Leicester
City Council

MEETING OF THE CHILDREN, YOUNG PEOPLE AND EDUCATION SCRUTINY COMMISSION

DATE: TUESDAY, 20 JANUARY 2026
TIME: 5:30 pm
PLACE: Meeting Room G.01, Ground Floor, City Hall, 115 Charles Street, Leicester, LE1 1FZ

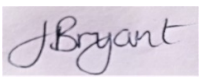
Members of the Committee

Councillor Batool (Chair)
Councillor Bonham (Vice-Chair)

Councillors Barnes, Cole, Gregg, Dr Moore, Singh Sangha and Westley

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

For Monitoring Officer



Officer contacts:
Katie Jordan (Governance Services) and Julie Bryant (Governance Services),
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Leicester City Council, City Hall, 3rd Floor Granby Wing, 115 Charles Street, Leicester, LE1 1FZ

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If you have any queries about any of the above or the business to be discussed, please contact: **Julie Bryant, Sharif Chowdhury, Katie Jordan and Governance Services, Governance Services on** . Alternatively, email committees@leicester.gov.uk, or call in at City Hall.

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PUBLIC SESSION

AGENDA

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1. WELCOME AND APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

To issue a welcome to those present, and to confirm if there are any 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 Children, Young People, and Education Scrutiny Commission held on Tuesday 28th October have been circulated, and Members are asked to confirm them as a correct record.

4. CHAIR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chair is invited to make any announcements as they see fit.

5. QUESTIONS, REPRESENTATIONS AND STATEMENTS OF CASE

Any questions, representations and statements of case submitted in accordance with the Council's procedures will be reported.

6. PETITIONS

Any petitions received in accordance with Council procedures will be reported.

7. DRAFT GENERAL FUND REVENUE BUDGET 2026/27 **Appendix B**

The Director of Finance submits a report setting out the City Mayor's proposed Draft General Fund Revenue Budget for 2026/27.

8. DRAFT THREE YEAR CAPITAL PROGRAMME 2026/27 **Appendix C**

The Director of Finance submits a report setting out the City Mayor's proposed

Draft Three Year Capital Programme 2026/27.

9. LEICESTER SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN PARTNERSHIP YEARLY REPORT 2024 - 2025 **Appendix D**

The Leicester Safeguarding Children Partnership (LSCP) submit their Annual Report for 24/25 which will be presented by the LSCP Independent Scrutineer.

10. SEND TRANSPORT UPDATE **Appendix E**

The Strategic Director for Social Care and Education submits a report providing an update to the Children, Young People and Education Scrutiny Commission regarding the Post 16 Transport service, including the latest policy implementation.

11. HNB TASK GROUP REPORT **Appendix F**

The Chair submits the final report from the High Needs Block Task Group.

12. FOSTERING SERVICE ANNUAL REPORT AND STATEMENT OF PURPOSE 2024 / 2025 **Appendix G**

The Strategic Director for Social Care and Education submits a report providing an overview of the activity and performance of the Fostering Service from 1st April 2024 to 31st March 2025. The report should be read in conjunction with the annual statement of purpose which sets out the service aims, objectives and configuration.

13. CHILDREN, YOUNG PEOPLE AND EDUCATION QUARTER 2 PERFORMANCE (APRIL-SEPTEMBER 2025) AND QUALITY ASSURANCE **Appendix H**

The Strategic Director of Social Care and Education submits a report providing an update on performance in Children's social care and information on monitoring and improving quality.

14. WORK PROGRAMME **Appendix I**

Members of the Commission will be asked to consider the work programme and make suggestions for additional items as it considers necessary.

15. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Appendix A

Leicester
City Council

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

Held: TUESDAY, 28 OCTOBER 2025 at 5:30 pm

P R E S E N T :

Councillor Batool (Chair)
Councillor Bonham (Vice Chair)
Councillor Orton

Assistant City Mayor- Children and Young People, Councillor Pantling

Standing Invitees (Non-Voting)

Jennifer Day / Nic Plumtree – Teaching Union
Janet Mckenna – Trade Union

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176. WELCOME AND APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

It was noted that apologies for absence were received from Councillors Gregg, Moore, Singh Sangha and Westley.

177. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

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

There were no declarations of interest.

178. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

The Chair highlighted that the minutes from the meeting held on 23rd September were included in the agenda pack and asked Members to confirm whether they were an accurate record.

AGREED:

It was agreed that the minutes for the meeting on 23rd September 2025 were a correct record.

179. CHAIR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chair advised the Commission that the order of the Work Programme had been adjusted to allow for the High Needs Block Task Group completion. This item would now come to the January meeting. The Children's Centres and Performance Dashboard would also be heard at a later date.

180. QUESTIONS, REPRESENTATIONS AND STATEMENTS OF CASE

The Monitoring Officer reported that none had been received.

181. PETITIONS

The Monitoring Officer reported that none had been received.

182. VERBAL OFSTED UPDATE/ CHILDREN'S SOCIAL CARE, EARLY HELP AND PREVENTION IMPROVEMENT PLAN

The Strategic Director of Social Care and Education gave a verbal update on the current position of the Ofsted and Children's Social Care, Early Help and Prevention Improvement Plan. Key points to note were as follows:

- The report was awaiting publishing.
- Future delivery would be shaped by a combination of the recommendations.
- Implementation was on schedule, and timely delivery was key.
- Further development was required in terms of measuring impact.

The Director of Children's Social Work and Early Help summarised the structuring of the report and noted that the vast majority of actions were completed, or on an amber rag rating. One action was marked red, but this was on track for completion.

The Chair welcomed questions and comments from the Commission, and it was noted that:

- The logistics were being coordinated.
- The area of Performance Management was of particular focus, surrounding timeliness, quality and escalation methods.
- A focus would be maintained on reviewing the mechanisms in place when outcomes were not delivered.
- In terms of Pathway Plans, it had been noted that Unregulated Places had remained well below the 5% threshold. Leicester benchmarked well against other Local Authorities.
- In response to the Ofsted findings, seven providers were reviewed to identify examples of best practice, and Islington was selected due to facing similar challenges. A three-month engagement had focused on:
    - Care Leaver Pathways

    - Safety Planning
    - Individual coaching from staff, balanced with high challenge
    - Working with leaders from a global majority background
- A joint protocol with the Housing Sector was in place, covering grants, rent support, and assistance for vulnerable individuals. Following Ofsted feedback, protocols had been reviewed and benchmarked. Further consideration was needed across the wider Council, beyond Children's Services.
- Directors sat on the Corporate Responsibility board.
- A Foundations Grant had been secured to develop impact and practice.
- Progress against the action plan was measured on quality feedback, youth engagement and partnerships.
- Governance was managed via the Impact Board.
- An interim Ofsted visit was expected within next 6 months and an annual conversation had taken place.
- There was an annual focussed visit.
- Reports would continue to come to scrutiny every six months.
- A letter would come to the January Scrutiny meeting.

AGREED:

That the report be noted.

183. CHILDREN SEEKING SAFETY

The Director of Children's Social Care and Early Help submitted a report and gave a presentation to update the Commission on the Families First Partnership which aims to transform Children's Social Care by promoting early coordinated and family centred support.

Key points to note were as follows:

- Developments were driven by a national mandate.
- A merger with Social Work services, excluding Child Protection was in place.
- A range of staff would be in place under a lead worker, with Social Worker involvement as required.
- Meetings had taken place with Turning Point to support embedding staff.
- Community Groups and Volunteers added support value.
- There was an emphasis on developing family enablement and support networks.
- Police partnerships were in place and had been reviewed.
- The programme had been running for six months and a three-month pilot had concluded.
- The pilot had informed objectives, and it was noted that the service would evolve over time with a holistic approach to supporting the whole family.
- Staff were in place at children's centres and family hubs for the upcoming launch.

- The Family Help Model had been adopted with co-location.
- New pathways would be tested out with a focus on assessment thresholds.
- A staff skills audit had taken place and learning plans had been developed, together with administration and support structuring.
- The programme would span two years:
    - Year one would implement the Family Help Model.
    - Year two would focus on Multi-agency team integration, incorporating the Health and Police teams.
- Ongoing discussions were taking place with path leaders Luton Borough Council with a view to gathering delivery insights.
- The goal was to reduce the numbers of Child Protection Plans and numbers of young people coming into care.
- Disability services were currently standalone but could be integrated.
- It was noted that the changes were welcomed within the wards and that Leicester was ahead when compared to other Local Authorities.
- Five workshops would be hosted with community groups and partners, schools had expressed a notable interest.
- Phase two would consider longer term support.
- An update would come to the Scrutiny Commission in March 2026.

WIn response to questions and comments, the following was noted:

- Delivery would be contained to Family Hubs and would not detract from the Youth Centres. Children's Trust Arrangements would map youth provision and consideration would be given by the Children's Board.
- Local Police secondments had taken place and the Leicestershire Partnership NHS Trust formed part of the transformation team.
- Resourcing and Housing remained challenging.
- Monthly meetings would ensue with directors for feedback and real-time learning.
- Reforms had been piloted in Lincolnshire, The Wirrall and Wolverhampton.
- Help resources included The Department for Education Regional Team and the online knowledge hub.
- Support was in place with Impower.
- Central government set the timelines, with implementation targeted for March 2026. Scheduling was currently on track.
- The Commission welcomed the Multi-Agency approach but noted it could have been more central to the transformation.
- Long-term projects included changes to the case management system and interfacing with partners.
- Engagement with the Young People's Council would help to shape provision preferences for young people.
- Informal Kinship Arrangements formed a key component of the model.
- There would be a consortium approach for cluster areas and organisations providing support.
- For matters of persistent neglect, it was noted that families were more prepared to work with local community groups.
- A significant investment would be directed towards procurement.

- A member briefing pack would be issued to the Commission.

Agreed:

1. That the report be noted.
2. For a Pilot update to be brought to the Commission in March.

184. FAMILIES FIRST PROGRAMME

185. EARLY YEARS EXTENDED ENTITLEMENT

The Director of Send and Education gave a presentation on the development of early years provision over recent years, outlining the series of national changes and local expansion taking place within the sector. It was noted that:

- It was explained that childcare and wraparound provision were being implemented gradually, with learning continuing as the system became embedded.
- The early years sector was described as being largely run by the voluntary, community and private sectors, with the Council having a statutory duty to ensure sufficient childcare places. The market was noted to be highly changeable and affected by national trends, recruitment challenges and the cost-of-living crisis, which had significantly influenced how providers operated.
- Leicester had been fortunate to retain strong nursery provision within schools, and a new government programme on school-based nurseries was highlighted as an effective use of capital to expand places. However, it was recognised that term-time provision did not fully meet the needs of working families who required year-round childcare.
- The importance of early access to education in improving life chances was emphasised, alongside the need to maintain sufficient places for vulnerable children and those with special educational needs and disabilities. While the demand for places had grown, the city's capacity had also expanded.
- A Department for Education capital grant of just over half a million pounds had been secured to support this expansion, enabling around three hundred thousand pounds of new provision to be created across five or six settings. The target was to create four hundred additional places, with approximately eighty per cent of that already achieved.
- The main challenges identified were funding levels, which had not increased in line with inflation, and ongoing national workforce shortages. It was expected that the government's Best Start in Life policy would review funding arrangements in the coming years.
- Officers advised that support, training and sufficiency monitoring continued to be provided to help settings overcome challenges and maintain market stability.
- The quality of provision and the sustainability of providers were also key priorities, with officers working closely with Ofsted and offering training to ensure that provision remained of a high standard.
- Recruitment pressures across the sector were discussed, with particular

difficulty in securing skilled and experienced staff and ensuring sufficient special educational needs capacity. The city continued to run a SENCO training course for early years staff, and the ongoing work of the specialist early years team was recognised as vital to sustaining quality provision.

In discussions with members, the following was noted:

Members compared the development of the sector to academisation and asked how the balance was being managed between maintained and private providers, particularly given financial pressures. It was explained that this balance had always existed and continued to evolve. The Council had supported private providers to remodel in response to market pressures and had encouraged schools to admit younger children to fill the gap for disadvantaged families eligible for the fifteen-hour offer.

It was noted that demand for places for children under two had increased and required significant financial investment to expand capacity.

Members queried how working parents were being made aware of new funding opportunities for under-twos. Officers confirmed that the rebranding of the Best Start for Life and Family Hubs programmes included a new eligibility checker and information hub for parents. Work was ongoing with communications teams and partner organisations to ensure parents were informed early about what they were entitled to.

Members suggested that information could also be shared through councillor social media channels to help promote awareness locally. Officers welcomed the suggestion and agreed that regular promotion was essential.

Members supported the idea of a local campaign and proposed using libraries and the annual council tax mail-out to distribute information. Officers noted that eligibility criteria were set nationally and that both parents in a working household needed to be employed for at least sixteen hours per week, with an income threshold of up to one hundred thousand pounds per person annually.

The information on the offer was already available on both local and national websites, although further local communication would be explored.

Members asked how equality and quality of provision were measured across the city. Officers explained that all providers were required to be Ofsted-registered and subject to the same inspection framework as schools. Only providers meeting the required standards were eligible for funding, and any with inadequate inspection outcomes could have funding frozen until improvements were made. Officers added that support would be provided to affected families to identify alternative provision if needed.

AGREED:

1. That the commission note the report.
2. That a further update on early years provision be added to the Commission's work programme for six months' time.

186. WORK PROGRAMME

Members of the Commission were invited to consider content of the work programme and were invited to make suggestions for additions as appropriate

to be brought to future meetings.

187. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

There being no other business, the meeting closed at 7.47pm.

Appendix B

Draft General Fund Revenue Budget 2026/27

Decision to be taken by: Council

Date of meeting: Draft for 25 February 2026

Lead director: Amy Oliver, Director of Finance

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Useful information

- Ward(s) affected: All
- Report author: Catherine Taylor/Amy Oliver
- Author contact details: amy.oliver@leicester.gov.uk
- Report version number: 1

1. Purpose

1.1. The purpose of this report is to present the City Mayor's strategy for balancing the budget for the next 3 years and to seek approval to the actual budget for 2026/27. The strategy is a continuation of the medium-term strategy established last year and includes the use of one-off money and reductions in annual service spending through savings and work to reduce the growth areas such as social care and homelessness. It. It is designed to ensure we remain financially sustainable for as long as possible, while we continue to seek ways to reduce the ongoing budget gap.

1.2. Whilst the strategy is forecast to provide sufficient reserves to balance the budget for at least the next three years, and is a significant improvement on previous forecasts, an ongoing budget gap continues. The Council continues to annually spend more than the income received and is using one-off monies to balance the budget. The City Mayor will continue to make these points to the Government.

1.3. The proposed budget for 2026/27 is described in this report, subject to any amendments the City Mayor may wish to recommend when he makes a firm proposal to the Council.

2. Summary

2.1. As members will be aware, the financial outlook is difficult. Like many authorities, we have ongoing difficulties in being able to balance our budget. A number of authorities have previously applied to the Government for "exceptional financial support", and/or to issue a formal report under section 114 of the Local Government Finance Act 1988. We are unaware if further authorities will be applying for EFS as part of this year's budget setting

2.2. We have so far been able to avoid reaching a financial crisis point, by the use of a "managed reserves strategy" and a multi-strand budget strategy approved last year. This is progressing, and the underlying financial position – while still difficult – has improved from last year's forecasts. As a result, this report proposes continuing the existing financial strategy and extending it to March 2029.

2.3. We are continuing with our £60m asset sales program, however we are not envisaging requiring a capitalisation direction over the three-year period of this financial strategy. Therefore, we will look to use this to fund some of the previously approved capital budget to relieve the borrowing pressures in the years the capital receipts are received.

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2.4. Achieving our strategic vision for the Council is dependent on establishing a sustainable budget position, which enables decisions to be made that balance the resource implications against the financial constraints. This strategy does not make specific decisions about how any service will be delivered, but provides a framework within which those decisions will be made. In particular, it reinforces our commitment to providing high quality care services, and provides additional resources in this area. We are also looking to maintain our economic development to support the long term vision for the City and invest in areas that improve the city for the people that live here.

2.5. In addition, to this we are continuing to mitigate the pressures within temporary accommodation by investing in additional accommodation for these households. This strategy looks to provide the revenue support to continue with our positive approach to preventing homelessness, alongside significant capital investment included in the capital budget strategy.

2.6. Estimates of our available funding are particularly uncertain this year. The government is undertaking a substantial review of support to local authorities; at the time of writing, the outcome of a consultation has just been published, and we do not expect to have the finance settlement for 2026/27 until just before Christmas. As a result, this draft budget report is based on estimates that could change significantly. However, given the wider position of the public finances, it is very unlikely that any changes will eliminate the substantial gap between our annual spending and income.

2.7. Local government reorganisation (LGR) could deliver significant efficiency savings to support the Council's budget, depending on the option chosen by the Government. As these would not start to materialise until 2028/29 at the earliest, the impact has been disregarded for the purposes of this report.

2.8. The report proposes a council tax increase of just under 5%, which is the maximum we believe we will be allowed to set without a referendum.

2.9. The medium-term outlook is attached at Appendix 4 and shows the escalating scale of the financial pressures facing the council.

3. Recommendations

3.1. At the meeting in February, the Council will be asked to:

a) approve the three year budget strategy described in this report;

b) approve the proposed budget and council tax for 2026/27, including the recommendations in the formal budget resolution, subject to any changes proposed by the City Mayor when he makes his final proposal to the Council;

c) approve the budget ceilings for each service, drafts of which will be at Appendix 1 to the final report;

d) approve the scheme of virement described in Appendix 2 to this report;

e) note my view on the adequacy of reserves and the estimates used in preparing the budget;

f) note the equality implications arising from the proposed tax increase, as described in paragraph 15 and Appendix 3;

g) note the medium-term financial strategy and forecasts presented at Appendix 4, and the significant financial challenges ahead;

h) note the earmarked reserves position that will be set out at Appendix 5 to the final report;

i) note the policy on council tax premiums and discounts set out at Appendix 6;

j) note the council tax support scheme has been reviewed by the Executive, and reported to OSC, during the year;

k) approve the inflationary increase to Council Tax Support Scheme thresholds as shown at Appendix 7 and approve further inflationary increases in future years (to be calculated with reference to published CPI inflation for the September prior to the start of the year in question);

l) approve the capital receipts flexibility policy that will be at Appendix 8.

4. Background and Financial Strategy

4.1. Between 2010 and 2020, a “decade of austerity” meant that services other than social care had to be reduced by 53% in real terms, limiting our scope to make further cuts. This was followed by the covid-19 pandemic which led to “stop gap” budgets whilst we dealt with the immediate emergency, and saw the budgets being supported by reserves.

4.2. This is alongside cost pressures shared by authorities across the country. These include pressures on the costs of children that are looked after and support for homeless households, as well as the long-standing pressures in adult social care and the hike in inflation. The budgets for 2024/25 and 2025/26 were supported by a further £61m and £31m of reserves respectively.

4.3. Plans for a “fair funding” review of grant allocation have been repeatedly delayed. This has left us providing services to a population far in excess of our last needs assessment (population has grown faster than elsewhere in the country, so an equitable system ought to give us a greater share of the national pot). The review is now being introduced for the 2026/27 financial year, although full implementation will take several years.

4.4. In February 2025, the Council approved a multi-strand budget strategy aimed at balancing the budget for a minimum three years. This includes:

Strand 1 - Releasing one-off monies to buy time, including the release of £90m from the capital reserve, and replacing this with borrowing to fund the capital programme;

Strand 2 - Reductions in the capital programme to reduce the borrowing required, and therefore reduce the cost of this borrowing;

Strand 3 – A programme of property sales aiming to secure an additional £60m of one-off monies. These receipts cannot be used to support the revenue budget without permission from the Secretary of State. It is now planned to use some of the capital receipts to support the capital programme and reduced the revenue cost of borrowing.

Strand 4 – Steps to constrain growth in those statutory services that are under demand led pressure (i.e. adult and children's social care services, and homelessness).

Strand 5 – Ongoing savings totalling £23m per year by 2027/28.

4.5. Progress against each of these strands is set out in the sections below, along with a limited number of areas of additional investment to assist in meeting corporate priorities.

4.6. Given the progress already made, and some improvements in factors outside our direct control, we now expect to have reserves available at the end of the forecast period (March 2029). However, these reserves are one-off funding and an underlying budget gap remains (although improved) which will need to be met in the longer term.

5. Strands 1-3: releasing one-off monies and reductions in the capital programme

5.1. Last year's forecasts included the release of £90m from the capital reserve, and £20m from other earmarked reserves. Since the budget was approved, a further £12m has been added to the budget reserve from subsequent reviews and additional one-off income.

5.2. Given the difficult financial outlook, earmarked reserves are kept under regular review, and amounts that are no longer required for their original purpose are released to the budget strategy reserve. This has now identified a further £0.5m that can be used to support the overall budget position.

5.3. The programme of property sales is continuing, and has achieved £21m in completed or legally contracted sales, with a further £55m of sales being progressed.

5.4. Originally, it was forecast that these receipts would be required to balance the budget after the 3-year strategy (which would require specific permission from the government). To do this, we would need to borrow money to fund the capital programme, which increases our revenue costs in the longer term. Given the improvement in reserves balances in the latest forecasts, options are now being explored to use some of these receipts to reduce our borrowing requirements.

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5.5. Available one-off funding has also been reviewed to ensure future costs are provided for. As detailed in paragraph 9 below, it is proposed to set monies aside towards transitional costs associated with local government reorganisations, and the DSG cumulative deficit when the current statutory override ends.

6. Strand 4: Constraining Growth in Service Demand

6.1. For several years, one of the chief reasons for our budget gap is growth in the costs of statutory services, particularly social care (and, more recently, homelessness), which have outstripped growth in our income.

Adult Social Care

6.2. The budget for **Adult Social Care** requires growth to take account of demographic and inflationary pressures. Demographic pressures can be the result of increased packages of support to those people already receiving care, or a change in the mix of people we provide care for, for example more working age people are diagnosed early with life-long health conditions such mental health and dementia. Inflationary pressures arise from increases in National Living Wage (NLW) and general inflation.

6.3. Calculating future growth is a complex process taking into account current care packages and future projections. The growth required can be seen in the following table:

	2026/27 £m	**2027/28** £m	**2028/29** £m
Underlying budget	179.1	179.1	179.1
Placement growth	14.8	29.8	45.1
Additional income	(2.0)	(2.0)	(2.0)
Vacancy factor	(0.4)	(0.2)	0.0
TOTAL	**191.5**	**206.7**	**222.2**

6.4. The department continues to reduce growth in the costs of care by reducing new entrants, preventative and early support, and by enhanced partnership working. Tracking of current package costs indicate that the department may have spent £24m more in 2025/26 (rising to £41m in 2026/27) if cost mitigation work had not taken place. This programme of work continues, and the future growth pressures identified above takes this into account. Despite this work, it is forecast that costs of care will increase by over £40m over the three years of this strategy.

6.5. The council has undertaken significant work to ensure that other local authority and health partners are contributing their fair share towards care costs. Through this work, adult social care have generated an additional £2.6m in 2025/26. Although we do not anticipate a sudden drop in future, this additional income is subject to the changes that

occur in care packages following reassessments or changes in a person's health conditions.

6.6. Adult Social Care was rated as 'Requires Improvement' by the CQC in July. They recognised that we have an effective care and support system, there is clear governance in place and that we are committed to staff development. However, as there were areas for improvement identified, we are implementing an action plan focussing on this.

6.7. Adult social care continues to struggle with recruiting and are undertaking significant work to reduce vacancies. However, we need to recognise that they are unlikely to be fully established in 2026/27, so have included a vacancy factor that will reduce over the three strategy period.

Education and Children's Services

6.8. The budget for **Education and Children's Services** will require growth in future years. This is due to the increasing costs of providing children's social care, particularly where a small number of care packages incur a significant cost due to the specific needs of those children.

6.9. The growth required has been estimated as shown in the following table.

	2026/27 £m	**2027/28** £m	**2028/29** £m
Underlying budget	120.1	120.1	120.1
Growth already in the strategy	1.0	2.1	0
Additional growth required	3.3	4.9	8.7
Vacancy factor	(1.0)	(0.5)	(0.2)
TOTAL	**123.4**	**126.6**	**128.6**

6.10. There is a strategy in place to increase our in-house offer providing better quality accommodation, improved quality control, lower likelihood of placement breakdowns and better matching to the needs of young people. This is also anticipated to provide better cost efficiency than external placements. It costs on average £260,200 per annum across our internal provision compared to £302,667 externally in residential settings; costs are lower by about 14% in our internal homes, along with having better outcomes.

6.11. This cost differential will be greater as we plan to improve our capabilities for providing in-house support for children and young people with complex needs, particularly those at risk of deprivation of liberty orders (DOLs) or living in accommodation unregulated by Ofsted. This may also benefit children who are living in care out of the city in need of a local residential placement. The capital build costs will be funded jointly with the Department of Education (DFE) and these two new children's homes are expected to be operational in 2027.

6.12. We are part of a pilot Families First Partnership (FFP) programme where we are working with our safeguarding partners to transform and expand preventative support. The overall aim is to keep more families together by strengthening kinship support and ultimately gain a significant reduction in the numbers of looked after children. Several work strands are underway including family group decision making, improving the role of education in multi-agency safeguarding arrangements and information sharing between partners. Through this work, the department has avoided costs of £1.3m in 2025/26 and this is expected to continue in future years.

6.13. The Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) cumulative deficit at the end of 2024/25 was £22.5m and is forecast to be £44.8m by the end of the current financial year 2025/26. The government has extended the statutory override to the end of 2027/28 whilst it considers reform to the funding for SEND and children's social care. The government have indicated that they will resolve (or centrally fund) DSG deficits occurring after April 2028, but it is not clear how deficits already accrued will be resolved; our cumulative deficit could be as high as £78m by the end of 2027/28. Therefore, it is planned to set aside the funding of the deficit to date from the budget reserve. This transfer will be made in the outturn monitoring report once the final deficit figure is known. Local authorities are not allowed to charge borrowing costs of the cumulative deficit to the DSG but have to pay it from the General Fund.

General Fund Housing

6.14. The budget for **homelessness** has been under severe pressure due to increased numbers of households presenting as homeless, and growth of £11m, in addition to a £6m contingency, was included in the 2025/26 budget. Mitigating work, including £45m of investment in temporary housing, has avoided an estimated £59m of costs by 26/27. However, the number of cases continues to increase and (without further action) will put further pressure on future years' budgets.

6.15. The 2026/27 General Fund Capital Programme Report (also on your agenda) includes the addition of £50m for the direct acquisition of properties for use as temporary accommodation. The revenue implications of this investment are covered within that report. Alongside acquisitions, it is proposed that we grow the number of properties leased from private sector landlords by 110; the cost of leasing a property is significantly less than hotel stays, and is estimated to result in the avoidance of annual revenue costs. Given the increasing number of homelessness presentations, additional staff are required to ensure that the focus remains on prevention rather than alleviation of need, and funding for additional staff is included in this budget.

6.16. The overall revenue impact of the above is estimated as:

	26/27 £m	27/28 £m	28/29 £m
Additional growth required without further mitigations	5.9	12.0	12.0
Net revenue impact of property acquisitions	(2.2)	(6.2)	(6.2)

Net impact of additional leased properties	(1.7)	(3.9)	(3.9)
Additional staffing cost	1.8	1.8	1.8
Total	**3.8**	**6.6**	**6.6**

6.17. In recent years, nationally the cost of Housing Benefit linked to supported housing has continued to rise and this is the same for us. Unlike the majority of Housing Benefit, these elements are not fully funded through government subsidy, and we have limited ability to influence either the level of rents charged or the claims themselves. The forthcoming changes to licensing and rent setting under the Supported Housing Act should improve our ability to manage these cases, but this will take time to have a material impact. To reflect the ongoing pressure, growth of £1.5m per year has been included in the proposed budget.

7. Strand 5 – Savings Programme

7.1. The budget strategy approved last year required achievement of savings totalling £23m by 2027/28. Progress against these savings targets has been regularly monitored and reported in the quarterly budget monitoring reports. By period 6 in 2025/26, over 60% of the £23m total had already been achieved:

	Target (full year) £m	Achieved to date £m
Estates & Building Services	2.8	1.0
Housing	1.0	0.9
Neighbourhoods & Environmental Services	7.2	2.1
Planning, Development and Transportation	4.0	4.0
Tourism, Culture & Inward Investment	2.3	2.3
Children's Services	1.0	1.0
Corporate Services	2.0	0.9
Financial Services	1.1	0.4
Adult Social Care	1.2	1.2
TOTAL	**22.6**	**13.7**

7.2. More details on these savings can be found in the regular quarterly monitoring reports. Work is ongoing to realise the balance of the savings total.

8. Additional Investment

8.1. Given the underlying financial pressures, the scope for additional investment is limited. However, growth has been built into the budget for some priority areas:

8.2. During the redevelopment of the central market there is a shortfall of income as a consequence of a reduction in the number of traders and a lower fee being charged.

£450k is being made available in 2026/27 to cover this shortfall in income until the new market becomes operational.

8.3. This budget includes funding for a permanent team, building on the pilot work already underway, to better manage public spaces across the city. At a cost of £0.3m per year, the hybrid team will work 7 days a week to tackle anti-social behaviour and environmental enforcement, working alongside the existing City Warden, Public Health and Housing teams.

8.4. The UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) is a government grant to invest in communities, businesses, people and skills, which runs until March 2026. This funding has been supporting some Council services such as festival, inward investment and business/retail support team. Without the addition of the £1m to the budget this would lead to this work not continuing.

8.5. Ash dieback is a disease which ultimately leads to the death of ash trees, of which there are 19,000 across the City. The disease increases the chance of branches becoming brittle and falling. Whilst this risk has been appropriately managed, existing budgets have become strained and a dedicated team is needed to deal with this going forward. £0.3m is being made available for a team to monitor sites and prioritise trees for removal.

9. Budget Strategy Reserve

9.1. When the 2025/26 budget was set, the budget strategy reserve was forecast to be £163.6m at 1st April 2025, reducing to £25m by March 2028. There have been improvements to the forecasts, offset by the need to set aside amounts to meet the historic DSG deficit as described in 6.13 above. Updated forecasts show that we are now expecting a balance of £27.2m by March 2029:

	2025/26 £m	**2026/27 £m**	**2027/28 £m**	**2028/29 £m**
At the beginning of the year	**193.8**	**129.9**	**101.7**	**71.2**
Add: Forecast rates pool surplus	7.5			
Reserve restatements:				
From earmarked reserves		0.5		
Set aside for DSG deficit	(44.8)			
Set aside for LGR transitional costs		(14.0)		
Minus budget gap	(26.6)	(14.7)	(30.5)	(44.0)
At the end of the year	**129.9**	**101.7**	**71.2**	**27.2**

10. Construction of the 2026/27 budget

10.1. By law, the Council's role in budget setting is to determine

a) The level of council tax;
b) The limits on the amount the City Mayor is entitled to spend on any service ("budget ceilings") - proposed budget ceilings are shown at Appendix 1;

10.2. In line with Finance Procedure Rules, the Council must also approve the scheme of virement that controls subsequent changes to these ceilings. The proposed scheme is shown at Appendix 2.

10.3. The budget is based on a proposed Band D tax for 2026/27 of £2,121.87, an increase of just under 5% compared to 2025/26. This is the maximum which will be permitted without a referendum.

10.4. The tax levied by the City Council constitutes only part of the tax Leicester citizens have to pay (albeit the major part – 84% in 2025/26). Separate taxes are raised by the Police and Crime Commissioner and the Combined Fire Authority. These are added to the Council's tax, to constitute the total tax charged.

10.5. The actual amounts people will be paying, however, depend upon the valuation band their property is in and their entitlement to any discounts, exemptions or benefit. Almost 80% of properties in the city are in band A or band B, so the tax will be lower than the Band D figure quoted above. The Council also has schemes for mitigating hardship.

10.6. The Police and Crime Commissioner and Combined Fire Authority will set their precepts in February 2026. The formal resolution will set out the precepts issued for 2026/27, together with the total tax payable in the city.

11. 2026/27 Budget Overview

11.1. The table below summarises the proposed budget for 2026/27 (projections for a full three-year period are included in the medium-term strategy at Appendix 4):

	2026/27
	£m
Net service budget	**456.8**
Provision for pay inflation	6.0
Corporate budgets (including capital finance)	12.4
Housing Benefits	1.5
General contingency for risk	1.0
Expenditure total	**477.7**
Income:	
Council tax	179.3
Collection Fund surplus	0.8

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Settlement Funding Assessment	275.5
Extended Producer Responsibility for Waste	7.4
Income total	**463.0**
Remaining budget gap (to be met from reserves)	**14.7**

12. Departmental Budget Ceilings

12.1. Budget ceilings have been prepared for each service, calculated as follows:

a) The starting point is last year's budget, subject to any changes made since then which are permitted by the constitution (e.g. virement);

b) An allowance is made for non-pay inflation on a restricted number of budgets. Our general rule is that no allowance is made, and departments are expected to manage with the same cash sum that they had in the previous year. Exceptions are made for the budgets for independent sector adult social care (2%) and foster care (2%) but as these areas of service are receiving growth funding, an inflation allowance is merely academic (we pay from one pot rather than another). Budgets for the waste PFI contract have been increased by RPI, in line with contract terms.

c) Unavoidable growth has been built into the budget. This has been mitigated by action that has already been taken to control costs in demand-led areas, as detailed in paragraph 6 above. Budgets have also been increased for the investment described at section 8.

d) Savings requirements for 2026/27, as set out in last year's budget strategy, have been deducted from service budgets, along with additional savings that have been approved subsequently to the strategy being set.

e) Budget ceilings have been reduced to reflect the reduction in employers' pension contributions from April 2026. The pension fund is managed by the County Council and its performance is reviewed by independent actuaries every 3 years. The actuaries examine investment performance in particular, and seek to ensure that all councils in the scheme make future contributions that are sufficient to pay all pensions when they become due. Our contributions are paid as a percentage of payroll costs, and previous reviews have usually led to an increase. As a consequence of the most recent review, we will be paying around £9m per year less than we are now. Members are asked to note that this does not reflect any reduction in the Council's overall liabilities: ultimately, we have to pay sufficient contributions to the County Council to ensure that all future pension costs are paid. Note that employees also pay a percentage of their earnings to the fund – these amounts are fixed by law.

12.2. The proposed budget ceilings are set out in Appendix 1.

12.3. In recent years, the pay award for local government staff has not been agreed until part way through the financial year. A central provision is held to fund the 2026/27 pay award, forecast at 3% and will be added to budget ceilings once agreed.

12.4. A substantial review of government funding is under way (see paragraph 14 below). It is likely that this will lead to some current grant funding streams being rolled into general funding, which will require amendments to the budget ceilings. (These are largely presentational changes to government funding that will not, in themselves, affect the amount we have available to spend).

12.5. The role of the Council is to determine the financial envelopes within which services are delivered. Delivering the services within budget is a function of the City Mayor.

13. Corporately held Budgets and Provisions

13.1. In addition to the services' budget ceilings, some budgets are held corporately. These are described below.

13.2. As discussed above, a provision has been set aside for **pay awards**, which are not (in recent years) agreed until some time into the financial year. The provision is based on an assumed 3% pay award each year

13.3. The budget for **capital financing** represents the cost of interest and debt repayment on capital spending, less interest received on balances held by the council. Decisions to borrow money to fund capital expenditure have led to an increase in the budget, although this increase will reduce where capital receipts are used to fund expenditure in lieu of borrowing. The budget also reflects the scale of the Dedicated Schools Grant deficit, impacts the level of interest received and must be met from the general fund.

13.4. **Miscellaneous central budgets** include external audit fees, pension costs of some former staff, levy payments to the Environment Agency, bank charges, general insurance costs, money set aside to assist council taxpayers suffering hardship and other sums it is not appropriate to include in service budgets. Miscellaneous central budgets are partially offset by the effect of recharges from the general fund into other statutory accounts of the Council.

13.5. The **housing benefits** budget funds the difference between benefits payments and the amount of subsidy received from central government. This gap has been increasing in recent years, particularly around supported housing (see para. 6.17 above.

13.6. A corporate contingency budget of £1m has been set aside, which will only be allocated if necessary. Following a number of years of having limited requirement to use the corporate contingencies the budgets have been reduced. However, it should be noted if we do have any unexpected pressures in 2026/27 the budget strategy

reserve is available to be used. This would however reduce the one-off funding available for the future year budget strategies.

14. Resources

14.1. The majority of the council's core funding comes from business rates; government grant funding; and council tax. Service-specific sources of funding, such as fees & charges and specific grants, are credited to the relevant budget ceilings, and are part of departmental budgets.

14.2. A major review of government funding is in progress, which will update funding allocations for the first time since 2013. At the time of writing, we do not have the outcome of this review and this draft budget is necessarily based on estimates, informed by modelling work commissioned from external advisors. The provisional settlement, which will give us figures for the major funding streams, is expected shortly before Christmas.

Business rates and core grant funding

14.3. Local government retains 50% of business rates collected locally, with the balance being paid to central government. In recognition of the fact that different authorities' ability to raise rates do not correspond to needs, there are additional elements of the business rates retention scheme: a top-up to local business rates, paid to authorities with lower taxbases, and Revenue Support Grant (RSG).

14.4. The government's planned reforms from April 2026 include several overlapping strands:

- Fully equalising for differences in council tax bases across the country. We should gain from this as our tax base is relatively low;
- Revised and updated formulae that measure each area's "need to spend" on different service areas. It appears from the information we have to date, that we will lose funding from some of these changes;
- Rebasing business rates income to redistribute growth achieved since 2013; and to reflect the rates revaluation that will be implemented from April;
- Transitional arrangements to phase in the effect on individual authorities.

14.5. The split of funding between different funding streams (business rates, top-up and RSG payments) is not yet known. For this draft budget, the total "settlement funding assessment" (SFA) is shown as a proxy for the totality of government grant and the proportion of business rates that are kept by the City Council. Overall, our current assessment is that the Council should benefit from these changes, but not as significantly as we might have anticipated.

Council tax

14.6. Council tax income is estimated at £179m in 2026/27, based on an assumed tax increase of just below 5% (the maximum we believe will be allowed to set without a

referendum). The 5% limit will include a “social care levy” of 2%, designed to help social care authorities mitigate the growing costs of social care. Since our tax base is relatively low for the size of population, the levy raises just £3.5m per year.

14.7. The estimated council tax base has grown by 2.3% since last year’s budget was set. The final council tax base is calculated on data from the end of November, and will be included in the final budget report to Council in February.

14.8. While the major elements of Council Tax banding and discounts are determined nationally, some discounts and premiums, as well as the Council Tax Support Scheme for those on low incomes, are determined locally. Appendix 6 sets outs these discounts and premiums.

Other corporate income

14.9. The majority of grant funding is treated as income to the relevant service departments and is not shown separately in the table at paragraph 11. Other grants which existed in previous years are expected to be rolled into the general settlement, and are not shown separately.

14.10. From 2025/26, a new (unringfenced) funding stream relating to Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) in respect of waste packaging has been received, for which our provisional allocation for 2026/27 is £7.4m. We have only limited information about likely levels of income in later years, which will depend on producers’ responses to the new levy. Regardless of the position, we expect waste costs to increase by up to £3m per year when there is a new contract in May 2028.

Collection Fund surplus / deficit

14.11. Collection fund surpluses arise when more tax is collected than assumed in previous budgets. Deficits arise when the converse is true.

14.12. The Council has an estimated **council tax collection fund surplus** of £2.4m, after allowing for shares to be paid by the police and fire authorities. The reasons for this include a reduction in bad debt provision, following significant work to improve collection rates; and a continuing fall in the cost of the council tax support scheme (CTSS).

14.13. The Council has an estimated **business rates collection fund deficit** of £1.5m.

15. Budget and Equalities (Surinder Singh, Equalities Officer)

15.1. The Council is committed to promoting equality of opportunity for its residents; both through its policies aimed at reducing inequality of outcomes, and through its practices aimed at ensuring fair treatment for all and the provision of appropriate and culturally sensitive services that meet local people’s needs.

15.2. In accordance with section 149 of the Equality Act 2010, the Council must "have due regard", when making decisions, to the need to meet the following aims of our Public Sector Equality Duty :-

(a) eliminate unlawful discrimination;
(b) advance equality of opportunity between those who share a protected characteristic and those who do not;
(c) foster good relations between those who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.

15.3. Protected groups under the public sector equality duty are characterised by age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy/maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation.

15.4. When making decisions, the Council (or decision maker, such as the City Mayor) must be clear about any equalities implications of the course of action proposed. In doing so, it must consider the likely impact on those likely to be affected by the recommendation; their protected characteristics; and (where negative impacts are anticipated) mitigating actions that can be taken to reduce or remove that negative impact.

15.5. A number of risks to the budget are addressed within this report (section 16 below). If these risks are not mitigated effectively, there could be a disproportionate impact on people with particular protected characteristics and therefore ongoing consideration of the risks and any potential disproportionate equalities impacts, as well as mitigations to address disproportionate impacts for those with particular protected characteristics, is required.

16. Risk Assessment and Estimates

16.1. Best practice requires me to identify any risks associated with the budget, and Section 25 of the Local Government Act 2003 requires me to report on the adequacy of reserves and the robustness of estimates.

16.2. Assessing the robustness of estimates requires a judgement to be made, which is now hard given the volatility of some elements of the budget. The most significant individual risks are described below.

16.3. Like most (probably all) upper tier authorities, we run the risk of further demand and cost increase in adults' social care and children's placements, despite mitigating work that is continuing.

16.4. Like many housing authorities, we run the risk of further cost pressures from homelessness. However, the Council has a significant programme of investment in temporary accommodation to mitigate this risk.

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16.5. In addition to the above, we have a cumulative overspend of £22.5m on the schools' "high needs" block, which we have not had to write off against general fund reserves due to a special dispensation given by the Government, and available until 31st March 2028; by which time it could be as high as £78m. It remains unclear how this national issue will be resolved; a planned White Paper has been delayed to next year which is expected to propose ways to reduce the ongoing costs deficit, but the historic deficit will still need to be met.

16.6. We are also exposed to any further inflationary cost pressures, which may result from world events.

16.7. Significant progress has been made on achieving the savings target, however failure to deliver the savings would have significant impact on the strategy.

16.8. A key part of our strategy is the use of one-off monies to balance the budget gap. This has a multiplicative effect of any risks which crystallise into annual cost pressures. For instance, an additional £5m per year of unavoidable cost will, all other things being equal, use £15m of reserves by the end of 2028/29.

16.9. The proposed budget contains a reduced level of corporate contingency (£1m per year) compared to previous years. As our budget is supported by reserves, this is largely presentational – a lower call on reserves is initially budgeted for each year, but with a greater chance that pressures will exceed the available contingency and further use of reserves will have to be made. If the call on reserves is required this will reduce the future one-off monies available in future budgets.

16.10. However, there is a clear plan: that shows the improvements that have been made in our financial strategy and the budget gap is closing, we continue to work on a programme to further reduce it. This involves the continuation of the cost mitigation work in areas of service under pressure, transformation of services and the potential to reduce borrowing by using capital receipts to fund the capital programme.

16.11. Subject to the above comments, I believe the estimates made in preparing the budget are sufficiently robust to allow the budget for 2026/27 to be approved.

16.12. In addition, we have a substantial level of reserves available to support the budget strategy. This means that, in the short term, reserves can be used in substitution for any savings which cannot be made, or for unexpected cost pressures; and there is limited risk of being unable to balance the budget in 2026/27. I regard our level of reserves as adequate.

16.13. As a last resort, a £15m General Fund emergency balance is held. I do not expect to have to call on this balance in the time period set out in this strategy.

17. Financial, Legal and Other Implications

17.1. Financial Implications

This report is exclusively concerned with financial issues.

17.2. ***Legal Implications (Kamal Adatia, City Barrister & Head of Standards)***

17.2.1. The budget preparations have been in accordance with the Council's Budget and Policy Framework Procedure Rules – Council's Constitution – Part 4C. The decision with regard to the setting of the Council's budget is a function under the constitution which is the responsibility of the full Council.

17.2.2. At the budget-setting stage, Council is estimating, not determining, what will happen as a means to the end of setting the budget and therefore the council tax. Setting a budget is not the same as deciding what expenditure will be incurred. The Local Government Finance Act, 1992, requires an authority, through the full Council, to calculate the aggregate of various estimated amounts, in order to find the shortfall to which its council tax base has to be applied. The Council can allocate greater or fewer funds than are requested by the Mayor in his proposed budget.

17.2.3. As well as detailing the recommended council tax increase for 2026/27, the report also complies with the following statutory requirements:-

(a) Robustness of the estimates made for the purposes of the calculations;
(b) Adequacy of reserves;
(c) The requirement to set a balanced budget.

17.2.4. Section 65 of the Local Government Finance Act, 1992, places upon local authorities a duty to consult representatives of non-domestic ratepayers before setting a budget. There are no specific statutory requirements to consult residents.

17.2.5. The discharge of the 'function' of setting a budget triggers the duty in s.149 of the Equality Act, 2010, for the Council to have "due regard" to its public sector equality duties. These are set out in paragraph 15. There are considered to be no specific proposals within this year's budget that could result in new changes of provision that could affect different groups of people sharing protected characteristics. Where savings are anticipated, equality assessments will be prepared as necessary. Directors and the City Mayor have freedom to vary or abort proposals under the scheme of virement where there are unacceptable equality consequences. As a consequence, there are no service-specific 'impact assessments' that accompany the budget. There is no requirement in law to undertake equality impact assessments as the only means to discharge the s.149 duty to have "due regard". The discharge of the duty is not achieved by pointing to one document looking at a snapshot in time, and the report evidences that the Council treats the duty as a live and enduring one. Indeed, case law is clear that undertaking an EIA on an 'envelope-setting' budget is of limited value, and that it is at the point in time when policies are developed which reconfigure services to live within the budgetary constraint when impact is best assessed. However, an analysis of equality impacts

has been prepared in respect of the proposed increase in council tax, and this is set out in Appendix 3.

17.2.6. Judicial review is the mechanism by which the lawfulness of Council budget-setting exercises are most likely to be challenged. There is no sensible way to provide an assurance that a process of budget setting has been undertaken in a manner which is immune from challenge. Nevertheless the approach taken with regard to due process and equality impacts is regarded by the City Barrister to be robust in law.

17.2.7. Schedule 1A to the Local Government Finance Act 1992 states that the Council must "make" a Council Tax Reduction scheme for each financial year, and if it wishes to change it, it must "revise" or "replace" it. The deadline for making, revising or replacing a Scheme is 11th March. There are no proposals to change the CTSS so recommendation 3.1(j) reflects the decision to keep the existing Scheme, subject to inflationary changes to thresholds for support.

17.3. **Climate Change Implications**

17.3.1 The climate emergency remains one of the key long-term challenges facing the council and the city, creating increasing real-world consequences, including financial costs, as we have seen from recent flooding incidents.

17.3.2 In broad terms, the financial pressures facing the council, and the strategy proposed for addressing them, are likely to have the following implications for addressing the climate emergency:

- Reductions in service delivery and sale of council buildings may result in reductions in the council's own carbon footprint i.e. the emissions caused by our own use of buildings and travel. These savings may not always be reflected in those of the wider city if reductions in council activity are offset by increases in community or business activity. For example, where council facilities need to be closed and sold/transferred, their use by community groups or businesses will still generate emissions.

- The constraints on both revenue and capital are likely to reduce opportunities for the council to invest in projects to reduce carbon emissions and to make the city more resilient to the changing climate, except where a compelling 'spend-to-save' business case can be made or external grant funding can be secured.

17.3.3 Efforts should continue to develop financial and environmental 'win-win' climate projects, such as those which can cut council energy/fuel bills and carbon emissions. Likewise, any opportunities to secure external funding for climate work should be sought.

17.3.4 More specific climate emergency implications will continue to be provided for individual decisions regarding projects and service/policy changes relating to implementing the budget strategy.

APPENDIX 1

Budget Ceilings

[to follow]

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APPENDIX 2

Scheme of Virement

1. This appendix explains the scheme of virement which will apply to the budget, if it is approved by the Council.

Budget Ceilings

2. Directors are authorised to vire sums within budget ceilings without limit, providing such virement does not give rise to a change of Council policy.

3. Directors are authorised to vire money between any two budget ceilings within their departmental budgets, provided such virement does not give rise to a change of Council policy. The maximum amount by which any budget ceiling can be increased or reduced during the course of a year is £500,000. This money can be vired on a one-off or permanent basis.

4. Directors are responsible, in consultation with the appropriate Deputy/Assistant Mayor if necessary, for determining whether a proposed virement would give rise to a change of Council policy.

5. Movement of money between budget ceilings is not virement to the extent that it reflects changes in management responsibility for the delivery of services.

6. The City Mayor is authorised to increase or reduce any budget ceiling. The maximum amount by which any budget ceiling can be increased during the course of a year is £5m. Increases or reductions can be carried out on a one-off or permanent basis.

7. The Director of Finance may vire money between budget ceilings where such movements represent changes in accounting policy, or other changes which do not affect the amounts available for service provision. The Director of Finance may vire money between budget ceilings to reflect where the savings (currently shown as summary figures in Appendix One) actually fall.

8. Nothing above requires the City Mayor or any director to spend up to the budget ceiling for any service. At the end of the year, underspends on any budget ceiling shall be applied:

   (a) Firstly, to offset any overspends in the same department;

   (b) Secondly, to the corporate reserve for future budget pressures.

Corporate Budgets

9. The following authorities are granted in respect of corporate budgets:

   (a) the Director of Finance may incur costs for which there is provision in miscellaneous corporate budgets, except that any policy decision requires the approval of the City Mayor;

   (b) the Director of Finance may allocate the provision for pay awards and other inflation;

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Earmarked Reserves

10. Earmarked reserves may be created or dissolved by the City Mayor. In creating a reserve, the purpose of the reserve must be clear.

11. Directors may add sums to an earmarked reserve from a budget ceiling, if the purposes of the reserve are within the scope of the service budget, and with the agreement of the Director of Finance. This cannot take place at year end (see para. 8 above).

12. Directors may spend earmarked reserves on the purpose for which they have been created.

13. When an earmarked reserve is dissolved, the City Mayor shall determine the use of any remaining balance.

14. The City Mayor may transfer any sum between earmarked reserves.

Other

15. The City Mayor may amend the flexible use of capital receipts policy, and submit revised policies to the Secretary of State.

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Equality Impact Assessment

Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) Tool:

Title of proposal	Council tax increase for 2026/27
Name of division/service	Corporate
Name of lead officer completing this assessment	Catherine Taylor, Financial Strategy Manager
Date EIA assessment commenced	3rd November 2025
Date EIA assessment completed *(prior to decision being taken as the EIA may still be reviewed following a decision to monitor any changes)*	
Decision maker	Council
Date decision taken	25 February 2026

EIA sign off on completion:	**Signature**	**Date**
Lead officer	Catherine Taylor	21 November 2025
Equalities officer (has been consulted)	Surinder Singh	21 November 2025
Divisional director	Amy Oliver	4 December 2025

Please ensure the following:

a) That the document is **understandable to a reader who has not read any other documents** and explains (on its own) how the Public Sector Equality Duty is met. This does not need to be lengthy but must be complete and based in evidence.
b) That available support information and data is identified and where it can be found. Also be clear about highlighting gaps in existing data or evidence that you hold, and how you have sought to address these knowledge gaps.
c) That the equality impacts are capable of aggregation with those of other EIAs to identify the cumulative impact of all service changes made by the council on different groups of people.
d) That the equality impact assessment is started at an early stage in the decision-making process, so that it can be used to inform the consultation, engagement and the decision. It should not be a tick-box exercise. Equality impact assessment is an iterative process that should be revisited throughout the decision-making process. It can be used to assess several different options.
e) Decision makers must be aware of their duty to pay 'due regard' to the Public Sector Equality Duty (see below) and 'due regard' must be paid before and at the time a decision is taken. Please see the Brown Principles on the equality intranet pages, for information on how to undertake a lawful decision-making process, from an equalities perspective. Please append the draft EIA and the final EIA to papers for decision makers (including leadership team meetings, lead member briefings, scrutiny meetings and executive meetings) and draw out the key points for their consideration. The Equalities Team provide equalities comments on reports.

1. Setting the context

Describe the proposal, the reasons it is being made, and the intended change or outcome. Will the needs of those who are currently using the service continue to be met?

Purpose

The Council has a legal obligation to set a balanced budget each year. There remains a difficult balance between funding services for those most in need, maintaining support for most vulnerable and the investment required to ensure the effective delivery of services. Council Tax is a vital funding stream for the Council to fund essential services. This appendix presents the draft equalities impact of a proposed 4.99% council tax increase. This includes a precept of 2% for Adult Social Care, as permitted by the Government without requiring a referendum.

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Alternative options

The realistic alternative to a 5% council tax increase would be a lower (or no) increase. A reduced tax increase would represent a permanent diminution of our income unless we hold a council tax referendum in a future year. In my view, such a referendum is unlikely to support a higher tax rise. It would also require more cuts to services in later years (on top of the substantial cost savings already required by the budget strategy).

The budget situation is already extremely difficult, and it seems inevitable that further cuts will have severe effects on front-line services. It is not possible to say precisely where these future cuts would fall; however, certain protected groups (e.g. older people; families with children; and people with disabilities) could face disproportionate impacts from reductions to services.

Mitigating actions

The Council has a range of mitigating actions for residents. These include: funding through the new Crisis & Resilience Fund, which replaces the Household Support Fund and Discretionary Housing Payments from April 2026, direct support through Council Tax Discretionary Relief (which increased by 50% from £500,000 to £750,000 from April 2025 for two years) and Community Support Grant awards; the council's work with voluntary and community sector organisations to provide food to local people where it is required – through the network of food banks in the city; through schemes which support people getting into work (and include cost reducing initiatives that address high transport costs such as providing recycled bicycles); and through support to social welfare advice services.

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2. Equality implications/obligations

Which aims of the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) are likely be relevant to the proposal? In this question, consider both the current service and the proposed changes.

a. Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation

- How does the proposal/service aim to remove barriers or disproportionate impacts for anyone with a particular protected characteristics compared with someone who does not share the same protected characteristics?
- Is this a relevant consideration? What issues could arise?

The Council Tax decision, as part of the overall budget strategy, aims to balance the funding of services for those in need, maintaining support for most vulnerable and the investment required to ensure the effective delivery of services. It does not, in itself, make specific decisions about the delivery of those services; which will be the subject of separate decisions with their own equality assessments, where appropriate.

b. Advance equality of opportunity between different groups

- Does the proposal/service advance equality of opportunity for people?
- Identify inequalities faced by those with specific protected characteristic(s).
- Is this a relevant consideration? What issues could arise?

By securing funding, the proposal aims to advance equality of opportunity by maintaining services that support independence and quality of life for these key protected groups, thereby reducing inequalities they face.

c. Foster good relations between different groups

- Does the service contribute to good relations or to broader community cohesion objectives?
- How does it achieve this aim?
- Is this a relevant consideration? What issues could arise?

Securing a sustainable budget for local services contributes to community stability and social cohesion. Effective, well-funded services that support vulnerable residents can help indirectly in fostering good relations.

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3. Who is affected?

Outline who could be affected, and how they could be affected by the proposal/service change. Include people who currently use the service and those who could benefit from, but do not currently access the service. Where possible include data to support this.

Who is affected by the proposal?

As at October 2025, there were 133,220 properties liable for Council Tax in the city (excluding those registered as exempt, such as student households).

Under the CTSS scheme, "vulnerable" households with low income are eligible for up to 100% support, limited to the amount payable on a band C property. Other low income households are eligible for up to 80% support, limited to the amount payable on a Band B property. Households deemed vulnerable are defined in the scheme which uses proxies to identify disability and/or caring responsibilities.

Council tax support for pensioner households follows different rules. Low-income pensioners are eligible for up to 100% relief on the total amount payable.

How are they affected?

The table below sets out the financial impact of the proposed council tax increase on different properties, before any discounts or reliefs are applied. It shows the weekly increase in each band, and the minimum weekly increase for those in receipt of a reduction under the CTSS for working-age households who are not classed as vulnerable. [Under the scheme introduced last year, households classified as vulnerable can access up to 100% CTSS support]

Band	No. of Properties	Weekly increase (£)	Minimum Weekly Increase under CTSS (£)
A-	411	1.08	0.22
A	77,960	1.29	0.26
B	26,994	1.51	0.30
C	15,571	1.72	0.52

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D	6,667	1.94	0.73
E	3,432	2.37	1.16
F	1,530	2.80	1.59
G	613	3.23	2.02
H	42	3.88	2.67
Total	133,220		

In most cases, the change in council tax (around £1.51 per week for a band B property with no discounts; and just 30p per week if eligible for the maximum 80% reduction for non-vulnerable households under the CTSS) is a small proportion of disposable income, and a small contributor to any squeeze on household budgets. A council tax increase would be applicable to all properties - the increase would not target any one protected group, rather it would be an increase that is applied across the board. However, it is recognised that this may have a more significant impact among households with a low disposable income.

Households at all levels of income have seen their real-terms income decline in recent years due to cost-of-living increases, and wages that have failed to keep up with inflation; although inflation has fallen more recently. These pressures are not limited to any protected group; however, there is evidence that low-income families spend a greater proportion of their income on food and fuel (where price rises have been highest), and are therefore more affected by price increases.

A 3.8% uplift to most working-age benefits, in line with CPI inflation, will come into effect from April 2026, while the State Pension and pension-age benefits will increase by 4.8%. The Local Housing Allowance rates for 2026/27 have not yet been announced. [NB council and housing association tenants are not affected by this as their rent support is calculated differently and their full rent can be compensated from benefits].

4. Information used to inform the equality impact assessment

- What **data, research, or trend analysis** have you used?
- Describe how you have got your information and what it tells you
- Are there any gaps or limitations in the information you currently hold, and how you have sought to address this? E.g. proxy data, national trends, equality monitoring etc.

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Information on the properties subject to Council Tax is obtained from the Council's own systems. We do not hold detailed information on council taxpayers' protected characteristics; national and local economic data has been used to help assess the likely impact on different groups.

5. Consultation

Have you undertaken consultation about the proposal with people who use the service or people affected, people who may potentially use the service and other stakeholders? What did they say about:

- What is important to them regarding the current service?
- How does (or could) the service meet their needs? How will they be affected by the proposal? What potential impacts did they identify because of their protected characteristic(s)?
- Did they identify any potential barriers they may face in accessing services/other opportunities that meet their needs?

Draft budget will be published in early December in advance of the final decision in February

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6. Potential Equality Impact

Based on your understanding of the service area, any specific evidence you may have on people who use the service and those who could potentially use the service and the findings of any consultation you have undertaken, use the table below to explain which individuals or community groups are likely to be affected by the proposal because of their protected characteristic(s). Describe what the impact is likely to be, how significant that impact is for individual or group well-being, and what mitigating actions can be taken to reduce or remove negative impacts. This could include indirect impacts, as well as direct impacts.

Looking at potential impacts from a different perspective, this section also asks you to consider whether any other particular groups, especially vulnerable groups, are likely to be affected by the proposal. List the relevant groups that may be affected, along with the likely impact, potential risks and mitigating actions that would reduce or remove any negative impacts. These groups do not have to be defined by their protected characteristic(s).

Protected characteristics

Impact of proposal:
Describe the likely impact of the proposal on people because of their protected characteristic and how they may be affected. Why is this protected characteristic relevant to the proposal? How does the protected characteristic determine/shape the potential impact of the proposal? This may also include **positive impacts** which support the aims of the Public Sector Equality Duty to advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations.

Risk of disproportionate negative impact:
How likely is it that people with this protected characteristic will be disproportionately negatively affected? How great will that impact be on their well-being? What will determine who will be negatively affected?

Mitigating actions:
For disproportionate negative impacts on protected characteristic/s, what mitigating actions can be taken to reduce or remove the impact? You may also wish to include actions which support the positive aims of the Public Sector Equality Duty to advance equality of opportunity and to foster good relations. All actions identified here should also be included in the action plan at the end of this EIA.

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a) Age

Indicate which age group/s is/ are most affected, either specify general age group (children, young people, working aged people or older people) or specific age bands.

What is the impact of the proposal on age?

Older people (pension age and older) are least affected by a potential increase in council tax and can access more generous (up to 100%) council tax relief. However, in the current financial climate, a lower council tax increase would require even greater cuts to services in due course. While it is not possible to say where these cuts would fall exactly, there are potential negative impacts for this group as older people are the primary service users of Adult Social Care.

While employment rates remain high, earnings have not kept up with inflation in recent years so working families are likely to already be facing pressures on households' budgets. Younger people, and particularly children, were more likely to be in poverty before the current cost-of-living crisis and this is likely to have continued.

What is the risk of disproportionate negative impact on age?

Working age households and families with children – incomes squeezed through reducing real-terms wages.

What are the mitigating actions?

Lower-income households will have access to the Council Tax Support Scheme, providing up to 100% support for "vulnerable" households and up to 80% for other low income households.

In addition, households will have access to council discretionary funds for individual financial crises; access to council and partner support for food; and advice on managing household budgets.

b) Disability

A person has a disability if she or he has a physical or mental impairment which has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on that person's ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities. If specific impairments are affected by the proposal, specify which these are. Our standard categories are on our equality monitoring form – physical impairment, sensory impairment, mental health condition, learning disability, long standing illness, or health condition.

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What is the impact of the proposal on disability?
Disabled people are more likely to be in poverty. Many disabled people will be classed as vulnerable in the proposed new CTSS scheme and will therefore be protected from the impact of a council tax increase.

However, in the current financial climate, a lower council tax increase would require even greater cuts to services in due course. While it is not possible to say where these cuts would fall exactly, there are potential negative impacts for this group as disabled people are more likely to be service users of Adult Social Care.

What is the risk of disproportionate negative impact on disability?
Further erode quality of life being experienced by disabled people.

What are the mitigating actions?
The CTSS scheme has been designed to give additional support (up to 100%) to vulnerable households. It also allows support at the level of the band C tax, rather than band B as applies to non-vulnerable households.

In addition, households will have access to council discretionary funds for individual financial crises; access to council and partner support for food; and advice on better managing budgets.

Ensure all information and advice relating to the CTSS scheme, discretionary funds, and support services is available and provided in a range of accessible formats.

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c) Gender reassignment

Indicate whether the proposal has potential impact on trans men or trans women, and if so, which group is affected. a trans person is someone who proposes to, starts, or has completed a process to change his or her gender. A person does not need to be under medical supervision to be protected.

What is the impact of the proposal on gender reassignment?
No disproportionate impact is attributable specifically to this characteristic.

What is the risk of disproportionate negative impact on gender reassignment?
N/A

What are the mitigating actions?
N/A

d) Marriage and civil partnership

Please note that the under the Public Sector Equality Duty this protected characteristic applies to the first general duty of the Act, eliminating unlawful discrimination, only. The focus within this is eliminating discrimination against people that are married or in a civil partnership with regard specifically to employment.

What is the impact of the proposal on marriage and civil partnership?

No disproportionate impact is attributable specifically to this characteristic

What is the risk of disproportionate negative impact on marriage and civil partnership?
N/A

What are the mitigating actions?
N/A

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e) Pregnancy and maternity

Does the proposal treat someone unfairly because they're pregnant, breastfeeding or because they've recently given birth.

What is the impact of the proposal on pregnancy and maternity?

Someone who is pregnant or recently given birth often have lower incomes during the period immediately before and after childbirth, when they may be receiving statutory maternity pay or no pay at all.

What is the risk of disproportionate negative impact on pregnancy and maternity?

Household may have a lower income during this period and be disproportionated impacted by the increase in Council Tax.

What are the mitigating actions?

Lower-income households will have access to the Council Tax Support Scheme, providing up to 100% support for “vulnerable” households and up to 80% for other low income households.

In addition, households will have access to council discretionary funds for individual financial crises; access to council and partner support for food; and advice on managing household budgets.

f) Race

Race refers to a group of people defined by their race, colour, and nationality (including citizenship) ethnic or national origins. A racial group can be made up of two or more distinct racial groups, for example Black Britons, British Asians, British Sikhs, British Jews, Romany Gypsies and Irish Travellers.

What is the impact of the proposal on race?

Those with white backgrounds are disproportionately on low incomes (indices of multiple deprivation) and in receipt of social security benefits. Some ethnic minority people are also low income and on benefits.

What is the risk of disproportionate negative impact on race?

Household income being further squeezed through low wages and reducing levels of benefit income.

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What are the mitigating actions?
Lower-income households will have access to the Council Tax Support Scheme, providing up to 100% support for “vulnerable” households and up to 80% for other low income households.

In addition, households will have access to council discretionary funds for individual financial crises; access to council and partner support for food; and advice on managing household budgets.

Where required, interpretation and translation services will be provided to remove barriers in accessing support/advice.

g) Religion or belief

Religion refers to any religion, including a lack of religion. Belief refers to any religious or philosophical belief and includes a lack of belief. Generally, a belief should affect your life choices or the way you live for it to be included in the definition. This must be a belief and not just an opinion or viewpoint based on the present state of information available and;

- be about a weighty and substantial aspect of human life and behaviour
- attain a certain level of cogency, seriousness, cohesion, and importance, and
- be worthy of respect in a democratic society, not incompatible with human dignity and not in conflict with fundamental rights of others. For example, Holocaust denial, or the belief in racial superiority are not protected.

Are your services sensitive to different religious requirements e.g., times a customer may want to access a service, religious days and festivals and dietary requirements

What is the impact of the proposal on religion or belief?
No disproportionate impact is attributable specifically to this characteristic

What is the risk of disproportionate negative impact on religion or belief?
N/A

What are the mitigating actions?
N/A

h) Sex

Indicate whether this has potential impact on either males or females.

What is the impact of the proposal on sex?
Disproportionate impact on women who tend to manage household budgets and are responsible for childcare costs. Women are disproportionately lone parents, who are more likely to experience poverty.

What is the risk of disproportionate negative impact on sex?
Incomes squeezed through low wages and reducing levels of benefit income. Increased risk for women as they are more likely to be lone parents.

What are the mitigating actions?
If in receipt of Universal Credit or tax credits, a significant proportion of childcare costs are met by these sources.

Lower-income households will have access to the Council Tax Support Scheme, providing up to 100% support for “vulnerable” households and up to 80% for other low income households.

In addition, households will have access to council discretionary funds for individual financial crises; access to council and partner support for food; and advice on managing household budgets.

i) Sexual orientation

Indicate if there is a potential impact on people based on their sexual orientation. The Act protects heterosexual, gay, lesbian or bisexual people.

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What is the impact of the proposal on sexual orientation?
Gay men and Lesbian women are disproportionately more likely to be in poverty than heterosexual people and trans people even more likely to be in poverty and unemployed. This would mean they are more likely to be on benefits.

What is the risk of disproportionate negative impact on sexual orientation?
Household income being lowered wages and reducing levels of benefit income.

What are the mitigating actions?
Lower-income households will be have access to the Council Tax Support Scheme, providing up to 100% support for “vulnerable” households and up to 80% for other low income households.

In addition, households will have access to council discretionary funds for individual financial crises; access to council and partner support for food; and advice on managing household budgets.

7. Summary of protected characteristics

a. Summarise why the protected characteristics you have commented on, are relevant to the proposal?
Some protected groups are more likely to be in poverty or have low disposable income, and therefore a council tax increase may have a more significant impact.

b. Summarise why the protected characteristics you have not commented on, are not relevant to the proposal?
For some groups no disproportionate impact has been identified. Individuals in these groups will still be able to access CTSS and discretionary support based on their specific circumstances.

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8. Armed Forces Covenant Duty

The Covenant Duty is a legal obligation on certain public bodies to 'have due regard' to the principles of the Covenant and requires decisions about the development and delivery of certain services to be made with conscious consideration of the needs of the Armed Forces community.

When Leicester City Council exercises a relevant function, within the fields of healthcare, education, and housing services it must have due regard to the aims set out below:

a. **The unique obligations of, and sacrifices made by, the Armed Forces**
These include danger; geographical mobility; separation; Service law and rights; unfamiliarity with civilian life; hours of work; and stress.

b. **The principle that it is desirable to remove disadvantages arising for Service people from membership, or former membership, of the Armed Forces**
A disadvantage is when the level of access a member of the Armed Forces Community has to goods and services, or the support they receive, is comparatively lower than that of someone in a similar position who is not a member of the Armed Forces Community, and this difference arises from one (or more) of the unique obligations and sacrifices of Service life.

c. **The principle that special provision for Service people may be justified by the effects on such people of membership, or former membership, of the Armed Forces**
Special provision is the taking of actions that go beyond the support provided to reduce or remove disadvantage. Special provision may be justified by the effects of the unique obligations and sacrifices of Service life, especially for those that have sacrificed the most, such as the bereaved and the injured (whether that injury is physical or mental).

Does the service/issue under consideration fall within the scope of a function covered by the Duty (healthcare, education, housing)? Which aims of the Duty are likely be relevant to the proposal? In this question, consider both the current service and the proposed changes. Are members of the Armed Forces specifically disadvantaged or further disadvantaged by the proposal/service? Identify any mitigations including where appropriate possible special provision.

No specific impacts have been identified on members, or former members, of the Armed Forces.
Individuals facing a significant impact will have access to a range of mitigating measures as above.

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9. Other groups

Other groups

Impact of proposal:
Describe the likely impact of the proposal on children in poverty or any other people who we may consider to be vulnerable, for example people who misuse substances, care leavers, people living in poverty, care experienced young people, carers, those who are digitally excluded. List any vulnerable groups likely to be affected. Will their needs continue to be met? What issues will affect their take up of services/other opportunities that meet their needs/address inequalities they face?

Risk of disproportionate negative impact:
How likely is it that this group of people will be negatively affected? How great will that impact be on their well-being? What will determine who will be negatively affected?

Mitigating actions:
For negative impacts, what mitigating actions can be taken to reduce or remove this impact for this vulnerable group of people? These should be included in the action plan at the end of this EIA. You may also wish to use this section to identify opportunities for positive impacts.

a. Care Experienced People

This is someone who was looked after by children's services for a period of 13 weeks after the age of 14', but without any limit on age, recognising older people may still be impacted from care experience into later life.

What is the impact of the proposal on Care Experienced People?
No disproportionate impact is attributable specifically to this characteristic. Indeed, many pay no council tax at all as a result of a specific discount and will therefore not be affected by the increase.

What is the risk of negative impact on Care Experienced People?
N/A

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What are the mitigating actions?
Qualifying care experienced people up to the age of 25 can apply for a 100% discount on their council tax.

b. Children in poverty

What is the impact of the proposal on children in poverty?
Even a relatively small increase in the amount payable may

What is the risk of negative impact on children in poverty?
A relatively small increase in the amount payable may have a more significant impact among households with a low disposable income.

What are the mitigating actions?
Lower-income households will be have access to the Council Tax Support Scheme, providing up to 100% support for “vulnerable” households and up to 80% for other low income households.

In addition, households will have access to council discretionary funds for individual financial crises; access to council and partner support for food; and advice on managing household budgets.

c. Other (describe)

What is the impact of the proposal on any other groups?
N/A

What is the risk of negative impact on any other groups?
N/A

What are the mitigating actions?
N/A

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10. Other sources of potential negative impacts

Are there any other potential negative impacts external to the service that could further disadvantage service users over the next three years that should be considered? For example, these could include:

- other proposed changes to council services that would affect the same group of service users;
- Government policies or proposed changes to current provision by public agencies (such as new benefit arrangements) that would negatively affect residents;
- external economic impacts such as an economic downturn.

Government policy on welfare benefits (including annual uprating) will also have an impact, although it is not yet possible to predict what this will be.

11. Human rights implications

Are there any human rights implications which need to be considered and addressed (please see the list at the end of the template), if so, please outline the implications and how they will be addressed below:

N/A

12. Monitoring impact

You will need to ensure that monitoring systems are established to check for impact on the protected characteristics and human rights after the decision has been implemented. Describe the systems which are set up to:

- monitor impact (positive and negative, intended and unintended) for different groups
- monitor barriers for different groups
- enable open feedback and suggestions from different communities
- ensure that the EIA action plan (below) is delivered.

If you want to undertake equality monitoring, please refer to our equality monitoring guidance and templates.

Click or tap here to enter text.

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13. EIA action plan

Please list all the equality objectives, actions and targets that result from this assessment (continue on separate sheets as necessary). These now need to be included in the relevant service plan for mainstreaming and performance management purposes.

Equality Outcome	Action	Officer Responsible	Completion date
Ensure residents are aware of available financial help.	Clearly signpost support available about the Council Tax Support Scheme (CTSS) and Discretionary Relief funds.	Cory Laywood, Head of Revenues & Benefits and Transactional Finance	ongoing

Human rights articles:

Part 1: The convention rights and freedoms

Article 2: Right to Life

Article 3: Right not to be tortured or treated in an inhuman or degrading way

Article 4: Right not to be subjected to slavery/forced labour

Article 5: Right to liberty and security

Article 6: Right to a fair trial

Article 7: No punishment without law

Article 8: Right to respect for private and family life

Article 9: Right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion

Article 10: Right to freedom of expression

Article 11: Right to freedom of assembly and association

Article 12: Right to marry

Article 14: Right not to be discriminated against

Part 2: First protocol

Article 1: Protection of property/peaceful enjoyment

Article 2: Right to education

Article 3: Right to free elections

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APPENDIX 4

MEDIUM TERM PROJECTIONS

1. Summary Forecasts

The table below shows our central forecasts of the position for the next three years, based on the information we have at the time of writing. As funding allocations for future years have not yet been announced, and are the subject of a significant national review, this is necessarily based on some broad assumptions.

We will receive our local settlement for 2026/27 in December; the projections will be updated for the 2026/27 budget report to Council in February. We are expecting this to be a multi-year settlement which will give us some clarity on funding for **The forecasts are volatile**, and the key risks are described at paragraph 2 below. In particular, because we are relying on one off money to balance the budget, a change in annual spending requirement will have a multiplicative effect (e.g. an increase in spending of £5m per year from 2026/27 will lose us £15m from reserves by the end of 2028/29, all other things being equal).

	2026/27	**2027/28**	**2028/29**
	£m	£m	£m
Net service budget	456.8	481.7	506.2
Provision for pay inflation	6.0	12.0	18.0
Corporate budgets (including capital finance)	12.4	13.7	15.6
Housing Benefits	1.5	1.5	1.5
Costs of new waste contract			2.5
General contingency for risk	1.0	1.0	1.0
Planning Total		2.0	4.0
Expenditure total	**477.7**	**511.9**	**548.9**
Income:			
Council tax	179.3	189.4	200.0
Collection Fund surplus	0.8		
Settlement Funding Assessment	275.5	286.0	299.6
Extended Producer Responsibility for Waste	7.4	6.0	5.2
Income total	**463.0**	**481.3**	**504.8**
Recurring budget gap	(14.7)	(30.5)	(44.0)

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Based on these forecasts, our budget strategy reserves position is expected to be:

	2025/26 £m	2026/27 £m	2027/28 £m	2028/29 £m
At the beginning of the year	**193.8**	**129.9**	**101.7**	**71.2**
Add: Forecast rates pool surplus	7.5			
Reserve restatements:				
From earmarked reserves		0.5		
Set aside for DSG deficit	(44.8)			
Set aside for LGR transitional costs		(14.0)		
Minus budget gap	(26.6)	(14.7)	(30.5)	(44.0)
At the end of the year	**129.9**	**101.7**	**71.2**	**27.2**

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2. Assumptions and Risks

The assumptions in the forecast, and the inherent risks, are explained below.

Spending	Assumptions – central scenario	Risks
Pay costs	We assume a pay award averaging 3% each year	Inflation has fallen since its peak of 11.1% in 2022, although it has increased in recent month and remains above the 2% target. It stood at 3.8% in the year to September 2025.
Non-pay inflation	It is assumed that departments will be able to continue absorbing this. The exceptions are independent sector care package costs, fostering allowances, and the waste management contract; an allowance is built in for these increases.	
Adult social care costs	Demographic pressures and increasing need lead to cost pressures which are reflected in the forecasts. The effect of the mitigation measures is also reflected in the forecasts.	Adult Social Care remains the biggest area of Council expenditure, and is demand led. Small variations have a significant impact on the Council's overall budget.
Costs relating to looked after children	Mitigation work is able to reduce the annual cost increase to 6.5% (lower than the trend in recent years)	Further increase in demand and associated costs. Projections can be volatile as there are a small number of very high-cost placements.
Support to homeless families	Growth in the budget assumes the successful implementation of cost control measures, including a £50m investment in properties for use as temporary accommodation.	Further increase in the number of households presenting as homeless requiring the use of expensive hotel accommodation
Housing Benefit costs	The proposed budget includes £1.5m per year to meet the net subsidy loss on supported housing elements of Housing Benefit.	Will require powers expected under the Supported Housing Act to deliver savings against current trends.
Waste contract	The current contract for waste collection expires in 2028. The tender process for a new contract is underway; it is expected that the new contract will involve an increase in costs from 2028/29 onwards.	Difficult to predict costs of new contract at this stage.
Other service cost pressures	A £1m contingency budget has been built into the forecasts to provide some cushion against uncertainty. Aside from this, it is assumed that departments are able to find savings to manage cost pressures within their own areas.	Costs assume the delivery of proposed savings for which delivery plans will be vital. Some are subject to consultation, which may result in a different decision to that currently proposed.

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	A planning provision of £2m has been included for 2027/28 rising to £4m by 2028/29.	
Departmental savings	The budget strategy assumes savings totalling £23m by 2027/28, of which £14m has been achieved to date.	Risk that savings are not achieved or are delayed, leading to a greater call on reserves to balance the budget. Costs assume the delivery of proposed savings for which delivery plans will be vital. Some are subject to consultation, which may result in a different decision to that currently proposed.
DSG deficit	The cumulative deficit on DSG is forecast to reach up to £78m by April 2028, when the current "override" ends. Forecasts in this report do not include this deficit.	It is not clear how this national issue will be resolved, and whether local authorities will have to meet some or all of their costs from general resources.

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Income	**Assumptions – central scenario**	**Risks**
Council Tax	Band D Council Tax will increase by 5.0% per year in line with expected referendum limits. Council taxbase (the number of properties that pay tax) will increase by 500 Band D properties per year.	Further economic downturn leading to increased costs of council tax support to residents on a low income. The government may make changes to the council tax banding system or to discounts and exemptions,
Business rates	The net impact of the current revaluation and rates reset will be neutral, i.e. any gain or loss in rates income is balanced by government support. No significant movements in the underlying baseline for business rates. Government changes to business rates (e.g. new reliefs) will continue to be met by additional government grant, in line with recent years.	Significant empty properties and / or business liquidations reduce our collectable rates.
Government grant	The results of the Fair Funding review will not be announced until the local government finance settlement in December. Up to date figures will be included in the budget report to Council in February. For this draft report, forecasts are informed by modelling work commissioned from external consultants.	Key elements of the review are still subject to government decisions and data updates. Our available resources will inevitably change from these forecasts, and this could be substantial. In future years, the overall quantum of funding for local government may change as a result of the wider fiscal and economic position.
Extended Producer Responsibility funding	The provisional allocation for 2026/27 (£7.4m) is included in the draft budget. It is assumed that income from the scheme falls thereafter as producers take steps to reduce their charges payable.	Income in future years is highly uncertain, and partly depends on the response from producers to the new charges.

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Appendix 5

Earmarked Reserves

(to follow)

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Appendix 6

Council Tax Premiums - Empty Property and Second Homes

1. This appendix sets out our policy on charging council tax premiums on empty properties.

2. In general, our policy is to use premiums to help bring empty properties back into use, as owners take steps to avoid the extra charges. There is a shortage of housing in Leicester. We want to see as many empty homes as possible made available for occupation. The changes will also raise additional revenue for the Council (to the extent that properties remain empty).

Substantially Unfurnished Empty Properties (referred to as long term empty properties)

3. Since 2013, councils have had considerable discretion over the levels of tax payable on unfurnished empty properties (Local Government Finance Act, 1992 and associated regulations). Our policy seeks to use this discretion to support our empty homes policy by charging the maximum permitted premiums for these homes, subject to any applicable exemptions

4. Assuming the recommendations in this report are approved, our policy for charging council tax on substantially unfurnished empty properties from 1st April 2026 will be:

Description	Tax charge as a percentage of the standard tax (inclusive of premium)
Empty for less than one year	100%
Empty for at least one year	200%
Empty for at least five years	300%
Empty for at least ten years	400%

Substantially Furnished Empty Properties (referred to as second homes)

5. The Levelling Up and Regeneration Act 2023 permits authorities to charge a council tax premium of up to 100% on substantially furnished homes, only occupied periodically, and which are no one's main residence, often referred to as second homes.

6. Our policy for charging council tax on substantially furnished empty properties from 1st April 2026 is:

Description	Tax charge as a percentage of the standard tax (inclusive of premium)
Empty (substantially furnished)	200%

Exemptions to premiums

7. From 1st April 2025, the Government has introduced the following mandatory exemptions to premiums, in addition to those already in place for unoccupied properties under the Council Tax (Exempt Dwellings) Order 1992. A local policy has been published on our website to give further guidance on how each premium exemption will be applied in practice.

Classes of Dwellings	Applies to	Exemption
Class E	Already applies to long term empty homes but extended to second homes from 1st April 2025	Dwelling which is or would be someone's sole or main residence if they were not residing in job-related armed forces accommodation.
Class F	Already applies to long term empty homes but extended to second homes from 1st April 2025	Annexes forming part of, or being treated as part of, the main dwelling
Class G	Long term empty homes and second homes	Dwellings being actively marketed for **sale** (12 months' limit)
Class H	Long term empty homes and second homes	Dwellings being actively marketed for **let** (12 months' limit)
Class I	Long term empty homes and second homes	Unoccupied dwellings which fell within exempt Class F and where probate has recently been granted (12 months from grant of probate/letters of administration)
Class J	Second homes only	Job related dwellings
Class K	Second homes only	Occupied caravan pitches and boat moorings
Class L	Second homes only	Seasonal homes where year-round, permanent occupation is prohibited, specified for use as holiday accommodation or planning condition preventing occupancy for more than 28 days continuously
Class M	Long term empty homes	Empty dwellings requiring or undergoing major repairs or structural alterations (12 months limit)

Appendix 7

Council Tax Support Scheme

1. The Council is required to maintain a Council Tax Support Scheme (CTSS) in respect of dwellings occupied by persons we consider to be in financial need. A new scheme was approved by Full Council in January 2025.

2. No substantive changes to the scheme are proposed for 2026/27. The only revision proposed is to uprate thresholds by 3.8% in line with the majority of welfare benefits (and the CPI measure of inflation from September 2025) (and used to uprate the majority of benefit rates from April 2026). The previous scheme maintained between 2013 and 2024 was also uprated annually on the same basis. The new bands including this uprating will be as shown:

		Vulnerable					Other				
Band	**Discount**	**Single Person**	**Couple with no children**	**Couple or Lone Parent with one child/ young person**	**Couple or Lone Parent with two children/ young persons**	**Couple or Lone Parent with three or more children/ young persons**	**Single Person**	**Couple with no children**	**Couple or Lone Parent with one child/ young person**	**Couple or Lone Parent with two children/ young persons**	**Couple or Lone Parent with three or more children/ young persons**
		Weekly Net Income									
1	100%	£0 to £155.70	£0 to £155.70	£0 to £155.70	£0 to £207.60	£0 to £259.50	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
2	75%	£155.71 to £233.55	£155.71 to £233.55	£155.71 to £311.40	£207.61 to £363.30	£259.51 to £415.20	£0 to £155.70	£0 to £155.70	£0 to £155.70	£0 to £207.60	£0 to £259.50
3	50%	£233.56 to £311.40	£233.56 to £311.40	£311.41 to £389.25	£363.30 to £415.20	£415.21 to £467.10	£155.71 to £233.55	£155.71 to £233.55	£155.71 to £311.40	£207.61 to £363.30	£259.51 to £415.20
4	25%	£311.41 to £389.25	£311.41 to £389.25	£389.26 to £467.10	£415.21 to £519	£467.11 to £570.90	£233.56 to £311.40	£233.56 to £311.40	£311.41 to £389.25	£363.30 to £415.20	£415.21 to £467.10
5	0%	£389.26+	£389.26+	£467.11+	£519.01+	£570.91+	£311.41 +	£311.41 +	£389.26 +	£415.21 +	£467.11 +

3. The alternative would be to freeze the bandings at their 2025/26 cash levels. This would lead to some households receiving lower levels of support or dropping out of the scheme entirely.

APPENDIX 8

Flexible Use of Capital Receipts policy

(to follow)

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Appendix C

Draft Three Year Capital Programme 2026/27

Decision to be taken by: Council

Decision to be taken on: 25 February 2026

Lead director: Amy Oliver, Director of Finance

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Useful information

- Ward(s) affected: All
- Report author: Claire Gavagan
- Author contact details: claire.gavagan@leicester.gov.uk
- Report version number: 1

1. Summary

1.1 The main purpose of this report is to ask the Council to approve a capital programme for 2026/27.

1.2 Capital expenditure is incurred on works of lasting benefit and is principally paid for by grant, tenants' rents, and the proceeds of asset sales (capital receipts). Money can also be borrowed for capital purposes.

1.3 For the past five years, the Council has set a one-year capital programme due to uncertainty over future resources. We have now moved to a three-year capital programme, providing greater visibility of planned investment and supporting improved medium-term financial planning.

1.4 In addition to the three-year programme any schemes approved and in the current programme will continue into 2026/27 where needed.

1.5 The funding of the 2025/26 capital programme changed to be aligned with our overall revenue and capital financial strategy. This meant we moved away from funding the capital programme through the capital fund and capital receipts but to using borrowing where grant was not available. This approach remains in place for the 2026/27 and the revenue budget will reflect the consequences of the decisions taken in this report

1.6 However, due to the positive work that has been undertaken on the revenue budget, we currently do not need the £60m capital receipts to balance the budget over the next three years. We will look to use some of the capital receipts to alleviate the need to borrow in turn reducing the revenue pressures placed from the increase in borrowing.

1.7 The report seeks approval to the "General Fund" element of the capital programme, at a cost of £129.8m, over the next three years. In addition to this, the HRA capital programme (which is elsewhere on your agenda) includes works estimated at £11.66m.

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1.8 The table below summarises the proposed spending for capital schemes starting in 2026/27, as described in this report:

Proposed Programme	**26/27** £m	**27/28** £m	**28/29** £m	**Later Years** £m	**Total** £m
Schemes – Summarised by Theme					
Grant Funded Schemes	20.66	13.18	13.17	-	47.01
Own buildings	4.75	6.89	3.26	-	14.90
Temporary Accommodation Acquisitions	50.00	-	-	-	50.00
Routine Works	3.63	4.39	5.28	-	13.29
Corporate Estate	1.10	-	-	-	1.10
Other Schemes and Feasibilities	1.38	0.74	1.05	-	3.17
Policy Provisions	-	0.12	0.12	0.12	0.35
Total New Schemes	**81.51**	**25.31**	**22.87**	**0.12**	**129.81**

Funding	**£m**	**£m**
Unringfenced Resources		
Capital Receipts	2.83	
Borrowing	79.97	
Government Grants	41.43	
Total Unringfenced Resources		124.23
Monies ringfenced to Schemes		5.58
Total Resources		**129.81**

1.9 The table below presents the total spend on General Fund and Housing Revenue Account schemes:

	£m
General Fund	129.81
Housing Revenue Account (1 year programme only)	11.66
Total	**141.47**

1.10 The Council's total capital expenditure now forecast for 2026/27 and beyond is expected to be around £534.99m, including the HRA and schemes approved prior to 2026/27.

1.11 The capital programme is split into two parts:

a) Schemes which are "**immediate starts**", being schemes which directors have authority to commence once the council has approved the programme. These are fully described in this report;

b) Schemes which are "**policy provisions**", where the purpose of the funding is described but money will not be released until specific spending proposals have been approved by the Executive.

1.12 Immediate starts have been split into three categories:

a) **Projects** – these are discrete, individual schemes such as a road scheme or a new building. These schemes will be monitored with reference to physical delivery rather than an annual profile of spending. (We will, of course, still want to make sure that the overall budget is not going to be exceeded);

b) **Work Programmes** – these consist of minor works or similar schemes where there is an allocation of money to be spent in a particular year;

c) **Provisions** – these are sums of money set aside in case they are needed, but where low spend is a favourable outcome rather than indicative of a problem.

2. Recommended actions/decision

2.1 At the meeting in February, the Council will be asked to:

(a) Approve the capital programme, including the prudential borrowing for schemes as described in this report and summarised at Appendices 2 to 7, subject to any amendments proposed by the City Mayor;

(b) For those schemes designated immediate starts, delegate authority to the lead director to commit expenditure, subject to the normal requirements of contract procedure rules, rules concerning land acquisition and finance procedure rules;

(c) Delegate authority to the City Mayor to determine a plan of spending for each policy provision, and to commit expenditure up to the maximum available;

(d) For the purposes of finance procedure rules:

- Determine that service resources shall consist of service revenue contributions; HRA revenue contributions; and government grants/third party contributions ringfenced for specific purposes.

- Designate the operational estate & children's capital maintenance programme, highways maintenance programme and transport improvement programme as

programme areas, within which the director can reallocate resources to meet operational requirements.

(e) Delegate to the City Mayor:

- Authority to increase any scheme in the programme, or add a new scheme to the programme, subject to a maximum of £10m corporate resources in each instance and to borrow whilst remaining within the prudential limits for debt which are proposed in the treasury management strategy (elsewhere on your agenda);

- Authority to reduce or delete any capital scheme, subject to a maximum reduction of £10m; and

- Authority to transfer any "policy provision" to the "immediate starts" category.

(g) Delegate to directors, in consultation with the relevant deputy/assistant mayor, authority to incur expenditure up to a maximum of £250k per scheme in respect of policy provisions on design and other professional fees and preparatory studies, but not any other type of expenditure.

(h) Approve the capital strategy at Appendix 8.

3. Scrutiny / stakeholder engagement

N/A

4. Background and options with supporting evidence

Key Policy Issues for the New Programme

4.1 The cost of Prudential Borrowing has been calculated for each scheme, and the total is included within the revenue budget report for 2026/27, and the Prudential Indicators included in the Treasury Report 2026/27 found elsewhere on the agenda.

4.2 The programme supports the Council's commitment to tackling the climate emergency, most obviously but not exclusively within the Transport Improvement Works, Operational Estate and Children's capital maintenance programmes.

Resources

4.3 Resources available to the programme consist primarily of Government grant, borrowing and capital receipts (the HRA programme is also supported by tenants' rent monies). Most grant is unringfenced, and the Council can spend it on any purpose it sees fit.

4.4 Appendix 1 presents the resources required to fund the proposed programme, which total some £129.81m. The key unringfenced funding sources are detailed below.

a) £2.83m of general capital receipts. The delivery of receipts from Ashton Green disposals to fund the work to sell/develop by the end of 2025/26.

b) £41.43m of unringfenced grant funding. Some of these figures are estimated in the absence of actual allocations from the Government.

c) £79.97m of borrowing, with an annual revenue cost.

4.5 For some schemes the amount of unringfenced resources required is less than the gross cost of the scheme. This is because resources are ringfenced directly to individual schemes. Ringfenced resources are shown throughout Appendix 2 and consist of government grant and contributions to support the delivery of specific schemes.

4.6 Only funding required to finance the schemes in this capital programme is included.

4.7 Finance Procedure Rules enable directors to make limited changes to the programme after it has been approved. For these purposes, the Council has split resources into corporate and service resources.

4.8 Directors have authority to add schemes to the programme, provided they are funded by service resources, up to an amount of £250,000. This provides flexibility for small schemes to be added to the programme without a report to the Executive, but only where service resources are identified. (Borrowing is treated as a corporate resource requiring a higher level of approval).

Proposed Programme

4.9 The whole programme is summarised at Appendix 2. Responsibility for the majority of projects rests with the Strategic Director of City Development and Neighbourhoods.

4.10 £47.01m is provided for grant funded schemes. These schemes are funded either from unringfenced grant (where we have discretion) and ringfenced resources.

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a) £12.99m has been provided to continue the **Schools Capital Maintenance Programme** across three financial years. This is in addition to the £6m previously approved within the 2025/26 capital programme for delivery in 2026/27. The programme will include routine maintenance and spending and is prioritised to reflect asset condition and risk. The proposed programme is shown at Appendix 5. Detailed schemes will be developed following consultation with schools.

b) £16.09m is provided as part of the continued **Highways Capital Maintenance Programme** across three financial years. This is a rolling annual programme and spending is prioritised to reflect asset condition, risk and local neighbourhood priorities. The proposed programme is shown at Appendix 4.

c) £12.35m is provided in 2026/27 to continue the rolling programme of works constituting the **LTG – Local Transport Schemes Programme.** This scheme will focus on maintaining and improving local transport infrastructure through the Department for Transport's Local Transport Grant, providing investment in the design, construction, and maintenance of local transport networks. The proposed programme is shown at Appendix 6.

d) £5.58m has been provided for **Disabled Facilities Grants,** across three financial years to private sector householders which is funded by government grant. This is an annual programme which has existed for many years. These grants provide funding to eligible disabled people for adaption work to their homes and help them maintain their independence.

4.11 £14.89m is provided for the Council's own buildings.

a) £13.11m has been provided to support the annual **Operational Estate Capital Maintenance Programme** of works to properties that the Council occupies for its own use. This is a rolling annual programme and spending is prioritised to reflect asset condition and risk. The proposed programme is shown at Appendix 3 but may vary to meet emerging operational requirements.

b) £0.15m has been provided for **LCB Maintenance.** The scheme focuses on essential maintenance works at the LCB Depot to ensure the building remains fit for purpose. This includes priority repairs, general maintenance, and upgrades necessary to meet current compliance standards.

c) £0.50m has been provided for **IT Investment,** ensuring we have technology to support our councillors and teams, this will include ensuring our committee and Council rooms Town Hall and City

Hall to support councillors and ensure the public have access to democracy.

d) £0.35m has been provided for the **Demolition of Rally House.** This is to facilitate the demolition of Rally House and the creation of a fenced, hardstanding area for vehicle parking, providing potential short-term parking income until the site is brought forward for future development.

e) £0.25m has been provided for the **Parks & Open Spaces Depot Transformation** scheme. This focuses on upgrading depot facilities at Gilroes Cemetery and Beaumont Park to enhance staff welfare facilities, storage, environmental compliance, and site security.

f) £0.10m has been allocated to support the ongoing **Depot Transformation** Project, enabling the relocation of the Park Services Environmental Ranger team from Riverside Depot to Knighton Park Depot.

g) £0.45m has been provided for **Public Toilet Refurbishment**. This is a rolling renovation programme for public toilet blocks across parks, highways, and cemeteries. Works will replace fixtures and improve facilities to maintain hygiene and appearance.

4.12 £50.00m has been provided for **Temporary Accommodation (TA) Acquisitions** for the purchase of 90 self-contained accommodation units for singles and 160 family accommodation units. Through this increase in the number of Council-owned TA units, we can better ensure that homeless households are housed in suitable accommodation, minimising the use of hotel stays. This builds on the £45m approved by Council in March 2024, and will directly result in annual cost avoidance of over £6m per year. Appendix 7 provides further details of the context to these proposals and the impact.

4.13 £13.29m is provided for Routine Works.

a) £0.10m is provided for **Foster Care Capital Contribution** Scheme to support foster carers with alterations to their property to allow fostered children to remain living with their carers or to increase the capacity to look after more children.

b) £0.23m is provided for the **Historic Building Grant Fund to** provide match funding to city residents and organisations to support the repair of historic buildings and the reinstatement of lost original historic features.

c) £1.20m is provided for **Local Environmental Works** which will focus on local neighbourhood issues including residential

parking, local safety concerns, pedestrian routes, cycleways and community lighting to be delivered after consultation with ward members.

d) £0.90m is towards the **Flood Strategy** to support the local flood risk management strategy and action plan, and the delivery of our statutory role to manage and reduce flood risk in collaboration with the Environment Agency & Severn Trent Water.

e) £0.08m is included as part of the continued programme to refresh **Festival Decorations**.

f) £0.43m is provided for **Heritage Interpretation Panels.** This scheme will focus on expanding the city's heritage interpretation by installing additional panels, highlighting Leicester's historic places and people. It will also enhance online content and collaboration with Visit Leicester and Place Marketing to boost public engagement and tourism.

g) £0.45m is provided for **Grounds Maintenance Machinery** to replace ageing machinery with up to date, energy efficient models to provide continued maintenance of our parks and open spaces.

h) £0.19m is provided for the **Environmental Crime / Parks & Open Spaces CCTV Enforcement Action Project** to purchase mobile CCTV cameras to tackle fly-tipping and street scene offences across the city.

i) £0.36m is provided for **Replacement Tree Planting** on a rolling tree replacement programme across parks and highways, delivering environmental, biodiversity, health, aesthetic, and economic benefits.

j) £0.65m has been provided for the **3G Pitch Replacements** Scheme to replace aging 3G synthetic pitches to reduce safety risks, protect user wellbeing, maintain FA compliance, and ensure surfaces remain fit for purpose.

k) £8.71m has been made available for the annual **Fleet Replacement Programme**. Wherever possible, ultra-low emission vehicles (ULEVs) will be sought to support the Council's climate emergency response.

4.14 £1.10m has been provided for the **Corporate Estate** to support the council's property portfolio. Including wall, steps & roof repairs, replacement windows. The council has a statutory responsibility to ensure business property is safe for our tenants and anybody else using the buildings. This will also ensure income is maintained for the revenue budget.

4.15 £0.35m is provided for Policy Provisions:

a) £0.35m is provided for the **Voices of Leicester** Project, as potential match funding to support an application to the National Lottery Heritage Fund. The application looks to support creating new social history and natural world galleries, improve building infrastructure, and develop inclusive learning and engagement spaces. To assist with celebrating Leicester's communities and stories.

4.16 £3.17m is provided for Other Schemes & Feasibilities:

a) £2.83m for infrastructure works to enable **Capital Asset Sales,** in particular Ashton Green.

h) £0.34m is provided for **Feasibility Studies**. This will enable studies to be done, typically for potential developments not included elsewhere in the programme or which might attract grant support. The breakdown for this is shown at Appendix 2e but may vary to meet emerging operational requirements.

Proposed Programme – Policy Provisions

4.17 Policy provisions are sums of money which are included in the programme for a stated purpose, but for which a further report to the Executive (and decision notice) is required before they can be spent. Schemes are usually treated as policy provisions because the Executive needs to see more detailed spending plans before full approval can be given.

4.18 Executive reports seeking approval to spend policy provisions must state whether schemes, once approved, will constitute projects, work programmes or provisions; and, in the case of projects, identify project outcomes and physical milestones against which progress can be monitored.

4.19 Where a scheme has the status of a policy provision, it is shown as such in the appendix.

Capital Strategy

4.20 Local authorities are required to prepare a capital strategy each year, which sets out our approach for capital expenditure and financing at high level.

4.21 The proposed capital strategy is set out at Appendix 8.

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

5.1 Financial implications

This report is exclusively concerned with financial issues.
Signed: Amy Oliver, Director of Finance
Dated: 5th December 2025

5.2 Legal implications

In accordance with the constitution, the capital programme is a matter that requires approval of full Council. The subsequent letting of contracts, acquisition and/or disposal of land, etc., all remain matters that are executive functions and therefore there will be the need to ensure such next steps have the correct authority in place prior to proceeding. Legal Services will provide specific advice in relation to individual schemes and client officers should take early legal advice.
Signed: Kevin Carter, Head of Law
Dated:18 November 2025

5.3 Equalities implications

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

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

People from across all protected characteristics will benefit from the improved public good arising from the proposed capital programme. However, as the proposals are developed and implemented, consideration should continue to be given to the equality impacts of the schemes in question, and how it can help the Council to meet the three aims of the Public Sector Equality Duty.

The main purpose of this report is to ask the Council to approve a capital programme for 2026/27, the capital programme includes schemes which improve the city's infrastructure and contribute to overall improvement of quality of life for people across all protected characteristics. By doing so, the capital programme promotes the PSED aim of: fostering good relations between different groups of people by ensuring that no area is disadvantaged compared to other areas as many services rely on such infrastructure to continue to operate.

Some of the schemes focus on meeting specific areas of need for a protected characteristic: disabled adaptations within homes (disability), home repair grants which are most likely to be accessed by elderly, disabled people or households with children who are living in poverty (age and disability).

Other schemes target much larger groups of people who have a range of protected characteristics reflective of the diverse population within the city. Some schemes are place specific and address environmental issues that also benefit diverse groups of people. The delivery of the capital programme contributes to the Council fulfilling our Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED). Where there are any improvement works to buildings or public spaces, considerations around accessibility (across a range of protected characteristics) must influence design and decision making. This will ensure that people are not excluded (directly or indirectly) from accessing a building, public space or service, on the basis of a protected characteristic.
Signed: Equalities Officer, Surinder Singh, Ext 37 4148
Dated: 18 November 2025

5.4 Climate Emergency implications

Following the council's declaration of a climate emergency and ambition to reach net zero carbon emissions for the council and the city, the council has a key role to play in addressing carbon emissions relating to the delivery of its services. This includes through its delivery of capital projects, as projects involving buildings and infrastructure often present significant opportunities for achieving carbon savings or climate adaptations and are an area where the council has a high level of control. It is important that the climate implications and opportunities of all projects and work programmes are considered on a project-by-project basis, both during the development phase and when decisions are made.
Signed: Phil Ball, Sustainability Officer, Ext 37 2246
Dated: 18th November 2025

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

Policy	Yes	The capital programme is part of the Council's overall budget and policy framework and makes a substantial contribution to the delivery of Council policy.
Crime and Disorder	No	
Human Rights Act	No	
Elderly/People on Low Income	Yes	A number of schemes will benefit elderly people and those on low income.

6. Background information and other papers:

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7. Summary of appendices:

Appendix 1 Capital Resources.
Appendix 2a Grant Funded Schemes
Appendix 2b Own Buildings
Appendix 2c Routine Works
Appendix 2d Temporary Accommodation
Appendix 2e Corporate Estate
Appendix 2f Other & Feasibilities Schemes
Appendix 2g Policy Provisions
Appendix 3 Operational Estate Maintenance Capital Programme
Appendix 4 Highways Maintenance Capital Programme
Appendix 5 Children's Capital Improvement Programme
Appendix 6 Local Transport Schemes
Appendix 7 Temporary Accommodation Acquisitions
Appendix 8 Capital Strategy 2026/27

8. 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)?

No

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

No – it is a proposal to Council.

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Appendix 1

Capital Resources

	26/27 *{£000}*	27/28 *{£000}*	28/29 *{£000}*	Later Years *{£000}*	Total ***{£000}***
Capital Receipts					
General Capital Receipts	1,209	574	1,051	0	**2,835**
Total Receipts	**1,209**	**574**	**1,051**	**0**	**2,835**
Unringfenced Capital Grant					
School Capital Maintenance	1,084	5,957	5,944	0	**12,985**
Local Transport Grant	12,349	0	0	0	**12,349**
Highways Maintenance	5,364	5,364	5,364	0	**16,092**
Total Unringfenced Grant	**18,797**	**11,321**	**11,308**	**0**	**41,426**
Prudential Borrowing	59,644	11,558	8,652	116	79,970
TOTAL UNRINGFENCED RESOURCES	**79,650**	**23,453**	**21,012**	**116**	**124,231**
Ringfenced resources					
Disabled Facilities Grant	1,861	1,861	1,861	0	**5,583**
TOTAL RINGFENCED RESOURCES	**1,861**	**1,861**	**1,861**	**0**	**5,583**
TOTAL CAPITAL RESOURCES	**81,511**	**25,314**	**22,873**	**116**	**129,814**

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Appendix 2a

Grant Funded Schemes

	Division	Scheme Type	26/27	27/28	28/29	Later Years	Total Approval
			{£000}	*{£000}*	*{£000}*	*{£000}*	*{£000}*
Grant Funded Schemes							
School Capital Maintenance	CDN (ECS)	WP	1,084	5,957	5,944	-	**12,985**
Highway Capital Maintenance	CDN (PDT)	WP	5,364	5,364	5,364	-	**16,092**
Local Transport Grant	CDN (PDT)	PJ	12,349	-	-	-	**12,349**
Disabled Facilities Grants*	CDN (HGF)	WP	1,861	1,861	1,861	-	**5,583**
TOTAL			**20,658**	**13,182**	**13,169**	**0**	**47,009**

Key to Scheme Types: PJ = Project; WP = Work Programme

**This scheme is funded through a ringfenced grant.*

Appendix 2b

Own Buildings

	Division	Scheme Type	26/27	27/28	28/29	Later Years	Total Approval
			{£000}	*{£000}*	*{£000}*	*{£000}*	*{£000}*
Own Buildings							
LCB Maintenance	CDN (TCI)	PJ	150	-	-	-	**150**
Property and Operational Estate	CDN (EBS)	WP	3,472	6,515	3,110	-	**13,097**
IT Investment	CDN (EBS)	WP	500	-	-	-	**500**
Rally House Demolition	CDN (EBS)	PJ	210	140	-	-	**350**
Parks & Open Spaces Depot Transformation	CDN (NES)	PJ	165	80	-	-	**245**
Depot Transformation	CDN (NES)	PJ	100	-	-	-	**100**
Public Toilet Refurbishment	CDN (NES)	PJ	150	150	150	-	**450**
TOTAL			**4,747**	**6,885**	**3,260**	**0**	**14,892**

Key to Scheme Types: PJ = Project; WP = Work Programme

Appendix 2c

Routine Works

	Division	Scheme Type	26/27	27/28	28/29	Later Years	Total Approval
			{£000}	*{£000}*	*{£000}*	*{£000}*	*{£000}*
Routine Works							
Foster Care Capital Contribution Scheme	ECS	WP	100	-	-	-	**100**
Historic Building Grant Fund	CDN (PDT)	WP	75	75	75	-	**225**
Local Environmental Works	CDN (PDT)	WP	400	400	400	-	**1,200**
Flood Strategy	CDN (PDT)	WP	300	300	300	-	**900**
Festival Decorations	CDN (PDT)	WP	25	25	25	-	**75**
Heritage Interpretation Panels	CDN (TCI)	WP	210	220	-	-	**430**
Grounds Maintenance Machinery	CDN (NES)	WP	150	150	150	-	**450**
Environmental Crime / Parks & Open Spaces CCTV Enforcement Action	CDN (NES)	WP	185	-	-	-	**185**
Replacement Tree Planting	CDN (NES)	WP	200	80	80	-	**360**
3G Pitch Replacement – FIS Carpets	CDN (NES)	PJ	250	400	-	-	**650**
Vehicle Fleet Replacement Programme	CDN (HGF)	WP	1,732	2,735	4,246	-	**8,713**
TOTAL			**3,627**	**4,385**	**5,276**	**-**	**13,288**

Key to Scheme Types: PJ = Project; WP = Work Programme

Appendix 2d

Temporary Accommodation Acquisitions

	Division	Scheme Type	26/27	27/28	28/29	Later Years	Total Approval
			{£000}	*{£000}*	*{£000}*	*{£000}*	*{£000}*
Temporary Accommodation Acquisitions							
Temporary Accommodation Acquisitions			50,000	-	-	-	**50,000**
TOTAL			**50,000**	**-**	**-**	**-**	**50,000**

Key to Scheme Types: PJ = Project; WP = Work Programme

Appendix 2e

Corporate Estate

	Division	Scheme Type	26/27	27/28	28/29	Later Years	Total Approval
			{£000}	*{£000}*	*{£000}*	*{£000}*	*{£000}*
Corporate Estate							
Corporate Estate	CDN (EBS)	WP	1,100	-	-	-	**1,100**
TOTAL			**1,100**	**-**	**-**	**-**	**1,100**

Key to Scheme Types: PJ = Project; WP = Work Programme

Appendix 2f

Feasibilities and Other Schemes

	Division	Scheme Type	26/27	27/28	28/29	Later Years	Total Approval
			{£000}	*{£000}*	*{£000}*	*{£000}*	*{£000}*
Feasibilities and Contingencies							
Infrastructure works to enable Capital Asset Sales	CDN (PDT)	PJ	1,209	574	1,051	-	**2,835**
PDT Feasibility	CDN (PDT)	WP	70	170	-	-	**240**
Curve Automation System Feasibility	CDN (TCI)	WP	50	-	-	-	**50**
Housing Public Space Infrastructure Regeneration (CCTV) Feasibility	CDN (NES)	WP	50	-	-	-	**50**
TOTAL			**1,379**	**744**	**1,051**	**-**	**3,175**

Key to Scheme Types: PJ = Project; WP = Work Programme

Appendix 2g

Policy Provisions

	Division	Scheme Type	26/27	27/28	28/29	Later Years	Total Approval
			{£000}	*{£000}*			*{£000}*
Policy Provisions							
Voices of Leicester (Match Funding)	CDN (TCI)	PP	-	118	116	116	**350**
TOTAL			**-**	**118**	**116**	**116**	**350**
GRAND TOTAL – ALL SCHEMES			**81,511**	**25,314**	**22,873**	**116**	**129,814**

Appendix 3

Property and Operational Estate Maintenance Capital Programme

Description	26/27 Amount £000's	27/28 Amount £000's	28/29 Amount £000's	Total Amount £000's
Building Works - Maintenance at the Councils operational buildings to ensure they meet the needs of our residents and employees. Key works will include refurbishment of buildings, including ensuring appropriate utilisation to enable maximisation of our assets, pathway replacements at park, refurbishment of public areas and works at heritage sites.	1,983	2,541	830	**5,354**
Compliance Works - Generally consisting of surveys to gain condition data across the estate and works arising from the various risk assessments that are undertaken.	568	503	815	**1,886**
Mechanical Works - Ventilation systems, pool filtration & dosing systems, building management systems and heating controls, including essential works at York House.	839	3,417	1,360	**5,616**
Emergency Provision – Provision for emergency reactive works that could be required across the Council's estate.	82	54	105	**241**
TOTAL	**3,472**	**6,515**	**3,110**	**13,097**

Appendix 4

Highways Maintenance Capital Programme

Description	26/27 Amount £000's	27/28 Amount £000's	28/29 Amount £000's	Total Amount £000's
Main Roads (Principal Roads & Classified Non-Principal Roads) – 2026 schemes include Victoria Road East, Hinckley Road, Glenfrith Way	625	625	625	**1,875**
Unclassified Neighbourhood Roads, Large Area Patching & Pothole Repairs – Target large carriageway defect repairs to provide longer term repairs in readiness for surface dressing. Includes lining, joint sealing, concrete bay repairs and road hump replacements. 2026 schemes include: Barkbythorpe Road – Humberstone Lane - Boundary Walnut Street Longfellow Road Vicarage Lane Eastfield Road Floyd Close Westernhay Road Southernhay Road Morley Road Dumbleton Avenue Rowley Fields Avenue **Includes lining, joint sealing, concrete bay repairs and road hump replacements**	1,750	1,750	1,750	**5,250**

Description	26/27 Amount £000's	27/28 Amount £000's	28/29 Amount £000's	Total Amount £000's
Footway Relays and Reconstructions – Focus on neighbourhood street scene corridor improvements in district centres. 2026 schemes included Melton Road uneven footway improvements and local footway maintenance.	750	750	750	**2,250**
Strategic Bridge Deck Maintenance & Replacement. 2026 schemes include feasibility studies and structural surveys to assess St. Margaret's Way half joint replacement and Burleys Way flyover maintenance.	50	250	250	**550**
Bridge Improvement & Maintenance Works including various parapet replacements, structural maintenance works and technical assessment review. 2026 schemes include Shady Lane, Ocean Rd, Dakyn Rd, Southgate Underpass.	689	250	250	**1,189**
Traffic Signal Installations Renewals and Lighting Column Replacements – Signalling upgrades, lamp column replacements, illuminated bollard and sign replacement.	240	400	400	**1,040**
Highway Drainage – Flood mitigation schemes and drainage improvement projects.	260	339	339	**938**
DfT Whole Government Accounting Lifecycle Asset Management Development Project – Strategic asset management development, condition surveys, data analysis, lifecycle planning and reporting in support of DfT Challenge Funding bidding linked to asset management performance.	1,000	1,000	1,000	**3,000**
TOTAL	**5,364**	**5,364**	**5,364**	**16,092**

Appendix 5

Children's Capital Improvement Programme

Description	26/27 Amount £000's	27/28 Amount £000's	28/29 Amount £000's	Total Amount £000's
Building Works - Typical works include roof replacements, sports hall floor replacements, playground resurfacing and window replacements.	478	3,830	3,143	7,451
Compliance Works - This work stream will mainly be used to ensure the playing fields and pavilions used by schools are fully compliant with current regulations and to conduct health and safety works.	434	783	1,251	2,468
Mechanical Works - schemes being undertaken within the programme typically consist of re-piping heating systems and end of life ventilation replacements.	172	981	1,181	2,334
Individual Access Needs Works - This is a provision to allow works to be carried out to enable children with additional needs to access mainstream school.	-	121	123	244
Emergency Provision - This is provision within the programme to allow for emergency unforeseen works to be carried out.	-	242	246	488
TOTAL	**1,084**	**5,957**	**5,944**	**12,985**

Appendix 6

Local Transport Schemes

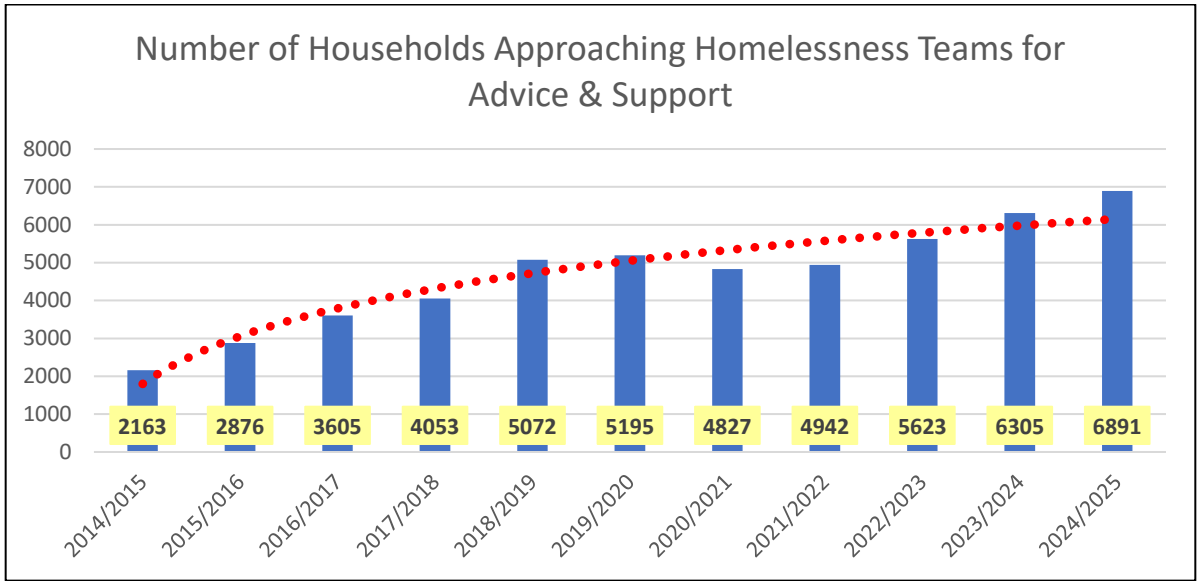
	Description	26-27 Amount £000
City Centre	Granby Street Phase 3 Delivery	1,100
City Connectivity	LCWIP Phase 1 Design Work	300
City Connectivity	LCWIP Phase 0 Delivery	1,400
City Connectivity	Stokeswood Park Culvert Repairs	2,200
City Connectivity	Rally Park Phase 3a Delivery	800
City Connectivity	Saffron Lane Phase 3/4 Design	300
City Connectivity	Service support (inc. data collection, modelling)	350
Future City	PROW Programme	434
Future City	Greengate Lane Design/Build	1,200
Future City	Highway Asset Replacement Programme	800
Healthier Neighbourhoods	Ped crossing programme (phase 3 design)	350
Healthier Neighbourhoods	Ped crossing programme (phase 2 delivery)	350
Healthier Neighbourhoods	Local Works Contribution	400
Healthier Neighbourhoods	School Streets Programme	165
Healthier Neighbourhoods	AQAP Delivery	850
Local Safety	20s Programme block allocation	750
Local Safety	Local Safety Scheme Block Allocation	600
TOTAL		**12,349**

The Local Transport Scheme grant is a one-off grant, so the programme of works is only for a single financial year.

Appendix 7

Temporary Accommodation Acquisitions

Like many other local authorities, Leicester has been experiencing significant pressures in the cost of meeting the needs of homeless households through the provision of temporary accommodation. Since 2014/15 the number of approaches has risen by 219% as can be seen in the table below:



The council works positively to support households in preventing homelessness with circa 60% prevented from ever becoming Homeless, with Leicester performing better than the national average. This is supported by the table below that shows the percentage of prevention duty cases that came to an end within Quarter with the outcome being "Secured accommodation for 6+ months":

	Q1 24/25	Q2 24/25	Q3 24/25	Q4 24/25
Leicester	62%	63%	62%	59%
National Ave.	52%	52%	54%	51%

However, the Council is unable to prevent all cases and needs to support households who have often found themselves homeless often due to no fault of their own.

The Council in March 2024 approved the addition of £45m to the capital programme to acquire properties to hold as temporary accommodation, providing 253 units. Alongside a package of different measures this has successfully achieved financial cost avoidance for the Council of £4m in 24/25, rising to £16m in 25/26 and forecast to be £39m in 26/27.

This positive intervention leads to a stronger homelessness pathway, that is more resilient to the ongoing pressures and improves the conditions for those going through homelessness, especially because of the additional self-contained temporary accommodation.

As of October 2025, we had a total of 1,100 households residing in temporary accommodation. A total of 653 of those households were families and a further 447 single households remain in temporary accommodation.

Even with the positive interventions for singles and families, due to the ongoing strong demand for Homelessness services and accommodation it is expected that numbers will continue to exceed LCC owned and commissioned temporary accommodation with 392 families in expensive temporary accommodation and 81 singles in expensive temporary accommodation as at March 2026. These figures are expected to grow to 452 families and 261 singles in expensive temporary accommodation by March 2027

The proposed capital budget provides an additional £50m for acquiring temporary accommodation during 2026/27. This is anticipated to provide 90 units for singles and 160 units for families, which will be held in the Councils General Fund and managed through a third-party provider.

In addition to this, we are increasing our staffing in this area to assist with our prevention work. Overall, the combination of the £50m investment in temporary accommodation and the additional staff to support the prevention work is forecast to achieve cost avoidance of £3.8m in 2026/27, rising to £6.4m in 27/28. The revenue implications costs of this investment including borrowing costs are included in the General Fund Revenue Budget.

Appendix 8

Capital Strategy 2026/27

Appendix to be added for final report

Appendix D

LSCP Yearly Report

CYPE Scrutiny

Date of meeting: 20th January 2026

Lead director: Laurence Mackie-Jones, Strategic Director Social Care and Education

Useful information

■ Ward(s) affected: All

■ Report author: Lindsey Bampton, Safeguarding Board Manager, Leicester and Jo Fowler, Safeguarding Partnerships Support Officer, Leicestershire and Rutland.

Presenting the report is Amanda Boodhoo, LSCP Independent Scrutineer

■ Author contact details: Lindsey.Bampton@leicester.gov.uk (0116) 454 6911

■ Report version number: Final published report

1. Summary

The Children, Young People and Education (CYPE) Scrutiny Commission will receive, at their January 2025 meeting, the Leicester Safeguarding Children Partnership (LSCP) 24/25 Annual Report which will be presented by the LSCP Independent Scrutineer.

Safeguarding partners must jointly report on the activity they have undertaken in a 12-month period. That reporting should be transparent and easily accessible to families and professionals. The focus of these reports should be on multi-agency priorities, learning, impact, evidence, and improvement.

2. Recommended actions/decision

In line with statutory guidance outlining that SCP yearly reports should be submitted and published by the end of September each year, the 2024/25 LSCP Yearly Report was published on the LSCP website in September 2025.

The CYPE Scrutiny Commission is invited to comment on how effectively the LSCP has reported on the activity they have undertaken in a 12-month period, with a focus on multi-agency priorities, learning, impact, evidence, and improvement.

3. Scrutiny / stakeholder engagement

The report was tabled at LMB on 16th September 2025 and at EHC Board on 18th November 2025.

4. Background and options with supporting evidence

N/A.

5. Detailed report

Please find the LSCP Yearly Report accompanying this cover paper.

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

6.1 Financial implications

There are no direct financial implications arising from this report. Income and expenditure for the financial year are included in the LSCP Yearly Report.
Mohammed Irfan, Head of Finance
09 January 2026

6.2 Legal implications

There are no direct legal implications arising from this report but the solid progress is noted. These achievements will ensure that the authority is well placed to meet with its' statutory duties.

Signed: S Holmes
Dated: 8th January 2025

6.3 Equalities implications

There are no direct adverse equality implications arising from this report, as it provides a retrospective summary of the LSCP's 2024/25 activities. However, safeguarding is intrinsically linked to the protection of children and young people who share protected characteristics under the Equality Act 2010.

The report highlights the Partnership's commitment to addressing inequalities through its four strategic priorities. Specifically, the LSCP uses performance data to identify gaps in service provision for groups related to age, disability, race, and religion. By ensuring that learning reviews and training are accessible to a diverse workforce and reach communities with specific cultural or linguistic needs, the Partnership aims to ensure the safeguarding system remains fair and effective for every child in the city.

Equalities Officer, Surinder Singh, Ext 37 4148
Dated 9 January 2026

6.4 Climate Emergency implications

There are no significant climate emergency implications directly associated with this report. As service delivery by the council and partners generally contributes to the council's carbon footprint, any impacts could be considered within delivery of related projects, such as encouraging the use of sustainable travel options, using buildings and materials efficiently and following the council's sustainable procurement guidance, as appropriate and relevant.

Signed: Phil Ball, Sustainability Officer, Ext 372246
Dated: 8th January 2026

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

N/A

7. Background information and other papers: N/A.

8. Summary of appendices: The LSCP Yearly Report is provided in the appendix.

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)? This is not a private report.

10. Is this a "key decision"? If so, why? No.

LEICESTER SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN PARTNERHIP

Leicester Safeguarding Children Partnership Board

WORKING TOGETHER TO KEEP CHILDREN SAFE

YEARLY REPORT
2024 - 2025

Foreword

We are pleased to present this report of the Leicester Safeguarding Children Partnership that covers the period from 1st April 2024 to 31st March 2025.

In 2023, there was the publication of the current version of the statutory guidance, Working Together, and national reforms to Children's Social Care began. The implementation of the reforms continues, as set out in the Keeping Children Safe, Helping Families Thrive policy paper published in November 2024, and the upcoming Children's Wellbeing and Schools Bill. In 2024-25, the Leicester Safeguarding Children Partnership, alongside the Leicestershire & Rutland Safeguarding Children Partnership, has embedded changes at a system and practice level influenced by these national updates.

In December 2024, we published our updated Multi-Agency Safeguarding Arrangements. In particular, these better reflect the role that Education and the Voluntary and Community Sector play in safeguarding children and address how these sectors influence work at both a strategic and operational level.

Across 2025-26, we will continue to implement quite significant changes to our quality assurance, scrutiny and communication and engagement arrangements, with a new Performance Group and Audit Group and the commissioning of a Young Scrutineer. This demonstrates our continued commitment to ensuring our work is led both by the voices and lived experiences of the children and families we seek to support and keep safe.

We want to thank all the dedicated workers in organisations across Leicester that are working to support the welfare and safety of children and families.

The Safeguarding Partners for Leicester

Key Achievements in 2024-25	Key Challenges in 2024-25
• Formed a new Education Subgroup, which promotes and strengthens the role of local schools, colleges, early years and childcare settings in safeguarding arrangements • Expanded the reach and membership of the Leicester, Leicestershire & Rutland Voluntary and Community Sector Forum to strengthen engagement with this sector • Quickly addressed and started to implement any learning required as a result of national reviews published by the Child Safeguarding Practice Review Panel • Delivered high quality and well-attended large scale training events alongside our regular training programme	• Implementing the changes required as a result of Working Together 2023 and ensuring that the measures agreed were suitable and proportionate • Progressing our Transitions Business Priority. The issues faced have been addressed and for 2025-26 there will be new vigour and focus to this work • Having the capacity to fulfil our audit schedule, in light of competing priorities linked to the Joint Targeted Inspection programme. As a result of the issues faced, for 2025-26, the work of the Assurance and Audit Group will be split and taken up by two separate subgroups – the Performance Group and the Audit Group

Observations from our Independent Scrutineer

Throughout the period April 2024 to March 2025 I have continued to work alongside members of the Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland (LLR) partnerships in the role of Independent Scrutineer. The Leicester and Leicestershire and Rutland partnership work closely. This results in the ability to maximise learning to continuously improve safeguarding practice, align processes and use the available resources efficiently. LLR partnerships have been very open to scrutiny, which has resulted in reflection and a clear commitment to drive improvements, ensuring the effectiveness and quality of the multi-agency arrangements in effectively safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children.

In undertaking scrutiny, a scrutiny framework has been established and agreed by partners. The scrutiny framework reflects the functions as described in Working together to safeguard children (2023) and adopts the 'Six Steps to Independent scrutiny' model. The framework aligns with the priorities identified and documented in the Joint Leicester, Leicestershire & Rutland Safeguarding Children Partnership Business Plan. The scrutiny plan continues over a two-year period to allow evidence of both progression of areas identified as priorities and impact of the activity.

During the last year of undertaking the role I have attended a range of meetings of the partnerships, scrutinised agendas, minutes and a range of reports.

I have participated in a range of meetings with Safeguarding Partners to discuss governance, areas of priority, safeguarding activity, staffing and funding requirements of the partnerships.

In undertaking scrutiny I have had the pleasure of meeting a range of partners, professionals and of hearing the voice of children. This has allowed the opportunity of triangulating the evidence of the effectiveness of the work undertaken by the partnership.

As part of the scrutiny framework, I have undertaken a range of scrutiny activity to support my assessment of the strength of the partnership safeguarding arrangements.

Areas of scrutiny have included:

- Scrutiny of work undertaken by the sub-groups to progress the identified priorities
- Scrutiny of the partnership data and quality assurance processes, providing challenge and advice re areas of development
- Scrutiny of the readiness of the partnership to respond to the requirements of Working Together (2023)
- Scrutiny of the rapid review and Local Child Safeguarding review process and activity undertaken to embed the emerging learning and assess impact

- Supporting the work undertaken to continually progress a joined up approach across the LCSPs and SABs with a focus upon the safeguarding of those transitioning to adulthood
- Scrutiny of approaches used to hear the voice of children, supporting the plans to develop opportunities for children and those transitioning to adulthood to support the partnership as young scrutineers
- Ongoing scrutiny of the embedding of the developments in response to Working Together 2023
- Participation in reginal and national fora

In triangulating the findings from the range of scrutiny activity there is clear evidence of robust child focused leadership with commitment to ensuring that children in Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland are safeguarded and their welfare promoted.

The system of rotating chairing responsibilities among partners, introduced within the last year is effective. Education have an increasingly strong voice and all statutory partners are fully committed to the safeguarding ambitions of the Partnership. There is a culture of openness, respectful challenge, and a willingness to learn and continually improve.

In the coming year the partnership face a number of challenges including the need to consider the local response to implementing the children's social care reforms alongside significant changes within partner organisations. The impact of such changes needs ongoing monitoring.

As the Independent Scrutineer, I am committed to hearing directly from children, young people, families, and frontline practitioners to understand what is working well and how multi-agency working can be improved. Given the plans to recruit a young scrutineer are progressing I look forward to working with them to ensure the voice of children, young people and families continue to inform the partnerships work.

While challenges lie ahead, I have confidence in the ability of Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland Safeguarding Children Partnerships to build upon its strengths and I will continue to scrutinise and support the Partnership in navigating risks and challenges.

The Partnership

The Leicester Safeguarding Children Partnership (LSCP) brings together organisations across Leicester with a vision.

Our vision is for children and young people in Leicester to be safe, well and achieve their full potential.

The local Safeguarding Children Partnership was established in 2019 to oversee the multi-agency safeguarding children arrangements under the Children Act 2004, as amended by the Children and Social Work Act 2017.

Multi-agency safeguarding arrangements should be based on Local Authority areas. Arrangements can cover two or more local authority boundaries by agreement. As we share a number of partners with Leicestershire and Rutland Safeguarding Children Partnership (LRSCP), we publish joint Leicester, Leicestershire & Rutland Multi-Agency Safeguarding Arrangements (MASA). In 2024-25, we reviewed our arrangements in light of the updated government guidance Working Together to Safeguard Children 2023. These were re-published in December 2024, in line with government timescales.

Our principles and aims across Leicester, Leicestershire & Rutland are:

- for clear accountability
- for clear and demonstrable influence
- for equitable and fair contributions from all partners

Amendments made by the Children and Social Work Act 2017 to the Children Act 2004 placed duties on Police, Integrated Care Boards (ICBs), and Local Authorities, as statutory safeguarding partners. Safeguarding partners are under a duty to make arrangements to work together, and with other partners locally, to safeguard and promote the welfare of all children in their area.

In accordance with the requirements and inclusions outlined in Working Together to Safeguard Children 2023,[1] these arrangements aim to ensure that at a local level:

- there is a clear, shared vision for how to improve outcomes for children locally across all levels of need and all types of harm
- when a child is identified as suffering or likely to suffer significant harm there is a prompt, appropriate and effective response to ensure the protection and support of the child
- organisations and agencies are challenged appropriately, effectively holding one another to account

[1] Working Together 2023, page 24, paragraph 40.

- the voice of children and families combined with the knowledge of experienced practitioners and insights from data, provides a greater understanding of the areas of strength and/or improvement within arrangements and practice
- information is sought, analysed, shared, and broken down by protected characteristics to facilitate more accurate and timely decision-making for children and families, and to understand outcomes for different communities of children
- effective collection, sharing and analysis of data, enables early identification of new safeguarding risks, issues, emerging threats, and joined-up responses across relevant agencies
- senior leaders promote and embed a learning culture which supports local services to become more reflective and implement changes to practice
- senior leaders have a good knowledge and understanding about the quality of local practice and its impact on children and families

Further information about the structure and governance of the Safeguarding Children Partnership is available in the "Progress against statutory guidance" section of the report.

Working Together 2023 states that "Safeguarding partners must jointly report on the activity they have undertaken in 12-month period".[2] This Yearly Report fulfils this requirement.

[2] Working Together 2023, page 40, paragraph 106.

Area profile

Local Context

During 2021 Leicester's population reached nearly 370,000 and Leicester was noted as the most densely populated local authority area across the East Midlands (Office of National Statistics, 2022) [3]. It is home to around 36 people per football pitch-sized piece of land.

Office of National Statistics, 2022

At the end of 2024-25 the population of 0–17-year-olds in Leicester was 88,725. The percentage of households including dependent children rose by 1.8% from 2011 to 2021. During the same period, the percentage in the East Midlands as a whole fell by 0.9%.

According to the Office of National Statistics in the 2021 census around 213,600 Leicester residents said they were born in England and this represented 57.9% of the local population. The 5 most common countries of birth for the population of Leicester in 2021 were England, India, South and Eastern Africa (other than Kenya, Somalia, South Africa and Zimbabwe), Poland, and Kenya.

In 2021, 43.4% of usual residents in Leicester identified their ethnic group as Asian, Asian British or Asian Welsh followed by 40.9% who identified themselves as White, 7.8% as Black, Black British, Black Welsh, Caribbean or African, 4.1% as Other ethnic groups and 3.8% as Mixed or Multiple Ethnic Groups (Office of National Statistics, 2022) .

The Spring (January 2024) School Census recorded at least 182 languages spoken by children in schools across Leicester whilst the Spring (January 2025) School Census recorded 48.4% of school children in Leicester as Asian / Asian British, 28.2% as White / White British, 10.9% as Black / Black British, and 8.2% as Mixed.

[3] Office of National Statistics (2022) How the population changed in Leicester: Census 2021 https://www.ons.gov.uk/visualisations/censusareachanges/E06000016/

Review of use of restraint in secure establishments

There are no Youth Custody homes within the local authority area but those which are in the region which house young people from the area will be required to report on arrangements as and when necessary.

Recent Inspections

Leicester City Council local authority children's services

Following an Ofsted inspection that took place in September 2024, Leicester City Council's local authority children's services was rated as requires improvement to be good by Ofsted.

The full report was published on 29th January 2025.

Ofsted noted the 'supportive environment' leaders have maintained for staff, ensuring that caseloads remain at manageable levels. They found that handovers happened clearly and swiftly; staff knew how to escalate children's cases appropriately and that social workers 'know their children well and speak about them with knowledge and sensitivity.' The use of child protection plans and processes to bring children into the care of the local authority were appropriate.

The council's fostering service was also highlighted as an area of significant strength, with carers receiving 'very good' support.

Their report says that in order to achieve a judgement of 'good', leaders in children's services need to improve the information they have to evaluate performance, and that care plans and responses to some referrals also need to be more consistent if all children are to have the best possible outcomes. An improvement plan has been produced to address the points raised by Ofsted.

Inspectors also said that arrangements to support the very small group of most vulnerable children in care and care leavers could be improved, as well as support for young adult care leavers in prison or facing homelessness - areas which have been swiftly addressed by the authority since the inspection.

Multi-Agency Collaborations

Joint Targeted Area Inspections (JTAIs)

Joint Targeted Area Inspections are carried out by inspectors from Ofsted, the Care Quality Commission (CQC), and His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS).[4]

Locally, a JTAI has not been completed since the process was implemented. However, supported by the Leicester and Leicestershire & Rutland Safeguarding

[4] See https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/joint-targeted-area-inspection-of-the-multi-agency-response-to-identification-of-initial-need-and-risk--2/joint-targeted-area-inspection-of-the-multi-agency-response-to-identification-of-initial-need-and-risk.

Children Partnerships, multi-agency partners carry out audits on current JTAI themes to measure their effectiveness and consider improvements.

In Summer 2024, the Planning & Delivery Group received the findings from the Serious Youth Violence and Child Exploitation audit – see the section on the "Keeping Adolescents Safe / Supporting Safe Adolescents" business plan priority for further information.

A new programme of Joint Target Area Inspections (JTAI) started in autumn 2024, with the focus being on the multi-agency response to children who are victims of domestic abuse. Since JTAIs last focused on this theme in 2016, the Domestic Abuse Act 2021 has made clear that children are victims of domestic abuse in their own right if they have seen, heard or experienced the effect of the abuse.

As a result, Leicester, Leicestershire & Rutland agencies carried out an audit of domestic abuse cases in December 2024. Single agency learning has been identified and is being taken forward.

Progress against statutory guidance

Implementation of changes set out in statutory guidance

In 2024-25, the Leicester Safeguarding Children Partnership, alongside the Leicestershire & Rutland Children Partnership, reviewed their Multi-Agency Safeguarding Arrangements in light of the updated government guidance Working Together to Safeguard Children 2023. The review particularly considered:

- Reflecting the role that Education plays in safeguarding children
- Reflecting the role that the Voluntary and Community Sector plays in safeguarding children
- The role of Safeguarding Partners – Lead and Delegates
- The role of Partnership Chair
- Updating Scrutiny arrangements.

Activities achieved

The Safeguarding Children Partnerships have strengthened the role of Education within the partnerships, with schools, early years and other settings now a core part of their arrangements.[5] A Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland (LLR) Education Group has been formed. Further information is provided below.

The reach and membership of the LLR Voluntary and Community Sector Forum has been expanded. It runs three times within each business year, and jointly with the local Safeguarding Adults Boards. It shares safeguarding updates with the Voluntary and Community Sector, faith-based organisations, and sport clubs / organisations, promoting the welfare of local children and adults with care and support needs. The qualitative feedback that members of the Forum provide can shape future agenda items and areas of focus for the Safeguarding Children Partnership.

Strategic leadership and accountability within the Safeguarding Children Partnerships is provided by the Lead Safeguarding Partners. Working Together 2023 defines Lead Safeguarding Partners (LSPs) as Chief Executives of Local Authorities, Chief Executives of Integrated Care Boards, and Chief Officers of Police forces.[6] Each Lead Safeguarding Partner should appoint a Delegated Safeguarding Partner (DSP) for its agency, sufficiently senior to make decisions on behalf of the Lead Safeguarding Partner and hold their organisation to account.[7] The Lead Safeguarding Partners and Delegated Safeguarding Partners are documented in the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Arrangements.[8]

Previously, the Safeguarding Children Partnerships were chaired by an Independent Chair. As advised in Working Together 2023, a clearer distinction has been made between the leadership and scrutiny roles.[9] Therefore, the Lead Safeguarding Partners have appointed the role of Partnership Chair for the local multi-agency

[5] Working Together 2023, page 33, paragraph 76.
[6] Working Together 2023, page 24, paragraph 48.
[7] Working Together 2023, page 28, paragraph 56.
[8] Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland Multi-Agency Safeguarding Arrangements (December 2024), page 8.
[9] Working Together 2023, page 29, paragraph 61.

arrangements to individual Delegated Safeguarding Partners, rotating on an annual basis.

The Safeguarding Children Partnerships are now supported by an Independent Scrutineer, rather than an Independent Chair.

Impact of the activities

The new Multi-Agency Safeguarding Arrangements recognise the central role that Education play in safeguarding children and ensure a more rigorous and effective independent scrutiny function, which provides challenge to local safeguarding partners.

Future Plans

A Young Scrutineer will be appointed to work alongside our Independent Scrutineer to ensure the views and experience of a range of children across Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland are at the centre of the work of the partnerships. They will provide independent scrutiny from the perspective of a young person within a broader independent scrutiny framework and hold partnership members to account bringing challenge from a young person's perspective.

Updates to published arrangements

In line with Working Together 2023, the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Arrangements will be updated when there are key changes, such as changes to the Lead Safeguarding Partners, or the list of relevant agencies, and any updates will be sent to the Department for Education.[10]

Representation of Education sector

Operational level

In the earlier part of 2024-25, the Leicester and Leicestershire & Rutland Safeguarding Children Partnerships continued to run their LLR Independent Schools Forum. It met every six months and its purpose was to share information, with the schools selecting safeguarding topics for discussion that were specific to them.

The advent of the LLR Education Group recognises that all local schools (including independent schools, academies, and free schools), colleges, early years and childcare settings, and other educational providers (including alternative provision) are relevant agencies for the purpose of our Multi-Agency Safeguarding Arrangements. They are included in the local safeguarding arrangements through this subgroup, which promotes education engagement within the Safeguarding Children Partnerships and coordinates what is done across the education sector for the purposes of safeguarding. Safeguarding themes already discussed include Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) and healthier screen time.

[10] Working Together 2023, page 40, paragraph 105.

For several years, Education has also been represented on the Case Review Group, Keeping in Touch Group, Multi-Agency Learning and Development Group, and the Audit and Assurance Group. The plan is for this to continue.

Strategic level

For many years, the Leicester Safeguarding Children Partnership has included representatives from primary and secondary schools and further education from Leicester on its membership.

The new Multi-Agency Safeguarding Arrangements strengthen the role of Education on the partnership. The Chair of the LLR Education Subgroup will now join the Delegated Safeguarding Partners at the LLR Meeting of Safeguarding Partners.

Partnership Chair

The Lead Safeguarding Partners appoint the role of Partnership Chair to individual Delegated Safeguarding Partners, rotating on an annual basis. Chairs and Deputy Chairs have been agreed until 2029-30 and their names are available via the LLR Multi-Agency Safeguarding Arrangements.[11]

Partnership Governance Structure

The membership of the Leicester Safeguarding Children Partnership comprises of Safeguarding Partners and other relevant agencies, including Education, Health agencies, Probation and other organisations working with children. The full membership of the partnership can be found in Appendix 1 of our Multi-Agency Safeguarding Arrangements.

The engagement of all partners, at a Partnership and subgroup level, is monitored. If a partner agency does not attend a number of meetings, this is escalated to the Chair of the group. If the matter remains unresolved, it is further escalated to the statutory Safeguarding Partners.

Delegated Safeguarding Partners and the Chair of the LLR Education Subgroup attend the LLR Safeguarding Partners meeting. This meeting considers shared matters of governance, funding, and sharing intelligence as well as setting the forward agenda for meetings of the Safeguarding Children Partnerships. The Independent Scrutineer and Business Managers are invited to these meetings, where appropriate. Up to half of these meetings are joint with the statutory partners of the local Safeguarding Adults Boards (SABs) and the Independent Chair of the local SABs is invited to join these meetings, where appropriate.

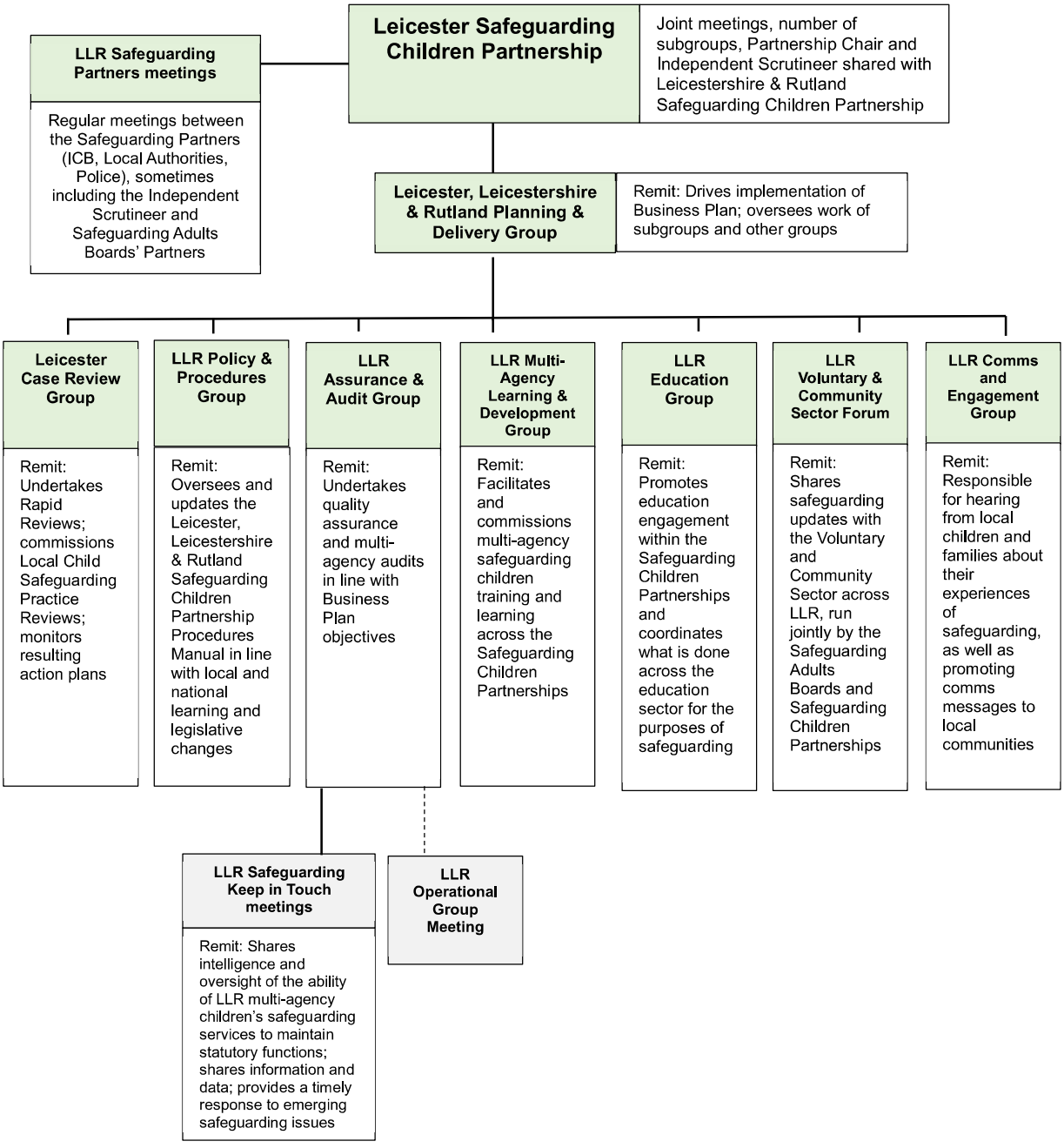
Representatives from the Safeguarding Partner agencies form the Planning & Delivery Group, with chairing duties rotating through the membership. This group drives implementation of the Partnerships' Business Plans; scrutinises and responds to multi-agency safeguarding performance and assurance; has oversight of learning

[11] Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland Multi-Agency Safeguarding Arrangements (December 2024), page 8.

from reviews; oversees work of the Partnerships' subgroups; and agrees learning and development arrangements.

Statutory Safeguarding Partner representatives also chair several subgroups. The Safeguarding Partners are accountable for decisions regarding Rapid Reviews and whether to proceed to Local Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews.

The structure chart below demonstrates the governance of the Partnership and its subgroups.



The interface between the Safeguarding Children Partnerships and other local strategic boards ensures assurance and joint work, where appropriate. The Safeguarding Children Partnerships receive the annual report of the Child Death Overview Panel (CDOP). They are provided with annual updates, within dedicated agenda items in meetings, from Domestic Abuse Boards and the Adolescence Safety and Diversion Board, which sits under the Strategic Partnership Board (SPB) and works to prevent and reduce involvement in violence through safeguarding, early intervention and diversion. Development days, to plan for future business plan objectives, include representatives from the Leicester Community Safety Partnership and local Safeguarding Adults Boards.

Financial breakdown and value for money

The work of the Safeguarding Children Partnership is supported by the Leicestershire & Rutland Safeguarding Partnerships Business Office that also supports the Safeguarding Adults Board and carries out Domestic Homicide Reviews for Community Safety Partnerships in Leicestershire & Rutland. The Safeguarding Children Partnership is funded by contributions from its partners.

A single funding arrangement for the Safeguarding Children Partnerships and Safeguarding Adults Boards for 2020 onwards was agreed between the statutory partners for the Safeguarding Adults Boards and the Safeguarding Children Partnerships for Leicester, Leicestershire & Rutland.

The contributions from partners for the Leicester Safeguarding Children Partnership for 2024-25 can be seen below alongside contributions from the previous year:

	2023-24	**2024-25**
Leicester City Council	£111,100	£111,100
Leicestershire Police	£51,850	£51,850
Leicester, Leicestershire & Rutland Integrated Care Board (LLR ICB)	£51,850	£51,850
DfE Grant Funding	£47,300	-
Use of Reserves	-	£90
Total income for SCP	**£262,100**	**£214,890**

Expenditure for the SCP was apportioned as follows:

	2023-24	**2024-25**
Staffing	£166,011	£180,466
Independent Chair/Scrutineer	£10,391	£13,973
Professional Membership	£914	£914
Training	£5000	£14,915

Policies and Procedures	£3,400	£3,129
Engagement and Comms	£1,000	£0
Case Reviews	£0	£1,375
Miscellaneous	£154	£118
Total Expenditure	**£186,870**	**£214,890**

Staffing costs increased as a result of the agreed Leicester City Council pay award (as the staff are hosted by this Local Authority). The cost of the Independent Advisor was higher in 2024-25. Their contract started part way through the previous year hence the lower cost. Throughout the year, the Scrutineer also completed additional work in relation to Working Together 2023. Whilst there was no expenditure on Case Reviews in 2023-24, there was a small cost in 2024-25 in relation to work stemming from a Local Child Safeguarding Practice Review. Training costs have increased due to the commissioning of a large-scale multi-agency training event.

Costs have risen and we spent just over the amount we received from partners' contributions. The shortfall of £70 was made up from reserves. Although costs have increased, we believe that the output of the Partnership demonstrates value for money. Despite budget constraints, we have still achieved developments to enhance engagement of Education, the Voluntary Sector, and the Faith and Sports sectors and have introduced new Subgroups into our governance structure.

Implementation of national reforms

Children's Social Care reforms

In 2023, reforms to Children's Social Care began, supported by the Stable Homes, Built on Love strategy. The implementation of the reforms continues, as set out in the Keeping Children Safe, Helping Families Thrive policy paper, published in November 2024, and the upcoming Children's Wellbeing and Schools Bill.[12]

Family Help

In delivering the Family Help approach, we envision that the right professionals are involved at the right time and that consistent services are provided regardless of where the family's plan sits and that we build upon existing strengths and practice of delivering s.17 work to families through engagement with a range of differently qualified and experienced professionals, including social workers and early help practitioners.

Our integrated social care and early help front door (the Children's Advice, Support and Prevention Team) ensures that cases are allocated with the right thresholds in place and that families receive the most appropriate support promptly (including through an effective 24-hour duty and advice service). Leicester benefits from having clear processes in place which ensure that practitioners know how to step-up

[12] See Community Care Inform Children: https://www.ccinform.co.uk/practice-guidance/childrens-social-care-reforms/

children's cases from early help to children's social care. Thresholds are clearly understood by professional partners and are applied appropriately by early help workers. Managers have oversight of this, ensuring they request cases step up to children's social care when risks and concerns escalate. Step down processes are also clear and social workers ensure that early help workers and families know the scope and nature of early help support needed.

There is strong recognition of the value and importance of early help, whole family and whole system working. There is a strong locality based early help and prevention offer, supported by effective with collaboration with social work teams. The Signs of Safety approach enables positive, sustainable outcomes for children and families – utilising family networks and developing detailed safety plans to understand and reduce risks. There is an expectation that all families are offered family network meetings; we have a standalone family decision making service which is utilised in specific circumstances and is currently being expanded.

The vision is that under Family Help children will experience consistent, relationship-based support from trusted professionals who explain their involvement clearly. They will be surrounded by wraparound support, including family and community networks, without needing to repeat their story and feel heard, seen, and valued, with their voices actively shaping decisions and actions. We want children to see real change and follow-through from plans, helping them feel empowered and supported in achieving their own goals as well as be respected for who they are, including their culture, identity, and individuality.

As a result of the transformation, our vision is that parents and carers experience continuity of support and only tell their story once. They will feel better listened to and understood, with their perspectives respected and valued as well as being more connected to practice around children through their role in networks. We want parents and carers to access support more easily, with services that are delivered locally and designed to be more accessible. Parents and carers will understand the network of support that is available to them, knowing who is there to help and how to reach them.

We anticipate that the Families First programme will increase the confidence of the workforce tapping into the network of support around families, working as one team. Our vision is that the workforce will be better integrated with communities, with strong knowledge of and connection to local social resources.

A foundation of strong practice exists with Leicester's integrated front door and through the appropriate application of thresholds by staff across early help, prevention and social work teams (as evidenced by the use of step up/step down processes). We have effective assessment and planning templates that, with some minor adjustments, will form a robust, streamlined child and family assessment/plan. Shared approaches such as the Lundy Model, Signs of Safety and Trauma Informed Practice are well embedded across Children's Services.

Family Hubs

Family Hubs aim to support any family with children aged 0-19 years, or 25 years for children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND), who may need

help. A Family Hub is not a single service; it is a group of services working together to make sure the right person with the appropriate skills offers their support.

There is a national framework for the delivery of Family Hubs,[13] and this sets out expectations of the types of activity and partnership working that is expected by the Department for Education.

Leicester's Family Hubs remains an excellent example of effective multi-agency collaboration and continues to provide key support services for children, young people and families. Particular successes over 2024-25 include the role out of family support training for partners across VCS, feedback from VCS partners through our Family Hub Network Mtgs to ensure continues progress and community cohesion.

One key area of success through multiagency collaboration in Family Hubs is the development of Leicester's Frenotomy service which is being launched in September 2025. This has been developed using funding committed from Leicester's Family Hubs in collaboration with Leicester Partnership Trust (LPT) and the LLR Integrated Care Board (ICB). As a result, we have been able to enhance existing infant feeding services in Leicester to include a weekly Frenotomy Clinic – this is in addition to conducting oral assessments and breastfeeding support. This creates a more holistic and comprehensive service, reducing the need for hospital or out of area referrals and improving access to care for infants with feeding difficulties. The service is now fully operational within Leicester's Family Hubs service, with an official launch date of 1st September 2025.

Leicester's Enhanced Infant Feeding service offers significant benefits for infant health, parental physical and mental wellbeing, and the Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland healthcare system, including improved infant nutrition, reduced health complications, enhanced parental wellbeing, and decreased demand on NHS resources. The service also enables data collection, audits, and outcome assessments to evaluate long-term outcomes.

Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse (IICSA)

As well as the six priorities set out in the 2023-25 LLR Safeguarding Children Partnership Business Plan, it stated that the Assurance and Audit Group would undertake a partnership wide self-assessment in relation to Child Sexual Abuse, linked to national findings on local multi-agency leadership from the Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse (October 2022). Since the implementation of that Business Plan, the Child Safeguarding Practice Review Panel published their national review, '"I wanted them all to notice": Protecting children and responding to child sexual abuse within the family environment', in November 2024. Consequently, for 2025-26, the Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland Safeguarding Children Partnerships have signed up to work with the NSPCC (funded by the Home Office) to undertake a local system-wide child sexual abuse (CSA) snapshot. This will be completed to inform the work of the Safeguarding Children Partnerships' subgroups to evidence the effectiveness of the local response.

[13] Family hub model framework 2025-26: Family Hubs and Start for Life programme guide, Department of Health and Social Care and the Department for Education (February 2025).

National Care Records Service

The National Care Records Service (NCRS) is a service that allows Health and Social Care professionals to access and update a range of patient and safeguarding information across regional integrated care system (ICS) boundaries. This is being rolled out across LLR: National Care Records Service - NHS England Digital. This work is progressing at an appropriate pace in line with Information Governance criteria.

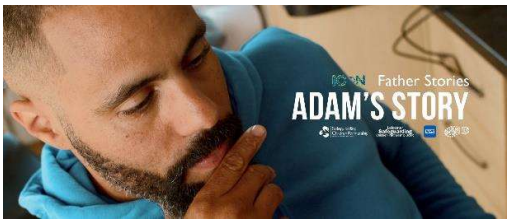
Moving Forwards

Locally, we will work towards the delivery expectations for safeguarding partners set out in The Families First Partnership (FFP) Programme Guide, published in March 2025. Safeguarding partners will receive updates and assurance on the local transformation activity for Family Help, multi-agency child protection, and Family Group Decision Making. The Policy and Procedures Group will lead on publishing a refreshed Thresholds document by the end of the transformation year (March 2026), confirming changes and setting out a broad continuum of Family Help.

How feedback from children and families has informed our work and influenced service provision

During 2024-25:

- A range of Father Stories were launched in May 2024. These are short films, performed by actors, which have been scripted by local fathers to reflect their experiences of becoming parents, the impact on their mental health and how to seek support and to manage crying babies. These have been promoted widely with practitioners so that they reflect on working with Dads and use these resources to support them.



- The local Safer Sleep Champions continued to monitor any family feedback provided to frontline practitioners regarding the local Safer Sleeping Risk Assessment Tool. The Tool was updated in January 2025, taking into account feedback from a practitioner survey which sought their experiences of using the tool with families.

The Safeguarding Children Partnership wants to have meaningful engagement with children, young people and families that makes a difference to the work of the partnership. To acknowledge that engagement could be improved, two new initiatives have been introduced.

A Communication and Engagement Group has been introduced. It is responsible for hearing from local children and families about their experiences of safeguarding, as well as promoting comms messages to local communities. The group does not

promote comms to practitioners as this is the role of the Multi-Agency Learning and Development Group.

In the future, the Safeguarding Children Partnership will commission a Young Person Scrutineer.

In Leicester Children and Family Services:

Children's Social Care offers activities and services to help rebuild and strengthen children and young people's resilience. Parents have primary responsibility for and are the main influence on their children. Children's social care's role is to strengthen parenting capacity, while remaining clear about their duty to safeguard vulnerable children and young people. If you have any concerns for the health and wellbeing of a child, contact the Duty and Advice Service on 0116 454 1004.

Below is feedback that reflects the views of families in receipt of multi-agency services coordinated by Children's Social Care in Leicester.

"we just wanted to express our sincere thanks for the way you chaired the meeting yesterday. Your balanced and fair approach made a real difference…. We felt heard, and it was reassuring to have someone guide the process such with clarity and professionalism"

Feedback from Leicester parent/carer

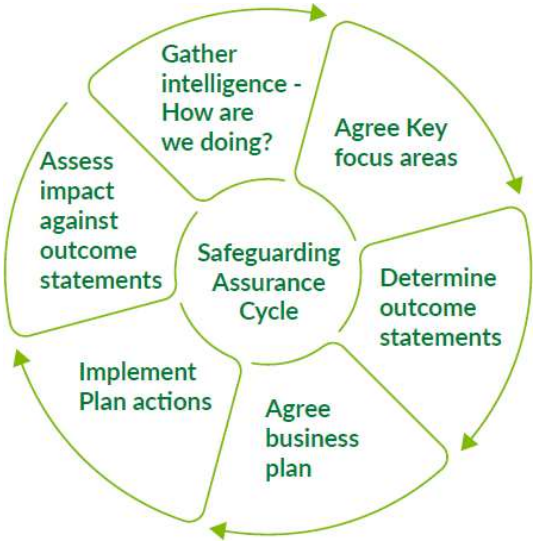
"Your support, patience, and genuine care have made such a difference in my life, and I truly don't know where I would be without your guidance. From the very beginning, you made me feel seen, heard, and understood… Thank you for being a steady presence during times that felt uncertain. Your compassion, encouragement, and honesty helped me grow in ways I didn't think were possible."

Feedback from Leicester young person

The Business Priorities of the Partnership

The Leicester Safeguarding Children Partnership worked with the Leicestershire & Rutland Safeguarding Children Partnership to identify shared priorities for the Joint Business Plan 2023-25. The annual Business Plan was replaced with a two-year-plan to allow time to embed the outcomes of the key deliverables and, subsequently, analyse the impact of these outcomes.

Updates on the joint business plan are provided throughout the business year to the Safeguarding Children Partnerships.



Progress on the following priorities was monitored throughout the year and assurance secured that actions were making a positive difference to the lived experience of local children and families.

Safeguarding Babies: Improving how we work together with families before and after births to safeguard babies and seek assurance that multi-agency working with families to safeguard babies is effective.
What we did in 2024-25: • Continued to raise awareness of the LLR SCP Pre-Birth and Post Birth Planning procedure, last updated in April 2024 to reflect learning from local reviews and a multi-agency audit completed in 2023-24. The procedure was relaunched in June 2024. There were two in-person launch sessions held at County Hall, followed by a session at City Hall in September 2024. There was also a section on the procedure at Safeguarding Matters Live in July 2024. The video of the session is available on the LLR SCP YouTube Channel. • Continued to promote and monitor the impact of ICON, which was launched early in 2022-23. ICON is an evidenced-based programme focused on reducing abusive head trauma (AHT) triggered by crying. The pneumonic ICON outlines the key messages of the programme: Infant crying is normal,

Comforting methods can help, It's **O**K to walk away, and **N**ever, ever shake a baby.

In 2023-24, it was recognised that further assurance of touch point messages being recorded by Maternity and GP services was still required. In 2024-25, an audit was carried out to continue to analyse the embedding of ICON in frontline practice and its impact. There remain issues with the recording of maternity ICON touch points and those for the GP final touch points. These are due to how they can be recorded with maternity systems changing and where the GP touch point is recorded. This is being monitored.

In May 2024, the ICON Father Stories were launched at the Phoenix Cinema and Arts Centre. These are 6 short films performed by actors that have been scripted by local fathers to reflect their experiences of managing crying babies. Research evidence indicates that 70% of AHT is perpetrated by men and, therefore, it is of importance to ensure men are given the ICON message as well as the support and resources to help them manage a crying baby and reduce AHT. Full and shortened versions of the stories are available on the YouTube Channel here: LLR Safeguarding Children Partnerships - YouTube.

The DadPad App, commissioned by Perinatal Mental Health, was made available to all fathers across the sub-region from Summer 2024 and includes national and local ICON information.

An "Invisible" / "Hidden" / "Unseen" Men: Engaging fathers and male carers in effective practice Resource Pack was published in September 2024 to collate information on local and national resources available.

- Undertook a spotlight audit of babies up to one year old, subject to Child Protection Plans, across Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland to consider whether there has been an improvement in safeguarding babies in recent years. Further detail on the audit is available in the "Quality Assurance and Service Improvement" section of this report.

- Considered the impact of the local Safer Sleeping Risk Assessment Tool in Summer 2024, six months after its launch. A frontline practitioner survey was disseminated by the Safer Sleep Champions across the multi-agency partnership to understand how the tool works in practice and how it could be improved and further promoted.

- Through the Section 11 self-assessment process, this year completed using a frontline practitioner survey, assessed evidence of the impact of the Safer Sleeping Risk Assessment Tool and improved approaches to working with males, in response to the publication of the Child Safeguarding Practice Review's third national review on "The Myth of Invisible Men".

- Supported "Baby Fortnight" in April 2024, which was held across Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland. There were two different strands to the fortnight: one for the whole workforce, with a variety of workshops for those working with parents/carers and children from pregnancy into the early years, and the other with a variety of sessions delivered to parents/carers in

Family Hubs. These sessions were delivered by the Family Wellbeing Workers in the Family Help Service, and colleagues working for Active Together.

Outcomes and Impact:

- ICON is well embedded locally with review and audit work evidencing that ICON messages are being shared widely and appropriately by local agencies. ICON messages are delivered by health staff to **all parents** through the 6 touch points and ICON is **targeted in greater detail** to families with specific vulnerabilities, for example, parents who misuse substances, young parents, and parents of premature babies. The voluntary sector support ICON messages through parenting sessions and ICON is also promoted to male prisoners.

- The ICON Father Stories have been well received with over 500 views on YouTube since their launch.

  "*Powerful, beautiful, moving, important. Thank you to you and the team for creating these films. A personal note to the actor who did an incredible job. My partner was a mess after the film. His delivery and authenticity is superb. I'm very honoured to be part of this truly groundbreaking project. Thank you. It's remarkable and I'm positive it'll have an impact on many lives.*" – feedback from a father who provided his story for one of the films

- Across the county, 108 families with 126 children attended the Baby Fortnight sessions. At the end of the session, parents were given a QR code so they could give feedback. Over half of those attending completed the survey.

  "*It is so important for the babies to interact with other babies and to build on their social skills. I needed this for my baby as we do not go out very much.*"

  "*Today has made me think how I can do some activities at home with my Baby that do not have too [sic] cost much.*" – feedback from parents/carers attending Baby Fortnight sessions

- The feedback from the survey disseminated by local Safer Sleeping Champions informed the updates to the Safer Sleeping Risk Assessment Tool which was republished in January 2025. The update did not require extensive changes. The updated tool was widely promoted via the Safer Sleeping Champions and the Safeguarding Matters Digest to tie in with national Safer Sleep Week 2025 (10th-16th March).

  The results of the Section 11 frontline practitioner survey, completed in late 2024, indicated that further promotion and awareness raising around the tool is required. 44% of respondents to the online survey[14] answered that they were aware of the tool, with 42% of those saying they had used it in

[14] The majority of practitioners completed the online practitioner survey, but GP Practices participated in a different way, via an Integrated Care Board managed process.

practice. Of those that had used the tool, there were some positive responses, with 58% saying they found it very useful.

"*Good conversation point for parents and also identifies risk in a clear manner and enables practitioners to document their concerns.*"

"*It is a protective measure to help both the child and parents whilst giving useful advice on sleeping arrangements to keep the baby safe. This tool can be used with the parents to also help recognise the pitfalls to co sleeping and how it could impact them and their baby.*" – comments made by survey respondents

- The results of the Section 11 frontline practitioner survey indicated more limited knowledge than hoped of the "Practice Principles – Engaging Fathers, and Male Carers in Effective Practice", launched in September 2023, with 39% of respondents to the online survey[15] saying they were aware of them. Around a third of those that were aware of the principles had used them and most found them useful.

  "*I find the Practice Principles helpful because they guide me in effectively engaging fathers and male carers in a child's life. They promote inclusive, strength-based approaches, ensuring fathers are active participants in care and support, benefiting the child's overall well-being.*"

  "*Helpful to focus on engaging fathers in all care from checks to consultations. Gives us a better understanding of family situations.*" – comments made by survey respondents

Moving Forwards:

The Safeguarding Babies priority has been in place since 2021-22 and a lot of work has been completed in this time, with the implementation of ICON, an updated Pre-Birth and Post Birth Planning procedure and the launch of the Safer Sleeping Risk Assessment Tool. Also, during this time, there have been numerous training events and individual courses, both in person and online, and a range of learning and development resources have been produced and disseminated.

The national analysis of Serious Incident Notifications for 2023-24, published in May 2024, noted that "Despite the fall in notifications for under 1s, this remained the most common age group in 2024, accounting for 1 in 3 notifications (33%)."[16] In line with the national picture, under 1s accounted for 1 in 3 local Serious Incident Notifications during 2023-24.

It is evident that this business priority has achieved a good level of assurance and so it will not be carried over to the 2025-27 Business Plan. It is acknowledged, though, that further awareness raising is required around key guidance and resources, particularly with a large and dynamic workforce. Therefore, babies will

[15] As above.
[16] Serious Incident Notifications: Reporting year 2024, Child Characteristics section (May 2024) – https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/serious-incident-notifications/2024

always be seen as a key cohort of focus for the Safeguarding Children Partnership.

Child Mental Health and Emotional Wellbeing: Seek assurance that partnership working supports good mental health for children and that mental health and safeguarding are effectively addressed together.

What we did in 2024-25:

- Received information and assurance, via the Planning & Delivery Group, regarding the Complex Care Escalation Process, which supports leaders within Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland to access timely support to progress the care arrangements of local children and young people. This includes the management of care for children and young people with mental health, learning disabilities and/or autism and/or placement needs.
- Formed a Task & Finish Group on "Capturing the Voice of the Child in the Child Protection process", which considered the experiences of local children subject to safeguarding arrangements and Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS).
- Recommendations and learning from the LLR Child Death Overview Panel (CDOP) themed review informed the review and update of the LLR SCP "Practice Guidance: Supporting Children and Young People who Self-Harm and/or have Suicidal Thoughts".
- Continued to consider the local implications of "Right Care, Right Person" (RCRP). This is a collective national approach from the Home Office, Department of Health & Social Care, the National Police Chiefs' Council, Association of Police and Crime Commissioners and NHS England which aims to work to end the inappropriate and avoidable involvement of police in responding to incidents involving people with mental health needs and ensure that individuals in mental health crisis are seen by the right professional.
- Following the multi-agency dip sample audit of referrals to Children's Social Care (CSC) across the three Local Authorities where the contacts were labelled as 'child's mental health', the Assurance and Audit Group have initiated a follow-up audit on young people open to CAMHS and subject to Child Protection Plan.

Outcomes and Impact:

- The CAMHS Young Person's Team provided information to the Voice of the Child Task & Finish Group on the activities undertaken in capturing the voice of the child. CAMHS sessions, which are in the main face-to-face, include the voice of the child. Several approaches are used to facilitate engagement and communication such as play and alternate communication forms, such as written or flashcards. Also, events have been held such as the 'my voice' event, where young people were invited to join poetry and rap

music workshops to share their views on mental health. This was followed by an 'Active' event where young people were invited to join CAMHS staff for professional led physical activities such as yoga and kickboxing with themes of emotional wellbeing fed through and staff available to talk during physical movement. A Learning Disability Nurse is embedded within the team, who offers consultation and support around adapting communication and resources. For young people for whom English is not their first language, interpreters are booked to ensure communication needs are met.

The CAMHS Young Person's Team reported that this work has enabled an understanding of the impact for our young people of often having multiple professionals in their lives. They have voiced that they feel unheard at times or that their paperwork is shared and people draw judgement from this rather than getting to know them. Groups and events such as 'my voice' and 'active' have helped them to break down some of these barriers. They recognise, though, that these were one-off events rather than an ongoing resource they can offer. Having a Learning Disability Nurse in their team has made a huge difference in enabling them to expand their ability to offer differing layers of communication.

"The nurses in the Young Person's Team have changed my life."

"We can't thank you enough for the amazing care, kindness, sensitivity and professionalism you have given to our family especially our child over the last 12 months. When we really needed it, you were there and we felt so supported when things didn't always feel great. You are the epitome of the NHS at its best and we wish you all the very best for the future." – feedback provided to the CAMHS Team

- The LLR SCP "Practice Guidance: Supporting Children and Young People who Self-Harm and/or have Suicidal Thoughts" includes more information on referral pathways to the Children and Young People Mental Health Triage and Navigation Service which now has a self-referral portal. The updated guidance and procedure were re-launched at the Safeguarding Matters Live event in December 2024.

  "*Learning more about self-harming behaviour as I am working with a young person that is displaying these behaviours.*" – feedback from attendee of Safeguarding Matters Live regarding what went well and what impact this will have on my work

  "It's brilliant to have. We use with families and children to look at what self-harm means." – feedback from attendee of VCS Safeguarding Forum

Moving Forwards:

The learning from the audit on young people open to CAMHS and subject to Child Protection Plan will be reported to the Safeguarding Children Partnership and any procedural or training needs will be considered.

Since its inception in 2021-22, it is felt that this business priority has achieved a good level of assurance and so it will not be carried over to the 2025-27 Business

Plan. It is acknowledged, though, that children's mental health continues to be a subject of both local and national importance. Therefore, the Planning & Delivery Group will continue to seek assurance that mental health and safeguarding are effectively addressed together locally by receiving CAMHS highlight reports.

Keeping Adolescents Safe / Supporting Safe Adolescents: Seek assurance that there is a clear governance and approach for safeguarding children from harm outside the home and that it is effective.

What we did in 2024-25:

- Continued to receive assurance from the Adolescence Safety and Diversion Board which provides governance to the Strategic Partnership Board's work relating to child exploitation (under 18s) and violence affecting young people (under 25s). It has been agreed that the Adolescence Safety and Diversion Board Chair will attend the Safeguarding Children Partnership meetings each year to present, within a dedicated agenda item, the progress of the ASD Board and delivery plans.
- Representatives from the Business Offices and several partner agencies of the Safeguarding Children Partnerships attend meetings of the Child Criminal Exploitation and Serious Violence Delivery Group.
- Received the findings from the multi-agency Serious Youth Violence and Child Exploitation audit, completed as part of the JTAI preparation. Learning was identified regarding the link between school exclusion and exploitation, support required for neurodiverse children, risk assessment and screening and transitional safeguarding. Recommendations have been taken forward with awareness raising with schools and work around risk assessment tools.
- Supported promotion to schools and wider partners of 'Tips for a Healthier Screen Time', which is a useful guide for parents, carers, children and young people produced by Dr Sanjiv Nichani OBE, Senior Consultant Paediatrician at the East Midlands Congenital Heart Centre and Leicester Children's Hospital. It raises awareness of the effects of screen time on the health, well-being and safeguarding of children and young people.
- Linked to the national discussion regarding online harm and abuse, in relation to both children and adults, the December 2024 Safeguarding Matters Live Event was focused on Safeguarding and the Internet, with a presentation on the impact of social media on children, delivered by Warning Zone, and a presentation on Prevent.

Outcomes and Impact:

- Assurance work informs training requirements and procedural reviews, with procedures on "Safeguarding Children and Young People from Child Sexual Exploitation" and "Online Safety" being updated in April 2025.

- The focused Safeguarding Matters Live led to some positive feedback about how the information presented will help professionals in practice:

  "*Interesting information about online platforms and I will be able to use this knowledge in direct work and safety planning with children and young people.*"

  "*Increased knowledge and understanding about online platforms, in particular how many very young children access these.*" – feedback from attendees of Safeguarding Matters Live.

Moving Forwards:

A priority on Harm Outside the Home has been included in the Business Plan for 2025-27, which will build on the progress made since 2022-23 around this priority.

This acknowledges the continued prevalence of this theme nationally, with persistent concern about the themes raised in the Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse (IICSA), including group-based Child Sexual Exploitation and grooming gangs. Implementation of the Online Safety Act 2023 is also at the forefront of national interest, following the release of the Netflix drama Adolescence, and with Ofcom's child safety measures due to come into force for social media, search and gaming apps and websites in July 2025.[17] Assurance around the local response to these themes continues to be required.

Safeguarding children from diverse backgrounds: Understand and improve how well partners work together with children and families from diverse backgrounds.

What we did in 2024-25:

- Continued to promote the locally agreed definition of cultural competency and the standard of expected practice. It has been shared with the Safeguarding Children Partnerships' Trainers' Network as something to include in training wherever relevant and appropriate.
- Ensured that the impact of abuse and neglect on protective characteristics are analysed during the Rapid Review process.
- Continued to plan how best to provide multi-agency learning and development around immigration status, culture, faith, and parenting, to sit alongside already existing training and resources that consider safeguarding children from diverse backgrounds.

  A Task & Finish Group is researching data and information about the demography of Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland and engaging with key contacts within those communities who can become specialists/advisors. It is recognised that the required learning and development cannot be

[17] https://www.ofcom.org.uk/online-safety/protecting-children/new-rules-for-a-safer-generation-of-children-online

achieved through one training course. The group is planning a multi-faceted approach, including consideration of a practitioner workbook/tool/resource of where to go for help/support; delivering some basic awareness information courses/sessions about different communities that live in LLR and the experience of being a migrant – what that journey might have looked like/what some of the terms mean – such as 'no recourse to public funds'; and providing practice forums and/or resources for building confidence for practitioners working in child protection/safeguarding, informed by local and national learning.

- Started to promote the learning from the Child Safeguarding Practice Review Panel's Briefing '"It's Silent": Race, racism and safeguarding children', published in March 2025. This has been included in the annual Learning from Reviews resource disseminated to Case Review Group members to share within their individual agencies.

Outcomes and Impact:

- Cultural competence and intersectionality are considered in audits and reviews across the Safeguarding Children Partnerships improving our understanding of how well partners work together with children and families from diverse backgrounds. It is acknowledged, though, that further work is required to improve this understanding, particularly in light of the questions raised by the Child Safeguarding Practice Review Panel's Briefing.

Moving Forwards:

A priority on Belonging has been included in the Business Plan for 2025-27, which will build on the progress made since 2021-22 around this priority. This will continue to seek assurance around the work already in progress and address the questions for Safeguarding Children Partnerships raised in '"It's Silent": Race, racism and safeguarding children'.

Effective Safeguarding in independent and out of school settings: Work with faith groups, independent schools, community organisations and other settings to support them to play an effective role in safeguarding children.

During 2022-23 a Task and Finish Group, chaired by Local Authority Designated Officers (LADOs), developed and promoted information leaflets for parents and carers about keeping children safe in out of school settings. These leaflets were added to the websites of the Safeguarding Children Partnerships.

What we did in 2024-25:

- Safeguarding out of school settings and the associated leaflets were promoted via schools, as well as at the Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) Safeguarding Forum at their July 2024 meeting.

- Continued engagement via the local Independent Schools Forum, with the schools selecting topics for discussion that were specific to them. The Child Sexual Abuse Response Pathway was a featured theme.

- Continued to expand the reach and membership of the LLR Voluntary and Community Sector Forum, which includes voluntary and community organisations, faith-based organisations, and sport clubs / organisations. Topics covered in 2024-25, in addition to the included the Child Sexual Abuse Response Pathway, delivered by a guest speaker from the Centre of Expertise on Child Sexual Abuse; Healthier Screen Time; and resolving safeguarding disagreements and how to escalate concerns.

- Received assurance from each Local Authority around the local picture regarding Electively Home Educated children. In May 2024, the Child Safeguarding Practice Review Panel published a Panel Briefing on Safeguarding children in Elective Home Education, which highlighted that "*figures from the Department for Education show that as many as 92,000 children were taught from home at the date of the census in England in autumn 2023. This is an increase from an estimated 80,900 in the previous autumn term. It also represents a 67% increase to the estimated 55,000 highlighted in the Association of Directors of Children's Services (ADCS) 2019 Elective Home Education Survey.*"[18] The recommendations from the Briefing helped to structure the assurance questions posed to the Local Authorities.

  A presentation on Electively Home Educated Children was given at Safeguarding Matters Live in July 2024 and referenced this national report.

  In response to national and local learning, in September 2024, the Policy and Procedures Group published new guidance entitled "Elective Home Education: An Approach to Safeguarding for LLR". Four training briefing sessions were delivered by the Multi-Agency Learning & Development Group, with the last one taking place in February 2025. A video of one of these sessions has been made into a learning resource.

- Following publication of the Child Safeguarding Practice Review Panel's report on "Safeguarding children with disabilities and complex health needs in residential settings" (October 2022 and April 2023), the Local Authorities provided the Department for Education with assurance that children within this cohort were safeguarded in their accommodation. In 2024-25, Health audited records of out of area children living in educational residential settings. The audit was undertaken to further this assurance via a review of health records of those children previously audited by the 3 LLR Local Authorities. The outcome was a good piece of assurance in that ongoing review of these children's health files is now taking place.

Outcomes and Impact:

[18] "Safeguarding children in Elective Home Education: Panel Briefing 3", Child Safeguarding Practice Review Panel (May 2024), page 2.

- In line with Working Together 2023 and its guidance on working with schools, colleges, early years, and other education providers, as well as voluntary, charity, social enterprise (VCSE) organisations and sports clubs, the updated local Multi-Agency Safeguarding Arrangements enhance the systems to engage and collaborate at both the operational and strategic level with these organisations.

  The Independent Schools Forum is no longer required, as all local schools (including independent schools, academies, and free schools), colleges, early years and childcare settings, and other educational providers (including alternative provision) are recognised as relevant agencies for the purpose of our Multi-Agency Safeguarding Arrangements and come together as part of the LLR Education Group. The formation of the subgroup enhances the scope of engagement to encompass awareness raising and operational and strategic influence.

  The Voluntary & Community Sector Forum has encouraged and provided better links and increased engagement with faith organisations, sports groups and community organisations. The Forum dedicates time to hearing feedback and input from those organisations about their experiences and knowledge of helping, protecting, and promoting the welfare of local children.

Moving Forwards:

It is evident that this business priority has achieved a good level of assurance and has led to the embedding of key, and ongoing, forums and so it will not be carried over to the 2025-27 Business Plan.

The role of Local Authorities around safeguarding and supporting home educated children is due to increase, in light of the new duties and responsibilities to be introduced through the Children's Wellbeing and Schools Bill. This includes the creation of a Children not in School Register. These national changes will inform any required changes to local policies and procedures.

Transitional Safeguarding: Seek assurance that Transitional Safeguarding is being managed appropriately across Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland.

What we did in 2024-25:

- The Task & Finish Group formed to consider if transitional safeguarding is being managed in the most appropriate and effective way continued to meet. To improve governance, the Terms of Reference and membership were refreshed and the group includes representatives from both children's and adults' services. It has been agreed that the group will map the progress made in response to the work plan produced following a previous report on transitional safeguarding.

• Due to issues around the remit of the group and what would be required for an overarching Leicester, Leicestershire & Rutland strategy/policy for transitional safeguarding, the work has not progressed as intended.
Moving Forwards: Transitional safeguarding will be carried forward to both the SCP Business Plan for 2025-27 and SAB Business Plan for 2025-27. It will be incorporated into a thematic priority, on "Belonging" for the SCP and "Equality, Diversity and Inclusion" for the SAB, so that the cohort of children and young people to be addressed can be clearer and more targeted.

Further information on assurance processes, procedures and training, informed by the business priorities, is outlined in the following sections of this report.

Analysis of areas with limited progress

It has been acknowledged above that three existing business priorities will be carried forward to the 2025-27 Business Plan. This is due to both progress locally and additional national learning and reform. Transitional safeguarding saw limited progress. The issues were escalated and the Independent Chair of the Safeguarding Adults Boards and the Independent Scrutineer of the Safeguarding Children Partnerships have been engaged to support this work.

Quality Assurance and Service Improvement

The Leicestershire & Rutland Safeguarding Children Partnership has a Performance and Assurance Framework shared with the Leicester Safeguarding Children Partnership. This can be found here LSCP Performance Management. This has been updated in the last year to reflect Working Together 2023.

Performance data

Indicators of performance in multi-agency safeguarding have been identified by the Assurance and Audit Group to monitor effectiveness of the operation of the multi-agency safeguarding system. Data is reported by agencies with analysis, utilising existing reports where possible.

Snapshot at end of year 2024-25	18-19	19-20	20-21	21-22	22-23	23-24	24-25
Number of Early Help assessments	1587	1973	1601	1338	1225	1319	1006
Number of Children Looked After	666	610	624	623	626	622	594
Number of Care Leavers	264	277	269	257	277	287	306
Number of Child Protection Plans	350	325	394	395	413	418	455
Number of Children in Need	1962	1963	1989	1834	2115	2150	2128

2024-25 Data	Number
Referrals to Children's Social Care - Education	555
Referrals to Children's Social Care - Health	578
Referrals to Children's Social Care - Police	824
Strategy Meetings	2446
Section 47 enquiries	1666
Initial Child Protection Conferences	286
Review Child Protection Conferences	525
Quorate Initial Child Protection Conferences	279
Quorate Review Child Protection Conferences	495

The number of referrals and requests for information from different sectors evidence strong information sharing across partners.

In 2024-25, the numbers of children in care dropped to under 600 for the first time in the last 7 years. There were 594 children in care on 31 March 2025, with the number of children in care in the previous four years varying between 622 and 626, a decrease of between 4.5% and 5.4% and an overall decrease of 12% since 2018-19.

There has been significant work undertaken to support children to return home safely to their family members over the past 12 months or to exit care with a plan for permanence via Special Guardianship Orders (SGOs) or Child Arrangement Order. This had an impact at the end of care proceedings, with children being safely supported to say with parents or extended family members, using support via teams such as the Function Family Welfare Therapy team and assessment and intervention via the Families Together Service. Increased scrutiny of potential plans for children to return home and exits from care head of service tracking has increased with 36 SGOs granted in 2024-25 with a significant proportion being made for those who had been looked after for a number of years.

There has been a rise in numbers of children subject to Child Protection Plans. Regional data from LLR has been analysed within the LLR SCP Performance Group and shows a similar increase in child protection plans across the region. Spotlight auditing and review of cases and threshold application has been completed and has provided assurance around threshold for child protection plans being consistently applied.

Use of data and information sharing

Quantitative data and qualitative information are shared to evidence that safeguarding arrangements are effective. An Annual Assurance Statement is delivered to the LLR Safeguarding Children Partnerships, in line with the Performance and Quality Assurance Framework, to enable the Safeguarding Children Partnerships to hold local agencies to account for their safeguarding work, including prevention and early intervention. The Safeguarding Children Partnerships can request additional data and narrative from partners to strengthen assurance, where required.

The Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland Safeguarding Children Partnerships and Safeguarding Adults Boards have a local Information Sharing Agreement (ISA).

An excellent example of how information sharing has continued to improve practice and outcomes has been the continued development of externally led Early Help Assessments with our School Ambassadors Programme.

The School Ambassadors Programme is a collaborative initiative, now involving 39 Leicester City schools. The programme has ensured strong partnerships between schools and the local authority to enable the delivery of externally led Early Help Assessments (EHAs). This collaboration has enabled schools to support children, young people and their families who may not have otherwise reached out for, or accepted, non-statutory support. By enabling families to work with a trusted professional within their school setting, the programme helps to build relationships, reduce the need for families to repeatedly retell their stories, and facilitate early intervention at the point of need.

We have seen a significant increase in the number of externally led EHAs recorded on our case management system – from 15 in 2023-24 to 52 in 2024-25. This demonstrates both the growing confidence of schools in the process and the programme's positive impact in ensuring earlier support for families.

Working in partnership, we now have a comprehensive offer that includes:

- A Sway-based digital toolkit for schools, which provides up-to-date signposting information, details of upcoming events, and access to local services such as Family Hubs, housing support, and community resources.

- Read-only access to the Liquid Logic system for schools, enabling better contextual understanding of a family's support history.

- Advice and guidance from Early Help Coordinators, who support schools in initiating new externally led EHAs on Liquid Logic and input information provided by schools, helping to build a full chronology of support for each family.

We have a well-established Partnership Support Panel, chaired and facilitated by the local authority and including core members from the school ambassador programme as well as key local authority services. This panel is to support the progress of cases where an external lead is seeking further guidance or support from local authority partners. The panel is a safe space to discuss case progression, emerging risks and next steps. Where there are immediate safeguarding concerns, schools continue to follow their established safeguarding procedures.

Self-Assessment

Section 11 self-assessments are undertaken by agencies as part of their duties under Working Together 2023.[19] In previous years, the safeguarding partners and specific relevant agencies have carried out a Section 11 self-assessment audit of their safeguarding effectiveness. For 2024-25, to enhance the process of obtaining safeguarding assurance from agencies, it was agreed to undertake Section 11 self-assessments using a different methodology.

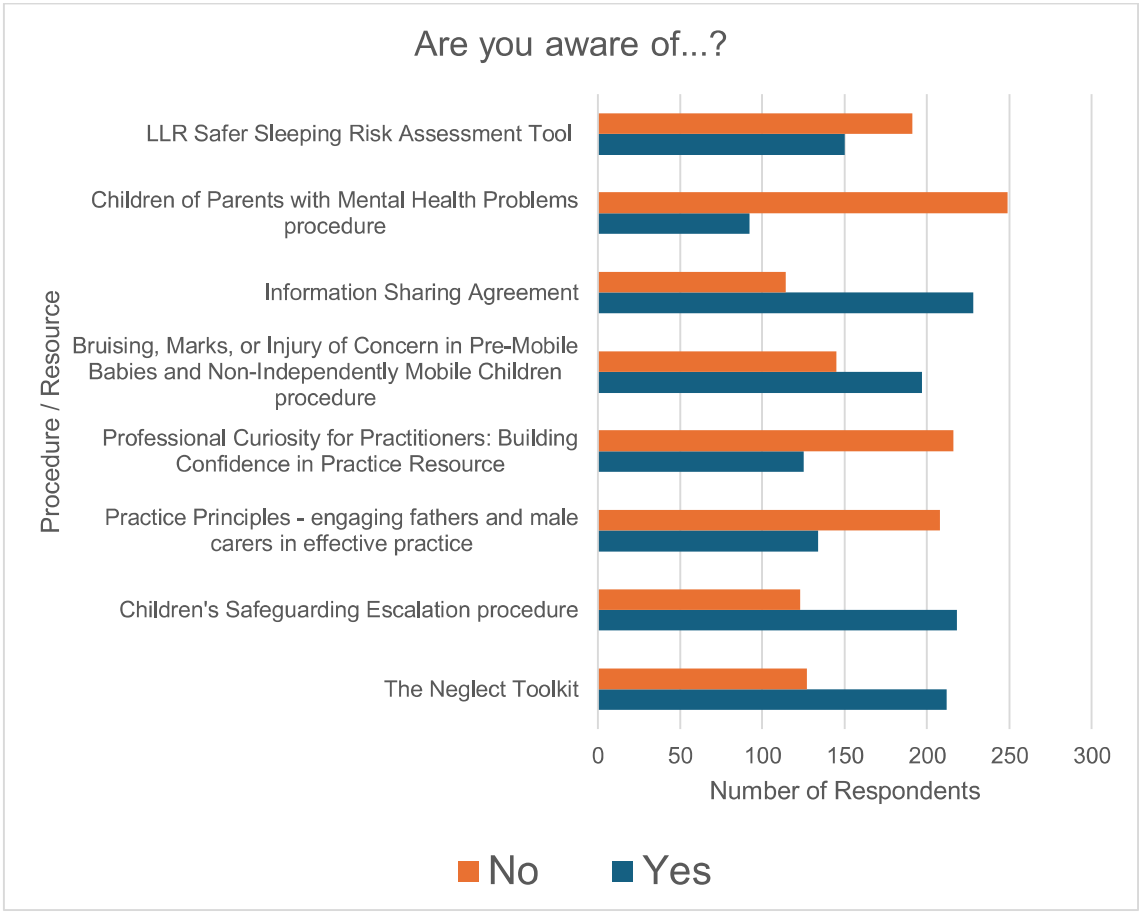
A survey of frontline staff and managers was carried out to enable the Safeguarding Children Partnerships to obtain assurance of the impact of recommendations and actions resulting from safeguarding reviews and multi-agency audits.

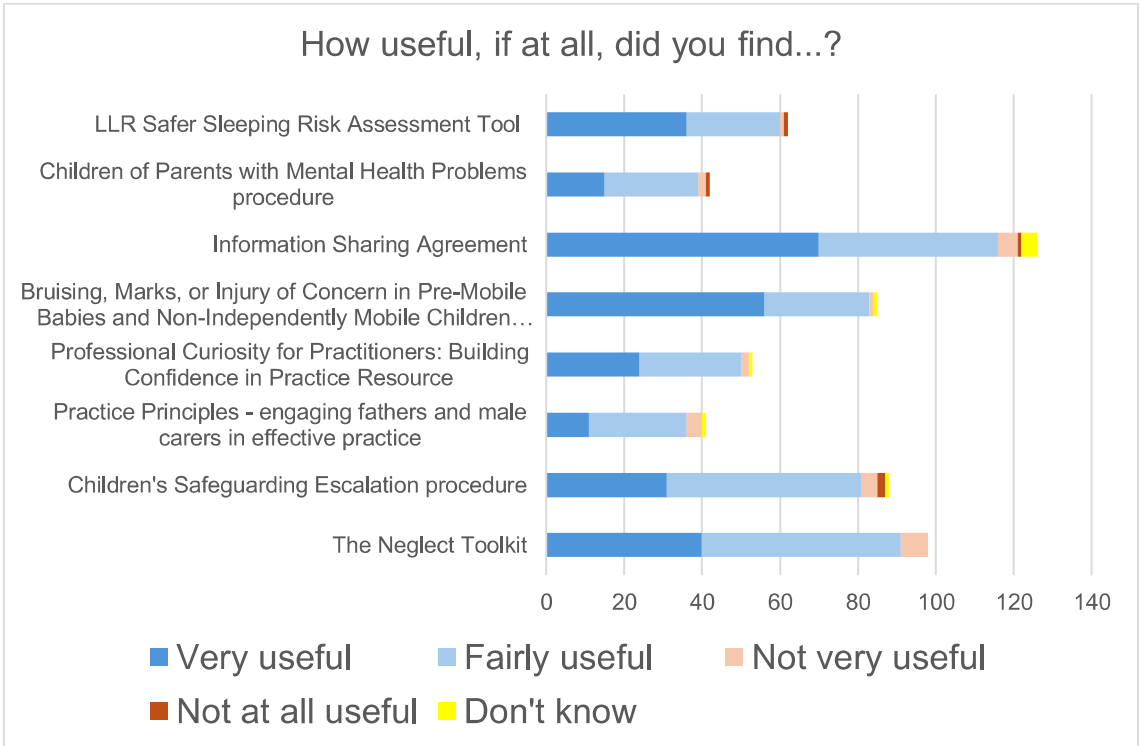
- There was a total of 344 responses to the Section 11 online practitioner survey.
- A further 62 GP Practices participated in the Integrated Care Board (ICB) managed process.
- There was a good mix of responses across Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland agencies and departments.
- Schools throughout the sub-region were included for the first time in this Section 11. Their inclusion was managed by Local Authority School Liaison departments.
- The survey was used as an awareness raising tool by including links to the relevant resources within the questions.
- Questions were asked about awareness, use and usefulness of key resources and procedures.

The majority of online respondents were aware of the Neglect Toolkit (63%), the Escalation procedure (64%) and the Bruising, Marks or Injury of Concern in Pre-Mobile Babies and Non-Independently Mobile Children procedure (58%), and the Information Sharing Agreement (67%). Less were aware of the Practice Principles on Engaging Fathers and Male Carers in Effective Practice (39%), the Building Confidence in Practice Resource on Professional Curiosity for Practitioners (37%), the Safer Sleeping Risk Assessment Tool (44%) and the Children of Parents with Mental Health Problems procedure (27%).

The awareness of some of these resources was less than expected. Positively, though, where these figures were lower, the majority of people who used the procedure/resource stated that they found it useful.

[19] Working Together 2023, Chapter 4, pages 104-107.


Are you aware of...?
LLR Safer Sleeping Risk Assessment Tool
Children of Parents with Mental Health Problems procedure
Information Sharing Agreement
Bruising, Marks, or Injury of Concern in Pre-Mobile Babies and Non-Independently Mobile Children procedure
Professional Curiosity for Practitioners: Building Confidence in Practice Resource
Practice Principles - engaging fathers and male carers in effective practice
Children's Safeguarding Escalation procedure
The Neglect Toolkit
Procedure / Resource
0
50
100
150
200
250
300
Number of Respondents
No
Yes


How useful, if at all, did you find...?
LLR Safer Sleeping Risk Assessment Tool
Children of Parents with Mental Health Problems procedure
Information Sharing Agreement
Bruising, Marks, or Injury of Concern in Pre-Mobile Babies and Non-Independently Mobile Children…
Professional Curiosity for Practitioners: Building Confidence in Practice Resource
Practice Principles - engaging fathers and male carers in effective practice
Children's Safeguarding Escalation procedure
The Neglect Toolkit
0
20
40
60
80
100
120
140
Very useful
Fairly useful
Not very useful
Not at all useful
Don't know

The Planning and Delivery Group considered the results, in terms of identifying areas to inform the Safeguarding Children Partnerships' priorities for 2025 onwards and if any further partnership action was required across Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland.

Whilst the majority of online respondents were aware of the Neglect Toolkit, the percentage of people still seemed low considering the Toolkit was originally launched in July 2016 and was updated and re-launched in 2021 to include adolescent neglect. A lack of awareness of the Toolkit has also been identified in multi-agency audit learning. Moving forwards, Neglect is a business priority for 2025-27 and further work will be completed on promoting the Neglect Toolkit.

We will continue to raise awareness of the suite of resources available to practitioners through learning and development.

Audits

Learning from audits leads to recommendations and actions that are progressed and monitored. The learning is disseminated and informs changes required at both a system and practice level. The impact of action outcomes is analysed once the outcomes have been embedded.

<u>Repeat Contacts Spotlight Audit</u>

In 2022-23, the Safeguarding Children Partnerships carried out a dip sample audit of referrals to Children's Social Care (CSC) across the three Local Authorities. The audit was focused on children with more than one contact recorded by Children's Social Care.

The aim of this 2024-25 spotlight audit was to understand improvements to responses to initial contact, following the learning identified from the previous audit on this theme. Ten cases were audited: four from Leicester City Council, four from Leicestershire County Council and two from Rutland County Council.

The audit found that:

- There was evidence that LLR procedures had been applied in all the cases and that the intervention made a difference for the child and family.
- There was appropriate intervention and Local Authorities, in most cases, completed appropriate children and family assessments.
- In some cases, children and family assessments were not as thorough as they could have been, and this led to the re-referral.
- The Local Authorities demonstrated contact with the family and network to explore issues; more needs to be done, though, to strengthen this through seeking the voice of the whole family and child, and in particular separated partners.
- There was evidence of multi-agency collaboration, but there were pockets where this could be further strengthened. For example, professionals were not always sharing information in Health services around Adult Mental Health, resulting in gaps, incomplete information and impact on assessments and planning.

There is continuous work to improve the quality of assessments and to promote the recording of the voice of the child and whole family. Regarding the learning around health information sharing, "Best Practice Guidance for Health Staff: Sharing health information with Children's Social Care and partner agencies" is due to be published in 2025-26.

Babies under 1 year on a Child Protection Plan Spotlight Audit

Linked to the Safeguarding Babies business priority, a spotlight audit was carried out looking at cases involving babies under 1 year on a Child Protection Plan. Ten cases were audited: four from Leicester City Council, four from Leicestershire County Council and two from Rutland County Council.

Pre-birth planning was a feature of six of the cases. Four cases had not had a pre-birth plan; in some cases, the foetus/infant was referred just prior to birth or soon after birth. For six of the cases, the category of abuse for the Child Protection Plan was Neglect; for two of the cases the category was Physical Abuse; the category for one case was sexual abuse; and emotional/sexual abuse was the category for the final case.

The audit found that:

- All the babies were deemed to have been safeguarded and the intervention had made a difference for the child and family with progress being made, leading to many of the families being closed to Social Care.
- There was evidence in many of the cases that the intervention was timely and ensured the child has the right service at the right time without delay.

- There was good information sharing across agencies, particularly Children's Social Care and Health, in many of the cases, with relevant agencies attending meetings or providing reports.
- There was consistent and timely use of the procedures, thresholds and plans were noted in most of the cases.
- There was evidence of consistency in speaking to mothers and including mothers and the wider family network in processes.
- There was poor use of the Safer Sleeping Risk Assessment Tool. There was too much reliance on Health staff, either the Midwife or Health Visitor/Public Health Nurse talking to parents and carers about safer sleep.
- The voice of the child was not consistently evidenced and/or captured.
- Although there was evidence of the father of the baby being known in many of the cases audited, there was a lack of consistency in them being engaged and involved in the processes and plans.

Work continues to embed use of the Safer Sleeping Risk Assessment Tool and Practice Points on Engaging Fathers in everyday practice. To extend the training already offered, as well the resulting learning and development videos, there will be further training on the Pre-Birth and Post Birth Planning procedure in 2025-26.

Other assurance work

LLR Safeguarding Keep in Touch Meeting

There is direct governance between the Safeguarding Keeping in Touch meeting and the Assurance and Audit Group.

The Safeguarding Keeping in Touch meetings bring together senior safeguarding leads to share intelligence and joint oversight of the ability of LLR multi-agency children's safeguarding services to maintain statutory functions in relation to safeguarding children. They share information and data and provide a timely response to emerging safeguarding issues with partnership support.

Discussions in 2024-25 have included how each agency has managed significant workforce issues and how these are being resolved. For example, there has been successful recruitment of qualified international social workers in Children's Social Care in Leicester City Council and Leicestershire County Council, which has had a positive impact on providing stability of staffing and decreasing the need to employ agency Social Workers. Other positive messages communicated include the Looked After Children Nursing Team managing to deliver all review health assessments within timeframes. They have also managed to add in an additional keeping in touch point at 6 months for children.

Each agency has provided monthly assurance that safeguarding work is prioritised and they have maintained full engagement with required safeguarding processes.

LLR Operational Group Meeting

The LLR Operational Group is a standalone group that feeds into the LLR Assurance and Audit Group.

The remit of the Operational Group is to allow managers, responsible for safeguarding children from across Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland, a forum to discuss and work through identified issues.

Internal Quality Assurance Processes

The Assurance and Audit Group seeks annual assurance from partner agencies around their internal quality assurance processes. The aim is to provide a picture of activity that agencies have completed over the previous twelve months, giving an overview of what the key successes have been, what are the areas for development and any key actions for the forthcoming year linked to the business plan priorities.

Safeguarding in Education

Safeguarding in Education support schools with all safeguarding concerns and signposting to Safeguarding Children Partnership safeguarding procedures.

They deliver:

- Initial Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) training and Refresher DSL training alongside whole school training and training to Governors
- The Safer Recruitment Training
- Allegation Management training in partnership with the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO).

Additionally, they:

- Host the Designated Safeguarding Leads Forum once a term to share local and national safeguarding updates to include learning from case reviews
- Create termly safeguarding newsletters
- Undertake safeguarding health checks and audits of schools and alternative provisions
- Respond to Ofsted complaints about Leicester City schools in collaboration with Education and LADO colleagues
- Research, draft and maintain safeguarding policies for City schools annually
- Provide bespoke training for other areas within Leicester City Council, such as Museums and other services such as universities and colleges
- Develop and deliver responsive and bespoke training packages annually, dependent on need, for example, training on harmful sexual behaviours and contextual safeguarding

Moving forwards

It has been acknowledged that the remit of the Assurance and Audit Group is very large. To address this and to reflect the structure successfully employed by the Leicester and Leicestershire & Rutland Safeguarding Adults Boards, from 2025-26 two new groups will be implemented to replace the Assurance and Audit Group. There will be a Performance Group and an Audit Group, which will fulfil the requirements of the Performance and Quality Assurance Framework of the Safeguarding Children Partnerships.

The Performance Group will analyse performance data; plan, scope and task multi-agency assurance processes; and analyse findings from multi-agency assurance processes, including findings from agencies' internal assurance processes and Section 11 audits. The LLR Safeguarding Keep in Touch Meeting and LLR Operational Group Meeting will feed into the Performance Group.

The Audit Group will complete multi-agency audits as informed by the Performance Group and Business Plan priorities, learning from case reviews, national learning and Section 11 audits and analyse the findings from multi-agency case file and spotlight audits.

It is anticipated that this change will allow for more audits to be completed and improve our ability to evidence how information sharing has improved practice and outcomes.

Multi-Agency Safeguarding Procedures

Together, the Leicester and Leicestershire & Rutland Safeguarding Partnerships ensure that procedures are in place for multi-agency safeguarding in line with Working Together 2023.

Throughout 2024-25, the Policy and Procedures Group has revised procedures and created new guidance in response to learning from local and national reviews and assurance processes.

The Leicester, Leicestershire & Rutland Safeguarding Children Partnerships' Procedures Manual can be found online: https://llrscb.trixonline.co.uk/

A full list of amendments made can be found on the 'Amendments' page of the manual. Individuals who want to sign up for alerts regarding the Safeguarding Children Partnerships' procedures can register for updates.

Workforce development through multi-agency learning and development and training

The Leicester Safeguarding Children Partnership's training co-ordination and delivery function is shared with the Leicestershire & Rutland Safeguarding Children Partnership to support consistent and effective partnership working.

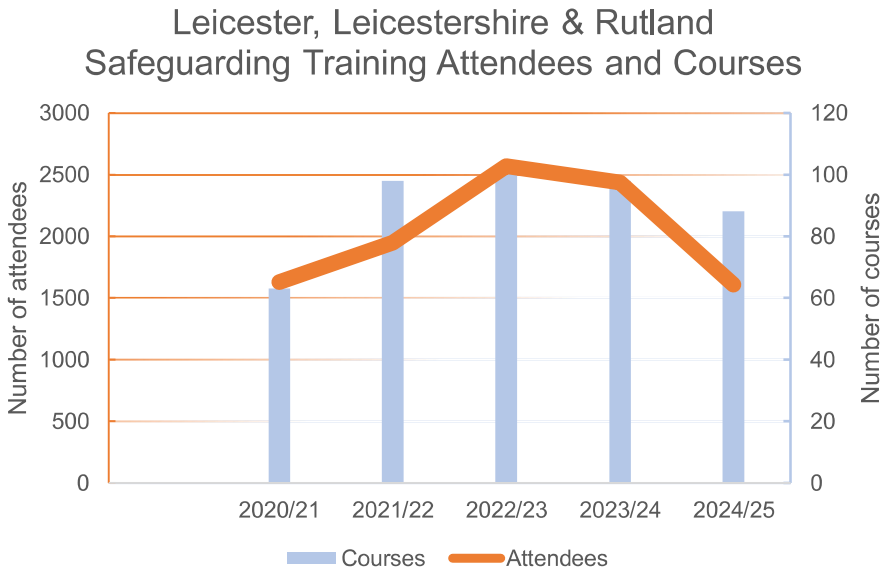
The Safeguarding Children Partnerships provide:

- A Multi-Agency Training Programme, which offers high quality training, with a core programme focusing on basic safeguarding / business as usual training, supplemented by commissioned training on key safeguarding themes and specific types of abuse/neglect, as well as large scale events
- A Competency Framework to support individuals and organisations to undertake their safeguarding roles and responsibilities in a confident and competent manner
- A Trainers Network that offers regular meetups between trainers to share knowledge, skills and to help develop the delivery of safeguarding children training

A blended approach to learning is taken, incorporating video resources and resource packs alongside online and face-to-face training sessions.

Training Delivery

The Multi-Agency Learning and Development Group (MALDG) is responsible for the sharing of learning across the children's workforce in support of the Business Plan Priorities and learning from reviews.



This year the Safeguarding Children Multi-Agency Programme delivered 88 courses to over 1609 attendees. There are events where data is not available. Firstly, because of a cyber-attack in April 2024, impacting on the systems and ability to collect information, and also because, when sessions are commissioned, the data is not always effectively shared. It is fair to say that there must have been over 2,000 practitioners who were able to attend events from the multi-agency safeguarding children programme.

The 88 courses included a Conference on Child Sexual Abuse which was hosted by the Safeguarding Children Partnerships and delivered by the Centre of Expertise on Child Sexual Abuse in May 2024. Over 180 practitioners attended this event from agencies across the partnership including Police, Health, Early Help and Social Care and aligned services in the Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS). In support of this area of work, there was also a session delivered on disclosure of child sexual abuse by The Reign Collective, which was attended by 43 practitioners. The Multi-Agency Learning & Development Group is looking to include sessions on sexual abuse in their programme moving forward.

Also, four sessions were delivered to 102 people to inform them of the new Elective Home Education guidance uploaded to the local procedures.

Training has been delivered in person and online. Obviously, online it is possible to share information with greater numbers, as there is no room space barrier; however, evaluation has shown that participants welcome a return to in-person sessions.

<u>Training linked to the Business Plan Priorities</u>

- Safeguarding Babies

The Multi-Agency Learning & Development Group supported the delivery of Baby Fortnight in April 2024. This was a series of events for practitioners working with those expecting and new parents to support the first critical 1001 days of life. In particular, there were sessions on “Involving and Supporting Dads and Partners”, “The Voice of Babies and Non-Verbal Children”, “ICON”, and “Safer Sleeping for babies in LLR”, all of which reflect learning locally and nationally. The event had sessions for expectant and new parents that ran alongside and was a great success.

The Multi-Agency Learning & Development Group supported the launch of the new “Pre-Birth and Post Birth Planning” procedure, providing two launch sessions in June 2024 for 51 participants and a further session in September where 13 people attended.

In addition, for this priority, to support the ICON message, and in support of working with fathers, films were commissioned which are a collection of experiences of new fathers. The films are called “Father Stories” and are available in short or long format. There was a launch of the films at the Phoenix Theatre which some of the dads who shared their stories were able to attend with the actors who committed them to film, as well as practitioners.

- Child Mental Health & Emotional Wellbeing

To support this business plan priority, the Multi-Agency Learning & Development Group shared the training that is available from CAMHS and agencies such as Papyrus with the wider workforce.

It is also an area that is covered in other sessions, such as “Hidden Sentence”, “Child Exploitation” and core safeguarding courses.

The Multi-Agency Learning & Development Group worked with ADHD Solutions to deliver sessions on how to work with and understand children with ADHD. This will continue even though the charity ceased to exist from the end of 2024. Over this period, 3 sessions were delivered with 48 participants.

- Keeping Adolescents Safe/Supporting Safe Adolescents

The programme of safeguarding children training offers a session on “An Introduction to Child Exploitation” and two courses were delivered on this topic in the last year for 38 attendees.

- Safeguarding Children from diverse backgrounds

This priority had a specific action for the Multi-Agency Learning & Development Group which was to “provide multi-agency learning and development around immigration status, culture, faith, and parenting.” To help meet this action point, a Task & Finish Group has been established and a proposal with an action plan to fulfil this action by the end of 2026.

- Effective Safeguarding in independent and out of school settings

The Multi-Agency Learning & Development Group, in support of this Business Plan Priority, has been trying to extend its reach by using social media and voluntary sector networks to encourage agencies to book onto training. Twilight and evening sessions have been delivered too to reach a different audience.

In addition, there have been more Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) sessions because every agency that works or volunteers with children must have a Designated Safeguarding Lead, who would need to complete this training. The programme has delivered 16 sessions, including refresher sessions, to 268 participants in a mixture of different formats such as online, in person and 2-part with e-learning. This should help to keep children safe who are attending out of school settings.

Safeguarding Matters Live

In addition to the 88 courses, the Multi-Agency Learning & Development Group also supported the delivery of Safeguarding Matters Live events. Two Safeguarding Matters Live are held each year. These are live online briefings for staff across the children and adults multi-agency partnerships. They share learning from reviews and audits, procedure and guidance updates, resources to support practice, and share messages around key national issues and from key national reports. The slides from the events are made available via the website and sessions are available to watch on the YouTube Channel.

Over the 2 events delivered in 2024-25, with one in June and one in December, 795 practitioners attended.

Topics covered in July 2024 included the Pre-Birth and Post Birth Planning procedure, Child Sexual Abuse and Electively Home Educated children. The December 2024 event focused on safeguarding and the internet, with presentations including the impact of social media on children and Prevent.

Trainers Network

The Safeguarding Children Partnerships co-ordinate a Trainers Network to look at development/practice issues in this area. The focus of the network is to look at the trainers' support needs and offer regular meetups between trainers to share knowledge, skills and to help develop the delivery of safeguarding children training.

Training Impact

The link between training and change in behaviour is difficult to measure although we do try to do this through evaluation.

The evaluation returns from the multi-agency safeguarding children programme have been much poorer this year, with only 288 completed forms. Although the Conference on Child Sexual Abuse and Safeguarding Matters were evaluated separately, this equates to roughly one fifth (20%) of training being evaluated which is down from a third last year. This could be because there have been more in-person courses and the evaluation is online. There was also a pilot where certificates were linked to the evaluation form but this was unsuccessful and so a return to a manual system was required.

The evaluation asks participants to assess their level of knowledge, skills and confidence before and after the training session. The results are as below:

Average Scores of	Knowledge	Skills	Confidence
Before	6.4	6.4	6.2
After	8.5	8.4	8.4
Average Increase	2.1	2	2.2

It can be seen that, for every area participants assessed, their knowledge, skills and confidence had increased by at least 2 points. There is also feedback that supports this data.

"*The trainer was very knowledgeable and I enjoyed the interactive elements. It was a very engaging workshop, thank you.*"

"*I am from a very small, independent organisation. It was good to share this training with more skilled and experienced practitioners from social care settings. I learnt from their knowledge during the case study section.*"

"*The use of real life examples enhanced my understanding.*"

Feedback from participants of Core Awareness training

"*I liked the fact that it was held in the evening, so it was more inclusive for people who work during the day. Online at night did help for those who can't travel to a venue. More short courses, e.g. the signs of safety, would be very useful if was held online of an evening.*"

"*The case studies (although difficult due to the nature of the content) made the training relevant and brought it to life.*"

Feedback from participants of Designated Safeguarding Lead training

"*Fantastic, really interesting and inspiring. A subject that hasn't had the time or acknowledgement that it needs. Lots of food for thought and definitely the start of an ever-growing conversation.*"

"*Such honesty and sharing from a place of knowledge and experiences creates a culture of confidence to make changes.*"

"*The talk from [the expert by experience] was incredibly insightful. It's very rare that you would have the opportunity to hear first-hand from a survivor of sexual abuse.*"

Feedback from attendees of the Conference on Child Sexual Abuse

"*I found the course to be very informative especially the facts and figures which were quite astounding.*"

Feedback from attendee of Pre-Birth and Post Birth procedure launch

"*Really interesting session in which I increased my knowledge and skill set in relation to ADHD. Makes me reflect and reevaluate some of my practices for the better. Thank you to the trainer who made the training enjoyable, manageable and accessible.*"

Feedback from participant in Practitioners ADHD Toolkit training

Of respondents that completed a survey on the Conference on Child Sexual Abuse, 80% felt it would lead them to do things differently in their role. Several described improving their own practices in relation to child sexual abuse, increasing awareness amongst their own and other teams, and supporting colleagues to use the CSA Centre's resources.

During 2024-25, more than 80 additional people requested they be added to the Safeguarding Matters distribution list, with nearly 800 people now signed up.

"Some of the content may be helpful for safeguarding training. I can merge it into my existing content, update, review, refresh etc. I can also cascade to staff using our comms channels for awareness raising."

"The presentations were brilliant. It's made me aware of services available."

"Really great information – find these really useful to share with providers/settings."

"Really useful categories, mixed content and very relevant in trend topics – will share through safeguarding effectiveness meetings."

Feedback from Safeguarding Matters Live Events

During the 2024-25 business year the Safeguarding Children Partnership website was viewed 63,985 times by 25,619 users.

Learning and Development Resources

During 2024-25, three print issues of the Safeguarding Matters newsletter were published, including special issues on Learning from Safeguarding Children Reviews and Audits and the Mental Capacity Act. The Safeguarding Matters newsletter focuses on disseminating local and national safeguarding learning and promoting procedural updates.

Updates on local and national safeguarding information are also delivered in a concise email format via the Safeguarding Matters Digest.

The Safeguarding Matters newsletters and Live PowerPoints and videos are available via the website and YouTube channel. Individuals can request to be added to the distribution list so that they are informed of publication and event dates by emailing lrspbo@leics.gov.uk. The Safeguarding Matters Digest is disseminated via email to those that have signed up to receive it. To be added to the distribution list, individuals can email lscpb@leicester.gov.uk.

The LLR SCPs' YouTube channel provides a bank of safeguarding videos that capture presentations from multi-agency training events and other resources that can be utilised by partners for learning and development – for example, in single agency training and supervision.

The Leicester, Leicestershire & Rutland Safeguarding Children Partnerships and Safeguarding Adults Boards also offer a set of Building Confidence in Practice Resources. These resource packs aim to focus on often complex issues that arise for practitioners when they are working with people whether they are children or adults.

Moving forwards

Commencing in June 2025, the LLR Safeguarding Children Partnerships will be extending their Trainers' Network to include colleagues who are in safeguarding supervisory roles. It will then be known as the SCP Supervisors' and Trainers' Network. Meetings will take place three times a year. Membership will be by invitation, and only available for staff who are named in their agency as a Safeguarding Trainer or a Safeguarding Manager/Supervisor.

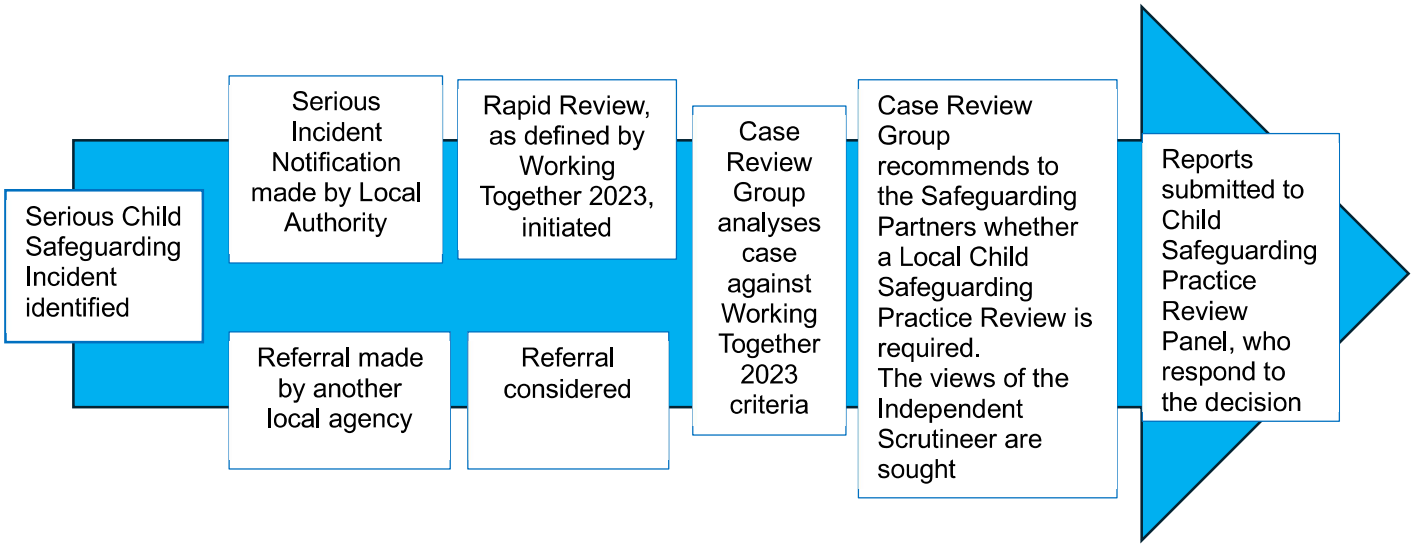
The reason for the change is to ensure that those who are in responsible supervisory positions are fully briefed about the learning from the children's Rapid Reviews and Local Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews, audits, national safeguarding recommendations and the work that underpins the Safeguarding Children Partnerships' Business Priorities.

It is anticipated that having the opportunity to discuss and explore the learning will facilitate the sharing of this information during supervision, team meetings and when advising on specific safeguarding issues.

Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews

Local Rapid Reviews and Local Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews

Responsibility for how a system learns lessons from serious child safeguarding incidents rests at a national level with the Child Safeguarding Practice Review Panel and at a local level with Safeguarding Partners. The Safeguarding Children Partnership assesses serious safeguarding incidents, as defined by Working Together 2023, in cases where abuse or neglect of a child is known or suspected, and the child has died or been seriously harmed.



Key decisions and actions taken

Six notifications/referrals for potential Local Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews, were received by the Case Review Group, resulting in six Rapid Reviews being completed in line with Working Together 2023.

No Local Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews were commissioned in 2024-25 but one Local Child Safeguarding Practice Review commissioned in January 2024 was progressed during 2024-25 and the completed report will be presented to the Safeguarding Children Partnership at the start of the 2025-26 business year.

No other reviews remain outstanding. The Safeguarding Children Partnership published the following review documents on their website throughout July 2024:

- An Improvements Made Briefing concerning 'Child E'
- A Local Child Safeguarding Practice Review concerning 'Children C & D'
- A Local Child Safeguarding Practice Review Briefing concerning 'Patricia'
- A Serious Case Review (SCR) Learning Briefing concerning 'Baby William'

Themes and learning identified from Rapid Review completed in 2024-25

The five rapid reviews completed during 2024-25 identified learning including the need for:

- Improved awareness across the partnership of free-birthing and doulas.
- Recording of information and sharing of information including out of area.
- Specialist medication continues to be prescribed for a child moving areas.
- Improved awareness of adultification across the partnership.
- Improved understanding interface between Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) and Sexual Assault Referral Centre (SARC).
- Plans to be written wherever possible with the young person, using language that makes sense to them and is meaningful.
- Improving multiagency awareness around safer infant sleeping including recognising and responding to risk, and the need for urgency in responding to emerging vulnerabilities, through the ongoing roll-out and embedding of the local Safer Sleeping Risk Assessment resources.
- Ongoing promotion of ICON across the partnership.

Actions from reviews

Action plans are in place to respond to and monitor areas of learning from reviews. During 2024-25 the Partnership completed 7 of the 11 action plans that were in place at the start of the year. The Partnership also completed 31% of actions that were created during the year as a result of undertaking five new rapid reviews.

Actions from existing rapid reviews and LCSPRs on 1st April 2024		
Ref.	**Number of outstanding actions as of 1st April 2024**	**Number of outstanding actions as of 31st March 2025**
A	1	0
B	4	0
C	5	0
D	10	0
E	6	3 (50%)
F	16	2 (12.5%)
G	17	0
H	11	1 (9%)
I	16	0
J	17	0
K	15	3 (20%)
Actions from new rapid reviews completed during 2024-25		
Ref.	**Actions created**	**Number of outstanding actions as of 31st March 2025**
L	5	3 (60%)
M	7	4 (57%)
N	16	13 (81%)
O	10	10 (100%)
P	5	4 (80%)

During 2024-25 the following actions from learning has been progressed across the Partnership:

- Help me tell you anything, a 7-minute briefing supporting disclosure of child sexual abuse, was published in October 2024
- The Pick up the phone campaign was included on our website in October 2024.
- The procedure Bruising, Marks, or Injury of Concern in Mobile Children was added to our multi-agency procedures.
- Paperwork in UHL's Adult Emergency Department now includes a space on the forms for staff to record if the adult attending has any dependents under the age of 18 years. The level 3 Safeguarding children training for Emergency Department staff covers what to do if an adult self-discharges from the department citing childcare as the issue. This includes exploring where the children are and documenting details of the children.
- The LPT Adult Autism Team have updated discharge letters with additional signposting information to include Crisis contact numbers.
- LPT health visitor standard operating guidance has been updated to reflect the 'must do' when a child has a sole carer, regardless of sex.
- The UHL Level 3 and level 2 Safeguarding Children Training packages (e-learning and face-to-face) includes information on hidden men.
- The Emergency Department electronic notes system allows for staff to document the family/social history i.e. who the child lives with.
- An article was published in Safeguarding Matters (issue no. 33) to raise awareness on the impact of parental use of cannabis on children.
- Awareness-raising took place in relation to the distinction between strengths and safety and understanding the potential vulnerability of children who present as confident and achieving well (in relation to Child Sexual Abuse).
- UHL has created a standard operating procedure for free births to support staff.

Ongoing work

Following the Conference/Roadshow delivered in 2024-25 and the publication of the Child Safeguarding Practice Review Panel's National Review on Child Sexual Abuse in the Family Environment, the Multi-Agency Learning and Development Group has been looking at how they can include an offer of multi-agency child protection training focused on sexual abuse as part of their regular offer. This analysis is being

informed by work with the NSPCC (funded by the Home Office) that the Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland SCPs have signed up to for 2025-26 to undertake a local system-wide child sexual abuse (CSA) snapshot.

Until June 2024, Trauma-Informed Practice training was delivered by Barnardo's, on behalf of the Violence Reduction Network (VRN), but this commissioned training has now ended. Discussions about a long-term, sustainable training model moving forwards are ongoing and the issue has been escalated to the LLR SCP Planning & Delivery Group (PDG).

Dissemination of learning

Learning is shared with practitioners across organisations through single and multi-agency training, briefings and learning events, including to communicate updated guidance and changes in procedures. Also, the Safeguarding Children Partnership communicates learning to the workforce through:

- The Safeguarding Matters newsletter and live events and the Safeguarding Matters Digest
- 7-minute briefings which are designed to convey key messages from reviews and encourage managers and workers to reflect on their practice
- The Leicester 'Learning from Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews: Common themes for learning from LCSPRs and Rapid Reviews' document, which was first produced in 2023. It provides key learning points for all practitioners and managers from audits and reviews, both local and national. This is a live document and is updated regularly.

The Safeguarding Children Partnerships published a Special Issue of Safeguarding Matters on Learning from safeguarding children reviews and audits. It also ran Curious Practitioner training in August 2024 to share some of the Rapid Review learning that had been similar or the same across Leicester, Leicestershire, and Rutland (LLR). It was open to anyone who works with children and families across LLR. A video of the training is available via the LLR SCP YouTube channel.

How we are measuring impact

The Section 11 in 2024-25 was completed using a frontline practitioner survey. Some of the questions posed related to learning from Rapid Reviews and resources linked to learning, such as the "Practice Principles – Engaging fathers and male carers in effective practice", the "Bruising, Marks, or Injury of Concern in Pre-Mobile Babies and Non-Independently Mobile Children" procedure, and the LLR Safer Sleeping Risk Assessment Tool.

The Curious Practitioner Training was attended by 168 practitioners from across Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland. At the end of the training, attendees were asked "In your opinion what went well and what impact will this have in your work". Some of the responses are listed below:

"Really good information. Will make me think more when doing assessments."

"The session was very informative. It was good to take time to reflect and hear other agencies' views. Very useful to hear the learning from rapid reviews."

"This was informative training and hearing the examples of using professional curiosity will help me to gain the confidence to ask further questions."

"Gave me lots of thinking for the team I manage and how in a very brief intervention we still ensure we work in-depth."

"It made me think about triangulating information, which I did after the training; contacting the school to ask if the information mum reported was correct."

Agencies were asked to document how they disseminated the Learning from Reviews resource. All agencies responded and there was positive feedback. For example, one agency stated that the format of it really helped their practitioners understand the wider picture. Education reported that it had a really good impact, particularly with the reference to actual cases.

National Reviews

We continue to incorporate the learning from national reports and out of area reviews into our work. For example, they are considered during our Rapid Reviews and other SCP subgroups continue to incorporate their learning into their work. National reviews are used for benchmarking and ensuring best practice.

Date	Publication	How national learning has been considered in local work
May 2024	Serious Incident Notifications	A report allowing for comparison of Leicester notification data with that of other areas for 2023-24 was produced and shared with the Case Review Group.
May 2024	Safeguarding Children in Elective Home Education: Panel Briefing 3 Child Safeguarding Practice Review Panel	A presentation on Electively Home Educated Children was given at Safeguarding Matters Live in July 2024 and referenced this national report. The new LLR SCP "Elective Home Education: An Approach to Safeguarding for LLR" guidance was published in September 2024. Four training briefing sessions have been delivered by the LLR SCP Multi-Agency Learning & Development Group (MALDG), with the last one taking place in February 2025. A video of one of these sessions has been made into a learning resource.

Date	Publication	How national learning has been considered in local work
November 2024	"I wanted them all to notice": Protecting children and responding to child sexual abuse within the family environment – National Review Child Safeguarding Practice Review Panel	A report on how the recommendations for SCPs are going to be addressed locally was presented to the Case Review Group in February 2025. For 2025-26 Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland SCPs have signed up to work with the NSPCC (funded by the Home Office) to undertake a local system-wide child sexual abuse (CSA) snapshot. There was a presentation on the report in Safeguarding Matters Live in December 2024, with a follow up article in the April 2025 print issue. The Briefing for Practitioners was shared via the Learning from Reviews 2024-25 resource. A 7-minute briefing…
December 2024	Annual Report 2023/24: Patterns in practice, key messages and 2024 to 2025 work programme Child Safeguarding Practice Review Panel	A paper on key points from the Annual Report was presented to the Case Review Group in their February 2025 meeting. The Briefing for Practitioners is to be shared via the April 2025 print issue of Safeguarding Matters and was shared in the Learning from Reviews 2024-25 resource.
March 2025	"It's Silent": Race, racism and safeguarding children: Panel Briefing 4 Child Safeguarding Practice Review Panel	The Briefing for Practitioners is to be shared via the April 2025 print issue of Safeguarding Matters and was shared in the Learning from Reviews 2024-25 resource. Further guidance is awaited from the LLR SCP Planning & Delivery Group (PDG) regarding further work.

During 2024-25 Leicester Safeguarding Children Partnership took part in The Child Safeguarding Practice Review Panel 'Learning Support & Capability Project' run by Research in Practice, University of East Anglia, and the Vulnerability Knowledge and Practice Programme. The project aimed to find out more about the current approach to safeguarding reviews and how learning can be generated. The project report and priorities for change will be published by The Child Safeguarding Practice Review Panel during 2025-26.

Future planning

Throughout the Yearly Report, future changes to be implemented have been highlighted around scrutiny, engagement with children and families, quality assurance and training.

Priorities for 2025-27

Having reviewed learning from local and national reviews, and from local assurance and engagement work, as well as considering the impact of the 2023-25 priorities, the Safeguarding Children Partnerships have determined that its priorities for 2025-27 will be:

- Child Sexual Abuse
- Neglect
- Harm Outside the Home
- Belonging

For each of these areas, we have set out our rationale for prioritising the topic, and presented the key deliverables, leads, timescales and impact measures. This will enable us to monitor progress and secure assurance that our actions are making a positive difference to the lived experience of our children and families. The Joint Leicester, Leicestershire & Rutland Safeguarding Children Partnership Business Plan for 2025-27 is published on our website.

Conclusion

In 2024-25, we have achieved a lot both strategically and operationally in light of significant national reforms, changes to statutory guidance and pressures linked to workforce capacity. Agencies have reported that, despite challenges with workforce capacity, safeguarding children has remained a priority. Our approach is system-led but child-focused. We are improving how we adapt to and adopt changes required as a result of both national and local learning. Moving forwards, we are aware of our strengths and the challenges we face. We have initiated implementation of changes to address some of these challenges. In particular, in the future, we believe that our quality assurance processes will be both increased and have more of an impact on our decision making and priority identification. Our new Young Person Scrutineer and Communications and Engagement Subgroup will make sure that we are driven by the views and wishes of the people we work to support and see thrive.

Appendix E

SEND Transport Policy and Service Update

Children Young People and Education Scrutiny Commission

Date of meeting: 20 January 2026

Lead directors: Laurence Mackie-Jones, Strategic Director, Social Care and Education

Sophie Maltby, Director of SEND and Education

Useful information

- Ward(s) affected: All
- Report author: Maria Coulson, Strategic SEND Transport Lead
- Author contact details: maria.coulson@leicester.gov.uk
- Report version number: 1.0

1. Summary

1.1. On 13 May 2025 a decision was made by the Assistant City Mayor (Children and Young People) which approved the SEND travel policy for the 2025/26 and subsequent academic years and the post-16 transport policy statement for the 2025/26 academic year.

1.2. This change signified a required cultural shift in policy and practice. The main risk was that, in some cases the revised level of support provided by the council to young people and adults (aged 16 to 25) who have special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) might cause young people and adults to become NEET i.e. not in employment or education.

1.3. This report provides an update to the Children, Young People and Education Scrutiny Commission regarding the service, including the policy implementation.

1.4. The Council supports transport needs through a combination of taxis, bus journeys and personal transport budgets (PTBs). There is a statutory requirement to provide support to children of school age; provision for the post-16 age group is discretionary.

1.5. The decision surrounding the Post 16 Transport Policy Statement for the 2026/2027 academic year follows a separate process when outcomes from the Autumn term can be analysed in January 2026. It is currently proposed that there will be no change to entitlements in the Post 16 Transport Policy Statement for 2026 - 2027. As such Appendix B contains the Proposed Draft Post 16 Transport Policy Statement 2026 - 2027 that will be subject to a consultation with relevant parties. The Year 12/13 exemption has been removed because that was only for the 2025/2026 academic year.

1.6. This report details:

- The outcomes of the policy implementation.
- Details of the service transformation programme.
- Early analysis and the forward plan.

2. Recommendation(s) to scrutiny:

The Children, Young People and Education Scrutiny Commission is invited to:

- Note the update surrounding the post-16 transport policy statement for the 2025/26 academic year implementation.
- Note the update surrounding the transformation programme and the Proposed Draft Post 16 Transport Policy Statement 2026-2027 (Appendix B) to be consulted upon.

3. Detailed report

3.1. The Council's policies for the current academic year are published and available here: Home to school transport | LCC Family Hub.

3.2. The policies set out arrangements for provision of transport assistance to the following groups who attend schools, colleges or certain other institutions:

- "children" – those not yet of compulsory school age or who are of compulsory school age (broadly 5-16 years old);
- "young people" – those of sixth form age (between 16 and 18 and those aged 19 or over who are continuing on a course which they started before they turned 19), including young people with SEND; and
- "adults" – those aged between 19 and 25 who have SEND.

3.3. The law makes separate stipulations about children, young people and adults. In practice, young people and adults are treated the same way in Leicester policy: this enables us to ensure we provide the right level of support to meet their individual needs.

3.4. Available support depends on need, but might include any of the following (provided free of charge):

(a) Arrangement of a taxi by the Council.
(b) Bus travel on a Council provided vehicle.
(c) A personal transport budget (PTB) – a sum of money which can be used to pay for any means of transport (including a lift in a family car, or a bus pass). The current rate is 45p per mile plus £500 per year.
(d) In exceptional circumstances where there is not full entitlement to council commissioned transport the council may contribute to the cost.

3.5. Data at the end of term showed 455 young people were supported during the 2024/2025 academic year who could be in the post 16 cohort at the start of the 2025/2026 academic year i.e. in year 11 and above.

3.6. Of those, 100 young people would be exempt from the new post 16 policy implementation due to moving from Year 12 to 13 next academic year.

3.7. At the end of November 2025 there have been 219 post 16 SEND transport applications received. Applications were not required for those in Year 13 in the 2025/2026 academic year unless there was a change in circumstances. Parents / carers of those in the exempt cohort were notified separately to provide additional clarification.

3.8. Based on information held in the Autumn term it is projected that those in post 16 education and above who will receive SEND transport support under the new policy are as follows:

Post 16 Application Status	Volume	% of cohort
Council arranged transport – Taxi provided	95	44%
Council arranged transport – Internal bus provided	65	30%
Personal Transport Budget (PTB)	52	25%
Enhanced PTB	3	1%
Total	215	100%

3.9. There have been 15 appeals in total. Of those four went on to became Stage 2 appeals. There have been no appeals rejected with no support offered. Of the Stage 2 appeals, two were offered enhanced PTB support in addition to the standard PTB and two were rejected due to gaps in information.

3.10. The average cost of enhanced PTB's is £1900 per month. Evidence with regards spend has been obtained and attendance will be closely monitored to ensure best value. Additionally, the service delivery is being audited now and there is a commitment to implement efficiency findings at pace. A review of all-age use of enhanced PTB's (which is used in very limited circumstances) will be completed in March 2026.

3.11. The financial impact of post 16 changes is estimated to be a reduction in spend due to an increase of around 38% receiving PTB's in the 2025/2026 academic year compared to 2024/2025 rather than council commissioned transport. The average cost of council commissioned transport in 2024/2025 was £9.5k on average per student compared to £2.4k for PTB.

3.12. A person-centred approach was adopted to post-16 application assessment, and it is by actively listening to parent / carer feedback that the process successfully evolved over the Summer.

3.13. An improved approach to feedback, service evaluation and data gathering will be developed but anecdotal feedback from parents and carers (from approximately 100 hours of telephone communication) has included:

- They have broadly appreciated the approach adopted
- They would like longer to plan
- They would like improved clarity regarding what is needed to support the financial part of assessment at the beginning of the application process

3.14. Internal checks have been undertaken and based on information held, no young person or adult learner in post 16 education or older (16-25) in Leicester is NEET because they have had an application for SEND Transport refused.

3.15. Data is not the only focus in this area, all schools have been communicated with to emphasise the importance of the partnership role in this area. A collaborative approach to share intelligence has been sought with contact details reiterated along with a commitment that officers will act fast to ensure appropriate support.

3.16. Officers have factored in considerations including impact on families receiving short breaks support, children who are looked after, including kinship carers and parents / carers in safe accommodation. A simplistic approach to financial hardship has not been adopted and when considering exceptional circumstances, the focus is a holistic analysis of need and never a blanket approach.

3.17. The service standard meant that it has been unusual for parents / carers to have to wait longer than five working days for a response to an application. At times, when additional information has been needed, applications have been protracted. An improved application form will be in place in Spring 2026.

3.18. By Spring 2026, ringfenced, specialist operational support will be put in place and be part of a new team with the proposed name of the Independence and Transport service. This will enable tight standards surrounding monitoring each part of the application process (surrounding both timeliness and quality of service).

3.19. The aims of the service are:

- to empower children and young people with SEND to succeed on their own unique journeys toward independent adulthood,
- to support children and young people in gaining greater independence within their communities,
- to maximise learning opportunities during travel between home and school, building confidence and resilience along the way and,
- to continue the current remit of the SEND Transport group as part of the deepening of service provision.

3.20. These aims have been formed after listening to the Big Mouth Forum in June 2025 and hearing what is important to them surrounding independence and transport skills. Visioning will continue in future months building on learning from the Preparing for Adulthood Visioning Event in November 2025.

3.21. The Independence and Transport service will also see the development of the council's independent travel training offer. The council's offer has predominantly been a train the trainer model but outcome data regarding the real-world impact for young people remains less evidenced. The courses however attract professionals nationally and feedback during the course itself is positive.

3.22. To improve outcome data, ringfenced resource dedicated to travel training (2 full time equivalent officers at Grades 8 and 6) will be in place to develop service delivery. This will enable parents and carers to be proactively contacted in February 2026. Specifically, parents / carers of those in Years 11 and 13 will be prioritised as 2026/2027 will potentially be a significant transition year.

3.23. Training will also be offered to those undertaking corporate parenting roles withing childrens social care to ensure best value and a unified approach across childrens services.

3.24. A further two grade 8, full time equivalent officers will also be recruited to deliver in person travel training. Building on the successful pilot work undertaken to date with one young person. The workshop training is being developed closely with Gloucestershire Council who have thirteen years of experience delivering what is perceived as the national best practice standard. The model will be adapted to be successful in Leicester communities with our differing geography, infrastructure and demographic of SEND. This support exists within pockets in the current system. Travel training is well embedded with the Vision Support team delivering 121 independent travel training sessions in Leicester over many years and schools with Social, Emotional and Mental Health (SEMH) needs.

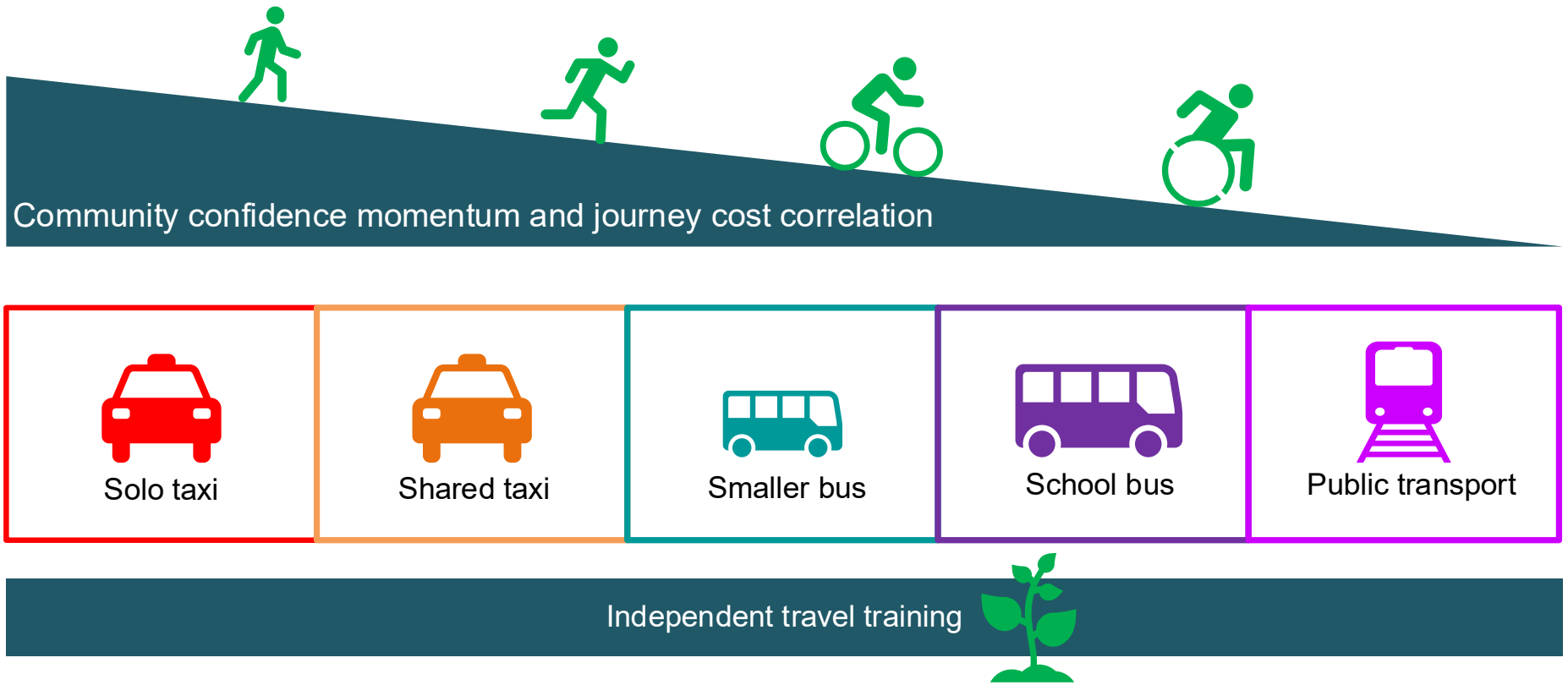
3.25. The training model will recognise the distinction between the skills required to navigate transport and the broader, preparing for adulthood objectives around incentivisation for independent travel i.e. where skills exist but a reason to travel is outweighed by barriers.

3.26. Assessments will take place on an annual basis to ensure opportunities to promote development are capitalised upon. The distinction between eligibility and the most effective transport provided will be embedded consistently.

3.27. A phased approach to service, with a person centred, need-led approach will be developed further. An early intervention, empowering, risk conscious approach, led by individual need will be embedded as an integral part of robust and collaborative operational assessment. Detailed metrics surrounding impact and supporting financial analysis showing cost control have been created to demonstrate the value of service developments.

3.28. The service developments support a strength based, need-led approach to support children and young people to move through the continuum of SEND transport provision (Figure 1)

Figure 1. – Continuum of SEND Transport Provision



3.29. In addition, a procurement to purchase a system to support effective fleet management, journey tendering is underway. This will enable improved communication with parents and carers and attendance monitoring. It will also support the development of sustainability measures.

3.30. Early analysis suggests that no change to entitlement is required for the following reasons:

- Applicant feedback is broadly positive
- Young people in post-16 are getting support under the policy
- Initial NEET analysis substantiates need is being met
- Opportunities to understand operational improvements for next year are well understood
- Families would benefit from stability, clarity and reassurance regarding available support

3.31. However, when service developments, data from the Autumn school term are better understood and consultation has taken place in line with statutory guidance a decision regarding the arrangements that the council considers it necessary to make in policy will proceed.

3.32. There will be ongoing work to test policy impact and the central principle that needs must be met on an individual basis and blanket approaches must be avoided is well understood and embedded practice. The following parties will be consulted with on the Proposed Draft Consultation Proposed Draft Post 16 Transport Policy Statement 2026-2027 (Appendix B):

- For sixth form age learners – (Section 509AB of the Education Act 1996)

  (a) any other local authority that they consider it appropriate to consult,
  (b) the governing bodies mentioned in subsection (4) of that section, (c) …
  (ca) persons in the local authority's area who will be of sixth form age when the statement has effect, and their parents, and
  (d) any other person specified for the purposes of this section by the Secretary of State

- For young adults – (Section 508G of the Education Act 1996)

  (a) any other local authority that they consider it appropriate to consult;
  (b) governing bodies of institutions within the further education sector in the authority's area;
  (ba) proprietors of 16 to 19 Academies in the authority's area;
  (c) persons in the local authority's area who will be relevant young adults when the arrangements or payments have effect, and their parents;
  (d) the Secretary of State; and
  (e) any other person specified by the Secretary of State

It will be demonstrated that these parties have been meaningfully consulted on the proposed draft policy before the preparation of the Post 16 Transport Policy Statement 2026-2027 and related decision report.

3.33. Endnote: a complaint stemming from initial decisions made in September 2023 to the Local Government Ombudsman, found that Leicester SEND Transport policy should be reviewed to ensure it was in line with statutory guidance. Particularly surrounding the requirement that parents must provide information from external professionals to support their application. Although the policy has been reviewed in the interim it has been updated to remove this as a mandatory requirement. The Home to school and college travel policy 2025-2026 now states that parents may provide evidence and there is no requirement that they must when making an application. This was updated in section 4.3 on page 7 following a decision by the Strategic Director of SEND and Education in October 2025. It was a required action that the Ombudsman decision be shared at Children, Young People and Education Scrutiny

Commission with action documented in minutes. Appendix A contains a copy of the Ombudsman's Final Decision, and the minutes of this meeting will be used for this purpose.

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

4.1 Financial Implications

This report is not seeking any additional funding but is providing an update on the policy and transformation programme. The current SEND home to school transport budget for 2025/26 is £14.7m. Taxi service quality assurance, increased competition and service efficiency regarding contracts mean average taxi costs have fallen. Assessment improvements coupled with support from alternate methods has also reduced expected requests for this service as outlined in this report. Due to these efficiencies, £1m of savings from 2026/27 has been brought forward and delivered in 2025/26 and the SEND home to school transport is forecast to underspend by £0.2m.

Signed: Mohammed Irfan, Head of Finance

Dated: 04 December 2025

4.2 Legal Implications

The report sets out the proposal that there be no change to current entitlements in the Post 16 Transport Policy Statement for 2026/2027 (the TPS).

The proposed TPS details the arrangements that the council consider are necessary to facilitate the attendance of young people and relevant young adults in education and training post the age of 16. The statutory provisions set out in the report identify the parties to be consulted on the proposed TPS. The results of the consultation should be analysed, prior to any final decision being made, to ensure that any decision making is lawful, follows a fair process and is reasonable.

The Post-16 Transport Policy Statement is required to be published on or before 31 May 2026 for the following academic year.

Signed: Julia Slipper, Principal Lawyer (Education & Employment); Tel ext 6855

Dated: 4 December 2025

4.3 Equalities Implications

When making decisions, the Council must comply with the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) (Equality Act 2010) by paying due regard, when carrying out their functions, to the need to eliminate discrimination, advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations between people who share a 'protected characteristic' and those who do not.

Decision makers need to be clear about any equality's implications of the proposed option on those likely to be affected by the recommendation and their protected characteristics. Protected groups under the Equality Act are age, disability, gender re-assignment, pregnancy/maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation.

The report provides an update on the implementation of the new SEND transport policy specifically focussing on the post 16 age group. The protected characteristics of age and disability are the most relevant, and the use of personal transport budgets are designed to offer flexibility and choice enabling families to tailor transport arrangements to their specific needs. The assessment process adopts a person-centred approach.

Signed: Sukhi Biring/Surinder Singh, Equalities Officers

Dated: 4 December 2025

4.4 Climate Emergency Implications
Whilst there are no direct climate emergency implications arising from this report, it should be noted that travel to school represents a significant proportion of journeys made in and from the city, and (except where journeys are undertaken by active travel modes) these add to the city's carbon emissions. Travel as a whole creates around a third of Leicester's carbon emissions from energy and fuel use. Where the council provides transport to school for SEN pupils, the resulting carbon emissions are included in monitoring of the council's own carbon footprint. In 2023/24 SEN transport is estimated to have generated approximately 1200 tonnes of carbon emissions, representing between 7% and 8% of the council total.
Signed: Phil Ball, Sustainability Officer, Ext 372246
Dated: 1st December 2025

4.5 Other Implications
Not applicable
Signed:
Dated:

5. Background information and other papers:

- 13 May 2025 decision made by the Assistant City Mayor (Children and Young People) which approved the new SEND travel policy for the 2025/26 and subsequent academic years and the new post-16 transport policy statement for the 2025/26 academic year.

6. Summary of appendices:

- Appendix A – Ombudsman complaint reference**:** 24 012 733
- Appendix B – Proposed Draft Post 16 Transport Policy Statement 2026-2027

5 June 2025

Complaint reference:
24 012 733

Complaint against:
Leicester City Council

Local Government & Social Care OMBUDSMAN

The Ombudsman's final decision

Summary: The Council was at fault for its handling of Mrs X's school transport application and subsequent appeal. It gave Mrs X inaccurate information, and its appeal response lacked the detail required by the statutory guidance. This caused Mrs X significant distress, uncertainty, time and trouble. The Council has agreed to apologise to Mrs X, make a payment to her and consider her application at a stage two appeal panel.

The complaint

1. Mrs X complained about the Council's delay and then refusal of her school transport application for her child, Y. She says the Council failed to consider Y's special educational needs and has since failed to respond to her request for a personal budget for Y. She wants the Council to arrange transport for Y and compensate her.

The Ombudsman's role and powers

2. We investigate complaints about 'maladministration' and 'service failure'. In this statement, I have used the word fault to refer to these. We must also consider whether any fault has had an adverse impact on the person making the complaint. I refer to this as 'injustice'. If there has been fault which has caused significant injustice, or that could cause injustice to others in the future we may suggest a remedy. (Local Government Act 1974, sections 26(1) and 26A(1), as amended)
3. If we are satisfied with an organisation's actions or proposed actions, we can complete our investigation and issue a decision statement. (Local Government Act 1974, section 30(1B) and 34H(i), as amended)
4. Under our information sharing agreement, we will share this decision with the Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted).

How I considered this complaint

5. I considered evidence provided by Mrs X and the Council as well as relevant law, policy and guidance.
6. Mrs X and the Council have had an opportunity to comment on my draft decision. I considered any comments before making a final decision.

What I found

School transport

7. Local authorities must make suitable home to school travel arrangements as they consider necessary for ‘eligible children’ of compulsory school age to attend their ‘qualifying school’. The travel arrangements must be made and provided free of charge. The relevant qualifying school is the nearest school with places available that provides education appropriate to the age, ability and aptitude of the child, and any special educational needs the child may have. ‘Eligible children’ include:

    - children living outside ‘statutory walking distance’ from the school (two miles for children under eight, three miles for children aged eight and above);
    - children living within walking distance of the school but who cannot reasonably be expected to walk to school because of their special educational needs, disability or mobility problem;
    - children living within walking distance of the school but who cannot walk to school because the route is unsafe; and
    - children entitled on low-income grounds. (Education Act 1996, 508B(1) and Schedule 35B)

8. A child will not normally be eligible for free travel to school on the grounds of their special educational needs, disability, or mobility problem, or on the grounds that the route is unsafe, if they would be able to walk to school if they were accompanied.

9. A child will not normally be eligible solely because their parent’s work commitments or caring responsibilities mean they are unable to accompany their child themselves. Councils must consider cases where the parent says there are good reasons why they are unable to accompany their child, or make other suitable arrangements for their journey, and make a decision on the basis of the circumstances of each case.

10. Where the local authority determines that a child would be able to walk if they were accompanied, the general expectation is that the parent will accompany them or make other suitable arrangements for their journey to and from school. (Department of Education, Travel to school for children of compulsory school age statutory guidance 2024, paragraphs 49 to 54)

11. Councils need to assess eligibility on the grounds of SEND on a case-by-case basis. The statutory guidance says the council may consider the following information when deciding eligibility:

    - information provided by the parent;
    - information provided by any professionals involved in the child’s care, for example, an educational psychologist or hospital consultant;
    - information provided by the child’s school;
    - any relevant information in the child’s EHC plan if they have one;
    - any relevant information in their individual healthcare plan if they have one.

    Where council ask parents to provide information, they should avoid asking parents for information which is not already in their possession or not easy for them to obtain. (Department of Education, Travel to school for children of compulsory school age statutory guidance 2024)

12. Councils should have an appeals process in place for parents who wish to appeal about the eligibility of their child for travel support. The Council adopts the following appeals process as recommended in the statutory guidance:

- Stage 1: review by a senior officer. Within 20 working days of receiving a parent's written request to appeal the decision, a senior officer reviews the original decision and sends the parent a detailed written notification of the outcome of the review setting out the nature of the decision, how the review was conducted, what was taken into account, the rationale for the decision reached, and how to escalate their case to stage 2; and
- Stage 2: Within 40 working days of receipt of the parent's request for an independent appeal panel to consider written and verbal representations, a detailed decision is sent setting out: the nature of the decision reached; how the review was conducted; what factors were considered; the rationale for the decision reached; and information about appealing to us.
  (Department of Education, Travel to school for children of compulsory school age statutory guidance 2023, Part 5)

The Council's SEND School Transport policy

13. The Council's policy says it will assess children with SEN for free school transport to the nearest qualifying school if they are unable to walk to school safely, even when accompanied by an adult.

14. The policy says the Council will consider professional reports gathered through the EHC needs assessment process to decide whether pupils meet its SEND transport criteria. It also says parents must provide evidence from external professionals to support their application.

15. Where a child with SEN can use public transport the Council will assess them using the same criteria as all other children.

What happened

16. Mrs X applied for school transport for her child, Y, in September 2023. Mrs X made clear her application was for Y's secondary school, school A, which they would attend from August 2024. She gave details of Y's Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND). She said Y needed transport as they lacked road awareness and a sense of danger. School A is approximately 1.5 miles walking distance from Y's home.

17. A few days later the Council issued Y's Final Education, Health and Care (EHC) Plan. It named Y's placement as school A from August 2024 and gave more details of Y's SEND.

18. In October 2023 the Council refused Mrs X's school transport application. It said Y did not meet its distance requirements and had no mobility issues. It said it had not identified any other SEND needs that prevented Y walking to school. Mrs X appealed the decision. Mrs X chased her appeal outcome in December 2023. The Council responded two days later saying Y lived 0.1 miles from their current school. It said Mrs X would need to resubmit her application for school A in the summer term.

19. Mrs X replied the same day. She said she had been told to apply early as they needed to plan Y's transport. She said summer term would be too late to prepare Y for a new routine. The Council said it would consider the application again before the summer term. It said Mrs X did not need to resubmit the application. Mrs X replied asking the Council if it was sure she did not need to resubmit the

application. The Council confirmed it would look at the application again and Mrs X did not need to take further action.

20. In February 2024 Mrs X asked an SEN officer at the Council for an update on Y's school transport application. The officer responded saying the application was awaiting a decision. Mrs X chased the Council again in June, July and August 2024.

21. Y started at school A in September 2024. At the same time the Council asked Mrs X to make a new transport application. Mrs X replied saying she had been told she did not need to make a new application. Mrs X complained to the Council.

22. In October 2024 the Council emailed Mrs X. It said it had reviewed her appeal, and Y did not meet the distance criteria for school transport. However, it recognised Y's walking route was unsuitable and would issue a bus pass for Y and an accompanying adult. Mrs X responded saying Y's SEN meant a bus was unsuitable as they could not handle busy places and had no sense of danger. She said there were no responsible adults to accompany Y.

23. The Council responded to Mrs X's complaint the next day. It accepted it had mishandled Y's application, and it had given Mrs X wrong advice. It said it had now offered Y a bus pass and signposted Mrs X to the Ombudsman. Mrs X responded to the complaint immediately, and repeated the bus was unsuitable. She asked about a personal budget for Y's transport. Mrs X then complained to the Ombudsman.

24. In response to our enquiries the Council repeated that Y did not meet its distance criteria and it had issued a bus pass. It said it had considered Y's EHC Plan and said when assessing a safe walking route, it assumed pupils were accompanied by a responsible adult so an adult could accompany Y on the bus. The Council added Mrs X had not responded to its stage one appeal, so it did not escalate the issue to a stage two panel. It also said it had received no request for a personal transport budget.

My findings

Mrs X's application

25. The Council accepted it mishandled Mrs X's school transport application. It told Mrs X it would decide her application before the summer term and Mrs X did not need to resubmit the application. It failed to reconsider the application, forcing Mrs X to repeatedly chase the Council between February and September 2024. The Council then told Mrs X she would have to make a new application. This was fault and caused Mrs X significant time and trouble, uncertainty and distress.

26. When Mrs X questioned making a new application the Council considered her request as a stage one appeal. This was fault. Mrs X did not ask for an appeal as she had not yet received a decision to appeal. The fault by the Council meant it did not give Mrs X an opportunity to set out her grounds for appeal in writing. It caused Mrs X further uncertainty over how the Council had considered her application.

27. As the Council said its response was a stage one appeal, I have considered whether it was compliant with the statutory guidance. Paragraph 12 sets out the detail needed of a stage one appeal response. While the Council's response said Y did not meet its distance criteria, it failed to explain how it had carried out the review, what information it had considered and the rationale for its decision. In particular, there was no reference to how the Council had considered Y's SEND, the information used to form their EHC Plan or Mrs X's reasons for not being able

to accompany Y. This was fault. The Council also failed to provide details of how Mrs X could escalate her appeal to stage two, and it is unclear whether the appeal was considered by a senior officer. This was also fault. The Council's appeal response was inadequate and caused Mrs X further distress and uncertainty over whether Y would receive school transport.

28. Despite not signposting Mrs X to a stage two appeal, Mrs X did respond to the stage one appeal setting out why she was unhappy with the decision. In response to our enquiries the Council said Mrs X did not ask for a stage two appeal. It is clear Mrs X remained unhappy with the Council's decision. The Council failed to treat this response as a request for a stage two appeal. This was fault, denying Mrs X her appeal rights and causing her further distress and uncertainty.

29. The Council also says it did not receive a request for a personal transport budget from Mrs X. Mrs X's reply to the Council's complaint response clearly contained a request for a personal transport budget. As with Mrs X's appeal response, the Council again failed to consider this. This was fault, causing further uncertainty.

30. For twelve months the Council repeatedly gave Mrs X inaccurate information, failed to properly consider her emails and failed to follow the proper appeals process. It remains unclear what information the Council considered when making its decision. The Council's responses to Mrs X lacked the detail, reasoning and formality needed when considering school transport applications and appeals.

31. We identified similar failings in a decision we issued in June 2024. The Council agreed to remind relevant officers of the requirements of its appeal process. Based on the evidence in this case, the Council has yet to resolve the reasons behind its repeated failings.

The Council's SEN Transport policy

32. The Council's policy says parents must provide information from external professionals to support their application. Paragraph 11 sets out examples of the information councils may consider when assessing eligibility on the grounds of SEND. The statutory guidance acknowledges councils will need to ask parents to provide some or all the information needed to make a decision but places no obligation on parents to do this. The Council's policy appears incompatible with the statutory guidance. This is fault causing distress and with the potential to cause similar injustice to others in future if not rectified.

Action

33. Within one month of the final decision the Council has agreed to:

a) Apologise to Mrs X for the significant uncertainty, distress, time and trouble caused by the failings identified in this decision. We publish guidance on remedies which sets out our expectations for how organisations should apologise effectively to remedy injustice. The organisation should consider this guidance in making the apology.

b) Pay Mrs X £500 to recognise the impact of the failings identified in this decision.

c) Consider Mrs X's application for school transport at a stage two independent appeal panel. The Council should ensure it follows the statutory guidance when considering Mrs X's appeal.

d) Consider Mrs X's application for a personal transport budget.

34. Within three months of the final decision the Council has agreed to:

a) Review its SEND school transport policy and procedures to ensure they comply with the statutory guidance.

b) Present a copy of this decision and the outcome of its review to its Children, young people and education scrutiny commission.

35. The Council should provide us with evidence it has complied with the above actions.

Decision

36. I find fault causing injustice which the Council has agreed to remedy.

Investigator's decision on behalf of the Ombudsman

Leicester City Council

Proposed Draft Post-16 Transport Policy Statement
Academic Year 2026 – 2027

DRAFT

December 2025

The council's travel policy statement for young people aged 16 - 18 in further education, continuing learners aged 19 and those young people aged 19 – 25 (inclusive) with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.

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DRAFT

1. Introduction

Local authorities (LAs) **do not** have to provide free or subsidised Post 16 travel support.

The council does have a duty to prepare and publish an annual travel policy statement specifying the arrangements for the provision of travel or other support that the authority considers it necessary to make, to facilitate the attendance of all persons of sixth form age receiving education or training.

All young people carrying on their education post 16 must reapply for travel support via the council's local offer pages. These will only be approved under exceptional circumstances. This is significantly different practice to previous years and is likely to affect rights to travel support even where currently being received on existing courses.

'Sixth form age' refers to those young people who are over 16 years of age but under 19 or continuing learners who started their programme of learning before their 19th birthday (years 12,13,14).

Local authorities also have a duty to encourage, enable and assist young people with learning difficulties / disabilities to participate in education and training, up to the age of 25.

This policy uses the term 'Post 16' to include both learners of sixth form age and those with learning difficulties / disabilities up to the age of 25.

This policy document specifies the support that Leicester City Council considers necessary to facilitate the attendance of Post 16 learners receiving education or training.

Education or training refers to learning or training at a school, further education institution, a council maintained or assisted institution providing higher or further education, an establishment funded directly by the Education Skills Funding Agency, learning providers delivering accredited programmes of learning which can lead to positive outcomes and are funded by the council, for example, colleges, charities and private learning providers.

2. Aims and Objectives

This document describes the support available to young people of Leicester entering or continuing with full-time Post 16 Education. It gives information from the local authority, schools, academies and FE colleges and other relevant sources.

The aim is to provide the most up to date details of the support available from various sources to encourage participation and prevent travel being a barrier to young learners.

DRAFT

This statement gives advice on the types of support available to learners with learning/mobility difficulties and explains the commitment to encourage independent travel to and from the place of learning.

3. Travel and travel support

Concessionary tickets for young people 16 – 25 from public transport providers

Many local operators have student season tickets available offering discounts compared to normal adult fares and/or at cheaper rates when bought on a termly or academic year basis. It is advised students contact the bus-operators directly as below:

Bus Operators

- Arriva website: arrivabus.co.uk
- Kinchbus website: kinchbus.co.uk
- First Bus website: firstbus.co.uk
- Centrebus website: centrebus.info

Disabled Person's Bus Pass

If you live in Leicester and have a qualifying disability, you are entitled to a concessionary travel pass or an annual payment of £22 by bank transfer. This allows free travel on local buses in all parts of England at certain times.

Disabled Person's Bus Passes are valid for free train travel at all times on train journeys between Leicester and stations in Leicestershire, and between Leicester and Derby, Nottingham, Grantham, Peterborough, Kettering and Nuneaton.

Website: Apply for a disabled person's bus pass

Train Services

Train services are available throughout Leicester and Leicestershire, with the option to purchase either:

- a 16 - 17 Saver Railcard to receive up to 50% of the price of eligible train tickets
- a 16 - 25 Railcard to receive up to 1/3 off the price of eligible train tickets
- a Disabled Persons Railcard to receive up to 1/3 off the price of eligible train tickets for you and an adult companion

Website: eastmidlandsrailway.co.uk

DRAFT

Dedicated school buses

Similarly, some of Leicester and Leicestershire's mainstream schools have commercial school special services operating to them. More information can be found directly from your school and the main operators of such services are:

- Confidence buses: confidencebus.co.uk/school-bus-routes
- Beaver Buses: beaver-bus.co.uk/school-buses
- Roberts Coaches: buspass.robertstravelgroup.co.uk
- G.H. Watts Coaches: ghwatts.co.uk/school_buses

4. Transport support from schools and colleges

Some of Leicester's secondary schools, academies and 6th Form/FE colleges have additional bus contract arrangements on which learners or their parents can purchase places. Some FE colleges also offer direct support to students. Arrangements vary between schools and colleges, so it is always best to check directly with the individual schools/colleges for details.

You can find details of all Leicester schools on the council's website (this will also give you a link to the school's individual website): Schools Directory (leicester.gov.uk)

Contact details and websites for all the Leicester and Leicestershire FE Colleges are shown below:

Brooksby Melton College (Leicestershire):
Contact the Travel Department on:
Telephone: 0166 485 5211
E-Mail: travel@brooksbymelton.ac.uk
Information available at interview and in 16-18 Travel Guide by visiting:
brooksbymelton.ac.uk

Gateway Sixth Form College (Leicester):
Telephone: 0116 274 4500
(Student services)
E-Mail: studentservices@gateway.ac.uk
Website: gateway.ac.uk

Leicester College (Leicester):
To discuss any travel queries with a member of the Student Advice and Guidance Team:
Telephone: 0116 224 2240 or 0116 224 4048

For information regarding travel provision for students with learning difficulties contact the Travel Coordinator: Telephone: 0116 224 2240 extension 2098

For any other travel queries:
Website: leicestercollege.ac.uk
E-Mail: info@leicestercollege.ac.uk

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Loughborough College (Leicestershire):
Telephone: 01509 517 140
E-Mail: dez.gentlemen@loucoll.ac.uk
Website: loucoll.ac.uk

North Warwickshire & South Leicestershire College (Leicestershire):
Customer Service Team:
Telephone: 0330 058 3000
Email: enquiries@nwslc.ac.uk
Website: nwslc.ac.uk

Wyggeston and Queen Elizabeth I College (Leicester):
Divisional administrators 'The Hub'
Telephone: 0116 255 4629
Email: enquiries@wqe.ac.uk
Website: wqe.ac.uk

Stephenson College (Leicestershire):
Telephone: 01530 836 136
Email: services@stephensoncoll.ac.uk
Website: stephensoncoll.ac.uk

5. Travel support from the government

As it is not a statutory requirement to provide Post 16 travel the Council expect all eligible students to apply for a bursary fund. Details of funds are noted below:

5.1 The 16-19 Bursary Fund

The 16 to 19 Bursary Fund provides financial support to help young people overcome specific barriers to participation, so they can remain in education.

There are 2 types of 16 to 19 bursaries:

1. A vulnerable bursary of up to £1,200 a year for young people in one of the defined vulnerable groups below:

    - in care
    - care leavers
    - in receipt of Income Support, or Universal Credit in place of Income Support, in their own right
    - in receipt of Employment and Support Allowance or Universal Credit and Disability Living or Personal Independence Payments in their own right
    - discretionary bursaries which institutions award to meet individual needs, for example, help with the cost of travel, meals, books and equipment

2. Discretionary bursaries which institutions award to meet individual needs, for example, help with the cost of travel, meals, books and equipment

    To be eligible for the discretionary bursary young people must:

- be aged 16 or over but under 19 at 31 August 2026 or
- be aged 19 or over at 31 August 2026 and have an Education, Health and Care Plan
- be aged 19 or over at 31 August 2026 and continuing on a study programme they began aged 16 to 18 ('19+ continuers')
- be studying a programme that is subject to inspection by a public body which assures quality (such as Ofsted), the provision must also be funded by either a government funding agency or the local authority

Schools and colleges are responsible for managing both types of bursary. Young people who want to apply for support from the bursary fund should contact their chosen school or college to make an application.

Further information: 16 to 19 Bursary Fund (GOV.UK website)

5.2 Personal Independence Payment (PIP)

Personal Independence Payment (PIP) can help with extra living costs if you have both:

- a long-term physical or mental health condition or disability
- difficulty doing certain everyday tasks or getting around because of your condition

You can get PIP even if you're working, have savings or are getting most other benefits. The mobility element of PIP could be used to support home to school transport.

How PIP works

There are 2 parts to PIP:

- a daily living part - if you need help with everyday tasks
- a mobility part - if you need help with getting around.

Whether you get one or both parts and how much you get depends on how difficult you find everyday tasks and getting around.

Mobility part

You might get the mobility part of PIP if you need help with:

- working out a route and following it
- physically moving around
- leaving your home

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You do not have to have a physical disability to get the mobility part. You might also be eligible if you have difficulty getting around because of a cognitive or mental health condition, like anxiety.

Website: Personal Independence Payment (PIP) (GOV.UK)

If you receive the enhanced rate mobility part of a PIP you may also be eligible to join the Motability scheme to support access to a car, scooter or wheelchair.

Website: Motability Scheme | Lease a car, WAV, scooter or wheelchair

5.3 Young parents / Care to Learn

If you are a young parent under 20, Care to Learn can help pay for your childcare and related travel costs, up to £160 per child per week, while you're learning.

Care to Learn can help with the cost of:

- childcare, including deposit and registration fees
- a childcare 'taster' session (up to 5 days)
- keeping your childcare place over the summer holidays
- taking your child to the childcare provider

Types of childcare

The childcare provider must be Ofsted registered and can be a:

- childminder
- pre-school playgroup
- day nursery
- out of school club

If your child needs specialist childcare, the provider must also be on the Care Quality Commission's register for specialist provision.

If you want a relative to get Care to Learn for looking after your child, they need to be both:

- providing registered childcare for children they're not related to
- living apart from you and your child

Payments

Childcare payments go directly to your childcare provider. Before your childcare provider can be paid:

- your childcare provider needs to confirm your child's attendance
- your school or college needs to confirm that you're attending your course

Payments for travel costs go to your school or college - they'll either pay you or arrange travel for you.

Payments will stop if:

- you stop attending your course
- you finish your course
- your child stops attending childcare

Eligibility

You can get Care to Learn if:

- you're a parent under 20 at the start of your course
- you're the main carer for your child
- you live in England
- you're either a British citizen or a national of a European Economic Area (EEA) country
- your course is publicly funded (check with your school or college)
- your childcare provider is registered with Ofsted or the Care Quality Commission

Type of course

Care to Learn is only available for courses in England that have some public funding.

This includes courses that take place in:

- schools
- school sixth forms
- sixth form colleges
- other colleges and learning providers, including Foundation Learning
- your community at Children's Centres

Young parents are also entitled to apply for an Under 19 Bus Only Ticket or for those aged 19 and over can apply for the 19 – 25 card.

For more information, please visit Care to learn how to claim (GOV.UK)

6. Council support for young people without special educational needs or disabilities

Please note that there are **no free bus passes available for learners aged 16-19 through the city council**. However, a flexi-ticket bus ticket is available to purchase for Leicester resident pupils over statutory school age if the student is aged 16, 17 or 18 at the start of the college year.

The pass allows travel on multiple bus companies to get to school/college. Details of the pass are available on the Choose How you Move website.

There are alternatives to the flexi-ticket. If you only need to use a bus from one operator, you could get better value in terms of price and flexibility by purchasing a season ticket directly from a commercial bus operator. Before you apply for any bus

pass or ticket, we strongly urge you to consider all the commercially available alternatives.

7. Council support for young people with special educational needs or a disability (SEND)

Many young people in Post 16 Education and older with SEND are able to travel independently or accompanied by a parent, carer, or guardian, using public transport, and the council cannot offer services to replace parental responsibility.

Many young people with a special educational need (SEND) may also be able to travel with a parent or guardian accompanying them.

For those with a diagnosed SEND or as part of Preparing for Adulthood, as detailed on our SEND Local Offer website, we also support Young People with Independent Travel Training.

7.1 Young people aged 16 - 19 with SEND

~~Those already in receipt of SEND Transport in Year 12 in the 2024/2025 academic year will continue to receive support in the 2025/2026 academic year ie in Year 13, to support the transition in policy.~~

To be considered for travel assistance, a young person must meet each of the following conditions:

i) the young person must be resident in Leicester City; and

ii) the young person must have a complex SEND need and a placement specified in an Education Health and Care Plan. A complex SEND need for the purposes of this policy is where a young person has:

   a) A diagnosed terminal illness that has severe impact on their current physical and / or mental health and that is likely to significantly reduce their life expectancy and/or;
   b) If required to travel independently, the student's SEND needs or disability would jeopardise his/her safety or that of others and/or
   c) The student has a mobility difficulty which requires specialised seating or a specialised vehicle e.g. tail-lift access that is not available to them (including on public transport where that has to be relied upon) and / or
   d) The learner is likely to require medical intervention or personal care during the journey to and from school;

iii) the young person must be attending the nearest appropriate education or training provider; and

iv) either:

a. the education or training provider is more than 3 miles walking distance from the young person's home, or
b. if the walking distance is 3 miles or less, the young person is unable to walk to and from the education or training provider because of a disability or because the walking route is unsafe; and

v) the young person must be attending a full-time, publicly funded course (a full-time course is a programme of at least 580 study hours per year).

A young person who satisfies each of the conditions above will be eligible for a personal transport budget, as explained in section 10.1 below. In "limited exceptional circumstances", and where there would otherwise be "demonstrable financial hardship", additional assistance may be offered. Section 10 below details the types of travel assistance that may be available.

Whether exceptional circumstances exist are determined by the Strategic Director of Social Care (or another officer exercising delegated authority) in the light of the specific circumstances of that case following an application. In each case, the Council will require appropriate evidence as to any claimed exceptional circumstances. Applications can be made in cases where a young person or a parent/carer believes the young person's needs are such that the standard PTB offer will be insufficient and without further support they could not travel to attend their place of education. Other reasons may exceptionally be considered.

None of the following is (taken in isolation) likely to constitute an exceptional circumstance:

- Single parent families.
- Parent(s)/ carers who work.
- Having other children to look after and/or at other schools.
- Travelling to an independent school out of area.
- Parents/carers/students unable to drive or having access to a car.
- Student uses a wheelchair.

There would otherwise be 'demonstrable financial hardship' if in receipt of one of the following:

- Income support
- Income-based jobseeker's allowance
- Income-related employment and support allowance
- Support under Part VI of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999
- Child tax credit (provided you're not also entitled to working tax credit and have an annual gross income of no more than £16,190)
- The guarantee element of state pension credit

- Working tax credit run-on - paid for four weeks after you stop qualifying for working tax credit.
- Universal credit with annual net earned income of less than £7,400

For children and young people up to their 18*th* birthday, the financial hardship test will be based around the income of parents / carers. For adult learners, the financial situation of the adult learner will be considered in the context of the household income.

The fact that transport or travel assistance may have been provided in previous years does not indicate that the young person will be provided with travel assistance, under this policy. Accordingly, any planning that a young person and/or their family makes for future arrangements should take this into account.

7.2 Young people aged 19 - 25 with SEND

The arrangements for young people with SEND aged 16 to 19 also apply to young adults with SEND aged 19-25.

Section 7.1 applies to young adults with SEND aged between 19 and 25.

8. Apprenticeships

For students on traineeships or apprenticeships, the learning provider is responsible for ensuring that reasonable expenses are met in full where they are needed to overcome barriers to learning. These may include the cost of travelling to or from the place of learning or work placement. Please contact your learning provider for more information. Students may also be eligible for a bursary (see Bursary Fund section above).

9. Those not in education, employment or training (NEET)

Connexions Leicester is a careers service for young people who live in Leicester City and are aged 16 to 19, or up to 25 for young people with special educational needs or disabilities (SEND).

Connexions also have specialist personal advisers who are trained to work with young people with SEND to help them make decisions about their future. Please contact

Telephone: 0116 454 1770
Email: connexions@leicester.gov.uk
Website: Leicester Employment Hub

Address:
Connexions,
2 Wellington Street,
Leicester,
LE1 6HL

10. Type of travel assistance available

10.1 Personal transport budget (PTB)

Personal Transport Budgets (PTBs) are designed to give families the freedom and to flexibility to make travel arrangements that best meet their family's needs. They enable parents to retain responsibility for ensuring their child attends school whilst providing the means to do so when the child is eligible.

For further information and to apply please see Personal Travel Budget (SEND Local Offer)

10.2 Independent travel training (ITT)

Independent travel training provides young people with tailored and practical assistance to travel safely by public travel, on foot or by bicycle to their school, college and placement. It also supports young people socially, to access other key services and connect with friends and family.

Independent travel is an essential life skill, and helps to better prepare young people for adulthood, and for accessing further education and employment by raising their confidence in their abilities.

The council's Independent Travel Trainer's will work with schools and colleges to be able to deliver travel training to their students.

If a young person is identified as potentially suitable for travel training, their parent/carer will be contacted by the council or their school to arrange a consultation with the nominated travel trainer.

Following the consultation, the young person and family (where appropriate) will then be supported to undertake the training programme. If they are not ready or suitable for training, a future review date will be set, and they will continue to be provided with travel assistance if they remain eligible.

Further information about Independent Travel Training can be found on our Local Offer page.

10.3 Public transport bus pass

Where young people are eligible and the method of transport is determined to be appropriate to offer but the child or young person requires accompanying, the council may offer a public transport bus pass to a parent / carer to meet its obligation

to provide free home to school travel assistance View details of eligibility and how to apply (leicester.gov.uk website).

10.4 Contracted minibus, private hire vehicle or taxi

This includes but may not be limited to:

- Pick up and drop off form/to a collection point or central location locally
- Shared or individual, private hire vehicle or minibus for groups of young people
- Individual taxi, private hire vehicle or minibus for solo travellers (exceptional circumstances only)

11. Useful contact details

11.1 Leicester City Council

If you want information about the assistance that is provided by Leicester City Council for mainstream pupils, call Education Travel on:

Telephone: 0116 454 1009 (Option 2)

Website: School travel (leicester.gov.uk)

If you need individual special needs travel assistance, call the Special Education Service on 0116 454 2050 or email SENDTravelSupport@leicester.gov.uk

If you have any comments on this document that would assist in the policy making, including in-year changes, please contact us as follows:

SEND Transport
Special Education Needs Service
Pinder Road
Leicester
LE3 9RN

11.2 Department for Education

Website: Subsidised college travel 16 to 19 (GOV.UK)

11.3 Bus routes and timetable information

Telephone: 0871 200 2233 (calls cost 12p per minute plus your phone company's access charge)
Telephone: 0145 563 2719
Website: Plan Your Journey | Traveline

11.4 Learner Support Service

Residential Support Scheme

Website: Residential support scheme (GOV.UK)

12. Applying for council travel support

Applications for travel support for children and young people with special educational needs or disabilities should be made via the website.

Website: Transport to school and college (leicester.gov.uk)

Applications for travel assistance for students age 16 and above in colleges of further education to commence at the start of the Autumn Term, should be made wherever possible by the last day of the summer term prior to the start of the new academic year. The LA cannot guarantee to provide travel assistance from the first day of the Autumn Term if applications are received after this date. Where late applications are submitted, parents/carers and/or sixth form students may have to make their own interim travel arrangements, the cost of which cannot normally be reimbursed.

Website: Personal Transport Budget (SEND Local Offer)

Young people attending further education establishments will need to re-apply annually, providing evidence of both satisfactory attendance and progress.

13. Appeals

13.1 Appeals Process for pupils with a special educational need or disability

Should parents/carers wish to appeal against the council's decision not to provide travel or against the mode of travel provided they should email SENDTravelSupport@leicester.gov.uk or write to:

Transport Appeals
Special Education Needs Service
Pindar Road
Leicester
LE3 9RN

The council has a 2-stage review and appeals process as recommended by the Department for Education. The timings for responses may be extended if additional time is required to gather supporting information or delayed by school/college holidays.

Please note that whilst the review and appeal process takes place the parent/carer will remain responsible for arranging and funding for any travel arrangements that a parent/carer may feel is necessary. Throughout the appeals process parents may wish to seek independent advocacy support and advice

The appeals procedure is in two stages:

Stage 1: Review by a Senior Officer of the council.

- A parent/carer has 20 working days from the date of the travel decision letter, to make a formal written request asking for a review of the decision.

- The written request should detail why the parent/carer or young person believes the decision should be reviewed and give details of any personal and/or family circumstances, including medical evidence, they believe should be considered when making the decision is reviewed.

- Within 20 working days of receipt of a written request, a Senior Officer will review the original decision and send a detailed written notification of the outcome of their review, including information about how the parent/carer can escalate their case to stage two (if appropriate)

Stage 2: Review by an Independent Appeal Panel:

- If a parent/carer are dissatisfied with the outcome of the review of their case, they have 20 working days from the receipt of their decision letter to make a written request to escalate the matter to stage two.

- Within 40 working days of receipt of the parent/carer's written request an Independent Appeal Panel will be arranged to consider both written and (if the parent /carer wishes to attend the panel hearing) verbal representations from both the parent/carer and officers involved in their case.

The Independent Appeal Panel members will be independent of the original decision-making process (but not required to be independent of the local authority) and suitably experienced, to ensure a balance between meeting the needs of the parent/carers and the local authority.

If a parent/carer or student is still not satisfied with the outcome of the appeal, there is no further right of appeal to the council. However, there is still the right to appeal to the Secretary of State or to take independent legal action.

If a parent/carer or young person feels that their appeal has not been treated fairly or in accordance with the LA's policy, the Local Government Ombudsman can be contacted for help and advice on:

Telephone: 0300 061 0614

Website: Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman

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Appendix F

Leicester City Council

Leicester City Council Scrutiny Review

HNB Task Group - Report and Recommendations

Children, Young People and Education Scrutiny Commission

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1. Acronyms:

AP – Alternative Provision
ASD – Autism Spectrum Disorder
BERA – Best Endeavour Reasonable Adjustments
CIPFA - Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy
CYPE – Children, Young People and Education
DBV – Delivering Better Value
DfE – Department for Education
DSG – Dedicated Schools Grant
DSP – Designated Special Provision
EHCP – Education and Health Care Plan
ELSA – Emotional Literacy Support Assistant
ESFA – Education and Skills Funding Agency
ESOL – English for Speakers of Other Languages
HNB – High Needs Block
LA – Local Authority
LCC – Leicester City Council
LGA – Local Government Association
PA – Personal Assistant
SEN – Special Educational Needs
SENDCO - Special Educational Needs and/or Disabilities Coordinator
SEND – Special Education Needs and Disabilities
SENDIASS - Special Educational Needs and Disability Information, Advice and Support Service

2. Participating Commission Members:

Councillor Batool (Chair)

Councillor Bonham
Councillor Moore

3. Evidence to the Commission was provided by:

Amy Smith - Head of Service Early Help & Disabled Children's Service

Jessica Nicholls – Head of Service – SEND Support Service

Dr Joycelin Eze-Okubuiro - Co-opted member of CYPE

Lucy Synclere – Leicester City SENDIASS Manager

Shelley Piercy – SEND Inclusion Transformation Manager

Sophie Maltby – Director of SEND and Education

Schools:

Beaumont Leys School - Andy York (Deputy Head Teacher)

Babington Academy - Fiona Laywood (Head Teacher)

Crown Hills Community College - Louise Glasby (SENDCo)

Imperial Avenue Infant School - Libby Smith (Head Teacher)

Netherhall Mead Academy - Sarah Naylor (Principal)

Stokes Wood Primary School - Megan Williams (Assistant Head Teacher) and Liz Christensen (Headteacher)

Tudor Grange Samworth Academy - Jemma Cox (SENDCo), Cathy Robinson (Associate Principal), Stacey Nicholls (PA to the Principal), Neil Tansley (Chair of Governors), Anika Collins (Head of School Primary Phase), Aiden Bannon (Principal)

Local Implementation Unit | Local Accountability and Improvement Division, DfE - Paul Cunningham

4. Foreword – Chair

Chair's Foreword

The Children, Young People and Education Scrutiny Commission identified the need for an in-depth evaluation of the efficiency and effectiveness of the SEND High Needs Block (HNB). This review has taken place within a challenging national context. The SEND system has been widely acknowledged by the National Audit Office, CIPFA and the Department for Education as financially unsustainable, with demand significantly outstripping funding. Most local authorities now carry High Needs Block deficits, and

Leicester's position reflects this national picture rather than isolated local failure. The extension of the statutory override to 2028 provides short-term relief, but does not remove the need for urgent, long-term reform.

While financial pressures are significant, the Task Group was clear that the focus of this review must remain on outcomes and experiences. Evidence gathered from schools, council officers, SENDIASS, families and young people highlighted persistent challenges, including delays in diagnosis and specialist placements, pressure on mainstream schools, limited local capacity and an increasingly adversarial culture around tribunals. These issues not only place strain on budgets but also undermine confidence in the system and risk poorer outcomes for children and young people.

At the same time, the review identified clear examples of good practice and innovation across the city. School visits demonstrated how early intervention, inclusive behaviour approaches, bespoke provision and strong partnerships can improve attendance, reduce exclusions and deliver better outcomes while making more effective use of HNB funding. Initiatives such as internal alternative provision models, Designated Special Provision units and culturally responsive, family-centred approaches show what is possible when support is tailored to need.

The Task Group also recognised the positive progress being made through Leicester City Council's SEND Transformation Plan and its work with the Department for Education's Change Partnership Programme. The commendation received from the DfE reflects a strong commitment to collaboration, innovation and improvement, although members acknowledged that many reforms would take time to evidence impact.

The recommendations set out in this report are intended to be constructive, realistic and forward looking. They focus on improving transparency around HNB funding, prioritising early intervention and prevention, expanding local specialist provision, strengthening mediation and parental engagement, promoting inclusive practice in mainstream schools, and learning from best practice nationally. Together, they aim to improve outcomes for children and young people with SEND while addressing the significant financial and operational pressures facing the system.

I would like to thank the members of the Task Group, all the schools and services that contributed evidence, and the parents, carers and young people whose voices informed this review. I also acknowledge the work of council officers and partners who contributed evidence openly and constructively.

It is my hope that this report will support informed decision-making, strengthen trust, and contribute to a more inclusive, resilient and financially sustainable SEND system in Leicester, one that places children and young people at its

heart while recognising the realities faced by schools, families and the local authority alike.

Councillor Misbah Batool
Chair, Children, Young People and Education Scrutiny Commission

5. Executive Summary

I am pleased that Scrutiny have decided to review the High Needs Block and SEND provision across the City.

The aim of this report is to provide detail on a scrutiny-led review of High Needs Block provision. The report centres on processes and systems within Leicester City, whilst recognising the national challenge faced around SEND and the High Needs Block. It has been recognised by the government, National Audit Office and CIPFA that there are significant challenges and systemic failings in the SEND system, meaning most of the Local Authorities nationally are recording deficit budgets for their High Needs Block. Currently the deficit in Leicester City is around 75 of 150 Local Authorities nationally.

5.1 Aims and Outcomes

5.2 **The overall aim is underpinned by the following objectives:**

- Understanding the allocation and utilisation of HNB funding.
- Evaluating tribunal costs and external consultant expenses.
- Assessing the sufficiency of provision within mainstream and special schools.
- Examining the effectiveness of the HNB recovery plan.
- Identifying potential improvements to enhance resource distribution and sustainability.

5.3 **The outcomes the Task Group aim to achieve include:**

- Improved transparency in resource allocation.
- Enhanced efficiency and effectiveness of the HNB.
- Better understanding of stakeholder perspectives and experiences.
- Development of actionable recommendations to improve the HNB framework.

6. Report:

6.1 a) Scrutiny Rationale

6.2 There have been increasing numbers of children and young people with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) and an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP). which has resulted in increasing demand for provision in schools and for special school places. This is a national concern. In January 2024, the National Audit Office estimated that there were 1.9 million children and young people aged 0-25 with Special Educational Needs (SEN).

6.4 It is the local authority's responsibility to ensure that all children and young people with SEND receive appropriate support. This includes children and young people with an EHCP. An EHCP is a legally enforceable entitlement, unlike SEN support. The number of EHCP's has increased 140% between 2015 and 2024 (*National Audit Office 2024).*

6.5 The High Needs Block (HNB) is part of ring-fenced funding called the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) which local authorities receive from the Government. The HNB funding is for the additional support required in schools by children with SEND. Increasing demand has put pressure on school budgets, particularly the High Needs Block as demand has significantly outstripped the funding received.

6.6 The result of these increases has been that the SEND system has been declared financially unsustainable by the National Audit Office.

6.7 Deficits in the HNB are currently held in a ring-fenced reserve. This reserve is held separately due to the Governments statutory override which was recently extended until March 2028.

6.8 There is widespread concern that once this is removed it could lead to the issuing of Section 114 notices for many councils.

6.9 As well as the clear financial strain placed upon local authorities and schools, there is a lack of confidence in the SEND system from families and the children with a sense that the provision falls short of expectations. This can be evidenced in a lack of consistent improvements in outcomes for children and young people with SEN since 2019 (National Audit Office 2024). Many parents have felt there is a battle for support, long wait times and children may not be in the most appropriate settings (Department of Education 2023). This adversarial nature is further adding to the financial strain of the HNB and DSG, with many decisions requiring mediation or going to tribunals as parents feel they need to fight for the support their children need.

6.10 There are other organisations that impact the SEN experience such as health partners, however that is outside of the scope of this Task Group.

7. Scrutiny Approach

7.1 It is relatively commonplace for scrutiny commissions to request further detail on particular topics. This can result in additional information being provided to subsequent commission meetings or through informal scrutiny meetings.

7.2 The Chair of the Children, Young People and Education scrutiny commission requested that a scrutiny Task Group be formed to consider the topic of the High Needs Block further. Questions were raised in the scrutiny commission around transparency of the HNB funding, tribunal costs and external consultant expenses, the sufficiency of provision within schools and the effectiveness of the HNB recovery plan.

7.3 The principal aims of the Task Group were therefore to evaluate the efficiency and effectiveness of the HNB funding, ensuring it was appropriately allocated to best support children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND). This includes giving further scrutiny to current spending, tribunal costs and analysing sufficiency in mainstream and special schools. Additionally, the Task Group would benchmark comparable local authorities to identify best practise which could be implemented in Leicester.

7.4 This method of informal scrutiny allows discussion and evidence as well as reflection and further enquiries between the sessions. As part of the evidence gathering to aid the scrutiny process, school visits would be undertaken to understand the utilisation of the HNB and the impact on outcomes for children and young people. The Task Group would also hear from stakeholders including the children, parents, carers, professionals and schools. Evidence would be provided in the form of discussion, presentations, case studies, school visits and desktop research to benchmark other local authorities.

7.5 The sessions and visits took place between March and May 2025. The data in this report reflects this time scale. [Appendix 4]

7.6 The first session provided the Task Group with a detailed overview in the form of a presentation [Appendix 1] which gave a breakdown of the funding and the allocation and utilisation of the HNB. It provided tribunals data that the SEND held and gave a run through of the HNB recovery plan and dashboard.

7.7 The site visits were to four schools - Tudor Grange Samworth Academy which had a high number of permanent exclusions, Stokes Wood Primary School which had mainstreamed alternative provision and adapted teaching, Crown

Hills Community College which had low permanent exclusion rates and Spinney Hills Designated Special Provision unit.

7.8 At the second session, stakeholders were invited to provide evidence of their utilisation of the HNB and their views and experiences on the effectiveness of the HNB. The Task Group received evidence from Babington Academy, Beaumont Leys School, Imperial Avenue Infant School, Nether Hall School, SENDIASS Leicester and Leicester City Council's (LCC) Early Help and Disabled Children team and the SEND support service team. Members of the Task Group also received anonymised case studies [Appendix 3] ahead of the meeting and a video on the support from the local authority to parents and children in their own voices.

7.9 A final session was intended to discuss the evidence and conclusions; however, this was cancelled due to Members unavailability.

7.10 a) Overview

7.11 It is worth noting that SEND provision is consistently in the national rhetoric due to the widespread acceptance that the current system is not working. It has been acknowledged that the system was financially unsustainable and national level interventions are required as demand continues to outstrip funding everywhere. Over half of councils will become insolvent when the temporary override ends in March 2026 (*LGA 2025*).

7.12 Due to the concern around this issue, it should be noted that there have been several papers addressing the system including the National Audit Office report *'Support for Children and Young People with Special Educational Needs'* (2023) and The Department for Education's *Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) and Alternative Provision Improvement Plan* (2023). Reforms are expected to the system from the Government but so far these have not been announced. Coverage includes: Westminster Hall debate, Dedicated Schools Grant, 23 April 2025 | Local Government Association Local Government Association 09 Jun 2025.

7.13 In Leicester, it was estimated that children and young people with an EHCP had increased to 4.6% in 2024/25, and the percentage of pupils with SEN but no EHCP had also increased to 12.3%. The increase is in line with the national trends, but Leicester's rates sit just below the national average of 5.3% and 14.2% respectively.

8. Evidence

8.1 The Task Group's first session was an overview from the Leicester City Council SEND team to provide a deeper dive into the HNB [Appendix 1]. The team has undergone changes to tackle the issues faced efficiently and a new post was recruited to support the initiatives and it is hoped this will shortly be evidenced.

8.2 The cost of tribunals had not been recorded efficiently since the records began in 2020. As of December 2024, when the new manager was in post, it became a priority to robustly monitor tribunal costs and to introduce a new model of staffing for tribunals which would be more supportive for parents. The data has suggested that the numbers of tribunals is increasing, which is in line with the national picture and the 'adversarial tone'.

8.3 The SEND team are working with the Department for Education (DfE) through the Change Partnership Programme on the SEND Transformation Plan and the High Needs Block Recovery Management Plan. It is important to note that many of these initiatives will take time to evidence their impact. The DfE have commended the team on their innovative work in addressing the challenges faced and have commented:

Jointly leading the department's Change Programme in the East Midlands alongside Leicestershire and Rutland, Leicester City have played a key role in strengthening local partnerships and enabling collaboration between the Local Authority, Health (ICB and LPT), school leaders, parents, carers, children and young people.

These partnerships have collectively delivered the aims of the programme at a regional and local area level, including the testing of new and creative approaches, acting as a trusted partner to provide feedback to help shape policy thinking, and driving local innovative inclusive practice to improve outcomes and experiences for children and young people.

Colleagues across Leicester City have identified opportunities, engaged and collaborated with key stakeholders and partners, driving positive change across the City and the three local authorities covering the ICB footprint, sharing best practice and lessons learnt across the East Midlands, and will continue to do so up to March 2026 and beyond.

Paul Cunningham, Local Implementation Unit | Local Accountability and Improvement Division, DfE.

8.4 The SEND Transformation Plan has identified areas of development to support more efficient use of the HNB funding. These include:

- Aim 1: New DfE Reforms – The SEND and AP Change Programme

- Aim 2: Developing Ordinarily Available offer: LA, Schools, Settings & Colleges
- Aim 3: Local Authority Process reforms & Sufficiency
- Aim 4: Increase confidence for parents and carers
- Aim 5: Placement reforms
- Aim 6: Stakeholder Engagement

8.5 The SEND team have been working closely with stakeholders as part of the drive to make more effective and efficient use of the HNB. Evidence was provided by Babington Academy, Beaumont Leys School, Imperial Avenue, Netherhall School and SENDIASS [presentations in Appendix 2] on how they have innovatively used HNB to best support SEND children and young people and their experiences working within the system.

8.6 Stakeholders emphasised the positive experience they have had working with LCC. The honest and transparent relationship that has been built around the HNB been crucial and has allowed working groups to be formed where sharing of best practise and the development of strategies that have a positive impact within the schools and for the families can occur. Stakeholders highlighted that it is very important for the issues facing children and young people to be addressed at a much younger age.

8.7 A huge challenge facing the schools was that for education to be truly inclusive for all abilities, provision must be bespoke. An example cited was the Designated Special Provision (DSP) unit at Babington Academy has 10 children who have to be grouped together, but they have hugely different abilities.

8.8 Members heard how one model is not suitable for all schools or children. For example, in some schools a one-to-one model worked well for yet at others it could leave children and staff frustrated. This further emphasises the above point and the need for bespoke support.

8.9 A recurring issue Members heard about was the limited spaces for supporting children and young people with SEND. This has meant children are being sent out of the city to be educated at a high cost to the local authority. To help mitigate this issue, Beaumont Leys School and LCC have been working together on a 2-year pilot. Additional funding was provided for a 10 place provison. The school created internal alternative provision to help address students' needs and prevent escalation or the need for an EHCP. Although money was spent earlier as an intervention, it prevents further costs and shows signs of saving costs. The school has seen improved attendance for the students and no permanent exclusions in 3 years, as well as a reduction in behavioural incidents.

8.10 Members heard from SENDIASS Leicester who provide advice and support to families navigating the system, but particularly if things are not going well. The service is funded by LCC but has helped prevent cases going to tribunals through mediation and support. The service is increasingly being contacted via social channels. SENDIASS emphasised the importance of good relationships with the SEND Teams in resolving concerns and supporting families.

8.11 The Family Hubs programme was highlighted by the representative from LCC Early Years Help as it has the SEND Local Area Partnership. This is part of a co-production offer working with the Change programme where a designated social care officer works proactively to encourage co-production between services and families. It is hoped there will be more social care input into EHCP's.

8.12 The Task Group was shown a powerful video from LCC and the Big Mouth Forum which captured the voices of young people, parents and carers and their experiences of the SEND support. It was highlighted that these communications would be even more powerful if shared more widely and the role of social media was raised.

9. Case Studies

Challenges and Opportunities in SEND Provision

Overview

The case studies highlight systemic challenges in meeting the needs of children and young people (CYP) with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND). Delays in accessing special school placements are creating significant pressures on mainstream schools, which are often required to implement temporary solutions to support children and young people. Whilst some support, training and resource is available from the Local Authority this is not always sufficient to effectively meet need. These delays can in some cases negatively affect pupils' mental health, learning, and behaviour, and increase safeguarding risks.

Whilst there are examples of effective interventions particularly through the SEND Support teams and multi-agency collaboration the system remains overly reliant on short-term interim measures and informal arrangements. The High Needs Block (HNB) Focus

calls for stronger long-term planning, expanded specialist capacity, strategic workforce development, and greater support for families. There is also a clear need for culturally sensitive approaches, active family engagement, and inclusive peer environments.

Feedback Identified in visits:

1. **Delays in Special School Placements**
    - CYP remain in less suitable mainstream settings for extended periods.
    - Consequences could include deteriorating mental health, disrupted learning, and behavioural challenges.
    - Mainstream schools may have to utilise ad-hoc provision.
2. **Pressure on Mainstream Schools**
    - Insufficient expertise, staffing, and funding to support high-need pupils.
    - Risks could include staff burnout, potential safeguarding concerns and negative outcomes for pupils.
3. **Over-Reliance on Informal Provision**
    - Schools improvising internal SEND units without formal structures or sustainability.
    - Reflects wider systemic gaps and lack of government support.
4. **Delays or Barriers in Diagnosis**
    - Parental hesitation and cultural factors contribute to delays in autism and other neurodevelopmental diagnoses.
    - This results in missed opportunities for early intervention.
5. **Positive Impact of Joined Up, Culturally Sensitive Support**
    - Case studies (e.g. AH) show that culturally responsive, family-centred approaches can lead to significant progress.
6. **Transition and Post-16 Gaps**
    - Lack of clear pathways for CYP with ongoing needs, especially at the Key Stage 4–Post 16 transition.
7. **Inconsistent Use of Communication and Sensory Tools**
    - Evidence-based tools (e.g. Colourful Semantics, visual aids) are effective but not consistently adopted.
8. **Effective use of High Needs Block funding**
    - The LCI team (and other SEND Support teams) play a pivotal role in supporting schools but are overstretched, raising questions about long-term sustainability.
9. **Variability in Parent Partnerships**
    - Outcomes improve where schools actively engage parents, but practice is inconsistent.
10. **Recognising the Strengths of CYP**

- Emphasising pupils' talents and achievements enhances inclusion, self-esteem, and wellbeing.

Strategic Challenges

1. Rising demand for special school placements.
2. Need for formal, funded interim provision within mainstream settings.

3. Delays in diagnosis and early identification.
4. Increased risk of exclusions due to unmet SEND needs.
5. Further requirement for specialist staff and training in mainstream schools.

Examples of Good Practice

- SEND Support Team interventions preventing exclusions and improving behaviour.
- Structured approaches such as Colourful Semantics and Attention Autism.
- Peer inclusion models (e.g. Ethan's case) demonstrating strong outcomes.
- Culturally sensitive, family-centred approaches (e.g. AH) resulting in transformative change.

Questions and Strategic Recommendations

- What is the current average wait time for special school placements?
- How is the council supporting mainstream schools accommodating complex needs pupils?
- Can SEND Support be expanded to meet increasing demand?
- What action is being taken to address diagnosis delays and workforce shortages?
- How are family engagement and cultural responsiveness being embedded across provision?
- Are schools being trained and resourced to implement evidence-based interventions and inclusive practices?

School Visits

The schools visited were chosen to allow consideration of low exclusion rates, inclusion in mainstream classrooms, adapted teaching and high numbers of permanent exclusions. This would contribute to the scope of the task group by identifying what has been done well in schools and where additional support and resources may be required to meet demand.

Tudor Grange Samworth Academy

The school has experienced high levels of permanent exclusions which they are hoping to address through the development of an Internal Alternative Provision unit. 69% percent of pupils are on the SEN register and there was an increase from 7 to 30 children with EHCPs in a single year. 14 students are awaiting specialist provision, and the development of this unit could allow them to stay within the school.

Significant work has gone into improving the annual reviews for EHCPs including digitalised plans and targets that teachers can access readily and to help ensure progress is being made for the children.

The school trust holds disadvantage committee meetings, which break down data on progress and there are staff briefings which highlight the key SEND concerns and any home/school dimensions, which are then discussed by the SENCO and college leaders.

There were 4 permanent exclusions in the last year. The risk of exclusion to the child is assessed ahead of the decision. The number of exclusions could be higher, but the school has invested a large proportion of its budget into preventing exclusion now. There is a mentoring team onsite with a specialist bereavement service, thrive support with emotional regulation and a school nurse provides drop-in sessions for sleep and anxiety. The HNB funding covers the cost for the mentoring for students, Forest School, a School Nurse, interventions & 5 Thrive practitioners.

Stokes Wood Primary School

This school was chosen as a good example of mainstream inclusion and adapted teaching to the Task Group. The school currently has 30 children with an EHCP. The school has creatively created a ‘constructive holding’ for children who are not suitable for the mainstream classrooms as there is no suitable provision for the children elsewhere. This is called the Rainbow Room and follows a sensory curriculum. The classroom capacity is now full at 11. All of the children in this room have EHCPs or are waiting for the process to be completed; and are non-verbal.

The school are expecting another 6 children that will need to be in the Rainbow Room with the intake in September so urgently require space. Each child within this provision receives funding from the HNB and the school have pooled the funding together to provide a group provision to maximise the efficiency of resource. The HNB funding currently covers a teacher, teaching assistants to run this alternative curriculum.

It was noted that the Rainbow Room provides specialist provision for children with SEND and is incredibly impressive. It is an example of the creative practice that our schools are demonstrating in this challenging climate.

As part of the adapted teaching, the school uses strategies and support staff to enable inclusion for children with communication difficulties with the teacher actively getting children involved. The children have short breaks for movement or alternatives before returning to the classroom on a rota so as not to be disruptive for other students. The adapted teaching was noticeably child centred, with different children having particular focuses to assist their learning.

Crown Hills Community College

Crown Hills Community College was chosen due to the low rates of exclusion. There are 1500 children on role with 200 SEND and 19 EHCP's.

The staff use BERA which is 'Best Endeavour Reasonable Adjustments' to keep SEND children in mainstream education and to promote inclusivity. Information on each child is given to teachers so they can consider how to adjust the school's behaviour management policy for individual needs, together with a photograph of the child and the features of each specific learning difficulty. There is also online information for teachers for each child who has an EHCP, which lists the key outcomes. The children are withdrawn from mainstream lessons daily for small group teaching. Children who were eligible for exam concessions, but reluctant to accept them are receiving interventions to familiarise them with what was involved and overcome embarrassment. It had also funded work with school leavers.

The funding which came with EHCPs, together with High Needs block money, was used to employ a mentor and to train an Emotional Literacy Support Assistant (ELSA). The High needs block funding helps with the employment of Teaching Assistants, and providing equipment for SEND children.

The school provides as much communication with parents as possible and parents are involved in reviews and ESOL support is available for parents who don't speak English. There are once-a-week staff meetings to discuss key children who are especially vulnerable, to help avoid exclusion. Staff have also been given training in positive behaviour management. The result of this approach by the school was that there have been no exclusions in the current year and no students had been referred to pupil referral units.

Spinney Hills Designated Special Provision unit

The Designated Special Provision (DSP) Unit provides places for 10 Children from year 1 to year 6. The children all have an Education Health Care Plan (EHCP). The children likely to be offered a place are children with communication difficulties and children with an autism diagnosis or who are on the ASD pathway. The DSP is unable to cater for children with complex sensory, physical and medical needs.

This type of provision means children have been able to interact and form friendships outside of the unit, and where appropriate they can attend mainstream classes. This form of provision is an effective use of HNB funding where children may need more support but not a special school.

a) Benchmarking

The Task Group considered other local authorities and national policy to compare the approach in Leicester. It is clearly widely acknowledged and accepted that the HNB funding is a national issue as mentioned in paragraph -.-.

It has been well evidenced in national reports that the HNB deficit is not due to poor management but instead is predominantly the result of the failure of funding to keep up with the demand. This does not mean that there are not best practises which can be identified through scrutinising the current landscape to improve services and efficiency though.

Most local authorities have reported a deficit budget for the HNB and over half would be insolvent if the HNB was brought back into the main budget as is intended March 2026. The DfE introduced 2 national programmes as a result of the financial pressures faced by local authorities – the Safety Valve programme and Delivering Better Value. In the research by the DfE for the Delivering Better Value programme, they found that increasing numbers of EHCP caseloads were driving up expenditure.

All local authorities with deficits to the DSG budget were required to submit a HNB management recovery plan in order for the DfE to assess their level of intervention. The initial draft management recovery plan was discussed with the DfE in August 2023 and has so far enabled LCC to avoid entering the Delivering Better Value or the Safety Valve intervention programmes. This plan has been scrutinised and accepted by the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA). The team now meets 2-3 times a year with the ESFA to discuss the progress of this plan.

In order to benchmark against other local authorities, deficit ranking information was reviewed through desktop research. HNB deficit figures provided by The Institute for Government analysis of DfE, 'LA and school expenditure', 2022/23 were used as the primary source. A range of Local Authorities with varying ranking scores were examined to provide a balanced comparison. The following local authorities were selected as comparators for benchmarking purposes:

LA	Deficit Ranking
Birmingham	16
Liverpool	32
Tower Hamlets	77
Bristol	6
Leicester	87

Birmingham City Council is part of the Delivering Better Value (DBV) programme. Implementation for the programme began in Spring 2024. However, it is important to clarify that there are strict conditions attached to the grant, and the funds cannot be used to cover school deficits. There are 12,108 children with EHCPs. They have 2

new free special schools with 500 places and the surplus in the HNB is confirmed at £38 million. Several factors have contributed to Birmingham's reserve being built up over the past few years including a review of payments in 2023-24 from the HNB which resulted in some services being correctly charged to the General Fund.

Liverpool is on one of the steepest trajectories for increasing EHCP's. The numbers have doubled since 2020 to Jan 2024, and by a further 17% for just 2023-24. They had 2884 ECHPs January 2020 and 5820 in January 2024. They have not been placed in the DBV programme though. A high needs working group was set up in May 2024, with the purpose to work in partnership to ensure appropriate steps are taken to address the financial position of the local authority. This entailed developing strategic solutions to mitigate the deficit and to make recommendations which achieve the best possible provision for 'high needs' pupils from within the 2025/2026 financial envelope. The membership of the group consists of key stakeholders such as headteachers, private, voluntary and independent sector for early years, health partners, council officers, trade union, and the Parent Carers forum.

Tower Hamlets has significant overspend and SEND support is on a five-year improvement journey. There is a projected overspend of £5.2 million on the HNB. There are now steps are in place to reduce the steep trajectory of requests for statutory assessment and the resulting EHCPs as this has contributed to the overspend.

Bristol saw a sustained 32% increase in initial requests for EHCP needs assessments received in 2024, compared to the same period in 2023. Bristol has been taken to court with the claim that the council should have consulted parents about the effect of the Safety Valve Agreements on their children, as the deal came with strings attached, including to support more pupils in mainstream schools rather than costly specialist ones.

Analysis of DBV data returns showed that the primary driver of growth in expenditure is growth in EHCP caseload, accounting for 90.7% of the overall growth in expenditure.

Of the benchmarked local authorities, Liverpool had the highest trajectory for EHCP growth. Birmingham held a surplus, despite a high ECHP count, which was accredited to having a strong financial oversight and clearer funding separation. Preparatory action had been implemented in holding funds back for the DBV. It is important to note that the surplus is ringfenced so cannot be used to offset wider school funding pressures.

f) Summary of Task Group conclusions:

Schools often had high levels of deprivation and inequalities, there is a well evidenced connection with SEND.

Imperial Avenue School and Beaumont Leys were good demonstrations of more bespoke funding models being trialled to support inclusion and reduce the demand for special school places, which helps reduce overall costs for the Local Authority.

There seemed to be confusion from schools over what the HNB funding covered and how this was broken down.

It was clear that schools favoured preventative measures addressing issues from a younger age.

Concerns were raised over how early EHCP plans are given and whether preventative measures could address the raising demand for these.

Schools such as Crown Hills and Beaumont Leys which had changed their behaviour policies seemed to be having greater success reducing exclusions. This approach helps address confidence of children and young people and allows them to build positive relationships.

g) Recommendations:

Introduction

Following extensive evidence gathering between March and May 2025, the High Needs Block (HNB) Task Group has reviewed the pressures, practices, and outcomes associated with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) funding in Leicester.

This document outlines a set of strategic recommendations arising from the visits made, the observations of task group members; and data provided by schools and the council to improve the effectiveness, efficiency, and long-term sustainability of the HNB, with the aim of ensuring better outcomes for children and young people with SEND, while addressing growing demand and financial pressures.

Summary of Recommendations

Improve Transparency of HNB Funding Allocation

Develop a clear, accessible funding guidance document for schools on the national guidance outlining what HNB can and cannot cover, with practical case study examples - Feedback indicated confusion among schools regarding HNB usage. Improved clarity will support better planning, equitable distribution, and accountability.

- Publish clear and accessible summaries of HNB spending, including tribunal costs, consultant fees, the percentage of the HNB funds used to fund support services and provision categories.
- Ensure clear access for the public and schools to the annual public report on HNB allocation, outcomes, and value-for-money analysis.

Prioritise Early Intervention and Prevention

Scale up early intervention models such as the Rainbow Room (Stokes Wood) and Beaumont Leys' pilot internal provision - Preventative approaches help avoid EHCP escalation, reduce long-term costs, and improve inclusion outcomes.

- Continue to allocate a proportion of HNB to fund early intervention strategies that prevent escalation of needs.
- Updates on the long-term savings and impact of earlier support to continue.

Support Bespoke Support Models Across Schools

Facilitate and fund locally tailored support models in schools to better meet student needs - Evidence shows a "one-size-fits-all" approach is not effective.

Bespoke interventions have led to improvements in attendance, behaviour, and cost efficiency.

- Continue to offer training to schools on cost-effective inclusion practices and alternative provision models.
- Increase support for parents and carers to navigate the EHCP process and access support earlier.

Promote Inclusive Practice in Mainstream Education

Encourage sharing of best practice between Leicester Schools, including positive behaviour policies such as those at Crown Hills and Beaumont Leys Schools that adjust behaviour policies and provide SEND-focused staff training have seen reduced exclusions and better student engagement.

Strengthen Tribunal and Mediation Services

Maintain robust monitoring of tribunal related costs and outcomes. Expand support for early mediation services and SENDIASS Mediation is cost effective and reduces adversarial conflict. SENDIASS has demonstrated success in resolving disputes early and supporting families through the system.

- Implement a formal review mechanism for tribunal outcomes to understand root causes and reduce future litigation.
- Set criteria for appointing external consultants to ensure cost-effectiveness and impact assessment.

Increase Designated Specialist Provision (DSP) Capacity

Invest in expanding DSP units in mainstream schools across the city - Demand for specialist places is growing. Local DSPs reduce out-of-city

placements, improve inclusion, and are a more cost-effective use of HNB resources.

- Use current and projected demand data to assess sufficiency of SEND provision across Leicester.
- Prioritise investment in local capacity (e.g. SEN units in mainstream settings, targeted interventions) to reduce reliance on out-of-area or independent placements.

Enhance Co-Production and Parental Engagement

Embed parent and carer voice more formally in strategic planning, through Family Hubs and the SEND Local Area Partnership - Co-production leads to services that better reflect need. Stronger communication channels will also increase public trust in SEND provision.

- Create an advisory group including parents, young people, headteachers, SENCOs, and finance leads to review HNB pressures and advise on allocation decisions.
- Use this forum to promote co-production and community accountability.

Promote Best Practice and Success Stories

Create a communications strategy to showcase successful models and outcomes (e.g., Rainbow Room, Big Mouth Forum video) via websites and social media Sharing good practice helps build confidence and encourages other schools to replicate successful models.

Embed Monitoring and Evaluation Frameworks

- Introduce clear KPIs to monitor the impact of HNB-funded provisions on learner outcomes and well-being.
- Review outcomes annually and feed insights into future planning cycles.

Promote Integrated Working Across Services

- Strengthen links between education, health, and social care teams to ensure joined-up support and better use of pooled budgets.
- Use joint commissioning approaches where possible to achieve efficiency.

Prepare Financially for the 2026 Statutory Override Expiry

Develop a clear post-2026 financial contingency plan, including modelling of deficit scenarios and options for service continuity. The override's removal poses a serious budgetary risk. Proactive planning can help mitigate the potential for drastic cuts or Section 114 notices.

- Ensure recovery strategies are informed by long-term needs planning,.

Following completion of the report, it had been confirmed that this had been extended to 2028. Please see the below resources.

SEND deficits override extended until 2028

Autumn Budget: what is the government doing to improve outcomes for children with SEND? – The Education Hub

Continue Benchmarking and External Learning

Regularly review progress in comparator local authorities and explore opportunities for collaboration on shared challenges - Examples from Birmingham (financial oversight) and Liverpool (multi-agency working groups) provide valuable learning for Leicester's ongoing improvement.

- Continue benchmarking practices with statistical neighbours and high-performing councils to adopt proven models.
- Explore participation in regional SEND networks or improvement partnerships

Conclusion

The recommendations above seek to address the dual pressures of increasing demand and finite resources. By continuing to prioritise transparency, early intervention, local solutions, and co-production, Leicester can build a more resilient, inclusive and financially sustainable SEND support system.

These recommendations are intended to support strategic decision-making in preparation for the anticipated reforms and the financial landscape post-March 2026.

Financial, legal, equalities, climate emergency and other implications

4.1 Financial Implications

Demand for SEN support has begun to outstrip the available resources due to an increase in the number of agreed Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs). The cumulative DSG deficit was £22.2m at the end of March 2025. The High Needs Block element of the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) is £88.6m for 2025/26. Although the service has put in place a range of strategies, described in this report, to mitigate the cost impact of the growth in demand and complexity of SEND support, the forecast for the current year is that the cumulative deficit will be £44.8m by March 2026. Due to a special Government 'override' we can maintain this deficit separate to the other local authority reserves until March 2028. The cumulative deficit could be as high as £78m by 2027/28. The government is currently considering reforms to the funding for SEND and children's social care but it is not completely clear how they will resolve (or centrally fund) DSG

deficits.

Signed: Mohammed Irfan, Head of Finance

Dated: 09 January 2026

4.2 Legal Implications

There are no direct legal implications arising from the recommendations summarised in this report. However, it is recommended that legal support is obtained on any proposals to implement the strategic recommendations as they are developed.

Signed: Julia Slipper, Principal Solicitor (Education & Employment)

Dated: 12 January 2026

4.3 Equalities Implications

Public authorities are subject to an ongoing Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED). This requires them, when carrying out their functions to give due regard to eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation, to advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who don't and to foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who don't.

Protected Characteristics under the Equality Act 2010 are age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation. In addition to the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED), local authorities have specific statutory obligations toward children and young people with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND).

The report focuses on the High Needs Block (HNB) and SEND, the most significant implications relate to the protected characteristics of age and disability.

The report notes a 140% increase in Education and Health Care Plans (EHCPs) since 2015. The inability to meet this demand risks "poorer outcomes" and "lack of confidence" in the system, potentially disadvantaging disabled children compared to their non-disabled peers. It highlights that while Leicester is struggling with a budget deficit (like most UK councils), local schools are being highly innovative to keep children in education and avoid exclusions. The strategic recommendations set out arising from the visits made, the observations of task group members; and data provided by schools and the council to improve the effectiveness, efficiency, and long-term sustainability of the HNB, aim to ensure better outcomes for children and young people with SEND, while addressing growing demand and financial pressures. There is a link between poverty and the need for SEND support. HNB funding is a vital investment in the future of Leicester's children. By targeting early intervention toward the link between deprivation and SEND, the HNB funding can be used as a tool to ensure that children in deprived areas of Leicester have the same life chances as those in wealthier areas.

Signed: Equalities Officer, Surinder Singh, Ext 37 4148
Dated: 9 January 2026

4.4 Climate Emergency Implications

Service delivery generally contributes to the council's carbon emissions, impacts can be managed as part of any commissioning through measures such as encouraging sustainable staff travel behaviours, using buildings efficiently and following sustainable procurement guidance, as applicable to the service.

Where the council provides transport to school for SEN pupils, the resulting carbon emissions are included in monitoring of the council's own carbon footprint. In 2023/24 SEN transport is estimated to have generated approximately 1200 tonnes of carbon emissions, representing between 7% and 8% of the council total.

Prioritising early intervention and prevention may help to minimise near-term increases in SEN transport and could reduce transport demand in the long-term as more local solutions are found for SEN pupils. In addition, there is the potential for contribution towards reduced future SEN travel through bespoke school support, promoting inclusive practice in mainstream education, increasing DSP capacity and improving parental engagement.

Signed: Phil Ball, Sustainability Officer, Ext 372246
Dated: 12th January 2026

5. Background information and other papers:

6. Summary of appendices:

Appendix Number	Appendix Title	Attachment
1	Session 1 Presentation	CYP Scrutiny March 25.pptx
2	School and SENDIASS Presentations	Netherhall presentation.pptx Babington Academy HNB Scrutiny.pptx BLS Graduated Approach LA Meeing.ı

		Powerpoint Imperial.pptx SENDIASS QA Presentation April 25.
3	Case Studies	SEND case study waiting well SSP.pdf SEND case study EYST.pdf SEND case study DSP.pdf S QAR case study.pdf QAR case study.pdf Case study Y1 child waiting a SS.pdf Case Study LCI T support for SSPupil se Case Study LCI support for SSP Prima Case study E.pdf Case Study DP Y6 waiting for special.pdf Case Study - Small group of students awa

		SEND case study_EYST.pdf SEND case study EYST March 2025.pdf
4	Councillor Notes on School Visits	Notes on task group visits by Cllr Bonham Spinney Hill Sch Visit.odt

Appendix G

Leicester City Council

Fostering Service Annual Report and Statement of Purpose 2024 / 2025

CYPE Scrutiny Commission

Date of meeting: 20/01/2026

Lead director/officer: Laurence Jones

SCE Social Care & Education

Useful information

Ward(s) affected: All

Report author: David Thrussell Head of Service Corporate Parenting

Author contact details: 37 1657

Report version number: v1

1. Summary

1.1 This report provides an overview of the activity and performance of the Fostering Service from 1st April 2024 to 31st March 2025. The report should be read in conjunction with the annual statement of purpose which sets out the service aims, objectives and configuration.

1.2 The Fostering Service is essential in supporting our delivery of high-quality care and support for our children looked after, allowing them to live and thrive in a family home. The service ensures that our children and young people live in safe, stable, and appropriately matched foster families, and that families are supported to deliver the best outcomes for our children and young people.

1.3 The Ofsted Inspection of Leicester City Council local authority children's services conducted in September 2024 noted the fostering service has areas of significant strength, and there is a commitment to achieving permanence for children where possible. It also highlighted the support our foster carers access from their social workers.

1.4 Most of our children looked after (64%) live in fostering households, with 63% of these living with Leicester City carers on 31 March 2025. Our carers live predominately within City or County boundaries, allowing children to stay close to their wider family, school and community networks.

1.5 The fostering service supports 174 fostering households, comprising of 117 mainstream fostering households and 43 kinship households, with the remainder being a mixture of respite or short breaks and fostering for adoption carers.

1.6 Our priority continues to be the recruitment of more foster carers to enable more children to live within local family households. We received 57 enquiries from prospective carers in 2024-25, of which 35 households applied to become foster carers. We recruited 12 new mainstream fostering households in 2024-25 who were approved to care for 17 children in total.

1.7 We approved 4 Enhanced Carers during the year, offering enhanced care for 6 children with complex needs enabling them to continue to live locally in family households.

1.8 Our foster carer population is significantly more diverse than the national average, reflecting the diversity of our city and offering more opportunities to place children in culturally matched homes.

1.9 We supported Kinship and mainstream carers for 35 children to become Special Guardians during the year who make a permanent commitment to the children they care for whilst ensuring the children cease to be looked after by the council.

2. Recommendations

2.1 The Scrutiny Commission are invited to note and approve the Fostering Service Annual Report for 2024-25 and the Annual Statement of Purpose for 2025/26.

3. Detailed report

3.1 Please see below the Fostering Service annual report for 2024-5.

fostering
Leicester City Council

Annual Report 2024/5

Purpose

The purpose of this annual report is to provide an overview of the activity and performance of Leicester City Council Fostering Service during 2024-5.

The report should be read in conjunction with the written Statement of Purpose 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 their 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.

The Fostering Service is a regulated service and subject to inspection under the Care Standards Act, 2000.

Our service

The Fostering service is a core part of the children's workforce, recruiting and supporting foster carers for looked after children in care and working closely with children's social workers. Support workers, supervising social workers and team managers work alongside foster carers as part of the team around our children. Foster carers are supported to meet the needs of children in care, offering them safe, stable family homes where they can thrive. We have considerable success in achieving permanence through Special Guardianship Orders for our kinship carers as well as some mainstream carers.

Our families

Leicester City fostering service supports 174 fostering households. Our carers live predominately within the City or County boundaries, allowing children to stay close to their wider family, school and community networks.

64% of Leicester's looked after children live in fostering households, and around two-thirds of those are living with Leicester City carers.

Our foster carers

- We received 57 enquiries in 2024-25, of which 35 households applied.
- We recruited 12 new mainstream fostering households in 2024-25, a reduction on the previous year.
- Leicester City fostering service supports 174 fostering households: 117 mainstream fostering households and 43 kinship households, the remainder being a mixture of respite/short breaks and fostering for adoption carers.
- On March 31st, 2025, 589 children were in the care of Leicester City. 64% were placed in foster care of which 63% were with council approved foster carers.
- Our foster carer population is significantly more diverse than the national average, reflecting the diversity of our city and offering more opportunities to place children in culturally matched homes.
- Carers for 35 children were supported to become Special Guardians during the year and make a permanent commitment to the children they care for. This is a mix of kinship foster carers and mainstream carers.

Our values

The Fostering Service is part of Leicester City Children's Social Work and Early Help division. Through our shared priorities across the division, we are committed to supporting children, young people, adults, and families to live their best life, so they can be safe, be independent and be ambitious for themselves.

Our service plan reflects these priorities, setting out the following objectives:

- **Support and celebrate** our staff, our foster carers and our good practice
- Improve and **promote our local offer** to foster carers, adopters and special guardians
- Challenge ourselves with robust **quality assurance**

- Develop kinship pathways in line with the new **Kinship Strategy**
- Progress the delivery of the **placement sufficiency** strategy and reduce the numbers of children experiencing placement instability.
- **Support good matching for all children:** Understand and celebrate children's culture and heritage; help our parents and carers nurture children's identities.
- Ensure lessons from Foster Care Home Reviews **inform and improve practice**
- Continue to grow our work with the **Rights and Participation Service** to gain children's views, ask for their involvement, understand their needs.
- Continue our strong **partnership with the Virtual School Team** to help every child reach their potential in education.
- Support our young people **get ready for independence** by collaborating with the Leaving Care service to support practical skills such as cooking and budgeting.
- Promote a **trauma-informed therapeutic parenting** approach for our children and young people.
- Help children to **maintain connections** to people and places who are important in their lives.
- Support children with **Staying Put** arrangements where it is right for them
- Work on a **Corporate Grandparenting** strategy for our young people who become parents.

Key successes and highlights from 2024/25

We are extremely proud of the high standards of care our foster carers offer to children when they welcome them into their families. Foster carers look after children who have experienced significant trauma and have complex needs, helping them to stay close to their families and live in place they can call home. They in turn are proud of the children and their achievements. Long-lasting bonds are formed, and this year several of our carers have been formally matched for permanence with the children they look after or are proceeding with adoptions where this is the plan for the child.

Fostering in Leicester reflects the diversity of our city. We have a diverse group of carers from different ethnic and religious backgrounds, and we continue to work on recruiting more carers who share key elements of children's identities. We also know that children can thrive in families where they are not obviously matched and understand how important it is to listen to children's voices about the kind of care they want to receive. We support carers to look after children with different heritage to them and children seeking safety from abroad.

Leicester City has recently published its first Fostering Microsite, embedded within the council website, allowing us to be much more responsive to the changing needs of the service. We are looking forward to developing this further in the coming year. We have also published a new fostering handbook to ensure we always provide up-to-date advice and guidance to carers.

The fostering panel has seen real change this year, returning to panels in-person and recruiting a new chair. We have delivered training to panel members and included them in staff training and begun to revise new standards.

Training for foster carers has been developed based on what they need to complete and on what they tell us they need.

The Ofsted Inspection of Leicester City Council local authority children's services conducted in September 2024 highlighted the support foster carers access from their social workers and noted:

The fostering service has areas of significant strength. There is a commitment to achieving permanence for children where possible. Carers receive very good support, which promotes stability and consistency of care for children…. When care arrangements appear vulnerable to disruption, effective action is taken to strengthen placement support.

Fostering Recruitment and Assessment Team

Increasing the number of Leicester City foster carers continues to be a priority for the council. We aim to recruit and retain a large and diverse range of foster carers to match our children and young people's needs.

Our dedicated Recruitment and Assessment team consists of 1 Team Manager, 1 Communications and Marketing Officer, 1 Enquiries Officer, 3.3 FTE Assessment Social Workers and 1 Child Care Support worker.

The Communications and Marketing Officer officer's role is to devise effective marketing and communications campaigns to aid in the recruitment of foster carers, and to share general information with foster carers effectively. Working closely with colleagues in the corporate communications team, the communications and marketing officer is responsible for the creation of marketing campaigns, based on areas of need, using various online and more traditional methods, alongside maintaining general communication with our foster carers including a monthly foster carer email newsletter.

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

Our information and publicity events are supported by the recruitment and assessment team, along with experienced foster carers to ensure those interested in fostering get a broad view of the role from staff and the foster carers themselves. Those interested in fostering are provided with information about upcoming information events. Once an application is received, an initial visit is arranged to discuss individual circumstances in more detail. This ensures that we are assessing the right people, at the right time.

Our assessments are completed by Social Workers in a timely fashion and are comprehensive to ensure that the foster family are ready to become foster carers.

Marketing, Communications and Events

Our online presence remains strong, and our increased financial offer means we are now more competitive against our neighbouring local authorities and Independent Fostering Agencies.

As part of our strategy for 2024/25, we:

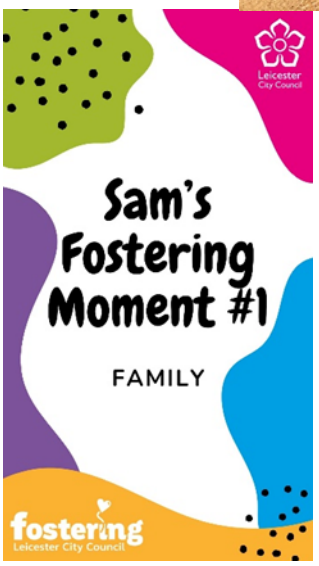
- Improved our online presence, including the creation of more engaging social media content and the development of a new, dedicated microsite, which launched in March 2025. Early feedback from users has been positive regarding the information available and ease of use.
- Increased our presence in the community, including supermarkets, public spaces and festivals/city events.
- Targeted marketing towards potential carers with the skillset we require for Enhanced and Specialist foster carers.
- Improved our foster carer newsletter to update fostering families on what support is available to them as foster carers.

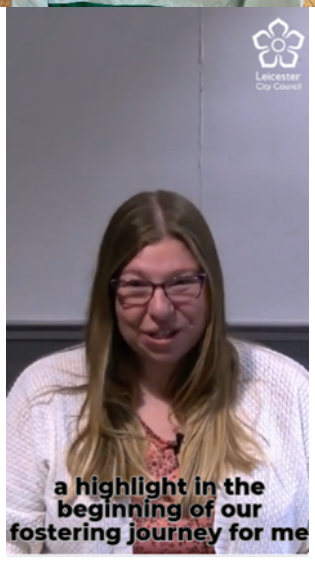
Events in 2024/25	
Dedicated fostering information events held:	**22**
No of supermarket awareness stalls:	**17**
Awareness stalls at other community venues:	**5**
Appearances at other local events:	**3**

Foster Care Fortnight 2024 – ‘Fostering Moments’

In the lead up to and during foster care fortnight, we celebrated the moments that

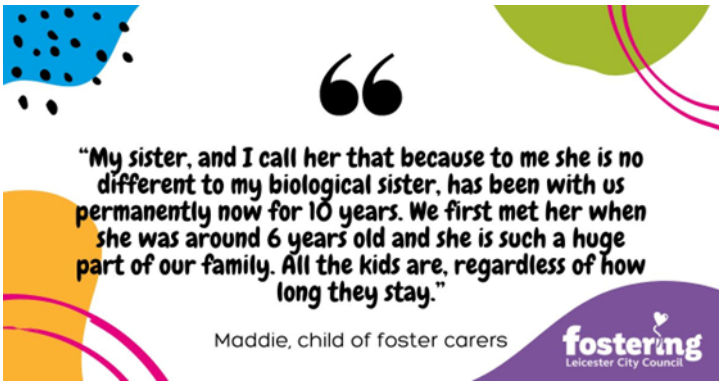
define fostering. Video content was popular on social media.





The recruitment team also facilitated several recruitment events throughout the fortnight, and we worked with the communications team to produce press coverage.

Children of Foster Carers Month



We are members of the East Midlands Regional Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children (UASC) foster carer recruitment forum, for children and young people from abroad seeking safety. This is hosted by the East Midlands Strategic Migration Partnership and aims to support the recruitment of UASC Foster Carers and Supported Lodgings Carers. The website and marketing materials will go live in 2025-26.

Foster Carer Recruitment

We assessed 16 fostering households in 2024-25. Eight of our foster carers approved this year were approved to care for sibling groups.

We recruited 12 new mainstream fostering households in 2024-2025, providing an extra 17 placements for the service.

We approved 4 Enhanced Carers during the year, offering Enhanced care for 6 children with complex needs.

We received 57 enquiries in 2024-2025, of which 35 households applied.

Two successful recruitment strategies have been the ‘golden hello’ - an incentive payment for ‘recommending a friend’ and the £500 reward payment. Six of the newly approved carers received a ‘golden hello’ 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 has been proven to be a positive recruitment aid, as the applicants already have a realistic view of fostering and have friends who can offer support and advice.

Enquiries

Of the 57 enquiries received from 1st April 2024 – 31st March 2025, a snapshot of where enquiries are received is shown below:

- 30 via internet
- 3 were previous enquiries
- 4 via Facebook
- 3 were recommended by another carer (£500 reward if approved)
- 12 via a recruitment event
- 2 via word of mouth
- 2 Advertising material
- 1 no source given

Applications

Nationally there is a distinct difference in conversion rates of initial enquiries to applications, due to the different ways of capturing what an initial enquiry is.

Of the 57 enquiries in the last year, 35 applications were received and 29 progressed through to initial visits, as some applicants withdrew before the visit.

Of the 29 who proceeded to an initial visit, 11 were progressed through to assessment and 18 were withdrawn or rejected for the following reasons:

- 8 due to personal reasons
- 2 language barriers
- 2 space/housing
- 1 availability
- 1 not meeting service needs
- 3 known information
- 1 Financial

Assessments

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

Approvals

In 2024 – 25 we approved 16 fostering households. Of these 16 approvals were:

- 7 approvals for sibling groups (6 for 2 sibs, 1 for 3)
- 12 approvals offering matching to children aged 0 - 10

- 5 approvals offering matching to children aged 10 - 18
- 4 households approved as Enhanced Foster Carers
- 9 households approved for Short Term foster care
- 1 household approved for Permanence
- 2 households approved for Mainstream Respite

It is not uncommon to see a higher number of short-term carers during their initial approval as this allows the new carers the opportunity to gain experience and adapt their lifestyle to fostering. Over time, we begin to see these carers expand their approval to permanent fostering at a time which is right for them and the children in their care.

Outcomes

	2021-2022	**2022-2023**	**2023-2024**	**2024-2025**
Enquiries	157	79	52	57
Applications	57	26	43	35
Assessments	29	25	25	17
Approvals	17	16	19	16
Enquiries to applications	36%	33%	82%	61.4%
Applications to assessments	51%	96%	58%	48.6%
Assessments to approvals	55%	64%	76%	94%

Kinship Team

The Kinship Assessment Team consists of:

1 Team Manager
2 IVA workers (until 30th April 2025)
5.8 Assessing Supervising Social Workers
1 FT Assessing Supervising Social Worker vacancy

Remit

Initial Viability Assessments

The Initial Viability Assessment (IVA) is a screening assessment that explores a person's ability and capacity to meet the long-term individual needs of prospective children, when it is unsafe for them to live with their birth parents. This person may be a family member, a friend or a person connected to the child/ren.

IVA's are either completed in an emergency where there are 48 hours to complete the assessment, during pre-proceedings where there are 3 weeks to complete the assessment or as part of care proceedings where the IVA is completed within two weeks.

The IVA assessors have moved away from assessing prospective Kinship Carers just for Special Guardianship Orders (SGO) and fostering. They now consider the suitability of a Child Arrangement Orders, alongside fostering and SGO as potential positive IVA outcomes. When suitable for either fostering or Looked After SGO, the Kinship assessment team will complete a full kinship assessment as part of the child's care planning process.

Where multiple family members have been identified prior to care proceedings being issued, the IVA assessors attend joint Family Network Meetings in collaboration with the child's Social Worker, family members and their friends. The IVA assessor's role

is to help family and friends consider the realistic nature of being considered as an alternative carer and through the assessment process consider expectations and support, they may need. This meeting helps family and friends decide on who in their network, is the best and most realistic long-term option to care for the child/ren in their network whilst being open and transparent about any concerns.

Every applicant that attends a joint Family Network Meeting is given both verbal and written information to help them consider and make an informed choice about their prospective role in becoming a carer for someone else's child.

Kinship Assessments

The team has experienced some change in the last year related to personal and developmental changes for team members. Despite this the team have remained committed and focused on providing a good quality service to their applicants, carers and children and young people they work with. Feedback from our Kinship Carers shows this:

"I would like to thank the staff who assisted me during the Kinship Fostering assessment with all the guide and kindness I received during this difficult time. "

"The information provided about Kinship fostering is straight forward and easy to understand"

"Yes, some of the aspects (of the assessment) were a bit challenging but with the help of my social worker she tried her best to make things easy and also make me understand what was expected from me"

"The process was fine but just very time consuming which we didn't realise when we initially agreed to look after our grandson. Not that it would have made any difference if we'd known."

"I was informed of everything I needed to know step by step in a professional manner"

"The assessing social worker was so helpful, patient a good listener"

"My experience of the assessment was tough especially with all the questions which needed answers and some of them bringing back memories. But nevertheless, with the help of the social worker I managed to pull through"

"Our social worker was great: professional but very friendly and approachable, she was always helpful and supportive."

The Kinship Assessment Team are preparing for change with the launch of the Kinship Strategy and the opportunity to create our own Kinship Local Offer, alongside the bigger structural changes in how children and families' services reconfigure to align with social care reforms for children's services.

As part of this change, we have commissioned Coram Baaf to deliver Kinship Assessment training in May 2025 to equip staff with relevant training with the new Form K licence. This will provide the team with an opportunity to reflect and consider best practice for future Form K assessments.

Independent Social Worker (ISW)

A childcare support worker in the fostering service supports Independent Social Workers (ISW's) in completing their court ordered Kinship Assessment.

To ensure expectations are clear, we have revised the (ISW) Letter of Instruction to ensure they understand what the court expects from their assessment whilst outlining what support they can receive from the Local Authority.

Whilst the childcare support worker has direct ongoing communication with the ISW, the Kinship Team Manager has oversight of this workstream.

Data

IVAs completed: 209

*Pre-Proceedings: 73
*Proceedings: 128
*x5 IVA's (FCO)- not in proceedings
*x3 private orders pursued prior to full assessment

43 Full Assessments
*22 Positive: 5 SGO, 7 FCO (LTF), 3 FCO (PWP/CAO),
*11 Withdrew
*9 Negative
*1 not needed
*x7 Pending outcome

***Of 209 IVAS**
-64 NEGATIVE
-66 POSITIVE
-19 NOT NEEDED
-13 NOT ENGAGED
-47 WITHDREW

ISW- 11 assessments (higher than previous years- average 5-7)
*3 Positive: 1 then withdrew, x2 SGO
*x4 negative
*x4 withdrew

Key successes/achievements

Initial viability assessments (IVA)

Developed our IVA assessment to account for both private and public law recommended outcomes

The IVA assessment has been integrated into our electronic case management system (Liquid Logic) and fostering pathway

Delivered on a high volume of IVA assessments

As of 30th April 2025, the IVAs will be managed by the Child in Need Service

In collaboration with legal services formalised a process and templates for carer withdrawing or not proceeding with IVA assessment

Kinship Assessment

Developed a virtual training programme that is provided following an IVA that explains the legal orders, expectations and process in details to enable our applicant and carers make informed choices about their ability and capacity to proceed with the assessment.

We developed this training programme into a pre-recorded programme to provide greater flexibility for our applicants/ foster carers.

Created a feedback process for Kinship carers to share their views on the kinship process, the quality of their experience and their relationship with their assessing Supervising Social Worker.

Created and developed a reflective tool based on the 'Social GGRRAAACCEEESSS' model to use in our team meetings to facilitate reflective thinking around equality, diversity and inclusion.

At the end of our Kinship assessments, we have started writing to the child, in simple language, the rationale for our assessment outcome.

We are utilising the support of Kinship charity for our carers with peer support groups and training.

Where children have experience complex trauma, we use the trauma tracker to help carers understand the child's lived experiences and the impact this has, to help them best support them as they grow and develop.

The Kinship assessment team has representatives in both the trauma informed practice group and the CORAM Baaf practice group for Kinship.

In collaboration with legal services formalised a process and templates for carer withdrawing or not proceeding with IVA assessment.

Independent social worker assessments

Compliance with ISW letter of instruction in fulfilling our support role for court ordered assessments.

Development work – what's next?

With the IVAs moving into another service area, IVA practice guidance needs to be written to ensure consistent information is shared with applicants as part of the kinship assessment process.

In collaboration with our Business Support Service, we are improving and developing a more efficient process for undertaking statutory checks.

Service Manager is developing links with the Health Authority to explore opportunities for reducing delays with Fostering medicals.

To utilise Form K assessment template, support plan and practice guidance for future assessments.

To create Kinship Policy that aligns with the content of the Kinship Strategy.

Kinship Assessment Team representative to be part of a working group as part of the Children's social care restructuring.

To establish a process to ensure Kinship Carers feedback is feedback into our learning consistently.

Fostering Supervision and Support Team

The fostering supervision and support team is managed by two team managers. It is a dedicated team of 12 qualified level 3 social workers, supporting and supervising foster carers and their households with the children they look after. Four social workers specifically support our kinship carer households but are embedded within the wider team.

Each social worker has a caseload of up to 22 fostering households, supporting a total of 117 mainstream fostering households and 43 kinship households, with 209 children in placement. Staff are appropriately qualified and experienced, and the team is stable, with many social workers remaining in post for many years. This allows social workers to develop and maintain high-quality relationships with carers. When social workers do move on to different roles, we have been able to recruit staff from other teams and services, increasing our skill set and knowledge base with new perspectives. We are proud to have a diverse workforce who reflect the local population and enhance our capacity to provide culturally sensitive support and challenge to our carers.

The team holds a key role in ensuring placement stability for children in care through our long term, short term, respite and short breaks schemes. Where carers have specialist skills and provide high levels of therapeutic care to children with complex needs, they are supported as Enhanced carers with additional training and skills payments.

Fostering support and supervision workers commission, coordinate and deliver training to foster carers, with a strong training offer combining both online and face-to-face training. During 2024-25 we have consulted with carers on their key training needs and devised a new training programme in collaboration with colleagues and partners including the Virtual School, drug and alcohol services, health services and psychology services.

During the year we have created a pilot Fostering Duty system, ensuring that a named worker is available in the office each day to support carers. The duty worker

maintains and updates the foster carer availability list, manages an e-mail inbox and sits alongside colleagues from other teams to increase connectivity across the service.

The management group has worked hard this year with colleagues from data services to develop a data dashboard, embedding monthly performance meetings to improve oversight.

Retaining foster carers is a key focus for the coming year, ensuring we understand why carers stop fostering and learning from this. Carers who are on hold are reviewed alongside the Fostering Independent Review Officer to provide oversight and clear planning around returning to fostering. A number of our carers have stopped fostering after decades of commitment, so we are confident that their retirement is a success story. We celebrated these carers in a festive event at the Guildhall in December 2024.

Foster carers tell us that they value the support from Leicester City. the monthly newsletter, regular 'Creating a caring culture'
meetings and foster carer reviews.

"My social worker and I have a good working relationship, and she has contacted me regularly especially when A was struggling, she listened and cared."

"They have kept the children at the centre, ensuring safety and promoting good fostering standards throughout their involvement."

"You always show genuine interest in the family; going over and above in a number of aspects of your role"

The foster carer described you as "brilliant" and said she couldn't fault you. You are always there for them, have been supportive and the carer has felt able to be open & honest with you about how she has felt without any worries about being judged by you.

"Our social worker changed but the transition was thought out and our new social worker came with knowledge of us and our family unit which was lovely. She has been supportive whilst still getting to know us and we are very happy … we are super thankful to all that have supported us."

"She goes above and beyond, and her support though this difficult time has been invaluable to us. My supervising social worker is a brilliant support to me

"We moved from an agency and our biggest worry was lack of support from LCC in comparison to IFA. However, I'd like to add that we have been very blessed with an amazing SSW who has exceeded our expectations. We have had consistency, full support, regular contact. Our SSW is extremely knowledgeable, and we are super grateful. We would even say the

"It is clear that you have offered the foster a very high level of support over the past year, including taking calls at weekends to avoid a crisis. Your preparation for his foster home review was evident and really helped him to reflect during his review on the last year and what has worked well."

"Always being responsive with compassion whether it be to an email, a phone call or an urgent request to visit, my supervising social worker has helped and supported me through some very hard situations."

"Our supervising social worker is an amazing social worker and has been with us during our fostering journey for twelve years"

"Proactive, direct & to the point but supportive, very efficient and always doing what you say you will do."

The spoke about having been "really impressed" by you. You have visited them regularly, get back to them quickly when they call/text you & have checked in with them regularly.
The foster carer particularly appreciated your support in helping her set up the new Foster **Carer's** support group.

High quality relationship-based practice, supporting carers to maintain placements with additional support when needed.

Varied and exciting training offer devised based on feedback from carers.

Monthly in-person coffee mornings, virtual groups and a culture of readily available peer support.

Development of fostering duty system and ongoing work to embed the role of the duty worker.

Creation of shared live 'fostering availability' list to provide oversight of internal fostering capacity.

Fostering performance meetings established and dashboard creation.

Next steps

Ensuring we use data to drive performance – automating oversight of compliance measures to allow more focus on quality and analytical practice.

Continuing to develop our exciting fostering events programme, including a Summer Fun Day and 'children who foster' events to celebrate our fantastic fostering families.

Building on our quality assurance practice to provide regular in-depth analysis through fostering-specific audits and dip-samples.

Our Local Offer

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

- Our Foster Carers are provided with membership to Foster Talk, an independent, not-for-profit organisation dedicated to supporting Foster Carers. They provide a comprehensive support package including 24 hour legal, counselling, and medical 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. This has been re-launched on Tri-x during 2024-25
- 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.
- All carers have an annual review meeting chaired by a Fostering Independent Reviewing Officer (FIRO) who sits outside of the service within the Safeguarding and Quality Assurance Team.

- The peer support group is an established and thriving group run by foster carers in the city.

- An annual professional development conference went ahead face to face this year, allowing foster carers and workers to learn together.
- Active Leicester Membership entitles the whole fostering family and those they care for to access free swimming and gym.
- 30 hours free childcare is provided for foster carers meeting eligibility criteria.
- Bespoke financial support is provided to foster carers via a Leisure Fund, to enable children and young people to sustain their interests over time, building confidence, skills, and enjoyment.
- Access to Bullfrog Arts focuses on improving the emotional health, wellbeing, and self-efficacy of looked after children and young people and their foster carers though music and singing culminating in an annual concert.

Long-term fostering and permanence

For children who are unable to return home to their birth family, permanence and stability are at the forefront of our planning. Placement stability remains strong with Leicester City foster carers, and several of our carers this year have made permanent commitments to children they look after - in a long-term fostering arrangement, under a Special Guardianship Order, or through adoption where this is the child's plan.

This works particularly well for children who have highly complex health and educational needs. Carers and children get to know each other and develop an authentic, loving relationship where children have a secure base within the foster home. Professionals can feel confident that carers are well matched to the children's needs and have the right support in place for the long-term.

Special Guardianship Orders (SGO) have been granted for 35 children exiting care during 2024-25. The Local Authority has a strong SGO offer for foster carers, enabling them to have confidence in the ongoing support they will receive. Two fostering households are currently in assessment to be approved to adopt the children they care for.

Where children are in short-term placements and need a long-term fostering placement, the Fostering Service provides support to identify the right carers. Children's profiles are developed and shared in a Permanence Newsletter with internal and external foster carers. We have developed our use of Linkmaker and begun to collaborate with the Placements team to work on pro-active family finding strategies for a small cohort of children who have waited longer or are ready to make the move from children's homes to foster care.

The fostering service supports tracking and oversight of children's permanence plans, in collaboration with colleagues from the children's social work teams. This is done through regular Exits from Care and Permanent Fostering Monitoring Group meetings.

Key successes

Development of matching standards and processes for long-term fostering placements.

Greater oversight and collaboration between services to ensure children are matched for permanence without delay.

Greater use of Linkmaker and permanence newsletter to identify the right homes for children.

Addition of a 'Permanence' flag to children's records to better identify those placements that have been formally matched for long-term fostering.

Most importantly, more than 40 children have a clear plan to stay with their carers in a permanence arrangement.

Next steps

Implementation of new matching processes, initially with a small cohort of matches. This includes the introduction of a Matching Certificate for children who would like one, to celebrate their place within their foster family.

Training for foster carers to help grow numbers of carers able to consider long-term matches.

Increased connectivity and creative family-finding work with local independent fostering agencies as well as our own carers, with potential to consider activity days.

Establishment of a long-term fostering Champion within the fostering service to drive best practice and provide a single point of contact.

Renewed focus on supporting and enabling carers to talk to children about their life story.

Fostering panels

Fostering panels in Leicester City Council are held twice a month to give regular and timely opportunities for fostering cases to be heard.

The panel consider applications to foster (kinship and mainstream), first annual reviews, reviews following concerns, de-registrations and attached support applications. The Panel also maintain oversight of Regulation 25 agreements, where temporary fostering approval under Regulation 24 is extended to allow further assessment time.

In 2024-25 considerable development work has been undertaken. A new Independent Chair was recruited, and the central list of panel members has begun to grow. Panels have returned to 'face-to-face' meetings rather than virtual, although carers can attend virtually where needed; this is particularly helpful for kinship carers who may live at a distance. A new booking system has been devised to ensure that all fostering managers have oversight of panel availability and can make family-centred decisions about prioritisation of cases. Work has begun to improve the administrative processes which support panel, including the development of front sheets for panels to be embedded in the coming year to ensure recording is consistent, clear and compliant with the regulatory framework. Over the next year, regular feedback processes will be established and linked back to add to our quality assurance framework, embracing a collaborative learning culture. This will also inform the annual panel review, held jointly with the Agency Decision Maker, and help identify additional training and support to individuals and the system.

Leicester City fostering panel has a diverse and experienced membership. The independent chair is supported by two vice-chairs, social worker representatives and independent members. The panel is supported by a team manager who provides panel advice. Our panel members bring experience of children's social care, education, housing, therapeutic services and lived experience. We are keen to ensure that health colleagues are also represented on the panel. We are proud that our panel members reflect a range of ethnic and religious heritages, genders and abilities, promoting a culture of welcome and inclusion for people attending panel.

Panel members' renumeration was reviewed during this year to take account of the rise in cost-of-living and to acknowledge the value that panel members bring to the service.

Panel training took place in March 2025, with a whole day focussing on Kinship care in fostering. This was well attended and engaging. Panel members all have annual appraisals which are up to date and clearly identify strengths as well as areas for development.

Panel activity

Case type	Number heard	Positive recommendation	Negative recommendation	Deferrals
Mainstream approval	13	13	0	2
Kinship approval	23	21	2	2
First annual review	33	32	1	4
Review following concerns	1	0	1	0
De-registration	3 (1 was conflictual)	2	1	0
Reg 25/AOB	38	38	0	0
TOTALS	111	106	5	8

The ADM followed the recommendation of panel in 98% of cases.

Key successes

Return to face-to-face panels.

Recruitment of a highly experienced independent panel chair, and growth of central list.

111 cases considered across the year.

Development of booking systems and processes to enhance management oversight.

Next steps

Embed quality assurance processes – feedback, compliance measures for paperwork and data.

Development of panel membership to ensure care-experienced people are able to contribute.

Further consider the need for a dedicated panel adviser role (Fostering and Adoption).

Managing Allegations

From 1st April 2024 to 31st March 2025, there were 18 households referred to the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) that considered allegations against Foster Carers. All allegations or concerns are followed up rigorously by the service. 7 contacts to LADO were resolved by giving advice and guidance and they did not meet the LADO threshold. Of the remaining 11 LADO processes were followed and strategy and or LADO meetings progressed. There were 2 unfounded allegations and 6 unsubstantiated allegations. There were 3 substantiated allegations.

The Fostering and LADO service work closely together. Quarterly quality assurance meetings are attended by LADO, FIRO, service managers and heads of service to ensure good communication, identify patterns of concern and highlight good practice.

During 2024 – 2025 three training events were held for foster carers about managing allegations and LADO processes. The events were well attended with those signing up to the training attending these. The foster carers who attended engaged well and these were positive events. The LADO met directly with the fostering team including supervising social worker and team managers in order to keep updated with the service. Views shared by carers about LADO processes have been noted and have prompted recommendations about follow up to carers who have been subject to LADO processes. Further training events are planned for 2025 – 2026.

Fostering Independent Reviewing Officer (FIRO)

Foster home reviews are undertaken by one full-time dedicated Fostering Independent Reviewing Officer (FIRO). Reviews take place at a minimum of every twelve months and are also held more frequently if there is a change in circumstances or if there has been a substantiated LADO investigation or standards of care concerns raised.

There is a focus on putting the voices and experiences of children at the heart of the review process including those of carer's own children and other children living in the

home. Flexibility review times are offered to ensure that male carers who are often working full-time are included. The views expressed by all family members, observations of family interactions and the views of professionals involved with children all contribute to an assessment of the child's lived experience within the home. It is lovely finding out about the various ways that our children are embraced by their foster families, and the dedication shown to them by our carers which is often recognised by children's social workers & IRO's.

Monthly meetings are held with Fostering Team Managers & Supervising Social Worker teams on a quarterly basis to discuss any issues arising from reviews & delays in reviews being completed on time. Quarterly feedback is given to the service on review themes.

The reviews also assess foster carers' performance and consideration of training and development needs with recommendations made for the following review period. Clear timescales are set for recommended actions for carers, Supervising Social Worker's and Team Manager's. Foster Carer's first annual reviews are presented to Fostering Panel and carer's have reported this to be a largely positive experience. First reviews are now being booked onto panel six months in advance so are being presented to panel in a timelier way which is working well.

Completion of reviews within timescales remains an issue with just 66% of reviews having been completed within twelve months over the year. This figure varies significantly between quarters – school holidays have a significant impact on the availability of carers as does a higher level of sickness in families in the winter months. The late completion of some Supervising Social Worker reports also impacts on this, particularly when workers are off.

Despite some staff changes and absences over the last year, 95% of carers reported feeling well supported by their Supervising Social Workers. When carers needed additional support, 99% reported having been able to access this and felt that their needs were responded too. Carers also value good communication from children's social workers about care planning timescales and decisions being made about the

children in their care. Positive feedback and commendations about social workers have been shared with them and their managers.

Priorities for 2025/26

- To ensure more reviews are undertaken with timescales
- To continue to ensure reviews capture the voice of the child on every occasion
- To continue to ensure that male partners are included in all reviews
- On-going liaison with Supervising Social Workers & Team Managers regarding carers who are on hold to minimise delays when they are ready to resume fostering
- Ensure that new platforms for the completion of mandatory & recommended training for carers are established, and carers are supported to access these

Staying Put Scheme

Staying Put is an arrangement whereby a young person remains living with their former foster carer after their 18th birthday.

The Staying Put Scheme is designed to promote a gradual transition from care to adulthood and to ensure that young people do not experience a sudden disruption to their living arrangements. Currently we have 25 young people on the scheme.

The figures are broken down as follows: 16 x 18yr olds, 2 x 19yr olds and 7 x 20yr olds living with their carers under the Staying Put Scheme. Policies and guidance are appropriately targeted for young people, professionals and those foster carers who wish to participate.

Looking ahead to 2025/26

As we embark on the year ahead there is continued drive and commitment to provide the best possible service to the children and families of Leicester.
Our priorities will be:

- Improve and promote our local offer to foster carers and special guardians
- Develop kinship pathways in line with the new Kinship Strategy
- Position the service to be able to deliver the Families First agenda
- Progress the delivery of the placement sufficiency strategy
- Reduce the numbers of children experiencing placement instability
- Support good matching for all children
- Understand and celebrate children's culture and heritage
- Ensure lessons from Foster Care Home Reviews inform and improve practice
- Promote Leicester City Council to become a Fostering Friendly employer
- Develop Fostering Champions across the service and wider council
- Support and celebrate our staff, our foster carers and our good practice
- Continue to develop robust quality assurance processes
- Develop our corporate parenting and corporate grandparenting offer to carers
- Continue to grow our work with the Rights and Participation Service and the Virtual School Team

We will continue to support our current foster carers, who are an essential and highly valued part of the professional network. We will seek to build on our good relationships with carers, listening to what support they need to sustain excellent care for our children and young people.

We are looking forward to spending more time with carers this year as more training is taking place in person and events are planned across the year to celebrate fostering, including a family fun day in the summer.

Annual Statement of Purpose 2025/6

Purpose

This report fulfils the requirement for fostering agencies to produce an annual statement of purpose and sets out details of our services and how we will meet our commitment to providing high-quality care and support for our children, young people, and foster families.

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

Summary

The Fostering Service is essential in supporting our delivery of high-quality care and support for our children who are Looked After, allowing them to live and thrive in a family home.
The service allows our children and young people to live in safe, stable, and appropriately matched foster families.

The Statement of Purpose explains the aims, objectives and services provided by Leicester City Council Fostering Service, as well as details about our recruitment processes for foster carers, placement types, support to foster carers, quality assurance processes, access to complaints service, safeguarding arrangements and support for kinship carers.

SCE Social Care & Education www.leicester.gov.uk

Leicester City Council

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

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

Our Aims and Objectives

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

Objectives

- To provide a skilled and flexible fostering service that can meet the wide range of assessed needs of children and young people requiring foster care placements.
- To recruit, assess and approve enough foster carers who live in the Leicester area, ensuring as far as possible that children can be placed in the local area.
- To assist and maintain appropriate links for children placed in foster care with family, community, schools, and friends.
- To match children and young people to foster placements that can meet their assessed needs, taking into consideration the views of the child as part of this process.
- To support children placed with friends and family, where the placement outside the Leicester area 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 consideration given to their views concerning important decisions affecting their lives.
- The specific needs of children with additional needs should be carefully considered when making and supporting foster placements.
- Children and young people should be supported and encouraged to maintain links and contact with their families and communities of origin, and foster carers will be encouraged to support these efforts.
- Children should not be allowed to 'drift' in care and should be prepared for permanency as determined by their care plan, whether this be reunification with their family, adoption, permanent foster care, or independence.
- Children should be safeguarded in care and be protected from harm, including against other actions by children or young people themselves.
- The fostering service and foster carers will operate within the practice and policies agreed by Leicester Safeguarding Children Partnership.

The Service

Service Manager: Ellie Boswell
Telephone: 0116 454 1656

In the absence of the Fostering Service Manager, Mike Evans (Service Manager – Placement & Commissioning) deputises as Service Manager, (0116) 454 4500.

The fostering service employs 4 Team Managers, 24 (full or part time) Supervising Social Workers, 2 Child Care Support Workers, a Publicity Officer, and an Enquiry Officer.

Recruitment Team
Team Manager

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

Kinship Assessment Team
Team Manager

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

Additional Information
Leicester City Council is an approved Fostering Service provider and is inspected by Ofsted.
The Fostering Service is managed by a Service Manager supported by dedicated Team Managers (Standard 17).

The Head of Service, Child Safeguarding Quality Assurance is the Agency Decision Maker (Standard 14).

Leicester City Fostering Panel is constituted in accordance with regulations (Standard 14).

Recruitment

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

Mainstream Foster Carers

The Fostering Service provides an enquiry officer during office hours for anyone interested in fostering. Alternatively, potential applicants can visit our website or email to request information. An information pack including a Registration of Interest Form is sent to enquirers within 24 hours.

Recruitment of carers is planned to maximise interest in foster care. Recruitment campaigns are supported by a dedicated publicity officer. Regular foster carer recruitment events are held throughout the year and target specific campaigns including National Foster Care Fortnight.

Recruitment is focused on the areas of greatest need including permanent placements, sibling groups, teenagers, and short breaks for children who have disabilities. Campaigns have supported recruitment for carers for 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 is completed, the service will carry out Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checks, Probation, The Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (CAFCASS), health visitor/schools' references (if the prospective carers have children) and character references. Applicants must have full health assessments completed by their 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. 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 are required to complete on-line training courses.

Following the assessment, the social worker will write a report, which is read, amended if necessary and signed by the applicant. The report is submitted to a Fostering Panel whose task it is to consider the suitability of the applicants to become foster carers, and their capacity to meet the National Minimum Standards. At the Panel, all members will have read the reports. Prospective carers and the assessing social worker will attend the panel. Foster carers can only be carers for one fostering provider.

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

If prospective foster carers do not agree with the decision made by the fostering agency, they may make representations to the Agency Decision Maker. Any applicant wanting to challenge the ADM's decision can request for the matter to be considered by the Independent Review Mechanism.

Following approval, the carer will be sent:

- Foster Carer Agreement
- Complaints and Access to Records information
- A copy of the Foster Carers National Minimum Standards
- The Fostering Services Regulations (2011/13)
- Foster Carer's Logbook
- Fostering Network leaflets on record keeping, insurance, contact, regulations
- Information on taxation for carers
- Notification details
- Virtual School Team Information
- Children's guides according to carer's approval
- Application form for Leicester City Council Leisure passes / Library access
- Fostering Training information
- Training Support and Development Standards
- Promotional support and information aimed at foster carers.

Following 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, acting as the Nominated Officer, may agree to an immediate placement with the Kinship Carer, under Regulation 24 of the Care Planning,

Placement and Case Review (England) Regulations 2010, following an Initial Viability Assessment (IVA). The child's social worker will inform the Kinship Assessment Team Manager of an immediate placement, if made. This will trigger a full assessment by the Kinship Assessment Team.

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

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

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

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

Types of Placements

The service provides:

- Family placements for children and young people from birth up to and including the age of 18 years.
- Placements for babies and young children, including those with a range of complex needs.
- Placements for children with disabilities and those children with medical needs who need adapted accommodation.
- Placement for children and young people who are seeking safety from abroad.
- Transition support to another placement, return home or independent supported 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 to 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 an 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 child to enable them to return home or to an alternative placement within a short timescale. Flexibility of care is a significant feature in ensuring success in moving children on to their next placements, at an appropriate time, in consideration of the child's needs and circumstances.

Permanent placements

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

Kinship (Family and Friend) Foster Care

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

Assessment and Support Plans for Special Guardianship

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

Short Breaks

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

Support for Foster Carers

- A named, allocated supervising social worker for approved foster carer(s)
- Membership for all fostering households to Foster Talk
- An independent 24-hour support line operated by Foster Talk
- Discounted activities and days out through Foster Talk
- A comprehensive Foster Carer Handbook
- Recreational activities supported through the Leisure Fund
- Free sports pass for use in all city swimming pools and gym facilities
- A rolling training programme linked to carers' accreditation levels
- Briefing sessions on key issues on national and local changes
- Development and peer support group sessions
- Therapeutic support services for children with more complex needs
- Corporate membership of the Fostering Network
- Representation on the Corporate Parenting Forum
- Specialist equipment provided to meet assessed placement needs

Ongoing Professional Development

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

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

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

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

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

Support for Young People

Leicester City provides:

- Access to primary mental health workers for young people who require assessment for services about their behavioural or emotional needs.
- Access to a Virtual School Team of professionals whose remit it is to raise the educational attainment of children looked after and secure appropriate educational arrangements for young people either in a mainstream school or specialist provision.
- A dedicated health team of Children Looked After nurses advising and implementing a health care programme to support the general health and well-being of children looked after and living in foster care.
- A dedicated Leaving Care Advisor for young people who are preparing to leave care, to live independently and access education, employment, or training into adulthood.
- A free sports pass for use in all city swimming pools and gym facilities and access to a discretionary Leisure Fund to maximise leisure and well-being opportunities.

- A dedicated Children and Young People's Rights and Participation Team, for children looked after to ensure young people know and understand their rights.
- Access to advice, assistance and advocacy for children and young people in having their views heard, or in making complaints.
- A regular newsletter for all children looked after and opportunities for young people in foster care to meet.
- Opportunities provided through initiatives supported by the work of the Corporate Parenting Board. These can include free cycle riding courses, free access to museum activities, work experience and apprenticeship schemes, job interview practice and recreational activities.
- An Independent Visitor service for children and young people who do not have visits from their parents or extended family (or a significant adult).
- The opportunity to participate in the Children in Care Council and other Care Experienced consultation activities about the council's services.

Children and Young Peoples Guides

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

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

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

Monitoring the Quality of the Service

The Fostering Service is monitored and inspected by Ofsted.

Foster carers receive at least one unannounced visit a year to their home by the supervising social worker, and regular supervisory visits.

The Service Manager responsible for the day-to-day management of the Foster Care Service monitors a range of matters identified in the Fostering Service National Minimum Standards and Regulations 2011 (Regulation 35 [1]), to ensure the standards are adhered to and the service is developing to meet the needs of a range of children.

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

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

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

The Role of the Fostering Panel

The fostering panel considers whether:

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

The Fostering Panel is governed by guidance and regulations. Panel members include:

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

The fostering panel meets monthly or bi-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 reports 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, and within specified timescales. The fostering service aims to resolve problems in the first instance informally through discussion with the carer.

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 or young person can ask the Children's Rights Service to support them.

Contact details for the Complaints Manager are as follows:

Complaints and Access to Records Team
Mezzanine level
Halford House
Charles Street
Leicester
LE1 1HA

Tel: 0116 454 2430
Email: youngpeople-complaints@leicester.gov.uk

If following the local complaints process the carer or young person remains unsatisfied with the outcome, the Local Government Ombudsman investigates complaints about Council services. The Ombudsman can be contacted at:

Local Government Ombudsman
The Oaks No2
Westwood Way
Westwood Business Park
Coventry, CV4 8JB
Telephone: 024 7682 0000

Safeguarding Arrangements

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

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

The Fostering Service will listen to every concern that is raised with them about the care of children who are placed in its service. If there are concerns about the welfare or treatment of children physically, sexually, emotionally, or about neglectful care, the service will initiate enquiries in accordance with LSCP procedures.

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

Where concerns are made about the foster carers or that of their family, there is a procedure within the Fostering Service to inform carers (at an appropriate time) of any allegations made about them and what is likely to happen. This procedure is also laid out in the Foster Carer Handbook and for staff in the staff procedure manual.

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.

In the event of complaints or concerns being raised, foster carers will receive support from the Foster Care Service and Foster Talk. Children will be supported by social workers, a Children's Rights Officer, Independent Visitors, and the family as appropriate.

During any safeguarding investigation, the placement of the child (and any other children) will be carefully considered during all stages of the investigation and subsequently when the outcome of the investigation is known.

Children and carers and relevant others will be informed of the outcome of any investigation.
The Fostering Service works closely with the placing social workers for the children, the Safeguarding Unit and relevant others including Police, to co-operate with any investigation and ensure records are kept of all complaints and allegations made and their outcomes.

Each foster care family will have a Safer Caring Policy completed prior to approval and regularly reviewed. The Safer Caring Policy aims to reduce risks to all family members and the Child who is being Looked After. When an investigation has been held, and where there is a substantiated allegation of abuse made about a foster carer.

Appendix 1: Recruitment Pathway for Mainstream Carers

1. Enquiry received. Enquiry Officer inputs on database.

2. Information pack sent out – booklet and Register of Interest Form (ROIF).

3. Completed ROIF returned. Enquiry Officer inputs on database.
LA checks completed.

4. Team Manager allocates ROIF to SSWs.

- Telephone interview completed
- Initial visit completed (if appropriate)
- Application accepted or declined.
- Letter sent to applicant to advise about the outcome.

5. Stage 1 assessment allocated.

- Stage One Agreement completed
- Checks and references completed.
- DBS completed.
- Medicals, training and learning identified.
- Move to Stage 7 if satisfactory. Stage 6 if not

6. Assessment ended due to Stage 1 information.
Letter sent within 10 working days of last information received.

7. Stage 1 completed
Applicants are advised they will move to Stage Two
Stage 2 assessment process commences

8. Stage 2 assessment report completed
All paperwork completed in file – electronic and paper.

9. The assessment report is presented to the fostering panel which makes a recommendation to the Agency Decision Maker – the prospective foster carer is encouraged to attend with the assessing social worker.

10. The Agency Decision Maker considers the Fostering Panel recommendation and any other advice before making the decision as to the suitability of the prospective foster carer to be approved as a foster carer for Leicester City Council.

11. If the prospective foster carer is unhappy with the decision (qualifying determination), then they may make representations or request that the Independent Review Mechanism review the decision.

Appendix 2: Kinship Foster Care Policy

1. Introduction

1.1. Kinship Foster Care is where a child or young person who is Looked After lives with family, friends or other people who are 'connected' with them in a placement approved by the Local Authority. This will be under a Care Order (Section 31 Children Act 1989), Interim Care Order, or provision of accommodation by agreement (Section 20 CA 1989). Kinship foster carers are assessed and approved under The Fostering Services Regulations (2011) in line with BAAF Guidance, Fostering National Minimum Standards and the Care Planning Placement and Case Review Regulations (2010).

2. A key principle is that children and young people should be enabled to live within their families where it is consistent with their welfare. If children and young people cannot remain at home, then placement with family, friends or connected people should be explored. Having a secure attachment and placement stability are important in building resilience and promoting children's long-term well-being. Children within kinship care are generally reported to feel secure, happy and feel a sense of belonging within their family. Research also evidences high levels of commitment from Kinship carers, their strong bonds with the children, the pleasure they find in the children themselves and the satisfaction they derive from caring.

2.1. Kinship placements can allow children to maintain positive links with their heritage and their sense of identity and self-esteem can be maximised.

2.2. Many carers are grandparents where issues of age and health may be a significant factor. There may also be complex family relationships, housing overcrowding or financial difficulties. Carers need time and the opportunity to reflect on the impact of their decision. Ultimately, the assessment process with Kinship carers is designed to weigh up these factors with the welfare of the child or young person as the priority.

3. Assessments of prospective kinship carers

3.1. In Leicester assessments are undertaken by the Kinship Fostering Assessment Team.

3.2. The workers within the team undertake assessments of prospective carers and provide supervision and support to the carers where a child has already been placed with the carers. Once approved, the ongoing supervision and support of kinship foster carers passes to the Kinship Supervision and Support Team. Where children and young people leave kinship care for reunification with birth parents or to permanent arrangements such as Special Guardianship Orders, the Supervision and Support Team in conjunction with the child's social worker continue to provide support until the order is made or the child returns home.

3.3. All referrals are welcomed without prejudice. This includes referrals irrespective of the age, gender, sexuality, or ethnic, cultural and religious heritage of the applicant. Where possible, assessments are allocated to Social Workers that reflect the heritage of the applicant. The assessing Social Worker will be provided with access to appropriate support and guidance.

4. The Referral System

4.1. It may be the case that there are several family members or friends who come forward to care for children. Social workers undertake a joint Initial Viability Assessment (IVA) along with an experienced worker from the Kinship Team, to identify whether a full assessment is needed.

5. The joint Initial Viability Assessment

5.1. When undertaking this viability assessment, the following will be covered.

- Relevant sections of BAAF Form C

  Interviewing the prospective carers: This will cover issues such as their motivation, their relationship with the child, birth parents and contact. Issues of safety, parenting capacity, and family history are considered and areas such as

whether the applicants have any major health or child protection concerns. See Schedule 4 of the 2010 Regulations.

- Assessing the accommodation

  Assessment is made of the space for a child or children and the safety of sharing a bedroom.

- Safety checks

  Social Care client database (Liquid Logic) and police checks are completed on all members of the household, checking with other Local Authorities if the proposed carers are known to them, if they do not live in Leicester City.

- The child's wishes and feelings about the proposed arrangements must be considered.

6. Regulation 24 Placements

6.1. There is provision in the legislation for children and young people Looked After to be placed with carers for a time limited period where a full kinship foster care assessment is to be completed. The principle behind this is to not delay placements and minimise placement moves.

6.2. Where an immediate placement is made, checks are undertaken, and the Joint IVA completed, before placement. Good practice includes reviewing case files and any records 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 disruption 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 support.

6.6. If the full assessment has not been completed after 16 weeks, agreement is sought for an extension to the temporary approval, (Regulation 25). The IRO is informed. The extension is up to a further 8 weeks.

7. The Assessment Process

7.1. Kinship foster carers are subject to as comprehensive assessment process as mainstream carers, but the assessment is focussed on meeting the needs of the specific child or children rather than generic issues. The BAAF Form C is used.

7.2. The assessment itself comprises the following: -

- A series of weekly home visits (usually 6 to 10 visits) covering the applicant's history, relationships, support networks, parenting skills, any child protection issues, Anti Discriminatory Practice issues. Currently these visits are virtual and face to face.
- Applicants have a full medical with their GP.
- A minimum of 3 referees are interviewed – one family member and two non-related individuals.
- Statutory checks are undertaken (DBS, Social Care Records, CAFCASS, Housing, Schools, Health Visitor, Employer).
- The views of the child or children who are looked after are sought as are the views of any children or young people in the household.
- Birth parents are asked about their knowledge of the parenting provided by the applicants, historical and current.

7.3. Workers undertaking the assessment will make a recommendation as to whether prospective carers should be approved as kinship foster carers. This is presented as a report to the Fostering Panel who then make a recommendation to the Agency Decision Maker (ADM).

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 care. They are expected to complete First Aid and Training, Support and Development Standards training offered by the Fostering Service.
- Kinship foster carers can get practical help with start-up costs and equipment such as beds, bedding etc.
- All Kinship Carers will have an allocated Supervising Social Worker and have access to out of ours support available to all Foster Carers.

9. Post Approval

9.1. All kinship foster carers have their own Supervising Social Worker. Their role is to supervise the placement and carers. Regular supervisory visits are undertaken alongside unannounced Visits and Annual Reviews.

9.2. Where appropriate we will also provide advice to carers on how to secure legal orders for permanency e.g., Special Guardianship Orders and complete the necessary reports in conjunction with the childcare social worker.

10. Partnership working

Communication and partnership working between Social Workers, Kinship Foster Carers and Supervising Social Workers in the fostering service is crucial to the success of kinship foster care placements.

Review of the Statement of Purpose

The Fostering Service reviews the Statement of Purpose on an annual basis to ensure its aims, objectives, services, and facilities provided remain appropriate to the care of children and young people. The next review is due in April 2026.

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.

fostering
Leicester City Council

Leicester
City Council

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

4.1 Financial implications

4.1.1 There are no financial implications arising from this report.
Mohammed Irfan, Head of Finance
27 May 2025

4.2 Legal implications

4.2.1 There are no legal implications arising from this report, which is for information purposes only.
Susan Holmes, Head of Law
21.05.2025

4.3 Equalities implications

4.3.1 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.

The aims, objectives and services provided by the Leicester City Council fostering service as detailed in the annual report and activity refer to the support provided to our children looked after across all protected characteristics, the service continues to attract applicants with a range of heritages. This report provides an overview of the activity and performance of the Fostering Service from 1st April 2024 to 31st March 2025. The Fostering Service's aim is to maintain a sufficiently large and diverse range of foster carers and short-breaks carers to match children and young people's needs.

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.

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

Equalities Officer, Surinder Singh, Ext 37 4148
21 May 2025

4.4 **Climate Emergency implications**

4.4.1 There are no significant climate emergency implications associated with this report.

Duncan Bell, Change Manager (Climate Emergency). Ext. 37 2249.
22nd May 2025

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

4.5.1 None

5. Background information and other papers:

5.1 Fostering Service Annual Statement of Purpose 2024-25.

6. Summary of appendices:

6.1 None

Appendix H

Leicester City Council

Presentation: Children, Young People and Education Quarter 2 Performance (April-September 2025) and Quality Assurance

Meeting date: 20th January 2026

Lead director: Laurence Mackie-Jones

Useful information

- Ward(s) affected: All
- Report author: Laurence Mackie-Jones
- Author contact details: Laurence.jones@leicester.gov.uk

1. Purpose of report

To provide an update on performance in Children's social care and information on monitoring and improving quality.

2. Summary

Directors will deliver a presentation on performance in education and children's services up to quarter 2 of 2025-26 and additionally will outline quality assurance mechanisms in the department and plans to make improvements in 2026.

3. Recommendations

That the CYPE Scrutiny Commission note the report and make any recommendations for future improvements or service development.

5. Financial, legal and other implications

5.1 Financial implications

There are no direct financial implications arising from this update.

Mohammed Irfan
Head of Finance, Leicester City Council
Social Care, Education and Public Health
0116 454 5669

Dated 5th January 2026

5.2 Legal implications

There are no direct legal implications resulting from this report, which is for information purposes only, from a childcare legal perspective. The challenges presented by an increase in number of children on Child Protection Plans are noted alongside continued recruitment and retention difficulties.

Sonali Unka
Principal Solicitor
Legal Services

0116 4541978

Dated 8th January 2026

5.3 Climate Change and Carbon Reduction implications

There are no climate emergency implications directly associated with this report. More widely, it should be noted that service delivery generally contributes to the council's carbon footprint through the consumption and use of energy, materials and services. As such, provision of the service should include consideration of opportunities to achieve carbon reductions, as relevant and appropriate, which could themselves provide further financial benefits through reduced consumption.

Potential measures could include opportunities to encourage the use of sustainable and active travel options, using buildings and materials efficiently and following the council's sustainable procurement guidance, as appropriate and relevant to the service.

Phil Ball, Sustainability Officer, 372246
7th January 2026

5.4 Equalities Implications

Our Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) requires us to eliminate unlawful discrimination, advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations between those who share a protected characteristic as defined by the Equality Act 2010 (sex, sexual orientation, gender reassignment, disability, race, religion or belief, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, age) and those who do not.

This performance report tracks outcomes for children and young people across Leicester, many of whom share protected characteristics—specifically Age (children and young persons) and Disability (SEND).

The council also has an obligation to treat people in accordance with their Convention rights under The Human Rights Act, 1998. In keeping with our PSED, we are required to pay due regard to any negative impacts on people with protected characteristics arising from our decisions (and this would include decisions on how we deliver our services) and put in place mitigating actions to reduce or remove those negative impacts. We need to consider the demographic profile of the city when developing and delivering services, to ensure we are meeting the needs of individuals.

Equalities Officer, Surinder Singh Ext 37 4148

Dated 5th January 2026

6. Background information and other papers:

N/A

7. Summary of appendices:

Appendix A: Quarter 2 SCE Dashboard

Appendix B: Presentation

Appendix C: CHAT (November 2025)

Children's Social Care and Education

QUARTER 2 PERFORMANCE and QUALITY ASSURANCE

APRIL-SEPTEMBER 2025

AREAS OF RISK

- The number of children subject to child protection pans has begun to rise. This is a general increase without any particular pattern that stands out in terms of reason for referral, area of the city or referring agency.
- Thresholds have been independently assessed (by an auditor not employed by the local authority) and are judged to be correct.
- The background to this appears to be wider societal factors outside of the direct control of the department or local authority

AREAS OF RISK AND MITIGATION

- **SOCIAL WORKER and OTHER VACANCIES**
- Recruitment and retention remains a challenge as it is across the social care sector
- The SCE department now has a dedicated Human Resources Business Partner
- We are using the % underspend created from staffing vacancies (Vacancy Level Turnover) and reinvesting this in a larger staffing establishment to give more resilience. Some of the current vacancy rate is due to the expansion of the establishment.
- Building on our successful apprenticeship programme we have created a Social Care Academy with an newly appointed Head to drive recruitment into the sector and ongoing professional development

AREAS OF POSITIVE PERFORMANCE

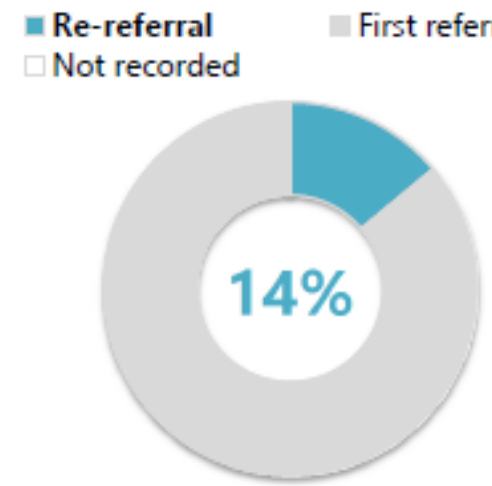
- EHCP completion in timescale continues to be at a higher percentage than the national average and the number of requests for assessments continue to decline bucking the national trend and indicating increased parental confidence in needs being met in mainstream school.
- The number of looked after children in unregulated placements remains at very low levels with swift finding of registered provision in most cases

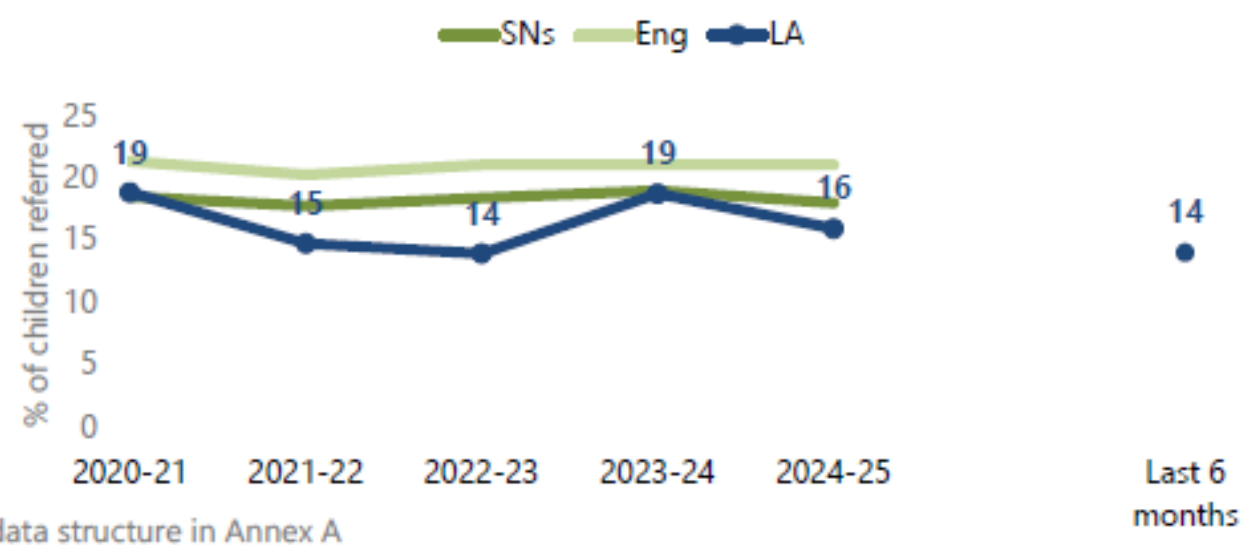
AREAS OF POSITIVE PERFORMANCE

Re-referrals: children with a previous referral within 12 months of their latest referral

289 children with previous referrals within 12 months of latest referral

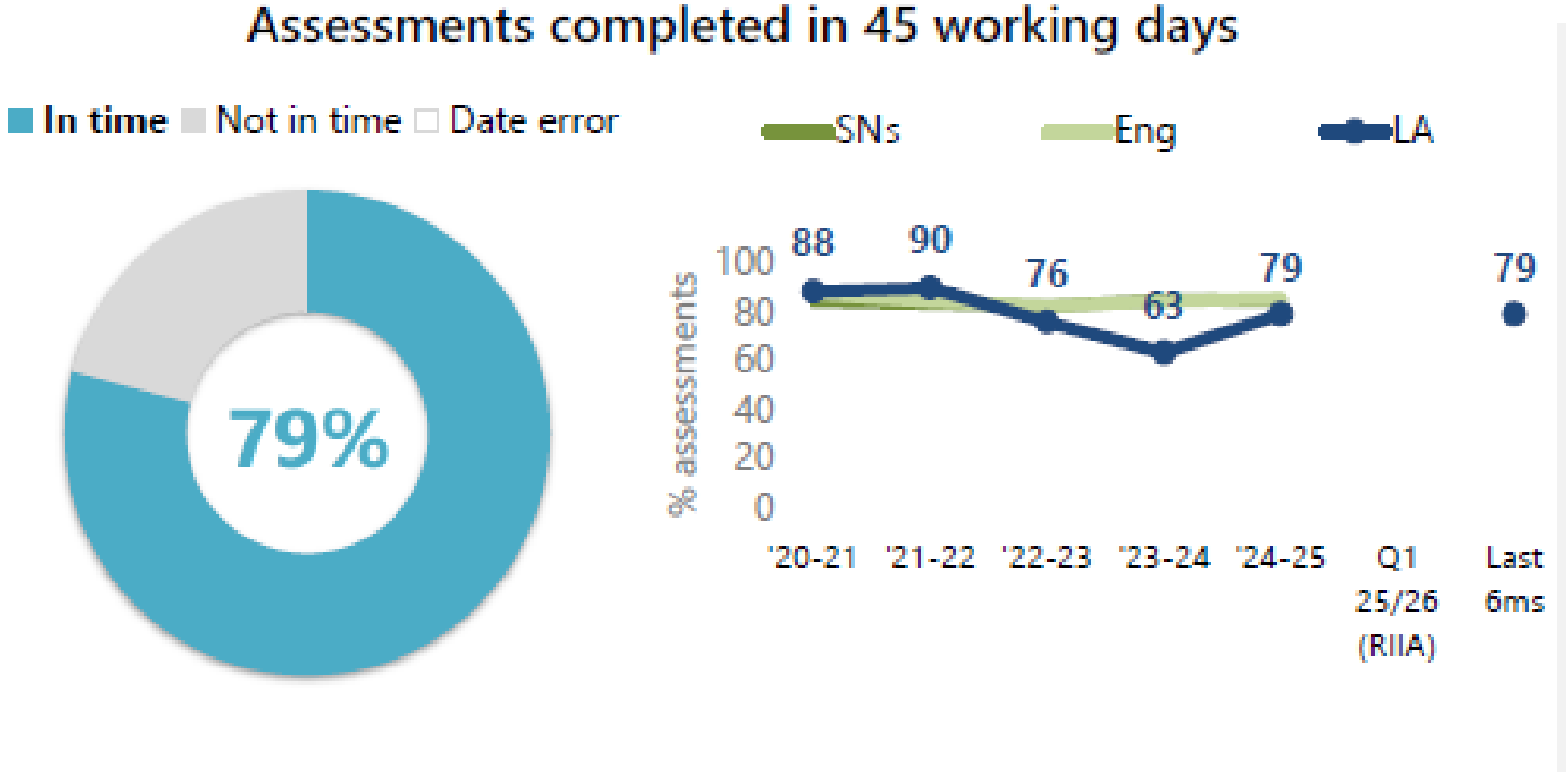
First referral	1,784
1 prev referral	268
2 prev referrals	19
3 prev referrals	2
4+ prev referrals	0
Not recorded	0





*"Last 6 months" calculation differs slightly from national statistics, due to data structure in Annex A

AREAS OF POSITIVE PERFORMANCE



Quality Assurance Framework

We have a quality assurance framework with 4 domains drawing on 20 varied sources of information including:

- National performance data and local operational data / metrics
- Financial information
- Complaints, commendations and feedback
- Practice audits
- Reviews and sector led / peer visits
- Information from staff – huddles, forums, surveys

Quality Assurance Framework

- Quality of practice is overseen by the Practice Oversight Board, reporting into the SCE Learning and Improvement Board
- Reporting cycles vary by source – monthly / quarterly / annual
- Evidence is drawn together in an Annual Assurance Statement
- A public facing ‘Community Story’ (Local Account) is co-produced with the Making it Real Group / Leicester Voices Together

QA of External Providers

- Bespoke Quality Assurance Framework & Contract Monitoring framework drawing on the standards as set out in service specifications
- Quarterly performance management against KPIs
- Intelligence gathering from CQC data, social work teams, partners (Local Authorities and Health), supporting risk rating of providers and determination of visits
- Announced and unannounced visits
- Health and Safety, infection prevention control audits by subject experts
- Information sharing across the partnership

Next Steps for Quality Assurance

- Developing a consistent methodology across the department
- Activity proportionate to risk
- Drawing in learning from compliments and complaints
- Clear analysis
- Answering the "So What?" Question
- Human learning systems approach to "aggregate evidence"
- Driving our workforce development activity
- Co-sponsors Divisional Directors Damian Elcock and Ruth Lake

Leading Performance Initiative

- For all SCE managers and leaders from Team Manager upwards
- Reflective performance workbook for every manager
- Mandatory sessions:
  - Positive psychology and motivation (Art of Brilliance)
  - Using data (PCH)
  - Ethical leadership and social justice (SCE Directors)
- Delivery by May 2026
- Co-sponsors Strategic Director Laurence Mackie-Jones and Divisional Director Sophie Maltby

Diversity and Inclusion

- Development of initial plan and staff engagement
- Inclusive decision-making forum - "views of those with lived experience"
- Maturity matrix drive by staff engagement
- Annual improvement plan
- Utilising tools such as Diverse by Design
- Co-sponsors Laurence Mackie-Jones and Divisional Director Kate Galoppi

Childrens Services Performance Dashboard – Quarter 2 2025/26

WORKFORCE METRICS	2025-26 Q2	2025-26 Q1	Change q-on-q	Change y-on-y	2024-25 Q4	2024-25 Q3	2024-25 Q2	2024-25 Q1	Region	National	Trend most recent on right Green best, Red worst
Children's Social Worker vacancies	51	42	↑	↑	37	34	0	0	-	-	
Overall children's vacancies	169	126	↑	↑	107	130	0	0	-	-	
Agency Usage	27	20	↑	↓	22	31	37	39	-	-	

	PERFORMANCE METRICS	2025-26 Q2	2025-26 Q1	Change q-on-q	Change y-on-y	2024-25 Q4	2024-25 Q3	2024-25 Q2	2024-25 Q1	Region	National	Trend most recent on right Green best, Red worst	Comment
Looked After Children	Number at period end	607	593	↑	↑	585	600	593	599	-	-		607 is equivalent to 68.41 per 10,000
	Full Care Orders at period end	385	400	↓	↑	397	385	376	383	-	-		385 is equivalent to 63.4% of all CLA
	Interim Care Orders at period end	74	51	↑	↓	59	81	80	86	-	-		74 is equivalent to 12.2% of all CLA
	S20 arrangements at period end	103	97	↑	↑	83	91	87	77	-	-		103 is equivalent to 17.0% of all CLA
	Other order types at period end	45	45	←→	↓	46	43	50	53	-	-		45 is equivalent to 7.4% of all CLA
	Exits	95	109	↓	↓	103	108	123	128	-	-		Rolling 6 months. 95 is equivalent to 10.71 children per 10,000
	Exits to adoption	6	8	↓	↓	9	14	21	16	-	-		Rolling 6 months. 6 is equivalent to 6.3% of all exits
	Exits to SGO	16	17	↓	↓	14	18	19	18	-	-		Rolling 6 months. 16 is equivalent to 16.8% of all exits
	Placed in own residential (number)	33	30	↑	↑	27	29	27	26	-	-		
	Placed in own residential (%)	31.1	28.8	↑	↑	27.3	29.3	30	29.9	-	-		% of all residential
	Placed with own foster carers (number)	209	212	↓	↓	226	233	230	230	-	-		
	Placed with own foster carers (%)	58.5	59.2	↓	↓	61.9	63.1	65	64.2	-	-		% of all in fostering
	Placement vacancies - Fostering	88	103	↓	↓	93	99	93	86	-	-		Q2 79 mainstream, 8 short break, 1 kinship. 18 additional places not available
	Placement vacancies - Residential	6	6	←→	↑	7	8	4	0	-	-		29 of 35 spaces filled over seven locations on 03 October 2025
	Click here for Top 10 most expensive placements for CLA												
	Unregulated placements	3	5	↓	↓	5	9	7	0	-	-		No under-16 and 3 17+ (+6 Z1 (other-type) placements)
CPP	Number at period end	432	446	↓	↑	455	416	418	410	-	-		432 is equivalent to 47.60 per 10,000
Safeguarding	Serious Incident Notifications	0	1	↓	↓	2	1	1	0	-	-		No notifications for Q2. 2025: 4, 2024: 5, 2023: 3
SEND	Requests to assess	197	180	↑	↑	215	228	146	285	12,993	154,489		593 requests to assess in 2025 YTD. 883 requests were received for 2024
	Assessments started	62	74	↓	↓	136	117	103	151	-	-		The number of assessments started may exceed the requests due to backlogs
	EHCP completed in 20 weeks (%)	59.77	77.68	↓	↑	62.12	54.1	43.61	51.24	38.0	45.9		Q2 52 of 87 completed within 20 weeks
	EHCP completed in 20 weeks (% calendar YTD)	66.87	69.26	↓	↑	61.54	51.05	50.22	56.89	-	-		2025 222 of 332 completed within 20 weeks
	EHCP annual review (completed within 12 months)	95	100	↓	↑	98	95	75	69	-	-		% annual reviews completed within the 12-month timescale
	EHCP annual review (amendments 12 wk)	53	39	↑	↓	96	39	129	63	-	-		Annual review amendments completed within 12-weeks within the quarter
Adult Reviews	No review for 24+ months	1,234	1,205	↑	↓	1,199	1,274	1,312	1,317	-	-		Ongoing work to explore alternative/proportionate review approaches

Data to Insight is the sector-led service for local authority children's data professionals, working with support from the ADCS, MHCLG, DfE and Ofsted to help make better use of data.

Children's services Analysis Tool (ChAT)

Based on Ofsted's ILACS Annex A dataset / Inspection Report

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Leicester

03 November 2025

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Headline figures

Contacts	
Contacts in the last 6 months	10,933
Early Help / Common / Targeted Assessments	
Early Help in the last 6 months	1,831
Referrals	
Referrals in the last 6 months	2,200
Social Care Assessments	
Total assessments in the last 6 months	2,013
Assessments completed in the last 6 months	1,603
Ongoing assessments	410
Section 47 enquiries and Initial Child Protection Conferences (ICPCS)	
Section 47 enquiries in the last 6 months	968
ICPCs that started from an S47 in the last 6 months	377
Children in Need (CIN)	
Total CIN in the last 6 months	2,975
CIN started in the last 6 months	1,262
CIN ceased in the last 6 months	1,039
Current children in need (snapshot)	1,936

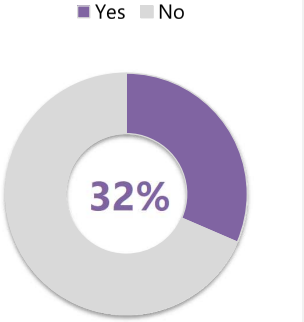
Child Protection Plans (CPP)	
Total CPP in the last 6 months	727
CPP started in the last 6 months	280
CPP ceased in the last 6 months	253
Current children subject of a child protection plan (snapshot)	474
Children Looked After (CLA)	
Total CLA in the last 6 months	703
CLA started in the last 6 months	111
CLA ceased in the last 6 months	84
Current children looked after (snapshot)	619
Care leavers	
Care leavers who have reached the threshold for receiving leaving care services	638
Adoptions	
Children adopted, waiting to be adopted, or had an adoption decision reversed in the last 12 months	72
Children adopted in the last 12 months	19
Children waiting to be adopted (snapshot)	40
Children with decision reversed in the last 12 months	13
Adopters	
Prospective adopters in the last 12 months	89

Contacts in the last 6 months

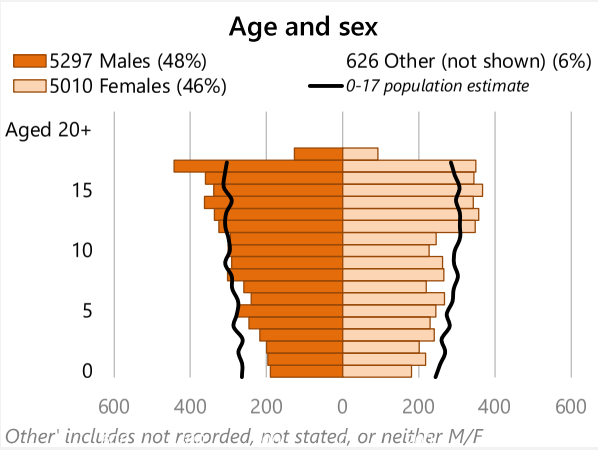
from 04/05/2025
to 03/11/2025

10933 contacts

Contacts for children who also appear on Referrals list



Age and sex



Other' includes not recorded, not stated, or neither M/F

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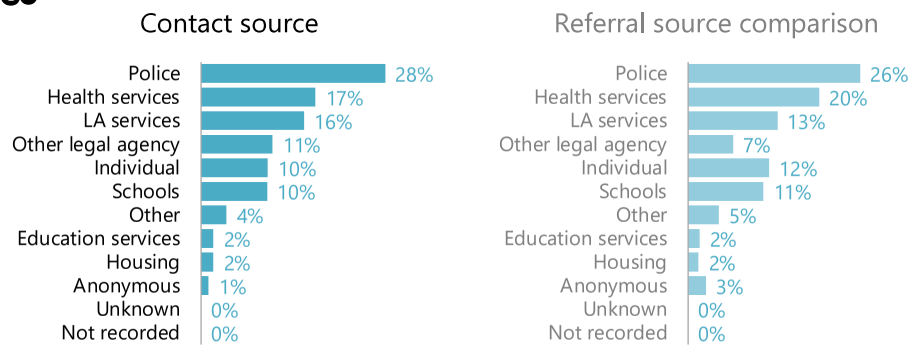
Source of contacts compared to source of referrals



Children with multiple contacts in period

Ethnic backgrounds

White	42%
Mixed	11%
Asian or Asian British	18%
Black or black British	9%
Other ethnic group	3%
Not stated	17%
Not recorded	0%

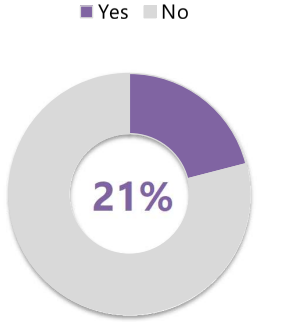
See page 25 for comparisons

Early Help in the last 6 months

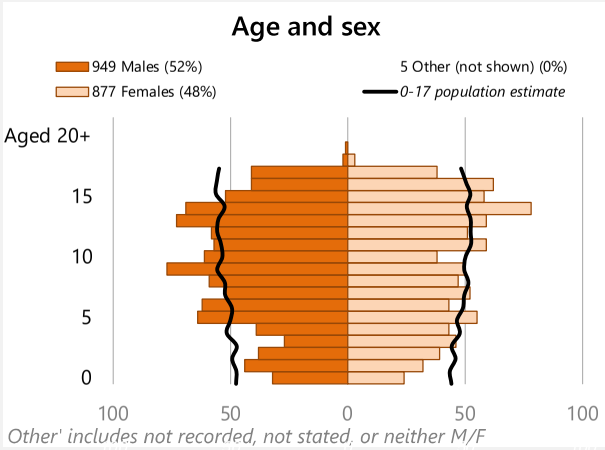
from 04/05/2025
to 03/11/2025

1831 Early Help / Common / Targeted Assessments

Early Help cases that also appear on the Referrals list

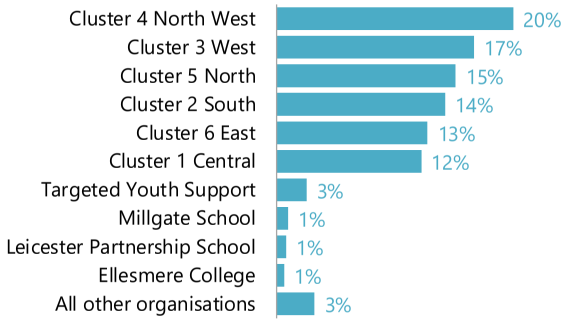


Age and sex

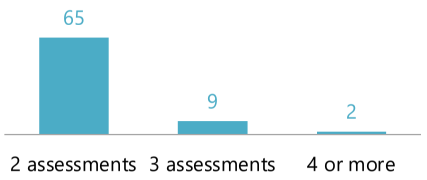


Other' includes not recorded, not stated, or neither M/F

Organisation completing assessment



Children with multiple records in period



Ethnic backgrounds

White	53%
Mixed	12%
Asian or Asian British	19%
Black or black British	9%
Other ethnic group	3%
Not stated	5%
Not recorded	0%

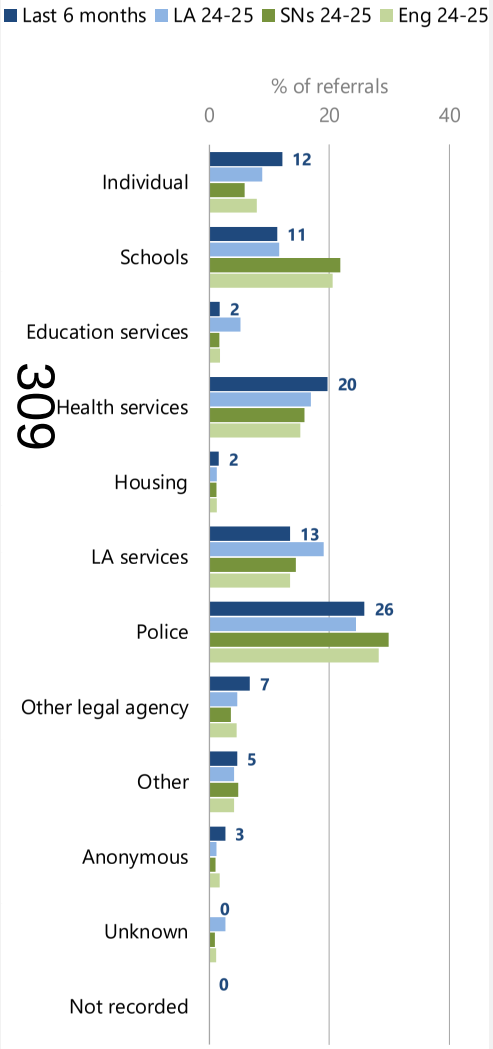
See page 25 for comparisons

Referrals in the last 6 months

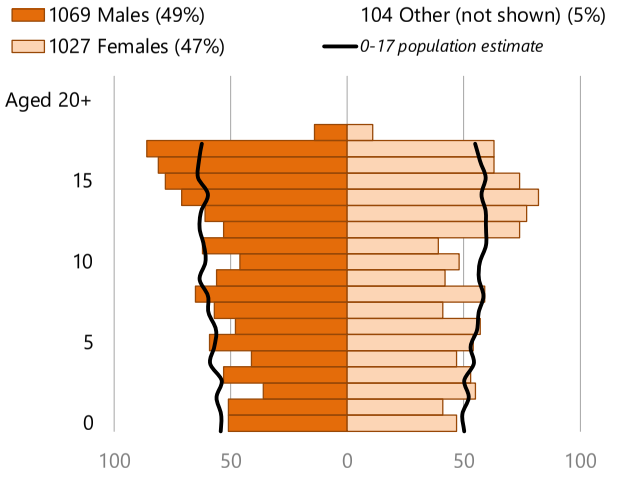
from 04/05/2025
to 03/11/2025

2200 referrals

Source of referral



Age and sex



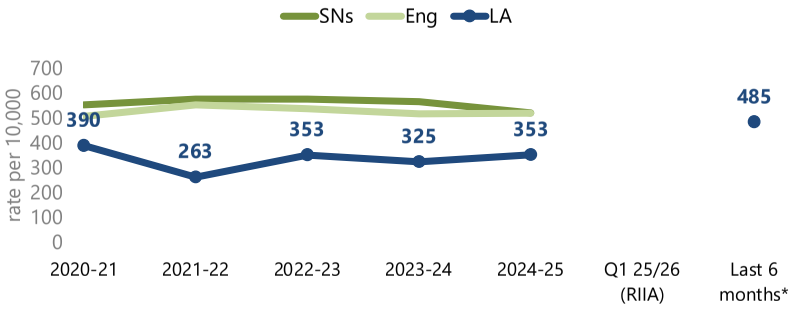
'Other' includes not recorded, not stated, or neither M/F

Ethnic backgrounds

White	49%
Mixed	12%
Asian or Asian British	20%
Black or black British	9%
Other ethnic group	4%
Not stated	5%
Not recorded	0%

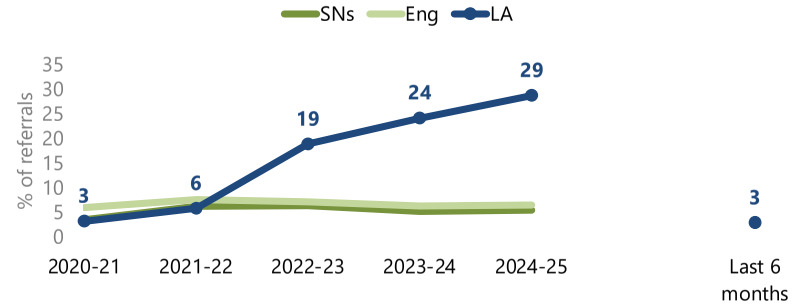
See page 25 for comparisons

Rate of referrals per 10,000 children aged 0-17



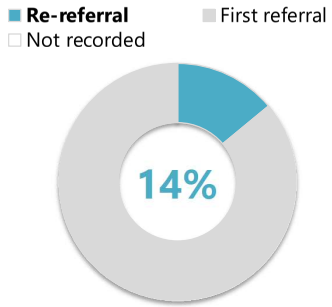
*Annualised rate for comparison purposes

Referrals with No Further Action (NFA)

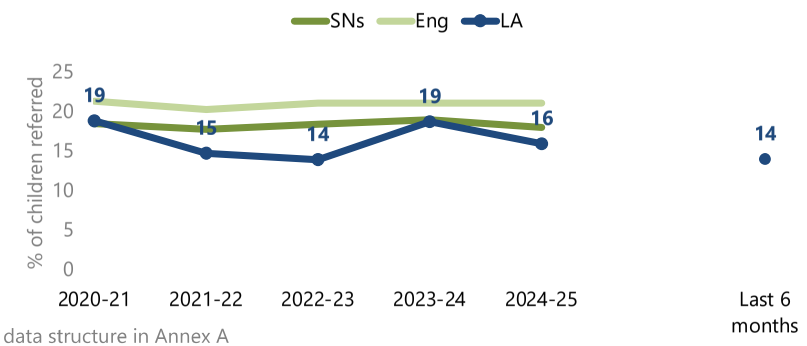


Re-referrals: children with a previous referral within 12 months of their latest referral

289 children with previous referrals within 12 months of latest referral



First referral	1,784
1 prev referral	268
2 prev referrals	19
3 prev referrals	2
4+ prev referrals	0
Not recorded	0



*"Last 6 months" calculation differs slightly from national statistics, due to data structure in Annex A

Assessments in the last 6 months

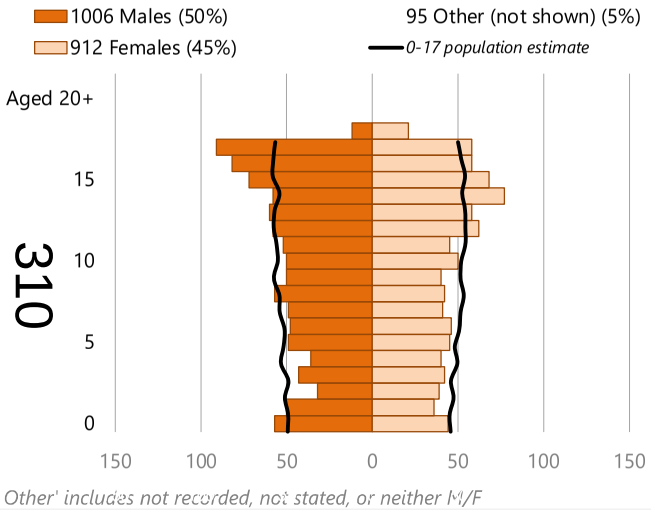
from 04/05/2025
to 03/11/2025

2013 total assessments

410 open assessments

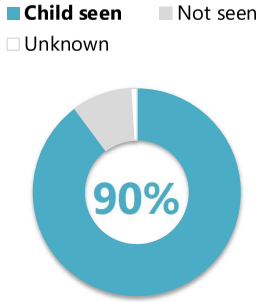
1603 completed assessments

Age and sex of all assessments



Other includes not recorded, not stated, or neither M/F

Assessments completed where child



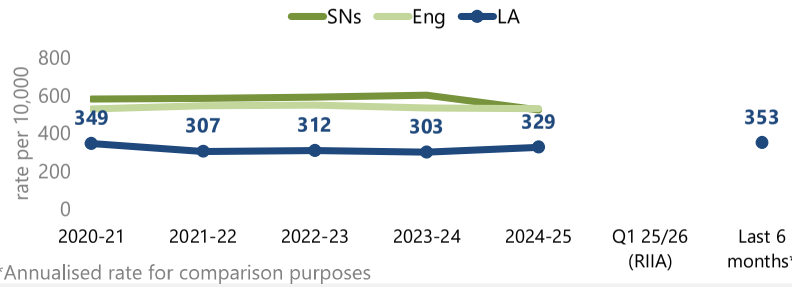
Ethnic background

White	52%
Mixed	13%
Asian or Asian British	19%
Black or black British	10%
Other ethnic group	3%
Not stated	4%
Not recorded	0%

See page 25 for comparisons

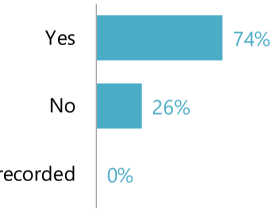
90 assessments (4%) for children with a disability

Rate of completed assessments per 10,000 children aged 0-17

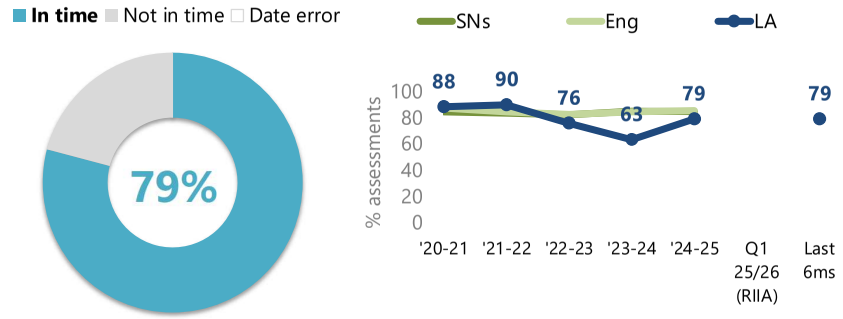


*Annualised rate for comparison purposes

Child assessed as requiring LA children's social care support

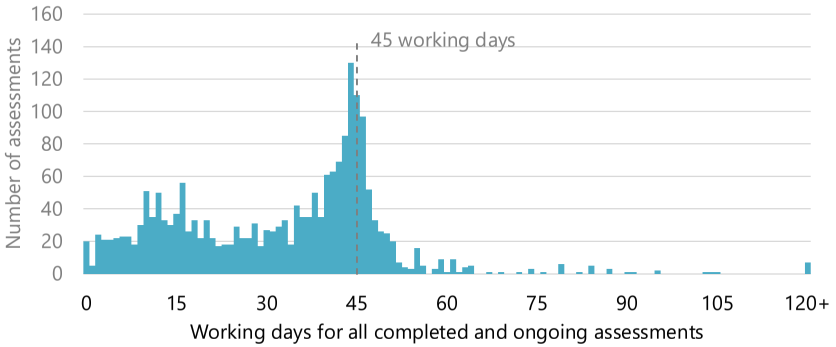


Assessments completed in 45 working days

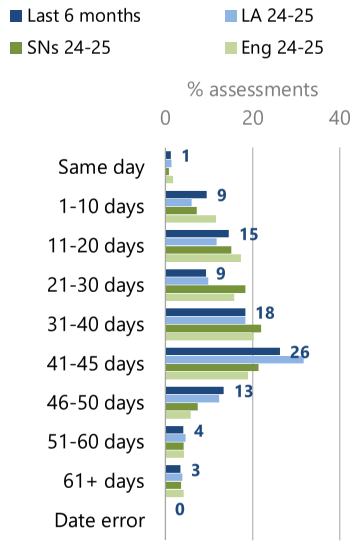


Durations for all completed and open assessments

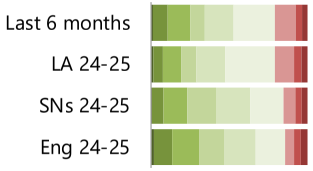
Average duration of completed assessments was 35 working days



Comparing timeliness



Duration categories as above

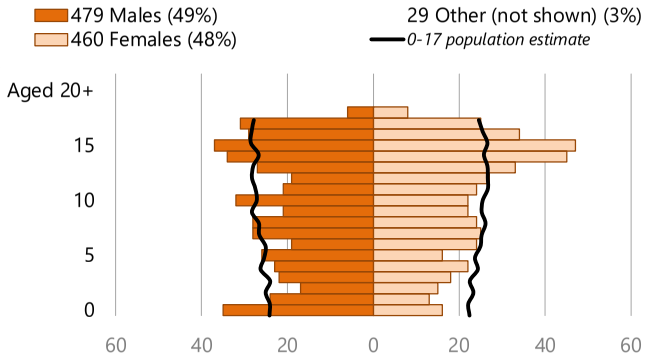


Section 47 enquiries in the last 6 months

from 04/05/2025
to 03/11/2025

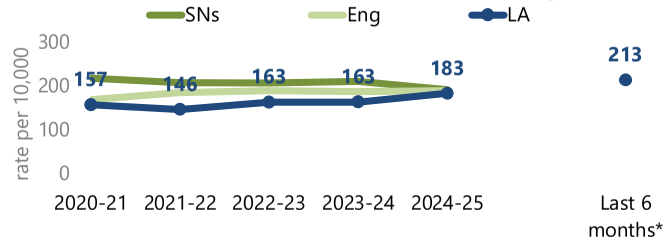
968 Section 47 enquiries

Age and sex



Other includes not recorded, not stated, or neither M/F

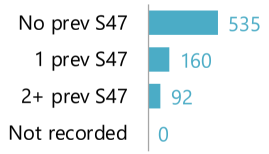
Rate of S47 enquiries per 10,000 children aged 0-17



*Annualised rate for comparison purposes

54 S47s (6%) for children with a disability

Children with a S47 in the 12 months preceding the latest



Ethnic background

White	54%
Mixed	12%
Asian or Asian British	20%
Black or black British	8%
Other ethnic group	2%
Not stated	4%
Not recorded	0%

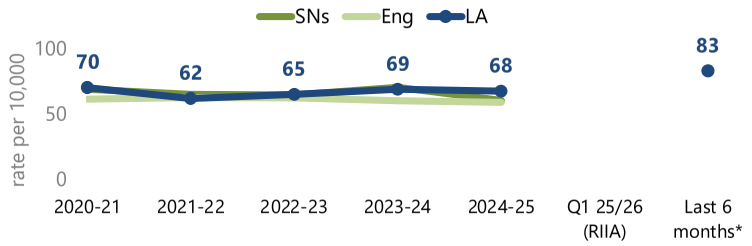
See page 25 for comparisons

377 Initial Child Protection Conferences (from S47 in period)

61% of completed S47s **did not require an ICPC**

ICPC not required may include S47s for open CPP where ICPC was not required, and may exclude children where an ICPC was required but has not yet occurred

Rate of ICPCs per 10,000 children aged 0-17



*Annualised rate for comparison purposes

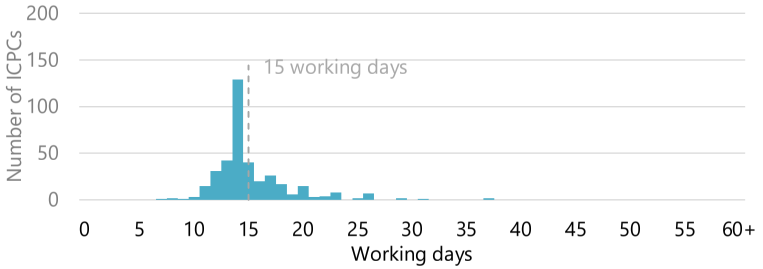
11 child(ren) with an ICPC in the 12 months preceding the latest S47*

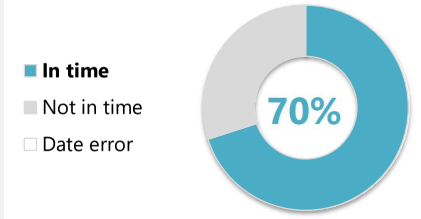
*Including where latest S47 did not result in ICPC

68%

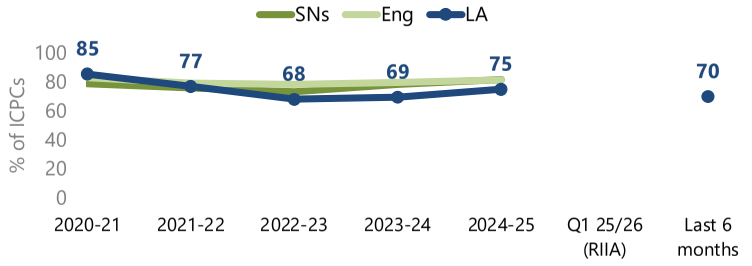
of ICPCs resulted in a child protection plan

ICPCs occurred within 15 working days of the strategy discussion date



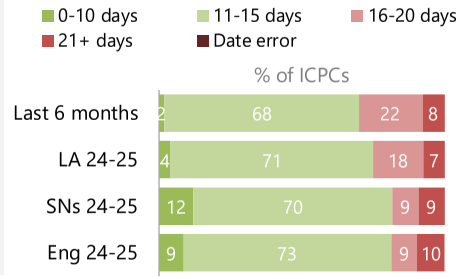


Trend of ICPC timeliness (within 15 days of S47 start)



* Published comparator data includes transfer-in conferences

Comparing ICPC durations



Children in Need (CIN) - total, started, and ceased in the last 6 months

from 04/05/2025
to 03/11/2025

2975 total CIN in 6 months*

***Note: the numbers of children in need reported in ChAT are not directly comparable to published CIN census statistics due to an undercount of referrals and care leavers.**

The children in need census includes any child referred to children's social care services in the year as well as any open case for whom the local authority was providing services. Ofsted's Annex A List 6 largely covers this cohort, with the exception of those with only an open referral and care leavers.

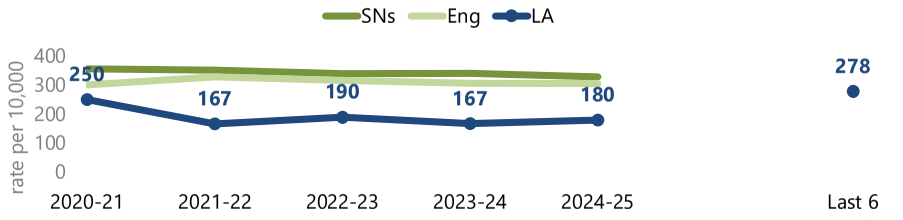
For this reason the published children in need census statistics are not directly comparable to ChAT, however there is considerable overlap with ChAT undercounting the true value as it excludes open referrals and care leavers. Additionally the CiN Census only include RC1-7 codes where here LAs may include additional codes i.e. RC8 (see FAQ row 14).

Cases included in Annex A / ChAT

Case status of children on CIN list	Number	Percentage
Looked after child	619	21%
Child protection plan	471	16%
Child in need plan	476	16%
Open assessment	370	12%
Closed episode	1,039	35%
Case status not recorded	0	0%
Total (excluding case status unknown)	2,975	100%

1262 CIN started in 6 months

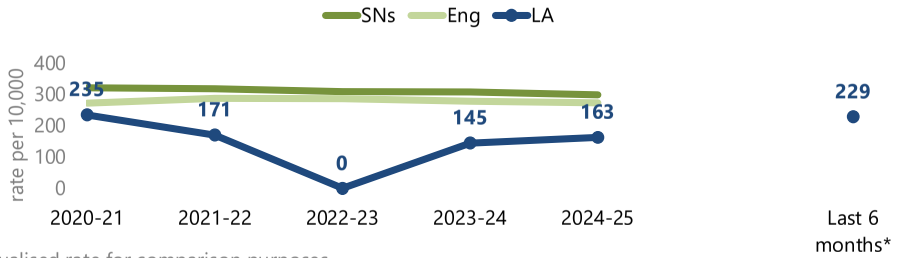
Rate of children who started an episode of need per 10,000 children aged 0-17



*Annualised rate for comparison purposes

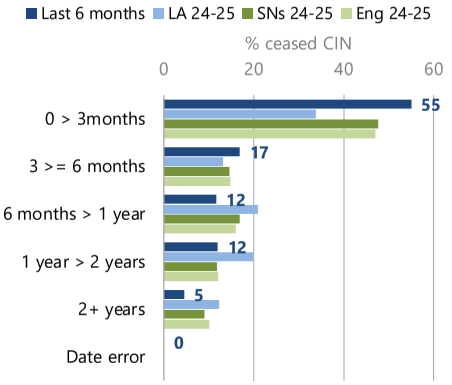
1039 CIN ceased in 6 months

Rate of children who ended an episode of need per 10,000 children aged 0-17

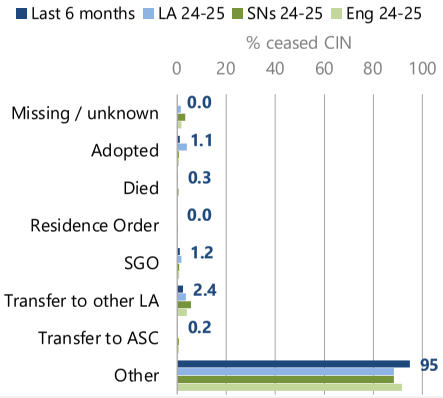


*Annualised rate for comparison purposes

Comparing CIN ceased durations



Comparing CIN ceased reasons



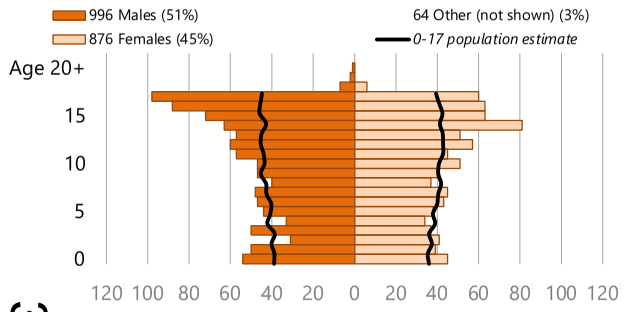
Children in Need (CIN) with an open episode of need

Snapshot 03/11/2025

1936 Children in Need with an open episode of need*

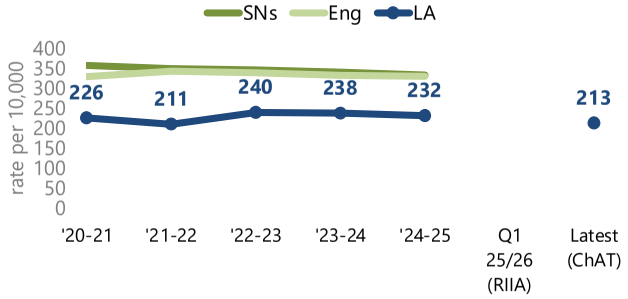
*Note: Annex A figures in this section are not directly comparable to the published Children in need census statistics (see note on page 8)

Age and sex

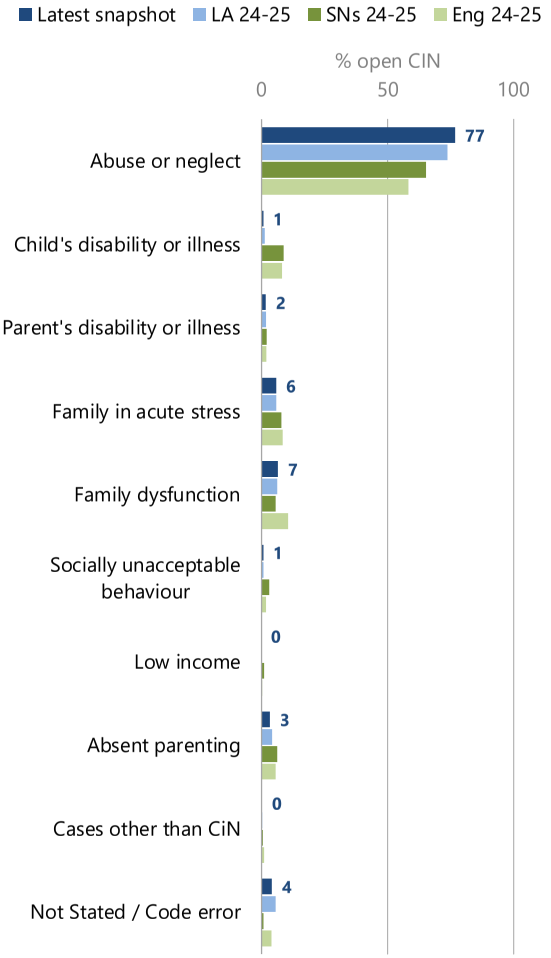


'Other' includes not recorded, not stated, or neither M/F

Rate of open CIN per 10,000 children aged 0-17*

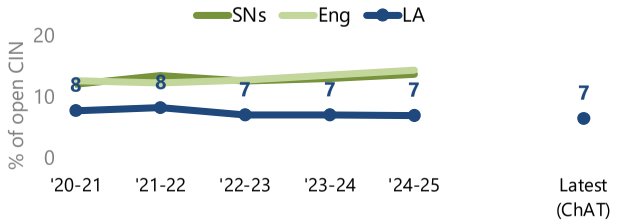


Comparing primary need of open CIN

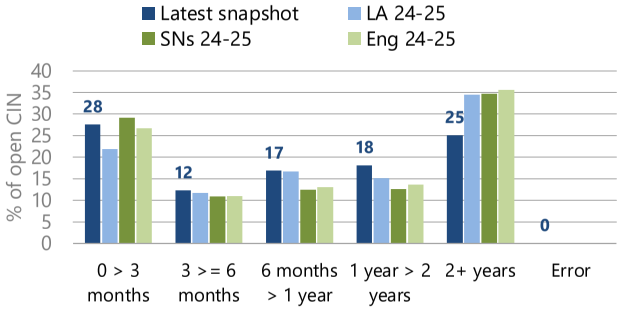


126 children (7%) with a disability

CIN with an open episode of need with a disability



Comparing episode duration of open CIN

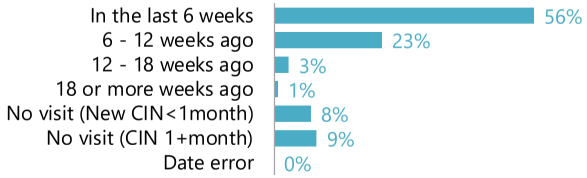


Ethnic background

White	53%
Mixed	14%
Asian or Asian British	17%
Black or black British	8%
Other ethnic group	3%
Not stated	4%
Not recorded	0%

See page 25 for comparisons

Time since the child was last seen by social worker

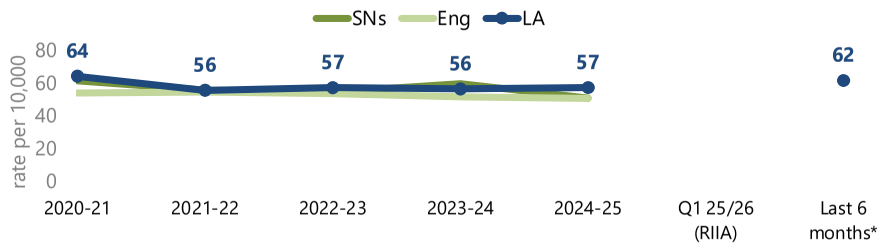


Child Protection Plans (CPP) started and ceased in the last 6 months

from 04/05/2025
to 03/11/2025

280 CPP started in 6 months

Rate of children who started a CP plan per 10,000 children



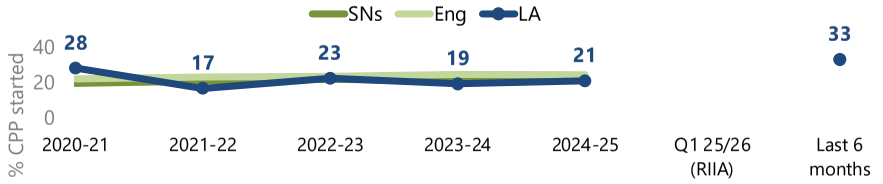
*Annualised rate for comparison purposes

"Re-registrations" for children who started on a CP plan (ever)

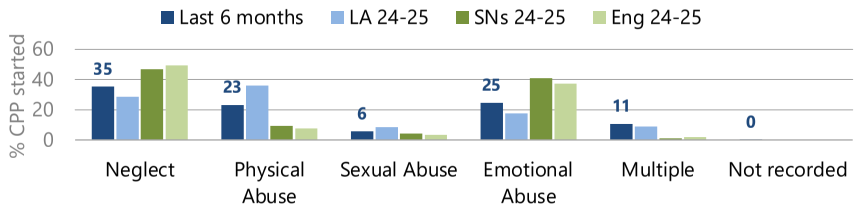
314

93 of the 280 children who started a plan in the period have been the subject of a previous child protection plan

Comparing "re-registrations" for CPP started

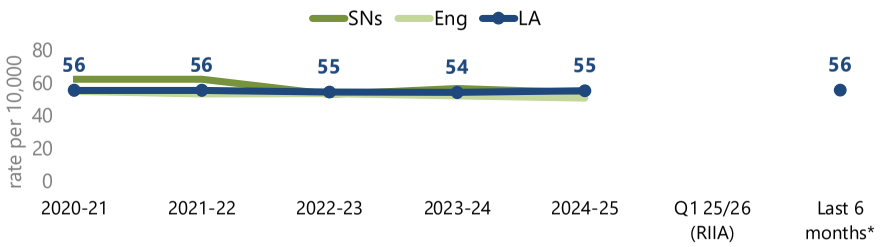


Initial category of abuse for CPP started



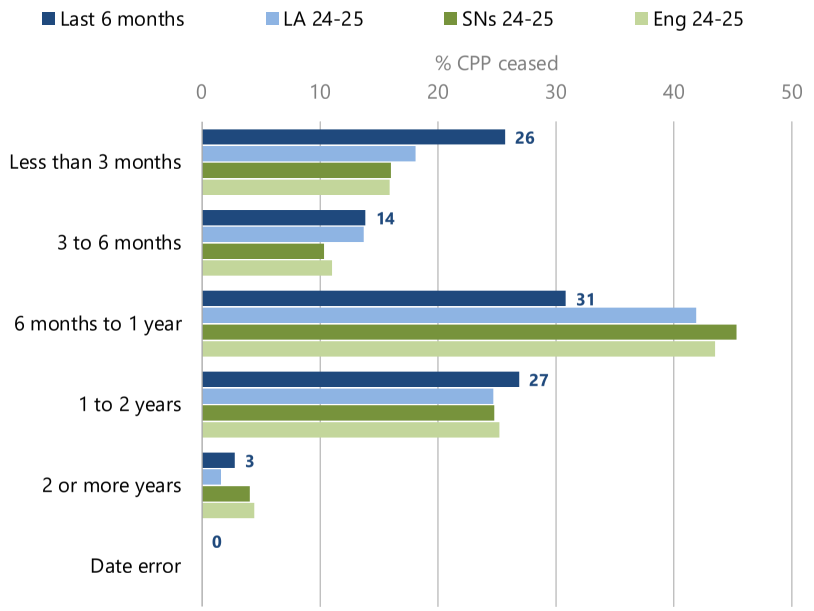
253 CPP ended in 6 months

Rate of children who ended a CP plan per 10,000 children



*Annualised rate for comparison purposes

Comparing plan durations for CPP ended



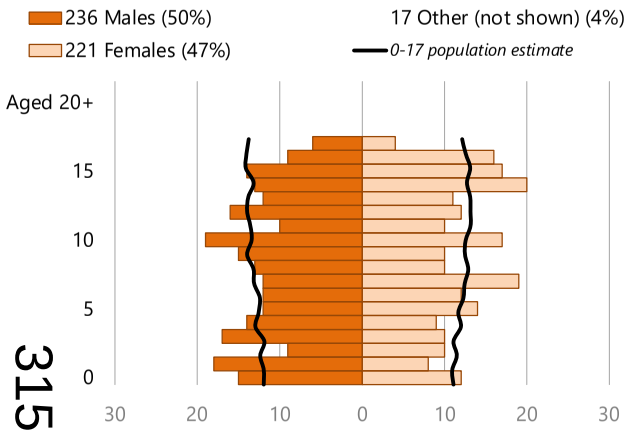
7 of 253 children ended a CP plan after 2 years or more

Child Protection Plans (CPP) currently open

Snapshot 03/11/2025

474 children currently subject of a Child Protection Plan (CPP)

Age and sex



'Other' includes not recorded, not stated, or neither M/F

Ethnic background

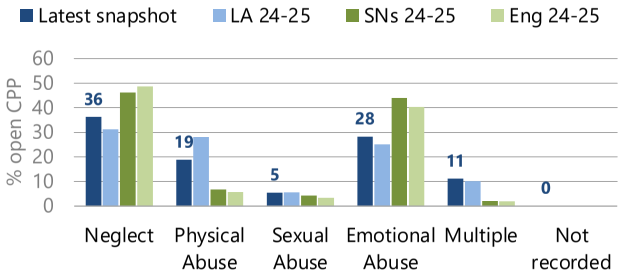
White	47%
Mixed	14%
Asian or Asian British	23%
Black or black British	7%
Other ethnic group	3%
Not stated	6%
Not recorded	0%

See page 20 for comparisons

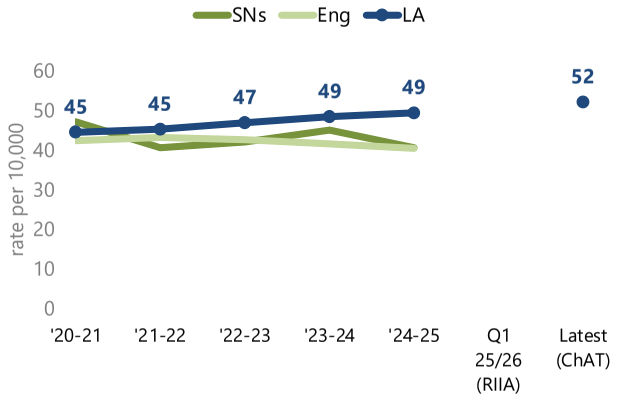
20 children (4%) with a disability

1 open CP subject to Emergency Protection Order or Protected Under Police Powers in last 6 months

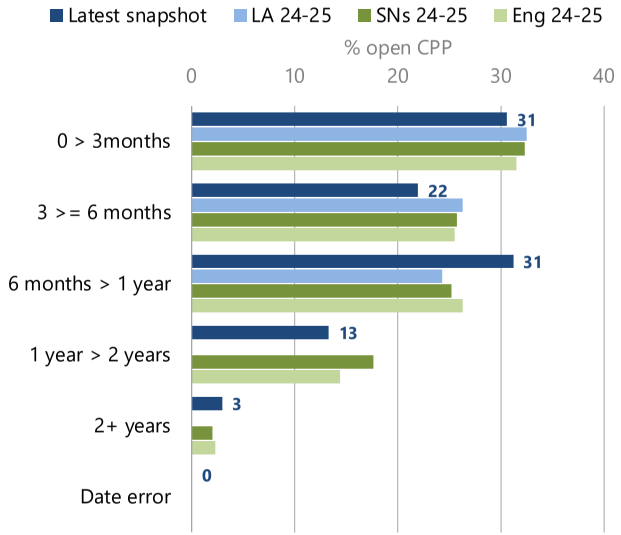
Latest category of abuse for current CP plans



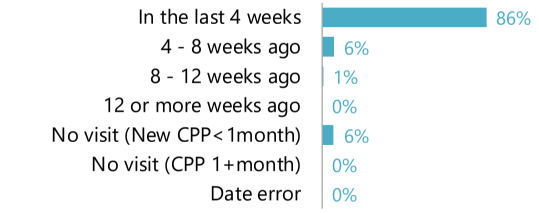
Rate of CPP per 10,000 children aged 0-17



Comparing duration of open CP plans

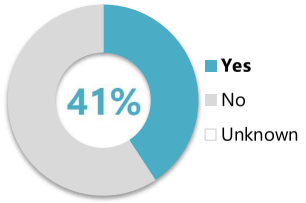


Time since the child was last seen

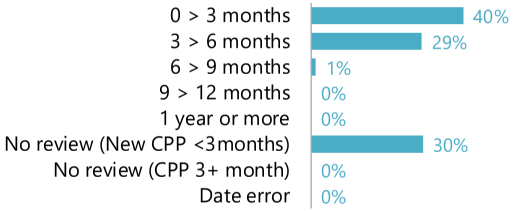


Open CPP **seen alone** at their last social work visit

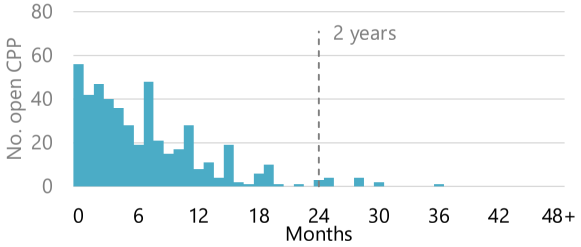
(excludes Not recorded or N/A)



Time since the child's latest review



Duration of current open CP plans (in months)

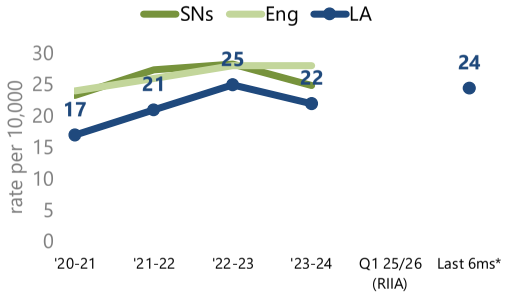


Children Looked After (CLA) started and ceased in the last 6 months

from 04/05/2025
to 03/11/2025

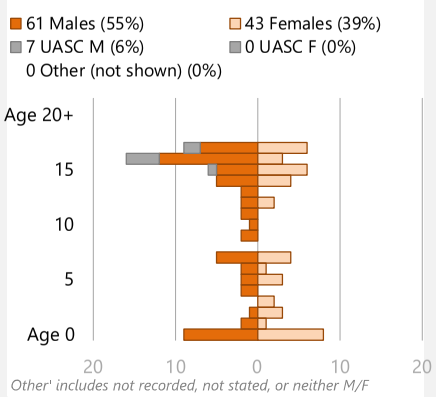
111 CLA started in the last 6 months

Rate of CLA started per 10,000 children



*Annualised rate for comparison purposes

Age and sex



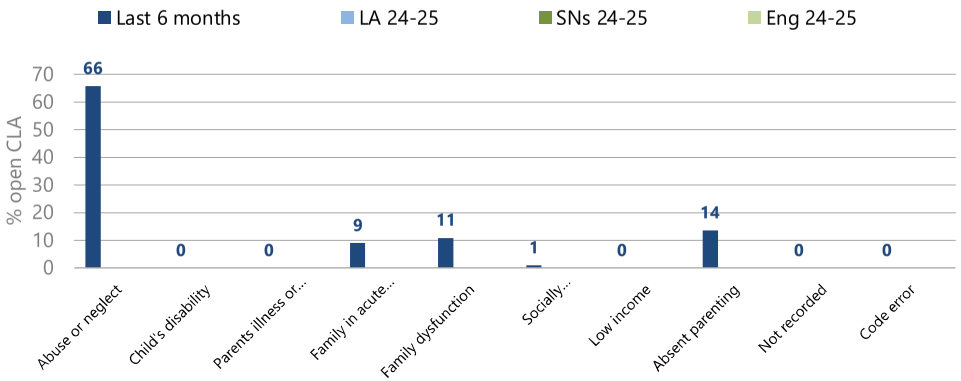
'Other' includes not recorded, not stated, or neither M/F

316

6% 7 of the 111 CLA starters were unaccompanied asylum seeking children (UAS)

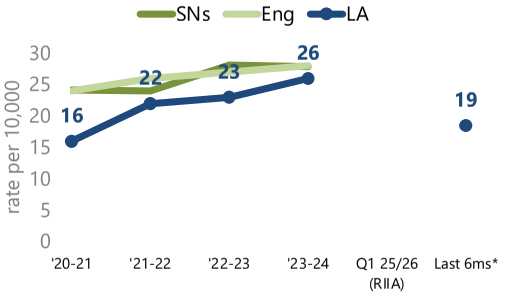
8% 9 of the 111 CLA starters have previously been looked after

Comparing the primary need of CLA starters



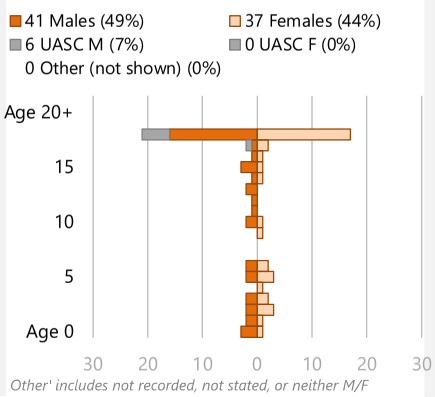
84 CLA ceased in the last 6 months

Rate of CLA ceased per 10,000 children



*Annualised rate for comparison purposes

Age and sex



'Other' includes not recorded, not stated, or neither M/F

Reason episode of care ceased

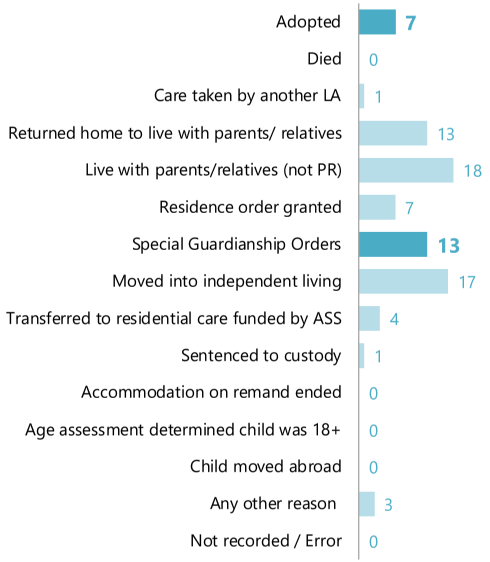
Adopted

Last 6 months	2024-25 (published)		
8%	LA	SNs	Eng
	0%	-	0%

Special Guardianship Order

Last 6 months	2024-25 (published)		
15%	LA	SNs	Eng
	0%	-	0%

Number of CLA ceased by reason in the period

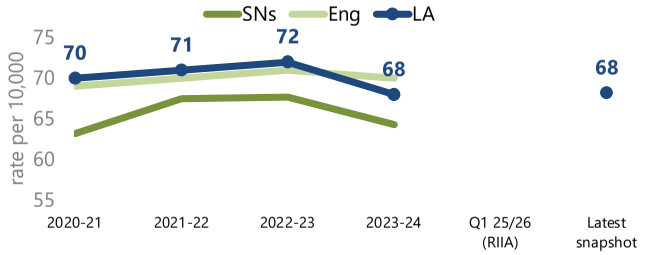


Children Looked After (CLA) with an open episode of care

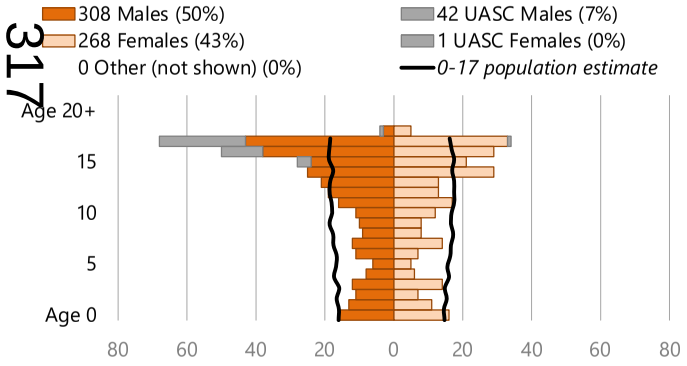
Snapshot 03/11/2025

619 Children Looked After (CLA) with an open episode of care

Rate of CLA per 10,000 children (snapshot)



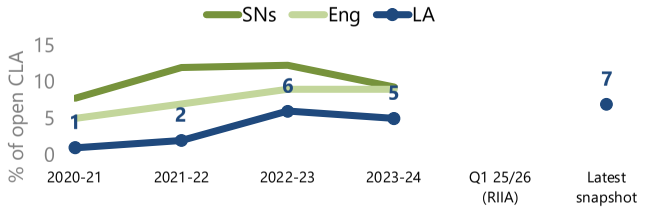
Age and sex



Other' includes not recorded, not stated, or neither M/F

43 open unaccompanied asylum seeking children (UAS)

UAS Children as a percentage of CLA (snapshot)



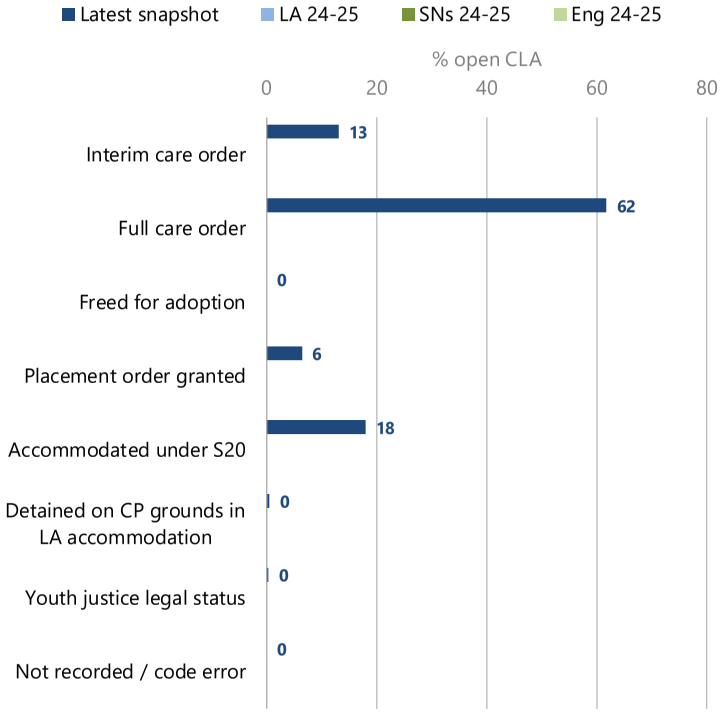
Ethnic background

	All CLA	Not UASC	UASC
White	58%	62%	2%
Mixed	17%	18%	0%
Asian or Asian British	11%	10%	30%
Black or black British	9%	7%	33%
Other ethnic group	3%	1%	33%
Not stated	2%	2%	2%
Not recorded	0%	0%	0%

See page 25 for comparisons

59 children (10%) with a disability

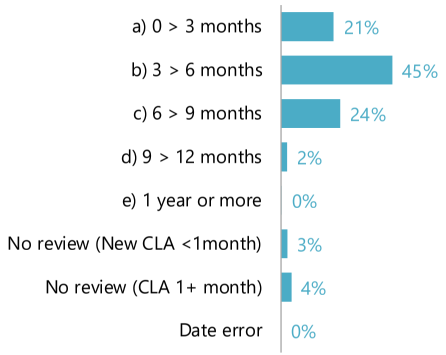
Comparing legal status of open CLA (snapshot)



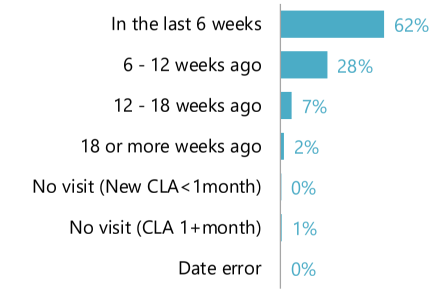
Permanence plan

	Number	%
Return to family	243	39%
Adoption	54	9%
SGO/CAO	29	5%
Supported living	32	5%
L/T residential	82	13%
L/T fostering	128	21%
Other	42	7%
Not recorded	9	1%

Time since latest review



Time since the child was last seen

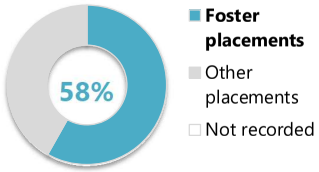


Children Looked After (CLA) placements

Snapshot 03/11/2025

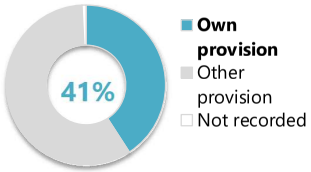
CLA placements by type and provision

Foster placements



LA 2024-25	0%
SNs 2024-25	-
Eng 2024-25	0%

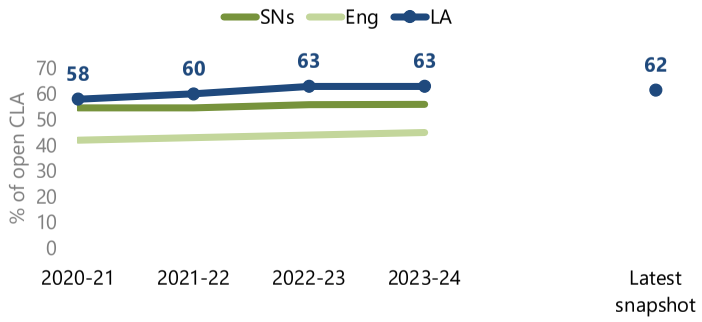
Own provision



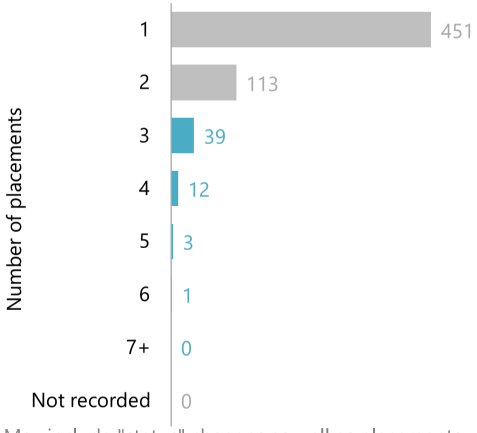
LA 2024-25	0%
SNs 2024-25	-
Eng 2024-25	0%

Placement type (open CLA)	Own LA	Private	Other	Total
Foster placement	212	144	4	360
Placed for adoption	9	0	3	12
Placed with parents	0	0	36	36
Independent living	0	0	0	0
Residential employment	0	0	0	0
Residential accommodation	0	83	8	91
Secure Children's Homes	0	0	1	1
Children's Homes	32	73	3	108
Residential Care Home	0	0	0	0
NHS/Health Trust	0	0	0	0
Family Centre	0	1	0	1
Young Offender Institution	0	0	2	2
Residential school	0	0	0	0
Other placements	0	4	4	8
Temporary placement	0	0	0	0
Total placements	253	305	61	619

CLA placements out of borough

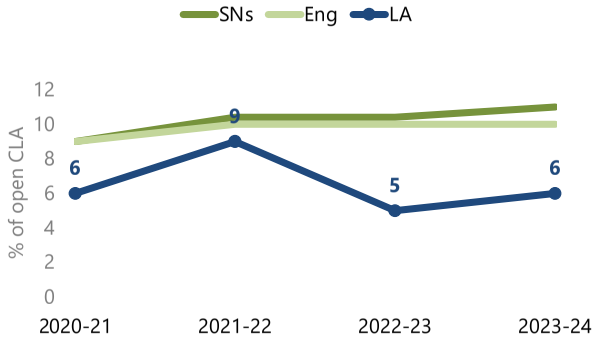


Number of placements in the last 12 months



May include "status" changes as well as placements

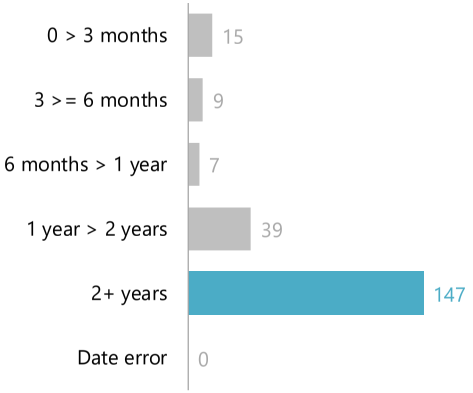
Comparing short term placement stability



Due to limited data in the Annex A dataset, ChAT does not present short-term stability alongside published statistics

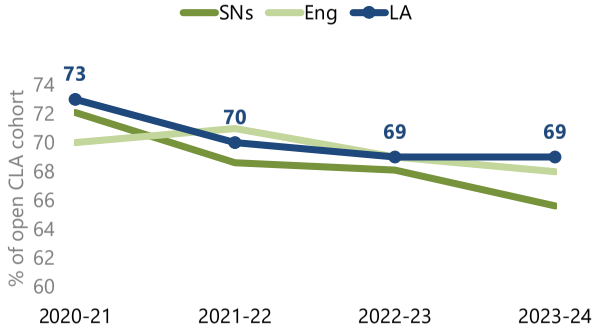
Duration of placements

Duration of latest placement for each current CLA aged under 16 who have been looked after for 2½ years or more



May include "status" changes as well as placements

Comparing long term placement stability



Due to limited data in the Annex A dataset, ChAT does not present long-term stability alongside published statistics

Children Looked After (CLA) health and missing/absent from placement

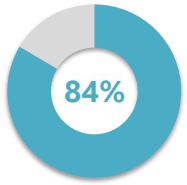
Snapshot 03/11/2025

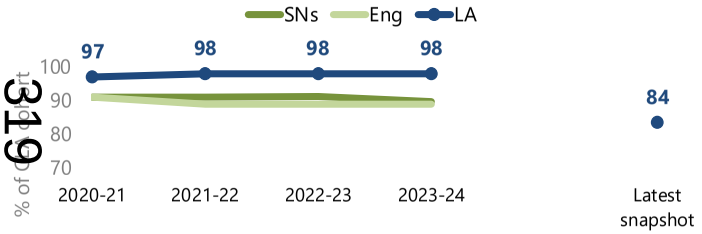
Health

437 current open CLA looked after for at least 12 months

Health assessments

Current open CLA who have been looked after for at least 12 months with an up to date health assessment (in the last 6 months for CLA aged under 5, and in the last 12 months for CLA aged 5-plus)

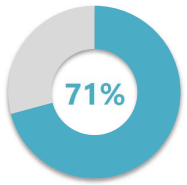


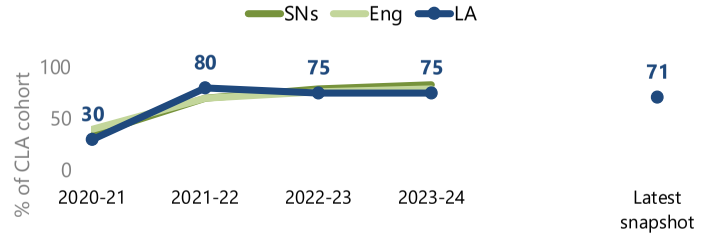


319

Dental checks

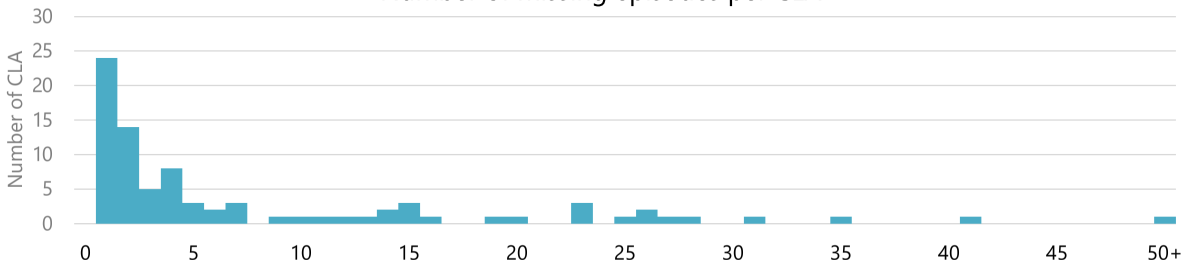
Current open CLA who have been looked after for at least 12 months who have had a dental check in the last 12 months.





Missing from placement

Number of missing episodes per CLA



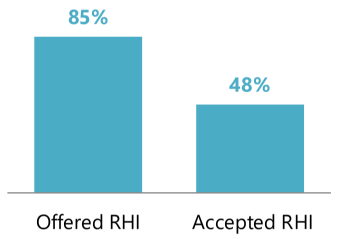
84 of 703 looked after children had a missing incident in the last 12 months

	Latest data	LA 24-25	SNs 24-25	Eng 24-25
Number of all CLA with a missing incident	84 of 703	0		
Percentage of all CLA with a missing incident	12%	0%	#VALUE!	0%
Total number of missing incidents for all CLA	706	0		
Average number of incidents per CLA who went missing	8.4	0.0	-	0.0

Missing incidents - return home interviews

	Latest data	
Missing children offered return interview	71 of 84	85%
Missing children not offered return interview	13 of 84	15%
Missing children return interview offer not recorded	0 of 84	0%
Missing children where return interview was n/a	0 of 84	0%

	Latest data	
Missing children accepted return interview	34 of 71	48%
Missing children not accepted return interview	37 of 71	52%
Missing children return interview acceptance not recorded	0 of 71	0%



Absent from placement

0 of 703 looked after children had an absent incident in the last 12 months

	Latest data	LA 24-25	SNs 24-25	Eng 24-25
Number of all CLA with an absent incident	0 of 703	0		
Percentage of all CLA with an absent incident	0%	0%	#VALUE!	0%
Total number of absent incidents for all CLA	0	0		
Average number of incidents per CLA who were absent	-	0.0	-	0.0

Care leavers - Demographics and Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking (UAS) Children

Snapshot 03/11/2025

638 care leavers who have reached the threshold for receiving leaving care services

Care leavers by age and eligibility

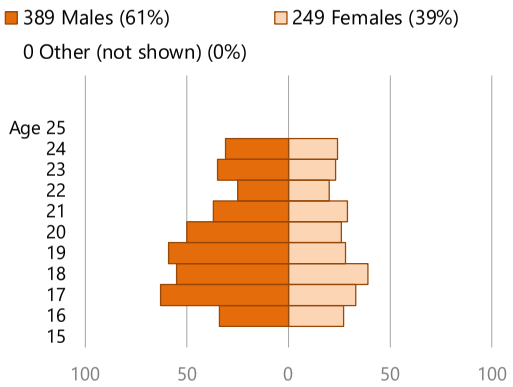
(where highlighted, please check eligibility/age criteria)

	Eligible	Relevant	Former Relevant	Qualifying	Other	Total
16	61	0	0	0	0	**61**
17	90	2	2	2	0	**96**
18	2	0	91	1	0	**94**
19	0	0	87	0	0	**87**
20	0	0	76	0	0	**76**
21	0	0	66	0	0	**66**
22	0	0	45	0	0	**45**
23	0	0	58	0	0	**58**
24	0	0	55	0	0	**55**
25	0	0	0	0	0	**0**
Other	0	0	0	0	0	**0**
Total	**153**	**2**	**480**	**3**	**0**	**638**

Care leaver eligibility summary (please refer to DfE guidance for full eligibility criteria)

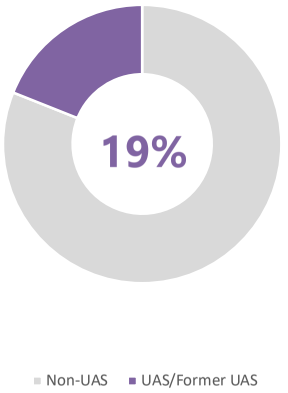
320 **Eligible**	~ Age 16 or 17 ~ Has been looked after for at least 13 weeks since age 14 (can be multiple periods) ~ Currently looked after
Relevant	~ Age 16 or 17 ~ Has been looked after for at least 13 weeks since age 14 (can be multiple periods) ~ Looked after on or after their 16th birthday ~ No longer looked after
Former Relevant	~ Aged between 18 and 25 ~ Previously an eligible or relevant child (see above definitions)
Qualifying (Annex A requires only those requesting and receiving a service)	~ Aged between 16 and 21 (or 25 if in education) ~ Looked after on or after their 16th birthday ~ **Not** looked after for at least 13 weeks since age 14 or ~ privately fostered after the age of 16 but before the age of 18 or ~ were looked after prior to becoming subject to a SGO

Age and sex



Other' includes not recorded, not stated, or neither M/F

All Care Leavers by UAS/Former UAS Status



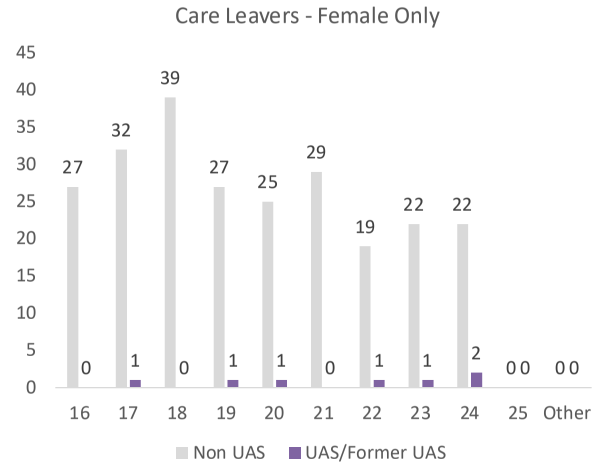
Ethnic background

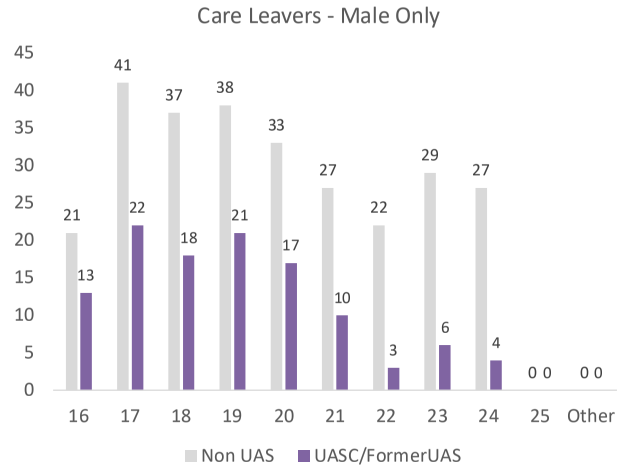
White	50%
Mixed	16%
Asian or Asian British	14%
Black or black British	11%
Other ethnic group	8%
Not stated	0%
Not recorded	0%

See page 25 for comparisons

97 (15%) care leavers with a disability

Care Leavers, by Age, Sex and UAS/Former UAS Status

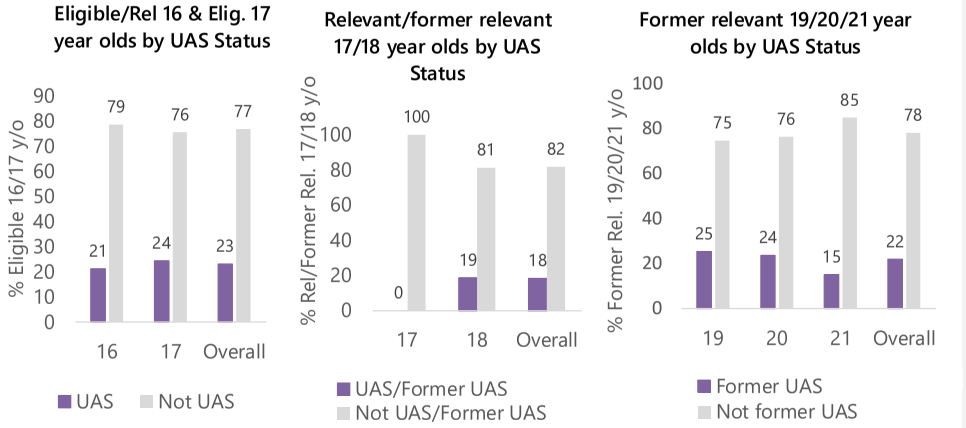




Care leavers demographics and UAS Children continued.

Snapshot 03/11/2025

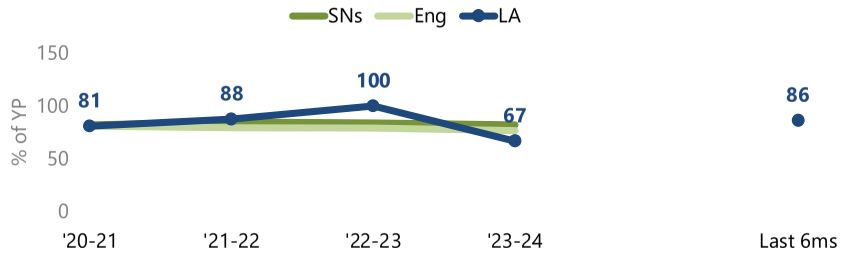
% Care Leavers UAS/Former UAS by Eligibility



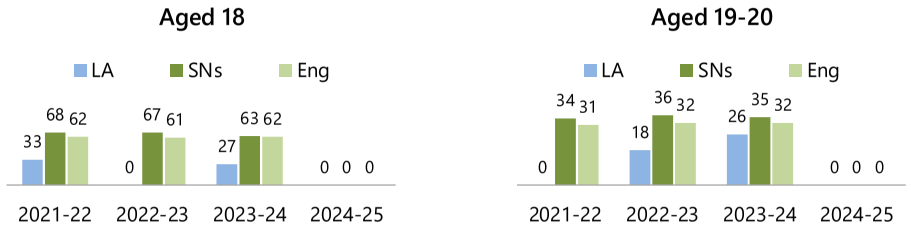
321

Remained in care until aged 18

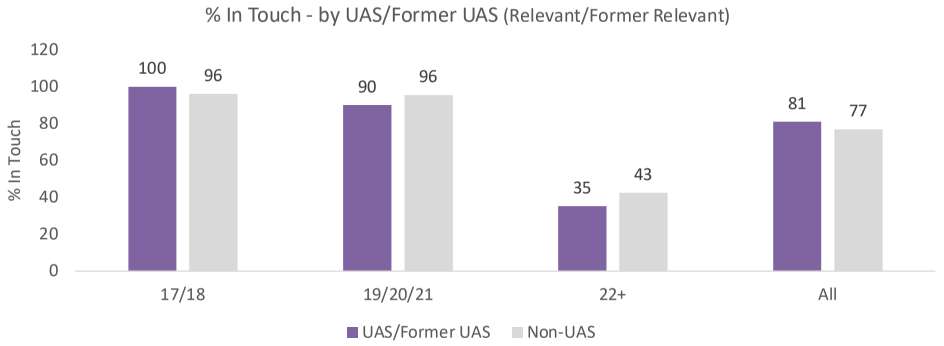
YP who ceased to be looked after aged 16-plus who were looked after until their 18th birthday



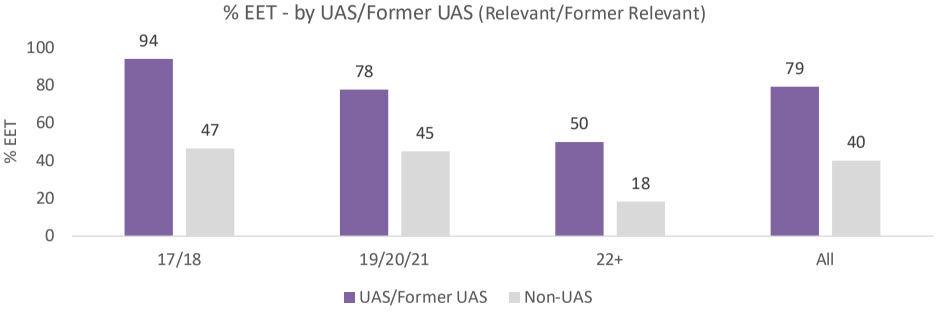
Remain with former foster carer



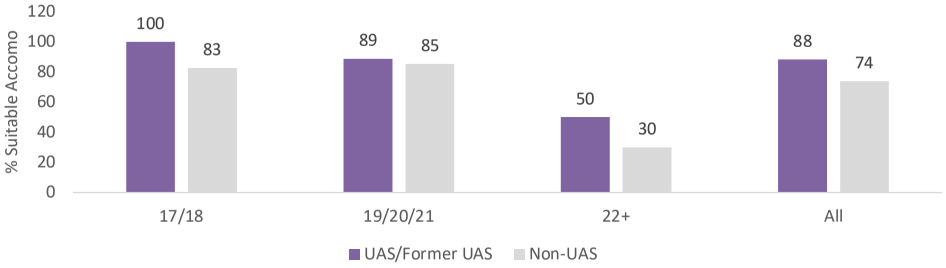
Care Leavers in Touch by UAS/Non-UAS



Care Leavers EET by UAS/Non-UAS



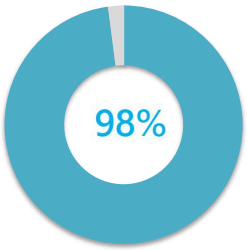
Care Leavers in Suitable Accommodation by UAS/Non-UAS



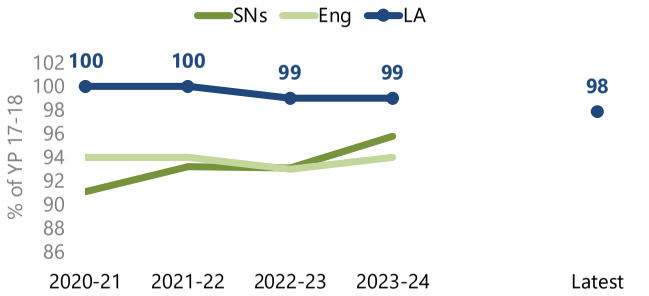
Care Leavers in touch and contact timescales

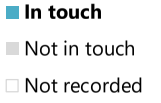
Snapshot 03/11/2025

LA in touch with 17-18 year olds (relevant/former relevant)

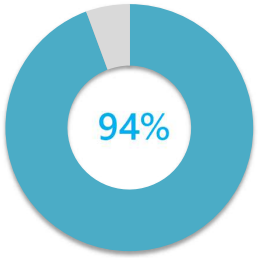


ChAT	Aged 17	Aged 18	Total
Numbers in cohort	4	90	94
LA in touch with YP	75%	99%	98%

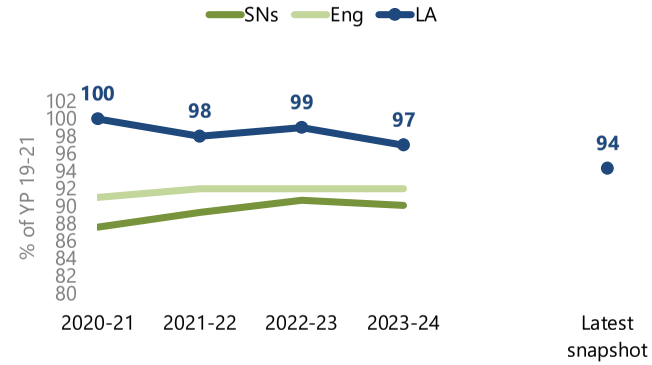


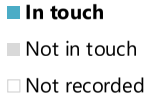


LA in touch with 19-21 year olds (former relevant)

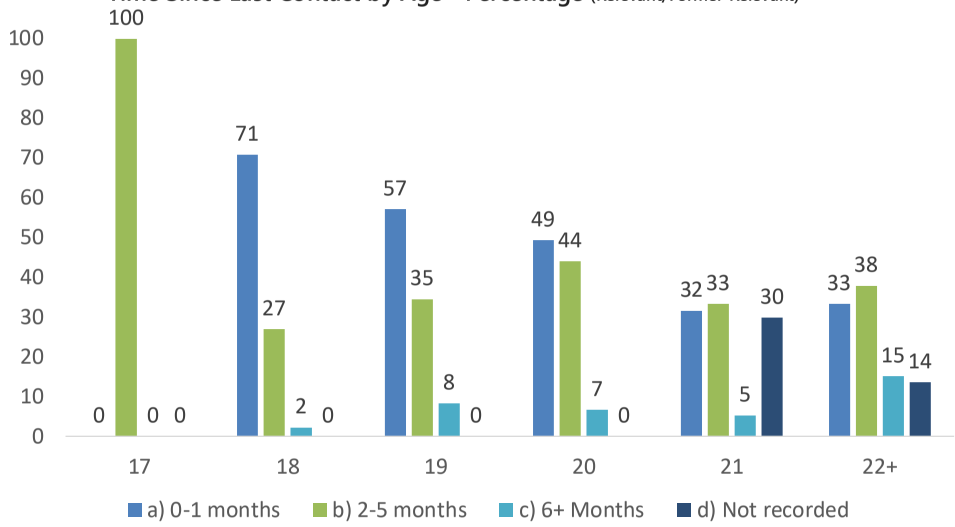


ChAT	Aged 19	Aged 20	Aged 21	Total
Numbers in cohort	87	76	66	229
LA in touch with YP	97%	99%	86%	94%

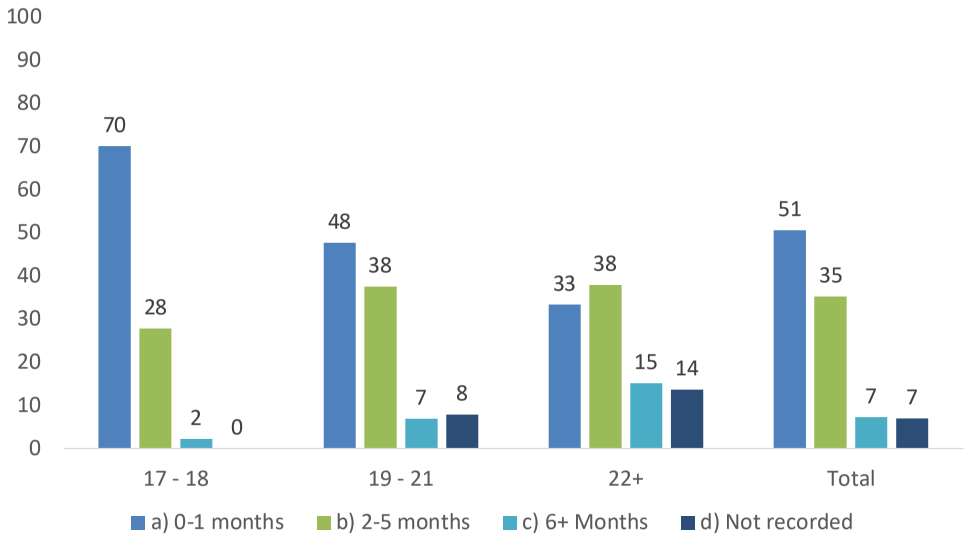




Time Since Last Contact by Age - Percentage (Relevant/Former Relevant)

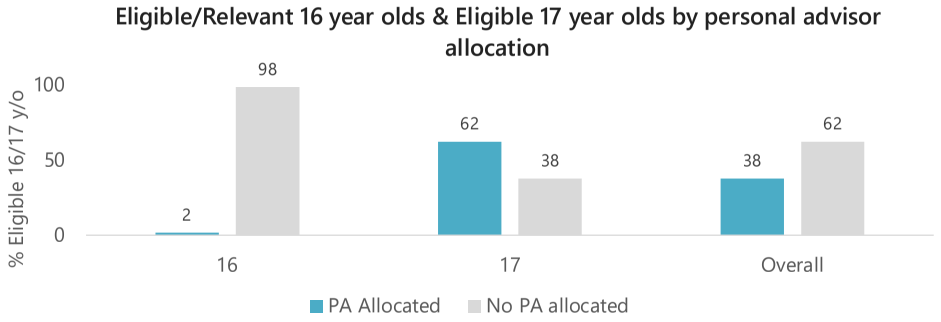


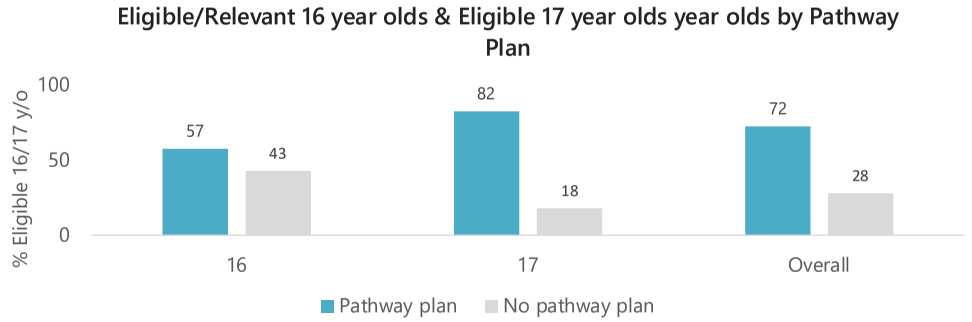
Time Since Last Contact by Age Group - Percentage (Relevant/Former Relevant)

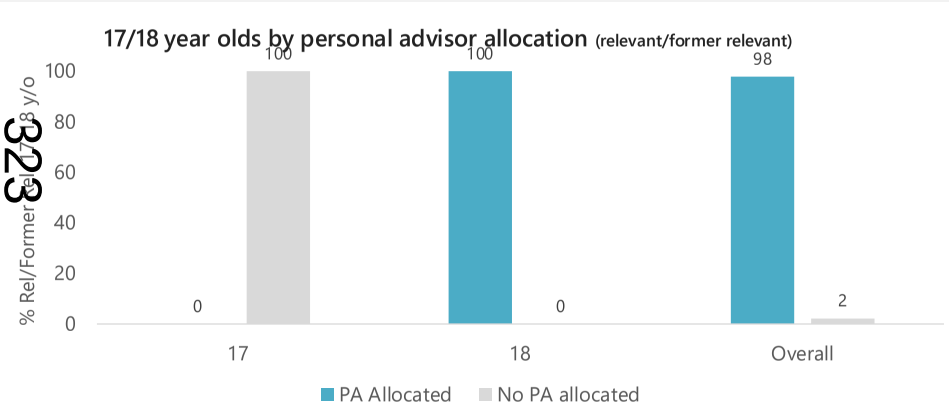


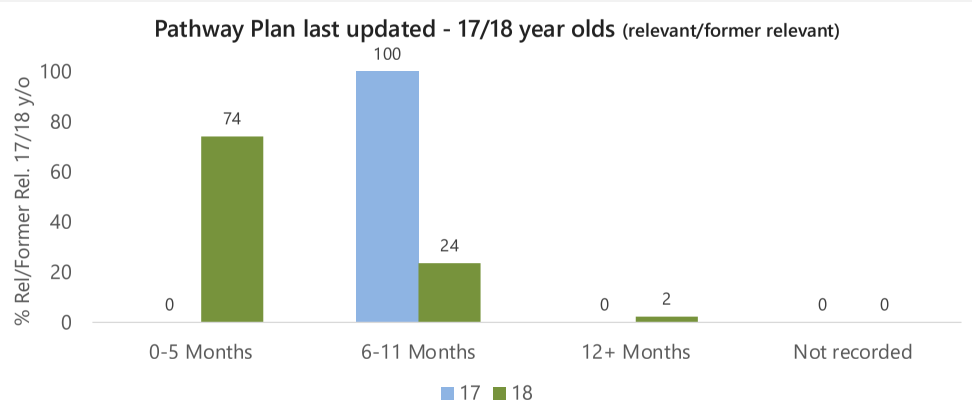
Care leavers PA allocation and Pathway Plans

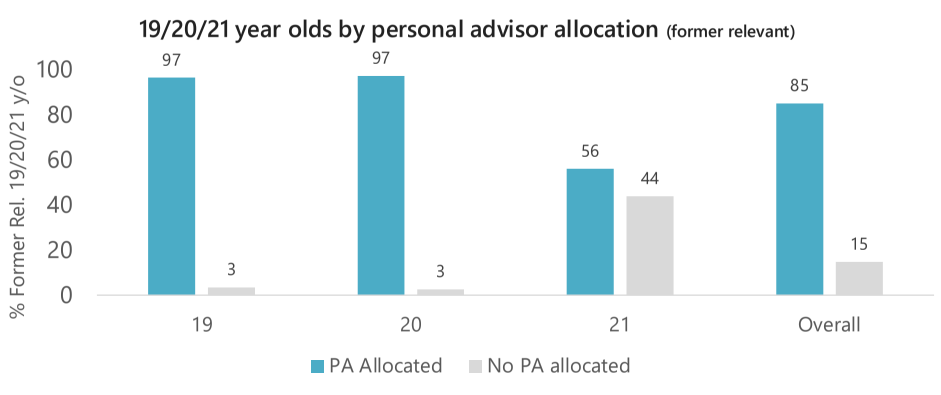
Snapshot 03/11/2025

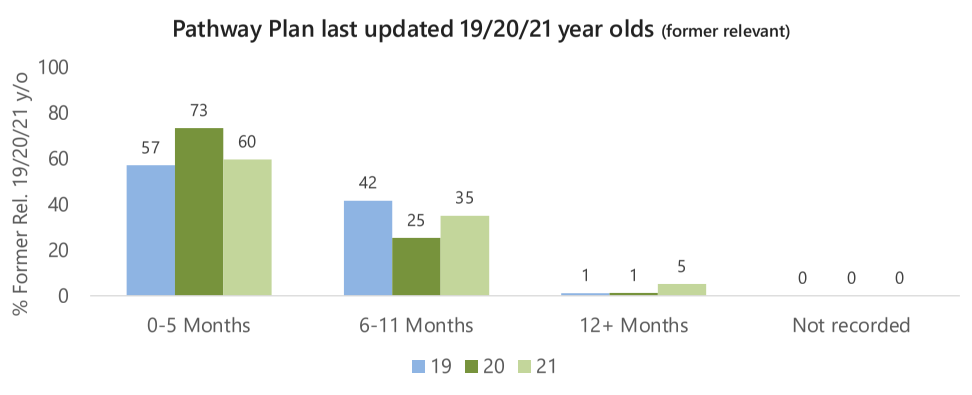








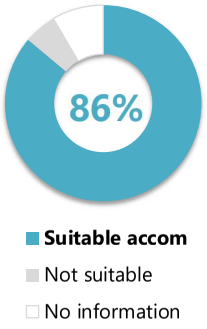




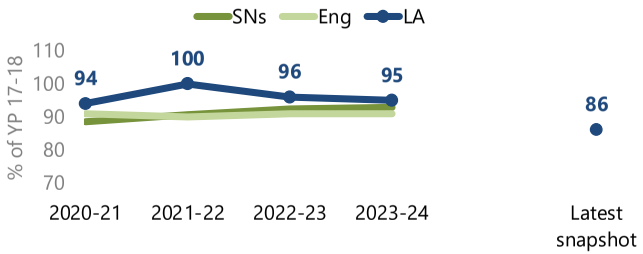
Care leavers accommodation suitability and type

Snapshot 03/11/2025

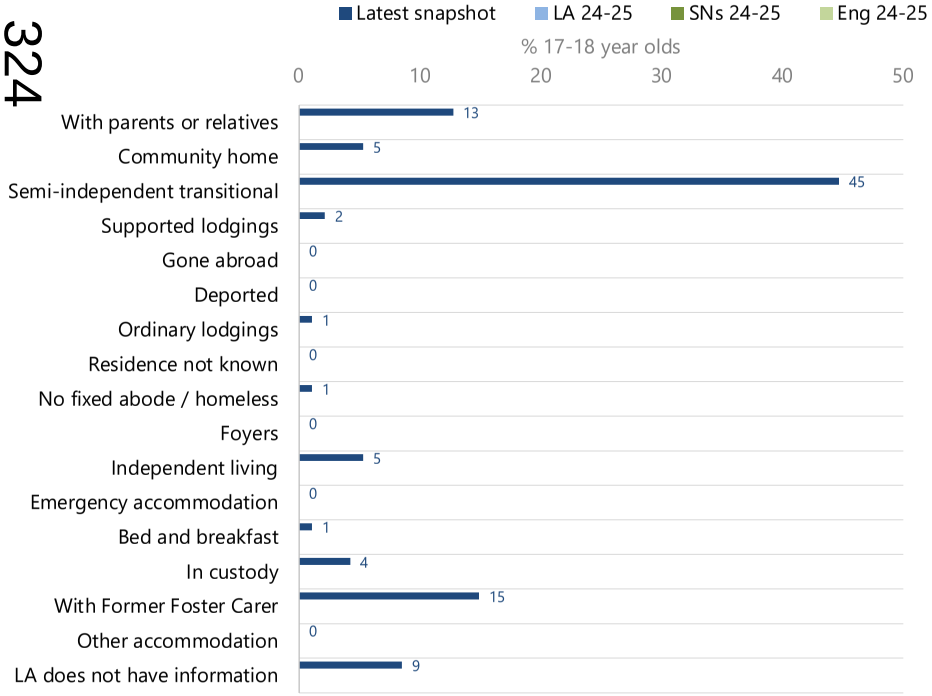
Accommodation suitability of 17-18 year olds (relevant/former relevant)



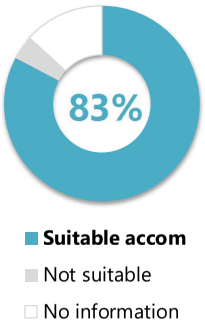
ChAT	Aged 17	Aged 18	Total
Numbers in cohort	4	90	94
In suitable accommodation	25%	89%	86%
In suit accomm (In touch only)	0%	89%	86%



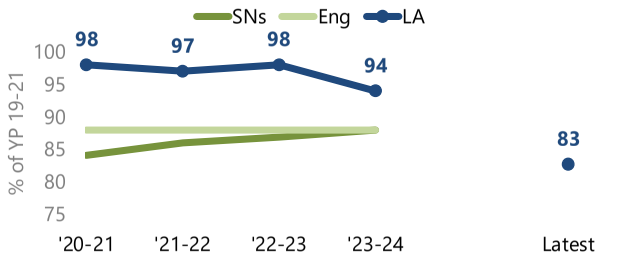
Accommodation types of 17-18 year olds



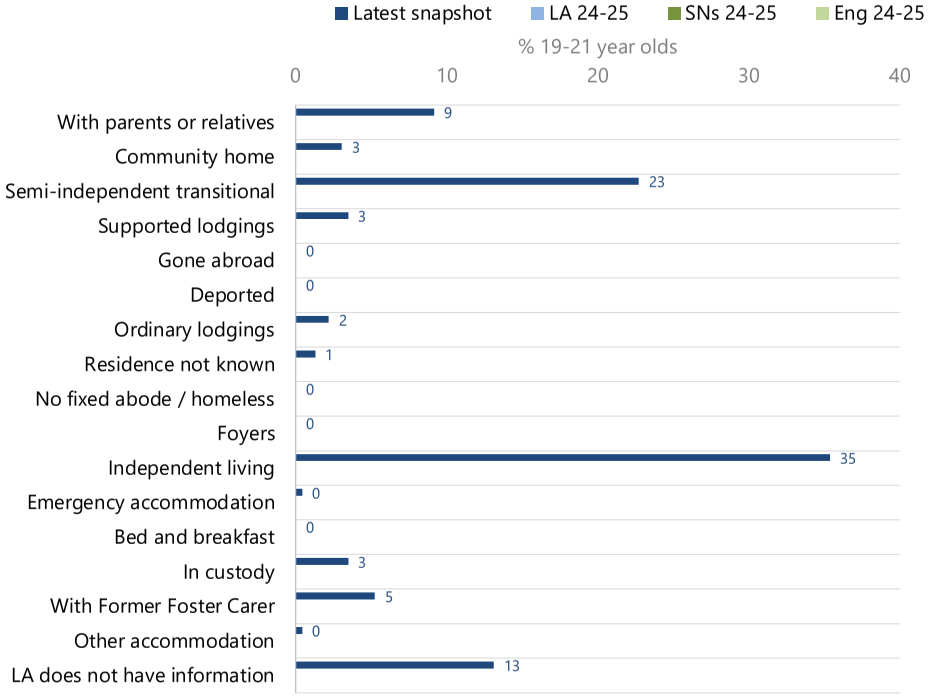
Accommodation suitability of 19-21 year olds (former relevant)



ChAT	Aged 19	Aged 20	Aged 21	Total
Numbers in cohort	85	75	66	226
In suitable accommodation	93%	96%	55%	83%
In suit accomm (In touch only)	93%	96%	63%	86%



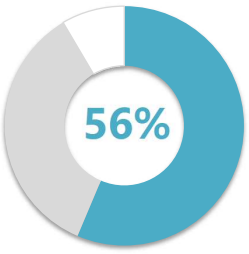
Accommodation types of 19-21 year olds



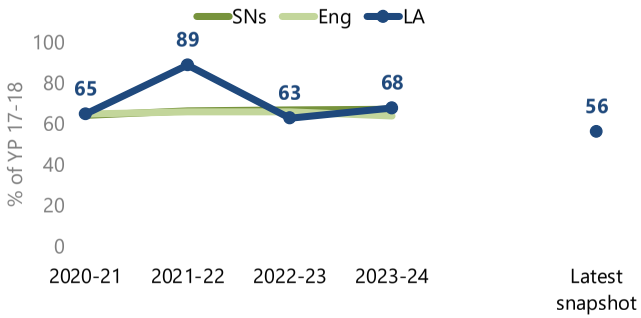
Care leavers activity (Education, Employment, or Training)

Snapshot 03/11/2025

Education, Employment, or Training (EET) of 17-18 year olds (relevant/former relevant)

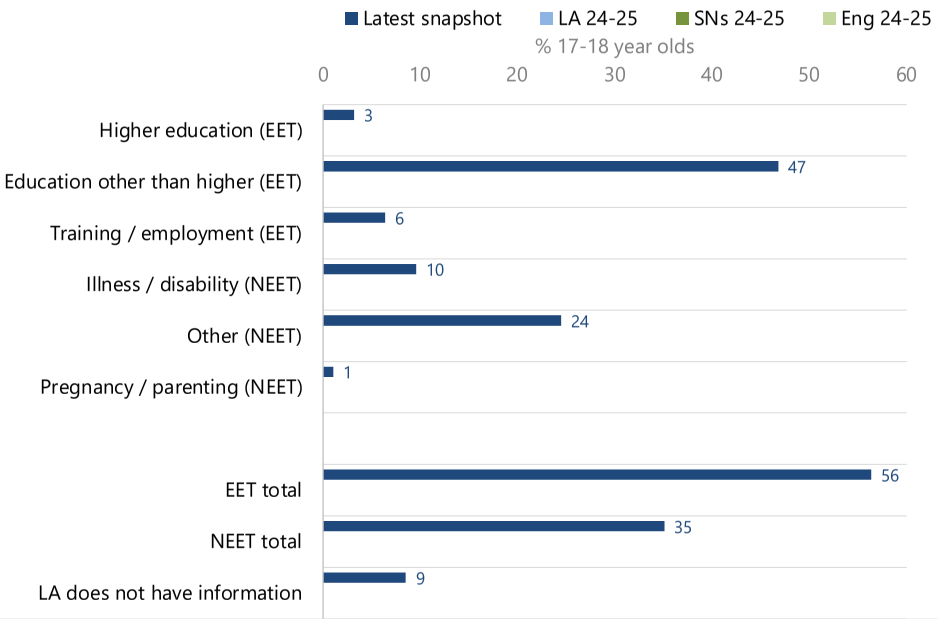


ChAT	Aged 17	Aged 18	Total
Numbers in cohort	4	90	94
In EET	50%	57%	56%
In EET (In Touch Only)	33%	56%	55%

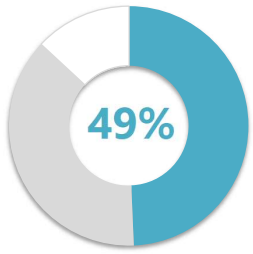


325

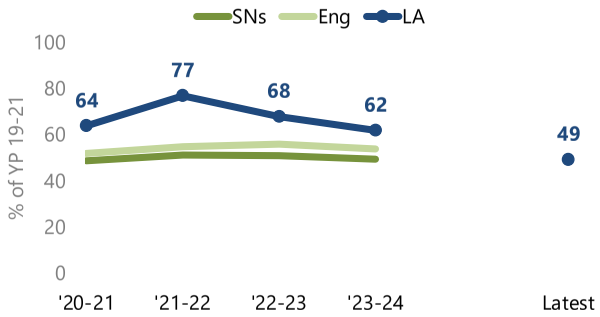
Activity types of 17-18 year olds (relevant/former relevant)



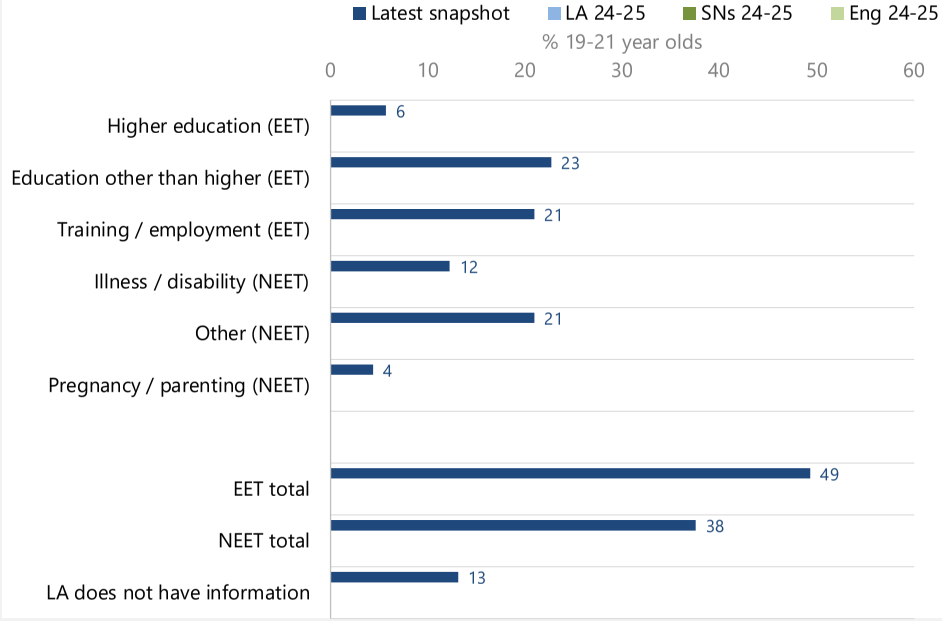
Education, Employment, or Training (EET) of 19-21 year olds (former relevant)



ChAT	Aged 19	Aged 20	Aged 21	Total
Numbers in cohort	87	76	66	229
In EET	54%	62%	29%	49%
In EET (In Touch Only)	55%	63%	33%	52%



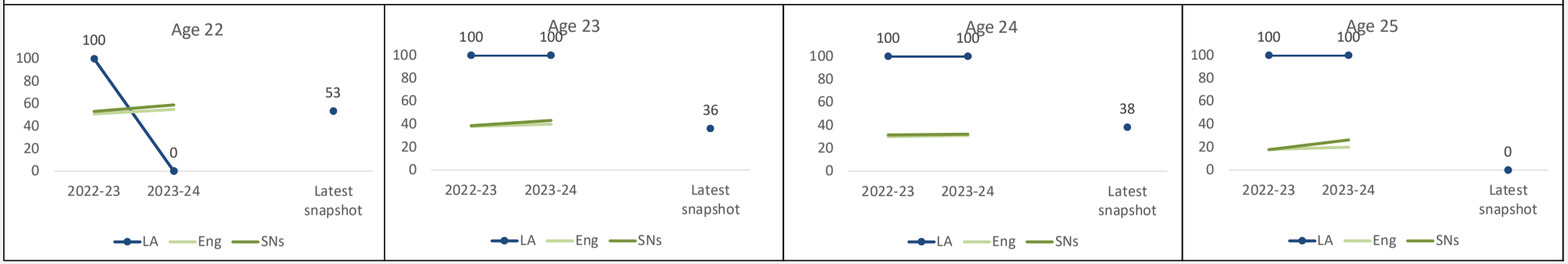
Activity types of 19-21 year olds (former relevant)



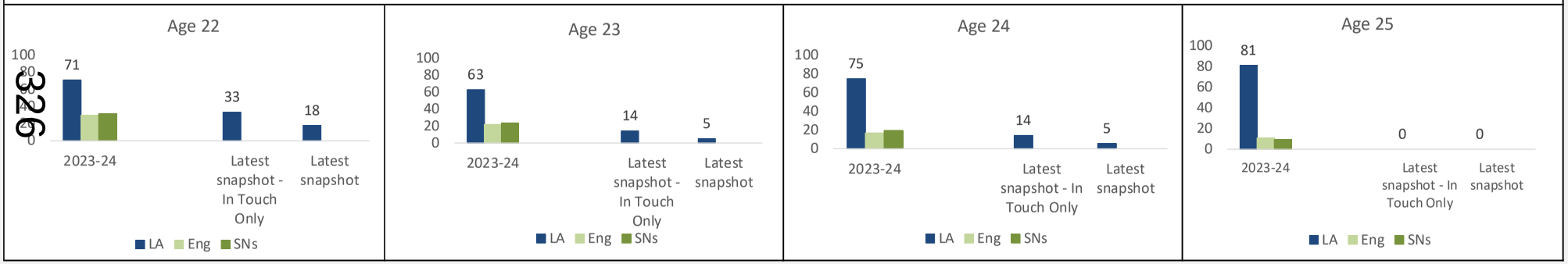
are leavers 22-25 In Touch, Activity and Suitable Accommodatic

Snapshot 03/11/2025

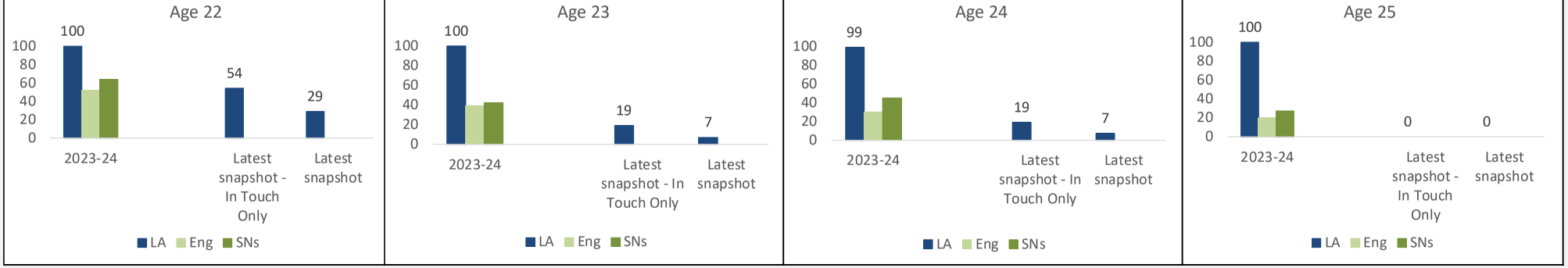
Care Leavers 22-25 - % In Touch (benchmarking for this measure uses 'Young person has requested and received support' from *Children looked after in England including adoptions*)



Care Leavers 22-25 - % EET (In touch snapshot uses list 9 definition)



Care Leaver 22-25 - % Suitable Accommodation (In touch snapshot uses list 9 definition)



Children adopted, waiting to be adopted, or had an adoption decision reversed in the last 12 month

from 04/11/2024 to 03/11/2025

72 children

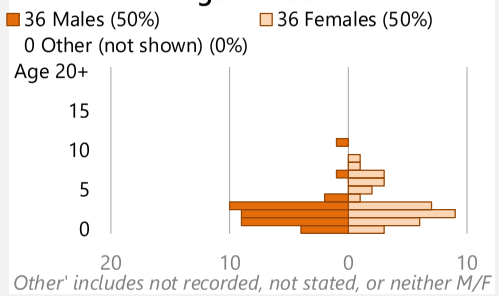
19 Child/ren adopted last 12 months
40 Child/ren waiting to be adopted
(33 Child/ren waiting with placement order)
13 Child/ren with decision reversed

Ethnic background

White	75%
Mixed	11%
Asian or Asian British	3%
Black or black British	8%
Other ethnic group	0%
Not stated	3%
Not recorded	0%

See page 25 for comparisons

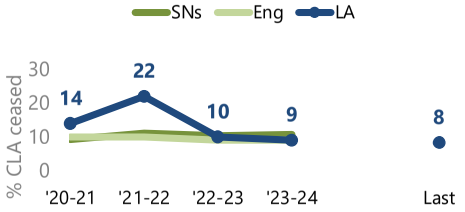
Age and sex



0 children (0%) with a disability

Of the 84 children who ceased to be looked after in the last 6 months, 7 was/were adopted (8%)

Children ceased who were adopted



Children aged 5-plus who were adopted

0% 0 of the 67 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	0.0%
LA 2023-24	c
SNs 2023-24	19.7%
Eng 2023-24	11.2%

Timeliness of each stage of the adoption process

Stage 1 Child entered care

Stage 2 Decision that child should be placed for adoption

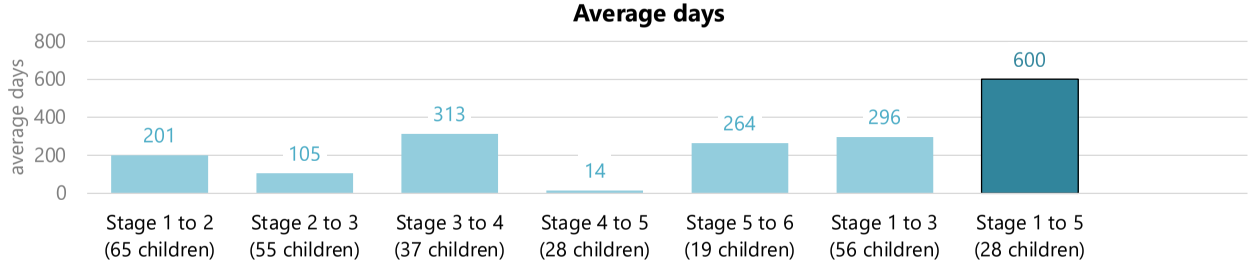
Stage 3 Placement order granted

Stage 4 Matching child and prospective adopters

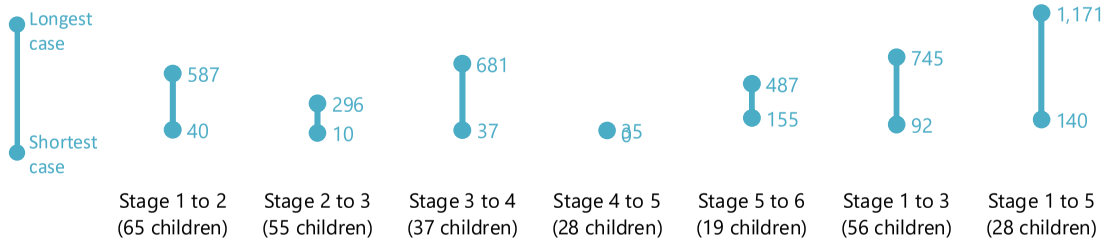
Stage 5 Placed for adoption

Stage 6 Adoption order granted

Average duration of each stage (number of days)



Range in days between shortest and longest cases at each stage



Adoption benchmarking

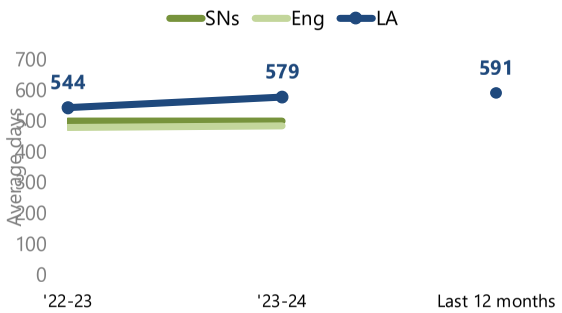
from 04/11/2024
to 03/11/2025

(A10) Time between entering care and placed with family for adopted children

591 days
19 children

Average number of days between entering care and moving in with adoptive family for adopted children (adjusted for foster carer adoptions)

Last 12 months



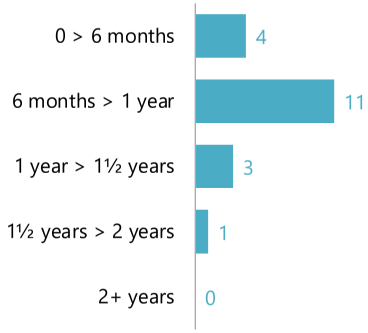
328

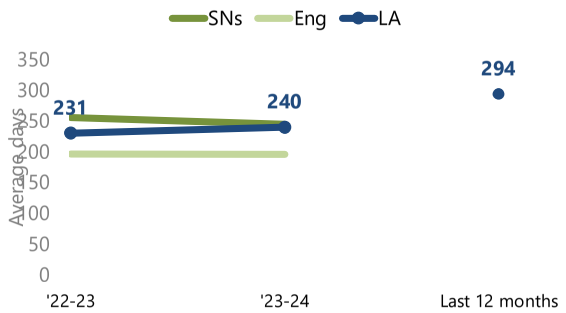
(A2) Time between placement order and deciding on a match

294 days
19 children

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

Last 12 months



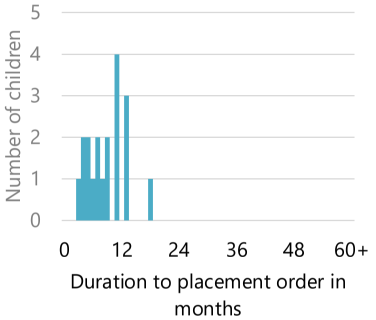


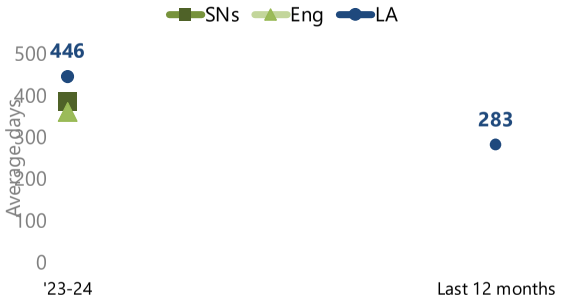
(A20) Time between entering care and placement order

283 days
19 children

Average time between a child entering care and a local authority receiving court authority to place a child, for children who have been adopted (days)

Adopted in last 12 months



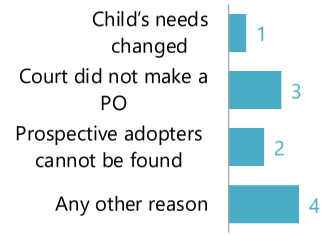


Permanence decision changed away from adoption

18%
13/65 children

Children where there was a decision that the child should no longer be placed for adoption

Last 12 months



Adoption Benchmarking

Adoption benchmarking has been imported from the CORAM ASG dataset. The full dataset, which contains more detailed LA and RAA data is available at www.coram.org.uk

Prospective adopters in the last 12 months

from 04/11/2024
to 03/11/2025

89 prospective adopters (48 families)

Prospective adopter current status

	Adults	Families
Child adopted	25	13
Child placed	21	12
Child matched	2	1
Application	25	13
Enquiry	2	1
Withdrawn	14	8

Ethnic breakdown

	Adults %	Children %
White	76%	75%
Mixed	2%	11%
Asian or Asian British	17%	3%
Black or black British	2%	8%
Other ethnic group	0%	0%
Not stated	2%	3%
Not recorded	0%	0%

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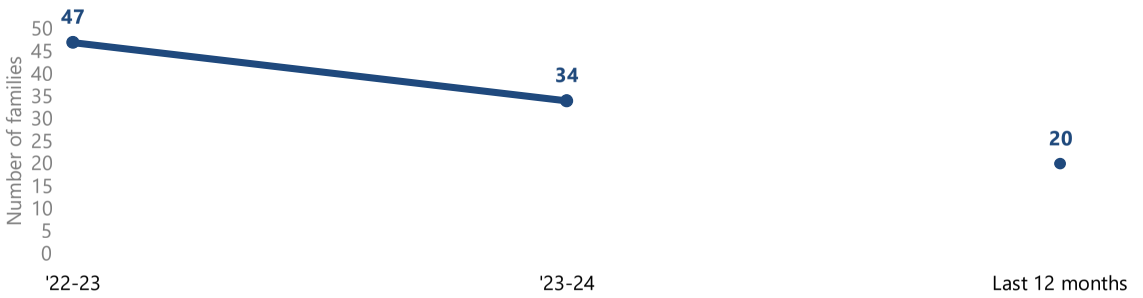
New two-stage adoption process

Stage 1 start	Registration of interest
Stage 1 end	Decision of suitability to adopt
Stage 2 start	Adopter's wish to proceed
Stage 2 end	Agency Decision-Maker (ADM decision
Matched	Family matched with child(ren)
Placed	Child(ren) placed with family
Adopted	Adoption order granted

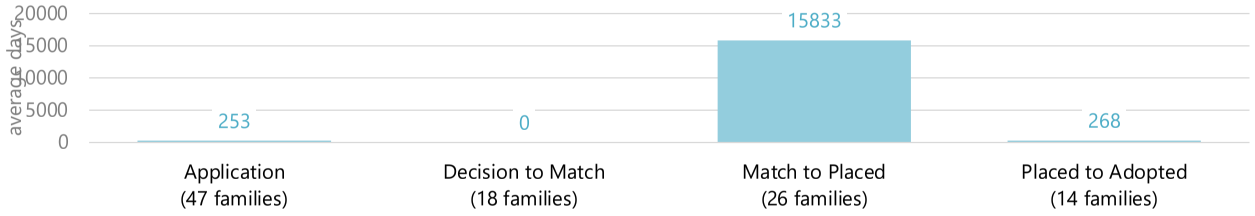
Adoption Scorecard A15 - new ADM decisions

Number of new ADM decisions for children in the year
(ADM = Agency Decision-Maker)

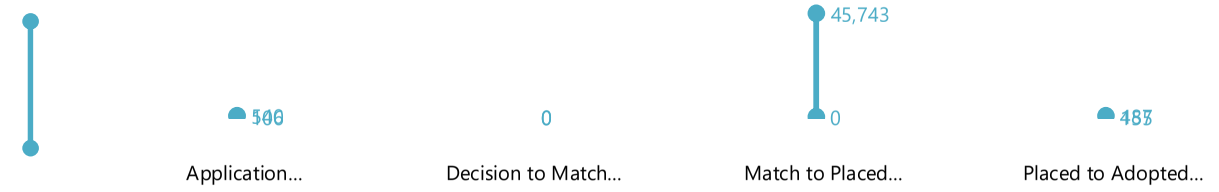


Duration of each stage of the adoption process

Average duration of each stage (number of days)



Range in days between shortest and longest cases at each stage



Demographics of children across all areas of children's social care

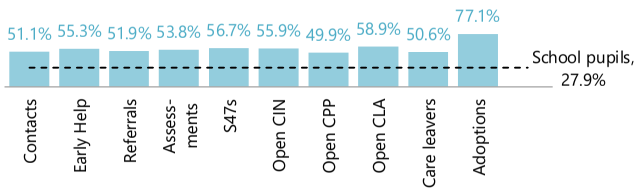
Snapshot 03/11/2025

Ethnicity

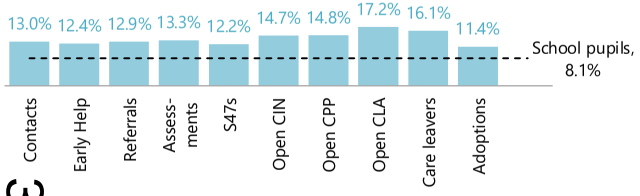
ChAT* compared to pupils in the LA schools (Jan-25)

*percentage of known ethnicity only

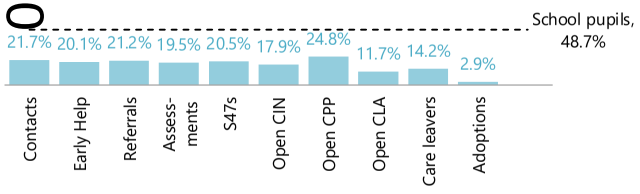
White



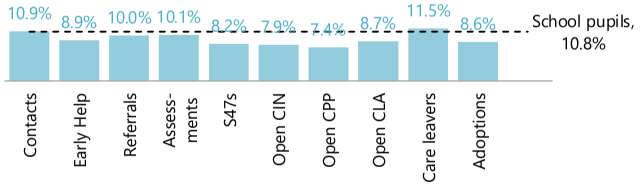
Mixed



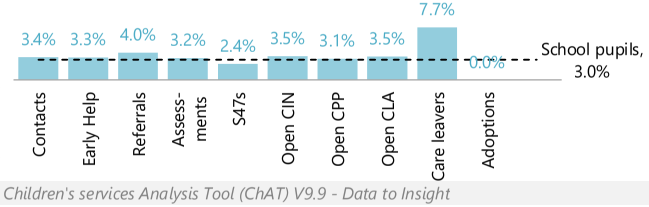
Asian



Black



Other

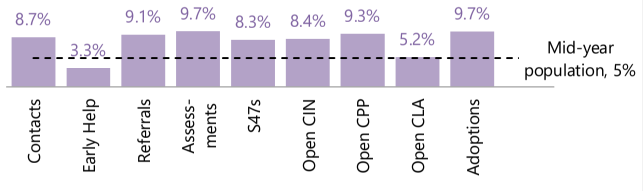


Age

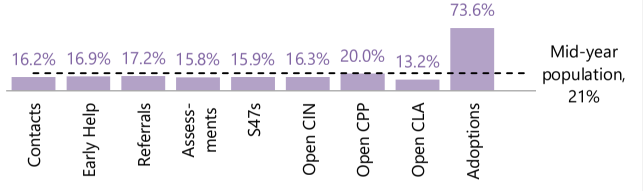
ChAT* compared to mid-year (2024) population estimates (ONS)

*percentage of known age only

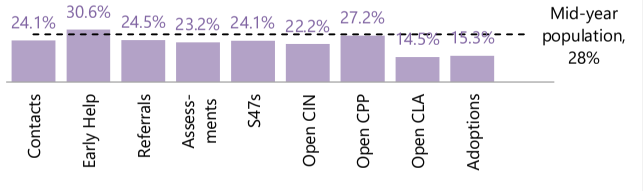
Under 1



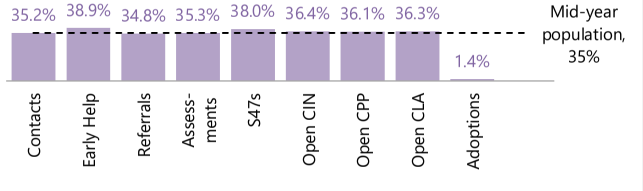
1 to 4



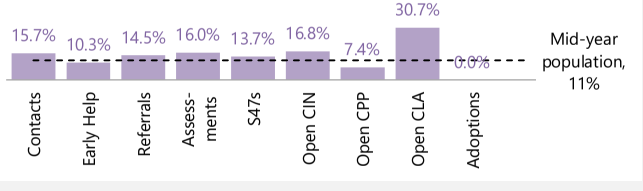
5 to 9



10 to 15



16 and over

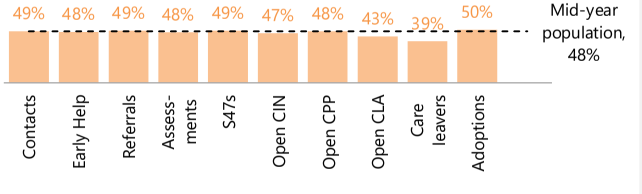


sex

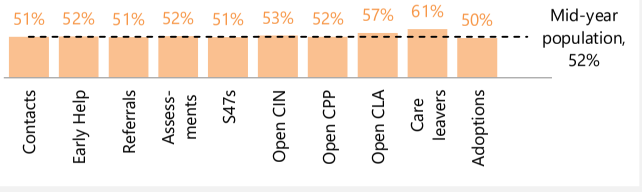
ChAT* compared to mid-year (2024) population estimates (ONS)

*percentage of Male / Female only, excludes Other

Female



Male



Comparing CLA demographics

CLA figures compared to published population statistics

Ethnicity

** compared to school census*

	LA Latest snapshot			LA 2025			Eng 2025		
	CLA	Pop	% difference	CLA	Pop	% difference	CLA	Pop	% difference
White	59	28	higher 107%	0	28	lower -100%	0	68	lower -100%
Mixed	17	8	higher 107%	0	8	lower -100%	0	7	lower -100%
Asian	12	49	lower -76%	0	49	lower -100%	0	14	lower -100%
Black	9	11	lower -21%	0	11	lower -100%	0	7	lower -100%
Other	3	3	higher 14%	0	3	lower -100%	0	3	lower -100%

Age

** Comparator is ONS mid-year population estimates*

	LA Latest snapshot			LA 2024			Eng 2024		
	CLA	Pop	% difference	CLA	Pop	% difference	CLA	Pop	% difference
Under 1	5	5	higher 3%	0	5	lower -100%	0	5	lower -100%
1 to 4	13	21	lower -36%	0	21	lower -100%	0	21	lower -100%
5 to 9	15	28	lower -48%	0	28	lower -100%	0	28	lower -100%
10 to 15	36	35	higher 4%	0	35	lower -100%	0	35	lower -100%
16-plus	31	11	higher 167%	0	11	lower -100%	0	12	lower -100%

sex

** Comparator is ONS mid-year population estimates*

	LA Latest snapshot			LA 2024			Eng 2024		
	CLA	Pop	% difference	CLA	Pop	% difference	CLA	Pop	% difference
Male	57	52	higher 9%	0	52	lower -100%	0	51	lower -100%
Female	43	48	lower -10%	0	48	lower -100%	0	49	lower -100%

330

Comparisons of headline figures and performance data to published statistics

The table below shows the Local Authority's latest data for each indicator as calculated in ChAT, and the direction of travel since the latest published statistics (where available).

Decreasing, low is good
Increasing, high is good
No change, not RAG rated

Lowest 25% quartile, low is good
Highest 25% quartile, high is good
Mid 50% range, not RAG-rated

Indicator	Latest data (ChAT)		Latest published statistics for all local authorities				
	LA	Direction of travel	LA	SNs	Eng	LA compared to mid-50% range of all LAs	Date
Referrals received (annual rate per 10,000 of children)	485	Increase	353	521	519	#N/A	2024-25
Referrals to social care that were within 12 months of a previous referral (%)	14	Decrease	16	18	21	#N/A	2024-25
Assessments completed (annual rate per 10,000 of children)	353	Increase	329	527	533	#N/A	2024-25
Assessments completed within 45 working days (%)	79	Decrease	79	85	86	#N/A	2024-25
Children subject to section 47 enquiries (annual rate per 10,000 of children)	213	Increase	183	192	189	#N/A	2024-25
Children subject of an initial child protection conference (annual rate per 10,000 of children)	83	Increase	68	61	59	#N/A	2024-25
Initial Child Protection Conferences held within 15 working days of the start of the section 47 enquiry (%)	70	Decrease	75	82	81	#N/A	2024-25
Children in need (snapshot rate per 10,000 children)	213	Decrease	232	334	330	#N/A	2024-25
Children who are the subject of a child protection plan (snapshot rate per 10,000 children)	52	Increase	49	41	41	#N/A	2024-25
Children who became the subject of a CP plan for a second or subsequent time (%)	33	Increase	21	22	25	#N/A	2024-25
Children who ceased to be on a CP plan whose plan lasted 2 years or more (%)	3	Increase	2	4	4	#N/A	2024-25
Children who are looked after (snapshot rate per 10,000 children)	68	Increase	0	-	0	#N/A	2024-25
Children looked after who had a missing incident in the period (%)	12	Increase	0	-	0	#N/A	2024-25
Children looked after who were away without authorisation in the period (%)	0	No change	0	-	0	#N/A	2024-25
Children looked after who had their teeth checked by a dentist in the last 12 months (%)	71	Increase	0	-	0	#N/A	2024-25
Children looked after who had their annual health assessment (%)	84	Increase	0	-	0	#N/A	2024-25
Children who ceased to be looked after in the period who were adopted (%)	8	Increase	0	-	0	#N/A	2024-25
Children who ceased to be looked after in the period due to a Special Guardianship Order (%)	15	Increase	0	-	0	#N/A	2024-25
Children leaving care over the age of 16 who remained looked after until their 18th birthday (%)	86	Increase	0	-	0	#N/A	2024-25
Care leavers aged 19-21 in suitable accommodation (%)	83	Increase	0	-	0	#N/A	2024-25
Care leavers aged 19-21 in education, employment, or training (%)	49	Increase	0	-	0	#N/A	2024-25
A10 - Time between entering care and placed with family for adopted children	591	-	#N/A	#N/A	#N/A	#N/A	2024-25
A2 - Time between placement order and deciding on a match	294	-	#N/A	#N/A	#N/A	#N/A	2024-25

Children, Young People and Education Scrutiny Commission (CYPE)
Work Programme 2025 – 2026

Meeting Date	Item	Recommendations / Actions	Progress
18 June 2025	**Overview of CYPE** **Families First Programme** **Social Care and Education Performance Dashboard** **Children's Social Care, Early Help and Prevention Improvement Plan**	 That regular updates on the progress of the Family First Programme would come to the commission. The improvements be an agenda item at a future meeting. Quarterly updates be added to the work programme.	
23 September 2025	**SEND Transport Update** **Children's Services Finances** **Edge of Care** **Youth Justice Plan**	Members to be notified and details circulated once white papers are released. Update to come to the commission on the outstanding 200 children DSG/ high needs recovery programme added to the work programme. School planning added to the work programme	

Appendix I

Meeting Date	Item	Recommendations / Actions	Progress
28 October 2025	Verbal Ofsted update/ Children's Social Care, Early Help and Prevention Improvement Plan Children Seeking Safety Families First Programme Early years extended entitlement ~~*Children's Centres – Verbal update*~~ ~~*Performance Dashboard*~~	To include impact monitoring on the Fostering Service microsite launched on the Council website which includes the fostering offer. Presentation 2 years offer take up	

Meeting Date	Item	Recommendations / Actions	Progress
20 January 2026	**Budget** **Leicester Safeguarding Children Partnership Annual Report** **SEND Transport Update** **HNB Task Group Report** **Fostering Annual Report** ~~**Corporate Parenting Annual Report**~~ **Performance Dashboard**	Outcome specifics gathered on Travel Training, applications, appeals and outcomes. To include costs relating to Customer Relationship management tool, the Ofsted thematic report, information on family finding events and more detail on advertising techniques for recruitment.	
3 March 2026	**Families First Programme**	To include an update on the pilot launched in South Leicester.	

Meeting Date	Item	Recommendations / Actions	Progress
14 April 2026	**Performance Dashboard** **Early Years Extended Entitlement**		

Forward Plan Items (suggested)

Topic	Detail	Proposed Date
Children from Abroad Seeking Safety	6-monthly report.	
Youth Services - overview		
Academies – Performance Report		
Needs Assessment in Relation to Families in the City		
Children not in state-maintained schools e.g.: Academies, Independent, Faith schools		
Multi-Academy Trusts - Overview		
Update from local DfE Officer		

Fostering Annual Report	Fostering Service microsite launched	
Fostering Community Champions update	Deferred from 26 March 2024	
Corporate Parenting Update	Annual report.	
Fostering Service – Marketing Strategy		
SEN support and funding		
Pupil Place Planning (Primary and Secondary)		
Early Years Childcare Sufficiency Report		
Children in Care Council/Care Leavers		
School Holiday Activity and Food Provision		
Education Govt reports e.g.: white paper / green paper		
Ofsted Inspection reports		
Children's Social Care – Recruitment Issues		
Mental Health impacts on children	Likely to be examined jointly with other commissions	
Informal Scrutiny on DSG High Needs Block	To commence following the full report to the Commission.	
Leicester Children's Services – Self Evaluation		
Covid impact and response to early childhood development		
Families First Programme	To remain on work programme.	
Children's Social Care, Early Help and Prevention Improvement Plan		
SEND Transport	Update to come to the commission on the outstanding 200 children in January 2026.	
DSG/ high needs recovery programme		

School Planning		
Sufficiency in Mainstream and Special Schools	Add Homefield info (following Special meeting May) as an appendix with the report.	
Sufficiency for CLA and Care Leavers		
Early Years Extended Entitlement	A further update to come to the Commission April 2025	