

Corporate Parenting Panel

Tuesday, 02 July 2024 at 14:00

County Hall, West Bridgford, Nottingham, NG2 7QP

AGENDA

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| 1 | Minutes of the Last Meeting held on 16 April 2024 | 3 - 12 |
| 2 | Apologies for Absence | |
| 3 | Declarations of Interests by Members and Officers:- (see note below) | |
| 4 | Foster Carers Liaison Group Update
Verbal Report | |
| 5 | Children in Care Council Update
Verbal Report | |
| 6 | Update on Nottinghamshire Children's Residential Homes and Secure Accommodation Service | 13 - 24 |
| 7 | Update on the expansion of the Children's Residential Estate
Verbal Report | |
| 8 | Progress of the Partnership Strategy for Nottinghamshire Looked After Children and Care Leavers (2022 – 2025) | 25 - 30 |
| 9 | Performance of Adoption Services 2024 | 31 - 34 |
| 10 | Work Programme 2024-25 | 35 - 36 |

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: Corporate Parenting Panel

Date: Tuesday 16 April 2024 (commencing at 2:00pm)

Membership:

Persons absent are marked with an 'Ap' (apologies given) or 'Ab' (where apologies have not been sent). Substitute members are marked with a 'S'.

County Councillors

Ap Sinead Anderson (Chair)
Anne Callaghan BEM
Francis Purdue-Horan
Mike Introna

County Council Officers

Amanda Collinson	-	Service Director for Care, Help and Protection
Ap Beth Downing	-	Group Manager for Placements and Commissioning
Sophie Eadsforth	-	Group Manager for Looked After Children
Rachel Miller	-	Service Director for Commissioning and Resources
Claire Sampson	-	Group Manager for Strategic Safeguarding and Independent Review
Jenny Whiston	-	Group Manager for Fostering, Residential and Secure Accommodation

Substitute Members

S Tracey Taylor

Officers and colleagues in attendance:

Heather Bennett	-	Executive Officer for Children and Families
Orlaith Green	-	Group Manager for Psychology Services and Head of the Virtual School
James Lavender	-	Democratic Services Officer
Davinia Lawton	-	Service Manager for Residential and Contact Services
Paul Thomas	-	Service Manager for Secure Accommodation

1 MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING HELD ON 9 JANUARY 2024

The minutes of the meeting held on 9 January 2024, having been circulated previously, were confirmed as correct and signed by the Chairman.

2 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Councillor Sinead Anderson - Other reasons
Beth Downing

3 DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS BY MEMBERS AND OFFICERS

None.

4 DESTINATIONS OF YEAR 12-13 LOOKED AFTER YOUNG PEOPLE COHORT 2023/24

In a change to the order of the published agenda, the Chair accepted a request that Item 12 – Destinations of Year 12-13 Looked After Young People cohort 2023/24, be heard first due to the availability of the report author. Orlaith Green, Group Manager for Psychology Services and Head of the Virtual School, presented the report which provided information on the education destinations of Nottinghamshire looked after young people who left statutory education at the end of the academic year 2022-2023 and went into Year 12, and those in Year 13 of post-16 education for academic year 2023-24. The following points were discussed:

- Nottinghamshire was above the national average in terms of academic achievements for this cohort.
- There were also positive updates regarding the post-16 Pupil Premium, which was used to support care leavers in their educational journey.
- The Panel noted the positive developments in the destination of this cohort, particular the number of looked after young people progressing into higher education.
- Data on the destinations for Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children could be presented to the Corporate Parenting Panel.

RESOLVED 2024/013

- 1) That the report be noted.
- 2) That data on the destination of Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children be provided.

5 CHILDREN IN CARE COUNCIL UPDATE

Rachel Miller, Interim Service Director for Commissioning and Resources, provided an update on the work of the Children in Care Council (CiCC). The following points were discussed:

- The CiCC was a body which represented the interests of children in the care of the County Council, and was made up of chairs and vice chairs of children in care groups representing Under 11s, 11 – 16-year-olds, and 16 years and over. The CiCC provided feedback on policies and programmes aimed at children in care. Since the last meeting of the Panel, two meetings of the CiCC had taken place.
- The CiCC were involved in several programmes organised by the Children and Families Department. They included undertaking training with students at University of Nottingham who were studying for degrees in social work and contributing to the Care Leavers Cookbook to encourage healthy eating amongst care leavers. They provided feedback on national government consultations on childcare policies and on the Council's Education Plans process aimed at children in care.
- The work of CiCC representatives was profiled on Notts TV, which included a feature about one of the CiCC representatives who provided a mentoring role to young people on youth mentoring courses at West Notts College.
- A new Chair for the CiCC aimed to be in post by next month.
- Members of the Panel believed it would be beneficial to have Councillors involved in the focus groups for improving fostering provision. Members also noted that there were plans for a Children and Families Select Committee task and finish group into the Council's fostering placement sufficiency which councillors could also be involved in.

RESOLVED 2024/014

- 1) That the update be noted.
- 2) That further involvement of councillors in the fostering provision focus groups and the Children and Families Select Committee Task and Finish Group into the Council's Looked After Children and Care Leaver placement sufficiency be explored.

6 FOSTER CARERS LIAISON GROUP UPDATE

Jenny Whitson, Group Manager for Fostering, Residential and Secure Accommodation, presented the Panel with a regular update on the recent meetings of the Foster Carers Liaison Group (FLAG). The following points were discussed:

- Staff had regular calls with the FLAG on Microsoft Teams, where they provided feedback on the Council's current foster carer support. The team had learnt much from these feedback sessions and had gained a greater confidence in managing the expectations of foster carers.
- The news of D2N2's successful application to the Department for Education (DfE)'s Fostering Recruitment and Retention Programme, bringing £1.8 million of central government funding into the region for improvements in fostering recruitment and retention, was welcomed by the FLAG. The D2N2 local authorities would trial a process for the support and retention of foster carers, known as 'Mockingbird'. The Mockingbird model involved several foster families linked together in an extended family network or 'constellation community'. Led by a Hub Home Carer and Liaison Worker, with the support of their fostering service, the constellation community would offer vital peer support and guidance alongside social activities and sleepovers to strengthen relationships, stability, and permanence.

RESOLVED 2024/015

- 1) That the update be noted.

7 ELECTED MEMBER VISITS TO NOTTINGHAMSHIRE CHILDREN'S RESIDENTIAL HOMES

Amanda Collinson, Service Director for Help, Protection and Care, noted that there had not been any visits by elected members to children's residential homes since the last meeting of the Panel in January. The Panel noted that the process for organising these visits needed to be clarified, the invitations should be made available to members of the Children and Families Select Committee, and that training should be provided to members prior to these visits.

RESOLVED 2024/016

- 1) To that the report be noted and any feedback on the process of organising elected member visits be considered.

8 UPDATE ON NOTTINGHAMSHIRE CHILDREN'S RESIDENTIAL HOMES AND SECURE ACCOMMODATION SERVICE

Jenny Whiston, Group Manager for Fostering, Residential and Secure Accommodation, Paul Thomas, Service Manager for Secure Accommodation, and Davinia Lawton, Service Manager for Residential and Contact Services, presented an update on the status of children's residential homes and secure accommodation within Nottinghamshire. The following points were discussed:

- Clayfields Secure Children's Home received an Ofsted visit on 23 and 24 January 2024 and the overall judgement was 'Good', which was a positive improvement on the previous 'Inadequate' judgement. The comments made by

Ofsted were very positive as was the feedback from parents, carers, professionals, and the children themselves.

- The monthly Regulation 44 visit took place. The inspectors spoke to managers, young people, health professionals, and youth workers. They noted the positive feedback and a significant change in the culture at Clayfields. The Service Development Plan continued to strengthen the positive work in improving the service provision at Clayfields.
- Recruitment continued to be a high priority, but the senior leadership team continued to take actions that were reasonable and practicable to address the shortfalls in staffing. The service set up a Workforce Development Board to address issues and discuss solutions to recruitment. This included support from colleagues across the County with specialism in human resources and communication.
- Since 29 February 2024, Clayfields had been operating on 68.01% occupancy level, with an overall bed night loss of 934 nights. This decrease was due to operating two house units (Sherwood and Loxley) and prioritising the Ministry of Justice contract. However, with the DfE Capital Building Programme, this would continue throughout the programme, which was currently estimated as a 46-week building programme and expected to be completed by 31 March 2025.
- The Big House in Edwinstone was inspected by Ofsted in November 2023 and it received an Outstanding judgement. It was its first Outstanding judgement in ten years and had demonstrated great work in meeting the needs of children with severe intellectual disabilities, physical disabilities, medical, and sensory needs. The manager of The Big House had planned to retire, but was now planning to stay on in light of the recent Ofsted inspection. The Big House was in the process of a garden transformation and a new set of play and gym equipment would be installed.
- Caudwell House had received an 'Outstanding' Ofsted judgement for the thirteenth year in a row. The team continued to provide outstanding team support for children with psychical disabilities, learning difficulties, and healthcare needs. Recruitment was underway for a new manager.
- Lyndene, a mainstream children's home had received a 'Good' Ofsted judgement. The Children and Families Department were confident in the provision of the home.
- Oakhurst had received a 'Requires Improvement' Ofsted judgement, which had been 'Good' in a previous inspection. There had been several changes in staff which had affected the service provision. The Ofsted inspectors noted that whilst improvements were needed in leadership and management, they had received positive feedback from the children resident in the home.
- West View was a registered specialist disability home, but it was not currently occupied.

- It was noted that young people in secure accommodation had committed the same level of crime as adults.
- Members of the Panel reiterated that it was incumbent on the Council to provide as much support to home managers as possible, particularly with regards to safeguarding.
- The Service Manager for Secure Accommodation remained optimistic about future recruitment at Clayfields. He also stated that he would arrange Members' visits to Clayfields. There would be a further Ofsted visit for a three-day inspection in July.
- The Panel noted that there was a delay with the processing of registering children and specialist care homes with Ofsted. It was also noted that a manager was registered as the manager of a specific home and that it could not be transferred to another home.
- There was a poor Wi-Fi connection at Oakhurst as the IT system had not been considered as part of the refurbishment process. The Panel noted that the fixing of the Wi-Fi connection at Oakhurst was a priority.
- The Panel noted that an empty home was not an unregulated home as it was still registered with the regulators. It was also noted that some local authorities register properties with Ofsted on a temporary basis, usually in the case of emergency child placements.

RESOLVED 2024/017

- 1) That the reported be noted.
- 2) That the Service Director for Care, Help and Protection resolve the internet provision at Oakhurst.

9 INSPECTION GRADINGS OF 'EXCLUSIVE USE' CHILDREN'S RESIDENTIAL HOMES – MARCH 2024

Rachel Miller, Interim Service Director for Commissioning and Resources, presented the report which provided an update on the current performance of homes operated by Homes2Inspire for the exclusive use of Nottinghamshire children in care. The following was discussed:

- The County Council had a long and well-established partnership with Homes2Inspire that was underpinned by a Block Contract for the Council to 'block book' and pay for twelve homes across the Homes2Inspire residential estate.
- Out of the twelve homes, two have been judged 'Outstanding', eight were judged 'Good', one 'Requires Improvement' and one had not been graded yet as it was awaiting registration. The delays to the registration of Lantern House

were due to the Ofsted backlog for registering properties. Two children had been already placed in the home.

- The Panel noted that further contact was needed with Ofsted to ensure that Lantern House would be registered as soon as possible.

RESOLVED 2024/018

- 1) That the report be noted.

10 LOCAL OFFER FOR CARE LEAVERS

Sophie Eadsforth, Group Manager for Looked After Children and Leaving Care, introduced the report which provided an update on the review and expansion of the Nottinghamshire Local Offer for Care Leavers, which was aimed at those young people who have been looked after by Nottinghamshire and were aged 18 – 24 and identified as ‘care leavers’, receiving support, advice, and guidance from the Leaving Care Service. The following was discussed:

- The Local Offer was developed through feedback from the CiCC. It was also tailored to meet the needs of different Looked After Children and Care Leavers. There was the Achievement Offer for care leavers aged 16 – 25 years in relation to their employment, education, and training opportunities. There was the 21Plus Offer aimed at care leavers aged over 21 to allow them to access support, advice, and guidance to help them set up a home. There was the Parenting Offer aimed at care leavers who identified parents or parents to be. There was the Custody Offer aimed at care leavers aged 16 – 25 years accessing support, advice, and guidance due to being in custody, released from custody, or involved with the Youth Justice and/or Probation Services. Finally, there was the Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children (UASC) Offer aimed at care leavers who identified as coming to the UK as asylum seeking children and were in the care of the County Council.
- The Panel noted that the Local Offer for Care Leavers had received positive feedback from several areas in Nottinghamshire.

RESOLVED 2024/019

- 1) That the report be noted.
- 2) That the Local Offers for Care Leavers be circulated to Members of the Corporate Parenting Panel.

11 INDEPENDENT REVIEW OF CHILDREN’S SOCIAL CARE

Claire Sampson, Group Manager for Strategic Safeguarding and Independent Review, provided an update of the Government’s response to the Independent Review of Children’s Social Care. The following was discussed:

- The Illustrated Guide to the Children's Social Care National Framework was helpful for children and families. The principles outlined under the four outcomes of the document hold true for Looked After Children and set a standard for the Council to provide for children in council care. It was easy for children to read and understand.

RESOLVED 2024/020

- 1) That the update be noted.

12 CARER LEAVERS ANNUAL REPORT

Sophie Eadsforth, Group Manager for Looked After Children and Leaving Care, presented the report which updated the Panel on the review and expansion of the Nottinghamshire Local Offer for Care Leavers aimed at those young people who have been looked after by Nottinghamshire and are aged 18 – 24 and identified as 'care leavers', receiving support, advice and guidance from the Leaving Care Service. The following points were discussed:

- The Leaving Care Service consisted of three teams covering geographical areas of Nottinghamshire (South, North and Central), as well as the 21 Plus team. The Service also had an Achievement Service which provides information and advice about training, education, and work opportunities. The Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children (UASC) Team offered a more dedicated and specialist service to UASC under the age of 18 and to UASC care leavers aged over 18.
- The service was assisting care leavers in providing links to further education, employment, and training opportunities. Taster Days were set up with local employers and links were established with sixth form colleges, such as West Notts College. The service also assisted care leavers into living accommodation.
- The figures regarding the number of care leavers in suitable accommodation did not fully reflect the destinations of care leavers as student accommodation and army barracks did not count as suitable living accommodation.
- The Panel noted that the number of care leavers going to university was a positive development. They also noted that not many local authorities had a Specialist 21 Plus Team to support their care leavers.

RESOLVED 2024/021

- 1) That the report be noted.

13 WORK PROGRAMME

Amanda Collinson, Service Director for Help, Protection and Care, presented the Work Programme.

RESOLVED 2024/022

- 1) To note the Panel's Work Programme.

There being no further business, the Chair closed the meeting at 3:52pm.

Chair:

2 July 2024**Agenda Item: 6****REPORT OF THE SERVICE DIRECTOR, HELP, PROTECTION AND CARE****UPDATE ON NOTTINGHAMSHIRE CHILDREN'S RESIDENTIAL HOMES AND
SECURE ACCOMMODATION SERVICE****Purpose of the Report**

1. The report provides an update on Nottinghamshire children's residential homes.

Information

2. There are five internal children's residential homes in Nottinghamshire comprising two providing for children with disability and three mainstream homes. Nottinghamshire also has a secure accommodation service, which houses 20 young people who are placed on remand on welfare grounds across England and Wales.
3. The current children's disability homes are Caudwell House and The Big House, although there are plans agreed to convert West View to become a specialist disability home in the future.

Children with Disability Homes**The Big House**

4. The Big House is a short break home for children with significant intellectual disabilities in the village of Edwinstowe. At present the home provides overnight short breaks for 30 children. Out of these 30 children, 6 are out of county children. Each child has a bespoke package of care ranging from 24 overnights to 156 overnights a year. Allocation is dependent on need and is subject to change dependent on the changing needs of the children.
5. All children who come to The Big House have a significant intellectual disability. They may also display risk behaviours when distressed or have an unmet need. They may also have moderate physical disabilities and sensory and medical needs. Children must be of school age, attend their own school and can be up to 18 years of age. At present, short breaks are being provided for four children from out of the County. Staff spend individual, quality time creating a positive relationship through meaningful interactions. This keeps children feeling safe and calm. Children are encouraged and supported to form friendships with each other. Friendship groups are arranged with children of similar ages, abilities and

interests. The home provides valuable respite care for the families and enables them to continue to care for their children living at home with them.

6. The last Ofsted inspection was November 2023 and the home received a judgment of Outstanding. The monthly reports from the Regulation 44 visitor continue to be positive and the feedback is excellent. All reports acknowledge the continued hard work of the staff and management team. The atmosphere around the home is one of warmth and care with a proactive staff team working to provide a high quality of care for all children. The level of incidents remains low. This is largely due to the staff having well established, positive relationships with the children. Staff understand children's needs and can diffuse situations before they develop into incidents.

The Regulation 44 officer highlighted some good practice in the May report:

'There are some lovely examples of recording which is a reflection of staff observations about things the children have responded positively to in the home as reported last visit. The staff have objects of reference, signs and symbols, now and next, timers all synonymous with enabling the child to understand a sequence of events. The Fact Finder document used to gather early information in preparation for admission is a brilliant tool to ensure children's needs are met, especially crucial for those children who are nonverbal. Creative keywork sessions are the proactive exploration about children's wishes and feelings, children are given opportunity to point at their choices or select a preferred item from an offered range'.

A compliment by parents Child A 'came for a visit and found staff to be warm and friendly. The passion for care, for the job and the children is clear. The building and facilities amazing. Child B 'was how amazing you have all been, citing the planning for stays as near as perfect. The parent spoke of having confidence in the service when their child stays and grateful for the support'.

7. The home now has new play equipment installed. This has proven to be highly effective for all children who love going outdoors to play, especially during the summer months. The homes new 'chill out room' is complete. This has been designed and furnished to meet the bespoke needs of all children at The Big House. This area creates a beautiful calm, quiet space for children which they enjoy. This additional room/space gives the children more choice about where they wish to spend their time while visiting The Big House.
8. The children enjoy a variety of activities and access to the community regularly, doing sports and activities. The children continue to enjoy lots of fun activities. One child has been on a steam train for the first time which they enjoyed. Another child went to Doncaster Dome swimming centre and managed to stay in the pool for 30 minutes. As well as a plethora of activities within the home there is a focus on independence skills, music, creative and sensory play. There is always something fun and exciting planned, which is why children love coming so much.
9. All children are making excellent progress. Even small achievements are significant for the children who attend The Big House. Matters that some would consider small, like taking a plate away after dinner, saying a few words, going to the toilet and sleeping through the night are major milestones for these children. The staff team continue to be ambitious for the children and this is evident in the opportunities they give them.

10. The Big House will be having a garden party on Saturday 13 July which will be an opportunity for children, families and the community to come together.
11. At the last round of recruitment, the Residential Social Care Worker post was successfully filled. Checks are waited for this individual to commence employment. One worker will be retiring in July and an advert is out to recruit to the post.

Caudwell House

12. Caudwell House is registered as a 12 bedded home for children with physical disabilities and associated learning difficulties and health care needs, with 4 residential beds and 8 short break beds. To provide the necessary and safe one to one care the children at Caudwell need, including moving and handling tasks, the current staff team can only provide a service for a maximum of 9 children at any one time.
13. There are currently 4 resident children, 2 of whom are from out of county. One child is now 18 and following a significant period of searching an adult placement has now been found for them. This child has leukaemia and is on a health maintenance plan that needs to be closely followed and monitored, a full transition is imperative moving forward. The final arrangements regarding the child's care package and costs are currently being discussed and decided.
14. The other 3 residents are progressing well. One child who was placed at Caudwell due to safeguarding concerns at home has made significant progress since they moved to Caudwell. The child has had their medication drastically reduced, is more mobile and communicative and is now eating rather than being peg fed through their stomach.
15. Caudwell has 24 short break children, 5 of whom are out of County children. These children's nights range between 36 nights per year to 156 nights per year. Most have a level of health need and/or moving and handling needs which requires 2 to 1 care. This ensures all health procedures and moving and handling tasks are completed safely and are within guidelines. Full health training is given to all staff and is competency assessed by health professionals and refreshed yearly.
16. Staff have undertaken personal and intimate care training. This enables staff to reflect on the need for dignity, care and respect when caring for children. To do this staff experience having their teeth brushed, being fed, having their faces washed and their hair done by another person. Continual staff training and development is vital in ensuring they are confident and competent in their role, know what is expected and deliver care to the highest standard. Staff have undergone sensory training, enabling the voice of the child who does not have verbal communication to be gained, and have been using pictures of what children with limited communication and cognitive ability enjoy and how their sensory needs can be tapped into. The Lundy model of communication and participation ensure children are given the space to have a 'voice' to people they trust and their wishes and feelings influence an outcome for them.
17. All the children continue to enjoy an array of activities. The resident children went to Blackpool in April for a short break which they all enjoyed. There are also plenty of trips and outings booked for the summer holidays. All children continue to have fun when at

Caudwell. The children engage in extensive activities and outings which to name a few include, music, arts and crafts, interactive games, garden games, sensory activities and celebrating diversity events. Caudwell is currently also developing the extensive grounds to the home and has created a sensory garden complete with 'fairy land' and a 'bug house'. A 'dyno land' is currently being designed for the children.

18. Caudwell House has been Outstanding with Ofsted for 13 years. Notwithstanding this managers and staff are continually looking at ways to develop and improve the service. The home's workforce development plan for this year is concentrating on sensory needs of children and meeting needs of children on the Autistic spectrum. This is due to children's physical disabilities and health needs often taken precedence over the child's Autism.

19. The independent Regulation 44 visitor reports very positive practice at Caudwell House. May's report highlighted:

'The home are strong in their practice when it comes to ensuring children are safe. There is a great interface in the systems used to manage risk. The team are reflective and open to learning what might be done differently to negate risks in the future. I continue to believe that CWH use risk management approaches to enable children to do more, to have more fun and experience activities they might otherwise not be able to achieve with their families.'

'A card was received this month from a young person that transitioned to adult care, thanking the team for 9 years of care and support. The young person stated they wanted to come back for the CWH summer fayre.'

'The atmosphere is great, staff were attentive and playful, the calm and quiet buzz on Bramley was just so ordinary and homely I wanted to stay for tea. The home is vibrant, colourful and inviting. Bedrooms were dressed very well for the short break children and the residential bedrooms could easily be identified by the personalities and interests of the children that use them.....Such a lovely and safe space for all children at CWH'.

20. The home currently has 1 Residential Social Care Worker vacancy which is being advertised and half a night care post which is being covered by a member of staff from Minster View. One Residential Social Care Worker is on maternity leave. One Residential Social Care Worker is not in work currently and lastly one part time Residential Care Worker is on long term sick. Two of these posts are being covered by staff from Minster View staff and a relief worker. The Registered Manager is going to retire and recruitment for this post has already commenced to ensure there is a seamless transition and handover.

Mainstream homes

Oakhurst

21. Oakhurst is a 4 bedded home that is fully occupied with 4 children. The home continues to provide a range of care for children with emotional and behavioural difficulties with or without moderate learning disabilities.

22. The home has recently been inspected by Ofsted, on 21 and 22 May 2024. The home was judged as being Inadequate and subsequently two compliance notices have been issued. There is also a restriction notice regarding the number of children who can be cared for in the home. This will remain in place until September 2024. Consequently, within one week of the inspection a new manager was brought into the home. This manager is the manager from Lyndene children's home. The manager is skilled, highly experienced, and well regarded within the service. The manager has already started to implement new systems in the home and provided clear structure, systems training and guidance for the staff team. Alongside the manager a new Assistant Manager has been brought into the home. Together the new management team has reviewed and updated all risk assessments, safety plans, behaviour management plan and baseline assessments. These assessments are now in line with children's current and ongoing identified needs. Additionally, the new management team is currently carrying out direct work with staff to explain policies, procedures and ensure that staff have a full induction.
23. A full audit has now taken place by the Service Manager and the designated Safety Intervention lead to ensure that there is full and robust oversight of all Safety Interventions that have taken place. The Safety Intervention lead for the service will deliver training to the entire staff team at Oakhurst to support staff to work in line with safety intervention policy, explore recording and teach staff to write comprehensive reports. The issues with the lack of Wi-Fi, internet access and digital phones are now being addressed.
24. The specialist social worker is based at Oakhurst and is delivering direct work with a child to support their emotional needs and work with the team to understand attachment and trauma. A package of training is being implemented to deliver to the staff team. The new way of working will assist to improve practice, build confidence in the team and provide a high level of care, improve outcomes for children and safeguard each child who lives at Oakhurst. The ethos of the home is to ensure each child that lives at Oakhurst feels valued, listened to and has a positive experience of living in residential care.
25. One child currently resides at the home. The other two children have been found alternative placements following a considerably unsettled period for them. The child that remains at Oakhurst is doing extremely well. They are currently finishing their GCSEs and aspires to go onto sixth form. Staff are currently working with this child to build on their independence skills, this includes self-administering medication, completing contracts for 'free time' and exploring ways that the child can assist to keep themselves safe. This child is planning to look for part time work from 21 June 2024 when they finish school. This will assist to build their confidence and enable them to earn 'pocket money'. Their independence will then include having a weekly budget to shop and cook their main meals, from Monday to Friday.
26. The home continues to encourage children to participate in hobbies and leisure activities that will help their physical and emotional wellbeing. This includes children attending football sessions, walks around the local Country Parks, trampolining and ice skating. A summer holiday has also been booked to Norfolk in August 2024, which there is great excitement and anticipation about.
27. There are currently five Residential Social Care Workers who will join the Oakhurst team from 14 June 2024. They will have a bespoke induction which includes training, one to one direct work with managers and mentoring with the support of experienced staff from other

homes. The home continues to have two vacancies and continues to recruit to ensure a fully staffed team moving forward.

28. The home has moved to 'reflect and repair', a restorative approach to practice. The home has introduced a new format titled 'Making it Right' that allows young people the opportunity to reflect on their behaviour and repair relationships. The new therapeutic social worker will support further therapeutic practices within the home.

Lyndene

29. The home is at full capacity accommodating 3 young people. The staff team remains committed to the home. The staff team remains a highly functioning, committed and cohesive team which offer the best standards of care to children living at Lyndene. A new structure of management is now in place, as mentioned above the Lyndene Registered Manager is now managing Oakhurst. Lyndene's Assistant Manager is now applying to be the registered manager of Lyndene and will be supported by the former Assistant Manager of Oakhurst. Both managers across both homes will be working together to ensure that they support each other and provide a seamless service across both provisions.
30. Education plans are in place for each child living at Lyndene. All three children are in full time education. Two children attend main steam education. One child, year 11, attends alternative provision within the mainstream school and is currently sitting GCSE exams. Plans are in place for this child to attend North Notts College in September to study motor mechanics. Another child, year 10, who used to access learning within the school's alternative provision, now attends mainstream classes and will be completing mock exams this month. The oldest child attends college at the Nottingham Hub three days a week, studying Child Care level 3 and attends a placement in a local nursery two days per week with aspirations of going to Manchester University to become a primary school teacher. The staff team link incentives to education and celebrate all achievements no matter how big or small. Staff work with children to complete homework and attend Personal Education Plan meetings. All staff support children in school to manage behaviours and emotional issues when they arise.
31. Two children are working on independence tasks; this consists of a weekly budget to plan their menu, shop and cook their meals. Getting children ready for post 18 involves using public transport and working through their independence file and assisting them with problem solving. One child has been allocated a Personal Assistant and a Transitional Personal Assistant to assist and support looking for and getting ready to transition to young adult, semi-independent living. Another child has been allocated a Personal Assistant earlier than usual, to support meeting and building positive relationships in preparation for post 18 independence plans and transition. One child will be participating with a new project called 'Limitless' who work with children about their experiences of being supported in relation to their life histories. The same child will also be getting involved with the 'Staying Close Project' to support and improve transition for young people who are moving on to semi-independence.
32. All children are kept busy and stimulated. The children go to the gym, swimming, ice skating, golfing driving range, mini golf, walks, local parks, cinema, clip and climb, scooter parks and trampolining. One child attends Mansfield Stags disability football team and attends games and training weekly and recently received a man of the match trophy.

Children have weekly activity planners which provides structure and guidance for each child to know what activities they are doing daily. Providing nurture and reassurance for children is extremely important and this is embedded in all children's plans to support children to feel valued, safe and to build positive relationships which supports staff to manage behaviours. All three children have participated with activity days through the Youth Service attending 'The Mill' adventure base and Perlethorpe team building activity day. The children enjoyed planned activities over the half term break, attending the fun aqua park at Tattershall Lakes. All three children enjoyed a holiday in Blackpool where they experienced lots of fun days out including fair rides, the circus, Madame Tussauds, The Blackpool Dungeon, sea life centre, the zoo, the beach and eating out. All three children enjoy staying in a caravan.

33. Celebrating achievements is important for all our children; since December the home has celebrated one birthday, and two children celebrated their anniversary of moving into Lyndene. Staff work to personalise each birthday with banners and balloons, choosing a theme with each child. One of the night workers bakes themed cakes and it is ensured that the children receive gifts. Families are involved in the children's plans and attend Lyndene to celebrate children's achievements and celebrations, joining the home for parties or calling in for a cup of tea and building positive trusting relationships.
34. The home had three missing episodes this year. Staff and managers work closely with children to support children to understand risk and encourage positive choices. Staff complete keywork sessions with children daily. Monthly catch-up meetings are planned. Taking children outside the home and listening to their wishes and feelings is also key to ensure that children feel valued and respected.
35. The home is utilising the newly appointed Specialist Social Worker to support the children and the team working therapeutically and understanding children's behaviours in the context of their lived experiences. There is currently one vacancy in the home for a Residential Social Care Worker.
36. The home had a recent Ofsted inspection and the judgement was Good. The inspector was very pleased with the outcomes and experiences for children and could see the outstanding work being undertaken. The home continues to have extremely positive Regulation 44 visits and reports. The Regulation 44 report in May 2024 concluded the following:

'Advice is sought from CAMHS to assist with meeting the needs of the children. Strengths include working closely with families, schools, and college, helping the children cope with family relationships and ensuring the children enjoy school holidays. There is a strong emphasis on preparation for independence including budgeting, managing medication and health, cooking, free time in the community and using public transport. Staff continue to work hard with other services. Managers continue to provide leadership, out of hours support and support on shift'.
37. The June 2024 Regulation 44 report was equally positive and concluded: *'Children are regularly praised and supported. Children have incentive charts which result in regular planned rewards, based on individual issues such as engagement with education, independence skills, using public transport and hygiene. Risk assessments are regularly updated, with each update being highlighted so that staff can see where recent changes*

have been made. Risk assessments are reviewed after each incident ensuing that children are kept safe'.

West View

38. **Paragraph 3** of this report has already reflected agreed plans to convert West View to become a specialist disability home in the future. However, this is currently subject to planning permission and refurbishment to ensure it is fit for purpose for children with disabilities.

Secure Accommodation

Clayfields Secure Children's Home

39. Clayfields House is a secure children's centre and a national resource in the Secure Accommodation Network. The home normally accommodates up to 20 young people but is currently undergoing a major refurbishment of two of the house units and so the home is operating two units and the annex. The current maximum numbers whilst the refurbishment work is being undertaken is up to 14 young people. Clayfields is rated as 'Good' overall from the latest inspection which took place in January 2024. The home will be due a full inspection in July and is hoping to maintain the good rating to highlight the consistent high-quality service that Clayfields delivers to its children and young people, as well as the wider role with stakeholders e.g., parents, carers and external professionals.
40. Clayfields had three recommendations from their last inspection which are:
- To ensure that progress in education can be measured and evidenced in various ways, including but not limited to success in academic, vocational, and other awards and qualifications. The measurements should include qualitative information. Leaders need to improve the quality of feedback that children receive so that children know when they have done well and what they need to do to improve the quality of their work.
 - Suitable arrangements to be made for the safe administration of children's medication and the storage and disposal of controlled drugs and that the fridge temperatures are checked daily and escalated when out of range.
 - Children's records should be clear. Staff should record information on individual children in a non-stigmatising way that will be helpful to children. They should ensure that terminology and language used in records are always appropriate.
41. There is a governance board arrangement that was established some years ago to oversee the running of Clayfields and provide a 'check and challenge' to the senior leadership team within Clayfields. There is a set of terms of reference, the Board is chaired by the Group Manager, Fostering, Residential and Secure Accommodation, and over the coming months will include the Service Director for Help, Protection and Care.
42. The Regulation 44 visits are undertaken by an independent person, and these have continued monthly since the last Panel meeting and some of the comments made in their report show a continuing improvement in relationships across the centre and specifically within the senior leadership team. The visitor has made the following comments:

It's helpful to see that children are being encouraged to share their thoughts and feelings, clearly feeling safe enough to do so and staff are ensuring to record and act on them.

This was an inspiring visit. Nothing is standing still at CFS. The children are moving forward and those that are not engaging and not appropriately placed are being given opportunity in new environments. There were some brilliant practices observed which show creative and child centred approaches.

The workforce in any children's home is the strongest asset to achieve positive outcomes for troubled children, staff are required to be resilient, compassionate, nurturing and warm. To do this they too need to feel valued, supported and listened to. At CFS this is getting stronger and stronger. The plans to develop the environment to provide staff with space to decompress, the improvements to 'sleep-in' rooms help validate staff, the staff forum and feel-good Friday sessions provide a space to talk through issues affecting their wider life and learn techniques to enhance their own well-being. The registered service manager is visible on 'the shop floor' and through staff briefings, keeping the team abreast with developments. Work stream communication at morning meetings, briefings, CMM, team meetings and supervision are the scaffolding for the established systems of communication. The atmosphere and interpersonal relationships with all teams give me the impression that working together is positive.

Staff across the centre talk of the strong partnerships and togetherness in seeking solutions to issues, teams helping teams out and the multidisciplinary morning coordination meeting feeding back into team briefings continues to be an excellent way to maintain positive working together.

The music workshop, coffee shop, pocket money are examples of excellent consultation with young people.

43. The children's views, wishes and feelings remain at the centre of everything that is being developed at Clayfields from the three-day induction, which includes the 'My Plan' and 'My Story' allowing the young person to tell us about what and who is important to them and why, to also what may be a trigger for them and how staff should help support them at this time.
44. To respond to young people's wishes and feelings, feedback forms have been developed for the young people to complete on a three-weekly basis for their case management oversight meeting; this enables the young people to send requests and feedback to the multi-disciplinary internal professionals involved in their care. This outlines how they feel things are going, these forms are then completed, and a response sent in writing back to the young people. The initial feedback from young people is they love hearing from the senior managers in response to how they are feeling and their thoughts.
45. In terms of enjoy and achieve, young people are also involved in arranging their annual graduation and Clayfest (Clayfields Festival), which takes place on 2 August. This is a whole centre celebration of the achievements of the young people throughout the year in education and a positive way to make sure that everyone across the service plays a part in delivering an activity throughout the day. The graduation service will take place in the morning and then the afternoon will consist of activities and special treats and activities for

the young people. The activities include an inflatable obstacle course, a magician and a candy floss and popcorn machine, alongside many of the centre's routine activities. The Catering Manager will also be supporting the event with a wide range of delicious selection of food, including specific choices picked by the young people which includes ice creams.

46. The annual sports day takes place on 8 August, again a whole team day of events, which will include staff participation and brings a real sense of supporting each other to perform the best that they can be, which includes some healthy competition. There will be several awards given out throughout the day, including best female and male sports person, best achievement, and the person who supports and encourages their team colleagues the most. This is a really positive day, which brings out the very best in everyone.
47. Recruitment remains a high priority for the senior leadership team and there has been an increase in applications coming through for frontline roles. Job vacancies have also been advertised on Indeed to try and increase the number of applications and general interest in positions within Clayfields. The Workforce Development Board is proving successful, with an ambitious action plan which focuses the senior leadership team and priority areas to be addressed, which is led by the service manager. The senior leadership vacancies have now been appointed to on a permanent basis, this includes the Intervention Health and Strategic Services Manager's position, which now leaves a revised position to recruit to which is the Safeguarding Quality Assurance and Strategic Services Manager position, which will strengthen the safeguarding arrangements, following the previous learnings. The home continues to look at all innovative avenues to recruit and retain staff, including working with human resources and communications colleagues, given their expertise within this area of work. The immediate priority is to provide a market factor supplement (MFS) report to a pay board, which is reflective of the work being undertaken nationally across all secure children's homes to help recruit and retain staff within the sector, especially given these roles are significantly different to those within a maintained community residential home. Once the MFS report is submitted and agreed, work will then be undertaken to revise the frontline job descriptions so that they align with salaries nationally.
48. As of 5 June 2024, Clayfields has been operating on 88.5% occupancy level, with an overall bed night loss of 14 nights since 1 April. These figures are based on 2 welfare beds at 100% capacity. However, with the Department for Education (DfE) Capital Building Programme, this will continue throughout the programme, which is currently estimated as a 46-week building programme and is currently expected to be complete by 31 March 2025.
49. The centre continues to operate two house units and the 2 bedded annexe with a maximum of 14 young people being accommodated. 12 of these beds are commissioned by the Youth Custody Service and due to the refurbishment, the home will be providing two welfare beds on a national basis. The refurbishment will be completed by 31 March 2025. Bed availability through the Ministry of Justice continues to be low with only 8 beds available nationally in Secure Children's Homes out of a total number of 107. This is an occupancy level of 92.16%, whilst the welfare referral demands for beds is currently around 39.

Developments

50. A property bought last year has been leased to the Council's largest provider of children's homes. Following refurbishment, it will seek Ofsted registration with a target to open as a two-bed home once planning has been approved. This will provide much needed capacity to provide more Nottinghamshire children with a good quality home environment in the County, enabling them to maintain links with their communities and support networks. Plans are also advancing for the refurbishment of some of the Council's existing children's homes.
51. They will be supported in their aim to provide homes for some of the children with the most complex needs by the newly appointed Specialist Social Worker. The postholder will offer direct help to children who have experienced trauma and ensure staff providing care are trained to help those children thrive.
52. Clayfields outlined in the previous report to the Corporate Parenting Panel that they had been given permission by the Department for Education to undertake an initial feasibility study, which is part of the 'Secure Children's Homes Estate Review – December 2022' and has been led by Atkins (Department for Education Architects). The Council's property commissioning team, alongside Arc Partnership, has put in a bid of £17,000, which has been agreed and will increase the administration block. This will ensure the service is fit for purpose for the future and takes into consideration current pressures around the facilities, more specifically given the increases in staffing and to ensure the facilities are future proof. Whilst the full capital funding for this building programme has not been agreed, meetings continue with DfE architects (Atkins) to ensure this continues to be their top priority and a priority list of work has been developed that will be considered by them in the coming years.

Other Options Considered

53. To not bring this report to the Panel: this option is discounted because this report provides information that forms an important part of the Panel's remit in assisting the Council in fulfilling its legal corporate parenting duties and acting as an effective corporate parent.

Reason/s for Recommendation/s

54. The report provides an opportunity for the Corporate Parenting Panel to consider any further actions arising from the information contained within the report.

Statutory and Policy Implications

55. 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

56. There are no financial implications directly arising from this report.

RECOMMENDATION/S

- 1) That the Corporate Parenting Panel considers whether there are any actions it requires in relation to the information contained in the report.

Amanda Collinson
Service Director, Help, Protection and Care

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Constitutional Comments (CM 19/06/2024)

57. The report falls within the terms of reference of the Corporate Parenting Panel

Financial Comments (CDS 19/06/24)

58. There are no financial implications directly 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.

[Update on Nottinghamshire children's residential homes and secure accommodation service – report to Corporate Parenting Panel on 16 April 2024](#)

Electoral Division(s) and Member(s) Affected

All.
CF0186



REPORT OF THE SERVICE DIRECTOR, HELP, PROTECTION AND CARE

PROGRESS OF THE PARTNERSHIP STRATEGY FOR NOTTINGHAMSHIRE LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN AND CARE LEAVERS (2022 – 2025)

Purpose of the Report

1. The report provides an update on the Partnership Strategy for Looked after Children and Care Leavers 2022 - 2025, including the progress and some of the key achievements by the Looked After Children and Care Leavers Partnership to date since January 2024.

Information

2. The Council remains committed to delivering a genuine, multi-agency, child-centred strategy to achieve its shared ambition and delivery of commitments. As a Partnership, the collective commitment is to give every one of our children and young people the foundations and support to thrive in adulthood.
3. Over the next few years, there is a requirement for partners to work together in the wider community to create systemic change: a better, more cohesive way of thinking and with agencies and organisations working towards a common goal. This must include the early dignified help and support that families need and trust, to enable better relationships.

Nottinghamshire's Delivery Plan for Looked After Children and Care Leavers (2022-2025)

4. The Looked After Children and Leaving Care Partnership Delivery Plan 2022-2025 was approved at the Partnership Board meeting in May 2024. It is owned by all partners as part of their existing service and/or multi-agency plans and seeks to capture wider achievements of Looked after Children and Care Leavers in relation to their social and emotional wellbeing.
5. There is a strong focus on preparation for independence and a fulfilling adulthood, ensuring explicit commitment to the Looked after Children and Leaving Care Partnership Strategy 2022-2025.
6. Evaluation and analysis of key performance indicators against strategic aims is to take place in summer 2025 and will form the basis of The Looked after and Leaving Care Partnership Strategy 2026-2029. The intention is to include the voice of a young person on the Partnership in this next partnership strategy.

The Looked After Children and Care Leavers Strategic Partnership Board

7. The Partnership Board continues to be chaired by Amanda Collinson, Service Director for Help, Protection and Care and vice-chaired by Peter McConnochie, Service Director for Education, Learning and Skills and is attended by Councillors Sinead Anderson and Tracey Taylor. The Board meets bi-monthly and is well attended by both internal services and external partners with the aim of working effectively together to ensure improved outcomes for looked after children and care leavers in Nottinghamshire and that these are prioritised within their respective organisations.
8. The Corporate Parenting principles continue to underpin the work of the Board and set an expectation of Board members to use their voice to influence and advocate on behalf of looked after children and care leavers in partner's wider organisations, taking all opportunities to amplify the understanding of the experiences and needs of looked after children and care leavers at a local, regional, and national level.

Progress and Partnership Updates Provided to the Looked After Children and Care Leavers Strategic Partnership Board from Internal and External Partners

Partnership Pledge

9. The Partnership Pledge has been developed by local care-experienced young people, approved by Partnership Board Partners earlier this year and referred to in the update to the Corporate Parenting Panel in January 2024. The pledge includes the support available to young people in care and outlines the Council's commitments to them. The voiceover for the animated video version of the Pledge took place on 20 May at the Inspire Youth Arts.

Joint Strategic Needs Assessment

10. Key priorities and recommendations have been identified on the development of the joint strategic needs assessment for children in care and care leavers, with input from the Partnership Board.
11. Nottinghamshire's key data performance on demographics of children (including unaccompanied), ethnicity, education and employment, youth and criminal justice has been analysed and compared against local and national data, considering health inequalities, local need, local provision, gaps, views and guidance, best practice, and legislation. A report is to be presented and approved at Health and Wellbeing Board in September 2024.

Statutory Health Assessments

12. Initial health assessments (IHAs) for looked after children remain on the NHS risk register, but it is an improving picture, with a focus on standardising the measurement of IHAs across all three health care providers and on improving outcomes for unaccompanied children. New key performance indicator metrics provide robust data and clearly identify blocks and challenges. There is a reduction in health assessment waiting times, the referral process is more robust, and is now 3-4 weeks as opposed to 10 weeks previously. Health

is working closely with the Council's looked after and leaving care team to triangulate the data and provide quarterly reports to NHS Senior Leadership.

The Integrated Care System Service Improvement Forum (SIF)

13. There is a focus on transition into the adulthood service for children in care and care leavers. There is a larger capacity of NHS nurses, enabling them to be more child focussed and understand the needs of older children, particularly on safeguarding issues. Out of area children and young people are considered carefully, with a particular focus on older children, ensuring working together effectively with other authorities. Safeguarding concerns are escalated to the Looked After Assurance group ensuring intelligence is captured and to understand challenges/issues with involvement from the Council's children's social care on the workstreams.

Nottinghamshire's Updated Local Offer for Care Leavers

14. The Local Offer informs young people about the 'offer' of services and support available as a care leaver in Nottinghamshire. An updated offer was launched in April 2024, including amendments, making it more inclusive and easier to understand.

Working Well (Individual Placement Support Project for People with Health Conditions)

15. Primary care provision is in place to support a sustained relationship between health and employment within Nottinghamshire, Nottingham City and Derby City. The key aim of the programme is to support local growth, the economy and employment, and facilitate sustained employment for care leavers who move into adulthood, who may have health conditions or disabilities impacting their ability to work. The programme supports individuals to secure work and maintain a job role.

Good News Stories

16. The Looked after and Leaving Care Team and the Virtual school provides updates on achievements and progress of children and young people and examples include:
 - Young people singing, dancing and reading at the recent Fostering's Got Talent event.
 - A Special Guardianship Order gained for a young person by his foster carer who he had lived with many years.
 - A young person out of education secured a college place in September 2024.
 - A young person has been elected to the school council.
 - Two young people spoke to the education conference (from West Notts College) about their experience at college, their aspirations and the support they receive.
 - A young person had positive contact with their dad for the first time in six years.

Other Options Considered

17. To not bring this report to the Panel: this option is discounted because this report provides information which forms an important part of the Panel's remit in assisting the Council in fulfilling its legal corporate parenting duties and acting as an effective corporate parent.

Reasons for Recommendations

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

Statutory and Policy Implications

19. This report has been compiled after consideration of implications in respect of crime and disorder, data protection and information governance finance, human resources, human rights, the NHS Constitution (public health services), the public sector equality duty, safeguarding of children and adults at risk, service users, smarter working, sustainability and the environment and where such implications are material they are described below. Appropriate consultation has been undertaken and advice sought on these issues as required.

Financial Implications

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

RECOMMENDATION/S

That the Corporate Parenting Panel:

- 1) considers whether there are any actions it requires to further strengthen the Leaving Care service.
- 2) considers how it wishes to further monitor the implementation of the Partnership Strategy for Looked After Children and Care Leavers in Nottinghamshire (2022-2025).

Amanda Collinson
Service Director, Help, Protection and Care

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Constitutional Comments (CD 19/06/24)

21. The recommendations proposed falls within the remit of the Corporate Parenting Panel by virtue of its terms of reference.

Financial Comments (VC 19/06/24)

22. There are no additional 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.

DfE statutory guidance for local authorities Local Offer for care leavers:
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/local-offer-guidance>

DfE statutory guidance for local authorities, Applying parenting principles to looked-after children and care leavers: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/applying-corporate-parenting-principles-to-looked-after-children-and-care-leavers>

[A Partnership Strategy for Looked After Children and Care Leavers \(2022-2025\)](#)

The Terms of Reference and Membership of the Looked After Children and Care Leavers Strategic Partnership Board.

The Partnership Pledge – A Guide for Looked After Children and Care Leavers.

Electoral Division(s) and Member(s) Affected

All.

CF0185

2 July 2024**Agenda Item: 9****REPORT OF THE SERVICE DIRECTOR FOR HELP, PROTECTION AND CARE****PERFORMANCE OF ADOPTION SERVICES 2024****Purpose of the Report**

1. The report provides information and an update regarding the performance of Adoption Services for Nottinghamshire County Council.

Information

2. The Permanence Team provides a service to all Nottinghamshire children who have a plan for adoption. This also includes 'Together Apart' assessments (assessing whether siblings should live together), Child Permanence Reports, matching with adopters, post adoption support and non-agency adoptions.
3. As of 3 June 2024, the Permanence Team supports 160 children.
4. The Permanence Team has an establishment of 11 full-time equivalent (FTE) Social Workers and 2 FTE Team Managers. The team is countywide and is fully staffed other than one part time position, although one worker is an agency Social Worker. The team is also supported by 1.5 FTE Adoption Support Workers whose role is to support adopters around providing therapeutic parenting and providing vital support to prevent breakdown of placements; they are both qualified in play therapy.
5. The Permanence Team works closely with Adoption East Midlands (AEM). AEM provides a range of adoption services on behalf of Derby City, Nottingham City, Derbyshire County and Nottinghamshire County Councils, and is in its sixth year of operation as the Regional Adoption Agency (RAA).
6. As the RAA, AEM aims to provide all children with an adoptive family that meets their needs, provides information, support and advice to those affected by adoption and ensures that families are well prepared for and supported to care for children with plans for adoption. AEM also provides information regarding the likelihood of achieving adoption where requested by the Courts.
7. AEM has developed a therapeutic parenting plan for use with prospective adopters and all families have an individualised Therapeutic Parenting Plan. AEM also provides independent birth family services, and the Birth Family Support Team has now been

established which seeks to hear the voices of those with lived experiences and what support should look like for parents who lose their children to adoption.

8. The Voices of Adoption Young People's Support Group is established and allows young people to share experiences and develop service delivery.
9. AEM facilitates all of the 'keeping in touch' work for children to maintain links with birth families. This is evolving from letters only to more modern ways of keeping in touch as adoptive children become ready to explore this.
10. Most adoptive carers identified for Nottinghamshire children are assessed and provided by AEM. When there is no available family in AEM the Family Finding Team seek an adoptive family from another adoption agency. There is a partnership across the Midlands, with the aim of keeping children as local as possible. AEM adopters are matched very soon after their approval, and only a few need to wait for a match. Between 1 April 2023 and 31 March 2024:
 - 65 adopters were approved via AEM (inclusive of Derby, Nottingham, Derbyshire and Nottinghamshire). This is an increase from the last financial year.
 - 46 Placement Orders were granted in Nottinghamshire. This is an increase in the last financial year.
 - 25 children were placed with adopters and 24 Adoption Orders were granted for Nottinghamshire children.
11. At the end of 2023-24, Nottinghamshire County Council had the lowest value of all local authority's within AEM in terms of number of days from the Court giving authority for a child to be placed for adoption to a match being identified, at 188 days.
12. There is a target for confirming a match with an adoptive family within 121 days of a Placement Order being made. This is challenging for some children who may be older or have complex needs, or where siblings need to be placed together. In addition, there can be more legal challenges to Placement Orders at the point of the match and this causes delay whilst the Court hears the challenge. The latest data shows the national average to be 199 days.
13. As of 31 March 2024, there were 39 children with a Placement Order waiting to be matched with adopters.
14. A Permanence Plan has historically often been considered only within the context of an Adoption Order but, over more recent years, as has been the case nationally, there has been a shift towards other ways of achieving permanence for children, including via Special Guardianship Orders (SGOs).
15. The number of children adopted within Nottinghamshire has dropped since 2015. In 2017, 64 children were no longer considered Looked After as they had been adopted, whereas at the end of 2024, this was 24.

16. Nationally, the number of Adoption Orders has dropped from 3,850 in 2017/18 to 2,980 in 2022/23. In contrast there has been an increase in the numbers of Special Guardianship Orders nationally from 3,470 in 2017/18 to 3,870 in 2022/23.
17. The Independent Review of Children's Social Care (Department for Education, May 2022) considered a change in the way in which kinship arrangements for children and their families are considered, with much more focus being placed on how to strengthen and support arrangements long term for children within their own wider families.
18. The review considered that "*children who leave care through a Special Guardianship Order (SGO).....achieve better outcomes and make better progress than children in care. In 2021, the average Attainment 8 score for those who left care on a Special Guardianship Order was 33.5 compared to 22.2 for looked after children....kinship care also helps to preserve important sibling relationships.....*"
19. In Nottinghamshire, between 1 April 2022 and 31 March 2023, 51 children were the subject of an SGO, up from 43 in the previous year. Of these, 37 were residing with a grandparent or other relative whilst 11 remained with their foster carer.
20. The Council now has an established Kinship Support Service. The small team is multi-disciplinary and made up from experienced Social Workers, Family Workers and Welfare Rights Officers with Social Work Support Officer administrative support. There is significant demand for support from the team from those who already offer Kinship care or those considering this. It is reassuring for families to know that they can access support quickly and without referral by direct support, advice and signposting. The team continues to develop the support offer based on identified need and since being established now jointly run Kinship Youth Group, work closely with the Contact Service offering drop-in support and commission support from Kinship Reach Charity for carers to access peer support and individual advocacy. The team works alongside agencies such as the Virtual School and Developmental Trauma and Attachment Team (DTAT) to improve outcomes for children living in Kinship arrangements. The team continues to grow and develop to meet the unique demands of children living within Kinship arrangements.

Other Options Considered

21. To not bring this report to the Panel: this option is discounted because this report provides information that forms an important part of the Panel's remit in assisting the Council in fulfilling its legal corporate parenting duties and acting as an effective corporate parent.

Reason/s for Recommendation/s

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

Statutory and Policy Implications

23. 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

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

RECOMMENDATION/S

- 1) That the Corporate Parenting Panel considers whether there is any feedback that it wishes to give and any actions that it recommends in relation to the information contained in the report.

Amanda Collinson
Service Director, Care, Help and Protection

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Constitutional Comments (LPW 13/06/24)

25. The recommendation falls within the remit of the Corporate Parenting Panel by virtue of its terms of reference.

Financial Comments (VC 10/06/24)

26. There are no additional 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.

[Independent Review of Children's Social Care, Department for Education, May 2022](#)

Electoral Division(s) and Member(s) Affected

All.

CF0184

CORPORATE PARENTING PANEL - WORK PROGRAMME 2024/25

Title	Sponsor/ Report Author
Standing items for each meeting:	
Foster Care (FLAG) items	Jenny Whiston
Children in Care Council items	Sophie Eadsforth
Visits schedule and observations from visits	Amanda Collinson
Update on Nottinghamshire Children's Residential Homes	Amanda Collinson/ Jenny Whiston
Looked After Children and Care Leavers Board update	Amanda Collinson/ Heather Bennett
Inspection gradings of Children's Residential Homes commissioned solely for Council use (verbal update + reports every 6 months)	Rachel Miller/ Beth Downing
Government response to the Independent Review of Children's Social Care	Amanda Collinson
15 October 2024	
Independent Reviewing Officer annual report	
Report of the Head of the Virtual School (termly plus annual reports)	
Fostering Service annual report	
Local Offer for Care Leavers – six monthly report	
14 January 2025	
Harmful Sexual Behaviour by children – annual report	
Annual report of the Strategic Safeguarding Service	
Nottinghamshire Placement Sufficiency and Commissioning Strategy	
Annual report of the Managing Allegations Service	
Reports from Districts on their corporate parenting responsibilities and how they are meeting them	
1 April 2025	
Care Leavers annual report	
Destinations of Year 12-13 Looked After Young People Cohort 2022-23	
Local Offer for Care Leavers – six monthly report	
8 July 2025	
Performance of Adoption Services	
To be placed	

