

Report of Director of Children and Families

Report to Scrutiny Board (Children and Families)

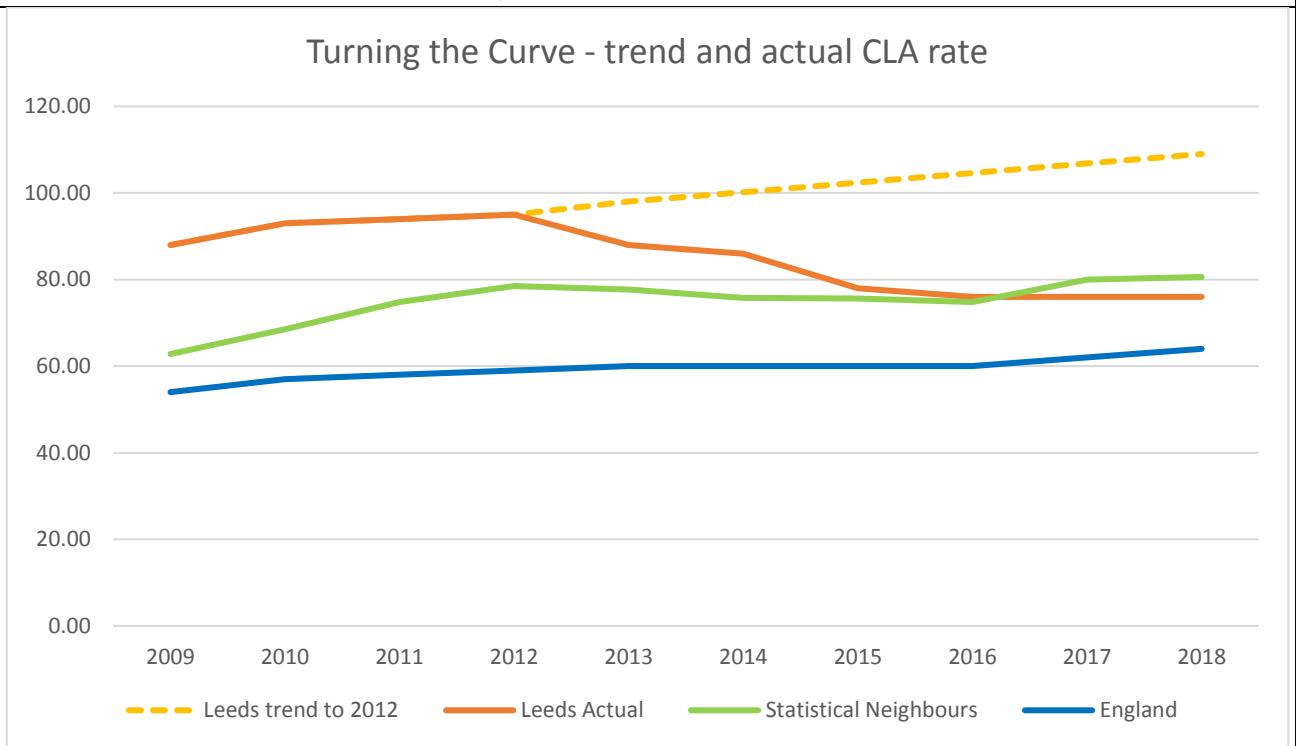
Date: 6th March 2019



Subject: Scrutiny inquiry - is Leeds a child friendly city?

Outcome:	Focus areas:
Children and young people are safe from harm	To safely and appropriately reduce the need for children to be looked after in Leeds

Story behind the baseline and turning the curve story



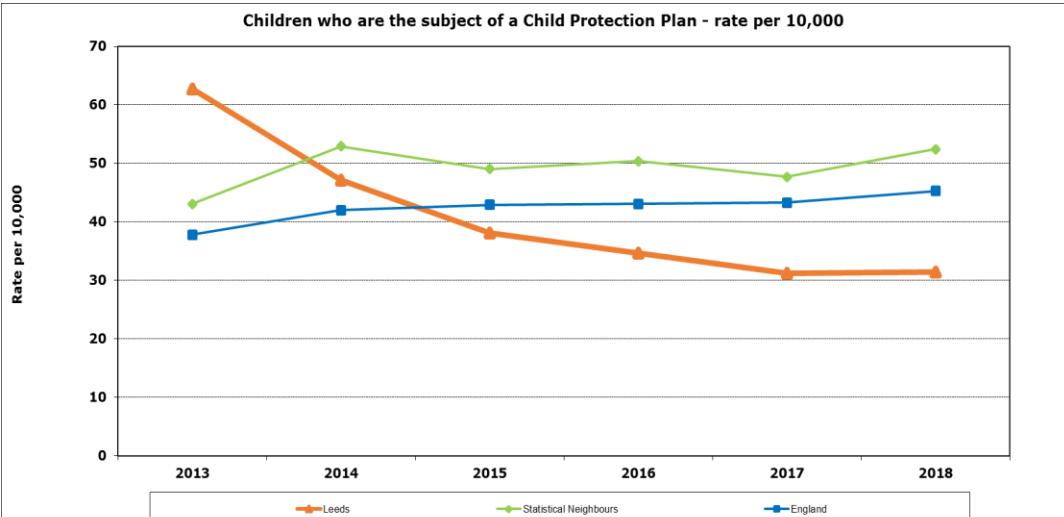
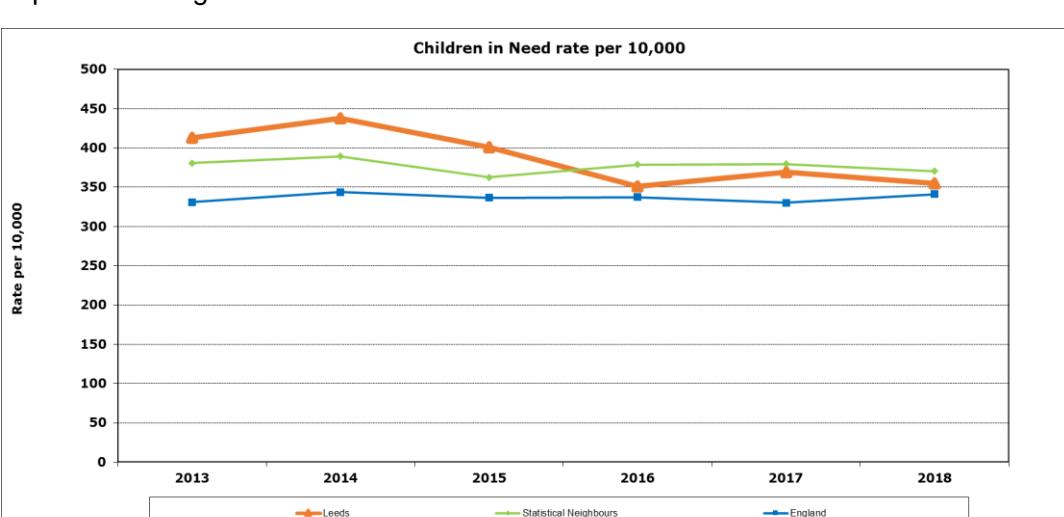
The graph above, from national Department for Education (DfE) data, shows very clearly that Leeds has 'turned the curve' and has successfully moved from a trend of a rising number and proportion of children needing to be looked after in the city. If the trend from 2009 to 2012 had continued as it had the proportion of Leeds children who needed to be looked after would have continued to rise, as indeed it has in the most of the rest of the country in the last five years. If the previous trend had continued over 100 per ten thousand children in the city would have been looked after – over 1% of the child population or over 1,800 children looked after – much higher than the actual figure in late January of 1,281. This means that the changes to the local child welfare system have helped over 500 (539) more children to remain safely at home with their families. Instead, collective action by the whole city has made a difference and together, the proportion of children looked after has been safely reduced. As the graph shows, this progress was made between 2012 and 2016, and since then the rate has been stable at 76 per ten thousand in each of the last three years. Whilst this is a challenge it is important to contrast this with the continued rises seen in similar areas (OFSTED Statistical Neighbour

Authorities) and across England as a whole. Furthermore it is important to note that sustaining stable rates is an achievement in the context of increasing deprivation in the city as a whole, rising rates of child poverty and population growth in Leeds that is centred on the most deprived, highest need neighbourhoods.

Summary of the journey

Narrative/key milestones	<p>The progress made in this crucial area of children's services' work – one of the 'Three Obsessions' that are the top priorities of the Children and Young People's Plan - has been due to improvement in children's services, supported by concerted whole Council and cross-city work to improve the life chances of the most vulnerable children and families in the city. Leeds approach to improvement has been to reform and improve the whole child welfare system – from early help to leaving care services, recognising that in an interdependent system all elements need to function well together in order to make progress. Much of this has been reported over recent years to the Board so this section will highlight what we believe to be the main strategic milestones in this improvement journey:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>'Outstanding' Leadership:</i> in 2010 the Council implemented new political and strategic leadership for children's services, bolstered by improved support from across the local political parties as well as the then new Chief Executive and Corporate Leadership Team. OfSTED rated the local leadership of officers and politicians as 'outstanding' in both 2015 and 2018 and have praised its impact on practice and services. This continues to develop and strengthen – recent examples include the creation of Elected Members working as Children's Champions for each Children's Home and new training from care leavers for Elected Members on the Corporate Parenting Board. • <i>Stronger Local Partnerships:</i> improving joint working with important local services and professionals e.g. in schools, NHS and the Police has been vital for progress, both strategically and in day to day work. Better frontline relationships, trust and cooperation is vital in dealing every day with calls to the Front Door and in work with children and families. At a strategic level the investment of local partners has been invaluable – for example schools continue to provide over £4m for cluster working; the NHS has invested £1M in Mindmate SPA, mental health support and services to reduce 'repeat removals'; the Police have invested in Safer Schools officers and support for Families First; and Adults and Health have invested in the new Intensive Positive Behaviour Support Service to reduce the need for children with the most complex needs to enter residential care. In addition Leeds has retained its Local Children's Safeguarding Board (now Partnership or LSCP) and its experienced independent Chair and has continued to provide strong support for safeguarding across Leeds. • <i>Creating a citywide focus on children:</i> in addition to the large scale support and investment of statutory partners the creation of Child Friendly Leeds in 2012, and the continued high profile cross-council priority of making Leeds a Child Friendly City has unlocked huge support from business, communities and individuals. This support ranges from mentoring to apprenticeships to Christmas gifts to events to a hundred other acts of support both large and small that continue to make a difference to children across the city. • <i>Developing a skilled and stable workforce:</i> in 2011 Leeds had huge problems within the social work workforce. Around 25% of social workers were temporary agency staff. Agency costs peaked in 2011/12 at over £4.8M. Changes in social worker led to instability in care for children and families and limited teamwork, learning and development within the service. A concerted strategy of support, investment and development has completely reversed this trend. In the latest national data Leeds was ranked 1st (best – out of 152 Local Authorities) in the country for social work vacancies, 4th best for the proportion of agency staff and 18th best for social work turnover. The impact of this work has been praised by OfSTED in 2015 and 2018; avoided costs of over £18M on agency fees over five years and led to the Workforce Development team winning a national award in 2018 as has avoided • <i>Embedding restorative ways of working:</i> the Leeds Children and Young People's Plan, and the entire Leeds strategy has been based around
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	<p>restorative practice. This approach seeks to work <i>with</i> and to build and rebuild relationships – working in new ways with children and families and new ways within organisations. The restorative approach has been praised and supported by central government, winning over £15M of Innovation Programme funding for Leeds. This has led to the creation of the UK's largest Family Group Conference (FGC) Team; internationally leading practice in the use of FGCs to deal with domestic violence and as an alternative to the use of Child Protection plans; and has been praised and recognised by both inspectors and through academic evaluations and national awards.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Improving front line practice:</i> improving the quality of front line practice is fundamental to improving outcomes and Leeds has continued to support social workers and the wider workforce with some of the best professional development, supervision and practice development in the country. This includes close working with national experts in academia and the profession, for example a major programme in 2013 with Professors Stein and Beihal; the Leeds Innovation Programmes which have supported restorative training and the development of the Leeds Practice Model; the roll-out of the Early Help Qualification across the city; the implementation of Advanced Practitioners to support front line social work teams and a huge range of other activities. Inspection shows the impact of this work – in 2018 OfSTED noted that 'social work is flourishing' in Leeds. • <i>Investing in Early Help:</i> research shows the need to invest in Early Help to meet the needs of children and families most effectively before problems have the chance to escalate. In contrast to many areas Leeds has protected investment whilst across the country 'Sure Start', youth service and family support services are cut and closed. Leeds has retained a full network of 56 Children's Centres, fully integrating early years and Health Visitor services within the centres. Clusters of schools and services continue to be supported and funded across the whole city, and continue to benefit from investment and innovation such as the 'Restorative Early Support Teams' funded through the Innovation Programme in high need areas of the city. The joint NHS and Council 'Future in Mind' strategy has created Mindmate SPA and improved support in schools. Leeds' Families First service is recognised as a national leader in the 'Troubled Families' programme, consistently exceeding targets for support and impact, helping win continued investment and support from the government for both Earned Autonomy reform and the creation of the Family First Hubs and the multimillion pound 'Stronger Families' programme. • <i>Reforming the 'Front Door' to social work:</i> the Duty and Advice Team – the 'Front Door' to social work has remained a central focus for improving practice, joint working and outcomes. Failings in this area were crucial to the 'inadequate' judgements in the late 2000s for Leeds services, and the concerns of inspectors that children had been left at risk. As such at every stage of our improvement journey the Front Door has been an important element of reform and innovation. The Front Door is now managed by a social work team supported by Police, NHS, and education staff as well as Early Help Practitioners, Victim Support, administrative support and 5 managers. Responding to domestic violence is a big priority, reflecting the importance of this problem for the city. There is now a Daily Domestic Violence Meeting to organise a shared response from all agencies. Schools and GPs are notified of lower risk cases, ensuring information is shared more appropriately and effectively. Decision-making is effective and swift, as confirmed by both OfSTED inspection as well as a multi-agency weekly review where decisions are quality assured by senior managers. • <i>Permanence:</i> whilst much of the focus of reducing the need for children to be looked after in Leeds is on preventing entry to care, helping children move on from care as safely and swiftly as possible is equally important. This too is an area of considerable progress. Examples include: improved support for the use of Special Guardianship and Adoption for example through Mockingbird Hubs to provide peer support to carers and improved financial and practice support; Leeds has led the development of the first Regional Adoption Agency; the development of MST-FIT homes which provide intensive
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	<p>therapeutic support to both children and families to aid reunification and exit from care; improved oversight of permanence planning by reviewing officers and senior managers through the Permanence Panel.</p>																																																								
Performance measures 2011 to 2018	<p>Wider measures of progress in safely and appropriately reducing the need for statutory social work intervention can be seen below. Firstly, the significant and sustained reduction in the proportion of children subject to a child protection plan. In 2013 Leeds was well above Statistical Neighbours and the national average. By 2018 the rate in the city had been halved, meaning Leeds was now well below benchmarks. Audits and reviews have been undertaken to ensure that this reduction is safe and that children and families are being supported effectively without the need for this serious intervention into family life.</p>  <table border="1"> <caption>Data for Children who are the subject of a Child Protection Plan - rate per 10,000</caption> <thead> <tr> <th>Year</th> <th>Leeds</th> <th>Statistical Neighbours</th> <th>England</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>2013</td> <td>62</td> <td>45</td> <td>38</td> </tr> <tr> <td>2014</td> <td>47</td> <td>53</td> <td>42</td> </tr> <tr> <td>2015</td> <td>38</td> <td>49</td> <td>43</td> </tr> <tr> <td>2016</td> <td>35</td> <td>50</td> <td>43</td> </tr> <tr> <td>2017</td> <td>31</td> <td>48</td> <td>43</td> </tr> <tr> <td>2018</td> <td>31</td> <td>53</td> <td>45</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <p>More broadly, the proportion of children in need (which includes all children and young people who are supported by statutory social work through an ongoing assessment, Child In Need Plan, Child Protection Plan or are Looked After) shows a similar trajectory, if less marked than in the 'curves' for children looked after and those with a CP Plan. This again shows that better early help is preventing the need for social work intervention and where it is needed better social work support is resolving problems more quickly. This final curve show Leeds above benchmarks in 2013 but by 2018 Leeds is below the rate for Statistical Neighbours and close to the national trend, which should still be seen as a success considering Leeds is relatively more deprived and higher need than the national norm.</p>  <table border="1"> <caption>Data for Children in Need rate per 10,000</caption> <thead> <tr> <th>Year</th> <th>Leeds</th> <th>Statistical Neighbours</th> <th>England</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>2013</td> <td>410</td> <td>380</td> <td>330</td> </tr> <tr> <td>2014</td> <td>440</td> <td>390</td> <td>340</td> </tr> <tr> <td>2015</td> <td>390</td> <td>360</td> <td>330</td> </tr> <tr> <td>2016</td> <td>350</td> <td>380</td> <td>330</td> </tr> <tr> <td>2017</td> <td>370</td> <td>380</td> <td>320</td> </tr> <tr> <td>2018</td> <td>360</td> <td>370</td> <td>350</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Year	Leeds	Statistical Neighbours	England	2013	62	45	38	2014	47	53	42	2015	38	49	43	2016	35	50	43	2017	31	48	43	2018	31	53	45	Year	Leeds	Statistical Neighbours	England	2013	410	380	330	2014	440	390	340	2015	390	360	330	2016	350	380	330	2017	370	380	320	2018	360	370	350
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Additional supporting Evidence 2011 to 2018	<p>OfSTED inspection reports provide a clear record of the improvement journey in Leeds:</p> <p>https://reports.ofsted.gov.uk/provider/44/383</p> <p>DfE national and data on Leeds, with comparison to Statistical Neighbour, regional and national benchmarks are all available in the 'Local Authority Interactive Tool':</p> <p>https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/local-authority-interactive-tool-lait</p>
Next stage of our journey	
Future aspirations	The obvious concern is to reinvigorate our work to 'Turn the curve' – for the past three years the proportion of children who are looked after in Leeds has remained the same – 76 per ten thousand.
Challenges/ barriers	<p>There are a range of significant barriers to progress:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continued population growth forecast for the city – an estimated 10% over the next decade, centred on higher need deprived neighbourhoods; older age groups that traditionally require different and more intensive support and care; and Black and Minority Ethnic communities where language and culture differences can make effective practice and relationship building more challenging. • Rising deprivation in the city, and its impact on the resilience, capacity and needs of children and families. Leeds has improved its strategic response to rising poverty through the Child Poverty Impact Board which began its work in 2018, with leadership from Elected Members and senior representatives from across the city. • Continuing challenges in the wider educational and health outcomes for vulnerable learners – there continue to be major gaps for the most deprived communities in Leeds and this limits life chances and increases demand for children's services support. • Continued austerity places significant pressures on both Council and partner budgets. Whilst Leeds has successfully protected children's services from the significant reductions seen elsewhere this will become increasingly difficult in future years. • Continuing to develop joint responses to new safeguarding risks for children and young people. The MACE (Multi-Agency Child Exploitation) arrangements between the Police, Council and other local partners. This group leads work to support the most vulnerable and at risk children and young people such as those affected by sexual or criminal exploitation and those who repeatedly go missing. The group have worked closely with Elected Members and other local leaders to make good progress to date but more work is needed.