

‘Storyboard’ for NCC staff and partners

In March 2010 Ofsted carried out a full inspection of safeguarding and looked after children’s services and found the safeguarding function to be inadequate. Services for looked after children were assessed as being adequate or good.

The Department for Education issued an Improvement Notice which set out the targets required over the following 12 months. Following this, the Safeguarding Improvement Board was established, with an independent chair to oversee the entire improvement programme. The Board meets monthly.

Since the introduction of the Improvement Board, we have:

Invested more than £20 million in our social care services, allocating new resource to the recruitment of additional social workers and support staff, and ensuring we have sufficient resources to find appropriate places for children and young people who need to be looked after outside of their families.

- Agreed and implemented a new County Council vision and mission for children’s social care.
<http://intranet.nottscc.gov.uk/index/departments/childrenfamiliesculture/safeguarding-improvement-programme/documents/>
- Completely overhauled our arrangements for reception and assessment services – the “front door” of social care, including co-location with Health colleagues, domestic violence link workers and closer working with specialist family support services and the Police.
- Introduced a new quality assurance system.
- Introduced *Pathway to Provision* – multi-agency guidance which clearly sets out the thresholds for accessing care and support, so that all partners know exactly when and how to refer a child to children’s social care or other support services.
www.nottinghamshire.gov.uk/pathwaytoprovision
- Undertaken an independent review of quality in reception and assessment teams and children’s services teams
- Changed the way in which we communicate with our social workers and their teams, offering them more opportunities to influence change and talk about their work.
- Increased the quantity and quality of training opportunities available to our social workers and their teams so that we improve supervision and assessment skills, care planning and adoption processes

In February this year, an Ofsted unannounced inspection took place. This had a positive outcome that recognised our progress and our direction of travel, as well as our ambition for vulnerable children and families.

In April, a second Department for Education review meeting acknowledged that the Council had moved in the right direction during the course of the Improvement Notice, away from crisis management to development and ongoing improvement.

And in May, a Peer Challenge – an unofficial inspection carried out by critical friends from other local authorities with experience of conducting inspections - was carried out. The feedback from was positive and also recognised the improvements that have been made.

We have now invited Ofsted to carry out a further inspection in the autumn and we hope that the improvements that have been made will be acknowledged by the inspectors. These have been realised, thanks to the hard work of children's social care staff, front line managers and our partners.

Our ambition now is to sustain and build upon this improvement through a transformation programme. This will include the development of:

- a multi-agency hub for initial contact and referral;
- a model of social work in localities;
- joined-up services for disabled children;
- co-ordinated services for young people aged 16 and over; and
- a review of our provision to children who are looked after by the local authority.

We have a very hard working and committed children's social care workforce who want to be recognised as providing the best service possible for vulnerable children and families in Nottinghamshire.

We are very ambitious for our future. We are positive about the improvements we have already made and are excited about the improvements we will continue to make over the next 18 months through our transformation programme.