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Meeting: Joint Children's Trust Committee
Date: Wednesday, 22nd December, 2021
Time: 2.00 pm
Venue: The Maybin/Sunflower Room, One Angel Square, Northampton

To members of the Northamptonshire Children's Trust Joint Committee

Councillors Lloyd Bunday (North), Scott Edwards (North), Cllr Jason Smithers (North), Fiona Baker (West), Matthew Golby (West), Jonathan Nunn (West)

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Items requiring a decision			
05	Approval of the NCT Business Plan and Provisional Contract Sum	Rory Seymour, Commissioning Manager (NNC) Tony Challinor, Assistant Director of Commissioning and Partnerships (NNC)	7 - 135
06	Children's Trust Contractual Agreements	Rory Seymour, Commissioning Manager (NNC) Tony Challinor, Assistant Director of Commissioning and Partnerships (NNC)	137 - 146
Exempt Items			
07	None Notified		

Urgent Items

To consider any items of business of which notice has been given to the Proper Officer prior to the meeting of the Executive and the Chairman considers to be urgent pursuant to the LGA 1972.

08

Close of Meeting

Adele Wylie, Monitoring Officer
North Northamptonshire Council



Proper Officer
14th December 2021

This agenda has been published by Democratic Services.

Committee Officer: Jenny Daniels

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Agenda Item 3



Children's Trust Joint Committee

Wednesday 24th November 2021

At 2:10 pm in the Council Chamber, Swanspool House, Wellingborough.

Members in Attendance:

Councillor Scott Edwards	North Northamptonshire Council
Councillor Fiona Baker	West Northamptonshire Council
Councillor Lloyd Bunday	North Northamptonshire Council
Councillor Jonathan Nunn	West Northamptonshire Council
Councillor Jason Smithers	North Northamptonshire Council

Officers in Attendance:

Rob Bridge	Chief Executive NNC
Anna Earnshaw	Chief Executive WNC
Janice Gotts	Executive Director of Finance NNC
Martin Hendry	Executive Director of Finance WNC
Cathi Hadley	Director of Children's Services
Tony Challinor	Assistant Director of Commissioning and Partnerships NNC
Rory Seymour	Commissioning Manager NNC
Anne Ireson	Democratic Services NNC

17. Apologies

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Matt Golby (WNC).

18. Minutes

Resolved that the minutes of the meeting of the Children's Trust Joint Committee held on 22nd September 2021 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

19. Notifications of Requests to Address the Meeting

None.

20. Declarations of Interest

None.

21. Progress on the Development of the Northamptonshire Children’s Trust Business Plan and Provisional Contract Sum

A report was submitted which provided updates on the following: -

- The provisional contract sum negotiations between North and West Northamptonshire Councils and Northamptonshire Children’s Trust (NCT); and
- The development of NCT’s Business Plan for the 2022-25 period.

It was noted that, once agreement had been reached, the Business Plan and provisional contract sum would be presented for approval at the meeting of the Committee to be held in December. It would subsequently be subject to consultation, scrutiny, and approval processes in place for the respective council budgets.

The Chair thanked councillors and officers for their contributions to the negotiations and the development of the Business Plan.

Resolved that:

- (a) the process for negotiating the Trust’s contract sum and the work completed to date in coming to an agreement be noted; and
- (b) the plan for a revision Business Plan and provisional contract sum to be brought to the December Joint Committee for approval be noted.

22. Urgent Business

None.

(The meeting commenced at 2.10 pm and ended at 2.16 pm)

Signed
Chair



North
Northamptonshire
Council



West
Northamptonshire
Council

Item no: 5

Children's Trust Joint Committee 22 December 2021

Report Title	Approval of the NCT Business Plan and Provisional Contract Sum
Report Author	Rory Seymour, Commissioning Manager – North Northamptonshire Council Tony Challinor, Assistant Director of Commissioning and Partnerships – West Northamptonshire Council

List of Appendices

Appendix A – NCT Medium Term Financial Strategy

Appendix B – NCT savings proposals for 2022-25

Appendix C – NCT Business Plan

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1. To seek the Children's Trust Joint Committee's approval of the NCT Business Plan for 2022-23 and the Trust's provisional contract sum for 2022-23.

2. Executive Summary

- 2.1 The contractual agreements between NCT and the Councils give a deadline of 30 November for agreeing the provisional contract sum for the following financial year. This is also the deadline for the Trust to submit their Business Plan to the councils for approval.
- 2.2 Over recent weeks, the Trust and the Councils have been working together to agree a provisional contract sum for the 2022-23 financial year. A provisional contract sum was agreed between the Councils and the Trust at the meeting of the Strategic Group on the 24 November. Once approved, this will form a part of both councils' budgets for 2022-23 and will be subject to each council's budget approval and scrutiny processes.
- 2.3 At the same time the Trust have also been working on their Business Plan. This sets out the vision and strategic objectives for the Trust as well as their financial strategy. The approval of the Business Plan is a matter reserved for both councils as owners of the Trust and has therefore been brought to the Children's Trust Joint Committee for approval by both councils.

3. Recommendations

- 3.1 It is recommended that the Children's Trust Joint Committee:
- a) Approve the provisional contract sum for Northamptonshire's Children's Trust for the 2022-23 financial year
 - b) Approve the updated Northamptonshire Children's Trust Business Plan for the 2022/23-2025/26 period
- 3.2 Reason for Recommendations
- To set the budget for Northamptonshire Children's Trust for the next financial year
 - To facilitate the setting of both councils' budgets for the 2022/23 financial year and to meet the duty for them to set a balanced budget
 - To meet the requirements set out in the contractual agreements between the Councils and the Trust

4. Report Background

- 4.1 From 1 April 2021, after the abolition of Northamptonshire County Council, North Northamptonshire Council and West Northamptonshire Council became joint owners of Northamptonshire Children's Trust (NCT) with each council owning a 50% share. Whilst the Trust is operationally independent of the councils, the councils still retain significant control over NCT and are responsible for making decisions on a number of 'reserved matters' that are set out in the Trust's Articles of Association.
- 4.2 One of these reserved matters is annual approval of the Trust's Business Plan. The Articles of Association set out that on or before 15 September 2021, NCT should prepare and submit a draft Business Plan to the councils for the 3 years starting on 1 April 2022. On or before 30 November 2021, NCT should prepare a draft Business Plan for approval by the councils including any amendments agreed by the Board and the councils.
- 4.3 The Business Plan should include relevant information under the following headings: -
- Introduction
 - Strategic Framework
 - Working with partners
 - Priorities and objectives
 - Financial strategy and plans
 - Profit and loss account
 - Cash flow statement
 - Revenue budget and working capital requirement
- 4.4 The councils have established the Children's Trust Joint Committee to discharge the functions of the councils that relate to the joint ownership of NCT. The committee is therefore able to make decisions related to reserved matters such as the approval of the Business Plan.

- 4.5 The Trust previously developed an 'interim business plan' covering the period 1 November 2020 (NCT's services commencement date) to 31 March 2022. This was approved by both councils' shadow executive committees in March 2021.
- 4.6 At the same time as developing the Business Plan, as part of the contractual governance processes, the Councils and the Trust must negotiate the provisional contract sum for the following year. The Strategic Group (a group that oversees the contractual agreements that includes Children's Services lead members, senior council officers and senior NCT officers) must meet to discuss and agree the contract sum by 30 November. In agreeing the provisional contract sum the parties should consider a range of factors such as inflation and demography, although these factors are without limitation.
- 4.7 Once the Strategic Group has agreed the provisional contract sum, the councils and NCT must seek internal approval of the sum by the 15 January.
- 4.8 The Children's Trust Joint Committee received an update on the contract sum negotiation process to date and the development of the Trust's Business Plan at the meeting of the 24 November.

5. Issues and Choices

5.1 Contract Sum Negotiation Process

- 5.1.1 As was noted above, a paper was brought to the previous Joint Committee that outlined the contract sum negotiation process that had taken place between the Councils and the Trust.
- 5.1.2 The process involved officers and members from both councils as well as officers from NCT. The proposed contract sum has been through several iterations following discussion between the parties.
- 5.1.3 Discussion concluded with a detailed budget discussion between the councils and the Trust on the 24 November. This was attended by:
- The Leaders and Executive Members for children's services for both councils as well as the finance Executive Member of North Northants Council
 - The Chief Executives and Chief Finance Officers of both Councils
 - The Joint Director of Children's Services
 - The Trust Chair, Chief Executive, Director of Finance and Resources and Director of Social Care
 - Officers from the councils' Intelligent Client Function
- 5.1.4 Following this discussion, the parties were able to agree on a provisional contract sum and the discussion was followed by a meeting of the Strategic Group so this meeting could formally discuss and agree the contract sum.

5.2 Provisional Contract Sum

5.2.1 The provisional contract sum agreed between the councils and the Trust for 2022/23 is £137.45m, this is an increase of £0.3m compared to the 2021/22 financial year. Generally, North Northamptonshire Council will contribute 44% of the contract sum and West Northamptonshire Council 56% as per the disaggregation principles that were agreed as part of the creation of Northamptonshire's Children's Trust. However, there are some grant income streams where it has been agreed this funding will be paid to NNC and passported to the Trust.

5.2.2 The table below provides an outline of the services provided by NCT and what proportion of NCT's budget is taken up by each service area:

Service	Budget %
Family Support Services (including Early help and youth offending services)	5%
Safeguarding (including Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub, Assessment and Children in Need/Child Protection)	10%
Corporate parenting (including Court, Children in Care, Adoption, Fostering, Disabled Children's Team)	32%
Commissioning and Quality Assurance (including placements for Children in Care)	43%
NCT support services provided internally	7%
Council support services provided by NNC or WNC	3%

5.2.3 As is outlined above, this provisional contract sum has been arrived at following robust challenge from the councils. It has taken into account a range of factors including the Trust's Business Plan and key priorities, the resources available to both councils, demographic pressures, inflationary pressures, and the savings to be delivered by the Trust.

5.2.4 In order to keep within the 2022/23 provisional contract sum, the Trust have set out £2.99m worth of savings to be delivered in the financial year. These savings proposals are set out in Appendix B. Appendix B also sets out where the Trust are planning to deliver savings for the 2023/24 and 2024/25 financial years as part of their Medium-Term Financial Strategy. These proposals are only indicative at this stage and will form the basis for future contract sum negotiations.

5.2.5 The provisional contract sum included the proposed savings and service improvement is predicated on additional one of investment of £3.65m (£3m of which will be for the 2022/23 financial year). It should be noted that although this investment has been agreed in principle, each investment will require a full business case to be submitted to and approved by the councils. This may lead to some adjustment to the exact investment required.

5.2.6 The requested investment is summarised in the tables below:

Revenue	Total £m		
Activity	22/23	23/24	Total
Improve independent fostering agency	0.250	0.250	0.500
Early help - address complexity and increase statutory social work step down	0.400	0.400	0.800
Total Revenue	0.650	0.650	1.300

Capital	Total £m		
Activity	22/23	23/24	Total
IT infrastructure - mobile working technology	1.500	0.000	1.500
In-house residential home – this is subject to a bid to the DfE for match funding	0.850	0.000	0.850
Total Capital	2.350	0.000	2.650

5.2.7 Both the Councils and the Trust have noted that the proposed in-house residential home funded by £850k worth of capital funding is not likely to be delivered for the start of the 2022/23 financial year. This puts some of the £1.250m of savings in the placement budget at risk. It has been agreed that the Trust will initially look to manage this with in year mitigations and that the Trust and councils will work in partnership to ensure the appropriate contributions are received from Education (through the Designated Schools Grant) and Health for joint funded placements.

5.2.8 Outside of the agreed contract sum, NCT have requested an additional £1m of investment in 2022/23, again subject to separate business cases. These are made up of:

- £300k for the implementation of an IT system for the fostering service. This is in response to the recent inspection of the Trust’s Independent Fostering Agency (IFA) and the additional expectations related to becoming an IFA.
- £700k to meet additional demand for children’s social care. The Trust have seen an increase in the number of families requiring support and the complexity of cases as a direct result of covid-19 such as poverty, anxiety, non-school attendance, poor child and adult mental health, loss, and bereavement. This will fund additional social work capacity in the Duty and Assessment and Safeguarding Teams.

5.2.9 The Trust’s financial strategy is set out in greater detail in its Medium-Term Financial Strategy at Appendix A.

5.2.10 The Committee is asked to approve the provisional contract sum for the 2022/23 financial year. It should be noted that once approved, this will become part of both councils’ budget and will be subject to the approval and scrutiny processes of each council.

5.3 NCT Business Plan

5.3.1 At the same time as negotiating the provisional contract sum with the councils, NCT have been developing their business plan for 2022/23-2025/26. This builds on the previous iteration of the Business Plan that was approved by the shadow executives of both unitary councils in March 2021.

- 5.3.2 The overall strategic framework and key priorities have been refreshed since the approval of the first Business Plan for 2021-22. This has been developed in consultation with both councils as well as children, young people, and key partners. The strategic framework and key priorities are broadly similar to the initial Business Plan; changes have been made to reflect the progress that has been made since the initial plan was agreed and is aligned with updates to the Social Care Improvement Plan following recent Ofsted Monitoring Visits and inspection of the Independent Fostering Agency.
- 5.3.3 The Business Plan sets out NCT’s overall vision to have “Children, Young People and Families at the heart of all we do – in every action we take and every decision we make.”
- 5.3.4 The Plan also states NCT’s Strategic Priorities for the duration of the Business Plan. These priorities are based on NCT’s vision, ambitions, quality assurance, Ofsted feedback and discussions with Children, Young People and Families. The updated improvement plan details how the Trust will deliver these priorities and what this will mean for Children, Young People and Families. The Trust’s Strategic priorities are in the diagram below:



5.3.5 It should also be noted that per the terms of the Department for Education intervention, the Secretary of State for Education has consultation rights over the contents of the Business Plan.

6. Implications (including financial implications)

6.1 Resources and Financial

6.1.1 Once the provisional contract sum is approved, this will form a part of both council's draft budgets for the next financial year. This means it will be subject to the governance and scrutiny processes each council has in place for its budget setting process.

6.1.2 When the Trust was being developed, detailed work was completed to calculate how costs would be split between North and West Northamptonshire Councils. This was based on the relative populations and demand for children's social care services in each council area. It was agreed that West Northamptonshire would contribute 56% and North Northamptonshire Council would contribute 44% exclusive of any specific grants that are given directly to NNC to passport to the Trust. Further work is being completed by both councils to understand grant income assumptions and therefore the split of the contract sum as part of the councils' budget setting processes.

6.1.3 This is an overall increase of £0.3m compared to the 2021/22 financial year, which is approximately £0.17m for West Northamptonshire and £0.13m for North Northamptonshire.

6.2 Legal

6.2.1 The relationship between NCT and the councils is governed by a series of contractual and legal agreements. The finance mechanism of the Service Delivery Contract states that the parties must agree the provisional contract sum by 30 November. This must then be approved internally by the councils and the trust by 15 January.

6.3 Risk

6.3.1 There is a risk that the cost of services delivered by NCT in the 2022/23 financial year exceed the agreed contract sum. The Trust have especially alerted to the councils the risks of an overspend on the budget for placements of children in care. This is a demand-led budget which causes challenges in forecasting demand and expenditure and a small number of high-cost emergency placements can have a significant impact on the budget. If NCT were to overspend on their agreed budget, in the first instance they would look for in-year mitigations to manage the overspend. If these mitigations were not sufficient, then the Trust is able to seek additional funding through the 'in-year change request' mechanism set out in the Service Delivery Contract.

6.3.2 There is a risk that the proposed savings are found to be not deliverable. There has been significant scrutiny of the proposed savings through the contract sum negotiation process but there remains a risk some might not be delivered. The process has again highlighted that proposed savings against

the placements budget are particularly risky. The councils and the Trust have committed to work together in partnership to manage this including working with partners to ensure they are making the appropriate contributions to the placement budget.

6.3.3 There is a risk that the impact of covid-19 increases demand on the children's social care system. The longer-term impact of the pandemic is not yet known but there is some evidence to suggest children are entering the social care system with more complex needs. The provisional contract sum does include additional one-off investment to manage the anticipated increase demand due to covid-19.

6.3.4 There is a risk that the strategic direction as detailed in the NCT Business Plan becomes misaligned with those of the two owning councils. However, the approval of the Business Plan is a reserved matter for the Councils which gives the chance for both councils to provide feedback and ensure the strategic directions are aligned. Additionally, in developing the Business Plan NCT have engaged with both councils' senior officers and lead members.

6.4 Consultation

6.4.1 This report has not been subject to any consultation.

6.5 Consideration by Scrutiny

6.5.1 This report has not been considered by Scrutiny.

6.6 Climate Impact

6.6.1 There are no climate impacts arising from this report.

6.7 Community Impact

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

7. Background Papers

7.1 [Joint Children's Trust Committee, 24 November 2021 – Item 5, Progress on the Development of the Northamptonshire Children's Trust Business Plan and Provisional Contract Sum](#)

7.2 [North Northamptonshire Shadow Executive Committee, 25 March 2021 – Item 15, Children's Trust Joint Business Plan](#)

7.3 [West Northamptonshire Shadow Executive Committee, 23 March 2021 – Item 13, Children's Trust Business Plan](#)



NORTHAMPTONSHIRE CHILDRENS TRUST

MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL STRATEGY 2022-2025 Including proposed contract sum 2022/23

1.0 OVERVIEW

1.1 Northamptonshire Children's Trust (NCT) Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) sits alongside the Business Plan and is produced as part of the budget process and agreement of the contract sum as part of the annual review process. This strategy outlines the Trust's financial plan for the next 3 years.

1.2 There are a number of key factors that influence NCT's finances, relating to sources of funding, regulation, demand for children's social care, and the effectiveness of services:

A. Funding

- Central government funding of children's services, local government and specifically the impact of this on the Councils that own and fund the majority of NCT's costs
- Specific government grant funding
- The need to resource activity required to meet the terms of the Statutory Direction from the Secretary of State to bring about significant improvements in Children's Services across wider Northamptonshire

B. Regulation

- Central government's regulations and statutory guidance on children's services.
- Requirements of Ofsted and YJB regulatory arrangements

C. Demand

- Changing demographics and levels of social need in Northamptonshire that impact on the number of children requiring support and the proportion of children with complex needs
- The effectiveness of universal services in meeting children's needs, and therefore reducing the need for children's social care services
- The ongoing impacts of the COVID 19 pandemic
- The legacy of poor performance and its impact on children and their families

D. Effectiveness

- The effectiveness of children's social care in supporting families and children to change their lives. Children's Services with a high Ofsted rating are almost always more cost effective
- The effectiveness of partners in meeting the needs of children with complex needs

2.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY OF THE CONTRACT SUM PROPOSALS

It is clear that the coming years will be financially challenging for both NNC and WNC as well as NCT. It is of paramount importance that NCT continues to work with commissioning partners to ensure a mutual understanding of existing and emerging pressures and reaches agreement on the level of funding available and how that funding should be prioritised in line with councils' objectives as set out on the relevant partnership plans.

NCT recognise that as children's social practice improves over the next 3 years, not only will children's outcomes improve, there will also be in comparison to other local authority areas a reduction in spend on:

- numbers of children requiring social work intervention
- children requiring care (both numbers and time in care), and
- care costs (with more children staying with foster carers and more stable placements)

To support the improvement in outcomes and reduce costs the following investments are proposed:

- a) Increase in Targeted Early Help staffing - will increase the quality of 'step down' from statutory social care and reduce re-referrals.
- b) Effectiveness of the Independent Fostering Agency (IFA):
 - a. Increased recruitment of foster carers
 - b. A new recording system for fostering, with a corresponding reduction in business support posts.
 - c. Review and improve out-of-hours fostering support arrangements
- c) Improved Recruitment and Retention package (with a reduction in agency costs):
 - a. mobile technology capital investment to enable more flexible and self-service reporting
 - b. Grow your own – recruiting local people to be social workers
 - c. Review of staffing structures to retain experienced social workers

It is expected that these investments alongside the general improvement in the service will allow NCT to:

- i) Achieve savings of £9.11m over 3 years, this figure will be reviewed annually as part of the annual contract sum review process
- ii) Generate additional income by concluding an agreement with the Clinical Commissioning Group and Education services in relation to the improved joint funding of children with complex needs, subject to agreement from WNC and NNC
- iii) Use 70% of the Supporting families PBR revenue as an income stream for 2022/2023 to further reduce the net Contract Sum (note: this will continue year on year unless ceased by MHCLG in a CSR).

The gross budget includes 4 elements, net contract sum, directly invoiced income from the councils, directly invoiced income from partners and specific government grants, this is estimated as £143.40 2022/23 (plus any additional specific government grant funding). The breakdown of this is as follows:

- 1) A provisional net contract sum of £137.45m 2022/23, £137.95m 2023/24 and £137.23m 2024/25 financial years. The provisional contract sum is subject to the conditions in the financial mechanism.
- 2) The provisional net contract sum is based on Invest to Save proposals of £3.15m 2022/23 and £0.65m 2023/24 to support the transformation and social care improvement plans.
- 3) Directly invoiced income from the councils of £1.76m 2022/23, £1.80m 2023/24 and £1.84m 2024/25.
- 4) Additional directly invoiced income from partners (including education) of £1.2m in 2022/23 to fund Joint Placements. This will be reviewed as part of the multi-agency resource planning during the 2022/23 financial year.
- 5) Continued access to specific additional government funding e.g. Supporting Families, any future COVID funding and other specific government grants.

3. KEY OBJECTIVES OF THE MTFS

3.1 The 2022-2025 strategy will continue to focus on achieving a sustainable financial base that both underpins NCT's work to improve services for children, young people and families and also takes explicit account of the wider context of escalating financial pressure in the specific delivery of children's and education services as well as in Local Government generally. NCT will be following three overarching principles:

- Delivery of high outcomes through efficient and effective services
- Maximise resources available to front line services
- Shared budget responsibility

3.2 The Strategy priorities ensuring services are affordable as follows:

- Ensure a mutual understanding of what is affordable for each council in terms of funding and quality
- Achieving value for money
- Achieving challenging cost reduction targets
- Generating income to support services
- Ensuring available funding is directed at priority areas
- Ensure the financial interest of each owner is safeguarded
- Planning for financial sustainability over a medium to longer term period

3.3 This strategy has been developed in the context of the continued improvement journey and escalating pressure on children's social care both locally and nationally. This pressure has been exacerbated in 2020/21 by the COVID pandemic which has increased the need for children's services and could potentially have a lasting financial impact over the coming years. The funding and demand pressures in social care has continued to feature in reports in the national press and also in findings reported by national Local Government representative groups from work that they have undertaken. The need for these services has continued to increase during the 2020/21 financial year and whilst there is a clear requirement to meet statutory need the organisation must ensure that it continues to develop mechanisms to drive down average costs of services to remain affordable. The budgets of the two

councils remain challenging and it is vital that we work in partnership to ensure that the use of our funding can be maximised in order to drive excellent value for money.

- 3.4 Given the tightening financial envelope it is important that NCT is clear about the affordability of services. It will look to secure further transformation in services that will accelerate the journey towards improved quality in outcomes within the financial resources that are available. This may involve doing things differently and challenging the way things have always been done. The Business Plan outlines how this will be achieved over the coming years.
- 3.5 Under the service delivery contract (SDC) the final contract sum for 2022/23 must be agreed and approved by 30 November 2021. The SDC allows for amendments after this date. For 2022/23 amongst the factors which may require additional funding allocation through the SDC provisions and Operational Commissioning Group (OCG) are:
 - National pay award
 - Additional funding through the Comprehensive Spending Review
 - Inflation changes
 - COVID funding
- 3.6 The SDC also allows for contract variation during the financial year through the OCG, this includes but is not limited to:
 - Demand pressures
 - COVID funding
 - Capital maintenance
 - Support for funding bids and DfE grant funding
- 3.7 The net contract sum excludes factors included in the gross NCT revenue budget;
 - DfE Grant funding
 - MHCLG Supporting families PBR
 - Invoiced revenue
 - Other grant funding

4 NORTHAMPTONSHIRE CHILDRENS TRUST (NCT) CONTEXT

- 4.1 LGA produced an insight document in the formation of NCT. This should be read alongside the MTFS and business plan.
- 4.2 NCT was established on 1 November 2020. It is a company limited by guarantee that was initially owned by Northamptonshire County Council. On 1 April 2021, Northamptonshire County Council was abolished, and two new unitary authorities were established; North Northamptonshire Council and West Northamptonshire Council. NCT is now wholly owned by these two unitary councils.
- 4.3 NCT was established in response to a statutory direction from the Secretary of State for Education issued in June 2019. Statutory directions are issued to councils that are poorly performing and, in most cases, provide children's services judged inadequate by Ofsted. In June 2019, Northamptonshire Children's Services were inspected by Ofsted and found to be failing to keep children safe. Thus the services were judged

inadequate by Ofsted as a result. This inspection found that children's social care services had significantly deteriorated since 2016 when services were judged to 'require improvement to be good'.

- 4.4 A statutory direction to improve had previously been issued to Northamptonshire County Council (CC) in 2013 following Ofsted inspection when arrangements to protect children were found to be inadequate overall and across every category. Although Northamptonshire CC had acted to secure improvement during the period 2013-2016, the improvement was not sustained.
- 4.5 In May 2018 following publication of the Caller report on Northamptonshire CC and its findings, the Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Governments appointed Commissioners for the council. Subsequently, the Secretary of State for Education appointed a Commissioner for Children's Services (November 2018), and required Northamptonshire CC to improve social care services for children. The council was directed to work with the Commissioner on an improvement plan. The position was largely unchanged when Ofsted inspected in June 2019 and judged children's services to be inadequate.
- 4.6 In the light of the widespread inadequacy of services for vulnerable children and a historic failure to maintain improvements, in June 2019, the Secretary of State directed that a Children's Trust be established as a wholly owned council company to ensure the council's children's social care functions were performed to an adequate standard.
- 4.7 In the case of systemic or persistent concerns in the delivery of children's services, it is the policy of the Department for Education (DfE) to put in place a Trust to provide fresh leadership, additional improvement capacity, clarity of purpose and a more stable operating environment (Putting Children First, DfE, 2016). It is the policy of the DfE to leave the requirement to have a Children's Trust in place at least until services are judged by Ofsted to be good.
- 4.8 Northamptonshire Children's Trust was established on 1 November 2020 as a not-for-profit 'Teckal' compliant company that has the required day to day operational independence in the management and delivery of children's social care services. The objective was to form a long-term sustainable organisation in order to deliver the much needed improvements in the quality of social care services for children, young people, and families in Northamptonshire.
- 4.9 NCT has a board of executive and non-executive directors that both guides and holds the organisation's leadership to account for the running of the company and delivery of performance outcomes. The two councils each have two nominated non-executive directors on the board. The Chair of NCT is appointed by and directly accountable to the Secretary of State.
- 4.10 A five year contract is in place with a presumption of extension for a further five years. A service specification and performance framework is also in place and NCT is accountable to the two councils for the delivery of specified performance outcomes. The two councils are required by law to appoint a Director of Children's Services. They have made a joint appointment to the role. This senior officer is the lead

commissioner of NCT. The two councils are politically accountable for the performance of children's social care functions and they will be subject to individual Ofsted inspection.

- 4.11 The latest DfE statutory direction issued in April 2021 specifically states that the Secretary of State is satisfied that North and West Northamptonshire Councils have now assumed responsibility for the historic and continuing failure to perform some or all children's social care functions to an adequate standard. The councils are legally required to comply with the statutory direction, to establish the Children's Trust (NCT), and to co-operate with the Commissioner for Children's Services on an improvement plan.
- 4.12 Mutual Ventures was appointed by the Department for Education in August 2019 to design, oversee and support the programme that results in the successful establishment of the Trust. Programme governance structures identified within this document were designed to reflect the programme time constraints, a best practice approach to programme management, while ensuring effective lines of delegation and accountability, the inclusive engagement of stakeholders, close monitoring of progress and issues, the effective management of risk and the enabling of timely decision making. In June 2020 the Department for Education varied this role to focus more on due diligence activity on behalf of the Department for Education.
- 4.13 Following the outbreak of the COVID 19 pandemic, the programme was paused in March 2020, restarting on 1 June 2020, with a reprogrammed launch date of the Trust on 1 November 2020. The Trust launched within this schedule entered a 5-month period to enable stabilisation and transition for the Trust in line with LGR and establishment of the unitary authorities on 1 April 2021.
- 4.14 It was a clear objective that the programme to establish the Trust should not disrupt the improvement journey but would need to align to ensure that future service delivery supported ongoing improvement and service continuity once the Trust was established. The programme team engaged with the Children's Commissioner, Social Care Improvement Board and with the other Children's Programme portfolios to ensure the dependencies between all elements were mapped and maintained.
- 4.15 The programme objectives and desired outcomes were as follows:
- To establish the Trust as a new and distinct legal entity that provides high-quality children's social care services, delivered by a high quality, stable, affordable, skilled workforce
 - To ensure that the Trust is financially viable and sustainable, in the short, medium and long term
 - To ensure that the design of the Trust considers and is adaptable to the future shape of local government in Northamptonshire
 - Ensure the design of the Trust will enable it to have day-to-day operational independence in the management and delivery of children's social care services
 - Recruit a strong board of executive, non-executive directors and senior leadership team to help improve services and guide the development of the Trust in its future direction

- To ensure that the programme demonstrates value for money, operating within the agreed contract sum

5. INITIAL CONTRACT SUM

5.1 An initial contract was agreed for the 17th month period November 2020 – March 2022 for a total value of £194.67m. The annual total value for the period April 2021 – March 2022 was £138.88m, made up of two elements £137.15m contract sum and £1.73m directly invoiced income.

5.2 A forensic review of all areas of the expenditure was undertaken by Mutual Ventures as part of their due diligence role to deliver a key objective of the programme the Trust is financially viable and sustainable, in the short, medium and long term. As part of the contract sum negotiations a savings requirement of £6.8m was built into the final sum. Section 5.5 provides more details of the delivery of this programme.

5.3 The table below details the Trust budget breakdown.

Budget Heading	Nov-Mar 2020/21 £m	Full year 2021/22 £m
Staffing	18.67	44.47
Placements	25.21	60.59
Adoption	3.04	7.30
Other care costs	2.11	5.07
Contracts	2.01	4.82
Legal	2.19	4.38
Transport	0.95	1.67
Other non-staff costs	1.23	2.95
Total	55.41	131.24
Estimated impact of increased pension contributions	0.39	0.93
Additional Trust management costs	0.27	0.99
Trust internal support functions (transferring April 2021)	-	0.74
TOTAL TRUST COSTS (excluding notional amounts)	56.07	133.90
Support services buy back (notional amount)	1.20	3.06
Property costs (notional amount)	0.53	1.47
Insurance (notional amount)	0.19	0.45
TOTAL TRUST COSTS (including notional amounts)	57.99	138.88

Notes:

1. Property, Insurance and Support Services figures for 2020/21 were notional amounts.
2. Excludes costs funded by one-off funding sources (Business Rates Retention, Flexible Use of Capital Receipts, DfE grants, earmarked reserves) for which separate drawdown arrangements will apply.
3. Demographic growth to be funded through change mechanism.
4. 2% Inflation - Pay, Placements and Support services. Other services funded at actual costs.
5. Due Diligence meeting 6th October 2020 - future savings were not discussed as it was generally accepted that NCC in its current form would no longer exist, so that would need to be a future discussion between NCT and the new Councils as part of the annual contract sum negotiations.

6.0 BUDGET MONITORING FINANCIAL YEAR 2021/2022

- 6.1 A monthly finance report is presented to the Operational Commissioning Group as part of the performance management contract framework, where all variances are reviewed. A detailed realignment exercise was undertaken in April 2021 to realign budgets to match activity.
- 6.2 The current forecast outturn position for 2021/22 (as at Period 6), is an overspend of £0.622m against the approved net controllable budget of £123.348m. The Trust will mitigate this pressure through the use of the carry forward reserve of £0.812m (relating to the financial period Nov 2020–Mar 2021). Through the detailed monthly financial reporting key budget risk areas will continue to be reported to ensure effective monitoring is in place.
- 6.3 A more focused project management approach has been introduced with the Chief Executive and Director of Finance and Resources having overarching responsibility for the achievement of savings across the Trust. The relevant leadership team and the Board receive updates on progress and risks. Each programme has a service lead, a project lead and a finance lead. Progress and achievement of net cost reductions will be monitored during the year with alternative actions being agreed with commissioners, if needed, through periodic commissioning meetings.

6.4 Reserves and ring fenced funding

- 6.4.1 As at the 31st March 2021, the trust carried forward a number of reserves. These were a combination of historic, partnership, specific earmarked and general reserves. The table below sets out the reserves and categorisation. These are primarily historic reserves created prior to the creation of the trust. Drawdown from the reserves requires supporting information to be provided to the councils.

Reserves	Opening Balance	20/21 Draw down	New reserves	Balance to c/f
Litigation costs (HRA)	131	(80)		51
Family Group Conferencing	514	(225)		289
International Social Worker visa costs	193	(45)		148
Youth Offending Service			310	310
Troubled Families			844	844
Staff Retention			650	650
Total Reserves	838	(349)	1,804	2,293

6.4.2 **Litigation costs (HRA)**

To support children who have had court judgement in their favour from Human Rights Assessments claims.

6.4.3 **Family group conferencing**

DfE funded 18 months controlled trial of family group conferencing (FGC), a comprehensive process through which the child's extended family create their own plan of how they will all come together to look after the child. This trial is for a select cohort of families to assess the impact of FGC in reducing the number of children that come into care.

6.4.4 **International social worker visa costs**

To provide assistance for overseas social workers in their visa application. Recruitment has been impacted by COVID and travel restrictions, as part of our social work workforce strategy, we have recommenced overseas recruitment and will drawdown from the reserve during the 2021/22. Any remaining funding at the financial year end will be carried forward.

6.4.5 **Youth offending service**

This provides help and support to the most vulnerable families, at the earliest possible stage, in order that children's outcomes across a range of areas improve. The programme is focused on happier, healthier children with improved educational attendance, attainment and improved life chances. Parents are supported to engage in preparation for work and towards financial independence so that they and their children can escape poverty and hardship.

6.4.6 **Troubled families**

This reserve is help achieve significant and sustained progress against multiple problems to make work and ambition possible for all families. Funding by central government is allocated based on level of need by application. The funding for Supporting families (previously Troubled Families) is built into the Early help service budgets and will be fully utilised as part of planned expenditure.

6.4.7 **Staff retention**

Three-year retention scheme for qualified social workers to reduce staffing cost, turnover and the reliance on agency staffing. A proposal is currently under development and is expected to be launched in October 2021 as part of our workforce strategy.

6.4.8 **Ring fenced funding**

Other carried forward ringed fenced funding totalling £2.401m comprises of DfE invest to improve of £0.976m, Public Health funded interventions of £1.341m and BRR practice improvement of £0.084m. The funding is linked to specific projects, which will all be delivered within the current financial year and the funding will be fully utilised. Separate reporting is in place for each of the projects to comply with individual grant conditions and is incorporated into the monthly monitoring reports.

Other Ring Fenced Funding	Opening Balance	20/21 Draw down	New Funding	Balance to c/f
DfE invest to Improve	1,500	(524)		976
PH Funded (Quality and Resources)	1,344	(3)		1,341
BRR Practice Improvement	310	(226)		84
Total Ringed Fenced Funding	3,154	(753)		2,401

6.4.9 General Reserve

The Trust held a general reserve of £1.092m (relating to the financial period Nov 2020–Mar 2021.) The underspends related to the delay in filing a number of posts as the Trust formed and established its central structure and additional one off underspends. A realignment budget exercise was undertaken in April 2021, and budgets were realigned to match activity. Detailed monthly monitoring is now in place and the latest outturn position is detailed in section 4.3 of the report.

6.5 Savings and Transformation Programme

6.5.1 The Trust was required to delivered a savings programme of £6.8m over 20/21 and 21/22 financial years. The 20/21 target was achieved, leaving £3.26m to be delivered for 21/22. The contract sum of £137.15m incorporated the full delivery of the savings.

6.5.2 The Trust is operationally managing this process and making necessary adjustments to reflect service issues and will secure the overall savings. We are now working on propositions to drive further efficiencies in our work for future years and to support our shared ambition for a sustainable financial base for services and the two councils. We discuss this in more detail later in this MTFs.

6.5.3 The savings requirement of £3.260m is for the full financial year 2021/22. The performance of the plans to achieve these savings are reviewed at the monthly Transformation and Efficiency Board meetings and reported to the Finance, Resources and Audit committee. A revised savings and transformation programme has been developed in 21/22 to ensure delivery.

Name	Target 21/22 (£000s)	Narrative
Improvement in capacity building in foster (BRR)	1,084	The development of and improved capacity in specialist resilient foster carers for young people with higher complex needs. Saving derived from the movement of children from out of County/high-cost

		external placements into specialist foster carer provision, including IFA stepdown.
Reducing Reliance on Agency Staff (BRR)	388	Reducing the proportion of agency staff within the workforce. Primarily delivery from non-frontline areas, also in scope is a review of FTC and secondment use.
Improved children's outcomes (BRR)	843	Reducing the number of young people in care and therefore reducing the overall placement costs associated with their care. Reduction in care costs through the review of high-cost placements.
Supported Accommodation	196	Saving generated from reduced use of residential care and reduced supported accommodation packages.
In-House Foster Carers	433	An overall increase in the capacity (carers and beds) of in-house foster carers. Saving derived from moving young people to in house foster placements from other more costly placement types.
Transport Optimisation	316	Reduction in the transport budget through the tighter management of the transport policy, supported through an invest to save 'internal hub'. Costs of hub team met within savings delivered.
	3,260	

7.0 CONTRACT NEGOTIATION PROCESS

7.1 On or before 30 November in each Contract Year, the Strategic Group shall meet to discuss in good faith and agree the proposed Contract Sum for the immediately following Contract Year (the "**Provisional Contract Sum**") which shall take into account the following factors (without limitation):

- the Trust's draft Business Plan
- the Council's overall funding (including any ring-fenced funding) directed to, or otherwise made available for, the Services in the relevant Contract Year
- the cost of the Services in the preceding Contract Year(s) (including any Changes to the Initial Contract Sum and/or Contract Sum (as applicable) agreed during the preceding Contract Year)
- the demand for the Services in the previous Contract Year and the expected demand for the Services in the immediately following Contract Year
- the costs associated with any Changes in Law, including any Relevant Changes in Law or New Burdens Changes in Law that are relevant from previous Contract Years and/or which are anticipated in the immediately following Contract Year
- the cost of Support Services
- the cost of all third party contracts (including any Subcontracts) used by the Trust in connection with performance of its obligations under this Agreement (including the provision of the Services)
- the costs associated with the Trust's occupation and/or use of the Properties

- the costs of the Relevant Insurances, Directors and Officers Insurance and any other insurances that the Trust may be required to take out from time to time in connection with the performance of its obligations under this Agreement (including the provision of the Services), including the cost of any applicable excess or deductible
- any costs associated with the Trust's compliance with its Emergency Planning and Business Continuity obligations pursuant to Clause 38 (*Emergency Planning and Business Continuity*)
- the cost of the Trust's workforce including the Trust Personnel, the Transferring Employees and any agency staff
- pay awards and any agreed changes with regard to terms and conditions of employment
- the contribution rates set out in the rates and adjustments certificate from time to time determined by the LGPS Fund Actuary pursuant to Schedule 10 (*Pensions*)
- the contribution rates relating to the TPS Eligible Employees or New Joiners who are enrolled in the TPS from time to time pursuant to Schedule 10 (*Pensions*)
- inflation, including general and sector-specific inflation;
- any applicable taxation
- any reserves to be retained by the Trust pursuant to its reserves policy and the agreed finance mechanism
- any social, demographic or other relevant factors that may affect the Services in the immediately following Contract Year and/or which affected the Services in the preceding Contract Year
- the strategic priorities and outcomes likely to be relevant to the commissioning of the Services in the immediately following Contract Year
- any sums payable by way of grant funding pursuant to Paragraph 8 (*Grant Funding*) of Schedule 5 (*Financial Mechanism*)
- any sums payable by way of Partner Contributions pursuant to Paragraph 9 (*Partner Contributions*) of Schedule 5 (*Financial Mechanism*)
- any change to the Initial Contract Sum and/or Contract Sum (as applicable) agreed in the previous Contract Year as the result of an in Year Change Request (including any shortfall in relation to any New Burden Change in Law that may be agreed pursuant to Paragraph 7A (*Change in Law*))
- any applicable savings and/or efficiency requirements
- any Surplus retained by the Trust pursuant to Paragraph 10 (*Management of Surplus and Deficit*) and
- such other matters that the Parties consider relevant (acting reasonably) from time to time

7.2 As part of the process of agreeing the Provisional Contract Sum the Trust shall also provide the Council with its Future Contract Sums Estimate, which is merely intended to be an indicative assessment based on the information that the Trust has available to it at the relevant time of what the Contract Sum for the second and third years of the relevant Multi-Year Cycle may be. The Parties acknowledge and agree that, the Future Contract Sums Estimate may be something that is considered as part of the Contract Sum Negotiation Process.

7.3 If the Parties cannot agree the Provisional Contract Sum pursuant, either Party may refer the matter to the Resolution Panel for resolution. The Initial Contract Sum and/or Contract Sum (as the case may be) that is applicable at the time of the relevant

Contract Sum Negotiation Process shall continue to apply until the resolution of such disagreement by the Resolution Panel.

7.4 Each Party shall seek internal approval of the Provisional Contract Sum by 15 January in each meeting of the Council. Subject to the approval of each Party, the Provisional Contract Sum shall become the Contract Sum and shall be paid to the Trust by the Council in the next Contract Year. Until the time of such approval by the Council, the Parties acknowledge and agree that the Initial Contract Sum and/or Contract Sum (as the case may be) that is applicable at the time of the relevant Contract Sum Negotiation Process shall continue to apply.

7.5 It is important that service quality and spending expectations are mutually agreed and understood with each council to improve this position. The key ways in which a mutual position is reached are as follows:

- N
CT staff and the DCS engage with the relevant council process in setting the annual budget
- Annual NCT contract review as part of commissioning process to look at the budget and performance targets for the following year
- S
Submission of monthly budget and performance monitoring data and periodic meetings with the commissioner to discuss performance
- Input into each council’s political approval and monitoring process
- Insufficient funding being provided within base contract price relative to annual growth requested during budget setting process
- Non funding of non-avoidable inflationary pressures e.g. pay increment/ pension inflation

8.0 STRATEGIC LINKS TO BUSINESS PLAN

8.1 Achieving a financially sustainable business model is one of the Trust’s key priorities in 2022/23 and the medium term. The priorities outlined in the Business Plan look to balance quality and affordability as well as achieve service improvement within a challenging financial envelope. The Business Plan and budget has been produced with significant amounts of engagement with staff, stakeholders and the councils. The Business Plan focuses on six themes, which align with borough specific projects and objectives. The following table looks at these strategic themes to identify how they can be aligned to NCT financial objectives.

Strategic priority	What we will achieve for children and young people?	Link to Financial Sustainability
EXCELLENT LEADERSHIP	Our Improvement will be driven by a stable senior leadership team that provides strategic leadership and direction, clarity of the vision for the service and sets clear priorities and expectations. The senior leadership team will be visible to and engage with all staff.	Every manager at all levels will be a leader for improvement in Northamptonshire with a clear understanding of their responsibilities and accountabilities and will know what good looks

STRONG RELATIONSHIP BASED PRACTICE	We are focused upon evidence based practice that works with children, young people and families to help them achieve positive changes. Our practice model is child-centred at its heart and evidenced through all that we do.	Our primary practice framework is Signs of Safety, which will deliver practice that is rooted in the relationships that our practitioners form with children and families, and is a strengths-based approach building upon the assets in the family network. The quality of social work assessments and plans so that they are consistently timely and are effective in improving children's experiences.
RETAIN AN EXCELLENT WOKFORCE	Our workforce will be experienced, talented, empowered and motivated to deliver the best possible services and outcomes for children and young people; we will invest in the recruitment, retention and development of our workforce and reward their achievements.	This theme will ensure that staff are skilled and retained which should reduce reliance on the more expensive agency workforce and ensure that staff are delivering efficient and high quality services through developing to their full potential.
FINANCIAL STABILITY	The services we deliver will provide excellent value for money and we are trusted by our commissioning Councils to deliver the best possible services within the agreed contract price, including the efficient delivery of our financial savings plans.	This priority is at the heart of the organisation's sustainability model. We will work with our commissioning councils to agree an affordable funding envelope and work to ensure that we achieve maximum value for every pound spent. We will learn best practice from other local authorities who are delivering good quality and relatively low cost services.
HEALTHY PARTNERSHIPS	Effective partnership working is essential to good practice.	We will work strategically with our core partners to share responsibility for driving our improvement plan, and all our staff will pursue effective multi-agency practice.
INSIGHTFUL QUALITY ASSURANCE AND LEARNING	We know ourselves and our practice well through rigorous Quality assurance	organisations and our approach seeks to ensure that learning is captured from a range of sources centred upon collaborative case audits, feedback from children and families, staff and understanding our data. We will ensure that learning is then acted upon to drive effective improvement

9.0 KEY BUSINESS PLAN/DEVELOPMENT PRIORITIES FOR THE UPCOMING YEAR

9.1 It is clear that affordability of services must be a key focus over the term of this strategy and the Business Plan. Increasing need and complexity of needs is continuing to add pressure across children's social care. In addition, there is the potential for COVID 19 and inflationary pressures. The following key areas of work will be integral to delivering affordable services in the coming year and beyond:

PRIORITY ACTIVITY TO CONTROL COSTS	HOW WILL IT BE DELIVERED?
DEMAND MANAGEMENT - Supporting the prioritisation of services to young people most in need and demand management through the application by service teams of consistent thresholds.	Core services have well established threshold guidance that is periodically reviewed both internally and externally through inspections or specific requests for independent review.
LOCAL PROVISION – Delivering the Sufficiency Strategy at pace in terms of using commissioning opportunities effectively and developing more local provision where it makes financial sense to do so.	There will be a focus in the coming months to identify those programmes that are likely to have the most positive financial impact and to develop these into business cases for agreement by the councils as appropriate.
REVIEW – The effective review of placements, plans and working models is key to ensuring that we are promoting independent, resilient families and that we are prioritising the funding we have in an effective way.	We are implementing practices to ensure that plans and placements are periodically reviewed to support the continued alignment of funding and support to the changing needs of young people. It is important that we continue to work to improve these practices where the financial pressure and scope for changing need is most significant.
MODERNISATION OF WORKING PRACTICE – Review of how we work to ensure that we are making best use of technology, flexible working practices and that support services offer value for money.	We will reflect on learnings from COVID to ensure we build back better in terms of efficient use of buildings, homeworking, digital technologies and reduced travel / printing. A key priority will also be on improving the current HR arrangements to lead to a more consistent offer across NCT and in time improvements in recruitment and retention.
FINANCIAL MONITORING & PLANNING – Detailed monitoring of all high risk areas on an ongoing basis and consistent reporting internal, to the NCT Board and to the Councils.	The finance team will continue to monitor budgets and report performance to budget managers, leadership teams, the board and councils regularly. The finance team will also work to further improve budget awareness and confidence in managing budgets across the organisation.
SMARTER WORKING – Our business processes will be efficient, cost-effective and supportive to frontline practitioners so that they are able to spend as much time as possible working directly with children, young people and their families to improve outcomes for them.	This workstream will maximise the resources that are available for front line services and lead to an affordable support service that meets business needs. We will develop our use of technology to make processes and business services more efficient including developing our accommodation and flexible working strategy.

10.0 FINANCIAL CONTROL

10.1 NCT operates a devolved approach to budget management with nominated budget managers responsible for service spend. The ongoing financial challenges faced by the Trust has necessitated a review of the arrangements that govern budget manager spend. Under the revised financial regulations budget managers are able to spend up

to their designated budget but must formally seek permission from their SLT member to spend above this limit.

10.2 Each budget manager is supported by a dedicated management accountant who meets with them at least quarterly and more frequently for higher risk budgets. The finance team produces monthly monitoring information which is signed off by the relevant SLT before being sent to the Board and relevant council.

10.3 The Trust has three main categories of spend which determines the key controls and levers for controlling spend:

Budget Type	Key controls
<p>Controllable budgets are budgets that can directly impact by taking associated actions. They support statutory services but may not in themselves be statutory. Examples include staffing, training, stationary, travel, supplies and services.</p>	<p>SLT approval of vacancies prior to recruitment.</p> <p>Centralisation of general budgets e.g. training, stationary, furniture and equipment etc.</p> <p>Where overspends are anticipated senior level sign off of spend over a pre agreed limit</p> <p>All budgets allocated to individual budget managers and signed off prior to the year</p> <p>Periodic review of agency staff by SLT</p> <p>Budget manager sign off of all invoices</p> <p>Budget manager training</p> <p>Monthly budget monitoring produced by finance team in consultation with the budget manager</p> <p>Consideration of overall position by SLTs monthly</p>
<p>Stepped Costs are those that are demand led but can be directly controlled through associated action and the risks associated with reducing spend can be managed more easily. The main category of budget here relates to</p>	<p>SLT approval of all vacancies prior to recruitment.</p> <p>SLT consideration of alternative options via the request form before recruitment decisions</p>

salary costs within frontline teams where the number of staff may not have to increase with every increase in demand but where there are a certain number of staff needed to maintain caseloads within an agreed range.	made Monitoring of workloads via information produced by the data intelligence team Manager sign off of funded establishment annually Periodic SLT review of teams over establishment Monthly budget monitoring produced by finance team in consultation with the budget manager Consideration of overall position by SLT monthly
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Demand led budgets are those that are directly linked to the meeting of statutory duty and are difficult to influence in the short term. Examples include placements for children looked after, rent and allowances for care leavers, direct costs related to agreed educational placements and legal costs associated with specific cases.	Child by child placement monitoring and sign off by budget manager monthly Budget manager sign off of all invoices Attendance of key staff at decision making panels including finance where finance decisions are being made Periodic high cost placement reviews Monthly reconciliation and production of management information. Periodic review of placement types by commissioning team Monthly budget monitoring produced by finance team in consultation with the budget manager Consideration of overall position by SLT monthly Development of the commissioning team and placement sufficiency strategy
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11.0 RISKS AND MITIGATIONS

11.1 The following table summarises key financial risks for the coming year and associated actions

RISK / CHALLENGE	ACTION
Ongoing overspend and balancing reaction to financial pressure with importance of making decisions in best interest of children	The relevant Leadership Team reviews the monthly monitoring and agrees all financial actions that could impact on services. This ensures that the service impact of financial action plans is considered and risks identified! monitored.

Placement budgets – Increasing average cost and demand pressures.	Internal review system for all placements to ensure they are the most appropriate in terms of service and cost. Detailed financial monitoring at an individual placement level. Sufficiency Strategy recommendations including developing more local place capacity through the fostering agency and new provisions Engagement with joint LA commissioning groups, initiatives to drive down cost and increase purchasing power
Achievement of savings and agreement of one off costs for redundancy etc.	Regular monitoring of progress against savings plans. Project plans for each of the high value schemes with regular reporting to the Senior Leadership Team. Quarterly progress reporting to the NCT Board and through the Intelligent Client function.
Risk that councils do not agree proposed contract sum	Regular briefings throughout the budget setting processes. Regular reporting through the OCG/SCG. Regular feedback between Section 151 officers and Deputies so that decisions can be reflected in latest financial reporting.

12.0 MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL POSITION 2022 -2025

12.1 NCT has undertaken high level budgeting plan for a three year period to ensure that there is a planned approach to delivering services. An annual review with the Councils in autumn each year to ensure that medium term financial planning remains aligned and the detailed budget setting process for the following year then commences. Savings plans and growth requirements are periodically reviewed during the year to identify how budget gaps can be resolved. This is informed by the emerging pressures and opportunities within children's services.

12.2 We have developed a number of transformation themes and savings propositions. The initial thinking follows a review of current demand and expenditure levels, incorporating the service aspirations in the social care improvement plan. The delivery of the proposals will also require some targeted investment in order to release ongoing future savings. These are set out in the following sections.

12.3 The MTFs contains a significant amount of risk to delivery, the annual review and change control mechanisms

- The Initial budget and business plan have been within the context of the COVID 19 pandemic, and as with all areas of public service the impact on both spend to date and future demand is not yet known
- Failure to invest in ICT will inhibit the ability of the NCT to drive efficiency savings through new ways of working. (e.g. the implementation of the new case management system)
- Recruitment and Retention remains a significant issue, with the additional costs of agency staff requiring the Trust to maintain higher vacancy rates

- Availability of ongoing partner contributions and external grant funding
- Increasing inflationary levels relating to Independent placements and demand for services
- Delivery of high quality support services from the Council(s) to NCT
- The national picture is that spending on children and young people's services increased by 7% between 2018/19 and 2019/20 as a result of both demand and cost pressures. The total spend on children in care nationally increased by 8.3%. The estimated national funding gap to 'stand still' is £824.1m (Association of Directors of Children's Services, Safeguarding Pressures 7, February 2021)
- Failure to agree contract sum within the contractual timescale

12.4 The table below sets out the financial position of the Trust for the financial year 2022/23 and indicative position for the 2023/24 and 2024/25 financial years in accordance with the requirements of the Service Delivery Contract, Schedule 5: Finance Mechanism. The format is consistent with the original contract sum classification of expenditure and funding.

Medium Term Financial Plan 2022 -2025

Budget Description	2022/23 £m	2023/24 £m	2024/25 £m
Initial Contract Sum	137.15	137.45	137.95
Directly invoiced Income	1.73	2.96	3.02
Total Service Delivery Contract	138.88	140.41	140.97
Inflation (note 1)			
Staffing	0.97	0.98	0.98
Placements note (2)	1.56	1.55	1.55
Other	0.78	0.74	0.73
Total Inflation	3.31	3.27	3.26
Additional Invoiced Income (note 3)	1.20	0	0
Total Funding	143.40	143.68	144.23
Less Savings/Transformation			
Staffing	0.33	0.66	0.66
Placements	2.45	1.25	2.00
Transport review	0.11	0.10	0.10
Legal Services	0.10	0.10	0.10
Contract savings	0.00	0.40	0.35

Asset Review	0.00	0.20	0.20
Total Savings/Transformation	2.99	2.71	3.41
Total Service Delivery Contract	140.41	140.97	140.82
Less Directly invoiced Income	2.96	3.02	3.09
Net Contract Sum	137.45	137.95	137.73

Note 1: Individual inflation factors are detailed in the medium term financial strategy. These will be subject to review and tracked against RPI, CPI and pay announcements.

Note 2: Agreement that the financial payment mechanism in the contract will be amended such that if actual demand exceeds the forecast then this will be dealt with via a contract variation agreed via the Operational Commissioning Group.

Note 3: The additional income reflects the current agreements for Joint Funding packages between Social care, Education and Health. Recharged are on an individual case basis and recharged accordingly.

12.5 The delivery of savings will require reinvestment back into NCT infrastructure, this will be required to ensure there is enough capacity to deliver against business development plans.

12.6 The management of need for social care services and the management of unit costs in these areas. This will be undertaken through the monitoring of thresholds to access services, continued investment in early intervention and the further development of the local placement market and placement commissioning function.

12.7 Management of increasing staff costs, particularly in social care due to regional shortages of suitably qualified staff. The workforce strategy will look to reduce reliance on expensive agency workers through targeted recruitment campaigns, improved agency arrangements and a review of the incentives package for staff groups where recruitment and retention is challenging. NCT will also be increasing the number of trainee social workers that are supported to assist with this pressure in the medium term.

12.8 The project management approach will keep the leadership team focused on the achievement of these programmes and associated savings. There will be early conversations where the achievement of savings is not possible to reach a mutual agreement with the relevant council about associated actions.

13.0 INVEST TO SAVE

13.1 The table below sets out the invest to save proposals to deliver the aspirations in the social care Improvement Plan, the challenges in the MTFS and the services pressures relating to COVID. The invest to save bids are a combination of both capital and revenue expenditure. This funding has not been included within the initial MTFS as it is in addition to the contract sum and of a time limited nature.

Investment to Save proposals	2022/23 £m	2023/24 £m	2024/25 £m
Revenue			
Additional social work capacity	0.70		
Early Help – Address complexity and increase statutory social work step down	0.40	0.40	
Improve Independent Fostering Agency (IFA)	0.25	0.25	
Capital			
IT Infrastructure	1.50		
IFA Child recording system	0.30		
Total Invest to save	3.15	0.65	0.00

13.2 Additional Social Work capacity (£0.70m)

Continuation of Funding for the additional capacity for 15 social workers within Duty and assessment and Safeguarding. In addition to existing increase in complexity. There are a number of families and children who have been managing just below the threshold for social care involvement however the lockdown, reduction in support network, and services available would have increased the pressure on these families and as such they are likely to experience greater levels of need and require a level of statutory intervention. In addition to that, additional levels of needs as a direct result of COVID-19, such as poverty, anxiety, non- school attendance, poor child and adult mental health, loss and bereavement would increase in the number of families requiring support due to complexity of needs.

13.3 Early Help – response to COVID (£0.8m)

COVID has increased complexity of issues in families and oversight of Early help needs tightening to reduce children in care. A greater oversight of Early Help Assessments (EHAs) in required to drive partnership ownership and delivery of the actions agreed in EHAs which will ensure better early support for families. Investment in 5 x Supporting Families EHA Professionals for an initial period of 2 years. A strong

practical lead on higher risk EHAs will secure effective step down from statutory social work services reducing repeat Child Protection Plans. In turn this will reduce demand for children in care and drive efficiency in the placements budget.

13.4 Improve IFA and increase Foster Carer Recruitment – response to COVID (£0.5m)

COVID has led to an increased need for Foster Carer placements. This is an investment in developing the NCT to operate as an IFA which was not considered in the initial contract sum. This approach will improve practice and increase the number of in house Foster Carers therefore reduce placement costs. An investment of £0.5m over two years will enable the embedding of the systems required through a complete review and redesign of system as well as work on the IFA identity and better co-ordination of support for Foster Carers. This will be effective alongside the capital investment for a new IFA recording system.

13.5 IFA Recording system (£0.3m)

An IFA requires a discrete recording system which holds all records for the IFA and is not linked to the wider Children’s Social Care recording system. The funds recommended will purchase the system and fund the implementation.

NOTE: Investment into the new Children’s Social Care recording system is supported by a corporate funding stream. The system may also be used for the VAA (Voluntary Adoption Agency) which is also subject to a regulatory inspection.

13.6 Investment in mobile working technology – response to COVID (£1.5m)

COVID has given a glimpse of what is possible in mobile working, this proposal builds on the current working approach due to COVID. Enable a streamlining of processes alongside the new case management system. By implementing mobile working technology staff will be able to input onto case files directly rather than coming back to the office to update on the case management system. This will drive out efficiencies in controllable costs such as payroll (building on the DfE investment of £200k for the 2020/21 financial year which funded the Contact booking system, MOMO and FOCUS apps).

Note: Support Service KPIs are still to be agreed under the support services agreement, ICT KPIs will be critical to success of this proposal. Streamlining of processes will create efficiencies in controllable cost such as staffing.

14.0 TRANSFORMATION AND SAVINGS PROGRAMME 2022-2025

14.1 Incorporated into the MTFS plan includes a number a savings for delivery over the medium term. The savings programme has been developed in the context of the challenging financial environment around the delivery of children’s social care. Current budget forecasts and the risks are outlined in this report.

14.2 The table below outlines the savings programme, these savings have been incorporated into the MTFS. The projected savings are configured against

transformation stream heading and have been removed from the respective expenditure lines in the MTFs.

Savings Programmes	2022/23 £m	2023/24 £m	2024/25 £m	Total
Staffing	0.33	0.66	0.66	1.65
Placements	2.45	1.25	2.00	5.70
Transport	0.11	0.10	0.10	0.31
Legal	0.10	0.10	0.10	0.30
Commissioning	0.00	0.40	0.35	0.75
Asset Management	0.00	0.20	0.20	0.40
Total Savings	2.99	2.71	3.41	9.11

- 1) **Staffing (£1.65m)** - A full service review is underway around the support functions within the Trust in order to streamline operations within the Trust. Support services are disaggregated across the trust leading to duplication and inefficiency. There are a number of legacy systems and processes, which are being reviewed to ensure a safe transition to the implementation of the new ways of working. The delivery of savings is dependent upon the investment in IT infrastructure, including the implementation of a new social care case management system to maximise resources and deliver efficiencies.
- 2) **Placements (£4.5m)** – The development of the placement sufficiency strategy and the development of the in house fostering capacity.
 - 2a) **Placements (£1.2m)** – Review of Joint Funding arrangements as part of the multi- agency resource panel process
- 3) **Transport Review (£0.310m)** - This is a continuation of savings programme around the development of an efficient service, robust placement and threshold management and annual review. The processes are now in place and work will continue to deliver further efficiencies in this area.
- 4) **Legal Services Review (£0.3m)** – Undertake a review of the use of Legal services and a gateway approval process.
- 5) **Commissioning (£0.75m)** – The Trust has launched a Commissioning Strategy and Framework 2021-25 setting out our overall vision and plan to use commissioning to contribute to the delivery of our Business Plan, and to improve outcomes for children, young people and families and to support our staff to do their work effectively and efficiently. The Commissioning Strategy and Framework is also intended to inform our Board, stakeholders, partners and our staff of the purpose of our commissioning; our expectations of commissioned services; how they align with and support our service delivery function; our approach to commissioning; what good commissioning looks like; what we intend to commission over the next four years and how we will know

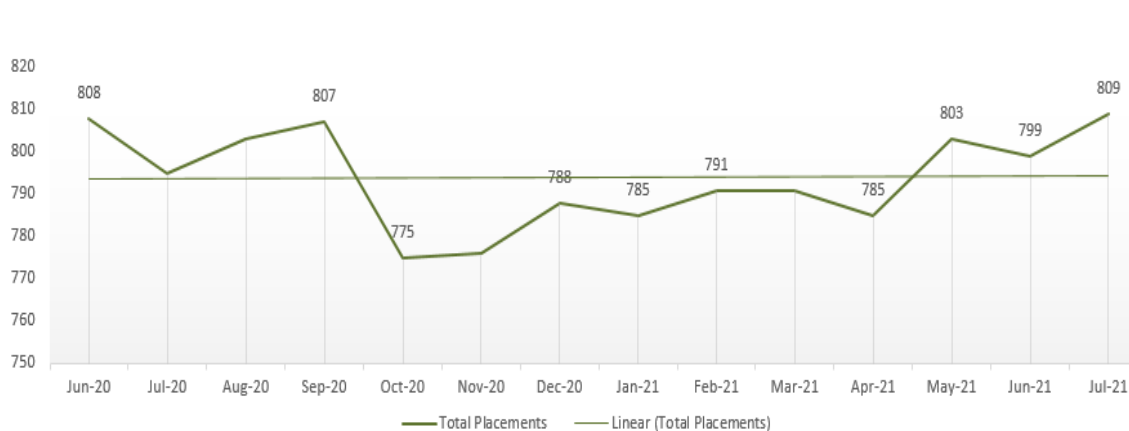
what difference we have made for children, young people and families in Northamptonshire as a result ensuring value for money in the use of resources.

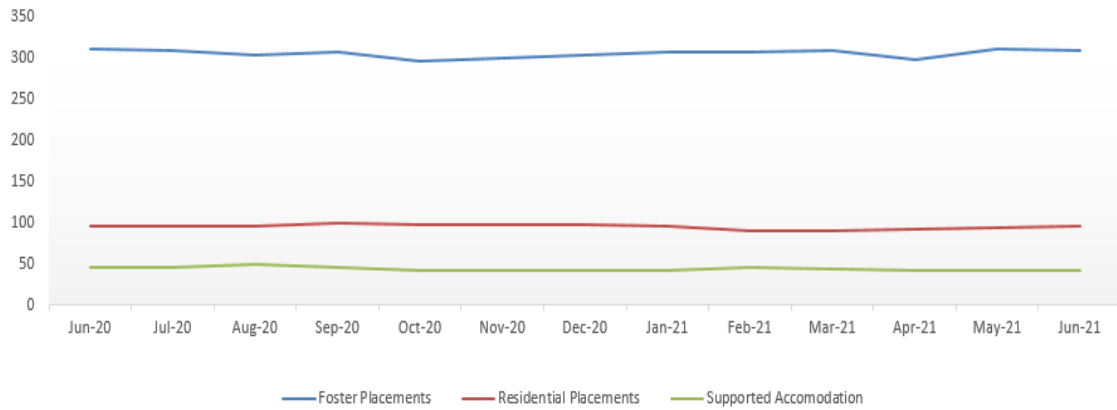
- 6) **Asset Management (£0.40m)** – Continuing to work in partnership with both councils in the development of their respective asset strategies. We are currently reviewing our accommodation needs as we imbed new ways of working in the post COVID environment. This will be supplemented by the request for investment of the IT infrastructure and the move to more mobile working.

15.0 PLACEMENT SUFFICIENCY STRATEGY

15.1 The Placement Sufficiency Strategy will help ensure adolescents who are not placed in residential home settings due to lack of in house fostering capacity, skill and abilities through the development of an in house specialist fostering service. Positive impact on children placed in a family setting, and savings will be delivered through reduced reliance on residential placements. Additionally, ensuring that only children and young people who need to be in public care are placed, as a result of improved 'edge of care' support and intervention with families. Working towards minimising the amount of time a child is in care before they are united with their parents. Historically, spend on residential care placements is high and is evidenced by the benchmarking data in this report. This is key priority of the placement sufficiency strategy and linked to the medium term financial strategy savings. We have improved our financial and commissioning processes around placements and are currently absorbing the additional demand pressures within the current budget. We will continue to work with partners around joint funding placements. However, there remains significant risk around the delivery of savings within the placements budget, with demand starting to increase post COVID and increasing above inflation increases in residential fees.

15.2 Whilst placements remain stable, this area remains volatile, the Trust has embedded pupil based placements modelling and the development of the placement sufficiency strategy. There remain significant pressures/risks including Impact of post-COVID on placement stability, National context Independent sector above inflation cost increases and increasing UASC costs.





- 15.3 The contract sum proposals identify the delivery of savings in this area, however given the volatility and pressures a significant degree of risk remains in their delivery. The Service Delivery Contract financial mechanism allows for a request for In-Year funding (Financial Mechanism: Schedule 5, 6.0).
- 15.4 The new budget monitoring and forecasting model now implemented within the Trust, will enable real time monitoring and should demand increase an evidenced based proposal for additional funding would be submitted.
- 15.5 The initial contract sum submission proposes the creation of placement provision. The savings identified in the submission would be placed in a reserve. The purpose of the reserve is to provide a contingency for an evidenced increase in placement demand. This would be reviewed as part of the Annual Contract process.
- 15.6 This table reflects the number of Children in Care (CiC & UASC) as reported by BIPI, Placement Management Commissioning Service (external placements) and Residential In-house Provision; reflects active placements only.

Placements with External Providers					
Assessment	7	7		0.6%	Percentage of CiC under 18 with external Providers
Fostering	328	326	2	27.7%	
Residential	104	103	1	8.8%	
Secure Remand	4	4		0.3%	
Shared Lives	8		8	0.0%	
Staying Put/Close	42		42	0.0%	
Supported Accommodation	127	44	83	3.7%	
Total for CiC Group	620	484	136	41.2%	Percentage of CiC under 18 with external Providers

UASC with External Providers					
Fostering	14	14		1.2%	Percentage of UASC under 18 with external Providers
Staying Put/Close	11		11	0.0%	
Supported Accommodation	164	42	122	3.6%	

	189	56	133	4.8%	Percentage of CiC under 18 with external Providers

Total Placements	809	540	269	45.9%	Percentage of under 18's with external providers
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15.7 Placement Models

15.7.1 The Trust has implemented a placement tracking model, to monitor individual placement by type, cost and duration. The model is providing high quality information to develop the placement sufficiency strategy and financial monitoring information to provide predictive financial modelling and early warning on demand increases.

15.7.2 Forecasting future placement demand is challenging, but the three models below outline to the impact of growth, reduction and placement mix changes

15.7.3 The models are based on the average cost of a placement by type and are shown as gross cost (excluding joint funding, specific government funding etc.) and assumes full occupancy based on 52 weeks.

Model 1 – Growth (3%, 5% and 10%) based on current placement type

Placement Type	3%		5%		10%	
	2021/22	2024/25	2021/22	2024/25	2021/22	2024/25
Assessment	7	7	7	7	7	8
Fostering	328	338	328	344	328	361
Residential	104	107	104	109	104	114
Secured Demand	4	4	4	4	4	4
Shared lives	8	8	8	8	8	9
Staying put	42	43	42	44	42	46
Supporting Accommodation	127	131	127	133	127	140
UASC	189	195	189	199	189	208
Total Placements	809	833	809	848	809	890
Gross Total Placement Costs (average Cost per place)	67.6m	69.9m	67.6m	70.8m	67.6m	74.2m

Model 2 – Placement Reduction (3%, 5% and 10%) based on current placement type

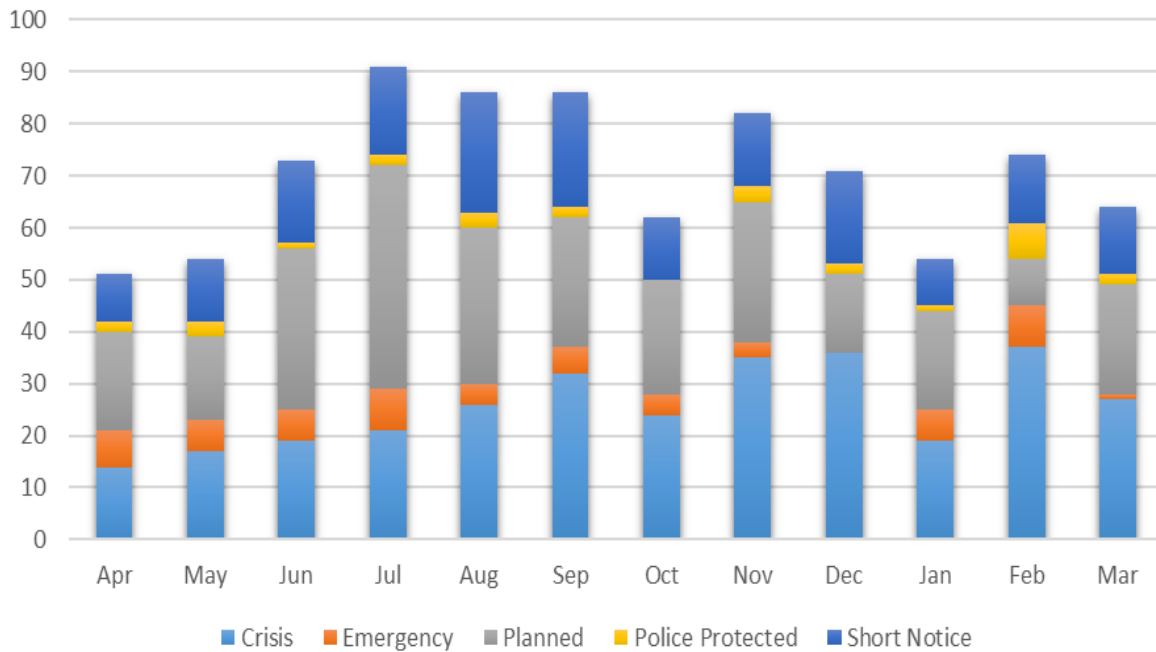
Placement Type	3%		5%		10%	
	2021/22	2024/25	2021/22	2024/25	2021/22	2024/25
Assessment	7	7	7	7	7	6

Fostering	328	318	328	312	328	295
Residential	104	101	104	99	104	94
Secured Demand	4	4	4	4	4	4
Shared lives	8	8	8	8	8	7
Staying put	42	41	42	40	42	38
Supporting Accommodation	127	123	127	121	127	114
UASC	189	183	189	180	189	170
Total Placements	809	785	809	771	809	728
Gross Total Placement Costs	67.6m	65.7m	67.6m	64.6m	67.6m	61.1m

Model 3 - Placement Mix Model (3%, 5% and 10%) based on the current number of placements but a change from residential to fostering

Placement Type	3%		5%		10%	
	2021/22	2024/25	2021/22	2024/25	2021/22	2024/25
Assessment	7	7	7	7	7	7
Fostering	328	333	328	336	328	342
Residential	104	101	104	99	104	94
Secured Demand	4	4	4	4	4	4
Shared lives	8	8	8	8	8	8
Staying put	42	42	42	42	42	42
Supporting Accommodation	127	125	127	124	127	123
UASC	189	189	189	189	189	189
Total Placements	809	809	809	809	809	809
Gross Total Placement Costs	67.6m	67m	67.6m	66.9m	67.6m	65.6m

Referrals by Category by Month



16.0 INFLATION PROVISION

16.1 The trust has reviewed the inflation provision within the contract, modelling against the latest Consumer price index (CPI), Retail Price Index (RPI) and pay inflation (including NI contributions) in line with the councils MTFs inflation provisions. For non-generic inflation, which is primarily the placement calculation we have calculated against each individual placement type and agreed contractual agreements.

16.2 Pay Inflation is estimated at 2% (The provision includes pay award of 1.5%, National living wage, Increased National Insurance contributions and pension provision). This will be subject to the final contract sum and allowed provisions (Schedule 5: Financial mechanism 7.2.12).

16.3 The following section provides an overview in relation to Provider Fee Uplifts for 2022/23 in relation to the following Frameworks and related Off Framework/Spot Purchase arrangements;

- All 3 Frameworks have the following statement in relation to Price Reviews; *“Weekly Prices* will increase annually, at the discretion of the Authority by 2% or CPI as reported by the Office for National Statistics (ONS) at the start of February each year, whichever is the lower.*

In addition to the annual price increase all Providers will be required to deliver a 1% annual efficiency saving. The price including this 1% reduction will be the price to which the annual increase is applied.

Should CPI fall below 1.5% the increase will remain at 1.5% with the net effect of a 1% efficiency meaning that Provider prices will always increase at a minimum of 0.5%.

Should CPI rise above 3% the annual increase will be reviewed by the Authority. Any such variations to the annual increase for the forthcoming financial year will be communicated to Providers by the end of February in the current financial year. The Authority will also review any relevant changes to legislation that have significant impact on costs and consider the requirement to vary the annual increase percentage.

- Consumer Price Index has been published in August 2022 at 0.7%. In line with the above statement.
- A regional approach has been taken by Local Authorities in the East Midlands Region (including NCT), in respect of legacy EMRCF placements and associated Off Framework/spot purchase arrangements. These were reviewed on a case by case basis where providers have submitted a fee uplift with justification for this.
- Children’s Homes Block Contract with Homes 2 Inspire Ltd. This contract commenced in 2019 and has not had any uplifts to date. The provider, Homes 2 Inspire (H2I) have submitted a request for a 2% uplift with a detailed explanation. Their current charges are below the average cost for similar provision – **2% Uplift** (the Contract allows for H2I to request an annual fee uplift). However, this has been challenged and we are now recommending that the uplift is **0.7%** which is in line with the East Midlands Framework approach, which the block contract was a mini tender from.
- Regional Provision – we have a number of arrangements that continue through the East Midlands Framework. There is an agreed regional process to review any requests, this is then approved by the regional DCS group. The majority of uplift requests were declined, for both EMRCF Framework and Off Framework/spot purchase provision. Where they were agreed, this has been set at CPI of **0.7%**. 0.7% was agreed as some LAs in the region use this for their local provision and do not have the 1% efficiency element. As shown in the Financial Implications below, NCT have a small number of placements on the Framework, with no Off Framework placements for those providers who had submitted a regional fee uplift request.

16.4 The table below sets out the Inflation provision applied against the expenditure categories. A detailed analysis has been undertaken across all placement provision to provide to provide an individual placement type inflation factor.

Category	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25	Narrative
	%	%	%	
Staffing	2	2	2	Awaiting confirmation from council
Placements	2.6	2.6	2	Individual average calculation based on contracts provision, independent sector and pay inflation for foster care
Adoption	2.4	2.4	2	Based on pay inflation

				and allowance uplift
Other care costs	2.4	2.4	2	Awaiting confirmation from council
Contracts	2	2	2	Council provision in MTFs. Awaiting confirmation from the council.
Legal	2.4	2	2	Current CPI moving back to Government target. Awaiting confirmation from the council
Transport	3.2	2	2	Current RPI moving back to Government target. Awaiting confirmation from the council
Other non-staff costs	2.4	2	2	Awaiting confirmation from council
Support services	2	2	2	Awaiting confirmation from council

17.0 BENCHMARKING AND VALUE FOR MONEY

17.1 The DfE have developed a Local Authority Interactive Tool (LAIT), which provides the opportunity for Councils to compare data for Children's Services. The LAIT was reviewed to identify whether trends on placements could be identified for NCT, with a focus on the statistical neighbour Councils which both the North and West Northamptonshire Councils have in common, since individually they are allocated into different statistical neighbour groups. The following statistical neighbours are shared between both Councils:

- Kent
- Warwickshire
- Staffordshire
- Nottinghamshire
- Worcestershire

The LAIT can be found at <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/local-authority-interactive-tool-lait>

17.2 At the introduction to the tool there is a note that the two new Northamptonshire Councils came into being on 1 April 2021, and that data for these Councils will be added to this tool when available, although currently it is limited to pre Local Government Reorganisation data. As such, the potential value to NCT may be limited at this time.

17.3 In order to get benchmarking information we are using existing Northamptonshire County Council data. The two charts below focus on both our common statistical neighbours per the LAIT tool and shire authorities.

- 17.4 The benchmarking highlights the high level of spend for Looked After Children as the key driver for our spend profile, which is ultimately the key factor in the spend per head. A clear priority is to develop our placement sufficiency model and the reduction in residential provision.
- 17.5 Since April 2020, savings of £4.78m have been taken from the placements budget (£2.22m in 2020/21 and £2.56m in 2021/2022) and over the medium term we are looking to deliver additional savings of £4.5m.
- 17.6 Continued investment in the development of Early Help services to reduce the expenditure in Children Looked After. The table below shows that Northamptonshire had the second highest spend of the 27 local authorities. However, there was significant underinvestment in Children’s Centres (23rd out of 27) and Family Support Services 24th out of the 27).
- 17.7 The Invest to Save proposal detailed at 12.3, sets out the additional investment in early help services. This investment is supplemented by the continued delivery of the Supporting Families programme.

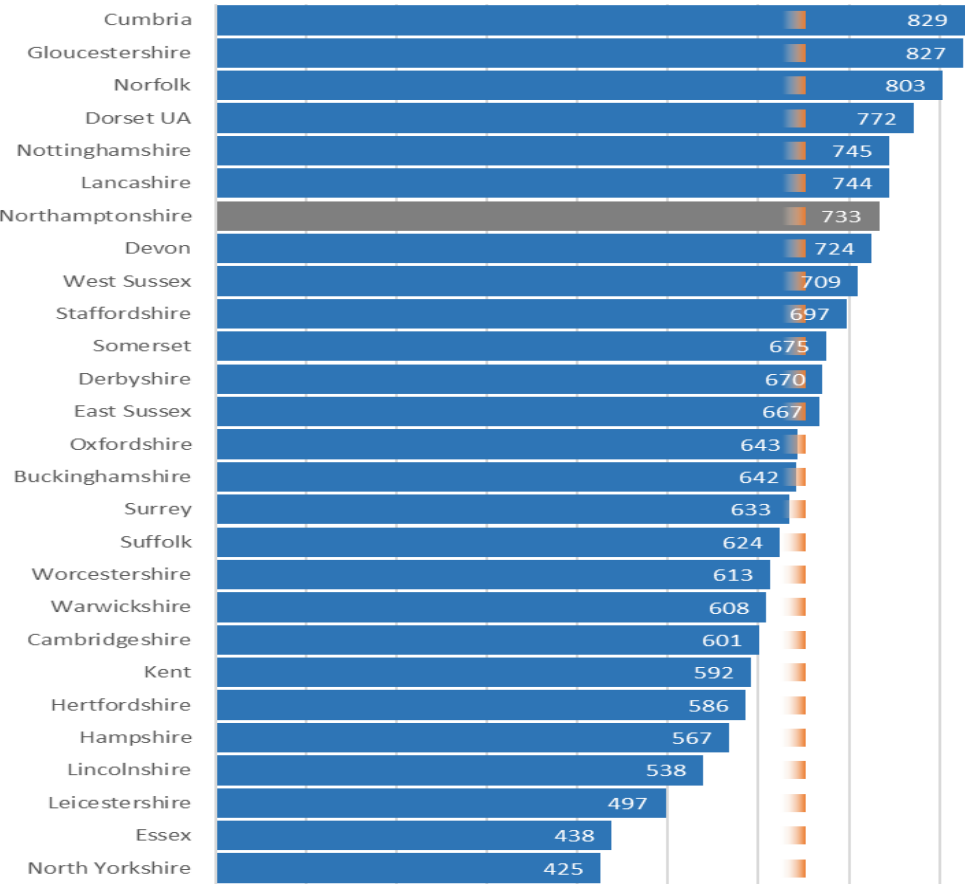
Northamptonshire County Council - Spend per head summary rankings by RO service line

	Total Spend £000	Spend per head £	Spend per head Rank
Sure start children's centres and early years	671	3.6	23
Children Looked After	93,435	498.9	2
Other children's and families services	889	4.7	12
Family Support Services	9,352	49.9	24
Youth Justice	2,200	11.7	9
Safeguarding children and young people’s services	25,558	136.5	18
Asylum Seekers	2,151	11.5	11
Services for young people	3,051	16.3	16
Children Social Care (Total)	137,306	733.2	7

2019-20 Spend per head (0-19yr)-Children's Social Care

Finance Source: 2019-20 RSX & RO3, MHCLG

Population Source: ONS mid-2019 population estimates



18.0 CONCLUSIONS AND NEXT STEPS

18.1 It is clear that the coming years will be financially challenging for both NNC and WNC as well as NCT. It is of paramount importance that NCT continues to work with commissioning partners to ensure a mutual understanding of existing and emerging pressures and reaches agreement on the level of funding available and how that funding should be prioritised in line with both organisation and council objectives. The following activity will be prioritised over the coming months to move this plan forward:

- Progression of the Placement Sufficiency Strategy and associated recommendations through council approval processes
- Development of business cases at pace for those business development opportunities that could have the most scope for cost avoidance / savings
- Effective monitoring of detailed budgets and associated savings plans
- Continued demand management through early intervention work and threshold management
- Continued focus on developing and delivery of placement commissioning activity
- Continued detailed monitoring and reporting to NCT leadership teams, NCT Board and the two councils
- Progression of this strategy alongside the NCT Business Plan and 2022/23 budget through council decision making processes

18.2 Agreement of the provisional contract sum subject to changes in inflation, pay awards and legislative changes.

18.3 The application of the Change Control Procedure and other mechanisms in the Agreement requiring payments to be made to the Trust by the Council, the Trust shall be entitled to submit the following two types of In-Year Change to the Initial Contract Sum and/or Contract Sum (as applicable) pursuant to this Schedule 5 (*Financial Mechanism*):

- (a) where there has been an increase in the demand for the Services and/or an additional cost to the Trust that could not reasonably have been anticipated when the overall budget for the relevant Contract Year was agreed by the Parties ("**Type One In-Year Change Request**"); and/or
- (b) where: (i) the Trust has a business case proposal which would require an increase to the Contract Sum but would deliver an improvement in the Services; or (ii) the Trust wishes to make an "invest to save" proposal which would require an increase to the Contract Sum in the short term but which would pay back to the Council in terms of a future reduction in the Contract Sum ("**Type Two In-Year Change Request**").

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Agenda Item No: 5 - Appendix B - NCT Savings Proposals 2022-25

Saving Proposal	Target 22/23 (£000s)	Target 23/24 (£000s)	Target 24/25 (£000s)	Narrative
Staffing	330	660	660	A full-service review is underway around the support functions within the Trust in order to streamline operations within the Trust. Support services are disaggregated across the trust leading to duplication and inefficiency. There are a number of legacy systems and processes, which are being reviewed to ensure a safe transition to the implementation of the new ways of working. The delivery of savings is dependent upon the investment in IT infrastructure, including the implementation of a new social care case management system to maximise resources and deliver efficiencies. £1.2m linked to IT investment
Page 49 Placements	1,250	1,250	2,000	The development of and improved capacity in specialist resilient foster carers for young people with higher complex needs. Saving derived from the movement of children from out of County/high-cost external placements into specialist foster carer provision, including IFA stepdown. Reducing the number of young people in care and therefore reducing the overall placement costs associated with their care. Reduction in care costs through the review of high-cost placements. Reducing the number of young people in care and therefore reducing the overall placement costs associated with their care. £850k linked to children's home bid.
Placements - Joint Funded	1,200	0	0	The increase in directly invoiced funding reflects the decisions of the Multi-Agency Placements panel. This year, charges for education and particularly health provision have been identified and re-charged with agreement of the panel. Therefore, the increase in funding can be expected. This will bring the contributions more into line with experience at other local authorities. The usual architecture of children's services would allocate the education costs to the high needs block of the DSG.
Transport	110	100	100	Reduction in the transport budget through the tighter management of the transport policy,

Optimisation				independent travel training. Reviewing current arrangements as part of a re-procurement exercise.
Commissioning - Review of contracts	0	400	350	The Commissioning Strategy and Framework is also intended to inform our Board, stakeholders, partners and our staff of the purpose of our commissioning; our expectations of commissioned services; how they align with and support our service delivery function; our approach to commissioning; what good commissioning looks like; what we intend to commission over the next four years and how we will know what difference we have made for children, young people and families in Northamptonshire as a result ensuring value for money in the use of resources.
Legal Services	100	100	100	A review of the current contract for the delivery of legal services and the processes around the commissioning of legal advice. Tighter gatekeeping of requests for legal advice, detailed review of use/ charging schedules. Potential to retender in the future, and explore alternative providers or a combination of providers for specific advice
Asset Management	0	200	200	Continuing to work in partnership with both councils in the development of their respective asset strategies. We are currently reviewing our accommodation needs as we imbed new ways of working in the post Covid environment. This will be supplemented by the request for investment of the IT infrastructure and the move to more mobile working.
Total	2,990	2,710	3,410	



Northamptonshire
Children's Trust

Northamptonshire Children's Trust

Business Plan 2022/23-2025/26



Northamptonshire
Children's Trust

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Section 1

Introduction

Foreword

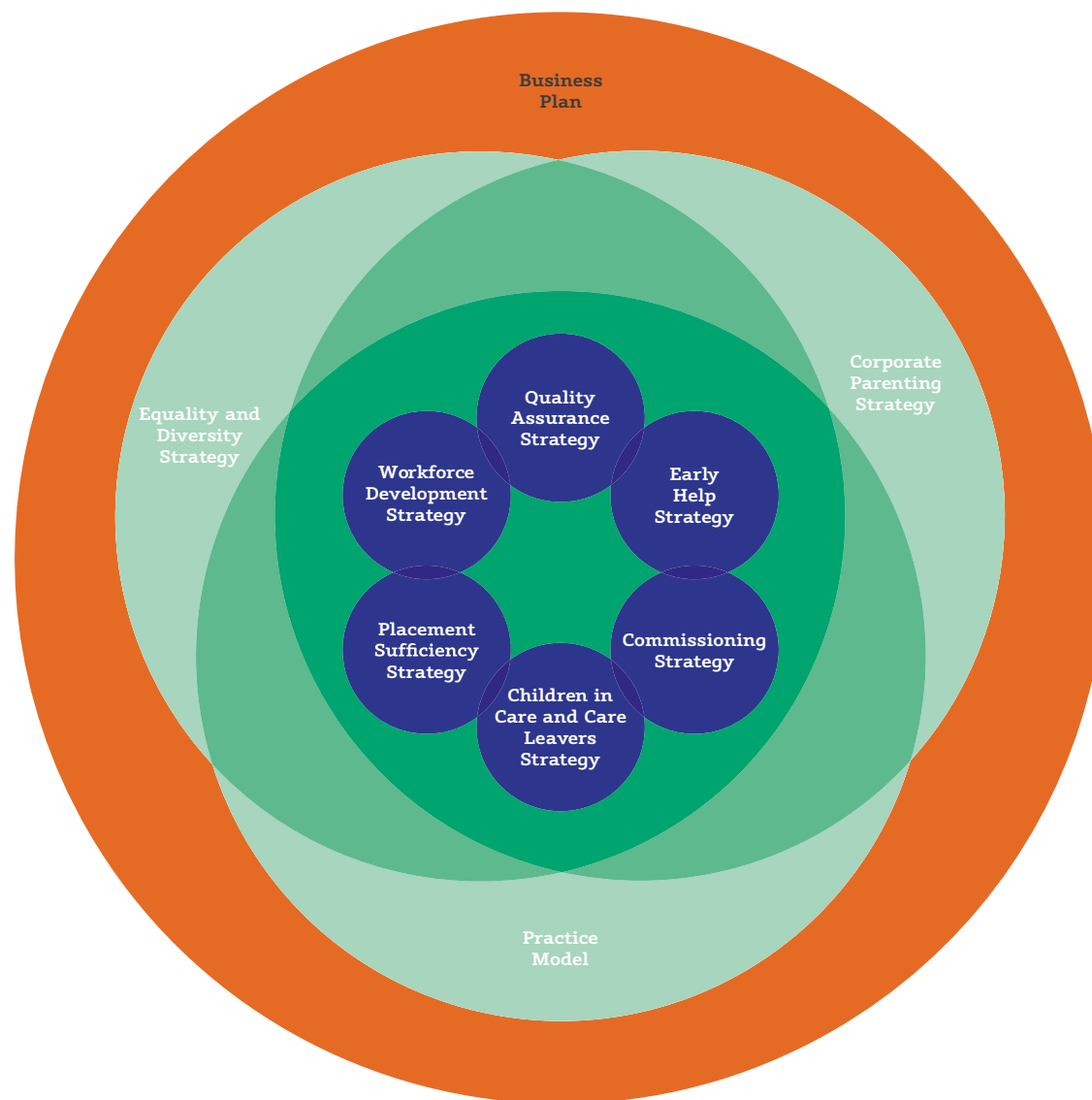
This Northamptonshire Children's Trust Business Plan really matters to us. It sets out our commitment to the children, young people and families of Northamptonshire. We are on a journey to improve services through Northamptonshire Children's Trust.

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

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

The aims of this strategy are to:

- Set a clear strategic vision and priorities
- Make clear our commitment to enabling the voice of children and young people
- Explain how we will work with children, young people and families through our strategic framework
- Show strong financial planning, strong governance, and effective management of all of our resources



Foreword (cont)

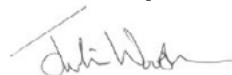
We always start with a simple question: What is life like for children, young people and families in Northamptonshire? And then we ask: How can we help make it better?

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

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

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

Northamptonshire Children's Trust



Julian Wooster, Chair



Colin Foster, Chief Executive

North Northamptonshire Council

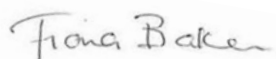


Cllr Scott Edwards, Lead member,
Children's Services




Rob Bridge, Chief Executive

West Northamptonshire Council



Cllr Fiona Baker,
Lead member, Children's Services



Anna Earnshaw, Chief Executive

1.1 Children's Services improvement journey

Children's Services in Northamptonshire were judged 'inadequate' by Ofsted in 2013, whilst this judgement improved to 'requires improvement to be good' in 2016 but by 2019 they were judged 'inadequate' again.

Northamptonshire Children's Trust (NCT) was partially formed on 1st November 2020 and fully launched on 1st April 2021.

When Ofsted conduct a re-visit under the ILACS framework we commit to working hard to ensure our improvement is recognised with a minimum judgement of 'requires improvement to be good' improving on towards good and better. The DfE statutory intervention notice applies to both North Northamptonshire Unitary Council and West Northamptonshire Unitary Council who are required to support the effective delivery of Children's Social Care, family support and youth offending services through NCT. This relies on the best possible people delivering the best possible services as part of the best possible partnership with the voice of the child at the centre of practice.

Our six strategic priorities for improvement are detailed within the improvement plan, these are:

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

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

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

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

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

Robust and effective resource management - We will be an effective, high performing Trust with high standards of resource management.

1.1 Children's Services improvement journey (cont)

Overview of Trust requirements and characteristics

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

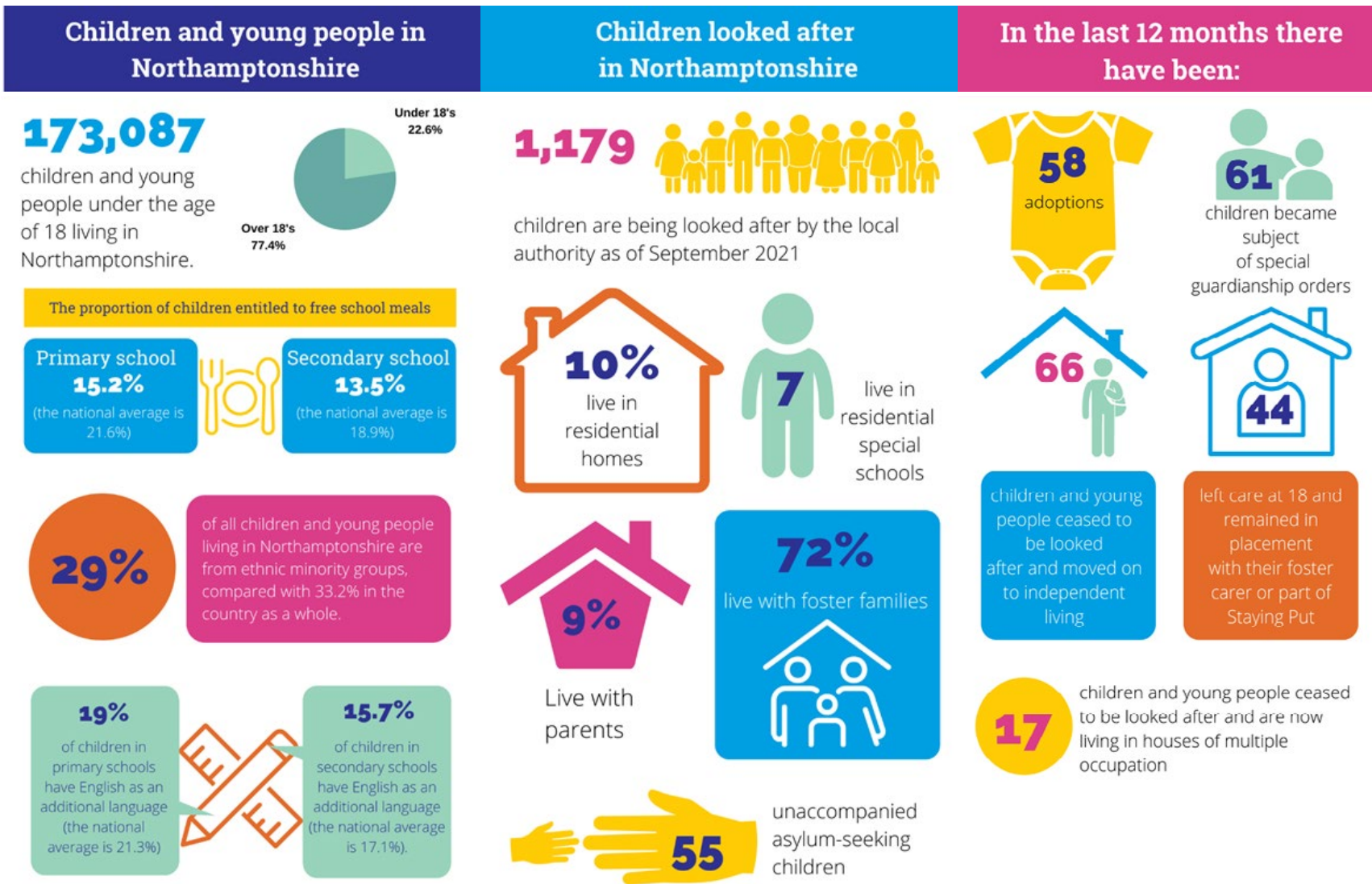
NCT is a non-profit distributing 'Teckal' compliant company that demonstrates day-to-day operational independence in the management and delivery of children's social care services in Northamptonshire through a strong board of executive and non-executive directors.

In conjunction with partner agencies, North Northamptonshire Council, West Northamptonshire Council and the Trust will work together collaboratively to:

- Promote the welfare and safeguard children in line with key children's legislation and statutory guidance;
- provide family support to vulnerable children and their families to enable them to cope with difficulties;
- support children to live safely with their immediate and extended families wherever possible;
- meet the needs of looked after children and those leaving care; and support disabled children and their families.



1.2 Local Context





**Northamptonshire
Children's Trust**

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Section 2

Who we are



Northamptonshire Children's Trust

2.1 Our Vision

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

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

Our Vision is:

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

2.2 Our Ambition and Values

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

- Ensure that the voice of children and young people drives all of our practice.
- Strengthen relationships with parents and carers, and our service offer will be shaped by them and by the direct involvement of children and young people. The co-production of effective solutions to local priorities, including financial challenges, will be evident in our successful delivery of this business plan, as well as our response to emerging issues.
- Focus our early help services on building resilience in families so that they are better able to help, support and protect their children without the need for statutory interventions.
- Consistently use reflective, collaborative and strengths-based approaches to working with the whole family so that parents are able to make positive and lasting changes to the care they provide to their children.
- Invest in integrated services and joint commissioning with our partners, bringing together our collective ideas, talent and resources to better meet the needs of children and young people, especially those with the most complex needs.
- Promote strong and meaningful relationships with our partner organisations and our whole-system approach to improving services and outcomes for children and young people.
- By the end of this 12-month business plan, have established strong and financially stable foundations.

Our Ambition is:

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

2.2 Our Values and Ambition (cont)

These are our Trust values:

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

We use our core values to inform practice where:

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

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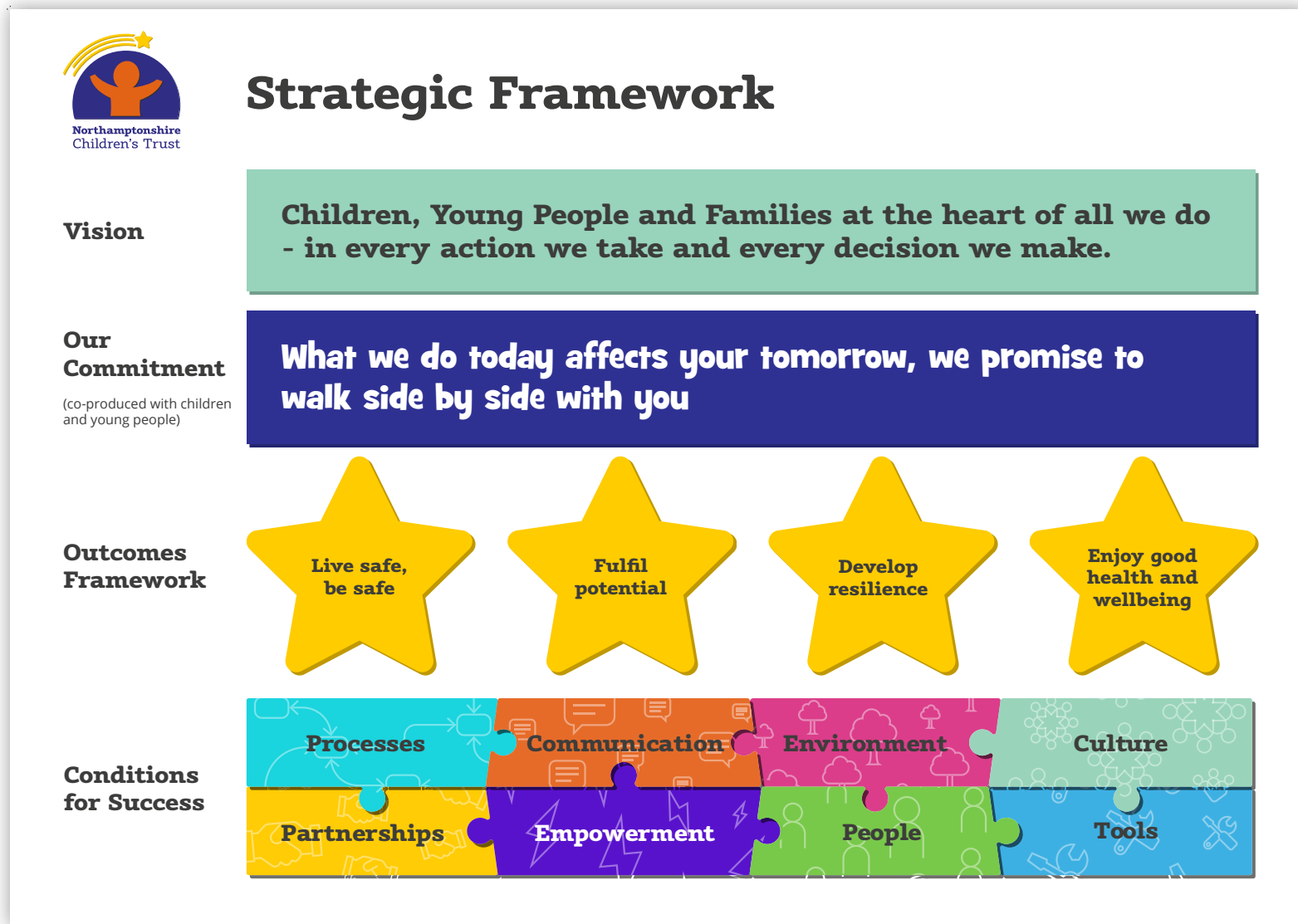


2.3 A Poem

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

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

2.3 Our Strategic Framework



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

2.4 Our Commitment to Children and Young People

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

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

2.5 Our Objectives and Outcome Framework

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

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



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

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

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

Outcomes framework details can be found in appendix 1

2.6 Our Conditions for Success

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



Partnerships

We will work together meaningfully with openness towards shared goals.

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



People

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

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



Communication

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

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



Environment

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

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

2.6 Our Conditions for Success (cont)

Processes

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

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

Tools

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

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

Empowerment

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

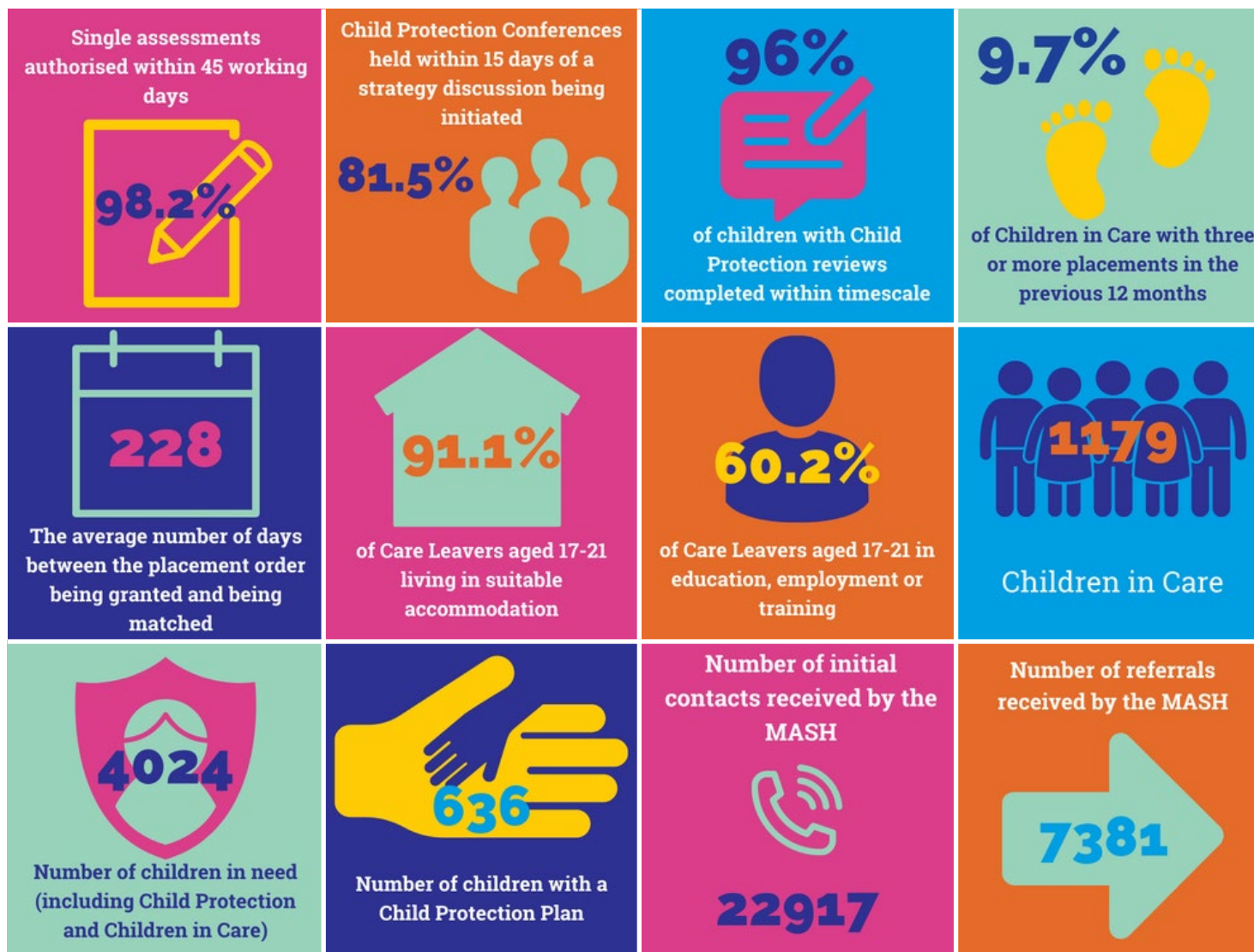
Children, Young People and Families will benefit from a confident and empowered workforce who are culturally competent and understand social graces.

Culture

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

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

2.7 Our Current Service Performance Overview



2.8 Our strategic priorities for 2022/23-2025/26

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

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2.8 Our strategic priorities for 2022/23-2025/26 (cont)

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

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2.8 Our strategic priorities for 2022/23-2025/26 (cont)

Strategic Priority	What we will achieve for Children Young People and Families?	Aim	What we will achieve by March 2022
<p>Strong Relationship Based Practice</p> <p>Page 75</p>	<p>We are focused upon evidence based practice that works with children, young people and families to help them achieve positive changes. Our practice model is child-centred at its heart and evidenced through all that we do.</p>	<p>Our primary practice framework is Signs of Safety, which will deliver practice that is rooted in the relationships that our practitioners form with children and families, and is a strengths-based approach building upon the assets in the family network.</p>	<p>Clear reunification plans and support services for children returning home where it is safe to do so.</p> <p>All practitioners understand the standards of good practice and purpose of our involvement and intervention in families' lives</p> <p>Our practice is child-centred alongside effective work with the whole family network</p> <p>Purposeful, planned and focused visits with children and young people to ensure that their needs are understood.</p> <p>The quality of social work assessments and plans so that they are consistently timely and are effective in improving children's experiences.</p> <p>Pathway plans that include clearly defined objectives for young people.</p>

2.8 Our strategic priorities for 2022/23-2025/26 (cont)

Strategic Priority	What we will achieve for Children Young People and Families?	Aim	What we will achieve by March 2022
<p>Insightful Quality Assurance and Learning</p> <p>Page 76</p>	<p>We know ourselves and our practice well through rigorous Quality Assurance.</p>	<p>We are a learning organisation and our approach seeks to ensure that learning is captured from a range of sources centred upon collaborative case audits, feedback from children and families, staff and understanding our data. We will ensure that learning is then acted upon to drive effective improvement.</p>	<p>Our practice is solid and continuously improving</p> <p>All managers know the quality of practice in their service and drive learning and practice improvements</p> <p>We can evidence learning and improvement as a result of our Quality Assurance activity</p> <p>The use of Quality Assurance activity through learning discussions and escalations to inform and improve practice.</p> <p>Action planning in response to the findings of serious case reviews.</p>
<p>Healthy Partnerships</p>	<p>Effective partnership working is essential to good practice.</p>	<p>We will work strategically with our core partners to share responsibility for driving our improvement plan, and all our staff will pursue effective multi-agency practice.</p>	<p>Children are protected through effective Multi-Agency Safeguarding. The identification of and response to risk when contacts relating to safeguarding concerns for children are received into the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH).</p> <p>Children in Care and Care Leavers have the full range of their needs met by all partners</p> <p>Children and families receive effective early help from all partners</p>

2.8 Our strategic priorities for 2022/23-2025/26 (cont)

Strategic Priority	What we will achieve for Children Young People and Families?	Aim	What we will achieve by March 2022
<p>Robust and Effective Resource Management</p> <p style="writing-mode: vertical-rl; transform: rotate(180deg);">Page 77</p>	<p>We understand the key drivers of the budget and budget managers understand the financial impact of their decisions. Budget managers will be equipped with support and systems to effectively monitor and forecast.</p>	<p>Develop a culture of shared budget responsibility with all staff being responsible for ensuring that every pound spent is maximising positive outcomes for children and young people and is in line with budget control processes.</p>	<p>Strong budget management and forecasting systems and processes will be embedded throughout the Trust.</p> <p>Delivering our Sufficiency Strategy so we have sufficient stable placements that meet the needs of our children and young people.</p> <p>Managing demand for specialist support and improving outcomes through effective earlier intervention.</p> <p>Benchmarking undertaken with statistical neighbours and throughout the social care sector to ensure services are delivered efficiently and effectively, exploring the use of innovative models and best practice.</p>

2.9 Our Quality Assurance

Northamptonshire Children's Trust has a very clear Quality Assurance (QA) framework and collaborative learning process which enables a strong understanding of the quality of practice and continuous improvement.

Our focus can be described as taking a 'so what' approach: Everything must relate fundamentally to seeking to improve our four key outcomes for children, young people and families and to demonstrate how these are met. Our measure of quality is the impact we have on children's lives, therefore our focus is on children's experiences and outcomes.

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

Our focus for our quality of practice are:

- Child centred: The experiences, progress and outcomes of the child or young person on their journey with us is central to our approach
- Restorative: Instead of a top down, critical approach, our quality assurance work takes place with and alongside practitioners as an opportunity for reflection and learning. It is characterised by both high support and high challenge.
- Outcomes based: In line with our core approach, our focus is on outcomes rather than processes.
- Positive: Our approach to quality assurance is a positive learning experience – looking at informing and encouraging improvement
- and supporting the development of practitioners, services and systems

- Reflective: Our Quality Assurance framework is designed for reflective practice and shared learning.

Quality Assurance activity and findings are monitored on a monthly basis through the Quality Assurance Board. By quantifying the qualitative we are able to see the overall and service/ team level of quality, areas of good practice and for improvement. The Quality Assurance reporting and governance structure has been established to ensure clear oversight, sign off of recommendations as a result of Quality Assurance activity, and monitoring of progress to promote continued learning across Northamptonshire Children's Trust.

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



Northamptonshire
Children's Trust

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Section 3

Partnerships and Trust Overview

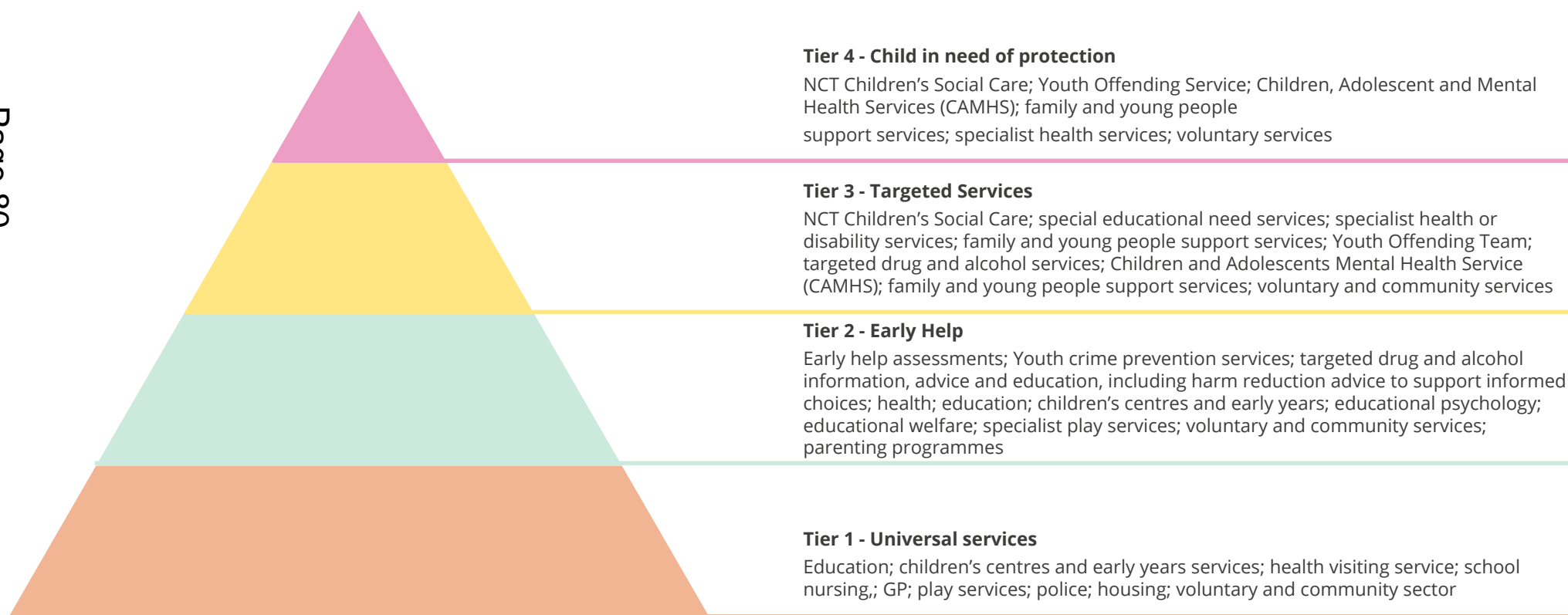
3.1 Our Relationship with Strategic Partners

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

Given this collective responsibility and the Trust's commitment to

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

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3.1 Our Relationship with Strategic Partners (cont)

Our relationship with North Northamptonshire Council and West Northamptonshire Council

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

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

The Councils' Corporate Parenting Role

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

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

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

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

Strategic dependencies

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

3.1 Our Relationship with Strategic Partners (cont)

- **Access to grant funding**

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

Operational dependencies

- **Support Services Board**

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

- **Property**

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

- **Information transfer**

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

- **Assets and supply contracts**

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

Joint working protocols

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

Our relationship with Strategic Partners

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

- **Early help**

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

- **Schools**

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

- **Early Years providers**

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

- **Adult Social Care**

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

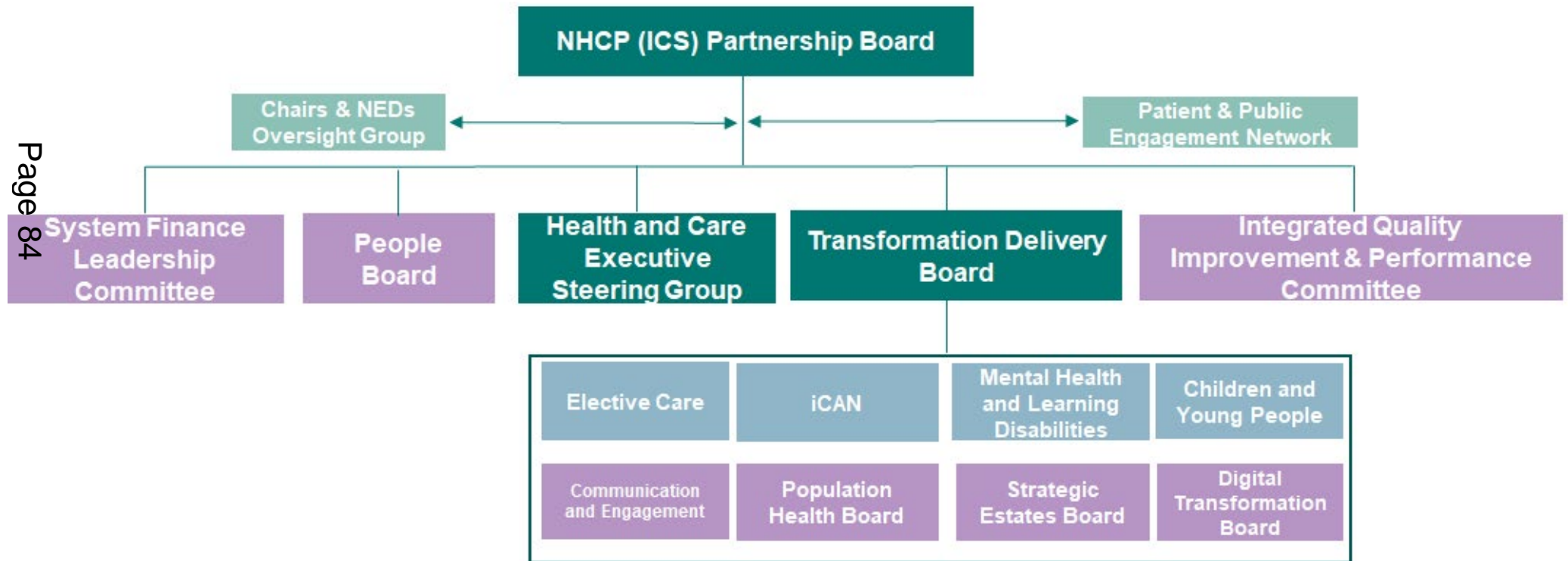
3.1 Our Relationship with Strategic Partners (cont)

- **Health Providers (including Clinical Commissioning Group and Public Health)**
The Trust will work through the Integrated Care System (ICS) to carry out their duties as strong and effective partners in respect of safeguarding and delivering children's care in an integrated way.
- **Police**
The Trust will ensure that an effective working relationship is maintained with police services. This includes multi-agency front door arrangements and safeguarding services. Communication, cooperation and collaboration between the Trust and police services is key to achieving the service outcomes.
- **Voluntary and community sector (VCS) partners**
The Trust will manage relevant operational relationships with the VCS, playing an active role in promoting a healthy and engaged voluntary sector that provides good quality services for local people and to engage with the VCS as partners in the development of services.



3.1 Our Relationship with Strategic Partners (cont)

NCT is a full partner in the integrated care system alongside colleagues in other agencies. We are heavily involved in the 'children and young people pillar' and contribute across the system to improve services and outcomes for children, young people and families.



3.2 Our Resources and Services

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

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

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

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

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

3.3 Our Financial Strategy and Plans

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

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

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

1. **Achieving value for money**

The Trust will deliver good quality services and is working proactively towards improving services in line with inspection findings. The Trust will maximise the economies of scale through both the delivery and procurement of services. Key priorities will be the effective commissioning of placements and the recruitment and retention of a highly skilled workforce, Benchmarking will be undertaken with statistical neighbour's and throughout the social care sector to ensure services are delivered efficiency and effectively, exploring the

use of innovative models and best practice.

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

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

The following four aspects are important in achieving this objective.

- Adequate needs-led budget growth and achievement of savings
 - Maximise income generation
 - Periodic review of emerging priority areas
 - Business plan programmes facilitate the effective use of resources
- ### 3. **Shared budget responsibility**
- The Trust will develop a culture of shared budget responsibility with all staff being responsible for ensuring that every pound spent is maximising positive outcomes for children and young people and is in line with budget control processes. The newly established Transformation and Efficiencies programme board will provide a management framework to ensure projects are identified, monitored and delivered and support resources are deployed effectively. Progress against the plan and on the associated spend and savings implications will be monitored on an ongoing basis with the relevant leadership team having overarching oversight.

Financial Planning

Northampton Children's Trust is still in its first contract sum period from November 2020 – March 2022. The financial position remains

3.3 Our Financial Strategy and Plans (cont)

challenging with a rise in the care population and increases in placement costs. During the initial contract period, NCT continues to look to achieve savings through the delivery of efficiencies across the Trust's activities.

The Medium- Term Financial Strategy 2022 -2025 is detailed below.

Budget Description	2022/23 £m	2023/24 £m	2024/25 £m
Initial Contract Sum	137.15	137.42	137.92
Inflation and Demographic Growth	3.29	3.27	3.27
Invoiced Income	2.97	3.00	3.03
Total Trust funding	143.41	143.69	144.22
Less Savings	2.99	2.71	3.41
Less Directly Invoiced Income	2.97	3.03	3.09
Net Contract Sum	137.45	137.95	137.73
Contract Income	131.76	132.26	132.04
UASC Pre 18 and post 18	4.51	4.51	4.51
Supporting Families	1.18	1.18	1.18
Total Contract Sum (with invest to save)	137.45	137.95	137.73

Invest to save

The table below sets out the invest to save proposals to deliver the aspirations in the social care Improvement Plan, the challenges in the MTFs and the services pressures relating to COVID. The invest to save bids are a combination of both capital and revenue expenditure. This funding has not been included within the initial MTFs as it is in addition to the contract sum and of a time limited nature.

Invest to Save	2022/23 £m	2023/24 £m	2024/25 £m
Revenue			
Additional social work capacity	0.70		
Early Help – Address complexity and increase statutory social work step down	0.40	0.40	
Improve Independent Fostering Agency (IFA)	0.25	0.25	
Capital			
IT Infrastructure	1.50		
IFA Child recording system	0.30		
Total Invest to save	3.15	0.65	0.00

3.4 Risk Management

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

The risk register includes strategic and operational risks.

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

The detailed risk register is shown at Appendix 8.



3.5 About Northamptonshire Children’s Trust and our Business Plan

Local Government Reorganisation

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

Our Governance

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

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

- **Operational independence**

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

related Council dependencies.

- **Reserved powers**

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

- **Governance Side Agreement**

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

- **Role of the Trust Board**

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

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

- **Structure of the Trust Board**

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

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

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

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

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

Page 90 **Board committee structure**

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

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

What is the business plan?

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

outcomes, the business plan sets out priority activities that we will focus on delivering over the next year, while also providing a platform for improvement over the longer term. These are the key priorities that will enable us to deliver our vision.

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

How we have developed the business plan

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

How we will measure our progress?

We will monitor progress in two ways. Firstly, by being clear about our priority activities, when we expect these to be delivered and monitoring our progress against our improvement plan. Secondly, through a set of key performance indicators (Appendix 5). These have been agreed with

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

the Councils as part of our contract with them and by the Trust Board of Directors to monitor and assure that the Trust is improving outcomes for children and young people. There is regular monitoring and scrutiny of our performance, with progress against the key performance indicators reported publicly to each of the owning Councils.

Annual Review

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

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

The Coronavirus Pandemic and this Business Plan.

The majority of 2020 was affected dramatically in the UK and worldwide by the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic. It is fair to say that no single event has had such a profound effect on the lives of people in this country since the nineteenth century. The pandemic will have a substantial impact on our county, county and more specifically the children, young people and families presently supported and those yet to access support. The impact to date on services delivered by the Trust, has necessitated an extensive programme of work, as well as diversion of resources to in order to continue to provide high quality services.

While the full ramifications of the pandemic are still to be fully known – and will inevitable impact on aspects of our plans, it has provided

the opportunity to be innovative and creative, establishing new ways of delivering our services; for example, through the increased use of digital solutions. Going forward, as part of our recovery planning we will be reviewing the lessons learnt and will apply best practice to our service delivery so we can continue to effectively meet the needs of our children, young people and families. For example, supporting the mental health of looked after children appropriate contact arrangements.

COVID-19 health protection board

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



Northamptonshire
Children's Trust

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Section 4

Appendices

Appendix 1 – Outcomes Framework



Outcome 1

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

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Outcome 2

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

Appendix 1 – Outcomes Framework (cont)



Outcome 3

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

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Outcome 4

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

Appendix 2 – Northamptonshire Children’s Trust Improvement Plan

Key Improvement Priorities

October 21- December 22

Effective Early Help offer with better step down from social care - meaning children and families receive the right support at the right time and preventing escalation of needs

High quality social care referrals at our front door - resulting in children and families receiving the right support in a timely way and reducing unnecessary social work intervention

The best Social Workers join and stay - meaning children and families benefit from consistently good quality social work practice built on strong and continued professional working relationships. Social workers have reduced caseloads and high quality supervision




Consistently good quality assessments and plans - so our practice makes a lasting difference for children and families

Placements that provide excellent care and support - they must meet the needs of our children and be available when we need them




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RAG Criteria

Delivery Rag

-  Red Not on track to meet delivery date, mitigation or escalation required
-  Amber Work in progress, some risk to delivery and/ or delivery date and mitigation applied
-  Green On track to meet delivery date or completed

Outcome Rag

-  Red Outcomes at risk/ not achieved, mitigation or escalation required
-  Amber Progress towards the agreed outcomes being made
-  Green Satisfactory outcomes achieved (in line or above comparators)

Appendix 2 – Northamptonshire Children’s Trust Improvement Plan (cont)

1. Excellent Leadership

Our improvement will be driven by a stable senior leadership team that provides strategic leadership and direction, clarity of the vision for the service and sets clear priorities and expectations. The senior leadership team will be visible to and engage with all staff.

Ofsted 2019 2a The quality of management decision-making, oversight and challenge

Ref	Actions	Lead and Support	Timescale	Measure of Progress	Direction of Travel since last update	RAG delivery	RAG outcomes	Progress Update
1.1	<p>Development of the Corporate Parenting Board responsibilities in order for them to champion improvements</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deliver CP training for CPB Members and wider council and partner colleagues • Strengthen CPB, eg through CPB member leads for specific areas, involvement in QA and engagement with children in care and care leavers • Increase range of apprenticeships and EET options within councils and NCT • Implement a QA process for Corporate parenting board to enable progress to be monitored. • Increase care experienced young people’s membership on the board 	Chief Exec, AD Corporate Parenting, DCS, Lead Members	Mar 22	<p>Clear understanding from all Corporate Parenting Board members of their responsibilities as evidenced through Corporate Parenting Board meetings</p> <p>Positive impact on experiences of children in care, including children with disabilities, evidenced by Corporate Parenting Board and Member activity - as evidenced through you said we did</p> <p>Demonstrating effective overview of Corporate Parenting related issues</p> <p>QA process shows that Pledges set out by the Corporate Parenting Board are being achieved.</p>	↑	Green	Amber	Corporate Parenting training for all Members of NNC and WNC completed June Revised Corporate Parenting Board structure in place from June 21 following elections Terms of Reference updated and recruitment of young members in progress CPB regularly reviews the NCT scorecard and an additional session planned for Dec to enable members to increase understanding of what the measures mean to enable them to challenge CPB is undertaking deep dive sessions on particular topics, led by subject matter experts including children and young people Impact includes: - Council tax exemption for care leavers in place from April 21 NNC and WNC - WNC hosting ‘Boss it Brunch’ career October 21 – for care leaver career opportunities - Timeliness of LAC health reviews has been escalated within health services - An important function of the Board is to celebrate the achievements of children and young people and this is done at each Board meeting

Appendix 2 – Northamptonshire Children’s Trust Improvement Plan (cont)

Ref	Actions	Lead and Support	Timescale	Measure of Progress	Direction of Travel since last update	RAG delivery	RAG outcomes	Progress Update
1.2	Improve the consistency of quality of management oversight and supervision to ensure it is meaningful and purposeful (to include reflection, views of children and professionals, analysis, challenge and time-bound actions to progress plans and improve children's circumstances)			Feedback from staff survey and QA activity shows staff experience good quality support from their managers Quality assurance activity (including observations of supervisions) shows increase in quality of management oversight and supervision which has positive impact on practice and outcomes for children	↑	Green	Amber	Leadership Development Programme for all line managers commenced June -clarity on strengths based, collaborative approach. Enabling leaders to lead more effectively, setting expectations
	• Refresh and launch Practice Model, Practice Standards and Supervision Policy and share best practice examples	Principal SW	Sept 21					Practice Standards, Practice Model and Supervision Policy reviewed, published in July and formally launched in September
	• All social care team and service managers to complete management oversight and supervision training to include focus on recording	AD Safeguarding & AD Corporate Parenting	Mar 22					Management oversight, supervision and brilliant basics training delivered and being rolled out/ followed up
	• Provide bespoke development, mentoring and coaching for managers from PIP, RIP and SWA	PIP Lincs, Principal SW	Mar 22					Learning Hub now live on intranet, including best practice examples
	• Complete NCT leadership development programme for all managers in NCT	Chief Exec	Mar 22					PIP improvement support for services in place and mentoring for managers,
	• Implementation of QAF within Children and Family Support Service (CFSS), includes management oversight and supervision	AD CFSS and QA Manage	Sep 21					Bespoke support from RIP for 7 team managers and 3 service managers and coaching/ mentoring from PIP and Social Work Academy. Additional 20 places on PSDP being finalised for starting in 21/22
							Supervision and Management Oversight QA shows some examples of good practice and further improvement required. Staff consistently feed back that they feel supported by managers	
							QA framework adopted in practice by CFSS (Sept 21)	
							Ofsted Feb 21 MV findings:	
							Overall quality of service remains inconsistent and management oversight is not sufficiently robust	
							Frontline management oversight, challenge and formal supervision inconsistent	
							Workforce reported that they felt supported. However consistency in practice and robust management oversight remains and issue	
							Ofsted July 21 MV comments:	
							Supervision records vary in quality	
							Practice model and revised supervision template helping to bring clarity and direction on next steps and what needs to happen to improve child's life	

Appendix 2 – Northamptonshire Children’s Trust Improvement Plan (cont)

Ref	Actions	Lead and Support	Timescale	Measure of Progress	Direction of Travel since last update	RAG delivery	RAG outcomes	Progress Update
1.3	Improve equality, address inequalities and discrimination and celebrate diversity			Feedback from workforce shows progress and improvement with regards to equality and diversity issues	↑	Green	Amber	<p>Equalities steering group and Forum in place-workforce led sessions raising awareness of equalities needs and experiences</p> <p>Planning for Equalities Week in November</p> <p>Culturally sensitive practice training developed by members of steering group with young people</p> <p>Review of Equality Impact Assessment tool and guidance in progress</p> <p>Workforce communications increasingly sharing and celebrating more diverse range of events and festivals</p> <p>81% of attendees at Forum in summer 21 said they felt that things were changing in NCT and that more conversations were taking place about inequality, including in team meetings.</p>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Deliver Equalities Strategy and Anti Racism Statement, including our equalities commitment to children, young people and our workforce 	AD QA & Commissioning	Mar 24					
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use our Equalities Forum to educate and support each other, share best practice and provide space to share experiences 		Mar 22					
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Celebrate diversity, increase understanding and skills through Equalities Week 		Nov 21					
1.4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Monitor impact of managers' review of children's circumstances at 9 and 15 months on reducing drift and delay for repeat CP plans and lengthy CP plans Review impact every 6 months and report to QA Board Implement any improvement actions identified through 6 monthly impact reviews 	AD Safeguarding	Feb 22	<p>Reduction in repeat CP Plans to align with comparators</p> <p>Maintain CP Plan 2+ years below comparators</p>	↔	Green	Amber	<p>Reviews of child protection cases at 9 and 15 months is taking place via service managers.</p> <p>Decisions re PLO are considered at the 9 month child protection conference review in all cases.</p> <p>First analysis report presented to Improvement Board in Summer 21</p> <p>CP plans 2+ years 2% YTD at Sept 21, below comparators</p> <p>Repeat CP Plans are above comparators and previous years - continued focus on reducing on repeat plans including improving quality of safety plans.</p>

Appendix 2 – Northamptonshire Children’s Trust Improvement Plan (cont)

2. Recruit, Retain and Develop an Awesome Workforce

Improvement for children and families will be delivered by our workforce, who are therefore our most valuable resource.

Ofsted 2019 3b Social worker caseloads that enable all children to have an allocated social worker and workers to have manageable workloads.

Ofsted 2019 3d Stability and sustainability of the social care workforce.

Ref	Actions	Lead and Support	Timescale	Measure of Progress	Direction of Travel since last update	RAG delivery	RAG outcomes	Progress Update
2.1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improve our Continuous Professional Development Offer for social workers to support recruitment and retention Create online Learning Hub bringing CPD offer, resources and best practice examples together in one place Review L&D programme to meet needs of social care workforce offer routes into social work roles: social worker apprenticeships, Step Up to Social Work, Front line Promote career progression opportunities and support workforce to benefit from them (eg senior social worker posts) 	AD Quality Assurance & Commissioning Head of HR & OD	Mar-22	Social Worker Apprenticeship and Step Up places offered and completion rates ASYE retention measure (Year 2 and beyond) Decreased workforce turnover Regular monitoring of Learning and Development SLA showing that goals are being met	↑	Green	Amber	Workforce Strategy refreshed. SLA in place for L&D support service. Service learning needs analysis in progress and L&D children’s programme being reviewed for 22/23 Bespoke CPD to meet our needs developed by our workforce and rolled out (Equalities Me and My sessions, management oversight, supervision, QA) Formal Teaching Partnership progressing following successful DfE bid Refreshed induction Signs of Safety trajectory plan in place, delivery supported by SofS project manager. Additional Practice Champions trained and Signs of Safety training available for all workforce PSW attending team meetings, PSW newsletter well received Social worker pipeline plan in place. 10 Step Up Students recruited for Jan 22.. 8 Step up Graduates started as NQSWs in May. 10 additional Practice Educators trained to support social work students. Application to Frontline in progress for Sept 22 programme Making research count membership in place with colleagues benefitting from attending webinars Learning Hub live on the intranet and being developed Monitor SLA with Learning and Development. Slight reduction in turnover seen across NCT

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Appendix 2 – Northamptonshire Children’s Trust Improvement Plan (cont)

Ref	Actions	Lead and Support	Timescale	Measure of Progress	Direction of Travel since last update	RAG delivery	RAG outcomes	Progress Update
2.2	<p>Improve our working conditions to support recruitment and retention of social workers</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deliver improved induction • Review HR Policies and Procedures • Deliver conditions for success - including improved finance and business processes • Monitor caseloads and take mitigating action 	<p>Director of Finance & Resources Director of Social Care Head of HR & OD</p>	Mar-22	<p>Decreased workforce turnover Reduced vacancies and agency rate</p>	↑	Green	Amber	<p>Conditions for success being delivered through business plan. Participants on leadership development programme improving processes</p> <p>Some positive impact of flexible and home working arrangements during COVID: reduced sickness rates, positive feedback from workforce - lessons learnt to inform future policy. workforce survey completed 500 returns - informing agile working policy</p> <p>Equalities steering group and Forum in place- staff led awareness raising sessions re protected characteristics. Equalities Survey completed. Equalities Strategy & Anti Racism Statement completed</p> <p>Financial approval processes to be reviewed. Changes requested to ERP to reduce burden on managers</p> <p>Pay increments introduced from Apr 21. New recruitment and retention package of hard to recruit posts to be launched Nov 21</p> <p>Agency rate has reduced since Nov 20. Challenges remain in DAAT, Safeguarding, Court teams. Mitigating action in place</p> <p>Slight reduction in turnover seen across NCT</p>

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Appendix 2 – Northamptonshire Children’s Trust Improvement Plan (cont)

Ref	Actions	Lead and Support	Timescale	Measure of Progress	Direction of Travel since last update	RAG delivery	RAG outcomes	Progress Update
2.3	<p>Improve our offer to social workers in hard to recruit teams</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Implement revised recruitment and retention bonus offer, with better incentives for hard to recruit to posts / teams 	<p>Director of Finance & Resources Director of Social Care</p>	Mar-22	Reduced proportion of Social Work vacancies and agency workers in Safeguarding, DAAT and Court teams	↑	Green	Amber	<p>Pay increments introduced from Apr 21. New recruitment and retention package of hard to recruit posts to be launched Nov 21</p> <p>Dedicated Recruitment team and Weekly recruitment panels in place</p> <p>Agency rate has reduced since Nov 20. Challenges remain in DAAT, Safeguarding, Court teams. Mitigating action in place. Need more perm starters in priority teams and to reduce turnover.</p> <p>NQSWs recruitment: 9 started Jan , 13 started in May (including 8 Step Up graduates) 14 started Sept 10 Step Up students will start in Jan22.</p> <p>Front Line - we are applying to be part of the programme from Sep 22</p> <p>Focus on improving agency, permanent, international recruitment</p>
2.4	<p>Improve the efficiency of our recruitment processes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> increase business support officers input to process and reduce admin demand on managers increase speed of approval and recruitment, appointment process 	Director of Finance & Resources	Dec-22	<p>Reduced time from point of identifying need to recruit to appointment</p> <p>Reduced proportion of social worker vacancies</p>	↑	Green	Amber	<p>Plans in place to enable business support to have more input to ERP Gold</p> <p>ERP backend processes being reviewed to streamline where possible</p> <p>All recruitment support now in Finance and Resources leading to improved working practices</p>
2.5	<p>Deliver creative and targeted recruitment campaigns which result in increase the appointment of permanent social workers</p>	Director of Finance & Resources	Dec-22	Reduced vacancies and agency rate	↑	Green	Amber	<p>NCT Social media recruitment campaign ongoing</p> <p>Re-launch of campaign planned following finalisation of recruitment and retention offer</p>

Appendix 2 – Northamptonshire Children’s Trust Improvement Plan (cont)

3. Strong Relationship Based Practice

We are focused upon evidence based practice that works with children, young people and families to help them achieve positive changes. Our practice model is child centred at its heart and evidenced through all we do.

Ofsted 2019 1a - The identification of and response to risk when contacts relating to safeguarding concerns for children are received into the MASH.

Ofsted 2019 1b - Timely and purposeful visits to children to ensure that their needs are understood.

Ofsted 2019 1c -The quality of social work assessments and plans so that they are consistently timely and are effective in improving children's experiences.

Ofsted 2019 1d - The identification of and response to risk in relation to long-standing concerns of chronic neglect.

Ofsted 2019 1e - The response to children at risk of exploitation to ensure that their vulnerabilities are fully recognised and lead to intervention to keep them safe.

Ofsted 2019 1f -Clear reunification plans and support services for children returning home.

Ofsted 2019 1g -Timely transition planning for disabled children in care to reduce uncertainties and anxieties for them and their families.

Appendix 2 – Northamptonshire Children’s Trust Improvement Plan (cont)

Ref	Actions	Lead and Support	Timescale	Measure of Progress	Direction of Travel since last update	RAG delivery	RAG outcomes	Progress Update
3.1	<p>Fully implement the Signs of Safety Practice Model across NCT to improve the quality of practice and outcomes for children</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deliver Signs of Safety Trajectory Plan and Key deliverables at partnership, organisation and service levels • Equip and support workforce through CPD offer that reflects and supports Signs of Safety • Review and develop Signs of Safety CPD for partners 	Director of Social Care	Mar-22	<p>Practice Model agreed and known by workforce</p> <p>Positive feedback from L&D participants regarding impact on practice</p> <p>Quality assurance activity shows improvement in consistency of use and quality of Signs of Safety</p> <p>SofS used across interventions with positive impact on practice and culture</p> <p>Adoption of language and approach within all parts of the organisation</p> <p>QA activity shows improvement in partnership working within SofS model that has impact for children</p>	↑	Green	Amber	<p>Practice Standards, Practice Model and Supervision Policy revised in line with Trust business plan for launched Sept 21</p> <p>Signs of Safety trajectory plan in place</p> <p>Signs of Safety Project Manager in post and additional Advanced Practitioners being recruited</p> <p>Key deliverables are in place and programme plan in development</p> <p>Signs of Safety bite size sessions have been delivered since Oct 20</p> <p>Further 5 day intensive training is in place for 2021 to develop additional Practice Champions .- focus on ensuring all front line managers have completed</p> <p>University of Northampton undertaking 12-18 month research project into impact of Signs of Safety</p> <p>PIP supporting MASH/DAAT/Safeguarding and CIC to embed Signs of Safety</p> <p>QA activity is showing improvement in use of SofS though still a way to go to achieve consistently good practice</p> <p>Ofsted focused visits found better quality child in need and child protection assessments, using Signs of Safety, capturing lived experience of children and most visits demonstrating a child focus.</p> <p>Ofsted Feb 21 MV found:</p> <p>Embedding the Trust’s strengths based model of social work practice is showing signs of progress e.g. recording of reviews</p> <p>Ofsted July MV 21 MV commented:</p> <p>the new practice model is helping to improve the quality of practice and the experiences and progress of children</p> <p>the strengths based model of practice is helping to inform children’s assessment and plans, however it is not yet embedded into practice</p>

Appendix 2 – Northamptonshire Children’s Trust Improvement Plan (cont)

Ref	Actions	Lead and Support	Timescale	Measure of Progress	Direction of Travel since last update	RAG delivery	RAG outcomes	Progress Update
3.2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Evidence good quality engagement of children and families and meaningful relationships with practitioners Consistent and appropriate use of direct work tools to inform assessments and plans (evidenced on case records) Evidence of relationship based practice with families Safety Planning and Family Network meetings undertaken with all families IROs consistently seek views of children and promote attendance at reviews Safeguarding QA Service to encourage views of children are heard and attendance of children promoted in CP Conferences DCT to ensure voice of disabled children is present in meetings Increase the partnership engagement and use of Early Help assessment and support plan with families. 	AD Children and Family Support Service and YOS AD Safeguarding AD Corporate Parenting AD Quality Assurance & Commissioning	Mar-22	<p>Quality assurance activity shows improvement in voice of child and relationship based engagement of parents in informing assessments and plans .</p> <p>Evidence of children and young people’s involvement in planning</p> <p>Children and young people participating in conferences, reviews, meetings with their views informing assessments, plans and reviews of progress</p>	↑	Green	Amber	<p>Clear expectation that voice of the child is considered/recorded by all Social Workers. Voice of the child more evidenced through work completed - recognised by Ofsted Focused Visit. Further progress to be made to increase range of engagement across all cohorts of children and at individual, service and strategic levels through the CYP Engagement Strategy</p> <p>MOMO to be implemented to increase range and depth of participation with more children and young people</p> <p>Child’s voice is integrated into the QA audit tool and QA Board includes Voice of Child regular agenda item.</p> <p>Young Inspectors participation in Practice Weeks, with focus on voice of child</p> <p>Ofsted Focused Visits finding better quality child in need and child protection assessments, using Signs of Safety, capturing lived experience of children and most visits demonstrating a child focus.</p> <p>Ofsted focused visits finding increasing examples of direct child centred work that informs plans and planning.</p> <p>MOMO being commissioned to increase range and depth of participation with more children and young people</p> <p>Partnership training plan for SofS in development</p> <p>Ofsted Feb 21 MV found:</p> <p>Children in Care Council and Young Inspectors have a strong voice and has had a significant impact in shaping services. They were described as inspirational by the Inspectors</p>

Appendix 2 – Northamptonshire Children’s Trust Improvement Plan (cont)

Ref	Actions	Lead and Support	Timescale	Measure of Progress	Direction of Travel since last update	RAG delivery	RAG outcomes	Progress Update
3.3	<p>Ensure all visits are purposeful</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Purpose of visit is in line with child’s plan and pertinent information is clearly recorded Regular QA activity to provide feedback 	AD Safeguarding AD Corporate Parenting	Mar-22	QA activity shows meaningful and purposeful visits on case recordings	↔	Green	Amber	CRPD cycle in place to provide regular feedback on quality Some good practice examples seen, further consistency is required
3.6	<p>Enable children to remain or return to the care of their families wherever safe and possible</p>			Reduced rate of children in care Increased rate of children in care cared for by family / connected person	↑	Green	Amber	FGC pilot making a difference in reduction of cases escalating. Seeking alternative funding sources as unlikely to deliver as an invest to save beyond current DfE funding Family Solutions Team fully operational with workflow referral processes in place and clear links to all operational panels - ie Gateway Panel and Child in Care Panel.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review impact of FGC pilot, develop and agree options for mainstreaming from June 22 	AD QA & Commissioning	Jan 22					
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Development of Family Solution, Family Support (Edge of Care) 	AD CFSS	Dec 21					
3.7	<p>Ensure all assessments and plans consider children’s unique characteristics, including ethnicity, culture and heritage</p>	AD Safeguarding AD Corporate Parenting	Mar-22	QA activity shows improvement	↔	Green	Amber	CRPD tool has focus on individual needs. 69% CRPDs over last 12 months scaled above 5 out of 10 (10 being exceeds good quality) for child, family and identity Early Help Assessment has been review and there is focus on unique characteristics of the Child and Family. Cultural competency training developed with input from young people

Appendix 2 – Northamptonshire Children’s Trust Improvement Plan (cont)

Ref	Actions	Lead and Support	Timescale	Measure of Progress	Direction of Travel since last update	RAG delivery	RAG outcomes	Progress Update
3.8	Improvement in the consistency of quality in Assessments (ensuring all include children’s family history, cultural genograms, consideration of fathers/ male carers, current concerns, and needs, lived life of child, thorough analysis of all issues affecting the child and rationale for next steps)	AD Safeguarding AD Corporate Parenting	Mar-22	Timeliness of assessments in line with comparators and targets Quality assurance activity shows improvement in consistency of quality % Re-referrals	↑	Green	Amber	<p>Quality Assurance activity and Ofsted identifying improvements and some good practice although overall inconsistency remains.</p> <p>IRO / CP Chair oversight & escalation processes in place to capture early identification of concerns for management review & actions to address. Reduction in CP Chair escalations in Q1 21-22 due to less drift being seen and more concerns being resolved informally and not needing formal escalation - highlights improved working relationships between services</p> <p>Practice in safeguarding is improving evidenced by performance; feedback from service users/judiciary/ gateway panels. PIP are implementing support plan in safeguarding teams from Oct 21. They are currently providing mentoring support for a number of line managers.</p> <p>Case progression manager is supporting sw’s to improve quality of reports in PLO and proceedings - working alongside and via QA activity. PIP also supporting. PLO working group recommendations are progressing.</p> <p>Action plans from QA activity and Practice Weeks are being implemented.</p> <p>Ofsted focused visit found Quality and impact of decision making for disabled children are satisfactory.</p> <p>Ofsted focused visit found tangible improvements in quality of social work practice . Impact not yet seen on % of re-referrals (34% which is above comparators). Improvement work with mash and DAAT ongoing including reflective group learning sessions.</p> <p>Ofsted Feb 21 MV found:</p> <p>Most social workers know their children well and have a clear understanding of their needs</p> <p>Majority of children are visited within statutory timescales</p>

Appendix 2 – Northamptonshire Children’s Trust Improvement Plan (cont)

Ref	Actions	Lead and Support	Timescale	Measure of Progress	Direction of Travel since last update	RAG delivery	RAG outcomes	Progress Update
3.8	Improvement in the consistency of quality in Assessments (ensuring all include children’s family history, cultural genograms, consideration of fathers/ male carers, current concerns, and needs, lived life of child, thorough analysis of all issues affecting the child and rationale for next steps)	AD Safeguarding AD Corporate Parenting	Mar-22	Timeliness of assessments in line with comparators and targets Quality assurance activity shows improvement in consistency of quality % Re-referrals	↑	Green	Amber	The vast majority of children have an up to date assessments that identifies their needs Further improvement needed on: Some assessments are not comprehensive and are limited in analysis and do not consider the children’s wider needs Some care plans are not actioned in a timely way leading to delays in meeting needs and achieving permanence Quality of recording care plans inconsistent with some not indicating what success looks like for a child Risk assessment and safety plans for children at risk of exploitation are inconsistent and safety plans are not always updated Supervision records do not reflect on children’s circumstances and miss opportunities to drive forward plans with actions not being specific or given a timescale
3.9	Improvement in the consistency of quality in Plans (ensuring all are focused, have clear, realistic and time-bound actions to improve children’s circumstances and focus on what plan is seeking to achieve to improve children’s outcomes (not adult focused) and include specific contingency plans)	AD Safeguarding AD Corporate Parenting	Mar-22	Timeliness of plans in line with comparators and targets Quality assurance activity shows improvement in consistency of quality	↑	Green	Amber	Continuing to embed Sos and use of appropriate tools e.g. words and pictures and use of timelines/ trajectory plans. Work is completed with families to ensure aims and objectives are realistic with clear anticipated outcomes. Use of contingency plans is increasing as the sofs model embeds. Practice is not consistent across the service yet. Supervision and management oversight is happening and quality is improving. The quality assurance framework will review plans to test progress. 72% CRPDs over last 12 months scaled above 5 for care planning (where 10 exceeds good quality)

Appendix 2 – Northamptonshire Children’s Trust Improvement Plan (cont)

Ref	Actions	Lead and Support	Timescale	Measure of Progress	Direction of Travel since last update	RAG delivery	RAG outcomes	Progress Update
3.10	<p>Improvement in the consistency of quality in Safety Plans</p> <p>(ensuring that all are written so children and families can understand them, are updated when circumstances change, are robust, include full network and explicit contingency arrangements)</p>	AD Safeguarding AD Corporate Parenting	Mar-22	Quality assurance activity shows improvement in consistency of quality	↔	Green	Amber	<p>Further training available to support drawing up of safety plans. Template and best practice examples in place</p> <p>Practice Champions and AP’s supporting practice. Direct work including safety planning with children and families is evident but not consistent across the service. Family network meetings are taking place but not consistently. Family group conferences are taking place for 50% cases in PLO and will move to 100% of case in PLO following the pilot ending. Supervision and management oversight is overseeing safety planning.</p>
3.11	<p>Continue to achieve effective planning and increase engagement with care leavers</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> improve quality and effectiveness of early pathway planning Up to date risk assessments and pathway plans 	AD Corporate Parenting	Mar-22	<p>Achieve target of 95% of Care Leavers with an up to date Pathway Plan</p> <p>Increase % of Care Leavers with a PA</p> <p>Maintain % of Care Leavers in EET and Suitable accommodation in line with or above comparators</p> <p>Quality assurance activity show consistent good quality and timely pathway planning</p>	↑	Green	Amber	<p>81.6% of children and young people have up to date pathway plans (September 21)</p> <p>91 % in suitable accommodation (YTD 21- 22 at Sept) above England average</p> <p>60.2% in EET (YTD at Sept 21) above England and stat neighbour averages</p> <p>All homeless young people are reviewed by team managers with clear actions taken to seek to resolve individual housing arrangements</p> <p>Pathway plan for young people aged 18+ developed with young people and completed by them has facilitated greater focus on goals and aspirations</p> <p>QA activity (Sept 21) found the majority of Pathway Plans reviewed have a clear exploration of the young person’s needs and how they like to be supported, with the voice of the young person present in the majority even when young people are non-verbal</p>

Appendix 2 – Northamptonshire Children’s Trust Improvement Plan (cont)

4. Insightful Quality Assurance and Learning

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

Ofsted 2019 2b The use of quality assurance activity such as case auditing and escalations to inform and improve practice.

Ofsted 2019 2c Action planning in response to the findings of serious case reviews.

Ref	Actions	Lead and Support	Timescale	Measure of Progress	Direction of Travel since last update	RAG delivery	RAG outcomes	Progress Update
4.1	4.1 Delivery of QA Framework <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Auditing • Practice weeks • Performance clinics • Training and coaching for audit consistency • Escalations • Quarterly QA reports shared with workforce • Review of QAF in light of new Trust Strategy • Regular Quality Board, chaired by Chief Exec to be established 	AD Quality Assurance & Commissioning	Mar-22	Increase in amount and range of QA activity across services that provides understanding of quality of practice Improvement in consistency of quality of QA activity (as confirmed by moderation) % Escalations resolved in timescale QA Board Minutes	↑	Green	Amber	CIC Practice week July and Safeguarding Practice Week completed Dec. Fostering PW completed Apr. Children and Family Support Service PW to take place Feb 21 Increasing quality of CRPDs and more completed side by side. Further to go with managers prioritising QA and consistency of quality of CRPDs QA training in place - 1-2-1 support ongoing Performance clinics in place across social care services with standard terms of reference Ofsted focused visit identified that our QA activity identified same themes as inspection, and confirmed variability in quality of QA Ofsted focused visit identified QAF and findings from audit activity are underpinning improvements to practice QA Board, chaired by Chief Exec in place QA Strategy and Framework refreshed in line with NCT business plan, Collaborative Reflective Practice Discussions CRPDs and cycle in place from April 21 Ofsted Jul 21 MV commented: Senior leaders have a comprehensive and thorough oversight of quality, strengthened by the development of the QA Board Practice weeks, which include the involvement of young inspectors, influence and drive improvements in SW practice in order to improve children's experiences

Appendix 2 – Northamptonshire Children’s Trust Improvement Plan (cont)

Ref	Actions	Lead and Support	Timescale	Measure of Progress	Direction of Travel since last update	RAG delivery	RAG outcomes	Progress Update
4.2	<p>4.2 Learning Loops are in place and influence practice</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learning and practice development opportunities are available to workforce in a range of mediums and through communication structures • Management oversight and audit • Peer Thematic Audit • Practice week • SCR/Practice Review • PIP 	AD Quality Assurance & Commissioning	Mar-22	<p>Evidence of casework actions to complete audit recommendations</p> <p>Evidence of actions to implement thematic/SCR recommendations</p> <p>QA Board Minutes</p>	↑	Green	Amber	<p>Learning from QA activity being shared in workforce and leaders’ newsletters, service management team meetings. Action plans developed by services in response to QA activity and Practice Weeks</p> <p>Audit team completing learning reviews and appreciative inquiry sessions. QA, SofS and Social Work Academy delivering training sessions with managers in response to QA findings.</p> <p>6 step briefings used to disseminate audit findings</p> <p>Learning hub developed live on intranet</p> <p>PSW newsletter well received</p> <p>Ofsted focused visit identified QAF and findings from audit activity are underpinning improvements to practice</p> <p>Ofsted focused visit found increasing examples of direct child centred work that informs plans and planning</p> <p>QA Board, chaired by Chief Exec provides strategic oversight of quality</p> <p>Ofsted Feb MV said:</p> <p>More for IROs to do in consistently seeking the view of children and promoting attendance at reviews</p> <p>Ofsted Jul 21 MV commented:</p> <p>Senior leaders have a comprehensive and thorough oversight of quality, strengthened by the development of the QA Board</p> <p>Practice weeks, which include the involvement of young inspectors, influence and drive improvements in SW practice in order to improve children’s experiences</p> <p>CP Chairs providing appropriate scrutiny and escalation but this is not always effective in making a difference for children</p>

Appendix 2 – Northamptonshire Children’s Trust Improvement Plan (cont)

Ref	Actions	Lead and Support	Timescale	Measure of Progress	Direction of Travel since last update	RAG delivery	RAG outcomes	Progress Update
4.3	<p>Ensure CP Chair and IRO escalations have the impact of improving experiences of and outcomes for children</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review current process and barriers and implement improvements 	AD Quality Assurance & Commissioning	Mar-22	Improvement in % escalations resolved in timely manner QA shows positive impact of escalations for children	↔	Green	Amber	

Appendix 2 – Northamptonshire Children’s Trust Improvement Plan (cont)

5. Healthy Partnerships

Effective partnership working is essential to good practice.

Ofsted 2019 3a Strategic development of Early Help services to ensure that children’s needs are identified and responded to at the earliest opportunity.

Ref	Actions	Lead and Support	Timescale	Measure of Progress	Direction of Travel since last update	RAG delivery	RAG outcomes	Progress Update
5.1	<p>Early Help is strengthened across the partnership and front door demand is reduced with right children being referred at right time</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deliver Early Help Strategy Action Plan • Children and Family Support Service Pathways • Partner training re thresholds and SofS • PAUSE • refresh of mash model for contacts • Improved quality of referrals 	NSCP Early Help sub group and AD Children and Family Support Service	Mar-22	<p>Increased Children and Family Support Service Assessments and interventions</p> <p>Reduced % of contacts that lead to no further action</p> <p>Increased % of contacts that lead to referral</p> <p>Reduced % referrals with a previous referral in the last 12 months in line with comparators</p>	↑	Green	Amber	<p>Early Help Strategy agreed by NSCP, action plan now being delivered. This is expected to increase early support and reduce inappropriate contacts to social care</p> <p>Children and Family Support Service in-house service specification and business plan developed Review and implement improved access to support for all services.</p> <p>Establish closer partnership working, introduce new West and North Partnership Networking Events Increase Partnership Training and Development to use EHA and support plans at the earliest opportunity.</p> <p>NSCP Early Help Subgroup to consider scorecard data which reflects EHA use and all other contributing data to demonstrate impact of early help offer.</p> <p>Improvements made with Supporting Families PBR and the governance of this programme will now sit with the EH Safeguarding Subgroup.</p> <p>Pause went live in October 20- positive impact</p> <p>Increasing number of initial contacts signposted to Children and Family Support Service, Children and Family Support Service workers facilitate the right support whether that is provided by our Internal Children and Family Support Teams or partners in the locality area.</p> <p>Contacts to referrals steadily increasing (31% YTD 21-22 at Sept 21 compared to 25% in 20/21)</p> <p>Partner SofS training plan in development</p>

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Appendix 2 – Northamptonshire Children’s Trust Improvement Plan (cont)

Ref	Actions	Lead and Support	Timescale	Measure of Progress	Direction of Travel since last update	RAG delivery	RAG outcomes	Progress Update
5.2	<p>Ensure children receive the right support at the right time according to their needs</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Implement Children and Family Support Services service specification. Ensure step down processes are efficient, timely and impactful Strengthen partnership collaboration working through Partnership Co-ordinators and Early Help MASH Co-ordinators. 	AD Children and Family Support Service and YOS	Mar-22	Reduced CIN rate Reduced CP rate Reduced CIC rate	↑	Green	Amber	CFSS specification is complete including the Business Implementation Plan. CFSS have implemented a new Step Down process which is under review. CFSS Partnership Co-ordinator and MASH Co-ordinator have been revised to strengthen their partnership Children and Family Support Service inclusion in MASH Pods and matrix management implemented Feb 21 - strengthening offer of Children and Family Support Service through MASH delivery CIN and CP rate has reduced from previous years, CLA rate has remained steady from last year
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review impact of commissioned family support services, review options for future delivery from 2024 	AD QA & Commissioning	Mar-22					
5.3	<p>Clear transition pathway for all children requiring support from adults services</p>	Adults Transition Manager AD Corporate Parenting	Mar 22	Timely CIN meetings for children in transition to adulthood Timely referrals and decisions to Moving Into Adulthood Panel	↔	Green	Amber	There are closer working relationships with Adult Social Care and processes and timescales for children referred to Adult Social care have been strengthened. The implementation of the Moving in to Adulthood Panel (MIAP) and referral process has led to improved outcomes. Further improvements so that the system of transition as a whole is enabling earlier allocation and assessment, in particular for children and young people with Mental Health difficulties Development of system wide approach to health and social care intervention through ICS

Appendix 2 – Northamptonshire Children’s Trust Improvement Plan (cont)

Ref	Actions	Lead and Support	Timescale	Measure of Progress	Direction of Travel since last update	RAG delivery	RAG outcomes	Progress Update
5.4	<p>Robust and effective partnership identification of and response to risk in the MASH</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consistent application of thresholds • Effective Domestic abuse triage 	Rich Tompkins with AD Safeguarding	Mar-22	<p>Quality assurance activity shows increase in consistency of quality in identification and response to risk in the MASH</p> <p>Timely submission and screening of DA notifications</p> <p>Reduced rate of s47 in line with comparators</p> <p>Actions from strategy meetings to be clearly identified and actioned and outcome reported in s47 and risks identified and recorded in s47</p> <p>Reduction in the use of PPO</p> <p>Reduced number of repeat CP plans in line with comparators</p>	↔	Green	Amber	<p>The process for Domestic Abuse notifications has been further refined in the MASH. All high and medium risk Domestic Abuse notifications where children are present or involved are progressed through the MADRA (Multi Agency Daily Risk Assessment) meeting, and in addition to this the standard risk Domestic Abuse notifications where there have been 3 incidents of Domestic Abuse within a 12-month period and those where professional judgement identifies risks to the child. Madra will be reviewed for effectiveness and overseen through the MASH Strategic Group.</p> <p>Ofsted focused visit found this helps ensure risks are understood and sensitive child and victim centred safety plans are implemented quickly</p> <p>Use of PPO 's being reviewed alongside police.</p> <p>2 education posts in place in the MASH to provide additional support to schools.</p> <p>PIP support in place for staff. Recommendations via PIP about S.47's in June 21 are being implemented and work will be continually supported by PIP.</p> <p>Mash model refresh to be implemented after 1/11/21. Currently working with partners to review model to strengthen thresholds including consent and to ensure contacts are moved to the right service right time at the earliest opportunity. Model to be reviewed at mash steering group 1/10/21. Implementation plan will be presented.</p>

Appendix 2 – Northamptonshire Children’s Trust Improvement Plan (cont)

Ref	Actions	Lead and Support	Timescale	Measure of Progress	Direction of Travel since last update	RAG delivery	RAG outcomes	Progress Update
5.5	<p>Effective identification of and response to children at risk of exploitation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Development of youth strategy and offer Full engagement with Community Safety partnership activity. Child exploitation strategy and development implementation 	AD Children and Family Support Service & AD Safeguarding	Mar 22	<p>Good quality risk assessments that are kept updated</p> <p>No of young people supported and outcomes</p> <p>Understanding of top 10 high risk YP across the partnership</p> <p>Data set that enables identification of risks/ trends</p>	↑	Green	Amber	<p>Vulnerable Adolescents Strategy completed Dec 2020, Exploitation Strategy being finalised</p> <p>New Youth Support service configuration, including Missing Children response, implemented 1st September 2020, enabling a more responsive and preventative service for exploited and vulnerable teenagers and their families.</p> <p>Vulnerable Adolescents Panel operational from the 3rd December - 6 month review completed and now utilising intelligence to revise offer</p> <p>YOS Prevent and deter offer to pre court disposals supporting this priority</p> <p>Ofsted focused visit found effective collaborative work with partners helping to prevent or reduce harm to missing and exploited children, however targeted services for adolescents are currently fragmented</p> <p>TCE multi-agency project progressing to support work on Exploitation strategy</p> <p>Vulnerable adolescents mentoring project progressing - NCT and partner mentors recruited and being trained</p> <p>Single point of contact in safeguarding service identified for police operations and regular meetings/sharing of information</p> <p>Ofsted Feb MV said:</p> <p>Prompt multi- agency response when children go missing from care and independent return interview provided to children in care</p> <p>Previous actions had been completed by Apr 21. This remains an action on the plan to review and develop as unitary Education Service now in place and perm AD Children and Family Support Service has started and will review progress and further improvements to be made</p>

Appendix 2 – Northamptonshire Children’s Trust Improvement Plan (cont)

Ref	Actions	Lead and Support	Timescale	Measure of Progress	Direction of Travel since last update	RAG delivery	RAG outcomes	Progress Update
5.6	<p>5.5a Mental Health Outcomes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mental Health pathways for children in care and care leavers Care Leavers health passports develop Mental Health support teams in schools children have up to date health reviews and dental checks 	AD Corporate Parenting	Mar-22	<p>Clear MH pathways for children in care, care leavers and vulnerable children</p> <p>Timely mental health assessments</p> <p>Reduction in % CAMHS referrals not accepted</p> <p>Reduction in number of children and young people presenting at A&E for self harm and/ or suicide ideation</p>	↑	Green	Amber	<p>Public Health funded projects for children’s mental health progressing well. 2 care leaver apprentices in place in Leaving care, champions in housing and mental health. Majority of Personal Advisors have received emotion coaching. Some challenges in identifying adult MH worker to join Leaving Care Team but this is progressing. Referrals being received for carer leavers to engage with the project. Too early as yet to identify outcomes and determine impact.</p> <p>Fostering Support project funded through Public Health now operational and referrals being received for this project. Options for provision of therapeutic work being reviewed.</p> <p>Young People’s Children and Family Support Service Mentoring Service now in operation as part of the internal Children and Family Support services Youth Support Team</p> <p>Additional MH funding for Northants announced Apr 21 via CCG to strengthen community based support</p> <p>All Children in Care are now able to access mental health consultation where next steps are agreed</p> <p>Ofsted MV said:</p> <p>Not all children have up-to-date initial and review health assessment and dental checks but the inspectors acknowledge that this has been hindered by COVID and that there is a plan in place to remedy</p> <p>CAMHS for children in care offer a comprehensive range of services for children and carers and have appropriate oversight for children out of county</p>

Appendix 2 – Northamptonshire Children’s Trust Improvement Plan (cont)

Ref	Actions	Lead and Support	Timescale	Measure of Progress	Direction of Travel since last update	RAG delivery	RAG outcomes	Progress Update
5.6	5.5b Improved Health Outcomes <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Care Leavers health passports children have up to date health reviews and dental checks 	AD Corporate Parenting	Mar-22		↔	Green	Amber	Health passport process begins at 16 and Pathway Plan for Care Leavers includes check that this is place and young person knows how to access Timeliness of health assessments and reviews and dental checks remains a concern. Additional resource has been requested from CCG to increase capacity
	5.5c Housing needs are met <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Access to emergency accommodation Joint pathway for 16 and 17 year olds 	AD Children and Family Support Service	Mar-22	Reduction in number of 16-17 year olds coming into care as s.20	↑	Green	Amber	<p>NCT Children and Families Support Service has established a steering group for 16/17 yrs old Housing Options / Homelessness. The terms of reference has been agreed and the action plan developed following guidance from Department for Levelling up, Housing and Communities (meeting scheduled 16th November with this Dept).</p> <p>A revised Joint Housing Options Protocol will be agreed with clear lines of accountability and partnership working arrangements.</p> <p>A Housing Representative now sits on the Children and Family Support Service Partnership, Housing have allocated single points of contact across the county to support the Partnership approach.</p> <p>Unitary ADs for Housing & Communities now in place- working together to prioritise key working protocols . Strategic and Operational Groups set up</p> <p>Joint Housing Protocol for Care Leavers is being refreshed to be operational from December 2021.</p>

Appendix 2 – Northamptonshire Children’s Trust Improvement Plan (cont)

Ref	Actions	Lead and Support	Timescale	Measure of Progress	Direction of Travel since last update	RAG delivery	RAG outcomes	Progress Update
5.6	<p>5.5d Educational needs are met</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Children in care are in appropriate educational placements to meet their need Reduce number of children in care who are excluded Performance clinics to monitor PEPs 	Head of Virtual School with AD Corporate Parenting	Mar-22	<p>Reduction in proportion of children in care on part time timetables, home tuition or in alternative education for too long</p> <p>Reduction in proportion of children in care who are excluded from school</p>	↑	Green	Amber	<p>Children in care at risk of being excluded or already excluded are discussed at the Vulnerable Pupils Panel held on a 3 weekly basis. Remedial activity planned and delivered.</p> <p>Multi agency weekly meeting review all children who are excluded or at risk to ensure that they have oversight and multi-agency input that plans interventions and promotes an outcome focus for education placements to be achieved.</p> <p>Virtual School monitors quality of PEPs which are led by schools.</p> <p>Both Post 16 PEP quality and PEP completion/ compliance has improved from 46% and 49% in 2018/19 to 79% and 86% in 2019/20 (Virtual School Annual Report 2020). Early indications into the 2020/21 data demonstrate this continuing upward trend (data awaiting verification).</p> <p>Proportion of young people 16+ who are NEET has continued to reduce year on year over the previous 3 academic years</p>

Appendix 2 – Northamptonshire Children’s Trust Improvement Plan (cont)

6. Robust and Effective Resource Management

We understand the key drivers of the budget and budget managers understand the financial impact of their decisions. Budget managers will be equipped with support and systems to effectively monitor and forecast. Ofsted 2019 3c Sufficiency of placements that meet children’s needs

Ref	Actions	Lead and Support	Timescale	Measure of Progress	Direction of Travel since last update	RAG delivery	RAG outcomes	Progress Update
6.1	6.1a Monthly robust oversight and monitoring in place <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Performance clinics Budget monitoring and forecasting Establishment monitoring Quality Assurance Board 	All ADs	Mar-22	Performance issues identified and addressed Savings are achieved and services are delivered within budget. - Deficits are understood and mitigations are in place	↑	Green	Amber	Performance clinics in place with consistent TOR, successes celebrated at clinics. Daily performance reports available to all managers including exception reporting. NCT transformation and efficiencies board oversees progress of projects to improve efficiency Improvement in budget oversight and forecasting supported by Finance and Resources in place from Apr 21

Appendix 2 – Northamptonshire Children’s Trust Improvement Plan (cont)

Ref	Actions	Lead and Support	Timescale	Measure of Progress	Direction of Travel since last update	RAG delivery	RAG outcomes	Progress Update
6.2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 6.2a Deliver the Sufficiency Strateg -Increase in house mainstream and specialist foster carers QA of fostering, residential framework and ISA Increase availability of quality emergency provision Implement revised statements of purpose for block contract homes Review inhouse residential home statements of purpose Increase range of providers accessed via frameworks Improve joint commissioning of support with adults and health colleagues improve placement request and finding processes Submit DfE capital bid 	AD Corporate Parenting AD Quality Assurance & Commissioning	Mar-22	Increase in no of in-house specialist foster carer placements Increase in no. of in-house standard foster carers Increase in in-house foster carer placement utilisation rate % CiC with in-house carers Reduced spend in placements	↑	Green	Amber	Reduction in children in residential homes achieved over period of last strategy - currently below comparators Placement Review Project achieved £1m savings 20/21 and positive impact for children, savings continue to be made in 21/22 IFA step down fostering placements in place Public Health project for in-house fostering supporting children’s mental health progressing Resilience and mainstream foster carer recruitment continuing, 5 resilience and 12 mainstream foster carers have been approved to date with more in progress Permanency tracking arrangements introduced in June - showing improvements. Just under 10% increase in number of available foster placements (excluding friends and family) which has led to 40 more children placed in in-house foster placements than were placed at 31st March 2020. IFA and Residential Care Framework re-opened increased range of provision Tender for additional emergency homes in progress Options to join other frameworks being considered DfE Capital bid submitted Improvements identified for placement request and finding processes, being implemented Initial discussions with adults re integrated commissioning Ofsted Feb MV said: Tangible improvements in placements sufficiency

Appendix 3 – Trust Board Members

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

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



Julian Wooster, Chair to the Board

Julian grew up in West London. He has always had an interest in strengthening disadvantaged communities and his first degree was in urban planning. He joined the social work profession after volunteering in a drugs crisis rehab centre, starting as a social work assistant. He has been involved in the social work profession for 34 years.

He says that his toughest social work job was in the East End of London well before the redevelopment. He recalls the level of material poverty and violence: “the friendly East End by then no longer existed”. This was before the profession became specialist, so Julian worked with all need groups including carrying out mental health assessments: “my favourite role was that of a frontline team manager, where I learnt most about team work and about how I can support others by changing my approach”.

Julian has extensive senior managerial experience, 10 years a Director of Children’s Services in Somerset and Portsmouth, 8 years as deputy director in Hillingdon and Wandsworth and 3 years leading Cambridgeshire’s social work teams.

On a personal level he has three adult children and reflecting how families have become more dispersed his eldest son and grandchildren are permanently resident in the USA, his daughter is in Liverpool and he has a brother in New Zealand. He relaxes by enjoying the natural environment, including through photography.

Appendix 3 – Trust Board Members



Colin Foster, CEX of Northamptonshire Children's Trust

Colin is an experienced Director of Children's Services and has 17 years public sector experience in Children's Services. In December 2022 Colin will have been with NCT for 2 years. Before this he changed career from commercial management where he undertook a number of roles in the UK, USA, Europe and then Asia. He was inspired whilst doing voluntary work in Asia and the UK, when he decided to commit his career to helping children and then qualified to MA level. Colin has a proven track record in improving Children's Services and gets up in the morning to make a sustainable difference to the lives of children, young people and families through enabling colleagues and ensuring delivery of the best possible services. He asks everyone in the Trust to do the best job of their life, every single day, because children, young people and families deserve nothing less.

Colin has two teenage children who keep him busy at home and is volunteer football coach in the community and has been doing that for over 10 years which is very rewarding. He has enjoyed working with the players and he says it has been great to watch them grow and develop their skills since they were 5 years old.

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Andrew Tagg, Director of Finance & Resources

Andrew joins the Trust with over 30 years' experience within Local Government holding a number of senior management roles. Previously he was the Bi- Borough Children's Services Director of Operations and Programmes for Westminster and Kensington and Chelsea and was part of the team that created the innovative Tri-Borough children's services model.

Within the Trust he provides financial expertise and leads the Trust's strategic operations and business planning processes through the management of a range of support services.

Andrew is passionate about developing high quality, efficient and effective services for children, young people and their families and maximising the use of resources.

Appendix 3 – Trust Board Members



Cornelia Andrecut, Director of Children’s Social care

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

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Clare Chamberlain, Independent Director

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



Rebecca Peck, Council Nominated Director

Rebecca is Assistant Chief Exec for West Northants. Rebecca has previously held senior leadership roles for the London Borough of Sutton, Royal Borough of Kingston-upon-Thames and Milton Keynes Council, leading on areas including digital, transformation, customer service and statutory children’s complaints.

Rebecca is a Northamptonshire resident and is passionate about transforming local public services. Rebecca will be working with the Trust Board to deliver improved outcomes for children, young people and their families.

Appendix 3 – Trust Board Members



Joshua Imuere, Council Nominated Director

Joshua is an experienced charity chief executive who has directed successful transformation programmes across the UK, in order to strengthen the voice of underrepresented groups and forge perennial alliances; recovering charities from risk of closure, re-aligning their core purpose and embedding the right operational systems for sustainability.

Over the last 17 years he has developed expertise in change management, informal education, place-based approaches, and youth leadership, using them at the helm of youth charities such as Art Against Knives and SYLA, both of which he substantially grew in terms of their reach and scale. Joshua is the vice chair of the practice, performance and quality subcommittee of board.

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Samantha Fitzgerald, Council Nominated Director

Samantha is the Assistant Director for Adult Services in North Northamptonshire's Adult, Communities and Wellbeing Directorate.

She is a registered Social Worker and has worked in adult services for over 20 years, both as a practitioner and manager. She has experience of working within Mental Health, Health Partnerships and wider Adult Social Care. Her roles to date have involved working closely with other statutory partners and the voluntary sector to improve outcomes for adults in Northamptonshire.



Darren Hickman, Council Nominated Director

Darren was the Finance and Relationship Director for the Insurance Company of Santander Bank, until December 2019. During his 37 years at the bank he has held a variety of executive positions including operational management, marketing, IT and change management.

Whilst working for the bank he has also undertaken several external non-executive director (NED) and pension trustee roles spanning 18 years. For the last 6 years he has been proud to serve as a NED for a large NHS trust, providing all-age mental health and community care. In November 2020 he was also appointed as a NED for a local building society.

Darren is looking forward to using his skills to assist the new Trust to deliver enhanced children's services in Northamptonshire.

Appendix 3 – Trust Board Members



Colin Cross, Independent Director

Colin brings over 30 years of experience of leading service delivery organisations serving clients in the public and private sector, both nationally and overseas.

He has worked for major international companies such as IBM and Capgemini. He looks forward to drawing upon his financial management, service delivery, operational improvement and strategic planning expertise to help improve the lives of Northamptonshire’s children and young people. Colin is Vice-Chair of the Finance, Resources and Audit Committee, and a member of the Practice, Performance and Quality Committee. Colin lives on the Northants/Bucks border and is married with two grown-up children. He has a keen interest in sport and travel.

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John O'Brien, Independent Director

John served as Chief Executive of London Councils – the organisation that supports the 33 London local authorities – between 2007 and 2021, working closely with elected members, senior officers and a range of partners across London, including health, police, business, the voluntary and community sector and Transport for London. He previously worked in central government at the former DCLG, in the private sector, within local government directly and on behalf of the sector at the IDeA and LGA. He uses that range of experience to contribute to the work of the Trust on behalf of children, young people and families across North and West Northamptonshire. In October 2021 he was appointed as the Chair Designate of the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Integrated Care System.

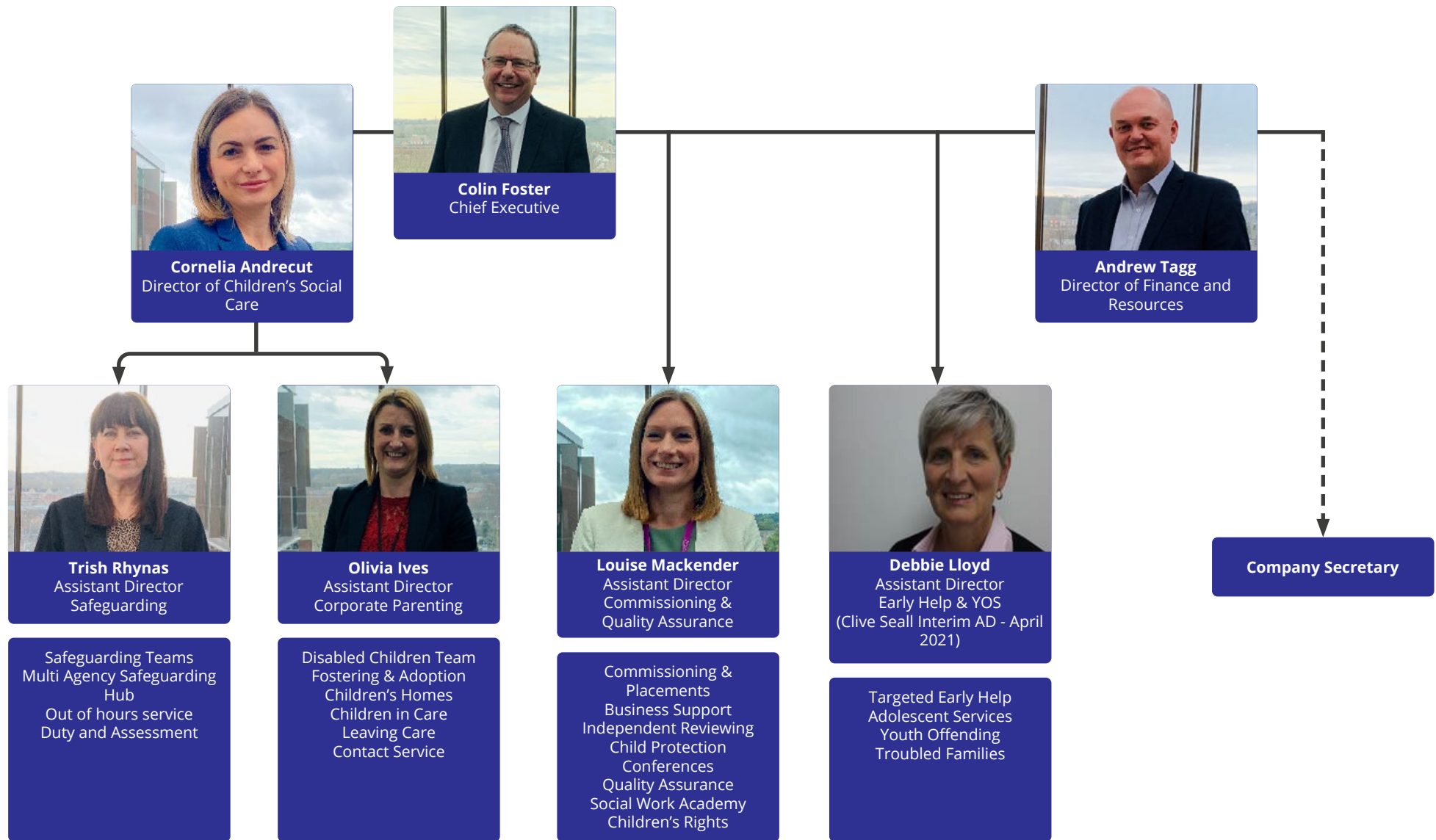


Hilary Daniels, Independent Director

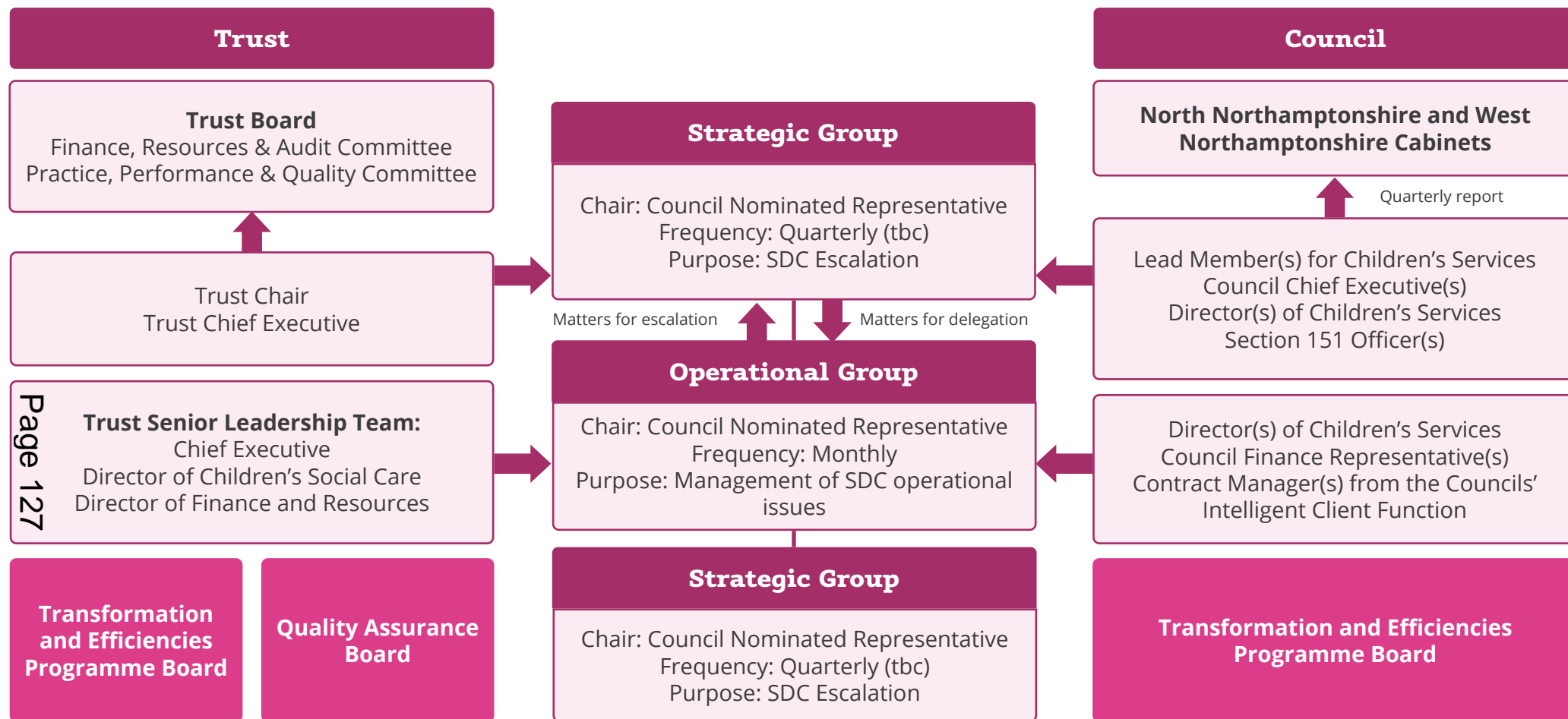
Hilary is a qualified accountant who has worked as a Director of Finance in Local Government and as a Finance Director and Chief Executive in the NHS, where she both commissioned and managed significant provider services including CAMHS and other children’s services. She is an experienced Non-Executive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

Appendix 4 – Trust Executive Management Structure

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Appendix 5 – Governance arrangements



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

Appendix 6 – Contractual Key Performance Indicators

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

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

Appendix 6 – Contractual Key Performance Indicators (cont)

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

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

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

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

Appendix 7 - Projected Profit and Loss Account

Budget Description	2022/23 £m	2023/24 £m	2024/25 £m
Initial Contract Sum	137.15	137.45	137.95
Directly invoiced Income	1.73	2.96	3.02
Total Service Delivery Contract	138.88	140.41	140.97
Inflation (note 1)			
Staffing	0.97	0.98	0.98
Placements note (2)	1.56	1.55	1.55
Other	0.78	0.74	0.73
Total Inflation	3.31	3.27	3.26
Additional Invoiced Income (note 3)	1.20	0	0
Total Funding	143.40	143.68	144.23
Less Savings/Transformation			
Service Reviews	0.33	0.66	0.66
Placements	2.45	1.25	2.00
Transport review	0.11	0.10	0.10

Budget Description	2022/23 £m	2023/24 £m	2024/25 £m
Legal Services	0.10	0.10	0.10
Contract savings	0.00	0.40	0.35
Asset Review	0.00	0.20	0.20
Total Savings/Transformation	2.99	2.71	3.41
Total Service Delivery Contract	140.41	140.97	140.82
Less Directly invoiced Income	2.96	3.02	3.09
Net Contract Sum	137.45	137.95	137.73

Note 1: Individual inflation factors are detailed in the medium term financial strategy. These will be subject to review and tracked against RPI, CPI and pay announcements.

Note 2: Agreement that the financial payment mechanism in the contract will be amended such that if actual demand exceeds the forecast then this will be dealt with via a contract variation agreed via the Operational Commissioning Group.

Note 3: The additional income reflects the current agreements for Joint Funding packages between Social care, Education and Health. Recharged are on an individual case basis and recharged accordingly.

Appendix 8 – Strategic Risk Register

Risk No	Date Raised	Risk Owner	Risk Type	Risk Description	Event	Impact	Initial Risk Score			Mitigating Action	Current Position and Risk as at Sept 2021				Future Actions	Target Residual			Date closed / transferred to Operational Risk Register
							Probability	Impact	SCORE		Current Position	Probability	Impact	SCORE		Further Management Actions	Probability	Impact	
Corporate Risk																			
1	01/04/2021	Chief Executive	Long term sustainability	"Stakeholder engagement - unitarities and other strategic partners Many of the KPIs for are dependent on good partnership working with North Northamptonshire and West Northamptonshire and other agencies including Health (PEPS, educational outcomes, health outcomes, missing from care) "	"Poorly defined shared vision Collaborative advantage for working together not clearly defined Policy changes within local authority and / or partner organisations Partnership initiative is incompatible / does not align with other local initiatives Lack of effective and consistent leadership for the partnership"	"Performance targets are not met. No strategic approach to issues of risks, costs, benefits."	2	5	10	"1. Clear vision and conditions for success developed and shared with all partners and colleagues 2. Children's Trust business plan strategy with clear priorities 3. Development of strong relationships with both councils and partner organisations "	"1. Consultation with staff through 58 minute sessions and additional forums 2. Children's Trust strategy in development through the forums above 3. Member engagement sessions 4. Development of Operational and Strategic commissioning groups"	2	5	10	"1. Initial Business Plan launched 2. Development of three year business plan completed by November 2021. 3. Increased reporting through commissioning groups "	2	5	10	
2	01/04/2021	Chief Executive	Quality of services / contractual	"Service Delivery Contract: A Persistent Breach in the provision of the Services persisting for [one or more Quarters] during the term of the Agreement; Monthly KPI falls outside of Tolerance for [three (3)] consecutive Months; Quarterly KPI, falls of Tolerance for [two (2)] consecutive Quarters or more"	"Insufficiency progress made against planned improvements and performance indicators "	Step In Notice	2	4	8	1. Regular monitoring against contractual KPIs 2. Improved reporting through OCG and SCG 3. improvements in Business intelligence and demand forecasting	1. Baselines agreed, together with reporting templates 2. Reporting improved 3. key focus on local and national demand pressures post covid	2	4	8	1. improved business intelligence systems. 2. Continued focus on permanent recruitment 3. Social care Improvement board 4. Increased workforce training (Bespoke Management training)	2	4	8	KPI performance report reported monthly (OCG)
Care Risks																			
	01/04/2021	Director of Children's Social Care	Quality of services / contractual	" An emergency occurs that has: - a significant adverse impact on the welfare of, and there is a serious increased risk of harm to, children and/or young people in the county of Northamptonshire; or - has a material adverse effect on the Trust of the Services by the such that there is, or will be, a long-term increased risk of harm to children and young people in the Northamptonshire if the Trust continues to perform the Services"	"Business continuity failure in critical services Death or injury to a child or young person under the responsibility of the Trust, through inappropriate care or attention "	Step in notice Child Safeguarding Practice Review	2	5	10	1. Regular quality assurance and audit activity along with management supervision and oversight to identify and address any risks in relation to practice	1. There are no cases currently where concerns of this type have been identified	2	5	10		2	5	10	
4	01/04/2021	Director of Children's Social Care	Inspection / Regulatory	Lack of improvement in Ofsted monitoring visits/ inspections	Failure to improve services for children	Failure to achieve a successful outcome in inspections could result in public criticism of services impacting upon future recruitment and retention, negative impact on outcomes for children, and reputational risk	2	5	10	"1. Effective leadership and oversight to ensure services are operated at an effective level 2. Monthly improvement board to monitor progress"	"1. Ofsted assurance visit recognised progress 2. Improvement plan updates with Ofsted feedback"	2	5	10	1. Updated improvement plan to be sent to Improvement Board	2	5	10	
5	01/04/2021	Director of Children's Social Care	Service delivery	Ongoing impact of CV-19 on service demand and related budget pressures	"Insufficient apportionment of national monies to cover incurred CV-19 related Trust costs. Additional financial pressure on the Council. CV-19 affecting staff members / foster carers / residential homes"	"Service delivery constrained - reduced service provision; workforce reduction. Need to find additional funding for services. Some non-essential services may be affected."	3	5	15	1. Baseline report to be produced detailing Trust position as at 1st November for discussion with two unitary councils. 2 Submission of covid funding request. 3. Placement monitoring in pace	1. Baseline underway as part of a commissioned piece of work 2. Additional funding secured for 21/22 financial year (Apr - Sept) 3. Weekly demand level report showing pressure on placements budget. 4. Early warning systems in place	4	5	20	Monitoring impact, potential impact on service demands post march.	2	5	10	
6	01/04/2021	Director of Children's Social Care	Finance / service delivery	Challenges to the delivery of / withdrawal of the Troubled Families Programme	Government withdraw or significantly amends the terms of the Troubled Families Programme	"Insufficient funding to sustain services funded by the Troubled Families Programme. Poor outcomes for young people. Increased costs, reputational risk. "	2	4	8	"1. Regular monitoring of troubled families (supporting families) attachment and PBR income "	"1. Attachment funding covers staffing and has been rolled forward by government for a further year to 21 / 22 2. Significant increase in successful claims for the final quarter of 20/21 financial year "	1	4	4	1. A/D Early Help leading a piece of work to identify where further claims are possible. Closer interface with Business intelligence with dedicated resource	2	2	4	

Appendix 8 – Strategic Risk Register (cont)

Risk No	Date Raised	Risk Owner	Risk Type	Risk Description	Event	Impact	Initial Risk Score			Mitigating Action	Current Position and Risk as at Sept 2021				Future Actions	Target Residual			Date closed / transferred to Operational Risk Register
							Probability	Impact	SCORE		Current Position	Probability	Impact	SCORE		Further Management Actions	Probability	Impact	
7	01/04/2021	Director of Children's Social Care	Service delivery	Non recent child sexual exploitation connected cases	Victims coming forward, police investigation and criminal charges, identification of further victims and alleged perpetrators as investigation continues and made public	Serious harm experienced by a child/ young person, reputational, financial (litigation, insurance, additional resource requirements), HR (disciplinary)	3	4	12	1. The Trust is managing the safeguarding aspects of the operation/ investigation in collaboration with safeguarding partners who together manage the communication strategy.	"1. Investigation still ongoing. Initial findings indicate cases are not connected and we do not deal with a criminal network"	3	4	12	"1. Once report written and publication timeline confirmed then to develop a comms plan. 2. Additional resources agreed by the council to effectively manage exiting work and any new referrals linked to the investigation 3. Communication plan managed by the Strategic Management Group, which is chaired by the DCS and include representatives of the safeguarding partners"	2	4	8	
Finance and Operational Risks																			
8	01/04/2021	Chief Executive/ Director of Finance and Resources	Service delivery	Manage budget within agreed contract sum	The inability of the Trust to break even leads to a 'breach of contract' as determined within the Financial Mechanism	Step-in notice	1	5	5	"1.Regular monitoring of cash flow by Director of Finance 2. Regular monitoring of budget through SLT and Trust Board"	1. No current cash flow concerns 2. Transformation and efficiency reporting in place 3. Outturn position as at the 31/3/2022. 4 Development of Trust Medium Term Financial Strategy	2	5	10	1. Review of Placement spend, though Joint Funding panels	1	5	5	Monthly Budget Monitoring report (SLT/OCG)
9	01/04/2021	Director of Finance and Resources	Finance	The risk of cuts in the budget contributions of partner agencies following central budget cuts	Partner agency reduce / withhold supporting budget	Service delivery constrained - reduced service provision; workforce reduction	2	5	10	1. Regular meetings with funding partners to ensure clear sight of any proposed budget cuts 2. Successful bid for additional funding from DfE for improvement activities £469k	1. Submission of contract sum for period 2022-2025 2. Monthly detailed financial monitoring	2	5	10	1. Funding agreements in place for 21/22. 2. Revised process in place for covid funding for the 21/22 financial year Medium term risks remain. 3. Finalising arrangements for the treatment of earmarked grants and reserves	2	5	10	
10	01/04/2021	Director of Finance and Resources	Finance / service delivery	Increase in volume and the complexity of care required and increase in numbers of children in need of support adding to budget pressures.	Inaccurate prediction of service demand and Placement Sufficiency	Failure to achieve a successful outcome for inspections and decrease in positive outcomes for children, young people and families	3	5	15	1. Regular monitoring of cases 2. review commissioning arrangements and benchmarking for external placements 3. Joint funding arrangements with education and CCG 4. Development of placement sufficiency strategy	1. increased complexity of cases due to CV-19 2. Review of placement budgets and partner contributions 3. Relaunch of Joint funding panel 1/11/2021	3	5	15	1. Monitoring systems in place re case numbers. 2. improved placement sufficiency and planning	2	5	10	
11	01/09/2021	Director of Finance and Resources	Finance / service delivery	Increasing cost of commissioned services and placements as a result of uncontrollable external factors (i.e. increased national insurance; changes in regulation; impact of Brexit and Covid on ability of providers to secure suitable workforce)	Failure to secure services and placements to meet level of demand within budget	"1) reduced service provision for children and families leading to future increase in demand 2) not able to fulfil contractual requirements"	3	4	12	"1. Commissioners working with providers to address workforce related issues 2. Re-opening of frameworks to increase number of providers and reviewing commissioning options 3. Identifying alternative service delivery models to commissioned services "	"1. Care and support providers experiencing challenges in securing suitable workforce 2. Reviewing provider contributions to placements and personal care and support; revised panel arrangements to be implemented from Nov 3. DfE Capital bid submitted; additional IFAs on framework "	3	4	12	"1. Join additional placement frameworks 2. Improve joint commissioning with adults services 3. Bring commissioned services in house if this is viable and will achieve better value for money"	2	4	8	
12	01/04/2021	Director of Finance and Resources	Finance / service delivery	Inability to deliver savings plans within contract sum	There have been additional cost burdens on Children's Services as a result of Covid-19. We have also postponed some transformation projects which were set to deliver savings and efficiencies for the Council	Failure to deliver savings and transformation projects leading to pressures on the contract sum and targeting resources on improving from line service delivery.	3	5	15	1. Review of individual project delivery 2. Work with partners as a collaborative approach (i.e. CCG, housing). 3. Identify alternative savings and in year mitigations 4. Incorporate project management with SRO for each project. 5. Closer links with finance	1. Continued review of budgets 2. Review benchmarking and demand forecasts 3. Implementation of forecasting and financial modelling tools. 3 In year mitigations 4. SRO in place for transformation project with regular reporting	3	5	15	1.Additional request for covid funding 21/22 2. Impact factored into the development of the MTFs and contract sum	2	5	10	Transformation and Efficiency Board Risk Register

Appendix 8 – Strategic Risk Register (cont)

Risk No	Date Raised	Risk Owner	Risk Type	Risk Description	Event	Impact	Initial Risk Score			Mitigating Action	Current Position and Risk as at Sept 2021			Future Actions	Target Residual			Data closed / transferred to Operational Risk Register	
							Probability	Impact	SCORE		Probability	Impact	SCORE		Probability	Impact	SCORE		
13	01/07/2021	Director of Finance and Resources	Information Governance	NCTrust processes and stores a high volume of sensitive information related to the safeguarding and protection of vulnerable children and their families. Risk factors to the integrity of this information are: 1) Data Breach; 2) Reporting and adherence to policy and procedures; 3) Cyber Attack; 4) Systems Data Protection Impact.	"1) Data Breach: Human error - employees and 3rd party Data Processors of Trust owned data inappropriately, unlawfully and incorrectly processing data through actions or inactions. 2) Reporting and adherence to policy and procedures: Staff unaware of their responsibilities to report data breaches and data security incidents within the correct timeframe or process. 3rd party Data Processors not working to agreed SLA's and their reporting responsibilities within contracts and Data Sharing Agreements. Staff not working to agreed data protection policies and procedures. 3) Cyber Attack: security breaches or hacks of computer systems leading to data breach and loss of functionality from Ransomware (malicious software) placed on systems, successful Phishing exercise, data leakage, Hacking activities and insider (employee) threat. Cyber defences are not sufficiently robust because the IT environment is not maintained to the required standard, security and integrity due to lack of control and ownership of IT services and systems by NC Trust. 4) Systems Data Protection Impact: New processes, systems, working methods, project programmes, software implementation, etc., are not assessed for their data protection impact at the appropriate time in the project cycle or not at all. No control over new systems and processes agreed prior to NC Trust creation. Lack of DPO input to Programme Boards and/or Control Boards.	"Reputational Harm. Financial penalty through ICO fines under GDPR. ICO audit and regulatory action. Harm or risk of harm to service users, their families, employees and 3rd parties due to data breaches. Breaches not being reported to the ICO within 72 hours as required by law. Loss of systems functionality. Possible safeguarding impact to children due information loss when decision making. Staff unable to make correct safeguarding decisions due to cyber security attacks. Cyber security awareness training and secure systems through support services KPIs. New systems not fit for purpose - financial impact, inappropriate sharing of data. Loss of children's social care provision contract to deliver services.	4	5	20	"A DPO has been appointed who will also lead on the implementation of an Information Governance Framework. Data Protection and Cyber Security Essentials training is mandatory to all staff. Data Protection policies and procedures are in place, either NCTrust owned or from within SLA's with WNC & NCC. Data protection policies and procedures to be regularly reviewed. The DPO/IG Manager and SIRO works closely with staff and A.D.'s ensure a Trust wide awareness of data protection responsibilities, training is taken up and breaches are reported to DPO. Data breach reporting process in place through SLA wish WNC, plus IG Management to streamline the breach reporting and incident management process and bring in-house. Information Governance Board set up with WNC & NCC set up to communicate and resolve issues and ensure cyber defences are sufficiently robust and meet the required standard of security and integrity. Data Protection Impact Assessments (DPIA) to be reviewed for current live projects and completed for new projects. NCTrust Control Board to be established to monitor project work streams.	We have seen an increase in potential breaches of data , and have reported three cases to the ICO. These three cases all pre date the creation of the Children's Trust, ICO decision of NFA for one case, remaining two still pending. Trust wide communications have commenced through DPO and CEO to workforce advising of DPO appointment and how to access for advice, data breach reporting procedure, training protection responsibilities. DPO access to SLT and SMT. SAR and FOI backlog addressed through additional resources provided by WNC to meet SLA. IT Security Manager still to be appointed at WNC but a SPOC has been identified.	3	4	12	1) Additional training to be put in place. 2) review of current processes. 3) Development of Information Governance and Data Protection Framework. 4) Review of DSA's and DPIA's. 5) Recruitment of IG team. 6) IG Provision to be brought in-house and IG SLA abandoned. 7) Improvement Plan agreed for NHS Data Security and Protection Toolkit. 8) ICO GDPR compliance audit to be completed April 2022.	2	4	8	Link to project risk register
14	01/11/20	Director of Finance/ Director of Social Care (reported to both committees)	Staffing	High levels of permanent staff turnover	Less consistency of practice and increased levels of agency staff	Service delivery is hindered by staff recruitment and retention issues. An over reliance on interim social workers, that impacts the over capacity and capability to deliver. Increased financial cost of interim staff.	5	4	20	"1. Push permanent recruitment 2. Effective support for staff to mitigate high levels of attrition 3. Work in partnership with OPUS and community care as part of a strategic campaign 4. Develop reputation and offer for social workers"	1. Development of a coordinated recruitment process incorporating permanent, overseas and overseas recruitment 2. Launch revised offer for social workers as part of out recruitment and retention strategy	5	4	20	1. ongoing regular focus on permanent recruitment 2. Development of a strategic recruitment partnership 3. Working with community care to promote the trust and utilise networks	2	4	8	

Appendix 8 – Strategic Risk Register (cont)

Risk No	Date Raised	Risk Owner	Risk Type	Risk Description	Event	Impact	Initial Risk Score			Mitigating Action	Current Position and Risk as at Sept 2021				Future Actions	Target Residual			Date closed / transferred to Operational Risk Register
							Probability	Impact	SCORE		Current Position	Probability	Impact	SCORE		Further Management Actions	Probability	Impact	
15	01/04/2021	Director of Finance and Resources	Contracts and Supplier resilience	Risk of weak supplier resilience	If there is a risk of weak supplier resilience, then there is the possibility of provider bankruptcies putting service continuity at risk.	A reputational risk of failing to meet the needs and expectations of our customers, members and politicians as well as legal implications for statutory services. Potentially increased costs through recommissioning are failure to identify an alternative provider	3	4	12	"1. Ensure service continuity plans are in place and annually reviewed for all strategic and priority contracts. 2. Increase frequency of monitoring of the provider, and use other indicators such as share value performance to help determine risk. 3. Monitoring CreditSafe alerts if the providers financial standing changes and rating drops to below 50%, Contract Managers to Increase frequency of monitoring of the provider, and use other indicators such as share value performance to help determine risk"	1. Review of all contracts and providers 2. Exposure to financial risk (post covid) organisations have been funded at budget. 3. Impact on changing demands (Transport - continuation of home working/virtual meetings)3. Premises rationalisation across all sectors	2	4	8	1) Continue to review supplier resilience as part of contracts review and commissioning strategy 2) Development of in house provision to limit exposure to external risks	2	4	8	Commission and Procurement Risk Register as part of strategy
Page 134	01/04/2021	Director of Finance and Resources	IT Infrastructure	Implementation of new children's IT system -Eclipse	Failure to implement the new IT system aligned to support practice improvement, improved reporting and integration with other systems > failure to engage with the service	1) System does not support practice and improved decision making and efficiencies . 2) Failure to integrate with other systems	3	4	12	1. Embeds best Practice into system implementation (eg Signs of Safety) 2. Ensures implementation supports Ofsted Improvement Plans 3. Implementation supports Ofsted Improvement Plans. 4. Appropriate groups embedded in Trust through project but continued post programme 5. Enhance technical support and on going development	1. Engagement of Project lead for Children's Services 2. Board structure now in place. 2. Clear objectives and outcomes communicated with supplier 3. project risk register established 5. However, progress has been paused with OLM (ECLIPSE provider) because of issues with the suitability of the solution. Programme Board will be making a decision on next steps in Oct 2021	4	4	16	"1. Programme board decision on future of eclipse will define new actions for this risk 2. Change to "Digital first" – but may require additional investment 3. Input of data only once – removal of duplication and thereby freeing up valuable Practitioner time to focus on Children and Families Enabling mobile working to enable more family facing time	2	4	8	Link to project risk register
	17	01/04/2021	Director of Finance and Resources	Service delivery	The Trust is dependent upon the Council(s) delivery of aligned services and of a number of support services	Reduced service delivery level by the Council(s) impacts the trust own performance	1. Performance targets are not met 2. Support services are not supporting the delivery of the trusts objectives	4	4	16	1. Development of KPI's that will support service delivery levels required by the Trust 2. Continued development of support services board , with focus on areas of poor performance	1. A Support services board has been established chaired by the Trusts Director of Finance and Resources. The board will review the performance of the various SLA's against an agreed set of Kpi's. The creation of the new support services has resulted in a initial issues of service delivery, we are working closely with corporate colleagues to improve delivery. 2. The SSA is not yet agreed outstanding elements relating to property SLA and tolerance levels within individual KPI's target date is the 30/10/2021 3. Information and Governance SLA transferring to the Trust from the 30/10/2021 4. reviewing arrangements for the delivery of Audit services from the 1/4/2022 following the notice to terminate the lead authority model with Milton Keynes	3	4	12	1. Development of key KPI's and governance arrangements to be established as part of transition period. 2. Review potential impact on KPI's and service improvement delivery 3. Review alternative delivery models in partnership with the councils	1	4	4
18	01/08/2021	Director of Finance and Resources	IT on going support	IT support for the Trust including access to systems	Failure to implement new functions in existing IT systems (e.g. CareFirst) results in NCT not being able to fulfil improvement and contractual requirements	"1) not able to support improvement plans 2) not able to fulfil contractual requirements"	3	4	12	1. Escalation with IT and also Eclipse programme board to gain buy in and support for this risk 2. Recruitment of IT relationship manager for the Trust 3. Review critical incident and business continuity	"1. Escalated to IT and awaiting results. 2. development in CareFirst being worked through to see impact 3) Submission of business case for IT investment"	3	4	12	1. CareFirst and other systems roadmap created to align with NCT priorities 2. Invest to save investment in technology to incorporate new ways of working 3. Engagement with IT relationship manager	1	4	4	



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North
Northamptonshire
Council



West
Northamptonshire
Council

Item no: 6

Children's Trust Joint Committee 22 December 2021

Report Title	Children's Trust Contractual Agreements
Report Author	Rory Seymour, Commissioning Manager – North Northamptonshire Council Tony Challinor, Assistant Director of Commissioning and Partnerships – North Northamptonshire Council

List of Appendices

Appendix A – Support Services Provided by the Councils

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1. To consider proposed changes to the contractual agreements between the Councils and Northamptonshire Children's Trust.
- 1.2. To seek permission from the Joint Committee to delegate execution of the final set of contractual agreements to the Chief Executives of both councils.

2. Executive Summary

- 2.1 This report sets out the proposed changes to the contractual agreements that exist to manage the relationship between North and West Northamptonshire Council (the Councils) and Northamptonshire Children's Trust (NCT).
- 2.2 The majority of contractual agreements were agreed and finalised in October 2020 before NCT's service commencement date of 1 November 2020. Following the Local Government Reorganisation (MGR) a number of agreements required changes. There were also some areas that required more detailed work between the parties before agreements could be finalised and this was envisaged when the original documents were completed in October 2020.
- 2.3 The report sets out the background to the establishment of the Children's Trust and the work completed to date on progressing the contractual agreements. The report then summarises the key agreements still to be finalised, the proposed changes to these agreements and the implications for the Councils.

3. Recommendations

- 3.1 It is recommended that the Joint Committee:
- a) Approve that the proposed changes and updates to the contractual agreements between the Councils and Northamptonshire Children's Trust outlined in this report are agreed; and
 - b) Delegate the sign off of the final set of contractual agreements to Chief Executives of both councils.
- 3.2 Reason for Recommendations
- To ensure the appropriate contractual agreements are in place to enable the strong management of the relationship between the Councils and NCT

4. Report Background

- 4.1 Northamptonshire Children's Trust (NCT) was established on 1 November 2020. It is a company limited by guarantee that was initially owned by Northamptonshire County Council. On 1 April 2021, Northamptonshire County Council was abolished, and two new unitary authorities were established; North Northamptonshire Council and West Northamptonshire Council. NCT is now wholly owned by these two unitary councils.
- 4.2 NCT was established in response to a statutory direction from the Secretary of State for Education issued in June 2019. Statutory directions are issued to councils that are poorly performing and, in most cases, provide children's services judged inadequate by Ofsted. In June 2019, Northamptonshire Children's Services were inspected by Ofsted and found to be failing to keep children safe, the services were judged inadequate by Ofsted as a result.
- 4.3 As part of the establishment of NCT, a set of contractual agreements were put in place to manage the relationship between NCC and NCT. The majority of these agreements were negotiated and signed by both parties in October 2020 prior to the establishment of NCT. Upon the abolition of NCC, the contracts were novated to the unitary councils who took on the obligations of NCC as set out in the agreements.
- 4.4 Whilst the majority of agreements were completed before November 2020, some of the agreements required amendment following the LGR and some required further development. These are summarised in section 5 below.
- 4.5 The West Northamptonshire Shadow Executive and North Northamptonshire Shadow Executive previously gave delegated authority on the 23 and 25 March 2021 respectively to the Director of Children's Services to finalise the Support Services Agreement, the Interface Agreement and any other documents necessary to give effect to the Children's Trust Governance arrangements prior to 1 April 2021 and make any necessary minor operational changes to enable the transition to the two Councils of North and West Northamptonshire.
- 4.6 Whilst it was anticipated that this work would be completed by 1 April 2021, this has not been possible for a number of reasons. Since April 2021, officers

from both NCT and the Councils have been working to finalise the agreements. This has been done whilst both parties were focusing on the commissioning and delivery of children's social care services which has at times had to take precedence over the finalising of agreements.

- 4.7 Additionally, some issues to be ironed out through the agreements were complex and required further work to get the agreements completed. This included some of the complex issues related to property agreements as well as the development of the 'performance concepts' included in the Support Services Agreement (see more detail in section 5.4 below). Some of the agreements were also inter-dependent on each other, so for example the Support Services Agreement could not be signed whilst there were outstanding issues on the Deed of Variation.
- 4.8 The council and the Trust also need to enter into a deed of variation to the Service Delivery Contract. This deed of variation makes amendments which are largely caused by local government reorganisation (see more detail in section 5.3 below) and therefore could only take place once the new unitary councils had been established.
- 4.9 Both parties have been supported by specialist legal support in drafting these agreements. The relevant agreements are now completed and ready for execution by NCT and both councils and this report therefore recommends that the Joint Committee grants the Chief Executives the delegated authority to execute the remaining agreements.

5. Issues and Choices

- 5.1 There are 5 documents that are due to be completed and that have been provisionally agreed between the councils and NCT. Each of these agreements is briefly summarised below with a summary of any updates or changes as well as the implications for the councils.
- 5.2 In addition to the 5 documents outlined below, the Councils are currently developing an Interface Agreement that will set out the interface between the two Councils in respect of the Trust. This document will be Council-facing as opposed to Trust-facing – the Trust will not be a party to the Interface Agreement. The Councils intend to agree this document following completion of the documentation referred to within this report. Once this is complete, a report will be brought to a future Joint Committee.

5.3 SDC Deed of Variation

- 5.3.1 The Service Delivery Contract (SDC) is the main contract that governs how the Trust will deliver children's social care and early help services on behalf of the Councils. The parties need to enter into a deed of variation on the SDC, the SDC is being varied to take into account the changes resulting from the change from NCC to the Unitary councils. The SDC (and its rights, obligations, and liabilities) are statutorily transferred from NCC to the Unitary Councils and the Parties to the SDC are varied accordingly.
- 5.3.2 The changes also clarify the position of North Northamptonshire Council as the 'Host Council' for managing the relationship with NCT. NNC hosts the

'Intelligent Client Function' with the Trust which leads on contract management.

5.3.3 There are minor changes to the standing memberships of the key contractual governance meetings (the Strategic and Operational Groups) to reflect the move from NCC to the unitary councils.

5.3.4 The Deed of Variation also changes some elements of the SDC that relate to the Trust's occupancy of the councils' properties and assets. These include making reference to the leases and licenses for the various properties that have been agreed between the Councils and the Trust.

5.4 **Support Services Agreement**

5.4.1 The Councils provide a variety of Support Services to the Trust to enable them to effectively deliver children's social care services. The support services provided are listed in Appendix A. Most support services are provided by West Northants with a small number provided by North Northants.

5.4.2 Two services are also provided by Cambridgeshire County Council and one by Milton Keynes Council which reflects the legacy of the old LGSS arrangements that were in place under NCC. However, in terms of contractual responsibility, the Councils are responsible for facilitating the provisions of the full suite of Support Services to the Trust including those provided by third parties.

5.4.3 The Support Services Agreement (SSA) records the overarching terms and conditions upon which the Councils will provide the Support Services to the Trust, and details the service parameters, responsibilities, and charges in respect of the provision of Support Services.

5.4.4 When it is agreed the SSA will replace the Transition Agreement (TA) dated 30 October 2020. The TA was entered into at the same time as the SDC and is a mechanism through which the Trust can buy back the Transitional Support services from the Council to fulfil its obligations under the SDC. It is a short-term agreement designed to allow the parties to agree outstanding elements of the Support Services Agreement.

5.4.5 There have been several changes from the TA to the SSA, these are:

- The refining and development of key performance indicators (KPIs) for each of the Support Services. A draft suite of KPIs were developed to enable the Trust to hold the councils to account for the delivery of the support services. Over the last few months, officers from both parties have worked together to agree a reduced number of KPIs as well as agreeing targets for each KPI.
- The agreement of the 'performance concepts' and how these relate to the KPIs. These concepts allow the Trust to hold the Councils to account for their performance of the individual support services by defining what constitutes a KPI Failure and prescribing a process for the rectification of any such failures. If the councils are failing to provide a support service to an adequate standard this may be defined as a performance failure, the Trust may then ask the councils to develop a plan to improve. If, after implementation of this plan, performance does not improve to the agreed standard then the Trust can

escalate this through the contractual governance channels and ultimately choose to terminate an individual support service for an individual material breach.

- The agreement of these performance concepts also clarifies the interface between poor performance of the Support Services and the Dependency regime under Schedule 4 to the SDC. It clearly defines when the Trust may claim a 'Relief Event' if the Councils fail to deliver one or more of the support services.
- Changed to Schedule 1 – The Support Services. This schedule provides an overview of what Support Services are being provided by the Councils to NCT. The changes are largely to reflect the changes stemming from LGR such as a change from NCC to one of the unitary councils providing the Individual Support Services or a change in the primary and secondary escalation points. These escalation points are officers at the councils the Trust should approach if issues with an Individual Support Service arise.
- Changes to Schedule 3 – the Service Level Agreements (SLA). Each support service has an individual SLA that sets out the councils' obligations which includes the KPIs which the Trust will use to hold the councils to account. The previously proposed KPIs and targets have been reviewed to enable scrutiny of performance and to reflect the parties' priorities. There have also been minor changes to the SLAs to reflect changes from NCC to the new Councils.
- The removal of the Information Governance and Data Protection support service from the SSA. Parties have mutually agreed that this service can now be provided in-house by the Trust. Since 1 April, NCT have recruited a Data Protection Officer so there is now a clear lead in the Trust for this service. The Trust also felt that they would be able to deliver a service more able to meet their specific needs if they delivered the service in house. This has involved the TUPE transfer of 1 member of staff as well as small accounting changes to the overall contract sum, however this change is financially neutral to both councils.
- The development of clearer processes to protect the limited exclusivity of the services, essentially there is an exclusivity period where the Trust may not choose to stop receiving a support service from either of the Councils. The updated SSA also provides greater clarity more generally over termination rights and notice periods.

5.5 Pensions Guarantee Agreement

5.5.1 The Pensions Guarantee Agreement is a document supporting the Trust's access to the Northamptonshire Pension Fund section of the Local Government Pension Scheme.

5.5.2 In it, the Councils guarantee the Trust's obligations to the Fund should the Trust fail to meet any of its payment obligations. Almost all forms of access to the Fund require some form of guarantee, so this is not unusual. It in fact offers benefits to the Councils. By so closely integrating the Trust's access to the Fund with the councils', it means that there will be no need to underwrite significant costs such as an exit debt.

5.5.3 The changes to the Pension Guarantee Agreement are again mainly to reflect the changes caused by Local Government Reorganisation. The councils together will be joint guarantors of the Trust's exposure to the fund whilst WNC will act as the administering authority.

5.6 Relationship Deed

- 5.6.1 The Councils were each automatically admitted as members of the Trust on 1 April 2021 in replacement of NCC. The Councils have established a joint committee and joint officer board for the purpose of discharging their relevant children's social care functions, managing the relationship between the councils and between the councils and the Trust from 1 April 2021 to enable the Trust to deal with a single entity and forum for all matters.
- 5.6.2 The Relationship Deed governs the terms under which North Northants will act as the Host Council, being the legal entity and interface between the joint committee, joint officer board and Trust (given that the joint committee and joint officer board are not legal entities themselves) and will act on behalf of the Councils in respect of all matters relating to the Articles.
- 5.6.3 The Relationship Deed will take priority over the Trust's Articles of Association (if a conflict between the two documents were to occur) and will continue until the joint committee arrangements end or the parties mutually agree to terminate the deed. During this time, unless the parties otherwise agree in writing, the Host Council will represent and act on behalf of both Councils for the purpose of the Articles (including issuing and receiving notices, giving, and receiving information, consenting, approving, or directing the Trust or being consulted by the Trust, exercising any rights, or carrying out any obligations and anything similar under the Articles) and any reference to 'Member' shall be to the Host Council.
- 5.6.4 However, nothing in the Relationship Deed shall fetter any rights of either Councils, as member, to exercise their rights as members of the Trust including passing resolutions, voting, attending meetings, nominating Council Directors, appointing authorised representatives, and accessing information relating to the Trust or in relation to their liability as members.

5.7 Side Letter to the Governance Side Agreement

- 5.7.1 The other document to be executed is a side letter to the Governance Side Agreement (GSA). The GSA is a contract between the Councils and the Secretary of State for Education under which the Secretary of State is afforded certain consultation and consent rights with regards to the Trust.
- 5.7.2 The letter will be from the Councils to the Secretary of State for Education. It will address how the two new councils will interface with the Secretary of State, this is required because of the creation of the two new Councils.

6. Implications (including financial implications)

6.1 Resources and Financial

- 6.1.1 There are no direct resources or financial implications arising from the proposals. The contract sum for NCT for the current financial year has already been agreed and the proposed changes to the contractual agreements will have no impact on the current contract sum.

6.2 Legal

6.2.1 This report provides a summary of the proposed changes to the legal documentation for the Committee's consideration prior to the amendments being made to the contractual agreements.

6.3 Risk

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

6.4 Consultation

6.4.1 Include the details of any statutory or other consultation undertaken with the public and/or agencies/interested parties. Also include the consultation results and any amended recommendations to draft policy or proposals that have resulted.

6.5 Consideration by Scrutiny

6.5.1 This report has not yet been considered by Scrutiny Committees at either council.

6.6 Climate Impact

6.6.1 There is no significant climate impact from this report.

6.7 Community Impact

6.7.1 There is no distinct community impact from this report.

7. Background Papers

7.1 [North Northamptonshire Shadow Executive Committee, 25 March 2021 – Item 16, Children's Trust Joint Arrangements](#)

7.2 [West Northamptonshire Shadow Executive Committee, 23 March 2021 – Item 18, Children's Trust Arrangements](#)

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Appendix A

AGENDA ITEM NO: 6 - APPENDIX A- THE SUPPORT SERVICES

Support Service	Service Delivery
Report Development - operational performance	West Northamptonshire Council SLA
Complaints	West Northamptonshire Council SLA
Customer Services	West Northamptonshire Council SLA
NCC Web and Digital Team	West Northamptonshire Council SLA
Asset Management / Property Services	West and North Northamptonshire Councils SLA
HR Transactions - Payroll & Pension Payroll	West Northamptonshire Council SLA
HR Policy & Projects	West Northamptonshire Council Lead Authority SLA
DBS – PAYG service	West Northamptonshire Council SLA
Payments and Direct Payments	West Northamptonshire Council SLA
Insurance	Cambridgeshire County Council Lead Authority SLA (through West Northamptonshire)
Finance Operations (AP / AP income and debt	Cambridgeshire County Council Lead Authority SLA (through West Northamptonshire)

Support Service	Service Delivery
Business Systems / ERP Gold	West Northamptonshire Council Lead Authority SLA
Audit & Risk	Milton Keynes Council Lead Authority SLA
Procurement	North Northamptonshire Council SLA
Health & Safety	West Northamptonshire Council SLA
Learning and Development	North Northamptonshire Council SLA
IT Services	West Northamptonshire Council SLA