





Northamptonshire
County Council

Cabinet

Tuesday 10th November 2020

Agenda Pack Two for the following Cabinet Reports:

 Denotes a key decision

Item No.	Subject	Page No	Name of Director	Contact name & Tel. no)
09.	An Update on the Children First Northamptonshire Social Care Improvement Plan	3 – 7	Councillor Baker	Tracy Bottomley 07500 881868
10.	Corporate Parenting Board 2019 -20	7 - 56	Councillor Baker	Tom Norford 01604 364010
11. 	Additional funding for the School Minor Works 2020/21 budget to address condition issues in Northamptonshire's maintained schools estate.	57 – 62	Councillor Baker	Jackie Desmond 07545 420556



CABINET

10 NOVEMBER 2020

DIRECTOR OF CHILDREN’S SERVICES: CATHI HADLEY

CABINET MEMBER WITH RESPONSIBILITY FOR: COUNCILLOR FIONA BAKER

Subject:	An Update on the Children First Northamptonshire Social Care Improvement Plan
Recommendations:	Report is for Information only

1. Purpose of report

The presentation set out at Appendix 1 and accompanying spreadsheet (Appendix 2) aims to give a high-level update on the progress made by the CFN against the Improvement Plan that was implemented following the Ofsted Inspection in 2018 and refreshed following the Inspection in 2019.

2. How this decision contributes to the Council Plan.

The Council’s vision is for Northamptonshire to be a county where everyone looks after each other and takes responsibility, where the vulnerable are protected and supported and where the people who can help themselves receive the assistance they need to stay independent and healthy.

This initiative helps the Council to deliver this vision through the following strategic priorities outlined in the Council Plan

- The Improvement plan is in place to ensure that improvements are made to the services offered to the children and families in Northamptonshire in line with the areas identified by the last Ofsted Inspection carried out in June 2019. The plan also focuses on workforce recruitment and retention which is fundamental to achieving improvements in outcomes for children.
- The plan allows progress to be reviewed at the Childrens Social Care Improvement Board which was set up following the Governments introduction of the Children’s Commissioner to oversee change in the service
- Enables the CFN Leadership team to focus on key areas for change with their Management Teams and wider staff.

3. Background

3.1 The Improvement plan was put in place further to the outcome of the last Ofsted Inspection held in October 2018 when the Service was judged to be Inadequate. The current plan was updated following the Ofsted Inspection in June 2019 and was refreshed again in June 2020. This was to ensure that the plan remained focused and relevant to reflect the progress achieved and the plan helps

measure improvements made in the key areas that Ofsted highlighted as well as other areas agreed by the Leadership Team in conjunction with the Children's Social Care Improvement Board. Progress on the plan is reviewed regularly by the Children's Leadership Team and reported to the Children's Social Care Improvement Board on a monthly basis. The Children's Social Care Improvement Board provide challenge and support in relation to the progress of the plan.

4. Consultation and Scrutiny

4.1 The plan is scrutinised by the Children's Social Care Improvement Board Members on a monthly basis. Board Members include Matt Golby, Leader of the Council, Fiona Baker, Lead Member for Children's Services, Theresa Grant, Chief Executive of NCC, Children's Commissioner, DfE, and partners from Police, Health and our Partners in Practice from Lincolnshire.

5. Equality Screening

Reason that no EqlA is required	✓ as appropriate
The paper is for information only	√
The proposal/activity/decision has no impact on customers or the service they receive	
The proposal impacts upon staff but the proposed staffing changes will not affect the service that customers receive*	
Other (Please explain further)	

*Where a proposal affects staff, the appropriate HR processes will be followed, which have already been subject to the EqlA process and will be compliant with HR legislation

6. Alternative Options Considered

6.1 There are no alternatives to be considered, the Children's Improvement Plan as was implemented as a result of the Ofsted Inspection of 2018.

7. Financial Implications

7.1 There are financial implications if key areas of the Improvement Plan are not met but no implications to the report itself.

8. Risk and Business Continuity Management

None delivery of the plan could incur the following potential risks.

- Children, young people and families experience delays in the support that they receive.
- Insufficient placements both standard and specialised means that improved outcomes for children are not attained
- Workforce Capacity and practice is not sufficient to the delivery of practice standards
- Reputational Risk to NCC/Trust and later the Unitary Councils

- Relationships with partner agencies are not strong meaning children, young people and families do not receive the right support at the right time

a) Risk(s) associated with the proposal

Risk	Mitigation	Residual Risk
Not Applicable – information only		

b) Risk(s) associated with not undertaking the proposal

Risk	Risk Rating
Not Applicable – information only	

9. List of Appendices

Appendix 1 November Cabinet – CFN Improvement Plan Summary

Appendix 2 November Cabinet – CFN Strategic Performance Report – Improvement Plan Sept 20 vo.1

Author:	Name: Children First Northamptonshire Leadership Team
Contact details:	Cathi Hadley Email: tbottomley@childrenfirstnorthamptonshire.co.uk
Background Papers:	NA
Does the report propose a key decision is taken?	NO
If yes, is the decision in the Forward Plan?	N/A
Will further decisions be required? If so please outline the timetable here	NO
Does the report include delegated decisions? If so, please outline the timetable here	NO
Is this report proposing an amendment to the budget and/or policy framework?	NO
Have the financial implications been cleared by the Strategic Finance Manager (SFM)? Have any capital spend implications passed through Capital Programme governance procedures?	N/A
Has the report been cleared by the relevant Director?	YES Name of Director: Cathi Hadley
Has the relevant Cabinet Member been consulted?	YES Name of Lead Member: Councillor Fiona Baker

Has the relevant scrutiny committee been consulted?	NA
Has the report been cleared by Legal Services?	YES Name of Solicitor: Edwina Adefehinti
Have any communications issues been cleared by Communications and Marketing?	NA
Have any property Issues been cleared by Property and Asset Management?	NA
Have the Procurement Implications below been referenced in the Paper:	NA
Are there any community safety implications?	NO
Are there any environmental implications:	NO
Are there any Health and Safety Implications:	NO
Are there any Human Resources Implications:	NO
Are there any human rights implications:	NO.
Constituency Interest:	NO



CABINET

10 NOVEMBER 2020

DIRECTOR OF CHILDREN’S SERVICES: CATHI HADLEY

**CABINET MEMBER WITH RESPONSIBILITY FOR CHILDREN’S SERVICES:
COUNCILLOR FIONA BAKER**

Subject:	Corporate Parenting Board Annual Report 2019 - 20
Recommendations:	That Cabinet note the content of the report.

1. Purpose of Report

This is the Corporate Parenting Board’s annual report for 2019-20.

2. How this decision contributes to the Council Plan

The Council’s vision is to make Northamptonshire a great place to live and work. This is achieved through increasing the wellbeing of your county’s communities and/or safeguarding the county’s communities.

<p>This initiative specifically delivers increased wellbeing and/or safeguarding ensuring that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • People of all ages are safe, protected from harm and able to live happy, healthy and independent lives in our communities. • People have the information and support they need to make healthy choices and achieve wellbeing. • People achieve economic prosperity, in a healthy, low carbon economy which give access to jobs, training and skills development. • Resources are utilised effectively and efficiently, in coordination with partners and providers.
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3. Background

3.1 The report sets out the role, structure and activity of the Board, specifically in terms of our progress against the Pledge to Children in Care and Care Leavers. The report also details the work of the Children in Care and Care Leavers’ Councils, the Fostering and Adoption Services, Commissioning Services and NCC children’s homes. Demographic information about our population of children in care and care leavers is also provided, with comparative data for the previous year.

3.2 The report contains:

Foreword by Cllr Fiona Baker – Chair of the Board and Cabinet Member for Children’s Services.

Executive Summary

Governance and statutory context – sets out the legal underpinning of corporate parenting, and the structure and role of the Board.

Life during lockdown – sets out actions taken within CFN to mitigate the effects of Covid-19 and lockdown.

The voice of children and young people. – Details about our participation groups, some of the activities they have taken part in during the year and how they have helped shape our service. There is more information about this in the next section.

Our Pledge. Gives a narrative update in regards to progress against each section of the Pledge to Children in Care and Care Leavers. Some headline data is included.

Fostering Service. Updates activity undertaken in the fostering service over the year. Includes some headline data.

Adoption Service. Updates activity undertaken in the adoption service over the year. Includes some headline data.

NCC Children’s Homes. Brief overview of the purpose and activity of each of the NCC children’s homes, including the new ones.

Demographics. Shows demographic data for children in care and care leavers, including comparisons with previous year and with statistical neighbours and England averages. This includes population trends, ethnicity, legal status, placement type and more.

Appendix 1: The Care Leavers Charter.

Appendix 2: Board Attendance: Shows councillor board attendance for the reporting period, including some brief explanatory notes.

4. Consultation and Scrutiny

4.1 The report was submitted to September 24th Corporate Parenting Board. The Board is a non-statutory committee of Councillors set up to provide oversight and strategic direction for services to children in care and care leavers. The Board also comprises NCC officers and independent representation from a variety of stakeholder such as Northampton Partnership homes and health services.

5. Equality Screening

Reason that no EqlA is required	✓ as appropriate
The paper is for information only	✓

* where a proposal affects staff, the appropriate HR processes will be followed, which have already been subject to the EqlA process and will be compliant with HR legislation

Children, Families & Education:

<https://www3.northamptonshire.gov.uk/councilservices/children-families-education/Pages/default.aspx>

6. Alternative Options Considered

6.1 Not applicable

7. Financial Implications

7.1 The 2019-20 net revenue budget for the Children First Northamptonshire (CFN) Directorate was £116.1m – included within this was £5.6m investment to support service demand pressures due to the rising number of children in care and inflationary uplifts to providers, and a significant savings requirement of £10.3m. Whilst there was acknowledgement some proposals within the budget would be challenging to deliver, the Northamptonshire Leadership Team demonstrated its commitment to delivering savings through reducing a Council wide deficit of £65.6m in August 2018 to a gap of £1.4m six months later and implemented rigorous governance arrangements to ensure delivery of transformative savings.

7.2 Throughout the 2019-20 financial year the increase in children in care numbers and associated costs had a significant impact on the ability to support the children within the budget envelope and deliver the required transformative savings in year. The increase in children in care is a position replicated nationally.

7.3 The 2019-20 final outturn position against the approved revenue budget was an overspend of £7.5m made up of £6.2m savings delivery pressures and a further £6.3m in year overspends due to demand pressures in the services providing for children in care above budgeted levels, offset by £5.0m in year underspends and management actions. The detailed breakdown on these variances can be found in the 2019-20 Final Outturn report.

7.4 Due to these continuing cost pressures as a result of the increased looked after children numbers, capacity issues and associated costs there has been significant focus on re-baselining Children's budgets in preparation for the set-up of the Children's Trust in 2020-21.

7.5 As such the CFN final budget for 2020-21 includes additional growth of £13.1m in respect of the full year effect of prior year 2019-20 demand pressures such as Fostering, and additional demand for social care transport. The CFN re-baselining figure has also been increased to take account of current demand levels for social care legal support, and demand levels for statutory service provisions for the Children’s Act 1989. In addition to this the 2021-22 budget includes a £2.6m growth item to provide for inflationary uplifts bringing the total growth to £15.7m. The budget also includes a savings requirement of £3.6m which is mainly efficiency and commissioning led.

8. Risk and Business Continuity Management

Not applicable.

9. List of Appendices

Corporate Parenting Annual Report 2019-20

Author:	Name: Tom Norford, Project Officer
Contact details:	Email: tnorford@childrenfirstnorthamptonshire.co.uk
Background Papers:	
Does the report propose a key decision is taken?	NO
If yes, is the decision in the Forward Plan?	NO
Will further decisions be required? If so, please outline the timetable here	Only requires approval of the report
Does the report include delegated decisions? If so, please outline the timetable here	NO
Is this report proposing an amendment to the budget and/or policy framework?	NO
Have the financial implications been cleared by the Strategic Finance Manager (SFM)?	YES - Emily Taylor
Has the report been cleared by the relevant Director?	YES - Cathi Hadley via SLT
Has the relevant Cabinet Member been consulted?	YES - Fiona Baker
Has the relevant scrutiny committee been consulted?	NO
Has the report been cleared by Legal Services?	YES, Sophia Nartey – Monitoring Officer
	Solicitor’s comments: Advised adding detail to this covering report [completed].
Have any communications issues been cleared by Communications and Marketing?	YES - Annalee Bougourd

Have any property issues been cleared by Property and Asset Management?	YES - James Wheeler
Are there any community safety implications?	The report considers the safety of children looked after by Northamptonshire.
Are there any environmental implications:	NO
Are there any Health & Safety Implications:	YES: the report considers the health and wellbeing of children in the care of the local authority.
Are there any Human Resources Implications:	NO
Are there any human rights implications:	NO
Constituency Interest:	NO

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Northamptonshire County Council

Corporate Parenting Board

Annual Report 2019 – 20



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Foreword



It is my pleasure to introduce the 2019 – 20 annual report of the Northamptonshire Corporate Parenting Board. The year has brought huge challenges to the authority, but I remain very proud of our ongoing dedication to the children and young people in our care and those moving on to living as independent adults.

Coming into care is a life changing event, and it is a local authority's duty to ensure it is one that has a positive impact on the child's wellbeing and prospects so they can achieve their full potential. Our obligations are expressed through our Pledge to Children in Care and Care Leavers, which is reviewed as part of this report, and through our commitment to the Government's 7 Principles of Corporate Parenting. Most of us have been lucky enough to enjoy the benefits of care and support from our own families. It is our privilege and responsibility to make sure that children in our care enjoy those same benefits.

Covid-19 has of course brought huge challenges but our organisational response to the pandemic has been robust, risk-focussed and imaginative. Lockdown accelerated our adoption of new ways to communicate with our children and young people and new ways of working with each other and our partner agencies. In the face of the challenges posed by the pandemic, our staff and the children they support deserve enormous credit for the tenacity, resilience and commitment they have shown.

The transition from a single county council to two unitary authorities brings a slew of opportunities to work even more closely with our partners such as housing departments, to the benefit of our children and young people. However a standalone Children's Trust, with the existing name Children First Northamptonshire (CFN), will deliver children's social care across both councils. This exciting development is gaining momentum with the appointment of Chair Ian Curryer and goes live prior to Vesting Day of the two new unitary authorities on 1 April 2021. The Corporate Parenting Board also remains a single entity covering both unitary councils.

Day to day, we continue to embed and promote the Signs of Safety social work methodology, ensuring that at every stage children are at the centre of our practice. Our new team structure is helping us deliver the specialised and dynamic support our children need, with smaller caseloads for our workers and greater management oversight. Business support and training structures have also been adapted to complement this new approach.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank Councillor Gill Mercer for her capable chairing of the Board for 9 months between 2019 and 2020. I returned to the role after discussions with senior CFN colleagues concluded that it was incumbent on the Cabinet Member for Children's Services to fulfil this role. Cllr Mercer remains a valued member of the Board.

I look forward to helping the Board evolve, placing a greater cross-party focus on improving outcomes for children and young people, and actively engaging with them. During 2020 we have implemented more Board meetings, with a strong emphasis on "deep-dive" sessions led by expert practitioners about the issues that affect children and young people and how we as a Board can facilitate positive change. As Board Chair I have been delighted to hear many examples of the progress and achievements of our children and young people and of the fantastic support shown by the dedicated professionals who work with them.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Fiona Baker". The signature is written in dark ink on a light-colored, slightly textured background.

Fiona Baker,
Cabinet Member for Children's Services and Chair of the Northamptonshire Corporate Parenting Board.

Executive summary

Northamptonshire's Corporate Parenting Board provides oversight and challenge to all our services to children in care and care leavers. It is made up of county councillors, lead officers and representatives of partner agencies and is chaired by the Cabinet Member for Children's Services. Board is accountable to full council. The county council is being replaced by two new unitary councils, West Northamptonshire and North Northamptonshire. However children's social services will continue to cover both authorities in the form of a Trust, under the existing name Children's First Northamptonshire (CFN). The Corporate Parenting Board will also remain a single entity.

Towards the end of the reporting period, the Covid-19 pandemic and lockdown brought huge challenges to our services, challenges which were met through swift and robust decision making, and the dedication of our staff. Measures implemented at this time included adapting social work visits based on risk assessments of every child open to our services, acting as a source of up to date and reliable information, and accelerating our increasing use of technology in our work communication. Our children in care and care leavers themselves deserve credit for the resilience and adaptability they have demonstrated.

Our Children in Care Council and Care Leavers' Councils have continued to operate throughout the year and remain a strong voice for children in Northamptonshire's care. New resources for our practitioners and crucial insights to the staff recruitment process are just two of the tangible contributions provided by the groups. Future activities will include a programme of regular consultation with the wider children in care population, to help shape our services.

During the reporting period our services' progress was monitored and reported to the Board through the lens of the Pledge to Children in Care and Care Leavers, as well as one-off and regular reports. The Pledge was divided into six sections, broadly covering health, relationships, accommodation, education, care leavers' issues and participation. Moving forward through 2020 – 21, the Pledge to Children in Care and Care Leavers will be updated and strengthened in partnership with young people, in keeping with our service priorities and ambitions.

In recent years CFN has increased the emphasis on securing a permanent, stable home (we call this "permanence") for children at the earliest stage. Most children in care continue to live in a home environment with foster carers and new processes are matching children with the right carers and increasing the sustainability of placements. Scrutiny of those placements not regulated by Ofsted has been strengthened and young people are helping us to assess our commissioned placement providers.

Northamptonshire children in care continue to receive a high quality health service through our specialist multiagency team which has gained a new Designated Nurse for Children's Safeguarding and a Named Professional for Safeguarding and Looked After Children. Strategic planning has helped increase the proportion of children receiving timely health assessments, including those living out of the county who in many cases have complex health needs. A suite of health services has been promoted to our children and young people from smoking cessation to therapeutic group-work. Clinicians also provide valuable training to our staff and carers. Young people will continue to help shape health services, having already contributed to the creation of new resources such the care leavers' Health Summary.

We are acutely aware of how positive relationships provide the support children need to grow into resilient adults. Lockdown has of course brought the importance of this into stark relief and has furthered our commitment to utilise technology to reach out to our children and young people. How we facilitate contact between children and young people and those who matter to them (including pets) has undergone a major review, resulting in increased resources in our specialist Contact Team and refurbishments of contact venues. Stabilising and reshaping our workforce and promoting the Signs of Safety methodology have strengthened the vital relationships between our children and young people and their social workers.

Northamptonshire children in care and care leavers continue to receive dedicated education support from our Virtual School. The team's wide remit includes monitoring the quality and timeliness of Personal Education Plans (PEPs), working with schools to prevent exclusions, training education staff around the barriers to education that affect our children and young people and providing a varied programme of holiday activities. One of the most rewarding roles for the team is simply celebrating the individual achievements of our children and young people. While lockdown sadly brought major disruption to education, it prompted stronger working relationships between the local authority and education settings, as all concerned worked to ensure our children and young people had the resources they needed to continue their learning.

Our specialist Leaving Care Team continues to support our young people as they move to independence. A new pathway plan format places greater emphasis on young people's own views and hopes for the future and our Independent Living Programme is helping them learn the skills they need, such as cooking and budgeting. Stronger working arrangements with housing services and JobCentre Plus are helping to ensure care leavers receive the support they need in light of their circumstances and history, while being encouraged to become self-sufficient. The move to two unitary authorities will bring new opportunities to improve our support offer to care leavers, particularly in terms of access to leisure services.

Children are at the centre of our practice, both individually and in shaping our services more widely. Systems and forms are being updated to incorporate the Signs of Safety methodology, and we promote this way of working with our partners. We have worked hard to make it easier for children and young people to get in touch with us, whether to make a compliment or complaint or simply to have a chat. Our expanded independent visitors programme provides many children with a vital person in their lives whom they know will listen to them. Surveys using the Bright Spots methodology have helped us identify trends to inform future service design and most importantly to understand how it feels to be a child in care in Northamptonshire.

Young people have helped redesign our framework for services we commission, such as Independent Supported Accommodation providers. Functions of this our wide ranging commissioning service include providing strategic direction across CFN, overseeing our child-participation work and ensuring there are sufficient accommodation placements available for children in care, of the right type and price. During lockdown, commissioning colleagues were instrumental in stabilising placements and providing guidance to our providers.

Sufficiency of foster carers and adopters remains a huge issue nationally and locally, although our figures compare favourably with those of England as a whole. Our adoption and fostering services continue to innovate to meet this challenge, through for example social media campaigns, the development of specialist foster carer roles for our children with complex needs and promoting “fostering for adoption” placements.

Our in-house children’s homes continue to provide valuable support to young people, whether helping them achieve independence, manage their emotions, or return to the care of their families. Two new NCC children’s homes have opened during the year: Thornton House provides short term emergency placements and intensive support whereas Phoenix House provides a more mainstream function.

1. Governance and statutory context

What is corporate parenting? Local authorities and their partners are responsible for ensuring that children in care are as safe and well cared for as any other child. This responsibility is called “corporate parenting” and applies equally to young people who have entered the UK from overseas and are separated from their families. Corporate parenting duty rests not only with social workers and their managers, but also any other agency that provides services and support to children in care such as health services, housing departments, the police and schools. Corporate parents actively promote the same goals that any good parent wants for their child. Of course, good parenting does not simply stop once a child turns 18, so corporate parents also have specific duties to those young people leaving care and making the journey to independence.

Legal background. The collective responsibility for local authorities was first laid out in the Children Act 1989 and the Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000. The central role of the council as an effective corporate parent has been emphasised by government in the publications ‘Care Matters: Time for Change’ (DCSF 2007), ‘Care Matters: Time to Deliver’ (DCSF 2008), and consolidated in aspects of the Children and Young Persons Act (2008). Other legislation and statutory guidance that determine our duties include:

- Adoption and Children Act 2002
- Care Leavers (England) Regulations 2010 Children and Adoption Act 2006
- Children and Families Act 2014
- Children and Social Work Act 2017
- Human Rights Act 1998
- The Adoption Agencies Regulations 2005 (as amended by the Adoption and Care Planning (Miscellaneous Amendments) Regulations 2014.
- The Children’s Homes (England) Regulations 2015
- The Care Planning, Placement and Case Review and Fostering Services (Miscellaneous Amendments) Regulations 2013.
- Adoption and Care Planning (Miscellaneous Amendments) Regulations 2014.
- The Care Planning and Fostering (Miscellaneous Amendments) (England) Regulations 2015.
- Working Together to Safeguard Children 2018.
- Borders, Citizenship and Immigration Act 2000

Principles of corporate parenting. The Children and Social Work Act 2017 provided a welcome distillation of corporate parenting responsibilities through seven principles of corporate parenting. Local

authorities and their partners are required:

1. To act in the best interests, and promote the physical and mental health and well-being, of those children and young people;
2. To encourage those children and young people to express their views, wishes and feelings;
3. To take into account the views, wishes and feelings of those children and young people;
4. To help those children and young people gain access to, and make the best use of, services provided by the local authority and its relevant partners;
5. To promote high aspirations, and seek to secure the best outcomes, for those children and young people;
6. For those children and young people to be safe, and for stability in their home lives, relationships and education or work; and
7. To prepare those children and young people for adulthood and independent living.

The principles do not represent new duties as such, but are designed to help local authorities and their partners fully comply with the existing duties. The Act did however introduce some new responsibilities relating to children in care and care leavers. These include a requirement to publish a ‘Local Offer to Care Leavers,’ setting out the services available to young people leaving care; extend the provision of personal adviser support to all care leavers up to the age of 25; and to provide education advice and guidance to young people formerly in care. The Act also introduces a number of requirements to ensure that court processes are focussed on long term plans for and specific needs of the child.

The Care Leavers Charter. The Care Leavers’ Charter is a set of promises to care leavers, published by the Government in 2012. It is “Designed to raise expectation, aspiration and understanding of what care leavers need and what the government and local authorities should do to be good Corporate Parents.” The Charter will “Remain constant through any changes in Legislation, Regulation and Guidance.” See Appendix 1 for the full Charter.

We promise:

- To respect and honour your identity
- To listen to you
- To believe in you
- To inform you
- To be a lifelong champion
- To support you
- To find you a home

Our Corporate Parenting Board. Northamptonshire Corporate Parenting Board is a non-statutory body which meets at least every two months to ensure the council and its partners are meeting their corporate parenting responsibilities. The Board is made up of a cross-party selection of councillors, CFN officers and external partners and is accountable to the full council. Appendix 2 provides details of councillor attendance at Board during the reporting period.

Each meeting is presented with narrative updates from service leads in regards to how our Pledge to Children in Care and Care Leavers is being met. Regular reports are presented to Board such as annual reports from the Virtual School and health colleagues. One-off reports based on discussions at Board are also presented. Although Board itself is not a statutory body, statute requires that certain areas of children's services supply regular reports to an appropriate oversight body, so Board fulfils this function. The Board links closely with the quarterly Health Network Meeting, the Virtual School Advisory Group and of course our young people's groups.

The Board holds "deep dive" thematic sessions around specific topics, such as youth offending services for our children and young people. Led by invited subject experts including young people, these serve an educative function as well as driving discussion and service development. An important function of Board is also to celebrate the achievements of children and young people, as any good parent would. As per Local Government Association guidance, Councillors and Corporate Parenting Boards are encouraged to consider:

1. How well does your local authority provide and commission services for looked after children?
2. How well do children in care do at school, both academically and in terms of other achievements?
3. How good is the health and wellbeing of children in your care?
4. How stable and secure are the lives of your looked after children while they are in your care?
5. How well does your authority do at finding appropriate adoptive families for children for whom it is decided this is the right option?
6. How well do your foster care arrangements work?
7. How good is the standard of residential care provided or used by your authority?
8. What support does your authority provide to young people leaving care and how effective is it?
9. How effective is your professional workforce of social workers and others responsible for running services for looked after children?
10. What more could be done to fulfil the council's responsibilities as a 'corporate parent'?

2. Life during lockdown

All of us experienced major changes to our lives in light of the Covid-19 outbreak. While children are mercifully at lower (not zero) risk of suffering serious health consequences from the virus, Children First Northamptonshire (CFN) was from the outset acutely aware that lockdown could compound the vulnerability of our children in care and care leavers.

As the outbreak took hold in March 2020, a suite of measures was introduced to ensure our children and young people were kept informed about the situation and as safe as possible. It was particularly important to make sure they were helped to manage their anxieties and knew how to find answers to their questions.

Under the auspices of the Northamptonshire Safeguarding Partnership and led by CFN, weekly Multidisciplinary Team Meetings in localities across the county were established to focus on the needs of our most vulnerable children and young people. In order to enact these plans it was course vital to keep our staff safe. Government advice around Personal Protective Equipment (PPE), hand washing, working from home and other safety practices were communicated and reinforced through daily staff updates from mid-March.

An important initial task across CFN was to identify the level of need of all children and young people open to our services. This meant

teams assessing every single case and assigning and recording a category of high (red), medium (amber) or low (green) risk for each individual. This informed how we prioritised face to face visits and deployed our resources. It is important to note that the risk ratings were subject to change depending on ongoing assessments and were accompanied by explanatory notes on the recording system. Children and young people were categorised in the three risk levels as follows:

High risk children were:

- Subject to a child protection plan.
- Children In Need (that is, receiving support under Section 17 of the Children's Act).
- Children in care living in unregulated placements or placed at home, or living in a placement with safeguarding concerns.

These children and young people were prioritised for visits, assessments and meetings, with visits taking face to face wherever possible.

Medium risk children were:

- Those who required specific support, without which their health and development may be affected.
- Part of a family which would fall into a category of greater need without support.
- Children in care at risk of placement breakdown or where there are complicating factors and the child and carers need social work support.

- Young people with limited support networks or who have recently left care establishments.

For these children technology could be used to facilitate virtual visits if appropriate.

Low risk children were:

- Children in care in settled and stable placements.
- Those with established support networks, income and safe homes.

For these children it was agreed that contact could be made by a professional other than their usual social worker.

Guidance issued for staff completing face to face home visits included using PPE, checking whether any members of the household had exhibited Covid-19 symptoms, avoiding direct contact and bringing food and supplies to the home if needed. In the midst of these extraordinary circumstances it was important not to lose sight of the reasons why we as a service were involved in these children's lives in the first place.

Another working group set about pulling together a suite of accessible and accurate information specifically for children and young people on our website, to help them understand the situation, manage their anxiety and stay

healthy and occupied. Our Virtual School worked hard with schools and academies to make sure all children in care had the resources to minimise disruption to their education.

Our Participation Team also adapted quickly to the new circumstances, adopting new ways of keeping in touch with children and young people and giving them an opportunity to share their anxieties about lockdown. Unsurprisingly, many young people were frustrated by their time with their families being disrupted, but appreciated being kept informed by the professionals working with them.



With the Covid-19 situation and government advice continuing to evolve and the tendency for misinformation to spread rapidly online, it is important that the local authority continues to act as a source of up to date and reliable information for the county, particularly for the most vulnerable members of the community.

3. The voice of children and young people

Meeting monthly, the Children in Care Council, (known as Speak Out Together) and the Care Leavers' Councils (Shout Out Loud), are our two main participation groups for any children and young people with experience of being in care. The well-established groups have benefitted many children and young people over the years, helping them develop confidence, build friendships and make a real difference to our service and the lives of their peers. The Virtual School's diverse programme of holiday activities also continues to be very popular. Shooting Stars provides a valuable forum for our children and young people with special educational needs or disabilities.

During the year the groups have participated in a wide range of projects, events and campaigns, a small selection of which is detailed below:

Celebrating our care leavers

During National Care Leavers Week in October, staff and care leavers held events around the county



including at the council's One Angel Square building, with musical performances, a short film in which young people and professionals talked about what makes a good personal adviser and how services have helped young people with their journey to independence when leaving care.

Takeover Challenge 2019

The Takeover Challenge is a national initiative introduced by the Children's Commissioner that aims to encourage opportunities for children and young people to be involved in organisations' decision-making. This year they challenged our teams to work with young people to identify ways of improving how we manage change. Young people focussed on the impact of change on feelings and relationships, the importance of clear information and how sometimes young people's behaviour can be affected by change.





Customer Service Training

The Children in Care Council designed a short bite-size training course for our customer service colleagues to raise awareness of what our children and young people may need or are facing when they come into our buildings.

Disabled Children National Conference.

Three young people represented Shootings Stars at a Council for Disabled Children Conference in London with support from the Participation Team. The aim of the event was to engage with other young people from across the country and give feedback about their priorities for disabled young people through workshops, including “Expressing yourself and being heard online” and “Life skills.”



Interview panels



The Participation Team supports children and young people taking part in interview panels within our recruitment process. Panels have assessed potential new independent visitors, personal advisers, assistant directors and social workers. Young people find this experience very rewarding and for the organisation it brings unique perspectives and insights to the process.

Resources for working with children and young people

During the year the groups have helped develop a “toolbox” of resources that our practitioners are using to help them work with children and young people more effectively. These include the new Children’s Guide to Being in Care, a Journey in Care roadmap and posters about how to make a complaint or compliment. Young people have helped shape changes to established templates and forms such as the pathway plan for care leavers.



Between February and April we conducted a survey of over a hundred children and young people using

the well-established Bright Spots methodology. Age-specific questionnaires were used to establish areas where children were doing well and where things needed to be improved. Positively, nearly all said they trusted their social worker and had a trusted adult in their lives. 81% felt their lives were improving. 98% of those over 11 felt their carers were interested in what they did at school, compared with 90% of the general population. Most of those who left comments wanted more contact with their families, and this helped prompt a full review of how we facilitate contact for children in care.

At the time of writing, our new Voice of the Child working group, which includes members from across the service, is exploring a range of options in order to most effectively collate and act upon the views of our children and young people. Individually, the Signs of Safety methodology helps to ensure that children's voices are central at every stage of their contact with social care, from looked after child statutory reviews to fostering panels and education plans.



4. Our Pledge

With the help of young people, we have made a Pledge to Children in Care and Care Leavers which is published on our website and updated regularly. The Pledge reflects our ambitions and what young people themselves have said is important to them. It can be used as a checklist by young people to record where they think we are doing what we should, and where we are falling short. Each section of the Pledge has a lead officer responsible for making sure it is kept, and all our team members and partners are expected to make sure their work helps to fulfil the Pledge. Below, each section of the Pledge is set out along with the actions we have taken to achieve it. Unless stated otherwise, Northamptonshire figures quoted relate to the end of March 2020.

A note on statistical neighbours.

Every local authority is designated a number of other authorities with similar demographics, known as statistical neighbours. Where available, authorities can compare their own data with the average of these similar authorities. Northamptonshire's statistical neighbours are Kent, Nottinghamshire, Swindon, Staffordshire, Derbyshire, Essex, Warwickshire, Worcestershire, Lancashire and Medway.

We will make sure you are living in the right place

We will have achieved this when:

- You are living with people who understand you, care for you well and build a positive relationship with you.
- You have a safe and stable home life.
- Where you are living does not affect how well you are looked after.

Every child has the right to a permanent, safe, stable and loving home, preferably with his or her own family. Where children cannot live with his or her own family we are committed to helping them remain in the county, close to people and places that matter to them. Where it is not possible for a child to remain living with their immediate family, the next step always includes exploring the extended family network

before consideration of an alternative placement. In recent years we have relentlessly emphasised the importance of a permanent home for children at every stage of our practice.

As in previous years, the majority of children in care live in a family setting with foster carers (72%, compared to 74% the previous year).

Throughout the year, 24% of those who left local

authority care moved to a more permanent arrangement such as Special Guardianship Order or adoption. This is up from 22% the previous year. 64% of our children who had been in care for more than 2.5 years had been in their current placement for over 2 years. This is a decrease from the previous year's figure of 71%. Northamptonshire continues to compare very well with our statistical neighbours in terms of keeping our children living in the local authority area. At the end of March 2020 just over 25% of our children were placed out of the county, compared to the March 2018 average of 31% for our statistical neighbours. Comparisons with England as a whole are less useful here due to the great variation in size and population density between authorities. We also continue to perform well in terms of our timeliness around adoption (see Adoption Service section).

New matching and tracking processes, a fostering panel that delivers robust decisions and the new family finder role are all helping to ensure that children and young people have the right home to meet their needs and that the right support is in place to make these placements long lasting and positive. Our new fostering and commissioning frameworks, created with substantial input from young people themselves, place a greater focus on positive outcomes for children and young people.

There is now a greater scrutiny upon unregulated placements with new fortnightly meetings of senior management to minimise such placements and oversee risk management plans. Any emergency placements at unregulated venues must be authorised at director level.

We will help you be physically and emotionally healthy

We will have achieved this when:

- You have the right support for your physical, mental and emotional wellbeing and you do not have to wait too long for it.
- The adults close to you understand your needs.
- You have a good understanding of your health needs and history, when you are in care and when you leave care.

Nationally, children in care experience poorer health outcomes compared to the general population and are likely to have a lower tolerance to physical and emotional distress. Corporate parents must ensure the specific health needs of our children are understood and addressed, through high quality, tailored health plans and a sound understanding of wider health

trends. Northamptonshire's Integrated Looked After Child Health Service provides specialist support to our children and young people. It is a multi-agency team incorporating NCC colleagues, paediatricians, specialist nurses and professionals from the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS).

Northamptonshire children and young people continue to receive high quality initial and annual health assessments, in which the views and feelings of children themselves are evident. In the challenging context of lockdown and an increasing population of children in care, 74% of children received an initial health assessment within the statutory 28 days of coming into care. This is a significant rise from 51% the previous year and has been achieved partly through strategically planning appointments for children living out of the county. For any assessments that fall out of timescale, the reason is well understood.

Frequent dip sampling has demonstrated that over 95% of our children have had a dental appointment in the appropriate time; where this is not the case, it becomes an element of their health plan.

Our specialist health team has been bolstered by the addition of a new Designated Nurse for Children's Safeguarding and a Named Professional for Safeguarding and Looked After Children. These roles link closely with the Board and with the Safeguarding Partnership. Day to day, health and NCC colleagues co-locate. The Health Network Meeting is made up of clinical professionals, health commissioners and representatives of CFN. The group continues to meet quarterly to monitor performance and identify strategic direction.

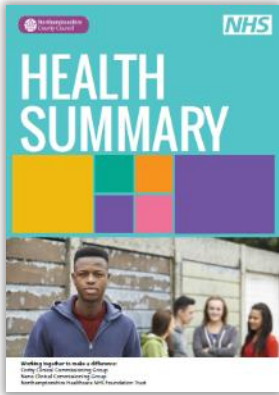
Sadly many children and young people in care have experienced significant trauma and are more likely to experience ongoing mental health issues. As of 31st of March 2020 our specialist Looked After Children Mental Health Team was working with 331 children; 71 of these were receiving one to one support. The other 260 were either supported by the duty team, or their carers were engaged in direct intervention to support them. Support provided includes work around emotional regulation, trauma or medication oversight.



The team also offers a range of psycho-education groups to carers, providing them with therapeutic skills to support the children in their care. These groups receive excellent feedback and make a positive difference for children and young people, often preventing the need for individual work. The local CAMHS online and phone chat service has been extended to cover evenings and weekends.

The health team also offers a range of other clinical services to support and improve the health of children in care. These include sexual health advice, access to smoking cessation

programmes, referrals to those at risk of Child Sexual Exploitation and those struggling with alcohol and substance misuse.



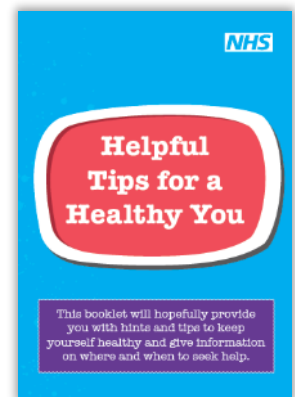
Working in collaboration with young people, a new Health Summary has replaced the former health passport. Given to young people as they reach adulthood, this provides young people

with details of their health history and ongoing needs, as well as contact details of their health professionals and how to access help. The summary is accompanied by the new Useful Tips for a Healthy You which features advice written specifically for young people to help them stay well.

Future priorities for the specialist health team include a greater focus on the particular needs of those young people from overseas who are

separated from their families. These young people have in many cases experienced the most profound trauma and may also be suffering with blood borne viruses, dental issues or the effects of poor nutrition.

We are aiming to utilise more effectively the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ), a mandatory non-diagnostic tool which is completed by or on behalf of children to ascertain their wellbeing. The team is also continuing to work hard to address the needs of those children and young people placed out of the county; these are often children with the most complex needs and can be the hardest to reach. Children and young people will continue to play a central role in shaping these services.

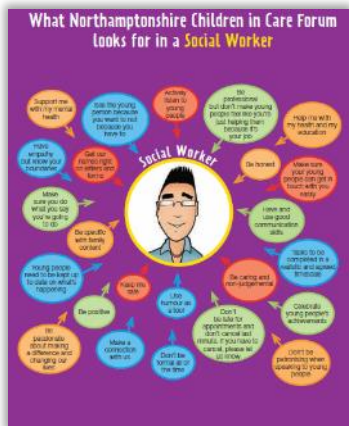


We will make sure you have great relationships in your life

We will have achieved this when:

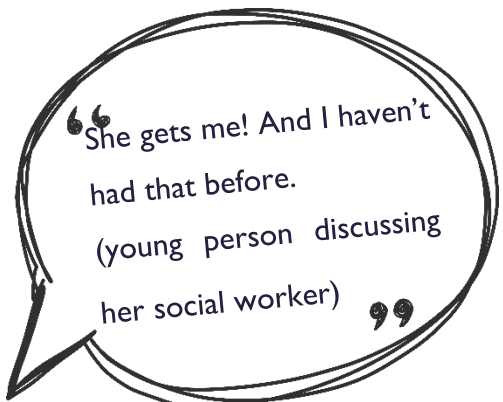
- You have regular contact with those who are important to you, as long as it's safe.
- You understand why you are in care and are involved with the plans that affect your life.
- We are warm and courteous towards you, do what we say we will, and respect your culture and identity.
- You have enough quality time with the adults (social worker, personal adviser, teacher, doctor, nurse) who are there to support you, at a time that is convenient to you.
- Changes of social worker or personal adviser are avoided wherever possible. Any changes are explained to you and you are introduced to the new person properly.

Many of the children and young people in our care have been badly let down by the adults in their lives, so it is important that we help them develop, repair and maintain positive and safe relationships in their lives. This includes friends, siblings and pets as well as the more obvious adult relations. In light of challenging new



restrictions in the era of Covid-19 this aspect of the Pledge is more important than ever.

A full review has been carried out of how we manage transport and family time for children. Capacity in our Contact Team has been increased as a result, meaning all family time sessions are now overseen by this specialist team. New feedback mechanisms for these sessions are helping us to shape future plans for children’s contact; after all, plans must adapt to meet the changing needs and wishes of the child. Our main contact venues have undergone complete refurbishments to ensure they are welcoming and age appropriate. While challenging, lockdown restrictions have



encouraged greater and more imaginative use of technology in facilitating family time and social opportunities for our children and young people.

Relationships between children and young people and their primary social worker are hugely important. Young people themselves have told us clearly what they expect of their workers. For instance they do not want to have to “tell their story” over and over again to new workers as this is likely to leave them disengaged, as it would any of us. This is just one reason why maintaining a capable and consistent workforce is so important.

During the year our new specialist Recruitment Team has had a huge impact, not only in recruiting new social workers but also family support workers and business support staff, who allow social workers to do what they do best and engage directly with children and young people. Social work roles for children in care and care leavers are now almost exclusively staffed by permanent workers.

We have restructured our workforce into smaller, more dynamic teams with lower caseloads and greater management oversight. All children in care are now assigned to specialist children in care teams, aside from those whose needs continue to be met by the Disabled Children’s Team.

This organisational redesign has meant that at the end of March 2020, there were no children

in care social workers with a caseload of over the target maximum of 22, compared with 26 workers at the same time in the previous year. Similarly, during the year no child in care was unallocated to a social worker for more than 48 hours. At the end of March 93% of children had been visited by their worker in the last 6 weeks, compared to 91% the previous year.

methodology is helping workers keep children and young people at the centre of everything they do. Our standard tools such as placement referral forms have been adapted accordingly, and we have developed a suite of resources for working with young people which is updated regularly. It is gratifying to note the very positive feedback many young people have given about their workers during the year.

We will make sure you get a good education

We will have achieved this when:

- You are achieving the best you can.
- You have a stable school where you feel safe.
- You feel part of your school community and able to take part in clubs and activities.
- You have adults who understand your needs and put the right things in place to support them.

Ongoing promotion of the Signs of Safety

Nationally, children in care have poorer educational outcomes than their peers. However, research demonstrates that coming into care generally has a positive impact on children's education; young children make better progress than had not they not come into care. Regardless, it remains incumbent on corporate parents to narrow this gap in educational attainment. As well as their actual education setting, all children in care are on the roll of a Virtual School, a local authority team with the remit to promote the education of children in care.

Specifically, the Virtual School's responsibilities include ensuring optimal use of government funding for the education of children in care (the Pupil Premium Plus), ensuring the quality of Personal Education Plans (PEPs) and delivering training to schools and other professionals. The Virtual School Advisory Panel meets termly and includes members of the Corporate Parenting Board (including the same chairperson) and professionals from Northamptonshire education settings and services. This offers high level scrutiny and support as a 'critical friend' to the Virtual School.

High quality PEPs are key to children and young people achieving strong educational outcomes and this remains a major focus of the Virtual School. A new PEP template was launched in 2019, with a greater emphasis on the voice of children and young people, and other Virtual Schools have expressed interest

in adopting the same format. Despite the need to adjust to this new template, PEP quality has continued to improve; 52% were rated Good in the summer 2019 term, compared to 51% in the previous term. Overall compliance of PEP completion has stood at over 93% for every term since summer 2018.

New tools for monitoring children's school attendance and outcomes have enabled the Virtual School to respond quicker to issues experienced by children and young people, for example when a child is at risk of being excluded. A robust response is enacted in such cases, and none of our children and young people



were permanently excluded during the year; 7 intended permanent exclusions were prevented during the Autumn 2019 term. Fixed term exclusions remain a challenge in Northamptonshire as a whole however, and a county-wide strategy to address this trend is under development. Revised procedures have helped children back into school who have been missing education. A pilot scheme was also launched to implement a new “assessment of

need” for all children entering care in order that any unmet educational needs are addressed as quickly as possible. The Virtual School is now actively involved in the wider permanence planning process within CFN, ensuring the importance of a stable school place is prioritised when children's living arrangements are being considered.

The Virtual School continues to provide a strong training offer to carers and educational professionals, with an emphasis on how attachment difficulties can affect educational outcomes. The offer has been widened to parents and guardians of previously looked after children, to support those young people's ongoing education journey. Over 125 delegates have attended PEPs training sessions since September 2019, with those schools showing a commensurate improvement in PEP quality.

Foundation Stage results for 2019 show that the percentage of children in care achieving a good level of development has increased from 2018 and this group are now just a few percentage points behind their peers. Outcomes for children in care at expected levels for reading, writing and maths at Key Stage 1 have increased in 2019. Performance at Key Stage 2 shows a decrease in outcomes from 2018 to 2019. Performance at Key Stage 4 has increased in 2019 from 2018 results. The Virtual School is of course hugely proud of our children and young people's achievements, and like the Board itself has introduced letters of celebration and gift vouchers.

Holiday activities are held throughout the year by the Virtual School. As well as the direct benefits derived by children and young people themselves (enjoyment, greater confidence and so on), these activities provide some much needed respite to fragile placements. Programmes this year have included an event for children from overseas who are separated from their families to learn about the culture and history of Northampton. In February, ten students attended a drama residential at the Frontier Centre where they completed a play in a weekend and performed to carers.

Lockdown has of course presented huge challenges to educators and the Virtual School, although the goodwill and cooperation between the local authority and schools and academies has been gratifying. The Virtual School has ensured that every single child in care has had access to the technology and other resources they need to continue their learning. As schools prepare to reopen at the time of writing, the Virtual School is producing guidance to help carers and professionals support children returning to school. Advice is also being prepared to help young people over 16 understand their GCSE grading and future options.

We will help you prepare for the future

We will have achieved this when:

- As you become independent, you have a suitable place to live which feels like a proper home.
- You are in education, employment or training, helping you reach your potential.
- You are helped to manage your money effectively and get the right benefits.
- You have access to leisure services and can get around easily.

Making the transition to independent adulthood can be daunting and emotionally fraught for any young person. For young people leaving care, this can be doubly so as they may well lack the support of family members that many of us take for granted, or the skills needed to live alone.

Nationally, care leavers are more likely to receive benefit sanctions and become involved in offending and drug use. Managing finances

can be particularly hard for our young people; the sudden responsibility of managing multiple bills can be overwhelming.

Providing young people with suitable housing and education, training and employment opportunities are particularly vital if they are to thrive. Good parenting does not simply stop when a young person turns 18 but evolves with the young person themselves, striking a balance

between support and promoting independence.

At the end of March 2020 89% of our care leavers aged 17 to 21 who in care at 16, were living in suitable accommodation. This compares to 81% the previous year. Management oversight of those young people not in a suitable home or at risk of rough sleeping has been strengthened and episodes of the latter have been short and few in number. In September, Board received detailed assurance of how each young person who was currently at risk of homelessness was being supported.

The service is of course aware that young people leaving care need more than a home that is just deemed “suitable.” Like all of us, they need a place that feels like a home, and to feel part of their community. Our Leaving Care Teams are fully staffed with permanent personal advisers who work closely with young people to create individual pathway plans which set out how they will be supported to achieve their goals.

The pathway plan format has been redesigned to place greater emphasis on the young person’s views, and incorporate Signs of Safety and Outcome Star methodologies. As they move into adulthood many young people become more curious about and aware of their history with us. We now have a dedicated Subject Access Request Officer who can help them access their records quickly with tactful support.

Our ASDAN-accredited Independent Living

Programme continues to help young people develop the skills they need to move on to independence, and this will soon be accompanied by the publication of an online Independent Living Guide.

To help make sure young people have all the support they need as they take on their own tenancy and manage their money for the first time, we have updated our working agreement with local housing services. We have also developed a new protocol with JobCentre Plus to ensure young people’s access to Universal Credit and other benefits is as seamless as possible and that they are encouraged to actively seek sustainable employment or training. A new financial policy for care leavers is being designed and will be accompanied by a young person’s guide to the financial support they can expect from us.

Our multiagency Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET) working group has continued to coordinate, to prevent young people falling into NEET status. Prospects remains Northamptonshire’s commissioned partner to provide a targeted NEET prevention service; if a young person becomes NEET, Prospects allocates an adviser who meets with them at least fortnightly to provide intensive support to get them back on track.

A curated list of local apprenticeships is shared with the leaving care service on a regular basis, helping personal advisers match young people

with suitable opportunities. The proportion of our care leavers currently in education, employment or training dipped slightly from the previous year, from 56% to 55%. However this compares well with the national figure of 50% and our statistical neighbour average of 45%.

As a group care leavers are at the best of times at risk of becoming socially isolated and the service was acutely aware of how this could be compounded during lockdown. A number of measures were taken to mitigate this risk

including developing our Facebook care leavers' group, connecting through communication apps, emails and phone calls and delivering resources to our young parents.

As we make the move to a Trust and two unitary authorities, we will exploit the opportunities this brings to improve our young people's access to leisure and social opportunities around the county and we continue to promote the benefits of walking and cycling.

We will involve you in developing our services and holding us to account

We will have achieved this when:

- We celebrate your successes.
- We actively seek and take account of your views, wishes and feelings to improve our services to you.
- You can access useful and accurate information about services available and the people who can support you.
- You feel able to share complaints compliments and comments about our services.
- There is a range of opportunities for you to get involved to with helping to improve all services to children and young people.

Listening to children and involving them in the decisions that affect them are central to good social work. The Signs of Safety methodology ensures children's voices are evident at every stage of practice, including formal meetings such as statutory reviews, but also in their relationship with their primary worker.

More and more of our built forms and assessments are becoming Signs of Safety-friendly, including statutory review reports,

pathway plans and personal education plans.

It is important that young people collectively have the opportunity to represent their peers, campaign for what they believe in, and shape the services we deliver. The benefits of this are mutual; young people gain confidence and experience, and our services are targeted effectively and improved. The Children in Care Council and the Care Leavers' Council remain the two main forums for our children and young

people and some of their activities they have undertaken this year are set out in section 3 of this report. The Commissioning Service section also sets out how children and young people are helping to shape and improve our commissioned services.

During lockdown, running virtual sessions has been both a challenging and exciting development. Zoom, telephone calls, texting and Facebook have been used for keeping in touch, and allowing young people to share information, socialise, develop new ideas and solve problems.



Our expanded Independent Visitor programme carefully matches volunteer adults to children and young people, many of whom find it hugely beneficial to have someone in their lives who is not in the employ of social services and is simply

there to befriend and listen to them.

Our Young Northants website continues to provide up to date, useful information for all children in the county with dedicated sections for children in care and care leavers, including details of how to share complaints and compliments. All our site content (including embedded documents) are accessible in many languages and in text-to-speech format. New guidelines are helping assure that website content is accessible to all.

Our Customer Feedback Team has worked with CFN to develop new promotional materials such as posters and postcards to encourage young people share their views with us. Themes arising from contacts made with us are shared with the service and used to inform service development. Complaints from children and young people are taken extremely seriously, and a number of measures are promoted for such instances including the use of advocates, and face to face contact from senior members of staff as opposed to written communication alone.

Further developments such as annual surveys are being explored in order to gain a greater understanding of the issues that matter to children and young people. The Board continues to celebrate and reward individual achievements, through shopping vouchers and certificates signed off by the chair and the Director of Children's Services.

5. The Fostering Service

Three teams make up the Fostering Service: Pre-Approval, Connected Persons and Fostering. Reflecting trends across the directorate, the service is now largely staffed by permanent workers. The Northamptonshire Foster Carers Association works closely with us providing invaluable informal support to foster carers and contributing to our recruitment activity.

At the end of March 2020 we had 221 households with a total of 326 beds approved for mainstream foster caring, which does not include connected persons carers whereby a child is cared for by someone in their existing family or social network. 23 new foster carers were approved during the year with 30 lost. However 15 actual beds were gained during the same period. It should also be noted that in many cases, foster care places are “lost” due to positive reasons, such as moves to more permanent arrangements such as adoption or Special Guardianship.

As of the end of March, compared to the previous year the percentage of children living in foster care, whether NCC or agency carers, remained at around three quarters of all those in care. 30% of children were living in NCC rather than agency care of some form, compared to 32% the previous year. The percentage of children living in connected persons arrangements rose from 14% to 18%. 43 new connected persons arrangements were approved

during the year for 62 children, and at the end of March there were 206 children in such arrangements in total, a rise from 126 at the same time in 2019. Current trends suggest there will be even more children in such arrangements by the end of March 2021.

New disruption and stability meetings are helping to maintain and strengthen permanent homes for our children. These are chaired by the independent Safeguarding and Quality Assurance Service which helps to ensure an impartial appraisal of any challenges being experienced at a placement.

Our new resilience fostering scheme is helping specially trained NCC carers meet the needs of children with complex needs. As well as financial savings this allows us to move children from out of county placements or residential homes back to Northamptonshire foster carers.

Sufficiency of foster placements is a huge national issue and so our recruitment efforts never cease. Our Recruitment Team and new digital marketing specialist are exploiting the reach of social media, turning expressions of interest into new homes for children. We aim to contact all those who make an enquiry within 24 hours to arrange a visit. A commensurate effort is needed to retain those already recruited, so if a carer expresses doubts about continuing in the role, a member of staff interviews them as soon

as possible to discuss their needs and offer support. Using the Recruitment Team rather than the carer's usual supervising social worker for this purpose allows the carer a greater freedom to share their concerns. We are also

strengthening our links to the Northamptonshire Foster Carer Association with monthly meetings, and a member of the association sits on Corporate Parenting Board.



6. The Adoption Service

We know that children need a permanent home to thrive and our first goal is always to keep them in or get them back to their familial homes. However if this is not possible permanence can mean adoption, special guardianship, child arrangement orders, kinship care, or long term fostering.

Northamptonshire's Adoption Service incorporates Adoption and Post-Order Teams, and matches children with the right family at the earliest possible stage, supporting them throughout their journey into adulthood. The service works closely with the Permanence Team, which with its specialist family finders, helps to identify a stable home for children from the earliest stage of our involvement. Many members of the fully permanent staff are now trained in play therapy techniques, with some trained in the complementary dyadic developmental psychotherapy. Along with our life story work these are invaluable tools for working with our more anxious children and with sibling groups.

By accessing the national Adoption Support Fund (ASF) we have also provided many other therapeutic interventions such as trauma processing and systemic family therapy. In total, during the year our teams utilised over £500,000 of the ASF to provide therapies for 204 children.

Nationally, recruitment of new adopters has

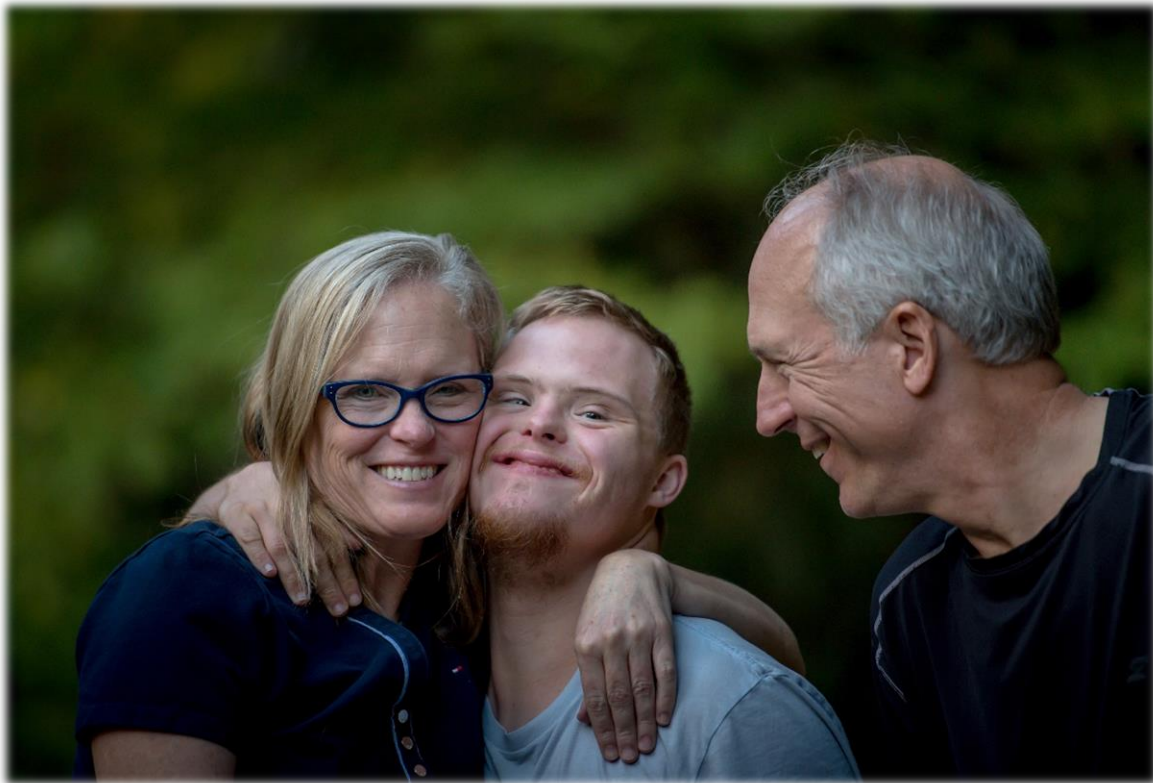
declined, and this has unfortunately been the case in Northamptonshire. This is partly due to the greater range of viable routes to creating a family, such as surrogacy and increased access to IVF treatment. 44 approvals for new adopters were completed during the year and 49 adoption placements were made. There were 11 cases during the year of foster carers choosing to adopt children in their care. This is distinct from the 6 Foster for Adoption placements; this means a child in care is placed with registered foster carers who have also been approved as adopters. Meanwhile the child's social worker makes a recommendation to the court about the child's future care and if it's decided that adoption is the best option to secure the child's future wellbeing then the fostering placement becomes an adoption placement.

We continue to compare well with our statistical neighbours and with England as a whole in terms of adoption timeliness, which is important given our focus on securing a permanent home for children as soon as possible. On average, there were 194 days between the court issuing the placement order and Northamptonshire children being matched with an adopter. This is up from 128 the previous year. The most recent figures for our statistical neighbours and England as a whole are 239 and 226 respectively. Of those children in care for whom adoption was identified as future plan for their care, 89% were adopted within 12 months. This is a slight rise

from 88% in the previous year, and compares favourably with figures for our statistical neighbours (73%) and England as a whole (74%).

With the move to a Trust, our adoption service will become a Voluntary Adoption Agency (VAA), before re-joining one of the wider

Regional Adoption Agencies (RAA) and this will help shape our future strategy. Meanwhile, in conjunction with our Fostering Service imaginative campaigns continue to drive recruitment, with social media being proving a fertile ground for this purpose. At the time of writing, adoption recruitment appears strong for the year 2020-21.



7. Commissioning Services

CFN's commissioning service is responsible for a wide range of functions, structured around the changing needs of our children and young people and the organisation's strategy. The service provides strategic direction and implements policy changes across CFN. Within this remit is also oversees our participation work and ensures there are sufficient services and placements for our children and families, of the right type and price. Specialist teams work with internal and external providers to shape the local market, manage existing contracts and undertake financial forecasting and data reporting.

At every stage of the commissioning process, the voice of children and young people and building partnerships with providers are of central importance.

Our Quality and Outcomes Team ensures services we commission meet the needs of children and young people, through for example announced and unannounced visits to accommodation providers. All providers who are not Ofsted-registered are monitored rigorously. For those who *are* Ofsted-registered, we provide a period of bespoke support if they receive a lower than Good rating. Unregistered placements are kept to an absolute minimum and must be authorised at director level. Performance monitoring drives positive outcomes for children and young people and

helps shapes best practice going forward.

Market shaping exercises in recent years have created more choice and competition among providers, with the number of Independent Support Accommodation (ISA) providers rising from 12 on the previous commissioning framework to 69. The frameworks have been revitalised, with young people themselves heavily involved in the process, bringing their unique perspectives and experience to the process of evaluating and scoring providers. Two young people visited the Corporate Parenting Board to talk about the valuable support they received during their time at Belinda Ferrison House, a suite of training flats that is helping young people transition successfully from care to independence.

Our provider support and development programme is going from strength to strength and allows us to share with providers latest developments as well as reinforcing policies and standards. This year has included sessions around emerging risks such as gangs and child exploitation, an event around the voice of the child and a session focussing on how we match children with the right placement. Around 90 providers attended our Introduction to CFN session. The Covid-19 lockdown precipitated the creation of a new provider newsletter, which has proved so popular that it is being continued beyond the lockdown period.

During the Covid-19 lockdown, placements were stabilised where necessary as the Brokerage Team took a strong stance of ensuring children were not moved between placements during this time. Cases were of course reviewed to ensure placements were continuing to meet the needs of the child or young person. There is evidence that this avoided some placements breaking down in

crisis situations so this process may be replicated in a business as usual context going forward.

Many commissioning contracts come to an end in March 2021 so there is much focus on recommissioning services. Again, children and young people will be central to the process and we are planning to structure this through an exciting new Young Commissioners Programme.



8. NCC Children's Homes

Arnold House

Located in Northampton, Arnold House is a five bed children's home which caters to children aged 8 to 17 on the autistic spectrum. Often arriving in times of crisis, children are helped to transition back to their families or a more permanent placement. Every child has an individual support package and staff are trained in a range of specialised techniques for working with autistic children, such as the Picture Exchange Communication System (PECS). When a child is referred, staff coordinate carefully with school, parents, and previous care settings. An impact risk assessment is undertaken and upon acceptance, a placement plan is developed. Before taking up residence, children usually have a daytime visit.



While a challenging Ofsted inspection in July 2019 identified a number of areas in which the home must improve, it was also noted that positive developments had been achieved, with all children in education, stimulated and making progress. Through tailored communication approaches, such as Communicate in Print, children are

able to share their wishes and feelings and exert greater autonomy in their lives. This also fosters positive relationships between staff and children. Ofsted noted in a July 2020 monitoring visit that the home is: "Now a more welcoming and homlier place to live" and the resilience staff have shown to the highly challenging lockdown period was also commended. There is now a strong focus on implementing Ofsted's recommendations, particularly in ensuring that record keeping is objective and clear and ultimately helpful to children.

Phoenix House

One of our two new residential homes, Phoenix House in Wellingborough opened in February 2020 under the leadership of an experienced residential home manager. It provides 4 beds for 11 to 17 year olds, specialising in meeting the needs of children and young people with emotional and behavioural issues, with each potential entry subject to a comprehensive risk assessment. Helping young people move on to independence is also a central aim of the home, through a 4 to 6 month package of support and learning.

Clear behaviour policies and a token economy help young people to understand what is expected of them and staff also link closely with more specialist support such as the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS) and the Ngage substance misuse service. With some members of staff being new to residential care, there is now an emphasis on delivering comprehensive training to the team, as well as develop new packages of support for the younger residents.

Raven House

Situated in Corby, Raven House is a well-established residential home for up to five young people aged 11 to 16 with emotional and behavioural difficulties. Staff provide an environment that is stable and supportive in order to help young people regulate their lives through the experience of good parenting. During the year some staff changes took place in light of the new NCC homes opening within the county, Phoenix House and Thornton House. This meant a new Raven House manager as well as 4 new residential workers who are enthusiastic about learning and developing in their role.



It is all too easy for children in care to miss out on the fun aspects of life that most of us took for granted during our own childhoods. Staff have made efforts to address this with activities including trampolining, horse riding and fishing. All the young people enjoyed a holiday in August to Chapel St Leonards and Blackpool. One young person who came to the home in late 2019, having displayed challenging behaviour such as absconding and substance misuse in several placements. He moved to Raven's semi-

independent flat and was supported in learning to cook and budget effectively. The care and structure around him helped stabilise his behaviour and he began to volunteer at a local charity shop as well as doing odd jobs at another NCC residential home. He re-established links with his father and this year moved on to a semi-independent property. For his 18th birthday Raven staff surprised him with a card and gift, for which he was deeply moved.

The most recent Ofsted inspection in April 2019 found the home to be Good. The inspection report noted that young people: “Are achieving positive outcomes, and their lives begin to stabilise within a relatively short period after admission. All children reported feeling happy and safe. A child said, ‘Staff are brilliant. They have helped me a lot and I like all of them.’” With a number of new members of staff in place, there is now a focus on continuing to embed the Signs of Safety methodology into everyday practice.

Thornton House

Our other new residential home Thornton House was Ofsted registered in January. Situated in Kettering, it is a two bed facility providing short term emergency places for children, if for example their placement has suddenly broken down. The small team works intensively with young people to help them move on to a more permanent home. This is based on re-establishing education provision as a top priority if needed, implementing tight routines and settling down any challenging behaviours.

Working closely with the Virtual School, Youth Offending Services and other specialist teams has helped the home achieve excellent results in a short space of time, for example there have been no children going missing from the home since January. One young person has been on a particularly positive journey; having come to the home with a history of offending, he was supported by Youth Offending Service and the home and is now doing well back in full time education.

Welford House

Welford House in Northampton caters for up to 6 young people aged 12 to 18 and specialises in helping young people move on to independence. Rooms in the home, including a self-contained training flat, are geared to different levels of young people’s independence. At the last inspection in May 2019, Ofsted rated the home as ‘Good’ noting that staff: “Recognise the vulnerability of young people during this crucial period in their lives. One young person who has recently left the home has received an exceptional level of care and support from staff. This is to be highly commended.” During the inspection one young person commented: “It’s great here. You get lots of support and staff are friendly and willing to talk if you need any help. I know I can trust them.” Ofsted’s 2020 interim inspection in 2020 concluded that

the home had sustained its effectiveness.

Young people at the home receive tailored packages of support, including educational plans that match their needs and interests. Staff link closely with the Prospects service to help young people into apprenticeships and other employment and training opportunities. A family liaison officer has undertaken valuable work to help young people at the home maintain or re-establish quality contact with their birth parents. In some cases this has enabled young people to return to living with their families. The home also worked very closely with the police, CAMHS and others to help keep young people safe; the number incidents of young people going missing has reduced dramatically in recent years.

Lockdown presented unique challenges to the home, not least as this coincided with the opening of the new NCC homes Thornton House and Phoenix House. Staff have risen to these challenges admirably and have vigilantly followed guidance around the use of PPE in order to keep themselves and young people safe.

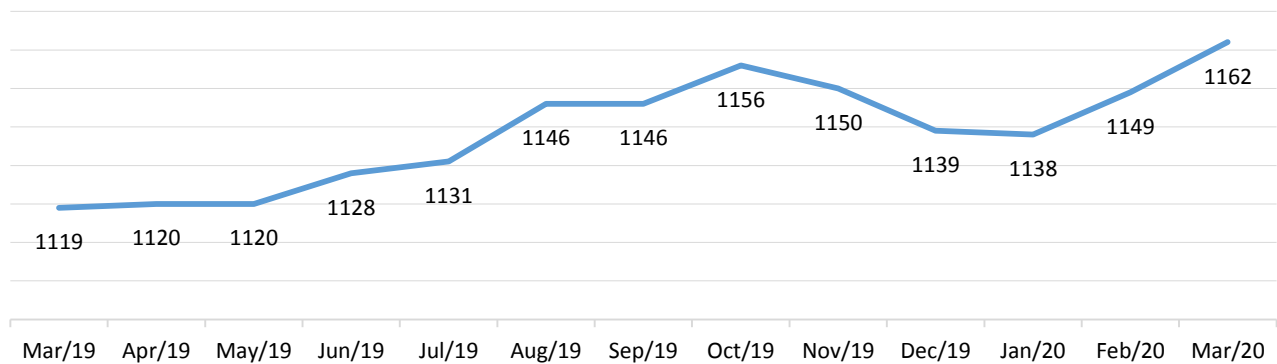
Notable achievements for young people have been achieved through the year. One young man, having developed his independence skills with the help of staff at the home, achieved excellent exam results, is living independently and is now hoping to study veterinary medicine at university. Another young person came to the home after losing both her parents and having a difficult experience in foster care where she exhibited increasingly risky behaviours. After engaging well with staff at the home however she has gone on to live in her own home, which she pays for herself, and is working as a qualified hairdresser. Many young people who have left the home maintain contact with their keyworker and occasionally drop in; they clearly value how Welford House has helped them.

9. Demographics

Population

The population of children in continued to grow through the year. The number of children in care per 10,000 of the population rose from 65 to 68.3. This compares to the most recent statistical neighbour average of 60.7 and national average of 65. The actual population rose from 1119 at the end of March 2019 to 1162 at the end of March 2020. Note that the most recent statistical neighbour and national figures are from the end of the March 2019.

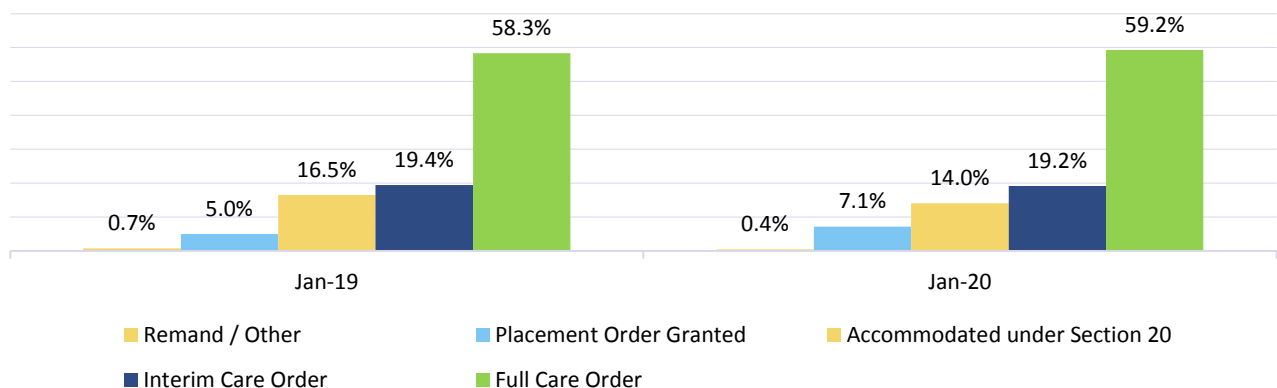
Northamptonshire children in care population 2019 - 20



Legal status

The proportion of children accommodated under Section 20 voluntary arrangements has continued to reduce year on year, from 18% in 2018, 16.5% in 2019 to 14% in 2020. This reduction is welcome since a high proportion of such arrangements indicates a lack of permanence for the children subject to them. Section 20 arrangements are designed to allow local authorities to care for children for a temporary period with parental consent in a cooperative spirit. Our reduction in Section 20 arrangements is mirrored by an increase in more permanent solutions such as full care orders, and reflects a national trend.

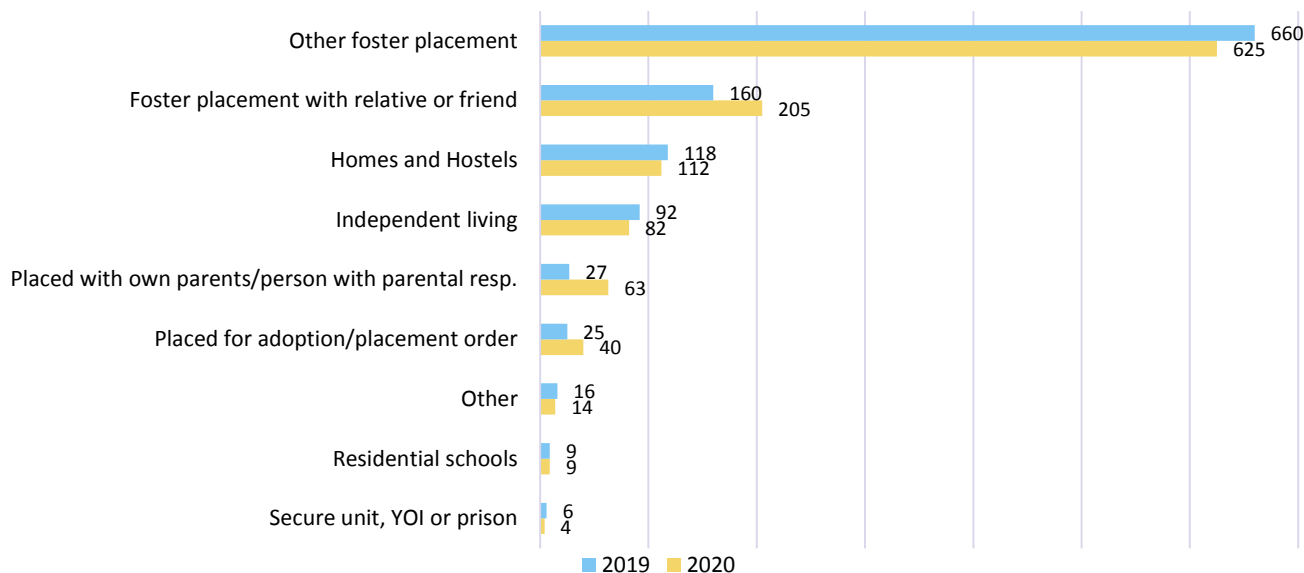
Legal status end of March 2019, 2020



Placement Type

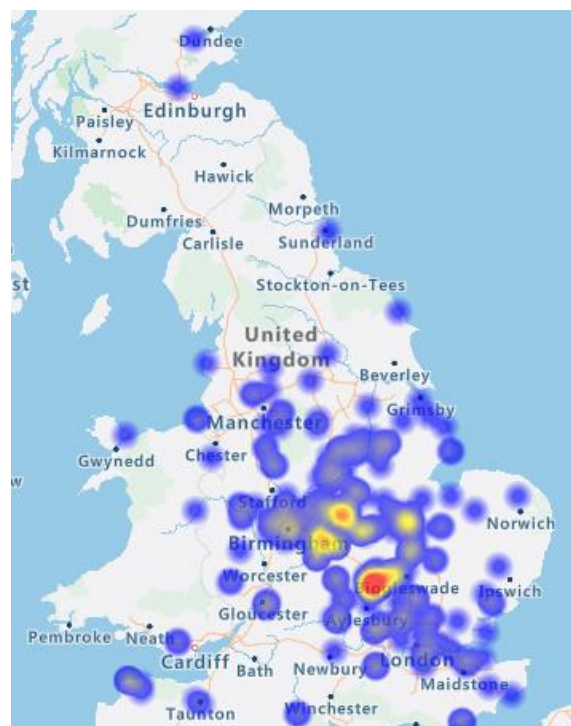
The proportion of children living in foster care, with relatives and friends or otherwise, has fallen very slightly from 73.7% to 71.9% between the end of March 2019 and the same time in 2020. This closely matches the latest national figure of 72%.

Placement type end of March 2019, 2020



Geography

At the end of March 2020 the percentage of children in care placed out of county stood at 25%, which is below the county's statistical neighbour Average 2018-19 comparator of 32%. 19% of children in care were living outside of the county and over 20 miles from their original home. This compares to 15% nationally at the latest measure and the same figure for our statistical neighbours. So, Northamptonshire children are less likely than average to be placed out of their local authority area, but if they are, they are more likely to be over 20 miles from home. This is likely a consequence of Northamptonshire being one of the larger, county-wide authorities. The most common other authority in which our children are placed is Milton Keynes, followed by Leicestershire, Cambridgeshire, Warwickshire and Lincolnshire. Generally, children may



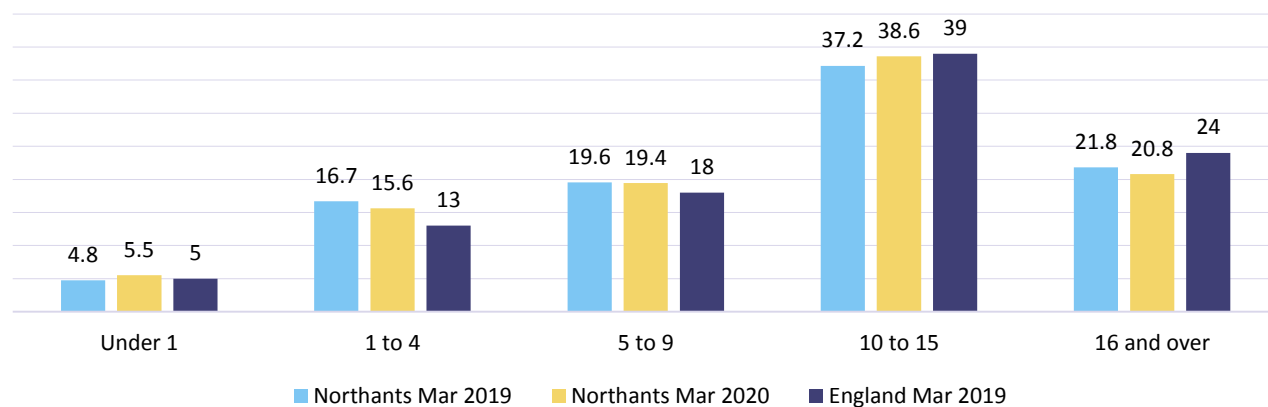
Children in Care placement geography, March 2020

be placed out of county if there is not a suitable placement for them in Northamptonshire but in some instances they are placed elsewhere for safeguarding or other reasons.

Age

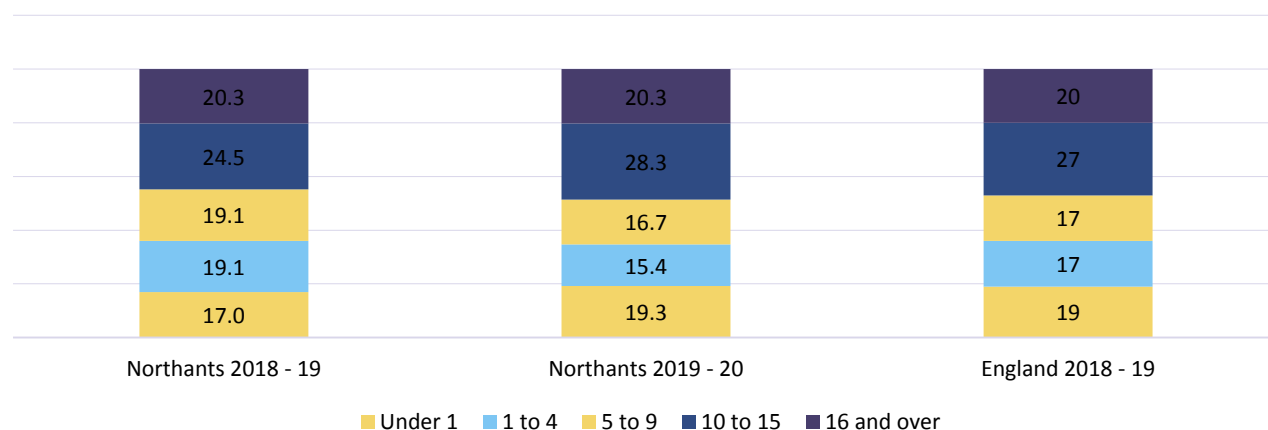
In previous years Northamptonshire had a relatively high proportion of children in care in the higher age ranges, however this has for the last two years been below the latest national average.

Children in care percentage per age group 2019 - 20



The proportion of Northamptonshire children entering care aged 10 to 15 rose slightly from 24.5% to 28.3%, with commensurate falls in the 1 to 4 and 5 to 9 age ranges. Northamptonshire figures are broadly in line with national averages.

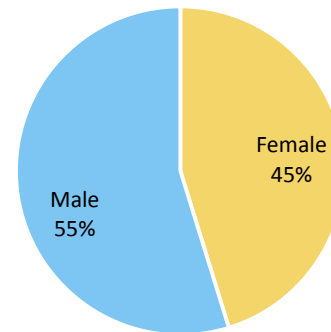
Percentage age on admission to care 2019 - 20



Sex

As in previous years, males are in the majority for Northamptonshire’s children in care population. This is largely explained by the county’s population of children from overseas who are separated from their families, over three quarters of whom are male.

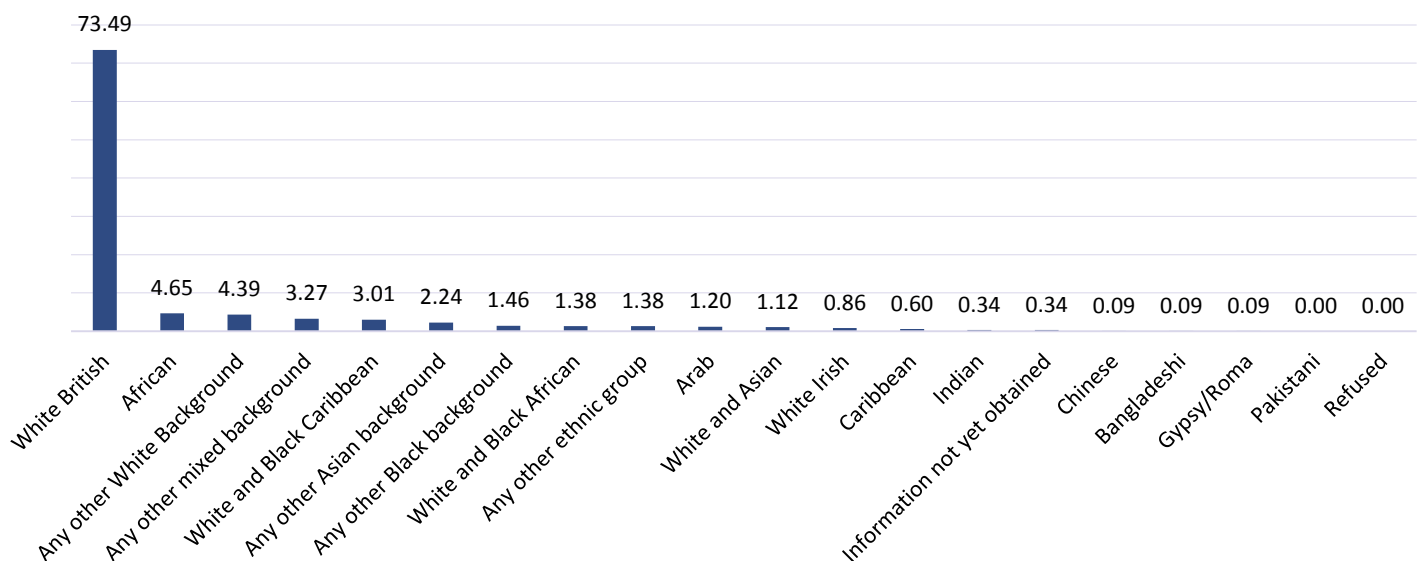
Children in care sex March 2020



Ethnicity

Reflecting the wider populous of Northamptonshire, almost three quarters of our children and young people are white British, though with significant numbers with African and Caribbean backgrounds. Nationally, 69% of children in care were white British at the end of March 2019.

Children in care ethnicity by percentage March 2020



Separated children

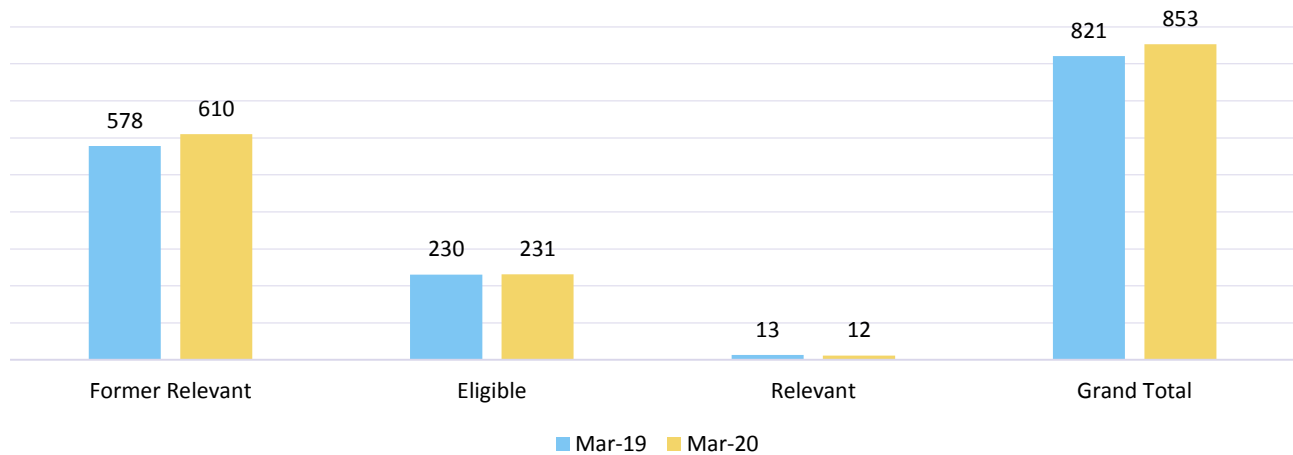
Nationally, just over 6% of the children in care population are classed as unaccompanied asylum seeking children (UASC). The percentage varies greatly by authority however. For example at the end of March 2019, 16% of Kent’s children in care were UASC, compared to 2% in Wigan. At the end of March 2020, Northamptonshire had 79 such children, representing 6.8% of children in care, a reduction from 7.5% at the same time in 2019. At March 2020, the most common country of origin for these children was Afghanistan, followed by Eritrea, Iraq, Sudan and Iran.

Care leavers

The qualifying characteristics of care leavers are set out in the Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000 and can be defined as follows:

- a) **Eligible** children are those in care aged 16 and 17 who have been in care for at 13 weeks since the age of 14 and are still in care.
- b) **Relevant** children are those aged 16 and 17 who meet the criteria for eligible children but who leave care. This also includes young people who were detained (e.g. in a youth offending institution or hospital) when they turned 16, but who were looked after immediately before being detained.
- c) **Former relevant** children are those who before reaching the age of 18 were either eligible or relevant children and are now aged 18 to 25.

Northamptonshire care leaver population 2019 - 20



Appendix 1: The Care Leavers Charter

The Care Leavers' Charter is a set of promises to care leavers, published by the Government in 2012. Created in consultation with care leavers themselves, it is "Designed to raise expectation, aspiration and understanding of what care leavers need and what the government and local authorities should do to be good Corporate Parents." The Charter will "Remain constant through any changes in Legislation, Regulation and Guidance."

We promise:

To respect and honour your identity.

We will support you to discover and to be who you are and honour your unique identity. We will help you develop your own personal beliefs and values and accept your culture and heritage. We will celebrate your identity as an individual, as a member of identity groups and as a valued member of your community. We will value and support important relationships, and help you manage changing relationships or come to terms with loss, trauma or other significant life events. We will support you to express your identity positively to others.

To believe in you.

We will value your strengths, gifts and talents and encourage your aspirations. We will hold a belief in your potential and a vision for your future even if you have lost sight of these yourself. We will help you push aside limiting barriers and encourage and support you to pursue your goals in whatever ways we can. We will believe in you, celebrate you and affirm you.

To listen to you.

We will take time to listen to you, respect, and strive to understand your point of view. We will place your needs, thoughts and feelings at the heart of all decisions about you, negotiate with you, and show how we have taken these into account. If we don't agree with you we will fully explain why. We will provide easy access to complaint and appeals processes and promote and encourage access to independent advocacy whenever you need it.

To inform you.

We will give you information that you need at every point in your journey, from care to adulthood, presented in a way that you want including information on legal entitlements and the service you can expect to receive from us at different stages in the journey. We will keep information up to date and accurate. We will ensure you know where to get current information once you are no longer in regular touch with leaving care services. We will make clear to you what information about yourself and your

time in care you are entitled to see. We will support you to access this when you want it, to manage any feelings that you might have about the information, and to put on record any disagreement with factual content.

To support you.

We will provide any support set out in current Regulations and Guidance and will not unreasonably withhold advice when you are no longer legally entitled to this service. As well as information, advice, practical and financial help we will provide emotional support. We will make sure you do not have to fight for support you are entitled to and we will fight for you if other agencies let you down. We will not punish you if you change your mind about what you want to do. We will continue to care about you even when we are no longer caring for you. We will make it our responsibility to understand your needs. If we can't meet those needs we will try and help you find a service that can. We will help you learn from your mistakes; we will not judge you and we will be here for you no matter how many times you come back for support.

To find you a home.

We will work alongside you to prepare you for your move into independent living only when you are ready. We will help you think about the choices available and to find accommodation that is right for you. We will do everything we can to ensure you are happy and feel safe when you move to independent living. We recognise that at different times you may need to take a step back and start over again. We will do our best to support you until you are settled in your independent life; we will not judge you for your mistakes or refuse to advise you because you did not listen to us before. We will work proactively with other agencies to help you sustain your home.

To be a lifelong champion.

We will do our best to help you break down barriers encountered when dealing with other agencies. We will work together with the services you need, including housing, benefits, colleges and universities, employment providers and health services to help you establish yourself as an independent individual. We will treat you with courtesy and humanity whatever your age when you return to us for advice or support. We will help you to be the driver of your life and not the passenger. We will point you in a positive direction and journey alongside you at your pace. We will trust and respect you. We will not forget about you. We will remain your supporters in whatever way we can, even when our formal relationship with you has ended.

Appendix 2: Board Attendance

The following chart sets out the attendance of elected members at Board for the year 2019-20.

Name	30th May 19	25th Jul 19	26th Sep 19	26th Nov 19	5th Feb 20
Fiona Baker (Con)	Attended	Attended	Attended	Attended	Apologies
Jane Birch (Lab)	Attended	Attended	Apologies	Attended	Attended
Wendy Brackenbury (Con)	Attended	Attended	Attended	Attended	Apologies
Gill Mercer (Con)	Attended	Attended	Attended	Attended	Attended
Dennis Meredith (Lib)	Attended	Absent	Absent	Attended	Absent
Anjona Roy (Lab)	Apologies	Attended	Attended	Attended	Apologies
Chris Smith-Haynes (Con)	Attended	Attended	Apologies	Attended	Attended

Notes:

- A Board meeting scheduled for March 26th 2020 was cancelled due to Covid-19.
- The February 2020 meeting was originally scheduled for the 30th of January.
- Cllr Gill Mercer chaired the meetings from July 2019 to February 2020 inclusive.



CABINET

10 NOVEMBER 2020

DIRECTOR OF CHILDREN FIRST NORTHAMPTONSHIRE: CATHI HADLEY

CABINET MEMBER WITH RESPONSIBILITY FOR: CHILDREN, FAMILIES & EDUCATION – COUNCILLOR FIONA BAKER

Subject:	Additional funding for the School Minor Works 2020/21 budget to address condition issues in Northamptonshire’s maintained schools estate.
Recommendations:	<p>Cabinet is asked to;</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Note the Cabinet Report in July 2020, approving the School Minor Works 2020/21 budget of £2,813,896; 2. Approve an uplift of £1,306,826 to the School Minor Works 2020/21 budget, due to the announcement of an additional tranche of School Condition Allocation funding from central government; 3. Note that any works undertaken under the Schools Minor Works scheme will be informed by a rolling programme of conditions surveys at maintained schools in the county; and 4. Delegate authority to the Director of Children First Northamptonshire, in consultation with the Director of Place and the Cabinet Member for Children Families and Education, to authorise all necessary legal, property and financial agreements to ensure effective delivery of condition schemes.

1. Purpose of report

1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide Cabinet with all relevant information required to make a fully informed decision on the proposals outlined above.

2. How this decision contributes to the Council plan

The Council’s vision is for Northamptonshire to be a county where everyone looks after each other and takes responsibility, where the vulnerable are protected and supported and where the people who can help themselves receive the assistance they need to stay independent and healthy.

<p>This initiative helps the Council to deliver this vision through the following strategic priorities outlined in the Council Plan:</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engaging with partners and communities to co-design and co-deliver services. • Focusing resources on prevention and early intervention. • Commissioning and procuring services and goods with partners. • Reducing inequalities and disparity of opportunities.

3. Background

- 3.1 NCC has a statutory obligation to maintain the school estate within the county. This obligation extends to maintained schools only, i.e. those with Community, Voluntary Controlled and Foundation status;
- 3.2 NCC receives School Condition Allocation (SCA) funding from central government. This funding is provided specifically to address condition issues within our maintained schools;
- 3.3 The SCA funding for this financial year was announced by the DfE in May 2020. The County Council received £2,813,896 and this allocation has been assigned to the School Minor Works 2020/21 budget, with approval from Capital Approvals Board (CAB) in June 2020 and Cabinet in July 2020;
- 3.4 The School Minor Works programme streamlines the financial and governance process for capital schemes designed to address condition issues in our maintained schools in a timely manner;
- 3.5 In August 2020 the DfE announced further SCA funding for 2020/21, with Northamptonshire allocated an additional £1,306,826 for this financial year. This additional funding will allow for the progression of an increased number of schemes within the School Minor Works 2020/21 programme and enable NCC to complete further priority remedial works at maintained schools in the county;
- 3.6 Cabinet is asked to note that whilst the NCC Capital Projects team will project manage the delivery of School Minor Works schemes, in certain circumstances NCC may passport limited amounts of funding to schools to ensure more efficient delivery of a required scheme.

4. Consultation and Scrutiny

- 4.1 This paper relates to the fulfilment of NCC's statutory obligation of maintaining its schools' estate. Whilst any works commissioned as a result will be subject to any necessary planning approvals and building regulation controls, no statutory consultation is required.

5. Equality Screening

Reason that no EqlA is required	✓ as appropriate
The paper is for information only	
The proposal/activity/decision has no impact on customers or the service they receive	✓ - This proposal relates to a business as usual activity, the maintenance of school buildings.
The proposal impacts upon staff but the proposed staffing changes will not affect the service that customers receive*	
Other (Please explain further)	

*Where a proposal affects staff, the appropriate HR processes will be followed, which have already been subject to the EqIA process and will be compliant with HR legislation

6. Alternative Options Considered

6.1 The main School Minor Works 2020/21 budget has already been approved through Cabinet. This report seeks approval to uplift the budget, taking into account the additional funding provided by the DfE in the form of SCA funding. This will allow NCC to address further works at maintained schools, categorised as priority 1 and 2 within Condition Survey reports.

7. Financial Implications

The uplift to the Schools Minor Works Phase 2 budget funded from the Schools Condition Allocation top up grant of £1,306,826 was reviewed at NCC's Capital Approvals Board on 16th September 2020 and recommended for inclusion in the Capital Monitoring Report elsewhere on this Cabinet agenda in order to secure approval for promotion from the development pool into the committed capital programme.

<p>What benefits will the proposal deliver?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supports improvements to the school estate to provide safe, warm and dry environments for children and young people educated in Northamptonshire; • NCC will be able to continue to plan and commission works to address conditions issues in maintained schools in a more efficient and pro-active manner; • Supports compliance with relevant Health & Safety legislation;
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8. Risk and Business Continuity Management

a) Risk(s) associated with the proposal

Risk	Mitigation	Residual Risk
<p>Costs higher than available budget</p>	<p>Works to be procured through NCC procurement frameworks or with three quotes to ensure best value. Works will be prioritised to ensure all can be delivered within available budget and least urgent works will not be progressed if they exceed available budget.</p>	<p>Green</p>
<p>Covid-19 impacts upon delivery of schemes</p>	<p>Timeframes for delivery arranged in full accordance with schools and in full compliance with all government advice</p>	<p>Green</p>

Risk	Mitigation	Residual Risk
Works undertaken impact on day to day school operation	Works to be planned in conjunction with schools and programmed to minimise impact.	Green

b) Risk(s) associated with not undertaking the proposal

Risk	Risk Rating
Health & Safety incident(s) resulting from poor condition of schools' estate	Amber
School buildings continue to deteriorate and children and young people access education in 'unsafe' buildings	Red
Schools are required to close as a result of poor condition and children and young people are unable to access education	Red
Cost of addressing remedial issues at a later date will increase	Red

List of Appendices

None

Author:	Name: Jackie Desmond Team: Strategic Planning
Contact details:	Tel: 07545 420556 Email: idesmond@northamptonshire.gov.uk
Background Papers:	Cabinet Report 14 th July – School Minor Works Phase 2 report
Does the report propose a key decision is taken?	YES
If yes, is the decision in the Forward Plan?	YES
Will further decisions be required? If so please outline the timetable here	N/A
Does the report include delegated decisions? If so, please outline the timetable here	
Is this report proposing an amendment to the budget and/or policy framework?	NO
Have the financial implications been cleared by the Strategic Finance Manager (SFM)? Have any capital spend implications passed through Capital Programme governance procedures?	YES Name of SFM: Rosemary Pallot YES – Capital Approvals Board
Has the report been cleared by the relevant Director?	YES Name of Director: Cathi Hadley

Has the relevant Cabinet Member been consulted?	YES Cabinet Member: Cllr Fiona Baker
Has the relevant scrutiny committee been consulted?	NO Scrutiny Committee:
Has the report been cleared by Legal Services?	YES Name of solicitor: Duncan Bisatt
Have any communications issues been cleared by Communications and Marketing?	YES Name of officer: Liam Beasley
Have any property Issues been cleared by Property and Asset Management?	YES Name of officer: James Wheeler
Have the Procurement Implications below been referenced in the Paper: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have you evidenced compliance with the Council's Contract Procedures Rules? • Have you made clear in this paper where you are seeking Cabinet to approve an exemption from the Contract Procedure Rules and detailed the risks and mitigations? • Have you identified any EU or UK legislative risks such as non-compliance with the Public Contract Regulations Act 2015, transparency and open competition? • Have you identified the procurement risks associated with a contract? 	N/A
Are there any community safety implications?	NO
Are there any environmental implications:	NO
Are there any Health and Safety Implications:	YES Possible Health & Safety implications if proposal is not progressed and school buildings become unsafe.
Are there any Human Resources Implications:	NO
Are there any human rights implications:	NO
Constituency Interest:	All Northamptonshire constituencies

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