

17 September 2018**Agenda Item: 12****REPORT OF THE CORPORATE DIRECTOR, CHILDREN AND FAMILIES****STABILITY INDEX 2018****Purpose of the Report**

1. The purpose of this report is to provide the Committee with a summary of the Stability Index 2018 recently released by the Children's Commissioner's Office and asks the Committee to consider whether there are any further actions it requires in relation to the performance information on the stability of the Council's services for looked after children contained in the report.

Information**Background**

2. The Children's Commissioner regularly hears from looked after children who have experienced instability in the place they live, their school or social workers – often against their wishes. To shed more light on this issue they have developed the Stability Index, an annual measure of the stability that looked after children experience.
3. All local authorities were invited to take part in this study and data on placement and social worker stability was requested. They have combined this with data the Department for Education (DfE) holds on educational stability to produce the Stability Index 2018.
4. In total 78 local authorities took part in the study, so comparisons are based on this cohort, although some extrapolation has been undertaken to produce national comparator values. Each local authority who took part also received a bespoke Stability Index Report. The full detailed report for Nottinghamshire is attached as available as a background paper.

Key National Findings

5. The national findings that Anne Longfield, the Children's Commissioner for England, has chosen to highlight are as follows:

The 2018 Stability Index finds that while many children in care experience a good level of stability, too many do not. Some children are seeing repeated changes - at home, at school, and in their social worker:

- *Only 1 in 4 children in care experienced no placement move, no school move and no social worker change in 2016/17. Only 1 in 10 children experienced none of these changes in both 2015/16 and 2016/17.*
- *Nearly 2,400 children experienced a placement move, a school move and a change in social worker all in 2016/17.*

Furthermore, these are often the most vulnerable children. My report found that children with additional behavioural and emotional needs, who have recently entered care, whose legal status indicates higher risk or who are in pupil referral units, are all more likely to experience instability.

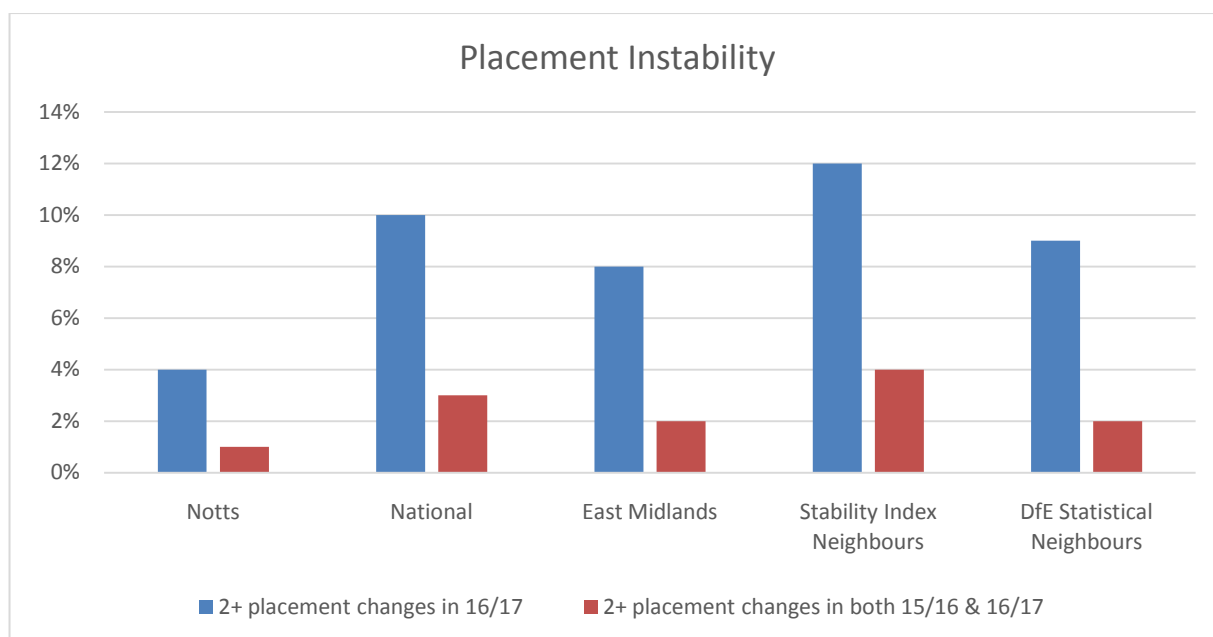
I believe there is room to deliver improved stability and experiences for these children, and that every local area has their own part to play in this. That is why I am sharing our Stability Index findings for Nottinghamshire with you - so that you can assess how well your own area is doing, and where improvements may be made.

Findings for Nottinghamshire

6. The Detailed Local Authority Report for Nottinghamshire includes a number of performance measures covering placement, school and social worker instability. It compares Nottinghamshire's performance in these areas against national, East Midlands and statistical neighbour averages as well as against the 5 most similar local authorities (Stability Index Neighbours) based on key indicators of instability.
7. The key findings from the report for Nottinghamshire are as follows:

Placement Instability

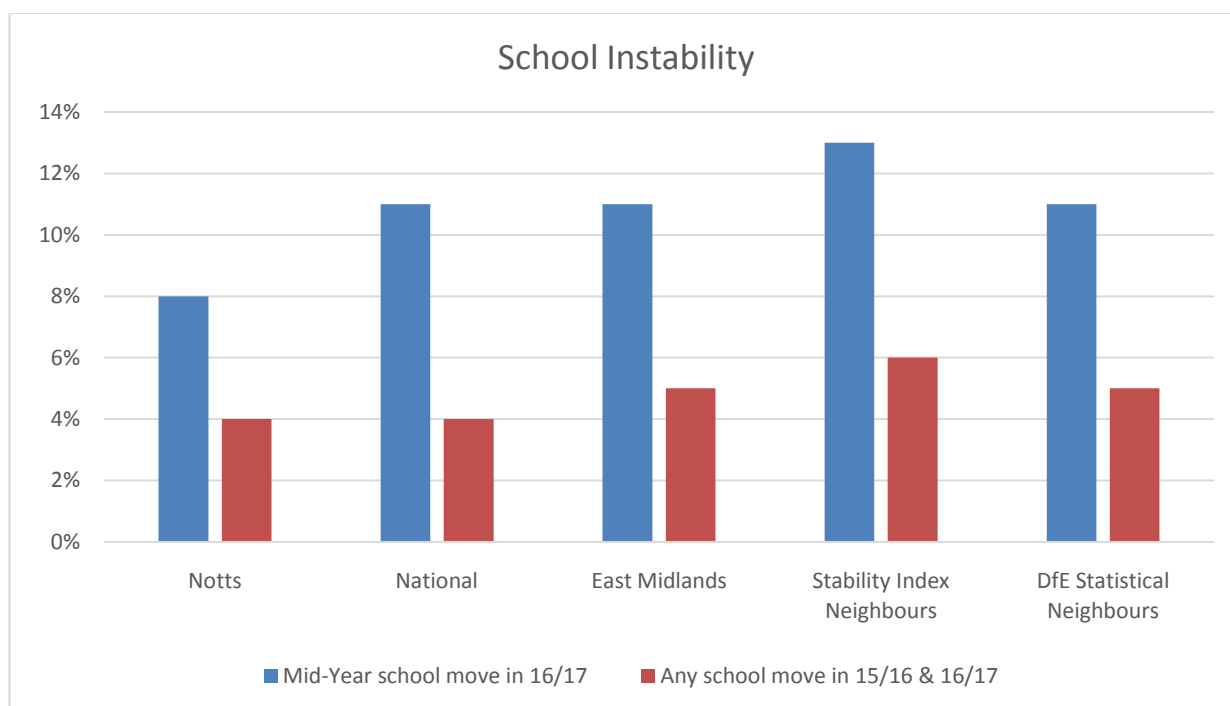
8. The report shows that Nottinghamshire performs very well when it comes to stability of looked after children's (LAC) placements. Only 4% of LAC experienced 2 or more placement changes in 2016/17 which is half the East Midlands average and only two-fifths of the national average.
9. When considering repeated instability, the same excellent performance remains, with only 1% of Nottinghamshire's LAC population, or 6 children, experiencing 2 or more placement changes in both 2015/16 and 2016/17. The East Midlands average is double this amount and the national average 3 times as high at 3%.
10. Although the general rule of fewer placement moves leading to better outcomes for the child or young person prevails for the majority of cases, the computation of this measure does not take into account the otherwise very positive process of stepping down of 16/17 year old LAC into a number of discrete supported placements that provide this group of elder young people with the necessary life skills to equip them for independence into adulthood.



Placement Instability	Notts	National	East Midlands	Stability Index Neighbours	DfE Statistical Neighbours
2+ placement changes in 2016/17	4%	10%	8%	12%	9%
2+ placement changes in both 2015/16 & 2016/17	1%	3%	2%	4%	2%

School Instability

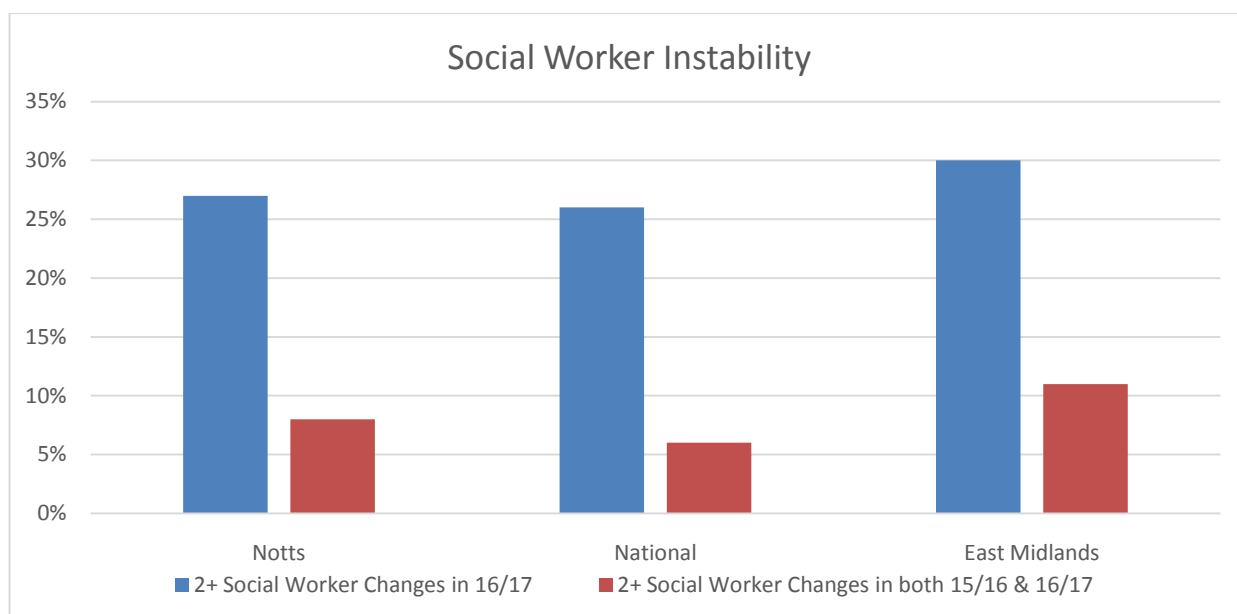
11. Again, Nottinghamshire shows good performance in this measure with the proportion of LAC experiencing mid-year school moves in 2016/17 at 8%. This is around two-thirds of the national, statistical neighbour and Stability Index Neighbour averages of 11% and substantially lower than the East Midlands average of 13%.
12. The repeated instability measure, which looks at school moves for the same looked after child in both 2015/16 and 2016/17 also shows good performance, with Nottinghamshire, at 4%, being in line with national averages and below the East Midlands, statistical neighbour and Stability Index Neighbour averages of 5% or 6%.



School Instability	Notts	National	East Midlands	Stability Index Neighbours	DfE Statistical Neighbours
Mid-Year school move in 2016/17	8%	11%	11%	13%	11%
Any school move in 2015/16 & 2016/17	4%	4%	5%	6%	5%

Social Worker Instability

13. The percentage of LAC experiencing 2 or more social worker changes in 2016/17 was 27%. This is broadly in line with the national average of 26% and below the East Midlands average of 30% with whom Nottinghamshire shares the same recruitment market. As such, it paints a reasonably positive picture for Nottinghamshire and is in-line with the Council's understanding of the position.
14. The repeated instability measure which looks at the proportion of LAC who have experienced 2 or more social worker changes in 2015/16 and 2016/17 shows the same position with 8% of Nottinghamshire LAC experiencing repeated social worker instability compared with 11% across the East Midlands as an average.
15. These figures are likely to be lower due to the previous reliance on agency workers and the high number of newly qualified workers coming in to the Authority. As work continues to recruit and retain permanent social work staff, there is potential for improvements in performance for this measure in future years.



Social Worker Instability	Notts	National	East Midlands	Stability Index Neighbours	DfE Statistical Neighbours
2+ Social Worker Changes in 2016/17	27%	26%	30%	NA	NA
2+ Social Worker Changes in both 2015/16 & 2016/17	8%	6%	11%	NA	NA

Future Developments

16. Within Nottinghamshire the issue of stability for looked after children is taken extremely seriously. There are currently a range of improvement initiatives underway to further strengthen performance in this area. These include:
- a range of activities aimed at improving the recruitment and retention of social work staff including participation in the 'grow your own' social work programme, the payment of the market factor supplement and employment of social work support officers
 - renewed efforts to recruit new foster carers, retain existing carers and develop the internal fostering offer to offer placements to a wider group of young people (reducing the number of young people the Council needs to place temporarily whilst looking for suitable local placements).

Other Options Considered

17. No other options have been considered.

Reason/s for Recommendation/s

18. The report provides an opportunity for the Committee to consider any further actions arising from the information contained within the report.

Statutory and Policy Implications

19. 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

20. There are no financial implications arising from the report.

RECOMMENDATION/S

- 1) That Committee considers whether there are any actions it requires in relation to the performance information on the stability of the Council's services for looked after children contained in the report.

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Constitutional Comments (EP 24/08/18)

21. The recommendation falls within the remit of the Children and Young People's Committee by virtue of its terms of reference.

Financial Comments (SAS 24/08/18)

22. 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.

Stability Index 2018 – Detailed Local Authority Report for Nottinghamshire.

Electoral Division(s) and Member(s) Affected

All.

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