

## Corporate Parenting Board – 26<sup>th</sup> July 2021

<b>Title of paper:</b>	<b>Children in Care and Care Leaver Strategy Review</b>	
<b>Director(s)/ Corporate Director(s):</b>	Helen Watson, Interim Director for Children's Integrated Services Catherine Underwood, Corporate Director for People	<b>Wards affected: All</b>
<b>Report author(s) and contact details:</b>	Treza Mann, Interim Service Manager for Children in Care and Leaving Care Services	
<b>Other colleagues who have provided input:</b>	Tajinder Madahar, Head of Duty, Housing Aid, Children in Care and Leaving Care Services	
<b>Date of consultation with Portfolio Holder(s) (if relevant)</b>	5 <sup>th</sup> July 2021	
<b>Relevant Council Plan Key Theme:</b>		
Nottingham People		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Living in Nottingham		<input type="checkbox"/>
Growing Nottingham		<input type="checkbox"/>
Respect for Nottingham		<input type="checkbox"/>
Serving Nottingham Better		<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Summary of issues (including benefits to citizens/service users):</b>		
<p>This report provides an update to the Corporate Parenting Board against the priorities and actions outlined in the Children in Care (CiC) and Care Leaver (CL) Strategy.</p>		
<b>Recommendation(s):</b>		
<b>1</b>	To note the progress made with regards to delivery of the Children in Care and Care Leaver Strategy.	
<b>2</b>	To note that a refresh of the Strategy is being prepared for consideration by the Board in September 2021.	

### 1 Reasons for recommendations

- 1.1 As Corporate Parents, we are required to publish a CiC and CL Strategy, to outline how we will work together to deliver good support and services for this cohort of vulnerable children and young people.

### 2 Background (including outcomes of consultation)

#### Leadership Changes

- 2.1 There have been some key changes in Leadership roles following the tragic loss of Helen Blackman, our Director for Children's Integrated Services. Helen Watson has been covering this role as the Interim Director, and recruitment has recently commenced.

- 2.1 With the previous Head of Children in Care leaving in January 2021, we now have 2 Heads of Service; Tajinder Madahar as Head of Children's Duty, Children in Care, Leaving Care and Housing Aid. We have a separate Head of Service for Regulated Services; Mary Ann Cosgrove who is commencing the role at the beginning of August. This post is currently covered by Sharon Clarke, covering Children's Residential, Fostering and Adoption, Permanency Team and the Placement Service.
- 2.3 Alison Wakefield, Service Manager for Children in Care and Leaving Care has also left the service and this role is being covered in the interim by Treza Mann.

#### Covid-19

- 2.4 During the Covid-19 pandemic and resulting lockdowns the Council has followed Government guidance and the safety of staff, the professional network, children, young people and families has remained our priority. There has been continued and managed use of PPE in day to day practice. We have needed to change our ways of working at times due to the pandemic restrictions and carers and children being worried about face to face visits. We know some young people have engaged more with their allocated worker through virtual means and have expressed preference to continue this as practices have returned to normal.
- 2.5 We have seen some significant impact on health data during the pandemic which we are working on to address since restrictions have relaxed.

#### Survey Feedback

- 2.6 The **Have Your Say** survey previously identified three specific areas for further focus through Children in Care Council meetings. Progress against these areas has been impacted by Covid-19, however this remains is a focus going forward.

#### **a) Changing the culture of care**

We are working towards ensuring that children in care have stability through permanent living arrangements. We have established a tracking system to identify all children in care who have been in a stable placement for 12 months to consider if the carer is able to offer permanency through long term fostering for the child if it is in their interest. We are able to address barriers to achieving this. We are assessing the potential for children to return to their parents or wider family through 2 projects; STARS and Reunification, each one has staff who work closely with children, young people and families to support with the transition and permanency.

#### **b) Improving opportunities for CiC and Care Leavers to prepare for independent living and successful adulthood**

Through a newly established Transitions Panel we are identifying the support young people may need to support their independence plan. Through this work we are identifying additional support that can be accessed with referrals to Adult Service post 18, Aspirations Champion, ASDAN, and the Local Offer

### c) **Supporting the Have Your Say survey**

We are engaging more care experienced children and care leavers to support as peer interviewers to encourage more children in care and care leaver to share their views, experiences and ideas for change.

We are looking at more opportunities for care experienced young people to be involved in training of social workers and foster carers, and participate in recruitment processes for Children's Social Care staff.

Although this survey was an electronic version due to Covid-19, it has had limited success, therefore the PA's have encouraged care leavers to visit the office and speak to them on a 1-1 level to complete their survey. Going forward we are recognising that a range of approaches to seek feedback is necessary.

#### Mind of my Own

- 2.7 Nottingham City is currently using Mind of my Own, an application (app) designed to help further capture the child's voice in a digital forum. The use of the app by children in care remains low and we need to understand the barriers to address this. We are continuing to roll out training on the use of Mind of My Own to frontline staff and including the training for Independent Reviewing Officers who chair our CiC Reviews so that they can promote the use of the App. We have also worked with foster carers to increase their confidence in the use of the App so that they can support children in care to have their wishes and feelings captured.

#### CiC Reviews

- 2.8 The outturn for 2020-21 the percentage of children in care (aged over 4years) who had participated in their statutory review stood at 91.7%. As at the end of May 2021, the year to date stood at 94.2% The IRO's are visiting children and young people in between their reviews or via virtual calls to also seek views from children.

#### Care Leavers Local Offer

- 2.9 The Local Offer is uploaded to Ask Lion webpage to support Care Leavers. The Local Offer, seeks to increase access to an Aspiration Champion, which provides mentoring support, and work experience within the city council.
- 2.10 Following changes introduced through the Children and Social Work Act 2017, Care Leavers will be able to ask for support from a Personal Advisor up to the age of 25, whether they are in education or training or not. We have been asked to complete a survey, something the DfES had committed to review at the time the new requirements came into force. Whilst the DfES had undertaken an assessment of the financial burden, it had been difficult to assess how many young people would continue to want Personal Advisor support. This survey is being completed for the 27<sup>th</sup> July 2021. In addition to this survey the DfES have had a series of "deep dive" discussions with a number of local authorities to collect more detailed information.

## Jobs

- 2.11 ASDAN courses provide young people with the opportunity to achieve employability qualifications (from entry level to level 2). The training programme commenced on 5th July 2021 which offers training to staff from the Leaving Care Service, internal residential staff, trainers from the workforce development, Independent Reviewing Officers, fostering service and Barnardo's, this was to ensure practitioners could then continue this training within their own work settings, and encourage learning opportunities for Care Leavers. This will be rolled out to everyone, starting with the internal residential homes, fostering carers, semi independence and this will lead to internal agencies.

## Work Experience

- 2.12 We now have an Aspiration Champions scheme which has recruited volunteers from within the Council and Partners to support care leavers through a mentoring scheme. This is not live just yet, due to still recruiting staff across the council, to support care leavers, however, 16 Aspiration Champions have fully signed up. 11 more are currently undergoing the training process. One young person has signed up so far (and a successful match has been made).
- 2.13 Staff from the Leaving Care Service will be able to set up more work experience and work tasters internally within the City Council. This will be coordinated through the Aspirations Champion referrals and our internal Education, Employment and Training co-ordinator (EETC) with support from our dedicated FUTURES workers at Leaving Care.

## Apprenticeships

- 2.14 The Employability Service have been currently delivering the Nottingham Works 4 You (NW4U) programme since April 2021. This Project is recognised and supported by the Department of Works and Pensions (DWP), maintaining the criteria for eligibility for Universal Credit claim, and move onto Education, Employment and Training (EET). The project is specifically for Nottingham City Care Leavers to support them with training into positive outcomes of EET. The designated Employability Training & Support Coordinator supports activities to extend employment opportunities and develop a skilled workforce. They have close links with alternative provisions to support young people into college and training, such as Catch 22. They encourage Care Leavers to take employment opportunities within Nottingham City Council as a Corporate Parent and accommodate in house support where necessary. Currently this has been on hold across the Local Authority due to Covid19, however, as restrictions are now easing, this will be progressing as normal.

## CiC CAMHS

- 2.15 A dedicated CiC CAMHS service is jointly commissioned by the Greater Notts CCG and Nottingham City Local Authority to support with emotional and mental health needs of children in care. The team provides a specialist service and training to support and maintain the emotional and mental health needs of our young people. The team also ensures the emotional health needs of young people are reflected in care planning.

## Health Outcomes

- 2.16 In May 2021, our performance headlines in relation to health were as follows:
- 82.8% of children in care have had a health assessment recorded in the last 12 months.
  - 57.4% of children in care have had a dental check recorded in the last 12 months
  - 75% of children in care have had a strengths and difficulties questionnaire (SDQ) recorded in the last 12 months.
- 2.17 All of the above have been impacted by the Covid19 pandemic; dental checks being the most impacted due to lockdown periods when dentists remained shut. We are working with health partners and carers to rectify this now that restrictions have been lifted. Dental treatment was still accessible for our children in care.

## CIC Police Officers

- 2.18 Since 2006 Nottingham City have had an established Children in Care Police Officer (CICPO) post which continues to be jointly funded by Nottinghamshire Police and Nottingham City Council. In January 2018 a second CICPO joined us and we are pleased to report that capacity for the role in the City has now been permanently expanded to two Police Officers. It may be noted that in March 2020, Nottinghamshire Police also successfully recruited a CICPO for the County, jointly funded by Nottinghamshire County Council. This was provide parity of service and improve outcomes for children across Nottinghamshire.
- 2.19 Up until (and including) the year 2016/17 we were able to report a 5 year trend in reducing offending behaviour within the children in care population. In 2017/18 we maintained our performance in terms of the numbers of children in care who offended. The figure for 2018/19 reduced to 3%. We can now report a figure of 4% for 2019/20. This is felt to represent a maintenance of performance. It may be noted that data is rounded to the nearest whole number, and figures are now so low that some fluctuation is likely to appear significant.

2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
9.80%	9%	9.80%	8.70%	8.20%	6%	6%	5%	6%	3%	4%

(Source <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/local-authority-interactive-tool-lait>)

- 2.20 We are encouraged that other Authorities continue to seek out advice and guidance from Nottingham City regarding reducing criminalisation, with a view to improving outcomes for Children in Care.
- 2.21 As mentioned a refreshed Children in Care and Care Leaver Strategy will be presented to Corporate Parenting Board at the next meeting.

## **3 Other options considered in making recommendations**

- 3.1 None

**4 Finance colleague comments (including implications and value for money/VAT)**

4.1 Not applicable

**5 Legal and Procurement colleague comments (including risk management issues, and legal, Crime and Disorder Act and procurement implications)**

5.1 Not applicable

**6 Strategic Assets & Property colleague comments (for decision relating to all property assets and associated infrastructure) (Area Committee reports only)**

6.1 Not applicable

**7 Equality Impact Assessment (EIA)**

7.1 Has the equality impact of the proposals in this report been assessed?

No

An EIA is not required because: this report is not recommending any change to policy or service delivery that would impact service users.

Yes

Attached as Appendix x, and due regard will be given to any implications identified in it.

**8 List of background papers other than published works or those disclosing confidential or exempt information**

8.1 None

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

9.1 None