

Children's Social Care Annual Self Evaluation Key Headlines

October 2020 – November 2021



**Northamptonshire
Children's Trust**



**North
Northamptonshire
Council**



**West
Northamptonshire
Council**



North Northamptonshire Council

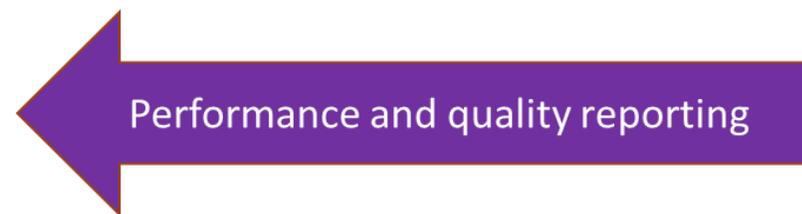


West Northamptonshire Council

- Lead Members
- Corporate Parenting Board
- Council Chief Execs
- Statutory Director of Children's Services (DCS)
- Corporate Parenting

Operational responsibility for Education and SEND.

The commissioning of Northamptonshire Children's Trust



Northamptonshire Children's Trust

Not for profit Teckal Company owned by West and North Northamptonshire Councils

- Trust Board
- Trust Chief Executive
- Trust Senior Leadership Team
- Awesome workforce

Operational responsibility for the delivery of Children's Social Care, Early help and Youth Offending Service on behalf of NNC and WNC

Our commitment to children and young people

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

hurt, abuse, pain. I feel alone.

They took me away.

Scared, worried, nervous.

I don't want to do this on my own.

It's hard to concentrate and feeling like
I fit in.

I always feel different. I never settle in
My Education fell behind.

I just existed. Although they were kind
Day by Day hour by hour

I missed my mum and my dad and
the fun we had. Although the abuse
made me sad.

They say I can't see them. I know why.

But what they don't know. Is that it
hurts like mad. My tears are on my
pillow even though they were bad.

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



**Northamptonshire
Children's Trust**



Strategic Framework

Vision

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

Our Commitment

(co-produced with children and young people)

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

Outcomes Framework



Live safe,
be safe



Fulfil
potential



Develop
resilience



Enjoy good
health and
wellbeing

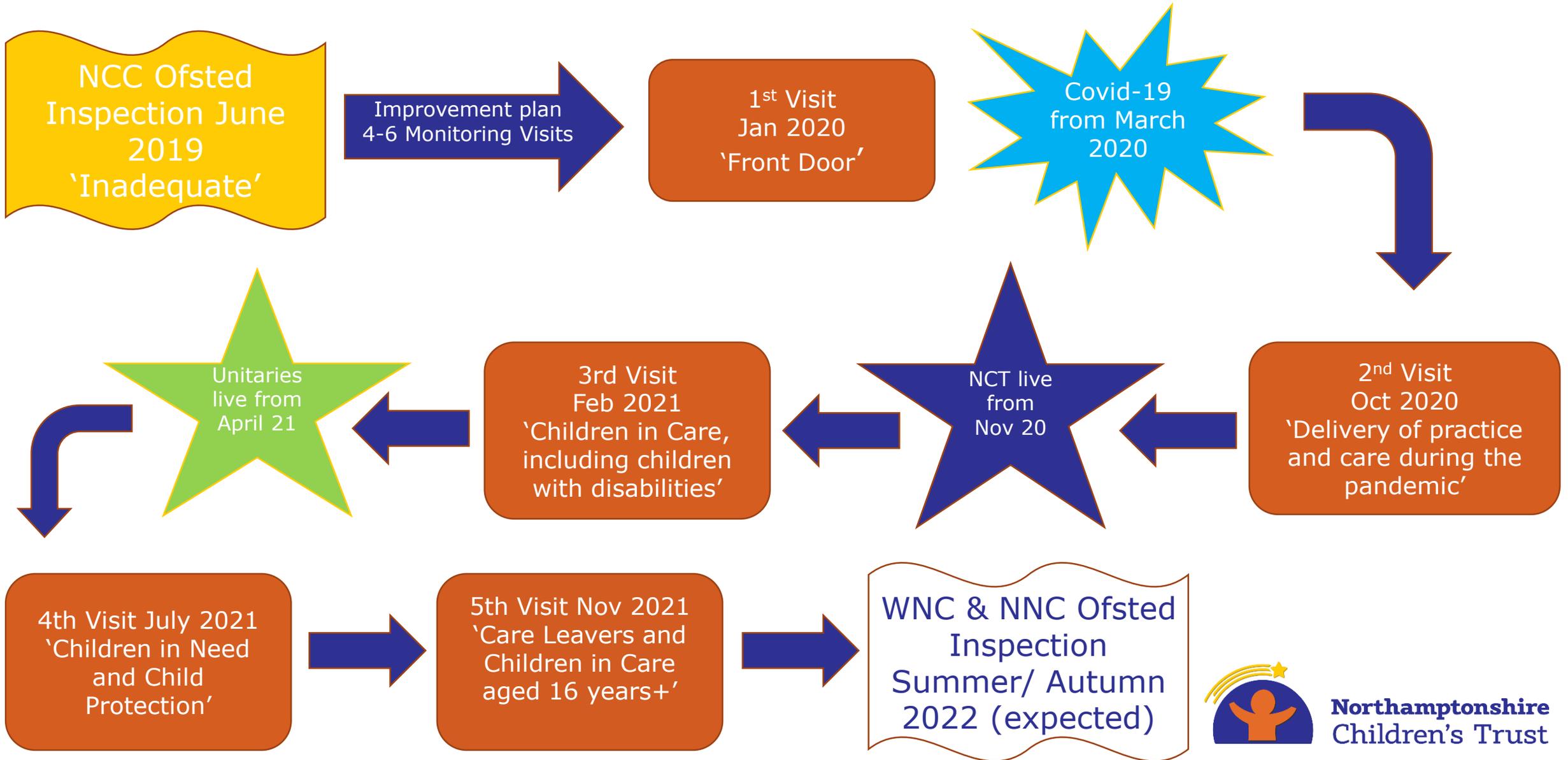
Conditions for Success



Our Priorities



Where are we on the journey?



In January 2020, the Ofsted monitoring visit of the 'front door' found:

- An acceleration of progress at the 'front door' over the last three months
- The quality and impact of assessments remain highly variable. The local authority's model of practice is not embedded within the workforce or fully understood by partner agencies. Frontline managers are not consistently challenging poorer practice. Although audit activity has increased, quality assurance systems remain underdeveloped.
- Senior leaders are focused on recruiting and retaining a skilled and stable workforce, raising standards of practice, and ultimately improving the experiences and progress of all children in receipt of services. Given the scale of improvement needed, senior leaders rightly recognise that it will take time to fully implement their plans and to see their impact.



In October 2020, the Ofsted focused visit of children's social care found:

- Despite unprecedented times due to the COVID-19 pandemic, inspectors found convincing evidence that services for children and young people in Northamptonshire are starting to improve, albeit from a very low base.
- Children's services leaders, together with safeguarding partners, responded quickly and effectively to challenges during the pandemic. Their main priorities were to ensure that vulnerable children, young people, their families and staff were helped and protected.
- Effective actions taken by senior leaders are resulting in tangible improvements to both compliance with statutory requirements and to the quality of social work practice.
- A revised quality assurance framework and the findings from audit activity are underpinning improvements to practice.



In February 2021, the Ofsted monitoring visit of children in care found:

- The stable and committed senior leadership team is steadily achieving improvements in the quality of services for children in care, including for disabled children
- However, the overall quality of the service remains inconsistent and management oversight is not sufficiently robust.
- The vast majority of children have an up-to-date assessment that identifies their needs. Some assessments are comprehensive and help to identify the progress made; this appropriately informs their care plan. However, this is not consistent for all children. Some assessments are limited in analysis and do not consider children's wider needs. Some care plans are not actioned in a timely way and this can result in delays in meeting needs and in achieving permanence.
- Children in care practice weeks, together with auditing and a strong focus on getting the basics right, are all contributing to the quality assurance process.



In July 2021, the Ofsted monitoring visit of children in need and child protection found:

- Throughout the challenges of the COVID-19 (coronavirus) pandemic, senior leaders have continued to focus relentlessly on improving practice. This has resulted in tangible progress, which continues to gain traction in improving the experiences, progress and outcomes for children.
- The quality of social work practice is improving in the children's safeguarding and disabled children's teams, although it still varies in quality.
- The practice model is already enabling positive experiences and progress for some children. However, the model of practice is not used consistently across all safeguarding and disabled children's teams.
- However, the frequency and quality of direct work with children to inform their assessments and plans are variable.
- Although improving, the quality of assessments remains variable.
- The quality of children's plans is improving, although it is still variable.
- Senior leaders have comprehensive and thorough oversight of the quality of practice, strengthened by the development of a quality assurance board which is chaired by the chief executive of the trust.



In November 2021, the Ofsted monitoring visit of care leavers found:

- Senior leaders have made progress in improving services for care leavers since the 2019 inspection of local authority children's services in Northamptonshire. However, the quality and consistency of practice are still too variable; senior leaders have realistic and achievable plans for improvement.
- The quality of support provided to care leavers by personal advisers varies.
- The quality and timeliness of written pathway plans have improved since the 2019 inspection
- Safety planning is inconsistent for older children in care and care leavers who are particularly vulnerable
- Improvement plans are realistic and continue to be implemented, with success, despite the ongoing challenges of the pandemic
- The comprehensive quality assurance framework provides senior leaders with a clear understanding of children's and young people's experiences, practice strengths and areas for improvement

Our Independent Fostering Agency **judged *requires improvement to be good* in November 2021**

Our Voluntary Adoption Agency **judged *good* in Jan/Feb 2022**

At this time on our journey

Whilst practice remains variable, Ofsted and our own quality assurance activity has identified improvements are being made and some examples of great practice

Our Improvement Plan, reviewed monthly, provides our focus

A strong and stable workforce underpins improving the consistency of practice and we continue to relentlessly prioritise this – more stability has been achieved in managerial posts, we have improved our recruitment and retention offer and are delivering on our conditions for success.

We are focused on improving the quality of assessments and plans, informed by the voice of the child and understanding and supporting their individual and diverse needs.

We are focused on improving the quality of supervision and management oversight. More front line managers have undertaken training, coaching and mentoring to support them in uplifting practice

Our **Ofsted Monitoring Visit** (November 2021):

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.

At this time on our journey cont.

We continue to implement and embed our strengths based, child focused practice model to achieve sustained outcomes for children

Our workforce is now better supported with a more tailored continuous professional development offer, access to best practice and research and sharing our quality assurance through our learning hub

Our collaborative quality assurance activity, including practice weeks with young inspectors, is helping practitioners and managers to uplift quality

This comprehensive quality assurance activity provides a measure of progress, and we are also focused on ensuring managers are confident and competent in undertaking this



Annual Self Evaluation Summary

(Oct 20- Nov 21)

What difference have we made for children, young people and families in the last 12 months?

- Improving outcomes for our children, young people and families, driven by stable, committed leadership focused on improving practice, organisational culture and workforce stability.
- Strengthening our Early Help offer, partnership and response at the front door to help children, young people and their families early and reduce escalation of needs.
- More families achieving positive and sustained outcomes as evidenced in vastly improved Supporting Families results
- Improving outcomes through a focus on quality and timeliness of assessments and planning, using Signs of Safety practice model to strengthen and empower families.
- Children are better protected from risks with improved multi-disciplinary relationships.



Annual Self Evaluation Summary

(Oct 20- Nov 21)

What are we proud of?

- Driven and consistent leadership achieving a positive cultural shift by empowering the workforce.
- Adapting our ways of working to ensure children and families continued to be supported effectively throughout the pandemic.
- Strong recruitment and retention campaign and offer, with a particular focus on achieving stability within our social work teams and increasing recruitment reach through increased use of social media and overseas recruitment
- Strengthening management oversight and scrutiny to improve consistency of good social work practice including application of thresholds, improving quality assessments, plans and reviews, decision making and improved timeliness.
- Increasing examples of excellent practice and compliments from children, families, partners and colleagues
- Strengthening multi-disciplinary team meetings and partnership working to ensure vulnerable children and young people are safe and receiving the help and support they needed.
- Embedding of an effective quality assurance framework, with robust senior leadership oversight and learning from quality assurance activity and multi-agency reviews embedded into continuous professional development and practice standards so that expectations for the workforce are clear.
- Ensuring children and young people's voices are not only heard and but that their views are used to shape and improve our services through better governance and senior leadership support to drive change.
- Our workforce led Equalities Forum driving change and increasing awareness to improve our understanding and support for colleagues' and children's and families' individual needs.



Annual Self Evaluation Summary

(Oct 20- Nov 21)

What do we want to do next?

- Further improve the consistency of good quality practice and management oversight to achieve positive and sustained outcomes from more children and families
- Continue to place the children at the heart of our work and use Signs of Safety consistently across all teams
- Implement learning from child safeguarding practice reviews
- Develop the Early Help offer through Family hubs, bringing partners together to make all services easy to access.
- Further extend the reach of our recruitment campaigns through social media and further developing our pathways into social work posts, including Front Line and recruiting the best workers from overseas.
- Improve retention of our workforce by continuing to deliver on our conditions for success
- Support our workforce with a return to office working, incorporating a mix of agile working and a mix of home and office-based locations.
- Find more creative solutions to sufficiency pressures to ensure that we can find the best possible placements to meet every child and young person's needs.
- Complete a research project with University of Northampton on the impact of using Signs of Safety with children, young people and their families within Northamptonshire Children's Trust (NCT)

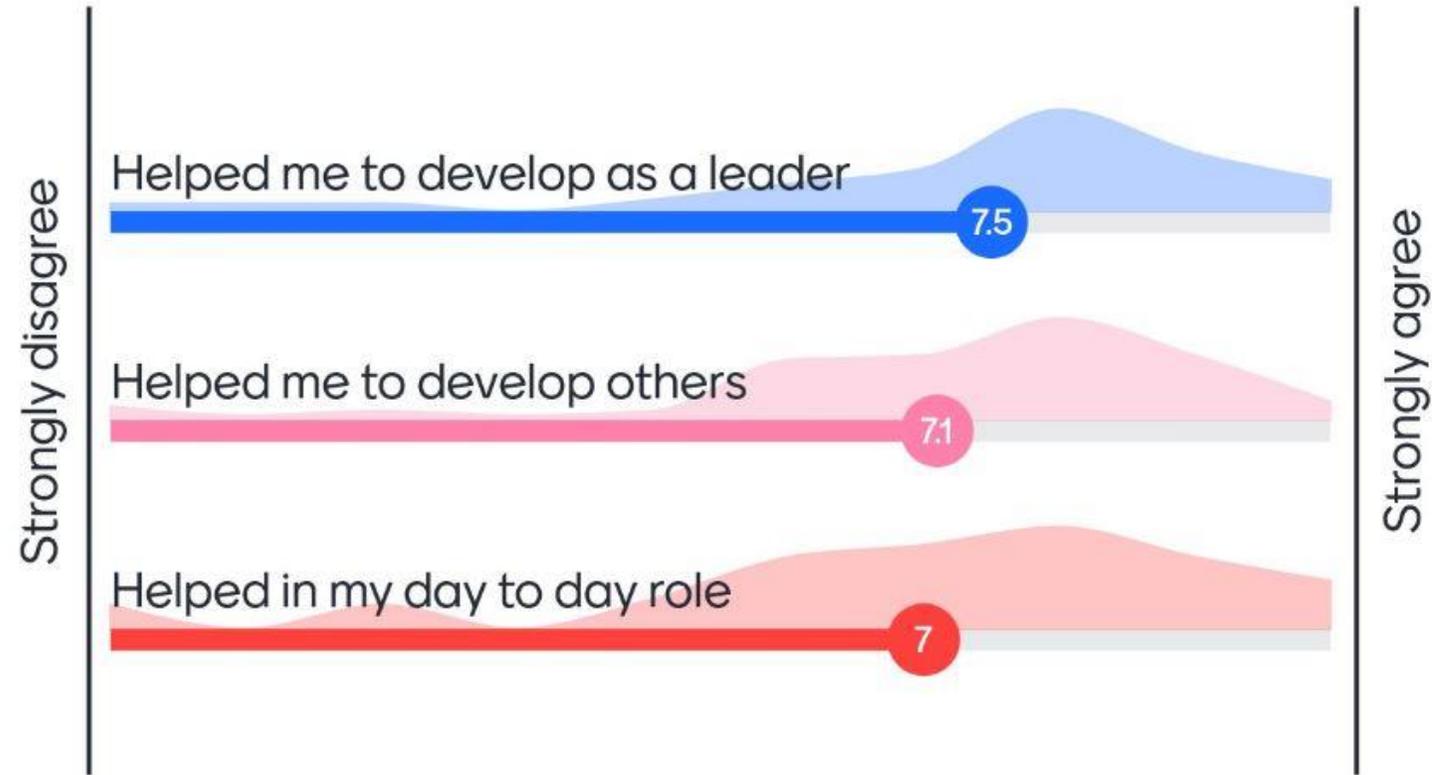


Excellent Leadership – *our improvement will be driven by a stable senior leadership team that provides strategic leadership and direction, clarity of the vision for the service and sets clear priorities and expectations. The senior leadership team will be visible to and engage with all staff.*

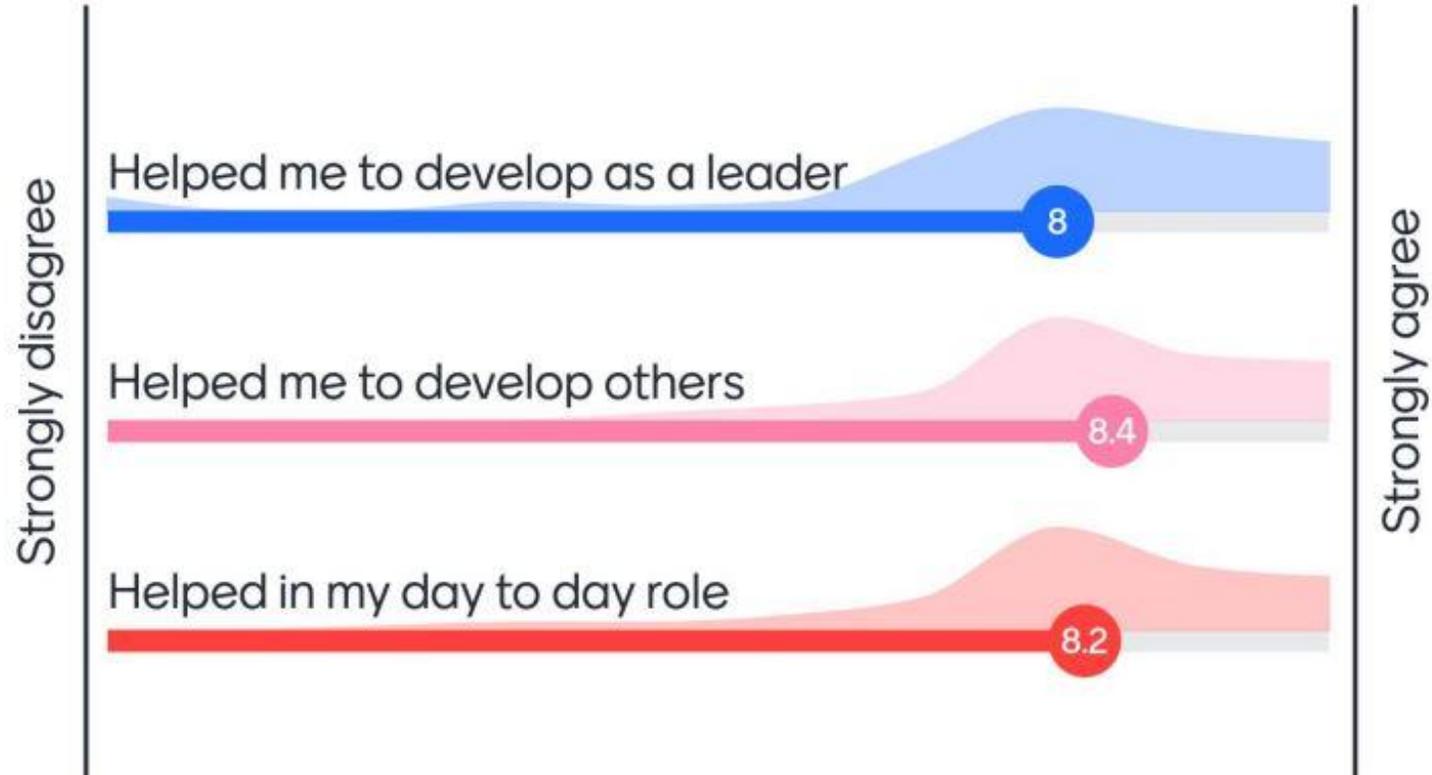
- Permanent senior leadership team since April 2021, all strategic and vast majority of service managers permanent. July 21 Ofsted ***‘the senior leadership team has an impressive energy and relentless commitment to improving the lives of children in Northamptonshire’***.
- Senior leaders **championing recognition of good practice**, ‘naming the issue’, empowering colleagues to make improvements through open communication and collaborative working.
- Positive feedback from **Chief Executive’s 58 minute sessions** and via our Practitioners’ Improvement Board re: SLT being visible, positive and inspiring. Communication has improved.
- Our workforce has clarity on our **vision, commitment and priorities**, which everyone helped to develop
- 9-month **Leadership Development Programme** impacting on practice and culture focusing on empowering staff.
- Leaders also benefit from **development opportunities**, including Research in Practice’s Practice Supervisor Development Programme, mentoring, coaching, Signs of Safety Practice Champion training and masterclasses and bespoke support from Partners in Practice
- **Strong and improving Quality Assurance**, which social workers value, with oversight from a monthly Quality Assurance Board, chaired by Chief Exec



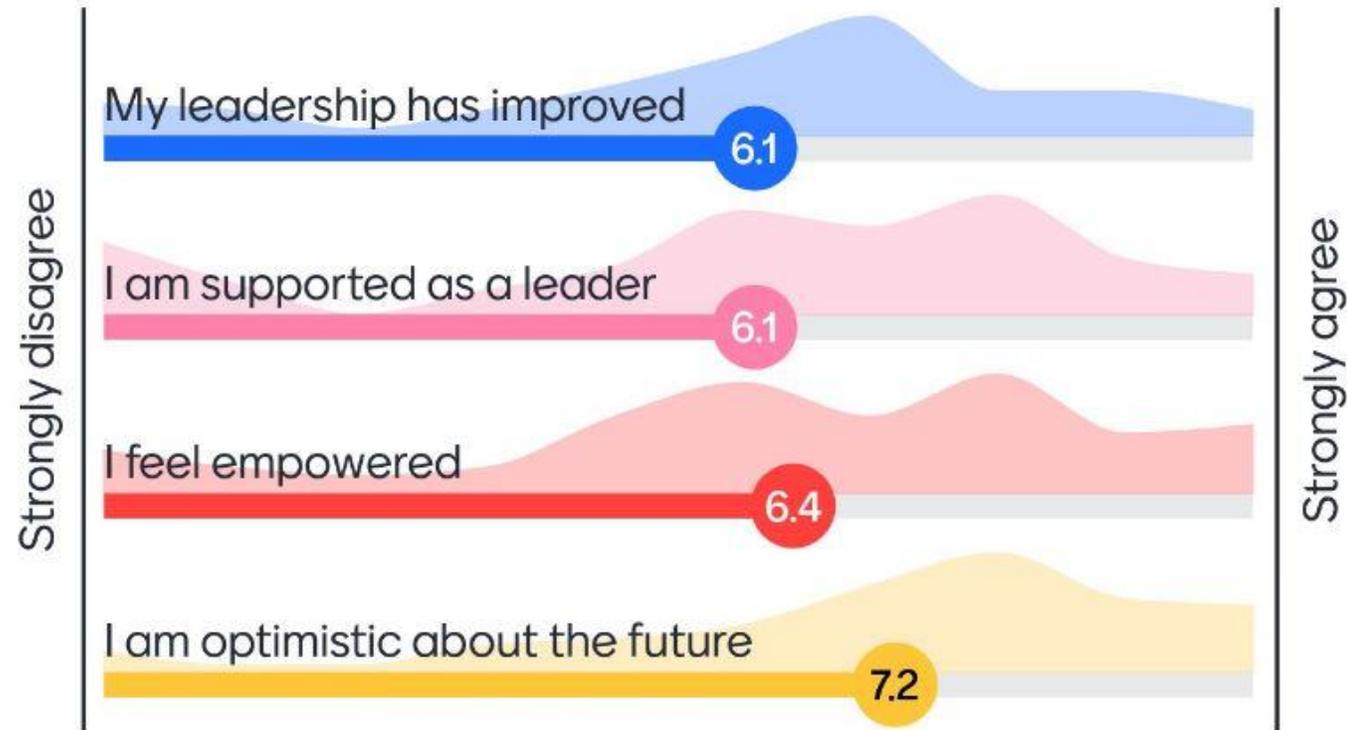
Leadership Development Programme



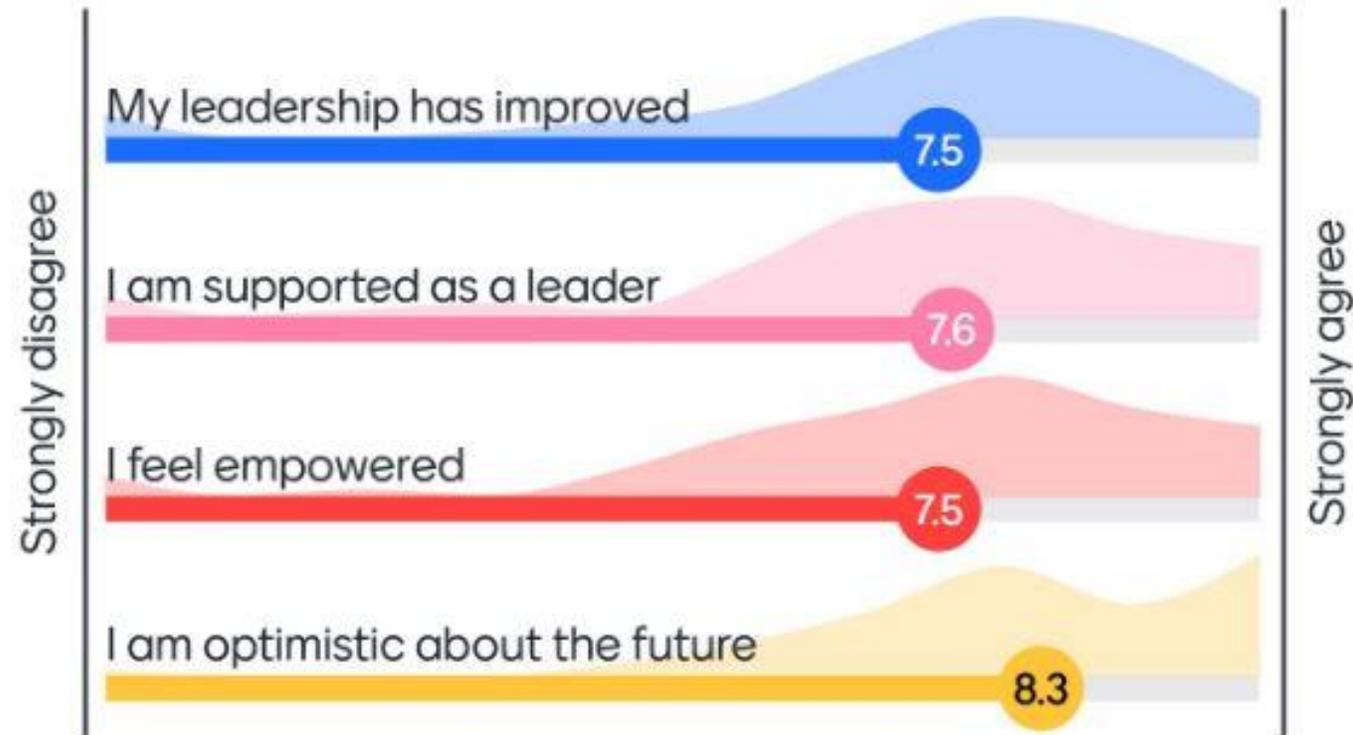
Leadership Development Programme



Your Leadership



Your Leadership



Corporate Parenting Board Developments

‘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

- New elected councillors provided with training on Corporate Parenting and Safeguarding. The Lead Member for West Northants and **joint chair of CPB** participated in LGA Leadership of Corporate CPB training.
- Greater participation of care experienced young people. The **terms of reference updated and written in a young person friendly way.**
- **Close links** with health network meetings, Virtual School Advisory Group and Children in Care and Care Leavers’ participation groups.
- West Northamptonshire and North Northamptonshire **Assistant Directors for Housing and Communities** are members of the Board.
- **Deep Dive sessions on various topics** led by subject matter experts, including children and young people
- **Council tax discount/reduction scheme for care leavers** in place from April 21 NNC and WNC.
- **Timeliness of children in care health reviews escalated** within health services.
- **Young people’s participation** on the board led to officers being required to be more specific about what positive outcomes mean and challenged officers and members’ thinking.
- **Celebrating the achievements** of children and young people at each Board meeting.



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

- **Relentless drive on recruitment and retention**, particular focus on **achieving stability within social worker teams**. Challenge remains in Duty and Assessment, Safeguarding and Court teams whilst other areas are more stable.
- **Recruitment - core focus**, with our **dedicated recruitment team**
- **Peripatetic social work team and assessment social workers**- recruitment in process- to enable timely support to areas of emerging pressure and support manageable caseloads and stability.
- **Additional temporary capacity** and managed service teams in place to manage demands created by pandemic incl. increased caseloads
- Recruiting additional **social workers from abroad** after 4 successfully joined in 21.
- Focused on **‘growing our own’ social workers**. Student SW placements, Step Up to Social Work and Front Line, Social work apprentices and NQSWs, supported by our Social Work Academy and learning and development team.

- ❖ Oct 20 and Oct 21: 32 **NQSWs** completed their AYSE.
- ❖ 14 **NQSWs** started in September 2021, and 3 joined in January 22, 9 recruited to start in May 22
- ❖ 10 **Step Up to Social Work** students joined on placement in Jan 22, 6 are current NCT employees. Due to qualify in April 23
- ❖ 3 **social work apprentices** in Safeguarding service currently, due to qualify in June 23
- ❖ 7 internal staff **appointed to senior social worker positions** since Nov 21.
- ❖ Our first cohort of 8 **Front Line students** will start in Sept 22



Recruit, Retain and Develop an Awesome Workforce

- **Focus on retention** due to fluctuations in our turnover rate. In October 21 this was 14.6%, above the last available public sector average of 13.4% in 2018 and national social worker turnover rates of 13.5% in 2020
- **Continuous professional development** strengthened through online learning hub, our Equalities Forum, membership of Research in Practice and Making Research Count
- **Salary scale pay increments** introduced for all permanent NCT staff on 1st April 2021. From Dec 21 **retention bonus** was introduced for social worker posts in priority services. Positively received by staff.
- **The Social Work Academy** has increased support for social workers in the year after their ASYE, 26% of previous NQSWs have left the organisation after 2 years. 47% have remained with NCT including 14 who have been promoted
- **Additional Advanced Practitioner** positions created in front line social work teams, case holding and mentoring team members
- Further **career development opportunities** via the Frontline programme from 2022.
- **Changing our culture to being strengths based and empowering**; improving processes and systems; investing in our staff, through leadership development programme and professional development opportunities. Implementation of our **'conditions for success'** expected to improve our retention of staff.
- Approx. **800 nominations** received for the inaugural NCT workforce awards (Dec 21)



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.*

- Our QA, peer review and Ofsted visits **confirmed that practice is improving, whilst inconsistent**, we know the areas for improvement, have plans in place and continue to improve
- Relentless focus on **improving consistency of quality of assessments and plans**
- **Signs of Safety** trajectory plan in place. Practice Champions trained and Signs of Safety training for all.
- **Partners in Practice** (PIP) support to improve practice. Bespoke support from Research in Practice for some managers, and coaching/ mentoring from PIP and Social Work Academy.
- **Celebrate and share good practice** through a range of channels; Learning Hub, emails from Chief Exec, 58 minute sessions.
- **Refreshed and relaunched Practice Standards, Practice Model and Supervision Policy** - clarity of expectations. Ofsted (July 21) noted signs of initial positive impact of revised supervision recording.
- Reinforcement that **voice of the child** is considered and recorded by all social workers. **Mind of My Own app** commissioned.
- **Cultural competency training** developed with input from young people, available for all practitioners.
- Further training made available to support **the drafting of safety plans**.



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

- **Strong senior oversight of QA** through monthly QA Board, chaired by Chief Exec and reporting to NCT Board, Social Care Improvement Board and WNC/ NNC contract monitoring of NCT
- **Collaborative Reflective Practice Discussions** support practitioners and managers to reflect and improve practice
- **Practice Weeks** (including our Young Inspectors), side by side collaborative practice discussions (audits), practice observations and speaking with CYP.
- Developed **quality and performance analysis at team level**, over time will provide a richer understanding of any differences in compliance and quality of practice across the county.
- **Learning from quality assurance** is shared and bespoke continuous professional development delivered to improve practice, e.g. culturally sensitive practice training.

The comprehensive quality assurance framework provides senior leaders with a clear understanding of children's and young people's experiences, practice strengths and areas for improvement

Ofsted monitoring visit November 21



**Northamptonshire
Children's Trust**

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

- **NCT Early Help** redesigned as **Children and Family Support Services (CFSS)** - focus on developing and supporting the partnership;
- West and North Northants Early Help Partnership networks successfully established including a revised simpler early help assessment and Team around the Family Support plan.
- Implementation of bespoke project - **tackling child exploitation**. Positive progress in NSCP CE sub group, county wide partnership approach to prevention and early intervention – recommendations incorporated into partnership Child Exploitation Strategy.
- **Integrated Care System Children and Young People's Transformation Board** - whole system approach to deliver priorities and improve outcomes



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.*

- **Improved monitoring of finances and efficiency projects** in place under NCT Director of Finance and Resources.
- **Priority focus on improving the sufficiency of placements** 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, number of external providers on our frameworks, commissioning of two new emergency children's homes, with further plans in progress.
- Improvements to **processes and procedures** to improve efficiencies and experiences for workforce.



Children in Need of Early Help

Quality and Impact

- **Progress recognised at the Focused Visit Oct 20** with action to “Sustain the cultural shift across the safeguarding partnership so that children consistently receive the right level of multi-agency support”
- **Increasing % of initial contacts signposted to Children and Family Support Services** - 12% in July to 19% in October.
- **Rates of referral to Early Help increased** - 12% in Nov 20 in to 21% in Oct 21
- Improved process introduced to ensure a **supportive dialogue between Strengthening Families teams and social workers**, encouraging stepping cases down at the earliest opportunity when it is safe to do so.
- **Edge of care service** providing support out of hours and responding to families in crisis to prevent children coming into care unnecessarily, by utilising the whole family approach.
- **Vast improvement** in Supporting Families payment by results from Quarter 4 20/21 continued throughout 21/22.
- **‘Pause for a Fresh Start’** supporting 23 women who have had multiple children (86 in total) removed from their care; progress in achieving positive changes is reported for all women.
- Our **independent return interviews** consider all risks and support needs faced by children, young people and their families. **Average of 87% of return interviews completed within the 72-hour timeframe.**
- **Multi-Agency Child Exploitation (MACE) arrangements** established through the Vulnerable Adolescents Panel (VAP) which considers all young people experiencing extra-familial harm, regardless of social care threshold.
- **YOS Prevention work in partnership with the Police Community Initiative Reducing Violence (CIRV)** to reduce violent crime and tackle the emerging concerns in relation to gang related offending .



Children in Need of Early Help

What are we doing to further improve?

- ❑ **Progress quarterly partnership networking events** for West and North areas, sharing good practice information, service changes and networking across partners.
- ❑ **Embed the Quality Assurance Framework** within Children and Family Support Service (CFSS)
- ❑ **Key performance indicators in development** to demonstrate the impact and efficacy of the support provided.
- ❑ Delivery of a comprehensive **workforce development programme** for NCT CFSS teams.
- ❑ Repurpose former children's centres in key locations to **create family hubs**
- ❑ **Reviewing our current response to older young people at risk** to ensure that NCT has a defined pathway and referral process for children at risk of harm from outside of their families.

Feedback from young people and their families

"I can't believe how much I have turned my life around in the last year. I am not getting into trouble anymore and not staying out late. I finally feel I have a purpose in life"
young person, aged 16

"Your service has worked wonders for my family and I cannot be grateful enough for how you have turned my daughter's life around"
parent of young person aged 15



Children in Need of Help and Protection – Robust Front Door

Quality and Impact

- A **revised operating model** enable a better management of MASH contacts and referrals and more consistency in decision making and in the application of thresholds
- The **Partnership Support Team in the MASH** facilitates early help support from partners or NCT's CFSS for families who do not require statutory social care assessment and support
- Improving practice supported by **Partners in Practice peer support** and review of s.47 decision making and practice **identified 'some really good examples of practice'** and we actions to further improve consistency and avoid unnecessary use of s.47
- **Complaints about MASH reduced significantly and compliments are increasing.** MASH received a **Rose of Northamptonshire Award** for their dedication to the safety of the community throughout the pandemic
- **Buddy system** between DAAT teams effective for back up during duty week, support, performance and managing capacity.
- **Children are seen within timescales** (79.1% of initial visits to children completed withing 5 days and on average 94% of children are seen Oct 21).
- **Needs are identified quickly and responded to timely. Assessments are completed within timescales** preventing drift and delay and services are identified promptly (98% within 45 days Oct 21, above England and SN averages)

'...the MASH call handler I spoke to today was exemplary. She listened to me, understood why I had called and made me feel that it is critical that we all work together. Many thanks to her.'

Deputy Headteacher



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Children in Need of Help and Protection – Robust Front Door

What are we doing to further improve?

- ❑ Some of the **quality of referrals to the MASH** requires improvement, and for referrers to **consistently receive quality feedback**
- ❑ The **MASH model was strengthened in Dec 21**, to ensure contacts are progressed to the right service, at the right time, at the earliest opportunity, with appropriate consent and robust threshold application.
- ❑ Review impact of **multi agency response to domestic abuse** notifications
- ❑ Improvement of the **quality of information sharing** within the MASH to ensure this is effective, reasonable, necessary and proportionate.
- ❑ Focus on **improving the consistency in the quality of management decision-making**, oversight and challenge
- ❑ Continue to **improve the quality of assessments and plans**, ensuring we evidence the impact and outcomes for children, the voice of the child is prevalent and informs the assessment, and plans are SMART
- ❑ **Maintaining manageable caseloads** in Duty and Assessment will also have an impact on the quality of work, and maintaining permanent recruitment momentum remains a focus
- ❑ Further **improvements on cases for transfer and step down** ensuring we have the correct level of intervention and support in place at the right time, and a positive experience for children and families

'Mother was touched by how the MASH Social Worker spoke with her, she didn't feel judged and she was made to feel she was worth something and she deserved to be helped. She is really grateful for the reassurance she felt after the conversation.'



Children in Need of Help and Protection – Safeguarding

Quality and Impact

- **Improvements evidenced by QA activity:** reducing rate of children subject to CP plans
- **Families are enabled to achieve positive outcomes** by commissioned and NCT Family Support services working alongside families with child in need and child protection (CP) plans and those who are stepping up or down **100% of families receiving rapid or medium term support showed progress through outcome star scales.** For families receiving multi systemic therapy, **96% of young people remained at home and 87% of these sustained this after 18 months.**
- **Pre-birth cases closely tracked** - led to more effective planning and improved outcomes.
- Tracking system in place to **ensure timeliness of Initial Child Protection Conferences** (to 95% in Dec 21)
- **Improved management oversight** of CP cases open over a long period -**lower proportion of CP plans closed after 2 years or more** (1.4% in October) in comparison with national (3.3%) and statistical neighbour (3.6%) average
- By working with families within pre-proceedings around 50% of the cases which met threshold have stepped down without going to court, suggesting **the process is effective in diverting matters from court.**
- **Court skills training** - improved knowledge, skills and confidence of staff in working within the legal framework.
- number of complaints about safeguarding has decreased and number of **compliments continuously increasing.**

“Social worker has been great at keeping in regular contact and keeping me updated. She is very professional in meetings but at the same time kind and caring, really showing empathy for the families. She is friendly, approachable, and lovely to work with.” **Head teacher**



**Northamptonshire
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Children in Need of Help and Protection – Safeguarding

What are we doing to further improve?

- ❑ **Persistent focus on building positive and empowering relationships with children, young people and families;** SMART Plans, that are formed with children and families, regularly reviewed and progressed in a timely way, meaningful visits focused on driving forward the plan, evidence-based assessments informed by direct work, and the use of assessments tools and best practice resources.
- ❑ **Capture more of the views and experiences of children and young people** who are the subject of a child in need or child protection plan
- ❑ **Continue to deliver our Signs of Safety trajectory,** supported by additional Advanced Practitioner capacity, as our vehicle to deliver strengths based, relational practice.
- ❑ **Privately Fostered Children’s Service will continue to be developed** by raising standards of practitioners work in this area through training, ensuring Signs of Safety methodology is used when working with families, continuing to raise awareness with partners and in particular GP surgeries and establishing links with private schools and international language schools.
- ❑ We know that **consistency in quality** of our practice, management oversight and reflective supervision, as well as strong recording on case files **needs to further improve** and **we are delivering improvement actions**

“I just wanted to send you a quick positive email about how absolutely amazing Social Worker has been! She’s gone above and beyond for us. She’s brilliant! From explaining things perfectly so we all understand, to having such a lovely relationship with XX (who completely trusts her) she checks in, she rings when she says she will ring, she does everything she says she will do without any hesitation at all. I just wanted to let you know.” **(Feedback from a family member about a Safeguarding Social Worker)**





“Social workers take pride in their work. They show commitment and dedication to supporting children and their families to make positive changes in their lives.”



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Children with Disabilities

Quality and Impact

- Children with disabilities receive a **more consistent, relationship-based service** leading to improved outcomes.
- Compliments received from families and partners evidence positive relationships and improved outcomes and impact.
- **Revised case management model** ensures our priority focus is on the most vulnerable children and families, this has also resulted in more manageable caseloads
- **Family support workers offer strength**, offering practical support and direct work, with impact evident in feedback, compliments and QA activity. It also enables social workers to concentrate on work where their specialist expertise is required.
- Evidence of **good quality child focussed practice where voice of the child is evident**, demonstrated by quality assurance activity, compliments, feedback and management reviews
- Assessments are predominantly **completed within timescales using the Signs of Safety** model, evident in weekly performance data.
- **Closer working relationships with Adults' Social Care** and the processes and timescales for children and young people referred to Adult's Social care have been strengthened.
- **Effective joint working with the CCG** around joint packages of care to ensure that children's needs are effectively assessed, and their needs met.

What are we doing to further improve?

- Ensuring plans help progress young people to becoming as independent as possible as they approach adulthood.
- We work on **timely allocations and assessment and a smooth transition between NCT and Adults' Social Care**, so that children and their families know what the plans will be for them post 18.
- Management oversight and supervision** is a key focus to ensure plans and services for children and families are progressed, staff are supported and risk is well managed.
- Redesigning the **short breaks offer** with our partners to create a collaborative, flexible model to better meet needs of children and families.



Children In Care

Quality and Impact

Permanency Planning

- Focus on improving permanency for children through **stronger assessments**
- Permanence for **under 15s is well established.**
- **All options considered** including reunification with birth families, connected persons' arrangements and Special Guardianship placements
- **Stability meetings and Vulnerable Adolescents Panel** support carers to feel able to continue to care for young people

Sufficient, Good Quality Placements

- **Majority of our children live in stable placements** that meet their needs well
- Broadened range, type and quality of **placement options** although challenges remain
- **Improved regular senior management oversight** of complex and high risk cases and unregulated placements.
- Our **young people contributed to the selection of framework providers** in tender processes.
- Quality & Outcomes Team undertake **QA checks including meeting with the children and young people** to hear what they think of their placement.

Education and Health

- Local specialist children in care **Mental Health Team support** (includes post-18 transition)
- Children in care health service **collaborative work with social workers and carers.**
- Children in care health team provides: **psycho-education groups for carers, specialist attachment training for practitioners and children's homes workforce** and a **duty / crisis response during the week**
- Additional **independent psychological assessment and therapy** for children in care.
- Sept 21: 35% (18) young people and **Independent Visitor matches in place for more than 2 years.**
- Virtual School **strong and consistent staff.**
- Effective monitoring of **Personal Education Plans (PEPs)**
- **Education Officers actively meet with young people** outside of multi-agency meetings to elicit their views and encourage engagement.
- % children in care with **fixed term exclusion is reducing,** similarly for NEET and training post 16.



“Just wanted to say a massive thank you for all you have done for me over the last few years.. I don’t think I would be able to have the same positive future without your encouragement and being there for me in my hard times. It has been a great time having you as my IRO and knowing you had my best interests at heart.”

Feedback from a child in care to their Independent Reviewing Officer.

“When I went for a walk with XX yesterday evening, he was beaming regarding being able to talk up for himself. He explained just having you there gave him the confidence to be able to voice his opinion”. **Feedback from a social worker to an advocate**



Children In Care

What are we doing to further improve?

Permanency Planning

- ❑ Further development of permanency tracking
- ❑ Focus on early permanence
- ❑ Support arrangements for special guardianship order (SGO) carers, engagement with partner agencies and the Courts
- ❑ Continue to support applicants to transfer from being Connected Persons Foster Carers to SGO carers
- ❑ Improved selection and matching arrangements for long term looked after children



Sufficient, Good Quality Placements

- ❑ Continue to deliver our **sufficiency strategy**, focus on increasing access to suitable placements that meet needs and monitor impact.
- ❑ Continue the development of **retention surgeries for NCT foster carers**
- ❑ Persistent focus on **recruiting NCT Mainstream and Resilience carers.**
- ❑ **Review of emergency carers and out of hours' support.**
- ❑ **Ongoing review of all policies and procedures** to include focus on timely reporting of schedule 7 and Reg 35
- ❑ **Review our long term matching process.**

Education and Health

- ❑ **Timeliness and recording of health assessments** and consider the specific challenges when children are placed out of county.
- ❑ Understanding and meeting the **health needs of UASC/separated children.**
- ❑ **Ensure care planning has due regard to health information** and ensures all health needs are progressed
- ❑ **Develop engagement and participation** with wider range of our children in care.
- ❑ **Develop a strategy for promoting the education** of children with a social worker.
- ❑ **County wide protocol** including the offer of training and support to prevent further exclusion.



Care Leavers – Impact

The achievements of our young people are celebrated within the Leaving Care service and through the Corporate Parenting Board with **34 awards, certificates and vouchers being given to those recognised for achievements – big or small.**



XX, an Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking child achieved good GCSEs results. Quite an achievement after arriving in England in 2018 speaking very little English. They are now completing a college course

XX has been successful at securing a place on a football scholarship. For a young person who was on the verge of permanent exclusion when in secondary school to now have progressed to a stage where they have been offered such opportunity, we are all immensely proud of them.

XX, an Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Child who came into care at the age of 11. Now speaks fluent English and is doing a college course, also one of the best cricket players in their college!

XX has been awarded a 1st class degree and has applied for a Masters degree.



**Northamptonshire
Children's Trust**

Care Leavers

Quality and Impact

- **Pathway Plans** have more clearly defined objectives and are informed by young people's voices
- Through **improved identification and risk management arrangements**, we have a positive percentage of young people in suitable accommodation (89.6% Sept 21)
- All homeless young people are reviewed by managers with **clear actions taken to seek to resolve individual housing arrangements.**
- 53 young people who have remained with their Foster Carers in a **Staying Put** arrangement (Oct 21- proportion in line/ above statistical neighbour and national averages).
- **Early planning for leaving care** is in place and the majority young people's transition arrangements are positive
- The **children in care Mental Health Team work flexibly with young people at the point of transitioning into adulthood.** Therapeutic work can continue up to the age of 19.
- x2 Mental health practitioners in leaving care and fostering offering individual or group work intervention, based on individually assessed need.
- **Education, Employment and Training(EET) for care leavers has improved over the past two years.** EET at 63% in Nov 21 against the comparator of 55% across England.
- **Positive outcomes** achieved for care leavers at our training flats
- **Care leaver apprentices** in Virtual School and Leaving Care provide invaluable insight to improve support and services
- Good evidence of **partnership working with the police, housing partners, adults' social care to support young people at risk of exploitation;** these areas **need continued focus and strengthening.**
- **Wishes and feelings of our young people** are captured and reviewed at every In Touch Visit and in Pathway Plans as part of our regular practice.
- We are proud of the **strong and lasting relationships the Participation & Engagement Team** at NCT builds with our young people, helping to build confidence and relationships with others, **supporting them to feel valued and listened to.**



Care Leavers

What are we doing to further improve?

- Ensure **consistency and strong advocacy** and **high aspirations for all of our young people**
- Focus, with our health colleagues, on **supporting our care leavers who are or plan to be parents** and develop trauma based support arrangements for our separated young people
- Increase timeliness of Pathway Plans and In Touch visits**
- Ensure Pathway Plans for children with disabilities are **meaningful, aspirational, involve the young person and focus on preparation for adulthood**
- Development of **Joint Transitions** approach
- The development of **Joint Prevention of Homelessness Housing Protocol for Care Leavers.**
- Work with unitary councils to **develop supported accommodation scheme for care leavers**
- Ensuring that **Personal Education Plans explicitly consider cultural and identity needs of young people.**
- Further **strengthening of partnership working**, informed by bespoke project supported by Research in Practice, University of Bedfordshire & The Children's Society in tackling child exploitation
- A **refreshed virtual and face to face engagement programme**, to ensure the voice of more of our care leavers is heard and considered.



"Thank you for the meeting, it's been lovely you've been such a help you changed my life in many ways I just wanted to thank you personally for everything you do for my family. I wish you all the best, I'll keep in contact don't worry"

Care Leaver about their IRO following their last children in care review at 18yrs old

"Everything I have achieved so far in my life, is down to the support that I have from my PA." **Care Leaver**

I think of all she did for me and I am very clear I would not be where I am today without her"
Care Leaver about a Personal Advisor

I just want to say a massive thank you for everything you have done for XX. Since you become his PA everything we have both asked for you to help us with, you have and it has always been done as soon as we have asked....Not only have you supported XX but me also.

You are an amazing PA and you are a credit to the leaving care team, we just wish we had you from the beginning. Any child to have you as their PA is very lucky and I just wish there were more like you.

Parent

