



**15 April 2024**

**Agenda Item: 7**

**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 2023-4**

**Purpose of the Report**

1. To provide the Committee with a summary of Children and Families Department's performance against the Ambitions set out in the Annual Delivery Plan.
2. To provide the Committee with a summary of Children and Families Department's key departmental risks.
3. To provide the Committee with a summary of the Children and Families Department's financial position for the current financial year.

**Information**

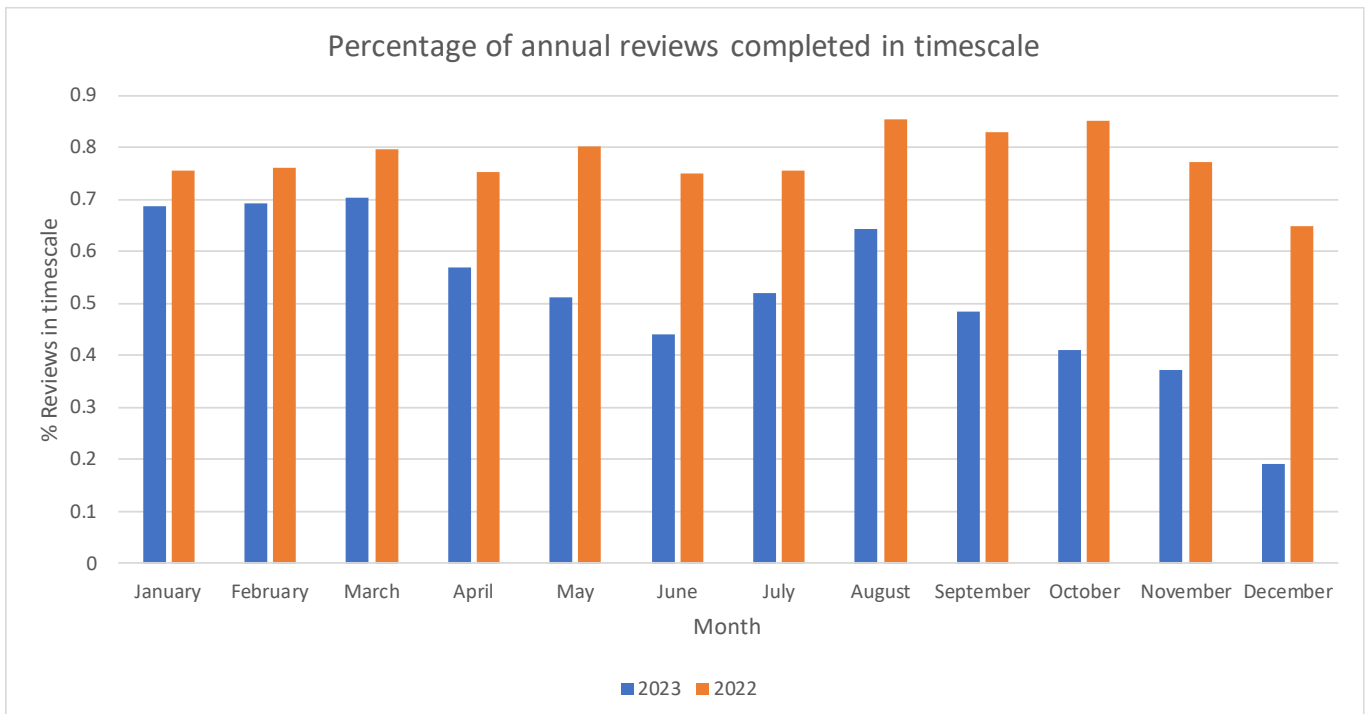
**Performance against the Ambitions set out in the Annual Delivery Plan**

**Annual Delivery Plan Ambition 2 - Supporting Children and Families**

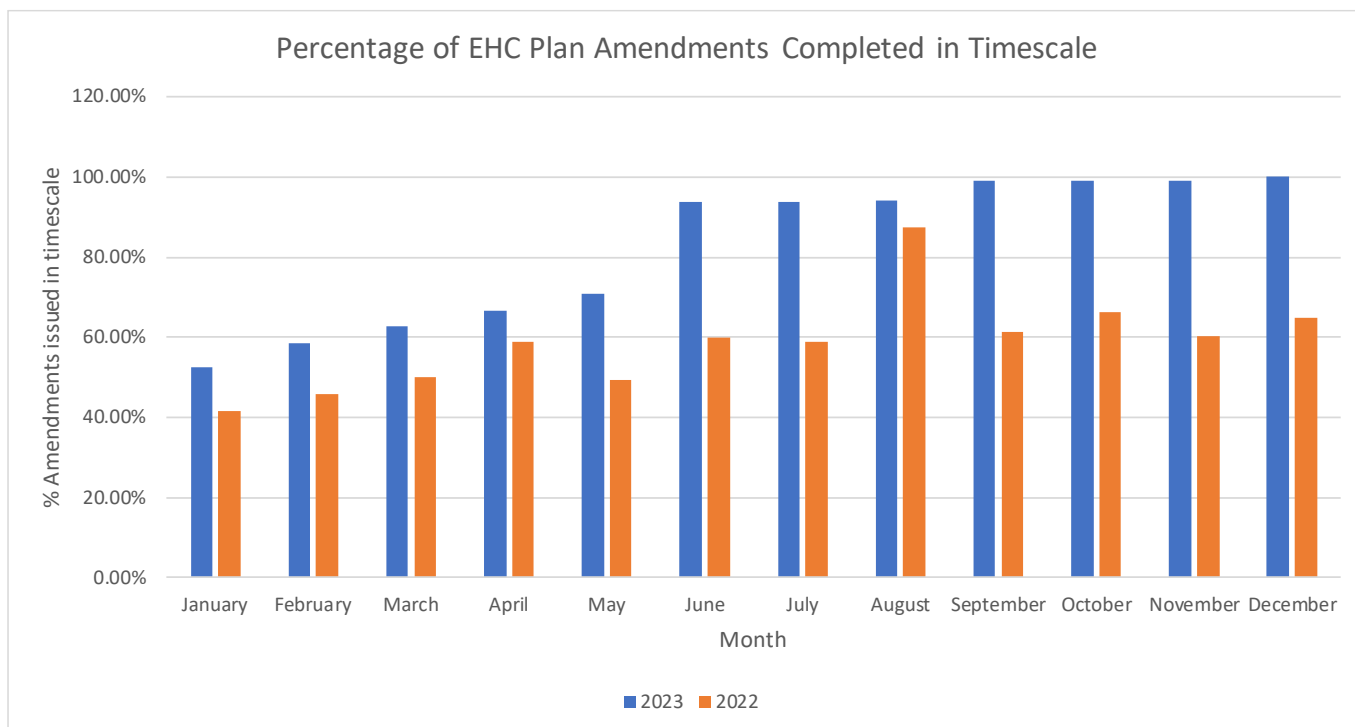
4. Almost 1 in 4 assessments undertaken for children and young people and their families were targeted early help assessments by children's centres and the family service, rather than a social care assessment, and 18.4% of children who have started a child in need (CIN) plan or child protection plan (CPP) this year received one of these targeted assessments in the previous two years.
5. Although there has been a sizeable increase in the proportion of children starting on a CIN or CP Plan who had received a targeted early help assessment in the previous two years, suggesting more families accessing early support, the ambition is to increase this further. The Department is working with partners to 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. Support is provided through early help services where it is appropriate to do so, increasing the number of families receiving support and reducing the number who experience social work assessments that do not result in meaningful

support. The Needs Led Front Door and Early Help Redesign transformation programmes are at the forefront of making these changes.

6. There is strong evidence that early help is effective in Nottinghamshire because the percentage of families supported making significant sustained progress through the Supporting Families programme has increased again this quarter, up to 86.7% for the year to date. This means that more than eight out of ten families supported by early help have made and sustained significant progress in all identified areas of need for six months after closure, with more making progress against some areas.
7. The proportion of new Education, Health, and Care Plans (EHCPs) issued in timescale for the calendar year stands at 28.0% compared to just 3.6% at the end 2022. This cumulative figure includes weaker performance earlier in the year. Performance was at or above 40% for four months in the last six and is on track to achieve the targets set out in the SEND improvement plan.
8. Over half of the annual reviews due for EHCPs have been completed in timescale so far this year. This is down on the 77% achieved last year, but this reduction is mostly attributable to delays in the recording of annual reviews once completed, so this is expected to improve in later quarters. Of the cases reviewed where amendments were necessary, 79.8% resulted in amended EHCP Plans being issued within 12 weeks in 2023. This shows really good performance in this area with performance more than 20 percentage points higher than the 55.3% of amendments issued in timescale in 2022. As can be seen in the chart below, more than 99% of amended plans have been issued in timescales since September 2023.



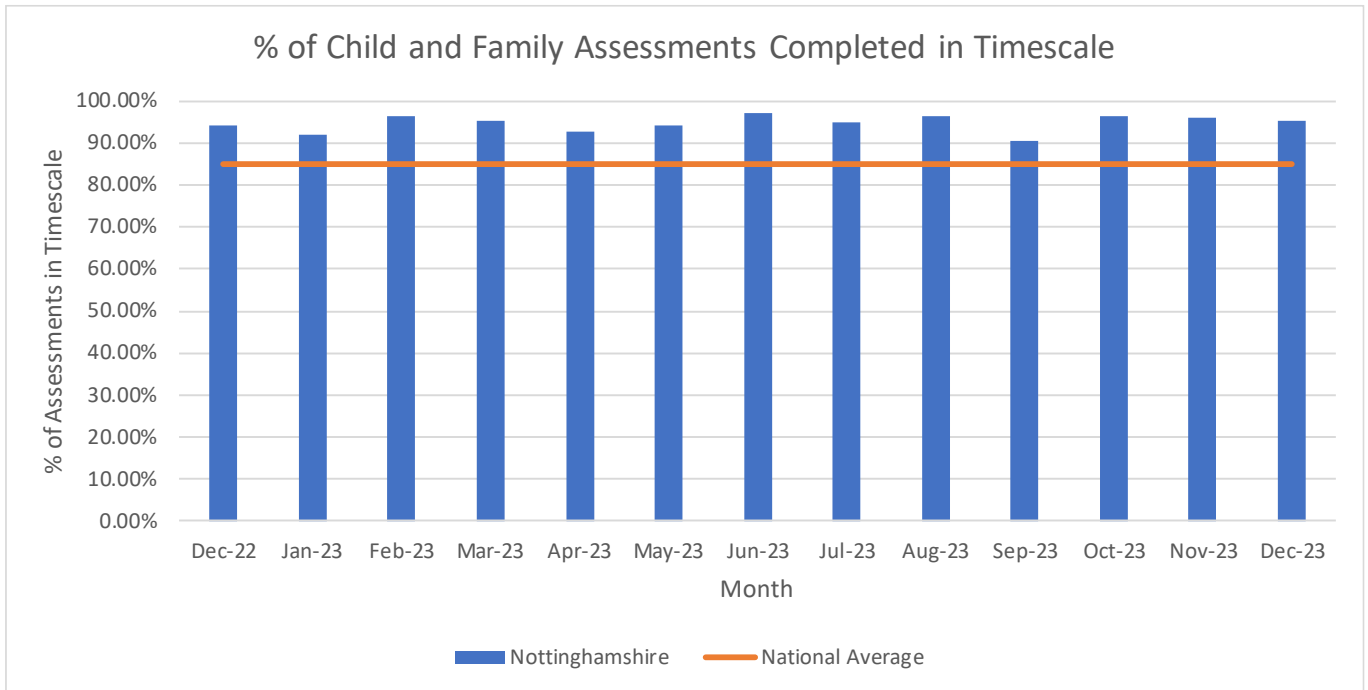
Data Source: Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Key Performance Indicators Report – December 2023



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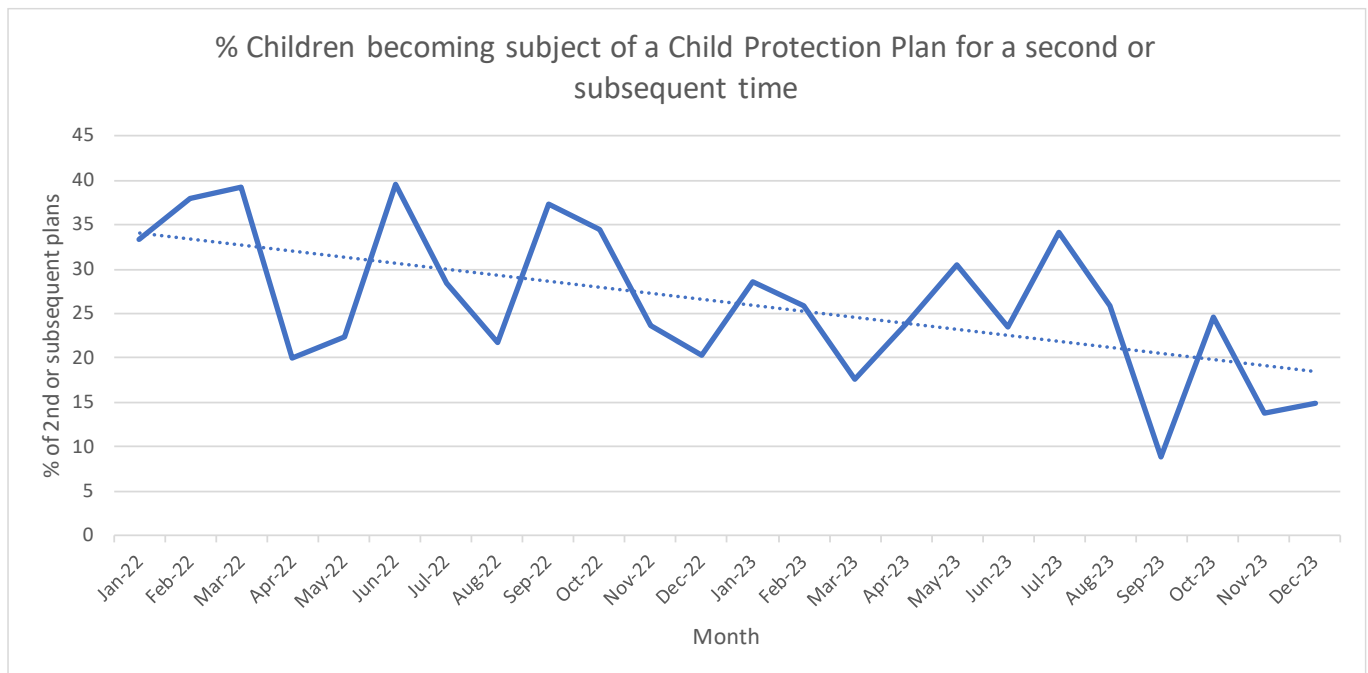
### Annual Delivery Plan Ambition 3 - Keeping children, vulnerable adults, and communities safe

9. The proportion of child and family assessments completed which don't result in ongoing children's social care involvement remains high at 61.1% compared to a statistical neighbour average of 32.9%. This is down more than seven percentage points on the previous quarter, suggesting that 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 proportion of child and family assessments completed in timescale remains high, with 95.2% of assessments completed within the statutory timescale of 45 days so far this year, as can be seen in the chart below. This is ten percentage points above the England average for 2022/23. Whilst a review is planned on the way that access to a range of children and family services works, there is confidence that when a child needs a social work assessment, they get one because of the high number of assessments that are completed in a timely way.



Data Source: Children’s Social Care Core Performance Measurement Set Monthly – December 2023

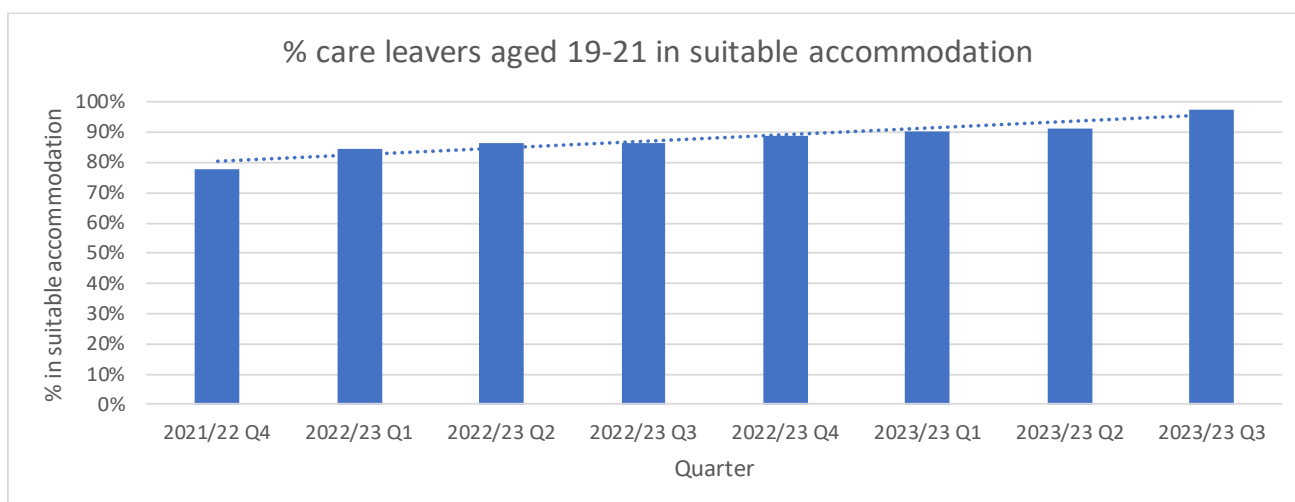
11. There has been a small decrease in the proportion of referrals which were a second or subsequent referral within 12 months this quarter, with the long-term trend shows re-referrals are decreasing, evidencing the way that the service is dealing with referrals and assessments is increasingly providing help when it is needed. This is expected to reduce further as more progress is made in transforming the front door.
  
12. There has been a significant decrease in the number of children becoming subject to a child protection plan for a second or subsequent time. This is now slightly lower than statistical neighbours and the national average for the first time. Independent Chairs are focusing on the needs of children and young people rather than focusing on thresholds. Latest data in the chart below shows the work being undertaken to reduce repeat child protection plans is having an effect, with the trend line on the chart below showing the proportion of repeat child protection plans has decreased significantly over the last two years.



Data Source: Children's Social Care Core Performance Measurement Set Monthly – December 2023

13. There has been further improvement over this quarter in the numbers of children on child protection plans lasting over 2 years. The numbers have reduced due to plans coming to an appropriate end through de-escalation of concerns, or through children becoming accommodated via the care proceedings process. There is monitoring of this cohort of children at around 15 months, to ensure that children's plans are being progressed appropriately prior to reaching the 2-year mark.
14. There has been an improvement in the proportion of child protection cases reviewed in timescale, up from 83.6% last quarter to 89.0% currently. As this measure is cumulative across the lifetime of the plan, the impact of staff absences earlier in the year, along with issues such as lack of social work reports and/or social work attendance at meetings and technical issues associated with Microsoft Teams has continued to reflect in the statistics. This improvement is due to no meetings in this quarter being agreed out of timescales.
15. 8.9% of children in care currently reside in kinship placements, that is fostering placements with family and friends. This is below the target of 12% of all children in care but an improvement in performance this quarter means performance is now back in line with performance last year. There has been a focussing of efforts on young people remaining local to and living with family members as kinship placements are an essential plank of Nottinghamshire's placement sufficiency.
16. There has been an increase this quarter in the proportion of children who leave care subject to a special guardianship order or child arrangement order. Current performance, at 19.2%, remains above both the latest national average of 17% and Nottinghamshire's statistical neighbour average of 14%. An approach is being developed to support improved family and extended family engagement for children in care through a Family Networking and tracking of potential Special Guardianship Orders and rehabilitation to parents/family via a panel.

17. 66% of children in care currently reside in a family-based setting which remains the ambition for children wherever possible. This includes fostering placements and placements with family and friends. This is an increase of eight percentage points since 2022/23.
18. There has been a decrease in the proportion of children in care placed 20 miles or more from home this quarter. Currently 23% of children are placed 20 miles or more away, in line with performance at the end of last financial year. This is seven percentage points higher than the England and statistical neighbour averages. The majority of these placements are in independent fostering agency and external residential placements as availability of suitable fostering and residential placements more locally remains a challenge.
19. More than half of children in care remain in long term placements – that is in the same placement for more than two years. Children in care have safe, stable, and loving placements because placement stability remains good. There has been an increased number of placements for those children aged below one, driven by more complex care plans as directed by the Courts, and those aged over 16. Whilst not all positive, some of that disruption is due to a well-developed pathway to independence and also, with the higher number of over 16s in care, is reflective of attempts to reconcile with birth families.
20. There has been a further increase in young people identified as being in suitable accommodation this quarter. As can be seen in the chart below, this has been an improving trend for the last two years. There has been an expansion of some of the Supported Accommodation Provision (including the specialist provision for former Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children care leavers which is continually expanding to meet demand). This more modern and more suitable accommodation is seen as meeting young people's needs and has decreased the need for other forms of emergency or unsuitable accommodation. Nottinghamshire continue to have Homelessness Prevention Personal Advisor roles which proactively help to prevent accommodation breakdown and risk of homelessness/unsuitable accommodation provision and have been able to identify funding to extend this support to March 2024. There has been a continuing increase in Staying Put extensions (especially educational ones that happen until July 2024).



Data source: Children's Social Care Core Performance Measurement Set Quarterly – Quarter 3 2023/24

21. There has been an increase in the number of young people within education, employment and training (EET) during this period when compared to that of Q2 23/24. This increase is around young people starting courses around October including Higher Education provision. This was identified as a predicted pattern in the Q2 summary which has now been evidenced. There is continuing support for young people to promote opportunities for care leavers within employment, education, and training as part of the Achievement Offer. There has also been the recruitment of the new Business Engagement Achievement Adviser who will continue delivering employability briefings within the world of work. The Achievement Offer will be now launched around March 2024 and so this may also have a further impact on young people considering their EET options from Q1 24-25.
22. First time entrants to the youth justice system remains low and has reduced compared to the same point last year with 85 entrants per 100,000 compared to 112 at the end of quarter 3 2022/23. The reoffending binary rate also remains low, at 19.2% currently compared to an average of 31% Nationally and for Nottinghamshire's statistical neighbours.

#### **Annual Delivery Plan Ambition 4 - Building skills that help people get good jobs**

23. Final figures show that 45% of pupils in Nottinghamshire schools obtained 9-5 grades (a strong pass) in English and maths at key stage 4 last year, up from 44.6% included in provisional figures released last quarter. This is a reduction of 5.9 percentage points on the previous year as grade boundaries were brought back in line with pre-pandemic levels. This is above Nottinghamshire's statistical neighbour average of 43% as it has been over the last 5 years.
24. There has been a slight narrowing of the gap in the proportion of disadvantaged pupils (those who have received free school meals in the last six years) who have achieved grades 9-5 in English and maths, down from 32% to 29.5%. This is still higher than the national average of 26.7%.
25. 92.5% of primary schools and 80% of secondary schools in Nottinghamshire are currently rated good or outstanding by Ofsted. Both of these are broadly in line with the national and statistical neighbour averages for these measures and show that the majority of pupils and their families have access to a good quality of education.
26. The proportion of 16- and 17-year-olds in Nottinghamshire reported as not being in education, employment and training remains low at just 1.8%. This has remained consistently low for more than two years now.

#### **Departmental Risks**

27. The department continues to manage key risks as reported at quarter two. The table below describes these risks and the mitigating actions being undertaken:

<b>Risk ID</b>	<b>Risk Category</b>	<b>Risk Description</b>	<b>Risk Mitigations</b>
C01	Service Delivery	<u>Placement Sufficiency</u> The ambition is to have more children and young people able to live in family-based	- Work has commenced across D2N2 to increase recruitment of foster carers and holistic care packages to retain them.

Risk ID	Risk Category	Risk Description	Risk Mitigations
		<p>placements, close to home. However, the context is a local and national shortage of suitable placements, particularly foster care. This impacts both on the types of placements that can be matched with and whether placements are close to home.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The service has focused on kinship, family and friends, Special Guardianship/Care Arrangement Orders to keep young people within their own networks.</li> <li>- The number of children that are coming into local authority care is being reduced through the above and robust arrangements for supporting families in difficult circumstances.</li> </ul>
C07	Reputation	<p><u>SEND Area Inspection</u> Nottinghamshire's SEND Area Inspection outcome was poor, so significant improvements are needed in the short and medium term as part of post-inspection monitoring arrangements. The main challenge is around pace of improvements having a tangible impact on the experience of SEND children and their families in the short-term.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The partnership is working to an approved improvement plan that is monitored regularly through governance arrangements.</li> <li>- A longer-term SEND Strategy is being developed collaboratively to ensure the partnership can sustain improvements.</li> <li>- There are workstreams focused on working with children and their families to ensure their experiences are improving.</li> </ul>
C11	Reputation	<p><u>ILACS Inspection</u> The last full children's social care inspection in 2019 rated Nottinghamshire as 'Good' and the ambition is to at least maintain this rating.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- There is a children's social care improvement plan in place with key priorities that are monitored regularly.</li> <li>- There is an inspection preparation plan in place as part of improvement planning to help staff respond to an inspection.</li> </ul>
C17	Workforce	<p><u>Workforce Recruitment and Retention</u> There are particular areas of the workforce where recruitment and retention are difficult both locally and nationally. This includes social workers, which impacts on the quality of practice.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The department have continued with the success for routes into social work and are building on this to try to retain social workers as they progress through their careers.</li> <li>- There is a focus on supporting the training and development of practitioners and to do well in the annual wellbeing check.</li> </ul>



Risk ID	Risk Category	Risk Description	Risk Mitigations
			- A social work academy arrangement is being considered as part of longer-term planning.

### Summary Financial Position – Period 10 2023/24

28. In December 2023 it was approved to separate Education and SEND into a separate portfolio. There is now Education and Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) and Children and Families Portfolios.
29. The overall Children and Families Department Revenue expenditure is forecast to overspend by £3.0m (£2.9m period 9) after planned use of grant reserves but excluding any redundancy costs. This variance is 1.6% (1.6% period 9) of the budget.
30. The Children and Families Portfolio is forecast to overspend by £2.3m (£2.2m period 9). Care, Help and Protection underspend has increased from £0.5m in period 9 to £0.7m in period 10.
31. There has been an increase in overspend on Commissioning and Resources from £2.8m overspend in period 9 to £3.2m overspend in period 10.
32. External placements overspend increased by £0.7m. Numbers of children in care placed in external placements increased by 15 in the month, whereas an increase of 5 was forecast. Independent Fostering Agency placements increased by 4, residential by 3, semi-independent block contract by 4 and semi-independent spot by 4 (with one being a change of category from residential).
33. There has been an increase in underspend (£0.1m) on the Children's Centres budget. The underspend is due to vacancies and more recently, maternity leave and reduced hours.
34. There has been a £0.1m increase in underspend (£0.7m underspend in period 10 compared to £0.6m period 9), on Internal Foster Care.
35. There has also been a decrease in overspend of £0.1m across a range of budget heads within the division. This is mostly due to not being able to achieve the budgeted Vacancy Level Turnover, particularly, within the Independent Chair Service along with use of agency staff, however this has improved slightly in the month owing to an agreed recharge to the Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children grant for Independent Reviewing Officer support.
36. Transformation & Improvement continues to forecast an underspend of £0.1m.
37. In the Education and Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) Portfolio, Education Learning & Inclusion Division is reporting a forecast £0.7m overspend which has remained unchanged from P9. The main cause of the overspend is in pension

enhancements. The December 2023 CPI rate which the annual increase is based upon is at 5.3%.

**Table 1 – Summary Revenue Position**

Change in Variance £000	Period 9 Under(-) / Overspend Variance £000	Division	Annual Budget £000	Actual to Period 10 £000	Year-End Forecast £000	Under(-) / Overspend Variance £000	Variance as % of Budget %
		<b>Children and Families Portfolio</b>					
(495)	(185)	Care, Help and Protection	45,461	39,427	44,781	(680)	1.50
2,830	405	Commissioning & Resources	108,087	86,430	111,321	3,234	2.99
(110)	(15)	Transformation & Improvement	4,660	3,990	4,535	(125)	2.69
(60)	(43)	Capital & Central Charges	1,394	1,298	1,291	(103)	7.42
2,165	161	<b>Subtotal</b>	<b>159,602</b>	<b>131,145</b>	<b>161,928</b>	<b>2,325</b>	<b>1.46</b>
		<b>Education and Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) Portfolio</b>					
740	(69)	Education Learning & Inclusion	13,768	12,897	14,439	671	4.88
0		Commissioning & Resources	173	173	173	0	0.00
(2)	(0)	Capital & Central Charges	12,332	12,330	12,330	(2)	0.01
739	(69)	<b>Subtotal</b>	<b>26,272</b>	<b>25,399</b>	<b>26,942</b>	<b>669</b>	<b>2.55</b>
		<b>Traders</b>					
0	0	Clayfields	(266)	(424)	(266)	0	0.00
<b>2,903</b>	<b>92</b>		<b>185,609</b>	<b>156,120</b>	<b>188,604</b>	<b>2,995</b>	<b>1.61</b>
0	0	Transfer to/(from) ear marked reserves	0	0	0	0	
0	0	Transfer to/(from) grant reserves	(1,769)	(84)	(1,769)	0	
0	0	Transfer to/(from) Traders reserves	(170)	0	(170)	0	
<b>2,903</b>	<b>92</b>		<b>183,670</b>	<b>156,036</b>	<b>186,665</b>	<b>2,995</b>	<b>1.61</b>

## Financial Implications

38. 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, as at Period 10 2023/24.

**Councillor Tracey Taylor**

**Cabinet Member for Children and Families**

**Councillor Sam Smith**

**Cabinet Member for Education and SEND**

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

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

#### **Constitutional Comments (SF 25/03/24)**

39. The recommendations fall within the scope of the terms of reference for the Children and Families Select Committee.

#### **Financial Comments (JG 27/03/24)**

40. 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.

None.

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

All.

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