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# Looked After Children Strategy 2012-2015

## Executive Summary

*An outcome-focused approach to supporting children in care*

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The Looked After Children Strategy is a joint statement of intent between Nottinghamshire County Council and our partner agencies to work together to deliver the best outcomes we can for the children who come into our care. Our ambition is:

*“To ensure our looked after children have all the opportunities that good parents afford their children”*

### Context

The strategy has been developed at a time when the Government is focusing its approach to supporting children in care. The children’s social care system is being reshaped to include more emphasis on preventative and early intervention techniques following the recommendations of the Munro Review. Legislation is being streamlined to support more effective care planning following the publication of revised care planning regulations.

Locally in Nottinghamshire this strategy is being developed as the County Council are undertaking a review of its provider services to ensure they are value for money and continue to meet the needs of vulnerable children and young people. We are committed to providing good value services that consistently meet the needs of a growing looked after children population.

### Approach to the Strategy

We undertook a consultation with over two hundred children and young people in care in 2011 who told us how we can improve their experience within the care system. This engagement and feedback has formed the basis of the promises that we will strive to deliver against.

The Strategy was developed in close consultation with colleagues across Nottinghamshire in Health, Education, district councils, and the voluntary sector. The Strategy is split in to eight themes:

- Participation and Joining In
- Education
- Health
- Safe and stable placements
- Relationships
- Identity
- Moving to Adulthood
- Emotional Wellbeing

The Strategy outlines over 40 key actions that we will be working to achieve over the next three years. From these actions, our top ten priorities will be to:

1. Continuously review 'The Pledge' to ensure it continues to reflect the priorities of all age groups in care
2. Develop a comprehensive participation strategy that outlines how agencies will gather and promote the views of children looked after
3. Ensure that we are minimising the number of times children looked after need to move to a different school during their education, by establishing better joint planning between social care and education
4. Improve the Information, Advice and Guidance (IAG) support to Looked After Children at the end of Key Stage 4 to ensure they make a successful transition into learning, in line with the Raising the Participation Age Strategy
5. Ensure that social care and health systems work more closely together to provide accurate and timely information, that will assist in identifying health concerns of looked after children and young people
6. Undertake a review of internal and external provider services within the Children's Social Care Division to ensure that placements are value for money and are providing the best possible experience for young people
7. Work more closely with the Children in Care Council to monitor standards for social workers and develop a system which allows children and young people to contribute to social work appraisals
8. Further develop our support to children and young people in permanent placements to ensure that these remain stable and continue to meet their needs
9. Pilot a Creative Solutions Panel that will be able to commission creative packages of support for children who are either on the edge of care or who are brought in to care for a defined period of time
10. Identify new ways of measuring positive progress in emotional resilience and wellbeing of our looked after children and young people, including the use of self reporting

### **How will we know we have made a difference?**

Nottinghamshire County Council as the lead organisation for the co-ordination of the Strategy will be responsible for monitoring progress made on an action plan. The Strategy will be monitored on an ongoing basis through a multi-agency Looked After Children Steering Group which reports to the Children's Social Care Transformation Board.

Highlight reports will also be taken to the Corporate Parenting Panel Sub-Committee and to the Children in Care Council to provide adequate scrutiny. The Strategy will be reviewed on an annual basis by the Children and Young People's Committee.