

LAC STRATEGY 2012 – 2015

EVALUATION REPORT

January 2015

Introduction

Nottinghamshire's Looked After Children Strategy was developed in 2012 by the Council and its partners; it set out how we would work together to achieve the best possible outcomes for children and young people in our care. The vision of the strategy and its accompanying Pledge to children and young people is:

To ensure our children looked after have all the opportunities that good parents afford their children.

Since the strategy was written, the Council and its partner agencies have faced significant financial challenges as well as changes in the Government's approach, legislation and guidance relating to looked after children.

The purpose of this report is to evaluate the progress that has been made since the Strategy and its accompanying Action Plan were developed and identify any areas where there is room for further improvement.

The LAC Strategy was written around 8 key themes which are also used in this evaluation. For each theme, this report will take a detailed look at:

1. Achievements
2. Demonstrating Progress
3. Future Improvements

This report will be used to inform a revised LAC Strategy which will keep outcomes for children and young people at the heart of our role as corporate parents.

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1. Participation and Joining In

The strategy said:

Children and young people will be treated with respect by all who are involved with them. Their views will be listened to and they will be involved in making decisions about their lives. They know how to get information and support, as well as how to raise a concern if not happy.

1.1. ACHIEVEMENTS

- Children and young people are the focus of The Nottinghamshire Children, Young People and Families Participation Strategy which was published by the Children's Trust in 2004. This will ensure that the participation of children and young people is embedded in decision making across agencies.
- Children and young people are better supported to contribute to their LAC Reviews through the use of the newly designed "Listen to Me" booklets. There are different booklets for different age groups.
- A "Signs and Symbols" leaflet has been developed for 0-18 year olds in conjunction with the Children in Care Council.
- Children and young people helped the Council to renew "The Pledge" which sets out our commitments to Looked After Children.
- Children and young people living in placements in the independent sector, including those who live outside Nottinghamshire, receive information more promptly thanks to a new database.
- Children and young people who live outside the County are ensured access to the same opportunities and services as those in the County, and are supported through our "From a Distance" plan.
- Children and young people have been involved in the commissioning of block contracts for residential placements.
- Children and young people are supported to better understand the process of adoption with a new guide for children that the Council have invested in and distributed.
- Children and young people's feedback is routinely included in the Council's auditing processes ensuring that their voice is heard.

Some excellent examples of young people's engagement in LAC Reviews are presented in the IRO Annual Report¹:

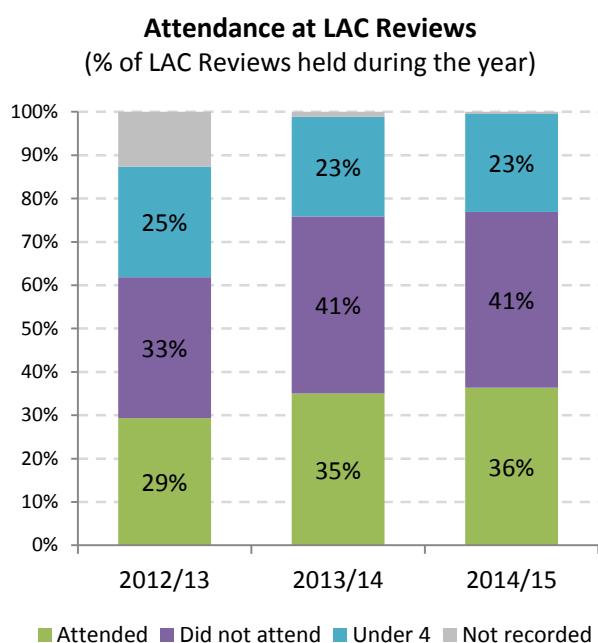
An 11 year old young person completed a Listen to Me leaflet, spoke with his IRO prior to his LAC review and fully participated in the meeting. He has a very positive view about how being in care has helped him and is making good progress.

A 17 year old young person co-chaired their own review. This worked well as she has attended her reviews since she came into care when she was 12 and she has ongoing support from Children in Care Council of which she is a member. The IRO was impressed as the young

¹ Annual Report of IRO Service April 2013 – March 2014, found at:
<http://www.nottinghamshire.gov.uk/caring/children/socialcarechildren/>

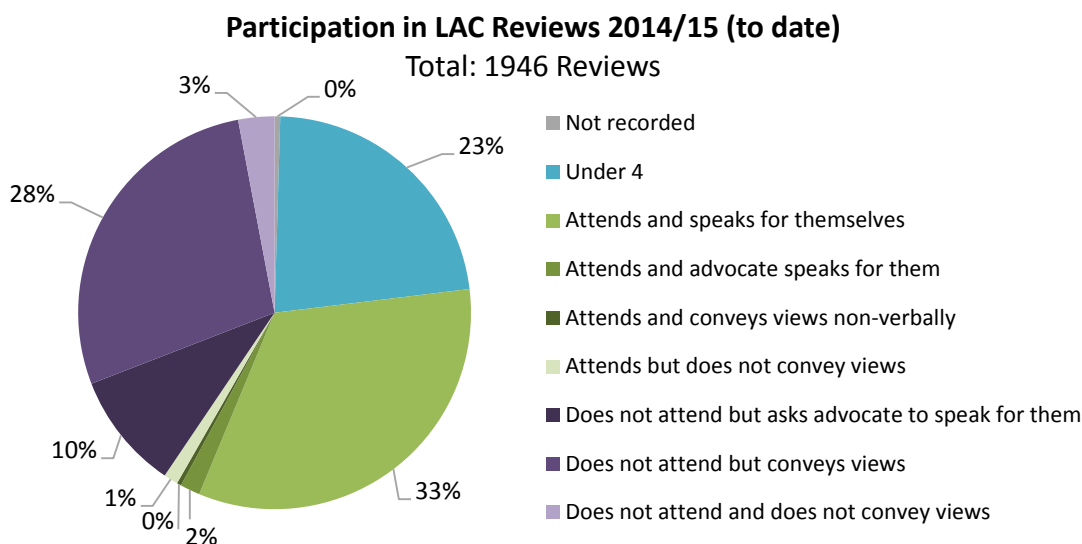
person took control of her own care planning whilst discussing current achievements and what she intended to do in the future once she had left care.

1.2. DEMONSTRATING PROGRESS



- The majority of LAC Reviews are not attended by children and young people.
- There has been a **slight increase** in the proportion of reviews that are attended each year, with 36% of reviews attended by the child so far in 2014/15.
- There are many possible reasons for non-attendance, in some cases not being at the meeting is the child's choice or may be in their best interest.
- It is important that children have the opportunity to convey their views even if they do not attend in person.

The pie chart shows in more detail how children and young people's views are heard at LAC Reviews. In total, children and young people have conveyed their views at **73%** of LAC Review meetings so far in 2014/15.



1.3. FUTURE IMPROVEMENTS

As we move forward we want to strengthen the role of our Children in Care Council “No Labels”, beginning with ensuring the views, ideas and aspirations of our looked after children and young people are embedded in our revised strategy. We have already done some work with young people to get their feedback on the 2012-15 Strategy.

The Care Leavers involved with the CiCC are a very active group and we are very proud of and grateful for their input and work with services, for example Care Leavers sit on interview panels for roles in the Leaving Care service. We are continuing to strengthen the CiCC for all ages and this will remain a priority in our new strategy.

As well as supporting children and young people to make their voices heard, we recognise the need for professionals to be supported to listen to those voices. Frontline staff and senior decision makers alike are subject to many pressures and influences, the revised strategy will acknowledge the need for support for professionals from all agencies to be able to listen to, and where possible, act upon the views of young people.

An important example of this is The Pledge, our promises to looked after children. The revised strategy will seek to ensure that The Pledge has a higher profile and will look at how professionals can be held accountable for the promises it contains.

2. Education

The strategy said...

Children and young people have clear educational plans which mean they receive the right support to achieve their full potential.

2.1. ACHIEVEMENTS

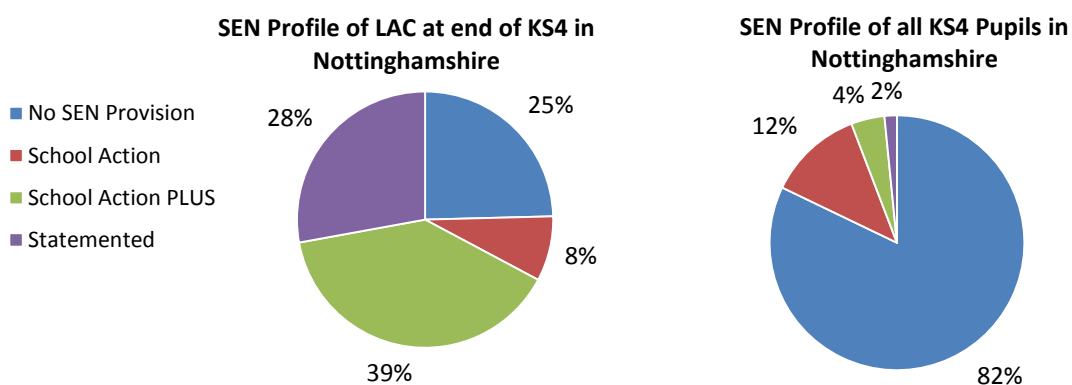
- Every Looked After Child has access where required to a designated Educational Psychologist who helps ensure the child has all the support that they need.
- We have improved the quality of Personal Education Plans which are in place for every Looked After Child, and social workers make sure they are completed in a timely manner.
- All PEPs are sent to the Virtual School to be quality assured. Robust challenge and support of social workers on the quality of the PEP is offered through this process.
- We are supporting Looked After Children to stay in the same school even if they move placement. Social care and education work together to achieve this and are using the transport budget to support this.
- Designated Teachers, schools and children and young people are supported by our LAC Achievement Officers, two additional officers were recruited into this role in 2012 and a further one in 2014.
- Looked after young people can access Information, Advice and Guidance through Targeted Support on request from the school or LAC Achievement Officer.
- There is a dedicated 16 plus achievement advisor within the LAC Service

2.2. DEMONSTRATING PROGRESS

2.2.1. Key Stage 4 (GCSE, age 14 -16 years)

Context: LAC Cohort

- In 2014, **61 LAC** completed their GCSEs. Of these, 57% were female and 43% male. 89% were of White British ethnic origin.
- The charts below show the SEN status of the 61 looked after pupils in comparison to the whole school cohort of pupils at the same age.



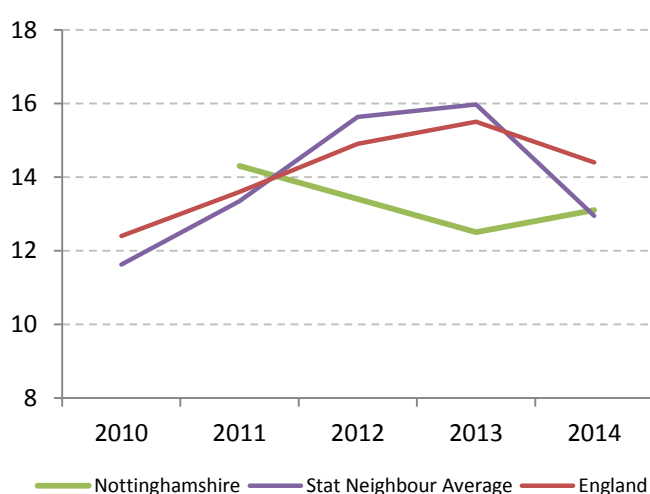
Note on Data Methodology:

- Some major changes were made to Key Stage 4 data in 2014, many of which were influenced by the recommendations of the Wolf Review²
- These changes include new criteria for which qualifications are included in performance measurement data and ‘discounting’ qualifications where there is a significant overlap in course content in two (or more) qualifications a pupil has completed.³
- New “early entry” rules have also been implemented and now apply to all performance measures.
- The new rule states that only a pupil’s first entry to a key stage 4 qualification counts towards their school’s performance measures.
- Prior to 2014, performance measures were based on the best entry – i.e. if a pupil sits the same examination more than once, the best result would be counted in performance data.
- This year, the DfE have published data using the old methodology “best entry” data and the new methodology “first entry” data⁴. This allows for both trend over time and current performance to be considered.

Attainment

LAC achieving 5 or more GCSEs grade A*-C (including maths and English)⁵

2013 Methodology: Best Entry Data⁶



- Looking at “best entry” data, there has been an improvement in the last year with **13%** of LAC achieving 5 or more GCSEs grade A*-C (inc. English and Maths) in Nottinghamshire.
- Set alongside a decline in results amongst our statistical neighbours, this means that we are now marginally **above average for our neighbours**.
- Nottinghamshire fall **below the national average** for “best entry” GCSE achievements amongst LAC

2014 Methodology: First Entry Data

- The chart below shows Nottinghamshire’s performance using the new methodology. Using this data, Nottinghamshire **is above statistical neighbour and national average** for GCSE results.

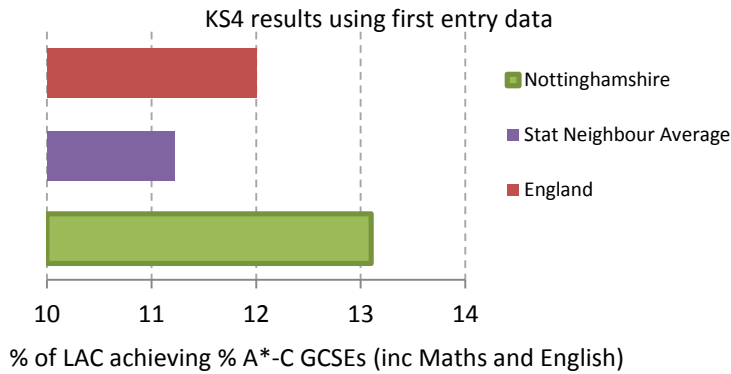
² Professor Alison Wolf’s review of vocational education was published in March 2011 (www.gov.uk/government/publications/review-of-vocational-education-the-wolf-report)

³ DfE Quality and Methodology Information: GCSE and equivalent results in England. 23 October 2014

⁴ DfE Statistics: Outcomes for children looked after SFR49/2014 published on 10 Dec 2014

⁵ Data on attainment and exclusions taken from DfE Statistics: Outcomes for children looked after SFR49/2014 published on 10 Dec 2014

⁶ This data uses the 2013 (old) methodology to allow for the most meaningful look at the trend over time for Nottinghamshire and neighbours.



- **13%** of LAC achieved 5 or more GCSEs grade A*-C (inc. English and Maths) at first entry in 2014 in Nottinghamshire.
- This is **above the national and statistical neighbour average.**

Moving forward, the DfE and Ofsted will gather data and measure performance using the new methodology which looks at first entry. Nottinghamshire currently perform well using this measure.

In terms of **outcomes** for children and young people, best entry information remains relevant. For an individual child, it is their **best exam result**, rather than their first result which will be considered when moving towards employment, education or training in the future.

Progress

Progress in terms of the proportion of LAC making expected progress in **English** (3 levels) has improved in comparison with 2013, but overall requires improvement

Progress in terms of the proportion of LAC making expected progress in **maths** (3 levels) has improved in comparison with 2013, but overall requires improvement. However the gap has narrowed since 2012 in comparison with all pupils nationally and all pupils in statistical neighbours and in Nottinghamshire.

% of LAC in Nottinghamshire making expected progress between KS2 and KS4

	2012	2013	2014
English	32	24	30
Maths	31	20	31

Attainment Gap

2014 Methodology: **First Entry**

The Nottinghamshire gap at at KS4 has **narrowed** in comparison with 2013 and is **narrower than the national gap** in 2014

- **All children in Nottinghamshire** achieving at least 5 or more A*-C including English and maths is **57%**
- The gap between Nottinghamshire LAC and all Nottinghamshire children is **43.9%** compared with 50.3% on this measure in 2013

- **All children nationally** achieving 5 or more A*-C including English and maths is 55%
- The gap between Nottinghamshire LAC and all children nationally is **41.9%**, compared with a national gap of 43%.

The table below compares LAC in Nottinghamshire with all pupils in Nottinghamshire based on SEN status. The data for all pupils shows the correlation between level of educational need and achievement of 5 GCSEs.

However, for all levels of education need, the percentage of children achieving 5 GCSEs (inc maths and English) within the LAC population falls short of what is achieved amongst the whole school population.

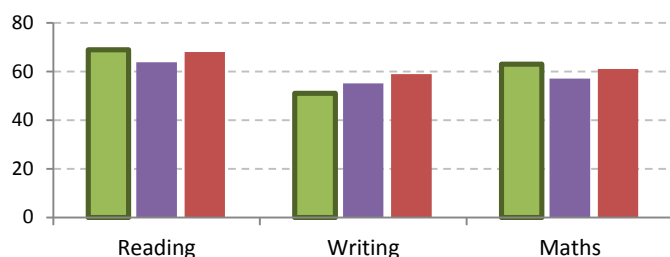
% achieving 5 A*-C GCSEs (inc. Maths & English)	Cohort				
	LAC	No SEN Provision	School Action	School Action Plus	Statement
First entry (2014 methodology)	LAC	40%	0%	8%	0%
	All Pupils	65%	26%	21%	4%
Best entry (2013 methodology)	LAC	40%	0%	8%	0%
	All Pupils	69%	29%	23%	4%

It is reasonable to expect that results for the LAC population as a whole are affected because there is a significantly higher proportion of children with SEN than within the whole population.

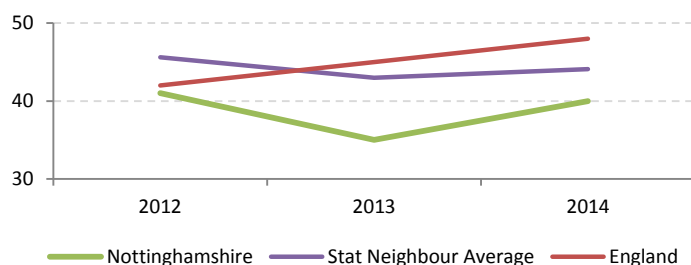
In addition, this table shows that children within the LAC population with SEN are less likely to achieve 5 GCSEs than children with the same level of SEN who are not looked after.

2.2.2. Key Stage 2 (age 7-11 years)

% of LAC at KS2 who achieved Level 4 or above (2014)



% of LAC achieving at least Level 4 in Reading, Writing and Maths at KS2



- Results at KS2 are mixed, in **reading and maths**, the percentage of LAC achieving Level 4 or more exceeds the national and statistical neighbour average.
- Results in **writing** have improved since 2014, but still fall below average.
- The **combined results** across reading, writing and maths fall 8 percentage points **below average**, with just 40% of LAC in Year 6 in Nottinghamshire achieving Level 4 in all three.
- 35 LAC sat KS2 tests in Nottinghamshire last year.

Progress

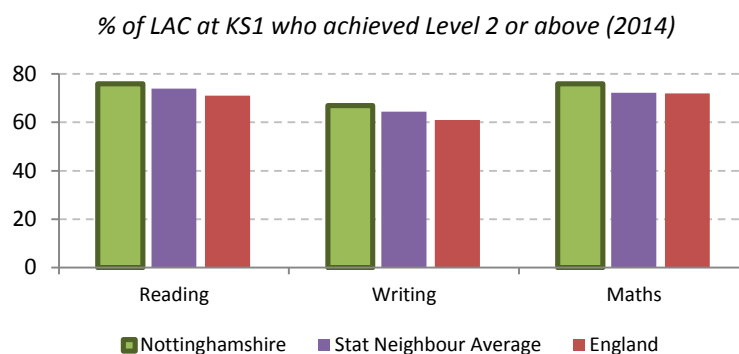
The table below shows data about progress made between Key Stages 1 and 2 by LAC in Nottinghamshire. The expected progress is 2 levels between Key Stages.

% of Nottinghamshire LAC achieving expected progress	2012	2014	Gap between Nottinghamshire LAC and all pupils nationally	2012	2014
Reading	71	86	Reading	19	5
Writing	71	83	Writing	19	10
Maths	71	86	Maths	16	4

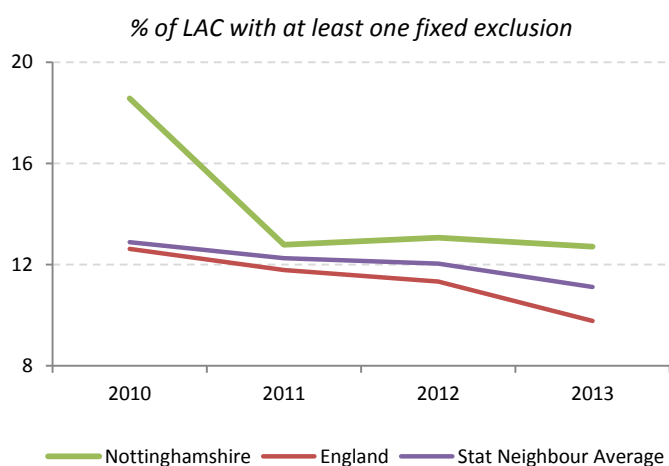
LAC in Nottinghamshire make good progress between Key Stages 1 and 2. Improvement has been made in all areas in the last 2 years and the gap between our LAC and all pupils nationally has closed considerably.

2.2.3. Key Stage 1 (age 5-7 years)

- Results at KS1 in reading, writing and maths for LAC in Nottinghamshire exceed our neighbours' and England's.
- Nationally, attainment for LAC at KS1 has increased year on year since 2010.



2.2.4. Exclusions



- Nationally, rates of permanent and fixed term exclusion have been decreasing year on year for the whole population as well as for looked after children.
- In Nottinghamshire, the rate of fixed term exclusion amongst looked after children has only slightly decreased, but remains higher than both the national average and statistical neighbour.
- 12.7% of LAC in the county had at least one fixed term exclusion in 2012/13 compared to 9.8% nationally and 11.1% average among statistical neighbours.

DfE statistics show that between 2010 and 2014, no looked after children in Nottinghamshire have been permanently excluded.

The Virtual School works closely with designated teachers to avoid exclusions. Unfortunately, fixed term exclusions are sometimes necessary as part of a coherent support plan aiming to make it possible for them to learn effectively in a school setting.

This is part of a strategy to avoid permanent exclusions for LAC, the success of which is demonstrated by the fact there have been no permanent exclusions from 2010-2014.

The Virtual School works in partnership with school staff to provide innovative and creative educational solutions to ensure that learning continues with a LAC on a school roll when it becomes clear that effective education can no longer be provided in a school setting. Wherever possible there is a plan in place to work towards the reintegration into a school or other setting.

2.3. FUTURE IMPROVEMENTS

There has been a wide range of achievements and progress in relation to education during the lifetime of the LAC Strategy. The revised strategy needs to maintain that progress, as well addressing areas where performance needs to be improved. The revised strategy will ensure that we maintain a clear focus on **outcomes** for our Looked After Children.

Maintain success at KS1

The data indicates that at KS1, our looked after children are well supported to achieve the expected levels of attainment. Performance for Nottinghamshire is above the statistical neighbour average and England average.

Increase improvement at KS2

At KS2, attainment in maths and reading is above average. However a smaller percentage of LAC achieve the expected level in writing, and across all three subjects. There has been some improvement, the new strategy will need to ensure this improvement is built upon in future years.

Reduce the attainment gap at KS4

The Council's self-assessment of services for LAC states that the underachievement at KS4 requires focused early intervention by the Virtual School to ensure Year 10 and 11 pupils are accessing appropriate courses and making appropriate progress.

LAC Achievement Officers make this age group a priority focus in planning and education improvement advisors have been supported by the co-ordinator of the virtual school to make achievement visits to all Nottinghamshire secondary and special schools by Spring 2015. Visits have also begun in out of authority schools with Nottinghamshire LAC.

New data methodology used by DfE makes it more challenging to compare results with previous years, nevertheless, it is apparent that there remains a significant attainment gap between Looked After Children in Nottinghamshire and their peers both locally and nationally.

3. Health

The strategy said...

Children and young people have their health needs assessed and planned for, and are able to access the health services they require. They are healthy and happy, and enjoy a good quality of life.

3.1. ACHIEVEMENTS

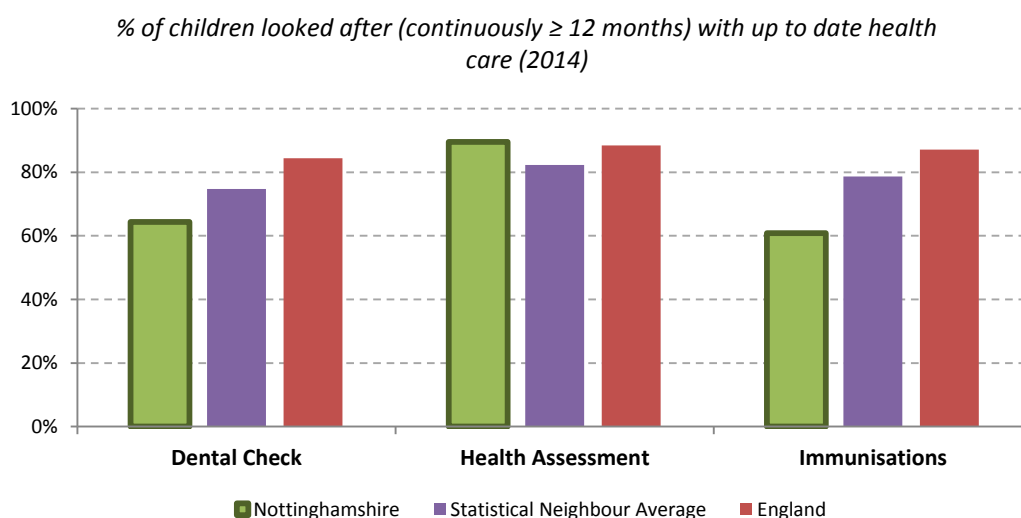
- Looked After Children have improved access to sport and leisure facilities thanks to the commitment of District Councils, many of which offer free or discounted activities.
- All looked after young people have been provided with a free Platinum Card for entry into all Youth Centres in the County.
- Health and social care are working more closely together so that important health information about Looked After Children is shared more effectively.
- The Integrated Commissioning Hub has been established and helps to ensure that health services for Looked After Children remain prioritised.
- Established single point of contact within Social Care for all LAC Health data input

3.2. DEMONSTRATING PROGRESS

Three key indicators recorded nationally in relation to health and development are:

- Children who have had their teeth checked by a dentist
- Children who have had their annual health assessment
- Children whose immunisations are up to date

The chart below shows Nottinghamshire's performance in these areas in 2014.⁷



⁷ Data taken from DfE Statistics: Outcomes for children looked after SFR49/2014 published on 10 Dec 2014. The data is contextualised by local intelligence in the next section.

- **64%** of Nottinghamshire's LAC had a **dental check** in 2014, which is an increase since last year. This result is in the **bottom 8%** of local authorities in England, and is 20 percentage points below the national average
- **90%** of LAC had their annual **health assessment**. This is a significant increase since last year and exceeds the national and statistical neighbour average. This puts Nottinghamshire in the second lowest quartile of local authorities in England.
- **61%** of LAC have up to date immunisations. This is a decrease since 2013 and places Nottinghamshire in the **bottom 5%** of local authorities in England. However, performance is generally strong in relation to vaccinations for 0-5 year olds, but drops off for the school leaver booster.

3.3. FUTURE IMPROVEMENTS

Nottinghamshire County CCGs, as commissioners of health services for looked after children, are working with the Council and provider organisations to support a whole system review of current pathways and service provision to ensure that they are commissioning an effective service.

A multi-agency steering group has been established to deliver the following actions:

- Review of the pathway and commissioned services working closely with commissioners, clinicians, children and young people, service providers, public health
- Develop effective approaches to commissioning services, in line with policy and guidance, including an emphasis on commissioning for outcomes.
- Contribute to the planning of safe, high quality and responsive services that will deliver improvements in outcomes address health inequalities and improve services within the resources available.
- Analyse and use information (health needs assessment, activity levels, benchmarking data etc.) to develop service improvement / development plans taking into consideration funding, workforce implications and information technology requirements.
- Develop a robust performance management framework to monitor progress against implementation of the pathway.

A detailed action plan is being developed and the revised LAC Strategy will need to take this into consideration, as well as any findings and recommendations from the Pathway Review. The health and wellbeing of our LAC will remain a strong focus of the revised Strategy which necessarily requires strong partnership working across the county. In future emotional wellbeing will be considered together with physical health.

4. Safe and Stable Placements

The strategy said...

Children looked after are in high quality placements where they feel safe and supported, and where they are able to remain for as long as they need to.

They receive information about their placement in advance and are listened to if they have concerns at any time. Children looked after have a positive experience of family life or residential care.

4.1. ACHIEVEMENTS

- Children and young people have greater opportunity to give feedback on their placements due to evaluation work carried out by the Placements Team who work closely with 'No Labels'.
- A new commissioning plan has been put in place which aims to move out-of-county placements into Nottinghamshire and enable children to live in a family setting with foster carers rather than in residential placements.
- Children and young people have been involved with the commissioning process and they have played an important part in the tender process, helping us to ensure our services are right for young people.
- Our "From a Distance" Policy ensures that children and young people whose placements are outside the county receive all the same support and benefits as those living within Nottinghamshire.
- The views of children and young people living out of county were gathered as part of a themed audit, this demonstrated many positive aspects of these placements as well as helping us understand areas to improve in the future. For example:

A is well integrated in the Local Area and states that he feels more "at home" in London as he is able to work in his uncle's fast food outlet.

B likes his new house which is near the sea. He has joined Beavers and told me he will "still be living here when he is in scouts"

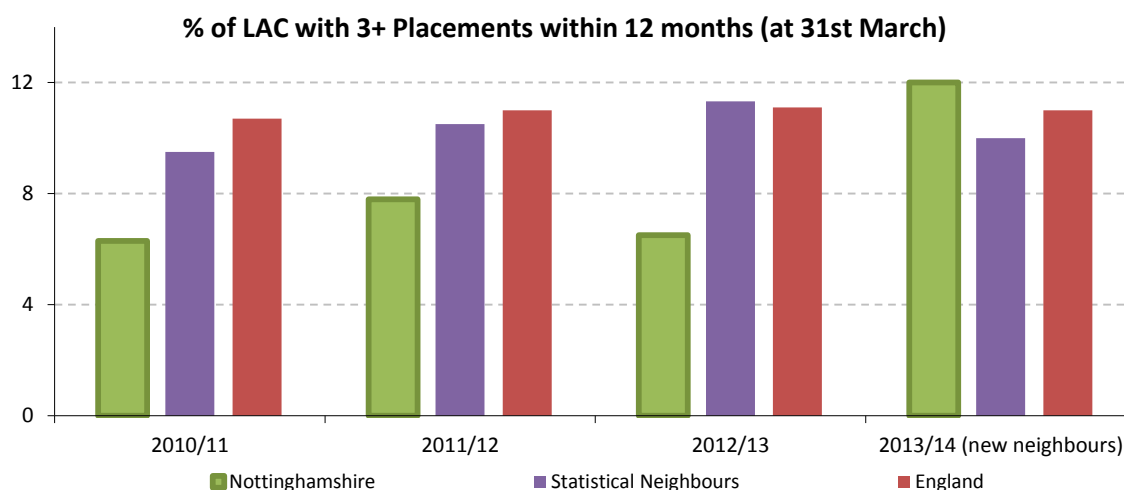
C is happy with the service provided but feels that a more local social worker may have been able to facilitate his independence plan more quickly

- A well-embedded and successful "Staying Put" Policy supports young people to remain in their foster placements beyond the age of 18, ensuring longer-term stability and a smoother transition to adulthood.

4.2. DEMONSTRATING PROGRESS

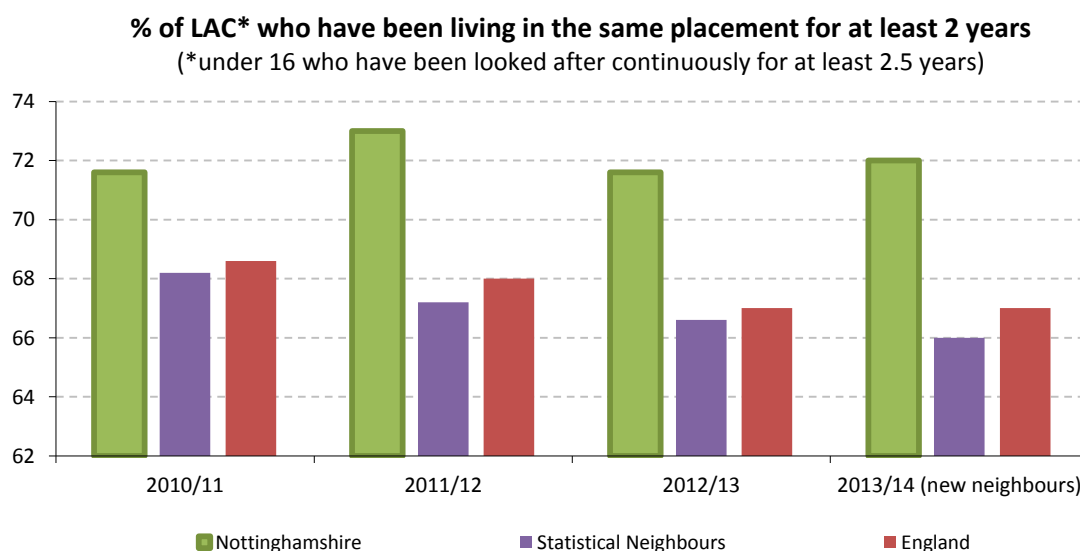
Over the last three years, Nottinghamshire have had a smaller proportion of LAC who experience 3 or more placement moves within a year that both the national and statistical neighbour average. This is a good sign that placements for our LAC remain stable.

However, the data for 2013/14 shows that there has been an increase in the proportion of children who experience frequent placement moves, and we are now above the national and statistical neighbour average. This may, in part, be due to planned placement moves as part of our new commissioning plan.



Another important indicator of placement stability is the proportion of LAC who remain in the same placement for 2 or more years. Nottinghamshire consistently perform very well in this area.

Last year, **72%** of our LAC had been in same placement for 2 or more years. This exceeds the national and statistical neighbour average.



4.3. FUTURE IMPROVEMENTS

Placement stability in Nottinghamshire has remained good for our looked after children, we will seek to maintain this success through the revised strategy.

We will do this by continuing to involve children and young people in decision making, both at individual level and more strategically. Children and young people will be involved in the ongoing monitoring of block contracts for placements and the Placements Team will continue to actively engage with young people as part of their quality monitoring.

We will continue to be mindful of the needs of those children and young people who are placed out of county and ensure that the quality of support and services they receive is not compromised because of their distance from home.

5. Relationships

The strategy said...

Children looked after are supported to maintain, build and sustain positive relationships with others, including their birth families, carers and peers.

5.1. ACHIEVEMENTS

- Our Contact Service has been reviewed and improved to ensure that contact between children and their families is arranged and managed as effectively as possible.
- New practice guidance delegates more authority to foster carers to make plans and arrangements about contact with family which helps ensure arrangements fit in with children's day-to-day lives.
- Children and young people's social workers are well-informed about a range of issues which are important to looked after children thanks to a new information pack used in staff inductions.
- Since February 2014, a new Permanence Panel has been in place which scrutinises and provides support to Permanence Plans (other than adoption). The Panel makes sure support is in place to ensure that the child's relationship with their carers and within their placement can be sustained long-term.

5.2. DEMONSTRATING PROGRESS

One clear example of demonstrable progress is in relation to the **Contact Service**:

Between September 2013 and December 2014, the Children's Social Care Transformation Team undertook a project to drive improvement in the service the Council provide to supervise contact between children (including looked after children) and their families. The project resulted in financial savings as well as many benefits for children and young people:

- Children are more likely to have the same worker supervising contact at every session. This will help provide consistency which will support the child in what can be a disruptive and unsettling time.
- New venues have been arranged which are more child-friendly and provide a better environment for children to spend time in.
- The new venues also allow us to offer contact sessions after school and in the evenings, which young people have told us fits in better with their routines.
- New processes for arranging contact sessions are more efficient and child-centred, with a focus on consistency of worker, appropriate venues and suitable times.
- The new processes ensure staff have more time to record notes of contact sessions. This is important for children and young people because it means their social workers will get information about contact quickly, which will help them provide the right support and aid decision making.

- Workers who supervise contact have received comprehensive training, including in safeguarding and case recording, to ensure that their skills are up to date.
- The service is able to provide transport to and from contact for children with disabilities.

5.3. FUTURE IMPROVEMENTS

Ofsted require that “children and young people have appropriate, carefully assessed and supported contact with family and friends and other people who are important to them”. The changes made to the Contact Service are quite recent, so it is important that we continue to monitor and evaluate their impact over time.

The revised strategy will need to maintain a focus on supporting children and young people to build and maintain positive relationships. Through engaging directly with young people during the development of the new strategy we will ensure that we understand and include what is important to them.

We also know the importance of relationships that children and young people have with professionals in their lives, in particular social workers. Ofsted require that “Professionals and carers, who know [Looked After Children] well, develop positive relationships with them and are committed to protecting them and promoting their welfare”. We already consider these relationships as part of regular service user feedback. The next strategy will ensure that we build on what we already know about children and young people’s relationships with their social workers and continue to do all we can to promote the development of positive and supportive relationships.

6. Identity

The strategy said...

Children looked after know who they are and why they are looked after. They feel valued and respected by others, and their individual needs arising from gender, race, culture, disability, sexual orientation and religion are understood and met.

6.1 ACHIEVEMENTS

- We take care to match children to suitable foster carers based on their individual needs and background where possible. In May 2013, a targeted recruitment campaign was undertaken to ensure that a range of carers from different backgrounds and cultures are available to meet the needs of the LAC population.
- We introduced a fee paid scheme in April 2014 seeking foster carers for young people aged 11+ (approximately half of the looked after population is aged 12-18).
- The newly developed Permanence Panel which oversees all plans for permanence plays an important role in matching children to placements which meet their needs and provide a supportive environment for children to explore and be confident in their identity.
- Work is ongoing to improve the completion of life story work with children in permanent fostering placements. The LAC Team and Permanence Team are working together to share good practice in this area.
- A full review and transformation of the Children's Disability Service is currently being undertaken, which includes services for LAC with disabilities. This will ensure that specialist services and placements are appropriately and effectively tailored to meet the individual needs of each child.
- Specific work to prevent and address homophobic bullying has been undertaken in residential homes.
- Training is provided for foster carers in relation to spotting the signs of bullying and providing support, specific work is also delivered around cyber bullying.
- There are established links between the Virtual School for LAC and the Achievement and Equality Team and information is shared in relation to UASC to ensure that they are able to speedily access education and that their linguistic needs are being met.
- Seminars for foster carers of BME children and young people have been delivered. A BME foster carer also sits on the planning group and reflective practice is encouraged during sessions allowing participants to learn from other group members.

6.2 DEMONSTRATING PROGRESS

In December 2014, a themed audit in relation to work with black and minority ethnic children was undertaken which has helped us understand progress and areas for improvement in this area. The audit included seven LAC cases. Although this is a small sample, it gives us detailed qualitative information.

All seven of those cases were graded "good" for consideration and impact of age, disability,

ethnicity, faith or belief, gender, identity, language, race and sexual orientation, and in all cases ethnic & cultural needs were identified and addressed in assessments, care planning and reviews. This is a positive indication of the quality of support that looked after children and young people receive in relation to their ethnicity and culture.

6.3. FUTURE IMPROVEMENTS

It is a continuing challenge to recruit foster carers who reflect the racial and cultural diversity of the looked after population. 97% of Nottinghamshire's foster carer community is white British (whereas 87% of the LAC population is White British). The authority provides training and access to consultancy to support foster carers in meeting the individual needs of children placed with them. The recruitment of a more diverse foster carer workforce is an area for continuous improvement. In addition, the recruitment of foster carers for older young people is another area for continuous improvement.

The needs of children and young people will continue to be addressed holistically, taking into account any individual needs arising from gender, race, culture, disability, sexual orientation and religion. We will continue to record and better understand information in relation to different characteristics of our looked after children so that we can design, plan and monitor services on an ongoing basis.

Oftsed require that “Children and young people are protected or helped to keep themselves safe from bullying, homophobic behaviour and other forms of discrimination.” This will remain an important theme in the next strategy.

Consultation work with children and young people during the development of the new strategy will also inform further work around identity.

7. Moving to Adulthood

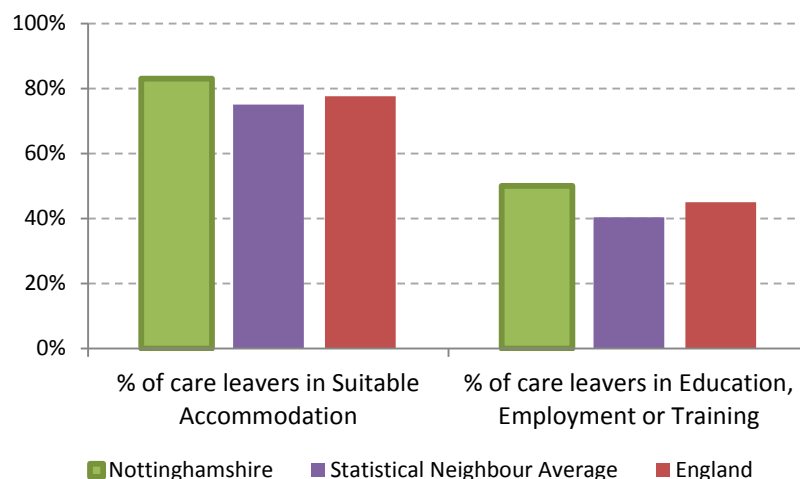
The strategy said...

Children looked after are supported to move into young adulthood successfully. They will have a home to live in, the skills to look after themselves and the ability to earn a living or continue in education. They feel confident about the future.

7.1. ACHIEVEMENTS

- A well-embedded and successful “Staying Put” Policy supports young people to remain in their foster placements beyond the age of 18, ensuring longer-term stability and a smoother transition to adulthood.
- Young people now remain in the LAC Service until they are 18 years old and no longer have to change social worker when they reach 16. This ensures a smooth transition to the Leaving Care Service.
- The Council’s 11+ Fostering Scheme recognises the more specialised skillset required to support older young people and help them develop independence as they move towards adulthood.
- The Leaving Care Service are successfully working towards the From Care2Work quality mark which recognises the County’s progress in supporting young people to develop employability skills and enter the world of work.

7.2. DEMONSTRATING PROGRESS



The chart above shows the most recent data (2013/14) for young people leaving care. 83% of young people leaving care move into suitable accommodation. This exceeds the national average as well as the average amongst statistical neighbours.

The percentage of care leavers entering education, employment or training also exceeds national and statistical neighbour average. However, the data shows that half of the young people leaving care last year did not enter employment, education or training, there is still plenty of room to improvement outcomes for young people leaving our care.

7.3. FUTURE IMPROVEMENTS

There have been a number of achievements of which to be proud in relation to young people moving to adulthood during the lifetime of the previous strategy, however the previous LAC Strategy did not encompass young people after 18 once they had left care.

The most significant improvement will be that the revised strategy will include Care Leavers as well as Looked After Children. This will promote the important extension of our corporate parenting responsibility to young people as they reach adulthood.

8. Emotional Wellbeing

The strategy said...

Children looked after achieve emotional stability, resilience and self-confidence.

8.1. ACHIEVEMENTS

- A Children and Young People’s Mental Health and Emotional Wellbeing Strategy (2014-2016) has been produced, which specifically includes Looked After Children.
- The County CAMHS Children Looked After and Adoption team continue to provide a range of services to children and young people. The total number of open cases to the CAMHS Children Looked After and Adoption Team on end is 255.
- Based on the January 2014 –December 2014 data, the average waiting time for the initial CAMHS consultation with a social worker was 24 days. Following the initial CAMHS consultation, young people/foster carers are generally seen within 2 weeks for treatment / follow up.
- The County CAMHS Children Looked After and Adoption team have received positive feedback from the parents of service users.

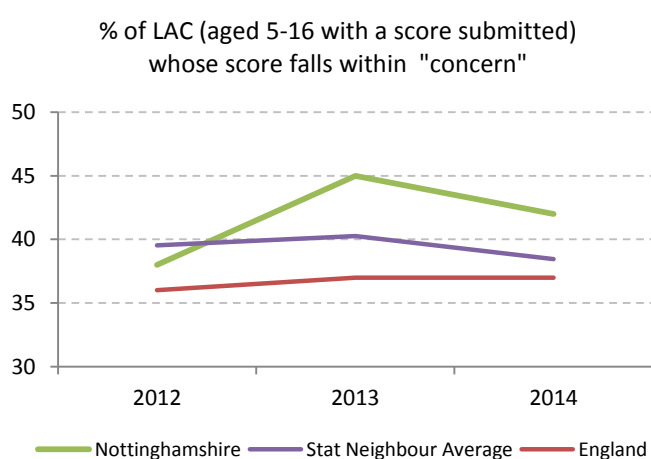
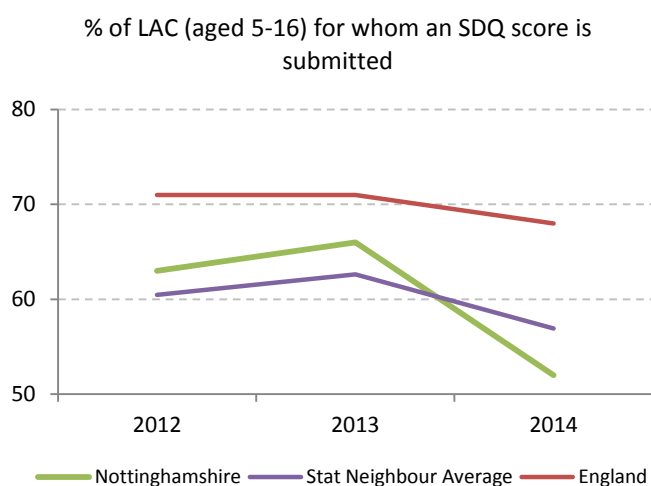
The advice and guidance we have been given by her when put into practice within differing environments have resulted in positive outcomes, this has inspired confidence and trust in her ability to support us with the various difficulties we have and will experience in the future. Importantly appointments have been arranged around our schedules and we have found the service really accommodating, understanding and non-judgemental.

- The team deliver a 10 week ‘Nurturing attachment’s’ therapeutic group for foster carers within localities this also includes supervising Social Workers. The aim of the group is to support foster carers to increase their understanding of how to identify and meet the unmet emotional needs of the young people for whom they are caring.

The 10 week CAMHS course has been invaluable to me, to get down to understand lots of behaviours I have been dealing with for nearly a year and to suddenly click and help me to see the reasons has been amazing.

8.2. DEMONSTRATING PROGRESS

The main indicator considered by DfE in relation to emotional wellbeing of Looked After Children is the Strength and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ). This is a screening questionnaire which the Council are required to complete and submit annually for all LAC between the ages of 5 and 16 years. The child’s main carer should complete the questionnaire. SDQ scores are grouped into “normal”, “borderline” and “concern”.



- Over the last 3 years, Nottinghamshire have consistently been **below national average** for submission of SDQ scores.
- In 2014, SDQ scores were only submitted for **52%** of LAC. This means Nottinghamshire now fall **below statistical neighbour average**.
- There has been a slight decrease in the percentage of LAC's SDQ scores which fall into the "concern" category.
- **42%** of children's scores fell within "concern"; this is higher than national and statistical neighbour average.
- Given the low return rate of SDQ scores in Nottinghamshire, it is difficult to draw a meaningful conclusion about the LAC population as a whole – nearly half of LAC are not included in this data.
- One hypothesis is that results are skewed because of the low return rate - it may be that a carer is more likely to complete the SDQ when they are already concerned about a child's emotional wellbeing.

8.3 FUTURE IMPROVEMENTS

Ofsted require that "Child and adolescent mental health provision, therapeutic help and services for learning or physically disabled children and young people are available when needed and for as long as they are required."

This is a priority area for improvement in the next strategy. The low return rate of SDQ scores and high proportion of scores of "concern" paint a negative picture of the emotional wellbeing of LAC in Nottinghamshire. It will be important for the Council, Health and carers to continue to work in partnership to ensure that children and young people's emotional and mental health needs are both met and properly recorded.

In reflection of the Government's "No Health without Mental Health"⁸ strategy, emotional wellbeing will be considered alongside other health needs in the revised strategy, emphasising the importance of meeting both emotional and physical health needs holistically.

⁸ No Health without Mental Health, HM Government, 2011

Next Steps

This report has highlighted many areas of achievement in relation to outcomes for looked after children in Nottinghamshire during the lifetime of the LAC Strategy 2012-15. It has also identified a number of areas where we need to strive to achieve much more for the children and young people for whom we are corporate parent.

Alongside this Evaluation Report, the Children in Care Council have been asked to give their feedback on what difference (if any) they feel the Strategy has made for them. This information will be crucial as we develop the revised strategy, and we will continue to involve young people in the development process.

The engagement of all departments and agencies who share corporate parenting responsibility will also be vital to the success of the new strategy and its associated actions, from frontline workers to senior managers and politicians.

Over the coming months, learning from this evaluation will be brought together with the views and ideas of children and young people and the expertise of professionals across agencies to develop our new Looked After Children and Care Leavers Strategy which will be ready for publication by Summer 2015.

The new strategy will consider Care Leavers as well as children who are currently looked after, this reflects the importance of our role in preparing young people in our care for adulthood. It will also address important and current issues affecting children and young people which were not previously included as part of the strategy. Child Sexual Exploitation and substance misuse will both feature in the new strategy.