

Safeguarding and Performance
Corporate Parenting Team
Annual Report
1st April 2022 - 31st March 2023



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1. Executive Summary

Welcome to our Corporate Parenting Team annual report, which outlines the work of the Corporate Parenting Team, consisting of our Children's Rights Officers and Participation Officers. This report not only identifies the outstanding work which the team and our services are proud of, but also the way in which our children and young people have been actively involved and how their voice has been championed and influenced both their own care plans, and also wider service delivery.

The Safeguarding and Performance Service are incredibly proud of the achievements of our children and young people and continue to recognise and celebrate this with them in many different ways. As Corporate Parents we are proud of all of our children and young people, their achievements and aspirations and feel privileged to work so closely with them and taking every opportunity to champion for them, as their Corporate Parents.

This report provides an overview of the work completed within the Corporate Parenting Team during 2022-2023, identifying our performance throughout the year and our priorities for the forthcoming year.

Our response to COVID19

The Coronavirus pandemic presented a time of severe pressure across all of society, and we know this specifically presented a higher level of risk for some children. Within Leicestershire County Council, we recognised it was especially important that children and young people across Leicestershire continued to receive the services and support that they need and are effectively safeguarded during this pandemic.

In response to the pandemic the Safeguarding and Performance Service rapidly adapted and changed the way we have delivered services to reflect the COVID19 circumstances, which have evolved since 2020. For a prolonged period we were delivering our services virtually in line with government guidance and also the local picture and circumstances. This was closely monitored and services responded accordingly to the circumstances presented.

In 2022/23 we have focused on continuing to use innovative approaches to engagement with our children and young people – sometimes building on our learning from developments in response to Covid-19 and at other times reinstating pre-pandemic ways of working.

This means our staff continue to use a range of interventions working flexibly to implement home and remote working models and making good use of mobile technology to offer additional ways to manage day-to-day communications with children and families. Workers continue to be inventive in how they engage children such as using what's app and video calls.

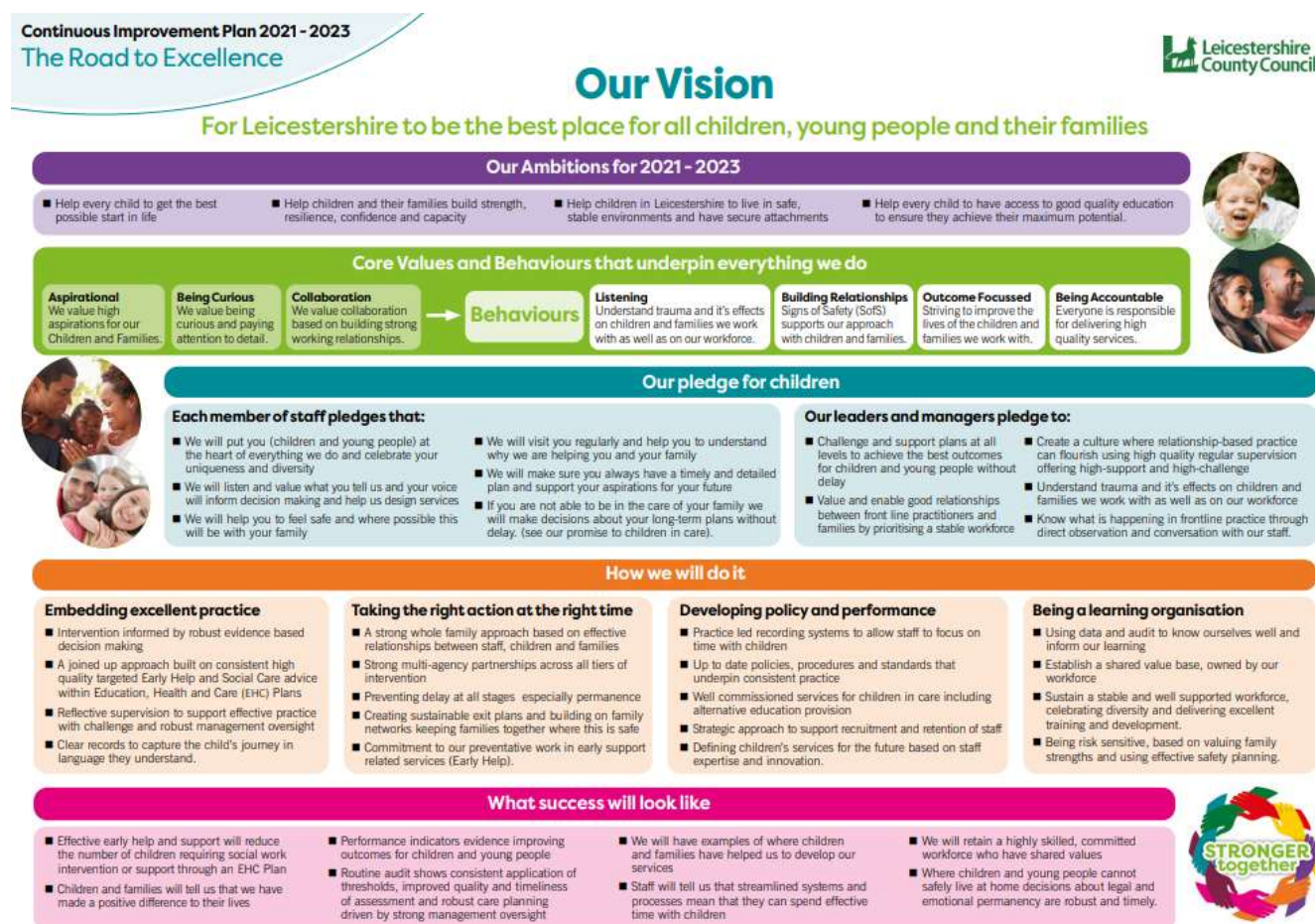
Since early March 2022 we have largely resumed face to face contacts, groups, activities and support at meetings for children and young people. All our Corporate Parenting groups and activities included face-to-face and children and young people being seen in person by their Children's Rights Officers and Participation Officers.

Corporate support for staff and managers has been strong throughout the pandemic with strong communication and support for staff wellbeing, funds for provision of working from home equipment and implementing safe working arrangements in key buildings where staff have continued to respond to service need.

2. Introduction

The Corporate Parenting Team is based within the Safeguarding and Performance Service. The ethos of corporate parenting runs throughout the work of the Safeguarding and Performance Service where the voice of children and their engagement makes our planning more effective. In Leicestershire we are ambitious for our children and young people and aspire to provide high quality services that improve children's outcomes.

Our Road to Excellence 2021 – 2023 plan provides a framework for action for all levels of staff, from managers to frontline practitioners. We have worked hard to ensure that our core values and behaviours underpin everything we do for children. We are aspirational for our children, we are curious and we place great value in relationships, which is underpinned by our core values and behaviours:



Our Corporate Parenting Strategy 2022-2025 provides the “*foundation and value base for how we will deliver high quality services to our Children in Care and Care Leavers. Furthermore, identifying where we are, where we want to be and how we intend to develop further to achieve our aspirations as corporate parents for our children, whilst championing and supporting them to meet their own ambitions and be successful in what they do now and in the future.*

We strive for children and young people of Leicestershire to be afforded positive, stable and safe care within their families, where they are well connected to their communities and supported to access support services where needed.

In circumstances where children are unable to live with their family, our priority is to ensure they are provided with safe, stable and secure care and permanence is secured within a timely way.

We want children to be afforded with opportunities to ensure they inspire to have high aspirations which are supported, thus having successful childhood experiences, which are the foundations to their adulthood.

In Leicestershire we are committed to our Children in Care and Care Leavers and are determined to ensure that we carry out our duty and responsibilities as a Corporate Parent with genuine passion, ambition, enthusiasm and care. This is underpinned by Our Promise which sets out our commitment to Children in Care and Care Leavers.

We understand that all of our children have individual needs and goals and our care planning and planned support offered to all of our children reflects this. We advocate and champion for diversity and ensure our children and young people are provided with inclusive services which values and respects their individual identity needs.

We are committed to the voice of our children and young people informing all areas of decision making, underpinned by a “You Said, We Did” approach. Participation is central to all services delivered to our children and young people and is championed in effective children and young people led forums including our Children in Care Council, Supporting Young People After Care (SYPAC), our Corporate Parenting Board and many more participation events”. (Corporate Parenting Strategy 2022-2025).

OUR VISION





For Leicestershire to be the best place for all children, young people and their families. This means that we will describe the outcomes we want to achieve for children, young people and their families and identify measures that can tell us how well we are achieving them.

OUR MISSION

Children and young people in Leicestershire are safe and living in families where they can achieve their potential and have their health, wellbeing and life chances improved within thriving communities.

The Children and Social Work Act 2017 outlined the seven key corporate parenting principles which local authorities should have regard to when exercising their functions in relation to children looked after and care leavers. The 7 principles within the act describe the behaviours and attitudes expected of councils when they are acting as any good parent would do by supporting, encouraging, and guiding their children to lead healthy, rounded and fulfilled lives.

Our role and commitment as Corporate Parents under the 7 principles:

-  We will act in the best interest, and promote the physical and mental health and wellbeing, of our children and young people.
-  We will encourage our children and young people to express their views, wishes and feelings.
-  We will take into account the views, wishes and feelings of our children and young people.
-  We will help our children and young people gain access to, and make the best use of, services provided by the Local Authority and its relevant partners.

- ✚ We will promote high aspirations, and seek to secure the best outcomes, for our children and young people.
- ✚ For our children and young people to be safe, and for stability in their home lives, relationships, and education or work.
- ✚ We will prepare our children and young people for adulthood and independent living.

Governance

Corporate Parenting is a collective responsibility first laid out in the Children Act 1989. The Act placed a duty on the Local Authority and all partners, including health, education and housing services to assist children's services to fulfil their functions under the Act – providing help, support and services in order to meet their Corporate Parenting responsibilities.

Leicestershire recognise the need to establish close, coordinated working relationships with partners if we are to succeed in improving outcomes for our children – now and in the future. We are committed to working in partnership with wider services, and with children and young people to achieve this. We have a strong and robust governance structure which enables challenge and reflection on how we, the Local Authority and our partners are held account for the application of our Corporate Parenting roles, responsibilities and commitment to our principles.

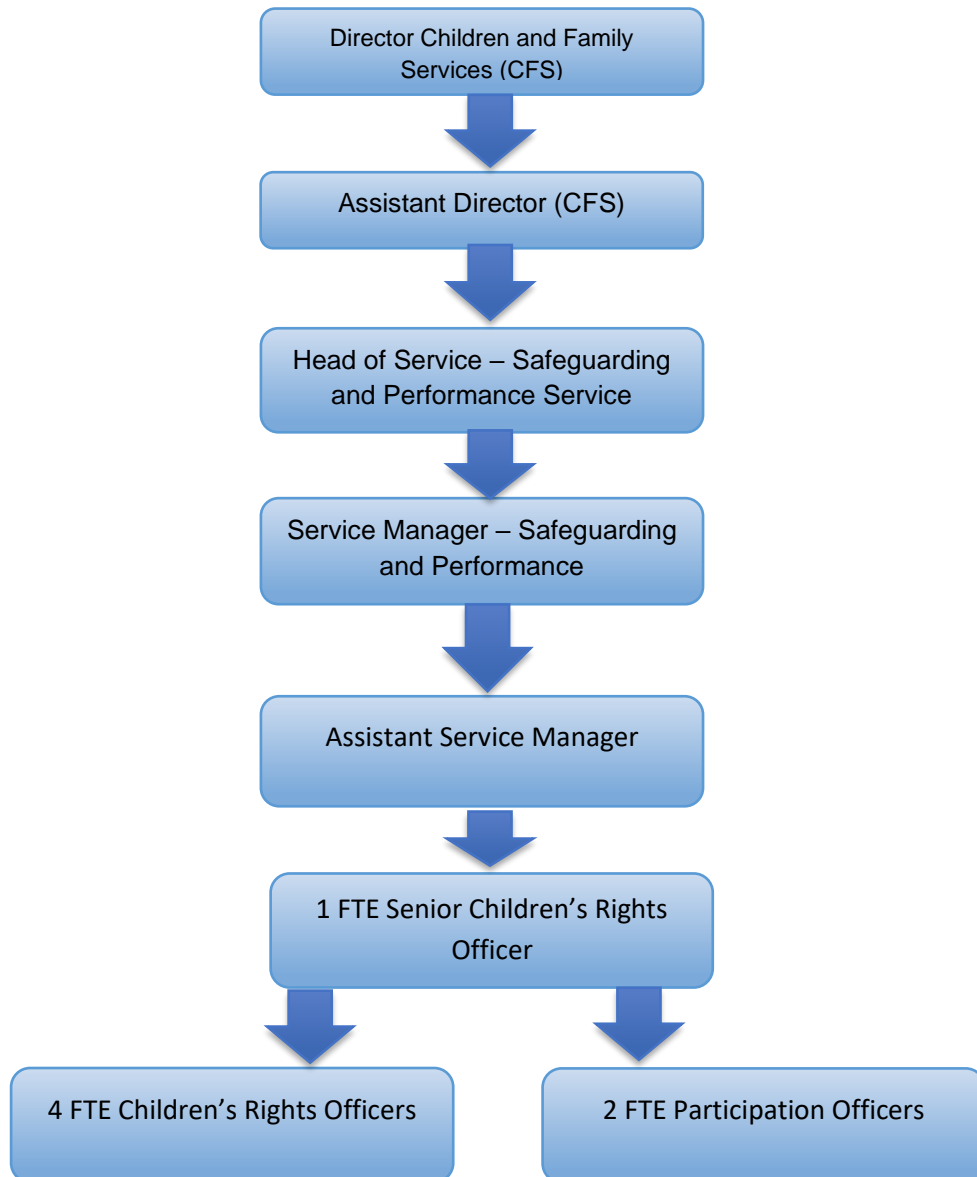
The governance arrangements that underpin our Corporate Parenting approach focus on the importance of the voice of our children and how they experience the support they receive, feel listened to and taken seriously, promoting the participation from our Children In Care and Care Leavers.

Our arrangements include:

- ✚ Corporate Parenting Board
- ✚ Children In Care Council
- ✚ SYPAC (Supporting young people after care)
- ✚ Out In Care
- ✚ Children's Social Care and Children in Care Member panels
- ✚ Children and Families Overview and Scrutiny Committee
- ✚ Beacon Voice Choir

3. Profile of the Corporate Parenting Team

The Corporate Parenting Team is based within the Safeguarding and Performance Service. During 2022 there was a successful growth bid for 1 FTE Children's Rights Officer and 0.5FTE Participation Officer due to the increase in the number of children and young people requiring advocacy and participation support. The Team consists of 1 FTE Senior Children's Rights Officer, 4 FTE Children's Rights Officers (5 workers), and 2 FTE Participation Officers (2 workers).



4. What do we know about the performance and quality of practice within our Corporate Parenting Team?

Children's Rights Officers (CRO) – Child Protection work

Reason for a referral – key themes

The main reason for a referral of children and young people subject to a child protection plan is for the child to have their voice heard independently during the child protection process. This includes CRO's attending child protection meetings on the child's behalf and sharing their voice. Some children and young people attend child protection meetings with the support of their CRO.

Ages of support

We aim to respond to automatic referrals for all children aged 10 to 18 years old who have an Initial Child Protection Conference. We also receive referrals from professionals and parents/carers for younger children. The youngest person we have supported this year is a 4-year-old child.

Prior to the Initial Child Protection Conference, a CRO will contact the child's parent or carer who has parental responsibility to offer the child a Children's Rights Officer. This is to ensure they have access to advocacy support to help them express their views and ensure that the people working with them really listen to their voice. The Children's Rights service is voluntary, and a young person can stop having advocacy at any time.

If the parent or carer feels their younger child under 10 years old would also benefit from a Children's Rights Officer, we will also provide them with our service.

We also receive non-automatic referrals from professionals for children of all ages at any point during the child protection process which may respond to specific issues or changes affecting the child.

During this reporting year, the team capacity has been significantly stretched. This was related to a period of staff long-term sickness. This meant that for a period from August to December 2022 automatic referrals for Initial Child Protection Conferences were suspended. This was to enable us to continue to prioritise the provision of a statutory advocacy service for children in care and care leavers. Children and young people subject to a Child Protection plan were still able to access advocacy support via a referral during this period and the automatic referrals resumed in December 2022.

Support provided by CRO – more detail

From 1st April 2022 until 31st March 2023 we had 67 children and young people accepted support from a CRO. Their ages ranged from 4 to 17 years old.

- 8 children (12%) were under 10 years old.
- 50 (75%) children and young people aged 10 -16 years old
- 9 (13%) young people aged 16 -17 years old

Number of referrals

From 1st April 2022 until 31st March 2023 the CRO service received 145 referrals. This is a significantly lower amount than the last financial year of 254 referrals. Reasons for this decrease maybe the lower amount of Initial Child Protection Conferences for children aged 10 years and older and the 4 months without automatic referrals.

- 133 (92%) were automatic referrals received for children and young people who had an Initial Child Protection Conference in the upcoming days or weeks.
- 2 (1%) referrals were received from Independent Reviewing Officers
- 1 (0.5%) referral was received from another professional
- 1 (0.5%) referral was a self-referral from a young person
- 8 (6%) referrals were received from Social Workers

Number of meetings supported

Of the 145 referrals received 67 (46%) children and young people accepted our service and were provided with support from a CRO. This advocacy support includes visits, phone calls, text messages, liaising with and challenging professionals, gaining the young person's voice, sharing their voice and ensuring it is listened too and attending professionals meetings with or without the young person on their behalf.

The CRO's attended 137 professional meetings on the behalf of children and young people. These professional meetings include Initial Child Protection Conferences, Review Child Protection Conferences, Core group meetings and Child in Need reviews.

- 40 (29%) meetings young people attended in person with the support of a CRO (face to face)
- 5 (4%) meetings young people attended virtually with the support of a CRO
- 72 (53%) meetings the CRO attended solely on behalf of the young person
- 20 (14%) meetings the CRO sent a report to the meeting

Length of time cases

Of the 67 children and young people who have accepted support from a CRO, 51 (76%) of the cases are now closed. The average length of time the cases remain open is 28 weeks. It is not unusual that 16 cases are still open to a CRO as often child protection plans last longer than a year and children and young people wish to have support all the way through the process. Also some children and young people have now come into care and wish to continue having the support of a CRO in the context of being looked after.

Feedback from children and young people

11 Children and young people have provided feedback on having a CRO during the child protection process to the questions below:

Did your Children's Rights Officer listen to what you wanted to say?

- 9 Children and young people answered: *Yes, they made me feel that what I had to say was important.*
- 2 Children and young people answered: *Yes, I felt listened to.*

How helpful did you find the Children's Rights Officer?

- 6 Children and young people answered: *They helped me a lot*
- 4 Children and young people answered: *Their help was good*
- 1 Child/ young person answered: *Some things were helpful*

Has the Children's Rights Officer helped your voice to be heard?

- 9 Children and young people answered: *Yes, my voice was heard*
- 2 Children and young people answered: *Some of my voice was heard*

Has the Children's Rights Officer done what they said they would do for you?

- 11 Children and young people answered: *yes, all of it*

Is there anything you think the CRO could have done better or differently?

- 7 Children and young people answered: *no* and 4 didn't answer.

Overall, how would rate CRO service.

- 7 Children and young people answered: *Excellent*
- 3 Children and young people answered *Good*
- 1 Child/ young person answered: *ok*

Any other comments you would like to make?

Child/ young person answered: *I think its brilliant and another she was 10x better than my social worker*

Case Studies

Ensuring Child's voice is heard at Child Protection Conferences and Core Group meetings

Young people: WP 8, LP 11, FP 11 & LP 13.

Case Summary: The P children were subject to a Child Protection Plan from December 2021 to December 2022, under the category of Emotional Abuse. I continued to support them on a Child in Need Plan until August 2023. The children's parents were separated and the children were living with their mother. There is a court order in place for the 3 youngest children to have regular contact with their father, however one of the 11 year olds refused to go to this contact. The mother had concerns that the children were at risk when they were at their father's house due to concerns around domestic abuse with his current partner. During the time the children were on a Child Protection Plan there was never a safety plan drawn up for/with them. When the Child Protection Plan was stepped down to a Child in Need Plan, the IRO wanted a safety plan to be in place. As the children had multiple changes in social worker, they hadn't been able to build a relationship with them. I agreed to draw up the safety plan with the children and then together we would share it with the social worker.

<i>The worries</i>	<i>What worked well</i>	<i>Outcome for young person</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • P children had experienced a number of changes in social worker so found it difficult to build a positive, trusting relationship. • There was no safety plan in place for a significant period of time. • Once the CP plan had stepped down to CiN, there was no CiN meetings held 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • P children felt listened to by their CRO and developed a trusting and positive working relationship, due to the CRO being the most consistent professional working with them • The CRO has been able to explain the processes starting with Child Protection through to Child in Need. • The CRO has been able to support LP to attend the RCPC, so she has been able to share her views. • The CRO has shared all the children's views at the RCPC and Core Group meetings • The Children were able to plan an active role in the drawing up of their own safety plan, then in turn share this with their social worker. They were able to explain to their social worker why they thought certain actions would work for them 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Due to the P children having the same CRO they has built up a trusting relationship so they were able to speak honestly with the CRO. The P children expressed that they felt listened to. • LP played an active part in the RCPC supported by the CRO. • The safety plan was personalised to the children as they had written it. This gave them a sense of ownership and a belief that their views were important <p><i>Increased YP voice</i></p> <p><i>Positive working relationship with CRO</i></p> <p><i>Safety plan was more likely to be adhered to</i></p> <p><i>An understanding of processes they were involved in.</i></p>



Young person: PA, 14, subject to a Child Protection Plan

Case Summary: PA became subject to a Child Protection Plan after she was admitted to hospital with unexplained abdominal pains. Following her admittance to hospital her health deteriorated and she lost the use of her legs and was unable to move her head independently. Health referred the family to Social Care due to suspected Fabricated or induced illness (FII) and parental refusal to accept Health's diagnosis of FND – functional neurological disorder.

Once PA became aware of the referral, she requested to have an advocate as she felt unheard by Health professionals and wanted to attend any meetings to share her views and feelings about her treatment plan, which she also felt was inadequate. The CRO started supporting PA by attending conferences and sharing several letters PA had written with professionals prior to having an advocate. The CRO also attended core group meetings on PA's behalf.

PA was increasingly having issues with health professionals and felt that being in hospital was making her condition worse and not better. She was desperate to be discharged home, however, due to the FII concerns this wasn't possible.

PA's main issue was with her physiotherapists and the nursing staff on her ward. She felt that she was being treated differently compared to other patients because of what health professionals thought of her parents. PA would regularly contact the CRO to complain about not being seen on time by nursing staff, not having painkillers on time, not having anyone to speak with, and feeling as though she would get her parents in trouble if she discussed any of these issues with them. This was further exacerbated by PA feeling unable to get in touch with her Social Worker when she needed, and feeling the Social Worker was siding with the health professionals, increasing her feeling of alienation. This resulted in PA wanting a change of Social Worker and the CRO submitted a complaint to the Social Worker's Team Manager on her behalf. Unfortunately, this wasn't successful due to it being a complicated case and being so far along. The Team Manager contacted PA to let her know she would remain having her Social Worker and not take the complaint further. PA agreed with this.

The CRO was able to share her views about Health professionals at Core group meetings as well as directly with Hospital staff.

As the case progressed, PA's recovery did not improve. Social Care felt that PA's condition in hospital wasn't improving due to her parents' involvement and that the best path of recovery for PA would be to remove her from her parents. Social Care started proceedings and the case went to court.

This was a devastating turn of events for PA and she wanted to be able to share with the court her wishes and feelings. The CRO was able to inform PA about the court process and let her know she had the option to have an independent solicitor should she want one. PA wanted to be able to share her views, the CRO sourced an independent solicitor for PA to ensure her wishes and feelings were being taken into consideration. PA was also appointed a court Guardian who would be her voice in care proceedings.

The court ultimately decided that the threshold wasn't met for PA to be removed from her family, and that this would further hinder PA's recovery and progress. Social Care and Health agreed that a discharge from hospital would be best at this point, to give PA a chance to recover at home and monitor her wellbeing via the Child Protection plan. This was ultimately what PA had hoped for and she was elated to be able to finally go home after a year in hospital.

As part of her recovery plan, there was a planned move to a specialist clinic in Manchester, specialising in rehabilitating children with FND. PA and her parents had wanted her to go to this clinic since the start of her stay in hospital, and PA finally was able to go in August 2023.

PA's Child Protection plan ended shortly after. She is considering a complaint against the local authority as she feels the entire process has been traumatic given that in the end she was discharged back home to her family. PA has also requested access to her social care records which the CRO has made a Subject Access requested for her.

<i>The worries</i>	<i>What worked well</i>	<i>Outcome for young person</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PA feels very negative about staying in hospital for such an extended time. She feels that she should be discharged to a specialist clinic that can treat her FND. • PA feels that Health isn't listening to her, and that her parents are being punished for wanting to help her get better. • PA is worried that she will be removed from her parents and placed into care which she does not want. • PA dislikes the physiotherapy sessions as she feels these always set her back and she is in more pain when she does them. • PA feels worried that she isn't able to walk and hold her head up due to being pushed too hard in a physio session and causing her to deteriorate. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PA engaged well with the CRO and was able to express herself and attend the Initial and review conferences with the CRO. • The CRO was able to support PA share the letters she had previously written with professionals at conferences. • CRO was able to inform PA of her rights to attend meetings, and the avenues available to her to complain should she not be allowed to attend them. • PA felt confident that CRO would be able to share her views at Core Group meetings and decided that CRO should attend on her behalf. • The CRO was able to represent PA's views at core group meetings regarding her continuing stay in hospital and the impact of this on PA as she no longer 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PA felt supported by the CRO to get her views across to Hospital and Social Care. • PA was able to attend her conferences and share her views. • PA was able to make complaints when she felt she wasn't being listened to. • PA had access to a solicitor and independent legal advice. • PA was able to fully participate in the process with the support of the CRO.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PA mentions that she was walking and able to use her legs when she first got admitted, and her downturn was a result of the physio sessions that made her do more than she could handle. • PA is very negative about the nursing team on the staff and feels that they dislike her or see her as a troublemaker. • PA feels she had a positive relationship with nursing staff until Social Care got involved and her parents became the 'bad guys'. As a result, PA feels that none of them talk to her as much as they did before, don't keep her company or sit with her and she feels very lonely in her cubicle when her parents aren't around. • PA was moved from her cubicle and placed on the main ward to accommodate for the rise in admissions during winter, which she is extremely unhappy about. • PA feels that she does not have any privacy on the main ward and that the nursing staff aren't respecting her need for privacy as she's older than the majority of patients whom are mostly younger children and babies. • PA feels she shares her worries and complaints about the nursing staff and physiotherapists with 	<p>felt motivated to engage with physio.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PA and CRO had a in depth conversation regarding Public Law Outline process and PA understood her rights and entitlements to a solicitor during the process. She was able to exercise this right and the CRO was able to secure a solicitor for her. • PA understood she could make a complaint and request a change of Social Worker which the CRO was able to support her with, by writing a complaint together to the Team Manager. • CRO was able to share PA's views with the Head nurse regarding her move to the main ward and lack of privacy, resulting in a meeting being set up by Social Worker with nursing staff and PA's Guardian. This put together a plan to accommodate PA's needs to privacy whilst also adhering to hospital policy to find a middle ground when curtains could be open or closed. • The CRO shared in Core Group meetings PA need for a specific person in the Hospital which PA could raise concerns to. Health put a lead nurse in touch with PA and her parents so PA could raise any issues with about the ward, nursing staff or physio, ensuring any concern would be investigated and dealt with promptly. • The CRO met with the IRO and Social Worker to advocate for PA to attend 	
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<p>her doctors but says they tell her she's not telling the truth.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PA is worried she may not be allowed to attend any more conferences • PA is worried that the LRI isn't a specialist unit and therefore do not know how to support her recovery properly, and yet do not want to discharge her so she can go to Manchester for treatment. • PA is worried she has not been seen by her Social Workers and that her messages to them have not been responded to. 	<p>conferences, whilst also ensuring she wasn't exposed to any conflict between parents and professionals within these meetings. The IRO heard PA's reasons for wanting to attend and agreed it would be important for her to have the opportunity to share her experience and wishes with professionals.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Despite not getting on with nursing staff, PA built a positive relationship with the Play Specialist on the ward. • PA was very determined to work hard in the Hospital School so that she didn't fall behind as she wishes to pursue Higher Education in the future. • PA was extremely happy that the judge decided she should be discharged home and felt that she was finally getting what she wanted. • The CRO was able to liaise with the specialist unit in Manchester to facilitate PA to attend her final Review Child Protection Conference. She joined virtually with the help of her support worker there. PA was able to offer final thoughts about what the experience has taught her, how she felt much better within herself now, she was getting the proper treatment she needed and how upset she was at how long it had taken to get to this point. 	
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Children's Rights Officers (CRO) – Children in care and Care Leavers work

Each young person who comes into care over the age of 5 years old is contacted by a member of the Corporate Parenting team to inform them of the services and activities the team facilitates and to offer them a CRO. For young people below the age of 16 years, they are often contacted via their carer. Young people over the age of 16 are often contacted directly by a member of the Cooperate Parenting team.

CRO's also contact all young people and/or their carers living in residential homes routinely at 6 monthly intervals to check on their wellbeing and offer them a CRO.

Number of referrals

From 1st April 2022 until 31st March 2023, we received 61 referrals for children in care and children who have left care (care leavers). 7 of these referrals did not meet the remit of our service and support for the young person was required by another professional.

Of the 54 referrals accepted by our service:

- 5 (9%) were for Care Leavers
- 19 (35%) were for children in care under s20 voluntary accommodation
- 6 (11%) were for children in care under s30 interim care orders
- 23 (43%) were for children in care under s31 full care orders
- 1 (2%) was for a young person open to the Child Sexual Exploitation team wishing to make a formal complaint.

Reason for referral – key themes

Together with information being shared when a child becomes looked after, young people can refer themselves for advocacy support or they can be referred by any professional, parent or carer involved with them at any time when there are in care. The Children's Rights Service for Children in care and Care Leavers is an opt-in service and they can access advocacy support at any time up to the age of 25.

Of the 54 referrals accepted by our service, the reason for the referral was for:

- 2 (4%) - Meetings support
- 1 (2%) - Informal complaint
- 15 (28%) - Formal complaint
- 6 (11%) – Care plan issues
- 3 (5%) - Explain rights/entitlements
- 1 (2%) - Access independent legal advice
- 2 (4%) - child requesting a new social worker
- 2 (4%) Education support
- 3 (5%) - Contact issues
- 8 (15%) - Placement issues

- 3 (5%) - Housing issues (18+ years)
- 8 (15%) – Other

We have identified 3 main themes during this year period that young people are having issues with and want CRO support for.

1. Educational issues especially for children with Special educational needs

We have received multiple referrals for young people regarding them being out of education, in unsuitable education settings, and having a lack of educational support. We have also had a young person have their EHCP plan ceased with no support provided after this albeit the young person still required support. The team has made formal complaints to SENA on young people's behalf and there has been a significant delay in responses to the complaints and actions undertaken by them. Most of the issues have been resolved with new educational settings found and support increased. For one young person work is still ongoing with SENA and their PA for the appropriate support for them.

2. Placement issues

We have received multiple referrals for young people who are having issues in their placements, this includes issues with the care they are being provided, where they are living and wishing to move placement. An example of support provided is below in case study IH.

3. Formal complaints

Our largest number of referrals has come from young people who wish to make a formal complaint. Whilst we try to sort any issues for young people informally in some cases the young person has come to a point where they feel the only option is to make a formal complaint against the LA. An example of support provided is below in case study CCB.

Ages of support

CRO's support children and young people from ages 0-25. This also includes non-instructive advocacy where a young person is unable to give clear direction of their views or wishes in a specific situation. The CRO seeks to uphold the young person's rights, ensure fair and equal treatment and access to services; and ensure that decisions are taken with due consideration for the young person's preferences.

For this year period, the age range we supported was between 5-20 years old with an average age of 15 year-olds.

Number of meetings supported

Of the 54 young people we have supported during this year period the majority of the support has come through numerous: phone calls with young people and agencies, face to face visits, communicating and liaising with relevant professionals and agencies on young people's behalf via phone calls, letter and emails, supporting young people making complaints, seeking independent legal advice and research.

CRO's have supported young people in 75 professional meetings during this year period.

- 32 (43%) meetings young people attended in person with the support of a CRO (face to face)

- 15 (20%) meetings young people attended virtually with the support of a CRO
- 19 (25%) meetings the CRO attended solely on behalf of the young person
- 9 (12%) meetings the CRO sent a report to the meeting

Types of meetings attended (75 meetings):

- 30 (40%) Review of Arrangements
- 2 (3%) Placement stability meetings
- 1 (1%) Secure accommodation reviews
- 8 (11%) Legal meetings
- 11 (15%) Child Protection/Child in Need/Child in care meetings for their own child
- 1 (1%) Education meeting
- 3 (4%) Complex case meetings
- 4 (5%) At Risk meetings
- 15 (20%) Other meetings (include; strategy discussion, Residential home meeting, visit to a young person who is in a secure accommodation, multi-agency meetings, complaint response meetings with the respondent, trajectory meetings, transition meetings and child in need reviews).

Length of time cases

54 young people have been supported by a CRO during this year period. 36 (67%) of these cases have been closed with the average length of time the cases have remained open being 20 weeks. Young people wanting support with meetings particularly Review of Arrangements can remain open for a significant length of time and often young people want this support throughout their whole time in care. Where possible the young person will have the same CRO if they require advocacy again in the future which helps to build positive and consistent relationships for our young people

Feedback from children and young people

4 Children and young people have provided feedback on having a CRO during their time in care and/or leaving care. Sadly this is a low number of feedback and we are prioritising getting more feedback from our young people moving forward.

What have been the good things about working with the children's rights officer?

- They helped locate historical savings saved for me by an Independent Fostering Agency
- The CRO liaised with professionals so the whereabouts of my savings were quickly identified.
- The CRO checked in with me to confirm that the money had been paid into my bank after receiving confirmation from the Independent Fostering Agency
- Now that I have my savings, I can buy my daughter things I wouldn't have been able to previously. I can now set up a savings account for my daughter

- They provided me with the opportunity to have someone independent to talk to about my Personal Advisor (PA), my accommodation and other support I needed
- I am very happy, My PA is helping me now. My PA helped me with applying for my flat because the CRO asked her to explain things more

What things haven't been very good about working with the children's rights officer?

- Nothing, they made a difference
- Nothing, I am happy

What things could the children's rights officer do to make the service better?

- That every child or young person in care should have a children's rights officer
- I'm happy with everything they did

Where 0 is the children's rights service (officer) hasn't really helped you to be heard or listened to by the people working with you at all, and 10 is that the children's rights service has made sure that you are heard and listened to by the people working with you. Where would you put yourself?

- 10

Did your Children's Rights Officer listen to what you wanted to say?

- 2 Children and young people answered: *Yes, they made me feel that what I had to say was important.*

How helpful did you find the Children's Rights Officer?

- 2 Children and young people answered: *They helped me a lot*

Has the Children's Rights Officer helped your voice to be heard?

- 2 Children and young people answered: *Yes, my voice was heard*

Has the Children's Rights Officer done what they said they would do for you?

- 2 Children and young people answered: *yes, all of it*

Is there anything you think the CRO could have done better or differently?

- Not particularly, you were off ill for a while but that wasn't your fault. But you did help me with what I needed so that's it really
- No

Overall, how would rate CRO service?

- 1 young person answered: *Excellent*
- 1 young person answered: *Good*

Any other comments you would like to make?

- You were the person I spoke to out of the service so I would score you the highest grade, you were amazing.

Case Studies

Supporting young person with a formal complaint

Young people: CCB 16 years old Child in Care

Case Summary: CCB has recently moved into supported accommodation and been out of education since July 2022. CCB was allocated a CRO, as he wished to complain regarding his unhappiness towards the treatment he had received at his previous educational provision, reasons given behind his exclusion and the impact this is having on his future prospects, specifically a referral made to Prevent.

<i>The worries</i>	<i>What worked well</i>	<i>Outcome for young person</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CCB was worried he will not be able to achieve any qualifications, having missed a significant part of his GCSE years. • The impact of being labelled a 'terrorist' will have on his future. • CCB was unaware of schools reasoning for giving him a permanent exclusion. • CCB struggled to engage with professionals due to losing trust with school. • CCB recently moved to independent supported living and lacked independent living skills. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CCB engaged with his CRO's, being honest and open regarding his needs and expectations. • CCB felt comfortable in communicating with his CRO in various forms. • CCB took responsibility in creating a letter of complaint, supported by his CRO's, to send to his previous school. • Multi-agency meetings were arranged and undertaken to ensure CCB needs, and expectations were being met. • The CRO fed back to CCB after every meeting, and liaised with other 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CCB was given the reasoning behind decisions made by school and within social care. • CCB was able to access alternative education comprising of 25 hours in fields of his interest. • CCB was able to achieve qualifications from this. • CCB successfully completed his work with Prevent. <p><i>Increased YP voice</i></p> <p><i>Positive working relationship with professionals</i></p>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CCB had moved to a new area and therefore did not know anyone. • CCB work with Prevent was ending soon. 	<p>professionals the concerns which were being highlighted.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Research was undertaken and key legislation adopted when challenging decisions. 	<p><i>Increase in confidence and self esteem</i></p> <p><i>Stability</i></p>
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Securing Care Leaver Status for a young person

Young person: LH, 16, Care Leaver

Case Summary: LH signed herself out of care and returned home to her mother. LH was not aware and was not informed that she was entitled to Care Leaver support/status. As LH had been in care for more than 13 weeks including some time after her 16th birthday she is classed as a Relevant Child. Making her eligible for similar entitlements of a Care Leaver had she left care at 18. LH was also entitled to a Personal Advisor for 6 months due to having returned home to her mother.

The locality team did not transfer LH over to Care Leavers team prior to her returning home to her mother and signing herself out of care and subsequently closed the case. This led to a delay in LH being allocated a PA and having ongoing support. The CRO wrote to the Team Managers of both teams explaining the situation and LH's rights and entitlements, however still no action was taken by the Team managers. The CRO escalated this to her manager to action which led to LH eventually receiving the support she is entitled to.

Following this, LH was allocated a PA to work with her for 6 months. The CRO advised LH of the outcome which she was pleased with.

<i>The worries</i>	<i>What worked well</i>	<i>Outcome for young person</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • LH has signed herself out of care and is worried about the future. • LH is not sure of what support she is entitled to receive now she is no longer in care. • LH needs support navigating living back at home and College. • Six months on, LH is still waiting on being allocated a PA. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The CRO was able to approach the Team Manager and previous Social Worker and request LH transfer to Care Leavers team. • The CRO informed LH of her rights and entitlements as a care leaver. • The CRO was able to advocate for LH to have PA allocated using relevant legislation. • The CRO submitted a complaint to their manager which was escalated to Team Manager. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • LH's worries were listened to. • LH was allocated a PA to support her for 6 months. • LH has a pathway plan, setting her up for the future once PA involvement ends. • LH feels clearer about her rights and entitlements as a Care Leaver.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • LH was allocated a PA and the 6 months to start from the date of allocation rather than when she signed out of care. • LH now has a pathway plan 	
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Supporting young person to share their views

Young Person: Y(A)C is a 17-year-old Child in Care – Section 20

Case Summary – YAC has recently come into care. It is less than 12 months until she turns 18 and becomes a Care Leaver. YAC is placed in a semi-independent placement at the opposite side of the county to her family home. She isn't currently having any contact with family members due to relationship breakdown and the family voicing that they feel shame within their community that their daughter is in care.

<i>The worries</i>	<i>What worked well</i>	<i>Outcome for young person</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • YAC was experiencing trauma from recent experiences within her family • YAC's cultural needs were not being recognised or met by the LA. • YAC was not being supported with her identity. • YAC didn't have a support network • YAC was struggling to engage in education even though she is very bright academically and has positive aspirations. • YAC had limited independent skills 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A positive working relationship was developed with YAC • YAC began to trust the CRO because she could see issues were being addressed and matters were progressed. • YAC was very receptive to advocacy support and would reach out as issues presented. • YAC was always happy to engage and was open and honest. • Good communication was established between the CRO and the allocated social worker. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Additional financial support was made available to YAC so she could purchase culturally appropriate hair and skin products of her choosing. • A Qur'an and a prayer mat were made available to YAC so she was able to practice her religion. • YAC was supported to celebrate festivals in line with her faith. • YAC felt more settled in her placement • YAC re engaged with education <p><i>Increased YP voice</i></p> <p><i>Improved confidence, self esteem and self-worth</i></p>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • YAC was experiencing poor mental health, anxiety, low self esteem and low self-worth. • YAC found it difficult to trust people that she doesn't know and lacked motivation. • YAC finds asking for support or accepting support from professionals a challenge • YAC had never had to budget 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Appropriate challenge was made by the CRO to the LA on a range of different issues to ensure YAC rights and entitlements were recognised and upheld, very importantly her cultural and identity needs. • YAC was able to work with mental health services. 	<p><i>Independent living skills increased.</i></p> <p><i>Improved mental health</i></p>
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Supporting a young person to remain in current placement.

Young Person: IH, Care leaver aged 20; placed out of authority.

Case Summary - IH moved to an adult placement in Devon in October 2020. She has a severe learning disability, is non-verbal and can display very challenging behaviour. She moved to the area as her mother lives there and has contact weekly, which is very positive. IH settled well in the placement and remained very settled and there has been a significant improvement in her behaviour and her general well-being.

The placement staff team have worked hard to develop independent living skills and IH goes out in the community for walks, to the café, to the beach as well as activities within the home.

IH is jointly funded by health and social care however both departments are now saying that the placement is too expensive, and she will probably have to move.

<i>The worries</i>	<i>What worked well</i>	<i>Outcome for young person</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The decision may be resource led rather than needs led • IH is very settled, and she may have to move • A move may be geographically away from the people (her mother) who 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Various approaches of non-Instructed advocacy were considered; The person-centred approach, Rights based approach, The watching brief and Witness - Observer approach. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 'Affirmative action via non-Instructed advocacy was taken on behalf of IH to uphold her rights and ensure fair and equal treatment. Due consideration to her views was heard' (Henderson 2006)

<p>is very important to her and who is a significant person in her life</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • IH is nonverbal so her voice may not be sought in the process • It is well documented that IH behaviour has significantly improved. Any move may lead to an introduction of negative behaviours • Her routines and the familiarity she has built up with staff and her surroundings will be disrupted • Any move may have a negative impact on her emotional wellbeing given she may feel that she has lost or is losing her safe base. • A move may inhibit IH ability to develop positive relationships with staff in the future for fear of another move. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A combination of the second and third approach was adopted • Information was gathered from the people who knew IH well. • Research was undertaken to ensure correct processes were being followed by the decision maker. • Dialogue between the decision maker and advocate was established. • Key legislation was considered • Appropriate challenge was made to the 'Best interest assessor' 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • IH voice was heard • IH's rights were upheld • IH was able to remain in the placement she has seen as home for over 2 years. • IH is able to build on and further develop all the positives she has achieved over the previous 2 years. <p>Increased YP voice</p> <p>Positive working relationship with professionals from adult services</p> <p>Stability</p> <p>No disruption to contact with direct family members</p>
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Participation

Beacon Voices – Children in Care Choir

The Beacon Voices choir is held on a Monday evening between 5-7pm at the Attenborough Arts Centre in Leicester. Our young people in care get to sing and have fun every week, led by a talented Music Director. The young people are able to showcase their talents at various events and sing a range of songs from old school classics to modern tunes.

This year all the choir rehearsals have been face to face which has been fantastic for both the staff and young people. We have had visits to the theatre and lots of choir members participated in their first performance.

The period ending March 2023 the choir had up 15 members with an average of 12 attending each week. Ages range from 8-15 years old. The average age of a choir member is 11 years old. The choir is made up of approximately 40% boys and 60% girls.

We welcomed Simon Lubowski for approximately five months from May 2022 to be our Music director. He inspired the choir to really take ownership of their voices and realise what a powerful tool they all had! Autumn 2022 saw the arrival of Matt Davis who took over the role of musical director. He encourages the choir members to sing well during concerts and has introduced musical instruments to their rehearsals. Matt is enjoying getting to know the choir members and observing how they have improved not only as individuals but the way they work together as a choir. Matt says that being the musical director of the Beacon Voices is the highlight of his week.

On the 5th and 6th May 2022, the Celebration of Achievement awards took place at the Leicester Space Centre. The choir sang two songs to their largest audience of the year. They sang loud and clear to the audience who clapped and cheered!



The choir invited people to come and hear their Christmas singalong on 12th December 2022. Foster carers, friends, family members and professional were all invited along to watch the choir sing a range of Christmas and non-Christmas songs. There were approximately 30 guests who watched the choir and afterwards joined them for refreshments in the Salmon Gallery. The choir members introduced the songs themselves and sang brilliantly.



On 27th February 2023, the Beacon Voices choir visited Curve theatre to see the Kaine Youth Showcase which featured a hip hop group, heavy metal band, dance troupe, saxophonist and solo singer. The choir interacted with the MC and really embraced the acts they saw that night.

On the 27th of March 2023, the choir were able to watch the Music hubs show entitled “Leics Make Music Festival” at De Montfort Hall. This event saw Leicestershire and partners bringing together young people to celebrate 75 years of music making in 2023. The choir were able to watch - The Leicestershire Music Steel Pan ensemble, Junior band, Intermediate strings, Babington College band and Leicester Taiko. The choir were really enthralled by the Taiko drums and the Steel pan band. Hopefully, this experience will encourage the choir members to seek out further musical experiences in the future.

The choir continue to grow in confidence week by week, and I am so pleased by their eagerness to sing to others at events. Whilst singing the choir members are also increasing their concentration, focus and active listening skills. There is a real sense of community within the group as older members support younger members. Members contribute to song choices and friendships are made. I always have lots of volunteers to read out the song introductions at performances which is great. I am very proud of all the choir members and look forward to next year and the new performances they can create and along with the ones we will watch.

Through working with the Assistant Head of Music Services, Sarah Share, the choir is looking to encourage more members to attend. With more new choir members the need for recruitment of volunteers to facilitate the choir is vital to enable the choir to run safely.

When I asked the choir members what they like about the Beacon Voices choir they responded:

- “Singing and meeting new people”
- “Because I love to sing, and I get to see all of my friends as well”
- “I love singing all the songs and I never get tired”
- “I like coming to choir as I want to be a professional singer”
- “The food, and I like singing”
- “I like coming to choir because I learn different songs every time, I also like the food at choir and make new friends”
- “Because I like to sing and make new friends”

- “The food, the adults and kids are friendly, the environment is good. It makes me excited to come from school to see my friends”

Out in Care – LGBT group

Out in Cares’ numbers have grown in 2022-2023. We now have 7 young people on the register ages ranging between 13-19. On average 5 attend each month.

In August we had a professional makeup artist attend the group, who styled the group members in a variety of different ways, including creating a “flick” on the eye.



We had a fantastic day out at Leicester Pride on the 4th of September 2022. Staff and group members got “glittered up” for the event and had a great day out. We managed to hold the flag for its journey to Victoria Park, and one of the group members got to hold one end of part of the “balloon rainbow.” Once at the park we stayed together for a short time visiting the stalls before the older members of the group went off to enjoy the event and the younger ones went home.



We were able to hold a mini pride event during October half term 2022 and the young people that attended made God's eyes, marshmallow ghosts and had a go at boxing. We also had a discussion around what makes a good worker which generated a lot of interesting responses.



Our Christmas event this year was to go and watch Black Panther: Wakanda Forever at the Cinema. The group all seemed to enjoy this although it seemed to be a tearjerker for some!

Friendships are formed during the Out in Care meetings, which is an extremely valuable element of the group and the members of the group also support each other outside of the group arena. There have been some very meaningful discussions around transgender issues, celebrating key events in the LGBTQ+ calendar and talking about celebrities from the community. Older members are always incredibly supportive of younger members and have a breadth and depth of experience that they are always happy to share. Members of the group are able to articulate well their names and the pronouns they wished to be called by.

At the end of March 2023, the LGBTQ+ centre closed its doors for the final time and the staff and groups that had met there, including the Out in Care group, dispersed across the city into other buildings. We will have our first meeting at the Attenborough Arts centre in April 2023. Hopefully, this venue will be central for the young people that attend and group members will continue to increase.

Children in Care Council

Children in Care Council is a group of young people who are all cared for by Leicestershire County Council. Meetings take place on a monthly basis at County Hall from 6.30pm - 8.00pm. Current membership comprises up to 20 young people, with an age range of 12 - 17yrs.

In addition to monthly meetings, members also regularly participate in a number of working party meetings, linked to a range of different Children in Care Council projects and young people's identified priorities.

Children in Care Council provides an important opportunity for our children and young people to collectively have a voice and influence upon the things that really matter in their lives. This includes members helping to shape and inform policy and procedures, with emphasis always on a solution-focused approach. Meetings are also consistently attended by both our Assistant Director and Lead Member for Children and Family Services.

Children in Care Council members also have strong and well-established links with Leicestershire's Corporate Parenting Board. This ensures young people have direct access to senior officers within the local authority, as well as representatives from key partner agencies and services, who collectively share corporate parenting responsibility for Leicestershire's Children in Care.

In seeking to continuously broaden reach and representation, several new members have successfully been recruited throughout the year and begun to attend monthly meetings. Accordingly, in order to build relationships and seek to establish positive group dynamics, Children in Care Council members have regularly taken part in a series of successful training and team-building activities.



This has enabled new friendships to be established and it has been extremely rewarding to observe members grow in self-confidence and become more able to fully express themselves. Crucially, our Children in Care Council provides a safe space where members can share experiences, feelings and their emotions.

In terms of specific projects and priorities throughout the year, Children in Care Council members effectively contributed to numerous consultations across a range of LCC Departments and Statutory and Voluntary Sector partners. A key and ongoing priority for our young people has been a focus upon the use of professional language and the often negative impact this can have upon care-experienced children and young people.

In order to progress this important work, funding was secured from the East Midlands Regional Participation Leads Group, enabling a residential to be organised and held at Beaumanor Hall in late October 2022.

For the very first time, the residential successfully secured collective engagement and representation from all Local Authority Children in Care Councils from across the East Midlands Region. Led by Leicestershire, the weekend provided an opportunity for young people to engage in a program of outdoor pursuit activities, whilst through a series of workshops reflecting on and sharing personal experiences pertaining to the use and impact of language and professional terminology. Young people describing and re-affirming how the mixture of day-to-day language, acronyms and abbreviations label, stigmatise and disempower children in care.

The weekend concluded by hosting a plenary session between young people and senior leadership representatives from each local authority, enabling young people's views and recommendations to be presented directly to those with key decision and policy making responsibilities.

Following the residential, Children in Care Council members continued to take real ownership of the project and collectively agreed further consultation and a broader evidence base was required specifically focussing upon the experiences of Leicestershire's Children in Care.

Utilising SNAP Software and working in partnership with LCC Business Intelligence colleagues, Children in Care Council members were empowered to co-produce and launch in early January the online Language of Care Survey.

It was intended to utilise existing established relationships between social work staff and targeted children and young people from their caseloads. This was done through one-to-one reflective discussions to gain further insight from children and young people's personal experiences. In implementing a targeted approach, this also ensured all protected characteristics would be effectively represented within the collated data and final analysis.

Please see the attachments in the appendix that include background guidance notes provided to social care colleagues and a copy of the Online SNAP Survey.

Once completed, Children in Care Council members will continue to be at the forefront of leading this work and alongside senior officers establishing best practice guidance and expectations into 2023/24.

Throughout the year, our Children in Council has also continued to make a significant contribution to staff recruitment and selection. This has included members completing recruitment and unconscious bias training provided by LCC Learning and Development colleagues and regularly taking part in young people led interview panels involving all tiers of the department.

Monthly meetings have also included members continuing to have responsibility for the allocation of Time to Spend Funding, with £150 available per application towards enabling other Children in Care to try a new activity, hobby or interest.

Corporate Parenting Board

Meeting on a quarterly basis, Leicestershire's Corporate Parenting Board has continued to provide Children in Care Council members with important access and opportunity to work alongside senior leaders from not only within the local authority but also external services who share responsibility for both our Children in Care and Care Leavers.

Alongside the Lead Member for Children and Family Services, a Children in Care Council representative will always co-chair meetings, with other young people providing regular updates and progress reports pertaining to Children in Care Council projects and evolving priorities.

Crucially, the format of Corporate Parenting Board meetings provides our young people with immediate access and opportunity to inform and have influence upon senior leadership representatives. This not only enables our children in care to have a voice within policy and practice development but also seeks to challenge and hold key decision-makers to account.

Thematic based discussions have continued to be based upon young people's identified priorities, whilst providing an opportunity to share any worries or concerns and also to collectively learn from and celebrate the things that are working well.

Indeed, across the year, lengthy discussions have focussed on the Children in Care Council's work focusing upon professional language and the impact of day-to-day terminology. Corporate

Parenting Board has secured a real commitment amongst partner agencies and services to not only reflect upon practice, but more broadly work towards implementing collectively more sensitive and young people friendly language.

Celebration of Achievements Awards

On the 5th and 6th May 2022 our Children in Care Celebration of Achievement awards took place at the National Space Centre in Leicester. This was an amazing, fun packed two nights celebrating our children and young people.

The staging and seating were set amongst the exhibits which created a fantastic backdrop to the awards being handed out to the children and young people. 208 in the 14+ age category were nominated for awards on the Thursday evening and 144 in the 5–13 year-olds category were nominated for awards on the Friday evening.

The space centre exhibits were accessible to all to explore including a trip to see the rocket tower and a visit to the planetarium! There was Space themed Bingo and the Beacon Voices choir entertained guests on both evenings.

All staff, foster carers and other professionals were so proud of the young people and children who attended who had all achieved so much.

These are some of the responses from the young people and children said when asked 'what was the best thing about the event':

- Choir
- Friendly people
- Seeing all the staff
- Planetarium
- Music
- The Awards
- Everything
- Food
- Getting my award
- Rocket tower
- Venue
- Getting photo on the night



Summer Scheme 2022

The Summer scheme's theme for this year was about the environment and recycling. 33 children and young people attended the 4 day scheme.

We had three different sessions for the participants to take part in over three days and these were sports, art and environmental sessions. The children engaged well with the sports sessions and had the opportunity to experience archery, curling and dodge ball. Art sessions were led by the team leaders and staff and were based around the theme of recycling and general crafts.

We were able to have the expertise of the Leicestershire County Council Environmental team who came along and helped the children to learn about recycling through a game involving bean bags with photos of different types of food and other household items which had to be thrown into the relevant "bin." The children also got to make a hibernaculum otherwise known as a bug hotel. The session was very thought provoking but fun at the same time.



Another day we were visited by two staff members from the Body Shop who were able to provide the children with a real hands-on session which involved removing aloe vera from the leaves of the aloe vera plant, lots of descriptive words used! The children were also able to plant a spider plant in a recycled hand cream pot which they took home.



The final session was arranged by staff from Severn Trent water. The children had fun playing snakes and ladders on a large scale with huge dice and a huge games board which was played outside and were also able to watch the life cycle of a rain drop through VR glasses.



On the final day of the summer scheme, all the young people had the opportunity to challenge themselves on the zip wire and high ropes. These proved to be very popular activities and were enjoyed by all.

Christmas event 2022

An event involving food, a film, and bingo was held on the 20th of December inviting children in care and their carers to come along and join us for this afternoon, in the council chamber and executive's lounge. The film was the "Polar Express," and it was shown on the "big screen," popcorn was on hand. The Vice Chairman and Lead Member for Children and Family Services attended the event, gave the welcome speech and supported with activities.



When the children, young people and foster carers were asked what they enjoyed the most about this event these were some of the responses:

- The film
- All face to face
- Being with other children
- Everything
- Having cans of pop and chicken, wedges and popcorn

- Been relaxed
- Loved Bingo

Events with unaccompanied asylum-seeking children and young people

Friends and food 14th June 2022

Unaccompanied asylum-seeking children and young people were invited to an event entitled “Friends and Food” at Loughborough University.

24 children and young people attended the event and had a great time. There was lots of pizza, football, cricket and chat.





Some of the comments that were collected from the event included:

- Nice day, see lots of staff
- Football, food everything was good
- Football, food, see previous social worker
- The get together
- Everything, watching the match, food and chatting
- Football and food
- Football
- Nice day, enjoyed everything, playing football
- Seeing old mates and previous social worker
- Friends and SW, enjoyed football and cricket
- Seeing my friend/ interpreter
- Food, happy to come once a month
- Previous Social worker here and seeing my mates
- Everything, favourite football
- Everything, saw lots of Afghans, had a great time

Event at Leicestershire County Cricket ground

On the 2nd of August 2022 6 unaccompanied asylum-seeking children and young people joined a session in the nets at Leicestershire County Cricket ground. There was some exceptional talent there that day and a really good atmosphere. Staff from the virtual school and UASC team were present, and refreshments were provided.



Event at Leicester City Football club

In the 30th of August 2022 another group of unaccompanied asylum-seeking children and young people attended the Leicester City Football club grounds for a stadium tour. The group really enjoyed the event and were able to have an “access all areas” tour which included the trophy room, media hub and changing rooms. Lots of smiles and positive chat!



Craft workshop

On the 29th November 2022 female unaccompanied asylum-seeking children and young girls were invited to attend a craft workshop and demonstration by two staff from The Body Shop. The young people who attended were able to make an exfoliator for their hands, Mexican Gods eyes and access Aboriginal art.



5. What is the impact for our children and families?

Feedback from children

As illustrated above there has been lots of positive feedback in relation to Corporate Parenting events, especially the Summer Scheme, which was seen as a real success in 2022. The feedback from carers on behalf of the children was really impressive, with comments talking about things such as; how much fun it was, how much the children liked meeting new friends, activities help building confidence and generally talking about how much everyone enjoyed it. The summer scheme planned for 2023 is going to be even bigger than last year and it's great to see how many people have volunteered to support this event including our Director of Children's services. The summer scheme is generally seen as brilliant way to get to get to know some of our amazing young people, have some fun and get an insight into what they think.

Traditionally Summer Scheme is also a good introduction for children and young people to learn about the Corporate Parenting Team and find out about other things they can get involved in such as Children in Care Council with key activities and opportunities publicised.

One of the key messages from the young people in the Children in Care Council recently has been about the importance of any work they do being meaningful. The Children in Care Council has a clear focus on getting young people's views on the level of service that the local authority provides and what could we do to make improvements. This has been seen as very important to young people in the council, who have made statements such as 'I want to make a difference' and 'I want to make things better for other children that come into care'.

The Children's Rights service have received 100% positive feedback from young people who have accessed the service expressing how they have felt listened too and supported due to having a Children's Rights Officer.

Feedback from professionals

Feedback from professionals on the work of the Corporate Parenting Team has again been very positive this year. In particular the IRO's (Independent reviewing officer's) very much value the work of the Children's Rights Officers. A strength of the CRO's is how they have prioritised seeing children face to face however they will work virtually with young people if that's what the young person chooses. Evidence has shown that often face to face meetings with young people have been the most effective way to build relationships and enable them to fully express themselves and feel their voice is important.

6. What can we do better?

There has been some excellent work undertaken by the Corporate Parenting Team during this year, with a lot to be very proud of. Last year one of the challenges we set ourselves was to consider how we can best engage young people who are living in Children's homes in and out of county. A priority area for us has been to ensure that we are regularly in contact with these young people to ensure that each young person is aware of the Corporate Parenting Team, what we do and how they can make contact with us if they need to.

Every 6 months we get information from the Commissioning Team of every child placed in a children's home and the Children's Rights Officers contact each young person to check on their wellbeing and see if they need any advocacy support. This system needs to be kept under review as what we are finding is that the majority of young people don't wish to come to the phone and understandably talk to a stranger. The information regarding our team is sent to the relevant children's homes to share with the children if they don't wish to talk to us on the phone. However for the future, we may need to look at a better way to engage with these young people and this may include face to face visits to these children's homes. However, given staffing capacity and a large amount of children placed out of the county this could prove difficult to achieve.

It was also positive that our Children in Care Celebration of Achievements Awards event at the National Space Centre was well attended including by many young people who live out of county, however we still believe that in relation to participation activities there is more to do to further engage with our children and young people living outside of Leicestershire.

Another area where we believe we can do better is in supporting more young people to be part of interview panels. The Corporate Parenting Team have for a long time enabled children to hold young people's panels when interviewing key members of staff in Children and Family Services including Service Managers and Heads of Service, in the coming year we would like to extend this by getting more young people involved to facilitate young people's panels across a wider cross section of job grades, with young people taking more of a lead role in this process including supporting young people to contact the successful candidate to offer them the post.

7. What are our plans for the next 12 months to maintain or improve practice?

Our team plans to update of Child Protection conference booklet for children with the support of our young people. This booklet was developed pre covid-19 and things have changed regarding how conferences are run since the pandemic. We want to ensure that our young people have the most accurate and up to date information regarding Child Protection conferences.

A key focus will be getting more feedback from our children. We will review and update our feedback forms to ensure they are clearer and easy to read for our young people to complete. This will help us audit our service and look at what we are doing well and what we need to improve on.

Our children's Rights service is an independent voluntary service however we are employed by Leicestershire County Council. It is felt to develop our own identity we will develop our own logo with the support and ideas from our young people. The logo will be used in our correspondence and promotional material.

One exciting development in relation young people's participation is the development of the Care Leavers Council. This is being developed by the Care Leavers Team but will be supported by Participation Officers from the Corporate Parenting Team when older children are transitioning from the Children in Care Council. Feedback from young people has told us that they very much like the way the Children in Care Council operates in a way that is very much focused on getting young peoples views and feeding these back through the Corporate Parenting Board and other ways to senior managers and for their views to shape the way the local authority provides services for children in care.

An important piece of work our young people will be getting involved in will be the Language of Care discussions, looking at what words, phrases and professional terminology is used with young people and how we can all work together to ensure that we are talking to children and young people using words that they are comfortable with and meaningful to them. This will be a key piece of work to take forward into 23/24.

Another excellent development proposal within the Corporate Parenting Team is the participation work being strengthened with the Unaccompanied Asylum Seeker Children (UASC). For some time the Corporate Parenting Team have been aware that there has been very little uptake in participation events among the UASC young people and much thought has gone into looking at how best to engage this group. This year our Participation Officer has arranged a number of sports based activities which have been particularly well attended. This is planned to continue into next year with the hope that these young people will wish to take part in our more formal forums of Children in Care Council and Corporate Parenting Board.

8. Safeguarding and Performance Service Delivery Plan 2022-2023

Action No.	Issue	Dept Plan/ CIP refs*	What's working well?	What are we worried about?	What needs to happen? (Action)	By When	What difference will this make? (Impact)
					<i>Please provide detailed actions and deadlines. Information from these columns will be copied into the quarterly report template for your service</i>		
1 All Services	Mandatory All staff are fully aware of the responsibilities they have, in their day-to-day roles in services and with colleagues at work, for advancing the council's equality and diversity objectives	All	<p>There is good attendance at the Practice Lead sessions by IRO's to further develop their skills and knowledge.</p> <p>Signs of Safety is fully embedded into the IRO service, both in CP and LAC.</p> <p>All IRO's have been on the 5-day Sign of Safety Training. They are confident and competent in using and developing the framework.</p> <p>IRO's have been supported to attend a 3-day specialist IRO training, one cohort on CP and another on LAC.</p> <p>There has been staffing additionality within the IRO</p>	Audit activity has identified the need for improvement in the application of safety networks and testing Safety Planning.	<p>Staff access mandatory and bespoke equality and diversity training</p> <p>Staff are supported to attend training events and opportunities to further enhance their skills, knowledge and experience.</p>	<p>March 2023</p> <p>March 2023</p>	The safeguarding service provides a work environment where all staff can access support, build positive career pathways, thus enabling consistent, effective and meaningful engagement and progress for children and families.

			<p>service supporting managing the increasing CP and LAC population.</p> <p>The Safeguarding Service is very well established with strong retention of staff.</p>				
2 All Services	<p>Mandatory</p> <p>Work towards a stronger, evidence-based approach to understanding and tackling inequalities (including relevant research, data, QA activity and engagement with children, young people and families)</p>	All	<p>The Equality and Diversity Guidance has been launched and shared with all staff for application in practice.</p> <p>EDI remains a standing item on all team meeting and supervision agendas, enabling staff with opportunity to discuss any matters relating to equality, diversity and inclusion.</p>	<p>The EDI action plan is underrepresented with colleagues across the service, and we need to receive greater input into championing the action plan and accountability for actions, with representatives from all four service areas.</p>	<p>Equality and Diversity remains as a standing team mtg agenda item and discussed within supervision.</p> <p>EDI action plan which covers all four services within Safeguarding and Performance.</p> <p>Equality, Diversity and Challenge week to be held in January across CSC services, with the review of the EDI guidance.</p> <p>Implement the new Welfare process.</p>	<p>March 2023</p> <p>March 2023</p> <p>January 2023</p> <p>June 2022</p>	<p>Ensure equality, diversity and inclusion remains high on our agenda, with workers feeling empowered to have a voice and influence future ways of working, in addition to celebrating diversity and individually challenging ourselves as well our processes / structures to ensure they align with our We Care and EDI guidance. Thus, providing a fully inclusive working environment for all staff and an inclusive service for our children and families. Thus, enabling staff to feel safe and supported within the Safeguarding and Performance Service to</p>

								challenge ADP and advocate on behalf of our children, families and colleagues regarding any issues.
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Please tell us about any participation/voice/engagement/consultation activity your service is proposing to carry out with children, young people and families.						
				Space /Voice		Audience/Influence
Lead Officer Who is co-ordinating the activity?	What will you do? Title and brief description	When will you do it? Start and end dates	Why? Reason for the activity	Who with? Target cohort eg LAC	How? Method you will use eg snap survey	Impact How will the feedback be used and shared with participants?
Hayley Binley – Service Manager	Facilitate the implementation of the Parent Consultation Group.	To go live in September 2022	To engage parents in the service design and delivery and learn from their feedback of experiences of LCC services.	Parents across all CSC services.	Group meeting	Parents to feel supported within the group, for their views to be obtained and inform future service delivery and improve outcomes for children and families.
Hayley Binley – Service Manager	Implement the new Corporate Parenting Board Structure.	May 2022	To ensure the young people’s voice is informing the key decisions and focus for the board meeting.	Corporate Parenting Board Members	Corporate Parenting Board Meetings.	Stronger evidence of the young person’s informing the board and young people sharing they feel their voice and proposed changes have had an impact

Hayley Binley – Service Manager and Stuart Jones – Assistant Service Manager	Deliver a successful Celebration of Achievement Awards being held in May.	May 2022	To celebrate the achievements of our children and young people who are in the care of the Local Authority.	Children in Care and Care Leavers Service, Corporate Parenting, Locality Teams and SMT	Celebration Event at the Leicester Space Centre.	Our children and young people feel their achievements are recognised and valued by our Children’s Services as well as them having an evening of fun opportunities.
Iona McKenzie – Senior Children’s Rights Officer	Support new children and young people to become involved in the CIC Council meetings, including our harder to reach young people, such as those in placements outside of county, residential and USAC.	June 2022	To ensure our Corporate Parenting Services are inclusive to all our children in care.	Corporate Parenting Team and Children in Care Team.	Driving forward awareness of the services provided through a range of communication methods.	To improve young people’s experiences and participation within Corporate Parenting and ensure our services are inclusive to all our looked after children and young people.
Adrian Clifford – Participation Officer	CIC council to be supported to develop an Equality, Diversity and Inclusion expectations statement.	August 2022	To ensure our practice is reflective of our commitment to championing diversity and being inclusive to all.	Children In Care Council	Meetings	To ensure that our CIC services, care planning and support received is inclusive to all children and young people and their voice is heard and represented.

Adrian Clifford – Participation Officer	Joint IRO/CIC council Task and finish Group to work on the development of more consistency of the application of Signs of Safety within Looked After Children reviews; to enhance the inclusion of the voice and participation of the child or young person.	August 2022	To ensure our children and young people are actively engaged in the facilitation of their ROA meetings.	Children In Care Council	Meetings	To ensure ROA meeting are co-ordinated in a way which is underpinned by the Signs of Safety methodology and supports children and young people chairing their own meetings where they wish to do so.
Iona McKenzie – Senior Children’s Rights Officer	Facilitate and lead on a Corporate Parenting Awareness Week, including a children and young person’s voice conference.	December 2022	To promote the role and responsibilities of being a Corporate Parent to all services within LCC.	Corporate Parenting Team and Children In Care Service.	A range of different activities, including a voice conference, participation activities, publicity and communications.	Ensuring professionals understand their role and responsibilities as Corporate Parents, engaging in different activities and enabling young people to their voice and experiences heard, as well as advocating what Corporate Parenting means to them.

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Date: 30/11/23

Appendix



Survey
Guidance.docx



Children in Care -
Impact of Language -