

Children's Trust Joint Committee

Tuesday 16th January 2024

Report Title	Approval of Northamptonshire Children's Trust Business Plan 2024/25 - 2027/28
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Executive Member	<p>Cllr Fiona Baker – Cabinet Member for Children, Families & Education, WNC</p> <p>Cllr Scott Edwards, Executive Member for Children, Families, Education & Skills, NNC</p>

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

List of Appendices

Appendix A – Northamptonshire Children's Trust Business Plan 2024/25 - 2027/28

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1. To seek approval of the Northamptonshire Children's Trust Business Plan 2024/25 – 2027/28.

2. Executive Summary

- 2.1. The contractual agreements between Northamptonshire Children's Trust (NCT), West Northamptonshire Council (WNC) and North Northamptonshire Council (NNC), including the Service Delivery Contract and the Articles of Association for Northamptonshire Children's Trust Ltd state that NCT must submit a copy of their Business Plan annually. NCT's Board are required to submit a Business Plan by 30th November including details of any amendments agreed by the Board and the Councils to the version initially submitted.
- 2.2. The Northamptonshire Children's Trust Business Plan 2024/25-2027/28 sets out the vision and strategic objectives for the NCT as well as their financial strategy. The approval of the Business Plan is a matter reserved for both Councils as owners of the NCT and should be considered alongside the Contract Sum provided by NCT, as set out in the Service Delivery Contract.
- 2.3. The Business Plan builds on the most recent Inspection of Local Authorities Children's Services (ILACS) inspection in October 2022, which moved both North Northamptonshire (NNC) and West Northamptonshire (WNC) out of the 'inadequate' judgement and graded both WNC and NNC 'requires improvement to be good'.
- 2.4. The Business Plan is set out in three sections and appendices:
 - Introduction
 - Who we are
 - Partnerships and Trust Overview
 - Appendices:
 - Outcomes Framework
 - Northamptonshire Children's Trust Improvement Plan
 - Trust Board Members
 - Trust Executive Management Structure
 - Governance arrangements
 - Contractual Key Performance Indicators
 - Projected Profit and Loss
 - Strategic Risk Register
- 2.5. The foreword of the Business Plan sets out the shared ambition of NCT, NNC and WNC to 'Help children and families stay together, live together, and thrive together where it is safe to do so. Where support is needed we will work with partners to deliver the right help from the right person at the right time'. It also sets shared commitments to support the delivery of the shared ambition.

3. Recommendations

3.1. It is recommended that the Committee:

- a) Note that the Business Plan at Appendix A was completed in line with the Service Delivery Contract and Articles of Association.
- b) Approve the Northamptonshire Children's Trust Business Plan for the 2024/25 – 2027/28.

3.2. Reason for Recommendations

For the Councils to discharge their functions as owners of NCT and meet the requirements set out in the Service Delivery Contract and Articles of Association regarding approval of the Business Plan as a Reserved Matter by the Councils.

3.3. Alternative Options Considered

To do nothing – however this is not recommended. The recommendations set out in this report will allow the Councils to fulfil their responsibilities as set out in the Articles of Association and the Service Delivery Contract.

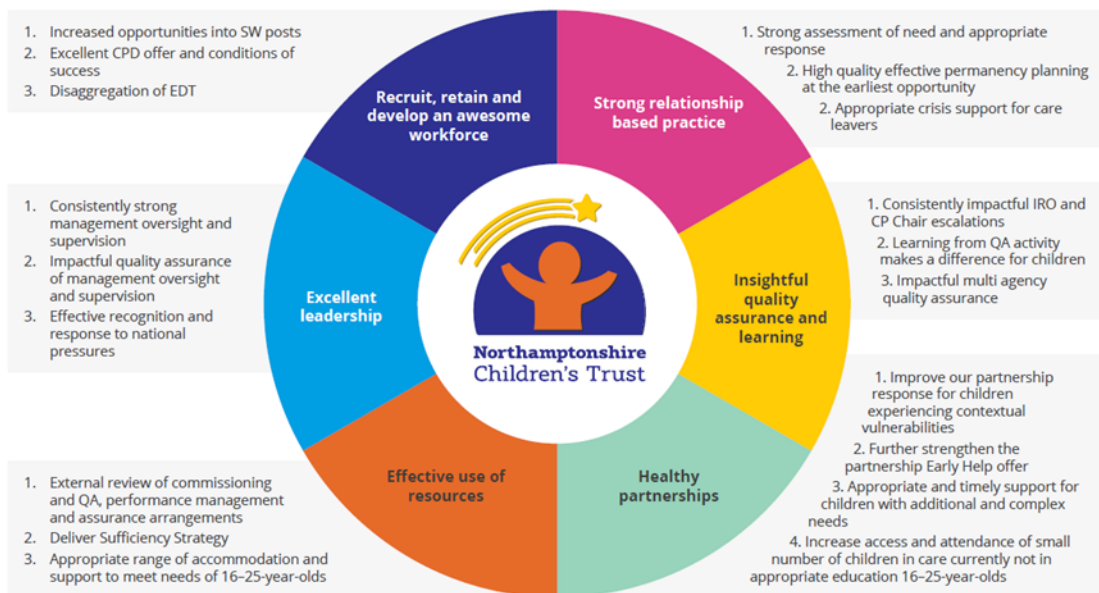
4. Report Background

- 4.1. North Northamptonshire Council (NNC) and West Northamptonshire Council (WNC) are committed to supporting Northamptonshire Children's Trust (NCT) to deliver Children's Social Care and Targeted Early Help services across Northamptonshire. Both take their corporate parenting role very seriously and want to support children, young people and families to thrive in their community.
- 4.2. Children's Services in Northamptonshire were judged 'inadequate' by Ofsted in 2019.
- 4.3. Northamptonshire Children's Trust (NCT) was partially formed on 1st November 2020 and fully launched on 1st April 2021.
- 4.4. From 1st April 2021, after the abolition of Northamptonshire County Council, North Northamptonshire Council (NNC) and West Northamptonshire Council (WNC) became joint owners of Northamptonshire Children's Trust (NCT). Whilst NCT is operationally independent of the Councils, the Councils still retain significant control over NCT and are responsible for making decisions on a number of 'reserved matters' that are set out in the NCT's Articles of Association.
- 4.5. Ofsted conducted inspections of West Northamptonshire and North Northamptonshire Local Authority Children's Services between 3rd-14th October 2022 and were both judged as "Requires improvement to be good".
- 4.6. One of the reserved matters is the annual approval of NCT's Business Plan. The Articles of Association set out that on or before 15th September, NCT should prepare and submit a draft Business Plan to the Councils for the 3 preceding years. On or before 30th November in each year, NCT should submit a Business Plan for approval by the Councils including any amendments agreed by the Board and the Councils.

- 4.7. The Business Plan should include relevant information under the following headings:
- Introduction
 - Strategic Framework
 - Working with Partners
 - Priorities and Objectives
 - Financial Strategy and Plans
 - Profit and Loss Account
 - Cash Flow Statement
 - Revenue Budget and Working Capital Requirements.

5. Issues and Choices

- 5.1. NCT have provided their Business Plan for 2024/25 - 2027/28.
- 5.2. The overall strategic framework and key priorities remain the same as previous Business Plans, which were developed in consultation with both Councils as well as children, young people, and key partners. The strategic framework and key priorities align with updates to the Social Care Improvement Plan following Ofsted Monitoring Visits.
- 5.3. The Business Plan sets out the shared ambition of NCT, NNC and WNC to 'Help children and families stay together, live together, and thrive together where it is safe to do so. Where support is needed we will work with partners to deliver the right help from the right person at the right time'. It also sets shared commitments to support the delivery of the shared ambition.
- 5.4. The Business Plan also states NCT's strategic priorities which are based on NCT's vision, ambitions, quality assurance, Ofsted feedback and discussions with children, young people and families. These are contained in the diagram below.



5.5. The Business Plan details how the Trust will deliver these priorities and what this will mean for children, young people and families.

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

6. Next Steps

6.1 The Business Plan will be taken to North Northamptonshire full Council on the 7th March 2024.

6.2 The Business Plan will be taken to West Northamptonshire full Council on the 21st March 2024.

7. Implications (including financial implications)

7.1. Resources, Financial and Transformation

7.1.1. When the Trust was being developed, detailed work was completed to calculate how costs would be split between North and West Northamptonshire Councils. This was based on the relative populations and demand for children's social care services in each council area. It was agreed that WNC would contribute 56% and NNC would contribute 44% exclusive of any specific grants that are given directly to NNC or WNC to passport to the Trust.

7.1.2. To support the Trust to deliver their business plan the Councils and NCT have agreed a provisional Contract Sum of £180.009m made up of block 1 core funding (£177.429m) and Block 2 transformation individual items (2.580m).

7.1.3. Block 2 transformation individual items funding of £2.580m includes £2.363m which is non-recurring.

7.1.4. WNC and NNC have made provision for a block 3 transformation costs totalling £3.291m. Use of this funding will be subject to business cases being presented to and approved by the Transformation and Efficiency Board.

7.2. Legal and Governance

7.2.1. The relationship between NCT and the Councils is governed by a series of contractual and legal agreements.

7.2.2. The recommendations set out in this report will allow the Councils to fulfil their responsibilities as set out in the Articles of Association.

7.3. Relevant Policies and Plans

7.3.1. NNC has identified 'Brighter, Better Futures' as a key priority in its Corporate Plan recognising that children, young people and their families may need help at different stages in their lives. They will aim to provide help as early as possible and provide the right support, at the right time in the right way to ensure that children are safeguarded and get the best start in life.

7.3.2. WNC has identified 'Improved life chances: Best Start in Life' as a key priority of its Corporate Plan, including a focus on early help services to ensure children have the best start in life and parents have the right support at the right time from the right service, to enable families to thrive.

7.3.3. Both NNC and WNC's identified priorities will be achieved by supporting NCT to provide higher standards of support.

7.3.4. The Business Plan enables NNC and WNC to gain further oversight of the services delivered by NCT and to help the Councils to understand how better support for children, young people and families can be delivered.

7.4. Risk

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

7.5. Consultation

7.5.1. This Business Plan was considered by the Children's Trust Operational Group and Children's Trust Strategic Group in November 2023. These governance

groups are the key contractual review meetings between the NNC, WNC and NCT.

7.6. Consideration by Executive Advisory Panel (NNC)

7.6.1. This report has not been considered by NNC's Executive Advisory Panel.

7.7. Consideration by Executive Leadership Team (WNC)

7.7.1. This report has been considered by SLT

7.8. Consideration by Scrutiny

7.8.1. This report has not been considered by the overview and scrutiny committees of either NNC or WNC.

7.9. Equality Implications

7.9.1. There are no specific equality implications arising from this report.

7.10. Climate and Environment Impact

7.1.1 There is no specific climate impact arising from this report, however as NNC and WNC committed to considering impact on the environment which is managed via the individual strategic lead partnership organisation via organisational policy and commitments.

7.1.2 NNC, WNC and NCT are aware there are emissions associated with publishing web content and will seek to minimise the impact where possible.

7.11. Community Impact

7.11.1. There is no specific community impact arising from this report.

7.12. Crime and Disorder Impact

7.12.1. There is no specific crime and disorder impact arising from this report.

8. Background Papers

8.1. None