



North  
Northamptonshire  
Council



West  
Northamptonshire  
Council

**Northamptonshire**  
Children's Trust



## Self-Evaluation September 2022

Progress since Northamptonshire ILACS 2019

### Our Vision:

*“Children, young people and families at the heart of all we do - in every decision we make and every action we take”*

### Our Values:

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

### Our Commitment to children and young people:

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

### Our Ambition:

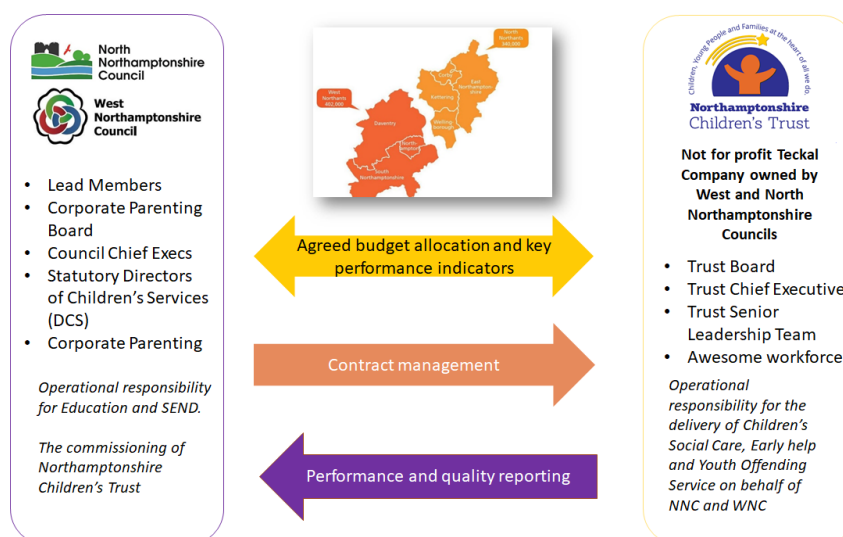
*“Our ambition is to make a sustainable improvement to the lives of children, young people and families”*

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## Section 1 – Introduction

**Northamptonshire Children’s Trust** (NCT) delivers Children’s Early Help, Social Care and Youth Offending Services to West Northamptonshire (WNC) and North Northamptonshire (NNC) councils, serving the whole of Northamptonshire County since November 2020. In April 2021 Northamptonshire County Council was replaced by two unitary councils, WNC and NNC, each with a Lead Member for Children’s Services. The DCS was initially a joint post until summer 2022.



**Since our 2019 ILACS we have had the following Ofsted monitoring visits, which document how we are improving experiences and outcomes for children and families:**

- **January 2020:** Front door.
- **October 2020:** Focused Visit – delivery of child-centred practice and care within the context of restrictions placed on society during the COVID-19 pandemic.
- **February 2021:** Children in Care, Placement Matching and Decision Making and Children with Disabilities who are looked after.
- **July 2021:** Child Protection (CP) and Child in Need (CiN).
- **November 2021:** Children in Care who are 16+, particularly planning for leaving care and Care Leavers.

**There have also been the following Ofsted regulatory inspections:**

- **November 2021:** Independent Fostering Agency– judged ‘Requires Improvement to be good’.
- **January/February 2022:** Voluntary Adoption Agency– judged ‘Good’
- We have also had inspections of all 5 of our Children’s Homes- Grades: 4 x ‘Good’; 1 x ‘Requires Improvement to be Good’

This self-evaluation provides a summary of progress made against the findings of our 2019 ILACS; what we know about the quality and impact of our practice over the last 12 months, how we know it, and what we are doing to further improve.

This assessment reflects our Social Care Improvement Plan and Business Plan, addressing priorities identified following inspections, quality assurance activity and peer reviews. The Improvement Plan is regularly reported to the Northamptonshire Social Care Improvement Board, chaired by a Department for Education (DfE) appointed Independent Chair.

## Section 2- Improvement in a challenging context

We are proud to have continued to drive and deliver improvements for children and families in Northamptonshire in a time of significant local, national, and global challenges:

- Global COVID-19 pandemic resulting in societal restrictions unprecedented in our times, and the impact of this on individuals, families, communities.
- Adaptation to virtual and hybrid ways of working as a result of the pandemic.
- War in Ukraine, withdrawal of allied troops from Afghanistan, and the associated impact on migration.
- Massive cost of living increases and impact on family income.
- Continued national shortage of social workers and other key worker professions, and an increasingly competitive labour market.
- A national placements market which is not meeting need – as identified in CMA report on Children’s Social Care<sup>1</sup> (March 22) and Independent Review of Children’s Social Care<sup>2</sup> (June 22).
- Brexit including the impact on the labour market.
- Local organisational changes – establishment of NCT, WNC and NNC.

During this time, we have achieved:

- **Improved quality of Social Care practice and management oversight**, which is helping to keep children safe, as evidenced in Ofsted visits and inspections, peer reviews and internal quality assurance.
- **More of our social worker posts are filled** 15.8% social worker vacancies in June 2022 (England average 17%) compared with 22.28% in October 2019 and no unallocated cases.
- **Improved working with our partners and a stronger strategic approach to early help, neglect and exploitation**; improved early help assessment, step down process and timeliness of support from NCT Children and Family Support Services.
- **An embedded quality assurance framework** working alongside practitioners to collaboratively reflect on practice, celebrate good practice and identify learning, which is ‘improving children’s experiences’<sup>3</sup>.
- **A permanent senior leadership team who ‘know the services well and are committed to improving the lives of children and young people’**<sup>4</sup> bringing stability, positive culture change and sustained drive for continuous improvement.

In November 2021, the Children’s Commissioner for Northamptonshire advised the Minister ‘*Given the progress secured and trajectory the service is on, I still believe that a continuing commissioner presence with the statutory powers entailed is more than is necessary as things stand.*’

In January 2022, the DfE issued a revised statutory direction which included the appointment of an independent chair of the Council’s Children’s Service Improvement Board at the end of the Children’s Commissioner’s tenure.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/childrens-social-care-market-study-final-report/final-report>

<sup>2</sup> [Final Report - The Independent Review of Children's Social Care \(childrensocialcare.independent-review.uk\)](https://www.childrensocialcare.independent-review.uk)

<sup>3</sup> Ofsted monitoring visits November 2021 and July 2021

<sup>4</sup> Ofsted monitoring visit November 2021

## Section 3 - Self-Evaluation at a glance

### What difference have we made to Northamptonshire children since 2019?

- Children are safe and are experiencing better quality support and outcomes.
- Children and families now receive more effective help at an earlier stage, which is making a positive difference to their lives.
- Children and families receive a swifter, more appropriate and co-ordinated response to vulnerabilities, concerns and risks.
- Children's needs are now better understood and supported.
- The majority of our children are cared for in a stable placement that meets their needs and achieves good outcomes.
- More children have been supported to safely return home to their families.
- Care leavers and those who support them are now more likely to be clear on what their plans are seeking to achieve.
- Children and families are now more likely to have better experiences as a result of a more stable and sustained Social Care workforce.

### What are we proud of?

- The strides we have made in strengthening our partnerships and developing early help.
- The good outcomes achieved by the vast majority of our children
- The achievements of Children in Care, including educational attainment, as celebrated at our first awards ceremony since 2017.
- Our awesome and resilient workforce who have kept children at the heart of all they do through some of the most challenging times in our living memory.
- The recognition of the quality and outcomes achieved by our Adoption Agency and Children's Homes.
- The fact that we know ourselves well and are focused on working together to continually improve.
- The positive, reflective, and empowering culture we have developed together which is making a difference to our practice and our workforce.

### What do we want to do next?

- Continue to increase the consistency of good quality strengths-based relationship practice.
- Continue to listen to our children and have their voice at the centre of all we do.
- Enable more children to remain in or return to the care of their families.
- Continue working with partners on consistency in applying thresholds, ensuring proportionate and appropriate support to children and families.
- To continue our work with partners to have a greater impact for children at risk or involved in exploitation.
- To increase our access to good quality homes that can meet the needs and care for our children.
- Continue to work with system partners to ensure we have the best possible support for the mental health, employment, education and training, and accommodation needs of our Children in Care and care leavers.
- Empower more of our workforce, particularly those of diverse backgrounds, to develop their practice and careers in NCT.

## Section 4 - Progress against 2019 ILACS Recommendations

**We are confident that children are safe in Northamptonshire.**

Compared to 2019, the needs of children and families are better understood and supported; their experiences and outcomes have improved. Whilst some children benefit from brilliant support, we know some still experience inconsistencies; we continue to work tirelessly to improve where we need to.

**The embedded document provides a summary of the progress we have made against the 2019 ILACS recommendations.**



progress on ILACS  
2019 recommendatic

## Section 5- Progress against our Strategic Priorities for Improvement

These are the areas we are focusing on to achieve our ambition of making a sustainable improvement to the lives of children, young people, and families. They reflect the thematic areas for improvement identified in the 2019 inspection and subsequent monitoring visits:



### Our Ofsted Monitoring Visit (November 2021) found:

Senior leaders demonstrate in their recently updated self-assessment that they **know their services well** and are **committed to improving the lives of children and young people**. Improvement plans are realistic and continue to be implemented, with success, despite the ongoing challenges of the pandemic.

### Our Ofsted Monitoring Visit (July 2021) found:

*'SLT has an impressive energy and relentless commitment to improving the lives of children in Northamptonshire'*

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

- **Full, permanent NCT senior leadership team (SLT)** in place since April 2021 supported by strong NCT Board. All strategic and most service managers are permanent this provides stability, clarity of vision and relentless drive for improvement.

- In July 2022, we appointed NCT's first **Young Chief Exec**, who is currently in our care and aspires to be a social worker. She and Colin have agreed joint commitments and will develop the role together to ensure it is meaningful and able to have a positive impact on our organisation and practice.
- **Monthly QA board** chaired by NCT Chief Executive giving senior leadership oversight of practice in a systemic and consistent manner.
- **Strong line of sight of NNC/ WNC Lead Members and DCSs** through monthly strategic and operational groups, Social Care Improvement Board, QA assurance meeting, Practitioners Improvement Board.
- **Regular engagement and visibility** of SLT through open door approach, Chief Exec's 58-minute sessions, comms, attending team meetings and QA activity alongside practitioners.
- Senior leaders **championing recognition of good practice**, 'naming the issue', empowering colleagues to make improvements to systems and processes through open communication and collaborative working.
- Our workforce has clarity on **our vision, commitment and priorities**, developed through 58-minute sessions with further refinement by the Practitioners' Improvement Board and Equalities Steering Group.
- 9-month **Leadership Development Programme** completed for all NCT managers (including SLT) with positive impact on practice and culture. This was developed with University of Northampton, Research in Practice and Beyond Behaviour (Functional Fluency) and **focused on enabling managers to empower each other, staff, children, and families and build a positive culture**.
- The Leadership Development Programme consisted of monthly sessions led by the Chief Executive, one to one development sessions and cross organisational learning sets which included an incredibly **well received session designed and delivered by our Care Leaver Apprentices on Empathetic Leadership**. The programme set expectations and provided clarity on a strengths based, collaborative approach. Improvement in leadership skills was reported by delegates.
- Other **leadership development opportunities**, including Research in Practice's Practice Supervisor Development and Practice Leaders Programme, mentoring, coaching, Signs of Safety Practice Champion training, masterclasses and bespoke support from Partners in Practice and Research in Practice.
- Clarity of standards and expectations through **Practice Model, Practice Standards and Supervision Policy** (refreshed and relaunched September 2021) and best practice examples shared on Learning Hub.

## Impact

- **Continuing improvement trajectory** evidenced through Ofsted monitoring visits; as a result of strong support, positive challenge and drive for improvement from SLT, Lead Members, DCSs, NCT Board and Social Care Improvement Board
- Positive feedback received from colleagues attending the **Chief Executive's 58 minutes sessions** and via our Practitioners' Improvement Board about **SLT being visible, positive, and inspiring, and that communication has improved**.
- **QA activity shows an improvement in the quality of supervision**, and there is ongoing work with managers to ensure quality is consistently good across the board. Ofsted (July 2021) noted some signs of initial positive impact of revised supervision recording.
- **71% of Collaborative Reflective Practice Discussions (CRPDs) in last 12 months** scaled management oversight and supervision at 6 and above (out of 10)<sup>5</sup> July 2022. Of this 12% scaled at 9-10; CRPDs since September 2020.

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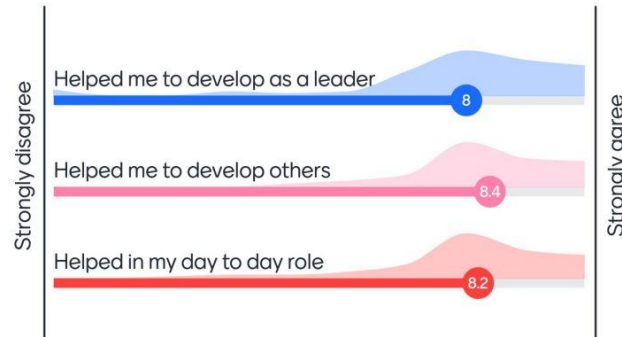
<sup>5</sup> On a scale of 0-10, where 10 means management oversight is timely, effective and has a positive impact on the direction of work with the child and their family, and 0 means that management oversight is either missing or is ineffective



- **Staff consistently feedback** that they feel supported by managers in QA activity, peer reviews and Ofsted monitoring visits.

### February 2022 Leadership Development Programme participant feedback

## Leadership Development Programme



*'It has helped me be more supportive in supervision. I had found some of the practitioners had a fixed mindset, so I am helping them to develop a growth mindset' - Manager about our Leadership Development Programme*

### What does this mean for children and families?

- Children and families are more likely to receive better quality, more timely support that meets their needs because our workforce is empowered, well supported, and clear about what is expected of them and what we're aiming to achieve.

### Development of the Corporate Parenting Board (CPB)

- Newly elected Unitary councillors were provided with training on corporate parenting, safeguarding and the function of the CPB.
- Further training 'Corporate Parenting Through the Eyes of a Child' delivered in December 2021 to enhance CPB members' understanding of roles and responsibilities and the lived experience of Children in Care.
- Lead Member for WNC and joint chair of CPB has participated in the LGA Leadership of CPB training.
- The NCT performance scorecard is regularly reviewed by the CPB and training of Board members has been provided to help them understand the performance data and enable them to challenge effectively.
- Having two care leavers as members of the CPB provides a helpful perspective to the Board and challenges officers and members to be thinking differently.
- Updated terms of reference written in a young person friendly way.
- CPB is undertaking deep dive sessions on particular topics, led by subject matter experts including children and young people.
- CPB links closely with quarterly health network meetings, Virtual School Advisory Group and Children in Care and Care Leavers' participation groups.
- WNC and NNC Assistant Directors for Housing and Communities are members of the Board.

### Impact

- CPB members' understanding of specific issues faced by children and young people in care has been strengthened.
- Council tax discount/ reduction scheme for care leavers in place from April 2021 NNC and WNC.
- Timeliness of Children in Care health reviews escalated within health services.

- An important function of the Board is to celebrate the achievements of children and young people and this is done at each Board meeting
- Young people’s participation on the board has led to officers being required to be more specific about what positive outcomes mean and has challenged officers and members’ thinking.

*‘The corporate parenting board has been strengthened recently and is showing some signs of impact in improving services and support for care leavers.’ Ofsted Monitoring Visit November 21*

### What does this mean for children and families?

- The achievements, needs and issues experienced by Children in Care and Care Leavers are better understood by decision makers.

**Recruit, Retain and Develop an Awesome Workforce** – Improvement for children and families will be delivered by our workforce, who are therefore our most valuable resource

### Recruitment

- **Significant improvements have been made since 2019** and as per the national picture, our workforce stability challenges are greater in duty and assessment and safeguarding social work teams. Vacancies, agency staff and caseloads are closely monitored, and managed service teams have been used to mitigate.
- We have **expanded the routes into social work roles** offering student placements, Step Up placements, frontline students (from September 22) who will become our NQSWs, SW apprenticeships and NQSWs.
- **Further 10 practice educators** being trained to support student placements.
- **Dedicated NCT recruitment team** and successful partnership with Opus providing relentless drive. All potential candidates are offered a conversation with the Chief Exec. **Improved processes to ensure social work vacancies** are filled quickly – ideally with permanent staff but utilising agency as required.
- The **partnership between NCT and Opus achieved a ‘Highly Commended’** award at the Annual PPMA Excellence in People Management 2022 Awards.

#### Successes:

- **4 social workers recruited** from outside the UK in 21/22; **6 joined April- July; 3 due to start in September**; 1 due to start in Jan and further 8 in pre- employment checks.
- **26 NQSWs** joined in 21/22 and 15 to date 22/23; 12 NQSWs completed their ASYE in May 22, with 11 more due to complete in September 2022. Positive feedback continues to be received about NQSWs from parents/ carers, children, and colleagues/ partners.
- **8 Step up Graduates** started as NQSWs in May 2021.
- **10 Step Up to Social Work students started** in January 2022, 6 were current NCT employees.
- **3 social work apprentices** in safeguarding service, who are due to qualify in June 2023.

### Retention and development

- Improved social worker **career path** with senior social worker posts and increased number of Advanced Practitioner (AP) roles.
- Robust senior oversight on **caseloads**, with action taken to ensure they remain manageable, whilst also ensuring all children have an allocated worker. Including redeployment, managed service teams, temporary assessment (non-case holding) social workers. We have increased the

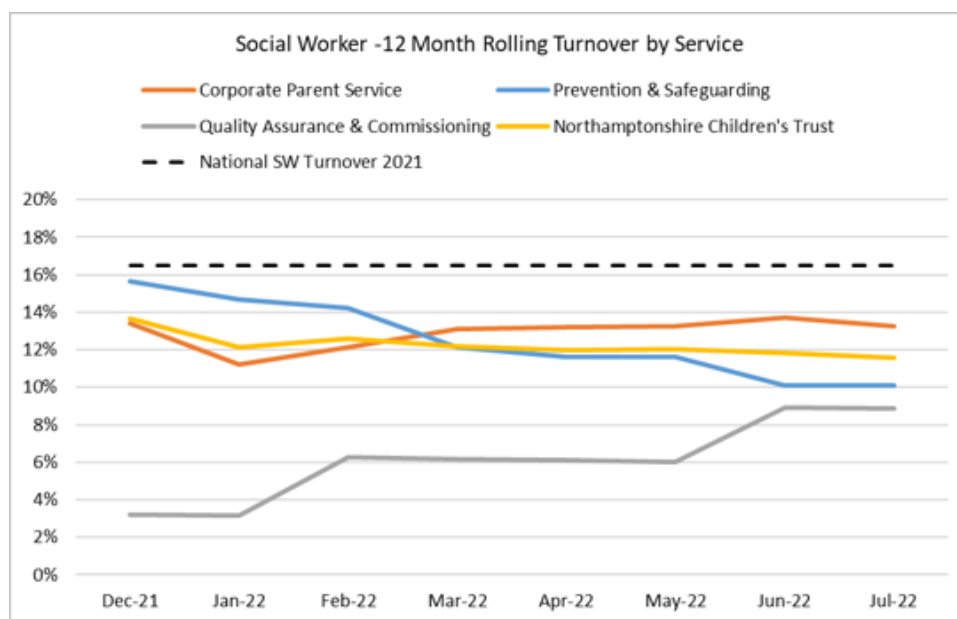
Advanced Practitioner posts to one per team. Social work teams are also each supported by a family support worker and business support colleague.

- **Continuous professional development (CPD)** of our workforce is strengthened via our online learning hub, providing access to NCT specific training programmes, resources, and good practice and **bespoke CPD to meet our needs**, developed by our workforce. Research in Practice and Making Research Count membership provides access to evidence, resources, tools, and training. From November 2022, the transfer of L&D functions from NNC to NCT will provide opportunity for a more flexible, cohesive and bespoke CPD offer for our workforce.
- **Formal Teaching Partnership** progressing following successful DfE bids for 21/22 and 22/23.
- Additional **Signs of Safety Practice Champions** trained and Signs of Safety training available for the whole workforce.
- Approx. **800 nominations** were received for **the inaugural NCT workforce awards** in December 2021.
- **Salary scale pay increments** introduced for all NCT staff on 1st April 2021 and was awarded again in 2022, plus 2% pay award in April 2022.
- From Dec 2021, a **retention bonus** was introduced for social worker posts in priority services, **positively received by staff**.
- Encouraging retention across NCT by **changing our culture to being strengths based and empowering**; improving processes and systems; investing in our staff, through our Leadership Development Programme and professional development opportunities. The implementation of our **'conditions for success'** are expected to improve our retention of staff.
- **Additional Advanced Practitioner (AP)** positions created in front line social work teams, managing a small number of cases as well as supporting less experienced team members to increase knowledge and skills through mentoring, coaching, support, and sharing their practice expertise.
- Further **career development opportunities** through the creation of consultant social worker and deputy consultant social worker roles for our Frontline hubs.



## Impact

- 15.8% social worker vacancies in June 2022 (England average 17%) compared with 22.28% in October 2019.
- Our turnover rate of permanent social workers (11.57% 12 month rolling average) is lower than national average 16.6%, across all services (July 2022).



- 65% of agency and permanent social workers have been in post since NCT was formed (November 2020); and 71% of our permanent social workers started prior to November 2020.
- 20% of agency and permanent social workers have moved into more senior roles since November 2020.
- 6 NQSW's have moved into Qualified social worker positions in DAAT since January 2022.
- 15 previous NQSWs have now progressed into management roles.
- No unallocated cases in July 2022 compared with 199 in June 2019.
- Number of social workers above caseload targets<sup>6</sup> has reduced across the board: June 2019 DAAT 25 above, safeguarding 37 above, Children in Care 7 above. Compared with July 2022 DAAT 12 above, safeguarding 18 above, Children in Care 3 above.

## What does this mean for children and families?

- Children and families are now more likely to have better experiences as a result of a more stable and sustained Social Care workforce.

## Equalities, Diversity, Inclusion & Equity

- Our **Equalities Forum** was set up at the request of colleagues, to inform, educate and support each other and provide a safe space to share experiences and views. **Open for the whole workforce** and attendance has been up to 110. A real success of the forum are sessions designed and delivered by colleagues based on lived experiences, including My Gender and Me; My Prejudice and Me; My Life in a Bubble (living with Autism); My Identity, Heritage and Me.
- **Dyslexia network** was set up following My Dyslexia and Me session .
- **Equalities week** (Nov 2021) ran **12 sessions** open for all to attend; Practice related training with a focus on equalities; 'Me and My...' lived experience sessions; fun session on learning sign

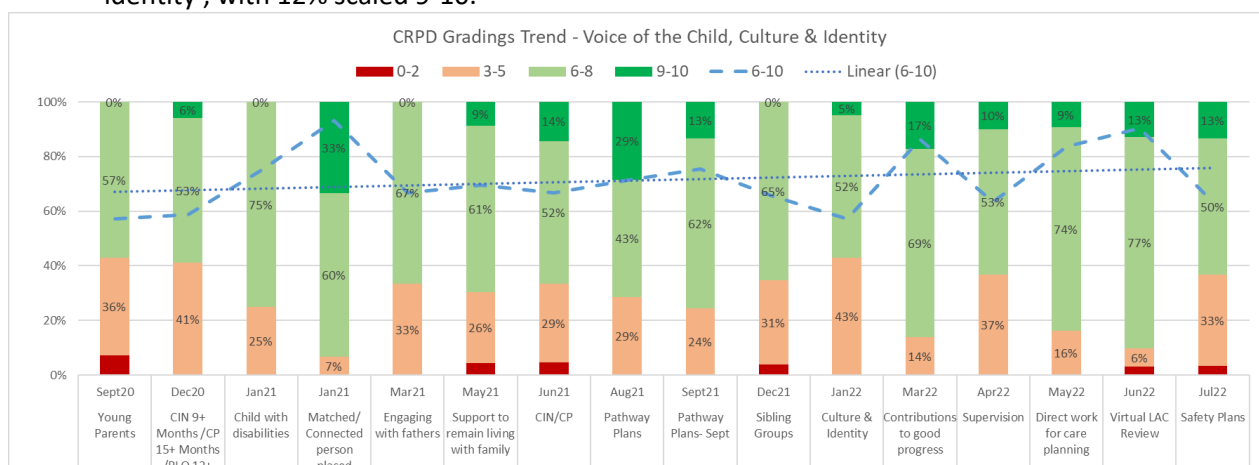
<sup>6</sup> Caseload targets are DAAT: 35; Safeguarding: 22; Children in Care: 20

language. The week also included a virtual exhibition of our culture and identity, a map of NCT's heritage, equalities conversations in teams and sharing of resources. Good level of engagement from workforce and positive feedback received. **Equalities Week 2022** is taking place again in September with a greater range of sessions being delivered by practitioners and foster carers.

- **Equalities Influencers** throughout NCT to **champion equalities issues**, share resources and best practice, signpost colleagues and listen to any concerns. Equalities Influencers in place across service and role description agreed.
- **Culturally sensitive practice training** developed by members of steering group with young people, available for all practitioners.
- **Workforce communications** increasingly sharing and celebrating a more diverse range of events and festivals.
- **'Leading in Colour'** session held as part of Leadership Development Programme in March 2022 – positive feedback received.
- 3 managers successfully applied **Black and Asian Leadership Initiative (BALI)** programme in 22/23.
- NCT asked to be part of **Research in Practice anti-racist practice resources and conference**.
- We have recently established an **over-representation steering group** to specifically look at children who are overrepresented in matters of concern e.g.: violent crime, CSE, CCE, Children in Care, exclusions. We will reflect on our current approaches and determine what needs to change to ensure any support is tailored to the cultural, diverse and inclusion needs of each individual child and their family.

## Impact

- 77% feel equality, diversity and inclusion has become more of a priority since we became NCT.
- 66% feel supported to progress their career in NCT.
- Membership of the forum is building confidence to work with diverse families.
- Since the forum started, it has been found that E & D is not just an overlooked agenda item / afterthought, it is becoming more prominent as a discussion topic.
- Collaborative Reflective Practice Discussions (CRPDs) since September 2020 show an improvement trend for voice of the child, culture and identity.
- 74% of CRPDs over last 12 months scaled 6 and above out of 10<sup>7</sup> for voice of the child, culture and identity ; with 12% scaled 9-10.



<sup>7</sup> On a scale of 0-10, where 10 means the child's voice is clear throughout their record, their cultural and identity needs are explicitly captured and understood, and these elements are considered and influence our work with the child and their family, and 0 means we cannot hear the child's voice and their cultural and identity needs are not understood, considered or supported

*"It's one of the most inspirational, informative meetings I've attended. I am truly humbled to have listened to the experiences of these courageous and awesome people".* Member of NCT workforce about the Equalities Forum

## What does this mean for children and families?

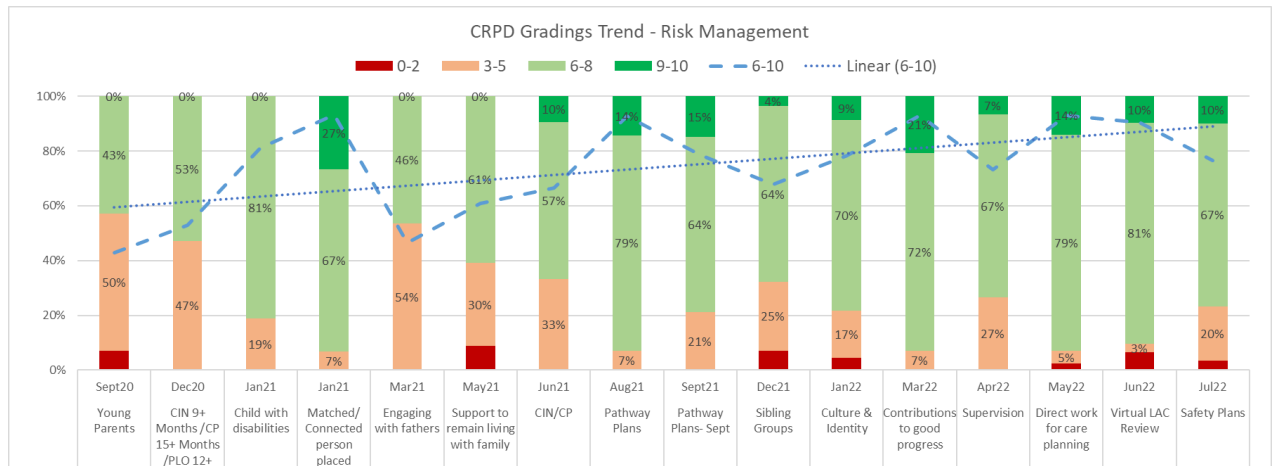
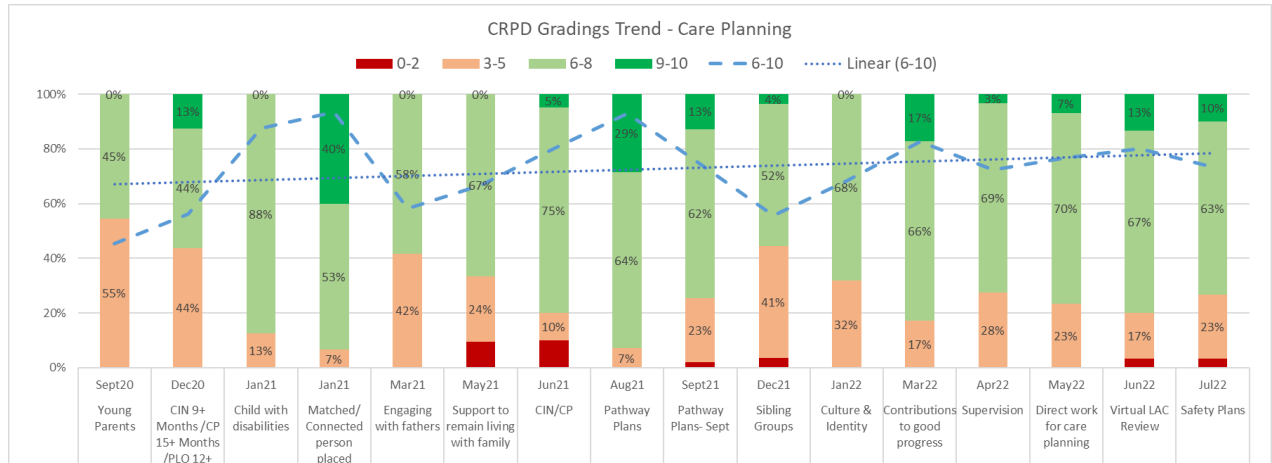
- Children and families' individual needs are now better understood and supported.

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

- Relentless focus on **improving consistency in the quality of assessments and plans.**
- **Increasing confidence and skills in using Signs of Safety.** Additional Practice Champions trained, resources and best practice on our Learning Hub and Signs of Safety training (including bespoke and bite size) available for all workforce and partners. Following short term funding we have now been able to mainstream SofS AP and Project Manager posts. University of Northampton undertaking 12–18-month research project into the **impact of Signs of Safety in NCT.**
- **Partners in Practice** have provided support alongside services to improve practice, bespoke support from Research in Practice for 7 team managers and 3 service managers. Additional 20 managers supported through this programme from Jan 2022, and coaching/ mentoring from PIP and Social Work Academy. Colleagues identified for Frontline Pathways programme 22/23.
- **Good practice celebrated and shared** through a range of channels such as: Learning Hub, emails from Chief Exec, PSW newsletter, 58 minute sessions.
- **Refreshed and relaunched our Practice Standards, Practice Model and Supervision Policy** to provide clarity of expectations. Ofsted (July 2021) noted some signs of initial positive impact of revised supervision recording.
- We benefit from **strong engagement of children and young people through our formal participation groups** - Children in Care Council, Care Leavers Council and Shooting Stars for children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND), Young Inspectors, and the recently formed Dynamic Youth (children who are subject of CIN or CP plan) whose voice shape our vision, transformation and review of services.
- Reinforcement that **voice of the child** is considered and recorded by all practitioners. Engagement of children and young people has been expanded through commissioning the **Mind of My Own app** and establishment (from April 2022) of groups for children who are the subject of CIN and CP. Our **CYP Engagement Strategy** is helping us to focus on improving our engagement at individual, service, and strategic levels to improve practice and support.
- We have an excellent **Advocacy service** who support children and young people with plans, meetings, complaints etc. This includes specialist support for children with SEND.
- We have developed '**language that cares**' to assist us in using language that is appropriate and meaningful to children and young people, rather than jargon or labelling language; our QA activity shows more case records are being written to the child which is helping them to be more child and outcome focused.
- **Cultural competency training** developed with input from children and young people, available for all practitioners.
- Further training has been made available to support **working with families to develop safety plans.**
- '**We are NCT...Being great at what we do**' campaign where each month has a focus on particular areas of practice with resources and good practice shared.
- Family Support Workers deliver **direct work opportunities** alongside social workers and offer engagement activities with children forming **positive and meaningful relationships.**
- **APs, now in every front-line team,** are supporting colleagues in strengthening quality of practice.

## Impact

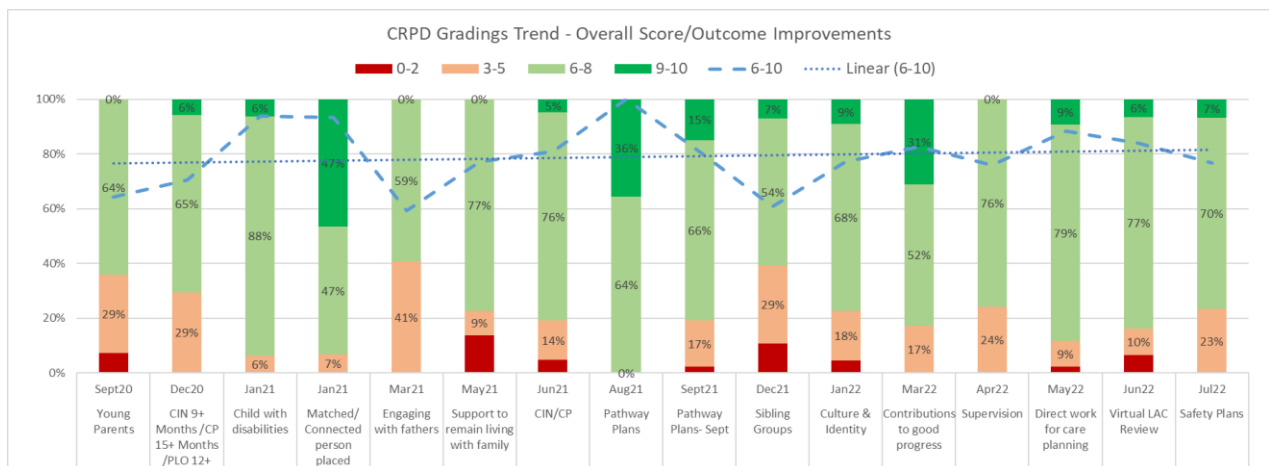
- 75% of CRPDs: audits over last 12 months scaled 6 and above (out of 10)<sup>8</sup> for care planning quality (July 2022); with 10% scaled at 9-10.
- 81% of CRPDs in last 12 months scaled risk management at 6 and above (out of 10)<sup>9</sup> July 2022. 11% scaled at 9-10.
- 81% of CRPDs over last 12 months scaled 6 and above (out of 10)<sup>10</sup> for outcomes (July 2022); with 12% scaled at 9-10.
- CRPDs since September 2020 show an improvement trend for outcomes, risk management and care planning.



<sup>8</sup> On a scale of 0-10 where 10 means the child has a good quality, outcome focused plan which is progressing effectively in a timely way, and 0 means that the child has a plan which is not clear about outcomes, is not progressing quickly enough, and is not of a standard we would expect for the child

<sup>9</sup> On a scale of 0-10 where 10 means any risks to the child have been identified quickly, responded to in a timely way, we have worked alongside the child's network to manage the risk and the child is safe, and 0 means that we have not identified risk, our response has been too slow, the child's network has not been supported well enough to manage the risk, and the child is at risk of harm

<sup>10</sup> Thinking about the overall experience of the child and the impact of our work with them over the last 6 months; on a scale of 0-10, if 10 means the child is safe and happy, enjoys good health and wellbeing, and their outcomes show they are resilient and fulfilling their potential, and 0 means the child is not safe and healthy, has low resilience, and are not fulfilling their potential



### What does this mean for children and families?

- Children are receiving timely support that better meets their needs.

**Insightful Quality Assurance and Learning** – We know ourselves and our practice well through rigorous quality assurance.

- **Strong and improving Quality Assurance**, which social workers value, with oversight of a monthly Quality Assurance Board, chaired by Chief Exec, which reviews feedback from service led performance clinics, CRPDs, practice weeks, voice of the child, learning from complaints and escalations, and other QA activity.
- **Practice Weeks (including our Young Inspectors and teams drawn from across services)** have been held across the majority of services providing a rich, qualitative picture of practice. Young Inspectors design their methodology and feedback their findings directly to senior leaders, providing valuable insight and ideas for improvement. Action plans have been developed to implement actions.
- Developed our **quality and performance analysis at team level**. This includes continuing to develop managers' skills and confidence in quality assuring work alongside practitioners, focusing on the impact of our work on children's experiences and outcomes.
- We have benefitted from expertise of our **Partners in Practice** and **Regional Improvement and Innovation Alliance** to provide objective views of the quality of our practice and identify improvement actions, which we have implemented
- **Learning from quality assurance** is shared and bespoke continuous professional development delivered to improve practice, for example culturally sensitive practice training. Briefings used to disseminate audit findings.
- The **quality of our quality assurance has improved**, through training, bespoke support, and reflective moderation, meaning we have confidence in what it tells us.
- NCT quality assurance activity generally reflects findings of peer reviews and Ofsted visits and **moderation, reflective discussions and training is helping to increase the quality of QA** activity undertaken by managers.



## Impact

- Practitioners report that CRPDs and Practice Weeks provide positive reflective learning experiences.
- Ofsted monitoring visits (July and November 2021) identified our comprehensive quality assurance framework is improving children's experiences.
- CRPDs since September 2020 show an improvement trend for overall outcomes for children.

*"I have learnt so much this week and it has been such a pleasure to not only witness great practice, but also the strong relationships the team have with their young people, it was lovely to see! I have definitely taken some ideas back, that we can use in our team"*

**Leaving Care Practice week team member.  
Sept 22.**

## What does this mean for children and families?

- Children and families are experiencing better quality support and outcomes.

## Healthy Partnerships – Effective partnership working is essential to good practice

- **Strengthened strategic partnerships** through NSCP, Social Care Improvement Board and CYP Transformation Board (ICS).
- **NSCP Early Help, Neglect and Exploitation strategies** in place and action plans being developed / driven by NSCP sub groups.
- Exploitation strategy and action plan informed by **multi agency Tackling Child Exploitation project** involving Research in Practice, Children's Society and University of Bedfordshire.
- **Early Help Strategy and Action plan** informed by Dept. Levelling Up, Housing and Communities Early Help System Guide and DWP Reducing Parental Conflict Planning Tool.
- **Early Help Strategic Board** and West and North networks established with positive levels of attendance, continuous professional development, and networking.
- Projects supported by Public Health (PH) funding improving **mental health and wellbeing** of care leavers and children in NCT foster care.
- **Partner SofS, EHA and thresholds training** being delivered.
- **2 education posts** in place in the MASH to provide additional support to schools.
- **Closer working relationships between DCT and Adult Social Care** and processes and timescales for children referred to Adult Social care have been strengthened.
- **Improved working with unitary Housing leads** – NCT CFSS has led on 16/17-year-olds Housing Options / Homelessness establishing a steering group, action plan informed by colleagues at Department for Levelling up, Housing and Communities and joint protocol for 16/17-year-olds refreshed.
- **Improved multi agency working and co-ordination** through establishment of partnership missing steering group.
- **Multi agency resource panel** and improving use of multi-disciplinary teams have improved shared responsibilities for children's placements.
- **Strong partnership with Homes 2 Inspire**, provider of our residential care block contract, and focus on strengthening partnerships with other local and specialist placement providers.

## Impact

- Working together to develop and agree strategies has led to a shared understanding of issues facing children, young people, and families, what we are collectively seeking to achieve and shared responsibilities for doing so.
- Strengthened relationships means any issues are identified and resolved more quickly, and good practice and learning is shared.

- Improved co-ordination of work to support children and families across agencies.

### What does this mean for children and families?

- Children and families receive a swifter and more appropriate response to concerns and risks; and children now receive a more co-ordinated and appropriate response to their vulnerabilities.

**Robust and Effective Resource Management** – We understand the key drivers of the budget and budget managers understand the financial impact of their decisions. Budget managers are equipped with support and systems to effectively monitor and forecast.

- We are dealing with the **national placement sufficiency challenge to improve experiences and outcomes for children** and achieve better value for money. With success to date in increasing NCT mainstream and resilience foster carers in 21/22; increasing number of external providers on our frameworks; improved quality of our NCT fostering agency; delivering 5 NCT Children’s Homes; adding an additional home to our block contract; commissioning of two new emergency Children’s Homes and YMCA supported accommodation; bidding for DfE capital funding in partnership with trusted and ethical partner; improving support to sustain placements.
- **Work to improve the efficiency and effectiveness** of placements, commissioning, and brokerage processes, following external review by People Too.
- NCT Fostering recruitment and marketing strategy with **clear plan of recruitment activity** in 22/23.
- Working with WNC and NNC to secure **additional properties and capital funding** to increase residential care provision.
- **Collaborative redesign** of short breaks provision for children with disabilities to enable more of the right support at the right time.
- Improvements being made to organisational **processes and procedures** to improve efficiencies and experiences for workforce, including freeing up time for practitioners and frontline managers.
- Improvement in **budget oversight and forecasting** supported by Finance and Resources in place from April 2021. Effective use of resources has enabled us to **commission managed service teams** to address capacity issues. Like all areas we are facing significant pressures on placement budgets due to the national sufficiency challenges.
- NCT is considered a **responsible Data Controller** for the purposes of the UK GDPR, following ICO self-assessment, and have met standards required.
- NHS Data Security & Protection **compliance**.
- **98.3% of NCT’s workforce had completed Data Protection Essentials & Cyber Security training** as of June 2022. This meets and exceeds the NHS DSPT compliance requirement of 95% of total workforce.

### Impact

- To date we have secured an additional 11 residential care beds for sole use of NCT by the end of 2022, including in emergency/ urgent situations.
- The proportion of Children in Care for 2.5+years in the same placement for 2+years/ placed for adoption has increased from 61% in 2019 to 68.3% in 2022; our focus is on reducing the proportion of children who have had 3+ moves in the last 12 months.
- 94.7% of care leavers are in suitable accommodation (YTD July 22) which is above the England and stat neighbour average.

- Net gain of 2 NCT fostering households in 22/23 despite challenges of the pandemic and national shortage of carers.
- Of 65 children who had received therapeutic support directly/via carer at end of June 6 (9%) had experienced a placement breakdown against a baseline of 30%<.
- NCT foster carers who have completed Therapeutic Parenting with a clinical psychologist reported going from a 70% chance that the placement would end, to a 70% chance it will continue.
- Review and negotiation of existing placements has resulted in better suited support for children and young people's needs and achieved £1.2m savings in 21/22.
- People Too review of placements commissioning and brokerage (February 2022) found:

*'In some areas, NCT is managing, and meeting need as effectively as comparators. Despite this, some intractable issues are present that require creative and innovative solutions.*

*Leadership, insight, and analysis is allowing NCT to focus on the right things, with many plans in flight to address existing deficits.*

**What does this mean for children and families?** The majority of our children are cared for in stable placements that meet their needs and achieve good outcomes.

## Section 6- What difference are we making for the children we support?

### Children in need of Early Help

#### What do we know about the quality and impact of our practice?

- Improved partnership approach, driven by NSCP Early Help Strategy as highlighted above, is enabling a more co-ordinated and effective early help offer across Northamptonshire.
- A simplified, more accessible EHA and Support Plan, developed with partners, was launched in February 2022.
- Permanent Children & Family Support Services (CFSS) AD has strengthened leadership, providing a clear and robust framework for overseeing the quality and impact of the service, ensuring it is child-centred from the moment we start working with a child.
- One referral pathway for external partners through Partnership Coordinators, integrated into the MASH and simplified step-down process has enabled children and families to receive the support they need more quickly.
- The strengthened and enhanced Partnership co-ordinator roles in MASH enables more children and families to be supported early with the right level of intervention that meets their needs promoting right support, right time, right service principles.
- All children worked with are seen alone at least once per month, their voice is heard and lived experience is incorporated into support plans. This is monitored by team managers and supervisors and progressed in team meetings and regular peer support/group supervision sessions.
- We understand that strong anti-discriminatory practice has a positive impact on children and young people, strengthening their positive sense of identity, and that they can participate fully when their diverse needs are understood and met. This practice is promoted through case reflection in supervision, group supervision activities and team meetings.
- Significant improvement in number of families achieving outcomes via Supporting Families Programme in 21/22 compared with previous years.
- All CFSS staff are fully Signs of Safety trained and complete annual safeguarding training; and senior practitioners and managers are Signs of Safety Practice Champions. The use of Graded Care Profile resources is encouraged to support practitioners to identify and evidence neglect.
- We've implemented a CFSS performance scorecard and QA activity to better understand activity and impact.
- Families in Corby (area of high deprivation) are able to access additional targeted commissioned support through Corby Children's Centres, which achieves positive impact for families.
- Since its inception in June 2021, CFSS' Family Solutions team has improved children's lives by working in partnership with families and other agencies to strengthen family resilience and achieve sustainable change, and enabled children/young people to remain within their own family.

**CFSS**

<b><u>Partnership Co-ordinator</u></b>	<b><u>Strengthening Families</u></b>	<b><u>Young People's Service</u></b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Whole Family Working</li> <li>• Drive EHA</li> <li>• Community Connectors</li> <li>• Support Network VCSE</li> <li>• Partnership Collaboration</li> <li>• Training</li> <li>• Events / Programme Delivery</li> <li>• MASH Contribution</li> <li>• Initial support to families</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Whole Family Working</li> <li>• Shared delivery with partners</li> <li>• Children Centre Activity</li> <li>• Parenting Programmes</li> <li>• Domestic abuse support groups</li> <li>• Children with additional needs - SEND Support</li> <li>• Domestic abuse support groups</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Whole Family Working</li> <li>• Contextual safeguarding -Exploitation</li> <li>• Missing RHI</li> <li>• Attendance &amp; Exclusions</li> <li>• Gangs / Crime</li> <li>• Youth Homelessness</li> <li>• Family Solutions – Edge of Care</li> <li>• Mentoring Support Team</li> </ul>

*“I have had a lot of troubles this year with my mental health and wellbeing, also K my daughter has had a lot of struggles this year, but Jo has been there to help and support both of us. We are sad that your involvement is finishing but like all good things they have to end, we cannot thank you enough for your time effort patience and understanding it means so much to all of us.”*

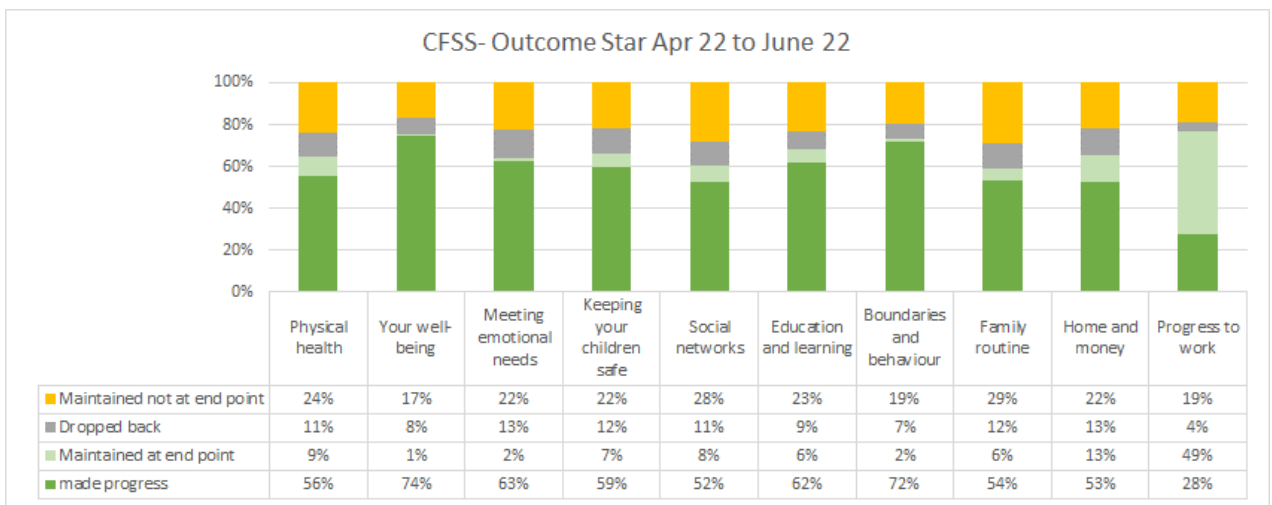
**Letter from a parent to CFSS**

**How do we know?**

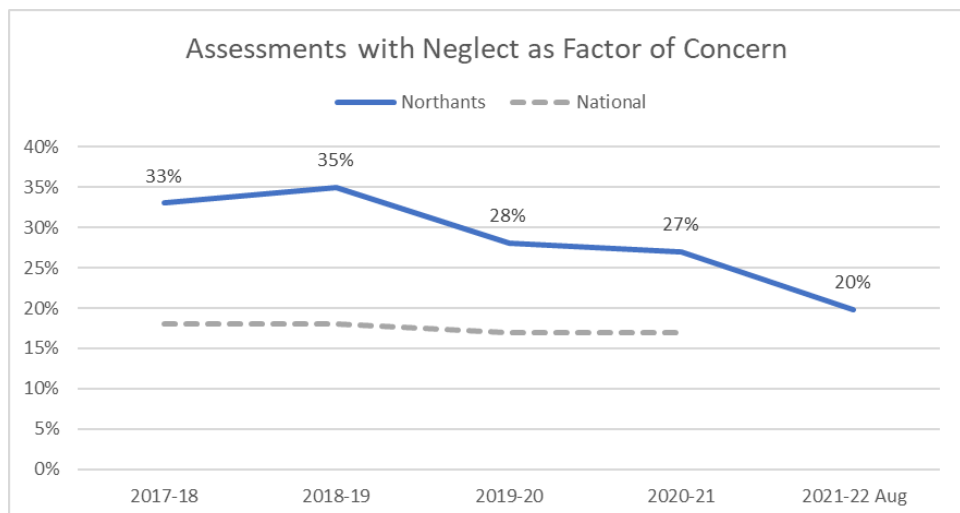
- More timely intervention with 82% of families allocated a CFSS worker within 2 days of receipt (YTD July 2022).
- 100% Strengthening Families payment by results target achieved 21/22 and on target to reach 100% for 22/23.
- 63% families as successful closure to CFSS (July 2022).
- Only 4% of children escalated to CP and 4% to CiN with 12 months of CFSS EHA (YTD June 2022).
- 63% of children (n. 79) at risk of care remained at home following support from the Family Solutions team (July 2022).
- 66% of young people and families supported by Family Solutions Team (edge of care) reported improvements (July 2022).
- **Partners in Practice Review (January 2022)** found that Partnership Coordinators are “*very experienced and passionate about the role of EH and the impact that this level of support and intervention can have on children and families.*”
- **CFSS Practice Week (February 2022)** findings included:
  - 67% of children considered were scaled 7, 8, or 9 which shows that these children have assessments and plans which demonstrate good multi agency support is in place.
  - Children’s assessments and plans evidence good multi agency working. CFSS workers are motivated, dedicated, and skilled at building relationships; they are working alongside partners with some complex families, and consent is managed appropriately.
  - A CFSS strength is finding support in the community for families – alongside this there needs to be more focused work exploring the family network, finding the safety there, and engaging family members in safety planning; this will help families be their own resource to sustain change.
  - Practitioners work in an open, honest way and children and families told the Practice Week team they appreciated this; they trusted the workers because of this. In every

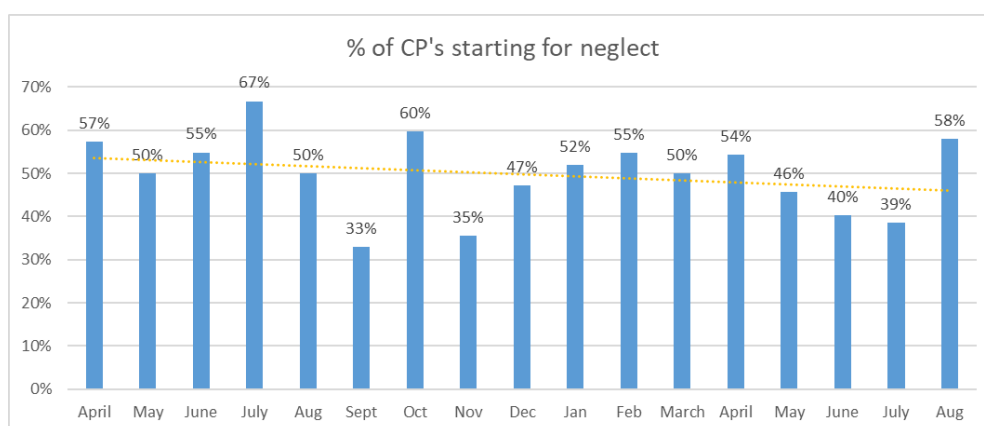
piece of work the Practice Week Team looked at, practitioners knew and understood the individual needs of each child in the family.

- The timeliness and quality of supervision and management oversight was variable on the children’s records reviewed and discussed. Managers are knowledgeable about children’s circumstances and always available for case discussions; sometimes these are not captured on the child’s record.
- The Practice Week Team saw multiagency practice in CFSS that supported better outcomes for children and young people and examples of outstanding CFSS practice were seen.
- Over 70% of families accessing support at Corby Children’s Centres reported reduction in isolation, increased understanding of child development and relationships with their child, greater level of support from community services.
- Over 50% of families supported by CFSS in Q1 22/23 made progress in all outcome star domains, except progress to work where 28% made progress and 49% maintained (see graph below).



Earlier and better identification of neglect means we have made some headway with closing the gap between Northamptonshire and National data, and know there is a way to go (graphs below)





### What does this mean for children and families?

- Children and families now receive appropriate help at an earlier stage, which is making a difference to their lives.

### What are we doing to further improve?

- CFSS Service Plan shows key performance indicators for the service, with timescales to ensure the momentum for improvement is maintained.
- Management oversight on casework was identified in Practice Week as an area for improvement. This will be managed through case supervision observation as part of CFSS QA Activity.
- Strengthening of communication, safety planning, documented family stories at step down to avoid families telling stories again and to help CFSS to pick up quickly.
- Increase use of Family Network Meetings to work with the child's networks to help build the safety plan.
- Improve age-appropriate engagement in team around the family meetings.
- Improve how we use the voice of the child and families to inform changes in service delivery.
- CFSS Staff will be offered Level 4 Accreditation in Working with Complex Families to improve their competence and capabilities for improving outcomes for children.
- Solution Focused Practice training is planned for Autumn 2022.
- Developing closer working relationships between councils' school attendance support teams and the Strengthening Families team to facilitate a seamless approach to addressing school attendance and behaviour issues, including increasing use of EHAs by school attendance.

## Children and young people experiencing risks from outside of the home and exploitation

### What do we know about the quality and impact of our practice?

- **Improved partnership approach**, driven by NSCP Exploitation Strategy as highlighted above, is enabling a more co-ordinated and effective response across Northamptonshire.
- RISE (Reducing Incidents of Sexual Exploitation) and Missing Teams moved into the NCT Young People's Service (September 2020) to ensure a **continuum of support across tiers**, meaning our response to missing and exploitation can target both high and medium risk. This will enable **high level contextual support** right through to prevention work.
- All children assessed as high risk of sexual exploitation receive a **health, police and allocated NCT practitioner as a minimum**.

- **Multi agency RISE school's prevention package** commenced in September 2021 including staff training, and Sarah's story (CSE survivor) shared from year 7 and a parent's event. Schools are using this for lesson plans and 3 schools have requested additional support re groups of children where there are emerging exploitation concerns at a lower level.
- **Exploitation / Missing training tailored for Children's Homes** delivered to 2 NCT homes and 54 external placement providers in Q1 22/23. This has been beneficial for relationship building and indirectly supporting our children in care.
- **Northamptonshire Police are leading Operation Makesafe**, supported by partners and local businesses, which aims to **raise awareness of Child Sexual Exploitation within the business community** including hotels, taxi companies, fast food outlets and licensed premises. Operation HOTELWATCH has also been set up to ensure that hoteliers are both aware of and proactive in tackling CSE/CCE and potential linked offences that criminals may either carry out or seek to facilitate on their premises. Additional training targeted at hotels that fail test purchases or where there are other concerns.
- **CE Specialist Nurse continues to act as a source of expertise** for health agencies across the county. Including a **liaison line for advice and support to practitioners**, dissemination of relevant research and resources to health agencies and provision of safeguarding supervision and training to health practitioners across the health economy. Also representing NHFT/RISE at the Vulnerable Adolescent Panel to give health advice and recommendations for the lead professionals as appropriate.
- **Young people** supported by RISE **receive an up-to-date, in-depth health assessment** offered either face to face in school/clinic or via telephone/video. Emerging and unmet health needs are addressed quickly.
- **Good communication is evident between the Young People's Service, RISE case workers and health professionals** to identify any emerging needs including sexual health, emotional health, trauma, physical health, drug and alcohol, smoking cessation, sleep, eating disorders, bereavement, ADHD/ASD referrals.
- We take a **"whole family approach"** to support the young person and we offer support to families in mitigating risks that their child faces, such as by increased supervision, or supporting the CYP into alternative peer networks.
- **Trained all Young People's Service and Family Solutions practitioners** in exploitation, RISE, and to conduct home return interviews.
- **Implemented partnership Vulnerable Adolescents Panel (VAP)** and a co-ordinator who triangulates our missing, exploitation and vulnerable adolescent data.
- NYOS have developed a **vulnerability screening tool**, alongside asset+ to identify needs and required referrals.
- NYOS and police gang and violent crime pilot project in Wellingborough has identified several young people that are suspects of multiple offences that have never been in receipt of a positive intervention or formal outcome. NYOS are working with these young people through prevention and diversion to provide **positive interventions to reduce the likelihood of further offending**.
- **Close work with Barnardo's** to ensure that professionals understand the National Referral Mechanism (NRM), the Independent Child Trafficking Guardianship Service (IGVA) and what reasonable and conclusive grounds mean. This will **ensure professionals will have a full understanding** of the referral process into NRM and the support that Barnardo's can offer to us. It will ensure that all professionals will be able to recognise the signs of exploitation. NYOS and CYPSS have developed a group of NRM champions who are receiving additional training and support in this area that can assist practitioners in and across NCT to make referrals.
- Established a missing steering group reviewing end to end processes and top 10 missing children. **Support from CFSS offered at every HRI** to any top 10 missing children who do not have an allocated worker.
- **Home return interview (HRI) format changed to reflect SoS model**, outlining worries and what is working well, for the professional and the young person. There is an **emphasis on the voice of the child** and asking individually tailored questions to each child, young person and family to establish individual cultural, ethnicity and identity needs and support offers. By doing so, we can make accurate recommendations and actions from this.



- In the past 6 months, 13% of children in care have had a missing episode, a slight rise from the previous year. Work is required to understand the reasons for this, but hypotheses include an increase in the number of young people being accommodated who are at risk of criminal exploitation and the **increasing needs of young people relating to their emotional well-being exacerbated by the pandemic.**
- Outcome Star tool and the RISE risk wheel allows practitioners to effectively risk assess families and young people, while **capturing their voice and understanding their strengths and needs.**
- **Multi agency review** of the Adolescent Risk Management (ARM) process dealing with exploitation and extra familial harm in June 2022 has identified key areas for improvement now being taken forward.
- **Increased use of multi-disciplinary teams/ complex case discussions** to oversee and manage risks for Children in Care.
- Participation of the MASH decision makers in Channel Panel enable informed decisions to be made
- **Positive partnership working** between the separated children's team and relevant agencies has led to better decision making when considering the safety and welfare of young people who might be at risk of or have been identified as being trafficked and/or are likely to go missing.
- The use of NRPF Connect identifies unaccompanied young people who present to or from another local authority which **helps to identify missing young people quickly.**
- **Missing episodes for separated children have been reduced** by consistently listening to young people's wishes and feelings. Where appropriate changes have been made, this has contributed towards overall stability and safety.

### How do we know?

- Increase in referrals seen and an increase in knowledge of the local picture as a result of school's prevention package.
- 80% of home return interviews were completed within 72 hours of being found in 21/22.
- ARM Review (June 2022) found that all agencies found the VAP valuable and felt that it was able to progress and accelerate a multi-agency response for young people at risk of exploitation.
- ARM Review (June 2022) found the current process is not well understood by partners; risk assessments and plans can be more consistently and effectively used and there is opportunity to improve trusted relationships with young people.
- All agencies working closer together to improve response to exploitation e.g., improved information sharing to ensure effective joint decision making and planning.
- Increased knowledge and expertise in practice.
- Police arrested 14 men in Q1 21/22 for child sexual exploitation related offences, with a further 43 live investigations; 34 arrests for online offences and 43 children safeguarded online.

### What does this mean for children and families?

- **Children now receive a more co-ordinated and appropriate response to their vulnerabilities.**

### What are we doing to further improve?

- Implement actions arising from ARM review recommendations, including a new operating model, exploitation guidance and toolkit (developed by University of Bedfordshire and Hackney and aligned to Signs of Safety), and scoping development of a multi-agency team for criminal and sexual exploitation. Timescales and leads to be agreed by NSCP exploitation subgroup in September 2022.
- Continue mapping of young people, and their associates via monitoring of missing episodes, community incidents, and referrals into RISE function and / or the Young People's Service. We continue to monitor themes, places, and people of concern and share these across the partnership to improve the joint approaches to combatting issues where we anticipate they may arise.

- As a result of learning from the Wellingborough pilot we are implanting a countywide Prevention Partnership Panel - multiagency triage approach that will mobilise services to respond and support children suspected to be involved in violence at the earliest opportunity
- Broaden our community response by continuing to offer training packages and bespoke resources to a wide variety of organisations across Northamptonshire and strengthen work across hospitals, CFSS, residential homes, Children in Care teams and leaving care to support vulnerable children and young people. Also, to identify an accessible training package for adults services who support over 18s.
- RISE plan to develop a more preventative, contextual approach to working with groups of young people in their own places and spaces and address current gaps in police capacity.
- NYOS are looking to gain a further understanding of the use of section 45 defence in court in relation to exploited children, to enable a more appropriate response for them.
- Risk register for Children in Care where concerns of significant harm exist in relation to missing, criminal and sexual exploitation and offending behaviours to improve oversight and risk management.
- Whilst Children in Care and Leaving Care services are working more closely with YOS when young people are remanded or sentenced to custody and keeping more in touch with the young people themselves through visits and calls, the increase in gang cultures within Northamptonshire is meaning further work is needed to divert young people from crime. This has been recognised by the Children Safeguarding Partnership and work is planned between the services to better understand the situation and action needed.

## Children in need of help and protection

### Robust Front door - MASH & EDT

#### What do we know about the quality and impact of our practice?

- **Threshold and Pathways multi-agency training is improving partnership knowledge** of thresholds and awareness of pathways to early help support; quality of referrals is improving.
- **Revised operating model to enable a better management of the contacts and referrals** in the MASH and achieve more consistency in decision making together with better application of thresholds by all professionals was introduced in 2021.
- **A professional consultation line** is in place and any young people calling the general number are transferred to a specific line providing prompt access to a social worker who they can talk to about their worries.
- **RAG rating system used and all cases meeting threshold for a Social Care assessment are allocated timely to a social worker**, with a 4-hour window to progress red rated cases for strategy meeting where appropriate.
- All contacts relating to child **safeguarding concerns have social work oversight.**
- Through **screening domestic abuse notifications daily**, we ensure that risks are understood, and safety plans are implemented in a timely manner.
- **Re-referral audit completed by service managers in May 2022.** We now only record concerns relating to an individual child for the specific child only. DAAT consider strategy discussions being held in cases where there have been multiple closures due to non-engagement and the concerns remain evident.
- **EDT workers are confident in applying a threshold decision** for new referrals.
- **EDT has positive relationships with partners** meaning children in need of immediate protection are responded to promptly and interim safety plans are agreed and implemented.
- **The Golden Hour policy** (designed by EDT and the custody inspector) ensures that on every occasion a child is arrested and taken to custody, Social Care is informed and within the first hour share information with custody officers. This provides police with a social perspective of a child's needs and feeds into the wider police policy of ensuring that their custody suites are 'trauma

informed' and each communication with the child is mindful of their history, and seeks a way to divert them from offending.

*"She is so excellent just want to say how well she handled today and helped me & my children. I could not have asked for a nicer and professional worker lovely person thank "you TK. And this country needs more people like her."*

**Feedback on our MASH**

### How do we know?

- 683 partners participated in thresholds and pathways training in 21/22 and gave it an average rating of 4.7 out of 5.
- Rate of referrals to MASH is now in line with stat neighbour and England averages.
- MASH referrals given an outcome within 2 working days has been strong (95% in April 2022) but currently impacted by police dealing with backlogs- close joint working and plans in place to address this.
- PIP review Jan 2022 found '*evidence of substantial improvements in the systems and process and good progress across the front door in relation to the improvement journey*'.
- PIP review May 2022 found '*Cases dip sampled by the review team, thresholds for Early Help were appropriate and observations of calls demonstrated that time and care is taken to discuss the worries with the caller*'.
- PIP found evidence of more consistent application of thresholds surrounding cases being progressed for assessment.
- In May 2022, PIP identified improvements made following their first review in Jan 2022.
- Whilst we still have further to go to bring in line with statistical neighbour and England averages, re-referrals have reduced from 35.6% in 21/22 to 30.3% July 2022.
- Complaints received by the MASH regarding threshold and feedback have reduced significantly and compliments have increased.

### What does this mean for children and young people?

- Children and families receive a swifter and more appropriate response to concerns and risks.

### What are we doing to further improve?

- Supporting partners to further improve quality of referrals, including through provision of clear analysis and recommendations lined to threshold document to referrers.
- We continue to focus on improving quality of danger statements (analysis of assessments) in MASH and EDT; better use of signs of safety in strategy discussions in EDT; and group supervision and voice of the child in MASH; helping to further improve the quality of our practice.
- Consistency of threshold application for strategy discussions.
- Outcomes of NFA remain higher than we would like, and it remains an area of priority focus; although % of s.47s leading to ICPC is in line with statistical neighbour and England averages.

## Children in need of help and protection

### Robust Front door – Duty and Assessment (DAAT)

#### What do we know about the quality and impact of our practice?

- Leadership capacity has been strengthened with a second permanent service manager post enabling better support for social work teams
- The increase of AP positions has increased experienced social work capacity within the teams.

- DAAT social workers have more manageable caseloads than previously, allowing them to spend time with children to understand and better assess their needs and better identify risks.
- Buddy system is effective in offering support to the team on duty. This ensures that strategy meetings are timely, children are seen promptly, and responses are proportionate to the presenting issues.
- Learning and reflections from group supervisions and audits are contributing to an improvement in practice in DAAT.
- Individualised actions for each child at the end of a section 47 enquiry.
- Family Support Workers and other professionals known to the child completing direct work in DAAT to inform assessments and plans.
- All families supported by DAAT have an initial safety plan.
- Section 47 NFA Audit (February 2022) found sufficient identification of risks in 90% of the cases audited. In the 10% where risks were not sufficiently identified, birth parents not living in the family home were not always consulted as part of the assessment; history had not been robustly considered, whilst for some, the voice of the child was not consistently evident on the child's file. Subsequently, there were reflective learning sessions held across the service which has contributed to an improvement in this area of practice.

House of worries (What are we worried about)	House of good things (What is working well)	House of dreams (What needs to happen)
I am a afraid of snake I am worried is daddy going to be PUP - mummy and dad - Dad - NO friends	snow site I Love porch I like hot chocolate - Play with with dad	I want daddy to stop going to the PUP - To be happy - Mum safe to be

*"Just wanted to thank you for your contribution and very good presentation during ICPC for XX family. I really appreciated you getting in touch with me way before the conference to discuss X and X participation. Their attendance made a massive difference to the outcome and quality of the conference. I was so pleased with your practice- safety plan had been completed with the family prior to the conference and saved on the records, genogram and chronology had also been updated before the conference. Well done and keep up the good work"*

#### Feedback on our DAAT

#### How do we know?

- 78% of DAAT visits happened within 5 days in 21/22 and above 74% in April & May; the recent decrease is seen due to impact of police PPN backlog, increasing complexity, and staff change.
- 96% of single assessments are completed in timescales (YTD July 2022) compared to 86% in June 2019.
- Management oversight at the point of allocation within DAAT is consistently over 95%.
- 38% of single assessments lead to no further action and 30% to early help/ universal (YTD July 22)
- 36% s.47s leading to an Initial Child Protection Conference (YTD July 22), in line with statistical neighbours and England averages of 37%.
- PIP review, Jan 2022 found Social Care Assessments consider the child's history and there is evidence of them being more child focused.
- PIP review, May 2022 found 'performance is being used to continue to support and drive practice and there is an enhanced understanding of statutory timescales'.

- Audit activity and feedback from the Child Protection Chairs has shown the quality of danger statements is improving.
- 60% of DAAT staff are agency workers. However, 50% of the agency workers have been in the service for over 18 months and some for over five years.

### What does this mean for children and families?

- Children are now receiving timely support that better meets their needs.

### What are we doing to further improve?

- Continue our relentless drive to achieve a stable workforce in DAAT.
- Ensure good quality and timeliness of all assessments.
- We continue to focus on ensuring that direct work is consistently available on children's records, that plans are SMART and developed with families and work with families is explicitly linked to plans.
- We continue to identify ways to reduce workload pressures for DAAT teams.
- Recording of what is written to children within CareFirst is being expanded to include assessment documents etc and has enhanced child-focused practice.
- Further reflective learning sessions regarding risk identification to further support and improve practice.

## Children in need of help and protection

### Children subject of a child in need or child protection plan

#### What do we know about the quality and impact of our practice?

- We are focused on **quality and consistent practice**, relationship based social work that empowers families, whilst maintaining performance and compliance.
- **Decision making is prompt by managers** escalating children's circumstances to strategy meetings and section 47 investigations.
- **Social workers take pride in their work and know their children well.** They show commitment and dedication to supporting children and their families to make and sustain positive changes in their lives.
- **Direct work is used to understand the wishes and feelings of children and young people to achieve positive changes** that are in the best interest of children. We use a strengths-based approach to work purposely, openly, and considerately with the whole family network which includes extended family members in our assessments and planning. All families are encouraged and supported to take the lead in making a safe plan for their child when concerns are identified.
- **The vast majority of children and families have timely visits** providing meaningful contact with a social worker, a plan that is regularly discussed and updated so actions are meaningful, and progress is made.
- **Capturing the voice of the child within visits** has improved and our recording is child focused.
- **Child in Need plans and visits are monitored weekly** to ensure timescales are met and plans progress. Managers have oversight to ensure that plans do not drift, that families are only subject to plans as required and that families step down to CFSS at the appropriate stage.
- **Advanced Practitioners support individual social workers** and deliver SoS support to the teams as a group. This has had a positive impact on plans and danger statements and there is noticeable improvement, however it is not yet consistent across all the teams which is the outcome we are striving for.
- As part of our Leadership Development Programme action learning, our **SoS AP led an initiative with the Corby Safeguarding teams during Q4 21/22, focused on implementing safety plans devised with families and children**, with the aim of reducing subsequent re-referrals. Through this,

other areas of development were also achieved, such as increased use and confidence in SofS mapping. Learning from this project has been implemented across other parts of the service.

- The Child Protection Chairs duty system **enables social workers to discuss and reflect on need** for ICPC, this is valued by social workers.
- Having Child Protection Chairs allocated to a 'linked' DAAT or safeguarding team and sharing good practice **has significantly improved relationships and enhanced the common and shared goals we all hold towards those we work with, and for.** Case escalations are dealt with in a more collaborative way which has positive impact for the child and family and supports our learning.
- Reviews of CP cases at 9 and 15 months (then quarterly) by Service Managers ensure **there is a clear trajectory for the case** to either step down from a child protection plan or to progress into PLO.
- Additional consideration by Service Managers for appropriateness of repeat CP plans in chronic neglect cases **is enabling improved decision making.**
- **Action for Children provide valuable additional support** to families known to safeguarding services through short or medium-term interventions and multi systemic therapy which has a positive impact for children and families, enabling families to stay together. Additional value is brought through partnership with Aldi to distribute surplus and essential food and clothing to families in need.
- When the councils receive new elective home education requests, a check is made if the child has a CIN or CP plan, or are known on other reporting systems (ie domestic abuse or missing persons), discussions with partners are held to review the suitability of the EHE request. For those children who are known to the Children's Trust who want to reintegrate back into school, officers work closely with admissions and with families/social worker to support school placement and successful transitions. **All new EHE requests are offered a home visit from an Inclusion officer who will also seek the voice of the child.**
- **Council CME Tracking Officers keep in direct contact with the child's social worker** until it is known where the child is living and confirmed as attending the school allocated. MASH are also informed of a new address and new school if the case has been open to NCT during the past 12 months (but currently closed).
- **13 of our children known to safeguarding services took part in a camping trip in Summer 2022,** helping to increase self-esteem, kindness, patience, teamwork, self-awareness, and confidence.

*"I would like to thank Brian for the report for today's conference. I like how you write to the girls rather than about them in a very child friendly and simple language. You are explaining clearly the reason and the journey the girls have been through during social care intervention including their views. I am impressed by your child focussed approach. Well done and keep up good work."*

**CP chair regarding a Safeguarding Social Worker**

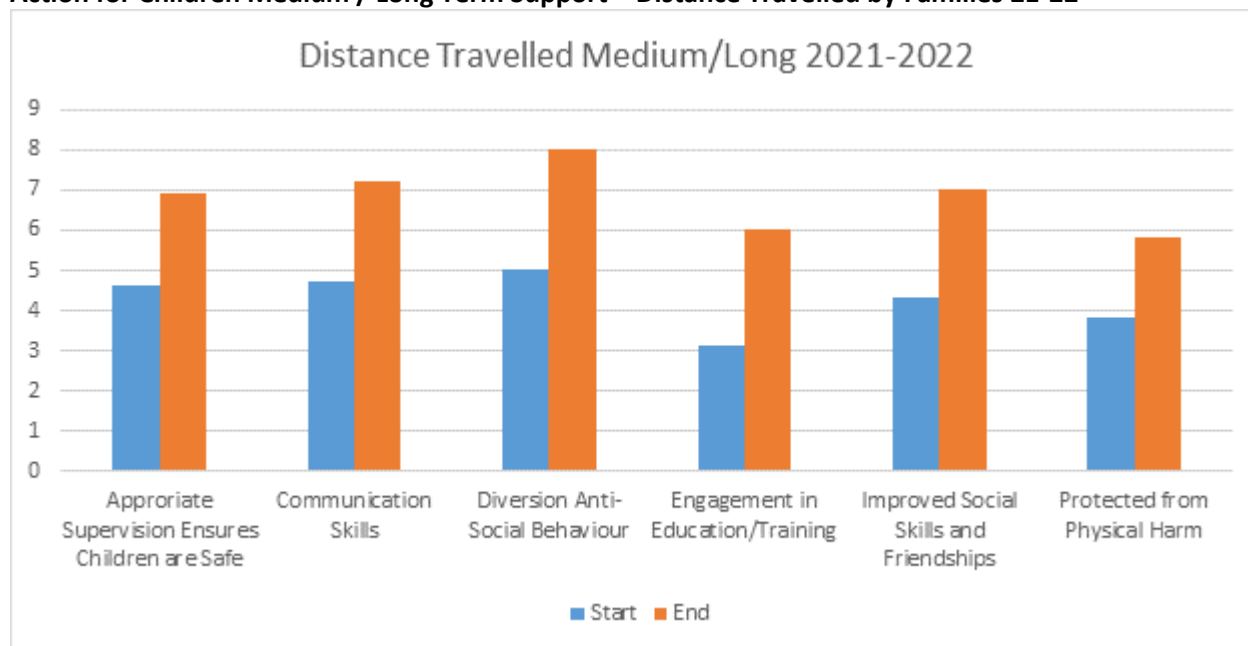
### How do we know?

- CIN visits were 79.7% on time; 81.5% up to date CIN plan (YTD July 2022).
- CP visits were 89.4% on time (YTD July 2022).
- 82.7% Initial Child Protection Conferences held on time (July 22); in line with England average of 83%
- 98.9% CP reviews completed within timescale YTD July 2022, above national and stat neighbour averages.
- The proportion of repeat CP plans is higher than we would like at 32%, above comparators.

Timeframe	September 2020	January 2022	March 2022
CP plans 9+ months	269	190	166
CP plans above that were 15+ months	78 (29%)	50 (26%)	57 (34%)

- The proportion of neglect CP plans open for more than 15 months reduced by more than a half, from 23% to 11% between January 2021 and August 2022.
- Neglect audit (August 2022) found there is more progress to be made in consistent use of Graded Care Profile, up to date chronologies to provide full picture, greater focus on unique characteristics of a child and their family to appropriately address concerns, focus on neglect in supervision. Strengths were evidenced in practitioners' commitment to building positive, effective working relationships with those children and young people they are supporting, involvement of partners, detailed plans which are being regularly reviewed, the actions on plans are mostly SMART.
- The proportion of children subject of a CP plan for 2+ years has been below comparators for some time, however, there have been higher proportions in a couple of months this year, likely due to sibling groups.
- Since last year, there has been an increase in children of longer-term child protection plans to progress to PLO from 16% to 40%.
- 35% of the children reviewed subject to long term child protection plans were also subject to PLO or legal proceedings which is a significant increase on the previous year (May 2022).
- CP Conference Practice Week (June/July 2022) findings included:
  - Child Protection Chairs support clear planning with SMART actions so everyone understands their roles and responsibilities; check that parents understand and enable their participation and ensure meetings stay focused on the child and impact for the child.
  - Diversity, culture, and language are considered but it would be even better if we explored how this linked to engagement and progress for our young people.
  - Whilst training for DSLs to advocate for children in conferences has taken place, we are yet to see this result in increased advocacy for children by someone with an existing relationship with them; and wider use of Mind of My Own could also help more young people to participate.
- Reduction in formal escalations by CP Chairs down to 6 in the last quarter compared to 15 in the previous quarter. 89% of all issue raised were resolved within 5 working days.
- The number of complaints about Safeguarding services has reduced.
- 29 families receiving medium/ long term interventions or MST from Action for Children in 21/22 de-escalated from CIN or CP plan; further 8 de-escalated in Q1 22/23, 3 escalated and 21 maintained their status. Two further cases due to be de-escalated within 1 month of intervention closure.
- 96.5% of children supported by MST remained living at home at the end of the intervention
- 12 month follow up of families supported by Action for Children: 84% of children remained in the family home; 75% were no longer under a Social Care plan

## Action for Children Medium / Long Term Support – Distance Travelled by Families 21-22



### What does this mean for children and families?

- Children and families are receiving better quality support that is improving their experiences and outcomes.

### What are we doing to further improve?

- Continuing our relentless drive to achieve a stable workforce to reduce likelihood of families having changes of workers and plans drifting. As well as continuing to recruit NQSWs, our two new Frontline hubs in the Safeguarding Service from Sep 2022 will provide another means of 'growing our own' social workers.
- Continue to encourage better use of chronologies to demonstrate and evidence neglectful parenting. An action plan is also being developed in response to neglect audit (August 2022) findings.
- Continuing to focus on ensuring all visits are purposeful and drive planning for the child.
- Further development work in respect of safety plans and ensuring that the voice of the child strongly influences the plan and what is needed to ensure the child feels safe within the family environment. The plan is agreed with parents and the extended family and is regularly reviewed.
- Continue to improve the quality of plans across the teams, and ensure we evidence within the plans the impact and outcomes for children, the voice of the child is prevalent and informs and influences the plan.
- AP's will continue to work with individual social workers and the teams to consistently incorporate signs of safety.
- To continue to improve and sustain key performance indicators and ensure that children are seen in a timely manner, visits are recorded promptly, and CiN meetings are held in timescale.
- Using feedback from our young inspectors see how we can make venues for our child protection conferences more child friendly.
- Reduce the likelihood of repeat CP Plans by ensuring safety plans are robust and have been tested when stepping cases down.
- We will continue to develop and grow our 'Dynamic Youth' group for children known to safeguarding services, whose input will help us further improve our practice and support.



# Children with Disabilities

## What do we know about the quality and impact of our practice?

- **DCT social workers now have more manageable caseloads of 11-21**; this has led to greater quality in practice for children and families, as they are more able to deliver high quality relationship-based practice and direct work.
- Children who are assessed as requiring a small package of support to meet their needs well with no other support needs identified now have an annual review and updated assessment where the child and family are seen. **This means that families receive an appropriate level of intervention and SW capacity can be focused on children with the highest levels of needs.**
- **Assessments are signed off by managers** to ensure quality and any actions completed as necessary.
- **Performance is generally good** with children being seen regularly and having up to date CiN. All Children in Care have and up to date care plan.
- Whilst there have been challenges with health assessments being completed in timescale, **this has been much more positive for disabled children who are in care** with the figure for Children in Care allocated to the Disabled Children's Teams sitting at 71.4% (DCT 1) and 82.4% (DCT 2).
- **Supervision and management oversight is notable area of improvement** and has been a focus area having previously been identified as an area for improvement in CRPDs. Managers have undertaken the Research in Practice PSDP programme which has enhanced their supervision and management skills in terms of quality supervision which understands and promotes equality diversity and inclusion for families and also our workforce.
- **Writing to the child has shifted the focus and lens through which we view children and families** and how we work in partnership with children and families. Children and young people and their lived experiences are at the centre of the work completed. Their records now reflect this more. There is evidence that young people are increasingly attending their meetings, how and where appropriate, and this ensures that children are at the centre of everything that we do.
- **Social stories are well used within the Disabled Children's Team** with some key practitioners being very skilled in doing this. These will often be used to support young people to understand their plans, what is happening next and changes and transitions.
- **Commissioned short breaks continued to be highly valued by families.** However, we know families could be better supported and less reliant on overnight short breaks through a more comprehensive and appropriate offer of non-residential short breaks.
- **There are a small number of children with disabilities living in unregistered placements** due to sufficiency challenges in residential care / residential schools to meet these children's specific and complex needs.
- Children and young people are referred to Adult Social Care when they are 16 years old, to improve co-working and smooth transitions, with children's social workers retaining case responsibility. Team Managers **track this is being completed within their teams.**
- **Adult Social Care allocate a social worker as soon as possible**, at least by the age of 17 years, and the Care Act assessment will commence, usually jointly with the allocated social worker in DCT.
- **North and West Transitions Managers are now in post in Adults Social Care** in the councils – reviewing 16 and 17 year olds to ensure they are on track for assessment and planning in adults – this will allow issues to be identified more proactively.
- **Monthly meeting between DCT Service Manager and Transitions Managers**, quarterly meetings with DCT and Adult Social Care team managers being established for North and West.
- **Transitions Managers are also members of Multi-Agency Resource and Residential Short Breaks Panels** which provides early notification of young people who may require continued services from Adult Social Care.

## How do we know?

- Children in Care with an up-to-date health assessment stood at 71.4% (DCT 1) and 82.4% (DCT 2) (July 2022).
- 61% of children have an up-to-date assessment (July 2022).
- NCT QA September 2021 found outcomes improving for the majority of children reviewed.
- DCT are currently supporting 86 16- and 17-year-olds (August 2022). Of these, 63 (73%) have been referred to Adult Social Care. Of those not yet referred, 3 are 17 years old and high priority; and 18 are 16-year-olds (of whom 8 turned 16 in the last 3 months). 1 of these children is a Child in Care who turned 16 in the last 3 months and a referral is in progress. 4 of the children who have not yet been referred receive resource only support from DCT so have fewer complex needs.
- 70.8% of families receiving support from the sleep service said there had been changes in the quality of family life.
- Complaints have significantly reduced within DCT.
- Compliments for DCT often highlight the 'above and beyond' work that many social workers do and also the strength and importance of relationships with parents/carers and children and young people and the difference this makes.
- Ofsted monitoring visit (November 2021) found '*when disabled children in care reach 16, they benefit from pathway plans that identify their strengths and needs for the future*'; and '*some disabled children experience delay in transition to adults services*'

## What does this mean for children and families?

- Children with disabilities and their families are receiving better quality social work support that is improving their experiences and outcomes.

## What are we doing to improve?

- Continuing with our focus on ensuring children have an up to date, quality assessment.
- Increase the recording of management oversight and supervision.
- Following decision of NNC and WNC to have their own transition managers in Adults Social Care services, we will develop transition strategies with each council.
- Transitions guide for parents in development, to be co-produced with Northamptonshire Parent Forum Group.
- Implement redesign of our short breaks and respite services, which has been developed in conjunction with parents and practitioners.
- Continue to work with providers and explore all options to address challenges faced as result of workforce shortages in the personal care sector and placement sufficiency for children with complex needs. This includes supporting unregistered providers to apply for Ofsted registration.
- Expand the membership of our 'Shooting Stars' participation group to include more children and young people supported by DCT. Also, develop a short and long-term plan for this group to shape developments overseen by the SEND Accountability Board and the CYP Transformation Board as well as NCT services and support.

# Children in Care

## What do we know about the quality and impact of our practice?

- **Staffing within the Children in Care service remains predominantly stable** with permanent & agency social workers who report being well supported by their teams and managers.
- **We held our first celebration event since May 2017** for our children and young people in care to receive awards that recognise their achievements, thanks to sponsorship secured by the Chief Exec. The feedback from children and carers was overwhelmingly positive, with areas for improvement relating to administrative and logistical points. 175 children attended along with 177 carers **“Look at our kids just being kids 😊”**
- Summer 2022 also **saw NCT’s first camping trip for 20 of our Children in Care**, helping to increase self-esteem, kindness, patience, teamwork, self-awareness, and confidence.
- **Our Children in Care Council helped the DfE by providing feedback on their report to UNCRC on how the UK is addressing Children’s Rights** and helped create a young person’s version and 3 videos that can be found at [How we are working with the United Nations to protect children’s rights - The Education Hub \(blog.gov.uk\)](https://www.blog.gov.uk/2022/07/28/how-we-are-working-with-the-united-nations-to-protect-childrens-rights/)
- **Strong senior management oversight** on all new admissions into care through either AD agreement or presentation at a weekly gateway panel.
- Legal Gateway Panel and Case Progression Team enable a lean process, **ensuring the right cases are escalated into PLO and legal proceedings**, and their progression and outcomes are closely monitored and reviewed. Our work during the PLO process means we are better prepared going into court, resulting in fewer independent assessments being completed during proceedings, and children achieving permanence in a timelier way.
- To ensure the correct level of support prior to birth, **we are now encouraging consideration for unborn children to become subject to the PLO processes earlier in the pregnancy** where appropriate, to allow for purposeful partnership with parents to effect change and support earlier permanence.
- By working with families within pre-proceedings, **around half of the children who met threshold have stepped down from pre-proceedings without going to court.**
- **There has been a rise in the number of children subject to interim care orders** over the last 12 months (from 258 to 280). This included a number of large sibling groups. A Public Law Court subgroup review of children subject to care proceedings for an extended period of time found the unavailability of judicial capacity to timetable final hearings and the instruction of experts were the main cause for the longest delay. Other factors included complexities where there are international issues, such as assessing family members who live abroad.
- The Director of Children’s Social Care is the chair of the Local Family Justice board and has monthly meetings with the Designated Family Judge, alongside meetings with the Assistant Director of CAFCASS. This **provides an opportunity for discussion around strategic opportunities, learning, any issue of concern or challenges, and ensures open and positive communication and continued progress is made.**
- Since its inception in June 2021, **CFSS’ Family Solutions team has improved children’s lives** by working in partnership with families and other agencies to strengthen family resilience and achieve sustainable change. This has enabled children to return to their family after a period in care, provided it is safe and, in the child /young person’s best interests to do so.
- Since the launch in January 2021, the Separated Children’s Team has been working under the auspices of Operation Innerste. This means that **children and young people are no longer detained by the police which has helped to eliminate any unnecessary trauma.** This has provided a much slicker process for admitting the young person into s20 care with the bonus of resource savings which instead can be invested in the young person.

- **We have introduced clear reunification assessment tools** (adopting NSPCC framework) to support the safe return home for children, trained champions and the Family Time Service now positively supports reunification plans.
- **We have strengthened the SGO pathway** through improved joint working, information and training for prospective SGO carers and training for staff to enable families to make informed decisions.
- Strong performance management has **maintained regular visits to our children** with those in more fragile care arrangements benefiting from more regular visits and contact.
- In January 2022, we introduced a more **child friendly format for 'My Care Plan'** combined with social work assessment, designed to be completed with children. It outlines the overarching aims and steps needed to achieve them. This has been received positively by children as easier to use.
- **IRO service is now tangibly (seen in young people's records) overseeing and driving plans with increased focus on timely responsive actions** that make tangible improvement to children's lives. The introduction of 'Link' IROs has led to improved relationships, communication, and sharing of good practice between IRO and Children in Care services. Targeted escalations in June 2022 as a result of feedback from children about co-producing care plans have had a positive impact, with an increase in plans being completed with children.
- **Children's reviews are usually only held outside of timescales if it is deemed to be in the best interest** of the child or young person, and action is taken if there are any administrative delays.
- The IV service facilitates special and long-lasting friendships for young people and their IV's. Many of our matches **last into the young person's adulthood as a consistent & trusted friend**, outside of professional roles / responsibilities.
- Targeted signs of safety training for Corporate Parenting Service on priority areas to have **greater impact for Children in Care**.
- **Greater support and modelling from corporate parenting management** and experienced staff to improve depth and analysis within social work assessments.
- Introduction of corporate parenting service permanency tracking arrangements providing **both oversight and drive to ensure timely planning for children**.
- Learning from our time in lockdown, and following feedback from children and young people, the IROs use a variety of methods to conduct children's reviews, (in person, virtual or hybrid), **this is supporting greater attendance of children at their reviews**.
- Children and young people have fed back to IRO's that they find having the IRO's one-page profile prior to their first review as it helps to make it feel more informal. The timeliness of first reviews has improved with the timeliness of subsequent reviews remaining stable and positive – **this means the vast majority of our children have their plans reviewed in a timely manner**, and the vast majority participate in their reviews.

*"Thank you for just being there for whenever I need you and even when I don't need you."*

**A child in care about their social worker**

*"The actions you have taken have helped us to stay focused and gave us hope, as all we asked for was a 2nd chance and support, we are proud of the journey we have taken and all the obstacles we had to overcome, and we are so, so grateful for everyone who has supported our children. Be proud of yourself because what u do brings family's like ours a bit closer and that's priceless"*

**Feedback from a parent about an IRO**

*"I would like to say thank you to A, for keeping me up to date with my children and for treating me with respect and like a mother." A parent regarding their child's social worker*

- The Virtual School (VS) places works with partners to **optimise the quality of children’s personal education plans** (PEPs). In the best PEPs, there is a golden thread running through, detailing the aspirations and needs of the child, progress made, and the ongoing support professionals are putting in place to help the child realise their ambitions
- The VS helps **children to achieve positive educational outcomes** through regular monitoring of attendance with schools. Regular liaison with Designated Teachers for early identification of attendance issues, ensuring timely Personal Education Plan (PEP) meetings take place, discussing gaps in learning and ensuring SMART targets are in place to address them, including appropriate use of PP+ and recovery funding. **Children’s skills** are increased through a range of VS activities including sports, arts, and outdoor education, with 139 children attending sessions in 2021/22 academic year
- VS Officers’ work is evidence-led, based on analyses of patterns in the cohort’s PEPs to address issues and improve outcomes; eg quality of PEPs
- The VS has a **robust quality assurance and audit process** in place for PEPs and regular training for officers, school staff, parents/ carers which participants say provides a stronger understanding of how to develop and implement strategies for supporting currently and previously looked-after children within the school environment. VS officers are using an increased understanding of the impact of trauma and attachment issues on education achieved through training to support colleagues. Training on exclusions appeals has also enabled VS officers to better advocate for children in care
- WNC/NNC Education colleagues **not commission any unregistered alternative provision** for Children in Care.
- For those Children in Care who are not on a school roll, i.e. children missing education (CME), **the VS has an increased focus on their support** including more frequent PEPs (6 times a year), a single point of contact within the service, increased management oversight, and multi-agency discussions. The VS works with partners to ensure children have access to full time DfE registered school places.
- For those young people in care who are NEET, the VS **hold monthly multi-agency meetings, have a single point of contact, and have regular contact with Prospects** (NCT commissioned careers advice and guidance service).
- **VS’s support ensures that children transitioning to adoptive parents are out of education for the shortest time possible** and fosters relationships between adoptive parents and their children’s school.
- Our partnership with Homes to Inspire (H2I) and Prospects (both part of Shaw Trust) is enabling **more flexible use of resources to improve outcomes for Children in Care**. Prospects Advisers and H2I Education Officer review the plans of young people living in our block contract homes monthly, and co-ordinate support from both organisations, including careers guidance from Yr 9 - 11.

## Health

- The vast majority of our Children in Care have a completed **SDQ, with a higher proportion than nationally scoring within the ‘normal’ range**. Our focus is on ensuring they are used effectively within care planning for Children in Care by all agencies. A trial of a new pathway has seen some evidence of SDQs being considered within review health assessments and supervision.
- **A higher proportion of Children in Care have an up-to-date dental assessment so far in 22/23**, in comparison with the previous two years when the pandemic impacted. However, it remains lower than we would like.

- We are worried about the low proportion of our Children in Care who have had an initial health assessment on time, and although there has been some improvement in timeliness of review health assessments, this remains lower than we would like. **We have reviewed and improved our internal processes** to ensure timely referrals are made and understand the issue relates to capacity within health and availability of appointments. We have escalated through NSCP and Social Care Improvement Board.

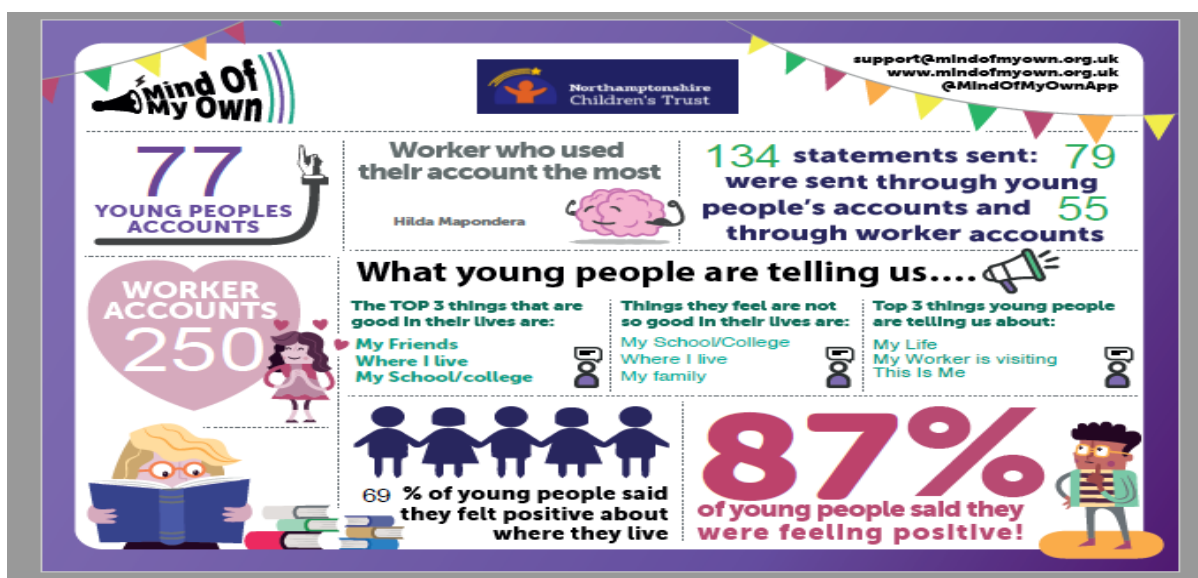
## Placements

- **While the majority of our children are living in stable homes** that are meeting their needs and improving their outcomes, we are impacted by the national market which is not meeting the needs of children.
- **The use of emergency unregistered and/or unregulated provision is closely monitored** to ensure they are only used when absolutely necessary. The length of such arrangement is kept to a minimum and are managed through regular review and risk management arrangements. During our Children in Care monitoring visit, it was seen that the rationale for the use of these placements was not clearly explained in the children's records. Now, senior management authorisation is captured on all records. Children in such arrangements are considered at multi-disciplinary meetings where all relevant agencies, the young people and their family are brought together regularly to ensure oversight and dynamic risk management arrangements are in place. All is being done to secure a suitable home for the young person and contingency plans are considered.
- Recent review of the procedures and pathway to the assessment of connected persons which has enabled a more fluid process. **This has resulted in improved communication between the connected persons fostering service and the social work teams.**
- **Our Quality & Outcomes Team provide effective quality assurance of unregulated and unregistered provision** and of placements where concerns have been raised (including seeking the voice of the child). They also support and encourage unregistered providers to register with Ofsted.
- **We are addressing the local impact of a national market** which is not meeting the needs of our children, and a national shortage of foster carers, with the following actions to increase access to homes that can meet the needs of our children:
  - Improved the quality of our NCT fostering agency (now judged RI) and continue to drive improvement.
  - Implemented our NCT fostering marketing and recruitment campaign including resilience, mainstream, Family Link, emergency, and short-term carers.
  - Implemented our Public Health funded project to support the mental health of children in NCT foster care which has had a positive impact on placement stability.
  - Re-opened our Fostering and Children's Homes frameworks in Summer 2022 with 11 additional providers joining.
  - Exploring options with IFAs to increase access to emergency carers.
  - Jointly reviewed the statement of purposes of homes on our block contract so they are better able to meet the needs of our children.
  - Residential homes block contract extended to include an additional out of county children's home – places will start being available from September 2022.
  - Contract for 2x new emergency Children's Homes – planning applications approved, due to be operational December 2022.
  - Work with WNC and NNC on capital funding proposals for additional inhouse residential care provision.
  - Submitted a partnership bid with Homes to Inspire to the 2022 DfE Capital funding, proposing refurbishment of a previous adult group care home to provide a home for children with mental health / behavioural needs.
  - Building stronger relationships with external providers.

- External review of placements, commissioning, and brokerage completed, and improvement actions being taken.
- Improving support to sustain placements through multi-disciplinary teams, placement stability meetings, commissioning action for children to pilot additional support to prevent external placement breakdown (expected to be operational by November 2022); recruitment of 2x FSWs to support stability of NCT foster placements.

## How do we know?

- Significant improvement from 2019 inspection to Monitoring Visit in February 2021 when “*too many*” had become “*a few*” children still come into care too late or in an emergency and finding suitable placements for those children remains a challenge. However, the Monitoring Visit in July 2021 raised concerns that “*some*” cases have been subject to drift and delay as a result of the lack of focus on what positive change would look like.
- The number of children subject to pre proceedings has increased from an average of 30 families per month a year ago to an average of 40 families, an increase of 25% over the course of the year (August 2022).
- The improvements in the length of time families are within PLO have been maintained in the last year and have improved further from an average of 19 weeks in February 2022 to 16 weeks in June 2022, with the aim to still have most pre-proceedings within 12 weeks.
- Of those families where the PLO process has ended in 2022, 54% have stepped down.
- The length of care proceedings was 58.9 weeks in October 2020 (a significant rise likely due to the pandemic and unavailability of court time and experts). In January 2021, this reduced to 38.6 weeks and the current average has been consistent at 35 weeks (August 2022).
- Escalations from the court have reduced and there has been a noticeable improvement in the quality of assessments completed in pre-birth, PLO pre-proceedings and in care proceedings.
- 48% (12 children) of children the Family Solutions team have worked who were in a care placement have been able to safely return home (July 2022).
- 74 Children in Care returned home January – June 2022 compared with 48 between November 2019 – April 2020.
- Over the past 6 months, 9% of children leaving care have been adopted, comparable to the national average.
- 83.4% of children have an up-to-date care plan (YTD July 2022).
- During June 2022, IRO escalations raised regarding young people having their care plan completed with them led to an increase of co-produced plans to 65%.
- 86.9% of children had their first review on time (YTD July 2022), an improvement from 78.9% in 21/22.
- 38% increase in the number children attending their reviews in the year 21/22 in comparison to the previous year and a 27% decrease in numbers of young people who did not attend and chose not to convey their views in their review process.
- 92% of children aged 4 and above participated in their reviews, either by attending their review and / or providing views in consultation forms or through IRO and / or social worker.
- 77 young people have Mind of My Own accounts with 134 statements from young people having been received to inform visits and discussions (YTD July 2022).



## Education

### North Northants:

- Statutory school age PEPs compliance: 90% in 2019-2020, 97% in 2020-2021 and 97% in 2021-2022
- Statutory school age PEPs quality assured as good: 56% in 2019-2020, 64% in 2020-2021 and 79% in 2021-2022
- Early Years PEPs compliance: 82% in 2019-2020, 91% in 2020-2021 and 93% in 2021-2022.
- Early Years PEPs quality assured as good: 77% in 2019-2020, 80% in 2020-2021; 80% 2021-22
- Post 16 PEPs compliance and quality has been more variable over the last 3 years:
  - Post 16 PEPs compliance: 83% in 2019-20, 97% in 2020-21 and 76% in 2021-22
  - Post 16 PEPs quality assured as good: 72% in 2019-20, 63% in 2020-21 and 68% in 2021-22

### West Northants:

- Statutory school age PEPs compliance: 90% in 2019-2020, 97% in 2020-2021 and 98% in 2021-2022.
- Statutory school age PEPs quality assured as good: 56% in 2019-2020, 64% in 2020-2021 and 79% in 2021-2022
- Post 16 PEPs compliance and quality has been more variable over the last 3 years:
  - Post 16 PEPs compliance: 83% in 2019-20, 94% in 2020-21 and 82% in 2021-22
  - Post 16 PEPs quality assured as good: 72% in 2019-20, 82% in 2020-21 and 52% in 2021-22.
- In 2018-2019, 25.9% of OC2 Northamptonshire Children in Care achieved a 9-4 pass in English and Maths, compared to 17.8% nationally. For 2019-2020 this rose to 29.2%, compared to 24.4% nationally (figures for 2022 not yet available)
- The percentage of post 16 Children in Care in Education, Employment or Training (EET) 3-year trend of improvement: 74% in 2020, 81% in 2021 and 84% in 2022.

### Feedback from VS holiday activities:

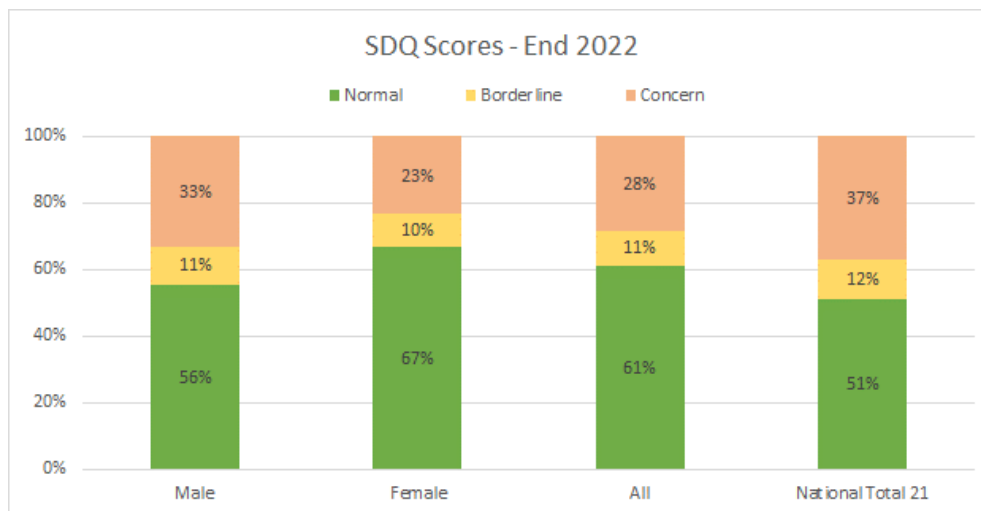
*"The best, we love them and want more, especially stable mates and adventure ways. Leaders lots of fun. Loads new challenges and activities this year I was living my best life thank you." (child in care)*

*"Great opportunity for the kids to get out and do some structured activities. Our young person did struggle when first attending these sessions but has now grown in confidence and welcomes the opportunity to get out and mix with others. As carers we really are grateful to be able to have some things in the diary especially over the 6-week holiday to help keep the kids busy." (carer)*



## Health

- 91% of Children in Care have a completed SDQ (June 2022).

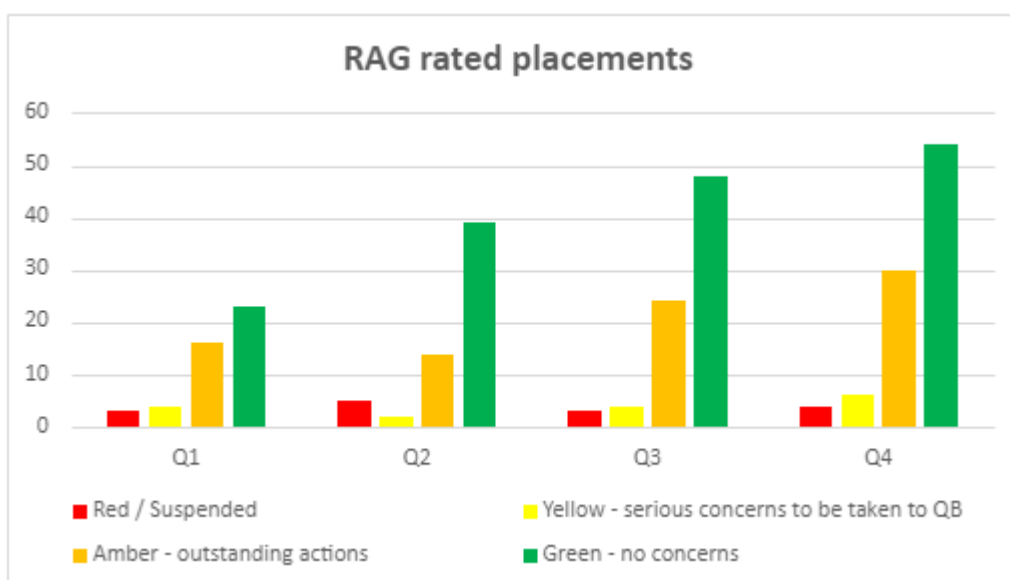


- 62.7% of children have an up-to-date dental assessment, above national and stat neighbour averages (YTD July 2022).
- 33% of Children in Care have had an Initial health assessment on time (YTD July 2022); and 68.8% have an up-to-date review health assessment, an improvement on previous 2 years but below comparators.
- NHFT's audit of IHAs has found the quality of the assessments is good.

## Placements

- Proportion of Children in Care for 2.5+years in same placement for 2+years/ placed for adoption has increased from 61% in 2019 to 68.3% in 2022; our focus is on reducing the proportion of children who have had 3+ moves in the last 12 months.
- 58 children are living in 'staying put' arrangements (August 22)
- Net gain of 9 NCT fostering households over last 2 years (to August 22) despite challenges of the pandemic and national trends of carers leaving the profession.
- Of 65 children who had received therapeutic support directly/via carer at end June 2022, 6 (9%) had experienced a placement breakdown against a baseline of 30%<.
- An NCT foster carer who completed Therapeutic Parenting with clinical psychologist reported going from 70% chance that the placement would end, to 70% chance it will continue. Another said: *"Before the sessions I didn't think I would continue with fostering and now I will"*.
- To date, we have secured an additional 11 residential care beds for the sole use of NCT by the end of 2022, including in emergency/ urgent situations.
- People Too review of placements, commissioning, and brokerage (February 2022) found: *'In some areas, NCT is managing, and meeting need as effectively as comparators. Despite this, some intractable issues are present that require creative and innovative solutions.'*

*'Leadership, insight, and analysis is allowing NCT to focus on the right things, with many plans in flight to address existing deficits.'*



**Quality and Outcomes team quality assurance of placements that are unregistered and/ or where concerns have been raised 21/22-** Extract from a Quality & Outcomes visit to an unregistered placement:

*'CM when I arrived you said you were happy for me to come in and complete my visit. You said you remembered me from my last visit. You told me that you had been at school today and now you were just doing your washing. You said you had had a good day at school and appeared happy. You said I could come see your room and I was amazed at how good it looked – and very bright. You said you liked your room. You showed me the pictures on the wall and told me the people in the photos were your old carers.*

*You told me you were saving up to buy a gaming PC and laughed at me when I didn't know what this meant. You told me you were going to use it to play fortnight. We talked about how you play on your x-box at the moment and you have 2 hours a day you can play. You said that sometimes you would like more and we talked, with N, about how well you have adhered to this time limit.*

*I heard you laughing and joking with your support worker and N and you were very pleased to show us all your trick for putting on your duvet cover.'*

### What does this mean for children and families?

- Our Children in Care are well supported by workers who care about and understand their needs and the majority achieve good outcomes.

### What are we doing to further improve?

- We are **part of the Local Family Justice Board** and its subgroups which meets regularly and improves joint working between the NCT and the courts. Priorities include more robust work prior to the first hearing, strengthening processes, better pre-proceedings, more robust case preparation, shorter care duration, less hearings, and more effective hearings.
- We are also **part of a DFE regional project** which has developed a toolkit for all practitioners along the lines of the Essex toolkit but with a local focus. This has been rolled out in NCT and is part of our overall improvement work for the PLO process and for use within the pre-birth procedures.
- **Graded Care Profile 2** training for staff will support our response to chronic neglect at earlier stages. By the time children reach threshold for PLO, Graded Care Profiles could be utilised to review the impact of the support and offer the evidence for the action that needs to be taken.
- We are looking at how to **further strengthen quality of assessments** i.e., training of social workers in specialist models of assessment such as Parent Assess.

- **Improvement actions are in place** to ensure 'My Care Plans' are consistently completed with children that clearly reflect their current and future needs with clear contingency plans, are shared with children in good time before their review, and they are given the choice of how their review is held.
- **We will continue to encourage children's participation in reviews** and the use of the Mind of My Own App to record and represent their wishes and views at reviews.
- **IROs will ensure the Care Plan holistically explores and identifies each child and young person's needs**, particularly focusing on children and young people's cultural and diversity needs.
- IRO and Children in Care Service Managers will continue to **share good practice and identify areas of concern** so we can develop joint plans to address these.
- **Support and encourage IRO's to fully evidence** the direct and indirect contact they have with children and young people and their families.
- **Reduce the number of children having 3+ moves in 12 months** through increased scrutiny on placement planning and stability arrangements, including additional family support for children in NCT foster care and external placements.
- **Developing trauma informed practice** in our Children in Care teams.

## Education

For the 2022/23 academic year The VS is focusing on:

- **Improving the compliance and quality of post 16 PEPs** through allocated resource of two Education Officers and an experienced Team Manager
- Addressing drift in the assessment of SEND for some children in care and the securing of special school places for children in care with an Education and Health Care Plan through **new escalation procedures**
- **Enhancing our intervention offer** for education settings to ensure they are best placed to improve the outcomes of children with a social worker.
- Developing **engagement and participation** with Children in Care.
- Supporting schools in responding to the **new exclusions guidance**: in particular, advice on what additional assessment and support needs to be put in place.
- Supporting other services in **discharging their statutory duties towards children in care** with SEND.

We will also:

- **Monitor the impact of and learning from the Prospects/ H2I** joint working to improve EET outcomes for children.
- Exploration of how care experienced young people with an EHCP may be able to **access Supported Internships available via Prospects**.

## Health

- **Training and support for practitioners** to improve understanding of SDQ scores and use in care planning.
- From September 2022, dip sample children's records from different agencies to assess how comprehensively SDQ's are used (and triangulated) to **inform practice and care arrangements for young people**. Information is also utilised to better understand and support Children in Care's emotional and mental health needs.
- **Continue to work with health partners** to address and highlight the impact of delays to children's health assessments and reviews.

- **Shaw Trust are funding a new Mental Health and Well-Being Worker** (to be recruited) to provide additional support to young people at H2I homes, with the intention to improve placement stability and achievement for young people.
- **Barnardo's have been commissioned by the ICB to deliver a key worker service** for children / young people aged 0 to 25 with learning disabilities/ autism with complex needs– this includes children who are in care and those who aren't. Key workers will navigate to ensure the appropriate level of support is accessible when needed, manage crisis, and support community living. En-fold (local organisation led by people with autism) will be providing peer support and step-down support. This is expected to go live in Q4 21/22.

## Placements

- Our Sufficiency Strategy is being refreshed and we continue progressing the following actions to address the shortage of suitable placements to meet children's needs:
  - Fully implement and monitor the impact of process changes in commissioning and brokerage.
  - Deliver NCT's fostering recruitment and marketing campaign to increase the net number of NCT carers that can support the differing needs of our children.
  - Further PH funding has been secured to provide therapy to <15 additional NCT foster children/ families to sustain placements; and Clinical Psychologist direct work with 10 families and 60 Social Care staff to upskill and embed trauma-informed practice. We are working with ICB to identify how this can be mainstreamed.
  - Work with external IFAs to increase access to emergency foster carers.
  - Continue to build and improve relationships with external providers.
  - Open our 2 new emergency homes by the end of 2022.
  - Work with councils to finalise capital investment in additional NCT Children's Homes.
  - Progress additional externally delivered Children's Home if successful in DfE capital bid.
  - Monitor impact of initiatives to stabilise placements.

## Care Leavers

### What do we know about the quality and impact of our practice?

- Russell House, our dedicated building for care leavers to drop in and attend groups provides a positive, warm, safe, and supportive space that is valued by young people and practitioners.
- Post pandemic, we have re-established our drop-in day where agencies such as DWP, Housing, Health, Education, Prospects, and CIRV are available to meet with our young people. We are also setting up a similar drop-in centre in the North.
- We were planning to celebrate our care leavers at a festival style event in September, for up to 100 of our young people; most of the performances / acts are by the young people. Unfortunately, this had to be postponed due to the Queen passing away and will be re-arranged.
- 19 of our care leavers took part in a camping trip in Summer 2022, helping to increase self-esteem, kindness, patience, teamwork, self-awareness, and confidence.
- Care Experienced Apprentices within the Leaving Care Team are supportive and creative. They also provide ideas of how to engage our young people so that we have a wider voice to help us shape the service delivery. Both are due to gain their qualifications in November, and one has already secured a permanent role in NCT (finance team).
- Positive relationships between the Separated Children's Team workers and PAs enable consistency of service for young people, particularly when they have been at point of crisis and when transitioning to leaving care services.

- Improved transitions for children into the leaving care service because of joint service events and joint supervisions.
- Since our November 2021 Monitoring Visit, young people have contributed to a survey about the Care Leavers offer and a reviewed offer has been created which is currently being prepared for publication. There will also be a version for young people.
- Financial entitlement changes have been agreed and the new policy has been rolled out within the service. This new financial policy provides a comprehensive offer to young people and guidance to staff and young people of sources of financial and other support.
- The stability of Leaving Care staff means many young people have positive enduring relationships with their personal advisors. Although at times unavoidable, we seek to limit the changes experienced by a young person. Changes in allocation arrangements has meant the 'duty' system is now able to provide a more responsive and person-centred service.
- We have continued to make further improvements in quality of pathway plans. All are reviewed by managers with clear oversight and direction given, which is then captured on the young person's record
- Young people at risk are now managed through the adult risk management arrangements with regular multi-agency team meetings to oversee and manage the risk, chaired by experienced and suitably qualified staff with important key other agencies (police, housing, adult services) routinely in attendance.
- The newly created accommodation and transitions panel allows for all agencies to refer and review young people and has been seen to have a positive impact in building brighter futures for young people.
- While there is pressure on the stock of social housing, care leavers have priority bidding status and practice has now changed to ensure housing applications are made at the earliest opportunity in line with the young person's needs. We have agreed refreshed care leavers housing protocols with WNC and NNC.
- Most young people now receive access to their records within the prescribed timescales and comprehensive chronologies are created for them. Where there is a delay, this is resolved as soon as possible.
- Through a PH funded project, 73% of Leaving Care case-working staff have fully completed Emotion Coaching training; there are 3 EC Champions and feedback shows staff are now working in this informed way: *"I found understanding how the brain develops and at what stages and how that affects behaviour extremely useful."*
- Mental Health Advanced Practitioner (MHAP) role has supported 50 young people intensively and another 50 through other approaches.
- 7/11 Tier 3 care leavers that our MHAP had supported in Q3 and Q4 of 21/22 had been helped so they **had not needed** to access NHS emergency/crisis pathways.

*"you're my go to person, you have saved me from myself on so many occasions, without a doubt you're always there for me and you understand me more than anyone. you mean so so so much to me and i want you to know that. i hit the PA jackpot with you!! you're amazing at your job and never ever let any of your new cases or the ones you still have tell you otherwise. i wouldn't be half the woman i am today if it wasn't for you j, thank you so much for being you x"*

**Care leaver about their PA**

## Suitable accommodation

- Most of our care leavers are living in suitable accommodation.
- Regular meetings with housing colleagues from WNC and NNC have been effective in moving young people into accommodation where they may previously have been homeless.
- Currently (August 2022) 13 young people have been identified as no permanency address or street homeless. All are carefully monitored with services and plans in place to seek to move them to suitable accommodation if possible:
  - 10 are staying with friends or family.
  - 1 is street homeless and has been presented to the Accommodation & Transitions Panel.
  - 2 are in temporary accommodation.
- Supported accommodation, from Homes to Inspire Belinda Ferrison House, 'Training Flats' continues to support up to 21 care leavers at any one time to achieve good outcomes.
- We have secured more of this kind of supported accommodation package by commissioning YMCA, with a new property for up to 9 care leavers with additional needs due to open in Summer 2023.
- We are working with council colleagues as finding their own tenancy continues to take longer than expected for young people, and there is a back log for the housing teams following the pandemic.
- The newly created Accommodation and Transitions panel allows for all agencies to refer and review young people and has been seen to have a positive impact in building brighter futures for young people.
- Prospects also provide valuable input for young person's education or employment plans.

## How do we know?

- QA activity (September 2021) found the majority of Pathway Plans reviewed have a clear exploration of the young person's needs and how they like to be supported, with the voice of the young person present in the majority even when young people are non-verbal.
- Ofsted monitoring visit (November 2021 found) *'the quality and timeliness of written pathway plans have improved since the 2019 inspection'.. 'regularly updated and written collaboratively with care leavers'.. though for 'some care leavers the plan does not address some important aspects of their lives'.*
- Most CRPDs undertaken with the service are seen to be good or better.
- 82.4% of young people have an up-to-date pathway plan (YTD July 2022) this includes 87.4.% of 18 – 21-year-olds.
- 81.4% of 18–21-year-old care leavers have been in contact with the service in the last 8 weeks (August 2022).
- 62.3% in EET (YTD July 2022) above England and stat neighbour averages.
- At the end of June 2022, 50 young adults had been intensively supported (Tiers 2-3) with their mental health and wellbeing by our MHAP and another 50 through light touch/via PA/complex case panel/open days. These young adults have had marked improvements in their range of wellbeing issues.
- 7/11 Tier 3 care leavers our MHAP had supported in Q3 and Q4 of 21/22 had been helped so they **had not needed** to access NHS emergency/crisis pathways.
- 94.7% of care leavers in suitable accommodation (YTD July 2022) which is above England and stat neighbour average.
- Ofsted monitoring visit (November 2021) found *'management oversight of care leavers who have become homeless has improved since 2019, resulting in many of their housing situations being resolved, although some inconsistencies remain'.*
- Feedback from adult's service attendees of the Accommodation and Transitions panel is that it is alerting them much earlier to young people with additional needs and also increasing awareness of the issues facing many care leavers. Alongside the need to develop priority pathways to ensure they can access the help that is needed.

- At the end of Q4, only 2 of the 19 care leavers supported at Belinda Ferrison House 'Training Flats' were NEET and there were zero notifiable incidents (no CSE, damage, assaults to staff, police involvement, complaints, episodes of bullying or hospital admissions).

*"My time at BFH was largely positive and I received lots of support from all of the staff there especially my support worker J. From the small things such as help with shopping to the much bigger things such as support with my mental health and self-harming issues.*

*The fact that there is a member of staff 24/7 is also a big positive as it allows for support even in the early hours of the morning, this came as a big help to me when I had a bad incident of self-harm.*

*Being able to meet other young people living at BFH was also a good experience as it allowed me to mingle with others and get out to exercise and participate in some football which helped me. Workshops and activities such as cooking with the staff here was also lots of fun.*

*Overall, my time at BFH provided me with lots of help and support with learning how to become independent. The staff were all very friendly and welcoming and I was glad to meet everyone there."*

#### **Initial findings from Practice Week (August/ September 2022) included:**

- Leaving Care workers know their young people well, are committed to improving their lives, have good communication skills, offer a good mix of support and challenge, have a focus on outcomes, and are incredibly adept at identifying and engaging the best support services.
- The service is working pro-actively to engage with our harder to reach young people – our Care Experienced Apprentices have supported with new ideas here.
- The Voice group is highly valued by female young people; it provides safe space to have helpful, supportive conversations with skilled practitioners from Health and Social Care.
- The service is making real headway building community networks and engaging partner agencies fully in ongoing support of our young people.
- Multi agency working is a real strength – because of this young people do not have to repeat their stories several times.

**My PA is always on my side**

**I like my worker; she speaks to me about my experience, my family and my identity**

#### **Feedback from auditor observing a joint supervision with Children in Care and leaving care**

*'The young person's views, wishes and feelings were clear; their voice had been captured and was shared well by both service areas; K facilitated this discussion well so each service areas views were heard equally. K's clear focus on the young person, and leading in a strengths focussed way was what made this an awesome piece of work'.*

#### **What does this mean for children and families?**

- Our care leavers are well supported by workers who care about and understand their needs; and the majority achieve good outcomes.

## What are we doing to further improve?

- The drive for all young people to have clear, specific plans and personal advisors to be clear on the action they need to take to support our young people to succeed remains relentless. Recent changes to the team structures have given increased oversight on case work and support to staff which we expect to help achieve this.
- We would like to create a hub similar to Russell House in the North and are having discussions regarding potential properties to progress this.
- Work around transitions into adulthood being seen as part of the young person's "journey" and not a single step is important to the leaving care service. A lot of work to inform and support other service areas is underway; this is part of proactive work to formalise earlier preparation for adulthood.
- Continue to engage partner agencies to ensure networks are built in advance and to share responsibility for supporting young people as they become adults; particularly for those young people who were separated children as services that can meet their specific needs are underdeveloped and not readily available across the county.
- Working with council colleagues to identify potential properties for a 'training flats' style supported accommodation in the North.
- Further PH funding has been secured for MHAP direct work with <35 care experienced young adults and <40 frontline staff to upskill and embed trauma-informed practice and events for an additional 100 care experienced young adults; and we are working with ICB to identify how to mainstream this.
- Through the ICS we are planning a stakeholder event for businesses, services, and relevant organisations in Northamptonshire aiming to further improve the offer to our care leavers.
- We have plans to offer more group work for our young people (beyond our well-being, UASC, Football, Girls Sport, and Your Voice groups) so that young people have many and varied opportunities to engage with the service.
- Working jointly with other services, the *Preparing for Adulthood* programme is being progressed to ensure all care leavers are helped to be ready to live successfully independently.

