 **WARDS AFFECTED**

**All Wards**

**FORWARD TIMETABLE OF CONSULTATION AND MEETINGS:**

**SDMT January 2014**

**DMT 5th December 2013**

**LMB 18th December 2013**

**CHILDREN’S PLACEMENT COMMISSIONING AND SUFFICIENCY STRATEGY**

**Report of the Director, Children’s Social Care and Safeguarding**

1. **Purpose of Report**

This report presents the placement commissioning strategy for Leicester’s looked after children and details Leicester City’s intended plans for the placement of looked after children. The purpose of the strategy is to help Leicester City Council achieve the best possible life outcomes for looked after children in their care.

1. **Recommendations**

For DMT to note the content of the Children’s Placement Commissioning and Sufficiency Strategy 2013 -15

1. **Summary**

**3.1 Background**

The duty to provide or procure placements for looked after children (LAC) is explicit in the Children Act 1989, reconfirmed in the Care Planning, Placement and Case Review Regulations (implementation March 2011). There is a duty of ‘sufficiency’ that requires local authorities and Children’s Trust partners to ensure that, through provision or commissioning, local authorities have a range of placements sufficient to meet the needs of all LAC. The regulations require a strategy that describes how local authorities intend to provide sufficient care placements for its LAC. The Commissioning Placement Strategy is attached as an addendum to this report. It sets out the vision for LAC, the priorities of the service, and offers analysis of the demands for placements setting out the means for securing sufficient placements to meet the needs of children in the care of the Leicester City Council.

1. **Report**

It is the policy of the city council to support vulnerable families to care for their own children in line with legal responsibilities. When children cannot live safely at home, it is the policy of the city council, in line with its duty as a good corporate parent, to provide the best possible services to LAC and care leavers and ensure resources are available meet the demand and needs of LAC.

The strategy presented is the culmination of analysis of placement trends over the past year and the increasing numbers children coming into care, historical analysis and statistical and performance comparisons with national, regional and statistical neighbour local authority averages, interrogation of current LAC placements and provision and financial analysis of the costs of different placement types. The strategy also addresses legislative arrangements for young people in secure remand, requirements for young people assessed under the “Southwark judgement”,

The strategy sets out the core principles, strategic objectives, and policy commitments and provides needs analysis of the current position of looked after children in Leicester. The action plan is based on the assumption that the numbers of children in the care of the council are unlikely to decline significantly over the next 3-4 years, and need is likely to increase in light of the current economic climate and current national and local trends in demand for specialist services. The profile of the LAC population, with an increasing proportion of adolescent admissions to care, and of children with complex needs and challenging behaviours, is not predicted to change.

The strategy is predicated to sustain and develop the council’s successful permanence policy as a means of moving children on, beyond the care system, with investment continuing services that are designed to support through late teens and early adulthood. The strategy has been developed in line with the Ofsted Framework, Adoption Improvement Plan, the Staying Put and Care Leavers strategies.

## 4.1. Conclusion

The proposed Children’s Placement Commissioning and Sufficiency Strategy 2013- 15 has been produced in order to address the council’s duty to provide a sufficiency of placements to meet the needs of children in care over the next two years. It contains an analysis of need, and a work plan designed to address how that need is best met within available resources. The strategy will be monitored and reviewed by the Corporate Parenting Forum, Children in Care Council and Children’s Trust arrangements.

**5. FINANCIAL, LEGAL AND OTHER IMPLICATIONS**

**5.1 Financial Implications**

To follow

**5.2 Legal Implications**

Section 22G of the Children Act 1989 requires Local Authorities to take “reasonably practicable” steps to secure sufficient accommodation for looked after children under their care who cannot live at home and whose circumstances indicate that it would be in a child’s best interest to be accommodated within the local authority’s area- this is referred to as the “sufficiency duty”. Local Authorities should have regard to the statutory guidance on securing sufficient accommodation for looked after children which outlines the approach that local authorities should take at a strategic level in ensuring that arrangements for commissioning placements and other services to support looked after children and those on the “edge of care” are in place and compliant with the sufficiency duty, so far as is “reasonably practicable”.

This report and attached addendum set out how Leicester City Council purports to meet that duty at a strategic level over the period 2013-2015.

*Pretty Patel, Principal Solicitor, Social Care & Safeguarding Ext. 371457*

**5.3 Climate Change Implications**

This report does not contain any significant climate change implications and therefore will not have a detrimental effect on the Council’s climate change targets.

*Chloe Hardisty (Senior Environmental Consultant, Ext 372252)*

**5.4 Other Implications**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **OTHER IMPLICATIONS** | **YES/NO** | **Paragraph/References**  **Within Supporting information** |
| Equal Opportunities | N/A |  |
| Policy | N/A |  |
| Sustainable and Environmental | N/A |  |
| Crime and Disorder | N/A |  |
| Human Rights Act | Yes |  |
| Elderly/People on Low Income | N/A |  |
| Corporate Parenting | Yes | Entire report |
| Health Inequalities Impact | N/A |  |

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LEICESTER CITY’S……

PLACEMENT COMMISSIONING

AND SUFFICIENCY STRATEGY

FOR LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN

NOVEMBER 2013 to NOVEMBER 2015

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**1. Introduction**

The Placement Commissioning Strategy for 2013-2015 summarises the means by which Education and Children’s Services will seek to provide the range and quality of placements needed to meet the anticipated needs of children and young people looked after over the next three years. Since April 2011, there has been a duty on each Local Authority to provide children's services to secure, so far as reasonably practicable, sufficient accommodation within its area to meet the needs of children that it is looking after/proposing to look after, (the sufficiency duty).

The sufficiency duty is a general duty that applies to local authority strategic arrangements for commissioning placements and other services to support looked after children and those “on the edge of care”. (‘Securing sufficient accommodation for looked after children’ statutory guidance DfE, March 2013)

To meet the requirements of the ‘sufficiency duty’ we need to have in place systems and processes for:

* care planning and assessment for individual children;
* commissioning individual placements
* the strategic analysis of children’s needs across an authority area;
* market management;
* inter-agency collaboration (locally and regionally);
* individual and strategic review of service effectiveness.

The strategy outlines the principles and intended activities to develop and strengthen placements services so that placement provision is available for the right children, at the right time, in the right location and at the right price. To achieve this, there will be a range of placement options to achieve the best match and ensure that each child’s needs are appropriately met. The strategy should be read in conjunction with the Children and Young People’s Plan, Invest In Our Children Commissioning Strategy, the Children’s Pledge and Social Care and Safeguarding Strategic Plans.

The strategy encompasses key elements of the current transitional arrangements for supporting care leavers. The developing Early Help strategy should support and be consistent with this strategy.

Trend data on the Looked After Children population in Leicester City, which includes comparators with the national picture, is located in the appendices. Analysis of the historical data provides the best indicator of the likely nature and extent of need in the short, medium and longer term, but the strategy is also informed by service aims, objectives and targets of the current national and local priorities.

1. **To work in partnership with early help and edge of care services so that the right children become LAC, at the right time**

Rational To ensure resources are targeted at the right children and that all alternatives to public care are considered prior to a child becoming LAC

The overall number of LAC has increased in the last three years to just below 550.

1. **To have sufficient high quality placements that provide consistently good and outstanding care to children so their assessed needs are met and children achieve to their full potential**

Rational There is a choice of high quality placements in a range of settings (residential, specialist schools, foster care, kinship, adoption, supported independent living) available to meet the needs of children, including heritage, disability, sexuality, health, education, emotional health and well –being.

1. **To meet the needs of severely disabled children, including those with mental health needs.**

Rational The assessed needs of disabled children are met within the community ,through S17 short breaks, at in house specialist provision such as Netherhall Road or Barnes Heath House, through joint funded specialist placement as agreed at Joint Solutions Forum. For children with severe mental health needs, they are placed in settings appropriate to their age and joint assessed needs where risk of harm is proactively managed and reduced.

1. **To scope and undertake a specific project to secure suitable accommodation for 16+ young people and care leavers**

Rational To have a ‘Staying Put’ policy embedded and to ensure a range of supported provision that provide value for money, high quality provision in a range of settings. To maximise opportunities for joint commissioning with partners and regional colleagues

To meet the needs of unaccompanied asylum seeking children, teenage parents, and those at risk of child sexual exploitation , domestic abuse or honour based violence.

1. **To ensure value for money across the board in placement provision within the allocated budget**

Rational To reduce the level of overspend within a volatile budget area

1. **To interpret national and local data to inform placement planning, identify gaps in provision and anticipate emerging need resulting in responsive and dynamic recruitment and commissioning strategies.**

Rational To ensure the right children are LAC, at the right time, delay and drift is minimised and permanence is achieved at the earliest point possible.

Increasing numbers of children becoming LAC aged 10 and over.

Need to increase the numbers of children adopted

Commissioning Priority 1

To work in partnership with early help and edge of care services so that the right children become LAC, at the right time

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Outcome** | **Actions** | **Targets** | **Performance measures** | **Lead** | **Progress** | **Timescale** |
| No child is LAC unless there is no safe alternative.  Increased placement choice and matching.  Improved permanence and stability.  To appropriately reduce the total number of LAC  . | LARP to identify emerging themes and gaps in provision  Review Care Planning processes to identify exit routes from care  LAC review decisions and care planning processes  Review Southwark judgement protocol  Re-structure Family Placement Service (April 2014)  Restructure Placement and Commissioning Service (April 2014)  Review and revise current policies in relation to Special Guardianship Orders, to include financial support to former foster carers | Numeric reduction in the number of LAC each year by 15 – 20.  KPI’s NI 62 and NI 63 show improved performance to 10%/75%  Minimum of 40 children adopted annually and meet national thresholds for timeliness  10 children to exit care through Special Guardianship Orders with their carers each year | MST and Think Family outcomes.  Numbers of CAFs completed  Ofsted inspection outcomes for early help, and social care and safeguarding.  Analysis of children presented at LARP on annual basis.  Analysis of Section 20 admissions through Care Planning/LAC Actions processes on annual basis. | Head of Service, LAC | LARP is embedded in practice  MST data evidences success in diverting children from care  Genograms and chronologies, to inform pre-proceedings work, are improving  Care planning and tracking processes embedded in practice  Review of Section 20 admissions due January 2014 | By end of April 2015 |

Commissioning Priority 2

To have sufficient high quality placements that provide consistently good and outstanding stable care to children so their assessed needs are met and children achieve to their full potential.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Outcome** | **Actions** | **Targets** | **Performance measures** | **Lead** | **Progress** | **Timescale** |
| To increase placement stability and permanence for LAC  Have more children adopted  To increase the numbers of foster carers able to provide placements to older LAC | Target recruitment of carers to meet emerging needs, particularly children aged 12 and over, sibling groups, and mother and baby placements.  Change Foster Carer approval to 0-19  Target Child specific foster carer / adopter recruitment  Review foster carer payment structure to incentivise foster carers to provide placements for remand, emergency and disabled children placements.  Participate in Regional partnerships and consortia to enhance Adoption for Hard to adopt Children  Review Care Planning processes to identify exit routes from care  LAC review decisions and care planning processes  Children are not placed in external provision that is not judged good or outstanding.  Implement the Residential Care Improvement plan.  Implement the Adoption Improvement plan.  Reorganisation of fostering service structure around recruitment, assessment and placement support.  Apply PLO and ensure participation in all possible kinship options and identify all children requiring permanent placements prior to care entry who will not be adopted.  Focus Increase fostering recruitment budget of TV, IT, and social media, including internet advertising  Review foster carer payment structure to incentivise fostering of older children.  Targeted permanent placement support by CFST  Embedded coordination and protocols with YOS for remand of young people | Monitor increases in total foster carer population (increase 10 p.a.) to 280 by 2017  Net increase per annum of 10 fostering households  All foster carers have children in placement, unless there are specific reasons why this is not appropriate (100% occupancy rate)  Minimum of 5 ‘foster to adopt’ placements per year | Ofsted inspection outcomes  Attainment at key stages in education  SDQ scores NI 58  Placement stability NI62  3+ Placement moves NI63  Care leavers in suitable accommodation.  Children report they are safe and feel safe in their placements  Occupancy rates  CIPFA data  Adoption scorecard | Head of Service, LAC  Virtual Head Teacher | Recruitment campaigns take place regularly  Improvement required in numbers of assessments that result in approvals  Revised regional commissioning framework being considered. Leicester City to consider whether this will improve efficiencies.  Review of 3 + placement moves due in March 2014. | By end of March 2015, with incremental actions during that time frame |

Commissioning Priority 3.

To meet the needs of severely disabled children, including those with mental health needs.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Outcome** | **Action** | Targets | **Performance measures** | **Lead** | **Progress** | **Timescale** |
| Greater take up of short breaks resulting in less young people in full time placements  Fewer young people placed outside of the local authority  Reduction in social care sole funding of placements for disabled children.  Joint commissioning or pooled budgets available in some circumstances where the assessed need and/ or risks are very complex. | Target recruitment for disabled children  Maintain a range of placements available in house, including long term foster care and residential provision  Undertake a Needs analysis in respect of autistic teenage boys and girls with extreme self-harm behaviour  Identify Child specific foster carer / adopter recruitment.  Create home adaptations budget to enable to be made to facilitate placement of disabled children, or bedroom partition.  BHH to provide training and support to foster carers of disabled children  BHH engage with foster carer assessment to ensure specialist knowledge is available to fostering recruitment and assessment teams |  | * Corporate parenting forum reports * CICC and Pledge review * Short breaks referral service * Fostering panel approvals * Placement decision group/Joint solution forum * LAC review decisions | Head of Service, LAC | Short breaks are provided for children under S17  Health and education fund a small number of complex cases  PDG process may be incorporated into care planning panel  JSF meeting regularly to review and agree funding arrangements  CAMHS Commissioning and Performance Group to undertake work on high need groups |  |

Commissioning Priority 4

**To consider options for securing suitable accommodation for 16+ young people and care leavers**

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| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Outcome** | **Actions** | **Targets** | **Performance measures** | **Lead** | **Progress** | **Timescales** |
| Accommodation that meets the needs of this group, and results in improved outcomes in education, training and employment, health, substance misuse, teenage pregnancy  Implement the Leaving care Strategy  To provide value for money, high quality provision in a range of settings  To meet the needs of unaccompanied asylum seeking children, teenage parents, and those at risk of child sexual exploitation , domestic abuse or honour based violence | Complete Project work to be in light of outcomes of the Homelessness Review to include  Implement Staying Put policy  Analysis of any gaps in service following the review of homeless services, and identify what may need to be commissioned  contributions and Partnership work with colleagues through the Corporate Parenting Forum, Joint Solutions, and Adult social care  Review and plan for Remand |  | Numbers in suitable accommodation  Numbers in education, employment or training  Numbers who remain in placements under Staying Put policy  Inspection outcomes  Bench mark current provision against Ofsted grade descriptors  Quality Standards audit | Head of Service, LAC | Staying Put policy in place, needs embedding into practice  Revised regional commissioning framework being considered. Leicester City to consider whether this will improve efficiencies  Benchmarking exercise to take place urgently | Ongoing.  End of January 2014 |

Commissioning Priority 5

**To ensure value for money across the board in placement provision within the allocated budget**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Outcome** | **Action** | **Targets** | **Performance measures** | **Lead** | **Progress** | **Timescale** |
| To reduce the level of overspend within a volatile budget area. | Weekly budget tracking and analysis of external placements budget  Weekly reporting to senior managers on the external placements budget and commissioning activity  Maximise use of internal resources  External placements only to be commissioned for four weeks initially, only if no in house provision available  Maximise joint funding opportunities  Ensure that children do not become LAC when there are alternatives available | Come in on budget | Weekly, monthly and quarterly budget returns  Care planning and LAC Actions work | Head of Service, LAC | External placements budget is predicting significant underspend  Weekly reports provided to senior managers  Placements only commissioned for four weeks and activity undertaken to explore in house options to reduce the need for external placements | Ongoing and an integrated aspect of the service’s work |

Commissioning priority 6

**To interpret national and local data to inform placement planning, identify gaps in provision and anticipate emerging need resulting in responsive and dynamic recruitment and commissioning strategies.**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Reason** | **How** | **Outcome** | **Performance measures** | **Lead** | **Progress** | **Timescales** |
| To ensure the right children are LAC, at the right time, delay and drift is minimised and permanence is achieved at the earliest point possible.  Increasing numbers of children becoming Lac aged 10 and over.  Need to increase the numbers of children adopted. | LAC managers to be aware of national and local data and emerging trends through Care Planning, LAC Actions and performance data sets  Recruitment strategies are targeted at cares who can meet the needs of our children  Placement service has an overview of the care and carer population to predict, track and monitor placement availability, to anticipate and meet need  A comprehensive programme of work to track admissions to care, achievement of care plans, compliance with FJR and adoption timescales  Implement Adoption Improvement plan | There is a range of placement options available to meet the assessed needs of children  Permanence is achieved and placement moves reduced  Increased pool of approved carers/adopters  Use of in house provision is maximised  Leicester City understands their care population, and can evidence placement provision suitable and sufficient to meet the needs of this cohort  Closing the attainment gap | Key performance indicator outcomes  Ofsted inspection  outcomes  Numbers of new carers/adopters recruited and approved  Adoptions achieved with in timescales  Care proceedings concluded within 26 weeks | Head of Service, LAC | Care Planning processes being refined  Significant data available to enable Leicester City to understand the local context  Review of S20 and 16+ cohort planned, this links with work undertaken in the previous year  Adoption and FJR timescales monitored and performance improving | January 2014  Ongoing  By end of March 2014  Year end statistics |

**3. Appendix 1 – Vision**

To ‘**Improve outcomes for particularly vulnerable groups of children and young people: Looked After Children, children and young people with special education needs/learning difficulties and/or disabilities and young offenders’**.

(The Children and Young People’s Plan, Priority 6)

**‘The Looked After Children service has a key role to play in promoting the welfare of Looked After Children. As excellent corporate parents we will provide high quality services that focus on the needs of Looked After Children, are efficient, effective, recognise diversity and lead to good and improved outcomes for children and young people’**

(Looked After Services Strategic Plan, 2013)

To improve the health and wellbeing of Looked After Children, Leicester City will ensure every child who needs to be looked after receives an appropriate and timely placement that meets their assessed needs. Leicester City will:

1. Ensure that no child becomes looked after unless no alternative is viable
2. Manage risk confidently and provide support to children at the edge of care to make sure the right children come into care at the right time.
3. Ensure all LAC are safeguarded.
4. Provide and commission a flexible and affordable mix of high quality placements to support all children in having positive experiences in care whatever their needs.
5. Ensure all LAC get a good education, whether this is in mainstream schools or in alternative arrangements.
6. Give children clearly planned journeys through care which enable them to be reunited with family and friends where possible, have stable placements and exit the care system positively and safely.
7. Support young people in transitional arrangements into early adulthood.
8. Aspire to having good or outstanding Ofsted outcomes across all services, and benchmark services against grade descriptors.

4. Appendix 2 - Strategic Objectives

1. To improve the quality of life for those children in care
2. To ensure that children are matched to placements that meet their individual needs.
3. Provide a wide range of quality internal placements in residential, fostering, kinship and adoption.
4. To commission placements efficiently and effectively.
5. To ensure thorough care planning to promote stability and permanence.
6. To ensure maximum efficiency gain and best value.
7. To ensure statutory compliance to achieve good or outstanding Ofsted judgements.

5. Appendix3 - Policy Commitments

1. To work to meet the principles of the ‘Pledge’ to children in care.
2. To work closely with our communities and partners to actively promote stability and permanence and reduce the need for placement moves.
3. To continually ensure that children in care feel safe, are in safe provision and have safe services.
4. Services offer values for money.
5. To ensure that children and young people are involved in planning services.
6. To measurably improve the experience and satisfaction of children and young people in care.
7. To quality assure external placements, particularly those out of county, to ensure children receive the best possible care and their views are known.
8. To meet the requirements of the new Ofsted inspection framework to achieve good or outstanding services

6. Appendix *4* - The principles that govern the Strategy are:

1. Children and young people should remain with family whenever possible
2. Children and young people are safe and feel safe.
3. Children and young people are in placements that meet their diverse needs
4. Children and young people achieve permanence and stability.
5. Children and young people are placed within a 20 mile radius of the city unless it is assessed otherwise.
6. Children and young people are placed with siblings wherever possible.
7. Children and young people are in placements that are assessed or inspected as good or outstanding.
8. If external placement provision is inspected and judged as requiring improvement or inadequate, the principle applies that the child should move. However, judgment needs to be exercised and an urgent assessment undertaken. This should include the views of the child and his/her IRO.
9. Children and young people are in placements that are cost effective.
10. Children and young people have access to Interventions that build resilience and maximise outcomes.
11. Children and young people are supported and helped with the transition from childhood to adulthood

**7. Appendix 5 - The Sufficiency Duty:**

The ‘Sufficiency Duty – Accommodation for Looked after Children’ incorporates what is expected of local authorities in providing sufficient accommodation within its area to meet the needs of children that it is looking after; and children whose circumstances are such that it would be consistent with their welfare for them to be provided with accommodation within the Local Authority area. Therefore the duty applies to all Looked After Children and children and young people who are at risk of coming into care or custody.

The sufficiency duty stresses the importance of having services in place that promote preventative action to support children and families so fewer children become looked after as well as ensuring there is sufficient accommodation available to meet the needs of children who are or become looked after.

Underpinning the provision of placements for children and young people is that the placement must be the most appropriate available. Preference must be given to a placement with family or friends or other persons connected to the child who is or could be assessed as a Local Authority Foster Carer. If this is not possible then the placement needs to address a number of practicalities and in most circumstances the following factors will have to be considered:

* Is near to the child’s home
* Does not disrupt his/her education or training.
* Enables the child to live with accommodated sibling/siblings.
* Is within the Local Authority’s area unless this is not reasonably practical or is assessed as not desirable.

The majority of Looked After Children will be placed within the Local Authority area. However, some children need specialist services, or may need further safeguarding and it may be necessary to place them in another Local authority area. In making decisions about these placements family networks and access to support systems must be considered.

If challenged the Local authority should be able to demonstrate that it has done all that is reasonable practicable to secure sufficiency.

Placement sufficiency and planning is not a straightforward process as needs as the profile of the care population changes. For example, pressures in 2012 related to teenage LAC mothers requiring placements with their children, and placements for Asian girls identified as at risk of forced marriage or honour based violence. Pressures in 2013 so far are placements for older teenage autistic boys, and placements for girls exhibiting extreme self-harm and mental health difficulties.

Locally work has taken place in respect of the Leicester Access to Resources Panel (LARP) outcomes, placement stability, Section 20 admissions, and further work is planned in respect of

* children who go home from care
* timescales for completion of care proceedings
* transformation of placement making services
* refinements to care planning and tracking processes
* Southwark LAC
* Accommodation for 16 plus
* Deep dive analysis of young people who are repeat remands with YOS

A detailed audit of all LAC in care for two years or more was completed in November 2013. This identified a number of cases which could possibly progress to an SGO, transfer to Section 24 (care leaver) or be rehabilitated home if safe to do so.

This audit will inform strategic work within the LAC service in the coming 6 -12 months, and complements the work streams above.

**8. Appendix 6 - Existing provision:**

Leicester City has maintained in house residential provision, and is an Adoption and Fostering agency.

There are five residential homes geographically dispersed across the city offering a range of provision to meet the needs of children and young people where residential care is a positive alternative to foster care.

Barnes Heath House: offers 9 places for young people with learning disabilities and complex health needs. Primary focus is to provide short breaks. It also provides emergency/assessment facilities and medium term care when needed.

Dunblane Avenue: offers 7 medium term places to young men and women.

Netherhall Road: offers 7 medium term places to young men and women with learning difficulties and disabilities.

Tatlow Road: offers 6 medium term places to young men and women.

Wigston Lane: offers 10 medium term places to young men.

Leicester City’s Fostering service offers placements for approx. 350 children with 251 carers. This number will fluctuate as foster carers are deregistered or retire and new carers recruited. There are approx. 90 children placed with 75 kinship carers. The fostering service retained its outstanding Ofsted judgment in 2012.

The Adoption service disaggregated from the joint arrangement with Leicestershire County Council in 2012. It is now a stand-alone adoption agency, which received a good judgment from the Ofsted inspection in 2013.

Numbers of children adopted is increasing, with the highest ever number, 30, in 2012-2013. It is anticipated that there will be in the region of 40 adoptions for the current year, with 29 Orders made by Christmas.

Externally commissioned placements are part of Leicester City Council’s portfolio of placements provided for Looked After Children, young people and in exceptional circumstances their parents. Placement provision includes foster care provision and residential children homes. The majority of external placements are within the county, and children are only paced outside of the county if there are particular risk factors or if there isn’t provision available more locally to meet their needs, e.g. a residential school for child with disability.

At end of September 2013, there were 58 children placed in a range of external placements (this does not include 5 young people in custody, who didn’t have a LAC status in September 2012), compared with 89 in September 2012. This represents a 35% decrease in external placements at a time when LAC numbers are increasing.

As of April 2013, the local authority became responsible for paying costs of young people remanded to any form of secure setting. Leicester has a low number of remands, and creative bail packages are offered by YOS in the majority of cases, unless there is an obvious reason why this isn’t appropriate. From a local authority perspective, whilst we pay for the provision we have no control over where the young person is placed, or what the quality of that provision is. All remanded young people are now LAC, and this does have an impact on the numbers of 15-17 years olds in care.

**9. Appendix 7: Data that informs the Commissioning Strategy priorities**

* Key data on a national basis and local basis
* Historical Lac numbers data for years 2009-2013
* LAC numbers in Leicester by legal status from August 2012-Augsut2013
* Children who ceased to be looked after reason codes, during the year ending 31 March 2013
  + CYP who started to be looked after during the year ending 31st March 2013 by gender and age
* Breakdown of ethnicity of LAC over a 3 year period

**10. Appendix 8: Commissioning priorities**

Commissioning Priority 1.

To work in partnership with early help and edge of care services so that the right children become LAC, at the right time

Commissioning Priority 2

To have sufficient high quality placements that provide consistently good and outstanding care to children so their assessed needs are met and children achieve to their full potential.

Commissioning Priority 3

To meet the needs of severely disabled children, including those with mental health needs

Commissioning Priority 4

To scope and undertake a specific project to secure suitable accommodation for 16+ young people and care leavers

Commissioning Priority 5

To ensure value for money across the board in placement provision within the allocated budget

Commissioning Priority 6

To interpret national and local data to inform placement planning, identify gaps in provision and anticipate emerging need resulting in responsive and dynamic recruitment and commissioning strategies.

## 11. Appendix 9: Key points (Looked After Children in England for the year ending 31St March 2013)

There were 68,110 looked-after children at 31 March 2013, an increase of 2% compared to 31 March 2012 and an increase of 12% compared to 31 March 2009.

Of children looked after at 31 March 2013, 50,900 were cared for in a foster placement. This represents 75% of all children looked after at 31 March 2013.

There were 28,830 children who started to be looked after during the year ending 31 March 2013, an increase of 2% from 2012 and an increase of 12% from 2009.

There were 28,460 children who ceased to be looked after during the year ending 31 March 2013. This is an increase of 3% from 2012 and an increase of 14% from 2009.

There were 3,980 looked-after children adopted during the year ending 31 March 2013, an increase of 15% from 2012 and an increase of 20% from 2009.

Although the number of looked-after children adopted fell between both 2009 and 2010, and 2010 and 2011, the number of these adoptions has since increased and is now at its highest point since the start of the current data collection in 1992.

**Leicester City numbers of LAC as at 31st March (and rate per 10,000 population) (snapshot data)**

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **2009** | **2010** | **2011** | **2012** | **2013** |
| 455 (61) | 480 (63) | 500(65) | 525(67) | 520 (67) |

**Leicester City numbers of Children looked after at any point during the year (activity data)**

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **2009** | **2010** | **2011** | **2012** | **2013** |
| 630 | 670 | 655 | 700 | 752 |

This represents a significant increase in the number of children we work with and have to find appropriate placements for during the year.

**TABLE 1**

**Historical data for years 2009 to 2013 for Looked After Children data**



**Leicester City Council**

* There was an overall increase of 8% in the number of children admitted into Leicester City care over a 5 year period from 2009 to 2013.
* There has been a 4% decrease however from 2012 to 2013.
* The lowest number entering Leicester City care was in 2011 (180 children entered the care system).

**Table 2**

**LAC numbers by legal status 1/08/2012 to 01/08/2013**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **MONTH** | **Interim Care Order** | **Full Care Order** | **Placement Order** | **PPO** | **EPO** | **Child assessment order** | **Remand to Care** | **Section 20** | **TOTAL** | **Section 20 Admissions** |
| Aug-12 | 77 | 278 | 70 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 92 | **517** | 11 |
| Sep-12 | 140 | 233 | 57 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 106 | **538** | 3 |
| Oct-12 | 144 | 228 | 56 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 3 | 100 | **531** | 12 |
| Nov-12 | 146 | 234 | 56 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 3 | 95 | **534** | 5 |
| Dec-12 | 136 | 239 | 58 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 3 | 95 | **531** | 4 |
| Jan-13 | 120 | 256 | 56 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 3 | 84 | **519** | 9 |
| Feb-13 | 107 | 262 | 59 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 7 | 85 | **520** | 12 |
| Mar-13 | 105 | 263 | 59 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 6 | 87 | **520** | 10 |
| Apr-13 | 102 | 263 | 60 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 4 | 91 | **520** | 17 |
| May-13 | 97 | 267 | 59 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 3 | 96 | **522** | 13 |
| Jun-13 | 90 | 274 | 61 | 0 | 2 | 0 | 3 | 98 | **528** | 9 |
| Jul-13 | 81 | 271 | 69 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 99 | **521** | 16 |
| Aug-13 | 77 | 278 | 70 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 92 | **517** | 1 |

**TABLE 3**

**Children who ceased to be looked after reason codes, during the year ending 31 March 2013, by local authority (Leicester)**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Care Ceased Code | TOTAL CYP |
|  |  |
| E11 Adopted - application unopposed | 20 |
| E12 Adopted - consent dispensed with | 10 |
| E3 Care taken over by another LA in UK | 1 |
| E4 Returned live with parents NOT Res/Res Guard order | 46 |
| E41 Residence Order (court granted on date ep ceased) | 11 |
| E43 Special guardianship order to former f/carer | 18 |
| E44 Special guardianship order NOT to former f/carer  E5 Moved to independent living - formal advice | 6  14 |
| E7 Transferred to care of adult social services  E8 Care ceased for any other reason  E9 Sentenced to custody | 3  85  6 |
| **Total LAC** | **220** |
|  |  |

**TABLE 4**

**CYP who started to be looked after during the year ending 31st March 2013 by gender and age (Leicester).**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Age Group | Females | Males | TOTAL CYP entering care |
| Under | 8 | 5 | 13 |
| 1 to 4 | 27 | 34 | 61 |
| 5 to 9 | 16 | 16 | 32 |
| 10 to 15 | 20 | 26 | 46 |
| 16 and Over | 24 | 29 | 53 |
| **Total LAC** | **95** | **110** | **205** |
|  |  |  |  |

*\*Early indications show this is significantly different for children under 1 in 2013/14*

* The largest number of CYP who entered care fall into the 1 to 4 age group.
* Overall 30% of CYP entering care were aged 1 to 4. Of these 56% were males. This group also has the highest number of males.
* The second largest group entering care was the 16 and overs. This was 26% of the overall CYP entering care of which 55% were males.
* The smallest number of CYP entering care fell into the under 1’s age group. 62% of the children entering care were females.
* The 5 to 9 age group had an equal number of males and females .50% of males and females.
* The 5 to 9 made up 16% of the number of children entering care.

**Table 5**

**Looked after children ethnicity breakdown as at 31st March 2011 – 2013**

The White British category remains the highest number of CYP in care by ethical breakdown throughout the 3 year period. This figure increases or decreases marginally over a 3 year period.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | 2011 | | | 2012 | | | 2013 | | |
| Ethnicity Description | | **Number LAC** | **%** | | **Number LAC** | **%** | | **Number LAC** | **%** |
| Any other ethnic group | | 2 | 2 | | 1 | 1 | | 1 | 1 |
| Asian & White | | 10 | 8 | | 4 | 3 | | 4 | 3 |
| Asian or Asian British - Indian | | 4 | 3 | | 6 | 5 | | 6 | 5 |
| Asian or Asian British - other Asian origin | | 3 | 2 | | 2 | 2 | | 2 | 2 |
| Black African & White | | 1 | 1 | | 1 | 1 | | 1 | 1 |
| Black Caribbean & White | | 6 | 5 | | 3 | 2 | | 3 | 2 |
| Black or Black British - African | | 4 | 3 | | 2 | 2 | | 2 | 2 |
| Black or Black British - Caribbean | | 3 | 2 | | 2 | 2 | | 2 | 2 |
| Black or Black British - other black origin | | 1 | 1 | | 4 | 3 | | 4 | 3 |
| Black or Black British - Somali | | 1 | 1 | | 1 | 1 | | 1 | 1 |
| Information not yet obtained | | 2 | 2 | | 8 | 7 | | 8 | 7 |
| Other dual heritage | | 10 | 8 | | 1 | 1 | | 1 | 1 |
| White - European | | 1 | 1 | | 5 | 4 | | 5 | 4 |
| White British | | 81 | 61 | | 78 | 64 | | 78 | 64 |
| White -other | | 3 | 2 | | 4 | 3 | | 4 | 3 |
| Total | | **132** | **100%** | | **122** | **100%** | | **122** | **100%** |

**12. Appendix 10: Children’s Social Care & Safeguarding Commissioning Priorities**

Commissioning Priority 1.

To work in partnership with early help and edge of care services so that the right children become LAC, at the right time

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **How** | **Outcome** | **Performance measures** | **Lead** | **Progress** | **Timescale** |
| Social work teams refer to resources such as MST, Think Family as appropriate.  Genograms and chronologies to be completed to identify family members who can provide alternative care or support.  LARP to identify emerging themes and gaps in provision  Care Planning processes to identify exit routes from care  LAC review decisions and care planning processes  Re-structure Family Placement Service (April 2014)  Restructure Placement and Commissioning Service (April 2014)  Provide consistent placement and matching response  Review and revise current policies in relation to Special Guardianship Orders, to include financial support to former foster carers  Implementation of Adoption Service Improvement Plan | No child is LAC unless there is no safe alternative.  Increased placement choice and matching.  Improved permanence and stability. | Numeric reduction in the number of LAC each year by 15 – 20.  MST and Think Family outcomes.  Numbers of CAFs completed  Ofsted inspection outcomes for early help, and social care and safeguarding.  Analysis of children presented at LARP on annual basis.  Analysis of Section 20 admissions through Care Planning/LAC Actions processes on annual basis.  Minimum of 40 children adopted annually and meet national thresholds for timeliness  KPI’s NI 62 and NI 63 show improved performance to 10%/75%  10 children to exit care through Special Guardianship Orders with their carers each year | Head of Service, LAC | LARP is embedded in practice  MST data evidences success in diverting children from care  Genograms and chronologies, to inform pre-proceedings work, are improving  Care planning and tracking processes embedded in practice  Review of Section 20 admissions due January 2014 | By end of April 2015 |

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **How** | **Outcome** | **Performance measures** | **Lead** | **Progress** | **Timescale** |
| Targeted recruitment of carers to meet emerging needs, particularly children aged 12 and over, sibling groups, and mother and baby placements.  Child specific foster carer / adopter recruitment  Review foster carer payment structure to incentivise foster carers to provide placements for remand, emergency and disabled children placements.  Increase take up of foster to adopt placements  Regional partnerships and consortia to be used to maximum benefit.  Placement planning and matching processes to be refined through service transformation.  Children are not placed in external provision that is not judged good or outstanding.  Ongoing quality assurance systems in place, which includes the views of the child.  Implement the Residential Care Improvement plan.  Implement the Adoption Improvement plan.  Benchmark services against the Ofsted inspection framework grade descriptors, including those for care leavers  Reorganisation of fostering service structure around recruitment, assessment and placement support.  Legal Planning Meeting Panel to examine all possible kinship options and identify all children requiring permanent placements prior to care entry who will not be adopted. (PLO)  Increase fostering recruitment budget by £40,000 per annum to enable more effective use of TV, IT, and social media, including internet advertising  Review foster carer payment structure to incentivise fostering of older children.  Targeted permanent placement support by CFST  PDG to monitor use of external placements to maximise use of in-house placements for older children, including bringing children back ‘in-house’ | Improved placement stability  Reduction in 3+ placement moves  Children report they are safe and feel safe in their placements  Children live in placements that meet their assessed need and achieve good outcomes  Quality assurance outcomes inform future service provision and evidence improvement in placement quality  Net increase per annum of 10 fostering households  All foster carers have children in placement, unless there are specific reasons why this is not appropriate (100% occupancy rate)  External placements budget is targeted at those children who have specialist needs that cannot be met in existing in house provision  Minimum of 5 ‘foster to adopt’ placements per year  Embedded coordination and protocols with YOS for remand of young people | Ofsted inspection outcomes  Attainment at key stages in education  SDQ scores NI 58  Placement stability NI62  3+ Placement moves NI63  Care leavers in suitable accommodation.  Service user feedback  Monitor increases in total foster carer population (increase 10 p.a.) to 280 by 2017  Occupancy rates  CIPFA data  Adoption scorecard | Head of Service, LAC  Virtual Head Teacher | Recruitment campaigns take place regularly  Improvement required in numbers of assessments that result in approvals  Revised regional commissioning framework being considered. Leicester City to consider whether this will improve efficiencies.  Review of 3 + placement moves due in March 2014. | By end of March 2015, with incremental actions during that time frame |

Commissioning Priority 3.

To meet the needs of severely disabled children, including those with mental health needs.

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **How** | **Outcome** | **Performance measures** | **Lead** | **Progress** |
| Targetted recruitment  Family support services identify and meet needs of children to maintain children in their homes  Short breaks provided by skilled and high quality carers who can meet complex needs  A range of placements available in house, including long term foster care and residential provision  Joint placements commissioned when the needs of the child cannot be met in local or existing provision.  Needs analysis in respect of autistic teenage boys and girls with extreme self-harm behaviour  Ensure that the range of placement types is able to meet the demand for different types of placement.  Child specific foster carer / adopter recruitment.  Create home adaptations budget to enable to be made to facilitate placement of disabled children, or bedroom partition.  BHH to provide training and support to foster carers of disabled children  BHH to engage with foster carer assessment to ensure specialist knowledge is available to fostering recruitment and assessment teams  Agree coordination and protocols with YOS concerning the placement on remand of young people | Greater take up of short breaks resulting in less young people in full time placements  Fewer young people placed outside of the local authority  Reduction in social care sole funding of placements for disabled children.  Joint commissioning or pooled budgets available in some circumstances where the assessed need and/ or risks are very complex. | Corporate parenting forum reports  CICC and Pledge review  Short breaks referral service  Fostering panel approvals  Placement decision group/Joint solution forum  LAC review decisions | Head of Service, LAC | Short breaks are provided for children under S17  Health and education fund a small number of complex cases  PDG process may be incorporated into care planning panel  JSF meeting regularly to review and agree funding arrangements  CAMHS Commissioning and Performance Group to undertake work on high need groups |

Commissioning Priority 4

To scope and undertake a specific project to secure suitable accommodation for 16+ young people and care leavers

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Reason** | **How** | **Outcome** | **Performance measures** | **Lead** | **Progress** |
|  | Social workers, carers, children and IRO’s aware of Staying Put policy  Consider whether there are any gaps in service following the review of homeless services, and identify what may need to be commissioned  Partnership work with colleagues through the Corporate Parenting Forum, Joint Solutions, and Adult social care  Implement the Leaving care Strategy  Bench mark current provision against Ofsted grade descriptors | Accommodation that meets the needs of this group, and results in improved outcomes in education, training and employment, health, substance misuse, teenage pregnancy  Young people have a choice of provision tailored to their need  Children aged 16+ who are assessed as at risk of harm are safeguarded | Numbers in suitable accommodation  Numbers in education, employment or training  Numbers who remain in placements under Staying Put policy  Inspection outcomes | Head of Service, LAC | Staying Put policy in place, needs embedding into practice  Revised regional commissioning framework being considered. Leicester City to consider whether this will improve efficiencies  Benchmarking exercise to take place urgently  Project work to be completed in light of outcomes of the Homelessness Review |

Commissioning Priority 5

To ensure value for money across the board in placement provision within the allocated budget

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Reason** | **How** | **Outcome** | **Performance measures** | **Lead** | **Progress** |
|  | Weekly budget tracking and analysis of external placements budget  Weekly reports to senior managers on the external placements budget and commissioning activity  Regional initiatives  Maximise use of internal resources  External placements only to be commissioned for four weeks initially, only if no in house provision available  Maximise joint funding opportunities  Ensure that children do not become LAC when there are alternatives available | Budgets are not showing overspends at year end.  Budget pressures are known and identified at the earliest point in order that action can be taken in a timely way to reduce or mitigate against predicted overspends. | Weekly, monthly and quarterly budget returns  Care planning and LAC Actions work | Head of Service, LAC | External placements budget is predicting significant underspend  Weekly reports provided to senior managers  Placements only commissioned for four weeks and activity undertaken to explore in house options to reduce the need for external placements |

Commissioning priority 6

To interpret national and local data to inform placement planning, identify gaps in provision and anticipate emerging need resulting in responsive and dynamic recruitment and commissioning strategies.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Reason** | **How** | **Outcome** | **Performance measures** | **Lead** | **Progress** |
| . | LAC managers to be aware of national and local data and emerging trends through Care Planning, LAC Actions and performance data sets  Recruitment strategies are targeted at carers who can meet the needs of our children  Placement service has an overview of the care and carer population to predict, track and monitor placement availability, to anticipate and meet need  A comprehensive programme of work to track admissions to care, achievement of care plans, compliance with FJR and adoption timescales  Implement Adoption Improvement plan | There is a range of placement options available to meet the assessed needs of children  Permanence is achieved and placement moves reduced  Increased pool of approved carers/adopters \_numbers  Use of in house provision is maximised  Leicester City understands their care population, and can evidence placement provision suitable and sufficient to meet the needs of this cohort  Closing the attainment gap | Key performance indicator outcomes  Ofsted inspection  outcomes  Numbers of new carers/adopters recruited and approved  Adoptions achieved with in timescales  Care proceedings concluded within 26 weeks  CIPFA benchmarking data | Head of Service, LAC | Care Planning processes being refined  Significant data available to enable Leicester City to understand the local context  Review of S20 and 16+ cohort planned, this links with work undertaken in the previous year  Adoption and FJR timescales monitored and performance improving |