

7<sup>th</sup> March 2022

Agenda Item: 4

## **REPORT OF THE SERVICE DIRECTOR, EDUCATION, LEARNING AND SKILLS**

### **PARTNERSHIP STRATEGY FOR LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN AND CARE LEAVERS IN NOTTINGHAMSHIRE (2022 TO 2025)**

#### **Purpose of the Report**

1. This report provides Committee with an update on Nottinghamshire's 'Partnership Strategy for Looked After Children and Care Leavers (2018-2021)' during the final year of its implementation (academic year 2020-21). This report supports Members to fulfil their duties as corporate parents and to monitor this Partnership Strategy to ensure Members continue to provide sufficient vision and ambition to allow every looked after child and care leaver ("our children") to thrive and to reach their potential socially, emotionally and in relation to their educational progress and attainment.
2. In addition, this report seeks to provide Committee with an update on progress in relation to the Local Offer for Care Leavers and the impact to date on improving the wellbeing and wider outcomes for care leavers. Committee approved Nottinghamshire County Council's Local Offer for Care Leavers in February 2019.
3. Finally, this report presents and seeks approval from Committee for the new Partnership Strategy for Looked After Children and Care Leavers (2022-2025), attached as **Appendix 1**, which has been developed in consultation with children in care and those young people who have left care.

#### **Information**

4. Throughout this report, references to children in care and those who have left care will be referred to as 'our children and young people' wherever possible.
5. The Department for Education Publication 'Applying corporate parenting principles to looked-after children and care leavers' (February 2018) states that "*Local Authorities have a unique responsibility to the children they look after and their care leavers*". This statutory advice also states that local authorities that have a strong corporate parenting culture recognise that the "*care system is not just about keeping children safe, but also to promote recovery, resilience and well-being*".

6. Since 2014, local authorities have had a duty (Children Act 2004 section 10) to promote cooperation between relevant partners with a view to improving the wellbeing of all children and young people in their area.
7. Section 10 defines relevant partners as including: the district council; the local policing body and the chief officer of police; probation board; any provider of probation services; youth offending team; NHS England and Clinical Commissioning Groups; and the governing bodies of publicly funded schools.
8. The Council's new 10-year vision for Nottinghamshire captured in "The Nottinghamshire Plan: Our plan for healthy, prosperous and greener Nottinghamshire" is committed to prioritising the needs of our children and young people. Members should note their responsibilities as corporate parents as follows:
  - to act in the best interests, and promote the physical and mental health and wellbeing, of those children and young people
  - to encourage those children and young people to express their views, wishes and feelings
  - to take into account the views, wishes and feelings of those children and young people
  - to help those children and young people to gain access to and make the best use of services provided by the Local Authority and its relevant partners
  - to promote high aspirations, and seek to secure the best outcomes, for those children and young people
  - for those children and young people to be safe, and for stability in their home lives, relationships and education or work and
  - to prepare those children and young people for adulthood and independent living.

### **The Looked After Children and Leaving Care Partnership Strategy (2018-2021)**

9. The Looked After Children and Leaving Care Partnership Strategy 2018-2021 has continued to drive the ambitions of the partners in relation to their priorities for looked after children and care leavers in Nottinghamshire. This is the third report to Members, presenting an update from the Partnership Board on their progress.
10. Whilst all partners have endeavoured to continue to deliver the Strategy's priorities throughout the current pandemic crisis, it is, nonetheless, the case that progress has been, at times, compromised and delayed. However, no scheduled Partnership Board meeting was cancelled during 2019-2021 as a result of the crisis, and the Board has met virtually with continued excellent attendance by partners during 2020 and 2021.
11. The Looked After Children and Care Leavers Partnership Board continues to be chaired by the Service Director for Education, Learning and Skills. This Board is also attended by one of the Vice-Chairmen of the Children and Young People's Committee, Councillor Sinead Anderson.
12. The Board meets bi-monthly and is well attended by both internal services and external partners which, in addition to internal education and social care colleagues, includes District Council representation, D2N2, East Midlands Chamber of Commerce, public health, designated looked after children Doctors and Nurses representing the Clinical Commissioning Groups (CCGs), higher and further education, Nottinghamshire Police and

the National Probation Service. In 2021, the Partnership and the Board welcomed new membership by the National Probation Service and by representatives of the Fostering Liaison Action Group. Membership by the Department for Work and Pensions was secured in January 2022. The Terms of Reference, which includes membership of the Board, is available as a background paper. The current Terms of Reference document is currently being updated to reflect recent changes to Board membership.

13. The Strategy has been driven by a partnership delivery plan which has been ‘owned’ by strategic partners. Over the three years of this Strategy, partners have increasingly ensured that the ambitions for improved outcomes for looked after children and care leavers are prioritised within their respective organisations. This report highlights some of the key achievements by the Partnership.
14. At the January 2022 meeting, Board members were invited to identify what they regarded as the most significant achievements of the Partnership from the last three years, celebrating those that have made a difference to the lives of our children and young people. The following grid captures the way in which this Strategy has galvanised partners to ensure that the needs of our children and young people are prioritised and represents a sample of the successes of some of our partners outside of the Council.

<b>District/borough councils</b>	<b>Children in Care Nursing Team</b>	
<p>We have embedded corporate parenting responsibilities within our organisations through the delivery of the Local Offer for Care Leavers, particularly in terms of Council tax exemptions and the leisure centre concessions</p>	<p>Collaborative work with the Children in Care Council to re-design the format in which young people are given their personal health information just prior to leaving care. The nursing team have received positive feedback from young people following the change</p>	<p>Learning gained from new ways of working with children and young people as a result of Covid-19 restrictions - this meant that the quality of children’s health assessments was not compromised, the Team learnt new ways of communicating with children, (including the use of MS Teams) and the voice of the child continued to be a pivotal part of the assessment. As a result, our children and young people have a greater choice about how their health assessment is delivered.</p>
<b>Nottingham Trent University</b>	<b>West Nottinghamshire College</b>	<b>Growth Infrastructure and Development Team (NCC)</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Launch of “Next Steps” online and face-to-face information and guidance sessions for care experienced young people from Nottinghamshire County and Nottingham City – 89% of participants agreed visiting NTU had made them more likely to consider attending university</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 11% of learners who are care leavers entered higher education – proportionately more than their peers in other parts of the country</li> <li>• Progression to higher levels of study for our young people has been in line with their peers</li> <li>• Our young people speak very highly of the specialist</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Care2work programme with Broxtowe Youth Homelessness to support our young people to move towards independence (16+). This includes guidance and awareness training to support employers to provide placements and a link with Futures to provide careers advice and guidance. So far</li> </ul>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ambassador role - a current care experienced NTU student who attends outreach events</li> <li>• Welcome packs for all first-year students who are care experienced</li> <li>• Virtual Q&amp;A to help ensure everything is in place for young people before they arrive</li> <li>• Online Looked After Children Conference in partnership with Nottinghamshire Virtual School for educators and Designated Teachers working with looked after children</li> </ul>	<p>support they receive from WNC staff when in college</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Positive working relationships with the social work teams and other agencies to ensure a “joined up” approach to support for our young people</li> </ul>	<p>11 young people have completed the programme and we have provided funding to 2023.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Accommodation for care leavers is now included in the revised Planning Obligations Strategy.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Probation Service</b></p>	<p><b>The Independent Chair Service</b></p>	<p><b>D2N2/East Midlands Chamber of commerce</b></p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Launch of good practice and other staff resource packs specifically designed for working with young adults and care experienced people</li> <li>• Designated Youth Justice Senior Probation Officers to support young people with the transition from youth to adult justice services</li> <li>• Presentation by the Board’s Care Leaver Champion during the Probation Service’s Safeguarding Adults week to familiarise staff with unique difficulties faced by our young people and to promote the Local Offer</li> <li>• Improving identification of our young people who are Persons on Probation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The development of a strength based and relational approach to practice</li> <li>• The development of Quality Assurance Framework that supports practice improvement for our children and young people</li> <li>• Through the national and regional groups for independent chairs we have contributed to the Independent Review of Children’s Social Care</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Online “Recruiting Talent” event attended by the Council’s Chief Executive who highlighted the number and needs of our care leavers to over 70 businesses</li> <li>• Over 20 companies are offering taster sessions for our care leavers</li> <li>• Online best practice resources and support for employers regarding employing care leavers</li> <li>• Achievement Advisers from the Leaving Care Service are connected with employment and skills activities in every district – Recruiting Talent events have resulted in more companies working with the Achievement Teams</li> <li>• Ensuring consistency of care leaver Local Offers across the D2N2 areas</li> </ul>
<p><b>Futures</b></p>	<p><b>Bassetlaw CCG</b></p>	<p><b>Terry Galloway – Care Leaver Champion</b></p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “Unlocking potential” ESF-funded contract – during 2021, the team provided targeted and specialist</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Co-production of a film and booklet on health advice for young people moving from</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Becoming a “Kickstart Gateway”, to get our young people into work, as they become less vulnerable and</li> </ul>

<p>support for 10 of our young people who were at risk of leaving employment, education or training and found new opportunities for them/prevented them from becoming “NEET”</p>	<p>children’s to adults’ health services.</p>	<p>build better relationships with people when they are in work</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• working with 130 businesses with 250 jobs and placed 130 young people into jobs (including our young people)</li> <li>• using learning on how to run and scale up a scheme and launched a pilot</li> </ul>
--	---	---

## Health Partners

15. The Service Improvement Forum was established in 2016 and continues to meet quarterly. It is a multi-agency looked after children forum with agreement and commitment from both Nottingham City Council and Nottinghamshire County Council, relevant health providers, Designated Doctors and Nurses for looked after children for Nottingham and Nottinghamshire CCG and Bassetlaw CCG, and commissioners. The aim of the forum is to improve health outcomes for children in care. An action plan is overseen by the designated professionals and commissioners. The Service Improvement Forum has shared effective multi-agency partnership working with the Board and plans to continue to do so in 2022.
16. Work often includes liaison with our counterparts in neighbouring provider organisations and CCGs when improving pathways for our children and young people placed out of area or those other local authority children placed in Nottinghamshire.
17. A key piece of work the Service Improvement Forum has undertaken in 2021 is the agreement to an Initial Health Assessment and Review Health Assessment timeline. This timeline outlines roles and responsibilities of all partners to achieve statutory timeframes for Initial and Review Health Assessments, acknowledging it takes a partnership approach to achieve them. This timeline was implemented in September 2021 and therefore will require review as to its effectiveness.
18. Our year end statistics for 2020/21 for immunisations and dental checks were as follows:
  - in 2020/21 86% of our children had up to date immunisations. This compares with 96% for 2019/20 and has been impacted by the Covid-19 pandemic. This continues to be an area of focus for the Local Authority and health providers.
  - in 2020/21 51% of our children had up to date dental checks. This compares with 89% for 2019/20 and has been significantly impacted by the Covid-19 pandemic. This continues to be an area of focus for the Local Authority and health providers.
19. During August 2020 the Designated professionals within the CCGs were informed by the Looked After Children Service of the difficulties for our children and young people accessing dental checks both routinely and on entering care. At this time dental services were significantly reduced due to Covid-19. Dental care is commissioned by NHS England. Liaison by the Designated Nurse with the relevant dental care lead took place to discuss the challenges, concerns, and the need for prioritisation of children and young people who have entered care after years of neglect and the impact that has on oral health. An

escalation process and access to advice are now in place to support the Looked After Children's Service to secure dental care for our children and young people when it is required. However, challenges in access to dental care remain.

20. A two-stage audit undertaken by Service Improvement Forum partners was completed in 2020. It reviewed how the health of our children is managed within statutory looked after child review meetings and resulted in several recommendations. One recommendation was agreeing a standard operating procedure. This standard operating procedure includes who should be invited/consulted with, who should receive minutes, along with an agreed escalation process should the most up to date statutory health assessment not be available. This standard operating procedure was implemented in September 2021 and has yet to be audited.
21. Additional health improvement activity during 2020 to 2021 has included:
  - on-going oversight of the out of area pathway, managing the health needs of our children and young people placed out of Nottinghamshire boundaries
  - Designated Nurse supported the Children in Care Nursing Team to update the health summary documentation for our care leavers
  - establishment of quarterly strategic residential care information sharing meetings
  - creation of working group (both medical and nursing provider contribution) to establish a pathway for obtaining medical advice for adoption within Nottingham and Nottinghamshire CCG. This will be shared with the local authorities and Adoption East Midlands for agreement of roles and responsibilities – at the time of writing this report the pathway is awaiting agreement
  - agreement to a Remand Pathway to ensure young people on remand have their health needs assessed
  - continue to strengthen the information in relation to our children and young people shared with GPs via the Safeguarding GP Leads meetings.
22. At any given time, the Designated Nurses for looked after children and the senior children's public health commissioner at the Council can be actively working together to support two or three "live" cases where the Council's Looked After Children Service is having challenges in accessing Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS) support for our young people living outside the Nottinghamshire County and Nottingham City boundary.
23. In response, a local escalation pathway has been written and agreed to support the Service when having difficulties in accessing external CAMHS/Emotional health support. This pathway includes the involvement of the looked after children Specialist Named Nurse, Designated Nurses for looked after children and the Council's senior children's public health commissioner.
24. As part of the new Partnership strategy, in 2022/23, Nottinghamshire and Bassetlaw health commissioners will work with NHS England to strengthen reciprocal arrangements to ensure that children and young people placed out of area have access to CAMHS provision.
25. The CAMHS Looked After Children Team has continued to work successfully with our young people and their networks during the Covid-19 pandemic. Working remotely was

new to the Team, and they have established new ways of working to provide excellent quality of care and outcomes for our young people. As a result of moving to a virtual platform, training is now more accessible and flexible to the needs of the community and has improved access for networks and consultations. The Team continues to offer in-person appointments, as it did at the height of the pandemic, despite the uncertainty at the time.

26. There continues to be a great level of interest from prospective candidates to work in the Team, and this contributes towards a Team of highly expert professionals who are passionate about our young people.
27. The Looked After Children and Leaving Care Services continue to work with local health to deliver “You Know Your Mind”, which has been operational since 2018. This is an integrated personal commissioning intervention for our children and young people aged 0 to 24 years with mental health needs. With professional input, children and young people use a personal health budget (up to £500 each) to support their own mental and emotional health needs in a timely way that they think will make the most difference to them.
28. Examples of support that has been put in place include bicycles, gym memberships or home gym equipment, boxing sessions, swimming lessons, dance and ice-skating classes, photography equipment, music equipment and lessons, horse riding lessons, and arts and crafts equipment.
29. One young person asked for support to create a reading area in their home with bean bags and lots of new books, which they used when they struggled to sleep at night, to relax and this helped their anxieties. Some young people have used the funding to set up their own sensory or mindfulness spaces in their homes.
30. Feedback from children and young people, along with professionals, has been overwhelmingly positive:

*“Having the bike has allowed me to remove myself from incidents in the home and gather my thoughts clearly”*

*“The foster carer reported that having purchased several story books this has allowed the child to look forward to bedtime and settled throughout the night. She is no longer anxious and stressed about her bedtime”*

*“I can manage my mood and anxiety better, having the bike has allowed me to go riding with my friends, visit my family members and my PA also showed me how to change a tyre!”*

*“Having an Xbox has allowed me to make new friends and invite them around to my home, I would never have done this before because I felt that I had nothing to offer”*

## **The Virtual School**

31. The ambition to ensure our children and young people fulfil their potential has continued to be a priority for the Virtual School which has developed evidence-based guidance for schools on the effective use of the Pupil Premium to ensure that ‘fulfilling potential’ is a key

driver for all additional requests for funding. For 2021-22 the Virtual School is releasing catch-up funding and National Tutoring Programme funding to schools to support the recovery following Covid-19.

32. In partnership with all children social care teams and the Leaving Care Service, the Virtual School has developed a Personal Education Plan Quality Assurance process. This process highlights good practice and informs areas for development for all partners involved in the Personal Education Plan process. The strength-based Personal Education Plans are held on an online platform which supports the Quality Assurance process and will be reported to the Divisional Leadership Team.
33. The Virtual School was successful in securing a bid for a Post-16 Pupil Premium pilot. The pilot provides an opportunity for colleges to direct additional funding to support our young people to achieve in their education setting and plan successful next steps towards future plans. The pilot includes four specific interventions at West Nottinghamshire College, as well as a per student budget for use at other further education colleges. 33 of our young people are being supported by the project at West Notts College. This includes staff training to ensure wider impact for future students and other students with vulnerability, such as those on the edge of care. The budget per student for other Further Education settings has been offered for another 82 of our young people.

### **Further and Higher Education**

34. West Nottinghamshire College works closely with the Virtual School and other local schools to support our children as they progress into Key Stage 5. During 2018 to 2021 the College provided education to 115 of our young people. The College works closely with the Looked After Care and the Leaving Care Services to ensure financial support, skills for independent living and general life skills are also part of the offer at college. On enrolment each of our children is automatically assigned a support coach who takes the lead on transition, liaison with social care and ensuring a smooth transition into college. Support coaches meet with young people as and when needed and, for those with more vulnerabilities, on a weekly basis.
35. There are currently 17 young people who have applied to Higher Education courses for 2022 - 2023. For the current academic year 2021-2022, 31 young people are undertaking their university studies (Years 1, 2, 3 or 4) and one young person is in their second year of a post-graduate degree. Examples of undergraduate courses being studied by our young people include BSc Psychology, International Relations and Politics, Midwifery, Biochemistry, Medicine, Bio Veterinary Science, Forensic Science, Exercise and Sport Sciences and Quantity Surveying, BA History, Music, Education (Psychology), Criminology, Social Work, History, Politics, Child Learning and Development and Interactive Design, LLB Law and Business Law.
36. Two of our young people are studying foundation degrees and Higher National Certificates in Sport Science and Exercise, and Working with Children, Young People and Families respectively. Postgraduate studies include International Law and Global Justice, and Data Science and Analytics. Our young people are studying at a range of higher education institutions including the University of Nottingham, Lincoln, Oxford, Durham, Manchester, Hull, Birmingham, Plymouth and Exeter, as well as Nottingham Trent University, Herriot Watt University and Long Eaton Football Club/University Centre Colchester.



37. Six of our young people graduated at the end of academic year 2020-21, including a PGCE Primary Education with Qualified Teacher Status, BA (Hons) Education Studies & Early Years degree from Nottingham Trent University, BSc Accounting & Finance with first class honours from University of Leicester, BEng Mechanical Engineering from Sheffield Hallam University and a postgraduate diploma in Translation Studies and as a qualified translator from the University of Sheffield.
38. Good partnership working continues between the Leaving Care Service's Achievement Service and Nottingham Trent University's Centre for Student and Community Engagement Team. In Spring 2021, the University delivered "Next Steps" access to higher education sessions to six of our young people. Two subsequently successfully enrolled at Sheffield Hallam University and University of Hull in September 2021, three have completed their UCAS applications for September 2022 entry and one of the young people has decided to defer their place until September 2023. The other two young people are currently studying Level 2 qualifications at local Further Education colleges and have been inspired to progress onto Level 3 qualifications to fulfil university entrance criteria and apply for September 2024 entry. These academic mentoring sessions are available in 2022. The Achievement Service is aware of 17 looked after children and care leavers who have expressed university plans for the 2022/2023 academic year.
39. Nottingham Trent University remains committed to working with partners to achieve the key priorities in the new Looked After Children and Leaving Care Partnership Strategy. Since 2019, Nottingham Trent University has established an Estranged and Care Leavers Working Group comprised of staff from across the university to ensure best practice and support for care leavers in respect of student finance, accommodation, transition, support and employability. Their offer of support for care leavers and care experienced students has grown significantly over the lifetime of the last strategy and includes significant practical and wellbeing support through Student Support Advisers, dedicated specialists within the employability team through their Rise initiative, financial support through the £1,000 a year Care Leavers and Foyer Resident Bursary and money management workshops.
40. Nottingham Trent University has signed up to the Care Leaver Covenant which clearly outlines their commitments to support care experienced young people. These commitments are continuously reviewed and updated considering guidance, best practice and student voice through their focus groups for care experienced students.
41. Nottingham Trent University collaborates with colleagues from other institutions through their membership of the National Network for the Education of Care Leavers (NNECL) and the East Midlands Care Leavers Activities and Student Support (EMCLASS). They work with the University of Nottingham to run an information event for professionals working with care leavers to support their progression to higher education.
42. Looked after young people are priority groups for all pre- and post-16 outreach activities including our work experience scheme and progression scheme.
43. Early Childhood Services have implemented a recruitment campaign to promote roles in and attract young people to the early years sector ([Working in Childcare | Notts Help Yourself and working in childcare leaflet](#)). This has included targeting young people in

schools, promoting apprenticeships, work experience and shadowing. We have also collaborated with workforce development colleagues to promote apprentice opportunities to within the early years sector and the Children's Centre Service to our young people. One young person who is also a parent has been recruited as an apprentice within the Families Information Service. However, we have yet to knowingly recruit any care experienced young following several attempts.

44. It may be that young people in general are less interested in working in childcare and early years at this time. We know that many schools no longer offer health, social care and childcare GCSEs or A-levels so young people are not as aware of these career options as they might have been previously.

## **Police and Youth Justice**

45. In September 2021, the Board agreed with the local Youth Justice Partnership Board its role in the local accountability structure to help implement the National Protocol on Reducing Unnecessary Criminalisation of Looked-After Children and Care Leavers. In Nottinghamshire, 2019/20 data shows that the rate of looked after children re-offending is strikingly higher than that of other groups, particularly those who are not open to Children's Social Care. Whilst not large numbers, the number of children entering the criminal justice system for the first time is disproportionately large compared to the general population (also based on 2019 and 2020 data). Nationally, children who are looked after for at least 12 months are five times more likely to offend than all children.
46. The Protocol focuses on acknowledging those young people who fall into the criminal justice system because of the nature of their identity or circumstances as a looked after child rather than their behaviour, or as a result of the disproportionate responses to their behaviour by the adults around them. For example, a residential placement may call the Police in response to a young person's behaviour when perhaps the parents of a young person living in their family home may not. A 10-point checklist for police officers, including custody sergeants, has been devised to ensure responses by the Police are proportionate. The 10-point checklist identifies important factors to help inform the Crown Prosecution Service on the most appropriate course of action. This checklist is helping to embed a culture change and move towards trauma-informed practice within Nottinghamshire Police.
47. Our partnership working has been enhanced by recruitment of a Children in Care police officer who offers support, advice, diversion and signposting to placement providers and caregivers.
48. The Nottinghamshire Reducing Offending of Children in Care and Care Leavers Oversight Group will report to the Board annually and the new strategy includes a specific commitment to reducing the criminalisation of looked after children.

## **Listening to Our Children and Young People**

49. Upon becoming looked after, all our young people are given the opportunity to complete the 'Listen to Me' booklet before each Looked After Child Review, or more regularly should they wish to. This enables their views to be sought in relation to their care plan and enables

their views to be heard in meetings held should they not choose to attend, or it may support their participation in meetings.

50. As well as the 'Listen to Me' booklet our children and young people can use the Mind of My Own app, which enables them to share their wishes and feelings directly with the professionals they work with, including their independent reviewing officers at any time. Mind of My Own was launched in Nottinghamshire in July 2019. This app provides an online platform for our children and young people to directly communicate their views, wishes and feelings to their Children's Service worker, 24 hours a day, every day of the year.
51. The Mind of My Own Express app can be used to support young people with additional needs to share their wishes and feelings with the professionals who are important to them. By using these resources, children's Social Workers continue to ensure the views, thoughts and feelings of our children inform their Care Plans and Pathway Planning processes.
52. Our children were the first group of children in the County to benefit from the app. In October 2020, the app was rolled out to the Leaving Care Service. The app has now been rolled out to most services and teams in the Children and Families department, most recently to the Education Partnership and there are plans to roll it out to Adoption East Midlands in the future. Our children and young people of all ages are using the app/sending statements. Those between the ages of 11 and 15 years continue to send the most statements.
53. The Youth Service's Participation and Engagement team has used the Partnership Strategy to drive further meaningful engagement with our children and young people. This service has continued to work with them to better understand their experiences and to ensure that this ambition to make a positive contribution continues to be relevant to them.
54. During 2020 and 2021, the Children in Care Council's sub-groups and No Labels have met 27 times. Due to the pandemic this has mainly been digital interaction which has involved creative ways of maintaining engagement. Members have been actively involved in several events or participated in sharing their views and making decisions on a variety of strategic and business agenda items. This has provided a safe and supportive environment in which our children and young people can come together to participate and engage in constructive and fun activities as well as having an opportunity to express their views and feelings about life in care and how it can be further improved.
55. An example of this was recently articulated in a spoken word project which saw members of the Children in Care Council talking about their lived experience through writing poetry with the support of a youth worker and County Youth Arts. This work was collated and will be shared with professionals within the Council and the wider partnership. A further example is the strength-based language glossary devised with social care colleagues around the importance of language used by professionals when working with children and families.

## The Local Offer for Care Leavers

56. Preparing our children for adulthood remains the overarching objective of the Partnership Strategy. The Nottinghamshire Local Offer for Care Leavers is driven by the ambitions that ensure every young person (care leaver) can become a resilient and confident young adult, in secure work, with financial independence along with permanent and secure housing, either through long-term tenancy or by buying their own homes. Moreover, the Local Offer supports the development of a healthy lifestyle that brings confidence and fulfilment and seeks to support care leavers to develop the ability to forge and maintain friendships and relationships and be able to engage positively with their wider communities.
57. The Care Leaver Offer was developed through strong partnership working, particularly with the district councils and health partners, and was approved by the Children and Young People’s Committee on 11<sup>th</sup> February 2019 and published on 8<sup>th</sup> April 2019. This Offer will continue to evolve as partners seek to constantly refresh and strengthen the offer. There was an update of the printed booklet in March 2020 and Members can view the current offer at: [www.nottshelpyourself.org.uk/careleaverslo](http://www.nottshelpyourself.org.uk/careleaverslo).
58. The communication of the Offer to our young people has been boosted by the introduction of the ‘Notts Next Steps’ app in May 2020 which was co-produced with Nottinghamshire Care Leavers. Following the end of the initial contract period the app has been extended into 2022. Notts Next Steps is an outreach tool created to generate interest and encourage young people to consider a range of employment, education and training opportunities including developing employability and basic skills often on a bespoke basis. The app is designed to work without an internet connection, meaning that our young people have access to information about the Nottinghamshire Local Offer to Care Leavers on a 24/7 basis without needing to rely on Wi-Fi availability or using their phone data. The app continues to offer a helpful resource providing contact information about the Leaving Care Service, help and support, advice and guidance and about other organisations that can offer support during their transition into independence.
59. The Offer provides exemption from Council Tax for all care leavers up to 25 years and is key to supporting care leavers to secure independent living. This benefit has been delivered by district councils who have committed to absorbing the additional costs for this. The Leaving Care Service shares monthly information with the district and borough councils to identify care leavers who should have exemption from Council Tax charges (if they are eligible to pay Council Tax in the first instance). The table below indicates current take up of the exemption and figures for the previous year:

	December 2021	January 2022
Ashfield	127	128
Bassetlaw	98	97
Broxtowe	60	59
Gedling	63	68
Mansfield	125	127
Newark	80	84
Rushcliffe	14	42

60. In addition to the Council Tax exemption, district and borough councils have continued to offer support for our young people to live on their own if this is what they desire. There is also outreach support available from the Supported Accommodation Providers for those young people that have been residing in supported accommodation. The Leaving Care Service has continued to build positive working relationships with district council housing departments and individual Housing Officers to provide continued support to Care Leavers to enable them to maintain their tenancies and to ‘troubleshoot’ any problems as they arise.
61. Building on the firm foundations of the partnership between the Leaving Care Service and district and borough councils, our young people are now able to join their local council leisure centre gyms and wider facilities, including swimming and fitness classes at no cost. Since the leisure offer was introduced in July 2019 at least 18 young people have taken this up and have been positive in their feedback, advising their Personal Advisors of the benefits to both their physical and mental health. At the time of writing, three young people have taken up of the offer in January 2022 and this represents a healthy start to the year which we would hope to continue!
62. During 2021, West Notts College created an independent living ‘flat’ that the Student Support Team uses with groups of our young people to promote independent living skills. Our young people have taken part in two sessions so far. This team now has regular meetings with the Leaving Care Team and direct contact with the Looked After Children Service and has established strong processes to aid transition.
63. The Achievement Service has increased to four Achievement Advisors and one Achievement Coordinator plus a 0.4 FTE post dedicated to Business Engagement and work opportunities. This has increased the capacity of the Achievement Service to work with the Virtual School to intervene at an earlier age. This is all underpinned by the continuing effective partnership between the Leaving Care Team and the Department for Work and Pensions which allows the Achievement Adviser within the Leaving Care Team to act on the young person’s behalf as and when necessary. This has made a significant difference to ensure that our young people secure additional support when looking for employment and training. This support includes access to work readiness programmes, access to work experience, Care 2 Work, support to complete job applications, preparation for interviews, access to life skills courses, and support for apprenticeship applications.
64. Since the Achievement Service and the Virtual School started to track whether our young people are in education, employment and training in Year 12 and 13 back in January 2020, we have seen an increase every year. In January 2022, 75% of our young people in year 12 and 13 are in education, employment or training, compared with 68% in January 2020.

	<b>% of our young people in education, employment and training in Year 12 and 13 (aged 16 and 17)</b>	<b>Number of our young people in education, employment and training in Year 12 and 13 (aged 16 and 17)</b>
Jan 2022	75%	214 out of 285
Jan 2021	70%	199 out of 283
Jan 2020	68%	108 out of 157

65. In January 2021, prior to the official launch of the Achievement Service in March 2021, 366 (52.7%) of our young people aged 18 to 21 were in education, employment and training

(EET) and 47.3% were not in education, employment and training (NEET). In January 2022, nine months since the launch of the Service, 407 (59.4%) of our young people aged 18 to 21 were in education, employment and training, an almost 7% increase, demonstrating the positive impact of the Achievement Service on the educational and employment outcomes of our young people in just nine months.

	<b>Percentage of our young people aged 18 to 21 in education, employment and training (EET)</b>
Jan 2022	59.4%
Jan 2021	52.7%

## **Voluntary Sector**

66. Voluntary sector partnership links have improved following the Achievement Service attending the Recruiting Talent event held virtually in April 2021. In April 2021, the Achievement Service met with Nottinghamshire’s Community Voluntary Services providers to explore offering bespoke volunteering opportunities for care experienced young people. Out of 366 care leavers only 1.4% chose to participate in volunteering. The aim is to increase this figure and promote the potential great benefits of volunteering to our young people, including the Achievement Service incentivising volunteering with rewards. The Partnership Board will meet annually to review progress with the Achievement Service, the review taking place in April 2022.
67. In 2021, the “WERK” (Work Experience Readiness) Programme was re-branded to the new “Care 2 Work” Programme and Broxtowe Youth Homelessness were commissioned to develop and deliver this accredited work readiness programme for looked after children aged 16 and 17, with the purpose of developing the necessary skills and prepare them for work. The two-day course provides the young people with the opportunity to showcase the transferrable skills they have gained as care experienced young people and to learn how they can be applied into the workplace for their future economic activity. Since April 2021, 11 of our young people have participated in the programme and achieved the Level 1 Aim Award Qualification in Personal Presentation at Work. Following this, the young people have participated in a variety of work experience placements secured by the Achievement Service’s Business Engagement Achievement Adviser, including in hospitality, retail, construction, health and social care, childcare, car garages, equine care and voluntary support services. Following this, the young people are referred to Futures, to take the next steps in their EET progression plans with support from the Achievement Service and Broxtowe Youth Homelessness.

## **Department for Work and Pensions**

68. The Leaving Care and the Achievement Services are proud of the excellent operational partnership that has been established with the Department for Work and Pensions/Job Centres on behalf of Nottinghamshire care leavers over the last several years, ignited by the 2013 and 2015 Department for Work and Pensions Care Leaver Strategy. This ensures our young people are supported to enhance their employability skills at their individual pace to move them closer to the world of work.

## The 21Plus Service

69. For the year 2021 there were 849 separate child enquiries for the 21Plus team with 221 young people being allocated to a Personal Advisor so that additional support could be provided. 754 of these child enquiries were self-referrals, which is positive as it indicates that care leavers eligible for the service are aware of the support they can access and will make contact when requiring support.
70. 258 of the child enquiries were specifically related to issues around homelessness and housing; these were picked up by the Homelessness Prevention Personal Advisors, to provide dedicated support advice and guidance.
71. In terms of the staffing provision there is now 1 FTE experienced Personal Advisor, 0.8 FTE experienced Personal Advisor, and 2 x 0.5 FTE experienced Personal Advisors. In September 2021 a second Homelessness Prevention Personal Advisor was seconded from the South leaving care team, after funding was granted for a further year from the Rough Sleeping Initiative fund. This has allowed the two workers to focus on training for social workers around accommodation planning for young people, offering a tenancy support package for young people moving into their first home and continuing to develop relationships with the seven councils.
72. The Council is required to make at least one contact with all our young people aged 21 to 24 years per year. The 21Plus service remain proactive in terms of this, the team has made contact with over 97% of all our eligible young people aged 21 to 24 years. A birthday card has also been developed and is now sent to all young people in the month of their birthday which provides a reminder of the 21Plus service contact details. Already this card has generated some new enquiries, which is extremely positive.
73. For those young people who may be more vulnerable or have more complex needs, a 21Plus worker is now allocated at point of case transfer, an introductory meeting is also offered with the support of the existing Personal Adviser. This again is seen as a positive development and is already being well received.
74. Examples of positive feedback include:

Regarding the support provided to a care leaver who is still awaiting a decision on their claim for asylum:

*"Thanks, really do appreciate your support - let's hope the Home Office decide soon and accept his status to stay - you have all been amazing support to (young person) and myself."*

Received from a 21Plus Service care leaver:

*"I would like the extra help. The reason I got in touch was because of the birthday card with your details in it - if it wasn't for that birthday card I could have been on the streets. Thank you for all your help."*

75. Personal Advisers continue to be allocated to our looked after young people by the time they are 17½ years old. This has supported the development of positive relationships prior to the transition from 'looked after' to 'leaving care' services at 18 years of age.
76. Ongoing engagement and participation with our young people will continue to be essential to ensure the Local Offer for Care Leavers, as well as the overarching Partnership Strategy, continues to evolve to meet the changing needs of each cohort of care leavers, particularly older ones.
77. The development and implementation of a strengths-based and relational-based approach to practice for the independent reviewing officers over the past 18 months has been a real change in culture. An initial sample group of independent reviewing officers have started using the new agenda and written record format in Looked After Child Review meetings. Feedback has been excellent – most of the young people chaired their own meetings, reported feeling in control of the meeting and being able to talk about the things they wanted to talk about and not being led by the adults involved in the meeting. The experience has provided opportunities to clarify their understanding of their care plans. This has been a very positive piece of work and the service is looking forward to rolling it out more widely over the next couple of months. 35 young people over 18 have now decided to have an independent reviewing officer continue to oversee their care and we hope this will grow.
78. There has continued to be a focus on the 'review' element of Pathway Plans to ensure that actions and tasks identified in the Plan have been progressed appropriately. There is an expectation that team managers within the Leaving Care Service review all Pathway Plans to ensure that all Plans identify specific tasks that will result in improved experiences and outcomes for our young people. In addition, Plans are expected to be continually involved in, updated and informed by the young person. During their inspection in October 2019, Ofsted confirmed that our Pathway Plans are reviewed regularly and focus on progressing important priorities, with young people's views integrated throughout the plans, ensuring that they are meaningful to young people.
79. Where risks to our young people are identified, the Leaving Care Service now routinely attends and convenes risk strategy meetings with multi-agency partners. On occasion Multi-Agency Problem Solving meetings have also been held. Managers retain oversight of these risks, and both the risk and safety plans are recorded on Mosaic. The Leaving Care Service is also involved in Child Criminal Exploitation and Child Sexual Exploitation monitoring and processes and continues to engage with MAPPAs (Multi-agency Public Protection Arrangements) meetings and other relevant safeguarding meetings with multi-agency partners for young people aged 18 - 24 years old.

## **Nottinghamshire Looked After Children and Care Leavers Partnership Strategy 2022-2025**

80. The voices of our children and young people are at the heart of the new Strategy, which is attached as **Appendix 1**; its priorities have been directly influenced by what our children and young people have told us is important to them. Throughout most of the calendar year 2021 and as the last strategy was concluding, the Board gathered views from children and young people with a wide range of care experience and ages, as well as those children from Nottinghamshire living in other parts of the country. Sources included:



- Nottinghamshire Public Health-led Looked After Children and Care Leavers Interim Needs Assessment (2020) commissioned by the Board, which included feedback from our children and young people
  - relevant views from Nottinghamshire Children in Care Council “No Labels” and sub-groups for care experienced children and young people gathered between 2018 and 2021
  - feedback gathered from our children and young people as part of the Council’s quality assurance activity during 2018 to 2021
  - feedback from children and young people accessing You Know Your Mind funding
  - Mind of My Own statement reports from 2020 to 2021.
81. In addition, during Spring 2021, young people from Nottinghamshire Children in Care Council, “No Labels”, and West Notts College led a consultation with other care experienced children and young people to find out what they thought the partnership priorities for the next four years should be. These young people were facilitated by a participation working group of the Partnership Board.
82. Taking the key priorities emerging from the feedback from our children and young people, a small writing group comprising representatives of education, police, children’s social care and health partners also collated the output from a round of structured discussions with individual Board members as well as from structured group discussions at the Board meeting in July 2021 to inform the drafting of the new strategy. A review of the Partnership’s vision, ambitions and commitments was also undertaken.
83. Building on their involvement in the development of the strategy, members of the Children in Care Council, “No Labels”, have written the foreword to the strategy, reinforcing the importance of their voice throughout the consultation process and the strategy’s implementation going forward. Ensuring that all our children and young people are aware of the strategy and how to access the support and services partners are committing to is a priority of all the partners.
84. In addition, Terry Galloway, a local care leaver champion, who has been pivotal in the development of the Nottinghamshire Local Offer for Care Leavers, has provided a foreword that reflects on progress made by the Partnership and offers a focus for the Partnership for the next four years.
85. The strategy also reflects on the positive impact that the Partnership has had on the lived experience of our children and young people over the past three years and describes how these achievements provide a strong foundation for the Partnership’s ambitions and aspirations over the next four years. The document describes what our children and young people have told us matters most to them and what they do not want.
86. Nottinghamshire County Council’s Pledge to looked after children has been incorporated into the new strategy to become a Partnership Pledge for our children and young people. The foundation commitments of the Pledge have been reviewed to reflect their feedback. As part of the delivery of the strategy, partners will pledge how they will meet these commitments, and we will work with children and young people to communicate the Pledge to all children and young people in care at times and in ways that suit them.

87. The strategy document features photography by care leavers from Nottinghamshire. They are winners of a competition to have their images included in the strategy, organised by our Leaving Care Service. Over 30 entries were received, the standard of which is very high, demonstrating the talents of our young people.
88. An online public consultation on the draft strategy took place from 15<sup>th</sup> November to 19<sup>th</sup> December 2021. 59 responses were received, 36 from young people - 14 looked after children and 22 care leavers. Other respondents included foster carers, and front-line workers, managers and senior managers/decision makers from health providers and commissioners, education, Nottinghamshire Police, district and borough councils, the voluntary/not-for-profit sector organisations and internal services at the Council.
89. Almost 94% of respondents agreed or neither agreed/disagreed with the ambitions and commitments of the strategy (others either disagreed (3%) or didn't know (3%)). 68% did not think there was anything missing from the ambitions and 32% thought there was. 61% of respondents thought that elements of the new strategy needed to be changed and 39% thought not. Some changes were made to the strategy document in response. In addition, feedback related to specific services areas was shared with the relevant teams from across the Partnership. Some of comments from the young people who took part in the consultation are included in the strategy document.
90. This is the second strategy of Nottinghamshire's Looked After Children and Care Leavers Strategic Partnership Board.
91. Through this renewed Partnership Strategy, the Council is committed to delivering a genuine, multi-agency, child-centred strategy which makes the most of the collective resources across the Partnership to achieve our shared ambition and deliver our commitments. As a Partnership, the collective commitment is to give every one of our children and young people the foundations and support to thrive in adulthood.

### **Other Options Considered**

92. No other options have been considered

### **Reason/s for Recommendation/s**

93. To ensure that Elected Members can fulfil their corporate parenting duties.

### **Statutory and Policy Implications**

94. This report has been compiled after consideration of implications in respect of crime and disorder, data protection and information governance finance, human resources, human rights, the NHS Constitution (public health services), the public sector equality duty, safeguarding of children and adults at risk, service users, smarter working, sustainability and the environment and where such implications are material they are described below. Appropriate consultation has been undertaken and advice sought on these issues as required.

## Financial Implications

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

## RECOMMENDATION/S

That Committee:

- 1) approves the proposed Partnership Strategy for Looked After Children and Care Leavers in Nottinghamshire (2022 to 2025), attached as **Appendix 1**
- 2) gives approval for annual updates on the impact of the Local Offer for Care Leavers to be provided as appropriate
- 3) gives approval for an annual report on the work of the Partnership Board and the impact of the Strategy for Looked After Children and Care Leavers in Nottinghamshire (2022 to 2025) to be provided as appropriate.

**Marion Clay**  
**Service Director, Education, Learning and Skills**

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

Marion Clay  
Service Director, Education, Learning and Skills  
T: 0115 9772073  
E: [marion.clay@nottscc.gov.uk](mailto:marion.clay@nottscc.gov.uk)

## Constitutional Comments (EP 15/02/22)

96. The recommendations fall within the remit of the Children and Young People's Committee by virtue of its terms of reference.

## Financial Comments (MDN 15/02/22)

97. There are no financial implications arising directly 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.

DfE statutory guidance for local authorities Local Offer for care leavers:  
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/local-offer-guidance>

DfE statutory guidance for local authorities, Applying parenting principles to looked-after children and care leavers: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/applying-corporate-parenting-principles-to-looked-after-children-and-care-leavers>

[Partnership Strategy for Looked After Children and Care Leavers in Nottinghamshire 2018-2021 – report to Policy Committee on 14 February 2018](#)

[Approval of Nottinghamshire's Local Offer for Care Leavers - report to Children and Young People's Committee on 11 February 2019](#)

[Nottinghamshire's Local Offer for Care Leavers, March 2020](#)

Terms of Reference of the Looked After Children and Care Leavers Partnership Board

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

All.

C1548