

Audit and Governance Committee 5th September 2022

Report Title	Northamptonshire Children's Trust	
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List of Appendices

Appendix 1: Letter to Chief Executive of Northamptonshire Children's Trust
Appendix 2: Northamptonshire Children's Trust key risks and audit arrangements

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 To provide the Committee with an overview of the key risks and audit arrangements of Northamptonshire Children's Trust.

2. Executive Summary

- 2.1 Northamptonshire Children's Trust delivers statutory social care services on behalf of North and West Northamptonshire Councils. The relationship between the Councils and Northamptonshire Children's Trust is governed by a set of contractual agreements.
- 2.2 The Audit and Governance Committee discussed the issues arising from this arrangement at the June meeting of the Committee. Following this, the Chair of the Committee wrote to the Chief Executive of Northamptonshire Children's Trust requesting they attend the September meeting and provide a response to the queries contained in the letter. This report provides a response to this letter and the issues raised within.

3. Recommendations

3.1 It is recommended that the Committee:

- a) Note the contents of the report.

3.2 Reason for Recommendations –

- For the Committee to exercise its duties and responsibilities and to respond to the request for further information agreed by the Committee on 20th June 2022.

4. Report Background

4.1 Following a statutory direction from the Secretary of State for Education, Northamptonshire County Council established an operationally independent but wholly council-owned company to deliver children's social care services. Northamptonshire Children's Trust (NCT) was established on 1st November 2020 and was a company limited by guarantee that was initially wholly owned by Northamptonshire County Council.

4.2 As part of this arrangement, statutory responsibility for children's services remains with the Council's Director of Children's Services. NCT is operationally independent, and a set of contractual agreements exist between NCT and the Council with the aim of ensuring NCT develops and provides high quality social care services to children and young people in Northamptonshire within the financial resources made available to it.

4.3 On 1st April 2021, ownership of NCT transferred to North and West Northamptonshire Councils as part of the transition to unitary Councils. North Northamptonshire Council acts as the 'Host Council' for managing the relationship with NCT including contract management arrangements. North Northamptonshire Council employs a team called the 'Intelligent Client Function' which manages the relationship with NCT.

4.4 At the meeting of the Audit and Governance Committee in June 2022, it was agreed that the Chair of the Committee would write to Director of Children's Services and a representative from the Children's Trust requesting that they address the Audit and Governance Committee to explain how assurance is obtained and evaluated over the activities of the Trust. This letter was sent to the Director of Children's Services on 23rd August and this report and Appendix 2 is a response to this letter.

5. Issues and Choices

5.1 The report in Appendix 2 provides a summary of the key risks and audit arrangements between North Northamptonshire Council and Northamptonshire Children's Trust in so far as they relate to the information requested by the Chair of the Committee. Appendix 3, which is referenced in Appendix 2, provides the Internal Annual Audit report and Audit Opinion.

5.2 There are no alternative recommendations arising from this report, but the Committee may wish to raise queries or request further clarifications, as appropriate.

6. Implications (including financial implications)

6.1 Resources and Financial

6.1.1 None specific to this report.

6.2 Legal

6.2.1 None specific to this report.

6.3 Risk

6.3.1 None specific to this report.

6.4 Consultation

6.4.1 None specific to this report.

6.5 Consideration by Scrutiny

6.5.1 Not required on this occasion.

6.6 Climate Impact

6.6.1 None specific to this report.

6.7 Community Impact

6.7.1 None specific to this report.

7. Background Papers

7.1 None.