

The overarching objective of this improvement plan is to ensure that the Children and Families Department is taking the necessary steps to provide safe, effective, efficient and cost-effective services to vulnerable children, young people and their families in Nottinghamshire, with enabling support and challenge from the Chief Executives, Adult Social Care and Health and Place Departments.

The plan should be read in conjunction with the existing highlight reporting against the Department's major change programmes: Remodelling Care and Remodelling Practice. These programmes detail the specific benefits to be delivered in respect of financial savings/cost avoidance and efficiency.

1. Addressing the in-year financial challenges

	Improvement Action	CLT Accountable Officer	Lead Officer	What we hope to achieve	Timeframe	Success Measure	Progress	Status
1.1	Regularly review the need for agency staffing through Agency Challenge Panel.	Colin Pettigrew	Steve Edwards	Reduce agency spend. Ensure that any agency deployment is absolutely necessary and is targeted at our highest priority areas.	Quarterly.	All social work caseloads are within the set manageable number when measured each month. The forecast on agency staffing spend for 2019-20 is carefully monitored and does not exceed the number of agency staff required to ensure that Social Workers have manageable workloads.		Ongoing programme of work
1.2	Quarterly reviews of non-essential spend.	Colin Pettigrew / Nigel Stevenson	Laurence Jones / Sue Summerscales	Identify and eliminate unnecessary spend.	Completed every quarter.	Completion of review and advice issued to staff on changes needed to expenditure approvals.	Quarterly reviews are in place. Of those areas identified as possibly being non-essential spend after the process was completed only 2% were designated as non-essential. The review of non-essential spend will now be rolled into action 4.3 "rolling "challenge process" for all Group Managers in relation to budget management."	Complete
1.3	Audit of financial management processes and culture within the department.	Colin Pettigrew / Nigel Stevenson	Simon Lacey	To understand if any changes are required to deliver the optimum oversight of value for money within the department.	November 2019	An action plan is approved and implemented to take forward any recommendations within the report.	The fieldwork has now been completed and final recommendation along with a plan for implementation will be produced for the 2020-21 financial year.	Complete
1.4	Benchmark current service outcomes and financial performance against statistical neighbours who are rated good or outstanding in an OFSTED ILACS.	Colin Pettigrew / Nigel Stevenson	Laurence Jones	This will help understand how the department is performing relative to others and prompt a deeper challenge of balancing children care need and staying within budget.	November 2019	An action plan is approved and implemented to take forward any recommendations as a result of the benchmarking.	Initial benchmarking was completed but was inconclusive. "Children looked after" rates continue to be below average in Notts and CIPFA benchmarking shows Nottinghamshire having low cost based for delivering care. Work is planned with Essex, an outstanding authority, to examine service provision and cost demands. This work will now be rolled into action 4.5 below.	Complete

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1.5	Independent review of 20 most recently accommodated children.	Colin Pettigrew	Steve Edwards	Assurance that only those children who need to come into care do so.	Report completed July 2019	Only children that need to come into care do so.	The Independent audit concluded that thresholds for admission into care are appropriate. It is expected that the recent Ofsted inspection will also comment on the appropriateness of thresholds.	Complete
1.6	Senior managers to regularly review the most expensive care placements.	Colin Pettigrew	Laurence Jones	Effective use of budget and appropriate investment in long term outcomes for children.	Monthly	The top 20 most expensive placements are reviewed monthly.	Reviews are underway. In one case a successful negotiation with health has decreased local authority contributions to a care package in excess of £50,000. This has prompted a review of the approach of joint commissioning. Cases continue to be reviewed by Service Directors through the Children Looked After Scrutiny Board.	Ongoing programme of work

2. Effective delivery of change programmes, accelerating pace where possible, and improving ability to track benefits realisation

	Improvement Action	CLT Accountable Officer	Lead Officer	What we hope to achieve	Timeframe	Success Measure	Progress	Status
2.1	<p>Increased number of internal fostering placements available</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ongoing prioritised support of marketing and communications colleagues with comprehensive campaign through to July 2020 Corporate and partnership approach to improve offer to foster carers (leisure facilities, council tax discount, parking etc). 	<p>Marje Toward</p> <p>Anthony May/ Adrian Smith</p>	<p>Luke Barrett/ Catherine Kelly</p> <p>Derek Higton/ Pete Mathieson/ Chris Ward/ Andy Dawson</p>	<p>Safe, caring and loving placements for children.</p> <p>Higher percentage of foster placements are made internally</p> <p>Any unnecessary expenditure is avoided</p>	<p>Rolling marketing campaign to July 2020</p> <p>Revised offer for foster carers by April 2020</p>	<p>Savings target achieved</p> <p>A net increase of 50 fostering placements by March 2021</p> <p>Increase in fostering enquiries of 20%</p> <p>Increase in conversion from enquiry to approved foster carer of 10%</p>	<p>The average number of enquiries per month in Jun-Aug was 8.3. Following the introduction of increased foster carer fees in August and the September publicity campaign, the average number of enquiries per month for Sept-Nov was 15.7</p> <p>A dedicated Recruitment and Assessment Team is now in place and the campaign to publicise increase in fees and support offer has been completed. A recruitment campaign will run from Feb 2020. Child-specific adverts are being used and social media marketing has been increased</p> <p>Fostering events have increased from once a quarter to at least once a month, and now take place in all districts rather than just in areas of high demand. Events targeted specifically at faith groups have been arranged</p> <p>The Fostering Conference in September was very well-attended</p>	Ongoing programme of work
2.2	<p>Increase in internal residential children's home capacity</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Additional 4 bed residential home opened. 	Colin Pettigrew/ Adrian Smith	Devon Allen/ Neil Gamble	Timely mobilisation of new residential home. Four new NCC residential placements available avoiding the need for more costly external	Timeframe is largely dependent on the operating model agreed by Members, but is estimated at between June and September 2020.	Four additional residential placements for Nottinghamshire in a NCC owned home by May 2020.	Further extensions are being negotiated to the block contract with our trusted providers and further proposals regarding the estate will be made to Policy Committee in March 2020.	Ongoing programme of work

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consideration when remodelling wider NCC estate and in planning applications for housing developments to increase children's home capacity/ accommodation for care leavers 			residential placements and resulting in good outcomes for the children.				
2.3	Increase the number of "block contract" residential placements with external providers. The total number of new homes under this arrangement will be four.	Colin Pettigrew	Jon Hawketts	Contracts which provide a better cost per placement (as long as occupancy is maintained) and therefore help reduce placement costs.	First two homes by September 2019	Savings target achieved New homes operational and fully occupied by February 2020.	The first two homes became operational from July 2019 and a third from November 2019. All are fully occupied. A fourth home has been sourced by the provider to become a specialist unit to accommodate a Nottinghamshire child in care who is deaf and presents with a range of special needs. Planning and preparatory work continues with the provider in relation to this bespoke facility	Initial work completed with further phase identified.
2.4	Establish a D2N2 Commissioning Framework for residential and Independent Fostering Agencies.	Colin Pettigrew	Jon Hawketts	To use economies of scale to reduce the cost of placements. To develop the market across the D2N2 footprint to increase diversity, availability and quality. This will also reduce costs per placement overall. Further development of block arrangements may also reduce unit costs.	February 2020	New D2N2 Framework in place	This framework is now live with contract management arrangements agreed.	Complete
2.5	Develop enhanced models of semi-independent accommodation for the most complex care leavers in smaller units.	Colin Pettigrew	Jon Hawketts	The most complex care leavers often fail to make a successful transition from residential care to supported accommodation. By providing smaller units an earlier successful transition could be made which is better for the young person as	Some already operational; others planned to be so by 2020/21	14 new units in place by April 2020 Reduced instances and level of evictions Improved outcomes for individual young people (as evidenced via Outcome Star scores)	1 smaller 5-bed 24 hour staffed setting has been developed and is operational. A site has been identified for Core plus service and ongoing discussions with Strategic Business Partner and current provider regarding its development Approval sought to commission spot placements via the DPPS to meet the needs of the most vulnerable care leavers aged 18+. Guidance note developed.	Ongoing programme of work

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				they reach adulthood and is also significantly cheaper than residential care. It also frees places in residential care for those who need it the most.			Teenage parent service is now staffed 24/7 (6 bed unit),	
2.6	Delivery of the Social Impact Bond Model (jointly with Nottingham and Derby City Councils).	Colin Pettigrew	Jon Hawketts	To reduce the number of young people in high cost residential placements and therefore reduce the pressure on the placements budget. To make use of up to £3m of Big Lottery (LCF) funding.	SIB to be operational by Feb 2020 (revised)	SIB to become operational, receiving referrals and delivering positive outcomes for individual CYP and delivering budget savings	A new social investor has been identified and the final stages of due diligence and formal contract signature are now being undertaken. Service mobilisation activity is being undertaken in parallel to enable a 'soft launch' ASAP after contract signature and confirmation of Big Lottery (LCF) funding from government.	Delayed but nearing full implementation.
2.7	To ensure that the corporate Digital Development Programme supports delivery of the Children and Families Department's "Digital Development Plan"	Adrian Smith / Colin Pettigrew	Katharine Smith Tracy Hill Sue Milburn Joe Foley	Using technology to achieve simple and immediate access and better support for service users More efficient access to relevant information between organisations within the children's partnership (e.g. social care and CAMHS). Care leavers better able to access information about local offer.	Details	Delivery of the Children and Families Department's "Digital Development Plan"	These programmes are aligned and the Digital Development Plan for the department. The plan was presented as a part of the department's annual update to Improvement and Change Committee in January 2020 and will be implemented and reviewed intermittently over the next few years.	Ongoing programme of work
2.8	Ensuring there is sufficient/prioritised capacity to develop the BI reports required to meet Ofsted requirements	Nigel Stevenson	Rob Disney	Reduction in manual tasks undertaken within frontline services thus freeing up management and	End of September 2019 for Ofsted reporting	A suite of appropriate reports and dashboards available	Business intelligence reports for Ofsted were completed in line with requirements. Post-inspection developments in the fostering service are being progressed.	

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	(including workforce reporting), baseline and track benefits of change programmes, and facilitate management decision-making.			<p>business support capacity.</p> <p>Better data on which to inform decision making.</p> <p>Better data upon which to inform benefits monitoring of projects</p> <p>Fulfil Ofsted requirement.</p> <p>Ability to track impact of project initiatives on recruitment and retention of staff.</p> <p>Better decision making on use of agency staff.</p>	Further development by June 2020		<p>Frontline staff benefit from daily access to an array of reports to assist decision-making in service delivery. Over the most recent 60-day period, 198 different reports and dashboards were accessed 6,240 times by 271 unique users across all operational areas of the department.</p> <p>Since the last update, new dashboards and reporting have been developed and are now being used routinely by key frontline services, notably: MASH 'Live' reporting; Adoption East Midlands operational and management information reports; Troubled Families. A dashboard to support the Remodelling Practice Programme is currently undergoing final quality assurance checks.</p> <p>Developments continue, working with colleagues in Performance to progress new and enhanced reporting in priority areas.</p>	
2.9	<p>Additional project management capacity/financial resource for capacity within the department to be established to deliver the following change projects:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establishing whole family safeguarding teams between children's and adults; Making the front door delivery model sustainable within the context of increasing demand; Taking a joint commissioning approach with health for children with complex needs; 	Nigel Stevenson /Colin Pettigrew	Sue Milburn/ Lucy Peel / Marion Clay	<p>More timely delivery of a range of projects intended to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> improve practice and through this children's outcomes; release capacity within frontline teams; and make more efficient use of resources and avoid cost where possible. <p>SEND budgets are managed so that large budget deficits do not appear in the Dedicated Schools Grant.</p>	<p>To be determined once projects initiated. Next step for progressing family safeguarding is joint CFS and ASCH leadership team meeting on 17 September.</p> <p>SEND strategy – initial phases are being delivered following Higher Level Needs budget review. This is being developed into a formal 5 year strategy for implementation from spring 2020.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establishing whole family safeguarding teams between children's and adults; Making the front door delivery model sustainable within the context of increasing demand; Taking a joint commissioning approach with health for children with complex needs; Delivering a five year SEND transformation strategy and Developing a coherent approach to supporting children living in kinship arrangements. 	<p>Work to develop a whole family safeguarding approach has not yet commenced due as resource has not yet been identified. Operational work is taking place in respect of integrated service delivery approaches to domestic abuse and substance misuse along with public health and provider colleagues.</p> <p>Front door delivery model project is in the scoping stage. A Programme Officer has been allocated from the Programmes and Projects team.</p> <p>A resource referral has been made to the Transformation & Change Governance Group to approve a joint commissioning project with health, focussing on two specific areas of need. A Project Manager from the Programmes & Projects Team will be allocated to the design and discovery stage imminently. A project working group has already been set up and helped developed the initial scope of the project. A bid has been submitted for a graduate trainee to support this work.</p> <p>A report has been developed to identify and describe the various projects and initiatives which contribute to the overall SEND transformation strategy. The report will go to SLT on 11 February</p>	Ongoing programme of work

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Delivering a five year SEND transformation strategy and Developing a coherent approach to supporting children living in kinship arrangements. <p>Anticipated additional capacity requirements: 2 project managers, 3 programme officers within programmes and projects, plus funding for 2 project manager posts to be hosted within the department, graduate trainee.</p>						<p>so that senior colleagues can appraise progress in each area and agree whether the existing work is sufficient or whether further projects should be scoped. A Project Manager and Programme Officer has been allocated from the Programmes & Projects team.</p> <p>The kinship PID has been approved at DLT. A Project Manager has been assigned from the service, and a Programme Officer has been allocated from the Programmes & Projects Team. The project is on track.</p>	
2.10	Ensuring that sold services are achieving full cost recovery in all instances	Colin Pettigrew	Laurence Jones	Accurately calculating full costs and having charges which reflect these	1 April 2020	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> full cost calculated income achieved 	<p>A review of the nightly bed price for disability homes and Clayfields House is complete. A medium term financial strategy for Clayfields has been developed.</p> <p>Sold services to schools are being reviewed based on updated demand information.</p>	Ongoing programme of work

3. Creating the conditions for good practice to flourish

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3.1	Taking a corporate approach to parking at all sites to ensure social workers have prioritised access to parking.	Adrian Smith	Derek Higton	Better efficiency of social work time. Improved staff morale.	To be determined.	Improved staff satisfaction ratings as measured through feedback via annual health check and through Practice Forum	•	
3.2	Ensuring that the smartphones for social workers function as smartphones at the earliest possible opportunity and no later than the current planning go live date of October 2019.	Nigel Stevenson	Nigel Harlow	Social workers better able to work efficiently. Would mean that Apps that have been commissioned (Mind of My Own, Guardian 24) can be used on work phones. Reduction in risk of IG breaches. Improved staff morale.	All social workers to have smartphones by October 2019	All relevant staff having functioning smartphones Improved staff morale as measured through feedback via annual health check and through Practice Forum	250 devices were upgraded to an interim smartphone solution prior to Oct 2019 as planned. During December 2019 all of the devices were upgraded to the fully managed solution to bring them into line with NCC security policies'.	Complete
3.3	Introduction of Guardian 24 on smartphones to improve personal safety for workers during visits in the community	Nigel Stevenson / Marje Toward	John Nilan	Improved staff morale. Reduction in cost (current solution more expensive).	April 2020	All relevant staff have access to Guardian 24. Improvement in percentage of staff feeling safe as measured through annual health check (baseline through health check of 79%).	Roll out of Guardian 24 App on target for April 2020 Smartphones distribution for Children's services currently at 70 % Supporting resource 'toolkit' of personal safety procedure and assessments and e-learning on target for April 2020 launch.	Ongoing programme of work
3.4	Introduce a clear values-based framework within which to work and support in managing the challenges of complex case work (rollout of reflective group supervision).	Colin Pettigrew	Lucy Peel	Improve case progress and successful outcomes therefore over time reducing the number of cases requiring a social worker. Increase job satisfaction and therefore social worker retention. This then reduces	Rollout across District Child Protection Teams and the Children's Disability Service by September 2019. Further roll outs to follow.	Social work caseloads are within the set manageable number Reduced drift and delay (average duration of child in need and child protection cases) Improved staff retention during 2020-21	Group reflective supervision is taking place within social work teams and this will be evaluated in April 2020. Senior leaders and managers across the department have engaged in restorative practice training and services are currently identifying priorities for working in a more strengths-based, restorative way. This includes promoting strengths-based language and developing the approach within child protection conferences.	Ongoing programme of work

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				the need for expensive agency workers.		Continued reduction in use of agency staff during 2020-21	There is a plan to identify a critical friend to support the department's implementation of the practice model.	
3.5	Provide support recognising the emotional toll of the work that social workers do (piloting Schwartz Rounds, access to counselling support and a health and wellbeing hub).	Colin Pettigrew	Lucy Peel	Reduce stress related absence and therefore for the need for expensive agency worker cover. Improve social worker recruitment and retention through the offer to social workers.	Pilot commences June 2019. Full rollout out January 2020 pending evaluation.	Improved staff retention Improved staff wellbeing as measured through health check Reduction in stress related absence	From January 2020 Schwartz Rounds have been rolled out across Children and Families on an open access basis following the randomised control trial that the department has been engaged in through Cardiff University. The national evaluation on the impact of Schwartz Rounds is due in September 2020.	Ongoing programme of work
3.6	Good continuing professional development and career progression opportunities through a refreshed CPD offer for experienced social workers and new team managers, and developing additional advanced practitioner roles.	Colin Pettigrew / Marje Toward	Lucy Peel / Helen Richardson	Improved social worker recruitment and retention through the offer to social workers.	Detailed action plan being developed.	Improved staff retention during 2020-21 Quality of practice as assessed through the Quality Management Framework	A revised workforce plan for Children and Families is being developed which will incorporate strengths-based practice and integrate the requirements of the knowledge and skill statements (KSS) for practitioners and supervisors. Dedicated information about the training offer linked to each KSS has been developed and will be promoted to staff. Job descriptions have been developed for the advanced practitioner role and the proposed structure is planned to go to CYP Committee for approval in April 2020.	Ongoing programme of work

4. Improving departments longer term efficiency and effectiveness

	Improvement Action	CLT Accountable Officer	Lead Officer	What we hope to achieve	Timeframe	Success Measure	Progress	Status
4.1	A review of the financial culture across the department is undertaken including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A "stock take" against the recommendations 	Colin Pettigrew	Laurence Jones	Consistent attention to the potential financial consequences of decisions so that they can be planned for.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Newton stock take by June 2020 Development programme roll out from September 2020 	Reduced levels of budget variance Contingency plans are in place where adverse financial conditions are predicted		Not yet commenced

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	<p>identified by Newton in 2018</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A development programme for all budget holders to improve confidence and consistency in financial matters 					Budgets are managed in line with guidance and financial regulations		
4.2	<p>To develop a revised vision and mission for the department for the period up until 2023 supported by key plans or strategies to support areas of financial risk including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Placement sufficiency and commissioning Social care delivery and demand management Workforce sufficiency 	Colin Pettigrew	Laurence Jones	Improved long term, planning around areas that influence financial risk	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Departmental Vision and mission by June 2020 Revised supporting "strategies" by September 2020 	Vision and strategies in place and communicated appropriately across the department		Not yet commenced
4.3	<p>To implement a rolling "challenge process" for all Group Managers in relation to budget management. This will be strengths based and will adopt an appreciative enquiry approach.</p>	Colin Pettigrew	Laurence Jones	Improved attention and accountability for budget issues and support in identifying improvement actions	Every 6-months from July 2020	<p>Meeting schedule and methodology in place</p> <p>Improvement plans being implemented at group level</p>		Not yet commenced
4.4	<p>To review the medium-term capacity required to drive a more financially aware performance and transformation culture across the department.</p>	Colin Pettigrew	Laurence Jones	Cultural change so finance becomes an embedded element of all change and performance management	Capacity in place by August 2020	Capacity identified and in place with a time-limited programme of work		Not yet commenced
4.5	<p>To continue to identify key financial data, unit costs and benchmarking for both externally commissioned services (through the Commissioning and Contracts Board) and for those services provided by the Council itself.</p>	Colin Pettigrew	Laurence Jones	An understanding of how departmental spend and performance are linked and if greater efficiency or better outcomes can be achieved.	September 2020	Framework in place that can identify areas for challenge in relation to spend vs performance		Not yet commenced

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	(possible area for joint work with Newton)							