

Leicester
City Council

Meeting of the Children, Young People and Education Scrutiny Commission

Date: Tuesday, 27 October 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, Gopal, Gregg, Dr Moore and Waddington

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

For Monitoring Officer

Officer contacts:

Ed Brown and Ollie Harrison (Governance Services)

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If you have any queries about any of the above or the business to be discussed, please contact: **Ed Brown and Oliver Harrison, Governance Services**), oliver.harrison@leicester.gov.uk or Edmund.Brown@leicester.gov.uk. Alternatively, email governance@leicester.gov.uk, or call in at City Hall.

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PUBLIC SESSION

AGENDA

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

1. 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 8 September 2026 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. Leicester Safeguarding Children Partnership Yearly Report 2025-2026

Appendix B

The Strategic Director of Social Care and Education submits the yearly Leicester Safeguarding Children Partnership report.

8. Family Therapies Annual Report

Appendix C

The Director of Children's Social Work and Early Help submits a report on progress on the delivery of Family Therapies; Multisystemic Therapy (MST), MST for Child Abuse and Neglect (MST CAN), Functional Family Therapy for Child Welfare (FFT-CW), Safe Steps Home, and Family Group Decision Making (FGDM), for the period January-March 2026 (Quarter 4).

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|------------|---|-------------------|
| 9. | Corporate Parenting Annual Report 2025/26 | Appendix D |
| | <p>The Strategic Director of Social Care and Education submits a report providing an overview of corporate parenting activity and performance from 1st April 2025 to 31st March 2026.</p> | |
| 10. | Impact of Recruitment and Retention Activity | Appendix E |
| | <p>The Strategic Director of Social Care and Education submits a report providing an overview of the recruitment and retention challenges affecting the Council's Children's and Education workforce and the action being taken to address these pressures.</p> | |
| 11. | Children and Young People from Abroad Seeking Safety | Appendix F |
| | <p>The Strategic Director of Social Care and Education submits a report providing an update on children and young people who come to Leicester having arrived from abroad seeking safety.</p> | |
| 12. | Work Programme | Appendix G |
| | <p>Members of the Commission will be asked to consider the work programme and make suggestions for additional items as it considers necessary.</p> | |
| 13. | Any Other Business | |

Agenda Annex



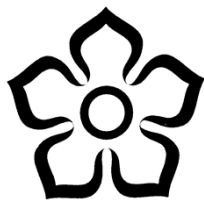
USEFUL ACRONYMS IN RELATION TO OFSTED AND EDUCATION AND CHILDREN'S SERVICES (updated November 2015)

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

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

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

WIT	Whatever it Takes
YOS	Youth Offending Service
YPC	Young People's Council



Leicester
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Appendix A

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

Held: Tuesday, 8 September 2026 at 5:30 pm

P R E S E N T :

Councillor Batool (Chair)

Councillor Cole

Councillor Dr Moore

Councillor Waddington

In Attendance

Assistant City Mayor Councillor Pantling
Joycelin Eze-Okubuiro – Parent Governor Representative (Primary)
Nic Plumtree – National Education Union
Two members of the Young People's Council

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240 Welcome and Apologies for Absence

The Chair welcomed those present to the meeting.

Apologies were received from Cllr Bonham.

241 Declarations of Interest

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

Cllr Dr Moore declared that she was an Educational Psychologist with her own business, but did not accept work within the City. She further declared that she was Chair of the advisory board at Millgate School.

242 Minutes of the Previous Meeting

AGREED:

That the minutes of the meeting of the Children, Young People and Education Scrutiny Commission held on 17 June 2026 be confirmed as a correct record.

243 Chair's Announcements

There were no Chair's announcements.

244 Questions, Representations and Statements of Case

The Monitoring Officer reported that none had been received.

245 Petitions

The Monitoring Officer reported that none had been received.

246 White Paper and Local SEND Reform Plan Update

The Director of SEND and Education submitted a report to update the Commission on Leicester City Council's SEND Reform Plan, which was submitted to the Department for Education (DfE) in June 2026. The Plan set out how Leicester's local area partnership, jointly led by Leicester City Council and the Integrated Care Board (ICB), would transform services for children and young people with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) over the next three years in response to national reforms.

The Assistant City Mayor for Children and Young People introduced the report and noted that the Department for Education (DfE) had responded well.

The Head of Service for Systems performance and Quality presented the report.

The presentation slides were attached to the agenda, additional points raised were as follows:

- There had been to DfE advisors, one on the financial aspect and another on the educational aspect.
- There had been a very tight turnaround to produce the plan.
- Potential changes to the legal framework for SEND had been looked at.
- It was aimed to co-produce the plan as much as possible, and the plan had been built through co-production workshops.
- Stakeholders had been involved in the delivery, including parents, children, the Integrated Care Board (ICB) and representatives from schools, colleges and nurseries. There been a series of six locality events and two Children and Young People sessions had been attended. The idea was to engage with partners about strategic engagements.
- Overall it was aimed for the plan to be ambitious. DfE feedback had wanted the service to prioritise against the areas of greatest pressure.

- The service had looked to build on strengths, much of this came from the Change programme which had been coopted into the plan.
- The City continued to invest in specialist services.
- It was understood that it was necessary to broaden the range of specialist provision. Significant funds had been built in designated specialist and SEND units and alternative provision.
- It had been necessary to deal with significantly increasing demand. Post-pandemic there had been an increase in demand in requests for assessment. The service was working through this.
- Work had been done with the Professional Capabilities Framework (PCF) who had been a very active partner in the programme delivered.
- The Council had a trusted relationship with schools and ongoing conversations and dialogues with schools.
- Proactive work was undertaken with inclusive practice, built around the Equality Act and Children and Families Act.
- It had been necessary to identify the core areas where there had been pressures, such as early years reception, where there had been a large increase in requests for assessments. Also in mid-Secondary, where there had been an increased need around children with communication and interaction need.
- Further demands in the implication of the 2014 Act led to growth in the use of independent specialist places.
- There was continued pressure around sufficiency.
- It was key to identify pressures with the DfE and bring additional resource to bear so it could have the most impact.
- There were five key workstreams as set out on the slides attached with the agenda pack. Strength and inclusion and building the offer were emphasised. A key priority was early years and early intervention and there was a big commitment to this.
- There was additional Capital resource to build out DSP. The DfE expected most schools would have some sort of specialist place.
- A large part of the plan was about reshaping and transforming existing services. Part of this was about how services could be brought to bear to encourage inclusive practice.
- More speech therapy and language therapy was being brought to bear.
- Social health and increased interaction were being built up in secondary education.
- There was delivery through the locality approach to align with the Family First agenda and Family Hubs agenda.
- There were additional places in DSP units.
- An understanding of data was being built and the service was understanding the drivers of the data with schools, partnerships and families.
- This was not an improvement plan as it had been very clear that it was necessary to look at provision. It had also been clear that due to timescales in

the plan over the three years, the plan could be amended and refocussed where necessary.

- Speech and language therapy, early intervention, a strengthening of post-16 and adding additional support at Key Stage 4 for where there was greatest need were the key drivers.
- Support would be based on the data from the relevant areas.
- Schools would have to deliver their own inclusion strategies by the end of this year.

In response to Young People's Council (YPC) member questions and discussions, the following was noted:

- In terms of ensuring that Young People were involved, there had been good dialogue in developing the plan with a regional SEND group. It had been aimed to include as many voices as possible, mainly in the post-16 transition, ensuring that the offer was as good as it was intended to be. The voice of the pupil was very important.
- In terms of what was aimed for in the reform and what young people would get out of it, it was noted that the SEND Reform White Paper aimed to develop inclusion. There was an idea that young people should have effective provision available in neighbourhoods. It was also aimed to create inclusive environments and broaden the capacity of mainstream schools so that SEND pupils could participate in local schools. Further to this it was aimed to use the plan and resources to try and support development so that there were schools in neighbourhoods to meet the needs of young people.

In response to member questions and discussions, the following was noted:

- The DfE were providing scrutiny on this, and reporting quarterly would provide a big picture and strategic numbers around this area.
- The locality model included dashboards around neighbourhoods. It was aimed to support schools in a more personal way.
- It was aimed to provide data and analysis going forward and to extract the data where focus was needed.
- It was aimed to provide transparency and a proportionate amount of data where achievements were being made, and where things needed to be done differently.
- In terms of methodology to measure parent satisfaction, there was an annual parent survey as well as regular feedback from the parent and carer forum. Clusters and locality demographics would also be used to inform the work. Additionally, there was the Big Mouth Forum for SEND children, and the Youth Council could also inform in a more general way. It was important to hear voices on experience.

AGREED:

- 1) That the report be noted.
- 2) That a matrix and analysis on clusters and locality be brought in a future meeting to see how locality and clusters were performing and the reasons behind it.
- 3) That comments made by members of this commission to be taken into account.

247 Presentation: Social Care and Education Quarter 4 Priorities and Performance Ambitions 2026/27 (January to March) and Quality Assurance

The Strategic Director for Social Care and Education submitted a report and presentation providing an update on departmental priorities, progress against performance ambitions and Quarter 1 performance for the period April to June 2026.

The Strategic Director introduced the report and advised that it had been developed to provide greater transparency around departmental priorities and performance. The purpose of the report was to support effective scrutiny and challenge by providing a high-level overview of key areas whilst enabling members to explore issues in greater detail where required. It was noted that the department remained ambitious in its approach, seeking to achieve the best possible outcomes for children, young people and families across the city.

In discussions with Members, the following was noted:

- The self-evaluation framework was highlighted as an area where further scrutiny could support the improvement plan, particularly in relation to assessment practice and service performance.
- Financial pressures within Children's Social Care continued to be affected by increasing numbers of children remaining in the care system for longer periods whilst awaiting court decisions. The impact on placement costs was noted and it was suggested that the Placement Sufficiency Strategy be brought back to the Commission for further scrutiny.
- Transition arrangements between Children's Services and Adult Social Care remained an area of focus. It was acknowledged that young people required appropriate accommodation, support and opportunities as they entered adulthood and that further joint working across services would be beneficial. The importance of hearing and reflecting the views of children and young people as part of this work was emphasised.
- Concerns were raised regarding overspends linked to care leaver accommodation and placement costs. Educational outcomes were also discussed, particularly GCSE English and Mathematics attainment, given the importance of achieving Grade 4 qualifications for future education, training and employment opportunities. Additional information was requested regarding outcomes for looked after children.
- Whilst the cohort remained relatively small, overall progress continued to be positive and work was ongoing to improve outcomes for looked after children and care leavers. Partnerships with businesses across the city were supporting

- opportunities in education, employment and training for young people up to the age of 24.
- A positive example was shared of a care-experienced young person achieving three A grades and progressing to study medicine at university. The importance of recognising and celebrating the achievements of children and young people was noted. Members were also advised of the forthcoming Celebration of Success event.
 - An update was provided on the Family First reforms, including proposals to bring together family help and child protection arrangements through integrated Family Help Teams. The changes would strengthen family group decision making and early intervention, with further national guidance expected regarding Lead Child Protection Practitioner arrangements.
 - Work was continuing with health and police partners to develop locality-based approaches and named contacts within cluster areas. Learning from pilot activity elsewhere was being used to shape local implementation, with further Family Hub-based pilots planned.
 - The importance of community-based support and building resilience within local communities was highlighted. Investment of approximately £400,000 per annum in community-led family support services was noted, with procurement activity currently underway.
 - Workforce development remained a priority, with leadership and performance programmes supporting managers, strengthening resilience and embedding continuous improvement. Further work on workforce development and change management was planned during the autumn.
 - An update was provided on the use of Microsoft Copilot and Liquid logic. Early progress had been made in exploring how technology could support frontline practice, including notetaking and recording activities. Whilst implementation remained at an early stage, there was potential to support report writing, quality assurance and case recording, enabling practitioners to spend more time working directly with children and families.

AGREED:

- 1) That the report and presentation be noted.
- 2) That the report from the Virtual Head to be shared with members, including information on school grades.
- 3) That a progress update on the implementation and use of Artificial Intelligence and associated technologies within Children's Services be brought back to the Commission in six months' time.
- 4) That a joint meeting of the Adult Social Care Scrutiny Commission and Children, Young People and Education Scrutiny Commission be arranged to consider transition pathways between Children's Services and Adult Social Care.

248 **Ofsted Focused Visit on Leaving Care**

The Strategic Director of Social Care and Education submitted a report providing an update following a two-day Ofsted Focused visit to the council's children's services Leaving Care Team held on 17 and 18 March 2026.

The Head of Service Performance and Placement presented the item referring to the slides attached with the agenda. Other key points included:

- The visit took place over two days in March 2026.
- The slides provided a summary in terms of context.
- There were 328 care leavers aged 18-21.
- Care leavers had Leaving Care Advisors (LCAs) as outlined on the slides. There were two teams who supported care leavers.
- It was important that Ofsted were asked to look at the leaving care process. They had found the quality of relationships between the staff and care leavers to be good, and care leavers had said that this was very important to them.
- The workforce had lots of staff who were experienced in leaving care.
- There was noted improvement in terms of the local offer, and there was a dedicated offer for care leavers on the website.
- There had been particular focus on support for a small number of care leavers (around 20) who were in the Youth Justice System. These people were often vulnerable due to lived experience. They were also often dispersed around the country, which produced challenges.
- Support was provided to care leavers when they started a new job or moved into their first home.
- Areas for improvement included:
 - Quality of recording of interactions.
 - The language needed to be more ambitious.
 - There needed to be evidence in terms of management oversight.
- Teams had been brought together, and there was an upcoming event for social workers.
- Work had been done around Audit activity.
- Staff had been talked to regarding what 'good' looked like.
- There had been a focus on people aged over 21 as for some there was a requirement for more assurance that they would get the level of support needed.
- With adults aged 21-25 staying in touch could be a challenge, as they were adults with free choice.
- Auditing on care leavers aged over 21 found no cases where practice was inadequate. All areas were good or had recommendations to become good.
- Standards had been set regarding young people in prison. These people were still visited and provided with extra support. There were often challenges upon release surrounding suitable accommodation.

- In the last six months, a further five Care Advisor posts had been funded. Additionally there was a new Head of Service post and recruiting was under way for a Dedicated Service Manager, who's responsibilities would include young people from abroad seeking safety.
- There had been additional capacity and training and audit activity. There had been a recommendation for a strategic plan to commit to sign up to the corporate plan and work was underway on this. It would involve key partners such as the NHS and Integrated Care Board (ICB). Once the strategy was agreed it could be brought to scrutiny.

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In response to YPC member discussion, the following was noted:

- In terms of ensuring that care leavers felt supported after the age of 18, there was an automatic allocation of a named person as a one-to-one advisor for care leavers aged 18-21. It was aimed to ensure that this person did not change so as to ensure continuity. The keeping-in-touch figures were good in this area. It could become more challenging after people turned 21 as some did not define themselves as care leavers, circumstances could be different. Everyone who was care-experienced was written to and QR codes were included so that they could quickly find information and support if they needed. As part of the duty system, there was a dedicated phone line where support could be requested. It was added that it was about keeping the door open for them and them knowing it remained open.
- It was further added that as corporate parents, care leavers often raised issues such as financial issues, housing issues and health (including mental health issues). It was aimed to reduce the times where young people remained isolated.
- Responding to a question over whether there was enough housing, it was stated that there was a wider issue of social housing. There was an allocation of social housing for care leavers, but the number of care leavers was increasing, so there were not enough tenancies and some became trapped in supported accommodation.

In response to member discussion, the following was noted:

- There could be issues of childhood trauma amongst care leavers and it was now being understood that there was delay impact and what this meant for young people and adults. They were more likely to have poor mental health, more likely to be in prison, and more likely to be homeless. Therefore they were reached out to so that they knew they had a safety net.
- Many care leavers started families and became concerned and then requiring additional support, such as family help or coming back into the care system. Work was being done on this in terms of providing advice and support to young parents to try and break that cycle effectively.
- It was necessary to be proactive and where there was a possibility of risky behaviour, to support young people to make the right choices.

- Family hubs were important as they helped the Council to stay in touch with vulnerable young people within the community.
- In terms of a strategy, there was a challenge in terms of young people who are not in education, employment and training (NEET).
- When young people became looked after, their progress could be tracked, but it was necessary to be ambitious.
- Regarding young people from abroad, there was an emphasis on peer support, for example in terms of English as a Second Language (ESOL) classes. Once groups got going there could be additional learning opportunities for accessing services and life in the UK. Young people often carried on meeting and friendships grew. Progress could be tracked through education and employment more than groups who were not from abroad.
- Efforts were put into respecting individual culture and it was necessary to be keen to have materials that were accessible, perhaps in the language of the relevant young person. Leicester was a city of sanctuary, so Leicester had been seen as a positive choice for young people from abroad who were care experienced. It was necessary to ensure that there was support on an individual level, but also make sure that young people did not feel isolated and could follow their goals. There was dedicated support for young people from abroad, and Ofsted were very positive about this.
- The approach on this was very deliberate as these people were the responsibility of the Council. It was very important to acknowledge that there were more that were the responsibility of other Local Authorities, but they had chosen to be allocated to Leicester as it seemed more appropriate. Sometimes these young people were poorly supported, but were not in the purview of Leicester as an authority. Other Local Authorities had sent young people from abroad to Leicester.
- It was requested that information be provided on the involvement of the voluntary sector be brought to the Commission.
- It was further requested that case studies from Care Leavers (including YP from abroad Seeking Safety) about how they have started life in Leicester be brought to the Commission.
- In terms of specialised services other than those of health, housing and finance, it was clarified that advice would be provided on any issue brought to the service. If the issue was more complex, it could be allocated to a dedicated worker.
- The service were keen to look at the wider issue of healthy lifestyles, and peer support programmes were run. The voluntary sector was involved in the local offer and there was an opportunity through Family Hubs for a local care leaver offer.
- The challenge around health and mental health was that it was not in the purview of the Council to solve. A wider issue was a lack of adult mental health services.
- A breakdown of demographic data was requested.

AGREED:

- 1) That the report be noted.
- 2) That the Leaving Care Strategy Report include information on Young People from Abroad Seeking Safety, and engagement with VCS Sector as well as a case study from Care Leavers (including YP from abroad Seeking Safety) about how they have started life in Leicester.
- 3) That the Leaving Care Strategy include a breakdown of demographic data.
- 4) That comments made by members of this commission to be taken into account.

249 Leicester Children's Services - Self Evaluation

The Director of Children's Social Care and Early Help submitted a presentation on Leicester Children's Services Self Evaluation Framework (SEF), which had been prepared in advance of the annual engagement meeting with Ofsted.

Officers explained that the SEF formed part of the three-year Ofsted inspection cycle and provided an opportunity to reflect on performance over the previous 12 months, identify areas for improvement and outline priorities for the year ahead. It was noted that following the engagement meeting, Ofsted would issue a narrative letter identifying strengths, evidence of progress and areas requiring further focus.

In discussion, the following was noted:

- The vision and priorities for Children's Services had been aligned with the wider Social Care and Education department, with a focus on empowering children, young people and families through connection, care and partnership working. The Families First reforms formed a key part of this approach.
- The city's demographic profile, including levels of deprivation, population mobility and diversity, continued to influence service demand. Officers highlighted the importance of ensuring services remained inclusive and culturally sensitive.
- Children and young people's participation continued to be promoted through a range of engagement activities, including the Young People's Council and Takeover Day initiatives, helping to ensure their views informed service development.
- Quality assurance activity showed that around 60% of audited cases were currently assessed as good, with a small proportion judged outstanding. Where practice required improvement, action plans and follow-up audits were used to support continued development.
- Placement stability for children in care remained positive, with only a small percentage of children experiencing three or more placements over a two and a half year period and the majority benefiting from long term stability.

- Re-referral rates remained relatively low, whilst the majority of care leavers were living in suitable accommodation despite ongoing pressures within the housing sector. Challenges remained around increasing participation in education, employment and training for care leavers.
- Questions were raised regarding the number of children subject to Child Protection Plans. It was noted that Leicester had historically experienced higher levels of demand than many authorities due to deprivation and wider social factors. Recent increases had been reviewed and continued to be closely monitored.
- Partnership working with schools and health services remained a priority. Work was continuing to strengthen early help provision through schools, family hubs and community based support, reducing reliance on statutory intervention where appropriate.
- Progress had been made against the areas for improvement identified at the previous Ofsted inspection, including strengthening care planning, improving consistency of practice and increasing management oversight.
- The Families First reforms continued to be implemented, with a focus on earlier intervention, improved partnership working and better outcomes for children and families.
- In response to questions regarding workforce capacity, it was reported that agency staff numbers had reduced in recent years and that recruitment of overseas social workers had strengthened the permanent workforce. Agency staff continued to provide flexibility to cover vacancies, maternity leave and periods of increased demand.

AGREED:

- 1) That the presentation be noted.
- 2) That comments made by members of the Commission be taken into account by lead officers.

250 Youth Justice Plan

The Strategic Director for Social Care and Education submits a report to provide an update on year one of the five-year Youth Justice Plan 2025-30 highlighting strategic and operational priorities.

The Head of Service – Prevention, and the Service Manager for the Children and Young People's Justice System presented the report. Key points included:

- The plan was on year one of five. It was a statutory plan that went to Full Council on a yearly cycle.

- Time had been spent refreshing it, and the partnership board had been met with.
- The latest Children's Plan, as well as the previous one was in the report.
- There were five new strategic policies:
 - Recognition of national changes – There was a Government White Paper on youth crime.
 - Local Government Reorganisation.
 - Online Harm – there was an operational group looking at online harm with a violence reduction group.
 - Knife crime guidance – It was necessary to cite this in the plan as a strategic priority, it had been discussed as to how to deliver on operational priorities on how to reduce knife crime.
 - Connectivity with the youth work agenda.
- In terms of successes, the service had been monitored by the Youth Justice Board on four quadrants, with two being 'good' and three being 'needs improvement'. The service had been in quadrant two, but due to challenges with Key Performance Indicators (KPI) they were put down to quadrant three. The service had now moved back up to quadrant two. This had required significant work and in a recent visit, the interim chair of the Youth Justice Board (YJB) had been pleased.
- The service had a good relationship with partners and the partnership board.
- Challenges included staffing, funding and potential national challenges.
- Further achievements included first-time entrants and the number in custody at the lowest level ever.
- New measures and processes were in place to avoid young people coming back into the youth justice system.
- There were partnerships with the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) and courts, as well as the Police. This partnership had ensured that no new entrants had come through the system.
- There were five people on a Youth Justice apprenticeship programme.
- The child-first approach had been invested in.
- Progress had been made, but there was more that needed to be done.

In response to member discussion, the following was noted:

- With regard to knife crime and what counted as a knife, possession of a knife was different to possession of an offensive weapon. Police had some discretion, for example, a child with mental health issues who had a knife and contacted the police themselves, would be considered differently to one who was carrying a knife with no apparent reason. Those convicted would get the equivalent of a youth conditional caution as a minimum.
- Nationally, there was a knife crime week, and a month in Leicester. This was not just about challenging knife-carrying, but also about supporting families, parents and communities, and providing information on what to do if they were concerned. Additionally, a presentation had been done to Social Care on how to identify the first signs. Work was done with schools and teachers to

encourage them to listen to children. Work had been done on education prior to new legislation. Schools and parents could self-refer. If any contact was made with the police, families were reached out to within 24 hours.

- There was more that could be done, as well as by other services such as the Youth Service. There was a partnership approach. Work was carried out in communities, clusters and community centres, and youth workers were working with children in the streets and in schools.
- There was a partnership with the police and the PolEd resource could be accessed by schools. Other resources included the Livesafe website.
- A conversation had been had with the programme lead in the Violence Reduction Network. They had community champions in local communities that could support on messaging to children and families.
- The Young People's Council survey had looked at what young people deemed as necessary on safety. Around 3000 young people completed the survey. This was still being analysed, but it had been noted that some young people wanted safe spaces and trusted adults. It was also noted that some young people did not feel safe in their communities and in the city centre, therefore it was necessary to think about what safety meant.
- The Chair congratulated the team and requested that the next report look at Family First, Family Hubs and the voluntary sector.

AGREED:

- 1) That the report be noted.
- 2) That comments made by members of this commission to be taken into account.

Cllr Waddington left the meeting during the consideration of this item.

251 Work Programme

The work programme was noted.

252 Any Other Business

It was noted that earlier in the meeting Cllr Dr Moore had raised the issue of reports needing a glossary for acronyms that weren't in the main glossary in the agenda pack.

There being no further business, the meeting ended at 20:00

Leicester Safeguarding Children Partnership Yearly Report 2025-2026

Children and Young People Scrutiny Commission

Date of meeting: 27 October 2026

Lead Director/Officer: Laurence Jones

Useful information

■ Ward(s) affected: All

■ Report authors: Joanna Fowler, Safeguarding Partnerships Support Officer, Leicestershire & Rutland Safeguarding Partnerships Business Office & Lindsey Bampton, Safeguarding Board Manager, Leicester Safeguarding Board Office

■ Author contact details: lindsey.bampton@leicester.gov.uk T.: (0116) 454 6911

■ Report version number: V0.06 FINAL

1. Summary

- 1.1 In their yearly report, safeguarding partners (police, health, and the local authority) 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 the report should be on multi-agency priorities of the local Safeguarding Children Partnership alongside learning, impact, evidence, and improvement.
- 1.2 In line with statutory guidance and to allow for consistency across local areas, yearly reports should be published by the end of September every year and should be reflective of work undertaken the previous financial year (April to March). The 2025-2026 yearly report of the Leicester Safeguarding Children Partnership was published on partnership website on 29th September 2026.

- 1.3 A summary of the published yearly report is provided as follows:

Overall Message

Strong progress despite rising demand, workforce pressures and national reforms. Governance, quality assurance, multi-agency working and child participation were strengthened.

Partnership Business Priorities for 2025-2027

Child Sexual Abuse, Neglect, Harm Outside the Home, and Belonging.

Key Achievements

Significant progress on child sexual abuse work; new Performance and Audit Groups resulting in an increased number of multi-agency audits completed; recruitment of Young Scrutineers; implementation of learning from national reviews.

Key Challenges

Notable increase in demand at the front door leading to a significant demand in multi-agency meetings, with rises in strategy discussions, Section 47s, Initial Child Protection Conferences and Review Child Protection Conferences; implementation of legislative reforms.

Workforce Development

61 multi-agency courses delivered to 1,723 attendees, with significant increases in practitioner knowledge, skills and confidence.

Priorities for 2026-27

Implement Child Sexual Abuse strategy, publishing refreshed thresholds document; respond to rising demand, embed reforms, strengthen transitional safeguarding, and continue improving child participation.

2. Recommended actions/decision

2.1 There are no recommendations/decisions

3. Scrutiny / stakeholder engagement

3.1 Scrutiny from the Independent Scrutineer forms part of the published report. Scrutiny from the Independent Young Scrutineers has also been received.

4. Detailed report

4.1 Please see the appendix for a copy of the Leicester Safeguarding Children Partnership 2025-26 Yearly Report that has been published in full.

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

5.1 Financial implications

There are no direct financial implications arising from this report. The income and expenditure for the Leicester Safeguarding Children Partnership for 2025/26 is included in their yearly report.

Signed: Mohammed Irfan, Head of Finance

Dated: 13 October 2026

5.2 Legal implications

No comments from a commercial legal perspective.

Mannah Begum, Principal Lawyer, City Barrister & Head of Standards

Dated: 26 August 2026

5.3 Equalities implications

It does not propose any direct changes to services, policies or resource allocation and, therefore, no direct adverse equality impacts have been identified.

The Public Sector Equality Duty requires relevant public authorities and bodies exercising public functions to have due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations.

The report provides a retrospective account of the work undertaken by the Leicester Safeguarding Children Partnership during 2025–2026. Safeguarding is intrinsically linked to equality, as children and young people who share protected characteristics may experience different or additional risks, barriers to accessing support, or poorer outcomes. The

Partnership's work should therefore continue to consider the differing needs and experiences of children and families, including in relation to age, disability, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation, gender reassignment, and pregnancy and maternity where relevant.

Any future proposals arising from the concerns identified, particularly those involving changes to safeguarding arrangements, staffing, access to health advice or partnership panels, should be subject to proportionate equality analysis before implementation.

Signed: Equalities Officer, Surinder Singh, Ext 37 4148

Dated: 27 August 2026

5.4 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: 26th August 2026

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

N/A.

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

7. Summary of appendices: The appendix is a copy of the published 2025-2026 yearly report from the Leicester Safeguarding Children Partnership.

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)? This is not a private report.

9. Is this a "key decision"? If so, why? This is not a "key decision".

LEICESTER SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN PARTNERSHIP

Leicester
Safeguarding
Children Partnership

WORKING TOGETHER
TO KEEP CHILDREN SAFE

YEARLY REPORT
2025 - 2026



Foreword

The child protection and early help landscape continues to evolve, with the Families First Partnership (FFP) a year into its two-year implementation programme. This is an exciting opportunity to reset the way services are delivered and how agencies and practitioners engage children and families. The programme is underpinned by principles and values of whole family working and developing multi-disciplinary teams who contribute to a team around the family.

The SEND Reform is in progress, and changes are imminent as a result of the Children's Wellbeing and Schools Act 2026 and the Crime and Policing Act 2026, with the aim of strengthening practice around different cohorts of children and young people, including care leavers, those affected by child sexual abuse and child criminal exploitation.

These reforms and changes in legislation will have an effect on multi-agency working nationally and locally. We, the local Safeguarding Children Partners, have a responsibility to support and guide the local workforce through this period of change, acknowledging the context of increased demand and challenging workloads. We thank them for their continued dedication and commitment to local children and young people.

In 2025-26, the Safeguarding Children Partnership of Leicester, alongside the Leicestershire and Rutland Safeguarding Children Partnership (LRSCP), have implemented and embedded our own significant changes to structure and processes. These have led to improvements to quality assurance, scrutiny, communication and engagement arrangements. This has, in turn, led to encouraging and impactful feedback about our work at both a strategic and practice level, with the Leicestershire Joint Targeted Area Inspection recognising the commitment to support local children affected by child sexual abuse, and at an operational level with positive responses to our training events and learning and development resources.

We are pleased to present this report of the Leicester Safeguarding Children Partnership (LSCP) that covers the period from 1st April 2025 to 31st March 2026.

The Safeguarding Partners for Leicester

Key Achievements in 2025-26	Key Challenges in 2025-26
• Significant amount of work completed around child sexual abuse and the progress made reflected in the positive result of the Leicestershire Joint Targeted Area Inspection • Changes implemented to the subgroup structure have had a positive impact on understanding of quality assurance and service improvement, with an increased number of multi-agency audits completed in 2025-26, enhancing the picture around key safeguarding themes • Two Young Scrutineers have been recruited to work alongside the Adult Independent Scrutineer, strengthening the commitment to ensuring that the voices and lived experiences of children and young people are at the heart of everything the Partnerships do • Continued timely implementation of learning resulting from national reviews, published by the Child Safeguarding Practice Review Panel, and out of area reviews	• Changes resulting from national reforms, whilst positive, are requiring a lot of local changes which is challenging in terms of timescales and resources required • There is a need to ensure the Partnership remains stable in the context of wider changes, such as the Local Government Reorganisation • Significant and notable increase in demand at the front door across all three Local Authorities (Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland) and, therefore, there has been a significant demand in multi-agency meetings, with rises in strategy discussions, Section 47s, Initial Child Protection Conferences and Review Child Protection Conferences

Observations from our Independent Scrutineer

During 2025-26, I have continued to provide independent scrutiny, constructive challenge, assurance and support to the Leicester Safeguarding Children Partnership. My focus has been on testing whether the local multi-agency safeguarding arrangements are effective, whether partners are working together with sufficient pace and impact, and whether the voice and lived experience of children and families are influencing strategic decision-making.

This year, the Partnership has shown clear evidence of strengthening its governance and quality assurance arrangements. The revised subgroup structure, including the introduction of separate Performance and Audit Groups, has improved its ability to understand practice, identify themes and translate learning into action. It has also supported a more focused approach to assurance, enabling partners to consider quantitative data alongside qualitative evidence from audits, reviews and practitioner feedback.

There have also been notable strengths during the year. The Partnership's work on child sexual abuse has been particularly significant, bringing together learning from local reviews, multi-agency audit activity, the NSPCC system-wide snapshot and the Leicestershire Joint Targeted Area Inspection to inform strategic planning and workforce development. The positive findings from the Joint Targeted Area Inspection reflected strong local commitment, skilled frontline practice and effective multi-agency leadership. The challenge now is to sustain this momentum and ensure that the emerging strategy, training offer and pathways lead to consistent practice across all agencies.

As Independent Scrutineer, I have observed the Partnership's continued focus on learning from reviews, national evidence and inspection findings. There is a clear commitment to embedding learning in practice through briefings, procedures, training and assurance activity. Work on neglect, safeguarding children with chronic health needs, safer sleep, belonging and harm outside the home demonstrates the breadth of the Partnership's safeguarding agenda and its willingness to respond to both local and national learning.

Another important development has been the Partnership's strengthened commitment to hearing from children, young people and families. The establishment of the Communication and Engagement Group and the recruitment of Young Scrutineers are important steps in ensuring that scrutiny is informed not only by professionals, but also by those who experience services. This work should continue to develop so that the voices of children and families are visible in priority-setting, audit activity, service improvement and the evaluation of impact.

Alongside these strengths, there remain areas requiring continued attention. Increased demand across the front door, child protection processes and multi-agency meetings has placed pressure on agencies and practitioners. At the same time, the implementation of national reforms, including the Families First Partnership programme, SEND reform and legislative change, is creating further complexity. The Partnership will need to maintain oversight of the impact of these changes, particularly in relation to thresholds, information sharing, workforce capacity and the consistency of multi-agency decision-making.

This wider context is compounded by ongoing organisational change across partner agencies and sustained budgetary pressures. The impact of these pressures should be kept under close review, particularly in relation to capacity, partnership resilience and the ability to sustain improvement activity.

In response, I have worked closely throughout the year with the Independent Chair of the Leicester Safeguarding Adults Board. This has supported a more joined-up approach to scrutiny in two key areas: understanding the impact of partnership budget pressures and progressing work on transitional safeguarding.

Looking ahead to 2026-27, the Partnership should maintain its focus on evidencing impact. This means demonstrating how learning from scrutiny, audit, reviews and inspection leads to measurable improvements in practice and outcomes for children. Particular attention should be given to the implementation of the Child Sexual Abuse Strategy, the response to child protection demand, the effectiveness of the refreshed assurance arrangements, and the extent to which children's voices are influencing change.

Overall, the Partnership has made positive progress during 2025-26. It has shown openness to challenge, a willingness to adapt its arrangements and a clear commitment to learning and improvement. Continued independent scrutiny, strengthened by the contribution of Young Scrutineers, will support partners to maintain this focus, challenge each other constructively and ensure that safeguarding arrangements make a demonstrable difference to children and families in Leicester.

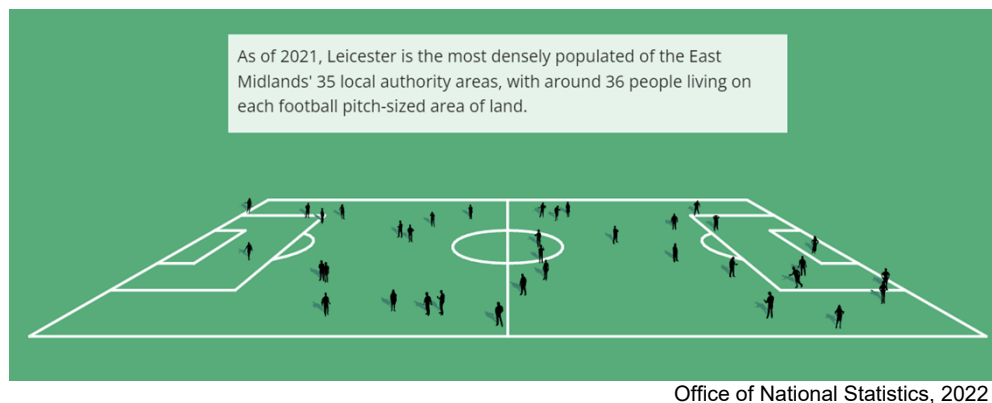
Amanda Boodhoo

Independent Scrutineer

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) ¹. It is home to around 36 people per football pitch-sized piece of land.



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) .

At the end of 2024-25 the population of 0–17-year-olds in Leicester was 88,725. 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.

¹ Office of National Statistics (2022) How the population changed in Leicester: Census 2021 <https://www.ons.gov.uk/visualisations/censusareachanges/E06000016/>

The Partnership

The Leicester Safeguarding Children Partnership (LRSCP) brings together organisations across the city of 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 the Leicester Safeguarding Children Partnership shares a number of partners with the Leicestershire & Rutland Safeguarding Children Partnership, joint [Leicester, Leicestershire & Rutland Multi-Agency Safeguarding Arrangements](#) (MASA) are published.

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

Partnership Governance

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.

As set out in Working Together to Safeguard Children 2026, statutory guidance published by the Department for Education (DfE), each safeguarding partner identifies a Lead Safeguarding Partner (LSP) and a Delegated Safeguarding Partner (DSP).²

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 Leicester Safeguarding Children Partnership can be found in Appendix 1 of the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Arrangements³.

² Department for Education, [Working Together 2026: A guide to multi-agency working to help, protect and promote the welfare of children](#), March 2026, page 29, paragraph 52 and page 31, paragraphs 60 and 61.

³ [Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland Multi-Agency Safeguarding Arrangements](#) (December 2024), page 13.

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 Multi-Agency Safeguarding Arrangements.⁴

Scrutineers

Working Together states that “Safeguarding partners must ensure that there are arrangements for effective independent scrutiny in place for their local area.”⁵ Leicester and Leicestershire & Rutland Safeguarding Children Partnerships jointly commission an Independent Scrutineer and Young Scrutineers. More information about the Young Scrutineers is included later in the Yearly Report.

Updates to published arrangements

In line with Working Together 2026, updates to the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Arrangements are required when there are key changes, such as changes to the Lead Safeguarding Partners, or the list of relevant agencies. Updates are sent to the Department for Education.⁶ In 2025-26, updates were implemented to reflect:

- The change of Lead Safeguarding Partner for the Integrated Care Board, Police and Leicestershire Local Authority
- The change of Delegated Safeguarding Partner for the Police, Rutland Local Authority and Leicestershire Local Authority
- The changes to the subgroup structure (further detail provided later in the report).

Yearly Report

Working Together 2026 states that “Safeguarding partners must jointly report on the activity they have undertaken in a 12-month period”.⁷ This Yearly Report fulfils this requirement.

Purpose of the Partnership

In line with Working Together to Safeguard Children 2026:⁸

The purpose of multi-agency safeguarding arrangements is to ensure that, at a local level, organisations and agencies are clear about how they will work together to safeguard all children and promote their welfare. This means:

- there is a clear, shared vision for how to improve outcomes for children locally across all levels of need and all types of harm

⁴ [Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland Multi-Agency Safeguarding Arrangements](#) (December 2024), page 8.

⁵ [Working Together 2026](#), page 39, paragraph 95.

⁶ [Working Together 2026](#), page 43, paragraph 111.

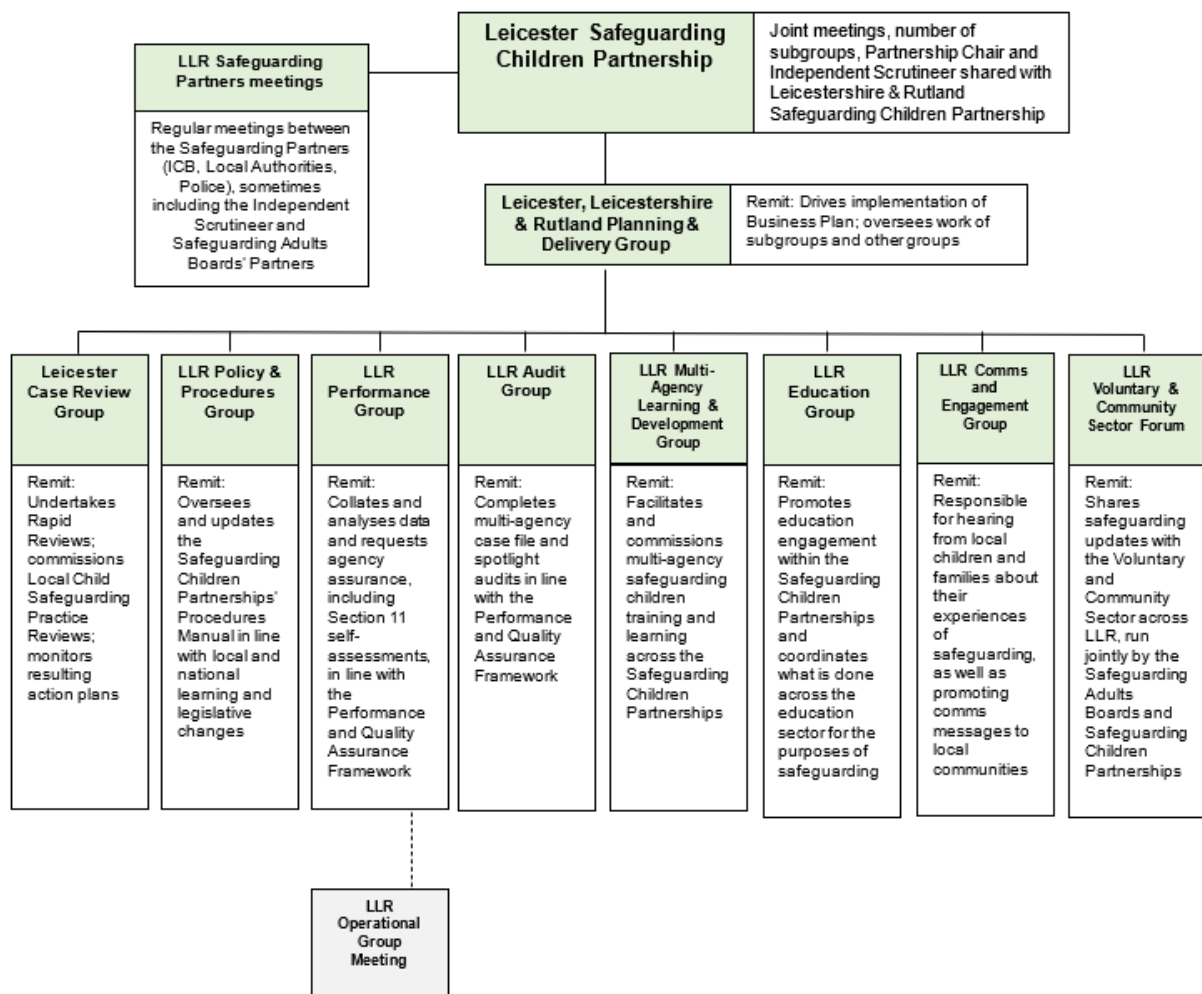
⁷ [Working Together 2026](#), page 43, paragraph 112.

⁸ [Working Together 2026](#), page 27, paragraph 44.

- 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
- 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 through this the identification of groups of children who may be disproportionately over- or under-represented in services, 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, including the identification of groups of children who may be disproportionately over- or under-represented in services, so that services are adapted to address these issues
- 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

Partnership structure

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



Delegated Safeguarding Partners attend the 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 their Independent Chair 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 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.

Further information about the subgroups of the Safeguarding Children Partnerships is available throughout the Yearly Report.

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.

Representation of Education sector

Strategic level

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

The Chair of the Education Subgroup now also sits on the Safeguarding Children Partnership and, when required, joins the Delegated Safeguarding Partners at the meeting of Safeguarding Partners.

Operational level

2025-26 saw the first full year of the running of the Education Group. The formation of the Education Group recognised 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 discussed by the group in 2025-26 covered self-harm and suicide, including support for local children and young people during school holidays; the effect of the Netflix Adolescence TV drama, including the production of guidance and an emoji guide for schools; and the key findings from Warrington Safeguarding Children Partnership's 'Scarlett' Local Child Safeguarding Practice Review, including work on managed moves.

Presentations were also delivered to the Education Group by the Violence Reduction Network, regarding the assets they have, including Live Safe, the School's Network and the Prevention Panels, and Project Echo. This is run by Safelives alongside Living Without Abuse and puts the voices of survivors at the heart of local responses to domestic abuse.

The membership of the Education Group has grown throughout 2025-26. The group continues to strengthen its identity and deepen its understanding of the diverse educational settings it represents, as well as the safeguarding challenges these settings encounter.

Moving forwards, the aim is to increase the group's breadth and reach, with the intention of including more representation from secondary schools, early years, post 16 provisions and virtual schools. Also, the Education Group will discuss the Operation Encompass changes implemented in 2025-26. Operation Encompass aims to directly connect Police and Schools, to secure better outcomes for children living with domestic abuse. Schools have raised issues and questions about the information now provided in notifications.

In addition to the Education Group, representatives from the Leicester City Council Education department are standing members on other subgroups, including the Case Review Group, Multi-Agency Learning and Development Group, Audit Group, and Performance Group. They support the Safeguarding Board Office in requesting Rapid Review responses and audit information.

Interface with other local strategic boards

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). In 2025-26, the Partnerships were also presented with the results of their Thematic Review into Suicide and Self-Inflicted Harm in children and young people.
- Are provided with annual updates, within dedicated agenda items in meetings, from Domestic Abuse Boards and the Adolescence Safety and Diversion (ASD) Board. The ASD Board sits under the Strategic Partnership Board (SPB) and works to prevent and reduce involvement in violence through safeguarding, early intervention and diversion.
- Work with the Safeguarding Adults Boards (SABs) to agree joint priority areas of business. As a result, the 2025-2027 business plans for both the SABs and the Partnerships included an objective to jointly develop multi-

agency Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland transitional safeguarding policy or practice guidance.

Financial breakdown and value for money

The work of the Safeguarding Children Partnership is supported by the Leicester Safeguarding Board Office that also supports the Leicester Safeguarding Adults Board. The Safeguarding Children Partnership is funded by contributions from its partners.

The contributions from partners for the Leicester Safeguarding Children Partnership for 2025-26 can be seen below:

	2025-26
Leicester City Council	£128,800
Leicestershire Police	£51,850
Leicester, Leicestershire & Rutland Integrated Care Board (LLR ICB)	£53,030
Probation	£2,192
Training Income (our share)	£2,425
Total income for SCP	£235,872

Expenditure for the Safeguarding Children Partnership was as follows:

	2025-26
Staffing	£190,368
Independent Scrutineer	£13,439
Multi-Agency Learning & Development	£5,000
Communication and Engagement	£980
Performance and Data	£0
Multi-Agency Audits	£0
Policy & Procedures	£3,697
Education Group	£0
Voluntary & Community Forum	£0
Case Reviews	£6,875
Membership Fees	£750
Other	£299
Total Expenditure	£221,408

Progress against statutory guidance

Review of use of restraint in secure establishments

Working Together 2026 states that “Where there is a secure establishment in a local area, safeguarding partners should undertake a review to assure themselves of the appropriate use of restraint within the secure establishment and include the outcomes of the review in the Annual Report.”⁹

There are no Youth Custody homes within the local authority areas 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.

Implementation of changes set out in statutory guidance

Working Together 2026

In March 2026, the Department for Education (DfE) published a new edition of its statutory guidance, Working Together to Safeguard Children. Working Together 2026 replaced Working Together 2023. This guidance applies to all organisations and agencies in England who have functions relating to children and sets out the governance for Safeguarding Children Partnerships.

The NSPCC highlighted that the key changes in the 2026 edition include updates around:

- identifying, understanding and challenging racism and discrimination
- recognising the specific needs and experiences of babies
- understanding the impact of domestic abuse on children and families
- consideration of children experiencing simultaneous harms or multiple harms
- strengthened inclusion of children in care
- the link between online harm and harm experienced in person.¹⁰

Locally, the Leicester and Leicestershire & Rutland Safeguarding Children Partnerships are in the process of updating their Multi-Agency Safeguarding Arrangements, multi-agency procedures and learning and development resources in line with this updated statutory guidance.

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 Children’s Wellbeing and Schools Act 2026. The reforms are designed

⁹ [Working Together 2026](#), page 44, paragraph 114.

¹⁰ NSPCC, “Working together to safeguard children 2026: summary of changes” CASPAR briefing, March 2026, <https://learning.nspcc.org.uk/research-resources/2026/working-together-to-safeguard-children-2026-summary-of-changes>.

to shift the balance of children's social care away from late intervention – child protection and the care system – towards early intervention.¹¹



Families First Partnership (FFP) programme

Families First Partnership is the name given by the Department for Education to the national programme of reforms across Children's Social Care. Locally, agencies have been working towards the delivery expectations for safeguarding partners set out in the Families First Partnership (FFP) Programme Guide, published in March 2025.¹² This Year 1 Guide supported the first wave of reforms. The expectation set out in the guidance was that, in 2025-2026, ongoing business as usual service delivery would take place alongside transformational activity. [The Families First Partnership \(FFP\) Programme Guide](#) was updated in March 2026 to set out what should happen in Year 2, 2026-27.

Locally, it has been acknowledged that, for both Police and Health, there is the additional challenge of needing to work in partnership with the three different Local Authorities of the sub region. To assist the process, a Clinical Lead from Health and a Detective Inspector from Leicestershire Police have been seconded to the three Local Authorities to support the programme.

During the implementation, local conferences are being held, led by the statutory safeguarding partners – Children's Social Care, Police, Health and Education – to inform the wider partnership of the progress being made. The November 2025 conference saw representatives from across the Voluntary and Community sector, District Councils, Public Health, CAMHS, Healthy Together, Integrated Care Board, Police, Probation, local authority services, Safeguarding Partnership, and Education Services.

The key pillars of the government's programme of reform are: Family Help, Multi-Agency Child Protection Teams, and Family Networks. The diagram below presents the Government's vision for the reformed system:¹³

¹¹ See Community Care Inform Children: <https://www.ccinform.co.uk/practice-guidance/childrens-social-care-reforms/>.

¹² Department for Education, The Families First Partnership (FFP) Programme Guide: Delivery expectations for statutory safeguarding partners in England, March 2025 (Year 1).

¹³ Department for Education, [The Families First Partnership \(FFP\) Programme Guide: Delivery expectations for statutory safeguarding partners in England: Year 2 \(2026 to 2027\)](#), March 2026, page 8.

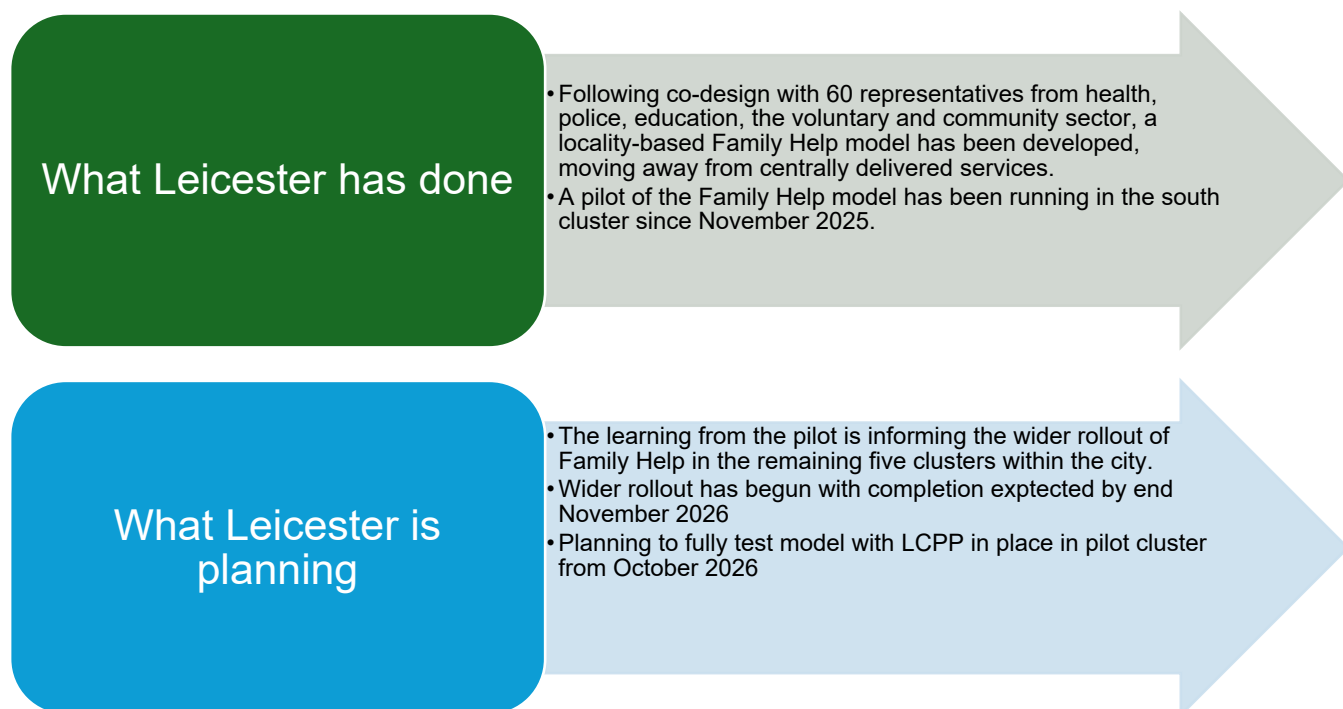


*FGDM = Family Group Decision Making and FNSP = Family Network Support Packages

There is a deadline of March 2027 for full implementation of the changes.

In Leicester, work has been underway since 2025, focused on the three core pillars:

Family Help



Multi-Agency Child Protection Team (MACPT)

What Leicester has done

- Multi-agency strategic discussions across the Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland footprint have been underway to begin to shape expectations around a Multi-Agency Child Protection Team.
- A workshop was held in January 2026 to begin to define the future model and understand the resources required to implement a model that meets each area's local needs.

What Leicester is planning

- Following the initial strategic visioning workshop, further work is underway to refine the models discussed, enabling a robust SWOT analysis to inform a partnership wide decision on the preferred direction of travel.
- Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland outline model will be agreed Spring 2026 and be piloted from Summer 2026 in Leicestershire and Rutland. Learning will be shared to inform Leicester implementation by March 2027.

Family Group Decision Making

What Leicester has done

- Family network meetings are already well-established in child protection, pre-proceedings and court work, with growing use in kinship assessments, adolescent cases and placement stability.
- Signs of Safety provides a shared practice framework for safety planning.
- There is a leadership commitment to making Family Group Decision Making a mandatory offer for all families receiving support.

What Leicester is planning

- Investment is being made within Leicester's family therapy team to support expansion of the Family Group Decision Making offer. This will support fully embedded, system wide approach accessible across Early Help, Family Help, Child Protection, PLO, court proceedings and reunification.

Moving forwards

It will be ensured that there are links between the Families First Partnership programme across Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland and the Safeguarding Children Partnerships' Multi-Agency Learning and Development Group so that any system changes can be reflected in training, including how to access services. Any training requirements that are multi-agency can be delivered, where appropriate, through the subgroup.

Best Start in Life Family Hubs



The government's [Best Start in Life](#) campaign, delivered by the Department for Education and the Department for Health and Social Care, aims to help break down barriers to opportunity for every family, supporting parents and children from pregnancy through to age five and beyond. "Giving every child the best start in life" is the government's strategy for improving child health and development and meeting the ambition that 75% of 5-year-olds in England have a good level of development by 2028.¹⁴

In line with Best Start in Life, Family Hubs can help families access a wide range of support. 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 are 12 Best Start [Family Hubs](#) across the city all offering activities, courses, information and support to families. They provide a [range of services](#) that support parents and carers to give their child the best start in life.

Five to Thrive



Five to Thrive is an evidence-based model, which supports healthy brain development in children, fostering secure attachment and resilience. It promotes safety, connection, and co-regulation, helping practitioners recognise their role as a vital resource for families. The approach also encourages shared language and collaboration across services.

Leicestershire County Council's Children and Family Services are leading a three-year project to embed Five to Thrive and Trauma-Informed Practice (TIP) across Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland. Nearly 200 practitioners have already been trained, with Education and Early Years being prioritised in 2025-26. Health and Midwifery will be the focus in 2026-27.

Children's Wellbeing and Schools Act

It is acknowledged that the Children's Wellbeing and Schools Act 2026 will lead to significant changes in different areas.¹⁵ For example, 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 Act. This includes the creation of a Children not in School Register. Also, the Act will set out changes in corporate parenting responsibility for services wider than Children's

¹⁴ See UK Government, "[Best Start in Life: 2025 campaign toolkit](#)", October 2025, pages 4 and 5.

¹⁵ The Children's Wellbeing and Schools Bill was proposed in 2024 – see <https://educationhub.blog.gov.uk/2024/12/the-childrens-wellbeing-bill-what-parents-need-to-know/>. The resulting Act became law in April 2026.

Social Care.¹⁶ These national changes will inform any required changes to local policies and procedures, and training requirements will be considered.

Crime and Policing Act

The Crime and Policing Act 2026 will bring in numerous elements linked to the protection of children, implementing recommendations from the Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse, including by introducing a new duty to report child sexual abuse, and creating new offences of cuckooing and child criminal exploitation.¹⁷ These national changes will inform any required changes to local policies and procedures and training requirements will be considered.

SEND Reform

In February 2026, the government published the Schools White Paper, titled “Every Child Achieving and Thriving”. Subsequently, the Department for Education published “SEND reform: putting children and young people first” and plans to reform the special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) system in England.¹⁸ The changes aim to improve help and support for children and young people with SEND across the 0 to 25 years system.

Locally, Education teams are considering the resource and capacity implications, the range of pastoral needs which schools have to respond to, and the logistical and strategy challenges. In October 2025, each Local Authority delivered SEND Assurance reports to the Safeguarding Children Partnerships to set out the current picture.

Local Government Reorganisation

The new councils, which will be formed as a result of the Local Government Reorganisation, are due to come into effect in April 2028. All 10 local councils (Leicestershire County Council, Leicester City Council, Rutland County Council, Borough and District Councils) are already working together on the transition.

Recent Inspections

¹⁶ Department for Education, [Children's Wellbeing and Schools Bill 2024: Policy Summary Notes](#), January 2026.

¹⁷ The Crime and Policing Bill was proposed in 2025. The resulting Act became law in April 2026 – <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/crime-and-policing-act-2026>.

¹⁸ See <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/every-child-achieving-and-thriving/every-child-achieving-and-thriving-html-version> and <https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/send-reform-putting-children-and-young-people-first/send-reform-putting-children-and-young-people-first-html-version>.

Joint Targeted Area Inspection (JTAI)

Joint Targeted Area Inspections (JTAs) are carried out under section 20 of the Children Act 2004. Working Together 2026 notes that “Safeguarding partners are inspected at a single agency level by their respective inspectorates; Ofsted, His Majesty’s Inspectorate of Constabulary, Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS) and Care Quality Commission (CQC). These inspectorates, along with HMI Probation, also jointly inspect and report on the impact of local multi-agency safeguarding arrangements through the joint targeted area inspection (JTAI) programme.”¹⁹ Each JTAI cycle looks at a different theme relevant to multi-agency working.

In November 2025, it was confirmed that Leicestershire would be subject to a Joint Targeted Area Inspection on the theme of Child Sexual Abuse within the family environment.²⁰

This was a three-week process, with inspectors from Ofsted for the Local Authority, the CQC for Health, HMICFRS for Police and HMI Probation for Probation on site for a week in December 2025. In order to evaluate children’s experiences, inspectors carried out case sampling and tracking and observations of practice. They spoke with staff and children, young people and families. The inspectors requested information from individual agencies and reviewed case related documents, as well as performance and management information.

The Safeguarding Children Partnership supported partners in this process, submitting documentation as required and the Independent Scrutineer meeting with inspectors.

The Joint Targeted Area Inspection results letter was published on 12.02.26. The Partnership was praised, with the report highlighting robust leadership, sensitive and skilled frontline practice, effective specialist support, and a strong multi-agency commitment to keeping children safe. Inspectors also noted the proactive work already underway, including local reviews, training and a draft county wide strategy to further strengthen the response to child sexual abuse.

Partners will build on the report’s suggestions, including improving early information sharing, expanding specialist therapeutic support, and increasing take-up of multi-agency Child Sexual Abuse in the Family Environment training. Progression of the Action Plan formulated as a result of the JTAI is being supported by the Safeguarding Children Partnership.

The following webpage includes the full joint statement from the partners: <https://www.leicestershire.gov.uk/news/commitment-to-support-vulnerable-leicestershire-children-recognised>. The full response is available on the Ofsted website [here](#).

Probation Inspection

¹⁹ [Working Together 2026](#), page 39, paragraph 94.

²⁰ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/joint-targeted-area-inspections-of-the-response-to-child-sexual-abuse-in-the-family-environment>

Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland had their Local Probation Delivery Unit (PDU) inspection, with the report published in May 2025. In addition, the East Midlands, as a region, then had an inspection and that report was published in August 2025. The East Midlands Inspection result was inadequate. Victim work overall was good. The public protection work was not strong enough. In both reports, the effect of the national context was acknowledged by the Chief Inspector, with the prioritising of national policy changes, linked to prison capacity, impacting on local delivery. The Safeguarding Children Partnerships received a presentation on both the East Midlands recommendations and the Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland recommendations and the Action Plan in place.

Strengthening multi-agency collaboration

Work is taking place across Leicestershire, Leicester and Rutland to develop thinking about the use of a shared early help assessment. Previously, there was the Common Assessment Framework (CAF). Locally, there has not been a focus on this way of working for many years.

The Quick-Thinking Plan (QTP) is a 2-page document which enables any organisation to quickly capture the worries, strengths and what needs to happen for any family with lower-level issues that do not require support from Children and Family Services. The plan will demonstrate to families that they are being heard, that there is support for them, but also what they and the organisation can do to move forward. It will be useful if the needs of the family increase or escalate. The Quick-Thinking Plan will help to demonstrate what has already been tried and can avoid families having to re-tell their story.

To date, the focus has been on Leicestershire working with school-based colleagues on this approach. It has now been opened up across the Partnerships.

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

The Safeguarding Children Partnerships want to have meaningful engagement with children, young people and families that makes a difference to their work. To acknowledge that engagement could be improved, two new initiatives were progressed in 2025-26 – the Communication and Engagement Group and the recruitment of two Young Scrutineers.

Communication and Engagement Group

This group is responsible for hearing from local children and families about their experiences of safeguarding, as well as promoting messages to local communities. The group's membership includes Engagement Officers, Children's Rights and Participation Team Leaders and Communications/Media Officers and the Independent Scrutineer. In the future, the Young Scrutineers will become members too (see below).

The group is working on a Strategy and has a two-year work plan, which addresses key deliverables linked to local Business Plan priorities, learning from reviews and multi-agency audits, and national learning, including from the NSPCC. To support the group's dissemination of key national messages, a Hub Relationship Manager from the NSPCC attended one of their meetings.



In 2025-26, linked to the Harm Outside the Home business priority, the group has supported promotion of [Live Safe](#). This is a partnership initiative providing a central online hub for young people,

parents/carers, and professionals across Leicester, Leicestershire, and Rutland with the main aim to empower young people (aged 10–19, but also relevant to young adults up to 25), their families, and professionals to play an active role in keeping young people safe.

A practitioner from Leicestershire Partnership NHS Trust (LPT) gave a presentation on care leavers' experiences of accessing mental health services, including the views of young people with lived experience. The group is now considering how to further support and increase communications around this cohort of young people.

Moving forwards

As a result of learning from a multi-agency audit, and in collaboration with the Safeguarding Adults Boards, the Safeguarding Children Partnerships will further promote [Sarah's Law](#) and [Clare's Law](#) to local families and communities. These are disclosure schemes, about child sex offenders and domestic violence respectively, which allow the Police to release information about previous history related to these types of abuse to provide information that could help protect people at risk and prevent further crimes.

During Safeguarding Adults Week in November 2025, which focused on "Prevention: act before abuse", the Safeguarding Adults Boards hosted a number of free online 15-minute spotlight briefings at the start of each week day, with one promoting

Clare's Law. The [video of the briefing](#) is now available on the Safeguarding Adults Boards' YouTube Channel. Information has also been shared with the Voluntary and Community Sector Forum. Work will continue over 2026-27. There will be more work to promote existing resources and ensure they are accessible across community settings.

Young Scrutineers

Leicester and Leicestershire & Rutland Safeguarding Children Partnerships have recently recruited two Young Scrutineers to work alongside the Adult Independent Scrutineer, strengthening the commitment to ensuring that the voices and lived experiences of children and young people are at the heart of everything the Partnerships do. Their role is to challenge how effectively safeguarding partners listen to, engage with, and act upon the views of children and young people.

The Young Scrutineers will:

- Attend partnership meetings to share their perspectives and help ensure priorities reflect what matters most to young people.
- Review policies, plans, and projects to ensure the voice of the child is central to decision-making.
- Contribute to reports and help present findings from their scrutiny work.
- Engage with children and young people across Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland to gather their views and ensure these are shared with key decision-makers.
- Visit frontline services to understand how practice works on the ground and provide informed feedback for improvement.

Ongoing voice work in partner agencies

The Health and Wellbeing workers of the Teen Health 11-19 Service, which works across Leicestershire and Rutland to provide health and emotional wellbeing advice and support to children and young people aged 11-19 (25 with SEND), write all notes to the child, clearly evidencing the voice of the young person being supported.

The CAMHS Young Person's Team use several approaches to facilitate engagement and communication, such as play and alternate communication forms like written or flashcards. For young people for whom English is not their first language, interpreters are booked to ensure communication needs are met.

Further work completed during 2025-26:

- New Children's Rights and Participation Films, produced by the Leicester Rights and Participation Service and created with children and young people, were promoted by the Safeguarding Children Partnerships in the May 2025 issue of the Safeguarding Matters newsletter. The new resources were the outcome of a consultation, with the workforce and with children, around what is needed to help improve how practitioners listen, and more importantly

ensure children and young people have an influence on decisions that are made about them.



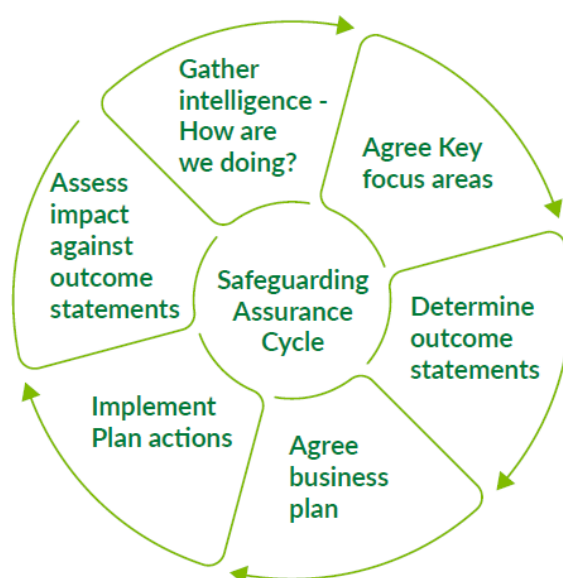
- The Safeguarding Children Partnerships supported promotion of Project Echo. This is a Leicestershire pilot project where local survivors, both adults and children, of domestic abuse are being invited to share their insight and lived experience. The project will help deliver a national blueprint for embedding child and adult domestic abuse survivors' voices in community approaches to domestic abuse. Representatives from the project have given presentations at Safeguarding Matters Live and to the Education Group.

- On 8th December 2025, during the 16 Days of Activism against gender violence, Living Without Abuse held a Survivors Voice Conference. There was a trauma focus and survivors' stories. This was promoted by the Safeguarding Children Partnerships and Safeguarding Adults Boards.

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 2025-27](#). The two-year-plan allows 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.

Child Sexual Abuse

What we did in 2025-26:

- Signed up to work with the NSPCC (funded by the Home Office) to undertake a local system-wide child sexual abuse snapshot to understand and evidence the effectiveness of the local response to this type of abuse. The process, involving a survey of professionals, was completed by September 2025.

Overall, the NSPCC identified:

- Strong multi-agency commitment to Child Sexual Abuse response
- Child Sexual Abuse complexity recognised, especially in familial contexts
- Good practice exists but is inconsistently embedded
- Low professional confidence in managing Child Sexual Abuse disclosures
- Public awareness and prevention activity underdeveloped

A Task & Finish Group has been set up to progress the NSPCC's recommendation that a local strategy is devised (see below). The findings of the snapshot have been fed into the Task & Finish Group.

- Completed an audit, between May and July 2025, to assess the quality of local multi-agency decision making when responding to concerns about child sexual abuse. The learning was fed into the Task & Finish Group working on the Leicester, Leicestershire & Rutland (LLR) Child Sexual Abuse Strategy. Further information on the findings of the audit is available in the "Quality Assurance and Service Improvement" section of this Yearly Report.
- Completed an analysis of learning around child sexual abuse from out of area reviews to further support the information for the local Strategy. This report considered 15 cases published in 2025 on the [NSPCC Case Repository](#) where "Child Sexual Abuse" had been deemed to be a main feature,²¹ with "sexual abuse" identified as a key word/phrase by the NSPCC.
- Started drafting the Leicester, Leicestershire & Rutland Child Sexual Abuse Strategy. This is progressing well and is being informed by the learning from local processes, as described above, and including the Joint Targeted Area Inspection findings, the national learning from the [Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse](#) (October 2022) and the Child Safeguarding Practice Review Panel's national review, ["I wanted them all to notice": Protecting children and responding to child sexual abuse within the family environment](#) (November 2024). Local Action Plans had been developed as a result of these national reports, and these are being incorporated into the Strategy.
- Identified and evaluated a range of multi-agency training initiatives around child sexual abuse, in a range of formats, with specific attention to the role of schools, early years and other education settings.
- Completed a training needs assessment, with agencies that attend the Multi-Agency Learning and Development Group reviewing their own internal offer to help plan and inform further the multi-agency training offer being developed. Most agencies reported making use of the resources from the Centre of Expertise on Child Sexual Abuse, including the e-learning.

Outcomes and impact:

- The Leicestershire [Joint Targeted Area Inspection report](#) acknowledged "*strong governance*" from the Safeguarding Children Partnerships around child sexual abuse learning and developing a trauma-informed workforce. It noted that *"Although the partnership's strategy is still in draft form, its ambition is evident through collaboration with the National Society for Prevention of Cruelty to Children (NSPCC) and the Centre of Expertise in Child Sexual Abuse (CSA Centre). The strategy has also drawn helpful*

²¹ "Main feature", in general, means that the incident that initiated the review was child sexual abuse. Some other cases that did not fit this description were included.

insights from local safeguarding practice reviews, thematic briefings, surveys and audits to inform planning and practice. Some of this work was far-sighted in advance of publication of the CSPRP report into child sexual abuse in the family environment in 2024 and work has picked up pace since the panel report.”

- The July 2025 session of the Supervisors’ and Trainers’ Network focused on child sexual abuse. Attendees received presentations on the impact of child sexual abuse; the East Midlands Children and Young People’s Sexual Assault Service (EMCYPAS) or ‘Coral Cove’ and what it offers; and the Multi-Agency Child Exploitation (MACE) Hub and the links between Child Sexual Abuse and Child Sexual Exploitation.

95 people attended from a range of agencies, including Local Authorities, Health, Education, Early Years Providers, Voluntary and Community Sector Providers, District/Borough Councils and Leicestershire Fire & Rescue Service.

Below are some comments taken from the evaluation forms:

“It was really useful hearing about the different places professionals / families can go for support. This will definitely help with the delivery of my Designated Safeguarding Lead training as I can pass this information on.”

“The presentation from the perspective of the lived experience was very powerful. A lot of reflective practice for me individually which will only enhance me further as a manager and supervisor.”

“I found the content both interesting and highly relevant. Excellent session. Very thought provoking. I think it will stay with me and influence my practice.”

- In September 2025, the Multi-Agency Learning & Development Group published [Resources to help build confidence when working with Child Sexual Abuse](#).
- Four pilot child sexual abuse awareness training courses have been delivered, two that were a full day and two that were half day sessions, to test the proposed materials and get feedback. This has informed what will be delivered regularly via the Multi-Agency Learning & Development Group’s training programme moving forwards.

Moving forwards:

- The aim is for the Leicester, Leicestershire & Rutland Child Sexual Abuse Strategy to be finalised and published in Summer 2026, with promotion throughout the Partnerships to follow.
- Regular training sessions, with a focus on child sexual abuse, will consistently form part of the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Children Training Programme. This will include delivery of:

- A half-day session around confidence in working with child sexual abuse and having difficult conversations. Prior to this session, attendees will be encouraged to complete the e-learning offered by the Centre of Expertise on Child Sexual Abuse
- An online session focusing on child abuse in the family environment
- Workshops on 'Understanding CSE/A from a survivor's perspective', which will provide a broader foundation and insight into the full lived-experience journey. These will be delivered by The Reign Collective, who are survivors of child sexual abuse
- 'Following the Breadcrumbs' sessions, allowing practitioners to deepen their learning specifically around recognising and responding to disclosure, delivered by The Reign Collective.
- The local Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangements (MAPPA) Strategic Management Board has been asked by the Safeguarding Children Partnerships to review how people who present a risk of sexual harm and who have contact with children are assessed and managed.
- The Safeguarding Children Partnerships will develop a local coalition and/or victim response pathway for local children and young people who have experienced recent or non-recent sexual abuse. They are currently considering adapting and adopting the Child Sexual Abuse Response Pathway set out by the Centre of Expertise on Child Sexual Abuse.
- Assurance will be sought by the Safeguarding Children Partnerships that there are local pathways for referring children for appropriate forensic medical and other health assessments, for both recent and non-recent sexual abuse, and that safeguarding practitioners understand them.
- It has been agreed that multi-agency audits, with a focus on practice around child sexual abuse, will be completed at the start and end of the two-year business plan period. A second audit will be completed by December 2026.

Neglect

What we did in 2025-26:

- Revised the local multi-agency Neglect procedure throughout, to be published in April 2026.
- Produced a new procedure around safeguarding children with chronic health needs, including where neglect is a feature. As set out in the 2024-25 Yearly Report, in response to local learning from a Leicestershire Rapid Review, a Task & Finish Group was formed with practitioners from Leicester, Leicestershire & Rutland to carry out this work.

The work acknowledged that many children will have health needs that are of a short-term duration and who do not require long-term clinical

management, and most children will have their health needs managed effectively by parents with the support of universal or targeted support. The procedure was required to support those children where longer-term chronic health needs are being managed in the context of wider safeguarding concerns, including neglect. This work was supported by an Independent Facilitator with expertise in this area.

The new procedure – [Safeguarding children with Long-Term Chronic Health Needs who require “additional child safeguards”](#) – was published in January 2026 on the Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland Safeguarding Children Partnerships’ Procedures Manual.

To support the new procedure, also in January 2026, two launch events were held and a presentation was delivered to the Education Group. A video of one of the launch sessions is available via YouTube – [Safeguarding Children with Chronic Health Needs video](#) – and there is also a [7-Minute Briefing on Safeguarding children with chronic health needs](#).

- Supported a wider system change around how Health shares more detailed health information with Children’s Social Care and details the impact / potential impact of abuse and neglect upon a child’s health needs. This has been supported by the publication, in January 2026, of [Best Practice Guidance for Health Staff: Sharing health information with Children’s Social Care and partner agencies](#) and the implementation of a new “Health needs checklist for Child Protection Conference and Core Groups” and a new process that strengthens the health information that goes to Strategy Discussions.
- Continued to support awareness raising of the [Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland Safer Sleeping Risk Assessment Tool](#). This addressed the learning from an audit completed in 2024-25, which found that there was poor use of the Tool, with too much reliance on Health staff, either the Midwife or Health Visitor/Public Health Nurse, talking to parents and carers about safer sleep. It also responded to the results of the Section 11 frontline practitioner survey, completed in 2024-25, that found 44% of practitioners that completed the survey were aware of the Safer Sleeping Risk Assessment Tool.
- Provided the Supervisors’ and Trainers’ Network with sessions on both the new safeguarding children with chronic health needs procedure and neglect more widely.
- Commissioned a new training course around neglect, with two sessions delivered in 2025-26.

Outcomes and impact:

- Extensive consultation took place during 2025 regarding the new system change in Health and the safeguarding children with chronic health needs procedure, including with Health staff in the 0-19 service, GPs, Community and Hospital Consultant Paediatricians, Leicestershire Partnership NHS Trust (LPT) and University Hospitals of Leicester NHS Trust (UHL)

Safeguarding Teams, Independent Reviewing Officers (IROs) and Conference Chairs and Social Workers via Social Work Managers.

Around 180 practitioners attended the two procedure launch events. Since the procedure was launched, it has been promoted to various Health settings by the Designated Nurse for Children and Adult Safeguarding.

The full impact of the changes cannot be assessed in detail until they have been in place for a sustained period of time. It is believed that they will have a significant impact for key meetings and how the partnership manages child protection planning.

Current feedback has been positive, with practitioners seeing the potential to greatly improve information sharing and multi-agency collaboration in understanding any child's health needs in the context of abuse and neglect and providing better support to the cohort of children with chronic health needs.

- Safer sleep information was disseminated via the identified Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland Safer Sleep Champions, which includes practitioners from Children's Social Care, Early Help, Health Visiting, HomeStart Teams, Perinatal Services, Neonatal Services, Breastfeeding Support Services, Turning Point Drug and Alcohol Services and Maternity Lecturers at the local Universities.

The Safer Sleeping Risk Assessment Tool was promoted again in the May 2025 issue of Safeguarding Matters. A one-hour Safer Sleep Session was delivered by the Leicester, Leicestershire & Rutland Designated Doctor for Child Deaths during Safer Sleep Week 2026.

The importance of the Tool was reiterated at a meeting of the Supervisors' and Trainers' Network and a Trainers' Network, held specifically for those who deliver safeguarding training to those working in Early Years. It was made clear that there is an expectation that messages around safer sleeping will be shared in all core/essential safeguarding children courses, including Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) training.

Moving forwards:

- In April 2026, the Child Safeguarding Practice Review Panel published [Child Neglect: A thematic analysis](#). The Safeguarding Children Partnerships have been awaiting this national thematic review. They will now carry out work to respond locally to the national learning, including learning set out in the additional briefing papers on [The use of child neglect assessment tools](#); [Child Neglect: Voice of the child](#); and [Child Neglect: Responding to cumulative harm](#).
- The national learning will inform the update of the Leicester, Leicestershire & Rutland Neglect Toolkit. This work is already in progress, and it is planned to include changes around dogs in the home, safer sleep and fire risk.

- The Safeguarding Children Partnerships will be seeking information from individual agencies on how the chronic health needs procedure has been implemented. Agencies have been provided with an assurance form to complete, which will be requested for return in October 2026. The Audit Group has agreed to carry out a multi-agency audit in the future to test how the procedure has been embedded.
- Regular sessions of the commissioned Neglect training course will form part of the multi-agency offer on the Safeguarding Children Training Programme.
- The Audit Group will complete an audit on Neglect in 2026-27.

Harm Outside the Home

What we did in 2025-26:

- Sought updates on Child Criminal Exploitation (CCE) and Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) work across Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland from the Adolescent Safety and Diversion Board, with the Chair of the Board invited to present to the Safeguarding Children Partnerships on an annual basis in line with multi-agency safeguarding arrangements.
- Received information from the local Child Exploitation and Serious Violence Group, who considered the findings of the National Audit on Group-Based Child Sexual Exploitation and Abuse, led by Baroness Casey.²² Multiple cases of rape and abuse against children across the country led to this report and the recommendations were addressed to the government. The Child Exploitation and Serious Violence Group felt it was necessary to consider the recommendations and benchmark the Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland region against them. They provided assurance to the Safeguarding Children Partnerships about their findings (see below).
- Received assurance from the Local Authorities, Police and Health regarding safeguarding of Looked After Children and Care Leavers, particularly in relation to exploitation and missing.
- Sought an improved understanding of sexual assault of children and young people outside the family environment across Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland. The Safeguarding Children Partnerships are looking to assure themselves that individual assaults, which have been the subject of local reviews, are not reflective of any wider and broader risks related to group-based child sexual exploitation. Data was collated by the Performance Subgroup from Leicestershire Police over a 5-year period for analysis.
- Supported promotion of Live Safe, which is a partnership initiative with the main aim to empower young people (aged 10-19, but also relevant to young

²² Baroness Casey of Blackstock, National Audit on Group-Based Child Sexual Exploitation and Abuse, June 2025, <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-audit-on-group-based-child-sexual-exploitation-and-abuse>.

adults up to 25), their families, and professionals to play an active role in keeping young people safe.

- Adapted a [Neurodiversity and Exploitation Briefing](#), created by Wolverhampton Safeguarding Together, for local use. This was in co-ordination with the local Child Exploitation and Serious Violence Group. It explores why neurodivergent young people can be targeted by offenders.
- Continued to deliver the training course entitled 'Child Exploitation: An introduction to CSE, County Lines, Trafficking and Missing' as part of the multi-agency offer on the Safeguarding Children Training Programme.

Outcomes and impact:

- The Child Exploitation and Serious Violence Group assured the Safeguarding Children Partnerships that child sexual exploitation is investigated by the Serious Crime Team in Leicestershire Police. The well-established Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland Multi-Agency Child Exploitation (MACE) Team enables detailed information to be shared between the Local Authorities, Police and Health to support multi-agency decision making for children subject to child sexual exploitation and child criminal exploitation. The MACE Team has established an audit programme to test the validity of MACE Team decision making. The Child Exploitation and Serious Violence Group is seeking assurance that ethnicity data is captured in the design of data sets.
- The volume of data collected by the Performance Group regarding sexual assault of children and young people outside the family environment across Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland made it difficult to draw conclusions. It was identified that this requires further work, analysis and expertise.
- A dedicated Live Safe webpage has been included on each Safeguarding Children Partnership's website (see <https://www.lcitylscb.org/information-for-practitioners/live-safe/>).

An article on Live Safe was included in the October 2025 issue of the Safeguarding Matters newsletter and a presentation was delivered at the December 2025 Safeguarding Matters Live event. The Voluntary and Community Sector Forum has been asked to support communication to children and young people in communities across Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland.

- A "My Role" article was included in the October 2025 issue of Safeguarding Matters on the Team Managers of the Child Exploitation Team in Leicestershire County Council.

Moving forwards:

- The Child Exploitation and Serious Violence Group will confirm that the local definition of what group-based abuse is adheres to the definition in Baroness Casey's report.

- The Performance Group will liaise with other agencies, as necessary, to gain a wider understanding of sexual assaults and continue to consider the data. They are liaising with the Multi-Agency Child Exploitation (MACE) team and the Child Criminal Exploitation and Serious Youth Violence Operations Group to see whether assurance can be provided.
- The Supervisors and Trainers' Network, planned for April 2026, will focus on 'Harm outside the Home'.
- The Audit Group will complete an audit on "Harm Outside the Home" in 2026-27.

Belonging

What we did in 2025-26:

- Addressed the reflective questions for Safeguarding Children Partnerships posed in the Child Safeguarding Practice Review Panel's briefing, entitled ["It's Silent": Race, racism and safeguarding children](#) and published in March 2025. In order to identify what further development was needed in reviews to respond to issues of race, racism and racial bias, a Task & Finish Group was formed to analyse Equality, Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (EEDI) in the Case Review Groups' review processes. A work plan was agreed and has been completed. A local action plan is being progressed (see below).
- Continued to promote and embed learning from "Race, racism and safeguarding children" in multi-agency learning and development. An article was included in the May 2025 issue of Safeguarding Matters, and it is referenced within the Core Awareness Safeguarding Children training.
- Completed an audit on the theme of "Belonging", between January and March 2026, to establish the effectiveness of multi-agency working in considering the role of immigration status, culture, faith, and parenting in safeguarding. Further information on the findings of the audit is available in the "Quality Assurance and Service Improvement" section of this Yearly Report.
- Progressed work, via a Diversity Task & Finish Group formed to meet an action from the 2023-25 Business Plan, with a focus on providing multi-agency learning and development around immigration status, culture, faith, and parenting to improve knowledge, understanding, and practice in relation to safeguarding children.
- Translated the leaflet, "Reducing the risk of harm to children in your household: Advice for parents who use drugs or alcohol", into five different languages – Arabic, Gujarati, Hindi, Punjabi, and Urdu. This leaflet is used by Turning Point, which provides drug and alcohol support services across Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland. The leaflets were supplied directly to Turning Point for their use.

- Continued work on Transitional Safeguarding, via a Task & Finish Group formed to support the 2023-25 business priority. The group is owned by both the Safeguarding Children Partnerships and Safeguarding Adults Boards and is co-chaired by children's and adults' representatives. Specifically, the group's purpose is to develop a multi-agency Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland transitional safeguarding policy or practice guidance. It is acknowledged that Transitional Safeguarding is not simply transition planning for people who are moving from Children's Social Care to Adult Social Care services.²³
- Supported the re-launch of [My Adult, Still my Child](#). This is a pioneering UK-based website designed to support parents and carers of young adults aged 16 and over who may not be able to make decisions for themselves, providing legal guidance, advice on health and care decision-making, and resources for transitioning to adult services.

Outcomes and impact:

- The Equality, Equity, Diversity and Inclusion in Reviews Task & Finish Group gathered information from partners involved in children's reviews at a local level to gauge confidence; this also covered what staff are provided with in terms of training. They were assured that awareness is being promoted in individual agencies, including through training and quality assurance processes.

The group conducted two in-depth audits of Rapid Reviews and Local Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews across Leicester and Leicestershire & Rutland to analyse where there were strengths and to identify weaknesses in equality, equity, diversity and inclusion. The Case Review Groups have a shared policy and templates, which consistently prompt consideration of all protected characteristics. There is a specific question on equality, diversity and inclusion for agencies to answer in information returns and in the template for the Rapid Review Report, which is submitted to the National Panel.

To further support this process and strengthen the response, the Task & Finish Group has proposed some changes to the paperwork. Further recommendations have also been made to the Case Review Groups (see below).

- As a result of the Task & Finish Group's analysis, and their response to both local and national learning, two new resources have been produced and published:
 - A [Practitioner Briefing on Adultification](#), which was adapted from a resource from Salford Safeguarding Children Partnership and includes research and an image created by Jahnine Davis, National Kinship Care Ambassador and Child Safeguarding Practice Review Panel member

²³ See Local Government Association transitional safeguarding resources for more information about transitional safeguarding: [Transitional safeguarding resources | Local Government Association](#).

- A [Practitioner Briefing on Cultural Genograms](#), which was adapted from a resource from Pan Bedfordshire Safeguarding Children Partnership and sets out why cultural genograms are needed and why it is important to be culturally competent when working with families.
- The Diversity Task & Finish Group has identified a provider to deliver training for the Partnerships to broaden understanding of religion, culture and communities relevant to the demographics of Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland. This training will be delivered between May and June 2026. It has also commissioned training to enable the Partnerships with understanding the support available and issues faced by families with no recourse to public funds, and immigration status.
- The Diversity Task & Finish Group has made links with the East Midlands Regional Improvement and Innovation Alliance (RIIA), which is a partnership of ten Local Authorities and the Northamptonshire Children's Trust, who work collaboratively to improve outcomes for children and young people in the East Midlands. The aim is to support resources being shared across the region via the RIIA learning hub.
- Transitional safeguarding was an area identified in 2024-25 as demonstrating limited progress. As a result, regular progress meetings have been held, throughout 2025-26, with the Independent Chair of the Safeguarding Adults Boards and the Independent Advisor for the Safeguarding Children Partnerships.

The Task & Finish Group has completed a local multi-agency mapping exercise and the report from this exercise has established that the position has not changed locally, with regard to the specific cohort of young adults/people that do not fit into existing pathways when the transition from children's to adults' services occurs. Group members have started to produce and present real-life case examples from their service which describe the journey from children's to adults' services for young people, as well as practitioner experiences. This analysis and lived experience will inform the production of the policy / practice guidance.

Moving forwards:

- The Equality, Equity, Diversity and Inclusion in Reviews Task & Finish Group has recommended that the Case Review Groups complete the following work:
 - Agree a new position statement around consideration of Equality, Equity, Diversity and Inclusion in reviews, to be included in their Terms of Reference
 - Amend Rapid Review and Local Child Safeguarding Practice Review templates with a view to strengthening the Equality, Equity, Diversity and Inclusion sections with new additional prompts to pull more out of agencies' responses

- Strengthen the Equality, Equity, Diversity and Inclusion section of the Individual Management Review (IMR) Report / Rapid Review Report author training
- Request that Equality, Equity, Diversity and Inclusion is consciously considered when preparing Key Lines of Enquiry for Local Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews
- Request that Equality, Equity, Diversity and Inclusion experience and training is stipulated, which is pertinent to the case, when advertising for a Reviewer.
- The Diversity Task & Finish Group will organise a conference, to include children and young people with lived experience, to support understanding of their experiences and to support wider learning.
- The Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland transitional safeguarding policy or practice guidance is due to be ready for November 2026.

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

Thresholds

The Business Plan for 2025-27 states that the Policy and Procedures Group will lead on publishing a refreshed Thresholds document, confirming changes and setting out a broad continuum of Family Help. This work was due to be completed by the end of March 2026. There has been an issue with progressing this work, though, as transformation activity is not at a stage where the Policy and Procedures Group has the information required to update the Thresholds document.

Quality Assurance and Service Improvement

The Leicester Safeguarding Children Partnership has a Performance and Quality Assurance Framework shared with the Leicestershire & Rutland Safeguarding Children Partnership. This can be found here <https://lrsb.org.uk/lrscp>.



Changes in 2025-26

The Safeguarding Children Partnerships previously shared an Assurance and Audit Group. It was acknowledged that the remit of this group was 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 were implemented to replace the Assurance and Audit Group. There are now a Performance Group and an Audit Group, which fulfil the requirements of the Performance and Quality Assurance Framework.

The Performance Group analyses performance data; plans, scopes and tasks multi-agency assurance processes; and analyses findings from multi-agency assurance processes, including findings from agencies' internal assurance processes and Section 11 self-assessments.

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

It was anticipated that this change would allow for more audits to be completed and improve the ability to evidence how information sharing has improved practice

and outcomes. These expected improvements are now evident in the work completed in 2025-26.

Additionally, in 2025-26, it was decided to step down the monthly Safeguarding Assurance Keep in Touch meetings, which fed into the Performance Group. This meeting brought together senior safeguarding leads to share intelligence and joint oversight of the ability of multi-agency children's safeguarding services to maintain statutory functions in relation to safeguarding children. The meetings have been closed down because data detailing trends in workload and workforce capacity are now collated by the Performance Group.

Performance data

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

Child Protection data

	2025-26
Referrals to Children's Social Care from Education	658
Referrals to Children's Social Care from Health	927
Referrals to Children's Social Care from Housing	61
Referrals to Children's Social Care from Police	1,088
Strategy Meetings	1,565
Section 47 enquiries	2,040
Initial Child Protection Conferences	379
Quorate Initial Child Protection Conferences	97%
Review Child Protection Conferences	561
Quorate Review Child Protection Conferences	95%
Number of Children Subject to Child Protection Plan	1,848

Categories of Abuse

	2025-26
Number of children subject to Child Protection Plan – physical abuse	333

Number of children subject to Child Protection Plan – emotional abuse	522
Number of children subject to Child Protection Plan – sexual abuse	107
Number of children subject to Child Protection Plan – neglect	729
Number of children subject to Child Protection Plan – multiple categories	157

Multi-agency response to data analysis

It was agreed that, as the increase in child protection numbers seen across Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland had an impact on capacity across the partnership, a multi-agency audit would be beneficial to establish if there were any threshold issues and to identify any learning. The Performance Group have requested that the Audit Group carry out a spotlight audit on the increase in children on child protection plans. This will take place in Quarter 1 of 2026-27.

In Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland, the majority of children subject to Child Protection Plans are under the category of abuse of neglect. This is reflected in Neglect being selected as a business priority in the Safeguarding Children Partnerships' Business Plan for 2025-27. All subgroups have been allocated work, with the Policy & Procedures Group progressing an update of the Neglect Toolkit, the Multi-Agency Learning & Development Group commissioning a new one-day training course, and the Audit Group due to complete a multi-agency case file audit in 2026-27. All of this work will be informed by the Child Safeguarding Practice Review Panel's Thematic Analysis on Child Neglect, published early in April 2026.

Self-Assessment

Section 11 self-assessments are undertaken by agencies as part of their duties under Working Together 2026.²⁴ Every other year, each member of the Safeguarding Children Partnerships self-assesses whether their organisation is being effective in keeping children safe, via a self-audit. In the years where the Section 11 is not completed, a frontline practitioner survey is completed. This work is co-ordinated by the Performance Group of the Safeguarding Children Partnerships. The results and learning are reported to the Planning and Delivery Group.

For 2025-26, a Section 11 self-assessment audit was completed. This requested information on strategic and governance arrangements; workforce capacity and resilience; service change and transformation; listening and responding to children at risk; effectiveness linked to the current business plan priorities; and learning and improvement.

Agencies were asked to grade their level of effectiveness in each area, provide evidence to demonstrate effectiveness and, if not currently reporting being 'fully

²⁴ [Working Together 2026](#), Chapter 4, pages 114-115, paragraphs 258-259.

effective', document their plan to achieve full effectiveness, including when they expected to see improvements.

Agency submissions are being analysed, and a report will be presented to the Planning & Delivery Group in 2026-27.

The 2024-25 Section 11 Practitioner Survey sought to establish from frontline staff and managers across Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland how they used local resources available to them to help safeguard local children. In response to the findings, the Performance Group produced and published [Local Resources to Help you Safeguard Children 2025](#). It provides an overview of, and links to, each resource asked about in the survey, with the aim of increasing awareness and use of these resources.

Audits

Both multi-agency case file audits and spotlight audits are completed throughout the year. A case file audit is a deep dive audit, looking at a smaller number of cases in more detail. A spotlight audit is dip sample audit, looking at a greater number of cases.

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.



Spotlight audit on children on a child protection plan and in receipt of CAMHS

In 2021-22, an audit was completed on the theme of children and young people with mental health needs. This 2025-26 audit sought to provide a follow up to the previous audit and to assess progress in regard to any gaps in joint working with children in need of safeguarding when they are in receipt of mental health services. The audit took place between March and April 2025.

The audit found that: • Where CAMHS were informed and invited to child protection meetings, they attended or sent apologies and provided a report. • The voice of the young people and parents / carers was evident in the records. • In two cases, where the child was born a girl and now identifies as a boy, preferred pronouns and names were recorded and used by partnership agencies and appropriate support was provided around gender identity and transitioning. • There was evidence that CAMHS practitioners were not always invited to Strategy Discussions, Child Protection Conferences or Core Groups. If a child/young person is on the CAMHS waiting list, Local Authorities should always still invite CAMHS. • CAMHS practitioners are not always made aware when a Child Protection Plan has ended to enable removal of the child protection icon from System 1 records. • Social Care should not be reliant on waiting for a mental health diagnosis; there should be a focus on supporting the child/young person every day and the presenting issues and needs, as these are unlikely to change as a result of a diagnosis. • Agencies should ensure that they understand the impact of a child's mental health on their siblings. It could have a parenting impact on siblings, as well as an emotional impact.	Outcomes and Impact Since the audit was completed: • Each Local Authority has provided assurance that Children's Social Care are sharing invites to meetings and minutes with CAMHS for children known to them on the waiting list and who are actively engaged with CAMHS. Rutland reported that the learning from the audit had been communicated to the social work teams and practice reviews have shown that this is being implemented. Leicestershire explained that the learning from the audit had been shared with all relevant service areas and new system monitoring is now in place for tracking attendance at meetings. • CAMHS provided assurance that System 1 has been updated with current children subject to child protection plans and open to Children's Social Care to ensure that all professionals can input into these plans. Also, following cross referencing with the Local Authorities, a manual update has been completed to remove the child protection icon from System 1 records, where a Child Protection Plan has ended. • The findings from the audit, including what worked well and learning points, were presented in a 7-Minute Briefing on the Multi-Agency Spotlight Audit on Children on a Child Protection Plan in receipt of CAMHS. This is published on the Safeguarding Children Partnerships' websites and was also disseminated via the October 2025 issue of Safeguarding Matters.
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	• A repeat CAMHS audit is planned for 2026-27 to test the impact of this audit.
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Case file audit on Child Sexual Abuse

An audit is to be completed at the start and end of the two-year business plan period to analyse the quality of local multi-agency decision making when responding to concerns about child sexual abuse. For this first audit, the audit tool focused on the key areas of learning identified in the Child Safeguarding Practice Review Panel's National Review, "I wanted them all to notice", including prompts to consider evidence of critical thinking and curiosity around sexual abuse and harm and understanding of risks, triggers, motivations, and specific impact and ongoing risk to the child. The audit took place between May and July 2025.

The audit found that:	Outcomes and Impact
• The Paediatric Sexual Assault Referral Centre (PSARC) made therapeutic referrals and carried out child protection medicals when requested. Where they received referrals that did not meet their thresholds, they fed back to referrers. • There was an example of excellent work by the Children's Independent Sexual Violence Advisor (ChISVA), with plans updated at every contact, the child's concerns being used to plan upcoming sessions and the child's lived experience outside of sexual abuse being recorded. • There was an under use of the Paediatric Sexual Assault Referral Centre (PSARC) in some cases. • Issues around therapeutic work have been identified and further scoping work is needed. • Practitioners could have been more professionally curious around how child sexual abuse could be affecting a child's behaviours.	• It was acknowledged that the learning from the audit, around under use of the Paediatric Sexual Assault Referral Centre (PSARC) and issues around therapeutic work, was similar to learning identified by the NSPCC's Child Sexual Abuse (CSA) System Wide Snapshot for Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland. The Audit Group's report was shared with the Task & Finish Group working on the Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland Child Sexual Abuse Strategy and the response to this shared learning will be led by them to avoid repetition. • In September 2025, a learning pack, entitled Resources to help build confidence when working with Child Sexual Abuse, was published. It is for practitioners and managers to use when working with or suspecting child sexual abuse and encourages professional curiosity, including lots of links to practice resources, including from the Centre of Expertise on Child Sexual Abuse. • A 7-Minute Briefing on the Multi-Agency Case File Audit on Child Sexual Abuse was published on the

	Safeguarding Children Partnerships' websites in December 2025.
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Spotlight Audit on Electively Home Educated (EHE) children

An audit on the theme of electively home educated children was previously undertaken in 2022-23. Following this, local guidance was produced and published in September 2024, supported by four training briefing sessions. This audit was completed to assess progress and any gaps in the implementation of the local guidance. Additionally, one of the conclusions of the Child Safeguarding Practice Review Panel's [Safeguarding children in Elective Home Education Panel Briefing](#) was that *"local safeguarding partners take all necessary steps to assure themselves that policy, practice, and procedures in their area enables professionals to work effectively together, with children and their families, to safeguard and protect this group of children."* Also, the Local Child Safeguarding Practice Review (LCSPR) on Sara Sharif, published in November 2025, raised issues around elective home education.

It was recognised that lots of electively home educated children have no safeguarding concerns, and their education is meeting their needs. The audit aimed to understand their visibility in line with previous local, and current national, learning, focused on establishing if children were known to services or presenting vulnerabilities. The audit took place between October 2025 and January 2026.

The audit found that:	Outcomes and Impact
- Local Authority Inclusion Services are being proactive where they have concerns and working as well as they can within the current guidance. - Agencies are acting appropriately when electively home educated children become known to them. - In a change from the earlier audit's findings, Leicestershire and Rutland Children's Social Care records do now routinely capture that the child is electively home educated, with flags being used to achieve this. - There is a good process around Operation Encompass and electively home educated children. - As with the previous audit, Inclusion Services have significant limitations with regards to their powers when dealing with families of children who	- A 7-Minute Briefing on the Spotlight Audit on Electively Home Educated (EHE) Children will be disseminated via the April 2026 issue of Safeguarding Matters. - It was acknowledged that many of the issues raised in this local audit reflect those raised in national publications. It is difficult to implement changes until national legislation changes. The Children's Wellbeing and Schools Act 2026 will aim to strengthen measures around home educated children. Its publication will likely require changes to local policies and procedures.

are electively home educated, which adds to the barriers to professional oversight and support to this group of children.	
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Case file audit on Belonging

An audit on the theme of “Belonging” was completed to establish the effectiveness of multi-agency working in considering the role of immigration status, culture, faith, and parenting in safeguarding. This audit supported the business plan priority and acknowledged that, whilst many of the recommendations in the Child Safeguarding Practice Review Panel’s Briefing, “It’s Silent”, are linked to Rapid Review and Local Child Safeguarding Practice Review work, the overarching recommendation is:

Safeguarding partners are asked to consider this report, and the reflective questions contained within it. We recommend that partnerships carefully evaluate current partnership work in this area and identify what further development is needed in learning reviews, and multi-agency safeguarding practice, to address and respond to issues of race, racism and racial bias.²⁵

The audit considered cultural needs, communication needs, immigration status, intersectionality, racism and adultification. It took place between January and March 2026.

The audit found that:	Outcomes and Impact
• There was evidence of different agencies’ recognition of ethnicity, language and identity of families, trauma, migration and cultural transition. • Where clearly evident, cultural context was explored well, understood and considered. • There was effective professional curiosity in high-risk cases – for example, where forced marriage was a concern. • Many of the cases involved domestic abuse, physical chastisement or maternal mental health issues. • There was inconsistency regarding:	• A 7-Minute Briefing will be produced to disseminate the learning. • The Policy & Procedures Group will review existing Toolkits and assessment tools – for example, the Neglect Toolkit – to ensure they are properly focused on belonging. • Guidance / information sheets on ethnicity will be sourced or produced to support practitioner understanding, with this work being led by the Multi-Agency Learning & Development Group. • Individual agencies will review their practice guides for the use of

²⁵ Child Safeguarding Practice Review Panel, [“It’s Silent”: Race, racism and safeguarding children: Panel Briefing 4](#), March 2025, paragraph 7.8.

○ Use of interpreters ○ Quality of information in making / receiving a referral ○ Accurate capture of ethnicity ○ Exploration of intersectionality ○ Exploration of racism. ● Where families had moved into the country, a lot of professionals can be involved and this can have a negative effect, including on trauma-informed practice. ● Where the child was from a dual heritage background, the impact of ethnicity was not so clearly recognised. ● In terms of immediate actions, the main focus was often, understandably, on risk to and safeguarding of the child, but understanding of belonging at the beginning of the process could help support in the future.	interpreters and update, where appropriate.
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Other assurance work

Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland Operational Group Meeting

The Operational Group is a standalone group that feeds into the Performance 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 Audit Group seeks annual assurance from partner agencies around their internal quality assurance processes. This includes information on key findings from internal agency audits undertaken to support and broaden safeguarding learning and how the voice of the child is included in internal agency safeguarding audits and how it drives improvement.

Joint Targeted Area Inspections (JTAs)

Supported by the Leicester and Leicestershire & Rutland Safeguarding Children Partnerships, multi-agency partners carry out audits on Joint Targeted Area

Inspection themes, as they are announced, to measure their effectiveness in that area and consider improvements. In 2025-26, the Planning & Delivery Group received assurance on the audits completed on the themes of Domestic Abuse and Child Sexual Abuse, in line with the JTAI themes.

The national learning from JTAI audit cycles is also considered and informs local work. The [Joint Thematic Report into the multi-agency response to children who are victims of domestic abuse](#), published in January 2026, indicated that local learning on this theme was reflected in some of the national learning.

Assurance reports from other partnerships / services

The Safeguarding Children Partnerships receive annual assurance reports from other partnerships / services that oversee specific areas of work linked to safeguarding. The following areas are invited to present on an annual basis:

- Child Death Overview Panel (CDOP)
- Local Authority Designated Officers (LADOs)
- Front Door
- Independent Reviewing Officers (IROs)
- Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND)
- Corporate Parenting
- Adolescence Safety and Diversion Board (ASDB)
- Domestic Abuse Locality Partnership Boards.

Use of data and information sharing

Quantitative data and qualitative information are shared to evidence that safeguarding arrangements are effective.

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

Moving forwards, phase two of the Child Protection Information Sharing (CP-IS) service is being rolled out. This means that children in care, children on Child Protection Plans and unborn babies subject to Child Protection Plans, their mothers and NHS numbers will automatically be on Health systems for the 0-19 service. All GPs, community dentists, community paediatricians and the Sexual Assault Referral Centre (SARC) will know about the fact that these children are subject to those criteria.

The Children's Wellbeing and Schools Act 2026 will introduce a new statutory Information Sharing Duty, which will come into force on 30th September 2026. Local arrangements will be updated in line with this national duty.

An example of how information sharing has improved practice and outcomes in 2025-26 is analysis completed around referrals from the Police into Children's Social Care. Questions were raised following performance reporting by the three Local Authorities to the Safeguarding Children Partnerships. It was identified that the Police made the highest number of contacts to the Local Authorities and that a

relatively high percentage of these did not proceed further into the system for action.

A piece of work was recommended to ensure that contacts were appropriate, focused and of the required quality. Meetings were held to consider the quality of referrals, how these were progressed, the reviewing processes in place, the communication between agencies and the pathways in place.

It was established that the volume of referrals was being managed effectively. There was not one particular reason for the volume of referrals from the Police.

Learning was identified around what could be done better. As a result, a proposal was progressed to add further information to police notifications to improve the analysis of risk associated with relationships and work to share the Police 'Threat Risk Assessment' commenced. The work also highlighted positive outcomes around standard Public Protection Notices (PPNs) going into Leicestershire's Extended Domestic Abuse Team and them being able to apply early intervention with some of those families affected by domestic abuse, which prevents an escalation of behaviour. This is a strength and really supports the Government's agenda for Family Help and prevention.

The work completed provided a good overview of the local systems and the openness of the Partnerships. It also identified how the Family First Partnership Programme will provide a good opportunity to strengthen information sharing even more.

Multi-Agency Safeguarding Procedures

Together, the Leicestershire & Rutland and Leicester Safeguarding Children Partnerships ensure that procedures are in place for multi-agency safeguarding in line with Working Together 2026. Throughout 2025-26, 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.

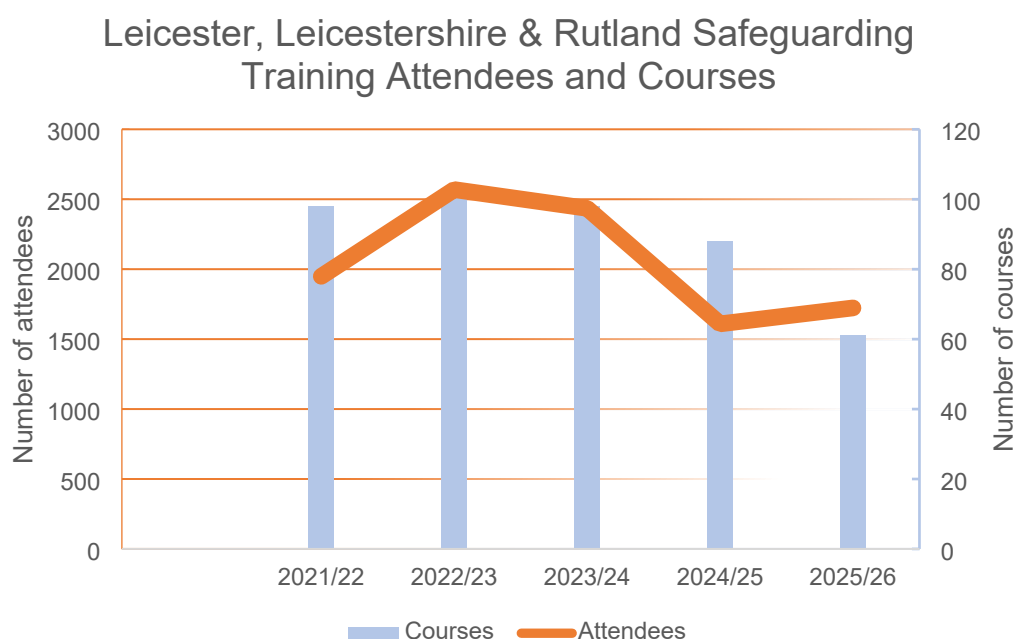
The Safeguarding Children Partnerships provide:

- 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 Supervisors and Trainers Network for staff who are named in their agency as a Safeguarding Trainer or a Safeguarding Manager/Supervisor
- 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) are 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 61 courses to 1723 attendees. The Partnerships also supported the Baby Fortnight programme through collaborative planning, promotion and technical delivery support. The programme brought together agencies across Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland to deliver a wide range of workshops and practice forums focused on infant wellbeing, brain development, safer sleep, healthy relationships, early years development and wider support for families with babies and young children.

A significant development during 2025-26 was the introduction of dedicated Early Years safeguarding training. New Early Years versions of both Core Awareness and Designated Safeguarding Lead training were launched to better support safeguarding and welfare requirements that were set out in the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) 2025.

The Multi-Agency Learning & Development Group also strengthened safeguarding leadership and workforce accountability through enhanced specialist learning opportunities. This included the introduction of a new “Safer Recruitment to Safeguard Children” course, and “Multi-Agency Reflective Supervision” course. Both of these consider staff and safeguarding. Established Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) training further strengthened understanding of how organisations should respond appropriately to allegations concerning staff and volunteers to ensure children remain protected.

To improve accessibility and ensure safeguarding learning reached practitioners across different agencies and sectors within Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland, the Partnerships expanded the flexibility of training delivery during 2025-26. Evening and weekend training sessions were introduced to support practitioners working varied hours and shift patterns, helping to ensure wider access to safeguarding learning opportunities.

Update of Competency Framework

The Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland Safeguarding Children Competency Framework (SCCF) was updated in January 2026 and then further reviewed to include any changes from the new Working Together to Safeguard Children, published in March 2026.

The Safeguarding Children Competency Framework is for use by the Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland Children’s Workforce to support individuals and organisations to undertake their safeguarding roles and responsibilities in a confident and competent manner. It outlines the minimum expected level of safeguarding competence that people need to have in order to work or volunteer with children.

The changes made reflect Annex C of the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS), updated in September 2025, which talks directly about what should be in the training for early years’ practitioners and Designated Safeguarding Leads (DSLs). The changes to the Framework were minimal, and it is suitable for use by any agency. Four training sessions were delivered to explain how to use the Safeguarding Children Competency Framework, to support managers and supervisors.

Safeguarding Matters Live

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 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 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 two events delivered in 2025-26, with one in July and one in December, over 640 practitioners attended.

For the first time, the July 2025 Safeguarding Matters Live was a hybrid event, with in-person attendance at City Hall and also online attendance. The event was focused on a specific topic, Safeguarding and Domestic Abuse. It looked at how domestic abuse can impact both adults and children and what services are available to support, with stalls from some of these local services at City Hall. Topics included Economic Abuse and the Domestic Abuse Act, the Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC) process and Transnational Marriage Abandonment, which is a type of immigration abuse mostly suffered by migrant women which had recently been recognised as a form of Domestic Abuse in legislation.

Topics covered in the December 2025 event were working with transient families and strengthening safeguarding practice across boundaries; Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS) – who they are and what they do; Live Safe – a partnership initiative with the aim to empower young people; Project Echo – a project from Safelives alongside Living Without Abuse, putting the voices of survivors at the heart of local responses to domestic abuse; and PEGS (Parental Education Growth Support), which aims to reduce the impact of Child to Parent Abuse by supporting parents and professionals.

Supervisors and Trainers Network

Commencing in June 2025, there is now a Supervisors' and Trainers' Network. Meetings take place three times a year. Membership is by invitation and is only available for staff who are named in their agency as a Safeguarding Trainer or a Safeguarding Manager/Supervisor.

The group was formed to ensure that those who are in responsible supervisory positions are fully briefed about the learning from 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. The aim is to provide the opportunity to discuss and explore the learning so that attendees can facilitate the sharing of this information during supervision, team meetings and when advising on specific safeguarding issues. Expert speakers are invited to deliver presentations to the Network. Videos of the sessions are published on the [YouTube channel](#).

Topics covered in 2025-26 included Child Sexual Abuse, the new safeguarding children with chronic health needs procedure and "Adolescence Abuse, Neglect and the Interface with Adulthood".

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 to offer regular meetups between trainers to share knowledge, skills and to help develop the delivery of safeguarding children training.

Training Impact

Feedback from participants throughout the year demonstrated the positive impact of the training programme and reflected the quality, accessibility and practical value of the learning delivered. Practitioners described trainers as “professional”, “knowledgeable”, “down to earth” and “easy to understand”, highlighting the supportive learning environment created across sessions.

Feedback particularly recognised the practical relevance of training content, opportunities for discussion and reflective learning, and the value of experienced trainers sharing real-life safeguarding perspectives. The flexibility of the training programme was also positively received. Feedback from Designated Safeguarding Lead Refresher training highlighted the benefit of evening delivery, with one practitioner noting that attending outside normal office hours “*made it easier to attend and focus on [the training] without other priorities crowding in*”.

“I found the training and presentation well formulated and carried out. It was very informative and pulled from local and relevant examples and challenged thinking. As a new practitioner within Leicester, I found it helpful as an introduction to local safeguarding pathways.”

Feedback from participant of Core Awareness in Safeguarding Children training

“I really enjoyed the scenarios and hearing the perspective of the trainer on how she dealt with situations. This was a very informative part of the training. Training was delivered in a superb fashion. Trainer was down to earth, easy to understand and was able to help me with queries I raised at the end of the session helping me to strengthen our approach in the future.”

Feedback from participant of Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) training

“This was a very helpful day with a very professional knowledgeable trainer. I already had a good knowledge of safeguarding, but this covered Leicester and Leicestershire requirements/paperwork and was therefore particularly useful.”

Feedback from participant of Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) Refresher training

Evaluation feedback across the 2025-26 learning programme demonstrated a significant increase in practitioner confidence following attendance at safeguarding training. Average confidence ratings, marked out of 10, increased from 6.56 prior to training to 8.55 following training, representing an overall increase of 1.99 points and approximately 30% growth in confidence across the workforce. Similarly, according to the same set of evaluation data, the attendees who answered the questions report a raise of 28% in their knowledge and 25% raise in their skills.

	Knowledge	Skills	Confidence
Scaling question point increase – out of 10	6.7 to 8.6	6.8 to 8.5	6.6 to 8.6
Average point increase	1.9	1.7	2.0
Percentage %	28%	25%	30%

The Safeguarding Children Partnership Learning & Development homepage on the Leicestershire & Rutland website was viewed over 2100 times, with the Competency Framework webpage being viewed nearly 2950 times.

The [Safeguarding Basic Awareness PowerPoint](#), aimed at people who may work in a voluntary capacity or staff requiring a basic induction to children's and adults' safeguarding, has been visited over 8000 times this year on the Leicestershire & Rutland website.

During 2025-2026, more than 90 people requested they be added to the Safeguarding Matters distribution list, with nearly 900 people now signed up.

“Training was good and informative, and a refresher to what organisations are available when dealing with safeguarding. Also resources available to take back to team.”

“Absolutely fantastic, very impactful and will share with colleagues.”

“Fantastic coverage from all speakers. I will be reviewing our safeguarding procedures and also discussing this within our team meetings, linking in resources and signposting staff to watch this Safeguarding Matters recording.”

“Learned about different agencies and how they operate and how to make contact with them.”

Feedback from attendees of Safeguarding Matters Live

Learning and Development Resources

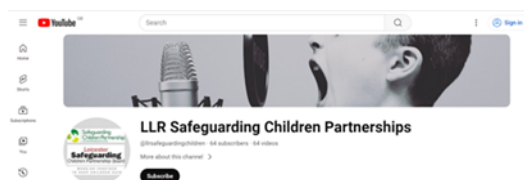


During 2025-26, two print issues of the [Safeguarding Matters newsletter](#) were published. They included information on the latest reports from the Child Safeguarding Practice Review Panel, a spotlight on stalking and harassment, Project Echo, Live Safe, and the re-launch of [My Adult, Still my Child](#).

Updates on local and national safeguarding information are also delivered in a concise email format via the Safeguarding Matters Digest. There was a special Digest on National Stalking Awareness Week (21st April to 27th April 2025). Other topics covered in the Digests included the national Romance Fraud Awareness Video Campaign, launched by the Met Police in October 2025; the national County Lines Awareness

webinars, hosted by the National County Lines Coordination Centre; and local events linked to the 16 Days Of Activism To End Gender-Based Violence.

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 lrsbpo@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. In February 2026,

a new resource pack was published on [Information Sharing to Safeguard Children and Adults](#). It was developed from work undertaken by Kent Safeguarding Children Multi-Agency Partnership. The resource pack aims to address effective sharing of information between practitioners, local organisations and agencies, essential for early identification of need, assessment, and service provision to keep children and adults safe. It covers key topics such as Legislation and Guidance and includes tips and links to resources.

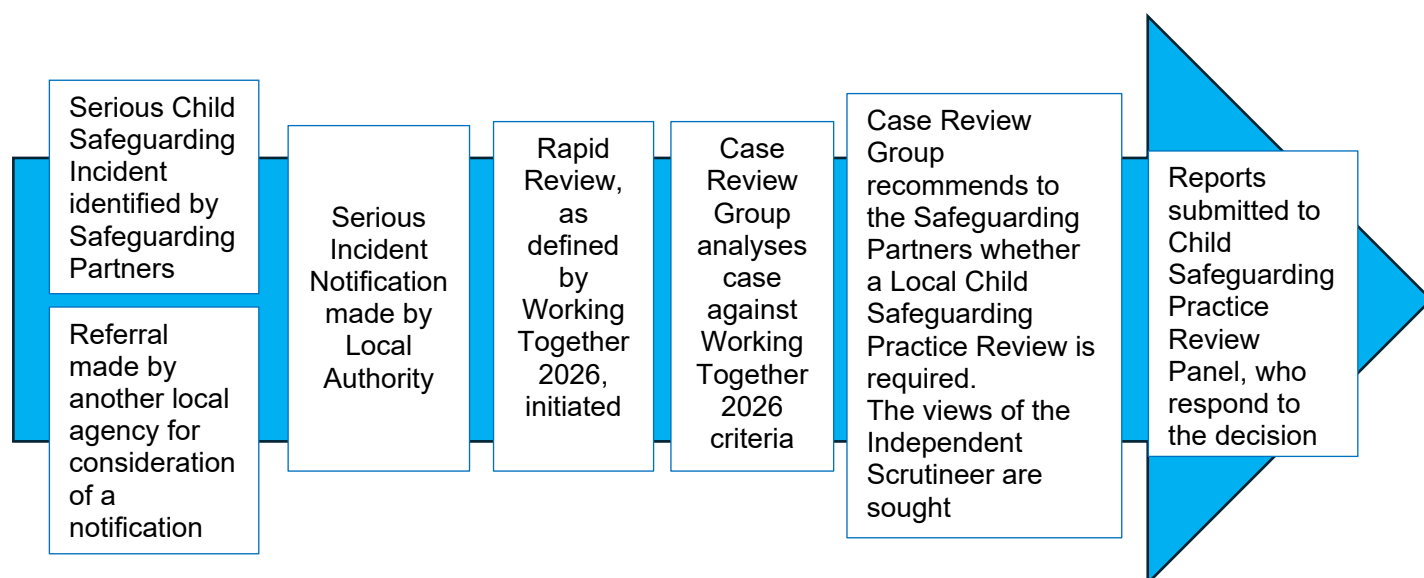
Moving forwards

The Multi-Agency Learning & Development Group will set up short online sessions, entitled “Safer Together: Top 10 LLR Safeguarding Essentials”, on a quarterly basis to raise awareness of key procedures and resources from the Safeguarding Children Partnerships, with the aim of helping support these being accessible and visible to professionals. For example, a 7-Minute Briefing could be shared, which could introduce learning from a review and link it to the procedures, or 10 top procedures/resources for safeguarding could be shared, which could link to key themes from reviews, such as professional curiosity or ‘invisible men’, and help to re-visit and embed key learning messages.

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 2026, in cases where abuse or neglect of a child is known or suspected, and the child has died or been seriously harmed.



Changes relevant to reviews in Working Together 2026

Updates to Working Together 2026 have included more detail on potential reviews on the deaths of care leavers and have introduced the possibility of Safeguarding Children Partnerships carrying out “Local Learning Reviews.”²⁶ Working Together 2026 states that “Where safeguarding partners have determined the criteria for serious incident notification has not been met, they may choose to undertake their own local learning reviews outside of the formal review process. For example, where there is an opportunity to learn from good or poor practice, or from a near-miss incident. However, only incidents that have been notified as a serious incident through the Child Safeguarding Incident System shall be subject to the procedures followed in this guidance and overseen by the Panel.”²⁷

²⁶ [Working Together 2026](#), page 138, paragraph 384.

²⁷ [Working Together 2026](#), page 137, paragraph 378.

Key decisions and actions taken

At the start of 2025-26 one Local Child Safeguarding Practice Review that was commissioned during 2023-24 remained ongoing. This review was completed during 2025-26 and presented to the Safeguarding Children Partnership at their July 2025 meeting. This report was not published to avoid interfering with ongoing criminal justice proceedings.

During 2025-26, six notifications/referrals for potential Local Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews (LCSPRs) were received by the Leicester Safeguarding Children Partnership's Children's Case Review Group (CRG), the same number as received in 2024-25.

One referral was a repeat referral where a rapid review had previously been completed, and no additional rapid review was necessary. Rapid reviews were undertaken on the five remaining notifications/referrals that were received, with one of those five being completed by an outside Safeguarding Children Partnership where the incident took place.

Out of the five rapid reviews completed, two Local Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews were commissioned, and both were ongoing at the end of the 2025-26 business year. Completed Local Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews or improvements made briefings are [published](#) on the Leicester Safeguarding Children Partnership website.

Learning identified from reviews

Key learning from reviews completed by Leicester Safeguarding Children Partnership during 2025-26 has included:

Domestic Abuse

- The importance of the Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland MARAC information sharing protocol being well understood and complied with.
- Ensuring inclusion of all relevant services involved with a family when child protection planning i.e. IDVA, schools, and Project 360.
- Ensuring that the effects of coercive and controlling behaviour and its impact on executive functioning is explored in enough detail to be sure that a victim/survivor of domestic abuse is able to maintain and follow safety plans when required.

Information Sharing

- The importance of sharing information out of area.
- Safeguarding partners to consider how/if GPs can be informed when there are different kinds of plans in place.
- Ensuring that information is shared with Probation when there is evidence that a licence condition has been breached.
- The importance of the child protection plan being clear about all agencies involved with families knowing which adults are at risk, what they look like, and being clear what restrictions are in place.

Neglect

- Ensuring that professionals understand the need to include dog safety in their safeguarding children assessments.
- A recommendation for safeguarding partners to explore the potential for including fire safety as part of the local neglect toolkit.
- That Child in Need plans should also give consideration to those over 16 and under 18 in the household.
- The need to consider how a more consistent use of the local neglect toolkit can be embedded across the partnership (including regional partners).
- The importance of observing a pattern of chronic neglect over a time period and how that information is used more effectively.
- Challenges around legal thresholds for child protection and neglect.

Hidden Males

- Work with fathers and male carers needs to be less ambiguous and more effective.

Good Practice

- There was good information sharing between agencies, with referrals being appropriately made by agencies who had contact.
- Inter-agency communication was largely excellent with good attendance at multi-agency meetings.
- A good network of professionals working with a family, with attendance at core groups and sharing information taking place.
- Joint visit with social worker; good liaison with prison and probation from ADHD service; health visitor and school nurse accessed regular safeguarding supervision; good continuity of health practitioners working with a family.
- Clear evidence of assessment and planning. Effective communication maintained between community midwifery, hospital maternity safeguarding services and children's social care during pregnancy.
- Safety planning evidenced for each pregnancy.
- Appropriate notifications were made to the hospital Safeguarding Children Team. Relevant information was shared with children's social care in line with safeguarding procedures.
- Officers from Leicestershire Police delivered a coordinated response initiating MARAC processes, securing IDVA support, liaising with Probation regarding recall, and sharing safeguarding information with Children's Social Care, showing strong multi-agency contacts in a high-risk domestic abuse context.
- Officers from Leicestershire Police also displayed a determined and well coordinated response by making multiple arrest attempts over several days following stalking, threats, and repeated breaches of a restraining order. During these enquiries, officers showed strong professional curiosity, noting concerns about the safety of those inside the home and the condition of the property, and submitted Child Public Protection Notices (PPNs) for neglect and environmental risks.
- A Probation Practitioner undertook significant and regular liaison with agencies, acting swiftly and appropriately to new information whilst remaining

professionally curious throughout. The practitioner also ensured that Social Care were informed about, and contributed to, Probation risk management strategies, including licence conditions.

- The different teams within prison healthcare shared concerns well with each other and appropriate review of risk was identified.
- Good inter-agency communication was highlighted by a number of agencies. There are examples of multi-agency planning meetings being held to support a family at key points, including when prison release or house moves were imminent which is good practice and illustrates professionals are responsive and pre-emptive at times of increased risk.

Actions Undertaken as a Result of Reviews

Action plans are in place to respond to and monitor areas of learning from all reviews. These are overseen by the Case Review Group.

During 2025-26 activity undertaken as a result of reviews included:

- A 7-minute briefing was developed and [published](#) in relation to adultification and promoted across the partnership.
- Health provided a presentation at Safeguarding Matters on 11th December 2025 which explained to practitioners the role of CAMHS and how it interfaces with the Sexual Assault Referral Centre (SARC). The event was attended by 240 multi-agency staff and remains available on our YouTube channel. Feedback received on the session was positive.
- The policy and procedures group considered and agreed to include fire safety and dog safety as part of the local neglect toolkit. The updated toolkit will be published during 2026-27.
- Leicestershire Fire and Rescue Service (LFRS) presented to Children's Social Care at an event in December 2025, explaining how LFRS can contribute to strategy meetings and contribute to working in partnership. This was to raise awareness to practitioners of the importance of considering inviting LFRS to strategy meetings where appropriate.
- The following article was developed, and [published](#) in Safeguarding Matters: "Invisible" "Hidden" "Unseen" Men: Engaging fathers and male carers in effective practice Resource Pack'.
- A learning from review session focused on the importance of Child in Need plans giving consideration to those over 16 and under 18 in the household.
- Evidence was provided of all agencies sharing the neglect toolkit internally. Police also agreed to include revised version within Leicestershire Academy once available.
- Both learning and good practice that was identified in reviews was fed back into organisations.

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](#) and [Local Resources to Help you Safeguard Children](#) which are designed to convey key messages from reviews and encourage managers and workers to reflect on their practice.

How we are measuring impact

Agencies are asked to provide assurance regarding how they disseminate and use learning resources produced by the Safeguarding Children Partnership, including 7-Minute Briefings, and to provide any feedback collated. It has been confirmed, for example, that the Integrated Care Board share resources via the GP Forum and directly to GP Practices, with the expectation that they are disseminated to their staff. University Hospitals of Leicester NHS Trust (UHL) have reported that 7-Minute Briefings, Safeguarding Matters and learning resources that can be easily shared are very valuable and well received.

In addition, in June 2025 the Case Review Group requested and received evidence of impact following the November 2024 request for all Safeguarding Children Partnership members to share the Child C and D [published review](#), the 7 minute [briefing](#) on supporting disclosure of child sexual abuse, and Child Sexual Abuse [procedure](#) across their services.

National Reviews

National reviews are used for benchmarking and ensuring best practice locally. The Safeguarding Children Partnership analyse the learning from national reports and out of area reviews and ensure it is integrated into local thinking and practice. For example, national and out of area learning is considered during Rapid Reviews and included in the Practice Points. Across Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland, this learning is often incorporated into a local Action Plan, with actions disseminated to the appropriate Safeguarding Children Partnerships' subgroup.

Date	Publication	How national learning has been considered in local work
May 2025	Serious Incident Notifications	A report allowing for comparison of Leicestershire & Rutland notification data with that of other areas for 2024-25 was produced and shared with the Case Review Group.

Date	Publication	How national learning has been considered in local work
November 2025	Sara Sharif Local Child Safeguarding Practice Review Surrey Safeguarding Children Partnership	Learning was considered by the Case Review Group in the December 2025 meeting. Learning points and links to the review and related 7-Minute Briefing have been included in the Practice Points. An extraordinary meeting of the Leicester and Leicestershire & Rutland Case Review Groups will consider any further action required in April 2026. Learning will be included in an article in the April 2026 print issue of Safeguarding Matters.
February 2026	“Protecting all vulnerable babies better”: National review into the broader safeguarding issues raised by the death of baby Victoria Marten Child Safeguarding Practice Review Panel	Learning points and links to the review and the briefing note for child protection professionals have been included in the Practice Points. An extraordinary meeting of the Leicester and Leicestershire & Rutland Case Review Groups will consider any action required in April 2026. Learning will be included in an article in the April 2026 print issue of Safeguarding Matters.

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.

The two-year business planning period started in April 2025 and will run through to March 2027. Therefore, the priorities in 2026-27 will continue to be Child Sexual Abuse, Neglect, Harm Outside the Home and Belonging. The Joint Leicester, Leicestershire & Rutland Safeguarding Children Partnerships' Business Plan for 2025-27 is [published](#) on the website.

For each of these areas, there are key deliverables, leads, timescales and impact measures. This enables the Safeguarding Children Partnerships to monitor progress and secure assurance that actions are making a positive difference to the lived experience of children and families.

Conclusion

Again, in 2025-26, the Leicester Safeguarding Children Partnership has been working in the context of significant national reforms and changes to statutory guidance. This has provided the opportunity to review and improve how the Partnership works together to safeguard children and look to make better use of the resources across the Partnership. The positive impact of the changes implemented to quality assurance processes is evident. Moving forwards, these processes will only be further strengthened by the involvement of the Young Scrutineers. The Partnership's learning and development output continues to support and adapt to the changing needs of the workforce. As this period of national and local transition progresses, with the aim of creating a whole-system, early intervention approach to improve outcomes for children, the Partnership will contribute to changes in practice through training and sharing learning from review and assurance work across the partnership.

Family Therapies Annual Report

Scrutiny Commission

Date of meeting: 27th October

Lead Director/Officer: Damian Elcock
Karen Manville
Tiernan Welch

Useful information

- Ward(s) affected: all
- Report author: Karen Manville and Tiernan Welch
- Author contact details: karen.manville@leicester.gov.uk
Tiernan.welch@leicester.gov.uk
- Report version number: V5

1. Summary

- The purpose of this report is to provide a progress on the delivery of Family Therapies; Multisystemic Therapy (MST), MST for Child Abuse and Neglect (MST CAN), Functional Family Therapy for Child Welfare (FFT-CW), Safe Steps Home, and Family Group Decision Making (FGDM), for the period January-March 2026 (Quarter 4).
- To provide an updated annual report that will now routinely be presented through to scrutiny on a yearly cycle at the end of Quarter 4.
- To briefly introduce the new names for some of the teams, within family therapies, from 1st September 2026. (*The old names are still referenced throughout this report due to it predating the new names*).

2. Recommended actions/decision

- Note the need to strengthen targeted support both pre-closure and 6-month post-closure stage to improve long-term sustainability.
- Note the need to refine evaluation measures to better capture Safe Steps Home (reunification) outcomes alongside CLA status.
- Note the need to expand capacity now that the vacant posts are recruited to.
- To support services to improve early identification of risk to enable earlier intervention and prevent escalation.
- To continue to focus on reducing high-cost placements by targeting highest-risk cases.
- To continue strengthening multi-agency working to enhance coordinated and timely interventions.
- To note the new team names for future reference which are highlighted in this report for ease. (*The original names are cited throughout this report due to the time period being covered*).

3. Scrutiny / stakeholder engagement

3.1 The report has been received by

- Senior Management team 27/04/26
- Director Management team 07/05/26
- Lead Members Briefing 12/05/26
- CMB 25th June 2026

- Delivered at the Family Therapies Partnership Board

3.2 The teams maintaining model fidelity (Adherence) is key to successful outcomes. Adherence to the evidenced-based programmes measures a range of factors, including the therapist's ability to work across the whole of the child's ecology, the ability to collaborate in a strength-based manner and the ability to create sustainable change for our families. Adherence is captured across all 5 teams via a monthly anonymous interview with family members, generating an adherence score for each therapist. MST and MST CAN teams use a Therapist Adherence Measure (TAM-R) to measure adherence, and FFT-CW use a Family Self-Report (FSR). Leicester continues to be highlighted nationally as a highly adherent service, with a strong reputation for keeping children safely at home.

- Questions in the TAM-R include:
 - My family knew exactly which problems we were working on.
 - The therapist understood what is good about our family.
 - My family and the therapist were honest and straightforward with each other.
 - Family members and the therapist agreed upon the goals of the session.
 - My therapist helped me figure out the reasons leading up to problems between me and my child.
- Questions on the FSR include:
 - Please help us understand how you felt your family was doing before your first session between 1 (very bad) to 7 (very good)
 - Overall, how confident or hopeful are you that your family will get better? 1 (Not confident) to 7 (I'm very confident)
 - Overall, how much do you approve or disapprove of the way your therapist is treating your family? 1 (I strongly disapprove) to 7 (I strongly approve)

3.3 All the teams regularly receive feedback from family members and professionals. This feedback is neither sought or requested and is separate to adherence measures above. Feedback received in the quarter is presented in Appendix A.

4. Detailed report

Background Information

4.1 Within Leicester City there are now six teams within the Family Therapies service area which work intensively with children at very high risk of entering care, at the time of writing they were still referred to as (MST, MST-CAN, FGDM, and FFT, incorporating Safe Steps Home). The teams were set up under the invest to save model, which is a coherent, planned approach to investing in the development of appropriate interventions to divert children from coming into placements in order to ensure that unnecessary expenditure is avoided and that available resources are used most efficiently for the long-term benefit of children, young people and their families.

- 4.2 Apart from the undoubted benefits for children, the main benefit for the strategy is the comparison to alternative future cost scenarios. In the previous financial year, the teams successfully diverted 171 children from entering the care system. The gross savings of this to the Local Authority are £5.5m 198% of the £3,083k full year target. Without this investment, Leicester would be faced with estimated significant additional expenditure on placements for looked after children in this year alone – as well as searching to place nearly 200 more children into already scarce looked after provisions.
- 4.3 MST** delivers a range of therapies aimed at young people aged 11-17yrs where there is a risk of care because of criminal and / or sexual exploitation, offending, substance misuse, missing, aggression, anti-social behaviours, problems at school etc. **This service is now called the Integrated Family Therapy (IFT) from the 1st of September 2026 with some additional eligibility criteria which will be cited in future reports.**
- 4.4 MST CAN** delivers a range of therapies aimed at children aged 6-17yrs who are subject to physical abuse or neglect. MST CAN has two p/t Psychiatrist positions attached to the teams. This service is now called the **Integrated Family Therapy – Complex Child Protection (IFT-CCP) from the 1st September with some additional eligibility criteria which will be cited in future reports.**
- 4.5 **FFT- CW** delivers family therapy where there are children from pre-birth to 17 with any child welfare concern (except active sexual abuse). They also offer the Safe Steps Home programme.
- 4.6 **FGDM** - Family Group Decision Making (FGDM) is a process led by family members to plan and make decisions for a child who is identified as being at risk.
- 4.7 Locally, MST CAN and FFT-CW take families from Legal Planning Meetings, Edge of Care panels or directly from Court. MST CAN take families outside of legal proceedings, and similar to MST use an assessment on the probability of care. Currently, those families open via other routes to LPMs, have escalated to LPMs in the early stages of MST CAN. Thus, a targeting deflator not needed and will continue to be monitored.
- 4.8 MST works with adolescents in crisis, targeting those deemed at the highest risk of care. This is typically when other services have tried to offer an earlier intervention and where care proceedings or a Section 20 placement are being given careful consideration. These children are usually known to multiple services (Social Care, Children and Young Peoples Justice Service, SEND etc). At the point of referral to MST, an assessment must be made as to the probability that the young person would have gone into care with no intervention. This probability measure, also known as the targeting deflator, measures the extent to which financial savings will be deflated because of not being able to target interventions with 100% accuracy, to those children that would have gone into care. This compares with MST CAN and FFT-CW where referrals are made in general, when legal proceedings to take the child into care would otherwise commence, hence the probability of care is near certain.
- 4.9 As of July 2024, Family Therapies became home to FGDM. The aim of the FGDM is recognition that often a child's best, most loving and consistent support comes from within their own family network. We recognise that families can be transitory, they may not have spoken in some time or may have had disagreements and fall outs, but that when it comes for the best interests of the child, most families will put aside these differences.

Combined Impact

- 4.10 In the quarter, across all teams, there have been 48 families and 70 children commencing treatment. The teams have worked with 111 families and 198 children in the quarter; this includes families commencing engagement in earlier quarters who are still in treatment. 45 families and 79 children have closed in the quarter.
- 4.11 Across the full year teams have worked with 440 families and 809 children within these families.
- 4.12 Of all 162 families starting in the year, 95% are still together. (See appendix B for case data).
- 4.13 Each child is allocated a projected placement (avoided) based on several factors: the risks the child/ren poses or are posed, their behaviours and needs, and placement availability on the day the child/ren is referred. This data is frequently cross checked with social workers and the placement team for accuracy. The average annual placement cost avoided is £76k.
- 4.14 The average time between referral and treatment starting for this quarter was 13 days, which is above target of <10. The 13 days average between referral and start includes a 'sign up and consent' visit before treatment start, so families are contacted and meet the team at least once between referral and start
- 4.15 124 TAM-R interviews have been conducted in quarter. The average adherence score across the therapists is .92 in quarter. This is above target (.61).
- 4.16 Crucially the TAM-R collection rate demonstrates that 95% of all families open have been interviewed in this quarter.
- 4.17 7 FSR interviews have been conducted, with an average of +2.14 across the quarter. This is above the target of +1 range.
- 4.18 In respect of auditing and quality assurance (QA) activity, 599 file audits took place in quarter 4. There were 26 direct observations of practice. In addition, 114 cases had additional 'deep dive' analysis exploring practice successes and difficulties, these have taken place outside of the usual QA activity.
- 4.19 Finally, the teams completed 5 audits against the OFSTED framework, with 4 scoring good and one scoring Requiring Improvement. This is a tested and robust process, with every case file being independently moderated by a different manager before concluding on a grade. All QAs are graded before and after the 'loop is closed' with actions for completion checked and signed off as achieved before the QA is completed. A moderation process is in place, and the Head of Service completes an additional moderation and views all inadequate and RI audits.
- 4.20 Over the year, 25 OFSTED framework audits were completed across the service with 6 graded as Requiring Improvement and 19 were good.
- 4.21 All children and parents are encouraged to provide input into what they want from the treatment from the outset. This is then reviewed as treatment progresses. The treatments specifically target the desired outcomes of the child, parents, wider family, and professionals working with the family. Some examples of children's goals are listed in appendix A.

- 4.22 In the quarter, 84% of children in treatment have concluded treatment and remained safely at home. Counting only families (n=45) closed in the quarter 24% (n=11) have closed to the department entirely, 18% (n=8) stepped down to a lower plan, 20% (n=9) stayed on the same plan, 9% (n=4) have stepped up, 9% (n=4) exited from the care, 7% (n=3) remained in care and 13% (n=6) became CLA.
- 4.23 Annually, 440 families or 809 children were served representing with an overall success rate of 95% meaning children were able to stay safely at home.
- 4.24 Sustainability is an ongoing area of focus for the teams. All cases opened to the teams are tracked for 18 months after closure to monitor their CLA status. Families are tracked in quarterly and annual cohorts:
- Families closing in the same quarter, 18 months ago: 89% remain at home.
 - Families closing in the same quarter, 12 months ago: 80% remain at home.
 - Families closing in the same quarter, 6 months ago: 75% remain at home.
 - Families closing in this quarter: 84% remain at home.
- 4.25 Since the start of the financial year, the teams are at 188% target for children diverted from care which is above the target. The number of children diverted from care however is 351 (target-187) which reflects the percentage above. Looking at teams, MST CAN which was not fully staffed for part of the year, are on 88% of the target, MST (75%) and on FFT (84%).
- 4.26 It is pleasing to note however that across the teams, gross savings are at £6.6m (gross LAC savings from successful diversions), 215% at the end of the financial year, which is above the target of £3,083K, equalling £4.2m (net LAC savings) above the target amount of £756k.
- 4.27 We are proud that the recommendations from last year which focused on concluding the FFT Safe Steps Home pilot and embedding Family Decision Making are complete.
- 4.28 All teams are now fully staffed, including the increased FFT reunification offer increasing staffing to 7 therapists in total.
- 4.29 The FGDM service has expanded to facilitate the mandated Family Decision Making Offer. This has been completed ahead of schedule and had its official launch on 15th April 2026 meaning that a core component of Leicester's Family First journey is complete. With Family Decision Making being offered across the spectrum of need, capacity is something which will need to be monitored closely to ensure that the demand can be met without delay. As such, we have already set up a system for monitoring and data collection so need can be responded to quickly.
- 4.30 All Family Therapies services are now fully embedded and available through Liquid Logic, enabling an easy referral process and increased visibility and accountability for data and tracking.
- 4.31 MST continue to have excellent working relations with the Police, attending daily risk meetings and contributing to the top 10 most at-risk monthly list. This ensures that the most vulnerable to exploitation are targeted.
- 4.32 A Family Therapies Strategic report named the Edge of Care Strategy is available. This a vital framework for social care services, designed to safely support families where children are at risk of entering care. It ensures that decisions about care are consistent,

evidence-based, and child-centred. By focusing on prevention and early intervention, the strategy helps reduce the need for care placements, while ensuring that when care is necessary, it's the right decision for the child.

MST Standard

- 4.33 There have been 22 new children starting across both MST teams in Quarter 4 and 75 children started annually. MST counts differently to MST CAN and FFT and whilst working with the whole family, the programme only counts one child per family as a start.
- 4.34 The teams have achieved 75% of target family and children starting treatment since April 2025 which is below target for this year. This is owing to acute staffing issues with 3 vacancies in therapist posts and a manager covering both teams. To mitigate this and ensure service delivery could be maintained both managers have been holding cases as well as meeting their managerial responsibilities. Ultimately, the average caseload per FTE therapist has been 4 this quarter, below the target of 5. This is owing to a staff member being unable to take cases as they were leaving the role. The target annually is met.
- 4.35 Of the 22 new case starts in the quarter:
- 0 (0%) was already LAC
 - 11 (50%) came from DAS or SAT
 - 0 (0%) were on a Child Protection Plan
 - 3 (14%) were on a CiN Plan
 - 1 (4%) were on a referral order with CYPJS
 - 7 (32%) were open to EH
- 4.36 The teams have closed 19 children in the quarter with 84% (n=16) still at home at closure. Annually, the team closed 62 cases successfully of 67 closures (92%).
- 4.37 Of the 19 children closed to treatment in the quarter 16% (n=3) have stepped up due to increased risk, 26% (n=5) have stayed on the same plan and 0% (n=0) have stepped down at least one level. Of all closures, 42% (n=8) have closed to the department entirely and 16% (n=3) became looked after.
- 4.38 Annually, of the 67 cases closed to the team, 49% (n=33) were closed to the department entirely, 22% (n=14) ended on CiN plans, 6% (n=4) on SGO, 16% (n=11) remained on child protection plans and 7% (n=5) were looked after.
- 4.39 The placement costs avoided in MST are significantly higher than budget at an average of £122k, with an annual target of £38k. This is due to the level of risk linked to the young person and placement availability in the city.
- 4.40 The targeting deflator is averaging 58%, on target of 51%. The targeting deflator is a tool which calculates the likelihood of risk of care within the MST team. To be out of range would suggest inappropriate referrals. See appendix.
- 4.41 In year gross savings from the 75 families started this year, total £2,007k compared to the annual target of £734k. The overall savings are 273% of the full year budget.

MST CAN

4.42 There have been 8 new families and 20 children started in quarter four and 21 families and 58 children started annually. With a target of 24 families the teams have achieved 88% of target starts since April 2025 and 121% of target for children opened. This is owing to unassessed complexities within the teams requiring additional work. Despite this, the therapists have maintained an average caseload of 4 this quarter, which is precisely on target.

4.43 Of the 8 new family starts in the quarter:

- 2 (25%) were on CP plan & came from LPM
- 1 (12%) were on CIN plan
- 5 (63%) were on CP and PLO & came from LPM

4.44 The teams have closed 6 families, and 16 children in the quarter with 83% (n=5) still at home at closure.

4.45 Of the 6 families closed this quarter

- 17% (n=1) became CLA
- 33% (n=2) stepped down at least one level
- 17% (n=1) stayed opened to the same plan
- 17% (n=1) stepped up a plan and 17% (n=1) closed to the department entirely.

4.46 Of the 20 families closed this year

- 20% (n=4) became CLA
- 25% (n=5) have stayed on the same plan
- 0% (n=0) exited from care
- 30% (n=6) stepped down at least one level
- 25% (n=5) closed to the department entirely.

4.47 In year gross savings from the 21 families and 58 children started, this year total £1.5m compared to an annual target of £653k. The overall gross savings are 239% of the full year budget. This is because the number of children per family is slightly higher than budgeted (2.4 compared to 2), and the age range and placement availability in the city.

FFT-CW

4.48 There have been 18 new families opening in the quarter with 28 children.

4.49 The teams have achieved 84% target start since April 2025 with 67 families opened or 91% of target with children (n=131). The average caseload per FTE therapist is 7 this quarter, below the target of 8.

4.50 The spaces are almost always reserved for new families where initial conversations with referrer's are taking place and so seen as an allocation start. All financial targets have been met, along with the success rate target. However, the target for number of families started and number of children started has remained unmet.

4.51 Of the 18 families starting in the quarter:

- 56% (n=10) were in PLO subject to child protection plan,
- 11% (n=2) were on child protection plan,
- 22% (n=4) were LAC, and

- 5.5% (n=1) were on SO and CiN plan
- 5.5% (n=1) were on PWP (S-38)

4.52 Out of 18 families

- 14 were referred via Legal Planning meetings
- 1 EoC Panel
- 3 were direct referrals.

4.53 The team has closed 20 families and 44 children in the quarter with 85% still at home at time of closure.

4.55 Of the 20 families closed this quarter

- 10% (n=2) closed to the department entirely
- 30% (n=6) stepped down
- 15% (n=3) stayed open on the same plan
- 15%(n=3) remained in care
- 20% (n=4), exited from care
- 10% (n=2) became CLA.

4.56 Annually, of the 62 families closed

- 14% (n=9) closed to the department entirely
- 36% (n=22) stepped down
- 11% (n=7) stepped up due to increased risk
- 23% (n=14) stayed open on the same plan
- 16% (n=10) became CLA.

4.57 In year gross savings from the 67 families and 131 children started, this year total £3,055K 180% of the annual target of £1,696k. This reflects the lower than budget case numbers and the lower placement cost avoided.

6. Summary of appendices:

Appendix A

Feedback received Jan-Mar 2026.

NB: This is unsolicited feedback.

Families:

- "Meghan is brilliant at her job, she should be highly recommended for the quality of the work she does for me. I will be lost without her."
- "My therapist is brilliant; she is the best"
- I don't know what I would have done without Jacquie and Martina. Their help has been great.

- I have had quite a few issues with my daughter and her behaviour since Hema has been involved, and I can't thank Hema enough for everything she has done. She has been amazing from the start. I could not have asked for a better therapist to be given to us to help us through it all. She has been fantastic, we will really miss her when it comes to the end of treatment, I wish I could keep her forever.
- I also would like to give a bit of praise to one of the other therapists on-call, I think her name was Yulander. She really did amazing helping us with some tough situations when it was out of hours and late at night. She really was fantastic with all her help even when it was just over the phone, so I really think she deserves some praise in all the work that has been done so far too!
- Thank you for all your support and advise that you and MST have given with mine and Y's parenting of X. Thank you for the sustainability plan which is super helpful and the lovely comments.

The positives I have found is in your helping to change my sometimes rigid mindset into what parenting is. I have learnt to adapt through your advice and valuable insight. Your calm demeanour and practical and kind advise has been really beneficial. The plan and identifying different areas of focus has been really structured and helpful. The regular meetings and support with the school have been really useful and supportive.

Overall the support you have given has been invaluable and we really appreciate the time given by you especially and your team. You have a very kind, fun and easy going nature as well as serious and practical and I think your skills have especially complimented by our family so thank you so much!

If there was one thing I would give to maybe help support more is perhaps just more focus on the child adapting their behaviour not just through parenting, but I understand it's more about parenting skills. Thank you again. We will miss you. X

- Shetal has been absolutely fantastic. She has really made a bond with us. It was difficult at the beginning with everything that we had going on but she has really helped us. Shetal really has had a positive impact on us all, especially on my daughter. I think what she has been doing has had a huge impact and we wouldn't be here in the position that we are now without her help.
- Meghan is absolutely brilliant, I couldn't fault her. She is trying so hard for us and I can't thank her enough for the effort that she is putting in. She is amazing and so on it with the school too. I couldn't fault her for trying!
- I've enjoyed our FFT sessions, its lovely having Lucy come to the house. She has really showed me how I can look at things differently with Megan, from different points of view to understand what's going on in her head which then changes the way I react.

Professionals:

- Just want to bring to your attention the fantastic work completed by Sonal Patel with Z – mother to X and Y. Ms Z has presented hostile, chaotic and verbally abusive to professionals during conferences and visits. This was mainly due to her own mental health and historic experience with social services. But, FFTs consistent engagement and continuous working with mum and building the healthy relationship with her. There was massive difference witnessed with mum's presentation and engagement in yesterdays conference.

Intense work with mum in regulating her emotions, reflective discussions with mum of her own behaviour. This benefited mum in engaging well in conference. Mum was composed and listening to difficult and challenging conversations. This was observed and witnessed during conference not only by me but also by other professionals.

Well done, Sonal

Keep up the good work.

- Mum was beaming with pride for herself and her family. Mum wanted me to pass on a message to Hema that you are wonderful and patient and really helped X think through her actions and helped her in so many ways. So, thank you Hema.
- Dad reported the first session with X went really well and it has eased his anxiety working with MST CAN.
- Hi Avanti, Shamnaz, Nicola, Emily and Daniel,
It is so brilliant to read this fantastic commendation about how your hard work and commitment has had such positive outcomes for this family. It is clear that working with this family has required significant input from you all to create change, engage family support and keep these children safe and supported.
Thank you for working in collaboration to achieve this. It is much appreciated.
Thank you
- Thank you so much for your kind words! It has been an absolute pleasure and a positive experience to work alongside you and your team to support X, Y, Z and Mum. I too am so happy that the family now have the security they need going forward.
Best Wishes
Natasha
- Hi Mandica, just want to say a big thank you for your support and patience regarding X. You have been a great help, thank u.
- I have been screening X and had a phone call with X's mum Y yesterday. Mum expressed gratitude for the support Vicky has been providing to both X and herself and described her as a joy to work with. She stated that Vicky has been able to build a brilliant relationship with X which is making a tremendous difference for X as he is at risk of CCE. It was just refreshing to hear all the job work Vicky is doing and I did say to mum that I will pass this on to Vicky's managers which she was happy for me to do.
Mum does acknowledge that there is still a lot that needs to happen with X which I will discuss with Vicky but Vicky seems to be making a real difference given she was only allocated a few weeks ago. Keep the good working going Vicky. You make us proud!!!
Many thanks.
- We really need Nicola to take this case as she has such a lovely way with families and can help them to calm down and we need that here!

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

5.1 Financial implications

The 2026/27 budget for the service is £2.15m. Up to 2024/25 171 children were avoided from going into care, had they gone into care the cost based on allocation of care to homes and providers is estimated to be £5.5m.

Signed: Paresh Radia

Dated: 06.06.26

5.2 Legal implications

There are no direct legal implications arising from this report from a social care and safeguarding perspective.

The update sits within the existing statutory framework for children's social care. It will be important to ensure that the delivery of these services continues to support the Local Authority in meeting its duties under the Children Act 1989. In particular, decisions around reunification, step down and case closure must remain clearly evidenced and welfare led with appropriate oversight where children remain looked after.

The focus on earlier intervention and strengthened support pre and post closure is consistent with statutory duties to safeguard and promote welfare, to avoid premature closure or drift, particularly in higher risk cases.

The intention to reduce high cost placements must remain secondary to the child's welfare. Placement and care planning decisions must not be influenced by financial considerations alone, as this would be open to legal challenge.

Signed: Sonali Unka, Principal Solicitor

Dated:23.04.26

5.3 Equalities implications

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 unlawful discrimination, advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations between people who share a 'protected characteristic' and those who do not. We need to be clear about any equalities implications of the course of action proposed. In doing so, we must consider the likely impact on those likely to be affected by the options in the report and, in particular, the proposed option; their protected characteristics; and (where negative impacts are anticipated) mitigating actions that can be taken to reduce or remove that negative impact. Protected characteristics under the public sector equality duty are age, disability, gender re-assignment, pregnancy and maternity, marriage and civil partnership, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation.

The purpose of this report is to provide a progress on the delivery of work in the Family Therapies service area. The Family Therapies services detailed in this report directly support highly vulnerable children, young people, and their families across Leicester. Service users are likely to represent a broad cross-section of the community, intersecting with multiple protected characteristics, particularly concerning 'Age' and 'Disability' (given the high prevalence of complex mental health needs, emotional regulation difficulties, and SEND among the cohort).

By providing targeted, intensive, and individualised support designed to divert children from the care system, these interventions actively advance equality of opportunity. They address systemic disadvantages by working to keep families safely together, improving long-term life chances, educational engagement, and health outcomes for at-risk youths.

The therapies utilise a whole-ecology approach, meaning interventions are explicitly tailored to respect and incorporate the cultural, social, and personal context of each family, thereby mitigating existing inequalities and fostering inclusive support.

Signed: Surinder Singh, Equalities Officer

Dated:22.04.22

5.4 Climate Emergency implications

There are no climate emergency implications arising directly from this report. However, by reducing the need for children and young people to be placed into care, the services discussed in the report will be reducing the need for additional accommodation and therefore reducing the associated extra carbon emissions caused by providing heating, hot water and power for that accommodation.

Signed: Phil Ball, sustainability officer
Dated: 18 th March 2026

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

6. Background information and other papers:

7. Summary of appendices:

Appendix a: Views of parents and children

Appendix b: Performance Summary and data

Appendix c: PowerPoint summary of the report

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

Appendix a:

5 Children’s views:

5.56 For there to be less shouting in my house and my parents get on with each other, and I don't have to ring the police.

5.57 I want to be back with mum full time.

5.58 To always stay with dad.

5.59 For mum and dad to stop shouting at them and smacking them.

5.60 I want to get into a basketball team.

5.61 To stop being blamed for everything bad that happens at home.

5.62 For teachers to understand me at school.

5.63 To be still enrolled at Castle mead but to complete work from home, then go into complete exams in school. Then to do an apprenticeship in electrician. (consider unique minds).

5.64 Not to be in care. To live at home with my mum, my brother and sister and to be able to stay with my nan and dad when I want.

5.65 To not make my mum upset all the time when I go missing. This looks like not going missing and coming home, not staying out when my mates stay out or running off when they do.

5.66 Not to get arrested.

5.67 Not to get in trouble in the community with Mum.

5.68 Support with social anxiety and attending school only.

5.69 Mum not to shout when we are out.

- 5.70 Be able to go out with friends.
- 5.71 I want shouting and arguing to stop.
- 5.72 I want to be listened to by mum.
- 5.73 I would like some support for my anxiety and panic attacks
- 5.74 I would like a big bed, everything else is good
- 5.75 I want my mum to understand my point and where I'm coming from.
- 5.76 Mum to be fair when there is an argument between me and my brother; mum to not always say 'he is young'.
- 5.77 Dad to not punch the wall or use violence when angry.
- 5.78 For dad to no longer use cocaine.
- 5.79 For dad and C (foster daughter) to return home.
- 5.80 For there to be less shouting in my house and my parents get on with each other and I don't have to ring the police.
- 5.81 For mum not to drink alcohol every day.
- 5.82 For adults to not be aggressive to each other or children.
- 5.83 I want a bigger house with a garden.
- 5.84 I want to spend more time with my dad.
- 5.85 I want there to be less arguments at home.
- 5.86 I want to move house to a different area.
- 5.87 I would like to pass my exams and do well but I want school to listen and understand my anxiety and adapt for that.
- 5.88 I would like to make my bedroom nice with some new furniture so I can organise my things.
- 5.89 To go after school club – something like basketball.
- 5.90 My room to be clean.
- 5.91 To stop wetting the bed as it makes me sad.

6 Parent and Carer views:

- 6.56 For my son to not go missing and for his self-esteem to improve. This looks like seeing and believing in a future for himself, pulling away from negative peers and focusing on getting qualified in something that will support him in the future.
- 6.57 To have a nice, quiet, easy life. This looks like not having the police come to my door, no calls from school or people in the community about my son misbehaving and for us all to just chill and get along. Not have massive blow out arguments or for my son to be physically aggressive or damage property.
- 6.58 I want zero physical harm; everyone keeps their hands to themselves including me. I do not want to hit the children.
- 6.59 I want to get to a place where I am not losing my s**t or retaliating. I want to learn how to approach situations with the children where I am putting in appropriate rules/boundaries and I can support the children to manage their reactions and manage mine.
- 6.60 For my daughter to not be spending time with unknown people and adult males.
- 6.61 Be able to know where my daughter is and safely retrieve her when she is missing.
- 6.62 I want social care to be happy with our progress so that I can return to work knowing things are ok at home. I want my wife to understand me.
- 6.63 To be able to raise my grandson in my own home like a normal family.
- 6.64 For the children to listen, not swear, not fight with each other.
- 6.65 Keep home conditions nice, clean and sustained.
- 6.66 For social care to leave so we can start rebuilding our lives.
- 6.67 To have a new house which is clean, children to have their own bedrooms and a back garden when I can hang washing.
- 6.68 I would like to stop using amphetamines.
- 6.69 I would like O to get the support he needs for his mental health.

- 6.70 I would like E to get some support so that she can live independently- she is not ready yet.
- 6.71 For there to be a good routine at home for K.
- 6.72 For mum to be abstinent from alcohol.
- 6.73 For L to be safe online by mum supervising regularly.
- 6.74 For the children to not have injuries which can't be explained.
- 6.75 I would like to see a happy child- smiling, singing.
- 6.76 I want to see a massive reduction in verbal aggression and the direct swearing to stop.
- 6.77 I want my daughter to stop hitting, punching, slapping me and younger brother.
- 6.78 I want my son to follow school rules and teachers' instructions.
- 6.79 Better communication with the girls – sit down and have a conversation/ have coffee together/ shopping together.
- 6.80 For YP to not be physically aggressive towards brother.
- 6.81 Attend Dad's coffee shop and help out there.
- 6.82 Dad and YP to go to Sunday Markets together.
- 6.83 More interactions/interest together with J – talking/playing football/eat together.
- 6.84 I would like to be able to take my children out without them squabbling, fighting and kicking off.
- 6.85 For my son to not get into trouble in the community.
- 6.86 For my son's school attendance and behaviour to improve.
- 6.87 For my son to follow curfew rules.
- 6.88 Mum wants to be able to emotionally regulate better and wants to be better at deescalating incidents rather than escalation.
- 6.89 For my son to have a new school that can meet his needs and for there to be an element of alternative provision. For his EHCP to be accepted and fund transport to and from his school and provision.
- 6.90 To learn how to emotionally regulate myself better, as I don't always manage situations the best. I'd also like to learn different and better ways to manage my son's behaviour so things don't escalate as much.
- 6.91 Him to have the 'normal' teen experience. This looks like seeing friends, going on holidays and speaking to girls. It also looks like my son getting the right support he needs for his mental health to enable him these opportunities.
- 6.92 For my son to get an education and have post 16 options for college. This looks like having access to home learning to complete his GCSE's, there being a plan in place to help him sit the exams and him having access to careers advisors or connexions.

Appendix b: Performance Summary and data

Appendix B: Case data

	Q1				Q2				Q3				Q4				All Q's
2025-26	MST	MST CAN	FFT	Total	MST	MST CAN	FFT	Total: qtr-2	MST	MST CAN	FFT	Total	MST	MST CAN	FFT	Total	Total
Children started	10	19	24	53	19	15	50	84	23	4	47	74	22	20	28	70	281
Number of starts	10	6	12	28	19	5	25	49	23	2	12	37	22	8	18	48	162
• LAC	0	0	5	5	0	0	4	4	0	0	3	3	0	0	4	4	16
• LAC PWP	0	0	1	1	0	0	2	2	0	0	2	2	0	0	1	1	6
• CP & PLO (LPM route)	0	3	4	7	0	3	17	20	0	0	5	5	0	5	10	15	47
• CP	1	2	2	5	2	2	0	4	3	2	1	6	0	2	2	4	19
• CiN and SO	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	1
• CiN	3	0	0	3	7	0	1	8	5	0	1	6	3	0	1	4	21
• Front door – DAS, CSE & SAT	6	0	0	6	4	0	0	4	6	0	0	6	11	0	0	11	27
• YOS	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	2	1	0	0	1	1	0	0	1	4
• Other EH with HoS approval	0	1	0	1	5	0	1	5	8	0	0	8	7	0	0	7	21
Referral route																	
• EOC	1	0	0	1	1	0	1	2	1	0	1	2	2	0	1	3	4
• PLO (LPM)	0	3	12	15	0	3	20	23	0	0	7	7	0	7	14	21	66
• Other (LL)	9	3	0	12	18	2	4	24	22	2	4	28	20	1	3	24	88
Cases served in the quarter	32	23	41	96	38	24	54	116	46	21	50	117	49	24	38	111	440
Children served in the quarter	32	56	89	177	38	61	111	210	46	54	124	224	49	62	87	198	809
Number cases / exits in quarter	14	4	8	26	15	5	20	40	19	5	14	38	19	6	20	45	149
Number children / exits in quarter	14	10	17	31	15	11	39	65	19	12	28	59	19	16	44	79	234
• LAC	0	0	1	1	1	2	4	7	1	0	4	5	3	1	3	7	20
• LAC PWP	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	1	1	0	0	2	2	4
• CP & PLO	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	2	0	0	2	2	0	1	2	3	7
• CP	1	2	3	6	4	0	3	7	3	2	2	7	3	1	4	8	28
• CiN/SO	2	0	3	5	4	2	7	13	4	2	4	10	4	2	7	13	41
• SGO	1	0	0	1	1	0	0	1	1	0	0	1	1	0	0	1	4
• None	10	2	1	13	5	1	3	9	10	1	1	12	8	1	2	11	45
% of exits in the qtr/still at home				96%				82.5%				84%				84%	

Step up and step-down data

Exits between 1 st January 2026 and 31st March 2026	EOC Outcome (No. of Cases)	MST CAN	FFT	MST	Total
1	Exited from care	0	4	0	4
2	Closed to social care and early help	1	2	8	11
3	Risk to child decreased (stepped down a level)	2	6	0	8
4	Stayed open to the same plan	1	3	5	9
5	Remained in care	0	3	0	3
6	Risk to child increased (stepped up a level)	1	0	3	4
7	Came into care (LAC)	1	2	3	6
Total		6	20	19	45

<u>PERFORMANCE SUMMARY</u>								
<u>STD 1 AND 2</u>	STD 1/2 Period 12 2025/26							
	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26	Annual	
	Cases	Cases	YTD	YTD	YTD	YTD	Target	
Number of families started	71	71	71	64	69	75	100	75% Of target
Success rate to date	82%	86%	85%	92%	87%	91%	85%	
Number of children started	71	71	71	64	69	75	100	
Savings in year 1	£2,592k	£1,765k	£3,369k	£4,800k	£3,300k	£3,461k		
Savings in year 2	£4,310k	£3,738k	£6,884k	£8,420k	£6,331k	£8,493k		
Savings in year 3	£1,718k	£1,973k	£3,515k	£3,620k	£3,031k	£5,032k		
						£8,493k		
						£8,493k		
Cumulative gross savings*	£8,620k	£7,476k	£13,768k	£16,839k	£12,662k	£16,985k	£6,529k	
Cumulative savings post targeting def	£4,182k	£3,813k	£7,985k	£9,767k	£7,344k	£9,851k	£2,938k	58% Current average
Intervention cost	£701k	£697k	£704k	£779k	£667k	£855k	£855k	
Net savings over placement period av	£3,481k	£3,116k	£7,281k	£8,987k	£6,677k	£8,996k	£2,083k	
Number of children successfully diver	28	31	31	34	35	39	38	104% Of target
In Year only gross savings post deflato	£1,258k	£900k	£1,752k	£2,640k	£1,914k	£2,007k	£734k	273% Of target
In Year only net savings post deflator	£557k	£203k	£1,048k	£1,861k	£1,247k	£1,152k	(£121k)	
Average annual placement cost avoid	£73k	£66k	£126k	£150k	£105k	£122k	£38k	
<u>PERFORMANCE SUMMARY</u>								
<u>CAN1&2</u>	CAN 1/2 Period 12 2025/26							
	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26	Annual	
	Cases	Cases	YTD	YTD	YTD	YTD	Target	
Number of families started	19	18	24	26	22	21	24	88%
Success rate to date	53%	67%	88%	85%	64%	95%	85%	
Number of children started	60	61	85	88	50	58	48	121%
Savings in year 1	£508k	£465k	£1,833k	£2,052k	£963k	£1,564k		
Savings in year 2	£1,207k	£1,617k	£3,258k	£4,653k	£3,649k	£2,768k		
Savings in year 3	£699k	£1,152k	£1,425k	£2,601k	£3,890k	£1,204k		
Savings in year 4				£0k	£3,289k	£2,768k		
Savings in year 5				£0k	£4,853k	£2,768k		
Cumulative savings*	£2,414k	£3,234k	£6,516k	£9,306k	£16,644k	£11,072k	£2,611k	
Intervention cost	£745k	£734k	£806k	£759k	£805k	£895k	£895k	
Net savings over placement period av	£1,669k	£2,500k	£5,710k	£8,547k	£15,839k	£10,177k	£1,716k	
In Year children successfully diverted	32	41	74	74	32	55	41	135%
In year only gross savings	£508k	£465k	£1,833k	£2,052k	£963k	£1,564k	£653k	239%
In year only net savings	(£237k)	(£269k)	£1,027k	£1,293k	£159k	£668k	(£242k)	
Average placement cost	£32k	£30k	£41k	£71k	£68k	£57k	£32k	
Children per family	3.2	3.4	3.5	3.4	0.8	0.5	0.8	

<u>PERFORMANCE SUMMARY</u>								
<u>FFT</u>	FFT Period 12 2025/26							
	2020/21 Cases	2021/22 Cases	2022/23 YTD	2023/24 YTD	2024/25 YTD	2025/26 YTD	Annual Target*	
Number of families started	43	52	39	46	53	67	80	84%
Success rate to date	74%	83%	69%	67%	87%	196%	75%	
Number of children started	73	90	70	98	120	131	144	91%
Savings in year 1	£1,613k	£746k	£1,037k	£1,347k	£2,626k	£3,055k		
Savings in year 2	£2,651k	£1,417k	£2,400k	£2,661k	£7,264k	£6,950k		
Savings in year 3	£1,038k	£671k	£1,363k	£1,314k	£4,638k	£3,895k		
						£10,502k		
						£5,251k		
Cumulative savings*	£5,302k	£2,834k	£4,800k	£5,322k	£14,528k	£29,653k	£6,782k	
Intervention cost	£422k	£430k	£423k	£503k	£534k	£576k	£576k	
Net savings over placement period av	£4,880k	£2,404k	£4,377k	£4,819k	£13,994k	£29,077k	£6,206k	
In year successful LAC diversion	54	74	48	66	104	256	108	237%
In year gross LAC savings	£1,613k	£746k	£1,037k	£1,347k	£2,626k	£3,055k	£1,696k	180%
In year net LAC savings	£1,191k	£316k	£615k	£843k	£2,092k	£2,478k	£1,120k	
Average placement cost	£43k	£24k	£47k	£55k	£62k	£60k	£31k	
Children per family	1.7	1.7	0.6	0.5	0.1	0.4	1.8	
<u>PERFORMANCE SUMMARY</u>								
<u>ALL PROGRAMMES</u>	Period 12 2025/26							
	2020/21 Cases	2021/22 Cases	2022/23 YTD	2023/24 YTD	2024/25 YTD	2025/26 YTD	Annual Target	
Number of families started	133	141	134	136	144	163	204	80%
Success rate to date	66%	76%	78%	80%	82%	144%	80%	
Number of children started	204	222	226	250	239	264	292	90%
Savings in year 1	£4,712k	£2,975k	£6,239k	£8,198k	£6,890k	£8,079k		
Savings in year 2	£8,168k	£6,772k	£12,542k	£15,734k	£17,244k	£18,211k		
Savings in year 3	£3,455k	£3,797k	£6,303k	£7,535k	£11,558k	£10,131k		
						£49,218k		
						£9,964k		
Cumulative gross savings*	£16,336k	£13,544k	£25,084k	£31,467k	£35,692k	£36,421k	£15,922k	
Cumulative savings post targeting def	£11,898k	£9,881k	£19,301k	£24,395k	£38,516k	£50,576k	£12,331k	410%
Intervention cost	£1,868k	£1,861k	£1,933k	£2,042k	£2,006k	£2,327k	£2,327k	
Net savings over a 2 year placement	£10,030k	£8,020k	£17,369k	£22,353k	£36,510k	£48,250k	£10,004k	
In year only figures:								
In year successful LAC diversion	114	146	154	175	171	351	187	188%
In year gross LAC savings from succes	£3,378k	£2,111k	£4,622k	£6,038k	£5,504k	£6,625k	£3,083k	215%
In year net LAC savings	£1,510k	£250k	£2,690k	£3,996k	£3,498k	£4,299k	£756k	568%
Average placement cost	£50k	£39k	£69k	£85k	£76k	£77k	£34k	
Children per family								
Overall success rate	71%	79%	81%	80%	82%	144%	80%	



Family Therapies Annual Report 2025/26

Keeping Children Safely at Home
MST • MST CAN • FFT-CW • Safe Steps
Home • FDM

Why Family Therapies Matter in Leicester

- Intensive evidence-based interventions for children at risk of care
 - Prevention
 - Reunification
 - Family-led decision making
 - Invest to Save model
 - Culturally responsive
- 

Annual Reach and Activity

- 440 families supported
- 809 children supported
- 162 new families started treatment
- 149 families completed treatment



Outcomes for Children

- 95% annual success rate
- 84% remained safely at home at closure in Q4
- 89% still at home after 18 months



What Children and Families Tell Us

- Children want safety, stability, education and positive relationships.
- Families consistently report high satisfaction with support.



Quality and Practice Excellence

- 124 TAM-R interviews
- 95% participation rate
- 0.92 adherence score
- 599 audits and 26 observations



Financial Impact

- 351 children diverted from care
- £6.6m gross savings
- 215% of target achieved



Service Highlights

MST: £2m savings

MST CAN: £1.5m savings

FFT-CW: £3.1m savings

FDM expanded ahead of schedule



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Recommendations and Next Steps

- Strengthen sustainability post closure
 - Expand capacity to work with more families
 - Improve early identification
 - Manage increased demand
- 

CYPE Scrutiny Commission

Corporate Parenting Annual Report 2025/26

**Children, Young People and Education
Scrutiny Commission: 27 October 2026**

Lead director: Laurence Mackie-Jones

Useful information

- Ward(s) affected: All
- Report author: David Thrussell, Head of Service
- Author contact details: 0116 454 1657
- Report version number: v1

1. Summary

- 1.1. This report provides an overview of corporate parenting activity and performance from 1st April 2025 to 31st March 2026.
- 1.2. The report identifies local performance set against the five priority areas in the corporate parenting strategy, together with identified priorities for 2026/27.

2. Recommended actions/decision

- 2.1 To note the Corporate Parenting annual report for 2025-6 and the priorities for 2026/27.

3. Scrutiny / stakeholder engagement

- 3.1 A presentation on the annual report and priorities for 2026/27 was delivered to the Corporate Parenting Board and strategic partners in May. Further discussions to progress the priorities will be undertaken with the children and young people's participation and engagement team, together with the care experienced consultants and care leaver reference group.

4. Background and options with supporting evidence

- 4.1 The report is for information purposes and does not require a decision.

5. Detailed report

- 5.0 The Wellbeing & School Act 2026 strengthens Corporate Parenting duties for Local Authorities and statutory partners. Relevant authorities and local authorities in England must, so far as reasonably practicable, collaborate with each other when performing their corporate parenting duty where they consider that doing so would safeguard or promote the wellbeing of looked-after children or relevant young people. Collaboration may include sharing information; providing advice or assistance; or co-ordinating activities.

“We will act with the same care, aspiration and determination for everyone of our children looked after and care leaver as we would for our own children, showing love and patience, championing their voices, removing barriers, and relentlessly pursuing the best possible outcomes in their lives.”

- 5.1 Our Corporate Parenting Strategy has five priority themes to measure progress and impact for children looked after and care leavers.

- Active Participation
- Education Training and Employment
- Mental Health & Wellbeing
- Preparing for Successful Living
- A Place To live

Active Participation

“Nothing about you, without you - your voice will shape every decision we make.”

- 5.2 The Children’s Rights and Participation Team has worked throughout the year to support children looked after and care leavers engagement in the Corporate Parenting Board and to enable young people to have a meaningful voice in shaping services and decisions that impact on their lives.

- 5.3 Children looked after and care leavers are supported to have a voice through monthly meetings of the care experienced consultant’s forum together with regular meetings of the Young People’s Council that includes children looked after. Children

and young people have a standing item for feedback at the Corporate Parenting Board and are also supported by the Rights and Participation team to attend the council's Children, Young People and Education Scrutiny Commission, and Overview Scrutiny Commission.

5.4. Activities undertaken to support active participation of children looked after and care leavers over the past twelve months has included:

- Producing Podcast recordings and a red-carpet film launch
- Developing a language guide for working with children and young people
- Participation in a Public Health Vaping campaign
- Producing an animation promoting Children's Rights and Participation
- Safer Spaces Project with Coventry University for Black young people in Care
- Information for young people to understand Local Designated Officer (LADO)
- Launch of a Children in Care from Abroad Seeking Safety Group (CASS)
- Support to Peer Reviewers quality assurance activities at children's homes
- Advocacy Surgeries and QR code voice boxes in our children's homes
- Presentation at the Regional Family Court Judges Conference
- Celebrating Success Event for Looked After Children & Young People

5.5 There remain challenges in widening the participation and engagement of children looked after and care leavers in the corporate parenting board and opportunities will be explored for alternative engagement in the coming year through both celebratory events and a Takeover Corporate Parenting Board in October.

Education, Training and Employment

"We will be unapologetically ambitious for our children, driving high expectations, closing attainment gaps, and ensuring every child and care leaver has access to education, skills and opportunities that enable them to thrive in adulthood."

5.6. Support for looked after children and young people's education, training and employment is overseen by the Virtual School Team, and the Director of Education and the Virtual School Head are standing members of the Corporate Parenting Board.

- 5.7. Education, Training and Employment for children looked after and care leavers has remained a priority throughout the year and was a spotlight theme session for the corporate parenting board, supported by the Virtual Head and the Service Manager for Information, Advice and Guidance.
- 5.8. The Virtual School provides support for all children looked after living in Leicester and children looked after who are placed outside the city. There is a positive focus on being aspirational for our children and young people to support them to achieve their full potential including targeted educational support packages and extra-curricular activities.
- 5.9 Activities undertaken to support education, training and employment of our children looked after and care leavers this year has included:
- Trauma Informed Training for Schools (30 more schools signed up)
 - Supported Internship programme for students
 - Work experience with John Lewis Partnership
 - Additional ESOL Classes for Young people from Abroad Seeking Safety
 - NHS Care Leavers Employability Programme (17 care leavers referred)
 - Apprenticeship Recruitment Fayre
 - Extra- curricular activities including Bullfrog Arts and Tall Ships
 - Transitions programme, supporting year 6 into year 7 with PGL residential trip
 - Monthly forest school for Foster Families
 - Planning our first summer school, to take place over the summer holidays
 - Annual Curve takeover for our Early Years and Primary children
 - Monthly book parcels from Reception to Year 8
 - Liaising with the strategic lead for LLR Work Well to ensure their Work and Health Coaches consider the health needs of care leavers
- 5.10. Our aspirations for our Early Years children is for them to achieve a good level of development (GLD). Last academic year, 60% reached this marker. Our children achieved higher than their looked after peers in the East Midlands (38%) and 3 % lower than their non looked after peers in Leicester City (63%). Our children looked after (CLA) achieved higher than their looked after peers in the East Midlands in the phonics benchmark with 60% reaching the benchmark. 76% of

the general cohort in Leicester schools reached the benchmark by comparison.

5.11 In 2024/2025 Key Stage 2 outcomes:

- A higher proportion of our CLA achieved the expected standard in reading, writing and maths than CLA nationally.
- Leicester City CLA who achieved the expected standard in maths are still behind CLA nationally and all children in Leicester.
- Leicester City CLA are making less progress in reading than those nationally and fall well below those who are not looked after in the city.

5.12 Our primary aged children are making pleasing progress when compared with other CLA, but there is still work to do to close the gap between them and non looked after peers. The phonics benchmark showed us that this cohort are still behind their non-looked after peers, but they have achieved better than CLA across the East Midlands area and nationally for the proportion working at the expected standard.

5.13 A higher proportion of our children looked after (CLA) achieved the expected standard in reading, writing and math's than CLA nationally. Leicester City CLA who achieved the expected standard in math's are still behind CLA nationally and all children in Leicester. Leicester City CLA are making less progress in reading than those nationally and fall well below those who are not looked after in the city.

5.14 There was a 10% increase in our young people gaining a GCSE grade 4 or higher and a 19% increase in our young people gaining 5 GCSEs at grade 1 or higher and a 10% increase in young people gaining a grade 4 or higher in English and Math's. Improvement is still required in science, and the Virtual School development plan will address how we bring about change in this area.

5.15 The Virtual School exam centre has grown from strength to strength, and we are now offering AQA unit awards, enabling engagement from our children and young people who are not ready for more formal exams.

5.16 The number of children with school attendance below 95% (10 days absence over a school year) in 2025/26 was 33.52% compared to 29.60% in 2024/25. (September-Mar for respective periods). The number and percentage of children looked after with fixed term suspensions 51 (17.79%) in 2025/26 compared to 76 (21.97%) 2024/25. (Autumn – Spring terms).

5.17 The Virtual School Priorities for 2026/27 include:

Narrowing the achievement gap between our looked after children and their peers
Improving the proportion of children achieving a Good Level of Development in the Early Years Foundation Stage.

Improving proportion of children achieving expected standards in all areas at KS1 / 2

Continuing to increase the number of year 11 students completing GCSE.

or equivalent qualification at the end of KS 4, with a focus on English and Maths

Improving outcomes at Key Stage 4.

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

Improving school attendance

Working in partnership with Leaving Care to reduce NEET figures and continue our cross working with Connexions.

Improving quality of Personal Education Plans (PEPs and PEP meeting including student voice.

Maintaining high level of PEP compliance.

Supporting foster carers and Designated Teachers to better support looked after children with their learning.

5.18 The Connexions Service has worked collaboratively with the Virtual School and Leaving Care Team to further develop the local offer to support our care experienced young people to make a positive transition into employment, education or training (EET) at post-16 and beyond. This will form the foundation of a local EET Offer based on the concept of the 'family business' model across the council and wider partnership.

Health & Wellbeing

“We will actively reduce health inequalities for our children and care leavers, ensuring they achieve the same health outcomes as their peers”.

- 5.19 The health and wellbeing of children looked after, and care leavers is supported through collaboration with the NHS Leicester Partnership Trust and Integrated Commissioning Board who provide the Designated Nurse for Children in Care and who commission the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS), Young People’s Team and the Looked After Children Health Team. The Director for Public Health is a member of the Corporate Parenting Board together with the designated doctor for Looked After Children.
- 5.20 The Health and wellbeing of children looked after, and care leavers was subject to a deep dive spotlight session in 2025/26 and priorities for improving health outcomes for children looked after is overseen by a standing Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland strategic group attended by the Head of Service for Corporate Parenting. The board also receives updates on progress against the Strategic Health Needs Assessment for Children Looked after by the Public Health Team.
- 5.21 Health and wellbeing priorities for children looked after in 2025/26 have included:
- Reducing health inequalities including Core 20 +5 pledge
 - Developing an Oral health pathway and LLR Care Records
 - Implementing a care leaver icon on System One health electronic patient record
 - Support for transition of health care with planning from year 9
 - Adult clinical team awareness and training around Trauma Informed practice
 - The Care Leaver’s Covenant/ NHS Universal Family Programme
 - Supporting the Staying Close and Connected Programme
 - Support to access prescriptions and appointments
 - Implementation of an Immunisation pathway following audit
- 5.22 The CAMHS Young Peoples Team (YPT) provides specialist mental health assessment and treatment to young people aged 0-18 years who are living in LLR with a registered GP in the area and who have a moderate to severe mental illness.

The team provides specialist assessment and care to children who are Looked After, Adopted, UASC, Homeless or involved with Youth Justice services, and to ensure that comprehensive assessments of risk are completed for these young people and that care planning is put into place which details their treatment plan.

5.23 In 2025 the CAMHS service were engaged with 119 children and young people in the city. This included:

- 6 children and young people supported through adoption team
- 1 homeless young person
- 17 children and young people living in fostering households
- 43 children and young people living in children's residential homes
- 14 children with Adverse Childhood Experiences (mild to moderate)
- 11 young people engaged in Youth Justice system (moderate to severe)
- 7 Children from Abroad Seeking Safety (UASC)
- 19 young people supported through Staying Close and Connected (SCSC)

5.24 The YPT have a specialist transitions nurse to support any young people in the team who are transitioning to an adult Community Mental Health Team (CMHT), this post ensures we have strong links to all CMHTs across LLR and can support young adults leaving CAMHS services to ensure their care is continued as adults.

5.25 The Director for Public Health is a standing member of the Corporate Parenting Board and the Public Health Team have reviewed progress on the Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA) for children looked after in the city.

5.26 Given time and resource constraints this was a rapid review of progress against the recommendations of the 2025 Health Needs Assessments. It was conducted via email and face to face discussions. For the purposes of the progress report impact is defined as changes at an organisational level. 17 recommendations were considered, 2 have been completed, 9 are progressing and 8 were delayed.

5.27 All care experienced children in Leicester, now have a code applied to the System One record, to ensure any clinical practitioner accessing their notes are aware of their status and as part of the Review Health Assessment RHA, nursing staff will review all contacts in the past 12 months, which will include Health Care Plan's.

- 5.28 Turning Point now have a recovery worker that regularly attends children's residential care settings to develop relationships with both children and young people and staff, including delivering training to staff working in care homes. This worker has delivered training to foster carers at least twice in the past 6 months and has recently started to do some co-location work with children's social care in their offices. Training has focused on working with children and young people in foster care that are using drugs but also considering how to work with children who have been affected by parental substance use.
- 5.29 The Looked After Children's Health Team in Leicester, Leicestershire, and Rutland (LLR) have developed a pathway to support young people with care experience, access to an NHS dentist, which was launched in April 2024. This utilises the NHSE funding for general dental practices to become enhanced dental practices with additional support and funding, which in turn supports the Community Dental Services to clear their backlog post-pandemic.
- 5.30 Health priorities for 2026/27 for Children Looked After and Care Leavers will include maintaining a focus on transition arrangements for young people with complex health and mental health needs as they transition to adulthood, timeliness of health assessments, oral health and continuing to reduce health inequalities.

Preparing for Successful Living

"We will stand alongside our care leavers as they move into adulthood, providing consistent support, opportunities and relationships that enable them to succeed".

- 5.31 Work to support preparing for successful living has been progressed jointly with Adult Social Care, and Special Education Services.
- 5.32 Activities undertaken to support children looked after and care leavers prepare for successful living have included:
- Residential programmes
 - Transition workshops

- Visioning event for an integrated Preparing for Adulthood Strategy
- Targeted youth work offer to support successful living

5.33 Preparing for Adulthood is a strategic priority for the council, and a new strategy will be launched in 2026. Work will also be undertaken with care experienced young people to strengthen the local care leaver offer and to review managing your own home in preparation for adulthood.

A Place to Live

“We will ensure that every child in our care grows up in a safe, stable and nurturing home, and that every care leaver has access to suitable, secure accommodation that supports their independence and wellbeing.”

5.34 The majority of our children looked after are living locally in foster carer households supported internally through the council’s fostering service. An increasing though smaller proportion of our children looked after are living out of the local area in foster care households supported by Independent Fostering Agencies.

5.35 The numbers of our children looked after living in children’s residential homes has increased both internally and externally. We have continued to expand our local internal children’s residential estate in line with our placement sufficiency strategy of reducing our use of externally commissioned homes and allowing more children to continue to live in Leicester when they are looked after. All seven of the children’s residential homes are currently rated either good or outstanding by Ofsted.

5.36 Children’s Social Care continues to work collaboratively with the Housing Department to ensure that our care leavers have good quality accommodation. All care leavers have priority banding for their housing applications and there is very low use of emergency accommodation for care leavers at risk of homelessness.

5.37 Activities undertaken to support our children looked after and care leavers Place to Live Priority has included:

- Joint work with Housing colleagues to strengthen our local offer
- Revisions to our Homelessness Strategy for Young People

- Development of a Joint Housing Protocol for Care Leavers
- Securing DfE Funding for a dedicated Housing Officer Post

- 5.38 A very small number of children looked after are placed in unlawful accommodation placements unregulated by Ofsted and our absolute priority is to cease use of this accommodation entirely. Robust senior management oversight arrangements are in place when children and young people are unavoidably placed in unlawful accommodation, and we have continued to work with unregulated providers to expedite Ofsted registration where this is not in place and to develop the regulated market so there is sufficient volume and quality of placements to meet all our children's needs.
- 5.39 There continues to be a shortage of suitable semi-independent and independent move on accommodation for children looked after and care leavers which prevents care experienced young people being able to move to be more suitable accommodation in a timely way and has significant cost impact.
- 5.40 Priorities for 2026/27 will include working with housing and adult social care colleagues to identify opportunities to provide more move on housing and support for care leavers whilst continuing to shape the market with local providers.

“We will lead as an effective and accountable Corporate Parent working across the council and with partners who also hold corporate parenting responsibilities to continuously improve, challenge ourselves, and deliver meaningful change for children looked after and care leavers.”

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

6.1 Financial implications

- 6.1.1 There are no direct financial implications arising from this report.
 Mohammed Irfan – Head of Finance
 07 July 2026

6.2 Legal implications

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

Susan Holmes

Head of Law for Social Care & Safeguarding

30th July 2026

6.3 Equalities implications

6.3.1 The Council must comply with the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) under the Equality Act 2010 by having due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations between people who share protected characteristics and those who do not.

6.3.2 Children looked after and care leavers are a particularly vulnerable group who often experience poorer outcomes compared to their peers across education, health, employment and housing. Many will also have protected characteristics, including disability, race, sex, or religion or belief, and may experience multiple and overlapping disadvantages.

6.3.3 This report highlights the Council's role as a Corporate Parent in seeking to reduce these inequalities. Activity outlined within the report demonstrates a continued focus on improving outcomes and access to services, including targeted education support through the Virtual School, health interventions to address inequalities, and work to improve access to suitable accommodation.

6.3.4 There is evidence of inclusive and participatory practice, with children and young people supported to have their voices heard through forums, advocacy, and engagement in decision-making processes. Specific initiatives, such as work with Black young people in care and children seeking safety from abroad, demonstrate an awareness of the need for culturally responsive and tailored approaches.

6.3.5 The report also identifies ongoing inequalities. Children looked after continue to experience lower educational attainment and attendance compared to their non-looked after peers, and there are challenges in securing timely, suitable housing for care leavers. Some groups, including those with complex needs,

those placed out of area, and those in unregulated accommodation, may be at greater risk of poorer outcomes.

- 6.3.6 The priorities identified for 2026/27, including narrowing attainment gaps, improving health outcomes, increasing participation, and expanding housing provision, are aligned with the Council's responsibilities under the PSED. Continued focus on targeted support, inclusive service design, and co-production with care experienced young people will be important to ensure that services meet diverse needs and that inequalities are reduced over time.

Equalities officer, Surinder Singh,
Ext 37 4148
Dated 8 July 2026

6.4 Climate Emergency implications

- 6.4.1 The report does not imply any significant negative climate impacts. Future implementation of accommodation, housing and estate-related initiatives should seek to maximise energy efficiency, climate resilience and opportunities for sustainable travel where appropriate.

Phil Ball, Sustainability Officer,
Ext 372246
8th July 2026

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

- 6.5.1 None

7. Background information and other papers:

- 7.1 Corporate Parenting Strategy
Virtual School Annual Report
Independent Reviewing Officer Annual Report
Health Needs Assessment Children Looked After
Annual Report Designated Doctor Children Looked After

8. Summary of appendices:

8.1 None

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

9.1 No

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

10.1 No

Impact of Recruitment and Retention Activity

Children, Young People and Education Scrutiny Commission

Decision to be taken on/Date of meeting: 27th October 26

Lead director/officer: Laurence Mackie-Jones

Useful information

- Ward(s) affected: All
- Report author: Rachel Heggs, Human Resources Business Partner
- Author contact details: Rachel.heggs@leicester.gov.uk
- Report version number: 1

1. Summary

- 1.1. This report provides an overview of the recruitment and retention challenges affecting the Council's Children's and Education workforce and the action being taken to address these pressures. It reflects the wider national context of skills shortages in specialist and statutory roles, alongside increasing complexity of need and national reform.
- 1.2. The Council is taking a range of actions to strengthen workforce capacity and reduce longer-term reliance on temporary staffing. These include targeted recruitment activity, apprenticeship and development pathways, international recruitment, dedicated resourcing support for Children's Social Care and initiatives to improve the retention and progression of existing employees.
- 1.3. Early indications from targeted recruitment activity are positive. The dedicated Children's Social Care resourcing pilot is improving recruitment outcomes, LinkedIn Recruiter has increased the reach of hard-to-fill vacancies, and all 35 internationally recruited social workers have been retained to date. Work is also progressing to establish a Social Work Academy to provide an integrated approach to learning, professional development and career progression.
- 1.4. Alongside immediate recruitment activity, there is an increased focus on strategic workforce planning. A Children's Workforce Strategy has been developed. This provides a framework for developing sustainable recruitment pipelines, strengthening retention and career pathways, and preparing the workforce for future service requirements.
- 1.5. Looking ahead, workforce planning will need to respond to the implementation of the Families First and SEND reforms, changes to roles and ways of working, and continued recruitment pressures in specialist areas. The Council will continue to use workforce data and evaluation of recruitment and retention initiatives to assess impact, identify emerging workforce risks and inform future priorities.

2. Recommended actions/decision

- 2.1. The Committee are asked to note and make comments on the report.

3. Scrutiny / stakeholder engagement

- 3.1 This report is to be reviewed by Children, Young People and Education Scrutiny Commission

4. Background Information

- 4.1. A number of workforce and resourcing related questions arose from an earlier budget monitoring report shared at the 19th of March 2025 Overview select committee meeting and at subsequent meetings thereafter. In response a report was presented to Overview Select Committee on 2nd February 2026.

4.2. This OSC report highlights ongoing recruitment and retention challenges in specialist and statutory roles, driven by national skills shortages, competition for talent and rising salary expectations. The Council is responding through targeted recruitment, apprenticeships and graduate pathways, career development, international recruitment and agency-to-permanent conversions. While staffing remains a challenge in some hard to fill areas the longer-term focus is on reducing reliance on temporary workers and building a sustainable, skilled permanent workforce through improved recruitment, retention and workforce planning.

4.3. This report is intended to focus on our Children's and Education workforce and actions that are taking place within this sector, including:

- Provide a broad outline of the workforce challenges within the Children's and Education workforce that Local Authorities, including Leicester are facing.
- Give some context regarding our current workforce profile.
- Explain what we are doing in our People Service to support effective resourcing.
- Set out some of the other activities in place to address known workforce challenges.
- Provide information about resourcing initiatives that have had success.
- Briefly outline some future focused challenges and opportunities.

5. Workforce challenges and the national Labour Market context

5.1. Recruitment and retention pressures within Children's Social Care and Education continue to present challenges nationally. These services rely on skilled and experienced professionals in areas where labour supply is constrained, while increasing complexity of need places additional demands on workforce capacity.

5.2. Within Children's Social Care, the recruitment and retention of experienced social workers remains a strategic priority. Workforce stability is a key factor in enabling practitioners to build effective relationships with children and families, maintain continuity of support, and deliver consistently high standards of practice. While agency workers continue to provide valuable short-term capacity, sustained reliance on temporary staffing can impact service continuity and increase workforce costs.

5.3. The introduction of the Department for Education's statutory regulations governing the use of agency child and family social workers has reinforced the importance of maintaining a sustainable permanent workforce. These reforms place greater emphasis on reducing dependency on agency staffing and strengthening workforce stability through effective recruitment, retention, professional development, and career progression. Continued investment in newly qualified social workers, high-quality supervision, and development opportunities for experienced practitioners will be essential to supporting service resilience and long-term workforce sustainability.

5.4. The Government's Families First Partnership programme represents a significant reform of children's social care, with greater emphasis on early intervention, integrated Family Help and multi-agency child protection. The Department for Education requires closer working across social care, education, health and police services, with multidisciplinary teams central to the new model.

5.5. In terms of retention nationally, turnover also remains a major issue:

- The national turnover rate for children's social workers was 13.8% in 2024.
- Around 61% of those leaving local authority roles exited the sector entirely, rather than moving between councils.

- 4.6 High turnover has been a sustained challenge across the sector for more than a decade, with the LGA reporting over 70% of local authorities reporting difficulties retaining social workers.
- 4.7 Retention beyond the first two years in role is critical to workforce stability. DFE national workforce data shows the largest proportion of social workers in local authorities have less than two years' service with their employer.
- 4.8 Education services are operating within similarly challenging labour market conditions. National evidence points to continuing teacher recruitment and retention pressures. Workload, working conditions and access to flexible working have also been identified as factors affecting retention, demonstrating that workforce challenges cannot be addressed through recruitment activity alone.
- 4.9 The Government's SEND reform programme, to improve inclusion and reform the SEND system, will place increased emphasis on early identification, inclusive mainstream provision and access to specialist support.
- 4.10 These workforce pressures need to be considered alongside increasing complexity of need among children and young people. Ofsted's 2024/25 Annual Report highlights the cumulative impact of disadvantage and vulnerability, including the interaction between absence from education, special educational needs and social care involvement. Maintaining appropriate workforce capacity and capability across both Education and Children's Social Care is therefore important to effective service delivery and outcomes.
- 4.11 Recruitment is only one element of addressing these pressures. The CIPD's 2025 Analysis of the Public Sector Workforce identifies leadership, people management and working conditions as important factors in workforce retention, morale, wellbeing and productivity. It concludes that improving leadership and people management should form an important part of the response to public sector workforce challenges.
- 4.12 The Council's approach within Children's Social Care and Education should therefore continue to focus on securing the immediate capacity required to deliver services while developing a sustainable workforce over the longer term. This includes attracting appropriately qualified employees, strengthening routes into professions, developing internal talent, supporting career progression and improving retention, alongside proportionate use of temporary staffing where this is necessary to maintain safe and effective services.

6. Our workforce profile – a snapshot

6.1. Based on the latest Children's and Education workforce data, we know that:

- We employ approximately 971 FTEs across Children's and Education services.
- Our Children's and Education workforce has grown from 850 FTEs in 2016 to 971 FTEs in 25/26, an increase of approximately 14%.
- Across all grades, the average length of service is 10.5 years.
- Within Children's Social Care, we employ 639 FTEs across all grades.
- Within SEND and Education, we employ 332 FTEs across all grades.
- 75% of employees are employed in Grade 9 or below roles.
- 90% of vacancies advertised in 2025/26 were for Grade 9 or below roles.
- 42% of employees are aged 50 or over.

- The largest age groups are 35-49 years (39%) and 50-64 years (37%).
- Turnover is 9.3% across the authority, Children's Social Care is 7.3%
- Leicester has an economically active population of approximately 157,000 people, from which the Council recruits its workforce.

6.2. We currently make use of several levers to address the challenges we face when it comes to attracting and retaining staff at all levels. These include the use of targeted strategies that enable us to grow our own talent from within. Some these are outlined below.

7. 'Grow your own' strategies

- 7.1. Where the external market is highly competitive or there is a shortage of skilled professionals, one of the most effective long-term strategies is to grow our own talent. We have an internal first recruitment model that enables the progression of staff within the authority.
- 7.2. Also, by investing in structured apprenticeship, trainee, and graduate pathways, we can develop a strong internal pipeline for hard-to-fill and specialist roles. This approach not only secures the skills we need for the future but also strengthens retention by providing clear progression and development opportunities.
- 7.3. We have 29 apprenticeship placements across Children and Education services.
- 7.4. Twenty-one are completing the Children, young people and families practitioner apprenticeship in placement and commissioning. These will progress into residential practitioner roles and help in growing our own staffing to align with the increasing number of provisions.
- 7.5. Seven are part of our successful degree qualification pathway this supports non-qualified staff to progress to fully qualified Social Workers, building capability and future staffing resilience from within. There is a with a clear progression plan in place for each of them which focus on retaining them in the workforce after the programme has concluded.

8. Temporary Workforce Position

- 8.1. In high-pressure areas, agency staffing has been effective in reducing immediate and more critical operational risk and has allowed us to maintain workforce levels close to establishment. That said, we are very aware that agency staffing is a more costly arrangement and have strict controls around its use.
- 8.2. Areas such as educational psychology have increased reliance on agency staffing. This is primarily due to the specialised nature of the role with increase qualifications and a low staffing pool to recruit from.
- 8.3. Eight agency Social Workers are currently deployed in CIN teams to mitigate the known service pressures and maintain safe and effective caseload management. This number has decreased from 18 in May 2025.
- 8.4. Since October 2025 and under the new Department for education rules, all agency workers must have worked directly for a local authority for three years before becoming an agency worker. This has led to a number of conversions from agency workers to employees.

9. People Services - Strategic Workforce Planning

- 9.1. A strategic approach to workforce planning is proven to enable organisations to identify potential skills gaps, succession risks, and hard-to-recruit roles early, allowing time to invest in training, apprenticeships, and alternative talent pipelines. These targeted initiatives reduce the reliance on agency staff, supports continuity of service delivery, and improves value for money.
- 9.2. In practice, strategic workforce planning involves understanding the current workforce - such as workforce size, skills, demographics, and costs – and considering how this relates to what will be needed in future. This involves looking at trends like service demand, funding pressures, technological change, and policy reform. By doing so, organisations can identify gaps, surpluses, and risks, and develop targeted actions such as recruitment plans, training and development, succession planning, and create an evidence based and planned approach to new ways of working.
- 9.3. In the long term, Councils with a strategic approach to workforce planning are better positioned to deliver high-quality services, manage risk, and respond effectively to future challenges while making the best use of public resources.
- 9.4. Recognising the value of this activity, we are co-producing a corporate people plan and drafted a children's workforce strategy the final version is with the division for approval in October.
- 9.5. Ensuring employee voice shaped priorities in our plans we undertook a series of structured listening sessions with a cross section of staff. This involved senior leaders, managers and staff from across the workforce facilitated by our internal HR business partners and independently by Inclusive Employers. In addition, we overlayed the findings with those of our 2026 Healthy Workplace Engagement Survey. HR MI information was analysed and diagnose and discovery sessions on HR service delivery undertaken.
- 9.6. The themes identified through this engagement activity directly shaped our five workforce pillars: Attract, Retain, Wellbeing & Resilience, Grow & Develop, Change Readiness.

10. Focus on Children's Social Care

- 10.1. The five workforce pillars were reviewed in line with Children's services priorities, creating 'We will' statements to show our commitment to children's workforce specifically with our priorities outlined and details what are employees can expect.
- 10.2. Under the Attract pillar, HR business partner analysis identified the need for a specified Resourcing consultant for children's social care. This pilot role started in May 2026. Increasing capacity to focus on attraction campaigns for children's services which are notoriously hard to fill and business critical. The increased support is showing promising results with a resourcing action plan created as part of the workforce strategy. Manager feedback from this additional support is very positive and proving to both decrease time to hire and vacancy rates but also improve applicant quality.
- 10.3. Vacancy numbers in hard to fill areas are reducing with teams such as Children in need social work now being at establishment.
- 10.4. Additional marketing activities are being completed by the Resourcing Consultant to attract more applicants and widen the audience to our roles. This includes attending local jobs fairs,

creating interactive social media videos. Working across the region as part of part of the regional residential workforce network to showcase the sector and Leicester City.

- 10.5. Starting in April 2026 a pilot of using LinkedIn Recruiter commenced. LinkedIn Recruiter is a talent acquisition platform that helps employers and recruiters find, engage, and manage potential candidates using LinkedIn's professional network. To date, our job adverts have achieved 45,000 views on this platform, with hard to fill roles such as Advanced Practitioner having substantially increased outreach. Early signs show using LinkedIn Recruiter is resulting in increased application numbers.
- 10.6. Our international recruitment approach helps to expand the talent pool particularly when domestic shortages exist. Through this programme 35 international Social Workers have been recruited, with the majority deployed to Children In Need teams. We've managed to retain all of the cohort to date. This programme has strengthened workforce stability and demonstrated strong onboarding and support structures. All of the first cohort are expected to have achieved their Level 3 (senior social worker) status within the next 6 months.
- 10.7. The strategy of international recruitment as a long-term initiative is to be evaluated as the proposed changes within home office legislation will impact upon this recruitment methodology.
- 10.8. The 'Families First' agenda presents many changes and opportunities for the children's workforce. One major change is the capacity for those "differently qualified" staff to hold cases of children on "Child in Need" plans with the support and oversight of a Qualified Social Worker on some cases. These changes do not include the possibility of these staff holding cases involving looked after children or those on a child protection plan.
- 10.9. The agenda also introduces a Lead Child Protection Practitioner, a specialist social work role within a Multi-Agency Child Protection Team (MACPT). We are working through the implementation of this role.
- 10.10. Retention trends of high turnover and workers leaving before 2 year's service are evidenced in our Children In Need teams. Therefore, a retention initiative was introduced in April 2026. A one-off retention payment was introduced for eligible Children In Need Social workers. The aim of this retention initiative is to deliver both service quality improvements and financial savings. This trial will be reviewed as it progresses.

11. Social Care Academy

- 11.1. The Academy will provide a single, integrated offer for workforce learning, development and career progression across Children's and Adult Social Care. Bringing together the Learning and Development functions from both service areas under one Academy structure will create a coordinated approach to workforce development, ensuring consistency, quality and accessibility of learning opportunities across the organisation.
- 11.2. The Academy will act as the hub for professional development, leadership programmes, apprenticeships, workforce planning and continuous learning. By aligning learning and development provision across Children's and Adult Social Care, the Academy will strengthen career pathways, support workforce retention and progression, and enable the development of a skilled, confident and future-ready workforce capable of meeting the evolving needs of our communities.

11.3. We are also delivering a programme to develop a performance culture across the divisions. Our “Leading Performance” programme across 2026 will set the foundation for future work in the department. This includes a series of in person workshops including change management, Values and ethical leadership.

12. Areas of emerging interest

12.1. The key emerging workforce priority is developing a sustainable and resilient Children’s and Education workforce that can respond to changing service requirements and national reform.

12.2. This will include preparing for new ways of working arising from SEND reforms and Families First, strengthening recruitment pipelines into hard-to-fill and specialist roles, and increasing the focus on retaining experienced staff through career development, professional support and effective management.

12.3. Alongside this, continued attention will be given to reducing longer-term reliance on agency staffing and strengthening the use of workforce data to identify future skills and capacity requirements and evaluate the impact of recruitment and retention initiatives.

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

13.1 Financial implications

This report provides an update on the recruitment and retention challenges within Children’s Services and Education. Where posts are vacant, it gives rise to an underspend against the allocated budget which is included in the budget monitoring reports. Although savings are generated, this must be seen in the context of reduced capacity and/or increased costs elsewhere for example if those posts are filled by agency staff at a higher rate. This report sets out the actions being taken to address these workforce challenges and these actions will have a positive impact on the budget by removing excess costs and providing staffing resources to support children who are in receipt of care or education services.

The strategic approach to workforce planning is welcome as this will ensure that longer term solutions are put in place to keep workforce costs within budget.

Signed: Mohammed Irfan, Head of Finance

Dated: 14 October 2026

13.2 Legal implications

There are no legal implications arising from the recommendations sought in the report.

Signed: Julia Slipper

Dated: 15 October 2026

13.3 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. The Council also has an obligation to treat people in accordance with their Convention rights under The Human Rights Act, 1998.

This report provides an update on recruitment and retention within Children's and Education services and does not propose a new policy or service change. The equalities implications relate mainly to the Council as an employer and the indirect impact of workforce stability on children, young people and families.

A stable, skilled workforce can support continuity of care and education, with potential positive impacts for disabled children, children with SEND and families from diverse communities. Recruitment, apprenticeship and development pathways may also improve access to employment and career progression, particularly for younger and lower-paid employees.

International recruitment and retention payments may support workforce stability, provided that employees receive appropriate support and that any eligibility criteria are applied fairly and consistently. No significant adverse equalities implications have been identified. The Council should continue to monitor workforce data by relevant protected characteristics, where available and proportionate, to identify any emerging disparities.

Signed: Equalities Officer, Surinder Singh, Ext 37 4148
Dated: 14 October 2026

13.4 Climate Emergency implications

Signed:
Dated:

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

14. Background information and other papers:

Budget monitoring report shared at the 19th of March 2025 Overview Select Committee

Workforce and Resourcing report shared at the 2nd February 2026. Overview Select Committee

15. Summary of appendices: None

16. 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

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

CYPE Scrutiny Commission

**Children and Young People
from Abroad Seeking Safety**

**Children, Young People and Education
Scrutiny Commission: 27 October 2026**

Lead director: Laurence Jones

Useful information

- Ward(s) affected: All.
- Report author: David Thrussell, Head of Service, Permanence & Placements
- Author contact details: 0116 454 1657
- Report version number: v1

1. Summary

- 1.1. This report provides an update on children and young people who come to Leicester having arrived from abroad seeking safety, often referred to technically as “Unaccompanied Asylum- Seeking Children”.

2. Recommended actions/decision

- 2.1 The Children Young People and Education Scrutiny Commission are asked to note the information in the report.

3. Detailed report

- 3.1 There are three main pathways for Children Seeking Safety. Most children and young people are identified and transferred to Leicester as part of a National Transfer Scheme overseen by the Home Office. The scheme is based on a formula of 0.1% of the total child population of the city. The other two routes are unplanned spontaneous arrivals, and migrants who are settled by the Home Office in hotels and subsequently present as young people requiring an age assessment to determine if they are under 18 years of age.
- 3.2 Leicester City currently supports 49 Children from Abroad Seeking Safety who arrived unaccompanied and are eligible for support as Children Looked After (01 October 2026). This represents a small proportion of the 664 children and young people who are currently looked after by the council.
- 3.3 As Children Looked After the Local Authority has a duty as Corporate Parents to ensure these children’s social care, health and education needs are met

until their eighteenth birthday when they become eligible for further assistance and support as adult care leavers up to age 25.

- 3.4 The report relates specifically to children and young people who are looked after by the council or supported as eligible care leavers and does not reference all new arrival families entering the city who do not receive support from children's social care, or children from abroad seeking safety who are placed in Leicester by other Local Authorities or who as care experienced young adults over 18 years moved to Leicester.
- 3.5 Most children and young people coming to the city seeking safety are young adults aged 18-23 years being supported by the Leaving Care Team, with the highest number aged 20. The Leaving Care Team currently supports 93 young adults aged 18-23 who arrived unaccompanied from abroad as children and are eligible for support as adult care leavers.
- 3.6 The numbers of children seeking safety are impacted by seasonal factors with higher numbers in summer months. There is an annual trend in children becoming eligible care leavers from 01 January each year where age assessments are required, as children seeking safety from abroad with an undetermined age are provided with a designated date of birth as 01 January.
- 3.7 Adult arrivals who are seeking safety and then claim to be under the age of 18 years following their arrival are subject to age assessments. This requires additional professional social worker time, independent support, and interpreter services, and may result in a young person either becoming looked after or ceasing to be looked after and not eligible for further support. Additional social work staffing capacity in children's social care has been agreed this year to support this process.
- 3.8 The Children's Assessment Support & Prevention Service (CASP) have completed 22 age assessments on new arrivals between the period of January and October 2026. 11 of those have been accommodated as looked after children.

- 3.9 The Looked After Children's Team have completed four full age assessments in 2026, all four of which concluded with accepting the claimed age. There is a fifth full age assessment in the process of being finalised and there is a sixth age assessment to be started. We have over the summer, and autumn taken five advance referrals from the NTS scheme due to the number of new arrivals into the UK. The rules in offering to take advance referrals allowed the service to specify that they all need to have their claimed age accepted by the home office which has had a positive impact in the total number of age assessments that we need to complete to date. There was one legal challenge which continued from 2025, and the court ruled in favour of the local authority in that the young adult was not providing leave to progress his appeal application for a judicial review.
- 3.10 Adults who have not had their age assessment verified and who subsequently have their asylum claim declined can either make their way to the originating country independently or can join a Home Office scheme to return them home. They have No Recourse to Public Funds (NRPF) other than specific Home Office grants. Migrant Help assist those leaving Home Office accommodation regardless of their determination decision.
- 3.11 All of the children seeking safety supported by the Children Looked After Service are male, as are the vast majority supported by the leaving care team, who are supporting five adult young women. Children and young people seeking safety come from a diverse range of cultural and ethnic backgrounds. The largest single group continue to be from Afghan heritage, followed by Iranian and Sudanese heritage, and a significant number with Kurdish heritage.
- 3.12 As the age profile of children and young people seeking safety is mainly over 18 years, 60 of the young people are being supported live in semi-independent accommodation in the community, with a smaller number of young people living independently, and two young people living with foster carers under 'Staying Put' arrangements. These arrangements are subject to the same safeguarding and quality assurance systems that are in place for all

children looked after and care leavers. This includes regular care plan and pathway plan reviews by a named social worker or leaving care advisor, visiting arrangements, tailored support agreed with the young person, and access to advocacy support.

- 3.13 An increasing number of Children Seeking Safety can add existing pressures within Leicester's housing system, which is already experiencing high demand for affordable and supported accommodation. These young people require stable placements while in care and suitable housing as they transition to independence, placing further demand on limited housing resources. However, strong partnership working between Children's Services and Housing helps to mitigate these challenges through established joint protocols, clear escalation routes, and coordinated planning to ensure housing assistance is provided where required, supporting homelessness prevention and positive outcomes for this vulnerable group.
- 3.14 The council's engaged in a two-day Ofsted Focused Visit in March 2026 to review services to care leavers, including young people from abroad seeking safety. Ofsted stated that *"the support for former children from abroad seeking safety when they leave care is strong. LCAs have a detailed understanding of the asylum process and are focused on supporting young people to achieve stability. Young people are encouraged to explore their culture and integrate into the local community. Most former children seeking safety from abroad are in employment, education or training and are living in accommodation which meets their needs"*.
- 3.15 Children and young people who are seeking safety are supported with integration into their local communities in accordance with their religious and cultural preferences. This may include support offered by churches, mosques, and temples together with services offered by local voluntary and community groups such as the Centre Project that provides a dedicated youth space with advice and support for young people seeking safety.

- 3.16 All young people from abroad aged 18-21 who are eligible care leavers are offered support, advice and assistance from a named Leaving Care Advisor, including support with outstanding asylum or refugee status decisions, and any appeals that may be required; support with Housing and benefit applications once status has been confirmed, and support with Employment Education and Training.
- 3.17 Children who are seeking safety and who are looked after by the council are supported by our Virtual School Team to integrate into local schools and are provided with a range of curricular and extra-curricular activities that are provided to all our children looked after. Our Virtual School work with a range of organisations to provide additional post curricular enrichment activities.
- 3.18 The Virtual School have worked with partners in the authority to address the increasing need for English for Speakers of other Languages (ESOL) provision for our young people seeking safety. As local training providers and colleges are often full or do not admit midway through the year, a new project was launched in January 2025, to extend our ESOL offer as part of the DfE grant funded Staying Close and Connected programme for care leavers. The Adult Education Centre have provided ESOL teachers to support our young people to access the course and to provide enrichment activities that will help to prepare them for life in Leicester and beyond. We have been able to secure this funding for an additional academic year through Staying Close, Staying Connected. The previous cohort of students have all secured places at Leicester College. This academic year, the cohort has been split in two. There are two sessions running for year 11 and under (16 and under) and two sessions a week running for 16-year-olds and over, this allows for more young people who are undergoing age assessments to take part and balance safeguarding arrangements. A Lead Officer for children with a social worker currently oversees this cohort.
- 3.19 The Virtual School commission the work of a part time, Specialist Senior Education Psychologist from the Psychology service and supports interventions for children in care including children and young people from

abroad seeking safety in Leicester. Partners at Bullfrog Arts support the 'Journeys' programme that works alongside young people. 'Journeys' explores and connects our Children Seeking Safety with their country of birth and with the other young people who have also sought safety here in Leicester.

(Appendix One)

- 3.20 Young people who are seeking safety and are eligible for support will be provided with careers advice from our Information Advice and Guidance (IAG) Service. The service is part of the team of professionals who are notified as soon as a young person is placed in Leicester and will work with the individual and colleagues to find the appropriate education or training provision. Careers advice will continue to be provided to the young person once they are in education or training, and an IAG adviser is part of the Personal Education Plan process.
- 3.21 Children seeking safety who come to Leicester having arrived from abroad may have experienced trauma and have complex unmet health needs. As with all children looked after, children seeking safety will be provided with an initial health assessment by a designated health professional to identify their health needs which will inform their care plan. Children who arrive from abroad will be provided with translators and interpreters to attend health clinics and be referred to specialist health services such as Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services where appropriate.
- 3.22 The Children's Rights and Participation Service have worked with an open group for children and young people seeking safety to seek their views, wishes and aspirations. Young people who have engaged in the group discussions have spoken positively about feeling listened to by their keyworkers and social workers and feel they have a trusted adults who take their views seriously. However, they consistently share experiences of low moods and loneliness and have shared with each other ways they manage this, such as attending gym, community sports/groups and places of worship. During group sessions, the diversity of languages spoken by the young

people has been supported with interpreters. Discussions highlighted the young people's interests with the similarities between different languages and dialects, as well as their impressive speed they have learnt English.

- 3.23 A recorded podcast is planned for later this year to provide young people with an opportunity to share their experiences directly and will be a tool in helping professionals understand the experiences and perspectives of children seeking safety.

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

4.1. Financial implications

- 4.1.1 The Home Office provides funding to local authorities in respect to their costs of supporting unaccompanied asylum-seeking children (UASC). This is on a case-by-case basis.

For the 2026/27 financial year, the Home Office will provide £143 per child per night. In addition, further funding is available to incentivise pace and greater participation in the National Transfer Scheme (NTS). Transfers that take place within two working days attract an additional £8,000 and transfers within five working days attract an additional £4,000. Day one is the day of the NTS referral. These incentive schemes run between April and November 2026. The projected claim for 2026/27 is expected to be £2.9m for 131 cases.

Home Office funding ceases automatically the day before the young person turns 18. Home Office payments also cease if the child is absent or missing for more than 28 days consecutively (unless in hospital) or placed in a Young Offenders Institute (YOI).

Signed: Mohammed Irfan, Head of Finance

Dated: 14 October 2026

4.2. Legal implications

4.2.1 This report is for information purposes only, as such there are no direct legal implications as a result of the report. In terms of statutory duties however, it should be noted:

Sections 17, 20, and 22 of the Children Act 1989 place clear duties on the Local Authority to safeguard and promote the welfare of children in need and those looked after by the LA. The report references both looked-after UASC and care leavers, meaning the council has corporate parenting responsibilities under s.22 and must ensure care, health, and educational needs are met. Failure to provide appropriate accommodation, support, or protection could expose the council to Judicial Review and/or Human Rights Act challenges.

4.2.2 Age assessments are a significant legal risk area, and numerous assessments have been challenged; the LA must ensure robust procedure, record-keeping, and adherence to the Home Office and ADCS Age Assessment Guidance (2023) and relevant case law.

4.2.3 UASC are a highly vulnerable cohort. Under Working Together to Safeguard Children (2018) and Section 47 duties, the council must ensure proper identification and response to safeguarding concerns (e.g., trafficking, missing episodes) and coordination with police, health, and voluntary sector partners.

4.2.4 Under the Modern Slavery Act 2015 the LA have a duty to notify the Home Office if they encounter a potential victim of modern slavery. This duty, which applies in England and Wales, typically involves making a referral into the National Referral Mechanism (NRM) for a child.

Signed: Susan Holmes, Head of Law, Social Care and Safeguarding,
Legal Services Dated: 12th October 2026

4.3. Equalities implications

- 4.3.1 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 unlawful discrimination, advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations between people who share a 'protected characteristic' and those who do not. Protected characteristics under the public sector equality duty are age, disability, gender re-assignment, pregnancy and maternity, marriage and civil partnership, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation.
- 4.3.2 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.
- 4.3.3 This report provides an update on the work being carried out across services that support Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children who are in the care of the council or are care leavers eligible for assistance. These children are especially vulnerable and face distinct challenges.
- 4.3.4 When delivering services, the protected characteristics of children and young people, such as age, race, religion or belief and sex have been considered. Collaboration with statutory partners, as well as voluntary and community organisations/group, plays a vital role in offering holistic support and assisting these young people in integrating into society.

Signed: Sukhi Biring, Equalities Officer

Dated: 14 October 2026

4.4. Climate Emergency implications

- 4.4.1 There are no significant climate emergency implications directly associated with this report.

Signed: Phil Ball, Sustainability Officer, Ext 372246

Dated: 14 October 2026

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

None

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

None

6. **Summary of appendices:**

None

7. **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

8. **Is this a “key decision”? If so, why?**

N/A

Introduction

The Creative Journeys intervention is a creative arts intervention consisting of Taiko drumming and arts-based activities. Working alongside, Bullfrog Arts, the Virtual School SSEP has provided enrichment and well-being intervention for the young people seeking safety.

The Creative Journey's Intervention took place over 13 weeks at the ESOL provision for young people seeking safety.

Building on last years' success, the Creative Journey's intervention was extended to provide 10 group sessions of creative arts and 3 sessions of Taiko drumming.

The participants

The young people who took part in the Creative Journeys group were males between the ages of 15-18. The young people were all asylum seekers with limited English language. The young people spoke a range of languages and were all from different countries including Afghanistan, Syria, Somalia, Sudan, Kurdistan, Eritrea and Iran.



This year there were 10 participants and 7 regular attenders. The young people are all in attendance at the provision prior to making post 16 college applications. Three of the young people were also on roll in year 11 in mainstream school.

The young people in this group intervention have not been included in the data capture for the Virtual School SSEP casework and consultation.

Psychological Underpinning

The intervention is founded in a strengths-based relational approach, and the secure base model provides a foundation to the intervention. Approaches from narrative psychology were used to support children who have experienced trauma from different cultures (Ncube, 2006; Lahad 2012). Music and arts provide an alternative to language-based intervention and provide opportunity for emotional and relational support.

Aims of the intervention

The research suggests that creative arts help people in reconstructing meaning and connection with others by focusing on resources and creativity (Demott et al., 2017). The aim of this intervention is to promote emotional well-being, language development and cultural understanding in addition to supporting students to consider future plans, and their transition to college.

Session Overview

The language focus of each creative arts session was planned with the ESOL tutor to align areas of language and vocabulary teaching to develop confidence and fluency and to provide opportunity for reflection and further social and emotional support.

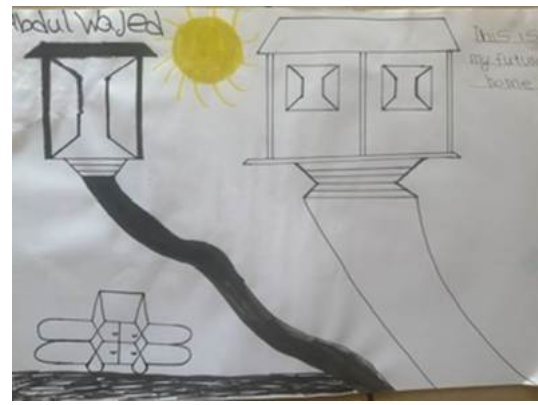
Through the teaching of emotional vocabulary, dialogue and the arts process young peoples' views, thoughts and feelings were shared. The group was supported by a member of the City Psychology Service Community Cohesion Team. This enabled additional conversation and provided reflection on the cultural needs and experiences of the boys.

A selection of artwork

Celebrations



My dream house



Tree of Strengths



Leicester



Clay modelling



Evaluation

The collaborative Creative Journeys project was positively received by staff and students. The Creative Journeys Project has provided students with opportunities to develop enrichment skills in music and art and experience pride and success in work. The ESOL provided weekly verbal feedback regarding the well-being and impact of the Creative Journey's sessions. The English tutor has observed students growing in confidence and expressing their feelings more in class. The students were observed to develop their relationships and their interactions with their classmates. In addition, they learned to interact with different adults.

Children, Young People and Education Scrutiny Commission (CYPE)
Work Programme 2026 – 2027

Meeting Date	Item	Recommendations / Actions	Progress
17 June 2026	Introduction to CYPE		
	High Needs Block Task Group – Executive Response		
	Children’s Social Care and Early Help Improvement Plan		
	Priorities and Performance Ambitions Q4 25/26	To include EDI information	
8 September 2026	White Paper and Local SEND Reform Plan Update		
	Performance Dashboard Q1 26/27		
	Care Leavers Focussed Visit		
	Leicester Children’s Services – Self Evaluation		
	Youth Justice Plan		

Meeting Date	Item	Recommendations / Actions	Progress
27 October 2026	Safeguarding Children Partnership Annual Report	Annual Report – to include report from Virtual Head including information on school grades.	
	Family Therapies Annual Report		
	Corporate Parenting Annual Report		
	Impact of Recruitment Work		
	Children from Abroad Seeking Safety		
27 January 2027	Revenue and Capital Budget		
	School Holiday Activity and Food Provision		
	Early Years Childcare Sufficiency Report		
	Family Hubs and Best Start in Life		
	Placement Strategy, Kinship Strategy and Leaving Care Strategy		

Meeting Date	Item	Recommendations / Actions	Progress
9 March 2027	Fostering Annual Report NEET and Connexions service Local Government Reorganisation SEND Reform Youth Strategy	To include Community Champions and Marketing Strategy To include a matrix and analysis on clusters and locality to assess performance and reasons behind it.	

Forward Plan Items (suggested)

Topic	Detail	Proposed Date
Youth Justice Plan Yearly Refresh	To include connections with Family First and Family Hubs and the VCS sector.	Mid-late 2027
Care Leavers Strategy and related improvement work		
Domestic Abuse/Domestic Violence		
School age childcare and Early Years Extended Entitlement Update	To come early in the 2026/27 municipal year.	
YPC Survey Findings	To go to first meeting of 2026/27 municipal year.	
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		
Corporate Parenting Update	Annual report.	
SEN support and funding		
Pupil Place Planning (Primary and Secondary)		
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.	
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	

