

Improving the Effectiveness and Efficiency of Children's Services Plan

The overarching objective of this improvement plan is to ensure that the Children and Families Department is taking the necessary steps to provide safe, effective, efficient and cost-effective services to vulnerable children, young people and their families in Nottinghamshire, with enabling support and challenge from the Chief Executives, Adult Social Care and Health and Place Departments.

The plan should be read in conjunction with the existing highlight reporting against the Department's major change programmes: Remodelling Care and Remodelling Practice. These programmes detail the specific benefits to be delivered in respect of financial savings/cost avoidance and efficiency.

1. Effective delivery of change programmes, accelerating pace where possible, and improving ability to track benefits realisation

	Improvement Action	CLT Accountable Officer	Lead Officer	What we hope to achieve	Timeframe	Success Measure	Progress																
1.1	<p>Increased number of internal fostering placements available</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ongoing prioritised support of marketing and communications colleagues with comprehensive campaign through to July 2020 Corporate and partnership approach to improve offer to foster carers (leisure facilities, council tax discount, parking etc). 	<p>Colin Pettigrew</p> <p>Marje Toward</p> <p>Anthony May/ Adrian Smith</p>	<p>Steve Edwards</p> <p>Luke Barrett/ Catherine Kelly</p> <p>Derek Higton/ Pete Mathieson/ Chris Ward/ Andy Dawson</p>	<p>Safe, caring and loving placements for children.</p> <p>Higher percentage of foster placements are made internally</p> <p>Any unnecessary expenditure is avoided</p> <p>A net 50 additional internal foster placements</p>	<p>Rolling marketing campaign to July 2020</p> <p>Revised offer for foster carers by April 2020</p>	<p>Savings target achieved</p> <p>A net increase of 50 fostering placements by March 2021</p> <p>Increase in fostering enquiries of 20%</p> <p>Increase in conversion from enquiry to approved foster carer of 10%</p>	<p>Progress YTD including to end November 2020</p> <div data-bbox="1852 718 2555 1117" data-label="Figure"> <table border="1"> <caption>YTD comparison</caption> <thead> <tr> <th>Category</th> <th>2019/20</th> <th>2020/21</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>enquiries</td> <td>111</td> <td>99</td> </tr> <tr> <td>initial visits</td> <td>68</td> <td>94</td> </tr> <tr> <td>new approvals</td> <td>25</td> <td>36</td> </tr> <tr> <td>deregistrations</td> <td>33</td> <td>24</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> </div> <p>Enquiries have dipped in September and October and so the YTD enquiries is actually lower this year than last. There are a number of factors which could have influenced this, including focussed campaigns at Nottingham City over the summer, and the effects of lockdown restrictions – people have perhaps decided to take stock rather than embark on something new in their lives.</p> <p>However, this has not impacted upon the number of visits we go on to make. The conversion rate of enquiries into visits in November 2019/20 was 61%; so far in 2020/21 it is 95%. This is due to an increase in the quality of the enquiries being made, probably because significantly more information events are being held and so enquiries are being made on an informed basis rather than speculatively. It is also due to the speed and efficiency in which enquiries are dealt with by the Recruitment & Assessment Team which has been in operation since November 2019.</p> <p>We have seen a net YTD increase of 12 new carers against a target of 14 for the full year. The number of assessments which are scheduled for panel forecast that the target will be met. This is due to positive improvements in both recruitment and retention of foster carers. Exit interviews suggest that the improved fostering offer is working well to reward and retain our carers.</p>	Category	2019/20	2020/21	enquiries	111	99	initial visits	68	94	new approvals	25	36	deregistrations	33	24	On track
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1.2	<p>Increase in internal residential children's home capacity</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Additional 4 bed residential home opened. Consideration when remodelling wider NCC estate and in planning applications for housing developments to increase children's home capacity/ accommodation for care leavers 	Colin Pettigrew/ Adrian Smith	Devon Allen/ Neil Gamble	Timely mobilisation of new residential home. Four new NCC residential placements available avoiding the need for more costly external residential placements and resulting in good outcomes for the children.	Two further homes by January 2022.	Four additional residential placements for Nottinghamshire in a NCC owned home by May 2020.	<p>Further extensions to the placement capacity within the block contract have been successfully negotiated with our trusted providers (see 1.3 below), and approval has been obtained via Policy Committee to increase the Council's internally managed residential estate.</p> <p>Feasibility work commenced but has largely been paused due to COVID19. The specifics of this work, which will recommence ASAP, are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> identify a pair of 2-bed homes on the open market; Forest Glade 2 bed home is now operational, staffed by a partner organisation A further two, two bedded bed homes as part of the wider development of the Top Wighay site; Continue to assess the suitability of homes in the existing estate 	Progress compromised by COVID 19.
1.3	<p>Increase the number of "block contract" residential placements with external providers. The total number of new homes under this arrangement will be four.</p>	Colin Pettigrew	Jon Hawketts	Contracts which provide a better cost per placement (as long as occupancy is maintained) and therefore help reduce placement costs.	First two homes by September 2019	<p>Savings target achieved</p> <p>New homes operational and fully occupied by February 2020.</p>	<p>The first 4 in-county homes for the exclusive use of Nottinghamshire children-in-care are now fully operational. All are fully occupied (11 placements in total). Two further homes are en-route to becoming exclusively for Nottinghamshire (timeframes dictated by the care plans for CYP in the care of other local authorities who are currently placed at these homes).</p> <p>An additional home has been sourced by the provider to become a specialist unit to accommodate a Nottinghamshire child in care who is deaf and presents with a range of special needs. The provider is presently seeking planning and regulatory approval for this bespoke facility</p>	Complete.
1.4	<p>Establish a D2N2 Commissioning Framework for residential and Independent Fostering Agencies.</p>	Colin Pettigrew	Jon Hawketts	To use economies of scale to reduce the cost of placements. To develop the market across the D2N2 footprint to increase diversity, availability and quality. This will also reduce costs per placement overall. Further development of block arrangements may also reduce unit costs.	February 2020	New D2N2 Framework in place	This framework is now live with contract management arrangements agreed.	Complete
1.5	<p>Develop enhanced models of semi-independent accommodation for the most complex</p>	Colin Pettigrew	Jon Hawketts	The most complex care leavers often fail to make a successful transition from residential care to supported	Some already operational; others planned to be so by 2020/21	<p>14 new units in place by April 2020</p> <p>Reduced instances and level of evictions</p>	<p>2 smaller 24 hour staffed settings have been developed are becoming operational on a pilot basis.</p> <p>Teenage parent service is now staffed 24/7 (6 bed unit).</p>	Ongoing programme of work

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	care leavers in smaller units.			accommodation. By providing smaller units an earlier successful transition could be made which is better for the young person as they reach adulthood and is also significantly cheaper than residential care. It also frees places in residential care for those who need it the most.		Improved outcomes for individual young people (as evidenced via Outcome Star scores) Unit cost reduction (average for 16/17 yo placements taking into account inflation etc.)	Plans for recommissioning for 2022 are being progressed and a market position statement has been produced. This will be a iterative commissioning exercise across D2N2.	
1.6	Delivery of the Social Impact Bond Model (jointly with Nottingham and Derby City Councils).	Colin Pettigrew	Jon Hawketts	To reduce the number of young people in high cost residential placements and therefore reduce the pressure on the placements budget. To make use of up to £3m of Big Lottery (LCF) funding.	SIB to be operational by Feb 2020 (revised)	SIB to become operational, receiving referrals and delivering positive outcomes for individual CYP and delivering budget savings Positive change in placement mix / reduction in high cost placements	The SIB project entitled STARS and delivered by Polaris Children's Services is now live. A stretch target to deliver an additional £600,000 benefit by 2023-24 has been identified with £250,000 to be delivered in 2021-22.	COMPLETE
1.7	To ensure that the corporate Digital Development Programme supports delivery of the Children and Families Department's "Digital Development Plan"	Adrian Smith / Colin Pettigrew	Laurence Jones Lucy Peel	Using technology to achieve simple and immediate access and better support for service users More efficient access to relevant information between organisations within the children's partnership (e.g. social care and CAMHS). Care leavers better able to access information about local offer.	An 18 month delivery plan will be developed for the period September 2020 to March 2022.	Delivery of the Children and Families Department's "Digital Development Plan"	A Digital Development Plan for the department. The plan was presented as a part of the department's annual update to Improvement and Change Committee in January 2020 is now being implemented. The plans has been reviewed to ensure that the significant progress that has been made on the use of digital and technological approaches as a result of necessity during COVID19 to extend our ambitions. These include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How technology can be used to enhance communication with children, families and partner agencies • Integration of care planning and sharing key information across agencies • Supporting, motivating and monitoring service user progress through technology • Using technology to maintain accurate records whilst reducing bureaucracy • Use of new technologies with Clayfields SCH to improve safety and accountability 	Ongoing programme of work

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1.8	Ensuring there is sufficient/prioritised capacity to develop the BI reports required to meet Ofsted requirements (including workforce reporting), baseline and track benefits of change programmes, and facilitate management decision-making and need / pressure forecasting.	Nigel Stevenson	Rob Disney	Reduction in manual tasks undertaken within frontline services thus freeing up management and business support capacity. Better data on which to inform decision making. Better data upon which to inform benefits monitoring of projects Fulfil Ofsted requirements. Ability to track impact of project initiatives on recruitment and retention of staff. Better decision making on use of agency staff.	End of September 2019 for Ofsted reporting Further development by June 2020	A suite of appropriate reports and dashboards available including forecasts of future need.	BI reporting continues to be developed in line with priorities agreed by the departments Digital Development Board and takes into account the available capacity in the team. Whilst there is a list of work waiting to be completed this is not having any immediate operational impact. COVID19 has led to the diversion of some resources although clear plans are in place to progress all key aspects of work.	Ongoing programme of work
1.9	The following change projects are delivered: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establishing whole family safeguarding teams between children's and adults; Making the front door delivery model sustainable within the context of increasing demand; Taking a joint commissioning approach with health for children with complex needs; Delivering a five year SEND transformation strategy and Developing a coherent approach to supporting 	Nigel Stevenson /Colin Pettigrew	Sue Milburn/ Lucy Peel / Marion Clay	More timely delivery of a range of projects intended to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> improve practice and through this children's outcomes; release capacity within frontline teams; and make more efficient use of resources and avoid cost where possible. <p>SEND budgets are managed so that large budget deficits do not appear in the Dedicated Schools Grant.</p>	To be determined once projects initiated. Next step for progressing family safeguarding is joint CFS and ASCH leadership team meeting on 17 September. SEND strategy – initial phases are being delivered following Higher Level Needs budget review. This is being developed into a formal 5 year strategy for implementation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establishing whole family safeguarding teams between children's and adults; Making the front door delivery model sustainable within the context of increasing demand; Taking a joint commissioning approach with health for children with complex needs; Delivering a five year SEND transformation strategy and Developing a coherent approach to supporting children living in kinship arrangements. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Developments in respect of transformation and recovery mean that "developing whole family" approaches to safeguarding" and "improving residents' access" (front door) will become corporate cross cutting transformation programmes Work is underway on joint commissioning of health including a review of how the CCGs and the local authority work together in Continuing Care for Children The SEND Strategy has been approved by CYP Committee A review of the support to children living in kinship arrangements has been completed and discussions are underway about local and regional approaches. 	Ongoing programme of work

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	children living in kinship arrangements.				from spring 2020.			
1.10	Ensuring that sold services are achieving full cost recovery in all instances	Colin Pettigrew	Laurence Jones	Accurately calculating full costs and having charges which reflect these	1 April 2021	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • full cost calculated • income achieved 	<p>An initial review of all sold services has been conducted within the department during and recommendations established to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - maximise income - identify services where services are running at a loss and where recovery is unlikely and change is required - identify services that are generating surpluses but below the level anticipated where the business model may require review <p>This will include looking at the short and long term impacts of COVID19.</p> <p>From April 2021 (January for new admissions) welfare bed placement costs in Clayfields SCH will rise £50 per night aside for those whose normal residence is in Nottinghamshire.</p>	Ongoing programme of work
1.11	Pilot the Safer Families for Children model to reduce the increases in children entering care	Colin Pettigrew	Steve Edwards	Reduction against the forecast for children entering care	Pilot until March 2022	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Metrics to be agreed 	Awarded and pilot identified to take place in Ashfield	Ongoing programme of work
1.12	To identify areas of underspend, funding duplication and opportunities for grant maximisation to enable amore stable departmental budget position.	Colin Pettigrew	Laurence Jones	An efficient and balanced budget	April 2021	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continued delivery of high-quality frontline services • Reduction in any non-essential spend • A balanced budget 	<p>The following areas have been identified where budget adjustments can be made to provide a more stable departmental budget in coming years:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Decreasing teacher pension enhancements by £84,000 due to increased mortality • Replacing a further £250,000 of revenue funding for the children's centres with Public Health Grant for the duration of the MTFS • Realising £300,000 of savings relating to early help management underspend which have resulted from changes in the delivery model. These will not impact on the delivery to service users. • Disestablishing three vacant Unit Leader posts in the Family service to realise £120,000 in savings • By utilising new technology to reduce mileage across the department realising £100,000 of savings • As soon as possible to cease the use of licences for older software to realise £100,000 in savings. 	Ongoing programme of work
1.13	Conduct a review of the departments internal process for joint funding decisions with health in respect	Colin Pettigrew	Laurence Jones	Increased health contributions where relevant and appropriate	March 2021	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Greater consensus and satisfaction in respect of CCfC funding outcomes • To deliver an additional CCG 	This review has been completed and new processes have been put into place.	Complete

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	of Continuing Care for children.					contribution to children in care of £150,000 per annum from 2021-22.		

2. Creating the conditions for good practice to flourish

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	Improvement Action	CLT Accountable Officer	Lead Officer	What we hope to achieve	Timeframe	Success Measure	Progress	Status
2.1	Ensuring that the smartphones for social workers function as smartphones at the earliest possible opportunity and no later than the current planning go live date of October 2019.	Nigel Stevenson	Nigel Harlow	Social workers better able to work efficiently. Would mean that Apps that have been commissioned (Mind of My Own, Guardian 24) can be used on work phones. Reduction in risk of IG breaches. Improved staff morale.	All social workers to have smartphones by October 2019	All relevant staff having functioning smartphones Improved staff morale as measured through feedback via annual health check and through Practice Forum	250 devices were upgraded to an interim smartphone solution prior to Oct 2019 as planned. During December 2019 all of the devices were upgraded to the fully managed solution to bring them into line with NCC security policies.	Complete
2.2	Introduction of Peoplesafe on smartphones to improve personal safety for workers during visits in the community	Nigel Stevenson / Marje Toward	John Nilan	Improved staff morale. Reduction in cost (current solution more expensive).	April 2021	All relevant staff have access to Peoplesafe. Improvement in percentage of staff feeling safe as measured through annual health check (baseline through health check of 79%).	The roll out of the application has commenced with a toolkit expected to support safer working by April 2021.	Back on target
2.3	Introduce a clear values-based framework within which to work and support in managing the challenges of complex case work (rollout of reflective group supervision).	Colin Pettigrew	Lucy Peel	Improve case progress and successful outcomes therefore over time reducing the number of cases requiring a social worker. Increase job satisfaction and therefore social worker retention. This then reduces the need for expensive agency workers.	Rollout across District Child Protection Teams and the Children's Disability Service by September 2019. Further roll outs to follow.	Social work caseloads are within the set manageable number Reduced drift and delay (average duration of child in need and child protection cases) Improved staff retention during 2020-21 Continued reduction in use of agency staff during 2020-21	Some aspects of implementation of the practice model were delayed due to COVID 19, however work has now recommenced in line with the report to Children and Young People's Committee in November 2020.	Ongoing programme of work
2.4	Provide support recognising the emotional toll of the work that social workers do (piloting Schwartz Rounds, access to counselling support and a health and wellbeing hub).	Colin Pettigrew	Lucy Peel	Reduce stress related absence and therefore for the need for expensive agency worker cover. Improve social worker recruitment and retention through the offer to social workers.	Pilot commences June 2019. Full rollout out January 2020 pending evaluation.	Improved staff retention Improved staff wellbeing as measured through health check Reduction in stress related absence	Virtual Schwartz Rounds are now being delivered across the County – referred to as Team Time. This approach is being evaluated in partnership with the Point of Care Foundation and Cardiff University.	Ongoing programme of work
2.5	Good continuing professional development and	Colin Pettigrew / Marje Toward	Lucy Peel / Helen Richardson	Improved social worker recruitment and retention	Detailed action plan being developed.	Improved staff retention during 2020-21	A revised workforce plan for Children and Families is being developed which will incorporate strengths-based practice and integrate the requirements of the	Ongoing programme of work

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	career progression opportunities through a refreshed CPD offer for experienced social workers and new team managers, and developing additional advanced practitioner roles.			through the offer to social workers.		Quality of practice as assessed through the Quality Management Framework	<p>knowledge and skill statements (KSS) for practitioners and supervisors. Dedicated information about the training offer linked to each KSS has been developed and will be promoted to staff. CPD delivery has been revised in light of social distancing with the training plan currently being reviewed.</p> <p>The creation of advanced practitioner posts was approved by CYP Committee in June 2020 with recruitment due to start in January 2021.</p>	
2.6	Develop a better and more consistent the understanding of outcomes from different placement settings through extension of the use of outcome stars	Colin Pettigrew	Laurence Jones	Increased understanding of the outcomes from different placements and providers	April 2021	<p>Introduction of outcome start to providers</p> <p>Annual reporting to inform commissioning and sufficiency</p>	A programme to introduce this into contractual agreements has begun.	Ongoing programme of work

3. Improving departments longer term efficiency and effectiveness

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	Improvement Action	CLT Accountable Officer	Lead Officer	What we hope to achieve	Timeframe	Success Measure	Progress	Status
3.1	A review of the financial culture across the department is undertaken including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A "stock take" against the recommendations identified by Newton in 2018 A development programme for all budget holders to improve confidence and consistency in financial matters 	Colin Pettigrew	Laurence Jones	Consistent attention to the potential financial consequences of decisions so that there can be planned for.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Newton stock take by June 2020 Development programme roll out from September 2020 	<p>Reduced levels of budget variance</p> <p>Contingency plans are in place where adverse financial conditions are predicted</p> <p>Budgets are managed in line with guidance and financial regulations</p>	<p>A stock take against Newton's recommendations has been undertaken as part of the new review process by Newton. These are feeding into new transformation plans.</p> <p>Finance colleagues will be supporting the department to deliver a development programme for all budget holders to improve confidence and consistency in financial matters over the coming six months.</p>	Ongoing programme of work
3.2	To develop a revised vision and mission for the department for the period up until 2023 supported by key plans or strategies to support areas of financial risk including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Placement sufficiency and commissioning Social care delivery and demand management Workforce sufficiency 	Colin Pettigrew	Colin Pettigrew	Improved long term, planning around areas that influence financial risk	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Departmental Vision and mission by June 2020 Revised supporting "strategies" by November 2020 	Vision and strategies in place and communicated appropriately across the department	A revised departmental vision has been completed and this will drive future departmental change and service development work and will align with wider Council transformation.	COMPLETE
3.3	To continue to identify key financial data, unit costs and benchmarking for both externally commissioned services (through the Commissioning and Contracts Board) and for those services provided by the Council itself.	Colin Pettigrew	Laurence Jones	An understanding of how departmental spend and performance are linked and if greater efficiency or better outcomes can be achieved.	September 2020	Framework in place that can identify areas for challenge in relation to spend vs performance	Work to analyse average costs, cost trends and remedial action is being undertaken at a regional level through the ADCS group, chaired by a Nottinghamshire Service Director.	Work underway
3.5	For a dashboard to be developed that shows occupancy in our internal residential homes and block contract beds	Colin Pettigrew	Laurence Jones / Rob Disney	To ensure occupancy is maximised whenever possible and appropriate.	April 2021	<p>Dashboard in place</p> <p>Regular review by senior managers</p>		Not yet commenced
3.6	Develop a "shadow budget" for our internal residential homes that allows for reports that	Colin Pettigrew	Laurence Jones	Develop a better understanding of unit costs in our internal homes and	April 2021	<p>Basis of calculations agreed</p> <p>Quarterly report in place</p>		Not yet commenced

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	offer a comparison against commercial providers			a price comparison with provision in the external sector				
3.7	Produce a revised placement sufficiency strategy with close alignment to regional work and market development	Colin Pettigrew	Jon Hawketts	Improve future planning of the market	March 2021	Sufficiency strategy produced and presented to Committee		Not yet commenced