



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