

# Public Document Pack



**Meeting:** Council  
**Date:** Thursday 31<sup>st</sup> August 2023  
**Time:** 6:00 pm  
**Venue:** Council Chamber, The Cube, George Street, Corby NN17 1QG

**The meeting will be available for the public to view live at our Democratic Services' YouTube channel:**

<https://www.youtube.com/@NNCDemServices>

### **Council Membership:**

Councillor Barbara Jenney (Chair), Councillor Lora Lawman (Vice-Chair), Councillor Jean Addison, Councillor Tim Allebone, Councillor Valerie Anslow, Councillor Ross Armour, Councillor Charlie Best, Councillor Paul Bell, Councillor Matt Binley, Councillor Jennie Bone, Councillor David Brackenbury, Councillor Wendy Brackenbury, Councillor Cedwien Brown, Councillor Scott Brown, Councillor Leanne Buckingham, Councillor Lyn Buckingham, Councillor Lloyd Bunday, Councillor Jon-Paul Carr, Councillor Robin Carter, Cllr Melanie Coleman, Councillor William Colquhoun, Councillor John Currall, Councillor Alison Dalziel, Councillor Mark Dearing, Councillor Dez Dell, Councillor Scott Edwards, Councillor Jonathan Ekins, Councillor Emily Fedorowycz, Councillor Martin Griffiths, Councillor Jim Hakewill, Councillor Clive Hallam, Councillor Ken Harrington, Councillor Helen Harrison, Councillor Kirk Harrison, Councillor Larry Henson, Councillor Helen Howell, Councillor David Howes, Councillor Philip Irwin, Councillor Bert Jackson, Councillor Ian Jelley, Councillor Matt Keane, Councillor King Lawal, Councillor Graham Lawman, Councillor Anne Lee, Councillor Richard Levell, Councillor Paul Marks, Councillor Dorothy Maxwell, Councillor Peter McEwan, Councillor John McGhee, Councillor Zoe McGhee, Councillor Andy Mercer, Councillor Gill Mercer, Councillor Macaulay Nichol, Councillor Steven North, Councillor Jan O'Hara, Councillor Dr Anup Pandey, Councillor Tom Partridge-Underwood, Councillor Mark Pengelly, Councillor Harriet Pentland, Councillor Roger Powell, Councillor Elliot Keith Prentice, Councillor Simon Rielly, Councillor Russell Roberts, Councillor Mark Rowley, Councillor Geoff Shacklock, Councillor David Sims, Councillor Jason Smithers, Councillor Chris Smith-Haynes, Councillor Joseph John Smyth, Councillor Mike Tebbutt, Councillor Sarah Tubbs, Councillor Michael Tye, Councillor Malcolm Ward, Councillor Malcolm Waters, Councillor Kevin Watt, Councillor Keli Watts, Councillor Andrew Weatherill and Councillor Lee Wilkes.

Members of The Council are invited to attend the above meeting to consider the items of business listed on the agenda.

## Agenda

Item	Subject	Page no.
01	<p><b>Apologies</b></p> <p>To receive any apologies for absence.</p>	
02	<p><b>Minutes of the meeting held on 22<sup>nd</sup> June 2023</b></p> <p>The minutes of the Meeting of the Council held on 22<sup>nd</sup> June 2023 to be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.</p>	To Follow
03	<p><b>Declarations of Interest</b></p> <p>Members to declare any interest as appropriate in respect of items to be considered at the meeting.</p>	
04	<p><b>Chair's Announcements</b></p> <p>To receive any announcements from the Chair.</p>	
05	<p><b>Leader's Announcements</b></p> <p>To receive any announcements from the Leader of the Council.</p>	
06	<p><b>Public Participation</b></p> <p>(i) Public Statements</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">To consider public statements received in accordance with public meeting procedure rule 15.</p> <p>(ii) Public Questions</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">To consider public questions received in accordance with public meeting procedure rule 16.</p> <p>(iii) Petitions</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">To receive petitions qualifying for full Council in accordance with the council's petition scheme.</p>	
07	<p><b>Executive Presentations</b></p> <p>To receive any presentations from the Executive in accordance with meeting procedure rule 3.1 (vi).</p>	

Items requiring a decision		
08	<p><b>Auditors' Annual Report 2021/22</b></p> <p>To note the Auditors Annual Report 2021/22 for North Northamptonshire Council</p>	9 - 60
09	<p><b>Approval of Pay Structure and Terms and Conditions</b></p> <p>To seek approval for the pay structure and terms of conditions of employment for adoption by North Northamptonshire Council.</p>	61 - 76
10	<p><b>Northamptonshire Youth Justice Plan 2023/24</b></p> <p>To seek approval of the Northamptonshire Youth Justice Plan 2023/24</p>	77 - 150
11	<p><b>Director of Public Health Annual Report 2022/23</b></p> <p>To note the annual Director of Public Health (DPH) statutory report for Northamptonshire.</p>	151 - 204
12	<p><b>Capital Programme and Revenue Budget Update 2023/24</b></p> <p>To seek council approval for a virement for a capital scheme as well as approval for new borrowing in relation to a capital scheme. To also seek approval for the use of the Transformation Reserve to fund one-off revenue implementation costs and the inclusion of ongoing annual revenue costs into the Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP)</p>	205 - 211
13	<p><b>Motions on Notice</b></p> <p>To consider motions received in accordance with Meeting Procedure Rule 18 as follows: -</p> <p><b><u>Motion 1</u></b></p> <p>To be proposed by Cllr Valerie Anslow and seconded by Cllr Lyn Buckingham-</p> <p><i>“It is clear that the country as a whole is in the midst of a real and continuing housing crisis, we acknowledge the enormous challenge and pressure faced by our members of Staff on homeless presentations in recent years.</i></p> <p><i>Whilst we acknowledge the pressures, we also feel much more should be being done by this council to put housing and homelessness on top of the agenda.</i></p> <p><i>There are blockages and delays in our house building/development programmes which although could be perceived as down to external forces, also see us prepared to be selling off surplus land instead of finding constructive ways to build.</i></p>	

*We have seen over the past two years, massive delays in processing housing applications, far in excess of the time needed to prevent homelessness effectively, which although reported that the backlog being cleared, the backlog is again growing to an unacceptable over three months wait for applications being processed.*

*We have seen homeless families be moved away from support and education networks because of lack of temporary accommodation, bringing disruption and chaos for families already facing hardship. Despite this Council putting forward resources to assist with rough sleeping programmes, (building on the successes of finding bed spaces during the height of the Covid pandemic) it seems that very little progress is being made in this area also partnering with the Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise.*

*This motion asks that North Northamptonshire Council develop its vision and strategy for the building and development of social housing and prevention of homelessness including, if appropriate, a review of the allocations strategy to support programmes that prioritise our duty under the armed forces covenant, the growing need for homeless provision for single women and young care leavers, in North Northamptonshire. Acting quickly and decisively ensures that right to buy receipts are not swallowed by raising build costs and that North Northamptonshire Council also commit further investment in housing.”*

### **Motion 2**

To be proposed by Cllr Anne Lee and seconded by Cllr Keli Watts-

*“The Alfred East Art Gallery in Kettering has now been closed for two years for works to improve and maximise its potential. North Northants Council undertakes to keep councillors informed of progress made on repairing the roof of the building, and to request that the Executive progress the project with a view to reopen the Art Gallery by the summer of 2024 at the latest.”*

### **Motion 3**

To be proposed by Cllr Jim Hakewill and seconded by Cllr Charlie Best-

*“This council treasures the Library Service and the many events and personal well-being experiences provided by our libraries, whether in the Statutory or Community Managed Library (CML) family. Many of the assets of our libraries have been, and are today, shared across the entire County.*

*Before any proposals for change in the way in which our libraries are funded, managed, and operated there must be a clear, compelling, financially sound, and customer-service-oriented business case, subjected to wide public consultation and full scrutiny by North Northamptonshire (and ideally, jointly, with West*

	<p><i>Northamptonshire) Councillor colleagues.</i></p> <p><i>This will ensure that everyone involved in running our libraries and everyone who benefits from the vast array of books and events will be able to confidently continue to enjoy the same services when visiting their local library in the future.”</i></p> <p><b><u>Motion 4</u></b></p> <p>To be proposed by Cllr Emily Fedorowycz and seconded by Cllr Harriet Pentland-</p> <p><i>“The River Nene is one of NNC’s most important assets in terms of tourism and ecology and, as such, needs proper guardianship.</i></p> <p><i>The Environment Agency has primary responsibility for the River Nene. NNC is one of many that has riparian responsibilities and also an important role in flood management.</i></p> <p><i>This Council will:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Ask the Environment Agency (EA) to provide the current levels of pollution in the Nene River and North Northants waterways;</i></li> <li>• <i>Continue to engage with the EA and Ofwat to understand what work is being undertaken in North Northamptonshire to protect waterways from pollution and consider options for ensuring the health of our waterways including, but not limited to, investigating Bathing Water Status for key leisure areas;</i></li> <li>• <i>Continue to engage with the EA and Ofwat on the processes for feeding in reports of pollution incidents”</i></li> </ul>	
14	<p><b>Councillor Questions</b></p> <p>To receive questions from members in accordance with meeting procedure rule 17.</p>	
<b>Urgent Items</b>		
	<p>To consider any items of business of which notice has been given to the Proper Officer and the Chair considers to be urgent, pursuant to the Local Government Act 1972.</p>	
15	<p><b>Close of Meeting</b></p>	

Adele Wylie, Monitoring Officer  
North Northamptonshire Council



**Proper Officer**  
**Tuesday 22<sup>nd</sup> August 2023**

This agenda has been published by Ben Smith (Head of Democratic Services).

☎ 01832 742113 ✉ [ben.smith@northnorthants.gov.uk](mailto:ben.smith@northnorthants.gov.uk)

## Public Participation

The Council has approved procedures for you to present petitions or request to address meetings of the Council

ITEM	NARRATIVE	DEADLINE												
Members of the Public Questions	Questions may be submitted by members of the Public to meetings of the committee. The question must be in writing and submitted 2 clear working days prior to the meeting. No debate on questions or answers. A period of 15 minutes (Chair's Discretion) is allocated for Public Questions.	09:00am Monday 28 <sup>th</sup> August 2023												
Members of the Public Agenda Statements	Members of the Public may make statements at meetings in relation to reports on the agenda. A request to address the committee must be received 2 clear working days prior to the meeting. The member of the Public has a maximum of 3 minutes to address the committee. A written copy of the statement must be submitted by the deadline indicated.	09:00am Monday 28 <sup>th</sup> August 2023												
Members of the Public Petitions	<p>Anyone who lives, works or studies in North Northamptonshire may submit a petition to the Council. Depending on the size of your petition it will be responded to as follows: -</p> <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Category</th> <th>Signatory Threshold</th> <th>Description</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Petition which triggers a debate</td> <td>1,500 +</td> <td>Any petition with 1,500 or more signatures will trigger a debate at a Full Authority meeting.</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Petition which calls an officer to account</td> <td>750 – 1,499</td> <td>Any petition with 750 – 1,499 signatures will summon a senior officer of the Authority to give evidence at a public Authority meeting.</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Standard Petition</td> <td>5 – 749</td> <td>Any petition with 5 – 749 signatures will be referred to a senior officer of the Authority to provide a response.</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Category	Signatory Threshold	Description	Petition which triggers a debate	1,500 +	Any petition with 1,500 or more signatures will trigger a debate at a Full Authority meeting.	Petition which calls an officer to account	750 – 1,499	Any petition with 750 – 1,499 signatures will summon a senior officer of the Authority to give evidence at a public Authority meeting.	Standard Petition	5 – 749	Any petition with 5 – 749 signatures will be referred to a senior officer of the Authority to provide a response.	
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Standard Petition	5 – 749	Any petition with 5 – 749 signatures will be referred to a senior officer of the Authority to provide a response.												

These procedures are included within the Council's Constitution. Please contact [democraticservices@northnorthants.gov.uk](mailto:democraticservices@northnorthants.gov.uk) for more information.

## **Members' Declarations of Interest**

Members are reminded of their duty to ensure they abide by the approved Member Code of Conduct whilst undertaking their role as a Councillor. Where a matter arises at a meeting which **relates to** a Disclosable Pecuniary Interest, you must declare the interest, not participate in any discussion or vote on the matter and must not remain in the room unless granted a dispensation.

Where a matter arises at a meeting which **relates to** other Registerable Interests, you must declare the interest. You may speak on the matter only if members of the public are also allowed to speak at the meeting but must not take part in any vote on the matter unless you have been granted a dispensation.

Where a matter arises at a meeting which **relates to** your own financial interest (and is not a Disclosable Pecuniary Interest) or **relates to** a financial interest of a relative, friend or close associate, you must disclose the interest and not vote on the matter unless granted a dispensation. You may speak on the matter only if members of the public are also allowed to speak at the meeting.

Members are reminded that they should continue to adhere to the Council's approved rules and protocols during the conduct of meetings. These are contained in the Council's approved Constitution.

If Members have any queries as to whether a Declaration of Interest should be made please contact the Monitoring Officer at – [monitoringofficer@northnorthants.gov.uk](mailto:monitoringofficer@northnorthants.gov.uk)

## **Press & Media Enquiries**

Any press or media enquiries should be directed through Council's Communications Team to [communications@northnorthants.gov.uk](mailto:communications@northnorthants.gov.uk)

## **Public Access and Enquiries**

The public are welcome to attend the Council's meetings in person using the Council's public gallery. Public enquiries regarding the Council's meetings can be made to [democraticservices@northnorthants.gov.uk](mailto:democraticservices@northnorthants.gov.uk)

## **Webcasting**

Meetings of the Council will be filmed by the Council for live and/or subsequent broadcast on the Council's website. The whole of the meeting will be filmed, except where there are confidential or exempt items. A copy will be retained in accordance with the Council's data retention policy.

If you make a representation to the meeting, unless you have specifically asked not to appear on the webcast, you are taking positive action to confirm that you consent to being filmed. You have been made aware of the broadcast and entering the Council Chamber you are consenting to be filmed by North Northamptonshire Council and to the possible use of those images and sound recordings for webcasting.

If you do not wish to have your image captured you should sit in the public gallery area that overlooks the Chamber.

The Council is obliged by law to allow members of the public to take photographs, film, audio-record, blog or tweet the proceedings at public meetings. The Council will only seek to prevent this should it be undertaken in a disruptive or otherwise inappropriate manner.

The Council intends to webcast all of its public meetings held at the Corby Cube, but if it is unable to do so, for the avoidance of doubt, the meeting will continue as scheduled and decisions and minutes made available on the Council's website in the normal manner.

If you have any queries regarding webcasting or the recording of meetings by the public, please contact [democraticservices@northnorthants.gov.uk](mailto:democraticservices@northnorthants.gov.uk)





## Full Council 31<sup>st</sup> August 2023

<b>Report Title</b>	<b>Auditors Annual Report 2021/22</b>
<b>Report Author</b>	<b>Ciaran McLaughlin, Grant Thornton</b>

### List of Appendices

#### Appendix A – Auditors Annual Report on North Northamptonshire Council 2021/22

#### 1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 This report provides the Auditors Annual Report 2021/22 for North Northamptonshire Council which has been produced by the Council's external auditors, Grant Thornton and following consideration by the Audit & Governance Committee on 14<sup>th</sup> August 2023.

#### 2. Executive Summary

- 2.1 Under the National Audit Office (NAO) Code of Audit Practice ('the Code'), the Council's external auditors are required to consider whether the Council has put in place proper arrangements to secure economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources.
- 2.2 Auditors are required to report their commentary on the Council's arrangements under specified criteria.
- 2.3 As part of its work, the external auditors considered whether there were any risks of significant weakness in the Council's arrangements for securing economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources. The conclusions are summarised as follows:

Criteria	Risk assessment	21/22 Auditor Judgment	
Financial sustainability	No risks of significant weakness identified	Amber	No significant weaknesses in arrangements identified, but improvement recommendation made
Governance	No risks of significant weakness identified	Amber	No significant weaknesses in arrangements identified, but improvement recommendation made
Improving economy, efficiency and effectiveness	No risks of significant weakness identified	Amber	No significant weaknesses in arrangements identified, but improvement recommendation made

2.4 The attached report (see appendix A) sets out the detail of the findings and subsequent recommendations.

### **3. Recommendations**

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3.1 It is recommended that Council notes the Auditors Annual Report 2021/22 as attached at **Appendix A** to this report

3.2 Reason for Recommendations:

- To note the work of Council and the Audit & Governance Committee in exercising its duties and responsibilities to consider reports of the external auditor.

3.3 Other Options Considered

- No alternative options proposed. It is important for the authority to consider its governance and assurance arrangements and to respond to recommended improvements to its practice.

### **4. Report Background**

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4.1 Each year the Council's external auditors are required to consider whether the Council has put in place the proper arrangements to secure economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its operations to comply with the National Audit Office Code of Audit Practice.

4.2 The Council's external auditors, Grant Thornton, have reviewed the position for 2021/22 and issued a report setting out their annual opinion for the year which is attached as Appendix A.

4.3 The report concludes that for the main areas of financial sustainability, governance and improving economy, efficiency and effectiveness that there were no risks of significant weakness identified but there were still improvements that could be made to achieve best practice as these are set out in detail in the report, with a total of 16 recommendations being made.

4.4 The report acknowledges that the Council's 2021/22 accounts are yet to be completed due to the delays in the finalisation of the accounts from legacy Councils.

4.5 As the report is a retrospective view of the financial year, a number of the recommendations have already been completed during 2022/23 as part of existing work plans. However, some will not be able to be implemented until 2023/24. Each recommendation sets out the intended completion date for any action and these will be monitored throughout the year.

4.6 The Auditors Annual Report 2021/22 was considered by the Annual and Governance Committee at its meeting in August 2023 in considering the report the committee noted the auditors conclusions and welcomed its recommendations.

## **5. Issues and Choices**

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- 5.1 The report provides an overview of the governance and assurance arrangements for the Council setting out recommended improvement to practice. The management response to those recommendations and subsequent actions are also included with the report. There are no alternative options proposed.

## **6. Implications (including financial implications)**

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### **6.1 Resources and Financial**

- 6.1.1 Not specific to this report.

### **6.2 Legal**

- 6.2.1 Not specific to this report.

### **6.3 Risk**

- 6.3.1 The report provides an opinion on the Council's arrangements for financial sustainability, governance and improving economy, efficiency and effectiveness and identifies areas for possible improvement in its recommendations.

- 6.3.2 The recommendations will be followed up as part of the Council's response to the report.

### **6.4 Consultation**

- 6.4.1 Not specific to this report.

### **6.5 Consideration by Scrutiny**

- 6.5.1 Not required on this occasion.

### **6.6 Climate Impact**

- 6.6.1 Not specific to this report.

### **6.7 Community Impact**

- 6.7.1 Not specific to this report.

## **7. Background Papers**

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- 7.1 None.

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# Auditor's Annual Report on North Northamptonshire Council

2021/22  
Page 13  
13 July 2023

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We are required under Section 20(1)(c) of the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014 to satisfy ourselves that the Council has made proper arrangements for securing economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources. The Code of Audit Practice issued by the National Audit Office (NAO) requires us to report to you our commentary relating to proper arrangements.

We report if significant matters have come to our attention. We are not required to consider, nor have we considered, whether all aspects of the Council's arrangements for securing economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources are operating effectively.



The contents of this report relate only to those matters which came to our attention during the conduct of our normal audit procedures which are designed for the purpose of completing our work under the NAO Code and related guidance. Our audit is not designed to test all arrangements in respect of value for money. However, where, as part of our testing, we identify significant weaknesses, we will report these to you. In consequence, our work cannot be relied upon to disclose all irregularities, or to include all possible improvements in arrangements that a more extensive special examination might identify. We do not accept any responsibility for any loss occasioned to any third party acting, or refraining from acting on the basis of the content of this report, as this report was not prepared for, nor intended for, any other purpose.

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# Executive summary



## Value for money arrangements and key recommendation(s)

Under the National Audit Office (NAO) Code of Audit Practice ('the Code'), we are required to consider whether the Council has put in place proper arrangements to secure economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources.

Auditors are required to report their commentary on the Council's arrangements under specified criteria and 21/22 is the second year that we have reported our findings in this way across the sector. As part of our work, we considered whether there were any risks of significant weakness in the Council's arrangements for securing economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources. Our conclusions are summarised in the table below.

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Criteria	Risk assessment	21/22 Auditor Judgment	
Financial sustainability	No risks of significant weakness identified	Amber	No significant weaknesses in arrangements identified, but improvement recommendation made
Governance	No risks of significant weakness identified	Amber	No significant weaknesses in arrangements identified, but improvement recommendation made
Improving economy, efficiency and effectiveness	No risks of significant weakness identified	Amber	No significant weaknesses in arrangements identified, but improvement recommendation made

- No significant weaknesses in arrangements identified or improvement recommendation made.
- No significant weaknesses in arrangements identified, but improvement recommendations made.
- Significant weaknesses in arrangements identified and key recommendations made.

# Executive summary



## Financial sustainability

Although we have raised some improvement recommendations in our work we have not identified any significant weaknesses in the Council's arrangements for securing financial sustainability.

Finance is at the forefront of both the Sector, and the Council's attention as future funding sources remain uncertain and the impact of Covid-19, the cost of living crisis and inflation are forecast to increase expenditure significantly. The Council reported an underspend for 21/22 of £1.7m despite some overspends in individual services which have been able to mitigated by non-recurrent sources of funding or off-set by underspends in other services.

The Council has set a balanced budget for 22/23 in line with legislation, with a net budget position of £295.9m. The assumptions used in developing this position are realistic although emerging risks in the sector around inflation and pay mean that these assumptions will need to be reviewed on an ongoing basis. The Council has mechanisms in place in order to review the budget and make amendments throughout the 22/23 year. The Council has set aside contingency and smoothing reserves in order to respond to any emerging or unexpected pressures that were not apparent at the time the budget was set, evidence demonstrates that the Council updates its plans as risks emerge and that it has a sufficient level of reserves to respond, based on best information available at the time of the budget prior to the completion of the disaggregation of predecessor Council reserves. The use of reserves planned in 22/23 has partly been facilitated by a contribution to reserves in 21/22 and therefore the Council's financial management has contributed to addressing unexpected pressures.

The Council continues to forecast a financial gap in the medium term, which stands at £59m for the period to 24/25. This has reduced by £30m over the same period since the MTFP was developed in 21/22 as a result of balancing the budget for 22/23, reviewing assumptions and identifying savings. Further actions to respond and to reduce the gap and respond to emerging pressures are expected to be developed in 23/24 as part of the budget setting process which commenced in October 22, and via the in-year budget monitoring.

Delivery of the Council's savings programme each year is vital in ensuring it performs in line with budget. The Council had 4% of savings undelivered in 21/22 and 50% either still in progress at year end or only partially delivered. Despite not achieving the programme in full the use of nonrecurrent funding allowed an overall underspend position to be achieved. 22/23 savings performance to date has shown improvement although further work is required to ensure schemes currently in progress or partially delivered can be full realized at year end.



## Governance

Although we have raised some improvement recommendations in our work we have not identified any significant weaknesses in the Council's governance arrangements.

The Council's risk management processes have been operating effectively throughout the year. The Council is committed to an ongoing improvement journey and this has been evidenced by updates to the Corporate Risk Register, in particular, following a review after the Council's first full year of existence. The updates to the register have ensured that decision makers have an appropriate suite of information with which to inform their discussions and decisions around risk, although some minor improvements to the format and review of the register have been suggested. The risk management strategy has been in place for a year and was due to be reviewed, in order that processes remain relevant we have suggested this review is undertaken as expected by the Audit & Governance Committee. The Council have been well supported in their risk management process by their Internal Audit function, which has been delivered by an in-house team from April 2022 and therefore there is an opportunity for the Council to externally assess its risk maturity and risk management processes and embed any lessons learned to achieve ongoing improvements.

A robust budget setting process was in place in both 21/22 and 22/23 which incorporated a strong level of engagement from a range of stakeholders, both internally and externally. Despite a time consuming approval process through the Council's governance structures the budget was approved prior to the start of the financial year in both cases. The Council has an opportunity to review and streamline its decision making processes to ensure they are operating as efficiently as possible and that an appropriate amount of time is allocated to each key decision.

A legal case inherited from a predecessor Council has been well managed in order to bring the case to a conclusion with appropriate challenge, communication and collaboration observed during the process.



# Executive summary



## Improving economy, efficiency and effectiveness

Although we have raised some improvement recommendations in our work we have not identified any significant weaknesses in the Council's arrangements for improving economy, efficiency and effectiveness.

The Council effectively reports on its non-financial performance and seeks to adapt the arrangements, iteratively, in order that they are fit for purpose and of the most benefit to decision makers. The Executive has received the Council's evolving KPI dashboard sufficiently regularly in 21/22 and the frequency of reporting has been updated to reflect the risks being faced. By year end performance overall is positive with a small number of red-rated underperforming KPIs. The actions that the Council is taking to respond are clear.

The Council has a significant partnership in the Northamptonshire Children's Trust who deliver Children's Services, with the exception of Education Services, on behalf of the Council. There are robust governance arrangements in place which are formalised and strictly adhered to by both parties. There is an appropriate flow of performance information between the Council and the Trust as a result of the governance structures set up outside of each of the organisations own committees structures. Some minor improvements have been noted in the format of finance reporting and sufficiently updating the Council Executive but overall the arrangements appear adequate. Though as Ofsted noted in their recent inspection of the Children's Trust it requires improvement to be good.

# Opinion on the financial statements and use of auditor's powers

We bring the following matters to your attention:

## Opinion on the financial statements

Auditors are required to express an opinion on the financial statements that states whether they : (i) present a true and fair view of the Council's financial position, and (ii) have been prepared in accordance with the CIPFA/LASAAC Code of practice on local authority accounting in the United Kingdom 21/22

Delays in completion of the 20/21 audits for predecessor bodies has delayed the production of the Councils draft 21/22 accounts and therefore our audit of them. We therefore issue our Annual Auditors Report in draft form pending completion of the audit.

## Statutory recommendations

Under Schedule 7 of the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014, auditors can make written recommendations to the audited body which need to be considered by the body and responded to publicly

No such issues identified

## Public Interest Report

Under Schedule 7 of the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014, auditors have the power to make a report if they consider a matter is sufficiently important to be brought to the attention of the audited body or the public as a matter of urgency, including matters which may already be known to the public, but where it is in the public interest for the auditor to publish their independent view.

No such issues identified

## Application to the Court

Under Section 28 of the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014, if auditors think that an item of account is contrary to law, they may apply to the court for a declaration to that effect.

No such issues identified

## Advisory notice

Under Section 29 of the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014, auditors may issue an advisory notice if the auditor thinks that the authority or an officer of the authority:

- is about to make or has made a decision which involves or would involve the authority incurring unlawful expenditure,
- is about to take or has begun to take a course of action which, if followed to its conclusion, would be unlawful and likely to cause a loss or deficiency, or
- is about to enter an item of account, the entry of which is unlawful.

No such issues identified

## Judicial review

Under Section 31 of the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014, auditors may make an application for judicial review of a decision of an authority, or of a failure by an authority to act, which it is reasonable to believe would have an effect on the accounts of that body.

No such issues identified

# Securing economy, efficiency and effectiveness in the Council's use of resources

All Councils are responsible for putting in place proper arrangements to secure economy, efficiency and effectiveness from their resources. This includes taking properly informed decisions and managing key operational and financial risks so that they can deliver their objectives and safeguard public money. The Council's responsibilities are set out in Appendix A.

Councils report on their arrangements, and the effectiveness of these arrangements as part of their annual governance statement.

Under the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014, we are required to be satisfied whether the Council has made proper arrangements for securing economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources.

The National Audit Office's Auditor Guidance Note (AGN) 03, requires us to assess arrangements under three areas:



## Financial Sustainability

Arrangements for ensuring the Council can continue to deliver services. This includes planning resources to ensure adequate finances and maintain sustainable levels of spending over the medium term (3-5 years).



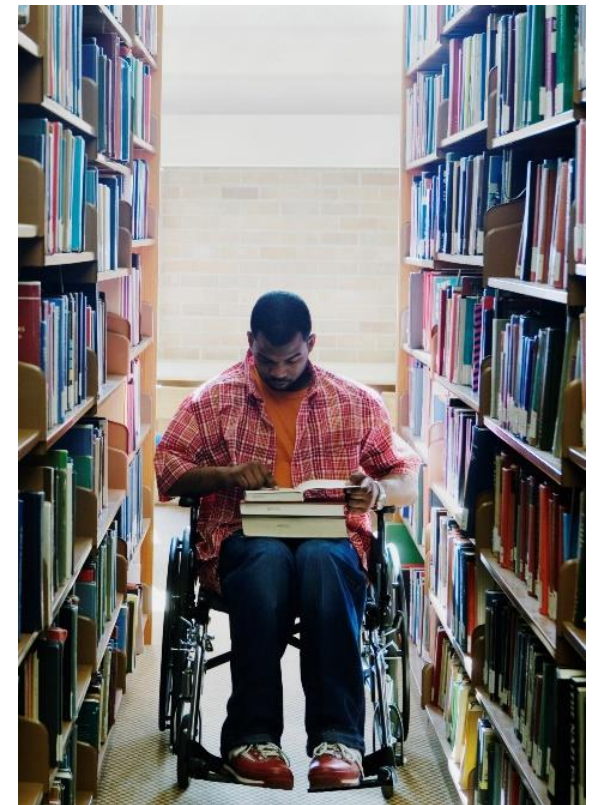
## Governance

Arrangements for ensuring that the Council makes appropriate decisions in the right way. This includes arrangements for budget setting and management, risk management, and ensuring the Council makes decisions based on appropriate information.



## Improving economy, efficiency and effectiveness

Arrangements for improving the way the Council delivers its services. This includes arrangements for understanding costs and delivering efficiencies and improving outcomes for service users.



Our commentary on the Council's arrangements in each of these three areas, is set out on pages 8 to 42.

# Financial sustainability



## We considered how the Council:

- identifies all the significant financial pressures that are relevant to its short and medium-term plans and builds them into its plans
- plans to bridge its funding gaps and identify achievable savings
- plans its finances to support the sustainable delivery of services in accordance with strategic and statutory priorities
- ensures its financial plan is consistent with other plans such as workforce, capital, investment and other operational planning which may include working with other local public bodies as part of a wider system
- identifies and manages risk to financial resilience, such as unplanned changes in demand and assumptions underlying its plans.

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## 21/22 Financial Planning Arrangements

The first draft Revenue Budget for 21/22 and Medium-Term Financial Plan for North Northamptonshire Council was initially presented to the Shadow Executive 7th December 2020, this committee received a further updated budget in January 2021 and the final budget was received at the meeting on 10th February 2021 prior to the start of the 2021 year. This demonstrates that there was an iterative process to budget setting prior to its finalisation with multiple opportunities for members to scrutinise and challenge the budget and amendments to be made as required.

The announcement of individual authority allocations in the Provisional Local Government Finance Settlement was announced on 17th December 2020 and the Final Local Government Settlements published on 4 February 2021 and therefore the timing of the final budget, and this iterative process, allowed for the budget to be updated for new information as it became available to ensure that assumptions were as realistic as possible.

The Shadow Executive was put in place to ensure that appropriate steps were taken to allow North Northamptonshire Council to be ready for its formal creation on 1 April 2021, to provide governance functions to the Council and ensure that strategic leadership was in place in creating the newly established Council. In addition to the Shadow Executive, a Shadow Authority was created to fulfill the role of Full Council prior to the Council coming into being and therefore allow statutory decisions to be effectively signed off in a timely manner. This included key policies and the final approval of the 21/22 budget on 25<sup>th</sup> February 2021.

The Shadow Executive and Authority were effectively supported through the budget setting process by the Shadow Overview and Scrutiny Committee who reviewed and challenged all aspects of the budget for 21/22 each time it was scheduled for presentation to the Shadow Executive. As well as comments from this panel of Council members, residents, local partners and other stakeholders had the opportunity to provide feedback on the budget via a seven-week consultation period and there is evidence of ongoing engagement with elected members throughout the process.

Even though the Council Finance function was not fully established at the time of the 21/22 budget being set, with finance teams at predecessor Councils required to fulfil their existing obligations, the Council was able to successfully set a budget in line with the expected timeline and undertake a comprehensive and extensive review process. The process was effectively led by an Interim Chief Finance Officer (CFO) in the first stages with the current Council CFO joining the Council and the process as it was progressing, this has ensured a level of retained knowledge taken forwards into the 22/23 process and ability to make improvements following lessons learned.

## 21/22 Financial Position

As a result of the 21/22 budget process the Council was able to set a balanced budget for 21/22 in line with Local Government legislation, this resulted in a net revenue budget position for 21/22 to be achieved of £292.5m fully funded by government grants per the Local Government Settlement, Council Tax, Business Rates and fees and charges for Council services.

The robustness of the 21/22 budget setting process and the appropriateness of the assumptions developed through this process is evidenced by the positive outturn position achieved for 21/22 which was a small underspend of £1.7m. Underspends were observed consistently across all but one directorate and corporate budget, with an overspend of £198k occurring in Enabling and Support Services. This is not significant in the context of the overall budget and has been funded in full by underspends in other directorates. At a service level the largest underspend in 21/22 was in relation to contingency budget held to meet unforeseen or unplanned/unbudgeted costs which was unused and transferred to reserves to effectively contribute towards potential future budget pressures.

Consideration has been given to the level of cash reserves the Council holds. Strong cash reserves are indicative of a sustainable financial position for the future. The Council monitor their cashflow position and update their year end forecast daily, this is undertaken by a dedicated member of the Finance Team for Treasury Management. This is effective and strong financial management which allows action to be taken immediately should deviation from expected cash position be observed. The Council ended 21/22 with cash, cash equivalents, short term investments and long-term investments of £252.8m and is currently forecasting to reduce these to £193.3m by the end of March 2024. Despite the reduction this is a substantial level of cash to hold and is comparable to the balances observed at London Boroughs and large unitary Councils. The high balances held are a result of the disaggregation process being in progress and payments and receipts in relation to shared services with West Northamptonshire Council not yet settled. The Council is holding the balances so that a net inflow or outflow position can be agreed for these services rather than transferring large sums of money between the two Councils. This is considered efficient management of the Council's resources and ensures cash is available to support payments in the meantime.

### 22/23 Budget

The Council followed a similar budget setting process and timeline for 22/23 as noted for 21/22 but under its established, rather than shadow arrangements, these are described in more detail in the Governance section of the report.

The Budget for 22/23 and updated medium term position were finalised and approved by Full Council in February 2022 ahead of the start of the 22/23 financial year. During the development of the 21/22 budget and medium term position the Council forecast an £18.5m budget gap for 22/23 however, because of the 22/23 Local Government Finance Settlement, the Council's internally developed savings and efficiency plan and updates to assumptions across funding and expenditure the Council has been able to set a balanced budget for 22/23. This equates to a net position of £295.9m for directorates and corporate services and therefore is a 1.1% increase on the 21/22 position.

We would expect the Council to review and update assumptions in relation to key sources of funding (from Council Tax, Business Rates, Fees and Charges and Grants), key source of expenditure (Inflation, Adult Social Care and Pay), Savings and Efficiencies and Reserves each year during the budget setting process. Review of the budget and MTFP has noted that each of these has been considered and updated in line with expectations.

Having reviewed the funding assumptions these were all in line with expectation and deemed to be appropriate based on the information available at the time the budget was produced. Council tax increase being set at the maximum permissible amount of 2.99% (1.99% increase in the Core Council Tax as announced in the provisional Local Government Finance Settlement and 1% increase for the Social Care precept) is appropriate as this remains the most stable and predictable form of income within the local government sector. All grant income included in the budget is as per the local government settlement announcement and fees and charges have been rolled forwards from predecessor Councils which was the best available information at the time of setting the budget. Fees and charges are reviewed and updated on an ongoing basis outside of the annual budget setting process as the Council seeks to harmonise charges across all areas (except for those fees set by statute).

We have observed evidence of this harmonisation process, an example in year has been in relation to the review of green waste charges, which was finalised in September 2022. Where charges are key decisions, they are reviewed and changes proposed, the council follows a strict review and approval process including the Executive, Overview and Scrutiny, Council and public consultation. Other fees and charges are updated based on the delegations available within the Council's consultations.

In relation to expenditure assumptions in the budget inflation, pay and social care costs are those area we would expect to have the largest impact to the spending power of the Council, and all have been sufficiently considered and included within the 22/23 budget at increased rates from 21/22.

There is a clear consideration of the financial risks facing the Council incorporated into the budget for 22/23. The process included several Budget Challenge Sessions which were facilitated workshops attended by Officers and Members with the objective of understanding and quantifying the risks and pressures in the budget and identifying efficiencies to offset these. This has ensured that there is an awareness of risk from the outset of the financial planning process. Risks are considered in the national context, Council level, Directorate specific risks and those specific to the Council for 22/23 year. The budget includes a Section 25 Report from the Executive Director of Finance (Section 151 Officer) which provides a conclusion on the robustness of estimates and on the adequacy of reserves for the coming budget year. To reach this conclusion there is a consideration of the financial risks facing the Council. There are 8 key risks considered to have the potential to impact the Council's financial position and review of these concludes there are no obvious omissions when compared with other similar Council's and from knowledge of the Council's specific circumstances. The risks are clearly described as well as the mitigations in place to respond to each, which allows Members to monitor the effectiveness of those mitigations and their impact over the financial year.

**Improvement recommendation – there is no information provided within the budget setting documentation which demonstrates the potential financial impact of each risk being faced. This would provide context to decision makers and focus their attention on the most financially impactful areas to reduce the likelihood of the risk occurring.**

The budget is designed around, and allocated to, the Council's directorates, each of which is responsible for a range of discretionary and statutory services. The sector wide financial environment is becoming more challenging and uncertain, with government funding unknown past 22/23 because of the annual nature of the current settlement regime and many sources of funding related to Covid-19 not continuing past 21/22, despite the ongoing impact of the pandemic on services. As a result, the Council may consider in future reducing the level of discretionary services it provides, or delivering them under alternative models, to ensure it is as cost effective as possible.

Currently the design of the budget does not provide decision makers with a clear distinction between discretionary and statutory spend to assist them in reviewing the resources the Council allocates to discretionary services. The revenue budget monitoring in year and the year end outturn reporting does include more granular detail on the performance of individual services which is beneficial in prompting discussions on the effectiveness of services and possible future actions to respond.

There is a clear alignment between the 22/23 budget and the Council's corporate priorities. Those areas with the most significant increases in budget from the prior year are related to Minimum Revenue Provision on Capital, increases in the National Living Wage and Social Care Reforms announced via the Government white paper in Sept 2021 and reflect specific priorities within the council's vision to support Modern Public services and helping service users live Active and Fulfilled Lives. Likewise, the largest reductions in budgets are a result of reversals in Covid-19 funding and efficiencies from transforming adult social care pathways, therefore the budget reductions do not prevent the Council delivering its priorities as they are a result of delivering services differently for the benefit of service users and recovering effectively from the pandemic. The budget, and as such the changes from the prior year, are based on the best information available at the time given the audit of the predecessor councils positions were not complete. As the disaggregation process completes the Council will need revisit and reconsider that alignment between the budget and Council priorities is maintained.

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### Disaggregation Process

North Northamptonshire Council is a newly established unitary authority which has been developed to fulfill the duties of and provide services of pre-existing district Councils in the geographical area and elements of the Northamptonshire County Council. These Councils have ceased to exist upon the creation of North Northamptonshire Council (and the also newly established West Northamptonshire Council). Therefore, a key requirement of formulating the 21/22 draft budget was to develop a process for allocating the existing Medium Term Financial Plans of the predecessor organisations to the new Council. This was a twofold process of aggregating the budgets of the existing District councils and the disaggregation of the County Council's budget into the new Unitary authorities. A clear methodology was developed splitting the County Council budget between West and North Northamptonshire based on postcode/residence of service users, geographic location of where the service is delivered from, cost drivers for a specific budget, population demand for a service, funding formula and staffing/payroll cost for each service. Whilst most disaggregation principles were agreed at the finalisation of the 21/22 budget some services have remained aggregated at vesting day and by the development of the 22/23 budget due to the complexity of the process for certain services, particularly those that are specialist in nature or have small staff teams. As such, in order to protect both Councils and their service users from any gaps in service provision, shared service arrangements were put in place for some services.

These arrangements have involved the Council both providing and receiving certain services from West Northamptonshire Council and, for the most part, have been supported by formalised inter authority agreements, setting out delivery and payment terms. At the end of 21/22 agreement of payments for these services remains in discussion between the two Councils. This therefore does assert some pressure and risk in the 22/23 budget and 21/22 financial position, however the Council have cash reserves to support these.

However, despite the challenges, communication channels between the Council's remain open to allow these discussion to be brought to a conclusion.

The 22/23 budget includes several pressures which are related to the ongoing disaggregation process, the largest being the impact of the disaggregation of contracts within adult services in relation to the Shaw Private Finance Initiative (PFI)/Public Private Partnership (PPP) care home arrangements and community equipment services following the change in funding arrangements. A balanced 22/23 budget has been set despite these pressures with the Council having identified sufficient savings, efficiencies and funding sources to respond to the ongoing pressures.

Aggregation of the four district Councils budgets has been a less challenging process, the initial aggregated position was established based on the 2020-21 approved revenue budgets of each Council and amalgamated, which was then reviewed and updated to incorporate budget proposals to develop the 21/22 budget. The aggregation of the four District and Borough councils' budgets together with the disaggregated County Council position for the North was undertaken under the oversight of the North Northamptonshire wide Disaggregation Task and Finish Group, North Northamptonshire Medium Term Financial Plan and Budget Task and Finish Group and North Northamptonshire Shadow Executive Committee.

Whilst a lot of work has been undertaken ensure the accuracy of the budgets via these groups and to realign them for the needs of the Council going forward, there is an acceptance that inevitably this takes time, recognising that the Council has only recently completed its first year of activity. The Council has deemed it prudent to retain a contingency within the 22/23 budget to address in-year risks and other requirements where the outcome is yet to be determined or quantified. The Council has a contingency budget of £4.750m in 22/23 (£5.724m in 21/22). This is considered an appropriate level of contingency to hold as the report states that less than 50% of the contingency budget has been used in 21/22 and the level of risk from disaggregating the County Council's budgets, together with any risks that may arise from service demands should decrease during 22/23. We would agree with this sentiment given that the Council is entering 22/23 with fewer services to disaggregate than in 21/22, recurring items funded from the contingency in 21/22 have been reflected in the 22/23 budget already and the pressures in predecessor services have already been accounted for.

Improvement recommendation – although there is a contingency in place to support pressures from the disaggregation process in 22/23 the Council is likely to face additional sector wide pressures from inflation, cost of living and ongoing impact of Covid-19. Therefore, the Council should prioritise finalising the disaggregation of the County Council finances and services in 22/23 ensure that sufficient contingency and resources are available to respond to these emerging risks.

A specific risk has been acknowledged in the 22/23 budget related to the final position on brought forward reserves being lower than anticipated following the final accounts certification by External Audit as this work is still ongoing at the time of writing. The level of reserves currently forecast should provide the capacity to manage this risk and no significant issues have, yet been identified in the sovereign district and borough accounts. The accounts for the former County Council are being closed by West Northamptonshire Council and the current forecast for reserves is based on the draft outturn. Regular dialogue sessions take place with West Northamptonshire finance officers to check on whether any issues are arising. Ultimately the Council will seek to replenish the reserves over the medium term if there is a significant impact following the Audit.

As well as disaggregation of budgets the process also includes disaggregation, and aggregation, of the services and their related teams. Although this commenced prior to the establishment of the Council in April 21 it still remains ongoing in the current 22.23 year to date. Although many of the larger services that the Council provides have been successfully disaggregated many of the smaller more specialist services are yet to be successfully transferred to their respective Council's. The predominant barrier to completing the process across all services is related to staffing as there are difficulties agreeing how to divide small teams or individuals between the two organisations, where that would leave a Council under resourced or without a particular skill set. In addition, the Council are finding that they have challenges in recruiting and retaining staff for posts left vacant following disaggregation. The Council is acutely aware of this challenge and it is being closely monitored via the updated performance reporting to members which includes a specific Workforce appendix with relevant KPIs in 22/23.

Improvement recommendation – the workforce KPI reporting provides appropriate information on the level of challenge being faced in relation to workforce and which services are particularly impacted. However, the Council now need to focus on completing disaggregation in order to release resources to focus on service delivery and to use the information from the workforce KPI reporting and benchmarking to develop tangible recruitment and retention schemes.

### Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP)

The Council updates its MTFP annually during the budget setting process for the next year. This involves updating for the future funding landscape (known or forecast) and estimating future expenditure forecasts using the 22/23 budget as a baseline. In addition, there has been analysis undertaken on expected risks and pressures and these have been incorporated into the budget and MTFP. The MTFP that was developed as part of the 21/22 budget process covered a 4-year time frame and forecast a financial gap of £90m for the 3 years between 22/23 and 24/25, with a balanced budget set for the 21/22 year. The MTFP set as part of the 22/23 budget setting process covers a 3-year horizon. As such we note that the MTFP has not been extended as part of the 22/23 process to ensure that decision makers have a medium-term view beyond the 24/25 year. The MTFP set in 22/23 demonstrates a reduction in the budget gap forecast from £90m to £59m for the same timeframe.

Improvement recommendation – in order that the Council can effectively plan its finances and seek financial sustainability in the medium term it is important that the MTFP is updated to cover at least a 3 to 5 years' time frame which is the generally accepted medium term horizon.

The medium-term financial gap has reduced by £30m from the 21/22 position to the 22/23 position, this is partially because of setting a balanced budget for 22/23 but also reductions to the medium-term position as a result of updated assumptions and efficiencies identified. This demonstrates a positive direction of travel in terms of medium-term financial sustainability although further work is required to close the gap.

We would suggest that budget gap is significant if it is greater than 5% of the expenditure requirement in a given year, the current MTFP confirms that for 23/24 this 3.9% and for 24/25 is 5% as such the gap is not suggestive of a weakness in arrangements. The reserves strategy accompanying the MTFP confirms that with approx. £2.5m of reserve usage in 22/23 the Council has been able to produce a balanced budget, this is not deemed excessive and is pre-planned for specific purposes. The Council forecasts to end 22/23 with £133m in reserves and therefore has an appropriate level of reserves even if it did not manage to close its £59m gap and still retain the minimum GF reserve threshold it has set itself of 5% of total net revenue budget which based on 22/23 is approx. £31m. The use of these reserves would be a last resort to close the full gap the Council is currently taking the actions we would expect to mitigate this risk.

Actions to close the gap in 23/24 and beyond are expected to be formed as part of the 23/24 budget setting process which commenced in October 22 with groups/service leads assessing the gap and developing potential savings plans to respond. As such the actions in place to address the gap are not included within the 22/23 budget and MTFP reported to the Executive and Full Council because they were not developed at the time of reporting.

Improvement recommendation - having a medium-term financial gap in the years following the current budget year, which must be balanced, is not uncommon and seen across the LG sector. However, given that there is a gap the Council members would benefit from some detail of actions being considered to close the gap, even at a high level, included in the finalised MTFP each year to facilitate early scrutiny and development of these plans. This would involve bringing this area of the budget timeline forwards or adding as an additional step in the process.

Employee costs account for a significant proportion of the Council's expenditure and increases in inflation and pay awards are expected to have an impact on these costs in 22/23 and beyond. Therefore, to ensure that the budget can reliably reflect the full cost of the workforce we would expect that the Council to have developed a Workforce Plan or Strategy to forecast a future expectation of the establishment based on Council priorities. In January 2022 the Council published its People Plan 2021-2023. The People Plan underpins the Transformation Plan and the Future Ways of Working Strategy and ensure that the Council's approach to workforce is aligned to its corporate outcomes. As the Council is still in a transition phase, they are currently focusing on a transformation project which will involve a restructure of services. This inevitably has an impact of resources, in particular staffing requirements for services.

As a result, the Council have not developed formal Workforce plans and instead rely on the HR system to provide details on current establishment. Directorates are encouraged to provide services within the resources included in the annual budget, including current staffing levels until the restructure is complete.

Improvement recommendation - for the Council to develop a reliable budget we would recommend the development of workforce plans are prioritised. As long as resources remain stable there is no budgetary impact however solid workforce plans and monitoring would determine if this stability of workforce is being achieved in reality and the future outlook for establishment levels would better inform the MTFP.

### Savings

Incorporated into the balanced budget for 21/22 was the requirement to achieve cost savings, income generation and efficiencies totaling £19.1m. At year end £8.8m was achieved or on track to achieve in full which equates to 46% of the total target. Conversely, £772k was 'red-rated' and therefore not on track to deliver, this equates to 4% of the target with the remaining £9.584m (50%) in progress but not yet completed or fully delivering. Despite planned savings not being delivered in full the Council has underspent overall on the 21/22 breakeven budget to achieve a £1.7m underspend and as such the savings performance has not negatively impacted financial sustainability.

Improvement recommendation - as the Council faces further pressures in 22/23 from inflation, pay awards, cost of living and ongoing disaggregation of services savings will be vital in achieving the balanced budget for 22/23. The Council needs to explore ways to increase deliverability of savings schemes. Only a minimal number of savings were red rated (unachieved in full) therefore the focus should be on identifying the issues causing amber-rated schemes (partially delivering or in-progress) to be rated as such and focus on addressing those causal factors to improve delivery.

There is limited evidence to comment on the Council's track record of savings delivery as 21/22 is the first year of existence of the Council, however the Council achieved a positive overall outturn including the savings that were achieved and other factors, such as Covid-19 funding received. More information will be needed over a few years to comment on whether savings can be achieved consistently. The 22/23 year to date demonstrates that of the £12.6m savings target set for 22/23 the Council has no red-rated schemes, 53% of schemes are completed or expected to deliver and the remainder (46%) amber rated. Therefore, although there is still some risk associated with amber rated schemes that they will not deliver in full, many are also rated as such as they are in progress.

The increased proportion of schemes completed/on track and the fact there are no red rated schemes suggests a positive direction of travel in terms of savings performance for 22/23 although continual efforts will be required to convert the amber rated schemes into schemes that are completed and fully delivered by year end.

As a result of the challenging financial environment in which the sector finds itself, it is unrealistic for the Council to develop more savings schemes than needed to meet the target set to call upon should there be slippage in the savings schemes in progress. Instead, the Council works with individual services to identify mitigations and focus attention on limiting the slippage by reducing costs through staffing, service levels or other cost reductions. Should 22/23 savings schemes start underperforming the 23/24 budget process begins in July 22 with services developing savings plans for 23/24 in October 22. At this stage, Finance are able to assist services to identify if any of the 23/24 savings can be brought forwards to 22/23 to be delivered earlier and address any slippage. This is an effective approach but does, in some cases, require investment to achieve.

Improvement recommendation - the annual budget planning process focusses on developing savings for the following financial year; however, the Council could reduce the pressure on future years and the financial gap in the medium-term financial plan if savings development was undertaken on a medium-term planning horizon and development focused on recurrent savings with multi year benefits.

Responsibility for development of individual savings plans sits with the individual services, they are supported by the finance team in developing these although ultimately responsibility for development and delivery is that of the service teams. The robustness of the savings proposals is tested via a series of Budget Challenge Sessions held between the Director and Deputy Director of Finance, Executive Lead for each service, service heads, the Chief Executive and the Leader of the Council. Therefore, there is evidence that the savings process is collaborative and therefore maximises the probability of achievement of savings via the iterative budget process referenced previously and in the Governance section savings schemes are also reviewed and challenged by Overview and Scrutiny, the Executive and ultimately approved by Full Council. As such the savings development approach is multifaceted and is both formal and informal, allowing for maximum opportunity to challenge the schemes being proposed. The budget setting process also include public consultation to ensure that the views of service users and local residents are incorporated into the Council's financial plans. The budget consultation for 22/23 focused on obtaining responses in relation to setting the level of Council Tax but did allow for general narrative comment in the responses from participants. Most respondents were local residents, but the reach was across service users, staff and other members of the community/partnerships and therefore the reach of stakeholders was sufficiently broad to gain a range of views via this 'open feedback' section to the questionnaire. No questions in the consultation were specifically related to savings proposal. The savings target is incorporated into the budget, which was the focus of the consultation, so they have been reviewed by the public inadvertently.

Improvement recommendation - in order that the Council can gain specific insight into whether specific savings schemes are realistic or have the backing of key stakeholders they should consider updating format of the public consultation on the budget to allow specific views on savings to be gained, or undertake a consultation dedicated to savings proposals. We do note that the fact that most respondents are local residents could make it difficult to include specific savings schemes as any reduction in funding to services could be emotive/politically sensitive and therefore the Council may wish to explore ways to message this sensitively or consult with a more even proportion of stakeholders (not weighted towards local residents) to ensure a balance of views is received.



Savings are monitored at each Executive meeting alongside monthly financial performance. Savings are presented at individual proposal level and therefore effectively highlight underperformance without this being masked by offsetting schemes that are delivering (or over delivering). Each scheme is effectively assigned to a directorate and a clear description of each proposal therefore there are clear mechanism to hold services to account for performance. The monitoring is predominantly based on a RAG (Red, Amber, Green) rating system which effectively draws attention to the schemes that are under delivering and require actions to intervene, although there is limited information on what these actions are.

Improvement recommendation – the monitoring of savings schemes by Executive is RAG rated but doesn't include information to allow decision makers to identify how much, in monetary terms, the scheme has delivered vs expectation p the acions being taken to respond to under-delivering schemes. This would allow users of the information to understand if a scheme had been delivered fully, partially or not delivered and if partially how much has been delivered. This information would be useful to allow decision makers to focus their attention on actions for those schemes which are the furthest behind in delivery and hold the relevant directorates to account.

There is evidence of Executive, and Overview and Scrutiny Committee, committees discussing the budget monitoring reports (of which the savings monitoring is an element) in detail. This discussion generally focusses on the overall financial position and on specific directorates.

Improvement recommendation - Specific discussion on savings, or individual savings schemes, is limited and there is no evidence of members delving into any of the amber or red rated schemes and suggesting interventions to improve performance within the financial year. Discussion should reflect the level of risk and there are a minimal number of red rated schemes, and the Council was on track to underspend on its budget prior to year end however as this profile of risk changes in terms of the RAG rating the Council may wish to focus more attention on specific savings projects.

The Council has an Equality Screening Assessment form which must be completed to evidence what impact a proposal, of any kind, may have on equality groups within the community or workforce. Any proposal that identifies a negative impact must have a full Equality Impact Assessment completed before the proposal progresses further. We have noted these being completed for the budget in full, as well as some specific proposals on changes to charges for services. The assessment in relation to the budget does reference savings included within the budget.

Improvement recommendation - There is limited evidence of post implementation reviews of successfully delivered savings schemes taking place. These are a key tool in assessing the quality, rather than the equality, of projects that have been implemented. This allows the Council to learn from the success of delivered and maximise further savings by extending the scope of these schemes or applying the approach to other projects. The RAG rating of savings reported at each Executive meeting is an ongoing assessment of progress rather than post implementation review and therefore this could be improved.

## Reserves and Contingencies

Reserves and contingencies incorporated into the budget and MTFP are a vital mechanism for addressing unforeseen or escalating risks to the Council's finances and therefore the development of these tools is considered to be strong financial management. The Council retained a level of contingency within the base budget for 21/22 of £5.724m. The contingency was set up to manage risks including pressures that were unknown at the time the budget was set. The unused balance on the contingency is estimated to be £3.619m at year end and the outturn reflects a transfer of £3.619m to reserves to support future years budgets.

The same approach has been taken within the 22/23 budget which includes a contingency sum of £4.750m. This is a reduction from £5.724m in 21/22 of £974k recognising that risks remain in the financial position following as the disaggregation of Council budgets and services continues and that several the assumptions within the budget are subject to further decisions, such as the pay changes and further work to understand the full impact of general inflationary increases, particularly the impact on utility costs. The reduction in the contingency is deemed to be appropriate given that disaggregation of services has progressed since 21/22 and therefore the risk associated with this process reduced and that recurring items funded from the 21/22 contingency have been built into the 22/23 budget. There is evidence that the contingency is continually reviewed as part of the budget monitoring process and there is evidence of the contingency having been increased by £0.5m for potential rises in energy costs following review by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and as such there are mechanisms in place to ensure that the Council can mitigate risks as they emerge.

Reporting expresses that the Council's contingency budget should be used in exceptional circumstances, and in the normal course of events there is an expectation that services will seek to mitigate any risks in year. This messaging is clear and consistent in effectively raising awareness of the important of this financial management tool to services and members.

The Council has a Reserves Strategy which is reviewed as part of the annual budget setting process to ensure it remains fit for purpose. As per the strategy the Council has a policy for both a minimum and maximum level of General Fund Reserves it is willing to hold and this is to ensure that the General Reserve is set at a prudent and not excessive level, as holding a high level of reserves can impact on resources and performance.

As such the maximum level of General Reserves is set at 10.0% of the total net revenue budget. The General Reserve & Minimum Level of Reserves is maintained at a level above the minimum of 5.0% of the total net revenue budget for the General Fund with the purpose of ensuring that reserves are at a level which allows the Council to continue providing services for a set period while other alternatives could be explored in challenging situations. The levels are consistent with what we see at other similar Councils and therefore appropriate. In reaching its decision to hold these levels of reserves the Finance team has undertaken benchmarking analysis comparing its level of General Fund and earmarked reserves as a proportion of net revenue budget with other councils and based on its current holdings. Its own analysis confirms it performs in line with 7 other Unitary Authorities and as such the levels held are appropriate.

In 21/22 the Council contributed to reserves, in addition to the unused contingency, by £5m and therefore due to strong financial management in 21/22 has been able to protect itself from emerging pressures that were not envisaged when the budget was set. This will provide the capacity to enable officers to identify longer term solutions within the Council's Medium Term Financial Plan from 2023/24.

The reserves balances included in the budget reporting are based on the information from the predecessor Council 19/20 and 20/21 accounts. The prior year outturn position and accounts of the predecessor Councils are yet to be audited and formally signed off. The Council may be required to consider any legacy issues arising because of the closedown and subsequent audits which may impact reserve levels. The finance team of the Council are in constant communication with colleagues in West Northamptonshire who are leading the audit of the County Council and therefore have information with which to make iterative updates to financial information. The predecessor District Councils have all produced draft accounts for 19/20 and 20/21 and audits are well progressed and therefore the information is as up to date as possible.

The expected balance on general fund and earmarked reserves at the start of 22/23 is £152.5m and the Council plans to maintain the general fund reserve balance throughout the 22/23 year at £22.4m. Therefore the general fund reserve equates to 7.5% of the net revenue budget, this sits between the maximum and minimum allowable by the Council's own reserves policy and demonstrates adherence to this policy. The Council plans to use reserves in 22/23, £7.1m in total and therefore reducing the holding to £145.4m. This represents 50% of the net revenue budget for the Council and is a comparatively better position than the position for all English Authorities and all Unitary Authorities. The use of reserves is predominantly planned from the Business Rates Risk Reserve and the Smoothing reserves. Reserve usage is not unplanned, excessive or reactive given the usage is for the purposes for which reserves have been set aside. Overall, the Council try to avoid use of reserves at any point for recurring pressures but will use them for one off pressure as required. They have set up smoothing reserves for this purpose which are there to be used as a stop gap while efficiency plans are developed and have been established because of previous underspends. As such this is considered robust reserves planning.

We would expect the reserves established, and their usage, to be aligned with the Corporate Plan and Council priorities. The Corporate Plan was approved after the 22/23 budget was set therefore the budget was not actively linked to the budget. The usage of reserves forecast has not highlighted any planned usage contrary to the Council's priorities despite them not being developed in conjunction. The Council plan to proactively align the 23/24 budget and Corporate Plan.

## Conclusion

Overall, although we have identified areas for improvement in arrangements, these represent actions to be taken to ensure best practice in ensuring financial sustainability and do not represent a weakness in current arrangements. The Council's financial arrangements are fit for purpose and despite being a newly established authority the Council have demonstrated some strong areas of financial management in 21/22. The Council faces emerging challenges that will need to be effectively responded to in order to replicate financial performance in 22/23 in line with that of 21/22.

# Improvement recommendations



## Financial sustainability

### Recommendation 1

The Council should consider quantifying the impact of the financial risks it faces and incorporating these into the budget setting process

### Why/impact

Quantifying the financial risks that have been identified as affecting the Council's ability to meet its financial position provide context to the issues identified. This allows decision makers focus their attention on addressing and monitoring the most financially impactful risks to reduce the likelihood of the risk occurring.

### Summary findings

The budget includes a Section 25 Report of the Executive Director of Finance (Section 151 Officer) which provides a conclusion on the robustness of estimates and adequacy of reserves for the coming financial year budget, to make this conclusion there is a consideration of the financial risks facing the Council. There are 8 key risks considered to have the potential to impact the Council's financial position. The risks are clearly described as well as mitigations in place to respond to each which allows members to monitor progress of those mitigations and their impact over the financial year but there is no indication of their potential impact on the Council's financial position.

### Management Comments

The Council will look at the potential to do this against the risks identified, mindful of the need to be proportionate in terms of risk management and recognising the sensitivity of any risk estimate (due to the variables involved with some risks) and the impact on decision making. The Council would always look to manage and mitigate such risks in the first instance.

Responsible Officer: Exec Director of Finance and Performance

Date: February 2024 as part of the Section 25 Report

The range of recommendations that external auditors can make is explained in Appendix B

# Improvement recommendations



## Financial sustainability

### Recommendation 2

The Council should prioritise completing the disaggregation of predecessor Council services and budgets in 22/23

### Why/impact

Disaggregation of County Council services and their resources between the Council and West Northamptonshire Council not yet being completed is causing a contingency to be set aside to fund any potential risks associated with this process. With the Council facing emerging pressures that could impact the budget that contingency would be available to respond if the disaggregation process had completed.

### Summary findings

The Council has deemed it prudent to retain a contingency within the 22/23 budget to address in-year risks and other requirements where the outcome is yet to be determined or quantified. The Council has a contingency budget of £4.750m in 22/23 (£5.724m in 21/22). Although this has reduced from the prior year due to progress made in disaggregating County Council services the sector is facing emerging pressures on inflation, pay awards and cost of living crisis which, if the contingency was not required for disaggregation risks, could contribute to these unexpected pressures.

### Management Comments

The Council is continuing to prioritise the disaggregation of former County Services, and a number of areas have already progressed successfully. The disaggregation of services is governed through the Joint Shared Services Committee.

The reference to the contingency budget in the narrative for this recommendation may be misleading. The contingency budget was held to recognise the risks across the budget including those services that had already been disaggregated and whether the disaggregation basis was appropriate to the levels of actual spend that the Council would see when in operation as a Unitary Authority. Inevitably there will also be general risks within the budget as there are for all Councils and for which it seems prudent to retain a contingency.

Responsible Officer: Exec Director of Finance and Performance

Date: March 2024 – The finalisation will depend on the timing for the sign off of the former County Council's accounts

The range of recommendations that external auditors can make is explained in Appendix B

# Improvement recommendations



## Financial sustainability

### Recommendation 3

The Council should seek to use the information from the Workforce KPI reporting and benchmarking to develop tangible recruitment and retention schemes to respond to the challenges highlighted via the disaggregation process.

### Why/impact

Delivery of an appropriate level and quality of service is dependent on having the appropriate establishment in place

### Summary findings

Although disaggregation of services commenced prior to the establishment of the Council in April 21 it still remains ongoing at the date of this report. The predominant barrier to completing the process across all services is related to staffing as there are difficulties agreeing how to divide small teams or individuals between the two organisations, where that would leave a Council under resourced or without a particular skill set. In addition, the Council are finding that they have challenges in recruiting and retaining staff for posts left vacant following disaggregation. The Council is acutely aware of this challenge, and it is being closely monitored via the updated performance reporting to members which includes a specific Workforce appendix with relevant KPIs as of 22/23. In January 2022 the Council published its People Plan, which sets out its commitment to its workforce, the actions it will take and the key benefits it hopes to achieve through active engagement with the workforce.

### Management Comments

There are examples where the Council has used workforce information and benchmarking to influence structures and pay decisions.

The Council recognises that it faces challenges on two fronts, firstly addressing the vacancies and instability created as services are disaggregated and transformed and secondly that it is not immune to the challenges observed nationally with regard to recruitment. Through its People Plan, the Council will seek opportunities to improve the position which will include required improvements to data gathering, use of information and planning in respect of the workforce.

Responsible Officer: Executive Director for Customer and Governance

Date: December 2023

# Improvement recommendations



## Financial sustainability

### Recommendation 4

The Council should consider reviewing the reporting format of the MTFP to ensure that it remains fit for purpose

### Why/impact

The MTFP is an important tool in planning for the future financial sustainability of the Council. It draws members attention to key risks to future financial position and allows them to be proactive, rather than reactive, in their response.

### Summary findings

The MTFP developed as part of the 21/22 budget process covered a 4-year horizon from 21/22 to 24/25. When the MTFP was updated in 22/23 the time horizon planned for was not extended.

There is a financial gap forecast in the medium term, but limited information included within the documentation as to the actions being taken to address the gap. It is clear action is being taken on an ongoing basis as the gap has reduced by £30m from 21/22 to 22/23 MTFP and discussions with officers confirms further actions will be developed as part of the 23/24 process which is currently underway. However, this is not effectively communicated to members,

### Management Comments

The Council will review the reporting format for the next available financial year, subsequent to the receipt of this report.

It is reasonable that the Council's budget plan covers a three-year timeline, recognising that the longer the timeline across years then the more uncertain the funding and spend forecasts become. With the backdrop of a single year settlements from Government and potential funding reform, forecasts beyond the first year are purely indicative and work will continue during the year to address any gap.

Changes to services as part of future years budget considerations are constantly in train but are not in a position to be formerly considered at the time of budget setting for the current year, which is not unusual for most councils. Issues around budget setting and the wider challenges are communicated to Members through Scrutiny, formal reports and Member briefings. Significant areas which may have future years impact on the budget (eg Green Waste charges) are presented to Members at the earliest point.

Responsible Officer: Executive Director of Finance and Performance

Date: December 2023

# Improvement recommendations



## Financial sustainability

### Recommendation 5

The Council should prioritise the development of a medium-term workforce plan and strategy

### Why/impact

Employee costs are a significant proportion of the Council's expenditure each year and therefore it is important that the cost included in the budget and medium-term financial plan is based on reliable data and Council priorities as determined by the Corporate Plan.

### Summary findings

As the Council is still in a transition phase, they are currently focusing on a transformation project which will involve a restructure of services. This inevitably has an impact of resources, in particular staffing requirements for services. As a result, the Council have not developed formal Workforce plans and instead rely on the HR system to provide details on current establishment. Directorates are encouraged to provide services within the resources included in the annual budget, including current staffing levels until the restructure is complete.

### Management Comments

Agreed, and workforce plans should be produced.

The Council has published its People Plan which was approved by Executive in January 2022. It focuses on key workforce priorities for 2022-2024 and identifies the benefits the plan will deliver. It has been designed to be flexible, allowing us to focus on the immediate needs as we emerge from the Covid-19 pandemic, as well as the unique challenges facing all newly formed organisations. The plan sets out key commitments across 5 people centred themes:

- Creating Inspirational Leadership
- Investing in You
- Attracting and Growing our Talent
- Engaging and Motivating You
- Transforming Together

The Future Ways of Working Strategy highlights the Council's desire to enable staff to deliver collaborative, solution focussed services, and how we will work in the future to achieve this.

Responsible Officer: Executive Director for Customer and Governance

Date: March 2024

# Improvement recommendations



## Financial sustainability

### Recommendation 6

The Council should review their approach to developing and monitoring a more robust savings programme by:

- Exploring ways to increase the deliverability of the savings programme
- Developing savings schemes across a medium term horizon to align with MTFP and impact multiple budget years
- Increasing the savings specific feedback received from public consultation undertaken as part of the budget setting process
- Including financial performance of savings schemes, as well as RAG rating, in the monthly monitoring reports for savings delivery
- Including details of the actions being taken in relation to under-delivering schemes within the savings monitoring reports
- Encouraging scrutiny of individual savings schemes at Executive and Overview and Scrutiny, particularly those that are red-rated.
- Undertaking post-implementation reviews of successful savings schemes

### Why/impact

The savings and efficiency programme is built into the setting of a balanced budget each year and therefore under delivery of the programme in full has the potential to cause the Council not to meet its year end financial target.

### Summary findings

46% of the savings target for 21/22 was delivered in full with 50% amber rated and therefore only partially delivered or still in progress at year end. Although improvement has been seen in performance in 22/23 to date with 53% of schemes completed or on track and 47% in progress or expected to partially deliver there is still effort required to convert those amber rated schemes into fully delivered savings by year end. The identification of savings is the responsibility of directorates and service and they are supported in doing so through the annual budget setting process. The focus therefore is on identifying savings for the next year to produce a balanced budget, however planning on a medium-term time frame would reduce the financial gaps in the MTFP.

Savings are monitored at each Executive meeting alongside monthly financial performance. Savings are presented at individual proposal level and using a RAG (Red, Amber, Green) rating system which effectively draws attention to the schemes that are under delivering and require actions to intervene. However there is limited information of the amount of savings, in monetary terms, that has been delivered for each scheme or the actions being taken to respond.

There is evidence of Executive, and Overview and Scrutiny Committee, committees discussing the budget monitoring reports (of which the savings monitoring is an element) in detail. This discussion generally focusses on the overall financial position and on specific directorates but not individual savings schemes. There is limited evidence of the Council undertaking an assessment of successfully delivered savings schemes in order to learn from their successes and apply to other schemes or services or extend the scheme to maximise the financial benefit to the Council.

### Management Comments

The Council will seek to review its arrangements for reporting the savings programme in light of these recommendations. Due to the timing of these recommendations, the Council will incorporate any changes required within the 2023/24 monitoring reports.

Responsible Officer: Executive Director of Finance and Performance

Date: July 2023 (for 2023/24 monitoring report)



# Governance



## We considered how the Council:

- monitors and assesses risk and gains assurance over the effective operation of internal controls, including arrangements to prevent and detect fraud
- approaches and carries out its annual budget setting process
- ensures effective processes and systems are in place to ensure budgetary control; communicate relevant, accurate and timely management information (including non-financial information); supports its statutory financial reporting; and ensures corrective action is taken where needed, including in relation to significant partnerships
- ensures it makes properly informed decisions, supported by appropriate evidence and allowing for challenge and transparency. This includes arrangements for effective challenge from those charged with governance/audit committee
- monitors and ensures appropriate standards, such as meeting legislative/regulatory requirements and standards in terms of staff and board member behaviour (such as gifts and hospitality or declaration/conflicts of interests) and where it procures and commissions services.

## Risk Management – Strategy and Risk Register

The Risk Management Strategy was approved by the Shadow Executive 25 March 2021 and adopted by the Council upon its formal establishment from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2021. The Strategy effectively sets out the framework by which risks is managed at all levels of the organization. In order that the Council's approach to risk management remains relevant and fit for purpose the strategy confirms that it should be reviewed at least annually by the Audit and Governance Committee and updated as required. However, since its initial approval and adoption there is no evidence of this annual review taking place.

The risk management strategy clearly defines roles and responsibilities of the Council, Executive, Audit & Governance Committee, Chief Executive, Corporate Leadership team, Executive Director of Finance, Executive Directors, Assistant Directors/Heads of Services and Chief Internal Auditor. However, we note that the role of all council officers and that of shared services/key partnerships such as the Children's Trust is not defined. Strong management of risk occurs when all aspects and members of an organization are included in the process and there is a clear awareness of the part they play.

**Improvement recommendation – The Council should review its risk management processes annually at the Audit and Governance Committee in line with the Strategy. Upon the next review the Council should consider updating the strategy to clearly define the roles and responsibilities in risk management of all Council Officers and key partnerships. This is simply a documentation suggestion as there is no evidence that risk is not managed effectively throughout the organization.**

A key mechanism for managing and monitoring the most likely and impactful risks the organisation may face is the Corporate Risk Register. This was developed and implemented by 1 April 21 following the approval of the Risk Management Strategy which set the guidelines for the identification, recording and monitoring of strategic risks.

The Corporate Risk Register follows a well-established 5x5 matrix scoring system which is widely used across the sector and at the predecessor organizations and as such is well understood throughout the organization. Despite updates to the risk register in the year, in the format and risk scores themselves, the scoring system has been consistently applied. Risks are identified through management level 'risk workshops' where each team member is able to identify their perspective of risk without influence from others, the outputs from this process are then subject to full team review to give a consensus on the main risks faced by that team. Internal Audit have supported the teams by facilitating these workshops which took place in June 2021.

The Council's Corporate Leadership Team (CLT) oversee the Corporate Risk Register, but Directorate Management Teams are responsible for the identifying, assessing, controlling and recording of risks via their Directorate Risk Register. Risks, at this level, are identified via discussions within the relevant groups as part of team meetings and any risks with high scores or wide impact are flagged by directors for consideration by the CLT for inclusion in the Corporate Risk Register. Further to this the council also identifies, records and monitors Project Level Risks for specific initiatives. Therefore, there is a multi-layered approach to risk identification which minimizes the opportunity for key risks not being addressed. Having reviewed the Corporate Risk Register throughout the year, despite changes, it is clear that the risks included are strategic in nature and therefore the approach taken is operating as intended.

The Corporate Risk Register is reviewed quarterly by the Audit and Governance Committee in line with the Strategy, this time frame is sufficient, common place across the sector, allows action to be taken in a timely manner based on up-to-date information and reflective of the low-medium risk levels in the risk register. This timeframe also effectively aligns with the quarterly review and reporting of reviewing various controls by Internal Audit.

Prior to being reviewed by Audit and Governance Committee there is a quarterly review by Corporate Leadership Team (CLT), therefore there are multiple layers of scrutiny of the risks which is a strong approach to risk management and in line with the strategy set out. At each committee meeting the Corporate Risk Register is presented by the Chief Internal Auditor therefore allowing for immediate response to any questions from members. Members are actively engaged in the risk management process and regularly challenge and pose questions at these meetings.

Although strong arrangements have been observed in the reviewing and monitoring of risk by CLT, Directorate and the Audit & Governance Committee there is no evidence of the Risk Management Strategy or Corporate Risk Register having been sighted at the top level of the organization, Council and Executive. These are the decision-making committees of the organization and understanding the alignment of key decisions with the risks they may impact is important and given this is the first year of existence of the Council members may benefit from greater oversight as risks and processes embed. As at June 22 there are no extremely high rated risks facing the Council and therefore the Executive/Council level review should reflect the risk being faced.

**Improvement recommendation – the Council should consider submitting the Corporate Risk Register to Executive for review at least annually.**

The Risk Management Strategy allows for an iterative improvement journey in terms of risk management and arrangements, and this has been clearly evidenced in year. There have been changes in the Corporate Risk Register following a year end review that have been implemented from June 22. These have been predominantly in relation to the format of the register, additional information included and the number/type of risks. The changes have been beneficial to help users of the register to gain a full understanding of risk.

We would expect the number of risks in the Corporate Risk Register to be between 15 and 30. This is reflective of a Council of North Northamptonshire's size, is a number that ensures risks are manageable and are strategic in nature. At the end of 21/22 the Council had 18 risks in the Corporate Risk Register, and this has reduced, following review, to 15 in June 22. The number of risks is within the threshold we expect, there is clear evidence of ongoing review and challenge of the risks included and the number is aligned with a sample of other Unitary Council's registers. There is no evidence that the Council has omitted any key strategic risks that are relevant to its priorities.

In order to ensure that risks can be appropriately assessed by decision makers we would expect the format of the risk register to meet some minimum standards which includes risks being assigned to a specific officer for accountability, risk RAG rated to highlight specific risks that require immediate action, direction of travel of each risk is clear, scoring includes likelihood and impact factors, there is a clear target date, mitigating actions are identified and their impact on the risk score and that risks are linked to the Council's objectives. There have been changes to the format of the risk register between March 22 and June 22 which ensure that all but one of these elements has been achieved.

**Improvement recommendation – the Council should ensure that risks in the Corporate Risk Register are clearly linked to the Council's priorities in the Corporate Plan so that decision makers can assess the impact of each risk on the Council's ability to meet its objectives and take action accordingly.**

## **Risk Management – Internal Audit and Audit & Governance Committee**

The role of the Chief Internal Auditor, as Head of the Internal Audit function, is vital in providing guidance, advice and support on the Council's Risk Management approach. They plan and deliver Internal Audit reviews of the internal control environment which helps to provide independent assurance of the processes and policies across the Council, including those related to risk management. They report directly to the Audit and Governance Committee at least quarterly on progress against the Audit Plan developed in conjunction with the Committee and executive ahead of the start of the financial year. There is also an Annual Audit Report provided to summarise the full year activity and overall opinion on the effectiveness of the controls environment at the Council.

During 21/22, the Internal Audit service was delegated to a shared service led by Milton Keynes Council. A detailed self-assessment against the Public Sector Internal Audit Standards (PSIAS) was completed by the Chief Internal Auditor and the outcome of the assessment was that the Internal Audit service was operating in general conformance with the Standards and therefore some assurance can be taken from this as to the effectiveness of the Internal Audit function for 21/22, with the caveat that this is a self assessment and not an external review which would be a more reliable and independent source of such assurance. From 1st April 2022, the Internal Audit service is being delivered in-house and a Quality Improvement Plan is being drafted by the current Chief Internal Auditor to support ongoing development, in line with the Public Sector Internal Audit Standards. Assessment against the Standards will be embedded in the delivery of the service and ongoing development work. An external assessment against the standards must be completed at least every five years and the timing of the first external assessment is yet to be agreed with the S151 Officer and Chair of the Audit and Governance Committee. We have not noted any internal or external effectiveness reviews being undertaken for any other aspects of the Council's governance arrangements, given this is the first year of the Council's existence it would be beneficial to undertake a health check via a rolling schedule of effectiveness reviews to ensure lessons can be learned and improvement implemented where committees could fulfil their purpose and remit better.

**Improvement recommendation – completion of the external assessment of Internal Audit should be prioritised given that the Council is newly established and Audit arrangements have changed between 21/22 and 22/23. External assurances provide a view on and recommendations for improvements that ensure Internal Audit continues to be effective in its role.**

**Improvement recommendation - A rolling schedule of committee effectiveness reviews would also be beneficial under the same rationale.**

The Annual Internal Audit Report for 21/22 rightly acknowledges that as 21/22 had been the first year of the Council's operation, the level of Internal Audit reviews that would be required to cover all areas of governance, risk and control could not be undertaken in a single year and thus the audit opinion was given in this context. The Internal Audit Opinion given for the adequacy and effectiveness of the Council's control environment for 21/22 was one of 'Satisfactory Assurance'. Strong assurance relies upon stable systems operating over multiple financial periods and therefore given the Council has only been established for one financial year the rating provided is essentially the maximum assurance that could be achieved in year one.

As at April 2022 90% of audits from the 21/22 Audit Plan had the fieldwork completed. This means the majority of the work was completed and despite the 10% not yet completed there was sufficient coverage of a range of operations at the Council to be able to provide an effective opinion. Despite the change of Internal Audit provider from April 22 work will continue on the outstanding 21/22 audits and the outcomes of all remaining assignments will be reported to the Audit and Governance Committee once finalised and therefore there will be no gaps in assurance the full 21/22 audit plan is expected to be fulfilled.

Of the 68 reviews undertaken by Internal Audit in the 21/22 year - 27 opinions were rated as Good, 34 as Satisfactory and 7 as Limited and therefore the balance is positive. The limited assurance opinions are minimal in the context of the number of reviews and have not negatively impacted on the overall Internal Audit Opinion. It is clear from the progress reports throughout the year that management are taking ongoing action to respond to these areas and Internal Audit follow these up monthly, follow up audits have been scheduled for 22/23 to ensure that improvement can be sought.

Within the limited assurance opinions one review included a Major Assurance risk which is the highest level of risk the internal auditors provide and was in relation to organisation impact specifically. This was in relation to Adult Safeguarding Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards (DoLS) which are the safeguards aim to make sure that people in care homes and hospitals are looked after in a way that does not inappropriately restrict their freedom. This is an area where there are pressures and backlogs nationally and as such this proactively selected for risk-based work to be undertaken by Internal Audit by the Council at the start of the year, to actively seek to understand how and where improvements could be targeted. The audit confirmed that proactive work had been undertaken to benchmark with other organisations to highlight areas of performance to target. This demonstrates that the quality of service was good, but efficiency of the service required improvements. The major risk rating was applied only to organisational impact, and no other elements of the review. The cause of this rating was attributed to the backlog of cases which the Council do not have sufficient resources to respond to quickly. The majority of the backlog has been inherited upon unitarisation and as such is not a weakness in the Council's arrangements in 21/22. The Adults, Communities and Wellbeing Directorate are working closely with Internal Audit to respond to their recommendations and in May 22 the revised date for implementation of recommendations were met.

The Council have received 132 recommendations from Internal Audit related to 21/22 reviews with the majority of these implemented or due to be implemented within the target date. Only 5% (7 recs) are overdue, and although this suggests that management have some improvement to make in terms of speed of response this is not excessive. None of the recommendations overdue are high priority and therefore this does not suggest significant ongoing issues in these areas as a result of a delayed response.

The Audit & Governance Committee, who support delivery of strong governance and risk management, met 5 times between 01/04/21 and 31/03/22. The Chair attended all of those meetings with the Vice Chair attending 4 of 5 of the meetings and thus providing effective and consistent approach to leadership. Where the Vice Chair and other members have not been able to attend a substitute has been provided to ensure there is no loss of information, challenge remains effective, and meetings are quorate. There have been no instances of meetings having to be postponed.

Members of the Committee possess the adequate skills and experience, including financial experience, to provide appropriate challenge or hold officers and the Executive to account. Members professions which included, Director of Finance, a Risk Assurance Auditor, PwC Accountant, Sales Manager and Computer Analyst. Minutes of the meetings and attendance at these meetings demonstrates that members are engaged, knowledgeable and readily challenge information.

The Audit & Governance Committee operates a process which subjects every agenda item to formal vote, with proposer and seconder required for an item to be considered closed. Given that this committee is not a decision-making committee, like Council, there is no requirement for such a strict process to be in place. The current process, is not commonplace across similar committees at other councils, and is an unnecessary burden on committee members' time.

[Improvement recommendation - A streamlined approach to the Audit & Governance Committee agenda would achieve greater efficiency in the use of the time and resource of its members. A redesign of the approach whereby the committee has no political affiliation to any one party and the agenda items concluded by the Chair confirming agreement, or disagreement of members, without the need to continually ask for proposer and seconder](#)

## Budget Setting Process

Overall, the budget process is comprehensive, includes all grades of the organisation, is a collaborative exercise designed to increase buy in and is ultimately approved by Council in line with the constitution. The Council receive appropriate support to ensure they make an informed decision to approve the budget from the Executive and Finance and Resources Scrutiny Committee. The process is an iterative approach to ensure that estimates included in the budget are as robust as they can be.

The Council use a roll forwards approach to setting the budget for 22/23. The process involves establishing the base budget for 21/22 from the monthly budget monitoring that is reviewed by both the Executive and Overview and Scrutiny and amending for recurring issues that emerged in 21/22, known pressures and agreed fundings sources or savings. This is a well-established approach that has benefits including being time and resource efficient and widely used in the sector and so well understood.

The 22/23 budget process began in July 21 with Finance and the Directorates working collaboratively to establish the 21/22 base line position, identify necessary amendments and start discussion on possible savings and efficiencies. This process includes a series of Budget Challenge Sessions between Directorate Heads and Director and Assistant Directors of Finance, Executive Member for Finance, Chief Executive and the Leader of the Council. This allows for ongoing refinement of assumptions in the budget as it develops before a draft is presented to members in December 21. This therefore demonstrates a collaborative, joined up approach to budget setting that includes input at all levels of the organisation.

To ensure that the budget is reflective of the Council's priorities and the needs of its residents the Council incorporates a public consultation exercise within the budget setting process, this spanned from December to January and therefore allowed sufficient time for this to be relayed to members and included in the budget.

The focus this year was predominantly on Council Tax however there is the opportunity for feedback on element of the budget. We have not identified any additional stakeholders, internal or external, we would expect to be included in the budget setting process or that would be of additional benefit. All staff have the opportunity to be involved through their directorate management meetings or the public consultation.

There are several methods that Councils can employ in order to increase the robustness of the estimates they use in their budgets. These include, but are not limited to, trend analysis, risk and sensitivity analysis and scenario planning. The Finance team have undertaken informal benchmarking to compare their assumptions and estimates with other similar organisations and proposing changes as required in place of trend analysis. Although risk is considered effectively throughout the budget setting process, we have noted limited evidence of sensitivity analysis, which seeks to highlight how small percentage changes in certain elements of the budget (such as a 1% decrease in business rates collection) impact potential overall outturn. There is also no evidence of scenario planning, which seeks to demonstrate and plan for optimistic, realistic and pessimistic potential budgetary outcomes based on potential inputs.

Not including this analysis is an active choice by the Council as the Council is newly established there is limited historical trend data that would be reliable.

**Improvement recommendation – As the Council becomes more established and further financial performance data is available, they may seek to strengthen the budget setting process going forwards by incorporating scenario planning, sensitivity analysis or trend analysis which will allow the Council to prepare for challenges which are currently unanticipated.**

Initiation of the budget process early in the financial year allows plenty of time for several iterations of the budget to be developed, reviewed and approved with further iterations reviewed by the Executive in February 22. The timeline is well planned and clearly understood and we have not noted any deviations from this, the scheduling also perfectly coincides with key information being released such as the Local Government Settlement and so it can be updated to reflect important new information as it becomes available.

The final budget was approved by Council in Feb 22 following review at each iteration from the Finance Team, Finance and Resources Scrutiny Committee and Executive. We have noted at least 3 versions of the budget being reviewed by these groups in the year and as such review of the budget is comprehensive.

The Overview and Scrutiny process in particular is extensive with a total of eight Budget Task and Finish Scrutiny Sessions taking place (two for each directorate) which usually last around 2-3 hours. Therefore, scrutiny on the budget is in excess of 24 hours. Although this is a benefit in ensuring robustness of the budget and the estimates it does mean that scrutiny committee time and resource is focussed on a narrow scope.

**Improvement recommendation - Although the Council has been able to set a budget by Feb 22 ahead of the start of 22/23 year due to starting the process early, the scrutiny process element of decision making could be more efficient and streamlined to allow the time of the committee to be applied to a wider range of relevant subjects in year.**

## Financial Reporting

The Council monitor financial performance against budget monthly via Budget Forecast Reports. These are prepared and presented to Executive from Period 2 to the Period 12 outturn report. This is appropriate regularity given the sector wide focus on finance, uncertainty on future funding and continually changing assumptions.

Reporting is at directorate level and clearly states the budget, expected outturn and variance. The performance is presented on a forecast basis which is important as the budget is set for the year, by forecasting the current months performance impact on year end the Council is allowing decision makers to understand the overall impact and take action now to reduce that impact where it could negatively impact the year end position. The narrative is extensive and detailed and generally provides a background to each directorate's individual services, drilling down into the specific services which may be driving any under or overspends. There is information on the causal factors of performance and also some information on actions being taken, this information is effective as it is focused on those directorates where there are pressures so that members are not overwhelmed with data. This provides an appropriate level of detail to decision makers to know where to focus their attention and to know what is being done already by the Council.

When the monitoring reports are presented, there is a 1-2 month lag in information being received between the date of the meeting it is being reported to and the date the information relates to. A 1-2-month lag in information is to be expected, given the frequency of the Executive meetings, these are monthly but require a lead in time to provide papers for publishing and information to be collated. The information is considered relevant and up to date with which to make information decisions. Publicly reporting the financial position monthly allows residents and other stakeholders to monitor financial performance regularly.

There is a collaborative approach in the budget setting process which sets the basis for monitoring financial performance. This collaborative approach continues through the budget monitoring process which initially takes place between finance and the Directorate leads, before reporting is undertaken at Scrutiny Committees and Executive. As such there is a mechanism in place to hold directorate leads to account for performance at the top level of the organisation. Financial performance in the risk register is assigned to the Director of Finance as opposed to specific directorate leads, this is appropriate as the Director of Finance has the overarching strategic view of finances at the Council and the strategic risk register is seeking to address council wide risk and not individual directorates. This does not impact the messaging that financial risk and performance is the responsibility of the directorates themselves.

Treasury management activity is reported to the Executive bi-annually. This process is effectively outlined in the Treasury management Strategy approved as part of the budget process and has been adhered to. Comments on the current treasury position are included in the annual review of the Annual Investment Strategy and Treasury Management Strategy undertaken as part of the annual budget setting process and therefore Executive have sight of activity 3 times a year, this is in line with other councils who take the bi-annual approach and include in the budget process. There are no risks evident from the performance which would suggest this isn't a sufficient level of oversight.

The reporting includes an overview of treasury management activity and is supported by a detailed appendix on all areas of treasury performance. The update report includes headlines in relation to cash balances, short and long term investment returns, long term and short-term outstanding borrowings. These areas are then further analysed in the body of the report. As such Executives are deemed to have a full suite of information across all aspects of treasury management. The year-end report does not highlight any significant issues with all limits having been complied with.

The report provides adequate information on the economic background, changes in key indicators such as inflation rates and a summary position of the Council investment and borrowing portfolio. The report is comprehensive but not overwhelming in its information. Overall the report makes it easy to understand that the Council is performing well in terms of treasury management, it has repaid loans to reduce its debt, it has not breached its borrowing limit, it has increased investments to generate a return and it continues to comply with prudential limits. The report clearly reiterates the commitment to a low risk approach throughout the report so that the message is clear and consistent to the whole organization.

### Decision Making Arrangements

The Councils Corporate Governance Code provides guidance on how the Council makes decisions and requires that all decisions be based on relevant, clear objective analysis and sound advice. It requires that all decisions consider the implications and risks inherent in the organisation's financial, social and environmental position and outlook and that effective and constructive challenge is encouraged to support balanced and effective decision making. Minutes of the Council's various committees and decision-making groups demonstrate that the Code is strictly adhered to. Meeting agendas are developed in advance, papers for each meeting provided for review appropriately ahead of time and the standard template used for the covering report for each item ensures that all risks, implications, financial, climate, legal and social impacts are considered consistently, and decision makers have sufficient information with which to make decisions.

The key decision making groups at the Council are Full Council and the Executive and they are supported by two Scrutiny Committees focused on Finance and Resources and Scrutiny Commission. Currently the scrutiny committees focus on the two key priorities of the Council but as the Council develops and issues come to the forefront they may wish to review, add and/or remove specific scrutiny committees. These committees investigate important public issues through Task and Finish Groups and where appropriate challenge or review executive decisions once they are made through the Call-In Procedure Rules.

Public participation is encouraged and observed at several Full Council meetings in year. Although this could be a contributing factor in the length of such meetings this is also positive garnering public interest in the services they receive and better informing decisions. As such this should continue to be encouraged but could be managed in a more efficient way by restricting the number of participants each meeting and/or the time slot available for public input. The caveat to this suggestion is that concerns were raised by several speakers and elected members at a Full Council meeting in year which limited the number of public speakers on a specific item.

Improvement recommendation – We would recommend that the Council explore ways to balance the benefit of public participation at Council meetings with the need to streamline the decision-making approach. Given concerns raised by members in year on this point we would expect that any decision by the Council to implement guidelines around participation would need to be agreed and formalised with member support. Amendments to increase participation in year have already been voted against therefore our recommendation centres around agreeing guidance on how additional input can be achieved, through alternative formats to attendance at meetings or summary reports from the public, rather than focusing on the number of speakers.

Statistics relating to complaints about the Council as reported to Ombudsman can provide useful information to gauge whether the Council is acting in a way that service users or residents do not deem to be effective. Statistics show that the Council had 2 complaints upheld by the Ombudsman, this is 67% of total complaints. This therefore demonstrates that a very small number of complaints are made in relation to the Council, that a minimal number are deemed to be accurate enough for the Ombudsman to investigate and the Council is not an outlier when compared to other councils. In 100% of cases the Ombudsman were satisfied the Council had successfully implemented their recommendations and so the performance is not indicative of inappropriate Council decision making.

### Legal Arrangements

The Council have inherited an historic legacy legal case that was brought against East Northamptonshire Council in 2018. The case was not resolved prior to the unitarisation that lead to East Northamptonshire services, and other responsibilities such as legal, being aggregated to form North Northamptonshire Council. Therefore, the effectiveness of the response to the case is dependent upon robust governance arrangements being in place at the newly established Council.

Our review of arrangements has determined that the Council's response to the case was appropriate, governance arrangements were robust and that there was appropriate challenge and communication throughout.

The Monitoring Officer and her team immediately sought to understand the facts of the case, liaise with the predecessor lawyer and obtain existing legal advice. This shows a timely response to a complex issue and contributes to the strong governance arrangements observed throughout the process.

The Council are supported in their legal proceedings by legal Counsel, Pathfinder, as part of their role they recommend appropriate lawyers for specific cases and their advice suggested that the incumbent lawyer for the case be retained and this was agreed as appropriate having been reviewed by the Council. We note that their previous knowledge of the case is an advantage in terms of responding efficiently and note that there was clear rationale for the selection of this representative (including experience in public sector disputes).

Two hearings took place shortly after the establishment of the Council in June 22 in relation to the case. Following these hearings, the advice provided by the Council's lawyer was amended, seeking to settle the case as opposed to favouring a trial procedure. There is clear evidence that the Monitoring Officer challenged this change in advice with both the case lawyer and the Council's legal counsel, the change could clearly be attributed to a change in information at the hearings changing the probability of success and potential costs.

The Chief Executive, Leader of the Council, Monitoring Officer and the case lawyer were in constant communication throughout the case with the Monitoring Officer ensuring that these decision makers were provided with the full suite of information relating to the case at each stage. These were both informal in the form of conference calls and formal in the form of briefing notes provided sufficiently regularly.

Following the advice provided by the lawyer Council were immediately informed and provided with the same information, allowed the chance to challenge and asked to approve the proposed settlement fee. There was clear scrutiny by members at this meeting with the approved settlement fee differing from that of the initial suggestion and therefore demonstrating appropriate deliberations taking place.

Ongoing liaison with the claimant, via legal representatives, lead to an initial rejection of the settlement and mediation taking place. The case came to a close with a final settlement reached in December 2021.

Overall, the Council has demonstrated that the case was well managed under robust governance arrangements and that the advice they sought was appropriate and no weaknesses or improvements are required to the arrangements. Despite the legal case being inherited the Monitoring Officer has taken ownership and brought the case to conclusion successfully. In doing so there has been sufficient challenge, engagement of decision makers and adherence to due process. Communication between senior officers, legal representatives and members has been frequent and well informed. The Council has been able to adapt its governance structures to respond in a timely manner with member briefings and extra ordinary meetings arranged to be able to facilitate an immediate response as new information became available.

Although there was a cost to settle the final settlement was much lower than the initial claim and therefore this fact, plus the strong arrangements demonstrate that the response achieve value for money in all respects.

As we have noted, in relation to the budget, scrutiny of the budget tends to use extensive time and resource of these committees. Further investigation has noted that efficiency of meetings is an area which could benefit from improvement across the organization. In particular meetings of Full Council tend to spend a similar time discussing each agenda item as the scrutiny committees do. Given the arrangements in place meaning that decisions flow through each level of the governance structure before coming to Council for final approval the expectation would suggest that less deliberation and debate would be required at this top tier of the organization. The current process does lead to adjournments of meetings and duplication of discussion and therefore there is the opportunity to streamline the approach.

Similarly, there is evidence of potentially inefficient decision making in relation to planning. The Council has five planning meetings in total covering four geographical locality and one overarching Strategic Planning Committee, which considers major developments. This does prevent inconsistencies and planning teams working in silo but presents another opportunity to streamline decision making given there is a planning policy in place which does not require different approaches for each geography. A small number of these meetings were cancelled in 21/22 due to them not being required, this is evidence that the current meeting schedule may be excessive.

**Improvement recommendation – linked to our point around efficiency of scrutiny meetings we would suggest that the Council has an opportunity to review and streamline its approach to decision making across all of its committees in order to generate efficiencies and allow debate of a wider range of Council issues.**

In order to ensure that decision making is based on sound advice the Council actively encourages and seeks feedback from the public and service users before making key decisions. There is a Consultation and Engagement Framework in place which reaffirms the purpose of their consultations, provides examples of what they will consult on and how and how people can get involved. It is clear, succinct and easily accessed so that stakeholders are aware of how they can input. The framework confirms that the Council plans to consult cover wide ranging topics such as budgets, service changes/improvements and equality. There is a dedicated consultations portal available via the Council website, which is easily accessible, there is evidence of extensive consultation in 21/22 and ongoing consultations in 22/23.

The consultation in relation to the budget had 527 respondents of which 504 participated via the questionnaire. Other options for participating were social media and written responses. Varying response rates are seen across the consultations that took place in 21/22. Given that the population of North Northamptonshire is approximately 395,000 people a response rate of 527 is considered to be low and therefore may reduce the reliability of responses in reflecting the views of the population.

**Improvement recommendation – the Council should explore ways that it can increase the response rate to the public consultations it undertakes on the budget and service proposals in order to ensure that the feedback can reliably inform decisions. This could include exploring additional methods for responding and better advertising of consultations to widen the reach.**

The Council have engaged Internal Audit to undertake work to provide assurances on their legal process for litigation. This review has been concluded and was rated satisfactory, it has been presented to Audit & Governance Committee and does have actions that are being processed currently and as such the Council has demonstrated commitment to learning from the case and embedding that learning going forwards.

### **Conclusion**

Overall, although we have identified areas for improvement in arrangements, these represent actions to be taken to ensure best practice in ensuring robust governance and do not represent a weakness in current arrangements. The Council's governance arrangements, which were adopted on 1st April, have been fit for purpose throughout the 21/22 year and the Council's commitment to its ongoing improvement journey is evident.

# Improvement recommendations



## Governance

### Recommendation 7

The Council should review their approach to risk management as set out in the Risk Management Strategy at least annually at the Audit and Governance Committee. Upon the next review the Council may consider updates to the process of Risk Management including:

- updating the Strategy to clearly define the roles and responsibilities in risk management of all Council Officers and key partnerships
- submitting the Corporate Risk Register to Executive for review at least annually.
- ensuring that risks in the Corporate Risk Register are clearly linked to the Council's priorities in the Corporate Plan so that decision makers can assess the impact of each risk on the Council's ability to meet its objectives and take action accordingly.

### Why/impact

It is important that risk management processes are reviewed with sufficient regularity to ensure they remain fit for purpose. Risk management performances most effectively when all levels of the organisation are involved and their role is clearly communicated. The Executive are a decision making committee of the Council and therefore in order that their decisions are well informed, including how the risks of the organisation may be impacted, it is important they have an awareness of those strategic risks.

The Strategic Risk Register is a key mechanism for managing risk to the achievement of the Council's strategic objectives and therefore it is important that there is a clear link between those objectives and the risk being faced.

### Summary findings

The Risk Management Strategy confirms that it should be reviewed at least annually by the Audit and Governance Committee and updated as required. However, since its initial approval and adoption there is no evidence of this annual review taking place. The risk management strategy clearly defines roles and responsibilities of the Council, Executive, Audit Committee, Chief Executive, Corporate Leadership team, Director of Finance, Executive Directors, Assistant Directors/Heads of Services and Chief Internal Auditor however there is no consideration of the role all team members or key partnerships play in the processes.

Although strong arrangements have been observed in the reviewing and monitoring of risk by CLT, Directorate and the Audit & Governance Committee there is no evidence of the Risk Management Strategy or Corporate Risk Register having been sighted at the top level of the organization, Council and Executive.

Although the format of the risk register has improved in year and generally conforms to the standards we would expect in terms of the information included we have not noted a clear link between the risks and the impact they may have on the Council's ability to achieve its objectives.

### Management Comments

The recommendation is noted, and the Council will reflect upon these in the next review of the strategy.

The risk register, including any changes in the level of risk, is reported regularly to the Audit and Governance Committee. The risk management framework has been strengthened and developed significantly over the last year and an updated strategy will be presented for approval, reflecting both this and further development planned for the forthcoming year.

It is noted that the corporate objectives could be incorporated within the risk register, but it is also considered that, due to the nature of local government, some risks the Council faces are due to its statutory roles and the environment in which it operates – and related risks cannot be eliminated but may not be directly related to a specific Council objective.

Risk integration into service plans will help strengthen the link between both service and corporate priorities and future actions centred on mitigating risk.

Responsible Officer: Executive Director of Finance and Performance

Date: October 2023



# Improvement recommendations



## Governance

### Recommendation 8

Completion of an external assessment of Internal Audit against the Public sector Internal Audit Standards should be prioritized.

### Why/impact

Arrangements for the provision of Internal Audit services has changed since 21/22. External assurances are a legal requirement for Internal Audit and provide a view on and recommendations for improvements that ensure the function continues to be effective in their role.

### Summary findings

An external assessment against the standards must be completed at least every five years and the timing of the first external assessment is yet to be agreed with the S151 Officer and Chair of the Audit and Governance.

### Management Comments

The arrangements for the provision of Internal Audit have changed since 2021/22 moving from a lead authority arrangement led by Milton Keynes Council during 2021/22 to an in-house service from 2022/23 – this change has served to strengthen the planning and focus of the service with a dedicated Chief Internal Auditor leading the team. The Council is aware that an external assessment must be carried out within five years and therefore the Council is within the timeline for such an assessment. The intention is to ensure that the service is settled and been in operation for a period (c 2 years) in order that the assessment is considering the normal operation of the service and there is sufficient evidence of a full audit cycle.

Responsible Officer: Executive Director of Finance and Performance

Date: Financial Year 2024/25

# Improvement recommendations



## Governance

### Recommendation 9

A rolling schedule of committee effectiveness reviews should be implemented.

### Why/impact

The Council is newly established and therefore has limited information with which to judge the effectiveness of its governance structures. External assurances provide a view on and recommendations for improvements that ensure that the Council's committees, continue to be effective in their role.

### Summary findings

There is no evidence of committee effectiveness reviews having been undertaken for 21/22 on any of the Council's committees.

### Management Comments

Committee effectiveness is undertaken by an annual review process culminating in annual reports to Council. A Constitutional Review Working Group meets regularly to review whether any changes should be made to ensure better efficiency and decision making. Two committee effectiveness reviews are already being undertaken (Planning and Scrutiny) and a review of the EAPs has been completed. This recommendation is already therefore being actioned on an ongoing basis.

Responsible Officer: Executive Director for Customer and Governance

Date: Complete

# Improvement recommendations



## Governance

### Recommendation 10

The Council may consider a redesign of the Audit & Governance Committees approach to the concluding agenda items at its meetings. This could be achieved by ensuring that the committee has no political affiliation to any one party and the agenda items concluded by the Chair confirming agreement, or disagreement of members, without the need to continually ask for proposer and seconder.

### Why/impact

A streamlined approach to the Audit & Governance Committee agenda would achieve greater efficiency in the use of the time and resource of its members.

### Summary findings

The Audit & Governance Committee operates a process which subjects every agenda item to formal vote, with proposer and seconder required for an item to be considered closed. Given that this committee is not a decision-making committee, like Council, there is no requirement for such a strict process to be in place. The current process, is not commonplace across similar committees at other councils, and is an unnecessary burden on committee members' time.

### Management Comments

There have been no issues with political membership and the impact upon debate in the Audit and Governance Committee and the recommendation is unlikely to have a material impact. It is standard democratic practice that a motion is moved and seconded before being voted on. The Monitoring Officer will discuss the recommendation with the Constitutional Review Working Group and consider if any amendments should be incorporated into the Constitution.

Responsible Officer: Executive Director for Customer and Governance

Date: September 2023

# Improvement recommendations



## Governance

### Recommendation 11

As the Council becomes more established and further financial performance data is available, they may seek to strengthen the budget setting process going forwards by incorporating scenario planning, sensitivity analysis or trend analysis

### Why/impact

Analysis such as trend analysis, risk and sensitivity analysis and scenario planning can be important tools in ensuring that estimates used in budgeting are robust and allow Council's to effectively plan for a range of possible eventualities before they occur.

### Summary findings

There is no evidence of trend analysis, scenario planning or sensitivity analysis in the Council's budget setting. Not including this analysis is an active choice by the Council as the Council is newly established there is limited historical trend data that would be reliable. We do not think risks have been considered and comparative benchmarking has been undertaken on assumptions to assist in ensuring the robustness of the budget despite a lack of historical data.

### Management Comments

Whilst recognising that this may not be formally reported to Committee as part of budget setting, it is nevertheless a consideration when identifying the potential financial requirements and funding availability and risks, in order to achieve the most likely scenario for the MTFP. This is ongoing as officers work with the latest information to support the financial planning as well as consider trends. However, as an authority that has been created during a pandemic and then has been subjected to the impact of an economic downturn, it is difficult to ascertain norms.

The Council will continue to review the robustness of the budget setting and in advance of the budget for 2024/25.

Responsible Officer: Executive Director of Finance and Performance

Date: December 2023

# Improvement recommendations



## Governance

### Recommendation 12

The Council should explore ways that it can increase the response rate to the public consultations it undertakes on the budget and service proposals. This could include exploring additional methods for responding and better advertising of consultations to widen the reach.

### Why/impact

Public feedback from consultations can only reliably inform decisions if the response are representative of the population impacted by the decision.

### Summary findings

The consultation in relation to the budget had 527 respondents of which 504 participated via the questionnaire. Other options for participating were social media and written responses. Varying response rates are seen across the consultations that took place in 21/22. Given that the population of North Northamptonshire is approximately 395,000 people a response rate of 527 is considered to be low and therefore may reduce the reliability of responses in reflecting the views of the population.

### Management Comments

**Increasing consultation responses and engagement on consultations across the board is an objective for the council's consultation and engagement team. A number of methods of engagement are employed to maximise reach and participation.**

Responsible Officer: Assistant Chief Executive

Date: February 2024

# Improvement recommendations



## Governance

### Recommendation 13

The Council should explore ways it can streamline the approach to decision making at its key committees whilst maintaining an appropriate balance of public participation, scrutiny and efficiency

### Why/impact

The Council's governance structure supports an upwards flow of information through the organization, culminating in approval at the top, decision making tier of the organization (Council and Executive). In order that decisions can be made in a timely manner it is key that information and deliberation is more summarized as it moves up through the reporting structure. At the same time public feedback is in an important tool in supporting informed decision making.

### Summary findings

The Overview and Scrutiny process in particular is extensive with a total of eight Budget Task and Finish Scrutiny Sessions taking place (two for each directorate) which usually last around 2-3 hours. Although this is a benefit in ensuring robustness of the budget and the estimates it does mean that scrutiny committee time and resource is focussed on a narrow scope.

Meetings of Full Council tend to spend a similar time discussing each agenda item as the scrutiny committees do. The current process does lead to adjournments of meetings and duplication of discussion and therefore there is the opportunity to streamline the approach.

The Council has 5 planning meetings in total covering each geographical locality and one overarching meeting to collate the information. This does prevent inconsistencies and planning teams working in but many of these meetings have been cancelled in 21/22 due to them not being required, this is evidence that the current meeting schedule may be excessive.

Public participation is encouraged and observed at several Full Council meetings in year. Although this could be a contributing factor in the length of such meetings this is also positive garnering public interest in the services they receive and better informing decisions. As such this should continue to be encouraged but could be managed in a more efficient way by restricting the number of participants each meeting and/or the time slot available for public input. The caveat to this suggestion is that concerns were raised by several speakers and elected members at a Full Council meeting in year which limited the number of public speakers on a specific item. Therefore, any decision by the Council to implement guidelines around participation would need to be agreed and formalised with member support. Amendments to increase participation in year have already been voted against therefore our recommendation centres around agreeing guidance on how additional input can be achieved, through alternative formats to attendance at meetings or summary reports from the public, rather than focusing on the number of speakers.

### Management Comments

Reviews of Committees are currently ongoing to decide whether they can be streamlined further and can be more efficient. These comments will form part of the review.

Responsible Officer: Executive Director of Customer and Governance

Date: Completed May 2023

# Improving economy, efficiency and effectiveness



## We considered how the Council:

- uses financial and performance information to assess performance to identify areas for improvement
- evaluates the services it provides to assess performance and identify areas for improvement
- ensures it delivers its role within significant partnerships and engages with stakeholders it has identified, in order to assess whether it is meeting its objectives
- where it commissions or procures services assesses whether it is realising the expected benefits.

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## Non-Financial Reporting and Data Quality

The Council reports its non-financial performance to the Executive via a series of Key Performance Indicators (KPIs). The fact that this report is taken to Executive, who are the top tier decision makers of the Council, is good practice and ensures equal attention is paid to financial and non-financial performance of the Council.

The frequency of reporting has increased from quarterly in the first half of the 21/22 financial year to reporting on performance every 1-2 months in the latter half of the year. The increase in frequency directly correlates to an increase in the number of underperforming KPIs being observed and therefore demonstrates an effective and direct response to the reduction in performance to ensure it was more closely monitored.

The Executive receive a KPI dashboard with an accompanying Executive summary. The format of this reporting has developed over the course of 21/22 and the updates have ensured that the information is more beneficial and accessible to decision makers. The updated reporting ensures that the Executive receive two KPI reports, one at summary level and one with detailed comments, trend data and benchmarking. The information includes RAG rating, including direction of travel and variance from target and specifically highlights underperforming KPIs and those that have fallen significantly since the last period.

At the end of 21/22 a revised set of provisional indicators was developed to be measured and reported on from April 2022 to align with the vision and key commitments set out within the Council's Corporate Plan which ensures that the Council can ensure it has mechanisms in place to achieve the priorities set out in this Plan. The update has ensured that there are more, different and updated KPIs and all are considered relevant to their services and provide decision makers with a wealth of information with which to inform decisions. This demonstrates the ongoing improvement journey, however all KPIs monitored in 21/22 were wide ranging in their coverage of Council operations and have not noted any services or directorates omitted that we would expect to be monitored prior to the update.

All KPIs are now consistently linked to the Corporate Plan which is a significant improvement from 21/22. More detail is included in the comments, although this still centres around why the performance has occurred and less so on actions, with the exception of the indicators on NHS health checks which have been persistently underperforming and additional information has been included on the underlying cause and next steps. This is appropriate and shows attention being centred around the key areas of concern but this was not present throughout 21/22

**Improvement recommendation - The comments included in the detailed KPI Dashboard generally include details of why the performance being observed has occurred but includes limited information on next steps and actions to be taken, this would be particularly useful if applied consistently to those KPIs that are below target so that members can track progress and success of those actions and hold officers to accounts as required.**

Overall the format of the KPI reporting is notable practice as it provides sufficient detail, on an appropriately frequent basis, to allow decision makers to clearly see how operational performance at the Council is progressing.

The Northamptonshire Children's Trust as a key partnership with the Council. The Council's KPI report includes metrics that measure the success of Children's Services overall where some elements are delivered by the Trust and others by the Council. However the direction of travel for the performance of those services delivered by the Children's Trust is reported separately and this ensures that decision makers can clearly distinguish Council performance from that of its partner and take action accordingly.

Minutes of the Executive meetings where performance is reported demonstrate that members are proactive, engaged and readily ask questions in relation to performance. This demonstrates effective challenge and clear understanding of performance.

The Council recognises the importance of having a full set of meaningful targets as well as comparable and reliable benchmark data and continues to prioritise this work. There is clear evidence of benchmarking in the majority of indicators in the KPI reporting and therefore the reporting is considered effective in its benefit to decision makers as it looks both internally and externally to provide assurances. The Council is also working with East Midland Councils to establish a new benchmarking group that agrees to share certain metrics on a quarterly basis within agreed timescales. This will be a voluntary process and the ambition is to, where appropriate, start to reduce the reliance on nationally published data either through collecting new data items or providing more timely access to existing data on a provisional basis by collecting data in-year, for example on a quarterly basis. This is expected to be used from month 6 reporting in November/December 2022 onwards. This ensures that there is a consideration of local factors in benchmarking going forwards which further strengthens the analysis being presented to decision makers.

At March 2022, of the circa 80 indicators only 3 are red-rated as underperforming, which has reduced from a maximum of 13 rated as such at period 7. This shows an improvement trajectory and is a minimal number of red rated metrics in the context of the total number of KPIs as such there is no evidence of pervasive performance issues.

Directorate	Underperforming Indicators	Variance from Target
Children's Services	T44 LS3a % of primary schools judged as good or outstanding by Ofsted	-13.98%
Adults, Communities & Wellbeing	T79 % of in-year eligible population offered an NHS Health Check	-55.36%
Adults, Communities & Wellbeing	T80 % of in-year eligible population who received an NHS Health Check	-83.80%

The underperforming metrics are within Children's Services and Adults, Community and Wellbeing. The fact that these are demand led services and are areas of challenge across the sector is not indicative that the underperformance is a result of poor arrangements at the Council but instead challenges in the external environment. The Adults related metrics are being caused by lack of GP capacity and a backlog of cases as recovery from the pandemic continues. The Council are working with current providers and potential additional providers outside of existing GP practices to increase the capacity for health checks and improve the metric. This immediate response and the fact that the Council is not an outlier in its performance when benchmarked with others suggests that there is an appropriate level of control of this service in the given circumstances.

We note that the Council Children's services, including education and those services delivered by the Children's Trust, have undergone an Ofsted inspection in 21/22 which has improved the inherited rating from the predecessor Council to 'Requires Improvement' and as such there has been an improvement noted in the Children's related metric in the year end KPI reporting. The underperformance was identified by virtue of a lag between the services improving and the rating being provided.

### Northamptonshire Children's Trust

The Council's most significant partner is the Northamptonshire Children's Trust which is a wholly owned local authority company for the provision of children's social care services, owned by West and North Northamptonshire Councils following the transfer of children's services from Northamptonshire County Council upon unitarisation in April 21. The company was established as a result of "Inadequate" Ofsted inspection provided to the County Council which led to Department for Education intervention which mandated a company be set up for the provision of children's social care services. It is a company limited by guarantee, and therefore is an Arms Length Organisation (ALMO), which delivers most children's services with the exception of education which has been retained by the Council itself.

Governance arrangements between the company and the Council were set up prior to unitarisation and have been effectively adapted to apply to the new Council structure. The governance arrangements are formally documented and include a clear reporting structure and well defined roles and responsibilities between the Council's and the Trust. We have observed the arrangements being applied and followed consistently throughout 21/22, engagement from the Trust and ongoing liaison between the Trust and Council officers. Currently there are no plans to review the governance arrangements in the immediate future as officers feel they are effective and fit for purpose.

The Council may consider establishing a mechanism with which to review arrangements, confirm they are working in practice and make adjustments as required should their effectiveness change. This could be achieved by a standing agenda item at one of the Council or Trust committees or an effectiveness review. The frequency and level of review should reflect the risk being presented by the partnership, as we have observed the arrangements operating effectively, good financial and non-financial performance of the Trust in 21/22 and the being reviewed and adapted at the start of the year they are considered to be up to date.

Delivery of Children's Services is a statutory responsibility of unitary Councils and therefore although the Trust is set up to provide these services the Council remain responsible for ensuring children's services of an appropriate volume and quality are provided to residents. Under the formal governance arrangements the Council sets the strategic outcomes and priorities whilst the Trust is responsible for delivering those outcomes and therefore statutory responsibilities are fulfilled under the arrangement. The Trust remains operationally independent as it has its own Trust Board, Chief Executive, NEDs, Chair and Executive Team as well as its own Committee set up. The Council also has its own separate Executive, members and officers.



The Trust is held accountable for its financial and non-financial performance by its own leadership team and also the Council via the governance structures in place. Contractually the Trust must provide the Council with regular reporting on financial and non-financial performance. It does so via monthly financial monitoring reports and a monthly KPI dashboard. Having reviewed the KPI dashboard for 21/22 we note that there is limited red-rated performance in year and all KPIs are amber or green rated at year end and therefore performing on or sufficiently near their target. This is positive performance and shows an improvement trajectory over the year. In terms of financial performance the Trust produced a small underspend against the contract sum agreed with the Council at year end of £0.019m. However it is noted that this was achieved following the transfer of Covid-19 funding from the Councils to fund pressures attributed to the pandemic and application of contingency set aside as a result of a prior year underspend. As such the financial performance of the Trust requires close monitoring and attention in 22/23 as these are non-recurrent funding sources that will not be available should the Trust overspend in 22/23.

The KPI report provided by the Trust has been consistent in its format and the data included throughout the year. The KPIs were developed by both Council's in conjunction with the Trust and finalised in September 21 to ensure they were reflective of the activities of the Trust and the performance expected. There are clear explanations for performance, summarized information and RAG rating in the report to draw attention to those areas where actions may be required. The data also shows the direction of travel and therefore clearly shows the improvement in performance over the year. To ensure that the Council members and Executives are sighted on Trust performance Children's Services metrics in their own KPI dashboard cover all aspects of Children's services, including those delivered by the Trust. As such we believe that there is an appropriate flow of non-financial performance information between the organisations.

The format of the Trust Financial Monitoring Report has changed in year. The reporting the Trust provided in the first half of the 21/22 financial year was most aligned to the Council's own financial reporting and the information included of most benefit to Council decision makers in helping them make informed decisions. Like the Council's reporting it includes forecast outturn position against budget at directorate level but also individual service level, it also includes information on savings RAG rated and the cause of each key variance is explained and the actions being taken to address these. In the latter half of the year the financial reporting has become more summarised in nature, it still includes forecast outturn at directorate level and key variances and their causes but has limited service level information, actions being taken and savings information. There is however some useful trend data on placements which are the factor driving demand.

Improvement recommendation - Therefore we might suggest that a consistent approach to financial reporting from the Trust would be beneficial and aligned to the Council's own reporting and the Council should work with the Trust to develop a standardised report which maximises the benefit of the information being provided within the constraints of Trust resources and contractual obligations

Improvement recommendation - We have not noted a standing agenda item at the Executive in relation to the Children's Trust but given that Council KPIs include non-financial performance, the Council budget and financial monitoring reports include Children's Trust performance and the annual report on Trust performance is presented to the Joint Committee attended by members the flow of information from the Trust to the Council decision makers is appropriate. However, as noted below the Joint Committee is not designed to monitor performance or financial reports from the Trust. We are of the view that a quarterly update to Scrutiny Commission or Executive would ensure awareness of Children's Trust performance for all decision makers.

To ensure an appropriate flow of information between the Trust and the two Councils there are series of joint committee structures between the two Council's and the Trust which operate separately from the individual organisations and ensure that there is joined up discussion on children's services. Each Committee has a specific remit as below:

- Children's Trust Joint Committee** - The committee is hosted in alternate years by North Northamptonshire Council and West Northamptonshire Council discharges functions on behalf of the two councils. The meeting is attended by Members of both Councils as well as key officers from both Councils such as the Chief Executive, MO, S151 and Director Children's Services as a minimum. Discussion is wide ranging but essentially relays information from the Trust level meetings as well as receiving an annual report on Trust performance in line with their contract each September. As such there is a clear flow of information from the Trust to both Councils. The minutes and meetings for this committee are publicly available on both Council websites and as such there is also transparency of Children's Trust activity. This is appropriate given the focus on this services following previous Ofsted inspections and the fact this is an overspending service across the LG sector which requires close monitoring due to demand led pressures. The key function of the Joint Committee is to manage any matters arising between the Council and West Northamptonshire Council relating to the joint ownership of the Children's Trust and any services which the Trust commissions from the authorities under the Support Services Agreement.
- Operational Commissioning Group** - This group meets monthly and reviews the KPI dashboard, financial monitoring reports, issues and opportunities. It also received any ad-hoc reports which assist the Trust in relaying information across all aspects of its performance, examples in year have included their positive self assessment against Ofsted criteria for Adoption Services, risk register and Internal Audit Reports. These meetings include senior representatives from all organisations including Trust Managing Director, Finance Director, Senior Social Work Leads for the Trust, S151 from both Council's and their Deputies, Director for Children's Services from both Councils, Commissioners and Department for Education representative. There is extensive discussion focused predominantly on performance with challenge, questions and responses provided in detail.

**Strategic Commissioning Group** - This group meet quarterly and it is chaired by portfolio holder for Children's Services, they receive the same information as the Operational group in a more summarised format and therefore provides an additional layer of scrutiny for the performance of the Trust. The focus is on performance, weighted towards mitigating actions as opposed to reasons for performance discussed by the Operational group. Therefore there is a clear distinction in role and different value added by each group. Like the Operational meetings they are well attended by both Councils and the Trust, questions are detailed and are more strategic in nature.

In addition to the Trust delivering children's services on behalf of the Council, the Council also provide support services, such as IT, HR, Procurement and some aspects of finance such as Accounts Payable to the Trust. The Councils provide these services to the Trust so that the Trust have appropriate administrative functions in place to allow them to focus on their expertise in delivering children's services and also benefit from economies of scale. In addition to the Commissioning Groups above the governance arrangements also include a Support Services Board which reviews performance of this element of the contract, discuss issues and opportunities. The Board has met sufficiently regularly over the year, is well attended by the Council and Trust representatives, has highlighted appropriate performance of the Council in delivering its contractual obligations and good engagement of officers from all organisations is observed at this meeting and those of the commissioning groups.

Under their contractual obligations the Trust must attend scrutiny meetings of each Council to allow challenge of their performance and decision making within the Council's internal framework. This ensures that there is member input into the Trust services and not just officer engagement. The Finance and Resources Scrutiny Committee of the Council, in September 2022 requested that the Children's Trust be invited to attend the committee. The Trust attended the November 21 meeting and presented the period 6 financial position. Therefore the Trust do open themselves up to the scrutiny process however this is limited within the financial year.

**Improvement recommendation - Given that the financial performance at year end has been positive the frequency of attendance in 21/22 is acceptable, however the engagement in this process by the Trust should reflect the emerging financial risk and should increase should the financial position in 22/23 seem to be deviating from the contract sum.**

The Council have limited control of how the Trust delivers services and the associated costs, however evidence has confirmed that there is a strong level of communication throughout the year between the Trust and Council officers, both formally and informally, which provides sufficient information to the Council to understand how the Trust is performing. There have been no significant issues noted in performance for 21/22.

The Children's Trust budget is developed by the Trust and proposed to the Council as a contract sum during their budget setting process. There is a contract negotiation process where the Finance Director of the Trust presents the proposed resource requirement based on forecast demand and the Council Finance leads undertake a reasonableness test on the information. The Council are reliant on the Trust processes being robust as they do not have access to the Trust ledger and therefore responsibility for the accuracy of the information sits with the Trust. To mitigate some of this risk the Council do a reasonableness test on demand figures, ensure that the Trust Finance Director presents the rationale for all elements of the budget and challenge via the Council's own budget setting process. The Trust have their own external auditors and are subject to Internal Audit to provide some assurance to the Council via this route. The results of these reviews in 21/22 have not raised any significant weaknesses in arrangements. Therefore although the Council is limited in the actions it can take due to the lack of control of Trust finances it does take some action to satisfy themselves of the appropriateness of the information being received. Further improvements are being sought due to the lack of access to the ledger, the Council are wanting to do a reconciliation process so they have more assurances and discussion with Trust to develop this process remains ongoing.

Overall we would suggest that the arrangements between the Council and the Trust are appropriate. In addition the purpose of the Trust was to deliver quality children's services which ultimately would improve the inherited 'inadequate' Ofsted rating. Ofsted inspected Children's Services in October 2022 and this has resulted in the rating being upgraded to 'requires improvement to be good' which demonstrates a positive improvement and direction of travel in terms of quality of the service provided under the current arrangements.

### **Capital**

The Council's Constitution includes Contract Procedure Rules, which set out the rules and procurement thresholds for buying, renting, and leasing of goods, services and works for the Council which must be adhered to for each procurement exercise. The rules set out are to ensure that the Council procures works, goods and services in a transparent basis and is fair as possible.

This guidance is supported by the Capital Approval Process which was reviewed by The Finance and Resources Scrutiny Committee in July 21 before being approved by Executive. The Process defines the approach to scheme assessment, prioritisation and subsequent performance to enable the Council to make more informed decisions based on business cases brought forward. This process is applied to individual project funding requests which must be evidenced through a fully costed business case. A standardised template business case has been developed and this ensures that specific factors vital to success of a project are considered each time a project is proposed before being approved.

Business cases are regularly presented to Executive and those observed cover all requirements of the Capital Approval Process before being approved by the Executive. As such the Council is effectively implementing its policies in relation to procurement.

In addition to approval by the Executive the Council has established a Strategic Capital Board (SCB). The Board meet monthly to consider and provide officer challenge and approval to projects and developments within the process. The Board oversee the overall Capital Programme and develop the strategy moving forward as well as consider the impact of external drivers such as changes to Government policy and the investment needs of North Northamptonshire. Schemes progress from the Strategic Capital Board to be considered by the Deputy Leader and the Executive Member for Finance and Transformation. Given that the Council is in its first year of existence with a series of inherited capital schemes the additional layer of challenge incorporated into the capital approval and review process is vital in streamlining the capital programme and adapting for this Council.

Underneath the Strategic Capital Board sits Portfolio Boards or Service Management Teams for individual service's capital projects. Individual Portfolio Boards or Service Management Teams are responsible for developing and proposing projects for the Strategic Capital Board for consideration. They engage with relevant Members in the development of capital plans including seeking the approval of the relevant Portfolio Holders before submission, keeping Portfolio Holders informed, and providing overall management of the projects under their control.

The new approval process for capital projects consists of five Checkpoints covering 7 areas of a projects lifecycle, progress through the lifecycle is monitored by The Strategic Capital Board and Capital Portfolio Boards/Service Management Teams to ensure each stage is completed and each check point evidenced. One of the lifecycle stages is scheme delivery monitoring which includes regular monitoring of contract, costs, funding, benefits realisation, outputs and therefore ensures there is formalised mechanism in place for monitoring whether schemes are successfully progressing and remaining within their costs.

The Place Directorate and the Capital Programme team provides a crucial role in the governance and delivery of the capital investment strategy and they act as the Programme Management Office (PMO) for the capital programme. The PMO can review and challenge project/ programme detail with Service Portfolio leads prior to each Strategic Capital Board meeting. The PMO requests each Portfolio lead to demonstrate key metrics on commercial data, procurement methodology, risk analysis and governance arrangements for each programme/project in order for the PMO to advise the Strategic Capital Board on the deliverability of the schemes and associated benefits aligned with the capital investment. The PMO engages with Portfolio leads together with colleagues from Finance to review the project/programme data and track the intentions of the investment decision aligned with the approved business cases. The PMO works with colleagues in finance and performance to develop a reporting dashboard for each Portfolio Board to complete within the project reporting timelines which are aligned to the financial reports. This PMO role is vital in ensuring that there is day to day oversight of projects and therefore reduces the risk of slippage as action can be taken in a more timely manner than if monitoring of a project relied on the less frequent formal Strategic Capital Board or Executive meetings.

Capital scheme proposals are reported to Executive for approval each month through the Capital Update Report. These proposals are requests for changes to the programme for the year as originally approved by Executive and therefore this shows that projects are reviewed and updated as necessary to maximise their chance of success.

The Deputy Leader and the Executive Member for Finance and Transformation both provide informal check and challenge, as well as signing off capital bids before the proposals go to the Executive as set out in the Council's Capital Approval Process document.

Deliverability of the 21/22 Capital Programme was monitored by the relevant accountable project manager and senior officer who collate information to produce a Capital Monitoring Report which is reported to the Executive. The report is presented twice a year and provides an overview of performance supported by an appendix highlighting all schemes that are demonstrating slippage. At month 6 of 21/22 slippage was identified totaling £40m and at year end for 21/22 the carry forward into 22/23 is £57m therefore slippage on the capital programme has increased.

Improvement recommendation - we would suggest that the Council could enhance the monitoring process by presenting the capital monitoring to Executive in year to identify slippage more regularly and allow action to be taken at an earlier stage.

The Council fulfills its legal obligation and requirement of the Contract Procedure Rules by producing and publishing a Contract Register which is a record of the contracts held with a value of £5,000 or more. The Contract Register export is published on a bi-monthly basis, in arrears, to reflect live contracts and includes information regarding what they are for, total values and who the supplier is. There is the e-procurement portal in place on the website allowing suppliers to submit offers electronically for any of the Council's published contract opportunities. Contracts have been awarded in year via a variety of methods including via direct award, tender and quotation and all are permitted by the contract procedure rules Contract Procedure Rules. There is no evidence of a significantly larger proportion of contracts having been awarded by direct award or a significant number or value or number of contracts being awarded to a particular or small number of supplier. As such there is no evidence of an unfair process procurement process being undertaken by the Council.

### Conclusion

Overall, arrangements to secure economy, effectiveness and efficiency are appropriate in relation to capital, key partnerships and non-financial reporting. The Council does have multiple partnerships which will be reviewed in future VFM reviews to ensure that arrangements are consistent across these relationships. Improvement recommendations have been made but these are suggested as methods of achieving best practice as opposed to correcting underperforming arrangements at the Council.

# Improvement recommendations



Improving economy, efficiency and effectiveness

## Recommendation 14

The Council should consider reviewing and updating the KPI Dashboard reporting non-financial performance to ensure decision makers are aware of the actions being taken to tackle underperforming metrics

## Why/impact

Decision makers will be able to actively monitor the success of the actions being taken to improve outcomes each time they receive the KPI reporting and take further action or hold officers to account where outcomes are not improved.

## Summary findings

The comments included in the detailed KPI Dashboard generally include details of why the performance being observed has occurred but includes limited information on next steps and actions to be taken, this would be particularly useful if applied consistently to those KPIs that are below target.

## Management Comments

The performance framework has recently been reviewed with a report presented to the March 2023 Executive which sets out the intention to provide greater capacity to integrate indicators at greater depth and identify next steps. Continuing improvement work will be undertaken following the arrival of the permanent Head of Performance, Intelligence and Partnerships (start date April 2023).

Responsible Officer: Executive Director of Finance and Performance

Date: Initial Review and Revision of Framework is complete.

# Improvement recommendations



Improving economy, efficiency and effectiveness

## Recommendation 15

The Council should consider undertaking more frequent capital monitoring by Executive in year to enhance the monitoring process

### Why/impact

The level of monitoring is most effective when it directly reflects the risk being presented by the performance. In relation to capital more frequent monitoring could allow decision makers to identify slippage more regularly and allow action to be taken at an earlier stage.

### Summary findings

Deliverability of the 21/22 capital programme was monitored by the relevant accountable project manager and senior officer who collate information to produce a Capital Monitoring Report which is reported to the Executive. The report is presented twice a year and provides an overview of performance supported by an appendix highlighting all schemes that are demonstrating slippage. At month 6 of 21/22 slippage was identified totaling £40m and at year end for 21/22 the carry forward into 22/23 is £57m therefore slippage on the capital programme has increased.

### Management Comments

The arrangements have been amended to report the capital position to Executive on a quarterly basis and this is taking place during 2022/23 including review at the Finance and Resources Scrutiny Committee. This frequency is considered suitable for the capital programme where spend is project led and has a longer timeframe. During 2022/23, an in-depth review of the capital programme was undertaken with each Directorate in order to reassess the likely profile of spend.

The approval for changes to the capital programme is set out within the Council's Capital Approval Process and capital update reports are presented to Executive as needed [it is a standing agenda item each month].

Responsible Officer: Executive Director of Finance and Performance

Date: Complete. More frequent reporting under way in 2022/23.

# Improvement recommendations



## Improving economy, efficiency and effectiveness

### Recommendation 16

- The Council should explore ways to work collaboratively with the Children's Trust to improve financial and non-financial reporting, specifically:
- Developing a standardised financial report which is presented consistently throughout the financial year and aligns to the Council's own financial reporting
  - Including an annual or quarterly standing agenda item at the Executive to provide a summarised update on the performance of the Children's Trust
  - Increasing the level of attendance by the Trust at the Council Scrutiny Committee if financial or non-financial performance deviates from target

### Why/impact

As a key partnership of the Council which has a significant impact on the financial position and quality of Children's Services it is important that the performance reporting provided by the Trust is consistent, adapted as required and remains fit for purpose.

### Summary findings

The format of the Trust Financial Monitoring Report has changed in year. The reporting the Trust provided in the first half of the 21/22 financial year was most aligned to the Council's own financial reporting and the information included of most benefit to Council decision makers in helping them make informed decisions. In the latter half of the year the financial reporting has become more summarised in nature, it still includes forecast outturn at directorate level and key variances and their causes but has limited service level information, actions being taken and savings information. There is however some useful trend data on placements which are the factor driving demand.

**There is no standing agenda item at the Executive in relation to the Children's Trust but given that Council KPIs include non-financial performance, the Council budget and financial monitoring reports include Children's Trust performance and the annual report on Trust performance is presented to Joint Committee attended by members the flow of information from the Trust to the Council decision makers is appropriate. However, the Joint Committee is not designed to monitor performance or financial reports from the Trust. We are of the view that a quarterly update to Scrutiny Commission or Executive would ensure awareness of Children's Trust performance for all decision makers.**

Under their contractual obligations the Trust must attend scrutiny meetings of each Council to allow challenge of their performance and decision making within the Council's internal framework. This ensures that there is member input into the Trust services and not just officer engagement. The Finance and Resources Scrutiny Committee of the Council, in September 21, requested that the Children's Trust be invited to attend the committee. The Trust attended the November 21 meeting and presented the period 6 financial position. Therefore, the Trust do open themselves up to the scrutiny process however this is limited within the financial year.

### Management Comments

The Council does work collaboratively with the Trust and also with West Northamptonshire as the other key partner. The Trust is a separate entity to each Council (North and West Northamptonshire) and services are supplied to each Council under contract. Improvements have been made within the financial reporting during 2022/23 with greater detail and analysis.

The Trust contract sets out the governance processes and the key touch points with the Councils such as the Operational Commissioning Group and the Strategic Commissioning Group. The contract also references that the officers of the Trust are not required to attend more than three Council meetings each year. However, up to this point, the Trust has agreed to be flexible around this restriction and has attended both Audit and Governance Committee and Finance and Resources Committee as requested.

Financial reports are produced by the Trust each month and finance colleagues have worked closely with the Trust to improve and standardise the reporting in order to support greater transparency and understanding of the position. The financial position of the Trust aligns to, and is included within, the Council's monthly monitoring reports.

Responsible Officer: Executive Director of Children's Services through the Intelligent Client Function which supports both North and West Northamptonshire Councils

Date: Changes to the financial reporting of the Trust have already been made and it aligns to Council timeline. The Trust have attended NNC committees when requested.

# Opinion on the financial statements



## Audit opinion on the financial statements

Delays in completion of the 2020/21 audits for predecessor bodies has delayed the production of the Councils draft 21/22 accounts and therefore our audit of them. We currently expect draft accounts in June 2023 and will carry out our audit following that. We therefore issue our Annual Auditors Report in draft form pending completion of the audit.

## Whole of Government Accounts

To support the audit of the Whole of Government Accounts (WGA), we are required to review and report on the WGA return prepared by the Council. This work includes performing specified procedures under group audit instructions issued by the National Audit Office. Any work required to comply with the WGA audit guidance will be completed following our work on the Council's accounts for 21/22.

## Preparation of the accounts

Delays in completion of the 20/21 audits for predecessor bodies has delayed the production of the Councils draft 21/22 accounts and therefore our audit of them. We currently expect draft accounts in June 2023.

## Grant Thornton provides an independent opinion on whether the accounts are:

- True and fair
- Prepared in accordance with relevant accounting standards
- Prepared in accordance with relevant UK legislation



# Appendices



# Appendix A – Responsibilities of the Council

Public bodies spending taxpayers' money are accountable for their stewardship of the resources entrusted to them. They should account properly for their use of resources and manage themselves well so that the public can be confident.

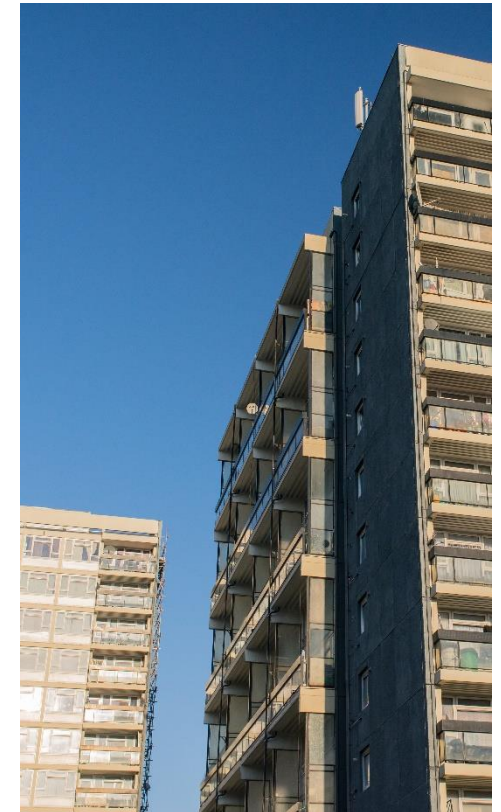
Financial statements are the main way in which local public bodies account for how they use their resources. Local public bodies are required to prepare and publish financial statements setting out their financial performance for the year. To do this, bodies need to maintain proper accounting records and ensure they have effective systems of internal control.

All local public bodies are responsible for putting in place proper arrangements to secure economy, efficiency and effectiveness from their resources. This includes taking properly informed decisions and managing key operational and financial risks so that they can deliver their objectives and safeguard public money. Local public bodies report on their arrangements, and the effectiveness with which the arrangements are operating, as part of their annual governance statement

The Chief Financial Officer (or equivalent) is responsible for the preparation of the financial statements and for being satisfied that they give a true and fair view, and for such internal control as the Chief Financial Officer (or equivalent) determines is necessary to enable the preparation of financial statements that are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error.

The Chief Financial Officer (or equivalent) or equivalent is required to prepare the financial statements in accordance with proper practices as set out in the CIPFA/LASAAC code of practice on local authority accounting in the United Kingdom. In preparing the financial statements, the Chief Financial Officer (or equivalent) is responsible for assessing the Council's ability to continue as a going concern and use the going concern basis of accounting unless there is an intention by government that the services provided by the Council will no longer be provided.

The Council is responsible for putting in place proper arrangements to secure economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources, to ensure proper stewardship and governance, and to review regularly the adequacy and effectiveness of these arrangements.



# Appendix B – An explanatory note on recommendations

A range of different recommendations can be raised by the Council’s auditors as follows:

Type of recommendation	Background	Raised within this report	Page reference
Statutory	Written recommendations to the Council under Section 24 (Schedule 7) of the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014.	No	N/A
Key	The NAO Code of Audit Practice requires that where auditors identify significant weaknesses as part of their arrangements to secure value for money they should make recommendations setting out the actions that should be taken by the Council. We have defined these recommendations as ‘key recommendations’.	No	N/A
Improvement	These recommendations, if implemented should improve the arrangements in place at the Council, but are not a result of identifying significant weaknesses in the Council’s arrangements.	Yes	See relevant sections proceeding Financial Sustainability, Governance and 3E’s narrative

# Appendix C – Sources of evidence



## Staff involved

- Janice Gotts, Executive Director of Finance and Performance (Chief Finance Officer)
- Claire Edwards, Assistant Director (Finance and Accounting)
- Mark Dickensen, Assistant Director (Finance and Strategy)
- Rob Bridge, Chief Executive
- George Candler, Executive Director for Place and Economy and Deputy Chief Executive
- Anne Marie Dodds, Executive Director for Children's Services
- Adele Wylie, Director of Customer & Governance (Monitoring Officer)
- Rachel Ashley-Caunt, Chief Internal Auditor



## Documents Reviewed

- 21/22 and 22/23 Budget Report (including savings, capital and HRA)
- Medium Term Financial Plan
- Budget Strategy Process
- Capital Strategy
- Treasury Management and Annual Investment Strategy
- Reserves Strategy
- Budget Monitoring Reports (including HRA)
- Savings Monitoring Reports
- Capital Monitoring Reports
- Treasury Management Monitoring Reports
- Year-End Outturn Report
- Cashflow Forecast
- Corporate Plan
- Internal Audit Plan
- Internal Audit Progress Reports
- Internal Audit Annual Report (including Head of Internal Audit Opinion)
- Risk Management Strategy
- Corporate Risk Register
- Annual Governance Statement
- Constitution
- Counter Fraud and Corruption policy
- Whistleblowing Policy
- Councillor Gifts, Hospitality and Interests Declarations
- Non-Financial Reporting (KPI Performance Reporting Dashboard)
- Consultation and Engagement Framework
- Consultations (including Public Consultation on 22/23 Budget)
- Children's Trust Governance Arrangements
- Children's Trust Financial and Non-Financial KPI Reporting
- Minutes and Papers from Children's Trust Committee
- Legal Advice and Correspondence
- Committee Papers and Minutes (Council, Executive, Audit & Governance predominantly)
- Procurement Strategy
- Capital Approval Process
- Business Cases
- Contract Register
- Ofsted Report
- People Plan 2021-2023



## Full Council Thursday 31 August 2023

<b>Report Title</b>	Approval of Pay Structure and Terms and Conditions
<b>Executive Member</b>	Cllr Jason Smithers, Leader of the Council
<b>Report Author</b>	Adele Wylie, Executive Director of Customer and Governance (Deputy Chief Executive Interim) <a href="mailto:adele.wylie@northnorthants.gov.uk">adele.wylie@northnorthants.gov.uk</a>  Marie Devlin-Hogg, Assistant Director Human Resources, <a href="mailto:marie.devlin-hogg@northnorthants.gov.uk">marie.devlin-hogg@northnorthants.gov.uk</a>

<b>Are there public sector equality duty implications?</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
<b>Does the report contain confidential or exempt information (whether in appendices or not)?</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
<b>Applicable paragraph number/s for exemption from publication under Schedule 12A Local Government Act 1972</b>	

### List of Appendices

Appendix A - Job Family Framework  
Appendix B - Proposed Pay Structure  
Appendix C - Proposed Terms and Conditions

### 1. Purpose of Report

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- 1.1. To seek approval of the pay structure and terms and conditions of employment for adoption by North Northamptonshire Council.

### 2. Executive Summary

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- 2.1. The council does not currently have its own pay and grading structure, or a complete set of employment terms and conditions of employment. The workforce is currently made up of employees who remain on their previous councils' terms and conditions, protected by TUPE legislation (c60% of the workforce); and employees who are on 'interim' / hybrid North Northamptonshire Council terms and conditions (c40% of the workforce).
- 2.2. TUPE legislation (Transfer of Undertakings Protection of Employment Rights) protects those employees who transferred to North Northamptonshire Council from one of our predecessor councils and who's role has not changed since

the transfer. Employees who are in this position remain on their previous councils' terms and conditions (including salary, pay scales, annual leave, allowances and redundancy pay) until such time that their role is changed significantly, or they apply for a new internal role. For example, if an employee was employed by Corby Borough Council before vesting day on 1<sup>st</sup> April 2021 and their role has not significantly changed since, they will continue to be employed under Corby Borough Council pay, terms and conditions.

- 2.3. New starters who have joined the council since 1<sup>st</sup> April 2021, or who have changed roles since that time, have been appointed to 'interim' North Northamptonshire Council pay, terms and conditions. These comprise of a small number of terms and conditions that were agreed before vesting day and those which were inherited from our predecessor councils.
- 2.4. Equal pay and retention considerations mean that it is not sustainable to continue using 'interim' arrangements for new appointments. Equally, the hybrid arrangements do not support the council's ambition to be an employer of choice.
- 2.5. A proposed pay structure for the council and an accompanying set of terms and conditions have been developed, in consultation with the councils recognised trade unions and shared with employees. These have been designed to support the attraction and retention of skilled employees and provide a robust defence against potential equal pay claims.
- 2.6. For clarity, employees who transferred from a previous council and whose role has remained the same, will not be impacted by the new pay and grading arrangements. TUPE legislation does not allow for a unilateral move of all employees to the proposed pay terms and conditions, often referred to as "harmonisation".

### **3. Recommendations**

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- 3.1. It is recommended that Council:
  - a) Approve the adoption of North Northamptonshire Councils Pay Structure at Appendix B.
  - b) Approve the adoption of North Northamptonshire Councils Terms and Conditions at Appendix C.
- 3.2. *Reasons for the Recommendations:-*
- 3.3. *Implementing a new pay structure and terms and conditions for North Northamptonshire Council is an important decision that will help to further, shape our workforce now and in the future.*
- 3.4. *Decisions relating to new pay and grading arrangements have significant financial implications for the council and whilst these have been built into the*

*Medium-Term Financial Plan, approving the adoption of these proposals is a decision for Council, in accordance with the Constitution.*

3.5. Alternative Options Considered:-

- *Continuing to employ people on 'interim' terms and conditions.*
- *Starting the pay structure at a lower pay point and decreasing the pay differential between pay bands.*

#### **4. Report Background**

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- 4.1. North Northamptonshire Council was legally formed on 1<sup>st</sup> April 2021. This date is commonly referred to as “Vesting Day” and is the day in which the Borough Council of Wellingborough, Corby Borough Council, East Northamptonshire District Council, Kettering Borough Council and Northamptonshire County Council were abolished and replaced by the new North Northamptonshire Council. The abolished councils are referred to as “Predecessor Councils”.
- 4.2. A shadow North Northamptonshire Council, which was established prior to the 1<sup>st</sup> April 2021, agreed a small number of employment terms and conditions to ensure that the council was able to operate effectively from an employment perspective from Vesting Day. The shadow council also agreed to adopt the following National Pay arrangements (including national pay awards and annual increments):
- NJC for Local Government Services (‘Green Book’) for most employees. The National Joint Council (NJC) is a negotiating body made up of unions and local government employers – it negotiates local government pay in England, Wales and Northern Ireland.
  - Chief Executive and Chief Officer pay arrangements for strategic heads of service, Assistant Directors and Corporate Leadership Team members.
  - Soulbury Officers (‘Blue Book’) for educational psychologists and school improvement professionals (*Schoolteachers are employed on statutory teacher pay and conditions*).
- 4.3. Since Vesting Day, the pay and grading project team have been negotiating and consulting with the council’s recognised Trade Unions on the outstanding pay, terms and conditions; as well as regularly briefing the Corporate Leadership Team, the Executive, elected members and employees.
- 4.4. The pay arrangements proposed in this paper have also been considered by the Corporate Scrutiny Committee on 15<sup>th</sup> August 2023, who have recommended that this be approved by Council, the decision maker for this matter.
- 4.5. Developing a new pay structure and accompanying set of terms and conditions is an incredibly complex undertaking, especially in a large organisation that has a considerable number of roles and services. The first task was the design of a job family framework to underpin a sustainable pay

and grading structure. In simple terms, the job family framework orders all the roles across the council into a distinct number of job families. The council proposes 9 job families and all current roles (except for Soulbury and Teacher roles) fit into at least one of these job families.

- 4.6. A job family is a group of roles with similar characteristics, which are engaged in similar type work, for example, business administration. There will be different levels of role within each family depending on the level of accountability, skill and competence the role requires. To measure this objectively, it is necessary to use a job evaluation scheme.
- 4.7. Job evaluation is a method that is used to determine the relative size and the level of jobs across an organisation. The aim of job evaluation is to compare jobs with each other to create a pay structure that is fair, equitable, and consistent for everyone. It helps organisations to pay the same salary for work of equal value.
- 4.8. Prior to unitary, the shadow council agreed to adopt two job evaluation schemes, the NJC evaluation scheme for most roles and the HAY evaluation scheme for senior roles.
- 4.9. A summary of the proposed job families for NNC can be found in **Appendix A** to this report.
- 4.10. The NNC proposed pay structure has 17 levels, which cover every role, with level 17 being the Chief Executive role. This translates to 17 pay grades/bands and within each pay band, there are incremental pay points, designed so that employees can develop and grow in their role.
- 4.11. The pay structure was designed with several key principles in mind:
  - the number of steps in the pay bands reflects a best practice pay and grading structure, the organisational structure and the scope and responsibilities of the roles at each level
  - a clear gap between each pay band to provide:
    - a notable increase in pay when taking on a role with bigger responsibilities;
    - encouragement to progress a career with NNC through supporting clear career pathways;
    - a competitive pay structure to attract and retain employees as part of our commitment to being an employer of choice; and
  - one consistent and transparent pay scale that extends beyond NJC and covers all roles within our organisation up to and including the Chief Executive.
- 4.12. The national NJC pay spine currently starts at spinal column point 2 (£20,441 per annum (£10.60 /hr) and stops at spinal column point 43, and employers who adopt the national pay arrangements have some flexibility to determine which pay points they adopt and where they wish to start and end their pay spine.



- 4.13. The NNC proposed pay scale starts at £21,575 per annum (£11.18 / hour). This is based on 2022 pay values as the 2023 NJC pay award not yet agreed at the time of writing. This is equivalent to spinal column point 5 on the national NJC pay scale. Benchmarking through looking at neighbouring councils, indicates many start their pay structures at the equivalent of NJC SCP 3 and 4 (£10.79 /hr and £10.98 / hr). Furthermore, the (statutory) national living wage is £10.42 and the foundation living wage is £10.90 at the time of writing. Starting at a higher spinal column point of (£11.18 / hour) in the NNC pay spine will provide a competitive advantage in recruiting and retaining talent in the organisation, as well as supporting employees at the lower end of the pay-spine.
- 4.14. A detailed breakdown of the proposed pay spine is shown in **Appendix B** and the proposed terms and conditions in **Appendix C**.
- 4.15. Following job matching, employees on interim NNC pay, terms and conditions will be assimilation to the new pay structure. For any employee who sees a reduction in their salary as a result, a two-year period of pay protection will apply.

## **5. Issues and Choices**

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- 5.1. The council could choose to continue to employ people on 'interim' terms and conditions. However, this could leave the council open to equal pay claims and would therefore be considered unsustainable. Continuation of interim terms can also be de-stabilising, creating anxiety in the workforce, which can directly impact morale, retention and turnover.
- 5.2. The council could choose to start its pay spine at a lower pay point and decrease the pay differential between pay bands. However, this is also likely to impact negatively on NNC's ability to attract and retain talent; or remain competitive in the local and national staffing market.

## **6. Next Steps**

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- 6.1. Pending approval of full Council to adopt the proposed pay, terms and conditions, employees on the 'interim' terms will be moved across to the new arrangements. To do this, their job will need to be evaluated. This activity is expected to be completed by November / December 2023.
- 6.2. There are three outcomes for employees on the 'interim' terms and conditions, following assimilation to the new pay structure: pay could decrease, remain the same or increase. Where pay is proposed to decrease, a 2-year period of pay protection will apply.
- 6.3. Employees on TUPE protected terms and conditions will see no change and will remain on their current terms and conditions. Over time the council should expect more and more employees to move onto the NNC terms and

conditions as roles are transformed, employees move to new internal roles and new starters join the organisation.

## 7. Implications (including financial implications)

### 7.1. Resources, Financial and Transformation

7.1.1. Moving employees on interim terms and conditions to the proposed pay structure will require investment into the base salary budget. The annual percentage increase on this section of the pay bill (i.e. for those employees impacted) is as follows:

	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5
Pay and Grading Investment	4.6%	5.1%	4.6%	4.5%	4.1%

7.1.2. The Financial implications of assimilating employees who are on 'interim' terms and conditions are as below. Finance officers working on this project have produced detailed estimates of these financial implications and this work has informed the associated provisions made within the 2023/24 budget and MTFP. The following tables identify the annual movement required in the MTFP and are, therefore, cumulative. Note, these estimates are predicated on a notional implementation of 1st November 2023 although this is now likely to be 1st February 2024. This will impact the timing but not the value of the estimated associated costs.

#### High Level Costs - Assumed Implementation Date 01/11/2023

*finance and investment data based on the updated (scp5) pay structure*

	General Fund			
	2023/24 £000	2024/25 £000	2025/26 £000	2026/27 £000
<b>Pay and Grading Project</b>				
Staff on interim T&C's net increase in pay including on costs (GF)	482	713	71	(5)
Staff on interim T&C's Pay Protection (GF)	43	60	(43)	(60)
Vacancies estimate (GF)	329	458	(27)	(73)
<b>Total financial impact for staff on interim T&amp;C's (GF)</b>	<b>854</b>	<b>1,230</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>(137)</b>

	Housing Revenue Account			
	2023/24 £000	2024/25 £000	2025/26 £000	2026/27 £000
<b>Pay and Grading Project</b>				
Staff on interim T&C's net increase in pay including on costs (HRA)	14	26	12	3
Staff on interim T&C's Pay Protection (HRA)	11	15	(11)	(15)
Vacancies estimate (HRA)	19	21	(10)	(3)
<b>Total financial impact for staff on interim T&amp;C's (HRA)</b>	<b>43</b>	<b>62</b>	<b>(8)</b>	<b>(15)</b>

	DSG			
	2023/24 £000	2024/25 £000	2025/26 £000	2026/27 £000
<b>Pay and Grading Project</b>				
Staff on interim T&C's net increase in pay including on costs (DSG)	10	14	(0)	(1)
Staff on interim T&C's Pay Protection (DSG)	0	0	0	0
<b>Total financial impact for staff on interim T&amp;C's (DSG)</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>(0)</b>	<b>(1)</b>

## 7.2. Legal and Governance

7.2.1. TUPE legislation has been considered as part of these proposals. TUPE protects employees at the point of transfer to an organisation and means that terms and conditions remain the same unless there is an economic, technical or organisational reason to change these. Usually this would be in the form of a restructure, a significant change in the role or where the employee voluntarily applies for a new role.

7.2.2. Staffing is a Council function (rather than Executive) and therefore Council is the decision maker for this matter.

## 7.3. Relevant Policies and Plans

7.3.1. This report supports the corporate plan to becoming an employer of choice

## 7.4. Risk

7.4.1. There are no significant risks arising from the proposals in this report.

7.4.2. There is a risk to the council if the proposed pay structure and terms and conditions are not implemented. These include equal pay claims and the inability to attract and retain good employees.

## **7.5. Consultation**

7.5.1. Extensive consultation and negotiations have been undertaken with the councils recognised Trade Unions, informally since April 2021, and formally between September 2022 and May 2023.

7.5.2. The proposals have also been shared with managers and employees with over twenty briefing and drop-in sessions between 13<sup>th</sup> June and 3<sup>rd</sup> August. During this time no comments or feedback have been received that relate to amending the proposed pay structure or terms and conditions. Employees have expressed concern that those on TUPE protected terms and conditions won't be harmonised onto the proposed terms and conditions, however this is constrained by TUPE legislation.

## **7.6. Consideration by the Executive**

7.6.1. As this report relates to a Council function, it has not been considered formally by the Executive. The project has however been overseen by the Leader of the Council and the Executive have been regularly briefed.

## **7.7. Consideration by Scrutiny**

7.7.1. Pre-Scrutiny was undertaken by the Corporate Scrutiny Committee on 15th August 2023. Scrutiny members welcomed the report and the recommendations contained therein and, on that basis, recommend the report recommendations in full to Council.

## **7.8. Equality Implications**

7.8.1. An equality impact assessment has been undertaken on the proposed pay structure. This has involved comparing the current pay structures inherited from the sovereign councils with the proposed pay structure with regards to gender (Percentage Female to Male Pay) and Age. The proposed pay structure is more equitable on both accounts.

## **7.9. Climate and Environment Impact**

7.9.1. There are no climate and environment impacts arising from the proposals.

## **7.10. Community Impact**

7.10.1. There is no community impact arising from the proposals.

**7.11. Crime and Disorder Impact**

7.11.1. There are no crime and disorder impacts arising from the proposals.

**8. Background Papers**

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8.1. None.

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**NNC Full Council report – 31 August 2023**

**Appendix A**

Page 1 - Job Family structure

Page 2 – Job Family role descriptors

**Job Family structure**

Family		Levels																
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17
BA	Business Administration		BA2	BA3	BA4	BA5	BA6											
CA	Customer Assistance	CA1	CA2	CA3	CA4	CA5	CA6	CA7	CA8	CA9	CA10							
CW	Care and Welfare		CW2	CW3	CW4	CW5	CW6	CW7	CW8	CW9								
LS	Learning Support	LS1	LS2	LS3	LS4	LS5	LS6	LS7	LS8	LS9	LS10	LS11						
OI	Operational and Infrastructure	OI1	OI2	OI3	OI4	OI5	OI6	OI7	OI8	OI9	OI10	OI11						
OM	Operational and Maintenance	OM1	OM2	OM3	OM4	OM5	OM6	OM7	OM8	OM9	OM10	OM11						
PS	Professional Support			PS3	PS4	PS5	PS6	PS7	PS8	PS9	PS10	PS11						
RT	Regulatory and Technical		RT2	RT3	RT4	RT5	RT6	RT7	RT8	RT9	RT10	RT11						
SM	Strategic Management												SM12	SM13	SM14	SM15	SM16	SM17

## Job Family Descriptors

<b>BA</b>	<b>Business Administration</b>	Business Administration roles support their teams and wider work groups by carrying out procedural and administrative tasks or manage those that do. Job holders' training and experience in a wide range of office and ICT skills, incorporating the particular tasks, tools and techniques of their working area, allow them to be deployed flexibly within the organisation. The principal responsibility of Business Administration family job holders is to support the work of their colleagues by operating and/or managing the business systems that optimise service delivery in their area.
<b>CA</b>	<b>Customer Assistance</b>	Customer Assistance roles are generally providers of front line procedural advice and assistance to our residents and service users, or manage those that are. Often the public face of the organisation, Customer Assistance colleagues exchange factual information in the context of public facing functions and facilities.
<b>CW</b>	<b>Care and Welfare</b>	Care and Welfare roles provide professional advice, guidance, practical assistance and statutory care to the vulnerable adults and children of our communities who depend upon the organisation for services. They may personally carry out caring, social care or support related tasks or manage those that do. It is personal interactions that are at the centre of these roles.
<b>LS</b>	<b>Learning Support</b>	Learning Support roles provide or enable front line teaching, teaching support, instructing and training delivery in a range of disciplines and across a variety of settings. Many Learning Support roles will have professional or academic qualifications and be responsible for designing and delivering learning interventions to adult and children service users and our own employees or manage those that do.
<b>OI</b>	<b>Operations and Infrastructure</b>	Operations and Infrastructure roles provide primary services directly or indirectly to the benefit of customer, colleagues or residents, typically in relation to the highways, associated assets, open spaces, grounds maintenance, refuse and council owned vehicles, plant and tools the organisation owns and/or manages. Many Operations and Infrastructure jobs will include a physical component to their role or entail the management of those that do.
<b>OM</b>	<b>Operational and Maintenance</b>	Operational and Maintenance roles provide primary services directly or indirectly to the benefit of customers, colleagues or residents, typically in relation to the land, buildings, tools and equipment the organisation owns and/or manages. Many Operational and Maintenance jobs may include a physical component to their role or entail the management of those that do.
<b>PS</b>	<b>Professional Support</b>	Professional Support roles are responsible for the delivery of organisational functions, which enable the business to continue to operate effectively. These roles are typically internally focused, working with or enabling service areas to operate, by providing, advice, guidance and support through the use of their professional specialism.
<b>RT</b>	<b>Regulatory and Technical</b>	Regulatory and Technical roles carry out a range of responsibilities and operational tasks related to their particular area of expertise. These roles are wide-ranging and will use their specialist knowledge to adhere to stringent statutory and technical legislation and will provide advice, guidance and support to customers and service users. Many Regulatory and Technical roles have responsibility for ensuring internal and external customers comply with regulations on behalf of the organisation.
<b>SM</b>	<b>Strategic Management</b>	Strategic Management roles bear both accountability and responsibility for the strategic direction of the organisation and the delivery of statutory and elective aims. Strategic Management roles will have significant responsibilities for broad functional areas.

Each level in a job family will have a role profile to describe the requirements of that level of role in job evaluation terms. The role profiles will be used to match individual roles against a job family and level.



**Final Proposal: North Northamptonshire Council Pay Bands**

\*22/23 NJC pay point values

Pay Band	NNC SCP	NJC SCP	FTE Pay *	Hourly Rate *	Increment Step	Grade Step
1	1	5	£21,575	£11.18		
	2	6	£21,968	£11.39	1.8%	
2	3	9	£23,194	£12.02		5.6%
	4	10	£23,620	£12.24	1.8%	
3	5	13	£24,948	£12.93		5.6%
	6	14	£25,409	£13.17	1.8%	
	7	15	£25,878	£13.41	1.8%	
4	8	18	£27,344	£14.17		5.7%
	9	19	£27,852	£14.44	1.9%	
	10	20	£28,371	£14.71	1.9%	
5	11	23	£30,151	£15.63		6.3%
	12	24	£31,099	£16.12	3.1%	
	13	25	£32,020	£16.60	3.0%	
6	14	27	£33,820	£17.53		5.6%
	15	28	£34,723	£18.00	2.7%	
	16	29	£35,411	£18.35	2.0%	
	17	30	£36,298	£18.81	2.5%	
7	18	32	£38,296	£19.85		5.5%
	19	33	£39,493	£20.47	3.1%	
	20	34	£40,478	£20.98	2.5%	
	21	35	£41,496	£21.51	2.5%	
8	22	37	£43,516	£22.56		4.9%
	23	38	£44,539	£23.09	2.4%	
	24	39	£45,495	£23.58	2.1%	
	25	40	£46,549	£24.13	2.3%	
9	26	42	£48,587	£25.18		4.4%
	27	43	£49,590	£25.70	2.1%	
	28		£50,631	£26.24	2.1%	
	29		£51,695	£26.79	2.1%	
10	30		£53,762	£27.87		4.0%
	31		£54,891	£28.45	2.1%	
	32		£56,044	£29.05	2.1%	
	33		£57,221	£29.66	2.1%	
11	34		£59,510	£30.85		4.0%
	35		£60,760	£31.49	2.1%	
	36		£62,036	£32.15	2.1%	
	37		£63,338	£32.83	2.1%	
12	38		£65,872	£34.14		4.0%
	39		£67,255	£34.86	2.1%	
	40		£68,668	£35.59	2.1%	
	41		£70,110	£36.34	2.1%	
13	42		£76,425	£39.61		9.0%
	43		£79,425	£41.17	3.9%	
	44		£82,425	£42.72	3.8%	
	45		£85,625	£44.38	3.9%	
14	46		£89,175	£46.22		4.1%
	47		£92,175	£47.78	3.4%	
	48		£95,425	£49.46	3.5%	
	49		£98,675	£51.15	3.4%	
15	50		£106,925	£55.42		8.4%
	51		£110,925	£57.50	3.7%	
	52		£114,925	£59.57	3.6%	
	53		£118,925	£61.64	3.5%	
16	54		£135,925	£70.45		14.3%
	55		£139,425	£72.27	2.6%	
	56		£142,425	£73.82	2.2%	
	57		£145,925	£75.64	2.5%	
17	58		£174,925	£90.67		19.9%
	59		£179,175	£92.87	2.4%	
	60		£183,425	£95.07	2.4%	
	61		£187,675	£97.28	2.3%	

NJC t&c's

local extension to NJC t&c's (up to below Deputy Chief Officer)

Chief Officer t&c's

Chief Exe t&c's

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Appendix C

Terms and conditions

<b>Overtime</b>	Rates paid for working more than 37 hours/week <u>Mon-Sat:</u> time and a half <u>Sun, Public or extra Statutory holidays:</u> double time	Eligible roles at Pay Bands 1 – 5 (NNC pay points 1-13) (NJC scps 5 - 25)
<b>Enhanced rates</b>	Rates paid for working on a Saturday, Sunday, at night, on public holidays <u>Standard (8am-8pm)</u> Monday to Saturday: x 1.0 Sunday: x 1.5 Bank Holiday: x 2.0 plus time off with pay <u>Night (8pm-8am)</u> Monday to Saturday: x 1.33 Sunday: x 1.83 Bank Holiday: x 2.33 plus time off with pay	
<b>Sleeping in allowance</b>	Employees required to sleep in on the premises and up to 30 minutes call out per night, after which the additional hours provisions will apply NJC rate @ 1 April 2022 = £39.24	
<b>Annual Leave</b>	28 days (plus an additional 2 days after 2 years' service and a further 3 days after 5 years') will apply to all other job families (Levels 1-11) and all other Soulbury roles  29 days (plus an additional 2 days after 2 years' service and a further 3 days after 5 years') will apply to roles within the Strategic Management job family (Levels 12-17) and senior Soulbury roles (Principle Educational Psychologist and Senior School Improvement Manager)	

<b>Notice periods</b>	<p>Contractual notice periods:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pay Bands 1 - 6 - 1 month</li> <li>• Pay Bands 7 - 10 and all other Soulbury pay ranges - 2 months</li> <li>• Pay Bands 11 - 17 &amp; Soulbury Scale B/SIM/SSIM pay ranges - 3 months</li> </ul> <p>Statutory notice period will apply to any employer-served notice period, where it is greater than the contractual notice.</p>
<b>Pay Progression</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Strategic Management job family (Levels 12-17) &amp; senior Soulbury (Principal Education Psychologist and Senior School Improvement Manager) roles - performance based incremental progression</li> <li>• All other job families (Levels 1-11) and other Soulbury roles – automatic incremental progression</li> </ul>
<b>Pay Protection</b>	2 years pay protection at 100% protection
<b>Redundancy Pay</b>	<p>The level of enhancement applied to the statutory redundancy pay scheme</p> <p>Statutory weeks (based on age) and length of service (capped at 20 years), but calculated:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• using actual contractual gross weekly pay (rather than limited to the statutory weekly pay cap)</li> <li>• applying a multiplier 1.5 on the statutory scale (the number of weeks' pay for every year of service)</li> </ul>
<b>Job Evaluation Scheme</b>	<p>The allocation of the Hay and NJC job evaluation schemes to the NNC job family levels/pay grades.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hay job evaluation scheme will underpin roles within the Strategic Management job family (Levels 12-17)</li> <li>• NJC job evaluation scheme will underpin role in all other job families (Levels 1-11)</li> </ul>



## Full Council Thursday 31<sup>st</sup> August 2023

<b>Report Title</b>	Northamptonshire Youth Justice Plan 2023/24
<b>Report Authors</b>	<p>Ann Marie Dodds, Executive Director of Children’s Services - North Northants Council. <a href="mailto:annmarie.dodds@northnorthants.gov.uk">annmarie.dodds@northnorthants.gov.uk</a></p> <p>Claire O’Keeffe, Head of Northamptonshire Youth Offending Service - Northamptonshire Children’s Trust. <a href="mailto:Claire.o'keeffe@nctrust.co.uk">Claire.o'keeffe@nctrust.co.uk</a></p>

<b>Are there public sector equality duty implications?</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
<b>Does the report contain confidential or exempt information (whether in appendices or not)?</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
<b>Applicable paragraph number/s for exemption from publication under Schedule 12A Local Government Act 1972</b>	

### List of Appendices

#### Appendix A – Youth Justice Plan 2023/24

#### 1. Purpose of Report

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- 1.1. Under the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 there is a statutory requirement to publish an annual Youth Justice Plan which must provide specified information about the local provision of youth justice services. The Youth Justice Board provides guidance about what must be included in the plan and recommends a structure for the plan. The Youth Justice Plan for the Northamptonshire Youth Justice Service 2023 is attached at **Appendix A**.

#### 2. Executive Summary

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- 2.1. Youth Offending Teams are statutory partnerships, established under the Crime and Disorder Act 1998, with the principal aim of preventing offending by children and young people. Local authorities are responsible for establishing a Youth Offending Team. Police, the Probation Service and Clinical Commissioning Groups (CCGs) are statutorily required to assist in their funding and operation

- 2.2. This current plan covers performance for the period 2022/23 and provides service budgets, operational and strategic developments within the service and partnership, service structure and the Service Improvement Plan for 2023 – 2024.
- 2.3. The Youth Justice Plan must be submitted to the Youth Justice Board for England and Wales (YJB) and published in accordance with the directions of the Secretary of State. After submission to the YJB, Youth Justice Plans are sent to Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Probation (HMIP - lead for Youth Offending Service inspections) and are placed in the House of Commons library.

### **3. Recommendations**

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3.1. It is recommended that full Council:

- a) Approve the content of the Youth Justice Plan 2023/24.
- b) Note Northamptonshire's Youth Offending Service priorities for 2023/24 as set out in the plan.

3.2. Reasons for Recommendations:

- To accord with the constitution of the Council where the Youth Justice Plan forms part of the Policy Framework that is decided by Full Council.
- To provide strategic direction to the Youth Offending Service that is delivered by Northamptonshire Children's Trust.

3.3. Alternative Options Considered:

None - As well as being a requirement of statute, the Youth Justice Plan forms part of the Council's Policy Framework and approval by the Council is therefore required.

### **4. Report Background**

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- 4.1. The Youth Offending Service (YOS) is a statutory multi agency service, which has a responsibility to prevent offending and reoffending by those aged under 18 years who are resident in Northamptonshire. Northamptonshire YOS is well respected nationally as an innovative service achieving good outcomes for children and young people.
- 4.2. There is a statutory requirement to produce and submit to the Youth Justice Board a Youth Justice Plan as set out in the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 section 40. The plan should set out how youth justice services are to be provided and funded, how the Youth Offending Service will be composed and

funded, how it will operate and what functions it will carry out. The Plan must be submitted for approval to the Youth Justice Board (YJB) and published in accordance with the directions of the Secretary of State. The submission of the plan is also a condition for receipt by the service of the second instalment of the Youth Justice Board Good Practice Grant.

- 4.3. The areas of work for the YOS are laid out in legislation, government policy and national guidance. The detail of local operational priorities and delivery are developed in agreement and with reference to key local strategic boards including Community Safety Executive; Children Trust Board; Local Safeguarding Children's Board and Northamptonshire's North and East Criminal Justice Board.

## **5. Issues and Choices**

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- 5.1. Statute requires the production of an annual Youth Justice Plan, the YJB also welcomes plans that cover more than one year. Plans must cover both strategic and operational elements. The wider strategic picture should be captured, whilst also outlining the key business activities that will be undertaken by services to achieve wider strategic aims.
- 5.2. The YJ Plan should set out the direction and strategy of youth justice services, describing how quality services will be provided to ensure positive outcomes for children and improvements in performance indicators, in particular:
- reducing first time entrants to the youth justice system
  - reducing the use of custody
  - reducing reoffending rates
  - locally agreed performance indicators that evidence positive outcomes for children
- 5.3. The YJ Plan must describe how leadership and governance is set up to monitor the quality and effectiveness of youth justice services across your area.
- 5.4. The Northamptonshire Youth Justice Plan has identified the following priorities:
- Strategic Priority 1 – Early Help & Prevention
  - Strategic Priority 2 - Recognising and responding to child exploitation and serious youth violence
  - Strategic Priority 3 – Tackling disproportionality in the criminal justice system
- 5.5. Due to the restrictions of the YJB prescriptive approach, the YOS is prevented from innovating and ensuring the document is child friendly and accessible to all. The YJB has a long list of key headings and directives the YOS must follow which as a result restricts some of the community.

## 6. Next Steps

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- 6.1. The Youth Justice Plan must be submitted to the Youth Justice Board for England and Wales (YJB) and published in accordance with the directions of the Secretary of State. After submission to the YJB, Youth Justice Plans are sent to Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Probation (HMIP - lead for YOS inspections) and are placed in the House of Commons Library).

## 7. Implications (including financial implications)

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### 7.1. Resources and Financial

- 7.1.1. The budget structure of the Youth Offending Service (YOS) is complex in nature as there are a number of funding streams. The 2023/24 indicative grant award for Northamptonshire's Youth Offending Service (NYOS) is £737,177 which is based on the 2022/23 allocation of £705,433 and a 4.5% uplift amounting to £31,745. The uplift of 4.5% is still subject to confirmation by the Youth Justice Board (Ministry of Justice).
- 7.1.2. The YJB require submission of the Youth Justice Plan which must be agreed by the Management Board and signed-off by the Chair prior to receiving the grant.
- 7.1.3. Alongside the YOS grant, NYOS will also benefit from statutory partner contributions, from both North Northamptonshire Council and West Northamptonshire Council (£1,606,151), Police and Crime commissioner (£200,900), Probation (£31,974), Health (£80,000) and Public Health (£66,112).
- 7.1.4. The total budgeted funding from the YJB Youth Justice and partnership contributions is £2,726,319. This funding will support children across Northamptonshire, in helping them stay away from crime.
- 7.1.5. In respect of the Local Authority contribution, these have been split in accordance with the disaggregation principles applied as part of the overall contract sum, the split is 44.16% for North Northamptonshire Council and 55.64% for West Northamptonshire Council. 100% of grants are paid to North Northamptonshire Council.

### 7.2. Legal and Governance

- 7.2.1. Local authorities have a statutory duty to submit an annual youth justice plan relating to their provision of youth justice services. Section 40 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 sets out the youth offending partnership's responsibilities in producing a plan. It states that it is the duty of each local authority, after consultation with the partner agencies, to formulate and implement an annual youth justice plan, setting out:
- How youth justice services in their area are to be provided and funded; and



- How the youth offending team (YOT) or equivalent service will be funded, how it will operate, and what functions it will carry out.

7.2.2. The Youth Justice Plan forms part of the Council's Policy Framework, its approval is therefore the responsibility of Full Council.

### 7.3. **Relevant Policies and Plans**

7.3.1. The Plan supports the following Council priorities identified in the Corporate Plan:

- Active, fulfilled lives
- Better brighter futures
- Safe and thriving places

### 7.4. **Risk**

7.4.1. There are no significant risks arising from the proposed recommendations in this report.

### 7.5. **Consultation**

7.5.1. In accordance with statutory requirements, the plan was placed before Northamptonshire YOS Management Board on which statutory partners sit (Police, Probation, Health) and was approved in May 2023.

7.5.2. The YOS intends to redraft the plan into a child friendly version once the plan has been agreed. The plan at present is not child friendly due to the prescriptive nature of the YJB requirements, NYOS are committed the young people have a full understanding of the YOS plans for 2023/24. We have identified our Youth Engagement Team to contribute to this.

### 7.6. **Consideration by the Executive**

7.6.1. The Executive Advisory Panel for Future Communities considered the Youth Justice Plan on 13 July 2023. Feedback received from members indicated that the panel was content with the details contained within the Plan.

7.6.2. The Executive then considered the Plan at its meeting held on 17 August 2023. The Executive supported the Plan, commenting that a holistic approach was important in tackling youth offending, with early intervention being key in diverting children and young people from negative behaviour paths. Additionally, every child had to be treated as an individual, cognisant of the fact that each had their own needs and requirements.

### 7.7. **Consideration by Scrutiny**

7.7.1. This report has not been considered by Scrutiny.

### 7.8. **Equality Implications**

7.8.1. There are no specific equality implications from this report.

## 7.9. **Climate Impact**

7.9.1. There is no specific climate impact arising from this report.

## 7.10. **Community Impact**

7.10.1. There is no distinct community impact arising from this report.

## 7.11. **Crime and Disorder Impact**

7.11.1 A Youth Offending Service is a 'statutory partnership' - the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 required Local Authorities to set up multi-agency partnerships to reduce re-offending by children and young people. The age range in the Youth Justice System is 10 to 18. Northamptonshire Youth Offending Service (NYOS) is funded by central government (Ministry of Justice/Youth Justice Board), from the Northamptonshire Children's Trust (NCT) and from partner agencies like the Police, Probation, the NHS and the Drug & Alcohol Action Team (DAAT).

7.11.2 Some of the paid staff are directly employed (by the Northamptonshire Children's Trust) to work in NYOS, others are seconded by their own agency to work within the service. There are: social workers; youth workers; restorative justice workers; education workers; community psychiatric nurses; probation officers; police officers; accommodation workers and substance misuse workers. NYOS also recruits, trains and supports a group of adult volunteers from a range of different backgrounds. NYOS works directly with children and young people who have committed offences; their parents/carers and the victims of their offences. Work is undertaken at all points of the formal system: from Out-of-Court outcomes through to Court Orders, both in the community and with young people in custody.

## 8. **Background Papers**

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8.1. None

# Northamptonshire Youth Offending Service Youth Justice Plan

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**Service** Northamptonshire Youth Offending Service (YOS)

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**Service Manager/ Lead** Claire O'Keeffe

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**Chair of YJS Board** AnnMarie Dodds

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# Introduction, vision and strategy

Welcome to the Northamptonshire Youth Justice Plan 2023/2024,

This plan builds on our achievements in 2022/23 and sets out our strong partnership commitment to early help, prevention, and diversion. The plan has been developed collaboratively with our Northamptonshire Youth Offending Service Management Board members to ensure we are confident of the priorities set and assurance that the child first principle is fully embedded.

We are proud to have continued to drive and deliver improvements in our performance, which includes the reduction in first-time entrants into the criminal justice system and reducing re-offending. However, while there are fewer young people in the criminal justice system, those who remain, present a higher level of complexity, and require intensive support. It is a testament to the effectiveness of our prevention and intervention collaborative efforts with schools, families, and partner agencies, that we have successfully diverted many young people from the path of criminality, offering them opportunities for positive personal growth and development.

We know ourselves and our practice well and whilst we recognise the progress we have made we are committed to moving forwards our priorities for 2023/2024 demonstrates our commitment to addressing the rising concerns of serious youth violence, often gang-related, with children and young people the victims of gun and knife crime, resulting, on too many occasions, in the tragic loss of life. We are further seeing the detrimental impact this has on our communities, particularly with the exploitation of young people, in many cases by organised criminal groups running 'County Lines'. We are committed to supporting the Serious Violence Duty arrangements in Northamptonshire to ensure that our young people are our priority as this developing strategy will lead to increased resources, coordinated efforts, and the implementation of evidence-based strategies.

Furthermore, reducing disproportionality is a priority in our plan. We acknowledge the disproportionate representation of certain communities, particularly young people from Black, Asian, and Minority Ethnic backgrounds, within the criminal justice system. We are dedicated to dismantling systemic barriers and biases, fostering equal access to opportunities, and promoting fairness and justice for all young people.

In conclusion, we understand that no one agency can achieve our vision and priorities. We recognise the importance of collaborating with education establishments, health services, voluntary sector community organisations, and other stakeholders who play a vital role in supporting young people. By working together, sharing expertise, and pooling resources, we can collectively create a safer and more inclusive environment for our young people, empowering them to lead successful and fulfilling lives.

We extend our deepest gratitude to our workforce and young people who support us. They have worked tirelessly, side by side, to improve the youth offending service and above all make a positive difference to the lives of young people in Northamptonshire.

## Child First

In line with the Youth Justice Boards Strategic Plan 2021-24 NYOS is committed to:

- See children first, offenders second and champion the needs of children throughout our work.
- Listening to children and their families/carers.
- Ensure that the services and interventions that are provided are inclusive, through challenging discrimination and promoting equality.
- Ensuring that children are offered every opportunity to achieve their potential and make positive changes.
- Building positive and trusted relationships with children.

We are on the journey to promote and embed the “Child First” principles within the service. This will be embedded across all areas of service delivery in collaboration with other services and all partners.

NYOS (Northamptonshire Youth Offending Service) supports these principles and promotes them in its own work and in its interactions with local partners in children's services and the youth justice system. The NYOS Youth Justice Plan for 2021/22 set out strategic priorities which were aligned with the YJB's Child First principles, reflecting work to improve both the local youth justice and children's services systems and the quality of practice within NYOS. The headline priorities were to:

- Enhance and expand the prevention and diversion offer for young people
- Ensure all assessments and intervention plans are young person led.
- Child first principles are evident in day to day practice and embedded in all policies and procedures
- Develop joint work with other local services to improve outcomes for children in the justice system
- All children experience an individual tailored approach that will help them address their offending behaviour, this could include restorative conferencing, family mediation, direct reparation, and trauma informed approaches where necessary
- Strengthen intervention delivery through young peoples experience of the YJS and use their voice to identify child focused solutions.
- Evidence of the Partnership's commitment to Child First principles is embedded throughout this document.

all the occurrences took place within those 20% most deprived areas.



## Voice of the child

A key tenet of Child First is the voice of the child, this is embedded in all operational and strategic elements of NYOS work.

Children's views are obtained via a range of intervention tools to inform assessment and plans. We have benefited this year by having a young person attending our partnership board to give a first-hand experience of their time in the Youth Justice System.

The speech and language worker has adapted intervention plans and assessments tools to enable greater young person participation in their plan along with the ability to capture feedback throughout the intervention to enable changes if necessary. Child First in everything we say, do and write.

We have focused on the development of our communication approaches with children and have a young person focused website to develop a social media footprint.

The Service seeks feedback from children, young people, and their families on a formal and informal basis, whether this be verbally, written (emails, letters) or through surveys). Formal feedback in the form of praise or complaints can be sent via the Children's Trust complaints and praise process. We record feedback on practitioners and the service from children and families at the end of interventions.

The service uses the end of order feedback forms to gain regular feedback from children and young people regarding their experiences of their intervention. This is analysed on a quarterly and rolling 12-month basis by the performance team. Feedback to the YOS (Youth Offending Service) is positive with the latest 12 month rolling data showing that of those who responded 89.47% felt that the service quality was very good and the remaining 10.53% feeling it was good most of the time. When asked what could be improved, young people felt that there was little that could be improved.

NYOS have a robust quality assurance framework and undertakes Collaborative Reflective Practice Discussion (CRPD's) NYOS also contribute to Multiagency Case Reviews and practice learning events, from which themes and learning are collated and fed into service improvements plans. Children and families are involved in this learning process

# Governance, leadership, and partnership arrangements

Youth Offending Teams were established under the statutory provisions of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998. The Act sets out the requirement for local Youth Offending Teams and primary duties on key agencies and individuals involved in the delivery and governance of those services.

Over time, the governance and leadership of youth justice services, through Youth Justice Management or Partnership Boards has evolved. In December 2021 revised guidance was published with the aim of enabling local authorities, including education and social care; and statutory partners in health, police, and probation to fulfil their statutory duties effectively.

The Youth Offending Service is part of the Northamptonshire Children's Trust (NCT). NCT is a wholly owned company of the two Unitary Authorities (West Northants Council and North Northants Council since April 2021) created under statutory direction from the department for education in 2020 under Northamptonshire County Council. NCT works in close partnership to continue to improve outcomes for disadvantaged children in the county

In recognition of the scale of Northamptonshire YOS and the challenges the county faces, as described throughout this plan, Northamptonshire has retained a Head of Service with sole responsibility for the delivery of local the Youth Offending Service. They report directly to the Assistant Director for Children and Family Support Services and Youth Offending Service.

Northamptonshire has also retained a distinct Youth Offending Service Management Board. The Head of Service and Board Members (appendix 1) have strong cross cutting connections across various partnership arrangements, outlined later in this plan.

The Northamptonshire Youth Offending Service Management Board meets 8 times per year and is chaired by the Executive Director of Children's Services North Northamptonshire Council. NYOS Management Board has responsibility for:

- Leadership and oversight of justice services for children.
- Contributing to local multi-agency strategies and work with local and national criminal justice organisations.
- Safeguarding children who receive youth justice services.

# Partnership Arrangements

In addition to the existing partnership arrangements that support the direct work with children and their parents and carers, the Service is currently represented directly or indirectly at several strategic and operational meetings, including:

Strategic Priority	Meetings attended by NYOS Managers and Caseworkers
<b>Safeguarding and Public Protection</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Child Protection Conferences.</li> <li>• Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangements (MAPPA) MARAC (Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conference) meetings.</li> <li>• Local Community Safety Partnership operational meetings.</li> <li>• Local complex needs panel meetings.</li> <li>• Early Help Partnership Board</li> <li>• Supporting Families Steering Group</li> <li>• Integrated care system children and young people pillar/work streams</li> <li>• Northants Local Criminal Justice Board</li> <li>• Serious Violence Duty Partnership</li> </ul>
<b>Child Exploitation and VAPP Panel</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Child Exploitation Tactical Groups within NCT.</li> <li>• Local multi-agency information sharing arrangements to identify and protect children at risk of exploitation.</li> <li>• Partnership Vulnerable Adolescent Panel in which the NYOS Manager is a standing Chair and a deputy to the running of the panel.</li> </ul>
<b>Reducing Re-Offending</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Northamptonshire Reducing Re-offending Strategy Group.</li> <li>• Community Safety Partnerships.</li> <li>• Risk Assessment Panels – management of YP identified as being at high risk of causing serious harm to others, or of experiencing significant harm themselves.</li> <li>• Harmful Sexual Behaviour - NYOS leads the work on Harmful sexual behaviour within NCT with the support of the Police. The NYOS and the Trust use recognised assessment and intervention approaches [AIM] for young people who commit harmful sexual behaviour.</li> <li>• Missing Children Steering Group</li> </ul>
<b>Preventing Violent Extremism</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• NYOS attends the Northamptonshire Prevent Group to ensure that our work is aligned with local initiatives.</li> <li>• NYOS contributes to the local assessment of extremism risks.</li> <li>• NYOS police officers act as a link to local police processes for sharing intelligence in respect of possible violent extremism.</li> </ul>
<b>Restorative Justice and Support for Victims</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Referral Order Panels</li> <li>• Referral Order Monthly Training</li> <li>• Restorative Justice Group</li> </ul>

# Board development

The YJB expects local management boards to take responsibility for all aspects of youth justice service governance; to lead strategically across relevant partners and to ensure a high-quality service is provided to all children. In 2021 the YJB provided updated guidance on youth justice service governance and leadership to support this. This was presented to YOS Management Board members by the Youth Justice Board early in 2022. Below is the YOS Management Board priorities for 2023 /24.

AIM	ACTIVITY
<p>Members of the YOS Management Board fully understand the vision and priorities of the NYOS YJB plan and can articulate their agency contribution to the priorities set out within it and advocate for the service and young people</p> <p>Board members to be active participants in task and finish groups on YJB plan priorities</p> <p>Board members to be supported to lead agenda items on topical themes that contribute to the priorities of the YJB Plan</p> <p>Board members to contribute directly to the YJB plan</p> <p>Board members to fully support 'Child First' ethos within their own organisations</p> <p>Board Members to report on training and development needs. -</p> <p>Board Members to better understand delivery locations and NYOS practitioners</p>	<p>All Board members to attend a development day to understand the strategic priorities within NYOS</p> <p>Board members to be allocated as a lead for all task and finish groups within YOS and update the Board on progress.</p> <p>Evidence of contributions by agenda items</p> <p>Template designed to support information required.</p> <p>All YOS Board members to promote Child first ethos in their organisation. Board members to feedback at each board progress and examples of good practice</p> <p>Induction pack created for Board members. An annual Training and Development skills analysis to be completed with all Board members.</p> <p>YOS staff to present items at the YOS management Board.</p> <p>Young people attend the YOS management Board and feedback on their experience of YOS.</p> <p>NYOS open day for all YOS members to attend and meet all staff and volunteers of NYOS.</p>

# Progress on previous plan

## Prevent Youth Crime to reduce First Time Entrants

What we aimed to achieve	Activity Completed	Evidence of success
Continue to reduce the number of First Time Entrants in Northamptonshire	<p>Partnership panel established.</p> <p>Attended Police briefings</p> <p>Supported Police weeks of actions identifying YP at risk of knife crime and serious violence</p> <p>Used Turnaround support to identify YP on fringes of knife crime.</p> <p>Partnership work with the police to identify YP on RUI (Release Under Investigation) to target Turnaround.</p>	Achieved a reduction in FTE (Full Time Equivalent) consistently over the last Year, however we still have a high number compared to regional and national figures.
Partnership awareness of the Youth Justice Plan and NYOS priorities that they all will contribute too.	Provided briefing sessions using good practice case examples of multiagency support plans to prevent offending and re-offending	<p>The Board have participated in YJB Board development.</p> <p>YOS Board agenda refined and HOS report provides evidence of good practice.</p> <p>Board members have completed the agency contribution to youth justice Plan</p>
A continued key focus on disproportionality and racial disparity.	<p>The NYOS Management Board will consider the issue from their individual areas.</p> <p>Use Partnership data to inform themselves and ensure that the issue is being addressed at all levels both strategically and operationally</p>	<p>The Overrepresentation and Disproportionality Plan has been signed off by the board and the YJB.</p> <p>The creation of the disproportionality steering groups covering three stands of practice i.e.: staff, young people and partner agencies. Each strand is strategically led and has representatives of all roles and responsibilities from all ethnicity and gender groups.</p> <p>A Peer review carried out in January 2023, it was noted that the elements of disproportionality with young people in care, black minority ethnicities and females was not as much concern as initially thought and the plan produced was fit for purpose. They also identified that consideration for overrepresentation and disproportionality was embedded into all assessments of young people.</p>

What we aimed to achieve	Activity Completed	Evidence of success
Improved emotional health and wellbeing providing easy and natural access to services	Strengthen Service Level agreements with NHFT Health partners to continue to resource Emotional Health and Wellbeing services within the service and prioritise access.	<p>All Young people in YOS are referred for a health assessment</p> <p>The health resource provided to YOS has resulted in the adaptation of interventions early on to better tailor work with young people sooner. They have also supported access to oversubscribed services to ensure the young people receive the support they require.</p>
Speech and Language assessment	<p>S&amp;L assessment completed means that all staff working with the child can be as effective as possible by taking the guidance from the S&amp;L therapist into account when interacting with the child.</p> <p>Further other agencies, such as the police and the Courts, can also be advised as to how to communicate most effectively with the child concerned.</p>	<p>All children within YOS complete a speech and language assessment to determine the level of support they require. A communication passport has been produced for magistrates and judges to better understand the young person's presentation in court. The speech and language resource has also redrafted interventions, policies, and procedures to ensure young people are clear on their expectations.</p> <p>Communication Passport has been introduced for Magistrates and Judges</p>

What we aimed to achieve	Activity Completed	Evidence of success
<p>Improved participation in education, training, and employment.</p>	<p>NYOS to work with education colleagues to explore how they might complement the offer to schools regarding supporting young people at risk of exclusion to maintain their education within a mainstream setting or suitable alternative and improve attendance.</p>	<p>NYOS continue to maintain positive ETE (Education, Training and Employment) performance. The education lead has reviewed and updated the education offer. As part of this a new role offering functional skills for young people will be an integral part of the education offer.</p> <p>All Young people who have SEN support needs are identified and their educational needs are supported in conjunction with their YOS Plan.</p>
<p>Analyse FTE and trends in offending.</p>	<p>Expand analysis and Access to QLIK police Data system. To be shared with NYOS and partners to promote. Improved data intelligence to inform service delivery priorities.</p>	<p>The Police have created a multiagency observatory. YOS have provided the financial resources to fund an additional analyst post. To focus on young people referred to and managed by the Northamptonshire Youth Offending Service (YOS) in both custody and community settings (within both the pre-court and post-court arena) and the wider U18 suspect / offender population known to Northamptonshire Police (as identified on its local crime and recording system).</p> <p>Focus may broaden to include wider data sets drawn from Northamptonshire Children's Trust (NCT) and other YOS Statutory Partners following agreements to share data and information to further inform and support analysis regarding YOS Cohorts</p>
<p>Increase and strengthen the participation and voices of our children and families in the NYOS</p>	<p>Implement participation and consultation events with our children and families</p> <p>Include family and young people feedback into the YJS QA/Audit process</p>	<p>In the last 12 months a youth panel has been created to formulate ideas for service development. An integral part of the management board has been to have case studies and young people in person attend and present their experiences. The YOS continues to collect feedback from young people at the end of their orders to ensure the effectiveness and quality of the service provided to them. A priority going forward is to evidence some of their practical suggestions to create a more young person friendly atmosphere.</p>

What we aimed to achieve	Activity Completed	Evidence of success
<p>To understand and respond to the potentially changing nature of youth crime e.g., criminal exploitation, extremism and radicalisation, child-sexual exploitation and gang associated drug dealing expanding along 'County Lines'.</p>	<p>Develop an Up-stream pilot to address / reduce Serious Youth Violence, (SYV) First Time Entrance (FTE) Reduction Of Reoffending, (ROR) this has been implemented and is the Violence referral scheme (Wellingborough pilot) working with Police to identify early trends in violence / offending and refer to appropriate agencies i.e. PADS (Prevention and Diversion Scheme).</p>	<p>The service redesign has been authorised. The restructure focusses on resources to mitigate and address SYV, FTE, ROR.</p> <p>The Wellingborough pilot was a success and is now embedded in day-to-day practice.</p>
<p>Reduce those that fast track to custody before any YOT (Youth Offending Team) intervention can take place.</p>	<p>We will review Out of Court Disposals (OOC) where a decision for no further action has been applied on more than 2 occasions.</p> <p>We will review 'no further actions' undertaken to ensure those children do not have other risks areas meaning the likelihood of re-offending or FTE is not increased.</p> <p>Expand the use of voluntary police interviews with prior notification given to the NYOS.</p> <p>Consider use of Police Bail conditions to engage the services of the PADS team</p>	<p>There has been a significant reduction in Re-Offending rates in NYOS with them being lower than both National and Regional figures.</p> <p>FTE has continued to be high but has reduced following the introduction of the youth prevention panel and the increased use of outcome 22 and the new turnaround project.</p> <p>The YOS have presented the use of police bail as a diversionary tool to the YOS board. This will be revisited following the PEER review positive response.</p>



What we aimed to achieve	Activity Completed	Evidence of success
<p>To reduce re-offending by young people in Northamptonshire with a particular focus on the relatively small proportion of young people who commit a disproportionate amount of crime in Northamptonshire.</p>	<p>The Northamptonshire Youth Justice Board have monitored and applied scrutiny (of the partnership endeavor) to reduce re-offending.</p> <p>Present at NRBB and request partners look at collective resources to reduce escalation and frequency of offending.</p> <p>Implementation of the NYOS over-representation plan.</p> <p>Better use of data from Asset+ / Core+</p> <p>Start running the re-offending toolkit.</p>	<p>NYOS has successfully maintained a lower re-offending rate than national, regional, family rates evidencing the strong early intervention work is effective in preventing re-offending. The re-offending subgroup run by the Office of Fire, Police and Crime Commissioner (OPFCC has made young people a priority.</p> <p>The PEER review NYOS over representation of some groups in our re-offending cohort They concluded that there was strong evidence of parallel planning with partner agencies to prevent the criminalisation of children. 10 Point checklist and the policy regarding the decriminalisation of Children has been circulated amongst all partners.</p>
<p>To develop high quality and evidence-based interventions that contribute to reducing re-offending and maintain the confidence of partner agencies, the courts, and the public.</p>	<p>The youth justice service will review the effectiveness of current 1-1 and group work approaches and interventions to reducing re-offending, particularly those aimed at the most prolifically offending young people, and will develop and re-design accordingly, with a greater focus on how safeguarding and over representation needs (e.g. communication and learning styles) are being met whilst working with Northamptonshire Speech and Language worker. This should involve co-production with young people.</p>	<p>The resources that have been reviewed by multi agency staff have had an impact on reducing NYOS reoffending binary rate to lower than National, regional, and family levels and to continue the downward trend.</p> <p>The introduction of alternative to custody panels, targeted training on interventions and youth review panels all contributed to this positive performance.</p>

What we aimed to achieve	Activity Completed	Evidence of success
<p>Strengthen the relationship with operational policing through CIRV (Community Initiative in Reducing Violence), LCSJB and Trauma informed custody and Northamptonshire task force.</p>	<p>Violence referral scheme (Wellingborough pilot) in place, working with Police to identify early trends in violence / offending and refer to appropriate agencies i.e., PADS.</p>	<p>The violence referral scheme was a success and is now embedded in practice across all Northamptonshire. The youth prevention panel representatives from CIRV, Early Help, IOM (Integrated Offender Management), PaDS (Prevention and Diversion Scheme) and Social care strengthen and reinforce joint working. The QLIK App now identifies up and coming young people and targeted prevention work can be offered.</p>
<p>Ensure the highest quality though care and resettlement planning are available. Working closely with the designated resettlement leads and relevant social workers (and do this earlier in the child's plan).</p>	<p>Revised approach to Custody and improve resettlement process including embedding new policy and procedures.</p> <p>Promote constructive alternatives to Custody.</p> <p>Amend risk panel process to include Risk of re-offending thereby introducing a multi-agency approach</p> <p>Alternative to Custody Panels introduced.</p> <p>The youth justice service and the National Probation Service will continue to jointly manage cases in transition ensuring consistency in delivery, relationships, and minimising transfers.</p>	<p>The YOS has introduced the Resettlement Policy and appointed Resettlement Lead Practitioners who support case workers in ensuring resettlement is prioritised at the start of any custodial sentence. The YOS seek to engage social care in this process, but this could be improved. The probation service continues to fund a full-time post to ensure the YOS is covered with a professional involved in transfers to adult services as fully and smoothly as possible.</p> <p>A Themed Quality Assurance Audit was completed, a learning reflective discussion held with Managers and teams. There is an action plan in place from recommendation to support improved practice.</p>

# Protect the public from harm, decrease in serious youth violence

What we aimed to achieve	Activity Completed	Evidence of success
<p>To ensure that children and young people who pose a risk of harm to others are appropriately assessed and effectively supervised to promote a reduction in that risk.</p>	<p>Maintain an accurate NYOS risk register that details all those young people known to the service deemed to present a high risk of harm to others.</p> <p>Strong management oversight of the register will be undertaken through the NYOS risk panel</p> <p>Develop data analysis around violence reduction and re-offending</p> <p>Embed Violence referral scheme (Wellingborough pilot) in place, working with Police to identify early trends in violence / offending and refer to appropriate agencies i.e.PA</p> <p>Undertake Rapid Learning Reviews on previous serious incidents in relation to knife crime and gang related activity. Make appropriate referrals to safeguard self and others.</p>	<p>Weekly Risk Panel calendars are sent out to all YOS practitioners and managers to ensure adherence and attendance.</p> <p>Very high-risk panels are all overseen at senior management level.</p> <p>Our recent YJB data evidence shows a lower rate of serious youth violence than National, Regional and Family areas.</p> <p>The Wellingborough pilot has now been embedded in the whole county approach to serious youth violence.</p> <p>The collaborative work with the police and QLIK app identifies Young people at the earliest opportunity of offending behaviour allowing us to tackle this before more entrenched criminality occurs.</p> <p>Referrals to NRM (National Referral Mechanism) and MAPPA are encouraged to support and protect the young people and others from unnecessary risk and exploitation-based offending.</p> <p>The HOS is a main contributor to 4 Rapid Learning Reviews (CSPR). Learning from these incidents has been cascaded by Quality assurance leads with the support of the HOS.</p>

What we aimed to achieve	Activity Completed	Evidence of success
<p>To recognise that serious harmful behaviour to others is often a symptom of significant distress and vulnerability, which needs to be addressed through a safeguarding approach for that risk to be reduced.</p>	<p>Quality assurance framework we will ensure that practice in relation to risk of harm to others is robust and meets the expected standards of HMIP. We will seek to improve the early identification of and response to safeguarding issues associated with young people who have offended or come to the notice of the police and children's services as potential victims by improving links between the Children's Services, the Adolescent Service, MASH (Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub) and NYOS Police and partnership panel.</p>	<p>The inception of the partnership panel has acted as a conduit to ensuring young people are criminalised at the last resort.</p> <p>QLIK data intelligence has been scrutinised review police interactions to determine whether a young person is on the periphery of crime.</p> <p>We have recently reviewed the MASH and PACE (Police and Criminal Evidence) processes to ensure there is a single point of entry for YOS contribute</p> <p>The HOS in conjunction with the CHRYSALIS foundation are bidding for lottery funding to develop a Trauma Centre specifically for CIC and YOS clients.</p>
<p>To minimise the potential for a 'transition gap' between youth and adult services where risk of harm to others is relevant.</p>	<p>The youth justice service and the National Probation Service will continue to jointly manage cases in transition ensuring consistency in delivery, relationships, and minimising transfers</p>	<p>The National probation service provides full-time probation member of staff ensuring a knowledgeable professional oversees the transition process and that this starts as early as possible, and support is maintained during transition. Transition starts 6 months prior to the YP 18th birthday.</p>
<p>Ensure that the risks are understood and employed within the Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangements (MAPPA).</p>	<p>Implement the MAPPA protocol.</p>	<p>The HOS is a standing member on the strategic MAPPA board and an Area Manager attends all MAPPA 3 cases with MAPPA 2 and 1's attended by and operational manager.</p>
<p>Protect the public from harm decrease in serious violence.</p>	<p>Deliver a multi-agency audit programme (creating a critical friend in quality assurance). Provide support and co-ordinate events with Knife Angel touring Northampton Knife Crime Workshops as part of the Knife Angel Campaign.</p>	<p>The YOS has a series of thematic reviews to look at standards across the service of specific strands of work. So far, the victim and resettlement thematic review has taken place.</p> <p>NYOS provided support workshops and individual consultations to the Knife Angel Campaign.</p> <p>NYOS continue to offer Knife Crime intervention to all identified Young People.</p>

## Resources and services

The Youth Offending Service has a complex budget structure comprising of partner agency cash, seconded staff and the Youth Justice Grant from the Youth Justice Board for England and Wales. The table below outlines the provisional contributions for 2023/24, as some contributions were still to be confirmed at the point this youth justice plan was agreed.

### NORTHAMPTONSHIRE 2023/24

INCOME	Youth Justice Board <sup>1</sup>	Local Authority	Police and Crime Commissioner	Probation	Health	Public Health	Total
Cash	£705,433	£1,606,151	£200,900	£31,974	£80,000	£66,112	£2,690,570
In-kind		£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0
<b>Total Income</b>	<b>£705,433</b>	<b>£1,606,151</b>	<b>£200,900</b>	<b>£31,974</b>	<b>£80,000</b>	<b>£66,112</b>	<b>£2,690,570</b>

1. This includes all grants received from YJB

EXPENDITURE	Youth Justice Board <sup>1</sup>	Local Authority	Police and Crime Commissioner	Probation	Health	Public Health	Total
Salaries	£705,433	£1,439,725	£200,900	£31,974	£78,455	£54,411	£2,510,898
Activity costs	£0	£165,391	£0	£0	£0	£11,701	£177,092
Accommodation	£0	£992	£0	£0	£0	£0	£992
Overheads	£0	£43	£0	£0	£0	£0	£43
Equipment	£0	£0	£0	£0	£1,545	£0	£1,545
<b>Total Expenditure</b>	<b>£705,433</b>	<b>£1,606,151</b>	<b>£200,900</b>	<b>£31,974</b>	<b>£80,000</b>	<b>£66,112</b>	<b>£2,690,570</b>










The YJB Youth Justice Grant is provided for the provision of youth offending services with an aim of achieving the following outcomes: reducing re-offending, reducing first time entrants, reducing the use of custody, effective public protection, and effective safeguarding.

The grant, partner contributions and available resources will be used to deliver Northamptonshire youth Offending services improvement plan, supporting the priorities identified for 23/24.

# Performance

This section should contain a summary of key performance targets, describing what current performance looks like, what has contributed to good or poor performance, and what the partnership is aiming for in the future.

## Northamptonshire YOS Performance Report YOS Management Board May 2023

<b>NI 19: Rate of Proven Reoffending by Young People in the Youth Justice System (Binary)</b>  <b>Jul 2020 – Jun 2021: 21.8%</b> Jul 2019 – Jun 2020: 23.3% Quarterly data ↓ <b>Apr 2021 – Jun 2021: 17.2%</b> Apr 2020 – Jun 2020: 22.4% 	<b>NI 19: Rate of Proven Reoffending by Young People in the Youth Justice System (Frequency)</b>  <b>Jul 2020 – Jun 2021: 5.08</b> Jul 2019 – Jun 2020: 3.85 Quarterly data ↓ <b>Apr 2021 – Jun 2021: 4.80</b> Apr 2020 – Jun 2020: 2.55 	<b>NI 111: First-time Entrants to Youth Justice System Aged 10 - 17</b> <b>National PNC Rate per 100,000 pop</b>  <b>Jan 2022 – Dec 2022 170</b> Jan 2021 – Dec 2021 172 
<b>NI 43: Young People Receiving a Conviction in Court who are Sentenced to Custody</b>  <b>Jan – Dec 22 0.10</b> → National 0.11 Jan – Dec 21 0.24 Regional 0.10 Jan – Dec 20 0.20 		<b>Number of Custodial Sentences Local YOS Tracking</b>  <b>2022/2023 4 (3 YP)</b> <b>2021/2022 8 (7 YP)</b> 2020/2021 13 2019/2020: 6 
<b>Remands to Custody Bed Nights Local Measure</b>  <b>2022/2023: 795</b> <b>2021/2022: 1215</b> 2020/2021: 606 2019/2020: 971  More STC and SCH due more vulnerable YP therefore costs only slightly lower than 2021/22 	<b>NI 45: Engagement in Education, Training and Employment by Young People who offend</b>  <b>2022/2023 89.8%</b> <b>2021/2022 89.9%</b> 2020/2021 86.1%* 2019/2020: 82.9% <small>*based on assumption Covid19 had not happened</small> 	<b>NI 46: Access to suitable accommodation for Young People in the Youth Justice System</b> <b>Data not yet available new reporting next year as part of new KPI's</b> <b>2021/2022: 100%</b> 2020/2021: 99.1% 2019/2020: 98.7% 

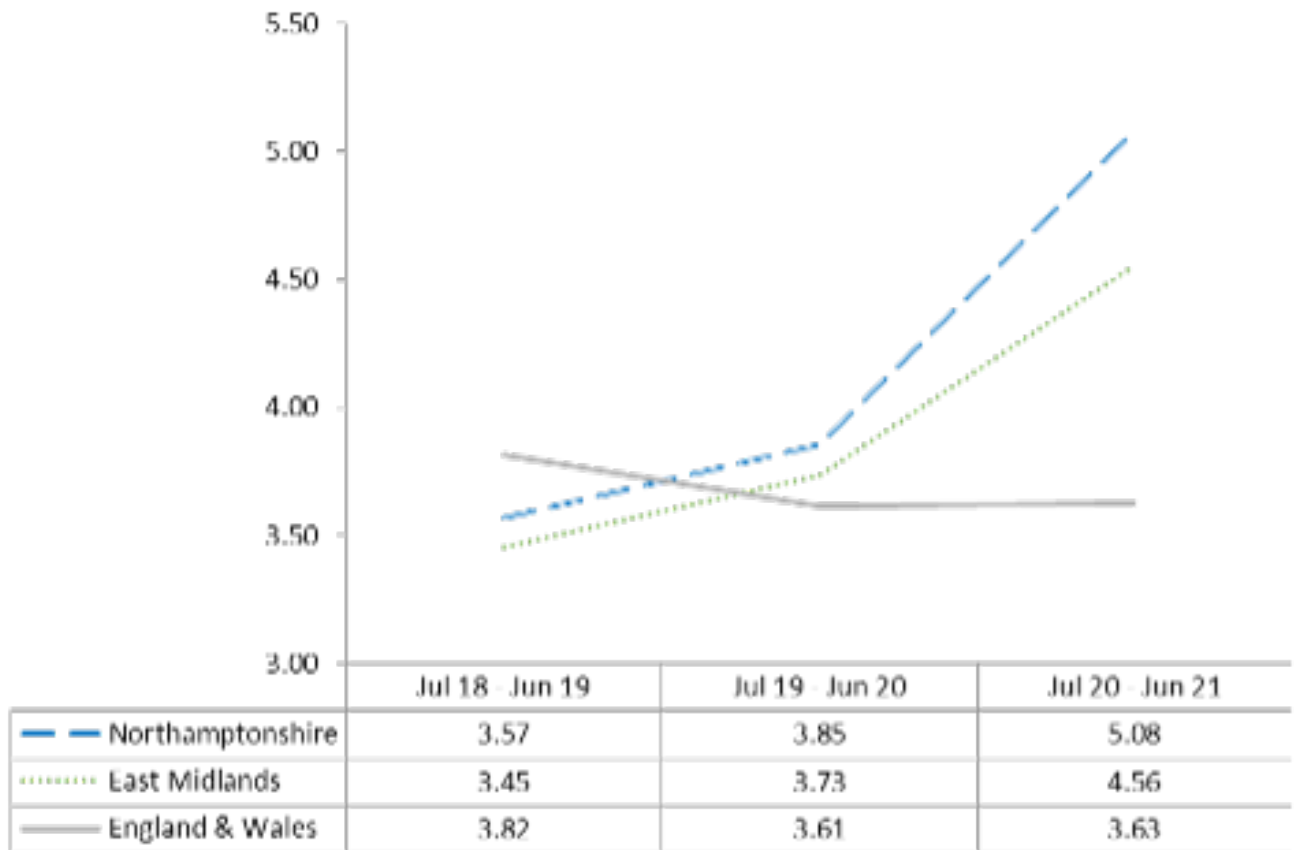
# National key performance indicators

## Existing key performance indicators

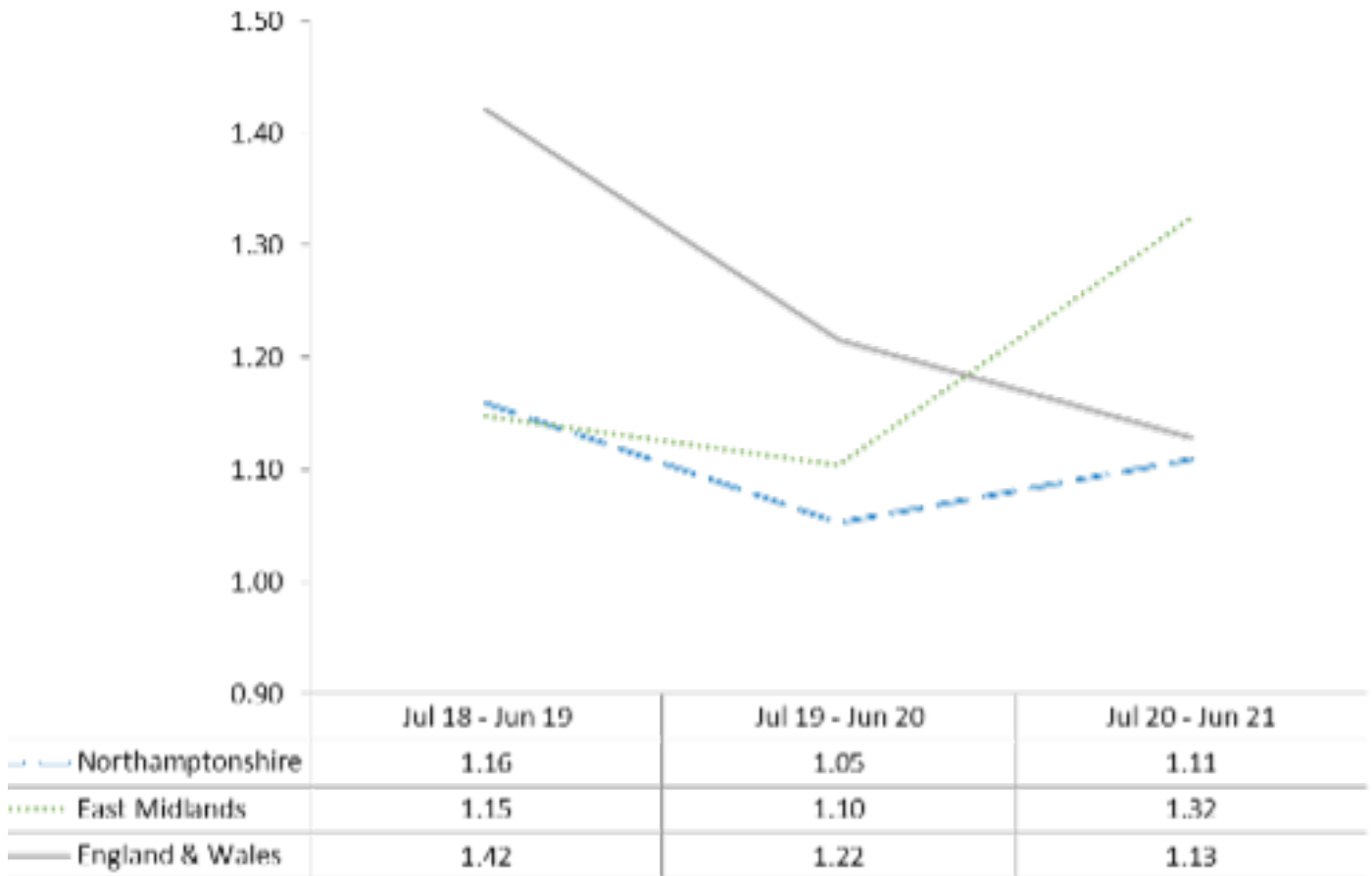
### Binary Re-Offending Rate

Annually: Northamptonshire continues to significantly outperform the region, family (28.9%) and national figures. Northamptonshire has reduced the percentage of Offenders re-offending from 27.3% to 21.8% in the most recent data years available.

### Average Re-Offences per Re-Offender



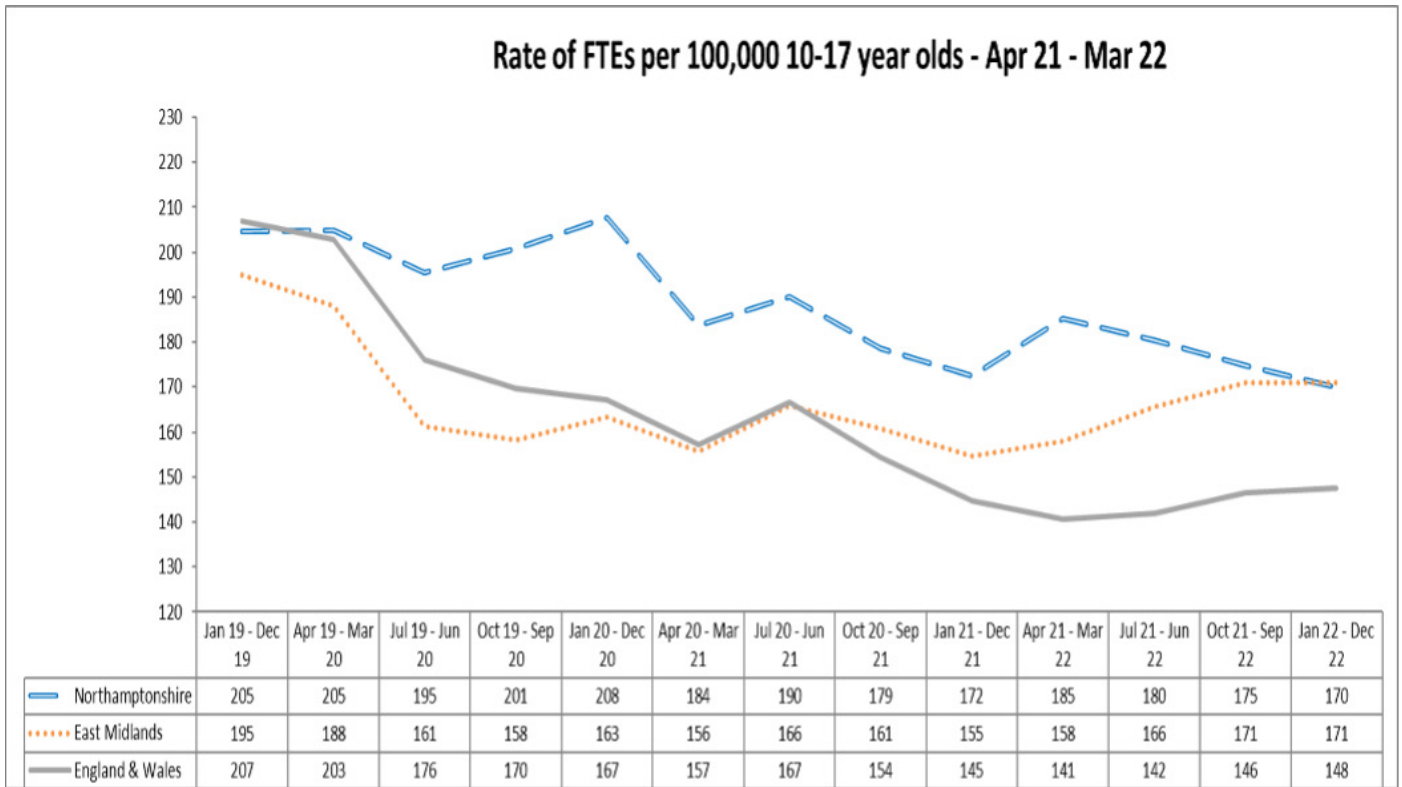
### Average Re-Offences per Offender



Annually: high average re-offences per re-offender but smaller cohort than other comparators. Increased from 3.85 to 5.08 in the most recent annual data available. Family is 3.58 in the most recent Annual data.

Annually: when looking at total offender cohort average number of re-offences is below the National and Regional figures. Northamptonshire has increased from the previous year in the most recent data available but decreased based on the previous year to that. This is slightly above Family at 1.03

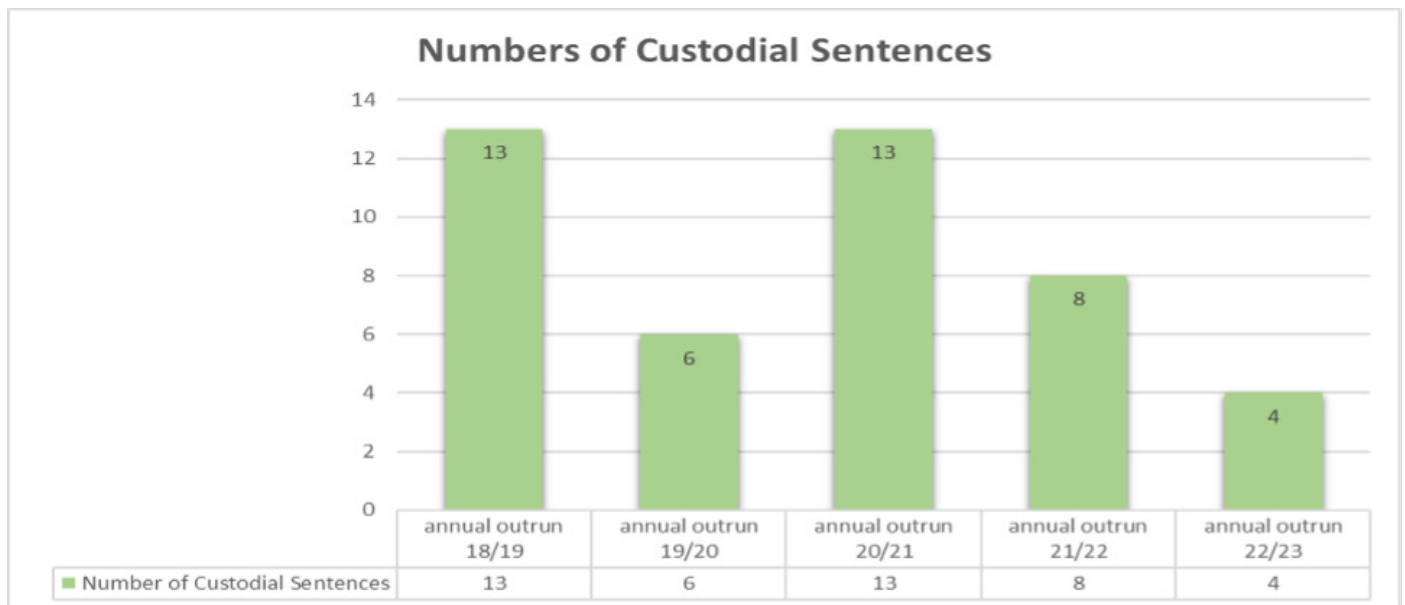




Consistent reduction in First Time Entrants Rate per 100,000 where all other comparators have shown an increase Jan 22 to Dec 22 compared to previous year (Family +23 rate 110 up to 133). Now below regional rate.

## Use of Custody

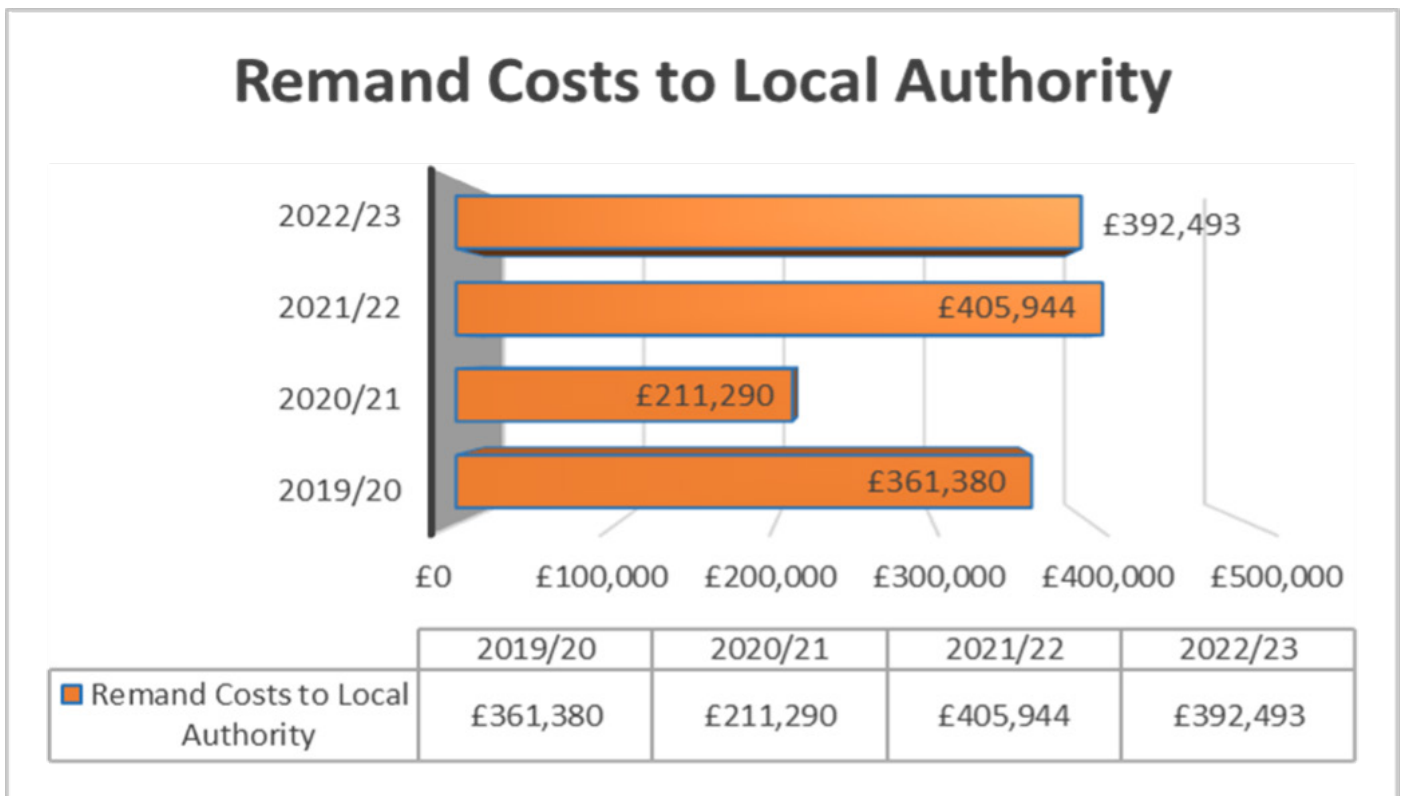
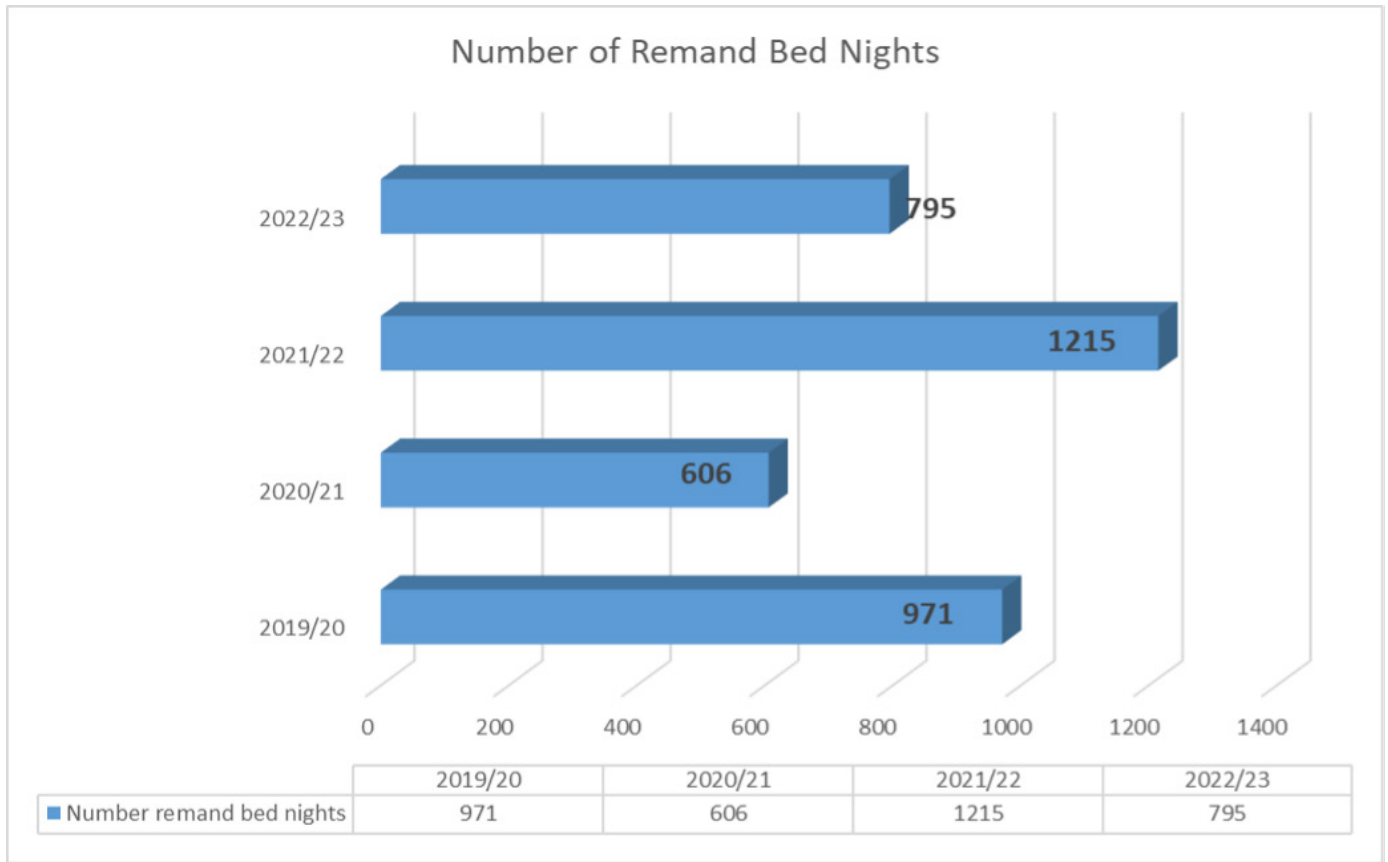
For the Period 2022/23 there have been 4 custodial sentences showing a significant reduction in custodial sentences compared to 2021/22. So far in 2023/24 there has been 1 custodial sentence. We do have 3 young people on remand for serious offences that could potentially, if found guilty, increase the first Custodial sentences for 2023/24. 2 of the 3 have a trial start date of 10/07/23 and one whose next appearance in court is 05/06/23



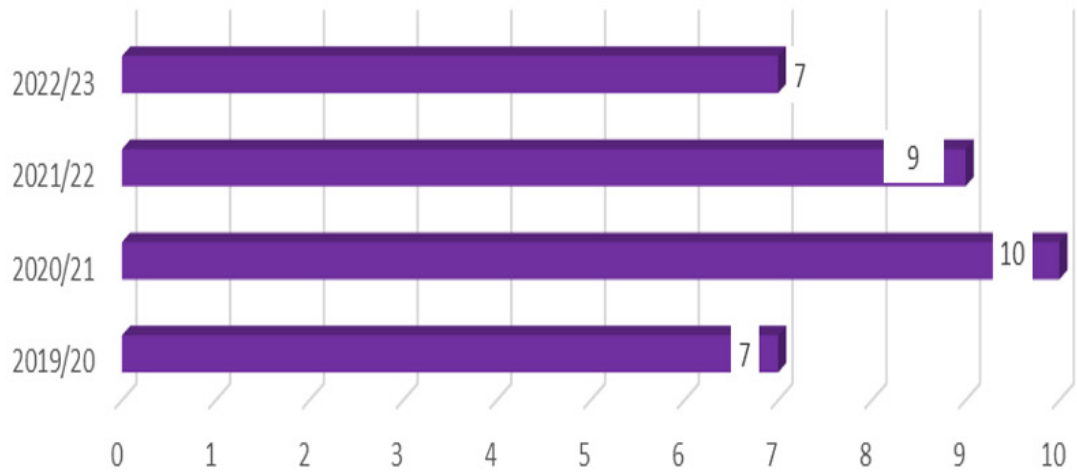
There have been 7 new remand episodes for the 2022/23 period.

- Of these 7 new remand episodes in 2022/23 4 carried over to the 2023/24 with one having been sentenced in April 2023
- The bed nights for 2022/23 have involved 7 young people and remand destinations have comprised of Youth Offender Institutions, Secure Childrens Home and Secure Training Centres
- Of the 795 Bed nights 457 have been at YOI (Young Offender Institution), 218 at STC (Secure Training Centre) and 120 at SCH (Secure Children Home) (Secure Children s Home) (Secure Children s Home) (Secure Children s Home)

Cost of Remands has been close to the 2021/22 levels even though the remand nights have been much less due to the increased use and therefore cost of STC and SCH



### Number of New Individual Remand Episodes



	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23
■ Number remand episodes	7	10	9	7

## Additional key performance indicators (from April 2023)

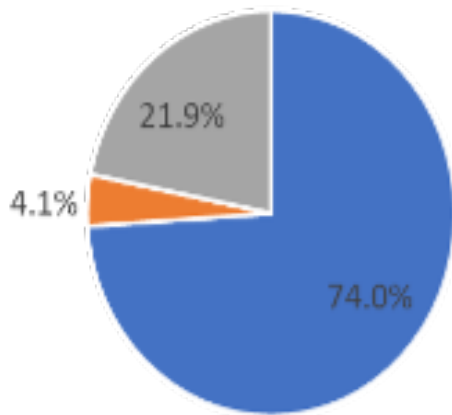
As of April 2023, additional key performance indicators have been introduced by the YJB. The following is an assessment completed for the first two periods of 22/23. This will act as a comparator for when the official data is published by the YJB. Unfortunately, restrictions in reporting requirements have prevented us from being able to complete for all KPIS. We have received reassurance from the system providers that this will be resolved in time for Quarter 1 23/24 reporting framework. The following is a snapshot of the areas we can provide information on. The data is pulled from Asset plus assessments in many sections and does not include data about some the out of court disposals such as CRD's, Outcome 22's or Outcome 20's. This data will relate to YC's and above where the young person has engaged.

### Suitable Accommodation & Education and Employment

<p><b>NI 45: Engagement in Education, Training and Employment by Young People who offend</b></p> <table border="1"> <tbody> <tr> <td>2022/2023</td> <td>89.8%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>2021/2022</td> <td>89.9%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>2020/2021</td> <td>86.1%*</td> </tr> <tr> <td>2019/2020:</td> <td>82.9%</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <p>*based on assumption Covid19 had not happened</p>	2022/2023	89.8%	2021/2022	89.9%	2020/2021	86.1%*	2019/2020:	82.9%	<p><b>NI 46: Access to suitable accommodation for Young People in the Youth Justice System</b></p> <p><b>Data not yet available new reporting next year as part of new KPI's</b></p> <table border="1"> <tbody> <tr> <td>2021/2022:</td> <td>100%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>2020/2021:</td> <td>99.1%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>2019/2020:</td> <td>98.7%</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	2021/2022:	100%	2020/2021:	99.1%	2019/2020:	98.7%
2022/2023	89.8%														
2021/2022	89.9%														
2020/2021	86.1%*														
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2021/2022:	100%														
2020/2021:	99.1%														
2019/2020:	98.7%														

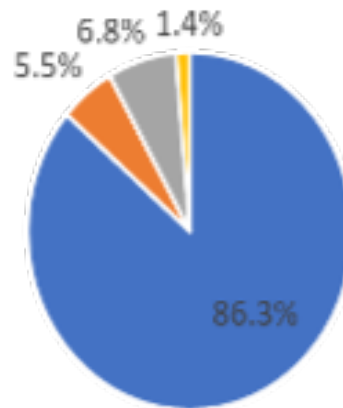
# Special Educational Needs and Disabilities/Additional learning needs

Any SEN Identified?



■ No ■ Yet To Clarify ■ Yes

Diagnosed With Social Communication Difficulties

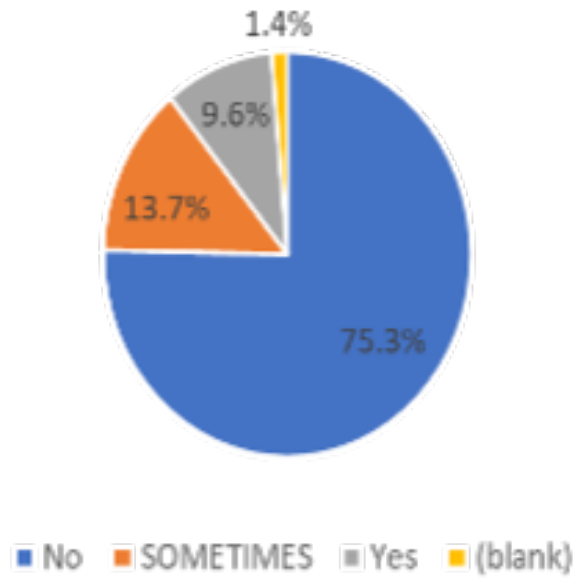


■ No ■ Yet To Clarify ■ Yes ■ (blank)

Any SEN Identified	QTY
No	54
Yet To Clarify	3
Yes	16
(blank)	0
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>73</b>

Diagnosed with Social Comm. Difficulties	QTY
No	63
Yet To Clarify	4
Yes	5
(blank)	1
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>73</b>

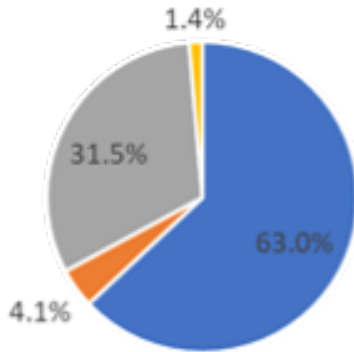
### Has a Problem Reading or Writing



Has a problem reading or writing	QTY
No	55
SOMETIMES	10
Yes	7
(blank)	1
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>73</b>

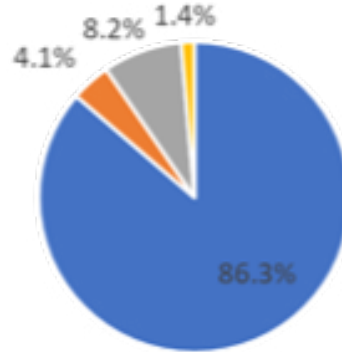
# Mental Health Care and Emotional Wellbeing

Any Contact With Mental Health Services



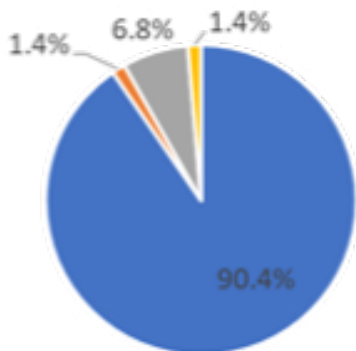
■ No ■ Yet To Clarify ■ Yes ■ (blank)

Feels Constantly In A Low Mood



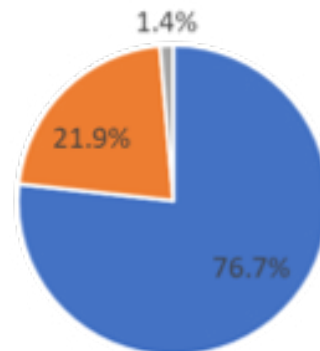
■ No ■ Yet To Clarify ■ Yes ■ (blank)

Feels Hopeless About The Future



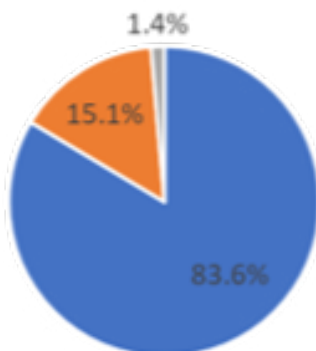
■ No ■ Yet To Clarify ■ Yes ■ (blank)

History Of Deliberate Self Harm



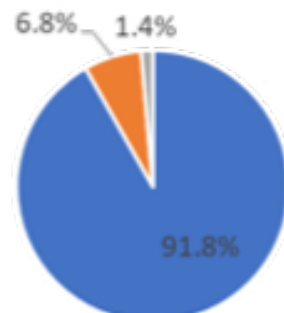
■ No ■ Yes ■ (blank)

Previously Attempted Suicide



■ No ■ Yes ■ (blank)

Looks Depressed or Exhibits Unusual Behaviour

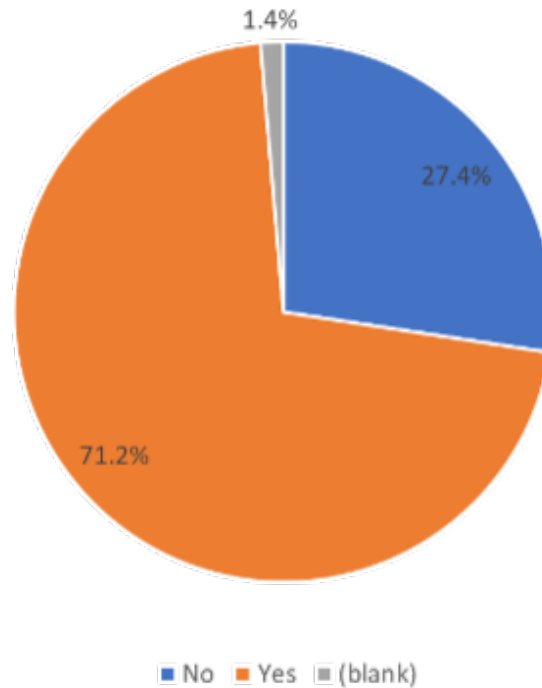


■ No ■ Yes ■ (blank)



# Substance Misuse

Any Evidence Of Substance Misuse



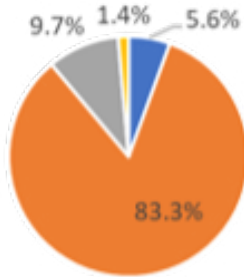
## Out-of-court Disposals- Engagement

All programme outcomes Jan 2022 to end June 2022 (211 programmes)	total	%
total completed successfully	91	43.1%
total concluded declined at some point or uncontactable	88	41.7%
total concluded due to further outcome/enforcement	14	6.6%
total concluded for reasons out of YOT control/ other service involvement	18	8.5%

voluntary programme outcomes Jan 2022 to end June 2022 (191 programmes)	total	%
total completed successfully	75	39.3%
total concluded declined at some point or uncontactable	88	46.1%
total concluded due to further outcome/enforcement	10	5.2%
total concluded for reasons out of YOT control/ other service involvement	18	9.4%

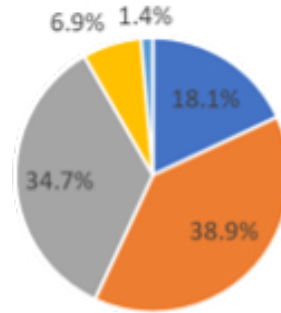
# Links To Wider Services

Accommodated By Voluntary Agreement With Parents



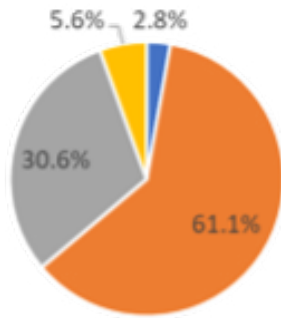
■ Currently ■ Never ■ Previously ■ Yet to Clarify

Any Childrens Services Involvement With Siblings



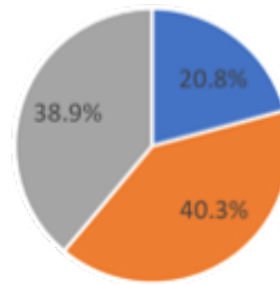
■ Currently ■ Never ■ Previously ■ Yet to Clarify ■ (blank)

Child Ever Had A Child Protection Plan



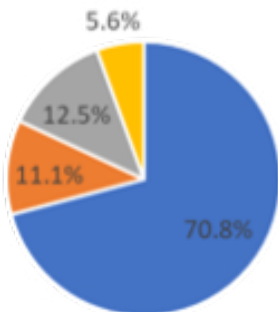
■ Currently ■ Never ■ Previously ■ Yet to Clarify

Identified Child In Need



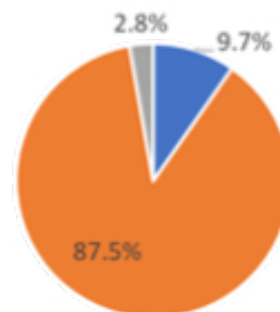
■ Currently ■ Never ■ Previously

Previous Safeguarding Or PPI



■ No ■ Yet To Clarify ■ Yes ■ (blank)

Subject To A Care Order



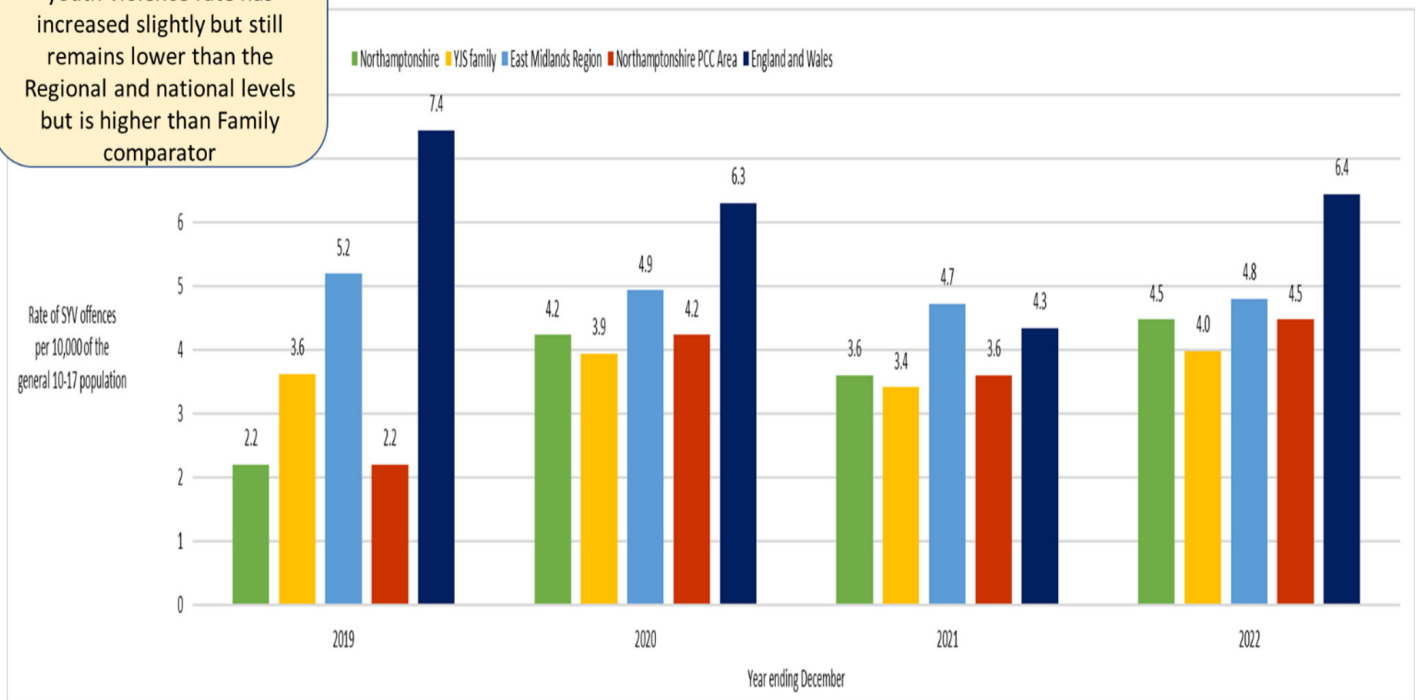
■ Currently ■ Never ■ Previously

# Management Board Attendance

- 18th May 2023 = 11 out of 18 = 61.11%
- 16th February 2023 = 14 out of 18 = 77.78%

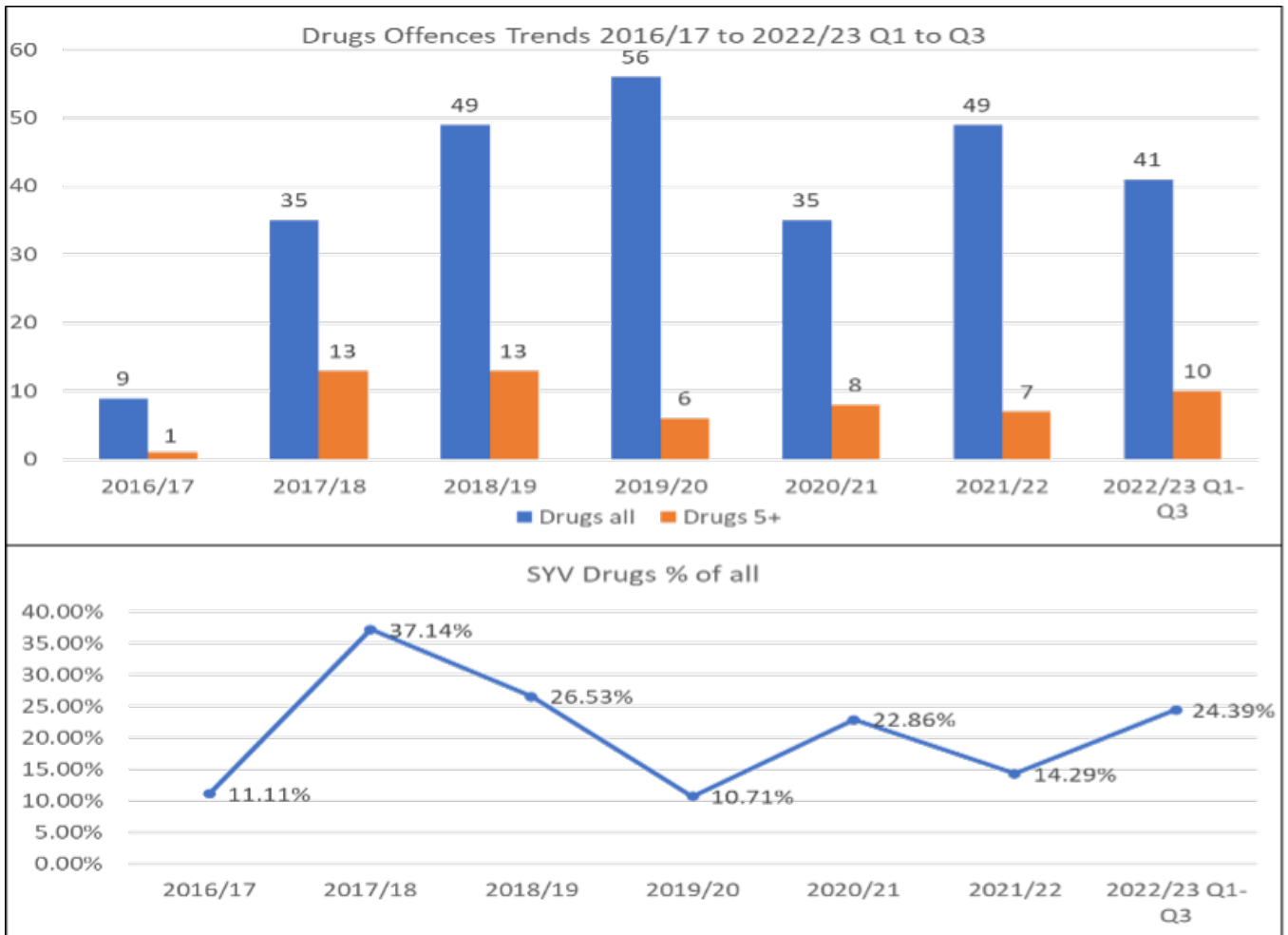
# Serious Youth Violence

As can be seen Northamptonshire's serious youth violence rate has increased slightly but still remains lower than the Regional and national levels but is higher than Family comparator



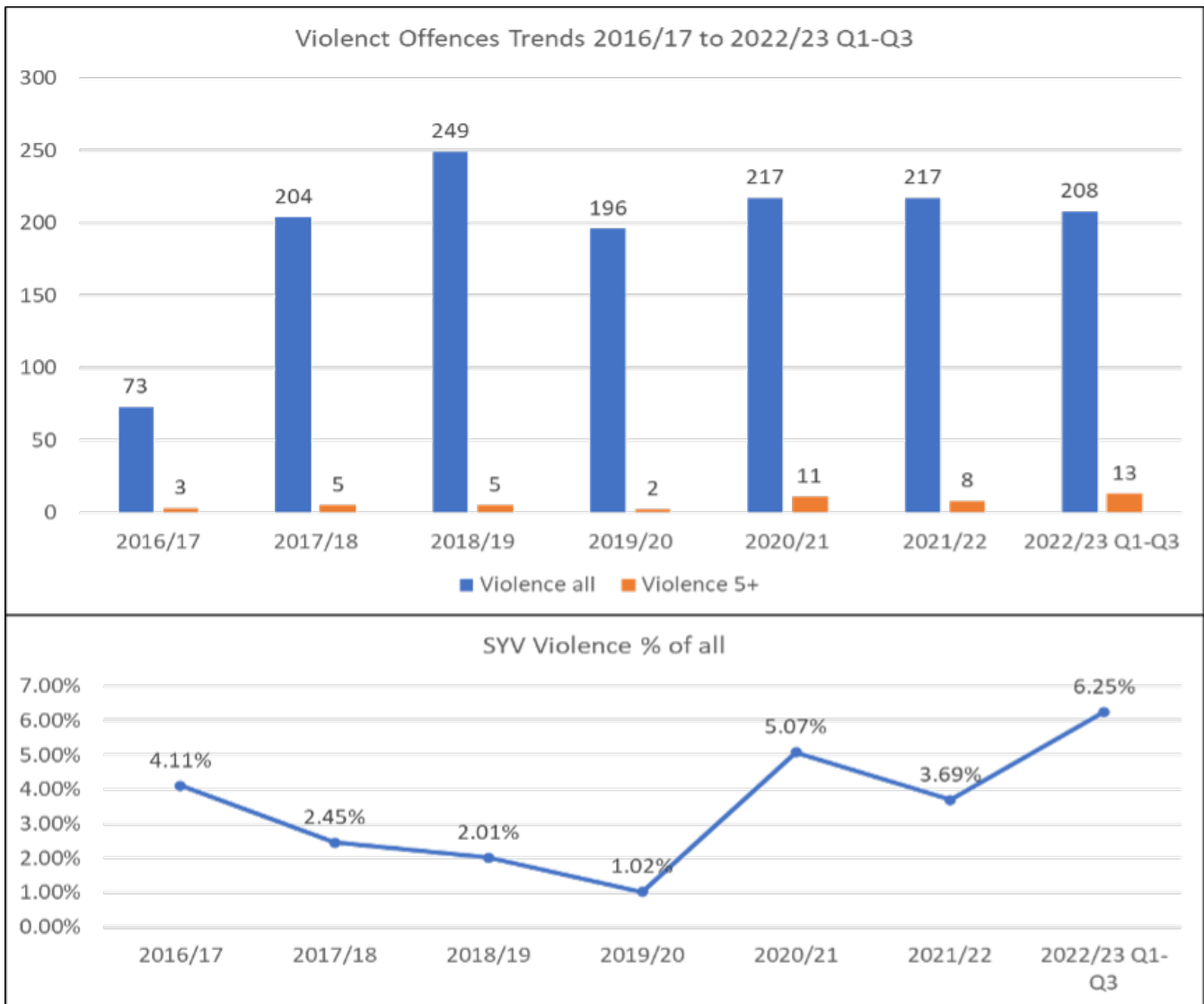
Overall Drugs Offences are creeping back up to 2021/22 levels pending Q4 22/23 data.

As a % of the overall Drugs Offences the serious Drugs offences gravity 5+ are also creeping back up to 2018/19 levels.



Overall Violent Offences are looking to be back up to 2018/19 levels when the Q4 data for 2022/23 is received and almost certainly an increase from last year.

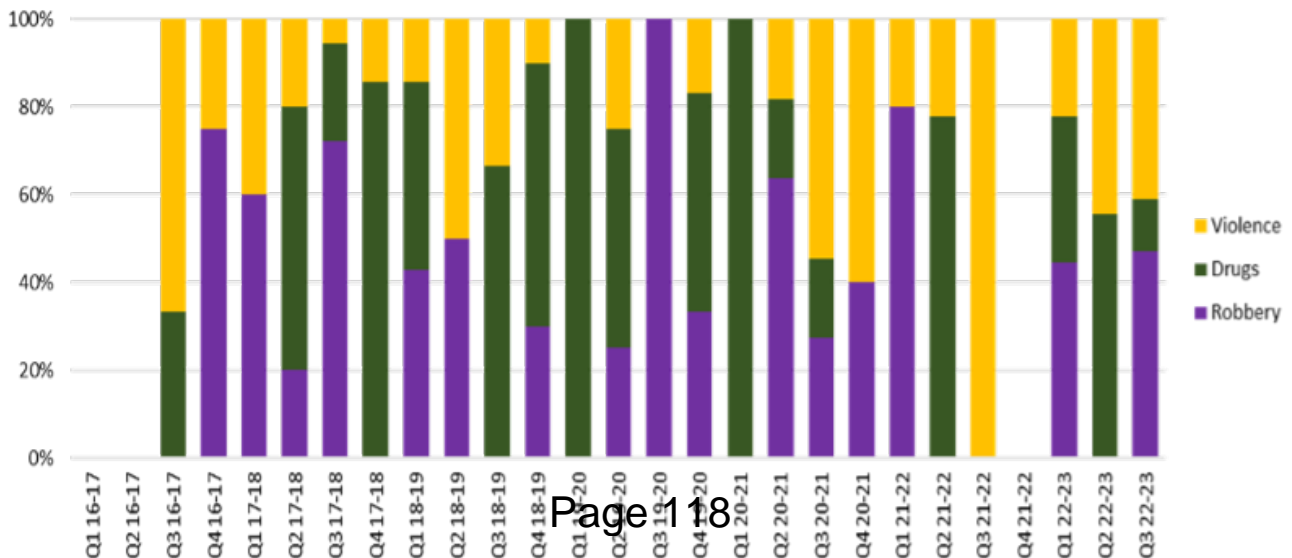
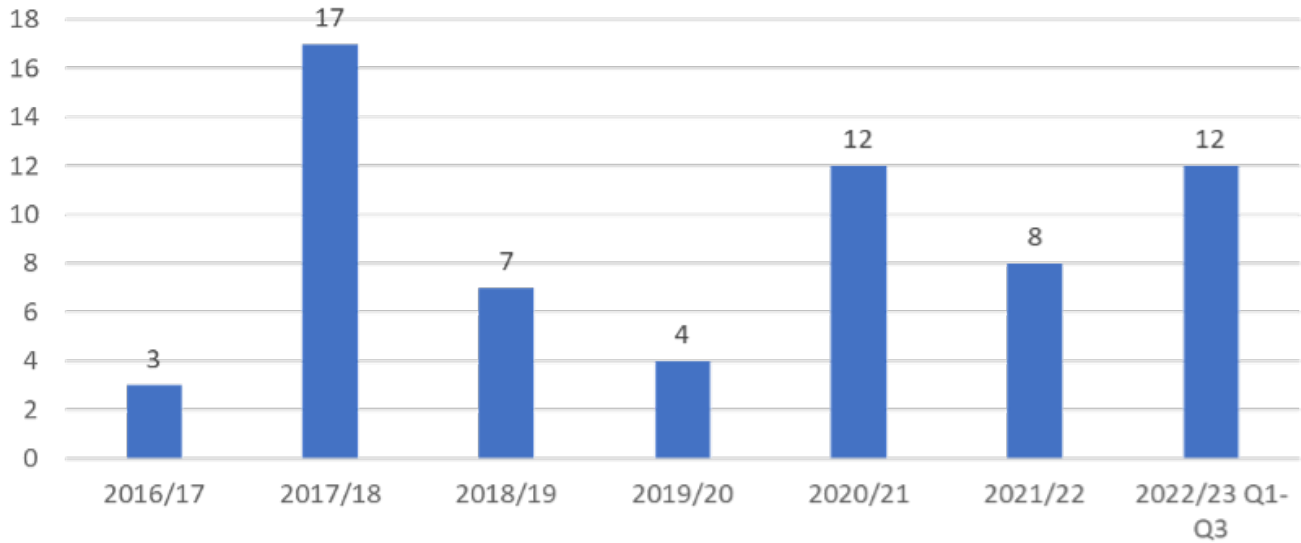
The Serious Violence Offences, gravity 5+, are already at their highest proportion of overall violent offences at 6.25% currently compared to 3.69% last year.



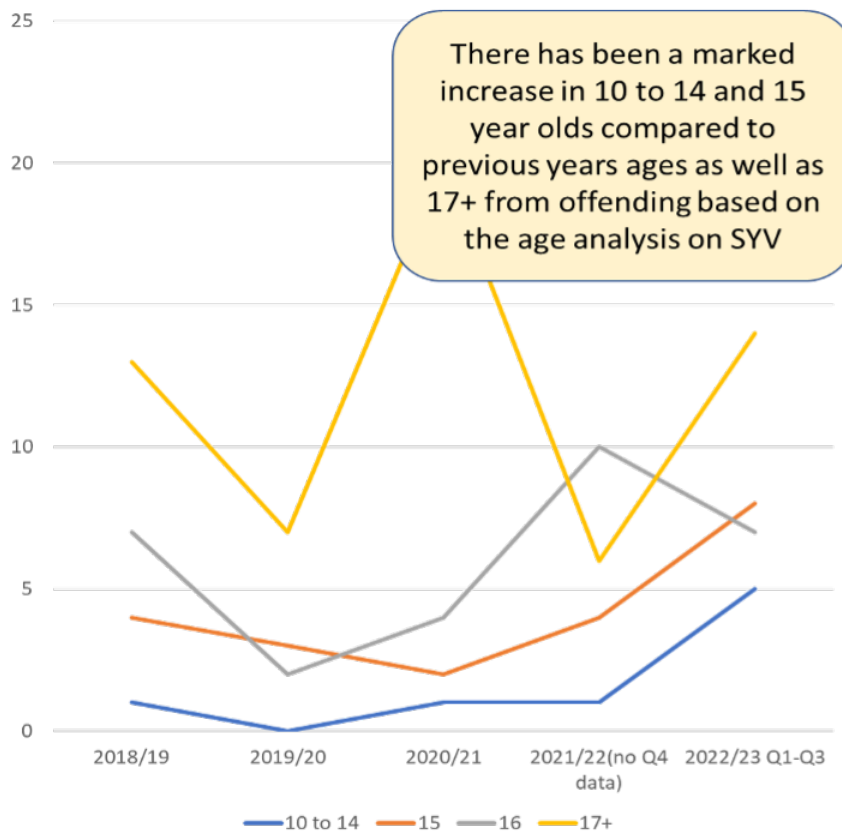
All Robbery offences are 5+ Gravity.  
The trend shows an increase back towards 2017/18 peak levels once the final Q4 data is in for 2022/23 and already above last years numbers.

Looking at the comparator of the 3 offending categories of Violence, Drugs & Robbery in 202/23 Q1-Q3 it is clear all areas contribute fairly equally.

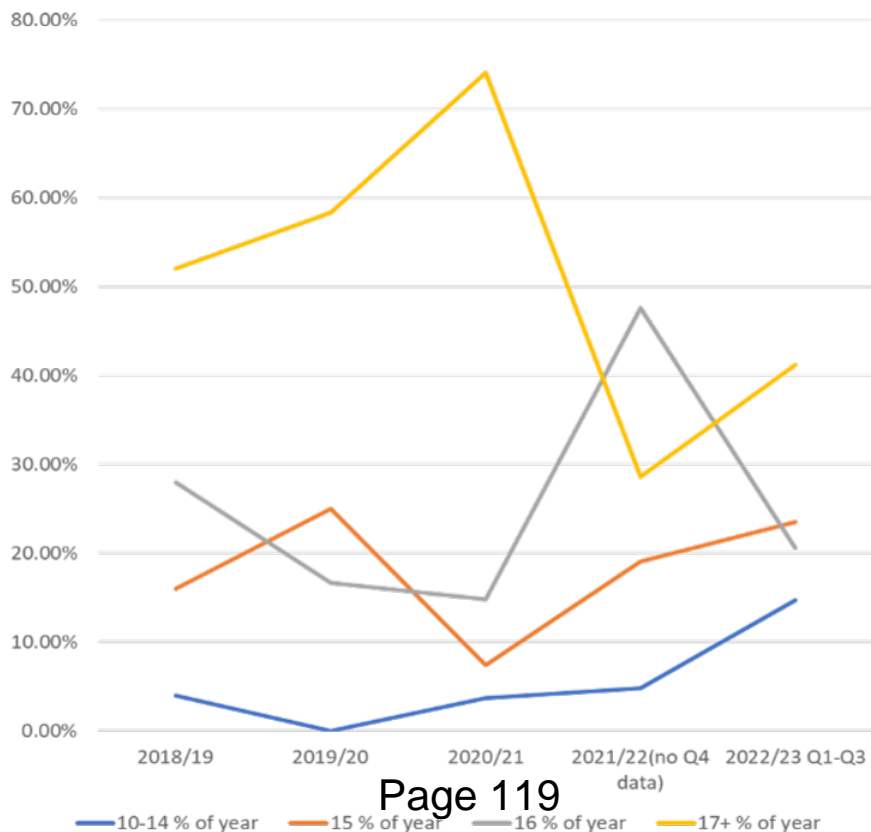
Robbery Trends 2016/17 to 2022/23 Q1-Q3



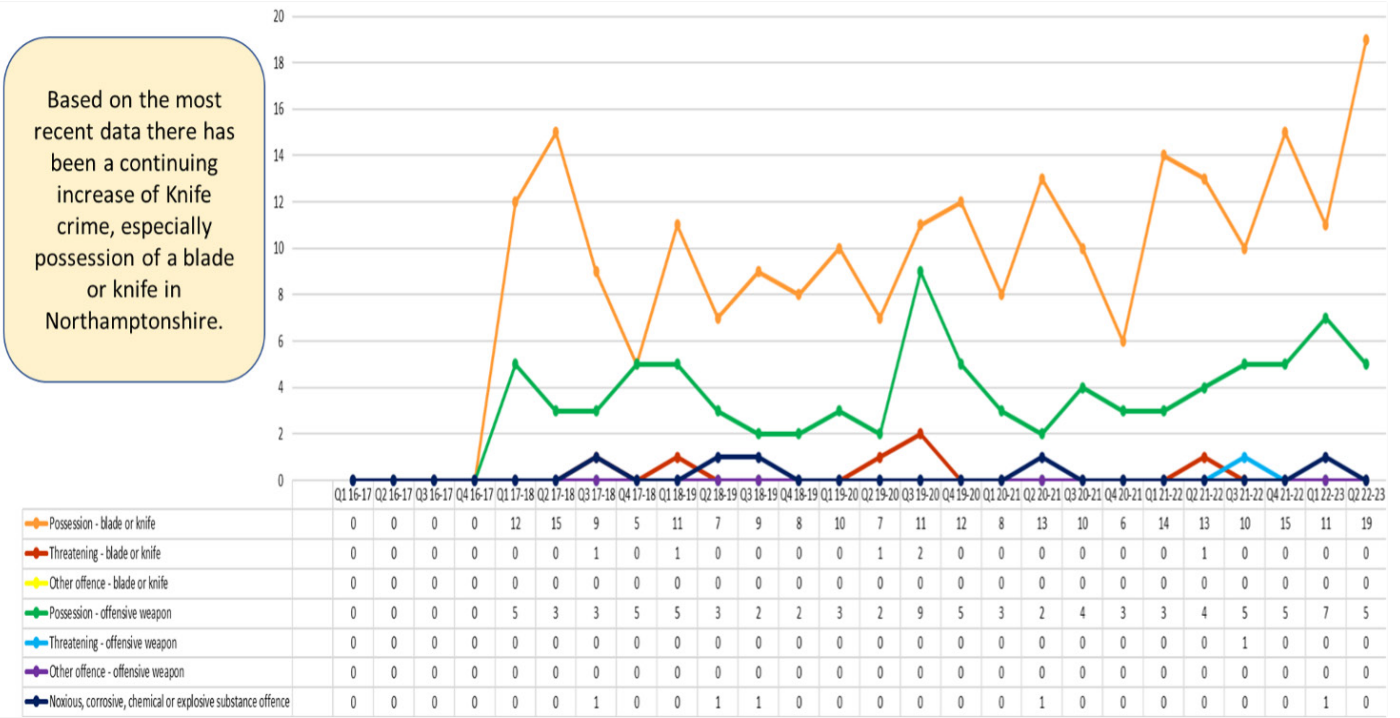
Quantity Of Serious Youth Violence Incidents By Age by Year  
2018/19 to 2022/23 Q1-Q3



Age trends as a % of Total Serious Youth Violence Incidents by Year  
2018/19 to 2022/23 Q1-Q3



The number of knife and offensive weapon offences with a gravity score lower than 5, Northamptonshire, Q1 16-17 to Q3 22-23





# Victims

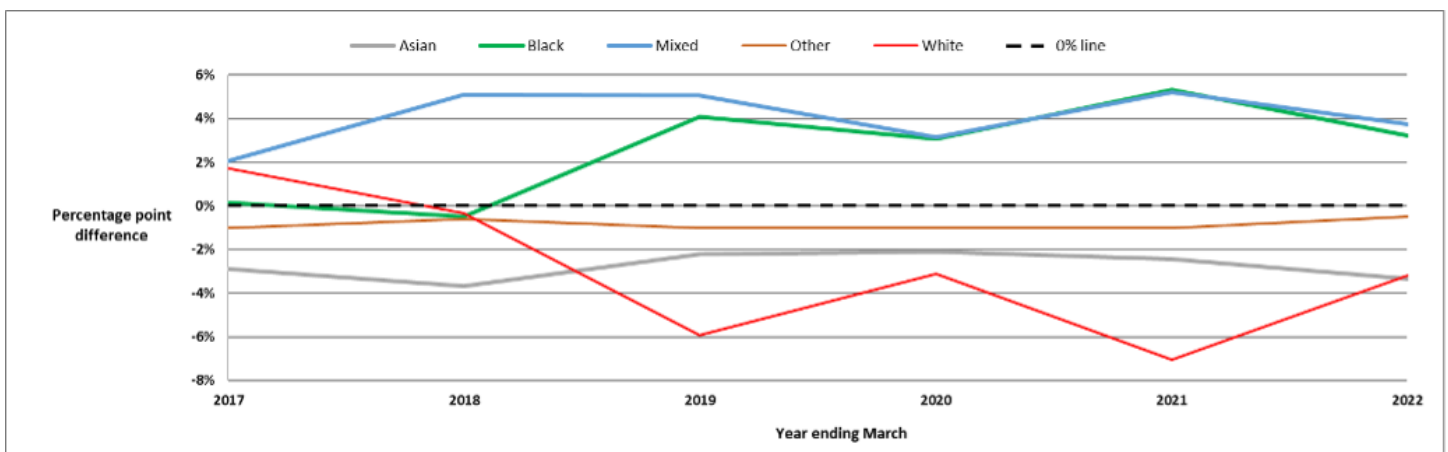
This will be reported in the new KPI run for Q1 2023/24

## Children from groups which are over-represented.

Using the most recent data from the Summary Ethnic Disparity Tool we can see this identifies Mixed Ethnicities as being over-represented and Black Ethnicity are also slightly over-represented. Overall, it shows that the Ethnic Minority Group Cohort is overrepresented by 3%/4%. Which is an improvement on recent Years, as can be seen from the graph below, and shows good progress with the Disproportionality Action Plan that Northamptonshire Youth Offending implemented prior to 2022/23.

Ethnic group	2022 Offending Population	Share of total <sup>(3)</sup>	2021 mid year 10-17 population by ethnic group	Share of total % <sup>(4)</sup>	% Point Difference	Over-represented and Significant cohort size
Asian	3	2%	3,863	5%	-3%	No
Black	17	9%	4,682	6%	3%	No
Mixed	17	9%	4,274	5%	4%	Yes
Other	1	1%	802	1%	0%	No
Ethnic minority groups <sup>(5)</sup>	38	21%	13,621	17%	3%	No
White	146	79%	64,379	83%	-3%	No

Trends in percentage point differences between local 10 17 population and YJS offending population, year ending March 2017 to year ending March 2022(1)



What can also be seen from this YJB data table below is the fact that in higher gravity offences Black and Mixed Ethnicities are more overrepresented.

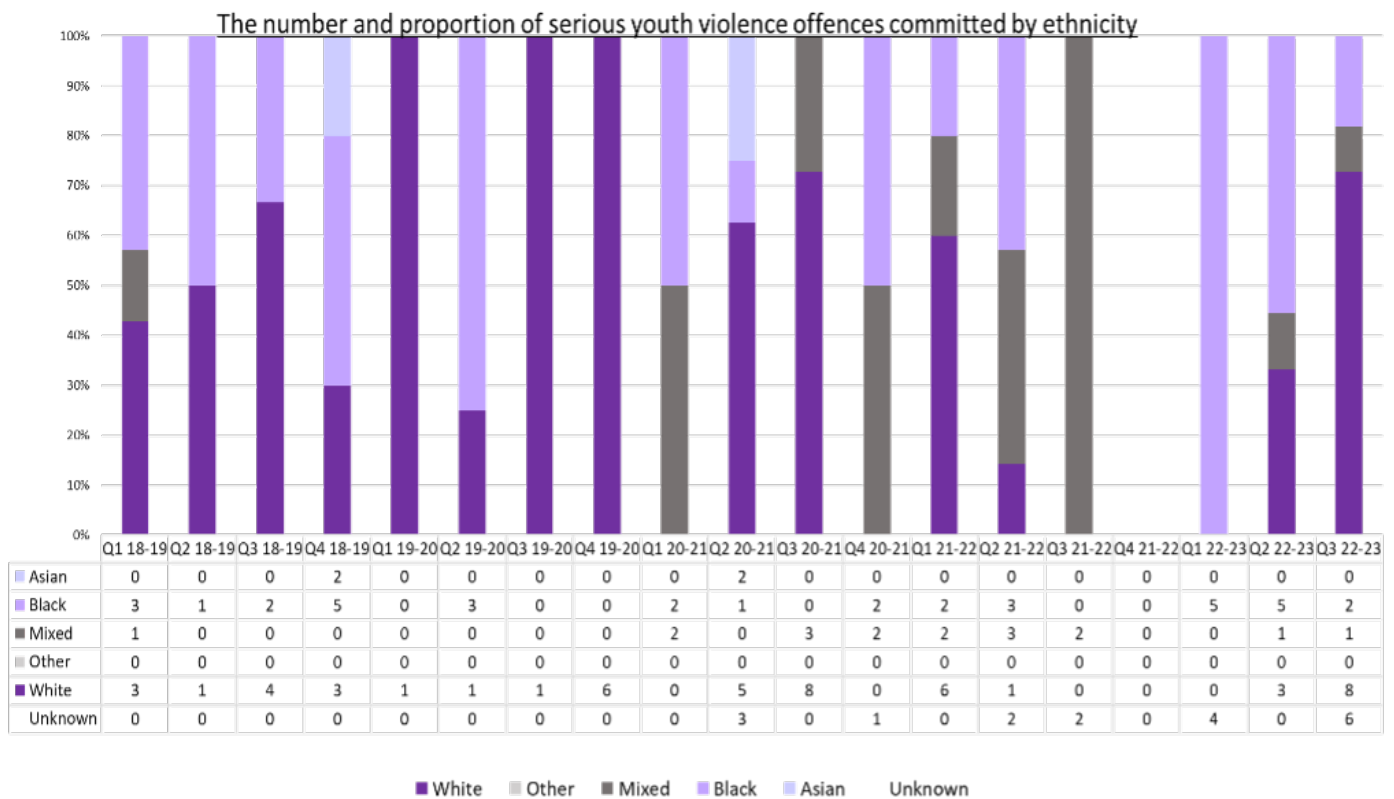
Proportion of offences committed by gravity score, within each ethnicity group

Gravity Score	Asian	Black	Mixed	Other	White	Ethnic minority groups <sup>(4)</sup>
1 to 4	100%	68%	77%	100%	85%	74%
5 to 8	0%	32%	23%	0%	15%	26%

Proportion of offences committed by ethnicity, within each gravity score

Gravity Score	Asian	Black	Mixed	Other	White	Ethnic minority groups <sup>(4)</sup>
1 to 4	1%	8%	9%	0%	81%	19%
5 to 8	0%	18%	13%	0%	69%	31%

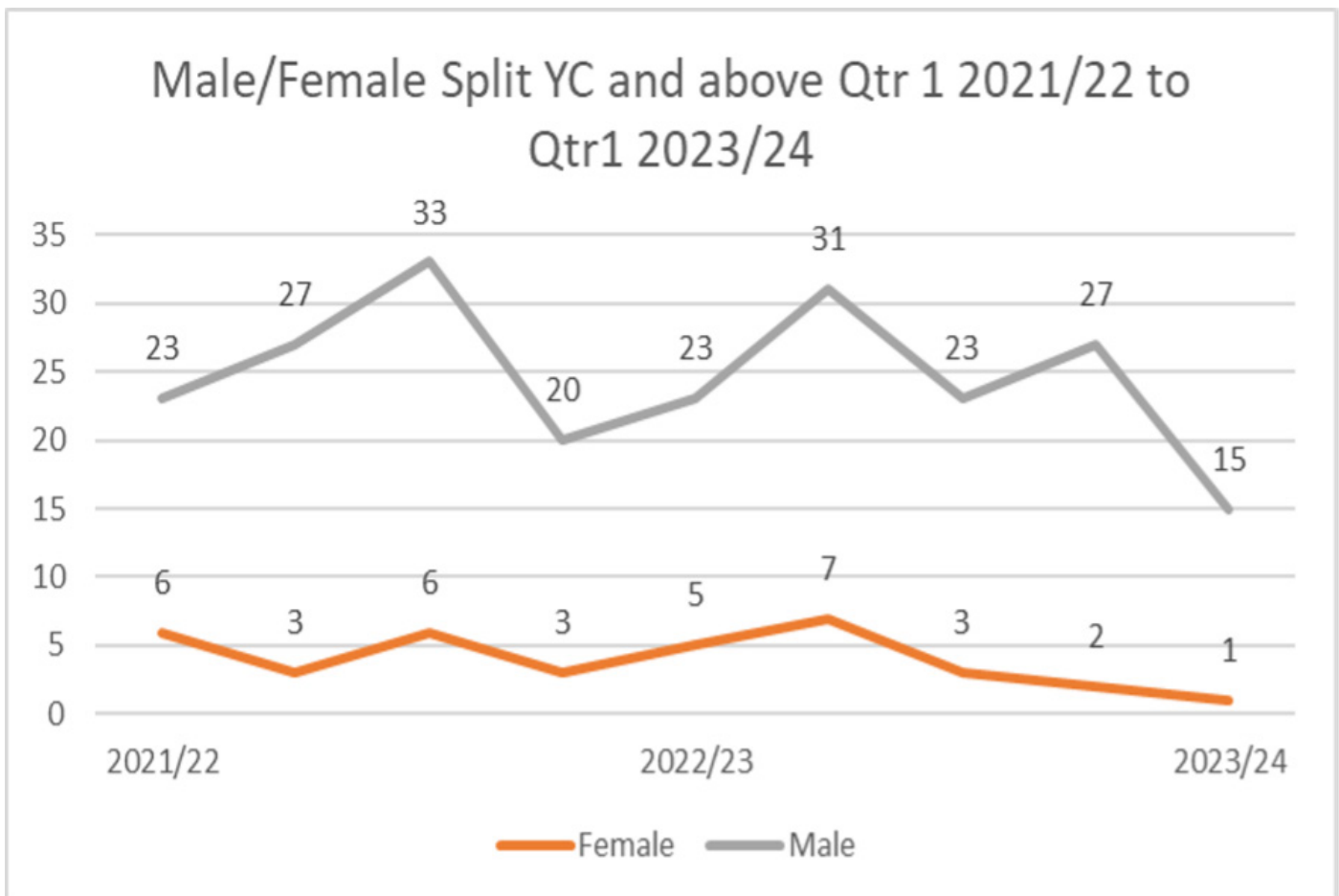
This correlates with the more recent data we see below in the Ethnicity analysis of Serious Youth Violence, although we have seen Black Ethnicities here as more than Mixed, bearing in mind these are based on a small cohort of young people where 1 person can make a significant impact on figures.



## Female Cohort

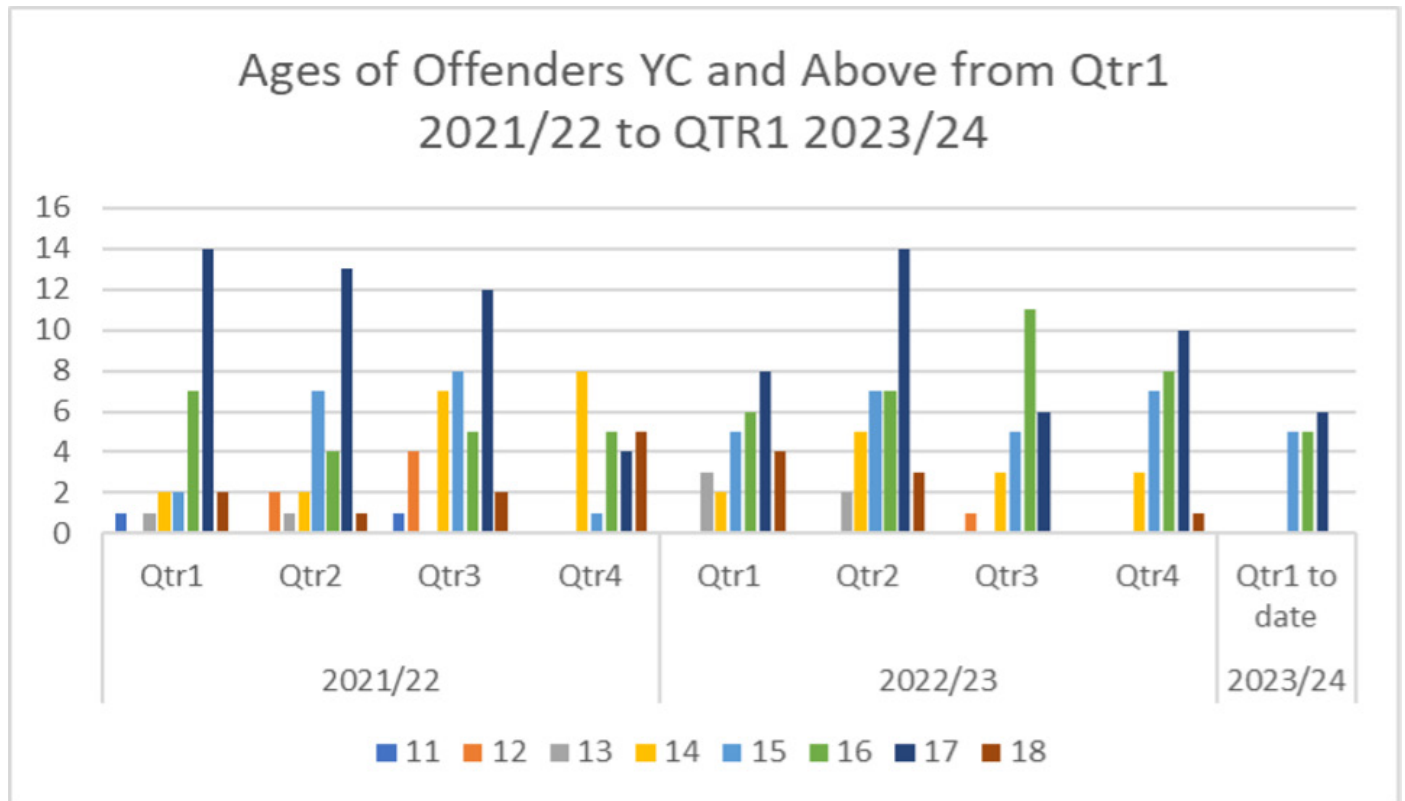
In 2022/23 we engaged in a PEER review on which one of the key areas of investigation was to establish what we initially felt was an overrepresented Female cohort. What came out of this review that Northamptonshire does not have a standout overrepresentation of this cohort and the use of the Girls Group has supported this performance. In 2023/24 our Girls group work is being shared with other Youth Offending Teams which has been instigated through the shared Basecamp Youth Justice platform. Data on our female cohort from 1st April 2021 to 10th May 2023 is below.

Gender	QTY YP	%
Female	36	13.95%
Male	222	86.05%
Grand Total	258	



# Age Of Offenders Analysis

Looking at the age groups of offenders receiving a Youth Caution or above it can be seen below that the age of offending is showing some reduction over time therefore our intervention and engagement practice may need to change to be more relevant to this younger cohort. 17 is however still our biggest cohort, at 34%, but purely the increase in some younger ages potentially increases the period in which they could potentially re-offend before becoming 18 and no longer being in the YOS cohort. The 15 and 16 cohort combined represents 41% of the total cohort based on the data below.



# Priorities

## Prevention

NYOS Prevention and Diversion Scheme continue to offer early targeted prevention work in collaboration with our local Police led initiative CIRV. We take direct referrals from CIRV and offer 1-2-1 tailored interventions to young people who meet the following criteria:

Consent and agreement to engage must be agreed prior to referral being made.

What makes a young person suitable for referral into PaDs (Prevention and Diversion Scheme) for preventative intervention and support?

- Concerns that the young person is engaged in unreported offending behaviour
- Identified as an associate/sibling of others involved in offending, named suspect
- Engagement in violence or aggression in the community or in school
- Links to knife or weapon possession where there is not a direct link to gang activity and therefore does not meet criteria for direct CIRV support
- Escalation of ASB (Anti-Social Behaviour) where enforcement measures are being considered
- What makes a referral into PaDs unsuitable?
- There is already support in place from Early Help Services such as Young People's Service, Strengthening Families or Youth Team
- There is an active crime under investigation with Police for the young person
- There has been PaDs intervention delivered or offered in the last 6months
- All young people referred and accepted are allocated a case worker who will complete an assessment of need, risk, safety, and wellbeing, which will inform and support a tailored plan of intervention. The case worker can support the young person for up to a period of 6months where required, with aim of addressing the presenting behaviours and considering intervention and support for all presenting needs.

Below is some feedback recently received from a parent, which evidences the impact this multi-agency working can have for the young people and families we work with;

NYOS ensure regular attendance within the local Hate and Anti-Social Behaviour Action Groups with the aim of sharing information and offering

*Mum described support from PaDs as "life changing as you have not just looked at his behaviours but his additional needs and how we can support him." Mum also stated "I had been saying to school for a long time that X may have further additional needs and they ignored it however you saw straight away that he needed further assessment and referred him to a SALT which has identified a severe language disorder. We are now going to have an EHCP in place which would never have happened, and X will receive the right support in education and at home". Mum feels she and stepdad Rory are now able to parent X "the way he needs to be parented" and although "feeling guilty" for not fully understanding X before, she is now confident in supporting X and "challenging and advocating for X when I need to. Mum stated "X struggles to build relationships due to his ASD however the relationship you built with him in a short space of time was very good which allowed him to trust and work with other professionals. There have been positive changes in him and myself which I thank you for".*

support in engaging young people in interventions when they are identified through these groups as involved in ASB or on the cusp of offending behaviours. We are improving our communication with YOS Police to ensure we gain a greater understanding of enforcement action being undertaken and how we can support alongside this to prevent escalation in concerns. Where concerns have been identified and enforcement actions such as ASB injunction or CBO is being considered NYOS attend consultation meetings again to review the behaviours of concern and consider any intervention and support that can be offered to prevent escalation.

As a wider YOS we are supporting with intervention delivery in schools through the serious youth violence programmes.

We have recently received a grant from the Ministry of Justice until March 2025 to support young people on the cusp of offending, through a new programme Turnaround. Our team is made up of a Senior Practitioner and three Practitioners and we are already seeing its benefits and how this gives us the opportunity to work with children and their families using a whole family approach, that would not normally enter the YOS statutory caseload. One case in particular is a young person that was fined at court and is now receiving additional support through our tutors to help prepare him for his GCSE's.

## Diversion

NYOS Prevention and Diversion Scheme continues to manage all Out of Court disposals and diversions, referred direct from Police or Youth Court. The team comprises of 12 practitioners, 2 Senior Practitioners and an Operations Manager. We receive an average of 40 referrals per month into the team.

Over the past year we have implemented a multi-agency panel process to provide opportunity for more effective communication and robust decision making. This ensures we are offering an appropriate response the referred crimes whilst taking into consideration the circumstances of the child and the support already in place. The decision regarding Out of Court Disposal remains a joint decision between YOS and Police, however the information provided panel members guides what action is taken alongside any Out of Court Disposal issued.

We have utilised the introduction of Outcome 22 in our area to enable us to offer support and intervention to a young person without the need to use formal outcomes and unnecessarily criminalising or escalating into the criminal justice system.

We continue to develop our processes and will now be prioritising the need to capture the young person and parent/ carer views prior to decision making. To do this we are changing our processes to ensure the young person is provided an opportunity to engage and share their voice from the point of initial referral and throughout.

We use both a summary assessment and ASSET+ to support in assessing and responding to individual needs as well as any key risk, safety, and wellbeing factors.

Northants OOC Scrutiny panel is held twice per year. The Northants OOC Scrutiny Panel is chaired by John Baker, JP, the Chair of the Northamptonshire Bench and includes representation from the Crown Prosecution Service, Police, sentencers (Magistrates), Her Majesty's Courts and Tribunal Service, the Probation Service, the Youth Offending Service (Youth panel only) and the Office of the Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner. Voice for Victims and Witnesses also attend the Domestic Abuse Scrutiny Panel.

The role of the panel is to ensure that the use of OOC's is appropriate and proportionate, consistent with national and local policy, and considers the victims' wishes where appropriate.

The panel review and discuss anonymised case files as a group and conclude one of four categories:

- Appropriate and consistent with national and local guidelines
- Appropriate with observations from the panel
- Inappropriate use of out of court disposal
- Panel fails to agree on the appropriateness of the decision made.
- The outcomes and achievements of the team and intervention delivered are measured in relation to re-offending rates and engagement in support.

In both our prevention and diversion work partnership working is key. We have access to all specialist based within NYOS and work closely with colleagues in Police, Early Help and Children's Social Care. The multi-agency working supports in addressing more complex needs, managing risk, safety and wellbeing concerns but also planning for our exit.

YP – Gary

Between August and October 2022 we received three referrals for Gary into the PaDs for a total of 12 offences of assault, criminal damage and aggravated vehicle taking. The victims of Gary's offending were his mother and siblings. Gary had also engaged in reckless behaviours placing himself at risk. The matters were taken to partnership panel where relevant information was shared regarding family context and Gary's vulnerabilities, an Outcome 22 was agreed with some diversionary interventions to be undertaken with him in response to his offending.

Diversity consideration: Gary is a 14-year-old heterosexual white British male who lives with his single mother and three siblings in the Borough Hill area of Daventry, an area with relatively average crime where violence and sexual offences are most reported. The family live in local authority housing and appear to be of low economic mobility. Gary is NEET and has been for the last three years due to concerns from his mother around bullying. There has been long term CSC involvement and Gary is currently subject to a Child in Need Plan since July 2022. Gary states he has no physical, SEN or SEMH needs, however he presents with significant neurodivergence with traits of autistic spectrum disorder and he has also experience significant trauma through lived experience of substantial domestic violence and a housefire.

Case was allocated to PaDs worker who completed a full assessment with Gary and Mum, liaising with partner agencies to agree a plan of intervention and avoid duplication of other support. PaDs worked directly with Gary to address the reasons behind his offending behaviours whilst social care partners took a wider family approach to address the ongoing challenges within the home. The interventions offered effected changes in the family dynamics, responses to behaviours and supported a more positive, nurturing environment. Professionals worked hard to secure an education placement for Gary, which he is now attending and progressing well. PaDs, referred to H&J to explore support around potential undiagnosed needs and emotional wellbeing, ongoing advice and guidance is planned via Forensic CAMHS consultation. We held regular multi-agency meetings to share update and plans. Gary's level of risk and safety and wellbeing reduced from being high to medium by point of closure. Social care agreed to consider ongoing support through tier 3 family support services as part of their exit planning. School has a good understanding of Gary's needs and have a plan to continue to support his reintegration into education.

There has been no further reported offending for a period of 7months which is a considerable change as we were seeing weekly incidents being reported.

At closure Gary fed back that there had been lots of positive changes for him including being in school, not causing harm at home, he also reported he would feel able to talk to school and mum about any worries in the future. Gary said he learnt a lot about offending, the consequences and impact of this. Gary states that his family know that the support from PaDs has made a big difference for him and they are proud of him. Mum fed back that the level of violence and aggression in the home has decreased dramatically.

Overall, this case is a good example of a multi-agency approach that has achieved positive outcomes for the young person and the wider family.

## Education

The local data in relation to Education, Training and Employment on the current open caseload within NYOS is as follows:

- 15% of the total NYOS cohort are current NEET, if we further reduce the cohort to only include post 16 children the proportion increases to 74%.
- 6% of the children are of secondary education age and are currently without a school place.
- Less than 2 % of the children we are on a part time timetable
- 20% of children are eligible for free school meals
- 11% are children in care
- 15% are children current open to children's social care on either Child in Need, Early help, or Child Protection Plans.
- 8% of children currently open have an EHCP (Education Health and Care Plans),
- 12% are assessed as having concerns in relation to social communication
- 17% are identified via the Asset Plus assessment as having SEN or Mental Health concerns.

In September 2022 NYOS implemented a new Education Training and Employment offer. The aim of this is to bring the offer in line with recommendations from the HMIP and Ofsted inspection of ETE services in youth justice and to ensure that we are using our resources to the best advantage of the young people we work with. This offer included the introduction of a weekly triage day for the ETE practitioners and Children are automatically allocated an ETE worker if they are assessed as needing some level of support, or if they are assessed at triage as not needing support there is no ETE worker allocation.

Support offered by the ETE workers includes, liaising with education inclusion and education providers to ensure that every child has access to an appropriate education provision, they work with parents who are home schooling to support with the structure and planning of this, feeding back to the relevant authority where there are concerns that the home education plan is not being adhered to. An example of successes in this area:

RG and MG were not able to access their GCSE examinations due to not being allowed access to school grounds. The ETE worker arranged the young people to sit these exams in the YOS offices. Additionally in relation to CP who has experienced a serious sexual assault and as such was not confident in accessing education, the ETE worker supported the school in developing a plan to re-engage her that is reflective of her needs.

In addition to the 2 ETE practitioners employed by NYOS, the service also commissions tutoring 2 afternoons per week, this is aimed at post 16 children to progress their English and Maths skills.

Over the next 12 months the Education, Training and Employment offer looks to increase the number of post 16 children accessing Level 1 and 2 functional skills in English and Maths, and re introducing the use of ASDAN qualifications, with a concentration on post 16 NEET children. The ETE workers will also be trained to screen for Dyslexia.

## Restorative approaches and victims

Within the RJ (Restorative Justice) Team we offer all victims of youth crime an opportunity to have their voice heard and considered in meetings. At risk and Safety Wellbeing meetings there is an update from the allocated victim worker to ensure that the victims needs are heard and acted upon. A member of the RJ Team will attend Alternative to Custody meetings and be involved in Youth Conditional Cautions and Licence condition discussions guaranteeing that the victims need, requests or wishes are included



To ensure that the victims voice is heard in Referral Order Panels we have reviewed the Quick Guide Card panellists use, to include prompts to remember to consider the victims' voice. All Victim Feedback Reports or CPS documents are shared with panellists, so they gain a greater understanding of the victim's perspective. The RJ Team always offers a victim of a young person the opportunity to attend a Referral Order panel, without the young person being there so they can share their story with the panellist.

An innovative approach we have been trialling is discussing the possibility of a restorative face to face meeting with the young person first, a restorative meeting should be agreed by both parties, however what we found in the team is that the victim would request a restorative meeting and then the young person would decline to be involved, leaving the victim feeling deflated and potential re-victimised. Now we ask the case manager to support discussions with the young person first. If agreed we would then approach the victim and explore if this were something they would find beneficial, empowering the victim who has the right to say no.

To make sure that the young person completes interventions related to victims, interventions to address this have been included in the new Intervention Plan. This encourages case managers to consider victim intervention within their work with the young person, even if there is no direct victim.

Planning for group work sessions to address victim intervention have begun, the sessions will include generic victim intervention, with the opportunity for specific one to one session to be delivered after. Within the team we have a First Aid Mental Health worker who can offer support and guidance to case managers if this triggers a young person who has been a victim previously or is currently being victimised.

Reparation activities have further developed, and we are now able to link in with Salcey Forest, Wicksteed Park and the Salvation Army. Offering young people, a greater opportunity to experience different tasks and linking into their desistance factors.

## Serious violence and exploitation

NYOS first started working with Barnardo's a number of years ago, however over the past two years we have created a network of champions within the Youth Offending Service who have received in depth, specialist inputs with follow up sessions to keep them up to date with case law, NRM developments, Child Trafficking Indicators and the Independent Child Trafficking Guardianship (ITCG) Service. We meet on a 6-weekly basis and cover some of the more complex elements that we are likely to need to understand. They also provide an opportunity to share further knowledge and information. Our NRM champions have then been able to give some of this advice within NYOS to make it sustainable. The more complex cases would still come into Barnardo's for support, but some of the others can then be managed by the 'champions' within the service to build service capacity and knowledge within the YOS.

NYOS is also a core panel member at the multi-agency Vulnerable Adolescent (VAP (Vulnerable Adolescent Panel)) panel. Services specifically for young people have developed rapidly in recent years on the back of widespread recognition that young people present complexities, which often exacerbated by outside influences and require a multi-agency focus. The proposal for establishing the Vulnerable Adolescent Panel in Northamptonshire was in recognition that children and adolescents today require support and high-quality interventions to reduce the risk they will be exploited, which would commonly come under the umbrella of contextual safeguarding. The Vulnerable Adolescent Panel is in the first instance a preventive process and a vehicle where appropriate for children and young people who come to notice to have the necessary support that improves their outcomes and life chances.

There are a considerable number of children and adolescents that are discussed in more than one panel, these are the most complex and at risk of harm. The Vulnerable Adolescents Panel aims to replace and cover all forums that discuss the following:

Exploitation and online abuse.

Missing Episodes

Gang involvement

County Lines

Radicalisation.

## Trafficking and Modern Slavery

### Female Genital Mutilation

One of our Area Managers is also the Deputy Chair of Prevent

We work closely with 2 Social Worker's employed as consultants at both West Support and Safeguarding Services and North Support and Safeguarding Services who support Social Workers with completing exploitation assessments and plans. We meet up with them monthly and they are also invited to our Risk and Safety & Wellbeing panels.

Currently under development in Northamptonshire is the new Partnership Child Exploitation Hub. This will bring together all existing resources across partners to form a new specialist service. NYOS will have bespoke prevention YOS officers working within the hub to support the need for earlier identification and intervention support.

The new Turnaround Programme works closely with the Police and recently we have worked in partnership with them during their weeks of action around Violence Against Women and Girls and Knife crime. This has resulted in some of those children and families receiving support through this new initiative.

A cross section of YOS workers is involved in delivering a multi-agency approach to educate young people about drug harm, knife crime, violence against women and girls, the laws around setting and serious violent crime. Students heard an audio of a witness statement and the perpetrator boasting about the incident before being split into groups to participate in an interactive classroom session to discuss the consequences of all involved in the offence. After the session, pupils spent time learning about the roles each agency has within the legal and social care systems and how they support young people affected by crime.

One Year 9 student commented: "This was an interesting and educational day as we did not know a lot of things about the law for young people, it does make you really think about the consequences and how it can affect you".

## Detention in police custody

NYOS have been working in partnership with Northamptonshire Police to decrease the numbers of young people detained in Police Custody and in the event, they are detained the surrounding they are detained to are less likely to provoke a trauma response. In collaboration, NYOS and Northamptonshire Police have altered custody suites using a trauma informed practice. It has been recognised that a high proportion of the children brought into custody are likely to have suffered trauma or an adverse incident. We know that experiencing trauma or prolonged stress in childhood can affect the behaviour, disposition, and development of children, and lead to risk-taking, offending behaviours and self-harm. Being more trauma-informed prevents replicating traumatic experiences and avoids custody staff adding to the chronic stress their youngest detainees are already likely carrying.

As well as changes to the risk assessment at point of booking the detainee which enquiries around neuro diverse issues and the changes to the physical environment within the cell, other actions are undertaken when a child is brought into custody. A 'Golden Hour' email, now known as the 'Juvenile Notification Certificate' is sent to several partner agencies including the MASH (or EDT (Emergency Duty Team) if out of hours) CIRV, YOS, OPFCC (Office of the Police, Fire & Crime Commissioner) (Office of the Police, Fire & Crime Commissioner) (Office of the Police, Fire & Crime Commissioner), Liaison and Diversion. This allows for the feedback of information to the custody staff in relation to the child and best ways to treat them whilst in custody. It can trigger a visit from CIRV and between 8 am and 8pm Liaison and Diversion Health staff will visit and engage with them. There is a bespoke room in custody for this to take place which is more appropriate than the cell environment. It also triggers up to 13 weeks of intervention by OPFCC bespoke youth workers and mental health services. By adopting a trauma informed approach, we aim to have the most engaged and positive approach to the interview process by the child and thus maximise our opportunities for out of court disposals to be used.

It is also recognised that Northants has a high number of children within the justice system. A substantial number of children are pleading guilty at first hearing and would have been eligible for an out of court disposal had they admitted the offence whilst on interview. Work is now ongoing between the custody department, the LCJB and the Justice Department to ensure that we are maximising the use of out of court disposals and other YOS interventions whilst keeping as many as possible out of the justice system. This is being done with the support of solicitors who are often having to advise their clients without a full understanding of the case the police have against their client. This leads to no comment interviews and thus no option to refer to YOS.

At a recent meeting, the YOS have proposed a telephone helpline that officers can call prior to any decision to arrest. To offer options and assistance to the officer and family rather than arrest. Going forward NYOS has requested a grant from the Serious Violence Duty. This grant would be to employ two YOS workers based in Police Custody. It is believed these posts will promote Out of Court Disposals and can advise solicitors and custody Sergeants of the appropriate sanction. We would also like to increase the use of voluntary interviews.

NYOS have continued to commission the services of the "Appropriate Adult Service" to manage all Appropriate adult requests and manage PACES. The Service Specification relates to the provision of Supporting Children and Young People through the custody and courts process by provision of an Appropriate Adults Service. The service is commissioned to operate 24 hours per day, seven days per week, and 365 days per year.

The Appropriate Adult Service performance for 2022/23 is as follows :

721 young people were supported by an AA provided by TAAS

The average response time for an AA to attend was 29 minutes (target is to attend within 1 hour)

66 % of young people said the support they received by TAAS was excellent

Quarterly contract review meetings have been held. This is led by the Commissioning and Strategy Service, and attended by the Head of Service YOS, Team Manager NCT EDT, Northamptonshire Police Custody Contract Manager, Regional Manager TAAS (The Appropriate Adult Service), Data Lead TAAS. There are no significant concerns with the service being provided by TAAS. Feedback from the Youth Offending Service, Emergency Duty Team and Police Custody has been the service is good. The response to a request for an Appropriate Adult is not only fast but also actively supports and advocates for the young person whilst in custody.

A recent example of good practice is:

Job number 169317.

Juvenile 15 arrested - PWITS.

Had previously been in Custody before. He said he couldn't relax in the cell, but said it helped having someone to talk too, as he's mum had refused to attend.

I arranged for cereal bars (we discussed the ones he liked) juice and something to read as he had refused food for the 5 hours he had been in. He said the reading would help pass the time. He said he felt better after speaking to the AA/ Solicitor and CID.

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276649

"This dp was a juvenile who had been arrested for murder, he was visibly scared and shell shocked after his interview we had a consultation and he opened up and began crying telling me how scared he was, we spoke for a bit and I consoled him. after he had his charges read out to him we had another consolation in where he broke down again once again i consoled him and he asked if he could just wait and talk a little before going back to his cell. he thanked me for being there to talk and for being able to keep him out his cell a little longer so his head wasn't in such a dark place

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Below comment from 16 year old juvenile I saw on the 29<sup>th</sup> March – 277963

"I was incredibly nervous and anxious about what was happening but now I feel a lot calmer"

## Remands

Northamptonshire YOS have a designated Court Team consisting of four Case Managers and two Assistant Court officers. We have a local process that is followed by the team and shared with the wider service for weekend remand courts and bank holidays.

We have a quarterly remand rota which provides consistency for Court staff, Magistrates, young people, and social care.

We have a system known as the 'Golden Hour' which is a system to share information related to children in Police custody. This can include details in relation to health and allows us to prepare ahead of any potential remand hearings.

In the morning, the staff on the rota will contact Custody (Police and Court) to check if any under 18's are in Custody and to gather information. A request for Pre-sentence disclosures (PSD's) is sent to the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) immediately which enables us to secure those prior to meeting the child in Custody.

We have effective working relationships with CPS solicitors and legal representatives. The Senior Manager and Operations Manager with oversight of the Court Team, have regular meetings with NCT Placements and Commissioning. These meetings review the children we have remanded into Youth Detention Accommodation and those in Youth Detention. When we have a child in Police custody and an application for remand could be made, we contact Placements and Commissioning to ensure that a plan can be agreed at the earliest opportunity.

A check of NCT Social care system is completed by the ACO's, and if the child is known to social care, we contact the allocated social worker before the Court hearing.

This collaborative approach provides us with the opportunity to work with partner agencies to create and present a robust, alternative to Custody package in Court. A bail assessment is completed, and, with management oversight, a package is put in place to reduce further offending, protect the public and to offer an alternative to remand.

For each child remanded to Youth Detention we will allocate to a Case Manager and Resettlement Lead within one working day. They will attend the Initial remand planning meeting together and the resettlement process will start with immediate effect. This includes preparing for any subsequent bail applications the child may make. For the more complex young people, we will hold multi-disciplinary bail preparation meetings to explore risks and how to manage those within the Community. This enables us to proactively, seek in supporting a child with bail.

NYOS Senior managers are working jointly with Police Custody sergeants to encourage and support the use of PACE transfers and to reduce the number of children being held for remand court.

The Common Platform has been launched in Northamptonshire on 16/05/2023. NYOS Court team and managers can now access Court listings and information within our area more readily. We will be better equipped to swiftly track a child through the Criminal Justice system due to having access to Court listings nationwide. This enables us to better plan, prepare and liaise with other agencies, inclusive of out of county local authorities and Courts.

## Use of custody

Currently NYOS has 3 young people remanded in Youth Detention Accommodation and 3 sentenced to Detention and Training Orders.

Processes have been put in place to manage and reduce the numbers of entries into the secure estate. Referral Order Custody Threshold panels and Alternative to Custody Panels work well as partner agencies are invited to attend and contribute towards both a proposal for sentencing and interventions. These plans are continued to be reviewed during throughout sentence planning and Risk and Safety & Wellbeing (R&SWB) panels post sentence.

At the point of a young person entering the secure estate either through a remand to Youth Detention Accommodation or sentence, a resettlement case manager will be co-allocated to the young person. The resettlement worker will attend all relevant professional meetings and specifically remand/sentence planning meetings and R&SWB panels to ensure that specific plans are in place to ensure a smooth transition back to the community.

Upon a young person entering custody through a remand, they automatically become a “looked after” child and as such are allocated to a social worker whose role is to undertake an initial assessment. NYOS will notify the local authority when this occurs. As with all remands/potential releases, such as bail applications; the local authority placements team will be notified and where possible, pre-planning will take place to ensure that the young person has a suitable plan in place. Again, R&SWB panels are used to monitor progress along with other relevant meetings.

Where it is deemed appropriate, representatives from National Referral Mechanism, Barnardo's, will be invited to contribute to Custody Threshold meetings, R&SWB Panels, and release planning meetings. There will be occasions whereupon a young person's R&SWB concerns are unable to be managed adequately within the home area and in the event of them being released, there will be a necessity to liaise with other out of area agencies such as Home YOS, local authority, and a placement provider.

In terms of development, Release on Temporary Licence has been identified as an area which to date has not been used to its full potential within NYOS. This practice has several potential benefits in terms of preparing a young person for release following an extended period in custody and for a young person to demonstrate their motivation to adhere to conditions. This can also be implemented to support attendance and college interviews, specific family events etc.

## Constructive resettlement

Northamptonshire YOS have designated Resettlement Leads within the Court Team. The Resettlement leads within YOS will be assisting Case Managers and young people by providing a guidance service around what is best practice, facilitated through partnership building.

NYOS have Positive Resettlement Guidance 2022, which focusses on implementing the principles of constructive resettlement via specific pathways. These include a focus on continuity for children before sentence or remand, through period in Custody and upon release.

There is a specific focus on the child being fully involved in the resettlement planning. During every planning meeting held in the custodial establishment, the allocated Resettlement worker will be present to act as an advocate for the young person and accurately record the meeting decisions. The tracker will be shared with the young person after every meeting to ensure that they are informed and empowered to take ownership of their sentence and resettlement. The Resettlement tracker titled ‘My resettlement pathway- what my life will look like after prison/care’ is a young person friendly document containing all the relevant information a child should need during their time in Custody. It contains information on all key areas of resettlement, a guide to how remand and sentence planning meetings are held and who is in attendance. This is updated each month with the child. All professionals working with the child both in Custody and in the Community should contribute to this pathway plan.

The key areas focused on within the resettlement tracker are;

- ROTL
- Accommodation
- Education, training, and employment
- Substance Misuse
- Health
- Finance/Budget and/or debts
- Family relationships

A key area of development within Resettlement is the focus on improving the use of ROTL. This should be considered for every young person, and we are committed to improving how we plan and implement ROTL arrangements. An example of this would be using ROTL to allow a child to be introduced to a potential placement and to facilitate introductory meetings with professionals they may be working with when they return to the Community.

The Resettlement worker will support the Case Manager in determining appropriate license conditions using the assessment and resettlement tracker. This will include ensuring that placements are considered at the earliest opportunity, this includes alerting placement services to release dates and liaising with social care. This will promote a timely and robust plan for the child upon release and allow them to become familiar with their potential placement several weeks prior to release.

Resettlement can be challenging, a case example of this would be 'Child L'. He was sentenced to Custody for his first conviction. He was overwhelmed and reluctant to engage in the initial planning meetings and subsequent review meetings. He was allocated a Resettlement worker who visited the secure establishment on several occasions with the Case Manager. Child L declined to attend the meetings and refused to engage with the Resettlement worker. He reported that as he would be returning to live with parents upon release and he felt able to secure his own education and/or employment he saw no value in engaging with her.

The Resettlement worker persevered by working with the Case Manager who Child L was engaging with, attending the reviews and gathering information from those meetings. This enabled her to begin to put together a resettlement plan to share with Child A. She approached him and provided him with her number, she shared the tracker with him and suggested that if he felt he wanted to work with her and share his views about what he wanted when he returned to the Community, he could work with her to plan for his release.

Approximately, two months before his release he contacted her by telephone and engagement began. Child L worked with the Resettlement Lead to put together a plan for his release which included seeking advice from YOS ETE practitioners.

Child L reported that he found it helpful to work with the Resettlement lead and made the process of release much clearer.

NYOS are currently working on a Memorandum of Understanding with Northamptonshire Childrens Trust to further reduce disproportionality of care experienced young people in the criminal justice system. We have identified several key responsibilities and actions across specific teams to ensure a joint commitment. Elements of this, focus on children within the secure estate and includes partnership working to improve and further develop resettlement for example, a representative from social care will attend planning meetings, involved in early release discussions and support in parts of the resettlement plan for the child.

## Standards for children in the justice system

Effective practice is a priority area for NYOS. We do this by providing accurate data, monitoring, auditing, and evaluating the work of the service. This means that our goal is to promote a constructive culture of learning, and moreover, offer a service to achieve Continuous Improvement (CI) to all staff as well as recognising good practice with Young People. The mechanisms used within the service are:

- Quality Assurance
- NYOS consistently assess, review and evaluate areas of our practice to prevent further re-offending..
- Internal Quality Assurance

NYOS leadership team meet every month to discuss their Performance and Accountability Report (PAR). This discussion provides a whole service overview of casework and offers a reflective practice opportunity for managers to support each other with team and service challenges.

### Mock HMIP Inspections

The YOS complete a Mock Inspection annually and this will as far as practicable mirror the HMIP process. This includes the Inspection being conducted at short notice and using the most recent HMIP Inspection tool. We aim to engage as many staff as possible and managers within the auditing process to ensure we have full ownership across the organisation. We will publish the results across the YOS and offer one to one feedback to staff with the goal of improving practice.

### Case Auditing

When an Asset Plus is completed by the Case Manager this is reviewed using the NYOS Quality Assurance Tool. Every Asset+ and Community Resolution Disposal (CRD) is assessed within National Standards guidelines unless there are exceptional circumstances or complications regarding the case.

### Thematic Audits

Within NYOS several thematic audits are taking place to ensure that we are meeting the requirements for our HMIP inspection. Once completed each audit will have area of good practice and areas for improvement. The areas of improvement will monitor through a live action plan monitored and overseen by the YOS management board.

Area	Lead	Date
Victims	Liz	Complete
Resettlement	Liz/ Leanne	Complete
Education	Leanne	July
Intervention plan	Claire	Sept
Substance Misuse	Liz	Nov

## Performance Development Group (PDG)

Much of the above is brought together and discussed at the PDG with the management team. Each month YOS Senior and Operational Managers attend the Performance Development Group. The meeting is chaired by the Head of Service. This meeting aims to share performance information, promote accountability and good practice. We aim to follow the performance cycle above; planning our work such as Audits and Inspections, monitoring the results and evaluate any findings.

### Peer Review

In January 2023 NYOS were delighted to host a Peer Review. The Peer Review team were asked to look at the effectiveness of:

- Partnership arrangements in place to reduce disproportionality of Children in Care (CiC) being criminalised.
- Partnership arrangements at reducing re - offending for CiC (including holding and reducing risk, safety, and wellbeing factors).
- A 'golden thread' throughout the Peer Review was: How partners have responded and adapted delivery for females?

The Peer Review Team feedback was strong and noted there was a culture of learning and continuous improvement. This was evident in quality assurance/auditing processes in place to support continuous improvement, for example of thematic audits, serious case reviews and the peer review process. The PRT also noted that Northamptonshire had several partnership action plans with recommendations and progress being monitored. A further observation was that the PRT found a dedicated, passionate, and stable workforce, who understood the needs/risk of the children they supervised.

It was clear the partnership was in the initial stages of lots of improvement and developmental work which aims to improve outcomes for children and families of Northamptonshire. Much of which was already developing well where for other areas the analytical work was taking place and governance arrangements were still being agreed.

Areas for consideration have been collated and shared with the YOS Management Board as an action plan. Progress will be monitored by the Board throughout 2023.

## Workforce Development

In Northamptonshire we are committed to having a highly skilled workforce that can meet the needs of our children and families. Our workforce consists of qualified social workers, nurses, police officers, and practitioners who are educated to degree level in relevant subjects e.g., Criminology, youth justice, social care.

We have an emphasis on a learning culture in Northamptonshire and ensure staff feel valued, listened to, and supported. All staff and volunteers have regular access to training. Most staff have completed the Youth Justice Effective Practice Certificate qualification and new staff are encouraged and motivated to do so. This is role specific and reflects the risk and complexity of working in youth justice.

Staff are trained in other key areas such as:

- Harmful sexualised Behaviour (AIM2/3 and Good Lives)
- Restorative Justice
- Safeguarding Children
- County Lines
- Risk outside the home
- Transitional Safeguarding
- Child Exploitation
- Domestic Abuse
- Child Development
- Children with Disabilities and SEND
- Prevent
- Neglect
- Equality and Diversity

All staff receive regular supervision and appraisals, and ongoing career development is encouraged through this process. All new starters also receive a robust induction package. The Youth Justice Board's Resource Hub provides a platform for practitioners to access a range of tools and resources that support ongoing knowledge and development. Training needs are regularly reviewed and most often linked to the Youth Justice Partnership's key priorities. This has included practitioners attending training on:

- Modern Day Slavery – including Section 45 Defence and the National Referral Mechanism.
- Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE's).
- Deprivation of Liberty and The Mental Capacity Act.
- Disproportionality and Unconscious Bias.
- Resettlement.
- Trauma Informed Practice
- Speech, Language and Communication Needs
- Child First Effective Practice

All staff have accessed the monthly development days that are often facilitated to provide staff with the opportunity to refresh their skills and knowledge, for example Asset Plus workshops and report writing workshops.

10.12 Children from groups which are over-represented

NYOS has seen a reduction in ethnic over representation in the past 12 months, however, it remains a concern.



The 2021 census identified black males are representing 6% of the general 10–17-year-old population within Northamptonshire, and mixed ethnicity males as representing 5% of the general 10-17 year of population in Northamptonshire. When we look at offending behaviours 9% of the offending population are represented by Black males, and this is the same for mixed ethnicity males. As such there is a 3% over representation for black males and a 4% over representation for mixed ethnicity males locally. A particular concern is that black males in Northamptonshire represent 9% of all violent offences, and mixed ethnicity males represent 12% of violent offences showing a significant increase in over representation when it comes to violent behaviour.

Over the past 12 months we have seen a shift in the representation of children based on age. Traditionally the most over-represented age group in Northamptonshire has been children aged 17, however, this has decreased slightly and there has been an increase in 15- and 16-year-olds.

When we consider gender, females currently account for 14% of the youth justice cohort which is an increase, and the female cohort locally accounts for a considerable proportion of reoffending, which is ordinarily related to less serious but more frequent offences.

In November 2022, all partners at the NYOS management board signed commitment to the action plan and its implementation. The current action plan was created in March 2022, and adapted when the HMIP thematic report exploring the over representation of Black and Mixed heritage boys in the youth justice system. The plan has commenced in July 2022, and we are currently beginning to review and update the plan for the year 2022/2023.

68% of the 2022/2023 action plan has been completed, with 30% underway and just 2 actions delayed currently. The main challenges have been progressing actions with partner engagement; however, positive progress has been made and NYOS is now involved with the Northants Police equalities action plan, and the Northamptonshire social care disproportionality action plan.

Examples of achievements over the past 12 months have included improved youth police custody processes, the development of a cultural identity intervention for the children we work with (this is currently being finalised), unconscious bias and cultural identity training for all staff, leaflet in custody providing children with understandable information about their options, the offering of early intervention for those children identified by Northamptonshire Police as 'top suspects', training for all practitioners on the creation of a communication passport so this is now offered to all children within the YOS, and a full review of the ETE offer locally to reflect the over representation of children with certain characteristics more likely to be excluded from or not able to access education training and employment.

Over representation remains a priority for NYOS, and this will be reflected in the review of the Over Representation plan for 2023/2024 which will further push the current progress to include joint racial trauma training for staff in NYOS, and children's social care; further progressing youth custody processes; reducing the criminalisation of looked after children by reviewing the partnership protocol and embedding it in practice for social care, placements, police and courts and an additional focus on girls in the youth justice system. The quarterly Diversity and Disproportionality Steering group will also be attended by board members from our partner organisations to drive the actions forward.

## Evidence-based practice and innovation

In collaboration with Northamptonshire magistracy, NYOS and the Magistracy have implemented creative solutions to better support the children and young people who appear before youth courts. These innovations have attracted positive attention from the Lieutenancy; the Shrievalty; the magistracy and senior judiciary; the Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner; the police; HMCTS; the Centre for Justice Innovation; and many others.

NYOS were invited to present at Centre for Justice Innovation Convention on Problem Solving Approaches. Nina Warren the Court Operations Manager presented on NYOS's approach to problem solving and was commended on our use of Youth review Panel, Problem Solving Hearings and Youth Court Solutions. These have been nationally recognised as innovative. Further details are below.

Youth Review Panel [YRO]- NYOS invite the Magistrates to review Youth Rehabilitation Orders in partnership with NYOS. The magistrates are invited to YOS premises along with the young person and their parents. The setting is informal and encourages young people to engage in a review of their own progress and share their work with the Magistrates. The Magistrates and NYOS have an opportunity to motivate and congratulate the young people on their engagement/progress which inspires them further to make positive changes. The YRO reviews can be multi agency e.g., social care, ETE, reparation reports, victim input.

Problem Solving Hearings – NYOS have been using problem solving hearing for complex cases. Complex cases often require a multi-agency response to a young person's offending behaviour. The problem-solving hearing pulls together all professionals who will have a responsibility for delivering any element of the court order are requested to attend court. In court, each professional is engaged by the presiding justice to declare what they propose to do and how they intend to deliver. To support understanding the presiding justice will ensure there is clarity on behalf of all attending professionals, the child or young person and their family.

Youth Court Solutions is the newest innovation in Northamptonshire. This service has been established to offer an at-court advice and support service at Wellingborough courthouse. Youth Court Solutions is delivered by a range of local charities and coordinated by The Crisalys Foundation working in conjunction with the Youth Offending Service, police and, where necessary, the legal profession. It aims to ensure that all young people have their broader problems addressed, offering access to a wide range of services for clients, children and young people and their families. This may include:

- Help to identify and access local authority, statutory or third sector support services to address the issues which bring children and young people to court
- Introductions to learning and training opportunities to improve employment prospects
- Practical support with financial issues and accommodation
- Information on the working of the criminal justice system

NYOS have also taken part in research commissioned by the Youth Justice Board. The YJB wanted to understand more about why reoffending rates among children are higher among some ethnic minority groups. NYOS was one of a few YOS's to work with Traverse, an independent research company, to do research to explore this in more detail. Learning from this study has been embedded into our Over Representation Action Plan.

NYOS and Northamptonshire Police have a strong partnership. A priority for Northamptonshire Police has been The Prevention and Intervention strategy (currently in draft) which identifies key delivery linked to partnership objectives and alignment of strategic partnerships to deliver for early intervention linked to children and young people. Over the last year Northamptonshire Police have worked in partnership with NYOS to create:

- The development of trauma informed practice.
- Multi agency problem solving
- The Observatory for shared partnership data
- A place-based approach with delivery through Neighbourhood Policing teams
- Creation of the Offender Management Unit which consolidates IOM, CIRV, YOS and the new development of an Early Intervention Hub seek to align coordinated preventative and diversionary support to children and young people.

The Observatory utilises a data visualisation tool **Page 138** QIR. QIR has been developed to support the key aims and outcomes

of the Youth Justice Plan. This has included profile and analysis of the First Time Entrant cohort over several years, to identify themes and opportunities for earlier identification and intervention. This has been developed further to produce real time intelligence of young people with ongoing police interaction that have yet to formally enter the YJS. The Qlik app has also been further refined to meet the requirements and criteria for the Turnaround program ensuring young people eligible can be systematically identified and referred to the scheme. This has been trialled using the Police weeks of actions in respects of the Force's matters of priority to refer young people into the program for support that are involved in serious violence, drug harm and VAWG (Violence Against Women and Girls) related occurrences.

A significant development for NYOS and the Police is that NYOS has funded a business analyst to sit within the Observatory to develop products specifically for the Youth Offending Service that will ensure dedicated resource to build information and analytical products that support the wider delivery of the current and future priorities for the YOS and the corresponding Youth Justice Plan.

# Service development plan

In February 2022 NYOS was designated a YJB Stage One Priority service due to concerns relating to numbers of first-time entrants to the criminal justice system and the amount of reoffences per reoffender.

## Strategic Priority 1 – Prevention and Diversion

The Crime and Disorder Act 1998 s 37 (1). It shall be the principal aim of the youth justice system to prevent offending by children and young persons.

### Outcomes sought

- Multi-agency information and intelligence is gathered to identify risks and vulnerabilities in groups, communities, and individuals as they relate to exploitation of children and young people.
- Whole family approaches are used to engage the child's whole system of support at the earliest opportunity
- Prevention and diversion activities are focused on reducing risks and vulnerabilities to offending
- Agencies are able to recognise and respond to the contextual factors that increase the risk of children and young people entering into the criminal justice system
- The need for statutory youth offending and/or safeguarding interventions is reduced

### To achieve this we will:

- Ensure children and young people from marginalized backgrounds and communities access universal and universal plus services aimed at improving their outcomes
- Ensure Out of Court Disposals are managed in accordance with the recommendations of the HMIP Inspection report, March 2018 "Out-of-court disposal work in youth offending teams"
- First time entrants are offered targeted and effective crime prevention and diversion interventions
- Ensure information is exchanged to identify the causes and risk factors of young people engaging in crime and anti-social behaviour
- Promote effective multi-agency working, joint decision-making, planning, with children and young people subject to Community Resolution, Turnaround, and Out-of-Court disposal (i.e. Triage, Youth Caution and Youth Conditional Caution)
- Strengthen our coordinated process for the use of point-of-arrest resolution
- Strengthen desistance opportunities through education, training and employment and other means of promoting self-esteem and future opportunities
- Maintain our strong partnership/interface with Health (GP, School Nurses, Speech and Language Therapy, Sexual Health), Education, Early Help key stakeholders.

## Strategic Priority 2 – Recognising and responding to child exploitation and serious youth violence

Local data suggests that children and young people involved in offending are more likely to be involved in criminal exploitation and at a greater risk of becoming a victim and/or perpetrator of serious youth violence. This Plan will interface with the aims and outcomes as set out within Northamptonshire Police's annual Strategic Assessment, community profiles and West and North Northamptonshire Community Safety Priorities. NYOS management Board are committed to reducing incidents of serious violence including domestic abuse, sexual offences and knife crime

### Outcomes sought

- Support and influence the place-based approaches to our priority neighbourhoods and vulnerable locations
- Focus on early intervention and utilising the powers and legislation available to reduce incidents of anti-social behaviour, youth violence, exploitation, and serious organised crime
- Increased Early Intervention and Youth Offer - Diverting young people from opportunities to commit crime
- Improved understanding of Serious Organised Crime and gang related activity
- Improved education and awareness amongst young people in relation to online abuse, gangs, knife crime, criminal and sexual exploitation and hate crime
- The Serious Violence duty will be delivered
- Develop and embed contextual safeguarding to ensure victims and their families get the right support when they need it most

### To achieve this we will:

- Continue to present CYP (Children and Young People) cases that meet the thresholds of VAP, IOM and MAPPA and work with partners in terms of information and intelligence-gathering to identify and intervene CYP's risk of serious harm, safety and well-being at the earliest opportunity
- Continue to access risk and screen all CYP open to YOS using the Child Exploitation tool to identify children and young people who are vulnerable to exploitation and criminal activity, including 'county lines'
- Strengthen our partnership with the Police, Rescue and Response, National Referral Mechanism and National Crime Agency
- Represent YOS in community events, gatherings and initiatives to tackle Serious Youth Violence and County lines
- Continue to coordinate Risk Safety and Wellbeing Panels to share information and draw a joint Intervention Plan with multi-agency partners to manage CYP's risk of serious harm and safety and well-being for them to desist from offending and re-offending
- Coordinate and respond with intelligence-led disruption in the community, utilising available Youth Justice Orders with their conditions to protect children and young people (i.e. Referral Order Contracts, YRO requirements, etc.)
- Support young people demonstrating harmful sexual behaviour and address their behaviour using evidence-based approaches and interventions
- Continue to ensure CYP's subject to early release and DTO (Detention and Training Order) (Detention and Training Order) License and post-conviction have effective intervention strategies to reduce the risk presented to the public and victim

## Strategic Priority 3 – Tackling disproportionality in the criminal justice system

The review led by David Lammy, MP (Member of Parliament) (Member of Parliament), in 2017 highlights disparity in the treatment and outcomes for Black, Asian and young people from other racially minoritised backgrounds within the Youth Justice System. In response, the Ministry of Justice published an updated response on Tackling Racial Disparity in the Criminal Justice System (CJS) 2020. This strategic priority aims to address the overrepresentation of Black and brown children, and those from other marginalised groups i.e., Gypsy Roma Travellers from exploited by criminal gangs, entering the criminal justice system and becoming perpetrators and victims of serious youth violence.

Whilst the numbers of children are relatively low, there is a need for the partnership to do more to improve outcomes for children from marginalised groups, particularly those who have had adverse childhood experiences and are at the greatest risk of educational and social exclusion.

We must be ambitious for their futures and ensure effective measures are in place to address the harmful impact of social and racial inequalities and injustice.

## Strategic Priority 3 – Tackling disproportionality in the criminal justice system

### Outcomes sought

- All agencies work to create opportunities for overrepresented children that promote a strong sense of their own cultural, racial, religious and linguistic identity and build their self-esteem through access and inclusion in education, employment, training and positive activities
- The partnership will seek to actively engage marginalised communities and the voluntary, faith and community providers supporting them in the community in addressing and solving the problem
- Local partners and agencies to develop a comprehensive understanding of the contextual risk factors and social inequalities that Black and brown young men experience and work effectively and purposefully to tackle disadvantage and structural racism
- Children and young people from racially minoritized backgrounds at risk of school exclusion and with additional vulnerabilities to receive targeted support aimed at keeping them in education, access positive activities and build trusted relationships
- Agencies and services have a sound understanding of the mechanisms of institutional racism in relation to the exploitation and criminalization of children from racially minoritized backgrounds
- Out of Court disposals to be considered for Black and brown children and young people to minimize the risk of early entry into the criminal justice system
- Agencies have effective and accessible measures in place to challenge discriminatory practices
- Training is available for all agencies to promote cultural competence in the development of policy, practice and engagement with children, young people and families from racially minoritized backgrounds
- All agencies work to create opportunities for children that promote a strong sense of their own cultural, racial, religious and linguistic identity and build their self-esteem through access and inclusion in education, employment, training and positive activities
- The partnership will seek to actively engage marginalised communities and the voluntary, faith and community providers supporting them in the community in addressing and solving the problem
- Local partners and agencies to develop a comprehensive understanding of the contextual risk factors and social inequalities that Black and brown young men experience and work effectively and purposefully to tackle disadvantage and structural racism
- Children and young people from racially minoritized backgrounds at risk of school exclusion and with additional vulnerabilities to receive targeted support aimed at keeping them in education, access positive activities and build trusted relationships
- Agencies and services have a sound understanding of the mechanisms of institutional racism in relation to the exploitation and criminalization of children from racially minoritized backgrounds
- Out of Court disposals to be considered for Black and brown children and young people to minimize the risk of early entry into the criminal justice system
- Agencies have effective and accessible measures in place to challenge discriminatory practices
- Training is available for all agencies to promote cultural competence in the development of policy, practice and engagement with children, young people and families from racialised backgrounds

## Strategic Priority 3 – Tackling disproportionality in the criminal justice system

### To achieve this we will:

- Raise awareness and recognise our unconscious bias
- Challenge discrimination within our own agencies in the youth justice system
- Promote equality and fairness
- Adopt anti-racist practices and include anti-racist statements in our policies and procedures
- Continue YOS working group to champion good practice in working with Overrepresented children and marginalised communities
- Ensure the YOS employs a workforce, including volunteers that is reflective of the communities we serve
- Ensure young people receive fair treatment at all stages of the youth offending system and their rights are promoted
- Recognise the adversity faced by marginalized groups and communities and strive to ensure our activities are inclusive and aimed at ensuring equality of service including access to services i.e., education, mental health, substance misuse, safeguarding, health
- Ensure young people are recognised as victims of criminal and sexual-exploitation and enforce the use of Modern Slavery Legislation through referral to the National Referral Mechanism
- Use the Scrutiny Panel for Out-of-Court Disposals to maintain checks and balances in the system
- Ensure that Overrepresented people who are at risk of Custody will be given an opportunity to receive the Bail Intensive Supervision and Surveillance (ISS) Support Package, instead of being remanded in a secure establishment



## Challenges, risks, and issue

<b>Legislation and guidance</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>YJSs/partnership will need to respond to the changes within the Police, Crime Sentencing and Courts Act (2022), including the Serious Violence Duty. As outlined in Section 5, the storming phase to ensure governance and processes are in place is underway.</li> </ul>
<b>Funding</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The YJB grant remains unannounced at the time of writing the plan and while assurances have been given on the maintenance of last year's core grant, this impacts on longevity planning.</li> </ul>
<b>Workforce</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Staff changes and new staff induction over the past two years resulted in significant time investment from other staff, including managers. This will continue over the next 12 months as due to the Service restructure and the introduction of turnaround. We have expanded the Prevention and Diversion team allowing us to reinvest resources earlier and prevent entry into the NYOS; with this said, the offer presents a need for a cultural shift within Northamptonshire Police that is currently underway.</li> </ul>
<b>Out of Court Disposals</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The last year has seen a shift into a higher proportion in the use of out-of-court-disposals that is welcomed, but there is an ongoing challenge in ensuring appropriate decision making with changes to how Home Office Counting Rules are interpreted and that the Association of Chief Police Officers Youth Gravity Matrix 2013 requires urgent updating; a national review is currently underway. HMIP, last year, described this as a '...as a 'postcode lottery' in the use of out-of-court disposals, with wide variation in the policies and processes that govern local schemes. NYOS are currently working alongside Northants Police to develop an updated Out of Court Disposal Policy for the region.</li> </ul>
<b>Offence Pattern Trends</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>While most proven offence types have reduced significantly, violence against the person remains the most common offence group type and the County saw an increase in weapon possession amount children last year.</li> </ul>
<b>Inspection</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>HMIP have moved from a 4-year inspection cycle to a 6-year cycle as a result of the Covid 19 pandemic. NYOS last inspection was 11.03.2015 and the previous full one was in 2012. a new framework (2018) and a new amended framework (2021) has been introduced since then. This has led to the Peer Review taking place as well as external support in reviewing of NYOS to ensure that local auditing is in line with revised inspections.</li> </ul>

## Sign off, submission and approval

Chair of YJS Board -  
AnnMarie Dodds

AnnMarie Dodds

Signature



Date

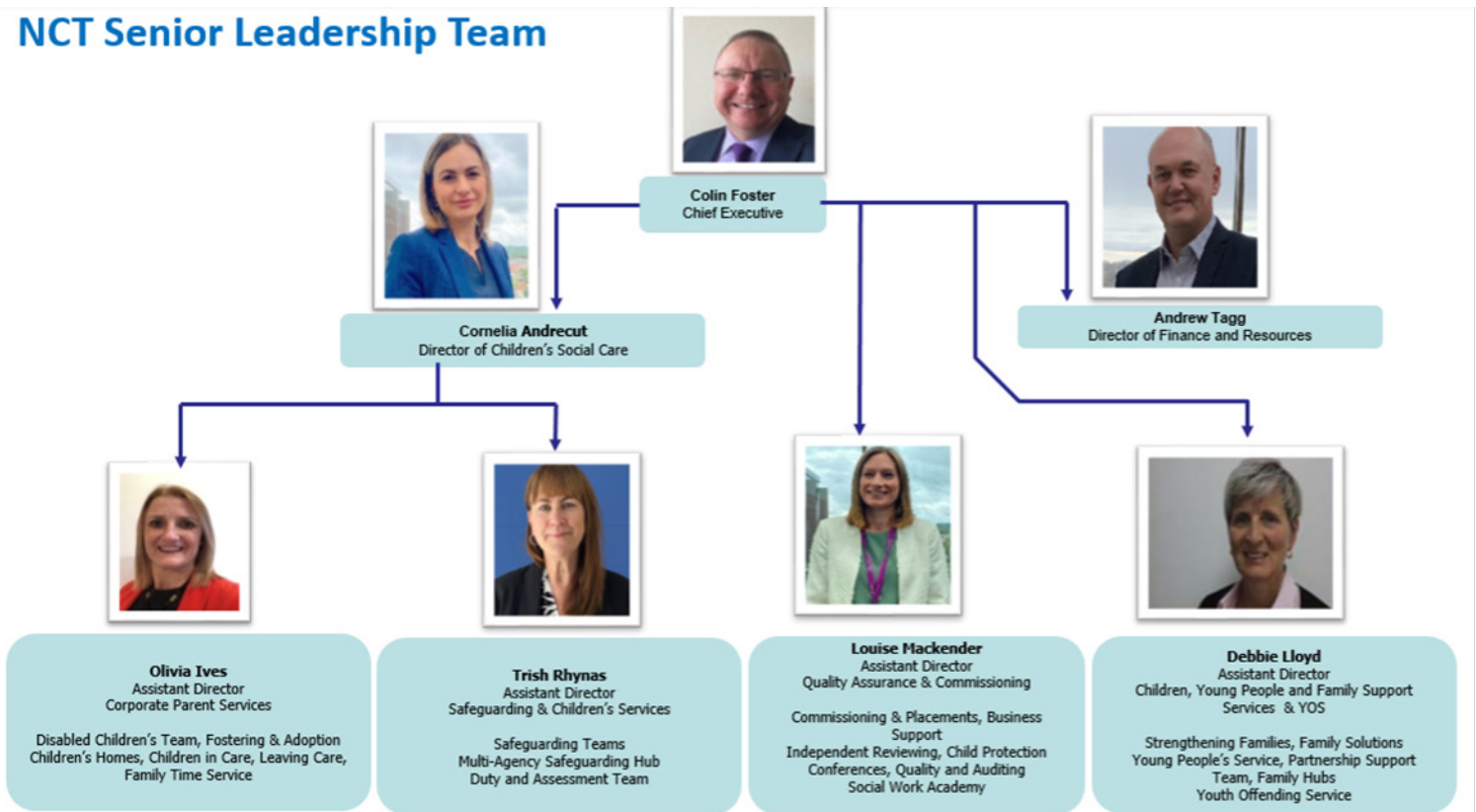
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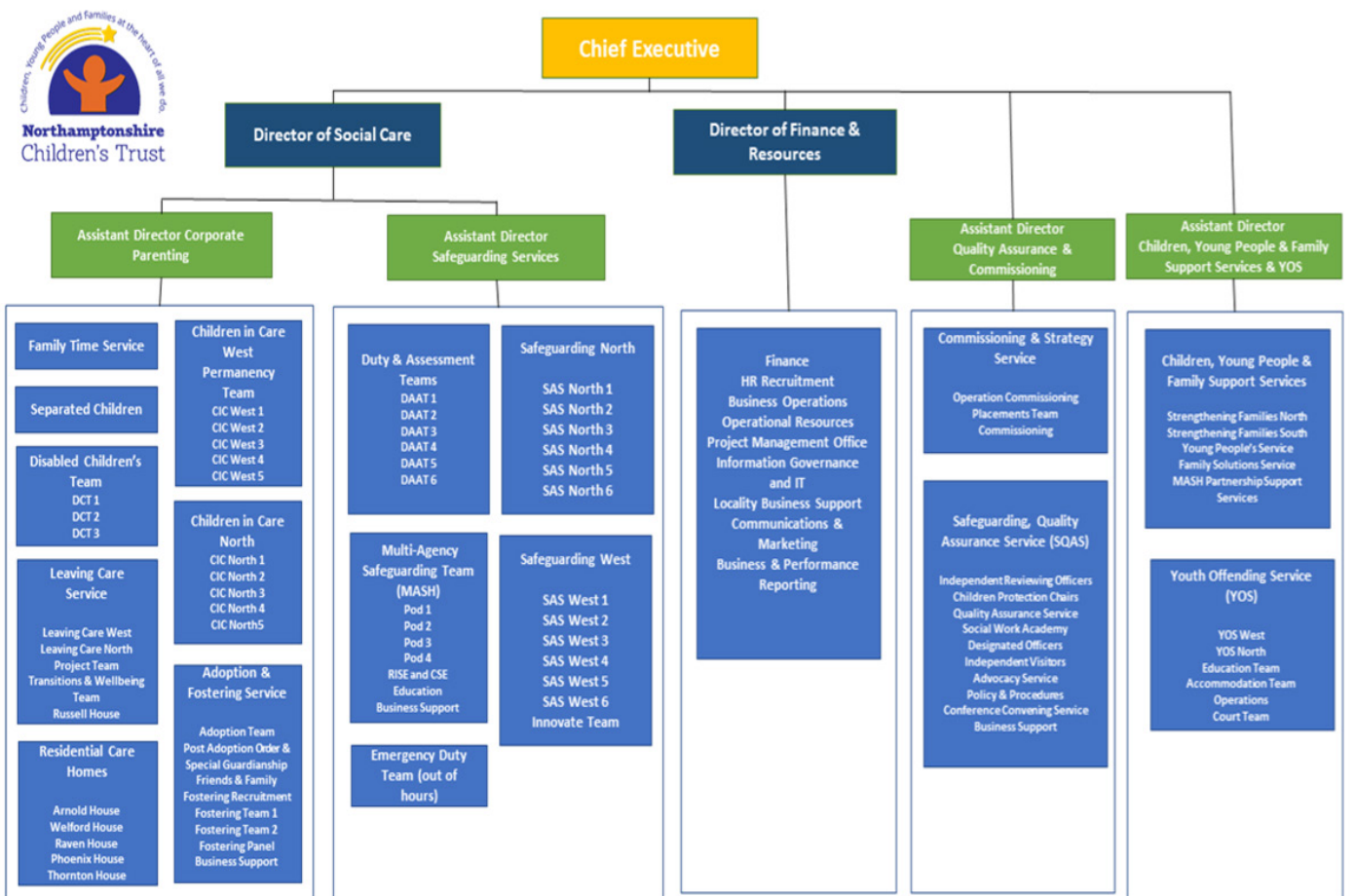
# Appendices

## Appendix 1: Staffing Structure

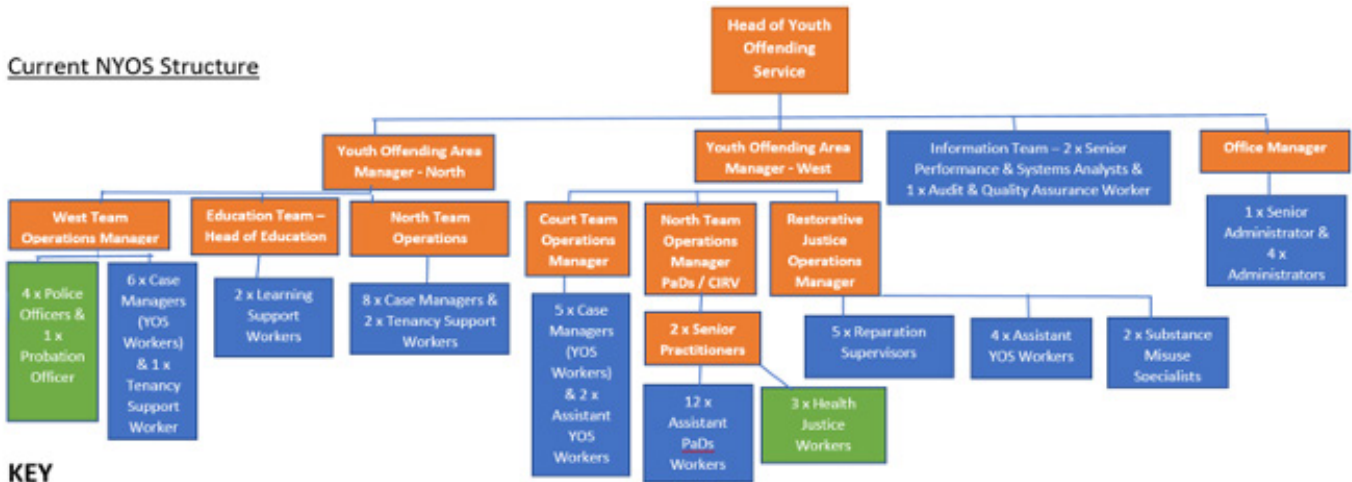
The full staffing structure showing details of the staff roles in the YJS and the reporting arrangements for the Head of Service

### NCT Senior Leadership Team





**Current NYOS Structure**



**KEY**

- Line Management responsibility
- Partner Agency seconded post
- YOS funded post

# Appendices

## Appendix 2

Northamptonshire Record of Ethnicity & Preferred Gender of Staff

Ethnicity/ Gender	Managers Strategic managers		Operational mangers		Practitioners		Administrative		Student		Volunteers		Total	
	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M
Gender														
Asian					3	1							3	1
White	2		3	2	25	6	4	1	1		10	5	45	14
Black					4	1					1	1	5	2
Mixed					3	1							3	1
Other	2				2	1							4	1
Not Known														
Disability (if known)					1	1							2	
													<b>62</b>	<b>19</b>



## Full Council Thursday 31st August 2023

<b>Report Title</b>	<b>Director of Public Health Report 2022/23</b>
<b>Report Author</b>	<b>Susan Hamilton, Interim Director of Public Health</b>

<b>Are there public sector equality duty implications?</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
<b>Does the report contain confidential or exempt information (whether in appendices or not)?</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
<b>Applicable paragraph number/s for exemption from publication under Schedule 12A Local Government Act 1972</b>	

### List of Appendices

**Appendix A – Public Health in North Northamptonshire - Our Ambitions, Our Journey.** North Northamptonshire Director of Public Health Report 2022/23.

#### 1. Purpose of Report

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- 1.1. To note the content of the annual Director of Public Health (DPH) statutory report for Northamptonshire.
- 1.2. To note the key recommendations made in the DPH annual report.

#### 2. Executive Summary

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- 2.1. The contents of the Annual Director of Public Health Report focus on the ambitions of the Public Health team in North Northamptonshire which was established in 2022-23. This is the first Director of Public Health report for North Northamptonshire, and it details the vision and priorities for improving public health in North Northamptonshire over the next few years. Ambitions for the key areas of public health are outlined Informed by an assessment of the health of the North Northamptonshire population, by lessons from the history of public health, and also current best practice.
- 2.2. The importance of using an evidence-based approach to decision making, working with communities using an asset-based approach, maintaining a relentless focus on reducing inequalities, and working in partnership with

others in the council as well as with wider stakeholders is recognised. The report outlines how public health will work, both within the department, and also with others in the council and wider stakeholders to achieve the stated ambitions.

### **3. Recommendations**

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- 3.1. Full Council is recommended to note the contents of the Director of Public Health Annual Report 2022- 2023 and the recommendations made within it.
- 3.2. Reason for Recommendations – To accord with legislation or the policy of the council. This is a statutory requirement of the Director of Public Health role.
- 3.3. Alternative Options Considered – None as this is a statutory requirement of the Director of Public Health role. The North Northamptonshire Public Health team was formed during the period covered by this report. Establishing the priorities for improving public health in North Northamptonshire was a key focus of 2022-23 and provides the focus of this report.

### **4. Report Background**

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- 4.1. The core purpose of the Director of Public Health (DPH) is to be an independent advocate for the health of the population and system leader for its improvement and protection. DPH's across the country are required to produce an annual report and distribute this to key partners and the wider public. The DPH annual report provides an opportunity to:
  - Raise awareness and understanding of the wellbeing of the area
  - Identify key issues and challenges relating to the wellbeing of the local population
  - Provide added value over and above intelligence and information routinely available
  - Reflect on work already undertaken, and the continued impact
  - Identify recommendations for future courses of action to improve health and wellbeing locally.

### **5. Issues and Choices**

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- 5.1. Each year the Director of Public Health (DPH) must decide on a topic that the annual report will cover for that period. At the time of making this decision, the Public Health team in North Northamptonshire was in the process of being formed following the disaggregation of the Northamptonshire Public Health team into North and West Northamptonshire Councils. The formation of the team provided the opportunity to review the public health priorities for North Northamptonshire and identify the key priorities for the next few years. The culmination of this work is set out in the first DPH report for North



Northamptonshire.

5.2. The report reflects on the history of public health in local authorities, detailing the 175-year-old journey of the development of public health legislation and practice in local authorities. Summaries of the Medical Director of Health reports from Wellingborough in 1894 and Kettering in 1918 are included and illustrate the need for preventative partnership working across the council directorates to address the causes of ill health such as poor housing, spread of infectious diseases, and working conditions. These issues are relevant to North Northamptonshire today and are reflected in the priorities in this report.

5.3. The creation of the North Northamptonshire Public Health team provided the opportunity to set out a vision for the team and establish ambitions for the next few years. The commitment of the Public Health team is detailed:

- To develop and support population level interventions to protect and improve health that are based on high quality intelligence and evidence to inform best practice.
- To take a Place and asset-based approach to working with local communities and develop a Community Orientated Health and Social Care System, building on existing strengths to create a sustainable future.
- To maintain a relentless focus on reducing health inequalities
- To work in partnership with all those who value the health and wellbeing of the people of North Northamptonshire
- To commission and deliver evidence-based, high quality, value for money public health services.

5.4. Ambitions for improving public health in the different areas of public health - health protection, health improvement and healthcare public health, are detailed in the report, informed by an assessment of where we are in relation to public health outcomes for North Northamptonshire. Achieving these ambitions relies on strong enabling functions and capabilities - including commissioning; research, evidence and intelligence and communications; as well as developing a skilled and diverse workforce and building a strong department.

5.5. Overarching priorities are outlined in the report. These include a focus on the early years, recognising the importance of the first 1000 days on lifelong health; working with communities; strong partnership working to embed the public health approach across the council; evidence-based decisions and communications; and delivering high quality public health services.

## **6. Next Steps**

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6.1. Not applicable.

## **7. Implications (including financial implications)**

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### **7.1. Resources and Financial**

7.1.1. The production of an Annual Report is a statutory function that should be executed by the Director of Public Health. A budget is therefore put aside for this annually and comes from the Public Health Grant. There are no additional financial implications or council resources required because of this paper.

### **7.2. Legal and Governance**

7.2.1. There are no legal implications arising from the proposals.

### **7.3. Relevant Policies and Plans**

7.3.1. The priorities identified in this annual report will assist in delivery of the Corporate Plan and the Integrated Care Northamptonshire 10-year strategy. The emerging North Joint Health and Wellbeing strategy provides an opportunity to address the issues raised in this report.

### **7.4. Risk**

7.4.1. There are no significant risks arising from the proposed recommendations in this report.

### **7.5. Consultation**

7.5.1. The priorities identified in this report were informed by discussions with public health staff.

### **7.6. Consideration by Executive Advisory Panel**

7.6.1. The report has not been considered by an Executive Advisory Panel.

### **7.7. Consideration by Scrutiny**

7.7.1. This report has not been considered by the Scrutiny Committee.

## **7.8. Equality Implications**

7.8.1. Public Health activities seek to identify and address inequalities in health.

## **7.9. Climate Impact**

7.9.1. This report recognises the importance of addressing climate change to improve public health outcomes.

## **7.10. Community Impact**

7.10.1. A better understanding of the issues identified by the DPH will enable the Council to make better decisions on how to support local communities.

## **7.11. Crime and Disorder Impact**

7.11.1. This report recognises the importance of prevention of serious violence and addressing risk factors to reduce crime and disorder.

## **8. Background Papers**

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8.1. None

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Public Health in North  
Northamptonshire

# Our Ambitions, Our Journey

North Northamptonshire  
Director of Public Health  
Report **2022/23**

# Foreword



## **This year has been another busy year for our Public Health Team.**

Having to deal with local government reorganisation and then the COVID-19 pandemic in previous years, this year the focus has been on forming two separate Public Health Teams: one for North Northamptonshire and one for West Northamptonshire.

We were fortunate to have John Ashton as our Director of Public Health (DPH) to guide the team and I through this tumultuous time, whilst keeping our core services running and COVID-19 under surveillance.

Whilst the process of splitting (disaggregation) continues, we do now have our own North Northamptonshire Public Health Team.

I would like to take this opportunity to acknowledge that this has been a difficult time for the team, with stress and uncertainty along the way, and to thank them all for the professional and positive way in which they have undertaken those changes.

For me, this is where things start to get exciting! North Northamptonshire Council is now two years old, and I have had the privilege of being the Executive Member for Adults, Health and Wellbeing throughout that time. From the start, I have been a huge advocate for public health, and it is my ambition that North Northamptonshire Council should be a Public Health Council.

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# What does that mean, a Public Health Council?

Public health is about supporting people to stay well, helping to improve the health of the population and reducing health inequalities, through prevention rather than treatment. Often, when people talk about health, their thoughts immediately turn to healthcare. However, the factors that have the biggest impact on our overall health sit largely outside of healthcare. Some examples would be good quality housing, clean air, access to green spaces and leisure facilities, good educational opportunities, safe streets and so on.

Responsibility for many of those things sit with the council, and we can exert influence on those things that are not our direct responsibility. A Public Health Council would look at every opportunity to use this responsibility and influence to improve health and wellbeing and reduce health inequalities, with the Public Health Team at the centre of that approach, advising, influencing and providing the crucial data upon which to make our policy decisions.

Let me give you an example: public transport policy could just be about connecting up areas of greatest population size as that would potentially maximise the number of people using it. However, if your starting point was to investigate areas of greatest social isolation and loneliness, areas of greatest need for public transport to get to work or school, areas that are disconnected from the public services that they need, then you are likely to develop a very different public transport plan.



That is the vision that I have for North Northamptonshire Council. A council with Public Health outcomes at its heart and the Public Health Team embedded into the centre of all that we do.

As I look ahead, and we say thank you and goodbye to John Ashton, and the baton is passed to Susan Hamilton, our new interim Director of Public Health, I feel confident that we can achieve this vision together.

## **Cllr Helen Harrison**

North Northamptonshire Council's Executive Member for Adults, Health and Wellbeing

# Foreword by the Director of Public Health

This is the first Annual Public Health Report focusing exclusively on the health of the people living and working in the new unitary council area of North Northamptonshire. It is in a long tradition of such reports that began in 1847, with those of the country's first Medical Officer of Health, William Henry Duncan, in Liverpool. Historically, these reports have been the independent observations, formerly by the local Medical Officer of Health, and since 1988, the Director of Public Health. They are on a par with external financial audits but take stock of population health and the challenges it faces from all quarters. Duncan, and later his colleagues around the country, came to establish a tradition of independence, with reports being presented to the annual public meetings of town and city councils.

Medical Officers of Health, and their successors, could not be sacked for drawing attention to unpalatable truths, but only for incompetence. (1)

This report covers the period from the previous one by my predecessor, Lucy Wightman, in 2022, which was the last for the whole county of Northamptonshire. As such, it captures the later stages of the pandemic of COVID-19. This was the greatest threat to public health for 100 years, with its dreadful toll of death, enduring ill health and stress on all aspects of health and social care, daily life and business continuity. During this, hopefully, end stage of the pandemic, it was necessary to

remain vigilant against further serious waves of the virus by maintaining active and robust surveillance of the virus across the county and its communities.

The separation of the previous Public Health Team into two, for the new unitary councils of North and West Northamptonshire, has had to be managed with care to avoid taking an eye off the ball during this critical phase. With pandemics, as with aeroplane flight, the most dangerous times are during take-off and landing.



Having acquitted themselves well throughout the pandemic, in terms of the pandemic impact on the county, all those involved across the council can be proud of how they pulled together at this time. This partnership of public health with many other individuals and agencies extended beyond North

and West Northamptonshire and its communities to include collaboration with the NHS locally, regionally and nationally, including regular liaison with the UK Chief Medical Officer, Sir Chris Whitty. (2)

Using the health protection arrangements that had been put into place during the pandemic, the new Public Health Team has had particular responsibilities for testing and tracing for the virus; the implementation of the COVID-19 vaccination programme at the local level with special emphasis on hard-to-reach groups; and advice to the public through communication and engagement by



working closely with colleagues across the council.

Although by the Spring of 2022 it began to seem that the worst of the pandemic had passed, with regard to serious illness, hospital admissions, intensive care pressures and deaths, together with the impact on the social care sector, there were still concerns about the emergence of new, potentially serious strains of the virus; the impact on school attendances; difficulties in reaching adequate levels of vaccination in particular groups and the potential impact of Long COVID in the future.

As the government changed its position to 'Living with COVID-19', it was possible to take stock and conclude that, while the situation locally seemed to be under control, it would be necessary to maintain a robust health protection function for at least a further twelve-month period as an insurance against further waves of infection. It had also become apparent that the former Northamptonshire County Council had failed to invest adequately in this area of public health and that the relevant functions, including environmental health, health emergency planning, trading standards, and intelligence and communications, had been fragmented prior to the pandemic. Bringing this together coherently for the future is seen as an important challenge.

Handling the remaining pandemic issues during the period from 2022 has been but one strand of work for the Public Health Team since it was having to do this whilst navigating the disaggregation of the team into two for the new unitary councils.

The timescale adopted for the safe separation of the teams was given until the end of September 2022, at which point it was necessary to review the strengths and weaknesses of the new smaller North Northamptonshire Public Health Team, to take stock and to begin to rebuild capacity and capability to ensure that there is an effective public health function for the future. A consensus has emerged at both a political and officer level that the vision for this function should be one in which the Public Health Team should not be seen as an isolated group within the council but should provide system leadership for public health in partnership with the council's Corporate Leadership Team and beyond, with full community engagement. An outstanding issue has been that during the recent period of uncertainty it had been difficult to recruit permanent staff members.

This agenda was complicated by the new national requirement to collaborate with the

NHS in the establishment of an Integrated Care System (ICS) and partnership for the whole of Northamptonshire, together with a countywide strategy for tackling health inequalities with specific defined outcomes. These imperatives involve the consolidation of existing effective working relationships with strategic county level organisations, including Northamptonshire Fire and Rescue, Northamptonshire Police, the Northamptonshire Children's Trust, together with other existing collaboratives, and the NHS itself, among others. Each of these relationships is important to the work of public health and tackling health inequalities and the integration of services are vital priorities. Nevertheless, the imposition of these new tasks on the back of disaggregation to a coherent unitary council poses a burden in the form of bureaucratic processes.

There is a danger, which must be avoided, of creating not only further layers of administration with their inherent burden of workload but also a risk of creating two parallel public health systems: one addressing the wider determinants of health from a local authority base on the one hand, and a re-medicalised public health system in the NHS on the other. Integration must apply to prevention as well as to treatment and care.

The large number of legacy, often overlapping, commissioning contracts inherited by the Public Health Team in North Northamptonshire Council, together with the pressing end dates of existing contracts, has posed a challenge to maintaining



**North  
Northamptonshire  
Council**



increased public expectations; and poor economic prospects for the foreseeable future means that we will have to do different things, do things differently, and embrace a major shift of emphasis to public health measures, prevention, self and primary health care. There is good reason to believe that North Northamptonshire is well placed to make this transformation.

Despite the unprecedented challenges that we have faced in recent times, the last twelve months has seen progress and real achievements while laying the foundations for a successful future. During this time the Public Health Team has been stabilised and morale restored; a shared sense of purpose has been developed and strong working relationships established across the council and with Corporate Leadership Team colleagues, not least with the Executive Member for Adults, Health and Wellbeing, Cllr Helen Harrison. Champions for public health are now beginning to appear in many quarters and significant achievements and green shoots can also be recorded. These include:

#### **Community Engagement:**

The Public Health Team has been supporting the development of the Local Area Partnerships (LAPs), part of the Integrated Care Strategy (ICS) place-based agenda.

A consistent theme within the community has been supporting the vulnerable and those who are sometimes left behind. Data analysis has been used to identify gaps and create pathways to provision by targeting previously overlooked or hard to reach residents, supporting them through the Household Support Fund (HSF).

The administration of HSF for North Northamptonshire Council has enabled many vulnerable residents to be supported during the cost of living crisis.

Partnership with the Voluntary Charitable and Social Enterprise sector (VCSE) has been vital in getting funding for heating and/or food shortages out to our most vulnerable residents, as well as practical support (e.g. providing household goods).

safe and effective services especially with regard to the public health aspects of services for those aged 0-19 years. In addition, the future of some services that have been jointly managed across the county area continues to be problematic. There can be a tension between each of the new unitary council's desires for its own functions and the need for critical mass at a county level to deliver quality services effectively.

The third major strand of work during 2022-23 has been the imperative to return to some semblance of 'business as usual' after the pandemic, during which so much of the routine but important work of public health was put on hold. Particular concerns have included the virtual abandonment of the important Health Checks programme since 2020, slippage in screening programmes and the adverse impact of subversive, 'anti-science' opposition to the COVID-19 vaccination programme. These have also had a significant adverse impact on childhood and other systematic vaccination programmes.

All in all, as we face the future in 2023, it is apparent that 'business as usual' will not be 'business as usual'. The convergence of three major factors: the rapid ageing of the population with the multiple medical conditions that come with a long life; technological advances bringing welcome but expensive therapeutic possibilities coupled with

## Health Protection and Wider Health Protection:

While health protection has had less of a focus on COVID-19 as in previous years, support has still been available in the form of advice and guidance during outbreak situations, particularly focused on settings with more vulnerable residents. This management and support also extended to other infectious diseases as most of our population mixed freely with each other.

There has been continued support for the COVID-19 vaccination programme for the two booster programmes in Spring and Autumn during the past year. Flu vaccinations were also a focus during the Autumn and Winter ensuring as many eligible as possible had theirs.

Support and advice has also been provided during times of extreme weather that we have experienced in the past year.

## Smoking Cessation:

Since the service disaggregated on 1 October, the North team has set 759 quit dates and achieved a 61% success rate. The team has also provided Brief Intervention training, which teaches organisations how to discuss the topic of smoking cessation, to a variety of partners that operate in North Northamptonshire including: Orbit Housing, Milk&You Breastfeeding Peer Support and the local Health Visitor team. In addition to this, the service is proactively tackling inequalities through its regular outreach work with the Bridge Substance Misuse Programme.

## Children and Young People:

The theme for the Children and Young People's team this year has been working collaboratively. Partners included the Northamptonshire Children's Trust, Children's Services, NHS Integrated Care Board (ICB) and NHS England. We enhanced the youth counselling provision by opening these up to primary school aged children.

Safeguarding children and young people is essential. The Safer Sleep campaign was updated and shared by partners during December to promote safe sleeping practices with the aim of

preventing avoidable child deaths.

The Healthy Schools Team has strengthened its delivery and engagement with schools and school aged children not in school, including carrying out a health education survey with primary and secondary school age students.

The Healthy Schools Team have been active partners in the review and development of the mental health digital offer for young people, through the Talk Out Loud programme. This year they have implemented their local Healthy Schools Award programme, which has been tailored to improve the health and wellbeing of school communities.

## Sexual Health:

This has been a busy year in the Sexual Health Team. The team has worked collaboratively with the NHS and the providers to further develop and increase access to residents through digital appointments, locker collection for online Sexual Transmitted Infection (STI) testing, the introduction of opportunistic cervical screening and the offer of pre exposure prophylaxis (PrEP).

Sexual health improvement action by the team:

- Extended the integrated sexual health service for a further two years.
- Set-up a sexual health network bringing together all the relevant stakeholders working to an agreed programme.



## **Health Improvement:**

The primary aim of the Health Improvement Team is to address health inequalities and improve the health and wellbeing of the local population to live healthier for longer.

To achieve this, the team worked collaboratively with the Integrated Care Partnership (ICP), Local Area Partnerships and communities to develop an asset-based approach to community development that is focused on creating the best possible environment for positive health and wellbeing.

Notable highlights of the last year include the launch of a grants programme to fund VCSE organisations to deliver weight management programmes that target key groups. These included people living with mental ill health and learning disabilities as well as low income groups.

North Northamptonshire Council has ambitions of being a leading local authority in effective community development and collaboration. Last year saw the launch of the Well Northants programme with community development workers engaging with communities in Corby, Kettering and Wellingborough to better understand what makes a healthier community and to co-produce actions together. This has led to the funding of community developed initiatives that will improve local health.

Making best use of our local neighbourhoods is important. The team funded Active Parks, an initiative to increase health and wellbeing options available to the community in their local area.

## **Adult Learning:**

The Adult Learning Service aims to ensure that every adult should have the opportunity to gain the skills they need to progress in the world of work, support their children to have the best start in life and improve their own confidence and wellbeing. The Adult Learning Service operates across a number of different streams, mainly funded by the Education and Skills Funding Agency, which cover Adult Community Learning, Adult Skills and 16-19 education opportunities. Within the academic year 2021/22 the total learners reached across all provisions was 3,598 equating to individual enrolments of 6,559.

## **Substance Misuse:**

There has been significant work done on drug and alcohol abuse over the past year in response to the new national Drug and Alcohol strategy. The Public Health Team has:

- Completed a drug and alcohol needs assessment and identified a new set of strategic priorities.
- Worked with West Northamptonshire Council to set up a Northamptonshire Combating Drugs Partnership which involves a wide range of partners from across the system.
- Successfully submitted funding applications to the Office for Health Improvement and Disparities for two drug and alcohol grants, generating over £2.5m of investment in North Northamptonshire between 2022/23 and 2024/25.

## **Suicide Prevention:**

A refreshed all-age county-wide Suicide Prevention Strategy and Action Plan was launched in September 2022. This strategy and action plan is being delivered with the aim to reduce suicide and self-harm in Northamptonshire.

Many areas of work have begun and will be reported on in the annual review of the strategy in September 2023. This includes the recent launch of a support package for all educational establishments in Northamptonshire in the event of a suspected death by suicide in a school community. This package will help to support the school community in effective postvention and prevention in the short and longer term.

## **Workplace Health:**

The Workplace Health Team launched The Road to Wellbeing in March 2022 in partnership with Northamptonshire Sport. This helps businesses to understand why workplace wellbeing is important and supports them to make improvements to their approach or initiatives.

The team worked with, and through, the University of Northampton Business Hub to engage and work with businesses on workplace wellbeing while raising awareness of wider public health work.

They also revived the delivery of health MOTs that had been slowed down by COVID-19 including sessions for Travis Perkins and Waitrose.

### Population Health Care:

The Public Health Team works closely with the Integrated Care Board to maximise the opportunities the NHS to prevent ill health and reduce inequalities. The team has been

working with the ICB on several areas. This includes targeting NHS health inequalities funding of programmes to identify people with undiagnosed hypertension in high-risk groups and addressing the priorities identified within Local Area Partnerships. This year we have developed a joint work plan to continue strengthening our collaborative approach to areas including health protection and joint improving our use of intelligence.

### Public Health Research and Intelligence:

The Public Health Intelligence Team is working to modernise our way of working to support not only the wider Public Health directorate, but also partner organisations. Using current and emerging technologies, we look for new ways to collect, analyse and present data, and to ensure it reaches the widest audience, as well as delivering the biggest impact.

### Communications:

We have definitely benefitted from warm relationships with local and regional media fostered in the earlier parts of the pandemic.

Since we have moved to the 'Living with COVID-19' stage the focus has shifted to respiratory infections and handwashing due to public fatigue with COVID-19 messaging.

The media, particularly radio, has continued to engage with us for health messaging for our residents.

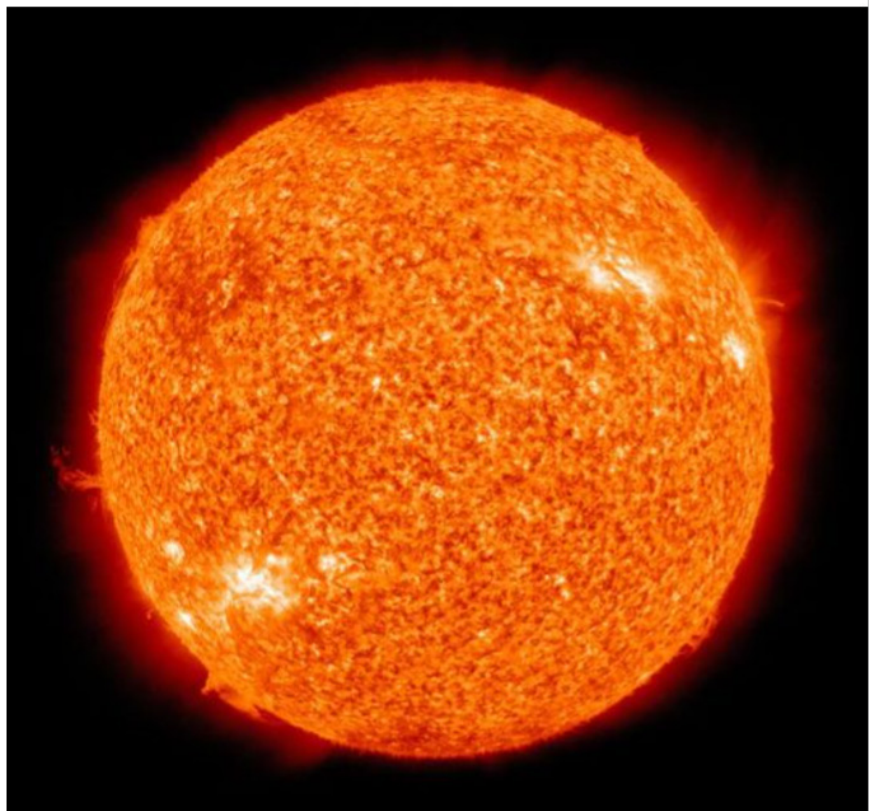
Social media remains an important, and free, way of reaching our local population: health messaging put out during the Summer was especially welcomed. Social media posts put out in this time were shared widely, with one reaching an incredible 108,870 people on Facebook.



Public Health North Northamptonshire

Published by Hootsuite · 16 July 2022 ·

Stay out of the sun between 11am and 3pm as this is when UV rays are the strongest - avoid physical exertion at this time. if you have to go out in the heat stay in the shade, apply sunscreen and wear a wide brimmed hat



9

13 comments 190 shares

The scope of work to protect and improve the health of the people we serve is broad and goes well beyond the narrow range of personal health and social care services. In particular, the location of the public health function within North Northamptonshire Council provides the opportunity to move upstream towards action on the determinants of health and the maintenance of a full life by working at a place level, mobilising community assets with the support of statutory agencies, and working with colleagues to support the reorientation of the NHS towards a health service rooted in public health principles and grounded in population based primary health care. The social goal is for all to 'die young as old as possible' while reducing the prevalence of long-term conditions and maintaining independent living.

It has been an immense privilege to act as the Interim Director of Public Health for North Northamptonshire for the past year and to work with such dedicated and committed colleagues. I am very proud of the members of the Public Health Team and their collaborators who have given so much of themselves, not only in 2022/23 but throughout the pandemic. I would like to thank them for the support they have given to a peripatetic, serially retired practitioner whose

motivation every morning in common with colleagues has been to make a difference. (3)

### **Acknowledgements**

Paul Trinder, Gareth Jenkins-Knight, Danny Adams, Caroline Maggs, Patsy Richards, Adbu Mohidin, Nick Garnet, Mike Bridges, Sarah Briddon, Connor Melia, Henna Parmar, Shirley Plenderleith and Susan Hamilton.

And a very special thank you to our wider Public Health Team who are helping to build a strong and resilient Public Health Team for North Northamptonshire, working alongside all our partners to ensure that we join forces to protect and improve the health and wellbeing of our residents.

Lastly, and very importantly, thank you to Cllr Helen Harrison in her role as the Portfolio Holder for Public Health. She is a strong advocate of the service and supports the vision of North Northamptonshire Council as a public health organisation, which can only be to the benefit of local residents, particularly those facing inequality.

### **Professor John R Ashton C.B.E.**



# Introduction:

## Public Health Comes Home

The creation of the new unitary council for North Northamptonshire two years ago is a landmark on a journey that began 175 years ago in British towns and cities. This journey had its roots in the face of radical changes in agriculture, industrialisation, the mass movement of people from the countryside to the towns and cities, and the appearance of a series of pandemics of cholera spreading from Asia in 1836, 1849, 1854 and 1866 that decimated populations, not least in the urban slums. Until that time, the role of local councils was a limited one, extending mostly to guaranteeing the security of residents and facilitating trade through the issuing of market licences and engagement with the business community. The organised response of people to the threat of cholera at the local level, focused on local councils, was to lead to the extensive range of responsibilities that we associate with modern local government today.

The threat posed by the pandemics galvanised local action, not least through the development of a broad-based public health movement, a partnership of local politicians, businessmen (sic), the churches, and the local press, together with enlightened medical practitioners who were interested in preventing disease. In the vanguard of this movement was the Health of Towns Association, which sprang up following the publication of Edwin Chadwick's Report on 'The Sanitary Conditions of the Labouring Classes', in 1842, and which drew attention to the high death rates in the nation's slums. Until that time, it had been assumed that because the urban economy was booming, as a result of industrialisation, life was better for everybody in the towns compared with the countryside.

The Health of Towns Association was formed at an inaugural meeting at Exeter Hall on the Strand in London, on 11 December 1844, described as being "an avowedly propagandist organisation, of capital importance." (1)

The Association was formed with the purpose of sharing information gained from recent enquiries into the terrible living conditions of much of the

population and campaigning for legal changes that would empower local government to take action on the causes. Following that first meeting, local branches were rapidly formed around the country; the nearest to Northamptonshire was in Rugby. Prominent among the activists campaigning for sanitary reform was the business community including the Society for the Promotion of Trade that was fearful of the impact of epidemic disease on the willingness of businesses to invest in local areas.

This early example of an evidence-based campaign to address the root causes of avoidable death, that fell disproportionately on the poor, was the beginning of a tradition that has extended down the years via the Quaker Rowntree family reports on poverty, to the Marmot reports on Inequality in Health today. (1) In the case of the work of the Health of Towns Association, its emphasis on disseminating facts and figures drawn from official reports; organising public lectures on the subject; reporting on the sanitary problems of their district; providing instruction on the principles of ventilation, drainage, and civic and domestic cleanliness whilst campaigning for parliamentary action to give powers of intervention to local authorities, led to the passing of the first Public Health Act in 1848.

This Act built on the innovative action of Liverpool in passing its own parliamentary 'Sanatory (sic) Act' in 1846 which enabled the town to appoint the country's first full time Medical Officer of Health. The 1848 enabling Act extended this power to the many other towns and cities that followed suit over the next 20 or so years, until this became a requirement in the later Public Health Act of 1875. (4) These reports represent not only a snapshot of population health in a moment in time, and a reference point for action, but also are documents of record for the future, of value to policy makers, practitioners and the public, that enable us to learn from the past, to see how far we have come, and, hopefully, avoid repeating previous mistakes.

### **Kettering MOH Report 1918**

An influenza epidemic in 1918 provides another sense of the familiar. Medical Officer for Health in Kettering, Leslie W Dryland, reported a “small, but severe, epidemic arose in June” followed by a “very serious one in late Autumn, which taxed the profession almost to breaking point”. Dryland estimated approximately one third of the Kettering population was affected with 38 deaths, indicating a low case-mortality rate. The second wave of 1918 was thought to entail a certain level of immunity and it was rare for individuals to experience cases in both. However, a chief new symptom of the second wave was a larger number of children who were affected, forcing school closures across the district in an echo of recent times. For a marker of how far we have come, Dryland’s advice from 1918, that the cases who went to bed as soon as symptoms developed “fared best” may ring true, but readers will be glad to know that significant progress has been made in public health advice since!

### **Wellingborough MOH Report 1894**

These themes can be seen throughout the reports of North Northamptonshire’s medical officers from over 100 years ago. In 1894, Wellingborough’s Rural District Council heard the Annual Medical Report of Dr. FH Morris who sought to draw attention to the inefficient water supply throughout the district and the exposure of its shallow wells to pollution. To prevent exposure of its residents, Morris prescribed “peat moss” for the district’s pail system and a more regular cycle of emptying. Morris’ role was concerned with the “sanitary condition” of the rural district, and other aspects of his report highlighted cases of homes “found to be too filthy for human occupation”, overcrowding, the seizure of “unsound meat”, and ventilation of workshops and factories of the district’s boot and shoe industry.

This is a reminder that Public Health still has a vital role to play today in preventative partnership working across our council, underpinning, and informing, the work of Housing, Social Care, Environmental Health, Regulatory Standards and beyond.



The work of the early pioneers of public health from the 1840s onwards was organised around the principle that came to be known as 'The Sanitary Idea' and focused on the separation of human, animal, and vegetable waste from food and water. Twenty years before the discovery of the germ theory of disease by Louis Pasteur in Paris, this led to concerted action on sanitation, cleanliness, scavenging, street paving, safe municipal water supplies, street washing and slum improvement. Over time, with the increased credibility of local government resulting from its effective action in tackling epidemic disease through these measures, other programmes of work became possible, including the creation of municipal parks as lungs of towns and cities giving access to fresh air and exercise for industrial workers on their day of rest; municipal bath and washhouses; early examples of municipal housing; and other infrastructure initiatives such as gasworks and hygienic slaughterhouses.

The advent of safe household water supplies and mains sewerage systems together with the mass manufacture of soap by Lever Brothers on Merseyside, together with the new insights into the germ causation of infectious disease, paved the way for a shift from the sanitary focus of the early years to one on hygiene from the 1870s onwards. At the same time, personal health and social services such as health visitors, social workers, and community nurses began to emerge from their environmental roots in household inspection, based yet again in local government. Examples of specific initiatives included the health visitor movement that began in Salford in 1862; the first Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children, in Liverpool in 1883; and the first depot to provide milk to nursing mothers, in St Helens, in 1899. Innovation and rollout by local councils came thick and fast.

- Despite this, an event of particular importance in the evolution of British public health came as a result of the Boer war from 1899 to 1902 when 40% of men who had volunteered for military service were deemed to be unfit to serve and concerns were expressed about

how the nation would deal with the increasing military threat posed by Germany. An interdepartmental government enquiry into the "physical deterioration" of the nation led to a comprehensive programme of action; A continuing anthropometric survey:

- Registration of stillbirths
- Studies of infant mortality
- Centres for maternal instruction
- Day nurseries
- Registration and supervision of working pregnant women
- Free school meals and medical inspection of children
- Physical training for children, training in hygiene and mother craft
- Prohibition of tobacco sales to children
- Education on the evils of drink
- Medicals on entry to work
- Studies of the prevalence and effects of syphilis
- Extension of the Health Visiting Service.

At the time, there were arguments over community versus family responsibilities for health and wellbeing, an echo of the contemporary debates about the so-called 'nanny state', but the interests of the nation prevailed and, with them, the establishment of the School Meal and School Health Services. Over 100 years on the range of local government initiatives looks impressive and comprehensive. Sadly, it was not to endure in the face of scientific medical advances and the increasing domination of hospital medicine as the therapeutic era based on pharmaceutical and other technical interventions took centre stage.

The widely accepted definition of public health as first coined by Charles Winslow, Dean of Public Health at Yale School of Public Health, in 1920, is that "Public Health is the science and art of preventing disease, prolonging life and promoting physical health and efficiency through

organised community efforts for the sanitation of the environment, the education of the individual in principles of personal hygiene, the organisation of medical and nursing service for the early diagnosis and treatment of disease, and the development of the social machinery which will ensure to every individual in the community a standard of living adequate for the maintenance of health". (5)

This comprehensive approach attracted widespread support after World War 1, building on the Boer War report but being extended to include Prime Minister Lloyd George's major programme of 'Homes Fit for Heroes'. When the Poor Law was abolished in 1929 and its responsibilities, including for the relief of poverty and for the workhouse hospitals, passed to local government, the era of local government public health reached a peak. At this point, the Medical Officer of Health was responsible for the traditional environmental services of water supply, sewage disposal, food control and hygiene; for the public health aspects of housing; for the control and prevention of infectious disease; for the maternity and child welfare clinics, health visitors, community nurses and midwives. He (sic), was also responsible for the tuberculosis (TB) dispensary and venereal disease (VD) clinic. Under his other hat he was in charge of school health, to which was added the responsibility for the administration of the local hospital. (6) Some of the larger public health teams consisted of thousands of staff. What could possibly go wrong?

What happened next was in fact the advent of the new, therapeutic era, in public health with major

scientific advances beginning with the discovery of insulin and the early antibiotics. Until this time, medical interventions made precious little difference to life expectancy and chronic ill health. Rather, the major improvements that had taken place and had led to dramatic falls in mortality from childhood and water and food-borne infections had come about as a result of improved living and working conditions; safe water and sanitation; increased agricultural productivity that had made cheap food abundantly available for the poor; the adoption of birth control leading to smaller families competing for scarce family resources and the

beginnings of vaccination for a range of infections. These included the later BCG vaccination together with medication to control tuberculosis, one of the "captains of the men of death", along with epidemic pneumonia.

The coming of the NHS in 1948 marked a dramatic change in

emphasis with a widespread belief that public health had completed its historic task. It came to be believed that the future would be largely based around hospital medicine with a pill for every ill and extended possibilities for surgery posed by antibiotics preventing wound infections. This also marked the point at which medical careers in general practice sharply divided and both public health and general practice went into a sharp decline.

By the time of the major local government reorganisation in 1974, the public health workforce was demoralised and struggling to recruit. Other professional groups such as social work,



environmental health, and community nursing, were vying for their own professional space, away from the hierarchical leadership by the Medical Officer of Health, and the role was abandoned and reinvented as an administrative one in the NHS, that of Community Physician, one that was to be short lived.

If Humpty Dumpty fell off the wall in 1974, it was not long before it became clear that a major mistake had been made. The void created by the movement out of local government was brought to sharp attention in 1986 by a salmonella outbreak at the Stanley Royd psychogeriatric hospital in Wakefield, with 19 deaths, and an outbreak of Legionnaires' disease at Stafford Hospital with 22 deaths. The creation of new joint posts in the control of communicable disease between the NHS and local government marked the beginning of the slow transfer back of public health to its proper home in local government. It was to take 27 years, until 2013, before this was implemented in full.

In the meantime, beginning in the 1970s there had been an increasing recognition internationally that countries may be on the wrong path with their infatuation with hospitals at the expense of public health and primary care, and that a rebalancing was necessary. The publication of the Alma Ata Declaration by the World Health Organisation in 1978 had called for a reorientation of health systems towards primary health care grounded in a public health framework which emphasised public participation and extensive partnership working, taking this thinking further with a focus on the need for cross-cutting policies that promote and improve health.

At the heart of these initiatives was the implication that our approach to health had been distorted not only on the undue emphasis on the role of hospitals in improving health but also the over-professionalisation of everyday maladies and the management of long-term conditions. This extended to the neglect of support for the overwhelming contributions of lay and self-care by individuals, family, friends and communities.

In addition, the limitations of the original 'sanitary idea' that drove public health in the nineteenth century have become apparent. Dumping sewage and chemical waste into the rivers and building

tall chimneys to move air pollution beyond the city limits may solve problems in the short term but over time have led to our soiling our own planetary nest and contributed to global warming.

The New Public Health that has emerged during the past thirty years puts emphasis on the ecological nature of the challenge and stresses the need for us to live in a sustainable way in the habitats that nurture and protect us. This thinking has led to the reconnection of public health to town planning to which it was akin to a Siamese twin in previous times. Four principles of ecological town planning have been identified:

1. Minimum intrusion into the natural state with new developments and restructuring reflecting and respecting the topographic, hydrographic, vegetal, and climatic environment in which it occurs, rather than imposing itself mechanically on locations.
2. Maximum variety in the physical, social and economic structure and land use, through which comes resilience.
3. As closed a system as possible based on renewable energy, recycling and the ecological management of green space.
4. An optimal balance between population and resources to reflect the fragile nature of natural systems and the environments that support them. Balance is required at both administrative district and neighbourhood levels to provide high quality and supportive physical environments as well as economic and cultural opportunities. (1)

This understanding has informed the development and adoption of the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals to be attained by the year 2030 and to which the British government is a signatory. Although government endorsement is necessary for progress to be made with these ambitions, it is not sufficient, and it is likely that the concerted action of local authorities globally will be essential. (1)

# Table 1

## The United Nations Sustainable Development Goals

1. No poverty
2. Zero hunger
3. Good health and wellbeing
4. Quality education
5. Gender equality
6. Clean water and sanitation
7. Affordable and clean energy
8. Decent work and economic growth
9. Industry, innovation and infrastructure
10. Reduced inequalities
11. Sustainable cities and communities
12. Responsible consumption and production
13. Life below water
14. Life on land
15. Peace, justice, and strong institutions
16. Partnerships to achieve the goals.

The lack of sustainability of the current path being followed in health and public health with regard to rapidly increasing demand in an ageing population was recognised in the UK in 2002. At that time, the then Chancellor of the Exchequer, Gordon Brown, invited banker, Derek Wanless, to review the case for bringing NHS funding up to the level of comparable European countries. In supporting the case for increased funds, Wanless and his team examined three scenarios based on: the status quo; the implementation of evidence based best practice universally across the present system; and the complete transformation of the NHS into one grounded in public health and full public engagement.

Only under the last scenario could he justify

increased funding; with both scenarios one and two the NHS was predicted to fall over either in 20 years or more slowly. Sadly, the significant increase in funds subsequently made available those 20 years ago was appropriated into a new hospital building programme together with large pay increases for NHS staff without the transformation envisaged. Now in 2023, a combination of these flawed decisions with the aftermath of the pandemic have brought the situation to a head. Time is short and the need for real change urgent. However, the experience of the COVID-19 pandemic has resonances with the cholera pandemics of the nineteenth century in that we have an opportunity to learn from that experience and build on the responses that were made.

The Health and Social Care Act of 2012 resulted in the transfer of public health from the NHS back to local authorities. (7) In the case of Northamptonshire that initially meant that the public health function was based at the county level in a two-tier structure of a county and districts with different responsibilities. The creation of two unitary councils in 2021 is a major step in the direction of bringing coherence to the complex task of improving public health locally. The work of North Northamptonshire Council since coming into existence, with its focus on Place, Local Area Partnerships, and a whole system approach to public health and integrated care puts us in a good place to give it our best shot.

# The Organised Efforts of Society for Public Health in North Northamptonshire

In October 2022, the former Northamptonshire County Council Public Health Team was disaggregated into one each for North and West Northamptonshire.

As interim Director of Public Health for North Northamptonshire, it has been my responsibility to work with colleagues to create a common understanding of the public health challenges that face the new organisation, establish our priorities and develop a strategic plan for the years ahead. This report presents the output of the work to date in laying the foundations for an imaginative, resilient and effective public health effort for local people.

The report has been informed by that timeless basis of effective public health action: sound intelligence on the health of the population together with the evidence for what makes a difference in policies, programmes and other interventions.

In recent years the World Health Organisation has advocated a comprehensive set of 10 functions seen to be necessary to deliver a robust public health response:

1. Surveillance of population health and wellbeing (intelligence)
2. Monitoring and response to health hazards and emergencies (health emergency planning)
3. Health protection, including environmental, occupational, food safety and other threats
4. Health promotion including action to address social determinants of health and health equity
5. Disease prevention including the early detection of illness
6. Assuring governance for health and wellbeing
7. Assuring a sufficient and competent public health workforce
8. Assuring sustainable organisational structures and finance

9. Advocacy, communication, and social mobilisation

10. Advancing public health research to inform effective intervention.

Under the Health and Social Care Act of 2012, the Director of Public Health (DPH) is accountable for the delivery of their authority's public health duties and is an independent advocate for the health of the population, providing leadership for its improvement and protection.



The Director of Public Health is a statutory officer of their authority and the principal adviser on all health matters to elected members and officers, with a leadership role spanning the three domains of public health; health improvement, health protection, and population health care and, therefore, holders of politically restricted posts by section 2 (6) of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989, inserted by schedule 5 of the 2012 Act.

The statutory functions of the DPH include a number of specific responsibilities and duties arising directly from Acts of Parliament - mainly the

NHS Act 2006 and the Health and Care Act 2012 - and related regulations. Some of these duties are closely defined but most allow for local discretion in how they are delivered.

The most fundamental health protection duties of a DPH are set out in law and are described below. How these statutory functions translate into everyday practice depends on a range of factors that are shaped by local needs and priorities from area to area and over time.

Section 73A (1) of the 2006, inserted by section 30 of the 2012 Act gives the DPH responsibility for:

- All of their local authority's duties to take steps to improve the health of the people of their area.
- Any of the Secretary of State's public health and health improvement functions that s/he delegates to local authorities, either by arrangement or under regulations; these include services mandated under regulations made under section 6C of the 2006 Act, inserted by section 18 of the 2012 Act.

Health protection mandated functions include:

- DsPH exercising their local authority's functions in risk assessing, planning for, and responding to, emergencies that present a threat to their area's public health.
- Preventing and controlling incidents and infectious disease outbreaks to protect their population.
- Carrying out public health aspects of the promotion of community safety.
- Taking local initiatives that reduce the public health impact of environmental and communicable disease risk.

The Director of Public Health has an overarching duty to ensure that the health protection system works effectively to the benefit of its local population.

At the moment some aspects of the core functions and responsibilities of the Director of Public Health in North Northamptonshire including Environmental Health, Health Emergency Planning, Trading Standards, and aspects of Community Safety (Violence Prevention), are not sitting within

the remit of the Office of the DPH. It is intended that stronger functional links will be developed with these areas of work in the coming year. Responsibility for Community and Leisure Services are currently being migrated into the Public Health Team.

In many local authority areas, the Director of Public Health has, since 2013, been line-managed by the Director of Adult Social Care, a situation which has also been the case in Northamptonshire. This will no longer be the case in North Northamptonshire for the future and the DPH will account directly to the Chief Executive. This reflects the recognition of the pan-corporate role and the important responsibility for providing whole system leadership for public health both within and beyond the local authority. This includes commitments both in relation to North Northamptonshire Council's Corporate Plan and the 10-year strategy for implementing integrated care in Northamptonshire.

From time-to-time other responsibilities are placed upon the public health function within the local authority, including those directed in relation to the deployment of the centrally provided public health grant. At the moment, one such responsibility is that of collaborating with the NHS England and NHS Improvement approach to support the reduction of health inequalities. Core 20 Plus 5 identifies the most deprived 20% of the population as the focus for action together with five clinical priority areas:

1. Maternity
2. Severe Mental Illness
3. Chronic respiratory disease
4. Early cancer diagnosis
5. Hypertension case finding.

# Where are we now?

'Statistics are patients with the tears wiped off'

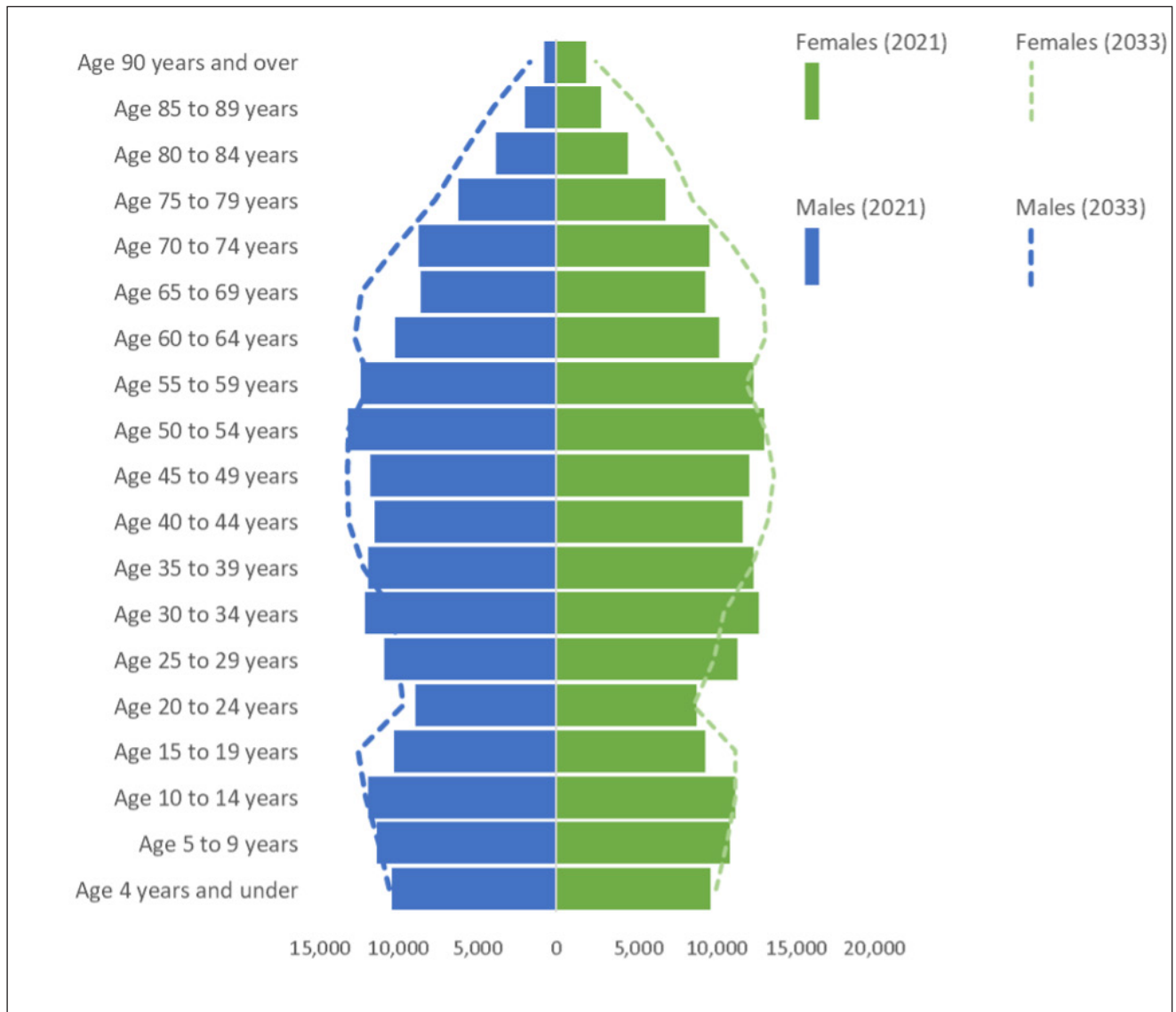
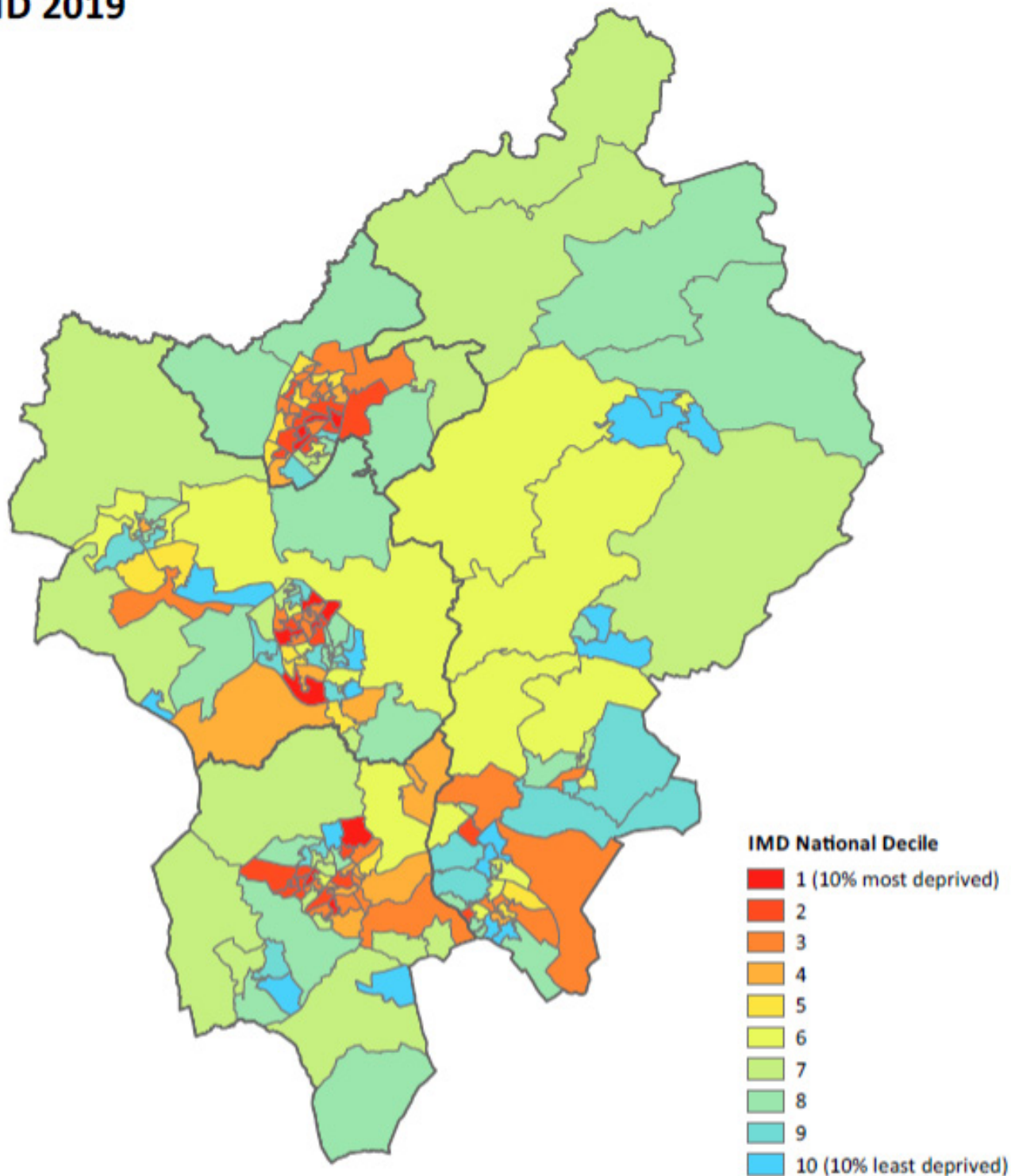


Figure 1: 2021 Mid-year population estimates and 2033 projected population in North Northamptonshire, by age group

# North Northamptonshire IMD 2019



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Figure 2: Overall deprivation in North Northamptonshire



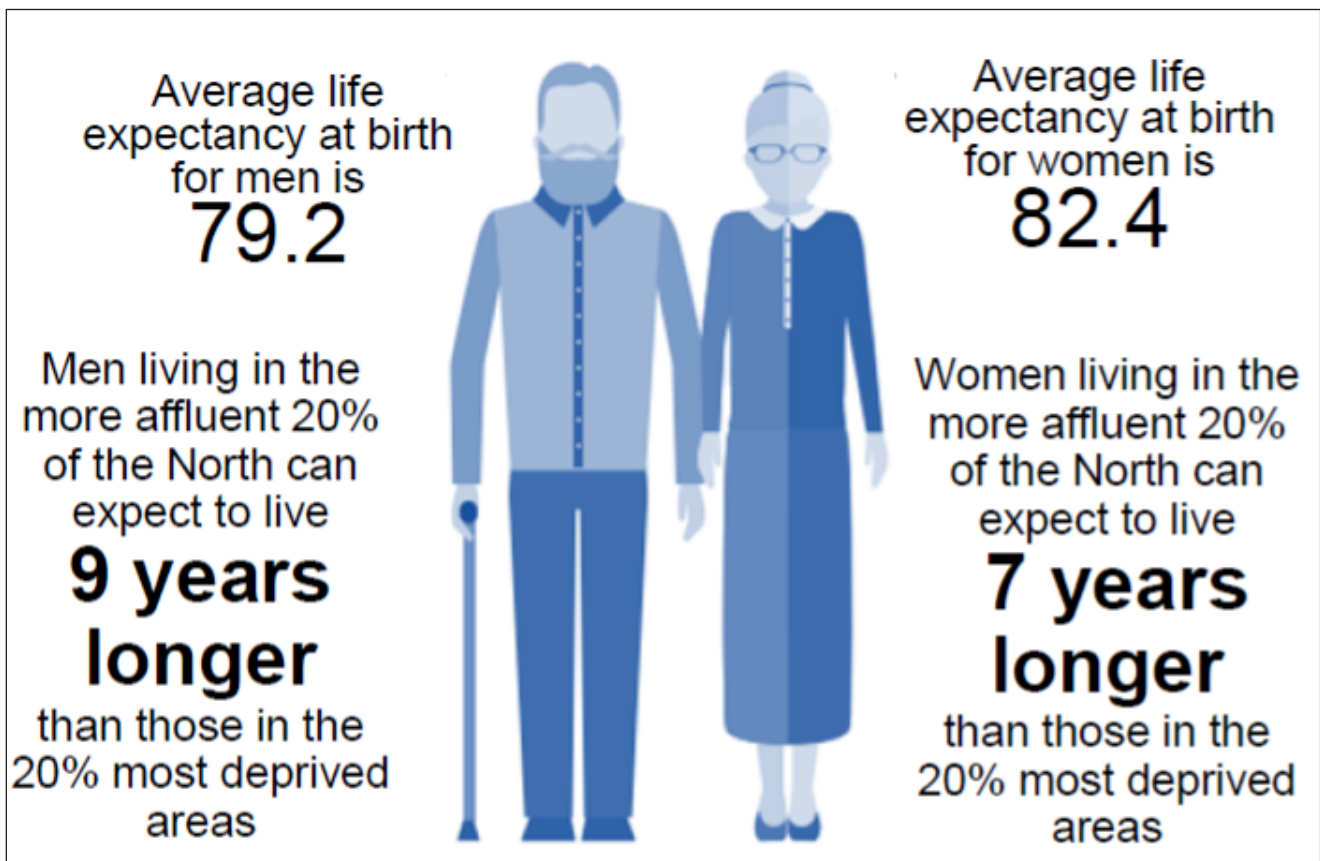


Figure 3: Average life expectancy at birth, by gender, in North Northamptonshire

## **Where are we now? The population of North Northamptonshire**

- Based on the 2021 Census, the population size of North Northamptonshire has increased by 13.5% from 316,000 in 2011 to 359,000 in 2021. This is higher than the 6.6% increase in England over the same period.
- There has been a 10.9% increase in children and young people aged under 15 compared with a 5.0% increase in England over the same period; a 10.3% increase in adults aged 15-64 compared with a 3.6% increase; and a 30.4% increase in people aged 65 years and over compared with a 20.1% increase in England. There are now 85,659 people aged 0-19 and 65,361 people aged 65 and over. Among those aged 65 and over, 28,952 were aged 75 and over and 7,625 were aged 85 and over. By 2033, the number of people aged 85 and over is projected to increase to around 13,500.
- The number of households has increased by 12.3% from 132,600 in 2011 to 148,900 in 2021, an increase of 16,300 households. This compares to an increase of 6.2% in England.
- In 2021 27.3% (40,715) of households were one person households; this compares with 30.1% in England. Of those with more than one person 66.5% were single family households compared with 63.0% in England. The remainder (6.2%) were a variety of household types including multiple person households (6.9% in England).
- 90.3% of people in North Northamptonshire were classified as white in the 2021 census compared with 81.0% in England. (8.9% Asian, Black, or Mixed Minority ethnic group compared with 16.8% in England). The proportion of Asian, Black, or Mixed Minority ethnic groups has increased by 2.6% since 2011 (3.2% in England).
- 90.5% of people in North Northamptonshire specified English as their main language in 2021 (90.8% England); 1.8% (6,163 people) could not speak English or speak English well (1.9% England).
- 90.5% of people aged 16 and over in the 2021 Census identified themselves as heterosexual (89.4% England), 2.5% as non-heterosexual (3.2% England).
- 17.3% of people in 2021 were classified as disabled under the Equality Act, which is 62,313 people. This compares with 54,407 in 2011.
- 34.0% of households in 2021 were classified as deprived on one dimension of deprivation (education, employment, health, or housing), compared with 33.5% in England; 13.7% were deprived on two dimensions (14.2% England); 3.3% were deprived on three dimensions (3.7% England); and 0.2% were deprived on all four dimensions, the same as England.
- In total, 25,522 households (17.1%) were experiencing multiple deprivation (deprived on two or more dimensions), similar to the England average of 18.1%.
- The most deprived areas of North Northamptonshire were located around the three main urban centres of Corby, Kettering and Wellingborough, as well as in areas around Desborough, Rothwell, Pytchley, and Burton Latimer in the west, and Finedon, Irthlingborough, and Caldecott in the east.
- Life expectancy for males in 2018-20 was 79.2 years, which is comparable to England at 79.3 years, and for females it was 82.4 years, which is lower than England at 83.1 years. Male life expectancy in the most deprived areas was 9 years lower than in the least deprived areas (England 9.7); female life expectancy differed by 7.4 years compared with 7.9 years in England.

This pen picture gives a sense of the challenge facing us if we are to reduce the profound inequalities in health that face us and require us to address both risk factors and risk conditions to support healthy, long lives.

# The Public Health Vision for North Northamptonshire

The North Northamptonshire corporate vision is of **'A place where everyone has the best opportunities and quality of life'**. Sitting behind this, action through the organised efforts of the council and the local population supported by the expertise of the Public Health Team is essential if the ambitions are to be achieved. Health itself is a resource for everyday life and the foundations for personal and community achievement and progress; good population health is also a prerequisite for a dynamic and successful economy. The Public Health Team contribution is to help make this vision a reality.

## The commitment of the Public Health Team in North Northamptonshire is:

- To develop and support population level interventions to protect and improve health that are based on high quality intelligence and evidence to inform best practice.
- To take a Place and Asset-based approach to working with local communities and develop a Community Orientated Health and Social Care System building on existing strengths to create a sustainable future.
- To maintain a relentless focus on reducing health inequalities.
- To work in partnership with all those who value the health and wellbeing of the people of North Northamptonshire.
- To commission and deliver evidence based, high quality, value for money, public health services.

## The Strategic Context: Contributing to the North Northamptonshire Council Strategic Plan

The Public Health Team programme of work contributes to each of the key objectives of the North Northamptonshire Council's Corporate Plan and supports the ten ambitions of Integrated Care in Northamptonshire:

## Active Fulfilled Lives:

- Provide system leadership to support and protect children and young people and reduce inequalities.
- Provide a coordinated approach to changing adverse lifestyles and reducing addictive behaviours.
- Supporting and funding a range of programmes and projects in leisure services to deliver increased levels of physical activity and wellbeing - 'More People, More active, More Often'.
- Continuing to develop and implement the Suicide Prevention Strategy.



### **Better, Brighter Futures:**

- A healthy start to life through a focus on planned parenthood; the first 1,000 days of life; parenting support; the avoidance of Early Childhood Events (ACES); school readiness; prevention of school exclusion; preparation for the world of work and adult life.
- Supporting healthy, safe and sustainable places and settings for everyday life: home, school, neighbourhood, the natural and built environment, access to leisure and cultural activities.
- Developing and implementing a partnership model for the prevention of violence using the World Health Organisation Public Health Framework for Violence Prevention.
- Working with Anchor Institutions to influence and shape the conditions that protect and improve life chances and address the challenge of global warming through concerted local action.

### **Safe and Thriving Places:**

- Implementing a comprehensive approach to health protection and wider health protection by anticipating, planning for and responding to external threats to health, whether through infectious disease, disasters and other environmental emergencies, road traffic and other transporting incidents or human behaviour including individual and organised violence.
- Collaborative working on spatial planning, the natural and built environment, workplaces and the other settings for everyday life.
- Working closely and supportively with the NHS and Social Care agencies to provide an evidence-based population-based perspective on the delivery of effective and efficient services to the whole population and tackle inequalities.
- Commissioning high quality sexual health, drug and alcohol, screening, and other public health services.

### **Green, Sustainable Environment:**

- Aligning agendas that jointly address health, environment, sustainability and social equity agendas and the climate emergency.

### **Connected Communities:**

- Working at the neighbourhood, community and Local Area Partnership level to mobilise and connect community assets for health and wellbeing, with voluntary organisations and the statutory sector.
- Developing trust, open dialogue and good communication with citizens and communities.
- Contributing to the Place development agenda, identifying priorities and supporting the implementation of solutions through Local Area Partnerships (LAPs).
- Delivering the Well Northants programme through the work of Public Health Community Development Workers.

### **Modern Public Services:**

- Investing in our and other council staff, and in community members, partner groups, associations and agencies to build capacity and capability for public health improvement and protection.
- Embracing diversity and sustainability in our workforce and services.
- Supporting decision-making that is evidence-based and assesses economic impact.
- Commissioning services to reflect social value.

### **The Way Ahead**

Our strategic intentions as set out in this year's Public Health Report are the basis for our delivery plans and work with other council directorates and external bodies over the next three years. It is not possible for them to be set in stone as they will need to change and evolve in response to the threats to health and the changing health needs of the population, changes in national policy and local priorities.



# Health Protection

At a local level the work of Health Protection aims to anticipate, prevent, respond to, and mitigate risks and threats to health arising from communicable diseases and exposure to environmental hazards including chemicals and radiation. However, the broader health protection extends to a wide range of additional external threats including those from commercial activities, whether legal or otherwise, and behaviours that involve aggression. Everybody has a right to be protected from both infectious and non-infectious environmental hazards to health and it has long been a primary duty of government at different levels to safeguard the public in this respect.

The effective delivery of local health protection requires close partnership working between North and West Northamptonshire councils, the UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA), together with other local, regional, and national agencies and bodies, including the NHS. Over the past three years the national and local health protection response has been in the spotlight throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. During this period, we have built up expertise, developed relationships and established systems to ensure an effective response to COVID-19 and other health protection threats. Building trust with our communities has been essential to providing an effective response.

COVID-19 is still circulating in the community, albeit in a more controlled manner, and the resurgence of other viral and respiratory illnesses, including influenza, is putting pressure on health and healthcare systems. Other risks and hazards are currently present and the circulation of Avian flu among the national poultry flock and wild birds is a warning of what could be possible should another novel virus migrate from livestock and become responsible for person-to-person spread. Additionally, the climate emergency is galvanising local authorities to ensure that they play their part in the sustained long-term threat to human populations and our ecosystem.

## **We will:**

- Continuously strengthen our preparedness against future health protection threats and improve the quality of our services to protect health.
- Fulfil the assurance role of ensuring that appropriate health protection arrangements are in place to protect the health and wellbeing of the residents of North Northamptonshire.
- Ensure that organisational and system level governance arrangements are in place across North Northamptonshire through the Northamptonshire Health Protection Board.
- Ensure that the North Northamptonshire Health Protection Board can respond promptly and flexibly to any health protection incident, emergency, or emerging priority across North Northamptonshire.
- Ensure that environmental, biological, chemical, radiological, and nuclear threats and hazards are understood, and that health protection issues are addressed through close collaboration with Emergency Planning Teams, Environmental Health and other appropriate colleagues.
- Work proactively with Environmental Health, Emergency Planning, Trading Standards and the Communications Team on incident and outbreak investigation, response and management.
- Proactively work to reduce the risk of and respond to, infection in high-risk settings, in particular those involving health and social care.

## Where are we now? Health Protection: Infectious Diseases

- In North Northamptonshire, 94.8% of babies aged one year were vaccinated against a range of diseases including diphtheria, whooping cough, polio, meningitis, and pneumonia in 2021/22. This was higher than the England average of 91.8%. Among two-year-olds vaccination uptake was higher at 95.9% compared to 93% in England.
- In 2021/22, 92.6% of two-year-olds in North Northamptonshire were vaccinated against measles, mumps and rubella (MMR, one dose), compared to the England average of 89.2%. At five years of age, uptake for one dose was 95.3%, and 89.8% for two doses compared with 93.4% and 85.7% for England.
- In Northamptonshire, 74.7% of girls aged 12-13 had received the HPV (Human Papillomavirus) vaccination (one dose) in 2020/21, which helps protect against cervical and some other cancers including throat and anus, in both men and women and cancer of the penis in males. This compared with an uptake of 76.7% in England. Among girls aged 13-14, 79.0% received two doses compared with 60.6% in England. 71.7% of boys aged 12-13 in Northamptonshire received the HPV vaccination (one dose) in 2020/21 compared with 71.0% in England.
- In 2020/21, 91.9% of boys and girls aged 14-15 in Northamptonshire had received the MenACWY (meningococcal bacteria strains A, C, W and Y) vaccination, which helps protect against meningococcal meningitis, compared with 80.9% in England.
- 67.7% of adults aged 65 and over in Northamptonshire in 2020/21 had received the PPV Pneumococcal Polysaccharide Vaccine (PPV), which helps protect older people against diseases including bronchitis, pneumonia, and septicaemia (blood poisoning). This is lower than the England rate of 70.6%.
- In 2020/21, 54.4% of those considered to be at clinical risk under age 65 in Northamptonshire were vaccinated against influenza; this was higher than the England average of 52.9%. Among the population of all those aged 65 and over the Northamptonshire coverage was 83.3% compared with England at 82.3%.
- The rate of new all age STI (Sexually Transmitted Infections) diagnoses (excluding chlamydia aged under 25) in North Northamptonshire in 2021 was 182 per 100,000 population (637 diagnoses from a population of 350,448), which is significantly lower than the England rate of 394 per 100,000 population.
- Within this overall figure for sexual infection the diagnostic rates of syphilis (3.7 per 100,000) and gonorrhoea (29 per 100,000) were lower than the England rates of 13.3 and 90.0 in 2021; the chlamydia detection rate among young people aged 15-24 in 2021 was 1,231 per 100,000, similar to the England rate of 1,334 per 100,000.
- There were 20 new cases of HIV diagnosed in 2021 – the diagnosis rate (5.7 per 100,000 population) was similar to England (4.8); in 2021, there were 400 people aged 15-59 living with HIV – the diagnosed prevalence rate (2.03 per 1,000 population) was lower than England (2.34) .
- In 2019-21, 59.1% of people aged 15 and over with HIV were diagnosed late, higher than the England average of 43.4%; the proportion diagnosed late was higher than the maximum recommended national target of 50%.
- In 2021, 38.8% of eligible people were tested for HIV, lower than the England average of 45.8%.

## **Human Papilloma Vaccine: An Extraordinary Contribution to Public Health from the Field of Science and Immunology**

The recent introduction of a programme of vaccination against infection by Human Papilloma Virus (HPV) is an example of the benefits to public health from population-based vaccination programmes.

This vaccine is completely safe, with millions of doses having been used around the world with no side effects. It provides high levels of protection against the long-term effects of infection with the virus for those whose natural immune system is insufficient.

Since 2012 a vaccine that contains the four most dangerous virus types (HPV types 6,11,16 and 18), together with type 9, from 2023, has enabled us to protect future generations against 95% of cancers of the cervix of the womb. These high-risk HPV types also cause cancers of the vagina, vulva, penis, anus, and head and neck.

The vaccine is now given to all 12 to 13-year-old girls and boys. The programme begins at this age as the immune system is at its peak and responds extremely well to vaccines. The vaccines are also more effective if given before any sexual contact that may transmit the virus. Two doses are now sufficient to provide long lasting protection.

Since the programme began in the United Kingdom there has already been a dramatic reduction in the incidence of papilloma genital warts, abnormal cervical smears and cervical cancer in the young. We now have the potential to eliminate not only cervical cancer but also types of vaginal, vulval, penile, anal, and head and neck cancers that are spread by this virus. It is unthinkable that any parent would deny their children protection against these common cancers.

The HPV vaccine is a triumph of science over cancer which the North Northamptonshire Public Health Team is committed to ensuring reaches every one of our teenagers.

*With acknowledgement to Dr Colm O'Mahoney, Consultant in Sexual Health, Chester.*



# Wider Health Protection

An important part of the health protection function is that of protecting the population against a range of external threats and hazards that go well beyond those of infectious disease and are not intrinsically related to biology. Rather they are those that arise from the social, physical and economic environment and include those that are commercially influenced and determined.

Most recently the World Health Organisation has begun to focus attention on what have come to be known as the commercial determinants of health.

(8) This includes an emphasis on industries such as those promoting alcohol, tobacco, gambling and online media that play on inherent weaknesses and influence behaviour in ways that is often detrimental to mental and physical health and wellbeing.

Existing public health programmes including smoking cessation and the provision of substance misuse (drug and alcohol) services have addressed some of these threats but there is more that needs to be done. The recent appearance of the major problem of teenagers inhaling nitrous oxide from balloons and using cheap, disposable, flavoured vapes creating a new generation of nicotine addicts bring potential threats to physical health including neurological and heart disease problems in the future. In a situation like this downstream intervention with treatment services is necessary but insufficient to get to grips with a problem that requires national action as well as intervention locally for example through the work of Trading Standards bringing enforcement to bear on rogue retailers.

Other external challenges are a consequence of the way we plan and design housing and our local neighbourhoods to be fit for purpose for everyday living in ways that are supportive, safe and sustainable. The COVID-19 pandemic revealed how inadequate much of the housing stock is when coping with infectious disease and the trials of a lockdown in which many families had no access even to a balcony for fresh air let alone

access to green space. The cumulative impact of these external hazards, combined with social and economic factors, means that the most vulnerable in society are at greatest risk of ill health.

Good practice on how we plan healthy and sustainable communities continues to grow, and through working with colleagues we can use this knowledge in the design of local neighbourhoods.

## **We will:**

- Work with planners and the public to design safe, supportive, and sustainable housing, neighbourhoods and communities.
- Address the commercial determinants of health by working with Development Control, Planning, Licensing and Trading Standards, and Environmental Health to reduce externally driven harms to the vulnerable.
- Develop a public health approach to violence prevention, using an evidence base to understand populations at risk and the impact of interventions.
- Work with local communities in the Local Area Partnerships, Community and Family Hubs to identify problems and mobilise and support community assets in the battle against anti-health influences.
- Work with organisations across North Northamptonshire to develop a strategic approach to combat the threat of addiction whether by alcohol, tobacco, drugs and other harmful substances, risky sexual activity, or gambling, supported by high quality, evidence-based services to reduce harm.
- Work with other bodies, organisations, and interested parties to reduce the hazards that increase the risk of falls in the vulnerable and the elderly.



## Where are we now? Wider Health Protection

- 16.6% of adults aged 18 and over in North Northamptonshire were current smokers in 2021, similar to the England average of 13.0%.
- 593 people died from lung cancer in 2017-19. The mortality rate (61.7 per 100,000) was higher than England (53.0 per 100,000).
- There were 133 alcohol-related deaths in 2020. The mortality rate (39.1 per 100,000) was similar to England (37.8 per 100,000).
- There were 49 deaths from drug misuse in 2019-21. The mortality rate (4.8 per 100,000) was similar to England (5.1 per 100,000).
- The rate of domestic abuse related incidents and crimes in adults aged 16 and over in 2021/22 was 28.7 per 1,000, lower than the England average of 30.8 per 1,000.
- There were 12,524 violent crime offences in 2021/22 – the rate of offences (35.7 per 1,000) was higher than England rate of 34.9 per 1,000.
- There were 1,225 violent sexual offences in 2021/22 – the rate of offences (3.5 per 1,000) was higher than England (3.0 per 1,000).



# Health Improvement – Children and Young People

Working with children and young people is the most effective and cost-effective way of preventing ill health in later life. In public health terms, this is where primary prevention, or preventing the causes of ill health in later life, has its best chance of success for the whole population. The COVID-19 pandemic has been particularly detrimental to children and young people and has widened inequalities. Many have lost opportunities for early development, experienced mental ill health, and current outbreaks with scarlet fever highlight the impact of lower levels of immunity to common infections. Mitigating the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic in children and young people will be critical over the next few years.

## **The broad aims for this stage of life have already been identified:**

- Planned parenthood
- The first 1,000 days of life beginning with conception
- Support for parenting
- Prevention of Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs)
- School readiness
- Prevention of school exclusions
- Readiness for the world of work and adult life.



Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) are linked to long-term impacts on an individual's health, wellbeing and life chances. Research is revealing the extent to which experiences and events during childhood, such as abuse, neglect and dysfunctional home environments, are associated with the development of a wide range of harmful behaviours including smoking, harmful alcohol use, drug use, risky sexual behaviour, violence and crime. Adverse childhood experiences aren't just about children; they affect people of all ages, they aren't just about people living in poverty; they cross every social boundary. However, research shows that those living in areas of deprivation are at greater risk of experiencing multiple ACEs.

**The ten adverse childhood experiences include five direct ACEs:**

- Sexual abuse by parent/caregiver
- Emotional abuse by parent/caregiver
- Physical abuse by parent/caregiver
- Emotional neglect by parent/caregiver
- Physical neglect by parent/caregiver

**and five indirect ACEs:**

- Parent/caregiver addicted to alcohol/other drugs
- Witnessed abuse in the household
- Family member in prison
- Family member with a mental illness
- Parent/caregiver disappeared through abandoning family/divorce.

To realise these goals requires the concerted efforts of families, communities, civic society, the private sector and statutory bodies. Success in these efforts will impact on both mental and physical health and wellbeing throughout life and will also reduce levels of violence in the community.

The North Northamptonshire Public Health directorate commissions and provides programmes and services to address the needs of children and young people (from 0-19 up to 25 with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND). This includes supporting the early years through our health visiting and school nursing services, providing opportunities to improve nutrition and maintain a healthy weight. We work with schools through the Healthy Schools programme and School Health Service by developing approaches that improve health and wellbeing, and work with other organisations on targeted approaches to support children and young people most in need.

While our sexual health and substance misuse services support all ages, young people are often those most at greatest risk.

North Northamptonshire Council was successful in achieving £1.9m of Multiply funding across the next three years to directly impact the numeracy skills of residents. Working with partners, a range of innovative options will be offered to residents, including targeted provision for those in the highest areas of need and those requiring improved numeracy skills for increased employment opportunities. In addition, the Multiply grant will directly support those in need through the current cost of living crisis by offering courses and intervention on budgeting, financial management and healthy lifestyles.

## We will

- Work in partnership with maternity services and early years settings and with others to influence childhood conditions and commission and provide services that give children the best start in life.
- Work with the Family Hubs team to improve access to parenting support and parent relationship services as, many families are struggling to access, especially families with non-clinical diagnosis.
- Work to engage young people and ensure service provisions are appropriate to support young people who have ACE experiences.
- Work with others to better support those staff in contact with parents in the early years, providing consistent public health messaging and support for action.
- Work strategically with schools and other stakeholders on the Healthy Schools programme, developing networks to build momentum and a consistent approach.
- Develop targeted programmes to address the priority issues identified in the recent schools survey including tackling healthy weight, nutrition and physical activity.
- Strengthen the voices of children and young people in decision-making.
- Develop a coordinated response to working with young people on building resilience, emotional health and wellbeing.
- Strengthen the approach to addressing the interrelated risky behaviours of violence, substance misuse, smoking and risky sexual behavior.
- Continue to promote good oral health to children and young people.
- Continue to commission high quality sexual health services that are accessible and acceptable to young people and high-risk populations.



## Where are we now? Children and Young People

- 3,789 babies were born in North Northamptonshire in 2021.
- 11.2% of mothers smoked during pregnancy in 2021/22. This was higher than the England average of 9.1%.
- 2.4% of babies born in 2021 had a low birth weight (under 2,500 grams), similar to the England average of 2.8%.
- There were 45 infant deaths under one year of age in 2019-21. The infant mortality rate of 3.9 (per 1,000) was the same as the England rate.
- 46.6% of babies were breastfed 6-8 weeks after birth in 2021/22, lower than the England average of 49.3%.
- 22,100 children aged 0-4 attended A&E in 2021/22 – the hospital attendance rate (1,097.8 per 1,000) was higher than the England rate (762.8 per 1,000).
- 240 children aged 0-5 were admitted to hospital for tooth decay in 2018/19-2020/21 – the hospital admission rate (309 per 100,000) was higher than the England rate (221 per 100,000).
- 22.0% of Reception year children (aged 4-5 years) in 2021/22 were overweight or obese, similar to the England average of 22.3%; this proportion increased to 39.1% among Year 6 children (aged 10-11 years), similar to 37.8% in England.
- 48.5% of children and young people aged 5-16 were classified as being physically active in 2021/22, similar to the England average of 47.2%.
- There were 83 pregnancies in girls aged under 18 in 2020 – the conception rate (13.7 per 1,000 females aged 15-17) was similar to the England rate (13.0).
- In 2020, 42 under 18 pregnancies (51.8%) led to abortions (53.0% England). Among girls aged under 16, there were six pregnancies in 2020, and the conception rate (0.9 per 1,000 females aged 13-15) was lower than the England rate (2.0).
- The hospital admission rate for alcohol-specific conditions among children under 18 was 27.2 per 100,000 in 2018/19-2020/21, similar to the England rate of 29.3 per 100,000.
- The hospital admission rate for substance misuse among young people aged 15-24 was 100.3 per 100,000 in 2018/19-2020/21, higher than the England rate of 81.2 per 100,000.
- 835 children and young people were admitted to hospital due to unintentional and deliberate injuries in 2020/21. The admission rates (per 10,000) were lower among children aged 0-14 compared with England (58.3 versus 75.7), and higher for young people aged 15-24 (123.4 versus 112.4).
- The hospital admission rate for self-harm among children aged 10-14 was 236.3 (per 100,000), similar to the England rate of 213.0, whilst for young people aged 15-19 (883.5 versus 652.6) and those aged 20-24 (639.9 versus 401.8), rates were higher in 2020/21.

# Health Improvement – Adults

By their mid-twenties, people are mostly fully grown, and the trajectory of physical and mental health is well established. If the period of childhood, adolescence and young adulthood is that in which the healthy foundations for the years have been laid in terms of the conditions which have been experienced and behaviours adopted, the next period, that of working age adult life, is one in which the potential for primary prevention is lessened. Rather modifying behaviour, reducing risk and harm, and the early identification of health problems focused on self- and primary health care becomes the main focus. In public health this is referred to as secondary prevention.

Improving health and wellbeing in adulthood is dependent on a wider range of factors, including those opportunities for behavioural change, through optimising the natural and built environment; by ensuring the prospects for personal development and work opportunities; and through the support of social networks and communities, backed up by accessible, high quality clinical and social care. Actions in these areas can reduce the risk of the major groups of non-communicable disease such as cancer, heart disease, stroke, depression, respiratory illness and diabetes which can afflict humans over time but may be prevented from becoming established or getting worse.

The public health aim for adult life is to prevent and defer decline in health and promote wellbeing in adults by supporting individuals in behaviour change that promotes health. Achieving good mental and physical health in working age adults provides benefits in older age, promoting independence and reducing the demand on health and social care services.

Public health has a range of programmes and services designed to support adults. This includes individual support through services including the NHS Health Checks programme, smoking cessation and weight management. The approach in North Northamptonshire is to work with local communities and settings such

as workplaces to achieve these ambitions. In addition to the corporate commitment to work with local neighbourhoods and areas, a new stream of work is being developed in collaboration with so-called Anchor institutions. Anchor institutions are those larger organisations, such as hospitals, universities and councils, private companies and social organisations, which have the potential, through their policies, practices and and procurement, to reshape the health prospects of their workforces, clients, customers and contractors and their communities and, at the same time, contribute to the challenge of the climate crisis and environmental sustainability.

Supporting others in the council, NHS and partner organisations to use their activities to improve health will be an important element of our future work. Working with those involved in clinical and social work to continue to develop evidence-based programmes such as Making Every Contact Count (MEEC) and trauma informed practice, will be developed as an opportunity to use the daily contact of professional encounters to provide evidence-based motivation and support for the adoption of healthier lifestyles.



**We will:**

- Work with the newly established Integrated Care Partnership (ICP) and the Local Area Partnerships (LAPs) to develop an asset-based approach to community development with a focus on health and wellbeing.
- Work with Anchor institutions, employers, schools and colleges, leisure and recreation centres and other community settings to deliver peer to peer programmes addressing a range of health and wellbeing outcomes.
- Contribute to the levelling up agenda, ensuring that all our programmes of work address health inequalities and the needs of marginal and hard to reach groups, are designed to be sustainable and value for money.
- Support the training of professionals across the NHS, council and wider system to improve mental and physical outcomes, including use of MECC, motivational interviewing and trauma informed practice.
- Work with partners to develop and deliver a mental health promotion programme and implement our suicide prevention strategy.
- Strengthen the delivery of an effective NHS Health Checks programme focusing on the most vulnerable groups and building on the emerging evidence base for digital delivery.
- Explore the potential for digital health support for individuals, families and communities while ensuring that programmes reach out to those who are digitally excluded.
- Implement a whole systems approach to lifestyle aspects of food and nutrition; healthy weight.



## Where are we now? Health Improvement Adults

- 4.9% of people (17,549) in North Northamptonshire described their general health as 'bad' or 'very bad' according to the 2021 Census which is lower than the England average of 5.2%.
- In 2021/22, 5.4% of adults aged 16 and over reported low levels of life satisfaction (England 5.0%), 2.6% reported low levels of worthwhile (England 4.0%), 8.2% reported low levels of happiness (England 8.4%), and 18.2% reported high levels of anxiety (England 22.6%) – all wellbeing outcomes were similar to England.
- 62.6% of adults over 19 years of age were found to be physically active in 2020/21, lower than the England average of 65.9%; 26.4% were defined as inactive, higher than the England average of 23.4%.
- In 2019/20 52.7% of adults aged 16 and over were eating the recommended '5-a-day' portions of fruit and vegetables, lower than the England average of 55.4%.
- In 2020/21, 69.6% of adults aged 18 and over were classified as overweight or obese, higher than in England (63.5%); 9.6% of these adults were obese compared with 25.3% in England.
- 15.6% of adults in North Northamptonshire were recorded with depression on GP registers in 2021/22 (12.7% England), 15.1% had hypertension (14.0% England), 7.7% had diabetes (7.3% England) – these were the three highest recorded long-term conditions.
- There were 535 emergency hospital admissions for intentional self-harm in 2021/22 in North Northamptonshire – the hospital admission rate (151.9 per 100,000) was similar to the England rate (163.9 per 100,000).
- In 2019-21 there were 96 suicides among people aged 10 years old and over in North Northamptonshire, a rate of 10.8 per 100,000, similar to the England rate of 10.4 per 100,000.
- There were 4,912 hospital admissions for alcohol-related conditions in 2020/21 – this admission rate (1,440 per 100,000) was lower than the England rate (1,500 per 100,000).
- There were 562 deaths in under 75s from cancers considered preventable in 2017-19. The mortality rate (59.6 per 100,000) was higher than England (54.1 per 100,000).
- In the under 75s, there were 268 deaths from cardiovascular diseases considered preventable in 2017-19. The mortality rate (28.3 per 100,000) was similar to England (28.1 per 100,000).
- There were 226 deaths in under 75s from respiratory diseases considered preventable in 2017-19. The mortality rate (23.8 per 100,000) was higher than England (20.2 per 100,000).
- 19.1% of adults reported a long-term musculoskeletal problem in 2021, higher than the England average of 17.0%.
- There were 1,180 emergency hospital admissions due to falls in people aged 65 and over in 2020/21. The admission rate (1,893 per 100,000) was lower than England (2,023 per 100,000).
- There were 310 hip fractures in people aged 65 and over in 2020/21 – 90 were among those aged 65-79, 220 in those aged 80 and over; the hip fracture rate in people aged 65 and over (500 per 100,000) was similar to England (529 per 100,000).



# Health Care

## Public Health

Health Care Public Health or Population Based Health Management is the application of public health principles, including epidemiological methods, to the planning, provision and evaluation of health care in a defined population. Working with the NHS and providing specialist public health advice and leadership is a core part of the public health function in a local authority bringing to bear the tools of public health practice on the provision of health and care.

Intrinsic to these tools is the epidemiological method with its basis in both quantitative and qualitative assessment and surveillance that had its origins in the registration of births and deaths, official notification of cases of infectious disease and decennial household censuses that date from the earliest days of public health in the nineteenth century. The work of the early Medical Officers of Health was based on these systems of registration and notification to advise the local authorities of their day.

In more recent times, the importance of qualitative perspectives including the lived experience of individuals, families, and communities has been recognised as being as important as a purely numerical understanding, as have anthropological, sociological and other insights from social psychology and communication science in producing a full picture; commissioned and pure research are also important in answering specific questions and informing practical advances based on theoretical exploration. The limitations of a narrow, biological and quantitative perspective were shown up vividly both in the Ebola epidemic of 2014 and the recent COVID-19 pandemic when a failure to understand the spread of infection from a broader public point of view led to delays in effective action and avoidable deaths.

The application of epidemiology in its various forms has a number of valuable applications including in the understanding of the priorities, working and effectiveness of health and social care. The public health perspective involves segmenting the way we look at populations into three: the whole

population; populations at risk; and populations suffering from defined medical conditions where medical and social care can make a difference.

In general, the contribution from local government and its partners can be seen as its role in assuring the protection of the population's health by tackling the upstream determinants of health and disease by primary prevention while the contribution of the National Health Service hospitals and specialist clinics is largely one of tertiary prevention. That is to say through providing specialist treatment to save life or mitigate the impact of ill health on everyday living. Where the work of local government meets that of the NHS is in the secondary prevention work of primary health care through vaccination and screening programmes, and early intervention to prevent disease progression or to support rehabilitation in the community.

The NHS Long Term Plan highlights the opportunities for prevention at an earlier stage, supporting those at an early stage of illness from progressing and from systematically identifying opportunities to prevent ill health occurring. Public Health Teams in councils have continued working closely with the NHS on shared priorities, including prevention, addressing inequalities and health protection. This will continue to be an important part of our workstream.

The NHS organisational landscape has changed considerably over the last couple of years with the formation of the NHS Integrated Care Board (ICB) and the formation of the Integrated Care System (ICS) and the Integrated Care Partnership (ICP). (9) These new organisations provide opportunities for organisations to work more closely together to collectively improve the health of the local population and reduce inequalities. Public health expertise in these organisations is important to ensure services are designed to improve public health outcomes and reduce inequalities.



**We will:**

- Provide strong, visible public health leadership within the Northamptonshire healthcare system to protect and promote health.
- Develop an integrated approach to generating and using public health evidence and intelligence in decision making within the NHS and across the ICP.
- Promote a focus on prevention and inequalities in the commissioning and delivery of NHS functions, including strong links with the factors influencing health outcomes such as employment, education, housing and the environment.
- Work with the NHS to ensure good knowledge, systems and processes are in place for responding to health protection threats.
- Ensure that the Northamptonshire system provides high quality training in relation to healthcare public health, supporting NHS training programmes and professional development in developing public health skills.
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- Ensure that the Northamptonshire system provides high quality training in relation to healthcare public health, supporting NHS training programmes and professional development in developing public health skills.

# Commissioning

Over half of the North Northamptonshire Public Health grant is spent on externally commissioned services delivered by organisations outside of the council. The role of Public Health as the commissioner of services is to design the requirements of the service, find suitable organisations to deliver the service, monitor performance and work with those providing services on continuous improvement.

Externally commissioned services cover children's services, including health visiting, school nursing and specialist sexual health services and NHS Health Checks. The external environment is rapidly changing with rising inflation, workforce challenges, and increased competition for organisations to deliver services. Our approach to commissioning must respond to these issues, and to use all the elements of the commissioning process to maximise public health outcomes.

Most of the services that we need to provide as a condition of the Public Health grant funding are delivered and will require recommissioning within the next three years. This includes contracts related to substance misuse, the children's 0-19s service,

sexual health and NHS Health Checks.

## We will:

- Develop the North Northamptonshire Council Public Health commissioning function with the capacity to support all areas of public health, and technical skills and agility to address the external challenges.
- Use our commissioning powers to embed the public health priorities, with a focus on reducing health inequalities, co-production, sustainability, and strengthening work on communities and place.
- Develop use of digital and technology in our commissioning and delivery of services.
- Work collaboratively with colleagues across the council and ICS on approaches to social value and to co-commissioning to address common strategic issues.
- Provide a robust approach to contract, risk, and performance management, and to monitoring and evaluating internally and externally commissioned public health programmes, while maintaining our work on quality assurance.



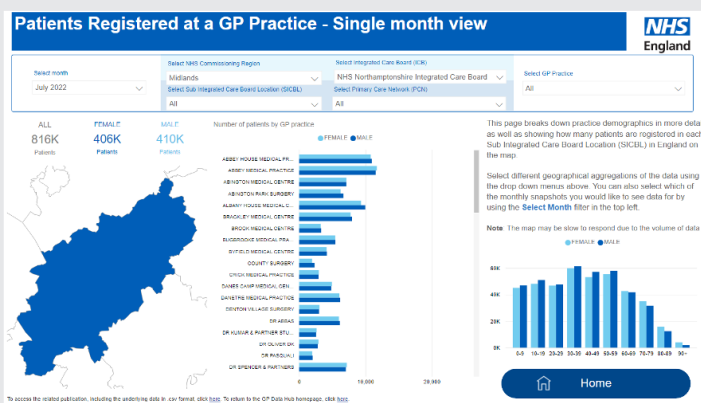
# Research, evidence and intelligence

Evidence and intelligence constitute the cornerstone and one of the bookends of public health. What we do is driven by understanding patterns of health and disease, identifying needs of our local population and prescribing those interventions that are most effective in improving health and wellbeing. We must also monitor and evaluate the performance of our local services while understanding the economic impact of our decisions. Evidence gained from qualitative methods such as interviews and focus groups are just as important as analysis of quantitative data. We need to be using intelligence from those with the lived experience to inform the design of services and public health programmes.

There will always be gaps in understanding, and strong links with academic institutions, especially our local University of Northampton. Such links have important benefits including the provision of educational and career opportunities for local people, providing a sustainable local pipeline of staff for local health, social care, and wellbeing services, and having ready access to appropriate research expertise to throw light on pressing issues.

## We will:

- Work with partners across and beyond the council to develop a joined-up, evidence and intelligence function to support commissioning decisions.
- Build on new tools and techniques for data linkage, enabling measurement of the impact of a change in one part of the system on other parts.
- Work with stakeholders to develop the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment and Asset mapping, reflecting the priorities of the Integrated Care Partnership and Health and Wellbeing Board.
- Strengthen the evaluation of public health interventions delivered across the council and wider system, providing clarity on health and economic impact.
- Improve the experience of the public users of public health services, with clear service offers the increased ability of managers to be self-sufficient in access to intelligence resources through the use of tools such as Microsoft Power BI.
- Build relationships with academic institutions and research networks within the ICS to ensure development of a public health research programme within the council.
- Improve how we use information from those with lived experience to develop services and further embed the use of citizen science and understanding of the lived experience of local people.



# Communications

Good communications are the other bookend of a robust and effective public health function, the other being sound intelligence. Clear messaging and information are central to any modern public health services. We need to be visible in and trusted by our communities to achieve our objectives. It is important that the tone and content are right to ensure that the desired outcomes are achieved, whether this is informing, warning or advising. The use of multimedia was critical during the COVID-19 pandemic and its value should not be underestimated, nor conversely overused. Effective campaigns will help people better manage their own health.

## We will:

- Continue to provide expert advice, underpinned by data and evidence and informed by behavioural insights.

- Use our learning from the COVID-19 pandemic of those approaches that work best with different groups in our local community.
- Maximise low-cost, effective messaging channels.
- Deliver a planned programme of awareness raising and information to the public to support the delivery of all our public health programmes.
- Strengthen our internal communication so other teams in the council understand the work of public health and opportunities for engagement.



# A Diverse and Skilled Workforce

The skills and capacity of the North Northamptonshire Public Health Team and wider workforce are essential to the improvement of population health and delivery of all those programmes that protect and improve health.

Within the Public Health Team itself we are fortunate to have a highly skilled and motivated workforce. We have expertise drawn from a range of professional, including clinical and non-clinical backgrounds, highly motivated staff many of whom are involved in professional public health training.

Reflecting the wider market, recruitment of public health staff at all levels remains challenging and the disaggregation has created skills gaps in some areas and impacted on wider training programmes. Our aim is to provide an escalator of opportunity, providing the environment and resources for individuals to develop skills, be inspired and realise their aspirations. We intend to build capacity and capability for public health both within the Public Health directorate itself and across the council with a programme of developmental opportunities and through the development of an apprentice programme.

## **We will:**

- Develop a workforce strategy for the Public Health Team and beyond that meets the needs of teams and supports delivery of the strategic plan.

- Broaden our public health training offer, building up expertise to deliver high quality public health training across the council and external stakeholders.
- Support all career stages, including developing an apprenticeship programme for those early in their career and providing specialist training for aspiring consultants.
- Ensure that our ways of working create a diverse workforce, where staff from all backgrounds feel equally valued and accepted.
- Develop innovative approaches to our training and development, so we are seen as leaders across the system and as an employer of choice.
- Provide the required training and support to ensure strong leadership at all levels.
- Continue to work closely with the Adult Learning Team on the development of opportunities to improve life chances and reduce inequalities.
- Explore the use of digital platforms for personal and popular public health education.



# Building and Maintaining a Strong Directorate

Strong foundations that enable both the public health function and specific public health services to be delivered effectively and efficiently are essential for the future. Following the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and the disaggregation of the countywide service there are opportunities for North Northamptonshire to develop in line with modern public health values and aspirations and local need. These include opportunities for new ways of working in new partnerships. All are contingent on delivering support and back-office services well and ensuring that governance and accountability lines are clear.

Effective processes will lead to efficiencies and ensure that we are focused on delivering an excellent function and public health services in line with statutory requirements and grant conditions. To ensure that we have the best opportunity to deliver excellent public health services, we will invest in short term capacity to support the establishment and delivery of a highly effective service.

## **We will:**

- Complete a team restructure to ensure that we have sufficient capacity and capability to deliver the public health functions and strategy following the disaggregation.
- Develop clear governance and processes for key activities:
  - Corporate governance including executive and committee deadlines
  - Communication
  - Budget management processes
  - Workforce development
  - Human Resources
  - Complaints and freedom of information requests
  - Staff training
  - Business continuity
  - Risk registers.

# Conclusion

The creation of the new unitary council for North Northamptonshire has brought together many of the key local government functions that can address the determinants of health and health inequalities both through areas that are under its own direct control and through partnership working, for the first time.

This report sets out the ambitions for Public Health in North Northamptonshire and outlines how we will work to improve the health and wellbeing of the local population and reduce health inequalities over the next three years. The new Public Health Team is being established at a challenging time. The long-term impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on physical and mental health is becoming apparent, affecting all age groups and disproportionately impacting those who are most deprived. Simultaneously, many are struggling with the cost of living crisis.



## Our Priorities

Moving forward, we will take a balanced approach to improving public health in North Northamptonshire, recognising that action is needed at three levels: interventions that impact the whole population; targeted intervention for groups at risk of ill health; and support for those with established disease to prevent further ill health and enable people to live well and independently with established medical conditions.

## Focus on the Early Years

We will prioritise our resources in certain areas. Investing in planned parenthood and support for the early years. Investment in the first 1,000 days provides the greatest opportunity for lifelong health outcomes. Providing support to parents and children at this stage reduces the risk of adverse childhood experiences (ACEs), traumatic events such as violence, abuse and neglect that have a lifelong and often intergenerational impact on health. (10) Preventing ACEs improves a wide range of outcomes including school readiness, educational outcomes, employment and earning potential, and reduces the risk of violence, substance misuse, mental ill health and chronic physical health conditions.



# Working with Communities

Working with local communities to identify opportunities to influence those conditions that increase the burden of ill health, especially on the most vulnerable and disadvantaged, and strengthening support to those with established ill health is further priority.

The new Northamptonshire Integrated Care Partnership provides a focus for this place-based work. Local Area Partnerships, local communities with around 30,000 to 50,000 people, are a vital part of the ICP and provide the structure for this work. LAPs are bringing together local communities to identify their priorities and to identify solutions.

We have begun to work closely with communities and intend to build on this using Asset Based Community Development (ABCD) approaches. ABCD starts from a position of identifying assets, or strengths, in the community as the basis for developing solutions. Assets can be the knowledge, skills and resources of individuals, associations and institutions, physical assets such as buildings and green spaces or local networks. Starting from a position of individuals and communities being half full rather than half empty, that it truly does “take a village or neighbourhood, to raise a child”, and what can be done by and with, as opposed to, with its emphasis on weaknesses rather than strengths, has been shown to be a more effective approach that is more sustainable in the long term.



# Embedding the Public Health Approach

Throughout this report we highlight the importance of working in partnership with other teams in North Northamptonshire Council and with other individuals, groups, bodies, and organisations outside it ('The Organised Efforts Of Society') to achieve public health outcomes.

Taking this approach means that we can reach many more people than the Public Health Team can reach alone, and which statutory services may only scratch the surface of. It also provides the opportunity to influence the wider determinants of health – factors such as education, housing, employment, the built and natural environment, our social and community networks, and the roots of crime and violence - all of which are strongly linked to health outcomes. This is where there is a significant opportunity to influence health and wellbeing outcomes and reduce health inequalities.

## Evidence-based Decisions and Communications

We have also focused on high quality evidence-based decision making and strong communication - the bookends of public health. Evidence and intelligence underpin everything we do in public health and require a wide-ranging approach. We need to ensure we have this range, from generating new knowledge from research; to using new techniques to turn data from multiple sources into intelligence; to working with individual and local communities to understand their experience and use this to design services. Strong communications with our local communities have been vital in our response to the COVID-19 pandemic and we will continue to build on this experience.

## High Quality Public Health Services

We will continue to commission and deliver public health services to our local communities, and this remains a vital part of our service delivery. Services include public health services such as health visiting, NHS health checks, specialist sexual health services, substance misuse services, smoking cessation and weight management services. Our workforce is key; building the skills and capacity of the Public Health Team and wider workforce is central to delivering our ambitions.

**The North Northamptonshire Public Health Team welcomes the challenge of protecting and improving the health of our local people in the years ahead. We stand ready to serve.**

**John Ashton**

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## Full Council Thursday 31 August 2023

<b>Report Title</b>	<b>Capital Programme and Revenue Budget Update 2023/24</b>
<b>Executive Member</b>	Councillor Lloyd Bunday, Executive Member for Finance and Transformation
<b>Report Author</b>	Janice Gotts, Executive Director of Finance and Performance <a href="mailto:Janice.gotts@northnorthants.gov.uk">Janice.gotts@northnorthants.gov.uk</a>

<b>Are there public sector equality duty implications?</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
<b>Does the report contain confidential or exempt information (whether in appendices or not)?</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
<b>Applicable paragraph number for exemption from publication under Schedule 12A Local Government Act 1974</b>	

### List of Appendices

None

### **1. Purpose of Report**

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- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to request approval for:
- a virement for a capital scheme which is in excess of £0.5m, in relation to the Phase 2 Refugee Resettlement Scheme;
  - new borrowing in relation to a capital scheme for Environmental Services grounds maintenance equipment; and
  - the use of the Transformation Reserve to fund one-off revenue implementation costs of the Education Case Management System and the inclusion of ongoing annual revenue costs of the system into the Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP)
- 1.2 Approval of the funding will allow the schemes to move forward to procurement and delivery. The Executive considered these items at its meetings on 12<sup>th</sup> July 2023 and 17<sup>th</sup> August 2023 and recommended that Full Council grant approval for the funding requests as outlined in this report.

## **2. Executive Summary**

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- 2.1 This report contains details of capital projects which have been submitted by officers to the Council's Strategic Capital Board as part of the Council's Capital Approval Process. Each scheme must complete a business case setting out the changes requested to the Capital Programme, including the purpose of the spend, the expected outcomes and the financial implications together with funding routes.

## **3. Recommendations**

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- 3.1 It is recommended that Council:

**a) Approve the funding for the following changes to the capital programme:**

- i) Phase 2 Refugee Resettlement Scheme – approve a budget in 2023/24 of £3.298m for phase 2 of the Refugee Resettlement Scheme funded through £1.298m from the Local Authority Housing Grant and a virement of £2m from the Housing and Homelessness prevention capital programme to the Resettlement capital programme to meet the match funding requirement for the grant.
- ii) Environmental Services ground maintenance equipment – approve a budget in 2023/24 of £445k for the replacement of grounds maintenance equipment funding from borrowing.

**b) Approve the funding for the following changes to the revenue budget:**

- i) Education Case Management System (ECMS) – approve a revenue budget of £1.362m in 2023/24 for the procurement and one-off implementation costs of a new ECMS funded through use of the Transformation Reserve, and approve the inclusion of ongoing revenue costs of £131k in 2024/25 and £142.5k in 2025/26 into the MTFP.

- 3.2 Reasons for Recommendations: These are set out in greater detail within section 5 of the report, but can be summarised as:

- i) To support the housing provision in North Northamptonshire;
- ii) To support the achievement of corporate plan objectives; and
- iii) To improve service provision in relation to children, young people, parents and carers

- 3.3 Alternative Options Considered:

- i) Alternative options in relation to the Phase 2 Refugee Resettlement Scheme can be summarised as follows:–
  - o Do nothing – if the Council does not participate in this programme, it will not receive the funding allocation and the challenge of finding onward settled accommodation for refugees will remain;.

- Commit to delivering a smaller number of homes – whilst this may be easier to achieve, the government grant allocation will reduce proportionately and less homes will be acquired into our temporary accommodation stock. Ultimately fewer additional homes will be available to the Council to use as affordable housing for our residents in the longer term.
- ii) Alternative options in relation to Environmental Services Grounds Maintenance Equipment can be summarised as follows:-
- External grants were explored but are not available for plant equipment. The option of leasing new equipment was considered, but not deemed to represent value for money and therefore borrowing is the most cost-effective funding source. The other alternative option would be to not approve this scheme. However, this would have an adverse impact on meeting service needs and the achievement of NNC's corporate objectives.
- iii) Alternative options considered for the ECMS can be summarised as follows:-
- Do nothing;
  - Apply for a variation with the current supplier, subject to this option being available under the current contract and such modification satisfying the Public Contracts Regulations 2015;
  - Reprocure the current system through a direct award; or
  - Build a bespoke system for the Education Service.
- iv) More detail in relation to alternative options considered by the Executive in respect of the three schemes are set out in the reports presented on 12<sup>th</sup> July and 17<sup>th</sup> August 2023, as referenced in Section 8 of this report.

## **4. Report Background**

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- 4.1 The Capital Programme is the Council's plan for investing in assets to efficiently deliver its statutory services, and to improve the local infrastructure of North Northamptonshire, with the benefits lasting over a number of years. The Council is required to set a balanced revenue budget and therefore must ensure that where borrowing is proposed to fund the cost of capital that the cost of servicing the debt is affordable within the Council's revenue budget.
- 4.2 Resources come from several sources including Government grants, capital receipts from surplus land and buildings, revenue contributions, other external contributions and borrowing. The Council captures its projected capital expenditure within the Capital Programme to monitor the same, help to control costs and ensure transparency. Given that the Capital Programme is approved by Council, changes to it are also approved by Council unless authority has been delegated in accordance with the Council's constitution.

- 4.3 This report provides an update to the Capital Programme 2023/24 as adopted by the Council in February 2023 and requests that the proposed changes are approved and reflected within the programme.
- 4.4 This report also covers the request for approval for the use of reserves in relation to the ECMS which are revenue costs and therefore seeks to update the revenue budget for 2023/24 as included within the Medium Term Financial Plan, as adopted by the Council in February 2023, and requests the proposed changes are approved and reflected within the revenue budget.

## **5. Issues and Choices – Further Detail on the Recommendations and Updates to the Capital Programme and Revenue Budget for 2023/24**

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- 5.1 **Phase 2 Refugee Resettlement scheme – capital budget of £1.298m in 2023/24 which is to be funded from the Local Authority Housing Fund Round 2, together with a virement of £2m from homelessness prevention capital programme to the resettlement programme:** Further funding from the Department of Levelling Up Housing and Communities of £1.298m for a further 11 homes is available to deliver additional housing for those on Afghan resettlement schemes and to ease the wider homelessness pressure. The grant requires match funding from the Council of £2m which will be met from accelerating the current homelessness prevention budget from 2024/25 and 2025/26, £1m for each year respectively, into 2023/24. It is proposed that this budget will then be vired into the resettlement capital programme.
- 5.2 Further information on this scheme is available from the separate report to Executive on 17<sup>th</sup> August 2023.
- 5.3 **Environmental Services grounds maintenance equipment – capital budget of £445k in 2023/24 (£400k brought forward from the development pool in 2024/25) which is to be funded from borrowing:** This proposal is seeking vital funds necessary to ensure the environment service continues to be deliverable. Within the grounds and parks services, equipment which is no longer in a serviceable state and not economically viable to continue in active service has been identified. There is also an environmental impact in continuing to use outdated technology and there are risks to users as the equipment deteriorates. Modernising elements of the equipment and fleet will ensure service provision beyond 2030.
- 5.4 Further information on this scheme is available from the Capital Update Report to Executive on 12th July 2023.
- 5.5 **Education Case Management System (ECMS) – revenue budget approval in 2023/24 for of £1.362m in 2023/24 for the procurement and one-off implementation costs of a new ECMS funded through use of the Transformation Reserve, and approve the inclusion of ongoing revenue costs of £131k in 2024/25 and £142.5k in 2025/26 into the MTFP:** The current ECMS is coming to the end of its contract on 31<sup>st</sup> March 2024, and



therefore a procurement exercise needs to be undertaken to replace the existing ECMS. The system is essential to the delivery of an effective and efficient education service.

- 5.6 Further information on this scheme is available from the separate report to Executive on 17<sup>th</sup> August 2023.

## **6. Next Steps**

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- 6.1 The next steps of the capital schemes and the ECMS are detailed within the reports to Executive, as referenced in section 8 below.

## **7. Implications (including financial implications)**

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### **7.1 Resources, Finance and Transformation**

- 7.1.1 The additional budget requirements in this report are funded from the use of external grants, borrowing and reserves. The funding source for each scheme is set out in the recommendations in section 3 and within the scheme details as set out within section 5 of this report.

- 7.1.2 A virement request as set out in section 5 is to support the match funding of government grant.

### **7.2 Legal**

The Council must utilise funding and deliver schemes in line with the restrictions and requirements as set out in the agreements linked to that funding and the requirements as set out in the Council's Constitution, in particular the budget setting and policy framework and the financial regulations. In this regard any new borrowing must be approved by Council, as requested in this report.

### **7.3 Risk**

- 7.3.1 The deliverability of the 2023/24 Capital Programme is monitored by each accountable project manager and senior officer. There is further review throughout the financial year reported through the Executive.
- 7.3.2 If any overspends or emerging pressures are identified during the year, then mitigating actions will be sought and management interventions undertaken.
- 7.3.3 With most capital projects there is a risk that delays, and cost increases may arise as a result of the impact of inflation. Generally, this relates to the supply and price of materials with projects requiring increased lead in times. Whilst every attempt is made to cost these implications into the project, the risks remain. However, it must be recognised that the current "Cost of Living Crisis" has driven up the level of inflation, which is much higher than in

previous periods and indeed when funding bids were originally submitted. This therefore poses a risk to the deliverability of the projects as originally envisaged, where reductions to the scope of projects may be required to ensure budgets are not overspent.

7.3.4 There is a risk in relation to funding, particularly where it is from third parties including grants. Appropriate agreements must be entered into to ensure that the funding is secured and spend is in accordance with any criteria stipulated by the funder, this includes both the nature of the spend and the timing (where a deadline applies).

7.3.5 The current uncertain economic context is also increasing interest rates associated with borrowing that is used to fund elements of the capital programme. This treasury risk impacts the overall affordability of the programme, which will be closely monitored and managed, but may lead to a reduced capital programme in the future.

7.3.6 The deliverability of the revenue budget is monitored by Service Managers and Assistant Directors across the Council. There is further review throughout the year reported through to Executive.

#### **7.4 Relevant Policies and Plans**

7.4.1 The schemes provide a strategic fit with the Council's priorities as set out within the corporate plan.

#### **7.5 Consultation**

7.5.1 The 2023/24 Capital Strategy, Capital Programme and Revenue Budget as part of the MTFP, were subject to consultation prior to approval by North Northamptonshire Council in February 2023. The programme was approved by Council at its meeting on 23<sup>rd</sup> February 2023 and was subject to consultation from 22<sup>nd</sup> December 2022 to 27<sup>th</sup> January 2023. These changes are in addition to the approved programme.

#### **7.6 Consideration by the Executive Advisory Panel**

7.6.1 Not applicable.

#### **7.7 Consideration by Scrutiny**

7.7.1 The schemes recommended in this report have not been considered by Scrutiny. However, monitoring against the programme is subject to Scrutiny.

#### **7.8 Equality Implications**

7.8.1 Nothing specific within this report.

## 7.9 **Climate and Environmental Impact**

7.9.1 The climate and environmental impact of each capital project will be considered and managed within the relevant scheme.

## 7.10 **Community Impact**

7.10.1 These proposals can be considered to have a positive impact on the community as the Capital Programme delivers a range of schemes to support and connect communities.

## 7.11 **Crime and Disorder Impact**

7.11.1 Nothing specific within this report.

## **8. Background Papers**

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8.1 The following background papers can be considered in relation to this report.

Capital Programme Budget 2023/24 – Full Council, 23<sup>rd</sup> February 2023 - [Capital Programme Report 2023-26 - Feb Council.pdf](#)

General Fund Budget 2023/24 – Full Council, 23<sup>rd</sup> February 2023 – [Budget 2023-24 - Council 23 Feb.pdf](#)

Capital Programme Update 2023/24 - Executive 17<sup>th</sup> August 2023 – [Capital Programme Update 2023-24.pdf](#)

Local Authority Housing Fund Round 2 Report – Executive, 17<sup>th</sup> August 2023 - [Local Authority Housing Fund Round 2 Funding.pdf](#)

Education Case Management System Procurement and Implementation Business Case – Executive 17<sup>th</sup> August 2023 – [Education Case Management System Procurement and Implementation Business Case.pdf](#)

Capital Programme Update 2023/24 – 12<sup>th</sup> July 2023 – [Capital Programme Update.pdf](#)

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