

Corporate Parenting Sub-Committee

Monday, 16 September 2013 at 14:00

County Hall, County Hall, West Bridgford, Nottingham NG2 7QP

AGENDA

- | | | |
|---|--|---------|
| 1 | Minutes of the last meeting held on 24 June 13 | 5 - 8 |
| 2 | Apologies for Absence | |
| 3 | Declarations of Interests by Members and Officers:- (see note below)
(a) Disclosable Pecuniary Interests
(b) Private Interests (pecuniary and non-pecuniary) | |
| 4 | Looked after children strategy update | 9 - 16 |
| 5 | Adoption services annual report | 17 - 24 |
| 6 | End of year report for the Independent reviewing officer service | 25 - 34 |
| 7 | Childrens homes in Nottinghamshire | 35 - 38 |
| 8 | Provision, achievements and progress of the Children in Care Council and participation of children a | 39 - 44 |
| 9 | Work Programme | 45 - 48 |

NOTES:-

(1) Councillors are advised to contact their Research Officer for details of any Group Meetings which are planned for this meeting.

(2) Members of the public wishing to inspect "Background Papers" referred to in the reports on the agenda or Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act should contact:-

Customer Services Centre 0300 500 80 80

(3) Persons making a declaration of interest should have regard to the Code of Conduct and the Council's Procedure Rules. Those declaring must indicate the nature of their interest and the reasons for the declaration.

Members or Officers requiring clarification on whether to make a declaration of interest are invited to contact Ruth Rimmington (Tel. 0115 9773825) or a colleague in Democratic Services prior to the meeting.

(4) Members are reminded that Committee and Sub-Committee papers, with the exception of those which contain Exempt or Confidential Information, may be recycled.

Notes

(1) Councillors are advised to contact their Research Officer for details of any Group Meetings which are planned for this meeting.

(2) Members of the public wishing to inspect "Background Papers" referred to in the reports on the agenda or Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act should contact:-

- (3) Persons making a declaration of interest should have regard to the Code of Conduct and the Council's Procedure Rules. Those declaring must indicate the nature of their interest and the reasons for the declaration.

Councillors or Officers requiring clarification on whether to make a declaration of interest are invited to contact Christine Marson (Tel. 0115 977 3887) or a colleague in Democratic Services prior to the meeting.

- (4) Councillors are reminded that Committee and Sub-Committee papers, with the exception of those which contain Exempt or Confidential Information, may be recycled.

minutes



Meeting CORPORATE PARENTING SUB-COMMITTEE

Date Monday, 24 June 2013 (commencing at 2.00 pm)

Membership

Persons absent are marked with 'A'

COUNCILLORS

Alan Bell
Boyd Elliott
Kate Foale
Colleen Harwood
Philip Owen

Liz Plant
Sue Saddington
Jacky Williams
John Wilmott

Officers in attendance

Rachel Coombs	-	Group Manager, Children, Families and Cultural Services Department
Yvonne Cottingham	-	Team Manager, CAMHS
Helen Daft	-	Interim Service Manager, CAMHS
Sue Denholm	-	Co-ordinator, Virtual School
Steve Edwards	-	Service Director, Childrens Social Care
Linda Foster	-	Head, Virtual School
Michelle Lee	-	After Care Service Manager
Christine Marson	-	Assistant Democratic Services Officer, Policy, Planning & Corporate Services Department

Foster Carers

Dawn Clements
Aleks Jackowska
Claire MacDonald
Marie McKeeman

CHAIRMAN OF THE SUB-COMMITTEE

The appointment at the Annual Meeting of Council of Councillor Liz Plant was noted.

MEMBERSHIP OF THE COMMITTEE

The membership of the Committee as detailed above was noted.

MINUTES

RESOLVED 2013/010

That the minutes of the last meeting held on 11 March 2013 having been circulated were confirmed and signed by the Chairman.

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST BY MEMBERS AND OFFICERS

None.

TERMS OF REFERENCE

RESOLVED 2013/011

That the report be noted.

INTRODUCTION TO THE ROLE OF THE CORPORATE PARENTING SUB-COMMITTEE

Rachel Coombs, Group Manager, Children, Families and Cultural Services Department introduced the report. She explained to the Sub-Committee that being a good corporate parent involved accepting responsibility for children in the council's care, making their needs a priority and seeking the same outcomes any good parent would want for their own children.

RESOLVED 2013/012

That the introduction to the role of the Corporate Parenting Sub-Committee be noted.

SUMMER TERM REPORT FOR THE VIRTUAL SCHOOL FOR LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN

Sue Denholm, Co-ordinator for the Virtual School updated the Sub-Committee on the work of the Virtual School. She informed the Sub-Committee that she was aware that there was improvement to be made on KS4 results. Councillor Liz Plant asked for figures for Looked After Children at the different Key Stages to be brought to the next meeting.

RESOLVED 2013/013

That the Sub-Committee noted the update on the virtual school for the Summer term 2013.

FOSTERING SUPPORT CARE POLICY

Rachel Coombs introduced the report by explaining that the newly developed Fostering Support Care Policy had been brought to the Sub-Committee as a result of a recommendation of a serious case review.

RESOLVED 2013/014

That the newly developed Fostering Support Care Policy be noted.

SERVICE PROVISION AND DEVELOPMENTS WITHIN THE COUNTY CAMHS CHILDREN LOOKED AFTER AND ADOPTION TEAM 2012-13

Helen Daft, Interim Service Manager, Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service introduced the report. She explained to the Sub-Committee that the service was funded by Nottinghamshire County Council and the NHS Trust, based in Mansfield but covered all the county.

RESOLVED 2013/015

That the Sub-Committee were updated on the work and service developments of the County CAMHS Children Looked After and Adoption Team.

LEAVING CARE SERVICE – UPDATE

Michelle Lee, After Care Service Manager introduced the report with particular reference to the review of the Leaving Care Service. She reported that following a review of the service there would be a change of structure.

RESOLVED 2013/016

That the update on the Leaving Care Service be noted.

WORK PROGRAMME

RESOLVED 2013/017

That the committee's work programme be noted, and consideration be given to any changes which the committee wishes to make.

FOSTER CARERS ITEMS

There were no issues raised by the foster carers.

The meeting closed at 3.05 pm

CHAIRMAN

M_24 June 13

16 September 2013**Agenda Item: 4****REPORT OF THE SERVICE DIRECTOR, CHILDREN'S SOCIAL CARE
LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN STRATEGY UPDATE****Purpose of the Report**

1. To update the Sub-Committee on the progress of the action plan for the Looked After Children Strategy.

Information and Advice

2. It was identified that our approach to Looked After Children would benefit from the development of an over-arching strategy which outlines the commitment of the Council and our partner agencies to supporting children in care. The strategy has been developed based on what young people have told us is important to them in The Pledge for Looked After Children, published in October 2010.
3. Nottinghamshire's commitments to Looked After Children, as set out in The Pledge, underpin our Looked After Children Strategy which was published in August 2012. This strategy identifies the Council's ambition for its Looked After Children and young people, ensuring that they receive placements that meet their needs, have access to high quality education and enjoy positive activities that support them to achieve their full potential. For those children who require permanent alternative families it means ensuring that effective plans are made so that they achieve permanence as quickly as possible.
4. The LAC Strategy action plan, attached as **Appendix 1**, had a number of work streams which included piloting new panel arrangements for entry to care, reviewing the support in place for kinship care and care leavers, and the wider range of options for permanency available to children and young people in the care system.
5. Key actions in all priority areas have been completed which include:
 - production of a new review booklet to ensure young people's voices are heard and that they shape their own care plans
 - a new guide to adoption is available for older children and young people to help them understand the opportunities and challenges this presents, and how they can influence the process

- all new looked after children and existing looked after children with significant changes to circumstance will have a designated Educational Psychologist
- two additional Looked After Children Achievement Officers have been recruited to the Virtual School
- most district councils are now offering free or reduced cost sports and leisure activities for looked after children and young people
- a new data sharing system is in place between Health and Children's Social Care that will assist in identifying health concerns of looked after children
- the number of salaried carers for young people in need of specialist foster care placements continues to increase
- established a new Family Assessment and Contact Service which provides a consistent approach to contact across the County
- increased leave available for Nottinghamshire County Council staff who are taking on the care of a child through a special guardianship order.

Other Options Considered

6. The report is for noting only.

Reason/s for Recommendation/s

7. The report is for noting only.

Statutory and Policy Implications

8. This report has been compiled after consideration of implications in respect of finance, public sector equality duty, human resources, crime and disorder, human rights, the safeguarding of children, sustainability and the environment and those using the service and where such implications are material they are described below. Appropriate consultation has been undertaken and advice sought on these issues as required.

Implications for Service Users

9. Looked After Children will benefit from clear commitments from the County Council and partner agencies which support them, based on what young people in care have told us is important to them in The Pledge.

Equalities Implications

10. The Strategy commits Council and partner services to giving Looked After Children the same opportunities as any other group of children and young people.

Safeguarding of Children Implications

11. The Strategy strengthens the commitment of the Council and partners to effectively safeguarding this vulnerable group of children and young people.

RECOMMENDATION/S

- 1) That the update on the progress of the action plan for the Looked After Children Strategy be noted.

Steve Edwards
Service Director, Children's Social Care

For any enquiries about this report please contact:

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Dawn Godfrey
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Constitutional Comments

12. As this report is for noting only, no Constitutional Comments are required.

Financial Comments (KLA 28/06/13)

13. There are no financial implications arising directly from this report.

Background Papers and Published Documents

Looked After Children Strategy – report to Policy Committee on 18 July 2012
Looked After Children Strategy update – report to Policy Committee on 16 January 2013

Except for previously published documents, which will be available elsewhere, the documents listed here will be available for inspection in accordance with Section 100D of the Local Government Act 1972.

Electoral Division(s) and Member(s) Affected

All.

C0257

LAC Strategy Action Plan Monitoring

Theme	Number	Action	Achieved?
Participation & Joining In	1	Work with young people to produce a new review booklet to ensure their voices are heard	Yes
	2	Ensure reviewing officers use the consultation booklets with children and young people prior to every review	Ongoing
	3	Create a Facebook page to enable better communication and networking with young people	Ongoing
	4	Continuously review 'The Pledge' to ensure it continues to reflect the priorities of all age groups in care	Ongoing
	5	Ensure that care planning decisions such as placement changes are not made outside the review process, and that children are always involved in these decisions	Ongoing
	6	Enable children who live in independent sector placements can access to the same opportunities and services as those who are placed within NCC	Partially
	7	Ensure care planning is inclusive and reflects the views of parents and carers	Yes
	8	Produce a new guide to adoption for older children and young	Yes
	9	Develop a participation strategy that outlines how agencies will gather and promote the views of children looked after	Ongoing
	10	Ensure that all children looked after will have a link educational psychologist	Yes
	11	Monitor LAC in below floor target schools and also those LAC in satisfactory schools	Yes
	12	Improve the timeliness and quality of Personal Education Plans	Yes
	13	Ensure that teacher assessment data is robust and good quality	Ongoing
Education	14	Review funding mechanisms that currently support the education of looked after children	Yes
	15	Minimise the number of times looked after children need to move to a different school during their education	Yes
	16	Remove barriers to school admissions for Looked After Children	Ongoing
	17	Ensure that the staffing and resources available to the Virtual School are sufficient	Yes
	18	Improve the Information, Advice and Guidance (IAG) support to Looked After Children at the end of Key Stage 4	Yes
Health	19	Work with District Councils to improve access to council-run sport and leisure facilities for looked after children	Partially
	20	Ensure that social care and health systems work more closely together to provide accurate and timely information	Yes

LAC Strategy Action Plan Monitoring

	21	Ensure commissioning arrangements for health services for LAC and care leavers are prioritised and maintained in the light of health reforms	Yes
Theme	Number	Action	Achieved?
Safe & Stable Placements	22	Consultation exercise to review the experience of children and young people in placements, to understand where we can improve	Partially
	23	Pilot a Creative Solutions Panel	Yes
	24	Ensure that disruption meetings are held in a consistent way in all types of placement	Yes
	25	Continue to expand the number of salaried carers for young people in need of foster care	Yes
	26	Explore ways of better managing the challenges that social media bring to placements	Yes
	27	Maintain our commitment to inclusive adoption planning and support	Yes
	28	Develop our support to children and young people in permanent kinship placements	Ongoing
Relationships	29	Establish a new Family Assessment and Contact Service which will provide a consistent approach to contact across the county	Yes
	30	Develop a training and information pack for social workers in the throughcare team	Yes
	31	Delegate more authority to foster carers to make day to day decisions about contact plans with family and friends	Yes
	32	Continue to recruit foster carers from a wide range of diverse backgrounds	Partially
	33	Review of internal and external provider services to ensure that placements are VFM and are providing the best possible experience for LAC, their birth families and carers	Ongoing
	34	Further develop our support to children and young people in permanent placements to ensure that these remain stable and continue to meet their needs	Partially
	35	Ensure that all LAC with permanent fostering plans have life story work completed	Partially
Moving to Adulthood	36	Scope the viability of an integrated transitions service for children with disabilities	Yes
	37	Continue to recruit foster carers under the 14+ scheme to support the Staying Put Policy	Ongoing
	38	Develop supported lodgings and extend accommodation options for care leavers	Yes
	39	Increase availability of apprenticeships within NCC for care leavers	Yes
Emotional Wellbeing	40	Services to looked after young people will all contribute to the emotional wellbeing of our looked after children and young people	Ongoing
	41	Identify new ways of measuring positive progress in emotional resilience and wellbeing of our looked after children and young people	Ongoing
	42	Further assess mental health and emotional needs of Looked After Children through the	Ongoing

LAC Strategy Action Plan Monitoring

		refresh of the CAMHS needs assessment	
	43	Increase leave available for NCC staff who are taking on the care of a child through a special guardianship order	Yes

16 September 2013**Agenda Item: 5****REPORT OF THE SERVICE DIRECTOR, CHILDREN'S SOCIAL CARE****ADOPTION SERVICE ANNUAL REPORT****Purpose of the Report**

1. To provide a review of activity in the adoption service in 2012.

Information and Advice

2. Adoption has remained high on the Government agenda from 2012 to the present.

This has been evidenced by the following:

- October 2011 - Adoption League Table
- October 2012 - April 2013 - Adoption Reform Grant
- March 2012 - An action plan for adoption tracking delay
- May 2012 - Adoption Score Card
- September 2012 - Guidance amendments
- January 2013 - Further action on adoption: Finding more homes
- January 2013 - National Gateway for adoption
- April 2013 - Adoption maps
- April 2013 - Equalised Interagency fee
- July 2013 - New guidance on adoption recruitment

3. In addition the Government collect quarterly data on adoption: annual data via the 903 returns (an annual report with data on many aspects of looked after children) and Ofsted have begun collecting data annually since June 2012. This data is slightly different to the quarterly data and was different between June 2012 and June 2013.

4. The data collected includes:

- all children at any stage of the adoption process (approximately 200-250 Nottinghamshire children at any one time)
- any significant date in the quarter:
 - date of agency decision
 - placement order
 - match, placed
 - adopted

- all adopters at any stage of the process (pre July 2013 applications and post July 2013 recorded separately)
 - date of application, approval, match and order
 - equalities data regarding adults' marital status, ethnicity, religion, sexuality
 - figures for support after adoption assessments and plans, and adults work – such as tracing birth family.
5. The information supports the following performance measures:
- N161 – a performance indicator taken from the 903 return.
 - time from Agency decision on adoption to placement with adopters
 - *target - less than 12 months*
 - Scorecard
 - time from placement order to match with adopters
 - *target - less than 7 months, falling to 4 months by 2017 (recorded in days)*
 - time from entering looked after to moving in with adoptive family
 - *target - less than 21 months, falling to 14 months by 2017*
 - time from application to approval
 - *target to July 2013, less than 8 months; from July 2013, less than 6 months (as yet unpublished data)*
6. Further information on time scales for adoption are included in **Appendices 1 and 2**.
7. This constant focus on adoption and consequent reform is a result of falling numbers of adoptions, at the same time as a rapid increase in numbers of children looked after nationally.
8. In 2005 there were approximately 3,500 adoption orders nationally; this number fell steadily in the following years to a low of approximately 3,000 in 2011, and slightly increasing in 2012. However there were also approximately 3,000 Special Guardianship and Residence Orders, so to consider adoption statistics only is to underestimate the permanent exits from looked after care.
9. However in 2011 and 2012, the number of children subject to a placement order (permission to place for adoption) grew by an average of 820 a year, without a corresponding increase in adopter approvals.
10. At the end of March 2012 nationally, there were 4,650 children with placement orders waiting adoption (not all of these children will be in a situation where there is active home finding, an unknown number will be subject to revocation of placement order applications)
11. To provide adopters for all these children an additional 600 adopters a year are needed, approximately 20% increase in current approvals, meaning an overall approval of 200-300 adopters over the next two years.
12. 3,000 children waiting for adoption costs local authorities £1.2-1.5m per week (£60-80m per annum) in foster care costs alone.

13. Nottinghamshire has experienced a rapid year on year rise in the number of Looked After Children and consequently in children needing adoptive families.
14. The table below shows the increased activity in adoption – the rise in plans, approvals and placing children.

	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14 estimate
New Plans	81	104	70
Approvals	31	45	48
Matches	51	86	96
Adoptions	43	40	58

15. Each month there is a home finding meeting where all children with agency decision of adoption are discussed. The following table shows the activity over 12 months (August 2012 to July 2013):

Month	Children Waiting	Match	Hold	Total
August	39	60	17	116
September	37	68	13	118
October	31	51	29	111
November	40	46	28	114
December	38	50	21	109
January	35	55	21	111
March	45	53	13	111
April	32	49	25	106
May	23	60	21	104
June	24	46	23	93
July	22	42	11	75

NB: Match is any child in a potential link; hold is no current active home finding activity.

16. Recruitment of adopters has increased by almost 50% in 2012-13 and is expected to maintain or slightly increase again. Even with this increase, it is not enough to place all children.
17. We are highly active in home finding activity:
- professional photos and extensive profiles

- home finder social workers actively seeking links for Nottinghamshire children
 - national adoption register events
 - local profile exchange events
 - adoption activity days
 - features including DVD footage, in Be My Parent, Adoption Today
 - use of adoption register.
18. In addition we now have a partnership with a local voluntary adoption agency, Adopt Together, using some of the adoption reform grant to place 20 Nottinghamshire children in 2013-2014. This benefits us as we can develop close working relationships, share resources, and adopters are in the Midlands.
19. In addition we have found some agencies repeat work with us, such as Buckinghamshire Local Authority, Clifton Children's Society, Coram, due to high quality of work from the permanence team, and the child focus of Nottinghamshire staff.
20. We have been successful recently in placing sibling groups (4 groups of 3 children) older children (eldest 9) and children with disabilities. We continue to need adopters for boys, same gender sibling groups and children with delay or uncertainty.
21. Nottinghamshire Performance:

	Children Adopted 2012-2013	Children Placed 2012-2013
N161	67.5%	48%
21 months	47.5%	52%
7 months	60%	45%

22. The above performance measures (when published) are triggered by the adoption order. Thus children adopted in 2012-13 were likely to have been subject to care proceedings and placed 12-18 months previously. In addition the cohort of children is constantly shifting, for example, those adopted in 2012-2013 will not have been placed in a corresponding cohort, some children who will be adopted in 2013-14 were placed in 2011.
23. As we also place more children, many of whom have waited a significant amount of time, this will affect performance, for example, a five year old boy about to be placed has been in the Home Finding process for over 2 years. It is positive that he now has a family and adoption will be achieved, however, not giving up on Home Finding later reduces published performance.
24. Of the 30 children subject to a placement order and matched in 2012-13:
- 16 met the 4 month timescale (53%)

- 27 met the 7 month timescale (90%)
25. With regard to adults approved, less than 30% meet the 8 month target; usual performance is 12 months. There is no national data on this performance measurement as yet, but we expect it to be included in the next score card publication. Nottinghamshire adopters have historically followed a sequential process, which has included waiting times, for example before and after preparation groups. Whilst we have altered the process we have also experienced a 50% increase in volume, making it impossible as yet to remove all waiting times.
 26. We have recently had one permanent, and one temporary full time post added to establishment, but these workers are not yet in post. However, Nottinghamshire adopters are matched very quickly, with most having a placement within four months of approval.
 27. We now have a new process in place with six months to approve families. Workers in adoption are generally risk averse and make very thorough assessments. The new targets are a challenge which workers are actively aiming to meet.
 28. A Bill currently before Parliament, if passed, will allow the Government to remove the right to function as an adoption agency from local authorities. It is not yet known if this will be used only for poorly performing adoption agencies.
 29. The Government has yet to publish plans for adoption support. It is generally acknowledged that there is a need for the right support to be available to adopters as they need it, and this must be a lifelong commitment.
 30. Nottinghamshire has a relatively well resourced support after adoption team, offering services to children, families and adults. Services are available to families living in Nottinghamshire; these are not necessarily children placed by Nottinghamshire.
 31. This team is increasingly busy managing adoption support, and with more children placed, the on-going need for support rises. The team also manage on going contact arrangements; currently there are almost 400 letter box arrangements with 800 exchanges a year which need to be monitored. These are confidential exchanges between adopters and birth family, usually an annual letter, via the Support After Adoption Team.

Other Options Considered

32. The report is for noting only.

Reason/s for Recommendation/s

33. The report is for noting only.

Statutory and Policy Implications

34. This report has been compiled after consideration of implications in respect of finance, the public sector equality duty, human resources, crime and disorder, human rights, the safeguarding of children, sustainability and the environment and those using the service and where such implications are material they are described below. Appropriate consultation has been undertaken and advice sought on these issues as required.

RECOMMENDATION/S

- 1) That the review of activity in the adoption service in 2012 be noted.

Steve Edwards
Service Director, Children's Social Care

For any enquiries about this report please contact:

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Constitutional Comments

35. As this report is for noting only no Constitutional Comments are required.

Financial Comments (KLA 29/08/13)

36. There are no financial implications arising directly from this report.

Background Papers and Published Documents

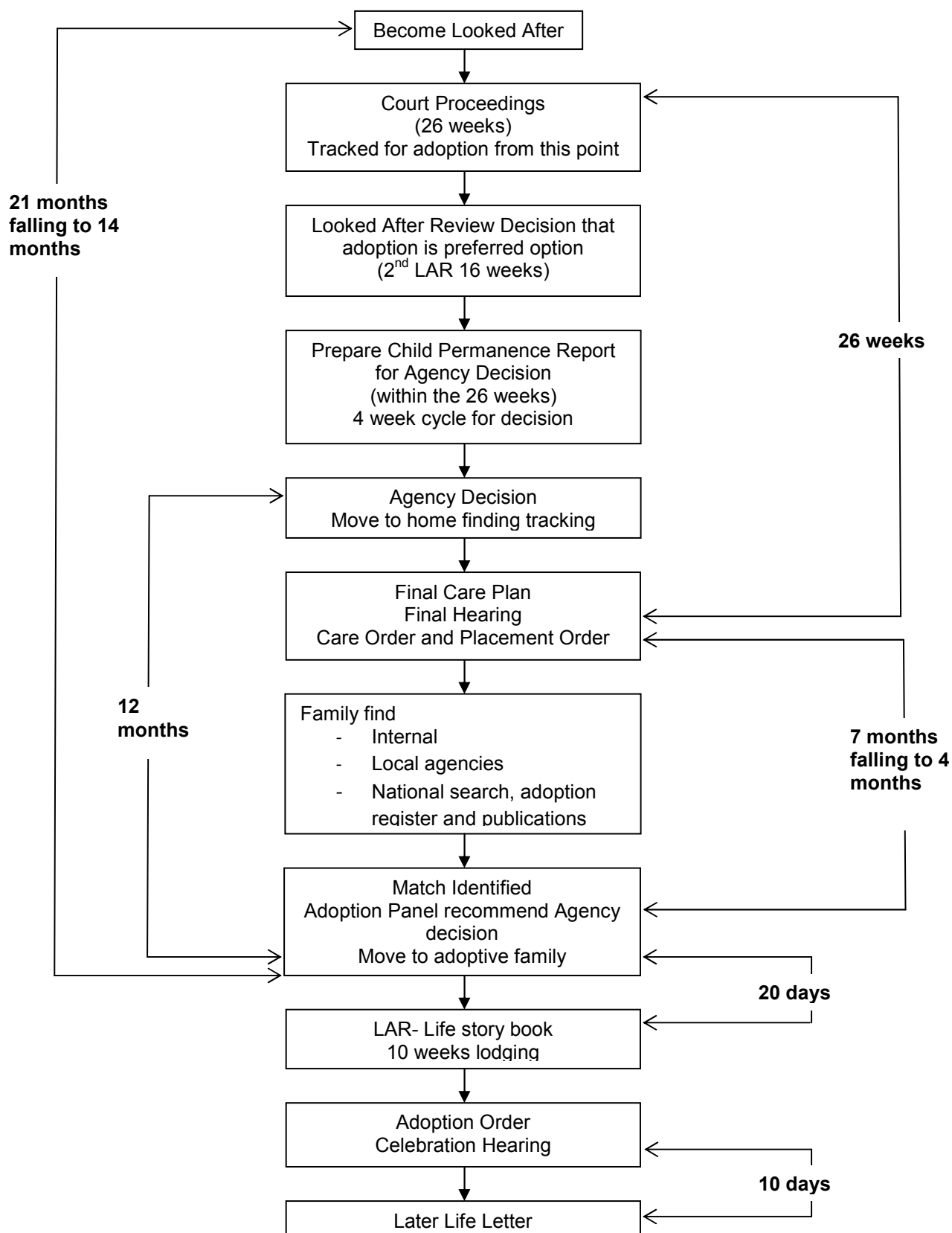
None.

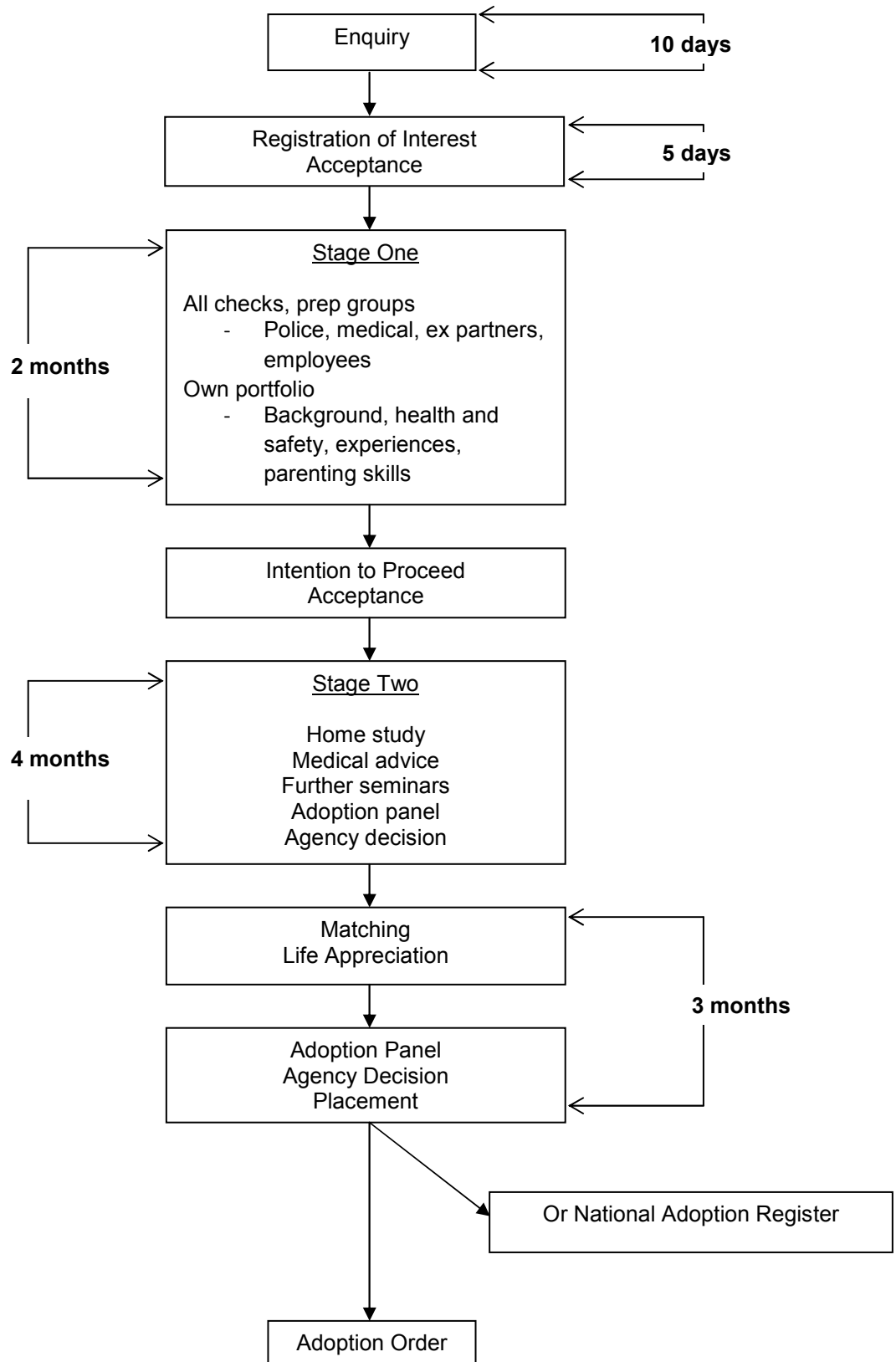
Electoral Division(s) and Member(s) Affected

All.

C0284

1





16 September 2013**Agenda Item: 6****REPORT OF THE SERVICE DIRECTOR, CHILDREN'S SOCIAL CARE
END OF YEAR REPORT FOR THE INDEPENDENT REVIEWING OFFICER
SERVICE****Purpose of the Report**

1. To update members of the Corporate Parenting Sub-Committee about the activities within the Independent Reviewing Officer Service from April 2012 to March 2013. The report, attached as **Appendix 1**, focuses on the activities undertaken in the Independent Chair service throughout 2012/2013 and how this has impacted on the Looked After Children of Nottinghamshire. The report also comments on the actions taken to strengthen the quality assurance role of the Independent Reviewing Officers.

Information and Advice

2. The report (**Appendix 1**) informs the Sub-Committee about how the service has expanded in response to the growing numbers of the Looked After Children population in Nottinghamshire. The report details the work undertaken to develop the service and also identifies the key areas for development for 2013-2014.
3. During 2013 the Children's Social Care new operating model was introduced and as part of this three dedicated Looked After Teams were created to focus solely on the needs of all Looked After Children in Nottinghamshire. The links between the Independent Reviewing Officers and the three teams is being developed and we continue to raise the profile of the Independent Chair service along with the consistency and quality of the service itself.
4. The recommendations at the end of **Appendix 1** highlight the activities the service will be focussing on in the coming year, 2013-2014. The service is constantly looking at how it can develop and different ways in which it can seek the views of children/young people and their carers.

Other Options Considered

5. The report is for noting only.

Reason/s for Recommendation/s

6. The report is for noting only.

Statutory and Policy Implications

7. This report has been compiled after consideration of implications in respect of finance, the public sector equality duty, human resources, crime and disorder, human rights, the safeguarding of children, sustainability and the environment and those using the service and where such implications are material they are described below. Appropriate consultation has been undertaken and advice sought on these issues as required.

RECOMMENDATION/S

- 1) That the activities of the Independent Reviewing Officer Service from April 2012 to March 2013 be noted.

Steve Edwards
Service Director, Children's Social Care

For any enquiries about this report please contact:

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Service Manager, Independent Chair Service
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Constitutional Comments

8. As this report is for noting only no Constitutional Comments are required.

Financial Comments (KLA 29/08/13)

9. There are no financial implications arising directly from this report.

Background Papers and Published Documents

None.

Electoral Division(s) and Member(s) Affected

All.

C0286

Appendix 1

NOTTINGHAMSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL Annual Report of Independent Reviewing Officer [IRO] Service

April 2012 – March 2013

Independent Chair Service vision statement created in June 2012.

“To ensure that, through the independent review process, protection and care plans for children meet their individual needs and secure better outcomes for children and young people”

1. Introduction

This is an annual report of the Nottinghamshire Independent Chair Service (ICS), focussing on the role of the Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO) in promoting good outcomes for Looked After Children. The IRO Handbook notes that the IRO Manager is responsible for the production of an annual report for the scrutiny of the members of the Corporate Parenting Board. It is planned that this report will be available as a public document via the County Council’s website.

This report will:

- § Highlight areas of good practice and areas which require improvement; identifying emerging themes and trends.
- § Describe areas of work which the service has prioritised during the year.
- § Areas of work which the service will prioritise in the coming year.

2. Context

The responsibility of local authorities is to provide Looked After Children the best experiences in life as possible and actively promote a wide range of opportunities to develop their talents and skills by acting as a ‘corporate parent’ alongside birth parents whenever possible. The role of the corporate parent is to act as the best possible parent for each child they look after and to advocate on his/her behalf to secure the best possible outcomes.

The Children Act 1989 [amended 2004] and the Care Planning Placement and Case Review Regulations 2010 specify the duties of the local authority to appoint an IRO when a child first becomes looked after. The IRO should ensure that the local authority gives due consideration to any views expressed by the child and the IRO has a responsibility to monitor the local authority’s performance of its functions in relation to the child’s case. The Regulations clearly specify circumstances when the local authority should consult with the IRO, for example, proposed change of placement, change of education plan, or serious incident. They also specify the actions that the IRO must take if it is felt that the local authority is failing to comply with the Regulations or is in breach of its duties to the child. Ultimately that could lead to making a referral to CAFCASS. The IRO should also seek to speak with a child prior to a review and enable their contribution to their meeting.

3. LAC Strategy

During 2012/13, Nottinghamshire County Council developed a strategy for looked after children in response to the Government refocusing its approach in supporting children in care with more emphasis on preventative and early intervention techniques following the recommendations of the Munro Review. The strategy forms part of Nottinghamshire's response to the changing national context regarding looked after children with a focus on promoting more effective care planning. The Children's Rights Director for England recently published the Care Monitor 2011 which provides a comprehensive picture of children's views of the care system and the challenges within it. As part of our local strategy, NCC and its partner agencies developed the Pledge in consultation with two hundred looked after children who stated how their experience within the care system could be improved. The Pledge reinforces the role of the IRO in seeking a child's views and giving them the opportunity to state these before the review or by ensuring completion of the revised 'Listen to Me' document, which covers a number of areas about the child's experiences in care.

4. The IRO Service

The group of IROs are all experienced practitioners/managers with a wealth of experience in working with looked after children. At the end of the year, there were 11 full time equivalent IROs – being a combination of permanent staff and agency staff whilst recruitment activity has continued. Two permanent IROs have specialist knowledge of working with children with disabilities which has assisted in ensuring relevant packages of care are in place.

From March 2013 an additional investment of 3 IROs has been secured to reflect the increase, and the projected continued increase, in the number of looked after children. By the end of March 2013 there were 892 looked after children but additionally there are approximately 50 children with disabilities receiving short breaks who require an IRO to chair their reviews given the number of nights they are away from home . The IRO Handbook indicates that IROs should have a caseload of 50-70 in order that they are able to complete all the core functions of their role. Caseloads for IROs have been higher than this over the year but the additional investment will have a beneficial impact in this regard.

The IROs are supported by a group of Business Support staff who have had their own challenges over the past year with vacancies and the need to employ temporary staff to meet the demands of the growing LAC figures. IROs generally type their own records of the LAC Reviews but a small number are minuted by the Business Support team, e.g. where it is a particularly complex case or a meeting is covering the reviews of three or more children. One IRO explored the use of a 'tough book' but due to connection problems this did not prove to be successful. Consideration is being given to the use of other electronic devices to aid and increase the efficiency of taking minutes within the service as a whole.

The production and distribution of minutes in a timely way has continued to be a challenge for the service and has received considerable managerial attention to remedy this. However, the IROs do ensure that the recommendations from the

meetings are distributed to the team manager within 5 working days of the review, in accordance with the IRO Handbook, in order to check that the manager is in agreement with the actions identified.

5. Independent Chair Service review

During 2012/13, the Independent Chair Service undertook a review of its service with a particular focus on promoting the effectiveness of the quality assurance aspect of the IRO. This involved establishing the strengths and challenges of the service, benchmarking against other local authority areas and producing an action plan. As part of this action plan, the Independent Chair Service developed a vision to express its core values and outline what the service is aiming to achieve. There were three areas identified in which the service wished to focus on to strengthen the quality assurance role of the IRO. These were:

- *To evaluate and audit the practice of the chairs consistently.*
- *Create a visible, transparent, consistent professional service where everyone is clear about its purpose in respect of children.*
- *Create child centred meetings ensuring meaningful participation of young people and their parents/carers.*

During 2012/2013 the service managers sought feedback from agencies and parents about the service they received from the IROs by the service managers requesting completion of a questionnaire as part of their observation of the IRO in practice. The following positive themes were noted:

- Practice was child focussed.
- There was evidence of challenge from the IRO.
- The chair enabled participation by all attendees.
- Previous recommendations were reviewed and progress of plans tracked.
- There was evidence of challenge when previous recommendations were not completed.
- Young people's views for LAC meeting were sought through the chair seeing them before the meeting or by referring to the 'Listen to Me' document at the review.
- Evidence of Chair recording when and how child should be informed of the outcome of the meeting if they were not present

Additionally, during February 2013, there was a further survey of parents/carers who were in attendance at LAC reviews during that month.

A total of 168 reviews were undertaken during the period, of these there were 17 (10%) where the Parent / Carer declined to respond and 80 (47%) where there were no Parents / Carers in attendance. Therefore, there were 71 questionnaires completed and from the information collated it is quite promising. The overall key messages were that the parents and carers felt comfortable and welcome, they understood what was discussed and felt they were given the opportunity to speak and ask questions at the meeting. Most parents felt that their views and wishes were listened to and considered.

From the information gathered, we identified two areas for further improvement which involves a more consistent approach to the chair speaking with the parent before the meeting and making parents aware of the complaints procedure if they are not happy with the service provided. All the IROs are aware of this and this is being positively addressed.

6. Participation of young people

During the year there have been revisions made to the 5-11 yr olds and the 11-18 yr olds 'Listen to Me' leaflet which involved some young people from the Children in Care Council. Subsequently further work has been undertaken involving young people to complete a Signs and Symbols translation of the leaflet for children with disabilities. The final version is in process and once agreed will be printed and then circulated. A further piece of work is being commissioned to work alongside Yeoman Park school to devise symbols for young people to answer the questions in the Signs and Symbols 'Listen to Me' document, the aim is to complete this work by the end of the summer.

The following are examples of the efforts made by IROs to include young people in their reviews:

Child 1

During her 8 years in care, this young person had a number of different workers which at times she experienced as not being very helpful as there was no consistency. However she spoke positively of her IRO who she said she considered to be the most reliable adult in her life and had an understanding of the difficulties and challenges she experienced in care. At her recent leaving care review she reflected on her care experience and recognised her behaviour had not always been helpful. Both the young person and the IRO jointly chaired the leaving care review and she was able to demonstrate how mature and confident she had become.

Child 2

A 17 year old young person who has anxieties related to his autism and learning disability has not been willing to engage with his reviews. The IRO and transitions worker met with the young person well before the date of his review and with the aid of Makaton symbols and signs they were able to establish his wishes and feelings. The young person fully engaged and completed a large map with his views on and this will be the central point for discussion when his review takes place over the coming weeks.

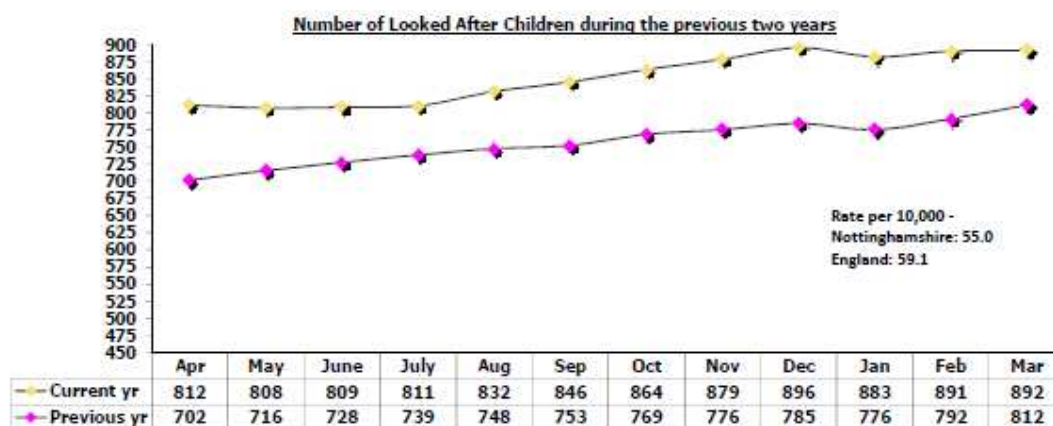
Child 3

An 11 year old young person will not attend his review but he regularly sends a typed letter to the IRO about his views about being looked after and very recently sent a commentary on a UB stick to the IRO. The IRO made sure the young person's comments were then fed into the LAC review.

These are just a few examples and there are many other creative ways the IRO undertakes to engage the children and young people they work with.

7. Children Looked After

At 31st March 2013, there were 892 children and young people looked after. As can be seen from the below chart, there was a notable increase in numbers from July 2012 to December 2012 but with relatively stability from January to March 2013.



At the end of March 2013, 666 (74.7%) of LAC were placed in foster care.

During the year, 76 children had been placed for adoption whilst 69% children were adopted who were placed for adoption within 12 months of the agency deciding that the child should be placed for adoption.

The total number of LAC reviews held within timescale for the year was 96.8%- 2,629 reviews took place with 2,544 being completed within timescale. This was slightly below the target figure of 98% but shows a significant improvement from the year before which was 85% and is set against the increased numbers of looked after children.

On the occasions when a child who is subject to a child protection plan becomes looked after, the child protection plan is reviewed at the earliest possible opportunity. During the year attention was given to this being undertaken in a timely way – to make certain that children would only be subject to one review process. At the end of March 2013, 18 children were recorded as dual status: 5 of whom had been dual status for 3 months or more. This is a positive reduction from the start of the reporting year (31). IROs will continue to work closely with operational staff from the children's social work teams and Child Protection Coordinators to maintain low numbers of children subject to dual processes.

8. Qualitative information

During July 2012, an IRO management information form was developed to record information relating to a child and their review as follows:

- Have the statutory visits been completed in timescale?
- Has the "Listen to Me Document" been completed?
- Were the reports received three days before the review and what is the quality?

- Have the care plan and pathway plan been completed and shared with the child and other interested parties?
- Was the report and care plan discussed with the young person before the review?
- Have all the appropriate agencies been invited and consulted with?
- Has the review resulted in an alert being sent?
- Did the social worker, supervising social worker and child/young person attend the review?

Findings from these reports noted the following themes:

- Good practice and liaison from the staff in the social care Permanence teams
- Individual and creative examples of good practice and Care Planning from the Children with Disabilities Service
- A consistent focus/understanding of reviews being held within timescale.
- Some parents/carers and young people are not seeing the social worker's report before the review. This can result in delays at the start of reviews as reports are read and queries are often raised particularly in more contentious reviews within proceedings.
- Changes of social workers have been positive in some cases.
- Examples of workers doing creative and skilled work with children in the Permanence, Court and some District Child Protection teams.
- Standards of reports vary - some are very detailed whilst others lack information required to progress the child's plan and/or recommendations not being fulfilled from the previous review.
- Transfer of cases and changes in staffing has had an impact on the progression of some plans

During the year, the service managers have reported to the social care operational management team on the key issues arising and feedback to other agencies has begun to be strengthened.

9. Dispute Resolution Process

Where there are significant concerns relating to practice and drift, the IRO will initiate an alert and send it to the team manager for their attention.

During 2012-2013, a total of 148 alerts were raised. This is a significant increase over the previous two years and evidences that the IROs are being more robust in challenging the local authority where appropriate about concerns relating to practice, including any delay in progressing recommendations. Following the introduction of the new operating model for children's social care, there are dedicated teams working with the majority of looked after children. This will provide an opportunity for there to be enhanced practice in working with looked after children and a strong and productive working relationship with the IRO service.

The following themes were noted with regard to the alerts processed:

- Paperwork for the review not being submitted in a timely way.

- Assessments outstanding.
- Pathway plan not fully completed
- Social Work visits not within timescale.
- LPM meeting to be considered.
- Contact arrangements to be clarified
- Need to ensure young person's views obtained
- Impact on case progression of change of worker
- LAC risk assessment required
- Need for life story work to be completed

Normally the issues raised by an alert are resolved at an early stage but there would be escalation to a service manager level if need be.

It is also important to note that IROs also inform managers of examples of good practice.

10. Key areas for further development for 2013/2014

- Complete a questionnaire with children and young people to ascertain their views about the service they receive from the IROs and respond to any areas where improvements are required.
- Complete and disseminate the Signs and Symbols 'Listen to Me' leaflet
- Linking identified IROs with the Children in Care Council
- Ensure children and young people have sight of their care plan prior to the review
- As far as possible promote reviews being held at venue of choice of young person
- Explore further the use of ICT in helping convey a young person's views
- Exploring further the opportunities for a young person to be involved in chairing their review
- IROs to be involved in a Mobile Technology project to promote efficiency
- Ensure that the level of IRO caseloads enables the exercising of their quality assurance role adequately.
- Link IROs with specific social work teams to promote quality feedback regarding key issues and exchange of information
- Strengthen the links with the Family Justice Board and CAFCASS in order to promote the role of the IRO.
- Improve the quality of LAC review minutes to ensure they are outcome focussed and expressed within a SMART framework.

Izzy Martin/ Hilary Turner
Service Managers
Independent Chair service
19.08.13

C0286a

16 September 2013**Agenda Item: 7****REPORT OF THE SERVICE DIRECTOR, CHILDREN'S SOCIAL CARE
CHILDREN'S HOMES IN NOTTINGHAMSHIRE****Purpose of the Report**

1. To update members of the Corporate Parenting Sub-Committee on Nottinghamshire's Children's Homes and their Ofsted inspection ratings.

Information and Advice

2. There are six residential children's homes offering a range of services and support for children and young people in Nottinghamshire between the ages of 12 - 18 years. All of the homes have very positive Ofsted inspection reports. The homes portfolio consists of three homes for children who are unable to live at home or within a foster family, who present with complicated life histories and challenging behaviours, and three homes for children with disabilities. The children and young people who come to live in these homes often have a very poor school attendance, complicated issues of poor self esteem and experiences of neglect and abuse, and have difficulties in trusting and forming positive attachments to adults. Some of the young people also have some degree of learning disability, and exhibit self injurious behaviours.
3. **Lyndene** is a three bed home, situated in Edwinstowe, and has recently been inspected by Ofsted, receiving a rating of *Good* and *making good progress*.
4. **Oakhurst** is a four bed home near High Oakham School in Mansfield, and also has an Ofsted rating of *Good* and *making good progress*.
5. **West View** is also a four bed home, situated in Pleasley, and is currently rated as *Good* and *making good progress* by Ofsted.
6. The three children's disability homes provide short breaks and residential living accommodation for children and young people with severe learning disabilities and challenging behaviours, with one home providing short breaks and living accommodation for children and young people with physical disabilities and complex health needs.
7. **Minster View** in Southwell, provides living accommodation for six young people, and provides a short breaks service to approximately 32 families with six short breaks beds. Most of the young people at Minster View are severely

autistic and present with very challenging behaviours, each with an individualised behaviour management and support care plan. Minster View has had an Ofsted rating of *Outstanding* since 2007.

8. **The Big House** in Edwinstowe offers eight beds for short breaks to approximately 44 families, with the same profiles as Minster View, and has an Ofsted rating of *Adequate* and *making good progress*. Both homes also offer support to families within their own homes where possible, advising on behaviour management and sleep routines.
9. **Caudwell House**, also in Southwell, is a 12 bed home, providing six residential beds, and 10 for short breaks. The children and young people who come to Caudwell House have profound physical disabilities, many with a health condition impacting on their life expectancy. Caudwell also has an Ofsted rating of *Outstanding* with *making good progress*.
10. All of the six homes have been judged to be providing a high standard of safeguarding and safe care, with robust care and support plans addressing education, health, leisure and integration or rehabilitation home where it is safe to do so.

Other Options Considered

11. The report is for noting only.

Reason/s for Recommendation/s

12. The report is for noting only.

Statutory and Policy Implications

13. This report has been compiled after consideration of implications in respect of finance, the public sector equality duty, human resources, crime and disorder, human rights, the safeguarding of children, sustainability and the environment and those using the service and where such implications are material they are described below. Appropriate consultation has been undertaken and advice sought on these issues as required.

RECOMMENDATION/S

- 1) That the update on Nottinghamshire's Children's Homes and their Ofsted inspection ratings be noted.

Steve Edwards

Service Director, Children's Social Care

For any enquiries about this report please contact:

Vonny Senogles

Children's Service Manager

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E: vonny.senogles@nottsgov.uk

Constitutional Comments

14. As this report is for noting only no Constitutional Comments are required.
Financial Comments (KLA 29/08/13)

15. There are no financial implications arising directly from this report.

Background Papers and Published Documents

None.

Electoral Division(s) and Member(s) Affected

All.

C0285

16 September 2013**Agenda Item: 8****REPORT OF THE SERVICE DIRECTOR, YOUTH, FAMILIES AND CULTURE****PROVISION, ACHIEVEMENTS AND PROGRESS OF THE CHILDREN IN
CARE COUNCIL AND PARTICIPATION OF CHILDREN AND YOUNG
PEOPLE LOOKED AFTER 2012/13****Purpose of the Report**

1. To provide an overview of the work of the Young People Looked After (YPLA) team, situated within the Young People's Service. The YPLA team is responsible for:
 - the Children in Care Council (CiCC) and ensuring that young people looked after are represented at all levels in the Nottinghamshire system of Youth Participation
 - encouraging and enabling young people who are looked after, adopted or living in residential care to engage in positive activities provided by the young people looked after youth work team and to independently access mainstream provision
 - offering individual support to an agreed number of fostered young people
 - engaging with at least 250 children and young people looked after in more than 900 attendances with staff
 - working in partnership with Children's Social Care and the Group Manager for the Access to Resources section.

Information and Advice

2. The YPLA team is responsible for the planning and delivery of a range of positive activities outside of school for looked after and adopted young people to enable them to come together to participate and have fun in events throughout the year as well as to have a voice about their life in care through the work of the CiCC. The opportunities on offer for young people to engage are designed to promote and support them to build their confidence and self esteem.
3. Young people looked after are signposted to universal services across the County as well as participating in small and large group work activities to ensure that they can gain the self reliance through learning new skills and experience positive relationships to help broaden their horizons.

4. Activities are designed to help support a holistic assessment of children and young people's needs and to help close the gap in educational attainment through joining in activities outside of the school environment. The positive activities young people participate in also promotes placement stability, as young people are actively engaged, as well as a platform for young people to share their views about life in care. A number of those young people will go on to be members of the sub groups of the CiCC and the more formal No Labels meetings where the sub-group representatives come together with a range of senior management and elected members to sign off completed pieces of consultation and commissioned task and finish participation work. The Structure of the CiCC is set out in **Appendix 1**.
5. Young People Looked After have participated in a wide range of activities throughout the first half of 2013, with more events planned for the remaining financial year. This includes various adventurous activities, visits and trips, dance, arts and crafts, music and horse riding.
6. The CiCC listen to what children and young people are saying and these views are taken forward and acted upon. Representatives from the CiCC are also encouraged to have an active role on the Children and Young People's Board. The strategic development of the CiCC has direct links to the new Looked After Strategy and is set within a whole vision for Children, Families and Cultural Services.
7. The work of the CiCC has direct links to The Pledge which is a set of promises that Nottinghamshire County Council has made to young people looked after and has strategic commitment from senior management and the Corporate Parenting Sub-Committee. The Pledge is currently in the process of being reviewed and there is an expectation that the CiCC sub-groups and No Labels will sign off the changes throughout 2013 with the updated Pledge will be ready for circulation to all young people looked after by April 2014.
8. The CiCC structure includes seven sub groups, which provides a mechanism for a range of groups of looked after young people to be involved in the Nottinghamshire system of Youth Participation. Representatives from each sub-group then meet as the formal CiCC board (known as No Labels). The groups have all met three times during 2013 with three more meetings scheduled up to March 2014. Young people have been asked to give their views and decisions on a variety of strategic and business agenda items such as:
 - the Looked After Children Strategy monitoring – Pledge review throughout 2013/14
 - Personal Education Plans – a new form introduced by the Virtual School Coordinator – booklet for young people
 - consultation with young people on the review of the Aftercare service
 - consultation with young people on the Nottinghamshire County and Bassetlaw Children in Care and Adoption Health Team Leaflet – ongoing throughout 2013/14

- group of young people worked together on the planning and participation at the Achievement Event
- consultation with young people regarding the payments for pocket money in NCC residential homes
- consultation with young people regarding free access to youth service provision across the County
- young people participating in the training of foster carers attending foundation training.

Other Options Considered:

9. As this is a report for noting, it is not necessary to consider other options

Reason/s for Recommendation/s

10. The report is for noting only.

Statutory and Policy Implications

11. This report has been compiled after consideration of implications in respect of finance, public sector equality duty, human resources, crime and disorder, human rights, the safeguarding of children, sustainability and the environment and those using the service and where such implications are material they are described below. Appropriate consultation has been undertaken and advice sought on these issues as required.

RECOMMENDATION/S

- 1) That the overview of the work of the Young People Looked After team be noted.

Derek Higton,
Service Director. Youth, Families and Culture

For any enquiries about this report please contact:

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 Group Manager, Young People's Service
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 E: chris.warren@nottsgov.uk

Constitutional Comments

12. As this report is for noting only, no Constitutional Comments are required.

Financial Comments (KLA 15/08/13)

13. There are no financial implications arising directly from this report.

Background Papers and Published Documents

The PLEDGE booklet – Nottinghamshire County Council's promise to children and young people Looked After

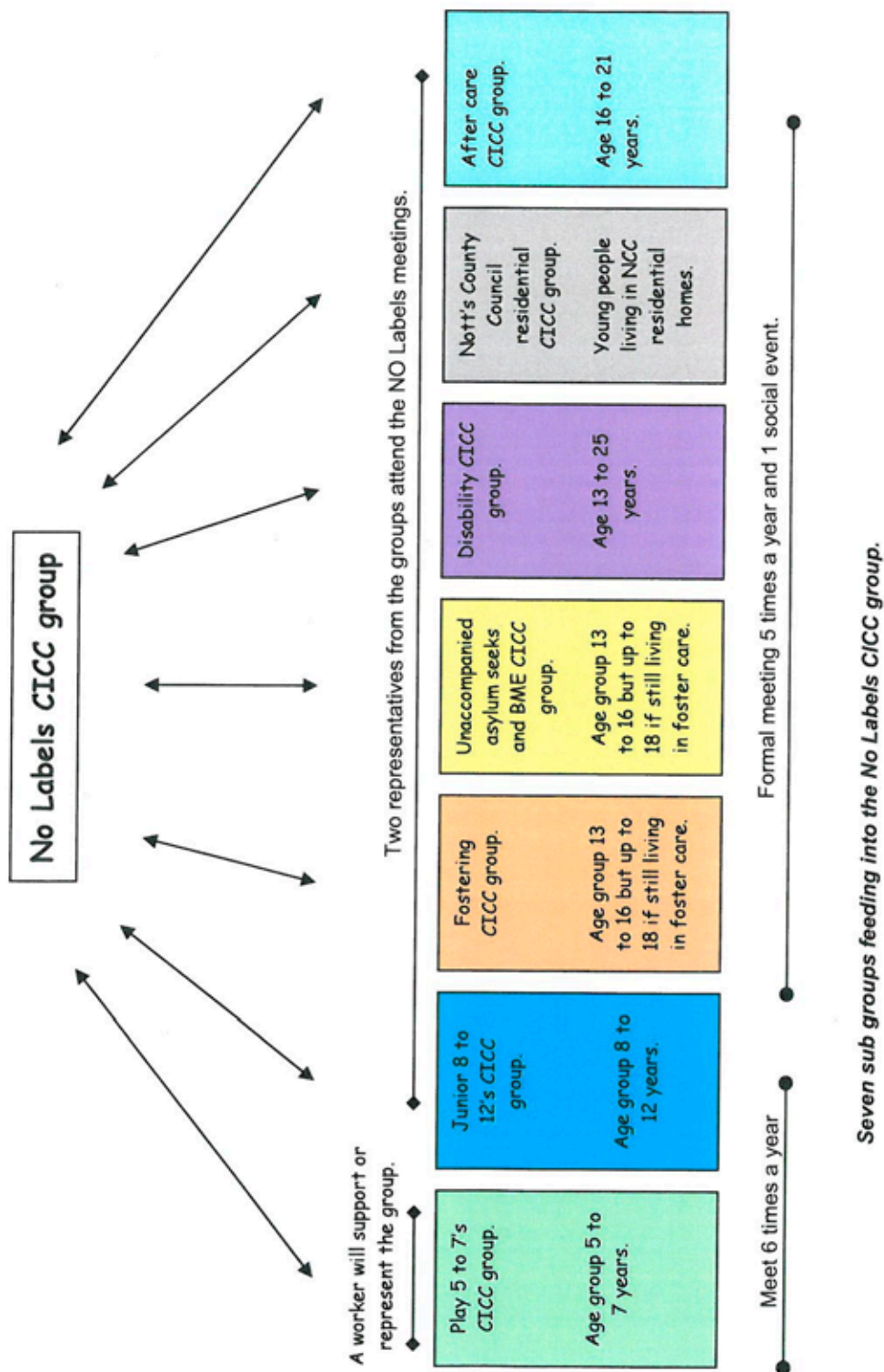
Nottinghamshire County Council Looked After Strategy

Except for previously published documents, which will be available elsewhere, the documents listed here will be available for inspection in accordance with Section 100D of the Local Government Act 1972.

Electoral Division(s) and Member(s) Affected

All.

C0276



16 September 2013**Agenda Item: 9****REPORT OF CORPORATE DIRECTOR, POLICY, PLANNING AND
CORPORATE SERVICES****WORK PROGRAMME****Purpose of the Report**

1. To consider the Committee's work programme for 2013/14.

Information and Advice

2. The County Council requires each committee to maintain a work programme. The work programme will assist the management of the committee's agenda, the scheduling of the committee's business and forward planning. The work programme will be updated and reviewed at each pre-agenda meeting and committee meeting. Any member of the committee is able to suggest items for possible inclusion.
3. The attached work programme has been drafted in consultation with the Chairman and includes items which can be anticipated at the present time. Other items will be added to the programme as they are identified.
4. As part of the transparency introduced by the new committee arrangements, committees are expected to review day to day operational decisions made by officers using their delegated powers. It is anticipated that the committee will wish to commission periodic reports on such decisions. The committee is therefore requested to identify activities on which it would like to receive reports for inclusion in the work programme.

Other Options Considered

5. None.

Reason/s for Recommendation/s

6. To assist the committee in preparing its work programme.

Statutory and Policy Implications

7. This report has been compiled after consideration of implications in respect of finance, equal opportunities, human resources, crime and disorder, human rights, the safeguarding of children, sustainability and the environment and those using the service and where such implications are material they are described below. Appropriate consultation has been undertaken and advice sought on these issues as required.

RECOMMENDATION/S

- 1) That the committee's work programme be noted, and consideration be given to any changes which the committee wishes to make.

Jayne Francis-Ward

Corporate Director, Policy, Planning and Corporate Services

For any enquiries about this report please contact: Assistant Democratic Services Officer -

Christine Marson

Tel: 0115 977 3887

Constitutional Comments (SLB)

8. The Committee has authority to consider the matters set out in this report by virtue of its terms of reference.

Financial Comments (PS)

9. There are no financial implications arising directly from this report.

Background Papers

Except for previously published documents, which will be available elsewhere, the documents listed here will be available for inspection in accordance with Section 100D of the Local Government Act 1972.

Electoral Division(s) and Member(s) Affected

All

CORPORATE PARENTING SUB-COMMITTEE - WORK PROGRAMME 2013-14

<u>Report Title</u>	<u>Brief summary of agenda item</u>	<u>Lead Officer</u>	<u>Report Author</u>
9 December 2013			
Autumn Term report for the Virtual School for Looked After Children		Steve Edwards	Sue Denholm
Fostering Service annual report		Steve Edwards	Rachel Coombs
Independent Advocacy Service		Steve Edwards	Rachel Coombs
Work Programme		Steve Edwards	
17 March 2014			
Spring Term report for the Virtual School for Looked After Children		Steve Edwards	Sue Denholm
End of year report for the Independent Reviewing Officer service 2012-13	Annual report	Steve Edwards	Pam Rosseter
Progress on the LAC Strategy	Six monthly report	Steve Edwards	Rachel Coombs
Outcomes for care leavers		Steve Edwards	Rachel Coombs
Work Programme		Steve Edwards	
16 June 2014			
Adoption Service annual report		Steve Edwards	Rachel Coombs
Fostering Service annual report		Steve Edwards	Rachel Coombs
Work Programme		Steve Edwards	
To be placed			

