

## Equality Impact Assessment Form

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### 1. Document Control

**Control Details:**

Title: <b>If this is a budget EIA please ensure the title is the same as the title used within the budget booklet</b>	Children’s Advocacy and Independent Visitor Service (Children in Care)
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Department:	Strategic Commissioning/ Children’s
Service Area:	Looked After Children
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Strategic Budget EIA: Y/N (Does this EIA have an impact on the budget)  <b>If yes, please include the reference number</b>	N
Exempt from publication: Y/N (All EIA’s are published on Nottingham Insight for public viewing unless specified. Exemption criteria is available on the EIA section on the Intranet)	N

### 2. Document Amendment Record:

Version	Author	Date	Approved
1	Charlotte Dodds	30/05/2022	

**3. Contributors/Reviewers** (Anyone who has contributed to this document will need to be named):

Name	Position	Date
Lisa Lopez	Lead Commissioning Officer	16/05/2022
Rosey Donovan	Equality and Employability Consultant	24/05/2022

**4. Glossary of Terms**

Term	Description
Looked After Children	Children or young people (aged under 18 years old) in the care of a local authority or provided with accommodation by the authority for more than 24 hours. This includes unaccompanied asylum-seeking children, children in friends and family placements, and those children placed for adoption but not yet adopted.
JSNA	Joint Strategic Needs Assessment, a process by which local authorities and Clinical Commissioning Groups assess the current and future health, care and wellbeing needs of the local community to inform local decision making.
Advocacy	Advocacy is about getting young voices and views heard. A child advocate empowers children to understand their rights and make informed decisions on matters that influence their lives.
Advocate	The main purpose of an advocate for a child is to enable children/ young people to express their wishes and feelings championing their rights and needs. They can assist the child/ young person to make a complaint in a constructive and effective manner. The aim of child advocate is to encourage empowerment of children/young people and uphold their legal rights and ensure they are fairly treated.
Independent Visitors	The role of the independent visitor was created under the Children’s Act 1989 to befriend children and young people in care. Independent visitors are adult volunteers who regularly visit a child/ young person in care, offering support and advice, spending time

	with, and taking part in activities together. Independent Visitors are primarily matched with children/ young people who have minimal/ no contact with their families when it is in the child/young person's best interest to do so.
Secure accommodation review panel	The panel is responsible for listening to the views of those that attend/ contribute and coming to a decision about whether they believe the legal criteria for holding a child/young person in secure accommodation is still met, or whether an alternative accommodation in a non-secure setting would be more appropriate for their needs.
Children in Care Council	This is a group of young people in care that regularly meet to take part in short fun workshops ran by NCC that give young people in care the chance to shape and contribute to the improvement of services that children and young people receive.
NCC	Nottingham City Council

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**5. Summary**

(Please provide a brief description of proposal / policy / service being assessed)

The current Children's Advocacy service and Independent Visitor service were joint commissioned from 2017 with Nottinghamshire County Council. There were two separate contracts, one for advocacy and one for independent visitors with different service providers running each service. In October 2021 Nottinghamshire County ceased their contracts and pursued their own commissioning arrangements. Nottingham City Council extended the existing contract until 30 September 2022.

**Change to service model**

There will be a change to the new service model, instead of having two contracts for two separate services, there will be one contract for the Advocacy and Independent Visitor service with one service provider. Having one service provider delivering advocacy and independent visitors is a positive change. Having a single point of contact for one service instead

of two separate ones will mean less confusion and it will be easier for service users and professionals to contact and refer into the service. Independent visitor and advocacy services work well having a singular provider. The relationship and referral process works well for neighbouring local authorities.

Furthermore, since Nottingham City Council are now commissioning the advocacy and independent visitor service as a singular authority the budget available has reduced since it was a joint contract with Nottinghamshire County. Having one service provider delivering advocacy and independent visitors means economies of scale are higher and that the service provider will be able to make efficiencies running one service with shared staff/ management. This will mean there are benefits for the service users as efficiencies made through running one service means that the available budget will be able to go further in terms of the quality of service to service users.

### **Change to service delivery virtual platform**

There will be a change to the service delivery of the advocacy service. In the current advocacy contract the expectation is that advocacy support is delivered face to face, with advocates visiting children/young people at placements within Nottingham and in other areas. Instead of delivering all advocacy support sessions face to face, the new advocacy service will deliver most of their advocacy support to children/young people virtually via a variety of digital platforms. A face to face advocacy service will still be delivered in the following circumstances:

- Children under the age of 10
- Children and young people with complex disabilities
- First visits and review visits
- If the child/young person does not have a device/ equipment to have a remote meeting
- If the child/ young person requests a face to face service

It is important that younger children and those with complex disabilities receive a face to face to service because these children and young people find engaging via a virtual platform difficult due to their young age and limited capacity. They find engaging with an advocate face to face easier than digitally where concentration may be problematic. It is more effective for advocates to build a relationship with children/young people when they have met in person at least once, so the first time an advocate meets a child/young person it is recommended to meet face to face, with review visits offering a further opportunity for an in person meeting. Other children/ young people who are older than 10 without complex disabilities, may have a personal preference to meet with their advocate face to face, so this option will be available to any child/young person who requests an in-person service.

The independent visitor service will continue to meet with children/young people face to face as the objectives of independent visiting is to take part in recreational activities with the children/young people which would not have the same value over a digital platform. In extenuating circumstances when the independent visitor or child/young person is not able to meet face to face, the independent visitor may contact them for a conversation over the telephone digital platform to maintain and build their relationship whilst awaiting their next face to face session.

These changes to service delivery have occurred as a response to the Covid-19 pandemic. The advocacy and independent visitor service had to adapt to offering children/young people a virtual service, as government restrictions meant that advocates and independent visitors were not allowed to meet with children/young people face to face. Prior to the pandemic advocates had to visit all children in residential homes and supported accommodation on a minimum 8 weekly basis and carry out issue-based advocacy support at the child/young person's placement address. For some children/young people who were not placed within the Nottingham area, advocates travelled a considerable distance, in some cases a 3 hour journey travelling to the placement and a 3-hour journey travelling back. When advocates arrived at the placement the child/ young person often decided they did not wish to meet with their advocate, despite having agreed to meeting when the advocate checked their appointment was still going ahead on the telephone before setting off. This resulted in lots of advocacy service delivery hours wasted. Therefore the advocacy service has found delivering advocacy support via digital platforms much more efficient, reducing travel time for advocates means that advocates are able to use this available time to support other children/young people with a higher quality service. Young people have also reported valuing the virtual delivery method because it is more informal; they have been able to remain in comfortable clothing rather than getting ready for an in-person meeting.

### **Changes to service delivery minimum advocacy visiting requirement**

The current service specification states that all children and young people placed within residential homes and supported accommodation will be visited at a minimum frequency of 8 weekly and those with disabilities will be visited at a frequency of 4-8 weekly dependent on need. In practice the current service provider has only been facilitating advocacy visits to children and young people placed in residential homes; they have called supported accommodation providers to check if the young people they house would like to speak to an advocate and if so, requested they submit a referral. Instead of visiting all children and young people in these two placement types at a minimum frequency of every 8 weeks the new advocacy service will only have a requirement for their advocates to visit those children and young who NCC deems as vulnerable every 8 weeks. Those deemed as vulnerable may be, but not limited to: in placements outside of Nottingham City, unaccompanied asylum seeking children (UASC), placed in residential solo placements, have no or minimal family contact, in a transition period, no longer in education or training (NEET). Visits for children with a disability will still range from four to eight weekly dependent on level of need. It is expected that the provider, in partnership with the local authority, will prioritise advocacy visiting frequency for all other children/young people based on a joint assessment of what is adequate and appropriate to meet needs. This

change ensures that children and young people that are deemed most vulnerable and therefore most likely to require the support of an advocate receive visits on a priority basis and other children and young people still have their needs met adequately.

### **Background of service**

The Children's Act 1989 gives the right to looked after children/ young people to make representations and complaints to the Local Authority regarding their care arrangements. It also requires a Local Authority to consider the appointment of an Independent Visitor in respect of a child/ young person they look after where it appears it would be in the child/ young persons best interests to do so.

The current statutory Children's Advocacy Service Nottingham City Council commission provides a service to all children/young people in care who require an advocate to support with them issue based advocacy on referral, visiting advocacy to all children placed in residential homes and supported accommodation, and provision of independent person's at secure accommodation review panels.

The current statutory Independent Visitor Service Nottingham City Council commission provides volunteers who befriend children/young people in care acting as an adult role model taking part in recreational activities together. Children who are isolated or who have minimal/ no family contact are referred by social workers into the Independent Visitor service.

The current contracts for the Advocacy and Independent Visitor Service have been extended in full to 30 September 2022, therefore a re-procurement process needs to be undertaken for a new service/ contract to commence on 1 October 2022.

## **[screentip-sectionC](#)**

### **6. Information used to analyse the effects on equality:**

(Please include information about how you have consulted/ have data from the impacted groups)

The Children in Care Council were consulted, the young people helped formulate a question to ask providers as part of the tender process around building relationships with children and young people. The young people from the group will mark this question as part of the tender evaluation.

<p>Children and young People’s Plan 2021-2023</p> <p>JSNA CiC</p> <p>Full Strategic Council Plan 2021</p> <p>Nottingham City Family Support Pathway</p>
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**7. Impacts and Actions:**

<a href="#">screentip-sectionD</a>	Could particularly benefit X	May adversely impact X
People from different ethnic groups.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Men	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Women	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Trans	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Disabled people or carers.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Pregnancy/ Maternity	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
People of different faiths/ beliefs and those with none.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Lesbian, gay or bisexual people.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Older	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Younger	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

<p>Other (e.g. marriage/ civil partnership, looked after children, cohesion/ good relations, vulnerable children/ adults).</p> <p><b><i>Please underline the group(s) /issue more adversely affected or which benefits.</i></b></p>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
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<p style="text-align: right;"><a href="#"><u>screeentip-sectionE</u></a></p> <p><b>How different groups could be affected</b> (Summary of impacts)</p>	<p style="text-align: right;"><a href="#"><u>screeentip-sectionF</u></a></p> <p><b>Details of actions to mitigate, remove or justify negative impact or increase positive impact</b> (or why action isn't possible)</p>
<p><b>Recap of 'Summary 5'</b></p> <p>As mentioned in the 'Summary 5.' having one service provider deliver the advocacy and independent visitor service will benefit looked after children and young people because there will be a single point of contact making it easier for children and young people to contact the service and self-refer for an advocate. Economies of scale through having one service provider deliver advocacy and independent visitor service should result in efficiencies being able to share staffing and management structures meaning the available budget should be able to better benefit children and young people in higher quality service delivery.</p> <p>Delivering the advocacy service virtually will benefit looked after children and young people because advocates have reduced travel time, which means they have more time available to</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Specification to include indicators for measuring and monitoring the impact of the service with requirement for the service provider to meet with the Children in Care Council group of looked after children once per year.</li> <li>2. A suitable provider will be sourced through a fair and transparent tender process, which will be advertised publicly and in accordance with procurement regulations and Nottingham City Council financial regulations.</li> <li>3. Service to commence 1 October 2022 (subject to implementation timescales to be agreed with successful provider)</li> <li>4. Impact of service to be monitored quarterly during the term of the contract, against the indicators in point 1. Above Nottingham City Council will work with providers to ensure the best outcomes possible are being achieved for the children/ young people using the</li> </ol>

<p>support children/young people resulting in a higher quality service. Children/young people also value the opportunity to meet with advocates virtually as this is more informal. Provisions have been made for children/young people where virtual support would be not appropriate due to young age (under 10) or limited capacity due to having a complex disability. Any child/young person who has a preference for an in-person service is able to request this.</p> <p>NCC identifies those looked after children and young people who are deemed vulnerable that are placed within residential and supported accommodation placements and informs the service provider. The provider has to ensure that this vulnerable cohort is offered a minimum 8 weekly visit from an advocate. Vulnerable children and young people who may fit the criteria examples outlined in section 5, are most likely to need the support of an advocate, and they will still receive the current frequency of advocacy visits that are offered in the new service. Other looked after children and young people will still receive an advocacy visiting service that meets their needs, as the frequency of their visits will be decided based on a joint assessment between NCC and the provider.</p> <p><b>Looked After Children/ Young People Issue-based Advocacy</b></p> <p>This service has the potential to benefit looked after children/ young people who wish to have an independent advocate's support in ensuring their views are heard by decision makers regarding the care they receive from the local authority. These looked after children/ young people may have a particular issue or problem that they wish an independent advocate to raise on their behalf 'issue based' advocacy. Looked after children/ young people who refer into this service for issue-based advocacy are typically aged between 7- 18 and could be in any type of care</p>	<p>service. ( 1 October 2022 potentially up to 30 September 2026)</p>
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placement ranging from foster care, residential to supported accommodation. Advocacy may be delivered in person or via a digital platform. All younger children aged under ten years old and all children/ young people with a complex disability will receive face to face advocacy.

**Residential and Supported Accommodation Visiting Advocacy**

Looked after children/ young people aged 7-18 that are placed in residential care and supported will have an advocate visit them via a digital platform or in person making themselves available to them to talk about any their care experience, these children/ young people will visited without a referral being made. All younger children aged under ten years old and all children/ young people with a complex disability will receive face to face advocacy. Visits will be every 4-8 weeks for those with disabilities, minimum every 8 weeks for those deemed vulnerable by NCC, all other children and young people will be visited at a frequency that is jointly assessed by NCC and the service provider to be adequate.

**Independent Visitors Service**

Looked after children/ young people aged 5-18 who are isolated having minimal/ no family contact are referred into the independent visitors' service by their social worker. The independent visitor will be-friend the child/ young person acting as an adult role model for them taking part in regular activities with the child/ young person. Visits will take place in person.

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**8. Arrangements for future monitoring of equality impact of this proposal / policy / service:**

The service will be managed via a contract, initially in place for 2 years, but with options to extend up to 2 years in total. Monitoring requirements will be built into the contract to ensure it can be evaluated effectively. Monitoring will include outcomes for the children/ young people. During the term of the contract, it will be monitored against agreed outcomes by Nottingham City Council’s Contracting team, on a regular basis ( likely to be quarterly but to be agreed)

**9. Outcome(s) of equality impact assessment:**

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	No major change needed	<input type="checkbox"/>	Adjust the policy/proposal
<input type="checkbox"/>	Adverse impact but continue	<input type="checkbox"/>	Stop and remove the policy/proposal

**10. Approved by (manager signature) and Date sent to equality team for publishing:**

<p><b>Approving Manager: John Matravers</b>                  The assessment must be approved by the manager responsible for the service/proposal. Include a contact tel &amp; email to allow citizen/stakeholder feedback on proposals.</p>	<p><b>Date sent for advice:</b>                  Send document or Link to:  <a href="mailto:edi@nottinghamcity.gov.uk">edi@nottinghamcity.gov.uk</a></p>
<p><b>Approving Manager Signature:</b></p>	<p><b>Date of final approval:</b></p>

**Before you send your EIA to the Equality and Employability Team for advice, have you:**

1. Read the guidance and good practice EIA's  
<http://intranet.nottinghamcity.gov.uk/media/1924/simple-guide-to-eia.doc>
2. Clearly summarised your proposal/ policy/ service to be assessed.
3. Hyperlinked to the appropriate documents.
4. Written in clear user-friendly language, free from all jargon (spelling out acronyms).
5. Included appropriate data.
6. Consulted the relevant groups or citizens or stated clearly, when this is going to happen.
7. Clearly cross-referenced your impacts with SMART actions.

**PLEASE NOTE: FINAL VERSION MUST BE SENT TO EQUALITIES OTHERWISE RECORDS WILL REMAIN INCOMPLETE.**