

Leicester  
City Council

## **MEETING OF THE CHILDREN, YOUNG PEOPLE AND SCHOOLS SCRUTINY COMMISSION**

**DATE: TUESDAY, 29 SEPTEMBER 2020**

**TIME: 5:30 pm**

**PLACE: Microsoft Teams Meeting**

### **Members of the Commission**

Councillor Dawood (Chair)  
Councillor Cole (Vice-Chair)

Councillors Pantling, Rahman, Riyait and Whittle

1 unallocated Group vacancy  
1 unallocated Non-Group vacancy

### **Co-opted Members (Voting)**

Gerry Hirst	Roman Catholic Diocesan
Carolyn Lewis	Church of England Diocese
Mr Mohit Sharma	Parent Governor (Primary / Special Schools)
Vacancy	Parent Governor (Secondary School)

### **Standing Invitees (Non-Voting)**

Janet McKenna	Unison
Joseph Wyglendacz	Teaching Unions
Vacancy	Faith Representative (Hindu)
Vacancy	Faith Representative (Muslim)
Vacancy	Faith Representative (Sikh)

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

For the Monitoring Officer

### **Officer contacts:**

**Jason Tyler (Democratic Support Officer),**  
Tel: 0116 454 6359, e-mail: [jason.tyler@leicester.gov.uk](mailto:jason.tyler@leicester.gov.uk)  
Leicester City Council, City Hall, 115 Charles Street, Leicester, LE1 1FZ

## Information for members of the public

### **PLEASE NOTE:**

*Any member of the press and public may listen in to this 'virtual' meeting via a weblink which will be publicised on the Council website at least 24hrs before the meeting.*

*Members of the press and public may tweet, blog etc. during the live broadcast as they would be able to during a regular Commission meeting at City Hall. It is important, however, that Councillors can discuss and take decisions without disruption, so the only participants in this virtual meeting will be the Councillors concerned, the officers advising the Commission and anyone the Chair invites to speak.*

### **Attending meetings and access to information**

You have the right to attend/observe formal meetings such as full Council, Committee meetings & Scrutiny Commissions and see copies of agendas and minutes. On occasion however, meetings may, for reasons set out in law, need to consider some items in private.

Dates of meetings and copies of public agendas and minutes are available on the Council's website at [www.cabinet.leicester.gov.uk](http://www.cabinet.leicester.gov.uk), or by contacting us using the details below.

### **Making meetings accessible to all**

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

### **Further information**

If you have any queries about any of the above or the business to be discussed, please contact: Jason Tyler, Democratic Support on (0116) 454 6359 or email [jason.tyler@leicester.gov.uk](mailto:jason.tyler@leicester.gov.uk)

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**

#### **LIVE STREAM OF MEETING**

A live stream of the meeting can be viewed using the following link:

<https://tinyurl.com/yxmmj3t9>

**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**

The Minutes of the meeting of the Commission held on 25 June 2020 are attached and Members are asked to confirm them as a correct record.

**4. PETITIONS**

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

**5. QUESTIONS, REPRESENTATIONS AND STATEMENTS OF CASE**

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

**6. ADOPTION SERVICE & FOSTERING SERVICE - ANNUAL REPORTS AND STATEMENTS OF PURPOSE**

The Strategic Director, Social Care and Education, submits the following two reports which provide an overview of the activity and performance of the Council's Adoption Service and Fostering Service, together with the Annual Statements of Purpose.

- (i) **ADOPTION SERVICE ANNUAL REPORT 2019-20  
AND STATEMENT OF PURPOSE 2020-21** [Appendix B](#)
- (ii) **FOSTERING SERVICE ANNUAL REPORT 2019-20  
AND STATEMENT OF PURPOSE 2020-21** [Appendix C](#)

## **7. PARTICIPATION STRATEGY**

The Strategic Director, Social Care and Education, will provide an update on the Participation Strategy consultation findings and report on next steps.

## **8. HIGH NEEDS BLOCK BANDING CONSULTATION**

The Strategic Director, Social Care and Education, will provide an update on the High Needs Block Banding consultation.

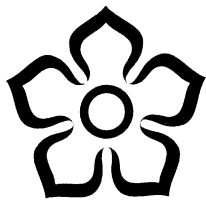
## **9. COVID-19 UPDATE**

The Strategic Director, Social Care and Education, will provide an update on the response to Covid-19.

## **10. ANY OTHER URGENT BUSINESS**







Leicester  
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# Appendix A

Minutes of the Meeting of the  
CHILDREN, YOUNG PEOPLE AND SCHOOLS SCRUTINY COMMISSION

Held: THURSDAY, 25 JUNE 2020 at 4:00 pm

P R E S E N T:

Councillor Dawood (Chair)  
Councillor Cole (Vice Chair)

Councillor Pantling  
Councillor Riyait

Councillor Rahman  
Councillor Whittle

In Attendance:

Councillor Cutkelvin, Assistant City Mayor - Education and Housing  
Councillor Russell, Deputy City Mayor - Social Care and Anti-Poverty

Also Present:

Gerry Hurst - Roman Catholic Diocese  
Carolyn Lewis - Church of England Diocese  
Janet McKenna - Unison  
Mr Mohit Sharma - Parent Governor  
Joseph Wyglendacz - Teaching Unions Representative

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## **70. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

An apology for absence was received from Councillor Hunter.

## **71. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no Declarations of Interest.

## **72. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING**

AGREED: That the Minutes of the meeting of the Commission held on 27 February 2020 be confirmed as a correct record, subject to clarifying the wording concerning support to the anti-poverty strategy.

## **73. PETITIONS**

The Monitoring Officer reported that no Petitions had been received, in accordance with Council procedures.

## **74. QUESTIONS, REPRESENTATIONS AND STATEMENTS OF CASE**

The Monitoring Officer reported that no Representations or Statements of case had been received, in accordance with Council procedures.

It was reported that a Question had been received out of time for formal submission to the meeting. The Chair used his discretion to allow the content of the question to be considered during the update on school safeguarding. Other issues arising from the Question had been referred to the appropriate authorities for any action.

## **75. IMPACT OF CORONAVIRUS ON LEICESTER'S CHILDREN'S SERVICES AND SCHOOLS**

The Strategic Director, Social Care and Education submitted a report, which provided a summary of the Council's response to the Coronavirus pandemic locally within the city in terms of children and young people, the way in which services have responded, and most importantly how the Council had supported children, young people and their families to date during the crisis.

It was noted that work was currently underway in relation to the actions needed as existing restrictions were eased and some of the emerging themes were highlighted. It was proposed that this would be the subject of a report once further work had been completed.

In considering the report Commission members joined the Chair in thanking the staff in the Directorate on their efforts in dealing with the Covid-19 pandemic to date.

The report provided detailed information on social care and education, including free school meals provision. It was noted that the report did not consider the specific financial impacts on the Directorate or the Council.

At this point, the Strategic Director, Social Care and Education gave a presentation to update the Commission with the most up to date position.

The presentation was divided in two separate sections, firstly dealing with the social care impacts, then moving to the educational impacts.

In considering the social care response the following key points were noted:

- Most services were broadly operating as normal
  - Safeguarding functions fully available
  - Supporting shielding & vulnerable groups
- PPE had been addressed
  - Guidance, specifications & supplier list
- Plans were in place for restoring services
  - Reopening of buildings being taken forward
  - Contact parental services
  - Increased direct contact by services with children & families
- Changes to services
  - Virtual contact had opened new opportunities
- Impact on improvement progress
  - Ofsted inspection not expected in the current calendar year.
  - Regional and national work continued, including the 'no wrong door' project in seen as an example of national best practice for partnership working.

The Commission was asked to comment, and issues were raised in relation to risks assessments, safeguarding, racist incidents and domestic violence. The stable numbers of cases that had been referred to social workers was noted, and it was confirmed that the severity and number of cases had not been significantly affected.

In response to questions, the support to foster carers and the participation with looked after children and care leavers was explained and welcomed. The effect of Covid on young people in residential settings and the work of the residential care staff and those involved in the virtual school was recognised.

In terms of racist incidents, it was noted that the numbers reported were low, and that the initial response as primarily dealt with by the Police and the ongoing partnership work and the role of the Council was clarified. The accelerated development work across the Council in relation to 'Black Lives Matter' was also noted.

The Deputy City Mayor, Social Care and Anti-Poverty, confirmed that these areas were regularly assessed as part of audit practices.

The additional pressure on staff arising from homeworking arrangements were also acknowledged and appreciated.

The Assistant City Mayor, Education and Housing commented on the importance of the safeguarding role during the period and reminded the Commission of the robust practices undertaken in schools.

In considering the education and schools part of the presentation, the following key points were noted:

- It was initially noted that the vast majority of schools had not closed and had remained open for vulnerable and other children. The planned process for the full return to schools as recently announced was described and it was noted that the final decision was with individual schools
- Risk assessment: site, movement, individuals
  - Dynamic process, based on latest guidance & local situation
  - Risk assessments shared with staff, unions and parents
  - Vulnerable staff, including BAME staff – individual risk assessment and can choose to work (all documented)
- Balancing different risks
  - Infection / health, social isolation, challenging home environments, lost learning opportunities
- Significant support given to Headteachers, Governing Bodies, Unions, staff

In terms of school practicalities, the following issues were outlined:

- Detailed plans developed
  - Staffing, use of space, cleaning, etc
- Class sizes halved ('bubbles'), with little social distancing within
  - Minimal mixing between bubbles
    - Staggered start & break times, separate toilet facilities, one-way systems
  - Avoid use of public transport
  - Imposes tight limits on numbers attending (space & staff)
    - Key workers & vulnerable children remain priority
- No need for PPE other than in very specific circumstances
- Whole 'bubble' isolates for 14 days if any member tests positive

In terms of the latest position it was confirmed that all schools were open and the data concerning attendance, including the impacts of extended opening initiatives was noted. It was reported that the guidance was awaited from DfE in terms of the further opening proposals in the Autumn. It was a concern that there would be little notice given before the end of the current term and it was expected that managing the situation would be challenging.

The data concerning reported cases in schools, impacts on early years settings, school closure statistics, and wider impacts on schools were also reported and noted. In concluding the presentation, the issues concerning the SEND impacts were reported.

The Assistant City Mayor, Education and Housing commented on the wider work undertaken with schools and welcomed the enhanced engagement and joint working arrangements due to the crisis. The increased work with Public Health partners and Union colleagues in a collaborative way was recognised and noted.

Joseph Wyglendacz (Teaching Unions Representative) referred to the work of staff in the Directorate and reiterated thanks for their efforts shown and collaboration with the Unions.

The Chair asked that thanks also be expressed to the staff involved in delivering the school meal service.

At this point, the effect of the pandemic and likely impact on the content of the 'underachievement' report being prepared separately was recognised. It was confirmed that the dialogue on Covid would be considered in conjunction with that Task Group report.

The Chair asked for clarification on the supply of laptops and the level of data provided. It was noted that the current need for 'live-learning' affected the data offer. In terms of the extent of contact with vulnerable young people, it was reported that some had child protection plans in place and continued to receive support at home. It was noted that additional vulnerable families and young people had been identified from the separate work undertaken in offering food parcels and deliveries during the period. It was also noted that schools had identified vulnerable children and information was shared allowing regular contact and support. The enhanced work undertaken in arranging risk assessments for vulnerable children was also reported and noted.

In conclusion, the Chair asked that an analysis of the gap in learning that was considered inevitable from the pandemic be measured and reported in due course.

The Deputy City Mayor, Social Care and Anti-Poverty and the Assistant City Mayor, Education and Housing, made comment on the wider work being undertaken across the Council on noting the positive changes to practices as a result of Covid.

## **76. CLOSE OF MEETING**

The meeting closed at 6.30pm.



# Appendix B

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## **Adoption Service Annual Report 2019 / 20 & Statement of Purpose**

### **Children, Young People & Schools Scrutiny Commission**

**Date: 29 Sept 2020**

**Lead director: Martin Samuels**

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## 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 Adoption Service from 1st April 2019 to 31st March 2020, together with the Annual Statement of Purpose.
- 1.2. 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.
- 1.3. 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.
- 1.4. 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.
- 1.5. 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 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.
- 1.6. We are committed to supporting our adoption families and continue to develop our support offer. More information about the adoption service and the support offered can be found on our website [www.leicester.gov.uk/adoption](http://www.leicester.gov.uk/adoption).



## **2. Recommended actions/decision**

- 2.1 The Scrutiny Commission are asked to note and approve the Adoption Service Annual Report for 2019-20 and Annual Statement of Purpose.

## **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 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 2019/20 and Statement of Purpose.

## **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 Leicester City Council 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 in terms of sexual orientation, gender and religion (although belief should be specifically included here as there are certain choices young people make from very early on such as being vegetarian or vegan that may not be related to a religion but a belief which is a protected characteristic also); 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.

Surinder Singh, Equalities Officers  
Tel 37 4148

#### **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 Report 2019 / 2020 and Statement of Purpose.

#### **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

# Leicester City Adoption Service Annual Report 2019-2020



# Purpose

The purpose of this annual report is to provide an overview of the activity and performance of the Adoption Service from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2019 to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2020.

In addition, 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 Adoption Service 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](http://www.leicester.gov.uk/adoption).

# Summary

The Adoption Service are 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.

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.

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 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 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 the adoption service and the support offered can be found on our website [www.leicester.gov.uk/adoption](http://www.leicester.gov.uk/adoption).

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

Leicester is working towards a Regional Adoption Agency (RAA) in response to the Government paper issued in June 2015 called “Regionalising Adoption”.

The RAA partnership of Leicester, Leicestershire, Lincolnshire and Rutland was expanded in January 2020 to include North Lincolnshire, and there are plans for this arrangement to be formally launched in autumn 2020.

The RAA will operate separately from the broader East Midlands Adoption (EMA) grouping and will continue to engage with our bordering RAA's to share learning and opportunities for further collaboration. Similarly, we will continue to engage with Voluntary Adoption Agencies. The aim is to deliver the benefits of a regional agency without disrupting arrangements that are already working well. The RAA will have a small central hub to coordinate those aspects of the work which will have a regional element, including initial contact from adopters, home-finding and data management.

A regional family finding hub is in place to more effectively find the best matches for children. Developments are underway for a regional marketing and recruitment strategy and a single website, with all enquiries being passed to local teams. By pooling performance information and data, the wider regional picture will allow us to plan more effectively, to deliver regional benefits for children and adopters.

## Current Performance

The Department for education publishes adoption scorecards showing a range of measures, for every Local Authority, as an average performance over the preceding three years focussing on the timescales achieved for children involved in the adoption process. The scorecards allow local authorities to monitor their own performance and compare it with that of others. An England average is published, and trends are mapped, and targets are set. Performance thresholds make clear the government's expectations for timeliness in the adoption system. The latest performance figures show:



A total of 27 Adoption Orders were made this year for Leicester's children which although lower than last year (38) is an improvement on previous years (22) and supports our commitment to high quality matches for adopters and children in adoptive placements.



A further 11 children are in adoption placements awaiting adoption orders from the court. There are currently 13 children with an identified match which will be progressed, and we are family finding for another 15 children.



Of the 27 children who were placed with families this year, 81% (22) were aged under 5, 33% (9) were from a BME group and 19% (5) were siblings.

# Prospective Adopter 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, however adopters need to be in good general health.

The Adoption Service has a well-defined recruitment strategy that aims to prioritise the recruitment of adopters who can best meet the needs of all children requiring adoption. Our recruitment strategy continues to prioritise applicants for siblings and children of dual heritage especially White/African Caribbean, White/African and of Caribbean and African heritage, and older children due to the national shortage of adopters for harder to place children. The strategy encourages exploration of Fostering for Adoption with applicants.

In addition to local advertising, Leicester is represented on the Adoption East Midlands website for Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland (L3R), which carries a searchable events calendar which signposts adopter enquirers to information events that are being held across L3R. A new website will be developed as part of Family Adoption Links.

The Adoption Service are members of New Family Social which has proved positive in terms of recruiting same sex adopters.

A weekday duty service is in place so that potential adopters can contact an experienced worker to discuss adoption. Recruitment criteria have been agreed, which provides consistency in information given to enquirers about our minimum expectations which need to be met for people to be able to be assessed as prospective adopters. Adoption applicants appreciate this level of expertise at the beginning of the process which has been evidenced by feedback from prospective adopters and adopters.

At the end of March 2020 there were 24 adopter households in assessment, and there have been 22 adopter households approved over the last year. Adopters have been drawn from a wide range of backgrounds, reflecting the diverse ethnic communities in Leicester.

An overview of the adoption recruitment process can be found in Appendix 1.

# Prospective Adopter Assessment

The adoption assessment process is uniformly strong, and this is underpinned by quality assurance activity undertaken by the Team Manager and Adoption Panel. Analysis of applicants' personal histories, relationships and motivations for seeking to adopt children are evident and Adoption Workers evaluate the applicants' strengths and potential vulnerabilities. Statutory checks and references are undertaken and documented, and assessments are mostly completed within six months.

We have aligned the three-day Preparation Course which all applicants attend so that courses run across Family Adoption Links have the same content and as such applicants have the flexibility to attend the earliest course available. Leicester City and Leicestershire will run three courses each over the year, which is time and resource efficient and will further reduce any delay in the process.



We are developing a modular approach to the training and preparation of adopters and Leicester has developed a Family and Friends module. The aims of the course are to help family members and friends understand more about the adoption process and needs of adopted children. The feedback has been positive with participants feeling they had developed their understanding of the needs of adopted children and benefitted from a safe space in which to voice some of their apprehensions.

Adopter feedback is positive about their experience of the assessment process and the training provided. Whilst challenging, the process is thorough, and applicants state it gave them confidence and a good understanding of the needs of adopted children and the potential impact of this throughout their adoptive child's childhood.

**'You were very child focused and committed in ensuring that the child gets the best opportunity to find his forever family. It was very apparent that you wanted and considered the child's best interest especially around his culture, heritage and religion.'**

**'When you have done your visit's, you have really listened to what the child was saying and getting their voice. I just wanted to let you know that all your hard work has not gone unnoticed.'**

## The Adoption Panel and the Agency Decision Maker

Carer's assessments are presented to the Adoption Panel, which meets at least monthly. The Panel make recommendations to whether the adopters are approved or not. This then goes to the Agency Decision Maker (ADM) who formally considers the recommendation and decides whether the adoption should be recommended for approval and is in the child's best interests.

The Adoption Panel has an experienced chair and several long-standing members from a variety of fields of knowledge including 3 adopters and an adopted adult, who has birth children and adopted children. Other panel members have expertise in post adoption support, psychology, and child protection.

Panel decisions are completed by the Agency Decision Maker in a timely manner. The Adoption Panel quality assures all reports. Over the year panel members have undertaken training including transitions between placements.

## Family Finding and Matching

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 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 Leicestershire, Lincolnshire and Rutland.

Child Permanence Reports (CPR's) reflect the needs of the children with a plan of adoption. Internal audit activity has shown that CPR's 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.

Quality assurance from Panel has shown that matching reports are of a good standard, demonstrating the care taken in matching children. The needs of children are clearly identified, with thorough analysis of how adopters can meet these needs. Areas of potential vulnerability are less well defined, though support needs are identified and addressed through the provision of a clear support plan to appropriately meet children's needs.

Most of Leicester's children are placed with in-house adopters. Where we do not have an in-house or Family Adoption Link resource, we family find on Link Maker and then look nationwide. For some older children, we use Adoption Activity Days run by Coram BAAF. Over the past year, of the 27 children adopted, 10 were Inter Agency placements.

**'I just wanted to say thanks for all of your work and support with our case, it really does not go unnoticed. The support worker goes above and beyond and the adoptive parents have been over the moon with her support.'**

## Transition Support

Adoption social workers are skilled in transition work with children and Transition Books are used for many of the children both prior to and during introductions. These books have proved invaluable especially when sibling groups are divided with children being placed in different 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 all 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. Adopters are also able to attend a 3-day attachment course which is run twice per year. We have introduced a new therapeutic parenting module which is a one-day course and received very positive feedback from those attending.

# Preventing Delay

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 Fostering for Adoption placements are secured.

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.

## Understanding of the child's life history and 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.

The Children and Families Support Team mentor staff with Life Story Book work, and Life Story Book training is provided for our staff. Additionally, the Contact Service produces "journey books" which record key events during supervised contact sessions, including photographs and handprints, which are provided to children who move on to permanence and their birth parents.

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.

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. In the past three years there has been only one adoption breakdown which occurred five months in placement, before the making of an adoption order.

# 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 27 children, young people, and 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 to families through to longer term support, a bi-annual newsletter, Walk and Talk groups and coffee mornings.

CFST support the 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 prior to the making of the Adoption Order.

CFST has provided bespoke training sessions to schools of around 30% of the post adoption cases supported this year. This training has explored trauma, attachment and best ways to support children in school settings. There are 390 cases supported through the post-box contact service and 5 adopted children are supported with direct contact with their birth families.

The CFST support up to 4 birth parents every three with letter writing. Support services were provided to 11 birth parents through independent birth parent counselling.

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 41 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.

The last Ofsted's report for Leicester published in September 2017 stated 'Adoption support is a strength. Post- adoption support is timely, and creative, sensitive work helps families to meet challenges. Adoptive families benefit from a wide range of services, and the team makes good use of the adoption support fund.'

### 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 in order 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>.**

## Children's services Analysis Tool (ChAT)

Page 19

Children adopted, waiting to be adopted, or had an adoption decision reversed in the last 12 months from 02/04/2019 to 01/04/2020

## 85 children

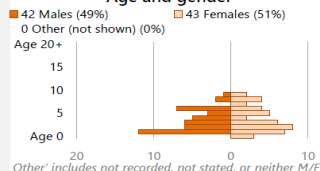
25 Child/ren adopted last 12 months  
37 Child/ren waiting to be adopted  
(32 Child/ren waiting with placement order)  
22 Child/ren with decision reversed

## Ethnic background

White	69%
Mixed	19%
Asian or Asian British	6%
Black or black British	5%
Other ethnic group	0%
Not stated	1%
Not recorded	0%

See page 20 for comparisons

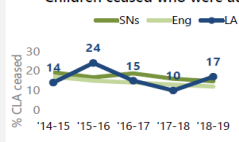
## Age and gender



3 children (4%) with a disability

Of the 113 children who ceased to be looked after in the last 6 months, 4 was/were adopted (4%)

## Children ceased who were adopted



## Children aged 5-plus who were adopted

1.4% 1 of the 74 children aged 5-plus who ceased to be looked after in the last 6 months were adopted

## Comparing 5-plus adoptions

LA last 6 months	1.4%
LA 2013-16 (3 yr average)	0.0%
SNs 2013-16 (3 yr average)	5.0%
Eng 2013-16 (3 yr average)	6.6%

## Timeliness of each stage of the adoption process

Average duration of each stage (number of days)

Stage 1 Child entered care

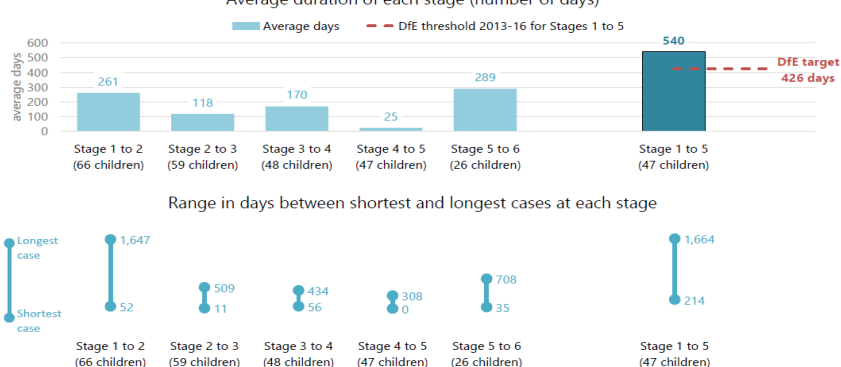
Stage 2 Decision that child should be placed for adoption

Stage 3 Placement order granted

Stage 4 Matching child and prospective adopters

Stage 5 Placed for adoption

Stage 6 Adoption order granted



Developer Jean Mallo - Data to Intelligence project, 2018

## Children's services Analysis Tool (ChAT)

Page 20

## Adoption benchmarking

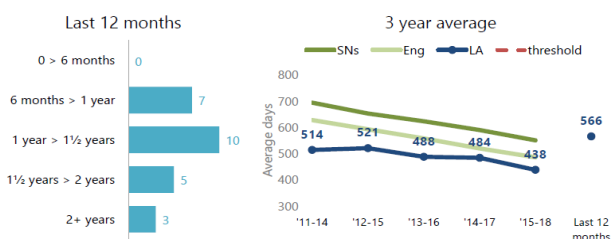
from 02/04/2019 to 01/04/2020

## (A1) Time between entering care and placed with family for adopted children

566 days

25 children

The average number of days from the date the child entered care to the date the child moved in with their adoptive family for adopted children

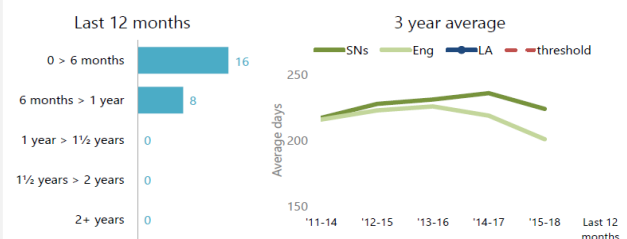


## (A2) Time between placement order and deciding on a match

131 days

24 children

The average number of days from the date of the placement order to the date the child was matched to prospective adopters

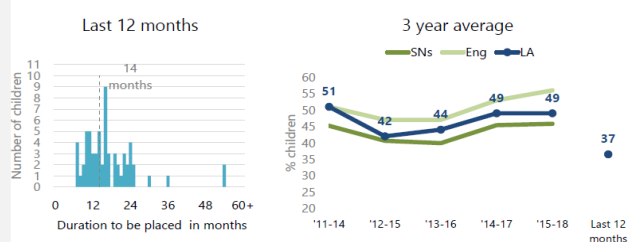


## (A3) Time between entering care and placed for adoption

37%

23/63 children

Children placed who waited less than the threshold between entering care and being placed for adoption (threshold: 14 months for 2013-16)



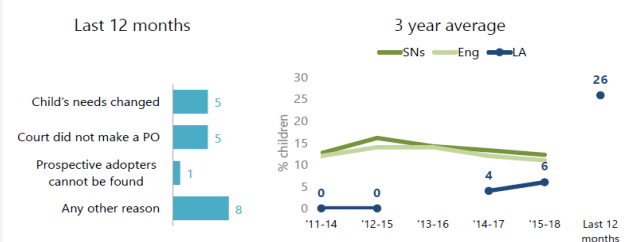
Developer Jean Mallo - Data to Intelligence project, 2018

## (A5) Permanence decision changed away from adoption

26%

22/85 children

Children where there was a decision that the child should no longer be placed for 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](http://www.leicester.gov.uk/adoption).





# Leicester City Adoption Service

## Annual Statement of Purpose 2020/21



# 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](http://www.leicester.gov.uk/adoption).

# Summary

In Leicester City the Adoption Service are 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.

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 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 by Leicester City Council Adoption Service, 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 adoption families and continue to develop our support offer. More information about the adoption service and the support offered can be found on our website [www.leicester.gov.uk/adoption](http://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.
- 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

## 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

**Service Address:** Sovereign House, Princess Road West, Leicester LE1 6TR.

**Telephone:** 0116 454 4506

The registered provider is Leicester City Council, Social Care and Education; the adoption service is called Leicester City Adoption.

The Agency Decision Maker on behalf of the Local Authority is Teodora Bot, 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.
- Two full-time and five part-time qualified, Social Work England registered social workers with experience in adoption work.
- One full time Adoption Support Worker.
- One full and two part time Admin and Business Support Officers.

## Additional Information

Leicester City Council is an approved Adoption Service provider and is inspected under the Care Standards Act 2000.

The Adoption Service is managed by the Head of Service for Corporate Parenting, a Service Manager and a Team Manager for Adoption. The Service Manager acts as the Adoption Support Services Advisor. (Standard 15)

The Head of Service, Child Safeguarding Quality Assurance is the Agency Decision Maker (Standard 17)

# 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. In conjunction with the Children and Families Support Team (CFST), advice, guidance and support to adoptive families during the matching process and post placement; this includes workshops and events for adoptive families.
- 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 in relation to the following: -
  - Birth parents, (First Families) whose children might be adopted
  - 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 as 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 need to go through.

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. The national helpline is on 0300 222 0022.

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.

## Regional Adoption Agency

At the start of 2020, the business case for the formation of a new Regional Adoption Agency was approved. This sets out the roadmap for the launch of our RAA in early autumn 2020, subject to formal approval of cabinet within each Local Authority.

This new RAA is comprised of four groups:

Leicester City, Leicestershire County, Lincolnshire County Council (who also cover adoptions in Rutland) and North Lincolnshire County Council.

By working closely together, we can more effectively find the best matches for children across the region. We do this by being able to form matches from a greater number of people looking to adopt and make the adoption process more efficient.



# 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 over-view 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 Leicester City Council 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” 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 Adoption 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 local authority 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 team and Leicester City Council as an 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 the Council's Children's Rights Officer, who will assist any child in making a complaint if they wish and support them throughout the process.

# Post Adoption Support

Post adoption support is provided by the Children and Families Support Team (CFST).

The Team is supported by a Manager.

6 qualified social workers provide post adoption support services alongside other placement services.

The team has two Mental Health Practitioners, a Child Care Support Worker and an Adoption Support Worker.

## 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

The team keep in touch with adoptive families through our regular newsletter called “A Different View”. This provides details of activities and relevant articles about adoption. Prior to the covid-19 epidemic the team ran various support groups and drop-in sessions for adoptive parents. These groups ran at various times and include “Play and Stay” sessions and ‘Walk and Talk’ sessions in local parks in the summer. The Team have continued to provide virtual online support and are planning to resume direct support going forward in accordance with emerging government guidance on social distancing.

The service continues to organise on-line therapeutic training relevant to adopters. The team will restart a rolling programme of seminars by Sue Golding, a clinical psychologist, on attachment issues and resolutions. These 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 (Looked After Children) can provide additional advice and support in school to assist adoptive children’s transition to a new school.

The Service has access to 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 be able 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 services for children in need of help and protection, children looked after and care leavers in Leicester City took place in 2017, and adoption performance was judged to be **good**.

Ofsted's stated:

*"Children receive an effective service from a well-established and experienced team of social workers led by committed and knowledgeable managers. Social workers and managers know their children well and robustly track all of those awaiting adoption".*

*"Family finding is thorough, detailed and sensitive to the needs of the child. Family finders are tenacious and, as a result, the local authority has been successful in achieving adoption over the past year for brothers and sisters together, disabled children and children from Black and Mixed ethnic backgrounds".*

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](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk)

# APPENDIX 1

## Overview of the adoption process: a guide 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 or 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, 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 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 the Link Maker and Adoption East Midlands 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 2021.

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](http://www.leicester.gov.uk/adoption).





# Appendix C

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## **Fostering Service Annual Report 2019 / 20 & Statement of Purpose**

**Children, Young People & Schools  
Scrutiny Commission**

**Date: 29 Sept 2020**

**Lead director: Martin Samuels**

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## **Useful information**

- Ward(s) affected: All
- Report author: David Thrussell, Head of Service Corporate Parenting
- Author contact details: 0116 4541657
- Report version number: 1

### **1. Summary**

- 1.1 This report provides an overview of the activity and performance of the council Fostering Service from 1st April 2019 to 31st March 2020, together with the Annual Statement of Purpose.
- 1.2 The Fostering 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.
- 1.3 The service allows our children and young people to live in safe, stable and appropriately matched foster families.
- 1.4 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.
- 1.5 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](http://www.leicester.gov.uk/fostering)

### **2. Recommended actions/decision**

- 2.1 The Scrutiny Commission are asked to note and approve the Fostering Service Annual Report and Statement of Purpose for 2019-20.

### **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 contains some direct quotations from foster carers who have been supported by the Fostering Service 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 2019/20 and Statement of Purpose.

### **5. Detailed report**

- 5.1 Please refer to the attached main reports. 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 children 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, short-breaks carers and independent visitors to match diverse service 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 who will respect these differences. Potentially, children 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 When developing the new marketing, recruitment and communications strategy, including the launch of a new brand, more targeted recruitment of underrepresented communities, and a digital transformation of application, recruitment and approval process. Equality considerations need to be embedded throughout the process going forward and equality impact assessments completed as appropriate. It is important to ensure that any consultation findings feed into the relevant equality impact assessment and

inform any proposals.

- 6.3.6 The Equality Impact Assessment is an iterative document which should be revisited throughout the decision-making process and should, ultimately, also take into account any consultation findings. The findings of the Equality Impact Assessment should be shared, throughout the process, with decision makers in order 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 4148

#### **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 Report & 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



# fostering

Leicester City Council

## Annual Report 2019-2020



# Purpose

The purpose of this annual report is to provide an overview of the activity and performance of the Fostering Service from 1st April 2019 to 31st March 2020.

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](http://www.leicester.gov.uk/fostering).

# Summary

The Fostering 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.

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

Our aims and purpose are exemplified in these statements from a reviewing officer:

**‘The children speak very highly of their carer’s. They regard their carer’s as their family and have fully invested in the idea of the placement as their home. I would like to thank the carers for their commitment to the children and for providing them with such a loving, stable, and nurturing home.’**

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.

**‘I wanted to give the carers a commendation for their care of the children. They have provided them with an environment where they are thriving. This includes structure, routine, nurture and emotional warmth and they take the time to have fun with them and give them the opportunity to talk through their feelings and views and are attuned to them.’**

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](http://www.leicester.gov.uk/fostering).

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

# Key Information

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.



The majority of our Looked After Children (75%) are placed in foster care, with our foster carers looking after 329 children and young people in March 2020.



The Fostering Service currently supports 156 mainstream fostering households, 72 Kinship fostering households and 9 short break fostering households.



11% of our fostering households consist of a single carer, 89% share caring responsibilities.



58% of our foster carers are approved to care for children on a long-term (permanent) basis, 35% offer short-term placements, the remaining 7% care for children on an emergency, respite or short-break basis



39% of our foster carers are approved to care for one child, 41% for sibling groups of 2, and a further 20% are approved to care for 3 or more siblings.



Most of our children are placed locally, with 53% of our foster care homes located within the city, with a further 39% located within Leicestershire. The remaining 8% are located outside of county and are permanent placements, mainstream and kinship (except for 1 placement which is short-term).



We have an older foster carer profile with most of our foster carers (31%) aged between 50 and 59, whilst a further 3% are aged 70+, 23% are aged between 40 to 49, and 23% are aged 20 to 39.



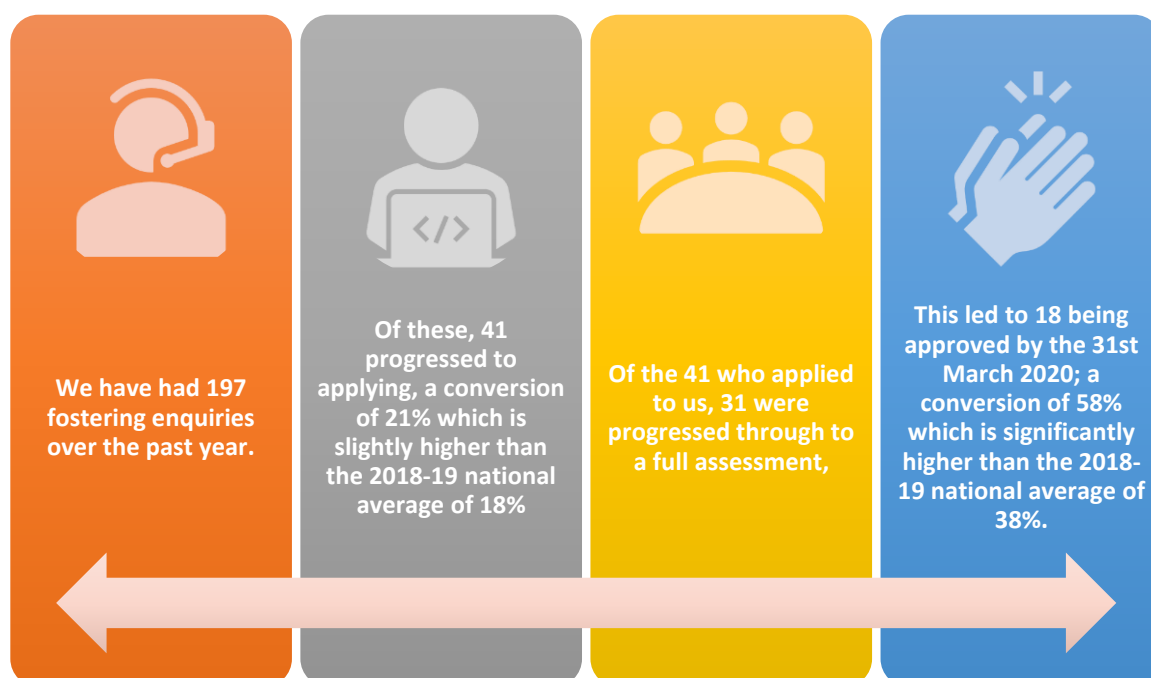
Our looked after children cared for by foster carers are predominantly white British (59%), compared to 76% nationally, but a significant number have diverse heritages.



71% of Leicester City Foster Carers are white British compared to 84% nationally. 23% of our carers have diverse heritages, speak over 20 languages and practice 17 different religions, some with no religion.

# Recruitment and Retention

The Service aims to maintain a sufficiently large and diverse range of foster carers and short-breaks carers to match children's needs.



Two successful recruitment strategies have been the 'golden hello' and the £500 reward payment. 11 of the 18 approved carers received a 'golden hello' of £1000 as they were approved for either sibling groups, or teenage placements. Three 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 developing a new marketing, recruitment and communications strategy, including the launching of a new brand, more targeted recruitment of underrepresented communities, and a digital transformation of application, recruitment and approval process. These proposals were subject to a public consultation as part of our wider sufficiency strategy consultation.

We currently use a variety of media and marketing activities to raise awareness of fostering, using a range of social media, local media and web forms to attract interest and facilitate enquiries and applications. An online application form is now in place.

The Recruitment and Assessment Team have a dedicated Enquiry Officer operating a daily service so that when the public make contact they get to speak to an experienced worker immediately.

The service operated a rolling programme of monthly information evenings which work well in terms of recruitment, and our website is effective in guiding applicants to our service.

Information packs are sent to those interested in pursuing fostering and returned application forms will then lead to an initial visit from the team.

We are currently exploring digital transformation whereby an initial enquiry can be responded to and 'kept warm' by keeping contact via automated responses. This would be particularly effective where the applicant shows potential, but the timing is not right.

We approve a wide range of single people, couples and families with children who meet the criteria.

Timescales remain positive, with mainstream assessments being completed in a timely manner, well under the National Minimum Standard of 8 months.

Unsuccessful applicants 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.

We want to increase the numbers of foster carers so more children can live in local foster carer households reflecting the population and communities of Leicester.

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.

Most of our carers stay with Leicester City following approval, the majority leaving due to taking Special Guardianship Orders on the children they care for, positively ensuring permanence for the children.

A completed analysis of de-registrations over the last year showed of the 17 mainstream carers leaving the service the top 3 reasons were: left due to struggling with the fostering role (5); transfer to another LA/agency (3); and ended by the fostering service (3). Other reasons included retirement, secured permanence through Special Guardianship and personal reasons / life events.

# Kinship (Family and Friend) Carers

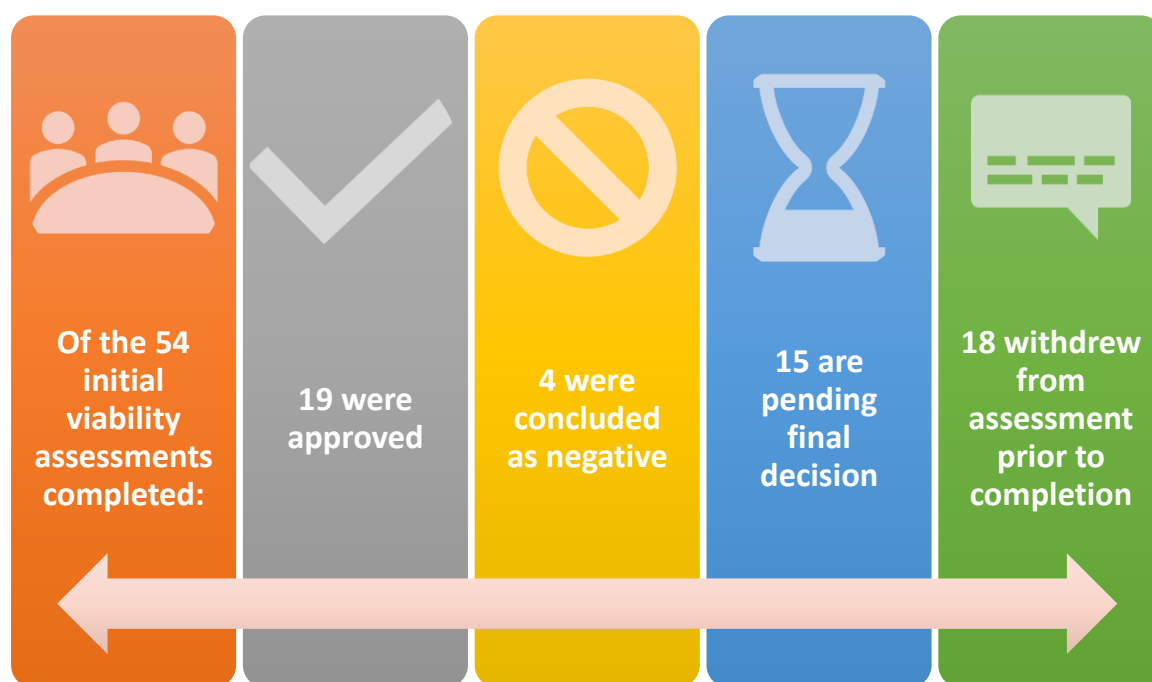
There is a legal requirement for local authorities to assess all potential family members as potential kinship carers for looked after children.

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.

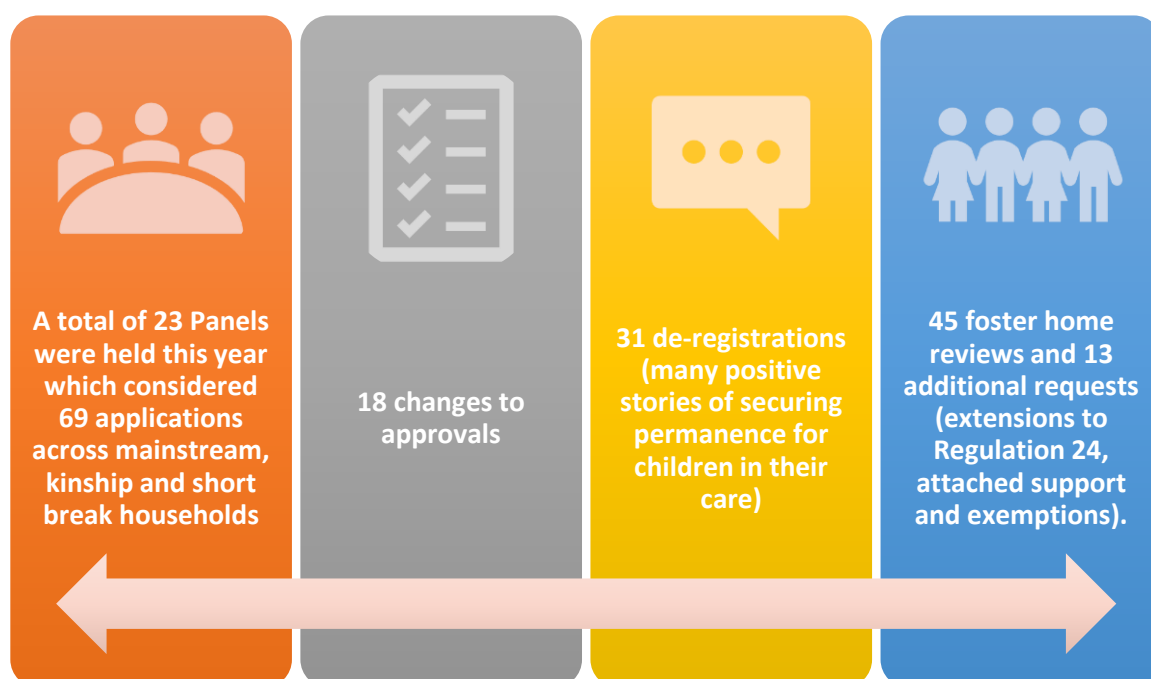
The joint working has proved to be very successful in improving the quality of viabilities. Resources are being focussed and dedicated to identifying positive family options alongside counselling out negative viabilities.



# Fostering Panel

The role of the Fostering Panel is to give recommendations to the local authority regarding the suitability of foster carers. The panel also quality assures each report 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.



## Support for Foster Carers

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.

**'We've had ups and downs over this last 7 years and he's the person we've turned to when we've felt like giving up, he's always supported us and here we still are.'**

Membership is paid 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 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.

**'the carers described her as the perfect Supervising Social Worker and that she is brilliant. She does anything needed straight away and is very responsive, even outside of work hours. They can talk to her about anything and she gives them good advice.'**

All carers have an annual review meeting chaired by an independent Fostering Independent Reviewing Officer (FIRO) who sits outside of the service.

A peer support group is established by foster carers in the city.

A buddy scheme has been established whereby new foster carers gain support from more experienced foster carers.

An annual professional development Conference and a meet the team event gives foster carers the opportunity to come together and share successes.

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 the 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, well-being and self-efficacy of looked after children and young people and their foster carers through music and singing culminating in an annual concert.

An annual celebration event during Foster Care Fortnight recognises the achievements of foster carers.

### Sons and Daughter's Group

The group is an activity-based support group for sons and daughters of our registered foster carers which meets regularly throughout the year. Each meeting includes an activity for the young people, plus opportunities to share their thoughts and feelings about the experience of fostering. Members of the group contribute to the Skills to Foster training programme for new carers and have also contributed to Ofsted inspections.

We have more than 150 members of the Sons and Daughter's group; all of whom have attended at least one event. All our registered foster carers receive information about the group at the point of approval.

Young People have taken a lead role in the planning and running of activities. The 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.



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 been able to provide training on several relevant current issues which include 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.

As well as the Sons and Daughters Group, 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 support for carers. Over the past year the team have worked with 2 young people (both male) who have used Sexually Harmful Behaviour and are subject to Children Using Abusive Behaviour (CUAB plans). This provides 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 25 children who are Looked After by the local authority, working with the child or young person and their caregivers. Additionally, CFST provide training to foster carers and Hub meetings for case discussions and support.

The carers comment on the support received from the CfST worker:

**'you are amazing, just wanted to say how appreciative I am of your fabulous knowledgeable input at this morning's conference'**

# Training for Foster Carers

There are three main areas to training: 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.

The Skills to Foster courses are run three to four times a year, over 3 days followed by an evening for Sons and Daughters, for ages 7 to 18. There have been four Skills to Foster events over the past year with 36 applicants trained. The feedback from this is positive, with 7 children appreciating an understanding of confidentiality, safeguarding and what a Supervising Social Worker does.

15 different courses were offered over the year, most running twice. Three of these courses were newly developed; Understanding Your Role as a Foster Carer using a signs of success approach; Moving on to Adoption and Permanency to support the successful transition of children to permanent placements; Rebuilding Bonds – Understanding Attachment developing the importance of therapeutic parenting. The take up of course places has steadily continued to improve noticeably by kinship foster carers. Established foster carers are required to refresh their training in Safeguarding and Recording. From the 800 course places offered most averaged 65-70% take up with new courses achieving full capacity. The service uses experienced foster carers to co-facilitate on several courses. One-off training events run by external agencies included training from the CAHMS Service and Health. All presentations and training are evaluated through attendee feedback; this has been very positive with most indicating a 4/5 rating for overall course usefulness.

Foster Carers received a regular quarterly e- newsletter Fostering News, with articles such as Working with the CSE Team, Warning Signs Your Child is Beginning to be Involved in Serious and Organised Crime. The Electronic Foster Carer Handbook contributes to carers' knowledge, signposting relevant resources via hyperlinks.

The highly successful 2019 Annual Conference by Sarah Naish's Inspire Training Group was attended by over 200 people, nearly half of whom were foster carers.

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. 90 new learners have created accounts with this e-learning Since 2019.

Training Support and Development Standards (TSDS) are completed by carers through commissioned e-learning from The Grey Matter Group. Carers can complete courses at home or attend six weekly drop-in sessions where they receive support from the Fostering Team and an experienced foster carer. These have been especially welcomed by new carers and those inexperienced in online learning. 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 carers' 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.

We have established a new foster carer reference group called 'Fostering Influence' who have met to advise and help develop opportunities for service improvement, such as helping us to develop our foster carer handbook, buddy scheme and exit interview programme.

## Managing Allegations

From 1st April 2019 to 31st March 2020, there were 19 recorded incidents of allegations against Foster Carers which related to 16 households. All allegations or concerns are followed up rigorously by the service.

14 concerns were resolved following investigation, 2 incidents resolved following monitoring for an agreed period, and 3 incidents resulted in further review and were then resolved.

In response to the learning from these allegations it has been identified that additional training is needed about the role of being a kinship carer alongside being a close family member and how the Local Authority's expectations need to be understood more clearly.

## Placement Stability



**A total of 9.33% of our looked after children have experienced 3 placement moves or more which is currently lower than England (10%) and our statistical neighbours (11.80%)**



**64% of our looked after children have been in placement for over 2.5 years**

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 pre- disruption meetings are called to identify additional resources to stabilise placements deemed to be vulnerable.

As part of the strategy to improve permanence (long term foster care) for our looked after children, a permanent fostering monitoring group has been established to review and track all children to ensure progress and prevent delay. This activity will promote better outcomes, support placement stability and reduce long-term arrangements with more costly IFAs.

Activity to support family finding for permanence includes:

- approaching existing foster carers – through a new e-bulletin; this has had a positive start in identifying permanent homes for our children.
- recruiting more permanent foster carers.
- 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

In the last 12 months, 25 children were found permanent placements with our in-house foster carers, of which 5 moved from IFAs, and a further 17 children were found permanent placements with IFA carers.

The recruitment film 'Giants' highlights how important it is to keep siblings together, and this is discussed throughout a foster carer's career.

## Staying Put Scheme

Young people who are care leavers have the option of staying with their foster carer after they turn 18. All care leavers are encouraged to consider this option prior to leaving care, and currently 25 care leavers and their carers have chosen '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.

More training is being planned to support foster carers to offer 'staying-put' arrangements.

# More Information

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](http://www.leicester.gov.uk/fostering).









# Annual Statement of Purpose 2020/21



# Purpose

As a Fostering 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 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](http://www.leicester.gov.uk/fostering).

# Summary

In Leicester City the Fostering Service are 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.

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

Our aim for children who are cared for is 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 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](http://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 disabled children 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 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 Board.

# The Service

**Service Manager:** Georgina Oreffo

**Service Address:** Sovereign House, Princess Road West, Leicester LE1 6TR.

**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 (Full Time equivalent) Team Managers, 22 (full or part time) Supervising Social 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 (p/t x 2)

Team Manager (p/t)

## 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 Notes

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 and 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 e.g. National Foster Care Fortnight.

Recruitment is focused on the areas of greatest need i.e. permanent placements, sibling groups, teenagers, disabled children's respite, 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, 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 (now completed virtually). 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 4 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 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 Diary & 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 brochure
- 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 connected person, under Regulation 24 of the Care Planning, Placement and Case Review (England) Regulations 2010 following a joint Initial Viability Assessment (IVA) completed by the Childcare Social Worker and the Supervising Social Worker 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 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 Connected Person's 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 disabled children and severely disabled children or children with medical needs who need adapted accommodation.
- Placement for unaccompanied asylum-seeking children and young people.
- 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 appropriate 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.

### **Specialist Placements (Contract Care)**

This service is provided to children and young people who require an intensive level of support over and above that which mainstream fostering provides. Young people will generally have had their care plan considered and agreed by the Department's Placement Decision Group to access this service.

### **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 disabled children by providing time limited overnight stays and short breaks for children, to help families to continue to care for their children at home.

# 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
- An independent 24-hour support line operated by Foster Talk
- Membership for all fostering households to 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
- Discounted activities and days out through Foster Talk.
- 4 weeks paid leave per year for specialist contract foster carers
- An on-going 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 the Fostering Network
- Sons and Daughters support Group for foster carers' own children
- Representation on the Corporate Parenting Forum
- Equipment provided to meet placement needs

## **Ongoing Professional Development**

All carers will discuss their development and training needs with their supervising social worker. 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 in specific circumstances 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

- 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 looked after children and secure appropriate educational arrangements for young people either in mainstream or specialist provision.
- A dedicated health team of Looked after Children's 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.
- 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 looked after children to ensure young people know and understand their rights when being looked after.
- 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 looked after children 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 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 placement 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 Looked after Children and young people have an Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO) who chairs their Looked after Child 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 only 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](mailto: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 arrangement in accordance with the LSCPB procedures.

The Fostering Service adheres to all the policies and procedures of the Leicester Safeguarding Children Partnership Board 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 local safeguarding children 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 Looked After Child.

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 Looked After Child or young person 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 principal 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. However, kinship placements can also present challenges. 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/young person as the priority.

## **3. Assessments of prospective kinship carers**

- 3.1. In Leicester, assessments are undertaken by the Fostering and Kinship 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 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 and/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 CAIU 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 Looked After Children and young people 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 a comprehensive assessment process as mainstream carers, but the assessment is focussed on meeting the needs of the specific child/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.
  - 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 looked after child/children 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 eg; Special Guardianship Orders and complete the necessary reports in conjunction with the childcare social worker.

## **10. Partnership working**

Crucial in the success of kinship foster care placements is the degree of communication and partnership working between Social Workers, Kinship Foster Carers and Supervising Social Workers in the fostering service.

# 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 June 2021.

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](http://www.leicester.gov.uk/fostering).

