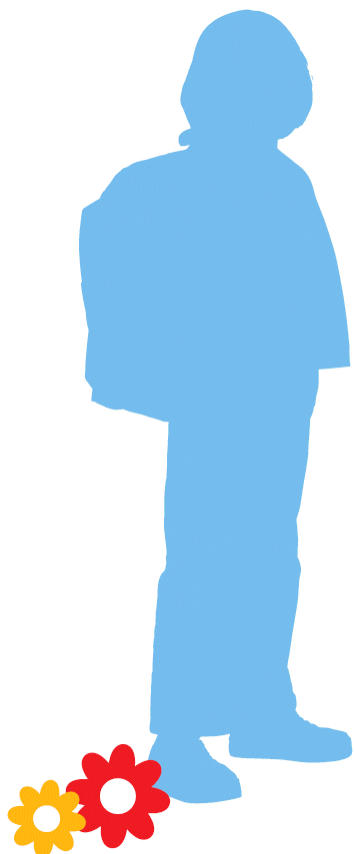


Inspection of safeguarding and looked after children services

The view from Nottingham City Council



1. Our vision

We will ensure that vulnerable children and young people are appropriately safeguarded by meeting all statutory requirements and developing strong partnership arrangements.

We will take a whole family approach to make sure that vulnerable families are supported to enable them to thrive and achieve their potential, reducing the need for more specialist interventions.

We will work in partnership with other agencies and with parents and carers to ensure that all children and young people in our care will receive excellent support and services to enable them to make a successful transition into adulthood.

2. Our purpose

- Provide specialist child protection services to vulnerable children and young people, ensuring that the needs of children and families are appropriately assessed and addressed.
- Improve outcomes for young people in our care by ensuring that appropriate placements are available and that they are supported by a package of support to enable them to thrive
- Provide integrated family support services to prevent families from reaching crisis-point and children coming into the care of the local authority
- Develop successful safeguarding arrangements across all partners in Nottingham City through the Local Safeguarding Children's Board
- Provide a reviewing service and quality assurance framework that captures learning, and acts on it, to enable us to continuously improve our service to citizens in Nottingham City.

3. Our drivers for change

Since the death of Baby Peter in 2007 we have seen a time of significant change for children's social care services nationally. Lord Laming's review and subsequent action plans and taskforce reports have changed the landscape by strengthening accountability at all levels and putting workforce development for social workers firmly on the agenda. The new coalition government has now commissioned a further review on children's social care, led by Eileen Munroe. This will report back in 2011.

We know that these changes have had a significant impact on the frontline locally with national shortages of social workers causing significant capacity issues for Nottingham City and increased levels of referrals. However, Nottingham City Council and our partners have already confirmed



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safeguarding and providing support to vulnerable families as key priorities in the Nottingham Plan, the Council Plan and the Children and Young People's Plan.

4. Where we are now

We know that Nottingham City is a challenging place to work with high levels of need leading to a high number of referrals and therefore higher numbers of children on child protection plans. This context, alongside a shortage of social workers, means that caseloads are high and that colleagues have to work extremely hard to respond to the demand.

Nottingham City Council has invested heavily in our safeguarding services. This investment has meant that, during 2010, we have been able to progress plans to change our residential provision to a "small group homes" model and have increased support to social workers through investing in contact workers. We have established the "15+ team" from January of this year to ensure that young people in our care are appropriately supported to plan for their futures and make a successful and safe transition into adulthood.

We received our first inspection under the new, more robust Ofsted framework in December 2009 which recognised a number of strengths in the service and found no priority areas for action. However, it did identify areas for development and plans are in place to address these. Overall, Children's Services in Nottingham City were judged to be 'performing well' in 2010. Despite all these successes we know that we still have a lot to do.

5. Where we want to be and how we plan to get there

In 2010 we want to address issues impacting on the workforce by putting in place a strong Recruitment and Retention Strategy. This will look at a range of issues including the skills-mix that we need to have in our social care workforce to address the challenges we face in Nottingham City. This will ensure that social workers are appropriately supported to free up their time to fulfil statutory requirements and spend more time with families. It will look at potential solutions to stabilise the workforce, such as by bringing in qualified social workers from overseas and understanding what will make the current workforce want to stay.

We also want to re-design our services so that there are clearer roles and responsibilities. We will implement a new screening service to ensure that referrals are appropriate and meet the threshold to access social care services. Where they don't meet our thresholds, cases will be sign-posted to other appropriate support across the partnership, including adult services to support parents and carers to address significant underlying issues within families.

In 2010, we re-structured to create Family Community Teams and their role will be key in reducing the demand on specialist services. We want to develop a strong preventative family support service in our new Family Community Teams which is able to intervene earlier, at community level. This will be explained more fully in our developing "Family Support Strategy". We will be clear about the pathways of support for families and will have a full suite of up-to-date policies and procedures in place.

We want to strengthen corporate parenting in the City, with all children and young people in our care receiving excellent services and support from all partners. We also want to reduce the number

of children in care by supporting families better and ensuring support is available to help young people become successful and independent adults. Embedding recent developments like the 15+ team and small group homes will enable us to do this. We will also invest in the Targeted Support Team.

We will have a clear quality assurance framework which communicates the learning from reviews and audits to all colleagues to ensure that we are able to continue to make improvements. We will continue to strengthen the Local Safeguarding Children's Board in Nottingham City to drive continued developments in the safeguarding agenda across all partners and embed key tools like the Common Assessment Framework across all partners.

We have an action plan in place which encapsulates this activity and this is being monitored regularly by Heads of Service, Directors and the Corporate Director for Children and Families Services.

6. Further Information

Nottingham City Council Children & Families department have established an Inspection Core Group, chaired by the Director of Safeguarding to lead the preparation for this inspection.

This is the second in a series of concise briefings relating to the inspection of safeguarding and looked after children services.

Further details of the framework for these inspections will be made available on the Nottingham Children's Partnership website at www.nottinghamchildrenspartnership.org.uk

