

PROGRESS OF THE PARTNERSHIP STRATEGY FOR NOTTINGHAMSHIRE LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN AND CARE LEAVERS (2022 – 2025)

Purpose of the Report

1. The report provides an update on the Partnership Strategy for Looked after Children and Care Leavers 2022 – 2025, including the progress and some of the key achievements by the Looked after Children and Care Leavers Partnership to date. A previous update was provided to the Children and Young People's Committee in March 2022.
2. The report includes information on the Virtual School, Youth Service, Youth Justice Board and Police in relation to Looked after Children and Care Leavers. In addition, an update on The Care Leaver Offer and its impact to date on improving the wellbeing and wider outcomes for care leavers.
3. The Council's 10-year vision for Nottinghamshire captured in "The Nottinghamshire Plan: Our plan for healthy, prosperous and greener Nottinghamshire;" is committed to prioritising the needs of our children and young people. Members are asked to note their responsibilities as corporate parents defined by The Children and Social Work Act 2017. This is to help enable better outcomes for looked after children and young people which apply throughout the child's upbringing and into adulthood as follows:
 - to act in the best interests, and promote the physical and mental health and wellbeing, of the children and young people.
 - to encourage children and young people to express their views, wishes and feelings.
 - to consider the views, wishes and feelings of children and young people.
 - to help children and young people gain access to and make the best use of services provided by the Local Authority and its relevant partners.
 - to promote high aspirations, and seek to secure the best outcomes, for children and young people.
 - for children and young people to be safe, and for stability in their home lives, relationships and education or work and
 - to prepare children and young people for adulthood and independent living.

Information

4. The Council remains committed to delivering a genuine, multi-agency, child-centred strategy to achieve its shared ambition and delivery of commitments. As a Partnership, the collective commitment is to give every one of our children and young people the foundations and support to thrive in adulthood.
5. Over the last four years, services for children in the care system have improved and the offer for children leaving care has significantly increased by being the first two-tier area in England to publish a "Joint Care Leaver Local Offer". Nottinghamshire councils and partners have worked to embed into our communities the importance of equipping, assisting, and preparing care leavers for adulthood and independent living.

6. However, there are some areas where progress has not been as expected over the last three years, with the pandemic contributing to this. For example, there is more to do to ensure young people have responsive and effective mental health support (particularly if they are living out of Nottinghamshire), and that timely and good quality health assessments are provided when they come into care and that there are enough of the right kind of homes in Nottinghamshire for young people to live. We will continue to focus on these areas through this delivery plan.
7. Over the next few years, there is a requirement for partners to work together in the wider community to create systemic change: a better, more cohesive way of thinking and with agencies and organisations working towards a common goal. This must include the early dignified help and support that families need and trust, to enable better relationships.

The Looked After Children and Leaving Care Partnership Strategy (2022-2025)

8. The Nottinghamshire Looked After Children and Leaving Care Partnership Strategy 2022-2025 continues to drive and build upon the previous 2018-2021 strategy and the ambitions of the partners in relation to their priorities for looked after children and care leavers in Nottinghamshire. The strategy has been informed by children, young people and care leavers working together with NCC and partners through a county-wide consultation.

Nottinghamshire's Delivery Plan for Looked After Children and Care Leavers (2022-2025)

9. The partnership strategy will be robustly driven by the partnership delivery plan currently being developed and 'owned' by all the partners. Since 2014, local authorities have had a duty (Children Act 2004 section 10) to promote cooperation between relevant partners with a view to improving the wellbeing of all children and young people in their area. Over the three years of this Strategy, partners are ensuring the ambitions for improved outcomes for looked after children and care leavers are prioritised within their respective organisations. Section 10 defines relevant partners as including the district council; the local policing body and the chief officer of police; probation board; any provider of probation services; youth offending team; NHS England and Care Leavers Clinical Commissioning groups; and the governing bodies of publicly funded schools.
10. The Looked After Children and Leaving Care Delivery Plan 2022-2025 will supersede the 2020/1 Delivery Plan and will include ambitions and objectives that will provide services, support, and change to looked after children and care leavers in Nottinghamshire and will add value to partners' existing service and/or multi-agency plans. It is structured around the six Ambitions of the Nottinghamshire Plan:
 - Ambition 1: LAC and Care Leavers are safe and feel safe.
 - Ambition 2: LAC and Care Leavers experience good physical, emotional and mental health, and wellbeing.
 - Ambition 3: LAC and Care Leavers fulfil their potential.
 - Ambition 4: LAC and Care Leavers achieve sustained and fulfilling employment and economic independence.
 - Ambition 5: LAC and Care Leavers make a positive contribution.
 - Ambition 6: LAC and Care leavers have a positive transition to adulthood.
11. These ambitions and objectives are intended to complement other Nottinghamshire partnership plans focused on looked After children and care leavers, as well as other vulnerable children and young people and are only possible by all partners working together effectively.

12. The delivery plan is intended to be implemented by early 2024 and will be used as a 'tool' by the Board to ensure internal and external stakeholders secure a visible and explicit commitment to the Strategy's vision and ambition to improve provision and outcomes for Looked After Children and Care Leavers in their relevant strategic services' core work. As such, all partners have been invited to determine their individual key performance indicators in line with each of the Nottinghamshire Plan's desired outcomes and ambitions. A rich and wide 'data' set will be developed which seeks to capture wider achievements of Looked after Children and Care Leavers in relation to their social and emotional wellbeing, with a strong focus on preparation for independence and a fulfilling adulthood.

The Looked After Children and Care Leavers Strategic Partnership Board

13. The Partnership Board is chaired by Amanda Collinson, Service Director for Help, Protection and Care and vice chaired by Peter McConnochie, Service Director for Education, Learning and Skills and attended by Councillor Sinead Anderson. The Board continues to meet bi-monthly and is well attended by both internal services and external partners with the aim of working effectively together to ensure improved outcomes for looked after children and care leavers in Nottinghamshire and that these are prioritised within their respective organisations.

The following partners attend in addition to internal education and social care colleagues:

- Nottinghamshire County Council •
 - Newark and Sherwood District Council on behalf of the seven Nottinghamshire district and borough councils •
 - Nottinghamshire Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust •
 - D2N2 and East Midlands Chamber of Commerce •
 - Nottingham Trent University • Nottingham University Hospitals NHS Trust •
 - Doncaster and Bassetlaw Teaching Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust •
 - Nottinghamshire Futures •
 - Nottingham and Nottinghamshire Care Leavers Clinical Commissioning Group
 - Bassetlaw Care Clinical Commissioning Group •
 - Nottinghamshire Police
 - Sherwood Forest Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust
 - National Probation Service
 - West Nottinghamshire College on behalf of further education colleges •
 - A care leaver champion
 - Fostering Liaison Advisory Group
 - Department for Work and Pensions
 - SIF and Assurance Group
14. The corporate parenting principles underpin the work of the Looked After Children and Care Leavers strategic Partnership Board. They also set an expectation of Board members to use their voice to influence and advocate on behalf of looked after children and care leavers in partner's wider organisations, taking all opportunities to amplify the understanding of the experiences and needs of looked after children and care leavers at a local, regional, and national level.
15. A Nottinghamshire Partnership Pledge - A Guide for Looked After Children and Care Leavers was developed in January 2023, which explains how partners will support looked after children and care leavers in and from the county. This has already been identified in

the partnership strategy and has been created by and for looked after children and care leavers. Partners have pledged how they will meet their commitments, and how they will work with and communicate the pledge to all children and young people in care and in ways that suit them.

Progress and Partnership Updates Provided to the Looked After Children and Care Leavers Strategic Partnership Board.

16. Regular meeting updates relating to Care Leavers and Looked after children are provided to the Board from both internal and external partners:

The Integrated Care System Service Improvement Forum (SIF)

17. The SIF provides a progress report on looked after data on a six-monthly basis. This multi-agency children's forum was established in 2016 and continues to meet quarterly. The SIF has developed a pathway specifically for Children in Care ensuring professionals work together collaboratively to improve the health and outcomes of looked after children and young people. It has agreement and commitment from both Nottingham City Council and Nottinghamshire County Council, relevant health providers, Designated Doctors, and Nurses for looked after children for Nottingham and Nottinghamshire CCG and Bassetlaw CCG, and commissioners.
18. The SIF progresses and prioritises programmes of improvement and work informed by national guidance and locally identified pressures and challenges, sharing local/national updates, and ensuring good partnership working, responding to rapid reviews and other safeguarding reviews, and hearing the voice of young people. It ensures initial and review health assessments are undertaken within statutory timescales; providing a holistic review of health and development and to gather information about emotional and physical health, engaging the child or young person in their own healthcare, and to provide information and advice to the child, their social worker and carers regarding their specific health needs.
19. A recent SIF update to the board provided in September 2023, explained that a streamlined action plan has been developed including timescales of health assessment pathways for young people, ensuring the health needs of children placed in this area from other areas, with high quality CAMHS access, quality assurance work around transitions, and an ongoing discussion around KPIs and reporting. The mandatory training document for looked after children or professionals is due to be rewritten, and changes to statutory guidance are currently being proposed when working together to safeguard children, with the intention of this being shared with the board on an ongoing basis. This mirrors operational partnership working in other regions.

The Integrated Care System Looked After Children Assurance Group

20. This group provides regular updates to the Board and drives forward improvement and obtains system assurances the health needs of looked after children and care leavers within the remit of Nottingham and Nottinghamshire Integrated Care System are being met. The purpose of the group is to ensure that the health needs of looked after children and care leavers are integral across the Integrated Care System offering strategic direction and support, provide constructive challenge.

Other Reports to the Looked after and Care Leavers Strategic Partnership Board include:

Police and Youth Justice

21. In September 2021, the Board agreed with the local Youth Justice Partnership Board its role in the local accountability structure to help implement the National Protocol on Reducing Unnecessary Criminalisation of Looked-After Children and Care Leavers. Local measures included the convening of the Reducing Offending Children in Care and Leaving Care Oversight Group on a biannual basis. The meeting is co-chaired by service managers from The Youth Justice Service and The Children in Care and Care Leavers Service.
22. In the paper to the September 2022 Board, we reported that, in the full year July 2021/June 22 there were 127 children and young people who entered the justice system for the first time, receiving a youth caution or above, of which 11 (9%) were recorded as being Children in Care. Considering the small number of children, it was agreed an audit would be completed to better understand the needs of the Children in Care. Upon completion, the report was presented to the May Oversight Group which highlighted the multiple and overlapping needs and vulnerabilities of children in care and how these may combine to increase the risk of offending. Principal risk indicators included children in care being not in education, employment, or training; using substances; having previous involvement with the Police; and having underlying emotional wellbeing and mental health concerns. It was evident that where these factors existed, particularly where the child is facing transition of placement or entering care, that they may face an increased risk of offending and/or exploitation.
23. A summary report was presented to both the Youth Justice Partnership and Children in Care and Care Leavers Boards in September 2023, which included key recommendations; including the promotion of greater support for children in care deemed to be at risk of offending, before and during transition; increased training to relevant staff to promote trauma informed responses to children in care and care leavers; and consideration of additional process measures to slow or stay the introduction of children in care into the justice system. The oversight group reconvened in November 2023 and agreed initial steps to begin implementing delivering against these actions, alongside strategic actions agreed in the boards.
24. Partnership working is supported by a Children in Care team which consists of a Police officer and two civilian grades (both former police officers). This team offer support, advice, diversion and signposting to placement providers and caregivers, who works closely with Police colleagues to support child centred decision making. As this role has matured it has led to the forming of established relationships with providers across the county as well as providing the opportunity to brief and upskill new providers as and when they are commissioned. The work of the Children in Care Police Officer is underpinned by a child centred approach with a focus the impact of adverse childhood experiences and how that influences a trauma informed approach. The Children in Care team follow the Reducing Offending Behaviour of Children in Care and Care Leavers protocol.
25. No child in care in Nottinghamshire should receive either an Out of Court or a statutory outcome without the completion of a ten-point plan. This is a nationally agreed document which promotes good decision making by OICs and partners. The use of this document within Nottinghamshire police is under review to ensure quality of completion and to identify areas for improvement from those completing it. With the review into the use of the ten-point checklist, It is anticipated that there will be remedial action to strengthen the process moving forward. No child in care in Nottinghamshire should receive an Out of Court or a statutory outcome without the case being discussed at a multi-partnership panel first.

26. A jointly agreed Out of Court Protocol is currently being revised by Nottinghamshire police, with both City and County Youth Justice Services. This will include guidance to all officers in relation to the management of investigations and disposal outcomes for Children in Care. The changes within the Out of Court Protocol will support and align with reducing offending protocol, with the aim being to reduce first time entrants of young people into the Court Justice system. This will support a child centred approach to the Youth Justice arena, with a focus on reducing offending through diversionary and intervention measures, opposed to formal criminal sanctions.
27. To support a consistent approach to Children in Care across the City and County, Nottinghamshire police are considering moving to a thematic Youth Interventions section in the future. This will potentially provide greater partnership working opportunities, improve consistency in police decision making, and allow for cross agency training and development. Should such a move take place, both City and County Youth Justice Service partners will be fully consulted with, and there will be no reduction in policing resources to these areas.

Joint Strategic Needs Analysis (JSNA) Partnership Board Update - September 2023

28. The first JSNA steering group took place in September with the aim of taking place every six weeks and included a wide variety of members. Its purpose is to bring system wide changes to: -
 1. Understand the health of Children in Care, those leaving care and following the transition to independence including adult health services.
 2. Enable service improvement: pathways and processes to support healthcare service provision.
 3. Inform Commissioning organisations of the provision needed and to procure appropriate services.
 4. Improve health and social outcomes across the life course for Children in Care.
29. JSNA data analysis is due to be completed by December 2023 and a finalised report is due to be completed by February 2024. Further updates will be provided to the Looked after and Care Leavers Partnership Board in March 2024, which will be briefed to the Health and Wellbeing board for formal public approval in June 2024.

Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO) Annual Report -September 2023

30. There is a statutory requirement to bring this report to the Looked after and Care Leavers Partnership Board and is presented at the Corporate Parenting Board after. Looked after numbers have stayed quite stable, but unaccompanied young people fluctuate. Quality assurance was provided that ongoing reviews with young people are held within good timescale, moving forward there is a need to ensure meaningful meeting participation.
31. Independent Reviewing Officers have regular meetings with Team Managers and the service to ensure there is consistent practice with the Children in Care Council, Participation Group Children Disability Service, Local Family Justice Board and Adoption Service and Foster carers meetings/CAMHS.

Looked After Children and Access to Dentists – September 2023

32. A recent Board update explained that current dental issues for looked after children and care leavers included:

- Difficulty in accessing an NHS dentist.
 - Being unable to return to previous dentist as the child has moved placement so dentist is nowhere near placement.
 - Long wait times for dental treatment through community dental services.
 - Aim is for every child must be seen by a dentist every 12months.
33. The outcome action for Board members to agree for the Local Authority to pay for and support Looked after children and care leavers accessing a dentist whilst there continues to be an issue accessing treatments.

Skills Development and Employment Opportunities Strategy and associated actions regarding care experienced young people - July 2023

34. The Skills and Development strategy was implemented in December 2021. However, there has always been a commitment to finding placements for looked after children and children in care and the Apprenticeship levy has been in place since 2017. The Achievement Service works with the team to seek an apprenticeship which meets their aspirations. NCC pays the living wage which is higher than the apprenticeship rate of pay.
35. Many care experienced young people aspire to enter into work but sometimes lack the skills to be able to do that, as do those who have been out of work for some time or are the furthest removed from employment. The strategy was implemented to consider how NCC can provide a progression route into proper employment, through apprenticeships, the graduate programme and standard recruitment.
36. The team are currently working on a pre-employment work experience offer which will be put on a virtual platform, involving case studies and exercises to do as well as our mandatory staff training. This is because physical placements are becoming harder to identify. They are also working more with schools/colleges/universities to offer placements that link to courses.
37. Recent approval has been provided for the budget to be ring-fenced for those most removed from employment, including care experienced young people. Apprentices are also guaranteed a job role at the end of their apprenticeship, at which point the team will work with departments to identify a job role – ideally in the same team as they did their apprenticeship in.

Good News Stories – Regular Bi-Monthly Agenda Item.

38. All partnership board members are invited to share their looked after and care leavers success stories. An update provided by the Looked After Team at November's meeting included:
- A 9-year-old looked after girl is having her first contact with her mum after no contact for four years.
 - In 2022, a looked after boy only attended school for an hour a day and now he goes full time, has made fantastic progress and is only about eight months behind others.
 - A child had their first holiday abroad to Egypt and 'loved it'.

- A care leaver had their RAF passing out parade at which the Social Worker attended, and photos were taken.
- A child has had their first face to face contact in many years with their father, they started with a photo, then the child made a video.
- A young person has commenced a carpentry course after being removed from education for a significant amount of time.
- Excellent positive feedback from an Independent Reviewing Officer to the Social Worker including:

*"I just wanted to share it was an absolute pleasure to chair * meeting recently. It was evident from these discussions, speaking with the foster carer and chairing the meeting that * and his Social Worker have an excellent working relationship. The Social Worker successfully supported * alongside the foster carer to share his thoughts and feelings throughout the review. The banter between Social Worker and * put him at ease and encouraged him to engage throughout the meeting".*

39. The foster family were very pleased that * is the children's Social Worker. They said * is the best Social Worker and communicates very well with the children. Both the foster carer and Supporting Social Worker thanked * for her support despite the situation being difficult (health wise) and the boys have continued to thrive in the Social Worker's care.

The Virtual School

40. The Virtual School held its fourth annual conference in partnership with Nottingham Trent University in April 2023. Two hundred delegates attended the Doing What Matters: Leadership Counts conference which consisted of inspirational keynotes from Hayley Care Leavers (Spen Valley Headteacher), Jaz Ampaw-Farr (keynote speaker and author), and Jamie (Chair of No Labels, Children in Care Council), and workshops delivered by local authority, school and Nottingham Trent University colleagues. The number of delegates attending this academic year, doubled when compared to last year. The average rating of the quality of the conference in evaluation was 4.73 out of 5. Example quotes from delegates in response to, what worked well:
- *Keynote speakers excellent. Nice to have secondary head this year to balance primary head last year.*
 - *Very informative and thought provoking. Great to network and time to think.*
 - *Incredibly knowledgeable. There was lots to take away from this conference and put into practice. Lots of thought-provoking moments.*
 - *Very strong keynote speakers and topics including workshops had a wide scope to impact on day to day running of school.*
 - *Raising profile of trauma informed practice*
41. Since the implementation of an online Personal Education Plan platform in September 2021, the number of Personal Education Plans completed for the children and young people has increased termly. 89% of children and young people aged 3-18 years had a PEP completed in the summer term compared to 53% in autumn 2021 when accurate completion figures were first extractable. Collaborative working between education and social care colleagues has enabled improvements to continue termly and barriers to be identified and addressed.

42. The Virtual School work in partnership with the Educational Psychology Service to deliver many of the training sessions available to Nottinghamshire education settings. 324 education and social care professionals attended Virtual School training this academic year. Average delegate evaluation feedback for all courses was 4-5 out of 5 when asked about usefulness and quality of the course. For 2023-24, a Building Relational Nurseries course is being developed with the Early Years Service to develop trauma informed approaches in settings where our youngest children attend which has been identified as an area of need through contextual knowledge, termly and end of key stage data. Example of feedback quotes from delegates at Relational Schools training this year:

- *Good balance of research and reflection combined with knowledge.*
- *A very useful reminder and some new ideas and resources.*
- *Feeling inspired.*

Course	Delegates 22-23
Building Relational Schools: Attachment Aware & Trauma Informed	47
Building Relational Colleges: Attachment Aware & Trauma Informed	11
Emotion Coaching	75
Understanding Behaviour & Responding to Distress (new for 22-23)	42
Statutory Role of the Designated Teacher	93
Meaningful Personal Education Plans	42
Mediated Learning Support Assistant training (new for 22-23)	14

43. At the end of the academic year 2021-22, 12.4% of children and young people achieved GCSE 5+ in both English and maths which is 1.4% above the national average. Children achieving GCSE 4+ in both English and maths is 2.6% above the national average.
44. Through the Department for Education's post-16 pupil premium pilot, the Virtual School has funded a care experienced mentor at West Nottinghamshire College for two years. This role is now well established and support for young people is extensive and includes support to complete and share their voice in Personal Education Plans; working with tutors to make reasonable adjustments and provide flex to enable achievement; supporting transitions including university visits and securing work placements. West Nottinghamshire College have developed excellent practice in supporting care experienced students to succeed and they were shortlisted for an Attachment Research Community Award following a nomination from Nottinghamshire Virtual School. West Nottinghamshire College have enthusiastically engaged with training and support provided by the Virtual School and implemented learning into practice including Emotion Coaching, 16 trained Emotional Literacy Support Assistants and Building Relational Colleges work. Plans for 2023-24 include West Nottinghamshire College and Virtual School continuing to work together to share good practice with other settings.
45. In January 2023, 73% of year 12 and 13 looked after children and young people were in education, employment or training compared to 75% last academic year. There were 303 children and young people in year 12 and 13 in January 2023 and this figure is increasing year on year. 18 children and young people transitioned to university in September 2022. 8 young people secured first year places at university for September 2023. The Universities the first-year students will be attending include Sheffield Hallam, Nottingham Trent, University of York, to name a few. The young people will be studying courses such as

criminology, art and design, drama and theatre, and health and social care. There are currently 35 Nottinghamshire care leavers studying at university.

46. The unaccompanied children seeking asylum group increased this academic year which initiated a pilot project with Inspire to provide ESOL and transition support to post-16 for 8 young people who were new to the country. The main project aims were to develop speaking in English, provide an opportunity to build relationships with peers, and to prepare for post-16 education settings starting in September. The Virtual School worked with the Achievement Service to support 16 unaccompanied young people seeking asylum to access summer ESOL project run by Winchmore tutors. Evaluations from these projects will be used to inform further opportunities and support for our unaccompanied children and young people in 2023-24.

Local Offer for Care Leavers

47. The Leaving Care service promotes relationship-based practice when supporting young people resulting in positive, sustained relationships between care leavers and their personal advisors. We hear from young people that they receive support when they need it and they value the relationship that they develop over time with their personal advisor. As such, we follow a solution-focussed strengths-based approach to pathway plans to best identify individual support needs when planning their transition to independence and adulthood.
48. As at the end of September 2023, Leaving Care support over 1000 young people aged 16 – 24 years, with 475 care leavers aged 18 – 20. In Nottinghamshire we aim for the young people to know their personal advisor before they commence their transition to leave care at 18 years. We have therefore increased our personal adviser establishment to ensure all looked after children have a named personal adviser before they are 16½ years old or earlier if there is a need for this. As such there has been an agreed expansion of the team to meet demand and recruitment has taken place of an additional 6 personal advisors.
49. Nottinghamshire have a higher-than-average proportion of care leavers living in either semi-independent transitional accommodation or in a 'staying put' arrangement, compared with our statistical neighbours and England average¹. This is due to Nottinghamshire having its own countywide supported accommodation provision that can be accessed by young people from 16 – 21 years old, alongside the promotion of young people continuing to live with their foster carers post-18, enabling young people's transition into independent living being better planned and at the right time for them.
50. Nottinghamshire has continued to see an improvement in the proportion of care leavers deemed to be in suitable accommodation, with this figure being 95% in 21/22, compared to statistical neighbour average of 92% and national average of 90%. There are two specialist homelessness prevention personal advisors (one funded through the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities until March 2024) who work across the leaving care service to help reduce the risk of and prevent homelessness, as well as our self-developed Care Leaver Emergency Accommodation (CARE LEAVERSEA), a wrap-around intense 12-week support in a supported tenancy to develop skills before moving into social housing.

¹ We have 51% in semi-independent transitional accommodation compared to 29% of our statistical neighbours. And Nottinghamshire has 25% staying put compared to 15% statistical neighbour average.

51. We continue to improve our approach to pathway planning through practice development and research that is centred on what our pathway planning should look like and feel like for young people. We intend a new model to be in place by the end of 2024 and will be co-producing this model with young people and all involved services. It is our priority to identify the people the young person wants to remain in contact with, in their pathway plan.
52. We actively promote pathway plans that are relevant, engaging, visual, inclusive and strength based positive. A young person's first Pathway Plan will commence after a young person is 15½ years and will be in place before they are 16¼ years and any young people who requires additional transitional support toward independence is referred to the specialist Transitional Personal Adviser Service (TPA). We are mindful of the continuous need to improve how well we keep life story records of events or experiences important to young people who are care experienced. We are working with Personal Advisors to recognise life story discussions and to keep important documents, photographs etc for young people for future access. We are also exploring options of a Virtual Memory Box which will act a bit like a personal social media page for young people where both themselves and professionals can upload pictures, important documents, and memories for them to be able to reflect on. Life summaries are also identified within a young person's Pathway Plan which helps set the context of the pathway plan, but also gives the young person an opportunity to reflect on their journey so far.
53. Alongside our health partners we will be introducing 2.5 (FTE) Wellbeing Workers commissioned through Barnardo's. They will support care leavers by offering support, counselling, signposting to services and enable wellbeing support to those young people who need it and cannot access other mental health services, or for instances when they wish to access their historical social care journey records. One of these Wellbeing Workers will be a specialist, dedicated to supporting our care leavers who were identified as unaccompanied children seeking asylum.
54. Our Leaving Care Team engage in continuous professional development to promote better emotional, health and wellbeing outcomes (for example, participating in the LIFT Study with the University of Bristol about better health outcomes for care leavers). We also look for alternative conversations around what works for the young person and celebrate young people's achievements personally by attending graduations, sending congratulations cards, contact from our councillors and senior leadership team, and sharing positive outcomes with all our partners at the Looked After and Leaving Care Strategic Partnership Board. We have a bi-monthly 21Plus interactive e-Newsletter for young people and the success of this means we are looking to expand this for younger 18+ leaving care cohort.
55. We listen to the young people through their relationships with personal advisors, multiple communication (via phone, email, WhatsApp, social media etc.), promotion of the Mind of My Own application and the contact facilities through Notts Next Steps application. We work alongside advocacy services to address issues and complaints that young people may raise with the service. Our internal complaints process is explained and accessible to young people and we use this as an opportunity to reflect and learn, so that we can improve our service.
56. Our Local Offer for Care Leavers is a robust and co-produced approach to supporting our care leavers. We have worked with our seven district councils to ensure fairness, equity, and a shared sense of corporate parenting to young people who are care experienced. We offer Council Tax exemptions for all Nottinghamshire care leavers living in our area until their 25th birthday, as well as free leisure centre access (regionally and nationally), and priority access to social housing and tenancies. We hear from care leavers that this has a

real impact on their lives financially, but also makes them feel cared for and supported whilst they are transitioning into independence. We have been reviewing the Local Offer since Sept 2023 ready for a relaunch in Jan 2024. This has also led to the development of more specialist local offers focusing on employment, education and training (Achievement Offer), 21Plus (for young people aged 21 – 24 years and beyond), Custody Offer (for young people in custody/leaving custody), Parents' Offer (for those who are parents or parents to be) and our UASC Offer (for young people identifying as children and young people seeking asylum).

57. Our Achievement Offer reflects our aim of encouraging children and young people to think about, work towards, and sustain employment, education, and training. We engage in structured support to improve circumstances for young people who are Care Leavers as not being in employment education, or training (NEET). We start conversations with young people about their aspirations early. We have a Business Engagement Achievement Advisor to improve employment opportunities and work with local, national, and international organisations to co-produce a range of options including work experience, apprenticeships, traineeships, job opportunities, and employability briefings. Our educational psychology service provide support to educational establishments to develop their capacity to provide emotional literate mentoring and coaching to looked after children and young people. We effectively use tools (such as the Personal Education Plan) and Pathway Plans to help young people identify and then work towards realising their potential. For summer 2023, 90% of PEPs were completed within timescales, which is an increase from 79% at our last spring term.
58. The Achievement Service support the care experienced into work and apprenticeships, including a top-up for apprentices to match the national living wage. We recognise our role as a corporate parent so offer employment opportunities for young people within NCC. Care leavers are offered guaranteed interviews for employment vacancies where they meet the job criteria. Upon successfully achieving employment within NCC, we consider any impact that care leavers' history and experience may have on them within their role and engaging with others and look to support this appropriately. We ensure all care leaver apprentices can access an independent mentor upon starting a role with NCC in addition to their personal and achievement advisor who are also employed by NCC.
59. The Virtual School and Achievement Service work closely together to increase educational placement stability and resilience and increased line of sight through transition to post-16 support. We continue to supplement the Higher Education Bursary for Care Leavers with a £10k annual financial support package for those accessing Higher Education pathways. The number of our care experienced people accessing higher education pathways between 2022 and 2023 is 36.
60. We have established a 'children in education' board to monitor and understand children who are excluded or who do not have an education place. This is a relatively small number of children (as of Oct 2023 this was 24 children) but senior managers in the virtual school, leaving care and looked after teams will regularly meet to explore options and look for solutions to ensure education provision for all our looked after children.
61. Young people over 21 have support from our dedicated 21Plus Service with experienced personal advisors who are proactive in keeping in touch with young people and ensuring that they can access support, advice, and guidance when they need it. These named 21Plus personal advisors offer both duty response as well as allocated case holder support and proportional pathway plan reviews when this is needed. We also offer young people to have continuing contact with their previous personal advisor(s) as part of the transition

to the 21Plus Service or after when this is preferred. We re-launched drop-in sessions in 2023 so young people can link with previous named workers and professionals, access advice from our Achievement Service, homelessness prevention personal advisor(s) and the 21Plus Service.

62. If a young person is approaching 21 years and there are continuing additional support needs, then they can stay with their allocated leaving care personal advisor post-21. During this time, we look to introduce the 21Plus Service to have a planned and supported transition to 21Plus support when this is suitable. We hold reflective group supervisions within the team and work alongside our quality assurance team to benchmark, reflect and improve our offer. We held an internal reflective audit led by an independent service manager as part of our learning and growing review.
63. As a service, we explored the recommendations of the Independent Review of Children's Social Care (May 2022) and voluntarily agreed to the extension of Staying Put for care leavers until the age of 23 with the ethos of this being opt-out as opposed to opt-in expectation.
64. For our 21Plus care leavers, we use a variety of tools to engage and communicate including hand-delivery, email, e-newsletters, and WhatsApp where we share important information, tips and advice, including any updates about our local offers or employability briefings. We have a dedicated app called "Notts Next Steps" which contains our Local Offer information, how to contact Leaving Care Services and other useful advice and opportunities for our young people. We ensure all looked after children and 21Plus young people have got plans for key dates such as birthdays and religious festivals and are not alone (unless they want to be). We also arrange at least 4 open access activities during holidays per year via the Holiday Activities and Food (HAF) funding.
65. The cost-of-living crisis is significantly impacting on care leavers and their ability to live independently with levels of financial stability. We have developed a bi-monthly e-newsletter with hints, tips, and cost-saving advice for our 21Plus care leavers and will be sharing this with our younger care leaver cohort. We have also developed a 'cookbook' to promote recipes for easy-cook and affordable meals. We work with support funds and local charities, providing young people access to additional grant-funding, supermarket vouchers, and My Boxes (issued quarterly by My Bag Charity) to those young people in independent/semi-independent accommodation. We also offer bespoke financial support for education, employment, and training such as suitable interview Care Leavers specific work/uniforms, apprenticeship top-ups, specialist equipment, transport, computer equipment, access to Wi-Fi, study materials, Higher Education grants and accommodation funding. We are working with our partners at the My Bag Charity to explore free 4G internet access for young people who are on low income or benefits and are usually responsible for paying for this themselves.

NCC's Youth Service

66. The Council's Youth Service works with looked after children and care experienced children in several contexts to enhance youth resilience, improve health outcomes and reduce escalation into statutory services, and to meet with other young people. Youth Work provision, No Labels (Children in Care council), the Young People's Board, early help and preventative youth work, C-Card, and the Holiday Activities and Food (HAF) programme are all coordinated through the Youth Service.

67. We promote active engagement and participation with 'No Labels' Children in Care Council through the Local Offer and through social worker interactions. When seeking input from No Labels, any service both internal and external to the Council can request support from young people through an expression of interest (Eofl). This is to enable active engagement with children and young people to hear their views about what matters to them and provides an opportunity for young people to offer insight into how changes can be made to better meet their needs. The Young People's Board (made up of eight Members of Youth Parliament, the Chair of the Children in Care Council and a representative from the D2N2 Voice of Adoption, who have all been elected to these roles by their peers), review each request with the support from their youth workers. This allows the board to take ownership of the agenda, establish the information required and the time needed to enable their active involvement, they then determine the next steps of engagement.
68. Our looked after and leaving care teams also actively seek the voices of young people who do not participate in the Children in Care council offer to gain the voice of those whose lived experiences would not otherwise be heard. No Labels reaches out to young people through events, activity days, family days, and social worker referrals. The children and young people who sit on our Children in Care council shape their own activities and are engaged through a range of methods such as drama, sports, and arts.
69. No Labels is attended by senior leaders, council members as well as representatives from children's services. No Labels attendees are also invited to participate in a range of other activities, for example, foster carer training and the chair of No Labels shared their experience of being a Looked After at the Designated Teachers conference in April 2023. The group was also involved in the delivery of Childline training in May 2023 and hope to present at the 2024 foster carer conference.
70. No Labels helps to ensure young people can be involved at all levels of youth participation and our care experienced young people have expressed appreciation for the consistency provided No Labels and report their own development around public speaking, building friendships and increased confidence in a 'safe space'.