

## Children and Families Select Committee

**Monday, 17 March 2025 at 10:30**

County Hall, West Bridgford, Nottingham, NG2 7QP

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### AGENDA

- 1 To note the appointment at Full Council on 27 February 2025 of Councillor Anne Callaghan BEM as Vice-Chairman of the Children and Families Select Committee for the remainder of the 2024/25 municipal year
- 2 Minutes of the last meeting held on 2 December 2024 3 - 16
- 3 Apologies for Absence
- 4 Declarations of Interests by Members and Officers:- (see note below)
- 5 Establishing Family Hub Networks – Progress Update 17 - 26
- 6 Elective Home Education 27 - 48
- 7 Impact of the introduction of VAT on independent school fees 49 - 56
- 8 Partnership progress in improving the experiences and outcomes for children and young people with SEND 57 - 68
- 9 Children and Families Departmental Performance, Risks and Financial Position – Quarter 3 2024-5 69 - 80
- 10 Outcomes to the review of recruitment and retention within Nottinghamshire County Council's Fostering Service 81 - 100

**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 James Lavender (Tel. 0115 854 6408) 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 & Families Select Committee

Date: Monday 2 December 2024 (commencing at 10:30am)

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

Mike Introna (Chairman)

Francis Purdue-Horan (Vice-Chairman) **(apologies)**

Anne Callaghan BEM

Robert Corden **(apologies)**

John Cottee

Debbie Darby **(apologies)**

Errol Henry

Johno Lee

Mike Quigley MBE

Nigel Turner

Michelle Welsh MP **(apologies)**

**Education Representatives**

Nigel Frith

James McGeachie

**Substitute Members**

Councillor Pauline Allan for Councillor Michelle Welsh

**Other County Councillors in attendance:**

- |                 |  |
|-----------------|--|
| Sinead Anderson | - Deputy Cabinet Member for Children and Families                                    |
| Nigel Moxon     | - Deputy Cabinet Member for Education and Special Educational Needs and Disabilities |
| Sam Smith       | - Cabinet Member for Education and Special Educational Needs and Disabilities        |
| Tracey Taylor   | - Cabinet Member for Children and Families   |

**Officers and colleagues in attendance:**

- |                               |   |
|-------------------------------|---|
| Pom Bhogal                    | - Group Manager, Young People's Service                       |
| Amanda Collinson              | - Service Director, Help, Protection and Care                 |
| Martin Elliott                | - Senior Scrutiny Officer                                     |
| Detective Inspector Dan Evans | - Childhood Risk of Exploitation Team, Nottinghamshire Police |
| Irene Kakoullis               | - Group Manager, Early Years Service                          |
| James Lavender                | - Democratic Services Officer                                 |
| Peter McConnochie             | - Service Director, Education, Learning and Inclusion         |
| Rachel Miller                 | - Interim Service Director, Commissioning and Resources       |

Colin Pettigrew	- Executive Director for Children and Families
Rosa Waddingham	- Chief Nurse, NHS Nottingham and Nottinghamshire Integrated Care Board
Ty Yousaf	- Interim Group Manager for Strategic Safeguarding

## **1 MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING**

On Page 10 of the agenda under the minutes of the last meeting held on 15 July 2024, relating to Item 5 – Progress with the recommendations of the Scrutiny Review of Education, Health and Care Plans, it was stated:

“Dame Christine Lenehan noted that the current EHCP process was designed to support around 3% of school-aged children, not the current 18.9% of children in Nottinghamshire who had an EHCP”.

Members noted this was an error and the sentence was amended to state the following correct information:

“Dame Christine Lenehan noted that the current EHCP process was designed to support around 3% of school-aged children, not the current national average of 4.8% of children in receipt of an EHCP”.

Once the minutes of the meeting held on 15 July 2024 were amended, the minutes were confirmed as correct and signed by the Chairman.

## **2 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Councillor Debbie Darby	- medical/illness
Councillor Francis Purdue-Horan	- other reasons
Councillor Michelle Welsh MP	- other reasons

## **3 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest by Members or Officers.

## **4 NOTTINGHAMSHIRE APPROACH TO TACKLING CHILD EXPLOITATION**

Councillor Tracey Taylor, Cabinet Member for Children and Families, Colin Pettigrew, Executive Director for Children and Families, Ty Yousaf, Interim Group Manager for Strategic Safeguarding, and Detective Inspector Dan Evans of Nottinghamshire Police’s Childhood Risk of Exploitation Team, introduced the report and presentation which highlighted the Nottinghamshire Safeguarding Children’s Partnership’s (NSCP) approach to tackling child exploitation as well as the NSCP’s annual Child Exploitation and Child Missing from Home and Care report for 2023/24. The following information was highlighted:

- The report covered the partnership’s strategy for keeping children safe who were at risk of being both sexually and criminally exploited. This strategy reflected a move in policy position from the Government around not

criminalising children who had become involved in criminal activity through exploitation by people their own age or older.

- The findings of the Jay Report into child sexual exploitation in Rotherham had outlined how different language was needed around the understanding of children who were being sexually exploited, namely that children were being 'exploited' rather than being 'participants.' The Jay Report also required local authorities to update their Councillors regularly on the activities taking place in their areas to tackle child exploitation. The challenges of online children exploitation were also recognised.
- Child exploitation was defined as the manipulation, coercion, or abuse of children for various purposes, including labour exploitation, sexual exploitation, and criminal exploitation. It was often seen as a hidden harm which typically occurred outside of the family home by individuals or organised criminal groups. It involved exploiters gaining a position of trust and power over a child.
- Risk factors that put children in harm's way include the use of social media, an unstable or abusive home, social isolation through the lack of a supportive social network provided by family, friends, school, education, and training. Poverty and a lack of access to education and training was another risk factor.
- The Partnership's governance arrangements provided effective partnership working between organisations from a strategic level down to frontline services. The Tackling Child Exploitation Steering Group, attended by key partners, informed and drove the work to respond effectively to child exploitation. Episodes in which children go missing from home or care were a key indicator of exploitation risk as well as escalating the risk to a child. A multi-agency strategic approach was provided through the County Missing Children Steering Group, which coordinated work to identify children who were going through missing episodes and children who were at risk of going missing.
- There was an agreed partnership commitment to Tackling Child Exploitation (TCE) from all agencies involved with the NSCP. There was close working between Nottinghamshire Police and Local Authority (LA) leads both strategically and operationally. A TCE Practice Network was launched by the Partnership and was aimed at practitioners from all the partner agencies by allowing them to meet up and share best practice, information, and resources. The Children's Society was commissioned by the Partnership to provide support services for children at risk of exploitation. Police-led Neighbourhood, Safeguarding and Disruption Meetings were held monthly in each borough and district and examined instances of knife crime, violence, anti-social behaviour in those areas, and may be indicators of exploitation. These meetings emphasised that it was the responsibility of all agencies to identify and tackle child exploitation and have a framework in place to address exploitation.

- For 2024/25, the Partnership launched a revised multi-agency child exploitation risk assessment which was expected to be more effective at identifying child exploitation and making an accurate assessment of what that risk is. A public awareness campaign will be launched. A Tackling Child Exploitation Conference would be delivered in March 2025 to improve the knowledge and skills available to practitioners who work with children and families. A joint training partnership event would also be organised. The Partnership would use the '4P' framework (Prepare, Prevent, Protect and Pursue) to not just pursue and prosecute perpetrators, but also prevent further offences and further harms to children. A joint partnership audit had also taken place.

In the discussion that followed, members raised the following points and questions:

- Whether the reduction in both the overall number of missing incidents and the numbers of child exploitation cases recorded for 2023/24 was due to the measures implemented by the NSCP beginning to take effect or whether there were wider trends causing the fall in numbers of missing incident and cases of child exploitation.
- Members asked for clarification on whether it was the same children who were at risk of both being exploited and of also going missing from their home. Members also sought further information on the benefits of approaching these situations as a connected problem.
- Members enquired about the prevention measures which took place with schools and what more could schools do to strengthen the work already taking place.
- Members welcomed the working between LAs across authority boundaries, particularly between the City and the County and asked whether this cooperation would expand to other authorities to prevent children falling into county lines criminal operations.
- With regards to the NSCP Strategy, were there any opportunities for safeguarding leads from schools to meet with partners to share information and identify measures to protect a particular child?
- Members noted that adverse childhood experiences were a factor that could increase the risk of a child being exploited and welcomed the good engagement across all organisations within the Partnership and across Nottinghamshire.
- Members queried the number of children who came from the Gedling and Rushcliffe districts of Nottinghamshire (notably areas which border Nottingham City) who were at highest risk of exploitation and were discussed at the monthly Children Criminal Exploitation Panels.

In relation to the points raised, the Executive Director for Children and Families, the Cabinet Member for Children and Families, Detective Inspector Dan Evans and officers provided the following responses:

- Whilst the fall in the numbers of children subject to missing incidents and exploitation was welcomed, it was crucial to ensure the Partnership remained effective in identifying children at risk of exploitation through the sharing of information between the agencies involved with the Partnership to make an informed assessment of risk to a child. The Ofsted findings noted that Council social workers were confident in identifying children at risk and that their actions were having a positive effect in reducing the number of children at risk of exploitation.
- There was a link between children who were at risk of going missing from home/care and from being exploited. Partner agencies used return to home interviews to identify what the risks were to a child and to identify opportunities to reduce that risk to that child and pursue perpetrators. However, the reason for the vast majority of children did go missing from home was due to family relationships and conflicts. If a child went missing three times, then a multi-agency meeting would take place.
- Colleagues within the NSCP and the Council's Education, Safeguarding and Wellbeing Hub (ESWH), visited schools regularly to promote safety for all young people, particularly from emerging threats and new technologies. The ESWH had created a "Harm outside the home" toolkit for schools to use to help identify potential child exploitation outside of school and home. This toolkit was linked to the designated safeguarding lead forums and networks. A conference had recently been held for schools to strengthen their abilities to safeguard children as well as an opportunity to network with agencies within the NSCP. Two early intervention PCs worked closely with the Council and schools. There were opportunities for schools and other frontline services to share intelligence with Nottinghamshire Police to build an early intervention response around a child or group of children who were at risk of exploitation.
- Nottinghamshire Police operated a County Alliance Team which worked with the NCSP to provide intelligence and pursue perpetrators across county boundaries. There were opportunities to share intelligence with police services across the East Midlands and further afield. The "Harm outside the home" toolkit was used across the East Midlands. Social workers and other social care colleagues work with their counterparts in other local authorities and across county boundaries. The British Transport Police were an important partner in the TCE programme, identifying children who were missing from home or at risk of exploitation when using the rail network.
- Education professionals would be invited to attend the TCE Conference and other training events to share information and to learn how to effectively identify the warning signs of child exploitation and report them. Teachers and other school staff would also be trained by the NCSP. Designated

Safeguarding Leads would also be able to access the training opportunities available. Nottinghamshire Police's Early Intervention PCs also provided training within education settings. Inclusion was a key strategy in keeping children safe as children who were truant or excluded from school were more at risk of exploitation.

- There were already mechanisms in place within the child protection and safeguarding process for agencies to meet and discuss safeguarding measures around individual cases. Some of these meetings were facilitated by the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub. These processes were recently reviewed as part of the joint partnership audit. The Neighbourhood, Safeguarding and Disruption Meetings involved district council officers identifying children at risk and bringing them to a meeting with representatives of the partner agencies, where they would discuss with the child what their situation was and what prevention measures were needed to mitigate the risks to the child.
- The partnership made sure all their assessments and processes were trauma informed, which included the use of language. When a child was identified as being exploited, an assessment would take place by a qualified youth worker or youth justice case manager to consider family history, peer and family influences, and prepare a plan to protect the child, the neighbourhood, and pursue the perpetrators. The NSCP and the Children's Society would work with young people and their families to identify and better support their needs.
- In-depth analysis of the threat of child exploitation across the county occurred to understand which areas experienced higher levels of child exploitation and why. Some of these reasons included population density, however the overall picture was complex.

The Chairman thanked the Cabinet Member for Children and Families, Executive Director for Children and Families, the Interim Group Manager for Strategic Safeguarding, the representative of Nottinghamshire Police's Childhood Risk of Exploitation Team, and other Council officers for attending the meeting and answering members' questions.

#### **RESOLVED 2024/024**

- 1) That the considerations and comments of the Children and Families Select Committee on the current approach in Nottinghamshire for supporting children at risk of exploitation, be noted.

## **5 THE EARLY YEARS AND CHILDCARE SECTOR IN NOTTINGHAMSHIRE**

Councillor Tracey Taylor, Cabinet Member for Children and Families, and Irene Kakoulis, Group Manager, Early Years Service, attended the meeting to present a report that provided a progress report on the implementation of the childcare expansion programme. The report also detailed the findings and recommendations of



the 2024 Nottinghamshire Childcare Sufficiency Assessment. The following information was highlighted:

- The plans from the previous Government around the expansion of free childcare to particular age cohorts and working parents would continue under the new Government. The report did not include the new Government's plans for breakfast clubs.
- The Council faced many challenges in terms of implementing the further expansion of the childcare programme, such as the increased number of children with special educational needs accessing childcare, which in turn required additional funding, and preparing Early Years education providers to be more skilled and inclusive in order to support those children.
- The viability of funding for Early Years settings was of great concern. Whilst the increase in the National Minimum Wage was welcomed, additional funding from Government was required to pay for the increased staff wages. This was on top of the existing increase in overhead costs and hourly rates within the Early Years providers. The Council ensured that as much its Early Years funding went to the sector as possible, using the smallest amount possible of the funding for administration. The amount of funding used for administration was much lower than was the case at many other local authorities.
- The Council had a duty to provide childcare to two-year-olds from low income households and Looked After Children. These children were entitled to fifteen hours funded early education and childcare a week. There was a concern that following the childcare expansion programme, Early Years providers would prioritise babies and two-year-olds from working households now that they were entitled to that funded childcare. When the report was written, the Council was doing well in terms of take-up from two-year-olds from low income households and Looked After Children, however early indications for this term had shown take-up had fallen.
- Opportunities were being sought to improve funding levels and the quality of Early Years provision. The Wraparound Childcare Programme received good coverage in Nottinghamshire schools, some of which were provided by schools themselves, whilst others were provided by charities and private businesses. The Government's plans for breakfast clubs would be built upon the current work around Wraparound Childcare, although the details of how they would be implemented had not yet been announced.
- Consideration was being given to whether school-based nurseries should be run by the schools themselves or by a private or voluntary sector childcare provider.

In the discussion that followed, Members raised the following points and questions:

- Where were the eight wards of the County which reported over 40% of their childcare places remain unfilled?

- Members questioned whether a more coordinated or standardised approach to Wraparound Childcare was required.
- Members identified the importance of identifying SEND support in an Early Years setting to support those children in their education journey.
- Members queried the costs of Wraparound Childcare if it was provided by a third-party within a school. There was a recognition that use of this service by parents for their children would fluctuate.

In relation to the points raised, the Cabinet Member for Children and Families, the Cabinet Member for Education and SEND, the Executive Director for Children and Families and officers provided the following responses:

- There were concerns about the take-up of funded childcare places in Langold, Carlton, and Netherfield. There were a number of reasons behind this such as the resignation of child minders and the challenges of recruiting new ones, as well as closures of nurseries which meant that alternative providers were needed, or schools would have to lower their age ranges. The full list of the eight wards would be circulated to Members of the Committee.
- There was no additional funding available to the Council for Wraparound Childcare. There were some temporary staff who were providing guidance on Wraparound Childcare and working on potential ways of delivery. The challenge facing a standardised Wraparound Childcare approach was that different areas of Nottinghamshire had different needs. Areas where there were more working parents may want more childcare hours in the evening, whilst some areas wanted breakfast clubs. Department for Education (DfE) guidance helped inform the Early Years sector approach to Wraparound Childcare. If the Council could obtain more permanent capacity for Wraparound provision, then a standardised approach with schools could be easier to implement, however it was recognised that a flexible approach to Wraparound Childcare was a strength of the Council.
- The Council had piloted the allocation of funding to children identified as having SEND in an Early Years setting which would then continue as they transitioned into a mainstream school setting. The amount of funding would be reviewed annually based on the needs of the child at that time. The Nottinghamshire Schools Forum had played an important part in increasing the Higher Needs Fund for secondary schools by 70% over five years and had also provided Early Years funding around inclusion.
- The power to award contracts to independent providers for Wraparound Childcare lay with schools and not the local authority. However, the Council could support schools going through a tendering process. Few schools were going through a tender process, with independent providers going to schools directly and bypassing that Council input. As LAs and schools were now obliged to provide this childcare, it was an opportunity for providers to come into the market and set the price for the provision of that service. Many parents were under the misapprehension that the Wraparound Childcare was fully funded by

the children's school and the Government. There was some financial support for lower income families available to support Wraparound Childcare.

The Chairman thanked the Cabinet Member for Children and Families, Executive Director for Children and Families, and other Council officers for attending the meeting and answering members' questions.

## **RESOLVED 2024/025**

- 1) That the considerations and comments of the Children and Families Select on the sufficiency of childcare places across Nottinghamshire, and on the plans for the delivery of new Childcare Reforms be noted.

## **6 THE COUNCIL'S YOUTH SERVICE PROVISION IN NOTTINGHAMSHIRE**

Councillor Tracey Taylor, Cabinet Member for Children and Families, and Pom Bhogal, Group Manager – Young People's Service presented a report on the ongoing activity of the Council's Youth Service and the outcome of the Local Government Association (LGA) Peer Challenge that had taken place in April 2023. The report was also provided an overview of Youth Service provision, how the Service aligned with any statutory services which the Council had to provide, and how the service provided positive outcomes for children and young people through a universal and targeted youth worker approach. The following information was highlighted:

- Nottinghamshire County Council was a national outlier in terms of the breadth, depth and expanse of Youth Service provision. The service possessed an innovative and flexible workforce which could meet different challenges and different times.
- The Youth Service was a vital partner in the Council's work to support children such as its work within the Nottinghamshire Safeguarding Children Partnership, where it helped identify children at risk of exploitation.
- The service was in a strong position despite budgetary constraints. The youth worker approach provided targeted intervention and support into areas such as youth violence, online safety, and mental health. The work of the service aimed to create and safe and engaging spaces for young people in youth centres, mobile provision, and local communities.
- A collaborative partnership approach helped expand the reach of the youth service, for example, the Holiday Activity and Food (HAF) Programme undertaken with the DfE.

In the discussion that followed, Members raised the following points and questions:

- Members praised the work the Youth Service in supporting young people to achieve their potential and highlighted the important role of the service in safeguarding children outside of school time during weekends and school holidays.

- Did the Council have a plan for an overarching strategy which embedded the existing vision, purpose, and ambition of the Youth Service?
- Members wished to know how information about the support provided through Youth Network Hubs was shared and sought further information on the data collection and quality assurance framework of the Youth Service.
- What could the impact be of the potential reforms to local government on the Youth Service?
- Members highlighted the success of the Youth Service buses in providing social activities and support to young people and asked whether these were available during the school holidays.
- How did the partnership working between the Youth Service and church youth groups, school youth workers or chaplains and the local universities' outreach programmes contribute to the overall service offer?
- How was the Youth Service helping to facilitate youth leadership roles?

In relation to the points raised, the Cabinet Member for Children and Families and the Group Manager – Young People's Service provided the following responses:

- There was a challenge in embedding the Youth Services within the work of the Council as whilst it was a statutory duty for the Council to provide a youth service, it was not the same obligatory responsibility which the Council had in areas such as social care or education. It was a service which could be reduced, as what has happened in other councils. The provision of a high quality youth service had been a long term commitment for the Council for many years.
- There was a lack of national policy which helped frame the delivery of youth services by councils. Despite this, the Youth Service had developed a strong collaborative approach with partners such as Nottinghamshire Police, the Council's Youth Justice Service and Family Services, as well as other public sector organisations who helped to identify the needs of a child and young person, from which the Youth Service provide a bespoke programme of activities. The Department for Culture, Media and Sport had also recently announced the production and implementation of a National Youth Strategy.
- Youth Hub Networks were linked into a wider network of support for young people which included Family Hubs, schools, the police, Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services and the voluntary sector.
- The Youth Service had provided further opportunities for feedback through the District Youth Forums and members of the Youth Parliament to inform and assess the quality of the work provided by the Youth Service. The service had been undertaking an evaluation of its impact on young people

through a Youth Work Curriculum which defined key areas which the service had to work on, such as achieving economic wellbeing, supporting young people through education, employment and training, physical activity, and emotional wellbeing. This provided a focus to Youth Workers in their work with young people. Case studies had shown the positive impact of the Youth Service, for example, improvements in the educational outcomes of children who had previously gone missing from school.

- It was too soon to say what the impact of local government reforms would be to the Youth Service; however the service faced a constantly changing environment and it was in a strong position to meet any of these challenges.
- Although the provision of the Youth Service had been reduced from 45-weeks to 38-weeks in 2014, the service was accessible to young people on weekends and in the school holidays in part due to the grants from the DfE's Holiday Activity Fund. Data gathered by the Youth Service had shown that there was a drop-off in the use during the summer holidays as children were more likely to be at home with their parents or be on holiday.
- More work could be done to map out the breadth of youth services provided by system partners across the seven district/boroughs of Nottingham. The Council facilitated the Play and Youth Voluntary Sector Partnership which was made up of a range of providers of play and youth activity across the country including the voluntary sector, church groups and uniformed groups. This partnership facilitated group projects, provided networking opportunities, and have discussions based around the needs of young people, identify gaps in provision, and provide those opportunities.
- Certain young people have taken on leadership roles within youth centres across Nottinghamshire and have then gone on to undertake Youth Work apprenticeships.
- The work of the Youth Service was embedded within the wider work of the Council and played a key role in identifying children at risk of exploitation, keeping children out of care and stopping breakdowns in relations between foster children and their foster parents.
- Youth workers did recognise that children needed support and safeguarding during weekends and school holidays and put provisions in place to enable this support to be provided.

The Chairman thanked the Cabinet Member for Children and Families, the Executive Director for Children and Families, and other Council officers for attending the meeting and answering members' questions.

#### **RESOLVED 2024/026**

- 1) That the considerations and comments of the Children and Families Select Committee on the Council's Youth Servicer provision in Nottinghamshire, be noted.

2) That the following issues raised by the Committee in its consideration of the report be progressed:

- a) That the teams involved in the delivery of the Council's Youth Service provision be commended for their commitment and their dedication to delivering such a high quality and impactful service to young people across Nottinghamshire.

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

Colin Pettigrew, Executive Director for Children and Families, and Rosa Waddingham, Chief Nurse for the NHS Nottingham and Nottinghamshire Integrated Care Board, attended the meeting to present a report that detailed the progress being 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. The following information was highlighted:

- There was positive oversight and assurances of the work of the partnership through an immediate report by the DfE and Ofsted that had just taken place. The Partnership also praised the contribution of education partners in schools and academies as part of the improvement journey.
- The improvements in data gathering meant that strong performance was recognised and areas for improvement were identified more efficiently.
- Whilst it was recognised that there were still long waiting times for children awaiting a SEND diagnosis, there was a growth in the number of referrals to services for neuro-divergent assessments.

In the discussion that followed, Members raised the following points and questions:

- Members enquired about the timeframe and completion date for the proposed full-service review of statutory SEND services.
- Members requested that the graphs used within reports included additional information to illustrate more clearly the improvements that have been made around the timely production of Education, Health, and Care Plans (EHCPs).

In relation to the points raised by the Committee, the Cabinet Member for Education and Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) and officers provided the following responses:

- The full-service review was currently underway and was originally planned as part of the mapping exercise for the SEND improvement journey. Two SEND consultants were working alongside the service, as well as learning

knowledge from the Safeguarding and MASH partnerships. The plan was to create a service which was more local-based and relied on strong working relationships with partner organisations and parents. It was expected that the review would be completed by April 2025.

- The performance around the timely production of EHCPs was improving and closing in on the national average.

The Chairman thanked the Cabinet Member for Education and SEND, Executive Director for Children and Families, and other Council officers for attending the meeting and answering members' questions.

### **RESOLVED 2024/027**

- 1) That the considerations and comments of the Children and Families Select Committee on the progress made by the Nottinghamshire local area Partnership for Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) in implementing improvements to the lived experiences and outcomes of children and young people with SEND and their families, be noted.
- 2) That a further progress report on Partnership progress in improving the experiences and outcomes for children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities be received at the March 2025 meeting of the Children and Families Select Committee.
- 3) That the following issues raised by the Committee in its consideration of the report be progressed:
  - a) That the Chairman of the Children and Families Select Committee discusses with officers how the graphs used in future reports could include additional information to illustrate more clearly the improvements that have been made around the timely production of Education, Health, and Care Plans.

## **8 WORK PROGRAMME**

Martin Elliott, Senior Scrutiny Officer, presented the Work Programme. It was noted that the second meeting of the Task and Finish Review of Fostering Recruitment and Retention was taking place next week.

### **RESOLVED 2024/028**

- 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.

The meeting closed at 12:34pm.

**CHAIRMAN**





**17 March 2025**

**Agenda Item: 5**

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

### **ESTABLISHING FAMILY HUB NETWORKS - PROGRESS UPDATE**

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

1. To provide an update to the Children and Families Select Committee on Family Hub Network developments in Nottinghamshire and future delivery plans.

#### **Information**

##### **What are Family Hubs?**

2. Family Hubs, as described by the government, offer support from pregnancy, through the child's early years, later childhood and into young adulthood.
3. Family hubs bring together different services in a 'one stop shop' to make it easier to get the help parents/carers and their family needs. They provide a single place to go for face-to-face support and information from a variety of services. They are not a statutory function and so the local offer from Family Hubs may vary from area to area, but Government asks that at the heart of all family hubs are services for families with 0 to 2 year-olds, which give babies a great [start for life](#).
4. Family Hubs should make it easier for parents and carers to get the support they need, with trained staff on site who work together to help overcome any difficulties they might be facing.

##### **Who are Family Hub Networks for?**

5. Family Hub Networks will provide services for all parents and carers from conception until their child reaches the age of 19, services are both universal and targeted. Universal services include examples such as Maternity Services, Health Visiting, activities for families with preschool children, schools, and Youth Services. Targeted provision includes services for children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND), interventions such as behaviour management and parenting programmes, and targeted provision in priority neighbourhoods and work with underrepresented groups and emerging communities.
6. Family Hub Networks also include dedicated services for young people such as Local Authority and Voluntary sector led youth services.

## Why are Family Hubs Networks so important?

7. All kinds of families face challenges from time to time. Family Hub Networks will make it simpler to get the help that the whole family needs as early as possible. The development of Family Hubs was introduced by the previous Government and has been continued by the current Government because of the focus on early intervention and family help.
8. *“Family Hubs in particular offer an important universal access point to support for families and will be critical to providing support both to families who are eligible for universal support (and might additionally be receiving a more intensive offer through Family Help), as well as families who have lower levels of need but still need help”*. Josh MacAlister, Independent Review of Children’s Social Care (2022).
9. Family Hub Networks provide support for families from conception to 19, however Government continues to emphasise the importance of retaining services and support for families with preschool children. The learning from Sure Start and Children’s Centres has evidenced that investing in the first years of life has improved outcomes in relation to educational attainment (in particular for children eligible for Free School Meals)<sup>1</sup>, a reduction in hospitalisation for children of primary school age (in particular those living in disadvantaged areas)<sup>2</sup>, and a reduction in serious offending in adolescence and a reduction of the amount of time children spent in care<sup>3</sup>. By helping to establish nurturing, supportive environments for the youngest members of society, family hubs will make it easier for parents and carers to give their children the best start in life and subsequently improve their life chances.
10. The implementation of Family Hub Networks will help to deliver the Council’s commitment to early help and prevention outlined within the Nottinghamshire Plan 2021- 2031 and the approach to achieving this commitment, approved by Cabinet in November 2023. In line with the budget report to Cabinet in February 2024, Family Hub Networks will help to strengthen the building blocks of good health and wellbeing in communities by actively prioritising those which will benefit most from the support and services that each network offers.

## Nottinghamshire’s approach to Family Hub Network developments

11. Despite some local authorities focusing solely on establishing dedicated Family Hub buildings, in Nottinghamshire the approach has been to establish a Network of services which families can access, both physically and virtually. The Networks include services such as the NHS and the Voluntary and Community Sector.
12. Each District will have a partnership in place of local professionals who will help to oversee the work of the Network, ensure partnership arrangements are established and services provided under the umbrella of the Family Hub Network are working together effectively. Despite the Council being the responsible body for Family Hub Networks, it is critical that services work together to ensure that families get the right support at the right time.
13. In response to findings of the public consultation carried out in autumn 2023, plans are underway to create Family Hub Network access points in a variety of venues and not just

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<sup>1</sup> [The short- and medium-term impacts of Sure Start on educational outcomes | Institute for Fiscal Studies](#)

<sup>2</sup> [Report reveals benefits of Sure Start | Institute for Fiscal Studies](#)

<sup>3</sup> [The effect of Sure Start on youth misbehaviour, crime and contacts with children’s social care](#)

dedicated buildings. This will not only reduce stigma for some families, but this will also ensure that families can access services when they need them, regardless of where they live e.g. libraries, health centres, youth centres and schools.

14. Work with a range of organisations is taking place to enable them to officially become members of Family Hub Networks. A short quality assurance exercise will be completed before they can advertise themselves as a Family Hub Network member, this will include ensuring that appropriate policies and procedures are in place regarding safeguarding, information sharing, and participation in some training e.g. 'Making Every Contact Count'. Each partner will also have access to the Notts Help Yourself website which includes an up-to-date directory of services which will also assist them in finding the right help for a family.
15. The previous Government awarded Family Hub Best Start for Life funding to 75 pre-selected local authorities; Nottinghamshire was not preselected so the approach aims to make the best use of existing resources by working together and ensuring this way of working is sustainable.

### **Progress so far**

16. Despite no additional funding, Family Hub Networks remained a priority and on 28 March 2024, Cabinet approved the roll out of Family Hub Networks across Nottinghamshire.
17. Five design sites were established in Retford, Sutton in Ashfield, Hawtonville, Oaktree and Netherfield. Establishing these design sites has allowed the Family Hub Partnership to use a test and learn approach, where new processes were created, tested and evaluated. Findings have now been used to shape full roll out across the County.
18. The voice of families and local professionals has been important in shaping how Family Hub Networks are provided. Public consultation was carried out in autumn 2023, followed by additional targeted consultation in spring term 2024. Views from parents/carers, professionals and young people were gathered, analysed and are being actioned.
19. Localised co-production activities are a standard requirement for each Family Hub Network, with local families and stakeholders engaging in discussions about what is important to them and how needs can be addressed holistically. A 'parents and carers panel' is being established in each district to ensure family voice remains a priority.
20. All Children's Centre buildings have now been renamed and rebranded as Family Hubs which by April 2025 will provide a range of services from conception to age 19.
21. Most roles within the Children's Centre service have now been changed to enable staff to work with families who have older children. For example, Early Years Practitioners will soon be working with families who have children up to the age of 8.
22. 17 local Family Hub Networks are being established and at the time of Committee, all but three will have been officially launched (the remaining sites to be launched by 31 March).
23. There has been a substantial increase of internal and external services operating from Family Hub sites enabling networks to provide services from conception until young people

reach the age of 19. This includes Family Hubs which host young people's activities in the evening.

24. New branding has been developed with families and professionals and it is anticipated that this will become easily recognisable and trusted by local families.
25. New multi-agency processes have been tested in Bassetlaw and Newark and Sherwood, bringing together a group of professionals to agree a collective response to meet the needs of families. This has been particularly beneficial for families who require support from several organisations. Feedback from these tests has been extremely positive so far.
26. New Early Help Advisor roles have been tested in Bassetlaw and Newark and Sherwood. These roles have in the main provided support and advice for schools which are unsure how best to support children and young people who have entrenched needs. It is anticipated that these roles will be created and rolled out across Nottinghamshire.
27. These tests have been reviewed and feedback has been positive. The success of new multi-agency processes and Early Help Advisor roles has resulted in plans to roll these out across Nottinghamshire from April 2025:
  - a. *"I feel like I've had more help in the last 30 minutes that in the last few years"* (parent who attended a multi-agency meeting)
  - b. *"Thank you, it feels like we have a team around the child now"* (practitioner)
  - c. *"In one case, we had the Youth Service emailing the local Youth Centre to arrange contact with a family during the multiagency meeting. It was that fast!"* (practitioner)
  - d. *"I was signposted to services that I had never come across before"* (practitioner)
  - e. *"It's been great to offer families a wider range of things that they can try"* (practitioner).
28. A new referral/service request process has been tested to reduce bureaucracy and speed up the process from referral to service delivery. This process includes all Council early help services rather than using different processes for each service. This is being refined before being fully implemented next financial year.
29. Family Hub Network partnership groups are now established across all Districts except for Gedling and Rushcliffe which are currently being progressed with Borough Councils.
30. There are an increasing number of partners and internal teams now providing services from Family Hub sites including services and activities for families with older children, as well as services for young people e.g. counselling. Dedicated Family Hub teams are also providing services from other venues in priority areas including Libraries and Community Centres.
31. Parents, carers, children and young people have consistently shared their concerns about accessing mental health services. Perinatal mental health services and young people's counselling services are now provided from some Family Hub buildings, and positive links have been established with commissioners, voluntary sector services and CAMHS (Child & Adolescent Mental Health Services).

32. Parents and carers of children with SEND have asked for peer support groups, these have been established by other services and an invitation to host these in Family Hub sites (at no cost) is being actioned.
33. A workforce development matrix has been developed to enable Family Hub Network members access to training and opportunities to learn from each other.
34. A Family Hub Network Outcomes Framework is in development to enable the Council and its partners to understand the impact of this way of working on family outcomes.
35. Three Family Hub Network newsletters have been created and disseminated to local families, schools and other stakeholders. Newsletters will be a key element of the digital offer for families.
36. The Council's Families Information Service has led on communications for families through social media (Facebook and Instagram). Further work is required to promote digital communications to increase the number of local families 'following' relevant social media accounts and increasing content for families who have children of school age.
37. A review of staffing across Council early help services is underway, with plans to integrate some teams into Early Help Locality Teams working within each Family Hub Network. This will also enable the existing workforce who work with expectant parents and young children, to gain skills and capacity to support families with older children.

### Areas for further development

38. Despite the progress made so far, further work is required to achieve some of the actions formulated from consultation findings which were shared with Cabinet in March 2024.

Recommendation	Progress
Design the new Virtual Family Hub with families and seek ideas for sustained promotion.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Virtual Family Hub will provide information, advice and guidance for families focusing on a range of topics. A decision has been made that this will be hosted on a new digital community directory for the City and County. This platform will not be in place until April 2026 due to planning and procurement timescales, so Family Hub plans have been delayed.</li> <li>• However, information is currently hosted on the Notts Help Yourself website alongside information about services.</li> </ul>
Provide briefings and training to frontline workers to enable them to navigate services with families.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A workforce plan has been developed which includes information to help services enable families to access the right service at the right time. This work is also interdependent on the creation of the new digital community directory of services.</li> <li>• The implementation of the workforce plan has been delayed and will be launched in 2025/26.</li> </ul>
Improve promotion of services to ensure that	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• This action is linked to the development of a new digital directory of services which will be in place from April 2026.</li> </ul>

<p>families understand a wide range of needs can be addressed.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All listings on Notts Help Yourself website have been updated to assist families and practitioners to identify the right support.</li> <li>• Family Hub Network partners have been invited to submit promotional information about their services and activities to increase the range of information shared through social media channels. Further work is required to engage more partners in this work.</li> </ul>
<p>Continue to work with the Voluntary and Community Sector to help promote their activities for families.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Local Family Hub Networks are bringing together a range of local organisations including the voluntary and community sector. Further work is required to increase ownership of Family Hub Networks so local partnerships are being established with district/borough councils and Place Based Partnerships to assist in the engagement of local charities and community organisations.</li> </ul>

## Next Steps

39. A new early help referral process has been tested and will be updated following the tests which were carried out in Bassetlaw and Newark and Sherwood. This includes a new self-referral process for parents and carers. This work will be completed by September 2025.
40. Information sharing agreements are required with key partners to enable successful implementation of multi-agency processes and discussions. An information sharing agreement is already in place with Department for Work and Pensions Job Centre Plus, and work is underway to refresh the information sharing agreement with Nottinghamshire Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust, however work has not yet started with other key partners yet.
41. New multi-agency processes will be rolled out across the County following two successful tests in Bassetlaw and Newark and Sherwood.
42. A new quality assurance process has been developed to enable partners to become official members of each Family Hub Network. Work is underway to implement this new process which will be progressed fully in 2025/26. This work is anticipated to help increase ownership and engagement with voluntary and community sector organisations.
43. Implementation of the new Early Help Workforce development plan will begin in April once new posts are established within the Family Hub service.
44. Additional capacity is required within the Families Information Service to increase the information available to families with school aged children using social media tools and digital communications. This is being explored further to assist the small team increase outputs for families with school aged children.
45. The Family Hub Communications plan will continue to be implemented to assist in the creation of a new digital community directory, promotion of services and increased use of social media and platforms such as TikTok.

## **Other Options Considered**

46. No other options have been considered.

## **Reasons for Recommendations**

47. The development of Family Hub design sites is included in the Nottinghamshire Plan 2021-2031 with the aim to improve access to family support services for residents and ensuring children get the best start in life.
48. Family Hubs bring together family support services providing support early when families need them. These include universal and targeted services, including access to the intensive support of a keyworker where appropriate.
49. The Early Intervention Foundation (EIF) has estimated that the cost of late intervention is almost £17 billion a year, suggesting that providing family support early can lessen the demand for statutory intervention or acute services later on. Implementing successful Family Hub Networks will provide early interventions to reduce the burden on statutory and specialist services in the longer term.

## **Statutory and Policy Implications**

50. 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**

51. Partners in the delivery of Family Hub Networks have been asked to use their own resources to help shape and improve services and interventions for children and families; no additional funding has been provided to support the implementation of Family Hubs.
52. New local authority Family Hub teams have been developed using available budgets and resources. Other Council teams who will work under the umbrella of Family Hub Networks will also be funded using their available budgets.
53. Properties owned by the Council which become Family Hubs will continue to be managed and paid for by Property Services in the Place Department.

## **Consultation**

54. Consultation and co-production activities have been central in the development of Family Hub Networks. These have been carried out through countywide and local activities<sup>4</sup>.

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<sup>4</sup> [Get involved | Nottinghamshire County Council](#)

55. A series of mini surveys were carried out at the start of 2025 with young people, parents and carers and professionals. The findings were analysed and provided useful insights into the needs and preferences of families in Nottinghamshire, helping inform the ongoing development and improvement of Family Hubs.

### **Crime and Disorder Implications**

56. Some of the signs that children and young people may be at greater risk of involvement in crime are present from birth. By using evidence-based practice to target and engage children at risk of poor outcomes, Family Hubs will be able to respond appropriately to these signals of risk and when required provide additional support at the earliest opportunity. Furthermore, research has identified that providing holistic community-based services for children under the age of 5 reduces the risk of serious crime in adolescence.

### **Data Protection and Information Governance**

57. Information sharing and General Data Protection Regulation compliance will be central to Family Hub developments and implementation. Information sharing agreements, data protection impact assessments and Privacy Notices will therefore be progressed.

### **Human Resources Implications**

58. An internal restructure of early help services is being progressed with additional capacity identified to help families with children of school age. This includes new job descriptions and relocation of some existing posts.
59. Consultation with affected staff and Trade Unions has now been completed.

### **Public Sector Equality Duty implications**

60. The creation of Family Hub Networks across Nottinghamshire will not have a negative impact on anyone with protected characteristics; this will however have a positive impact on children and young people with a disability, expectant parents and new parents, women, and families with children over the age of 4 (as well as continuing to support families with preschool children). An Equalities Impact Assessment has been published and will be updated as plans progress.

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

61. Safeguarding children and families continues to be a key priority within Family Hub developments. All partners involved in Family Hub Networks are asked to access Nottinghamshire Safeguarding Children Partnership training and have policies and procedures to safeguard children and vulnerable adults.

### **Implications for Residents**

62. The successful delivery of Family Hubs will be beneficial for children, young people and families by being accessible, better connected and relationship centred so that needs can be identified and addressed early.



63. All families will have access to information they need, when they need it: through a digital platform, as well as virtual and telephone offers around the needs of the family. Families who need additional help will be supported through a range of virtual and face to face support.
64. Local families will have an accessible, single point of reference that families can use to navigate local services.

## **RECOMMENDATION**

- 1) That the Children and Families Select Committee considers and comments on progress in relation to the implementation of Family Hub Networks and proposed next steps.

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

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

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### **Constitutional Comments (SF 04/02/25)**

65. This report falls within the remit of the Children and Families Select Committee for consideration as set out in their Terms of Reference.

### **Financial Comments (CDS 04/02/25)**

66. Financial arrangements are described in **paragraphs 51-53**. In summary, there should be 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.

[Implementing the roll out of Family Hubs in Nottinghamshire – report to Cabinet 28 March 2024](#)

[Implementing the roll out of Family Hub Networks across Nottinghamshire – report to Cabinet 9 November 2023](#)

[The Council's Prevention and Early Help Approach - report to Cabinet 21 September 2023](#)

[Family Hub Developments in Nottinghamshire – report to the Nottinghamshire Health and Wellbeing Board 15 September 2023](#)

[Best Start Strategy Annual Progress Report 2022-2023 – report to Health and Wellbeing Board 5 July 2023](#)

[Implementing Family Hubs in Nottinghamshire – report to Children and Young People’s Committee on 13 December 2021](#)

[Proposed changes to Retford Central Children’s Centre – report to Children and Young People’s Committee on 13 December 2021](#)

Nottinghamshire Family Hubs Implementation Equalities Impact Assessment November 2021  
[Completed Equality Impact Assessments \(EqiAs\) | Nottinghamshire County Council](#)

[Proposed Consultation on the use of Retford Central Children’s Centre – report to Children and Young People’s Committee on 13 September 2021](#)

### **Electoral Divisions and Members Affected**

All.

CFS0036



**17 March 2025**

**Agenda Item: 6**

**REPORT OF THE CABINET MEMBER, EDUCATION AND SPECIAL  
EDUCATIONAL NEEDS AND DISABILITIES**

**ELECTIVE HOME EDUCATION**

**Purpose of the Report**

1. This is the second report to the Children and Families Select Committee in respect of Elective Home Education. The report seeks to provide a progress report to Members in respect of the current position on Elective Home Education in Nottinghamshire and to enable the Committee to monitor the Council's delivery of support and discharge of our statutory duty in this area.

**Information**

2. Parents and carers' legal rights and duties are set out in the Education Act 1996. The parent of every child of compulsory school age must ensure that they receive an efficient, full-time education, suitable to his/her age, ability and aptitude and any special educational needs that they may have, either by regular attendance at school or otherwise. A person with parental responsibility has the legal right to withdraw a child from school by delivering notification of that fact to the school. The school then has a duty to notify the local authority and to remove the child's name from the school register.
3. The Council has a well-established process to record known children as being electively home educated and provide support to those families. Parents and carers/carers can choose whether to engage with support offered by the local authority. At the point of a child being electively home educated, parents and carers/carers are elective home educators and are completely responsible for the costs, provision, management and delivery of education for that child. There are no specific curricular requirements incumbent on elective home educators as there are on schools.
4. Parents and carers of all children recorded as electively home educated in Nottinghamshire are offered at a minimum, a yearly intervention visit, supporting them in continuing to fulfil their responsibilities as specified by the Education Act 1996. There is flexibility in how this takes place, and visits can be made virtually or in person where this is requested or needed.
5. It is the Council's duty to ensure that all children of compulsory school age in its area are being suitably educated and to act if it appears that any child is not receiving such an

education through well-established working practices, as described in the Elective Home Education Policy (attached as **Appendix 1A**). This policy was reviewed in 2024 and takes account of recent case law *Goodred v Portsmouth City Council (2021)*.

6. Parents and carers retain the right to apply for their child to return to a mainstream school whilst they are of statutory school age should they wish to cease elective home education, or they cannot demonstrate that suitable home education is being provided.

### **Staffing structure**

7. The current Elective Home Education service structure comprises of a Senior Professional Practitioner and 3 Professional Practitioners, all supported by a business support team. The line management of the service sits with the Fair Access Team Manager.
8. The three Professional Practitioner posts introduced in 2021 are now fully embedded within the team structure with specific focus to:
  - ensure that parents and carers are aware of their rights and responsibilities when making the decision to electively home educate and that this is appropriate for their child;
  - provide support to ensure that when children are returning to school this happens without delay;
  - provide an additional layer of support to children identified as the most vulnerable and share this with Senior Practitioner or Team Manager for discussion and actions;
  - ensure flexibility is maintained to request specific follow up or one-off support, such as when a child requires input from other services or when parents and carers/carers would benefit from additional support.
9. Commissioning through the Dynamic Purchasing System also allows the Council to draw on the expertise of Associate Education Advisers as needed, currently there 17 Associate Education Advisers available to support the team. These advisers undertake specialist education support and guidance visits to families where this is identified as a need. The Council's procurement process enables new applicants to be approved ensuring that the team's capacity is sustainable.
10. Associate Advisers meet annually with the Fair Access Team Manager and Elective Home Education team to ensure they have received relevant training to enable their duties to be carried out in line with current legislation and the Council's policies and procedures. Communication and training information is also available via a dedicated Adviser SharePoint site and a new termly newsletter is being rolled out in Spring 2025.

### **The Nottinghamshire Model**

11. Parents and carers are under no legal obligation to see anyone from the Elective Home Education team, and in these situations the Local Authority writes annually to make informal enquiries about their home education provision. Home educators are asked to demonstrate to the Council that their child is in receipt of suitable education; is making progress and is being prepared for adulthood. Information submitted is reviewed by a senior member of the Elective Home Education team (who is Designated Safeguarding

Lead trained) alongside an Education Adviser with qualified teacher status. This supports a holistic view to be formed about suitability.

12. The Elective Home Education Policy 2024-2028 (attached as **Appendix 1A**) and the EHE Best Practice document (attached as **Appendix 1B**) outline the processes undertaken by the Elective Home Education Team and where appropriate, referral to other agencies, such as The Family Service in line with s437 of the Education Act 1996. This supports the safeguarding of the child, monitoring of education provision and enables the Council to fulfil its statutory duty and be satisfied that children are not missing education.
13. There is no duty incumbent on the Council at this time to provide access to formal examinations for children who are electively home educated. All members of the team maintain their knowledge of local examination centres and sources of support to advise home educators. A key development has been the establishment of a new Nottinghamshire elective home education webspace, which includes signposting for external examination candidates. This is subject to ongoing review to ensure information is accurate and up to date.

## Data and analysis

14. The dashboard for elective home education (attached as **Appendix 2**) reports on children known to be electively home educated in Nottinghamshire on 28 June 2024; this was the last day of statutory schooling for year 11 and therefore the day in the academic year that the cohort was at its highest number. Comparative numbers for previous years are also taken on the last Friday in June. Information from the dashboard is used to inform decisions regarding the operation of the Elective Home Education team and identify areas of possible concern in relation to deregistration from school.
15. In Nottinghamshire, 1,663 children were recorded as electively home educated on 28 June 2024, an increase of 266 since 30 June 2023:
  - 863 were receiving direct support from the Elective Home Education team
  - 774 parents and carers declined Local Authority involvement.
16. The five-year data on the dashboard demonstrates the yearly increase in numbers of children known to be electively home educated in Nottinghamshire. The BBC reported in June 2024 that elective home education requests have increased nationally with the East Midlands showing a rise of 7%. However, the picture across Nottinghamshire is well above this level showing a rise of 19.4% from the previous academic year. Data indicates that numbers of children who are electively home educated in Nottinghamshire continue to rise throughout secondary peaking in year 10, with numbers then decreasing slightly at year 11. This pattern is similar to that of the previous 2 academic years.
17. Reasons for electively home educating vary:
  - 37% (609) state ideological and philosophical reasons
  - 33% (552) state mental health/anxiety

18. Of those known to be electively home educated in Nottinghamshire on 28 June 2024:
- 63 children had an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) some of whom had an EHCP issued whilst being home educated and others had deregistered from school whilst awaiting a specialist setting;
  - 2 children were on a Child Protection Plan
  - 5 children were on a Child in Need Plan.
19. For these children, a named member of the Elective Home Education team is responsible for closer monitoring and reviewing the suitability of elective home education provision, under the supervision of the Senior Practitioner. Practitioners work collaboratively with Children's Social Care colleagues to ensure that steps are taken to return children to school without delay where this is necessary to ensure they are appropriately safeguarded and/or educated.

### **Children for whom Elective Home Education ended in the academic year 2023-24**

20. During the academic year 2023-24, the local authority could not be satisfied of suitable education for 141 children. This was due to either no demonstration of learning, a limited demonstration of learning that did not cover a full-time educational entitlement or an unsuitable visit by an Education Adviser. In these cases, parents and carers/carers were required to apply for a school place - supported by a professional practitioner; or demonstrate suitable learning. If provision remained unsuitable and/or no school place had been secured the Council's statutory duty, in line with s437 Education Act, was discharged with a referral to the Family Service. This resulted in 25 children being referred for a school attendance order.
21. A number of children (120) returned to mainstream school during the 2023-2024 academic year. The districts with the highest number of returners were Ashfield and Mansfield, with Rushcliffe having the lowest number. This highest proportion of returners was within the secondary phase (peaking at year 10).

### **Impact of Children's Wellbeing and Schools Bill**

22. The Children's Wellbeing and Schools Bill, in its current form, suggests additional statutory duties for local authorities. Whilst the proposals outlined in the Bill are welcomed and the current team structure and processes are established, the changes to legislative framework in respect of 'children not in school registers', and the additional duties on local authorities regarding 'consent to withdraw a child from school' would increase the workload across a team already working to maximum capacity. The number of children and young people accessing learning through Elective Home Education has doubled since the current funding levels for the team were agreed and this will need to be reviewed. It is unclear at this stage whether there will be any central funding from Government for any additional mandatory requirements placed on local authorities as a result of the Bill being passed.
23. A comprehensive record of known children that are electively educated at home is already in place and would form the basis of any compulsory new register for children out of school. However, greater capacity would be needed if the compulsory register increased demand for more parental support and oversight. In addition, there is an unknown number of parents and carers who have always electively home educated and never enrolled their

child/ren at school. These children are not recorded as being in receipt of home education unless they are brought to the attention of the Local Authority by parents and carers or by another means. The proposed Bill places mandatory requirements on parents and carers for their child to be registered with the local authority when not in school.

24. The current budget for elective home education in Nottinghamshire is £308,114 which covers the 3 x professional practitioners and the Senior Professional practitioner salaries with oncosts as well as business support hours and all associated adviser costs. Increases in cohort numbers has led to changes in the work of the team so that the budget can meet need.
25. The impact of the increase in numbers has resulted in face-to-face adviser visits being prioritised for those young people with EHCPs, those are open to Social Care or those known to be vulnerable. The panel process to review the demonstrations of learning has also changed whereby the face-to-face meeting has ceased and advisers complete a template for processing. In doing so, additional children can be reviewed at each panel. Additional panels have also been added during the school holiday periods. The continuing increase of electively home educated children will require additional finance if this level of oversight is to be maintained.
26. The Council's current Elective Home Education Policy was most recently reviewed in June 2024 by the Children and Families Select Committee. It is proposed that a further review takes place once more information is known about the implementation of the Children's Wellbeing and School's Bill and any changes to associated legislation and regulations.

## **RECOMMENDATION**

That the Children and Families Select Committee:

- 1) notes the rise in electively home educated children since the last report to Select Committee.
- 2) considers and comments on delivery of support and discharge of the Council's statutory duties in this around Elective Home Education.
- 3) considers and comments on the extent to which Nottinghamshire's Elective Home Education Team is sufficiently prepared to implement any changes in light of the forthcoming Children's Wellbeing and Schools Bill.

**Councillor Ben Bradley**  
**Cabinet Member, Education and Special Educational Needs & Disabilities**

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### **Constitutional Comments (KK 04/03/25)**

27. The proposals in this report are within the remit of the Children and Families Select Committee.

### **Financial Comments (SS 06/03/25)**

28. The budget for to run the Elective Home Education service is £308,114. This is the cost of 3 Professional Practitioners, 1 Senior Practitioner plus the cost of advisers. The increase in cost for extra posts can be quantified when it is identified exactly what extra staff will be required.

### **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.

[Education Act 1996 \(legislation.gov.uk\)](https://legislation.gov.uk)

Nottinghamshire County Council Elective Home Education Policy [Elective Home Education Policy | Nottinghamshire County Council Intranet](#)

[Elective home education: departmental guidance for local authorities \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://publishing.service.gov.uk)

[Goodred v Portsmouth City Council | \[2021\] EWHC 3057 \(Admin\) | England and Wales High Court \(Administrative Court\) | Judgment | Law | CaseMine](#)

[Children's Wellbeing and Schools Bill 2024-25 - House of Commons Library](#)

[Move to home schooling biggest since Covid - BBC News](#)

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

All.

CFS0038





## **Elective Home Education Policy June 2024**

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- 2. Background**
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### **Annex A**

# Nottinghamshire Elective Home Education Policy 2024-2028

## 1. Introduction

1.1 This Policy applies to those children whose parents and carers have chosen to educate their children at home. The document sets out parental rights and responsibilities, the current legal position and outlines Nottinghamshire County Council's (NCC) procedures in respect of Elective Home Education. Throughout this guidance the word 'parents' should be taken to include all those with parental responsibility, including guardians, and foster carers (N.B. in the case of Foster Carers the Local Authority may be the corporate parent).

1.2 Elective Home Education is the term used by the Department for Education to describe a choice made 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.

1.3. 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. NCC 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.

1.4. This policy revision was initiated in line with the 3 year review determined within the previous (2020) policy and takes into account recent case law *Goodred v Portsmouth City Council* (2021).

## 2. Background

2.1. This policy is informed by:

- [Elective home education - draft departmental guidance for local authorities.pdf](#) 2023
- [2019 guidance provided by the DfE, Elective home education Departmental guidance for local authorities](#) (hereafter referred to as '2019 guidance')
- [Education Act 1996 \(inserted by the Education and Inspections Act 2006\)](#)
- [The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child](#) (Article 28)
- [European Convention on Human Rights](#) (Article 2, Protocol 1)
- [Case law Goodred v Portsmouth City Council \(2021\)](#)
- [Education Act 1996 - Legislation.gov.uk](#)
- [The Children Act 2004](#)
- [Education Act 2002](#)
- [Elective home education, Academic year 2022/23 – Explore education statistics – GOV.UK \(explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk\)](#)
- [The Education \(Pupil Registration\) \(England\) Regulations 2006](#)
- [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](#)
- [Nottinghamshire Safeguarding Children Partnership Child Protection Procedures](#)

2.2. NCC is committed to eliminating discrimination, advancing equality of opportunity and fostering good relations between people in accordance with the [Equality Act 2010](#).

### **3. Aims of the Policy**

3.1 This policy is in place to ensure that NCC 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.

3.2 The policy aims to give 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.

3.3 The Local Authority in its role as champion for all children and young people whether they are educated in school or elsewhere has a duty to promote the achievement of all children and young people. In doing so it will seek to establish the identities (so far as possible), of the children in Nottinghamshire who are home educated and offer information, advice and guidance to parents. The Local Authority will also intervene where there are concerns that a child is not receiving a suitable education or there are concerns about a child's wellbeing or safety.

### **4. Principles underpinning Nottinghamshire County Council's policy**

4.1 NCC's ambition is for Nottinghamshire to be a place where children are safe, healthy and happy, where everyone enjoys a good quality of life and where everyone can be given the support to achieve their potential and prepare for adulthood.

4.2 All children and young people have a right to an education that is appropriate to their age, ability and aptitude which takes into account any special educational needs and disabilities they may have. We recognise that parents have the legal responsibility for ensuring that their children are suitably educated and respects the rights of parents who elect to home educate their child. The Local Authority seeks to work in partnership with and offer support to all parents who make this choice and recognises its role in making information available to parents who are considering this route.

4.3 Every effort will be made to ensure that the child continues their education in school if that is in their best interests. Where a parent's decision to withdraw their child from school does not appear to be a positive one, or there is evidence of off-rolling, Nottinghamshire's Elective Home Education (EHE) team will always seek to work with children, parents and the school to resolve any issues and support conversations and joint meetings to agree how a student's needs can continue to be met by the school.

4.4 The Local Authority will work with all maintained schools, academies and independent schools to ensure that they adhere to statutory guidance in relation to attendance, exclusions and the removal of children from a school roll to reduce the potential for children to be off-rolled, displaced into elective home education by default or go missing.

4.5 There are a variety of approaches to providing a suitable, full-time education and an electively home educated child may not necessarily follow a programme of study designed for the school sector. We acknowledge that children learn in different ways and at different times and speeds. Parents should be aiming to offer satisfactory home education from the outset, and to have made preparations with that aim in view, as time lost in educating a child is difficult to recover. However, we appreciate that parents and their children might require a period of adjustment before finding their preferred mode of learning and that families may change their approach over time.

4.6 The Local Authority is required, as far as is reasonably practicable, to identify children who are not in receipt of a suitable education and appropriate informal enquiries shall be made to this end in respect of children who are electively home educated by suitably qualified and trained representatives of NCC. Where a return to a school setting is required, we will work collaboratively with parents to ensure that this can happen without delay.

## 5. Parental rights and responsibilities

5.1 Parents have a legal responsibility to ensure that their children receive an education. Section 7 of The Education Act 1996 provides that:

*'The parent of every child of compulsory school age shall cause them to receive efficient full-time education suitable –*

*(a) to their age, ability and aptitude, and*

*(b) to any special educational needs they may have, either by regular attendance at school or otherwise.'*

5.2 Education 'otherwise' includes by means of elective home education and parents may elect to home educate at any stage. Whilst their children are of statutory school age, they must ensure that they receive suitable full-time education for as long as they have elected to educate them at home.

5.3 Parents are not required to seek approval from the Local Authority to educate their child at home. Where parents choose for their child not to enter the school system and to provide elective home education, they are requested to bring this to the attention of Nottinghamshire County Council's EHE team, although there is no statutory duty for them to do so. Parents' right to educate their child at home applies equally where a child has Special Educational Needs (SEN) and further information about children with an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) is contained in **paragraphs 34 - 37** of this policy.

5.4 On the basis of international comparisons, the current legislative framework for home education is relatively permissive. Parents' education provision will reflect a diversity of approaches and interests. Some parents may wish to provide education in a formal and structured manner, following a traditional curriculum and using a fixed timetable that keeps to school hours and terms. Other parents may decide to make more informal provision that is responsive to the developing interests of their child.

5.5 Parents are not required to have any qualifications or training to provide their children with a suitable education and may choose to employ other people to educate their child, though they themselves will continue to be responsible for the education provided. They will also be responsible for ensuring that anyone they engage is a suitable person to have access to children and that their child is not attending a setting that is operating as an independent school without registration. Parents who choose to educate a child at home rather than sending the child to school full-time take on financial responsibility for the cost of doing so, including the cost of any external assistance used such as tutors, parent groups or part-time alternative provision. Examination costs are also the responsibility of parents if a child is electively home educated.

## 6. Local authority responsibilities

6.1 Section 436A of the Education Act 1996, inserted by the Education and Inspections Act 2006, places a statutory duty on the Local Authority to:

*'make arrangements to enable them to establish (so far as it is possible to do so) the identities of children in their area who are of compulsory school age but –*

*(a) are not registered pupils at a school, and*

*(b) are not receiving suitable education otherwise than at a school.'*

6.2 When children are electively home educated local authorities are recommended to make informal enquiries if it is not clear as to whether home education is suitable, including where there is no information available at all. The 2019 guidance recommends asking parents for detailed information about the education they are providing and following up these enquiries with at least annual contact so the authority may reasonably inform itself of the current suitability of the education provided. Parents are under no duty to respond to such enquiries, but if a parent does not respond,

or responds without providing any information about the child's education, then it will normally be justifiable for the authority to conclude that the child does not appear to be receiving suitable education.

6.3 Under section 437(1) of the Education Act 1996, local authorities shall intervene if it appears that the parents may not be providing a suitable education. If it appears to a local authority that a child of compulsory school age in their area is not receiving suitable education, either by regular attendance at school or otherwise, they shall serve notice in writing on the parent requiring them to satisfy them within the period specified in the notice that the child is receiving such education. Parents must have at least 15 days to respond to such a notice.

6.4 If parents do not make a response, or if they fail to satisfy the authority that the child is receiving a suitable education, and it is expedient that the child attends school, then the authority will serve a School Attendance Order requiring the parent to cause the child to become a registered pupil at the school named in the order. The basis on which schools are selected for this purpose is outlined in Sections 438 to 441 of the Education Act 1996.

6.5 Local authorities have a duty to safeguard and promote the welfare of children. The welfare and protection of all children, both those who attend school and those who are educated at home, are of paramount concern and the responsibility of the whole community. Working Together to Safeguard Children 2018 states that all agencies and individuals should aim to proactively safeguard and promote the welfare of children.

## 7. The Nottinghamshire model

7.1 NCC records all children in the area who are known to be electively home educated in order that we can discharge statutory duty as set out in **paragraphs 21 – 25** of this guidance. Where a child leaves a school or academy, including an independent school, there is a requirement for the establishment to inform us that the child's name is being deleted from the admission register for the reason of elective home education (where this is the case). The Children Act 2004 places a duty on all stakeholders to share information for the purposes of safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children. All children brought to the attention of NCC as being in receipt of elective home education by other means will be recorded as such in order that we are able to discharge our duty under section 436A of the Education Act 1996. NCC must of course comply with the General Data Protection Regulation and the Data Protection Act 2018.

7.2 When a notification is received from school that a parent is considering elective home education, or that they have formally requested a deregistration from the roll for elective home education, contact is offered from a Professional Practitioner within the Nottinghamshire EHE team. This offers an opportunity for parents to ask any questions, discuss the decision and to confirm the elective home education is a positive choice they have made, without pressure to do so. If, during this conversation it appears that it is the parents' wish that their child remains on school roll, then conversations and meetings to agree future support from within the school systems will be facilitated by the Professional Practitioner. Checks are routinely undertaken for all children known to be electively home educated to see if the child is known to any other NCC support services who may be working with the child or family and can support them in their future decisions.

7.3 If parents wish to continue to electively home educate then options for future contact with Nottinghamshire's EHE team will be discussed:

- All parents are offered support from a suitably qualified and experienced Education Adviser. They can offer guidance in respect of curriculum, qualification pathways and external support available. If parents choose to accept this advice and guidance offer then the a view regarding whether the child is in receipt of suitable education will be formed following contact with the Education Adviser. A record of any recommendations and advice given will be sent to parents.

- Some parents indicate that their child has specific needs that may mean additional support from the Professional Practitioner is offered, these could include where a referral is required to another service for ongoing support.
- The EHE team will make informal contact to ensure that a suitable education is in place on at least an annual basis. Where parents request further support, or where there are concerns about the suitability of the education or about the wellbeing of a child, the contact may be more frequent. The Local Authority will make at least two informal attempts to contact parents to seek assurances that a suitable education is in place before taking any more formal action.
- Parental views on the type of contact they would prefer to receive will be sought by the team. Where parents indicate they do not wish to have direct contact with the team and do not provide other evidence of suitable education, Nottinghamshire County Council's EHE team will make informal enquiries and ask the parents for further information about the education that is being provided. *'Parents are under no duty to respond to such enquiries, but if a parent does not respond, or responds without providing any information about the child's education, then it will normally be justifiable for the authority to conclude that the child does not appear to be receiving suitable education'* (DfE Guidance 2019). NCC is not prescriptive about what needs to be provided and will form a view based on each individual situation. Information that could be provided includes: a detailed report covering what learning has taken place, the child's progress and level of comprehension; a report from a third party (this need not be a specifically qualified third party or one who tutors the child); copies of the child's work; copies of feedback from educational service providers; images of the child engaged in learning or some other form of information that indicates the suitability of the education provision. Where the information provided is simply an assertion of the education the child is in receipt of, this will not usually suffice.

7.4 NCC recognises that each child is an individual and does not apply a blanket policy in forming a view about whether we are satisfied that a child is in receipt of suitable education. However, there are some fundamentals that it is highly likely will need to be in place to be confident that suitable education is being delivered. **Annex A** outlines NCC's considerations when reviewing information in relation to the home education in place.

7.5 If NCC is not able to confirm that a suitable education is in place through the usual informal processes, it may be necessary to serve a s.437(1) notice to seek assurance that a child is in receipt of a suitable education. In this case the Authority would set out, in writing, the reasons why EHE does not appear to be suitable at the point of serving a s.437(1) notice, (also referred to as a 'preliminary notice') so that parents can respond constructively to the notice. The period specified for a response will not be less than 15 days beginning with the day on which the notice is served.

7.6 If NCC cannot be satisfied that a child is in receipt of suitable education then this will be communicated to the parent and support offered to ensure the child is returned to suitable education provision, usually at a school, without delay. If parents do not comply with the timescales set out to either apply for a school place or further demonstrate suitable education then action in line with **paragraphs 24 and 25** of this Policy will be initiated.

7.7 As with school educated children, safeguarding issues may arise in relation to electively home educated children. If concerns come to light in the course of engagement with children and families, or otherwise, they shall be addressed in accordance with the process set out in Nottinghamshire Safeguarding Children Partnership child protection procedures.

7.8 To ensure equality of access to health services, specifically the School Aged Immunisation Services and the Healthy Families Programme, Nottinghamshire's EHE team provides, on a termly basis, details of children who are electively home educated in the County to the area NHS foundation trust. Information is communicated to parents at the point their child becomes known to Nottinghamshire's EHE team and details are not shared when consent is withheld.

## **8. Children and young people in specific circumstances**

### **8.1 Children with an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP)**

8.1.1 When a child with an EHCP is attending a special school under arrangements made by the Local Authority then the Local Authority's consent is required for the child to be removed from the school roll to become electively home educated. When such a request is received this will be passed to NCC's Integrated Children's Disability Service which will give consideration to parents' plans and ability to provide education at home to a child whose special educational needs are significant enough to warrant a place in a special school. Additionally for any request for a child with an EHCP they will need to carefully consider with parents how the health and social aspects of the plan will be delivered within the home education proposals. An early annual review will be called for any children with an EHCP who moves to elective home education in order that any revisions to the plan can be agreed.

8.1.2 Where a child has an EHCP, the Local Authority is required to monitor the educational provision and to arrange for the EHCP to be annually reviewed. This review will be conducted by the Integrated Children's Disability Service in conjunction with the EHE team.

8.1.3 Providing the home education is suitable, the Local Authority has no duty to arrange any special educational provision for the child; the plan should simply set out the type of special educational provision that the Authority thinks the child requires but it should state in a suitable place that parents have made their own arrangements under s.7 of the Education Act 1996.

8.1.4 Young people may also be educated at home in order to meet the requirement to participate in education and training until the age of 18. If this is specified within an EHCP then support from Nottinghamshire's EHE team, as detailed in this policy, will continue until the child's 18<sup>th</sup> Birthday.

### **8.2 Children who are Flexi Schooled**

8.2.1 Flexi-schooling is an arrangement whereby a child is educated at home for some of the week but also registered at a school where they attend for part of the week. If a child is of compulsory school age he or she must, overall, be receiving full-time education even if components of it are part-time. The 2019 guidance is clear that it applies as much to children who are flexi-schooled as it does to others who are educated at home.

8.2.2 Flexi-schooling can be requested by parents but is not an automatic right and must be agreed by the school involved. In situations where this agreement is reached, the Local Authority ensures that the requirement for suitable full-time education is met by regular reviews by the school of the child's provision, including information about the provision being received at home. Schools are required to inform NCC of any children subject to a flexi-schooling arrangement in order that this can be recorded and a yearly assurance of full-time suitable education sought from the school. Advice and guidance can be sought by schools from NCC's EHE team.

## **9. Maintained and independent schools and academies: roles and responsibilities**

9.1 Schools should explore with parents all the immediate and longer-term implications of taking their child off roll. In line with the 2019 guidance it is strongly advised that parents confirm in writing to the school their intention to home educate to avoid misunderstanding; if no such written confirmation is provided to the school then NCC requires the school to provide a written confirmation to the EHE service of the decisions made.

9.2 The school must inform the EHE team without delay of the parents' decision to deregister their child. They should follow the legal requirements and the agreed NCC protocols for taking children off roll. Any safeguarding concerns must also be reported at this point.

## **10. Monitoring and reporting arrangements**

10.1 Details of all children and young people who are electively home educated are maintained in secure database systems within the Education, Learning and Inclusion Service. Information about how personal data is handled and stored, including information about how long records are retained for, can be found by visiting [Nottinghamshire County Council's Privacy Statement](#).

10.2 The Local Authority is expected to consider trends in EHE in a wider strategic context, for example, in identifying shortcomings in local school provision and non-school based alternative provision settings, including failure to meet requirements relating to SEND, or failures by schools to manage attendance and behaviour. Consequently an annual report is submitted to the Cabinet Member for Education and SEND for the purposes of monitoring discharge of statutory duty and support offered to parents who elect to home educate. This provides characteristics of the entire population of children known to be electively home educated in Nottinghamshire, such as gender, SEN, area, but does not provide information at such a level that it would be possible to identify individual children.

10.3 The Local Authority is requested to provide information to the Department for Education in the form of a termly data return for children who are EHE and complies with this request. The information provided is at a cohort level and not an individual child level.

## **11. Complaints, Comments and Compliments**

11.1 We want to hear your views about our services, good or bad. What you tell us helps us improve services and plan for the future. Informal complaints or compliments can be sent to the Fair Access Team Manager via the EHE email address [EHE@nottscc.gov.uk](mailto:EHE@nottscc.gov.uk)

11.2 To make a formal complaint, comment or compliment please use the online form [Make a comment, compliment or complaint | Nottinghamshire County Council](#) or write to Complaints and Information Team, County Hall, West Bridgford, Nottingham, NG2 7QP.

11.3 If you remain dissatisfied after the Nottinghamshire County Council Complaints Procedure has been followed you can raise your complaint with the Local Government Ombudsman <https://www.lgo.org.uk>

## **12. Review of this policy**

12.1 It is intended that this policy statement is reviewed within three years of its publication unless the arrangements have to change as a result of County Council policy development or service structure, or changes in legislation or guidance before this date.



## **Annex A**

There are some key points considered by NCC when forming a view about whether a child is in receipt of suitable education provision:

- There is a planned approach to literacy and numeracy suitable to the learner's age, ability, strengths and individual needs;
- a range of learning opportunities are provided across a variety of subjects, topics, areas suitable to the learner's age, ability, strengths and individual needs;
- there are planned learning outcomes and progress is demonstrable;
- appropriate time is allocated to the home education programme and this is appropriately supervised and supported;
- there are opportunities to develop interpersonal skills and socialise outside the home;
- the learner's physical, social and emotional health and wellbeing are being promoted and any risk factors or needs are being appropriately supported;
- the learner's thoughts on the home education programme are being sought;
- the programme is matched to the learner's aspirations, interests and strengths;
- a suitable learning environment is being provided and resources are well matched to the planned learning programme. These could include digital (with appropriate online safety measures), workbooks, equipment and external provision;
- the child is well equipped for life within their community;
- there is evidence of preparation for adulthood.



## **Nottinghamshire County Council Elective Home Education (EHE) and Best Practice**

- All schools have been sent and have access to our Best Practice Guide, EHE Fact Sheet & FAQ's which is expected to be shared with parents during EHE discussions.
- Schools are expected to complete the Deregistration Form incorporating amended and improved NCC approach, including specific reminders about legal duty and best practice.
- Schools are challenged and asked for further information where a parent suggests off rolling or we suspect off rolling. Where not enough information is provided on the school form we will send them back for full completion.
- Safeguarding is paramount and underpins everything we do, all safeguarding concerns are discussed at the relevant level and passed to MASH.
- CME cases are discussed at our weekly meetings and passed onto the CME officer where appropriate.

In addition:

- Parents are made aware of any potential issues in the initial call/email from our EHE Practitioners, which can then form part of further school-based discussion before decisions regarding EHE.
- Parents now have our Professional Practitioner's to support in conversations with schools and other relevant professionals to prevent inappropriate EHE recording and if further signposting for support is required.
- All Parents are told they should inform their GP that their child is home educated.
- Parents are sent the NHS letter and rather than giving consent to opt in, they have to inform us in writing that they withdraw consent for information sharing with health.
- We have now moved all our recording to mosaic so we can see any previous or current safeguarding concerns to inform our initial enquiries, this also aids in communication with ICDS and Social Work colleagues.
- If a child has an EHCP or other agency involvement, such as social care, family service, enforcement, Youth justice, HRET etc, we will have discussions with these colleagues when we receive an EHE intention.
- We have recently had a report built by the Business Intelligence Hub to reflect our EHE cohort in terms of data including around ICDS, CIN or CP families (this is still being looked at as there are some discrepancies).
- We now have a new website built for our EHE families, [Elective home education | Nottinghamshire County Council](#)
- EHE moved to the Fair Access Team structure in September 2019.
- [Nottinghamshire's Elective Home Education Policy](#) was agreed by members in February 2020 following a period of public consultation there is also further information on this page about EHE in Nottinghamshire. Current NCC EHE policy is in the process of being reviewed.
- Children have a right to education, parents have a right to arrange education at school or otherwise including EHE.
- EHE is free from regulation in the same way as a school, there is no right of access to young people or their parents and education does not have to follow a school curriculum.
- An increasing number of parents are choosing EHE due to dissatisfaction with the school system or a perceived failure to meet their child's needs. EHE is a long term commitment and should never be viewed as a temporary or interim solution.

- Since March 2020 an increase in EHE intentions has been seen in line with Covid restrictions and predicted yearly increase. A number of parents have cited anxiety regarding Covid as the reason they have decided to home educate.
- Under Section 436a Education Act 1996 the LA has a duty to act if we believe that a young person is not in receipt of suitable education (EHE service)
- We make informal enquiries to ascertain whether suitable education is being provided by offering a yearly education adviser visit to parents and if they choose not to engage with this then requesting a yearly demonstration of learning to satisfy us of the education being provided. The Local Authority's right to make enquires and be satisfied as to suitability of education for children in its area is set out in legislation, government guidance and has been supported by recent case law (Goodred v Portsmouth CC [2021] EWHC 3057 (Admin)). Nottinghamshire County Council's current published Elective Home Education Policy (February 2020) includes information about the need for informal enquiry requests for detailed information to all home educators who choose not to meet with one of our representatives. This links to meeting our duties in respect of s436a Education Act 1996, which are further clarified within non statutory Elective Home Education guidance for Local Authorities (April 2019).
- When a parent notifies a school it is their intention to home educate their child the school must inform NCC's EHE service and it is good practice for the school to ask parents to confirm in writing to them. The school returns information to NCC to support decision making about whether EHE is going to be supported.
- Mosaic is reviewed when a new EHE intention is received and a parental intention can only usually be refused if it can be evidenced that potential harm would be caused to the young person. This is usually only applicable to children open to Social Care and a view would always be sought from the lead professional to inform decision making.
- If a child has an EHCP, discussions will be held with ICDS and the plan amended accordingly if appropriate, usually EHE can only be refused if the child is on roll at a special school.
- For children who have never been recorded in a Nottinghamshire school NCC would only become aware if the parent or another service made contact. There is no legal obligation on parents to do this.
- All EHE children that we are aware of are recorded as such on the front page of Mosaic, we have now had all our processes moved to mosaic to ensure that families are followed up in a fair, timely manner.
- We meet weekly with business support to discuss any processing issues.
- We are currently looking at the reporting systems to see what improvements are required to improve data i.e the ECHP, CIN/CP/SEN data doesn't seem to be captured accurately currently, there will be discussions moving forward on how this report can be improved.
- The Parent engagement group have been reaching out to parents and as a result there will be opportunities in the future EHE adviser forums for parents to share their voice on the Nottinghamshire EHE Team and a parent survey will be incorporated into our website and communication.
- We meet weekly to discuss vulnerable cases on a 1:1 basis.
- We attend all the AEHP forums and serious case review panels when required for sharing good practice and receiving essential updates.

**EHE Structure – Who are we?** Elective Home Education, Education, Learning and Inclusion.

T 0115 9772573

E [EHE@nottscc.gov.uk](mailto:EHE@nottscc.gov.uk)

W [nottinghamshire.gov.uk](http://nottinghamshire.gov.uk)  
A Nottinghamshire County Council  
County Hall | West Bridgford | NG2 7QP

**Business Support Team:** Margaret Bowers, Caitlin Coyle, Judith Anderson, Lucy Haigh

**EHE Professional Practitioners:** **Donna Goodson** (Newark and Bassetlaw), **Rebecca Stringfellow-Bateson** (Mansfield and Ashfield), **Lisa Mathieson (BGR - Broxtowe, Gedling and Rushcliffe)** - Oversight of EHE children in area, direct support and monitoring to the most vulnerable.

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Tel: 0115 8040717 – Newark and Bassetlaw

**EHE Education Advisers:** Ruth Hardy, Trish Dykes, Sally Whitlam, Kevin Hayes, Yvonne Jackson, Val Fraser, Jo Swift, Wendy Mounsey, Eloise Barnett, Paul Lowther, Caron Cox, Tony Walker, Mel Clarke, Georgina Anelay, Rebecca Thompson, Chimson Lawson-Jack and Craig Moxham. Self-employed associates commissioned by the Local Authority to undertake virtual or in person visits to look at a family's education, give support and consider suitability. Education advisers also form part of our education information panels. The responses from our demonstration of learning requests are reviewed by two council representatives, at least one of whom holds Qualified Teacher Status, to form a view about whether the information provided demonstrates suitable education. The points considered to help form a view are applied individually to each young person and their circumstances and are formulated with consideration against or within the context of the 2019 guidance.

**EHE Senior Professional Practitioner:** **Alex Bradshaw** - Co-ordination of EHE service, day to day management of EHE Professional Practitioners and 17 EHE advisers.

[alex.bradshaw@nottscc.gov.uk](mailto:alex.bradshaw@nottscc.gov.uk)

Tel: 0115 9772573

**Team Manager | Fair Access and Elective Home Education:** **Linda Smith** - Strategic management of Fair Access, EHE Team and overall line management for EHE and Fair Access.

[lindasmith2@nottscc.gov.uk](mailto:lindasmith2@nottscc.gov.uk)

Tel: 0115 8546218 | M: 07974 842896



## Elective Home Education Dashboard 2023-24

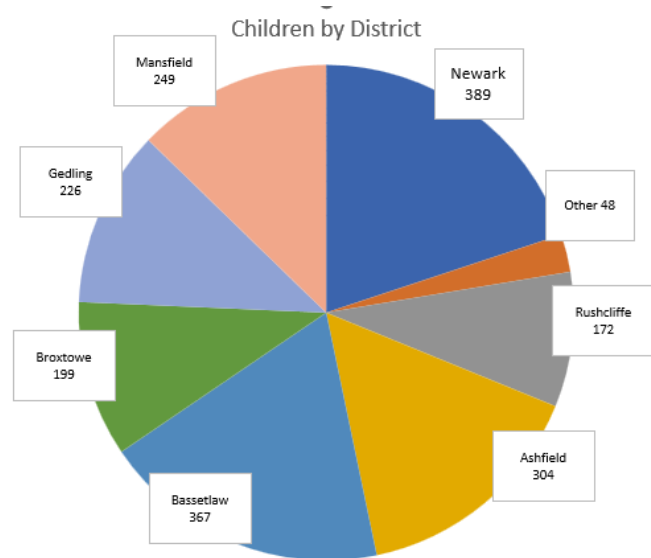
Section 1 of the Dashboard reports on data taken on the 28 June 2024 for last academic year, and the last Friday in June for subsequent years. This is the final day of statutory schooling for year 11 students and therefore represents the day in the year when the cohort is at its highest.

### Section 1

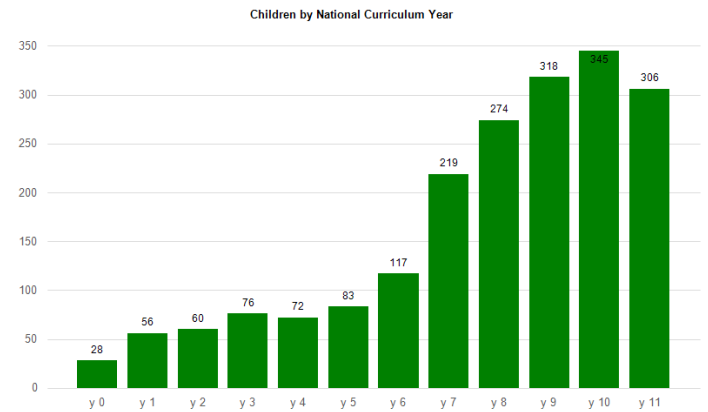
#### 1.1

Total number of Electively Home Educated children and young people:	1663
Number with an EHCP:	63
Number who are Child Protection:	2
Number who are Child in Need:	5

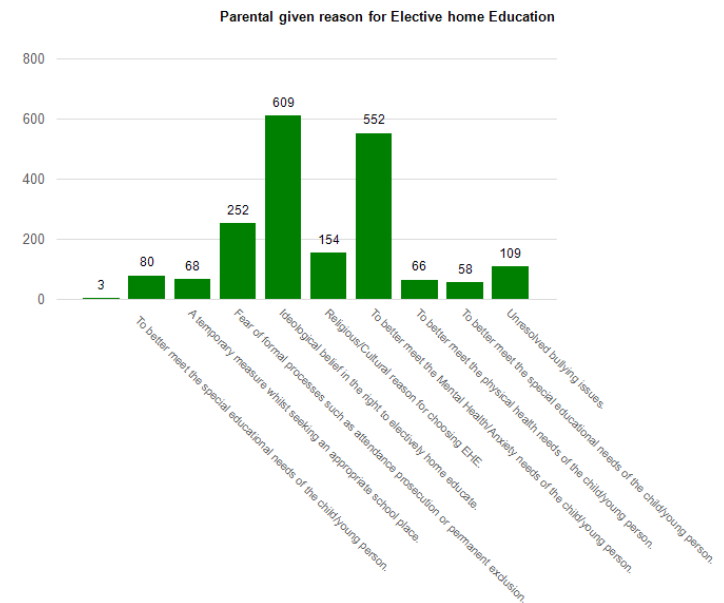
#### 1.2



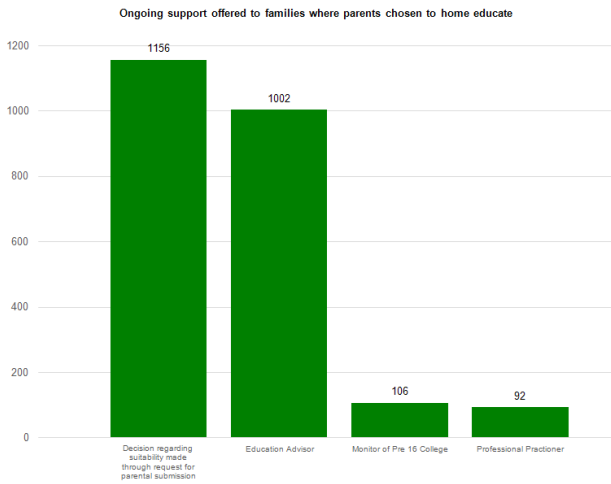
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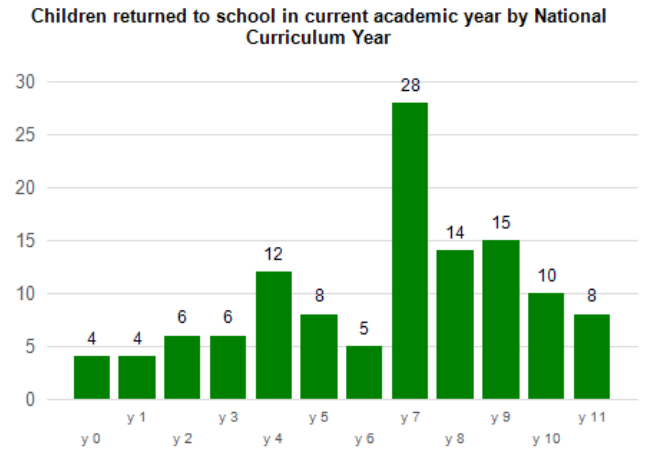
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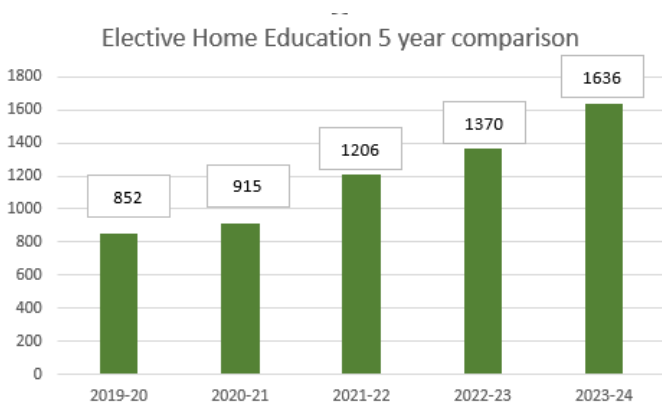


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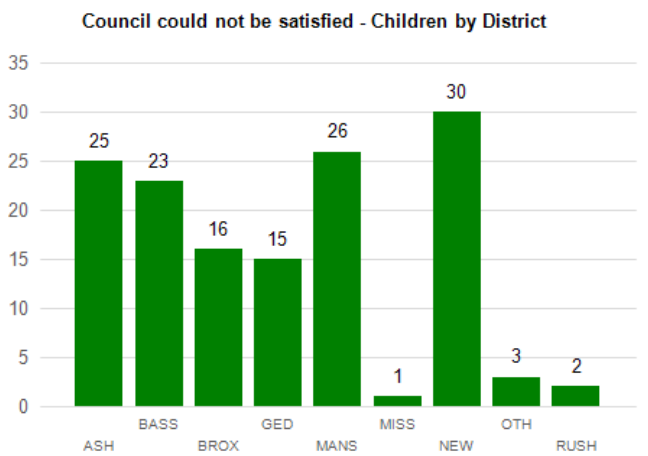


## Section 2

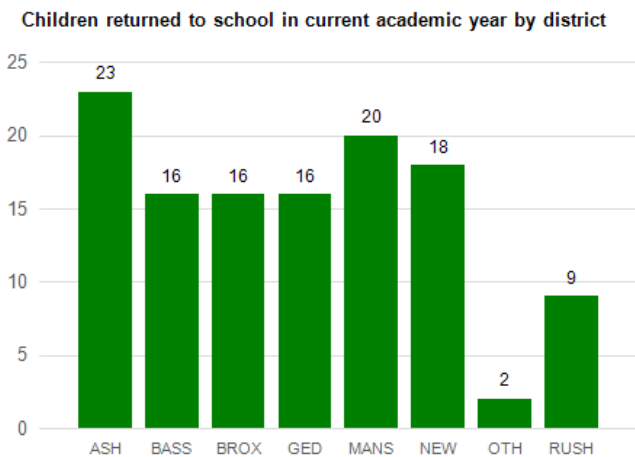
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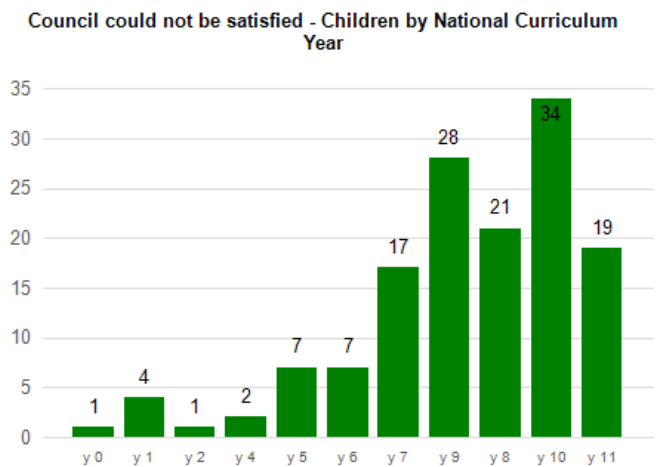
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**17 March 2025**

**Agenda Item: 7**

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

### **IMPACT OF THE INTRODUCTION OF VAT ON INDEPENDENT SCHOOL FEES**

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

1. To consider the implications of the introduction of VAT on independent school fees on the statutory duty of the Council to ensure a sufficiency of statutory school places in Nottinghamshire.

#### **Information**

2. On 29 July 2024, the Chancellor announced that as of 1 January 2025, all education services and vocational training supplied by a private school, or a connected person, for a charge will be subject to VAT at the standard rate of 20%. Boarding services provided by a private school, or a connected person, will also be subject to VAT at 20%.
3. It has also been announced that fees invoiced or paid on or after 29 July 2024 that relate to the school terms after 1 January 2025 will be subject to the standard rate of VAT at the beginning of that term.
4. School fees paid before 29 July 2024 will follow the VAT treatment in force at the time of the normal tax point for these supplies, where the fee rate for the relevant term has been set and was known at the time of payment.
5. Education provided by private schools to individuals where local authorities fund the schooling because of Educational, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs) will also be subject to VAT at 20% from 1 January 2025. HMRC have confirmed local authorities will be able to recover this VAT charged by private schools as section 33 bodies.
6. The draft legislation also confirms that both nursery fees for pre-school age children and supplies of closely related goods/services to education remain exempt from VAT.

#### **Context**

7. Excluding Private Schools in neighbouring local authorities and those providing Specialist Provision, there are six Private fee paying schools based in Nottinghamshire with approximately 1,304 pupils in attendance.

8. There are widely varying assumptions made about the potential impact of VAT on independent school fees.
9. There are various ways that a school could minimise their VAT liability, and also their ability to put up fees depends on the level of price sensitivity in their share of the market.
10. There are likely to be marked differences between schools (depending on their market sector), locations (depending on the perceived attractiveness of local state-funded alternatives) and year groups (lower impact for children already at school, and increasingly lower as the child moves closer to exam years, as families are less willing to risk disruption; higher impact for primary school ages). In the short run, the effect might be particularly small as few parents might opt to take their children out of a school part-way through primary or secondary school. The effect might be larger over the medium to long term.
11. One indication that the demand for independent schools has a low sensitivity to prices is that demand for private schooling in the UK has hardly changed over the last 10 or 20 years, despite a 20% real-terms rise in fees since 2010–11 and a 55% real-terms rise since 2003–04 ([IFS, 2023](#))
12. The Institute for Fiscal Studies ([July 2023](#)) concluded that an effective VAT rate of 15% (after schools have taken actions to reduce liability) would lead to a 3–7% reduction in private school attendance.
13. If there is an increased demand for state school places resulting from an introduction of VAT, the Council does not have the data to fully quantify whether the current state school capacity would be sufficient to meet any increased demand from families choosing state schools rather than independent schools.

### **Number of Vacant State School Places**

14. Numbers of vacant state school places shown in **Table 1** (see paragraph 22) are based on a comparison between:
  - (i) The total number of places that schools make available each year to applicants. This is known as the Published Admission Number (PAN)
  - (ii) The number of pupils on roll by year group, as per statutory school censuses
15. The data does not show the number of additional school places that the Council and schools are planning to make available over the next few years, particularly in secondary schools. However, those places are intended to address current projected demand, which does not include / reflect the potential impact of pupils transferring from independent schools to state ones.
16. The current data indicates that the key pressure points would be in Years 7, 8 and 9 if there was an increase in the number of children transferring from the independent sector.

## **Independent school pupils in Nottinghamshire schools**

17. Data on independent school pupils is provided by the Department for Education (DfE) at school level each January (2024 has been used in the table below). The table below is based on those pupils attending independent mainstream schools located in the Nottinghamshire Local Authority area.
18. The Council does not receive the same level of data on pupils in independent schools as it does for pupils in state schools. The DfE published sources are limited and do not show where pupils attending independent schools live.
19. One Nottinghamshire independent school for example accepts boarders and therefore these pupils' home local authorities could possibly be further away than Nottinghamshire. If the parents of those pupils decide to remove their children from those schools, they may seek alternative places in state schools other than in Nottinghamshire.
20. Equally, there could be Nottinghamshire resident pupils who may be attending independent schools outside the County. These pupils will not be included as the table is based on independent schools located in the County. Some Nottinghamshire resident parents are likely to have sent their children to independent schools based in Nottingham City (such as the High School and Nottingham Girls' High School). If those parents decided to remove their children from those schools, they may seek alternative places in Nottinghamshire state schools instead.
21. If pupils do switch from independent to state school, it is not obvious which state schools would be affected. The DfE data is provided by year of age which, of course, does not exactly match national curriculum year.
22. The table is based on those full-time pupils attending independent mainstream schools and excludes those pupils attending independent special provision settings. This is different to the methodology used in another local authority example that was reviewed which includes this cohort. It was decided to exclude this cohort in the Council's statistics as specialist places are funded by the state rather than by parents and are therefore less likely to be as price sensitive. It has also been publicised that specialist provision commissioned for pupils with an EHCP will be VAT exempt. Also, both the Council and parents are less likely to want to move pupils with such high levels of need and potential vulnerabilities.

**Table 1** – Potential impact of the introduction of VAT on independent school fees in Nottinghamshire, based on place availability (PAN)

Year Group	No. vacant state school places, based on PAN			Pupil age	No. pupils in Nottinghamshire independent schools (Jan 24)	Proportions of independent school pupils					
	May-23	May-24	Oct-24			5%	10%	15%	20%	30%	50%
Recep	1,852	1,750	1,988	4	64	3	6	10	13	19	32
Year 1	1,204	1,545	1,644	5	70	4	7	11	14	21	35
Year 2	1,030	965	1,491	6	66	3	7	10	13	20	33
Year 3	978	821	1,001	7	84	4	8	13	17	25	42
Year 4	995	830	829	8	79	4	8	12	16	24	40
Year 5	773	823	785	9	73	4	7	11	15	22	37
Year 6	474	674	823	10	79	4	8	12	16	24	40
Year 7	0	0	0	11	92	5	9	14	18	28	46
Year 8	0	0	0	12	105	5	11	16	21	32	53
Year 9	132	52	0	13	85	4	9	13	17	26	43
Year 10	213	339	366	14	74	4	7	11	15	22	37
Year 11	581	393	624	15	91	5	9	14	18	27	46
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>8,232</b>	<b>8,192</b>	<b>9,551</b>		<b>962</b>	<b>48</b>	<b>96</b>	<b>144</b>	<b>192</b>	<b>289</b>	<b>481</b>

Assumptions have been made that:

- The total number of PANs offered in Yr R will also apply in Yrs 1 & 2
- The total number of PANs offered in Yr 3 will also apply in Yrs 4-6
- The total number of PANs offered in Yr 7 will also apply in Yrs 8-11

23. To supplement the nationally recognised data referred to above, the Council undertook an additional research exercise by requesting information from all independent schools in Nottinghamshire and some of those in neighbouring authorities. The schools were asked to provide data on the number of pupils per year group that were living in postcodes that are wholly or partly in Nottinghamshire.
24. Only four responses were received, and it is therefore difficult to extrapolate the findings from such a small sample. Also, the sample is not considered particularly representative, as three of the four schools who replied are based in Nottingham City rather than Nottinghamshire. Nevertheless, the sample confirmed the Council's previous assumption that the majority of a school's pupils tend to be recruited from nearby postcodes. In other words, parents who elect to send their children to schools in the private sector overwhelmingly choose local independent schools. An exception to this could be boarding schools, one of which is located in Nottinghamshire and has 75 boarders who could come from further afield.
25. The additional research, particularly with reference to the responses from the three Nottingham City schools, also confirmed assumptions that Nottinghamshire resident pupils would be attending independent schools in other local authority areas. 600

Nottinghamshire resident pupils attend these three city schools (most in the secondary phase), with an additional 800 attending from postcode areas which overlap with both Nottinghamshire and other local authority areas. This assumption could be extended further to other neighbouring independent schools that are located just outside the Nottinghamshire boundary but within reasonable commuting distance for parents. The attached map (**Appendix 1**) shows independent schools within 15 miles of the Nottinghamshire boundary.

## Conclusion

26. The Nottinghamshire School Admissions Service has established a report to identify fluctuations in the regular pattern of in year admission applications in order to monitor the likely impact of changes to VAT arrangements for Private Schools.

**Table 2** – Recent transfers to state education from the independent sector

	Ashfield	Bassetlaw	Broxtowe	Gedling	Mansfield	Newark and Sherwood	Rushcliffe	Total
2022	3	4	1	4	7	12	5	36
2023	3	4	0	2	3	9	5	26
2024 - 2025	0	0	0	10	3	8	5	26
<b>Total</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>88</b>

27. As of January 2025 there has not been a significant increase in pupils transferring back into state education but that position will now be regularly reviewed by officers on a termly basis.

## RECOMMENDATION/S

- 1) That the Children and Families Select Committee continue to be kept up to date on the number of pupils transferring from the private sector to public sector education so that the impact of the introduction of VAT on independent school fees can continue to be monitored.

**Councillor Ben Bradley**

**Cabinet Member for Education and Special Educational Needs & Disabilities**

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

Karen Hughman  
Group Manager, Education Access and Partnership

T: 0115 9772572

E: [karen.hughman@nottscc.gov.uk](mailto:karen.hughman@nottscc.gov.uk)

### **Constitutional Comments (KK 06/03/25)**

28. The proposal in this report is within the remit of the Children and Families Select Committee.

### **Financial Comments (SS 06/03/25)**

29. There will be no financial implications with Independent Schools charging VAT, as the council can claim the VAT back. The Local Authority will show the net costs of any provision in the financial accounts.

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

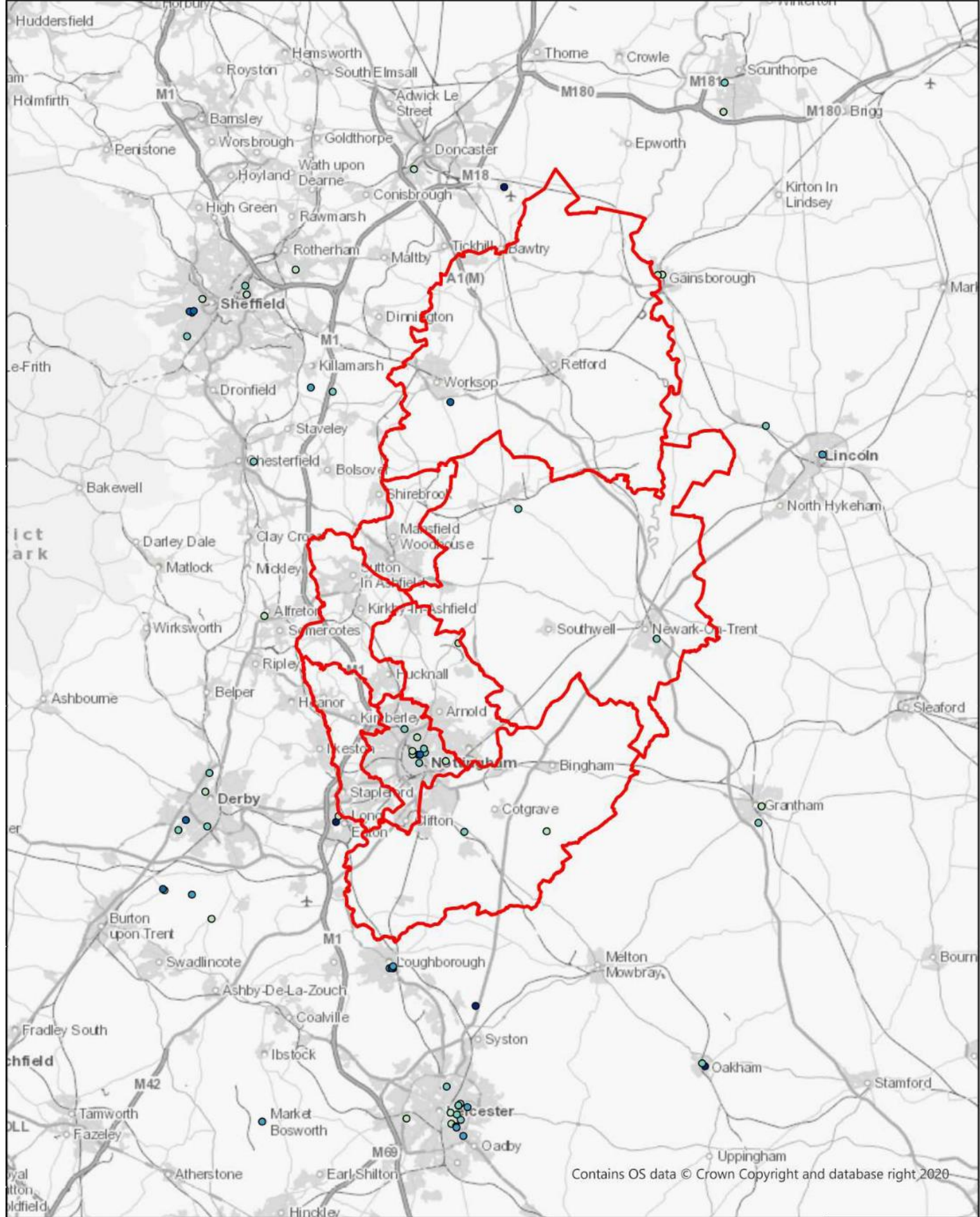
Except for previously published documents, which will be available elsewhere, the documents listed here will be available for inspection in accordance with Section 100D of the Local Government Act 1972.

None.

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

All.

CFS0039



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### Independent schools within 15 miles of Nottinghamshire by number of pupils

- ▭ Nottinghamshire
- Pupils (headcount all year groups)
- 3 - 100
- 101 - 250
- 251 - 500
- 501 - 750
- 751 - 1300



1:500,000



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 Business Intelligence Unit.







17 March 2025

Agenda Item: 8

**REPORT OF THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR FOR CHILDREN AND FAMILIES  
AND THE DIRECTOR OF NURSING, 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 – UPDATE**

**Purpose of the Report**

1. To provide an update to the Select Committee on the progress made by the Nottinghamshire local area Partnership for Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) in implementing improvements to the lived experiences and outcomes of children and young people with SEND and their families.

**Information**

2. Progress reports have been presented to the Select Committee quarterly since October 2023 outlining the progress of the local area Partnership to deliver improvements in response to the [findings](#) of the January / February 2023 Ofsted/Care Quality Commission (CQC) local area SEND inspection.
3. The local area Partnership brings together the organisations from across education, health, care, and the voluntary sector, which provide services to meet the needs of children and young people with SEND in Nottinghamshire. The two leading partners are the County Council and the Integrated Care Board (ICB).
4. The Ofsted/CQC local area SEND inspection identified two Priority Action Areas which required urgent attention by the local area Partnership:
  - a) **Area for Priority Action 1 (APA1):** *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.*
  - b) **Area for Priority Action 2 (APA2):** *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.*

- In addition, to the two Priority Actions, the inspection identified the need for the local area to have a stronger focus on the use of data, quality assurance (especially of assessments and plans), co-production and shared leadership and governance across the SEND system.

### Department for Education (DfE) and NHS England (NHSE) Stocktakes and Deep Dives

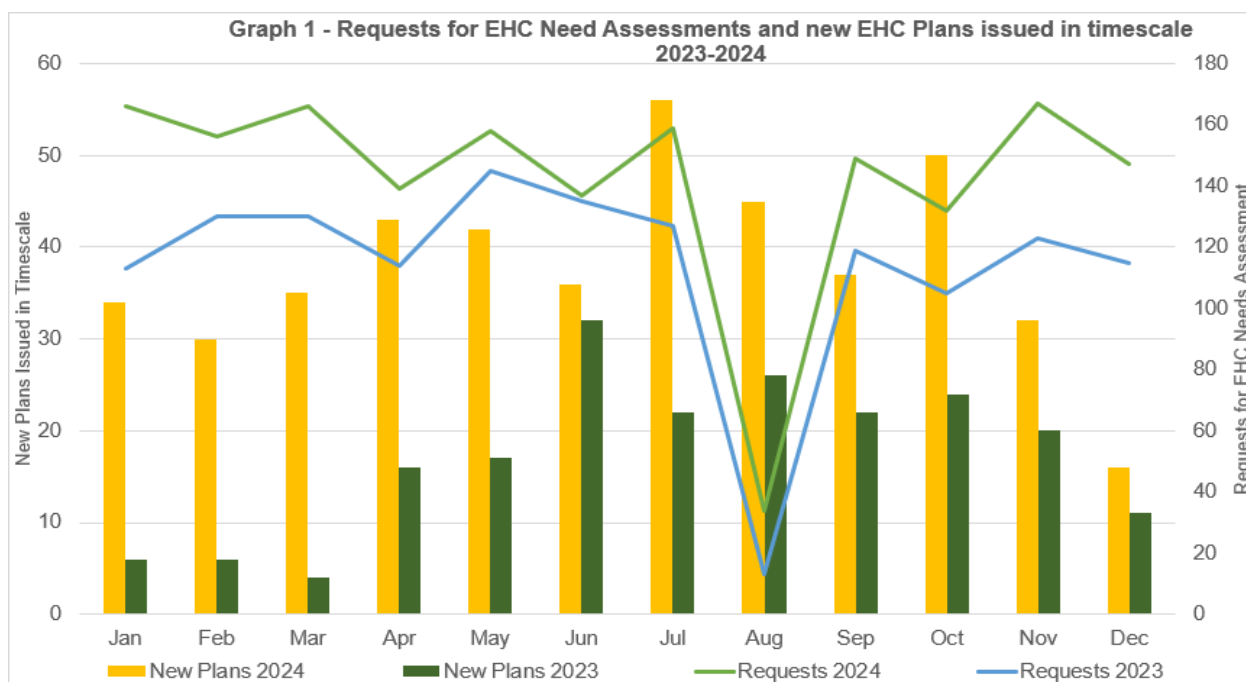
- Since the last report to the Select Committee in December 2024, the DfE and NHSE have undertaken a Stocktake with the local area Partnership. The visit was intended to provide the DfE and NHSE with assurance on progress. The evidence of progress presented was well received.

### Key Performance Indicators

- This section of the report provides key information against identified key performance indicators measured against SEND improvement activities. To monitor ongoing performance and maintain system oversight and assurance into these areas the SEND Data Dashboard includes a set of ‘vital signs’.

### EHC Need Assessment Requests and timeliness of new EHCPs

- Graph 1** below details the number of requests for EHC Needs Assessments and the number of new EHC Plans issued on time over the last two years.



- The demand for statutory Education, Health, and Care (EHC) Needs Assessments continues to increase, both locally and nationally:

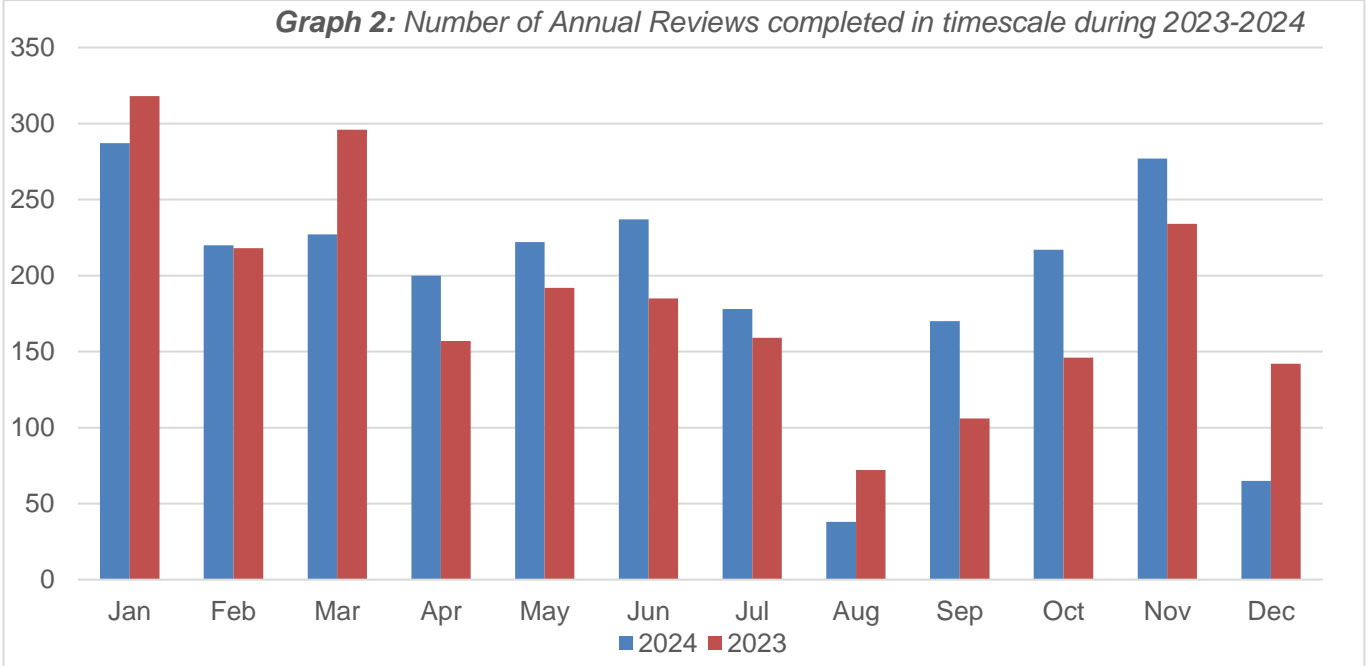
- Nottinghamshire:** Between January and December 2024, 1,708 requests for an EHC assessment were received, which is 24.9% higher than the 1,368 requests received between January and December 2023.

- **National:** there was an 20.8% increase in the number of initial requests for an EHC Plans during 2023, compared with 2022.
10. The proportion of new Education, Health and Care Plans issued within statutory timescales (20 weeks) continues to increase in Nottinghamshire:
- **Nottinghamshire:** new EHC plans issued in timescale during the calendar year has improved significantly in 2024 compared with 2023, up from 28.01% (207 new EHCPs) between January and December 2023 to 35.0% (456 new EHCPs) between January and December 2024. By comparison, Nottinghamshire issued just 4.5% (30 EHCPs) of new EHCPs within 20 weeks during 2022.
  - **National:** in 2023, 50.3% of new EHC plans were issued within 20 weeks. In 2022, 49.2% were issued within 20 weeks. National data for 2024 will be available after May 2024.

### Annual Reviews

11. Over the last six years the number of EHCPs that the Local Authority maintains has increased significantly. As the number of EHCPs grow, so therefore does the number of Annual Reviews. Between January 2023 and December 2024 the number of new of EHCPs maintained by Nottinghamshire grew from 3,741 to 5,164 (38.0% increase).
12. Between January and December 2024, 4,685 Annual Reviews were due for completion, compared with 4,172 between January and October 2023 (an increase of 12.3%).
13. As shown in **Graph 2** below the percentage of annual reviews completed in timescale were lower in 2024 compared with 2023, with an average of 49.9% completed in time in 2024 compared with 53.3% in 2023. Although the County Council has the statutory responsibility for the timely completion of annual reviews the majority are completed by education settings. **Graph 2** below shows the number of Annual Reviews completed in timescale during 2023 and 2024.

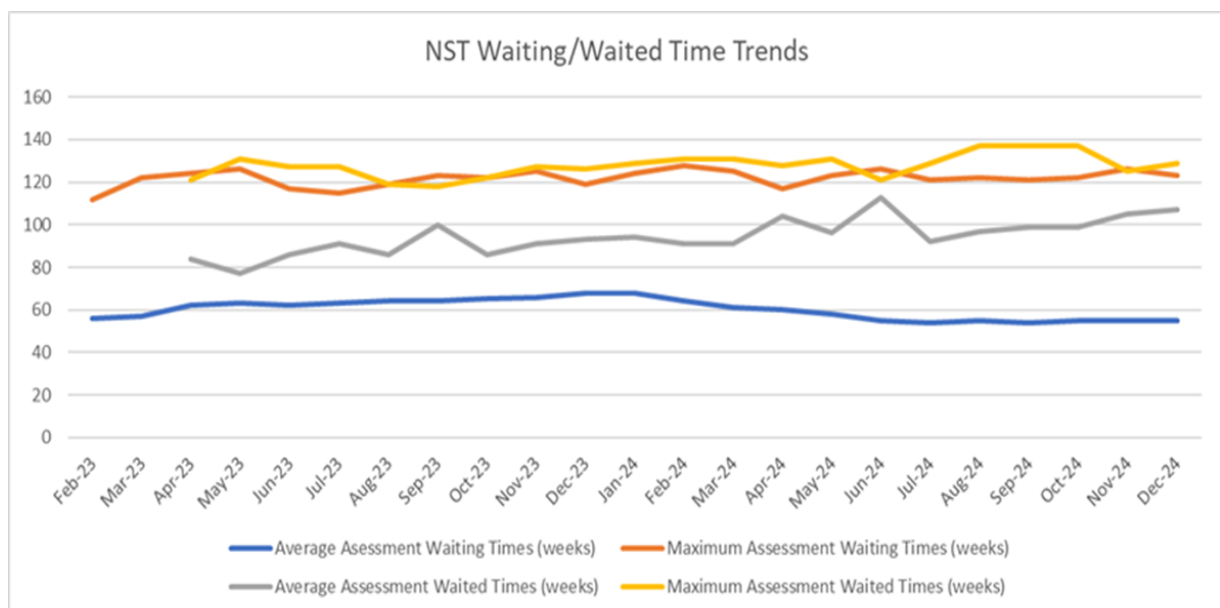
**Graph 2: Number of Annual Reviews completed in timescale during 2023-2024**



**Neurodevelopmental Pathway (Neurodevelopmental Support Team (NST))**

- 14. The service has seen a substantial rise in referrals, increasing from a monthly average of 223 in 2021 to 245 in 2022, and further to 332 in 2023. The upward trend has continued, with the monthly average for 2024 so far reaching 341 referrals per month.
- 15. The work undertaken to date to support the neurodevelopmental pathway has cumulated in a reduction in average wait times from 68 weeks in December 2023 to 55 weeks in December 2024 for NST (see **Graph 3**). Wait times for referral screening and triage have also significantly reduced from 12 months to just one week over the past year, ensuring that priority and/or inappropriate referrals are identified much more quickly, ensuring the primary needs of the child/young person are addressed much more effectively.

**Graph 3 – Neurodevelopmental Support Team Waiting / Waited Time Trends**



16. Wait times are anticipated to reduce again to below the planned trajectory (see **Table 1** below) following the introduction of additional specialist practitioner resource within the team and the implementation of a new online referral form with revised thresholds. This streamlined revised referral process will minimise information requests needed to start assessments, potentially reducing referral numbers by emphasising a more needs led approach rather than diagnosis.

**Table 1: Waiting Times Trajectory – Planned and Actual**

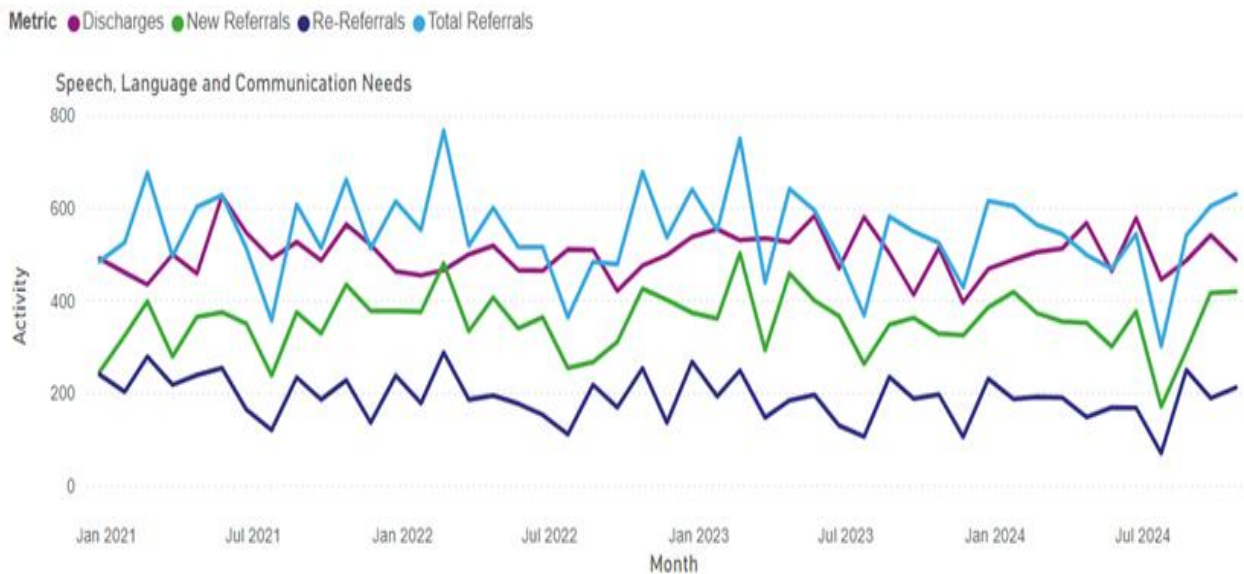
Month/ Year	Maximum waiting Time (weeks)	Average waiting time (weeks)	Actual maximum waiting time (weeks)	Actual average waiting time (weeks)
Jan 2024	125	66	124	68
Feb 2024	125	66	128	64
Mar 2024	125	66	125	61
Apr 2024	123	65	117	60
May 2024	121	63	123	58
Jun 2024	119	61	126	55
Jul 2024	117	59	121	54
Aug 2024	115	57	122	55
Sep 2024	113	55	121	54
Oct 2024	111	53	122	55
Nov 2024	109	51	126	55
Dec 2024	107	50	123	55
Jan 2025	105	48		
Feb 2025	103	46		
Mar 2025	101	44		
Apr 2025	99	42		
May 2025	97	41		
June 2025	95	40		

17. Currently, 279 children and young people have been waiting over 104 weeks for assessments. A plan is in place to reduce this number to approximately 50 children and young people waiting past 104 weeks by March 2025.

**Therapies – Speech Language and Communication Needs (SLCN)**

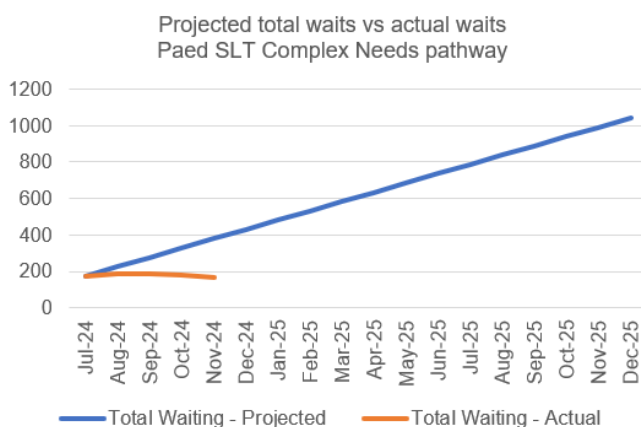
18. Demand continues to outstrip capacity within specialist SLCN services, with high rates of referrals and lower rates of discharge, meaning that caseloads are continuing to grow. **Graph 4** overleaf illustrates the rates of referrals against the rates of discharges showing the increasing demand on the service.

## Graph 4 – Demand for SLCN services

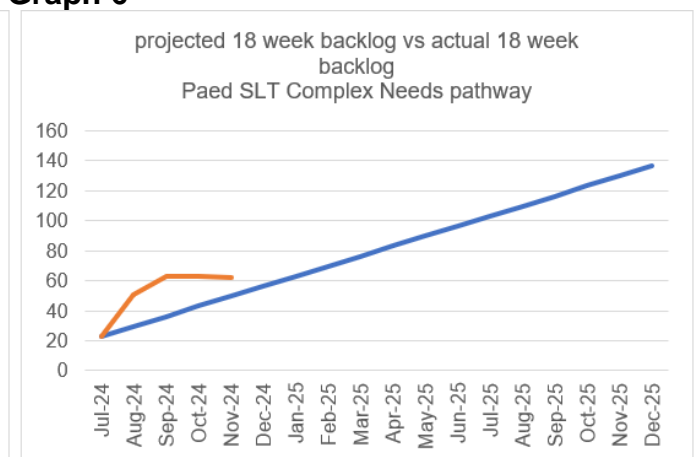


19. Interventions that have been put in place to date have demonstrated a reduction in the anticipated wait times and projections are showing a decline. **Graphs 5 – 10** show this information across the various SLCN pathways.
20. **Graphs 5 and 6** relate to the Paediatric Speech and Language Therapy Complex Needs pathway. **Graph 5** shows that the total number of children waiting is well below the trajectory. However, **Graph 6** shows that the numbers waiting over 18 weeks remained higher than projected. This is largely due to the impact of long-term sickness in the Dysphagia Service over the Summer.

### Graph 5

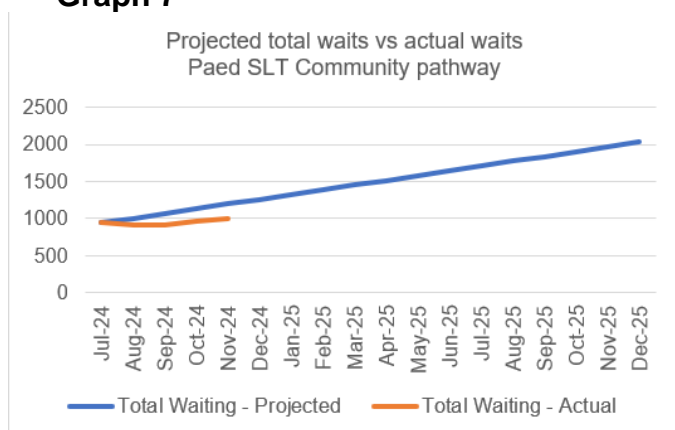


### Graph 6

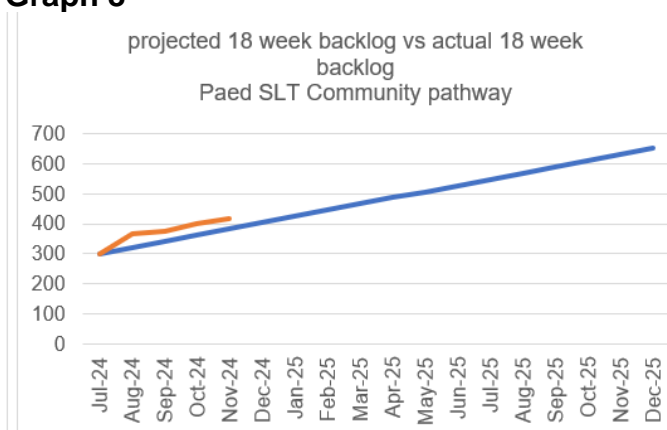


21. **Graphs 7 and 8** relate to the Paediatric Speech and Language Therapy Community pathway. **Graph 7** below show the total number of children waiting continued to be slightly lower than projected. However, **Graph 8** shows that the numbers of children waiting over 18 weeks continues to increase and is higher than projected. This is primarily due to increasing demand even though capacity has been increased.

**Graph 7**

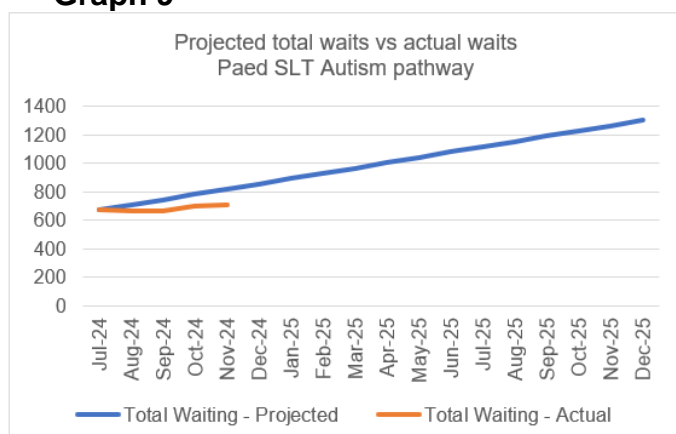


**Graph 8**

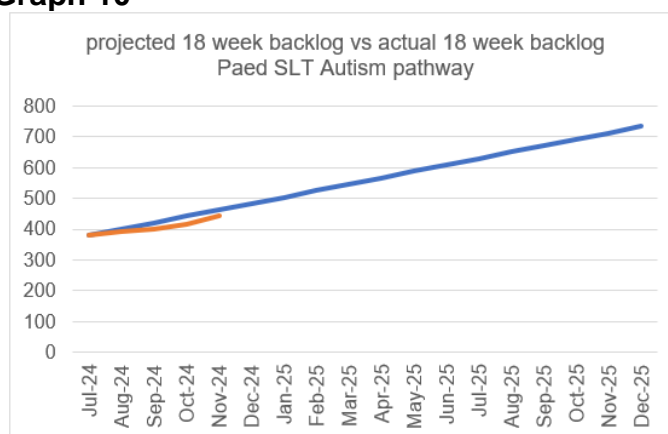


22. **Graphs 9 and 10** relate to the Paediatric Speech and Language Therapy Autism pathway. **Graph 9** shows that the total of children waiting remained slightly lower than projected. Likewise **Graph 10** shows that the number of children waiting over 18 weeks is slightly lower than projected. This demonstrates the impact the additional non-recurrent funding available to this pathway and the changes made to service delivery.

**Graph 9**



**Graph 10**



## Local Area Partnership Progress since September 2024

### APA 1 - Outcome 1: Children and young people with SEND in Nottinghamshire have their needs identified and assessed in a timely way through statutory processes

23. Performance and output have increased significantly. However, there is further work to do to manage the rising demand and to continue to strengthen service performance. Activities underway to address this include:
- a. Support from SEND sector-specialists, providing additional leadership around SEND improvement for a six-month period to review internal processes.
  - b. This work will include a full-service review of statutory SEND services seeking to embed a more strengths-based relational approach, with a greater focus on providing the right support at the right time for children. The review will work closely with other partners and stakeholders. It has been initiated through an EHC Assessment Service

process remodelling workshop held in December 2024. The outputs will be used to inform the vision of the future operating model.

- c. Improving understanding, public confidence and application of the 'graduated approach', primarily in education settings. Closer locality working is underway with inclusive practice district workshops scheduled to share best practice and agree principles for these groups.
- d. Ensuring that local authority decision-making as part of the EHCP process is more effective.

**APA 1 - Outcome 2: Ensure our children and young people with SEND receive robust and consistent support through their EHC Plans, which have the right input, at the right time and from the right place**

24. Improvement activities are underway to strengthen relationships and understanding across partners who contribute to effective EHC Plan Annual Reviews. These include improvements to local quality assurance arrangements and especially the information provided for Annual Reviews by partners. It will involve:
  - a. Re-establishing a quality assurance multi-agency steering group to refresh our approach and progress in embedding the QA Education, Health and Care (EHC) Plan Framework across organisations.
  - b. Developing a 5-level plan to produce a mechanism that ensures all EHCPs meet the required standards, at operational, multi-agency and strategic levels.
  - c. Embedding the learning from previous partnership audits, in addition to feedback from families about their experience of the annual review process.

**APA 1 - Outcome 3: Children and young people with additional needs, but without an EHC Plan, have their needs identified, met, and monitored effectively**

25. Children and young people receiving SEN support (but without an EHC Plan) account for around 80% of Nottinghamshire's overall SEN population. Children and young people in Nottinghamshire have been able to access additional support in educational settings (e.g. additional funding, input from specialist services) without the need for an EHC Plan, resulting in the local area having a lower number of EHC Plans relative to its population when compared with nationally.
26. There are now better shared systems to identify the SEN Support cohort of children and young people across the local area Partnership. SEN Support cohort descriptors and outcome data is now shared regularly through the SEND Monthly report and the Data Dashboard.
27. Following the school engagement events last Summer, the County Council during 2025 will work with school leaders in districts to develop the actions identified as part of the engagement events. This work will also include partners from health and social care.

**APA 2 - Outcome 4: The needs of children and families with SEND are clearly understood so that immediate and long-term changes to health service provision can be made through effective joint commissioning**



28. A system-wide Nottingham and Nottingham and Nottinghamshire SEND Joint Commissioning Strategy (2024-2027) has now been published, the annual delivery plan for which is fully aligned with the annual delivery plan for the Partnership's SEND Strategy.
29. Regular engagement sessions and working groups with families continue to be held to support the development of local pathways and service provision. Lived experience is being embedded within the SEND Data Dashboard and the Partnership has committed to co-produce services and service improvement within the SEND Joint Commissioning Strategy and the SEND Outcomes Strategy. Recommendations made by families and professionals within Nottinghamshire have shaped improvements within the neurodevelopmental pathway and SLCN service provision and has influenced changes to working practices within local Occupational Therapy Services.

**APA 2 - Outcome 5: Children and young people receive timely assessment and treatment offer for assessment by the Neurodevelopmental Support Team (NST)**

30. Activity since the last report to Select Committee has included:
  - Completion and distribution of a neurodevelopmental medical 'Red Flag' guidance document for professionals to ensure the appropriate pathway is identified and followed where priority medical concerns are identified.
  - Completion and distribution of a 'Right to Choose' guidance document to assist families in making informed decisions and navigating alternative assessment options effectively.
  - Drafting of a second opinion guidance document for professionals.
  - Minds of All Kinds neurodevelopmental website co-production group re-commenced with proposed launch of the site in Spring 2025.
  - Updates made to the 'Concerning Behaviour Pathway' now known as the [Neurodevelopmental Assessment Pathway Guidance](#)
31. Key priorities and implementation of the neurodevelopmental pathway review recommendations for 2024/25 include:
  - A review of demand & capacity within Community Paediatrics.
  - A review of threshold criteria and implementation of a revised online referral system within early support service NST.
  - An in-depth review of the neurodevelopmental services within Doncaster & Bassetlaw HealthCare Trust.
  - A review of the Tics & Tourette's service for children and young people.
  - A review of pre- and post-diagnostic support across neurodevelopmental services.
  - Implement awareness campaigns within the community to inform families, educators and healthcare providers about early signs of neurodevelopmental concerns and the pathway process.
32. Improvements continue to be made to communications with children, young people and families who are waiting. Information detailing support for families is now sent at the point of referral receipt, and via monthly newsletters.

## **APA 2 - Outcome 6: Children, young people and families with SEND experience services that are easy to navigate, free from duplication and are adaptive to their needs**

33. Options for the redesign of Local SLCN service provision are under review by strategic commissioning leads, with aims to reduce referrals to specialist services (and therefore wait times to access provision) and enhance the experiences of children, young people and their families. Due to complexities and practicalities of this work, it is likely to be toward the end of the 2025/26 financial year before a jointly commissioned pathway can be fully designed, negotiated, agreed across partners and implemented. Additional capacity and the implementation of improvement measures have helped cut waiting times despite continued high demand.
34. Drop-in sessions at Family Hubs and an advice line (contacted over 200 times between October and December 2024) provide interim support for families waiting to access specialist support.
35. A sensory processing support pathway is being scoped by strategic commissioning leads, with a school support pilot live within 40 schools. This has an aim to create sensory-friendly environments and upskill education staff to understand sensory processing difficulties within an education setting.
36. An Integrated Care System (ICS) wide Occupational Therapy Professionals Network has been established and is working collaboratively in line with both the SEND Joint Commissioning Strategy and feedback from families and professionals to reduce duplication of contact with families, through the development of a digital interoperability platform that will support in the sharing of assessments, diagnoses, care plans and progress between the multiple OT teams supporting families in Nottinghamshire.
37. An ICS Health Transitions Network has been established, bringing together colleagues from paediatric and adult services to work collaboratively to provide a smooth and positive transitions process for local young people in Nottingham and Nottinghamshire. Young people with recent experience of transitioning have been invited to support the Network in implementing improvements that will have real-life impact.
38. Additional sleep practitioners have been recruited to community paediatric services to support the de-medicalisation of sleep difficulties in neurodivergent children and young people and to reduce the use of melatonin as a first-line intervention.

### **Leadership & Strategic Development**

39. The Nottinghamshire SEND Local Area Partnership completed an updated [SEND self-evaluation framework \(SEF\)](#), which was shared with Ofsted and CQC at the Annual Engagement Meeting. The SEF outlines the local area's current strengths and areas for development as part of a continuous cycle of monitoring improvements and seeking assurances, when meeting the needs of our children and young people with SEND.
40. The local area Partnership is expected to receive a Monitoring Inspection by Ofsted and CQC in the Summer term.

## **Other Options Considered**

41. No other options have been considered.

## **Reason for Recommendation/s**

42. 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**

43. 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**

44. 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.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

That the Children and Families Select Committee:

- 1) considers and comments on the content of the report in relation to progress with the required improvements.
- 2) agrees to receive a further update on progress on SEND improvement activity in July 2025.

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

**Rosa Waddingham**  
**Director of Nursing, Nottingham and Nottinghamshire Integrated Care Board**

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

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

45. This report falls within the remit of the Children and Families Select Committee for consideration under Section 6, Part 1, paragraph 4(a) of the Council's Constitution at p.91.

### **Financial Comments (SS 03/03/25)**

46. 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.

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

[Nottinghamshire Local Area Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Strategy \(2024-2027\) – report to Cabinet on 25 July 2024](#)

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

All.

CFS0035



17 March 2025

Agenda Item: 9

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

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

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

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

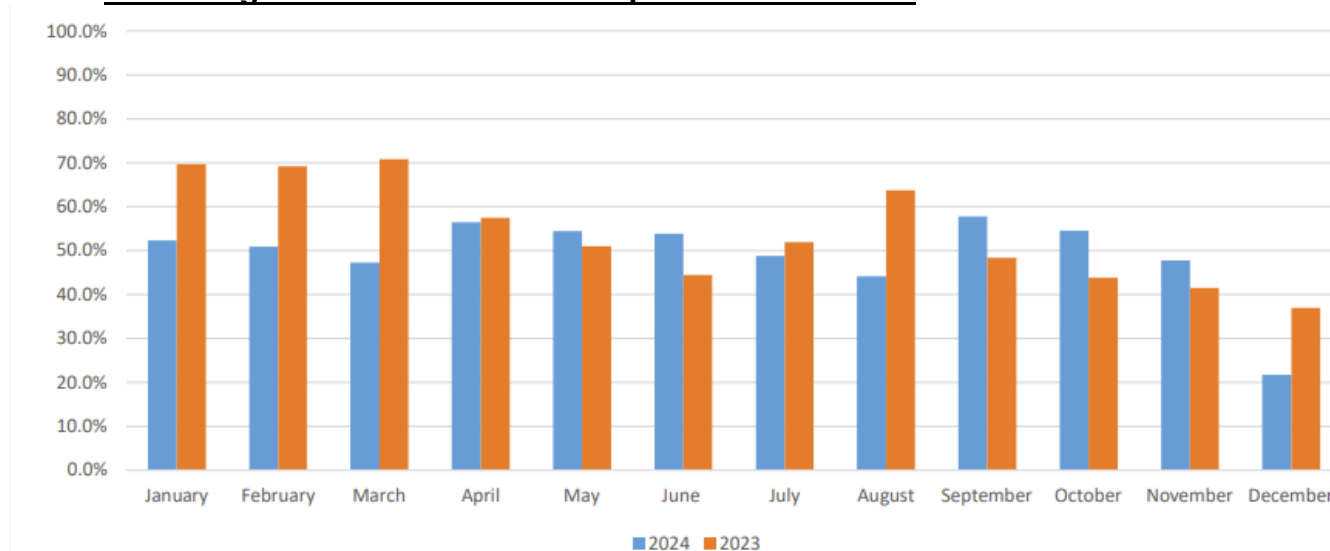
#### **Information**

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

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

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

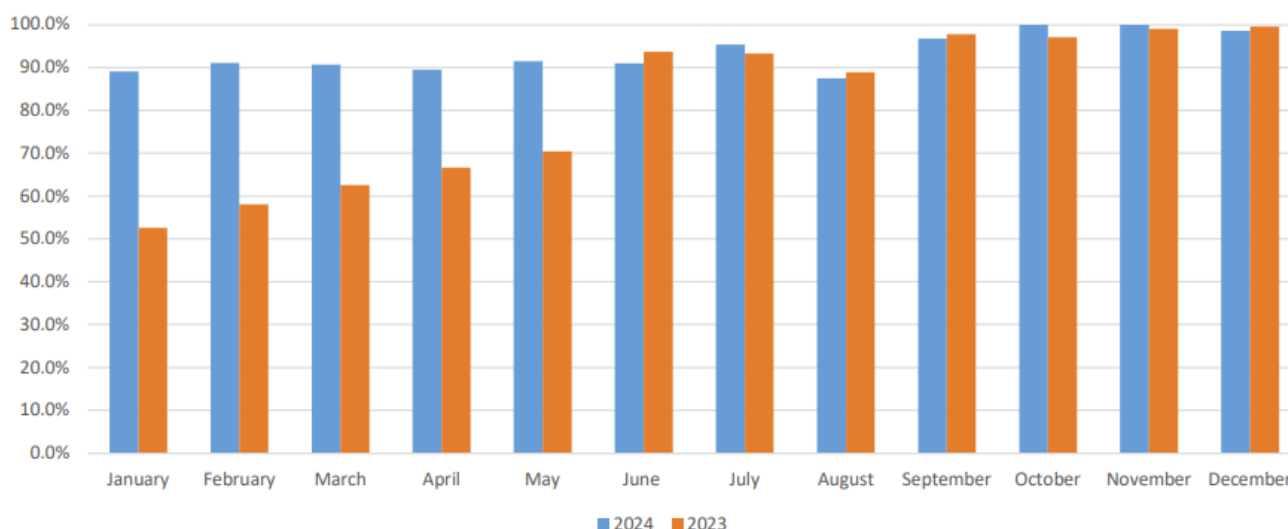
**Percentage of annual reviews completed in timescale**



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

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

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



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

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

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

### Departmental Risks

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

**Children and Families Portfolio**

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

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

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

### **Dedicated School Grant**

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

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

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

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

### **Non ISB Reserve**

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

### **Financial Implications**

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

## **RECOMMENDATION/S**

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Except for previously published documents, which will be available elsewhere, the documents listed here will be available for inspection in accordance with Section 100D of the Local Government Act 1972.

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

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

All.

CFS0037



Key Performance Indicator	Paragraph in Main Report	Nottinghamshire						Vital Signs		Comparator Data			
		Current Value	Best to be	Direction of Travel	Performance is	Current Reporting Period	Previous Value	Previous Reporting Period	Vital Sign Measure?	RAG Rating	Previous Annual Performance	National Average	Statistical Neighbours
<b>Annual Delivery Plan Ambition 2 - Supporting Children and Families</b>													
Early years foundation stage attainment (Reaching a 'Good Level of Development' - at least expected in all early learning goals in all prime areas and in the specific areas of literacy and mathematics)		67.5%	High	↔	Stable	2022/23 Academic	66.9%	2021/22 Academic			66.9% (21/22 Academic)	67.2% (22/23 Academic)	67.4% (22/23 Academic)
% assessments completed which were a targeted early help assessment	11	27.3%	High	↔	Stable	2024/25 Q2	27.0%	2024/25 Q2	Y	Amber	23.4% (2023/24)	-	-
% children becoming subject of a CIN or CP Plan who had a targeted early help assessment in the previous 2 years		19.8%	High	↔	Stable	2024/25 Q2	17.7%	2024/25 Q2	Y	Red	21.6% (2022/23)	-	-
Percentage of families supported making significant sustained progress through the Supporting Families programme		76.8%	High	↔	Stable	2024/25 Q3	75.0%	2024/25 Q2			-	-	-
% of new EHCPs issued within 20 weeks (exc. exceptions) - year to date **	5-6	35.0%	High	↑	Improving	2024 Q4	24.5%	2023 Q4	Y	Red	32.3% (2023)	50.3% (2023)	41.2% (2023)
% of EHCP Annual review amendments issued within 12 weeks - year to date **	9	93.2%	High	↑	Improving	2024 Q4	81.0%	2023 Q4	Y	Green	55.3% (2023)	-	-
% EHCP annual reviews completed within 12 months - year to date **	8	49.9%	High	↔	Stable	2024 Q4	53.3%	2023 Q4	Y	Red	77.0% (2023)	-	-
<b>Annual Delivery Plan Ambition 3 - Keeping children, vulnerable adults and communities safe</b>													
% Child and Family Assessments resulting in NFA (cumulative for the year)	10	54.3%	Low	↓	Improving	2024/25 Q3	54.2%	2024/25 Q2	Y	Red	60.4% (2023/24)	30.3% (2023/24)	33.3% (2023/24)
Average Social Worker Caseload - A NEW METHOD OF REPORTING THIS MEASURE IS CURRENTLY UNDER CONSTRUCTION			N/A						Y		-	-	-
Child and Family assessments for Children's Social Care carried out within statutory timescales		95.2%	High	↔	Stable	2024/25 Q3	96.6%	2024/25 Q2			95.3% (2023/24)	84.4% (2023/24)	88.1% (2023/24)
Re-referral rate		29.3%	Low	↔	Stable	2024/25 Q3	29.7%	2024/25 Q2	Y	Amber	25.8% (2023/24)	22.4% (2023/24)	20.8% (2023/24)
Children becoming the subject of a child protection plan on more than one occasion	12	27.0%	Low	↑	Deteriorating	2024/25 Q3	20.5%	2024/25 Q2	Y	Amber	24.9% (2023/24)	24.7% (2023/24)	23.6% (2023/24)
Children who are subject to a child protection plan for 2 years or more		3.1%	Low	↓	Improving	2024/25 Q3	3.7%	2024/25 Q2			1.6% (2023/24)	2.6% (2023/24)	1.8% (2023/24)
Percentage of child protection cases reviewed within timescale		95.7%	High	↔	Stable	2024/25 Q3	98.1%	2024/25 Q2			89.8% (2023/24)	89.8% (2023/24)	89.8% (2023/24)
% children looked after in kinship placements		8.8%	High	↔	Stable	2024/25 Q3	8.6%	2024/25 Q2	Y	Amber	8.7% (2023/24)	-	-
% children who leave care subject to an SGO or CAO	13	20.9%	High	↑	Improving	2024/25 Q3	19.5%	2024/25 Q2	Y	Amber	17% (2023/24)	14% (2023/24)	15% (2023/24)
% of children looked after in family-based setting		62.4%	High	↔	Stable	2024/25 Q3	64.4%	2024/25 Q2			65% (2023/24)	-	-
No. of children in care placed in unregulated placements		23	Low	↓	Improving	2024/25 Q3	27	2024/25 Q2	Y	Red			
Percentage of children looked after placed 20 miles or more from home		23.6%	Low	↔	Stable	2024/25 Q3	22.4%	2024/25 Q3	Y	Amber	20.0% (2023/24)	19.0% (2023/24)	26.0% (2023/24)
Percentage of children looked after remaining in long-term placements*		61.0%	High	↔	Stable	2024/25 Q3	63.2%	2024/25 Q2			85.0% (2023/24)	68.0% (2023/24)	69% (2023/24)
Percentage of care leavers aged 19-21 in suitable accommodation	14	96.6%	High	↑	Improving	2024/25 Q3	91.3%	2024/25 Q2			93% (2023/24)	88% (2023/24)	88% (2023/24)
Percentage of care leavers in education, employment or training (EET) aged 19-21		51.2%	High	↔	Stable	2024/25 Q3	50.3%	2024/25 Q2			51% (2023/24)	54% (2023/24)	52% (2023/24)
First time entrants to the Youth Justice System aged 10-17 (per 100,000)		38	Low	↔	Stable	2024/25 Q2	35	2024/25 Q1	Y	Green	130 (2022)	144 (2022)	108 (2022)
Re-offending binary rate		12.5	Low	↓	Improving	2024/25 Q2	17.6	2024/25 Q1	Y	Green	10.2 (2022/23)	31.2 (2021/22)	30.9 (2020/21)

Key Performance Indicator	Paragraph in Main Report	Nottinghamshire						Vital Signs		Comparator Data			
		Current Value	Best to be	Direction of Travel	Performance is	Current Reporting Period	Previous Value	Previous Reporting Period	Vital Sign Measure?	RAG Rating	Previous Annual Performance	National Average	Statistical Neighbours
<b>Annual Delivery Plan Ambition 4 - Building skills that help people get good jobs</b>													
Percentage of pupils achieving 9-5 grades in GCSE English & maths at KS4		45.0%	High	↓	Deteriorating	2022/23 Academic	50.9%	2021/22 Academic			50.9% (21/22 Academic)	45.5% (22/23 Academic)	43.0% (22/23 Academic)
Percentage of children looked after achieving 9-5 grades in GCSE English & maths at KS4	15	6.00%	High	↓	Deteriorating	2022/23 Academic	12.4%	2021/22 Academic			12.4% (21/22 Academic)	9.5% (22/23 Academic)	-
Attainment gap at age 16 between pupils taking free school meals and the rest (FSM during past six years) 9-5 grades in GCSE English & maths		29.5	Low	↓	Improving	2022/23 Academic	32.0	2021/22 Academic			32.0 (21/22 Academic)	26.7 (22/23 Academic)	-
Percentage of pupils in primary, secondary and special schools classed as persistent absentees	16	18.5%	Low	↓	Improving	2023/24 Aut & Spr term	19.7%	2022/23 Aut & Spr term			21.2% (22/23 Academic)	19.2% (23/24 Aut & Spr)	19.2% (23/24 Aut & Spr)
Percentage of Children Looked After classed as persistent absentees	17	22.1%	Low	↑	Deteriorating	2022/23 Academic	19.5%	2021/22 Academic			19.3% (21/22 Academic)	20.0% (22/23 Academic)	17.8% (22/23 Academic)
Percentage of pupils in primary, secondary and special schools with at least one suspension		1.71%	Low	↔	Stable	2022/23 Autumn term	1.26%	2021/22 Autumn term			2.95% (21/22 Academic)	1.61% (22/23 Autumn)	1.62% (22/23 Autumn)
Percentage of Children Looked After with at least one suspension		15.78%	Low	↑	Deteriorating	2021/22 Academic	11.85%	2020/21 Academic			11.85% (20/21 Academic)	12.22% (21/22 Academic)	11.98% (21/22 Academic)
Percentage of pupils in primary, secondary and special schools permanently excluded		0.05%	Low	↔	Stable	2022/23 Autumn term	0.01%	2021/22 Autumn term			0.05% (21/22 Academic)	0.04% (22/23 Autumn)	0.05% (22/23 Autumn)
Percentage of Children Looked After permanently excluded		0.00%	Low	↔	Stable	2021/22 Academic	0.00%	2020/21 Academic			0.00% (20/21 Academic)	0.06% (21/22 Academic)	0.00% (21/22 Academic)
Percentage not in education, employment or training (NEET) aged 16-17		1.3%	Low	↓	Improving	2024/25 Q3	1.8%	2023/24 Q3			2.0% (2022/23)	-	-

\* In year for this measure is not comparable with the benchmark data as this excludes placement changes where the same provider continued to provide the care.

\*\* EHCP Performance is reported on a calendar year basis in line with statutory reporting to the DfE.





17 March 2025

Agenda Item: 10

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

### **OUTCOMES TO THE REVIEW OF RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION WITHIN NOTTINGHAMSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL'S FOSTERING SERVICE**

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

1. To share with the Children and Families Select Committee the findings from the task and finish review around fostering recruitment and retention and to seek the endorsement of the committee for the recommendations of the review to be submitted to Cabinet for consideration.

#### **Information**

2. At its meeting on 15 April 2024, the Children and Families Select Committee considered a report on the progress of the Council's Sufficiency and Commissioning Strategy for Children in Nottinghamshire 2023-2025, particularly with regards to children in care and care leavers. As part of their discussions, Members noted the financial pressure on the Children and Families department from the increasing costs of residential placements for looked after children as result of a fall in the number of Council-employed foster carers. As a result, the Committee resolved:

***“That a task and finish review be carried out to examine in detail the issues surrounding Looked After Children and Care Leaver placement sufficiency and to offer subsequent recommendations to the Cabinet Member for Children and Families”.***

#### **Review Scope**

3. Subsequently work was carried out to “scope” the review. This work was carried out by the Chairman of the Children and Families Select Committee, in consultation with the Service Director, Help, Protection and Care, and officers from the Fostering Service. This work identified the key objectives of the review as well as the strategic and legislative context in which the issues involved would be considered.
4. The key objectives set out for the review were:
  - To gain an understanding of the current challenges being faced by the Council around the recruitment and retention of foster carers.

- To gain an understanding of the current work that is being carried out to increase recruitment and improve the retention of foster carers.
- To consider what changes to current practices, procedures and policies could be implemented to increase recruitment and improve the retention of foster carers.
- To consider how wider activity across the Council (as the Corporate Parent) could be developed to support the recruitment and retention of foster carers.
- To consider how wider activity with the District and Borough Councils could be developed to support the delivery of activity around the recruitment and retention of foster carers.

### **Links to Council Priorities**

5. The work of the Council's scrutiny function should always be focussed on supporting delivery of its strategic priorities, which will in turn support the delivery of the best possible services to the residents of Nottinghamshire. The work in scoping the review identified that a review around the recruitment and retention of foster carers supported a wide range of strategic priorities, as well as the strategies and policies that underpinned them.

### **The Nottinghamshire Plan 2021 – 2031**

6. The Nottinghamshire Plan 2021 – 2031 is an ambitious plan for the County Council that sets out the Council's strategic vision for the future of Nottinghamshire and the local authority. The activity in the Nottinghamshire Plan is built around achieving a bold 10-year vision for a 'healthy, prosperous and greener future for everyone'. This vision is supported by nine ambitions which will act as a framework for all County Council activity. The scoping of the review identified that the review would support the following ambitions that supported the overall vision of the Plan:
  - Supporting communities and families
  - Keeping children, vulnerable adults and communities safe
  - Building skills that help people get good jobs
  - Making Nottinghamshire somewhere people love to live, work and visit

### **The Review Process**

7. Two information gathering meetings took place on Thursday 7 November and on Monday 9 December 2024 involving the following members:
  - Councillor Mike Introna (Chairman)
  - Councillor Francis Purdue-Horan (Vice-Chairman)
  - Councillor Anne Callaghan BEM
  - Councillor Debbie Darby
  - Councillor Mike Quigley MBE
  - Councillor Nigel Turner

8. The following council officers attended these sessions:

- Amanda Collinson – Service Director, Help, Protection and Care
- Jenny Whiston – Head of Service, Fostering, Residential and Secure Accommodation
- Matt Wesson – Service Manager, Fostering Service

### **The Council as Corporate Parent**

9. Under the requirements of the Children Act 1989 if a child is identified as being at risk from abuse or significant harm by a parent or guardian, then that child could come under the care of the Council, which would then act as the 'Corporate Parent'. When a child comes into care, the council becomes the Corporate Parent. The term "Corporate Parent" means the collective responsibility of the council, elected members, employees, and partner agencies, for providing the best possible care and safeguarding for the children who are looked after by us.
10. The Council's statutory responsibility as the Corporate Parent is to provide a safe and nurturing homes for all looked after children. Each child in the care of the council looks to the Council to be the best parent it can be to that child. Every member and employee of the council has the statutory responsibility to act for that child in the same way that a good parent would act for their own child. In order to meet its responsibility as Corporate Parent, the Council has a range of possible options for how each child is looked and cared for.

### **Foster Care**

11. Fostering is when an adult or family looks after a child, young person or sibling group, in their own home in situations where their own family is unable to look after them and they have come into the Council's care. Foster carers provide stability, safety and a nurturing environment when this happens. Foster carers give children space and support to flourish and share their lives with the children they welcome into their homes. Some children will stay with a foster family for a short period of time of a few days, while other children will live with their foster families on a longer-term basis.
12. The Council retains legal responsibility for the child or young person in foster care. This is different to adoption, where adoptive parents become the child's legal parents and take on full legal responsibility for the child or young person. Fostering can be either delivered in house through a cohort of foster carers who are directly supported by the Council or through Independent Fostering Agencies (IFAs) who have their own cohort of foster carers and support networks.
13. Nottinghamshire's ambition is that more children and young people are able to live in family-based placements, close to home. When a child comes into the care of the Council, the first option that is explored is to see if whether a child can be placed into the care of a member of their wider family. If this is not possible, then the Council looks to find a home for the child with one of the Council's foster carers known as in-house foster carers. If there are no appropriate in-house foster carers available to take a child into their care, then a placement with an IFA is sought.

## **Residential Care**

14. If a fostering placement with either an in-house or IFA foster carer cannot be found, then a child will be placed in a children's residential home ran by, or on behalf of the Council. In some limited circumstances a child's needs might identify that a residential home is the most suitable option, however, for the vast majority of children the best outcome for them is to be able to live in family-based placement, close to their home.

## **The financial costs of looking after children in the Council's care**

15. As well as enabling the Council to be able to provide the best possible outcomes for the children in its care, it is also more financially sustainable for the Council to place children with its own foster carers. Currently, the cost to the Council of placing a looked after child with one of its own foster carers is around £20,000 per child, per year. In comparison it costs £53,664 for a child to be placed with an IFA and £312,000 for a placement in a residential children's home. Due to a shortage of foster carers, some of our looked after children have by necessity been allocated foster placements that are located outside of Nottinghamshire. Having more locally recruited foster carers would mean that more children and young people could be placed closer to their families and their communities, which would not only enable the delivery of better outcomes for these children and young people, but also help to reduce the costs for the Council in providing these placements.
16. The costs of placing a child with an IFA or in a residential placement are much higher than the costs involved of placing a child with one the Council's own foster carers due to the Council having to pay additional fees when using an IFA and due to the significant costs involved in operating residential children's homes. Also, as some of these placements may be outside of Nottinghamshire, the costs of transport to a child's school or the visits from a social worker and Independent Reviewing Officer are incurred by the Council. Having more locally recruited foster carers means that looked after children can be placed closer to their families and their communities, reducing the number of children being placed outside of Nottinghamshire and reduce the costs incurred by the Council in terms of transport and accommodation.

## **The national context**

17. In 2023, over 100,000 children were living in the care of Local Authorities (LAs) with 70,000 children living with over 53,000 foster families. Around 38,000 children become looked after each year. However, there is a national shortage of foster families, with 6,500 more foster families needed to meet the demand for providing homes for looked after children. Since 2021, the number of fostering households in England has decreased by 1,045 whilst the number of children needing foster carers has increased by 5,690. Foster carers have identified a number of reasons why they have stopped fostering, including feeling unsupported, feeling undervalued and inadequate financial support being available. In May 2024, the Fostering Network identified that urgent action needed to be taken to recruit more foster carers while ensuring existing carers feel sufficiently supported to continue to foster.

## **The Nottinghamshire context**

18. As of November 2024, the Council had 967 children in looked after care, of which 559 were in foster placements. Out of the 559 looked after children in foster care (including extended

family), 235 children were placed with Council foster carers in Nottinghamshire and 317 were placed with IFAs, of which 150 were outside of Nottinghamshire and 59 were outside of the East Midlands region. There were 158 mainstream and support foster carers employed by the Council. There were 201 children living in residential places, of which 101 were outside of Nottinghamshire and 58 were outside of the East Midlands. Of the children in residential placement, 42 were aged 12 years or under. It is estimated that the Council has 30 children in residential placements who are there due to there not being sufficient foster families available to look after them.

19. Compared with national average and statistical neighbour comparators, Nottinghamshire has a lower rate of children in foster placements and a higher proportion in residential children's homes and semi-independent supported accommodation placements suitable for some young people over the age of 16. With the exception of Lancashire, all of Nottinghamshire's closest statistical neighbours have seen reductions in the proportion of fostering placements and an increase in residential and semi-independent placements over the last five years. The pattern is also repeated when looking at England as a whole, but the scale of change in Nottinghamshire is more pronounced.
20. The fall in the number of foster carers has been due to not enough foster carers being recruited to replace those who have left. A number of factors have contributed to the fall in the recruitment of foster carers in Nottinghamshire. These include the national negative perceptions of institutions involved in the Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse, as well as societal factors such as the move to home working meaning that a spare room in a household which otherwise might have been a bedroom for foster child is being used as an office or study. The most significant reason for the fall in the number of Council foster carers is that the Council's Fostering Service is facing heavy competition from IFAs and other LAs who are offering more competitive pay rates.

### **Foster for East Midlands Councils**

21. To address the regions wide challenges with recruiting and retaining high quality Foster Carers, the D2N2 local authorities (Derbyshire County Council, Nottinghamshire County Council, Nottingham City Council, and Derby City Council) have partnered to launch a new regional approach to Fostering. A successful D2N2 application to the Department for Education's (DfE) Fostering Recruitment and Retention Programme has brought £1.8 million of central government funding into the region for improvements in this area. Foster for East Midlands Councils has a central recruitment hub that engages with prospective foster carers from their initial enquiry through to submission of their full application. This funding will also help improve the support available for existing foster carers across the region, empowering them to create loving, stable homes for children in need. The programme will also be working to deliver an increase in the number of available foster carers across the four local authorities which will improve outcomes for children in care by ensuring that more children can be placed in family-based placements, close to their home. Foster for East Midlands Councils has a recruitment website ([Foster for East Midlands](#)) to represent the four local authorities as well as having an active presence across social media.

### **Recruitment**

22. There are numerous benefits to expanding the Council's foster care provision within Nottinghamshire. It would help provide stable, loving homes for looked after children within

their local area and would reduce the disruption to their lives by being able to be placed with local foster carer's who are close to their family, their community and their place of education.

23. The Council, via Foster for East Midlands Councils, aims to recruit more foster carers to provide more direct support and oversight to looked after children in Nottinghamshire. A marketing plan, which was tied into the Local Offer for Care Leavers and promotion through local business partners, is currently being undertaken to promote roles in foster care. Capital bids will also be made by the Fostering Service to secure further funding for recruitment and other initiatives, for example, to enable fostering families to secure funding to buy larger properties to provide more rooms for foster children.
24. The D2N2 authorities have worked in partnership with the DfE on establishing targets and key performance indicators for Foster for East Midlands Councils around the number of enquiries received and on how many of these follow through to a foster carer being recruited. Additionally there is also a focus on the timely processing of applications, with a target turnaround time of 6 months from enquiry to approval being in place.

### **Nottinghamshire's offer to Foster Carers**

25. To support foster carers, the Council offers a range of financial and practical support. Financial support is provided through a basic fostering allowance alongside an additional skills payment. Skills payments are paid in recognition of a foster carer's experience and training, and sometimes due to the complexity of the support required for a child. In addition to these payments there is also an annual holiday allowance as well as additional payments being available for birthdays, Christmas, school uniform and travel expenses. The current rates of the main allowances in Nottinghamshire are detailed below.

<b>Age Band</b>	<b>Basic Fostering Allowance (weekly per child) 2024-2025 rates</b>
0 - 4	£170.00
5 -10	£187.00
11 - 15	£225.69
16 - 17	£274.56

<b>Level</b>	<b>Skill Payment (weekly per child) 2024-2025 rates</b>
1	£80.00
2	£130.00
3	£180.00

<b>Age Band</b>	<b>Annual Holiday Allowance (per child) 2024-2025 rates</b>
0- 4	£340.00
5 - 10	£312.00
11 – 15	£370.80
16 - 17	£420.24

## **Foster Carer Support and Training**

26. In addition to the financial support provided to foster carers to enable them to carry out their role, the Council provides a comprehensive training and development package. This includes direct support from Supervising Social Workers and Fostering Family Workers. This support ensures that Nottinghamshire foster carers have the skills, expertise and support to provide the best care for our looked after children.
27. The Council works to create support a sense of community amongst our foster carers through networks of mutual support. The Fostering Liaison and Action Group (FLAG) provides a forum for foster carers to talk about and raise measures to improve their experiences. As part of the Foster for East Midlands Councils funding, 'Mockingbird constellations' are being created. The Mockingbird model aims to nurture relationships between cared for children and young people and their foster families by the bringing together six to ten fostering families who act as an extended family who can then provide vital support to one another. Foster carers also have a network of local support hubs and groups which use local venues as meeting points to exchange information and to provide support to one another. Foster carers can also access out of hours support if they require immediate support from the fostering service.
28. The financial support and training provided to foster carers by the fostering service is in line with the National Minimum Standards (NMS) which are set by the Department for Education. The NMS, together with legal regulations around the placement of children in foster care such as the Fostering Services (England) Regulations 2011, provide the regulatory framework that LAs must meet regarding corporate parenting. The standards are used within the fostering sectors and checked by Ofsted, who examine positive welfare, health and education outcomes for children in foster care.

## **Retention of foster carers**

29. As detailed, retaining foster carers is a challenge faced by councils nationwide. To address this, the Council's Fostering Service has developed a plan for retaining foster carers. This plan includes numerous opportunities to provide feedback through surveys, events hosted by the Council, such as the Foster Carer Conference, the FLAG, and the Fostering Improvement Board. Such opportunities help foster carers shape the service and increase their sense of being valued by the Council and by wider society. Improved communications with foster carers can help celebrate success within the fostering provision in Nottinghamshire, provide more direct feedback, and promote training and support opportunities to foster carers. The service is also reviewing its own working practices, as well as encouraging creative solutions to problems through cross-departmental cooperation as well as engaging with external partner organisations.

## **Continual service improvement**

30. The Fostering Service constantly reviews their work through two means, the Fostering Improvement Board and the Action Plan. The Fostering Improvement Board reviews the functions of the service and uses data and a report-driven approach to improve processes such as the panel interviews for prospective foster carers, communication with foster carers on areas of improvement, and finding out why certain foster carers had left the Council. The Board also identifies local community partners who can help with the recruitment and retention of foster carers. The Action Plan involved developing SMART objectives around

improving recruitment and retention within the Council's Fostering Service. A wide area of review has been considered within the Action Plan, including reviewing all processes related to foster care, utilising new technologies much more efficiently to improve outcomes for foster carers, foster children and the wider service, and reviewing the Service's policies, procedures and guidance relating to foster care.

### **Nottinghamshire as a "Fostering Friendly" employer**

31. The Council, and the other three councils that are part of Foster for East Midlands Councils, are members of the Fostering Network's Fostering Friendly employers' scheme. This scheme helps employers to support and recognise the roles of their employees who foster. Nearly 40 per cent of foster carers combine fostering with other work and a supportive employer can make all the difference to someone becoming and staying as a foster carer, enabling them to balance their employment with looking after children.
32. Members of the scheme agree to put in place a fostering friendly HR policy for all foster carers in their employment (regardless of their fostering service). This includes offering foster carers flexible working and paid time off for training and settling a new child into their home. Fostering Friendly employers also help promote the annual Foster Care Fortnight, an annual campaign to raise the profile of fostering and encourage people to consider becoming foster carers and offer children the care they need. Foster for East Midlands Councils is also encouraging other local employers to come forward to become fostering friendly.

### **Research and information**

33. As part of the review process consideration was given to the work carried out by other local authorities to improve the recruitment and retention and what their offer to foster carers looked like in comparison to what was provided in Nottinghamshire. Other local authorities looked at included:
  - Cumberland Council
  - Cheshire West and Chester Council
  - Derbyshire County Council
  - Devon County Council
  - Essex County Council
  - Herefordshire Council
  - Kent County Council
  - Lancashire County Council
  - Leicestershire County Council
  - Lincolnshire County Council
  - North-East Lincolnshire Council
  - North Northamptonshire Council
  - North Yorkshire Council
  - Oldham Council
  - Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council
  - Staffordshire County Council
  - Somerset Council
  - Thurrock Council



- Walsall Council
- Worcestershire County Council

The Department for Education report: Department of Education, *Foster carer recruitment and conversion rates*, July 2023 was also used as an information resource.

## **Review activity and recommendations**

### **Recruitment and advertising**

34. The Foster for East Midlands Councils website is a well presented and informative website that provides all the information that someone would need when considering whether fostering is a possibility for them in advance of them making an initial enquiry and which compares very favourably to fostering web pages used by other local authorities such as Lancashire County Council. Foster for East Midlands Councils also has a dedicated YouTube channel that is linked from its main page that includes videos that show the positive impact and benefits of fostering, both for the children and young people being cared for as well as for the foster carers themselves. As well as providing a step-by-step guide to the processes involved in becoming and working as a foster carer, the website also contains a detailed, but accessible set of FAQs that aim to answer questions that potential foster carers may have around the application and assessment process and on the role and responsibilities of a foster carer.
35. Findings from the review meetings and from the DfE report from July 2023 ('Foster carer recruitment and conversion rates') detailed how some prospective foster carers may have been deterred from proceeding with a full application due to being overwhelmed by the thorough background checks that are made and which require the sharing of significant amounts of personal information about them and their families. Some applicants can also feel that they do not fit the profile of what they perceive to be what a good foster carer should be or that they can't foster based on their ethnicity, sexual orientation or whether they have a disability. However, LAs and other IFAs have been doing more work to advertise fostering to a wider audience. Members of the review group agreed that the website and accompanying FAQs provided an appropriate amount of information on the role, who could foster and, on the application, and assessment process. Members did note however that it was important that whilst the website and other promotional material should be encouraging to stimulate enquiries from potential foster carers, that they should also be clear that the role could, at times, be challenging.
36. Members also agreed that whilst the promotional resources showed the fantastic impact of foster carers could have on the lives of the children and young people they cared for, that they should also make clear that being a good foster carer did not require someone to be "superhuman" with their parenting and caring skills, and should show that good foster carers came from a broad range of backgrounds, all bringing different skills that had the potential to make a positive impact on a child's or young person's life.
37. In addition to the newly designed recruitment website that represents the four local authorities that are part of Foster for East Midlands Councils, as well as following examples of effective foster carer promotion, such as Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council, there has been a focus since its launch in 2024 in developing an active social media profile, such as on Facebook and Instagram. This work to raise the profile of the service, and to encourage more

people to consider becoming a foster carer has also been supported by the social media activity of the four local authorities in linking to and promoting this content through their own individual social media channels. Foster for East Midlands Councils also promotes using paid for online advertising. Promotional activity linking into online resources is also delivered internally by the Council on the staff intranet to encourage its staff to consider becoming a foster carer.

38. In addition to the delivery of promotion and awareness raising activity online, other promotional activities have included physical advertising activities on billboards and on buses. In person information events are also held where fostering staff are available (often alongside and foster carers and foster children and young people) to talk about the role and to answer any questions that potential foster carers may have. These sessions are held in a wide range of settings including community centres, supermarkets and libraries. Online versions of these sessions are also available and both type of sessions are advertised on the Foster for East Midlands Councils website and through social media. This type of promotion activity is used by other Councils including North Lincolnshire and Worcestershire.
39. Members of the review group agreed that the coming together of the four local authorities to promote fostering through Foster East Midlands Councils was a positive step. Members also agreed that the “brand” that had been created was strong and had the potential to have a more significant impact of foster carer recruitment than if all four local authorities were running promotional and recruitment activity independently. Members acknowledged that as Foster for East Midlands Councils was still quite a new brand, further activity should be carried out to increase its profile both online and as well as with physical advertising. Members looked at examples of how other local authorities have been working to promote awareness of fostering and on what type of innovative approaches had taken place elsewhere. Promotional activities by North-East Lincolnshire Council’s Fostering Service have involved the use of places or businesses of local community significance to promote fostering, for example, Grimsby Town Football Club has advertised Lincolnshire’s fostering service on matchdays. Members of the review group agreed that more could be done to utilise the potential that working with local football clubs, leisure centres and other community facilities to advertise fostering, especially in areas where there was a high demand for new foster carers.
40. Members of the review group also recognised that any advertising of fostering should highlight the realistic expectations of fostering, but also make it clear that anyone with the passion, drive, and caring nature could be a foster carer, regardless of their background or circumstances. Members also agreed that how advertising and promotional activity was best carried out would vary both across Nottinghamshire and in the wider D2N2 area to make sure that the right activity was being carried out in the right place and at the right time.
41. Members of the review group agreed that whilst the activity that was carried out by the fostering service to raise awareness and encourage Council employees to consider fostering was welcome, that there was significant potential to expand this type of activity further. Members identified that as well as the Council, there were many other large employers across Nottinghamshire, such as the NHS and who had employees that could be encouraged to become foster carers. A similar approach is taken by North Lincolnshire Council to promote foster carer recruitment to schools, nurseries, hospitals and community groups. Members agreed that there was the possibility of increasing recruitment of foster carers by building relations with other employers to promote fostering with their employees. Members also

agreed that such partnership working also provided an opportunity to encourage more employers to develop 'Fostering Friendly' accreditation and practices.

**Recommendation One:**

***That to further raise the profile of fostering, and to encourage more initial enquiries from potential foster carers to be made, that the Council through Foster for East Midlands Councils:***

- a) looks to carry out further large scale awareness raising marketing and advertising activity in areas with high public visibility.***
- b) explores the possibilities of working in partnership with other large employers to promote fostering and how these employers can be worked with to encourage and support their employees to consider becoming foster carers.***

**Remuneration and allowances**

- 42. A key aspect of the review was to understand the different offer(s) available to foster carers, either as in house foster carers or IFAs and seeking to understand best practice.
- 43. In June 2024, the Cabinet Member for Children and Families approved an increase to the standard fostering allowances and fees paid to foster carers looking after children and young people above those as prescribed by the Department for Education for 11-15 and 16-18 year olds. The rates for foster carers caring for children in the for the lower age bands (0 - 4 and 5 -10 year olds) remained at the levels set in the National Minimum Fostering Allowances. The increase in the allowances for the older age bands reflected the particular shortage of foster carers available to care for older children. In making this decision it had been recognised that Nottinghamshire County Council needed to pay its foster carers above the minimum rates to attract new foster carers, retain its existing foster carers and pay at rates comparable to its neighbouring Councils.
- 44. It is difficult to draw a direct comparison of Nottinghamshire's financial offer to foster carers, against other local authorities (geographical or statistical neighbours) as each local authority structures their allowances and rates differently depending on needs, ages, additional allowances such as training and celebration events. Some local authorities show separate allowances (to cover the expenses of looking after a child or young person) and fee/rates (to the foster carer), whilst some are combined payments.
- 45. IFAs offer around £350-450 per week per child/young person, however, the Council is charged around £1,000 per week, with the remaining money used by IFAs to cover central costs, and to provide an element of profit. As such it is difficult to make a direct comparisons between the IFAs offer and that of local authorities. The presentation of allowances is also different at each local authority. For example, Nottinghamshire provides a holiday and festival allowance on top of the standard fees and allowances, whereas some other Councils, such as Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council and Lancashire County Council, and IFAs include this in their weekly sum.

46. Members of the review group noted that whilst financial reward was not the primary motivation for people becoming a foster carer, that it was essential that the allowances and fees that are paid for providing such a valuable role were set at a sufficient level in order to prevent dissatisfaction and risk foster carers ceasing to provide their services to the Council. Members also agreed that it was important that the allowances and fees paid by the Council fully recognised the costs involved in looking after a child, especially in view of the increases that have been seen in the cost of living over recent years (a one off cost of living payment of £500 had been made to Nottinghamshire's foster carers in 2024).

### **Other allowances and payments**

47. In addition to the basic fostering allowance and the skills payment that are made to foster carers, the Council also provides additional allowances to foster carers for specific events including birthday celebrations, Christmas, holidays, travel expenses and for school uniforms. Some of these payments are not paid automatically e.g. the payment for birthdays, with foster carers having to submit an application each time in order to receive them. Members noted that the current process could mean that some foster carers could miss out on receiving these payments and agreed that it would be beneficial if these payments could be made automatically or brought together into a single annual payment, rather than having to be applied for each time.
48. From the research carried out as part of the review process it was found that some other local authorities offered retention or other similar payments based on a foster carer's years of service. Lincolnshire County Council provides a retention payment to its foster carers after one, five and 10 years of service. Lancashire County Council and North Yorkshire Council have also provided a welcome payment for new foster carers. Members agreed that the provision of some form of additional payments to foster carers when joining the Council as a foster carer or when they have provided years of good service to our looked after children had the potential to support the wider activity being carried out to ensure that more children could benefit from being placed in a family based placement close to home.

### **Fees and allowances paid by Independent Fostering Agencies**

49. As already detailed, the rates of fees and allowances paid by IFAs are significantly higher than those paid by the Council and other local authorities. For some foster carers this could make fostering for an IFA more appealing even if they felt they would prefer to foster with the Council due to the wider offer around training and development and wanting to work within a public sector organisation. Currently if a foster carer with an IFA wants to transfer to the Council, then discussions take place to see if they could be paid at the same rate as what they are currently receiving from an IFA for as long as they continue to care for the same child/ren. Staffordshire County Council however state on their fostering web pages that they will match the pay rates that a foster carer currently receives from their IFA. This arrangement will continue for as long as they care for the same child/ren. Members agreed that adding clarity to the Council's current position on foster carers transferring from IFAs and being able to retain the same level of payment for as long as they cared for the same child/ren could potentially attract more current foster carers to provide their services through the Council.

## **Other potential enhancements to the offer to foster carers**

50. As part of the review process, members considered what other potential enhancements could be made to the overall Council offer to its foster carers and which could support the ongoing activity to recruit and retain enough foster carers to give our looked after children the family based placement that they deserved as well as making the Council the “go to” provider for foster carers. Members agreed that possible options could be for the Council to consider providing access for its foster carers to a pension or health insurance. Members acknowledged that the provision of such benefits would have a cost and could be complex to implement, but had the potential encourage more people to foster with the Council as most foster carers did not have other paid employment and access to a work based pension or other work based benefits.
51. Members acknowledged that whilst the Council continues to face significant financial challenges, changes to the overall offer made to foster carers would mean an increase in some costs in their delivery. Members however strongly agreed that any activity that could lead to an increase in the number of the Council’s own foster carers should be considered as it could reduce the need to use IFAs or Residential Children’s Homes and provide significant future savings by not having to use these more costly options. Having a family based placement not only provides the best outcomes for our looked after children, but also significantly reduces the costs involved in providing their care for the Council. As such, members agreed that a range of further improvements to the Council’s payment and benefits package for foster carers should be considered as these would not only help provide the best outcomes for our looked after children but also support the Council’s work to deliver the best services in a financially sustainable way.

### ***Recommendation Two:***

***That to further improve the Council's payment and benefits package for foster carers, and to encourage more people for foster with the Council, that consideration should be given to:***

- a) increasing the rates of the fees and allowances that are available for providing foster care.***
- b) putting processes in place that enable the additional allowances (such as at birthdays and Christmas) that foster carers are entitled to be paid to automatically.***
- c) the introduction of additional payments to foster carers in recognition of starting or continuing to provide this essential service.***
- d) enabling more foster carers who currently foster with Independent Fostering Agencies to continue to receive the payment rates offered by their current provider (for as long as they continue to care for the same child/ren) if they become a foster carer with the Council.***
- e) how a form of pension provision for foster carers could be introduced.***
- f) the possibility of providing a form of health insurance for foster carers.***

## **Council Tax and access to other discounts**

52. As part of the review process, members considered how the Council's offer to foster carers could be further improved by working in partnership with the district and borough councils.
53. In 2018 the Council, in partnership with the district and borough councils introduced a 100% exemption for Council Tax liability for care leavers, up to the age of 25. From the research carried out as part of the review it was found that in many other areas a similar Council Tax exemption had been put in place for foster carer households, examples of this included Herefordshire, Walsall, Thurrock and Somerset Councils. Members agreed that working with the district and borough councils to introduce a similar exemption for foster carer households in Nottinghamshire would work to significantly improve the competitiveness of the Council's offer to its foster carers. Members noted that enabling discretionary relief from Council Tax, the Council would be providing practical help and financial assistance to encourage more foster carers to join the fostering service. This in turn would enable more of our children to be placed in family placement, close to their home. As some of the Council's foster carers live just outside of Nottinghamshire's boundaries, members noted that additional provision would be needed in these cases (and which would have a cost impact) to ensure equality of the offer to all of the Council's foster carers.
54. Members also agreed that partnership working with the district and borough councils could also provide the opportunity for further benefits to foster carer households to be provided, such as concessions on leisure facility access, bulky household waste collections and on other services that were provided by these councils. From the research carried out as part of the review it was found that many other councils provided similar discounts on services, however these were mostly provided by unitary authorities. Members acknowledged however that providing a uniform offer around such discounts in Nottinghamshire would be more difficult to put in place as these benefits would have to be negotiated with each council on a case by case basis.

### ***Recommendation Three:***

***That work should be carried out with the District and Borough Councils in Nottinghamshire to explore how foster carers could be offered:***

- a) a reduction in their Council Tax liability.***
- b) concessionary/reduced rates when accessing leisure and other council services***

### **'Fostering Friendly' Accreditation**

55. As already detailed, the Council is accredited by the Fostering Network as a "Fostering Friendly" employer. Council staff who are currently a foster carer are able to receive up to five days paid additional leave for the purposes of carrying out their role, such as in attending assessment, meetings or training in relation to the foster carer role or the settling in of a foster child. The Council's flexi-time scheme and the processes that are in place that enable staff to request flexible working can also be used by foster carers who work for the Council to combine working for the Council with their role as a foster carer. However, the HR policies that can be used by managers at the Council to support staff who are foster carers are not all contained in one separate document. Lancashire County Council have recently submitted a bid to

become a Fostering Friendly employer have created a specific Fostering Friendly Draft Policy which outlines how their staff who were foster carers would be allowed flexible leave and time-off to meet the needs of their foster child.

56. Members of the review group agreed that for the Council as a large employer, and who has staff who are either currently or considering being a foster carer it was important that comprehensive and clear policies were in place that fully supported and promoted its commitment to being Fostering Friendly. Members also felt that the Council's HR policies and procedures could be reviewed to bring relevant HR policies into a single document that would help managers in supporting staff who were foster carers. Members agreed that the Council's current policy around additional leave for foster carers could also be potentially expanded to allow Council staff who are applying to become a foster carer to request additional leave during the application and assessment process if required.

#### ***Recommendation Four***

***That the Council's Human Resources policies and practices should be reviewed to ensure that they are fully "Fostering Friendly".***

#### **Recognition and the value of foster carers**

57. During the review process members heard how one of the most common pieces of feedback received from foster carers was that they did not always feel that they were treated and respected as equal partners with the Council in the joint effort of caring for our looked after children. Members agreed that whilst it was important that the fees and allowances that were paid to foster carers should be at a level that prevented dissatisfaction amongst foster carers, that the financial reward was not the singular most important part of the offer and ensuring that foster carers felt that they were fully supported and valued by the Council was of significant importance.
58. Currently the Council does not provide any IT equipment to foster carers to support them in carrying out their role. Being online however, with access to IT is a crucial aspect of the work of foster carers, allowing them to communicate with their Social Workers, claim for expenses, and to write and submit weekly reports. Members of the review group agreed that the Council should provide more IT resources to support foster carers in carrying out their role and which reflected their role as equal partners in caring for our looked after children. Such resources could include the provision a council laptop/tablet and corporate email address to enable foster carers to easily access the Council's online fostering resources as well as to receive emails highlighting news, information on training and support, as well enabling direct and secure contact to be made with their allocated Social Worker and the fostering team. Further digital support could also be provided through an online Foster Carer Portal which could be accessed through an App. An App and portal system would help foster carers keep track of their pay and allowances, book onto training sessions, and access support outside of office hours. IT equipment is provided by other Councils, such as Somerset Council, to their foster carers.
59. Providing IT equipment and a corporate email address for foster carers, as well as making the carrying out of important aspects of their role easier, would also have significant benefits around data and information security. At present online communication between foster carers

and the Council is carried out through personal, web based email, which as a communication platform is inherently insecure.

60. Members agreed that the provision of essential IT equipment would add a sense of value and belonging for foster carers as well as being essential for them to carry their role in the most effective way. Members noted that they themselves as Councillors, whilst not employees, were able to access laptops, email addresses and IT support. Members felt strongly that foster carers in their role of caring for our looked after children should also be seen in a similar position, as working for, and as part of the Council.

#### ***Recommendation Five***

***That to further improve the Council's current offer to foster carers, that consideration should be given to providing:***

- a) foster carers with laptop or tablet to support and enable them to carry out their role effectively and efficiently.***
- b) foster carers access with a corporate email address.***
- c) a 'Foster Carer portal system and/or App for use by foster carers.***

#### **Celebrating the work of foster carers**

61. Throughout the review process, members expressed their thanks for the work carried out by the Council's foster carers who looked after our looked after children and made them a part of their family and by doing so carried out a valuable but very challenging role.
62. Members agreed that our foster carers are a significant asset for the Council whose work and dedication for caring for our most vulnerable children and young people should be fully recognised and celebrated. Members agreed that carrying events similar to the Adult Social Care Department's awards ceremony for its social care workers (Proud to Care Awards 2024) would be a great way for foster carers to be celebrated. Other types of events that could be considered to recognise and champion our foster carers could be awards ceremonies or garden parties for all fostering families. Oldham Council, for example hosted a Fostering Awards Night in October 2024. Members agreed that hosting events like this would not only reemphasise to foster carers how valued they were by the Council, but would also help raise the profile of foster carers and of fostering with the wider public.

#### ***Recommendation Six:***

***That the Fostering Service should host a variety of high profile recognition events to further champion and publicise the vital role and achievements of foster carers across Nottinghamshire.***

#### **Learning from Best Practice**

63. As detailed throughout the report, the recruitment and retention of enough foster carers to provide sufficient high quality, family based placements for looked after children is a challenge for local authorities across the country.



64. Throughout the review process members welcomed the focus and energy that was being given to increasing the number of the Council's own foster carers and agreed that the implementation of Foster for East Midlands Councils would, in time, have a positive impact in increasing the recruitment of foster carers in Nottinghamshire. The research that has been carried out as part of this review, and detailed throughout this report, has shown many examples of changes and initiatives can be implemented to encourage more people to become foster carers, and most importantly, to remain as one. Members of the review group agreed that to further support the activity being carried out by the Council and Foster for East Midlands Councils to improve the recruitment and retention of foster carers that further work should be carried out to examine how other local authorities are working towards and succeeding in improving their rates of foster carer recruitment and retention.

**Recommendation Seven:**

***That the Council engages with other local authorities who are undertaking transformation activity, and that have shown improvements around the recruitment and retention of fosters to consider any further measures or approaches that could also be used effectively in Nottinghamshire.***

**65. Summary of recommendations**

1.	<p>That to further raise the profile of fostering, and to encourage more initial enquiries from potential foster carers to be made, that the Council through Fostering East Midlands:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) looks to carry out further large scale awareness raising marketing and advertising activity in areas with high public visibility.</li> <li>b) explores the possibilities of working in partnership with other large employers to promote fostering and how these employers can be worked with to encourage and support their employees to consider becoming foster carers.</li> </ul>
2.	<p>That to further improve the Council's payment and benefits package for foster carers, and to encourage more people for foster with the Council, that consideration should be given to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) increasing the rates of the fees and allowances that are available for providing foster care.</li> <li>b) putting processes in place that enable the additional allowances (such as at birthdays and Christmas) that foster carers are entitled to be paid to automatically.</li> <li>c) the introduction of additional payments to foster carers in recognition of starting or continuing to provide this essential service.</li> <li>d) enabling more foster carers who currently foster with Independent Fostering Agencies to continue to receive the payment rates offered by their current provider (for as long as they continue to care for the same child/ren) if they become a foster carer with the Council.</li> </ul>

	<p>e) how a form of pension provision for foster carers could be introduced.</p> <p>f) the possibility of providing a form of health insurance for foster carers.</p>
3.	<p>That work should be carried out with the District and Borough Councils in Nottinghamshire to explore how foster carers could be offered:</p> <p>a) a reduction in their Council Tax liability.</p> <p>b) concessionary/reduced rates when accessing leisure and other council services.</p>
4.	<p>That the Council's Human Resources policies and practices should be reviewed to ensure that they are fully "Fostering Friendly".</p>
5.	<p>That to further improve the Council's current offer to foster carers, that consideration should be given to providing:</p> <p>a) foster carers with laptop or tablet to support and enable them to carry out their role effectively and efficiently.</p> <p>b) foster carers access with a corporate email address.</p> <p>c) a 'Foster Carer portal system and/or App for use by foster carers.</p>
6.	<p>That the Fostering Service should host a variety of high profile recognition events to further champion and publicise the vital role and achievements of foster carers across Nottinghamshire.</p>
7.	<p>That the Council engages with other local authorities who are undertaking transformation activity, and that have shown improvements around the recruitment and retention of fosters to consider any further measures or approaches that could also be used effectively in Nottinghamshire.</p>

## Acknowledgements

66. The Chairman and the members of the review group would like to express their thanks for the invaluable support provided during review process by Amanda Collinson, Service Director – Help, Protection and Care, Jenny Whiston, Head of Service – Fostering, Residential & Secure Accommodation and Matt Wesson – Service Manager - Fostering Service.

## Other Options Considered

67. None. The recommendations of the review, if approved and to comply with the requirements of the Constitution are required to be submitted to Cabinet for their consideration.

## Reason/s for Recommendation/s

68. To comply with the requirements of the Constitution that the findings of a scrutiny review are submitted to the Cabinet for their consideration.

## Statutory and Policy Implications

69. 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

70. There are no direct financial implication relating to the recommendations in the report.

## RECOMMENDATION/S

- 1) That the recommendations from the scrutiny review around recruitment and retention within the Council's Fostering Service, as detailed in the report, be endorsed, and referred to Cabinet for consideration

**Councillor Mike Introna**  
**Chairman of the Children and Families Select Committee**

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## Constitutional Comments (GR 20/02/25)

71. Pursuant to the Nottinghamshire County Council constitution this committee has the delegated authority to receive this report and make the recommendation contained within it

## Financial Comments (SH 06/03/2025)

72. There are no direct financial implication relating to the recommendations in the 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.

- [Children and Families Select Committee, Monday 15 April 2024 – Agenda Item 6: Progress with the Sufficiency and Commissioning Strategy for Children in Care and Care Leavers](#)
- [Department of Education, Foster carer recruitment and conversion rates, July 2023](#)

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

- All

**17 March 2025**

**Agenda Item: 11**

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

### **WORK PROGRAMME**

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

1. To consider the Children and Families Select Committee's work programme.

#### **Information**

2. The work programme (attached as Appendix 1 to the report) assists in the management of the Committee's agenda, the scheduling of its business and its forward planning.
3. The work programme was developed through the use of a workshop session where committee members and other non-Cabinet members had the opportunity to learn about the work and priorities of the department in advance of making suggestions for items for inclusion.
4. The work programme has been approved by Overview Committee and will be reviewed regularly with the Chairman and at each Committee meeting, where any member of the Committee is able to suggest items for possible inclusion.
5. The Forward Plan is available online for members to consider –

<https://www.nottinghamshire.gov.uk/dms/ForwardPlans/tabid/68/FolderID/20/Current-Forward-Plan.aspx>

#### **Other Options Considered**

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

#### **Reasons for Recommendations**

7. To assist the Committee in preparing its business effectively.

## **Statutory and Policy Implications**

6. 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**

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

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 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.

## **Councillor Mike Introna, Chairman of the Children and Families Select Committee**

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

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## **Constitutional Comments (HD)**

8. The Committee has authority to consider the matters set out in this report by virtue of its terms of reference.

## **Financial Comments (NS)**

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

## **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





## WORK PROGRAMME 2024/25 – CHILDREN AND FAMILIES SELECT COMMITTEE

Meeting Date	Agenda Item	Cabinet Member Responsibility	Purpose of the report	Issue raised by	Nottinghamshire Plan Ambitions
<b>7 October 2024</b>	Outcomes and Experiences of Children and Young People with SEND – Progress Report	Cabinet Member - Education and SEND	To examine the progress made by the Nottinghamshire local area SEND Partnership in implementing improvements to the experiences and outcomes of children and young people with SEND.	Committee meeting	Supporting communities and families
	Performance, Finance and Risk Update	Cabinet Member - Children and Families/Cabinet Member - Education and SEND	To provide a progress report on departmental performance, risk and financial position.	Committee meeting	Supporting communities and families  Keeping children, vulnerable adults, and communities safe
	Education, Health, and Care Plans (EHCPs)	Cabinet Member - Education and SEND	To receive a progress report on the activity that has been carried out since the completion of the task and finish review of EHCPs. Also to cover the upcoming contract in for assessments in support of EHCPs	Committee meeting	Supporting communities and families
	Nottinghamshire Safeguarding Children Partnership (NSCP) – Progress Report on Priorities and Annual Report 2023/24	Cabinet Member - Children and Families	To receive the NSCP Annual Report.	Annual item	Keeping children, vulnerable adults, and communities safe
	Outcomes of the review of secondary pupil place planning		To consider the findings of the scrutiny review of secondary pupil place planning.  <a href="#">Page 105 of 112</a>		Supporting communities and families

## WORK PROGRAMME 2024/25 – CHILDREN AND FAMILIES SELECT COMMITTEE

Meeting Date	Agenda Item	Cabinet Member Responsibility	Purpose of the report	Issue raised by	Nottinghamshire Plan Ambitions
<b>2 December 2024</b>	Outcomes and Experiences of Children and Young People with SEND – Progress Report	Cabinet Member - Education and SEND	To examine the progress made by the Nottinghamshire local area SEND Partnership in implementing improvements to the experiences and outcomes of children and young people with SEND.	Committee meeting	Supporting communities and families
	Youth Services/ Local Authority Approach to Youth Provision in Nottinghamshire	Cabinet Member - Children and Families	To examine the provision of Youth Services.	Work Programming session.	Supporting communities and families
	Early Years Provision of Childcare	Cabinet Member – Children and Families	Resolved at February 2024 meeting “That a further report on the Early Years and Childcare Sector in Nottinghamshire be received at the January 2025 meeting of the Children and Families Select Committee.”	Committee meeting	Supporting communities and families
	Child Exploitation Support	Cabinet Member - Children and Families	To examine the Council’s approach to tackling child exploitation.	Work Programming session	Keeping children, vulnerable adults, and communities safe

## WORK PROGRAMME 2024/25 – CHILDREN AND FAMILIES SELECT COMMITTEE

Meeting Date	Agenda Item	Cabinet Member Responsibility	Purpose of the report	Issue raised by	Nottinghamshire Plan Ambitions
17 March 2025	Outcomes and Experiences of Children and Young People with SEND – Progress Report	Cabinet Member - Education and SEND	To examine the progress made by the Nottinghamshire local area SEND Partnership in implementing improvements to the experiences and outcomes of children and young people with SEND.	Committee meeting	Supporting communities and families
	Performance, Finance and Risk Update	Cabinet Member - Children and Families/Cabinet Member - Education and SEND	To provide a progress report on departmental performance, risk and financial position.	Committee meeting	Supporting communities and families Keeping children, vulnerable adults, and communities safe
	Children not in school/Elective Home Education	Cabinet Member - Education and SEND	To examine activity around the new requirements to maintain a record of all children not in school. Also to consider issues relating to children to why children are withdrawn from school	Work Programming session	Supporting communities and families
	Family Hubs	Cabinet Member – Children and Families	To examine the delivery of Family Hubs. Site visits in advance of the meeting.	Work Programming session	Supporting communities and families
	Impact of VAT on private school fees on school places.	Cabinet Member - Education and SEND	To examine whether there has been an impact on demand for school places due the introduction of VAT on private school fees.	Work Programming session	Supporting communities and families
	Outcomes of the review of fostering recruitment and retention		To consider the findings of the scrutiny review of fostering recruitment and retention Page 107 of 112	Work Programming session	Supporting communities and families

## WORK PROGRAMME 2024/25 – CHILDREN AND FAMILIES SELECT COMMITTEE

Meeting Date	Agenda Item	Cabinet Member Responsibility	Purpose of the report	Issue raised by	Nottinghamshire Plan Ambitions
14 July 2025	Outcomes and Experiences of Children and Young People with SEND – Progress Report	Cabinet Member - Education and SEND	To examine the progress made by the Nottinghamshire local area SEND Partnership in implementing improvements to the experiences and outcomes of children and young people with SEND.	Committee	Supporting communities and families
	Workforce recruitment and retention	Cabinet Member - Children and Families/Cabinet Member - Education and SEND	To examine the issues and activity being carried out around workforce recruitment and retention.	Work Programming session	Building skills that help people to get good local jobs  A forward looking and resilient council
	Youth Justice Plan	Cabinet Member – Children and Families	To examine the delivery of the Youth Justice Plan.	Work Programming session	Keeping children, vulnerable adults, and communities safe
	Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education (SACRE) – Annual Report	Cabinet Member - Education and SEND	To receive the Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education (SACRE) – Annual Report	Annual item	Supporting communities and families
	Developing the approach to meeting children's needs through the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub	Cabinet Member – Children and Families	To receive a progress report on the approach to meeting children's needs through the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub	Committee meeting	Keeping children, vulnerable adults, and communities safe

**WORK PROGRAMME 2024/25 – CHILDREN AND FAMILIES SELECT COMMITTEE**

**Items pending scheduling or removal.**

<b>Item</b>	<b>Cabinet Member Responsibility</b>	<b>Purpose of the report</b>	<b>Issue raised by</b>	<b>Nottinghamshire Plan Ambitions</b>

## WORK PROGRAMME 2024/25 – CHILDREN AND FAMILIES SELECT COMMITTEE

### Reviews

Project Start Date	Item	Cabinet Member Responsibility	Purpose of Review	Issue raised by	Nottinghamshire Plan Ambitions
November 2024	Fostering recruitment and retention	Cabinet Member - Children and Families	Agreed during 2023/24. Scope has been drafted.	Committee	Supporting communities and families
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 - 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.	Committee	Supporting communities and families  Keeping children, vulnerable adults, and communities safe

**WORK PROGRAMME 2024/25 – CHILDREN AND FAMILIES SELECT COMMITTEE**

**Items to be scheduled for 2025/26**

<b>Item</b>	<b>Cabinet Member Responsibility</b>	<b>Purpose of the report</b>	<b>Issue raised by</b>	<b>Nottinghamshire Plan Ambitions</b>
Small Schools Sustainability Strategy	Cabinet Member - Education and SEND	Strategy being considered by Cabinet September 2024. To be considered for scheduling for 2025/26.	Work Programming session	Supporting communities and families

**Items for information briefings for committee members**

<b>Item</b>	<b>Cabinet Member Responsibility</b>	<b>Purpose of the report</b>	<b>Issue raised by</b>	<b>Nottinghamshire Plan Ambitions</b>

