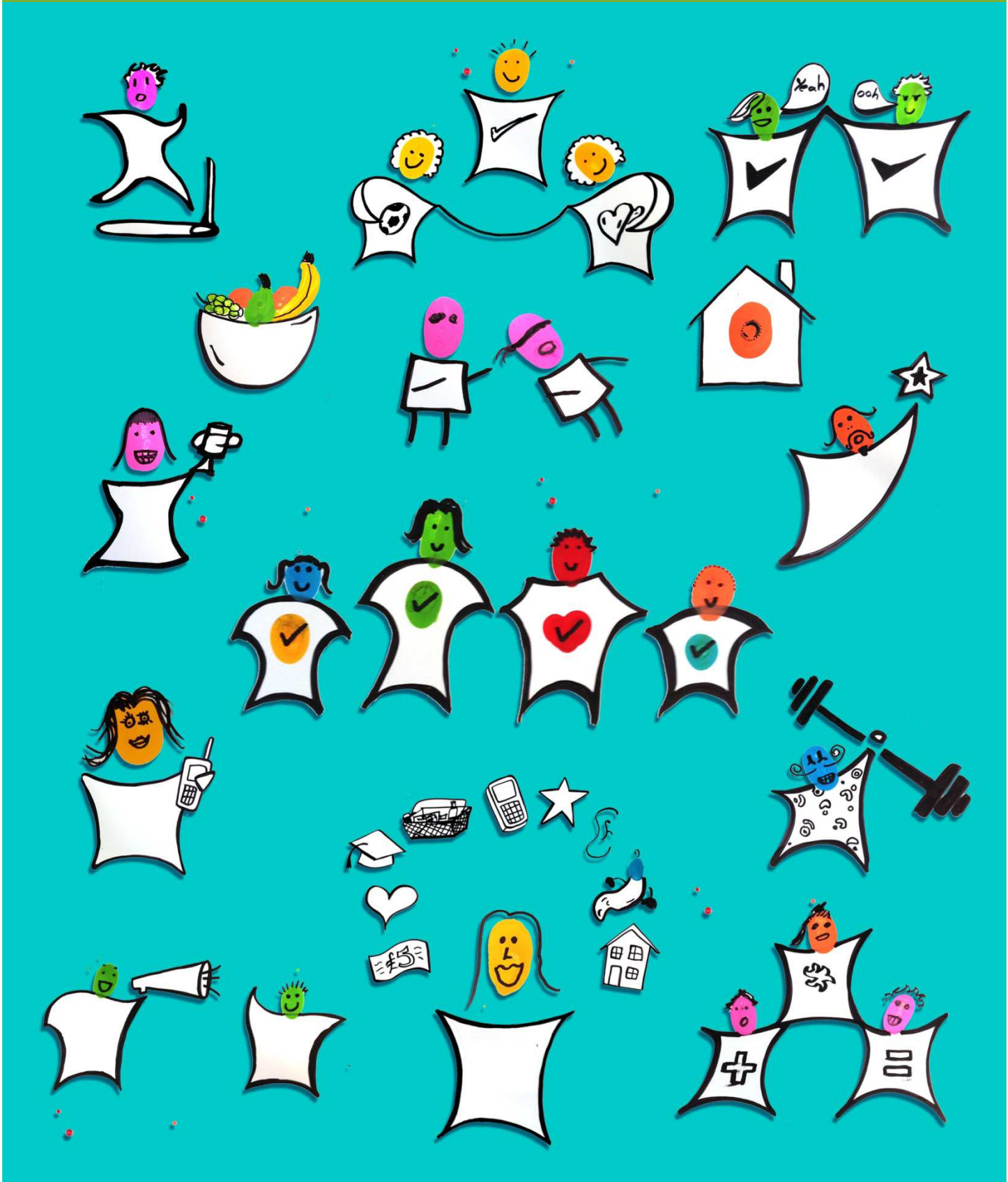




Nottinghamshire
County Council



Looked After Children and Care Leavers Strategy 2015 - 2018



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Foreword

The Looked After Children and Care Leavers Strategy is important to us because we depend on it to show our needs and expectations, and what we want adults to do to meet these. It's important the strategy continues to be a partnership strategy and it should continue to develop with young people.

The Children in Care Council recognises the importance of 'Looked after children and care leavers achieve their potential' and we truly believe this strategy will positively influence many aspects of young people's lives.

The Children in Care Council will frequently review the strategy and ensure we are able to challenge it where needed. This is for reassurance for all of our young people as we would like regular reports on achievements, but also on what hasn't gone well so we can all agree on how we can do more.

We are confident outcomes for looked after children and care leavers will continue to improve and the Children in Care Council will be at the heart of this.

Keeley Terry

Chair

No Labels Children in Care Council

This multi-agency strategy has been developed to ensure we deliver the best possible outcomes for children and young people in our care. The strategy now includes care leavers, because we recognise that our Corporate Parenting responsibility should not end when a young person leaves care. To reflect this change, we have updated our vision as Corporate Parents in Nottinghamshire:

To ensure our looked after children and care leavers have all the opportunities that good parents afford their children

As partner agencies, we recognise the best outcomes for looked after children and care leavers can only be achieved through effective partnership working.

We are ambitious for our looked after children and care leavers and this is why the strategy is aspirational, however, we also acknowledge that individual agencies are subject to their own financial constraints, reporting requirements and the pressures of organisational change. In the face of those challenges, we remain committed to striving for the best possible outcomes for the children and young people for whom we are Corporate Parents, particularly in the areas of health and education.

The priorities in this strategy are drawn from what our looked after children and care leavers have told us is important to them. The strategy reflects what children and young people in Nottinghamshire have asked for in The Pledge: Our Promise to Children and Young People in Our Care and is also informed by the Children's Care Monitor 2013/14, a national survey which represents the views of over 2,000 children and young people in care.

Councillor John Peck

Chair,
Children and Young People's
Committee

Derek Higton

Acting Corporate Director,
Children, Families and Cultural
Services

Chris Kenny

Director of Public Health

Introduction

The **Nottinghamshire Looked After Children and Care Leavers Strategy 2015-2018** has been developed by the County Council and its partners to set out our ambitions for the children and young people in our care. This strategy is exclusively focused on achieving the best possible outcomes for the looked after children and care leavers for whom we are Corporate Parent, and is underpinned by our vision:

To ensure our looked after children and care leavers have all the opportunities that good parents afford their children

Children and young people have been consulted during the development of this strategy, and we have endeavoured to make sure it reflects the promises we have made in The Pledge: Our Promise to Children and Young People in Our Care.

This strategy builds on the commitment to multi-agency working which is evidenced by the successes of the 2012-2015 strategy. We know that the best outcomes for looked after children and care leavers can only be achieved through **effective partnership working**. The success of this strategy relies on the commitment of the whole County Council; foster carers and other residential providers; commissioners and providers of healthcare; schools and colleges and all public and voluntary sector organisations in Nottinghamshire which contribute to improving the lives of children and young people in our care.

The Strategy is built around **six outcomes** for looked after children and care leavers (listed below). This document looks at each outcome in turn providing national and local information, as well as the view of children and young people from Nottinghamshire. Each outcome is then described with a list of **outcome statements** which give more detail about what we aspire to achieve for children and young people.

Looked after children and care leavers are happy and healthy

Looked after children and care leavers are safe

Looked after children and care leavers achieve their potential

Looked after children and care leavers are prepared for adulthood

Looked after children and care leavers are listened to

Looked after children and care leavers build positive relationships

The strategy is accompanied by an **Annual Action Plan** which will be reviewed each year by looked after children, care leavers and professionals. To ensure that the action plan is realistic and achievable, each year it will **focus** on a number of key outcomes statements each year. The strategy explains which outcome statements will be focussed on in the first year.

All of the outcome statements and measures identified in the strategy are important and agencies will continue to seek improvements in all aspects of work with looked after children, the Annual Action Plan provides a vehicle for the multi-agency Looked After Children and Care Leavers Strategy Group to drive improvement in the selected focus areas.

Background to the Strategy

The strategy has been developed using multiple sources of information to ensure it reflects what is most important to looked after children and care leavers in Nottinghamshire:

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

The Pledge was developed in consultation with over 200 looked after children, it sets out the issues important to children and young people and the promises we have made in response to them.

Looked After Children Strategy 2012-2015: Evaluation Report

In January 2015, the multi-agency Looked After Children and Care Leavers Strategy Group undertook an evaluation of the last strategy in consultation with looked after children and care leavers. This has given an up to date picture of progress since the last strategy was written and areas for further improvement.

Children's Care Monitor 2013/14

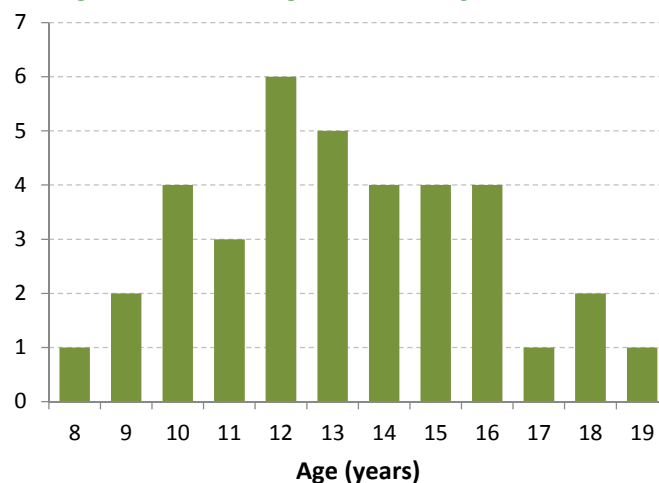
The Children's Rights Director for England publishes this annual report of the views of children and young people across the country who are in care. 2,305 children and young responded to the 2013/14 survey and information about their views is included throughout this strategy.

Ofsted & CQC Inspection Frameworks

The frameworks under which our services for looked after children and care leavers are inspected have been used as a guide to inform the development of this strategy.

VIEWS OF LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN AND CARE LEAVERS

- Children and young people were invited to complete a questionnaire which looked at six areas of their lives, corresponding to the six outcomes in the strategy.
- 37 children and young people completed the questionnaire – 25 girls and 12 boys.
- The graph to the right shows the ages of people completing the questionnaire.
- Children and young people gave a **score out of 5** to show how well they felt things were going in the following areas:
 - School/work
 - Where you live
 - Having your say
 - Family & friends
 - Feeling healthy
 - The future
- They were also asked what they would change in that area of life if they could.
- This exercise will be repeated each year so that we can review the progress we are making for looked after children and care leavers with strategy.



- Five was the best mark in each of the six areas, giving a maximum overall total of **30** across all six areas.

The average **total mark out of 30** across all six outcomes was:

25.0

The average **mark out of 5** across all six outcomes was:

4.2

- For each of the six outcomes in the strategy we will look at what children and young people have said.

Looked after children and care leavers are happy and healthy

As Corporate Parents, we have a responsibility to ensure that the children and young people in our care are in **good health** or are being **helped to improve their health**, and that their health **needs are identified**. To do this, we need to consider a child or young person's health needs holistically, and address both physical and mental wellbeing.

We have a responsibility to ensure access to child and adolescent mental health services (CAMHS) and therapeutic help and services for learning or physically disabled children and young people when needed and for as long as they are required. We also want to make sure that as young people grow up and leave our care they have the information and support they need to maintain good health into adulthood.

NATIONAL PICTURE

Children's Care Monitor 2013/14

- Seventy seven percent of those over 14 listed drugs amongst their top 5 dangers to children (compared with 49% of those aged under 14)
- 69% of over 14s listed alcohol (compared with 41% of under 14s)
- Overall, 85% of the children thought they were healthy or very healthy. Ten percent thought they were unhealthy or very unhealthy.
- Care leavers were much less likely than others to rate themselves as healthy or very healthy; 71% of care leavers rated themselves healthy or very healthy.
- Only 65% of care leavers reported getting enough help to stay healthy, much lower than the 85% reported by children and young people generally.
- 50% of children in children's homes, 45% of foster children and 54% of care leavers said they had **mental health or emotional problems**.
- The rates of emotional, behavioural and mental health difficulties are 4 to 5 times higher amongst looked after children than the wider population.

LOCAL PICTURE

- Since the last strategy was published the Integrated Commissioning Hub has been established which helps ensure health services for looked after children are prioritised.
- A multi-agency group who are carrying out a review of health services has already been established. The group works with commissioners and providers.
- Nottinghamshire's performance in relation to immunisations and dental checks for looked after children was below average in 2014. Completion rate of annual health assessments was above average.
- The Children and Young People's Mental Health and Emotional Wellbeing Strategy 2014-16 specifically includes looked after children.
- In 2014 Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ) results were only submitted for 52% of looked after children in Nottinghamshire. This is below average and makes it very difficult to form a clear picture of emotional wellbeing across looked after children in the county.



The average mark out of 5 for "Feeling Healthy" is:

4.5

This is the second highest score amongst the six categories.

VIEWS OF CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

Some comments made by children and young people were:

- *I get tired on walks and don't like doing active things*
- *I've lost a lot of weight and I want to lose more*
- *I need a more healthy diet*
- *I am very healthy!*
- *I am generally not well at school*

OUTCOME STATEMENTS Children and young people...	OUTCOME MEASURES	Focus for 2015/16?
See themselves as healthy and happy	Direct feedback questionnaire	
Have good emotional wellbeing	SDQ scores	✓
Have support with their mental health needs when they need it	Access to CAMHS	✓
Have their health needs assessed when they enter care	Completion of initial health assessments	✓
Have their health needs regularly assessed	Completion of annual (or 6 monthly) health assessment	
Have ongoing access to health services (including when they have left care)	GP registration Completion of "Important Health Information" for care leavers	
Do not misuse drugs and alcohol	Children identified as having a substance misuse problem	✓
Have good sexual health and access to contraception	C-card registration Teenage pregnancy rates	✓
Have good oral health	Regular dental checks completed	
Have received immunisations as per routine immunisation schedule	Immunisation rate	
Have meaningful opportunities to give feedback about health services	Completion of Service User Customer Experience Questionnaires	
Have the opportunity to enjoy physical activities and exercise	Children in healthy weight and height range (BMI)	

YEAR 1 FOCUS

- In the first year we have chosen to focus on five important areas that we feel we need a better understanding of in Nottinghamshire: mental health and emotional wellbeing, drug and alcohol misuse, sexual health and initial health assessments.
- Because SDQ information is only collected for around half of our looked after children, we don't have a very good overall picture of the emotional wellbeing of the children and young people in our care.
- Nationally, we know that two thirds of looked after children identify drugs as a top danger. We also know that children and young people can access advice and information about drugs and alcohol in lots of ways.
- However, we don't have an overarching understanding of the extent or nature of the issues our looked after children and care leavers experience, or of the consistency or quality of the support they receive.
- Similarly, while we know that looked after children and care leavers can access contraception and sexual health services, we don't currently have a comprehensive shared understanding across agencies.
- In addition, we know that remains very important to ensure we get the basics right for all looked after children, starting with ensuring we complete Initial Health Assessments within timescale for children when they enter care, and with that in mind, we have also made this a focus for Year 1.

LINKS

Children in Care Health Pathway Review Action Plan

Looked after children and care leavers are safe

As Corporate Parents, we have a responsibility to ensure that the children and young people in our care live in **safe, stable and appropriate homes or families**, that they do not live in homes that fail to meet their needs and do not move frequently.

We also have need to ensure LAC are protected or helped to keep themselves safe from **bullying** and discrimination. We need to be aware of any risks associated with **offending, going missing or being sexually exploited** and we need to do all we can to reduce those risks. As young people grow up and leave our care, we need to make sure that they are properly equipped to keep themselves safe and access help to maintain their safety when they need to.

NATIONAL PICTURE

Children's Care Monitor 2013/14

- The top three dangers listed by over 14s in 2013 were, in order with the most frequently listed first, **drugs, alcohol and bullying**. The top three dangers listed by those under 14 were bullying, strangers and drugs.
- 92% of the children and young people surveyed in 2013 said they felt very safe or fairly safe in the **buildings in which they lived**.
- Those aged 14 and over felt much safer at **school or college** than those under 14.
- 29% of children told us in 2013 that they were getting **bullied** sometimes, often or always.
- Compared with foster children, those in children's homes reported much more bullying by being threatened, and through cyber bullying.
- Over the last 4 years, there has been a big and steady reduction in how many children say they **worry** a lot or a little about their safety.
- In 2009, 43% said they worried a little or a lot about their safety, in this 2013 survey it went down to 32%.

LOCAL PICTURE

- The last Looked After Children Strategy focussed on "Safe and Stable Placements". Compared to national and statistical neighbour average, placement stability in Nottinghamshire is very good.
- A new commissioning plan has been put in place to ensure that we can maintain good quality and good value external placements.
- Work has also been undertaken to consider the needs of children placed out of county to ensure we are equipped to keep children who live further afield safe.
- As part of the focus on "Identity" in the previous strategy, work was undertaken with foster carers around bullying, including cyber bullying.
- Child sexual exploitation has been and continues to be a significant focus for the NSCB. Provision is made for the specific vulnerabilities and needs of children in care and care leavers within local policy and guidance, and we are aware of the need to continue to address this important issue for all children, including those in our care.
- Similarly, there is guidance and policy in place around children going missing.



The average mark out of 5 for "Where you live" is:

4.6

This is the **highest** score amongst the six categories.

VIEWS OF CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

Some comments made by children and young people were:

- *I want to be able to choose my own bedroom colour*
- *Love it! Don't want to leave*
- *I want to live nearer my friends*
- *I love living on my own, I like my own space*
- *I would like more independence*
- *I want to my own meds and move into a proper flat*

OUTCOME STATEMENTS Children and young people...	OUTCOME MEASURES	Focus for 2015/16?
Have a safe place to live	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Allegations against carers • Suitable accommodation for care leavers • Quality of external placements 	✓
Feel safe where they live	Direct feedback questionnaire	
Are safe from sexual exploitation	Referrals/CSE Strategy Meetings	✓
Don't go missing from care	Missing episodes	✓
Go to school every day	School attendance	
Are safe from bullying	(Consider outcomes within bullying strategy)	✓
Aren't involved in offending behaviour	Offending rates	
Are safe from avoidable injuries	A&E admissions	
Are safe from self harm	Hospital admissions for self harm	

YEAR 1 FOCUS

- Our first focus, which underpins many of the other outcome statements is to ensure that children and young people in our care, and those who have left care, have a safe place to live.
- Our responsibility includes ensuring our internal foster carers and residential homes are safe and in addition ensuring that any placement we commission externally keeps our children safe.
- This also includes ensuring that children and young people themselves have appropriate opportunities to speak out if they feel unsafe where they live.
- Because we know that children in care have particular vulnerabilities in relation to CSE and going missing, we are making these issues a focus for our first year.
- With the support of the NSCB, we will continue to strengthen our response to these issues and ensure that all those caring for our looked after children are as well equipped as possible to address the risks associated with going missing and CSE.
- The final focus in this area is bullying. Looked after children tell us that bullying worries them, The Pledge says "We are worried about bullying when we are in school and when we get home. We are worried about bullying on social networking sites and text messages"
- We want to improve our understanding of the issue of bullying, and think about the best way for agencies to work together to identify and prevent bullying.

LINKS

NSCB Child Sexual Exploitation Multi-Agency Strategy
NSCB Missing Multi-Agency Strategy
Nottinghamshire Anti-Bullying Policy

Looked after children and care leavers achieve their potential

As Corporate Parents, we have a responsibility to ensure that children and young people in our care **attend school or other educational provision** and that they **learn**. We need to provide accurate and timely assessments of their needs, as well as specialist support where it is needed and help them to make good progress in their learning and development wherever they live.

Looked after children should receive the same **support from their carers** as they would from a good parent in relation to their schooling. It is also important that we support children and young people to explore their talents in other areas and provide opportunities to take part in **activities outside of school**.

As young people grow up and leave our care we need to support them to engage in **further education or training, or move into work**.

NATIONAL PICTURE

Children's Care Monitor 2013/14

- 88% of the children rated their **education as good or very good**, and 2% rated it as bad or very bad.
- 81% of the children and young people in education said they were **doing well or very well** in their education; 4% said they were doing badly or very badly.
- The percentage of children who have **changed schools** because of a change in placement has fallen from 67% in 2010, to 52% in 2013.
- 69% of the children who had changed schools reported that the **change was in their best interests**. Only 15% thought the change of school had definitely not been in their best interests.
- 76% of the children in the 2013 monitor told us their carers or staff at home gave them some or a lot of **help with their school or college work**.

LOCAL PICTURE

- At Key Stages 1 and 2, looked after children in Nottinghamshire perform above national average in reading and maths, but below in writing.
- Looked after children are also progressing very well between KS1 and KS2, and the gap between LAC and their peers is rapidly closing.
- Just under a third of looked after children make expected progress in English and Maths between KS2 and KS4, and GCSE results need to be further improved.
- During the last strategy, work was undertaken to improve the quality of Personal Education Plans (PEPs)
- LAC Achievement Officers work with schools, Designated Teachers and children to provide support.
- We have also focussed on providing access to leisure facilities by working with District Councils, and in addition all looked after children have a free Platinum Card for entry into all Youth Centres in the County.



The average mark out of 5 for "School/work" is:

3.5

This is the **lowest** score amongst the six categories.

VIEWS OF CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

Some comments made by children and young people were:

- *I want to change my behaviour at school. If I could see my support worker every week, not just when things go wrong*
- *Need more support with being able to stay in college*
- *Distractions in class*
- *More help*
- *Stop going on about SATs!*

OUTCOME STATEMENTS Children and young people...	OUTCOME MEASURES	Focus for 2015/16?
Go to school every day	School attendance	
Are supported to remain in the same school	Exclusion rates School moves	
Achieve the best results they can in primary school	Age Related Expectations in reading, writing and maths	
Make good progress each year in school	Expected progress in reading, writing and maths/English and Maths	✓
Leave school with good GCSE results	Age Related Expectations in English and Maths (at GCSE)	✓
Are supported to attend school in Nottinghamshire where possible	Out of county placements	
Remain in education or training or move into employment after leaving school	EET figures for care leavers	✓
Have the opportunity to access a university education	University attendance amongst care leavers	✓
Enjoy learning and school life	Direct feedback questionnaire	
Have the opportunity to join in out of school activities	Through C&YP feedback through PEP form	✓
Are supported to succeed in their chosen out of school activities	Case study examples	

FOCUS FOR YEAR 1

- We know that education is important through all stages of childhood and adolescence, and every looked after child has a Personal Education Plan which reflects this.
- Across the county as a whole, the proportion of looked after children securing 5 GCSEs at A*-C (including English and Maths) requires improvement as does the proportion making expected progress in reading, writing and maths by the end of primary school.
- With that in mind, in the first year of this strategy we will concentrate on supporting young people to achieve the best progress they can and the best results they can at GCSE level.
- This strategy now also includes care leavers, and in Year 1, we will also focus on supporting young people to remain in education or training, or move into employment after they have left school.
- We are ambitious for all of our looked after children and we want to support them to meet their potential in whatever area their talents lie.
- For some young people, we hope that this will result in the opportunity to attend university and we want to promote that possibility and support them through that process.
- We also know that many of our looked after children and care leavers have talents in a wide range of activities like sports, music or drama, and in 2015/16 we will focus on ensuring all looked after children have opportunity to join in out of school/leisure activities.

LINKS

- Virtual School Improvement Plan
- Support to Schools Service Plan

Looked after children and care leavers are prepared for adulthood

Our responsibilities as Corporate Parents don't end when a young person turns 18. We continue to have a responsibility to ensure that young people who have been in our care have a suitable **place to live** and the opportunity to access **education, training or employment**. Some young people, for example those with disabilities or mental health needs, will need to access support from adult services after they turn 18 and we have a responsibility to support their **transition** into those services.

As we would expect from all good parents, we need to begin preparing young people in our care to move into adulthood before they turn 18. We have a legal responsibility to ensure that every young person has a **Pathway Plan** in place before they leave care and we need to ensure that young people have the opportunity to participate in developing that plan.

NATIONAL PICTURE

Children's Care Monitor 2013/14

- 11% of those about to leave care told us they were **not getting any help** they needed in preparing for their future life after care.
- The percentage of those about to leave care saying they are getting help to **prepare for getting a job** has fallen steadily over recent years, from 60% in 2010, down to 50% in 2013.
- 74% of care leavers in the 2013 care monitor rated the **support** they were getting as good or very good, and 9% as bad or very bad.
- 69% of care leavers said that they were living in the **right accommodation** for them, and 24% that they were not.
- 62% of care leavers said they had a **pathway plan**; 18% didn't know what a pathway plan was. 6% knew what a pathway plan was but said they definitely didn't have one. %
- 82% of care leavers who knew about their pathway plans said they **had a say** in what was in their plans.

LOCAL PICTURE

- During the lifetime of the last strategy we made some changes to the structure of the teams that work with care leavers. This has improved the transition for young people and enabled staff to develop their specialist skills in working with young people leaving care.
- The Leaving Care Service has achieved the From Care2Work Quality Mark, which recognises our progress in supporting young people to develop employability skills and enter the world of work.
- The percentage of care leavers in Suitable Accommodation and in Education, Employment or Training is higher in Nottinghamshire than the national and statistical neighbour average.
- We have developed a successful and well-embedded Staying Put Policy which supports young people to stay in their foster placements after the age of 18, ensuring longer-term stability and a smoother transition to adulthood.
- We recognise that even with these improvements, leaving care is worrying for young people and this is reflected in The Pledge.



The average mark out of 5 for "The Future" is:

3.9

This is the **second lowest** score amongst the six categories.

VIEWS OF CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

Some comments made by children and young people were:

- *I'm scared about what the future may hold*
- *I don't know where I will be*
- *I want to know my care plan*
- *Stop changing social worker*
- *Not sure what's happening. Let me know what's going to happen.*
- *I know what I want to do in the future.*

OUTCOME STATEMENTS Children and young people...	OUTCOME MEASURES	Priority for 2015/16?
Are supported to develop meaningful plans to help them prepare for the future	Pathway Plans/EHC Plans (completion rate and quality)	✓
Understand their Pathway Plans and find them useful	Feedback from young people at leaving care review	
Have somewhere safe to live after they leave care	Care leavers in suitable accommodation	✓
Have access to information, advice and guidance	Care leavers in touch	
Are supported to transition to adults services (where appropriate)	Transition plans for young people Access to Adult Services	✓
Are able to manage their own money responsibly when they leave care	Direct feedback questionnaire	
Have the practical skills needed to live alone	Direct feedback questionnaire	
Know how to access health services after they leave care	“Important Health Information” discussed at final health assessment	
Feel positive about their future	Direct feedback questionnaire	
Have support to manage relationships (e.g. with birth family) after they leave care	Care leavers in touch	
Know how to make well-informed, safe decisions	LAC reviews and Pathway plans	
Can access support to prepare for parenting at the right time	Engagement/attendance at Children’s Centres	

FOCUS FOR YEAR 1

- In The Pledge, young people have said “We cannot always remember completing a Pathway Plan and would like it updated regularly”. To reflect the importance of this, the first focus for Year 1 is around developing meaningful Pathway Plans.
- We will also focus on ensuring that young people whose needs are best met through an Education, Health and Care Plan received the right support. These plans can remain in place until a young person is 25, so we need to ensure support continues after the age of 18.
- We will also focus on making sure that all young people leaving care move on to live in accommodation which meets their needs, and where possible their preferences. This includes ensuring that children have the right support available to help them live independently where appropriate.
- The transition to adult services, for example for those with disabilities or mental health needs, can be a complicated and difficult process for young people. There are many different agencies involved which can add to the complexity, we will work in partnership to ensure that transitions are as supported and as smooth as possible.

LINKS

Looked after children and care leavers are listened to

As Corporate Parents, we have a responsibility to ensure that we listen to the **wishes and feelings** of children and young people in our care and them into account when making decisions. This responsibility extends from frontline social workers, to the most senior decision-makers.

Looked after children and young people should be seen by their social worker alone and understand what is happening to them, they should be involved in developing plans relating to their care, education and future. Looked after children and care leavers should be helped to understand their **rights and responsibilities** and have **access to an advocate and independent visitor**.

Children and young people's views should be represented by a Children in Care Council which is regularly consulted about services that effect them.

NATIONAL PICTURE

Children's Care Monitor 2013/14

- Nearly two thirds of the children (64%) said their **opinions** were usually or always asked on things that mattered to them. 10% said their opinions were not usually, or never, asked.
- Overall, over half the children (55%) said their opinions usually or always **made a difference to decisions** about their lives, while 14% said their decisions didn't usually or ever make a difference.
- Just over two thirds (67%) of the children in our survey told us they knew what a **care plan** is, and knew that they had one.
- Younger children were much more likely to be **told what was going to happen** than older young people were.
- 78% of children aged under 14 said they were usually or always told when major changes were going to happen in their lives, compared with 67% of those aged over 14.
- 55% of the children and young people both knew what an **advocate** is, and how to get hold of one. But 29% didn't know what an advocate is.

LOCAL PICTURE

- During the last strategy, we improved the way we include children and young people in LAC Reviews by developing new materials to help them prepare and take part.
- We have focussed on ensuring that children and young people out of county have the same opportunities to take part in decision making and receive the same information as those living in Nottinghamshire.
- Looked after children contributed to a new version of The Pledge which sets out our promises to them, and that document has played an important part in developing this strategy.
- We have an active and dynamic Children in Care Council as well as sub-groups for children and young people of different ages, and regular consultation events throughout the year.
- We are also getting better at making sure we routinely include the voice of the child in every element of our work, from case auditing to commissioning.



The average mark out of 5 for "Having your say" is:

4.4

This is above average amongst the six categories.

VIEWS OF CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

Some comments made by children and young people were:

- *People are starting to listen to me a lot more.*
- *People don't really care*
- *Most people don't understand or listen to what I say*
- *I am very opinionated.*
- *I wish I could always have a say.*
- *There is nothing I would change*

OUTCOME STATEMENTS Children and young people...	OUTCOME MEASURES	Focus for 2015/16?
Are involved in making plans and giving feedback about their care	Participation in LAC Reviews and Foster Carer Reviews	✓
Are involved in making plans about their future	Pathway Plans completed	✓
Are involved in making plans about their education	Personal Education Plans (PEPs) /EHC Plans completed	✓
Have chance to talk to their social workers alone	Case recording	
Have chance to give feedback about the support they've received	Through case audits	
Know how to make complaints if they want to	Number of complaints made Direct feedback	
Can access support from an advocate if they want to	Number of children with an advocate	
Have chance to tell us if we have kept to The Pledge	Pledge evaluation	
Feel listened to	Direct feedback questionnaire Direct consultation	✓

FOCUS FOR YEAR 1

- During 2015/16 we are going to focus on making sure that children and young people have opportunity to be actively involved in making plans and giving feedback about their care, their education and their future.
- This includes Personal Education Plans, Education Health and Care Plans, Pathway Plans and taking part in LAC Reviews.
- We want to make sure we continue to use and develop creative and inclusive methods to ascertain the wishes and feelings of children in our care and ensure that they are reflected in plans made about their lives.
- We will also focus on making sure that children and young people feel listened to. We will keep looking for improvements in the ways we communicate with and feedback to children and young people, so that even at times when we aren't able to make the choices they want us to, we keep doing our best to explain why.

LINKS

Nottinghamshire Children, Young People and Families Participation Strategy, 2014
The Pledge: Our Promise to Children and Young People in Care

Looked after children and care build positive relationships

As Corporate Parents, we have a responsibility to ensure that children and young people in our care have appropriate, carefully assessed and supported **contact with family and friends** and other people who are important to them. We should also seek to place children and young people with their brothers and sisters when this is in their best interests.

At the same time, we need to support children and young people to build **positive relationships with the adults caring for them**. We know that this underpins positive outcomes in many of the other areas discussed in this strategy.

It is also important to help looked after children understand their lives and their identities through life story work that is effective and provided when they need it.

NATIONAL PICTURE

Children's Care Monitor 2013/14

- By far the main reason for children saying they should not have come into care was that they had **wanted to stay with their family**. Almost one in six disagreed with the view that they weren't being looked after properly at home.
- Even though the law now says that visiting **social workers should speak to children in care in private**, only 40% of children in this year's monitor told us this happens on every visit.
- Almost a third of children (31%) had already had more than three **different placements** in care so far. 10% had already lived in eight or more different placements. 55% said there had been **no choice** of placement the last time they moved.
- 70% of children in care told us that they do not feel they are made to 'stand out' from others at school or college because they are in care. 15% told us they did feel made to 'stand out'.
- 71% 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.

LOCAL PICTURE

- A significant review of the Council's Contact Service was undertaken during the lifetime of the last strategy.
- The review has resulted in a more child-centred process, with more appropriate venues and more consistency for children.
- Contact remains an important issue within the revised Pledge, with children and young people saying "We would like contact with our brothers, sisters and families to be arranged with a diary in advance" and "We would like to know if people are not meeting us and why to help us understand"
- A new Permanence Panel has been established that makes sure support is in place to ensure that the child's relationship with their carers and within their placement can be sustained long-term.
- We know that we need to improve the consistency and quality of life story work with children, to ensure they understand their lives and identities.



The average mark out of 5 for "Family & friends" is:

4.2

This is the average score amongst the six categories.

VIEWS OF CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

Some comments made by children and young people were:

- *I block myself away, I can't deal with a lot of people.*
- *I would like to see my family more.*
- *Have whole family contact and stop changing dates.*
- *Really good.*
- *Don't care about them.*
- *Contact – more often and unsupervised.*

OUTCOME STATEMENTS Children and young people...	OUTCOME MEASURES	Priority for 2015/16?
Are supported to maintain meaningful contact with their birth families (where appropriate)	LAC reviews/pathway plan reviews	✓
Are supported to become part of the community where they live	Out of county placements "From a distance" audit	
Have an understanding of safe and positive relationships	LAC reviews/pathway plan reviews	
Are supported to maintain positive relationships with the people they live with	Placement Breakdowns	✓
Are supported to manage the ending of relationships positively	Placement Breakdowns	✓
Have as few changes in social worker as possible	Changes in social worker	
Feel positive about their relationships with friends and family	Direct feedback	

FOCUS FOR YEAR 1

- We know from The Pledge, and consultation as part of developing this strategy, that contact with parents, siblings and other family members remains an important issue for children and young people in our care.
- In the first year of this strategy we will focus on continuing to improve the way contact is supported, including the way we support young people to maintain positive contact with birth families after they have left care.
- Whilst we have good levels of placement stability, we have seen an increase in placement moves in the last year.
- We will focus on supporting children and young people to develop and maintain positive relationships with their carers, enabling greater stability and a happier experience of the place where they are living.
- As part of the action plan in the first year, we also want to focus on the best way to support children and young people to manage the ending of significant relationships in their lives in the most positive way possible.

LINKS

Delivery of the Strategy

The Strategy is accompanied by a multi-agency **Annual Action Plan** which will drive forward improvement in outcomes for children and young people. The Action Plan is in six parts, one for each outcome and in the first year (2015/16) concentrates on the focus outcome statements identified within the Strategy. This will ensure that the scope of the Action Plan is achievable, and will allow for flexibility over the three year period.

Each of the six outcomes has a pair of **Outcome Owners**, from across different agencies. The outcome owners will:

- Provide oversight of the actions associated with their outcome
- Offer their expertise in developing realistic and meaningful actions
- Act as champions for their outcome within their organisations

The Outcome Owners, along with other relevant professionals from across different partner organisations form the multi-agency **Looked After Children and Care Leavers Strategy Group**. This group, will monitor progress and support activity within the Annual Action Plan. Regular updates on progress will be delivered to the **Children's Services Leadership Team** and **Children in Care Council**.

Twice a year, progress will also be reported to the **Corporate Parenting Sub-Committee** with an annual report to the **Children and Young People's Committee**. It is important that the governance of this strategy reflects its multi-agency nature, and as such, updates will also be provided to the **Children's Trust, Health and Wellbeing Board** and **Nottinghamshire Safeguarding Children Board** as appropriate.

At the end of the year, all of the actions and all of the outcome statements within the Strategy will be evaluated. Children and young people will be a key part of this evaluation and will be invited to give their feedback on how things have improved during the year, and what we need to focus on next. Based on the end of year evaluation, the Looked After Children and Care Leavers Strategy Group will identify a set outcome measures which will be the focus of the next year's Annual Action Plan.