

# **A Partnership Strategy for Looked After Children & Care Leavers in Nottinghamshire 2018-21**

DRAFT

# Foreword

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

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

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

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

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

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

Our ambitions exceed our statutory roles and responsibilities, and our vision has been

shaped by the children and young people we look after. They are at the heart of everything we do as a Council and we expect all partners to share this commitment to look after children and care leavers.

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

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

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

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

*< signatories of partnership representatives >*

## Our Vision

*We want our children and young people to have everything that good parents want and provide for their children.*

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

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

## Our Ambitions

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

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

# Building on Previous Successes

## Looked After Children & Care Leavers Strategy 2015-18

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



### Key achievements include:

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

### Other significant achievements include:

- the piloting of transitional personal advisors (PAs) who are appropriately supporting more young people into semi-independent living;
- a dedicated practice consultant who now supports pathway planning; practice development is improving the quality of plans for looked after children and care leavers;
- a new, nationally-recognised supported accommodation model which is ensuring more young people are suitably housed;
- the virtual school ensures that looked after children are better supported in schools; outcomes have improved as a result, with no looked after children excluded permanently and good attendance has been sustained;
- ensuring that the virtual school is now collecting, reviewing, monitoring and strategically using termly data on individual children and young people's progress, attendance and engagement, to identify children and young people at risk of failing to achieve their potential. This enables the virtual school to target additional resources and challenge where they are most needed for children and young people from 0–16 years of age.

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

# LAC and Care Leavers are safe and feel safe

## **We will:**

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

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

## **We will:**

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

# LAC and Care Leavers fulfil their potential

## **We will:**

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

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

## **We will:**

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

# LAC and Care Leavers make a positive contribution

## **We will:**

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

# LAC and Care Leavers have a positive transition to adulthood

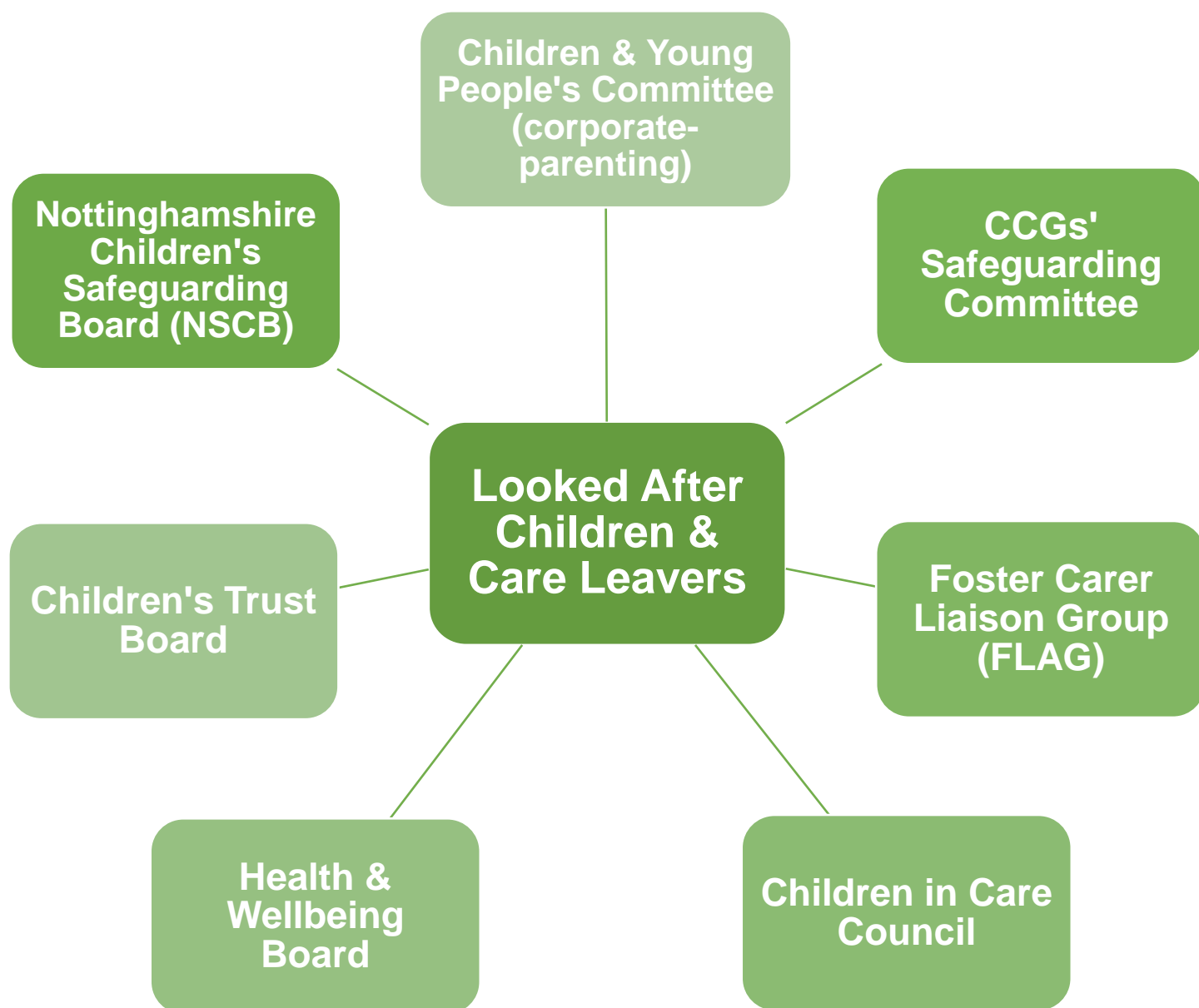
## **We will:**

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

## Governance

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

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





# LAC & Care Leavers Partnership Board

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

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

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

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

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

- [Youth Homelessness Strategy 2012-15](#)
- Accommodation Strategy
- Placement Commissioning Strategy
- Children in Care Health Action Plan and Outcomes Framework (including care leavers)
- [Closing the Gap Strategy 2014-16](#)
- Nottinghamshire SEND Commissioning Strategy 2017-19
- Nottinghamshire’s SEND Strategic Action Plan

# Monitoring, Evaluation & Reporting

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

Many of the improvements identified in this renewed strategy are not expensive, because they are more about a change of culture. All partners will use outcomes from monitoring to evaluate the effectiveness of actions taken and will report improved outcomes and areas for further development to the LAC & Care Leavers Partnership Board. The Board will use these evaluations to hold all partners to account for implementing additional actions to address the areas for further improvement.

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

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

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

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

# Appendices

Delivery Plan

A range of action plans

Post 16 Education Strategy

Health Framework

CSC Data dashboards