

Corporate Parenting Sub-Committee

Date: Monday, 16 July 2012
Time: 14:00
Venue: County Hall
Address: County Hall, West Bridgford, Nottingham NG2 7QP

AGENDA

- | | | |
|-----------|---|----------------|
| 1 | <u>To note the appointment by the County Council at its Annual Meeting of Councillor Allen Clarke as Ch</u>
Details | 1-2 |
| 2 | <u>To note the Membership of the Sub-Committee:-</u>

<u>County Councillors:- John Allin, Ged Clarke, Bob Cr</u>
Details | 1-2 |
| 3 | <u>Apologies for Absence</u>
Details | 1-2 |
| 4 | <u>Declarations of Interest</u>
(a) Personal
(b) Prejudicial | 1-2 |
| 5 | <u>Minutes of the last meeting held on 16th April 2012</u>
Details | 3 - 6 |
| 6 | <u>Terms of reference</u>
Details | 7 - 8 |
| 7 | <u>looked after children Strategy</u>
Details | 9 - 56 |
| 8 | <u>Virtual School</u>
Details | 57 - 64 |
| 9 | <u>Independent Advocacy Service for LAC</u>
Details | 65 - 68 |
| 10 | <u>Foster Carers Items - oral update from Foster Carer representatives.</u>
Details | 1-2 |

(1) 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 08449 80 80 80

(2) Persons making a declaration of interest should have regard to the Code of Conduct and the Council's Standing Orders. Members or Officers requiring clarification on whether to make a declaration of interest are invited to contact Christine Marson (Tel. 0115 977 3887) or a colleague in the Governance Team prior to the meeting.

(3) Members are reminded that Committee and Sub-Committee papers, with the exception of those which contain Exempt or Confidential Information (on coloured paper) may be recycled.

(4) The agenda, minutes and reports for this meeting are available in a wide range of languages, large print, Braille and audio upon request. For more information please contact:-

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minutes



Meeting CORPORATE PARENTING PANEL

Date Monday, 16 April 2012 (commencing at 2.00 pm)

Membership

Persons absent are marked with 'A'

COUNCILLORS

Allen Clarke (Chair)

A Fiona Asbury
Joyce Bosnjak
Ged Clarke
Bob Cross

A Keith Girling
Philip Owen
Stella Smedley
Lynn Sykes

Officers in attendance

Rachel Coombs	-	Group Manager, Children, Families and Cultural Services Department
Christine Marson	-	Governance Support Officer, Policy, Planning & Corporate Services Department
Jayne Austin	-	Service Manager, Fostering
Michelle Lee	-	Children's Service Manager (Aftercare)
Steve Edwards	-	Service Director, Strategic Services, Children & Young People's Department
Shelagh Mitchell	-	Children's Service Manager (Adoption)
Rebecca Bowring	-	Employment, Education & Training Adviser (Care Leavers)
Dawn Clements	-	Foster Carer Representative
Elaine Liddy	-	Foster Carer Representative

MINUTES

The minutes of the last meeting held on 16 January 2012 having been circulated were confirmed and signed by the Chair.

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from:-

Councillor Fiona Asbury (other reason)
Councillor Keith Girling (other reason)

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST BY MEMBERS AND OFFICERS

None

LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN STRATEGY 2012-15

Rachel Coombs, Group Manager, Regulated Services & Corporate Parenting gave an updated progress report on the Strategy stating that it covered the range of activity and aspirations for Looked After Children with measurable outcomes. She reported that the draft Strategy had an important role in monitoring the Strategy for Looked After Children. It would be going to the Policy Committee in June and also to the Childrens Trust Executive and District Councils for consultation. Rachel Coombs reported that the Strategy would be an evolving document with an Action Plan. The final draft would be brought to the next meeting of the Panel in July.

SPRING TERM REPORT FROM THE CO-ORDINATOR OF THE VIRTUAL SCHOOL FOR LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN

Rachel Coombs, Group Manager, gave a progress report in the absence of Sue Denholm, Co-ordinator, Virtual School. She reported that the virtual school was making good progress. She stated that monitoring of Looked After Children would be an important part of the Virtual School Co-ordinator.

Councillor Joyce Bosnjak asked how many children in the Behaviour Units were Looked After Children. Rachel Coombs would investigate and respond to Councillor Bosnjak.

A full discussion of the Virtual School would take place at the July meeting.

AFTERCARE SERVICE: UPDATE

Michelle Lee, Aftercare Manager and Rebecca Bowring, Employment, Education & Training Adviser (Care Leavers) jointly gave an update on the Aftercare Service. Michelle Lee stated that the Aftercare Service becomes involved with Looked After Children at 16 years of age. The Service helps develop skills for adulthood and independent living. They are currently working with 240 young people in the county. The majority of young people can access college courses or apprenticeships. There are also asylum seeker young people, one of which is going on a gap year to China and will provide feedback on return. 70% of care leavers get involved in further education but concern is raised about the 30% which are a big challenge. Some of these have particular problems involving mental health issues, drug misuse and long term unemployment.

Michelle Lee reported that voluntary work is often a positive step for young people. The County Council are currently in the early stages of negotiations with the Prince's Trust but this would involve an expenditure.

Michelle Lee stated that at 18 years of age the looked after children are legally adult. The "Staying Put" Strategy is to allow young people to stay at foster carers homes. There is then the possibility for this arrangement to be converted into "supported lodgings" for as long as the young people and the foster carers want

to. The County Council have a legal duty to ensure accommodation is available for young people who are attending college or university. This also applies to ones going into the Armed Forces.

Councillor Ged Clarke asked if supported housing was used. Michelle Lee responded that nominations were sent to supported housing associations but that there were insufficient places.

Councillor Stella Smedley asked if there could be positive discrimination for Looked After Children with regard to applying for apprenticeships. Rachel Coombs replied that the Council were looking at setting up "ring fenced" apprenticeships for Looked After Children. She offered to bring an update on this to the next meeting.

Councillor Allen Clarke, on behalf of the Panel, thanked Michelle Lee and Rebecca Bowring for the excellent service they offered.

OFSTED INSPECTION

Jayne Austin, Service Manager, Fostering Service introduced the report by updating the Panel regarding the recent Ofsted inspection. She reported that the department were very pleased with the overall good inspection which had previously been satisfactory. The Ofsted report stated that the key strengths were the amount of money being used for Looked After Children and the strong relationships being between foster carers and young people. The report also stated that the organisation for fostering was efficient and foster carers were well supported. Two recommendations from the Ofsted report were:-

- (1) Each child over the age of 3 to have their own bedroom.
- (2) Foster Carers to have a personal development plan.

Jayne Austin stated that if foster children have to share a room then a risk assessment is always carried out. There would be continued supervision and training of foster carers. A conference programme has been organised for 2013. From April 2012 there would be an additional £20,000 funding available to the Fostering Service.

Dawn Clements, Foster carer said that foster carers had benefited from buddying schemes with more experienced ones helping new foster carers.

The Panel noted the outcome of the Ofsted inspection and the Service's action plan and the positive foster carer recruitment.

ADOPTION SERVICE INSPECTION AND ACTION PLAN

Shelagh Mitchell, Service Manager from the Adoption Service introduced the report following the Ofsted inspection in January 2012. She reported that they had gained a satisfactory rating with many positives for the Adoption Service. The report highlighted where improvements were needed and congratulated the Service on a good, strong leadership team.

Shelagh Mitchell stated that a homefinder post had been created to ensure a speedy response is made to adoptive families. It was hoped that this would reduce any delays in the process for potential adoptive parents. There were tighter systems in place to ensure Adoption Panels operate to capacity but also ensuring that the right placements are found for the right children.

It was noted that the Ofsted report was expecting 100% placements for adoptions and the Panel felt that this was unrealistic considering some young people are difficult to place. Shelagh Mitchell commented that only 2% of adoptions disrupt.

Councillor Allan Clarke thanked Jayne Austin and Shelagh Mitchell for their work.

FOSTER CARERS ITEMS

Dawn Clements and Elaine Liddy reported that training was good for foster carers and they appreciated the information received.

The meeting closed at 3.45 pm

CHAIR

16th July 2012**Agenda Item: 6****REPORT OF THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE****TERMS OF REFERENCE****Purpose of the Report**

1. To note the Committee's terms of reference.

Information and Advice

2. County Council on 29 March 2012 agreed the following terms of reference for the Corporate Parenting Sub-Committee:-

The exercise of the powers and functions set out below are delegated by the Full Council in relation to children and young people:

- (i) Responsibility for overseeing the County Council's responsibilities as the corporate parent of children and young people in care
- (ii) Responsibility for championing the interests of children and young people in care.

Other Options Considered

3. None.

Reason/s for Recommendation/s

4. To inform the committee of its terms of reference.

Statutory and Policy Implications

5. This report has been compiled after consideration of implications in respect of finance, equal opportunities, human resources, crime and disorder, human rights, the safeguarding of children, sustainability and the environment and those using the service and where such implications are material they are described below. Appropriate consultation has been undertaken and advice sought on these issues as required.

RECOMMENDATION/S

- 1) That the report be noted.

Mick Burrows
Chief Executive

For any enquiries about this report please contact: Christine Marson, Governance Support Officer, Democratic Services. Tel No. 977 3887

Constitutional Comments

6. As the report is for noting only, no constitutional comments are required.

Financial Comments (PS 2/5/12)

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

Background Papers

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.

- a) Report to County Council – 29 March 2012 (published).

Electoral Division(s) and Member(s) Affected

All

16 July 2012**Agenda Item: 7**

REPORT OF THE SERVICE DIRECTOR, CHILDREN'S SOCIAL CARE

LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN STRATEGY

Purpose of the Report

1. To consider and comment on the proposed Looked After Children (LAC) Strategy, attached as **Appendix A**, which has been recommended to Policy Committee for approval on 18 July by the Children & Young People's Committee.

Information and Advice

2. It has been identified that our approach to Looked After Children would benefit from the development of an over-arching strategy which outlines the commitment of the Council and our partner agencies to supporting children in care. The strategy has been developed based on what young people have told us is important to them in The Pledge for Looked After Children, published in October 2010.
3. Nottinghamshire's commitments to Looked After Children, as set out in The Pledge, underpin our Looked After Children Strategy. The strategy has been developed with our key partners and was endorsed by the Children's Trust Executive in June 2012. This strategy identifies the Council's ambition for its Looked After Children and young people, ensuring that they receive placements that meet their needs, have access to high quality education and enjoy positive activities that support them to achieve their full potential. For those children who require permanent alternative families, it means ensuring that effective plans are made so that they achieve permanence as quickly as possible.
4. In common with other areas of the country, Children's Social Care services in Nottinghamshire continue to be under pressure from the increase in numbers of Looked After Children. In Nottinghamshire, there were 808 children and young people in public care at the time of writing this report. Independent audit shows that thresholds for entry to the care system are being applied appropriately and the numbers of Looked After Children are in line with those of Nottinghamshire's statistical neighbours. There is evidence, however, to suggest that some children spend longer in the care system than necessary. The challenge is therefore to ensure that those children who will remain in care have a loving, safe, stable and happy childhood whilst also having a clear focus on finding permanent alternative placements through adoption, special guardianship or within the extended birth family through kinship care.
5. The Council's performance in relation to adoption timescales has also improved recently. Our current performance can be seen on the scorecard issued by Government in May

2012. Recent developments aimed at improving our performance include the establishment of a Permanence Team. This team was established in August 2011 to work exclusively to progress adoption plans and (together with significant revision of adult and child adoption processes) already shows signs of improving the quality and timeliness of adoption planning. However, we cannot underestimate the challenge of providing permanent families for vulnerable children. This is especially true at a time when nationally there are more children in care than ever before.

6. The LAC Strategy action plan (**Appendix 1** to the LAC Strategy document) will in part be delivered by the LAC project within the Children's Social Care Transformation Programme. This project has a number of work streams which include piloting new panel arrangements for entry to care, reviewing the support in place for kinship care and care leavers, and the wider range of options for permanency available to children and young people in the care system.

Other Options Considered

7. It is considered that not developing a strategy which encapsulates our commitments to this particularly vulnerable group of children and young people places at risk the outcomes which can be achieved, particularly in gaining the commitment of our partners to support children and young people in care.

Reason/s for Recommendation/s

8. The Looked After Children Strategy has been developed to give a clear and consistent cross-agency approach to improving outcomes for Looked After Children in Nottinghamshire.

Statutory and Policy Implications

9. This report has been compiled after consideration of implications in respect of finance, equal opportunities, human resources, crime and disorder, human rights, the safeguarding of children, sustainability and the environment and those using the service and where such implications are material they are described below. Appropriate consultation has been undertaken and advice sought on these issues as required.

Implications for Service Users

10. Looked After Children will benefit from clear commitments from the County Council and partner agencies which support them, based on what young people in care have told us is important to them in The Pledge.

Equalities Implications

11. The Strategy commits Council and partner services to giving Looked After Children the same opportunities as any other group of children and young people.

Safeguarding of Children Implications

12. The Strategy strengthens the commitment of the Council and partners to effectively safeguarding this vulnerable group of children and young people.

RECOMMENDATION/S

- 1) That the Sub-Committee considers and offers any comments on the proposed Looked After Children Strategy.

Steve Edwards
Service Director, Children's Social Care

For any enquiries about this report please contact:

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E: steve.edwards@nottscs.gov.uk

Constitutional Comments (LM 04/07/12)

13. The Corporate Parenting Sub-Committee has responsibility for overseeing the County Council's responsibilities as the corporate parent of children and young people in care. The Sub-Committee may consider and offer any comments on the proposed Looked After Children Strategy.

Financial Comments (NDR 03/07/12)

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

Background Papers

The Pledge for Looked After Children
DfE Adoption scorecard May 2012
Report to Corporate Leadership Team – CSC Transformation Programme May 2012

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.

Electoral Division(s) and Member(s) Affected

All.

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Looked After Children Strategy 2012-2015

An outcome-focused approach to supporting children in care

Front Cover image

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Introduction

Welcome to the Nottinghamshire Looked After Children Strategy.

This 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.

The strategy is being 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. The Children's Rights Director for England's recently published Care Monitor 2011, which provides a comprehensive picture of children's views of the care system. This strategy forms part of Nottinghamshire's response to this changing national context.

Locally in Nottinghamshire this strategy is being developed as we are undertaking a review of all our 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.

Our Children Looked After and Care Leavers rely on all agencies in Nottinghamshire to work together to meet their needs. A joined up approach is only possible when everyone understands and accepts their responsibilities for this most vulnerable group of children and young people. It is to this end that Nottinghamshire County Council and its partner agencies have created a shared vision:

"To ensure our looked after children have all the opportunities that good parents afford their children"

This vision is underpinned by The Pledge – Our Promise to Children and Young People in Our Care. The Pledge was developed in consultation with over two hundred children and young people 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, along with our partner agencies, will strive to deliver against.

Children only have one childhood, and so this document also commits us to achieve our vision through an action plan which focuses our attention on what matters most - outcomes for the children and young people in our care.

Anthony May

**Director for Children, Families, and
Cultural Services**

[Signature]

Cllr Philip Owen

**Portfolio Holder for Children and
Young People**

[Signature]

Nottinghamshire's ambition for Looked After Children

Our ambition for looked after children is to ensure that children and young people in our care have everything that good parents afford their children; giving them the support and protection they need to be safe, secure, happy and to achieve their full potential.

We want to keep children at home wherever possible, working with families to promote their resilience in often difficult and complex situations. When children do come into our care we want to ensure that they continue to live close to their friends and family to maintain a sense of stability in their lives. Their experience of care should be nurturing and meaningful, with the expectation that they will quickly return home when it is right and safe to do so.

We want our children and young people to be healthy, both physically and emotionally, and to be safe from harm and exploitation. We want them to enjoy and achieve at school, make a positive contribution to their communities and to make the transition to adulthood with confidence.

These outcomes can only be achieved by working with our looked after children and young people, their parents, carers and birth families. We will ensure that they have the opportunities to participate in decisions which affect their lives, and shape how we manage their care and support.

This strategy commits Nottinghamshire County Council and its partners to work together to achieve the very best outcomes we can for the children in our care, and in the subsequent sections we outline over 40 key actions we will be working to achieve over the next three years. From these actions, our top ten priorities will be to:

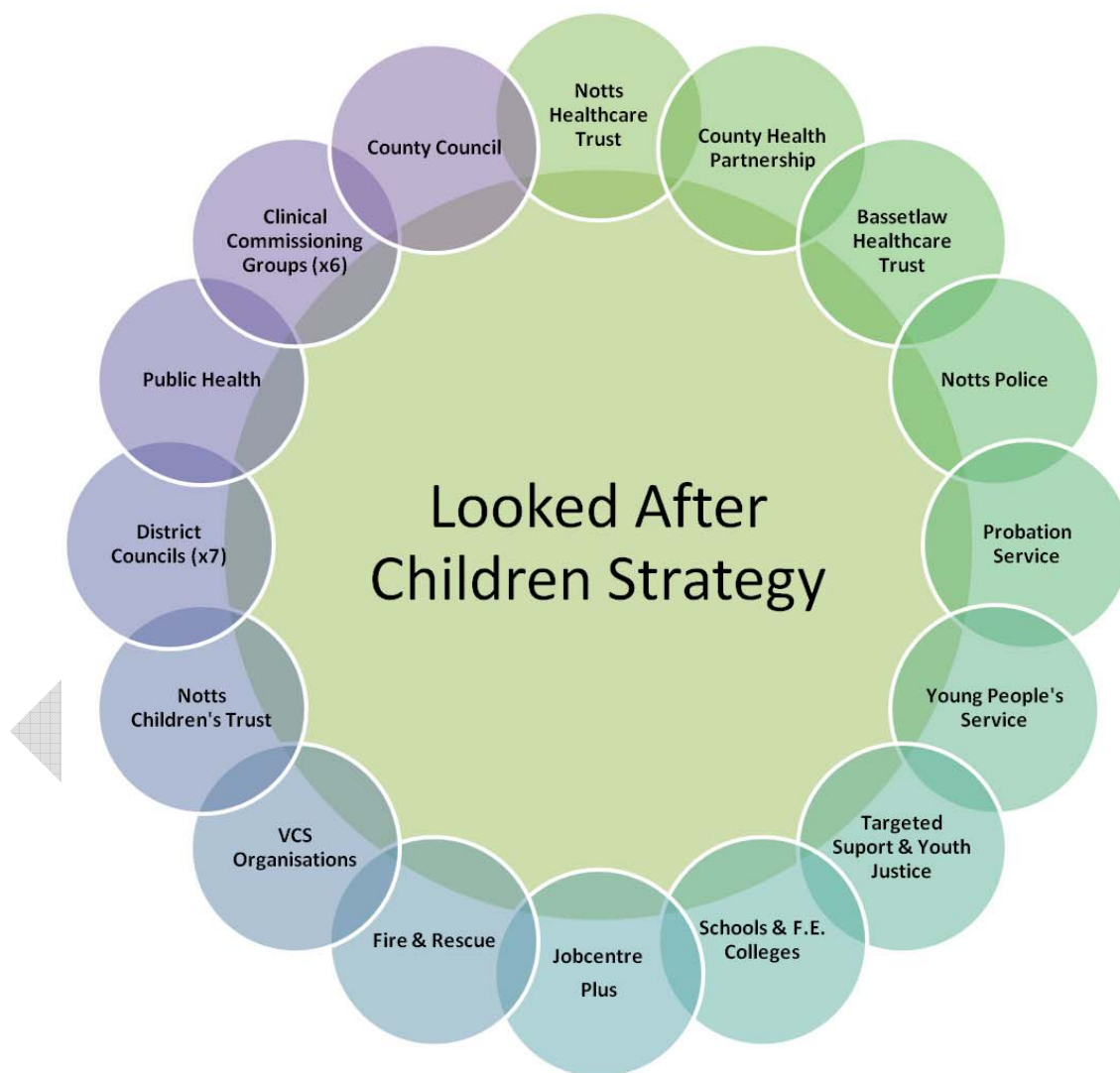
1. Continuously review 'The Pledge' to ensure it continues to reflect the priorities of all age groups in care
2. Develop a comprehensive participation strategy that outlines how agencies will gather and promote the views of children looked after
3. Ensure that we are minimising the number of times children 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

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A Joint Approach: Partnership Agencies

This document has been developed in close consultation with partner agencies across Nottinghamshire to ensure it reflects the joint priorities of all those who are working to support children looked after.



Outcomes for Children Looked After

Our focus is on what matters most to children looked after. In order to focus our attention, we have used the feedback we gathered from children and young people in The Pledge (see appendix one), as well as national research and trends. From this we have developed eight outcomes that that we will work in partnership to make a reality.

1. Participation and Joining In

Children and young people will be treated with respect by all who are involved with them. Their views will be listened to and they will be involved in making decisions about their lives. They know how to get information and support, as well as how to raise a concern if not happy.

2. Education

Children and young people have clear educational plans which mean they receive the right support to achieve their full potential.

3. Health

Children and young people have their health needs assessed and planned for, and are able to access the health services they require. They are healthy and happy and enjoy a good quality of life.

4. Safe and stable placements

Children and young people are in high quality placements where they feel safe and supported, and where they are able to remain for as long as they need to. They receive information about their placement in advance and are listened to if they have concerns at any time. Overall children and young people have a positive experience of family life or residential care.

5. Relationships

Children and young people are supported to maintain, build and sustain positive relationships with others, including their birth families, carers and peers.

6. Identity

Children and young people know who they are and why they are looked after. They feel valued and respected by others, and their individual needs arising from gender, race, culture, disability, sexual orientation, and religion are understood and met.

7. Moving to Adulthood

Children and young people are supported to move into young adulthood successfully. They will have a home to live in, the skills to look after themselves and the ability to earn a living or continue in education. They feel confident about the future.

8. Emotional Wellbeing

Children and young people achieve emotional stability, resilience and self confidence.

Our Strategy for Looked After Children

1. Participation and Joining In

Children and young people will be treated with respect by all who are involved with them. Their views will be listened to and they will be involved in making decisions about their lives. They know how to get information and support, as well as how to raise a concern if not happy.

Nottinghamshire's Pledge to Children and Young People in Care

- We promise to listen to all children and young people and engage their views through a range of mechanisms
- We will listen to children and young people's views about where and when to have reviews, and who should attend. We promise to plan them well in advance so that everyone can prepare thoroughly.
- We promise children and young people can talk to an independent visitor or advocacy worker if they are not happy about their social worker
- We promise help for young people to have their say if they are not happy. No Labels, our Children in Care Council, will speak up for them to improve services
- We promise to help children and young people take part in things like sports and clubs

What we know nationally (*Children's Care Monitor 2011*)

- 57% of children said they are asked their opinion on things that matter to them, but 15% of said their opinions don't make a difference
- The top three things children and young people wanted more say in were deciding on their placement, decisions about their future, and decisions about contact with their family

What we know in Nottinghamshire

- Children and young people want their social worker to be reliable and turn up when they say they will, to explain to them if meeting times change or are cancelled, and ask that social workers take a real interest in them
- Children and young people enjoy joining in with the activities and opportunities provided by the Young People Looked After Youth Work Team¹

¹ A profile of the Young People Looked After Youth Work Team can be found in Appendix 3

What we have done so far

- Established the 'No Labels' Children in Care Council, which acts as an advocate for children and young people in care
- Produced a Nottinghamshire Pledge, or "The Pledge", that was developed in consultation with children and young people. This sets out children and young people's priorities in a user-friendly way
- Updated the 'Listen to Me' booklet for younger children looked after
- Extended the Nottinghamshire Children and Young People's Board to include a young person who is currently looked after. This ensures the priorities of young people in care are adequately represented
- Commissioned an independent organisation to provide an independent visiting and advocacy service, so that young people's views are fairly represented in all aspects of their life
- Ensured that reviewing officers meet with children looked after prior to their reviews, to encourage two-way participation and to make this as meaningful as possibly to young people's lives
- Consistently signpost and assist young people to access Nottinghamshire Youth Service activities
- Set up a system whereby fostered young people now actively take part in the training of prospective foster carers thereby enabling a continuous cycle of learning. They also take part in the review of foster carers, provide regular placement feedback reports about the quality and standard of care, recognising that children and young people know what matters to them most
- Established a process whereby a careleaver is on every recruitment panel for aftercare team staff including the team manager
- Invited careleavers to be part of the Step Up to social work programme by speaking about their experiences to prospective social workers
- Involved careleavers in training and development of social workers through their participation in the NCC training programme "Preparing for Adulthood"
- Established and maintained strong links with What About Me? Substance Misuse Service which further adds a 'voice' to children and young people through their consultation work and advocacy

What are we going to do next

- Work with older young people to produce a new review booklet to ensure their voices are heard
- Ensure reviewing officers use the suite of consultation booklets available to involve looked after children in shaping their own care plans and support them to monitor their care plans

- Set up a Facebook page that will mean we communicate and network with young people in a way that is friendly and accessible to them
- Continuously review 'The Pledge' to ensure it continues to reflect the priorities of all age groups in care
- Find new and innovative ways of ensuring that care planning decisions such as placement changes are not made outside the review process, and that children looked after are always involved in these decisions
- Enable children looked after who live in independent sector placements to access to the same opportunities and services as those who are placed within Nottinghamshire County Council care
- Ensure care planning is inclusive and reflects the views of parents and carers
- Implement a revised placement feedback report, designed by fostered young people for fostered young people
- Produce a new guide to adoption for children looked after to help them understand the opportunities and challenges this presents, and how they can influence the process
- Develop a comprehensive participation strategy that outlines how agencies will gather and promote the views of children looked after
- Ensure that very young children and foster carers can access the early years and family support services they need at the local children's centre

2. Education

Children and young people have clear educational plans which mean they receive the right support to achieve their full potential.

Nottinghamshire's Pledge to Children and Young People in Care

- We will make sure you have a school place
- We will work with schools to ensure you get full time education
- We will try to ensure that you get into a school within 6 days if you are out of school or have moved
- We will ensure access to nursery or early years education for children in care who are 3-4 years old
- We promise a designated teacher for children in care in every school
- We promise you will have a plan which guides your time in school - this is called a PEP (Personal Education Plan)

What we know nationally (*Children's Care Monitor 2011*)

- 87% of children in care rate their education as good or very good, with more children in foster care than residential care saying they have a positive experience of education
- 78% of children in care said they are doing well in education. Most children who are doing well in education, said it was because they were working hard (68%), followed closely by good teaching (56%)

What we know in Nottinghamshire

- Children and young people want their teachers to know enough about them to understand their situation, but don't want to be singled out and made to feel different in front of their peers
- Children and young people want support for extra tuition that is easily accessed at school
- Children and young people are sometimes excluded from classroom activities because of their behaviour, and want more support to stay within the classroom
- Children and young people want to stay in the same school to be close to friends, even if they now live further away than before
- Children and young people ask that meetings in school are not organised for times that will make it obvious they are 'different', as it draws too much attention to them

What we have done so far

- Established a Virtual School, which monitors the educational performance of children in care, and helps schools access additional funding streams. The services of the Virtual School are also available to all adopted children with parental agreement. This is supported by a senior leadership team of head-teachers, and has close ties with the corporate parenting panel.
- Personal Education Plans have been updated to ensure educational planning for children looked after in school and to close educational gaps
- Provided training for all designated teachers for looked after children to enable them to respond to the effects of trauma and attachment difficulties
- Improved attainment figures for children looked after and young people across all Key Stages in Nottinghamshire
- Decreased the number of fixed-term exclusion rates for looked after children and young people, and through a range of intervention and support, ensured that no looked after young person has been permanently excluded
- Commissioned high quality alternative educational provision where needed to meet individual children and young people's needs
- Made available a financial support package for care leavers who wish to access higher education
- Hold regular annual events to celebrate regular educational achievements of looked after children and young people

What are we going to do next?

- Improve the timeliness and quality of Personal Education Plans to ensure they have a greater impact on looked after children's educational attainment
- Enhance opportunities for children looked after in and out of education for music and school trips
- Ensure that teacher assessment data is robust and good quality, so that we can respond quickly and effectively to looked after children who need more support in education
- Monitor children looked after in below floor target and satisfactory schools
- Review funding mechanisms that currently support the education of children looked after to ensure these continue to provide added value
- 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

- Embed systems for quick access to school places whether the school be an Own Admitting Authority (OAA), academy, foundation or VA school
- Ensure that all children looked after will have a link educational psychologist
- Demonstrate our commitment to the Virtual School by working together to ensure that the staffing and resources available to the Virtual School are sufficient for the work that it does
- 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

DRAFT

3. Health

Children and young people have their health needs assessed and planned for, and are able to access the health services they require. They are healthy and happy, and enjoy a good quality of life.

Nottinghamshire's Pledge to Children and Young People in Care

- We will make sure children and young people get regular health and dental check ups
- We will give children and young people contact details of the nurse for Looked After Young People

What we know nationally (*Children's Care Monitor 2011*)

- 69% of children aged 14 or over identified alcohol as a danger to people their age
- The top three dangers listed by children aged 14 or over were drugs, knives and alcohol
- Drugs were much more likely to be seen as a big danger by care leavers living independently, by asylum seekers, and by children living in children's homes
- Children often enter the care system with a worse level of health than their peers, in part due to the impact of poverty, poor parenting, chaotic lifestyles and abuse or neglect. Longer term health outcomes for looked after children remain worse than their peers²
- Many aspects of young people's health have been shown to worsen in the year after leaving care. Young people interviewed a year after leaving care were almost twice as likely to have problems with drugs or alcohol and to report mental health problems. There was also increased reporting of 'other health problems' including asthma, weight loss, allergies, flu and illnesses related to drug or alcohol misuse and pregnancy³
- Research has shown that by the age of 20 a quarter of children who had been in care were young parents, and 40% were mothers⁴. The prevalence of teenage motherhood among looked after girls under-18 is around three times higher than the prevalence among all girls under-18 in England

What we know in Nottinghamshire

- Looked after young people would like their health checks to be done in different places such as leisure centres

² Haywood J. and James C. (2008) Improving the health of children in care and care leavers in London 2008/9. Unpublished paper, Care Services Improvement Partnership

³ Dixon, J. (2008) 'Young people leaving care: health, well-being and outcomes', Child and Family Social Work 13, 207-217

⁴ Barn R, Andrew L, Mantovani N (2005) *Life after care: the experiences of young people from different ethnic groups* Joseph Rowntree Foundation, London

- Looked after young people want to know what their health plan is and be given a copy of it
- The prevalence of teenage pregnancy amongst young women in care is lower than national estimates

What we have done so far

- Working with health, together we ensure that health needs are better identified and addressed
- Within Nottinghamshire a dedicated team of doctors and nurses ensure that children looked after and young people receive appropriate and timely health services
- Produced a booklet for young people who self harm which gives advice and information about sources of support available
- Put in place a programme of training events for foster carers which promote healthy living for children and young people
- Commissioned a specialised service for children looked after to both prevent and treat substance misuse
- A substance misuse screening tool is now used in work with care leavers to aid early identification of substance misuse issues and fast-track to treatment services
- Trained Social Care staff to support young people with sex and relationships education and the provision of the C-Card condom scheme
- Established good links and referral pathways to the young people's advocacy group What About Me? (WAM) to further enhance support provision for looked after children where appropriate

What are we going to do next?

- Work with District Councils across Nottinghamshire to improve children looked after and young people's access to council-run sport and leisure facilities
- 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
- Ensure commissioning arrangements for health services for looked after children and care leavers are prioritised and maintained in the light of health reforms

4. Safe and stable placements

“Children and young people are in high quality placements where they feel safe and supported, and where they are able to remain for as long as they need to.

They receive information about their placement in advance and are listened to if they have concerns at any time. Children and young people have a positive experience of family life or residential care.”

Nottinghamshire’s Pledge to Children and Young People in Care

- We will try our best to help you stay in your foster home where you are happy
- We promise a place to live with carers who will meet your needs
- We will make sure that services for young people in care, children’s homes and foster care are checked to make sure they give good services

What we know nationally (*Children’s Care Monitor 2011*)

- Most children feel very safe where they live. 94% of children said they feel safe in the building where they live, and 90% of feel safe when at school or college
- Children and young people feel safer when in the presence of an adult they trust (55%) or when around police or security people (23%).
- 57% of children and young people in foster care said they would go to their foster carer for help if they felt unsafe

What we know in Nottinghamshire

- Children and young people want to be able to visit placements before they move in
- Children and young people want to be able to have a choice in where they are placed
- Children and young people worry about being moved from the placement where they feel happy and settled
- Children and young people want carers to speak up for them because sometimes they feel their voice is not heard by people making the decisions about their lives
- Children and young people want carers not to concentrate only on practical things, but to also think about how to meet their aspirations and support their emotions

What we have done so far

- Produced an award-winning children’s guide about being looked after
- Provided a range of support to young people and their carers to help keep placements stable, which has resulted in less than 5% of young people in care experiencing three or more moves in any one year.

- Increased the number of long term, therapeutic foster homes by an additional 10 households in 2011/12 and increased the number of foster homes overall from 342 to 358. This gives more choice to young people in need of a foster home
- Implemented a Staying Put Policy which makes it possible for young people to remain in their foster placements after the age of 18
- Set up a dedicated multi disciplinary Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services team for looked after and adopted children
- Commissioned an independent agency that provides an advocacy service to ensure that young people are able to share any concerns they have about their placement

What are we going to do next?

- Undertake a consultation exercise to review the experience of children and young people in placements, to understand where we can improve
- 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
- Ensure that disruption meetings are held in a consistent way in all types of placement, where a placement ends in an unplanned way. This will mean that learning from disruption is embedded to inform future service and care planning
- Implement a recruitment programme for foster carers for children with disabilities
- Continue to expand the number of salaried carers for young people in need of permanent foster care
- Explore ways of better managing the challenges that social media bring to the stability and security of placements for children and young people
- Maintain our commitment to inclusive adoption planning and support in light of changing national legislation
- Further develop our support to children and young people in permanent kinship placements to ensure that these remain stable and continue to meet their needs

5. Relationships

Children and young people are supported to maintain, build and sustain positive relationships with others, including their birth families, carers and peers.

Nottinghamshire's Pledge to Children and Young People in Care

- We promise that, unless there is a good reason not to, you can have contact with your brothers, sisters and other family members.
- We will make sure contact meetings are planned in advance

What we know nationally (*Children's Care Monitor 2011*)

- Bullying is an ongoing concern for children in care. 9% of children and young people in care said they are bullied often. The most common type of bullying identified was name-calling (79%), followed by rumours being spread (42%), and being left out of things (35%)
- In 2011, nearly three quarters (73%) of the children in care who had one or more siblings also in care were separated from brothers or sisters by being placed to live in different placements
- 92% of those who had been placed together with their siblings thought this had been right in their case. 41% of those who had been separated from one or more siblings in a different placement thought that this was right in their case
- Children in foster homes were much more likely than children in residential care to say that being separated in different placements had been right in their case

What we know in Nottinghamshire

- Children and young people said they worry about their family and particularly their siblings
- Children and young people want the adults around them to be honest with them
- Children and young people want to have a relationship with their social worker that they can rely on. They want social workers to keep their promises and if a young person asks them for a small or big thing they need to recognise that they are all important to them
- Children and young people said they don't see their family and friends as much as they would like to. Sometimes meetings are rushed and they have to choose between seeing family or friends.

What we have done so far

- Designed activity days for adopted young people to get together and share their experiences

- Ensured that contact plans are at the heart of a child's care plan
- We have set clear standards for social workers and have redefined them in relation to their role and responsibilities towards the children and young people they work with
- Recruited foster carers from all over Nottinghamshire to try and keep young people close to their family/community of origin where it is safe to do so
- Committed to ensuring that foster carers have the necessary competence to work with birth families and understand the relevance of contact plans
- Maintained a letterbox scheme for children who are adopted which ensures that links are kept with members of their birth family who are important to them

What are we going to do next?

- Establish a new Family Assessment and Contact Service which will provide a consistent approach to contact across the county
- 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
- Develop a training and information pack for social workers within the throughcare team which covers a range of important issues for looked after children including overnight stay guides, and the role of education and health
- Seek to delegate more authority to foster carers to make day to day decisions about contact plans with family and friends

6. Identity

Children and young people know who they are and why they are looked after. They feel valued and respected by others, and their individual needs arising from gender, race, culture, disability, sexual orientation and religion are understood and met.

Nottinghamshire's Pledge to Children and Young People in Care

- We promise services that meet the needs of young people from different backgrounds, cultures and disabilities
- We promise to listen to **all** children and young people

What we know nationally (*Children's Care Monitor 2011*)

- 68% of children in care said that they thought coming into care was the right thing for them at the time. Around one in five were not sure, and just over one in eight (13%) thought that coming into care was the wrong thing for them at the time
- 75% of foster children whose foster parents had their own children told us that they were treated the same as their foster carers' children

What we know in Nottinghamshire

- Children and young people are sometimes unsure why they had to come in to care, and this could have been explained more clearly to them
- Children and young people in care want more information about their family backgrounds to help them understand who they are
- Children and young people who are unaccompanied asylum seekers want placements which meet their cultural and emotional needs
- Rules and regulations don't always make sense to young people, they can make them feel different, and could be explained more clearly

What we have done so far

- Provide specialist counselling for children looked after from a black and minority ethnic background
- Provided specialist consultancy for carers of black and minority ethnic young people
- Run a photography project for looked after children and care leavers to share their experiences of being in care
- Helped children with adoption plans to better understand their life story by producing a "life story work"
- Extended support available for children and young people in permanent placements including dedicated support

What are we going to do next?

- Continue to recruit foster carers from a wide range of diverse backgrounds
- Through specific commissioning arrangements ensure that all internal and external placement providers meet the individual needs of children
- Establish a new recruitment programme for foster carers specifically for children with disabilities
- Further develop our support to children and young people in permanent placements to ensure that these remain stable and continue to meet their needs
- Ensure that all young people with permanent fostering plans have life story work completed with them

7. Moving to Adulthood

Children and young people are supported to move into young adulthood successfully. They will have a home to live in, the skills to look after themselves and the ability to earn a living or continue in education. They feel confident about the future.

Nottinghamshire's Pledge to Children and Young People in Care

- We will work with you to give you all the help and support you need to make a success with moving on from care to adult life
- We promise you will have a pathway plan which we will write with you and you can keep a copy
- We will make sure we will talk to you regularly about your pathway plan
- We will give you all the information you need about leaving care
- We will keep you informed about what money you are entitled to
- We promise to provide a card with information to support you if you get into trouble
- We will give you up to date information about available support
- We will make sure you are not criminalised by any actions in care settings that wouldn't normally result in police involvement in a family home

What we know nationally (*Care Monitor 2011*)

- 13% of children and young people who were about to leave care said they were getting no help to prepare for future
- 29% of children and young people who leave care are classified as not in education, employment, or training (NEETs)
- Overall, 64% of care leavers said they were getting good or very good support

What we know nationally (*After Care 2012*)

- 44% of care leavers said their lives were much better as a result of leaving care
- There is a significant variance in the levels of leaving care grant that children receive across the country. The Government advises that £2,000 is an appropriate amount
- The top four things children and young people want when leaving care are more help with money, more practical help, to be given important documents, and to have someone to talk to

What we know in Nottinghamshire

- 21% of care leavers are classified as not in education, employment or training (NEETs)

- Children and young people said they get worried about what age they have to leave care and who will help them once they reach 18. In particular they would like more support when they leave care
- Young people may need extra support emotionally as their developmental age may not be the same as their chronological age

What we have done so far

- Developed a Staying Put Policy which makes it possible for young people to remain in their foster placements beyond 18
- Provided access to dedicated Employment, Education and Training Advisors to assist care leavers in accessing employment, education and/or training to prevent them reaching NEET status
- Continued to improve the quality of pathway planning to ensure young people have the necessary skills and confidence to move into adulthood
- Enabled more flexible use of home establishment grants to ensure individual young people's needs are met
- Prioritised the accommodation of careleavers by recruiting a dedicated accommodation officer in the Aftercare team to develop housing options and promote good practice
- Ensured all careleavers have access to a named Education, Employment and Training Adviser in the Aftercare team who can provide individual direct help and support to young people

What are we going to do next?

- Scope the viability of an integrated transitions service for children with disabilities to embed person-centred planning and ensure the journey from childhood to adulthood is as comfortable as possible
- Continue to recruit foster carers under the 14+ scheme to support the Staying Put Policy
- Develop supported lodgings and extend accommodation options for care leavers
- Increase availability of apprenticeships within Nottinghamshire County Council for care leavers
- Explore ways of making emotional and mental health support services more accessible to older young people

8. Emotional Wellbeing

Children and young people achieve emotional stability, resilience and self confidence.

Nottinghamshire's Pledge to Children and Young People in Care:

- We will give you up-to-date information about self harming, and advice and support services

What we know nationally (*Children's Care Monitor 2011*)

- There has been a slight decrease in the number of children who said they worry about their safety. In 2011, 34% said they worry a little or a lot about their safety. This was down from 36% last year and 43% the year before
- Looked After Children show significantly higher rates of mental health disorders compared to their peers, including children in the most deprived socio economic groups⁵
- There are high levels of mental health need amongst looked after children, particularly those in residential care. 45% of looked after children were assessed as having a mental health disorder, rising to 72% of those in residential care. Boys in Care experience mental health disorders more than girls^{6,7}

What we know in Nottinghamshire

- Children and young people said they want to have someone to talk to when they feel happy or sad, and ongoing help to confront the issues from their childhoods
- Children and young people would like carers to try not to make it obvious that they are not the same as their birth children
- Children and young people say that, even though they have unique challenges due to their backgrounds, they want to be treated the same as other children

What we have done so far

- Established an annual achievement event which celebrates achievements of children and young people looked after
- Produced a booklet for young people who self harm which gives advice and information about sources of support
- Identify emerging issues through the consistent use of a Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire

⁵ Ford T., Vostanis P., Meltzer H. and Goodman R. (2007) 'Psychiatric disorder among British children looked after by local authorities: comparison with children living in private households', British Journal of Psychiatry 190, 319-325

⁶ Dimigen G., Del Priore C., Butler S. et al (1999) 'Psychiatric disorder among children at time of entering local authority care: questionnaire survey', British Medical Journal, 319, 675

⁷ McCann J., James A., Wilson S. and Dunn G. (1996) 'Prevalence of psychiatric disorders in young people in the care system', British Medical Journal 313, 29-30

- Established a dedicated multi disciplinary CAMHS team for looked after and adopted children
- Developed a policy for Safeguarding Children and Young People from Sexual Exploitation that includes inter-agency guidance

What are we going to do next?

- 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
- Further assess mental health and emotional needs of Looked After Children through the refresh of the CAMHS needs assessment

Our Action Plan

A detailed annual action plan has been agreed across all agencies to support the delivery of the priorities set out in this strategy. This is outlined in more detail in appendix 1.

The strategy and action plan will be formally signed off by the Children's Trust Executive and Children and Young People Committee. The action plan will be monitored by a multi agency Looked After Children steering group on a bi-monthly basis and highlight reports against each of the eight themes will be taken to both the Corporate Parenting Sub Committee and 'No Labels', our Children in Care Council twice yearly.

The overall strategy will be reviewed in 2015

DRAFT

Appendix 1: Action Plan

Action	Owner/s	Job title	Deadline
Work with older young people to produce a new review booklet to ensure their voices are heard and that they shape their own care plans (LAC Review) (Listen to Me)	Izzy Martin	Service Manager, Conference & Review	Jul-12
Ensure reviewing officers use the consultation booklets with children and young people prior to every review to ensure they can shape their own care plans	Izzy Martin	Service Manager, Conference & Review	Jun-12
Set up a Facebook page that will mean we communicate and network with young people in a way that is friendly and accessible to them	Jo Down	Children's Social Care Locality Manager for Gedling	
Continuously review 'The Pledge' to ensure it continues to reflect the priorities of all age groups in care	Sue Hollingworth-Shaw	Co-ordinator Youth Services, Young People Looked After	Ongoing activity
Find new and innovative ways of ensuring that care planning decisions such as placement changes are not made outside the review process, and that children looked after are always involved in these decisions	Izzy Martin	Service Manager, Conference & Review	Jun-12
Enable children and young people who live in independent sector placements to access to the same opportunities and services as those who are placed within Nottinghamshire County Council care	Norman Chessman	Service Manager, Placements	Nov-12
Ensure care planning is inclusive and reflects the views of parents and carers	Ty Yousaf	Service Improvement Team Manager	Oct-12
Produce a new guide to adoption for older children and young people to help them understand the opportunities and challenges this presents, and how they can influence the process	Shelagh Mitchell	Service Manager, Adoption	Jul-12
Develop a comprehensive participation strategy that outlines how agencies will gather and promote the views of children looked after	Rachel Coombs	Group Manager for Access to Resources	May-13
	Dawn Godfrey	Group Manager for Social Work Services North	
Improve the timeliness and quality of Personal Education Plans to ensure they have a greater impact on looked after children's educational attainment	Rachel Coombs	Group Manager for Access to Resources	Ongoing activity

	Dawn Godfrey	Group Manager for Social Work Services North	
Enhance opportunities for children looked after in and out of education for music and school trips	Sue Denholm	Co-ordinator of the Virtual School	
Ensure that teacher assessment data is robust and good quality, so that we can respond quickly and effectively to looked after children who need more support in education	Sue Denholm	Co-ordinator of the Virtual School	Ongoing activity
Monitor children looked after in below floor target and satisfactory schools	Sue Denholm	Co-ordinator of the Virtual School	Ongoing activity
Review funding mechanisms that currently support the education of children looked after to ensure these continue to provide added value	Rachel Coombs	Group Manager for Access to Resources	Jul-12
Ensure that we are minimising the number of times looked after children need to move to a different school during their education, by establishing better joint planning between social care and education	Rachel Coombs	Group Manager for Access to Resources	Ongoing activity
	Dawn Godfrey	Group Manager for Social Work Services North	
Embed systems for quick access to school places whether the school be an Own Admitting Authority (OAA), academy, foundation or VA school	Sue Denholm	Co-ordinator of the Virtual School	Jun 12
	Scott Hollingsworth	Access and Admissions Strategy Co-ordinator	
Ensure that all children looked after will have a link educational psychologist	Charles Savage	Principal Educational Psychologist	Sep-12
Demonstrate our commitment to the Virtual School by working together to ensure that the staffing and resources available to the Virtual School are sufficient for the work that it does	Marion Clay	Group Manager for Support to Schools Service	Ongoing activity
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	Dennis McCarthy	Targeted Support Operations Manager	Apr-13
Work with District Councils across Nottinghamshire to improve children looked after and young people's access to council-run sport and leisure facilities	Rachel Coombs	Group Manager for Access to Resources	Apr-13
	Dawn Godfrey	Group Manager for Social Work Services North	
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	Rachel Coombs	Group Manager for Access to Resources	Apr-13
	Dawn Godfrey	Group Manager for Social Work Services North	
Ensure commissioning arrangements for health services for looked after children and care leavers are prioritised and maintained in the light of health reforms	Rachel Coombs	Group Manager for Access to Resources	Sep-12
	Dawn Godfrey	Group Manager for Social	

		Work Services North	
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	Norman Chessman	Service Manager, Placements	Jan 13
Undertake consultation exercise to review the experience of children and young people in placements, to understand where we can improve	Norman Chessman	Service Manager, Placements	Nov-12
Ensure that disruption meetings are held in a consistent way in all types of placement, where a placement ends in an unplanned way. This will mean that learning from disruption is embedded to inform future service and care planning	Rachel Coombs	Group Manager for Access to Resources	Sep-12
	Dawn Godfrey	Group Manager for Social Work Services North	
Continue to expand the number of salaried carers for young people in need of foster care	Jayne Austin	Service Manager, Fostering	Jul-12
Explore ways of better managing the challenges that social media bring to the stability and security for placements of children and young people	Jayne Austin	Service Manager, Fostering	Jul-12
	Shelagh Mitchell	Service Manager, Adoption	
Maintain our commitment to inclusive adoption planning and support in light of changing national legislation	Shelagh Mitchell	Service Manager, Adoption	Ongoing activity
Further develop our support to children and young people in permanent kinship placements to ensure that these remain stable and continue to meet their needs	Denise Martin	Service Manager, Family Support	Nov 12
Establish a new Family Assessment and Contact Service which will provide a consistent approach to contact across the county	Denise Martin	Service Manager, Family Support	Ongoing activity
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 feed in to social work appraisals	Rachel Coombs	Group Manager for Access to Resources	Dec-12
	Dawn Godfrey	Group Manager for Social Work Services North	
Develop a training and information pack for social workers within the throughcare team which covers a range of important issues for looked after children including overnight stay guides, and the role of education and health	Dawn Godfrey	Group Manager for Social Work Services North	Ongoing activity
Seek to delegate more authority to foster carers to make day to day decisions about contact plans with family and friends	Jayne Austin	Service Manager, Fostering	Sep-12
Continue to recruit foster carers from a wide range of diverse backgrounds	Jayne Austin	Service Manager, Fostering	Ongoing activity
Through specific commissioning arrangements ensure that all internal and external placement providers meet the individual needs of children	Norman Chessman	Service Manager, Placements	Jan-13
Further develop our support to children and young people in permanent placements to ensure that these remain stable and continue to meet their needs	Rachel Coombs	Group Manager for Access to Resources	Ongoing activity
	Dawn Godfrey	Group Manager for Social Work Services North	
Ensure that all young people with permanent fostering plans have life story work completed with them	Dawn Godfrey	Group Manager for Social Work Services North	Ongoing activity

Scope the viability of an integrated transitions service for children with disabilities to embed person-centred planning and ensure the journey from childhood to adulthood is as comfortable as possible	Fran Arnold	Group Manager, Children's Disability Service	Sep-12
Continue to recruit foster carers under the 14+ scheme to support the Staying Put Policy	Jayne Austin	Service Manager, Fostering	Mar-13
Develop supported lodgings and extend accommodation options for care leavers (link with youth homelessness strategy)	Laurence Jones	Group Manager - Targeted Support and Youth Justice Services	Ongoing activity
	Michelle Lee	Service Manager, Aftercare	
Increase availability of apprenticeships within Nottinghamshire County Council for care leavers	Rachel Coombs	Group Manager for Access to Resources	Jun-12
	Dawn Godfrey	Group Manager for Social Work Services North	
Services to looked after young people will all contribute to the emotional wellbeing of our looked after children and young people	Rachel Coombs	Group Manager for Access to Resources	Mar-12
	Dawn Godfrey	Group Manager for Social Work Services North	
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	Helen Daft	Interim Children's Service Manager, Residential / CAMHS services	Sep-12
Further assess mental health and emotional needs of Looked After Children through the refresh of the CAMHS needs assessment	Sally Handley	Senior Public Health Manager	Apr-13

Appendix 2: The Pledge – Our Promise to Children and Young People in Care

Nottinghamshire County Council have made this Pledge to Looked After Children and Young People. Young people were involved in the Pledge and were represented by No Labels.

The Pledge is a list of promises to children and young people.

We cannot promise to do everything you ask but when we cannot we will explain why.

No Labels is the name of our Children In Care Council.

It's a place where young people meet up to talk about life in care.

You can find out more about No Labels from Sue Shaw on 07740 845824, or ask your social worker for information.

▼ SOCIAL WORKERS

Young People SAY...

- We would like a qualified social worker and to meet our social worker away from our foster home so that we can talk openly.
- We would like the social worker's telephone number so we can contact them.

We Promise

A qualified social worker for every young person in care. Your social worker will listen to you and make sure you have our contact details.

Your social worker will meet with you away from your foster home if you wish.

Young People SAY...

- Who can we talk to about our social worker if we are not happy?

We Promise

You will not be in trouble if you tell your social worker you are not happy about something they do.

You can talk to an independent visitor or advocacy worker if you are not happy about your social worker.

▼ REVIEWS

Young People SAY...

- Some of us do not see our care plan before our review or we get it too late so we feel we cannot contribute.
- We want to see our care plan at least two weeks before the review so that we are given time to have a say in the services we need and who attends our review.

Young People SAY...

- We want reviews done out of school time.
- We do not like to be taken out of school or out of class.
- We would like our reviews to occur in places that we know, where we feel safe, and that are nice for young people.

We Promise

An up to date care plan for every Looked After Child and Young Person and the opportunity to have your say before your review meeting.

We will listen to your views about where and when to have your reviews, and who comes to them.

▼ CONTACT

Young People SAY...

- We would like contact with our brothers, sisters and families to be arranged with a diary in advance.
- Young people feel under pressure to attend at the last minute that makes us have to make a choice about meeting our family or going out with our friends.

We Promise

Unless there are good reasons not to, you can have contact with your brothers and sisters and other family members.

We will make sure the meetings are planned in advance.

▼ INCLUDING EVERYONE

Young People SAY...

- Please make sure you include unaccompanied asylum seeking children and young people, young people with disabilities and those from different backgrounds when you consult us.

We Promise

To listen to all children and young people.

Services that meet the needs of young people from different backgrounds, cultures and disabilities.

▼ WHERE WE LIVE

Young People SAY...

- Who can young people speak to if the carer does not meet our needs?
- Please tell us who we can talk to about our carers if we are not happy?

We Promise

A place to live with carers who will meet your needs.

We will make sure you can speak to your social worker, youth worker, advocacy worker or an independent visitor if you have concerns.

Help for young people to have their say if they are not happy. No Labels, our Children In Care Council, will speak up for you to improve services.

We will also make sure that services for young people in care, children's homes and foster care are checked to make sure they give good services.

Young People SAY...

- Some of us have to keep moving foster home, which makes us worried.

We Promise

We will try our best to help you stay in your foster home where you are happy.

We will make sure you can tell us your views at your review.

▼ EDUCATION

Young People SAY...

- We have the right to go to school full-time.

We Promise

We will make sure you have a school place.

We will work with schools to ensure that you get full-time education.

We will try to ensure that you get into a school within six days if you are out of school or have moved.

Nursery or early years education for children in care who are three to four-years-old.

Young People SAY...

- Who is the teacher in my school to help me if I have any worries?

We Promise

A teacher whose job is to help young people in care to do as well as other young people. This person is called a Designated Teacher. We will make sure you are given the teacher's name when you start or change school.

You will have a plan which guides your time in school—this is called a PEP (Personal Education Plan).

Young People SAY...

- Please tell us about the Personal Education Allowance (PEA).

We Promise

To tell you about the Personal Education Allowance (PEA). This is a payment which can be used to help you catch up with school work.

Support to help you feel happy in school.

JOINING IN

Young People SAY...

- We sometimes feel worried about taking part with other young people. We would like someone to support us to help us feel confident, like a youth worker or a social worker.

We Promise

Help to take part in things, like sports and clubs. We will tell you about the youth work team for Looked After Young People.

HEALTH AND WELL-BEING

Young People SAY...

- Please can we have the name of the nurse for young people in care who can give us confidential advice and help?

We Promise

We will make sure you get regular health and dental check-ups.

We will give you contact details of the nurse for Looked After Children and Young People.

LEAVING CARE

Young People SAY...

- We get worried about what age we have to leave care and who will help us.

We Promise

To work with you to give all the help and support you need to make a success with moving on from care to adult life.

You will have a Pathway Plan which we will write with you and you can keep a copy.

We will give you all the information you need about leaving care.

Young People Who Have Left Care SAY...

- We cannot always remember completing a Pathway Plan and would like it updated regularly.
- We would like a small card, which tell us our entitlement to money, etc., at ages 16–18 (we get information but forget).
- We would like more support when we first move out from care.

We Promise

We will keep you informed about what money you are entitled to.

We will make sure we talk to you regularly about your Pathway Plan.

OTHER THINGS

Young People SAY...

- We would like to know what our rights are if we get into trouble with the police, for example:
- What is the law about the age we are classed as an adult?
- Are we allowed to phone someone if we are at the police station?

We Promise

To provide a card with information to support you if you get into trouble.

Young People SAY...

- We would like more advice about self-harming and how we can be signposted to help and support.

We Promise

We will give you up to date information about available support.

We Also Promise

To give you a Children's Guide, which contains lots of information about Being Looked After.

That we will check our Pledge to you often, so that when we can, we will improve on the promises that we have made.

We will listen to your views through No Labels– Nottinghamshire's Children In Care Council.

We cannot promise to do everything you ask, but when we cannot we will explain why.

Appendix 3: Glossary of key agencies and services that will deliver the Looked After Children Strategy

Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS)

The Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) provide a service for children 0-18 years where there are concerns about their emotional well-being or mental health.

The County Children Looked After & Adoption Team is based within the CAMHS service and specifically works with children and young people who are living away from their birth parents in the care of Nottinghamshire Children's Services.

These children and young people may be living with foster carers, in residential group home placements or for whom adoption is being explored / planned. The team also offers specialist consultation and support to children who have been adopted and their families.

CAMHS endeavour to meet the emotional health needs of looked after children by offering consultation to the network around the child. The multi-disciplinary team offers support and intervention based on a consultation model that empowers the professional network around the child and their carers and offers them an opportunity to explore ideas about how best to meet the child's needs.

Kinship Care workers

Kinship Care Workers support extended family members who are caring for children and young people from birth to 18 years whom for various reasons are unable to live with their parents, as an alternative to them being accommodated by the local authority.

Senior Educational Psychologist

Looked after children are supported by an educational psychologist who is trained in understanding how children and young people behave and learn. Their job is to make sure that children and young people who are in care and adopted get an education which they enjoy and where they succeed. They make contact with responsible adults involved in children's' lives, to identify the best learning environment for looked after young people.

Throughcare team

The Through-care Service is made up of 3 teams, made up of Personal Advisers, Education, Employment and Training Advisers and an Accommodation officer. The team is a mix of qualified and non-qualified social workers. They work with young people aged 16 to 21 (up to 25 if you are in education) who have been in care for at least 13 weeks. They support young people to think about what their goals are and to help them make realistic plans to achieve them through the formulation of a Pathway Plan.

Independent Reviewing Officers

Independent Reviewing Officers are qualified social workers whose role it is to quality assure looked after children review meetings. These review meetings take place within 20 days of a young person coming in to care, followed by another 3-monthly and then 6-monthly review.

A young person will always be invited to their review, but if they do not want to attend their review meeting, they will speak to them beforehand to ensure their views are represented at every stage.

Family Resource Team

The Family Resource Team focus on provide a range of preventative support services that for families with children aged 8 to 18 years, to enable them to stay with their birth family wherever possible. They also undertake crisis intervention and time-limited packages of intensive work where there is a serious risk of family breakdown, and provide more general advice, guidance and early support for families of children over 8 years of age who are experiencing difficulties in caring for their children.

Education, Standards and Inclusion Service

This service is made up of different teams of professionals who work with schools and other educational settings, including pre-school and home settings, to make sure that all children, including those looked after, on the edge of care, adopted, and those receiving after care services, can learn well. This includes extending access to extra resources such as one-to-one tuition, the personal education allowance, and the pupil premium, to help you to make good progress.

Some teams within this service work mainly with teachers to ensure that the schools children attend are safe places to learn, where lessons are stimulating, interesting and meet your learning needs.

Some of the professionals in the Education, Standards and Inclusion Service work directly with children, carers and teachers to agree ways of supporting young people to stay in school when you are at risk of being excluded. Sometimes when it is too difficult, professionals within the service help young people and their carers to find education alternatives which are better matched to their needs.

The Virtual School for Looked After Children

Within the Education, Standards and Inclusion Service, there is a 'virtual school' which focuses exclusively on the education needs of children and young people looked after, on the edge of care, adopted children, and those receiving after care services. This virtual school oversees the education of all Nottinghamshire Looked After Children, whether they attend schools and settings within Nottinghamshire or out of county.

The School consists of the Coordinator, a Senior Educational Psychologist, two officers working directly with schools, carers, social workers and, where appropriate, children and young people. Alongside this team a dedicated youth worker, connexions, health and CAMHS representatives all work with the virtual school to ensure that all children looked after access high quality education

The Virtual School supports schools and all partner agencies through training, advice and guidance concerning any issues around education. The school supports the personal educational planning process, looked after reviews and at all times adopts a solution focussed approach to their work with LAC. The school also celebrates achievement and out of school opportunities through personal education allowance and promotion of youth work events dedicated to looked after children.

Young People looked After Youth Work Team

The team consists of one full time co-ordinator, one full time youth worker and a number of youth work staff with a responsibility for the Children in Care Council and one to one youth work. The role of the team is to support Fostered and Adopted young people to participate in a full range of activities which they enjoy and is fun.

The main responsibility of the team is to develop leisure, sports and arts opportunities for children and young people looked after, care leavers, and those who are adopted throughout Nottinghamshire as well as be responsible for the Children in Care Council and the participation of young people.

The Children In Care and Adoption Health Team – County Health Partnerships, Nottinghamshire and Nottingham City

The Children In Care and Adoption Health Team are a team of Doctors and Nurses who work together to look after the health of children and young people who are in care or are going to be adopted.

Children and young people in the care of the local authority are seen on a regular basis through their time in care by the health team to have their health assessed. At their health assessment children and young people have the opportunity to discuss how they are feeling and if there is anything that can be done to help to make their health better. We know that the health of children and young people who come into the care of the local authority is often worse than their peers. We aim to work with children and young people to improve their health now and for their future

What About Me (WAM)

WAM gives help and support to young people who are affected by someone elses drug or alcohol use or misuse. WAM is for young people who live anywhere in Nottinghamshire and is a totally confidential service. When a child or young person comes to the service they are given a support worker.

This support worker will provide confidential 1 to 1 support. This is done through weekly or fortnightly sessions where the child or young person can use these sessions to give themselves timeout from their normal day to deal with any problems or concerns they may have.

Appendix 4: Terms of Reference for Children in Care Council

To be added upon final publication

DRAFT

Appendix 5: Demand Trends

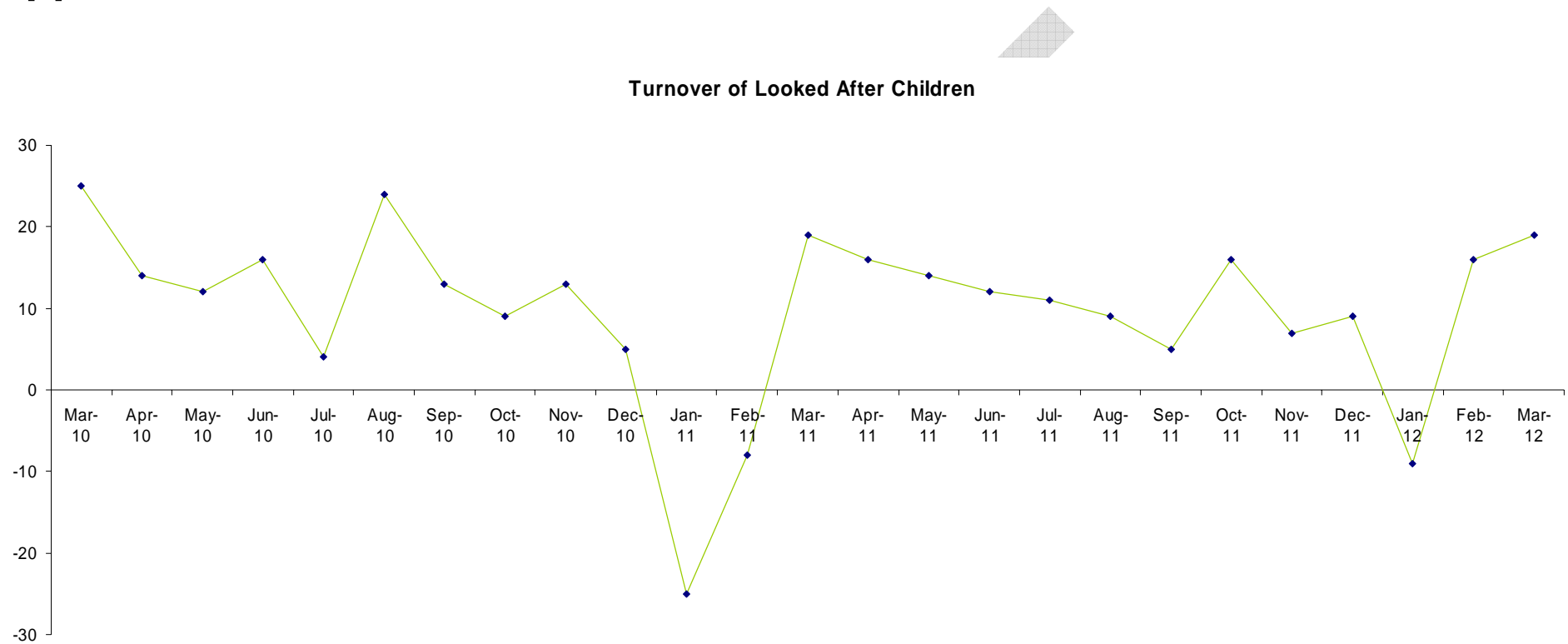


Figure 1: Turnover of children who are classified as looked after (LAC status), Mar 2010 - Mar 2012

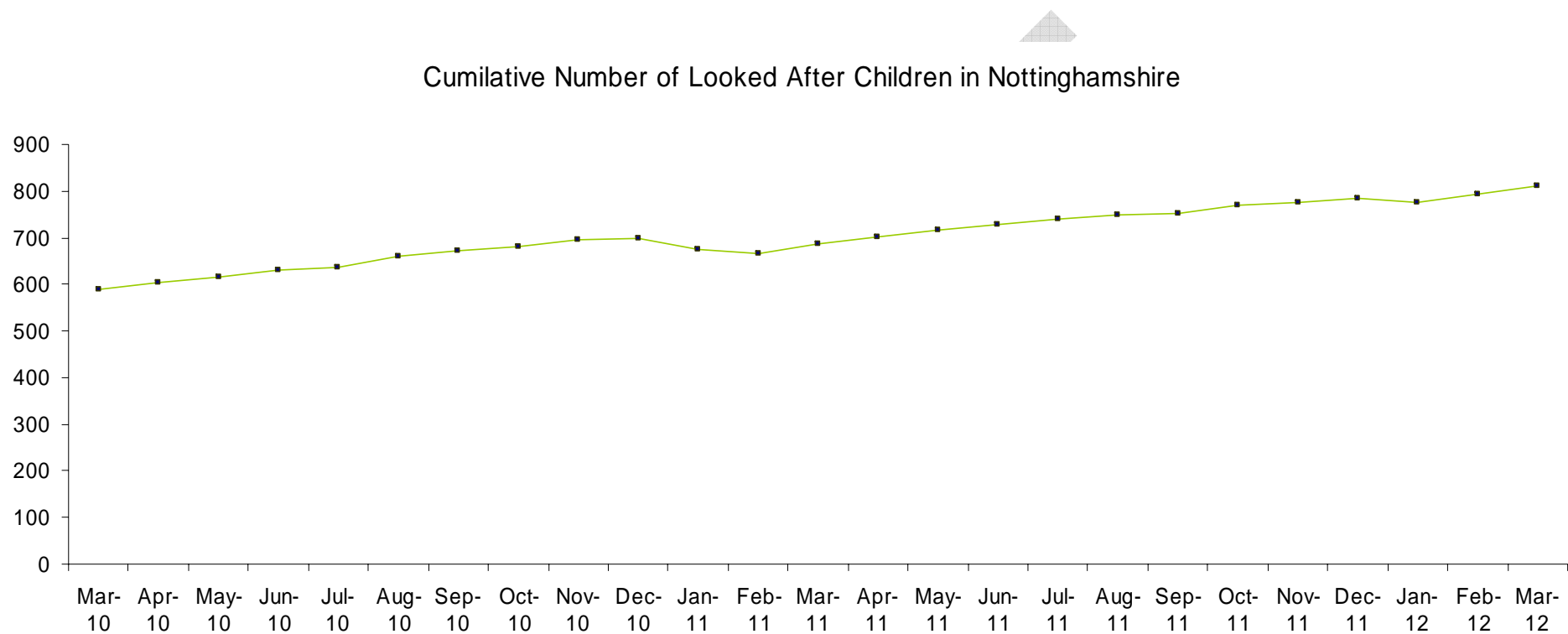


Figure 2: Cumulative number of children who are classified as looked after (LAC status), Mar 2010 - Mar 2012

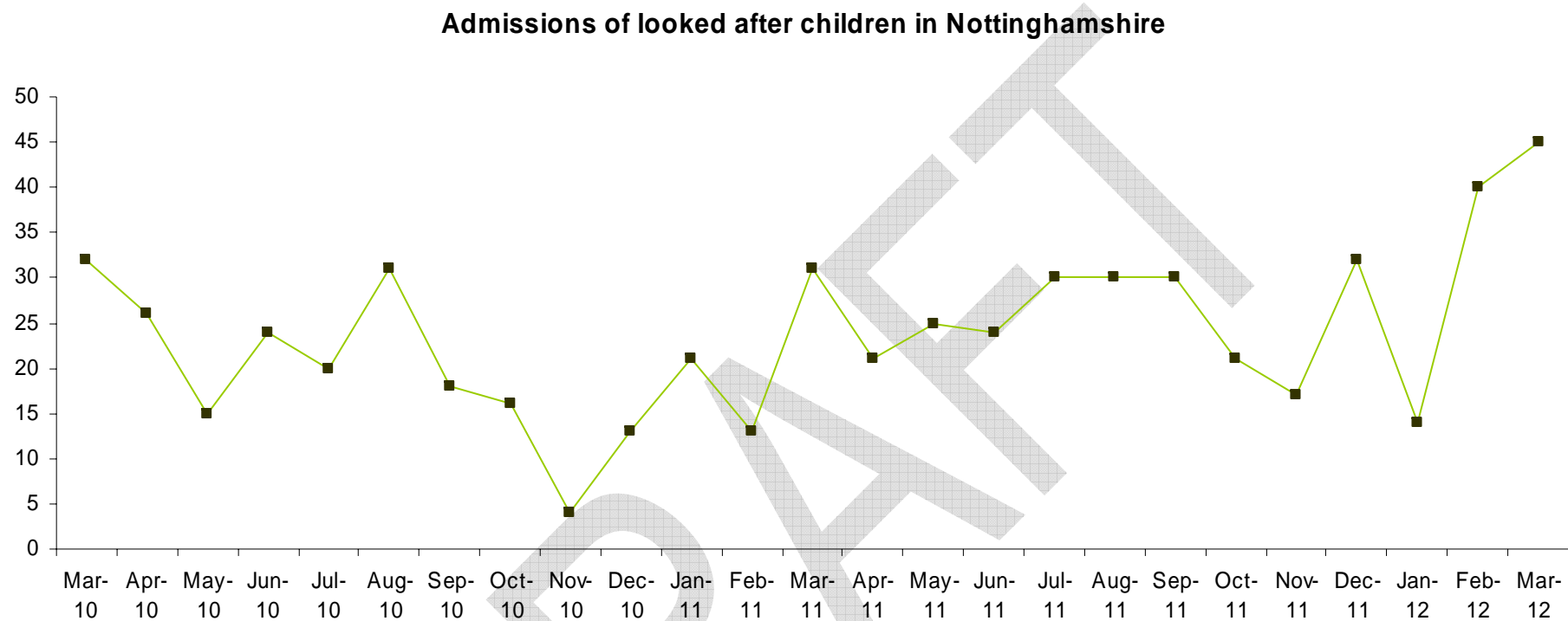


Figure 3: Admissions of looked after children, Mar 2010 - Mar 2012

Discharges of looked after children in Nottinghamshire

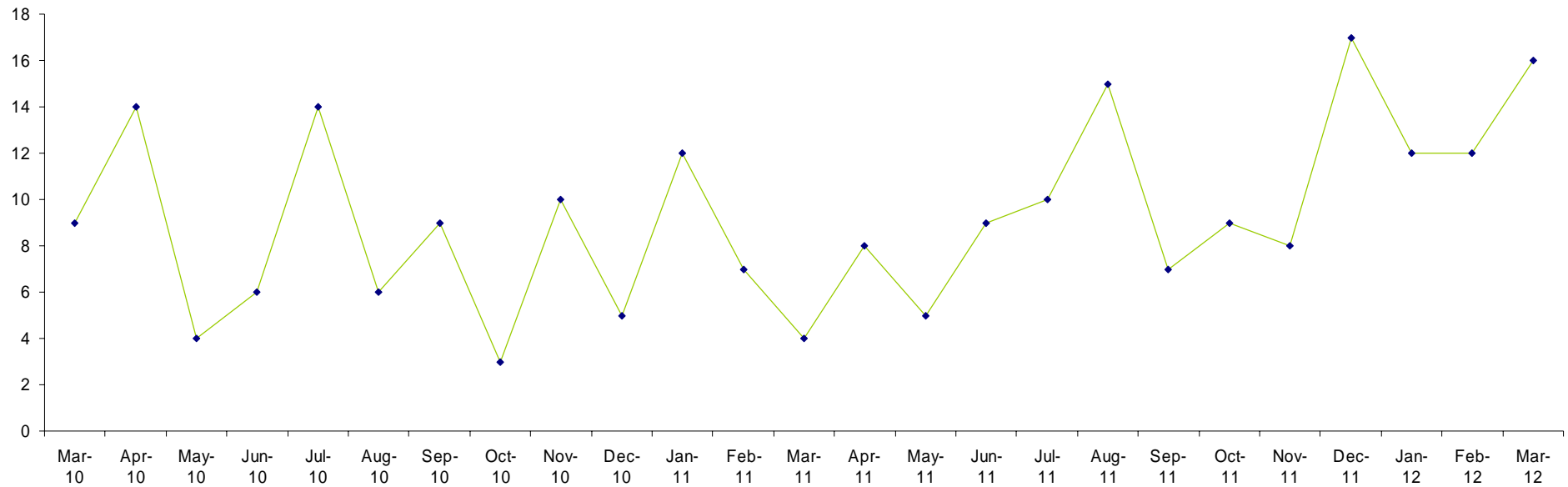


Figure 4: Discharges of looked after children in Nottinghamshire, Mar 2010 - Mar 2012

Number of Looked After Children who are not in education, employment or training (NEET status)

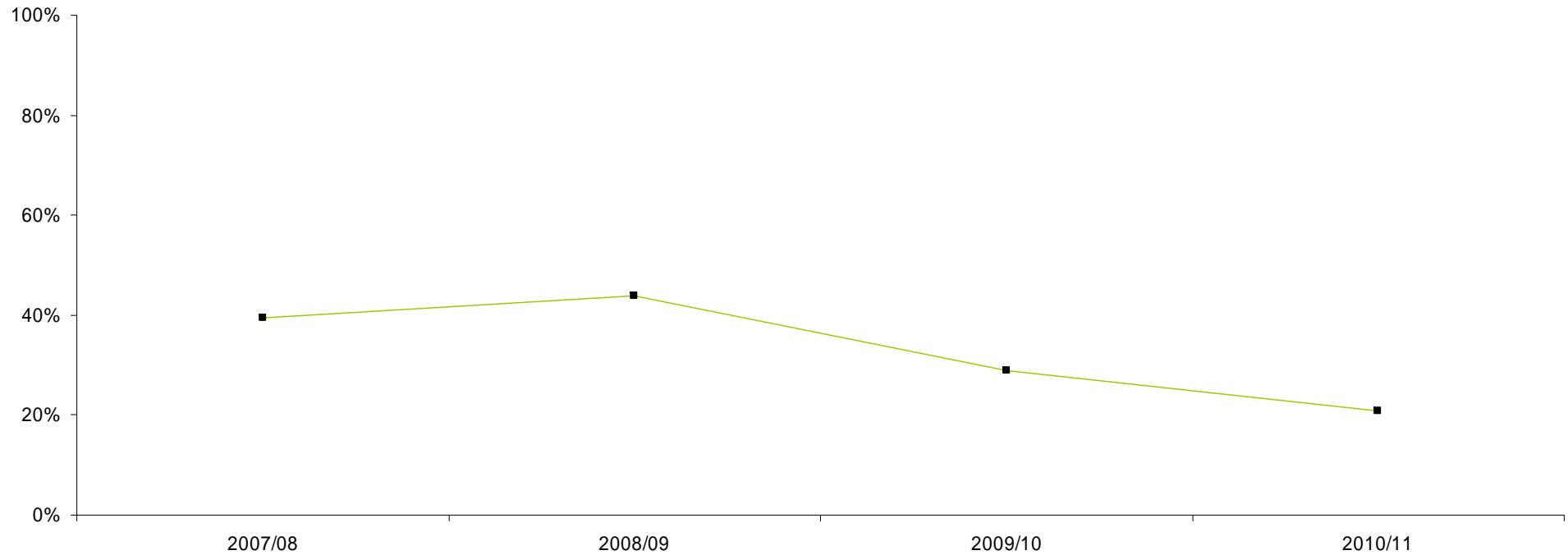


Figure 5: Number (displayed as a percentage) of previously looked after children who went on to be classified as NEETs (not in education, employment or training) Apr 2007 - Apr 2011

16 July 2012**Agenda Item: 8****REPORT OF THE CO-ORDINATOR OF THE VIRTUAL SCHOOL FOR
LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN****SUMMER TERM REPORT FOR THE VIRTUAL SCHOOL FOR LOOKED
AFTER CHILDREN****Purpose of the Report**

1. To update the Corporate Parenting Sub-Committee on the virtual school for the summer term 2012.

Information and Advice**Virtual School Senior Leadership Team and Virtual School Development Plan**

2. The next meeting of the virtual school senior leadership team will be in July 2012. Updates on the virtual school development plan will be shared at this meeting.
3. A member of the virtual school senior leadership team who is head teacher of an academy in the north of the County expressed an interest in running a short course English GCSE for looked after children. Four other schools in the area will also collaborate in working towards establishing a short course English GCSE. Further developments will be discussed at the senior leadership team meeting.

Virtual School Staff

4. The virtual school co-ordinator is pleased to report that two Looked After Children Achievement Officers were appointed following interviews in April 2012. Ian Stewart and Marice Gillespie are now working for the virtual school full time. Ian will be covering the south of the County (Broxtowe, Rushcliffe, Gedling and Newark) and will also be working with the three County residential homes on any educational issues. Marice will cover the north of the County (Mansfield, Ashfield and Bassetlaw). Both Officers will be based at Lawn View House with the co-ordinator.
5. Both members of staff have received an induction programme with the virtual school and attending training with an outside provider on looked after/adopted children/young people's needs in education to assist them in providing support for our schools.

Termly Designated Teacher Network Meetings

6. To provide ongoing continuous professional development (CPD) opportunities and information sharing events Designated Teacher Network Meetings have been organised

for the summer term in the north and south of the County. The co-ordinator of the virtual school, and both looked achievement officers will be in attendance as will the senior educational psychologist for looked after children. These summer term meetings will be providing CPD on a multi-modality resource that the virtual school will offer to schools following the successful multi-modality project run by the virtual school in conjunction with Dr Petula Bhojwani, consultant on literacy. The meetings will also give an opportunity to discuss any educational issues schools may have with LAC/adopted pupils.

Designated Teacher Memos

7. These continue to be sent out regularly, minimally half termly. The coordinator uses this method to communicate information, news and events with designated teachers across the County. Feedback from teachers has been positive and encourages contact from all schools with the virtual school.

School Links

8. The virtual school co-coordinator continues to deliver training to primary and secondary schools and evaluations are positive.
9. The virtual school co-ordinator continues to support out of County schools who have Nottinghamshire looked after children and adopted children/young people on roll with any educational issues.
10. The virtual school co-ordinator has also continued to attend the primary and secondary head briefing events and will be delivering a workshop at the Closing the Gap event in June 2012.

Social Care Links

11. The virtual school co-ordinator has now visited social care teams across the County. Information has been passed to them concerning updates on the virtual school, new LAC achievement officers, funding streams and the importance of keeping school placements stable. Since these meetings, social workers have been contacting the virtual school for support when considering a school move.

Fronter

12. The Fronter room for the virtual school is now accessible to all schools. This will be continually updated with information available for schools on important aspects of education and looked after children. Currently, there are films from the Mighty Creative Projects, OFSTED information, designated teacher training course materials and The Pledge. In the future such items as pupil premium and transition ideas will also be posted. The virtual school also has a room on Fronter for fostering and adoption networks.

Floor Target Schools

13. The virtual school continues to monitor looked after children in below floor target schools.

14. There are now 13 looked after children in schools below floor target. The summer term checks by School Improvement Advisors are now underway and reports back so far are encouraging. All children are making progress with some making accelerated progress. All children who qualify for 1:1 tuition have had or are receiving the additional sessions in English and maths and have made progress in these areas. Other interventions are also provided for children who require them in areas such as reading, maths and English and show good progress in these areas.
15. In the new academic year, should there still be schools in this category. School Improvement Advisors will continue to monitor any looked after children on roll.

Teacher Assessment Data Collection

16. The virtual school has now implemented the collection of termly teacher assessment data. There have been two collections, one in the autumn term and one in the summer term. Schools have been supportive in returning data. However, there is still work to be done with ensuring all the data is sent into the authority. Out of 345 children and young people of statutory school age, data was returned on 242 across autumn and summer collections. These figures are based on Nottinghamshire looked after children in Nottinghamshire schools.
17. This is seen as positive and there will be further contact made with the schools not returning the data either on a timely basis or not at all to ensure that 100% return is made in the future.
18. The virtual school is working in collaboration with the data management team to begin the analysis of the data received. Reports to enable the co-ordinator to track and monitor individual pupils will be developed in the coming months.
19. The Authority is making this a high priority for development and the senior leadership team for the virtual school is also working collaboratively to assist in this process. The co-ordinator is working with the data manager for a secondary school represented on the senior leadership team to ensure correct reports are developed. The head teacher of the secondary school is also keen to support the virtual school in working with the schools not returning data or not in a timely fashion.
20. Special school data is returned by manual methods. Generally pupils in special schools do make good progress and achieve their potential within the range of their complex needs.

Areas for monitoring

21. The Mission Statement for the virtual school has been agreed to replace the No Less than Success document. This will now be reviewed and updated as required through both senior leadership team and Corporate Parenting Sub-Committee. A copy of the statement is available as a background paper.
22. School moves. There have been concerns that a number of looked after children may move schools inappropriately and to schools that may be unsuitable in meeting the child's needs. This issue and the use of the agreed transport policy to ensure looked

after children can remain in their schools were also highlighted in the serious case review findings and have been identified as areas for monitoring through the Corporate Parenting Sub-Committee. To assist with this monitoring process, it has been agreed that applications for looked after children to move schools within the County will be passed through the virtual school to monitor the situation and reduce the number of unnecessary moves.

23. To date no applications have been received by the virtual school. There have been a number of school moves that were in process prior to this agreement involving 17 children/young people and the virtual school has had a role in all of these cases to ensure that appropriate support has been provided and the placement can be as successful as possible.
24. Looked After Children Strategy 2012-2015. The virtual school holds a number of key areas in the Strategy. These areas will be monitored through the Corporate Parenting Sub-Committee.

Achievement Event

25. The achievement event is due to take place on 14 July 2012. The co-ordinator will be attending an evening session with the young people who are working on the bunting theme for the day. A year 13 young person will also make a short presentation on her forthcoming trip to teach English abroad. Rufford Park has again been chosen for the venue and they are providing free of charge activities through the day to support the event.

Projects

26. The final sharing event for the Mighty Creatives projects went ahead in May and was successful. A number of other local authorities have made contact with either the co-ordinator or the Mighty Creatives organisation to run similar projects.
27. The 2011/12 multi modality project ended in June 2012. A celebration event was organised for June at Rufford Park where the young people came to show their work; schools also came to this event to support their pupils alongside carers. From the success of this project Dr Petula Bhojwani is now working with the virtual school to produce a sustainable resource for all schools to use. This will be shared at the designated teacher network meetings. The work of the children and young people from this project was due to be shown at an international conference in June 2012 and displayed at the achievement event.
28. The co-ordinator of the virtual school is also in contact with the Arts and Sports for Children and Young People team looking at music opportunities through the Music Hub.
29. Intensive Mentoring Project. The virtual school highlighted that a number of post 16 young people can be at risk of falling out of their education plans. Alongside Remedi (a charitable organisation providing reparation services) and the Youth Justice Service, the virtual school has jointly funded a mentor to support the most vulnerable young people known to the virtual school through working with them during their statutory school age education. This worker will not be taking over the role of an after care worker but

complement and enhance the support the After Care team currently provide. The mentor has already met with all the young people identified and their carers/parents and there has been positive feedback from Children's Social Care, families and young people to date.

Letterbox Club

30. Initial evaluation of the 2011 letter box club has been received in draft form. The outcomes have been very positive with 118 children and young people accessing this resource (over 90 living in Nottinghamshire). Questionnaires were sent out to the carers of the children/young people. For the first questionnaire there was a 40% response rate and for the second questionnaire a 32% response rate. The evaluation indicated 81% of children/young people enjoyed receiving the parcels 'a lot' the remaining saying 'a little' or 'OK'.
31. An evaluation report should be available for the autumn term 2012. Provisional numbers for the 2012 project are 104 children/young people.

LAC Education Enrichment Fund

32. Agreement has been secured to continue to provide access to £500 for looked after children to enhance their educational opportunities. This funding has been agreed by Schools Forum Direct Schools Grant. This LAC 'Education Enrichment Fund' will effectively replace the Personal Education Allowance that was phased out by the Government over 3 years ago. This decision by the Schools Forum reflects the commitment of Nottinghamshire schools to improve educational outcomes for LAC.
33. The guidance and paperwork will be circulated in June 2012 to Children's Social Care service managers, team managers, social workers and independent reviewing officers.

Personal Education Plan

34. The first draft of the updated personal education plan is now ready and will be delivered to the Permanence Team and Mansfield/Ashfield children's service team for a trial period of at least two terms. Feedback will then be taken and documentation further revised as necessary.

Children in Care Council

35. The coordinator will be meeting with the Children in Care Council in September 2012 to both introduce herself and discuss items such as update on personnel for the virtual school, the revision of the personal education plan and ways in which the Council can ensure the virtual school works best for them.

Good News

36. Book tokens once again have been sent out to children and young people for a variety of successes. These have included completing SATs week, achieving 100% attendance for the first time, making outstanding progress and achieving early GCSEs.

37. A young person has also been highlighted to the virtual school for achieving a prestigious award for agriculture presented at Southwell Minster. This young person will have his name on the Roll of Honour board at Nottingham Trent University and has a glass trophy to keep.

Other Options Considered

38. This report is for information only.

Statutory and Policy Implications

39. This report has been compiled after consideration of implications in respect of finance, equal opportunities, human resources, crime and disorder, human rights, the safeguarding of children, sustainability and the environment and those using the service and where such implications are material they are described below. Appropriate consultation has been undertaken and advice sought on these issues as required.

RECOMMENDATION/S

- 1) That the Corporate Parenting Sub-Committee notes the report.

Sue Denholm
Co-ordinator of the Virtual School

For any enquiries about this report please contact:

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Constitutional Comments

40. As this report is for noting only, no Constitutional Comments are required.

Financial Comments (NDR 25/06/12)

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

Background Papers

Virtual school mission statement

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.

Electoral Division(s) and Member(s) Affected

All.

C0036

16 July 2012**Agenda Item: 9****REPORT OF THE SERVICE DIRECTOR, CHILDREN'S SOCIAL CARE****INDEPENDENT ADVOCACY SERVICE FOR LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN
AND YOUNG PEOPLE****Purpose of the Report**

1. To report on the current arrangements for the provision of the Advocacy Service for Looked After Children and Young People and the planned increase of the service in 2012-2014.

Information and Advice

2. The DN11 Serious Case Review, which considered the sexual abuse of a number of young boys placed in foster care, recommended that the Council review the Advocacy Service it provides to its Looked After Children population and report the review to the Corporate Parenting Sub Committee and the Nottinghamshire Safeguarding Children's Board.
3. Nottinghamshire, working in partnership with Nottingham City Council, commissions an external and independent Advocacy Service for Looked After Children. In March 2011, Barnardo's successfully tendered to supply both Nottinghamshire County Council and Nottingham City Council with an Advocacy Service.
4. This contract consists of three separate lots:
 - a Children's Advocacy and Independent Visitors Service, costing £86,962 in its first year and rising to £125,106 in its third year.
 - Advocacy for Young People in Secure Accommodation, costing £12,807 in its first year and £12,728 for the successive two years.
 - an Issue-Based Advocacy Service, which is contracted on a 'spot purchase' basis at a cost of £43 per hour. This potentially provides a service for young people in the Child Protection process, particularly in relation to Child Protection Conferences.
5. There were some difficulties, which continued for several months, concerning TUPE arrangements for staff transferring from the previous provider, NYAS, into the Barnardo's Service, which caused delay in the initial stages of providing the commissioned services. In January 2012, following some discussion with Barnardo's around their difficulties in meeting the service level agreement, a decision was taken to change the management of

the project and implement a very clear plan for offering the service that the two Local Authorities had commissioned and were funding.

6. In March 2012, Barnardo's met the targets set by the terms of the contract.
7. At the point of the tendering process in 2009/10, Nottinghamshire County Council's Looked after Children Population was in the region of 400 children and young people. In 2012 this has increased significantly to 804, in line with national trends. As a result of this increase the number of children and young people who may require an Independent Visitor has increased.
8. Any Looked After young person who requests an Independent Visitor is entitled to one. Currently there are 35 young people, 18 of which are Looked After by Nottinghamshire, who have been matched to an Independent Visitor. There are 31 young people, 16 in Nottinghamshire, waiting to be allocated.
9. 75 Residential Establishments have been visited and there is now a much clearer system for ensuring that Barnardo's are notified of all the units (including out-of-county placements) in which Nottinghamshire young people are placed.
10. There are two Independent Advocates attached to Clayfields Secure Unit, who deal specifically with issues for these young people.
11. The current established contract regarding Issue-based Advocacy and Advocacy to Clayfields Secure Unit meets the needs of those services, but the Advocacy and Independent Visitor Service for Looked After Children and Young People has been struggling to deal with the increasing demand within the budget available through the original contract.
12. Consideration was given to whether this contract would need to be re-tendered, given the difficulties being experienced with Barnardo's initial inability to meet the terms of the contract. However, given the lengthy TUPE process, and the time needed to set the service up, the decision was taken to continue with the current provider but set very clear expectations. Barnardo's were viewed as the preferred provider based on both a slightly lower cost and the fact that it was a well established national organisation, which should have less difficulty covering a service that would need to be countrywide, including those young people placed out of county.
13. Research carried out by the NSPCC suggests that any one Independent Visitor Coordinator can manage a maximum of 40 Independent Visitors/Advocates.
14. Under the structure proposed and agreed through the procurement process, Barnardo's were unable to offer a high quality, safely managed Advocacy/Independent Visiting Service to any more than approximately 40 young people at any given time. They are now in the position where they have recruited a large number of volunteers and could increase the number of young people being offered this service. In order to do so, they would need to employ another staff member to manage the additional volunteers. The cost of extending this service is in the region of £36,000. This allows for another 40 young people to be supported by the Advocacy/Independent Visiting Service. Currently Nottinghamshire County Council has 16 young people awaiting a service.

15. The additional investment into this service of £36,000 per annum, pro-rata for 2012/13 and for the full year 2013/14, will ensure that the young people currently waiting for an Independent Visitor will have one allocated and also that there is some additional capacity in the service to allow for a further increase. This additional investment will be funded from within the division's existing budget.

Other Options Considered

16. The report is for noting only.

Statutory and Policy Implications

17. This report has been compiled after consideration of implications in respect of finance, equal opportunities, human resources, crime and disorder, human rights, the safeguarding of children, sustainability and the environment and those using the service and where such implications are material they are described below. Appropriate consultation has been undertaken and advice sought on these issues as required.

RECOMMENDATION/S

- 1) That Committee notes the current arrangements for the provision of the Advocacy Service for Looked After Children and Young People and the planned increase of the service in 2012-2014.

Steve Edwards
Service Director, Children's Social Care

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Constitutional Comments

18. As this report is for noting only, no Constitutional Comments are required.

Financial Comments (NDR 06/07/12)

19. The financial implications are referred to in paragraph 15 of the report.

Background Papers

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.

Electoral Division(s) and Member(s) Affected

All.

C0029