

Looked After Children Strategy 2012-2015

An outcome-focused approach to supporting children in care

Front Cover image

Contents

| | | |
|----|---|---------|
| 1. | Introduction | Page 3 |
| 2. | Nottinghamshire's Ambition for Looked After Children | Page 4 |
| 3. | A Joint Approach: Partnership Agencies | Page 6 |
| 4. | Outcomes for Children Looked After | Page 7 |
| 5. | Our Action Plan | Page 26 |
| 6. | Appendix 1: Action Plan | Page 27 |
| | Appendix 2: The Pledge | Page 31 |
| | Appendix 3: Glossary of Key Agencies | Page 36 |
| | Appendix 4: Terms of Reference for Children in Care Council | Page 39 |
| | Appendix 5: Demand Trends | Page 40 |

Introduction

Welcome to the Nottinghamshire Looked After Children Strategy.

This strategy is a joint statement of intent between Nottinghamshire County Council and our partner agencies to work together to deliver the best outcomes we can for the children who come into our care.

The strategy is being developed at a time when the Government is focusing its approach to supporting children in care. The children's social care system is being reshaped to include more emphasis on preventative and early intervention techniques following the recommendations of the Munro Review. Legislation is being streamlined to support more effective care planning following the publication of revised care planning regulations. The Children's Rights Director for England's recently published Care Monitor 2011, which provides a comprehensive picture of children's views of the care system. This strategy forms part of Nottinghamshire's response to this changing national context.

Locally in Nottinghamshire this strategy is being developed as we are undertaking a review of all our provider services to ensure they are value for money and continue to meet the needs of vulnerable children and young people. We are committed to providing good value services that consistently meet the needs of a growing looked after children population.

Our Children Looked After and Care Leavers rely on all agencies in Nottinghamshire to work together to meet their needs. A joined up approach is only possible when everyone understands and accepts their responsibilities for this most vulnerable group of children and young people. It is to this end that Nottinghamshire County Council and its partner agencies have created a shared vision:

"To ensure our looked after children have all the opportunities that good parents afford their children"

This vision is underpinned by The Pledge – Our Promise to Children and Young People in Our Care. The Pledge was developed in consultation with over two hundred children and young people who told us how we can improve their experience within the care system. This engagement and feedback has formed the basis of the promises that we, along with our partner agencies, will strive to deliver against.

Children only have one childhood, and so this document also commits us to achieve our vision through an action plan which focuses our attention on what matters most - outcomes for the children and young people in our care.

Anthony May

**Director for Children, Families, and
Cultural Services**

[Signature]

Cllr Philip Owen

**Portfolio Holder for Children and
Young People**

[Signature]

Nottinghamshire's ambition for Looked After Children

Our ambition for looked after children is to ensure that children and young people in our care have everything that good parents afford their children; giving them the support and protection they need to be safe, secure, happy and to achieve their full potential.

We want to keep children at home wherever possible, working with families to promote their resilience in often difficult and complex situations. When children do come into our care we want to ensure that they continue to live close to their friends and family to maintain a sense of stability in their lives. Their experience of care should be nurturing and meaningful, with the expectation that they will quickly return home when it is right and safe to do so.

We want our children and young people to be healthy, both physically and emotionally, and to be safe from harm and exploitation. We want them to enjoy and achieve at school, make a positive contribution to their communities and to make the transition to adulthood with confidence.

These outcomes can only be achieved by working with our looked after children and young people, their parents, carers and birth families. We will ensure that they have the opportunities to participate in decisions which affect their lives, and shape how we manage their care and support.

This strategy commits Nottinghamshire County Council and its partners to work together to achieve the very best outcomes we can for the children in our care, and in the subsequent sections we outline over 40 key actions we will be working to achieve over the next three years. From these actions, our top ten priorities will be to:

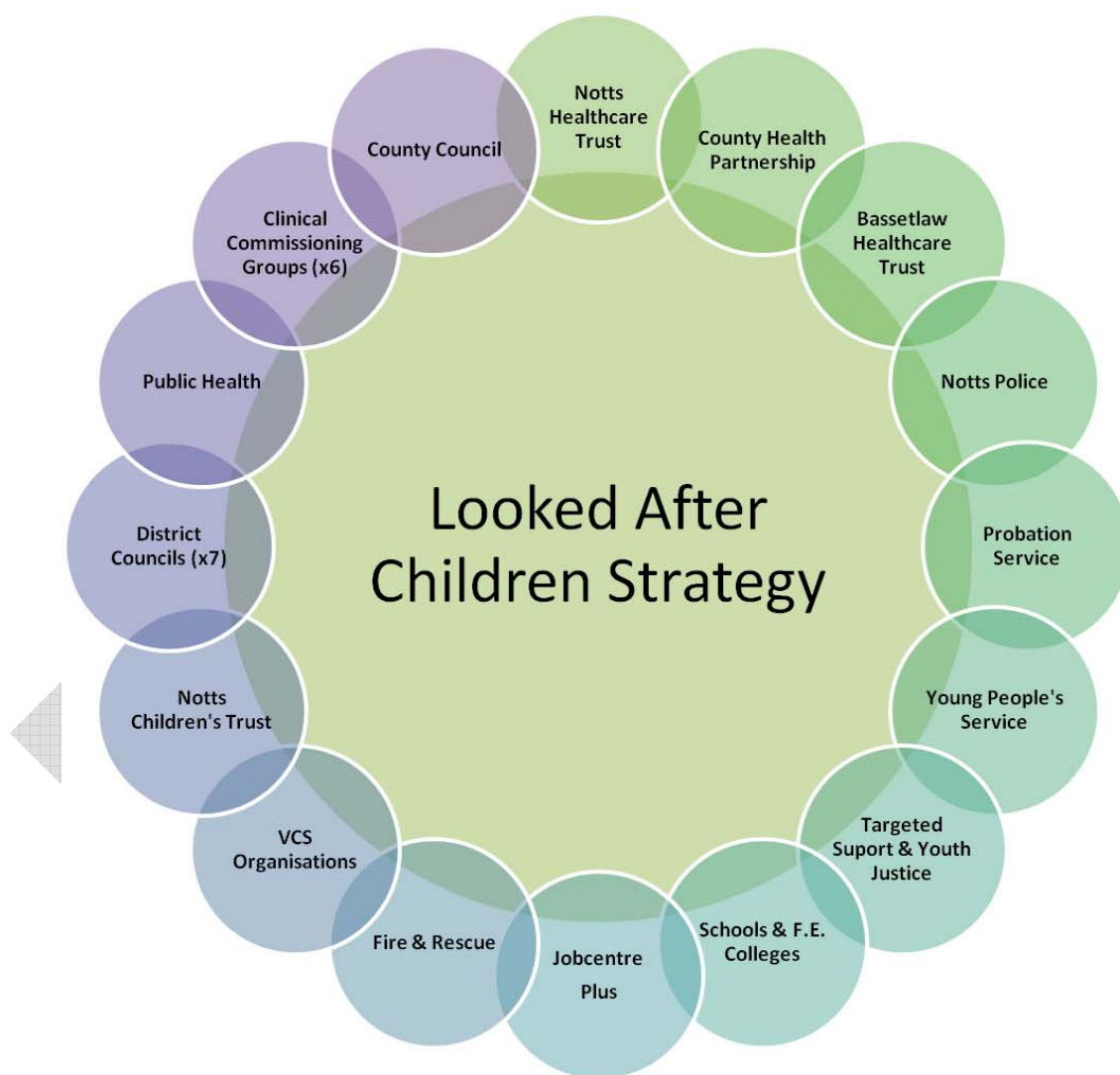
1. Continuously review 'The Pledge' to ensure it continues to reflect the priorities of all age groups in care
2. Develop a comprehensive participation strategy that outlines how agencies will gather and promote the views of children looked after
3. Ensure that we are minimising the number of times children looked after need to move to a different school during their education, by establishing better joint planning between social care and education
4. Improve the Information, Advice and Guidance (IAG) support to Looked After Children at the end of Key Stage 4 to ensure they make a successful transition into learning, in line with the Raising the Participation Age Strategy
5. Ensure that social care and health systems work more closely together to provide accurate and timely information, that will assist in identifying health concerns of looked after children and young people
6. Undertake a review of internal and external provider services within the Children's Social Care Division to ensure that placements are value for money and are providing the best possible experience for young people

7. Work more closely with the Children in Care Council to monitor standards for social workers and develop a system which allows children and young people to contribute to social work appraisals
8. Further develop our support to children and young people in permanent placements to ensure that these remain stable and continue to meet their needs
9. Pilot a Creative Solutions Panel that will be able to commission creative packages of support for children who are either on the edge of care or who are brought in to care for a defined period of time
10. Identify new ways of measuring positive progress in emotional resilience and wellbeing of our looked after children and young people, including the use of self reporting

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A Joint Approach: Partnership Agencies

This document has been developed in close consultation with partner agencies across Nottinghamshire to ensure it reflects the joint priorities of all those who are working to support children looked after.



Outcomes for Children Looked After

Our focus is on what matters most to children looked after. In order to focus our attention, we have used the feedback we gathered from children and young people in The Pledge (see appendix one), as well as national research and trends. From this we have developed eight outcomes that that we will work in partnership to make a reality.

1. Participation and Joining In

Children and young people will be treated with respect by all who are involved with them. Their views will be listened to and they will be involved in making decisions about their lives. They know how to get information and support, as well as how to raise a concern if not happy.

2. Education

Children and young people have clear educational plans which mean they receive the right support to achieve their full potential.

3. Health

Children and young people have their health needs assessed and planned for, and are able to access the health services they require. They are healthy and happy and enjoy a good quality of life.

4. Safe and stable placements

Children and young people are in high quality placements where they feel safe and supported, and where they are able to remain for as long as they need to. They receive information about their placement in advance and are listened to if they have concerns at any time. Overall children and young people have a positive experience of family life or residential care.

5. Relationships

Children and young people are supported to maintain, build and sustain positive relationships with others, including their birth families, carers and peers.

6. Identity

Children and young people know who they are and why they are looked after. They feel valued and respected by others, and their individual needs arising from gender, race, culture, disability, sexual orientation, and religion are understood and met.

7. Moving to Adulthood

Children and young people are supported to move into young adulthood successfully. They will have a home to live in, the skills to look after themselves and the ability to earn a living or continue in education. They feel confident about the future.

8. Emotional Wellbeing

Children and young people achieve emotional stability, resilience and self confidence.

Our Strategy for Looked After Children

1. Participation and Joining In

Children and young people will be treated with respect by all who are involved with them. Their views will be listened to and they will be involved in making decisions about their lives. They know how to get information and support, as well as how to raise a concern if not happy.

Nottinghamshire's Pledge to Children and Young People in Care

- We promise to listen to all children and young people and engage their views through a range of mechanisms
- We will listen to children and young people's views about where and when to have reviews, and who should attend. We promise to plan them well in advance so that everyone can prepare thoroughly.
- We promise children and young people can talk to an independent visitor or advocacy worker if they are not happy about their social worker
- We promise help for young people to have their say if they are not happy. No Labels, our Children in Care Council, will speak up for them to improve services
- We promise to help children and young people take part in things like sports and clubs

What we know nationally (*Children's Care Monitor 2011*)

- 57% of children said they are asked their opinion on things that matter to them, but 15% of said their opinions don't make a difference
- The top three things children and young people wanted more say in were deciding on their placement, decisions about their future, and decisions about contact with their family

What we know in Nottinghamshire

- Children and young people want their social worker to be reliable and turn up when they say they will, to explain to them if meeting times change or are cancelled, and ask that social workers take a real interest in them
- Children and young people enjoy joining in with the activities and opportunities provided by the Young People Looked After Youth Work Team¹

¹ A profile of the Young People Looked After Youth Work Team can be found in Appendix 3

What we have done so far

- Established the 'No Labels' Children in Care Council, which acts as an advocate for children and young people in care
- Produced a Nottinghamshire Pledge, or "The Pledge", that was developed in consultation with children and young people. This sets out children and young people's priorities in a user-friendly way
- Updated the 'Listen to Me' booklet for younger children looked after
- Extended the Nottinghamshire Children and Young People's Board to include a young person who is currently looked after. This ensures the priorities of young people in care are adequately represented
- Commissioned an independent organisation to provide an independent visiting and advocacy service, so that young people's views are fairly represented in all aspects of their life
- Ensured that reviewing officers meet with children looked after prior to their reviews, to encourage two-way participation and to make this as meaningful as possibly to young people's lives
- Consistently signpost and assist young people to access Nottinghamshire Youth Service activities
- Set up a system whereby fostered young people now actively take part in the training of prospective foster carers thereby enabling a continuous cycle of learning. They also take part in the review of foster carers, provide regular placement feedback reports about the quality and standard of care, recognising that children and young people know what matters to them most
- Established a process whereby a careleaver is on every recruitment panel for aftercare team staff including the team manager
- Invited careleavers to be part of the Step Up to social work programme by speaking about their experiences to prospective social workers
- Involved careleavers in training and development of social workers through their participation in the NCC training programme "Preparing for Adulthood"
- Established and maintained strong links with What About Me? Substance Misuse Service which further adds a 'voice' to children and young people through their consultation work and advocacy

What are we going to do next

- Work with older young people to produce a new review booklet to ensure their voices are heard
- Ensure reviewing officers use the suite of consultation booklets available to involve looked after children in shaping their own care plans and support them to monitor their care plans

- Set up a Facebook page that will mean we communicate and network with young people in a way that is friendly and accessible to them
- Continuously review 'The Pledge' to ensure it continues to reflect the priorities of all age groups in care
- Find new and innovative ways of ensuring that care planning decisions such as placement changes are not made outside the review process, and that children looked after are always involved in these decisions
- Enable children looked after who live in independent sector placements to access to the same opportunities and services as those who are placed within Nottinghamshire County Council care
- Ensure care planning is inclusive and reflects the views of parents and carers
- Implement a revised placement feedback report, designed by fostered young people for fostered young people
- Produce a new guide to adoption for children looked after to help them understand the opportunities and challenges this presents, and how they can influence the process
- Develop a comprehensive participation strategy that outlines how agencies will gather and promote the views of children looked after
- Ensure that very young children and foster carers can access the early years and family support services they need at the local children's centre

2. Education

Children and young people have clear educational plans which mean they receive the right support to achieve their full potential.

Nottinghamshire's Pledge to Children and Young People in Care

- We will make sure you have a school place
- We will work with schools to ensure you get full time education
- We will try to ensure that you get into a school within 6 days if you are out of school or have moved
- We will ensure access to nursery or early years education for children in care who are 3-4 years old
- We promise a designated teacher for children in care in every school
- We promise you will have a plan which guides your time in school - this is called a PEP (Personal Education Plan)

What we know nationally (*Children's Care Monitor 2011*)

- 87% of children in care rate their education as good or very good, with more children in foster care than residential care saying they have a positive experience of education
- 78% of children in care said they are doing well in education. Most children who are doing well in education, said it was because they were working hard (68%), followed closely by good teaching (56%)

What we know in Nottinghamshire

- Children and young people want their teachers to know enough about them to understand their situation, but don't want to be singled out and made to feel different in front of their peers
- Children and young people want support for extra tuition that is easily accessed at school
- Children and young people are sometimes excluded from classroom activities because of their behaviour, and want more support to stay within the classroom
- Children and young people want to stay in the same school to be close to friends, even if they now live further away than before
- Children and young people ask that meetings in school are not organised for times that will make it obvious they are 'different', as it draws too much attention to them

What we have done so far

- Established a Virtual School, which monitors the educational performance of children in care, and helps schools access additional funding streams. The services of the Virtual School are also available to all adopted children with parental agreement. This is supported by a senior leadership team of head-teachers, and has close ties with the corporate parenting panel.
- Personal Education Plans have been updated to ensure educational planning for children looked after in school and to close educational gaps
- Provided training for all designated teachers for looked after children to enable them to respond to the effects of trauma and attachment difficulties
- Improved attainment figures for children looked after and young people across all Key Stages in Nottinghamshire
- Decreased the number of fixed-term exclusion rates for looked after children and young people, and through a range of intervention and support, ensured that no looked after young person has been permanently excluded
- Commissioned high quality alternative educational provision where needed to meet individual children and young people's needs
- Made available a financial support package for care leavers who wish to access higher education
- Hold regular annual events to celebrate regular educational achievements of looked after children and young people

What are we going to do next?

- Improve the timeliness and quality of Personal Education Plans to ensure they have a greater impact on looked after children's educational attainment
- Enhance opportunities for children looked after in and out of education for music and school trips
- Ensure that teacher assessment data is robust and good quality, so that we can respond quickly and effectively to looked after children who need more support in education
- Monitor children looked after in below floor target and satisfactory schools
- Review funding mechanisms that currently support the education of children looked after to ensure these continue to provide added value
- Ensure that we are minimising the number of times children looked after need to move to a different school during their education, by establishing better joint planning between social care and education

- Embed systems for quick access to school places whether the school be an Own Admitting Authority (OAA), academy, foundation or VA school
- Ensure that all children looked after will have a link educational psychologist
- Demonstrate our commitment to the Virtual School by working together to ensure that the staffing and resources available to the Virtual School are sufficient for the work that it does
- Improve the Information, Advice and Guidance (IAG) support to Looked After Children at the end of Key Stage 4 to ensure they make a successful transition into learning, in line with the Raising the Participation Age Strategy

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3. Health

Children and young people have their health needs assessed and planned for, and are able to access the health services they require. They are healthy and happy, and enjoy a good quality of life.

Nottinghamshire's Pledge to Children and Young People in Care

- We will make sure children and young people get regular health and dental check ups
- We will give children and young people contact details of the nurse for Looked After Young People

What we know nationally (*Children's Care Monitor 2011*)

- 69% of children aged 14 or over identified alcohol as a danger to people their age
- The top three dangers listed by children aged 14 or over were drugs, knives and alcohol
- Drugs were much more likely to be seen as a big danger by care leavers living independently, by asylum seekers, and by children living in children's homes
- Children often enter the care system with a worse level of health than their peers, in part due to the impact of poverty, poor parenting, chaotic lifestyles and abuse or neglect. Longer term health outcomes for looked after children remain worse than their peers²
- Many aspects of young people's health have been shown to worsen in the year after leaving care. Young people interviewed a year after leaving care were almost twice as likely to have problems with drugs or alcohol and to report mental health problems. There was also increased reporting of 'other health problems' including asthma, weight loss, allergies, flu and illnesses related to drug or alcohol misuse and pregnancy³
- Research has shown that by the age of 20 a quarter of children who had been in care were young parents, and 40% were mothers⁴. The prevalence of teenage motherhood among looked after girls under-18 is around three times higher than the prevalence among all girls under-18 in England

What we know in Nottinghamshire

- Looked after young people would like their health checks to be done in different places such as leisure centres

² Haywood J. and James C. (2008) Improving the health of children in care and care leavers in London 2008/9. Unpublished paper, Care Services Improvement Partnership

³ Dixon, J. (2008) 'Young people leaving care: health, well-being and outcomes', Child and Family Social Work 13, 207-217

⁴ Barn R, Andrew L, Mantovani N (2005) *Life after care: the experiences of young people from different ethnic groups* Joseph Rowntree Foundation, London

- Looked after young people want to know what their health plan is and be given a copy of it
- The prevalence of teenage pregnancy amongst young women in care is lower than national estimates

What we have done so far

- Working with health, together we ensure that health needs are better identified and addressed
- Within Nottinghamshire a dedicated team of doctors and nurses ensure that children looked after and young people receive appropriate and timely health services
- Produced a booklet for young people who self harm which gives advice and information about sources of support available
- Put in place a programme of training events for foster carers which promote healthy living for children and young people
- Commissioned a specialised service for children looked after to both prevent and treat substance misuse
- A substance misuse screening tool is now used in work with care leavers to aid early identification of substance misuse issues and fast-track to treatment services
- Trained Social Care staff to support young people with sex and relationships education and the provision of the C-Card condom scheme
- Established good links and referral pathways to the young people's advocacy group What About Me? (WAM) to further enhance support provision for looked after children where appropriate

What are we going to do next?

- Work with District Councils across Nottinghamshire to improve children looked after and young people's access to council-run sport and leisure facilities
- Ensure that social care and health systems work more closely together to provide accurate and timely information, that will assist in identifying health concerns of looked after children and young people
- Ensure commissioning arrangements for health services for looked after children and care leavers are prioritised and maintained in the light of health reforms

4. Safe and stable placements

“Children and young people are in high quality placements where they feel safe and supported, and where they are able to remain for as long as they need to.

They receive information about their placement in advance and are listened to if they have concerns at any time. Children and young people have a positive experience of family life or residential care.”

Nottinghamshire’s Pledge to Children and Young People in Care

- We will try our best to help you stay in your foster home where you are happy
- We promise a place to live with carers who will meet your needs
- We will make sure that services for young people in care, children’s homes and foster care are checked to make sure they give good services

What we know nationally (*Children’s Care Monitor 2011*)

- Most children feel very safe where they live. 94% of children said they feel safe in the building where they live, and 90% of feel safe when at school or college
- Children and young people feel safer when in the presence of an adult they trust (55%) or when around police or security people (23%).
- 57% of children and young people in foster care said they would go to their foster carer for help if they felt unsafe

What we know in Nottinghamshire

- Children and young people want to be able to visit placements before they move in
- Children and young people want to be able to have a choice in where they are placed
- Children and young people worry about being moved from the placement where they feel happy and settled
- Children and young people want carers to speak up for them because sometimes they feel their voice is not heard by people making the decisions about their lives
- Children and young people want carers not to concentrate only on practical things, but to also think about how to meet their aspirations and support their emotions

What we have done so far

- Produced an award-winning children’s guide about being looked after
- Provided a range of support to young people and their carers to help keep placements stable, which has resulted in less than 5% of young people in care experiencing three or more moves in any one year.

- Increased the number of long term, therapeutic foster homes by an additional 10 households in 2011/12 and increased the number of foster homes overall from 342 to 358. This gives more choice to young people in need of a foster home
- Implemented a Staying Put Policy which makes it possible for young people to remain in their foster placements after the age of 18
- Set up a dedicated multi disciplinary Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services team for looked after and adopted children
- Commissioned an independent agency that provides an advocacy service to ensure that young people are able to share any concerns they have about their placement

What are we going to do next?

- Undertake a consultation exercise to review the experience of children and young people in placements, to understand where we can improve
- Pilot a Creative Solutions Panel that will be able to commission creative packages of support for children who are either on the edge of care or who are brought in to care for a defined period of time
- Ensure that disruption meetings are held in a consistent way in all types of placement, where a placement ends in an unplanned way. This will mean that learning from disruption is embedded to inform future service and care planning
- Implement a recruitment programme for foster carers for children with disabilities
- Continue to expand the number of salaried carers for young people in need of permanent foster care
- Explore ways of better managing the challenges that social media bring to the stability and security of placements for children and young people
- Maintain our commitment to inclusive adoption planning and support in light of changing national legislation
- Further develop our support to children and young people in permanent kinship placements to ensure that these remain stable and continue to meet their needs

5. Relationships

Children and young people are supported to maintain, build and sustain positive relationships with others, including their birth families, carers and peers.

Nottinghamshire's Pledge to Children and Young People in Care

- We promise that, unless there is a good reason not to, you can have contact with your brothers, sisters and other family members.
- We will make sure contact meetings are planned in advance

What we know nationally (*Children's Care Monitor 2011*)

- Bullying is an ongoing concern for children in care. 9% of children and young people in care said they are bullied often. The most common type of bullying identified was name-calling (79%), followed by rumours being spread (42%), and being left out of things (35%)
- In 2011, nearly three quarters (73%) of the children in care who had one or more siblings also in care were separated from brothers or sisters by being placed to live in different placements
- 92% of those who had been placed together with their siblings thought this had been right in their case. 41% of those who had been separated from one or more siblings in a different placement thought that this was right in their case
- Children in foster homes were much more likely than children in residential care to say that being separated in different placements had been right in their case

What we know in Nottinghamshire

- Children and young people said they worry about their family and particularly their siblings
- Children and young people want the adults around them to be honest with them
- Children and young people want to have a relationship with their social worker that they can rely on. They want social workers to keep their promises and if a young person asks them for a small or big thing they need to recognise that they are all important to them
- Children and young people said they don't see their family and friends as much as they would like to. Sometimes meetings are rushed and they have to choose between seeing family or friends.

What we have done so far

- Designed activity days for adopted young people to get together and share their experiences

- Ensured that contact plans are at the heart of a child's care plan
- We have set clear standards for social workers and have redefined them in relation to their role and responsibilities towards the children and young people they work with
- Recruited foster carers from all over Nottinghamshire to try and keep young people close to their family/community of origin where it is safe to do so
- Committed to ensuring that foster carers have the necessary competence to work with birth families and understand the relevance of contact plans
- Maintained a letterbox scheme for children who are adopted which ensures that links are kept with members of their birth family who are important to them

What are we going to do next?

- Establish a new Family Assessment and Contact Service which will provide a consistent approach to contact across the county
- Work more closely with the Children in Care Council to monitor standards for social workers and develop a system which allows children and young people to contribute to social work appraisals
- Develop a training and information pack for social workers within the throughcare team which covers a range of important issues for looked after children including overnight stay guides, and the role of education and health
- Seek to delegate more authority to foster carers to make day to day decisions about contact plans with family and friends

6. Identity

Children and young people know who they are and why they are looked after. They feel valued and respected by others, and their individual needs arising from gender, race, culture, disability, sexual orientation and religion are understood and met.

Nottinghamshire's Pledge to Children and Young People in Care

- We promise services that meet the needs of young people from different backgrounds, cultures and disabilities
- We promise to listen to **all** children and young people

What we know nationally (*Children's Care Monitor 2011*)

- 68% of children in care said that they thought coming into care was the right thing for them at the time. Around one in five were not sure, and just over one in eight (13%) thought that coming into care was the wrong thing for them at the time
- 75% of foster children whose foster parents had their own children told us that they were treated the same as their foster carers' children

What we know in Nottinghamshire

- Children and young people are sometimes unsure why they had to come in to care, and this could have been explained more clearly to them
- Children and young people in care want more information about their family backgrounds to help them understand who they are
- Children and young people who are unaccompanied asylum seekers want placements which meet their cultural and emotional needs
- Rules and regulations don't always make sense to young people, they can make them feel different, and could be explained more clearly

What we have done so far

- Provide specialist counselling for children looked after from a black and minority ethnic background
- Provided specialist consultancy for carers of black and minority ethnic young people
- Run a photography project for looked after children and care leavers to share their experiences of being in care
- Helped children with adoption plans to better understand their life story by producing a "life story work"
- Extended support available for children and young people in permanent placements including dedicated support

What are we going to do next?

- Continue to recruit foster carers from a wide range of diverse backgrounds
- Through specific commissioning arrangements ensure that all internal and external placement providers meet the individual needs of children
- Establish a new recruitment programme for foster carers specifically for children with disabilities
- Further develop our support to children and young people in permanent placements to ensure that these remain stable and continue to meet their needs
- Ensure that all young people with permanent fostering plans have life story work completed with them

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7. Moving to Adulthood

Children and young people are supported to move into young adulthood successfully. They will have a home to live in, the skills to look after themselves and the ability to earn a living or continue in education. They feel confident about the future.

Nottinghamshire's Pledge to Children and Young People in Care

- We will work with you to give you all the help and support you need to make a success with moving on from care to adult life
- We promise you will have a pathway plan which we will write with you and you can keep a copy
- We will make sure we will talk to you regularly about your pathway plan
- We will give you all the information you need about leaving care
- We will keep you informed about what money you are entitled to
- We promise to provide a card with information to support you if you get into trouble
- We will give you up to date information about available support
- We will make sure you are not criminalised by any actions in care settings that wouldn't normally result in police involvement in a family home

What we know nationally (*Care Monitor 2011*)

- 13% of children and young people who were about to leave care said they were getting no help to prepare for future
- 29% of children and young people who leave care are classified as not in education, employment, or training (NEETs)
- Overall, 64% of care leavers said they were getting good or very good support

What we know nationally (*After Care 2012*)

- 44% of care leavers said their lives were much better as a result of leaving care
- There is a significant variance in the levels of leaving care grant that children receive across the country. The Government advises that £2,000 is an appropriate amount
- The top four things children and young people want when leaving care are more help with money, more practical help, to be given important documents, and to have someone to talk to

What we know in Nottinghamshire

- 21% of care leavers are classified as not in education, employment or training (NEETs)

- Children and young people said they get worried about what age they have to leave care and who will help them once they reach 18. In particular they would like more support when they leave care
- Young people may need extra support emotionally as their developmental age may not be the same as their chronological age

What we have done so far

- Developed a Staying Put Policy which makes it possible for young people to remain in their foster placements beyond 18
- Provided access to dedicated Employment, Education and Training Advisors to assist care leavers in accessing employment, education and/or training to prevent them reaching NEET status
- Continued to improve the quality of pathway planning to ensure young people have the necessary skills and confidence to move into adulthood
- Enabled more flexible use of home establishment grants to ensure individual young people's needs are met
- Prioritised the accommodation of careleavers by recruiting a dedicated accommodation officer in the Aftercare team to develop housing options and promote good practice
- Ensured all careleavers have access to a named Education, Employment and Training Adviser in the Aftercare team who can provide individual direct help and support to young people

What are we going to do next?

- Scope the viability of an integrated transitions service for children with disabilities to embed person-centred planning and ensure the journey from childhood to adulthood is as comfortable as possible
- Continue to recruit foster carers under the 14+ scheme to support the Staying Put Policy
- Develop supported lodgings and extend accommodation options for care leavers
- Increase availability of apprenticeships within Nottinghamshire County Council for care leavers
- Explore ways of making emotional and mental health support services more accessible to older young people

8. Emotional Wellbeing

Children and young people achieve emotional stability, resilience and self confidence.

Nottinghamshire's Pledge to Children and Young People in Care:

- We will give you up-to-date information about self harming, and advice and support services

What we know nationally (*Children's Care Monitor 2011*)

- There has been a slight decrease in the number of children who said they worry about their safety. In 2011, 34% said they worry a little or a lot about their safety. This was down from 36% last year and 43% the year before
- Looked After Children show significantly higher rates of mental health disorders compared to their peers, including children in the most deprived socio economic groups⁵
- There are high levels of mental health need amongst looked after children, particularly those in residential care. 45% of looked after children were assessed as having a mental health disorder, rising to 72% of those in residential care. Boys in Care experience mental health disorders more than girls^{6,7}

What we know in Nottinghamshire

- Children and young people said they want to have someone to talk to when they feel happy or sad, and ongoing help to confront the issues from their childhoods
- Children and young people would like carers to try not to make it obvious that they are not the same as their birth children
- Children and young people say that, even though they have unique challenges due to their backgrounds, they want to be treated the same as other children

What we have done so far

- Established an annual achievement event which celebrates achievements of children and young people looked after
- Produced a booklet for young people who self harm which gives advice and information about sources of support
- Identify emerging issues through the consistent use of a Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire

⁵ Ford T., Vostanis P., Meltzer H. and Goodman R. (2007) 'Psychiatric disorder among British children looked after by local authorities: comparison with children living in private households', British Journal of Psychiatry 190, 319-325

⁶ Dimigen G., Del Priore C., Butler S. et al (1999) 'Psychiatric disorder among children at time of entering local authority care: questionnaire survey', British Medical Journal, 319, 675

⁷ McCann J., James A., Wilson S. and Dunn G. (1996) 'Prevalence of psychiatric disorders in young people in the care system', British Medical Journal 313, 15, 29-30

- Established a dedicated multi disciplinary CAMHS team for looked after and adopted children
- Developed a policy for Safeguarding Children and Young People from Sexual Exploitation that includes inter-agency guidance

What are we going to do next?

- Identify new ways of measuring positive progress in emotional resilience and wellbeing of our looked after children and young people, including the use of self reporting
- Further assess mental health and emotional needs of Looked After Children through the refresh of the CAMHS needs assessment

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Our Action Plan

A detailed annual action plan has been agreed across all agencies to support the delivery of the priorities set out in this strategy. This is outlined in more detail in appendix 1.

The strategy and action plan will be formally signed off by the Children's Trust Executive and Children and Young People Committee. The action plan will be monitored by a multi agency Looked After Children steering group on a bi-monthly basis and highlight reports against each of the eight themes will be taken to both the Corporate Parenting Sub Committee and 'No Labels', our Children in Care Council twice yearly.

The overall strategy will be reviewed in 2015

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Appendix 1: Action Plan

| Action | Owner/s | Job title | Deadline |
|--|-----------------------|--|------------------|
| Work with older young people to produce a new review booklet to ensure their voices are heard and that they shape their own care plans (LAC Review) (Listen to Me) | Izzy Martin | Service Manager, Conference & Review | Jul-12 |
| Ensure reviewing officers use the consultation booklets with children and young people prior to every review to ensure they can shape their own care plans | Izzy Martin | Service Manager, Conference & Review | Jun-12 |
| Set up a Facebook page that will mean we communicate and network with young people in a way that is friendly and accessible to them | Jo Down | Children's Social Care Locality Manager for Gedling | |
| Continuously review 'The Pledge' to ensure it continues to reflect the priorities of all age groups in care | Sue Hollingworth-Shaw | Co-ordinator Youth Services, Young People Looked After | Ongoing activity |
| Find new and innovative ways of ensuring that care planning decisions such as placement changes are not made outside the review process, and that children looked after are always involved in these decisions | Izzy Martin | Service Manager, Conference & Review | Jun-12 |
| Enable children and young people who live in independent sector placements to access to the same opportunities and services as those who are placed within Nottinghamshire County Council care | Norman Chessman | Service Manager, Placements | Nov-12 |
| Ensure care planning is inclusive and reflects the views of parents and carers | Ty Yousaf | Service Improvement Team Manager | Oct-12 |
| Produce a new guide to adoption for older children and young people to help them understand the opportunities and challenges this presents, and how they can influence the process | Shelagh Mitchell | Service Manager, Adoption | Jul-12 |
| Develop a comprehensive participation strategy that outlines how agencies will gather and promote the views of children looked after | Rachel Coombs | Group Manager for Access to Resources | May-13 |
| | Dawn Godfrey | Group Manager for Social Work Services North | |
| Improve the timeliness and quality of Personal Education Plans to ensure they have a greater impact on looked after children's educational attainment | Rachel Coombs | Group Manager for Access to Resources | Ongoing activity |

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| | Dawn Godfrey | Group Manager for Social Work Services North | |
| Enhance opportunities for children looked after in and out of education for music and school trips | Sue Denholm | Co-ordinator of the Virtual School | |
| Ensure that teacher assessment data is robust and good quality, so that we can respond quickly and effectively to looked after children who need more support in education | Sue Denholm | Co-ordinator of the Virtual School | Ongoing activity |
| Monitor children looked after in below floor target and satisfactory schools | Sue Denholm | Co-ordinator of the Virtual School | Ongoing activity |
| Review funding mechanisms that currently support the education of children looked after to ensure these continue to provide added value | Rachel Coombs | Group Manager for Access to Resources | Jul-12 |
| Ensure that we are minimising the number of times looked after children need to move to a different school during their education, by establishing better joint planning between social care and education | Rachel Coombs | Group Manager for Access to Resources | Ongoing activity |
| | Dawn Godfrey | Group Manager for Social Work Services North | |
| Embed systems for quick access to school places whether the school be an Own Admitting Authority (OAA), academy, foundation or VA school | Sue Denholm | Co-ordinator of the Virtual School | Jun 12 |
| | Scott Hollingsworth | Access and Admissions Strategy Co-ordinator | |
| Ensure that all children looked after will have a link educational psychologist | Charles Savage | Principal Educational Psychologist | Sep-12 |
| Demonstrate our commitment to the Virtual School by working together to ensure that the staffing and resources available to the Virtual School are sufficient for the work that it does | Marion Clay | Group Manager for Support to Schools Service | Ongoing activity |
| Improve the Information, Advice and Guidance (IAG) support to Looked After Children at the end of Key Stage 4 to ensure they make a successful transition into learning, in line with the Raising the Participation Age Strategy | Dennis McCarthy | Targeted Support Operations Manager | Apr-13 |
| Work with District Councils across Nottinghamshire to improve children looked after and young people's access to council-run sport and leisure facilities | Rachel Coombs | Group Manager for Access to Resources | Apr-13 |
| | Dawn Godfrey | Group Manager for Social Work Services North | |
| Ensure that social care and health systems work more closely together to provide accurate and timely information, that will assist in identifying health concerns of looked after children and young people | Rachel Coombs | Group Manager for Access to Resources | Apr-13 |
| | Dawn Godfrey | Group Manager for Social Work Services North | |
| Ensure commissioning arrangements for health services for looked after children and care leavers are prioritised and maintained in the light of health reforms | Rachel Coombs | Group Manager for Access to Resources | Sep-12 |
| | Dawn Godfrey | Group Manager for Social | |

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| | | Work Services North | |
| Pilot a Creative Solutions Panel that will be able to commission creative packages of support for children who are either on the edge of care or who are brought in to care for a defined period of time | Norman Chessman | Service Manager, Placements | Jan 13 |
| Undertake consultation exercise to review the experience of children and young people in placements, to understand where we can improve | Norman Chessman | Service Manager, Placements | Nov-12 |
| Ensure that disruption meetings are held in a consistent way in all types of placement, where a placement ends in an unplanned way. This will mean that learning from disruption is embedded to inform future service and care planning | Rachel Coombs | Group Manager for Access to Resources | Sep-12 |
| | Dawn Godfrey | Group Manager for Social Work Services North | |
| Continue to expand the number of salaried carers for young people in need of foster care | Jayne Austin | Service Manager, Fostering | Jul-12 |
| Explore ways of better managing the challenges that social media bring to the stability and security for placements of children and young people | Jayne Austin | Service Manager, Fostering | Jul-12 |
| | Shelagh Mitchell | Service Manager, Adoption | |
| Maintain our commitment to inclusive adoption planning and support in light of changing national legislation | Shelagh Mitchell | Service Manager, Adoption | Ongoing activity |
| Further develop our support to children and young people in permanent kinship placements to ensure that these remain stable and continue to meet their needs | Denise Martin | Service Manager, Family Support | Nov 12 |
| Establish a new Family Assessment and Contact Service which will provide a consistent approach to contact across the county | Denise Martin | Service Manager, Family Support | Ongoing activity |
| Work more closely with the Children in Care Council to monitor standards for social workers and develop a system which allows children and young people to feed in to social work appraisals | Rachel Coombs | Group Manager for Access to Resources | Dec-12 |
| | Dawn Godfrey | Group Manager for Social Work Services North | |
| Develop a training and information pack for social workers within the throughcare team which covers a range of important issues for looked after children including overnight stay guides, and the role of education and health | Dawn Godfrey | Group Manager for Social Work Services North | Ongoing activity |
| Seek to delegate more authority to foster carers to make day to day decisions about contact plans with family and friends | Jayne Austin | Service Manager, Fostering | Sep-12 |
| Continue to recruit foster carers from a wide range of diverse backgrounds | Jayne Austin | Service Manager, Fostering | Ongoing activity |
| Through specific commissioning arrangements ensure that all internal and external placement providers meet the individual needs of children | Norman Chessman | Service Manager, Placements | Jan-13 |
| Further develop our support to children and young people in permanent placements to ensure that these remain stable and continue to meet their needs | Rachel Coombs | Group Manager for Access to Resources | Ongoing activity |
| | Dawn Godfrey | Group Manager for Social Work Services North | |
| Ensure that all young people with permanent fostering plans have life story work completed with them | Dawn Godfrey | Group Manager for Social Work Services North | Ongoing activity |

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|---|----------------|--|------------------|
| Scope the viability of an integrated transitions service for children with disabilities to embed person-centred planning and ensure the journey from childhood to adulthood is as comfortable as possible | Fran Arnold | Group Manager, Children's Disability Service | Sep-12 |
| Continue to recruit foster carers under the 14+ scheme to support the Staying Put Policy | Jayne Austin | Service Manager, Fostering | Mar-13 |
| Develop supported lodgings and extend accommodation options for care leavers (link with youth homelessness strategy) | Laurence Jones | Group Manager - Targeted Support and Youth Justice Services | Ongoing activity |
| | Michelle Lee | Service Manager, Aftercare | |
| Increase availability of apprenticeships within Nottinghamshire County Council for care leavers | Rachel Coombs | Group Manager for Access to Resources | Jun-12 |
| | Dawn Godfrey | Group Manager for Social Work Services North | |
| Services to looked after young people will all contribute to the emotional wellbeing of our looked after children and young people | Rachel Coombs | Group Manager for Access to Resources | Mar-12 |
| | Dawn Godfrey | Group Manager for Social Work Services North | |
| Identify new ways of measuring positive progress in emotional resilience and wellbeing of our looked after children and young people, including the use of self reporting | Helen Daft | Interim Children's Service Manager, Residential / CAMHS services | Sep-12 |
| Further assess mental health and emotional needs of Looked After Children through the refresh of the CAMHS needs assessment | Sally Handley | Senior Public Health Manager | Apr-13 |

Appendix 2: The Pledge – Our Promise to Children and Young People in Care

Nottinghamshire County Council have made this Pledge to Looked After Children and Young People. Young people were involved in the Pledge and were represented by No Labels.

The Pledge is a list of promises to children and young people.

We cannot promise to do everything you ask but when we cannot we will explain why.

No Labels is the name of our Children In Care Council.

It's a place where young people meet up to talk about life in care.

You can find out more about No Labels from Sue Shaw on 07740 845824, or ask your social worker for information.

▼ SOCIAL WORKERS

Young People SAY...

- We would like a qualified social worker and to meet our social worker away from our foster home so that we can talk openly.
- We would like the social worker's telephone number so we can contact them.

We Promise

A qualified social worker for every young person in care. Your social worker will listen to you and make sure you have our contact details.

Your social worker will meet with you away from your foster home if you wish.

Young People SAY...

- Who can we talk to about our social worker if we are not happy?

We Promise

You will not be in trouble if you tell your social worker you are not happy about something they do.

You can talk to an independent visitor or advocacy worker if you are not happy about your social worker.

▼ REVIEWS

Young People SAY...

- Some of us do not see our care plan before our review or we get it too late so we feel we cannot contribute.
- We want to see our care plan at least two weeks before the review so that we are given time to have a say in the services we need and who attends our review.

Young People SAY...

- We want reviews done out of school time.
- We do not like to be taken out of school or out of class.
- We would like our reviews to occur in places that we know, where we feel safe, and that are nice for young people.

We Promise

An up to date care plan for every Looked After Child and Young Person and the opportunity to have your say before your review meeting.

We will listen to your views about where and when to have your reviews, and who comes to them.

▼ CONTACT

Young People SAY...

- We would like contact with our brothers, sisters and families to be arranged with a diary in advance.
- Young people feel under pressure to attend at the last minute that makes us have to make a choice about meeting our family or going out with our friends.

We Promise

Unless there are good reasons not to, you can have contact with your brothers and sisters and other family members.

We will make sure the meetings are planned in advance.

▼ INCLUDING EVERYONE

Young People SAY...

- Please make sure you include unaccompanied asylum seeking children and young people, young people with disabilities and those from different backgrounds when you consult us.

We Promise

To listen to all children and young people.

Services that meet the needs of young people from different backgrounds, cultures and disabilities.

▼ WHERE WE LIVE

Young People SAY...

- Who can young people speak to if the carer does not meet our needs?
- Please tell us who we can talk to about our carers if we are not happy?

We Promise

A place to live with carers who will meet your needs.

We will make sure you can speak to your social worker, youth worker, advocacy worker or an independent visitor if you have concerns.

Help for young people to have their say if they are not happy. No Labels, our Children In Care Council, will speak up for you to improve services.

We will also make sure that services for young people in care, children's homes and foster care are checked to make sure they give good services.

Young People SAY...

- Some of us have to keep moving foster home, which makes us worried.

We Promise

We will try our best to help you stay in your foster home where you are happy.

We will make sure you can tell us your views at your review.

▼ EDUCATION

Young People SAY...

- We have the right to go to school full-time.

We Promise

We will make sure you have a school place.

We will work with schools to ensure that you get full-time education.

We will try to ensure that you get into a school within six days if you are out of school or have moved.

Nursery or early years education for children in care who are three to four-years-old.

Young People SAY...

- Who is the teacher in my school to help me if I have any worries?

We Promise

A teacher whose job is to help young people in care to do as well as other young people. This person is called a Designated Teacher. We will make sure you are given the teacher's name when you start or change school.

You will have a plan which guides your time in school—this is called a PEP (Personal Education Plan).

Young People SAY...

- Please tell us about the Personal Education Allowance (PEA).

We Promise

To tell you about the Personal Education Allowance (PEA). This is a payment which can be used to help you catch up with school work.

Support to help you feel happy in school.

JOINING IN

Young People SAY...

- We sometimes feel worried about taking part with other young people. We would like someone to support us to help us feel confident, like a youth worker or a social worker.

We Promise

Help to take part in things, like sports and clubs. We will tell you about the youth work team for Looked After Young People.

HEALTH AND WELL-BEING

Young People SAY...

- Please can we have the name of the nurse for young people in care who can give us confidential advice and help?

We Promise

We will make sure you get regular health and dental check-ups.

We will give you contact details of the nurse for Looked After Children and Young People.

LEAVING CARE

Young People SAY...

- We get worried about what age we have to leave care and who will help us.

We Promise

To work with you to give all the help and support you need to make a success with moving on from care to adult life.

You will have a Pathway Plan which we will write with you and you can keep a copy.

We will give you all the information you need about leaving care.

Young People Who Have Left Care SAY...

- We cannot always remember completing a Pathway Plan and would like it updated regularly.
- We would like a small card, which tell us our entitlement to money, etc., at ages 16–18 (we get information but forget).
- We would like more support when we first move out from care.

We Promise

We will keep you informed about what money you are entitled to.

We will make sure we talk to you regularly about your Pathway Plan.

OTHER THINGS

Young People SAY...

- We would like to know what our rights are if we get into trouble with the police, for example:
- What is the law about the age we are classed as an adult?
- Are we allowed to phone someone if we are at the police station?

We Promise

To provide a card with information to support you if you get into trouble.

Young People SAY...

- We would like more advice about self-harming and how we can be signposted to help and support.

We Promise

We will give you up to date information about available support.

We Also Promise

To give you a Children's Guide, which contains lots of information about Being Looked After.

That we will check our Pledge to you often, so that when we can, we will improve on the promises that we have made.

We will listen to your views through No Labels– Nottinghamshire's Children In Care Council.

We cannot promise to do everything you ask, but when we cannot we will explain why.

Appendix 3: Glossary of key agencies and services that will deliver the Looked After Children Strategy

Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS)

The Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) provide a service for children 0-18 years where there are concerns about their emotional well-being or mental health.

The County Children Looked After & Adoption Team is based within the CAMHS service and specifically works with children and young people who are living away from their birth parents in the care of Nottinghamshire Children's Services.

These children and young people may be living with foster carers, in residential group home placements or for whom adoption is being explored / planned. The team also offers specialist consultation and support to children who have been adopted and their families.

CAMHS endeavour to meet the emotional health needs of looked after children by offering consultation to the network around the child. The multi-disciplinary team offers support and intervention based on a consultation model that empowers the professional network around the child and their carers and offers them an opportunity to explore ideas about how best to meet the child's needs.

Kinship Care workers

Kinship Care Workers support extended family members who are caring for children and young people from birth to 18 years whom for various reasons are unable to live with their parents, as an alternative to them being accommodated by the local authority.

Senior Educational Psychologist

Looked after children are supported by an educational psychologist who is trained in understanding how children and young people behave and learn. Their job is to make sure that children and young people who are in care and adopted get an education which they enjoy and where they succeed. They make contact with responsible adults involved in children's' lives, to identify the best learning environment for looked after young people.

Throughcare team

The Through-care Service is made up of 3 teams, made up of Personal Advisers, Education, Employment and Training Advisers and an Accommodation officer. The team is a mix of qualified and non-qualified social workers. They work with young people aged 16 to 21 (up to 25 if you are in education) who have been in care for at least 13 weeks. They support young people to think about what their goals are and to help them make realistic plans to achieve them through the formulation of a Pathway Plan.

Independent Reviewing Officers

Independent Reviewing Officers are qualified social workers whose role it is to quality assure looked after children review meetings. These review meetings take place within 20 days of a young person coming in to care, followed by another 3-monthly and then 6-monthly review.

A young person will always be invited to their review, but if they do not want to attend their review meeting, they will speak to them beforehand to ensure their views are represented at every stage.

Family Resource Team

The Family Resource Team focus on provide a range of preventative support services that for families with children aged 8 to 18 years, to enable them to stay with their birth family wherever possible. They also undertake crisis intervention and time-limited packages of intensive work where there is a serious risk of family breakdown, and provide more general advice, guidance and early support for families of children over 8 years of age who are experiencing difficulties in caring for their children.

Education, Standards and Inclusion Service

This service is made up of different teams of professionals who work with schools and other educational settings, including pre-school and home settings, to make sure that all children, including those looked after, on the edge of care, adopted, and those receiving after care services, can learn well. This includes extending access to extra resources such as one-to-one tuition, the personal education allowance, and the pupil premium, to help you to make good progress.

Some teams within this service work mainly with teachers to ensure that the schools children attend are safe places to learn, where lessons are stimulating, interesting and meet your learning needs.

Some of the professionals in the Education, Standards and Inclusion Service work directly with children, carers and teachers to agree ways of supporting young people to stay in school when you are at risk of being excluded. Sometimes when it is too difficult, professionals within the service help young people and their carers to find education alternatives which are better matched to their needs.

The Virtual School for Looked After Children

Within the Education, Standards and Inclusion Service, there is a 'virtual school' which focuses exclusively on the education needs of children and young people looked after, on the edge of care, adopted children, and those receiving after care services. This virtual school oversees the education of all Nottinghamshire Looked After Children, whether they attend schools and settings within Nottinghamshire or out of county.

The School consists of the Coordinator, a Senior Educational Psychologist, two officers working directly with schools, carers, social workers and, where appropriate, children and young people. Alongside this team a dedicated youth worker, connexions, health and CAMHS representatives all work with the virtual school to ensure that all children looked after access high quality education

The Virtual School supports schools and all partner agencies through training, advice and guidance concerning any issues around education. The school supports the personal educational planning process, looked after reviews and at all times adopts a solution focussed approach to their work with LAC. The school also celebrates achievement and out of school opportunities through personal education allowance and promotion of youth work events dedicated to looked after children.

Young People looked After Youth Work Team

The team consists of one full time co-ordinator, one full time youth worker and a number of youth work staff with a responsibility for the Children in Care Council and one to one youth work. The role of the team is to support Fostered and Adopted young people to participate in a full range of activities which they enjoy and is fun.

The main responsibility of the team is to develop leisure, sports and arts opportunities for children and young people looked after, care leavers, and those who are adopted throughout Nottinghamshire as well as be responsible for the Children in Care Council and the participation of young people.

The Children In Care and Adoption Health Team – County Health Partnerships, Nottinghamshire and Nottingham City

The Children In Care and Adoption Health Team are a team of Doctors and Nurses who work together to look after the health of children and young people who are in care or are going to be adopted.

Children and young people in the care of the local authority are seen on a regular basis through their time in care by the health team to have their health assessed. At their health assessment children and young people have the opportunity to discuss how they are feeling and if there is anything that can be done to help to make their health better. We know that the health of children and young people who come into the care of the local authority is often worse than their peers. We aim to work with children and young people to improve their health now and for their future

What About Me (WAM)

WAM gives help and support to young people who are affected by someone elses drug or alcohol use or misuse. WAM is for young people who live anywhere in Nottinghamshire and is a totally confidential service. When a child or young person comes to the service they are given a support worker.

This support worker will provide confidential 1 to 1 support. This is done through weekly or fortnightly sessions where the child or young person can use these sessions to give themselves timeout from their normal day to deal with any problems or concerns they may have.

Appendix 4: Terms of Reference for Children in Care Council

To be added upon final publication

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Appendix 5: Demand Trends

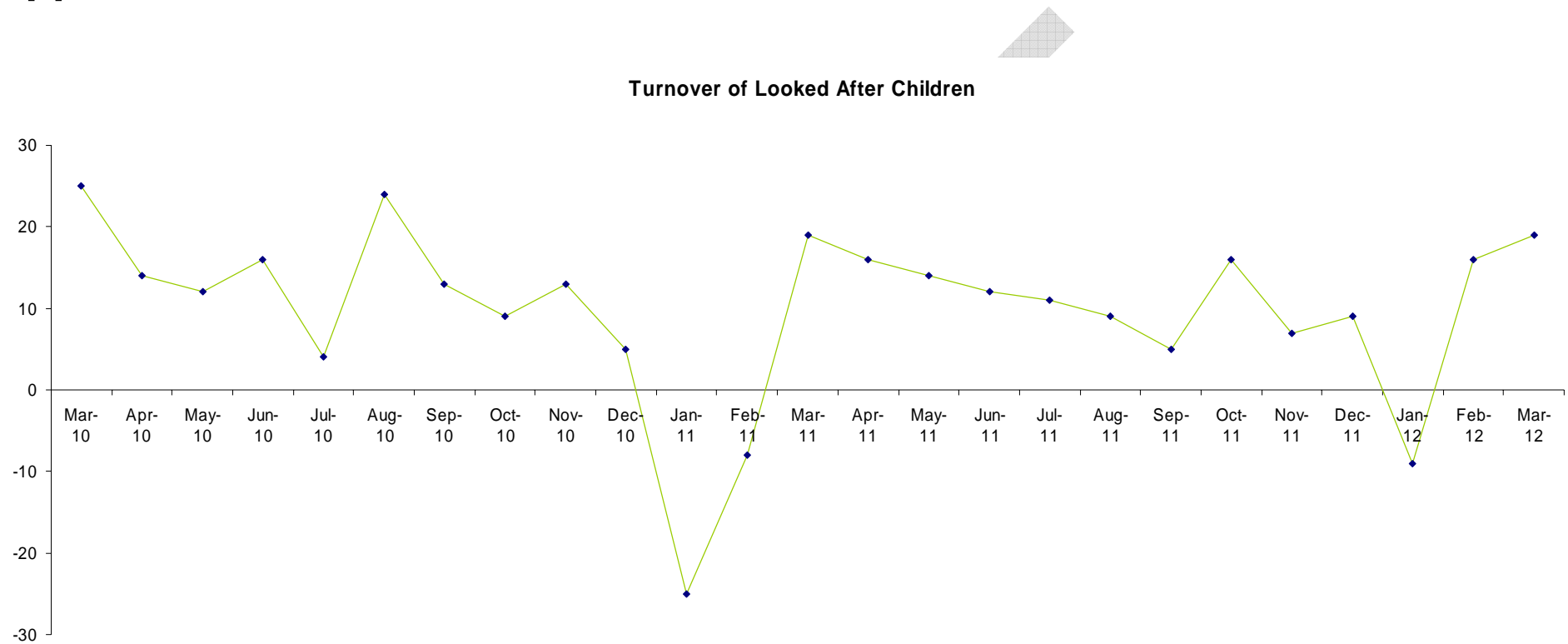


Figure 1: Turnover of children who are classified as looked after (LAC status), Mar 2010 - Mar 2012

Cumulative Number of Looked After Children in Nottinghamshire

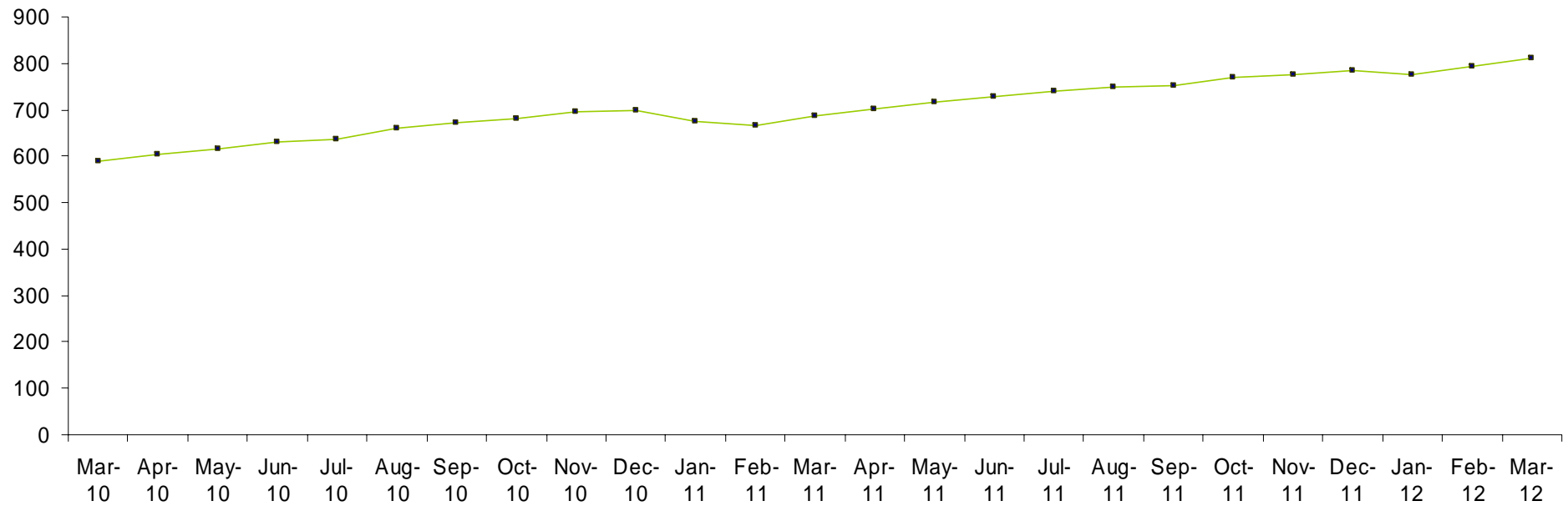


Figure 2: Cumulative number of children who are classified as looked after (LAC status), Mar 2010 - Mar 2012

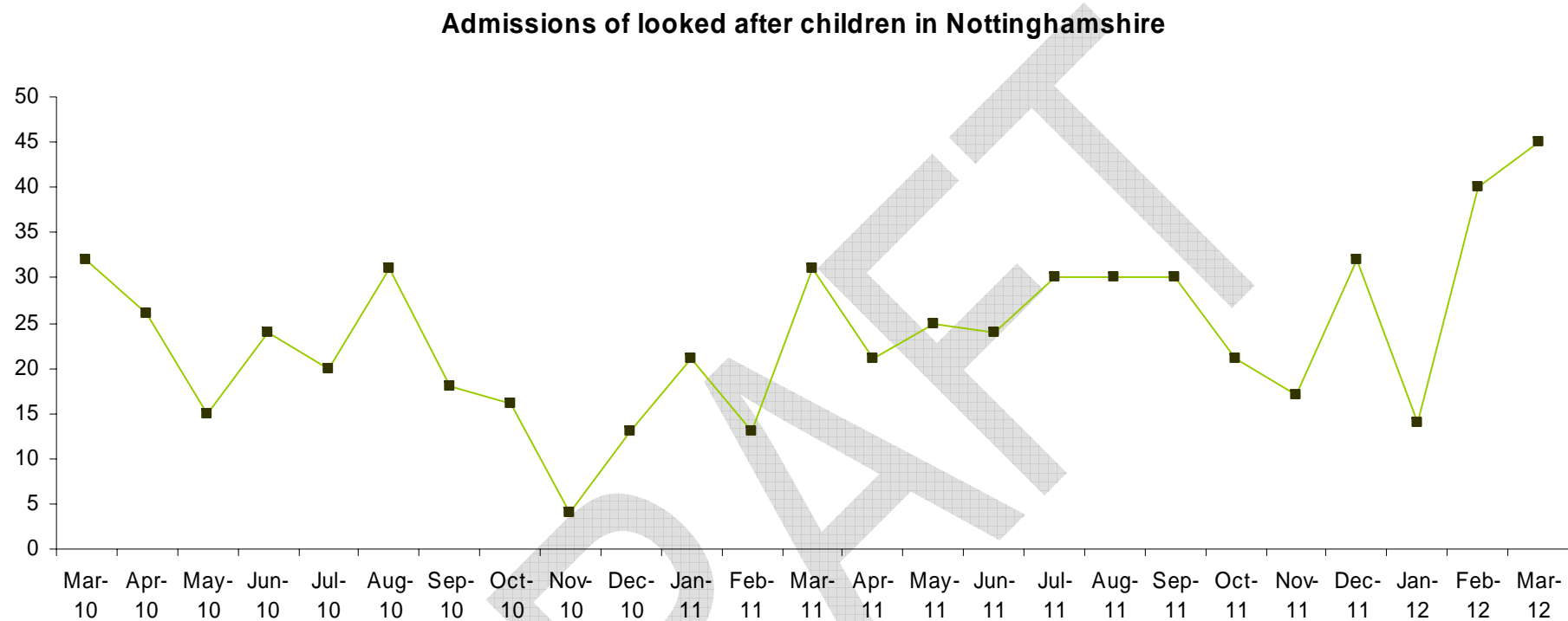


Figure 3: Admissions of looked after children, Mar 2010 - Mar 2012

Discharges of looked after children in Nottinghamshire

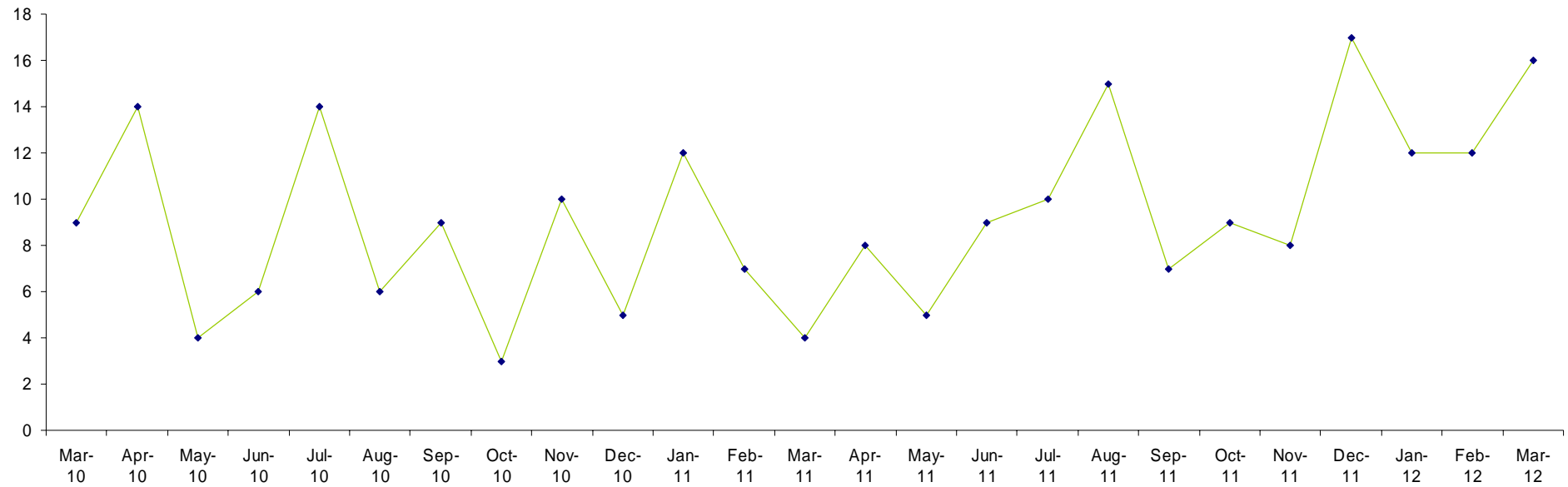


Figure 4: Discharges of looked after children in Nottinghamshire, Mar 2010 - Mar 2012

Number of Looked After Children who are not in education, employment or training (NEET status)

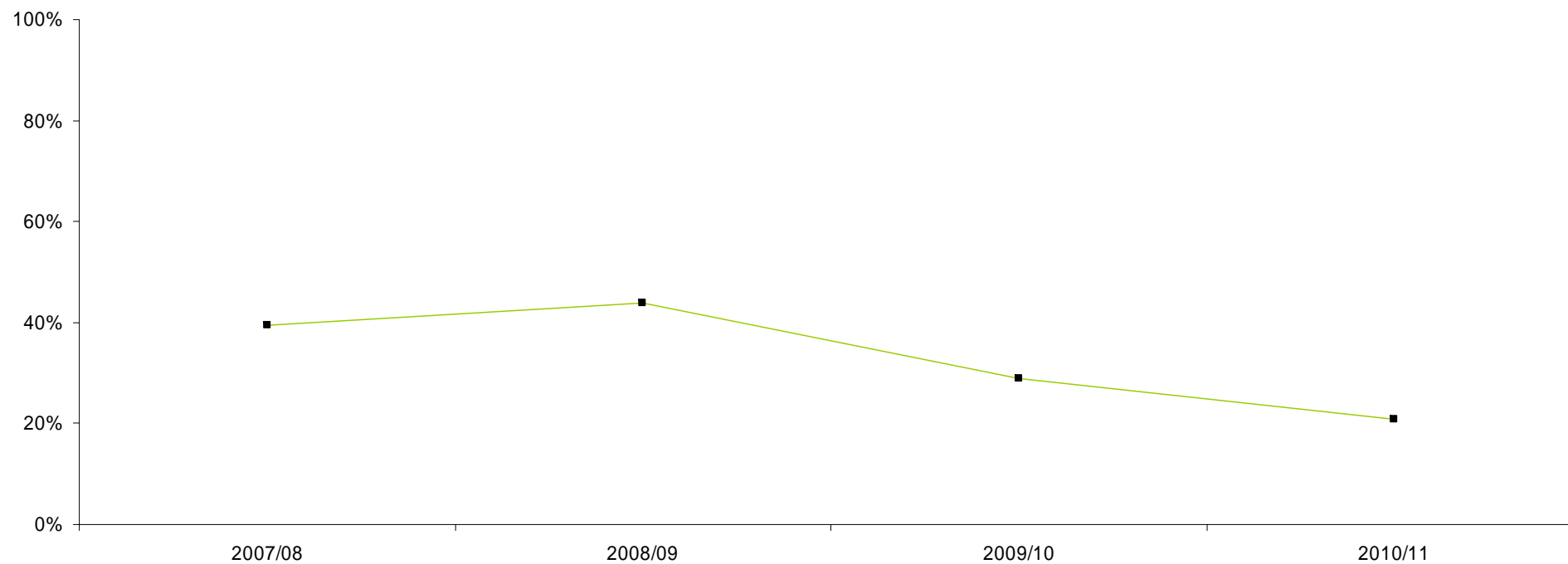


Figure 5: Number (displayed as a percentage) of previously looked after children who went on to be classified as NEETs (not in education, employment or training) Apr 2007 - Apr 2011