



Northamptonshire
Children's Trust

Northamptonshire Children's Trust

Business Plan 2021/22



Northamptonshire
Children's Trust

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Northamptonshire
Children's Trust



Section 1

Introduction

Foreword

Our Northamptonshire Children's Trust Business Plan really matters to us. It sets out our commitment to the children, young people and families of Northamptonshire. We are on a journey to improve services through Northamptonshire Children's Trust.

Our vision is to put children, young people and families at the heart of all we do, in every decision we make and every action we take. We are ambitious for all Children, Young People and Families and we have a critical role to making a difference to their outcomes and within Northamptonshire.

Our purpose is to relentlessly improve outcomes for children, young people and families through excellence in practice. We ask that our staff and stakeholders do the best job possible, every single day and because that is what children, young people in families deserve and have a right to expect.

The aims of this strategy are to:

- Set a clear strategic vision and priorities
- Support our awesome workforce
- Create a strategic framework
- Make clear our commitment to enabling the voice of children and young people
- Put in place our conditions for success and an outcomes framework
- Explain how we will work with children, young people and families

- Show strong financial planning, strong governance, and effective management of all of our resources

We always start with a simple question: What is life like for children, young people and families in Northamptonshire? And then we ask: How can we help make it better?

We take our responsibility seriously alongside everyone who works with and cares about children and young people. We are committed to do all that we can to ensure children, young people and families live safely, are safe, fulfil their potential, develop resilience and enjoy good health and wellbeing. This includes being involved and respected at home, at school, in their communities and, most importantly, being part of all decisions that affect them. We want to send a clear message about how important their welfare is to us and how important they are to our future.

Our vision and strategic framework have been developed with partners, the children's workforce and side by side with children, young people and families. We recognise that we can only improve outcomes for children, young people and families through effective partnership working. Whilst this plan focuses on Northamptonshire Children's Trust, it should be noted that the Trust supports, commissions and works with many other stakeholders including; voluntary organisations, the Northamptonshire Parent Carer Forum, Northamptonshire Health and Wellbeing Board, Northamptonshire Integrated Care System and the Northamptonshire Safeguarding Children Partnership. In each of these arrangements there is a clear strategy and action plan and this business plan compliments them. We can only make a difference if we work together towards a set of common aims.

Foreword (cont)

North Northamptonshire Council and West Northamptonshire Council are committed to supporting Northamptonshire Children's Trust to deliver the Children's Social Care and Early Help services across Northamptonshire. Both take their corporate parenting role very seriously and want to support children, young people and families to thrive in their community.



Northamptonshire Children's Trust

Julian Wooster, Chair

Colin Foster, Chief Executive

North Northamptonshire Council

Cllr Wendy Brackenbury,
Lead member, Children's
Services

Rob Bridge, Chief Executive

West Northamptonshire Council

Cllr Fiona Baker,
Lead member,
Children's Services

Anna Earnshaw, Chief
Executive

1.1 Welcome and Strategic Context for the Children's Trust

We are delighted to present the Northamptonshire Children's Trust Interim Business Plan for 2021/22. This is an ambitious plan that builds upon the stability that we have established and the progress that we have made over the first five months as outlined in our Initial Business Plan (1st November 2020 to 31st March 2021). In developing this business plan we have received valuable input from children, young people, parents, families, workforce and our strategic partners.

We understand that by improving outcomes for children, their life chances and overall economic, health and wellbeing outcomes are so much better, and that this adds value not only to the individual but also to society overall. By working together with North Northamptonshire Council, West Northamptonshire Council and our local strategic partners we recognise that by investing in our services, we are investing both in our children and in the county's future.

We will continue to work closely with children, young people and families alongside our owners to ensure that we can demonstrate our improvements in both service outcomes and financial management. We will develop deep and lasting relationships with our key partners in health, police and both the faith and voluntary sectors recognising that solutions are 'system wide' and not just within one body. The Trust is supported by services from North Northamptonshire Council and West Northamptonshire Council through a service level agreement. The transformation of services for Children and Young People across Northamptonshire is one of the four priority transformation programmes agreed by all system partners across

Northamptonshire. This is recognised in the Integrated Care System (ICS) development plan alongside; Mental Health, Elective Care and Adults' Services.

The Case for Change

The children's services that the Trust is responsible for are on an improvement journey.

- The Ofsted focused visit in October 2018, found that the quality of assessment services to children in need of help and protection in Northamptonshire had substantially declined since the single inspection in 2016.
- Children's services were judged inadequate by Ofsted in June 2019. The Ofsted report highlighted the urgent need for improvement across Children's Services. It found that financial uncertainty contributed to significant shortfalls in social work capacity, resulting in unmanageable caseloads and high volumes of unallocated and unassessed work.

Since November 2018 a number of statutory directions were issued by the Department for Education (DfE), identifying the establishment of a Children's Trust as a critical element of the service improvement journey and vital to ensuring service stability during and immediately after local government reorganisation (LGR). Consequently, the Northamptonshire Children's Trust was formally established on 1st November 2020 and from that point has been responsible for the delivery of the Councils' children's social care functions.

1.1 Welcome and Strategic Context for the Children's Trust (cont)

Children's Services improvement journey

Children's Services in Northamptonshire were judged 'inadequate' by Ofsted in 2013, whilst this judgement improved to 'requires improvement to be good' in 2016 but by 2019 they were judged 'inadequate' again. When Ofsted conduct a re-visit under the ILACS framework we commit to working hard to ensure our improvement is recognised with a minimum judgement of 'requires improvement to be good' improving to good and then onto outstanding. The DfE statutory intervention notice applies to both North Northamptonshire Unitary Council and West Northamptonshire Unitary Council who are required to support the effective delivery of Children's Social Care. This relies on the best possible people delivering the best possible services as part of the best possible partnership with the voice of the child at the centre of practice.

After Statutory Direction from the Department for Education (DfE), a plan identifying the areas for required improvement has been developed. Our six strategic priorities for improvement are detailed within the plan, these are:

Effective leadership - Improvement will be driven by a stable Trust senior leadership team that provides strategic leadership and direction, clarity of the vision for the service and sets clear priorities and expectations.

Recruit and retain an awesome workforce - Staff are our most valuable resource. We need to recruit, develop and retain committed, skilful and child-centred staff and provide them with the environment in which good practice will flourish.

Strong Relationship-based practice - Ensuring our practice model is child-centred at its heart and evidenced through all that we do.

Insightful quality assurance and learning - We know ourselves and our practice well through rigorous quality assurance.

Healthy partnerships - We will work strategically with our core partners to share responsibility for driving our improvement plan, and all our staff will pursue effective multi-agency practice.

Robust and effective resource management - We will be an effective, high performing Trust with high standards of resource management. Critically resource management and budget control are essential to the effective operation of the Trust.

1.1 Welcome and Strategic Context for the Children's Trust (cont)

Overview of Trust requirements and characteristics

The Trust has been established as a company limited by guarantee, wholly owned by North Northamptonshire and West Northamptonshire Councils, to provide a long term and sustainable platform to realise improved performance and deliver high quality and innovative social care services to children, young people and their families within Northamptonshire.

The Trust is a non-profit distributing 'Teckal' compliant company that demonstrates day-to-day operational independence in the management and delivery of children's social care services in Northamptonshire through a strong Board of executive and non-executive directors. In conjunction with partner agencies, North Northamptonshire Council, West Northamptonshire Council and the Trust will work together collaboratively to:

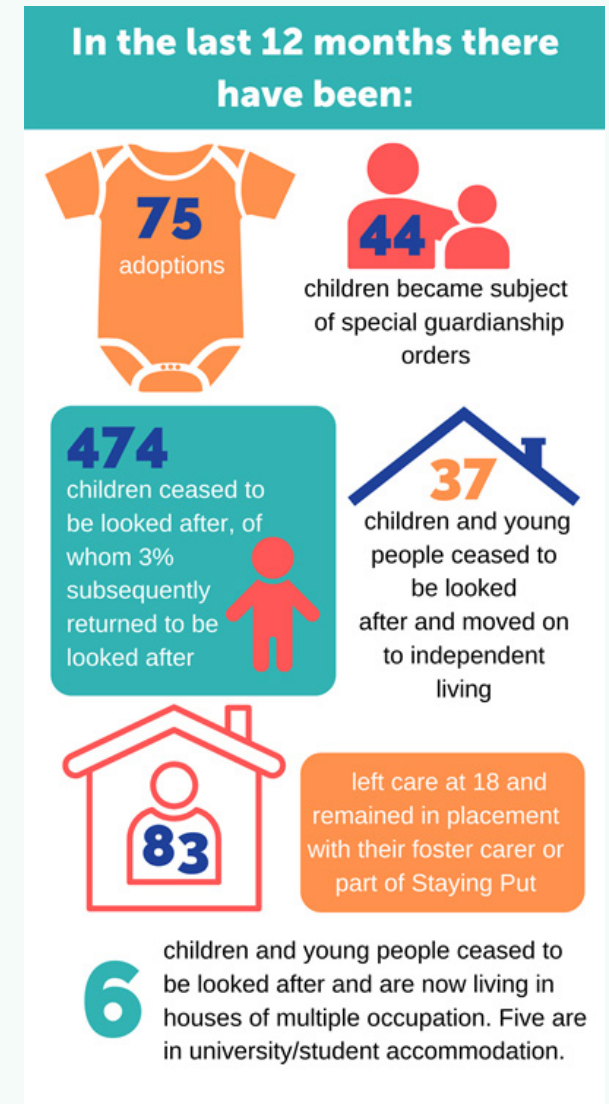
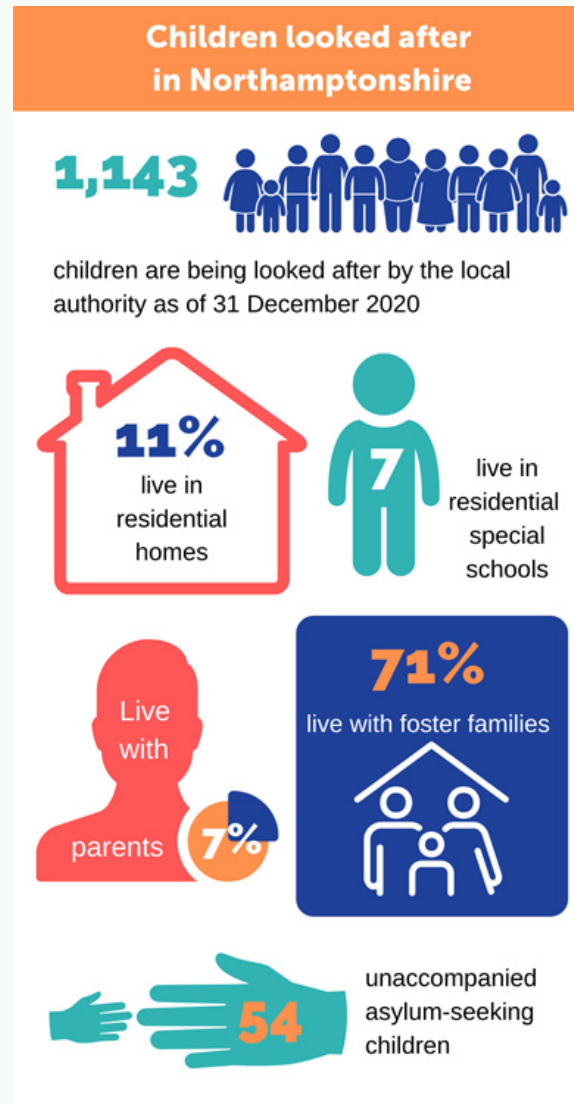
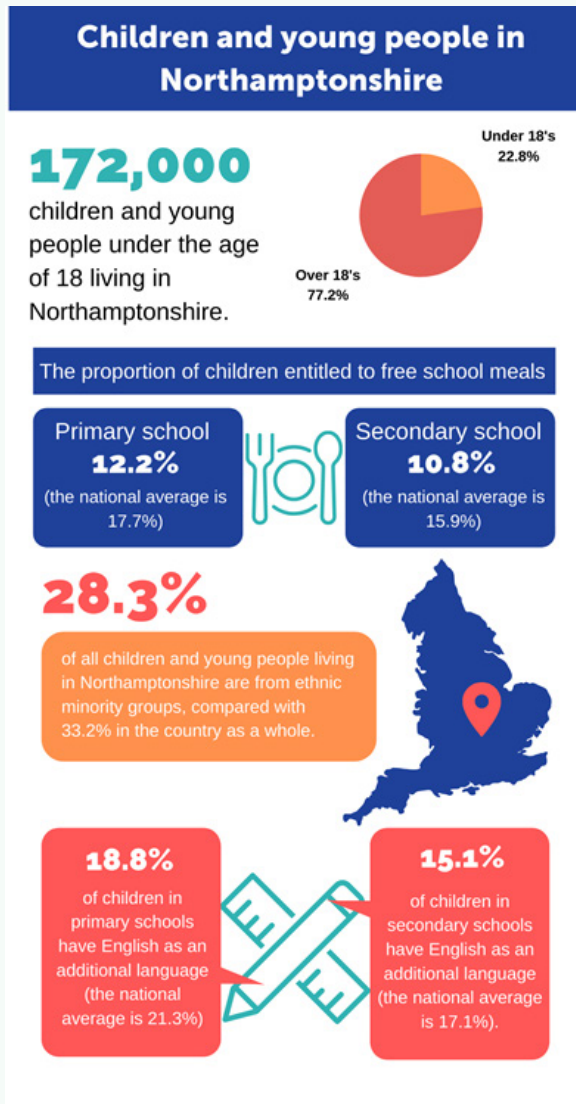
- Promote the welfare and safeguard children in line with key children's legislation and statutory guidance;
- provide family support to vulnerable children and their families to enable them to cope with difficulties;

- support children to live safely with their immediate and extended families wherever possible;
- meet the needs of looked after children and those leaving care; and
- support disabled children and their families.

The focus of the Trust, Northamptonshire County Council and shadow authorities over this recent period has been the agreement of the contract sum for financial year 2021/22, together with in the agreement and implementation of long term arrangements for a range of issues that are subject to interim arrangements over the stabilisation period (i.e. support services, ICT, property, joint working protocols etc.). We have also started to build supportive and effective relationships with the two new Councils – North Northamptonshire Council and West Northamptonshire Council - as the owners, commissioners and key partners of the Trust.



1.2 Local Context





Northamptonshire
Children's Trust

Section 2

Who we are



Northamptonshire Children's Trust

2.1 Our Vision

Our vision, strategic framework, outcomes framework and conditions for success were developed through extensive consultation with children, young people, parents, families, staff and our strategic

partners. It has included feedback from several '58 minute' sessions led by the Chief Executive of the Trust who discussed ideas with the workforce.

Our Vision is:

“ Children, Young People and Families at the heart of all we do - in every decision we make and every action we take ”

2.2 Our Ambition and Values

The voice of children and young people informs our values. Our Children in Care Council and Care Leavers group have told us that:

“Many of us have a hard time with the one life we have and just want someone to help us through”

“We just ask for someone to listen, someone trustworthy as trust is a valuable commodity in our lives”

“Life is full of frightening turns, made harder by the pressures we already face. So we kindly ask for help during those times, to be there when we need you”

“Sometimes we just need someone to talk to, so respect and compassion are important qualities. Other times we require help with our future, work, school, socialising”

“We ask for commitment. Someone who is at least a phone call away. We don’t want to sound hard but we’ve already dealt with neglect”

“Some of us have seen the worst people have to offer and we look to you for guidance. So your hard work and pride in your work is important to us”

“Our ambition is to make a sustainable improvement to the lives of children, young people and families”

To meet the challenges faced by communities, we will have a relentless focus on our impact and outcomes for children and young people based on local needs and priorities. Delivering our vision for children, young people and families is not just a job for Northamptonshire Children’s Trust, but is a shared responsibility with our strategic partners, and the wider public and voluntary sector. To achieve this we will:

- Ensure that the voice of children and young people drives all of our practice.
- Strengthen relationships with parents and carers, and our service offer will be shaped by them and by the direct involvement of children and young people. The co-production of effective solutions to local priorities, including financial challenges, will be evident in our successful delivery of this business plan, as well as our response to emerging issues.
- Focus our early help services on building resilience in families so that they are better able to help, support and protect their children without the need for statutory interventions.
- Consistently use reflective, collaborative and strengths-based approaches to working with the whole family so that parents are able to make positive and lasting changes to the care they provide to their children.
- Invest in integrated services and joint commissioning with our partners, bringing together our collective ideas, talent and resources to better meet the needs of children and young people, especially those with the most complex needs.

2.2 Our Values and Ambition (cont)

- Promote strong and meaningful relationships with our partner organisations and our whole-system approach to improving services and outcomes for children and young people.
- By the end of this 12-month business plan, have established strong and financially stable foundations.

These are our Trust values:

- Be child focused and work with the whole family
- Make a difference with trust and integrity
- Concentrate on the best solution
- Act with respect, kindness and compassion
- Communicate well
- Do the best job of your life every single day



We use our core values to inform practice where:

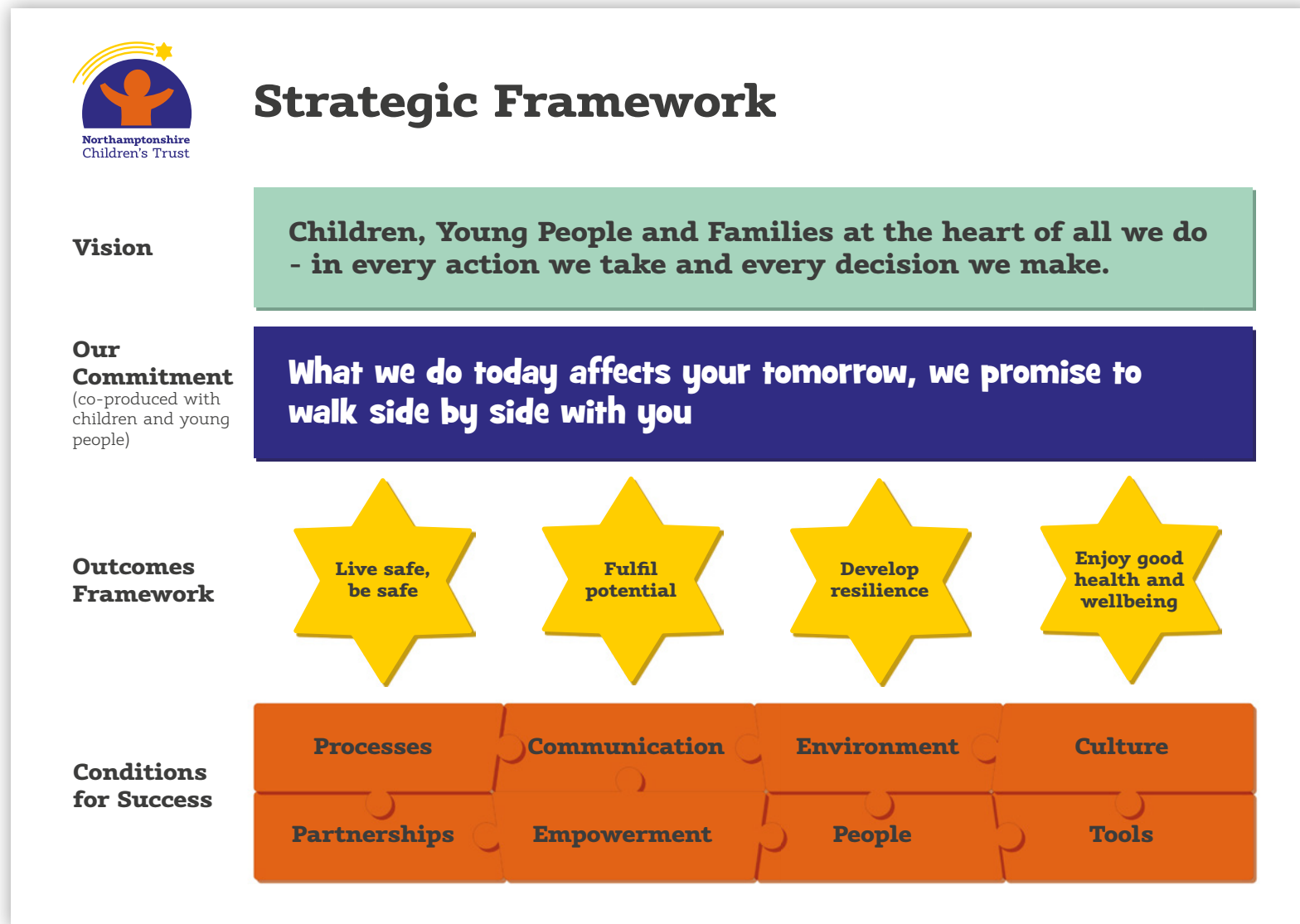
- Children and families who do need to access support, services will be responsive, of a high quality and focused on achieving resilience.
- We recognise the strengths that are present in every family and help families to arrive at their own solutions to their own difficulties; we believe children are best raised within their birth family network and will do all we can to support this.
- We work with children and their families to ensure that they receive the support and services they need to live happy, healthy and successful lives.
- We work to ensure that positive opportunities and effective help are available at the earliest opportunity – enabling children and their families to make the choices that mean they can thrive and achieve.
- We listen and observe attentively to children, young people and families, and respond to what they are telling us in order to inform how we improve the delivery of our services.
- We promote relationship-based practice and prioritise the continuity of relationship between practitioners and families.
- We believe in recruiting and retaining a stable and resilient workforce which will empower and enable children, young people and families to achieve their full potential.
- We strengthen partnership working so that children and families experience consistent joined up approaches to assessing and meeting their needs.

2.3 A Poem

hurt, abuse, pain. I feel alone.
They took me away.
Scared, worried, nervous.
I don't want to do this on my own.
It's hard to concentrate and feeling like
I fit in.
I always feel different. I never settle in
My Education fell behind.
I just existed. Although they were kind.
Day by Day hour by hour
I missed my mum and my dad and
the fun we had. Although the abuse
made me sad.
They say I can't see them. I know why.
But what they don't know. Is that it
hurts like mad. My tears are on my
pillow even though they were bad.

This young person is supported by a member of the Northamptonshire Children's Trust team - enabling and empowering practice supports children and young people to understand their thoughts and feeling and express themselves in their own way and on their own terms.

2.3 Our Strategic Framework



Our strategic framework overview encapsulates what matters to us on one page. It includes our vision, our commitment to children and young people, our outcomes framework and our conditions for success.

2.4 Our Commitment to Children and Young People

Our commitment to children and young people was written by them, they asked us to make this commitment which we will.

“ What we do today affects your tomorrow, we promise to walk side by side with you ”

2.5 Our Objectives and Outcome Framework

Northamptonshire Children's Trust outcomes framework is co-ordinated into four areas.

We are committed to enable children, young people and their families to:



The objectives of Northamptonshire Children's Trust to provide social care, youth offending and other related services and support to children, young people and their families for the advancement of the community, and in particular:

- a. to provide high quality and coordinated services in connection with children, young people and their families, including in relation to children's safeguarding, children in care and at the edge of care, children leaving care and adoption and fostering services;
- b. to innovate and to secure improvements in the quality and effectiveness of the services provided to children, young people and their families in respect of social care, family support and youth offending service and (subject to the Company's overriding

- duty to keep children and young people safe from harm) to demonstrate value for money considerations;
- c. to advance and promote social care, family support and youth offending services available to children, young people and their families;
- d. to work collaboratively with other agencies to identify the individual social care needs of children and young people and to establish suitable arrangements to prepare for and meet such needs;
- e. to make a positive and effective contribution to multi-agency early intervention support for children, young people and their families to avoid the need for more intensive social care support;

Outcomes framework details can be found in appendix 1

2.6 Our Conditions for Success

Our conditions for success were developed by our workforce through '58 minute' sessions with the Chief Executive and developed further by our practitioners group and equalities group. Our conditions for success are all about how we operate as a whole system and they fit together like a jigsaw – each piece is reliant on every other piece to make a full picture.



Partnerships

We will work together meaningfully with openness towards shared goals.

Children, Young People and Families will benefit from us working side by side with them.



People

We will enable all to be the best they can be and develop an awesome workforce.

Children, Young People and Families will benefit from a highly skilled, motivated workforce.



Communication

We will ensure that all voices are listened to, heard and valued.

Children, Young People and Families will benefit from clear communication at all times.



Environment

We will create accessible and welcoming spaces to work collaboratively and privately with colleagues.

Children, Young People and Families will benefit from the best work environment we can create.

2.6 Our Conditions for Success (cont)



Processes

We will empower our system to deliver the best support by having clear, up to date policies which enable slick processes.

Children, Young People and Families will benefit from a system that works effectively, efficiently and is delivered with care.



Tools

We will support a confident and competent workforce who have the tools they need to aspire to excellence.

Children, Young People and Families will benefit from everybody having the right toolkit to do their best work.



Empowerment

We are all leaders and will strive at all levels of the organisation to build respect, trust and a positive learning culture where diversity is celebrated and equality is embedded.

Children, Young People and Families will benefit from a confident and empowered workforce who are culturally competent and understand social graces.



Culture

We will treat each other with kindness, compassion and respect.

Children, Young People and Families will benefit from everybody giving their very best, every single day.

2.7 Our Current Service Performance Overview



2.8 Our strategic priorities for 2021/22

Based on our vision, ambitions quality assurance, Ofsted feedback and discussions with children, young people and families, we have identified six strategic priorities for our business plan for the next year. Our updated Improvement Plan (Appendix 4.4) details how the Trust will deliver these priorities and what this will mean for Children, Young People and Families.



2.8 Our strategic priorities for 2021/22 (cont)

| Strategic Priority | What we will achieve for Children Young People and Families? | Aim | What we will achieve by March 2022 |
|--|--|--|--|
| Excellent Leadership | Our Improvement will be driven by a stable senior leadership team that provides strategic leadership and direction, clarity of the vision for the service and sets clear priorities and expectations. The senior leadership team will be visible to and engage with all staff. | Every manager at all levels will be a leader for improvement in Northamptonshire with a clear understanding of their responsibilities and accountabilities and will know what good looks like. | High quality of management decision-making, oversight and challenge. Quality assurance board to enable strategic oversight |
| Recruit, Retain and Develop an Awesome Workforce | Improvement for children and families will be delivered by our staff, who are therefore our most valuable resource. | Recruit, develop and retain committed, skilful and child-centred staff and provide them with the system conditions in which good practice will flourish. | Stability and sustainability of the workforce through an increase in permanent employees. Caseloads that enable all children to have an allocated social worker and workers to have manageable workloads. Sufficient capacity to deliver high practice standards Investing in our workforce so that we are knowledgeable and up to date in practice. Team, Service and Strategic Managers providing rigorous and effective oversight and support |

2.8 Our strategic priorities for 2021/22 (cont)

| Strategic Priority | What we will achieve for Children Young People and Families? | Aim | What we will achieve by March 2022 |
|------------------------------------|---|--|---|
| Strong Relationship Based Practice | We are focused upon evidence based practice that works with children, young people and families to help them achieve positive changes. Our practice model is child-centred at its heart and evidenced through all that we do. | Our primary practice framework is Signs of Safety, which will deliver practice that is rooted in the relationships that our practitioners form with children and families, and is a strengths-based approach building upon the assets in the family network. | <p>Clear reunification plans and support services for children returning home where it is safe to do so.</p> <p>All practitioners understand the standards of good practice and purpose of our involvement and intervention in families' lives</p> <p>Our practice is child-centred alongside effective work with the whole family network</p> <p>Purposeful, planned and focused visits with children and young people to ensure that their needs are understood.</p> <p>The quality of social work assessments and plans so that they are consistently timely and are effective in improving children's experiences.</p> <p>Pathway plans that include clearly defined objectives for young people.</p> |

2.8 Our strategic priorities for 2021/22 (cont)

| Strategic Priority | What we will achieve for Children Young People and Families? | Aim | What we will achieve by March 2022 |
|---|---|--|--|
| Insightful Quality Assurance and Learning | We know ourselves and our practice well through rigorous Quality Assurance. | We are a learning organisation and our approach seeks to ensure that learning is captured from a range of sources centred upon collaborative case audits, feedback from children and families, staff and understanding our data. We will ensure that learning is then acted upon to drive effective improvement. | <p>Our practice is solid and continuously improving</p> <p>All managers know the quality of practice in their service and drive learning and practice improvements</p> <p>We can evidence learning and improvement as a result of our Quality Assurance activity</p> <p>The use of Quality Assurance activity through learning discussions and escalations to inform and improve practice.</p> <p>Action planning in response to the findings of serious case reviews.</p> |
| Healthy Partnerships | Effective partnership working is essential to good practice. | We will work strategically with our core partners to share responsibility for driving our improvement plan, and all our staff will pursue effective multi-agency practice. | <p>Children are protected through effective Multi-Agency Safeguarding. The identification of and response to risk when contacts relating to safeguarding concerns for children are received into the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH).</p> <p>Children in Care and Care Leavers have the full range of their needs met by all partners</p> <p>Children and families receive effective early help from all partners</p> |

2.8 Our strategic priorities for 2021/22 (cont)

| Strategic Priority | What we will achieve for Children Young People and Families? | Aim | What we will achieve by March 2022 |
|--|--|---|---|
| Robust and Effective Resource Management | We understand the key drivers of the budget and budget managers understand the financial impact of their decisions. Budget managers will be equipped with support and systems to effectively monitor and forecast. | Develop a culture of shared budget responsibility with all staff being responsible for ensuring that every pound spent is maximising positive outcomes for children and young people and is in line with budget control processes.w | <p>Strong budget management and forecasting systems and processes will be embedded throughout the Trust.</p> <p>Delivering our Sufficiency Strategy so we have sufficient stable placements that meet the needs of our children and young people.</p> <p>Managing demand for specialist support and improving outcomes through effective earlier intervention.</p> <p>Benchmarking undertaken with statistical neighbours and throughout the social care sector to ensure services are delivered efficiently and effectively, exploring the use of innovative models and best practice.</p> |

2.9 Our Quality Assurance

Northamptonshire Children's Trust has a very clear Quality Assurance (QA) framework and collaborative learning process which enables a strong understanding of the quality of practice and continuous improvement. Our focus can be described as taking a 'so what' approach: Everything must relate fundamentally to seeking to improve our four key outcomes for children, young people and families and to demonstrate how these are met. Our measure of quality is the impact we have on children's lives, therefore our focus is on children's experiences and outcomes.

The voice of the child, family, advocates and our workforce are essential elements of the QA framework. They help us to understand the difference we make and ensure that we are delivering child centred support. Quality assurance and improvement is everyone's business and is part of our day to day work.

The focus for our quality of practice are:

- Child centred: The focus of Quality Assurance will be on the experiences, progress and outcomes of the child or young person on their journey through our early help, safeguarding and social work systems.
- Restorative: Quality Assurance will be restorative. Instead of a top down approach, Quality Assurance work will be based on working with and alongside staff and managers and building relationships. As a restorative process Quality Assurance will be characterised by both high support and high challenge.
- Outcomes based: In line with our core approach, the proper focus of Quality Assurance will be on outcomes rather than processes.
- Positive: Our approach to quality assurance will be a positive learning experience – looking at informing and encouraging

improvement and supporting the development of staff and services.

- Reflective: Our Quality Assurance framework is designed to be about promoting reflective practice and shared learning.

Quality Assurance is monitored on a monthly basis through the Quality Assurance Board. The Quality Assurance reporting and governance structure has been established to ensure clear oversight and sign off of recommendations and actions that are a result of Quality Assurance activity to promote continued learning across Northamptonshire Children's Trust.

The Trust Senior Leadership Team (SLT) is responsible for not only endorsing findings, recommendations and future development work but also for ensuring that information is disseminated effectively to teams and all staff. SLT provides assurance to the Trust Board and the Council in relation to the Quality Assurance processes that are in place, their effectiveness, the impact on services and improvement, and ultimately ensuring that children of Northamptonshire are receiving high quality services and good experiences when receiving support from us.

A diagram showing how all boards work together can be found in appendix 9.



**Northamptonshire
Children's Trust**

Section 3

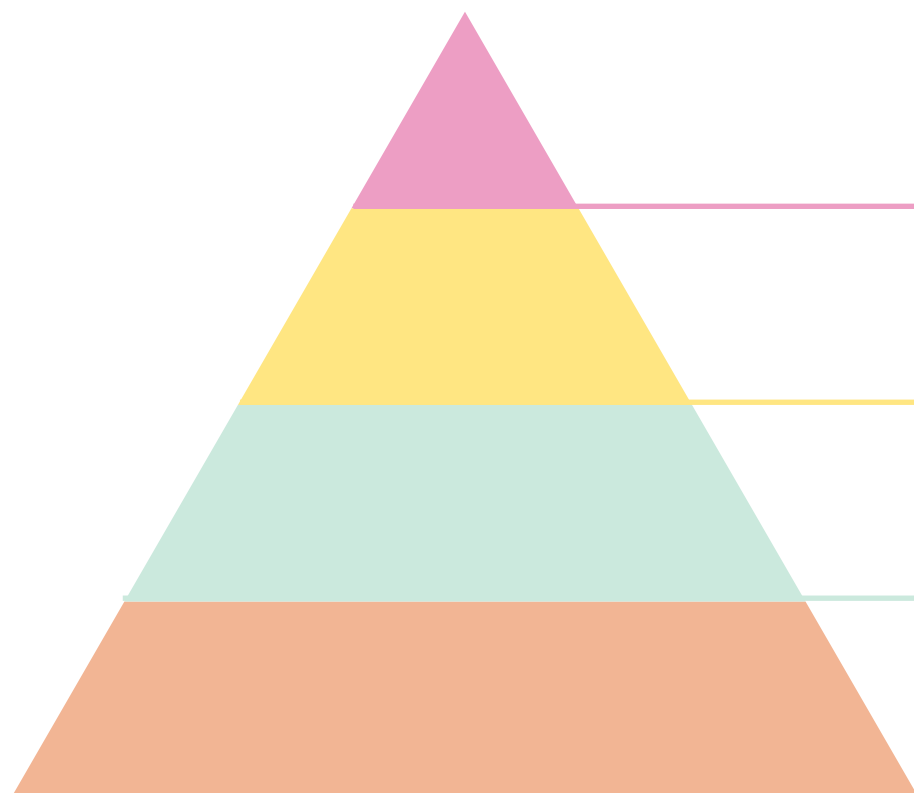
Partnerships and Trust Overview

3.1 Our Relationship with Strategic Partners

We believe that keeping vulnerable children and young people safe from harm is everyone's responsibility and that collectively we will only be successful if all partners work together across the county. Everyone who works with children, families and young people in Northamptonshire shares responsibility for improving outcomes for the most vulnerable children, young people and families.

Given this collective responsibility and the Trust's commitment to

collaborative and integrated working, the Trust is committed to being fully involved and playing an active role working alongside our strategic partners in the Northamptonshire Safeguarding Children Partnership. Early engagement between the Trust and strategic partners has taken place; further and ongoing engagement will be undertaken to ensure that children receive high quality and joined up services through our safeguarding partnership and integrated care system (ICS).



Tier 4 - Child in need of protection

NCT Children's Social Care; Youth Offending Service; Children, Adolescent and Mental Health Services (CAMHS); family and young people support services; specialist health services; voluntary services

Tier 3 - Targeted Services

NCT Children's Social Care; special educational need services; specialist health or disability services; family and young people support services; Youth Offending Team; targeted drug and alcohol services; Children and Adolescents Mental Health Service (CAMHS); family and young people support services; voluntary and community services

Tier 2 - Early Help

Early help assessments; Youth crime prevention services; targeted drug and alcohol information, advice and education, including harm reduction advice to support informed choices; health; education; children's centres and early years; educational psychology; educational welfare; specialist play services; voluntary and community services; parenting programmes

Tier 1 - Universal services

Education; children's centres and early years services; health visiting service; school nursing,; GP; play services; police; housing; voluntary and community sector

3.1 Our Relationship with Strategic Partners (cont)

Our relationship with North Northamptonshire Council and West Northamptonshire Council

A strong strategic partnership is emerging and the Trust will be a reliable and effective partner. Improved outcomes for children, young people and families depend upon the Council and the Trust establishing and maintaining strong and effective partnership and joint working arrangements. Where challenges and issues arise, the Trust's commitment is to working with the Councils in a positive and collaborative manner. A joint approach to solution focussed problem solving reflects the symbiotic relationship that exists between the respective organisations.

The Councils retain statutory accountability for children's services, and they continue to provide and commission all those services for children that are not within the Trust; Corporate parenting, education support, school safeguarding, special educational needs and disabilities co-ordination (although support for children with SEND is certainly our business too), school admissions and place planning, virtual school for children in care, and early years services. The 'dependencies' have been set out in the Service Specification of the Trust Service Delivery Contract. These reflect arrangements and services for children that the Council must put in place to enable the Trust to achieve its priorities and performance targets.

The Councils' Corporate Parenting Role

Elected members are the corporate parents for Northamptonshire's Looked After Children and have a collective responsibility across services and local authorities to safeguard and promote their life chances. North Northamptonshire Council and West Northamptonshire Council will ensure the appropriate contribution

from education and other retained children's services, housing services and the Councils universal services in supporting Looked After Children.

North Northamptonshire Council and West Northamptonshire Council will support the Northamptonshire Corporate Parenting Board. The Trust will provide professional expertise and advice to the Corporate Parenting Board, in order to help the Council(s) discharge their responsibilities. This includes (but is not limited to) the provision of information on the profile of the county's care population, engaging with Looked After Children, planning services which meet their needs, monitoring their progress across a range of outcome areas and reviewing the effectiveness of corporate parenting functions.

In addition to the dependencies listed above, the Trust is supported by North Northamptonshire Council and West Northamptonshire Council in relation to a number of key strategic and operational dependencies that include (not an exhaustive list):

Strategic dependencies

- **Working in partnership**
The Councils will work in partnership with the Trust to implement and maintain ways of working and cooperative arrangements in relation to retained services, consulting and working in partnership with the Trust in respect of any proposed changes to retained services that will impact on the Trust.
- **Acting on inspection findings**
Following any regulatory inspection, the Councils are responsible for implementing certain actions in relation to the services/other statutory functions for which the Council is responsible/which

3.1 Our Relationship with Strategic Partners (cont)

have a direct impact on the performance by the Trust.

- **Access to grant funding**

The Councils will support the Trust in making applications (including providing required information) for grant funding relating to services that the Trust is required/contracted to provide.

Operational dependencies

- **Support Services Board**

The Trust will hold the Councils to account for the performance of all the support services that they deliver under service level agreements in accordance with the Support Services Agreement.

- **Property**

The Councils are required to ensure that the Trust has access to properties required to deliver the services. This includes both Councils' owned properties and those owned by third parties.

- **Information transfer**

The Councils will ensure that the Trust has access to all available information required by the Trust to deliver the services and functions identified within the contract.

- **Assets and supply contracts**

The Councils will ensure the Trust's access to the assets and supply contracts, in accordance with the agreed schedule.

- **Implementing post-LGR arrangements**

The Councils will work collaboratively with the Trust, providing all reasonable cooperation and assistance, to enable and achieve an orderly transition to post-LGR ownership and commissioning arrangements.

Joint working protocols

The Trust and the Councils have agreed a series of protocols covering the areas that fall outside of both the Service Delivery Contract and the Service Specification – in essence a framework for how people will work together and set the parameters for expected ways of working.

Our relationship with Strategic Partners

The Trust is committed to working collaboratively with partners to improve outcomes for children, young people and families. Early engagement between the Trust and strategic partners has taken place; further and ongoing engagement will be undertaken to ensure that children receive high quality and joined up services.

- **Early help**

The Trust, North Northamptonshire Council and West Northamptonshire Council will promote and create opportunities for co-operation with local partners to build the best possible Early Help Offer to improve the well-being of children and young people. Families should be supported to stay together where it is safe to do so.

- **Schools**

The Trust will maintain constructive and cooperative relationships with all schools who are an essential partner in safeguarding children and young people.

- **Early Years providers**

The Trust will maintain constructive and cooperative operational relationships with early years' providers.

- **Adult Social Care**

3.1 Our Relationship with Strategic Partners (cont)

The Trust will ensure that an effective working relationship is maintained with adult social care services within the Councils. Communication, cooperation and collaboration between the Trust and adult social services is critical to achieving the service outcomes, particularly as related to children's transition to adulthood, children at risk of parental mental health, substance misuse, children with disabilities and domestic abuse.

- **Health Providers (including Clinical Commissioning Group and Public Health)**

The Trust will work through the Integrated Care System (ICS) to carry out their duties as strong and effective partners in respect of safeguarding and delivering children's care in an integrated way.

- **Police**

The Trust will ensure that an effective working relationship is maintained with police services. This includes multi-agency front door arrangements and safeguarding services. Communication, cooperation and collaboration between the Trust and police services is key to achieving the service outcomes.

- **Voluntary and community sector (VCS) partners**

The Trust will manage relevant operational relationships with the VCS, playing an active role in promoting a healthy and engaged voluntary sector that provides good quality services for local people and to engage with the VCS as partners in the development of services.



3.2 Our Resources and Services

The Trust is commissioned by the North Northamptonshire Council and West Northamptonshire Council to deliver services relating to the following:

- **Early Help Services**
- **Children’s Social Care Services**
- **Children’s residential homes**
- **Fostering**
- **Adoption**
- **Care Leaver Services**
- **Youth Offending Services**
- **Business Support**
- **Corporate parenting alongside all partners**

Commissioning of services relating to the functions above, for example legal services

For the Trust to succeed in its ambition to make a sustainable improvement to the lives of children, young people and families, the Trust will be reliant upon the strong partnership with the Councils and of their performance of a number of support services that they retain responsibility for - The following support services are provided to the Trust by the Councils through ‘service level agreements’ whose performance are routinely monitored through a joint Support Services Board:

| Finance services | HR services | IT services | Customer services | Miscellaneous business support |
|--|------------------------------|-----------------------------|-------------------|--------------------------------|
| Internal Audit | Health, Safety and Wellbeing | ICT | Complaints team | Procurement |
| Finance operations | HR Policy & projects | Business systems and change | Customer services | Property services |
| Payments team and direct Payments team | Learning & Development | Report development | | |
| Insurance | Payroll & HR transactions | Web team | | |

3.3 Our Financial Strategy and Plans

Northamptonshire Children's Trust Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) focuses on achieving financial sustainability over the business plan period and explains how the business plan programmes align with financial priorities. In setting the medium term budget, we have focused on making informed recommendations that align with our commissioning Councils' affordability objectives as well as making best use of available funds to achieve the best outcomes for children and young people.

The financial implications, in terms of spend and savings will be carefully monitored over the plan period. It is clear that the coming years will be financially challenging, given the ongoing pressure on wider public sector budgets and national increases in levels of need for children's services. It is of paramount importance that the organisation continues to work with commissioning partners to ensure a mutual understanding of existing and emerging pressures and reaches agreement on the level of funding available and how that funding should be prioritised to achieve the best possible outcomes for the children and young people we support.

The organisation will be following three overarching financial principles over the coming years. Our aims are to;

1. **Achieving value for money**

The Trust will deliver good quality services and is working proactively towards improving services in line with inspection findings. The Trust will maximise the economies of scale through both the delivery and procurement of services. Key priorities will be the effective commissioning of placements and the recruitment and retention of a highly skilled workforce.

Benchmarking will be undertaken with statistical neighbour's and throughout the social care sector to ensure services are delivered

efficiency and effectively, exploring the use of innovative models and best practice.

2. **Maximise resources available to frontline services**

Regularly review budgets to ensure that resources available to frontline services are maximised and there is a sufficient balance to ensure that frontline services have the infrastructure to ensure they can continue to support children and families.

The following four aspects are important in achieving this objective.

- Adequate needs-led budget growth and achievement of savings
- Maximise income generation
- Periodic review of emerging priority areas
- Business plan programmes facilitate the effective use of resources

3. **Shared budget responsibility**

The Trust will develop a culture of shared budget responsibility with all staff being responsible for ensuring that every pound spent is maximising positive outcomes for children and young people and is in line with budget control processes. The newly established Transformation and Efficiencies programme board will provide a management framework to ensure projects are identified, monitored and delivered and support resources are deployed effectively. Progress against the plan and on the associated spend and savings implications will be monitored on an ongoing basis with the relevant leadership team having overarching oversight.

3.3 Our Financial Strategy and Plans (cont)

Revenue Budget and Capital Requirements

The table below sets out the revenue budget for the Trust for the financial period November 2020 – March 2022 (17 months). Detailed below are the key income and expenditure headlines, with the detailed projected expenditure and income analysis shown at appendix 7

| Budget Headings | Nov-Mar 2020/21 | Full year 2021/22 |
|---|-----------------|-------------------|
| Expenditure | | |
| Staffing | 19.33 | 47.12 |
| Placements, adoptions, Care and Transport | 31.31 | 74.63 |
| Contracts | 2.01 | 4.82 |
| Support Services | 5.34 | 12.31 |
| Total Expenditure | 57.99 | 138.88 |
| | | |
| Income | | |
| Contract sum | 57.27 | 137.15 |
| Direct Income | 0.72 | 1.73 |
| Total Income | 57.99 | 138.88 |

The Trust can has the ability to submit two types of In-Year Change to the Initial Contract Sum in order to improve service delivery or respond to changes in demand.

Type 1 : Where there has been an increase in the demand for the Services and/or an additional cost to the Trust that could not reasonably have been anticipated when the overall budget for the relevant Contract Year

Type 2 : The Trust has a business case proposal which would require an increase to the Contract Sum but would deliver an improvement in the Services or the Trust wishes to make an “invest to save” proposal which would require an increase to the Contract Sum in the short term but which would pay back to the Council in terms of a future reduction in the Contract Sum.

Capital Funding

The Trust will have the ability to access capital funding through the capital programmes of both unitary authorities through the submission of a business case.

Cash Flow and Reserves Policy

A working revenue reserve has been established for the Trust equivalent to three seventeenths (3/17ths) of the Initial Contract Sum to ensure the Trust has a sufficient operational resources. The contract sum payments will be made on a monthly basis equivalent to one seventeenth (1/17th) of the total contract sum.

The Trust determines the level of general reserves it wishes to maintain when setting the Budget. Reserves must be sufficient to meet unexpected events and protect NCT from over spends should

3.3 Our Financial Strategy and Plans (cont)

they occur. Earmarked reserves may also be established for specific purposes.

The levels of reserves that it is prudent to maintain, and will account for the NCT's reserves in accordance with the Reserves Policy and relevant Codes of Practice, ensuring the purpose and usage of reserves is clearly identified.

3.4 Risk Management

Our risk management framework helps to ensure we identify and manage those risks that could affect our ability to deliver the company's objectives. The management of risk is embedded in our day-to-day business activities, and well-established processes and policies are in place. All of our employees have a role in reducing risk through our internal control framework. Risks are recorded in a Trust risk register which is regularly reviewed by the Senior Leadership Team and reported to the Finance, Resources and Audit Committee of the Board of Directors.

The risk register includes strategic and operational risks.

- Strategic risks are the direct responsibility of the Senior Leadership Team and concern the overall direction of the Company and its sustainability.
- Operational risks concern day-to-day activities which need to be managed in order for services to be delivered. They are managed by individual service managers and are regularly reported to service directors.

The detailed risk register is shown at Appendix 8



3.5 About Northamptonshire Children’s Trust and our Business Plan

Local Government Reorganisation

Local government in Northamptonshire is facing its biggest change in over 40 years. As of 1st April 2021, the eight existing Councils have been replaced with two new Councils, North Northamptonshire Council and West Northamptonshire Council, who are now responsible for all public services provided to residents in their areas.

Our Governance

- **Owned by the North Northamptonshire and West Northamptonshire Councils**

The Trust was established as a company limited by guarantee on 1st November 2020, with the sole member at the point of contract commencement being Northamptonshire County Council. At this point only, core children’s social care services had been transferred to the Trust. On 1st April 2021 (vesting day), the County Council ceased to exist. At that point, North Northamptonshire Council and West Northamptonshire Council became the two members (owners) of the Trust, and the remaining infrastructure staff were transferred to the Trust.

- **Operational independence**

North Northamptonshire Council and West Northamptonshire Council, as the owners of the Trust, agree that Trust senior leadership team (which is accountable to the Trust Board) have unfettered operational independence in respect of the day-to-day management and performance of the services and functions that transfer at the point of contract commencement. The Councils will commission the contract and the performance of the Trust via the Director of Children’s Services. The Trust will also hold the Councils to account for the delivery and performance of

support services and related Council dependencies.

- **Reserved powers**

Although operationally independent of North Northamptonshire Council and West Northamptonshire Council, the Councils retain ‘reserved powers’ for certain significant matters including, for example, any appointment and/or removal of the Chief Executive or a Council appointed Director and/or any changes to the terms of such appointments; any changes/amendments to the Articles; the entering into by the Trust of any new third party contracts for the provision of services etc.

- **Governance Side Agreement**

A Governance Side Agreement is in place between the DfE, North Northamptonshire Council and West Northamptonshire Council, describing those areas of the Trust’s governance over which the DfE retains some control, or influence, whilst children’s social care services remain subject to Government intervention.

- **Role of the Trust Board**

The role of the Trust Board is to set the strategic aims of the Trust, oversee the management of the Trust and hold the executive team to account. It is the responsible body for the performance of the Trust in terms of delivering its legal and contractual obligations and achieving outcomes for children and young people in Northamptonshire.

For the period during which children’s social care services remain subject to Government intervention, the Chair of the Board is appointed by the Secretary of State for Education.

- **Structure of the Trust Board**

The Trust Board contains a wide portfolio of expertise and knowledge in children’s services, commercial, financial and other

3.5 About Northamptonshire Children's Trust and our Business Plan (cont)

disciplines. The Board provides support and challenge on the direction and strategy of the Trust. The Board comprises of:

- A non-executive Director selected as Chair; the Chief Executive of the Trust;
- up to 3 additional Executive Directors appointed by the Board;
- up to four Independent Non-Executive Directors appointed by the Board;
- up to four Council Directors nominated by the North Northamptonshire Council / West Northamptonshire Council and appointed by the Board.

The number of Council Directors shall not exceed the number of Independent Non-Executive Directors at any time.

• **Board committee structure**

The Trust Board has established two supporting committees; one covering finance, resources and audit, and a second covering practice, performance and quality. The membership of each committee is three independent Non-Executive Directors, a Council appointed Non-Executive Director, and an Executive Director.

- Both boards report into the Trust Board. All boards and their inter-dependencies can be seen in appendix 9

What is the business plan?

The Interim Business Plan for Northamptonshire Children's Trust for 2021 to 2022 is our organisation's most important strategic document. It articulates our vision for the Trust together with the most important outcomes that we want to achieve for children in partnership with our owning Councils and local strategic partners. It also sets out our objectives for what we want the Trust to be and

how we will change and develop in order to deliver these outcomes. Against each of our strategic outcomes, the business plan sets out priority activities that we will focus on delivering over the next year, while also providing a platform for improvement over the longer term. These are the key priorities that will enable us to deliver our vision.

The intention of our business plan is a high-level strategic document which provides a clear framework for decision-making about our services and how we prioritise and allocate our resources. Whilst this is a one-year interim business plan a three-year business plan for 2022/25 will be developed and which will be in place on 1st April 2022.

How we have developed the business plan

The priorities in our business plan are based on a sound understanding of the local needs of children, young people, and families across the county. We have developed a strong evidence base for our plan using demographic trends, performance data, needs analyses, and feedback from Ofsted (through inspection and monitoring visits), alongside more qualitative feedback about the effectiveness and impact of our services. Additionally, the content of the business plan has been informed through extensive consultation with: Children, young people, and families; staff; and strategic partners. The feedback from these engagements has helped to shape the Trust's vision, values and conditions for success.

How we will measure our progress?

We will monitor progress in two ways. Firstly, by being clear about

3.5 About Northamptonshire Children's Trust and our Business Plan (cont)

our priority activities, when we expect these to be delivered and monitoring our progress against our improvement plan. Secondly, through a set of key performance indicators (Appendix 5). These have been agreed with the Councils as part of our contract with them and by the Trust Board of Directors to monitor and assure that the Trust is improving outcomes for children and young people. There is regular monitoring and scrutiny of our performance, with progress against the key performance indicators reported publicly to each of the owning Councils.

Annual Review

Each year the business plan priority areas will be reviewed and updated. The annual review of the contract between the Trust, North Northamptonshire Council and West Northamptonshire Council provides the opportunity to consider: The quality of practice and outcomes for children; how the Trust discharges the Councils' functions; and if any Changes are required to the contract.

The annual review will also assess our progress at implementing priorities in the previous year, as well as refreshing our priorities and activities for the year ahead.

The Coronavirus Pandemic and this Business Plan.

The majority of 2020 was affected dramatically in the UK and worldwide by the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic. It is fair to say that no single event has had such a profound effect on the lives of people in this country since the nineteenth century. The pandemic will have a substantial impact on our county, county and more specifically the children, young people and families presently supported and those yet to access support. The impact to date

on services delivered by the Trust, has necessitated an extensive programme of work, as well as diversion of resources to in order to continue to provide high quality services.

While the full ramifications of the pandemic are still to be fully known – and will inevitable impact on aspects of our plans, it has provided the opportunity to be innovative and creative, establishing new ways of delivering our services; for example, through the increased use of digital solutions. Going forward, as part of our recovery planning we will be reviewing the lessons learnt and will apply best practice to our service delivery so we can continue to effectively meet the needs of our children, young people and families. For example, supporting the mental health of looked after children appropriate contact arrangements.

COVID-19 health protection board

As co-opted member of Northamptonshire COVID-19 health protection board the Trust contributes as the need arises, working in accordance with the countywide outbreak prevention and control plan.



Northamptonshire
Children's Trust

Section 4

Appendices

Appendix 1 – Outcomes Framework

Outcome 1- Live safe, be safe

- 1a) Children in need of support and protection are identified early and have their needs assessed in a timely and effective way
- 1b) The level of intervention is always proportionate to the assessed level of risk and need and children are supported to remain with their families where it is safe to do so
- 1c) When children become looked after they do so at the right time and are cared for in the right placement
- 1d) Children, young people and their families are able to access local services

Outcome 2 – Fulfil potential

- 2a) Children in Care access high quality education and training and feel motivated and ambitious about their future
- 2b) Children in Care and Care Leavers are able to make the most of the choices available to them after leaving school, engage positively in post 16 learning and successfully transition to adulthood

Outcome 3 – Develop resilience

- 3a) Children and Young People have strong relationships with their family members and the whole family builds resilience, feeling part of and pride in their community
- 3b) Strong community partnerships reduce the risk of exploitation and abuse

Outcome 4 – Enjoy good health and wellbeing

- 4a) Children receive timely support and intervention to promote health and wellbeing
- 4b) Children, young people and their families are encouraged and supported to lead a healthy lifestyle

Appendix 2 – Updated Improvement Plan

1. Leadership

Our Improvement will be driven by a stable senior leadership team that provides strategic leadership and direction, clarity of the vision for the service and sets clear priorities and expectations. The senior leadership team will be visible to and engage with all staff. Every manager at all levels will be a leader for improvement in Northamptonshire with a clear understanding of their responsibilities and accountabilities and will know what good looks like.

- The quality of management decision-making, oversight and challenge.
- Clear reunification plans and support services for children returning home

| Ref | Change to be secured and sustained | Actions | Lead and Support | Status update | Progress Update |
|-----|--|--|------------------|---------------|---|
| 1.1 | A stable senior team providing consistent and effective strategic leadership | 1.1a Sufficient SLT capacity in place | NCT | Completed | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New Trust Leadership Team in place - all perm except AD Early Help; perm AD Early Help due to start Mar/Apr • Positive impact of leadership recognised in Ofsted focused visit |
| | | 1.1b Refreshed Vision and Principles for Children's Trust | NCT | In progress | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Workshops held by JUMP with staff, foster carers, young people. • Draft vision and values completed • Practice Model launched Nov 20 • 58 minute sessions with approx. 600 staff held by Chief Exec refined vision, commitment to children and conditions for success. • Workforce Strategy Steering Group, Practitioners Improvement Board, Equalities Steering Group further developed conditions for success • Finalisation in progress for March completion plus priorities and outcomes framework to measure progress - to form Trust Strategy • Planning for formal Trust launch April |
| | | 1.1c Visible & Engaged Leadership with presence across Early Help & Social Care <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regular Internal comms (staff and managers) • Termly all staff briefing sessions • Regular Practice Weeks throughout year • Consistent and regular management meetings structure in place • You Said, We Did included in comms | NCT | In progress | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Trust Comms plan in place and delivering regular comms • Fortnightly newsletter for staff and managers in place • Fortnightly extended SLT meeting in place plus regular service senior management team meetings • Virtual staff briefings completed August, Sept, Nov, Dec, scheduled for Feb • Safeguarding Practice week held in Dec • Positive feedback during Ofsted focused visit from staff regarding support from managers • Vast majority of managers are permanent • Staff turnover decreasing • LGA Social Work Health Check survey completed Dec, further staff survey in development |

Appendix 2 – Updated Improvement Plan (cont)

| Ref | Change to be secured and sustained | Actions | Lead and Support | Status update | Progress Update |
|-----|---|---|------------------|---------------|---|
| 1.2 | Team, Service and Strategic Managers providing rigorous and effective oversight | 1.2a Clarity of standards for all managers <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Revised Managers Development Programme content for Social Care Practitioners: to include Strategic Managers Reflective Supervision – consistency and quality | NCT | In progress | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Thematic 'Brilliant Basics' CPD sessions with Operational Managers being delivered Phase 2 management development programme underway (action learning sets/ coaching/ mentoring) Planning for revised leadership programme for all levels of management and regular leadership sessions across service Practice Model launched Nov Changes to be made to Care First supervision form to support reflective supervision. Training provided by Research in Practice Safeguarding Audit and Children in Care Practice Week Action Plans being delivered which include focus on improving standards of supervision and management oversight |
| | | 1.2b Support for Managers to deliver to expectations <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mentoring and Coaching Offers from Partners in Practice, Social Work Academy, Learning & Development Research in Practice Development Programme | NCT | In progress | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> PIP mentoring offer for managers PIP to provide mentoring for TM's in Mash re: threshold decisions. Audit being completed re: management oversight in mash. Team and Service Manager development programme phase 2 offered mentoring / coaching 2 managers in Social Work Academy offering coaching - MASH TM receiving 2 managers in Social Care teams nominated for Research in practice development programme starting Sept Thematic 'Brilliant Basics' CPD sessions with Operational Managers completed- positive feedback |
| | | 1.2c Monthly robust oversight and monitoring in place <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Performance clinics Budget monitoring and forecasting Establishment monitoring | NCT | In progress | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Performance clinics in place with consistent TOR, successes celebrated at clinics. SLT monitoring of COVID specific management information in addition to business as usual information Revised model for establishment and staffing budget monitoring implemented August Tighter grip on recruitment and staffing spend by SLT, improved ownership of budgets and savings by ADs – further progress needed with managers' ownership Budget Management and forecasting to be focus of new Support Structure to be in place Apr 21 |

Appendix 2 – Updated Improvement Plan (cont)

| Ref | Change to be secured and sustained | Actions | Lead and Support | Status update | Progress Update |
|-----|--|---|--------------------------------------|---------------|---|
| 1.3 | Managing demand for specialist support and improving outcomes through effective earlier intervention | 1.3a Front Door Demand <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Rigorous application of thresholds Strengthened Early Help and Support pathways (see Partnership section below) Improved partnership approach to early intervention and risk management including strengthened Domestic Abuse triage (see Partnership section below) | NCT Education Health Police | In progress | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Early Help Strategy agreed by NSCP and action plan being implemented. EH inclusion in MASH Pods and matrix management to be implemented Feb 21 Impact of COVID has begun to show at the Front Door - demand and complexity Slight increase in proportion of contacts to referrals (29% Dec 20) Referrals NFAs increasing. Service review undertaken in Dec 2020 to confirm position and update SLT Increase in % referrals with previous referral in last 12 months - still above comparators. Action plan following audit on re-referrals being implemented 97.% of our assessments have been authorised within 45 days (Dec20) with the average duration of completed assessments at 23 working days; it is positive that the assessment work has remained effective although demand has increased. |
| | | 1.3b Child Protection Demand <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improved confidence in managing risk Strengthened CIN practice | NCT Education Health Police | In progress | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Potential risk of surge mitigated with preventative approach of utilising Early Help Coordinators to be more visible in schools and support the management risk. This was in place from Sept 2020 Rate of CIN below comparator authorities Rate of assessments above comparator authorities - may be covid related Rate of CP Plans close to comparator authorities. Signs of Safety bite size sessions for Team Managers, Advanced Practitioners and Senior Social Workers for all relevant services being delivered COVID has seen an increase in complexity of cases associated with CP conferences and Emergency intake. Robust application of thresholds and risk management continue to be priority areas. Impacted by Covid 19 |
| | | 1.3c Children in Care Demand <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Development of Edge of Care Offer Improved approach to reunification at edge of care and for children in care Refresh and deliver Sufficiency Strategy children in the right placement to meet their needs | NCT Education Health Police | In progress | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sufficiency Assessment and Strategy has been approved and is now being implemented - positive feedback from Ofsted inspector regarding the quality of the strategy. Recruitment of Edge of Care workers in progress - Recruitment to 7 roles of the 10 undertaken in January 2021 Early Help based in DAAT and Safeguarding facilitating step downs. This is having an impact in the smooth transition from Social Care to Early Help, but we acknowledge that we need to review stepdown process in order to maximise families stepping down to early help, in terms of numbers. Process reviewed and implemented in November 2020 Thematic audit showed good evidence of IRO input and tracking on a number of cases relating to children in care. Courts using guidance to promote CO for a year before SGO application further work planned Focus on revocation of care orders and s.20 via there are still approx. 20 of these and a plan going forward will come to SLT Safeguarding Practice Week in development for November: focus on effectiveness of keeping children within families 52 adoptions made between Apr - Nov 20 |

Appendix 2 – Updated Improvement Plan (cont)

| Ref | Change to be secured and sustained | Actions | Lead and Support | Status update | Progress Update |
|-----|--|---|------------------|---------------|---|
| 1.4 | Service Design to support effective practice and improved outcomes | 1.4a Revised Service Design <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Options Appraisal on service structure Input of staff at all levels into service design Implementation of revised service structure | NCT | In progress | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Agreement that current operational structure will 'lift and shift' to Children's Trust 1st Nov and locality based re-design to be considered following establishment of Trust. Tupe successfully completed, phase 2 support service tupe to be progressed. Staff turnover reduced (from 14% to 12% amongst social workers), recent increase in vacancies due to number of additional Covid response posts added to establishment |
| | | 1.4b Strengthened offer for adolescents <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Service restructure to enable increase in capacity to help young people at risk of all forms of exploitation and strengthening approaches to respond to extra-familial risk | NCT | Completed | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Targeted Support Adolescent Service has been implemented 1st Sept which incorporates Adolescent Service. Adolescent social work team re-organisation implemented 1st October, creating additional team in Safeguarding ensuring social work oversight and decision making for social workers previously in Targeted Support - Completed Adolescent Strategy Agreed. December 2020 Vulnerable Adolescents Panel implemented 3 December 2020 Contextual Safeguarding Toolkit developed through NSCP sub-group. Contextual Safeguarding training scoped through NSCP partners - based on national best-practice and to reflect SC - Contextual Safeguarding Toolkit. Agreed and being driven by WFD in Nov 2020 Practice Guidance for Missing sign off from Safeguarding board - November 2020 |

Appendix 2 – Updated Improvement Plan (cont)

2. Workforce and Resources

Improvement for children and families will be delivered by our staff, who are therefore our most valuable resource. We need to recruit, develop and retain committed, skilful and child-centred staff and provide them with the system conditions in which good practice will flourish.

- Social worker caseloads that enable all children to have an allocated social worker and workers to have manageable workloads
- Sufficiency of placements that meet children's needs.
- Stability and sustainability of the social care workforce.

| Ref | Change to be secured and sustained | Actions | Lead and Support | Status update | Progress Update |
|-----|--|---|------------------------------|---------------|--|
| 2.1 | Investing in our workforce so that we have strong and stable staff | 2.1a Develop the skills and confidence of Team and Service Managers to lead good practice and effective services <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deliver Phase 2 of Round 1 Team and Service Manager development programme (mentoring, coaching, action learning sets, individual training needs) • Deliver refreshed Round 2 Team and Service Manager development programme • Deliver thematic training to managers based on QA findings | NCT Learning and Development | In progress | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PIP to provide mentoring for Service Managers • Team and Service Manager development programme Phase 2 coaching / mentoring • 2 managers in Social Work Academy to be trained as accredited Coaches / Mentors (Sept / Dec 2020) • 2 managers in Social Care teams nominated for Research in practice development programme starting Sept • Thematic 'Brilliant Basics' CPD sessions and Signs of Safety bite size sessions with Operational Managers (starting October) • Improvement actions regarding supervision and management oversight identified in QA activity action plans |
| | | 2.1ab Refreshed Continuous Professional Development Offer <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Signs of Safety CPD plan in place and implemented • Refresh CPD pathway for Practitioner roles • Refresh routes in practice offer • Develop Social Work Academy to support Practitioners at different levels of the organisation • Develop CPD offer for the Trust | NCT Learning and Development | In progress | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Signs of Safety trajectory plan in place. • Additional DfE funding secured • Signs of Safety Project Manager and additional Advanced Practitioners recruitment under way • Training available to staff, Induction programme offered by the SW Academy - all new staff attend. Signs of Safety induction package given to all new starters. • Signs of Safety training plan in place (has been impacted by Covid) • Social worker pipeline plan developed • 10 additional Practice Educators to be trained to support social work students • Social Work Academy and L&D leading review of CPD framework refresh • Staff turnover reduced from 14% to 11% |
| | | 2.1c Improved Working Conditions <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • -Develop Trust agile working policy • -Improve business processes to improve efficiency and robustness (Transport for children and financial approval) • -Improve career development support and voice to minority groups | NCT | In progress | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To be developed with Trust development • Some positive impact of flexible and home working arrangements during COVID: reduced sickness rates, positive feedback from staff - lessons learnt to inform future policy • Transport challenge unit pilot in process of being set up • Equalities steering group and Forum in place and Equalities Strategy in development • Financial approval processes to be reviewed • Recruitment processes being reviewed to further improve |

Appendix 2 – Updated Improvement Plan (cont)

| Ref | Change to be secured and sustained | Actions | Lead and Support | Status update | Progress Update |
|-----|--|--|------------------|---------------|---|
| 2.2 | Sufficient Social Work capacity to deliver high practice standards | 2.2a Recruitment <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Directorate and service level recruitment planning in place and implemented | NCT | In progress | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Recent increase in staff leaving following positive progress in harder to recruit to teams. Oct data shows increase in perm staff in all SW services except safeguarding. Increase in vacancies in assessment teams in Oct data due to additional Covid posts. Oct data shows decrease in vacancies in CIC teams Rolling Recruitment campaign for DAAT and Safeguarding 20.4% of the social worker workforce is filled by agency staff Agency workers, in FTE, have remained static from September to October NOSWs recruitment: 12 started Jan and 7 due to start in May Directorate and Service level workforce planning in progress - impacted by resources deployed to Trust TUPE and HR Business Partner leaving |
| | | 2.2b Retention <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Deliver workforce strategy | NCT | In progress | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Permanent staff turnover has steadily, slowly decreased from 14.08% (Dec 19) to 11.25% (Oct 20). Turnover in Prevention, Early Help and Safeguarding has remained consistent around 13% (13.43% October 2020) during the COVID months Recent increase in staff leaving (Nov/Dec) following improvement in staff turnover and vacancy rate. High proportions of agency remain in DAAT & some Safeguarding teams and recent addition of Covid posts in teams has increased vacancy rate New Trust Recruitment campaign launched Dec, Chief Exec contacting applicants Low sickness level during COVID response; some positive and some negative impacts of working from home Vast majority of Senior Social Worker appointments to date are internal staff Equality steering group and Forum established following feedback from staff, equality strategy in development |
| | | 2.2c Improved Capacity <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improve efficiency of practice workflows and processes Demand management activities (as in Leadership section above) | NCT | In progress | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Additional capacity agreed for DAAT and EDT Adolescent service social work re-organisation increasing capacity in Safeguarding North Additional short term social work capacity agreed to manage expected surge in demand following all children returning to school Ofsted focused visit highlighted high caseloads in DAAT - have been improvements since but remain challenge in DAAT and Safeguarding Revised duty system has led to improved timeliness of single assessments at 97.1% (Dec); which is above comparators Timeliness relating to children in need and child protection above comparators Additional Family Support Worker capacity being considered to support life story work |

Appendix 2 – Updated Improvement Plan (cont)

| Ref | Change to be secured and sustained | Actions | Lead and Support | Status update | Progress Update |
|-----|--|---|------------------|---------------|---|
| 2.3 | Delivering our Sufficiency Strategy so we have sufficient stable placements that meet the needs of our children and young people | 2.3a Refresh and deliver the Sufficiency Strategy <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Placement Panel is effective and evidences activity Fostering Improvement Plan and IFA set up Increase in house specialist foster carers QA of fostering and residential framework Options appraisal for bridging foster care placements to support step down Options appraisal for additional HMO for UASC | NCT | In progress | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reduction in children in residential homes achieved over period of last strategy Placement Review Project achieved £1m savings to date and positive impact for children In house specialist Foster Carer recruitment will potentially provide 9 placements Utilisation of mainstream foster care placements remains steady at 86% Dec 2020 - net gain of 2 carers IFA step down fostering placements in progress (provider in place and mobilising) Additional HMO project progressing Permanency tracking arrangements introduced in June - showing improvements. Small increase in % of children with in house foster carers (excl. friends and family carers) |

3. Relationship-based Practice

We are focused upon evidence based practice that works with children, young people and families to help them achieve positive changes. Our practice model is child-centred at its heart and evidenced through all that we do. Our primary practice framework is Signs of Safety, which will deliver practice that is rooted in the relationships that our practitioners form with children and families, and is a strengths-based approach building upon the assets in the family network.

- Timely and purposeful visits to children to ensure that their needs are understood
- The quality of social work assessments and plans so that they are consistently timely and are effective in improving children's experiences
- The identification of and response to risk in relation to long-standing concerns of chronic neglect.
- Pathway plans that include clearly defined objectives for young people.
- Proactive intervention and focus for older teenagers disengaged from support services.

| Ref | Change to be secured and sustained | Actions | Lead and Support | Status update | Progress Update |
|-----|--|--|------------------|---------------|---|
| 3.1 | All practitioners understand the standards of good practice and purpose of our involvement and intervention in families' lives | 3.1a Implement a Practice Model <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop and agree Practice Model with staff that clarifies our principles, ways of working with and purpose of intervention and involvement with families Equip and support staff through CPD offer to implement the Practice Model Review Induction to reflect Practice Model Ensure Collaborative Case Audits and Practice Weeks are undertaken | NCT | In progress | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Practice Model drafted and reviewed by Practitioners Improvement Board - This has now been signed off and launched by Principal SW. CIC Practice Week held end July 20., Safeguarding Practice Week held in Dec Some improvement in collaborative case audits identified - further to go Good practice shared with staff. Service plans including the Learning from Audit and Learning from Practice week are being developed within the service for finalisation in January 21 . |

Appendix 2 – Updated Improvement Plan (cont)

| Ref | Change to be secured and sustained | Actions | Lead and Support | Status update | Progress Update |
|-----|--|--|------------------|---------------|---|
| 3.2 | Our practice is child-centred | <p>3.2a Evidence of Voice of the Child and of engaging parents in meaningful relationships with practitioners</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consistent and appropriate use of Three Houses and other direct work tools to inform assessments and plans • Evidence of relationship based practice with families • Safety Planning and Family Network meetings to be undertaken with all families • All direct work to be evidenced on child file | NCT | In progress | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clear expectation that voice of the child is considered/recorded by all Social Workers. Voice of the child more evidenced through work completed - recognised by Ofsted Focused Visit • Child's voice is integrated into the QA audit tool. • Young Inspectors participation in Practice Weeks, with focus on voice of child • The quality of assessment and plans depend largely on caseloads and do vary. • Practice Model includes emphasis on whole family and relationship based practice. Launched November • Ofsted Focused Visit found better quality child in need and child protection assessments, using Signs of Safety, capturing lived experience of children and most visits demonstrating a child focus • Ofsted focused visit found increasing examples of direct child centred work that informs plans and planning |
| 3.3 | Our practice is sound and continuously improving | <p>3.3a Improvement in the consistency of quality in:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assessments • Plans • Pathway Plans • Reviews • Management Oversight - including rationale for recommendations and appropriate challenge | NCT | In progress | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quality Assurance activity and Ofsted identifying improvements although inconsistency remains • IRO / CP Chair oversight & escalation processes in place to capture early identification of concerns for management review & actions to address. • Practice in safeguarding is improving evidenced by performance; feedback from service users/judiciary/gateway panels. • Brilliant Basics CPD to be delivered to managers • Action plans from QA activity and Practice Weeks are being implemented. • Ofsted focused visit found Quality and impact of decision making for disabled children are satisfactory • Ofsted focused visit found tangible improvements in quality of social work practice |

Appendix 2 – Updated Improvement Plan (cont)

| Ref | Change to be secured and sustained | Actions | Lead and Support | Status update | Progress Update |
|-----|--|---|------------------|---------------|--|
| 3.4 | We work with the whole family network | 3.4a Improvement in the consistency of quality in <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SoS supporting tools and approaches • Chronologies • Genograms • Consideration of fathers / male carers purpose of visits to children • Assessments: lived life of child - views of all involved to be explicitly recoded plans to be focused and measure & progressed all above need to be child not adult focused | NCT | In progress | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quality Assurance activity and Ofsted focused visit identified inconsistency. QA function agreed for EH and Partnership in December 2020 via DfE Partnership funding • Interim DAAT Service Manager focus on QA and working with MASH Service Manager regarding threshold application reviews • Brilliant Basics and Signs of Safety bite size sessions to operational managers delivered from Oct |
| | | 3.4b Deliver FGC Pilot <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • deliver pilot and contribute to evaluation | NCT | In progress | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • FGC pilot is underway with the first meetings having been held with families |
| 3.5 | Signs of Safety is embedded at the core of our practice | 3.5a Signs of Safety Practice Priorities identified and delivered <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • small no of priorities for 2020 • Trajectory plan delivered • PIP to support development of a learning culture and confidence in using SoS | NCT | In progress | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Signs of Safety trajectory plan in place • Additional DfE funding secured • Signs of Safety Project Manager and additional Advanced Practitioners to be recruited • Key deliverables are in place and programme plan in development • Signs of Safety bit size sessions have been delivered since Oct • Further 5 day intensive training is in place for 2021 to develop additional Practice Champions . • Ofsted focused found better quality child in need and child protection assessments, using Signs of Safety, capturing lived experience of children and most visits demonstrating a child focus |
| 3.6 | We plan and engage effectively with our Care Leavers to help them improve their outcomes | 3.6 Continue to achieve effective planning and increase engagement with care leavers <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • improve quality and effectiveness of early pathway planning • Up to date risk assessments and pathway plans | NCT | In progress | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ofsted focused visit identified some concerns re two homeless young people who had not accepted support. • Recent reduction in up to date Pathway Plans from 92% to 86% (Dec 20) and in % in suitable accommodation , although still above England average |

Appendix 2 – Updated Improvement Plan (cont)

4. Quality Assurance

We know ourselves and our practice well through rigorous Quality Assurance. We are a learning organisations and our approach seeks to ensure that learning is captured from a range of sources centred upon collaborative case audits, feedback from children and families, staff and understanding our data. We will ensure that learning is then acted upon to drive effective improvement.

- The use of quality assurance activity such as case auditing and escalations to inform and improve practice.
- Action planning in response to the findings of serious case reviews.

| Ref | Change to be secured and sustained | Actions | Lead and Support | Status update | Progress Update |
|-----|---|--|------------------|---------------|---|
| 4.1 | All managers know the quality of practice in their service and drive learning and practice improvements | 4.1 Delivery of QA Framework <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Auditing • Practice weeks • Performance clinics • Training and coaching for audit consistency • Escalations • Quarterly QA reports shared with staff • Review of QAF in light of new Trust Strategy • Regular Quality Board, chaired by Chief Exec to be established | NCT | In progress | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CIC Practice week July and Safeguarding Practice Week completed • Increasing quality of audits and side by side audits • QA training in place and management development session planned for Jan • Performance clinics in place across social care services with standard terms of reference • Ofsted focused visit identified that our QA activity identified same themes as inspection, and confirmed variability in quality of QA • Ofsted focused visit identified QAF and findings from audit activity are underpinning improvements to practice |
| 4.2 | We can evidence learning and improvement as a result of our QA activity | 4.2 Learning Loops are in place and influence practice <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learning and practice development opportunities are available to staff in a range of mediums and through communication structures • Management oversight and audit • Peer Thematic Audit • Practice week • SCR/Practice Review • PIP | NCT | In progress | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learning from QA activity being shared in staff and leaders' newsletters, service management team meetings. Action plans developed by services in response to QA activity and Practice Week • Audit team completing learning reviews and appreciative inquiry sessions. QA, SoS and Social Work Academy delivering training sessions with managers in response to QA findings. • 6 step briefings to be produced to disseminate audit findings • Principal Social Worker role merged into Social Work Academy Service Manager role to improve learning loop • Ofsted focused visit identified QAF and findings from audit activity are underpinning improvements to practice • Ofsted focused visit found increasing examples of direct child centred work that informs plans and planning |

Appendix 2 – Updated Improvement Plan (cont)

5. Partnerships

Effective partnership working is essential to good practice. We will work strategically with our core partners to share responsibility for driving our improvement plan, and all our staff will pursue effective multi-agency practice.

- Strategic development of early help services to ensure that children’s needs are identified and responded to at the earliest opportunity.
- Timely transition planning for disabled children in care to reduce uncertainties and anxieties for them and their families.
- The response to children at risk of exploitation to ensure that their vulnerabilities are fully recognised and lead to intervention to keep them safe.
- The identification of and response to risk when contacts relating to safeguarding concerns for children are received into the MASH.

| Ref | Change to be secured and sustained | Actions | Lead and Support | Status update | Progress Update |
|-----|--|--|--|---------------|--|
| 5.1 | Children and families receive effective early help from all partners | 5.1a Early Help is strengthened across the partnership <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • EH Strategy • EH Action Plan • EH Pathways • Partner training re thresholds and SoS • PAUSE • DFE funded support | NCT Education SEND Police Health | In progress | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • EH Strategy agreed by NSCP, action plan now being delivered. This is expected to increase early support and reduce inappropriate contacts to social care • Edge of Care project in implementation phase go live planned for January. One role outstanding from this proposal - recruitment expected Jan 2021 • Pause went live in October • Increasing number of initial contacts signposted to Early Help Early help workers facilitate the right support whether that is provided by our Targeted support or partners in the locality area. • EH inclusion in MASH Pods and matrix management to be implemented Feb 21 |
| 5.2 | Improved transitions for care leavers with disabilities | 5.2a Clear transition pathway | NCT Adults' Services Education SEND | In progress | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There are closer working relationships with Adult Social Care and processes and timescales for children referred to Adult Social care have been strengthened. • The implementation of the Moving in to Adulthood Panel (MIAP) and referral process has led to improved outcomes. • Further improvements so that the system of transition as a whole is enabling earlier allocation and assessment, in particular for children and young people with Mental Health difficulties |

Appendix 2 – Updated Improvement Plan (cont)

| Ref | Change to be secured and sustained | Actions | Lead and Support | Status update | Progress Update |
|-----|---|---|--|----------------------|---|
| 5.3 | Children are protected through effective Multi-Agency Sguarding | 5.3a Robust and effective identification of and response to risk in the MASH <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consistent application of thresholds Effective Domestic abuse triage | NCT Education SEND Police Health | In progress | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The process for Domestic Abuse notifications has been further refined in the MASH. All high and medium risk Domestic Abuse notifications where children are present or involved are progressed through the MADRA (Multi Agency Daily Risk Assessment) meeting, and in addition to this the standard risk Domestic Abuse notifications where there have been 3 incidents of Domestic Abuse within a 12-month period and those where professional judgement identifies risks to the child. Ofsted focused visit found this helps ensure risks are understood and sensitive child and victim centred safety plans are implemented quickly MASH service plan will be completed partnership with agencies and finalised by end of Jan |
| | | 5.3b Effective identification of and response to children at risk of exploitation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Development of county wide approach to all forms of exploitation Development of youth strategy and offer Improve management oversight of children who are missing education | NCT Education SEND Police Health | In progress | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Vulnerable Adolescents Strategy completed Dec 2020 New adolescent service configuration, including Missing Children response, implemented 1st September 2020, that will enable a more responsive and preventative service for exploited and vulnerable teenagers and their families. Completed September 2020 Vulnerable Adolescents Panel agreed, to be operational from the 3rd December - completed Ofsted focused visit found effective collaborative work with partners helping to prevent or reduce harm to missing and exploited children, however targeted services for adolescents are currently fragmented Additional action added regarding children missing education following Ofsted Focused Visit Oct 20 |
| | | 5.3c Improvement in Practice <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assessments informed by partners' information Regular multi-agency meetings | NCT Education SEND Police Health | In progress Amber | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Locality multi-disciplinary meetings in place for children in care and children with disabilities |

Appendix 2 – Updated Improvement Plan (cont)

| Ref | Change to be secured and sustained | Actions | Lead and Support | Status update | Progress Update |
|-----|--|--|---|---------------|---|
| 5.4 | Children in Care and Care Leavers have the full range of their needs met | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 5.4a Improved Health Outcomes Mental Health pathways for children in care and care leavers Care Leavers health passports develop Mental Health support teams in schools | NCT Education SEND Police Health | In progress | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Public Health funded projects for children's mental health now progressing (following some delay due to COVID) All Children in Care are now able to access mental health consultation where next steps are agreed |
| | | 5.4b Strengthened corporate parenting <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increased range of apprenticeships and EET options | NCT Education SEND Police Health | In progress | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pathway planning compliance improved above target at 93% Care Leavers in Suitable accommodation has shown a small decline due to cohort size and young people in custody Care Leavers in EET has shown a slight reduction due to covid related redundancy and covid impact Audit checklist introduced for all in touch visits. |
| | | 5.4c Housing needs are met <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Access to emergency accommodation Joint pathway for 16 and 17 yo's | NCT Education SEND Housing Police Health | In progress | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> As part of the Early Help Partnership, Housing have allocated single points of contact across the county to support the Partnership approach. This has been shared with NCT staff and Housing have been asked to join NSCP Early Help subgroup and Vulnerable Adolescent Panel Zero 16-17 year olds came into care under s.20 in Sept and Oct (excl. UASC) |
| | | 5.4d Educational needs are met <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Children in care are in appropriate educational placements to meet their need Reduce number of children in care who are excluded Safeguarding performance clinics to monitor PEPs | NCT Virtual School for Looked After Children | In progress | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> NEW ACTION FOLLOWING OFSTED FOCUSED VISIT OCT 20 Children in care at risk of being excluded or already excluded are discussed at the Vulnerable Pupils Panel held on a 3 weekly basis. Remedial activity planned and delivered. Multi agency weekly meeting review all children who are excluded or at risk to ensure that they have oversight and multi-agency input that plans interventions and promotes an outcome focus for education placements to be achieved. |

Appendix 2 – Updated Improvement Plan (cont)

6. Finance and Resources

Aligning with our commissioning Councils’ affordability objectives as well as making best use of available funds to achieve the best outcomes for children and young people. It is of paramount importance that the organisation continues to work with commissioning partners to ensure a mutual understanding of existing and emerging pressures and reaches agreement on the level of funding available and how that funding should be prioritised to achieve the best possible outcomes for the children and young people we support.

- Regularly review budgets to ensure that resources available to frontline services are maximised and there is a sufficient balance to ensure that frontline services have the infrastructure to ensure they can continue to support children and families.
- Develop a culture of shared budget responsibility with all staff being responsible for ensuring that every pound spent is maximising positive outcomes for children and young people and is in line with budget control processes.

| Ref | Change to be secured and sustained | Actions | Lead and Support | Status update | Progress Update |
|-----|--|--|----------------------------|---------------|--|
| 6.1 | Develop a culture of budget responsibility and accountability. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Budgets aligned to activity • Budget manager training and support • Closer interaction between finance and service | NCT | In progress | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review of Budgets underway with alignment of budgets to activity • Revised reporting capturing high risk and demand led budget area • Development of budget forecasting models and predictive modelling of demand pressures • Budget monitoring and Reporting systems established within the Trust Governance framework |
| 6.2 | Maximise available resources | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regularly review budgets to ensure that resources available to frontline services are maximised and there is a sufficient balance to ensure that frontline services have the infrastructure to ensure they can continue to support children and families. • Adequate needs-led budget growth and achievement of savings • Maximise income generation • Periodic review of emerging priority areas • Business plan programmes facilitate the effective use of resources | NCT Education Health | In progress | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development of Transformation and Efficiency Board • Benchmarking analysis of statistical neighbours • Review of best practice/ innovation across the sector. I.e. London councils work on placement models |
| 6.3 | Ensure Best value | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maximise the economies of scale through both the delivery and procurement of services. | NCT | In progress | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review the delivery of all services to ensure value for money • Review all contracts and maximise opportunities through procurement and commissioning • Adherence with finance regulations and compliance with scheme of Delegation |

Appendix 2 – Updated Improvement Plan (cont)

| Ref | Change to be secured and sustained | Actions | Lead and Support | Status update | Progress Update |
|-----|--|--|---|---------------|---|
| 5.4 | Children in Care and Care Leavers have the full range of their needs met | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 5.4a Improved Health Outcomes Mental Health pathways for children in care and care leavers Care Leavers health passports develop Mental Health support teams in schools | NCT Education SEND Police Health | In progress | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Public Health funded projects for children's mental health now progressing (following some delay due to COVID) All Children in Care are now able to access mental health consultation where next steps are agreed |
| | | 5.4b Strengthened corporate parenting <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increased range of apprenticeships and EET options | NCT Education SEND Police Health | In progress | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pathway planning compliance improved above target at 93% Care Leavers in Suitable accommodation has shown a small decline due to cohort size and young people in custody Care Leavers in EET has shown a slight reduction due to covid related redundancy and covid impact Audit checklist introduced for all in touch visits. |
| | | 5.4c Housing needs are met <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Access to emergency accommodation Joint pathway for 16 and 17 yo's | NCT Education SEND Housing Police Health | In progress | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> As part of the Early Help Partnership, Housing have allocated single points of contact across the county to support the Partnership approach. This has been shared with NCT staff and Housing have been asked to join NSCP Early Help subgroup and Vulnerable Adolescent Panel Zero 16-17 year olds came into care under s.20 in Sept and Oct (excl. UASC) |
| | | 5.4d Educational needs are met <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Children in care are in appropriate educational placements to meet their need Reduce number of children in care who are excluded Safeguarding performance clinics to monitor PEPs | NCT Virtual School for Looked After Children | In progress | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> NEW ACTION FOLLOWING OFSTED FOCUSED VISIT OCT 20 Children in care at risk of being excluded or already excluded are discussed at the Vulnerable Pupils Panel held on a 3 weekly basis. Remedial activity planned and delivered. Multi agency weekly meeting review all children who are excluded or at risk to ensure that they have oversight and multi-agency input that plans interventions and promotes an outcome focus for education placements to be achieved. |

Appendix 3 – Trust Board Members

The Trust Board comprises of directors and Non-Executive Directors. The Executive Directors are responsible for running the organisation and for making sure that it delivers on its statutory obligations. They are also responsible for making sure that the Trust performs

at the highest possible level – offering the best possible services to children, young people, and families within Northamptonshire. The Non-Executive Directors are appointed for their expertise and take part in decision making at Board meetings.



Julian Wooster, Chair

Julian grew up in West London. He has always had an interest in strengthening disadvantaged communities and his first degree was in urban planning. He joined the social work profession after volunteering in a drugs crisis rehab centre, starting as a social work assistant. He has been involved in the social work profession for 34 years. He says that his toughest social work job was in the East End of London well before the redevelopment. He recalls the level of material poverty and violence: “the friendly East End by then no longer existed”. This was before the profession became specialist, so Julian worked with all need groups including carrying out mental health assessments: “my favourite role was that of a frontline team manager, where I learnt most about team work and about how I can support others by changing my approach”. Julian has extensive senior managerial experience, 10 years a Director of Children’s Services in Somerset and Portsmouth, 8 years as deputy director in Hillingdon and Wandsworth and 3 years leading Cambridgeshire’s social work teams. On a personal level he has three adult children and reflecting how families have become more dispersed his eldest son and grandchildren are permanently resident in the USA, his daughter is in Liverpool and he has a brother in New Zealand. He relaxes by enjoying the natural environment, including through photography.

Appendix 3 – Trust Board Members



Colin Foster, Chief Executive

Colin is an experienced Director of Children's Services and has 17 years public sector experience in Children's Services. He changed career from commercial management where he undertook a number of roles in UK, USA, Europe and then Asia. He was inspired whilst doing voluntary work in Asia and the UK, when he decided to commit his career to helping children and then qualified at MA level. He has two teenage children who keep him busy at home. Colin is volunteer football coach in the community and has been doing that for 9 years which is very rewarding. He has enjoyed working with the players who are now U14s and he says it has been great to watch them grow and develop their skills since they were 5 years old. Colin has a proven track record in improving Children's Services and gets up in the morning to make a sustainable difference to the lives of children, young people and families through enabling colleagues and ensuring delivery of the best possible services. He asks everyone in the Trust to do the best job of their life, every single day, because children, young people and families deserve nothing less.



Andrew Tagg, Director of Finance & Resources

Andrew joins the Trust with over 30 years' experience within Local Government holding a number of senior management roles. Previously he was the Bi- Borough Children's Services Director of Operations and Programmes for Westminster and Kensington and Chelsea and was part of the team that created the innovative Tri-Borough children's services model. Within the Trust he provides financial expertise and leads the Trust's strategic operations and business planning processes through the management of a range of support services. Andrew is passionate about developing high quality, efficient and effective services for children, young people and their families and maximising the use of resources.

Appendix 3 – Trust Board Members



Cornelia Andrecut, Director of Children’s Social care

Cornelia’s particular strength is her drive for improvement and the ability to create the conditions for high aspiration, high performance and a highly effective working environment. Cornelia is very passionate about improving outcomes for children and families and has contributed to better children’s services in Northamptonshire; initially as an Improvement Director for Lincolnshire County Council and the East Midlands Regional Improvement and Innovation Alliance, prior to joining Northamptonshire on a permanent basis. Having extensive leadership experience in public services, which includes social care, early help and the integration of Public Health into the Local Authority, Cornelia is both a qualified nurse and a registered social worker. Cornelia brings a ‘can do’ attitude and approach to everything she does and is determined to use her energy and passion to continue improving outcomes for children and families in Northamptonshire Children’s Trust.



Clare Chamberlain, Independent Non-Executive Director

Clare was the Executive Director of Children’s Services for the London Tri-Boroughs. She has worked as a social worker and manager in both adults and children’s services for close to 45 years, holding a number of senior management roles. She has also undertaken freelance work, including serious case review investigations. She worked in the voluntary sector leading a national project about children in care and was independent chair of the Hampshire LSCB. Most recently Clare has been one of the DfE Children’s Commissioners in Northamptonshire. She also leads the national Practice Leaders Development Programme



Rebecca Peck, Council nominated Non-Executive Director

Rebecca joined Northamptonshire County Council as Assistant Chief Executive in January 2020. Rebecca has previously held senior leadership roles for the London Borough of Sutton, Royal Borough of Kingston-upon-Thames and Milton Keynes Council, leading on areas including digital, transformation, customer service and statutory children’s complaints. Rebecca is a Northamptonshire resident and is passionate about transforming local public services. Rebecca will be working with the Trust Board to deliver improved outcomes for children, young people and their families.

Appendix 3 – Trust Board Members



Joshua Imuere, Council nominated Non-Executive Director

Joshua is an experienced charity chief executive who has directed successful transformation programmes across the UK, in order to strengthen the voice of underrepresented groups and forge perennial alliances: recovering charities from the risk of closure, re-aligning their core purpose and embedding the right operational systems for sustainability. Over the last 17 years he has developed expertise in change management, informal education, place-based approaches, and youth leadership and used them at the helm of youth charities such as Art Against Knives and SYLA, both of which he substantially grew in terms of their reach and scale. Joshua has just relocated to the East Midlands and is looking forward to working with fellow directors to form and lead the new Children's Trust.



Amy Brock, Council nominated Non-Executive Director

Amy is the Assistant Director for Inclusion and Safeguarding in Northamptonshire Adult Social Services. She has worked in adult services for over 20 years, both as a practitioner and manager. She has experience of working within Olympus Care Services, which was a limited company owned by the council. Her roles to date have involved working closely with other statutory partners and the voluntary sector to improve the outcomes for vulnerable adults in Northamptonshire.



Darren Hickman, Council nominated Non-Executive Director

Darren was the Finance and Relationship Director for the Insurance Company of Santander Bank, until December 2019. During his 37 years at the bank he has held a variety of executive positions including operational management, marketing, IT and change management. Whilst working for the bank he has also undertaken several external non-executive director (NED) and pension trustee roles spanning 18 years. For the last 6 years he has been proud to serve as a NED for a large NHS Trust, providing all-age mental health and community care. In November 2020 he was also appointed as a NED for a local building society. Darren is looking forward to using his skills to assist the new Trust to deliver enhanced children's services in Northamptonshire.

Appendix 3 – Trust Board Members



Colin Cross, Independent Non-Executive Director

Colin brings over 30 years of experience of leading service delivery organisations serving clients in the public and private sector, both nationally and overseas. He has worked for major international companies such as IBM and Capgemini. He looks forward to drawing upon his financial management, service delivery, operational improvement and strategic planning expertise to help improve the lives of Northamptonshire’s children and young people. Colin lives on the Northants/Bucks border and is married with two grown-up children. He has a keen interest in sport and travel.



John O'Brien, Independent Non-Executive Director

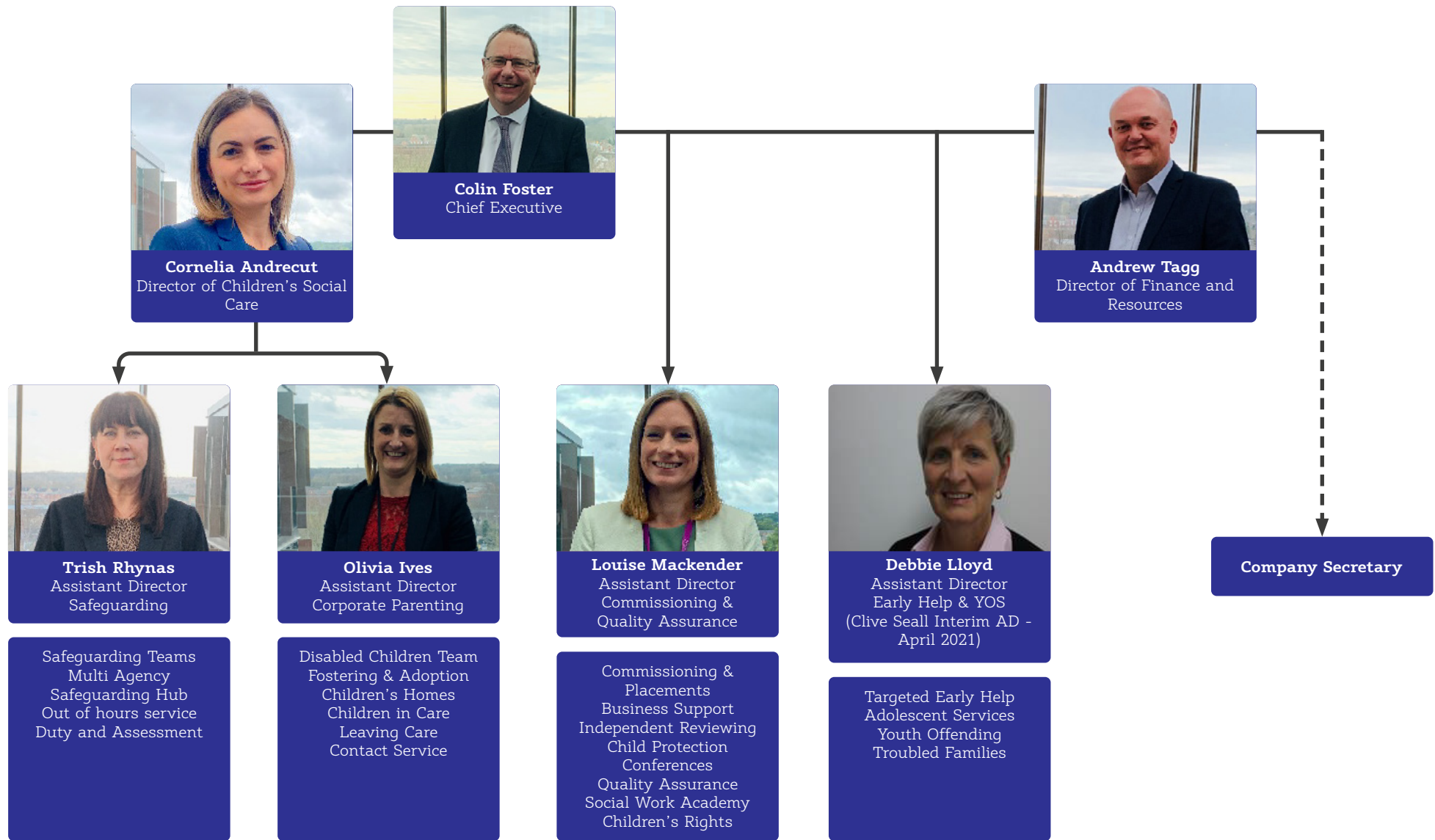
John is the Chief Executive of London Councils – the organisation that represents the interests of London’s 33 local authorities. He works closely with members and officers across London and with a wide range of other partners, including health, police, business, the voluntary and community sector and Transport for London. He has previously worked on behalf of local government with the IDeA and LGA, in Government at CLG, in the private sector and directly within local government itself. He will use this experience in supporting the formation and leadership of the newly created Children’s Trust.



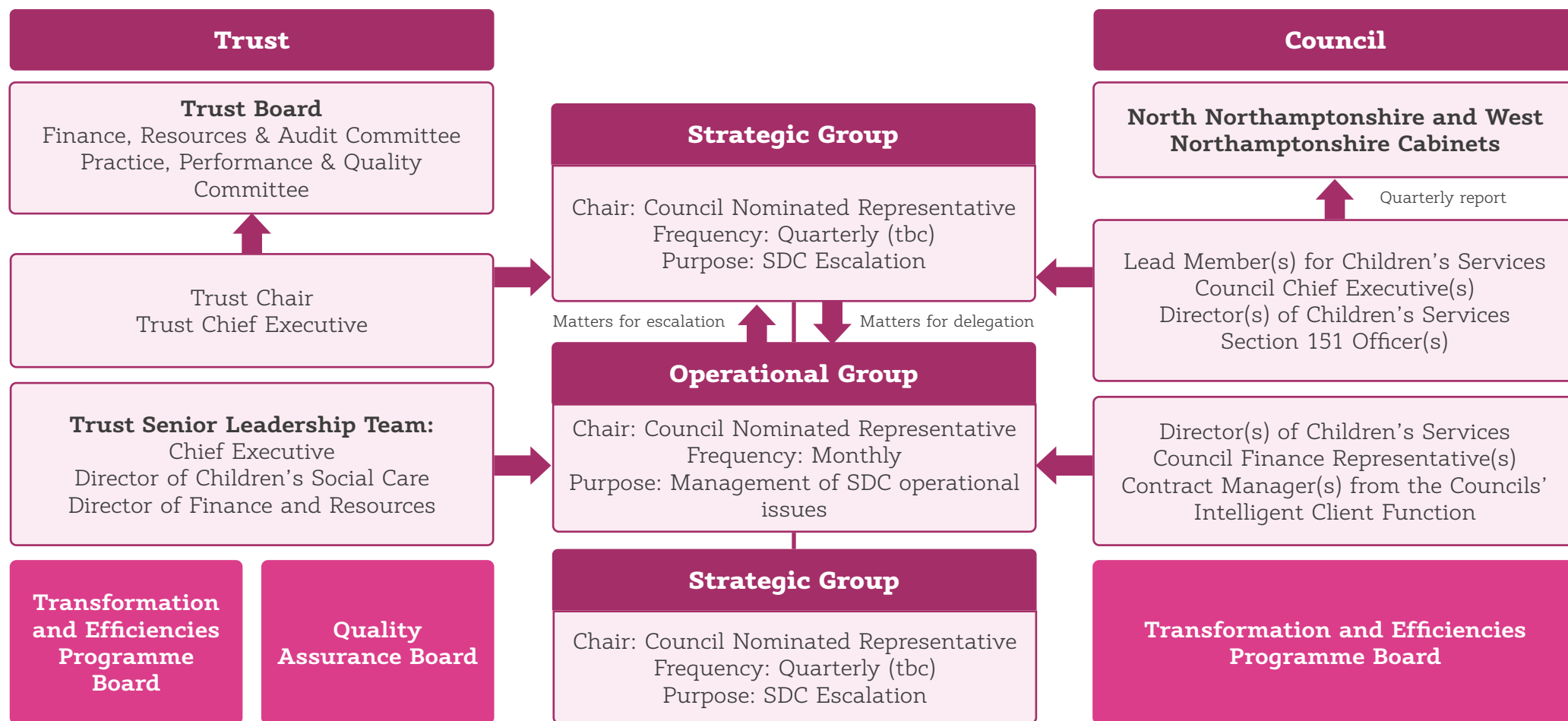
Hilary Daniels, Independent Non-Executive Director

Hilary is a qualified accountant who has worked as a Director of Finance in Local Government and as a Finance Director and Chief Executive in the NHS, where she both commissioned and managed significant provider services including CAMHS and other children’s services. She is an experienced Non-Executive Director, usually taking finance, audit and governance leads. Hilary has lived in Northamptonshire for 25 years and is passionate about providing quality services. A keen gardener, Hilary also enjoys walking in the East Northants countryside. She is a bell ringer, and over the last few years has enjoyed teaching others to do so.

Appendix 4 – Trust Executive Management Structure



Appendix 5 – Governance arrangements



Strategic Partner engagement

Northamptonshire Children's Safeguarding Partnership Board; MASH Strategic Group and MASH Partnership Meeting; Northamptonshire Health Care Partnership Strategic Executive and NHCP Partnership Board; Northamptonshire Integrated Care System (ICS); Health and Wellbeing Board; Northamptonshire's Disabled Children and Young People's Delivery Group; Community Safety Board/Partnership; Youth Offending Board; Local Family Justice Board; Corporate Parenting Board; East Midlands Regional DCS Meeting and sub-groups.

Appendix 6 – Contractual Key Performance Indicators

At the time of writing the targets are still being discussed, the table below shows the last complete year of data available which is 2019/20.

| | KPI | 2019/20 performance |
|--------|--|---------------------|
| KPI 1 | Percentage of all referrals with a decision within 2 working days | 83% |
| KPI 2 | Percentage of referrals with a previous referral within 12 months | 33% |
| KPI 3 | Percentage of Single Assessments authorised within 45 working days | 87% |
| KPI 4 | Percentage of Single Assessments closing with no further action | 34% |
| KPI 5 | Percentage of Initial Child Protection Conferences held within 15 days of a strategy discussion being initiated | 68% |
| KPI 6 | Percentage of children that became the subject of a Child Protection Plan for the second or subsequent time | 26% |
| KPI 7 | Children who have been in care 2.5 years or more, and of those, who have been in the same placement for 2+ years/placed for adoption (%) | 63% |
| KPI 8 | Percentage of Children in Care with three or more placements in the previous 12 months | 12% |
| KPI 9 | Percentage of young people now aged 17-21 and in employment, education or training who were looked after when aged 16 | 55% |
| KPI 10 | Percentage of young people now aged 17-21 and living in suitable accommodation who were looked after when aged 16 | 89% |
| KPI 11 | Percentage of qualified social workers with caseloads above target | 17% |
| KPI 12 | % of children placed more than 20 miles from their homes, outside LA boundary | 19% |

Appendix 6 – Contractual Key Performance Indicators (cont)

| | KPI | 2019/20 performance |
|--------|--|---------------------|
| KPI 13 | Percentage of stage 1 complaints responded to within 10 working days. | n/a* |
| KPI 14 | Stage 2 investigations as a % of stage 1 complaints received within the year | n/a* |
| KPI 15 | budget % variances (forecast to budget) | n/a* |
| KPI 16 | Percentage of social worker vacancies | n/a* |
| KPI 17 | Percentage of Social Worker posts filled with agency staff | n/a* |
| KPI 18 | Average time between the LA receiving court authority to place a child and deciding on a match | 147.2 days** |
| KPI 19 | Percentage of children in care who were placed for adoption within 12 months of an agency decision that they should be adopted | 89% |
| KPI 20 | Numbers of data breaches reported or self-reported to the ICO per quarter | 3 |
| KPI 21 | Percentage of children leaving care due to permanence (Special Guardianship Order, adoption, residence order) | 24% |

NOTE The targets for 2021/22 are currently under review with the Trust's stakeholders, and are due to be finalised by April 1st, 2021

* New measures that will be collected such that historic data is not available for 2019/20

** Provisional figure, not yet finalised and published by DfE

Appendix 7 - Projected Profit and Loss Account

| Projected Budget | Nov-Mar 2020/21 | April - March 2021/22 |
|--|-----------------|-----------------------|
| Income | £m | £m |
| Contract sum | 57.27 | 137.15 |
| Adults Services contribution to Emergency Duty Team | 0.06 | 0.13 |
| Public Health contributions to Targeted Support and Youth Offending Team | 0.05 | 0.13 |
| Education contributions | 0.27 | 0.65 |
| Health contributions | 0.24 | 0.57 |
| Sale of adopters to other local authorities | 0.1 | 0.25 |
| Total Income | 57.99 | 138.88 |
| Expenditure | £m | £m |
| Staffing | 19.33 | 47.12 |
| Placements | 25.21 | 60.59 |
| Adoption | 3.04 | 7.3 |
| Other care costs | 2.11 | 5.07 |
| Contracts | 2.01 | 4.82 |

Appendix 7 - Projected Profit and Loss Account

| Projected Budget | Nov-Mar 2020/21 | April - March 2021/22 |
|--|-----------------|-----------------------|
| Legal | 2.19 | 4.38 |
| Transport | 0.95 | 1.67 |
| Other non-staff costs | 1.23 | 2.95 |
| Support services - Service Level Agreement | 1.2 | 3.06 |
| Property Costs | 0.53 | 1.47 |
| Insurance (notional amount) | 0.19 | 0.45 |
| Total Expenditure | 57.99 | 138.88 |
| Net Budget | 0 | 0 |

Appendix 8 – Strategic Risk Register

| Risk Description | Mitigating Action |
|---|---|
| Finance | |
| Failure to fully deliver efficient services creates additional pressure on the two new Councils | 1. Regular monitoring of budget through Trust Senior Leadership Team (SLT) and Trust Board |
| Financial mechanism: Failure to manage budget / run out of money | 1. Regular monitoring of cash flow by Director of Finance & Resources 2. Regular monitoring of budget through SLT and Trust Board |
| Ongoing impact of Covid-19 on service demand and related budget pressures | 1. Baseline report to be produced detailing Trust position as at 1st November 2020 for discussion with the two Councils |
| The risk of cuts in the budget contributions of partner agencies following central budget cuts | 1. Regular meetings with funding partners to ensure clear sight of any proposed budget cuts |
| Challenges to the delivery of / withdrawal of the Troubled Families Programme | 1. Regular monitoring of Troubled Families attachment and Payment By Results income |
| Quality of Practice / Ofsted | |
| Increase in volume and the complexity of care required and increase in numbers of children in need of support adding to budget pressures. | 1. Team, service and strategic managers providing rigorous and effective oversight, and regular monitoring of cases |
| Inadequate Ofsted inspection | 1. Effective leadership and oversight to ensure services are operated at an effective level 2. Monthly improvement board to monitor progress |

Appendix 8 – Strategic Risk Register

| Risk Description | Mitigating Action |
|--|--|
| Non recent child sexual exploitation connected cases | 1. Trust involved in development of a report concerning non-recent cases and will be part of communication strategy. The Trust is managing the safeguarding aspects of the investigation in collaboration with safeguarding partners |
| Contractual | |
| Service Delivery Contract: An emergency occurs that has: - a significant adverse impact on the welfare of, and there is a serious increased risk of harm to, children and/or young people in the county of Northamptonshire; or - has a material adverse effect on the Trust of the Services by the such that there is, or will be, a long-term increased risk of harm to children and young people in the Northamptonshire if the Trust continues to perform the Services | 1. Regular quality assurance and audit activity along with management supervision and oversight to identify and address any poor practice |
| Service Delivery Contract: A Persistent Breach in the provision of the Services persisting for [one or more Quarters] during the term of the Agreement; Monthly Key Performance Indicators (KPI) falls outside of Tolerance for three consecutive Months; Quarterly KPI, falls of Tolerance for two consecutive Quarters or more | 1. Regular monitoring against contractual KPIs |
| Workforce | |

Appendix 8 – Strategic Risk Register

| Risk Description | Mitigating Action |
|--|---|
| High levels of permanent staff turnover | Investing in our workforce so that we have strong and stable staff 1. Promote permanent recruitment 2. Effective support for staff to mitigate high levels of attrition |
| Dependencies | |
| Stakeholder engagement - Councils and other strategic partners Many of the KPIs for Children in Care are dependent on good partnership working with the Council(s) and other agencies including Health (Personal Education Plans, educational outcomes, health outcomes, missing from care) | 1. Clear vision and conditions for success developed and shared with all partners and colleagues 2. Children’s Trust strategy with clear priorities |
| The Trust is dependent upon the Council(s) delivery of aligned services and of a number of support services | 1. A series of workshops are being held to determine the content of the SLAs with the Council, and of the accompanying KPIs that will support service delivery levels required by the Trust |