



ADDITIONAL / TO FOLLOW AGENDA ITEMS

This is a supplement to the original agenda and includes reports that are additional to the original agenda or which were marked 'to follow'.

NOTTINGHAM CITY COUNCIL

CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Date: Tuesday, 17 January 2017

Time: 11.00 am

Place: Ground Floor Committee Room - Loxley House, Station Street, Nottingham, NG2 3NG

Governance Officer: Rav Kalsi **Direct Dial:** 0115 8763759

AGENDA

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Agenda Item 5



Our improvement journey since March 2014



Nottingham
City Council

This document is designed to explain and celebrate the improvements made to Children's Services since our last Ofsted inspection in March 2014.



Foreword

In March 2014 Ofsted inspected our services and judged them to require improvement to be good.

They recognised a lot of strengths and, most importantly, they felt that children in Nottingham were safe. They also identified some areas for development and asked us to develop an action plan to address these. Between 2014 and 2016 we have also benefited from a number of peer reviews and inspections that have helped us to keep testing the quality of our services and inform our plans for continued improvement.

Over the past three years we have made many improvements to our services and to the experiences of children, young people and families. This is thanks to the continued hard work and commitment of colleagues across the Directorate and the wider Council.

With ongoing increases in demand for our services, the implementation of Liquid Logic and roll out of our new operating model we know that 2016 has been a busy year.

This document has been written to remind you of our achievements over the last few years. Hopefully you will recognise some of these achievements as your own and reflect on how far we have travelled as a Directorate when we look at our whole journey.



April 2014 to March 2015

This year saw some big changes:

- We started to move towards integration of two Directorates (Vulnerable Children & Families and Children's Social Care). During 2014 Helen Blackman became Interim Director for this service area and we began our journey towards becoming Children's Integrated Services.
- We implemented a new structure for our Fostering, Adoption and Post-Order Services to ensure that teams were able to strengthen and develop the specialist skills and knowledge required to support foster carers and adoptive families.
- In July 2014 Nottingham City was awarded £42m of Big Lottery Funding to establish the Small Steps Big Changes (SSBC) programme. SSBC is a 10 year programme designed to improve the outcomes of 0-3 year olds. SSBC is a new partnership between Nottingham CityCare, the City Council, voluntary sector organisations, parents, families and communities. SSBC focuses on children, parents and communities in Arboretum, Aspley, Bulwell and St Anns.
- During 2014 we established Project Evolution, a project to help us deliver a new case recording system to replace CareFirst, which was heavily criticised by Ofsted during the inspection. We developed a specification and put this out to tender in December 2014.
- We temporarily increased our IRO capacity from 8 to 14 and from one Manager to two. These arrangements have subsequently been formalised as a permanent increase in the establishment for the service. We have also established a dedicated Local Authority Dedicated Officer (LADO) role.
- In October 2014 we had our first cohort of Newly Qualified Social Workers (NQSW) start a new induction programme with dedicated learning placements in Duty and Fieldwork teams prior to taking up a permanent role. Many of those workers are still with the Council and have progressed to become Level 2 Social Workers. We have continued to learn and strengthen our NQSW programme in the City. We have also worked hard to retain our most experienced and committed social workers. This has allowed us to stabilise our workforce through the introduction of a market supplement to bring the City's pay in line with that of neighbouring authorities.

- We received a Peer Review of Adults Services in November 2014. This review looked at the effectiveness of the joint Children's and Adults Safeguarding Board. One of the main recommendations was for the work of the two Boards to be split out. This led to the creation of a new Nottingham City Safeguarding Children's Board (NCSCB).
- In March 2015 we also received a visit to our Youth Offending Team to inform a Youth Justice Board stock-take which was published in July 2015. We received very positive feedback about the work of our YOT.
- We introduced supervision logbooks to ensure that everyone was provided with consistent support and we strengthened supervision templates to improve the analysis section and links to Signs of Safety.



April 2015 to March 2016

Our improvement journey gained momentum:

- In May 2015 we launched the first Delivery Plan for our integrated Directorate. This document was designed to explain how the work we do fits with our commitment to improve the lives of children and families in Nottingham City. The plan links our work to the bigger picture for the Council and outlined key principles and priorities for our newly merged Directorate. We also introduced a regular newsletter from the Director to help to keep up to date with good news and important information. During 2015 we confirmed permanent appointments to all the Director and Head of Service roles within the Directorate to create a new Leadership Team.
- Project Evolution continued at a pace. In May 2015 we awarded the contract for our new case recording system to Liquid Logic after many frontline colleagues had tested and fed back their views about a number of potential new systems. Later in 2015 we started the hard work to configure the Liquid Logic system to fit our local model and to make sure that key elements of our practice, like Signs of Safety and whole-family approaches, were reflected.
- We rolled out a new payment scheme for our City Foster Carers to encourage more local carers to join the Council and support our children in care. In January 2016 we started to work with the NSPCC on an innovative project to deliver Life Story work.
- To improve the connection between our work and our partners in schools we established a network for Designated Safeguarding Leads in Schools. To bring challenge and test the impact of our work we established a new Children and Young People's Scrutiny Committee and to drive the quality of the Virtual School a Virtual School Governing Body was formed. We expanded the remit of the Virtual School to enable children in care 16+ and care leavers to access support.
- Learning from the Casey and Ofsted reviews into Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) we established a Multi Agency Sexual Exploitation Panel to coordinate our work across the Council and partners. To further strengthen our work in this area we established a full-time CSE Coordinator. In recognition of the potential links between children who go missing and sexual exploitation we realigned the work of our Missing Children's Team and the CSE Coordinator took over line management of the team. Our CSE Coordinator also chairs the Assessment of Sexual Harm Arrangements (ASHA) Panel to ensure a joined-up approach to this work.
- In December 2016 responsibility for Business Support moved into the Directorate to ensure that we are able to develop a responsive, high quality support service. Since then colleagues have been working to stabilise the Business Support workforce by reducing our reliance on casual workers which is improving the consistency of the support the service can offer.

- In August 2015 we received a Peer Review of our own services. The review concluded that the time was right for us to think about the next steps in the integration of our services. They encouraged us to clarify the language we use and to move away from a step up, step down approach to case transfer. During Autumn 2015 we spent a lot of time consulting with the workforce, shadowing teams and thinking about what we wanted our new integrated operating model to look like. As a result of this work in January 2016 we launched the new Children & Families Direct Hub. The new hub was designed to act as the main 'front door' to all services across the Directorate and included specialist colleagues from early help and targeted teams to ensure that families can access the right support at the right time. At the same time we launched the new Multi Agency Request Form (MARF) to improve the quality of referrals from partners.
- In March 2016 we moved to the next stage of our Operating Model by moving to a new locality hub model. This saw team boundaries shifting to equalise the demands across the City and to enable a return to a North, Central and South model of service delivery. Services across these 3 areas were teamed up to create 6 hubs that include early help, targeted and social work resources. We introduced locality hub meetings to ensure that colleagues across these services had the opportunity to gain a shared understanding of the demands in their hubs and work together to ensure that families are receiving the right level of support and intervention to meet their needs.
- We also launched a new Integrated Working and Case Transfer Procedure (which replaced Step Up/Step Down). This new procedure meant that existing cases were able to transfer between locality teams as family's needs escalated without having to go back through the 'front door' for assessment. The procedure also encouraged collaboration between teams to ensure that families experience a joined-up and streamlined response.
- In 2015/16 our Early Help services reached 7,557 children who attended a total of 104,555 times. Our Targeted Family Support Services worked with over 1000 families and during this year we focussed on embedding whole family approaches in our Targeted Family Support Teams. We began to move away from the Common Assessment Framework terminology towards a whole family assessment and plan, designed to identify and address the needs of adults where these needs may be having an impact on the child's safety and wellbeing.
- In March 2016 our new structure was formally ratified at the Council's Appointment and Conditions of Service (ACOS) Committee. We were now formally the Children's Integrated Services Directorate.
- Our NQSW programme continued and we recruited 20 NQSWs onto the programme during this period.

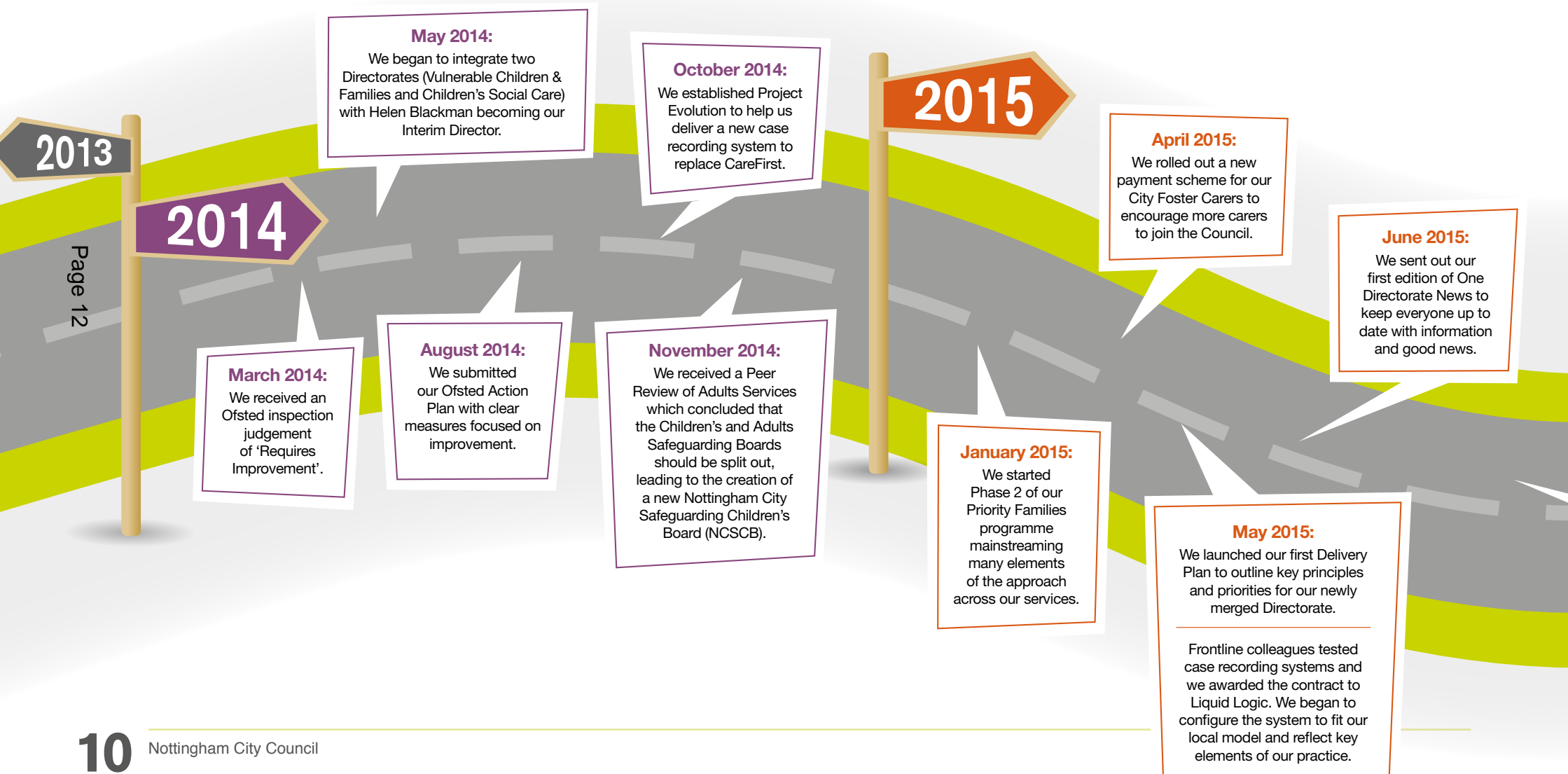
April 2016 to December 2016

Our new direction is now well established:

- The effective implementation of Liquid Logic has been a huge focus. Colleagues from across the Directorate have been involved in developing and testing the new system and we have rolled out a whole workforce training programme. The new system was launched on the 28th November 2016. This is the single biggest achievement and improvement that we have made and will be the key tool to enable us to continue to improve our practice moving forwards.
- We have continued to invest in our workforce. A further 18 NQSWs have joined our services. We have reconfigured budgets to ensure that we are able to permanently fund an adequately resourced Independent Reviewing Service. As a direct consequence of this we have permanently recruited five permanent Independent Reviewing Officers. As a direct response to a request by the Children in Care Council we have prioritised stabilising our Children in Care teams and CiC reviewing activity.
- The NCSCB has adopted a new approach to disseminating learning from Serious Case Reviews with an aim to increase the involvement of frontline practitioners from agencies across the City.
- Our work with Priority Families has continued with more services now beginning to participate. We are on track to meet our national target to work with 1136 families by March 2017. We have listened to colleagues across Children's Integrated Services to ensure that the requirements of the programme are met within Liquid Logic to avoid recording in multiple systems. The programme has also invested in developing innovative group work approaches to pilot new ways of working and test their effectiveness as demands on our early help and targeted services have continued to increase. We are currently piloting a series of parenting programmes and will evaluate their impact in early 2017.
- We received an inspection of our Youth Offending Team (YOT) in June 2016. The inspection found our YOT was high performing. The inspectors commented on the excellent work to keep children and young people safe and the creative approaches used by Case Managers to build positive relationships and encourage engagement of children, young people and their families.
- In July 2016 we received a Safeguarding Assurance Visit to look at the work of our Children & Families Direct and Duty Service. Again, they reiterated that children in the City are safe. They recommended that we think about how to build in more time for reflection before we commence child protection processes. As a result of this we have implemented a 'pause and reflect' approach in these teams, which is enabling a more proportionate response to concerns raised. We're now working to stabilise the workforce in these teams and ensure that all colleagues in these teams have access to regular, high quality reflective supervision.
- In September 2016 we launched our restorative supervision programme. We trained 15 colleagues as restorative supervisors to invest in the resilience and welfare of the frontline workers that children and families depend on.
- In December 2016 we have introduced a new CiC Club as an extension of our CiC Council arrangements to give younger children and their carers an opportunity to participate.
- In December 2016 our Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) Single Point of Access (SPA) moved to co-locate with C&FD Hub to better integrate and make sure that the right services reach children with behavioural, emotional or mental health needs quickly and effectively.



our journey to good



2016

August 2015:

We expanded the remit of the Virtual School to enable children in care 16+ and care leavers to access support. We established a Governing Body to drive the quality of the Virtual School.

We received a Peer Review of our Directorate which encouraged us to move away from a step up, step down approach to a case transfer model.

October 2015:

Our Great Workforce Programme started with frontline colleagues developing improvement plans for the Directorate.

We established the first Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee to bring challenge and test the impact of our work.

March 2016:

We launched our new Locality Hub Model creating six hubs with early help, targeted and social work teams working together to ensure families receive the right support.

We introduced a new Integrated Working and Case Transfer Procedure to ensure families experience a joined-up and streamlined response.

July 2016:

We received a Safeguarding Assurance Visit to look at the work of our Children & Families Direct and Duty Service which judged that children in the City are safe.

April 2016:

We refreshed our Family Support Pathway to provide clear guidance on thresholds and pathways for support.

January 2016:

We launched the new Children & Families Direct Hub designed to act as the "front door" to all Directorate services and we introduced the new Multi Agency Request Form (MARF).

February 2016:

We launched our Multisystemic Therapy for Child Abuse and Neglect (MST-CAN) service to treat young people and their families to resolve clinical and practical concerns.

June 2016:

An inspection of our Youth Offending Team (YOT) judged the service to be highly performing.

November 2016:

Liquid Logic went live! This is the single biggest improvement that we have made and will be the key tool enabling us to improve our practice moving forwards.

July 2015:

To improve our work in schools we established a network for Designated Safeguarding Leads in Schools.

We launched Safe Families For Children a new volunteer based programme designed to help stabilise families facing crisis.

September 2015:

We appointed Chris Cook as our new NCSCB Independent Chair.

December 2015:

We confirmed permanent appointments to all the Director and Head of Service roles within the Directorate to create a new Leadership Team.

So what?

You might be thinking,
so what?

We've changed a lot
but what difference
has it actually made
to children and young
people in our City?

Here are just a few examples:

- All of our internal residential provision is judged to be good or outstanding, offering high quality care to children living in our small group homes.
- We have reduced our reliance on external residential placements. We have gradually reduced from 71 in November 2014 to 52 in July 2016.
- We have significantly increased the number of young people able to access 'Staying Put' opportunities with their carers. 29 young people have been able to 'stay put' and we have 19 currently open.
- We have invested in more social workers with senior leadership support to over-recruit. This has reduced caseloads across the service.
- We have significantly reduced the number of unallocated child in need cases and have also reduced the length of time for which CiN remain unallocated. We have improved the quality of management oversight of these cases as Team Managers now regularly chair CiN review meetings.
- We have developed a new Employability Programme for our Care Leavers. This programme has made a significant contribution to the 15.9% increase in our care leavers in employment, education or training from 2014/15 (50%) to 2016/17 (65.9%).
- We have continued the positive downward trend in relation to the percentage of CiC who offend from a high of 19.1% in 2006 to just 6% in 2015.
- We can evidence that our work at the edge of care (Multi Systemic Therapy, MST-Child Abuse and Neglect, Edge of Care Hub and Safe Families for Children) is supporting more children to stay safely at home with their birth family.
- Between October 2015 and September 2016 108 young people were seen in SHARP school clinics and 1375 professionals received training. 117 young people received a therapeutic intervention and 97% saw a reduction in self-harm behaviour.
- School attendance has improved again for the seventh year in Nottingham, according to new figures from the Department for Education. Statistics show that Nottingham's absence rate is now 4.5%, compared to 4.4% across England. This has reduced in the city from 7.3% in 2009/10. Nottingham is now ranked 91 out of 152 local authorities, compared to 150 at its lowest point in 2012/13.
- CAMHS developments are now informed by a CAMHS Advocacy Worker who is an 'expert by experience' young adult. They ensure that the views and experiences of service users are heard and acted upon as we shape the service.



What's next?

That's not the end
of the journey...

We'll be launching a new Continuous Improvement Programme in early 2017 but areas we already know we want to focus on are:

- 1 Evaluating the effectiveness of our group work pilot.
- 2 Piloting the use of Family Network Meetings.
- 3 Strengthening the understanding of what services are available across the partnership to ensure families can access the support they need.
- 4 Reviewing our Learning Improvement Framework to ensure that we make the most of all of the work we do to consult and engage with families, monitor performance and audit the quality of our work.
- 5 Implement Mind of My Own (MOMO) - an app designed to enable the voices of children in care and children on a child protection plan to be heard more directly.
- 6 Launching the new Children and Young People's Mental Health Passport.
- 7 Develop a qualifications pathway for colleagues in Early Help and Targeted Services.
- 8 Launch a new induction booklet for the Directorate alongside a series of mandatory induction workshops throughout 2017.
- 9 Implement a Grow Your Own Programme in partnership with Manchester Metropolitan University to enable us to create clear pathways for progression into social work careers.
- 8 Development of a new Social Work Teaching Partnership with Nottinghamshire County Council and Derbyshire Councils.
- 9 Further recruitment to vacant IRO roles to secure permanent Child Protection Chairs.

Thank you. These changes are just the tip of the iceberg and only really enable colleagues across the Directorate to continue to deliver high quality support for children, young people and families. It is still your hard work, dedication and direct work with families in the City that makes the biggest difference to keeping children happy, healthy and safe.





With thanks from

Alison Michalska

Corporate Director for Children & Adults

Helen Blackman

Director for Children's Integrated Services

The Children's Integrated Services Leadership Team

Steve Comb, Tracey Nurse, Clive Chambers, Tajinder Madahar, Aileen Wilson & Sophie Russell



The Inspection of services for children in need of help and protection, children looked after and care leavers and the Review of the effectiveness of the local Safeguarding Children Board

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In partnership with



Inspection date: 11 March 2014 – 2 April 2014



Nottingham
City Council



This document is designed to celebrate what we are doing well, acknowledge the improvements we need to make and explain the action we will take.



Foreword

Nottingham children are safe. Those four words matter.

Ofsted arrived for their unannounced inspection on the 11th March 2014 and, after three weeks of rigorous investigation they left with the conclusion that children in our City are safe.

Their judgement confirms that, as a local authority and Safeguarding Children Board we put in place effective measures to safeguard and protect the most vulnerable children.

Nottingham City is committed to providing 'Good' services; we recognise there is more we must do to improve our work. This was our first inspection under the new Ofsted framework, a framework which has been designed to meet the recommendations of Professor Eileen Munro that inspections should focus on outcomes and children's experiences, rather than strategy or processes.

Ofsted have been clear that the new inspection framework is a 'tougher test' and that authorities have to work harder to achieve the top ratings of 'Good' and 'Outstanding'. The new framework is designed to raise standards and improve practice. The overall judgement received from Ofsted was 'Requires Improvement'.

We found that this inspection was far more focused on the child's journey with much greater emphasis placed on observing and assessing practice. A strong theme of the weaknesses identified by Ofsted concern

our 'back office' functions, specifically our I.T. and case recording systems, which we recognise need significant improvement.

We wholeheartedly support Ofsted's drive to raise the bar for safeguarding inspections; it's tougher for councils but better for children. Our challenge now is to make the improvements necessary to secure a 'Good' rating. At a time when Government budgets are reducing and case referrals are increasing we are facing a substantial challenge, but it is one we will rise to.

This document is not intended to replicate Ofsted's official report, which can be found here www.ofsted.gov.uk/local-authorities/nottingham it is designed to celebrate what we are doing well, acknowledge the improvements we need to make and explain the action we will take.

We must conclude by thanking the Children and Adults workforce. Time and time again the passion, commitment and professionalism of our teams has been recognised by Ofsted as something to be celebrated as truly special here in Nottingham. We are proud of the people who work tirelessly on behalf of the children and young people of our City. Our teams do the most important job in the world, they keep Nottingham children safe.

Thank you

Cllr David Mellen
Portfolio Holder for Children's Services
Nottingham City Council

Alison Michalska
Corporate Director for Children and Adults
Nottingham City Council

Paul Burnett
Independent Chair
Nottingham City Safeguarding Children Board

Children benefit from being able to access a wide range of effective early help services.



1 Children who need help and protection

What are Ofsted looking for?

In this judgement Ofsted are seeking to ensure that children and young people who are, or who are likely to be at risk of harm or who are the subject of concern, are identified and protected. Help is provided early in the emergence of a problem and is well co-ordinated through multi-agency arrangements. Thresholds between early help and statutory child protection work are appropriate, understood and operate effectively. Records of action and decisions are clear and up to date. Children and young people are listened to and heard. Social workers build effective relationships with them and their families in order to assess the likelihood of and capacity for change. Children and young people experience timely, multi-agency help and protection through risk-based assessment, authoritative practice, planning and review that secures change.

Ofsted have judged that the experiences and progress of children who need help and protection requires improvement

Verbal feedback from Ofsted identified the following strengths and areas for improvement:

Celebrating our strengths:

- Children benefit from being able to access a wide range of effective early help services.
- There is good use of the Family Support Strategy and Pathway and the Common Assessment Framework (CAF); Lead Practitioner role is well embedded in agencies in the City.
- The effective use of Step Up/Step Down processes supports escalation and de-escalation of cases between the Council's Family Community Teams and Children's Social Care Directorates.
- Children are visited regularly and they are seen alone where necessary.
- Young people receive help which is proportionate to the risk, avoiding unnecessary statutory interventions.
- The introduction of Children & Families Direct, a new service that ensures that professionals and members of the public have easy access to advice and expertise.
- There are effective systems to ensure that children who have been referred to the Children's Social Care Screening & Duty Team a number of times, but have not met the threshold, do not fall through the net.
- Assessments at the 'front door' are good at taking into account the Signs of Safety tool.
- The Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) role is managing allegations well, taking them seriously and dealing with them correctly.
- Families are well supported by the Disabled Children's Team; there is a variety of support services available and smooth transition of services.
- The Domestic Abuse Referral Team (DART) provides a thorough multi agency response to incidents of domestic violence.
- The Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC) and the Multi Agency Pregnant Liaison Group (MAPLG) provide effective multi agency support.
- Arrangements to protect children who are at risk of, or subject to, Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) and/or going missing are co-ordinated and satisfactory, they are subject to ongoing robust monitoring.
- Monitoring of Private Fostering arrangements is good and the statutory requirements are met.

1 Children who need help and protection continued

Identifying areas for improvement:

- The quality of assessments (including the CAF) can be variable; some lack basic information, the voice of the child is not always evident and some are not regularly updated.
- There are a number of Child in Need cases awaiting allocation to a social worker.
- Children's plans are not always SMART and outcome or child focussed.
- Escalation processes are not always used effectively by partners, particularly when parents do not engage with support. This can lead to drift.
- Issues with capacity in the Council's Independent Reviewing Team means that Independent Reviewing Officers (IROs) are not always able to follow up and challenge progress on recommendations made in conferences between meetings.
- Supervision needs to be more reflective.

Taking action to improve:

We had already planned to introduce our Continuous Assessment (to replace the Initial and Core Assessments) in April 2014. The re-design of this assessment form means that many of the issues identified by Inspectors have already been addressed.

Over the next few months we will look to review the templates for key plans to ensure that they support workers to be SMART and outcome focussed.

We will also set out clear standards with regards to how often plans and assessments should be updated.

We had already commissioned a review of our IT systems in late 2013 and we are now looking to develop a more detailed options appraisal and delivery plan to ensure we have a recording system that is fit for purpose.

We are also working to ensure that capacity in key teams meets the increasing demands in the children's social care system. We are recruiting additional Independent Reviewing Officers and Social Workers.



Young people benefit from warm, nurturing relationships with key staff and managers; and say that they feel safe where they live.

2 Children looked after and achieving permanence

What are Ofsted looking for?

In this judgement Ofsted are seeking to ensure decisions about children and young people becoming looked after are made using high-quality assessments about the risk of harm or actual harm to them and the likelihood of change in their family. Thresholds are clear and applied appropriately. Children and young people are listened to by social workers who know them well. Adults working with children and young people help them to understand and manage their early childhood experiences, to progress well and achieve educationally, and to influence decisions about their future. They return home with the support they need and when it is safe for them. If this is not possible, they live in stable placements where they are helped to build positive relationships and maintain contact with their family and friends where this remains in their best interests. Care plans are regularly reviewed to ensure that the child or young person's current and developing needs continue to be met. Permanent homes and families are found for children and young people without unnecessary delay. Their needs are met and they live with their brothers and sisters if that is assessed as being in their best interests. They do not experience placement disruption. They develop safe and secure relationships with adults that persist over time. When support is needed, children, young people and families are able to access it for as long as it is needed, throughout their childhood and beyond.

Ofsted have judged that the experiences and progress of children looked after and achieving permanence requires improvement

Verbal feedback from Ofsted identified the following strengths and areas for improvement:

Celebrating our strengths:

- Decisions to accommodate young people are made in their best interests.
- Children and young people at risk of coming into care are offered support. Our Edge of Care interventions and Panel enable children to remain at home if it is appropriate and safe for them to do so.
- Good use is made of legal proceedings including pre-proceeding work. This means that parents understand what needs to change and the consequences if changes are not made.
- Agreement about the best plan for a child in care is reached in a timely manner. There are good relationships with the courts and there is always consideration of all options to secure permanence for the child.
- Looked after Children are visited regularly and they are seen alone when necessary.
- Social Workers and other staff with whom Inspectors spoke expressed good understanding of the need to build positive relationships with children and young people; workers know their children well.
- Children know how to access support and how to complain, they have access to independent advocacy.
- Brothers and sisters are placed together wherever possible.
- There is a strong plan in place to recruit more Foster Carers which will provide better choice of carers for our children in care.
- Foster Carers' views are consistently sought; carers are passionate about the young people who lived with them and they had appropriate levels of delegated authority to make day to day decisions for children in their care.
- Stability of placements is generally good and many children live in Good or Outstanding provision which is well-matched to meet their individual needs.

2 Children looked after and achieving permanence continued

Identifying areas for improvement:

- Educational attainment for looked after children is a mixed picture. The quality of Personal Education Plans is variable and the Virtual School could be strengthened.
- Health assessments and Health Care Plans for looked after children are not always up to date or available on file.
- Improvements are required to ensure that we recruit more, local Foster Carers and that they are well supported and trained.
- Placement matching for some children is not as strong as we would like due to capacity issues in the market. Information is not always immediately available to carers to ensure that they are able to meet the needs of the child.

Taking action to improve:

We had already been working closely with health partners to address issues with medicals and plans for Looked after Children and over the next few months we will continue to drive performance across the partnership.

We will also be looking at how we can strengthen our Virtual School to ensure it is proactive in addressing barriers to learning and attainment for our children in care.

We have been working to improve our fostering and adoption processes to ensure that they are fit for purpose, meet all National Minimum Standards and offer good support to our carers.

We continue to seek caring families with the skills to offer a home to our vulnerable children.

2.1 Adoption performance

What are Ofsted looking for?

In this judgement Ofsted are seeking to ensure suitable adoptive families are identified without delay for all children for whom adoption is in their best interests. The recruitment and assessment arrangements are aligned with national systems and enable potential adopters to consider and to be considered for a wide range of children for whom they may provide a home. Children are able to develop safe and secure relationships with their adoptive family that persist over time. When support is needed, children, young people, families and carers are able to access it for as long as it is needed, throughout their childhood and beyond.

Ofsted have judged that the graded judgment for adoption performance requires improvement

Verbal feedback from Ofsted identified the following strengths and areas for improvement:

Celebrating our strengths:

- There is a year on year increase in the number of children being adopted.
- Potential adopters spoke of a positive experience.
- The new team of Adoption Placement Advisors are having a very positive impact on family finding. They are ambitious, creative and well thought of by Social Workers and families. There is good use of life story work.
- The new Marketing Strategy is attracting more people to adopt.
- Panel recommendations are robustly considered by the agency decision maker to ensure that every permanent placement is in the child's best interests.
- There are good examples of adoption packages, which are individualised and creative using a range of support services with good support from the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS).

Identifying areas for improvement:

- In most cases there was evidence of some delay in progressing plans for adoption and family finding wasn't always commenced quickly enough. Delays are not always challenged by the child's Independent Reviewing Officer.
- Permanency is considered at the second review although adoption wasn't always considered.
- When families request post-adoption support they do not always receive a package as quickly as we would like.
- There is no clear evidence of parallel/concurrent planning to ensure that children can be progressed as quickly as possible through the system.

Taking action to improve:

We are planning to review policies and procedures to ensure that our social care workforce understands and puts into practice concurrent planning where appropriate. Inspectors commented positively on our Adoption Placements Advisors which are new posts designed to improve the timeliness of family finding.

We are already seeing some improvements here and we will continue to monitor this over the coming months.

We will be looking more closely at post-adoption support to ensure that families receive a good package of support and receive a timely response to specific requests for help.

2.2 Experiences and progress of care leavers

What are Ofsted looking for?

In this judgement Ofsted are seeking to ensure that young people leaving care and preparing to leave care receive support and help to assist them in making a successful transition to adulthood. Plans for them to leave care are effective and address their individual needs. They are safe and feel safe, particularly where they live. Young people acquire the necessary level of skill and emotional resilience to successfully move towards independence. They are able to successfully access education, employment, training and safe housing. They enjoy stable and enduring relationships with staff and carers who meet their needs.

Ofsted have judged that the experiences and progress of care leavers requires improvement

Verbal feedback from Ofsted identified the following strengths and areas for improvement:

Celebrating our strengths:

- Young people benefit from warm, nurturing relationships with key staff and managers.
- Staff have a positive impact on the children they are working with.
- Pathways Plans are up to date and young people are involved in developing their own plans.
- There are high numbers of Care Leavers in suitable accommodation. The authority is performing very well compared with statistical neighbours and the close working relationship with Nottingham City Homes is a strength.
- Young people say that they feel safe where they live.
- Young unaccompanied asylum seekers receive appropriate and timely support to access accommodation.
- There is good support with the transition to independence and around basic skills (cooking, budgeting etc).
- The standard of statutory visits is met and in some cases exceeded.

Taking action to improve:

We are already working with Care Leavers to re-design the Pathway Plan template to ensure that it is concise and fit for purpose.

We will work closely with health partners to ensure that every child leaving care receives a 'health passport' with details of their full health history.

- Young people are given good advice about their rights.
- Health needs are addressed and young people understand how to access primary health care. Care Leavers readily have access to therapeutic services.
- Participation is a key strength. At the Children in Care Council individual opinions are valued and young people feel it is a safe environment. Care Leavers have good opportunities to contribute to service design and their contribution is valued.
- The Apprenticeship Programme for Care Leavers is a positive initiative.

Identifying areas for improvement:

- Pathway Plans were too lengthy and lacked rigorous analysis. Some young people reported that they felt their Pathway Plan had no impact on their life.
- Young people are not routinely provided with, nor know how to access their full health history.
- Too many Care Leavers are not in Education, Employment or Training.

The current economic climate means all young people are finding it hard to gain employment, or perhaps feel that they cannot afford to go to University. The partnership are working hard to ensure that Care Leavers have opportunities to access further education or find work.

We will keep a sharp focus on this issue through our Corporate Parenting Board.

The local authority has continued to invest in early intervention and prevention and there is evidence of the positive impact that this is having due to the rising attendance levels in primary schools.



3 Leadership, management and governance

What are Ofsted looking for?

In this judgement Ofsted are seeking to ensure that leadership, management and governance arrangements comply with statutory guidance and together establish an effective strategy and good-quality services for children, young people and their families.

There is a clear and up-to-date strategy for commissioning and developing services delivered by a suitably qualified and experienced workforce that meets the needs of local children and young people and families.

The Director of Children's Services (DCS), the lead elected member and the senior management team have a comprehensive knowledge about what is happening at the 'front line' to enable them to discharge their responsibilities effectively. They know and understand the difference that help, care and protection are making. They oversee systematic performance management and monitoring that demonstrate rigorous and timely action in response to service deficiencies or new demands.

The local authority works with partners to deliver early help, protect children and young people, improve educational attainment and narrow the gap for the children looked after and care leavers.

It acts as a strong and effective corporate parent for children looked after and those leaving or who have left care.

Leaders, both professional and political, drive continuous improvement so that the local authority is consistently effective as the lead agency for the protection and care of children and young people and as a corporate parent. Partnerships are supported by transparent and rigorous governance between the local authority and key statutory, private and voluntary organisations. Shared priorities are clear and resourced.

There is effective engagement with the relevant local partnerships including the Health and Well-being Board.

The DCS works closely with the LSCB chair and the chief executive holds the LSCB chair to account for the effectiveness of the LSCB.

Ofsted have judged that leadership, management and governance requires improvement

3 Leadership, management and governance continued

Verbal feedback from Ofsted identified the following strengths and areas for improvement:

Celebrating our strengths:

- Managers have lots of energy, commitment and ambition but there is not always clear prioritisation.
- Senior managers have a good understanding of the need for future development.
- The local authority has continued to invest in early intervention and prevention and there is evidence of the positive impact that this is having due to the rising attendance levels in primary schools.
- There is a well developed strategic framework; the architecture of governance is in evidence and there are good links between groups.
- Strategic priorities are clear and linked to Performance Indicators; there is a named manager for each of these.
- The Lead Member is highly visible and actively involved with services, he also has regular interaction with young people.
- There are good and effective partnerships especially with Health, Housing, the Police and local business. This is evident in the work around domestic violence and CAMHS.
- The local authority knows its communities well.

- The Corporate Parenting Board has helped with a variety of projects and schemes.
- The Chief Executive has good oversight of the Local Safeguarding Children Board and meets regularly with the Chair and Director of Children's Services (DCS); there is two-way challenge.
- There is an extensive dataset which is used to hold managers to account and to inform the work of the commissioning team.
- There is a committed workforce despite the challenges and difficulties they face.
- Staff noted that they feel well supported.

Identifying areas for improvement:

- Senior managers need to prioritise more effectively, for example ensuring Service Plans are SMART.
- There is a lack of clear strategy for Looked after Children's education.
- Delivery and performance monitoring needs to focus on evidencing outcomes for children, young people and families.
- Capacity is an issue for managers and caseloads are too high in some services. This means that the quality of supervision is variable with little time for reflection.
- The IT system causes a variety of issues for frontline workers.

Taking action to improve:

In order to respond to this feedback we will be looking at developing a clear, prioritised improvement plan that will take us to Good over the next three years.

This will feed into Service and Business Plans as well as team objectives. We will be looking to develop a clear vision for our Looked after Children's education and will be reviewing the role and remit of our Virtual School to help us deliver on this agenda.

We are already looking at where investment in additional workers is needed to manage increasing demands.



The LSCB has recently developed a strong local learning and improvement framework to gather and disseminate learning from Serious Case Reviews (SCRs) and Serious Incident Learning Processes (SILPs).

4 Review of the effectiveness of the Local Safeguarding Children Board



Verbal feedback from Ofsted identified the following strengths and areas for improvement:

Celebrating our strengths:

- There is good compliance against the key statutory guidance 'Working Together'.
- Attendance of the Board is good with the majority of members attending all meetings.
- The quarterly Safeguarding Assurance Forum effectively ensures strategic priorities are aligned. The Forum is effective in unblocking barriers and it ensures duplication of activity is avoided.
- The Independent Chair is held in high regard by partners. His roles with other local and national activity benefits the Board in Nottingham and it benefits children in Nottingham through shared experiences.
- There is good challenge to the Health and Wellbeing Board and Children's Partnership Board.
- The LSCB gives high priority to early help in planning.
- Sub groups have a good focus; there is increasing importance placed on Looked after Children and Missing Education.
- Sub groups are chaired by partners, which demonstrates their importance. The Chair provides good challenge and seeks accountability in terms of action plans.
- The LSCB has recently developed a strong local learning and improvement framework to gather and disseminate learning from Serious Case Reviews (SCRs) and Serious Incident Learning Processes (SILPs).
- Learning also informs core training and specific briefings around neglect and other key issues in the City.
- Multi agency audits are themed and specifically targeted; each audit is scoped in its own right to give effective monitoring.
- Section 11 audits are done every other year; year on year the LSCB has seen greater compliance across all agencies.
- Policies and procedures are in place and additional practice guidance is cascaded to staff. The move to the Tri-X system will bring a more rigorous approach to the updating and dissemination of policies.
- There is an increasing level of engagement between the LSCB and Youth Council.

What are Ofsted looking for?

In this judgement Ofsted are seeking to ensure that the Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB) complies with its statutory responsibilities in accordance with the Children Act 2004 and the Local Safeguarding Children Board Regulations 2006. The LSCB is able to provide evidence that it coordinates the work of statutory partners in helping, protecting and caring for children in its local area and there are mechanisms in place to monitor the effectiveness of those local arrangements. Multi-agency training in the protection and care of children is effective and evaluated regularly for impact on management and practice. The LSCB checks that policies and procedures in respect of thresholds for intervention are understood and operate effectively and identifies where there are areas for improvement. Challenge of practice between partners and casework auditing are rigorous and used to identify where improvements can be made in front-line performance and management oversight. Serious case reviews, management reviews and reviews of child deaths are used by the local authority and partners as opportunities for learning and feedback that drive improvement. The LSCB provides robust and rigorous evaluation and analysis of local performance that influence and inform the planning and delivery of high-quality services.

Ofsted have judged that the effectiveness of the Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB) requires improvement

4 Review of the effectiveness of the Local Safeguarding Children Board continued

Identifying areas for improvement:

- An ongoing refresh of the Threshold document is taking place across the partnership, but Children in Need still are not clearly identified as a cohort in the Family Support Pathway.
- Evaluation of the impact of training on individual practice is underdeveloped. Partners need to deliver frameworks in their own agencies that build learning and impact from training into their practice. This will assist in monitoring effectiveness.
- The 2012/13 LSCB Annual Report is not sufficiently analytical and is too descriptive. It does not look at service weakness, causes of weakness or action to address weakness.
- There is an escalation policy but this does not appear to be used by partners.
- The Performance Framework is developing but the views of children need to be better incorporated.
- Reporting between the Independent Chair and the Council's Overview and Scrutiny function could be further strengthened to ensure they are clear as to what the issues are.

Taking action to improve:

The Nottingham City Safeguarding Children Board (NCSCB) has already worked hard to ensure its Annual Report for 2013/14 is more analytical.

The Board have requested that the refresh of the Family Support Strategy and Pathway more clearly identify Children in Need as a key cohort that requires safeguarding, so this has been incorporated into recent versions.

Discussions will take place at the Board and Operational Management Group in the coming months to ensure that recommendations made about the evaluation of training, the use of the escalation policy and required developments to the Performance Framework are incorporated into the Board's plans for 2014/15.

¹ The Children Act 2004; www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2004/31/contents

² The Local Safeguarding Children Boards Regulations 2006; www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2006/90/regulation/5/made



Over the coming weeks and months the work and improvements already in progress, and those being planned, will be shared.

As we work together to ensure that our services are consistently 'Good' we will be engaging with all relevant colleagues and partners to ensure we provide Nottingham's children and families with the best possible outcomes.

We are grateful to colleagues and partners for their continued hard work and contribution.