



**Report of the Director of Social Services and the Chief Executive of Education Leeds
Scrutiny Board (Children's Services)**

Date: 13th July 2006

Subject: Monitoring Support to Children in Need and in Public Care

Electoral Wards Affected: All

Specific Implications For:

- Ethnic minorities
- Women
- Disabled people
- Narrowing the Gap
-

1. Introduction

1.1 The following ten performance indicators were agreed at the Scrutiny Board on 16th February 2006 as a framework for monitoring of provision for children in need or looked after.

These indicators were selected on the basis that,

- They are key threshold indicators, for which performance can impact upon the assessed rating of the Council; or
- they relate to issues identified in recent inspections or assessments; and
- performance can be monitored by the Scrutiny Board throughout the year (as opposed to annual indicators).

1.2 The indicators identified within this document should be considered within the context of the broader cohort of annually reported information, an example of which would be that contained within the Children's Annual Performance Assessment.

1.3 Data includes information showing the average performance of a group of local authorities identified by the Institute of Public Finance (IPF) and the Commission for Social Care Inspection (CSCI) as providing the best comparison for social care performance.

2 **Be Healthy**

2.1 **Indicator**: PAF C19: **Health of Children Looked After**

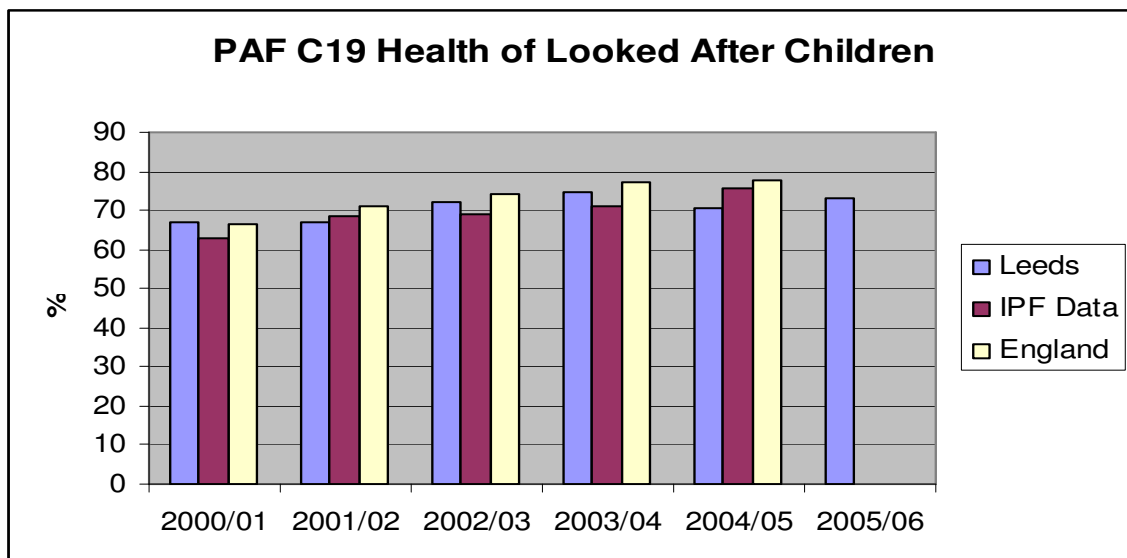
Definition

The average of the percentages of children looked after at 30 September who had been looked after continuously for at least 12 months, and who had their teeth checked by a dentist during the previous 12 months, and had an annual health assessments during the previous 12 months.

These elements are seen as the basic health requirements for all children on occasions and so should not be overlooked for children who are looked after. This indicator is associated with good parenting, notwithstanding the fact that older children looked after might exercise their right to refuse medical examinations and treatment.

2.2 **Results**

PAF C19: Health of children looked after							
	2000/01	2001/02	2002/03	2003/04	2004/05	2005/06	Target
Leeds	66.8	67.2	72.1	74.5	70.5	73	75
IPF							
Data	63.1	68.7	69.1	71.3	75.6		
England	66.7	71.1	74.2	77.3	77.9		



This performance is rated in the 4th performance band as “Good” by CSCI

2.3 **Current Issues**

The national problem of registering with a dentist is exacerbated for children coming into care who have often moved location and sometimes not been previously registered with any dentist. During the last 12 months local agreements have made some improvements in the availability of dentistry for looked after children. Availability remains limited however and is an ongoing constraint upon performance. There is

concern that NHS dentists are virtually not available in Leeds and overcoming this problem could have a budgetary impact. Children in their teens often refuse to attend both health assessments and dental checks.

3. Stay Safe

3.1 Indicator: PAF C23, BV 163: **Adoptions of children looked after**

KEY THRESHOLD INDICATOR

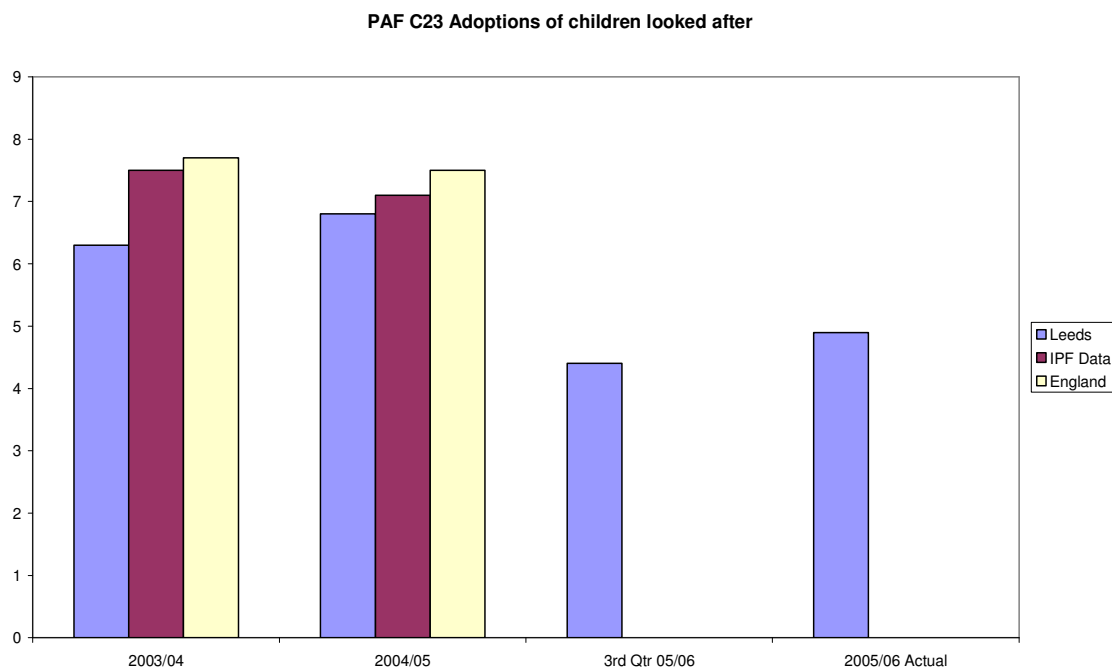
Definition

The number of looked after children adopted during the year as a percentage of the number of children looked after at 31 March (excluding unaccompanied asylum seekers) who had been looked after for 6 months or more on that day.

This indicator aims to promote the use of adoption by local authorities, as it offers a legally secure placement for children assessed as unable to return to their birth parents. A national target of all authorities bringing their practice up to band 4 or 5 (7% and above) has been set for the end of the current financial year.

3.2 Results

PAF C23: Adoptions of children looked after					
	2003/04	2004/05	3rd Qtr 05/06	2005/06 Actual	Target
Leeds	6.3	6.8	4.4	4.9	5.5
IPF Data	7.5	7.1			
England	7.7	7.5			



The threshold set by the Government for performance is greater than 3%.

Leeds performance meets the required threshold and is rated in the second of five bands by CSCI. It is classed as "Ask Questions about performance."

Performance in this area has deteriorated since the introduction of the indicator in 2001.

3.3 Current Issues

Levels of adoption in Leeds can only be improved through a broad range of long term solutions. Several years ago the Department focused its recruitment and selection activities upon fostering due to concerns that there were insufficient fostering resources to meet the needs of looked after children. An unforeseen consequence of this was a fall in the numbers of adopters recruited by the Council and this has had a long term impact upon the numbers of adoptions which could take place during the year. Over the last twelve months this policy has been reversed. Additional budget has been provided to increase the resources available to assess prospective adopters. Specialist adoption teams have been introduced to ensure improvements in recruitment and assessment timescales for adoption. Performance data systems have been improved and the Chief Officer monitors improvement in performance on a monthly basis. Some improvements in performance have been noted leading up to the end of the last financial year.

3.4 Indicator: PAF C20, BV 162: **Reviews of child protection cases**

KEY THRESHOLD INDICATOR

Definition

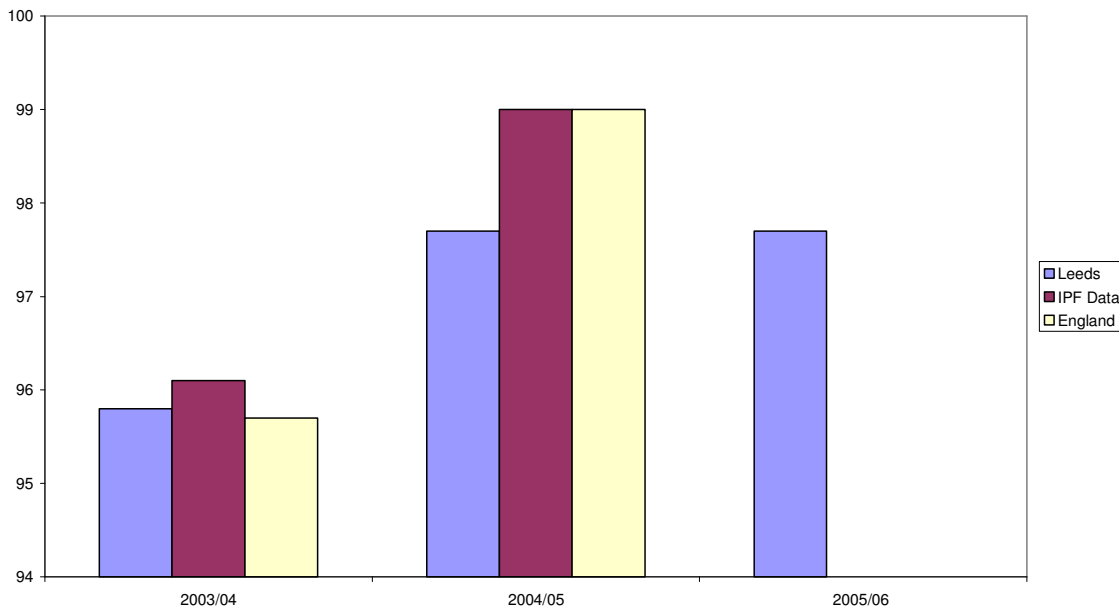
The percentage of child protection cases which should have been reviewed during the year that were reviewed.

This indicator measures the effectiveness of the interventions provided to children on the Child Protection Register. 'Working Together to Safeguard Children' (National Guidance Document) requires that the first child protection review is held within 3 months of the initial child protection conference and thereafter at intervals of no more than every 6 months. Reviews are a key element of delivering child protection plans and effective reviews should ensure the provision of good quality interventions.

3.5 Results

PAF C20: Reviews of child protection cases				
	2003/04	2004/05	2005/06	Target
Leeds	95.8	97.7	97.7	99
IPF				
Data	96.1	99		
England	95.7	99		

PAF C20: Reviews of child protection cases



The threshold set by the Government for performance is greater than 92.5%.

Projected performance is rated in the fourth of five bands by CSCI. It is classed as “Good.”

Performance in this area has remained constant since the introduction of the indicator in 2001.

A recent data audit has revealed concerns with the quality of data used for this indicator. Further work is currently being undertaken to identify the extent and implications of this.

3.6 Indicator: PAF C64: **Timing of core assessments**

Definition

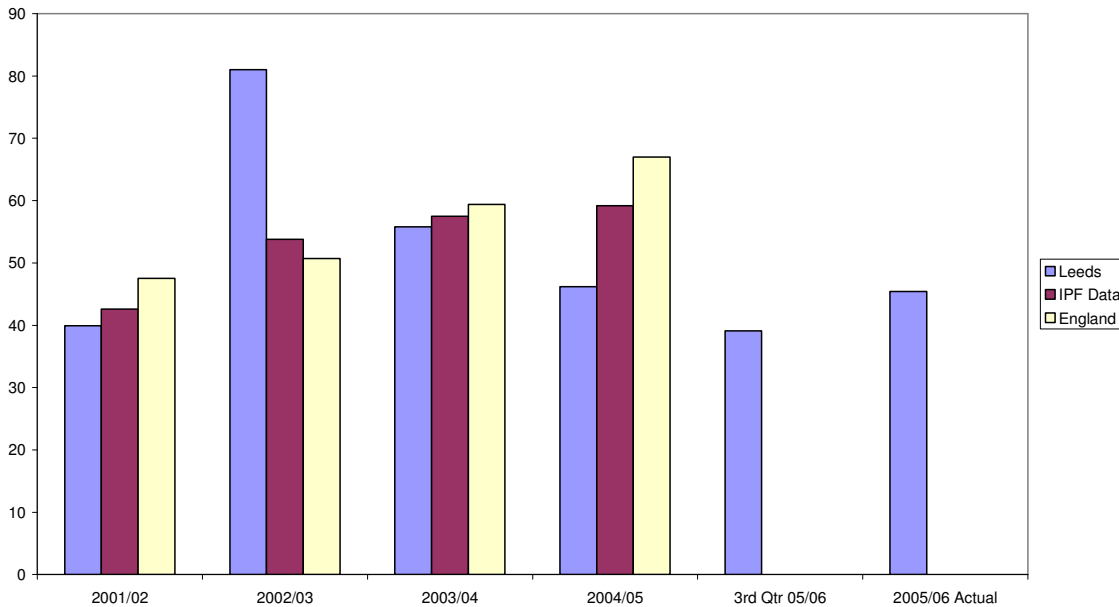
The percentage of core assessments that were completed within 35 working days of their commencement.

Core Assessments are in-depth assessments of a child (or children) and their family, as defined in the Framework for the Assessment of Children in need and their families. They are also the means by which child protection enquiries are undertaken following a strategy discussion. It is important for Councils to investigate and address concerns in a timely and efficient way, and that those in receipt of an assessment have a clear idea how quickly this should be completed. Successful meeting of the time-scales can also indicate effective joint working where multi-agency assessment is required and supports the transition from assessment to care management.

3.6 Results

PAF C64: Timing of core assessments							
	2001/02	2002/03	2003/04	2004/05	3rd Qtr 05/06	2005/06 Actual	Target
Leeds	39.9	81	55.8	46.2	39.1	45.4	70
IPF Data	42.6	53.8	57.5	59.2			
England	47.5	50.7	59.4	67			

PAF C64: Timing of core assessments



This performance is rated in the second of five bands by CSCI. It is classed as “Ask Questions About Performance”. CSCI have announced a further uplift in bandings for 2006/07 when a performance of 70% will be required for acceptable performance.

Performance in this area has remained static over the last 12 months .

3.8 Current issues

This is a priority area for improvement in Leeds Social Services. The Chief Officer is monitoring performance on a monthly frequency. New business processes are being developed. A programme of practice development workshops for front line social work managers has been implemented and personal accountability is being strictly enforced.

3.9 Indicator: Local performance indicator: **Timing of initial assessments**

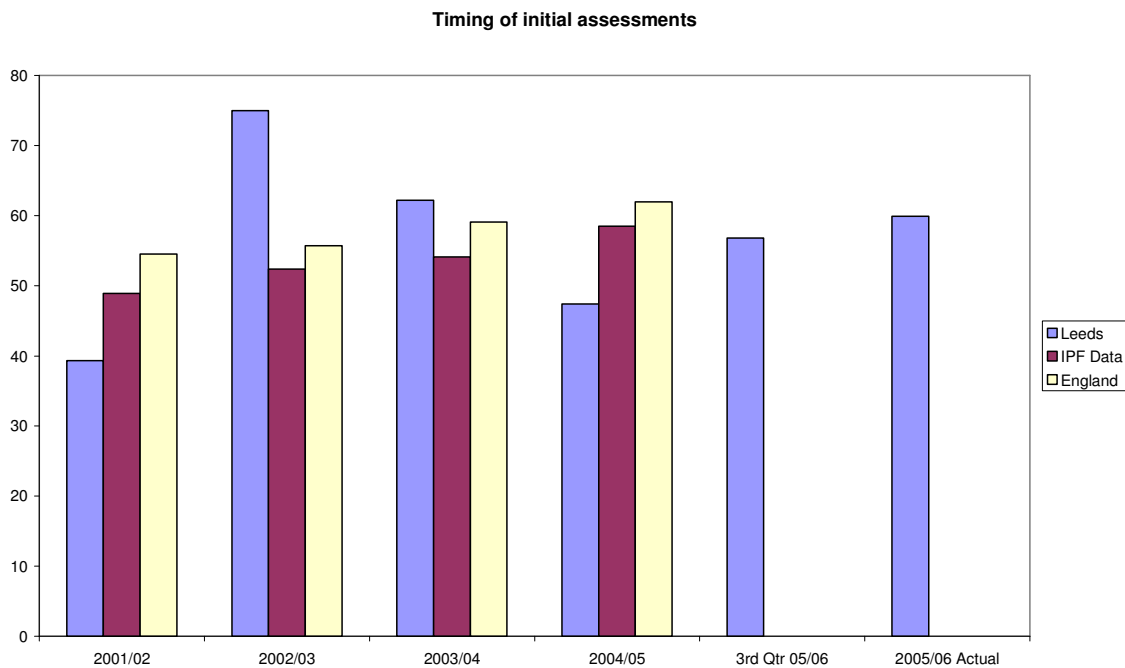
Definition

The percentage of initial assessments that were completed within 7 working days of referral.

An initial assessment is defined as a brief assessment of each child referred to social services with a request for services to be provided.

3.10 Results

LKPI: Timing of initial assessments							
	2001/02	2002/03	2003/04	2004/05	3rd Qtr 05/06	2005/06 Actual	Target
Leeds	39.3	75	62.2	47.4	56.8	59.9	65
IPF Data	48.9	52.4	54.1	58.5			
England	54.5	55.7	59.1	62			



This indicator is not rated by bandings. Leeds performance is above its comparator group of authorities. Performance reported for 02/03 reflects the less accurate reporting methodology used for that year.

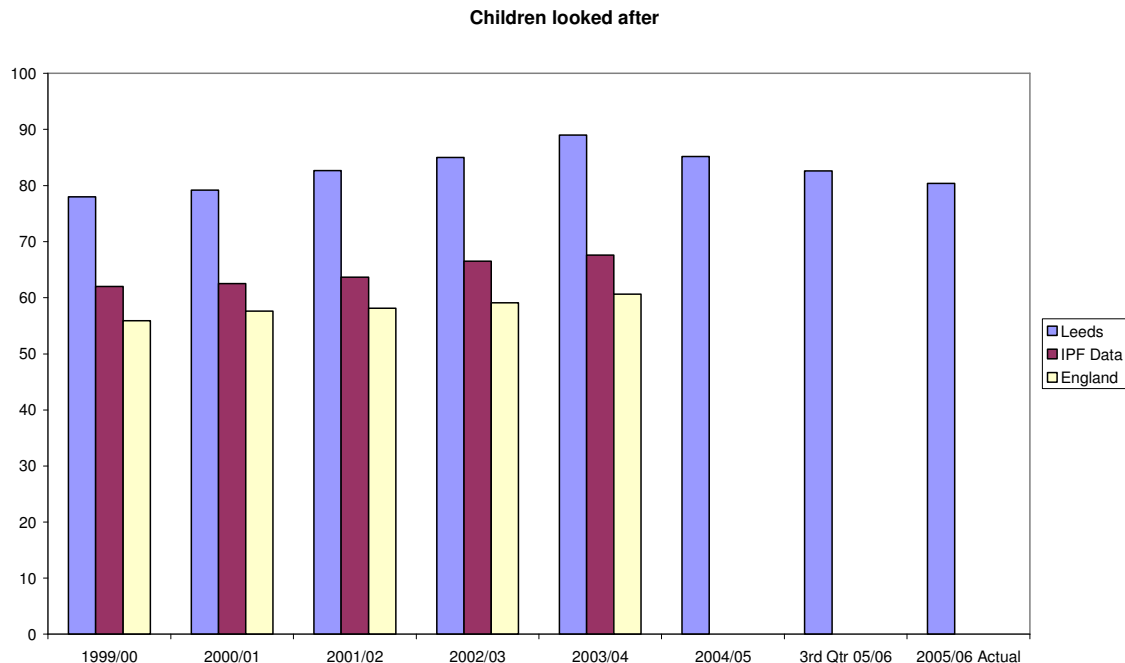
3.11 Indicator: Local performance indicator: **Children looked after**

Definition

The number of children looked after at 31 March per 10,000 population aged under 18. Excludes children accommodated under a series of short term breaks. Includes children placed with parents and unaccompanied asylum seeking children.

3.12 Results

LKPI: Children looked after								
	1999/00	2000/01	2001/02	2002/03	2003/04	2004/05	3rd Qtr 05/06	2005/06 Actual
Leeds	78	79.2	82.7	85	89	85.2	82.6	80.4
IPF								
Data	62	62.5	63.7	66.5	67.6			
England	55.9	57.6	58.1	59.1	60.6			



At March 2005 the Council had 1332 children in care. At the 31st March 2006. Leeds had 1250 children in care

3.13 Current issues

The number of children in care of the local authority in Leeds has steadily declined since 2003/4. The Council has been careful to ensure that an appropriate balance of risk has been maintained and that the fall has resulted from improvements in preventative services. The period has seen no significant increase in children identified as being at significant risk of abuse or neglect.

4. **Enjoy and Achieve**

4.1 **Indicator:** Local performance indicator: **Personal Education Plans**

Definition

The percentage of looked after children with a Personal Education Plan.

Looked after children have particular obstacles to fulfilling their educational potential. All looked after children in full time education are therefore required by statutory guidance to have an individual plan to support their education which is agreed between the child, their school and the Social Service Department. These plans are reviewed annually to ensure that the plan is being delivered and remains appropriate for the child's needs.

4.2 **Results**

LKPI: Personal Education Plans					
	2003/04	2004/05	3rd Qtr 05/06	2005/06 Actual	Plan
Leeds		68	74	83	100

4.3 **Current Issues**

Performance in this area was highlighted as an area for improvement in the DfES Priorities Meeting held on 13th January 2006. Education Leeds and the Social Services Department are working closely to improve performance in this area. Jointly appointed teams are focusing activity upon improving performance.

5 **Making a Positive Contribution**

5.1 **Indicator:** PAF C63: **Participation of looked after children in reviews**

Definition

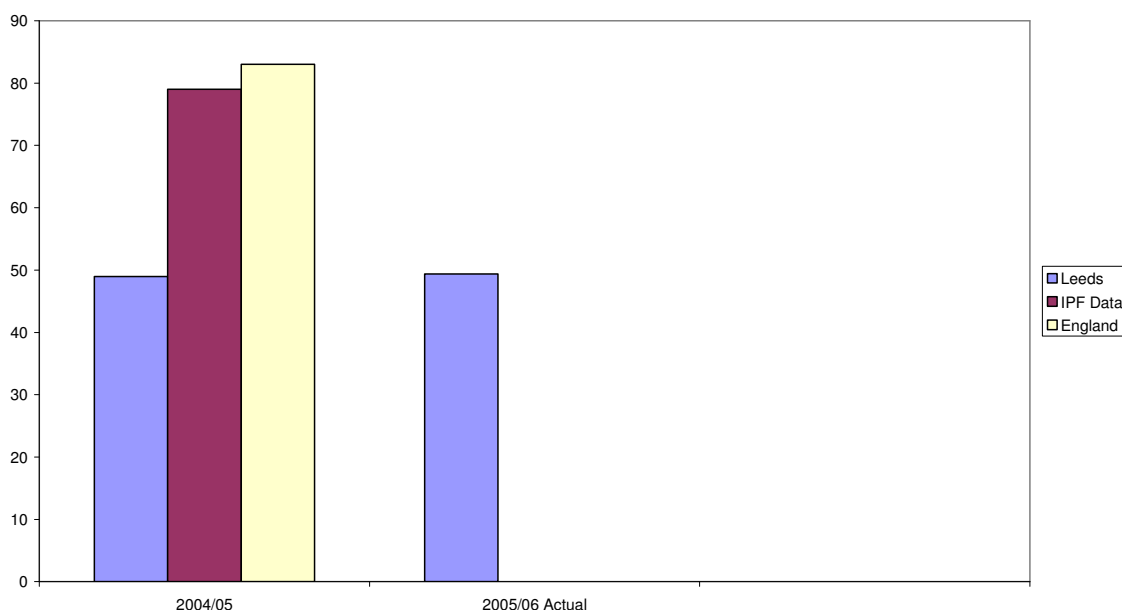
The number of children and young people who communicated their views specifically for their latest statutory review as a percentage of the number of children and young people who had been looked after at 31 March for more than 4 weeks.

The active participation of children in planning their care should contribute to improved outcomes. To ensure that the views of looked after children and young people are listened to, good practice dictates that they should either attend and participate in the review meeting, or should at least be able to express their views by some other appropriate method.

5.2 **Results**

PAF C63: Participation of looked after children in reviews			
	2004/05	2005/06 Actual	Target
Leeds	49	49.4	80
IPF			
Data	79		
England	83		

PAF C63: Participation of looked after children in reviews



This performance is rated in the lowest of five bands by CSCI. It is classed as “Investigate urgently”. CSCI have announced a further uplift in bandings for 2006/07 when 80% will be required for acceptable performance.

5.3 Current Issues

This indicator was measured and reported for the first time in 2004/05.

The proportion of looked after children reviews in which children were involved actually increased from 51% in 2004/5 to 70% in 2005/6. However, the indicator was redefined during 2005/06 and now shows the proportion of children who have been involved in all their reviews during the year. It therefore excludes the results of improvements in practice seen during the year. It is anticipated that improvement in practice which was introduced during 2005/06 will be reflected in the results during the current year.

Three further initiatives will improve the Department’s performance in this area. A new electronic consultation form for looked after children intended to encourage more children to contribute to their review plans has been successfully piloted and will be rolled out to all social work teams by September 2006. A new post has been introduced which is dedicated to supporting the participation of disabled children.

A bid has been made for funding to implement “Blueprint”, a model which will encourage best practice and provide specific targets to improve participation of looked after children in their reviews.

6 Economic Wellbeing

6.1 Indicator: PAF A4, BV 161: **Employment, education and training for care leavers**

Definition

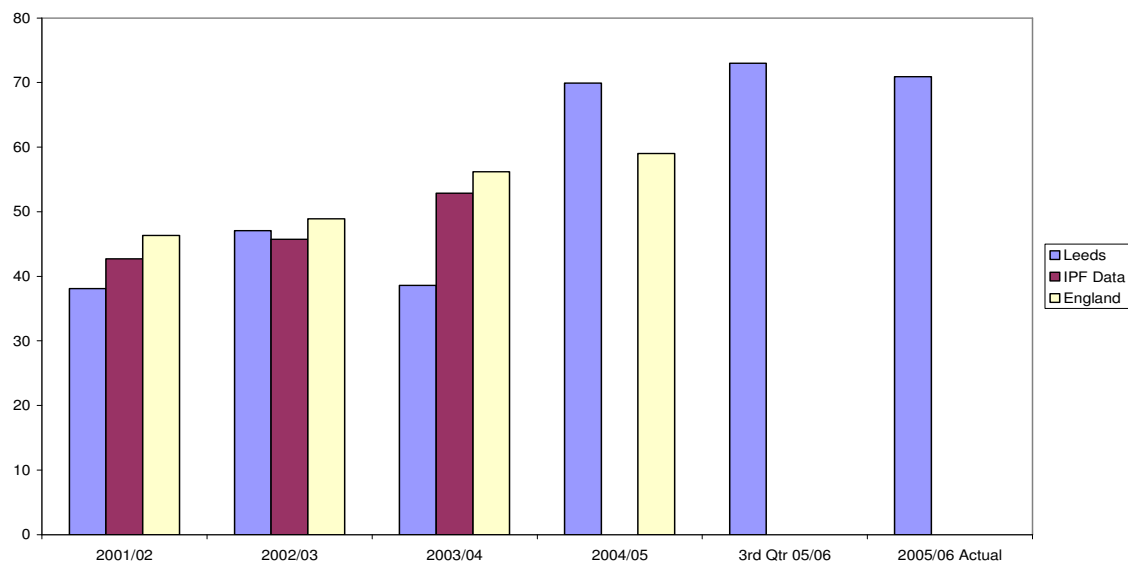
The ratio of the percentage of those young people who were looked after on 1 April in their 17th year (aged 16), who were engaged in education, training or employment at the age of 19 to the percentage of young people who were engaged in education, training or employment at the age of 19.

Research shows that care leavers experience high levels of unemployment and are at risk of homelessness and social inclusion. This performance indicator supports two national objectives for children's services, improving outcomes for looked after children through making a positive contribution and securing their future well being.

6.2 Results

PAF A4: Employment, education and training for care leavers							
	2001/02	2002/03	2003/04	2004/05	3rd Qtr 05/06	2005/06 Actual	Target
Leeds	38.1	47.1	38.6	69.9	73	70.9	80
IPF Data	42.7	45.7	52.9				
England	46.3	48.9	56.2	59			

PAF A4: Employment, education and training for care leavers



This performance is rated in the highest of five bands by CSCI. It is classed as "Very good".

6.3 Current Issues

Leeds has been recognised as a national leader in this area and has generally maintained its previous high performance. It should be noted that the appropriate support of young people who have been in the care of the local authority has the potential to create additional budget pressures upon the Council. The Department is required to provide ongoing practical and financial support for young people in further education who have been looked after to be maintained until they reach twenty five years old.

6.4 Indicator: Local performance indicator: **Direct payments for disabled children**

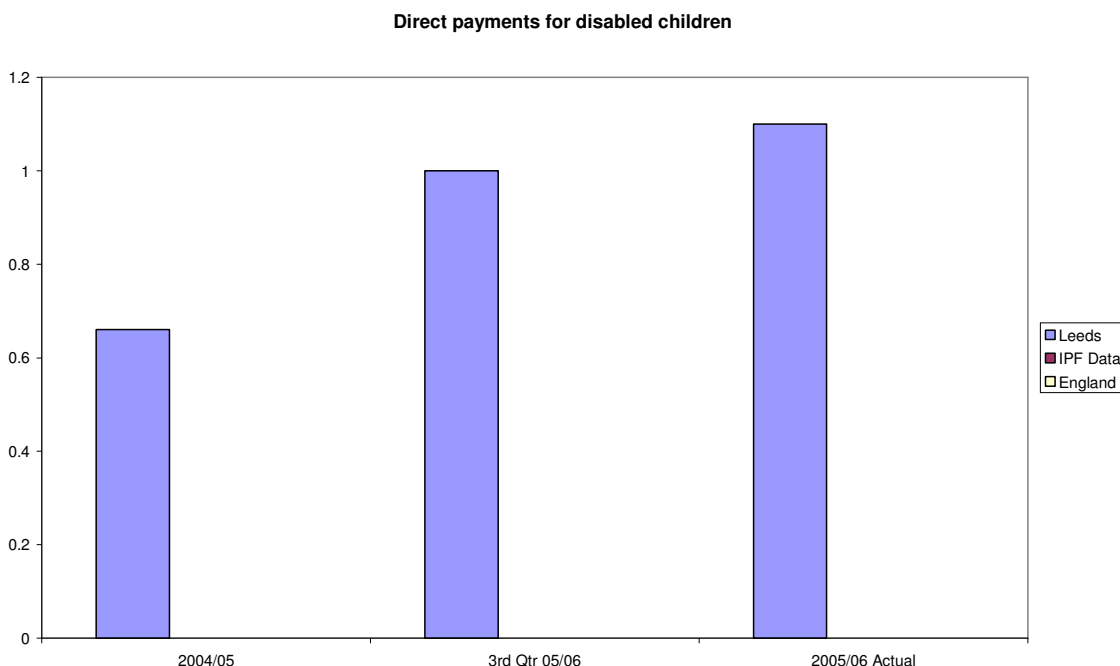
Definition

Direct payments for carers of disabled children (for children's services) and disabled children (16-17) as a percentage of the estimated total population of disabled children living in private households.

The purpose of a direct payment is to give the carers of disabled children control over their services by providing an alternative to social care services provided by the local authority. The Council has a duty to make direct payments to the carers of disabled children where they consent to and are able to manage them. This indicator shows how effective councils are at implementing direct payments.

6.5 Results

LKPI: Direct payments for disabled children				
	2004/05	3rd Qtr 05/06	2005/06 Actual	Target
Leeds	0.66	1	1.1	1.2



No comparative data is available for this indicator.

6.6 Current Issues

During 2005/06 the number of carers of disabled children receiving direct payments in Leeds grew from 46 to 73. It is planned to provide direct payments to one hundred parents by 31st March 2007. It has been the expectation of National Government that families would receive Direct Payments in place of services they were receiving from Local Authorities; however it is now clear that many of the families receiving direct payments in Leeds are new service users and thereby the planned expansion of the service is likely to place an additional financial burden upon the Council.

7.0 Recommendation

7.1 The Board is requested to consider the attached information and identify any areas requiring further scrutiny involvement.