Leicester
City Council

MEETING OF THE CHILDREN, YOUNG PEOPLE AND EDUCATION SCRUTINY COMMISSION

DATE: **TUESDAY, 25 OCTOBER 2022**
TIME: **5:30 pm**
PLACE: **Meeting Room G.01, Ground Floor, City Hall, 115 Charles Street, Leicester, LE1 1FZ**

Members of the Commission
Councillor Batool (Chair)
Councillor Willmott (Vice-Chair)

Councillors Crewe, Khan, Dr Moore, Riyait and Thalukdar

Co-opted Members (Voting)
Carolyn Lewis   Church of England Diocese
Mr Mohit Sharma

Standing Invitees (Non-Voting)
Youth Representatives Amira Duale and Kiera Finney
Jennifer Day   Teaching Unions representative
Janet McKenna   UNISON Branch Secretary

Members of the Commission are invited to attend the above meeting to consider the items of business listed overleaf.

For the Monitoring Officer

Information for members of the public

Attending meetings and access to information
You have the right to attend formal meetings such as full Council, committee meetings, and Scrutiny Commissions and see copies of agendas and minutes.
However, on occasion, meetings may, for reasons set out in law, need to consider some items in private.
Due to ongoing mitigations to prevent the transmission of COVID, public access in person is limited to ensure social distancing. If you wish to attend a meeting in person, you are required to contact the Democratic Support Officer in advance of the meeting regarding arrangements for public attendance. A guide to attending public meetings can be found here on the Decisions, meetings and minutes page of the Council website.
Dates of meetings and copies of public agendas and minutes are available on the Council's website at www.cabinet.leicester.gov.uk, or by contacting us using the details below.
To hold this meeting in as Covid-safe a way as possible, all attendees are asked to follow current Government guidance and:

- maintain distancing while entering and leaving the room/building;
- remain seated and maintain distancing between seats during the meeting;
- wear face coverings throughout the meeting unless speaking or exempt;
- make use of the hand sanitiser available;
- when moving about the building to follow signs about traffic flows, lift capacities etc;
- comply with Test and Trace requirements by scanning the QR code at the entrance to the building and/or giving their name and contact details at reception prior to the meeting;
- if you are displaying Coronavirus symptoms: a high temperature; a new, continuous cough; or a loss or change to your sense of smell or taste, you should NOT attend the meeting, please stay at home, and get a PCR test.

Making meetings accessible to all

Wheelchair access – Public meeting rooms at the City Hall are accessible to wheelchair users. Wheelchair access to City Hall is from the middle entrance door on Charles Street - press the plate on the right hand side of the door to open the door automatically.

Braille/audio tape/translation - If you require this please contact the Democratic Support Officer (production times will depend upon equipment/facility availability).

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If you intend to film or make an audio recording of a meeting you are asked to notify the relevant Democratic Support Officer in advance of the meeting to ensure that participants can be notified in advance and consideration given to practicalities such as allocating appropriate space in the public gallery etc..

The aim of the Regulations and of the Council's policy is to encourage public interest and engagement so in recording or reporting on proceedings members of the public are asked:
- ✓ to respect the right of others to view and hear debates without interruption;
- ✓ to ensure that the sound on any device is fully muted and intrusive lighting avoided;
- ✓ where filming, to only focus on those people actively participating in the meeting;
- ✓ where filming, to (via the Chair of the meeting) ensure that those present are aware that they may be filmed and respect any requests to not be filmed.

Further information

If you have any queries about any of the above or the business to be discussed, please contact:
Jacob Mann , Democratic Support Officer on 0116 454 5843.
Alternatively, email jacob.mann@leicester.gov.uk, or call in at City Hall.

For Press Enquiries - please phone the **Communications Unit on 0116 454 4151**.

USEFUL ACRONYMS IN RELATION TO OFSTED AND EDUCATION AND CHILDREN'S SERVICES
(updated November 2015)

Acronym	Meaning
APS	Average Point Score: the average attainment of a group of pupils; points are assigned to levels or grades attained on tests.
ASYE	Assessed and Supported Year in Employment
C&YP	Children and Young People
CAMHS	Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service
CFST	Children and Families Support Team
CICC	Children in Care Council
CIN	Children in Need
CLA	Children Looked After
CLASS	City of Leicester Association of Special Schools
COLGA	City of Leicester Governors Association
CPD	Continuing Professional Development
CQC	Care Quality Commission
CYPF	Children Young People and Families Division (Leicester City Council)
CYPP	Children and Young People's Plan
CYPS Scrutiny	Children, Young People and Schools Scrutiny Commission
DAS	Duty and Advice Service
DCS	Director of Children's Services
EAL	English as an Additional Language
EET	Education, Employment and Training
EHA	Early Help Assessment
EHCP	Education Health and Care Plan
EHP	Early Help Partnership
EHSS	Early Help Stay Safe
EIP	Education Improvement Partnership

ELG	Early Learning Goals: aspects measured at the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage Profile
EY	Early Years
EYFS	Early Years Foundation Stage: (0-5); assessed at age 5.
EYFSP	Early Years Foundation Stage Profile
FS	Foundation Stage: nursery and school Reception, ages 3-5; at start of Reception a child is assessed against the new national standard of 'expected' stage of development, then teacher assessment of Foundation Stage Profile areas of learning
FSM	Free School Meals
GCSE	General Certificate of Education
GLD	Good Level of Development
HMCI	Her Majesty's Chief Inspector
HR	Human Resources
ICT	Information, Communication and Technology
IRO	Independent Reviewing Officer
JSNA	Joint Strategic Needs Assessment
KPI	Key Performance Indicator
KS1	Key Stage 1: National Curriculum Years (NCYs) 1 and 2, ages 5-7; assessed at age 7.
KS2	Key Stage 2: NCYs 3, 4, 5, and 6, ages 7-11; assessed at age 11.
KS3	Key Stage 3: NCYs 7, 8 and 9, ages 11-14; no statutory assessment.
KS4	Key Stage 4: NCYs 10 and 11, ages 14-16; assessed at age 16.
KTC	Knowledge Transfer Centre
LA	Local Authority
LADO	Local Authority Designated Officer
LARP	Leicester Access to Resources Panel
LCCIB	Leicester City Council Improvement Board
LCT	Leicester Children's Trust
LDD	Learning Difficulty or Disability
LESP	Leicester Education Strategic Partnership
LLEs	Local Leaders of Education
LP	Leicester Partnership

LPP	Leicester Primary Partnership
LPS	Leicester Partnership School
LSCB	Leicester Safeguarding Children Board
LSOAs	Lower Super Output Areas
MACFA	Multi Agency Case File Audit
NCY	National Curriculum Year
NEET	Not in Education, Employment or Training
NLEs	National Leaders of Education
NLGs	National Leaders of Governance
OFSTED	Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills
PEPs	Personal Education Plans
PI	Performance Indicator
PVI	Private, Voluntary and Independent
QA	Quality Assurance
RI	Requires Improvement
SA	Single Assessment
SALT	Speech and Language Therapy
SCR	Serious Case Review
SEN	Special Educational Needs
SEND	Special Educational Needs and Disabilities
SIMS	Schools Information Management Systems
SLCN	Speech, Language and Communication Needs
SLEs	Specialist Leaders of Education
SMT	Senior Management Team
SRE	Sex and Relationship Education
TBC	To be Confirmed
TFL	Tertiary Federation Leicester
TP	Teenage Pregnancy
UHL	University Hospitals Leicester
WIT	Whatever it Takes
YOS	Youth Offending Service
YPC	Young People's Council

PUBLIC SESSION

AGENDA

FIRE / EMERGENCY EVACUATION

If the emergency alarm sounds, you must evacuate the building immediately by the nearest available fire exit and proceed to the area outside the Ramada Encore Hotel on Charles Street as directed by Democratic Services staff. Further instructions will then be given.

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Members are asked to declare any interests they may have in the business to be discussed.

3. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING   **Appendix A**
                                                                     (Pages 1 - 4)

The minutes of the meeting of the Children, Young People, and Education Scrutiny Commission held on 7 September 2022 are attached and Members are asked to confirm them as a correct record.

4. CHAIR'S ANNOUNCMENTS

5. PETITIONS

The Monitoring Officer to report on the receipt of any petitions.

6. QUESTIONS, REPRESENTATIONS, AND STATEMENTS OF CASE

The Monitoring Officer to report on any questions, representations, or statements of case received.

7. VIRTUAL SCHOOL HEADTEACHER REPORT   **Appendix B**
ACADEMIC YEAR 2021/22   **(Pages 5 - 42)**

The Strategic Director of Social Care and Education submits a report to summarise the educational outcomes and attainment of Leicester's Looked After Children during the academic year 2021/22. It considers their achievements and the support provided by the Virtual School Team to achieve the best learning outcomes.

8. SEND PUPIL PLACE PLANNING MODEL 2022   **Appendix C**
(Pages 43 - 102)

The Strategic Director of Social Care and Education submits a report detailing the SEND pupil place planning model, which was refreshed for 2022.

9. SEND INSPECTION FRAMEWORK UPDATE

The Strategic Director of Social Care and Education will present a verbal update on the new Area SEND inspections framework from Ofsted and the Care Quality Commission.

10. SEND ACCELERATED PROGRESS PLAN

The Strategic Director of Social Care and Education will present a verbal update on the SEND Local Area Accelerated Progress Plan which was currently being considered by the Department for Education.

11. SEND GREEN PAPER CONSULTATION RESPONSE   **Appendix D**
(Pages 103 - 112)

The Strategic Director or Social Care and Education submits the response from Leicester City Council to the Government's SEND Green Paper Consultation. Members are asked to note the report.

12. ASH FIELD ACADEMY RESIDENTIAL PROVISION -   **Appendix E**
STRATEGIC REVIEW   **(Pages 113 - 130)**

The Strategic Director of Social Care and Education submits a report to provide an overview of a strategic review of the Residential Provision at Ash Field Academy and associated consultation proposal to cease the funding with effect from September 2024.

13. FOSTERING SERVICE ANNUAL REPORT 2021/22   **Appendix F**
AND STATEMENT OF PURPOSE   **(Pages 131 - 176)**

The Strategic Director of Social Care and Education submits a report to provide an overview of the activity and performance of the council   Fostering Service from 1st April 2021 to 31st March 2022. The report should be read in conjunction with the annual statement of purpose which sets out the service aims, objectives and configuration. Members are asked to note the report.

14. ADOPTION SERVICE ANNUAL REPORT 2021/22 AND   **Appendix G**
STATEMENT OF PURPOSE   **(Pages 177 - 218)**

The Strategic Director of Social Care and Education submits a report to provide an overview of the activity and performance of the Family Adoption Links

Regional Adoption Agency incorporating Leicester City Adoption Service from 1st April 2021 to 31st March 2022. The report should be read in conjunction with the annual statement of purpose which sets out the service aims, objectives and configuration. Members are asked to note the report.

15. WORK PROGRAMME   **Appendix H**
                                                          (Pages 219 - 222)

The Commission's Work Programme is attached for information and comment.

16. ANY OTHER BUSINESS
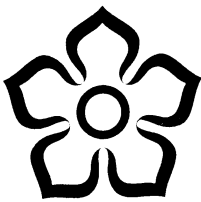
Leicester
City Council

<u>Minutes of the Meeting of the</u>
<u>CHILDREN, YOUNG PEOPLE AND EDUCATION SCRUTINY COMMISSION</u>

Held: WEDNESDAY, 7 SEPTEMBER 2022 at 5:30 pm

<u>P R E S E N T :</u>
<u>Councillor Batool (Chair)</u>
<u>Councillor Willmott (Vice Chair)</u>

<u>Standing Invitees (Non-Voting)</u>
Jennifer Day – Teaching Unions Representative
Amira Duale Youth Representative
Kiera Finney Youth Representative

<u>In Attendance</u>
Councillor Cutkelvin Asst City Mayor (Education and Housing)

* * * * * * * *

14. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

5.30pm
Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Thalukdar, Councillor Riyait, Councillor Dr Moore and Janet McKenna (Unison rep).

The Chair noted that Councillor Crewe, Councillor Khan, Carolyn Lewis (Co-optee) and Mohit Sharma (Co-optee) were absent, and the meeting was therefore inquorate.

As there was not a quorum present the meeting stood adjourned for fifteen minutes to allow for any late attendees.

5.45pm
The Chair declared that there was not a quorum present, and the meeting would therefore adjourn immediately.

The Chair noted that the remaining business on the agenda would be considered at a time and date to be fixed or at the next ordinary meeting scheduled.

The Chair and those present received a short informal briefing from the Strategic Director of Social Care and Education on matters not on the agenda regarding the impending Ofsted multi-agency inspection which had been notified to take place for the week commencing 19th September 2022.

The informal briefing included an overview of how the inspection would be carried out, the work being done to prepare and reference to past inspections and outcomes.

It was noted that confidential feedback would be received on the last day of the inspection however this type of inspection would not lead to a graded judgment. A letter was expected to be received around December 2022 providing extensive commentary feedback about the inspection and any areas identified for further improvement which would be shared with the commission.

The Chair thanked those present.

15. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Not applicable, meeting adjourned as inquorate.

16. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

DEFERRED to the next meeting.

17. CHAIR'S ANNOUNCMENTS

DEFERRED to the next meeting.

18. PETITIONS

DEFERRED to the next meeting.

19. QUESTIONS, REPRESENTATIONS, AND STATEMENTS OF CASE

DEFERRED to the next meeting.

20. SEND GREEN PAPER CONSULTATION RESPONSE

DEFERRED to the next meeting.

21. NEW SEND INSPECTION FRAMEWORK UPDATE

DEFERRED to the next meeting.

22. WORK PROGRAMME

DEFERRED to the next meeting.

23. ANY OTHER URGENT BUSINESS

None notified.

24. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

To note the next ordinary scheduled meeting is on Tuesday 25 October 2022 at 5.30pm

Appendix B

Virtual School

Virtual School Headteacher Report Academic Year 2021/2022

Report prepared by Vivien Tetley and colleagues in the Leicester City Council Virtual School

Purpose of this report

The purpose of this report is to summarise the educational outcomes and attainment of our Looked After Children during the academic year 2021/22. It considers their achievements and the support provided by the Virtual School Team to achieve the best learning outcomes for our Looked After Children.

Context

The Virtual School contribute to increasing the educational performance of our looked after children in order to:

- Raise attainment and accelerate progress for children in care across all key stages;
- Improve school attendance and reduce suspensions and exclusion;
- Improve the quality of Personal Education Plans and;
- provide and support a range of opportunities to widen horizons and raise achievement.

Our aspiration is that all our looked after children and young people;

- attend a good or outstanding school and learn
- have a voice that positively impacts on the services they receive
- have accurate and timely assessments of their needs, as well as specialist support when it is needed to help them to make good progress in their learning and development, wherever they live
- where they do not attend school, they have access to 25 hours per week of good quality, registered provision appropriate to their level of ability and aspirations. They are encouraged and supported to attend the provision and there is regular review of their progress
- where they are missing from education, work with other professionals to take action to improve their attendance
- have social workers, residential staff, carers and schools who support them to enjoy what they do and to access a range of social, educational and recreational opportunities
- have access to a range of cultural opportunities
- have stability in care and education placements
- receive recognition for their achievements and have their successes celebrated
- engage with the Aim Higher Reach Further programme to encourage all to achieve their potential and for our most able to present them with opportunities to progress into higher education or another appropriate pathway
- for those who are leaving care, provide with appropriate support and guidance to ensure they can progress to further education, higher education, training or employment as appropriate to their aspirations.

6

Summary of Key Priorities for 2021/2022

- To narrow the achievement gap between our looked after children and their peers

o Improve proportion of looked after children achieving a Good Level of Development in the Early Years Foundation Stage

o Improve proportion of children achieving expected standards in all areas at KS1 and KS2

o Continue to increase the number of year 11 students completing GCSE, with a focus on English and Maths

o Improve outcomes at Key Stage 4

o Improve outcomes and reduce drop-out for young people pursuing Level 3 courses in schools or Sixth Form Colleges

o Improve attendance

o Aim Higher Reach Further Programme to enthuse learners and accelerate their progress and raise aspirations

- Improve quality of Personal Education Plans (PEPs and PEP meetings), including student voice

- Maintain high level of PEP compliance

- Support foster carers and Designated Teachers to better support our looked after children with their learning

Notable Achievements in 2021/2022
- *There have been no permanent exclusions of Leicester CLA during 2021/22*
- *In Early Years, Leicester's CLA have significantly outperformed CLA nationally, with 8.3% achieving 'greater depth' in writing compared to 2% of CLA nationally and 8.3% achieving 'greater depth' in reading, writing and maths compared to 1% of CLA nationally*
- *Leicester's young people have been subject to fewer fixed term suspensions that CLA nationally, with an exclusion rate of 7.58% compared to 10% for CLA nationally*
- *According to FFT's national attendance tracker for 2021-22, our CLA at both Primary and Secondary school achieved higher attendance than all pupils nationally. Our primary cohort achieved an average attendance of 97% compared with 92.8% for all pupils nationally and our secondary cohort achieved average attendance of 93% compared with 89.7% for all pupils nationally. This is a terrific achievement!*

Pupil Characteristics

Numbers of school age children and young people looked after has decreased slightly this year.

	Early Years	R	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	Post 16	TOTAL
20/21	122	24	19	22	27	32	45	31	38	43	45	47	57	78	630
21/22	126	16	24	17	25	25	35	46	34	40	48	45	53	85	619

This shows us the spread of how many children and young people in each school year were looked after at some point during the school year. For some young people this is long term but there are others whose care journey is short. This demonstrates clearly the numbers are higher in secondary education and these are the young people whose care journeys are generally longer and more complex.

This information about the numbers of children and young people entering and leaving care during 2021/22 shows clearly that children up to the age of 5 are the group where care journeys are shorter.

Age	Into Care	Left Care
0	37	0
1	15	11
2	9	19
3	6	10
4	7	9
School Year	Into Care	Left Care
R	6	6
Year 1	8	7
Year 2	5	1
Year 3	5	3
Year 4	2	4
Year 5	7	5
Year 6	3	5
Year 7	7	4
Year 8	4	1
Year 9	6	3
Year 10	7	5
Year 11	12	3

The table below shows an increase in the number of young people with Education, Health and Care Plans this year, but it is likely this is the result of more accurate recording in Local Authority systems, particularly for those young people placed out of the area.

SEN CODE *	Mar-17	Jun-17	Mar-18	Jun-18	Jul-19	Jul-20	Jul-21	Jul-22
N (no SEN)	48%	45%	51%	48%	51%	48%	46%	41%
K (SEN Support)	37%	38.50%	35%	36%	34.53%	35%	31%	34%
E (EHCP)	15%	17%	13%	17%	14.00%	17%	23%	**25%**

*Information correct at 12th September 2022

Number of children with SEN in each year group (Correct at 01/08/2022)

| SEN Status	R	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	TOTAL number	Total % of LCC	Total % CLA
CLA in Year Group	16	24	17	25	25	35	46	34	40	48	45	53	408	0.7%	
ALL LCC in Year Group	4446	4666	4751	4824	4863	4996	5012	4544	4446	4434	4358	4256	55596		
E All LCC	80	145	147	151	169	208	179	199	158	182	164	210	1992	3.50%	
K All LCC	423	514	576	677	703	677	755	590	616	538	444	416	6929	12.50%	
E (CLA)	1	6	0	4	2	13	13	5	7	13	18	19	101		24.70%
K (CLA)	5	6	4	13	14	9	18	16	14	16	12	13	140		34.20%
TOTAL SEN (CLA)	6	12	4	17	16	22	31	21	21	29	30	32	**241**		58.90%

This data indicates that CLA represent 0.7% of the whole Leicester cohort.   58.9% of our CLA have some level of special need. This is a very high proportion compared with figures for all Leicester children with an EHCP (3.5%) and all Leicester children with a known learning need (12.5%), although in general, the prevalence of SEN in CLA is higher than for the total population.

This information tells us that there has been a 2% increase in the number of our young people with an Education, Health and Care Plan. In part this is attributable to a piece of work completed to improve the recording of young people with an EHCP, particularly those placed outside Leicester City, although there have been plans completed that stalled during the pandemic and this will also likely be a contributory factor.

It remains clear that there is a higher concentration of young people with Education, Health and Care Plans in secondary education at present. 63% of these young people are placed in Special School settings where their needs can best be met.

41 of the young people with EHCPs are educated in City settings.

Young people categorised as 'K' receive additional support with their learning, but this is managed within the normal bounds of a mainstream school and may include some 1 to 1 support or a learning intervention to address a short term or specific issue.

Areas of Primary Need
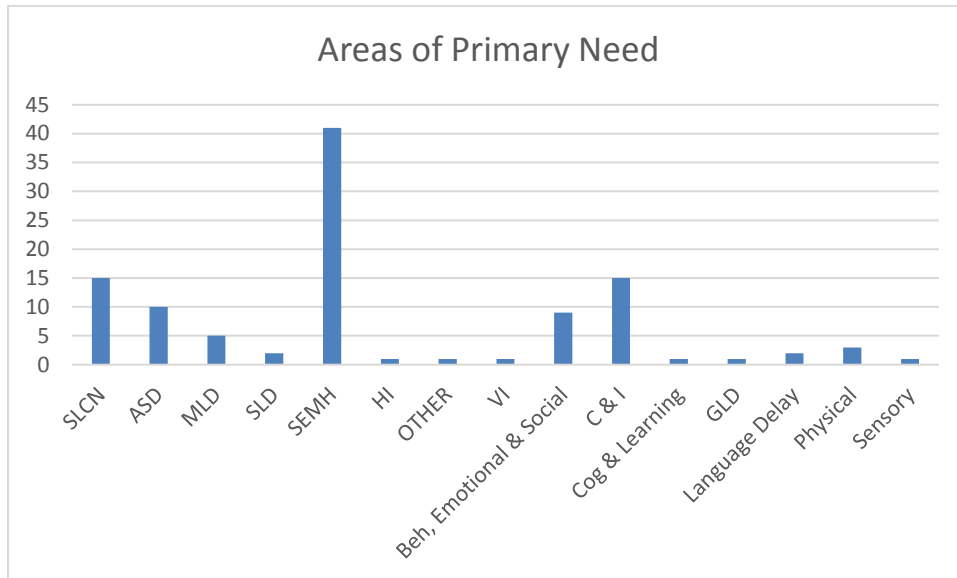
It is clear that by far the greatest primary need for those CLA with EHCPs is in the area of social, emotional and mental health needs. This differs from the national trend, where from data published in 2019 the most common area of primary need was Autistic Spectrum Disorder, which is double the rate of the second place need of Speech, Language and Communication Needs with SEMH coming in third. Given the early life experiences of our CLA and the trauma they have experienced, this is not a surprise to us but does highlight why there may be a national shortage of specialist places for young people with SEMH needs.

Gender	Jun-17	Mar-18	Jun-18	Jul-19	Jul-20	Jul-21	Jul-22
Male	56%	56%	56%	53%	54%	54%	55%
Female	44%	44%	44%	47%	46%	46%	45%

This table shows us that although there has been a small change in the last 3 years, the gender balance of our CLA cohort remains more than 50% male.

Ethnicity	Dec-17	Mar-18	Jun-18	Jul-19	Jul-20	Jul-21	Leicester All pupils July 2021	Jul-22
ABAN - Bangladeshi	0.25%	0.25%	0.23%	0.00%	0.25%	0.20%	0.00%	0.80%
AAF - Asian African	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.30%	0.60%	0.40%
AIND - Indian	5.90%	6.40%	6.44%	5.64%	4.42%	4.60%	32.10%	3.61%
AOT – any other Asian background	3.19%	2.96%	2.76%	2.71%	3.19%	3.50%	5.60%	4.01%
APKN - Pakistani	2.70%	2.71%	3.22%	2.71%	2.70%	1.70%	4.20%	2.00%
Bangladeshi	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	2.60%	0.00%
BAOF - other Black African	0.49%	0.49%	0.46%	0.45%	0.49%	1.50%	1.40%	0.80%
BLB – Black/Black British Caribbean	1.97%	1.97%	1.61%	0.90%	1.23%	1.10%	0.80%	1.00%
BLF – Black/Black British African	0.49%	0.49%	0.46%	0.45%	0.74%	0.90%	4.40%	2.20%
BLG – Black/Black British Other	1.97%	1.97%	1.84%	1.58%	0.74%	0.90%	0.00%	0.60%
BSOM - Somali	0.98%	0.99%	1.15%	1.35%	0.25%	0.70%	3.00%	0.20%
CHE - Chinese	0.49%	0.49%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.30%	0.00%
MWBA – Mixed White/Black African	2.46%	2.46%	5.98%	1.58%	0.00%	0.50%	1.20%	1.00%
MBO	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.25%	0.10%	0.00%	0.00%
MOTH - any other mixed background	2.70%	2.22%	2.30%	3.39%	3.44%	4.00%	2.10%	3.61%
MWAS - White/Asian	3.44%	3.45%	3.45%	4.06%	5.65%	4.60%	1.90%	4.61%
MWBC - White/Black Caribbean	2.70%	6.16%	5.98%	5.64%	4.91%	5.50%	2.10%	4.81%
OEO – Other Ethnic Origin	3.44%	0.49%	0.46%	0.68%	1.23%	1.10%	2.60%	1.20%
NOT – Information not obtained	1.47%	0.74%	1.61%	3.84%	4.42%	5.50%	0.80%	1.20%
REF – Refused	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.23%	0.00%	0.30%	0.50%	0.80%
WEN - White English	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.25%	0.36%	0.00%	1.00%
WBRI - White British	57.74%	58.13%	58.16%	58.69%	58.23%	57.70%	23.70%	60.04%
WEUR - White European	3.44%	3.45%	3.68%	2.93%	2.95%	3.50%	6.00%	3.41%
WIRI - White Irish	1.47%	1.48%	1.61%	0.45%	0.49%	0.20%	0.10%	0.80%
WOB - White other British	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.45%	0.00%	0.30%	0.10%	0.20%
WOW – White other	0.98%	0.99%	1.15%	0.23%	0.25%	0.30%	1.70%	0.80%
WROM	1.23%	0.99%	0.23%	1.13%	0.98%	0.70%	0.10%	0.80%

This data tells us that there have been small fluctuations in some groups, but numbers of CLA may be too small to make this significant. It is clear, however, that the CLA population is not reflective of the population for all of Leicester.

Achievements and Outcomes

Narrowing the Achievement Gap

In 2022, assessment of children and young people's learning has returned to pre-pandemic models with young people sitting tests and exams that are externally marked and verified. Like those who have preceded them, the young people in the key year groups have all felt the impact of the pandemic on their lost learning but have prepared as best they could to return to the examination rooms.

School Readiness

The Virtual School Officer with responsibility for the Early Years children attends PEPS for children from aged 2 upwards, where the child is registered in an Early Years setting or from birth if the child has significant learning needs requiring the support of a range of professionals. The assessment of the needs of this cohort in Early Years settings has improved the transition to Reception with schools better prepared to meet the needs of those learners requiring additional support.

School readiness is discussed in PEP meetings each term, generating the following information;

School Readiness 2022		
Key Areas	**Mini Goals**	
Settle happily when parents/carers are not there	I can play with my friends at pre-school	56%
	I can find another grown up if I am sad	88%
Separation and Independence: feel secure, say how they feel and ask an adult for help		
	I can say how I feel	50%
	I can ask for help with something if I need it	63%
Play with others and begin to share	I can take turns in a small group	56%
	I can name two of my friends	63%
Enjoy exploring new things and make choices	I can help load the trolley in the supermarket	Not asked in PEP
	I can choose my own clothes to wear	81%
Listen, talk and understand	I can follow three instructions at once	19%
	I can use sentences of 4-5 words	38%
Enjoy rhymes, songs, stories and books	I can sing my favourite nursery rhymes and do the actions	50%
	I can tell my own story using pictures in a book	31%
Walk, run, climb and balance	I can hop	75%
	I can jump forwards with two feet together	81%
	I can try a new food	81%

Eat, chew, try different foods and drink from a cup	I can help to set the table	81%
Use the toilet, wash their hands and clean their teeth	I can brush my teeth all by myself	88%
	I can wipe my own bottom	Not asked in PEP
Begin to dress themselves	I can do up a button on my clothes	31%
	I can move a zip up and down	88%

The impact of this work will be monitored as these children start their school careers through the numbers achieving their Early Learning Goals at the end of their Reception year. However, it is already clear that these children are experiencing fewer issues in the Reception year than may have been experienced by their peers in previous years when this work was not undertaken.

Example of intervention work by the Virtual School to support attainment in Early Years

Forest School Programme

Professionals and carers are very clear that the impact of the pandemic on our youngest learners has been significant, with a particular reduction in their language and communication skills as a consequence of not being able to mix freely with other children and not being able to access groups that would normally have run. In order to address this, we designed this Forest School programme to focus on and develop these skills that included modelling behaviours to carers so that the impact went far beyond the sessions themselves and became embedded in daily life.

In the spring and summer of 2022, we delivered a Forest School Playgroup to a small group of pre-school 3 year olds and their carers. This ran for the whole of the summer term at a local nursery which has an outstanding Forest School space. It was based in a forest setting in the countryside to give the children an authentic experience of the natural world beyond the urban environment. The outcomes we were hoping to achieve were; developing literacy and communication in line with the EYFS framework, exploration and supported risk taking in a natural setting, development of confidence and self-esteem through hands-on experiences, strengthening the bond and encouraging healthy interaction and play between child and carer and creating a supportive environment for carers to network. We gifted them a selection of story books, set in the natural world, and used these as a basis for each session. Healthy

interaction and play between child and carer and creating a supportive environment for carers to network. We gifted them a selection of story books, set in the natural world, and used these as a basis for each session.

What did you, as a carer, appreciate about the sessions?

"Meeting other carers and getting a break",

"I was able to watch how R interacts with other children and I had a better idea of what he likes and doesn't like to play with. I had a better understanding of his abilities and challenges",

"Meeting new people",

"Watching him grow from week one. By the end he was very confident in his surroundings. Made new friends and enjoyed the experience",

"I've introduced a lot of the activities into our own garden… such as the mud kitchen and bug houses",

"We have now have 2 bug hotels in our garden so far. So we can keep exploring nature. We will he adding more things to encourage wildlife"

14

Key Stage 4

Improving KS4 Outcomes

Key Stage 4 qualifications changed in 2017 with GCSE English and Maths scored numerically from 1 (low) to 9 (high). Course content was also expanded and increased. Whilst there is no direct correlation with previous grades, a 4 is considered a 'low C grade' and a 5 a 'good C grade'. All GCSEs are now marked on the 9 – 1 scale and revised courses have been reported as more challenging for all learners, placing increased pressure on schools and learners.

<u>**GCSE Results Analysis 2022 (collected by the Virtual School)**</u>

GCSE Outcomes	All Leicester LAC 2018	Leicester LAC 2018 in care 12 months at 31/03/2018	Leicester City All 2018	National all LAC 2018	All Leicester LAC 2019	Leicester LAC 2018 in care 12 months at 31/03/2019	Leicester City All 2019	National all LAC 2019	All Leicester LAC 2020	Leicester LAC 2018 in care 12 months at 31/03/2020	Leicester City All 2020	National all LAC 2020	All Leicester LAC 2021	Leicester LAC 2018 in care 12 months at 31/03/2021	Leicester City All 2021	National all LAC 2021	All Leicester CLA 2022	Leicester CLA in care 12 months at 31/03/2022	Leicester City All 2022	National all CLA 2022
Cohort	50	42			46	45			60	47			58	41			53	39		
English 4+	20%	24%	69.90%	15%	35%	35%			32%	32%			33%	32%			30%	46%		
Maths 4+	10%	12%	60.10%	11%	22%	22%			24%	13%			17%	17%			16%	28%		
5 GCSEs at 4+ (inc Eng and Ma)	6.70%	9%		13%	13%	13%			15%	11%			14%	12%			16%	28%		
Basics (Eng and Ma at 4+)	8.90%	12%	56.10%	7%	17%	17%	55%	65%	15%	13%			16%	15%			23%	31%		

2022 has been another difficult year for our Key Stage 4 young people. The closure of schools in March 2020 mid way through their Year 9 learning followed by repeated episodes of school closure, bubble closure and illness have all impacted on the quality of teaching and learning and particularly on the confidence and mental health and well-being of these young people. Formal examinations have been resumed this year and results based on these. We are very proud of these learners, their achievements and their resilience in challenging circumstances are testament to their commitment and endeavour.

A significant feature of this Year 11 cohort is the proportion of them with Education, Health and Care Plans at 37%. 10 (19%) of the cohort did not follow a GCSE based curriculum:-

- 4 attend a Special School and did not sit GCSEs or equivalent
- 1 young person was in a hospital setting and was not well enough to take any exams
- 2 young people were on roll at mainstream schools but only attended vocational settings and took no qualifications
- 1 young person was newly arrived in the UK and took no exams
- 2 young people had no place in a Special School and took no qualifications

This year there has been an encouraging increase in the number of the young people who had been in the care of the local authority for more than 12 months at 31/03/2022 who achieved outcomes. However, the proportion achieving 5 GCSEs at Grade 4 or above, including English and Maths, has risen slightly again for all young people in care, but the number achieving a Grade 4 or higher in Maths has decreased. It is likely that this is attributable to a combination of pandemic impact on learning and learning styles but will be monitored closely in the next year.

Learners from different minority groups did perform at different levels this year, but the numbers in those groups are too small to draw any firm conclusions about this.

As previously stated, 37% of this cohort have an Education Health and Care Plan. A further 25% of this cohort are recognised as having additional needs, but the young person's needs could be met within their mainstream school. 38% of this cohort have no identified additional learning need.

Of the young people who achieved Grade 4 or higher in both English and Maths, 17% have additional learning needs; 58% are identified as white British, with 8% in each of Mixed white and black African, Pakistani and black/black British Caribbean and 16% from any other Asian background.

Of the 13 young people who achieved 5 passes at grade 4 or above, 15% have some additional learning needs. 62% identify as White British, 38% of this group identify as other mixed heritage.

Of the 12 young people who achieved 5 GCSEs at Grade 4 or above, 83% had attendance of 90% or higher, 50% had attendance of 95% or higher. Of the young people who achieved a Grade 4 or above in both English and Maths, 83% had attendance of 90% or higher, 50% had attendance of 95% or higher. Of those 28 young people who did not attain 5 GCSE passes at Grade 4 or above, 50% had attendance of 90% or higher

Example of intervention work by the Virtual School to support attainment at KS4

Case Study: Student N, Year 11

SEN STAGE: EHCP

Tuition support overview:

Tuition Began: 25/02/2022   **Tuition end:** July 2022

Subject(s): Maths   **Tutor: NT**

Student N required tuition in Maths due to low ability in the subject and although she made excellent effort in lessons, she finds most maths topics a huge challenge. Her cognitive ability is in general, quite low. This meant that solving problems beyond simple maths operations have always been a real struggle for her.

NK also had low attainment and ability in English.

It was deemed appropriate to try 1:1 tuition through the Virtual School to improve her progress and attainment through a more focused session of support in both English and Maths.

The original focus was on GCSE maths, (for which she was being entered by her school) and working towards achieving a grade but it became clear to her tutor that this may not be achievable and there needed to be an alternative for her. As with most secondary schools, hers was unable to offer any other qualification than GCSE so the Virtual School were enter her for a Functional Skills qualification through the Adult Learning Centre in Leicester.

Notes:

It became apparent quite quickly that a GCSE qualification was potentially out of reach for Student N. At best, she may achieve a Grade 1 but not the grade 4 which is considered by many to be a 'pass'. So we started to work through functional maths and the skills required for this qualification. This is a much more appropriate qualification for students like Student N as it related to 'real-life' and uses maths which applies to everyday calculations and problems. More often than not, she engaged well with this type of work and made good progress during each session.

Outcome:

With the extra support that was in place for her, on 24th June 2022, Student N achieved a pass in Functional Skills Maths at Entry Level 3 with City and Guilds. She was over the moon! The confidence boost this gave her during a time when she was also sitting GCSE examinations at school was highly significant. She was very happy indeed to have achieved this qualification and we were proud to have been able to support her towards this outstanding result.

Student N has ambitions to go to college and she is a determined, hard-work young woman who we're sure will continue to achieve her ambitions and overcome challenges as she has done throughout her time in secondary education.

Previous attainment level: *Maths GCSE - Grade U*

Final attainment: ***Functional Skills Maths Entry Level 3 – PASS***

                               Maths GCSE - Grade 2

Other support provided by the Virtual School

Student N was a shy, quiet young pupil in Year 7 but was very happy to be involved in extra-curricular clubs and activities run by the Virtual School. This included enrichments sessions at 'Soft Touch' where she was able to complete an artwork project and also make friends with other pupils in care. It really helped her confidence and she then started to regularly attend other enrichment activities. Together with the support she has received from the Virtual School regarding her progress and education she has been able to thrive, make friends, become more confident both socially and in her studies too.

Feedback from staff

"Hi Nick, she has returned to school really happy and told us the news. Thank you so much for enabling this and for all the work you have done with her.

"What brilliant news- made my day!!"

"Just fabulous! Well done N and thank you to the team involved in making this happen.

"Well done all for putting our young people front and centre, as they deserve"

Destinations for Post 16 young people

Improve outcomes for L3 & Reduce drop-out

Post 16 Destinations 2022	2019 No.	2019%	2020 No.	2020%	2021 No.	2021%	2022 No.	2022 %
Cohort size	46		60		58			
Level 3 course	10	21.73%	8	13.33%	8	13.79%		
Level 2 course	10	21.73%	17	28.33%	9	15.51%		
Level 1 course	9	19.56%	11	18.33%	14	24.13%		
Remain at Special School	4	8.69%	6	10%	14	24.13%		
Secure/Health setting	0		4	6.66%	0			
Apprenticeship	1	2.17%	3	5%	1	1.72%		
Job	1	2.17%	0		0			
Traineeship	1	2.17%	0		5	8.62%		
NEET	10	21.73%	11	18.33%	7	12.06%		

Information provided by Connexions, October 2021. Updated information will be available in November 2022.

Work Readiness

All schools have a statutory duty to provide information, advice and guidance to their students from year 7 upwards. In year 10 and 11 this should increase significantly to start to prepare their students for making well informed decisions for post-16 transition and the world of work. The framework to support schools to deliver this is based on the eight Gatesby Benchmarks. In using these benchmarks schools should address the needs of each pupil and link the curriculum learning to careers, provide encounters with employers and offer experiences of workplaces.

For those who are looked after by LCC, additional information, advice and personal guidance is provided from year 10 upwards. This recognises not all will have had the right level of support from the school at which they were on role, especially if there have been changes/unsettled placements. By the summer of term of year 11, the aim is for all to have an offer of learning for post-16. The vast majority of the CLA young people in this cohort will have an offer to stay in full-time education, mostly in a college or a school setting but the offer may be with a training provider, and for a small number it may be a specialist placement for their SEND needs.   Even if they are staying in a school 6th form or going onto a full-time college course, the activities that are done with our young people should start to increase their work readiness, for example, decision-making, independence and the understanding of a broader range of options.

The support with IAG and preparation for work continues with our post-16 CLA cohort and intensifies for those who are NEET. PEPS will continue with this cohort and are offered even if the young person is dis-engaged so that the individual will know that when they are ready it will be not too late to form a career

plan. As part of the planning for post-18 work and learning there is more work done around interviews, applications and the local labour market.

As well as the additional IAG referred to above, our care leavers and CLA from year 10 were offered a chance to meet with an employer this year. This employer was either linked to an area of work they wanted to get into, or an area they wanted to find out more about. The aim of the contact was to help individuals improve their understanding of different job roles, gain knowledge of how to apply for jobs, gain a contact with an employer, improve their confidence and refine their thoughts about their future careers. Ultimately this should help to prevent some of our young people becoming NEET or act as a step towards re-engagement.
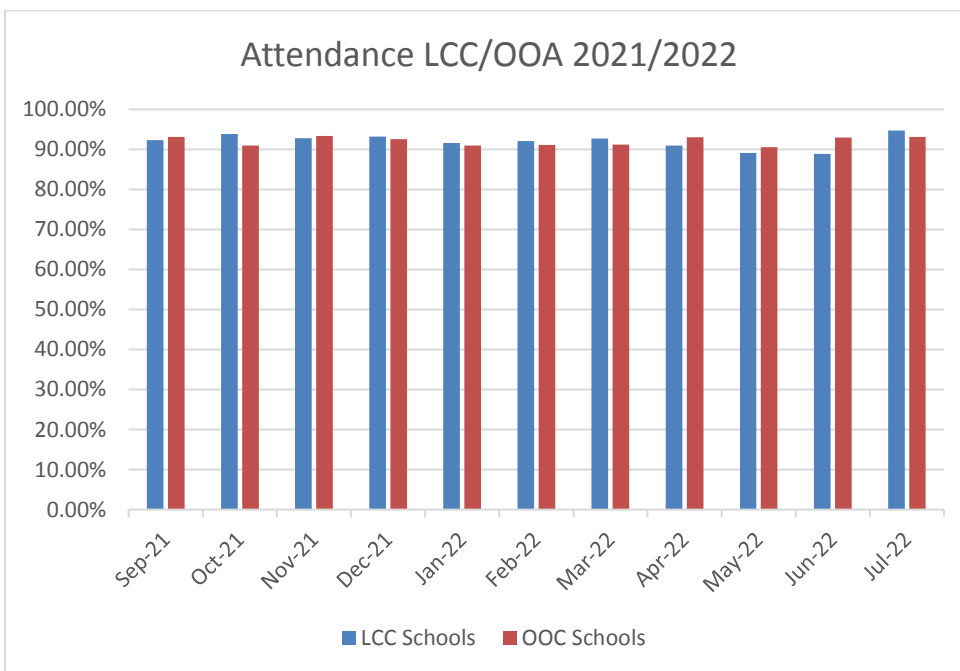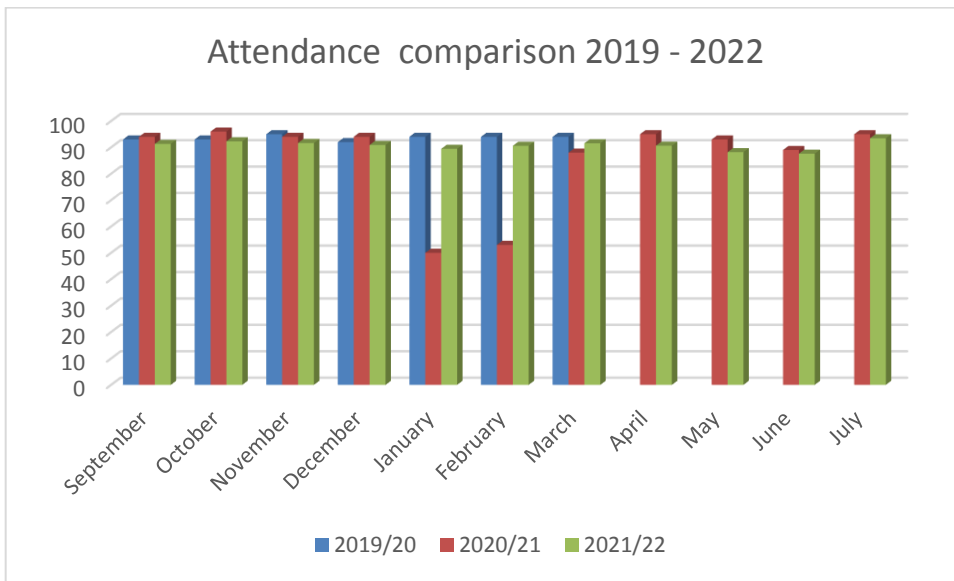
'Get Inspired' is a project managed by LCC, with funding from ESF. It is just underway and will provide intensive support into work or learning for those who are age 16-24 and NEET especially if from a priority group. One of the groups we are prioritising are those who are looked after or have left care. It will allow additional resource to bridge the gap around work readiness and allow activities to be done with providers and employers to help increase the chances of a sustained transition.

Attendance and Exclusions

Improve Attendance
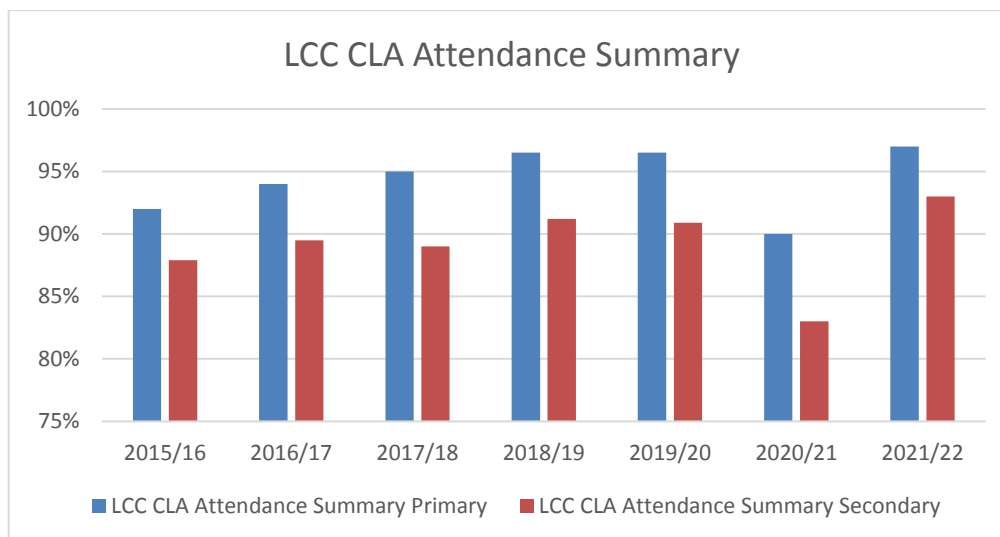
2021/22 has been a year where the attendance of our CLA continued to recover from the pandemic. Attendance remains higher in the primary phase than secondary, but it is pleasing to note that whilst primary attendance has returned to pre-pandemic levels, secondary attendance is higher in 2021-22 than it was before 2020.

Attendance comparison 2019 - 2022

Chart showing monthly attendance percentages (September–July) comparing 2019/20, 2020/21 and 2021/22. Legend: 2019/20, 2020/21, 2021/22.

Attendance LCC/OOA 2021/2022

Chart showing monthly attendance percentages (Sep-21 to Jul-22) comparing LCC Schools and OOC Schools. Legend: LCC Schools, OOC Schools.

There is no difference between attendance rates in and out of area this year with both City and out of area schools averaging 92%.

What is the impact of coming into care on the school attendance of these children and young people?

Comparing the attendance for the year prior to coming into care and the year they came into care, the following is noted about these 35 learners who all attended schools in Leicester City:

- 1 CLA maintained their attendance at the same level
- 5 had no attendance the previous year – 3 were not of statutory school age, 2 were newly arrived
- 10 young people improved their attendance
- 19 had their attendance fall

Difference	Attendance rises	Attendance falls	Notes
0 – 5%	1	8	
6 – 15%	3	6	
16 – 30%	4	2	
More than 30%	2	3	2 learners whose attendance fell more than 30% were placed temporarily out of the area and it was too far to travel to school until they returned to the area

Of those whose attendance fell, 36.5% were Key Stage 1 and 2 and 30% Key Stage 3 and 4

Of those whose attendance rose, 26.5% were Key Stage 1 and 2and 7% Key Stage 3 and 4

Higher overall absence leads to lower attainment at KS2 and KS4

The Department for Education (DfE) published research in 2016 which found that:

- The higher the overall absence rate across Key Stage (KS) 2 and KS4, the lower the likely level of attainment at the end of KS2 and KS4
- Pupils with **no absence** are 2.2 times more likely to achieve 5+ GCSEs A*- C or equivalent including English and mathematics than pupils that missed 15-20% of KS4 lessons

Attendance Headlines for 2021/22

33 (8%) young people achieved 100% attendance

99 (23.5%) were persistently absent – meaning their overall attendance fell below 90%

Average attendance for the whole cohort was 90.7% for the school year. This is higher than the previous year when the pandemic, related illness, school and bubble closures left young people at home but is not yet back to pre-pandemic levels when average attendance was around 94%.

Attendance 2021-22

There are many reasons why our young people may miss school. We always aim for and encourage 100% attendance and in 2021/22, 33 young people achieved this.

Reason for non-attendance 2021/22	% Missed CLA	% Missed ALL Leicester	ALL CLA (Days)	ALL LEICESTER (Days)	KS1&2 CLA (Days)	KS1&2 ALL LEICESTER (Days)	KS3 CLA (Days)	KS3 ALL LEICESTER (Days)	KS4 CLA (Days)	KS4 ALL LEICESTER (Days)
Holiday (days)	Information not available									
Authorised Absence (days)	5.70%	5.27%	4586	1,347,425	1841	570,028	1091	290,834	1654	358,125
Unauthorised absence (days)	3.80%	2.59%	3026	660,948	483.5	274,339	719.5	193,306	1823	142,267
Suspension (days)	0.30%		215.5		15		123		77.5	
Total			7827.5		2339.5		1933.5		3554.5	

This data tells us that the most common reason for absence from school in 2021/22 was authorised absence, meaning that it was considered as absence for a legitimate reason. Both authorised and unauthorised absence for Leicester's looked after children is higher than for all children and young people in Leicester, reversing the trend from the previous year. Unauthorised absence in Key Stage 4 is higher than from reception to Year 9 due in some part to 10 young people with more than 50 days each of unauthorised absence caused by their refusal to attend their education setting.

Absence caused by fixed term suspensions is highest at Key Stage 3 and this mirrors the picture against all young people in Leicester, with learners in Years 8 and 9 in particular struggling to settle back into school post pandemic. 10 Key Stage 3 students had more than one fixed term suspension during the year. 7 learners were subject to 3 or more fixed term suspensions with this highest number of suspensions being 6. 6 of the 7 students subject to more than 3 suspensions have all, for various reasons, since moved on to new schools.

Exclusions 2021/2022

Reduce Exclusions

There have been no permanent exclusions of Leicester CLA during 2021/22

The Virtual School Team was able to support pupils at risk of suspension. Team members attended PEPs, worked with pupils, their carers and schools to seek solutions which avoided suspension. These included increased support in school, managed moves and time spent in alternative provision settings to address the reasons the suspension may have occurred.

The VST Learning Mentors provided support to pupils at risk of suspension. They successfully worked alongside school mentors, residential staff, carers and other support staff to establish pastoral support systems and personalised programmes to enable everyone to remain on track. In some cases, Pupil Premium Plus funding was used to appoint 1:1 support staff to enable a young person to remain in school, settle and make progress. In schools where numbers

of CLA are high, the Virtual School has funded or part-funded a mentor to work specifically with our children to ensure they have appropriate support to keep them in school and learning.

51 pupils received a fixed term suspension during 2021/2022. Of these 51 young people, 18 of them were suspended for a fixed term on more than one occasion. 2 young people were each subject to 6 separate fixed term suspensions. Both of these young people have since moved on to new settings better able to meet need.

The total number of days lost to fixed term suspension was 215.5. This figure represents a very significant increase from the previous year but does mirror suspensions for all pupils in Leicester.

| Year	Number of pupils excluded	Total number of pupils in cohort	%
2009/10*	52	309	16.80%
2010/11*	45	281	15.70%
2011/12*	25	248	10.10%
2012/13*	28	244	11.40%
2013/14*	27	208	13.00%
2014/15*	18	283	6.30%
2015/16*	27	403	6.70%
2016/17	46	410	11.00%
2017/18	34	446	7.60%
2018/19	44	448	9.80%
2019/20	33	464	7.00%
2020/21	31	418	7.41%
2021/22	51	418	12%

*note – these figures are for CLA in Leicester City schools only

Fixed Term Suspensions comparison
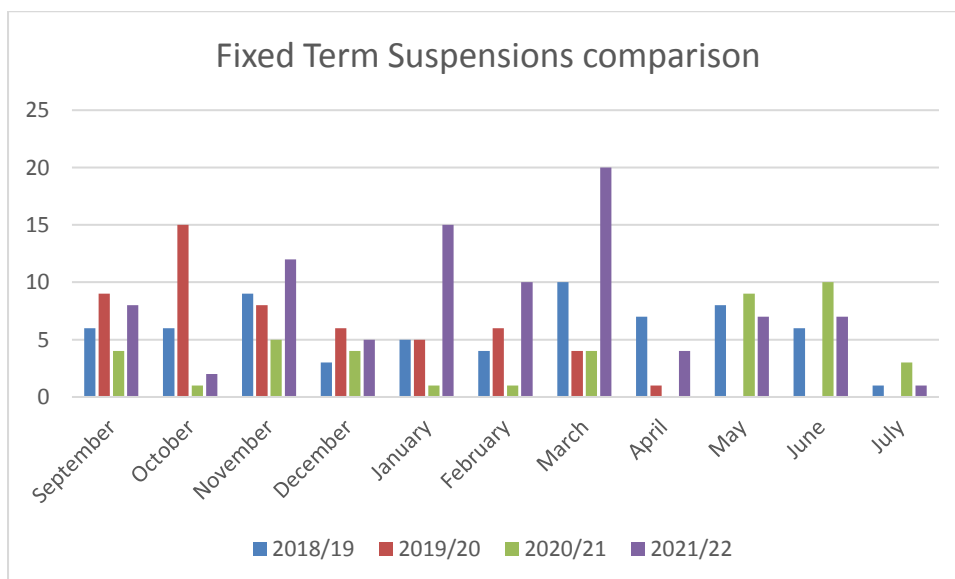
This graph shows that fixed term suspensions have risen this year with a particular increase in January and March 2022.

Fixed Term Suspensions by Year Group
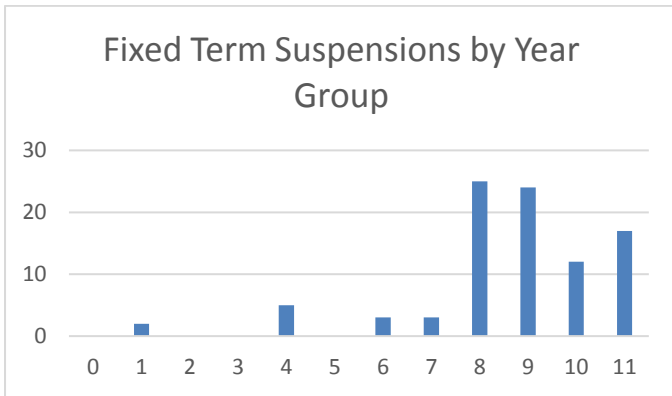
This graph shows that there are key year groups where suspensions are higher – Years 8,9, in the most part, are the areas with the highest percentages of fixed term suspensions. This mirrors the picture for all young people in Leicester as it is thought that these are the two year groups that have experienced the least transition into secondary education and are presenting as challenging.

**Fixed Term Suspensions by Gender**
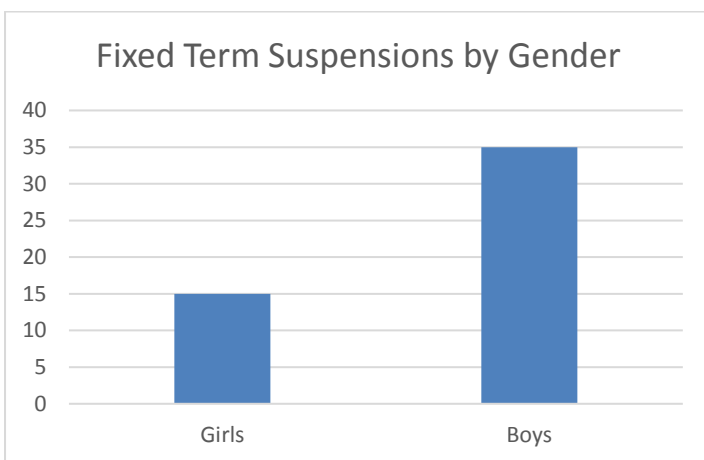
This shows quite clearly that boys are much more likely to be suspended than girls. The balance between the two in the overall CLA population is almost even.

The Target 25 group monitors the provision and plans for CLA who do not have a full time offer of 25 hours of education as well as attendance and suspensions. Target 25 is a multi-disciplinary group with knowledge and understanding of the learners and the challenges they may need to overcome. The Authority's commissioning officer also attends. Together the group provides a holistic approach to meeting the needs of the most vulnerable looked after children.

There is a further monthly meeting chaired by Deputy Mayor Cllr Russell and attended by Senior Officers of the Local Authority, Service Managers from Education Welfare, Social Care and Special Educational Needs; this group monitor not only the young people at risk of not having a full time education, but also actions and plans around young people who may have been suspended from school or whose attendance falls below 95%, taking a solution focussed approach to resolving the barriers for each learner.

In Year School Moves

Moving to a new school during a school year should be avoided whenever possible. However, sometimes factors beyond our control mean that children or young people move to new placements or move to alternative settings that are better able to meet their needs following statutory assessment.

In year school moves 2021/22
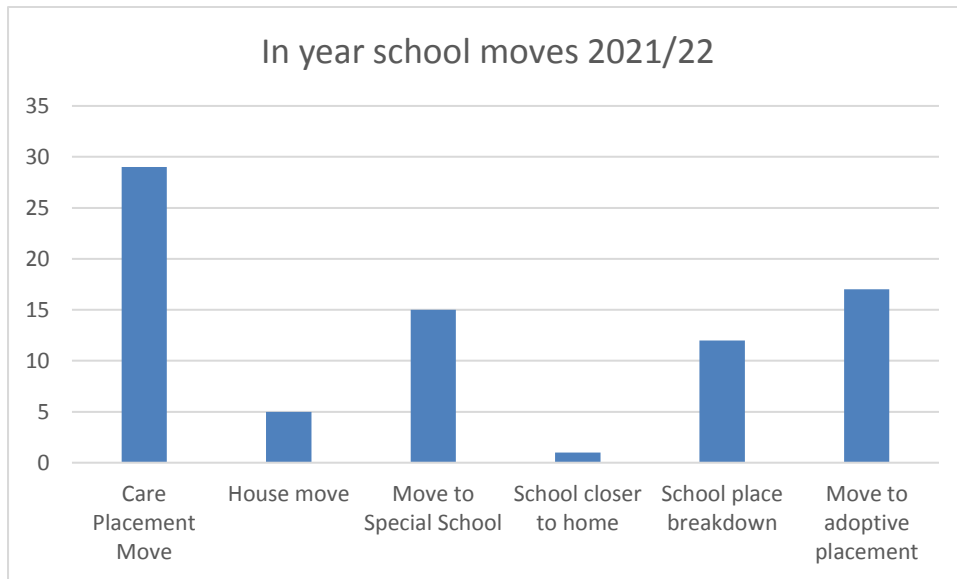
There were 79 school moves in total, meaning that 19% of our young people were subject to a school move during the school year. However some young people moved multiple times across the year bringing the actual percentage of young people with school moves down to 13%.

37% of all the moves were due to a change in placement.

19% of the moves were young people moving to a school better able to meet their needs.

Excluding those children and young people who moved on to adoptive placements, of those young people who moved schools during the school year, 7 young people moved more than once.

- 1 young person had 2 placement breakdowns and moved twice
- 2 young people moved placements then were ordered by the Court back to a placement with a parent
- 1 young person moved when brought into care then moved to a kinship placement
- 1 young person had to move care placement for their own safety
- 1 young person moved due to medical needs
- 1 young person moved due to a house move then the breakdown of their school place

This graph shows that 49% of the school moves were for young people in either Year 9, 10 or Year 11.

69% of the moves were for young people at Secondary School.

In year school moves by year group
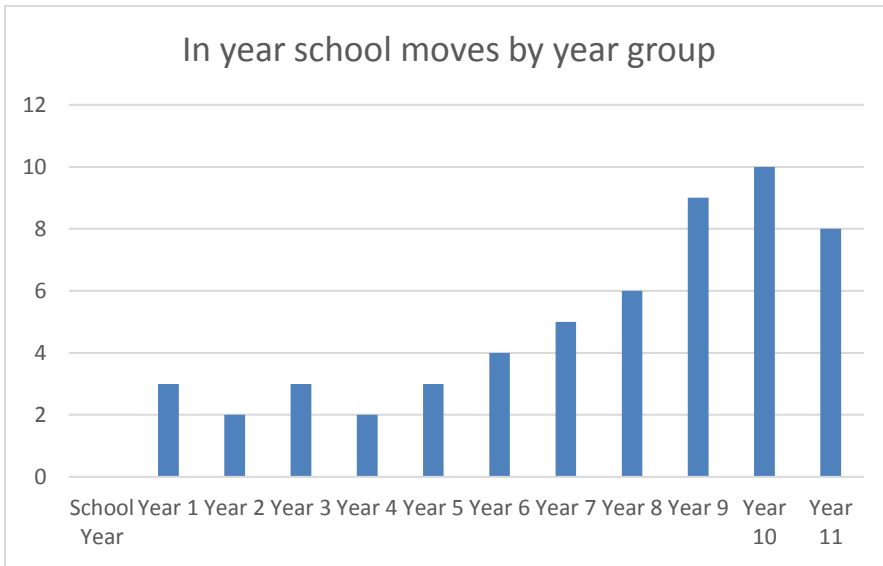
This graph shows that students in Years 9, 10 and 11 were more likely to be subject to an in year move of school during this academic year.

In year moves as proportion of CLA cohort
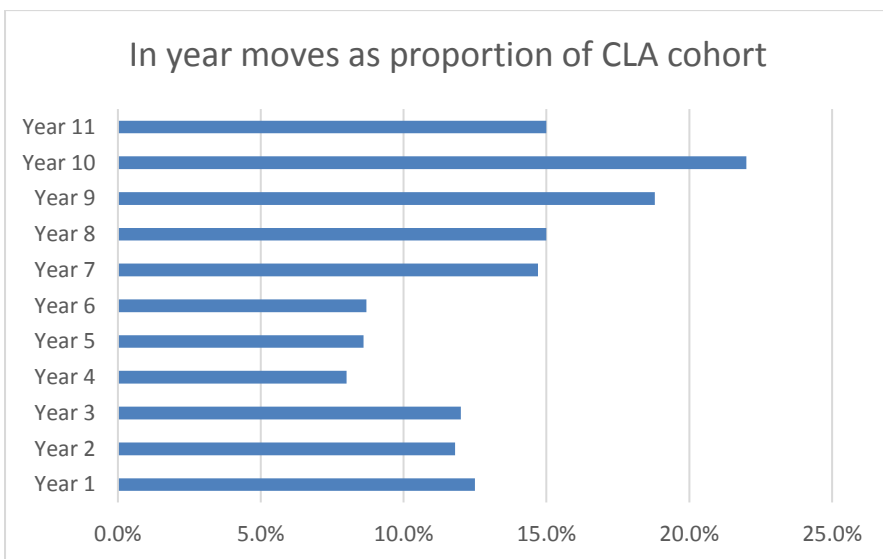
This data shows the number of young people subject to an in-year school move as a proportion of the number of LCC CLA young people in that year group during this academic year.

Proportions are highest in the secondary age range but particularly in Years 9 and 10 where continuity towards GCSE or other qualifications is key.

Reasons for in year school move
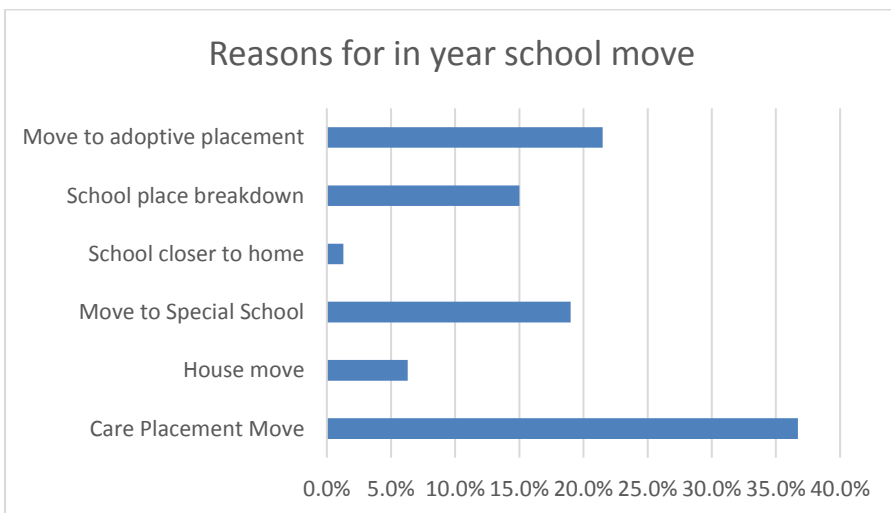
Clearly the most common reason for an in year school move is when a young person has a placement move and needs to transfer to a school closer to the new placement.

In year school moves by SEN code
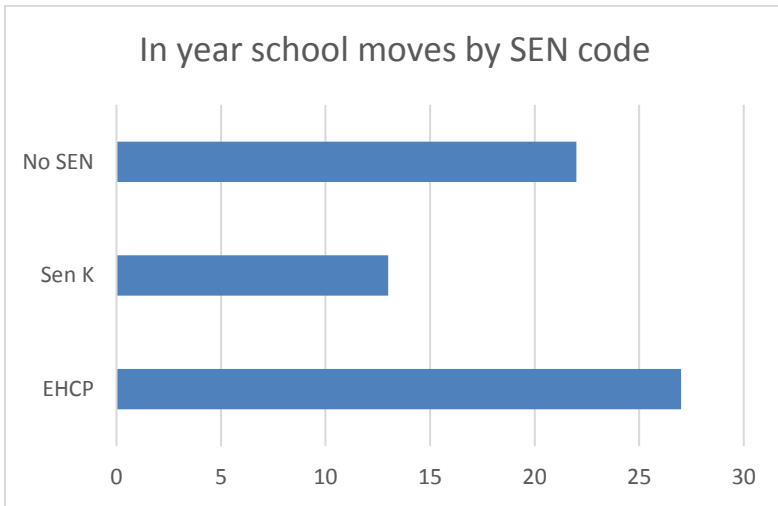
It is clear that the largest proportion of school moves are for young people with EHCPs. 52% of the moves for young people with EHCPs were to move to a school better able to meet need whilst 40% were due to a move of care placement.

In year school moves by gender

■ Male   ■ Female
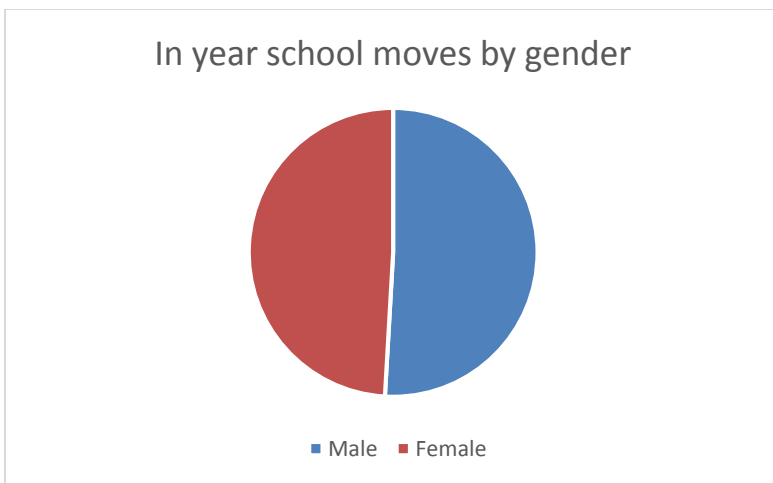
In year moves are balanced almost exactly across both genders this year, but given that the cohort is made up of more males than females, the proportion of girls subject to moves is higher.

Children and Young People Previously Looked After

The Children Previously Looked After Officer was appointed in October 2020. The CPLA Officer is responsible for providing information, advice and guidance with regard to CPLA young people in Leicester City.

After addressing the limited understanding of CPLA in terms of pupil identification via schools Census, and funding, schools are now showing a much clearer understanding of the process and how to distribute the funding.

Alongside this much work has been completed with the LCC Post SGO(Special Guardianship Order)/adoption support worker, to ensure that carers of adopted, SGO or CAO (Child Arrangement Order) children are fully aware of their rights. Joint meetings are now commonplace and all final PEPs are attended by the CPLA Officer to ensure carers have the most up to date information about how they are able to access educational support should they need it. This has now progressed to school meetings with CPLA carers, initially at Overdale Junior and Infant Schools to ensure that line of advice and guidance is still there once a court order has been signed and a child is adopted. This is to be extended in the future to a Trust wide carer meeting with the hope that other schools and Trusts opt into the need for developing communications with carers. To further ensure carers have up to date information the Virtual School have also redesigned their webpage making it much easier to access information.

On the wider context, Leicester City CPLA officer was a driving force in the creation of the first regional CPLA meeting. This was used to discuss national changes and the impact that could have locally as well as the shared challenges faced across the East Midlands for CPLA.

Enrichment Activities

The Virtual School Enrichment Programme exists to provide additional educational, cultural and social opportunities, outside of school, for our young people who are looked after. The broad aims are to create opportunities that give these young people qualifications, aspirations, cultural capital, confidence, self-esteem and life skills that will help them overcome their experiences and live full and successful lives.

We have mainly focussed on the two school transition points, Year 6 and Year 11.

The Year 6 Transition Programme is run, in large part, by the Educational Psychology team who made contact with all of our Y6 students and ran a combination of on-line and in-person events which helped them think about and prepare for the move to secondary. The emphasis of the EWE Programme is on mental health and emotional resilience. The final event took place at King Power stadium in partnership with Leicester City Football Clubs Community Team.

In addition to this, Virtual School ran a full day of transition activities for a smaller group of 9 children who were selected according to additional needs. We had a fantastic time at a venue called New Leaf Triangle, which is a Leicestershire-based Alternative Provision with a specialism in SEHM and SEN. The children had contact with animals, loads of wide-open space to play on, the forest school area and traditional tepees. We played games which made the most of the space and which focussed the children on thinking about the challenges and excitements ahead of them and got them thinking about coping strategies. We got some positive student voice about how useful the day had been and a strong message about how great it had been to make new friends. Watching the friendships form over the day and seeing how easily they bonded and identified with each other was a privilege. There are big plans to build on the success of this day and make it more available to the whole of the year group.

One of the stated aims of this project was to reduce the number of and incidences of fixed term suspension for young people in Year 7. The number of young people continues at the reduced level but the number of days has increased due to one young person's involvement in an incident judged serious by school. This young person has since moved schools to a setting better able to meet their needs.

	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22
No of Y7 young people excluded	9	5	2	2	2
No of days lost to Y7 exclusions	52	24	7	2	17
No of Y7 exclusions	15	11	3	2	3

The Year 11 Transition Programme included;

A social meet up at Leicester Outdoor Pursuits Centre with 17 of our YP to re-establish relationships that had been lost over Covid and games to help us get to know where our YP were with their post-16 plans.

A university experience day, attended by 8 YP and led by the Pathways team who tailored it towards CLA YP, partnering them with Student Ambassadors and providing information about the various grants, bursaries and support available.

College Visits to mainstream and alternative provisions, attended by 4 to 8 YP, which focussed on introducing our YP to the sites, courses and staff who would be supporting them and encouraging them to consider their options

The Tall Ships Sailing Residential, a unique and unforgettable experience for five of our YP, where we spent five days with the Tall Ships Youth Trust sailing around Portsmouth, living aboard a sailing boat, learning to sail, navigate, work as a team, cook, clean and gain a qualification with the RYA. Friendships were formed, fears over-come, skills were learned, many laughs were had, and confidence and resilience grew. Without exception, they worked hard, respected each other and the crew and showed extraordinary bravery and tenacity over the week. One YP is hoping to attend again next year and complete the next level of training and act as a mentor to the next cohort. Here is some of the student voice we collected;

"It is a good trip to get you out of your shell",

"one of the best things I have ever experienced",

"Even people I didn't think I would get on with, I did. We all worked together",

" I loved it! I want to volunteer (for Tall Ships)",

"Overall, I think the tall ship that I like makes me feel more enjoyable because I have never been on a boat or sailed and that changes my life forever",

Over the Summer we have collaborated with Curve Theatre to deliver two projects; a Billy Elliott Day, where some of our Y10 and Y11 YP came for a tour of the theatre, took part in some theatre workshops and then had a meal and saw the show in the evening. I think we were all blown away by the performance and we identified some YP to put forward for bursaried places on Curve CYCC theatre programmes, which start in September.

The second was a five day series of workshops with a local, care-experienced Poet, Ty'Rone Haughton, with his company Literati, , who led a small group through imagining, writing and performing their own Spoken Word pieces to a small audience of carers and professionals. We were blown away by their bravery and talent, in their confident performance and in the open and honest sharing of their stories. They made a connection with a local art venue, made friends with other CLA YP and learnt the unique skill of writing and performing which will give them a therapeutic tool for the rest of their lives. In addition, they learnt how to present to an audience, manage their anxieties and hone their writing skills, all of which will be invaluable to them. We hope to continue this collaboration with Curve and Literati next year. Here is some student voice from this project.

You have learnt a new skill this week, how could this help you in the future? *"…to write more stories and more poems, I want to be an author" "it lets out my feelings, writing gets it out of me", "it makes you go to a different kind of world, ,makes you see the world in a different way", "it helped me prepare and think about what …[I'm]..going to say", "it's [writing] one of my coping mechanisms now", "I feel more confident and open to other people's thoughts", "there's no right or wrong way, if you make mistakes, it's ok"*

Work of the Virtual School

Personal Education Plans

Maintain PEP Compliance / Develop Systems to Secure Information Sharing

Virtual School Officers, under the guidance and direction of the Team Leader and Virtual Head, aim to attend Personal Education Plan meetings (PEPs) for as many young people as possible. Each young person should have a PEP meeting each school term. As it is impossible for Officers to attend all, priority is given to meetings about young people who are new into care, those whose circumstances are judged to be complex as well as children and young people in key transition years – Year 2, Year 6, Year 9 and Year 11. During the pandemic all PEP meetings moved online and as the blended model of working has continued this year, officers have been able to attend more PEP meetings as they are no longer travelling between schools. Some PEP meetings are happening face to face in schools and are attended by someone from the Virtual School Team where there is good reason to do so.

Since January 2017, we have been using eGov's, ePep, a secure online platform for our Personal Education Plans. Meetings are chaired by school, who set smart learning targets for the young people with the aim of accelerating progress. All PEPs are quality assured by either the Virtual Head or Virtual School Team Leader. Whilst we always aim for all our children to have a current PEP, our rate of compliance remains high at an average of 98% during the school year 2021/22.

Letterbox Club
This was provided for 153 CLA during 2021/22.

During 2021/2022 the Virtual School enrolled all its looked after children in Years 1, 2, 4, 6 and 8 in the Letterbox Club, a national scheme run by Book Trust, a national charity. The club is managed in partnership with the University of Leicester and was first conceived and set up by Leicester City Council's Virtual School Team.

The project explores ways of improving the educational outlook for children in care by providing them with educational materials and reading material. Each child receives a parcel once a month for six months, with an additional parcel at Christmas. Each parcel is addressed to the child at their home and includes a letter personalised with the child's name, two reading books and stationery items such as pencils, an exercise book or drawing book, a bookmark and a maths game. Sometimes the child receives a CD to accompany one of the books. The books chosen include a mixture of fiction, poetry and non-fiction, with good levels of illustration and aimed at the "interest age" of each cohort of children. The mathematics games focus on number and arithmetic and are provided at a suitable level for the age of the children.

Emotional Wellbeing in Education Project

During 2021-2022 the *EWE* Project worked with:

- 89 schools and settings;
- 43 primary schools,
- 23 secondary schools,
- 12 special schools and
- 11 alternative settings such as Children's Homes.
- In total the project supported 138 looked after children and young people

This academic year saw the EWE team reconnect with schools in person by offering face to face therapeutic sessions and staff consultations. All of our EWE 1:1 individual and group interventions were delivered back in schools :-

❖ The *Waves* intervention provides CiC with opportunities to understand and manage their feelings that follow their multiple experiences of transition, loss and change.

❖ The *SPACE* programme focusses on increasing young people's positive thoughts, emotions, and wellbeing.

❖ The EWE Theraplay model is an attachment-based intervention which supports relationships in school supporting the child to be regulated and ready to learn.

❖ The *CREATE* programme supports CiC to communicate and express themselves through art and creative activities.

❖ The EWE *Children's Wellbeing transition initiative* is a universal offer for all Year 6 CiC supporting their transition from primary to secondary school, increasing wellbeing and the child's sense of belonging.

We continue to provide staff support through training and consultation. In addition to this, we have been available to provide staff emotional containment as they reconnect with CiC post-pandemic.

As part of our ongoing commitment to providing holistic support for CiC, our post Covid work highlighted an area for further development. We noticed an increase in the number of placement moves for the children on our caseload, a trajectory which Social Care have also noticed. This led to us working closely with a small group of foster carers to explore their own emotional wellbeing needs.

Reading For Pleasure Project

Reading for Pleasure has been a piece of work undertaken by one of our tutors. This project has focussed on our own residential homes and improving both access to and enthusiasm for reading;

Residential homes:

- VST have continued to work collaboratively with all residential homes this year, to enhance the provision of reading materials and thus raise the profile of reading for pleasure within our young people.
- All residential homes have received a substantial number of books, individualised according to the ever-changing needs of the young people.
- Netherhall and Barnes Heath have substantially improved their resources for their young people with SEND needs, including audio books, picture books and dual language appropriate texts.
- Netherhall and Barnes Heath have also received a selection of Story Sacks with multi-sensory resources to aid their provision for the YP there.
- Many of the homes have worked on improving their 'reading areas' and creating displays to make 'reading' more prolific and visual to the young people. Staff favourite texts have been shared and made a part of daily conversations etc.
- One home now continues to have regular visits to the local shop, to purchase magazines based upon their young people's interests and hobbies. This was inspired by VST signing them up for a subscription to 'The Week' newspaper.
- Many ESOL books have been ordered and are used by the YP in the homes
- 'Match of the Day' magazine subscription set up for Wigston Lane and Dunblane Avenue.

Feedback from residential home managers:

"Hi Jenny
The young people are really enjoying the story sacks.
Regards
Sue "

"Hi Jennifer,
Those (story sacks) look fantastic! I would love to have them all! ☺
Regards
April"

"M got his book today he was made up and was full of thank you's and that he will be 'reading that'.
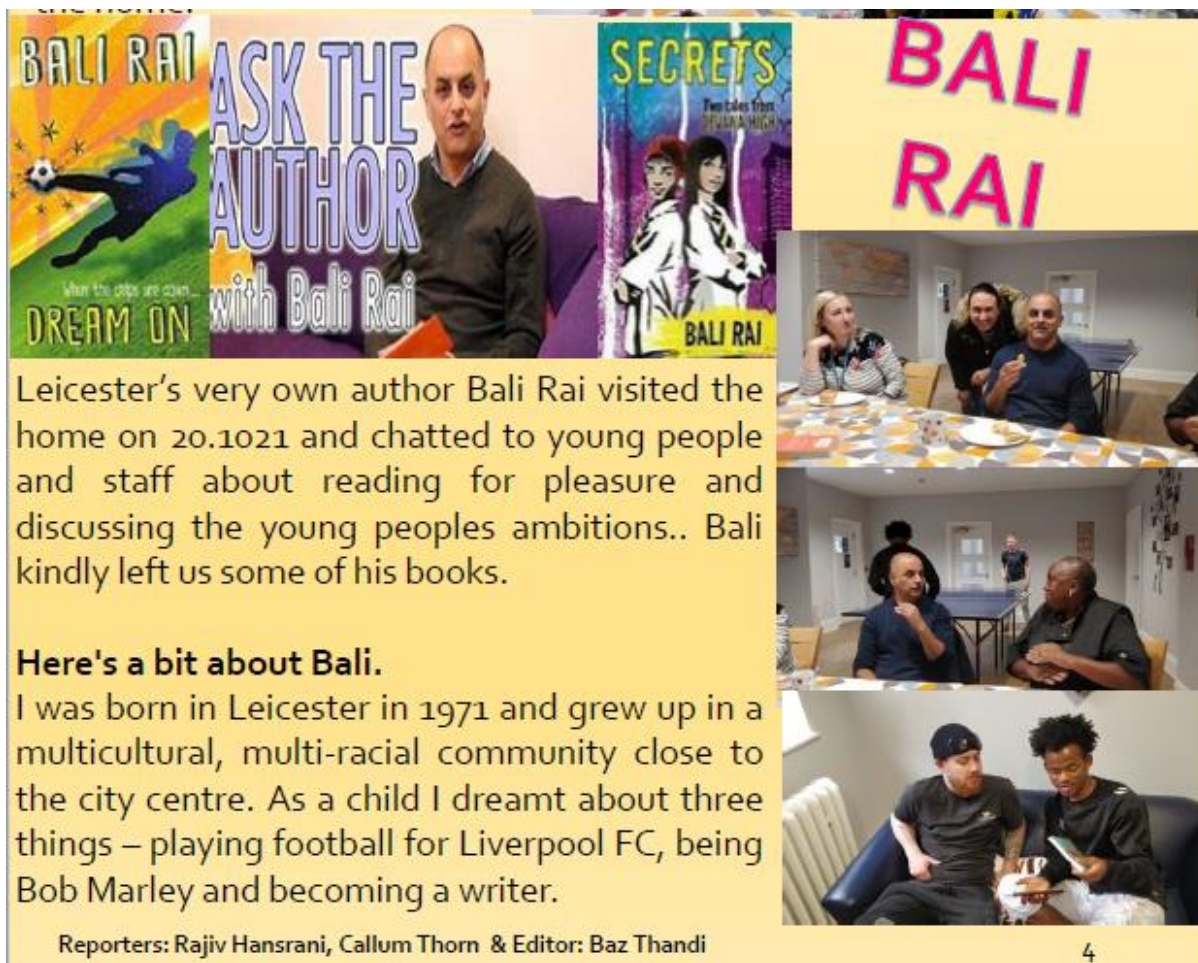*Thanks*
Loretta "

Bali Rai Workshop

In October 2021 local author Bali Rai visited 2 of the residential homes to deliver a workshop based around raising the profile of reading for pleasure. He worked with 3 young people and thus, was able to provide a individual bespoke service for them.

One of the Young People shared a love for Liverpool FC with him and as a result had a copy of the Jamie Carragher autobiography hand delivered to him by Bali. I am told he has really enjoyed reading it ☺ I also ordered another football book for both homes to have a copy of which Bali recommended to them-about football.

Another Young person had read one of Bali's text 'Game on' and so enjoyed chatting with him about the story etc This was particularly impressive given that the young person had limited English!

Bali left signed copies of his books with the homes and I am told they have enjoyed looking at them since the workshop.

Leicester's very own author Bali Rai visited the home on 20.10.21 and chatted to young people and staff about reading for pleasure and discussing the young peoples ambitions.. Bali kindly left us some of his books.

Here's a bit about Bali.

I was born in Leicester in 1971 and grew up in a multicultural, multi-racial community close to the city centre. As a child I dreamt about three things – playing football for Liverpool FC, being Bob Marley and becoming a writer.

Reporters: Rajiv Hansrani, Callum Thorn & Editor: Baz Thandi

World Book Day 202

- In March 2022, VST held a World Book Day competition. Entrants had to design a bedroom for a character from their favourite story.
- We received 7 entrants and the standard was high ☺
- The winning entry was a child from Whitehall Primary School, who had really taken the time and effort to create a 3d model and had written the following description

"I have chosen to design a bedroom for Belle from Beauty and the Beast! I really enjoyed reading this book because I liked the lesson from the story. The prince gets a second chance and this made me feel hopeful. That there is room for change and good things can happen if you try your best and believe in yourself

My character has a bed that is comfortable as my character likes to read a lot and she can do this in bed. She also enjoys hanging up photos and she has a big window in her room as she likes to gaze out at the sunrise or sunsets.
She also has a forever rose in a vase because it reminds her of the prince. I hope you like my design."

All of our CLA were sent a £10 Book Token for World Book Day to enable them to choose a book of their own to read and enjoy.

Bullfrog Arts

This year, Bullfrog Arts have worked with:-

- Over 100 young people
- 4 young instrumentalists
- 10 young people on the Philharmonia project
- 4 schools on the Singing Project
- 1 Special School for the Taiko Residential
- 10 young leaders
- 3 settings to develop the Taiko Tots programme

The Virtual School commissions work by Bullfrog Arts, who have been engaging the most vulnerable children and young people of Leicester City in high quality arts activities this year. Using singing and music, the work focuses on improving emotional health, well-being and self-efficacy and is unique to Leicester. All the work is carefully tailored to meet the needs of the individual and support the creative, expressive and musical ability of those they work with. Bullfrog Arts staff are skilled musicians, teachers, social workers and creative practitioners who are specialists in working with Looked After Children and supporting learners who have experienced trauma and loss in their lives. The Bullfrog approach has been proven to help children and young people regulate stress, improve self-confidence, build resilience and nurture a positive sense of self-image and worth.

Taiko drumming is a Japanese art-form that is very engaging, quick to learn and can be especially beneficial to students who have difficulty regulating their emotions or who display challenging behaviour. It is a spectacular and very accessible medium with a rich cultural legacy that has the additional benefits of engendering confidence, team-work skills, concentration and the ability to regulate emotions amongst students.

Bullfrog Arts have worked on several strands, as agreed with the Virtual School this year. These include: -

- Bullfrog Taiko, working with individuals to develop self-regulation and emotional resilience
- Bullfrog Taiko residential, with young people and staff from Tatlow Road Residential Home
- Bullfrog Performance Group
- Rock School project
- Singing Project, working with 5 schools this year to train the adults around the children to sing with them and embed singing into routines
- Fostering Voices, an opportunity for Foster Carers to meet weekly and sing together and share experiences
- Peripatetic music teaching, delivering one to one music lessons for young people to develop emotional resilience, delivered to five young people this year

- Bullfrog Orchestra, a partnership project between Bullfrog Arts and the Philharmonia, fusing Taiko drumming with orchestral music, delivered to 10 young people this year

Use of Pupil Premium Plus funding

In 2021/2022, the Pupil Premium Plus allocation was £2345 for each young person who had been in care for 12 months up to 31st August 2020.

The Virtual School continued with the practice of using up to £400 per pupil as a pooled resource to fund a range of core activities delivered by the Virtual School, including Aim Higher Reach Further, Bullfrog Arts Interventions, Educational Psychology support and one to one tuition.

Schools now request Pupil Premium Plus funding, linked to smart learning targets, in a child's Personal Education Plan. There is an expectation of this relating to issues identified in attainment data so that impact of the funding might be measurable. Sometimes, funding is for staffing or additional staffing and the impact of this might be the young person remaining in their education or avoidance of exclusion.

1:1 Tuition

Virtual School tutors worked with 57 different young people in 2021/22

In 2021/2022, young people from all key stages benefitted from personalised 1:1 tuition. This is agreed during PEP meetings or by referral from a learner's school, with tuition usually focussed on core subjects, to support the young person achieving their target grade or to make them feel more confident in English or Maths. Tuition usually takes place at home, outside the school day. Some may have just an hour a week of tuition to develop confidence and address underachievement in one area of the curriculum, whilst others may have more intensive tuition to address gaps in their learning usually associated with their education before coming into care.

The Virtual School employs 2.6 tutors who work during term time to deliver bespoke learning support to our young people. Delivery is now a mixture of virtual and face to face, according to need. Working in this way means that these tutors can teach more pupils than when they were travelling between schools. The Virtual School still has cause to use tutors from Agencies, because need outstrips supply all the time, but the following information shows the impact of the tuition provided.

Analysis of the impact of the Virtual School tutors is very clear in recognising the difference they make to our young people.

<u>Overall annual tutor impact</u>

- 47.2% made 1 level of progress
- 29.7% made 2 or more levels of progress
- 20.2% awaiting final progress data
- 2.9% made no progress

The impact our tutors have is very clear. Furthermore, we have begun a new stream of work this year by working in partnership with the Adult education Centre, who have acted as an examo centre for us so that we could enter young people for Functional Skills examinations. It may be that they have no access to qualifications because they have no school place or it may be that they need a confidence boost to support their attainment in other areas. Our pilot project this year saw 5 young people entered:

- 2 pupils took functional skills maths level 1. Unfortunately both failed but will be taking entry level 3 papers in early autumn
- 1 pupil took entry level 1 English and passed
- 1 pupil took entry level 3 maths and passed
- 1 pupil took entry level 1 maths and passed

Going forward, we plan to extend the scope of this project and would very much like to support more of our young people to achieve Functional Skills qualifications in the coming year as these are very rarely offered by schools and can be crucial to ensuring our learners have succeeded in a qualification to support their ongoing progress.

About the schools our pupils attend

Quality of provision attended

It is our aim for all our Looked After Children to attend an OFSTED registered school that is at least good. However, there are several factors that need to be considered when identifying a school, including proximity to the home address, friendship bonds and a school's capacity to support vulnerable learners. There may also be situations where a school judged by OFSTED to be less than good is the most appropriate place for the pupil to be educated and where a young person comes into care already placed at a school judged inadequate, it may be more damaging to move them to another school than to leave them where they are when that school place is the one element of stability in a child's life.

Our young people of statutory school age attend 201 different schools and establishments.
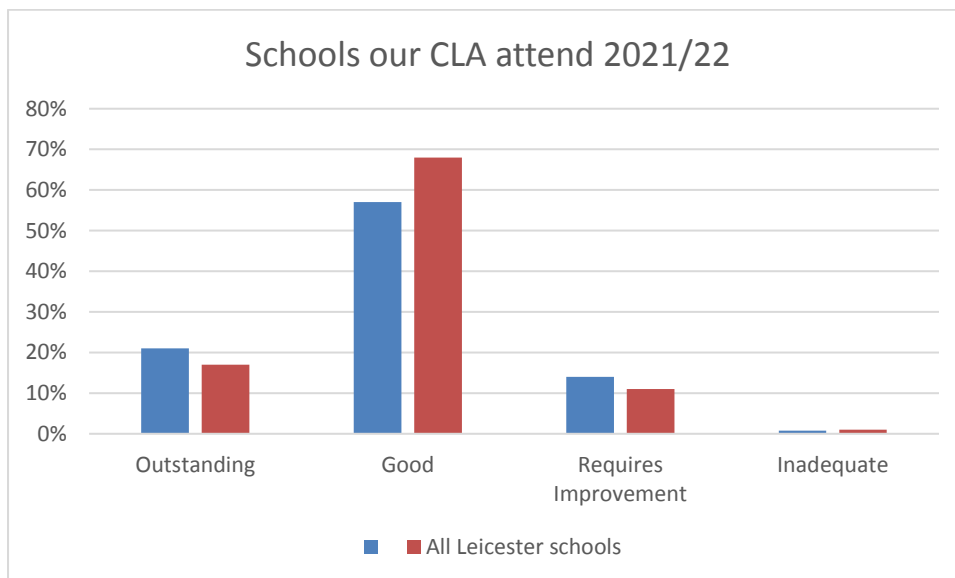
This shows that the schools attended by our CLA are broadly in line with the proportion of schools in these categories in Leicester City. The key difference is the proportion attending a school judged as 'good' by OFSTED although these are smaller disparities where CLA attend schools judged either 'outstanding' or 'requires improvement'.

Leicester City Council Virtual School

Leicester's Virtual School Team is managed by the Virtual School Head, Vivien Tetley. Leicester City's Virtual School is a member of the National Association of Virtual School Heads (NAVSH).

The Virtual Head meets termly with Virtual Heads from the East Midlands region. These meetings give the opportunity to remain abreast of national developments and to be briefed by Ofsted on key messages. They also provide opportunities to share good practice and reflect on both strengths and areas for development. This information is disseminated to the virtual school team, schools, carers and social workers as appropriate.

A team manager is responsible for the operational management of the team and we have a Senior Virtual School Officer who is responsible for our response with regards to young people who are previously looked after.

The rest of the team consists of five officers, one mentor, one project officer/mentor, one administration assistant (0.6) and an Information Officer (0.6) and 2.6 tutors. Virtual School officers and tutors work during term time only. VST officers are responsible for ensuring that each child has an up to date and effective Personal Education Plan, as well as providing advice, support and challenge to social workers, carers and schools in order to ensure that each child is making good progress at school. Each officer has a caseload of schools and is expected to develop a positive working relationship with each school in order to support both the school and the CLA children placed there. Each officer is responsible for tracking and monitoring the attendance, progress and attainment of children in the schools they oversee. The officer will also ensure where issues arise with a child's education these are resolved quickly and effectively. The work of the officers is overseen and supervised by the Team Manager.

APPENDIX A: Monthly Data return Information, 2020/2021

Monthly Key Indicators	Sep-21	Oct-21	Nov-21	Dec-21	Jan-22	Feb-22	Mar-22	Apr-22	May-22	Jun-22	Jul-22
Number of LAC of school age	391	395	405	399	400	399	401	397	409	409	407
No. of LAC with concerns regarding school place	79	73	83	77	113	84	83	88	104	92	85
% LAC with concerns regarding school place	20%	18%	20%	19%	28%	21%	18%	22%	25%	22%	21%
No. of LAC with Less than 85% Attendance	54	47	55	53	80	57	58	61	64	63	64
No. of LAC with Less than 85% Attendance/CITY schools	25	22	27	25	30	26	24	37	40	36	27
No. of LAC with Less than 85% Attendance/OOC Schools	29	25	32	28	50	31	34	24	24	27	37
No. of LAC with Less than 90% Attendance	72	58	73	67	103	75	73	75	89	78	78
No. of LAC with Less than 90% Attendance/CITY Schools	33	27	34	30	38	35	28	40	56	44	37
No. of LAC with Less than 90% Attendance/OOC Schools	39	31	39	37	65	40	45	35	33	34	41
No. of LAC with Less than 95% Attendance	93	99	105	103	150	120	106	104	118	105	88
No. of LAC with Less than 95% Attendance/CITY Schools	46	49	50	42	65	49	45	54	74	57	36
No. of LAC with Less than 95% Attendance/OOC Schools	47	50	55	61	85	71	61	60	44	48	52
No. of LAC with Fixed-term Exclusion/Monthly	6	2	11	5	16	9	19	5	7	7	1
No. of LAC with Fixed-term Exclusion/Cumulative	6	8	29	34	50	59	78	83	90	97	98
No. of LAC with less than 25 hours education per week	7	15	10	10	10	9	10	13	15	14	7
% of LAC reported by school via PEP on trajectory to meet target set by school	67%	68%	68%	67%	66%	67%	67%	67%	67%	67%	66%
% school age Children in Care with current Personal Education Plan (Statutory school age only) (VH info)	98%	98%	98%	99%	99%	98%	99%	99%	99%	98%	96%
% of PEPS QA'd as 'on target'	57%	63%	66%	60%	73%	78%	64%	74.00%	74%	76%	69%
% of PEPS QA'd as good or outstanding	12%	28%	26%	19%	14%	17%	18%	16.00%	15%	11%	14%
No. of PEPs quality assured by Virtual Head	107	185	120	61	86	98	150	276	182	117	247

42

Scrutiny Committee Report

SEND pupil place planning model 2022

For review by: Scrutiny Committee

Date of meeting: 17th October 2022

Lead director: Martin Samuels

Presenting Officer: Sophie Maltby

City Mayor

Useful information

■ Ward(s) affected: All

■ Report author: Sophie Maltby, Principal Education Officer

■ Author contact details: Sophie Maltby 0116 454 4650
sophie.maltby@leicester.gov.uk

■ Report version number: 1.0

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1. Summary

1.1 This paper details the SEND pupil place planning model, which has been refreshed for 2022.

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2. Recommendations

2.1 This report is for information only.

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3. Background

3.1 On 16.12.21 the initial SEND pupil place model was shared with the Executive based upon data from May 2021. It was agreed that this data would be annually refreshed in line with pupil planning data for mainstream schools. Appendix 1 is the Scrutiny Committee presentation which summarises the refreshed data for 2022 and its outcomes. Appendix 2 is a more detailed presentation providing additional background information and data, originally drafted for the Education Lead Member.

3.2 The agreed requests for Education and Health Care Plans (EHCPs) have continued to increase for the last 6 years from 234 in 2015/16 to 489 in the first 11months of 2021/22. The expected 2021/22 final figure is 530.

3.3 The refreshed model uses an amended methodology to incorporate all those cases where a Statutory Assessment has been agreed by the Special Education Service, rather than just those finalised. Providing a more accurate picture of the demand for EHCPs and thus SEND placements.

3.4 The model also takes account of population measures such as the birth rate and housing developments.

3.5 The revised methodology and outcomes of the model refresh are detailed in Appendix 1 (SEND place planning model 2022).

3.6 The refreshed data indicates a significant increase in demand for SEND placements in all educational settings (mainstream, Designated Specialist Provisions (DSP) and Special Schools).

3.7 To address the growing demand for DSP placements an Executive Decision to undertake a DSP Phase 2 programme was implemented on 16.2.22 and will provide 150 additional DSP placements by 2025.

3.8 Unlike the 2021 data, as a result of an amended methodology and a sustained increase in requests for EHCPs, the refreshed model indicates that demand for special school places will exceed supply over the next 10 years.

3.9 An Options Paper is currently being developed for the Executive to suggest possible ways to meet this demand.

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4. Details of Scrutiny

Scrutiny Committee members are asked to note the contents of this report, which is for information only.

5. Financial, legal and other implications

5.1 Financial implications

5.1.1 The increase in the total number of EHCPs from this model would mean total gross high needs block expenditure increasing from £74m in 2022/23 to £100m by 2031/32 based on current unit costs, an increase of £25m or 35%.

5.1.2 The current high needs block funding in 2022/23 is not sufficient – the forecast this year is for an in-year deficit of £5.5m which will increase our cumulative DSG deficit to £9.3m.

5.1.3 All local authorities with deficit DSG reserve balances must prepare a management recovery plan for the DfE which outlines both historic high needs block expenditure and future demand and cost projections together with actions taken or proposed to reduce costs.

5.1.4 The DfE have increased high needs block funding significantly in recent years but not sufficiently to accommodate the continued growth in demand or the surge in requests for EHCPs in 2021, which was seen nationally. Only 9% of the formula for high needs block funding is allocated on the basis of the number of pupils with EHCPs and then only those in special schools. The balance of funding is based on historic expenditure and other proxy indicators for SEN such as income deprivation, low attainment and levels of disability living allowance claims. In other words, the vast majority of the funding is not linked directly to demand as measured by the number of EHCPs and the DfE have been quite explicit about this as they believe it would create perverse incentives to do otherwise. Their focus is on reducing the level of demand for plans, ensuring that there is sufficient in-house provision, more inclusion within the mainstream and adequate cost sharing with the ICB.

5.1.5 The modelling in this report will form a solid basis on which to prepare the future cost projections for discussions with the DfE.

Martin Judson, Head of Finance

5.2 Legal implications

There are no legal Implications arising from this report.
Julia Slipper, Principal Lawyer

5.3 Climate Change and Carbon Reduction implications

There are no significant climate emergency implications associated with this report.
Aidan Davis, Sustainability Officer, Ext 37 2284

5.4 Equalities Implications

Schools are covered under Part 6 of the Equality Act 2010. Schools must not discriminate against a child by not offering a place or by only offering a place under specific terms and conditions. They must ensure that the child has full access to education, facilities and services. They must not subject 'the pupil to any (other) detriment' which means they must not subject the child to any form of disadvantage.

Schools and education authorities have a duty to provide reasonable adjustments for disabled pupils.

Under the Equality Act 2010 (including the local authority and schools), have a Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) which means that, in carrying out their functions, they have a statutory duty to pay due regard to the need to eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Act, to advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who don't and to foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who don't.

Protected Characteristics under the Equality Act 2010 are age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation.
Equality covers all aspects of school life enjoyed by children – teaching and learning, special educational needs and disabilities can affect a child or young person's ability to learn.
The report provides information on a revised methodology that provides a more accurate picture of the demand for EHCPs and thus SEND placements and takes account of population measures such as the birth rate and housing developments. Where options that aim to meet projected demand for children and young people with SEND need, the protected characteristic of disability is highly relevant.

Equalities Officer, Surinder Singh, Ext 37 4148

5.5 Other Implications (You will need to have considered other implications in preparing this report. Please indicate which ones apply?)

6. **Background information and other papers:**

7. **Summary of appendices:**

Appendix 1: Scrutiny Committee presentation

Appendix 2: SEND place planning model 2022 (extended LMB version)

8. **Is this a private report (If so, please indicated the reasons and state why it is not in the public interest to be dealt with publicly)?**

   No

9. **Is this a "key decision"?**

   No

10. **If a key decision, please explain reason**

   In determining whether it is a key decision you will need consider if it is likely:

   - to result in the Council incurring expenditure which is, or the making of savings which are, significant having regard to the Council's budget for the service or function to which the decision relates.

- to be significant in terms of its effects on communities living or working *in two or more wards in the City.*

Expenditure or savings will be regarded as significant if:

(a) In the case of additional recurrent revenue expenditure, it is not included in the approved revenue budget, and would cost in excess of £0.5m p.a.;

(b) In the case of reductions in recurrent revenue expenditure, the provision is not included in the approved revenue budget, and savings of over £0.5m p.a. would be achieved;

(c) In the case of one off or capital expenditure, spending of over £1m is to be committed on a scheme that has not been specifically authorised by Council.

In deciding whether a decision is significant you need to take into account:

- Whether the decision may incur a significant social, economic or environmental risk.
- The likely extent of the impact of the decision both within and outside of the City.
- The extent to which the decision is likely to result in substantial public interest
- The existence of significant communities of interest that cannot be defined spatially.

2022 SEND pupil place planning model

17th October 2022 Scrutiny Committee

Introduction

- SEND forecasts were initially produced in May 2021 and shared with the Executive in December 2021

- These provided far greater detail than that available to most other LAs in our region

- Forecasts were also shared with the DfE and were positively received

- An annual refresh is recommended to reflect latest data and assumptions

- Some changes to methodology for 2022 have been made based on learning from 2021 and the availability of somewhat improved data

- DfE are intending to make SEND forecasting part of the statutory pupil place planning returns from 2023 and will prescribe a methodology, which may differ from this model

Accuracy of 2021 forecasts

- DfE confirm the accuracy of previous forecasts can be measured as:

$$\left(\frac{\text{Forecast pupil number - actual pupil number}}{\text{Actual pupil number}} \right)$$

Forecast total SEND places required	Actual SEND places required	Error rate	Accuracy rate
2373	2378	-0.21%	99.79%

51

New Education Health & Care Plan (EHCP) volumes

New EHCP volumes

	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22
New requests	358	457	466	480	558	614	686
Assessments started	234	318	328	342	401	475	509
Plans completed	215	257	331	258	381	284	540

Academic year
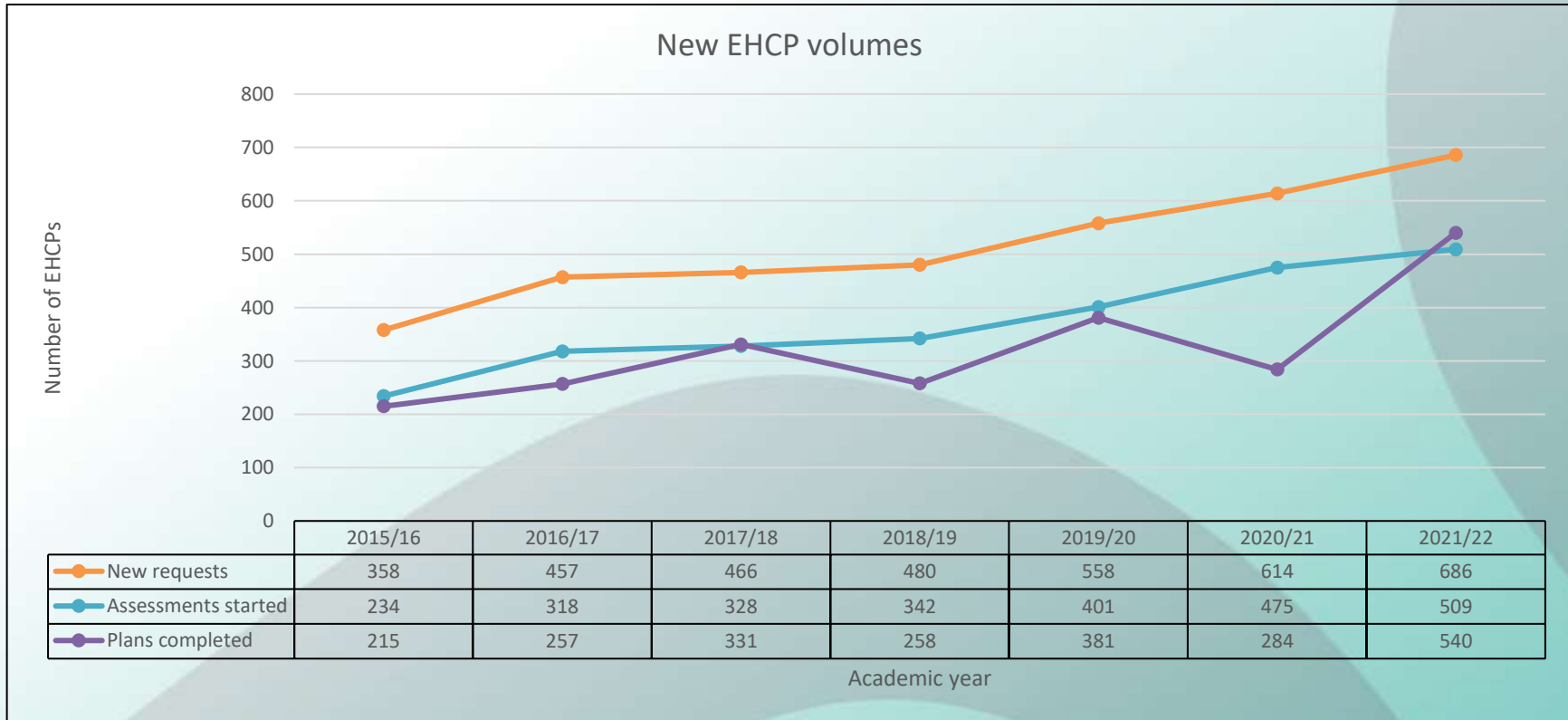
Assessments started but not yet completed

Open EHCP assessments at February each year

	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22
Open assessments	105	167	186	234	318	279	409

Count of open assessments at February each academic year
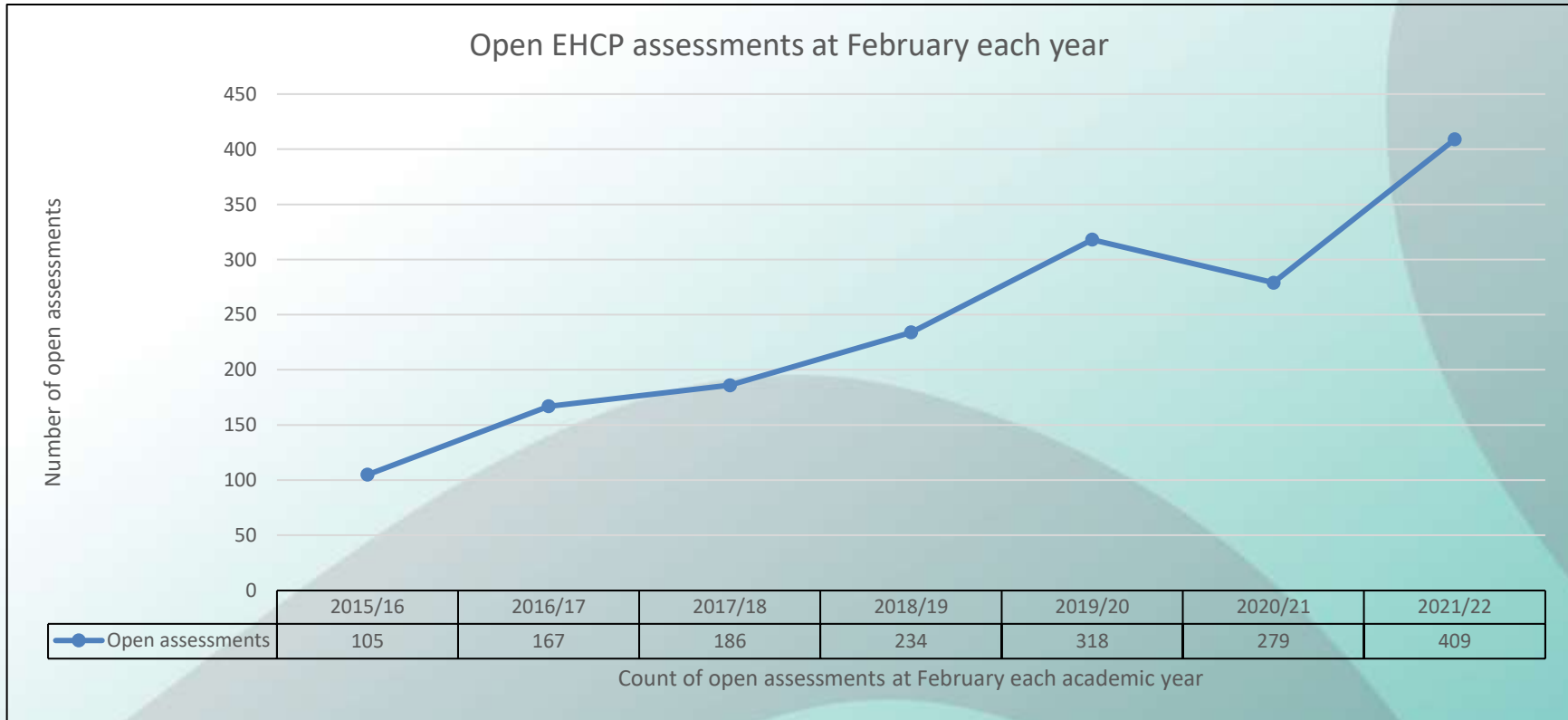
Proportion of mainstream pupils with a new statutory assessment

New EHCPs assessment started as percentage of mainstream pupils

	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018/19	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23
% of pupils with a new assessment	0.47%	0.62%	0.63%	0.64%	0.74%	0.87%	0.96%	1.08%

Academic Year
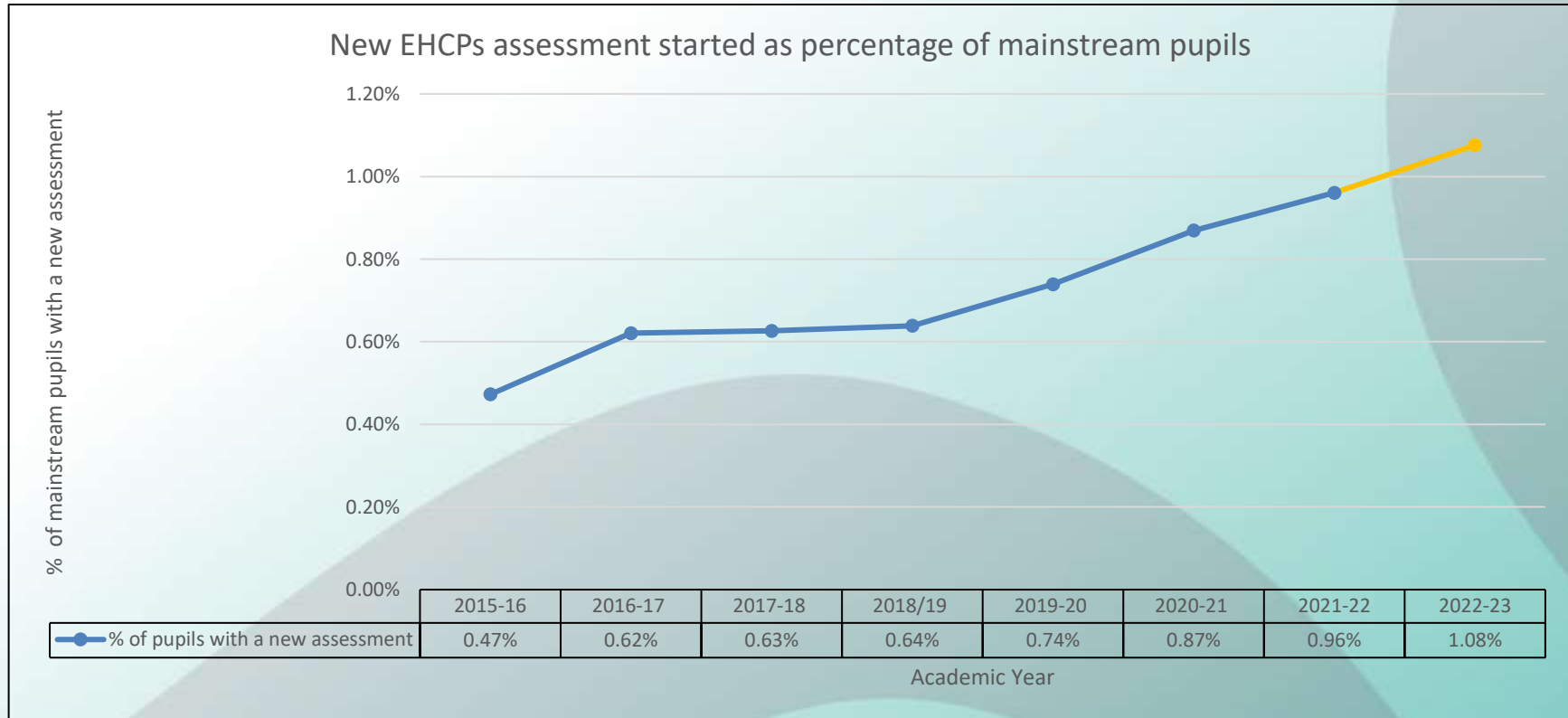
Mainstream pupil population forecasts

Mainstream school population

	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25	2025-26	2026-27	2027-28	2028-29	2029-30	2030-31	2031-32
Mainstream school population	51235	52365	53559	54258	54648	55176	55277	55001	54414	53420	52528	51441	50401	49501	48682	47838

Number of pupils

Academic Year
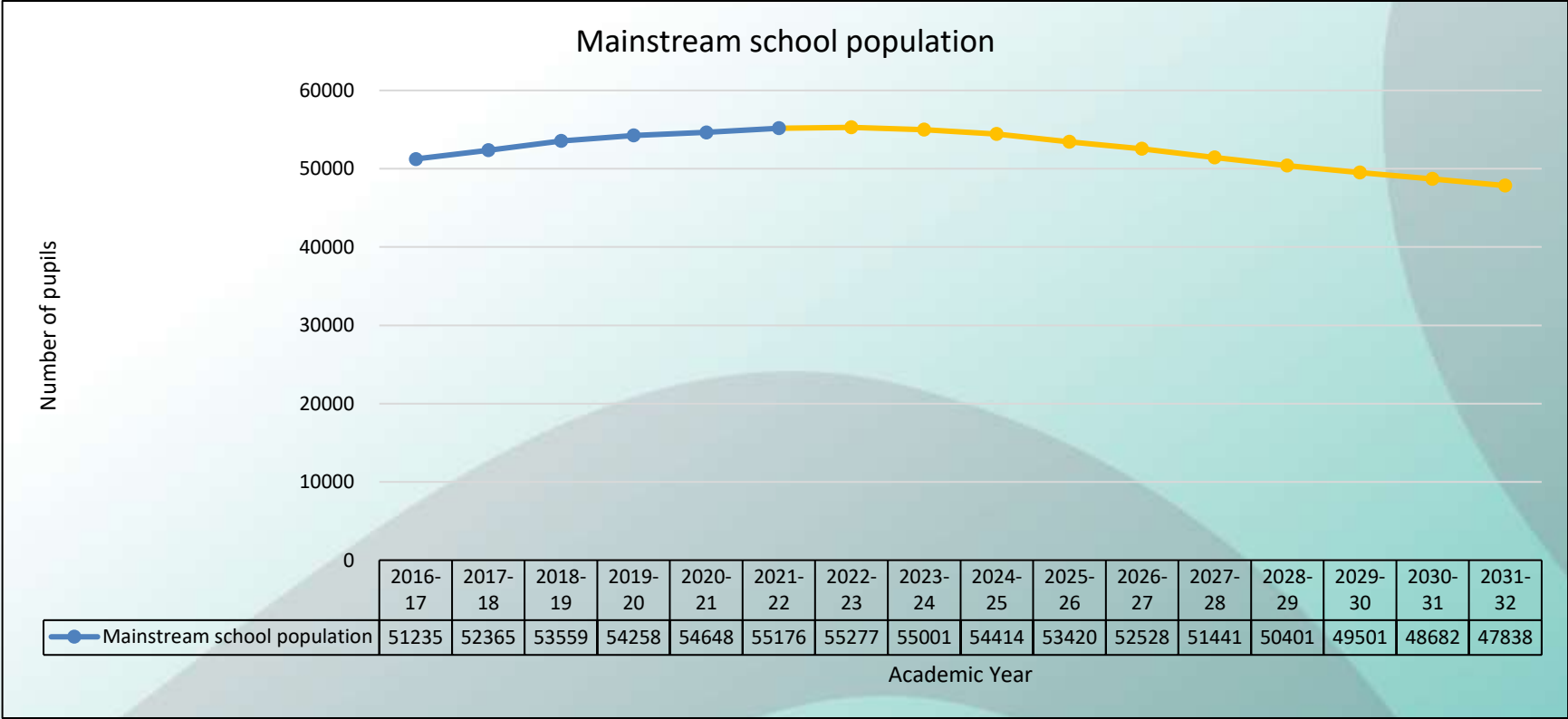
Changes to methodology for 2022

- Future EHCP volumes based on number of new assessments started, rather than plans completed

- Model assumes 1.0028% of mainstream population will have a new assessment from 2023/24 until 2031/32

- This ensures demographic factors such as birth rates, migration patterns and new housing developments are fully taken into account

Agreed new EHCP volumes used in model

New assessments started

	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28	2028/29	2029/30	2030/31	2031/32
New assessments started	234	318	328	342	401	475	509	595	554	552	546	536	527	516	505	496	488

Academic Year

New EHCPs agreed
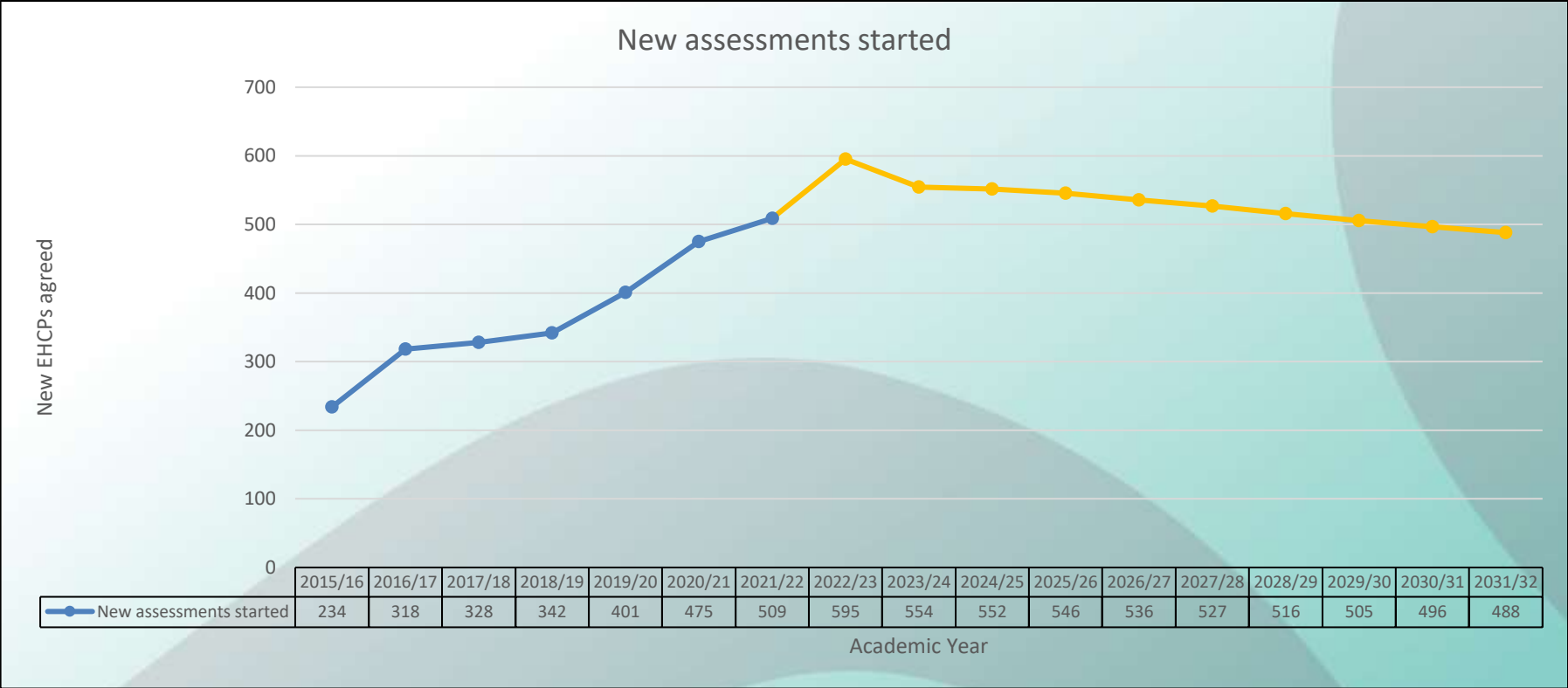
Distribution of provision types

- Based on an analysis of trends over the last 3 academic years, the assumed distribution of new placements is:

Provision type	% of new EHCP placements
Special School	34.4%
Designated Specialist Provision (DSP)	17.5%
Mainstream School	48.1%

Places required from new assessments

Places required annually from new EHCP assessments

	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25	2025-26	2026-27	2027-28	2028-29	2029-30	2030-31	2031-32
All provision types	595	554	552	546	536	527	516	505	496	488
Special school places	205	191	190	188	184	181	177	174	171	168
DSP places	104	97	97	95	94	92	90	88	87	85
Mainstream places	286	267	265	262	258	253	248	243	239	235

Academic Year

Places required

Special school demand & capacity

Special school demand & capacity

	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28	2028/29	2029/30	2030/31	2031/32
Total special school demand	1395	1426	1437	1447	1466	1464	1467	1459	1440	1432	1411
Capacity	1169	1319	1319	1319	1319	1319	1319	1319	1319	1319	1319

Academic Year

DSP demand & capacity

DSP demand and capacity

	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28	2028/29	2029/30	2030/31	2031/32
Overall demand	207	303	388	467	546	603	637	667	688	710	710
Confirmed capacity	207	217	217	217	217	217	217	217	217	217	217
Planned capacity	207	217	267	317	367	367	367	367	367	367	367

Number of places

Academic Year

Mainstream pupils with EHCP

Demand for mainstream pupils with EHCP

	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28	2028/29	2029/30	2030/31	2031/32
Total mainstream SEND demand	776	991	1183	1359	1522	1661	1769	1837	1888	1914	1925

Number of places

Academic Year

Summary

- Initial short-term overall forecasts have been accurate, giving some confidence in the model
- Switching to new assessments rather than plans completed significantly impacts on overall level of demand
- Clear upward trend in demand for new EHCPs
- Forecasted shortfall for both special school and DSP capacity using this model
- Steps have already been taken to significantly increase capacity, but further options to manage the increased demand need to be explored

Actions planned to manage demand

- Aiming to reduce demand through our inclusion agenda and work with the Best Endeavours and Reasonable Adjustments framework (BERA)

- Executive Decision (February 2022) for DSP Phase 2 programme to create an additional 150 DSP places by 2025

- Options to manage special school demand are being explored and a paper will be brought to the executive by the end of the year

Refreshed SEND forecasts

July 2022 Lead Member Briefing

Introduction

- SEND forecasts were initially produced in May 2021

- An annual refresh of forecasts is recommended to reflect latest data and assumptions

- Some changes to methodology based on learning from 2021 and the availability of somewhat improved data

- Key variable factors remain the number of new EHCPs and the distribution of RAP outcomes

- DfE are intending to make SEND forecasting part of the statutory pupil place planning returns from 2023 and will prescribe methodology

Contents

Assessing the accuracy of 2021 forecasts

Changes to methodology for 2022

EHCP volumes

RAP outcome distributions

2022 forecasts

Accuracy of 2021 forecasts

- DfE confirm the accuracy of previous forecasts can be measured as:

$$\left(\frac{\text{Forecast pupil number - actual pupil number}}{\text{Actual pupil number}}\right)$$

- July 2021 forecast was for 2373 SEND pupils needing a special school, DSP or mainstream setting

- Actual count at March 2022 was 2378 pupils, giving an error rate of -0.21%

- So the 2021 forecast for the overall total was 99.79% accurate

- March 2022 pupil count was DSP 207 (forecast 205), Mainstream 776 (forecast 835), Special 1395 (forecast 1333)

88

Changes to forecasting methodology for 2022

- Future EHCP forecasts based on number of new plans *agreed*, rather than actual *completions*

- A trend calculation has been used to extrapolate the recent surge in newly agreed EHCP requests until the end of 2022/23

- A 3-year weighted average of agreed EHCPs based on demographic factors (i.e. linked to the mainstream pupil forecasts) has been applied from 2023/24 onwards

- Primary needs for existing SEND pupils have been taken from the SEN2 return and the ONE system, rather than the school census
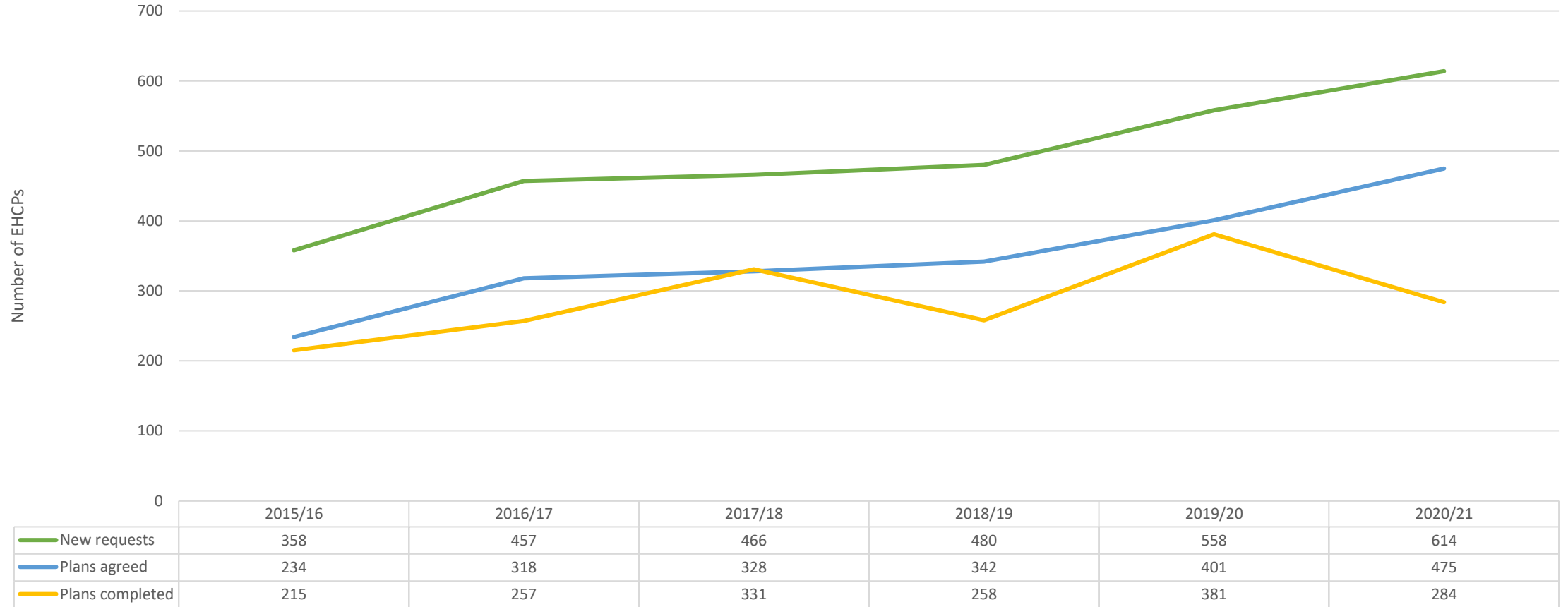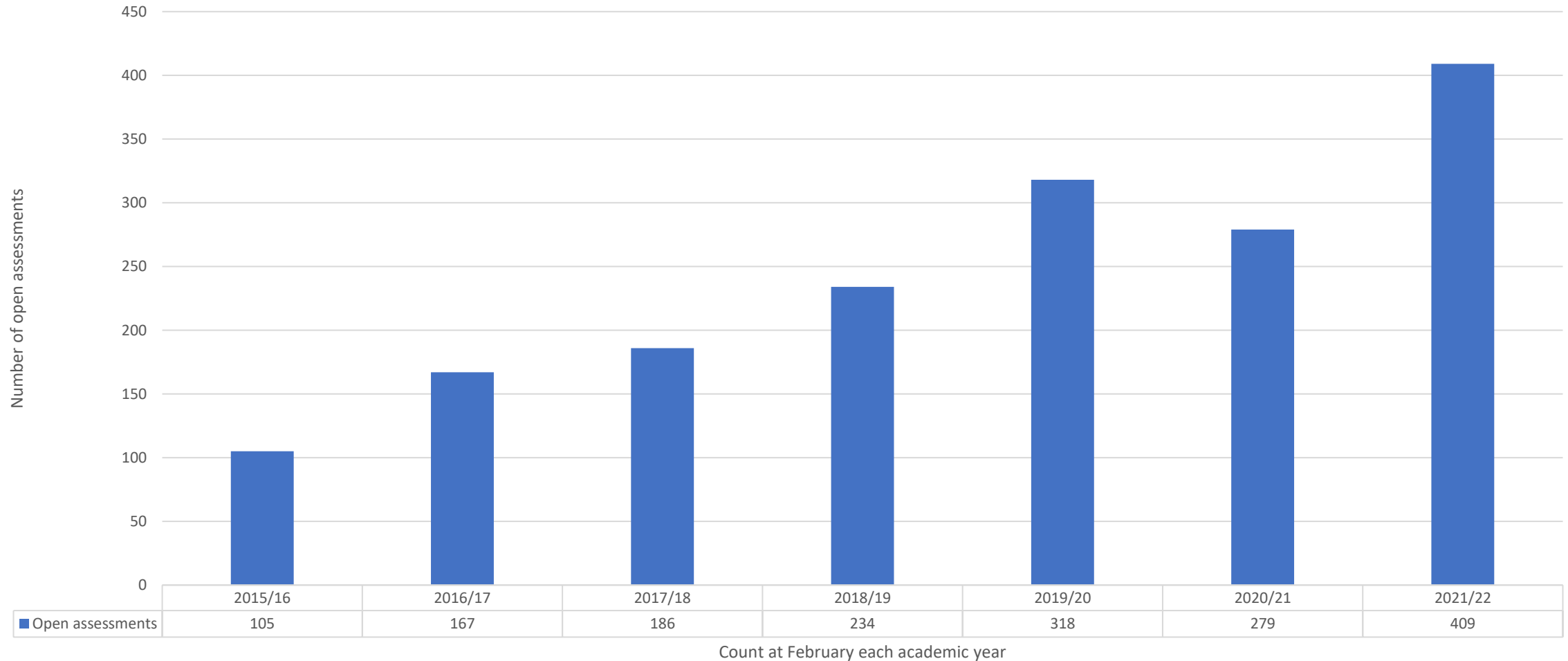
69

EHCP volumes

New EHCP volumes

Assessments agreed but not yet completed

72

Open EHCP assessments at February each year

Open assessments	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22
	105	167	186	234	318	279	409

Count at February each academic year

Number of open assessments

Agreed plans rather than *completed*

- Clear upward trend in number of new requests received and agreed

- Completed plans do not necessarily follow the same pattern due to resource constraints

- As a result, plans agreed but not started have risen each year

- Using *agreed* plans instead of *completed* clarifies the true level of underlying demand
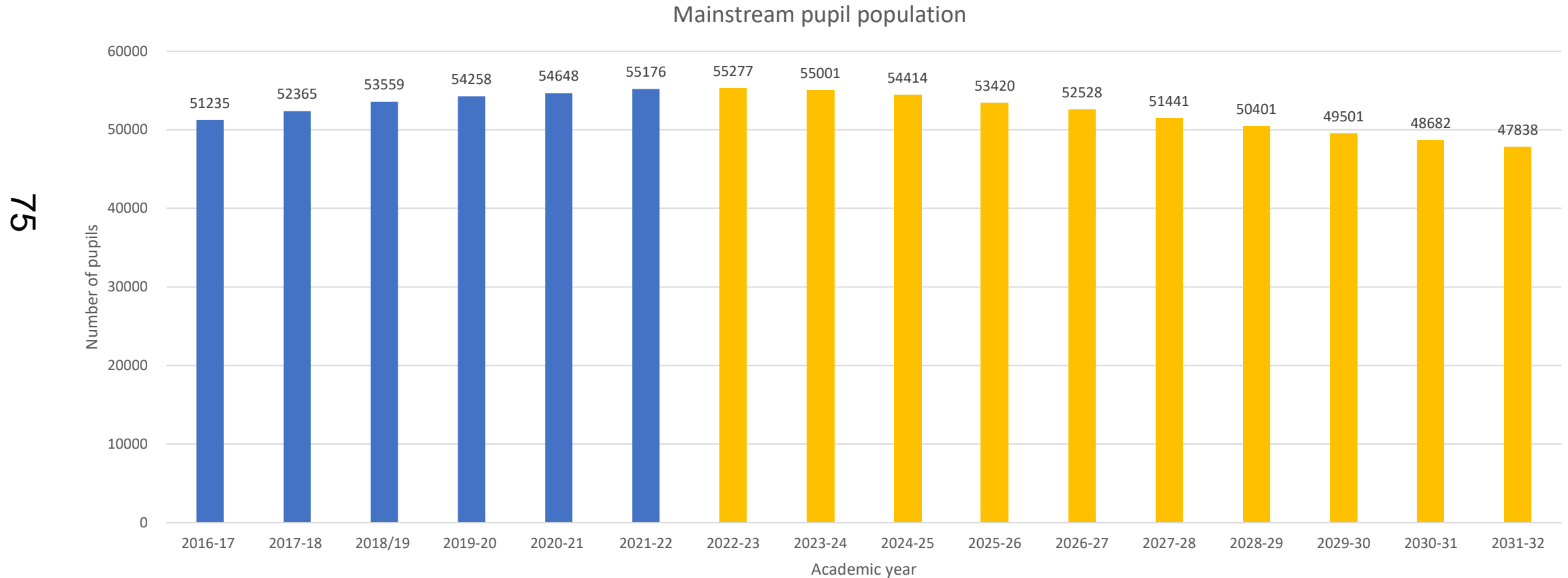
73

Rising proportion of mainstream population receiving a new EHCP

74

Agreed new EHCPs as percentage of mainstream population
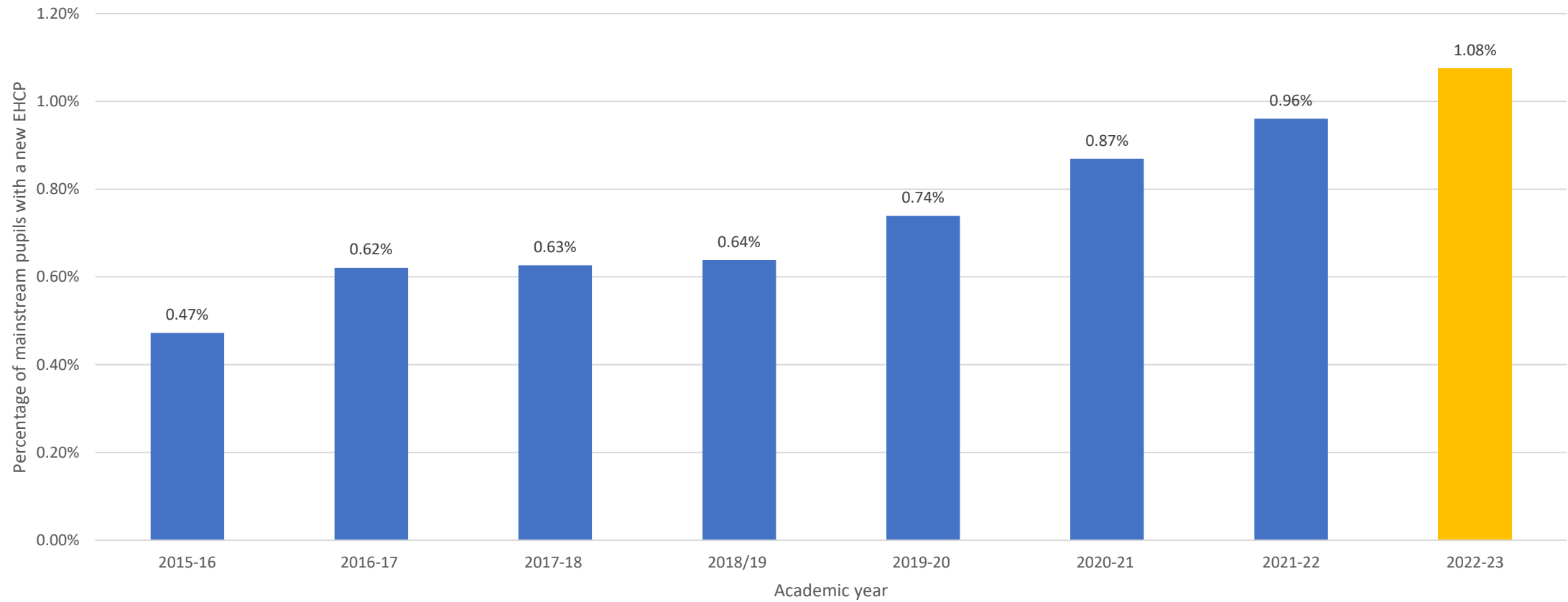
Mainstream pupil population is forecast to fall from 2022/23 onwards due to falling birth rate
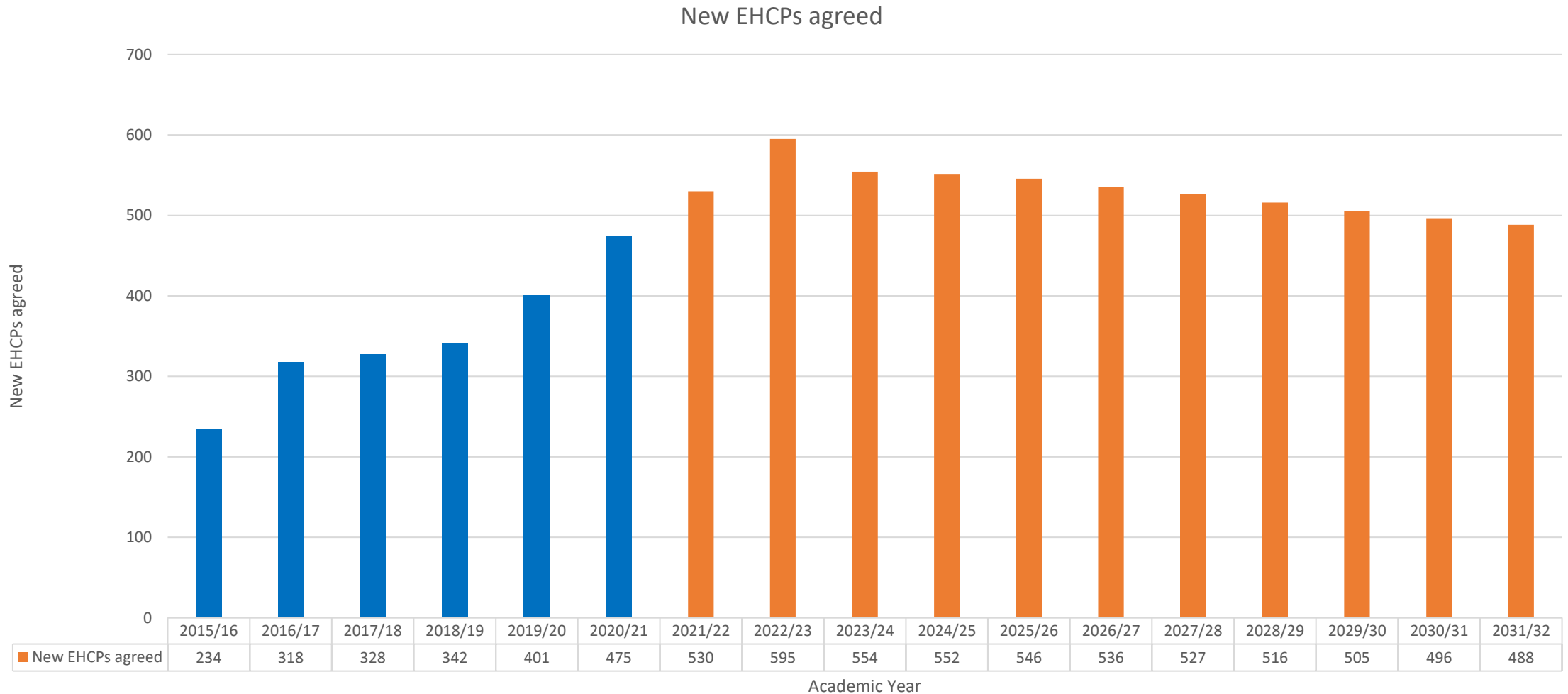
75

11

EHCP forecasting methodology

- Clear upward trend in new EHCPs agreed as percentage of mainstream population

- A 3-year weighted average of the 2020/21 – 2022/23 period has been used for all forecasts from 2023/24 onwards

- So we are forecasting using a flat rate of 1.00280% from 2023/24 until 2031/32

- This ensures demographic factors such as birth rates, migration patterns and new housing developments are fully taken into account

76

Agreed new EHCP volumes used in forecasts

New EHCPs agreed

	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28	2028/29	2029/30	2030/31	2031/32
New EHCPs agreed	234	318	328	342	401	475	530	595	554	552	546	536	527	516	505	496	488

Academic Year

RAP outcomes

Changing profile of RAP distribution

2019 actuals	
Provision type	**% of RAP outcomes**
Mainstream	49.40%
Special	43.20%
DSP	7.40%

2021 actuals	
Provision type	**% of RAP outcomes**
Mainstream	45.20%
Special	31.00%
DSP	23.80%

Changes to RAP assumptions in forecasts

2021 forecasts used these:	
Provision type	**% of RAP outcomes**
Mainstream	51.40%
Special	36.10%
DSP	12.50%

2022 forecasts changed to these:	
Provision type	**% of RAP outcomes**
Mainstream	48.10%
Special	34.40%
DSP	17.50%

Places required from agreed EHCPs
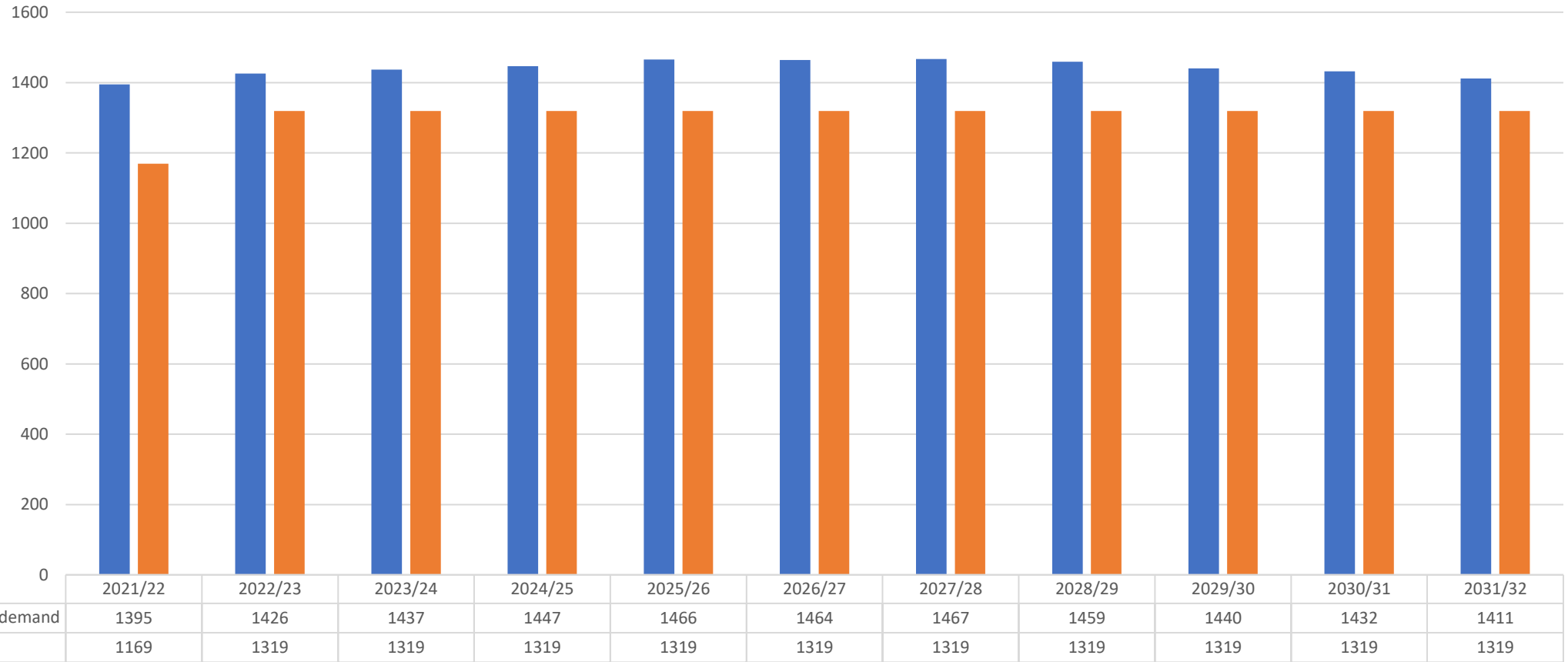
Places required annually from new EHCPs

	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25	2025-26	2026-27	2027-28	2028-29	2029-30	2030-31	2031-32
All provision types	595	554	552	546	536	527	516	505	496	488
Special school places	205	191	190	188	184	181	177	174	171	168
DSP places	104	97	97	95	94	92	90	88	87	85
Mainstream places	286	267	265	262	258	253	248	243	239	235

81

Special school forecasts

Special school forecasts

83

Forecasts for Total special school demand v supply

	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28	2028/29	2029/30	2030/31	2031/32
Total special school demand	1395	1426	1437	1447	1466	1464	1467	1459	1440	1432	1411
Capacity	1169	1319	1319	1319	1319	1319	1319	1319	1319	1319	1319

■ Total special school demand ■ Capacity

19

Distribution of new EHCP allocations to special schools 2019-2021

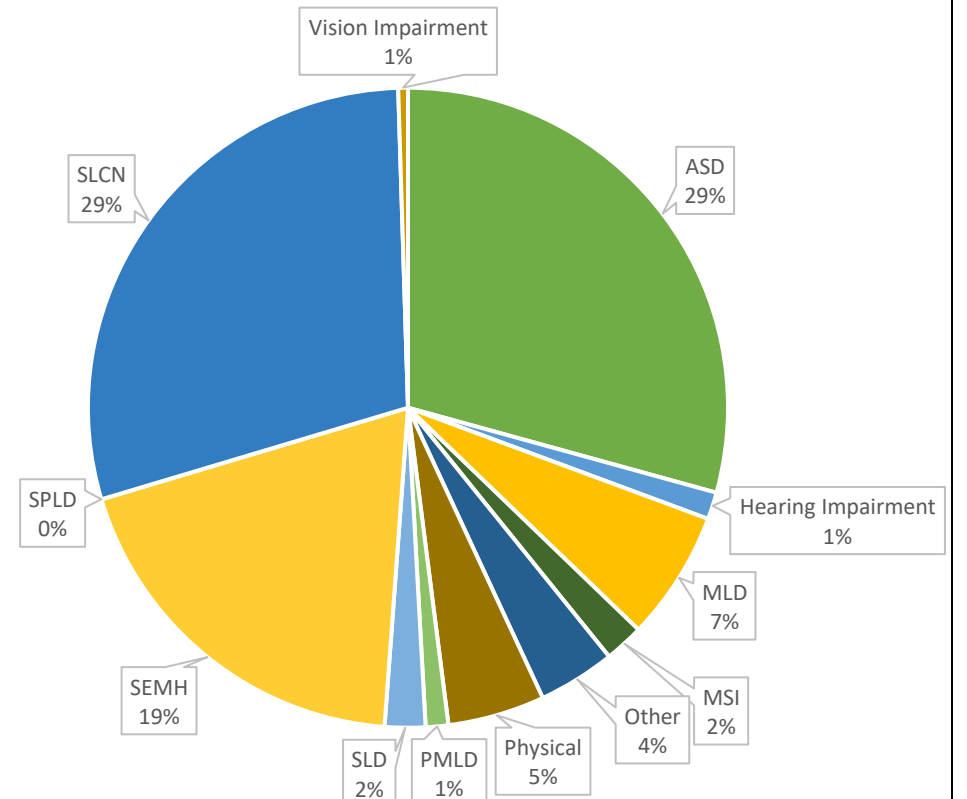Primary needs of pupils recently allocated a special school (2019-2021)

- SLD 2%
- SLCN 24%
- ASD 25%
- Hearing Impairment 1%
- MLD 7%
- MSI 1%
- Other 4%
- Physical 4%
- PMLD 1%
- SEMH 31%

84
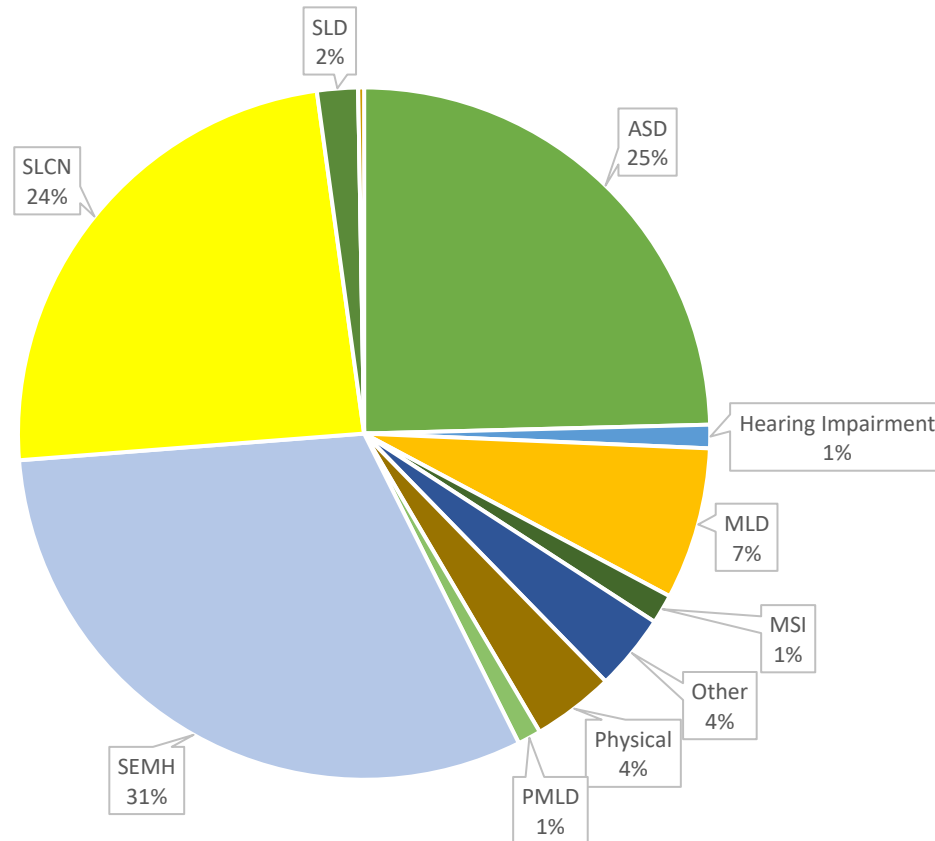
Primary needs of special school pupils

Distribution of special school primary needs 2021-22
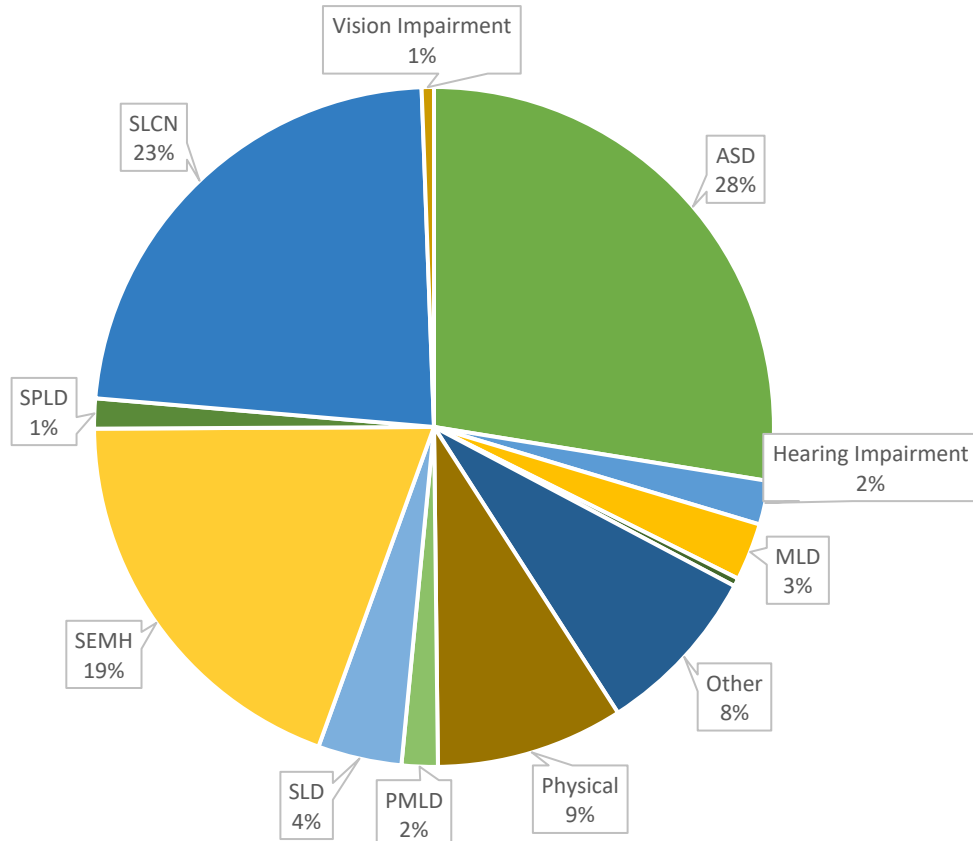
Vision Impairment 1%
SLCN 23%
ASD 28%
SPLD 1%
Hearing Impairment 2%
MLD 3%
SEMH 19%
Other 8%
SLD 4%
PMLD 2%
Physical 9%

Forecasted distribution of special school primary needs 2031-32

Vision Impairment 1%
SLCN 29%
ASD 29%
SPLD 0%
Hearing Impairment 1%
MLD 7%
SEMH 19%
MSI 2%
Other 4%
SLD 2%
PMLD 1%
Physical 5%

Special school primary need forecasts

Forecasted special school demand by primary need

Primary need	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25	2025-26	2026-27	2027-28	2028-29	2029-30	2030-31	2031-32
Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD)	384	393	397	405	418	420	427	428	424	422	416
Hearing Impairment (HI)	29	26	23	23	21	20	20	19	19	19	19
Moderate Learning Difficulty (MLD)	38	50	59	67	74	79	84	86	89	91	92
Multi-Sensory Impairment (MSI)	5	8	11	13	16	19	21	23	25	27	28
Other Difficulty/Disability (OTH)	114	101	86	76	69	65	61	59	57	56	55
Physical Disability (PD)	124	122	116	108	104	100	94	86	79	73	70
Profound & Multiple Learning Difficulty (PMLD)	24	24	22	22	22	21	21	20	19	18	16
Severe Learning Difficulty (SLD)	56	51	44	42	41	38	38	35	32	31	29
Social, Emotional & Mental Health (SEMH)	271	292	304	308	307	297	290	286	278	271	264
Specific Learning Difficulty (SPLD)	20	17	13	11	7	6	4	2	1	0	0
Speech, Language and Communication Needs (SLCN)	322	336	358	368	383	393	402	410	412	418	414
Visual Impairment (VI)	8	5	5	5	5	6	6	6	6	7	7
Totals	**1395**	**1426**	**1437**	**1447**	**1466**	**1464**	**1467**	**1459**	**1441**	**1432**	**1411**

2022-23 Special school primary need NCY forecasts

Primary need	NCY 0	NCY 1	NCY 2	NCY 3	NCY 4	NCY 5	NCY 6	NCY 7	NCY 8	NCY 9	NCY 10	NCY 11	NCY 12	NCY 13	NCY 14	Total all NCY
Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD)	3	26	31	29	30	34	36	26	34	24	32	42	16	13	14	**393**
Hearing Impairment (HI)	0	1	1	1	1	1	2	2	2	4	1	4	3	1	2	**26**
Moderate Learning Difficulty (MLD)	1	4	6	1	3	2	6	5	5	5	2	3	2	3	2	**50**
Multi-Sensory Impairment (MSI)	1	3	2	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	**8**
Other Difficulty/Disability (OTH)	1	3	4	6	1	6	2	8	9	14	7	9	6	12	13	**101**
Physical Disability (PD)	0	5	7	3	8	13	12	14	9	12	11	9	4	8	6	**122**
Profound & Multiple Learning Difficulty (PMLD)	0	0	2	2	2	1	3	2	3	1	0	1	2	2	2	**24**
Severe Learning Difficulty (SLD)	0	3	2	2	3	4	5	2	5	5	3	5	1	4	8	**51**
Social, Emotional & Mental Health (SEMH)	0	0	1	3	8	8	16	23	42	28	59	62	32	5	4	**292**
Specific Learning Difficulty (SPLD)	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	2	1	4	1	2	2	1	2	**17**
Speech, Language and Communication Needs (SLCN)	9	25	27	33	21	27	24	22	32	27	37	23	11	13	6	**336**
Visual Impairment (VI)	1	2	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	**5**
Total	**16**	**72**	**83**	**79**	**77**	**96**	**110**	**107**	**143**	**124**	**154**	**161**	**79**	**64**	**60**	**1426**

DSP forecasts

DSP forecasts

Forecasted DSP demand v supply

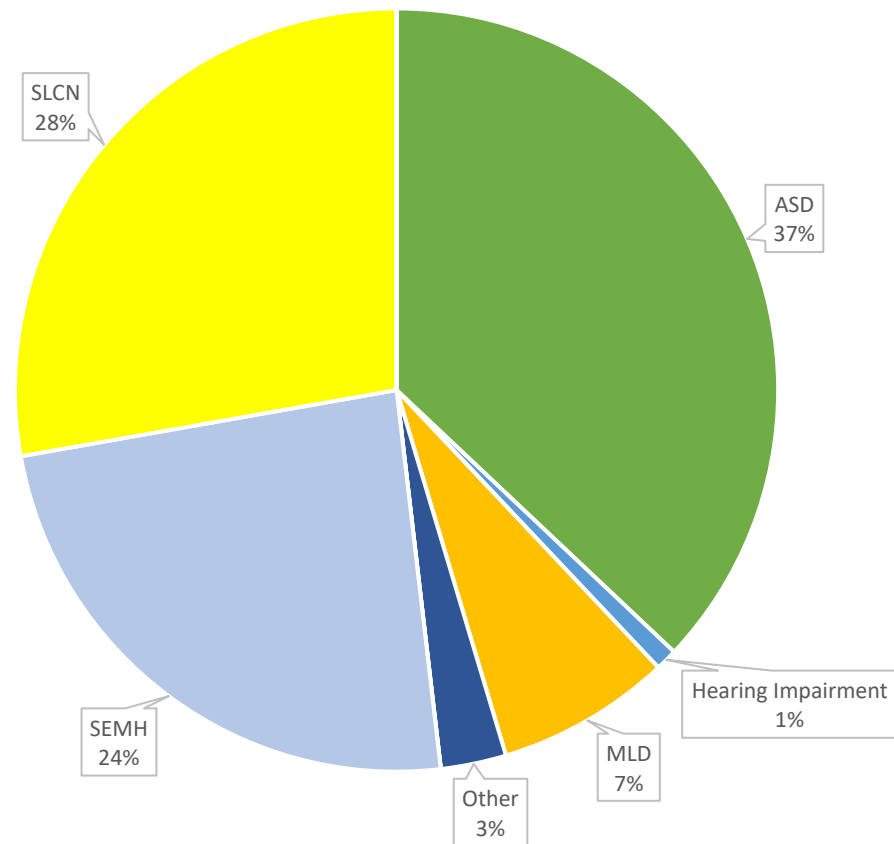| Academic Year	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28	2028/29	2029/30	2030/31	2031/32
Overall Demand	207	303	388	467	546	603	637	667	688	710	710
Overall Capacity	207	217	217	217	217	217	217	217	217	217	217

Number of places
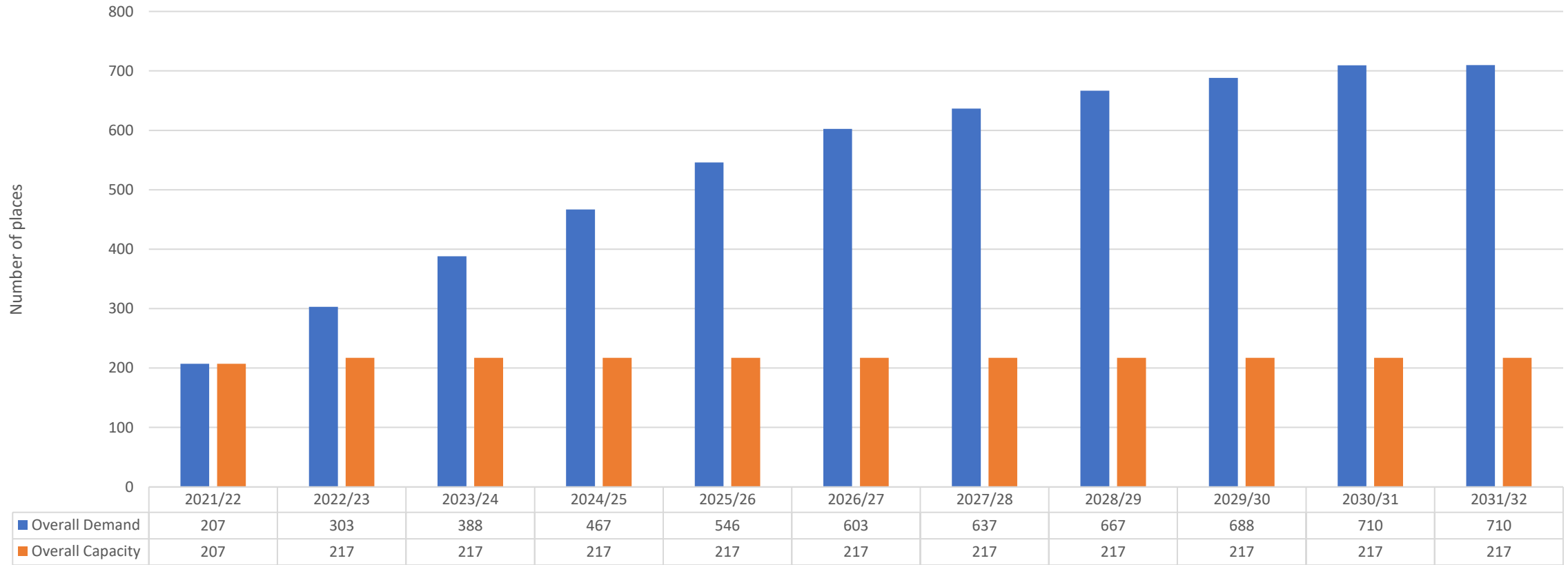
■ Overall Demand   ■ Overall Capacity

69

25

Distribution of new EHCP allocations to DSPs 2019-2021

Primary needs of pupils recently allocated to a DSP (2019-2021)

- ASD 37%
- Hearing Impairment 1%
- MLD 7%
- Other 3%
- SEMH 24%
- SLCN 28%

06

Primary needs for DSPs

Distribution of DSP primary needs 2021-22

- ASD 32%
- SLCN 40%
- MLD 3%
- Other 3%
- SEMH 22%

Forecasted distribution of DSP primary needs 2031-32

- SLCN 35%
- ASD 37%
- Hearing Impairment 1%
- MLD 6%
- Other 3%
- SEMH 18%
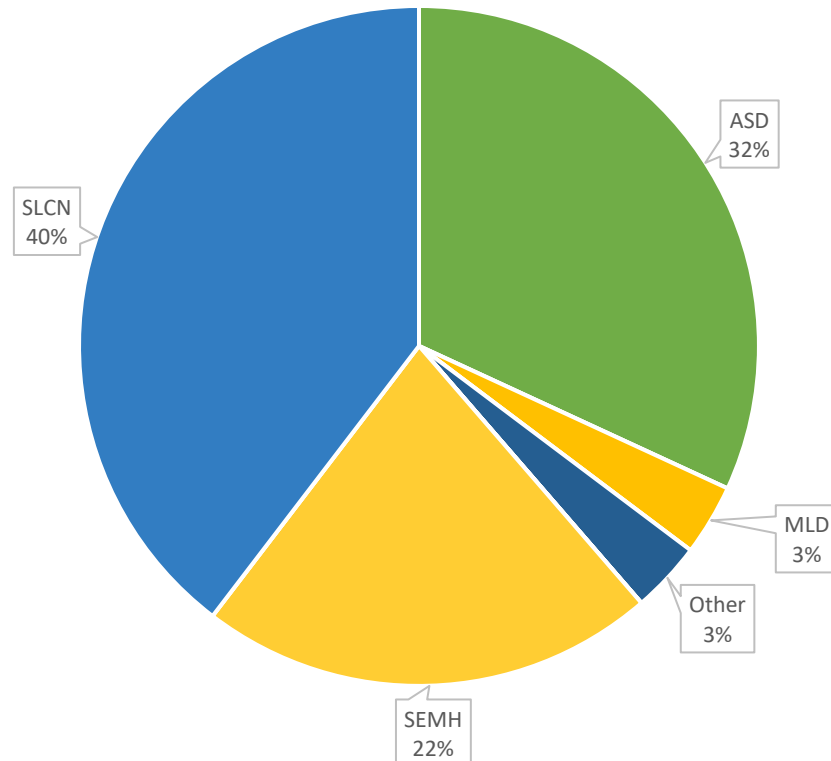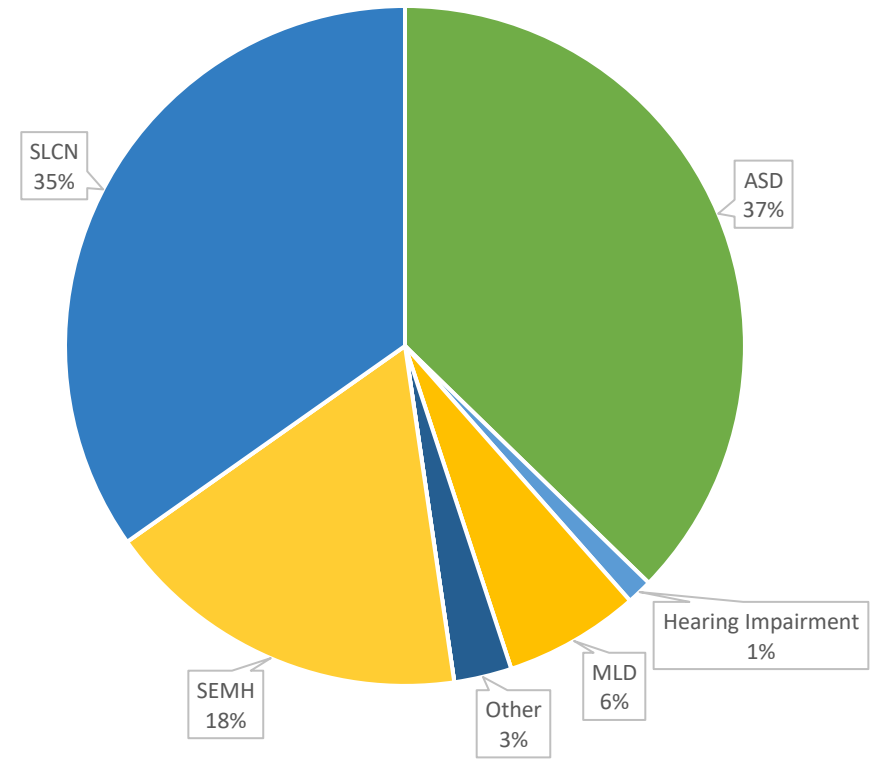
DSP primary need forecasts

Forecasted DSP demand by primary need

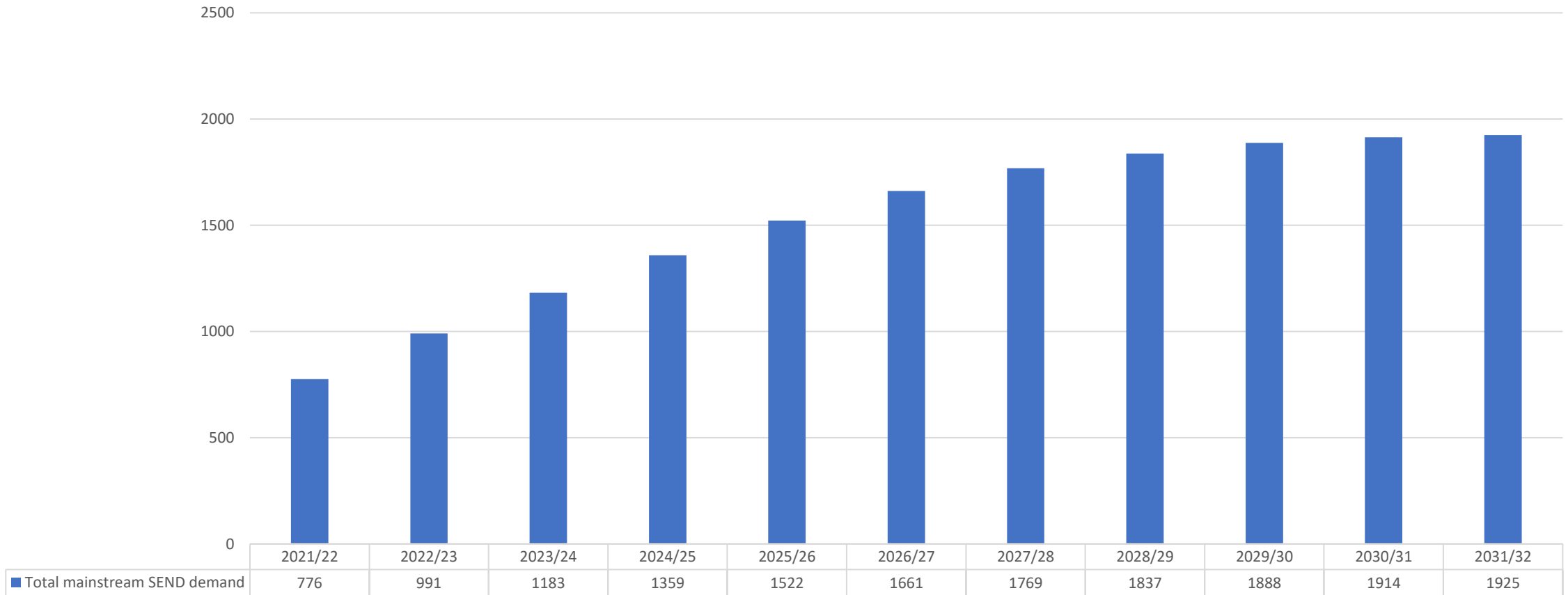| Primary need	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25	2025-26	2026-27	2027-28	2028-29	2029-30	2030-31	2031-32
Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD)	66	102	134	163	190	210	230	245	257	264	265
Hearing Impairment (HI)	0	1	2	3	4	5	5	6	7	8	9
Moderate Learning Difficulty (MLD)	7	15	21	26	31	35	39	42	43	45	46
Multi-Sensory Impairment (MSI)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Other Difficulty/Disability (OTH)	7	10	13	13	15	16	17	19	19	20	19
Physical Disability (PD)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Profound & Multiple Learning Difficulty (PMLD)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Severe Learning Difficulty (SLD)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Social, Emotional & Mental Health (SEMH)	45	70	90	110	128	139	137	135	130	128	125
Specific Learning Difficulty (SPLD)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Speech, Language and Communication Needs (SLCN)	82	106	129	152	178	198	209	220	232	245	247
Visual Impairment (VI)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Totals	**207**	**303**	**388**	**467**	**546**	**603**	**637**	**667**	**688**	**710**	**710**

2022-23 DSP primary need NCY forecasts

Primary need	NCY 0	NCY 1	NCY 2	NCY 3	NCY 4	NCY 5	NCY 6	NCY 7	NCY 8	NCY 9	NCY 10	NCY 11	Total all NCY
Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD)	3	10	14	13	9	7	11	9	12	6	5	4	**102**
Hearing Impairment (HI)	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	**1**
Moderate Learning Difficulty (MLD)	0	1	3	1	1	2	1	1	1	1	2	1	**15**
Multi-Sensory Impairment (MSI)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	**0**
Other Difficulty/Disability (OTH)	0	1	0	1	1	1	0	1	2	1	2	0	**10**
Physical Disability (PD)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	**0**
Profound & Multiple Learning Difficulty (PMLD)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	**0**
Severe Learning Difficulty (SLD)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	**0**
Social, Emotional & Mental Health (SEMH)	0	0	1	2	4	9	13	20	10	5	4	3	**70**
Specific Learning Difficulty (SPLD)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	**0**
Speech, Language and Communication Needs (SLCN)	4	11	20	16	6	9	12	15	6	0	4	4	**106**
Visual Impairment (VI)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	**0**
Total	**7**	**23**	**37**	**33**	**21**	**28**	**36**	**46**	**31**	**13**	**17**	**12**	**303**

93

Mainstream with EHCP forecasts

Mainstream with EHCP forecasts

95

Forecasts for Total mainstream SEND with EHCP demand

	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28	2028/29	2029/30	2030/31	2031/32
Total mainstream SEND demand	776	991	1183	1359	1522	1661	1769	1837	1888	1914	1925

Total mainstream SEND demand

Distribution of new EHCP allocations to mainstream EHCP pupils 2019-2021

Primary needs of mainstream pupils recently allocated a new EHCP (2019-2021)

- SLD 1%
- SPLD 2%
- Vision Impairment 1%
- ASD 27%
- SLCN 23%
- Hearing Impairment 2%
- MLD 13%
- MSI 1%
- Other 4%
- Physical 6%
- SEMH 20%
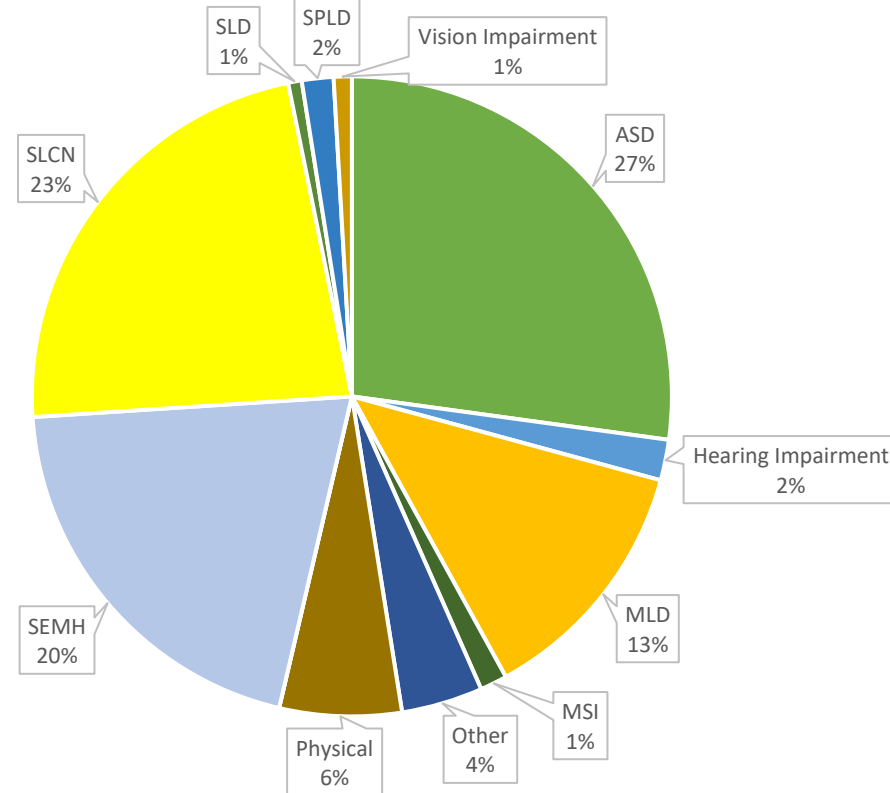
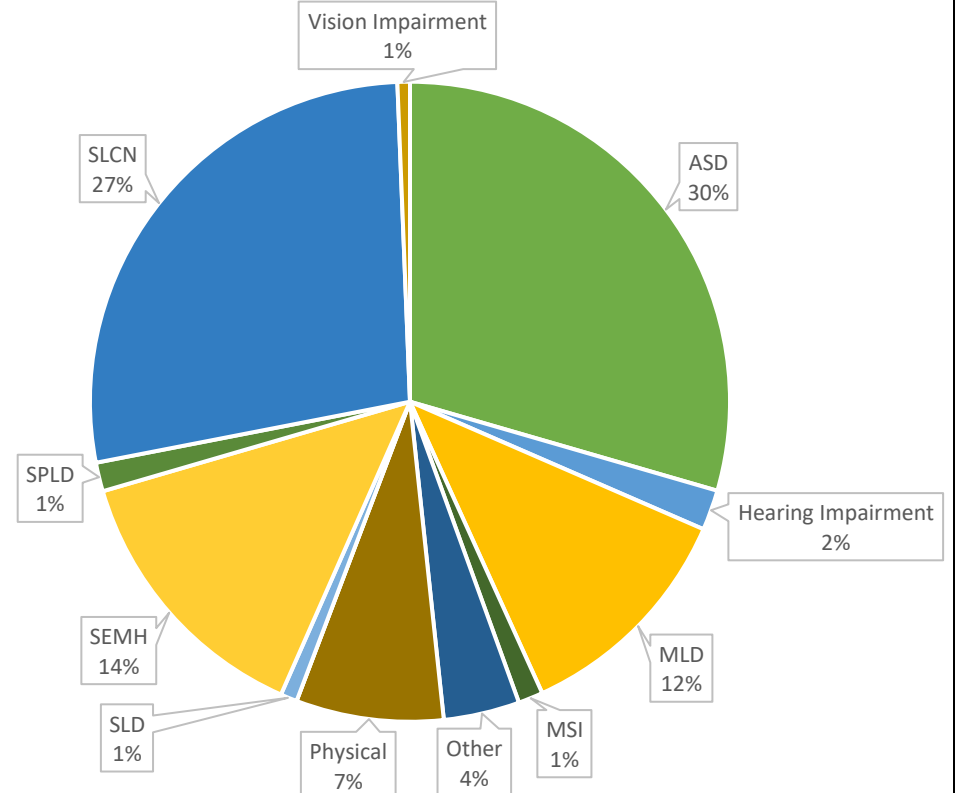# Primary needs for mainstream EHCP pupils

Distribution of the primary needs of mainstream pupils with EHCPs 2021-22
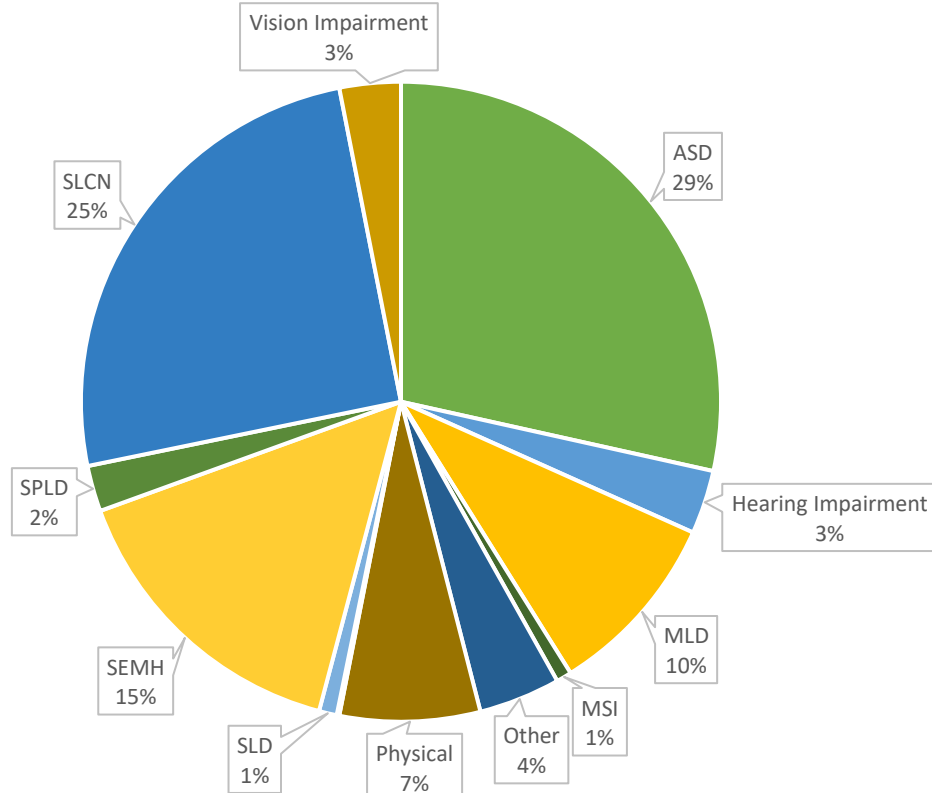
Distribution of the primary needs of mainstream pupils with EHCPs 2031-32

Mainstream with EHCP primary need forecasts

Forecasted mainstream SEND demand by primary need

Primary need	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25	2025-26	2026-27	2027-28	2028-29	2029-30	2030-31	2031-32
Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD)	221	282	342	390	438	484	517	538	555	564	568
Hearing Impairment (HI)	25	29	31	32	34	34	36	36	37	38	39
Moderate Learning Difficulty (MLD)	73	106	133	157	180	199	210	217	223	225	225
Multi-Sensory Impairment (MSI)	6	10	11	14	15	17	19	20	22	23	24
Other Difficulty/Disability (OTH)	32	39	48	56	61	66	69	71	72	74	74
Physical Disability (PD)	55	71	85	99	111	121	130	138	142	143	143
Profound & Multiple Learning Difficulty (PMLD)	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	0	0	0
Severe Learning Difficulty (SLD)	7	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	15	16
Social, Emotional & Mental Health (SEMH)	119	159	190	218	241	255	267	271	275	272	267
Specific Learning Difficulty (SPLD)	18	20	22	25	28	29	30	28	28	27	28
Speech, Language and Communication Needs (SLCN)	195	241	288	338	381	424	459	485	505	516	528
Visual Impairment (VI)	24	25	20	19	19	19	18	18	15	14	12
Totals	**776**	**991**	**1183**	**1359**	**1522**	**1661**	**1769**	**1837**	**1888**	**1914**	**1925**

2022-23 Mainstream with EHCP primary need NCY forecasts

Primary need	NCY 0	NCY 1	NCY 2	NCY 3	NCY 4	NCY 5	NCY 6	NCY 7	NCY 8	NCY 9	NCY 10	NCY 11	NCY 12	NCY 13	NCY 14	Total all NCY
Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD)	9	30	28	29	29	28	32	25	16	18	22	7	4	4	0	**282**
Hearing Impairment (HI)	2	4	1	1	0	1	3	1	4	3	5	4	0	0	0	**29**
Moderate Learning Difficulty (MLD)	1	9	9	8	9	9	14	15	8	7	9	7	1	1	0	**106**
Multi-Sensory Impairment (MSI)	1	2	2	1	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	**10**
Other Difficulty/Disability (OTH)	0	3	4	4	2	3	3	4	5	5	4	2	1	0	0	**39**
Physical Disability (PD)	1	7	8	9	10	9	5	5	6	5	3	1	0	1	0	**71**
Profound & Multiple Learning Difficulty (PMLD)	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	**1**
Severe Learning Difficulty (SLD)	1	2	1	0	2	0	0	0	2	0	1	0	0	1	0	**9**
Social, Emotional & Mental Health (SEMH)	0	2	5	12	11	11	17	16	23	16	18	20	4	4	0	**159**
Specific Learning Difficulty (SPLD)	0	1	2	1	2	1	4	2	3	2	1	2	0	0	0	**20**
Speech, Language and Communication Needs (SLCN)	10	30	30	19	29	28	23	18	14	14	8	10	3	4	0	**241**
Visual Impairment (VI)	0	0	0	2	1	5	1	2	1	1	3	8	0	0	0	**25**
Total	**25**	**88**	**88**	**86**	**96**	**94**	**103**	**89**	**82**	**72**	**74**	**63**	**15**	**15**	**0**	**991**

Totals and summary

Total forecasted needs across all provision types

All provision types

Primary need	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25	2025-26	2026-27	2027-28	2028-29	2029-30	2030-31	2031-32
Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD)	671	777	873	958	1046	1115	1174	1211	1235	1251	1248
Hearing Impairment (HI)	54	56	56	58	58	59	62	61	63	65	67
Moderate Learning Difficulty (MLD)	118	171	213	250	285	314	332	345	354	360	363
Multi-Sensory Impairment (MSI)	11	18	22	27	31	36	40	43	47	50	52
Other Difficulty/Disability (OTH)	153	151	147	145	145	146	147	149	148	151	149
Physical Disability (PD)	179	192	201	207	214	221	224	224	221	216	213
Profound & Multiple Learning Difficulty (PMLD)	25	25	23	23	23	22	22	20	19	18	16
Severe Learning Difficulty (SLD)	63	60	54	52	53	51	51	50	48	46	45
Social, Emotional & Mental Health (SEMH)	435	521	585	636	676	690	693	692	683	670	656
Specific Learning Difficulty (SPLD)	38	37	35	36	35	35	33	29	29	28	28
Speech, Language and Communication Needs (SLCN)	599	683	775	857	943	1015	1070	1116	1150	1179	1188
Visual Impairment (VI)	32	30	25	24	24	25	24	24	21	21	19
Totals	**2378**	**2720**	**3008**	**3273**	**3534**	**3728**	**3872**	**3963**	**4017**	**4056**	**4046**

Summary

Initial short-term overall forecasts have been accurate, giving some confidence in the model

However, significant variability in both new EHCP volumes and RAP outcomes means long-term forecasts should be treated with high degree of caution

Switching to EHCPs *agreed* rather than *completed* significantly impacts on overall level of demand

Actual demand will only match forecasts if the agreed number of EHCPs are completed each year

SEND Green Paper Consultation

Final Response from Leicester City SENDIB/SEND Transformation Partnership

15 June 2022

1. What key factors should be considered when developing national standards to ensure they deliver improved outcomes and experiences for children and young people with SEND and their families? This includes how the standards apply across education, health, and care in a 0-25 system

   To support a more inclusive system, we must ensure expectations are managed for all stakeholders and minimise the postcode lottery/service boundary effects:
   - Needs should be identified and assessed recognising the individual
     - support to enable C&YP to achieve standards and expectations and ambitions for them and their peers (reasonable person test). i.e. reasonable, affordable, and achievable
   - Appropriate provision made for all types of needs – at this time, alternative provision doesn't cover the broad spectrum of needs
   - Standardised access and review of support and all processes
     - Standardise process for accessing support and being clear at what stage (BERA)
     - Standardise the support links across services health and social care eg complex and challenging behaviour and language
     - This will include making explicit Quality First teaching expectations. These expectations should link with the Whole School SEND resources.
   - Transition standards in the education system will support SENCos and other educationalists to be clear about best practice
   - Standards for coproducing and communicating with children, young people, parents and carers as expectations vary
   - A common language used with definitions which are clear to professionals and parents
   - Dedicated SENCO as a mandatory part of education leadership teams
   - Consider how C&YP with NO EHCP can be supported to access the right support in secondary and tertiary education
   - Access – Establish common register for C & YP with SEND across ICS; EHCP and SEN Support
   - Re-engaging NHS providers for Over 18 services - a statutory commitment to SEND for 18-25yrs old at Board level

2. How should we develop the proposal for new local SEND partnerships to oversee the effective development of local inclusion plans whilst avoiding placing unnecessary burdens or duplicating current partnerships?

   We agree that this will give a clear focus on local SEND. It must not duplicate existing partnerships and emerging systems eg Local Safeguarding Partnerships, Integrated Care Partnership.

   The Local SEND Partnership should be a statutory board to bring partners together – with greater accountability on partners that aren't education. Although there are different

pressures for health, education and social care, we need to be enabled to be more integrated. The Local SEND Partnership should report to the place-based Health &Wellbeing Board. All partners must be at the table and enabled to be accountable. All partners including health social care, parents/carers/young people should be represented. Local inclusion plans should be developed with all partners.
Partnership needs to be culturally embedded, with collaborative messaging from all national stakeholders and Government Departments.
Consider:

- A key named person and deputy in each partner organisation including PCF to report into ICS/HWB/LA Cabinet and direct link a joint accountability through the ICB via SEND SRO/ SEND & CYP Exec Lead.
- SEND ICS Partners to develop Inclusion Plan aligned to ICS Integrated Care Strategy and local priorities and agree responsibilities and funding, to be reviewed annually or as prioritise change.
- Shared responsibilities could include areas across SEND ICS rather than aligned to individual organisation i.e., inform and respond to funding bids; EHCP; Joint Commissioning; Transition and Preparing for adulthood; development of personalisation agenda.
- Partnership needs to be culturally embedded, with collaborative messaging from all national stakeholders and Government Depts.
- Ensure there are agreed accountable roles within ICS for system and place.
- There should be one lead exec SEND accountable person to coordinate the plan for each area in partnership. SEND partnerships require accountability and focus similar to same status given to Safeguarding/ Looked After Children.

3. What factors would enable local authorities to successfully commission provision for low-incidence high-cost need, and further education, across local authority boundaries?

These factors will support activity across LA boundaries:
   o Ensure we have a common clear definition of "high-cost"
   o Effective shared decision-making governance on low-incident and high cost at an ICS level through Joint ICS & Place-based SEND strategies.
   o Co-design and co-development with main stakeholders including Parent/ YP groups
   o Expectations need to be managed. The role of parents, schools, primary care needs to be clear as does the limitations of service provision.
   o Inclusive education offers linking to wider early help provision and family support offers.
   o Understand population data/ sufficiency/
   o A more joined up Commissioning framework
   o Shared needs analysis, prevalence and benchmarking exercises with health partners and schools' alliances.
   o Gap analysis about what locality can commission together to bring CYP back into local area – support and working on and jointly with county A) High cost needs and B) investment in colleges to provide provision
   o Standardising College approaches as they differ widely cross boundaries
      ▪ Invest in college provision for high cost as well as the independent specialist providers

4. What components of the EHCP should we consider reviewing or amending as we move to a standardised and digitised version?

We agree with this proposal, to create a clear plan template which is understood by all children and young people, parent/carers professionals and stakeholders. Developing the right digitisation (Leicester City is in the process of rolling out a professional portal and a parent/carer portal) will be key to smoothing the process and having transparency at every step.

Additional aspects to consider:
- Brevity of EHCPs – they should not be too long and readable on smartphones
- BSL and new Deaf act – a digitised version may be possible
- Advocates and navigators should be culturally competent
- Set Outcomes and be clear about how to measure them, for example outcomes should be spelled out, with a drop-down option that includes progress being met, and thereby that the EHCP is no longer needed.
- Varied systems across ICS and information provided being transferred into plan can be complex.
- Review of Section C and G: Clear guidance and training. Leicester City have created an aide memoir to assist health professionals in writing advice and reports for plans.

5. How can parents and local authorities most effectively work together to produce a tailored list of placements that is appropriate for their child, and gives parents' confidence in the EHCP process?

In principle this will support an open and transparent process but this must also manage expectations and the reality of what is available locally.

Additional aspects to consider:
- A list of placements/menu of provision will require resource to manage this well – a framework/guidance will be required to manage expectations.
- Important principle of keeping CYP local and provision appropriate to meet needs.
- There should be guidance for stakeholders and parents about using the list of placements – for example – new providers are not necessarily best
- Ensure a keep local approach and remove barriers to access provision
- Potentially creates a greater risk of Tribunals if AP choice is made and there is no availability
- Could Section 41 list be adapted for this?
- Co-design and coproduction needed
- An extended role for SENDIASS

6. To what extent do you agree or disagree with our overall approach to strengthen redress, including through national standards and mandatory mediation?

Overall approach of national standards will help strengthen redress, however there are mixed views on whether mandatory mediation would make the process less challenging. Locally, parent/carers inform SENDIASS regularly that they have already spent a lot of time corresponding with the LA and where the position does not change, they have the right to appeal via SENDIST. Adding mandatory mediation as another step may be perceived by

parents as another barrier to their parental right and route of redress even further. The nature of mediation requires both parties to enter into it willingly.

Consideration must be given to

1. The quality of advice and the experience of the mediators giving the initial mediation information
2. How the LA is enabled to ensure a decision maker attends all mediations
3. Mediations being carried out in a timely manner so as not to delay the process and further create a lack of faith in the system.
4. The capacity and funding to coordinate, manage and set up these formal mediation sessions with the relevant parties
5. The nature of the parental request may not require mediation
6. Making it clear that is it a process for reaching resolution, rather than a step towards Tribunal.
7. The issue of private assessments/consultations: Currently the reasons why parents pay for private consultations to obtain EHCP or LD funding is due to need for medical assessment. Independent assessments are based on individual need not population and therefore not fair to those who cannot afford this. Independent assessments are often not the full picture on for example priorities in Health Commissioned by ICS/access and availability to meet needs in schools and colleges.
8. How to manage any party coming to an EHC Assessment with the prejudged view of a particular educational setting.
9. Creating a standard and setting out the expectations about what might be reasonable given a moderated view of the child's level of need.
10. A fair and transparent process with a lay person on panel should be standard.

7. Do you consider the current remedies available to the SEND Tribunal for disabled children who have been discriminated against by schools effective in putting children and young people's education back on track?

Tribunal directed decisions should not fall solely on the Local Authority to act upon, for example in an EHCP where particular health needs are not identified but subsequently Tribunal directs provision is required, we have experienced that this then becomes a Local Authority responsibility to commission.

8. What steps should be taken to strengthen early years practice with regard to conducting the two-year-old progress check and integration with the Healthy Child Programme review?

- National standards for the 2 year check and on the quality of referrals. Health visitors should be accountable and trained. It is important to strengthen links with Public Health with Early Years Support services and into Family Hubs.
- Include early years checks within Nursey and school placements to be assured that the necessary checks have been carried out and not omitted
- Mandated shared register by General Practice on all Early Years checks conducted and outcomes, especially where SEND could be included
- Recruitment is a significant issue for the Early Years sector, and this is linked to low pay. The local partnership will need to be proactive in ensuring that the more marginalised voices of the early years sector are heard.

- Align the training of staff with Workforce Capacity and Capability
- Educational Psychologists (Registered with the Health & Care Professions Council to work with children and young people from birth to 25 years) and Early Years Specialist Teachers & Portage practitioners could play a key role at this stage, especially if there is scope for joint funding the specialist and skilled workforce for an early years partnership – across settings, childminders and parent/carers.

9. To what extent do you agree or disagree that we should introduce a new mandatory SENCo NPQ to replace the NASENCo?

We agree with proposing a new mandatory SENCo NPQ as long as the qualification is not of a lower standard than the NASENCo qualification. It must include the SEND Code of Practice and learning about the BERA/graduated approach as a mandatory part of the learning programme.
Other aspects to consider:
- Enabling the SENCo to have authority and impact on change in the school/college/ early years setting.
- Having a Level 3 SENCo qualification

10. To what extent do you agree or disagree that we should strengthen the mandatory SENCo training requirement by requiring that headteachers must be satisfied that the SENCo is in the process of obtaining the relevant qualification when taking on the role?

We agree with the proposal to strengthen SENCo training. In order to support SEND and Inclusion in schools, the SENCo must be a dedicated role and a member of the school senior leadership. Ofsted should strengthen their support of this governance in the school system.

11. To what extent do you agree or disagree that both specialist and mixed MATs should coexist in the fully trust-led future? This would allow current local authority maintained special schools and alternative provision settings to join either type of MAT.

A mixed MAT would create a better more inclusive system which will provide a closer cross-fertilisation of expertise and support across the MAT, enabling the development of a graduated provision across the MAT.

It is critical that Dedicated Specialist Provisions in MATs engage with Local Authority support services around early intervention and the graduated response to ensure the Inclusion is promoted.

12. What more can be done by employers, providers and government to ensure that those young people with SEND can access, participate in and be supported to achieve an apprenticeship, including though access routes like Traineeships?

Consideration should be given to

- a lower level Apprenticeship qualification to level 2
- Strengthen support to employers about being disability aware and to expand their opportunities for apprentices with lower level qualifications.
- Adjustment passports and strengthened messaging around reasonable adjustments would be very helpful for both young people and potential employers
- The National Funding Programme for apprenticeships and traineeships should be strengthened to ensure there is capacity in the system for example to enable Apprenticeship coordinators/Coaches (who work directly with young people in colleges for eg) to support the growing numbers of young people with SEND.
- Government campaigns to support a change in attitude and culture for employers and for parent/carers not to hold back their young people's ambitions/abilities.
- Families who receive Carers allowance/benefits allowance should not be adversely affected if their young person with SEND gets onto apprenticeship and/or traineeship.
- This should be cross referenced to the National Disability Strategy
- Ensure there is co-produced messaging with DWP.
- Ensure there is a pathway/onward destination for supported internships
- Ensure those who are NEET are not left behind
- The Educational Psychology profession (Registered to work with young people up to the age of 25 years) and Specialist Teachers have something more to offer in the Post-16 sector, including helping employers to engage understanding in reasonable adjustments, as happens in school. Also the continuing support and advisory role with parent/carers.
- SEND investors award, where they advertise inclusion off SEND placements and become one off the measurements for successful business. Could the government provide a Grant to encourage the above and obtained more placements

13. To what extent do you agree or disagree that this new vision for alternative provision will result in improved outcomes for children and young people?

The new vision, with appropriate resource and funding for new responsibilities, should help strengthen the ability to improve outcomes. It is appropriate that schools are accountable for Alternative Provision for their learners.
Considerations:
- All stakeholders must be clear about the quality measures to be met for improved outcomes.
- The notion of Alternative Provision may move children & young people further away from inclusion
- Consider less divisive terminology: using 'complementary' rather than 'alternative' provision.
- Consider if all children should be on a school roll, with complementary provision.
- This provision, with funding and responsibilities, should also offer progression towards improving stated outcomes and achieving qualifications.
- The qualifications of staff in these provisions should be equal to teaching qualifications.

14. What needs to be in place in order to distribute existing funding more effectively to alternative provision schools to ensure they have the financial stability required to deliver our vision for more early intervention and re- integration?

We agree that funding should be distributed to PRU APs to operate a graduated approach. There should be flexibility to allow for an early intervention approach wider than just commissioning to AP schools. Consideration should be given to the process of moderation, perhaps with special schools, so that funding could become more predictable.

15. To what extent do you agree or disagree that introducing a bespoke alternative provision performance framework, based on these five outcomes, will improve the quality of alternative provision? a bespoke AP performance framework, based on the 5 outcomes improve the quality of AP?

(Effective outreach support, improved attendance, reintegration, academic attainment, with a focus on English and maths, successful post-16 transitions)
We agree that an AP performance framework with those 5 outcomes should improve the quality of Alternative Provision including PRUs and we are in tune with this vision. There should be flexibility in choice of **outreach support** as this is also provided through the Local Authority SEND support service. However, **academic attainment** for children and young people with SEND should not necessarily focus on English and maths but recognising appropriate vocational qualifications and/or functional skills. The focus should be on the right attainment for the young person. Schools must have a duty to **reintegrate** children back and where excluded, have a time limited program with a view to return to school. The return to school should include an in-depth assessment and recommendations to inform schools of the child's learning, their triggers and their needs for reintegration. Outcome measures are critical for the individual child eg SEMH curriculum, emotional wellbeing, self-regulation to support reintegration. Following reintegration, attendance and outcomes should be monitored.

16. To what extent do you agree or disagree that a statutory framework for pupil movements will improve oversight and transparency of placements into and out of alternative provision?

The framework will also enable monitoring and checks for supporting pupils.
This should be standardised approach not specific to SEND and health partners and should be included in the formal notification of pupil movements plus the planning of as required.

17. What are the key metrics we should capture and use to measure local and national performance? Please explain why you have selected these.

- New inclusion dashboards, to provide a timely local and national picture of how the system is performing
- Proposed performance metrics must take account of health intervention and provision.
- All of SEND - National standards that are going to be introduced
- Outcome focused metrics, linked to the national standards
- Inclusion measures from schools, measuring attendance and exclusion
- Appropriate curriculum offer to meet the needs of a range of children and this means a reduced curriculum

- Use of Alternative Provision
- Voice of children who have SEND as part of Ofsted inspection of local schools,
- Local metrics on consult on refusal for EHCP, fair access data, managed moves
- BERA checklist / challenges
- Joint Commissioning Strategy and action plan (SEND ICS Priorities)
- SEND Transition/preparing for adulthood Strategy and yearly action plan (show clear process and pathway for key transition stages inc. adulthood)
- Referral to treatment times – key SEND Inc. recovery information
- EHCP assessments and plans – time periods
- Assessed optimum level of functioning – child attaining

18. How can we best develop a national framework for funding bands and tariffs to achieve our objectives and mitigate unintended consequences and risks?

- Ensure that the banding and tariffs are in line with high cost funding allocated to LAs.
- Ensure new national framework of banding and price tariffs is matched to levels of need and types of education provision set out in the national standards.
- Funding bands should reflect the actual cost of the provision required and increase in line with inflation and reflective of different geographic areas.   Disadvantaged funding pots that are ringfenced for children and young people with SEND should continue

- Funding bands should be split into 3 parts: Special education, Health and Social care elements. The government should define the criteria for funding band splits which gives clarity to the responsibilities

19. How can the National SEND Delivery Board work most effectively with local partnerships to ensure the proposals are implemented successfully?

- Ensure this is a two way process where regional send advisors take back issues/etc to national.
- Commission analysis to better understand the support that CYP with SEND need from the health workforce

20. What will make the biggest difference to successful implementation of these proposals? What do you see as the barriers to and enablers of success?

The biggest difference to successful implementation will be:
- Deliver clarity in roles and responsibilities with every partner having a clear role to play, and having the levers to fulfil their responsibilities
- DfE's new Regions Group to take responsibility for holding LAs and MATs to account for delivering for SEND
- Provide statutory guidance to Integrated Care Boards (ICBs) to set out clearly how to discharge their SEND statutory responsibilities
- Ofsted/CQC to deliver an updated Local Area SEND Inspection Framework

Barriers:
- Tribunals that pit parents against services

- Competing Ofsted and Standards agenda
- Funding and AP funding: extra burdens but no extra funding or funding is not clear
- The SEND code of practice didn't take into account the extended responsibilities and funding for post 19 up to 25.
  - Changing legal issues from children act to care act. Transitions doesn't set up yp to access health/social care support. Over reliance.
  - Link into adults is critical for provision.
  - Education of parents to understand the range of support available to care for children/young person as opposed to care of yp as an adult.
- PfA should be done earlier but resourcing is not available to do this prep properly to avoid crisis management as the yp gets older and more expensive support is required as an adult.

Enablers:
- Create the right conditions in secondary schools to mandate PfA for cyp with SEND.
- Ofsted to monitor PfA in secondary schools.
- Destination data and outcomes at 19 should be reconsidered.
- Communications and system positioning (tribunals/ofsted) is needed to support inclusion messaging. More national comms about inclusive schools. Good destination data.

21. What support do local systems and delivery partners need to successfully transition and deliver the new national system?

There needs to be opportunity for quality teams to work with schools to give a continuum of provision and standard thresholds.
There needs to be high quality local teams, including Local Authority and Health staff with school/college representatives, to drive forward the changes needed, to provide the support and challenge. There needs to be a clear, shared language. This will require funding and change would not be expected within a short period of time.

22. Is there anything else you would like to say about the proposals in the green paper?

Many of the ambitions in the SEND Green Paper are welcome and offer real hope for reform. We recognise that it will take several years for the proposals to be taken through the legislative process, before coming into law. In the meantime, therefore, making additional high needs funding available via the 'safety valve' and 'Delivering Better Value in SEND' programmes is welcome, but DfE must go further and develop a plan that enables every council to eliminate its Dedicated Schools Grant deficit.

In Summary:
- The proposals will require the need for greater support and capacity in this sector and must be firmly supported by culture change
- Some proposals for removing identified barriers may run the risk of simply creating other, new barriers for families eg
  - Mandatory mediation carries many issues with it
  - There is a concern that the Green Paper may reinforce a 'deficit view' of additional needs and disabilities as a 'medical issue and risk` where NHS are required to intervene, as opposed to a 'strengths and ambitions' approach
- The national system is in crisis. Overhauling it requires funding and recognition of the system workforce issues (demand, capacity, skills mix)

- Consistency would be welcome (i.e. reduction of the postcode lottery situation), although national prescription is potentially difficult since it doesn't necessarily acknowledge local variation/need
- Parent support services that help parents know how to support their child could significantly help change the picture and reduce demand
  - This systemic and cultural change will take time to create confidence and set family expectations
- EHCPs should not be seen as the panacea for children with SEND to get the right support at the right time in the right place. Ceasing an EHCP should not be seen as a loss, but rather as a successful outcome, and should end at the right time, rather than arbitrarily at age 25. This needs to be communicated to parents
- Clarity is needed around:
  - frameworks and standards
  - roles and responsibilities - with every partner having a clear role to play, and having the levers to fulfil their responsibilities
  - protocols of support
  - accountability and escalation
  - Clear and common language and terminology and messaging is critical – eg the definition of 'AP' (Alternative Provision) varies within DfE proposals
- DfE's new Regions Group should take responsibility for holding Local Authorities and Multi-Academy Trusts (MATs) to account for delivering the SEND agenda
- Statutory guidance should be provided to NHS Integrated Care Boards (ICBs) to set out clearly how to discharge SEND statutory responsibilities
- The use of local multi-agency panels is supported. In the local area, the NHS have forums in place with the three Local Authorities. These are crucial for joint assessment of need, assessing capacity of local available services and key escalation routes for exceptional clinical decisions. Governance is critical, with a Leicester City (Place level) SEND Transformation Partnership reporting to the Health and Wellbeing Board
- Support across the system for Inclusion: Ofsted/CQC should deliver an updated Local Area SEND Inspection Framework which enables inclusion
- Successful delivery will require the removal of key barriers:
  - Tribunals that pit parents against services in an adversarial manner
  - Competing/conflicting Ofsted and Standards agendas
  - Unclear funding around extra burdens and Alternative Provision
  - Funding issues that cause Preparing for Adulthood to start too late, leading to crisis management and more expensive support

Not much reference is made in these proposals or in the consultation to SEN Support or Young Carers.

Children's, Young People and Education Scrutiny Committee Report

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**Ash Field Academy Residential Provision –
Strategic Review**

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Date: 25 October 2022
Lead member: Cllr Elly Cutkelvin
Lead Strategic Director: Martin Samuels

City Mayor

1. Purpose

1.1. The purpose of this report is to provide the Children's, Young Lead and Education Scrutiny Commission with an overview of a strategic review of the Residential Provision at Ash Field Academy and associated consultation proposal to cease the funding with effect from September 2024. A copy of the consultation documentation is detailed at Appendix 1.

1.2. The service is currently funded from the High Needs Block grant, which is awarded to schools for educational purposes, although there are exceptions which are detailed at paragraph 2.5.

1.3. There are currently significant pressures on the High Needs Block grant monies, due to the increase in the number of children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities being approved for Education, Health and Care Plans, which places a statutory duty on local authorities to provide support.

1.4. The review concluded that whilst the residential provision was highly regarded, there was no clear evidence to demonstrate the outcomes it achieves could not be delivered within the daily school curriculum.

1.5. Therefore, the Local Authority commenced a formally consultation exercise on Monday 26 September 2022, to discontinue funding for this provision with effect from 1 September 2024 as detailed at Option 3.

2. Summary

2.1. Ash Field Academy provides education and support to children and young people between the ages of 4 to 19 years of age with additional learning, communication and sensory needs, ranging from profound and multiple learning disabilities to moderate learning disabilities. All pupils at the school have an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP).

2.2. The school has capacity for 160 pupils and provides overnight residential provision for up to 18 pupils per night, for 4 nights a week throughout term-times, enabling 22% - 28% of the school population to access the provision annually. The annual cost of the provision for 2021/22 was approximately £407k. Ash Field Academy has reserves of over £2m.

2.3. The provision is only accessible to Ash Field Academy pupils and not the wider Special Education Needs and Disabilities (SEND) population of over 1,000 pupils across all special schools. The authority has a legal duty to provide short breaks / respite support for children and young people with SEND, which is provided through the council's Disabled Children's Service.

2.4. The terms of reference for the review of the provision at Ash Field Academy were agreed with the Head Teacher and Chair of Governors. The review took place between January and March 2022, involving the school staff, pupils, parents, SEND Services and Children Social Care. Reviewing Officers would like to note the Academy have been highly co-operative throughout the review process.

2.5. The review highlighted that the residential provision was highly regarded by parents / carers and whilst there is an acknowledgement in the Children and Families Act 2014 (annex 3 of the Code of Practice) that certain types of health or social care support may be considered as educational and training. This requirement would need to be recorded in Section F of a child's EHCP, meaning the local authority would be required to ensure this provision was available. None of the children or young people attending Ash Field Academy have this requirement documented in their EHCP.

2.6. A discussion has taken place with the Academy to explore options for expanding the provision to make it accessible as a short break/ respite provision beyond its pupils. The Principal and Governors felt this was moving away from its primary focus and therefore not an option they wanted to consider.

3. Recommendations

3.1. The Children's, Young People and education Scrutiny Commission is recommended to:
a)   provide feedback / comment on the outcome of a strategic review of the Residential Provision at Ash Field Academy
b) to note that a formal 12-week consultation exercise commenced on 26 September 2022
c) to provide feedback / comment on the proposal to end the funding on 1 September 2024

4. Supporting information including options considered:

Background

4.1. The purpose of the residential review was to consider:

a)   the provision/ service delivered to pupils
b)   cost of operating the provision
c)   the impact and outcomes the provision offers to the pupils
d)   alignment to the strategic priorities of the local authority

4.2. Ash Field Academy has had a residential provision since 2002, which was rated as Outstanding by Ofsted earlier this year.

4.3. The school has almost 160 pupils with additional learning, communication and sensory needs, ranging from profound and multiple learning disabilities (PMLD) to moderate learning disabilities (MLD). All pupils at the school have an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCPs).

4.4. The residential provision is available for up to 18 pupils per night in a range of single, twin and triple rooms, alongside a dedicated flat to develop independence skills. The provision is staffed by a range of support staff, including waking and sleeping night staff.

4.5. The review took place between January – March 2022 and the approach and details of the review is outlined in, and has involved:

- Qualitative evidence from school staff, school pupils, parents and wider stakeholders, including case studies.
- Quantitative data provided by the school and from school census data.

Review Findings

4.6. The provision enables pupils to interact with friends outside of the school environment, as the support of staff and the facilities are able to meet their disability needs. There is a varied afterschool programme for pupils, and structured activities to the evening, including sports and music clubs. The independence flat supports pupils to learn shopping, cooking and washing skills.

4.7.   Each of the pupils have their own plan, where there are identified targets to support their independence goals. One case study provided by the Academy, identified a pupil who had attended the provision from the age of 8 years old. He had developed various independent skills more recently wanted to hoist himself and dress independently. With support of staff, he was able to achieve this goal.

4.8. The Academy also offers extended days to pupils which are designed to support pupils to access overnight stays. There is generally up to 2 extended day places available each evening.

4.9. Pupils, teachers and parents can request a stay at the facility and a 'placement criteria' is in operation to help manage demand and identify pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds, as priorities for attending the provision. There is some flexibility, and the Academy will support families in the case of emergencies. As of February 2022, there was a waiting list of 16 pupils wishing to attend the provision

4.10. The provision also offers an opportunity for pupils to take residential visits in the UK and has included trips to Norfolk and Scarborough in recent years. Whilst this provides an excellent opportunity for pupils, this is a short break opportunity rather than education provision. The residential provision does not close during school trips and additional staff are used to deliver both activities. The Academy confirmed parents are asked to contribute to these trips up to £200, should they be able do so.

Cost of operating the provision

4.11. The cost of operating the provision is based on a modelling exercise using information provided by the academy, because the existing funding is provided as part of the banded rates paid to the school for all pupils, rather than a lump sum.

	2019-20	2020-21	2021 – 2022 (estimate)
Staffing	£172,215.64**	£177,898.76	£184,303.12**
Leadership Staffing	£147,413.36**	£152,278.00	£157,760.01**
Residential Trip Expenses	£23,430.16*	£23,664.46	£24,256.07*
Equipment maintenance (inc. hoists, intercom, urinal, bath, beds)	£2,601.19*	£2,627.20	£2,692.88*
Running costs (inc. TV subscription, building maintenance, heat & light, laundry, Ofsted, PPE)	£36,484.16*	£36,849.00	£37,770.23*
Total	£382,144.51	£393,317.42	£406,782.31

Table1: Core budget for Ash Field Residential Provision

4.12. To note on Table 1 above
- ** an average public sector pay inflation of 3.3% in 2020 and 3.6% in 2021 have been used to calculate estimated staffing and leadership costs in 2019-20 and 2021-22 years.
- *the Consumer Prices Index including Owner Occupied Housing Costs (CPIH index) has been used to estimate all other costs (including those relating to residential trips) in 2019-20 and 2021-22, at rates of a 1% inflationary increase in 2020 and 2.5% in 2021.

4.13. There remains substantial increases year on year for the running costs of the provision, based on the information the Academy were able to provide as part of this review. Of note the residential trips are substantial due to the staffing costs for this activity, whilst also maintaining staff to running the residential provision at the same time.

4.14. During a typical evening there are approximately 7-10 staff available to support the pupils. The hours worked are both fulltime and part-time, and a small proportion of the staffing budget is also allocated to 'on-call' allowances for the Principal and Deputy Principal. It should be noted staff provide all of the medical support, such as feeds for the pupils throughout the stay.

School Feedback

4.15. The Academy have provided case studies evidencing the impact the provision has on its pupil's wellbeing, and extensive feedback from both residential staff and teaching staff across Ash Field Academy. Reviewing Officers also met with staff whilst visiting the provision.

4.16. Feedback was received from 11 residential staff members and 10 school staff members. The information provided identified their extensive commitment to the provision and recognition impacts for the pupils in terms of their independence, social skills by providing a safe space to develop these skills. Furthermore, it enabled children to spend time with friends which they wouldn't normally have the opportunity to do, out of the school environment. Whilst school staff also stated the provision offers the first taste of independence away from parents in a caring and supported environment, enabling pupils to take greater responsibility for their own needs under supervision.

4.17. When considering safeguarding of pupils staying within the provision, information was shared with the Reviewing Officers identifying the approaches taken by staff around several safeguarding incidents. In all cases the staff followed identified procedures and addressed concerns. The Academy also noted it accepted pupils at short notice following requests from a parent and Children's Social Care, as the provision was identified as the most suitable place for the child at that time.

4.18. Furthermore, staff commented, looking after pupils with physical disabilities and complex medical needs can be challenging for families, therefore by having access to such a provision supports families from going into crisis, by offering a safe environment for their child.

Pupils Feedback

4.19. A number of pupils were met by reviewing Officers during a visit to the provision. Pupils and staff engaged with one another respectfully but playfully, and there was no sense of anyone having "disabilities", just difference. The children said they enjoyed staying at the residential provision, spending time away from their parents, seeing their friends outside of school time and being able to do things more independently for themselves.

4.20. An older child described how they had learnt to cook their own meals with ingredients they had selected and purchased themselves. They were particularly proud of having learnt how to chop vegetable ingredients without needing assistance, despite having limited use of their limbs.

Parents Feedback

4.21. Twenty-four parents provided extensive responses to questions as part of this review to gather their views and feedback on the impact and outcomes the provision provides for their child, themselves and their families. Whilst all mentioned the invaluable respite that the provision offers to both parents, siblings, and the children themselves, they also highlighted the improvements in their children's social skills, emotional wellbeing, and confidence to become more independent.

4.22. Several parents mentioned being the sole carer for their child/children, and the importance to them both physically and mentally of having a period of respite. Another provided extensive feedback in that their daughter's communication had improved through the promotion of using an electronic device in the residential provision, allowing her to answer more questions and become more expressive in the classroom.

CLASS feedback

4.23. A presentation was given to CLASS, (the City of Leicester Association of Special Schools) in September 2021, which explained the Council's approach to examining the need for SEND residential provision. This is the same methodology used for a review of another SEND residential provision in the city.
4.24. One member of the group noted from past experiences within another local authority, that the closing of a service in a previous school they worked at had a detrimental impact on those who used the school and the schools' overall outcomes. However, it should be noted, there are pupils at two other special schools within the city with similar health and medical needs, who do not have access to residential facilities, who are therefore disadvantaged, and their outcomes impacted.

4.25. The group raised a query regarding equality of accessing, acknowledging only those pupils at the school were able to access the provision, and there was limited access to the council's respite provision at Barnes Heath House.

Alignment to the strategic priorities of the local authority

4.26. Children's Social Care, Special Education Needs and Disabilities (SEND) Services were contacted as part of this review to gather their feedback and views on the service and strategic alignment. Whilst the provision is seen as beneficial to children and young people attending Ash Field Academy, it is not equitable to other pupils with SEND needs.

Children's Social Care Service

4.27. Details of the pupils accessing the residential provision have been crossed referenced with Children Social Care information. Several the pupils do have identification references; however, none were open to Children's Social Care as a matter of concern.

4.28. Feedback from Children Social Care confirmed that whilst the provision is seen as beneficial to children and young people with SEND needs attending Ash Field Academy, it not something they would want to directly commission for Children Looked After with SEND or Children in Need.

Potential Impact of removing the funding

4.29. If the funding for the residential provision at Ash Field Academy was removed and the facility was to close, it is possible that the Disabled Children's Service, would see an increase in demand for short breaks / respite support. At present there are limited places at Barnes Heath House, however, the Council is in the process of reviewing its short breaks / respite provision, which includes a review of the current 'offer', and an opportunity to work with health to increase and fund the provision in the

city. This work is likely to be concluded in early 2023, and therefore would be aligned to the timeline if Option 3 was agreed, meaning that the funding for Ash Field Academy would end in September 2024 as new services come online. (Although it is not clear at this time if Ash Field Academy would cease their residential provision, so there may be no impact).

4.30. As previously explained, options regarding the use of the residential provision have been discussed with Ash Field Academy, potentially widening access to more pupils from across the City, and with different complex health needs. This was taken into consideration by the Principal and Governors, however they felt this moved away from their focus as an education provision, and would require extensive work to meet regulatory standards, therefore did not wish to explore this further.

Conclusion

4.31. The residential facility at Ash Field Academy is undoubtedly an excellent provision, as identified by Ofsted, and the children and young people benefit from accessing it. However, the educational benefits are not clear, and the learning or Preparing for Adulthood activities could be part of the curriculum, which could easily be transferred into the school day. Also none of the children or young people at Ashfield have a statutory need for this requirement detailed in their EHCP.

Options/recommendations

4.32. The residential provision is and always has been part of the offer for pupils attending Ash Field Academy. It is recognised as outstanding by Ofsted and offers a unique opportunity for children with complex physical disabilities and medical needs, helping to develop their independence skills as they prepare for adulthood however, it is useful to consider:

- Can we afford to give funding to a limited number of pupils or spread the funding across a wider number of children and young people in the city?
- What would be the implication and demand on other services such as Barnes Health House provision, if this facility was not available?

4.33. It is proposed there are 3 options to be considered for the future of this provision, following this strategic review.

Option 1: Continue to fund whilst an alternative funding (rather than High Needs Block funding) is sort, with support from the Local Authority	
Benefits of option	Risks of option
- Provision is retained to support pupils and their families. - Outcomes of residential provision will improve services to help children with preparation to transition into adult services or independent living. - Will help increase attainment levels for students who use the service. - Limited demand on wider respite/ short breaks services managed by the Local Authority.	- There is a risk, that alternative funding sources are unavailable resulting in closure of the service. - There is a risk of closure of the provision, potentially resulting in an increased demand for local authority services. - There is a risk of staff redundancies or organisational review may be triggered.

• School will have greater autonomy in managing and developing the provision. • Opportunity for parents to contribute for pupils to stay at the provision	• There is a risk more children and young people are not well prepared for adulthood and independence • The High Needs Block in year overspend continues to be very significant which is unsustainable and the LA is already in discussions with the DfE regarding a deficit reduction plan. Expenditure within the block has to be prioritised and expenditure not for direct educational purposes cannot be a priority.

Option 2: Continue to fund the provision via the General Fund budget	
Benefits of option	**Risks of option**
• Ash Field Academy pupils (and their families) continue to have access to residential provision, develop and build their independence skills in preparation for adulthood. • There is unlikely to be an increase demand in other local authority services such as Barnes Heath House or Short Breaks • Ofsted have continually given the school an outstanding rating, therefore retaining the provision may maintain that good inspection outcome.	• The General Fund budget is already overspent, and the Council could not justify funding a residential provision that is not a legal requirement at a time when the council's finances are under serve pressure • The service is not open to the wider SEND population, and therefore not equitable • There is a risk that there is no clear accounting for the funding of the provision, with operational costs linked fluctuating use

Option 3: Remove the funding with effect from 1 September 2024	
Benefits of option	**Risks of option**
• Provides the school time to develop their business model/service specification. • Provides the school time to seek alternative funding • Greater equality of provision is maintained across the wider SEND population.	• There is a risk of adverse publicity and reputation risk for the local authority • Possibility of staff being made redundant • There is a risk the local authority will see an increase in demands for other services, although this will be mitigated via the review of Councils Short Breaks / Respite service • Less positive outcomes, e.g. as they transition into adulthood and have less skills requiring greater social care support in the community.

4.34. It should be noted that Ash Field Academy were not part of the Re-alignment of Leicester City Special Schools in 2020-21, however it was agreed the Academy's funding would be reviewed at a later date. This report focusses specifically on the

121

Residential element of funding the Academy receives from the High Needs Block and is separate to an ongoing banding review.

5. Details of Scrutiny

5.1.   The Principal and Chair of Governors have been engaged in the proposal to consult on ending the funding of the residential provision.

5.2.   The Schools Forum and union representative at Ash Field Academy were appraised of the proposal on 21 September 2022

5.3.   A report will be scheduled for discussion at the Children's, Young People and Education Scrutiny Commission meeting on 25 October 2022.

6. Financial, legal and other implications

6.1 Financial implications

6.1.1. If the proposal to be consulted upon of ending the funding for this residential/respite provision at Ash Field then, after the transitional period, expenditure from the High Needs Block would be lower by £0.4m from 2025/26 onwards than it would otherwise be.

6.1.2 If the decision is taken, following consultation to end the funding of the residential/respite provision this does not need approval from the DfE.

6.1.3. For context, the cumulative overspend from the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) as a result of previous year's overspends from the HNB was £3.6m at 31 March 2022. This followed an in year overspend of £6.1m from the HNB in 2021/22. It is forecast that the cumulative deficit will rise to £9.3m by March 2023 as a result of continuing rising demand for EHCPs and SEN placements which outstrips increases in HNB funding. This is unsustainable and the LA is already in discussions with the DfE regarding actions to reduce the deficit through a deficit management recovery plan. Expenditure from the HNB needs to be prioritised and this report indicates that the provision is not educational and therefore is not a priority. The LA's own financial position excluding the DSG is such that the LA could not afford to fund this provision.

Martin Judson, Head of Finance

6.2 Legal implications

Part 3 of the Children and Families Act 2014 sets out the duties placed on Local Authorities for children and young people in England with SEND. High Needs Block (HNB) funding provides the funding for support packages for an individual with special educational needs in a range of settings. The purpose of the HNB is to ensure equality and equity of opportunity for all children and young people irrespective of their need.

It should be noted that some of the decision-making around SEN provision, particularly the level of provision and type of placement to be provided under an EHCP, can be determined by the SEND Tribunal regardless of the authority's position. If educational provision is specified in an EHCP, the local authority is under a duty to secure that. It is therefore important to give consideration to whether the residential provision is specified in any individual EHCPs.

The report identifies options where potential savings can be made. There have been a number of recent legal challenges to local authorities seeking to make savings in this area. When taking decisions, the Council therefore needs to be mindful of the welfare of the children and young people who may be affected and not simply seeking to address financial concerns.

Julia Slipper, Principal Lawyer (Education & Employment), tel: ext 6855

Advice on consultation has been provided outside of this report, legal services can provide detailed advice on a consultation process as required. Generally those engaged in the consultation should be invited to comment on the proposals and put forward alternative suggestions. The consultation process must be meaningful, fair and proportionate to the potential impact of the proposal. Consultation must be made at a time when the proposals are at a formative stage –for the Authority to undertake meaningful it needs to consult at a stage where our mind is still open to change and the responses would therefore be able to influence the Authority's decision. The Authority is entitled to consult upon a preferred option, provided it has not genuinely made a decision as to the way forward and there is the genuine potential for that preference to change as a result of the consultation. The result of the consultation should be analysed, prior to any final decision being made, to ensure that any decision making is lawful, follows a fair process and is reasonable.

The Public Sector Equality Duty requires the Council to have due regard to the need to eliminate unlawful discrimination, advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not. Any proposed consultation should be used to help identify where the proposal might be needed to take account of the impact of those affected and to ensure continued equality of opportunity for those affected.

Mannah Begum, Principal Lawyer (Commercial) Ext: 1423.

6.3 Climate Change and Carbon Reduction implications

No climate change implications"

6.4 Equalities Implications

Under the Equality Act 2010, public authorities have a Public-Sector Equality Duty (PSED) which means that, in carrying out their functions, they have a statutory duty to pay due regard to the need to eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation, to advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who don't and to foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who don't. The Public Sector

Equality Duty cannot be delegated and therefore responsibility will remain with the Council.

Protected Characteristics under the Equality Act 2010 are age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation.

The Act also sets out the legal obligations that schools, early years providers, post-16 institutions, local authorities and others have towards disabled children and young people:

This report presents findings from a strategic commissioning review of Ash Field Academy's residential provision and presents three options for the future delivery of the provision for consideration. Those most likely to be affected by any change are likely to have the protected characteristics of age and disability. Impacts on staffing may well be for people from across several protected characteristics.

In order to ensure that any potential equalities implications are considered and whether any of the options would disproportionately impact any specific protected characteristic/s it will be conducive to carry out an equality impact. Findings from any formal consultation should inform the equality impact assessment which should be an iterative process and should inform decision making.

Equalities Officer, Surinder Singh, Ext 37 4148

6.5 Other Implications (You will need to have considered other implications in preparing this report. Please indicate which ones apply?)

None

7. Background information and other papers:

None

8. Summary of appendices:

A copy of the consultation documentation is detailed at Appendix 1.

9. Is this a private report (If so, please indicated the reasons and state why it is not in the public interest to be dealt with publicly)?

No

10. Is this a "key decision"?

No

Ash Field Academy Residential Provision

Overview

Ash Field Academy provides education and support to children and young people between the ages of 4 and 19 years of age, who have complex health and medical needs. All pupils have an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP).

The school has capacity for 160 pupils and currently provides overnight residential provision for up to 18 pupils per night, four nights per week during term time. Annually, 35-45 (22-28%) of Ash Field Academy's pupils are accessing the residential provision. Many of the pupils accessing the service have profound and multiple disabilities and require specialist care and facilities to support them.

Whilst staying in the residential facilities, pupils are involved in various leisure activities and have opportunities to practice their independence skills. Staying in the residential provision and the activities included are free of charge to pupils and parents.

None of the school's pupils have an EHCP stating residential provision is required, and no teachers are employed to deliver / support the service.

Ash Field Academy's residential provision is currently funded by the High Needs Block (HNB) grant which Leicester City Council receives from the Government to deliver educational services. The HNB grant is not intended for non-educational activities or services.

It is acknowledged the academy provides an outstanding residential service for its pupils and is highly regarded by all who use or are involved in the facility, not least the pupils and their parents/guardians. The service isn't accessed by all pupils at the academy and is not available to children with SEND who aren't pupils of the academy, of which there are over 1,000 across the city.

The council does have a legal duty to provide short breaks / respite support for some eligible children and young people with SEND, however this is supported through the council's Disabled Children's Service.

The purpose of this consultation is to invite views on whether the council should cease HNB funding for the residential provision from August 2024. The HNB is intended for educational services for SEND pupils across the city.

It should be noted that at this stage no decision has been made regarding withdrawal of funding for the residential facility.

If the post-consultation decision is to no longer fund the residential provision with the HNB grant, the council would work with Ash Field Academy to identify potential alternative funding.

About you

Are you responding as.....

Please select only one item

○ Pupil at Ash Field Academy who uses the school's residential support services

○ Pupil at Ash Field Academy who does not use the school's residential support services

○ Parent of a pupil at Ash Field Academy who uses the school's residential support services

○ Parent of a pupil at Ash Field Academy who does not use the school's residential support services

○ Member of Ash Field Academy residential staff

○ Member of Ash Field Academy school staff or governors

○ Member of staff or governor at another school

○ Parent of a pupil who attends another school

○ Member of Leicester City Council staff

○ Health professional

○ Local resident

○ Other

If Other, please specify

[   ]

What is your postcode?

Please note: we collect postcode data to gain a better understanding of which parts of the city / county respond to our consultations. We cannot identify individual properties or addresses from this information.

[   ]

The proposal

It is proposed to cease HNB funding for the residential provision from August 2024. The HNB is intended for educational services for SEND pupils across the city.

It should be noted that at this stage no decision has been made regarding withdrawal of funding for the residential facility.

If the post-consultation decision is to no longer fund the residential provision with the HNB grant, the council would work with Ash Field Academy to identify potential alternative funding.

Do you agree with the proposal to cease HNB funding for Ash Field Academy's residential provision?

Please select only one item

◯ Yes
◯ No
◯ Partially

If you disagree with the proposal (or only partially agree), please indicate why.

Supporting documentation

Please upload any relevant documentation to support your comments

Equality monitoring

The information you provide in this final section of the questionnaire will be kept in accordance with terms of current Data Protection legislation and will only be used for the purpose of monitoring.

Your details will not be passed on to any other individual, organisation or group. Leicester City Council is the data controller for the information on this form for the purposes of current Data Protection legislation.

Ethnic background:

Please select only one item

- ◯ Asian or Asian British: Bangladeshi
- ◯ Asian or Asian British: Indian
- ◯ Asian or Asian British: Pakistani
- ◯ Asian or Asian British: Any other Asian background
- ◯ Black or Black British: African
- ◯ Black or Black British: Caribbean
- ◯ Black or Black British: Somali
- ◯ Black or Black British: Any other Black background
- ◯ Chinese
- ◯ Chinese: Any other Chinese background
- ◯ Dual/Multiple Heritage: White & Asian
- ◯ Dual/Multiple Heritage: White & Black African
- ◯ Dual/Multiple Heritage: White & Black Caribbean
- ◯ Dual/Multiple Heritage: Any other heritage background
- ◯ White: British
- ◯ White: European
- ◯ White: Irish
- ◯ White: Any other White background
- ◯ Other ethnic group: Gypsy/Romany/Irish Traveller
- ◯ Other ethnic group: Any other ethnic group
- ◯ Prefer not to say

If you said your ethnic group was one of the 'Other' categories, please tell us what this is:

Age:

Please select only one item

- ◯ under 18
- ◯ 18 - 25
- ◯ 26 - 35
- ◯ 36 - 45
- ◯ 46 - 55
- ◯ 56 - 65
- ◯ 66+
- ◯ Prefer not to say

Sexual orientation. Do you consider yourself to be ...

Please select only one item

◯ Bisexual

◯ Gay / lesbian

◯ Heterosexual / straight

◯ Prefer not to say

◯ Other (please specify)

[   ]

Disability

The Equality Act 2010 defines a person as disabled if they have a physical or mental impairment which has a substantial and long-term effect on their ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities and has lasted or is likely to last for at least 12 months. People with HIV, cancer, multiple sclerosis (MS) and severe disfigurement are also covered by the Equality Act.

Do you consider yourself to be a disabled person?

Please select only one item

◯ Yes

◯ No

◯ Prefer not to say

If you have answered **'Yes'** to the above, please state the type of impairment that applies to you. People may experience more than one type of impairment, in which case you may need to tick more than one box. If none of the categories apply, please tick 'Other' and state the type of impairment.

Please select all that apply

☐ A long standing illness or health condition such as cancer, HIV, diabetes, chronic heart disease, or epilepsy

☐ A mental health difficulty, such as depression, schizophrenia or anxiety disorder

☐ A physical impairment or mobility issues, such as difficulty using your arms or using a wheelchair or crutches

☐ A social / communication impairment such as a speech and language impairment or Asperger's syndrome / other autistic spectrum disorder

☐ A specific learning difficulty or disability such as Down's syndrome, dyslexia, dyspraxia or AD(H)D

☐ Blind or have a visual impairment uncorrected by glasses

☐ Deaf or have a hearing impairment

☐ An impairment, health condition or learning difference that is not listed above (specify if you wish)

☐ Prefer not to say

☐ Other

If Other, please say

[   ]

How would you define your religion or belief?

Please select only one item

◯ Atheist
◯ Bahai
◯ Buddhist
◯ Christian
◯ Hindu
◯ Jain
◯ Jewish
◯ Muslim
◯ Sikh
◯ No religion
◯ Prefer not to say
◯ Other

If Other, please specify

[   ]

What is your sex?

Please select only one item

◯ Female
◯ Male
◯ Prefer not to say

Is your gender identity the same as your sex registered at birth?

Please select only one item

◯ Yes
◯ No
◯ Prefer not to say

If No, what term do you use to identify your gender? (leave blank if prefer not to say)

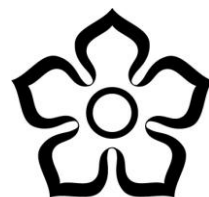[   ]

CYPE Scrutiny Commission

Fostering Service

Annual Report 2021/22 and Statement of Purpose

CYPE Scrutiny: 25 October 2022

Lead director: Caroline Tote

www.leicester.gov.uk

Useful information

■ Ward(s) affected: All

■ Report author: David Thrussell, Head of Service Corporate Parenting

■ Author contact details: 0116 454 1657

■ Report version number: v1

1. Summary

1.1   This report provides an overview of the activity and performance of the council Fostering Service from 1st April 2021 to 31st March 2022. The report should be read in conjunction with the annual statement of purpose which sets out the service aims, objectives and configuration. Our priority continues to be the recruitment of foster carers to enable more children to continue to live within local family households.

1.2   The majority of our children looked after (69%) are placed in foster care, with our foster carers looking after 50%, 281 children and young people on 31st March 2022. Despite a reduction on the previous year, the percentage of local in - house carers remain above the national average.

1.3   We have good rates of retention of foster carers and 37% of mainstream carers have 0-5 years' experience, 27% 5-10 years, 20% 10-20 years and 16% over 20 years' experience.

1.4   The Fostering Service currently supports 151 mainstream fostering households, 62 Kinship fostering households and 7 short break fostering households. The percentage of kinship fostering households has reduced although remains above the national average. This is in part due to the number of special guardianship arrangements allowing for children to remain living with family members without the need for formal care arrangements.

1.5   The service received 157 new enquiries in 2021-22, of which 57 households applied, and recruited 17 new mainstream fostering households in 2021-22, which was three lower than the previous year; 39 assessments were started or in progress. The number of recorded enquiries was lower than the previous year partly due to changes in recording methods and the drop off in general enquiries following the first lockdown.

1.6   Most of our children are placed locally, with 91% of our mainstream foster care homes located within Leicester and Leicestershire. This remains above the national average.

1.7   Long term placement stability continues to be a priority. We continue to exceed national and regional trends with more than 73% of children remaining in their home for more than 2 ½ years.

1.8   53% of our foster carers approved this year were approved to care for sibling groups. We extended and/or changed approvals for 11 mainstream fostering households to care for children on a permanent basis achieving permanence for 25 children. Children requiring permanent fostering placements are actively tracked to progress matching and permanence with positive outcomes for these children.

2.   Recommended actions/decision

2.1   This report is for information only and the Executive are asked to note and approve the Fostering Service Annual Report for 2021-22 and identified priorities for the coming year.

3.   Scrutiny / stakeholder engagement

3.1   The report has been prepared in consultation with the Service Manager for the Fostering Service and shared with relevant stakeholders in the mainstream Fostering and Kinship Teams, and the Children's Safeguarding and Quality Assurance Team. The report will proceed to Children, Young

People and Education Scrutiny Commission. The report contains some direct quotations from carers who have been supported over the past year.

4.   Background and options with supporting evidence

4.1   This is a covering report for the attached Fostering Service Annual Report 2021/22.

5.   Detailed report

5.1   Please refer to the attached main report. If you have any questions about the information contained in this Annual Report or the Statement of Purpose, please contact the Fostering Team on 0116 454 4510.

6.   Financial, legal, equalities, climate emergency and other implications

6.1   Financial implications

6.1.1   There are no direct financial implications arising from this report

Martin Judson, Head of Finance
Adult Services / Education and Children's Services
Tel 37 4101

6.2   Legal implications

6.2.1   There are no direct legal implications arising from the contents of this report.

Pretty Patel, Head of Law
Tel 37 1457

6.3 Equalities implications

6.3.1 The Equality Act expects us to show due regard to eliminating discrimination, advancing equality of opportunity, and fostering good relations. Our public sector duty expects us to demonstrate how we do this, and included within this is how we undertake decisions, what information we are informed by and what impacts we have taken into consideration to address needs now and in the future.

6.3.2 The aims, objectives and services provided by the Leicester City Council fostering service as detailed in the annual report and activity refer to the support provided to our children looked after across all protected characteristics, the service continues to attract applicants with a range of heritages. The Fostering Service's aim is to maintain a sufficiently large and diverse range of foster carers and short-breaks carers to match children and young people's needs.

6.3.3 The service also advances equality of opportunity and fosters good relations by encouraging and publicising fostering services to enable all members of the community to consider fostering as a positive option and to recruit from a wide variety of backgrounds to meet children's individual needs.

6.3.4 In addition, the service helps to eliminate discrimination, advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations by recruiting foster carers who will respect the diverse cultures and lifestyles within society and who will bring up children and young people who will respect these differences. Potentially, children and young people will come from a wide range of backgrounds; all have different family situations, experiences, and will all need different types of care.

6.3.5 Going forward any new initiatives being developed along with current areas of work underway such as the digital transformation and introduction of the new CRM tool, need to ensure equality considerations are embedded throughout

the process going forward and equality impact assessments completed as appropriate.

6.3.6 The Equality Impact Assessment is an iterative document which should be revisited throughout the decision-making process and should, ultimately, also consider any consultation findings. The findings of the Equality Impact Assessment should be shared, throughout the process, with decision makers to inform their considerations and decision making. Where any potential disproportionate negative equalities impacts are identified in relation to a protected characteristic/s, steps should be identified and taken to reduce or remove that impact.

Sukhi Biring, Equalities Officer,
Tel 37 4175

6.4   Climate Emergency implications

6.4.1 There are no significant climate change implications associated with this report.

Aidan Davis, Sustainability Officer, Environment Team Tel 37 2284

6.5   Other implications (You will need to have considered other implications in preparing this report. Please indicate which ones apply?)

6.5.1 None

7.   Background information and other papers:

7.1   Fostering Service Annual Statement of Purpose 2019/20.

8.   Summary of appendices:

8.1   None

9.   Is this a private report (If so, please indicate the reasons and state why it is not in the public interest to be dealt with publicly)?

9.1   No

10.   Is this a "key decision"? If so, why?

10.1   No

Annual Report 2021-22

Purpose

The purpose of this annual report is to provide an overview of the activity and performance of the Fostering Service from 1st April 2021 to 31st March 2022.
The Fostering Service is essential in supporting our delivery of high-quality care and support for our children looked after, allowing them to live and thrive in a family home. The service ensures that our children and young people live in safe, stable, and appropriately matched foster families, and that our families are supported to deliver the best outcomes for our children and young people.

Our aim for children who are cared for is that that they will have a clear understanding of why they are looked after by the local authority, be given an opportunity to make sense of their experiences, knowing who is there to support them to achieve their goals and lead successful lives.

The Fostering Service is also required to produce a written Statement of Purpose each year which sets out details of our services and how we will meet our commitment to providing high-quality care and support for our children, young people and foster families.
The Fostering Service Annual Report and Statement of Purpose are available to all staff, foster carers, children and young people, parents, and other professionals in a variety of formats.
You can find the most up to date copy on our website www.leicester.gov.uk/fostering.

Highlights of 2021-22

The fostering service has continued to support our foster carers and the children in their care. Routine visits and reviews moved to virtual meetings in accordance with national and local restrictions on contact during the pandemic, and then returned to pre-covid visiting. Where children and carers needed to be seen in person, contact or home visits have taken place throughout this year.

Support for our foster carers has been provided through online forums, webinars, training events and professional practice days, whilst peer support has been encouraged. The Service Manager has continued to provide a weekly bulletin to foster carers since the pandemic providing additional advice and support, and access to online resources.

We have developed more online presence and we have increased our starting fees for new foster carers.

The Fostering Panel has continued to meet throughout the past year to ensure that potential foster carers can continue to be assessed and approved, and that children can be matched to carers without delay.

Joint working with the children in need team continues to be very successful in improving the quality of viability assessments for potential Kinship carers and we have also been able to cease the use of external providers leading to a higher quality of assessment.

Key Successes

- ♥ We have increased our starting financial offer to be more competitive, which has led to an increase in high quality applications.

- ♥ Our work with corporate communications and digital transformation has opened new ways of working, which once implemented will lead to quicker response times, more focused work, and automation of tasks leading to better conversion rates and prioritising of resources.

- ♥ Our capital funding scheme has allowed existing foster carers to expand their homes and offer more homes to children and young people.

- ♥ Foster carers continue to tell us that we are supporting them, and we have found lots of new ways of offering support such as buddy schemes, online forums, webinars, training events and professional practice days and regular newsletters from the Fostering and Adoption Service Manager.

Local Profile

♥ The majority of our Looked After Children (69%) are placed in foster care, with our foster carers looking after 50%, 281 children and young people on 31st March 2022.

♥ The Fostering Service currently supports 151 mainstream fostering households, 62 Kinship fostering households and 7 short break fostering households.

♥ We received 157 enquiries in 2021-22, of which 57 households applied.

♥ We have recruited 17 new mainstream fostering households in 2021-22.

♥ In addition to the 29 assessments progressed from enquiries received in 2021-22, a further 10 assessments remained on-going from the previous year 2020-21 – in total 39 assessments were started or in progress during 2021-22.

♥ Long term placement stability continues to be a priority. We continue to exceed national and regional trends with more than 73% of children remaining in their home for more than 2 ½ years.

♥ 53% of our foster carers approved this year were approved to care for sibling groups. We extended and/or changed approvals for 11 mainstream fostering households to care for children on a permanent basis; this confirmed permanence for 25 children.

♥ Most of our children are placed locally, with 91% of our mainstream foster care homes located within Leicester and Leicestershire.

♥ We have an experienced cohort of foster carers: 37% of mainstream carers have 0-5 years' experience, 27% 5-10 years, 20% 10-20 years and 16% over 20 years.

♥ We are recruiting to match the needs of our children in care: 77% of Leicester City Foster Carers are white British compared to 82% nationally. 23% of our carers have

diverse heritages, compared to 15% nationally, and our foster carers speak over 20 languages and practice 16 different religions, some with no religion.

142

Recruitment and Retention

Enquiry → Application Pack → Initial Visit → Stage 1 Assessment → Stage 2 Assessment → Approval

Increasing the number of Leicester City foster carers is a significant priority for the Council. We aim to recruit and retain a large and diverse range of foster carers and short-breaks carers to match our children and young people's needs.

Our dedicated recruitment and assessment team consists of 1 Team Manager, 1 Publicity Officer, 1 Enquiries Officer, 4 Assessment Workers and a Child Care Support worker. It should be recognised that as corporate parents, all services across the organisation play a role in supporting and delivering better outcomes for our foster families and our children.

Our Publicity Officer works closely with colleagues in the Corporate Communications Team to create appropriate and cost-effective recruitment campaigns, based on areas of need, using various online and more traditional methods such as posters, postcards and banners as well as recruitment events, radio campaigns and adverts in newspapers.

Our Enquiries Officer is available on the phone, e-mail, social media and in person at regular recruitment events to provide a friendly, warm welcome to fostering for Leicester City and to discuss individual circumstances.

Those interested in fostering and provided with an application pack and are given information about upcoming information events. Once an application pack is received, an initial visit is arranged to discuss individual circumstances in more detail. This ensures that we are assessing the right people, at the right time.

Our assessments are completed by assessment workers in a timely fashion but are also comprehensive and ensure that the foster family are ready to become foster carers.

Outcomes

	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22
Enquiries	257	197	408	157
Applications	52	41	48	57
Assessments	47	31	25	29
Approvals	27	18	20	17

Enquiries to applications	20%	21%	13%	36%
Applications to assessments	90%	76%	46%	51%
Assessments to approvals	57%	58%	80%	55%

143

Initial Enquiries

Our online presence remains strong, and the increased financial offer means we are now more competitive against our neighbouring local authorities and independent fostering agencies. Of the 157 enquiries received, a snapshot of where enquiries are received from is shown below

- 45% (71) via Internet
- 25% (39) via Facebook
- 8% (12) via Word of Mouth
- 7% (11) via £500 reward
- 7% (11) via Recruitment Events
- 8% (13) other – including google ads, leaflets, Leicester Mercury etc
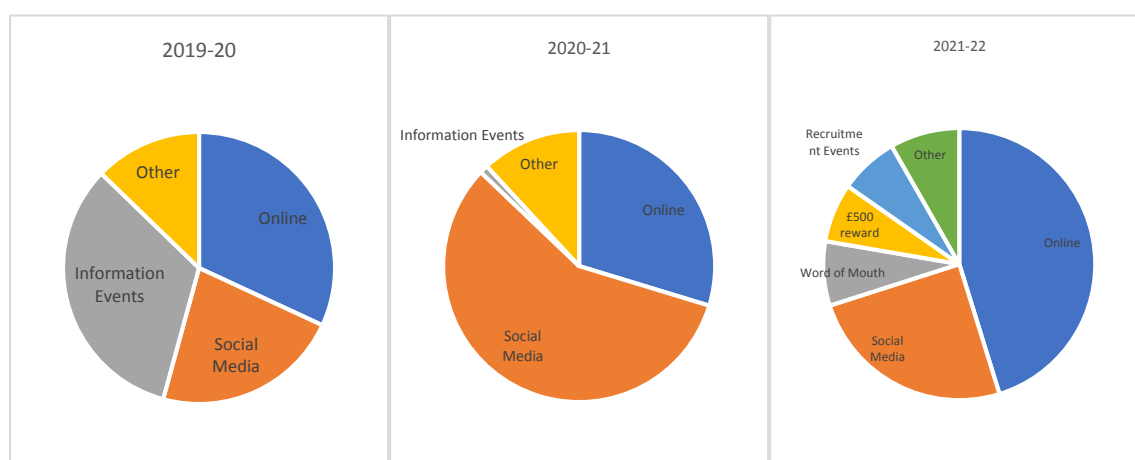
As part of our new strategy, we have:

- ♥ Increased our starting financial offer to be more competitive with private agencies

- ♥ Increased our social media presence, held 23 Virtual Information Sessions offering both day and evening session. The team have also completed a video recording of a presentation of Information Session, to use virtually.

- ♥ Created a Facebook Enquiries Form

- ♥ Refreshed our printed materials for Short Breaks and Postcards

Two successful recruitment strategies have been the 'golden hello' and the £500 reward payment. 7 of the 17 approved carers received a 'golden hello' of £1000 as they were approved for either sibling groups, or teenage placements. 2 current foster carers received a £500 reward for recommending friends who went on to be approved this year. This is a positive recruitment aid, as the applicants already have a realistic view of fostering and have friends who can offer support and advice.

We are currently progressing with procuring a Customer Relationship Management (CRM) tool which will help to respond to enquiries and applications at a time which is best suited to the enquirer, prioritise those who are most interested, automate admin processes, and

highlight trends and areas of interest to ensure we are focusing on what matters will deliver the best outcomes. This is expected to be in place by the end of 2022.

Applications

Nationally there is a distinct difference in conversion rates of initial enquiries to applications. Our conversion rate is approximately 1 application per 10 enquiries received, which compares well against IFAs with an average conversion of 1 application per 20 enquiries received, while other local authorities reported a conversion of 1 application per 9 enquires.

Of the 57 applications received, 52 progressed through to initial visits and 5 were withdrawn or rejected.

Of the 52 scheduled for an initial visit, 40 proceeded to an initial visit, 5 are awaiting an initial visit and 7 withdrew prior to attending an initial visit.

Of the 40 who proceeded to an initial visit, 29 were progressed through to assessment and 11 were withdrawn or rejected.

- 2 withdrew due to personal reasons
- 2 language barriers
- 3 lacked experience
- 1 financial
- 1 space/housing
- 2 availability / not meeting service needs

Assessments

In addition to the 29 assessments progressed from enquiries received in 2020-21, a further 10 assessments remained on-going from the previous year 2019-20 – in total 39 assessments were started or in progress during 2020-21.

Our assessment timescales remain positive, with 87% of mainstream assessments being completed within 4-5 months, (compared to 90% in 2020-21), well under the National Minimum Standard of 8 months.

Applicants who are unsuccessful include those who fail to meet basic requirements, for example their working pattern may not be flexible enough; they may lack experience of looking after or working with children; they may demonstrate that it would be unlikely they will meet the minimum standards. Some applicants may express attitudes inconsistent with fostering; they may have health issues that prevent fostering; some will be excluded after negative background checks.

Approvals

In 2021-22 we approved 17 fostering households.

Type of household	Number	Percentage	Max approval of household
Mainstream permanent	4	23%	7
Mainstream not permanent	10	59%	10 (14 if siblings)
Mainstream respite	1	6%	1
Short Breaks	2	12%	2

It is not uncommon to see a higher number of not permanent carers during their initial approval – this allows the new cares the opportunity to gain experience and adapt their lifestyle to fostering. Over time, we begin to see not permanent carers expand their approval to permanent fostering at a time which is right for them and the children in their care (for example, the fostering panel heard 11 changes to approval this year).

Retention

In 2021-22, 27 fostering households left the service as seen below:

Type of household	Number of households	Percentage	Max approval of household
Mainstream permanent	4	15%	9
Mainstream not permanent	18	66%	31
Mainstream respite	4	15%	9
Short breaks	1	4%	1

The context of our retention of foster carers for 2021/22 is that it has been a difficult and emotionally taxing year, with the pandemic and isolation and greater levels of demand on families. Subsequently, most carers (14) left due to changes in personal circumstances (52%) which included new employment and moving cities, a couple separating, a change in family dynamics, supporting a nephew, and prioritising family needs. Six households left due to concerns raised by the Service, and four left due to ill health. One carer resigned following a complaint, one transferred to an Independent Fostering Agency (IFA) and one household left due to their foster child turning 18.

Kinship (Family and Friends) Carers

There is a legal requirement for local authorities to assess all potential family members as potential kinship carers for looked after children. Locally we have a comparatively high number of kinship carers.

Family members who need to be considered for kinship care are subject to a Joint Initial Viability Assessment (IVA) usually carried out by the Children in Need Service arising out of care proceedings.

A Supervising Social Worker from the Kinship Team has been 'embedded' alongside Social Workers in the Children in Need Teams, to support quality and consistency of viability assessments giving advice and collaboratively completing joint viability visits.

The joint working has proved to be very successful in improving the quality of viabilities. Resources are being focussed and dedicated to identifying positive family options alongside counselling out negative viabilities.

There have been no assessments outsourced to an external provider since August 2020 following reconfiguration of the Kinship Team, leading to a higher quality of assessment.

Of the assessments completed in 2021-22:

- ♥ 15 were approved
- ♥ 5 were concluded as negative

Fostering Panel

The role of the Fostering Panel is to make recommendations to the local authority regarding the suitability of foster carers. The panel also quality assures reports and gives feedback to the Team Managers to promote opportunities and share learning.

The Panel consists of experienced individuals who work to ensure that Looked after Children in Leicester City enjoy a consistently high standard of care with approved foster carers who can meet their needs.

From June 2021 all first Foster Home Reviews are brought to Panel, and the foster carers attend. This improved practice and has begun to give an overview on carers' first year's fostering.

In 2021-22 a total of 23 panel meetings were held – these meetings considered:

- ♥ 37 applications across mainstream, kinship and short break households
- ♥ 11 changes to approval
- ♥ 12 first reviews
- ♥ 17 additional requests (such as extensions to regulation 25, attached support and exemptions).

Our Local Support Offer for Foster Carers

Our Team

The main source of support for our foster carers is access to an experienced and qualified Supervising Social Worker allocated to each fostering household. Foster carers indicate that this relationship is one of the most important elements of the local offer. The Team around the child is invaluable as shown in the comments below.

> ""C is 7 years old, has global developmental delay and is awaiting hearing aids and requires speech and language in line with an EHCP. It is noted how well the foster carers have been working with the adopters and with professionals towards C having a family – how she has gone above and beyond, C has been placed there 2 years. The work that has taken place to get C's journey to this point is acknowledged, the Social Worker, Adoption Worker, and colleagues well done in this – I could see on your faces how proud and delighted you are. This is a good news story given C's age and health needs- and a previous adoption placement not lasting, no one has given up on him."

Our Local Offer

In addition to our Supervising Social Workers day-to-day support, we also offer a range of other support resources to support our foster carers, this includes:

- ♥ Our Foster Carers are provided with membership to Foster Talk, an independent, not-for-profit organisation dedicated to supporting Foster Carers. They provide a comprehensive support package including 24 hour legal, counselling, and medical

147

and first aid helplines; accountancy and tax advice, high street discounts, legal expenses insurance, education advisory service, and independent support during allegations.

♥ A comprehensive Handbook for Foster Carers is published online.

♥ There are close working relationships with a range of childcare professionals including the child's Social Worker, Independent Reviewing Officer, the Virtual School Team, Health colleagues, and the Children and Families Support Team (CFST) providing therapeutic advice and direct work.

> *"A always supports B to come to his therapeutic sessions. She offers a warm response to B before and after his session and takes an interest in his emotional health. A seems to have a great understanding of B and his needs with regards to the impact of developmental trauma. They appear to have a healthy loving relationship and B knows that she cares about him. I wish we had more fosters carers like A".*

♥ All carers have an annual review meeting chaired by a Fostering Independent Reviewing Officer (FIRO) who sits outside of the service within the Safeguarding and Quality Assurance Team.

♥ Peer support is established, by foster carers in the city.

♥ An annual professional development Conference went ahead virtually this year, allowing more foster carers and workers to join.

♥ Active Leicester Membership entitles the whole fostering family and those they care for to access free swimming and gym.

♥ 30 hours free childcare is provided for foster carers meeting eligibility criteria.

♥ Bespoke financial support is provided to foster carers via a Leisure Fund, to enable children and young people to sustain their interests over time, building confidence, skills, and enjoyment.

♥ Access to Bullfrog Arts focuses on improving the emotional health, wellbeing, and self-efficacy of looked after children and young people and their foster carers though music and singing culminating in an annual concert, which was virtual this year.

♥ It is hoped that the annual celebration and Meet the Team events will be reinstated in line with changing government guidance on group gatherings.

Sons and Daughter's Group

The group is an activity-based support group for sons and daughters of our registered foster carers which has previously met regularly throughout the year. Due to the inability to meet up over the past year we have missed the meetings and activities for the young people, plus opportunities to share their thoughts and feelings about the experience of fostering.

Members of the group have previously contributed to the Skills to Foster training programme for new carers and have also contributed to Ofsted inspections.

As a group they have evolved using feedback from consultations with the children and their parents, in supervisions, from foster home reviews and team meetings, which has highlighted the need for more training. As a result, we have previously been able to provide training on several relevant issues which included on-line grooming, the role of the Supervising Social Worker, Bullying, Loss and Transitions and building resilience in terms of support networks. Outcomes from the training events are then in turn fed back to the service, informing individual practice and Service Development.

Young People have taken a lead role in the planning and running of activities. The previous take up of young people wanting to be part of the working group, as well as attending regular activities, clearly evidences the need for support and training for sons and daughters, so that they are better able to support their own needs and a successful placement of a Looked after Child.

Our Supervising Social Workers all get to know the sons and daughters of our foster carers and will speak and meet with them individually subject to parental consent.

The Children and Families Support Team (CFST)

The Children and Families Support Team (CFST) provide assessment and intervention to children and their families and carers to enable them to live safely in their family environment and within the community. The team has worked with 38 children who are Looked After by the local authority over the past year, working with the child or young person and their caregivers. They have worked with 8 young people (Lac and non-Lac) who have used Sexually Harmful Behaviour and are subject to Harmful Sexual Behaviour Plans. Additionally, CFST provide training to foster carers and Hub meetings for case discussions and support. Over the past year CFST has helped 16 foster carers via the CFST Hub.

From a parent whose son was helped therapeutically:

"I feel the therapy has really helped my son and is a much-needed service. C listened and helped my son with some deep-rooted issues, her knowledge and guidance helped him to confront traumas/issues and gave him coping strategies. I feel he connected with C and he felt comfortable talking to her she made him feel at ease and relaxed, she was not judgmental. C would let him talk and get his feelings out, she would interject with her thoughts and opinions and give him ways to cope and a different perspective. I definitely feel my son came out of the therapy with a better understanding of his own traumas, better and more positive relationships with people around him and less angry. Thank you very much C for such a brilliant service and therapy that has help my family so much"

Training for Foster Carers

The three main areas of our training offer are Initial preparation training for mainstream carers, ongoing offer of training for all carers, including one-off training provided by partners, and Training, Support and Development Standards (TSDS) for all carers.

During lockdown The Skills to Foster courses have been run on a rolling programme approximately every 8 weeks to meet the needs of applicants. 4 courses were completed during 2021 - 22, this included a brief virtual introduction session, 2 online courses (8 hours of content each) 2 virtual training sessions with a social worker and a foster carer and a one-to-one reflective session. Over the past year 34 applicants were trained. This was followed by a session for Sons and Daughters, for ages 7 to 18. There have been 5 virtual or blended Son's and Daughter's sessions. The feedback from this is positive, with 14 children appreciating an understanding of confidentiality, safeguarding and what a Supervising Social Worker does.

A new virtual course has been developed and run by the Kinship Team, entitled Introduction to Kinship Foster Care. Other new virtual courses have been provided by Inspire Training including Therapeutic Parenting; Calming the angry child; Dealing with lying; Using PACE in real life; Overcoming compassion fatigue; Surviving the holidays; How to deal with arguing.

Foster Carers received a regular weekly email from the Service Manager with attachments and hyperlinks on a range of relevant information and resources throughout the year.

The 2021 Annual Conference '*The Power of the Senses'* was run virtually by the Therapeutic Services and Trauma Team at Beacon House. The conference provided an understanding of children's sensory systems impacted by trauma and loss and included a toolbox of practical everyday sensory strategies to support regulation

The Service has a well-established e-learning platform from Kate Cairns Associates, offering a range of general and specialised fostering topics. Currently 66 courses are offered from Level 1 to Level 3. An e-learning journal completed by carers offers opportunities to reflect on practice and there is opportunity to be mentored by their Supervising Social Worker in an interactive way outside of face-to-face contact.

Training Support and Development Standards (TSDS) are completed by carers through commissioned e-learning from The Grey Matter Group. Carers have been completing courses at home, starting the Standards over the past year and completing them. The six weekly drop-in sessions were moved to a virtual platform due to Covid-19 restrictions, so the carers continued to benefit from the support from the Fostering Team and an experienced foster carer. All carers must complete their TSDS; mainstream carers need to complete this within a year of approval and Kinship Carers within 18 months. Newly approved carers are now demonstrating they can complete within this timescale. Further work is being undertaken to support kinship carers. The reviewing of individual foster carers and their training is monitored in supervision and in the Foster Carer Annual Review.

Quality Assurance

Foster Home Reviews are completed by a dedicated Fostering Independent Reviewing Officer (FIRO), whilst unannounced visits and supervisory visits completed by Supervising Social Workers, all contribute to an assessment of the child's lived experience in the home. Timeliness of foster carers' reviews has improved significantly, with 96% completed. This means that foster carer's performance, consideration of training and development needs are reviewed regularly. Foster carers are positive about the support that they receive from their Supervising Social Workers and the service.

Whilst unannounced visits dipped during covid precautions, compliance has now returned to pre-covid levels, as shown by the Foster Home Review Monitoring forms:
1-4-21 to 1-9-21 96% of annual unannounced visits were completed (93 FHRs)
2-9-21 to 31-3-22 99% of annual unannounced visits were completed (71 FHRs)
Commendations over the past year have included the following from a social worker:

> "D provides an outstanding level of care. M is 100% incorporated into D's family life. It is a very happy, active, supportive and caring family and Ma is thriving in D's care.
> M enjoys an array of healthy activities, he is frequently attending after-school activities and clubs particularly so pre covid
> D is very aware of the impact of trauma throughout early years. Whilst recognising the neglect suffered by M she work hard to support M to overcome these experiences. D has developed an extremely positive relationship with parents to ensure M enjoys his contacts and all involved feel happy, engaged and supported.
> D is supporting M with his attendance at CFST
> In respect of the foster home D provides a very safe environment and a happy environment. M is fully supported to participate and achieve. He had as lots of activities that he enjoys and D is so positive in relation to education. M has been supported to come on in leaps and bounds since being in this placement.
> D is extremely supportive and acts very quickly and willingly on suggestions that I make. D is a pleasure to work with and I am very appreciative of the support and care she gives M".

Below is what child L said about his care; he drew a lovely picture of P calling him for dinner and him on his computer asking for more time on his game!! With lots of laughs written over the picture.

> "I have my own money. I feel like family, not a foster kid. Mum nurtures me, she gives me love, buys me things and feeds me. The house isn't dull and it's funny. We have good times together. I love that B lives here. I can tell mum and K anything. I have nice things. D and M give me cuddles.
> I sometimes feel like I don't get as much freedom as others eg can't help myself to snacks, restrictions on screen times.
> Mum has helped me with all the above. Mum and K helped me to talk about my emotions. They help me see how important education is and if I do well at school I'll have a better future. They praise me if I do good and help me with my confidence.
> I only wish that there were no rules around my screen time. Although I understand why".

> Foster Carers are now attending and supporting the five Corporate Parenting subgroups, (Active Citizenship; Health and Wellbeing; Education Training and Employment; Preparing for Successful Living; A Place to Live). This allows Foster Carers to contribute to and influence decision making and service developments for Children Looked After.

151

Managing Allegations

From 1st April 2021 to 31st March 2022, there were 21 households involved in incidents of allegations against Foster Carers. All allegations or concerns are followed up rigorously by the service.
Safeguarding Strategy Meetings and Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) investigations were held. There were 3 substantiated allegations (two involving neglect and one of physical harm). There have been 10 post LADO Reports where all findings have been presented to the Fostering Panel and the Agency Decision Maker. Three fostering households have subsequently been deregistered.

Placement Stability

- ♥ 6% of our children looked after experienced 3 placement moves or more which is currently lower than England and our statistical neighbours (10%)
- ♥ 73% of our looked after children have been in placement for over 2 years which is currently higher than England (70%) and our statistical neighbours (70%)

Stable and secure relationships are a vital element to ensuring that our Looked After Children are safe and have the best possible opportunities to fulfil their aspirations, whilst consistent and high-quality relationships with carers add to their resilience and security. Robust actions are taken to prevent placement breakdown and stability meetings are called to identify additional resources to stabilise placements deemed to be vulnerable.
As part of the strategy to improve permanence for our children looked after, a permanent fostering monitoring group (PFMG) has been established to review and track all children to ensure progress and prevent delay. This promotes better outcomes, supports placement stability, and reduces long-term arrangements with more costly IFAs.
Activity to support family finding for permanence includes:
- approaching existing foster carers – through a monthly e-bulletin.
- recruiting more permanent foster carers.
- approaching local Independent Fostering Agencies – through a new e-bulletin; this has had a positive start in identifying permanent homes for our children.
- The use of Link Maker to search for possible placements outside of Leicester City
- bespoke recruitment for specific children – this will be an innovative recruitment approach as evidenced by conversations with Coram BAAF.

Staying Put Scheme

Young people who are care leavers have the option of staying with their foster carer after they turn 18. Care Leavers make good use of Staying Put arrangements with their ex-foster carers post-18, with 58 young people using this as a 'springboard' for increased independence, e.g., before they move on to their own accommodation, or higher education opportunities. All care leavers are encouraged to consider this option prior to leaving care,

and currently 16 care leavers aged 19 and 20 remain living with their carers under 'staying put'.

Other young people return to their carers for Sunday lunches and celebratory events, and for ongoing support and interest in their lives. Policies and guidance are appropriately targeted for young people, professionals and those foster carers who wish to participate.

Looking Ahead to 2022-23

Recruitment of Foster Carers

Whilst we have an overall need for more foster carers, there are specific needs for more carers who can support young people over the age of 11 years, larger sibling groups and children and young people with more complex needs due to trauma histories and attachment difficulties.
We will continue to develop our permanence recruitment scheme and two new specialist foster carer schemes to care for children and young people with more complex needs.
We will strengthen our position using a CRM which will support our recruitment team to better understand and deliver a timely, effective response to enquiries and applications.

Enhancing our Local Offer

We will continue to enhance our local support offer using learning from their annual foster home reviews and in consultation with foster carers to shape a local offer which meets the needs of our foster carers.

A Corporate Wide Commitment to our Foster Carers

We will continue to champion and advocate for a corporate wide commitment to our foster carers, recognising each service's role as a corporate parent to support our foster carers. As part of this work, we will develop a foster carer charter which will outline our commitments.

Participation and Engagement

We will continue to build on our participation and engagement work with our foster carers ensuring that their voices are heard and help to shape our services going forward. Visit www.leicester.gov.uk/fostering for more information.

Annual Statement of Purpose 2022/23

Purpose

We are required to produce a written Statement of Purpose each year which sets out details of our services and how we will meet our commitment to providing high-quality care and support for our children, young people, and foster families.

The Statement of Purpose is available to all staff, prospective carers, children and young people, parents, and other professionals in a variety of formats. You can find the most up to date copy on our website www.leicester.gov.uk/fostering.

Summary

The Fostering Service is essential in supporting our delivery of high-quality care and support for our children who are Looked After, allowing them to live and thrive in a family home.

The service allows our children and young people to live in safe, stable, and appropriately matched foster families.

The Statement of Purpose explains the aims, objectives and services provided by Leicester City Council Fostering Service, as well as details about our complaints and quality assurance services.

The primary aim of the Fostering Service is to ensure that children who require a foster care placement, are placed within a caring and supportive family that can meet their needs during childhood and beyond.

We are committed to supporting our foster families and continue to develop our support offer. More information about the fostering service and the support offered can be found in our Foster Carers Handbook available at www.leicester.gov.uk/fostering.

If you have any questions about the information contained in this Statement of Purpose, please contact the fostering team on 0116 454 4510.

Our Aims and Objectives

The primary aim of the Fostering Service is to ensure that children who require a foster care placement are placed within a caring and supportive family that can meet their needs during childhood and beyond.

Objectives

- To provide a skilled and flexible fostering service that can meet the wide range of assessed needs of children and young people requiring foster care placements.

- To recruit, assess and approve enough foster carers who live in the Leicester area, ensuring as far as possible that children can be placed in the local area.

- To assist and maintain appropriate links for children placed in foster care with family, community, schools, and friends.

- To match children and young people to foster placements that can meet their assessed needs, taking into consideration the views of the child as part of this process.

- To support children placed with friends and family outside the Leicester area, where the placement is in their best interests.

- To place siblings together wherever possible; and where this is not possible due to safeguarding or other reasons, determined efforts will be made to reunite siblings as soon as is possible and where appropriate.

- To consider race, language, culture, religion, gender, gender orientation and ability, when matching carers to the needs of children.

- To support the implementation of the child's Placement Plan, Care Plan, or young person's Pathway Plan in conjunction with other relevant partners.

- To support placement stability, including where appropriate, availability of the placement to the young person after they reach the age of 18 years.

- To provide a designated supervising social worker to each foster carer, and ensure foster carers receive good quality support and training, to assist them to provide the best parenting for children in their care.

- To work in partnership and openness with foster carers and all other partners who are involved in supporting the child or young person's welfare.

Our principles

The Fostering Service believes: -

- Children in foster care are entitled to experience a family life in which they feel loved and secure in the same way as any other child.

- Children should be encouraged to be proud of their heritage and background and to reach their full potential, celebrating their talents and achievements into adulthood.

- Foster families are recognised as often providing the basis for positive change in a child's life, leading them to grow and develop to become successful adults.

- Children should be consulted, involved, and listened to, with appropriate consideration given to their views concerning important decisions affecting their lives.

- The specific needs of children with additional needs should be carefully considered when making and supporting foster placements.

- Children and young people should be supported and encouraged to maintain links and contact with their families and communities of origin, and foster carers will be encouraged to support these efforts.

- Children should not be allowed to 'drift' in care and should be prepared for permanency as determined by their care plan, whether this be reunification with family, adoption, permanent foster care, or independence.

- Children should be safeguarded in care and be protected from harm, including against other actions by children or young people themselves.

- The fostering service and foster carers will operate within the practice and policies agreed by Leicester Safeguarding Children Partnership.

The Service

Service Manager: Georgina Oreffo
Telephone: 0116 454 4506

In the absence of the Fostering Service Manager, Mike Evans (Service Manager – Placement & Commissioning) deputises as Service Manager, (0116) 454 4500.
The fostering service employs 4 Team Managers, 22 (full or part time) Supervising Social Workers, 2 Child Care Support Workers, a Publicity Officer, and an Enquiry Officer. The service is supported by a small team of business support administrative staff.

Recruitment Team
Team Manager

Supervision and Support Teams
Team Manager Mainstream and Kinship Fostering (one full time, one part time)

Kinship Assessment Team
Team Manager

Children and Families Support Team (CFST)
Team Manager
The CFST provide various direct therapeutic interventions with foster children and foster carers experiencing placement difficulties, including specialist advice and training.

Additional Information
Leicester City Council is an approved Fostering Service provider and is inspected by Ofsted.
The Fostering Service is managed by a Service Manager supported by dedicated Team Managers (Standard 17)
The Head of Service, Child Safeguarding Quality Assurance is the Agency Decision Maker (Standard 14)
Leicester City Fostering Panel is constituted in accordance with regulations. (Standard 14)

Recruitment

The Fostering Service recruits, assesses, and approves new foster carers. The service supports individuals and families from different cultural, ethnic, and religious backgrounds from all parts of the community, who can bring a variety of experiences to the fostering task and help to support our children and young people in care.
Mainstream Foster Carers

The Fostering Service provides an enquiry officer who anyone interested in fostering can call in person, or alternatively, visit our website, email, or phone to request information. An information pack including a Registration of Interest Form is sent to enquirers within 24 hours. Recruitment of carers is planned to maximise interest in foster care. Recruitment campaigns are supported by a dedicated publicity officer. Regular foster carer recruitment events are held throughout the year and target specific campaigns including National Foster Care Fortnight.

Recruitment is focused on the areas of greatest need including permanent placements, sibling groups, teenagers, short breaks for children who have disabilities, mixed heritage, Black and Asian children, and geographical areas that are underrepresented with foster carers.

On completion of the Registration of Interest Form, Local Authority checks are carried out, and a phone interview completed. If the application is successful an initial visit is arranged where further discussion will take place to establish, for example, whether the prospective carers are likely to have sufficient space, and time, to foster and more information about the task of fostering is given.

After a Stage 1 agreement form being completed, the service will carry out Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checks, Probation, The Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (CAFCASS), health visitor/schools' references (if the prospective carers have children) and character references. Applicants must have full health assessments completed by their own GP.

Prospective carers will be invited to commence the assessment process and complete the Stage 2 Assessment Agreement subject to satisfactory checks and references. An assessment will usually take 3-4 months involving approximately 8 visits (currently completed virtually and face to face). A specific form designed by the British Association for Adoption and Fostering (BAAF) is used for assessment and is competency based. Applicants will be invited to attend a pre-approval course, called "Skills to Foster" and currently they are required to complete on-line training courses.

Following the assessment, the social worker will write a report, which is read, amended if necessary and signed by the applicant. The report is submitted to a Fostering Panel whose task it is to consider recommending the approval of foster carers. At the Panel, all members will have read the reports. Prospective carers and the assessing social worker will attend the (virtual) panel. Foster carers can only be carers for one fostering provider.

Following the Panel, a recommendation is made to the Agency Decision Maker (Head of Service, Child Safeguarding Quality Assurance). Where foster carers are approved, a letter of approval detailing the terms under which the carer is approved, and the matching criteria, will be sent i.e., children's ages; gender; the number of placements, and the type of placement.

If prospective foster carers do not agree with the decision made by the fostering agency, they may appeal to the Fostering Panel to reconsider. If still wanting to challenge the ADM's decision, the applicants can request for the matter to be considered by the Independent Review Mechanism.

Following approval, the carer will be sent:
- Foster Carer Agreement
- Complaints and Access to Records information
- A copy of the Foster Carers National Minimum Standards
- The Fostering Services Regulations (2011/13)
- Foster Carer's Logbook

- Fostering Network leaflets on record keeping, insurance, contact, regulations
- Information on taxation for carers
- Notification details
- Virtual School Team Information
- Children's guides according to carer's approval
- Application form for Leicester City Council Leisure passes / Library access
- Fostering Training information
- Training Support and Development Standards
- Promotional support and information aimed at foster carers

After approval, responsibility for the carer's support and supervision will transfer to the Supervision and Support Team located within the Fostering Service.

Kinship Foster Carers

A family member or Connected Person may be identified as a potential future foster carer for a specific child or children by a social worker and will be referred for assessment by the Kinship Assessment Team.

The Service Manager, Fieldwork Service, may agree to an immediate placement with the Kinship Carer, under Regulation 24 of the Care Planning, Placement and Case Review (England) Regulations 2010, following an Initial Viability Assessment (IVA) completed by the Supervising Social Workers responsible for IVA's. The child's social worker will inform the Kinship Assessment Team Manager of an immediate placement, if made. This will trigger Stage 1, and a full assessment by the Kinship Assessment Team.

Following a recommendation by the Fostering Panel and approval by the Agency Decision Maker, a letter of approval detailing the terms under which the carer is approved will be sent including the specific children's details, the number of placements, and the type of placement.

Following approval, the Kinship Foster Carer will be sent the same information as that sent to all mainstream foster carers as detailed above.

After approval, responsibility for the carer's support and supervision will transfer to the Supervision and Support Team located within the Fostering Service.

Our policy on Kinship Foster Care Placements is contained in Appendix 2.

Different Types of Placements

The service provides:
- Family placements for children and young people from birth up to and including the age of 18 years.

- Placements for babies and young children, including those with a range of complex needs.

- Placements for children with disabilities and those children with medical needs who need adapted accommodation.

- Placement for children and young people who are unaccompanied asylum-seekers.

- Transition support to another placement, return home or independent living post 16/17 years of age, as part of a planned process.

- Placements for children and young people from varying ethnic, religious and cultural backgrounds.

- Support from the Child and Families Support Team (CFST) to provide appropriate direct work to maintain placement stability.

- Support for young people who are aged 18 and continue to live with their foster family as part of 'Staying Put' provisions.

Emergency placements

These placements are initially provided for 24 hours, and up to 5 working days, pending work to return the child home, to their previous placement, or alternative placement. Some placements may continue to be provided for a short-term period (where the care plan agrees this assessment, and the carer is approved for such placements).

Short-term placements

These placements are intended to meet the care plan for the young person, to enable the young person to return home or to an alternative placement within a short timescale. Flexibility of care is a significant feature in ensuring success in moving children on to their next placements, at an appropriate time, in consideration of the child's needs and circumstances.

Permanent placements

These placements are where the child's care plan is permanency, within foster care. Foster Carers return to Panel to approve the match and update their approval as permanent foster carers for the child.

Kinship (Family and Friend) Foster Care

This provision is where relatives or friends are approved for specific, named children. The length of the placement will vary, dependent on whether permanency is achieved through kinship care, Special Guardianship, or a return to a parent.

Assessment and Support Plans for Special Guardianship

The service contributes to the assessment for Special Guardianship Orders and support plans, where the foster carer seeks to, or obtains a Special Guardianship Order (SGO) on a child for whom they are caring.

Short Breaks

This service gives support to families caring for children with disabilities by providing time limited overnight stays and short breaks for children, to help support families and offer new experiences for children.

Support for Foster Carers

- A named, allocated supervising social worker for approved foster carer(s)

- A 24-hour on-call system staffed by qualified social workers

- Membership for all fostering households to Foster Talk

- An independent 24-hour support line operated by Foster Talk

- Discounted activities and days out though Foster Talk

- A comprehensive Foster Care Handbook

- Recreational activities supported through the Leisure Fund

- Free sports pass for use in all city swimming pools and gym facilities

- 4 weeks paid leave per year for specialist contract foster carers

- A rolling training programme linked to carers' accreditation levels

- Briefing sessions on key issues on national and local changes

- Development and peer support group sessions

- Therapeutic support services for children with more complex needs

- Corporate membership of Fostering Network

- Sons and Daughters support Group for foster carers' own children

- Representation on the Corporate Parenting Forum

- Equipment provided to meet placement needs

<u>Ongoing Professional Development</u>

All carers will discuss their development and training needs with their supervising social worker and new on-line training courses are available to all carers.

An annual training plan is produced by the service, and newsletters are regularly sent to all carers detailing courses available.

There are joint training opportunities for foster carers to attend training with supervising social workers, Fostering Panel members and other professionals.

A carers' annual review will highlight all courses undertaken and those that might be required to maintain the carers' approval, and to develop carers' knowledge and skills.

Each carer has their own Training, Support and Development Standards information, so they can build up a portfolio of training, specific work, or research study they have undertaken. Foster carers are encouraged to complete this online, and the service will support foster carers to do this successfully.

Support for Young People

Leicester City provides:
- Access to primary mental health workers for young people who require assessment for services about their behavioural or emotional needs.

- Access to a Virtual School Team of professionals whose remit it is to raise the educational attainment of children looked after and secure appropriate educational arrangements for young people either in mainstream or specialist provision.

- A dedicated health team of Children Looked After nurses advising and implementing a health care programme to support the general health and well-being of children looked after and living in foster care.

- Access to services available to support young people who are preparing to leave care, to live independently and access education, employment, or training into adulthood.

- A free sports pass for use in all city swimming pools and gym facilities and access to a discretionary Leisure Fund to maximise leisure and well-being opportunities.

- A dedicated Children and Young People's Rights and Participation Team, for children looked after to ensure young people know and understand their rights.

- Access to advice, assistance and advocacy for children and young people in having their views heard, or in making complaints.

- A regular newsletter for all children looked after and opportunities for young people in foster care to meet.

- Opportunities provided through initiatives supported by the work of the Corporate Parenting Board. These can include free cycle riding courses, free access to museum activities, work experience and apprenticeship schemes, job interview practice and recreational activities.

- An Independent Visitor service for children and young people who do not have visits from their parents or extended family (or a significant adult).

- The opportunity to participate in the Children in Care Council and other Care Experienced consultation activities about the council's services.

Children and Young Peoples Guides

All children who are placed in a foster home, receive a booklet which informs them of what the service is for, what it might feel like to live in another family home, the services that children / young people can expect from a foster carer and the service, and what to do if they are unhappy about any aspect of their care.

Children and young people's guides are available for differing age ranges and reading abilities and types of placements, and reviewed regularly with young people, to ensure the details are updated.

A copy of the children's guide is also available to carers of young people, their parents, and social workers on request.

Monitoring the Quality of the Fostering Service

The Fostering Service is monitored and inspected by Ofsted.
Foster carers receive at least one unannounced visit a year to their home by the supervising social worker, and regular supervisory visits.
The Service Manager responsible for the day-to-day management of the Foster Care Service monitors a range of matters identified in the Fostering Service National Minimum Standards and Regulations 2011 (Regulation 35 (1)), to ensure the standards are adhered to and the service is developing to meet the needs of a range of children.

Inspectors from Ofsted inspect the Local Authority's Foster Care Service as part of the inspection of local authority childcare services according to requirements laid down by the Department for Education and can contact or inspect foster care homes unannounced.

Complaints made about the Service, including carers, are monitored on a routine basis; this also includes any allegations made about staff or carers. A central record is kept of all complaints as part of the agency's quality management process; these records are open to inspection by Ofsted.

All children looked after, and young people have an Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO) who chairs their Child Looked after Review meetings to ensure their care plan is being met and they are being provided with quality care by a range of services to meet their needs. The IRO's role is to ensure the 'child's voice' is at the centre of their plan, but to also ensure parent's and foster carer's views are considered alongside other parties in relation to how well a child is progressing.

The Role of the Fostering Panel

The fostering panel considers whether:
- Prospective carers are suitable to provide foster care, and
- Carers are suitable for a particular child or children (matching)
- The Panel has responsibility to take an interest in the general running of the fostering service and to receive reports giving over-view information about the general running of the team.

The Fostering Panel is governed by guidance and regulations. Panel members include:
- An Independent Chair
- Independent Vice Chair
- Social workers with experience of fostering and other relevant specialisms
- Independent Members (not employed by the Fostering Service and who may have personal experience of fostering or other relevant experience).
- Panel Adviser

The fostering panel meets twice monthly and occasionally monthly to ensure the process is not subject to delay.

Prospective carers are encouraged to attend the Fostering Panel.

Following a recommendation of the Fostering Panel, the papers and minutes of the meeting will be passed to the Agency Decision Maker who has responsibility for decision making on behalf of the Agency. The decisions are made following consultation with the panel adviser and access to the panel minutes. Decisions are made within seven days of the approved minutes of the panel recommendation. The decision will be put in writing to the prospective carer(s).

Complaints Procedure

The Fostering Service has a complaints procedure. Copies of the procedure and complaints forms can be requested from the Fostering Service by telephoning: 0116 454 4510.

All complaints and matters of concern are treated with respect and will be dealt with as promptly as possible, within specified timescales. The fostering service aims to resolve problems in the first instance by informal negotiation.

Children who are living in foster placements are children in care of the Local Authority and have access to the Council's Children's Rights Officer, who will assist any child in making a complaint if they wish and support them throughout the complaints process.

Whilst the investigation is ongoing, the designated Complaints Manager will make sure that carers and young people are informed of progress.

Where it is appropriate, the parents of children (or legal guardians) will be informed of any complaint or allegation made and the outcome, and their views considered.

Parents and family members, friends or advocates can act on behalf of a child to make a complaint about the Fostering Service, or the child / young person can ask the Children's Rights Service to support them.

Contact details for the **Complaints Manager** are as follows:

Freepost
RTRZ-TSAH-EXBZ
Complaints and Access to Records Team
Leicester City Council
10 York Road
Leicester
LE1 5TS
Telephone: 0116 454 0613
Email: youngpeople-complaints@leicester.gov.uk

If following the local complaints process the carer or young person remains unsatisfied with the outcome, the Local Government Ombudsman investigates complaints about Council services. The Ombudsman can be contacted at:
Local Government Ombudsman
The Oaks No2
Westwood Way
Westwood Business Park
Coventry, CV4 8JB
Telephone: 024 7682 0000

Safeguarding Arrangements

All carers will receive training on the local child safeguarding arrangements in accordance with the Leicester Safeguarding Children Partnership (LSCP) procedures.

The Fostering Service adheres to all the policies and procedures of the LSCP in keeping children safe and responding to concerns when children are thought to be at risk.

The Fostering Service will listen to every concern that is raised with them about the care of children who are placed in its service. If there are concerns about the welfare or treatment of children physically, sexually, emotionally, or about neglectful care, the service will initiate enquiries in accordance with LSCP procedures.

The assessment of foster 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 prior to foster carer approval.

Where concerns are made about the foster carers or that of their family, there is a procedure within the Fostering Service to inform carers (at an appropriate time) of any allegations made about them and what is likely to happen. This procedure is also laid out in the Foster Carer Handbook and for staff in the staff procedure manual. Copies can be requested from the Fostering Service.

Allegations that are made against foster carers are investigated using an established procedure whereby all allegations 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.

In the event of complaints or concerns being raised, foster carers will receive support from the Foster Care Service and Foster Talk. Children will be supported by social workers, a Children's Rights Officer, Independent Visitors, and the family as appropriate.

During any safeguarding investigation, the placement of the child (and any other children) will be carefully considered during all stages of the investigation and subsequently when the outcome of the investigation is known.

Children and carers and relevant others will be informed of the outcome of any investigation. The Fostering Service works closely with the placing social workers for the children, the Safeguarding Unit and relevant others including Police, to co-operate with any investigation and ensure records are kept of all complaints and allegations made and their outcomes.

Each foster care family will have a Safer Caring Policy completed prior to approval, and regularly reviewed. The Safer Caring Policy aims to reduce risks to all family members and the Child who is being Looked After.

When an investigation has been held, and where there is a substantiated allegation of abuse made about a foster carer, this will be reported to Ofsted, as outlined in the Foster Care Standards and Regulations (Regulation 29 and 37).

Appendix 1: Recruitment Pathway for Mainstream Carers

1. Enquiry received. Enquiry Officer inputs on database.

2. Information pack sent out – booklet and Register of Interest Form (ROIF).

3. Completed ROIF returned. Enquiry Officer inputs on database.
LA checks completed.

4. Team Manager allocates ROIF to SSWs.
Telephone interview completed.
Initial visit completed (if appropriate)
Application accepted or declined.
Letter sent to applicant to advise about the outcome.

5. Stage 1 assessment allocated.
Stage One Agreement completed
Checks and references completed. DBS completed. Medicals, training and learning identified.
Move to Stage 7 if satisfactory. Stage 6 if not

6. Assessment ended due to Stage 1 information.
Letter sent within 10 working days of last information received.

7. Stage 1 completed
Applicants are advised they will move to Stage Two
Stage 2 assessment process commences.

8. Stage 2 assessment report completed
All paperwork completed in file – electronic and paper.

9. The assessment report is presented to the fostering panel which makes a recommendation to the Agency Decision Maker – the prospective foster carer is encouraged to attend with the assessing social worker.

10. The Agency Decision Maker considers the Fostering Panel recommendation and any other advice before making the decision as to the suitability of the prospective foster carer to be approved as a foster carer for Leicester City Council.

11. If the prospective foster carer is unhappy with the decision (qualifying determination), then they may make representations or request that the Independent Review Mechanism review the decision.

Appendix 2: Kinship Foster Care Policy

1.   Introduction

1.1.   Kinship Foster Care is where a Child or young person who is Looked After lives with family, friends or other people who are 'connected' with them, in a placement approved by the Local Authority; this will be under a Care Order (Section 31 Children Act 1989), Interim Care Order, or provision of accommodation by agreement (Section 20 CA 1989). Kinship foster carers are assessed and approved under The Fostering Services Regulations (2011) in line with BAAF Guidance, Fostering National Minimum Standards and the Care Planning Placement and Case Review Regulations (2010).

2.   A key principle is that children and young people should be enabled to live within their families where it is consistent with their welfare. If children and young people cannot remain at home, then placement with family, friends or connected people should be explored. Having a secure attachment and placement stability are important in building resilience and promoting children's long-term well-being. Children within kinship care are generally reported to feel secure, happy and feel a sense of belonging within their family. Research also evidences high levels of commitment from Kinship carers, their strong bonds with the children, the pleasure they find in the children themselves and the satisfaction they derive from caring.

2.1.   Kinship placements can allow children to maintain positive links with their heritage and their sense of identity and self-esteem can be maximised.

2.2.   Many carers are grandparents where issues of age and health may be a significant factor. There may also be complex family relationships, housing overcrowding or financial difficulties. Carers need time and the opportunity to reflect on the impact of their decision. Ultimately, the assessment process with Kinship carers is designed to weigh up these factors with the welfare of the child or young person as the priority.

3.   Assessments of prospective kinship carers

3.1.   In Leicester, assessments are undertaken by the Kinship Fostering Assessment Team.

3.2.   The workers within the team undertake assessments of prospective carers and provide supervision and support to the carers where a child has already been placed with the carers. Once approved, the ongoing supervision and support of kinship foster carers passes to the Kinship Supervision and Support Team. Where children and young people leave kinship care via rehabilitation to birth parents or via permanent orders such as Special Guardianship Orders the Supervision and Support Team in conjunction with the child's social worker continue to provide support until the order is made or the child returns home.

3.3. All referrals are welcomed without prejudice. This includes referrals irrespective of the age, gender, sexuality, or ethnic, cultural and religious heritage of the applicant. Where possible, assessments are allocated to Social Workers that reflect the heritage of the applicant. The assessing Social Worker will be provided with access to appropriate support and guidance.

4. The Referral System

4.1. It may be the case that there are several family members or friends who come forward to care for children. Social workers undertake a joint Initial Viability Assessment (IVA) along with an experienced worker from the Kinship Team, to identify whether a full assessment is needed.

5. The joint Initial Viability Assessment

5.1. When undertaking this viability assessment, the following will be covered.

- *Relevant sections of BAAF Form C*

  Interviewing the prospective carers: This will cover issues such as their motivation, their relationship with the children, birth parents and contact. Issues of safety, parenting capacity, and family history are covered and areas such as whether the applicants have any major health or child protection concerns. See Schedule 4 of the 2010 Regulations.
- *Assessing the accommodation.*

  Assessment is made of the space for a child or children and the safety of sharing a bedroom.
- *Safety checks,*

  Social Care client database (Liquid Logic) and police checks are completed on all members of the household, checking with other Local Authorities if the proposed carers are known to them, if they do not live in Leicester City.
- *The child's wishes and feelings* about the proposed arrangements must be considered.

6. Regulation 24 Placements

6.1. There is provision in the legislation for Children and young people Looked After to be placed with carers for a time limited period where a full kinship foster care assessment is to be completed. The principle behind this is to not delay placements and/or minimise placement moves.

6.2. Where an immediate placement is made, checks are undertaken, and the Joint IVA completed, before placement. Good practice includes viewing case files the department holds on potential carers, to identify any concerns or risks to the child.

6.3. Temporary approval is granted. Information about the child including the Care Plan, is given to the carer, and a Placement Plan is prepared. The Child's Social Worker will visit weekly until the first Review, and then at least monthly. The full assessment is then undertaken.

6.4. Where a child has been placed under Regulation 24, although such placements may be positive in the longer term, there is clearly some degree of risk if the outcome of the assessment is not positive.

6.5. A Foster Carer Agreement (Regulation 24) is signed by the carers, and Service Manager. The carers will receive a Fostering Allowance and are eligible for equipment.

6.6. If the full assessment has not been completed after 16 weeks, agreement is sought for an extension to the temporary approval, (Regulation 25). The IRO is informed. The extension is up to a further 8 weeks.

7. **The Assessment Process**

7.1. Kinship foster carers are subject to as comprehensive assessment process as mainstream carers, but the assessment is focussed on meeting the needs of the specific child or children rather than generic issues. The BAAF Form C is used.

7.2. The assessment itself comprises the following: -

- A series of weekly home visits (usually 6 to 10 visits) covering the applicants' history, relationships, support networks, parenting skills, child protection issues, ADP issues. Currently these visits are virtual and face to face.

- Applicants have a full medical with their GP.

- A minimum of 3 referees are interviewed – one family member and two non-related individuals.

- Statutory checks are undertaken (DBS, Social Care Records, CAFCASS, Housing, Schools, Health Visitor, Employer).

- The views of the child or children who are looked after are sought as are the views of any children or young people in the household.

- Birth parents are asked about their knowledge of the parenting provided by the applicants, historical and current.

7.3. Workers undertaking the assessment will make a recommendation as to whether prospective carers should be approved as kinship foster carers. This is presented as a report to the Leicester City Fostering Panel that meets on a monthly basis. The Fostering Panel then makes a recommendation to the Agency Decision Maker.

7.4. If the outcome of the assessment (at any stage of the process) is negative, this will be discussed with the applicant, the Team Manager and Social Worker and an appropriate

course of action decided upon. Legal advice will be sought, particularly in care proceedings, and advice given to the applicant.

8.   **Support to Kinship Foster Carers**

- Kinship foster carers are entitled to receive the full fostering allowance (this includes Regulation 24 and 25 Placements).

- Kinship Foster carers are eligible to take up all the training offered by the Fostering service.

- Kinship foster carers receive specific training related to kinship issues. They are expected to complete First Aid and Training, Support and Development Standards training offered by the Fostering Service.

- Kinship foster carers can get practical help with start-up costs and equipment such as beds, bedding etc.

- All Kinship Carers will have an allocated Supervising Social Worker and have access to out of ours support available to all Foster Carers.

9.   **Post Approval**

9.1.   All kinship foster carers have their own Supervising Social Worker. Their role is to supervise the placement and carers. Regular supervisory visits are undertaken alongside Unannounced Visits and Annual Reviews.

9.2.   Where appropriate we will also provide advice to carers on how to secure legal orders for permanency e.g., Special Guardianship Orders and complete the necessary reports in conjunction with the childcare social worker.

10.   **Partnership working**

Communication and partnership working between Social Workers, Kinship Foster Carers and Supervising Social Workers in the fostering service is crucial to the success of kinship foster care placements.

Review of the Fostering Service Statement of Purpose

The Fostering Service reviews the Statement of Purpose on an annual basis to ensure its aims, objectives, services, and facilities provided remain appropriate to the care of children and young people. The next review is due in April 2023.

The Fostering Service maintains a comprehensive range of policies and procedures that support the management of the Service, the care of children and advice / guidance / protocols to foster carers which are contained in the Foster Carer Handbook many of which can be found on our website www.leicester.gov.uk/fostering.

CYPE Scrutiny Commission

Family Adoption Links Regional Adoption Agency

Leicester City
Annual Report 2021/22 and Statement of Purpose

CYPE Scrutiny Commission: 25 October 2022

Lead director: Caroline Tote

SCE Social Care & Education   www.leicester.gov.uk

Leicester City Council

Useful information

- Ward(s) affected: All
- Report author: David Thrussell, Head of Service Corporate Parenting
- Author contact details: 0116 454 1657
- Report version number: v1

1. Summary

1.1. This report provides an overview of the activity and performance of the Family Adoption Links Regional Adoption Agency incorporating Leicester City Adoption Service from 1st April 2021 to 31st March 2022. The report should be read in conjunction with the annual statement of purpose which sets out the service aims, objectives and configuration.

1.2. The report identifies the benefits of collaborative working that are emerging through the regional arrangements for adoption including marketing, matching children for adoption and assessment and training of potential adopters regionally which is led by the city. The RAA has enabled the Local Authority to reach more potential adopters at an earlier stage and provided access to shared information on adoption resulting in an enhanced and more cost-effective service.

1.3. The Adoption Service is essential in supporting our delivery of high-quality care and support for our looked after children, allowing them to live and thrive in a family home.

1.4. The primary aim of the Adoption Service is to ensure that children, who are referred for an adoptive placement, are placed within a caring and supportive family that can meet their needs during childhood and beyond.

1.5. The report identifies 31 children were placed in adoptive homes over the last year, and 30 children were matched to prospective adopters. This was achieved despite the restrictions on visiting imposed by national lockdowns impacting on timescales. Of those 31 children placed, 60% were placed with

FAL Adopters showing the increasing impact of the Regional Adoption Agency.

1.6. A total of 44 Adoption Orders were made this year reflecting our ability to match and place children during covid. Some of our children who had a plan for adoption waited for longer for the formal adoption order to be made by the courts, resulting in a higher annual figure for adoption than the previous year.

1.7. Of those 44 children adopted, 25% were aged 5 or above which is an increase on the previous year, and 23% had diverse heritages from African, African-Caribbean, Asian and mixed groups. 30% of our adopted children were part of a sibling group, which is the same as the previous year. This is encouraging for older children and siblings some of whom are historically more difficult to place.

1.8. There is no comparative data for the Regional Adoption Agency at present whilst the new arrangements are embedded. As regional comparisons are complicated by the different configuration of RAA arrangements nationally, the proposal is to develop enhanced local monthly data and performance for FAL.

2. Recommended actions/decision

2.1 This report is for information only and the Executive are asked to note and approve the Annual Report 2021-2022 and Statement of Purpose for 2022-3.

3. Scrutiny / stakeholder engagement

3.1 The report has been prepared in consultation with the Service Manager for the Adoption Service and shared with relevant stakeholders in the Adoption Team and Children's Safeguarding and Quality Assurance Team. The report will proceed to Children, Young People and Education Scrutiny.

The report contains some direct quotations from carers and adoptive parents who have been supported by the Adoption Service over the past year.

4. Background and options with supporting evidence

4.1   This is a covering report for the attached Adoption Service Annual Report 2021/22 and Statement of Purpose 2022/23.

5. Detailed report

5.1   Please refer to the attached main report. If you have any questions about the information contained in this Annual Report or the Statement of Purpose, please contact the adoption team on 0116 454 4550.

6. Financial, legal, equalities, climate emergency and other implications

6.1   Financial implications

6.1.1 There are no direct financial implications arising from this report

       Martin Judson, Head of Finance
       Adult Services / Education and Children's Services
       Tel 37 4101

6.2   Legal implications

6.2.1 There are no direct legal implications arising from the contents of this report.

       Pretty Patel, Head of Law
       Tel 37 1457

6.3   Equalities implications

6.3.1 The equality act expects us to show due regard to eliminating discrimination, advancing equality of opportunity, and fostering good relations. Our public sector duty expects us to demonstrate how we do this and included within this is how we undertake decisions, what information we are informed by and what

impacts we have taken into consideration to address needs now and in the future.

6.3.2   The aims, objectives and services provided by the Family Adoption Links Regional Adoption Agency incorporating Leicester City Adoption Service in the annual report refer to the support provided to and outcomes of children across all protected characteristics.

6.3.3   The service advances equality of opportunity by ensuring that prospective adopters understand the relevance and importance of a young person's choice by ensuring that Children and young people's ethnic origin, gender, sexual orientation, religion, belief and language is fully recognised and positively valued and promoted when decisions are made about them and that the needs of disabled children are fully recognised and considered when decisions are made.

6.3.4   The service also advances equality of opportunity and fosters good relations by encouraging and publicising adoption services to enable all members of the community to consider adoption as a positive option and to recruit from a wide variety of backgrounds to meet children's individual needs and by recruiting adopters who will respect a child's birth and family origins and who will bring up an adopted child knowing and understanding their origins. The commitment to providing Life Story Books and Later Life Letters of a high quality for adopted children also helps to ensure this happens.

6.3.5   In addition, the service helps to eliminate discrimination, advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations by recruiting adopters who will respect the diverse cultures and lifestyles within society and who will bring up children who will respect these differences.

Sukhi Biring, Equalities Officers
Tel 37 4175

6.4   Climate Emergency implications

6.4.1 There are no significant climate change implications associated with this report.

Aidan Davis, Sustainability Officer, Environment Team
Tel 37 2284

6.5   Other implications (You will need to have considered other implications in preparing this report. Please indicate which ones apply?)

6.5.1 None

7.   Background information and other papers:

7.1   Adoption Service Annual Statement of Purpose 2022/ 2023

8.   Summary of appendices:

8.1   None

9.   Is this a private report (If so, please indicate the reasons and state why it is not in the public interest to be dealt with publicly)?

9.1   No

10.   Is this a "key decision"? If so, why?

10.1   No

Family Adoption Links Regional Adoption Agency

Leicester City

Annual Report 2021-2022

Background

The purpose of this annual report is to provide an overview of Leicester City's Adoption Service activity and performance, as part of Family Adoption Links, from 1st April 2021 to 31st March 2022.

We are also required to produce a written Statement of Purpose each year which sets out details of our services and how we will meet our commitment to providing high-quality care and support for our children, young people, and adopters.

The Adoption Annual Report and the Statement of Purpose are available to all staff, prospective adopters, children and young people, parents, and other professionals in a variety of formats. You can find the most up to date copy on our website www.leicester.gov.uk/adoption.

Summary

Adoption services are essential in supporting our delivery of high-quality care and support for our children who are looked after, allowing them to live and thrive in a family home.

The primary aim is to ensure that children, who are referred for an adoptive placement, are placed within a caring and supportive family that can meet their needs during childhood and beyond.

Adopters will become the permanent family for a child who cannot, for whatever reason, return home. They will take on all the rights and responsibilities of a birth parent. They will give the child stability, love, and security throughout their childhood and beyond.

The service supports our children and young people to live in safe, stable, and appropriately matched families. Our aim for children who are cared for is that that they will have a clear understanding of why they are looked after by the local authority, be given an opportunity to make sense of their experiences; knowing who is there to support them to achieve their goals and lead successful lives.

We are committed to supporting our adoption families and continue to develop our support offer. More information about adoption services and the support offered can be found on the website About Adoption | Family Adoption Links

If you have any questions about the information contained in this Annual Report or the Statement of Purpose, please contact the adoption team on 0116 454 4550.

Family Adoption Links Adoption Agency

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

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

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

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

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

Jane Moore, Director of Children's Services, Leicestershire County Council
Janice Spencer, Assistant Director, Lincolnshire County Council
Sharon Cooke, Assistant Director, Leicestershire County Council
Caroline Tote, Assistant Director, Leicester City Council
Paul Cowling, Service Lead, North Lincolnshire
Emma Sweeney, Head of Service, Rutland Council
Cornelia Andrecut, Director, Northamptonshire Children's Trust

The partnership has a strategic Vision that states:
"We're a dynamic regional partnership aimed at delivering excellence in every aspect of adoption.
We strive to ensure the best possible match for children and adoptive parents and develop a comprehensive range of support services to ensure a positive adoption journey.
We seek to develop the widest pool of professionals who engage in innovative and ground-breaking new adoption practices".

A pooled budget was created within the RAA to fund central hub staffing costs including the RAA Head of Service post, marketing officer, data analyst and business support officer. All of these were in post by April 2021. The provision of the posts was funded by equal contributions from all partnership Authorities. This has augmented the central Government grant allocation and provided firm staffing foundations for the first three years of operation. The intention is that the partnership will deliver a range of financial benefits, including better value for money through economies of scale and a decrease in the number of children requiring specialist, intensive and costly placements or services.

The combined RAA Head of Service post governs the management and decision-making of those Local Authority budgets in conjunction with the Adoption Managers that hold responsibility for the budgets locally. This ensures consistency in decision-making and assists

with regional improvements, identifies areas where practice needs to be aligned and future efficiencies could be identified.

Progress

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

The Partnership initially appointed an interim Regional Head of Service responsible for the delivery of the RAA, and a temporary Head of Service has been in post on a part-time basis since May 2021. The Regional Head of Service has a single line of accountability to the Management Board and undertakes a range of key functions in conjunction with Service leads across the partnership.

The operational focus for the first full year of operation has been to develop five core pillars as the foundations for effective partnership working. The emphasis on these has been successful in developing collaboration in both strategy and operational delivery.

Marketing and Branding

The partnership has been successfully re-branded with a 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 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 and presentations have been created in the new style:
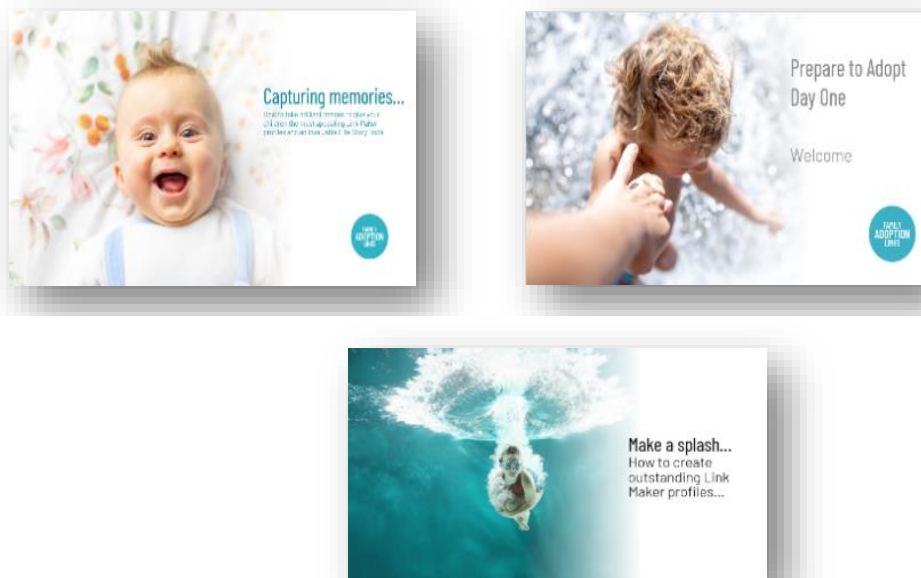
Website

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, we are able to deliver a better response to enquiries, maximise event attendance and reduce administration time.

Featuring full editorial control, the website is more flexible and adaptable 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.

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.
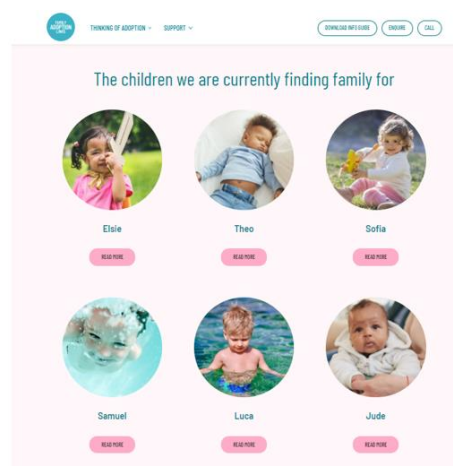
Adoption Information Events

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, we have welcomed 139 potential adopters online.

Some of the feedback we 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."

187

Marketing and Workstreams

Marketing is fully involved in each of the partnership's workstreams from producing striking new presentations for the Assessment and Training group to creating enticing videos for priority children in the Family Finding workstream. We are 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 of 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."
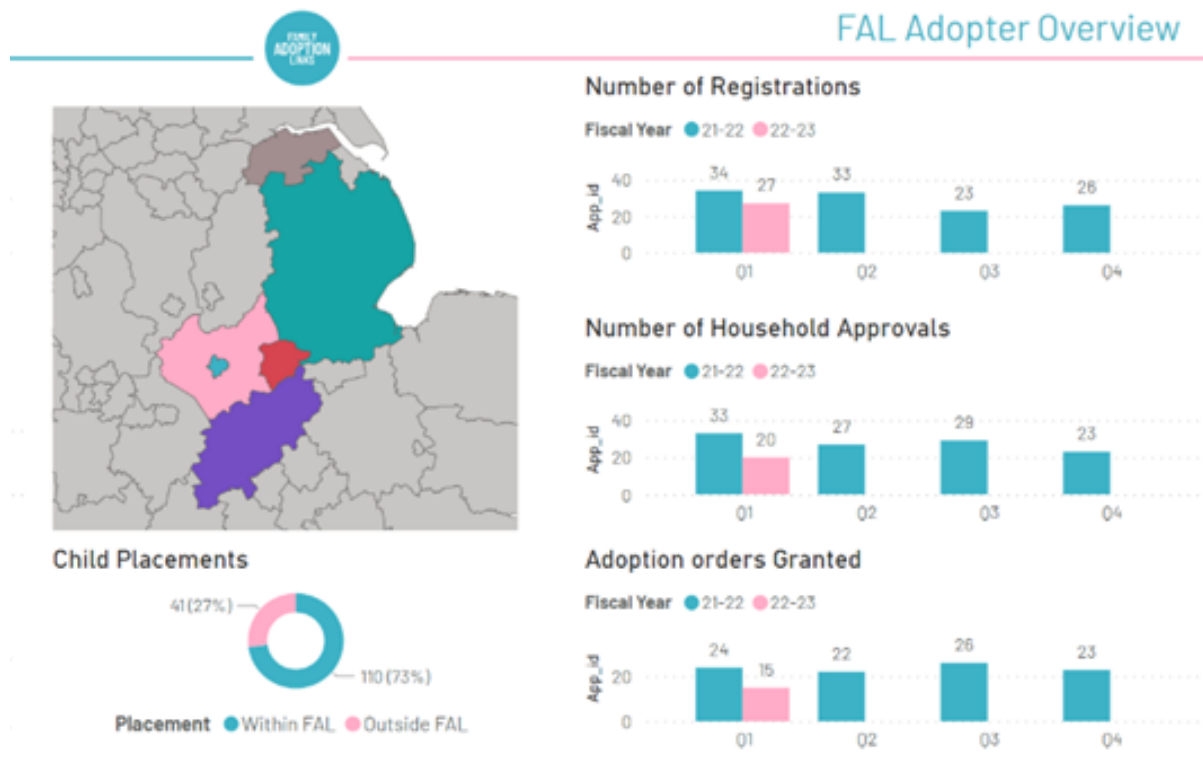• Excellent performance statistics

Data

The Data analyst employed centrally has worked collaboratively with partnership representatives to deliver an agreed submission to the Adoption and Special Guardianship Leadership Board (ASGLB) on a quarterly basis. Work is taking place to deliver a regional data set that will support recruitment and family finding activity. Microsoft Power BI will provide accurate adoption reporting facilities for both individual Local Authorities and the region and provides visuals that will support the presentation of adoption data for any OFSTED inspection. Work is currently taking place to facilitate the sharing of this to all partner authorities. Data is seen as key to service delivery within the partnership and our analyst contributes to the development of all work streams. By forging productive working relationships this has moved the partnership to the point where it is able to deliver the required adopter lead data in a timely fashion for the quarterly ASGLB return. Coupled with the development of the local data set, the partnership is moving towards a more consistent and timely delivery of key information which supports all adoption activity.

Performance in the first 12 months

The recruitment and approval of adoptive parents continued against the backdrop of the covid 19 pandemic. Panels continued to operate virtually, and matches have in many ways been enhanced by the advent of Teams. The court processes have sadly been subject to some

delay and as a result, the plans for some children have been delayed. Nevertheless, activity across all partners has remained strong.

FAL Adopter Overview

Number of Registrations

Number of Household Approvals

Child Placements

Adoption orders Granted

- Leicester City workers successfully approved 19 adopter households over the year.

- A total of **44 Adoption Orders** were made this year for **Leicester's children**, following the covid-19 pandemic and lockdowns, which had resulted in some of our children who had a plan for adoption waiting for longer for the formal adoption order to be made by the courts in 2020-21.

	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22
Adoption Orders made in year	33	22	38	27	20	44

- Over the last year 31 children were placed in adoptive homes, and 30 children were matched to prospective adopters. Despite the restrictions imposed by national lockdowns, children have continued to be matched and introduced to prospective adopters and placed in their adoptive homes. Of those 31 children placed, 60% were placed with FAL Adopters.

- As seen from the table below, of those 44 children adopted, 25% were aged 5 or above (20/21 was 12%), and 23% had diverse heritages from African, African-Caribbean, Asian and mixed groups, lower than last year where it was 35%. 30% of our adopted children were part of a sibling group, the same as the previous year.

189

Child characteristics:	Aged under 5 years old	Aged 5 years old and over	Female	Male	BME	Disabled	Part of sibling group	Harder to place
Number adopted in last 12 months	33	11	22	22	10	1	13	24
Number waiting with a PO...	12	2	8	6	6	0	4	9
...of which have been waiting at least 18 months since BLA	4	2	3	3	3	0	3	5

- The average number of days between entering care and moving in with adoptive family for adopted children was 555 days in 2021-22 making the 3-year ASGLB average for 2019-22 at 512 days. The Adoption Scorecard target is 426 days and 28% of our children met this target.

	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	Last 12 months
Leicester City	390	422	566	515	555
National	420	433	459	489	

- The average number of days between the date of the placement order to the date the child was matched to prospective adopters was 249 days in 2021-22. The Adoption Scorecard target is 121 days and 34% of our children met this target.

	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	Last 12 months
Leicester City	154	177	131	169	249
National	171	173	190	207	

Workstream Development

The Partnership has brought together regional operational managers responsible for Adoption from each partner agency. This group demonstrates a shared purpose to deliver services for families that are locally determined but at the same time have clear links to wider local, regional and national priorities. The group meets monthly, and a service lead is allocated to core functions essential to develop a regional approach. The workstreams are Assessment and Training, Family Finding and Post adoption support.

Assessment and Training

The Assessment and Training workstream is led by Leicester City. An agreed modular approach to both pre and post approval training is in place. The content of the preparation courses has been agreed with joint delivery across the partnership commenced in 2022. In addition, the group has developed an integrated and seamless training plan to support adopters post approval. The mode of delivery has been enhanced by the development of the website which acts as a hub for online and face to face training modules. The ambition is for

all courses to be available to adopters across the partnership which should enable more rapid access and provide staff flexibilities.

Family Finding

The Family Finding workstream is led jointly by Lincolnshire and Leicestershire. The ambition of the partnership is to provide a consistent approach to family finding and ensuring that the partnership can meet the needs of most children requiring adoption. The adoption of a single approach requires practice to change for some partners and proposals for achieving a whole partnership approach will be made to the Family Adoption Links Board. The workstream has effectively developed an agreed process for the partnership and the refreshed approach to family finding will be in place in 2022. This will bring together information of all adopters and children matched within partner authorities and identify those who would benefit from a broader range of adoptive homes and importantly offer an integrated and creative opportunity to identify families for children who have additional needs and developmental complexities.

In support of the family finding model Linkmaker have been asked to set up a FAL area on their system, so that there is a 'shared area 'where all the FAL children's profiles will appear and all the approved adopters are able to register, search and express interest in the children. Each of the LAs in the partnership has a representative who will attend the monthly family finding meetings, bringing with them the up-to-date position of children and adopters in their LA. In order to make sure the meetings are focussed on the children who have been the more difficult to place, and those who have been waiting the longest, a data system will track all the children, which has links to the profiles on Link Maker which will support the process and ensure that the meetings are effective. The meetings started in April 2022 and there will be ongoing monitoring of the process and the outcomes.

Preventing Delay

All Leicester City adoption workers carry out family finding, in addition to recruitment, training, and assessment of adopters. This works well as workers can talk to adopters during their assessment regarding specific children whose profiles are anonymous.   A Childcare Support Worker assists social workers in the family finding by putting children on Link Maker, assisting with profiling the children, and attending matching meetings with Family Adoption Links.

Adoption Workers are allocated to a child at the point of Agency Decision Maker (ADM) decision. Advice is also given to children's social workers on completion of siblings together or apart assessments in cases where there may be reasons for children being placed separately. The Adoption Manager or team member attend Legal Planning Meetings and Permanence Planning Meetings to support children at an early stage who have a plan of adoption.

> "M was really fantastic as our Adoption Social Worker. She led us through the whole process really well making sure we got everything done in time and chasing people for missing paperwork etc. She went out of her way to make sure we found all the assessments as easy as possible, taking into consideration we also had two young boys with additional needs to look after while going through the process of adopting R. She

Adoption social workers are allocated to every relinquished child as soon as the referral is made to adoption, in order that social workers can be guided by experienced adoption workers and cases are progressed speedily to adoption panel, and in appropriate cases placements are secured. The numbers of relinquished children are usually 2-3 per year.

Child Permanence Reports (CPR's) reflect the needs of the children with a plan of adoption. Internal audit activity has shown that CPRs are not of a consistently good quality, while some reports are excellent, the majority need amendments. These are quality assured at a Panel by the Adoption Team Manager and a Service Manager in the Child in Need Teams. This ensures that children's wishes, and feelings are captured.

The service is committed to finding permanence for harder to place children including older children and those with complex needs and reducing delays in the time it takes to family find and prepare both the prospective adoptive family and the children before placement.

Adoption Support

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

1.   Post Adoption Support Directory
2.   Therapeutic Suppliers List
3.   Adoption Support Fund
4.   Quarterly Adopters Newsletter – second edition available
5.   Post Placement and Post Order training offer across FAL which includes
         virtual / face to face training modules and E Learning modules.
6.   Training Calendar goes live April 2022

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

Transition Support

Adoption social workers are skilled in transition work with children. The transition books which are used for many of the children both prior to and during introductions have proved invaluable especially when sibling groups are divided with children being placed in different

192

placements. Where children are placed separately for adoption, contact is promoted between siblings, and the adoption team provide financial assistance to enable contact to take place where children are placed at a distance to one another to promote the children's identity.

Adopters receive support from the Children and Families Support Team (CFST), who provide post adoption support to adoptive families and their children and may also be working with a child prior to placement and can continue this work post placement.

Adopters receive full information on children prior to placement, and all are offered a consultation with the Agency Medical Advisor, a visit to the child's foster carer, nursery, or school. Support workers from CFST also carry out visits to adopters, pre-placement where adopters are about to take on complex children. Advice is provided on possible issues and behavioural management techniques. We have introduced a new therapeutic parenting module which is a one-day course and received very positive feedback from those attending.

Leicester's Adoption & Post Adoption Support

Leicester's Adoption and Post Adoption Support continues to be provided by the Children and Families Support Team (CFST), a multi-professional team with a wide range of knowledge and skills around Theraplay, Play Therapy, systemic approaches, attachment, and therapeutic parenting.

Over the last 12 months, Adoption support has been provided to 17 children, young people, their families and adults impacted by adoption. This support has been provided in a variety of diverse ways ranging from one off support, making Post Adoption assessments of need, and providing longer term support and advice with queries relating to historic adoptions.

CFST offers a range of support to adopters both pre and post Order ranging from a dedicated duty system, one off visits, through to longer term support, and a bi-annual newsletter. The Walk and Talk groups and coffee mornings have not yet restarted.

CFST support Adoption Preparation Days (along with birth parents, CAMHS, adopted adults and adopters) to ensure families have an awareness of the team and the support they provide to enable them to seek help at an earlier stage. In addition to this, the Team Manager also sits on Leicester's Adoption Panel, which can highlight support for families, ensuring smoother transitions.

Feedback relating to two adopted adults:

> "I wish I could give an award for the best service from a local authority, as it would go to you. So efficient and helpful on both cases, thank you so much.
> Regards S C
> Manager
> Origins (Support After Adoption & Support After Care)

Feedback from a birth parent:

> "The service provided was warm and friendly and gave me a safe space to discuss any thoughts and feelings surrounding adoption. S was very knowledgeable about the process and drew on previous experiences to answer any questions honestly and thoroughly. The service has helped me to talk openly about difficult emotional and mental problems and to see the positives in what has been a very difficult time.
> I honestly can't thank you enough for working with me and helping me through this. You have been an absolute godsend and put me at ease going through the adoption process of which I could find no information about to answer my concerns prior to speaking with you. I just wish I had spoke to you from the start. Finally, receiving the support and encouragement I needed to get through the difficult emotional turmoil has made me feel much more positive about my decisions and the situation overall so thank you.

As part of the post adoption support, applications are made to the Adoption Support Fund (ASF) when required, alongside the therapeutic support that is provided by CFST. Over the past 12 months, Leicester has made 63 assessments of need and applications to the ASF where children and their adopted families are now in receipt of therapeutic support; enabling them to access several different therapeutic interventions including Theraplay, Play Therapy, Drama Therapy, Music Therapy, Crisis Intervention Therapy and Sensory Processing Interventions.

> "I just wanted to email you, to let you know the difference which has been made to our family by accessing Post Adoption support.
> To give you just a brief overview, at the start of 2021, I felt desperate to find appropriate support for my 13 year old Daughter and myself. We were in a very difficult place, where I was at a point where I didn't feel I was the right' Mum' for E to be able to meet her needs. And felt the future for us both together was bleak, I was also extremely anxious concerning what the future held for E. We had by this time had a few incidents where Police were required to be called due to E's aggression towards me.   Our home was being destroyed by E throwing things. I didn't feel safe in my own home, and I used to dread each day.
> E was receiving support from Cahms, due to her deteriorating mental health. However, it was clear this was not enough to support her or us together. During the first week of January, I spoke to L (Post Adoption Team). I think I was on the phone for almost 2 hours, I remember I was extremely distressed concerning our situation and felt at a crisis point.   L listened and offered reassurance during the call. By the time I had finished talking to her, I felt I had off loaded to L everything that was happening and due to L's response felt there was hope that we would receive the right support.
> L spoke to me several times that week to explain a plan and what support would be offered and she arranged meetings for the following week. As we already had several professionals involved with our family, L set up a Professionals meeting, so everyone was aware of what each other were doing and their roles. L's communication was and continues to be supportive and responds to any issues in a timely manner and is realistic in her approach.
> Subsequently, E is now receiving individual weekly therapy sessions and we are both having weekly Family Systemic therapy which is being paid for by the Adoption Support fund. It would have been impossible to fund this therapy myself and I know this support is vital for us.
> Reflecting on the last 7 months, since I made the call to L, although it has continued to be a difficult journey, I can now see positive change in both E and myself. I have started to feel safer in our home. E has now been discharged from Cahms, her attendance at school has improved and we have had no further involvement with the Police. I feel less daunted by the future for E and hopeful for our future as a family.
> Thank you for the support your team has and continues to offer. L has gone above and beyond what I expected, and I will always be so thankful that she answered my call.

Understanding the child's life history & experiences

There is a commitment to providing Life Story Books and Later Life Letters of a high quality for adopted children. A tracking process has been developed to ensure that this work is carried out. Adoption workers quality assure the books before they are given to adopters. It is recognised that for older children it is important for them to have the books at the point of transition. Where this is not possible, adoption workers strive to produce a shortened book as a tool for adopters and the child to use immediately.

Moves are planned carefully, with a meeting to plan the timetabling. A Pause and Plan meeting halfway through ensures the plan can be refined if the children or adopters need more time, or more information or advice. Transition books are used with the children to help them understand the planned move.

During the pandemic, we have had significantly positive results from transitions from foster care to adoption, by starting with virtual introductions. At the first lockdown, our foster carers downloaded Microsoft Teams. The transitions started with adopters and foster carers talking virtually over teams. Children are a part of this and remain close to their secure base with the foster carers, experiencing a sense of safety. Adopters have shown the children around the house and have built up a relationship with the children before meeting face to face. Children have kissed the screen, tried to feed adopters on the screen, and a child on the day of placement was confident to go into his new home knowing the rooms and where their bed was and naming the teddies he had met virtually. The fear seems to be reduced, and children move easily between the virtual and face to face worlds. A significant benefit is that introductions are longer as no-one needs to take leave or time off. We will retain this practice going forward.

Foster carers are offered training in preparing a child to move onto adoption, and a foster carer provides training to adopters on transitions, to enable them to see the foster carer as a partner to support the child. Foster carers assist with introductions, helping children who are adopted to develop secure attachments to their new parents.

Engagement with Key Stakeholders

Family Adoption Links Head of service is continuing to engage key stakeholders within and beyond the Councils to align services and to identify broader opportunities for transformation and development. This includes representing the region to the Department of Education (DfE), at the National RAA Leaders Group and the Regional Adoption & Special Guardianship Leadership Board. The service has engaged with Adopter voice on a 12-month contract to ensure that the views of adopters is reflected within service delivery. Adopters actively support the delivery of information events and preparatory training. In addition, following a meeting of stakeholders involved in the "child's journey" FAL will convene meetings for ADMs and Panel advisors as an opportunity to share good practice, work towards achieving consistency and consider training needs.

195

Conclusion

The partnership development has taken place against a backdrop of a pandemic and staff changes. Development of the partnership is centred on core areas which when completed will provide the partnership with genuine momentum and provide opportunities to modify adoption practice and create some staffing efficiencies. Progress is very much in line with the expectations of the Revised Government strategy for adoption "Achieving Excellence Everywhere" issued in July 2021.

Looking Ahead to 2022-23

There is a Regional Adoption Service Delivery Plan which is reviewed monthly, and progress is reported to the Board. There are 7 key priority areas with identified key actions and leads. The priority areas are:

1. **General Governance**

   To ensure that all the Governance arrangements are in place for the RAA, that the arrangements are effective and reviewed with the overall aim of achieving the best outcomes we can for children and families.

2. **Quality Assurance**

   To ensure there is a clear framework in respect to RAA quality assurance with the intended aims being:

   - Ensuring consistency of practice across the RAA
   - Having shared manager oversight of practice
   - A shared system which evidences the outcomes and high standard practice being achieved by the RAA.

3. **Performance**
   - To have a clear understanding of the combined performance of the RAA
   - To identify areas where improvements are needed
   - To celebrate areas of achievement within performance
   - To contribute to the clear understanding of the outcomes being achieved for children and families across the adoption scorecard
   - Prompt and timely submission of performance data on behalf of the RAA to the relevant bodies.

4. **Marketing and Recruitment**
   - A robust brand that stands out and clearly identifies us as being Family Adoption Links and the geographical areas that the RAA covers
   - A successful Marketing and Recruitment Strategy and Plan that ensures we recruit the adopters that we need for children across the RAA. This will be evidenced by RAA family finding and the matches taking place across the RAA

5. **Adopter Assessment and Post Approval Training**

- All those who approach the RAA and who are assessed by the RAA receive a consistent baseline experience with regards to their initial enquiry; assessment and preparing to adopt training.

- Following approval there is an RAA core offer of post approval training for all approved adopters to ensure consistency of approach and preparation across the RAA.

6. **Family Finding, Matching and Placement**
   Every child who has a need for an adoptive family can be placed with their adoptive family in a timely way. This will include the following.

   - A clear system across the RAA for family finding which includes knowing the children we are family finding for and having a clear understanding of our cohort of children and any areas of pressure i.e., identifying families for harder to place children.

   - By having a clear understanding of the above this helps drive our recruitment for adopters based on a sound understanding of our sufficiency need.

   - To align and have consistent practice across the RAA in respect to family finding, matching and placement.

   - We have resilient and well-prepared families across the RAA who provide a secure and loving home to children by way of adoption.

   - All within the adoption system receive support and feel supported throughout family finding, matching and placement.

   - Children are at the heart of the adoption system and receive good preparation for moving to live with their permanent family

7. **Post Adoption Support**

- To align and have consistent practice across the RAA in respect to post order support.

- To have a RAA Core Offer that is accessed by all families across the RAA.

- The RAA Core Offer is also underpinned by a local offer that considers specific needs within different local areas.

- We have resilient families across the RAA who provide a secure and loving home to children by way of adoption and who can access support when they need it.

- All within the adoption system receive support and feel supported and the support provided is based on what children and families tell us that they need

Appendix 1

Overview of the Adoption process for potential adopters

1. Your initial contact with us

When you contact the Adoption Service, we will ask some questions to learn more about you and your personal circumstances, and we can answer any questions you may have.   We will then send out an information pack if requested within 10 days.

2. Registration of Interest Form

If, after receiving further information via an Information Session followed by a home visit (Initial Visit) you wish to proceed, you will then need to complete the Registration of Interest Form (ROIF)

3. Call from a Recruitment Team social worker

Once the Recruitment Team receives your ROIF we will contact you within 5 days of receiving it and a social worker from the service will have a detailed discussion with you. We will then let you know if we can accept you into Stage One of the process.

4. Stage One

Statutory references and checks will be taken up. Stage One will usually be completed in 2 months but can be extended up to a maximum of 6 months. It will be very much an adopter led process and will move at your pace. If your application is not able to progress to Stage Two, the adoption team will inform you in writing of the reasons and if appropriate refer you on to other agencies if applicable.

5. Plan and agreement

During Stage One the service will draw up a Stage One Plan (agreement) and ask you to sign an agreement setting out what the Recruitment Team will provide, and it will detail what steps you need to take and what needs to happen for you to progress to Stage Two.

6. Stage Two

You will be allocated a worker to complete your adoption assessment following completion of a Stage Two Agreement form. The agreement will set out details of each visit (minimum of 6) and you will be given a provisional panel date for your approval. You will receive further information and training in both Stage One and Stage Two which will include Adoption Preparation Groups. As part of the course you will have the opportunity to speak to experienced adopters who share their knowledge of what it is really like to adopt a child. All this information is brought together in the Prospective Adopters Report (PAR).

7. Adoption Panel

This happens on completion of the adoption assessment. At the end of the assessment, your PAR is presented to the Adoption Panel, which meets at least monthly. Adopters are invited to attend. You will be given the panel's recommendation on the day. This then goes to the Agency Decision Maker (ADM) who formally considers the recommendation and decides within seven days.

8. Finding the right match

We work with you to identify the right child and we will complete a Matching Plan Agreement with you. How long you must wait depends on the needs of the children and what age and type of child you are best suited to. We try to place children as soon as possible and matches can take place as soon as a few weeks after approval but usually there is a wait of several months before a match is made. If you have not been matched within three months and with your agreement, your details will be referred to Link Maker which means potential matches for you could be made with children from across the country.

9. Matching Panel

The adoption panel considers the appropriateness of the match between yourselves and the child/children. It then makes a formal recommendation that the child can be placed with you, and this is then subject to the Agency Decision Maker agreeing the match within seven days of the date of the panel. This process may be slightly different, if you have been matched with a child from another area, in which case you will attend the adoption panel in the area with responsibility for the child.

10. Introductions

Your child's placement is carefully planned and following a series of introductions they will move and become part of your family. Your social worker supports you as you get used to becoming an adoptive family. The local authority has a statutory duty to review the child's placement up until an adoption order is granted.

11. Adoption Order

Following the placement of a child, or children, the granting of the Adoption Order usually takes three to six months, although in some cases it can take longer.

A printable version of the attached created for prospective adopter can be found on our website https://www.leicester.gov.uk/adoption**.**

More Information

The Adoption Service maintains a comprehensive range of policies and procedures that support the management of the Service, the care of children and advice / guidance / protocols many of which can be found on our website www.leicester.gov.uk/adoption.

Leicester
City Council

Family Adoption Links

Leicester City Adoption Service

Annual Statement of Purpose 2022 / 23

Purpose

As an Adoption Service in England we are required to produce a written Statement of Purpose each year which sets out details of our services and how we will meet our commitment to providing high-quality care and support for our children, young people and adopters.

The Statement of Purpose is available to all staff, prospective adopters, children and young people, parents and other professionals in a variety of formats. You can find the most up to date copy on our website www.leicester.gov.uk/adoption.

Summary

Leicester City Council is part of Family Adoption Links (FAL), a regional partnership of Adoption Services.

This partnership comprises of Leicester City Council, Lincolnshire County Council (who provide adoption services for Rutland Council), Leicestershire County Council, North Lincolnshire Council and Northamptonshire Children's Trust. 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 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 service allows our children and young people to live in safe, stable, and appropriately matched families. Our aim for children who are cared for is that that they will have a clear understanding of why they are looked after by the local authority, be given an opportunity to make sense of their experiences, knowing who is there to support them to achieve their goals and lead successful lives.

The Statement of Purpose explains the aims, objectives and services provided, as well as details about our complaints and quality assurance services.

The primary aim of the Adoption Service is to ensure that children, who are referred for an adoptive placement, are placed within a caring and supportive family that can meet their needs during childhood and beyond.

We are committed to supporting our adoptive families and continue to develop our support offer. More information about the adoption service and the support we offer can be found on our websites https://familyadoptionlinks.org.uk/ www.leicester.gov.uk/adoption.

If you have any questions about the information contained in this Statement of Purpose, please contact the adoption team on 0116 454 4550.

Our Vision, Principles and Values

The primary aim of the Adoption Service is to ensure that children, who are referred for an adoptive placement, are placed within a caring and supportive family that can meet their needs during childhood and beyond.

The service aims to:

- Place children at the centre of the adoption process and always act in their best interests, ensuring the process is timely and avoids delay.

- Have the widest range of adopters trained to meet the needs of children placed.

- Ensure matching delivers the best quality outcomes for all children.

- Recruit high quality adoptive families to meet the needs of children referred for adoption, whilst recognising that family life can be experienced in different ways.

- Provide a range of services and information to adoptive families, birth families and adoptive children.

- Provide a range of post adoption support services for families and children to ensure adoptive placements are successful.

- Provide a service that meets statutory requirements and National Minimum Standards.

- Ensure adopters receive a consistent, high quality and professional service at all stages of the process.

- Have the same high standard of adoption support for all adoptive families across the region.

- Ensure Family Adoption Links, local authorities and Voluntary Adoption Agencies work together to promote and maximize choice for children and adopters.

Objectives of the Service

- To ensure children's needs have been fully assessed and an adoption plan is in the child's best interest.

- To provide a suitable adoptive placement for every child with a plan for adoption.

- To ensure, that the views of children and young people have been listened to and have been given due consideration in any decisions that are taken about their future.

- To regularly publicise adoption services to enable all members of the community to consider adoption as a positive option, and to recruit carers from a wide variety of backgrounds to meet children's individual needs.

- To recruit adopters who will respect a child's birth and family origins, and who will bring up an adopted child knowing and understanding their origins.

- To recruit adopters who will respect the diverse cultures and lifestyles within society, and who will bring up children who will respect these differences.

- To recruit adopters who will respect a young person's choice, in terms of sexuality, gender and religion.

- To recruit, train and retain highly skilled and appropriately qualified staff that understand the adoption process, and can support family placements.

Principles

The Adoption Service believes that: -
- Children are entitled to grow up as part of a loving family which can meet their needs during childhood and beyond.

- It is best for children where possible to be brought up by their own birth family.

- The child's welfare, safety and needs are at the centre of the adoption process.

- The child's wishes, and feelings will be actively sought and fully considered at all stages of the adoption process.

- Delays in adoption can have a negative impact on the health and development of children and should be avoided wherever possible.

- Children and young people's ethnic origin, gender, sexuality, religion and language should be fully recognised and positively valued and promoted when decisions are made about them.

- The ongoing needs of children should be fully recognised and considered when decisions are made, recognising any disabilities and learning difficulties.

- The role of adoptive parents in offering a permanent family to a child who cannot live with their birth family should be valued and respected.

- Children have the right to grow up knowing they are adopted and should have access to information about their family of birth.

- Where appropriate children should continue to have contact, either directly or indirectly, with those family members who are significant to them.

Standards of Care
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, 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).

The Service

Service Manager: Georgina Oreffo
Telephone: 0116 454 4506

Family Adoption Links (FAL) is a regional adoption partnership which includes Leicester City Council, Social Care and Education.
The Agency Decision Maker on behalf of the Local Authority is Kate Wells, Head of Service, Child Safeguarding and Quality Assurance.

The Adoption Service Team
The Adoption Service includes qualified and experienced staff as follows:

- Team Manager: who is responsible for the day to day work of the Adoption Assessment Team.

- Three full-time and four part-time qualified, Social Work England registered social workers with experience in adoption work.

- One part time Adoption Support Worker.

- One full and two part time Admin and Business Support Officers.

Governance and Management
The Regional Adoption Agency (RAA) will be accountable to the Family Adoption Links (FAL) Management Board which is responsible for delivering the agreed vision and will enable partners to have a continuing demonstrable focus on achieving permanence through adoption for Children Looked After. 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 LA. Each partner LA 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.

Service Functions

The service provides: -

- Recruitment and assessment of adoptive families; including publicity, information giving and attendance at regular drop-in sessions across Leicester and Leicestershire.

- Assessment and preparation of prospective adoptive families, which includes visiting their homes, undertaking a home study assessment, references, checks, and preparation groups.

- Support for approved families awaiting placement, advice and guidance to adoptive families during the matching process and post placement; this includes workshops and events for adoptive families in conjunction with the Children and Families Support Team (CFST).

- Delivering training and educational events and providing guidance for departmental staff that are preparing and supporting children, their parents and carers during the adoption process.

- Provision of adoption support services to adoptive families and birth relatives.

- Facilitation of direct and indirect contact arrangements and in a limited number of cases, supervision of contact.

- Provision of a specialist consultation and advice service.

- Counselling, information, and advice to Birth parents, (First Families) whose children might be adopted, and prospective adopters and adults who have been adopted, including access to birth records counselling.

Safeguarding Arrangements

Leicester Children's Social Care & Early Help Service and its Adoption Service are part of Leicester's Safeguarding Children Partnership Board arrangements.

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.

Training is mandatory and covers specific areas such safer caring, the implications of looking after children who have been impacted by trauma 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 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 Leicester Safeguarding Children Partnership Board procedures.

Recruitment

The Adoption Service welcomes enquiries from people from all backgrounds, whether single, in a relationship, or married, and regardless of sexual orientation, gender, race or religion. There is no upper age limit for a prospective adopter(s), but adopters need to be in good general health with lots of energy and love to give to a child.

In addition to our comprehensive website, an information leaflet and brochure is available to explain what adoption involves and the processes that prospective adopters will follow.

The Adoption Service has a well-defined recruitment strategy whose aim is to prioritise the recruitment of adopters who can best meet the needs of all children requiring adoption.

In addition to our own information on adoption, "First 4 Adoption", the Government's 'adoption gateway' provides information for those interested in adopting.

Leicester City Council is a subscribing member of 'New Family Social' which is a UK-wide support network run by, and for, LGBT+ adopters and prospective adopters. More information about the support network can be obtained on their website together with clear information about the adoption process.

The role of Adoption Panel

Leicester City Adoption Panel is constituted in accordance with regulations. (Standard 17)
The adoption panel only considers:

- whether a child who is looked after by Leicester City Council should be placed for adoption, where a parent relinquishes their child or consents that adoption is the best outcome for their child.

- recommending whether prospective adopters are suitable to adopt, and

- recommending whether adopters are suitable for a particular child or children (matching).

- the general running of the adoption service, and to receive reports giving overview information about the general running of the team.

Prospective adopters and approved adopters who are to be matched with a child are encouraged to attend the Adoption Panel.

The Adoption Panel is governed by guidance and regulations. Panel members include:

- An independent chair
- Independent Vice Chair
- Social workers with experience of adoption and other relevant specialisms
- Medical adviser
- Independent Members (not employed by the Adoption Service and who may have personal experience of adoption or other relevant experience).

- Panel Adviser

The adoption panel meets at least monthly and occasionally twice monthly to ensure the adoption work of the Adoption Agency is not subject to delay.

Following a recommendation by the Adoption Panel, the papers and minutes of the meeting will be passed to the "Agency Decision Maker" (ADM) who has responsibility for decision making on behalf of the Agency. The decisions are made following consultation with the panel adviser and access to the panel minutes. Decisions are made within seven days of the approved minutes of the panel recommendation. The decision will be put in writing to the prospective adopter(s).

Reports on children for whom an Adoption Plan is proposed are considered directly by the Agency Decision Maker after a comprehensive quality assurance process. Adoption Agencies (Panel and Consequential Amendments) Regulations 2012.

Monitoring the Quality of the Adoption Service

The quality of the Adoption Service's work and standards are regularly monitored: -

- The managers of the service ensure that staff are appropriately skilled, trained and supervised in accordance with the City Council policy to ensure they are fulfilling statutory compliance and meeting the quality standards required by Leicester City Council.

- The work of the adoption team is governed by Adoption Standards, Guidance and Regulations. The Regional Adoption Agency also submits information against national performance indicators.

- The work of the adoption team is monitored to ensure appropriate timescales are adhered to.

- The Adoption Panel independently scrutinise all assessments and judgements made about voluntarily relinquished children being considered for adoption, and those of prospective adoptive parents.

- The Adoption Panel scrutinise all reports on children at the point of matching for adoption. The Adoption Panel has a critical role to play in the provision of independent expert oversight.

- Adoption Panel members are appraised annually, and the performance of the Panel reviewed to ensure that it carries out its role efficiently and effectively.

- The Agency Decision Maker observes at least one panel each year and attends relevant training days.

- The Adoption Service is subject to inspection by Ofsted according to national guidelines.

- Feedback is gathered throughout the process by evaluation and questionnaires.

- Case files are subject to regular internal quality assurance audits.

- The performance of the Adoption Agency is published by the Department for Education on behalf of the Government.

Complaints Procedure

Any formal complaints are considered through the Local Authority complaints procedure. Copies of the procedure and complaints forms can be requested from the Adoption Team Telephone: 0116 454 5440.

All complaints and matters of concern are treated with respect and will be dealt with as promptly as possible, within specified timescales. The adoption service aims to resolve problems in the first instance by informal negotiation. A central record will be kept of all complaints as part of the agency's quality management process; these records are open to inspection by Ofsted.

Children who are already placed in adoptive placements (i.e., children in the care of the Local Authority) have access to a Council's Children's Rights Officer, who will assist any child if they wish to make a complaint and support them throughout the process.

Post Adoption Support

As part of Family Adoption Links, the post adoption support in Leicester is provided by the Children and Families Support Team (CFST).

The Team of ten workers is supported by two part time Team Managers.

The team has a range of qualified Mental Health Practitioners, Adoption Support Workers, Social Workers, and a Post Special Guardianship Support Worker. These full time and part time workers provide post adoption support services alongside other placement services.

Services to Adopted People

Adults who have been adopted can approach the Registrar General when they are 18 years old and ask for details from their original birth certificate. Once they have obtained this information a request can be made to the service for a Birth Records Counselling Service. This involves obtaining a file from either the local archive or from another adoption agency. This work is provided on a statutory basis.

First Family Support

A requirement of National Adoption Standards is to offer independent counselling to birth parents during care proceedings where a plan of adoption is proposed. Counselling for birth parents, independent of the adoption process is provided in Leicester through the Children and Families Support Team. A leaflet explaining the service is available.

Contact Services

There are now over 550 adoption post box arrangements. The post box enables written (indirect) information to pass between adoptive families and children's birth families via the adoption team. These arrangements provide confidentiality for adoptive families and can sometimes involve the exchange of information from adoptive families between several birth relatives of the adopted child. An email facility is available that is popular amongst adopters for the exchange of indirect contact material.

Of those contact arrangements in place, 2% involve direct contact arrangements which require supervision and support from post adoption support services. A leaflet on the Post Box Scheme is available.

Services to Children

The service provides additional support to parents through the Contact Scheme. We have access to a supply of books, and other media platforms for direct work with children. Counselling is possible with older children. Children participate in social events such as the annual party, summer event and "Play and Stay" and the service delivers a young people's forum, for teenagers to those in their early 20's.

Services to adoptive families

Family Adoption Links keep in touch with adoptive families through our regular newsletter called "Thrive". This provides details of activities and relevant articles about adoption.

The service continues to organise on-line therapeutic training relevant to adopters. The team has a rolling training programme to enhance the understanding of attachment issues as well

as develop skills to parent traumatised children. Learning in the company of other adopters is experienced as supportive and sometimes useful on-going contacts are established. Other professionals including schoolteachers, health visitors, adoption panel members and social workers can also attend this training and helps build positive professional relationships which are supportive of adopted children and families.

The adoption support workers provide training to other departmental staff; for example, writing Life Story Books. An information booklet for schools on adoption issues is available to schools attended by children who have been adopted. Training has been provided to schools by the team on attachment issues and how to respond to these. The Virtual School Team (for Children Looked After) can provide additional advice and support in school to assist adoptive children's transition to a new school.

The Service has access to the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS) through the Young People's Team, to respond to the needs of adoptive families. The Educational Psychology Services from the city and the county also contribute to post adoption placement support.

Adoption Support Fund

CFST undertakes post adoption assessments of need and makes applications to the Adoption Support Fund where appropriate. The Adoption Support Fund enables adoptive families to access therapeutic adoption support, following assessment of support needs after the child is made subject to an Adoption Order.

OFSTED Inspection

Ofsted is responsible for inspecting the Adoption Agency. The last inspection of Leicester City Council local authority children's services took place in 2021. The experiences and progress of children in care and care leavers was judged to be **good**.

Ofsted's stated:

Early consideration is given to permanence planning in all situations regardless of the circumstances, including to support reunification with parents. Regular permanence planning meetings help to drive progress and ensure that all necessary assessments are taking place or commissioned accordingly. Delay in achieving permanence for children is rare. Once decisions have been made for permanence for children, these are progressed in a timely manner. This is the case irrespective of which permanence option is identified to be in the best interests of the child. Children's life-story work is sensitively and imaginatively completed for children with permanence decisions, to ensure that they have a comprehensive understanding of their families and experiences.

Recruitment and assessment of foster carers and adopters is thorough, timely and analytical. Training builds their confidence and enables children to be well matched to their carers or adopters.

Ofsted will also receive and may investigate any complaints about the Adoption Service.

They can be contacted at: -

Ofsted
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD
Telephone: 0300 123 1231
Email: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk

APPENDIX 1

Overview of the adoption process: a guide for potential adopters

1. Your initial contact with us

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Once the Recruitment Team receives your ROIF we will contact you within 5 days of receiving it and a social worker from the service will have a detailed discussion with you. We will then let you know if we can accept you into Stage One of the process.

4. Stage One

Statutory references and checks will be taken up. Stage One will usually be completed in 2 months but can be extended up to a maximum of 6 months. It will be very much an adopter led process and will move at your pace. If your application is not able to progress to Stage Two, the adoption team will inform you in writing of the reasons and if appropriate refer you on to other agencies if applicable.

5. Plan and Agreement

During Stage One the service will draw up a Stage One Plan (agreement) and ask you to sign an agreement setting out what the Recruitment Team will provide, and it will detail what steps you need to take and what needs to happen for you to progress to Stage Two.

6. Stage Two

You will be allocated a worker to complete your adoption assessment following completion of a Stage Two Agreement form. The agreement will set out details of each visit (minimum of 6, usually over four months) and you will be given a provisional panel date for your approval.   You will receive further information and training in both Stage One and Stage Two which will include Adoption Preparation Groups. As part of the course you will have the opportunity to speak to experienced adopters who share their knowledge of what it is like to adopt a child. All this information is brought together in the Prospective Adopters Report (PAR).

7. Adoption Panel

This happens on completion of the adoption assessment. At the end of the assessment, your PAR is presented to the Adoption Panel, which meets at least monthly. Adopters are invited to attend. You will be given the panel's recommendation on the day. This then goes to the Agency Decision Maker (ADM) who formally considers the recommendation and decides within seven days.

8. Finding the right match

We work with you to identify the right child from across the partnership and we will complete a Matching Plan Agreement with you. How long you must wait depends on the needs of the children and what age and type of child you are best suited to. We try to place children as soon as possible and matches can take place as soon as a few weeks after approval but usually there is a wait of several months before a match is made. If you have not been matched within three months and with your agreement, your details will be referred to Link Maker which means potential matches for you could be made with children from across the country.

9. Matching Panel

The adoption panel considers the appropriateness of the match between yourselves and the child or children. It then makes a formal recommendation that the child can be placed with you and this is then subject to the Agency Decision Maker agreeing the match and this is done within seven days of the date of the panel. This process may be slightly different, if you have been matched with a child from another area, in which case you will attend the adoption panel in the area with responsibility for the child.

10. Introductions

Your child's placement is carefully planned and following a series of introductions they will move and become part of your family. Your social worker will continue to support you and the local authority has a statutory duty to review the child's placement up until an adoption order is granted.

11. Adoption Order

Following the placement of a child, or children, the granting of the Adoption Order usually takes three to six months (although in some cases it can take longer).

If you have any questions, or want to know more detailed information about any of the stages below, please don't hesitate to get in touch with us Tel: 0116 454 4540

Review of the Adoption Service Statement of Purpose

The Adoption Service reviews the Statement of Purpose on an annual basis to ensure its aims, objectives, services and facilities provided remain appropriate to the care of children and young people. The next review is due in June 2023.
The Adoption Service maintains a comprehensive range of policies and procedures that support the management of the Service, and the care of children.

Children, Young People and Education (CYPE) Scrutiny Commission

WORK PROGRAMME 2022 - 23

Meeting Date	Meeting Items	Actions Arising	Progress
14 June 2022	1) Provision of Taxi Framework for Vulnerable People 2) Review of High Needs Block – SEN Support for Pupils in Mainstream 3) Education White Paper – high level assessment		
6 September 2022	1) SEND Green Paper – consultation response 2) New SEND inspection framework - update 3) Youth Justice Plan	THIS MEETING WAS ADJOURNED DUE TO IT BEING INQUORATE	
25 October 2022	1) Virtual School 2) Youth Justice Plan 3) SEND Pupil Place Planning 4) SEND Inspection Framework 5) SEND Accelerated Progress Plan (verbal update) 6) SEND Green Paper Consultation Response (for information) 7) Ashfield Academy Consultation (verbal update) 8) Fostering Annual Report (for information only)		

219

Appendix H

Updated October 2022

Meeting Date	Meeting Items	Actions Arising	Progress
	9) Adoption Annual Report (for information only) 10) Verbal update on Covid-19 in schools		
Tuesday 6th December 2022	1) Impact on children's learning of the impact of Covid (Primary schools) 2) Update on Taxi Reprovision 3) Update – bandings moderation process 4) Ash Field Academy Banding Update 5) Performance Reporting Q1 update 6) Residential children's homes 7) Family hubs		
Tuesday 24th January 2023	1) Draft General Fund 2023/24 Revenue Budget & Draft Capital Programme		
Tuesday 21st March 2023	1) Impact on children's learning of the impact of Covid (Secondary schools) 2) Ash Field Academy Residential Consultation Report		

220

Updated October 2022

Draft Forward Plan / Suggested Items for 2022/23

Topic	Details / Progress	Proposed Date
Performance Reporting and data monitoring, including Quarterly and Qualitative Reports	The commission to receive regular 'Quarterly Quality Assurance & Performance' Reports - *('Performance Book' and 'Dashboard' is sent to members as background information).* Note: a request for the sharing of LADO reports to resume, was given in the Oct 2021 meeting by outside representatives.	**STANDING ITEM**
COVID19 Update and Vaccinations in Schools	This was requested as a standing item by Chair following the Oct 2021 meeting.	**STANDING ITEM**
Safeguarding Partnership Annual report	To receive a report for members consideration.	tbc
School Attendance Annual Report (incorporating update on Children Missing Education and Elective Home Education)	To receive a report on progress for members consideration	tbc
Report on Multisystemic Therapy-Child Abuse and Neglect (MST-CAN) & Functional Family Therapy (FFT) intervention programmes (Annual Report)	To receive a report on progress for members consideration	Oct 2022?
Adventure playgrounds	Item carried over from the previous work programme.	tbc
OFSTED engagement	Commission aware of potential updates that may be given during this municipal year.	TBC
How schools have coped with national exams and pressures	further detail at a future meeting, once data relating to the pattern of grades is collated in February 2022 (requested by Cllr Cole in June's Agenda Meeting)	TBC
School Nursing Provision	Potential joint Item with Health and Well-being Scrutiny Commission	tbc

221

Updated October 2022