



Leicestershire
County Council

Our Promise Annual Report 2021-2022

Continuous Improvement
Plan 2021 - 2023

The Road to Excellence

we will
support
you

we
believe
in you

we will
respect and
honour
your identity

we will
listen
to you

we find
you a place
where you
home

we will
involve
you

we will be
a lifelong
champion

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Executive Summary

This Annual Report sets out the implementation of Our Promise for all of our children in care and Care Leavers and the impact that this has had on our support and service delivery.

Key messages within this report are:

- The commitment of and depth agencies are going to, to ensure they meet the areas of Our Promise particularly around young people needing more complex support.
- The quality of the recording within LCC has bought the children and young people 'alive'. children's case notes, reports and chronologies are now written to the child and plans often include pictures. The child or young person's voice is much stronger. The commitment to thinking about language to create a stronger sense of children and young people feeling listened to and valued. Our commitment to ensure that at all times they feel safe and cared for with a great sense of belonging.
- Many services within and outside the authority are supporting Our Promise for example Environment and Transport, and Culture Leicestershire, the LGBT Centre in Leicester and the Bridge in Loughborough.
- Young people's voice has been central in developing Our Promise and evidencing impact. We are ambitious to make sure that the children and young people we care for know their voice is listened to and they are influencing their own plans and the development of the services that support them.
- Our Promise responses have shown ownership through management structures not only in LCC but also in other agencies, from frontline workers to senior managers.



Introduction

In Leicestershire we want to ensure that all children and young people are given opportunities to be happy, healthy and to achieve their best outcomes. We embody this in our continuous improvement plan (2021-23) and the Road to Excellence Across Children and Family Services. The Departmental plan Clearly states out vision:

OUR VISION

Leicestershire is the best place for all children, young people and their families.

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 core values and behaviours highlighted in *The Road to Excellence* are central to our engagement with our children, young people, families and partners and are important to how we drive forward ‘Our Promise’ and for the services we offer to have a meaningful impact (Appendix 1 for the full document).



Our Promise embodies these values and behaviours and our commitment to children in care and care leavers. It was launched in April 2019. Our Promise represents Leicestershire County Council and other agencies’ commitment to the seven needs identified in the Children and Social Work Act 2017 and is a commitment to all children in care and care leavers (relevant children and former relevant children), across all service areas including, localities, Disabled Children’s Service and Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (UASC).

The Council has a strong Corporate Parenting ethos which recognises that the care provided for children is not just about keeping them safe but also advocating for them and being aspirational for their futures.

Leicestershire County Council’s Elected Members and key partner agencies have embraced and are committed to Our Promise. Collectively we want to enable all our young people to make positive life choices and achieve their goals and beyond.

Our Promise sets out our commitment to ensure that Leicestershire County Council and partners provide the best support, guidance and care to our children in care and care leavers. It demonstrates that we value them for their individuality, provide stability and offer aspirational life chances as a good parent provides for their children. Our Promise makes a commitment directly to children, young people and their families in 7 key areas:

we will support you

- We will provide emotional support
- Whatever you do we will be there
- Ensure all your needs are met
- Provide advice, information, practical and financial support
- We will make sure you know what your rights are
- We will not judge you if things go wrong, we all make mistakes



we believe in you

- We will value your strengths and talents
- Support you to overcome any stumbling blocks you face
- Support you to achieve your goals
- Embrace your individuality
- Encourage your aspirations
- Support you to succeed in life



we will respect and honour your identity

- We will respect your unique identity
- Support you to develop your own personal beliefs and values
- Accept, respect, and celebrate your identity, culture and heritage
- Value, respect and support important relationships
- Encourage you to express your identity positively



we will listen to you

- We will listen and respect you
- Strive to understand your point of view
- Place you at the heart of all decisions
- Support you to talk about your worries and happy times
- Support you to seek independent advocacy.



we find you a place you can call home

- We will do our best to find you a home near people who are important to you
- Ensure you feel safe and secure
- As you grow, we will support you to learn new skills to support your independence
- We are here to support you if things go wrong.



we will inform you

- Legal entitlements and services
- Up to date and accurate information
- Support you to access your care records
- Provide information throughout your journey
- We will support you if you need to make a complaint



we will be a lifelong champion

- Support and breakdown barriers to other agencies
- Work together with other agencies to better meet your needs
- Encourage and support you to make positive life choices
- Will make sure you know how to get support when you need it
- Trust and respect you.



Being a Trauma Informed Organisation

Our Vision

*We are committed to our vision of becoming a trauma informed responsive department where we believe “**we are stronger together**” and our culture is one of partnership where we look for solutions and recognise the potential impact of trauma on the children and families we work with and on our staff.*

We will strive to create a safe, compassionate, healing environment demonstrated through relationships based on trust, respect, hope and empathy.

We will achieve this through a spirit of curiosity, by nurturing connections through relationships, making a deliberate effort to know and understand people, and by providing hope for growth and recovery.

Children and Family Services have embedded an approach of being trauma informed. Hearing and seeing the impact of the trauma children and families experience is critical. Also, to appreciate the trauma the staff themselves may have lived through and the impact of the work that they do. Our lived experiences are real. Young people and families need to be heard and seen for who they are. They need to be supported to see the trauma they have lived through and its impact. But at their pace whilst ensuring the children are safe and secure.

The trauma young people experience has been a focus both nationally and locally particularly after COVID and the mental health issues now faced by old and young alike. For young people who still feel a stigma and challenge around their mental health it is vital we stop and hear and develop services to meet that need.

During the past year and into the next year the Practice Excellence Team have been supporting the Children in Care Service with training around trauma, its origins, its presentation and ways of supporting people who have experienced or are experiencing trauma. By doing this we will be able to support children and their families and their networks with a clearer understanding of what the impact of their experiences have been both now and in the future. The staff will also have an improved understanding their own trauma both personally and secondary trauma through the work they do. This understanding and access to appropriate support will enable effective and meaningful relationship-based practice with our children.

The Role of a Corporate Parent

In the same way that a family shares responsibility for bringing up their children with their extended family members, the corporate parenting responsibility must be shared by everyone involved in supporting children in care and care leavers. Put simply, the term 'Corporate Parent' means the collective responsibility of the council, elected members, employees, and partner agencies, for providing the best possible care and safeguarding for the children who are looked after by us.

When a child becomes looked after in Leicestershire as Corporate Parents, we are committed to provide stability, security and aspirational care for our children, the ambition to secure emotional attachment, physical stability and long-term commitment to children. It also aims to ensure that all children in care receive access to appropriate, high quality and stable education, thus affording them with positive educational experiences.

The Corporate Parent 'test' is to always challenge, 'would this be good enough for my child'?

As Corporate Parents we work with children in care and care leavers up to the age of 25. During this period the Council had between 680-691 children in care. Of these 280 were female and 411 are male. 31 are between the ages of 0 and 5, 115 are between the ages of 5 and 10, and 419 between the age of 10 and 18.

459 of these children and young people live with foster carers or family/friends foster carers, 57 live in residential care. Other are placed with parents, have disabilities and are in specialist residential, independent living or placed for adoption.

In addition, the Council supports close to 362 children who have left care aged 18-25 years, of which 45 are between the ages of 22 and 24 years of age. (August 2022)



The Voice of Children in Care and Care Leavers

Article 12 of The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child says every young person has the right to express their views, feelings and wishes in all matters affecting them and to have those views considered and taken seriously. It is extremely important that young people get the opportunity to shape their own future, have a say on relevant things that affect them and that they are taken seriously. It will be us as young people who will be most affected by any political or local changes made. Lots of policies and services affect us already, and if they don't yet they soon will. Putting the user of a service, the young person, at the centre of its design makes sure that it addresses their needs. (Members of youth parliament 2020)

Leicestershire Children and Family Service's Voice and Influence Strategy sets out the vision and aspirations for all Leicestershire's children, young people and their families to participate and engage in the services that affect them. This strategy relates to children and young people from 0 to 18 and to care leavers and young people with disabilities up to the age of 25. The Voice and Influence Strategy evidences Leicestershire County Council's commitment to putting children and young people at the heart of all our activities through involving them and their families in the decision making, planning, commissioning, design, development, delivery and evaluation of services that affect their daily lives. The voice of our children in care and care leavers is central to Our Promise and will be reflected on throughout this annual report. Our children are enabled to share their views and opinions through a variety of forums such as school councils or CYCLE, the Youth Parliament as well as Children in Care Council and Supporting Young People After Care (SYPAC) and other forums.

As part of the quality assurance carried out in social care we always try and hear the voice of the children and families. The following quote was taken from recent audits.

"R identified that being involved with a social worker was extremely positive and contributed towards him now having stability and security. R referred to positive relationship he has with his allocated worker and that he finds her support invaluable. R outlined that if he did not receive this intervention, he would not have been able to flourish or achieve all he has."

How have we met Our promise in 2021-22?

In this annual report we will focus on four key areas where we will check and challenge how we have implemented 'Our Promise' and where it has made a difference. The four key areas are:

- Leadership
- Partnership
- Voice
- Impact

Teams and services within Leicestershire County Council and external partners who had all signed up to Our Promise have been asked to share information about what they have done to support children in care and care leavers and how their engagement has supported the 7 principles of Our Promise.

In addition to this information sharing, this annual report is supported by two podcasts which have been developed focusing on Leadership and Partnership. This provided opportunity for open discussions and challenge led by some of our children. This annual report will capture strengths and learning from the Podcast discussions

The discussions captured in the Podcasts have been able to identify actions which will be carried through to 22-23.

Leicestershire believes that voice and impact is a golden thread throughout our work with children and families. Within this annual report we will reflect on some of the fantastic voice work undertaken, this will include visual and audio voice work as well as statements from children and young people. Teams have gathered the voice of young people and children including the Virtual School, Fostering and the Disabled Children's Service. This will be showcased and referenced in section 3.



Leadership

For all services provided for children and young people it is vital to ensure support from all who work with them. Leaders and managers are there to ensure the services we provide are robust, the correct services and to offer high challenge and high support. Good strong leadership supports effective service delivery for our children in care and care leavers and is also central to meaningful partnership working.

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The key learning from the podcast is the way the senior leaders within the authority are aware of Our Promise. Senior Leaders are actively involved in ensuring they hear the voice of children and young people and develop the processes, procedures and direct work mirrors the best outcomes for our children and young people. For example, ensuring we have the right staff to able to build relationships and enabling staff to stay with the authority and then ensuring that when they say they will do something they will do. Building trust is critical for our young people to help them make positive steps in their lives. The Assistant Director, Sharon Cooke provides young people with assurance, that we don't just listen to what the workers say, we hear the young people, we go out on visits and attend meetings to hear a rounded view.

Another key is identified by the Head of Service, Kelda Claire. She said that she has heard that it is important to young people to get their life stories told to them both now and in the future, when they want to access their files and understand their journeys.

The Corporate Parenting Board enables leaders from all areas to come together including housing, Virtual School, Youth offending, early years, District Councils and Elected Members. Young people are well represented on the board and co-chair the board with the Lead for Children and Families. The Council has three Lead Member Panels with a councillor acting as the key lead for each of the following:

- Accommodation
- Health and Education and
- Employment.

The panels enable agencies to come together with a member representative to move forward areas for young people. For example, we have worked with the Accommodation Panel and ensured the housing providers and supporting charities know who the most vulnerable young people and children are. This has led to a review of the Housing Protocol with the districts housing authorities and the Care Leavers Team.

By reviewing the Housing Protocol, we are able to identify gaps in provision and support, to ensure we have common understanding of what it means for our care leavers to feel safe and secure and to ensure multi-agency support, as corporate parents, is in place at key transition points or when young people are vulnerable.

LCC's Corporate Parenting Service carried out a piece of work with young people in 2021/22 to review the role of the Corporate Parenting Board. This was important as it enabled young people to review the role of the board, but also to review what they wanted from it.

Virtual meetings were held with the young people. The young people alongside support from staff, reviewed the terms of reference and pulled their ideas into an improved document. The young people were then supported to take this to the board for ratification, and it was launched in January 2022.

The Assistant Director and the Lead Member are regular attenders at the Children in Care Council to ensure they lead from the front in hearing from children and young people.

Over the last year leaders have engaged with the Care Leavers group SYPAC (Supporting Young People After Care). This has enabled children to have a direct line to the top and can engage in meaningful discussions around potential changes and developments. The group has been and will be used to gather views and opinions around potential changes including for Defining Children and Family Services for the Future Programme. DCFS is a change programme focused on ensuring children and families receive the right services at the right time, that has the highest impact and enables them to sustain change.

DCFS programme team worked with the Corporate Parenting Team to provide children and young people with a voice to shape services for better outcomes, that recognised their experience and recognised them as leaders. The voice part of the programme was also designed and delivered by young people. All views gathered were then collated and shared with workstream leads who had to demonstrate how the children and young people's views were taken into account. It was a truly collaborative and innovative approach to voice work and could not have been achieved without the children and young people and the support of the Corporate Parenting Team.

The programme had 3 projects with multiple change workstreams under each. For example, we have supported more children to return to or remain in family-based care by identifying those living within their network and want to do that permanently without us. In December 2021 the Post Order Support Service met with a group of Special Guardianship Order carers to ensure we hear their voice and the potential voice of the child through them. The group were asked to focus on support or information that they could have or would have required before the order was made and after the order was made. This covered the assessment process, finance, contact and support.

Analysing the information, they shared highlighted a few key issues.

What is going well

- Talking to other SGO carers about the realities of caring for a family member in this way.
- When a child had their life story this was positive for the child. The support to write words and pictures for a difficult situation was positive.

Less well

- SGO carers sometimes felt they were pushed into the role too quickly and when they had time to think and learn the role they felt better supported.
- Issues regarding finance and contact with parents need to be more robust
- Help needs to be given on what the carers and children say about their situation to others.

So what are we doing?

- The teams are reviewing the support offered to SGO carers both in the short term and in the future
- Reviewing the need for support grant at the start as often the children and young people come to them with very little.
- And reviewing the need for a mentors/support people for carers who are new to the process.

What was consistently said?

- All felt that their proudest and biggest achievement was their children and being a carer for their children and wouldn't change that for the world. One was happy to speak at future training if supported by the social worker.

We introduced a new service model in November 2021 and started to see the impact of this in May 2022.

DCFS continues to provide opportunities to consider how we can improve services and we are now considering how we can better support children in care for example those who are placed with their parents. It's a chance to ask ourselves and young people, 'Are we doing the right thing for you? What does right look and feel like?'

DFCS 2 will continue the change and improvement journey, including consideration of services and support to children and young people in care placed with their parents and identifying the potential for the removal of care orders. The aim is to ensure children and young people only remain in care as long as is needed and for their family and networks to feel confident to provide care to these children.



OFSTED and Peer Challenge

Ofsted visited us for a Focus Visit on Help and Protection in January. Over a 2 weeks period Inspectors spent 2 days on site meeting with social workers, IROs and senior leaders and considering a number of children's case files.

The Inspectors could see the excellent progress that has been made by the service since our last full inspection in 2019. They reported that we know ourselves well and they agreed with the focus of our continuous improvement plan- The Road to Excellence

The Inspectors found strong evidence of a culture that places children at the centre of our work and decision making. Social workers know their children well. The report highlighted that the 'Creative and thoughtful direct work, using the model of practice is completed with children which gives them the opportunity to share their views and helps children to build a positive and purposeful relationship with their social worker'

Strength based practice, writing to the child, multi-agency work and quality of direct work were all acknowledged by the inspectors to be real strengths. 'Social workers spoke positively about the support they receive from their managers. Supervision takes place regularly and workers spoke about having access to management advice and guidance outside of formal supervision'.

"We are really proud of what you have all achieved and continue to do for children in Leicestershire. This report, following the inspection is a really significant achievement that shows what excellent work you do, the value of your work and commitment and how we can continue to develop to be outstanding for children."

Jane Moore (Director of Children and Family Services).

Ofsted made two recommendations, which are areas that we are continuing to make progress against.

- Consistency in the quality of children's plans.
- Consistency in the recording of supervisions to ensure that it evidences reflective discussion and how this is leading to progress against the child's plan

As part of the overall audit process for Children's services we have evidenced that the quality of the care plans and pathway plans has improved substantially. Nearly all now have for example a picture. This has meant the young person has become visible. When for example a report comes to a panel with the care plan, those people on the panel can actually see the child or young person. They are no longer just words on a page.

Consistency was a key driver this year. With the audits and the involvement of the Practice Excellence Team we have developed the understanding of plans and their role with the staff teams. This has seen a change for the positive. Social workers and personal advisors are more creative in their written documents as well as ensuring the young people have copies and realise, they are a live document.

In terms of supervision this remains a high focus of attention for managers. They have been supported through managers meetings, training, and practice excellence team to ensure as a group they are committing to the same quality of practice for our children and young people. As a department consistency remains a part of our Road to Excellence. For example, workers now come to their supervision with part of the forms completed. This matters because it gives more quality time for reflection and discussions regarding Childrens care plans.

The use of Pods (group supervision) has been driven again with the support of the Practice excellence team to ensure again consistency and reflection opportunities across services as well as across the grades of workers.

You may ask why does this matter for our children in care and care leavers? It matters because as Children and Family Services we support children in the communities they live in, are from and will return to. We aim to provide the right support at the right time. For those children where that support means becoming a child in care, timely and effective intervention will support achieving stability and security for children in care and care leavers.

Getting the work right early on means the ground is laid for better support into care and then the foundations are built for children returning to families when it is safe to do so.



Equality and Diversity



In March 2022, Our Race Equality Strategy – We Care – was launched. It sets out CFS commitment to the principles of diversity, equality of opportunity and inclusion, and recognises the importance of adhering to these principles at all times. Diversity, equality and Inclusion together form a positive approach to recognise that everyone is different and can make and bring their own unique contribution, experience, knowledge and skills to the work across the Department. Jane Moore. Director.

The Director and senior leaders are actively involved in the Equality and Diversity agenda ensuring the needs of children, young people and staff are met regardless of their identify race, gender or another characteristic. The following is an example of bringing the agenda alive by offering themselves to be mentored on different cultural experiences.



CFS Race Equalities Mentoring Pilot

CFS Race Equalities Mentoring Pilot has launched. On Monday CFS Snr Managers met with their race mentors. The mentors will now continue to work alongside CFS Snr Managers to offer high support and high challenge.

By doing this the impact for our families and children and young people is a greater insight into the lived experiences of those from different background and cultures.

Not sure we should let these two out alone LOL!

Jane Moore (Director)

Nicci Collins (Strategic Lead; Transformation and Planning)



We have also developed Equality and Diversity Guidance for practitioners across Children and Family Services.

Leicestershire County Council have been committed to ensuring equality and diversity matters are at the forefront of staff wellbeing as well as informing our service delivery. Since 2020, we have been on a journey to further strengthen the policies and processes which we have in place.

It was evident that there are procedures in place to ensure workers welfare is protected, however, there was not a process in place for looking at how our service delivery to children and families promotes fully inclusive practice.

As a result, a task and finish group was set up to look at different pieces of legislation, policies and procedures and it was agreed Leicestershire County Council would benefit from having a guidance document for all our workers across children and families.

The guidance was reviewed by a range of audiences, including the Practice Development Group, Legal, Senior Management Team, Departmental Management Team, Departmental Equalities Group, as well as our groups including the BAME Network, LGBT+ Staff Network, Disabled Workers Group whom all had input into the development of the guidance.

This document sets out our vision for ensuring the core values held by Leicestershire County Council underpin all practice with our children and families, with whom we provide support and services to.

<file:///C:/Users/kclaire/Documents/compressedCFS%20Equalities%20Guidance%20updated.pdf>

Recruitment

From the start of recruitment, we are engaging young people in the decision making. This enables young people to hear what potential staff say, ask Questions and be an equal part of the recruitment process. There are several ways we do this. One of which is for young people to interview staff as part of a young people's panel, and another way is for young people to be on the same panel. For the Assistant service Manager for Care Leavers, a care leaver sat on the panel with managers and asked questions as part of the panel member and helped the decision making as a panel member. The candidates reflected they found this very challenging but also positive as an experience. The young man reflected he really enjoyed the process and felt his views matter.

There is to be some recruitment coming up in the service whereby there will be pre workshops so that potential candidates can understand the role they are applying for and for them to get the best out of themselves. Young people will be asked to be a part of that workshop. These are virtual and so far, have worked well for other roles.

From the first point of recruitment, we ensure the people applying for post realise our commitment to Equality and Diversity. Our Job adverts say

We are on a journey to be an inclusive department where a culture to celebrate equality, diversity and inclusion is embedded and discrimination challenged at every level together as a department. We warmly welcome those from all cultures, ethnicities, and beliefs - this diversity is vital to our journey and is fundamental to our values and enriches the services we offer our children and families. We particularly welcome applicants from black, minority, ethnic (BME) communities, disabled people, and lesbian, gay, bisexual and trans (LGBT) communities, as they are currently underrepresented within our workforce.

It is essential our workforce represents the people we work for. The children, families and young people will only trust and build relationships with us if they see themselves in the workforce. A new worker recently commented that she felt happy when she walked into her new role and actually saw people like her.

Partnership

Who are our Partners?

The Leicestershire Partnership Board was established to ensure the progress and development of the Children and Families Partnership Plan: Our Children – Our Future:

All of these aspects are embedded within Our Promise specifically for Children in Care and Care Leavers.

Partners include schools, colleges and universities, the police, health providers, the LGBT centre, housing providers and district councils, Turning Point, DWP, members, and charities. Evidence of LCC and partners supporting children and young people is built of relationships. It is recognised that relationship-based Practice ensures a trusting and honest relationship whereby young people feel they are listened to and supported to make positive life choices.

Relationship-based practice isn't just about the support to the children and young people but with and between services. For children in care and care leavers this includes the links we make with others including with their families, health and education services, police, and for the child or young person we work with. In this way we build strength and resilience for children's and young people through networks.

What is Partnership working?

This is summed up well as the forward to the Leicestershire Children and Families Partnership Plan 2021-23, the strategic approach and targets for Partners over the next year.

'Our Children and Families Partnership Plan brings together partners who work closely with our children and young people. Over the past three years we have made great strides in improving the lives of our children and young people, their families, and carers in Leicestershire. A partnership approach where the child's voice is at the forefront of all our thinking and action, provides a safe and supportive culture for our children to thrive. This in turn supports our vision that Children and young people in Leicestershire are safe and living in families where they can achieve their full potential. We are united as partners, and I am incredibly proud to be the Chair of the partnership as we move forward over the next three years'

Cllr Deborah Taylor Lead Member for Children, Families, Safer Communities and Regulatory Services, Deputy Leader of Leicestershire County Council

This plan supports the Leicestershire Children and Families Partnership to focus on five key areas and provide strategic oversight and challenge.

Priority 1: Ensure the best start for life

Priority 2: Safe and free from harm

Priority 3: Support families to be self-sufficient and resilient

Priority 4: Ensure vulnerable families receive personalised, integrated care and support

Priority 5: Enable children to have good physical and mental health

The Partnership Plan is not a detailed description of the work of each partner individually, but an overview of those actions we know that, by working as partner agencies, we can have the biggest impact on the lives of children and young people

Clearly the overarching plan provides support for all children and families. For this report you will see Our Promise is for children in care, leaving care and Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children.

The following link is a Podcast engaging with Partners around their support of our Promise. It allows people to hear what's happened in this area of work but also reflect on what the next year brings.

[CiC Promise Partnership](#)

Leicestershire County Council has worked with several partners over the past 12 months. These include the Police, Health Services covering mental and physical health, Education services and District Councils.

Health Services and LCC have continued to develop services for children in care and care leavers. Operationally there is a group who meet on a regular basis to ensure we are providing the right services at the right time and when there are challenges these are addressed, and solutions found. For example, Dental treatment has become a national issue and non-more so that for those who move around. Health services identified in the Partnership Pod cast the work they will be doing about the language they use in health. Colleagues in health on the podcast raised the impact of talking about children as LAC for example as if they are lacking something. This was following comments from children at the corporate parenting board. The impact is young people won't feel valued or they won't feel they want to talk to the looked after nurses or take part in their health assessments.

One of the key areas of focus has been the work we do together for those children and young people presenting high risk behaviours. There are two high risk panels, one for Care Leavers and one for Children in key. These panels are attended well by partners and enable us to review the work with those children and young people who may need more support from other agencies wither this be through Youth Offending, Turning point drug and alcohol support or the Bridge a housing charity.

The impact of the high-risk panels has been the ability to engage and support young people who don't want to work with their personal advisor or social worker. For example, a young man, had a personal advisor and somewhere to live. But due to his past traumas and current challenges he would often go missing and would appear as street homeless. It got to the stage where despite trying the PA couldn't find him. The Bridge were able to support us following the meeting by engaging their outreach workers in his area to look out for him.

They did and found him, and the young man reengaged with services in a way which worked for him and made sure people could continue to offer him support to try and keep him safe.

*The partnership working has ensured young people
are at the heart of our decision making*

Barney Thorne (Leicestershire Police)

The Partnership Team of Leicestershire County Council supported Children in care worked in Partnership with the virtual school created an amazing exhibition of artwork created by the children. www.cultureleicestershire.co.uk/projects/my-books-my-story/



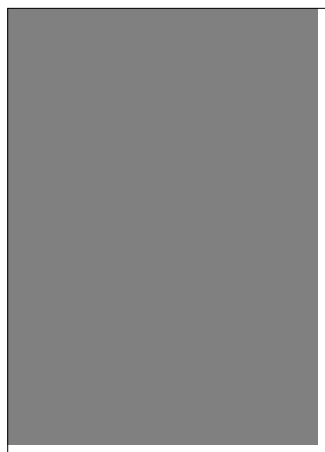
My Books, My Story started in 2021 with the aim of creating an exhibition of artwork inspired by books, created and co-curated by Leicestershire Children in Care. We have worked in partnership with the Virtual School during their Year of Reading, and have had some fabulous achievements, including a month-long pop-up exhibition at the Highcross Leicester (a resounding success), and we have still more to come!

Stephanie Strange
(Community Participation worker)

Partners outside of LCC are enabling care leavers and children in care to learn to drive for free in Pre-Driver Days! What a chance to try it out and see if it's what you want. The Corporate parenting team then supports young people by match funding their lessons to assist them particularly in the current financial climate. www.tjunction.org.uk/pre-driver-days/



Work has continued over the last year to work alongside Barnardo's as part of the Children's Innovation Partnership. This project is enabling the development of specialist resources for our most vulnerable groups to give the head start needed to enable positive life choices. This year the project has started to hit a head of steam following the recruitment of staff and managers as well as identifying the best accommodation resources and the transformation of properties to provide the best offer for our young people and young parents.



Leicestershire County Council has partnered with [Barnardo's](#) to redesign and deliver our residential homes. Our homes will ensure children remain in their communities, connected to key services like their schools, CAMHS and the homes are supported by a clinical team which includes a clinical psychologist, educational psychologist and speech therapist. We are opening 8 homes – a home to provide assessment of need, a home to provide parent-baby support, four homes for children who are at risk of exploitation and two other homes.

This work continues to develop, and I am sure there will be positive impact for our young people which we can report on next year.

Some of the partners supporting our children in care leavers are not big companies or nationally known areas (although we appreciate their support). They are the communities we live in. This was Easter in the Office! (Unfortunately, not for me!) And then Christmas!



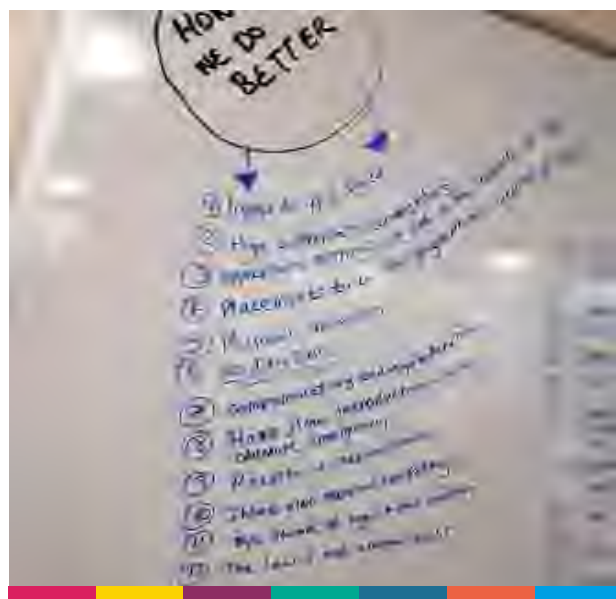
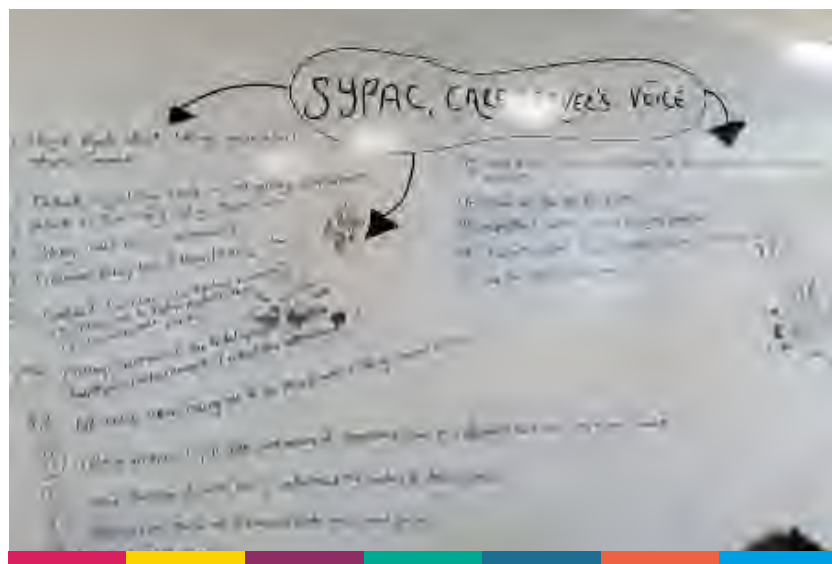
A huge thank you to Ashby Rugby Football Club (ARFC) and Phil Silver and his company Advanced Industrial Engineering for their special relationship with the Easter Bunny which saw a very generous 250 Easter Eggs donated for children in care and care leavers.

ARFC has supported CiC and CLs for the last 5 years, opening their hearts, their wallets and club to our children.

The impact of this generosity? Many care leavers don't have family or friends who buy them gifts. Communities like ARFC show that our children are part of a bigger family.

The impact of this simple act is seen by the comments made by a social worker whose children and young people benefited from this generosity.

Working in partnership with children and young people is critical.





SYPAC – den building 2022

From this the service area, has been meetings to discuss the way forward, initiated two surveys to provide further opportunities for care leavers to express their views. Following a survey carried out in May 2022 around the need for a support group for care leavers struggling with their mental health, one young person said:

“I think it’s important for others to meet people in a similar situation to themselves. This also enables young people to accept the other differences and know that it’s okay to be different. After all everyone needs someone to lean on and learn from in life no matter their circumstances.”

(Young person on the survey)

Further activity is in progress to capture the voice of those not in education, employment, or training and identifying the impact of partnership working on our children in care and care leavers who struggle to be engaged in mainstream education for any number of reasons is critical.

This You Tube video captures the vital role in building the self-esteem and confidence of young people who may feel disengaged and not heard. The Virtual School worked alongside the provider and the young people to look at the opportunities for young people to share their experiences and challenges in their education. This is an alternative provision provider. This means the provider isn’t mainstream but specialist resources for those young people who struggle with the ‘norm’. The clip demonstrates the involvement of our own children in care of which we are so proud!

<https://m.youtube.com/watch?v=JHL7Jex27D4&feature=youtu.be>

Impact and Voice

Two examples of some amazing work by young people supported by the Corporate Parenting Service and shared through the leadership to the corporate parenting board, is the contact and the review of arrangement expectations. As well as taking these to the Corporate Parenting Board, the young people came to the July Childcare Managers Meeting and shared the views of young people and asked them to make a commitment (a call to action).

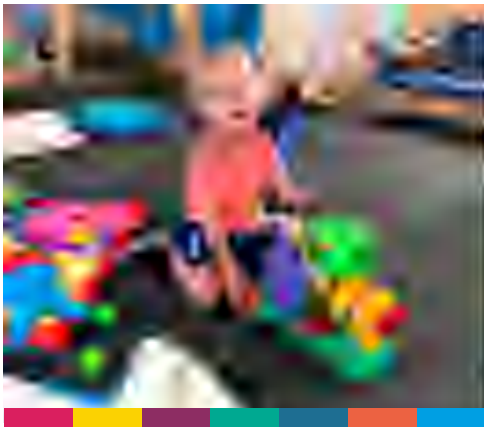
The impact of these two critical pieces of work is the adults supporting young people and the young people themselves, know what to expect, why and when. Young people not involved in the usual forums for developing these things have been sent the findings and documents. Leaders and managers have been given copies. Senior leaders internally and externally through the board have been made aware of them. The voice of children and young people is clear and will develop as things move forward.



Working with care leavers and children in care starts early. For a care Leaver who is a parent we need to be sure that, like we would for our own children, they have the skills and knowledge to support themselves and a child. What does it mean to have a baby? How do I look after a baby?

To support all Children, the Children and Families Wellbeing Service put together a video to support the scheme know as My First 1001 days. The providers have met with the Care Leavers Team and provided information and guidance. Care Leavers can attend a young parent's group as well as universal services to help them understand the needs of and care for their baby.

<https://youtu.be/b5JpLNn77bQ>



Our Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children and young adults

A growing area of work for the children and families service is the work supporting Unaccompanied Asylum Seekers. These are in the main teenagers who have come from war torn areas. They have experienced significant trauma not only in the country of original but also in how they have reached the UK. It is critical we ensure they are supported in a way which helps them to be with people from their own cultural back grounds but also integrate into the local communities.

The Children in Care Service hold a 'friends and food' group which allows the young people to come together with no other agenda than to meet others from the same or similar backgrounds. And play cricket! This group hasn't yet engaged in larger voice and support groups like SYPAC and the CIC Council. The services recognise several barriers for these young people, like life experiences, language and expectations are different. Through Friends and Food, these young people are being given the chance to engage with each other and build networks within their own community, and to build confidence so that they may join SYPAC or the Children in Care Council.

The Care Leavers Team have established a Care Leavers Council. This has been attended by one of the UASC young people and she expressed how amazing it was to talk about all of the different things a care leavers council could do! She is very excited by this and will continue to be a part of the council going forward.

Relationships



One of the most important areas of work over the last year has been around the relationships we build. What we know with relationship-based practice is it enables the children and young people to develop positive working relationships which in the long run develop the child and young person to enable them to have positive life outcomes. The next few quotes and audio and visual attachments give a real sense of the impact this has had for some young people over the past 12 months (and for some before)

This following young man has experienced a lot of challenges and trauma and has simply turned himself around! This is his voice given through the carer's social worker.

"A spoke of his aspirations to become world boxing champion & Tyson Fury coming to watch him fight- A told me he also wanted to become a famous chef and people will want to come to his restaurant if he is a famous boxer! He is applying for a course at Melton Brooksby. He will have an apprenticeship with his current employer where he is a kitchen porter. He works alongside going to his education 100% attendance. He talked about having spoilt his GF with his wages, but now wanting to save his money for the future. He spoke about having told his friends he doesn't want to drink & do drugs anymore and they have since cut him off, but he knows this is for the best and talked about all the positive people now around him through his boxing. He appeared extremely happy & reflected that he knows being brought back to Leicestershire to be the best thing that could have happened, and he intends to make the most of his opportunity"

The Virtual School supported by Library Services provide books to children in care and the attached outline some of the responses from those children about the books they get. Overall, they love getting the books! A couple of comments stood out for me:

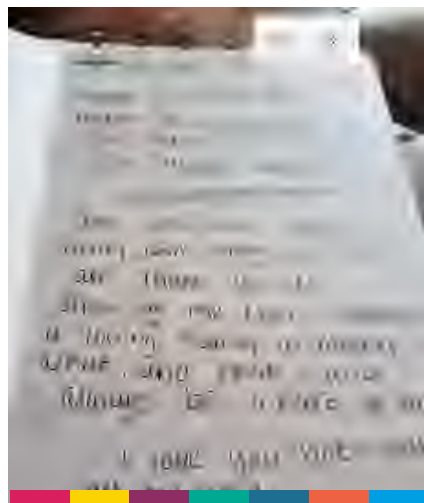
*"I enjoy that they take me off my phone and it gets me to have time to myself.
L spoke about the book club she attends on Monday"*

*"Me and my dog like getting post, we run to the door and open the
parcel and sit and read it together."*

LINK: [Virtual School Book Club Voice](#)

As part of audit work, we also try and gather the choice of children in care and care leavers. One young person quoted:

When you struggle to understand something, D is really good at explaining things to you in a manner that you understand, you speak to D every few weeks however if you ever need her during that period, you can always contact her. You feel that D listens to you and your views are always taken into consideration. You described your life as being easier since you started to work with D



'I just wanted to share this lovely thank you card received by my SLP carers D and S, K lived with them from 17 to 21 years. She has just left and is working fulltime and is about to buy a house with her boyfriend.' (Supervising Social Worker for supported Lodging's providers)

The next card is from a young person to his support worker who has been there for him for a few years making sure he sees his family in safe way and ensured that he could have someone else to ensure mum had good time with him.



Priority aims and objectives include over the next 12 months:

- Over the next 12 months there will be a response to the Social Care Review, the attached document is an easy guide the review produced for children and young people.
- The Children in Care Service will develop the use of network meetings and cultural genograms to help support children and young people to understand their journey but also ensure they can work towards a return home or to a network of support
- The health of children and young people will be a priority. It remains a national issue regarding being able to get a dentist. It remains an issue that children's mental health was hit hard through COVID and services are not robust enough to support appropriately.
- Staying Close will be reviewed and learning from a regional bid will be taken forward to develop the projects with partners including the district councils This will enable us to provide focused and multi-agency support to a young person to avoid them drifting into life choices which are healthy or put them at risk. We need to give young people an 'alternative'.
- Service will be reviewed to ensure we are supporting children in the right way at the right age. Are 16+ children and young people provided with the right support at the right time given the challenges on social workers with young children.
- Critically we need to ensure our children and young people are at the front and centre of decision making and where appropriate they are engaged for their views and opinions.
- DCFS 2 will be a driver for the development of services going forward for those children and young people who it is envisaged could return home or to a network.
- The police have committed to hear the voice of those children in care and care leavers and how they identify those most at risk but also hear their voice to develop services.
- Members panels will be further developed, and members supported to gather and learn from the voice of children in care and care leavers.
- Health services have committed to support children and young people in sharing their views about the work they do. Does it work for them for example the leaving care health summaries or is there a better way to support them.
- Over the next 12 months we will continue the discussion in health, police, districts and the police to look at that use of language for example LAC, Care Leavers, placements etc. We don't want our young people to feel different and language is so important in their journey.
- Over the next 12 months there will be embed the Care Leavers Council to support the work of the Children in Care Service hearing voice and sharing potential developments to improve outcomes for care leavers as they transition to adulthood.
- Over the next 12 months we will ensure our practice is purposeful and that young people feel they matter to us and those around them. Young people want to feel listened to and not have to retell their story to many times. They want to understand their past, present, and future and by developing purposeful practice we will capture this.

