

Corporate Parenting Panel

Tuesday, 17 October 2023 at 14:00

County Hall, West Bridgford, Nottingham, NG2 7QP

AGENDA

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| 1 | Apologies for Absence | |
| 2 | Declarations of Interests by Members and Officers:- (see note below) | |
| 3 | Minutes of the Last Meeting held on 18 July | 3 - 10 |
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| 5 | Children In Care Council Update | |
| 6 | Visits to Children's Residential Homes | |
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Notes

- (1) Councillors are advised to contact their Research Officer for details of any Group Meetings which are planned for this meeting.
- (2) Members of the public wishing to inspect "Background Papers" referred to in the reports on the agenda or Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act should contact:-

Customer Services Centre 0300 500 80 80

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

Councillors or Officers requiring clarification on whether to make a declaration of interest are invited to contact Kate Morris (Tel. 0115 804 4530) or a colleague in Democratic Services prior to the meeting.
- (4) Councillors are reminded that Committee and Sub-Committee papers, with the exception of those which contain Exempt or Confidential Information, may be recycled.
- (5) This agenda and its associated reports are available to view online via an online calendar - <http://www.nottinghamshire.gov.uk/dms/Meetings.aspx>

Meeting: Corporate Parenting Panel

Date: Tuesday 18 July 2023 (commencing at 2:00pm)

Membership:

Persons absent are marked with an 'Ap' (apologies given) or 'Ab' (where apologies have not been sent). Substitute members are marked with a 'S'.

County Councillors

Sinead Anderson (Chair)
Anne Callaghan BEM
Francis Purdue-Horan
Sam Smith

County Council Officers

Amanda Collinson	-	Service Director for Care, Help and Protection
Laurence Jones	-	Service Director for Commissioning and Resources
Sophie Eadsforth	-	Group Manager for Looked After Children
Claire Sampson	-	Group Manager for Safeguarding, Assurance and Improvement
Ap Jon Hawketts	-	Group Manager for Commissioning
Charles Savage	-	Group Manager for Psychology and Inclusion Services

Substitute Members

None

Officers and colleagues in attendance:

Katherine Browne	-	Senior Public Health and Commissioning Manager
Adrian Mann	-	Democratic Services Officer
Philippa Milbourne	-	Business Support Administrator

1. Apologies for Absence

Jon Hawketts

2. Declarations of Interests

No declarations of interests were made.

3. Minutes of the Last Meeting

The minutes of the last meeting held on 16 May 2023, having been circulated to all Members, were taken as read and were confirmed and signed by the Chair.

4. Foster Carers Liaison Group Update

Sophie Eadsforth, Group Manager for Looked After Children, provided an update on the recent meetings of the Foster Carers Liaison Group (FLAG). The following points were discussed:

- a) The virtual meetings of the FLAG are well attended, with around 33 different households represented at the latest session. The meetings are an opportunity for foster carers to share good new stories, ask questions and raise concerns. Although the FLAG is a conduit for foster carers to be able to discuss any problems that they are experiencing as a group, there are also other avenues through which households can engage with Council officers directly on their specific issues.
- b) Due to the current size of the FLAG meetings and the volume of questions raised, it can be difficult for the Council representatives in attendance to answer everything in detail during the session – so questions are taken down and responses are circulated after the meeting using various channels. To seek to ensure greater clarity, it is proposed that a nominee is sought from the FLAG to attend the formal meetings of the Panel as an opportunity to bring forward specific questions from foster carers on service provision, as the Panel could represent a better forum for addressing these queries.
- c) The Panel noted that care should be taken to ensure that FLAG participants have the opportunity to be heard by both Council officers and elected members at their meetings, as well as being able to escalate specific service-related queries through an appointed representative to the Panel.

Resolved (2023/018):

- 1) To note the update on the Foster Carers Liaison Group (FLAG).
- 2) To request that an approach is made to the FLAG to seek a formal representative to attend the meetings of the Panel, to raise any specific issues impacting foster carers in Nottinghamshire.

5. Children in Care Council Update

Laurence Jones, Service Director for Commissioning and Resources, provided an update on the recent engagement with the Children in Care Council (CiCC). The following points were discussed:

- a) The Nottinghamshire Safeguarding Children Partnership's business plan is currently under review. The views of the CiCC have been sought as part of the

development process for the new business plan, to ensure that it meets the safeguarding needs of the children and young people in care in Nottinghamshire.

Resolved (2023/019):

- 1) To note the update on the Children in Care Council and confirm that no additional actions were required in relation to the points raised.

6. Elected Member Visits to Nottinghamshire Children's Residential Homes

Councillors Sinead Anderson, Anne Callaghan and Francis Purdue-Horan presented a report on their visits to children's residential homes (either run by the Council or by external providers for the sole use of the Council). The following points were discussed:

- a) Councillor Anderson and Councillor Callaghan visited the Lyndene children's home on 9 June, and Councillor Purdue-Horan visited Oakhurst on 20 June. The visits took place when the children were at home, and were a positive experience. The atmospheres at the homes were good, and the staff appreciated members visiting to see the children in residence.
- b) The Panel expressed its thanks to the staff of the residential homes for their hard work. Members hoped that other County Councillors beyond those on the Panel would be interested in carrying out future visits, as part of their corporate parenting remit.

Resolved (2023/020):

- 1) To note the report on Panel member visits to Children's Residential Homes.
- 2) To encourage other County Councillors to participate in these visits, following receiving the appropriate training, as part of their corporate parenting remit.

7. Update on Nottinghamshire Children's Residential Homes

Laurence Jones, Service Director for Commissioning and Resources, presented a report to provide an overview of the internal children's residential homes provision in Nottinghamshire. The following points were discussed:

- a) The Caudwell House residential home is rated as 'outstanding' by Ofsted and its Regulation 44 reports continue to be very positive. It provides residential care for children with physical disabilities and associated learning and healthcare needs, including children on the autistic spectrum. Grounds maintenance work has started with the removal of the sensory walkway so that a path suitable for wheelchairs can be put into the adjacent sensory garden.
- b) The Big House is a short breaks home for school-aged children who have a severe intellectual disability, combined with manifestations of challenging and complex behaviour. The demand for places at the home can be high. A great deal of work has been carried out to achieve improvements following the most

recent Ofsted inspection, and the latest Regulation 44 reports have been very positive.

- c) The mainstream homes of Lyndene and Oakhurst are performing well. A building refurbishment is being scoped at Oakhurst, for completion by the end of October. Westview remains closed pending renovations for it to reopen as a specialist home, and the works will start once the Oakhurst refurbishment has been completed.
- d) Clayfields is a children's home that operates as a national resource for the provision of secure care for up to 20 vulnerable young people. It is inspected annually by Ofsted, and this year's inspection has just begun.
- e) A shortage of staff for residential homes is a national issue currently, but the Nottinghamshire homes are attracting qualified and experienced people. This is particularly important as it is intended to open a new two-bed home in the early autumn. As part of staffing planning in the long-term, steps are underway to develop work further experience opportunities and vocational qualifications. A good progression structure is in place, so there are strong opportunities for people seeking a career in this area. Ultimately, due to the current challenging situation, recruitment must be proactive and targeted, with strong communications to emphasise the opportunities and career paths available in Nottinghamshire.
- f) The Council's Group Manager for Regulated Services, who has formal oversight of children's homes, has retired. A appointment has now been made to the role, with the oversight function resting with the Service Director for Commissioning and Resources until the post is taken up by the new appointee.

Resolved (2023/021):

- 1) To note the report on the internal children's residential homes in Nottinghamshire and confirm that no additional actions were required in relation to its contents.

8. Inspection Gradings of 'Exclusive Use' Children's Residential Homes

Laurence Jones, Service Director for Commissioning and Resources, provided an update on the current performance of the children's residential homes that are operated by Homes2Inspire for exclusive use by children in the Council's care. The following points were discussed:

- a) The 'exclusive use' homes are performing well, in general. Where Ofsted and Regulation 44 inspections have raised concerns, good progress has been made in delivering the improvements to address them effectively.
- b) The Savills Garden, which represented a full kitchen/market garden exhibited at the Chelsea Flower Show, will be installed at the Meadow View children's home to help teach cookery skills to the young people living there.

- c) The Panel felt that the establishment of the Savills Garden at Meadow View was extremely positive for the home and its residents, and recommended that everything possible should be done to share and celebrate this good news story.

Resolved (2023/022):

- 1) To note the update on the current performance of the children's residential homes operated by Homes2Inspire.
- 2) To request that consideration is given to any additional communications that can be released to celebrate the installation of the Savills Garden (exhibited at the Chelsea Flower Show) at Meadow View Children's Home.

9. Update on the Independent Review of Children's Social Care

Amanda Collinson, Service Director for Care, Help and Protection, provided an update on the Government's response to the Independent Review of Children's Social Care (IRCSS). The following points were discussed:

- a) The Department for Education published the 'Children's social care: stable homes, built on love' strategy on 2 February 2023, with a focus on six key 'pillars'. An accompanying consultation was also launched and the Government's response to this is awaited. Currently, the Government is working to identify three local authorities to act as 'pathfinders' in respect of Pillar 1 ('Family Help provides the right support at the right time so that children can thrive with their families'), but these have not yet been announced.
- b) Locally, work is being carried out by the D2N2 Local Enterprise Partnership to deliver a recruitment and retention programme for foster carers across the whole D2N2 area. The programme is intended to establish strong support around individual foster carers and is being developed on the basis of the 'Mockingbird' system of sustainable foster care.
- c) Given the issues at the national level in recruiting people into social work, there will be some challenges in delivering Pillar 5 ('A valued, supported and highly-skilled social worker for every child who needs one'), so detailed consideration is being given to how social workers can be recruited and trained in-house, as well as being sourced from agencies where required.

Resolved (2023/023):

- 1) To note the update on the current position relating to the outcomes of the Independent Review of Children's Social Care and confirm that no additional actions were required in relation to the points raised.

10. Performance of Adoption Services 2023

Amanda Collinson, Service Director for Care, Help and Protection, presented a report on the performance of the Council's Adoption Services during 2023. The following points were discussed:

- a) The number of children adopted within Nottinghamshire has dropped since 2015. In 2017, 64 children were adopted, whereas 33 were adopted in 2022. However, the number of children leaving care through Special Guardianship Orders and Kinship Services are now increasing.
- b) There is a target to confirm a match with an adoptive family within 121 days of a Placement Order being made, and this is often met. Nevertheless, the target can be challenging to meet in the case of children who may be older or have complex needs, or where siblings need to be placed together. In addition, there can be further legal challenges to Placement Orders at the point of the match, which can cause a delay whilst the Court hears the challenge. Matching targets are easier to achieve when there are more adopters available locally, and there have been successes in creating a pool of adopters in Nottinghamshire.
- c) Following the conclusion of care proceedings, the placement process for children should be completed within 26 weeks. Regionally, the process is taking around 32 weeks, currently. A great deal of work is underway to reduce backlogs in the system, and a fast-track scheme is in place. Placements can be delayed by the time required to achieve effective matches, and by the current availability of adopters. As a result, the initial work to find an effective placement is started ahead of the final hearing in the care proceedings, wherever possible.

Resolved (2023/024):

- 1) To note the report on the performance of the Council's Adoption Services and confirm that no additional actions were required in relation to its contents.

11. Provision, Achievements and Progress of the Children in Care Council 2022-23

Laurence Jones, Service Director for Commissioning and Resources, presented a report on the work of the Children and Young People's Participation team with the Children in Care Council (CiCC). The following points were discussed:

- a) The Children and Young People's Participation team is responsible for the planning and delivery of a range of activities outside of the school day for children in care and adopted young people. This helps to develop wider participation and enable young people to come together to have a voice about their life in care through the work of the CiCC. If desired, representative of the CiCC are welcome to attend the meetings to the Panel to escalate any feedback.

Resolved (2023/025):

- 1) To note the report on the work of the Children and Young People's Participation team with the Children in Care Council and confirm that no additional actions were required in relation to its contents.

12. Health of Children in Care

Katherine Browne, Senior Public Health and Commissioning Manager, presented a report on the health needs of children and young people who are in the Council's care. The following points were discussed:

- a) Most children and young people enter care because of abuse and neglect, and so may have additional healthcare needs that are greater because of the impact of their adverse experiences. The NHS Nottingham and Nottinghamshire Integrated Care Board (ICB) has the oversight for ensuring that appropriate healthcare provision is put in place for these children.
- b) The Council works in partnership with the ICB to produce an Initial Health Assessments (IHA), which must be completed within 20 working days of a child entering care. The achievement of the statutory timescales requires joint and cross-organisational processes between the health providers and the Council. However, there can be delays in the initial referral for a IHA being made, slowing down the process.
- c) Review Health Assessments (RHAs) then provide a holistic review of health and development, gathering information about emotional and physical health by engaging the child or young person in their own healthcare, to then provide information and advice to the child, their social worker and carers regarding their specific health needs.
- d) All assessments are undertaken by a medical professional on a face-to-face basis with the child. Good performance would constitute more than 90% of IHAs and RHAs being within the required timescales. However, currently, 65% of IHAs are completed with the statutory deadlines, with 72% of RHAs being completed to time.
- e) The ICB is committed to working with the Council and local providers to drive improvement, and will be reporting back regularly on progress, including to the Chief Nurse. Recovery workshops have taken place to consider how the assessment process can be developed, how collaboration can be improved, how barriers to access can be reduced, and how the right processing capacity and resilience can be ensured. Council officers have also met with colleagues from Derbyshire County Council to discuss the delivery of improvement through ensuring that the right processes are in place, that referrals are made at the right time and that the right capacity is in place to manage them.

Resolved (2023/026):

- 1) To note the recovery work underway in relation to the completion of Initial Health Assessments and Review Health Assessments relating to the health needs of children and young people in care within the statutory timeframes.

13. Work Programme

Laurence Jones, Service Director for Commissioning and Resources, presented the Corporate Parenting Panel's current Work Programme. The following points were discussed:

- a) The development of a new Sufficiency Strategy for children in care will begin next year.
- b) Feedback from the Nottinghamshire District and Borough Councils has been sought on the approach that they take to their corporate parenting functions, and it is hoped that an appropriate representative will be able to attend the October meeting of the Panel to discuss this topic.

Resolved (2023/027):

- 1) To note the Panel's Work Programme.

There being no further business, the Chair closed the meeting at 3:06pm.

Chair:

17 October 2023**Agenda Item:7****REPORT OF THE SERVICE DIRECTOR, COMMISSIONING AND RESOURCES****UPDATE ON NOTTINGHAMSHIRE CHILDREN'S RESIDENTIAL HOMES AND
SECURE ACCOMODATION SERVICE****Purpose of the Report**

1. The report provides an update on Nottinghamshire children's residential homes.

Information

2. There are five internal children's residential homes in Nottinghamshire comprising two providing for children with disability and three mainstream homes. Nottinghamshire also has a secure accommodation service, which houses 20 young people who are placed on remand or on welfare grounds.
3. The current children's disability homes are Caudwell House and The Big House, although there are plans agreed to convert West View to become a specialist disability home in the future.

The Big House

4. The Big House is a short break home in the village of Edwinstowe. At present the home provides overnight short breaks for 23 children. Each child has a bespoke package of care ranging from 24 overnights to 156 overnights a year. Allocation is dependent on need and is subject to change dependent on the changing needs of the children.
5. Any child who comes to The Big House will have a significant intellectual disability. They may also display risk behaviours when distressed or have an unmet need. They may also have moderate physical disabilities and sensory and medical needs. Children must be of school age, attend their own school and can be up to 18 years of age. Due to reaching the age of 18, some children leave this year, 2023. At present, the home also provides short breaks for 3 children who are out of county children. A package of overnight care for 3 other children from Derbyshire and 1 child from Nottingham City have recently been agreed. These are still in the planning stages and introductory visits have been provisionally arranged.

6. The last Ofsted inspection was October 2022 when the home received a rating of good. A Regulation 44 visitor visits the home every month and the feedback in the reports have shown that The Big House is going from strength to strength regarding the care it provides. The atmosphere around the home is one of warmth and care with a proactive staff team working to provide a high quality of care for the children.
7. The children have just returned to school following the summer holidays. During this time, they got to experience a varied number of activities, including seaside trips, boat trips, Drayton Manor Park, trampolining, and soft play – to name a few. Swimming continues to be very popular with the children and a private pool is hired out so the children can enjoy this without the noise and bustle of a general pool.
8. There has been a limited number of incidents through the summer holidays. Due to the level of disabilities the children have, they find school holidays difficult due to being out of a routine. There were only 5 recorded incidents through August, which is positive and shows the relationships that the staff have developed with the children. It also shows that the staff team know the children well and can plan for their stays in a proactive way. The staff are excellent at encouraging the children to go out of their comfort zone and do different things. The staff are proactive at planning activities and approach them with positivity.
9. The home has had staff leave and some staff have been recruited. An interview took place for a residential care post recently and the candidate was successful. A new residential social care worker also started recently. The home is currently advertising a further 2 residential social care worker posts. Given that there are some staff from Minster View based at The Big House the home is fully staffed.

Caudwell House

10. Caudwell House (Southwell) is registered as a 12 bedded home, with 4 resident beds and 8 short break beds, although to provide the necessary and safe 1 to 1 care the children at Caudwell need, the current staff team can only provide a service for a maximum of 9 children at any one time. It provides residential care and short breaks for children with physical disabilities and associated learning difficulties and health care needs.
11. Caudwell House is rated as Outstanding by Ofsted. The Regulation 44 reports are always very positive highlighting the excellent service provided for children and young people. They always commend the staff for their dedication to the children and for their creativity and imagination and the managers for their leadership and determination to offer the best care possible.
12. There are currently 4 resident children, one of whom is due to move to an adult placement at the end of October. There is a meeting later this week to look at best interests as despite the efforts of all professionals their mother is not cooperating fully with the process, which may result in a court hearing to ensure the young person's needs are met. A full transition plan will be supported by Caudwell.
13. Another resident will be 18 in March 2024, and the remaining 2 children are from Rutland and Derby. One of the residents has leukaemia and is currently on a maintenance plan which entails Caudwell working very closely with health professionals and the transitions

team to ensure any move to adult care is managed sensitively. Future placements will have to have the knowledge and skills to continue to support this young person's needs.

14. The 2 out of county children have settled in well and are making fabulous progress. Two of the resident children have been on holiday and all the children have been on many trips over the summer including trips to hydro swimming, farms, the seaside and the circus, theme parks, animal parks, aquariums, ice skating and bowling. They have also enjoyed an array of in-house activities and made use of the new sensory garden which has been developed in addition to the other sensory environments within Caudwell House. The children have been part of the choosing and planning of equipment for this area. Caudwell is already planning a holiday for the 2 new children for next year and some short breaks for the young person with leukaemia.
15. The short breaks service offers accommodation for a maximum of five children, which allows the home to provide the 1 to 1 support needed to care for the children safely, considering the support they need with moving and handling and medical needs. All staff undertake moving and handling and health training to support the children's needs which includes peg feeding, medication, yankur suctioning, anaphylaxis, managing epilepsy and the use of VNS, giving oxygen in addition to child specific training such as deep suctioning, catheter care and giving injections. All staff must be assessed as competent with each procedure three times by health professionals before they are able to perform the tasks.
16. Maintenance work on the grounds has nearly been completed with the removal of the sensory walkway and sensory garden. It has been agreed that a walkway for wheelchairs will be put into the new sensory garden (land acquired from Minster View) This work is expected to start in September 2023, following funding being agreed. Caudwell has purchased some new sensory equipment and replenished equipment that was broken or worn.
17. Although there are still challenges to recruitment, with the home is still trying to recruit 2 Residential Care Workers, a Residential Social Care Worker and a part time Occupational Therapist. The home has a settled staff team committed to making the children's lives as varied as possible whilst having fun and new experiences, enabling them to reach their full potential.

Mainstream Homes

Lyndene

18. The home is at full capacity accommodating 3 young people, 2 males and a female. The staff team remain committed to the home. There is currently one vacancy in the home for a Residential Social Care Worker. Several staff from Lyndene are currently supporting Oakhurst due to staffing shortages. Both homes are very proactive in supporting each other to ensure that all shifts are fully covered and all children receive a good standard of care.
19. Education plans are in place for each child. All children are in full-time education. Two children go to mainstream school. One child requires support in school and therefore attends an alternative provision that is linked to the school. One child has completed their GCSEs achieving levels 5 and 6 this has secured them a place at Nottingham Hub College attending childcare level 3; their aspirations are to attend university to become a primary

school teacher. The staff team link incentives to education and celebrate all achievements no matter how big or small. Staff work with children to complete homework and attend Personal Education Plan meetings. All staff support children in school to manage behaviours and emotional issues when they arise.

20. One child is working on independence, this consists of a weekly budget to plan their menu shop and cook their meals. Getting children ready for post 18 involves using public transport and working through their independence file and assisting them with problem solving.
21. All children are kept busy and stimulated. The children go to the gym, swimming, ice skating, walks, local parks, cinema, scooter parks and trampolining. The children have visited theme parks and had day trips to the seaside as well as attending the Mill for body boarding, canoeing, and climbing completing the leap of faith. This year the children have been on two holidays including Whitby in April and Cleethorpes in August. The children have taken part in Edwinstowe in Bloom and painting bikes for the Tour of Britain.
22. Children have weekly activity planners which provides structure and guidance for each child to know what activities they are doing daily. Providing nurture and reassurance for children is extremely important and this is embedded in all children's plans to support children to feel valued, safe and to build positive relationships which supports staff to manage behaviours. Staff plan events in advance with children such as birthdays. The home has a Macmillan coffee morning in September, a 'come dine with me' as well as a Halloween party in October. The children all get involved decorating the home with banners and balloons and cooking, baking and making and sending out invitations to family and friends. The children have all been involved in decorating the home, learning new skills such as painting and wallpapering.
23. The home had one missing episode this year. Staff and managers work closely with children to support children to understand risk and encourage positive choices. Staff complete keywork sessions with children daily. Monthly catch-up meetings are planned. Taking children outside the home and listening to their wishes and feelings is also key to ensure that children feel valued and respected.
24. The home continues to work with the reg 44 inspector each month and the reports remain positive. The most recent report concludes:

'Advice is sought from CAMHS to assist with meeting the needs of the children. Strengths include keeping the children active and happy during the summer holiday with a comprehensive activity planner including a summer holiday, helping the children cope with family relationships, preparation for independence including budgeting, cooking, using public transport and decorating. Staff continue to work with other services such as education providers, the police, health services and CAMHS. Managers continue to provide leadership, out of hours support, support on shift, back staff up and reinforce staff messages. The home is well managed, adequately staffed and well led by the management team.'

Oakhurst

25. Oakhurst is a four bedded home that currently has three resident children. The home provides a range of care for children with emotional and behavioural difficulties with or without moderate learning disabilities.
26. Two children currently attend full-time education, one of the children is on target to achieve their predicted GCSE grades. The second child continues to attend Alternative Provision three days a week accessing a learning schedule bespoke to their needs, including support from therapeutic and pastoral support workers. In the forthcoming weeks it is anticipated that the young person will be attending education full-time. The home's newest resident is not in education and full discussions are being held with the head teachers and the SEND team to identify a bespoke education provision for them.
27. The home continues to encourage children to participate in hobbies and leisure activities that will help their physical and emotional wellbeing. The home has an emphasis on health and fitness activities and all the children attend the gym twice a week with a staff member. A range of activities that are physical are used to negate the children's fixation with using electronic devices. Menus that reflect tasty and healthy meals are now fully embedded in the home.
28. The children have enjoyed a varied, exciting and fun summer. They attended a holiday to Hartlepool visited Harry Potter World as well as swimming, trampolining, football camp, boxing, youth club, gym, Trentham Monkey Forest and Twycross Zoo.
29. There have been no breaches of safeguarding. Three incidents of children leaving the home without consent have occurred. On each occasion staff have acted quickly to safeguard and ensure that the child returned home safely. Oversight of such incidents have ensured robust challenge to practice has taken place when required. Lessons learned and reflective practice also assist to improve practice moving forward.
30. Recent changes have been made and two members of staff from Lyndene have joined Oakhurst to drive improvements and good practice within the home. Two new staff members have joined the team which has enabled the home to take another child and has alleviated the pressures of workloads, improved morale and helped the team to get back to their peak capabilities.
31. The Regulation 44 visit held in August concluded that-

'Mentoring, guidance in team meetings and reflective practice discussions are tackling practices that are percolating to the surface. My observations during the visit, assured me that the home is revisiting conversations with staff about care priorities and shift leading responsibilities. The records whilst a little disjointed in places are a step up from my last visit and I can see some triangulation of team discussions being translated into actions agreed. I am delighted to see timely debriefs and key work sessions that are attempts to help LM make sense of his current world. The plethora of activities for the summer holiday are impressive also. It is good to see staff have taken on board manager advice to give praise for the small stuff as this is really showing effect in LM swearing less and having fewer outbursts.'

32. The home continues to anticipate the imminent arrival of Ofsted.

Clayfields Secure Children's Home

33. Clayfields Secure Children's Home is a national resource providing Secure Accommodation for up to 20 vulnerable young people between 10 and 18 years of age. Within the service, a total of twelve beds are available for purchase by the Ministry of Justice for children and young people on remand or sentenced to custody and eight for local authorities under Section 25 of the Children Act 1989, for example, where children frequently abscond from care, are at risk of child sexual exploitation (CSE) or are involved in child criminal exploitation (CCE) e.g., gang activity. Clayfields House also accommodates young people from the police under the Police and Criminal Evidence Act (PACE) 1984 legislation for young people who are deemed vulnerable.
34. Clayfields House had an inspection on 18 - 20 July, whilst the feedback was incredibly positive the outcome of the full inspection was a negative judgement of Inadequate, which primarily centred around three restraints. The County Council has formally challenged this judgement, but Ofsted has maintained their assumption that the actions of staff had an impact on the children, even though this related to one complex and challenging young person. Having had an independent 'subject expert', the service has continued to challenge this view and will be writing to each local authority where they have a young person residing at Clayfields, so there is transparency that their child is being well looked after and the service continues to safeguard their welfare. That said children and young people continue to be well looked after and this was demonstrated when Ofsted revisited on 6 September and were happy with the changes that have been put in place but were unwilling to review their previous decision. There is a comprehensive Ofsted action plan and an overarching Governance Service Development Plan to support the long-term developments. Ofsted will be revisiting within the next few months to re-inspect limited areas around 'help and protection', 'overall experiences and progress of children and young people' and 'effectiveness of leaders and managers'. Education and Health areas will not be reinspected, as these areas were considered Good but were negatively impacted by the Ofsted judgement around restraints.
35. The monthly Regulation 44 visits continue by an independent person and provides a healthy challenge to the service. The visitor summarised their visit in August 2023 as follows:

The leadership of teams at CFS, whilst stretched and covering gaps in SLT, is working harmoniously, and are having a positive impact on the culture of the home.

The morning coordination meeting was a great example of this with the chair allowing some banter but refocusing the task in hand. I saw managers affirming child centred actions, reminders to get children's views and strong safeguarding thinking and actions.

Information and support is very evident, interpersonal communication is much better and staff are feeling listened to. Whilst some challenges continue, I have a sense that staff with a renewed feeling of being valued and heard can dig deep and carry on.

The care teams observed this visit were reasonably attuned to the children present. The children themselves had enjoyable activities to look forward to and felt listened to. Silly behaviours were checked by staff as I would expect.

Risk behaviours are responded to quickly and whilst I feel there is a self-consciousness about being involved in a restraint, that is not inhibiting interventions but perhaps raising helpful reflection and questioning which has to be healthy in the long run.

I had easy access to information requested as well as sight of confidential documents and was well supported throughout the visit. I appreciate that this is a busy time and I place yet another demand on people who are already stretched with the business at hand. I appreciate the support and access thank you.

I really like the feedback and the introduction of the new electronic recording of incidents which in time staff will be able to populate more quickly and evidence be more legible and professional, the system also more efficiently joining up with other data collection.

Partnerships internally and externally was the resounding picture of strength taken from this visit.

36. There is a distinct feeling of change and positive transformation in Clayfields; the Senior Leadership Team seems to be working well together, the building is looking positively different, and young people are able to contribute to the changes that are being made.
37. Behind the scenes the independent investigation into performance continues and should reach a conclusion in early October and will hopefully fully conclude by the end of November.
38. Whilst the service continues to have vacancies across different departments e.g., care, education, intervention, support services and health, every effort is being made to advertise and appoint to these positions on a permanent basis. The service is exploring all possible avenues to recruit and retain staff including market factor supplement payments or the return of the secure allowance for frontline staff, which is an exercise the governance board is taking forward. This is alongside the national piece of work being undertaken by the Secure Accommodation Network (SAN), which provides support, guidance and advice to Secure Children's Homes in order that they can grow and develop a range of trauma aware and psychologically informed integrated care, health and educational services and interventions. Work is underway with human resources to address this and information is currently being gathered on national pay and conditions within secure accommodation, which is a strategic piece of work being undertaken by SAN. This piece of work will significantly benefit staff in secure accommodation and help and support to retain staff, as well as value them. It is acknowledged that working in these areas is significantly different and more challenging than mainstream residential or children with disability services.
39. As of 31 August 2023, Clayfields has been operating on 58.06% occupancy level, with an overall bed night loss of 194 bed nights, however, as a trading occupancy, this continues to be positive, estimated at 93%.
40. The vacancy figures relating to the Youth Custody Service beds continues to be low, and the welfare bed referrals have been constant and consistent and remain high with over 70

'live' referrals. However, whilst the adult estate numbers are significantly increasing, youth custody figures remain stable across the youth estate due to more community disposal orders, where young people are serving their sentences on license in the community. However, early indications across youth custody is this is likely to change over the coming months.

41. The service had been successful in securing Department for Education (DfE) Capital Building Programme funding, as previously reported to the Panel in May 2023; the initial bid was £2.85 million of capital and an additional £403,597 is now required to refurbish Loxley and Sherwood house units, including their external leisure activities/ yard. The total capacity at Clayfields will remain at 20 beds but the overall centre facilities will be re-aligned across the centre and will benefit all children and staff working at Clayfields. Alongside this funding bid, funding has already been authorised to update the personal protection system at an increased cost of £418,000 (up from £340,000).

Developments

42. A property bought last year has been leased to the Council's largest provider of children's homes. Following refurbishment, it will seek Ofsted registration with a target to open as a two-bed home in early autumn. This will provide much needed capacity to provide more Nottinghamshire children with a good quality home environment in the County, enabling them to maintain links with their communities and support networks. Plans are also advancing for the refurbishment of some of the Council's existing children's homes.
43. They will be supported in their aim to provide homes for some of the children with the most complex needs by the appointment of a Specialist Social Worker. This new role is currently being recruited to. The postholder will offer direct help to children who have experienced trauma and ensure staff providing care are trained to help those children thrive.
44. Clayfields have been given permission by the DfE to undertake an initial feasibility study, which is part of the '*Secure Children's Homes Estate Review – December 2022*', which has been led by Atkins (DfE Architects). Work has been identified to increase the administration block, especially with the increased staffing and facilities required for the future. The current facilities have limited space for the number of staff and could do with improving. The Clayfields Senior Leadership Team continues to bid for government capital grant, which currently will be around £20,000 to £30,000 for the initial feasibility study. Work is underway to undertake this piece of work, with the support of colleagues in the Council's Property Commissioning team and Arc Partnership.

Other Options Considered

45. To not bring this report to the Panel: this option is discounted because this report provides information that forms an important part of the Panel's remit in assisting the Council in fulfilling its legal corporate parenting duties and acting as an effective corporate parent.

Reason/s for Recommendation/s

46. The report provides an opportunity for the Corporate Parenting Panel to consider any further actions arising from the information contained within the report

Statutory and Policy Implications

47. This report has been compiled after consideration of implications in respect of crime and disorder, data protection and information governance finance, human resources, human rights, the NHS Constitution (public health services), the public sector equality duty, safeguarding of children and adults at risk, service users, smarter working, sustainability, and the environment and where such implications are material they are described below. Appropriate consultation has been undertaken and advice sought on these issues as required.

Financial Implications

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

RECOMMENDATION/S

- 1) That the Corporate Parenting Panel considers whether there are any actions it requires in relation to the information contained in the report.

Laurence Jones
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Constitutional Comments (SF 19/09/23)

49. The recommendation in this report falls within the remit of the Corporate Parenting Panel being 'to assist the Council in fulfilling its legal corporate parenting duties to ensure the Council and partner agencies act as effective corporate parents' (Constitution Section 7 Part 2 Terms of Reference).

Financial Comments (CS 20/09/23)

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

Background Papers and Published Documents

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

None.

Electoral Division(s) and Member(s) Affected

All.

CF0111

17 October 2023**Agenda Item:8****REPORT OF THE SERVICE DIRECTOR, COMMISSIONING AND RESOURCES****INSPECTION GRADINGS OF 'EXCLUSIVE USE' CHILDREN'S RESIDENTIAL
HOMES – SEPTEMBER 2023****Purpose of the Report**

1. The purpose of this report is to provide the Panel with an update on the current performance of homes that are operated by Homes2Inspire for the exclusive use of Nottinghamshire children in care.

Information

2. The vast majority of children's residential home placements are commissioned from the external market, i.e. in homes operated and managed by companies from the private and voluntary sector. Most providers are privately owned companies though there are some providers that are linked to the voluntary sector in some way. The largest of these voluntary sector providers is Homes2Inspire (H2I) which is part of the national charity Shaw Trust and whose Chief Executive Officer is a former child in care.
3. The Council has a long and well-established partnership with H2I that is underpinned by a Block Contract which commenced in 2015 and took the form of the Council 'block booking' and agreeing to pay for 12 beds across the H2I residential home estate. This worked very successfully for both parties and a more expansive partnership-based arrangement has evolved over the past eight years, always underpinned by the provisions within the Block Contract for the care of Nottinghamshire children who live at homes operated and managed by H2I.
4. As well as increasing the number of young people living in homes operated by H2I, there have been two significant expansions in the scope of the partnership during the past eight years. The first was the development of 'exclusive use' homes, i.e. locally-based homes owned and operated by H2I for the exclusive use of Nottinghamshire children in care. The second followed on from the Council's decision in 2020 to expand its own children's residential home estate and led to the development of 'hybrid homes' whereby the property is owned by the Council but the home is operated by H2I via the same Block Contract for the care provision, together with an appropriate lease that allows it to set up, operate, manage and maintain the building as a children's residential home on behalf of the Council. The Council has latterly opened two new 'hybrid homes' in conjunction with H2I and has acquired a third property that is currently being prepared for use as a children's home.

5. As a consequence of the above developments, H2I currently owns and/or operates more children's homes in the local area, and accommodates more children in care, than the Council itself does at the homes that it wholly owns and operates. The Council/H2I partnership encompasses 11 homes of varying size, location and capacity that can collectively accommodate up to 33 Nottinghamshire children in care.
6. It is this set of homes and their current level of performance, as judged by their most recent Ofsted inspection outcome, that is the focus of this report. The table below provides a list of these homes, identifying which party owns which property and the potential capacity of each, i.e. the maximum number of children for which each home is registered with Ofsted.

Name	Location	Max beds
Meadow View House	Worksop	5
Layton House	Mansfield	5
Holly House	Chesterfield	5
Evans House	West Bridgford	3
Braidley House	Derby	3
Stirling House	Newark	2
Newbury House	Newark	2
Farrimond House	Worksop	2
Sudbury House *	Huthwaite	2
School House *	Sutton-in-Ashfield	2
<i>Virtual beds</i>	Nottingham / various	2
TOTAL		33

* = property owned by the Council

7. The table below provides the outcome and a very brief summary from Ofsted's most recent inspection visit to each of the homes.

Home	Ofsted rating:	Inspection Summary
Meadow View House	Good	Children make good progress in crucial areas of their lives. Staff understand children's needs from when they first move to the home. Managers and staff celebrate the children's progress and achievements, no matter what these may be. Memories are captured through memory books that children take with them when they leave the home. This supports them to feel cared for and loved.
Layton House	Good	There have been significant and positive developments since the last inspection and monitoring visit. Staff support children to see their families. The manager and staff ensure regular communication between them and children's families in order to update them regularly about their child's progress. Children are provided with continued support from staff, even when they leave the home in an unplanned way. A 'staying close' package is provided, and staff ensure that children experience a positive goodbye from staff, including a farewell gift and a meal out. This helps children feel cared for.

Holly House	Requires Improvement	This home is not yet good because the progress and experiences of children are variable. Some children have had positive experiences; others have experienced difficult relationships with their fellow residents, which has resulted in them being placed at risk of harm. In response to the challenges, the acting manager took decisive action. Some children have very recently moved on from the home, due to the risk children were posing to each other. Since that time, the children who continue to live in the home have reported positively about enjoyable activities and trips they have been on. Additionally, they report improved relationships with staff.
Evans House	Outstanding	Children benefit from extremely good relationships with staff who are dedicated and provide exceptional care. Children thrive and make significant progress from their starting points when moving to the home. Children say that they feel safe and secure and can discuss their fears and anxieties with staff freely. Children are well cared for and loved by staff, who are sensitive to their needs, these secure relationships help children to regulate their emotions. Children do not go missing from care and there is no need for behavioural sanctions.
Braidley House	Requires Improvement	Children are generally happy and have positive relationships with staff. The atmosphere in the home is relaxed, warm and friendly. One child said, 'The staff are lovely. They are always there if I need to speak to them.' Children make small but significant steps towards progress in the 12 weeks they are at the home. However, their progress can sometimes fluctuate. Staff persevere in building very positive relationships and providing support to children.
Stirling House	Outstanding	The quality of individualised care and support provided to the children by the manager and staff is outstanding. Children live in a warm, loving home, with a strong family feel. Children feel safe and secure in expressing their views, fears and anxieties. With the support and guidance of staff, children have a solid foundation from which they begin to manage their behaviours and can explore their sense of identity. Children in this home develop emotionally and go on to make excellent progress because of the care they receive.
Newbury House	Good	The manager and the staff team's commitment and dedication to children mean that children experience stability and security. For some, this is the first time they have experienced these in their lives. Because of the high levels of encouragement and support provided by the staff team, children engage in a range of enriching and enjoyable activities. Praise and celebration of achievements help children to feel good about themselves. This is resulting in improved levels of confidence and self-esteem.
Farrimond House	Outstanding	The quality of care and support provided to the children by the manager and staff is outstanding. Children live in a warm, loving

		home with a strong family feel. Staff make every effort to ensure that each child feels comfortable, showing great warmth and affection toward the children. Children build trusting and secure relationships with staff and have developed a sense of permanence and belonging. Staff support children to work to their goals, developing their independence and engaging in new experiences. Children are supported to feel and be safe. Multi-agency working is excellent which ensures that strategies to reduce risk are highly effective.
Sudbury House	Good	There was one child in the home at the time of this inspection. Staff have clear and shared objectives to support the child to achieve her full potential. They know the child very well, have established positive relationships with her, and have a genuine sense of commitment and loyalty towards her. She is encouraged to develop her independence skills and has learned and developed new skills which have enhanced her confidence and self-esteem. The environment is that of a family home. This supports the progress and experience of the child.
School House	Good	There was one child in this home at the time of this inspection, who is making very good progress from their starting point, sees the house as their home and has developed a sense of belonging. The child has some very good relationships with staff and the home is a happy place. There is a comprehensive risk management plan in place which includes behaviour management strategies. The child feels safe in this home.

Other Options Considered

8. To not update the Panel on the current inspection activity in relation to the portfolio of children's homes: this option is rejected as knowledge of inspection activity forms an important part of the Panel's remit in assisting the Council in fulfilling its legal corporate parenting duties and acting as an effective corporate parent.

Reason/s for Recommendation/s

9. The report provides an opportunity for the Corporate Parenting Panel to consider any further actions arising from the information contained within the report.

Statutory and Policy Implications

10. This report has been compiled after consideration of implications in respect of crime and disorder, data protection and information governance finance, human resources, human rights, the NHS Constitution (public health services), the public sector equality duty, safeguarding of children and adults at risk, service users, smarter working, sustainability and the environment and where such implications are material they are described below. Appropriate consultation has been undertaken and advice sought on these issues as required.

Financial Implications

11. There are no direct financial implications arising from this report.

RECOMMENDATION/S

- 1) That the Panel notes the content of this report regarding the current performance of homes that are operated by Homes2Inspire for the exclusive use of Nottinghamshire children in care and considers whether there are any further actions it requires.

Laurence Jones

Service Director, Commissioning and Resources

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Constitutional Comments (SF 13/09/23)

12. The recommendation in this report falls within the remit of the Corporate Parenting Panel being 'to assist the Council in fulfilling its legal corporate parenting duties to ensure the Council and partner agencies act as effective corporate parents' (Constitution Section 7 Part 2 Terms of Reference).

Financial Comments (CDS 14/09/23)

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

Background Papers and Published Documents

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

None.

Electoral Division(s) and Member(s) Affected

All.

CF0107

17 October 2023**Agenda Item:10****REPORT OF THE SERVICE DIRECTOR, COMMISSIONING AND
RESOURCES****ANNUAL REPORT OF THE INDEPENDENT REVIEWING OFFICER (IRO)
SERVICE: APRIL 2022 – MARCH 2023****Purpose of the Report**

1. The report provides an update on the performance and activities of the Independent Reviewing Officer service from 1 April 2022 to 31 March 2023.

Information

2. The Independent Review Officer (IRO) service is set within the framework of the updated IRO Handbook, linked to revised Care Planning Regulations and Guidance which were introduced in April 2011. The responsibility of the IRO has changed from the management of the Review process to a wider overview of the case including regular monitoring and follow-up between Reviews. The IRO has a key role in relation to the improvement of care planning for Looked After Children and for challenging drift and delay. The IRO's role is to ensure that Nottinghamshire County Council acts as a responsible corporate parent and provides good standards of care and services to the children they care for.
3. The annual report, attached as **Appendix 1**, contains information in respect of the vision of the service and a reflection on the Council's achievements and the impact of the progress. It also considers the challenges and commitments for 2022/23. Additional to this report, attached as **Appendix 2**, is the child friendly report for April 2022 - March 2023 which outlines some information from the annual report to share with children and young people.

Other Options Considered

4. To not bring this report to the Panel: this option is discounted because this report provides information that forms an important part of the Panel's remit in assisting the Council in fulfilling its legal corporate parenting duties and acting as an effective corporate parent.

Reason/s for Recommendation/s

5. The report provides an opportunity for the Panel to consider any further actions arising from the information contained within the report.

Statutory and Policy Implications

6. This report has been compiled after consideration of implications in respect of crime and disorder, data protection and information governance finance, human resources, human rights, the NHS Constitution (public health services), the public sector equality duty, safeguarding of children and adults at risk, service users, smarter working, sustainability and the environment and where such implications are material they are described below. Appropriate consultation has been undertaken and advice sought on these issues as required.

Financial Implications

7. There are no financial implications arising from the report.

RECOMMENDATION/S

- 1) That the Corporate Parenting Panel considers whether there is any feedback that it wishes to give and any actions that it recommends in relation to the information contained in the report.

Laurence Jones
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Constitutional Comments (SF 11/09/23)

8. This report falls within the remit of the Corporate Parenting Panel being 'to assist the Council in fulfilling its legal corporate parenting duties to ensure the Council and partner agencies act as effective corporate parents' (Constitution Section 7 Part 2 Terms of Reference).

Financial Comments (CDS 11/09/23)

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

Background Papers and Published Documents

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

None.

Electoral Division(s) and Member(s) Affected

All.

CF0109



From Strength to Strength

NOTTINGHAMSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL
Annual Report of Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO) Service
April 2022 – March 2023

Purpose of the Report

1. This is an annual report written for the Safeguarding Assurance and Information Group and the lead member for Children and Young People. It provides an outline of the progress and challenges of the work being undertaken by the Local Authority and relevant partner organisations regarding children being looked after in Nottinghamshire after during the last year (April 2022-March 2023) and the commitments for the following 12 months.

2. I am a Service Manager with responsibility for the Independent Chair Service. The Independent Chair Service is part of the Strategic Safeguarding and Independent Review Service, it is positioned in the Commissioning and Resources Division to provide a level of independence from the social work teams who sit within the Children in need of Help, Care and Protection Division. The Independent Chair Service is responsible for quality assuring practice in relation to children in public care and children subject to child protection and safeguarding plans. It ensures that appropriate care and safeguarding plans are in place for these children and promotes effective interagency working. There are two groups of staff within the Independent Chair Service and this report will focus on the Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO). A separate report is available in respect of the Child Protection Coordinator part of the service.

3. The responsibility of the IRO is the management of the review process to a wider overview of the case including regular monitoring and follow-up between reviews. The IRO ensures the child's current wishes and feelings are given full consideration and where necessary challenges where the child's care plan has not been acted upon or progressed in a timely way. They are responsible for chairing care plan reviews at regular statutory intervals. It is not the responsibility of the IRO to manage the case, supervise the social worker or devise the care plan. However, it is important for the IRO to develop a consistent relationship with the child. The IRO's role in essence is to ensure that Nottinghamshire County Council acts as a responsible corporate parent on an individual basis and provides good standards of care and services to the children they care for.

Our vision

The Independent Chair Service promotes best outcomes for children through support, review, and challenge. We will deliver this commitment by providing a strength based Independent Chair Service that will promote best outcomes for

children and young people by working with them, their families, carers, and professionals to ensure they are kept safe and achieve their potential.

How we work and what we do

3. Since 2004 all Local Authorities have been required to appoint Independent Reviewing Officers under S118 of the Adoption Act 2002, to protect children's interests throughout the care planning process.

4. The Independent Reviewing Officers (IRO) service is set within the framework of the updated IRO Handbook, 2010 linked to the revised Care Planning Regulations and Guidance which were introduced in April 2011 (amended 2015).

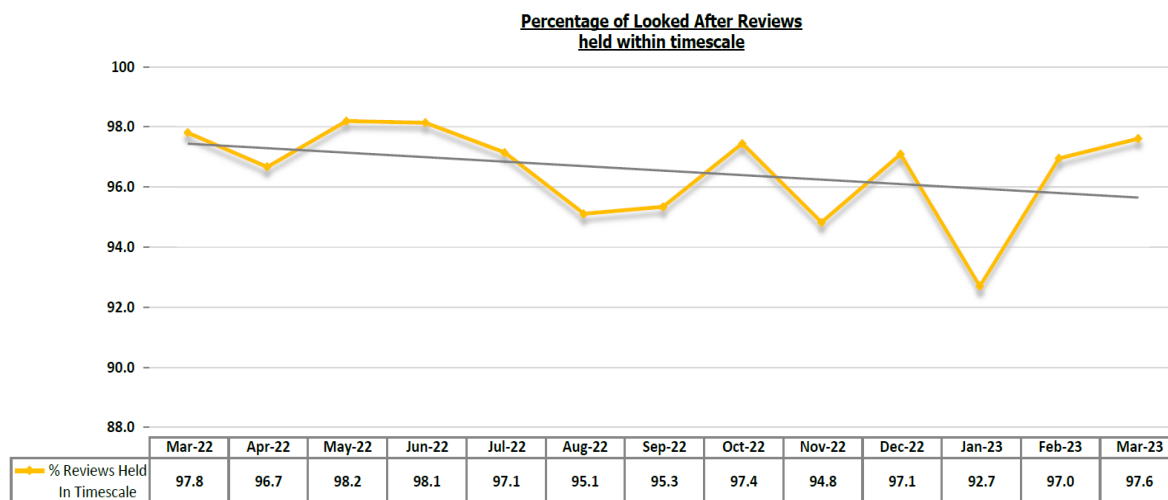
5. The IRO's role in essence is to ensure that Nottinghamshire County Council on an individual child basis acts as a responsible corporate parent and provides good standards of care and services to the children they care for.

6. Lead roles are shared out between the IROs to cover the areas of Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE), Child Criminal Exploitation (CCE), and Harmful Sexual Behaviour (HSB). The IROs meet with respective Child Protection Coordinators (CPCs) for these areas so consistency is created between the two in ensuring local procedures and policy are being followed and providing advice to social work teams where needed.

7. IROs provide quality assurance on social work practice. Feedback is provided directly to the team manager after each individual review. On a quarterly basis a summary report is provided to children's services managers which identifies key themes and analysis of the data collated. The Service Managers for the social work teams and the independent chair service work together to develop action plans from this information to improve practice. IROs attend social work team meetings throughout the year to discuss feedback (two way) directly with staff and share information about service updates. IROs provide feedback about social workers identifying areas of good practice and any positive comments made by a child, family or partners about work undertaken.

8. IROs have a role in presenting social care teams and external agencies with appropriate constructive challenge where required, to address issues if children are not being safeguarded effectively and/or there is drift or delay in progressing interventions/assessments to meet identified needs. Currently this is achieved through the established concerns resolution and escalation processes. In addition, all IROs have an auditing role and complete regular audits throughout the year in line with the Service Improvement Team requirements.

Children looked after during the past year



Over the past year 2,409 reviews were held and of these 96.5% were held within timescale which is within the current target of 90%.

Reflecting on our Achievements and the Impact of this Progress

Last year we identified the following as our key priorities:

9. To implement a quality assurance framework within the service including practice observations, regular peer audit of the chair's role, reflective group supervision and individual professional development.

The service has implemented a quality assurance framework which includes practice observations of chairs by managers and peer audits have also been undertaken.

The audit work identified a need to increase the visibility of the IROs footprint on a child's records and this is an area of practice we have been developing as a service.

Reflective group supervision sessions continue with chairs reflecting on the impact of their practice for children and young people they work with. This allows chairs to share their own experiences with new members of staff to develop skills and knowledge.

10. To improve the quality of the data and feedback provided to our social work colleagues with a focus on how this is used to improve practice and outcomes for children and families.

The service has continued to develop the report provided to social work teams and the quality of the action plans that focus on practice improvement. In the following twelve months we will focus on evidencing the impact of these action plans

11. To fully embed strength-based and restorative model of practice into our work with looked after children.

Together with the social work teams a group of IROs worked together to create a strengths-based agenda and this is now fully implemented for initial and review meetings. Feedback was sought from a group of young people and the Children in Care Council, and it was received well.

12. Actively support more children and people to access independent visitors and advocates.

This is spoken about in all reviews, but we need to have clear data around how many children access these services. This needs to continue to be a focus for the forthcoming year.

To embed practice where IROs speak to all children and young people at least once between reviews and two weeks prior to the review to ensure they are fully prepared and can participate.

13. To receive feedback from children/young people about their reviews.

IROs have continued to encourage young people at their reviews to access independent advocates and use the Mind of my Own app. This needs to go further and over the next 12 months a departmental feedback form will be created for children and young people to complete at different points of their social work journey.

We have engaged some children and young people for feedback when making changes to our practice such as the agendas for meetings.

14. To hold child focused reviews where the child is empowered to participate, and their voices are heard including child friendly agendas, reports, and minutes.

Face to face meetings for all initial reviews are taking place and then following a conversation with the child or young person arrangements are made for future reviews in line with their requests but with an understanding that if the review is virtual then the IRO will have seen the child or young person face to face.

Reviews are child focused on venues chosen by children and young people and them having a say about who they would like to attend. There are also many examples of young people being supported to chair their own reviews.

15. To embed the concerns resolution process within children's social care and our partners whilst offering high support and challenge to improve outcomes for children.

The concerns resolution process is embedded into practice which encourages high challenge conversations with the child at the centre between the social worker initially to resolve any concerns at stage one of the process.

Good news stories of children and young people IROs are responsible for

S- Young person had the therapy Cat, during covid they were anxious and hardly attended college and consequently had to repeat a year. The young person shared in their post 18 review that they had gained a distinction in their BTEC extended diploma in Creative Media Practice (Film and TV Production)

L-This young person had an amazing year. They got over an injury that left them in bed for months and has gone back to education. They have grown in confidence, they like to go out and try new things, including the leisure centre, going to the library, the youth club, going swimming, and they also been on adventures on trains, trams, and buses. They used an IPAD which has given them a voice.

J, we are very proud of you and the way you have adjusted and managed independent living, J is a very independent and has thrived since living semi-independently. They have had a lot of disruption since becoming a child in our care but has proved themselves since moving into a cluster home, applying for a part time job, changing their name, achieving highly in college exams. J has demonstrated that they have the necessary independence skills and is a very mature, responsible, organised young person. They manage their money well and even opened a savings account. J is a model tenant and is praised for how responsible, mature, and independent they are.

IROs continue to send emails to celebrate good practice noted from the work undertaken with looked after children with their social workers. Some of these have included the following comments.

I wanted to pass on positive feedback for Julie Dean – social worker for C, T and M. Julie is very organised and ensures her reports are written and shared well in advance of reviews and this is such a win for parents. Julie also owns the decisions and recommendations and ensures good progress matters for the children in between reviews. Julie Dean, Looked After Team

Parents of a child returned to their care under a Supervision Order said how supported they felt by the social worker who has helped them manage a very difficult time and felt she went over and above in her work and support of them which resulted in a very positive outcome for them and their daughter. (Clare Micklewhaite-court team)

SW for MR worked really hard to make sure she has listened to M's views about her rehabilitation home to live with her dad. The SW stayed focussed on the needs of M when her FC was challenging the plan for M to go home. (Charlotte Holdaway-Ashfield)

Grandparents caring for their granddaughter with a view for an SGO shared how supportive the social worker has been to them and thanked her for all her hard work. (Suela Hyka- court team)

I have been very impressed with the work undertaken by Cheryl Kidby. The children M/EB have now got prospective adopters. Their Father has tried so hard to care for them and loves them very much. He has not been able to pass assessments though due to his mental health and Cannabis use. He is absolutely devastated and Cheryl has worked so sensitively with this asking adopter if they will agree to once yearly face to face. (Cheryl Kidby Permanence team)

It was a pleasure to chair A's initial review today. Emily's social worker report was comprehensive and provided clear insight into A's journey and his current circumstance and needs. The report was strength based and there was clear evidence of a good working relationship between S and Emily. This was also evident during today's meeting, and the support Emily provided enabled and empowered S to participate throughout. It was lovely to hear the progress that S is making, and all evidence suggests that she is working with the local authority and in line with the safety plans and agreements in place. It is clear A is thriving in S's care within their current placement. It was a positive meeting and its clear how hard Emily has worked to support the family to progress this plan. (Emily Smith-CP Mansfield)

Just wanted to bring to your attention that JC has been great in relation to addressing some concerns around the R case. JC chaired a professional meeting last week and handled some difficult issues in a firm, but polite and sensitive manner. As a result of the meeting, the SSW's have spoken to the foster carers and clarified the LA's expectations with them. We had a great review meeting today and the care plan is progressing in a much better manner. From an IRO perspective, it was helpful to have a proactive team manager championing for better outcomes for children. (JC, CDS)

The report for OW was clear and produced well in advance of the meeting and case notes well maintained, which allowed me to prepare and discuss with parents last week. In doing so this meant the review flowed and I was able to be aware of the issues that mum was likely to present with.

Laurie's contribution throughout the review was child focused, the information presented professionally and lots of work has been done to promote O's safety and wellbeing. (Laurie Carter, Child Protection Team, Mansfield)

Training and Workforce Development

16. Independent Reviewing officers have a varied and extensive training offer: both through the County Council training offer and externally. IROs have identified lead

roles within the service and are encouraged to develop their skills and knowledge in the area chosen and share with the rest of the group.

17. They continue to offer support and guidance to frontline workers about their role, they attend team meetings to feedback examples of good practice will provide time to assist teams who may need extra advice about what is required from them when attending a review.

18. IROs attend seminars held regionally and supported by School Development Support Agency SDSA, which involves training sessions being held for IROs within the region and speakers on subjects delivering training. This allows IROs to a share experience with colleagues and to learn from each other. The seminars have been delivered 4 times a year and found to be beneficial.

19. An e-learning programme has been developed explaining the role of the IRO and what is required when attending a review for social workers and external partners.

Voice and experiences of children, young people, and their families

20. The voices of children and young people is a crucial part of the chairs role when preparing for the meeting, it is important the IRO speaks with the child/young person beforehand. In exercising their role, the IRO must ensure the child's current wishes and feelings have been established and considered where appropriate, whilst promoting their voice as part of the process.

	Q1		Q2		Q3		Q4	
PN6 - child does not attend but conveys their feelings to the review	252	45.7%	228	44.9%	297	49.4%	239	46.1%
PN3 - child attends and conveys their views non-verbally	1	0.2%	2	0.4%	0	0%	2	0.4%
PN7 - child does not attend nor conveys their view to the review	35	6.3%	23	4.5%	31	5.2%	29	5.6%
PN1 - child attend and speaks for themselves	225	40.6%	228	44.9%	242	40.3%	220	42.4%
PN5 - child does not attend but asks advocate to speak for them	23	4.2%	22	4.3%	20	3.3%	25	4.8%
PN0 - child under 4 at time of review	108		98		99		98	
29PN4 - child attends; does not speak for	4	0.7%	2	0.4%	0	0%	2	0.4%

themselves / convey their views								
PN2 - child attends and an advocate speaks for them	7	1.3%	2	0.4%	2	0.3%	1	0.2%
Total	655		606		669		617	

- From the figures over the past year, it shows the participation figures have shown a similar trend. Children and young people are consulted on how they want their reviews undertaken and many are showing a preference for them to be undertaken virtually.
- Of those who chose not to attend their review, they convey their views to the meeting through other means, with 5% not providing their views, these figures have varied slightly throughout the year but overall shows a positive picture in relation to the participation of children and young people when their reviews take place.

Evidence of Challenges and Impact.

21. The IRO handbook sets out that one of the key functions of the IRO is to resolve problems arising out of the care planning process. Where an IRO has significant concerns about practice or other issues affecting a child's care plan then the IRO can instigate a concern. In the first instance, the IRO will initiate a concern and seek to resolve the concerns with the social worker at stage one of the process. If this is not achievable, then the concern is raised at stage 2 with the team manager. In the situation where it is viewed the child is at risk of significant harm then this would be escalated immediately to the Children's Service Manager and ICS Service Manager. A record of this concern and outcome is placed on the child's file.

22. During this year 79 concerns were raised altogether by IROs under the concerns resolution process with social care practitioners and external partners. 40 were completed at stage 1 with the social worker. The other 39 were progressed to stage 2 with a few onto stage 3. Five of the concerns raised were with external agencies.

- Concerns within social care related to the care plan not being progressed and relevant documentation not being provided for the IRO to view.
- Concerns in relation to partner agencies focused on nonattendance, missing information, and some practice concerns.

23. Overall, the concerns raised were responded to in a timely manner and resolved to the IROs satisfaction

24. A Care Planning Support and Assurance Panel has been established that is chaired by the Group Manager with responsibility for the IROs. This provides an opportunity for social work teams and IROs to bring children to discuss their care plans where there might be particularly difficult issues or requests for support. This

adds a further layer of scrutiny to the care planning process that can be a supportive measure for IROs.

25. In situations where challenge to the Local Authority care plan may be particularly difficult and an agreement cannot be reached the IRO has access to independent legal advice.

Our Commitments for the Next 12 Months

26. We will embed a process where we routinely collect the views of children and young people about their reviews and their IROs that can be translated into data and can inform practice improvement and developments within the service.

27. We will seek to achieve consistent practice within the service including a focus on the IRO footprint on the child's file, visiting frequency, mid-way reviews and practice around face-to-face meetings.

28. We will work with the Service Improvement Team to ensure that learning from quality assurance and the concerns resolution process is evidenced in practice and that it contributes to the departmental practice improvement plan and objectives.

29. We will refine the outputs from reviews so that they are child focused and the IRO has more capacity to build relationships with social work teams, partner agencies and children and young people.

Izzy Martin
Service Manager
Strategic Safeguarding and Independent Review
19.07.23



**Independent
Reviewing Officer
Service Annual Report**

**A Summary Report for Children
and Young People**

April 2022 to March 2023

September 2023





Our vision for all Looked After Children and Young People

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

Your IRO (Independent Reviewing Officer) will ensure your protection and care plans will meet your individual needs which will make sure you have the best outcomes possible.

We are committed to you and will help you to achieve your best by focusing on your strengths and celebrating your achievements.

IRO's work creatively and praise the positive work undertaken with looked after children, which is very important to make sure children are safe, happy, healthy and are being supported to build a promising future.

The Voice of Nottinghamshire Children and Young People

The IRO service ensures the voice of Children and Young People are listened to and any issues they raise are talked about and the right action is taken for them.

Every effort is made to make sure the voice of Children and Young People is heard, some Children and Young People choose to speak with their IRO on their own, some come to their review and some ask an advocate to speak on their behalf.

This report talks about:





Children and Young People who are Looked After

- At the end of March 2023, there were 967 Children and Young People being looked after by the Local Authority.
- 43.2% of Children and Young People attended their reviews.
- 50.9% of Children and Young People did not attend their reviews but asked for their wishes and feelings to be shared at their review.
- 5.9% of Children and Young People did not attend their reviews but asked for an advocate to speak for them.
- IRO's continue to work to ensure all Children and Young Peoples' Care Plans are meeting their needs and changes to their Care Plans are made when needed.
- IROs make sure they ask Children and Young Peoples' wishes and feelings through talking to and visiting them, also through their social worker or carer, these tend to be young people who either do not want to be involved in their review or are happy to be told how their Care Plan is meeting their needs by their IRO's, or by their carers or their social workers afterwards.



Achievements of some Children and Young People

16 yr old who overcame illness, he was being very brave when undertaking treatment. He started to attend college and described as having an infectious laugh and being a caring young person. He also won the John Stollery award for his bravery.

17 yr old began his basic training for the army. Although he struggled initially, he persevered and is now enjoying the training.

This shows what a resilient and determined young person he is as this has been his long-term ambition.

17 yr old who adjusted well to living independently. He experienced a lot of challenges throughout his care journey. He applied for a part time job and achieved highly in his college exams. He was described as a model tenant.

Young person who got an injury that left them in bed for months. After returning to education, they grew in confidence and they try new things such as going to the library, youth club, swimming, adventure son trains. They have an IPAD which has given them a voice.



What's happened during this year?

The IRO's Chaired 2627 Children and Young Peoples' Looked After Child reviews by the end of March 2023.

IRO's continue to use technology when undertaking reviews, this has worked well for some Children and Young People who have told their IRO's that they felt more able to join their review, while others prefer to meet face to face in their reviews. Over this past year IROs are now chairing initial reviews face to face and are visiting children and young people when they can between their reviews.

IRO's continue to work to make sure that Children and Young People are encouraged and supported to participate in their review. All Children and Young People continue to be offered the opportunity to complete a Listen to Me consultation booklet or through other creative ways to include them in their Looked After Child review.

IROs continue to encourage children and young people to use the Mind of My Own app as a means of conveying their views.

Children and young people also are offered an advocate by the IRO at each review, this is someone independent of Social Worker and the IRO that you can speak to about any worries you may have.

Over this year IROs have changed the way looked after reviews have been conducted, they have changed the agenda to the meeting and now write a summary of the review to the

child and young person. Before this new approach was launched the proposed changes were taken to Children in Care Council who offered some suggestions but overall felt the new outline to the agenda and summary document was good.

There have been quite a few changes to our IRO group, we have had a couple of IROs retire recently; Mike Law and Stephanie Kiernan who both were in our service for a long time. Both loved working as an IRO and want to wish you all the best for the future.

Originally there were 2 IRO's who review Foster Carers only who are placed in the Independent Chair Service, this number has increased to three and are managed by one manager and continue to work independently focusing on Foster Care Reviews.



What Children, Young People and their carers said:

Children and Young People, their carer's and parents continue to make positive comments about the involvement of the IRO in their lives and for many the IRO has been the most consistent professional in their life.

Here are some Good Social Work Practice Stories shared by IRO'S:

- Social Worker has worked hard to make sure she had listened to the child's views about her rehabilitation home to live with her dad.
- The Social Worker's report to the review for a young person was clear and they remained child focused, the information presented on the young person ensured they were kept safe and considered their emotional wellbeing.
- Parents of a child returned to their care under a Supervision Order said how supported they felt by the social worker who has helped them manage a very difficult time and felt she went over and above in her work and support of them which resulted in a very positive outcome for them and their daughter.
- It was a pleasure to chair young person's initial review today. The report provided by the Social Worker was strength based and there was clear evidence of a good working relationship between the young person and the Social Worker. It was lovely to hear the progress the young person is making where she is living.
- We had a great review meeting today and the care plan is progressing in a much better manner. From an IRO perspective, it was helpful to have a proactive social

worker and team manager championing for better outcomes for the children.



Working together for Children and Young People



IRO's have regular meetings with Team Managers and the service to ensure there is consistent practice with:

Children in Care Council / Participation Group

Children Disability Service/Local Family Justice Board

Adoption Service/Foster carers meetings/CAMHS.





Our Key Plans for Children and Young People for 2023-2024 are:

We will ensure we routinely collect your views about the meetings IROs chair. This will enable us to improve on our practice and develop the service further.

IROs will encourage everyone involved with yourselves to use strength-based language which will focus on your views, strengths, aspirations, hopes, talents and achievements. They will also look at ways with yourselves to be supported to understand and work with professionals and social workers about your Care Plans

We will work to ensure the summaries produced from your reviews are clear and understandable. Will also work to increase IROs time so they can build relationships with yourselves, social work teams and other important people working with you.

As a group of IROs we will continue to work with you in a consistent way and will record on your file when we visit you or when we have discussions with others about your lived experience.

We will work with
Childrens' Social Care
staff to ensure
professionals work with
yourselves focusing on
your achievements along
with the challenges you
may encounter

We will continue to ask all
Care Leavers if they wish for
their IRO to provide a Post
18 service and make sure we
are working in a way you find
helpful and supportive.

Independent Chair Service



17 October 2023**Agenda Item:11****REPORT OF THE SERVICE DIRECTOR, EDUCATION, LEARNING AND
INCLUSION****VIRTUAL SCHOOL ANNUAL REPORT****Purpose of the Report**

1. To update the Corporate Parenting Panel on the work and impact of the Virtual School and its partners for the academic year 2022-23.

Information**Virtual School role and structure**

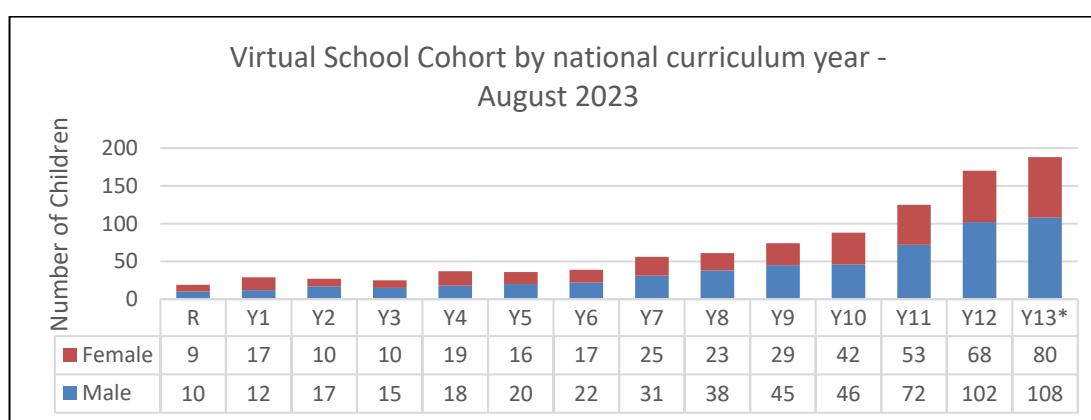
2. The Virtual School discharges the Council's statutory duty to promote the educational achievement of Looked After Children, aged 3-18 years old. It does this by facilitating strong collaborative working and partnerships with services and schools as well as by providing effective support, challenge, and intervention.
3. The work of the Virtual School contributes to the achievement of the ambitions summarised in Nottinghamshire's Partnership Strategy for Looked After Children & Care Leavers 2022-25. The Virtual School is a key contributor to the Local Authority's Looked After Children and Care Leavers Partnership Board; this accountability board ensures that key partners come together from across and beyond the Local Authority to have collective responsibility for the education, health and wellbeing of our children.
4. Nottinghamshire's Virtual School team is relatively small in size. It is our intent, within an increasingly 'schools-led system', to promote and build a clear shared vision for developing systems, capacity and accountability in schools through strong partnership-working to secure good quality educational provision and outcomes for our children. Headteachers and governing bodies retain the responsibility for the educational outcomes of our children, and the Virtual School holds them to account when progress stalls or provision is not meeting need. The Virtual School works in a relational and strengths-based way promoting trauma informed approaches.
5. The Virtual School's Senior Leadership Team oversees the strategic and operational working practices of the team. This leadership team currently comprises the Head of the Virtual School, who is also the Local Authority's Group Manager (Psychology Services), the Assistant Heads of the Virtual School (one full-time and one part-time post), and the Senior Educational Psychologist for our children. The wider team includes a Virtual School Data Officer, currently working 0.6 with vacancy of 0.4, and eight Achievement Officers.

6. Virtual School structure:

Group Manager – Psychology Services (Virtual School Head)		
Assistant Head of Virtual School (1.0 FTE)	Assistant Head of Virtual School – Project Lead (0.6 temporary)	Senior Educational Psychologist (0.4)
Data Officer (1.0 FTE)	Achievement Officers (5.0 FTE perm.)	Achievement Officers (2.4 FTE temp.)

Virtual School cohort

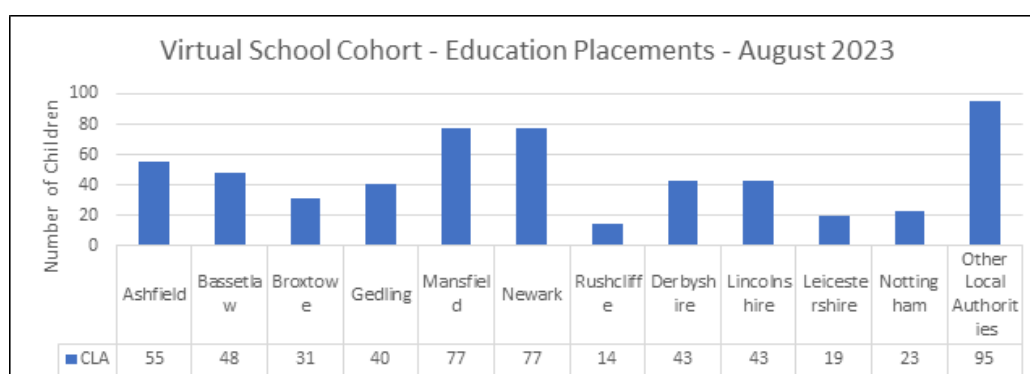
7. At the time of writing there are 967 Nottinghamshire looked after children. The number of children looked after by Nottinghamshire has remained between 950 and 1000 for the last 2 years. 597 children are of statutory school age.



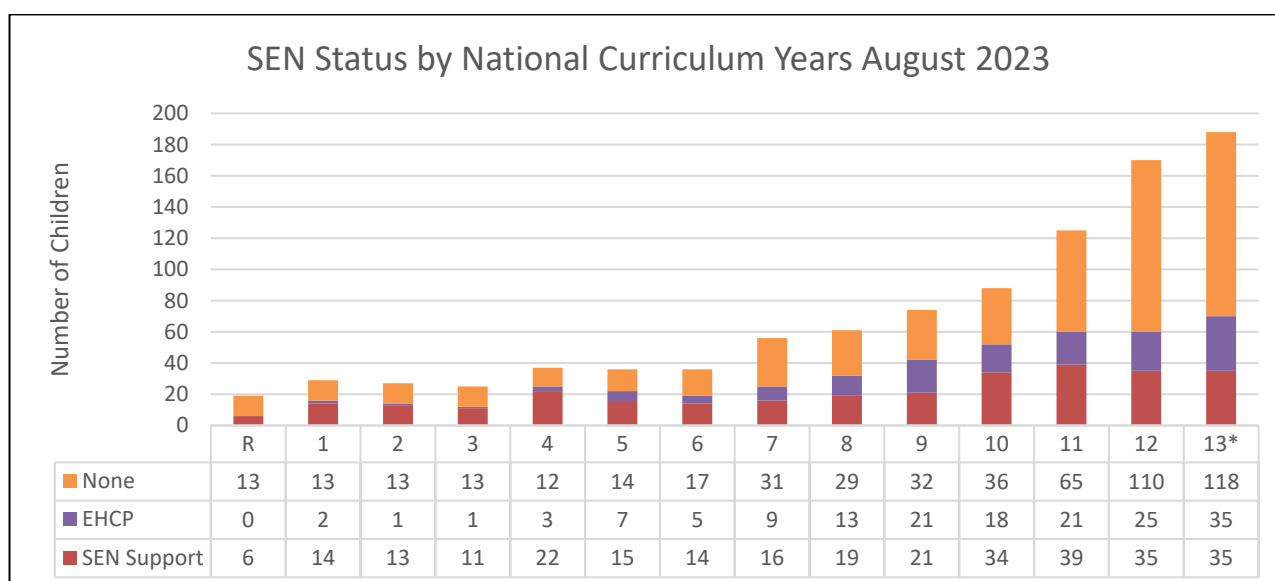
*Y13 includes care leavers

Note: in this table female/male refers to sex, not gender identifies as

8. At the time of writing 58% of our children of statutory school age attend education settings in Nottinghamshire. There is a 2% increase on number of our children attending Nottinghamshire schools when compared to last academic year. Mansfield and Newark continue to be the two Nottinghamshire districts with the highest numbers of Nottinghamshire children in care. For children attending education settings outside of Nottinghamshire, 58% of those attend schools in neighbouring authorities. Virtual School Achievement Officers are allocated to work for our children by district or local authority. This enables officers to understand the context and landscape of districts our children are in, and to understand how to navigate processes of other local authorities where needed to avoid unnecessary drift and delay.



9. Over 85% of the schools our children attend are rated good or outstanding by Ofsted. School Ofsted ratings form part of the Virtual School's termly data triangulation which informs the priorities and work of Achievement Officers.
10. 14% of our children and young people have an Education Health and Care Plan which is 13% below the national average for children in care. This demonstrates the impact of Nottinghamshire's graduated response and processes which enable access to Educational Psychology support and other services without the need for an Education Health and Care Plans. Of those children with Education Health and Care Plans, 34% attend mainstream schools. The highest proportion of Special Education Needs support is in primary age groups, and highest proportion of Education Health and Care Plans is in secondary and post-16 year groups.



*year 13 includes care leavers

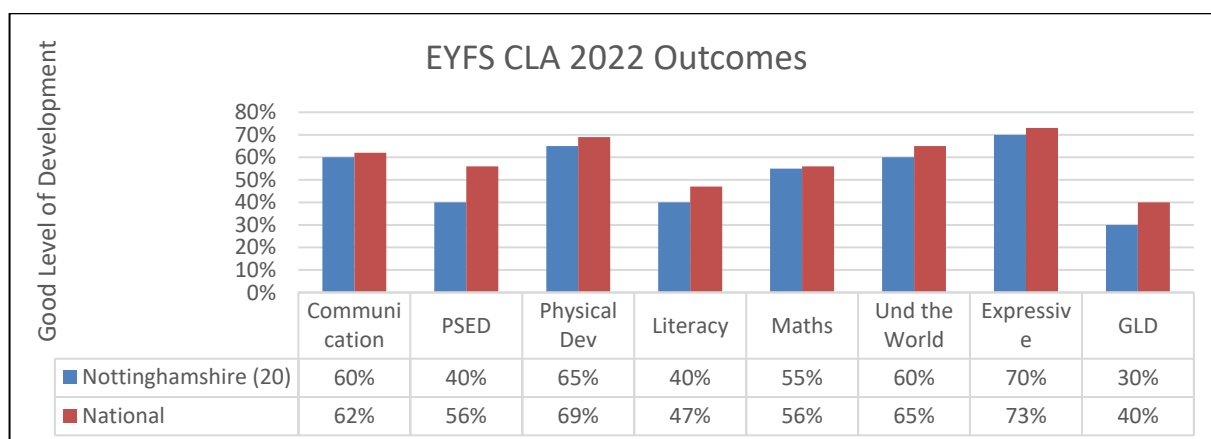
Outcomes - Attendance and suspensions

11. Average attendance for our children of statutory school age is 86.16% for the academic year 2022-23 which compares to 90.55% in 2021-22. Persistent absence is slightly above national average when compared to last year's national figures. The slightly lower attendance figures for this academic year mirrors the national picture post-pandemic.
12. The Virtual School use attendance data at individual, school and cohort level throughout the academic year to inform and prioritise the work of Achievement Officers. To enable earlier identification, support and intervention for children and schools with low attendance the Virtual School has procured a daily attendance monitoring system which will be implemented in September 2023. The Virtual School worked closely with Educational Psychology Service to promote the Attend programme training with Nottinghamshire schools this year. Attend is an early intervention, systematic way of identifying the underlying reasons for pupil absence and aims to engage families in a collaborative process to put together effective support plans. In November 2022, 170 primary schools and 43 out of 45 Nottinghamshire secondary schools participated in wave 1 of Nottinghamshire's Attend training delivered by the Educational Psychology Service.

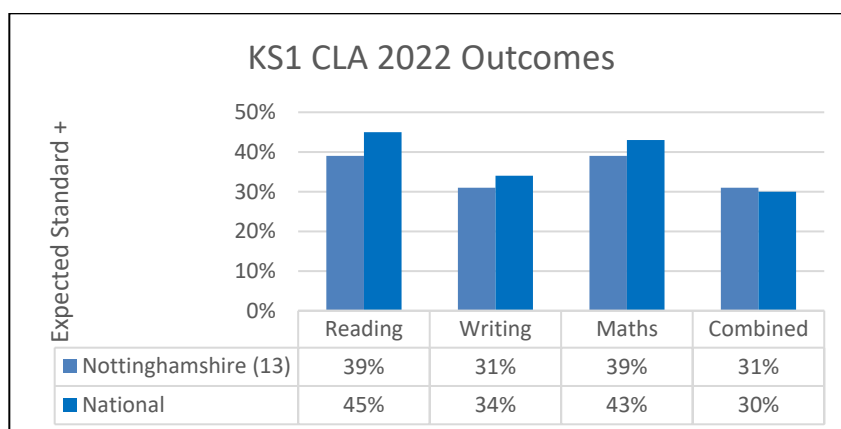
13. 110 of our statutory school age children and young people received fixed term suspensions this academic year, this compares to 77 the previous year. The Virtual School team use data and information gained through regular communication with education settings and social care colleagues to prioritise support and challenge to schools around suspensions. During the academic year, the number of our children and young people receiving fixed term suspensions decreased with 1/3 fewer children being suspended in the summer term when compared to the autumn term. The Virtual School training offer for Nottinghamshire education settings focuses on developing a trauma informed lens in education using relational and inclusive approaches to respond to behaviour rather than sanction led approaches. 292 delegates attended Virtual School training courses during the academic year 2022-23. No Nottinghamshire looked after children were permanently excluded from school in 2022-23.

Validated outcomes from 2021-22

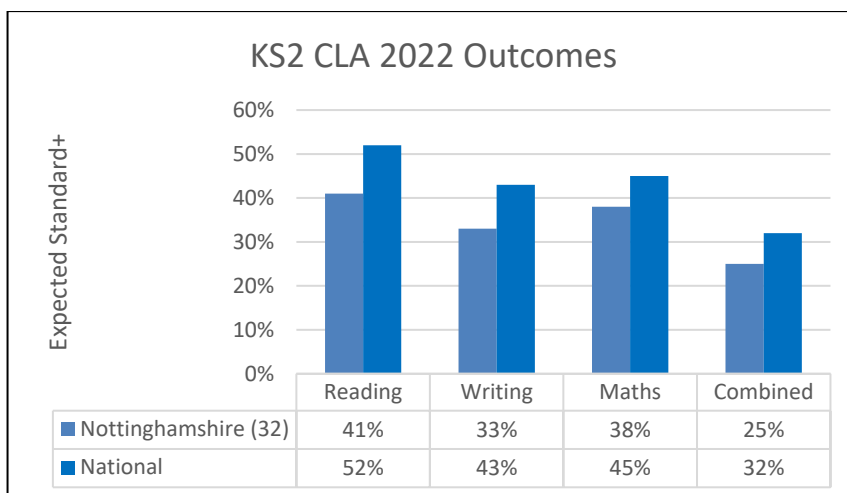
14. 30% of our children achieved a good level of development at the end of Reception which is 10% below the national average. This is a small cohort of 20 children and SEN support is 8% higher than the national average. Girls and SEN support group achieved broadly in line with the national average.



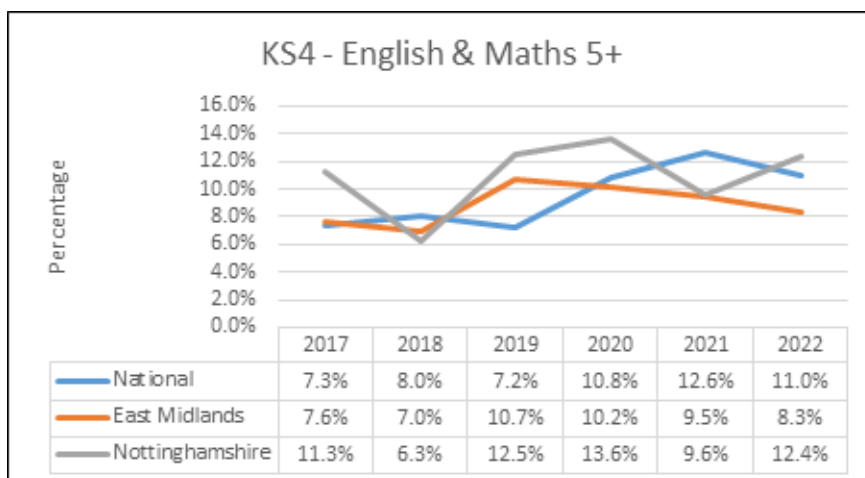
15. 31% of our children achieved age related expectations+ in combined reading, writing and maths which is 1% above national. This is a small cohort of 13 children with 8% above national average for children with SEN support. Writing remains an area for development for this cohort.



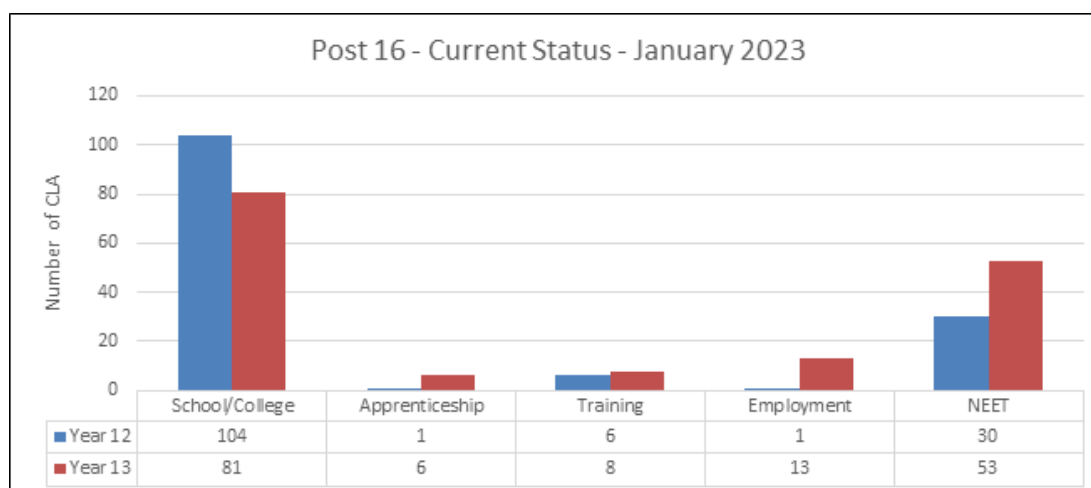
16. 25% of our children achieved age related expectations+ at the end of key stage 2 which is 7% below the national average. This is another small cohort of 32 children. Girls achieving age related expectations+ in reading was 22% above the national average for girls.



17. 12.4% of our 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.



18. In January 2023, 73% of our year 12 and 13 children and young people were in education, employment or training which is 2% lower when compared to last academic year. There were 303 of our children and young people in year 12 and 13 in January 2023 and this figure is increasing year on year.



19. 18 of our children and young people transitioned to university in September 2022. At the time of writing, 8 of our young people have secured first year places at university for September 2023. Universities our first-year students will be attending include Sheffield Hallam, Nottingham Trent, University of York, to name a few. Our young people will be studying courses such as criminology, art and design, drama and theatre, and health and social care.

Improving Personal Education Plans

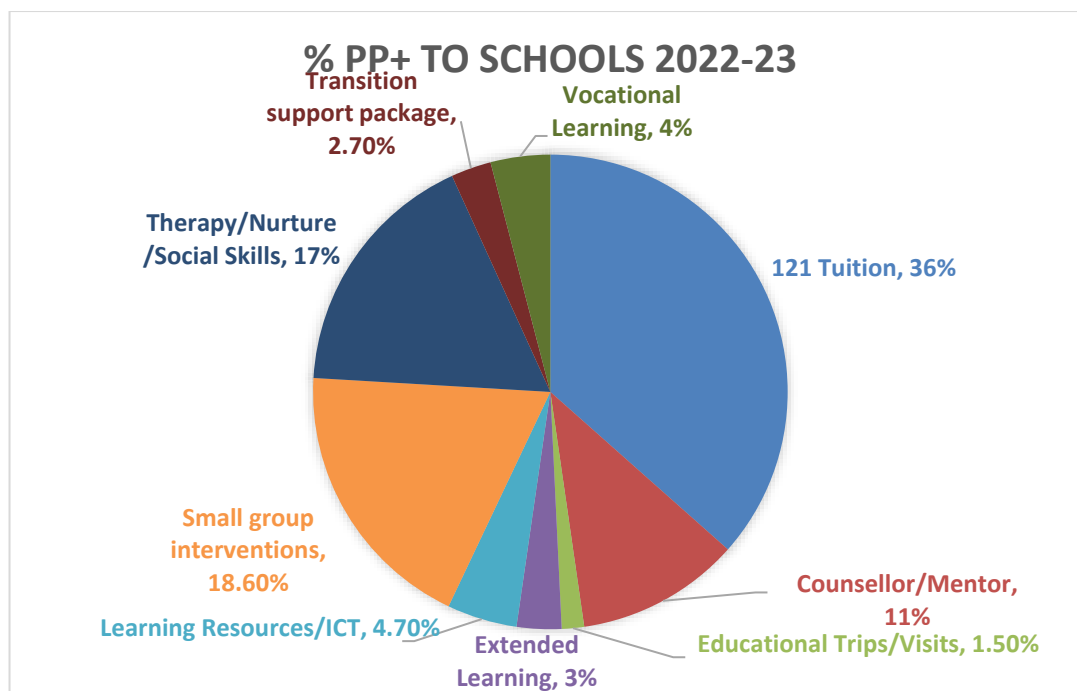
20. Local authorities and education settings have a statutory duty to conduct Personal Education Plans for children in care three times a year. Personal Education Plans are living documents that are the vehicle for driving educational achievement for children in care. Local authorities have a statutory responsibility to develop Personal Education Plan quality assurance processes with partners to ensure our children and young people receive quality and timely Personal Education Plans. The Virtual School facilitate a termly Personal Education Plan working group for key partners to continue to drive the improvement of Personal Education Plans and the quality assurance process for our children and young people.
21. Nottinghamshire's Personal Education Plan quality assurance process has three strands: termly Personal Education Plan completion figures; Independent Reviewing Officers' Personal Education Plan in timescales check at looked after review; termly deep dive of randomly selected Personal Education Plans
22. Since the implementation of an online Personal Education Plan platform in September 2021, the number of Personal Education Plans completed for our children and young people has increased termly. 89% of our children and young people aged 3-18 years had a PEP completed in the summer term which compares 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.
23. Nottinghamshire Personal Education Plan quality assurance process has continued to develop this academic year. A representative from a local Further Education setting is an active member of the termly deep dive group, and outcomes of deep dives continue to be used to inform training and projects with education and social care colleagues.

24. Personal Education Plan deep dives take place termly and representation includes colleagues from Virtual School, school/education settings, Early Years Service, Achievement Service, Independent Reviewing Officers and Children's Social Care teams. Individual feedback is given to link schools and social workers through normal processes, and general feedback from the deep dive is sent to all designated teachers through termly memos.
- 2022-23 deep dive overall strengths:
 - Child's voice and aspirations captured
 - Strengths well documented
 - 2022-23 deep dive overall areas for development:
 - Consistently specific actions for adults to support needs
25. The capturing of our children and young peoples' voices is an integral part of a good and meaningful Personal Education Plan. Prompts have been added to this section of the Personal Education Plan to encourage aspirational discussions and a space to hear what else our children and young people need from the adults around them. Children in Care Council artwork and message has been added to the 'child's voice' section of the Personal Education Plan document this year. An extract from primary child's voice recorded in summer 2023 Personal Education Plan:

When I'm a big girl I want to be a chef and make cakes. I want to be a doctor and a singer and a teacher. In year 2 I want to have Miss Robinson in the Rabbits class because I like rabbits. X said she sometimes likes learning her phonics and art. X also likes when it is someone's birthday in school because "you get cake."

Pupil Premium Plus to drive improvement

26. Pupil Premium is additional funding provided to publicly funded schools in England to raise the attainment of disadvantaged pupils, and to ensure educational opportunities for all. Looked after children are eligible for Pupil Premium Plus which equates to £2,410 per pupil of statutory school age. Virtual Schools are responsible for overseeing Pupil Premium Plus for looked after children.
27. This academic year, the Pupil Premium Plus grant for Nottinghamshire children in care was just over £1.6million. For eligible Nottinghamshire looked after children, schools claim £700 per term through the child's Personal Education Plan. The grant is claimed against specific interventions and actions linked to children's termly targets which helps to ensure the grant is used to fund support and interventions with a strong evidence base. In 2022-23, 55% of Pupil Premium Plus sent to schools was to fund 1:1 tuition and small group interventions to address gaps in learning and to raise attainment and progress.



28. In line with the 'Conditions of Grant' guidance, Nottinghamshire's Virtual School retains some Pupil Premium Plus funding in order to commission and provide a range of additional development projects. Projects are identified using data and areas identified for development. The aim of all Pupil Premium Plus funded projects is to improve achievement and opportunity for our children through an enhanced offer.
29. The Virtual School training offer to schools and education settings is funded through Pupil Premium Plus to support the Virtual School's approach of building capacity in schools and supporting designated teachers and schools to meet the needs of our children. Other Pupil Premium projects are identified through Virtual School data to address areas for development such as the Letterbox, Multimodal Literacy and Switch-On to support reading and writing outcomes. Additional careers advice and guidance was offered to 14 year 11 student who did not have post-16 plans. School specific projects were started in April 2023 with 6 secondary schools with high numbers of our children to create an evidence base of good practice to increase attendance and reduce suspensions. Outcomes will be measured next academic year after a year of the projects and opportunities facilitated to share learning with other settings.
30. The Letterbox Club, which is an initiative run by the Book Trust between May and October, to promote reading for pleasure continues to be evaluated as being extremely positive, with many carers reporting that their young people are now enjoying reading. Letterbox is offered to all our children in nursery, year 1, year 3, year 5 and year 7. 155 children have taken part this academic year which is an increase on previous years. In 2022 evaluations, 33% of carers said that teachers at school had noticed an improvement in reading and/or maths for children receiving Letterbox parcels. 100% children from nursery to year 5 said they liked or loved reading out of school. When asked what the best thing about Letterbox was, one child said, *"it's exciting to get things in the post. I like love the books."*
31. 2022-23 has seen another successful year of the Multimodal Literacy project with the addition of a key stage 3 group and the largest Multimodal cohort to date. 46 children were

part of the project this year and half of those were new participants. The delivery of the programme is bespoke in delivery and uses quality multi-layered texts and technology linked to children's interests. The project is based on closing the gap research and it demonstrates positive outcomes in reading, writing, communication skills and relationships between home and school. Participants making expected+ progress in reading for 2022-23 increased from 50% to 70% by the summer term. 5 children were making exceeding progress in reading in summer term 2023. MML cohort expected+ progress in writing for 22-23 increased from 44% to 64% across the year. 2 children were making exceeding progress in writing in summer term 2023.

32. Teacher and carer quotes for Multimodal Literacy primary groups:

- *It has also done a great deal for his self esteem and made 2 positive impacts on his literacy.*
- *Vastly improved writing skill and pencil hold/control.*
- *Range/breadth of vocabulary improved and speech and language improved*
- *Moved up multiple book bands - huge sense of achievement in his progression*
- *Improved the detail she adds to her writing and is using more descriptive language in her writing.*

33. Teacher and carer quotes for Multimodal Literacy key stage 3 group:

- *Both have discovered an interest in engineering and riding motorbikes. They both enjoyed the creativity pieces*
- *He is now working at a career in engineering after his visit to the Triumph factory*
- *He has been happier in school and looking forward to year 8.*

34. Our 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.

Working with partners

35. 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 College: Attachment Aware & Trauma Informed (new for 22-23)	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

36. The Virtual School held its 4th annual conference in partnership with Nottingham Trent University in April 2023. 200 delegates attended the Doing What Matters: Leadership Counts conference which consisted of inspirational keynotes from Hayley Clacy (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 NTU colleagues. The number of delegates attending this academic year, has 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:

- *Key note 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 key note speakers and topics including workshops had a wide scope to impact on day to day running of school.*
- *Raising profile of trauma informed practice*

37. The Virtual School run termly network meetings as part of standard practice which provides an opportunity for designated teachers, mental health leads and designated safeguarding leads to come together to access peer support and share good practice. Following the success of the 2023 conference, a Doing What Matters network was set up to provide an additional space to develop collaborative relational work and create opportunities to share good practice across Nottinghamshire. Comments from designated teachers in the Virtual School annual evaluation survey included:

- *The network meetings are always useful*
- *The new network recently set up based around trauma informed schools is looking good and our first meeting was positive*
- *The follow up network helps drive improvement*

38. 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 our 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 have been 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, 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.
39. The Virtual School work with the Youth Service, Children in Care Council and social care colleagues to deliver an annual achievement event for our children. This year the event was held in June 2023, at the University of Nottingham, Jubilee Campus which provided some children their first experience of a university. Members of the Children in Care Council chose the keynote speaker for the day, Ashley John-Baptiste, who gave an inspirational speech sharing his personal experiences overcoming adversity. Over 250 of our children and young person were nominated for an achievement award by their carers, social workers, teachers and other adults in their lives. Almost 90 children and young people attended the celebratory event on the day and they all received a trophy and certificate for their achievements. Quotes from young people:
- *This is the best day ever*
 - *I'm going to keep this trophy forever*

Virtual School priorities for 2023-24

40. Virtual School priorities for 2023-24 will include:
- Improve monitoring data and early intervention to increase attendance and reduce suspensions
 - Virtual School senior leadership team to lead strategically and operationally on key groups of children in the most vulnerable situations to ensure they have good educational provision and the right support in place. Groups to include children Educated Other Than at School, children who are Unaccompanied and Seeking Asylum, children with Youth Justice Service involvement; children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities
 - Work with partners and other stakeholders to continue to increase completion and quality of PEPs through established quality assurance processes

Extended duties

41. The Virtual School have extended duties in an advice and guidance role to promote the education of previously looked after children. The Nottinghamshire offer for previously looked after children this year included an advice and guidance line for families and professionals, and workshops for parents. 2022-23 workshop themes were informed by

evaluations from the previous year and themes identified through the advice and guidance line. The workshops were delivered by the Virtual School lead for previously looked after children and a senior educational psychologist. Workshops were attended by 53 delegates this academic year and the themes were:

- Thinking about anxiety
- Who's who in SEND
- Emotion Coaching

42. Developments for 2023-24 include changes to promoting workshops to increase delegate numbers; a conference for families of children previously looked after; and working with Adoption East Midlands to form a multi-disciplinary team for adoptive families.
43. Virtual Schools also have extended responsibilities to promote the education of children who have or have ever had a social worker. This is a strategic and advice and guidance role supporting schools, education settings and children's social workers and does not involve working directly with children and families. The Virtual School provides an advice and guidance line for families and professionals requiring support and signposting around the education of children with a social worker. The Virtual School is running pilot projects with two schools with the aim of increasing attendance and promoting the achievement of children with a social worker. Both schools identified their area of need was additional support for this group of children specifically focusing on their social, emotional, and mental health. As a result both schools have implemented a mentoring programme using external providers. Developments for 2023-24 include further project work with Nottinghamshire schools to raise the profile of children with a social worker and establish what works well for them. The Virtual school will work in partnership with social care to embed signposting and understanding of approaches and processes to support the attendance and achievement in education for children with a social worker.

Other Options Considered

44. To not bring this report to the Panel: this option is discounted because this report provides information that forms an important part of the Panel's remit in assisting the Council in fulfilling its legal corporate parenting duties and acting as an effective corporate parent.

Reason/s for Recommendation/s

45. The report provides an opportunity for the Panel to consider any further actions arising from the information contained within the report.

Statutory and Policy Implications

46. This report has been compiled after consideration of implications in respect of crime and disorder, data protection and information governance finance, human resources, human rights, the NHS Constitution (public health services), the public sector equality duty, safeguarding of children and adults at risk, service users, smarter working, sustainability and the environment and where such implications are material they are described below. Appropriate consultation has been undertaken and advice sought on these issues as required.

Financial Implications

47. There are no financial implications arising from this report.

RECOMMENDATION/S

- 1) That the Corporate Parenting Panel provides any feedback in relation to the information contained in the report.

Peter McConnochie
Service Director, Education, Learning and Inclusion

For any enquiries about this report please contact:

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Constitutional Comments (initials CD12/09/23)

48. The recommendation falls within the remit of the Corporate Parenting Panel by virtue of its terms of reference.

Financial Comments (SS 19/09/23)

49. There are no financial implications arising from this report.

Background Papers and Published Documents

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

Promoting the Education of Looked After Children and Previously Looked After Children (Department for Education, February 2018)

Nottinghamshire's Partnership Strategy for Looked After Children and Care Leavers 2022-25

Electoral Division(s) and Member(s) Affected

All.

C0108

17 October 2023
Agenda Item:12

REPORT OF THE SERVICE DIRECTOR, CARE, HELP AND PROTECTION

FOSTERING SERVICE ANNUAL REPORT - APRIL 2022 TO MARCH 2023

Purpose of the Report

1. The report provides an update on the performance and activities of the Fostering Service for the period 1 April 2022 to 31 March 2023.

Information

2. The table below shows that the number of Nottinghamshire looked after children has increased during the last year.

Number of children in the Council's care	
April 2022: 943	March 2023: 967

3. The percentage of children in foster care who are living with a Nottinghamshire internal foster carer has reduced in the last year, as shown in the table below. The internal fostering service remains the provider of placements at the lowest cost.

	Total children in care	Total children in foster care	Living with a carer approved by NCC	Living with a carer approved by an external agency
April 2022	943	527 (56%)	231(25%)	296 (31%)
March 2023	967	495 (51%)	212 (22%)	283(29%)

4. There has been an increase in unaccompanied asylum seeking children (UASC) entering the care of the Local Authority as part of the Home Office's mandated National Transfer Scheme (NTS). In April 2022, there were 31 looked after UASC in the care of the Local Authority of which 3 were living with an UASC carer approved by NCC and 16 with carers approved by an external agency. At the end of March 2023, there was an increase to 71 looked after UASC in the care of the Local Authority of which 5 were living with an UASC carer approved by NCC and 21 with carers approved by an external agency. All costs associated with UASC (including fostering fees) are funded under the Home Office grant.
5. The recruitment and retention of foster carers is the core activity and focus within the Fostering Service, to support children and young people in the care of the Local Authority.

6. Nationally the recruitment of foster carers is challenging. In March 2022 the number of approved foster carers from both local authorities and Independent Fostering Agencies nationally was 61,360, this is a 4% decrease from the number in 2018 which was 63,815. At present 58% of all carers are from local authorities, this has decreased by 8% since 2018.
7. The Council's Marketing and Communications Team works closely with the Fostering Service on the recruitment and retention strategy. The Recruitment and Assessment team have held regular information events throughout the year, many of which have had input from approved foster carers. In addition, social media is used extensively to promote fostering in Nottinghamshire. All Nottinghamshire foster carers are encouraged to promote fostering for Nottinghamshire County Council with their family and friends. Work has also been undertaken with a charitable organisation to promote fostering via churches in the County to further increase fostering households. The Service is making efforts to engage fostering friendly employers with information events held at their venues, which has included supermarkets, a department store, and a bank.
8. The Service recruited 22 foster carers, of which 14 are mainstream foster carers (some with preference to provide support care) and 8 Family and Friends (connected person) foster carers.
9. The Council follows National Standards when assessing and reviewing its foster carers, which includes all foster carers having an annual review undertaken by a Fostering Independent Reviewing Officer.
10. Outcomes for children fostered by Nottinghamshire foster carers are generally positive, the Council provides high quality supervision and support to its foster carers, ensuring foster carers access relevant training event and are provided with support, advice, guidance and challenge when necessary. Ensuring that looked after children are safe is the Council's highest priority. One of the strengths of the Fostering Service is that it works closely with the children's Social Work teams and the Independent Reviewing Officers to identify any issues and deal with them swiftly and appropriately.
11. During 2022/23, the Council terminated the approval of 4 foster carers following concerns. In addition, 8 foster carers resigned following concerns being raised about them.
12. 7 foster carers left the Fostering Service due to becoming Special Guardians to the child in their care via a Special Guardianship Order or through adoption. 27 foster carers left for other reasons, which includes retirement and personal reasons which could not have been prevented.
13. The children and young people for whom there is a continued struggle to find placements are teenagers and sibling groups. Child specific adverts have been used to attract potential foster carers for some younger children in residential care and for children with more complex needs.
14. The Fostering Service has a good reputation locally in relation to the support provided to foster carers. The Service continues to engage foster carers in service developments and continues to support its foster carers in their professional development and identity through a varied programme of learning, training, and developmental opportunities. There is a clear

training pathway for the first three years for newly approved foster carers. The Fostering Service promotes relationship-based therapeutic approaches and benefits from having a qualified therapist and therapeutically trained family workers. This is positive for foster carers who have been supported to develop their resilience and practical skills they need during difficult periods. The approach supports foster carers to understand the effects of early life trauma on children's development and how to use their relationship with a foster child to help them heal. Being playful, accepting of the whole child, curious and empathetic (known as PACE), is the key to building a therapeutic relationship and the service has embedded this approach in the foster carer community over the years. Further therapeutic parenting training for staff and foster carers will be provided during 2023-24.

15. The fostering service is now providing pre-approval training to foster carers as part of D2N2 regional collaboration; this is for applicants who are completing the assessment process to become foster carers. This has been well received and includes specific training sessions for family and friend foster carers. Planning for post-approval training is now underway with neighbouring councils which will provide more flexibility in terms of dates and times for foster carers.
16. The Council is committed to celebrating the achievements of looked after children and young people. The Fostering Service held its annual 'Fostering's Got Talent' event at which 8 acts performed; many people attended including Councillors, looked after children and young people, foster carers and their families and staff from both the fostering and children's services. The winner and foster carer received tickets to watch the live semi-final of 'Britain's Got Talent'.
17. The Fostering Service has experienced some changes in staffing due to retirements and vacancies. The level of passion and commitment within the Service remains high; the Service is committed to providing high quality care for children and young people in a family environment. As part of the foster carer's annual survey, they were asked how they would rate the 'Level of support from the Supervising Social Worker' (0-5, with 5 being the best). 97% of carers rating this area either 4 or 5 (83% of these being a 5). This is a good indicator that foster carers value the support of their Supervising Social Worker (SSW). The second highest rated area was the 'Quality of the support from the fostering team' with an overall 83% of carers rating this area either 4 or 5.
18. In line with the national shortage of foster carers the Fostering Service understands the importance of retaining foster carers. During 2022-23 the Council increased its fostering allowances from April 2023 to support its foster carers and ensure that fostering allowances remain competitive with private providers and neighbouring local authorities.

Other Options Considered

19. To not bring this report to the Panel: this option is discounted because this report provides information that forms an important part of the Panel's remit in assisting the Council in fulfilling its legal corporate parenting duties and acting as an effective corporate parent.

Reason/s for Recommendation/s

20. The report provides an opportunity for the Panel to consider any further actions arising from the information contained within the report.

Statutory and Policy Implications

21. This report has been compiled after consideration of implications in respect of crime and disorder, data protection and information governance finance, human resources, human rights, the NHS Constitution (public health services), the public sector equality duty, safeguarding of children and adults at risk, service users, smarter working, sustainability and the environment and where such implications are material they are described below. Appropriate consultation has been undertaken and advice sought on these issues as required.

Financial Implications

22. There are no financial implications arising from the report.

RECOMMENDATION/S

- 1) That the Corporate Parenting Panel considers whether there is any feedback that it wishes to give and any actions that it recommends in relation to the information contained in the report.

Amanda Collinson
Service Director, Care, Help and Protection

For any enquiries about this report please contact:

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Constitutional Comments (GMG 11/09/23)

23. This report falls within the remit of the Corporate Parenting Panel to consider (see Section 7, Part 2, paragraph 36 of the Council's Constitution on page 125).

Financial Comments (VC 12/09/23)

24. There are no additional financial implications arising from the report.

Background Papers and Published Documents

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

None.

Electoral Division(s) and Member(s) Affected

All.

CF0106

17 October 2023**Agenda Item 13****REPORT OF THE SERVICE DIRECTOR FOR CUSTOMERS, GOVERNANCE
AND EMPLOYEES****WORK PROGRAMME****Purpose of the Report**

1. To consider the Corporate Parenting Panel's current work programme, as set out in **Appendix 1** to the report.

Information

2. The work programme assists in the management of the Panel's agenda, the scheduling of its business and its forward planning. It includes business items that can be anticipated at the present time, while arising issues are added as they are identified. The work programme is reviewed and updated regularly with the Chair and at each Panel meeting, where any Panel member is able to suggest items for inclusion.

Other Options Considered

3. To not maintain a work programme for the Panel: this option is discounted as a clear work programme is required for the effective management of the Panel's agenda, the scheduling of its business and its forward planning.

Reasons for Recommendations

4. To assist the Panel in managing its business effectively.

Statutory and Policy Implications

5. This report has been compiled after consideration of the implications in respect of crime and disorder, data protection and information governance, finance, human resources, human rights, the NHS Constitution (public health services), the public sector equality duty, safeguarding of children and adults at risk, service users, smarter working, sustainability and the environment and, where such implications are material, they are described below. Appropriate consultation has been undertaken and advice sought on these issues as required.

Financial Implications

6. There are no direct financial implications arising from this report.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Corporate Parenting Panel is asked to:

- 1) Note its current work programme, attached as **Appendix 1** to the report.
- 2) Make any further suggestions for items for inclusion on the work programme for consideration by the Chair, in consultation with the relevant officers and partners.

Marjorie Toward

Service Director for Customers, Governance and Employees

For any enquiries about this report, please contact:

- Adrian Mann, Democratic Services Officer
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- Phillippa Milbourne, Business Support Administrator – Children and Families
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Constitutional Comments (CEH)

7. The Panel has the authority to consider the matters set out in this report by virtue of its Terms of Reference.

Financial Comments (SES)

8. There are no direct financial implications arising from the contents of this report.

Background Papers and Published Documents

9. Except for previously published documents, which will be available elsewhere, the documents listed here will be available for inspection in accordance with Section 100D of the Local Government Act 1972.
- None

Electoral Division(s) and Member(s) Affected

- All

CORPORATE PARENTING PANEL - WORK PROGRAMME 2022-24

Title	Sponsor/ Report Author
Standing items for each meeting:	
Foster Care (FLAG) items	Amanda Collinson
Children in Care Council items	Laurence Jones
Visits schedule and observations from visits	Laurence Jones
Update on Nottinghamshire Children's Residential Homes	Laurence Jones
Inspection gradings of Children's Residential Homes commissioned solely for Council use (verbal update + reports every 6 months)	Laurence Jones
Government response to the Independent Review of Children's Social Care	Amanda Collinson
25 October 2022	
Terms of reference & draft work programme	Laurence Jones
24 January 2023	
Experiences and progress of Children in Care and Care Leavers	Amanda Collinson
Staffing in children's residential homes	Laurence Jones
Ofsted and independent visitor findings in Nottinghamshire children's residential homes	Laurence Jones
Elected Member visits to Nottinghamshire children's residential homes	Laurence Jones
16 May 2023	
Care Leavers annual report	Amanda Collinson
Destinations of Year 12-13 Looked After Young People Cohort 2022-23	Charles Savage
18 July 2023	
Performance of Adoption Services	Shelagh Mitchell
Health of Children in Care	Katharine Browne
Children in Care Council – activity and achievements	Laurence Jones/ Pom Bhogal
17 October 2023	
Independent Reviewing Officer annual report	Laurence Jones/ Izzy Martin
Report of the Head of the Virtual School (termly plus annual reports)	Peter McConnochie/ Stephanie McGill
Fostering Service annual report	Amanda Collinson/ Sophie Eadsforth/ Jenny Whiston
9 January 2024	
Harmful Sexual Behaviour by children – annual report	Laurence Jones/ Claire Sampson
Child Sexual Exploitation & Children Missing from Home & Care - annual report	Laurence Jones/ Hannah Johnson
Sufficiency Strategy – Looked After Children	Laurence Jones
Reports from Districts on their corporate parenting responsibilities and how they are meeting them	Laurence Jones

Title	Sponsor/ Report Author
16 April 2024	
2 July 2024	
To be placed	