



Nottinghamshire
County Council

A Partnership Strategy for

Looked After Children and Care Leavers in Nottinghamshire

2018-2021



Foreword

Nottinghamshire County Council (NCC) is the corporate parent of all looked after children in Nottinghamshire. These are our children, and we are ambitious for them.

Collectively, we care about them, as well as care for them.

As with any good parent, we want to provide our children and young people with the best possible start in life, so that they can enjoy their childhood. As they prepare for adulthood, we want to inspire and support our young people to fulfil their own ambitions and dreams. For this reason, we have integrated our strategy for our looked after children and care leavers, to ensure the best possible support is provided as they reach adulthood.

In collaboration with key partners, which include health, education, police, housing, Adult Social Care and Children's Social Care, we will use our collective commitment to give every looked after child strong foundations and support to thrive in adulthood.

We will give all our looked after children both 'roots and wings' to become grounded and successful adults. As corporate parents, we demand collectively that looked after children and care leavers:

- **are safe, and feel safe**
- **enjoy good health and wellbeing**
- **have high aspirations and fulfil their potential**

Our ambitions exceed our statutory roles and responsibilities, and our vision has been shaped by the children and young people we look after. They are at the heart of everything we do as a Council and we expect all partners to share this commitment to look after children and care leavers.

We will deliver a genuine, multi-agency, child-centred strategy, accepting that there is more to do to ensure that all partners are equally accountable for all outcomes. We want to make best possible use of our collective resources to achieve our shared ambitions.

Where it is safe to do so, we will support our children to remain with their families. When this is not possible, we are committed to providing family-based placements wherever possible – a place that our young people can call home. At all times, we will support the stability of children's education and ensure that those young people who have special educational needs receive the additional support they need to succeed.

We will carefully plan the journey into adulthood for all looked after children and young people, to ensure there is no 'cliff edge' once young people reach 18 years of age. We will offer all children in care who are aged 13+ work experience, and care leavers will be offered apprenticeships and employment.

This strategy builds on the Looked After Children and Care Leavers' Strategy 2015-2018 and sets out our shared vision and ambition of how this will be achieved.

Colin Pettigrew

Director of Children's Services,
Nottinghamshire County Council

Councillor Philip Owen

Chair of the Children &
Young People's Committee

Dr John Doddy

Chair of the Health & Wellbeing Board

Darren Yemm

Chair of the No Labels Children in Care Council



Introduction

I hope that you are as proud of your County Council as I am today because they are taking on board my vision for a better future for our children in care. They know and understand and have allowed me to push forward my ideas despite how ambitious they are. I am immensely grateful to them and I believe that we will look back on this and see it as a milestone in the development of better outcomes for children in care and care leavers across the country.

Community

Our community needs to sit up and take notice that we have a combined responsibility because it's our community. I believe that our responsibility is to think and do as we would do for our own children. We need to support our kids to dream and be the best that they can be because they have been in enough drama as it is. We need to encourage them, guide and pick them up when they are down. They are our children.

I believe that the key ambition is to prepare our children by creating opportunities whilst they are in care, so they can fly the nest as they become adults. Every child is an individual and is facing different challenges in life.

Many of our care leavers will want to reunite with their birth families, so we need to respect that and support them to do this. Otherwise, our children will be right back in the same system that brought them into care in the first place.

Our Strategy

The timing of this strategy could not be better in Nottinghamshire because we are in a 2-tier local authority. Through the Children and Social Work Act 2017, the government introduced the requirement for local authorities to publish a "Care Leaver Offer" covering health and wellbeing, relationships, education and training, employment, accommodation and participation in society.

Therefore we are making history because it is the first time ever that our district councils at Ashfield, Bassetlaw, Gedling, Broxtowe, Mansfield, Newark and Rushcliffe share a legal duty and mechanism to design and deliver support to our care leavers with Nottinghamshire County Council.

This strategy is ambitious and can only be achieved if we all work together. I therefore send out a message to everyone in our community including business, community and faith leaders that this is an opportunity for us to create a better society for all.

Kids in care have so much to offer.

Terry Galloway

Care Leaver



Case Study

I was always an inquisitive child and will always remember asking my keyworker in the children's home what things other children in my situation had achieved in their lives. Did they ever go on to become doctors, pilots or stock brokers? Social Services did not care or have a plan for my dreams. At the time it felt like all they cared about was keeping me from my mum. I would often cry at night because all I wanted was to live at home and have what I thought was a normal family life.

Back then I was young and naïve to the barriers and obstacles that we three children would face as we grew older. I went to case conferences to discuss my future but had to sit outside whilst the adults talked until I was allowed to have my say for the last 10 minutes. Our lives were chaotic, and by the time I'd left care I had lived in over 100 places.

We had a horrendous time in the child care system and when I look back on all the suffering that we went through as a family, the damage that was caused, I reflect on how things could have turned out had we been prepared for life after care. I felt that no one actually cared about what we would become in the future.

I am a fighter and never gave up but it is too late for my beautiful sister who had a heart of gold. There was no help, guidance or support for us. Her daughters were eventually taken from her by the local authority because she was in a mess and was an alcoholic and on drugs. This is not unique for people that leave care. My sister did not make it; she was vulnerable and ended up in an abusive relationship and has now gone to make rainbows. Sadly, my brother has also struggled as an adult.

I've been working with Nottinghamshire County Council to develop this strategy and help shape the promises that all the partners are making. I am on a personal journey to make sure that my loss and experiences don't go to waste.

Terry is a successful campaigner, advocating for the rights of children in care. Currently, he is an ardent supporter of enhancing apprenticeship and employment opportunities for care leavers.

Terry Galloway

Care Leaver



Our Vision

We want our children and young people to have every opportunity and the support they need to be the best they possibly can be.

We will give our children strong roots of stability, love, encouragement, positive relationships and healing from past harm.

We will give our children wings of resilience, ambition, aspirational goals and practical and emotional support into successful adulthood.

Our Ambitions

As corporate parents, we have high aspirations and expectations that every looked after child and care leaver:

- is safe and feels safe
- experiences good physical, emotional and mental health & wellbeing
- fulfils their potential
- makes a positive contribution to their communities
- has a successful transition to adulthood
- achieves sustained and fulfilling employment & economic independence



Building on Previous Successes

Looked After Children & Care Leavers Strategy 2015-18

Following a good Ofsted judgment of Children's Social Care in May 2015, further improvements have been made throughout the lifetime of the 2015-2018 Looked After Children & Care Leavers Strategy. These address the areas for development identified by Ofsted in 2015, recognising that there were areas that required improvement within the Leaving Care Service.

Key achievements include:

- care leavers now routinely receive important health information;
- pathway plans are more specific regarding actions and timescales, and are regularly reviewed by the service;
- management information is now used to identify care leavers who are missing, at risk of sexual exploitation, misusing substances or offending, in order to better understand their needs and allocate additional resources;
- implementing, monitoring and reviewing a 16+ accommodation strategy;
- strengthened the governance arrangements for the leaving care service;

Other significant achievements include:

- the piloting of transitional personal advisors (PAs) who are appropriately supporting more young people into semi-independent living;
- a dedicated practice consultant who now supports pathway planning; practice development is improving the quality of plans for looked after children and care leavers;

- a new, nationally-recognised supported accommodation model which is ensuring more young people are suitably housed;
- the virtual school ensures that looked after children are better supported in schools; outcomes have improved as a result, with no looked after children excluded permanently and good attendance has been sustained;
- ensuring that the virtual school is now collecting, reviewing, monitoring and strategically using termly data on individual children and young people's progress, attendance and engagement, to identify children and young people at risk of failing to achieve their potential. This enables the virtual school to target additional resources and challenge where they are most needed for children and young people from 0–16 years of age.

Nottinghamshire partners are on a journey of continuous improvement and whilst the strategic outcomes have facilitated progress in a number of key areas, it is recognised that there is more to do, and that further progress can be made if partners work differently and better together around the shared vision.



LAC and Care Leavers are safe and feel safe

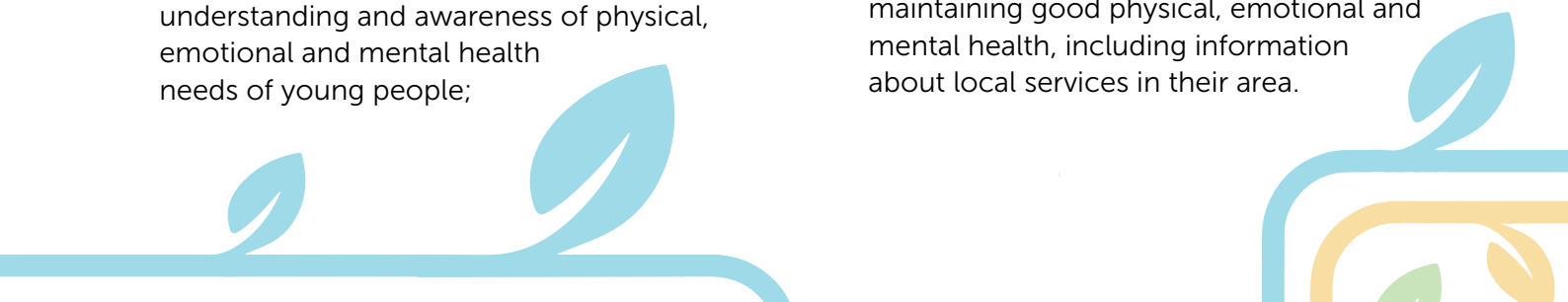
We will:

- embed a nurturing culture which builds resilience in children and young people across all services, settings and partners;
- prepare our children and young people for adulthood by allowing them to take risks in a safe environment;
- support children and young people to remain in contact with their birth family and community wherever it is safe to do so, providing appropriate support when needed;
- support permanence through appropriate use of court processes;
- ensure that young people have access to an independent advocate;
- provide every care leaver with the opportunity to 'stay put' or have regular contact with foster carers and/or children's homes as they move towards adulthood.

LAC and Care Leavers experience good physical, emotional and mental health & wellbeing

We will:

- make timely referrals to education, health and care services, which are followed up, including for Education, Health and Care Needs Assessments where needs are complex, significant and long-term;
- undertake meaningful health assessments with children and young people, including for those who are about to leave care;
- undertake a strategic health needs assessment for looked after children and care leavers
- ensure that children and young people understand their health histories and assessments;
- support carers to develop their understanding and awareness of physical, emotional and mental health needs of young people;
- work with GPs to ensure that they are aware of care leavers registered with their practice;
- ensure that CAMHS consultation is available for providers of 16+ supported accommodation;
- cooperate with health commissioners in other local areas to ensure that the health needs of looked after children are effectively met, wherever they are placed;
- ensure that all children and young people with emotional and mental health needs receive effective support until age 24 if required;
- ensure that children and young people are provided with information and advice about maintaining good physical, emotional and mental health, including information about local services in their area.



LAC and Care Leavers fulfil their potential

We will:

- ensure all children and young people have aspirational education targets supported by bespoke, outcome-based plans for successful adulthood;
- extend the reach of the virtual school into early years and post 16 settings, as well as to previously looked after children in all settings;
- provide opportunities for our children to have new experiences, and access to enriching opportunities to broaden horizons;
- ensure schools provide access to independent information, advice and guidance for all looked after children and young people and those who have been previously looked after;
- aim to reduce offending behaviour and support young people to avoid criminalisation;
- support designated teachers in schools to ensure that our children, including adopted children and those with Special Educational Needs, meet their full potential.

LAC and Care Leavers achieve sustained and fulfilling employment & economic independence



We will:

- offer work experience and work placements, within an appropriate bespoke curriculum pathway plan, that supports children and young people, as far as they are able, to aspire to access the most appropriate route into future education, employment or training from Year 9 onwards;
- explore opportunities to exempt care leavers from council tax and maximise their income;
- provide initial work experience from Year 9, leading into work placements and employment from 16 years. This is to ensure that all LAC and care leavers have opportunities for learning and developing the appropriate skills that will support them in their future careers.

LAC and Care Leavers make a positive contribution

We will:

- encourage all children and young people to participate in the children in care council, to enable their voice to shape our services;
- encourage and support young people in care to access the Duke of Edinburgh scheme;
- encourage and support young people in care to access cadet training programmes;
- encourage and support children and young people to join a uniformed organisation;
- encourage and support children to engage in or lead community activities, including arts, sports, science and engineering, in schools, with carers and through the broader partnership.

LAC and Care Leavers have a positive transition to adulthood

We will:

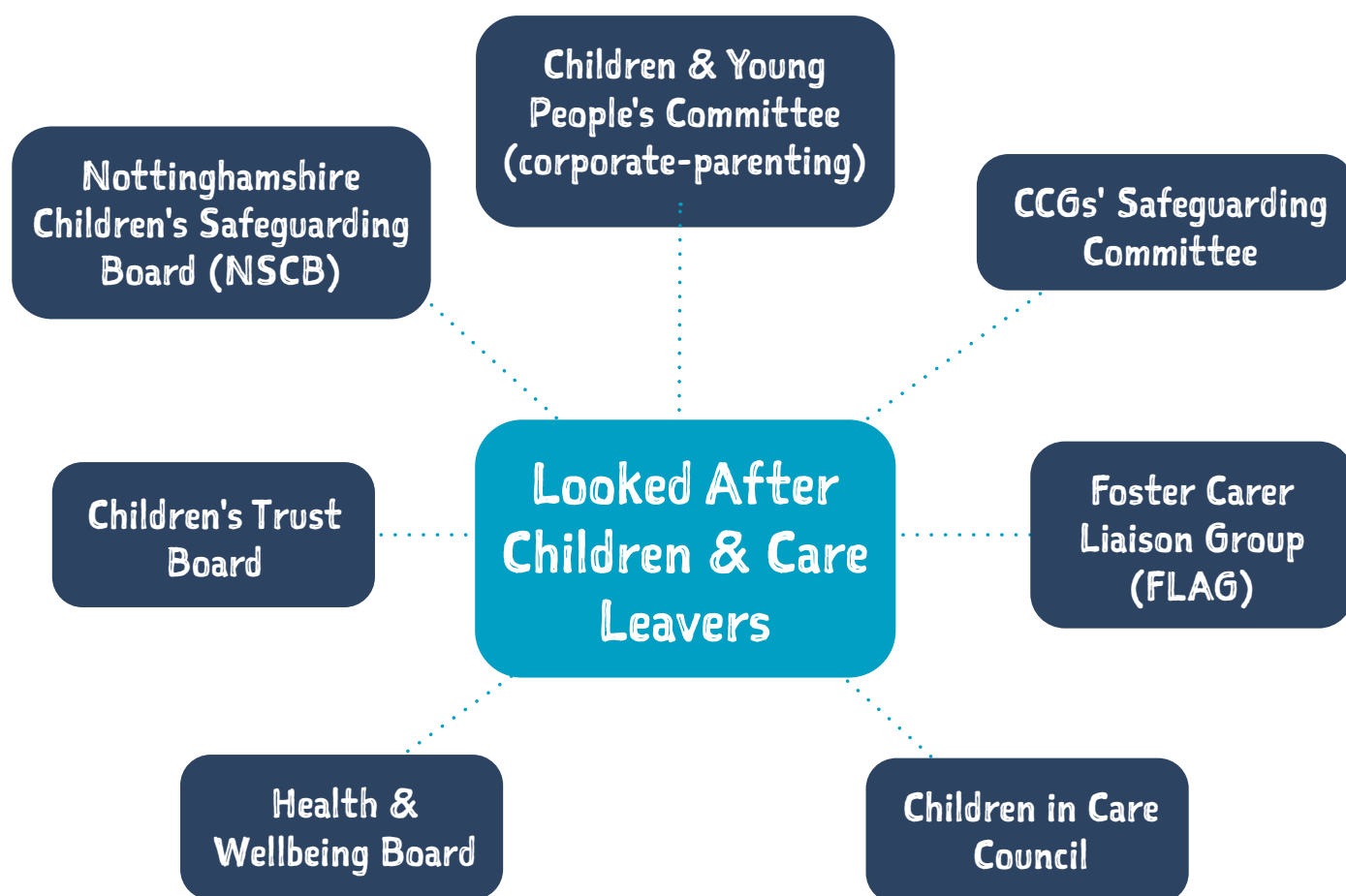
- ensure that placements prepare and plan for children's independence and transition to adulthood;
- extend the personal adviser offer to all looked after young people aged 16 years or above;
- increase multi-agency support in planning for adulthood, building on shared pathway plans from age 14 years onwards, underpinned by high quality independent information advice and guidance;
- promote independent challenge and scrutiny, by continuing the involvement of the IRO to care leavers.



Governance

This renewed vision and strategy is driven by an aspiration that all agencies working with children and young people will take ownership of their responsibility for those who are in care or leaving care.

The diagram below illustrates the range of agencies involved with children and young people in care in Nottinghamshire.



LAC & Care Leavers Partnership Board

New governance structures will be created to ensure that all partners recognise and act on their responsibilities and our shared ambitions for looked after children and care leavers.

The Service Director of Education, Learning and Skills will Chair a multi-agency group ('**LAC and Care Leavers Partnership Board**') of senior officers responsible for planning, reviewing and developing all aspects of our work with looked after children and care leavers, and providing support and challenge across the partnership. This Board's Vice-Chairs will be the Service Director for Youth, Families & Social Work, Service Director for Commissioning & Resources and Consultant in Public Health & Children's Commissioning.

Key consultative stakeholder groups include: Primary Trust Board, Governors Education Trust Board, Foster Liaison Advisory Group, Virtual School Trust Group, the Service Improvement Forum, the Children in Care Council, the Children & Young People's Committee, the Children's Trust, the Nottinghamshire Children's Safeguarding Board and staff across the Children and Young People's Department.

Regular reports on the needs and outcomes of care leavers will be reported to the Nottinghamshire Safeguarding Adults' Board.

The views of children and young people in care are expressed through the Children in Care Council and its various sub-groups. Feedback is also achieved via participation activity that forms part of our quality assurance framework, as well as via Independent Reviewing Officers.

The Partnership Strategy for Looked After Children and Care Leavers will be underpinned by an Annual Delivery Plan, which will outline the Strategy's key actions and activity. It will be developed, monitored and reviewed by the Partnership Board.

Other important local strategies and projects which impact on this Strategy include:

- Youth Homelessness Strategy 2012-15
- Accommodation Strategy
- Placement Commissioning Strategy
- Children in Care Health Action Plan and Outcomes Framework (including care leavers)
- Closing the Gap Strategy
- Nottinghamshire SEND Commissioning Strategy 2017-19
- Nottinghamshire's SEND Strategic Action Plan



Monitoring, Evaluation & Reporting

The monitoring, evaluation and reporting arrangements will be underpinned by robust and comprehensive data gathering and analysis across all partners. All partners will use data to monitor that appropriate actions are being taken, which are likely to improve outcomes and make best use of available resources.



All partners will use outcomes from monitoring to evaluate the effectiveness of actions taken and will report improved outcomes and areas for further development to the LAC & Care Leavers Partnership Board. The Board will use these evaluations to hold all partners to account for implementing additional actions to address the areas for further improvement.

The LAC and Care Leavers Partnership Board will report to the Children and Young People's Committee, as corporate parents for all looked after children and care leavers in Nottinghamshire. The Partnership Board will be held to account by the Children's Trust Board and, through this, by the Health & Wellbeing Board. Independent oversight and scrutiny affecting the safety of all children and young people in Nottinghamshire is the responsibility of Nottinghamshire Children's Safeguarding Board.

The Children in Care Council will provide scrutiny and challenge for the work of the LAC & Care Leavers Partnership Board, to ensure that the voice of children and young people shapes and informs all actions.

The LAC & Care Leavers Partnership Board will also oversee a number of operational groups established to deliver the renewed 2018-2021 strategy, including:

- The service improvement forum for the health of children in care;
- The virtual school trust board;
- LAC service development group;
- Vulnerable Children Educational Commissioning.





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