

Nottinghamshire Children, Young People and Families Participation Strategy



2014 – 2016



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1. Introduction

This document sets out a revised participation strategy, which is intended for everyone working with children and young people aged 0 to 19 years of age (up to 25 if they have a disability or are included in the Looked After cohort) and their families in Nottinghamshire. This includes people working directly with children and young people and those who commission or manage staff, services or organisations that support children and young people. The strategy is also for organisations and partnerships whose work impacts on children and young people, for example public health, housing services and transport services.

The strategy is primarily focused on the participation of children and young people, promoting a rights-based approach linked to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. We also recognise that in many instances the involvement of parents and carers in participation activity is appropriate for service improvement.

The strategy intends to:

- set out our vision for participation
- clarify what participation involves, and how consultation is used to support this
- outline the legislative framework and benefits of participation
- identify good practice to date
- outline areas for further development and steps to achieve them.

2. Our Vision

In Nottinghamshire, all children, young people and families will have the opportunity to participate in decisions which affect their lives. They will have access to services which they need and the opportunity to shape how these services are planned and delivered.

3. What we mean by participation

In Nottinghamshire, we are committed to promoting the active participation of children and young people and their families wherever possible, although we recognise that the extent to which children and young people participate will depend on the situation.

There is sometimes a lack of clarity about what we mean when we talk about participation and it is often confused with consultation.

Consultation is the process by which children, young people and their families are asked their opinions. This includes asking their opinions on various suggested options, or retrospective satisfaction surveys and evaluation exercises. Consultation may support participation but does not replace it.

Participation is the process by which individuals can proactively influence decision-making and bring about change. This may mean individuals influencing decisions about their own lives, for example children who are supported by social care and health influencing their care plans, or it could mean young people influencing the development and implementation of service delivery. There are many examples of participation - the following is not an exhaustive list:

- Recruiting and selecting staff
- Peer mentoring
- Deciding how money should be spent
- Planning, running and evaluating events
- Being on forums or councils that lead to change
- Lobbying elected members
- Making positive changes in the local area
- Involvement in commissioning services (identifying needs, drawing up service specifications, assessing tenders, inspecting services).

Hart's Ladder of Participation (overleaf) is a useful way of deciding how actively children and young people are being involved.

4. Why we promote participation

According to the legislative context, children and young people have the right to be involved in the decisions which affect them as individuals. We also believe that families should also have the option to be involved.

Local authorities must take steps to ascertain the views of young people and to take them into account in making decisions about services and activities for them, in line with Article 12 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC). They should establish and maintain structured arrangements for doing so. To inform continuous improvement, these arrangements should enable young people to inspect and report at least annually on the quality and accessibility of provision. As appropriate they should also be involved actively in service design, delivery and governance. Young people should receive the support they need to participate, ensuring representation of the full diversity of local young people, and those who may not otherwise have a voice.

Children and young people have the ideas, set up the project and invite adults to join with them in making decisions.

Children and young people have the initial idea and decide how the project is carried out. Adults are available but do not take charge.

Adults have the initial idea but children and young people are involved in every step of the planning and implementation. Not only are their views considered, but they are also involved in taking the decisions.

The project is designed and run by adults but children and young people are consulted. They have a full understanding of the process and their opinions are taken seriously.

Adults decided on the project and children and young people volunteer for it. Adults respect their views.

Children and young people are asked to say what they think about an issue but have little or no choice about the way they express those views or the scope of the ideas they can express.

Children and young people take part in an event (e.g. by singing, dancing or wearing T-shirts with logos on) but they don't really understand the issue.

Children and young people do or say what adults suggest they do but have no real understanding of the issues, or are asked what they think. Adults use some of their ideas but do not tell them what influence they have had on the final decision.

8

Children & young people Initiated shared decisions with adults

7

Children & young people are direct

6

Adults initiated shared decisions with children and young people

5

Consulted but informed

4

Assigned but informed

3

Tokenism

2

Decoration

1

Manipulation

This should include the planning, delivery and evaluation of services that they access, for example health services, libraries, early years, play and youth settings, as stipulated in the Statutory Guidance for Local Authorities on Services and Activities to Improve Young People's Well-being (Department for Education, June 2012). This statutory guidance is issued by the Secretary of State for Education under Section 507B of the Education and Inspections Act 2006. It relates to local authorities' duty to secure services and activities for young people aged 13 to 19, and those with learning difficulties to age 24, to improve their well-being, as defined in Subsection 13.

6. The benefits of participation

Our ambition to enable all children and young people and their families to have the opportunity to participate in decisions which affect their lives is also driven by the belief that the process of participation brings about many benefits and improves outcomes.

For children and young people, through:

- skill development, aspiration-raising and confidence-building
- raising their awareness and knowledge about services and how organisations work
- promoting active citizenship
- enabling them to make a positive contribution.

For their families, through:

- consultation on decision-making
- promoting the exchange of information
- shared clarity of purpose and outcomes of services.

For the community, through:

- building a shared understanding
- a sense of belonging across generations
- a more vibrant local democracy
- developing a positive image of children and young people as citizens.

For service providers, through:

- services meeting actual rather than assumed needs and thus leading to better value for money
- children and young people bringing a fresh perspective and new ideas about services
- feedback from children and young people leading to improved services

7. Our strategic commitment to the participation of children, young people and their families

Nottinghamshire Children’s Trust (the Trust) and its member organisations are committed to promoting the participation of children and young people by continuing to endorse the participation of children, young people and their families. The Trust has endorsed the ‘ground rules’ charter, developed by children and young people, which sets out the commitment of organisations to the children and young people they work with.

8. Nottinghamshire principles for participation

In Nottinghamshire, our approach to participation is guided by the following principles:

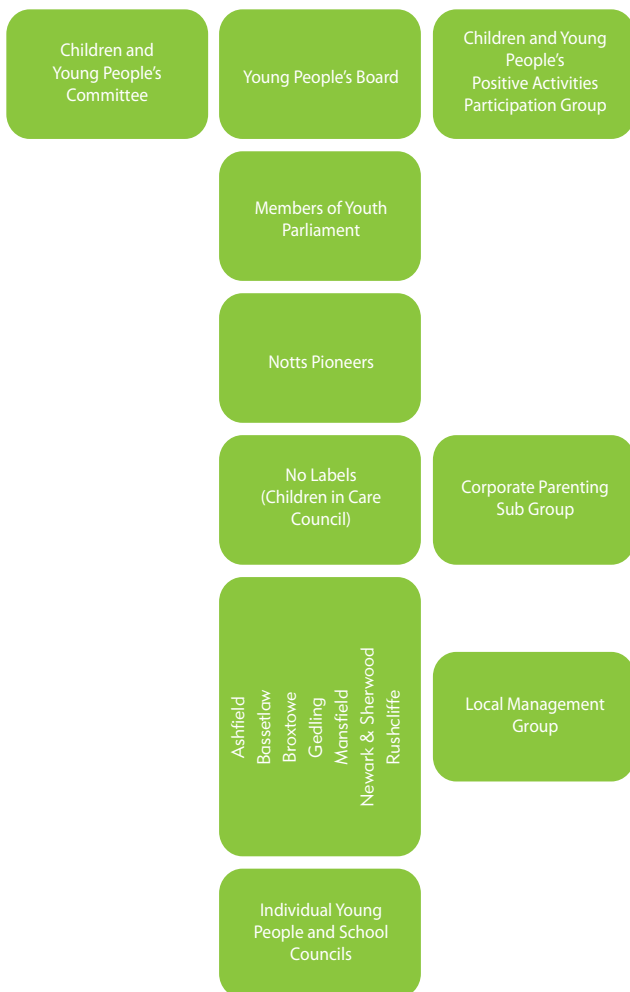
1. The National Youth Agency’s ‘Hear by Right’ document ensures that all children and young people along with their families should have an equal opportunity to participate, should they choose to, so we will work to support those who face the greatest barriers.
2. Children and young people should have the opportunity to participate in an age appropriate way.
3. Participation needs to lead to positive outcomes which are agreed with and communicated to children, young people and their families.
4. All organisations working with children and young people should work together to support and promote participation.
5. We value all children and young people and will promote their successes.
6. Organisations should seek to actively involve children, young people and their families, rather than simply consult.



9. Opportunities for children, young people and their families to participate

The Trust currently adopts a wide range of approaches to enable the participation of children, young people and their families. This includes formal structures such as forums, councils and boards that link into adult decision making structures (overleaf) and more informal approaches. Young people have been involved in needs analysis (being consulted on the Children, Young People’s and Families Plan), procuring services (contributing to service specifications and assessing tenders and bidders) and quality assurance work (inspecting services).

10. Participation Structure (ages 10-19 or to 25 with a disability)



11. How we know participation is making a difference for children, young people and their families

- Participation by looked after children in their reviews is very good.
- No Labels (Children in Care Council) has enabled children and young people to improve services they receive.
- Participation opportunities for children and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are encouraging.
- Participation by children and young people in child & adolescent mental health service design is positive.
- Strong emphasis is given to active participation by children, young people and their families in shaping the design and delivery of services.
- The Young People’s Board and Nottinghamshire’s members of the National Youth Parliament have been effective.
- A number of case studies outlining good practice across the Trust in involving children and young people can be found overleaf.

12. Areas for development

We have used the ‘Hear by Right’ framework to assess where we are now and what we need to do to fully achieve our vision for participation. We have identified three key areas for development:

1. We will embed our strategic commitment to the participation of children and young people in the Nottinghamshire Children, Young People and Families Plan.
2. We will build on our current strengths of consultation and evaluation of services to create regular opportunities for children, young people and their families to participate in designing services.
3. We will ensure we have a workforce which regularly creates environments for children, young people and their families to be offered the opportunity to participate.

Next Steps

To reinforce our strategic commitment to the participation of children, young people and their families, it is recommended that:

- the Trust identifies a champion to promote the Participation Strategy in the work of the Board;
- where an organisation has commissioning responsibilities, they are responsible for ensuring that contracted organisations evidence the participation of children, young people and their families, and for ensuring that participation is built into the commissioning process;
- we focus on improving the involvement of children, young people and their families in service redesign rather than evaluation of the service they receive;
- young people engaged in formal participation structures continue to be offered appropriate training to enable them to make change happen;
- that the Participation & Positive Activity Group has an overview, where appropriate, of policies to cover consent, safety, access, transport, compliments, complaints, incentives and rewards;
- relevant job descriptions and person specifications include a commitment to the participation of children and young people and the skills to enable this to happen; and
- children, young people and families continue to be meaningfully involved in the recruitment, selection and induction of key staff.

13. The role of the Children and Young People's Participation and Positive Activity Group

This strategy is governed by Children and Young People's Participation and Positive Activity Group on behalf of the Trust, with the active involvement of the Young People's Board. Its membership (see Appendix 1) includes staff working in Nottinghamshire County Council's Children, Families and Cultural Services Department, Community Safety, Health and the Nottinghamshire Voluntary Sector Youth Partnership.

The Group is responsible for overseeing the implementation of the strategy. This includes:

- providing the strategic direction for the development of participation
- monitoring the impact of the Participation Strategy, identifying any potential support needs and developing solutions to these needs
- providing advice and guidance to colleagues developing participative practice
- promoting opportunities for children, young people and their families to participate that are safe, sound and effective. The Participation Strategy Group has an overview, where appropriate, for policies to cover consent, safeguarding, safety, access, transport, compliments, complaints, incentives and rewards
- a regular audit of participation, linked into existing performance monitoring arrangements. This enables the Trust to celebrate change resulting from children and young people's participation and identify learning and support needs.

14. Examples of good practice

Young people-friendly health services

Young people who are employed as Young Inspectors will be trained to also assess how young people-friendly health services are. They will be tasked to make assessments by contacting services using a range of methods including face to face, telephone and email. They will assess services such as contraception and sexual health services, child and adolescent mental health services, General Practitioners and pharmacists. (Children and Young People's Team, Public Health).

Participation in service review

The Leaving Care Service was reviewed between January and March 2013 to ensure that it continued to meet the needs of Nottinghamshire's Looked After Children and Care Leaver population in light of the newly formed Throughcare Service. The review had a clear focus on care leavers' participation and a major theme emerged from this participation around changing social workers and lack of pathway planning. These issues were given a high profile within the review resulting in a new structure which encompasses a 15+ hub which allows the same social worker to remain involved until a young person leaves care with a clear focus in pathway planning. (Leaving Care Team, Children's Social Care).

Nottinghamshire Safeguarding Children Board – Road Safety

One of the responsibilities of the Nottinghamshire Safeguarding Children Board (NSCB) is to review the deaths of all children who are normally resident in the county to identify ways to prevent future deaths. Following the review of a number of road fatalities involving teenagers a proposal was put forward to create a short film on road safety. The project, which is designed to complement existing educational work by the NCC Road Safety Team, was agreed by the Board and is currently underway. Ideas for the content of the film have been generated by facilitating sessions at seven youth groups across the county and students from West Notts College are now developing those ideas into a short film. The guiding principle behind the project has been to provide young people with information about road safety risks and support the development by them of an effective way to communicate road safety awareness with their peers. (NSCB Team).

Virtual School

The personnel education plan documentation was recognised as being very out of date. This document is a statutory planning tool for looked after children's education. The virtual school took on responsibility to update this document to ensure that children and young people felt they could contribute to this process and the information gained from the meeting is appropriate and helpful in ensuring looked after children get the most out of their educational opportunities.

Through the children in care council and working parties of primary and secondary aged looked after children the young people's section of the PEP was considered. The young people asked that their sections in the PEP were put into booklet form instead of being included in the large planning document and these booklets had the same artwork as the Listen to Me Booklet for their looked after review. In the future a signs and symbols version will also be produced for those looked after children with additional needs.

This has been actioned and design and print are in the process of producing the booklets for final review and agreement with the children in care council. (Nottinghamshire Virtual School for Looked After Children).

Children's centres

Children's centres in Ashfield have used a publicly accessible website to obtain feedback that has directly improved delivery in the following areas:

- volunteer training and courses in the evenings
- sessions that link into baby clinics, engaging families who access this service at the Children's centres
- domestic violence drop-in session are now delivered at alternate Children's centres to accommodate those families with transport issues.

Children's centres have also recently extended their age remit to 5-12 years and are increasing their range of participation methods to include this age group. One recent example that has led to the creation of new local services includes a group of children and young people who have been supported by children centre staff to take over some unused changing rooms, the only local community accessible site, in order to hold their own activities such as putting on a show for the local community. (Early Years and Early Intervention Service, Youth, Families and Culture).

"I Pledge to Keep on Track"

A countywide youth participation programme has been delivered to over 3,000 pupils from years 5 and 6. It involves interactive visits to the Galleries of Justice, including opportunities to participate in role plays and mock trials. The programme encourages participating schools to enter a competition to consult on, develop and deliver a community pledge to improve an aspect of their local community. Previous initiatives have included addressing motor-cycle nuisance outside the school, anti-graffiti projects and e-safety training for parents and carers. Following consultation with pupils and teachers, the programme has also developed a set of safety books which are made available to all participating schools and have been adopted by a number of other targeted settings. (Community Safety Team, Policy, Planning & Corporate Services).

Services for looked after children

Varied participation programmes have improved the service offered to children and young people who are accommodated and their families. A better understanding of how parents and families feel about their child being accommodated; the difficulties of ringing the home; coming down the drive, leaving their child; having to leave them all over again after the first visit; and having pre-conceived ideas about children's homes – have all directly led to a brochure being produced to share with family and friends. Young people are now also involved in setting sanctions and, through consultation and choices, there is a reduction in incidents. (Access to Resources, Children's Social Care).

Independent Chairing Service

Young people are routinely involved in interviewing people applying to be independent chairs and their views are taken seriously when assessing candidates. We have never been in a position of appointing a chair against the advice of the young person on the panel. Independent Reviewing Officers are encouraging more and more young people to have the confidence to chair their looked after child review where appropriate, and to be routinely involved in decisions regarding who to invite to the LAC review and where the review is held. If a child does not wish to attend a looked after child review, then the chair makes every effort to seek their views prior to the meeting by seeing them or speaking to them on the telephone.

We are also committed to ensuring that views of children and young people are heard at Initial Child Protection Conferences, and this is embedded in the chairs' agendas. At review child protection conferences the chairs have the benefit of a leaflet designed to be child friendly and assist the child to give their views. This is My Protection Plan, and the child is assisted to complete this by their social worker. (Independent Chairing Service, Children's Social Care).

Youth work with looked after young people

Looked after young people from across the county have worked with youth workers through a range of participation days to identify ten promises which they agreed were most important to support their life in care. These feature in The Pledge, which is used by all staff engaged with looked after children and young people. Looked after children and young people also have a voice about their life in care through the work of the Children in Care Council (CICC). The CICC listens to what children and young people are saying and these views are taken forward and acted upon. Representatives from the CICC Board sit on the Young People's Board to ensure the views and needs of the Looked After cohort contribute to improving services for all of Nottinghamshire's children and young people. (Young People's Looked After Youth Work Team, Young People's Service).

The One Project

Through parent participation, the One Project has had conversations with families and young people to design, develop and improve services for 0-25 year olds with special educational needs and/or disabilities. This has led to an increased understanding of their needs in relation to where they go for information on the support available across education. Improvements are now being made to this area of service provision. (SEND Policy and Provision, Education, Standards and Inclusion).

Supporting Families Project

Participation of 'troubled families' who are or have been supported by the Supporting Families team includes adult family members as well as children and young people. Outcomes from this process are increased service user satisfaction, service users becoming more active citizens and service users who feel empowered, have improved confidence levels and report raised aspirations. (Nottinghamshire Supporting Families Project, Targeted Support and Youth Justice).

Residential care

Through participation, children and young people are now involved in the following improvements to the service they receive: recruitment of staff, decoration and refurbishment of the home, menu planning and developing welcome information packs for their peers. (Residential Services, Children's Social Care).

As part of the new monitoring process, external residential placements will be visited on a rota basis. All young people will be seen as part of this process and their views sought and subsequently collated to support improvements in the service they receive. (Placements and Commissioning Team, Children's Social Care).

Health visiting

The Health Visiting Service undertakes a service user and carer experience survey bi-annually. The survey contains questions to find out how people rate the service, whether they are treated well and if they believe it has helped them achieve their goals. There is also the opportunity for people to comment on what they would like to see improved about the service. From the results, locality actions plans are developed. Service users are informed that their comments have been acted upon via 'listening posters', which demonstrate what they said and what has been done. (Health Visiting Service, County Health Partnerships).

Child and adolescent mental health (CAMHS)

An event was held at Rufford Country Park called 'Party in the Park', which engaged with all CAMHS client groups and partners in an informal setting to look at the service as a whole and to ascertain views on the service. The CAMHS Service also actively involves young people and families on interview panels to ensure openness and transparency. (Specialist Community Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services).

Adoption

Fun activity participation days are planned in consultation with adopted children and young people. During the day their feedback is gathered and acted upon to improve the service they receive. (Adoption Service, Children's Social Care).

Healthy schools

We talk to young people from each school, as well as parent/carer representatives, to find out the ways in which they feel they have become a greater part in the running of their school. Following this, we make recommendations to the school through discussions with the senior management and/or headteacher and in our final report. (Nottinghamshire Healthy Schools, NHS – County Health Partnerships).

Children with complex health needs

Participation focus groups have taken place at APTCOO (voluntary sector provider) and through Barnado's Butterflies Project for children and young people with complex needs and life-limiting, life-threatening and end-of-life care services. These related to the Integrated Community Children and Young People Healthcare Programme and resulted in the production of a 'Statement of Expectation' and family profiles for a commissioning report.

(Children and Young People Team, Public Health Nottinghamshire).

School nursing & children in care health services

Nottingham West Clinical Commissioning Group has been trialling a questionnaire to analyse young people's experiences of the School Nursing Service and the Children in Care Service. It is used at all contacts with young people in order to collate a large representation of views and opinions. (Health Visiting, School Nursing, Children in Care Team and Liaison Health Visitors, County Health Partnerships).

Targeted Support & Youth Justice Service (i.e. CAMHS & Head2Head). (Commissioning and Partnerships Team, Targeted Support & Youth Justice Service).

Targeted support and youth justice

Leaflets have been developed through participation processes with young people on recognising child sexual exploitation, the housing "pathway" and court orders. Young people are also involved in evaluating the following to seek service improvements: resources used in youth justice, commissioned youth justice services and health services accessed via referral from the Targeted Support & Youth Justice Service (i.e. CAMHS & Head2Head). (Commissioning and Partnerships Team, Targeted Support & Youth Justice Service).

Participation structures

Over 18,500 young people took part in the election of the eight Nottinghamshire members of the UK Youth Parliament 2013. Members of the Youth Parliament (MYPs) are between the ages of 11 and 18 and are in post for two years. At their local meetings, MYPs work on campaigns addressing issues which are of concern to young people in the county. The local campaign areas for this term in office include: access to transport, helping to create a positive image of young people in the media and careers advice in schools.

In addition to these formal structures, Young Inspectors have participated in inspections of Young People's Service and Library Service provision and will be working in primary health care settings in the future. (Children and Young People's Participation Team, Young People's Service).

Young carers

An interactive participation event was held with young carers that involved them in a day of positive activities and discussions. A DVD was created which identified the needs of young carers and is used to raise their profile with peers and other agencies. (Children and Young People's Participation Team, Young People's Service).

Disabled children

Nottinghamshire Pioneers, the young disabled people's youth forum, was involved in an interviewing skills training programme provided by the Disability Support Team. After the training, young people sat on the interview panel for the Lead Officer post for the Short Breaks Childcare Project. They said they enjoyed the experience and learned much about interview skills, which would be of great value for them as individuals. Young people also took an active part in looking at the tenders for providers of short breaks for disabled children. They listened to presentations from prospective providers and, alongside a parents'/carers' panel, commented on suitability to provide services. The adult panel were impressed by the professionalism of the young people, their honesty and their insight into what was required from the providers. (Disability Support Team, Young People's Service).

Breaks in Partnership Project

Comments from families indicated that although Breaks in Partnership staff had visited settings and provided them with documentation and resources to meet individual children and young people's needs, the out of school club management were not passing this communication on to their staff. Breaks in Partnership staff have used this feedback to contact the settings and work with them to improve practice, ensuring staff are updated and prepared to meet children and young people's needs. (Play for Disabled Children Team, Youth, Families and Culture).

15. Appendix 1 Membership of the Children and Young People's Participation and Positive Activity Group

Name	Role	Service/Agency
Margaret Clement	Senior Practitioner - Disability Support Team (Young People's Service)	Nottinghamshire County Council - Children, Families & Cultural Services Department
Chris Coverley	Healthy Schools Advisor	Healthy Schools Team
Ray Kinsey	Participation Lead (Young People's Service)	Nottinghamshire County Council - Children, Families & Cultural Services Department
Lorna Naylor	Anti-Bullying Co-ordinator (Education Standards and Inclusion)	Nottinghamshire County Council - Children, Families & Cultural Services Department
Beatrice Jackson	Commissioning Officer, Children's Social Care	Nottinghamshire County Council - Children, Families & Cultural Services Department
Chris Warren (CHAIR)	Group Manager (Young People's Service)	Nottinghamshire County Council - Children, Families & Cultural Services Department
Sue Hollingworth-Shaw	Coordinator – Youth Services Looked After Young People	Nottinghamshire County Council - Children, Families & Cultural Services Department
Alison Jones	Participation Lead (Targeted Support and Youth Justice)	Nottinghamshire County Council - Children, Families & Cultural Services Department
Sarah Blackhurst	Senior Practitioner – Play 4 Disabled Children Team (Young People's Service)	Nottinghamshire County Council - Children, Families & Cultural Services Department
Carol Newman	Team Manager – Library Service Development (Libraries, Archives &	Nottinghamshire County Council - Children, Families & Cultural Services Department
Geoff Hamilton	Performance, Participation & Needs Assessment Manager (Integrated Commissioning Hub)	Nottinghamshire County Council – Public Health
Peter Cook	Team Leader – Children & Young People's Participation (Young People's Service)	Nottinghamshire County Council - Children, Families & Cultural Services Department
Anne Murphy	Locality Team Manager (Early Years & Early Intervention)	Nottinghamshire County Council - Children, Families & Cultural Services Department
Lisa Barker/Lauren Clarke	Joint Chair	Nottinghamshire Voluntary Youth Partnership
Chris Rolle / Denise Richards	Sports Manager (Cultural & Enrichment Services)	Nottinghamshire County Council - Children, Families & Cultural Services Department
Leah Sareen	Community Safety Officer (Community Safety Team)	Nottinghamshire County Council – Policy, Planning & Corporate Services
Sue Cullen	Sports & Arts Service Team Manager	Nottinghamshire County Council - Children, Families & Cultural Services Department
Sue Denholm	Head of the Virtual School (Education, Standards and Inclusion)	Nottinghamshire County Council - Children, Families & Cultural Services Department

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