



Leicester
City Council

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

* * * * *

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.
-

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