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Meeting: EAP Education, Skills and Employment
Date: Thursday 22nd December, 2022
Time: 5.00 pm
Venue: Remote meeting, via Zoom

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To members of the EAP Education, Skills and Employment

Councillor Scott Edwards (Chair), Councillor Wendy Brackenbury,
Councillor Leanne Buckingham, Councillor Philip Irwin, Councillor Ian Jelley,
Councillor Dorothy Maxwell and Councillor Lee Wilkes

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

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Adele Wylie, Monitoring Officer
North Northamptonshire Council



Proper Officer
Date 16 December 2022

This agenda has been published by Democratic Services.
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Minutes of a meeting of the EAP Education, Skills and Employment

At 5.00 pm on Tuesday 22nd November, 2022, held as a remote meeting, via Zoom

Present:-

Members

Councillor Scott Edwards (Chair)
Councillor Wendy Brackenbury
Councillor Leanne Buckingham
Councillor Philip Irwin

Councillor Dorothy Maxwell
Councillor Lee Wilkes

Officers

Jan Baines	School Admissions Manager
Jenny Daniels	Democracy Officer (minutes)
Ann-Marie Dodds	Assistant Director for Education
Neil Goddard	Head of SEND
Ben Smith	Democratic & Electoral Services Manager

122 Apologies for absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Ian Jelley.

123 Minutes of the meetings held on 8 September and 25 October 2022

RESOLVED that:-

- a) The minutes of the meeting held on 8 September 2022 be approved as a correct record with the inclusion of apologies received from Councillor Philip Irwin; and
- b) The minutes of the meeting held on 25 October 2022 be approved as a correct record.

124 Declarations of Interest

The Chair invited those members who wished to do so to declare any interests in respect of items on the agenda.

No interests were declared.

125 Briefing on the School Admissions and Appeals Process

At the Chair's invitation the Schools Admissions Manager provided a presentation (copies of which were previously circulated) on the School Admissions and Appeals Process.

In answer to queries on the update the following was confirmed:

- i) A first come, first served basis was not applied to applications to a school. Only a school's waiting list;

- ii) People applied for a school place on-line. The in-year system was being reviewed to ascertain if more automation could be added to the process;
- iii) The Team co-ordinated all school places in the area to ensure no place was offered to more than one child. They also managed all of the waiting lists to ensure children with the highest need were offered a place at a school;
- iv) They would be working with the new Head of School Place Planning to ensure there were adequate school places;
- v) Staff were still being recruited to positions following the disaggregation of the service to North and West Northamptonshire Councils respectively;
- vi) Referrals for assistance with transport to and from school were dealt with by a separate department; and
- vii) Some children lived on the borders of North Northamptonshire travelled to another school outside of the authority area or conversely travelled in from another authority.

RESOLVED that:

The Panel notes the presentation on the Schools Admissions and Appeals Process.

126 Local Area SEND Peer Challenge

At the Chairman's invitation the Assistant Director of Education introduced this report (copies of which had been previously circulated) which provided details of how the recent peer review had been undertaken, and its findings which included strengths, areas for development and recommendations of where the Council could improve its service.

It was confirmed the report would be circulated to members and any questions could be e-mailed to the Assistant Director of Education. The report would be made public on Friday 25 November 2022.

RESOLVED that:

The Panel notes the report and presentation on the Local Area SEND Peer Challenge.

127 Update on Early Childhood Provision

The Early Years Strategic Advisor provided a presentation (copies of which had been previously circulated) providing details of an early years review which noted progress to date, the development of an early childhood board and next steps.

In answer to queries the following was confirmed:

- i) There were various ways of assisting those with special educational needs including purchasing equipment for them to use. Nurseries worked with the parents of children with special needs so that strategies that worked in nursery could be replicated at home;
- ii) There was adequate space for working parents and those with additional special needs. They had a duty to work with the sector to provide training and support of areas to provide services;
- iii) Any parent on benefits could receive up to 15 hours of childcare to benefit them to be able to work or undertake training. It was up to the parent on whether or not they took this up; and

- iv) There were 400 nurseries in North Northants offering both private and public sector provision. The Early Years Strategic Advisor would provide a link to where details of these could be found.

RESOLVED that:

The Panel notes the update on Family Hubs.

128 Virtual School Head Annual Report

At the Chair's invitation the Head of the Virtual School set out the Service's annual report, noting that it provided education for looked after children (LAC) wherever they be educated, including where necessary to place them out of the county. There was a need to ensure that wherever these children were placed, that setting understood the child's needs and that they were receiving all the assistance they were entitled to. The Virtual School was responsible for providing settings to ensure a child's Personal Education Plan (PEP) was met.

This was the first time a report was made to North Northamptonshire Council and it was based on the performance and outcomes for children.

Children received 3 PEP's a year. There could be new children in and some children out of the system. There were 1,003 statutory PEPs created in the last year and the School had been able to provide at least 2 PEPs to each child in 97% of cases for the year. There was a 3-year trend of improving quality, with 79% of PEPs quality assured as good. 93% of early Years PEPs had been completed and post 16 PEPs were a key focus for the current year as they only stood at 76%.

89% of young people aged 16+ years were in education, employment or training. Participation gaps were also provided for them. Holidays were based around sport, music and drama and 89% of children had accessed them.

Future development for this year included an increase in post 16 PEPs. Direct support to schools who had emotional wellbeing was also required. The work was governed by the Corporate Parenting Board and would be presented to them in January 2023.

In answer to queries on the report the following was confirmed:

- i) The School had a statutory duty to monitor and promote the education of LAC. They also had a wider duty to look after previously LAC. They provided training to parents, guidance, support and training to schools. They also had a non-statutory duty to provide education to any children who have had a social worker.
- ii) PEPs were attended by a designated teacher, carer, support worker and the Looked After Child could also attend. The Virtual School could also attend but they did not have the capacity to attend every one of them. They had attended approximately 46% of them;
- iii) The Head of the virtual School worked for both North and West Northamptonshire Councils;
- iv) The School provided pupil premium plus funding which a school could use to provide things like music lessons for a child.

- v) There was an age assessment team within the social care team who undertook assessments when an unaccompanied asylum seeker entered the country. No child was placed in a school until this had been undertaken.

RESOLVED that:

The Panel notes the Virtual School Head Annual Report.

129 Forward List of Items for Education, Skills and Employment EAP

RESOLVED that:

The forward list of items for the Education, Skills and Employment EAP be noted.

130 Close of Meeting

There being no further business, the Chair thanked members and officers for their attendance and closed the meeting.

Chair

Date

The meeting closed at 6.41 pm

Inspection of North Northamptonshire local authority children’s services

Inspection dates: 3 to 14 October 2022

Lead inspector: Alison Smale, His Majesty’s Inspector

Judgement	Grade
The impact of leaders on social work practice with children and families	Requires improvement to be good
The experiences and progress of children who need help and protection	Requires improvement to be good
The experiences and progress of children in care and care leavers	Requires improvement to be good
Overall effectiveness	Requires improvement to be good

This is the first inspection of North Northamptonshire local authority children’s services. North Northamptonshire and West Northamptonshire unitary authorities came into being on 1 April 2021. Children’s services in the predecessor local authority, Northamptonshire County Council, were judged inadequate in 2019. Northamptonshire County Council delegated its children’s social care statutory functions and transferred the provision of children’s social care services to Northamptonshire Children’s Trust (NCT) on 1 November 2020. The trust now delivers children’s social care and targeted early help services on behalf of North Northamptonshire and West Northamptonshire councils. At this stage in the development of the local authorities and NCT, there is little distinction between the quality of provision across the local authority areas.

Children in need of help and protection in North Northamptonshire receive much better support than they did at the time of the inspection in 2019. Early help support has been strengthened, children at risk of harm are identified and timely protective action is taken. Improvements to the quality and impact of social work practice are evident throughout the service, although practice is not yet consistent.

The overall quality of practice for children in care and care leavers has improved since the previous inspection, particularly with regard to adoption, although considerable variability remains.

Leaders have developed and implemented an early help offer, stabilised the workforce, embedded a much more positive culture across the service and caseloads have reduced. This has been achieved against a backdrop of the establishment of the NCT, the creation of two new unitary authorities, a change to the director of children's services (DCS) and the COVID-19 pandemic. Leaders know what needs to be improved and have comprehensive plans in place. Some changes have been too slow, with insufficient progress made in areas such as the response to neglect, exploitation and permanence. Some aspects of practice, such as the use of unregistered children's homes, have not had sufficient senior management oversight.

What needs to improve?

- The effectiveness of how managers support social workers to ensure that assessments and plans are focused on children's experiences and progress.
- The development of clear and effective systems, together with increased management oversight, to improve the overall quality of practice in areas such as the use of unregistered children's homes, children at risk of exploitation and those who go missing from home and care, children who experience chronic neglect and domestic violence, and confirmation of permanence plans for children in care.
- The effectiveness of planning when children come into care.
- The quality of direct work to ascertain children's views about their experiences, and life-story work for all children in care to help them to understand their care history.

The experiences and progress of children who need help and protection: requires improvement to be good

1. Early help has been strengthened and children are identified early when they need help. While there is sometimes a short delay before intervention, children and families benefit from an increasing number of services which, for many, help to improve their lives.
2. Referrals about children in need of help and protection are identified promptly and responded to by staff in the multi-agency safeguarding hub. However, some referrals are not transferred quickly enough to the duty and assessment teams, even when it is immediately evident that a fuller assessment is required. In some instances, when it is less clear if social care involvement is required, more thorough enquiries do not take place and no further action is taken. This contributes to unnecessary re-referrals to the service, when children's needs could have been assessed sooner. Children who are at risk of significant harm benefit from thorough and timely multi-agency child protection strategy meetings. Thresholds are applied well and investigations are undertaken effectively, which result in appropriate actions to safeguard children.

3. Assessments undertaken by the duty and assessment service vary in quality. The high volume of cases in the duty and assessment teams means that too many assessments of children's needs lack sufficient detail to fully understand the experiences of children. As a result, some children are re-referred to the service for the same reasons as in the original referral. Nearly all pre-birth assessments to inform decisions are completed well, providing timely detail which informs next steps. However, assessments for a small number of unborn children could have been completed sooner, avoiding reactive practice following birth and support for babies that is less timely or well matched to their needs.
4. Child in need and child protection plans are of varying quality and most are not sufficiently purposeful or time-specific. They focus on managing presenting risks and needs, and do not give enough attention to the impact of children's experiences over time or to the outcomes to be achieved. Most child protection core group and child in need meetings are held regularly and include key agencies. They focus primarily on the completion of actions and not sufficiently on the impact of services and interventions for children. As a consequence, too many children's plans end prematurely, when agreed actions have been completed but desired outcomes have not always been achieved, particularly for children living in situations of long-term neglect.
5. Work with families at the pre-proceedings stage of the Public Law Outline has been strengthened significantly since the last inspection. This work has had a positive impact and enables many children to remain at home safely, avoiding the need for court proceedings and for them to come into care to secure their safety. Tracking of children in pre-proceedings is regular and helps to prevent delays in important decisions. A small number of children, particularly those living in neglectful circumstances, do not enter pre-proceedings soon enough and have remained on a child protection plan for a prolonged period. The trust's strategy on neglect is not yet embedded in practice. Some social workers do not sufficiently understand the complexities of domestic abuse, leading to an inappropriate over-reliance on the parent who is the victim to keep children safe.
6. Children are seen regularly by their social workers and develop positive relationships with them. However, completion of direct work with children is not consistent, meaning that social workers do not always gain sufficient information from children about the impact of their experiences. Some children have experienced too many changes in worker, which has led to some delay in progressing plans for children and families.
7. Practice in the disabled children's team to assess and support disabled children and their families is stronger. Social workers know their children well and use a wide variety of communication styles to gain the child's voice. Senior managers recognise that there are sufficiency challenges which result in delays before some families are given the right support to meet their needs, including transition planning.

8. The initial response by the local authority designated officer is effective, with actions to safeguard children when there are allegations against those in positions of trust. Ongoing monitoring is less effective and multiple recording systems create additional complexity, which results in gaps in tracking allegations. This means that the local authority cannot be assured that actions agreed in longer-term investigations are completed in a timely way. NCT are already aware of this issue and are in the process of changing the recording system for the designated officer.
9. When children are at risk of exploitation, services and systems are fragmented and lack cohesion across agencies to reduce risks, particularly for children at risk of criminal exploitation. This means that professionals in the services do not successfully engage with some children and screening is not integrated, so professionals do not have a full understanding of exploitation risks. The response to children at risk of sexual exploitation is stronger and better coordinated. The response to children who go missing from home and care does not contribute to making children safer. The trust has recently enhanced capacity in the team that provides return home interviews, but the interviews lack depth and fail to elicit the reasons why children go missing.
10. Leaders have a secure oversight of children who are missing education and those who are electively home educated. Leaders use statutory attendance orders to ensure that children attend school as necessary. The number of children who are electively home educated has increased. Staff are vigilant in making the necessary checks to ensure that the arrangements for vulnerable children who are home educated are suitable.
11. An updated joint housing and social care protocol ensures that most 16- and 17-year-olds who present as homeless receive a timely and appropriate response to ensure that they are protected.

The experiences and progress of children in care and care leavers: requires improvement to be good

12. Most children come into care when it is necessary and appropriate for them to do so. For most children, particularly very young children, this is planned and timely. Too many children enter care in an emergency as a result of the police using their powers of protection. This means that some children live for too long in neglectful circumstances before coming into care in a crisis. Also, communication between the police and NCT, particularly out of office hours, is sometimes poor. As a result, coming into care can be a traumatic experience for these children, which makes it harder for them to settle.
13. Effective work is undertaken by the family solutions team, which enables some children on the edge of care to remain safely at home. Likewise, this service helps children who are in care to return home when this is in their best interests. However, in several instances, families are referred to this service after children

have returned home, limiting the ability to prepare families at the earliest opportunity and making it more difficult for children to settle back at home with their families.

14. There are delays in securing permanent homes for some children. This includes delays in assessing and securing special guardianship orders, children placed with parents long term and ratification of long-term matches. Senior managers have recently established systems to address this, but it is too soon to see a positive impact.
15. Social workers know their children well and endeavour to build trusting relationships through regular visits. Children know that they have a trusted adult with whom they can share their worries and aspirations. Most children in care are not given the opportunity to undertake life-story work, which limits their understanding of their own personal history. However, life-story work is usually done well for children with a plan for adoption.
16. Reviews for children in care are timely and minutes are sensitively written to children. Attendance by children at their own reviews is not consistent. Some children do not attend, and there is no clear explanation for this. Others do attend and some chair their own reviews. Social workers provide an update for children's six-monthly reviews. However, these updates do not provide a holistic assessment of the child's needs. The resulting care plans can be formulaic, with a lack of personal focus on achieving permanence, or timescales to bring pace and prioritisation.
17. Overall, children's health needs are understood well. Social workers have worked proactively to reduce delays in health assessments and dental appointments. Senior managers have identified the reasons for delays in health assessments and are taking action to resolve this issue. The child and adolescent mental health service for children in care offers timely responses and guidance when children living in the authority area have mental health difficulties. Despite social workers' best efforts, there are challenges and some delays to accessing mental health assessments and support for children who live outside the authority area.
18. Staff at the virtual school are ambitious, ensuring that most children in care make good progress at school or other provisions. Most children achieve well in relation to their starting points. However, there are some who do not attend or achieve as well as they might. Most children who access alternative provision are based in poor-quality educational settings. Leaders recognise this and they are developing new strategies to improve this situation. However, it is too soon to see the impact of this work. The proportion of children in care entering full-time education, employment or training is improving as a result of the focused support and guidance that children in care receive.

19. Children in care are supported to take part in a wide range of leisure and social activities. Their talents are promoted and celebrated. As a result, children have fun, make friends, develop a sense of achievement and feel proud of themselves.
20. For older disabled children in care, planning for their transition from receiving support and accommodation from children's services to being supported by adult services starts too late. This results in anxiety for children and their families when they do not know the future arrangements. A new strategy is in place, but this has not yet had an impact.
21. Most children in care live in good-quality placements, including specialist provision that meets their needs well. Children in stable foster care homes are cared for, and cared about. They enjoy all the benefits of family life, including a range of activities and family holidays. Some children with the most complex needs and disabilities continue to experience placement moves and instability while the right placements are identified for them. Ambitious plans are under way to address sufficiency challenges. However, it is too soon to see the impact.
22. A small number of children live in unregistered children's homes. While senior managers quality assure and monitor all these placements and are working with providers to seek registration, leaders accepted during this inspection that their oversight has not been robust enough to be assured that the welfare of every child living in these arrangements is being protected.
23. Successful recruitment of additional foster carers has resulted in a small net gain over the last year. Leaders recognise that more foster carers need to be recruited. Challenges remain for the fostering service in respect of staffing capacity, resulting in some connected carer assessments being delayed, and a lack of support being provided to foster carers by consistent supervising social workers. Despite this, foster carers report positively about working for the fostering agency and value the additional support available to promote placement stability.
24. Strong adoption work means that children benefit from permanence at the earliest appropriate opportunity, sometimes with fostering to adopt carers. Adopters benefit from the support of passionate, knowledgeable and skilled social workers. Adopters reported positively about their preparation and journey to becoming adoptive parents.
25. Unaccompanied asylum-seeking children are well supported and provided with help in line with their assessed needs. Children are quickly allocated to workers in a dedicated team. Strong Home Office connections enable children to secure timely 'leave to remain' decisions. Children are provided promptly with accommodation and safety plans are quickly completed with children to understand risks and how these will be mitigated. Interpreters are used well and are easily accessible. Children's identity needs are considered, for example by linking them to other children from similar backgrounds and with the Refugee

- Council. Children are encouraged and supported to maintain contact with their family while social workers seek legal advice when this is necessary to support children.
26. Personal advisers take time to build relationships with care leavers. They often work persistently to address issues and advocate for young people to access services in their efforts to support them. Young people who spoke to inspectors described personal advisers as 'amazing' and 'brilliant'. Some care leavers have experienced changes in personal advisers, which has affected the quality of their relationship and support. A few care leavers have been introduced to their personal advisers very late, causing anxiety about the transition towards independence.
 27. Most care leavers are placed in accommodation that meets their needs. However, before they are allocated permanent accommodation, some care leavers live in temporary accommodation, some of which, they told inspectors, was of poor quality.
 28. Care leavers are encouraged to be healthy. Most receive their health histories before leaving care; this is an improvement since the last inspection. Training for personal advisers in emotional coaching is starting to have a positive impact, enabling personal advisers to talk with young people more effectively to understand their well-being. Mental health practitioners are a valued addition to the care leavers' team, but their ability to offer one-to-one intervention has been limited by short-term funding decisions. For some care leavers, the impact of significant trauma in childhood has not been fully considered in plans, and the specialist support that they require is either not put in place soon enough or is ended abruptly. For a very small number of care leavers, this means that their mental health deteriorates to the point that they need in-patient mental health care, which disrupts every aspect of their lives. Continuation of funding was confirmed at the time of the inspection.
 29. Support to care leavers who are parents is more variable and there is a limited current offer to develop and support care leavers' parenting skills. Leaders have plans in place to enable personal advisers to offer this support.
 30. The response to care leavers who have been unaccompanied asylum-seeking children is mixed. Some continue to be supported well. For others, intermittent contact via phone or messaging is not sufficient, meaning that some of these care leavers struggle to maintain accommodation, education or employment and do not receive sufficient support.
 31. Most care leavers are well supported into education, employment or training. They are supported by their personal advisers to maintain their educational placements and to do well at university. Care leavers enjoy a range of activities, such as residential trips, which promote their inclusion. Apprenticeships are starting to be offered, but this work is currently underdeveloped. A small number

of care leavers work in the care leavers' team, providing them with the opportunity to influence the service as care experienced employees. Most care leavers leave care with bank accounts and the appropriate documentation that they need so that they can establish themselves independently.

32. Care leavers' participation and voices are strong. Care leavers report that the corporate parenting board has listened to their views. Care leavers know about the 'local offer', but it does not take account of rising living costs or include subsidised access to Wi-Fi, which are major challenges for some care leavers.
33. While many care leavers do receive support until they are 25, some young people regard a formalised assessment when they reach 21, rather than a simple agreement between the personal adviser and the care leaver, as overly bureaucratic.

The impact of leaders on social work practice with children and families: requires improvement to be good

34. Great care and effort are taken by senior managers to visibly support staff and secure a shared vision for improved services for children and young people. Social workers are overwhelmingly positive about working in children's services in North Northamptonshire and for NCT, which reflects a significant shift in culture to one of high support and kindness. Although social workers report exceptionally strong support from managers, there is insufficient focus on helping social workers to reflect on the impact of their work or to understand what is changing for children.
35. Leaders have improved services in many aspects and the foundations are now in place to sustain further progress. Improvements include the widespread use of the strengths-based practice model, case recording written to children across much of the service using caring language, a strengths-based quality assurance framework, an improved early help strategy and offer, and more manageable caseloads through an increasingly stable workforce. North Northamptonshire with NCT have also embraced learning from other organisations to improve their services.
36. Strengthened governance arrangements are in place through NCT's board, and the improvement and safeguarding boards, which provide scrutiny and challenge. Services for vulnerable children now benefit from a stable and experienced senior management team. Compliance with basic practice standards is now in place and provides a foundation on which the further improvements in the quality and consistency of practice can be built. Through the implementation of comprehensive improvement plans, North Northamptonshire with NCT have improved the quality of services for children so that they are no longer inadequate.

37. The DCS, appointed in March 2022, is clear about her role and continues to maintain alignment between the two unitary authorities and NCT to ensure that children receive an equitable service in North Northamptonshire. Effective liaison with West Northamptonshire and NCT enables information-sharing and scrutiny of the work of the trust and provides a forum for ongoing challenge. At this stage in the development of the local authority, with the primary tasks being to create a more positive culture and to improve the quality of services, leaders work closely to enable a cohesive approach which consolidates improvement. Elected members are kept well informed of progress and challenges.
38. Although generally comprehensive and effective, gaps in some key areas of performance and quality management systems mean that some pockets of practice have not improved sufficiently since the inspection in 2019. Analytical commentary further strengthens the comprehensive performance reports. Leaders know the service well and are realistic about the scale of the ongoing improvement journey. However, they recognise that there has been some over-optimism on their part about the quality of services for some specific cohorts of children. Plans have not been implemented quickly enough to improve services for children at risk of exploitation and for children in care to achieve confirmation of their permanent homes. Systems in place to manage and oversee the use of unregistered children's homes are not robust enough.
39. Leaders have developed more effective relationships and a stronger shared vision and strategic engagement with partner agencies. Leaders and senior managers are increasingly well respected, and partners recognise the progress that is being achieved. Partners have increased confidence in NCT's services, but this is not always seen operationally, for example with the regular use of police powers to protect children. Leaders have undertaken a review and are addressing this.
40. Corporate parenting arrangements have been strengthened. Members of the corporate parenting panel now appreciate the experiences of children and young people through strong engagement with the children in care and care leavers' councils and dedicated training, which enables a greater level of practice scrutiny. Children and young people are listened to and heard, and actions are taken to improve children's experiences, such as changing the use of language to show children that they are cared about.
41. Active and influential groups exist for children in care and care leavers to contribute to improvements in the trust. The experiences of children, young people and families who use the services are important to leaders in North Northamptonshire and NCT. An up-to-date engagement strategy and participation framework promote participation and the feedback is then used to inform service and strategic developments. A strong approach to complaints, informed by children who use services, enables children to make a complaint more easily. It is a credit to the service that the volume of compliments now outweighs negative feedback.

42. Leaders understand the need to develop sufficiency of placements and are proactive in developing the right services for children and families. Forward plans, as well as responsiveness to changes in demand, are creating a much more resilient workforce and range of services to meet levels of need, such as increasing the capacity of social work and leaving care teams. Progress is being made to develop placement capacity through an ambitious sufficiency strategy. Leaders have increased the number of teams within NCT to reflect the greater level of need within those communities.

43. Recruitment and retention of staff remain an ongoing challenge and priority. Continued capacity issues in specific areas of the service affect the quality of practice, specifically in the duty and assessment teams and emergency duty team. Positively, social work vacancies have reduced significantly. Staff development is highly valued and supported through the social work academy, which is helping to stabilise the workforce.

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EXECUTIVE 22nd December 2022

Report Title	Disaggregation of the Joint Sensory Impairment Service to North Northamptonshire Council and establishment of a new operating model
Report Author	AnnMarie Dodds, Executive Director of Children’s Services
Lead Member	Councillor Scott Edwards, Executive Member for Children, Families, Education and Skills

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

List of Appendices

Appendix A – Sensory Impairment Service Revised Model Business Case

Appendix B – Schools and Young People service feedback

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1. The purpose of the report is to provide an overview to the Executive of the Sensory Impairment Service revised model Outline Business Case, and to seek approval to implement the proposed recommendation as set out within the report.
- 1.2. Further detail relating to the recommendation, including how the new model will be organised, is provided within the Appendices.

2. Executive Summary

- 2.1. This report outlines the current position regarding delivery of the Children’s Sensory Impairment Service (in Education) across North and West

Northamptonshire Councils, the core options relating to future disaggregation of the service, and the rationale to proceed with the recommended alternative option of creating a commissioned service model arrangement between the two Councils.

- 2.2. Subject to consultation with affected staff, agreement with affected schools and legal input, the recommended option would also see the potential transfer of some specialist peripatetic staff who already work within schools, directly under school employment (as is already the case for the majority of schools within the county requiring specialist support for students). This would realise a potential saving of £0.31m from the current budget, which will be provided through the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG).

3. Recommendations

- 3.1. It is recommended that the Executive:

- a) Approve the creation of a single model of delivery for the Sensory Impairment Service within education across Northamptonshire, located within North Northamptonshire Council, which could be commissioned by others.
- b) Approve the proposal to seek transfer of Access and Communication Support Workers (ACSWs) employment from the Sensory Impairment Service directly into schools (as outlined in the recommended new delivery model and explained within Sections 5.7 to 5.10), subject to full staff consultation and HR processes.
- c) Grant delegated authority to the Executive Member for Children, Families, Education and Skills, in consultation with Monitoring Officers and Section 151 Officers for North and West Northamptonshire, to take any further decisions and actions necessary and complete any legal agreements required to effect the decision.
- d) Note that a report will be considered by the Joint Shared Services Committee in relation to the removal of the service from the Inter Authority Agreement between North Northamptonshire Council and West Northamptonshire Council
- e) To note financial implications as set out within Section 7.1 of the report and the impact on the allocation of Dedicated Schools Grant funding.

- 3.2 Reason for the recommendations:

This option has been recommended following a detailed investigation of possible service delivery models and completion of a comprehensive Impact and Options Assessment, which demonstrated that a traditional disaggregation approach created significant risk that could not be fully mitigated. Implementing a single commissioning based model utilising the existing service framework with North Northamptonshire Council would ensure that both Councils are able

to fulfil the obligations set out by the original Local Government Reform 'Future Northants' blueprint through the delivery of an alternative remodelled service. This also safeguards services delivered to vulnerable children and their families and provides a sustainable and resilient model for the future.

3.3 Alternative options considered:

- Do nothing – retain the current lead authority arrangement governed under the Inter-Authority Agreement (IAA) between North Northamptonshire Council and West Northamptonshire Councils
- Disaggregate the service equally between the two Councils in line with original Blueprint

The alternative options shown above have been discounted as they would not provide an effective and sustainable delivery model for either Council whilst working towards full disaggregation of shared services. Splitting the service equally would pose significant risk to vulnerable service users and cause untenable strain on already very limited specialist resources.

4. Report Background

- 4.1. Every Local Authority must make adequate provision for the range of needs within its education service. It is a requirement, detailed in the current Code of Practice for SEND children that Local Authorities (LAs) provide specialist support services to children with a hearing or vision impairment in mainstream and in special schools.
- 4.2. The complexity of the task of supporting these children is recognised by the DfE in insisting that teachers who teach and support pupils with a hearing/ vision impairment should hold a mandatory qualification.
- 4.3. Schools have a statutory duty to provide the highly specialist support identified in Education Health and Care Plans for students with a sensory impairment. This includes support from specialist teachers, IT specialists, Mobility officers, BSL instructor and specialist resource adaptors. These roles currently work across the county to ensure that specialist support can be provided quickly at point of need.
- 4.4. The Sensory Impairment Service (SIS) aims to raise the aspirations and improve the outcomes of children and young people (CYP) with hearing/ vision impairment (ages 0-19yrs) by identifying and meeting their needs at an early stage and positively impacting on their progress within educational settings and the home. The team currently has a caseload of 1,025 Children, Young People (CYP) spread broadly evenly across both North Northamptonshire Council (NNC) and West Northamptonshire Council (WNC) geographies
- 4.5. The service is made up of a wide range of highly specialist unique roles meeting highly complex specific needs.

- 4.6. The SIS is currently hosted by NNC and provides services across both North and West Northamptonshire Councils. The hosted arrangement is governed and monitored by the Inter Authority Agreement (IAA) between both councils and is made up of 55 employees.
- 4.7. It was originally agreed as part of the new unitary authorities Blueprint that the service would be disaggregated, with an original target date of 1st September 2022. However, subsequent detailed review and completion of an Impact and Options review highlighted some significant risks associated with this approach – most of which would have a direct impact on the ability of both Councils to deliver a safe and effective model to service users.
- 4.8. Traditional disaggregation with the aspiration of creating two equally effective teams would not fulfil the user need without the requirement of significant growth and the duplication of key roles. There is a national shortage of specialist qualified teachers, and so the required recruitment would expose both Councils to significant risk of being unable to meet their statutory requirements, a fall in service standards and failing vulnerable children and young people.
- 4.9. At the Shared Service Joint Committee meeting held on 17th August 2022, it was agreed that disaggregation of the Sensory Impairment Service would be delayed, pending completion of a Business Case to further explore and recommend an alternative delivery model which would best meet the needs of both Councils with minimal associated risks. It was agreed at this meeting that the Business Case would be brought back to both North Northamptonshire Executive and West Northamptonshire Cabinet in December 2022 for further consideration and agreement of next steps.

5. Issues and Choices

- 5.1. Upon completion of the detailed Impact Assessment and Business Case, there are three main core options for the future delivery model of the Sensory Impairment Service. These are now examined in detail.
- 5.2. **Do nothing** – This would mean that the current Sensory Impairment Service would remain under a hosted (or lead) arrangement across both Councils, delivered through NNC and managed accordingly through existing IAA arrangements.
- 5.3. **Disaggregate the service equally between the two Councils in line with original Blueprint** – This would mean that the current Sensory Impairment Service would be split, and two smaller teams established within both WNC and NNC, thus dissolving the existing IAA arrangements. This option is of too significant a risk of negative impact on effective and sustainable service delivery, and likely to significantly increase the level of risk to the extremely vulnerable service users.
- 5.4. **Developing an alternative commissioned delivery model** – This would mean the existing service would move to an alternative delivery model which

would see a commissioned service arrangement set up between North Northamptonshire Council and West Northamptonshire Council, with North Northamptonshire being the service provider. The service would be remodelled with a traded service (outsourced arrangement in place) to West Northamptonshire Council with other elements of the service aligned with delivery with schools. This option also enables further opportunities to explore working with other local authorities in the future.

- 5.5. The **recommended option** is that set out in **section 5.4** above, to delay disaggregation and seek to instead build and implement a single, commissionable service delivery model within North Northamptonshire Council. This would mean the majority of existing SIS staff would remain within their current employment arrangements, but the existing IAA schedule would be removed, and a supplier/provider contractual arrangement would be put in place for the new model between North and West Northamptonshire Councils
- 5.6. Moving towards a single commissionable service model utilising the existing service framework with NNC would ensure that both Councils are able to fulfil the obligations set out by the original blueprint through the delivery of an alternative remodelled service. This also safeguards services to vulnerable children and their families and provides a sustainable and resilient model for the future.
- 5.7. As well as providing a resilient, safe and sustainable service to end users, the proposed new delivery model would also realise an immediate saving from the Dedicated Schools Grant funding of £0.31m against existing budgets due to the potential transfer of Access and Communication Support Workers (ACSWs) into schools. This saving will fall within the existing Dedicated Schools Grant funding which is allocated to deliver the service.
- 5.8. ACSWs currently work directly in schools throughout the day and support highly vulnerable students with either British Sign Language or Braille. The new model would see all the SIS ACSW's employed directly by schools with a small number of new 'Specialist Practitioner' posts created within the team to provide specialist advice, guidance and training to ensure continued professional development of ACSW's in schools. Moving these roles would provide the opportunity to further embed ACSW staff within the school culture and environment with which they already work closely with, whilst continuing to receive specialist support through the retained central Sensory Impairment Service as appropriate.
- 5.9. Deployment of ACSWs managed at school level would also significantly free up leadership capacity and focus within the core Sensory Impairment Service.
- 5.10. The proposed business model would create capacity and commercial focus to enable the service to adapt to meet the changing needs of both Councils and the vulnerable children they serve.

6. Next Steps

- 6.1. Following review by Executive, the proposal is also due to be discussed by West Northamptonshire Cabinet at their meeting on 17th January 2023. Subject to approval by both North Northamptonshire Council Executive and West Northamptonshire Cabinet, these are the key milestones to further develop and deliver the revised Sensory Impairment Service business model:

Key Milestone	Date
Business Case approved by NNC Executive	22 nd December 2022
Business Case approved by WNC	17 th January 2023
Detailed Delivery Plan developed and agreed	End March 2023
Trading Contract between WNC and NNC drafted and agreed in principle	April – July 2023
Staff and core stakeholder consultation	April – July 2023
Staff transfer plans / implementation process	July – August 2023
Formal trading contract between WNC and NNC live	1 st September 2023
ASCWs transfer to school employment	1 st September 2023
Full commercial model in place	1 st September 2023

7. Implications (including financial implications)

7.1. Resources, Financial and Transformation

7.1.1. The current total cost of the service is £2.04m, which is funded through contributions from West Northants Council and North Northants Council via their Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG). In line with the agreement made at Local Government Reform changes, service costs are split 56% WNC and 44% NNC which broadly reflects the distribution of service activity across the areas. For FY2022/23 the contributions from each authority are £1.07m for WNC and £0.97m for NNC.

7.1.2. Staff within the service are employed by NNC and income is received from WNC to offset a proportion of the costs. In the new model, this will become a trading arrangement, where NNC continues to employ staff but are commissioned to deliver services by WNC. This arrangement being subject to an 18-month break clause on either party to provide certainty of delivery and financial stability.

7.1.3. As set out in sections 5.7 and 5.8, part of the new model proposal is to transfer the specialist ACSW peripatetic staff directly into applicable schools, leaving the core Strategic and Advisory team within the Sensory Impairment Service. This will deliver greater resilience, free up leadership capacity within the service and give schools greater opportunity to deploy staff efficiently and embed ACSW staff within the school culture and environment.

7.1.4. The current full cost of the staffing structure, including ACSWs, is £2.173m. The staffing structure required to deliver the proposed model is costed at £1.692m, with an expected saving of £0.48m. Set against this, no recharges will be made to schools, as they will employ staff directly, and so the net saving would be £0.31m from within the DSG.

7.2. Legal and Governance

7.2.1. The Shared Services Joint Committee is responsible for “ensuring there are robust plans for any disaggregation of services and that there is a smooth transition to new service delivery arrangements”. They are also responsible for ensuring that statutory arrangements are in place for each Council.

7.2.2. The service is currently operating in accordance with the Inter-Authority Agreement (IAA) that exists between North Northamptonshire Council and West Northamptonshire Council, under Schedule 2B1 relevant to the lead delivery arrangement for the Sensory Impairment Service. This would continue until the alternative model has been agreed and safely implemented. Should the recommendation be approved, a Deed of Variation will need to be completed to remove Schedule 2B1 from the IAA.

7.2.3. Upon agreement of proposed direction for the service by both North Northamptonshire Council and West Northamptonshire Cabinet, it is expected that a further follow-up paper will be taken to the Shared Services Joint Committee to consider any further operational details relating to the proposal and agree an outline implementation plan.

7.2.4. Should the recommended option be approved, legal involvement will be required from both Councils in the setting up and ongoing monitoring of contractual arrangements relating to the outsourced service provision.

7.3. Relevant Policies and Plans

7.3.1. This proposal will specifically help meet the corporate priorities of supporting active, fulfilled lives, and building better, brighter futures. It will meet the corporate objective of ensuring every child has equal access to a high standard of education.

7.3.2. All relevant policies will need to be reviewed and updated to ensure they remain fit for purpose following implementation and are agreed for the respective authorities as necessary.

7.4. Risk

7.4.1. The core risks identified with the proposal are set out in the table below:

Risks / Impacts	Risks mitigated / Impacts managed
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• As lead of the commercial contract NNC will bear the risk of the service and financial sustainability• WNC are committing to outsource the delivery of this service which means they have reduced control and influence over quality assurance• Imposing any change on a successful and high performing service increases risk of impact on sustained performance.• Reliance on income from WNC to fund service delivery	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Risks carried will be reflected in the cost of service arrangement with WNC• Increased capacity and commercial focus enabling the service to adapt to meet the changing needs of both Councils and the children they serve• Commissioning model which supports recruitment and retention of highly qualified specialist team• Ensuring clarity and transparency of funding models that can be adapted to meet changing needs• Monitoring of quality assurance processes to ensure consistency of excellent provision. Transparency of processes with WNC• Agreed minimum 18-month break clause to mitigate risk

7.5. Consultation

7.5.1. Consultation will be expected with affected member of staff and schools potentially impacted by the proposal.

7.5.2. Any staff directly impacted by the implementation of the proposal will be consulted with completely in accordance with required HR policy and processes.

7.6. Consideration by Executive Advisory Panel

7.6.1. No immediate considerations arising from this report.

7.7. Consideration by Scrutiny

7.7.1. No immediate considerations arising from this report.

7.8. Equality Implications

7.8.1. No considerations arising from this report. An Equality Impact Assessment will be undertaken as part of the implementation planning process.

7.9. Climate and Environment Impact

7.9.1. No negative impacts arising from this report.

7.10. Community Impact

7.10.1. None arising from this report.

7.11. Crime and Disorder Impact

7.11.1. None arising from this report.

8. Background Papers

8.1. Outline Business Case – Sensory Impairment Service, alternative delivery model.

8.2. Change Request (to Shared Services Joint Committee) – Sensory Impairment Service (in Education) Disaggregation – Change to Approach (Agenda Item 5) ([Public Pack](#))[Agenda Document for Shared Services Joint Committee, 17/08/2022 14:00 \(moderngov.co.uk\)](#)

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Outline Business Case

Document Type	Outline Business Case
Project Name	Sensory Impairment Service – Alternative Delivery Model
Audience for this document	
North Northants Council (NNC) Children’s Senior Leadership Team; NNC Corporate Leadership Team; West Northants Council (WNC) Executive Leadership Team; NNC Executive and WNC Cabinet	
Purpose of this document	
This document is used to present options available relating to the future model of delivery for the Children’s Sensory Impairment Service and to provide rationale for a preferred option – this is to be used to obtain commitment and approval to proceed to the next stages of planning/implementation of the preferred and recommended option. The ongoing viability of the project will be monitored against the Business Case, and it is therefore intended to be ‘living document’ which will remain live until the project enters the closure stages.	

Version History			
Date	Ver	Author	Brief Comments on Changes
28.09.22	0.1	Helen Baines, Project Manager	Initial draft
04.10.22	0.2	Helen Baines, Project Manager	Second draft, amended format and structure
14.11.22	0.3	Jacqui Joseph / Helen Baines / Neil Goddard	Service additions
17.11.22	1.0	Helen Baines	Minor amendments following service review
07.12.22	1.1	Helen Baines	Minor amendments following Pathfinder Legal review



Distribution (For Information, Review or Approval)	
Name	Resp⁽¹⁾
	R / A / I
Neil Goddard, Assistant Director for Education, NNC	R / A
Jacqui Joseph, Lead Teacher (SIS), NNC	R
AnnMarie Dodds, Executive Director of Children's Services, NNC	A
Ben Pearson, Assistant Director for Children's Services, WNC	R / A
Ranvir Aujla, Transformation Programme Manager, Children's Services, NNC	I
Fayth Skeete, Transformation Delivery Manager, Children's Services, WNC	I

(1) Responsibility: R=Review, A=Approval, I=Information

1. Description of Business Challenge/Opportunity

The Sensory Impairment Service (SIS) aims to raise the aspirations and improve the outcomes of children and young people (CYP) with hearing/ vision impairment (ages 0-19yrs) by identifying and meeting their needs at an early stage and positively impacting on their progress within educational settings and the home. The team currently has a caseload of 1,025 Children, Young People (CYP) spread broadly evenly across both NNC and WNC – this is a relatively stable cohort in terms of changes with minimal increase/decreases from year to year. However, the students supported by the SIS are some of the most vulnerable, with a significant high level of need but low incidence, and it is vital that these students do not have their education disrupted.

The SIS is currently hosted by North Northamptonshire Council (NNC) and provides services across both North and West Northamptonshire Council (WNC). The hosted arrangement is governed and monitored by the Inter Authority Agreement (IAA) between both councils and is made up of 55 employees. The service is made up of a wide range of highly specialist unique roles meeting highly complex specific needs. Traditional disaggregation with the aspiration of creating two equally effective teams would not fulfil the user need without the requirement of significant growth and the duplication of key roles. There is a national shortage of specialist qualified teachers, and so the required recruitment would expose both Councils to significant risk of being unable to meet their statutory requirements, a fall in service standards and failing vulnerable children and young people.



It was originally agreed as part of the new unitary authorities Blueprint that the Sensory Impairment Service would be disaggregated, with an original target date of 1st September 2022. However, subsequent detailed review and completion of an Impact and Options review highlighted some significant risks associated with this approach – most of which would have a direct impact on the ability of both Councils to deliver a safe and effective model to service users.

Several options have been explored to mitigate some of the core risks identified with proposed disaggregation of the service. This included the recommendation to not disaggregate the service into a traditional North/West model, but instead review alternative ways of delivering the service for both authorities – this would include considering a single service owned by NNC offering specialist service provision to both West and North Northamptonshire Councils, and potentially other Councils through a commissioning model.

At the Shared Service Joint Committee meeting held on 17th August 2022, it was agreed that disaggregation of the Sensory Impairment Service would be delayed, pending completion of a Business Case to further explore and recommend an alternative delivery model which would best meet the needs of both Councils with minimal associated risks.

2. Options Overview

A comprehensive Impact and Options Assessment has been completed which explored the core options available. These are outlined below.

2.1 Option 1 – Service Disaggregation in line with the agreed blueprint

This would mean that the current Sensory Impairment Service would be split and two smaller teams established within both WNC and NNC, thus dissolving the existing IAA arrangements. This is not recommended for the following reasons:

- Statutory responsibilities may not be met as developing an appropriately skilled service with capacity to meet needs for each Council could not be achieved without investment of significant time and resources and may still not be successful. A National shortage of specialist teachers already leads to recruitment difficulties.
- Reduced size of individual services would limit resilience due to specialisms of teachers and difficulty in accessing appropriately skilled and qualified contingency cover. Additionally, needing to duplicate specialist roles within teams is likely to incur increased costs for both Councils.
- Smaller disaggregated teams are likely to lead to a less responsive service due to reduced capacity and resilience. This would pose a significant risk to the current highly regarded and effective service which is meeting the needs of very



vulnerable children and young people (CYP), resulting in a direct impact on positive outcomes for these CYP.

2.2 Option 2 – Retain existing arrangement

This would mean that the current Sensory Impairment Service would remain under a hosted (or lead) arrangement across both Councils, delivered through NNC and managed accordingly through existing IAA arrangements.

This option has been discounted due to the ongoing drive towards complete split of shared services between NNC and WNC.

2.3 Option 3 – Delay disaggregation and seek to deliver an alternative delivery model

This would mean the existing service would disaggregate to an alternative delivery model than the straight split between the two Councils, and would likely retain the service as a whole to mitigate the significant risks identified. Pending further development of an Outline Business Case, this could be the setting up of a commissioning arrangement between NNC and WNC, with NNC being the service provider. If approved, this would mean the service would be remodelled with a commissioned service (outsourced arrangement in place) to West Northamptonshire Council with other elements of the service aligned with delivery with schools. This option also enables further opportunities to explore working with other local authorities in the future.

It is this third option which was recommended and endorsed by both Councils at the Shared Services Joint Committee in August 2022, and which forms the basis of the preferred way forward outlined within Section 3. Decisions made at this meeting were as follows:

a) Agreed that the disaggregation of the Children's Sensory Impairment Service is reprofiled to enable a more detailed Business Case with recommendations for a potential alternative model to be developed.

b) Agreed that the Children's Sensory Impairment Service remains within the current IAA until a further decision is made regarding the future model of delivery.

c) Noted that a Business Case will be presented to both the West Northamptonshire Council's Cabinet and North Northamptonshire Council's Executive by December 2022 to consider alternative service delivery models.

d) Granted delegated authority to the Monitoring Officers for North and West Northamptonshire Councils to amend or terminate the relevant provisions within the IAA if an alternative delivery model has been approved and commenced, subject to an agreed Exit Plan.



3. Preferred way forward and option

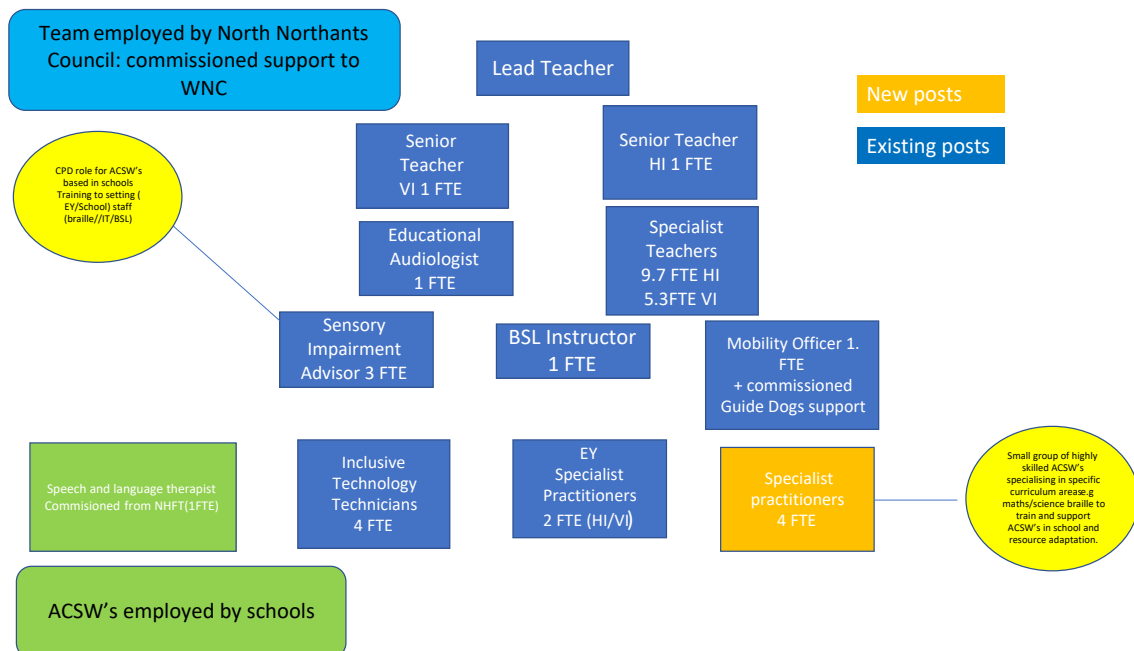
3.1 Overview

The preferred approach is to develop a single model of delivery for the Sensory Impairment Service (SIS) within education across Northamptonshire, located within North Northamptonshire Council.

This option would mean the majority of existing SIS staff would remain within their current employment arrangements, but the existing IAA schedule would be dissolved, and a commissioned supplier/provider contractual arrangement would be put in place for the new model between North and West Northamptonshire Councils – please refer to picture 1 below for proposed new service model set-up.

The service would be remodelled with a commissioned service (outsourced arrangement in place) to West Northamptonshire Council with other elements of the service aligned with delivery with schools. This option also enables further opportunities to explore working with other local authorities in the future. Within this model, it is proposed that a group of specialist staff who currently work primarily directly within schools transfer directly across to relevant schools, to enable more effective and efficient service delivery.

Picture 1 – Proposed SIS Service Model



3.2 Core Rationale

This option has been developed based on a detailed investigation of possible service delivery models and completion of a comprehensive Impact and Options Assessment,



which demonstrated that a traditional disaggregation approach created significant risk that could not be fully mitigated. Based on this, moving towards a single commissionable service model utilising the existing service framework with NNC would ensure that both Councils are able to fulfil the obligations set out by the original blueprint through the delivery of an alternative remodelled service. This also safeguards services to vulnerable children and their families and provides a sustainable and resilient model for the future.

3.3 Staff Changes

Access and Communication Support Workers (ACSWs) work directly in schools throughout the day and support highly vulnerable students with either British Sign Language or Braille. The ACSWs are currently deployed to schools by the service to meet the needs of individual pupils. Of the 20 schools across Northamptonshire who have this requirement, 12 currently seek support direct ACSW through the SIS and the other 8 employ their own.

A new model would see all the SIS ACSW's employed by schools with a small number of new 'Specialist Practitioner' posts created within the team to provide specialist advice, guidance and training to schools to ensure continued professional development of ACSW's in schools – funding for these roles is currently provided to the Local Authorities via the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG), and this funding would therefore subsequently transfer to the schools to manage once the roles move across. These new posts would also provide resource adaptations for braille and large print as required, enabling continuous access to education for highly vulnerable students. The role of the existing Resource Technicians would be absorbed into the new specialist roles. Two early years specialist practitioners would be centrally based to ensure continuation of essential early intervention in early years settings. The remaining specialist advisory team would remain the same to enable continuous excellent support to highly vulnerable CYP.

3.4 Outline Approach

In order to ensure a successful transition to the proposed new model, a phased delivery approach is recommended. This would allow for a review of the delivery of ACSW resources after the formal decision is made, with a move to the fully commissioned model to be effective ideally in line with the end of the academic year, to align with the School's Forum decision making processes. This would be subject to Business Case approval in principle by both North Northamptonshire Executive and West Northamptonshire Cabinet, and subsequent approval of a detailed proposal by the Shared Services Joint Committee.

Commissioned support from both specialist Speech and Language Therapists and Guide Dogs would continue as required to enable development of communication skills and independent living skills (including the direct teaching of cane skills)



3.5 WNC Commitment

NNC and WNC have worked collaboratively at all stages of the review and development work into suitable options for the future service delivery model of the SIS, and are supportive of the future recommended proposal at Senior and Executive level. Both Councils agree that there is a significant and untenable level of risk to vulnerable service users associated with splitting existing resource and that it should remain as a single service. Given the team are currently already employed within NNC, both parties are supportive of this remaining in place to minimise disruption to both staff and service users.

It has been agreed that there needs to be a commissioning agreement in place (jointly drafted and agreed) prior to removing the IAA schedule and effectively dissolving the current lead authority model – this would effectively reflect the whole cost of service delivery within the West, including addressing support requirements such as accommodation needs for staff and storage space for necessary equipment.

Have more flexibility

To mitigate risk to either party, there would be a minimum 18-month break clause written into this agreement.

4. Financial Implications

The current total cost of the service is £2.04m, which is funded through contributions from West Northants Council and North Northants Council via their Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG). In line with the agreement made at LGR, service costs are split 56% WNC and 44% NNC which broadly reflects the distribution of service activity across the areas. For FY2022/23 the contributions from each authority are £1.07m for WNC and £0.97m for NNC.

The majority of costs relate to staffing and the provision of specialist equipment to support accessibility to the curriculum in schools for students with sensory impairment. Service staffing is made up of strategic and advisory peripatetic specialist professionals and, Access and Communication Support Workers (ACSWs) who work directly in schools throughout the day and support highly vulnerable students with either British Sign Language or Braille. The ACSWs are deployed to schools by the service to meet the needs of individual pupils. Schools are recharged for these services, but currently not for overheads or the management time involved in the delivery of this service. The budgeted income for the team for the services for FY2022/23 is £0.17m.

Recently, more schools have chosen to employ ACSWs directly as this gives them greater flexibility to deploy the resources effectively across the school to meet the needs of vulnerable children. This approach has been proven to work, and continues to successfully meet the needs of children. This is supported by a comprehensive training offer delivered by the SIS specialist advisory team. This training is provided as part of the strategic offer and ensures consistent high standards are maintained and excellent outcomes achieved for vulnerable students.



The proposed model would retain and strengthen the Strategic and Advisory Team whilst moving to a consistent model of ACSW delivery where all these staff are employed directly by schools. This will deliver greater resilience for the SIS team, free up leadership capacity within the service and give schools greater opportunity to deploy staff efficiently and embed ACSW staff within the school culture and environment.

The current full cost of the staffing structure, including ACSWs, is £2.173m. The staffing structure required to deliver the proposed model is costed at £1.692m, with an expected saving of £0.48m. Set against this, no recharges will be made to schools, as they will employ staff directly, and so the net saving is £0.31m – summarised in Table 1 below.

Table 1. SIS cost comparison between current model and proposed new model

	Annual Budgets	
	Current Model	Proposed New Model
Total Staffing Costs	£2,172,564	£1,692,071
Total Non-Staffing Costs	£108,372	£108,372
Income	£170,000	£0*
TOTAL BUDGET	£2,110,936	£1,800,443

**£170k income lost from schools' contribution towards ACSW staff*

Currently, the cost of the service is shared between WNC and NNC through the Inter-Authority Agreement established as part of the LGR process. All staff are employed by NNC and income is received from WNC to offset a proportion of the costs. In the new model, this will become a trading arrangement, where NNC continues to employ staff but are commissioned to deliver services by WNC. This arrangement being subject to an 18 month break clause on either party to provide certainty of delivery and financial stability.

Under the new arrangements, further income generating opportunities could be pursued through providing services to other organisations, such as Local Authorities or schools. Historically, enquiries have been made of the existing service regarding potential commissioning of specialist services. This is based on the excellent reputation of the service and the nationally recognised shortage of qualified specialist teachers. As a result of this, it is envisaged there will be continued high demand for these services.



5. Core Benefits

The key benefits of implementing the proposed new SIS model are as follows:

- There is an opportunity to embed ACSW staff within the school culture and environment. The remodelled team will seamlessly continue to be high performing and will effectively meet need and deliver statutory services to vulnerable children across North and West Councils.
- The remodelled service would have greater resilience and provides efficiencies in access to and deployment of limited specialist resources.
- The service retains, and can build on, excellent working relationships with schools, health and other partners.
- The service could expand trading outside of County to create greater resilience through increased capacity.
- Deployment of ACSWs managed at school level freeing up leadership capacity and focus within the service.
- The proposed business model would create capacity and commercial focus to enable the service to adapt to meet the changing needs of both Councils and the children they serve.
- Innovative business model supports recruitment and retention of highly qualified specialist team.
- Clarity and transparency of funding models that can be adapted to meet changing need.
- Savings realised as set out above (for transfer of ACSWs into schools).

6. Core Risks and impacts

Risks / Impacts	Risks mitigated / Impacts managed
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • As lead of the service provision, NNC will bear the risk of the service and financial sustainability • WNC are committing to outsource the delivery of this service which means they have reduced control and influence over quality assurance 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Risks carried will be reflected in the cost of service arrangement with WNC • Increased capacity and focus enabling the service to adapt to meet the changing needs of both Councils and the children they serve



- | | |
|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Imposing any change on a successful and high performing service increases risk of impact on sustained performance. • As a new organisation NNC has limited experience of designing and delivering commercial activities relating to Children’s Services. • Reliance on income from WNC to fund service delivery • Limited capacity and resource within the Children’s Transformation team to support and manage the delivery of the proposal | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Innovative business model which supports recruitment and retention of highly qualified specialist team • Ensuring clarity and transparency of funding models that can be adapted to meet changing needs • Monitoring of quality assurance processes to ensure consistency of excellent provision. Transparency of processes with WNC • Agreed minimum 18 month break clause to mitigate risk • Resource allocation and capacity will be managed by the Children’s Transformation Programme Manager, once priorities have been further scoped and recruitment completed |
|---|--|

7. Estimated Project Delivery Costs

There are no direct or additional costs associated with the setting up or implementation of the project. All delivery resources will be allocated from within the available transformation team dedicated with Children’s Services (NNC) and enable resources allocated upon agreement at core points within the project.

8. Links and dependencies

None identified

9. How will the project be delivered?

Once approved, the project should be delivered with support from the Children’s Transformation team resource, with a dedicated Project Manager assigned to manage all stages of the project lifecycle. This would be done in accordance to agreed NNC and service specific governance arrangements and project methodology processes. However, there is currently limited capacity in the team due to vacancies and other core project commitments – further scoping into delivery of the project will help determine support resource requirements and enable allocation and management of resources available.

Subject to approval of the recommended option by Executive, a more detailed plan will be produced to identify more specific actions and timelines, core decision points and any further specific resource requirements. The anticipated key milestones to deliver the recommended option are as follows:



Key Milestone	Date
Business Case approved by NNC Executive	22 nd December 2022
Business Case approved by WNC	17 th January 2023
Detailed Delivery Plan developed and agreed	End March 2023
Trading Contract between WNC and NNC drafted and agreed in principle	April – July 2023
Staff and core stakeholder consultation	April – July 2023
Staff transfer plans / implementation process	July – August 2023
Formal trading contract between WNC and NNC live	1 st September 2023
ASCWs transfer to school employment	1 st September 2023
Full commercial model in place	1 st September 2023

10. Who will deliver the project?

The project will be delivered as part of the agreed NNC and WNC corporate Transformation Programmes and led by transformation resources based within the NCC Children’s Directorate. There is an assumption that resources will be available to support and manage overall delivery, although there is a risk that this may not be the case (dependent on other priority allocation within the Children’s Transformation Plan and potential limited capacity). Resources would include:

- Lead Project Manager (NNC)
- Supporting Project Manager (WNC)
- Change and Engagement Manager (NNC)
- Children’s Transformation Programme Manager (governance and oversight)
- Business Analyst (if deemed necessary) (NNC)
- Senior Responsible Officer (SRO, NNC)
- Service Lead (NNC)
- Enable resources to support as necessary at identified periods of the project delivery plan – including Finance Business Partner, HR Business Partner and IT resources.



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11. Appendices

None

12. Other Supporting Documents

SIS Disaggregation Impact & Options Assessment

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Appendix B

Sensory Impairment Service Quality Assurance
A selection of Comments from Service Evaluation
Questionnaires
Academic year 2021/22

From schools/families

What an outstanding service from the VI(Vision impaired) team we are delighted to be able to work so closely with them all to provide the best opportunities possible for X. Many thanks.

Thank you X for all your truly OUTSTANDING and amazing support. It has been an absolute pleasure to work with you. Thank you So much for all OUTSTANDING and exceptional hard work and unconditional support to all of our hearing impaired Pupil's.

I cannot speak highly enough of all the colleagues from the SIS. They brighten our day when they are in school.

TOD (Teacher of the deaf) could not be more supportive, positive and a pleasure to work with. Her reports are thorough and accurate. She does not avoid difficult situations but handles them promptly and astutely but with sensitivity.

Really feel very thankful to have the support of such a competent and fantastic team.

From CYP 'what's going well'

Using my cane and having support from my mobility officer when needed. IT support from X is also a big help that allows me to become more proficient. QTVI X is very supportive in all areas of my learning journey by anticipating my needs with the ever-changing curriculum and the challenges this can bring.

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Having my ACSW (Access and Communication Support Worker) helps me in lessons, if I didn't have them it would be harder. The radio aid is helpful. The ACSWs sign to help me understand words I don't know.

Further Feedback – from Schools with their own employed ACSW arrangement – November 2022

ACSW View

'I think the main benefit is consistency. I can support the child in all of his lessons; I therefore know what has just past and aware of what is coming up next . This helps with pre and post teaching. This consistency also enables me to judge if this student has understood or not and need further support.

Also being part of school I am part of the school staff and atmosphere e.g. training days, staff events and after school staff meetings'

Student View

'I like having the same CSW support all week. She knows about me well and knows where I like her to sit and how to help me. We can talk about all my lessons that I have that week and there are no gaps she knows what I am talking about as she was there'



EXECUTIVE 22nd December 2022

Report Title	Northamptonshire Corporate Parenting Board Annual Report 2021-22
Report Author	AnnMarie Dodds – Executive Director for Children’s Services
Lead Member	Cllr Scott Edwards, Executive Member for Children, Families, Education & Skills

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

List of Appendices

Appendix A – Northamptonshire Corporate Parenting Board Annual Report 2021-22

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 This is the Annual Report of the Northamptonshire Corporate Parenting Board for 2021-22.

2. Executive Summary

- 2.1 The annual report is structured as follows:

- **Foreword.** From Cllrs Fiona Baker and Scott Edwards.
- **Executive Summary.** Summarising the report as a whole.
- **Governance and Statutory Context.** Sets out the legal underpinning of corporate parenting, and the structure and role of the Board, including in light of the creation of the Trust and creation of two unitary councils.

- **Board activity.** Summarises the activity of the Board during the reporting period, including meeting arrangements, service reports, and young people's participation.
- **NCT Improvement Plan and Priorities.** Sets out the Board's performance against the priorities set out in the Trust Improvement Plan, and the Board's future priorities. This section includes recommendations for council's attention.
- **Appendix.** Reproduces the four priorities as set out in the Trust's corporate parenting strategy 2021-25.

3. Recommendations

3.1. It is recommended that the Executive approves the implementation of four key priorities for the corporate parenting board, specifically:

- a) Approves the establishment of Corporate Parenting Operational Groups as set out in Section 3 (page 19) of the annual report.
- b) Notes that the Head of Paid Service will consider the inclusion of corporate parenting responsibilities being set out in every North Northamptonshire job description as set out in Section 3 (page 19) of the annual report.
- c) Notes that North Northamptonshire Council will further consider becoming a Fostering-Friendly employer, as set out in Section 3 (pp19-20) of the annual report and delegates authority to the Executive Member for Children, Families, Education & Skills in consultation with the Chief Executive to approve.

3.2 Reason for Recommendations:

- To promote and monitor the Trust's corporate parenting strategy.
- To encourage all members and employees to recognise their role as corporate parents.
- To promote in-house fostering sufficiency.

3.3 Alternative Options Considered:

3.3.1 The alternative option to the recommendations set out in the annual report, are: For the Corporate Parenting Board to continue operating in its current form, Corporate Parenting Responsibilities not being included in NCT and NNC job descriptions, and that NCT and NNC do not become Fostering-Friendly Employers.

3.3.2 The above options would not promote the Trust's corporate parenting strategy, nor encourage more employees to become foster carers, nor encourage all members and employees to recognise their role as corporate parents.

4. Report Background

- 4.1. The report sets out the role, structure and activity of the Corporate Parenting Board, including proposed priorities.

5. Issues and Choices

- 5.1. The Executive is asked to consider the recommendations set out in section 3. While there are financial and other implications to the recommendations, if they are not approved an opportunity will be missed to promote NCT's corporate parenting strategy, encourage greater fostering sufficiency, and ensure that all employees of the Trust and NNC are aware of their corporate parenting responsibilities.

6. Next Steps

- 6.1. For the report to progress through appropriate approval stages, for approval by Full Council. NCT Assistant Director, Olivia Ives is drafting an implementation plan for the recommendations, which will be brought to Corporate Parenting Board in January 2023.

7. Implications (including financial implications)

7.1. Resources, Financial and Transformation

- 7.1.1. There may be some financial and resource impact in terms of the recommendations set out in section 3. Becoming a fostering-friendly employer could for example include allowing paid leave to employees in order to help children settle into placement, or for carers to complete training. There could also be some resource impact in terms of amending job descriptions to feature corporate parenting responsibility. If there are financial implications of becoming a foster friendly employer, they will form the basis of a further report to Executive on the matter for consideration.

7.2. Legal and Governance

- 7.2.1 The annual report sets out the legal framework for local authorities' corporate parenting responsibilities. The recommendations of the report are intended to help the local authority meet its legal corporate parenting responsibilities.
- 7.2.2 The Board itself is not a statutory body. However, selected service reports are required to be seen by a suitable oversight body, and Board fulfils this function.

7.3. Relevant Policies and Plans

7.3.1 The proposals help the Council and NCT meet the following objectives and priorities:

7.3.2 Section 1.1 of NCT's Improvement Plan, as informed by Ofsted guidance, sets the following objective: "Development of the Corporate Parenting Board responsibilities in order for them to champion improvements."

7.3.3 Four priorities for children in care and care leavers are set out in the NCT Corporate Parenting Strategy 2021/25:

- a) Live Safe, Be Safe
- b) Fulfil Potential
- c) Develop Resilience
- d) Enjoy Good Health and Wellbeing

7.4. Risk

7.4.1 Risks associated with the recommendations of the report include:

- NCT lacks sufficient in-house foster places for children in care.
- NCT and Council employees who are foster-carers do not receive adequate support from their employer in their fostering role.
- NCT and Council employees do not recognise their role as corporate parents.

7.4.2 Overall, these risks imply a deleterious impact on the outcomes for children in care.

7.5. Consultation

7.5.1 The report was submitted to and agreed by the Corporate Parenting Board on 29th September 2022. The Board includes the Trust CEO, Director of Children's Services for the Trust and two councils, and both Executive members for Children and Families.

7.5.2 The Council continues to work with partners including Northamptonshire Children's Trust to promote the objectives and outcomes within the report as needed.

7.6. Consideration by Executive Advisory Panel

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

7.7. Consideration by Scrutiny

7.7.1 This report has not been considered by the Council's Scrutiny committees.

7.8. Equality Implications

7.8.1. The report considers the safety and wellbeing of Northamptonshire children in care and care leavers, including those living out of county.

7.9. Climate and Environment Impact

7.9.1 None specifically identified

7.10. Community Impact

7.10.1. The recommendations aim to improve outcomes for Northamptonshire children and young people in care and care leavers, including in the community.

7.11. Crime and Disorder Impact

7.11.1. None specifically identified.

8. Background Papers

8.1. None

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Northamptonshire Corporate Parenting Board Annual Report 2021 – 2022

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

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Foreword



Welcome to the Annual Report of the Northamptonshire Corporate Parenting Board, covering the financial year from April 2021 to March 2022.

We want the very best for our own children, and as corporate parents we must deliver the same level of care and support for children in care and those moving on to independence. This responsibility is expressed through the Board's Pledge to Children in Care and Care Leavers and reflects the seven Principles of Corporate Parenting set out in legislation.

Local elections in May 2021 brought an entirely new group of elected members to Board (aside from Cllr Baker), and an opportunity to reinvigorate its purpose and focus on the real-world outcomes and experiences of children and young people. We would like to take this opportunity to thank all the former members of Board who worked so diligently to improve the outcomes for the children in and young people in our care.

The Board has made significant progress against the challenges set out by Ofsted after its monitoring visit in February 2021 and the Trust's Improvement Plan. We are particularly pleased that young people now have a greater influence in the Board's functioning, and we welcomed two care-experienced young people to the Board as permanent members in November 2021. Ofsted's monitoring visit in November 2021 recognised that "The Corporate Parenting Board has been strengthened recently and is showing some signs of impact in improving services and support for care leavers." More needs to be done, however, and the Board welcomes this challenge.

Fiona Baker, West Northamptonshire Council's Executive Member for Children, Families, Education and Skills and Chair of the Northamptonshire Corporate Parenting Board.

Scott Edwards, Council's Executive Member for Children, Families, Education and Skills and Chair of the Northamptonshire Corporate Parenting Board.

Executive Summary

Good corporate parenting means actively promoting the outcomes that good parents want for their children. Local Authorities' corporate parenting responsibility is set out in legislation and has been emphasised in further statutory guidance and publications. The Care Leavers Charter and the seven Principles of Corporate Parenting (set out in the Children and Social Work Act 2017) express the foundations of our responsibilities. The Board's commitment is also set out in its Pledge to Children in Care and Care Leavers.

In April 2021, Northamptonshire County Council and the seven borough councils were replaced by West Northamptonshire Council and North Northamptonshire Council. Northamptonshire Children's Trust now delivers children's social care across the county on behalf of the two councils. The Board remains a single entity covering the whole county and meets six times per year. Each council has five elected members sitting on the Board, with Cllr Fiona Baker the only remaining member from before the May 2021 local elections.

Through the year, the Board has fulfilled statutory obligations to provide oversight and scrutiny of key annual service reports, including those of the Virtual School, Independent Reviewing Officers, health and fostering and adoption services.

Board scrutinises a specific corporate parenting performance scorecard at each meeting, which has prompted challenges to the Trust and its partners in key areas, particularly health assessments for children in care.

The Board also focusses on key thematic areas (planned or ad hoc, based on prior discussions), allowing the Board to challenge and oversee services which impact on children and young people. During the reporting period, topics included accommodation and placement sufficiency, mental health, independent visiting, and support for children at risk of entering care.

Young people's influence over the Board has increased, and it continues to liaise closely with the Children in Care and Care Leavers Councils. Care-experienced young people have attended the Board to share their experiences, and presentations have featured real experience case studies, demonstrating the real-world impact of NCT's and its partners' services. Two care-experienced young people have been welcomed as permanent members of the Board. Young people's successes, large and small, are celebrated, with young people receiving certificates and shopping vouchers in recognition of their accomplishments.

Substantial progress has been achieved in meeting the challenges to the Board set out by Ofsted and the NCT's Improvement Plan, and the Board looks forward to continuing its evolution.

1. Governance and Statutory Context

What is corporate parenting?

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

Legal background

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

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

Principles of corporate parenting

The Children and Social Work Act 2017 provided a welcome distillation of corporate parenting responsibilities through seven principles of corporate parenting. Local authorities and their partners are required:

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

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

The Care Leavers Charter

The Care Leavers' Charter is a set of promises to care leavers, published by the Government in 2012. It is "Designed to raise expectation, aspiration and understanding of what care leavers need and what the government and local authorities should do to be good corporate parents." The Charter will "Remain constant through any changes in legislation, regulation and guidance."

We promise:

- To respect and honour your identity

- To listen to you
- To believe in you
- To inform you
- To be a lifelong champion
- To support you
- To find you a home

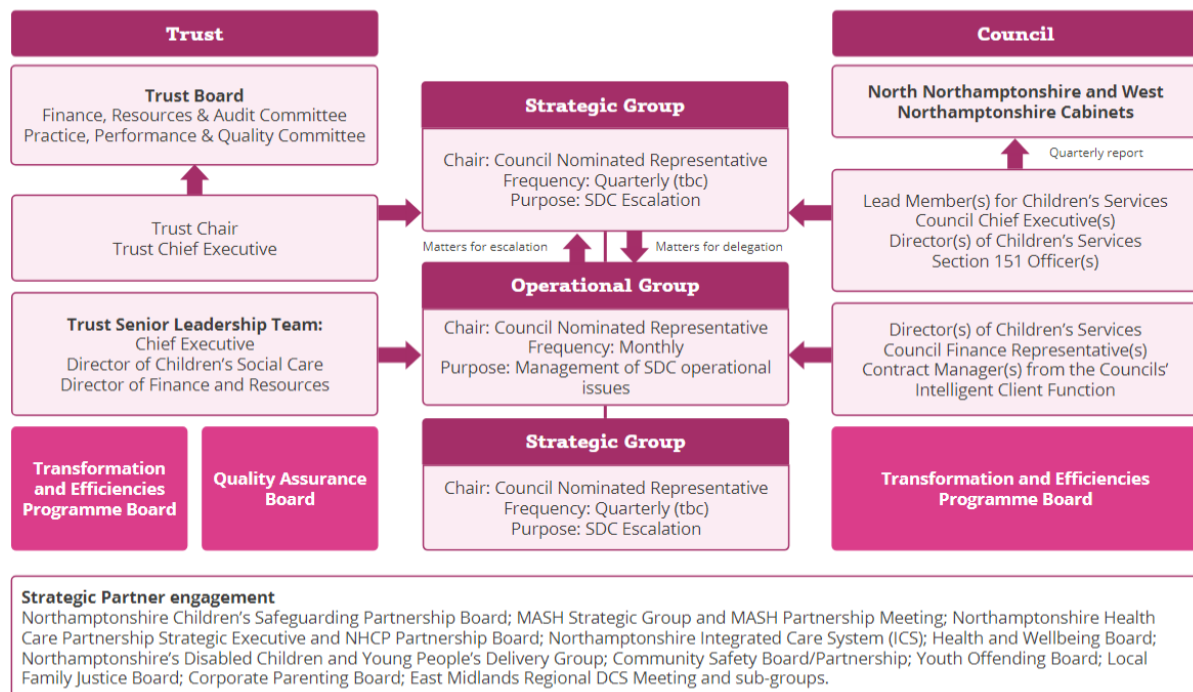
NCT has developed a separate set of promises to care leavers which have been adopted by the Board.

[NCT and the move to unitary authorities](#)

Government legislation passed in February 2020, determined that from April 2021 Northamptonshire County Council and the seven district and borough councils would be formally replaced by two new councils, North Northamptonshire Council and West Northamptonshire Council. The priority during this enormous undertaking was to ensure that vital services were safe and legal from day one. Some services which were delivered by different councils were brought together through the process (aggregated), whereas others which were delivered by the county council were split (disaggregated).

Northamptonshire Children's Trust was established on the 1st of November 2020 to deliver children's social care across the county. It is owned by West and North Northamptonshire councils but in order to achieve operational independence it has its own board of directors which sets strategic aims for the Trust, oversees its management and holds the executive team to account.

Northamptonshire Children's Trust governance arrangements



Decision was taken at the inception of NCT for there to be a single Corporate Parenting Board inclusive of both North and West Northamptonshire Councils. The Lead Members for each Council share the chairing of the Board with each chairing for a 6-month period.

The Pledge to Children in Care and Care Leavers

The Board's pledge to young people in care and care leavers was drawn up in conjunction with the Children in Care Council and is available to view on the Young Northants and the Trust's websites.

We will help you be physically and emotionally healthy

We will have achieved this when:

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

We will make sure you are living in the right place

We will have achieved this when:

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

We will make sure you have great relationships in your life

We will have achieved this when:

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

We will make sure you get a good education

We will have achieved this when:

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

We will help you prepare for the future

We will have achieved this when:

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

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

We will have achieved this when:

- We celebrate your successes.
- We actively seek and take account of your views, wishes and feelings to improve our services to you.

- You can access useful and accurate information about services available and the people who can support you.
- You feel able to share complaints compliments and comments about our services.
- There is a range of opportunities for you to get involved to with helping to improve all services to children and young people.

2. Board Activity, 2021-22

Membership and meeting arrangements

A single Corporate Parenting Board operates in the county, with representation from both councils. It meets every two months. During the reporting period, meetings exclusively took place via video link, although at the time of writing the Board is returning to in-person meetings.

The Board did not meet in May 2021 due to local elections taking place in Northamptonshire. After the elections, all councillors for both councils were provided with information setting out their role as corporate parents, the function of the board, and the Trust's vision and objectives.

Membership was made up of councillors new to the Board, aside from chairperson Cllr Fiona Baker, and the new group met for the first time in July 2021. Given the cross-council nature of the board, Cllr Scott Edwards and Cllr Baker agreed to share chairing duties.

Training and information sessions for elected members took place in July and December 2021, led by the Assistant Director for Corporate Parenting. These set out the corporate parenting function and gave a comprehensive overview of children's services from a child's perspective.

From May 2021 to March 2022, the elected membership of Board was as follows.

West Northamptonshire members:

Fiona Baker (Chair, Con), Louisa Fowler (Con), James Hill (Con), Stephen Hibbert (Con) Harry Barrett (Lab).

North Northamptonshire members:

Scott Edwards (Chair, Con), Lora Lawman (Con), Macauley Nichol (Con), Cedwien Brown (Con), Zoe McGhee (Lab).

Board is also attended by Trust officers and other representatives:

- Chief Executive Officer and Director of Children's Social Care for Northamptonshire Children's Trust (NCT).

- Assistant Director and Strategic Manager for Corporate Parenting, NCT.
- Head of Adoption, Fostering and Children's Homes, NCT.
- Strategic Manager, Safeguarding and Quality Assurance Service, NCT.
- Head of The Virtual School.
- Care-experienced young people.
- Vice Chair, Northamptonshire Foster Carers Association.
- Assistant Director, Housing and Communities
- Designated Nurse for Looked After Children, Northamptonshire Health Foundation Trust.
- Corporate Parenting Project Officer (providing administration and other support), NCT.

Other NCT officers and representatives of partner agencies also attend as required, on invitation.

Service annual reports

While Board is not a statutory body per se, legislation requires an appropriate oversight body to have sight of certain statutory annual reports. Northamptonshire's Board fulfils this function, providing scrutiny and oversight to NCT services. Where possible, reports for Board are summarised for presentation during the meeting, while full reports are also shared a week prior.

The following annual reports were scrutinised by Board during 2021-22. Note, however, that the annual reports themselves were for the year 2020-21.

Fostering Service Annual Report 2020-21: During the reporting period, the number of NCT fostering households rose from 219 to 228, with the number of connected persons households (where a child is cared for by someone with a pre-existing link to them) rising from 104 to 144.

Targeted recruitment and retention activity continued, via digital marketing platforms and events such as drop-in sessions, open evenings and National Carers Week. Retention surgeries focussed on early intervention to address any placement issues at the earliest stage.

Priorities for the service included reviewing the training offer, and the recruitment of further Resilience Carers, who are trained to care for children with particularly complex needs. The Board was assured that fostering awards events were being reinstated, having been curtailed by the pandemic. Members were encouraged to promote fostering recruitment efforts via their social media platforms.

Adoption Service Annual Report 2020-21: The service became operational as a Voluntary Adoption Agency in November 2020. Northamptonshire has always had above average performance in timely placement of children following Placement Orders but this year, there was a 14.5% growth in our

performance against the national average. 29 children were agreed to have a plan for adoption, a 51% decrease from the previous year, largely due to court delays. There was, however, a 32% increase in adoption orders, with 74 being made, which is exceptional performance.

The service saw an increase in people making initial enquiries but not proceeding to apply to become adopters. Analysis suggested this was due in part to fears around further lockdowns and turbulent financial circumstances for the country. Support for adopters was delivered through over 30 training courses, including those focussed on attachment, virtual catch-up sessions, an expert duty service, newsletters, support groups and more.

Priorities for the service included joining a Regional Adoption Agency (which has now taken place), further embedding Dyadic Developmental Practice knowledge within the teams, and increasing recruitment activity.

Board queried what action was being taken to address court delays regarding adoption and were assured that the service was working closely with the court to address timeliness.

Corporate Parenting Board Annual Report 2020-21: The Board approved its annual report for the year 2020-21.

Independent Reviewing Officers (IRO) Annual Report 202-21. Board heard that IROs had an average caseload of 70, the top end of the national recommendation of 50 to 70. The switch to virtual meetings during lockdown brought advantages as well as drawbacks, so the service now uses a hybrid model, whereby children themselves drive whether their reviews take place virtually or face to face. A strong drive took place for IRO communications to be more child-focussed; IROs provided one-page profiles of themselves to children and addressed them directly through reports and letters. Children's participation in reviews increased from 88% to 92%.

The service continued to work closely with regional workshops and national bodies to share good practice, and with CAFCASS. 148 formal escalations were raised by the service with social care teams, in order to address drift in care planning and delays in resource allocation, which contributed to more effective plans of support and interventions for the children we are corporate parents for.

Looked After Children Health Annual Report 202-21. There were significant challenges meeting statutory timeframes for initial and review health assessments for children in care, for reasons including paediatrician sickness, large sibling groups being placed out of county and lockdown. Meeting the health of children placed out of county has proved an ongoing challenge. However, new administrative systems are alerting health colleagues to such placements at an earlier stage. Focus was also placed on improving the efficacy of Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaires, profiling the

health needs of children in care (asthma and allergies being the most common issues), and working closely with sexual exploitation specialists to ensure this issue informs health actions plans where necessary. As of 31 March 2021, the Looked After Children Mental Health team were working with 286 children; 81 of these children were receiving direct therapeutic individually or attachment-based family work.

Board provided robust challenge to the health annual report, particularly regarding health assessment performance, which had been poor in Northamptonshire for some time. It was agreed a further report on this would be presented to Board to ensure impact of the agreed actions. The report also provided the opportunity for fostering teams to be made more aware of available health pathways.

Virtual School (VS) Annual Report 2020-21 Academic Year. After a comprehensive review, the VS remained a single service covering the whole county, although it is able to analyse and report data, split by local authority.

The VS has continued to provide training to education and social care professionals and carers, including courses around the impact of attachment issues on learning. Participation activities for children and young people also took place during school holidays, such as sport, music and drama programmes.

89% of the Virtual School's cohort of children and young people were enrolled in education settings with an Ofsted rating of Good or Outstanding. Completion levels for Personal Education Plans for school-age children remains very high, rising from 90% the previous year to 97%. The VS scrutinises the quality of education plans as well as their timeliness, and around two thirds of plans were rated Good.

Measures of academic outcomes and school attendance were both disrupted by the pandemic. Fixed term exclusions rose a little from 84 to 92, and there were no permanent exclusions within the cohort. The VS also supports pre-school and post-16 children, each cohort having a specific education plan format. Officers work closely with early years settings, and lead a Not in Education, Employment or Training prevention group for post-16s.

[Performance scorecard](#)

The Board reviews a performance scorecard at each meeting, providing an opportunity for dialogue, scrutiny and challenge between officers, partner agencies and elected members. Measures include

national metrics required by the DfE and relate closely to the Trust's Improvement plan. They are grouped under the following headings:

- General measures (such as population data, timeliness of statutory visits, admission and discharges from care, health assessment performance).
- Placements (proportion of children living out of county, placement stability measures).
- Adoption (timeliness of placements, number of orders granted).
- Care Leavers (young people living in suitable accommodation, employment and training measures, up to date pathway plans).
- Education (education plan timeliness and quality, exclusions).

During the year, discussions around the scorecard focussed heavily on health assessment performance, with a specific agenda item on this topic coming to Board in January. The following are examples of how the scorecard has been used throughout the year as a starting point for scrutiny of the Trust's and its partners' performance:

- Board challenged officers regarding adoption timeliness figures. In response, it was noted that there are well-understood narratives to explain outlying figures; in some cases, while the figures suggest delay, the children themselves had very positive outcomes. Ultimately, reaching the best outcome is preferable to meeting quantitative targets.
- The Foster Carers Association representative challenged NCT regarding dental check figures, highlighting that while carers do prioritise these, this is not reported accurately due to NCT data issues. Actions have been taken to improve this and a further report on progress is expected to the Board.
- Board challenged the Virtual School regarding the number of children missing education. This was usually due to delays between children being placed at a distance from their original home and being enrolled in a new school. In many cases, such children are receiving education via tuition or other means. The Virtual School has a dedicated officer overseeing the cohort of children who are not in education and were in the process of creating a new escalation strategy for these children.

Board thematic reports

At every meeting, the Board focusses on a particular topic of relevance to care-experienced children and young people, informed by the NCT's priorities and Improvement Plan. Young people, NCT officers and partner agencies are often invited to contribute. Items may also be added to future

agendas as a result of discussions held in Board. The following provides a summary of the topics discussed at Board during the year:

Children and young people's mental health: This was led by a Clinical Psychologist from the Looked After Children's Mental Health Team and a Named Nurse for Safeguarding and Looked After Children. They set out the impact of early life trauma and the mitigating effects of protective factors such as consistent, trusted adults. Children seeking asylum from overseas are particularly vulnerable to mental health issues, including the effects of profound trauma.

Local mental health provision includes the specialist mental health team, wellbeing cafes, and the Ask Normen website for signposting to services. Weekly, multi-agency ATLAS meetings scrutinise all emotional wellbeing and mental health referrals. Elected members were challenged to consider their role in improving children's emotional wellbeing and mental health. For example, members should adopt an attachment-aware approach to interacting with children and young people, and consider multi-agency, community-based approaches to help asylum-seeking children.

National Independent Visitors (IV) Campaign. A care-experienced young person and her Independent Visitor spoke to Board about their experiences. The IV role is required by statute and matches young people with an adult volunteer to provide friendship and mentoring. The function is extremely rewarding for young people, providing stability and a non-judgmental role model and friend. The Our Legal Right campaign sought to raise awareness of and recruitment to the role nationally, and the details were shared with members. Board acknowledged the value of Independent Visitors and challenged NCT to expand the service.

Where do our children live? (Sufficiency, housing, fostering and adoption). As well as the annual reports of the fostering and adoption services (see above) colleagues from the Trust's Commissioning and Strategy teams presented an item around accommodation sufficiency. A care-experienced young person attended the session and challenged the Board to focus on specific measures, rather than the generic term "outcomes."

Despite lockdown and increases in the number of children in care, placement stability measures remained above national averages; of children who had been in care 2.5 years or more, 68.5% were in the same placement for 2 or more years or placed for adoption. This compared to the England average of 68% and statistical neighbour average of 67%. Northamptonshire also had a higher proportion than the England average of young people aged 16 to 21 who were living in suitable accommodation.

Significant challenges to sufficiency included finding emergency or short-notice provision and finding the right accommodation for children with complex needs. The team was meeting these challenges

through a variety of measures and impact of these was monitored by the sufficiency steering group; actions taken include accessing public health funds for individual therapeutic interventions to support placements, opening new in-house residential provision and recruiting specialist carers for children with complex needs.

NCT also outlined plans for a new, aspirational joint-working protocol with housing services, geared to improving access to independent accommodation and preventing homelessness. A new accommodation and transitions panel was also being developed, which would develop robust multi-agency plans for individual young people, particularly those with specific vulnerabilities.

Education, Employment and Training opportunities for young people (Virtual School Post-16 provision, NEET prevention, Care-Experienced apprentice champions). The Virtual School set out to support young people post-16, such as specific education plans, addressing barriers to accessing education, employment and training, and working closely with colleges and other organisations. The proportion of young people in education, employment or training had steadily improved year on year.

Prospects, part of the Shaw Trust national charity, set out their work with young people who are at risk of becoming Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET). The service works closely with the Trust and Virtual school through a monthly focus group and their advisers work with young people on an individual basis. A Board councillor agreed to liaise with the service to explore possible venues for an extra drop-in venue in the county.

NCT's care-experienced Apprentice Champions spoke to Board about their experiences, as they took up their specialist roles focussed on housing and mental health. While they felt well supported, they challenged the Board to provide more employment and training opportunities to care-experienced young people, and to improve the recruitment process. They spoke movingly of children's social care as a "family business," and that young people themselves should be welcomed into this business.

Introduction to Mind of My Own. The Board was introduced to Mind of My Own, a suite of tools, including a mobile phone app, to help children share their views in a way that suits them, with an adult of their choice. It was initially rolled out in the children in care service but would extend to the rest of NCT. The Board will receive regular updates about how the app is being used and what young people are saying.

Health Assessment Performance. Health colleagues presented an in-depth analysis of challenges and remedial actions regarding Northamptonshire's health assessment performance. Extra funding had been secured to address a backlog of review assessments through the use of additional staff, with only limited success. NHS England were in the process of holding a national audit of health

assessments which included Northamptonshire, practice and processes were being refined to reduce delay. Undertaking timely assessment for children living out of county remained a challenge and NCT Chief Executive assured that cases could be referred to himself if required. It was noted that while the delivery model for review assessments should be analysed and adapted, the current model did provide valuable continuity for children, as they often had the same practitioner conducting their assessment year on year.

Wider support for children and families (Engaging with families, Pause Project, Family Solutions).

Colleagues from commissioning and safeguarding services explained the commissioned Family Group Conference process, which was instigated to help avoid the need for family court proceedings. The purpose of family group conferences (and the similar, in-house family network meetings) is to bring together members of the child's wider family to determine what support can be drawn from the network. This can mean tasks such as shopping or school transport, or a family member caring for the child if the parents cannot. In 70% of families which took part, the child remained living in the family network, compared to 50% for families who declined the process. Board queried how fathers are included in the process; officers responded that great efforts are made to include fathers, however, confidentiality issues can pose challenges to this.

A representative of the Pause Programme explained how the organisation supports mothers who have had multiple children taken into care. Practitioners with small caseloads work intensively with women on areas such as grief and trauma, domestic violence, sexual health and substance misuse, to prevent the cycle being perpetuated. Board agreed to share with their councils the value of the project, with a view to its continuation, and officers also agreed to share useful legal contacts with the programme.

Officers from NCT's Children and Families Support Services shared details of the Family Solutions programme, which has a remit to support children and young people at risk of coming into care. The service supports children aged 0 to 17 and can offer families a same-day response, with priority given to those at risk of homelessness or coming into care. Referrals usually come via legal gateway meetings but also from front-door duty and assessment teams. Joint visits take place with the child's primary worker. The officers shared a case study with Board, demonstrating how workers had helped a family to overcome significant issues and heal their relationships, with the young person's future prospects markedly improved.

Young People's Participation

Officers and elected members make every effort to include young people in the Board's functioning, whether by inviting them to attend in person or provide materials such as videos or artwork. Materials prepared for the Board are written in a young person-friendly format wherever possible. The Board liaises closely with the participation groups, the Children in Care Council, the Care Leavers' Council, and the Shooting Stars group for young people with special educational needs or disabilities.

Through the year, young people have contributed significantly to the Board, and in November 2021, the Board recruited two care-experienced young people as full, permanent members. As detailed above, the Board heard directly from young people at various meetings, including a young person talking about her experience of the Independent Visitor programme, and our Apprentice Champions sharing details of their work. Presentations for Board also included anonymised case studies, helping Board to appreciate the real-world impact of NCT's and its partners' services.

At the time of writing, the Board has been involved with the reintroduction of celebration and award events for children in care and care leavers, which were on hiatus due to the pandemic.

Celebrating young people's successes

Like any good parent, the Corporate Parenting Board celebrates the achievements of children. Every meeting includes a slot in which anonymised stories of children and young people's successes are shared, and all receive a certificate and shopping voucher in recognition. These achievements have included high-level accomplishments such as having written work published or securing first class degrees. But the Board also celebrates those ostensibly small steps, which cumulatively, add up to significant progress. This has included achievements as simple as being able to attend school regularly or engage with their social worker.

3. NCT's Improvement Plan: Progress and Priorities

Section 1.1 of NCT's Improvement Plan, as informed by Ofsted guidance, sets the following objective: "Development of the Corporate Parenting Board responsibilities in order for them to champion improvements."

Within this, the following specific objectives are laid out:

- Deliver CP training for CPB Members and wider council and partner colleagues.

- Strengthen CPB, e.g. through CPB member leads for specific areas, involvement in quality assurance and engagement with children in care and care leavers.
- Increase range of apprenticeships and education, employment and Training options within councils and the Trust.
- Implement a quality assurance process for Corporate Parenting Board to enable progress to be monitored.
- Increase care-experienced young people's membership on the board.

Detailed training for Board members (most of whom were new to the Board) took place in July and December 2021. A redrafted scorecard was introduced in July, allowing Board to monitor service performance in key areas. This scrutiny has helped to achieve council tax relief for care leavers, escalation of issues pertaining to health assessments for children in care and increased apprenticeship opportunities within the NCT.

Young people's participation in and influence upon Board has increased through the year, with young people themselves talking about their experiences, and two care-experienced young people being recruited as permanent members.

Whilst lots has been achieved to increase the education, employment and training opportunities within NCT, partner agencies and businesses, further work is planned. There is regular communication and joined up working between the Leaving Care Service and lead officer for apprenticeships enabling all apprenticeship opportunities, internships and vacancies to be shared with care leavers. Care leavers benefit from the guaranteed interview scheme in place and a number of care leavers have successfully applied for roles within West Northamptonshire. Continued reflection and learning are in place between the organisations with further consideration of the support required both by care leavers who begin employment with the Council and their immediate line managers to ensure that employment is sustained.

Further work is planned and to this end, an exciting event will take place in the near future, to engage partner agencies and businesses. The Board is also keen to ensure that its members play a greater role in engaging with young people directly. At the time of writing, some members have taken the opportunity to do this at the very successful celebration and awards event in July 2022. The Board looks forward to maintaining this progress, and to achieving the aims set out in its Pledge to Children in Care and Care Leavers.

Significant work has taken place outside of the Board to promote corporate parenting responsibilities within the Councils. Whilst each lead member diligently promotes the needs of looked after children and care leavers at every opportunity there has been specific engagement with

the Councils' senior leadership teams and all councillors. This has included attendance by 4 senior managers from NCT at a carousel event for councillors of West Northamptonshire where Councillors were provided with opportunity to hear about the work of NCT and ask questions pertinent to their individual roles and interests.

There is also increased dialogue with the leadership teams of each Council who are keen to promote opportunities for the education, employment and training for care leavers and to consider other ways to fulfil their role as corporate parents. These discussions have led to identification of 4 key areas which the Board is asked to endorse and promote and monitor progress. These are:

1. Development of Corporate Parenting Operational Groups

Delivery of each of our four priorities as identified in the Corporate Parenting Strategy 2021/25 to be achieved through a series of live action plans which are driven within specific priority theme groups led by partners/officers and supported by elected member champions from the Board. Groups may be cross council in membership or specific to each council. Officers from NCT will operate in all groups with partners engaged as appropriate. These priority themes are then reported back to the Corporate Parenting Board in turn in a yearly cycle.

Priority themes as identified within the Corporate Parenting Strategy 2021/25 (see appendix 1) are:

- i. Live Safe, Be Safe
 - ii. Fulfil Potential
 - iii. Develop Resilience
 - iv. Enjoy Good Health and Wellbeing
2. Commitment to corporate parenting responsibilities to be included in every job description with NCT and North and West Northamptonshire.

This will ensure that every employee is able to recognise their role as a corporate parent and consider what this means and how they can contribute to enable us to be the best corporate parents we can be to all children and young people in our care and who have been cared for by us.

3. NCT, North and West Northamptonshire Councils to consider becoming a Fostering Friendly employer

Currently less than 50% of all foster placements are achieved with NCT approved foster carers and over the next three years we have ambitious targets to increase this significantly. This requires recruitment of more foster carers. NCT and the Councils have large workforces offering a potential source of future foster carers.

The Fostering Network's Fostering Friendly employers' scheme helps employers to support and recognise the roles of their employees who foster and involves no direct costs. Members of the scheme agree to put in place a fostering friendly HR policy for all foster carers in their employment (regardless of their fostering service). This includes offering foster carers flexible working and paid time off for training and settling a new child into their home.

Fostering Friendly employers also help promote Foster Care Fortnight, to raise the profile of fostering and encourage people to consider becoming foster carers and offer children the care they need.

4. NCT and North and West Northamptonshire Councils' contributions to Local Offer for Care Experience Young Adults

This details information about the services that the Council and NCT offer that may assist care leavers in making a successful transition to independence. Positively both Councils offer Council Tax discount to care leavers, which is one area of contribution to the local offer.

Areas for consideration could be:

- Inclusion of care experience as a protected characteristic as recommended by Care Review.
- Guaranteed interview scheme for care experienced young adults
- Apprenticeships/internships/work experience for care experienced young adults
- Access to leisure facilities
- Funded travel to aid access to education/employment/training for cared for and care experienced young adults

Appendix 1: Four Priorities

Priority themes Corporate Parenting Strategy 2021/25



How we Achieve this in Practice	Key Success Criteria
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ We will work with communities, businesses and partner agencies to recruit more foster placements to meet the needs of the looked after children cohort and increase placement choices. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Increase sufficiency of local placements to increase choice for children in care.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ If a child or young person has to move from where they are living, we will involve them in the decision making as much as possible and give them an information profile of the placement they are moving to. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Increase in the number of children in foster placements who turn 18 and stay put in their placement.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ If possible, we will keep our children who are looked after with their brothers and sisters when they come into care. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Reduction in the number of children in care with 3+ placement moves.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Families and friends are always considered in the planning process and our children are placed with family and friends in instances where it is safe to do so. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Reduction in the number of children returning to care within one year of previous period of care.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ We will improve choice and quality of accommodation and support for older young people in care and care leavers. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Increase in the number of children in care in long-term placements (fostering).
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ We will offer support to care leavers moving to independence to maintain tenancies. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Percentage of children in care during the year who were placed within 12m of the decision (adoption).
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ We will continue to develop clear service pathways for children at risk of Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) and Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) supported by a multi-agency process. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Reduction in number of missing episodes for looked after children and increase in number of independent return home interviews.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ We will continue to ensure that all children and young people who go missing receive return interviews, a completed risk assessment and timely management of identified risks. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Reduction in number of looked after children who are first time entrants to criminal justice system.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ We will further develop a multi-agency response to serious youth violence enabling early identification of young 	

Priority 2



Virtual School

SEND Strategy & Transformation Programme

Care Leavers Strategy

How we Achieve this in Practice	Key Success Criteria
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Educational needs or requirements of the child will be considered at the outset as part of any placement. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ All looked after children will have an up to date PEP supported by a daily monitoring call to each school where a child attends to ensure attendance.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ We will support our children looked after with education, training and employment options to help them achieve the best they can. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Improvement in educational attainment of children in care.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Children looked after will be supported to make good progress in education. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Increase in percentage of care leavers in education, employment or training (aged 17-21).
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Children who are required to move schools will be allocated a new school place without delay. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Reduction in number of looked after children without a school place.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Our looked after children with additional needs will be supported to have appropriate provision so they can achieve their potential. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Increase in number of care leavers undertaking apprenticeships within Northamptonshire Children's Trust and North and West Northamptonshire Councils.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ All children looked after will have a Personal Education Plan (PEP). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ EHCP plans for children in care reviewed on an annual basis and quality assurance demonstrates plans are of good quality.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Young people leaving care will be encouraged and supported with accessing further and higher education, employment 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ and training opportunities, including apprenticeships. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ We will increase apprenticeships and work experience and training opportunities across North and West Northamptonshire, partners and the private sector for care leavers. 	

Priority 3



Reunification Policy

Workforce Development Strategy

Joint Housing Protocol

Participation Strategy

How we Achieve this in Practice	Key Success Criteria
✓ We will help our children we look after to learn about who they are as well as the important events and people in their lives.	✓ Increase in children moving out of care and number of children returning home.
✓ We will ensure all necessary information and paperwork is obtained in a timely way such as passport, birth certificate and national insurance number.	✓ % of visits to looked after children in timescale.
✓ We will promote family time between children, young people and their families in a way that enables them to have positive relationships with the people who are important to them where it is safe to do so.	✓ Increase in % of permanent social workers in Corporate Parenting Service.
✓ We will support children looked after to reconnect with family members and other trusted adults in a safe way and learn about their family history.	✓ Increase number of children and young people engaging in Children in Care Council and participation events.
✓ We will work with children, young people and families to ensure that there is effective support in place to support and maintain a return home.	✓ Feedback from children and young people.
✓ We will continue to build positive relationships with our children and never give up on them.	
✓ We will ensure that children and young people have a variety of means to express any concerns that they may have and that these are acted on promptly.	
✓ We will aim to keep changes for our looked after children to a minimum.	
✓ We will make certain that we have a robust and active Children in Care Council who are able to influence and shape the delivery of services.	
✓ We will offer support to care leavers moving to independence to maintain tenancies.	

Priority 4



Integrated Care System

Clinical Commissioning Group Health of Looked After Children Strategy

How we Achieve this in Practice	Key Success Criteria
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Children who are looked after receive appropriate and dedicated services within agreed timescales including access to initial and review health assessments, dental appointments and emotional health and well-being services. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Children and young people identify themselves as healthy and happy.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ We will give access to appropriate emotional and mental health support for looked after children when they need it. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ % of CHILDREN IN CARE with Strengths & Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ) scores.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ) scores. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ % of care leavers provided with their health passport.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ We will support care leavers to achieve positive mental well-being and emotional resilience. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Reduction in % of care leavers who are street homeless and engaged in offending behaviour.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Looked after children who have complex health needs and disabilities will have access to integrated services. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Increased placement stability performance.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ We will make sure our children who are looked after can access their health records and history. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Number of children referred to MIAP at age of 16.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ We will develop support offers to foster carers including access to Children and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS). 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ We will help our children who are looked after to do the things that are important to them in terms of culture and religion. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Young people who require support into adulthood will enjoy a smooth transition between children's services and adult social care. 	

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North Northamptonshire Council

1 JANUARY 2023 TO 30 APRIL 2023

Published by: Democratic Services

Leader of North Northamptonshire Council: Councillor Jason Smithers

INTRODUCTION

This is the North Northamptonshire Council's Forward Plan. It is published pursuant to The Local Authorities (Executive Arrangements) (Meetings and Access to Information) (England) Regulations 2012. Its purpose is to provide the required 28 days notice of the Council's intention to take 'key decisions' and to hold meetings or parts of meetings in private. It gives advance notice of all the "key decisions" and "exempt decisions" which the Executive or another body or officer so authorised are likely to take over a four month period. The Plan is updated on a rolling monthly basis.

The Members of the Executive are:	
Councillor Jason Smithers	Leader of North Northamptonshire Council
Councillor Helen Howell	Deputy Leader of North Northamptonshire Council Sport, Leisure, Culture and Tourism
Councillor Helen Harrison	Adults, Health and Wellbeing
Councillor Scott Edwards	Children, Families, Education and Skills
Councillor Harriet Pentland	Climate and Green Environment
Councillor Lloyd Bunday	Finance and Transformation
Councillor David Brackenbury	Growth and Regeneration
Councillor Graham Lawman	Highways, Travel and Assets
Councillor Matt Binley	Housing, Communities and Levelling-Up
Councillor David Howes	Rural Communities and Localism

The concept of a "key decision" is intended to capture the most important or significant decisions. "Key decisions" will normally be made at meetings open to the press and public. The press and public will only be excluded from such meetings as and when the Council's Monitoring Officer considers that this is necessary in order to avoid the public disclosure of confidential or exempt information.

The authority has decided that a Key Decision is one which is likely:-

- (a) to result in the authority incurring expenditure of which is, or the making of savings which are, significant; or
- (b) to be significant in terms of its effects on communities living or working in an area comprising two or more electoral wards in the area of the authority."

The Council has decided that significant expenditure or savings are those amounting to above £500,000.

In determining the meaning of "*significant*" for these purposes North Northamptonshire Council will also have regard to any guidance for the time being issued by the Secretary of State in accordance with section 9Q of the Local Government Act 2000.

At times it may be necessary for the North Northamptonshire Council to give consideration to items where the public may be excluded from the meeting. Members of the public are excluded from meetings whenever it is likely that, in the view of the nature of the business to be transacted or the nature of the proceedings that confidential information would be disclosed. This includes exclusion from access to any pertinent documents. Details of the exemption categories can be found in the 'Access to Information Procedure Rules' section in the Council's [Constitution](#). This plan provides advance notice of any items which may be held in private.

Paragraph 5 of the Local Authorities (Executive Arrangements) (Meetings and Access to Information) (England) Regulations 2012 provides for members of the public to make representations to the Council on why an exempt item should be considered in public, rather than in private. Persons wishing to make such representations and/or obtain further details in respect of any issues referred to in the Plan should contact the undermentioned officer.

The Monitoring Officer may also include in the Forward Plan references to such other decisions, which are to be taken by the Council or any of its Committees or Sub-Committee or officers as they consider appropriate. These will be those decisions that are considered to be significant or sufficiently important and/or sensitive so that it is reasonable for a member of the public to expect it to be recorded and published.

All general questions or queries about the contents of this Forward Plan or about the arrangements for taking key decisions should be raised with David Pope, Democratic Services.

Please email: democraticservices@northnorthants.gov.uk

January 2023

Subject of the Decision:	Purpose of Report	Decision Maker	Is it a key decision?	Will it contain exempt information? /Reasons for exemption, if any	Consultation undertaken	Anticipated Date of Decision:	Report Author
Budget Forecast Update	To report any adjustments to the in-year budget	Executive	Yes	No		12 th January 2023	Executive Director of Finance
North Northamptonshire Local Nature Recovery Strategy	To consider arrangements for progressing a Local Nature	Executive	Yes	No		12 th January 2023	Executive Director – Place & Economy

	recovery Strategy for North Northants						
Housing Development – Former Grange Methodist Church Site, Kettering	Approval to procure the main contractor for a new-build Council housing development	Executive	Yes	Partially; paragraph 3	Public consultation as part of planning process	12 th January 2023	Executive Director - Adults, Communities and Wellbeing
Continuation of Capital Investment Programme	Seeking to procure a framework contract for the undertaking of capital improvement works to the Council's housing stock	Executive	Yes	No		12 th January 2023	Executive Director - Adults, Communities and Wellbeing
Procurement of Shared Parts and Materials Suppliers for Housing Stock	To approve the award of 7 supply contracts for parts and materials for the Property Services stores	Executive	Yes	No		12 th January 2023	Executive Director - Adults, Communities and Wellbeing
Integrated Sexual Health Services	Approval to extend the Northamptonshire Integrated Sexual health Service contract for 1+1 year, in line with the current option	Executive	Yes	No		12 th January 2023	Director of Public Health

	to extend clause in this contract						
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February 2023

Subject of the Decision:	Purpose of Report	Decision Maker	Is it a key decision?	Will it contain exempt information? /Reasons for exemption, if any	Consultation undertaken	Anticipated Date of Decision:	Report Author
HRA Final Budget 2023-24 and Medium Term Financial Plan	To recommend for approval to Council the HRA Final Budget 2023-24 and MTFP	Executive	Yes	No		9 th February 2023	Executive Director of Finance
General Fund Final Budget 2023-24 and Medium Term Financial Plan	To recommend for approval to Council the General Fund Final Budget 2023-24 and MTFP	Executive	Yes	No		9 th February 2023	Executive Director of Finance
Capital Programme 2023-27	To recommend for approval to Council the Capital Programme 2023-27	Executive	Yes	No		9 th February 2023	Executive Director of Finance
Budget Forecast Update	To report any adjustments to the in-year budget	Executive	Yes	No		16 th February 2023	Executive Director of Finance

Capital Programme Update 2022/23	To report any adjustments to the in-year programme	Executive	Yes	No		16 th February 2023	Executive Director of Finance
Procurement of Grounds Maintenance Consortia Contract	Seeking approval to commence a procurement exercise for the contract for provision of grounds maintenance services for the NNC lead consortia for Town and Parish partners	Executive	Yes	No	Development of specification has been done in consultation with the partners.	16 th February 2023	Executive Director – Place & Economy
The Lawrences Site	Proposal for social housing development	Executive	Yes	No	Yes, as part of planning process	16 th February 2023	Executive Director - Adults, Communities and Wellbeing
Draft NNC Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy - Permission to Consult	To seek permission to proceed to formal statutory consultation on the draft Homelessness & Rough Sleeping Strategy 2023-2028 for NNC	Executive	Yes	No		16 th February 2023	Executive Director - Adults, Communities and Wellbeing

Housing Revenue Account Integration and Housing Strategy Roadmap	Approval of the approach to integrate the HRA	Executive	Yes	No		16 th February 2023	Executive Director - Adults, Communities and Wellbeing
Housing Development Pipeline	To inform Executive about the current and projected sites to be brought forward for Council Housing development	Executive	Yes	No	Yes; with Registered Housing Providers and Developers	16 th February 2023	Executive Director - Adults, Communities and Wellbeing
Security Services Contract	To consider procurement of a corporate security services contract	Executive	Yes	No		16 th February 2023	Executive Director – Place & Economy

March 2023

Subject of the Decision:	Purpose of Report	Decision Maker	Is it a key decision?	Will it contain exempt information? /Reasons for exemption, if any	Consultation undertaken	Anticipated Date of Decision:	Report Author
Budget Forecast Update	To report any adjustments to the in-year budget	Executive	Yes	No		16 th March 2023	Executive Director of Finance
Capital Programme Update 2022/23	To report any adjustments to the in-year programme	Executive	Yes	No		16 th March 2023	Executive Director of Finance
Commercial Property Service Contract Review	To consider options for delivery of commercial portfolio contract management	Executive	Yes	No		16 th March 2023	Executive Director – Place & Economy
NCC Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2023-28	To adopt the proposed Strategy following consultation and subsequent amendments	Executive	Yes	No		16 th March 2023	Executive Director - Adults, Communities and Wellbeing
Procurement of Home	To approve	Executive	Yes	No		16 th March	Executive

Care Service	procurement of Home Care Service for North Northamptonshire					2023	Director - Adults, Communities and Wellbeing
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April 2023

Subject of the Decision:	Purpose of Report	Decision Maker	Is it a key decision?	Will it contain exempt information? /Reasons for exemption, if any	Consultation undertaken	Anticipated Date of Decision:	Report Author
Budget Forecast Update	To report any adjustments to the in-year budget	Executive	Yes	No		20 th April 2023	Executive Director of Finance
Capital Programme Update 2022/23	To report any adjustments to the in-year programme	Executive	Yes	No		20 th April 2023	Executive Director of Finance


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EAP Education, Skills and Employment

Chair: Councillor Scott Edwards


Committee Officer: Ben Smith

(Items that have been newly added/amended during the month of December are highlighted in red below)

Decision/Item	Summary of Report	Report Author	Department	 Exempt Item	22 Dec 2022	2 Feb 2023	2 Mar 2023	3 April 2023	25 April 2023
Standing Items									
Forward Plan of Executive Items	External Forward Plan	Ben Smith	Legal and Governance		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Forward List of Items for Education, Skills and Employment EAP	Internal EAP Forward Plan of Items and Briefings	Ben Smith	Legal and Governance		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Update on SEND progress	To provide a four monthly progress update	Helen Redding	Children's Services			✓		✓	
Update on Family Hubs	To provide an update every other month on progress	Kirsty Reed	Children's Services			✓		✓	

Decision/Item	Summary of Report	Report Author	Department	 Exempt Item	22 Dec 2022	2 Feb 2023	2 Mar 2023	3 April 2023	25 April 2023
Individual Items									
Disaggregation of the Joint Sensory Impairment Service and Establishment of new NNC Operating Model	To report on the outcome of the process which will have been considered by the Executive earlier in the day on 22 December 2022.	Neil Goddard	Children's Services		✓				
Children's Trust OFSTED Report	To provide a copy of the report and update on outcomes following its receipt to the Authority on 25 November 2022.	AnnMarie Dodds	Children's Services		✓				

Items to be scheduled arising from member requests

Decision/Item	Summary of Report	Report Author	Department	 Exempt Item	22 Nov 2022	22 Dec 2022	2 Feb 2023	2 Mar 2023	3 April 2023	25 April 2023
PROSPECT – Presentation on Young Adults NEET	That a presentation be provided by PROSPECT detailing the work being undertaken by, and in conjunction with, the Council to support young adults not in education, employment or training.	?	Children’s Services		?	?	?	?	?	?
Special Schools – Future Arrangements	Briefing Paper	Neil Goddard	Children’s Services		?	?	?	?	?	?
Children Not in Education	Briefing Paper	?	Children’s Services		?	?	?	?	?	?

Decision/Item	Summary of Report	Report Author	Department	Exempt Item	22 Nov 2022	22 Dec 2022	2 Feb 2023	2 Mar 2023	3 April 2023	25 April 2023
School Exclusion Policies and Exclusions	Briefing Paper	?	Children's Services		?	?	?	?	?	?
Children's Mental Health following the Covid pandemic	Briefing Paper	?	Children's Services		?	?	?	?	?	?
Foster Care	Briefing Paper	?	Children's Services		?	?	?	?	?	?