

17 March 2025

Agenda Item: 9

## REPORT OF THE CABINET MEMBER FOR CHILDREN AND FAMILIES AND THE CABINET MEMBER FOR EDUCATION AND SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS AND DISABILITIES

### CHILDREN AND FAMILIES DEPARTMENTAL PERFORMANCE, RISKS AND FINANCIAL POSITION – QUARTER 3 2024-5

#### Purpose of the Report

1. To provide the Committee with a summary of Children and Families Department's performance against the ambitions in the Annual Delivery Plan as at the end of December 2024.
2. To provide the Committee with a summary of Children and Families Department's key departmental risks as at the end of December 2024.
3. To provide the Committee with a summary of the Children and Families Department's financial position for the current financial year as at the end of December 2024.

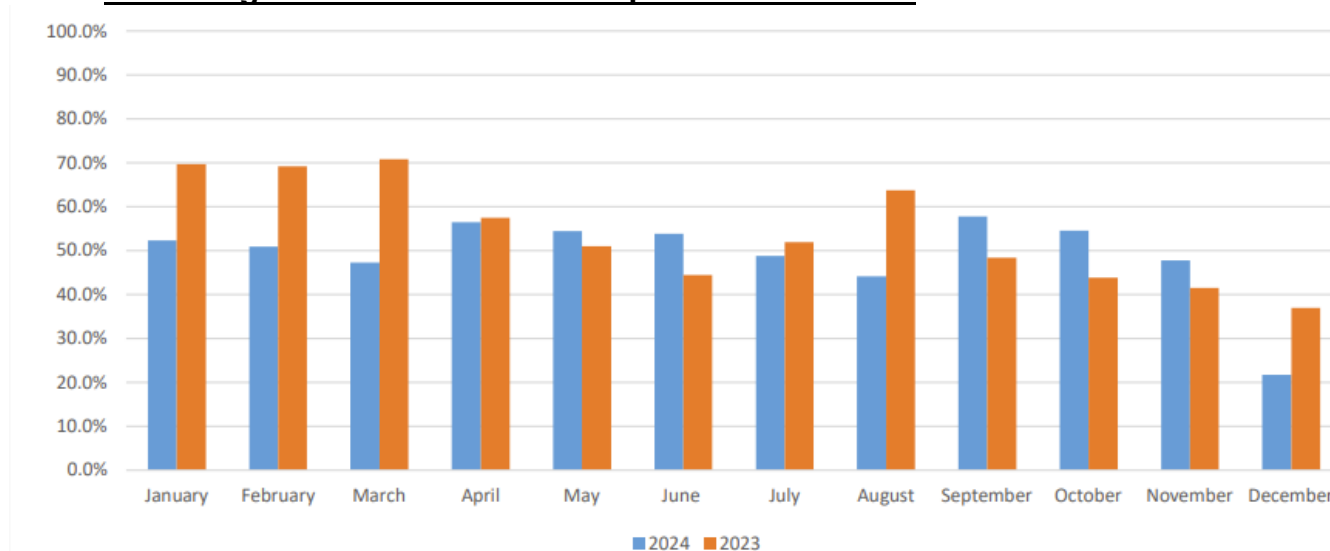
#### Information

##### Key Performance against the Ambitions set out in the Annual Delivery Plan

4. Following feedback at the Children and Families Select Committee meeting of 14 April 2024, the format of **Appendix 1** has been amended to better show performance for each measure as follows:
  - The 'best to be column' shows whether good performance is shown by either a high value or a low value.
  - The 'direction of travel' indicator looks at the long-term trend for the measure and whether the direction of travel is upwards, downwards, or stable. Performance for some measures can fluctuate from quarter to quarter due to a number of factors. This may not be indicative of a change in overall performance, so a longer-term view has been taken in the consideration of this.
  - A new column has been added to show whether performance is improving, stable or deteriorating based on this long-term trend.
5. Despite a 25% increase in requests for an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) assessment in 2024 compared with 2023, the proportion of EHC Plans issued in timescale continues to increase with 35% of plans issued in timescale in 2024 compared with 24.5% in 2023. By comparison, Nottinghamshire issued just 4.5% of plans in timescale in 2022.

6. The local area continues to complete more assessments, more quickly and waiting times have reduced. Performance and output have increased significantly. However, there is further work to do to manage the rising demand and to continue to strengthen service performance. An update was provided to Committee in December 2024 on the activities underway to address this.
7. The number of EHCPs that the Local Authority maintains continues to increase, up from 3,741 in December 2023 to 5,346 as at the end of December 2024, a 43% increase. As the number of EHCPs grow, so does the number of annual reviews. Because of this, the number of annual reviews completed in timescale were lower in 2024 compared with 2023, with an average of 49.9% completed in time between January – December 2024 compared with 77% during the same period in 2023. Although the County Council has the statutory responsibility for the timely completion of annual reviews the majority are completed by education settings and there is often a delay in the reporting of annual reviews being completed, so it is expected that this performance will improve once all reviews are reported.

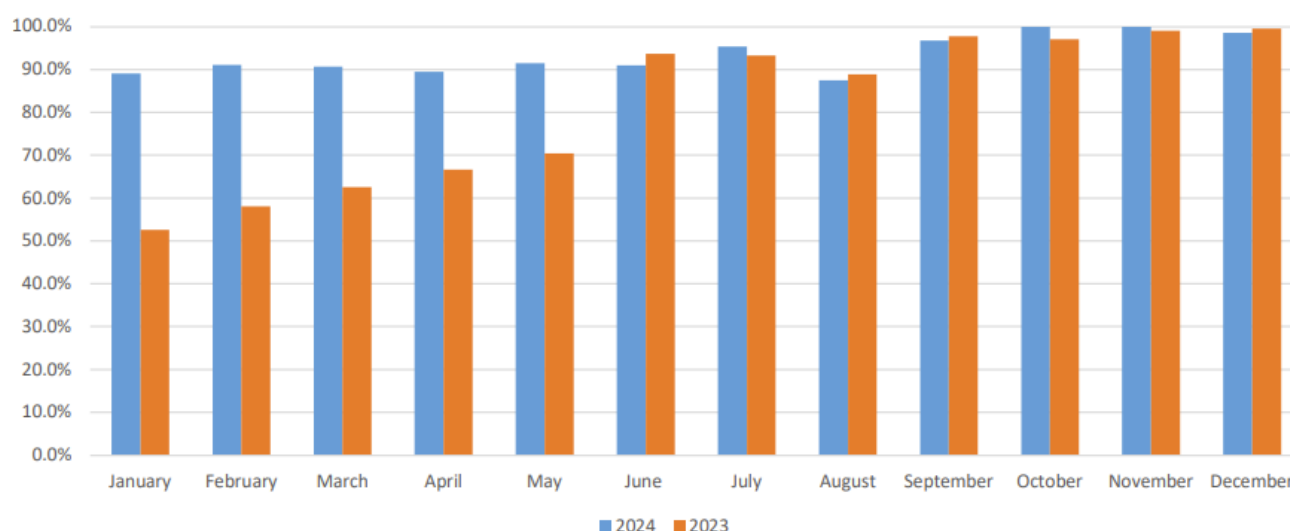
**Percentage of annual reviews completed in timescale**



Data Source: Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Key Performance Indicators Report – December 2024

8. Of the cases reviewed where amendments were necessary, 93.2% resulted in amended EHC Plans being issued within 12 weeks in 2024. This is a significant improvement on performance in 2023 and is due to the recruitment of dedicated plan writers in June 2023. The chart below shows the improvement made in this measure since last year.

## **Percentage of EHC Plan Amendments Issued in Timescale**



Data Source: Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Key Performance Indicators Report – December 2024

9. The proportion of child and family assessments completed which do not result in ongoing children's social care involvement has reduced by more than ten percentage points since last year. The overall trend over the last 12 months is downward because the improvement work being undertaken with partners through the Needs Led Front Door and Early Help Redesign is starting to have an effect. These transformation programmes will support children and families at the right time and at the right level and to provide help at the earliest opportunity based on need rather than an application of threshold.
10. The impact of this work can also be seen in the proportion of assessments undertaken for children and young people and their families which were targeted early help assessments by children's centres and the family service, rather than a social care assessment. At 27.3% this is four percentage points higher than last year.
11. The proportion of children becoming subject of a child protection plan for the second or subsequent time has increased this quarter following a substantial drop in quarter two. This was due to a very low rate of repeat plans in September, where just one of the 50 plans started was a second or subsequent plan. At 27%, the proportion of plans which were repeat plans is still five percentage points lower than in quarter one of 2024/25.
12. There has been an increase in the proportion of children leaving care to live with family members or friends through a Special Guardianship Order (SGO) or Child Arrangement Order (CAO) which at 20.9% is above both the latest national average of 14% and Nottinghamshire's statistical neighbour average of 15%. An approach is being developed to support improved family and extended family engagement for children in care through Family Networking and tracking of potential Special Guardianship Orders and rehabilitation to parents/family via a panel.
13. The percentage of care leavers aged 19-21 in suitable accommodation continues to improve. At 96.6% this is substantially higher than the national and statistical neighbour average of 88%. The Council has continued to expand and improve its Supported Accommodation Provision (including the specialist provision for former Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children care leavers which is continuously expanding to meet demand).

14. Final figures show that 6% of looked after children obtained 9-5 grades (a strong pass) in English and mathematics at key stage 4 last year. This is a reduction of 6.4 percentage points on the previous year as grade boundaries were brought back in line with pre-pandemic levels and mirrors the reduction seen nationally as this change was made.
15. 18.5% of pupils in Nottinghamshire schools were recorded as persistently absent in the 2023/24 Autumn and Spring terms. This is a reduction of 1.2 percentage points on the same period last year and is below the national and statistical neighbour averages of 19.2% as absence from school continues to be an issue since the end of the pandemic.
16. 22.1% of looked after children were recorded as persistent absentees in the 2022/23 academic year, the latest year for which data is available. This is slightly above the national and statistical neighbour averages and three percentage points above the persistent absence rates for all pupils over the same period.

### Departmental Risks

17. The department continues to manage key risks as reported at quarter two. The table below describes these risks and reports on their status:

Risk ID	Risk Category	Risk Description	Reporting Comments
CF1	Service/Project Delivery	Inadequate resourcing across Children and Families to enable transformation and change.	We are reviewing resourcing for change in the light of government announcements around the Families First programme and aligned budgets. Many of the Programme features form part of the department's direction of travel so a supporting mandate and aligned resourcing for change is a welcome step.
CF2	Compliance & Regulation	Placement sufficiency for children in local authority care, short breaks/respite and schools.	Market sufficiency continues to be a challenge, leading to increasing care and specialist education placement costs. We are continuing to grow our residential estate in partnership with Homes2Inspire and have 4 new homes of which 2 are open, 1 opens in February and the final should be operational within the next 6-8 months. We also intend to bring West View children's home back into use in the next 6 months. Our commissioning intentions have been developed for the replacement of the current

Risk ID	Risk Category	Risk Description	Reporting Comments
			block residential care contract and we are working with the market to identify solutions for children we currently struggle to find regulated placements for.
CF3	Compliance & Regulation / Reputation	Failure to meet statutory responsibilities resulting in poor inspection/regulatory review outcomes for CFS, Partnerships and/or Schools.	We have invested in SEND Consultants to support with a review and re-design of our systems, processes and delivery model. We have developed a new strategy, risk register and governance structure with an independent chair in relation to SEND and currently have high levels of monitoring and oversight from external organisations such as the Department for Education, Care Quality Commission and NHS England.
CF4	People & Wellbeing	Workforce recruitment, retention and development.	We are continuing to pursue a number of internal and external initiatives to enable otherwise excluded people to train as social workers and to gain employment with the local authority as social workers. These initiatives will hopefully reduce the reliance on agency staff and help create a more stable workforce. Full benefits of the pipeline into social work will not be seen until Winter 2025. The Government and Department for Education are pursuing national reform of children's social care which will impact on the type of work and the social worker and workloads. The full impact of this will not be known for some time.
CF5	Compliance & Regulation	Changing demographics and behaviours driving service demands.	There is a focus on retaining and recruiting foster carers to enable children to have the opportunity to be cared for in family settings if they are not able to live with family members. Events with

Risk ID	Risk Category	Risk Description	Reporting Comments
			providers have been held and will continue to be held to encourage more residential homes for children to be set up in Nottinghamshire for looked after children.
CF6	Technology & Digital	MOSAIC replatforming	A programme supported by external consultants is in place for MOSAIC replatforming which is currently not flagging any critical issues. Two areas of work, implementing MOSAIC finance and a new workflow to support redesign of the Front Door, will need to be completed by summer. The latter has issues due to requirements not being finalised which will present a risk to change freeze dates. We are working with the service to agree a finalisation date and will need to prepare service areas for the cut-over period, currently planned for December 2025.

### Summary Financial Position – Period 9 2024/25

18. The overall Children and Families Department revenue expenditure is forecast to be overspent by £4.4 million after planned use of reserves but excluding any redundancy costs.
19. The Children and Families Portfolio is currently forecast to overspend by £4.7 million, and the Education and SEND Portfolio is forecasting to underspend by £0.3 million.

**Table 1 – Summary Revenue Position Children and Families LA Budget 2024/25**

Change in Variance £000	Period 8 Under(-) / Overspend Variance £000	Division	Annual Budget £000	Actual to Period 9 £000	Year-End Forecast £000	Under(-) / Overspend Variance £000	Variance as % of Budget %
		<b>Children and Families Portfolio</b>					
256	(3,114)	Care, Help and Protection	67,232	51,716	64,374	(2,858)	4.25
7	7,573	Commissioning & Resources	107,332	75,006	114,911	7,580	7.06
0	0	Capital & Central Charges	2,004	2,109	2,004	0	0.01
<b>264</b>	<b>4,459</b>	<b>Subtotal</b>	<b>176,567</b>	<b>128,831</b>	<b>181,289</b>	<b>4,722</b>	<b>2.67</b>
		<b>Education and Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) Portfolio</b>					
217	(332)	Education & Inclusion	16,470	13,065	16,354	(116)	0.70
0	(186)	Commissioning & Resources	186	0	0	(186)	100.00
0	(0)	Capital & Central Charges	10,622	10,622	10,622	(0)	0.00
<b>217</b>	<b>(519)</b>	<b>Subtotal</b>	<b>27,279</b>	<b>23,687</b>	<b>26,977</b>	<b>(302)</b>	<b>(1.11)</b>
		<b>Traders</b>					
0	0	Clayfields	(394)	(311)	(394)	0	0.00
<b>480</b>	<b>3,940</b>		<b>203,452</b>	<b>152,207</b>	<b>207,872</b>	<b>4,420</b>	<b>2.17</b>
0	0	Transfer to/(from) ear marked reserves	0	0	0	0	
0	0	Transfer to/(from) grant reserves	(2,444)	0	(2,444)	0	
0	0	Transfer to/(from) Traders reserves	(167)	0	(167)	0	
<b>480</b>	<b>3,940</b>		<b>200,841</b>	<b>152,207</b>	<b>205,261</b>	<b>4,420</b>	<b>2.17</b>

**Children and Families Portfolio**

20. The Care, Help & Protection Division is forecast to underspend by £2.9 million, of which £1.3 million is due to an historic decline in internal fostering placements, which has contributed to increased demand for more costly commissioned external placements. There is also a forecast underspend of £1.2 million on social worker staffing, for which additional temporary budget was allocated in 2024/25.
21. The Commissioning & Resources Division is reporting a net forecast overspend of £7.6 million owing to a continued increase in external placement costs, partly offset by underspends in Children’s Centres/Family Hubs staffing costs arising through vacancies.

## **Education and Special Educational Needs & Disabilities (SEND) Portfolio**

22. The Education and Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Portfolio is reporting a forecast underspend of £0.3 million primarily due to underspends within Integrated Children’s Disability Services and Early Years Services.

### **Dedicated School Grant**

23. The Dedicated Schools Grant is currently forecasting an overspend of £13.3 million for 2024/25.

**Table 2 – Summary Revenue Position Dedicated Schools Grant 2024/25**

<b>Period 8 Variance £000</b>	<b>Funding Block</b>	<b>Annual Budget £000</b>	<b>Year-End Forecast £000</b>	<b>Under () / Overspend Variance £000</b>
<b>-100</b>	Schools	655,600	655,500	<b>-100</b>
13,491	High Needs	119,893	133,832	13,939
<b>-542</b>	Early Years	90,314	89,758	<b>-556</b>
0	Central School Services	5,424	5,424	0
<b>12,849</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>871,231</b>	<b>884,514</b>	<b>13,283</b>

24. The forecast overspends within the High Needs Block are primarily linked to the continued increase in demand for education placements in special schools and academies, and independent settings for children with and without an Education, Health and Care Plan.

### **Non ISB Reserve**

25. Nottinghamshire County Council began 2024/25 with an accumulated Non ISB reserve of £19.5 million. Due to the 2024/25 overspend on the Dedicated Schools Grant, and other commitments approved from the reserve by Nottinghamshire’s School Forum, it is forecast that the reserve will have reduced to £5.3 million at the end of 2024/25.

### **Financial Implications**

26. There are no direct financial implications arising from this report.

## **RECOMMENDATION/S**

That the Children and Families Select Committee considers and comments on:

- 1) the summary of Children and Families Department performance against the ambitions in the Annual Delivery Plan.
- 2) the summary of Children and Families key departmental risks.
- 3) the financial position of Children and Families Department.



**Councillor Tracey Taylor**  
**Cabinet Member for Children and Families**

**Councillor Ben Bradley**  
**Cabinet Member for Education and SEND**

**For any enquiries about this report please contact:**

Colin Pettigrew  
Executive Director, Children and Families  
E: [colin.pettigrew@nottscc.gov.uk](mailto:colin.pettigrew@nottscc.gov.uk)

### **Constitutional Comments (CM 07/02/25)**

27. The report falls within the terms of reference of the Children and Families Select Committee.

### **Financial Comments (JG 05/02/25)**

28. There are no financial implications arising from this report.

### **Background Papers and Published Documents**

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.

[Partnership progress in improving the experiences and outcomes for children and young people with SEND – report to Children and Families Select Committee on 2 December 2024](#)

### **Electoral Division(s) and Member(s) Affected**

All.

CFS0037