

# Children and Families Select Committee

**Monday, 16 October 2023 at 10:30**

County Hall, West Bridgford, Nottingham, NG2 7QP

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## AGENDA

- |   |  |         |
|---|--|---------|
| 1 | Apologies for Absence  |         |
| 2 | Declarations of Interests by Members and Officers:- (see note below)   |         |
| 3 | Minutes of the Last Meeting held on 19 June 2023   | 3 - 12  |
| 4 | Nottinghamshire Safeguarding Children Partnership Annual Report 2022-23  | 13 - 38 |
| 5 | Partnership Progress in Improving the Experiences and Outcomes for Children and Young People with SEND   | 39 - 50 |
| 6 | Outcomes of the Review of Education, Health and Care plans   | 51 - 62 |
| 7 | Proposed Reviews Regarding Elective Home Education and Secondary School Pupil Place Planning   | 63 - 70 |
| 8 | Response of the Cabinet Member for Children and Families on how Elected Members can be most effectively communicated with and involved in the activity that takes place with Academy Trusts regarding Pupil Place Planning | 71 - 74 |
| 9 | Work Programme   | 75 - 90 |

### Notes

- (1) Councillors are advised to contact their Research Officer for details of any Group Meetings which are planned for this meeting.
- (2) Members of the public wishing to inspect "Background Papers" referred to in the reports on the agenda or Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act should contact:-

Customer Services Centre 0300 500 80 80

- (3) Persons making a declaration of interest should have regard to the Code of Conduct and the Council's Procedure Rules. Those declaring must indicate the nature of their interest and the reasons for the declaration.

Councillors or Officers requiring clarification on whether to make a declaration of interest are invited to contact Kate Morris (Tel. 0115 804 4530) or a colleague in Democratic Services prior to the meeting.

- (4) Councillors are reminded that Committee and Sub-Committee papers, with the exception of those which contain Exempt or Confidential Information, may be recycled.
- (5) This agenda and its associated reports are available to view online via an online calendar - <http://www.nottinghamshire.gov.uk/dms/Meetings.aspx>

Meeting: Children and Families Select Committee

Date: Monday 19 June 2023 (commencing at 10:30am)

**Membership:****County Councillors**

Sam Smith (Chairman)

Francis Purdue-Horan (Vice Chairman)

Callum Bailey

Anne Callaghan BEM

Robert Corden

Debbie Darby

Errol Henry JP (**Apologies**)

Johno Lee

Mike Quigley MBE

Nigel Turner

Michelle Welsh (**Apologies**)

**Education Representatives**

Nigel Frith

James McGeachie

**Substitute Members**

Jim Creamer for Errol Henry JP

Mike Pringle for Michelle Welsh

**Other County Councillors in attendance:**

Tracey Taylor

- Cabinet Member for Children and Families

Sinead Anderson

- Deputy Cabinet Member for Children and Families

**Officers and colleagues in attendance:**

Sophie Eadsforth

- Group Manager for Looked After Children

Martin Elliott

- Senior Scrutiny Officer

Irene Kakoullis

- Group Manager for Early Childhood Services

Adrian Mann

- Democratic Services Officer

Peter McConnochie

- Service Director for Education, Learning and Inclusion

Jason Monks

- Acting Data Protection Officer

Lucy Peel

- Service Director for Transformation and Improvement

Colin Pettigrew

- Corporate Director for Children and Families

## **1. APPOINTMENT OF THE CHAIRMAN AND VICE CHAIRMAN**

The Committee noted the appointment by Full Council on 11 May 2023 of Councillor Sam Smith as Chairman and Councillor Francis Purdue-Horan as Vice-Chairman of the Committee for the 2023/24 municipal year.

## **2. MEMBERSHIP**

The Committee noted that its membership for the 2023/24 municipal year was Councillors Callum Bailey, Anne Callaghan BEM, Robert Corden, Debbie Darby, Errol Henry JP, John Lee, Mike Quigley MBE, Nigel Turner and Michelle Welsh, and that the Education Representatives were Nigel Frith and James McGeachie.

## **3. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Councillor Errol Henry JP - other reasons  
Councillor Michelle Welsh - other reasons

## **4. DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS**

No declarations of interests were made.

## **5. MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING**

The minutes of the last meeting held on 20 March 2023, having been circulated to all Members, were taken as read and were confirmed and signed by the Chairman.

## **6. CHILD POVERTY – FREE SCHOOL MEALS**

The Cabinet Member for Children and Families, the Service Director for Education, Learning and Inclusion, and the Group Manager for Early Childhood Services attended the meeting to present a report on how Free School Meals (FSM) provision was being used to plan and inform the delivery of other support for children and families.

- The report set out that FSM eligibility had increased significantly in recent years, particularly during the Coronavirus pandemic where some families had been unable to work. Pupils who were eligible for FSM on 1 April 2018, or had since become eligible, would continue to receive provision until March 2025 (or until the end of their current phase of education, if this was sooner).
- The report noted that children were only eligible to receive benefits-related FSM provision when a claim had been made on their behalf and that their eligibility had been confirmed. If a parent applied for FSM but did not meet one of the qualifying criteria, the Council continued to check their entitlement on a weekly basis to ensure that if the family's circumstances changed and eligibility for FSM was confirmed, the Council could notify schools immediately.
- The report explained that the Council had developed a comprehensive package of support to provide a Holiday Activities and Food (HAF) Programme to children

and young people who were eligible for FSM during the school holidays. The Council had adopted a combined approach that included in-house provision, outreach events and activities, and had developed partnerships with a range of providers across Nottinghamshire so that families had access to a range of opportunities and activities that were both sustainable and cost-effective. The Council had also worked closely with Health and Wellbeing teams, the Cost of Living team, the Youth Service and community-based groups and schools to ensure that there was a coordinated effort to support children and young people who were most in need through a holistic service that benefited the wider community.

- The report stated that the Online FSM Project had enabled local authorities to access data from His Majesty's Revenue and Customs, the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) and the Home Office by introducing wider data sharing agreements through a Department for Education (DfE) platform. This enabled local authorities to use the DfE Eligibility Checking System to confirm families in receipt of legacy benefits and Universal Credit and assess FSM entitlement. However, in order to access Housing data to provide further proactive support to families in need, the County Council would have to co-ordinate with the Nottinghamshire District and Borough Councils to ensure that the appropriate data protection measures were in place.

The Committee raised the following points in discussion:

- The Committee was concerned that the number of children eligible for FSM had risen significantly during the Coronavirus pandemic and that the levels of children living in poverty in certain areas of Nottinghamshire had increased – while the number of children experiencing poverty in the East Midlands region was greater than the national average. Members observed that the majority of children living in poverty were part a household where at least one adult was in work, so expressed concern that these children therefore might not be eligible for FSM, despite their vulnerability. Members noted the significant financial burdens experienced by poorer families and the social separation and stigma this might lead to for children at school.
- The Committee agreed that it was vital that all possible steps were taken to ensure that every child who was eligible for FSM was enrolled for that support. Members asked at what phases of education parents were contacted directly about FSM. Members also asked what work was underway with District and Borough Councils to access relevant data held by them that could then be used to support proactive engagement with eligible families.
- The Committee noted that it was important to collect and analyse the right data to enable informed and focused support, both directly to children in poverty and to the voluntary and community providers working in this area at the local level. Members advised that engagement should be carried out with other local authorities and the Information Commissioner's Office to develop best practice for ensuring that data sharing opportunities to achieve effective service delivery could be maximised, including the potential for auto-enrolment.

- The Committee asked for further information on what partnership work was being undertaken to identify and support struggling families who were not eligible for FSM currently but were likely to be in the near future, and how many children were enrolled in FSM due to the Council's proactive checks for changed circumstances carried out following an initial application when the child was not eligible. Members queried whether the eligibility criteria for FSM was set too high and what engagement might be possible by local authorities with the DWP to see eligibility expanded.
- The Committee observed that engagement levels with the HAF Programme varied across different areas of Nottinghamshire, and that they could be comparatively lower in areas where the actual service need was greater. Members queried what work was underway to ensure that the HAF Programme was accessible to everyone that needed it, particularly in the context of encouraging providers from across the whole of Nottinghamshire to bid to deliver the services in their local areas.

In relation to the points raised by the Committee, the Cabinet Member and Officers provided the following responses:

- It was confirmed that work was underway to reach families eligible for FSM and encourage them to enrol – though, ultimately, it was a decision for parents as to whether they chose to apply. Families who were struggling financially but who were not eligible for FSM were provided with help to access information and other support and were engaged with quickly if they did then become eligible. Any changes from non-eligibility to eligibility were checked automatically via an electronic system that was provided with live information from the DWP.
- It was explained that engagement on FSM was carried out with parents when children moved from infant, junior, primary and secondary school phases, and that a new information portal was being established to achieve wider communication with parents more generally.
- It was reported that the County Council engaged both with District and Borough Councils and the wider community and voluntary sector regularly, particularly in the context of formal strategic child poverty partnerships. These groups had a strong focus on supporting families' financial resilience to improve life chances, particularly in the context of the Coronavirus pandemic and current cost of living pressures. Significant work was being carried out to address the root causes of child poverty, particularly in areas such as housing, debt and food security. Several community groups also operated at the grassroots level independently of the regionally and nationally established partnership and reporting structures, and efforts were made to engage with and support these bodies as much as possible.
- It was confirmed that legislative structures were in place that established how data could be shared lawfully between central Government, local authorities and wider partners, and that all legal requirements must be complied with in establishing clear, transparent and justified data sharing arrangements. Currently, it was not possible to introduce a scheme of auto-enrolment within either two-tier or unitary local authority contexts, but discussions were taking place with the

Local Government Association and the Government. A great deal of information was available regarding people engaging with the DWP, but reaching families outside the Universal Credit and wider benefits system was more difficult. Work was underway to collect as much population-related data as possible to indicate where communities requiring support might be, and engagement was also taking place with the Citizens' Advice Bureau to help understand the wider needs. Ultimately, all partners had to work together to make the best use of their resources to properly establish and plan for both the current and future service needs.

- It was set out that as much activity was carried out as possible to review data and focus support from the HAF Programme, to achieve a good level of access everywhere. Direct engagement with young people on the HAF Programme was also done through Youth Services. Providers were sought across all areas of Nottinghamshire but were not always able to come forward to provide the HAF services in every locality.

The Chairman thanked the Cabinet Member and Officers for attending the meeting to present the report and answer Members' questions.

**RESOLVED (2023/003):**

- 1) That the report be noted.
- 2) That the following issues raised by the Children and Families Select Committee in its consideration of the report be progressed:
  - a) That information be circulated to the members of the Committee on the number of successful enrolments to Free School Meals (FSM) that have been made as a result of the weekly entitlement checks carried out by the Council on claims that that did not qualify initially for FSM, as the family had not been in receipt of one of the qualifying benefits.
  - b) That the Child Poverty Action Plan be circulated to the members of the Committee.
  - c) That the Cabinet Member for Children and Families, in consultation with Officers, gives further consideration on how the County Council could work with the District and Borough Councils to enable the effective sharing of data in relation to auto-enrolment for FSM.
  - d) That, through existing work with partner organisations and the voluntary sector, there should be a focus on developing a better understanding of the number of families in Nottinghamshire who are just above the income level to be eligible for FSM, but who are still struggling financially, to enable the targeting of available support.
  - e) That a report on the delivery of the Holiday Activities and Food Programme be brought to a future meeting of the Committee, with a focus and at a date to be agreed by the Chairman.

## **7. PROVISION OF SUPPORT TO LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN TRANSITIONING OUT OF THE CARE SYSTEM**

The Cabinet Member for Children and Families, the Service Director for Education, Learning and Inclusion, and the Group Manager for Looked After Children attended the meeting to present a report on the transition of children and young people out of the care system.

- The report explained that, as of 31 March 2023, there were 965 children in the Council's care. Of these, 597 had a long-term care plan and an allocated Social Worker from the Looked After Children's Service. The remaining children had an allocated Social Worker from the Children with Disabilities Service, one of the District Child Protection teams or the Court team, as their needs required.
- The report set out that, so a smooth transition for a child leaving care could be achieved, early conversations took place with the young person, the professionals who supported them and the people who were important in their lives to develop a Pathway Plan. This was completed over the months following the young person's 16<sup>th</sup> birthday so that possible options could be discussed. Sometimes, more than one Pathway Plan was made, depending on what the young person needed.
- The report noted that the Local Offer for Care Leavers that had been published in 2019 was now under review, with a timescale to publish an updated Local Offer by December 2023. Consultations with young people in care and care leavers on what they thought had the most value and positive impact for them had started with face-to-face feedback, a 'your views' stand at the Achievement Event in June 2023, online surveys and consultation with the Children in Care Council. The review would include an update by the Achievement Officer in relation to employment, education and training, the offer to care leavers who were young parents, care leavers in and leaving custody, and the 21Plus Service. The reviewed service would be presented for input and comment at the Children Looked After and Leaving Care Strategic Partnership Board, alongside the individual feedback received from young people, to inform the targets for the future development of the Local Offer. Regional meetings had also been arranged to discuss Local Offer agreements for care leavers residing in other local authority areas.

The Committee raised the following points in discussion:

- The Committee noted that, as the transition into adulthood was a very difficult period, it was important that the Local Offer for Care Leavers was available until they became 25 – and that young people were able to stay on with their foster carer beyond the age of 18 if they needed to.
- The Committee noted concern that a number of young people did not enter into either further or higher education, employment or training after leaving care. Members asked how children in care could be supported in a targeted way within their school settings to grow their aspirations and achieve their full potential, and



how their achievements could be formally reported and recognised. Members were particularly concerned that children in care from ethnic minority backgrounds should be supported by advisors from these communities where appropriate.

- The Committee asked what engagement had been carried out with those with direct care experience on the development of the revised Local Offer, and how many people had participated.
- The Committee considered that the dedicated Children in Care Police Officer role was extremely positive and that there had been good information sharing between schools and the Police to help protect vulnerable children – particularly in the context of ‘county lines’ issues. Members requested that more specific information was provided on the work and outcomes of this dedicated role.

In relation to the points raised by the Committee, the Cabinet Member and Officers provided the following responses:

- It was confirmed that both children currently in care and those who had left care were considered to be ‘care experienced’, which the Council now treated as equivalent to a statutory protected characteristic. It was important that young people leaving care should still be able to access support until age 25, including ‘staying put’ or ‘staying close’ arrangements with their foster carers beyond age 18 – while seeking to also ensure that there were enough foster carer places to meet the ongoing need.
- It was explained that a growing number of children and young people were entering care as a result of being an unaccompanied asylum seeker, with the current number at around 70 (who were mostly male and between the ages of 15 and 17). To provide very specialist support, an Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children Social Work Team had been established. Measures were in place to ensure that ethnicity and culture were taken into account when children were matched with residential homes and foster carers. Many providers were working specifically with black, Asian and minority ethnic children in care, while the Council was leading a foster carer recruitment programme across the East Midlands area targeted specifically to support these children.
- It was reported that all children in care at school had Personal Education Plans in place to help them work towards achieving their interests, and that these were reviewed on a termly basis. Consideration was being given to how children in care could be engaged with at a much sooner stage at school, including getting earlier access to a programme of work experience that could be delivered in an incremental way. Individual personal advisers were also in place within school settings, alongside access to the Virtual School – which reported regularly on the attainment of children in care. A mentoring scheme had also been established from Year 8 with Nottingham Trent University.
- It was highlighted that the number of care-experienced young people attending further and higher education had increased, and that many young people had attended employability briefings with local businesses with which the

Achievement Service had made strong links. Achievement Events took place to provide inspiration and establish both champions and role models for care experienced young people, and the participation of members in these events would be particularly welcome.

- It was explained that a consultation with the Children in Care Council and its sub-groups on a revised Local Offer would take place shortly, and information on the level of engagement from the children and young people would be circulated as it became available.
- It was noted that, as the Service had been formally inspected last during 2019, the next inspection was likely to take place during 2024.
- It was explained that the dedicated Children in Care Police Officer carried out vital work with adults in various settings to address the potentially negative preconceptions of children in care and emphasise that, wherever possible, any difficult behaviour should be approached proportionately and only be referred to the Police if absolutely required – so as to reduce the unnecessary criminalisation of these vulnerable children. A great deal of work was still needed to encourage communities to be welcoming of children in care, rather than actively challenging the establishment of new residential homes through the Planning system.

The Chairman thanked the Cabinet Member and Officers for attending the meeting to present the report and answer Members' questions.

**RESOLVED (2023/004):**

- 1) That the report be noted.
- 2) That the following issues raised by the Children and Families Select Committee in its consideration of the report be progressed:
  - a) That further information and case studies that illustrate the success and achievements of young people who have transitioned out of the care of the Council be shared with members of the Committee.
  - b) That the Cabinet Member for Children and Families, in consultation with Officers, gives further consideration to how more young people could be encouraged to remain with their foster family after turning 18, and also to the activity that would also be required to ensure that a sufficient number of foster family placements were still maintained and available for children and young people who are under 18.
  - c) That further information be circulated to members of the Committee on the work being carried out with both residential homes and foster carers to support them in ensuring that the children in their care are not potentially criminalised though being referred to the Police unnecessarily in relation to their behaviour.

## **8. EXCEPTIONAL PAYMENTS FOR SCHOOL CLOTHING AND FOOTWEAR 2023/24**

The Cabinet Member for Children and Families attended the meeting to present a report on the proposed allowances scheme to support families with the cost of school clothing and footwear in exceptional circumstances.

- The report established that the Council had discretion to consider requests for assistance with school clothing costs from vulnerable families in exceptional circumstances (such as where clothing had been lost due to fire, flood, theft, or where children had been made homeless or were fleeing domestic violence). To ensure that there was consistency and fairness in the allowances given, it was proposed to continue to adopt a maximum allowance of £50 per qualifying pupil – as the allowance was intended to support families with replacing school uniforms in exceptional circumstances, rather than necessarily covering the full costs. Ultimately, there was an increase in the claims made during the 2022/23 financial year, with £673.75 paid in allowances against a budget of £500. The overspend was contained within the overall Education, Learning and Skills budget.
- The Committee noted that many academies had their own schemes in place to support parents with school uniform costs. Members recommended, however, that due to the previous overspend in the scheme, the overall budget should be increased to £1,000 to ensure that it could meet the projected demand fully. Members also considered that the £50 maximum allowance per qualifying pupil should be kept under review in the future, to ensure that it continued to meet vulnerable families' needs effectively.

The Chairman thanked the Cabinet Member for attending the meeting to present the report and answer Members' questions.

### **RESOLVED (2023/005):**

- 1) That it be recommended to the Cabinet Member for Children and Families:
  - a) To continue to adopt the current scale of payments as a guide for school clothing and footwear allowances paid under the category of exceptional circumstances, subject to discretion, for 2023/24.
  - b) That, from April 2024, the budget for school clothing and footwear allowances paid under the category of exceptional circumstances be set at £1,000, to ensure that the budget allocated meets demand.

## **9. WORK PROGRAMME**

The Senior Scrutiny Officer presented the Committee's current work programme.

- It was reported that, following the publication of the results of the local area review of special educational needs and disabilities services by Ofsted and Care Quality Commission, the progress made in addressing the identified priority areas

for action and areas for improvement would be reported to the Committee at its meeting in October.

- It was noted that the work programmes of the Overview and Select Committee meetings were now being developed for the period from September 2023 to August 2024.

**RESOLVED (2023/006):**

- 1) That the Children and Families Select Committee's work programme be noted.
- 2) That Committee members make any further suggestions for items for inclusion on the work programme for consideration by the Chairman and Vice-Chairman, in consultation with the relevant Cabinet Member(s) and senior officers, and subject to the required approval by the Chairman of the Overview Committee.

There being no further business, the Chairman closed the meeting at 12:09pm.

**Chairman:**



**16 October 2023**

**Agenda Item: 4**

## **REPORT OF THE CORPORATE DIRECTOR, CHILDREN AND FAMILIES**

### **NOTTINGHAMSHIRE SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN PARTNERSHIP ANNUAL REPORT 2022/23**

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

1. The Nottinghamshire Safeguarding Children Partnership (NSCP) Annual Report 2022-2023, attached as **Appendix 1**, sets out what the NSCP has achieved over the 2022-23 reporting period and is provided for the Committee to scrutinise and to provide assurance that the NSCP is fulfilling its duties. The NSCP's Business Plan for 2023-27, attached as **Appendix 2**, provides information about its identified priorities and how these will be progressed over the coming 12 months.

#### **Information**

2. The NSCP provides the safeguarding arrangements required under the Children and Social Work Act 2017 and the statutory guidance 'Working Together to Safeguard Children 2018'. The purpose of safeguarding arrangements is to support and enable local organisations and agencies to work together to safeguard and promote the welfare of children. The NSCP is required to prepare an annual report and to submit this to the National Child Safeguarding Practice Review Panel. Both the Annual Report and the Business Plan have been approved by the NSCP Strategic Leadership Group and submitted to the Review Panel.

#### **Financial Implications**

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

#### **Safeguarding of Children and Adults at Risk Implications**

4. This report demonstrates how the multi-agency safeguarding arrangements have impacted on the safeguarding of children and young people in Nottinghamshire in the 2022-23 reporting period.

#### **RECOMMENDATION/S**

- 1) That the Select Committee considers the Nottinghamshire Safeguarding Children Partnership (NSCP) Annual Report 2022-2023, attached as **Appendix 1**, and the

Partnership Business Plan for 2023-27, attached as **Appendix 2**, and advises of any further assurance or activities required.

**Colin Pettigrew**  
**Corporate Director, Children and Families**

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

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#### **Constitutional Comments (GMG 27/09/23)**

5. This report falls with the remit of the Children and Families Select Committee (see Section 6, Part 1, paragraph 4(a) of the Council's Constitution on page 91).

#### **Financial Comments (CDS 12/09/23)**

6. 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.

None.

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

All.

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# Annual Report 2022 - 2023

### Foreword from the NSCP Strategic Leadership Group Chair

I am pleased to introduce the NSCP annual report for 2022 – 2023, a year in which I joined the partnership Strategic Leadership Group (SLG) and also took over as chair. This was also a year of reflection. All partnership agencies are in a period of post-Covid recovery with financial challenges also creating a challenging operational environment. We welcomed Donna Ockenden commencing her review of maternity services at Nottingham University Hospitals and this reporting period also saw the lead up to the CQC and Ofsted inspection of the partnership's provision for children with Special Education Needs and Disabilities (SEND). Alongside these local developments, several national reviews (particularly the Child Protection in England and Stable Homes, Built on Love reports) prompted us to reflect how we might want to build on our strong safeguarding partnership work in Nottinghamshire.

In my opening remarks at a recent partnership half-away day where we were developing our new business plan I reflected on what makes us a strong partnership:

1. We recognise that our organisations are different and we value and understand these differences.
2. We have a shared sense of purpose and direction about what we are collectively striving to achieve.
3. We think about capacity not just in terms of physical resource, but in terms of passion, commitment and dedication to safeguarding children.
4. We focus on developing the togetherness of our relationships across the partnership.

Our independent scrutineer reflects in his review of the year on how he has observed this (p. 15). He considers both the operational response to a particular situation for a young person in distress and in the strategic decision to conduct a transparent review of the safeguarding partnership response to events at Harlow Academy. I would add to this the partnership decision to commission a strategic review of the Nottinghamshire Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH), demonstrating our drive to develop a shared strengths-based vision of how we provide the right help, at the right time, to the right children and their families in Nottinghamshire.

SLG are collectively very proud of the training offer by our partnership. The NSCP learning and Workforce Development Group's commitment allows us to have an expert local training pool, giving their time without remuneration to ensure an extensive training offer. One of many training highlights in this reporting period has been the launch of the Anti-Racist Practice training (p. 11), take up and feedback for this course has been one part of moving forward our objective of improved understanding and practice around diversity in Nottinghamshire. I also highlight the work of the Child Safeguarding Practice Review Group (p.8), which, despite various changes of professional membership through this period, has worked very hard to publish three Local Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews with consistently positive feedback from the national panel.

I am also pleased to be able to introduce the NSCP's business plan for 2023-2027 alongside this annual report. This is the product of a good deal of hard work by the NSCP's Safeguarding and Improvement Group and I believe it demonstrates the journey of reflection we as a partnership have undertaken in 2022-2023 and lays out clearly how we intend to continue.

*Rob Griffin (Assistant Chief Constable, Chair of SLG)*





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## Introduction

Nottinghamshire Safeguarding Children Partnership (NSCP) provides the safeguarding arrangements required under the Children and Social Work Act 2017 and the statutory guidance 'Working Together to Safeguard Children 2018'. The purpose of safeguarding arrangements is to support and enable local organisations and agencies to work together to safeguard and promote the welfare of children.

### *Vision and values*

The Partnership set out its vision in the safeguarding arrangements: -

***'That children and young people in Nottinghamshire grow up in a safe and stable environment and are supported to lead healthy, happy, and fulfilling lives'***

The Nottinghamshire Safeguarding Children Partnership will:

- Work effectively as a partnership to protect children from harm.
- Build working relationships between partners which support a culture of high challenge and high support.
- Be transparent and self-critical.
- Learn from local and national safeguarding practice and improve the way children are safeguarded.
- Listen and respond to children and young people and adult victims and survivors of child abuse to guide how services are delivered.
- Ensure services for children and families in Nottinghamshire support children and young people to stay safe, healthy and happy.
- Ensure services for children and families in Nottinghamshire support parents and carers to provide the best possible care for their children.

This report sets out what the Nottinghamshire Safeguarding Children Partnership has achieved over the past year, including the following:

- An update on progress in relation to the safeguarding priorities for 2020-23 and the key areas of work to take forward.
- A summary of the decisions made in relation to local case reviews and the learning and actions taken from those reviews and national reviews.
- The effectiveness of the safeguarding arrangements in practice.



- Evidence of the impact of the work of the safeguarding partners and relevant agencies, including training, on outcomes for children and families from early help to looked-after children and care leavers.
- Examples of the ways in which the partners have sought and utilised feedback from children and families to inform their work and influence service provision.

The safeguarding arrangements in Nottinghamshire are fully detailed in our document published in line with national requirements, and available on the NSCP website <https://nscp.nottinghamshire.gov.uk/about-the-partnership/>. The arrangements were last updated in January 2020. They include details of the partners to the arrangements and explain how the functions of the Partnership are carried out through several different groups and led by the Strategic Leadership Group (SLG).

Safeguarding partnership activities and progress

<u>What we said we would do</u>	<u>What we did</u>
<b><i>Understanding and developing the role of the Safeguarding Partnership in evolving system arrangements</i></b>	
<p>Continued engagement with key initiatives such as the Integrated Care System and the Domestic Abuse Partnership Board to ensure a strategic approach for the safeguarding of children and families.</p>	<p>The local needs assessment in relation to children and young people who are victims of domestic abuse has been completed. A face-to-face meeting of the relevant subgroup to be held in September 2023 will take forward a detailed plan for the next 12 months, including our new domestic abuse strategy. The subgroup will continue to report to the Domestic Abuse Partnership Board and the Safeguarding Assurance and Improvement Group and will continue to be subject to oversight within the partnership in addition to independent scrutiny.</p> <p>In the first quarter of 2022/23 Nottingham &amp; Nottinghamshire (N&amp;N) CCG and Bassetlaw CCG continued to align their safeguarding arrangements with the establishment of the Integrated Care Board (ICB) and partnership working across the Integrated Care System (ICS) on 1st July 2022. The ICB with health partners developed safeguarding health system arrangements across the ICS through the establishment of the Safeguarding &amp; Public Protection Assurance Group (SPPAG) with the first meeting taking place in August 2022. This group has continued bringing partners together to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) share and reflect on new or revised policy, practice and procedural issues relating to safeguarding across the Nottingham and Nottinghamshire system</li> <li>b) discuss and achieve consistency across safeguarding work across the N&amp;N ICS</li> <li>c) share learning and best practice</li> <li>d) provide an opportunity to identify blocks to interagency working and solutions to mitigate these.</li> <li>e) The ICB Safeguarding Children team report to the Chief Nurse and Designated Professionals quarterly meeting.</li> </ul> <p>Similarly to this there is now an established ICS Looked After Children Assurance Group and an ICS SEND Assurance Group; any safeguarding issues or concerns from these groups are escalated to the SPPAG and within the ICB.</p>
<p>Develop the cross-authority Neglect Steering Group to drive, monitor and evaluate the Neglect Strategy.</p>	<p>A terms of reference has been agreed for the relaunched cross authority neglect steering group, with the aims of supporting and monitoring the implementation of the strategy, evaluating the impact of the strategy and promoting the strategy. A working group drawn from the steering group membership is currently engaged in revising the toolkit and guidance in the light of feedback from practitioners and</p>

	<p>the need to incorporate strength based language and approaches. A set of measures aimed at assessing the prevalence of neglect in the partnerships is under development, and members of the steering group have been invited to participate in the forthcoming audit of organisation responses to neglect in the partnerships.</p>
<p>Conclude the work to fully align the CCE response across City and County and develop a plan to evaluate progress.</p>	<p>This piece of work has not developed as previously anticipated, in light of new research and development of practice with regard to child exploitation; stressing the benefit of a holistic response to child exploitation. On this basis the cross authority steering group has reorganised its governance and has made a commitment to embedding the Tackling Child Exploitation principles (Research in Practice) into practice, with the police also agreeing to reorganise their response teams into one child exploitation team. The partnership is therefore now committed to (i) complete a partnership self-assessment using the TCE tool, (ii) agree a joint strategy with Nottingham City and partners and (iii) to embed the principles into practice and to achieve co-location within the police exploitation team. There will also be a NSCP audit with Nottingham City in respect of exploitation which will further inform our knowledge of practice.</p>
<p>To consider the government's Green and White papers and recommendations in respect of how better to engage schools and academies within the NSCP.</p>	<p>There have been changes in the government messaging about this through 2022/23, however it is clear both locally and nationally that the involvement of education provisions at all levels of partnership decision making is key. The partnership has a well-developed network of 7 designated safeguarding leads (DSLs) who attend partnership forums and the partnership service manager co-facilitates county-wide DSL forums and safeguarding governor focus groups throughout the year. There are therefore good mechanisms in place for updating operational leads from education settings on safeguarding learning and developments, or for their views to be taken back to partnership meetings. However, a consultation is underway on development of a formal education sub-group in the partnership and representation on the strategic leadership group to develop better education influence in partnership strategic decision making.</p>
<p><b><i>Preventing abuse and neglect</i></b></p>	
<p>Delivering the faith groups, sports clubs and voluntary sector action plan and embedding the recommendations to improve information sharing and offer annual</p>	<p>A wider group of representatives from relevant agencies attended the partnership forum in November 2022. This provided a space for the statutory partners to explain the very significant changes in the health space following the move to Integrated Care Systems, developing an overarching strengths based framework in the Local Authority and reflections on safeguarding in policing from the Assistance</p>

engagement events in addition to the partnership forum.	Chief Constable from Nottinghamshire Police. The attendance at training from relevant agencies also demonstrates improved engagement with faith groups, sports clubs and the voluntary sector.
Develop our ability, through data review and auditing, to understand the impact of non-statutory support to children and families.	Nottinghamshire has a newly established Data Maturity Steering group with membership from key partners in the Early Help Executive. The priority area of work for this group is to establish regular data feeds from all parts of the partnership. This will support quick identification of issues for referred families, understanding whole community needs and evidencing impact of whole family working. NCC has invested in products that allow datasets from different systems to be matched (education exclusion, education attendance, children’s social care, EHCP etc). Police and NCC have signed a new information sharing agreement (ISA) to bring police data into the matching process. In 2023 there is a plan to develop ISAs to secure housing, substance misuse and Healthy Families Team data feeds. Information will be made available to Early Help and Social Care practitioners through a dashboard to support them in their work. Ultimately information will be available through a portal for schools and other partners although this will be beyond 2024.
Further developing the partnership response to CCE, including continued training and incorporating the learning from the audit into the cross authority steering group.	Nottinghamshire’s approach developed over a number of years with the SYVCCE Panel (CCEP) first being held in 2019, this was the first evaluation of the process for serious youth violence (SYV) and child criminal exploitation (CCE). A multi-agency audit was agreed in 2021 to consider the efficacy of the process and the level of interagency working from a multi-agency perspective, it focused on the multi-agency work with 10 young people considered variously at risk of CCE (low, medium and high). The audit found those young people identified as high risk have clear plans and proactive work aimed at reducing risk and safeguarding their wellbeing. Where the risk is identified as moderate, gaps were seen in information sharing, joint working and mutual understanding of the risk and limited engagement was seen with the young person. The audit report was taken to SAIG in 2022, following which an action plan was developed with recommendations in respect of the participating agencies. The action plan points presently live with agencies an these recommendations will be revisited/reviewed as part of the current multi agency review of CE practice across Nottinghamshire County and Nottingham City.
<i>Improving safeguarding practice</i>	
Expanding work around understanding diversity in safeguarding contexts.	The partnership has worked intensively to develop the training offer to incorporate diversity needs identified in partnership reviews and national guidance. Three new courses have been developed and delivered through 2022/23 with strong feedback (these are further considered in the multiagency training section of this report). A seconded service manager is also being funded by the partnership to focus on understanding the voices of children and their families in relation to the partnership’s work and

	<p>developing priorities. Her work through 2022/23 has significantly influenced the development of the partnership's new business plan which was in development at the close of this financial year.</p>
<p>Continued work on safer sleep, thinking in particular about the cost of living difficulties and implications for safer sleep through the coming winter. Continuing to ensure this learning is across all safeguarding professionals.</p>	<p>The multi-agency Nottinghamshire and Nottingham Safer Sleep Steering Group continues to meet quarterly.</p> <p>Key achievements include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Safer Sleep messaging and bulletins shared widely across health and care partnerships in July 2022 (summer message), November 2022 (winter message including links to cost of living support) and March 2023 (safer sleep week).</li> <li>• Extensive mapping has taken place to provide assurance that safer sleep messaging is consistent and continues to be provided by health and care agencies during pregnancy, on discharge from maternity services and in the early days, weeks and months after a baby's birth up until one year of age. A development in 2022 was the East Midlands Ambulance Service (EMAS) adding safer sleep advice to the handheld devices used by ambulance crews.</li> <li>• The safer sleep risk assessment tool has been updated in line with national guidance and will be re-launched following sign off from the city and county safeguarding partnerships.</li> <li>• From January-December 2022, 190 practitioners completed the 'safer sleeping for babies' e learning. Attendees included foster carers, children's and adult social care teams, charities, Children's Centre Services, private day nurseries and pre-schools, housing support for young people and Youth Offending Team workers.</li> <li>• Level two Sudden Unexpected Death in Infancy (SUDI) and safer sleep training has been delivered by both safeguarding children partnerships (city and county), with wide representation of services attending. Safer Sleep has been included in the workforce development and training matrix for Family Hubs in Nottinghamshire County.</li> <li>• A parent volunteer is a member of the safer sleep group. The group is keen to build on parental engagement and review opportunities for funding to support this.</li> </ul>
<p>Focussing on early intervention in the harmful sexual behaviour context along with better incorporation of the voices of children and families in this area.</p>	<p>The multi-agency arrangements for assessment and intervention for Harmful Sexual Behaviour continue to be overseen by the Nottinghamshire Safeguarding Children Partnership (NSCP) and HSB steering group. The NSPCC are currently undertaking a piece of work that will focus on early intervention work in respect of problematic sexual behaviour, with a focus on delivering to this work to schools across Nottinghamshire and Nottingham City. Partners have worked closely with the NSPCC</p>

	<p>in respect of this and will continue to do so. Head2Head CAMHS provide specialist assessment and intervention for young people with complex unmet needs that present with Harmful Sexual Behaviour.</p> <p>As part of the commissioning arrangements for the above work public health has supported the Steering Group to undertake a needs assessment across the partnership and Nottingham City. This assessment is not yet completed but will be used to develop work moving forward including working more closely with the Police and Crime Commissioners Office in respect of early intervention.</p> <p>The voices of children and young people presenting with harmful sexual behaviours is an area of focus for development over the next 12 months to work with children and young people to gain their experience of our services and to use this to inform improvement and development of practice and services across the system.</p>
<p>Continued work towards a finalised review and recommendations for the MASH and continued partnership work to manage short-term demand.</p>	<p>The review of the MASH was concluded with 9 recommendations which have been full endorsed by the Strategic Leadership Group. The review endorsed the strength in the partnership and commitment to working together towards a modernised front door and identified some of the challenges about a lack of joint partnership understanding of thresholds. They key partnership priority in 2023/24 is the delivery of a new front door for children and families to access support and help in Nottinghamshire.</p>



## Case reviews

There is a statutory requirement on safeguarding partners to conduct a 'Rapid Review' when serious child safeguarding cases are identified. The reviews should be completed within 15 working days and a report provided to the National Child Safeguarding Practice Review Panel (National Panel). The NSCP remains committed to gathering as much learning as possible during the rapid review process and to only progressing to a Local Child Safeguarding Practice Review (LCSPR) where necessary.

The NSCP has completed 6 rapid reviews during this reporting period. Of note is that all 6 have involved significant contributions from other areas, and the NSCP has also contributed to the rapid review for a child who was looked after by Derbyshire and placed with carers from an independent fostering agency in Nottinghamshire. Two of the rapid reviews were for children under 1 due to physical harm, two related to harm to looked after children and in one the mother who caused the harm was recently care experienced. The National Panel agreed with the outcomes of all six rapid reviews that progression to LCSPR was not appropriate, but for one review related to suspected fabricated and induced illness the National Panel requested deeper consideration of the learning from a health perspective.

**Professional curiosity** and **effective strategy discussions** were identified as key elements for improvement of both practice and partnership, and a 'review of reviews' is presently being undertaken by the Independent Scrutineer and the partnership Development Manager such that any repeated and/or linked issues from individual reviews can be identified and responded to in a joined up way and in terms of future learning and development.

Three LCSPRs were published in this reporting period:

### **TN20 "Tom"**

This review was for an 18-day old baby who died when co-sleeping with a parent who was under the influence of drugs. Both parents were subsequently convicted of neglect offences. The baby's parents and his five siblings had been known to services, including Childrens Social Care, for many years in relation to parental neglect. The review has focused on how agencies work together to deal with cumulative neglect and how we can embed the "safer sleep for babies" message into the routine work of all agencies

Some **key areas of learning** from the review included stressing safe sleeping is an issue for services broader than health visiting and midwifery. It identified a need to see and record the world as seen through the eyes of children and work with families being framed within relationship-based practice; acknowledging the importance of parents having an effective relationship with key health and social care professionals. Some learning points were focused on professional assessments, including the use of chronologies, enquiring into history and around domestic abuse, and using tool kits and evidenced based frameworks.

"We welcomed the approach relating the report findings to relevant literature and reviews. We thought it contained some interesting analysis" (National Panel).

### UN21 - “David and Daniel”

This review addressed how professionals responded to harmful sexual behaviour (HSB) between two siblings, 11 year old David and 14 year old Daniel. The boys were in a long-term foster care placement with three other siblings. Two of the siblings were assessed as having learning difficulties and the disclosures involved Daniel harming David. There had been a history of involvement from children’s social care due to concerns about neglect. David disclosed sexual harm from Daniel in December 2020, this had not been the first disclosure. Restrictive practices were put in place in the foster placement to try and manage this.

Some **key areas of learning** focused on how professionals responded to disclosures of sexual behaviour between siblings and the need for the use of expertise, toolkits and best practice guidance. Assessments should take previous traumatic events and other significant factors into account, and also consider the needs of all children in a sibling group. This includes consideration of whether a sibling group should be placed together. Professional roles were covered in the learning points, including the degree of influence of foster carers with professionals, the role of the independent reviewing officer and for professional curiosity across all involved professionals.

A “good review”, “grounded in evidence informed understanding of harmful sexual behaviour” (National Panel).

### VN21- “Alison”

This review concerns a four-year-old girl and her unexplained serious injuries while in foster care with her two older siblings. The children had complex needs as they had experienced many traumatic events in the care of their birth parents. The foster carers were new and inexperienced, they had no children of their own and this was their first placement. There was no single ‘trigger’ incident for the SIN and rapid review, and it followed an analysis of a number of incidents involving injuries to the girl whilst in the care of her foster carers from April 2020 to February 2021.

Some **key areas of learning** included the importance of recognising when to follow safeguarding processes on open cases when there is uncertainty about the cause of an injury or other harm that a child has suffered was a learning point. It was highlighted that staff or carer inexperience may affect service delivery and that additional support and systems may be necessary to maintain service standards and quality. The importance of the availability of services that address adverse childhood experiences, and which can help mitigate the impact on children of those experiences.

“A thorough analysis with relevant learning points” (National Panel).

The National Panel expressed some frustration with regard to delay in all three of the LCSPRs, but acknowledged good reason for this, and that the learning in two of the three was evidently being addressed as the review was ongoing, with updates included from the independent authors.

In January 2022 a special school in Nottinghamshire named Harlow Academy was temporarily closed following an Ofsted inspection which found that pupils were at risk of immediate and imminent harm. In the 2022/23 reporting period the safeguarding partners considered very carefully whether the safeguarding response to concerns raised about the school prior to the inspection had been adequately responded to. The partners together concluded that there would be learning gained from an independent review and this was commissioned, with publication due in June 2023.

The 2022/23 period has proven very busy for the partnership in terms of statutory reviews. Our independent scrutineer describes a mature partnership, with a willingness to examine our multiagency practice. The partnership decision to commission and publish a review about the safeguarding response to events at Harlow Academy demonstrates this continued commitment to reflecting and learning. The timeliness of our rapid reviews and LCSPRs is an area requiring improvement and we acknowledge this is for the second year. Having now stabilised the partnership team after significant changes, and changes to safeguarding partner representation, we are confident of a better position to achieve this over the coming financial year.

### Multi-agency training, guidance and procedures:

*Providing high-quality multi-agency training, linked to learning and improvement objectives*

This has been the third year of offering training following the Covid 19 pandemic, with many organisations feeding back that they are now *on catch up* following the pandemic. With consequent effect staffing levels and capacity. Whilst we anticipated that there will be a consequent decrease in demand and attendance at our multi-agency training. It is very positive to report that this has not been the case and we have in fact delivered 1,275 MORE training opportunities this year. Training has continued to be via Microsoft Teams and E-learning in response to partner feedback that this remains the preference, however we have some in person training events scheduled for the next financial year to start to move towards a more hybrid post-pandemic model.

It is notable that there has been a slight decrease in attendance by the Police alongside a significant decrease from health colleagues (from 360 in 2021-22 to 209 this year) possibly suggesting that it is health who have struggled the most with capacity issues. In comparison we have seen a rise in attendance overall from Nottinghamshire County Council staff from 1749 to 1868, so 119 more places have been taken up. Additionally, there has been an increase again in attendance from schools and colleges from 578 course completions last year to 643. Total attendance from other relevant partner agencies has remained the same. So overall a very positive picture of increased awareness of the training offer amongst partners and relevant agencies. Despite the reduction in health and police attendance, this is in comparison to the last financial year when we know several partners increased their e-learning through lockdown periods. When we compare the figures to pre-pandemic levels attendance for this financial year remains favourable.

2022/23 has seen the development of three new courses: Anti-Racist Practice, Radicalisation and Counter-Terrorism and Understanding Trans Youth. These have all moved forward the partnership's priority of providing inclusive and accessible services, with all of the courses being oversubscribed and the Anti-Racist Practice having a fourth date added to try and accommodate the demand. Feedback has been resoundingly positive with practitioners giving examples of impact on practice such as:

*"Since the course I have supported a colleague in what I feel was a situation whereby racism was used to disempower a social worker".*

*"I have used knowledge gained during personal supervision when supporting colleagues in their work with families".*

### KEY ACHIEVEMENTS

11,629 training opportunities were accessed, an increase of 1,275 from last year.

Delivery of 4 new courses directly responding to training needs about changing risk (e.g. safeguarding children in a connected world).

Despite Covid pressures, the partnership has maintained a committed training pool with 41 partners delivering this year's training programme.

The partnership has also developed a training course in response to the National Child Safeguarding Practice Review Panel's report 'The Myth of Invisible Men'. 4 courses have been offered through 2022/23, all were oversubscribed and on one of the courses 35% rated themselves as good/very good in their practice with Hidden Men, which then improved to 95% after completing the course. Examples of impact on practice included:

*"I have visited the dad of a child who was not living in the home to make him part of the assessment."*

*"During a home visit I enquired about a male visitor in the kitchen and then went on to check what I had been told with all children on a school visit."*

*"I began working with a Mum and her daughter to improve teenage conflict. After being in the home, it was very evident that the child's stepfather was also playing a large part in conflict resolution too. So, I then did sessions with Mum and stepdad".*

The partnership continues to routinely deliver the Working Together to Safeguard Children course in two parts (E-learning followed by a 3 hour virtual session). This is a well embedded part of induction for safeguarding professionals across the statutory partners and relevant agencies in Nottinghamshire. 11 courses were delivered in 2022/23 with the evaluations being very positive. The same is true for the Safeguarding Children Today seminars which are delivered quarterly and this year have contained a guest slot about safeguarding Looked After Children which attracted attendance from foster carers who were very positive about the seminar.

The partnership's learning and development offer has expanded over 2022/23, demonstrating our ability to respond to national and local learning from reviews and our own training needs analysis. Our delivery is greatly assisted by the training pool, commitment to which is exceptional from across the partnership.

### Review of use of restraint within Clayfields:

*As a safeguarding partnership with a secure children's home in our area, the NSCP is required to have oversight of the use of restraint in the setting.*

Clayfields House provides secure accommodation for up to 20 children and young people between the ages of 10 and 17 years of age. It is licensed by the Department of Education and inspected by Ofsted. The contract for the provision of services is reviewed through HM Prison and Probation Service and the Youth Custody Service. The NSCP is required to review the use of restraint at Clayfields House and include the outcome within its yearly report.

A comprehensive report and presentation have been provided to the Partnership by the Clayfields Service Manager and Support Services Manager providing details of the legal framework for Restrictive Physical Interventions (RPI), data on the use of restraint, quality assurance governance and staff support. It was noted that the number of RPIs has reduced over the 2022/23 year compared to the previous year, in line with similar levels of bed occupancy. The SAIG agreed with the conclusions that:

- Staff are trained to a high standard using the Safety Intervention (CPI) form of physical intervention. This replaced the previously used MAPA system with an increased emphasis on the safety of all involved in an RPI.
- Internal and external monitoring of physical interventions are thorough, and the internal quality assurance regime is robust.
- External scrutiny continues through the Regulation 44 visitor, independent Advocate, YCS Performance Contract Manager and twice-yearly Ofsted interim and full inspections.
- In addition, where there are concerns, the Local Authority social workers or Youth Offending Team officers or the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO), can review individual incidents, which can include the review of CCTV.

Ofsted completed a 3 day inspection July 2022 in which the provision was graded as Good in all areas. This remained the case at the assurance visit in February 2023 where Ofsted reflected that 'strong leadership and support to staff overall and relationships between staff and young people continue to be strong'. Over the coming year a focus will be on reviewing the quality assurance officer role to incorporate more of a safeguarding element thereby strengthening the safeguarding focus of assurance in the setting.

### Reflections, next steps and priorities:

The 2022/23 period was one of significant change within the partnership, along with national developments and new legislation. The Integrated Care Board continued to develop with the wider partnership working to understand the responsibilities of provider organisations and how to best ensure continued strong relationships. All of the individuals fulfilling key senior policing roles in the partnership have changed in the 2022/23. A positive outcome of this period of change is the Assistant Chief Constable with responsibility for Public Protection is now the Chair of the SLG and subsequent appointments within his areas of responsibility have brought a renewed commitment to the Partnership and improved stability. However this follows a significant period of change which has impacted on progression and a need to build new working relationships. There have been changes in three key Service Director posts within the Local Authority which has also necessitated getting up to speed for partnership meetings and building relationships. Finally, a new partnership Service Manager came into post in March 2022 along with an interim partnership Development Manager who then handed over to the permanent appointee in January 2023.

It is in the above context that partners reflect on the achievements of publishing three Local Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews, completion of 6 rapid reviews and initiation of a significant independent review despite these changes in key members of the Child Safeguarding Practice Review Group (CSPRG). The training programme has continued to go from strength to strength, with the learning loop from the CSPRG to Learning and Workforce Development Group evidenced in the development of new training in response to national and local learning. The decision to allocate responsibility for SLG to the Assistant Chief Constable has been welcomed and creates a base of strong leaders at a level to agree strategy and allocate resource to continue to lead the partnership through the coming period. This report evidences progress against all of the actions identified in the 2021/22 period but for several these have not developed at the pace the partnership intended. The partnership is mindful of this and a new business plan is being developed at the time of writing, specifically designed as a dynamic document with SMART actions and built in reviews through the SAIG.

### Priorities for 2023 – 2024:

The NSCP business plan for 2023-2027 is being published alongside this annual report. After reflecting on what some children, young people, parents and carers told us when we asked about the partnership's priorities partners have chosen to develop 3 commitments:

Commitment 1: We will work together to keep young people safe in their homes and communities

Commitment 2: We will work together to ensure each child who needs support or help receives the right service at the right time for them and their family.

Commitment 3: We will work together to ensure the partnership reflects, learns from and acts on the experiences and feedback from children, young people and their families.

### Independent Scrutineer Overview

Every type of working arrangement based on partnership, I would suggest, fundamentally rests on the strength and quality of the relationships between the people involved. For, whilst agreements, contracts, policies and procedures all help to 'set the scene' and coordinate how and by whom work is done, the overall worth and creativity of a partnership will ultimately reflect the quality of relationships and degree of trust between the people involved.

In this sense, a safeguarding Partnership like the NSCP represents an especially complex web of relationships requiring agencies, (with very different structures and cultures) professionals, (with very different skillsets) children and their families (with often very different circumstances and needs) to work together seamlessly. Indeed, if we were to 'add up' all of the people potentially involved in safeguarding on any single day in Nottinghamshire the total would be difficult to calculate, but would certainly run to thousands of individuals with children's best interests at heart.

I am going to take some time here to ask some questions in order to evaluate the relationships that underpin the NSCP and, on the basis of the evidence I will present, give an overall picture of the 'health' of our Partnership.

**Q. if we know how difficult it is to maintain good relationships relationships generally, how can we ensure and maintain good relationships between all involved in a safeguarding Partnership?**

The Senior Leadership Group (SLG) of the NSCP brings together officers from Police, Health and Local Authority, with the role of Chair rotating between members, such that all perspectives are addressed, and none of the agencies can dominate or 'dodge' their responsibilities.

SLG is the decision-making forum which leads safeguarding in Nottinghamshire, negotiating and setting out the vision of how the Partnership should work, and strong, trust-based relationships in SLG are essential here as they serve as a model, cascading down through the respective agencies, of how relationships throughout the Partnership should be conducted.

**Q. Are strong trust-based relationships in place in SLG?**

I regularly attend SLG and can confirm that strong trust-based relationships are in place, and that this permits robust, but respectful and constructive discussions, and underpins informed, creative decision making. There is evident trust and a sense of common purpose between members, especially where complex safeguarding issues present, that require imaginative solutions, beyond the scope of established policies and procedures.

ACC Rob Griffin joined SLG as the Police representative earlier this year, and is presently Chairing the group. I see the rotation of the SLG Chair working effectively (as outlined above) and, in the present circumstance, the considerable advantage of affording better insight of the Police perspective of safeguarding.



**Q. All very well, but what about when things get difficult in SLG, are relationships quite so good then?**

Here I am going to use the SLG decision to commission an independent review of circumstances with regard to Harlow Academy (the completed review is now in the public domain) as evidence of good relationships and strong decision-making being consistent in SLG, even in complex, sensitive and difficult circumstances.

Safeguarding issues raised with respect of Harlow Academy were of considerable concern as they related to exceptionally vulnerable children, with the most complex needs in a residential setting. Very careful consideration was given to whether, in this circumstance, the guidance (in place at the time) would suggest that a Serious Incident Notification (SIN) should be made to the Child Safeguarding Practice Review Panel and to OFSTED, triggering the requirement to complete a statutory Rapid Review within fifteen working days of notification.

Despite the level of concern however it was evident that the reported issues at Harlow Academy did not meet the test for SIN and that, as a result, a Rapid Review would consequently not be required. That might very well have been the end of the story, but SLG took the view that whilst they agreed that the test for a SIN had not been met, and understood that a line could be drawn at this point which would satisfy statutory responsibilities, that this was not the 'right' thing to do in the circumstances. As a result, SLG agreed to commission an independently led review of Harlow Academy, not because they were obliged to do so, but in the best interests of the children and families concerned, and as a mechanism to learn from what happened, even if that proved to be challenging and uncomfortable.

The decision by SLG to review Harlow Academy to learn and because it was 'the right thing to do' reveals, in my opinion, the depth, strength and quality of relationships of inter-agency relationships and trust directly. There was clear agreement that there could be no question of such concerns being 'swept under the carpet', and an understanding also that, whatever the outcome, this was not only in the best interests of the children concerned, but for the Partnership also.

**Q. Is there any evidence that good, trust-based relationships at the top of the Partnership cascade throughout agencies?**

I could give many, many examples here of safeguarding in Nottinghamshire that goes 'above and beyond' what's in the job description, but will confine my remarks to the Police (reflecting the Chair role in SLG) and to two specific circumstances.

Firstly, the residential placement for a young woman placed in Nottinghamshire by an out of County agency broke down in circumstances that, for a time, left her especially vulnerable and with nowhere to go. For complex reasons, and in a wholly unsafe setting, Police officers had to step up to ensure her safety, engaging with all other agencies for as long as it took to find the best outcome. In a very sensitive situation, the actions of the officers concerned is to be commended, and demonstrates directly their commitment not just to this young woman but also to the Partnership more generally.

Secondly, a team of female officers has for some time now run a boxing club for young women. In the first instance this was largely done in their own time and on a shoestring budget

sometimes out of their own pockets. (Latterly, modest financial support has been offered by NSCP) The officers realised that the boxing club offered vulnerable young women a number of tangible benefits. Bringing young women together afforded friendship and mutual support, boxing built a sense of self-confidence and resilience and the club meant that, often hard to reach isolated young women potentially at risk of abuse and exploitation, were kept in view and safe. This outstanding group of officers continue to make a major contribution to safeguarding in Nottinghamshire. This of course reflects well on them individually and on the Force more generally. But is now also, supported and understood as part of a 'portfolio' of ways in which we can proactively effect safeguarding.

**Q. Even with good trust-based relationships within the Partnership, how do we ensure we continue to learn from our combined experience and don't lose this through normal staff turnover?**

Relationships of any kind require constant work to remain positive, and if that's true for individuals, it's even more relevant in safeguarding that often requires people, who might not know one another in any other context, to work in Partnership.

A key mechanism for development and maintenance of strong professional relationships in Nottinghamshire continues to be, in my assessment, the very strong training offer made to all those involved in safeguarding. Demand for safeguarding training remains very high and user feedback exceptionally positive. Additionally, it is possible to directly link recommendations from reviews to training subsequently offered.

It is my view, based on this evidence, that NSCP remains committed to learning and improvement, and that the quality and range of training on offer is second to none. Normal staff turnover similarly underscores the vital importance of maintaining the training offer and, of course, brings new staff from all agencies together in a collegiate and supportive way.

In conclusion, I would argue there is strong evidence that NSCP does exhibit strong trust-based professional relationships from SLG cascading throughout agencies into day- to-day safeguarding practice. That the NSCP is an open, transparent Partnership with a good commitment to learning and improving safeguarding for all local children and young people.

*Dr Mark Peel*  
Independent Scrutineer NSCP



# Business Plan

Our plan for 2023 – 2027 is to continue to build on our strong partnership relationships and always make sure that children, young people and their families are at the heart of everything we do. After listening to some of Nottinghamshire’s children and carers, we make the following commitments.

*We have outlined what we will focus on for each commitment for the next 12 months and will reconsider the priorities and provide a progress update in each annual report.*





**Commitment 1: We will work together to keep young people safe in their homes and communities**

<i>Over the next 12 months</i>	<i>What progress will look like over the next 12 months</i>
<p>Children at risk of or experiencing exploitation will be supported through a joined up response from the partnership.<sup>1</sup> Children and young people will feel supported, safer and heard and parents and carers will be valued partners in our work to keep children safe from exploitation.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A new Child at Risk of Exploitation (CARE) team will have been created within Nottinghamshire Police, meaning co-location of officers working with children at risk of all forms of exploitation</li> <li>• An exploitation self-assessment<sup>2</sup> will be completed by the newly re-launched cross-partnership steering group</li> <li>• A decision will be made about embedding social workers into the CARE team</li> </ul>
<p>Children with emotional or mental health difficulties will receive joined up support. Children with special educational needs and disabilities and their families will receive earlier intervention about identified safeguarding risks. Children showing their distress through severe self-harm will receive a more timely response in the right setting for their needs.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The partnership will develop or adopt newly released guidance and a toolkit for use when trying to find the right home for young people who severely self-injure and who cannot live with their family</li> <li>• Analysis will be completed to understand, from a partnership perspective, the emotional and mental health needs of children in Nottinghamshire and a partnership plan for this will have been developed</li> <li>• Parents and carers of children with special educational needs and disabilities will receive an improved offer of support around areas of risk such as technological harm</li> </ul>
<p>Schools, colleges and alternative education providers will become an integral part of the partnership. This will enable exploration of how the partnership can better work to meet the safeguarding needs of children in their education space.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• An education sub-group will be embedded in the partnership, with the chair attending the strategic leadership group of the partnership</li> <li>• The partnership participation plan will incorporate voices of young people from within school councils, children and young people accessing alternative provision who are not in school councils, children in care council and SEND groups (Pioneers)</li> </ul>
<p>We will review our neglect strategy and toolkit to make sure it helps professionals and families understand when things are going wrong, and see what the data tells us about whether it is working.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The toolkit will have been reviewed to amend to strengths-based language and a shortened version will be developed specifically for health professionals</li> <li>• A partnership audit will have identified how widely the toolkit is being used and how effectively. A plan will be underway to address any area identified by the audit.</li> </ul>

<sup>1</sup> All of the exploitation work will be underpinned by the Tackling Child Exploitation Principles ([www.tce.researchinpractice.org.uk](http://www.tce.researchinpractice.org.uk)).

<sup>2</sup> The self-assessment will follow the TCE, as above.





**Commitment 2: We will work together to ensure each child who needs support or help receives the right service at the right time for them and their family.**

<i>Over the next 12 months</i>	<i>What progress will look like over the next 12 months</i>
We will stop talking about ‘thresholds’ and instead talk about what children and families need and how to provide it.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The current pathway to provision will be replaced with a new model based on assessment of need</li> <li>• The partnership training offer will be updated to reflect this change in emphasis and language</li> </ul>
We will create a new front-door, with a greater focus on early help. Within this re-design, we will work together to think about how many referrals for children are made and whether some of these needs could be better met in the community or by early help.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A new front-door model will be in place, building in strengths-based practice and creating more early help offers to families and less progression to statutory social work assessment</li> <li>• Additional training and support will be offered to professionals working with children and young people in the community to enable increased confidence to work with families who need support without automatically making a referral to the front-door. Professionals doing this will feel they have the support of the partnership in doing so</li> <li>• Less of the contacts made with the front-door will result in no further action, meaning less families will be contacted by children’s services without a resultant offer of support</li> </ul>
Too many children in Nottinghamshire have child protection plans. We will rethink how we work together and with families to avoid so many situations reaching a child protection plan.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The number of children with a child protection or repeat child protection plan will decrease</li> <li>• Audits will show us that Child in Need plans are more robust and effective</li> </ul>
We will improve the quality, attendance and timeliness of strategy discussions and make sure that the needs of all of the children relevant to the discussion are considered	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• We hope to see a change in the amount of strategy discussions resulting in single agency child protection investigations</li> <li>• Audits will tell us that the right professionals are attending strategy discussions and that all children’s needs are being sufficiently considered in a multi-agency framework.</li> </ul>





<p><b>Commitment 3: We will work together to ensure the partnership reflects, learns from and acts on the experiences and feedback from children, young people and their families.</b></p>	
<p><b>Over the next 12 months</b></p>	<p><b>What progress will look like over the next 12 months</b></p>
<p>In developing these commitments, we asked some of Nottinghamshire’s children and parents/carers what they thought. We will build on so that we can keep listening to as many voices as possible.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The partnership is funding a seconded service manager to build on the participation to date, and a partnership participation plan will be approved in early 2024.</li> <li>• Over the next 12 months we will gradually increase the groups of children, young people and parents/carers that we listen to and seek to formalise this engagement.</li> </ul>
<p>We will focus on making the recommendations from our statutory reviews as clear and SMART as possible, and address any themes reviews reveal. We will make sure what is learned in reviews is available to everyone working with children in Nottinghamshire.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• We will embed new ways of sharing learning, such as 7 minute briefings and short recorded briefings based on the views and needs of professionals</li> <li>• Each partner agency will review their own process for sharing information from reviews and provide assurance that this is robust</li> <li>• Partners in the child safeguarding practice review group will act as critical friends to each other in ensuring actions are SMART and that progress is effectively monitored, resulting in a more timely movement of actions through the group</li> </ul>
<p>We will develop an NSCP understanding of what trauma informed practice means and develop a plan to integrate this into practice.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• We will have mapped what each partner agency understands by trauma informed practice and have a clear plan for consistency moving forward.</li> <li>• We will have identified what training to offer and how to measure impact on practice</li> </ul>





**16 October 2023**

**Agenda Item: 5**

**REPORT OF THE CORPORATE DIRECTOR FOR CHILDREN AND FAMILIES  
AND THE CHIEF NURSE, NOTTINGHAM AND NOTTINGHAMSHIRE  
INTEGRATED CARE BOARD**

**PARTNERSHIP PROGRESS IN IMPROVING THE EXPERIENCES AND  
OUTCOMES FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE WITH SPECIAL  
EDUCATIONAL NEEDS AND DISABILITIES**

**Purpose of the Report**

1. To inform Committee of the progress made by the Nottinghamshire local area Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) Partnership in implementing improvements to the experiences and outcomes of children and young people with SEND, informed by the priority areas for action and areas for improvement identified during the Ofsted/Care Quality Commission (CQC) local area [inspection](#).
2. To inform Committee of the new requirements arising from the Government response to the SEND Green Paper, the [SEND and Alternative Improvement Plan](#), and to outline the implications for the Partnership's improvement activity.

**Information**

3. The Nottinghamshire local area SEND Partnership continues to undertake focussed work to improve the experiences and outcomes of children and families. This work is captured in a joint [Improvement Plan](#), that was approved by Ofsted and the CQC on 14 July 2023, and responds to [findings](#) of the Ofsted/CQC local area SEND inspection that took place in January/February 2023.
4. Revised SEND governance arrangements have been implemented across the local area partnership and continue to be embedded. This includes the establishment of a SEND Partnership Improvement Board, which meets monthly to provide oversight, challenge and scrutiny of the partnership's performance, progress and implementation of the actions needed to improve services and the provision of care. The Board is independently chaired by Dame Christine Lenehan, a recognised sector expert and Strategic Director of the National Children's Bureau.
5. External support for the Improvement Programme has been agreed through the Council for Disabled Children, achieved via the Research and Improvement for SEND Excellence (RISE) partnership with the Department for Education (DfE). This includes supporting the local area partnership with the development of a Strategic Outcomes Framework, an

outcomes-led SEND Partnership Strategy and exploration of data indicators to enable the partnership to evidence progress and impact. Improvement capacity has also been implemented across the partnership to drive improvement activity and ensure progress is made at pace. This includes a joint programme manager and dedicated project managers across the Local Authority and NHS Nottingham and Nottinghamshire Integrated Care Board (ICB), as well as administrative support for the Improvement Programme.

6. The DfE and NHS England (NHSE) remain in regular contact with the local area to engage with and support the partnership’s improvement progress. In line with external monitoring arrangements, the DfE and NHSE are undertaking a six-monthly SEND Deep Dive of the local area in September 2023, seeking to assess the partnership’s progress of the Priority Action Plan and Areas for Improvement at an operational level. Deep dives will be supplemented by six-monthly Stocktake Meetings, which will focus on engagement with senior officials from the partnership to identify concerns, agree next steps and agree on DfE support where needed.

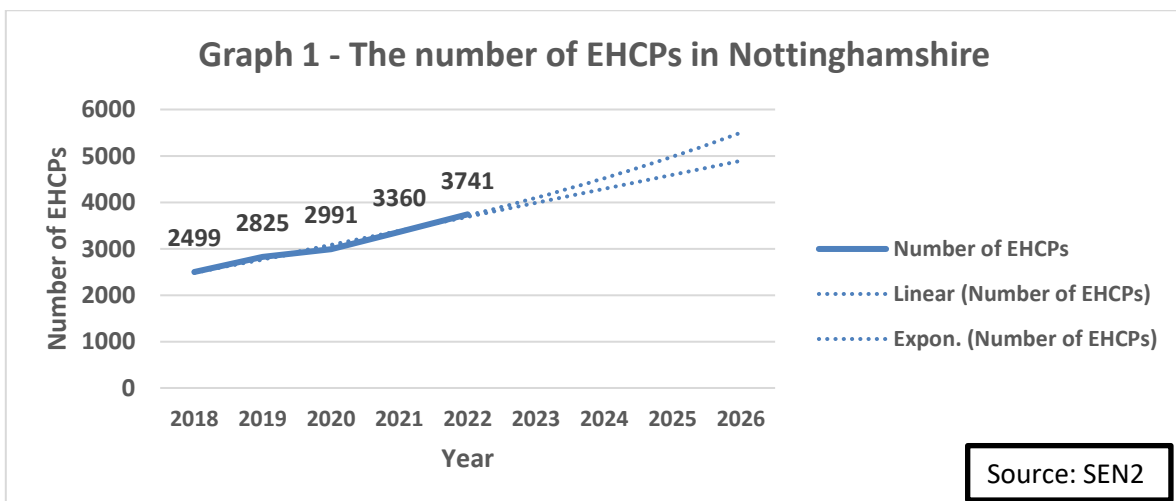
**Progress against the Priority Areas for Action**

Area for Priority Action 1:

*Leaders, NHS Nottingham and Nottinghamshire Integrated Care Board and education, health and care providers should cooperate to urgently identify, assess and provide for the needs of children and young people with SEND. This includes assessment of needs, timely issuing of Education, Health and Care (EHC) plans and holistic oversight of these plans through annual reviews.*

Joint Leads: Peter McConnochie, Service Director – Education, Learning and Inclusion, Nottinghamshire County Council (NCC) and Nicola Ryan, Deputy Chief Nurse, NHS Nottingham and Nottinghamshire Integrated Care Board (ICB).

7. Improvement activity has initially focused on improving access to timely assessment of need and issuing of Education, Health and Care (EHC) Plans through statutory processes against a backdrop of increased demand for assessments and a continued increase in the number of EHCPs issued across Nottinghamshire as detailed in Graph 1. By the end of August 2023, the number of EHCPs had reached over 4000 in line with Graph 1 projections.





8. This has involved a comprehensive review of the Council's service responsible for EHCPs, the Integrated Children's Disability Service (ICDS) processes and operating model to identify service improvements. The continued increase in demand for EHC Needs Assessments (up by 34.3% in the first eight months of 2023 compared to the same period in 2022) and subsequent issuing of EHC Plans has required an uplift in staffing across the ICDS to better manage and respond to demand. Additional Covid-19 recovery funding has been utilised to increase staffing in year including 6 additional EHC Co-ordinators, 2 Plan Writers and 1 Service Organiser. The additional capacity is intended to be in place for two years whilst further SEND systems work is undertaken along with a further review of the establishment and structures in place within the service to ensure long term sustainability.
9. Draft changes have been proposed, and consulted upon with parents and carers, to the decision-making process for EHC Needs Assessments, to include structured conversations to support EHC Assessments and provide improved contact with parents and carers. This includes the piloting of Education Pathway Officers to provide guidance and support at this early stage of the EHCP process.
10. Recruitment is underway to secure 5 Education Pathway Officers. It is expected that the role will support the Local Authority to improve the quality of decision-making and ensure that children and young people receive the right support at the right time.
11. To reduce the length of time it takes to provide Educational Psychology advice for an EHC Needs Assessment and thus reduce the overall average length of time taken to issue an EHCP, the capacity of the Educational Psychology Service has been reviewed and a proposed increase in establishment over the next three years of 9 FTE posts is being developed. In the interim, work has been undertaken to secure additional agency Educational Psychologist capacity through a commissioning process. It is expected that the additional agency capacity will provide an additional 30 EHC assessments each month. Some of this capacity will be used to reduce the backlog of EHC requests requiring an EHC Needs Assessment.
12. As a result of the steps taken so far, 23.19% of EHCPs were issued within 20 weeks at the end of August 2023 year to date. This is an improvement from 4.5% issued within 20 weeks for the whole of 2022 (SEN2). The average time between request for assessment and the issuing of an EHC Plan is also decreasing. Between January 2023 and August 2023, the number of days between first contact and date the final EHCP was issued reduced by 37.8 days and the average time in August 2023 was 26 weeks.
13. To ensure that mainstream education settings are enabled to better provide for the complex and varied needs of children and young people with SEN, the funding available to schools has been increased by 20% in 2023-2024. A revised 'SEND Funding Tracking Tool' has been developed to be tested by school Special Educational Needs Co-ordinators (SENCOs) in partnership with Family SENCOs to improve the oversight and of provision for children and young people with SEND both with and without an EHC Plan in mainstream settings. The Tool will be trailed this Autumn term to judge its likely impact on the monitoring of funding and how the focus on early intervention will help to improve the sustainability of mainstream placements for children and young people with SEND.
14. Improvements to the annual review process have included the recruitment of 6 additional Plan Writers to carry out annual reviews and issuing of amended EHCPs within statutory timescales. The EHC Plan Writers started in June 2023 and have already cleared the

existing backlog of 450 EHCPs that need amending. Further work is now underway to strengthen pupil voice within the EHC process.

15. Future activity is planned to further improve the outcomes and experiences of children, young people with SEN support and their families through the Graduated Response ('Assess, Plan, Do, Review' cycle). This will include using District moderation activity throughout 2023/2024 to review the quality and robustness of the SEN support offer in mainstream settings, identifying and sharing best practice, and representing the voices of children and young people with SEND. With a focus on early intervention prior to EHC needs assessment requests will enable needs to be met earlier and more effectively without recourse to the EHCP process.
16. The oversight and impact of these developments is scrutinised through regular Priority Action 1 workstream executive leadership meetings. Further work will also be undertaken during the 2023/2024 academic year to listen and learn from education settings, parents, carers and stakeholders to identify additional areas for improvement and opportunities for meaningful co-production.

#### Area for Priority Action 2:

*Leaders, including commissioners and providers, should act urgently to identify and address the delays and gaps in access to some health services, particularly speech and language therapy, neurodevelopmental pathways and equipment services. They should also ensure that they use available performance data to identify where gaps exist and whether actions taken to address these are effective.*

Joint Leads: Karon Foulkes, Head of Maternity and Children's Commissioning and Transformation, NHS Nottingham and Nottinghamshire ICB and Laurence Jones, Service Director, Commissioning and Resources, NCC

17. System partners have acted at pace to collaboratively scope current health service provision for children and young people with SEND, in order to better identify, understand and address delays in access to services, commissioning gaps in service provision and duplication in service offer. Specific focus has been had on Speech, Language and Communication Needs (SLCN), Services Physiotherapy (PT), Occupational Therapy (OT) and Neurodevelopmental Services. There is a shared, system-wide understanding of the pressures on these services and the challenges currently being faced. This mapping will be further refined, and consideration had around how integrated commissioning can be utilised to increase efficiency and effectiveness of services. Dates have been identified for the initial meetings to discuss this.
18. Review processes have a specific focus on the lived experience of service users and their families. A co-production group is well established as part of the review of the neurodevelopmental pathway. A detailed engagement programme is planned for November 2023 to review the experiences of children, young people and their families who access specialist health services, colleagues providing the services and professionals who refer into these services. The recommendations made by these groups will be utilised to inform future modelling and commissioning arrangements.
19. Initial data has been collated for health services and shared with system partners. Commissioners and providers continue to work collaboratively, having a shared

understanding of the scope of data required going forward. This will be regularly reported and utilised to better understand the changing needs of the local population and inform future modelling and commissioning arrangements. A dedicated Data Analyst post has been recruited within the ICB to embed data flows from provider to ICB to generate data, insight and intelligence to drive quality improvement, monitor impact, reduce waiting times and improve access to services.

- 20. An in-depth review of the entire Neurodevelopmental Pathway is ongoing, with initial scoping completed. Key areas of risk highlighted have included the long waiting times from referral to accessing the service. Immediate work has focused on significantly reducing these waiting times from over 90 weeks in December 2022 to an average of 62 weeks and ensuring that those on waiting lists are ‘waiting well’. This includes a newly developed suite of key information that is being shared with families at the point of referral. This review will continue and include capacity and demand with partners and undertaking quick wins at pace. The development of the neurodevelopmental website will continue to be coproduced with service users and families.
- 21. Initial scoping into equipment services has been done and findings shared with the Nottingham and Nottinghamshire Integrated Community Equipment Loan Service (ICELS) lead with a view to initiating improvements across process and interaction with families.

Progress on Areas for Improvement

- 22. Four areas for improvement were identified as part of the local area inspection in addition to the two areas for priority action:

<b>Area for Improvement 1</b>	Leaders across the partnership should continue their work to gather a wider range of views of children and young people with SEND and their families so that they can use these views to inform their planning for, and evaluation of, SEND services
Progress to date	<p>The partnership has approached this improvement priority by coming together to develop a shared set of principles for how coproduction can be at the heart of the approach to improvement, whilst also recognising the value and importance of engagement and communications. A mapping exercise has been done to identify what existing coproduction activity is already taking place with children and young people, and parents and carers and to begin to identify opportunities to strengthen this. At the heart of the approach to coproduction, engagement and communication is keeping a focus on the impact on the experiences and outcomes of children and young people with special educational needs and their families and disabilities.</p> <p>Leaders have met with the Pioneers, Nottinghamshire’s Youth Engagement Forum for children with disabilities, to explore the issues they are experiencing in respect of the EHCP process and access to wider support. This Forum will continue to shape the work of the improvement programme with a further session planned for November 2023. As part of this, consideration will be given to establishing a SEND Children and Young People’s Forum to influence the work of the SEND Partnership Assurance and Improvement Group.</p>

	<p>An event was held in May 2023, supported by KIDS, which is delivering the national ‘Making Participation Count’ programme, to feed back the views of 280 children and young people with SEND to 50 leaders from across the Nottinghamshire SEND Partnership. Attendees pledged actions in response to the feedback from young people and this will be monitored to ensure impact. Following the event, the partnership has been establishing groups of children and young people with SEND across educational settings in Nottinghamshire. Groups have been established in different settings such as mainstream and specialist settings as well as alternative provision to ensure a representative view is captured. During the next academic year, these groups will be visited regularly to build strong relationships directly with children and young people and collate their experiences to gather the impact of improvement activity and feed into the wider SEND Improvement Programme.</p> <p>To strengthen the influence of children and young people on strategic decisions, and specifically the work of the SEND Partnership and Assurance and Improvement Group, there is the intention to develop a SEND Children and Young People’s Forum.</p> <p>The partnership is committed to strengthening parent and carer engagement and coproduction including through the Nottinghamshire Parent Carer Forum. The partnership has supported the forum to successfully obtain a funding grant through the Local Authorities Contain Outbreak Management Fund. This will enable further capacity within the forum to establish consultation groups across the county, ensuring the forum’s reach is far-reaching and gathering a wider range of parent/carer views.</p> <p>Parents/carers have come forwards following post-inspection briefings to express interest in being part of an advisory group to ensure that the improvement programme is focussing on the issues which matter most to children, young people and families, and this is now being progressed.</p> <p>An e-bulletin is being developed for families in Nottinghamshire to raise awareness of the partnership’s improvement priorities and progress and to encourage the involvement of families in the improvement work that most matters to them.</p>
<p>Intended Impact and Outcomes</p>	<p>Children and young people will feel engaged in coproduction of service developments that feel meaningful to them.</p> <p>Children, young people, parents and carers will feel that they are actively shaping services that matter to them.</p> <p>Children, young people, parents and carers will understand the impact of their engagement on service developments and when change is not possible, will understand why.</p>

	A greater range of children and young people, and parents and carers will feel engaged in coproduction and engagement.
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<b>Area for Improvement 2</b>	Leaders across the partnership should establish effective processes for the quality assurance of EHC plans and use these to improve the quality of new and existing plans.
Progress to date	<p>The partnership has taken the opportunity to review the current approach to quality assurance through its existing cross-authority steering group. The membership and terms of reference of the group are being reviewed in order to ensure that the scope and impact of the approach to quality assurance are as robust as they need to be. There is work already underway across the partnership to strengthen the approach to multi-agency quality assurance of finalised EHCPs through a new approach to auditing which was piloted in July. The learning from this pilot is being taken forward and a schedule of audits being developed for the next year.</p> <p>The steering group will, through the review of its scope, extend its remit to cover quality assurance of the end to end EHC journey, including the quality of individual agency advice submitted as part of the EHC assessment process, the quality of draft EHC Plans, and crucially, the way in which learning from quality assurance is used to improve practice, through stronger engagement of practitioners and a focus on workforce development. The intention is also to engage with children, young people and parents/carers to ensure that there is a shared understanding of what a meaningful plan looks like, and that it supports improving children’s experiences and outcomes.</p>
Intended Impact and Outcomes	<p>There is a shared understanding of ‘what good quality EHC Plan looks like?’ across the system.</p> <p>Children, young people and their families who have commenced the EHC assessment process will have an improved experience.</p> <p>Approved plans will be of good quality and multiagency audits will continue to identify opportunities for improvements, which will then be acted upon, to improve children and young people’s experiences and outcomes.</p>

<b>Area for Improvement 3</b>	Leaders across the partnership should use performance data and information effectively to inform their evaluation and joint commissioning of SEND services.
Progress to date	Initial work undertaken by the partnership to improve the use of performance data and information has focussed on two areas:

- prioritising operational reporting related to the two main priority areas to ensure core data and reports are available to drive and track improvements in timeliness, as well as support a deeper understanding of the underlying challenges impacting on timeliness.
- Creating a joined-up approach across the ICB and Council to developing a revised outcomes and performance framework for SEND. The framework for reports being developed considers the different levels of strategic, management and operational, for individual services and the partnership.

Partnership data, insight and intelligence working group established and scoping approach to data, insight and intelligence.

#### Partnership Oversight of the Experiences and Outcomes of children with SEND

A dataset proposal has been developed to ensure effective performance reporting into the Partnership Assurance Improvement Group. Recommendations align with the current SEND inspection framework Annex A requirements, with additional health provider information to obtain assurance for monitoring and oversight.

Nottinghamshire local partnership will be receiving support from the Council for Disabled Children; RISE programme at a planned event on 6 November 2023, with partners across the system working collaboratively to explore appropriate data indicators to evidence strategic outcomes.

#### Strengthening the tracking of the timeliness of EHCPs

A vital signs Power Business Intelligence (BI) dashboard report has been developed so that the Council's Corporate Leadership Team now has visibility of the performance of key SEND indicators. A new monthly management information report is being developed for discussion at the Education, Learning and Inclusion Senior Leadership Team. This will include all of the key indicators for the service area including those covering the EHCP processes. This report will be available for Quarter 2 reporting.

A new operational BI report is being developed to track cases through the entire EHCP Assessment process for management oversight and timescale tracking. This will include the educational psychologist process that until now has only been available within the team. The report is currently under development and will be complete in September. Separate discussions are underway to develop a dashboard to give managerial oversight of timescales to enable proactive management of any issues or delays.

#### Strengthening the tracking of the timeliness of access to key health therapies

	<p>Significant progress has been made with specialist service health providers around the sharing of data that is currently available and future data requirements. Baseline data for PT, OT, SLCN and neurodevelopment services has been provided and trajectories for the services are under development. Additional data describing a further breakdown in referral information around diagnosis and pathways (as has been done for SLCN) will be provided for other services and data will be broken down to better understand whether referrals are new patients to the service, or if they are children already known to the service who were previously discharged for their initial presenting needs. This will be utilised to inform future modelling arrangements for services provided. Data detailing current staffing levels and service models will also be provided.</p>
<p>Intended Impact and Outcomes</p>	<p>Leaders will gather accurate, timely information about children and young people with SEND in their local area and monitor the changing needs of the population, including using the perspectives of children, young people and families.</p> <p>Leaders will jointly evaluate whether their services and provision are improving outcomes for children and young people with SEND, not only whether children and young people have received the services.</p> <p>Leaders will monitor whether there are sufficient services and provision to meet the needs and aspirations of the children and young people in their area and take appropriate action as a result.</p>
<p><b>Improvement Area 4</b></p>	<p>Leaders across the partnership should put in place the appropriate governance arrangements to deliver their SEND plans both individually and across the wider partnership.</p>
<p>Progress Update</p>	<p>The substantive governance arrangements to deliver SEND plans in Nottinghamshire have been revised. The SEND Accountability Board will be replaced by a new governance structure mirroring the Safeguarding Partnership Arrangements, with a SEND Executive Leadership Group setting strategic direction and supported by a SEND Partnership Assurance and Improvement Group (PAIG) with a much wider reach in terms of membership. The SEND Executive Leadership Group has met and the Partnership Assurance and Improvement Group will meet for the first time in November. The terms of reference have been developed and will be subject to approval at this first meeting. The meeting will also consider a proposed, revised performance metric set, to ensure assurance and oversight of SEND system arrangements.</p> <p>As outlined in <b>paragraph 5</b>, the partnership is working with the Council for Disabled Children to develop a revised partnership SEND strategy. The key steps towards developing the strategy are below:</p>

	<p>29 September 2023, 10:00 - 15.00: Developing &amp; Embedding a Strategic Outcomes Framework</p> <p>6 November 2023, 10:00 - 15.00: Exploring data indicators to evidence strategic outcomes</p> <p>4 December 2023, 10:00 - 15.00: Developing an Outcomes-Led SEND Strategy.</p>
Intended Impact and Outcomes	<p>Leaders will have an ambitious strategy that defines the shared outcomes they will work collectively to achieve for all children and young people with SEND, and they embed an aspirational culture of high expectations and quality across services and provision.</p> <p>Leaders will challenge themselves and each other to improve experiences and outcomes for children and young people with SEND.</p> <p>Leaders will jointly evaluate whether their services and provision are improving outcomes for children and young people with SEND</p> <p>Leaders will have an accurate, shared understanding of the needs of children and young people in their local area.</p> <p>Leaders will create an environment for effective practice and multi-agency working to flourish.</p>

### SEND and Alternative Improvement Plan

23. In March 2023, the Government published the SEND and Alternative Provision Improvement Plan Right Support, Right Place, Right Time in response to the SEND Green paper that was published in March 2022.
24. The Improvement Plan sets out a threefold mission:
  1. **fulfilling children’s potential** and improving outcomes with an emphasis on preparing for adulthood, particularly in relation to employment
  2. **rebuilding parental trust** in the system, and
  3. **providing financial sustainability**.
25. The Improvement Plan describes the need to develop a single system for SEND underpinned by national standards which details the various elements of support available to meet need, along with the partners that should provide and fund these.
26. A system of funding bands and tariffs will be explored along with a new approach to funding for Alternative Provision (AP). This will be delivered by local inclusion partnerships which will produce inclusion plans based on an assessment of need.
27. The future role of AP is focused on early intervention and how the expertise in this sector can be used as an intervention rather than a destination.



28. The Improvement Plan has a focus on the workforce and leadership, including early years, SENCOs and educational psychologists.
29. As the national implementation approach for the Improvement Plan becomes clear, the local area partnership will integrate the relevant elements within its existing plans. For example, the Plan talks about developing local Inclusion Partnership. The intention locally will be to align this with the developing governance arrangements for SEND including locality working groups that support delivery under the countywide Partnership, Assurance and Improvement Group.

### **Other Options Considered**

30. No other options have been considered.

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

31. The local area partnership is committed to improving the experiences and outcomes of children and young people with SEND and will continue to focus on implementing the improvement plan and wider improvement arrangements moving forwards.

### **Statutory and Policy Implications**

32. 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**

33. Local authority costs associated with the improvement programme and associated partnership governance arrangements have been subject to the relevant approvals in line with financial regulations.

### **RECOMMENDATION/S**

That the Select Committee:

- 1) considers the content of the report and confirms whether Members have any further questions or recommendations in relation to progress with the required improvements.
- 2) agrees to receive a further update on progress in implementing the improvement plan at each meeting.

**Colin Pettigrew**  
**Corporate Director, Children and Families**

**Rosa Waddingham**  
**Chief Nurse, Nottingham and Nottinghamshire Integrated Care Board**

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

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#### **Constitutional Comments (CEH 04/10/23)**

34. The Children and Families Select Committee has the remit to consider the report.

#### **Financial Comments (SS 03/10/23)**

35. Local authority costs associated with the improvement programme and associated partnership governance arrangements have been subject to the relevant approvals in line with financial regulations.

#### **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.

[Improving the experiences and outcomes for children and young people with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities](#) - report to Cabinet on 25 May 2023

[Progress in Improving the Experiences and Outcomes for Children and Young People with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities](#) – report to Cabinet on 22 June 2023

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

All.

CFS0013



**16 October 2023**

**Agenda Item 6**

## **REPORT OF THE CHAIRMAN OF THE CHILDREN AND FAMILIES SELECT COMMITTEE**

### **OUTCOMES OF THE REVIEW OF EDUCATION, HEALTH AND CARE PLANS**

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

1. To share the findings arising from the scrutiny task and finish review of Education, Health and Care (EHC) Plans with the Children and Families Select Committee.
2. To seek the Select Committee's endorsement for the review's recommendations to be submitted to Cabinet for consideration.

#### **Information**

##### **Background**

3. As part of the development of the Select Committee's work programme, the EHC Plan process was identified as an important area for a detailed scrutiny task and finish review – particularly in the context of Ofsted's and the Care Quality Commission's findings following their inspection of the local area arrangements for children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) during January and February 2023.
4. The review of how the Council's organisational processes, structure and capacity operate was carried out to support it in fulfilling its statutory duties sustainably and efficiently in relation to EHC Plans. The review considered the full EHC Assessment process, from what is in place to mitigate the need for an Assessment request being made to the decision-making regarding placements for pupils for whom an EHC Plan has been issued.

##### **Review Scope**

5. The scoping of the review was carried out by the Chairman and Vice Chairman of the Select Committee, in consultation with the Service Director for Education, Learning and Inclusion and other officers. This work identified the key objectives for the review and set out the strategic context in which the issues involved would be considered.
6. The key objectives set out for the review were:
  - to gain an understanding of the issues and challenges surrounding the implementation of EHC Plans and the carrying out of the preceding Assessments,

- to establish what organisational processes, structures and capacity the Council has in place so that it can fulfil its statutory duties relating to EHC Plans sustainably and efficiently,
- to examine the processes being carried out at neighbouring and statistically similar local authorities in relation to EHC Plans and consider if this identifies any new learning or best practice that could be adopted, and
- to make appropriate recommendations on how the processes surrounding EHC Plans could operate more effectively at the Council to ensure that the best outcomes are achieved for children, young people and families.

### **Links to the Council's Corporate Plan**

7. The work of the scrutiny function should always be focussed on supporting the delivery of the Council's strategic priorities, which will in turn develop the provision of the best possible services to the residents of Nottinghamshire. The work that was carried out in scoping the review identified that it would support a range of strategic priorities, as well as the strategies and policies that underpinned them.
8. The Nottinghamshire Plan 2021-31 sets out the strategic vision for the future of the county and the Council. The activity in the Nottinghamshire Plan is built around achieving a 10-year vision for a 'healthy, prosperous and greener future for everyone'. This vision is supported by nine ambitions that act as a framework for all Council activity. The scoping of the review identified that it would support the following ambitions of the Plan:
  - Ambition 1: Helping our people live healthier, more independent lives.
  - Ambition 2: Supporting communities and families.
  - Ambition 3: Keeping children, vulnerable adults, and communities safe.
  - Ambition 4: Building skills that help people get good jobs.

### **Local area SEND (Ofsted and Care Quality Commission) inspection Nottinghamshire 2023**

9. Between 30 January and 3 February 2023, Ofsted and the Care Quality Commission (CQC) carried out an inspection of the Nottinghamshire local area to assess how effective the local education, health and care services were at identifying, and meeting the needs of, children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) aged 0 to 25. Nottinghamshire's area SEND inspection was the first to be carried out under a new area SEND inspection framework guidance.
10. The Nottinghamshire local area inspection highlighted significant concerns about the experiences and outcomes of children and young people with SEND in Nottinghamshire.
11. The findings of the Nottinghamshire local area SEND inspection set out two areas for priority action:
  - That leaders, the NHS Nottingham and Nottinghamshire Integrated Care Board, and education, health, and care providers should cooperate to urgently identify, assess and provide for the needs of children and young people with SEND. This includes assessment of needs, timely issuing of EHC Plans and holistic oversight of these Plans through annual reviews.

- That leaders, including commissioners and providers, should act urgently to identify and address the delays and gaps in access to some health services, particularly speech and language therapy, neurodevelopmental pathways and equipment services. They should also ensure that they use available performance data to identify where gaps exist and whether actions taken to address these are effective.
12. Four areas for improvement were also identified, setting out that leaders across the partnership should:
- continue their work to gather a wider range of views of children and young people with SEND and their families so that they can use these views to inform their planning for, and evaluation of, SEND services,
  - establish effective processes for the quality assurance of EHC Plans and use these to improve the quality of new and existing Plans,
  - use performance data and information effectively to inform their evaluation and joint commissioning of SEND services, and
  - put in place the appropriate governance arrangements to deliver their SEND plans both individually and across the wider partnership.
13. The Nottinghamshire local area SEND partnership is now undertaking focussed work to improve the experiences and outcomes of children and families. The SEND Improvement Programme and the supporting action plan will take forward the learning from the Ofsted and CQC inspection process and the areas for improvement identified through the inspection. A Nottinghamshire SEND Partnership Improvement Board has also been established to oversee the improvement actions needed. This Board is chaired independently by a recognised sector expert, Dame Christine Lenehan, Director of the Council for Disabled Children.

### **Review Process and Activity**

14. The review process was led by the Chairman of the Children and Families Select Committee, Councillor Sam Smith. Other members who contributed throughout the review process were:
- Councillor Francis Purdue-Horan
  - Councillor Robert Corden
  - Councillor Kate Foale
  - Councillor Roger Jackson
  - Councillor John Lee
  - Councillor Michelle Welsh

James McGeachie (the co-opted representative of the Roman Catholic Church in relation to education matters on the committee) also participated in the review process.

15. In undertaking the review, the Chairman and members carried out:
- evidence-gathering briefings with the Service Director for Education, Learning and Inclusion and the Service leadership team,
  - discussions with the Nottinghamshire Parent Carer Forum, and
  - desktop research and benchmarking in relation to the approach taken by other local authorities to EHC Plans and Assessments.

11. The first evidence-gathering session of the review group took place on 17 May 2023, with a second session on 22 May 2023. At these meetings, members received detailed information from the Service Director for Education, Learning and Inclusion; the Acting Group Manager and the Service Manager for Integrated Children's Disability Services; the Group Manager for Psychology and Inclusion Services; the Designated Clinical Officer; and the SEND Strategic Lead on:
- the outcomes of the 30 January to 3 February 2023 Nottinghamshire local area SEND inspection by Ofsted and the Care Quality Commission – including the identified areas of strength, improvement and priority action, the actions taken by the Service following the inspection and the upcoming next steps,
  - the current national Code of Practice and legal framework governing EHC Plans,
  - the processes in place in Nottinghamshire to support children with SEN within mainstream education without requiring an EHC Plan, the EHC Assessment processes in place and the context of partnership working with Health, Social Care and Community partners within the EHC Plan process – including what was working well and the current areas of challenge,
  - the statistical performance data for the EHC Plan process from 2018-22, and
  - the operational delivery of the EHC Assessment and Plan process.
12. Following these sessions, the review group requested and received further information on the current Service budgets, staffing levels and structures, in addition to the most recent document that mapped out the EHC Plan processes in a visual way.
13. On 17 June 2023, review group members met with the Chair of the Nottinghamshire Parent Carer Forum to explore the experiences of families supporting children with SEN and engaging with the EHC Plan process.
14. Finally, a benchmarking process began on 21 June 2023 with the following questions being submitted to neighbouring and statistically similar local authorities of Derbyshire, Doncaster, Durham, Hampshire, Lancashire, Leicestershire, Lincolnshire, Nottingham, Oxfordshire, Rotherham and Warwickshire:
- How many requests for EHC Assessments were made in 2018, 2019, 2020, 2021 and 2022, how many EHC Plans were issued as a result?
  - What percentage of notifications as to whether an EHC Assessment would be undertaken were returned to the applicant within 6 weeks of the request having been made, and what percentage of EHC Plans were issued within the statutory 20 weeks?
  - What has been the cost to the Council in fines for EHC Plans not being issued within the statutory 20-week period between 2018-22?
  - What steps has the Council taken to improve the number of EHC Plans issued within the statutory 20-week period?
  - What procedures are in place to engage with parents and carers if it becomes apparent that it will not be possible to issue an EHC Plan within the statutory 20-week period?
  - What proportion of children and young people with SEN have their needs supported in mainstream education without an EHC Plan being issued?
  - What proportion of children and young people with an EHC Plan attend a Special School, or are currently waiting for a Special School place?

- How many Educational Psychologists are employed directly by the Council, and how many are employed via agencies?
  - What proportion of the directly employed Educational Psychologists' time is allocated to carrying out statutory assessments?
15. After the conclusion of the information gathering and benchmarking processes, members reviewed the information that had been received in order to formulate their recommendations.

## **Review Findings and Recommendations**

### **Recommendation One**

**That the Select Committee receives progress reports on the implementation of the activities being delivered to address the Areas for Improvement and Priority Action identified by the Area SEND Inspection of the Nottinghamshire Local Area Partnership.**

11. The majority of Nottinghamshire children with SEN, including those with an EHC Plan, are in mainstream education. It is vital for young people to be able to access required support early and in a timely way so that an EHC Plan is not required for their particular educational needs to be met. Consequentially, the right resources should be available in the right places to ensure that mainstream schools are a supportive and inclusive environment for as many young people as possible. Schools should also prioritise maintaining implemented SEN provision where it is required to give parents and carers confidence that this provision will not be discontinued if a child accessing it does not have an EHC Plan.
12. Schools must work to integrate children with SEND effectively and flexibly so that they do not experience periods of being outside of an educational setting. Schools should engage with parents in a sensitive way on meeting a child's specific needs when reintegration is required and be aware of instances when a child may come from a family context where there are wider support needs. All safeguarding requirements must be managed effectively.
13. Early access to therapy is an important priority and requires a strong partnership approach for it to be delivered effectively. It is important that schools communicate clearly with parents and carers on the early support and funding available, but problems can arise if there is not a strong relationship between the school and the parents and carers. Comprehensive information is provided by the Council to schools on how to secure funding to support children with SEN within the mainstream environment without a child needing an EHC Plan.
14. Potentially, schools could view the EHC Plan process as a means of transferring young people from a mainstream to a special educational setting. However, Special School places should only be used for those children with the greatest needs, so there should be as many pathways as possible within mainstream education to ensure that children with SEN are not separated from their wider communities and peers.
15. In Nottinghamshire, 90% of schools are currently rated as 'good' or 'outstanding' by Ofsted. However, in addressing the areas of priority action identified in the local area SEND inspection it is vital that all partners listen to and engage with parents and carers, schools and young people on the challenges being experienced, to ensure that SEN are being identified early and met effectively within mainstream educational settings wherever possible – with clear monitoring, assurance and benchmarking processes in place.

## **Recommendation Two**

**That the Council should take all available steps to maximise its partnership working with schools to ensure that mainstream educational settings:**

- i. participate fully in the early intervention agenda,**
- ii. take advantage of the available support to achieve educational environments that are as inclusive as possible for the widest range of children,**
- iii. integrate children with SEND effectively and flexibly so that they do not experience periods of being outside school, and**
- iv. maintain implemented SEN provision where it is required, to give parents and carers confidence that this provision will not be discontinued if a child accessing it does not have an EHC Plan.**

16. The statutory deadline for a new EHC Plan being issued is within 20 weeks of the request for an EHC Assessment being made. Demand for Assessments has increased significantly both locally and nationally, with some local authorities seeing requests levels doubling over the last five years. In Nottinghamshire, 524 EHC Assessment were requested in 2018 compared to 1,081 in 2022 and, during the first seven months of 2023, there has been a further 39% increase in Assessment requests compared to the same period in 2022. As such, it is proving difficult to ensure that the right level of capacity is in place to carry out the full EHC processes within the statutory deadlines, increasing the risk of complaints being made to the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman.

17. Although the High Needs Funding Block is available to support the needs of children with SEND, this resource cannot be used for ensuring capacity to manage the EHC Assessment and review process – which is paid for from the Service's revenue budget. The current establishment of SEND services is under review internally to ensure that they are fit for purpose and to identify where rapid improvements can be made, as well as establishing how an efficient service can be funded.

## **Recommendation Three**

**That, as a result of the internal review of the Council's SEND offer, the appropriate measures and allocation of resources should be implemented to ensure that future service provision is sustainable in the context of increasing demand.**

18. From 2018 to 2020, over 90% of EHC Assessments in Nottinghamshire were carried out and the resulting Plans issued within the 20-week statutory deadline. However, due to the sharply increased demand, this reduced to 44% in 2021 and 5% in 2022. Improvement work to date has resulted in 21.23% of EHC Plans being implemented within the 20-week statutory deadline between January and July 2023, which is up from 4.5% for the same period in the previous year.

19. The benchmarking process with neighbouring and statistically similar local authorities identified that a similar trend has been experienced by many other councils in the same period. Details of a number of approaches to investment and transformation to seek to improve performance levels going forward were shared, which included:



- working in partnership with education providers, local Parent Carer Forums, Public Health, the Department for Education (DfE) and other key partners in planning a recovery process,
- working with schools and other providers to deliver effective SEN support that helps to ensure that young people are referred for an EHC Assessment at the right time when required, and also reduce the number of unnecessary Assessment requests,
- reviewing decision-making and monitoring processes,
- reviewing processes in relation to the early identification of SEN,
- improving inclusion in mainstream educational settings,
- redesigning key documentation to facilitate information-gathering and timely decision-making,
- reviewing service staffing structures, including recruitment and retention,
- improving resourcing for the case management of Tribunals,
- increasing Educational Psychologist advice-giving capacity and developing external contracts with agency providers to deliver additional Educational Psychologist support over a fixed-term period,
- considering the greater use of agency capacity commissioned by educational settings, and
- introducing new case management systems to better track performance and timescales.

#### **Recommendation Four**

**That the Council engages with the local authorities that participated in the benchmarking exercise that are undertaking transformation activity for the improved delivery of EHC Assessments and Plans, to consider any further measures or approaches that could also be used effectively in Nottinghamshire.**

20. The challenges to delivering the timely completion of EHC Plans largely relate to the high and increasing number of applications being received. There has also been a significant impact in workload caused by the Covid-19 pandemic. There is a straightforward, electronic process to make an EHC Assessment application and the level of need that has to be demonstrated to have an Assessment carried out is relatively low.
21. The size of the Council's directly employed Educational Psychology Service is relatively small when compared to that of other local authorities. As part of the current EHC Assessment process, the Service is being asked to complete around 100 statutory assessments each month. Of these, around 30 are done by Educational Psychologists employed via an agency. To address the current backlog of required assessments, it is intended to at least double agency capacity, in addition to the implementation of other measures – though this will need to be coupled with increasing resources within the Council's Integrated Children's Disability Services so as not to simply move the backlog from one service area to another.
22. There is currently a need to use Educational Psychologists from an agency to complete the statutory assessments as the Council's Educational Psychologists have a wide range of other duties to carry out, including important early intervention work to ensure that as many young people as possible have the right support at the right time so that an EHC Assessment may not ultimately be necessary. It is vital that young people have early contact with Educational Psychologists where required, as a lack of access can result in parents and carers applying for an EHC Assessment as a means of securing psychological support, further increasing the workload in this area.

23. Additionally, if an Educational Psychologist wished to focus on statutory assessments alone, the pay for doing so in the private sector is significantly higher than that offered by local authorities, as the market environment is currently highly competitive. As a result, significant work has been carried out to ensure that the time of the Council's Educational Psychologists is being used efficiently and in the right areas, within the constraints of the resources currently available.
24. A number of schools now appoint their own Educational Psychologists to offer early support and, potentially, these staff could assist in the statutory assessment process – provided that this does not give rise to a possible conflict of interests.
25. Ultimately, effective assurance and audit processes must be maintained to ensure that in working to clear the backlog and to address the rising number of EHC Assessment requests, all statutory assessments and EHC Plans are still produced to a high standard and within the required timescales.

### **Recommendation Five**

**That the effectiveness and sustainability of the current cap on the time that Educational Psychologists employed directly by the Council spend on carrying out statutory assessments is reviewed, to ensure that it is set at the right level.**

26. The amount of time that the Council's own Educational Psychologists spend carrying out statutory assessments is currently capped. This enables vital early support and preventative work to be carried out. If the Council's own the Educational Psychologists were solely focussed on completing statutory assessments, whilst enabling more assessments to be completed, this approach could undermine morale and reduce resources for vital early support and prevention work.
27. The current cap that is in place on the time that Educational Psychologists who are employed directly by the Council spend on carrying out statutory assessments enables them to carry out 50 statutory assessments a month. A further 20 statutory assessments are carried out by agency staff. Members of the review group noted that if the cap on the amount of time spent by Educational Psychologists who are employed directly by the Council was increased then more statutory assessments could be completed.

### **Recommendation Six**

**That, to manage the demand for EHC Assessments effectively, consideration should be given to an increase in resources within the Educational Psychology Service for the provision of additional Educational Psychologists, to enable further early support to be implemented within mainstream educational settings.**

### **Recommendation Seven**

**That effective assurance and audit processes should be maintained to ensure that all statutory assessments and EHC Plans are produced to a high standard and within the required timescales.**

28. Delays in the production of EHC Assessments and Plans can have a significant impact on families, particularly if the family is seeking a school place at an educational setting that they consider would best meet their child's specific needs, but for which the child would not meet the entry criteria without an EHC Plan. If a young person without an EHC Plan does not have any option other than to attend their catchment school, but this school is not able to meet their specific needs effectively, there is a risk of the child refusing to go to school and becoming isolated.
29. As the EHC Assessment process can be a significant challenge at a difficult time for families, every effort should be made to engage with them when the statutory deadline for the EHC Assessment and Plan will not be met. There should also be a very clear and accessible point of contact at the Council for queries and support, as it is vital to ensure that parents' and carers' voices are heard. The digital EHC Hub is an important tool for increasing the openness and transparency of the process, but care should be taken to also support families who do not have digital access. Ultimately, many families do not have the resources or the endurance to engage with the numerous and potentially difficult processes involved in securing the best outcomes for their children. As such, the Council should aim to offer as much support to these families as possible.
30. There have been very few cases of the statutory deadlines being exceeded due to parents and carers requesting a longer review period, in Nottinghamshire. Although not all exceeded deadlines have resulted in a complaint to the Ombudsman and a compensation payment being awarded, the maximum level of compensation possible has been sought through the formal complaints process in a number of cases.

### **Recommendation Eight**

**That it should be ensured that schools, parents and carers are communicated with regularly, clearly and in good time by the Council during the EHC Assessment and Plan development process (making full use of the EHC Hub), particularly if it becomes apparent that an EHC Assessment or Plan will not be completed within the statutory deadline.**

### **Recommendation Nine**

**That parents and carers should have a clear and accessible point of contact at the Council for queries and support during the process of applying for an EHC Plan.**

31. The Service's target is to complete 90% of the regular, annual reviews of all existing EHC Plans on time. It is vital that both young people and their parents and carers are closely involved in the review process to ensure that the Plan remains clearly focused on the child. It is important that these reviews involve all of the relevant parties – including health professionals and Council officers. The reviews are often carried out at the level of the child's educational setting, so their timely completion is not completely within the Council's control. The Council, however, must ensure that it is properly involved in the review process so that any amended EHC Plan is completed and issued in a timely way.

### **Recommendation Ten**

**That the Council should work closely with individual educational settings to ensure that the EHC Plan annual reviews are carried out with the right level of participation from health partners, other professionals and the relevant Council officers, and are completed within the required deadlines.**

#### **Recommendation Eleven**

**That, where an annual review concludes that the EHC Plan should be updated, the Council ensures that the amended EHC Plan is completed in a timely way.**

32. Although the Council has the responsibility to ensure that all EHC processes are completed within the statutory deadlines, it does not have direct control over a number of areas of the system. It is hoped that this will be reviewed by the DfE at the national level, but this has not yet occurred.

#### **Recommendation Twelve**

**That the Council should engage further with the DfE to request that the criteria for justifying the carrying out an EHC Assessment is raised, and that the existing direct liability risks to local authorities for processes outside of their control are mitigated.**

#### **33. Summary of recommendations:**

- 1) That the Select Committee receives progress reports on the implementation of the activities being delivered to address the Areas for Improvement and Priority Action identified by the Area SEND Inspection of the Nottinghamshire Local Area Partnership.
- 2) That the Council should take all available steps to maximise its partnership working with schools to ensure that mainstream educational settings:
  - i. participate fully in the early intervention agenda,
  - ii. take advantage of the available support to achieve educational environments that are as inclusive as possible for the widest range of children,
  - iii. integrate children with SEND effectively and flexibly so that they do not experience periods of being outside school, and
  - iv. maintain implemented SEN provision where it is required, to give parents and carers confidence that this provision will not be discontinued if a child accessing it does not have an EHC Plan.
- 3) That, as a result of the internal review of the Council's SEND offer, the appropriate measures and allocation of resources should be implemented to ensure that future service provision is sustainable in the context of increasing demand.
- 4) That the Council engages with the local authorities that participated in the benchmarking exercise that are undertaking transformation activity for the improved delivery of EHC Assessments and Plans, to consider any further measures or approaches that could also be used effectively in Nottinghamshire.
- 5) That the effectiveness and sustainability of the current cap on the time that Educational Psychologists employed directly by the Council spend on carrying out statutory assessments is reviewed, to ensure that it is set at the right level.

- 6) That, to manage the demand for EHC Assessments effectively, consideration should be given to an increase in resources within the Educational Psychology Service for the provision of additional Educational Psychologists, to enable further early support to be implemented within mainstream educational settings.
- 7) That effective assurance and audit processes should be maintained to ensure that all statutory assessments and EHC Plans are produced to a high standard and within the required timescales.
- 8) That it should be ensured that schools, parents and carers are communicated with regularly, clearly and in good time by the Council during the EHC Assessment and Plan development process (making full use of the EHC Hub), particularly if it becomes apparent that an EHC Assessment or Plan will not be completed within the statutory deadline.
- 9) That parents and carers should have a clear and accessible point of contact at the Council for queries and support during the process of applying for an EHC Plan.
- 10) That the Council should work closely with individual educational settings to ensure that the EHC Plan annual reviews are carried out with the right level of participation from health partners, other professionals and the relevant Council officers, and are completed within the required deadlines.
- 11) That, where an annual review concludes that the EHC Plan should be updated, the Council ensures that the amended EHC Plan is completed in a timely way.
- 12) That the Council should engage further with the DfE to request that the criteria for justifying the carrying out an EHC Assessment is raised, and that the existing direct liability risks to local authorities for processes outside of their control are mitigated.

## **Acknowledgements**

34. The Chairman and members of the review group would like to express their thanks to Peter McConnochie, Service Director for Education, Learning and Inclusion, and the Service leadership team for their support provided during the review process. Thanks are also extended to Georgina Palmer, Chair of the Nottinghamshire Parent Carer Forum, for her participation in the review process, and to the eleven local authorities that provided data for the benchmarking process.

## **Financial Implications**

35. There are no direct financial implications relating to the recommendations of this report.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 1) That the recommendations of the scrutiny task and finish review of Education, Health and Care Plans be endorsed and referred to Cabinet for consideration.

**Councillor Sam Smith**  
**Chairman of the Children and Families Select Committee**

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

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**Constitutional Comments (LPW 14/09/2023)**

36. The recommendation falls within the remit of the Children and Families Select Committee by virtue of its terms of reference.

**Financial Comments (SES 15/09/2023)**

37. There are no specific financial implications arising directly from this report.

**Background Papers and Published Documents**

38. 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.

- [SEND code of practice: 0 to 25 years](#)
- [Summary of the SEND review: right support, right place, right time](#)
- [SEND and Alternative Provision Improvement Plan](#)
- [Area SEND inspection of Nottinghamshire Local Area Partnership](#)
- [Area SEND inspections: framework and handbook](#)
- [The Annual Report of His Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills 2021/22 \(sections 4.3 to 4.5\)](#)
- [Education, health and care plans](#)

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

- All



**16 October 2023**

**Agenda Item 7**

## **REPORT OF THE CHAIRMAN OF THE CHILDREN AND FAMILIES SELECT COMMITTEE**

### **PROPOSED REVIEWS REGARDING ELECTIVE HOME EDUCATION AND SECONDARY SCHOOL PUPIL PLACE PLANNING**

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

1. To seek agreement for the proposed scopes for task and finish reviews regarding Elective Home Education and Secondary School Pupil Place Planning.

#### **Information**

2. Scrutiny task and finish review groups are informal, time-limited bodies that are established to undertake a specific piece of Scrutiny work and then report back to the full Select Committee with their findings and recommendations.
3. At its meeting on 10 October 2022, the Select Committee considered a report on Elective Home Education. The report set out the legal rights of parents to withdraw a child from school, the number of children in these circumstances and the support offered to these children and their families by the Council. Following the discussion of the report, it was resolved:

**“That members of the Committee be involved in the review of the Council’s Elective Home Education Policy that is scheduled to take place during 2023.”**

4. In addition, at its meeting on 20 March 2023, the Select Committee considered a report on Secondary School Place Planning. This report set out the current position of secondary school place planning in Nottinghamshire in relation to both the overall sufficiency of school places and in terms of specific year group place pressures, to enable the Select Committee to monitor the Council’s discharge of its statutory duty in this area. Following the discussion of the report, it was resolved:

**“That members of the Committee carry out a task and finish review on how the Children and Families and Place departments can best work together on projects being implemented to deliver additional school places.”**

5. Following these resolutions, proposed scopes for associated task and finish reviews have been drafted in consultation with the relevant officers and are attached as **Appendix 1** and **Appendix 2** to the report.

## **Financial Implications**

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

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

1) That the proposed scopes for task and finish reviews regarding Elective Home Education and Secondary School Pupil Place Planning are approved.

**Councillor Sam Smith**  
**Chairman of the Children and Families Select Committee**

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

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## **Constitutional Comments (SF 6/10/23)**

7. The matters referred to in this report and the recommended action are within the remit of the Children and Families Select Committee (Constitution Section 6 Terms of Reference).

## **Financial Comments (KRP 6/10/23)**

8. There are no direct financial implications arising from the contents of the report

## **Background Papers and Published Documents**

9. 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.
- [Elective Home Education](#), report to the Children and Families Select Committee (10 October 2022)
  - [Secondary School Place Planning](#), report to the Children and Families Select Committee (20 March 2023)

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

- All



## Review Scope: Elective Home Education Policy

<b>Purpose of the Review</b>	To review the draft revised Elective Home Education policy in advance of it being considered for approval by the Cabinet Member for Children and Families.
<b>Anticipated outcome(s)</b>	To gain assurance that the Council's approach to Elective Home Education, as set out in the draft policy, supports the delivery of the best outcomes being achieved for the children, young people and their families who are receiving and providing Elective Home Education.
<p><b>Background</b></p> <p>Elective Home Education is the term used by the Department for Education to describe a choice by parents to provide education for their children at home - or at home and in some other way which they choose - instead of sending them to school full-time. This is different to education provided by a local authority otherwise than at a school - for example, tuition for children who are too ill to attend school.</p> <p>Home education is an option that families may consider for their children's education. Parents may choose to electively home educate their children for many reasons. Educating children at home works well when it is a positive, informed and dedicated choice, but there is evidence that not all children who are educated at home are in receipt of suitable education. The Council has a duty to ensure that children are safe and are being suitably educated and the Council's aim is to take a proportionate approach in ensuring that all children receive a good education that enables them to reach their potential and prosper into adulthood.</p> <p><b>Information on current EHE numbers here</b></p> <p>At the meeting of the Children and Families Select Committee held on 10 October 2022 a report on Elective Home Education was considered where it was resolved that:</p> <p><i>"That members of the Children and Families Select Committee be involved in the review of the Council's Elective Home Education Policy that is scheduled to take place during 2023."</i></p>	
<b>Key lines of enquiry</b>	<p>Does the draft policy support the delivery of its stated objectives of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensuring that the Council has clear and consistent procedures for working in partnership with parents who choose to electively home educate their children and discharge its statutory duties in relation to the education of all children living within Nottinghamshire.</li> <li>• Giving parents who are considering removing their child from school to home educate them, the opportunity to fully explore the implications, and to assist them in making an informed decision that is an active and positive step in the best interests of their child.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How does the policy link into existing processes to ensure that effective safeguarding procedures are in place for children being educated out of the school system.</li> <li>• In addition to Department for Education guidance and the related legislation and regulations, as detailed in the draft policy, has best practice and benchmarking information been used to inform the development of the refreshed policy?</li> </ul>
<b>Links to the Council's Corporate Plan</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Supporting Communities and Families</li> <li>• Keeping children, vulnerable adults, and communities safe</li> <li>• Building skills that help people get good jobs</li> </ul>
<b>Methodology</b>	Information gathering meeting. Analysis of the draft Elective Home Education Policy and supporting documents.
<b>Key background papers</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Draft Elective Home Education Policy</li> <li>• <a href="#">2019 guidance provided by the DfE, Elective home education Departmental guidance for local authorities</a> (hereafter referred to as '2019 guidance')</li> <li>• <a href="#">Education Act 1996 (inserted by the Education and Inspections Act 2006)</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child</a> (Article 28)</li> <li>• <a href="#">European Convention on Human Rights</a> (Article 2, Protocol 1)</li> <li>• <a href="#">Case law Goodred v Portsmouth City Council (2021)</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">The Children Act 2004</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Education Act 2002</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Special educational needs and disability code of practice: 0 to 25 years Statutory guidance for organisations which work with and support children and young people who have special educational needs or disabilities January 2015</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Nottinghamshire Safeguarding Children Partnership Child Protection Procedures</a></li> </ul>
<b>Evidence to be provided by</b>	Cabinet Member for Children and Families Service Director - Education, Learning and Inclusion Group Manager for Education Access and Partnership
<b>Timetable</b>	Evidence gathering meeting to be arranged. The group's report and recommendations to be considered by the Children and Families Select Committee on 16 January 2024.
<b>Reporting mechanism</b>	The report of the scrutiny group and its recommendations will be considered by the Children and Families Select Committee on 16 January 2024 in advance of being submitted to Cabinet on 8 February 2024.

## Children and Families Select Committee Review Scope – Secondary School Pupil Place Planning

<p><b>Purpose of the Review</b></p>	<p>For the members of the Children and Families Select Committee:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To understand the Council’s statutory responsibilities for the provision of sufficient secondary school places across Nottinghamshire.</li> <li>• To consider the methodology used to predict the future requirements for secondary school places, what options are available to meet changing demand and how additional places are identified, funded and delivered.</li> <li>• To establish what organisational processes, structures and capacity are in place at the Council so that the requirements for secondary school places identified by the Children and Families department are then delivered by the Place department.</li> <li>• To make appropriate recommendations as to how the processes for the Council’s assessment and delivery of sufficient secondary school places across Nottinghamshire could operate most effectively to ensure that the best outcomes are achieved for children, young people and families.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Anticipated outcomes</b></p>	<p>That a report is presented to the Children and Families Select Committee to make recommendations on how the Council’s services could be improved to best fulfil its statutory duties regarding the assessment and delivery of the required number of secondary school places, for submission to Cabinet.</p>
<p><b>Background</b></p> <p>At its meeting on 20 March 2023, the Children and Families Select Committee considered a report on <a href="#">Secondary School Place Planning</a>. This report set out the current position of secondary school place planning in Nottinghamshire in relation to both the overall sufficiency of school places and in terms of specific year group place pressures, to enable the Select Committee to monitor the Council’s discharge of its statutory duty in this area.</p> <p>As part of their discussions, members noted that the Council’s Children and Families department was responsible for assessing the future school place requirements, while the delivery of the needed places was then carried out by the Place department. Members considered that it was vital for the Children and Families and Place departments to work together closely for the effective delivery of the needed school places within the required timeframe and resolved that a task and finish review should be established to explore how the two departments worked together in delivering school place sufficiency.</p>	

<b>Key lines of enquiry</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To review the methodology used by the Council to project the future demand for secondary school places across Nottinghamshire.</li> <li>• To review how the potential delivery options are appraised when a need for additional secondary school places has been identified.</li> <li>• To review how the current organisational processes, structure and capacity at the Council are used to deliver additional secondary school places.</li> <li>• To review how the potential funding options are considered and utilised to ensure that the additional secondary school places delivered are sustainable and in the right places.</li> <li>• To review how the Council engages with the Department for Education, academies and other key partners in the effective delivery of additional secondary school places.</li> </ul>
<b>Key questions</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What factors are taken into account when projecting the future demand for secondary school places across Nottinghamshire, and are the projections proving to be accurate?</li> <li>• How are the options for supplying additional secondary school places assessed?</li> <li>• How are school extension, re-build and new-build projects planned for and funded, and is the delivery of these projects meeting the need effectively?</li> <li>• What methodology is used to consider whether a given school should be extended or rebuilt to supply more places, or whether a completely new school is required, and how far ahead are the place requirements projected to inform these decisions?</li> <li>• Is it generally more economically efficient to provide a large number of new school places at once by building a new school, or by seeking to renovate and extend existing schools?</li> <li>• Is there a proactive approach taken to identifying and assessing a range of possible sites across Nottinghamshire that have the potential to be developed as a new school in the future?</li> <li>• What steps are taken to ensure that new secondary school places delivered are sustainable, and that they are provided within the communities that need them most (i.e., are experiencing, or are likely to experience, a particular local pressure for places)?</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How is engagement carried out with the Department for Education, academies and other key partners to achieve the delivery of the required secondary school places, and is the Council achieving good outcomes in these negotiations?</li> </ul>
<b>Links to the Council's Corporate Plan</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ambition 2: Supporting communities and families</li> <li>• Ambition 3: Keeping children, vulnerable adults and communities safe</li> <li>• Ambition 4: Building skills that help people get good jobs</li> <li>• Ambition 6: Making Nottinghamshire somewhere people love to live, work and visit</li> </ul>
<b>Methodology</b>	In undertaking the review, members will carry out evidence-gathering sessions with the Cabinet Members for Children and Families and for Economic Development and Asset Management, the Service Directors for Education, Learning and Inclusion and for Green Growth, Investment and Assets, and other senior officers involved in the planning and delivery of school place sufficiency.
<b>Key background papers</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">Education Act 1996</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">School Admissions Code</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Report to the Children and Families Select Committee Meeting (20 March 2023) - Secondary School Place Planning</a></li> </ul>
<b>Evidence to be provided by</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Cabinet Member for Children and Families</li> <li>• The Cabinet Member for Economic Development and Asset Management</li> <li>• The Service Director for Education, Learning and Inclusion</li> <li>• The Service Director for Green Growth, Investment and Assets</li> </ul>
<b>Timetable</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>November/December 2023:</b> Members to hold evidence-gathering sessions with officers on how the Children and Families and Place departments work together to deliver school place sufficiency.</li> <li>• <b>4 April 2024:</b> The review report to be completed.</li> <li>• <b>15 April 2024:</b> The review report and its recommendations to be considered by the Children and Families Select Committee for presentation to Cabinet.</li> </ul>
<b>Reporting mechanism</b>	The report and its recommendations will be considered by the Children and Families Select Committee on 15 April 2024, in advance of being submitted to Cabinet.



**16 October 2023**

**Agenda Item 8**

## **REPORT OF THE CABINET MEMBER FOR CHILDREN AND FAMILIES**

### **RESPONSE TO A RECOMMENDATION FROM THE CHILDREN AND FAMILIES SELECT COMMITTEE**

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

1. To provide a response to the recommendation made at the 20 March 2023 meeting of the Children and Families Select Committee:

*“That the Cabinet Member for Children and Families, in consultation with officers, gives consideration to how local elected members can be most effectively communicated with and involved with the activity that takes place with academy trusts regarding the pupil place planning.”*

#### **Information**

#### **Response**

2. The Local Authority (LA) holds the responsibility for pupil place planning and carries out a range of functions to monitor and forecast demand and sufficiency.
3. The Department for Education commissioned independent research in 2021 to look at the continuing role of local authorities in place planning. This reported that both local authorities and academies were strongly in favour of place planning remaining a local authority function rather than being devolved to schools and academies. The Local Authority actively engages with maintained schools, academies and academy trusts regarding place planning.
4. The Academies Act states that local authorities cannot instruct academies to undertake place planning mitigation strategies. Local authorities can seek only to collaborate with academies in addressing place planning and admissions issues and whilst there is a duty to collaborate, this limits the opportunities for County Councillors to be involved with the direct activity regarding pupil place planning with academy trusts.
5. The Cabinet Member is communicated with via Service Director briefings following Strategic School Place Planning Board feasibility and project monitoring discussions. Where ‘in principle’ agreements have been reached, these are subject to established decision-making processes. Where appropriate, this will include officer-led conversations with local Councillors, mindful of their in-depth knowledge at a constituency level.

6. County Councillors can be more directly involved with local academy trusts as members of Trust Boards where they will have greater involvement with the individual place planning activity of the academy trust.

## **Statutory and Policy Implications**

7. This report has been compiled after consideration of the 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**

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

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

That the response from the Cabinet Member for Children and Families be noted.

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

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

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## **Constitutional Comments (CD 05/10/23)**

9. The recommendation proposed falls within the remit of Children and Families Select Committee by virtue of the Children and Families Select Committee's Terms of Reference set out in the Constitution.

## **Financial Comments (SS 04/10/23)**

10. There are no direct 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.



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

All.

CFS0011





**16 October 2023**

**Agenda Item 9**

## **REPORT OF THE SERVICE DIRECTOR FOR CUSTOMERS, GOVERNANCE AND EMPLOYEES**

### **WORK PROGRAMME**

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

1. To consider the Children and Families Select Committee's current work programme, as set out in **Appendix 1** to the report.

#### **Information**

2. The work programme assists in the management of the Select Committee's agenda, the scheduling of its business and its forward planning. It has been developed using suggestions submitted by the Select Committee members, the relevant Cabinet Member(s) and senior officers, and has been approved by the Overview Committee. The work programme will be reviewed regularly with the Chairman and at each Select Committee meeting, where any member of the Select Committee is able to suggest items for possible inclusion.

#### **Other Options Considered**

3. To not maintain a work programme for the Select Committee: this option is discounted as a clear work programme is required for the effective management of the Select Committee's agenda, the scheduling of its business and its forward planning.

#### **Reasons for Recommendations**

4. To assist the Select Committee in managing its business effectively.

#### **Statutory and Policy Implications**

5. This report has been compiled after consideration of the 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**

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

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

The Children and Families Select Committee is asked to:

- 1) Note its current work programme, attached as **Appendix 1** to the report.
- 2) Make any further suggestions for items for inclusion on the work programme for consideration by the Chairman and Vice-Chairman, in consultation with the relevant Cabinet Member(s) and senior officers, and subject to the required approval by the Chairman of the Overview Committee.

**Marjorie Toward**

**Service Director for Customers, Governance and Employees**

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

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## **Constitutional Comments (HD)**

7. The Select Committee has the authority to consider the matters set out in this report by virtue of its Terms of Reference.

## **Financial Comments (NS)**

8. There are no direct financial implications arising from the contents of this report. Any future reports to the Select Committee on operational activities and officer working groups will contain relevant financial information and comments.

## **Background Papers and Published Documents**

9. 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

## WORK PROGRAMME 2023/24 – CHILDREN AND FAMILIES SELECT COMMITTEE

Meeting Date	Agenda Item	Cabinet Member Responsibility	Purpose	Resolutions
16 October 2023	Nottinghamshire Safeguarding Children Partnership (NSCP) – Progress Report on Priorities and Annual Report 2022/23	Cabinet Member for Children and Families	<p>Resolved at the December 2022 meeting:</p> <p>That the Independent Scrutineer of the NSCP attends the June 2023 meeting of the Committee to present a report on the current activities of the NSCP and on the progress being made towards its strategic priorities.</p> <p>To receive the NSCP Annual Report.</p>	
	Outcomes and Experiences of Children and Young People with SEND	Cabinet Member for Children and Families	<p>To receive a report on the progress made in implementing improvements to the experiences and outcomes of children and young people with SEND, informed by the priority areas for action and areas for improvement identified during the Ofsted/Care Quality Commission local area review in Jan/Feb 2023, and to incorporate within this report the new requirements arising from the Government response to the SEND Green Paper – the SEND and Alternative Improvement Plan.</p> <p><b>Invite partners and Notts Parent Carer Forum to attend</b></p>	

## WORK PROGRAMME 2023/24 – CHILDREN AND FAMILIES SELECT COMMITTEE

Meeting Date	Agenda Item	Cabinet Member Responsibility	Purpose	Resolutions
	Pupil Place Planning	Cabinet Member for Children and Families	<p>To receive the response from the Cabinet Member for Children and Families to the resolution made at the March 2023 meeting:</p> <p>That the Cabinet Member, in consultation with officers, gives consideration to how local elected members can be most effectively communicated with and involved with the activity that takes place with academy trusts regarding the pupil place planning.</p>	
	Outcomes of the Review of Education, Health and Care Plans		To consider the outcomes of the task and finish review of Education, Health and Care Plans.	
	Elective Home Education		To approve the scope for a task and finish review on the revised Elective Home Education Policy.	

**WORK PROGRAMME 2023/24 – CHILDREN AND FAMILIES SELECT COMMITTEE**

Meeting Date	Agenda Item	Cabinet Member Responsibility		Resolutions
15 January 2024	Provision of Support to Looked After Children Transitioning Out of the Care System	Cabinet Member for Children and Families	<p>To receive the response from the Cabinet Member for Children and Families to the resolution made at the June 2023 meeting:</p> <p>That the Cabinet Member, in consultation with officers, gives further consideration on how more young people could be encouraged to remain in the care of their foster carer post-18, and to the activity that would also be required to ensure that a sufficient number of foster family placements are also maintained and are available for children and young people who are under 18.</p> <p>Also to cover, as detailed in the resolution at the June meeting.</p> <p>That further information be circulated to members of the Committee on the work being carried out with both residential homes and foster carers to support them in ensuring that the children in their care are not potentially criminalised though being referred to the Police unnecessarily in relation to their behaviour.</p>	

## WORK PROGRAMME 2023/24 – CHILDREN AND FAMILIES SELECT COMMITTEE

Meeting Date	Agenda Item	Cabinet Member Responsibility	Purpose	Resolutions
	Early Years – Provision of Childcare	Cabinet Member for Children and Families	To make recommendations on how the Council can support the provision of, and access to, affordable and accessible childcare across Nottinghamshire.	
	Performance, Finance and Risk Update	Cabinet Member for Children and Families	<p>To provide a progress report on departmental performance, risk and financial position.</p> <p>To agree how the Committee would like to receive and monitor this information in the future.</p>	
	Outcomes and Experiences of Children and Young People with SEND – Progress Report	Cabinet Member for Children and Families	To receive a report on the progress made in implementing improvements to the experiences and outcomes of children and young people with SEND, informed by the priority areas for action and areas for improvement identified during the Ofsted/Care Quality Commission local area review in Jan/Feb 2023.	



## WORK PROGRAMME 2023/24 – CHILDREN AND FAMILIES SELECT COMMITTEE

Meeting Date	Agenda Item	Cabinet Member Responsibility	Purpose	Resolutions
15 April 2024	Sufficiency Strategy for Looked After Children and Care Leavers	Cabinet Member for Children and Families	To examine activity in the delivering of the strategy.  Also to consider the Children's Transformation sub-regional approach to fostering.	
	Holiday Activities and Food Programme (HAF)	Cabinet Member for Children and Families	Resolved at the June 2023 meeting:  That a report on the delivery of HAF be brought to a future meeting of the Committee, with a focus and at a date to be agreed by the Chairman.	
	Pupil Place Planning		To consider the outcomes of the task and finish review of how the Children and Families and Place departments can best work together on projects being implemented to deliver additional school places.	
	Outcomes and Experiences of Children and Young People with SEND – Progress Report	Cabinet Member for Children and Families	To receive a report on the progress made in implementing improvements to the experiences and outcomes of children and young people with SEND, informed by the priority areas for action and areas for improvement identified during the Ofsted/Care Quality Commission local area review in Jan/Feb 2023.	

## WORK PROGRAMME 2023/24 – CHILDREN AND FAMILIES SELECT COMMITTEE

Meeting Date	Agenda Item	Cabinet Member Responsibility	Purpose	Resolutions
15 July 2024	Youth Justice Plan	Cabinet Member for Children and Families	To examine the implementation of the strategy.	
	SEND Provision and Sufficiency	Cabinet Member for Children and Families	<p>Resolved at the December 2022 meeting:</p> <p>That a progress report on the provision and delivery of additional specialist educational placements be brought to a future meeting of the Committee.</p>	
	Outcomes and Experiences of Children and Young People with SEND – Progress Report	Cabinet Member for Children and Families	To receive a report on the progress made in implementing improvements to the experiences and outcomes of children and young people with SEND, informed by the priority areas for action and areas for improvement identified during the Ofsted/Care Quality Commission local area review in Jan/Feb 2023.	

## WORK PROGRAMME 2023/24 – CHILDREN AND FAMILIES SELECT COMMITTEE

### Items pending scheduling or removal

Item	Cabinet Member Responsibility	Details	Status
Government Response to the Independent Review of Children's Social Care in England	Cabinet Member for Children and Families	To consider how the proposals align with Nottinghamshire's current transformation plans around children's social care.	To be considered for scheduling
Small Schools Sustainability Strategy	Cabinet Member for Children and Families		To be considered for scheduling
Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education – Annual Report	Cabinet Member for Children and Families		To be considered for scheduling
All-Age Carers Strategy	Cabinet Member for Children and Families  Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care and Public Health	To review progress after the strategy has been in place for one year.	Joint item with the Adult Social Care and Public Health Select Committee
Children's Transformation - Front Door/Family Hubs	Cabinet Member for Children and Families		To be considered for scheduling
Local Authority Approach to Youth Provision in Nottinghamshire	Cabinet Member for Children and Families		To be considered for scheduling

## WORK PROGRAMME 2023/24 – CHILDREN AND FAMILIES SELECT COMMITTEE

### Reviews

Project Start Date	Item	Cabinet Member Responsibility	Purpose of Review	Current Status and activity
May 2023	Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs)	Cabinet Member for Children and Families	<p>To gain an understanding of the issues and challenges surrounding EHCPs.</p> <p>To gain assurance on the activities planned and taking place to enable the Council to meet statutory targets for the assessment of requests for EHCPs.</p> <p>To examine processes at other authorities and to make recommendations on how the processes surrounding EHCPs could operate to provide the best outcomes for children, young people and their families.</p>	Review activity to be completed during May and June. Report to be considered at October 2023 meeting.

**WORK PROGRAMME 2023/24 – CHILDREN AND FAMILIES SELECT COMMITTEE**

<b>Project Start Date</b>	<b>Item</b>	<b>Cabinet Member Responsibility</b>	<b>Purpose of Review</b>	<b>Current Status and activity</b>
September 2023	Elective Home Education	Cabinet Member for Children and Families	Resolved at the October 2022 meeting:  That members of the Committee be involved in the review of the Council's Elective Home Education Policy that is scheduled to take place during 2023.	Scope to be considered at October 2023 meeting.

**WORK PROGRAMME 2023/24 – CHILDREN AND FAMILIES SELECT COMMITTEE**

<b>Project Start Date</b>	<b>Item</b>	<b>Cabinet Member Responsibility</b>	<b>Purpose of Review</b>	<b>Current Status and activity</b>
November 2023	Pupil Place Planning	Cabinet Member for Children and Families	Resolved at March 2023 meeting:  That members of the Committee carry out a task and finish review on how the Children and Families and Place departments can best work together on projects being implemented to deliver additional school places.	Scope to be developed. Review to start at the completion of the review of the Elective Home Education Policy.

**WORK PROGRAMME 2023/24 – CHILDREN AND FAMILIES SELECT COMMITTEE**

Project Start Date	Item	Cabinet Member Responsibility	Purpose of Review	Current Status and activity
TBC	Transition of Service Users from Children and Families Services to Adult Social Care Services  (Joint item with the Adult Social Care and Public Health Select Committee)	Cabinet Member for Children and Families  Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care and Public Health	To examine the current procedures surrounding the transition of service users from Children’s to Adult Services.  To make recommendations on how procedures could be developed to ensure the best possible transition for each service user.	Pending

**WORK PROGRAMME 2023/24 – CHILDREN AND FAMILIES SELECT COMMITTEE**

<b>Project Start Date</b>	<b>Item</b>	<b>Cabinet Member Responsibility</b>	<b>Purpose of Review</b>	<b>Current Status and activity</b>
TBC	Provision of Additional Specialist Educational Placements	Cabinet Member for Children and Families	<p>Resolved at the December 2022 meeting:</p> <p>That a task and finish review on the potential locations for the provision of additional specialist educational placements be carried out by members of the Committee.</p>	Pending



**WORK PROGRAMME 2023/24 – CHILDREN AND FAMILIES SELECT COMMITTEE**

**Items for information briefings for Committee members**

<b>Item</b>	<b>Cabinet Member Responsibility</b>	<b>Details</b>	<b>Status</b>
Inspection of Local Authority Children's Services (ILACS) – Ofsted Self-Evaluation	Cabinet Member for Children and Families	ILACS focuses on the local authority functions regarding the help, care and protection of children and young people.	To be circulated twice-yearly

**Items to be scheduled during 2024/25**

<b>Item</b>	<b>Cabinet Member Responsibility</b>	<b>Details</b>	<b>Status</b>

