



## **Nottingham City Council Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee**

**Date:** Thursday, 30 March 2023

**Time:** 11.00 am (pre-meeting for all Committee members at 10:30am)

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

**Councillors are requested to attend the above meeting to transact the following business**

**Director for Legal and Governance**

**Governance Officer:** Jane Garrard

**Direct Dial:** 0115 8764315

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|----------|---|----------------|
| <b>1</b> | <b>Apologies for absence</b>                                  |                |
| <b>2</b> | <b>Declarations of Interests</b>                              |                |
| <b>3</b> | <b>Minutes</b>  | <b>3 - 10</b>  |
|          | To confirm the minutes of the meeting held on 26 January 2023 |                |
| <b>4</b> | <b>Child Exploitation</b>                                     | <b>11 - 22</b> |

If you need any advice on declaring an interest in any item on the agenda, please contact the Governance Officer shown above, if possible before the day of the meeting.

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## **Nottingham City Council**

### **Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee**

**Minutes of the meeting held at Ground Floor Committee Room - Loxley House, Station Street, Nottingham, NG2 3NG on 26 January 2023 from 10.00 am - 12.15 pm**

#### **Membership**

##### **Present**

Councillor Carole McCulloch (Chair)  
Councillor Maria Joannou (Vice Chair)  
Councillor Georgia Power  
Councillor Samuel Gardiner

##### **Absent**

Councillor AJ Matsiko  
Councillor Shuguftah Quddoos  
Councillor Maria Watson  
Councillor Phil Jackson  
Councillor Cate Woodward

#### **Colleagues, partners and others in attendance:**

Councillor Cheryl Barnard	- Portfolio Holder for Children, Young People and Schools
Ailsa Barr	- Director for Children's Integrated Services
Sam Morris	- Head of Children's Strategy and Improvement
Lou Williams	- Independent Improvement Advisor and Chair of the Children at the Heart Improvement Board
Catherine Underwood	- Corporate Director for People

#### **29 Apologies for absence**

Councillor Phil Jackson – personal  
Councillor AJ Matsiko – unwell  
Councillor Shuguftah Quddoos – personal  
Councillor Maria Watson – personal  
Councillor Cate Woodward - personal

#### **30 Declarations of Interests**

None

#### **31 Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting held on 1 December 2022 were confirmed as an accurate record and signed by the Chair.

#### **32 Children's Integrated Services Improvement**

Councillor Cheryl Barnard, Portfolio Holder for Children, Young People and Schools, Catherine Underwood, Corporate Director for People, and Ailsa Barr, Director for Children's Integrated Services, presented the report on the response to the Ofsted Inspection and development of an improvement plan. They highlighted the following information:

- a) The Council has submitted an improvement plan to Ofsted, which has been accepted. It covers eight specific areas and progress will be monitored through the Improvement Board, which is chaired by an independent improvement advisor. The improvement activity dovetails with the transformation programme and its implementation is a priority for the Council.
- b) It is anticipated that the first monitoring visit by Ofsted will take place within the next couple of months and it is expected that it will focus on the multi-agency safeguarding hub (MASH).
- c) Support is being provided by the Department of Education in the form of some funding and access to resources, and support from an independent advisor to provide support and challenge, who is chairing the Improvement Board.

Lou Williams, independent advisor and chair of the Improvement Board, spoke to the Committee about his role, the role of the Improvement Board and his perspective on the Council's current position. He highlighted the following information:

- d) He is social work qualified and has previously worked at Peterborough and Cambridgeshire, who have faced similar challenges to Nottingham.
- e) He has been appointed to the role to provide challenge to the Council and support improvement through independent oversight.
- f) He is aware of the Council's financial challenges and transformation agenda, and has a relationship with the Improvement and Assurance Board.
- g) The Improvement Board meets monthly to provide oversight. It involves a range of senior leaders including the Chief Executive, Portfolio Holder and Leader of the Council. The Board receives reports on key issues, such as the workforce and considers the impact of sector-led improvement work and peer reviews. It will also receive feedback from Ofsted monitoring visits.
- h) Recently the Board has been looking at the 'front door' to children's services as this is very important for outcomes and likely to be the focus of the first Ofsted monitoring visit.
- i) Going forward, consideration will be given as to how the Board gets reports on wider service issues such as outcomes for children in care.
- j) In his view the Corporate Director, Director and Portfolio Holder have a real grip of the issues that need addressing and a lot has already been achieved in relation to the 'front door' to services. However, while there has been a lot of progress on a range of issues, there is more to do.

- k) The 'front door' to services is a really important area. Essex County Council has looked at the Council's 'front door' arrangements again and their findings are encouraging, with a better culture, less blame and more communication found to be in place. Decision making is more consistent and the timeliness of decision making has improved since the Ofsted inspection. Consent is still an issue. Work that partners do before referral is good and consent is a really important issue to address, enabling everyone who works with children to have difficult conversations. This is not simple to do but is the approach that must be taken. It requires training and experience to do well, alongside an understanding that everyone is there to get the best outcomes.
- l) The Ofsted outcome was very disappointment but there were positive comments, such as those relating to the commitment of staff. The inspectors also said that they had confidence in the senior leadership and he concurs with that view. Senior leaders understand the journey that needs to be made and are committed to achieving it.
- m) Key priorities for the next 12 months are:
  - a. sustaining the improvements that have been made while continue to improve other areas;
  - b. working with partners on early help and strengths based approaches and on consent
  - c. ensuring thresholds are consistent across the service
  - d. investing in frontline managers
- n) There are national workforce issues but it is positive that the Council's workforce is committed and work is taking place locally to review the way that posts are advertised which seems to be working and there is investment in retention schemes. As a result of this, and the work to improve culture and ensure visibility of leadership, immediate workforce challenges haven't happened in Nottingham.
- o) In terms of scrutiny of improvement activity, there needs to be a balance to allow leaders to get on with the work required and also recognition that improvement takes time and there may be periods when there is little to formally report on.
- p) There is a lot to do to secure consistently good outcomes and this will take time, but the service has good leadership, is promoting a good culture and is open to challenge.

In response to questions from the Committee and during subsequent discussion the following points were made:

- q) There has been no written response from Ofsted regarding the improvement plan submitted by the Council but they have verbally confirmed that they are content with it.
- r) Since September there have been monthly meetings of the Executive Board and the Partnership Board has met twice, with partners engaged and committed. This is very positive.

- s) Realistically it is likely to take 18-24 months to deliver sustained improvements. The experience of other local authorities in similar situations is that there has been approximately three years between inspections and the opportunity to be regraded. While 'Outstanding' should always be the aspiration, that requires an authority to have very low caseloads for staff and that can be challenging to achieve from a financial perspective. The immediate work is looking to achieve 'Good' in 2-3 years.
- t) The in-housing of housing functions to the Council presents opportunities for improving joint working on housing issues e.g. young people presenting as homeless. A joint visit to Children's Integrated Services and Housing from the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities is scheduled for April to ensure that the right procedures are in place, the right information is available and that quality assurance work is taking place to ensure that changes are resulting in the right outcomes.
- u) The improvement plan is primarily focused on responding to the issues raised by Ofsted but as part of wider service development other work is taking place, for example on exploitation, which is an area of risk that the Council needs to be very focused on. These sorts of issues are where the wider partnership is really important for getting involvement of partners such as the Police and schools. A key priority is to ensure that schools are appropriately supporting children and families and this will be part of the new early help strategy. While schools are stretched there is a very active network of designated safeguarding leads with attendance from every school in the City and that is a good opportunity to have these discussions. Schools also have their own duties and responsibilities that they have to fulfil.
- v) Conversations with partners about areas such as thresholds of need did start prior to the Ofsted inspection but they weren't actively talking about consent. Changes to the threshold document were made last year and conversations about consent started in spring 2022, and those are continuing. Over 200 designated safeguarding leads and others have signed up for training so far. Work to address issues of consent have started and it is in progress.
- w) The Service has reflected on its position and the causes of that, and opened its doors to get a fresh, independent view. Those reflections have been built into how the Service is managed in the future. It is hard to identify a single event/cause. Going forward, the Service needs to be clear how it assures itself on performance, including through feedback from children and families and benchmarking against others, and ensure a culture of continuous improvement.
- x) Due to timescales, the improvement plan was not co-produced with citizens but their feedback on impact will be important.
- y) The most significant risk to delivery of the improvement plan is workforce. Recruitment of social work apprentices has started with six starting in January to complete their degree within the next three years. Work is taking place to identify funding to repeat this in future years. Work is continuing with universities to offer placements for students, and through the Step Up to Social Work programme. Alongside recruitment of newly qualified social workers, the Council is also

looking at how to attract more experienced staff and extending the learning academy to differently qualified staff.

Ailsa Barr provided a detailed update on progress in addressing the issues relating to the 'front door' to services (the multi-agency safeguarding hub [MASH] and duty and assessment services), highlighting the following information:

- z) Areas of vulnerability were identified and work has taken place at pace to improve and build blocks to create confident permanent delivery of the service.
- aa) Managerial arrangements for the service have been reviewed. The span of responsibility was too wide and therefore an additional service manager post has been created so that both the MASH and Duty Teams have a dedicated manager.
- bb) Work is taking place with social work practitioners to review performance, identify good practice and address issues of drift and delay.
- cc) Eight additional social worker posts have been added to the MASH, which will help to reduce delays.
- dd) Daily views are taken of information to prioritise and respond to information, and daily performance information is analysed. The Council's Insight Team has assisted in developing this approach and performance information is compared with others. This information enables progress to be tracked in current time (rather than just retrospectively) and 'pinch points' identified and dealt with.
- ee) The information coming into the MASH continues to be reviewed, for example managers are reviewing the contacts that result in no further action to ensure they are correct. The audit work will provide assurance on that. Where cases are identified that should be on a different path, the learning will be taken from that.
- ff) The service is embedding a mystery shopper process, involving a social worker contacting the Service face-to-face, by telephone and in writing. When this was first done in autumn 2022 the response was inconsistent but, following reflections, the more recent repeat of this exercise has found improvements.
- gg) Essex County Council looked at the MASH in November 2021 and again in November 2022. It identified strengths that morale amongst staff is high with colleagues keen to support improvement; the changes in leadership have resulted in swift and purposeful change; staffing is in line with demand; responses are positive for staff and families; the relationship with the Duty team is positive; and there is a learning environment. Areas identified for development include consent; advice and information not always in the case management system; written processes and guidance are still in progress and not yet available; lack of formal induction for new staff resulting in risks that processes are not communicated properly; and a strengths based approaches are not evident in written work.

hh) The areas for development identified by Essex County Council are broadly in line with the Service's own assessment of progress, which gives assurance that work is moving in the right direction.

The Committee commented that this information about progress in addressing issues with the MASH was well-evidenced and reassuring.

The Committee sought reassurance that significant issues affecting progress on improvement will be reported to the Committee and it was suggested that the Portfolio Holder provide a brief verbal update at the start of every Committee meeting summarising key activity and highlighting any concerns that she feels is appropriate to bring to the Committee's attention.

### **33 Budget and Medium Term Financial Plan**

Councillor Cheryl Barnard, Portfolio Holder for Children, Young People and Schools, Catherine Underwood, Corporate Director for People, and Ailsa Barr, Director for Children's Integrated Services, presented the papers updating the Committee on progress in implementation of agreed savings for 2022/23 and budget proposals for 2023/24 relating to Children's Integrated Services.

In response to questions from the Committee and during subsequent discussion the following points were made:

- a) Having capacity to deliver changes to services and associated savings is important and, for example, as part of the transformation programme the Service has been clear about the requirements to achieve delivery.
- b) It is acknowledged that the process for offering leases to organisations to use buildings no longer required as children's centres has not been the smoothest. A new corporate landlord function is currently being implemented across the Council and will result in there being a team that are experts in property matters to deal with such activity in the future rather than it being led by service areas that do not have the necessary expertise and experience. Councillors welcomed this to avoid similar situations happening in the future. The Portfolio Holder commented on the need for a robust expression of interest process and that she is confident that the process is moving forward, but agreed that the new corporate landlord model will be an improvement for the future.
- c) It is important for the Council to be clear on the outcomes of proposals for service change and savings, and whether possible mitigations are a replacement for a Council service or not. Some Committee members felt that this hadn't always been clear in the past, with expectations raised that have not been delivered on.
- d) In response to a question about whether changes to early help services are in conflict with the transformation programme, it was explained that going forward a strengths based approach is being taken to supporting families and individuals and work is taking place to redesign early help services. Essex County Council has been asked to input into this redesign work.



- e) The delay to the start of the transformation programme means that, while savings will be of the same scale overall, there will be a delay in the financial impact. However, the delay has meant that the whole Service is able to move forward with a coherent programme of improvement 'Changing Lives Changing Futures' following the Ofsted inspection. It will take time to make and sustain this improvement.

The Committee felt that overall the proposals support getting children the right support at the right time and therefore, as long as there is sufficient capacity and capability to deliver those changes, the Committee was comfortable with what was being proposed.

Nick Lee, Director of Education, presented a paper updating the Committee on progress in implementation of agreed savings for 2022/23 and budget proposals for 2023/24 relating to the Education Division. He highlighted the following information:

- f) The saving relating to disposal of the vacant Thorneywood Hospital School building and site has not been fully achieved because there has been a delay in securing formal approval to dispose of the site. The Council is continuing to press the Department for Education for a decision to approve the disposal and in the meantime the savings shortfall has been offset by increased income generation elsewhere in the wider service area.
- g) There are three proposals for savings in the 2023/24 budget including passenger transport in the Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Team, fully funding statutory duties in relation to the Education Welfare Service, School Attendance and Employment Licensing from the Dedicated Schools Grant Schools Block; and removing the subsidy from Curriculum Service Projects relating to the Adventure Team, School Swimming and Why Nott Transport and deletion of a vacant post in the team.

**Resolved to submit a comment to the consultation on the budget 2023/24 outlining that the Committee:**

- (1) is supportive of the proposals relating to children's integrated services in dovetailing with the transformation programme and having potential to improve outcomes alongside making financial savings, but has concerns about capacity and capability to manage and deliver savings; and**
- (2) is supportive of the proposal for additional resource to support the Council's scrutiny committees in carrying out their role in relation to good governance of the organisation.**

### **34 Work Programme**

The Committee noted the items scheduled for its meeting in March, and discussed plans for the municipal year 2023/24.

**Resolved to explore the possibility of holding meetings of the Committee more frequently, with support for increasing officer capacity to facilitate this.**



**Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee  
30 March 2023**

**Child Exploitation**

**Report of the Statutory Scrutiny Officer**

**1 Purpose**

- 1.1 To consider how children and young people at risk of exploitation are identified, safeguarded and supported.

**2 Action required**

- 2.1 The Committee is asked:
- a) whether it wishes to make any comments and/or recommendations;  
and
  - b) if any further scrutiny is required and, if so, the focus.

**3 Background information**

- 3.1 The Committee identified that it wanted to look at how the Council and its partners ensure that children who are at risk of exploitation are identified, safeguarded and supported.
- 3.2 A report has been submitted detailing information in relation to children who go missing from home, how child exploitation is responded to and the strategic approach to addressing child exploitation in Nottingham. The Portfolio Holder for Children, Young People and Schools, Director of Children's Integrated Services and lead officers will be attending the meeting to discuss this with the Committee and answer questions.

**4 List of attached information**

- 4.1 'Report on Child Exploitation in Nottingham City' from Corporate Director for People and Portfolio Holder for Children, Young People and Schools

**5 Background papers, other than published works or those disclosing exempt or confidential information**

- 5.1 None

**6 Published documents referred to in compiling this report**

- 6.1 None

**7 Wards affected**

7.1 All

## **8 Contact information**

8.1 Jane Garrard, Senior Governance Officer  
[jane.garrard@nottinghamcity.gov.uk](mailto:jane.garrard@nottinghamcity.gov.uk)  
0115 8764315

<b>Meeting Title</b>	Children and Young People's Scrutiny Committee
<b>Report Title</b>	Report on Child Exploitation in Nottingham City
<b>Meeting Date</b>	30 <sup>th</sup> March 2023

<b>Corporate Director(s)/Director(s):</b>	Catherine Underwood, Corporate Director for People Ailsa Barr, Director for Children's Integrated Services
<b>Portfolio Holder(s):</b>	Councillor Cheryl Barnard
<b>Report author and contact details:</b>	John Matravers, Head of Service – Safeguarding & Quality Assurance <a href="mailto:john.matravers@nottinghamcity.gov.uk">john.matravers@nottinghamcity.gov.uk</a> Nicole Harris – Head of Service – Fieldwork Services <a href="mailto:nicole.harris@nottinghamcity.gov.uk">nicole.harris@nottinghamcity.gov.uk</a>

## Summary of issues:

This report provides information on key activity in relation to child exploitation and missing children in Nottingham City. The report demonstrates how we ensure that children who go missing from home and are at risk of exploitation are identified, safeguarding and supported.

Working Together to Safeguard Children 2018 specifically identifies the following risks under the term **contextual safeguarding** and acknowledges that children may be vulnerable to multiple threats:

- Exploitation by criminal gangs and organised crime groups such as County Lines
- Trafficking
- Online abuse
- Sexual exploitation
- Extremism leading to radicalisation

## Recommendation(s):

1. This report is for information, discussion and challenge.

## 1. Background

- 1.1 Exploitation is a form of abuse. Child exploitation occurs when an individual or group takes advantage of an imbalance of power to coerce, manipulate or deceive a child or young person into an activity that results in financial or other advantage for the perpetrator or facilitator.
- 1.2 Specific types of exploitation include:
  - Modern slavery (including human trafficking)
  - Sexual Exploitation
  - Criminal Exploitation
  - Financial Exploitation

- 1.3 Multiple types of exploitation can occur alongside one another or as part of other forms of abuse.
- 1.4 The national strategy, Tackling Child Sexual Abuse Strategy 2021, defines Child Sexual Exploitation: forcing or enticing a child or young person to take part in sexual activities, not necessarily involving violence, or whether the child is aware of what is happening. The activities may involve physical contact, and may also include non-contact activities, such as involving children watching sexual activities, encouraging children to behave in sexually inappropriate ways, or grooming a child in preparation for abuse. Sexual abuse can take place online, and technology can be used to facilitate offline abuse.
- 1.5 Home Office guidance defines Child Criminal Exploitation as: where an individual or group coerce, control, manipulate or deceive a child or young person under the age of 18 to take part in criminal activities, including but not exclusively County Lines. The victim may have been criminally exploited even if the activity appears consensual. Child Criminal Exploitation does not always involve physical contact; it can also occur through the use of technology.
- 1.6 The national strategy has three Objectives:
  - Tackling all forms of child sexual abuse and bringing offenders to justice
  - Preventing offending and re-offending
  - Protecting and safeguarding children and young people and supporting all victims and survivors.

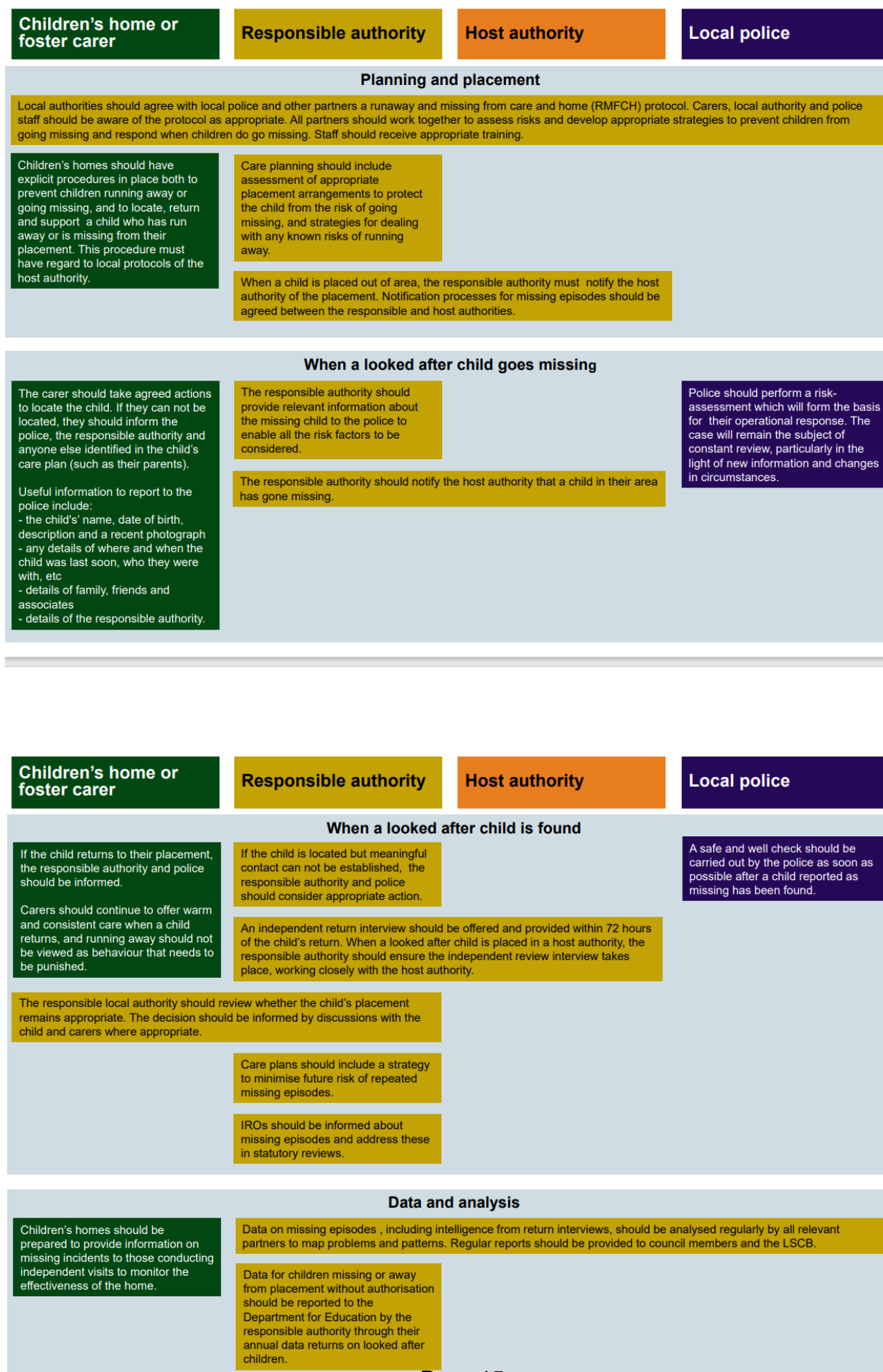
## **2. Key Issues:**

- 2.1 This report provides information on key activity in relation to child exploitation and missing children in Nottingham City. The report demonstrates how we ensure that children who go missing from home and are at risk of exploitation are identified, safeguarded, and supported.

## **3. Missing from Home**

- 3.1 Children who go missing, particularly those who repeatedly go missing from home or care can be more vulnerable and at risk of forms of exploitation. The statutory guidance which underpins the responsibilities of local authorities is set out by the Department for Education and specifically outlines additional responsibilities in relation to Looked after Children (children in care) in the event that they are missing [Statutory guidance on children who run away or go missing from home or care \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://www.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/672222/Statutory_guidance_on_children_who_run_away_or_go_missing_from_home_or_care.pdf)
- 3.2 The flow chart on the next page sets out the responsibilities in respect of children who are missing from care as per the statutory guidance:

The following chart shows the main steps that need to be taken when a child goes missing from local authority care, and where responsibility lies for those steps. It should be read alongside the full statutory guidance on children who run away or go missing from home or care, and is not intended to be a comprehensive list of actions.



- 3.3 The statutory guidance requires local authorities to develop a protocol with the local police service to set out response to all children who run away or go missing in their area. In accordance with the guidance Nottingham City Council and Nottinghamshire County Council have jointly developed a protocol with Nottinghamshire police service, this is set out in the joint [Children Missing from Home and Care Protocol](#). This protocol relates to all children who go missing from their homes, it does not singularly relate to children in care.
- 3.4 When a child is reported as missing it is required that the level of risk is assessed by the police, the local protocol determines that a missing child will either be assessed as medium or high risk as opposed to low risk. The police risk assessment will take account of information gathered from the professional partnership as well as information from the child's parents/carers and will guide the police response.
- 3.5 Every child who goes missing must be offered a return home interview once they are found. The return home interview should be undertaken within 72 hours of the child returning home, it is the responsibility of the local authority to ensure that this work is completed and the statutory guidance recommends that it is best carried out by an independent person (i.e. someone not involved in caring for the child) who is trained to carry out these interviews and is able to follow-up any actions that emerge.
- 3.6 The role of the Nottingham City missing children's team is to act as a central point of contact for all missing children notifications and to undertake the return home interview, attend multi-agency meeting and if required refer to children's social care in line with the joint Nottinghamshire and Nottingham City Children's Safeguarding procedures which can be viewed at: [Children Missing from Home and Care Protocol](#).
- 3.7 When considering the prevalence of children who go missing from home or care it is challenging to understand the local context as compared to others as there is not published national data in relation to this. There is, however, national data in relation to the prevalence of missing in relation to children who are looked after (in care) by the local authority. This data indicates that over the last 5 years there has been a rise nationally of children in care going missing and with a dip during 2020/21 which it is believed has a direct link with covid and the national lock-downs.
- 3.8 Exploration of the data (table 1) indicates the following:
- The rate of children who had a missing incident in Nottingham has increased at a slower rate than our statistical neighbours (local authorities which have similar demographics determined by the DfE)
  - The percentage of children in care who have missing incident is slightly higher than statistical neighbours and the East Midlands region
  - The number of missing incidents per year has reduced in Nottingham whereas it has risen across the statistical neighbours and the East Midlands region
  - The average number of missing incidents per child is in line with statistical neighbours and the rest of East Midlands
  - The number of Nottingham child in care who went missing more than once during the year has only slightly risen as compared to more substantial rises in the statistical neighbour group and across the East Midlands.



		2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22
Children who had a missing incident during the year	Number	88	85	82	77	97	99	98	115	99	111	550	640	780	660	820
Children looked after during the year	Number	830	838	868	876	944	1,084	1,111	1,127	1,107	1,130	7,700	7,900	8,200	8,360	8,720
Percentage of whom had a missing incident during the year	%	11	10	9	9	10	9	9	10	9	9	7	8	10	8	9
Missing incidents during the year	Number	439	349	263	248	393	571	551	697	660	652	2,730	3,310	4,400	3,660	4,680
Average number of missing incidents per looked after child who went missing	Average	5	4	3	3	4	6	6	6	7	6	5	5	6	6	6
Children who went missing more than once during the year	Number	54	50	45	39	55	63	59	66	63	72	340	400	480	400	510

Table 1: Nottingham, statistical neighbour, and regional information in respect of missing information as relates to children in care

- 3.9 It is essential that children who go missing receive a swift and thorough response from practitioners skilled at supporting them to share information and who can assess the level of risk posed to the child.
- 3.10 A return home interview is an opportunity to discover information to help protect the child from going missing again, to reduce the instances of going missing and to reduce risks they may have been exposed to while missing or in their home.
- 3.11 The statutory guidance determines that the return home interview should:
- Identify and respond to any harm the child has suffered (this may or may not have been disclosed as part of the 'safe and well check') either before they ran away or while missing.
  - To understand and try to address the reasons why the child ran away.
  - To understand who they were with when missing and where they were found.
  - To understand what future risk there is of going missing.
  - Help the child feel safe and to understand they have options to prevent or reduce repeat instances of running away.
  - Provide the child with information on how to stay safe if they choose to run away again, including helpline numbers. g. Identify the support, in the form of a plan of action, the child requires on returning home or to their care placement.
- 3.12 Return home interviews should take place in a neutral setting where the child feels safe and be undertaken by an independent person who has sufficient knowledge and skill of working with children. It should not be someone involved in caring for the child; residential care staff or foster carers should not undertake the return home interview. The return home interview must take place with 72 hours of notification that the child has returned home.

- 3.13 The Ofsted inspection of children's services in July 2022 identified that improvement work was required to improve the quality and timeliness of return home interviews. Work has commenced to ensure greater oversight of this work and increased capacity to ensure improved timeliness of this work. The Missing Children's Team has increased resources since January 2023 with the recruitment of a Team Manager in addition to the existing 2 Children's Workers. Recruitment to 2 further Children's Worker posts is underway to double the capacity of the team. These workers shall be in place in April 2023. We are seeking to establish a stable and diverse team which will ensure that the children of Nottingham have access to a range of independent professionals who can support them following missing episodes.
- 3.14 There is no national data to allow us to compare to other local authorities in relation to completion of return home interviews. However, we know that our current timeliness in relation to completion of return home interviews needs to improve and we are committed to ensuring that this happens through the commitment of increased resourcing, development of improved performance reporting and the addition of a dedicated manager post who will have lead responsibility for improving both timeliness and quality in relation to this work. Currently we achieve 28% of return home interviews within 3 calendar days of children returning home after a missing period. The timescales in the national guidance are challenging therefore dedicated management oversight of this work is essential to support and ensure improvement in this area.
- 3.15 Since the Team Manager has been in post since January 2023, they have undertaken observation of the Missing Children's Teams Workers, by accompanying colleagues when they undertake return home interview with children who have been reported as missing to assess the quality of the interviews taking place. This will continue to happen along with a monthly programme of auditing and dip sampling.
- 3.16 With the completion of successful recruitment for additional children's workers we anticipate being able to demonstrate clear improvement in respect of both timeliness and quality of missing from home interviews. This is an area of focus during the next 3-6 months of our improvement work.

#### **4. Responding to child exploitation**

- 4.1 Councils have a duty under the Children Act 2004 to work with local police and health partners to safeguard and promote the welfare of children in their area. Local authority children's services departments are responsible for carrying out assessments of children deemed at risk of significant harm and working with partners to put in place plans to keep children safe where necessary. If a child has been being exploited, there may be a need for close collaboration across areas if this has taken place across borders, for example in the case of county lines.
- 4.2 There are Safeguarding Partners in each area who will work collaboratively to strengthen the child protection and safeguarding system in the local area. They will consist of the local authority, the integrated care board (ICB) for any area that falls under the LA, and the chief officer of police for any area that falls under the LA.
- 4.3 Working Together to Safeguard Children (2018) is the statutory guidance outlines the responsibilities of councils and partners in relation to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children. The guidance applies to all organisations and agencies who have functions relating to children, including all councils, NHS, police, education, faith-based organisations and sports clubs.

4.4 The principles underpinning the response to the exploitation of children include:

- Child sexual exploitation is a form of child sexual abuse
- Exploited children should be treated as victims, not offenders
- Exploitation includes sexual, physical, and emotional abuse and can also include neglect
- Children do not make informed choices to enter or remain in exploitation, but do so from coercion, control, enticement, manipulation, or desperation
- Children who are, or at risk of, being exploited will have varying levels of needs. They may have multiple vulnerabilities and therefore an appropriate multi-agency response and effective coordination and communication is essential

4.5 During the Ofsted inspection of children's services in July 2022 there was identification of positive practice in relation to practice in respect of responding to risk associated with exploitation. The report says: "Children who are at risk from criminal and sexual exploitation receive detailed assessments in which risk factors are identified and effective analysis of the impact of criminal and sexual exploitation on young people and their families is provided. Multi-agency meetings and subsequent planning lead to plans that effectively reduce risks to children. Plans are reviewed regularly, with actions being updated in recognition of changes in children's circumstances." However, this area of work is not static, and it is important that we remain well linked to other local authorities in order to further develop good practice and learn from others where appropriate.

4.6 In Nottingham if there are concerns about the safety of a child who may be at risk of or experiencing exploitation, a referral is made to the Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) where screening is undertaken to identify next steps. To make an informed decision the team share and gather information from partner agencies, children and their families and the most appropriate intervention is agreed in response to the child or young person's identified needs. The outcome of this screening could be signposting for Early Help services or for a detailed Children and Family Assessment to be completed by a Qualified Social Worker. An exploitation toolkit will be completed as part of this process to consider evidence of exploitation and inform analysis of the risk that may be being posed to the child.

4.7 All completed exploitation toolkits are reviewed by a Child Protection Coordinator to consider the level of risk identified. For children identified to be at medium or high risk of exploitation; a multi-agency Exploitation Risk Assessment Meeting (ERAM) will be convened. This meeting is chaired by an independent Child Protection Coordinator and is attended by partner agencies supporting the child including Police, Health and Education colleagues as well as other appropriate professionals. The child and their parents/carers will also be supported to attend the meetings.

4.8 The purpose of the meeting is to share all the information with partner agencies, to build a picture of what is happening in that child's life. It is also to identify other young people or adults who the child associates with who may be at risk or who may pose a risk. At the end of the meeting, a risk rating will be identified (low, medium or high) and a plan of multi-agency support agreed. These actions will aim to reduce risk, support children in their understanding of exploitation, prevent further harm and focus on holding perpetrators of exploitation to account.

- 4.9 Child exploitation toolkits are updated at regular intervals of following significant events to track the impact of intervention and review the level of risk posed to the child. ERAM meetings take place at regular intervals to review the risk level. For children identified to be at High risk, the meetings will take place every 8 weeks (minimum), those assessed to be at medium risk will be reviewed every 12 weeks (minimum). For children identified to be at low risk, a review meeting can be convened in response to changing risk levels or significant incidents.
- 4.10 Multi Agency Child Exploitation (MACE) meetings are held monthly to provide clear and consistent identification and assessment of children at risk of child exploitation. This meeting is attending by senior representatives from statutory partners including Social Care, Police, Health, Education, Substance Misuse Services, Voluntary Sector and Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services. The purpose of this meeting is to discuss children (or groups) identified to be at the highest risk, identify hotspot areas of the city where there is heightened activity increasing risk of exploitation, to identify targeted action which can be taken to disrupt the exploitation of vulnerable children and to ensure that there is effective information sharing across key professionals.
- 4.11 Services available to support children at risk of exploitation include:
- Parents against child exploitation (PACE) training for parents and carers
  - Outreach, mentoring and risk reduction work from the voluntary sector including Stronger People; Breaking Barriers, Building Bridges; Switch Up
  - Young people's groups including activity-based groups such as boxing activities
  - Sexual health services provided by Nottingham University Hospitals
  - Trafficking support team provided by Barnardos.
- 4.12 Services to children who are at risk of exploitation are delivered in partnership with statutory partners and the voluntary sector. These services include focusing on providing parents with increased understanding and strategies support their care of their children; as well as direct opportunities for children themselves to increase their understanding, offer opportunities for sharing their experiences and for positive intervention.

## **5 Strategic approach to addressing child exploitation in Nottingham City**

- 5.1 There are many cross-cutting themes regarding exploitation in Nottingham that require close working with Nottinghamshire County Council. Therefore, both Safeguarding Children Partnerships have established the Cross Partnership Contextual Safeguarding Strategic Management Group. The group considers all elements of the national definition of exploitation and defines what areas of contextual safeguarding the group will focus on. Key Partners from Health, Police and Education are members of the group.
- 5.2 Its overarching aim is to:
- provide a strategic focussed, coordinated and integrated response to contextual safeguarding across Nottingham City and Nottinghamshire.
  - provide overarching governance of the various work streams and formulate a response to local and national learning.
  - provide assurance to the statutory partners through oversight of the multi-agency response.

- 5.3 Its role and function are to develop a Contextual Safeguarding Strategy and work plan, on behalf of both partnerships, that sets an approach and supports oversight of the co-ordinated response.
- 5.4 The work plan will include, but not be limited to, addressing the challenges posed by the recent National Child Safeguarding Practice Review: Safeguarding Children at Risk of Criminal Exploitation.
- 5.5 The four main areas to be addressed by the group are:
- Problem identification
  - Support for the workforce
  - Service design and practice development
  - Quality Assurance
- 5.6 The group requests specific reports as deemed necessary to inform understanding of the local performance its effectiveness and impact. It will link to regional groups through shared attendees providing relevant information and updates.
- 5.7 The group reports to the Business Management Group (BMG) in Nottingham City and the Safeguarding Assurance and Improvement Group (SAIG) in Nottinghamshire. Commencing in June 2023 they will report annually to the Senior Leadership Group of the Children's Safeguarding Partnership.

## **6. Areas for Development**

- 6.1 Within the Children's Integrated Services we recognise that addressing exploitation is a key focus. It is essential that we are focused on ongoing and continuous service improvement to ensure the best outcomes for children. To ensure further service improvement activity planned in this area over the coming months includes:
- Expansion of the Missing Children's Team through recruitment should lead to increased capacity by the team by April 2023; this will lead to increased performance in relation to timescales of Missing Return Interviews meaning more children will receive a timely response to any missing episodes
  - Exploitation will be a focus of partnership training and development workshops due to take place from May 2023 and which will be repeated every 3 months throughout the year. The focus of these sessions will include:
    - Identifying and recognising signs of exploitation
    - Appropriate use of language when working with young people at risk of exploitation
    - Completion of the exploitation toolkit to identify and assess risk posed to children at risk of exploitation
    - Partnership working to respond to exploitation
  - Implementation of practice guidance for Social Workers to support best practice to identify, assess and support children at risk of exploitation. This has been written and will be shared with the Social Work teams by the end of March 2023.
  - A review of MACE and CCE Panel is taking place to ensure the meetings offer effective strategic oversight of activity across the partnership focused on addressing exploitation. There is a joint commitment and priority between Children's Services and the Police to ensure there is targeted focus on hotspot areas in the City linked to increased risk of exploitation as well as a focus on holding perpetrators of exploitation to account for their actions. This will be completed by end of April 2023.

