

CORPORATE PARENTING BOARD REPORT – 21st March 2016

Title of paper:	Attainment of Children in Care 2015	
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Date of consultation with Portfolio Holder(s) (if relevant)		
Relevant Council Plan Strategic Priority:		
Cutting unemployment by a quarter		<input type="checkbox"/>
Cut crime and anti-social behaviour		<input type="checkbox"/>
Ensure more school leavers get a job, training or further education than any other City		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Your neighbourhood as clean as the City Centre		<input type="checkbox"/>
Help keep your energy bills down		<input type="checkbox"/>
Good access to public transport		<input type="checkbox"/>
Nottingham has a good mix of housing		<input type="checkbox"/>
Nottingham is a good place to do business, invest and create jobs		<input type="checkbox"/>
Nottingham offers a wide range of leisure activities, parks and sporting events		<input type="checkbox"/>
Support early intervention activities		<input type="checkbox"/>
Deliver effective, value for money services to our citizens		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Summary of issues (including benefits to citizens/service users):		
<p>This report explains the recent trends in educational attainment of Nottingham City Children in Care by analysis of their performance at Key Stage 2 and Key Stage 4. It also provides a commentary on the context for these results and the barriers to achievement that Children in Care face. Finally, it summarises the interventions provided to improve attainment.</p>		
Recommendation(s):		
1	It is recommended that the Corporate Parenting Board note and discuss: The recent trends and current levels of educational attainment for Nottingham City’s Children in Care (CiC).	
2	To note the proposed interventions to improve attainment and secure a narrowing of the gap between the performance of CiC and that of other pupils in the City schools, and between City CiC and our statistical neighbours.	

1. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1.1 To ensure that we identify any emerging trends in the achievement of Nottingham City Children in Care. In addition, to discuss proposed interventions to improve attainment and narrow the gap between the performance of CiC and that of other pupils in the City schools and between City CiC and our statistical neighbours.

2. BACKGROUND (INCLUDING OUTCOMES OF CONSULTATION)

2.1 This report will consider the current attainment and trends at Key Stages 2 and 4. The key findings are that the 2015 educational attainment outcomes for Nottingham's Children in Care are mixed. The Key Stage 2 results have improved over the last four years and outcomes in Nottingham are higher across every measure. The Key Stage 4 results were down on the results in 2014. The proportion of pupils obtaining the headline 5+ A*-C passes including English and Maths in Nottingham was down 4% (1 pupil) on the 2014 results. However the number of pupils achieving a pass in at least one qualification improved from 62% to 84% in 2015.

It should be remembered when considering the data that numbers in the CiC cohort groups are very low and the individual performance of one child (or the removal of several children from a cohort group) can have a disproportionate effect on percentages; it is prudent, wherever possible, to look at numbers alongside the percentages.

2.2 Context: Achievement levels can be lower for children in care given the many changes they have faced but it is worth reflecting on the make up of these cohorts whilst considering effective actions to increase the rate of improvement and longer term good outcomes from a foundation for education. .

2.3 Absolute attainment outcomes of Nottingham City's Children in Care (CiC) are low compared to non-CiC City pupils. This is replicated nationally and in part will reflect the troubled lives many of these children have experienced. Higher special education needs (school action plus and EHCPs) are over-represented in CiC cohorts, especially at Key Stage 4. This makes attainment of benchmark educational standards particularly challenging. While CiC typically achieve substantially less well than their peers on all educational measures, there is a strong association between the length of time in care and positive educational outcomes at age 16. When the educational outcomes for CiC are compared with their peers with similar backgrounds, the achievement gap is very much smaller.

2.4 The Virtual School has a responsibility to monitor the achievement of all school age Children in Care (over 360 pupils) and not just those who are included in Department for Education statistics at the end of Key Stages (those in care for at least one year since March 31st of the year that the exams are being sat – in this case March 31st 2015). Since the establishment of the Virtual School, it has been working to develop practices aimed at raising attainment for individuals and groups (see 2.19 – effective intervention).

2.5 A higher proportion of CiC have special needs than the total school population, some requiring specialist provision. These pupils often make good progress but perform significantly below nationally expected outcomes. The majority of their special needs are related to behaviour and emotional and social difficulties. A significant percentage also has physical disabilities.

2.6 47% (171 pupils) of Nottingham City school aged children are educated within the city boundaries with a further 30% (107 pupils) educated in Nottinghamshire. 23% (84pupils) are educated in other Local Authorities. 62% (224 pupils) attend Good or Outstanding schools.

- 2.7 The trauma involved with coming into care cannot be underestimated. For many young people the reasons for coming into care are disturbing and damaging. They have to adjust to a different home environment, may lose contact with family and friends and may also have to change schools.
- 2.8 Many of the Key Stage 2 pupils experienced more school changes than might ordinarily be expected. These multiple transitions are disruptive and affect academic progression.
- 2.9 For those entering care in Key Stage 4, a move of school can have a significant impact upon their outcomes. It can result in missed assessments/modules/units and changes of examination boards which all impact on the individual's chance of success, let alone the social and emotional trauma experienced. Although statutory guidelines state that CiC should not move placement during Years 10 and 11 because of the impact on provision and the resulting outcomes, this is not always possible. It can be particularly difficult to find a school place for a CiC in Year 11 and CiC who move placement at this point may have a period of time out of school which further impedes their engagement and progress. They are also more likely to be educated in an alternative provision setting which does not offer GCSE courses.
- 2.10 Some children in care in Key Stages 3 and 4 find a school environment increasingly challenging and require alternative provision to maintain their engagement. This often results in qualifications that are not GCSE equivalent but can lead to apprenticeships and college places that prove successful. The increasing number of Education Progress Grant funding requests for post 16 pupils provides evidence that several CiC are re-engaging with education and training beyond statutory school age.

Looked after children at Key Stage 2:

2.11 2015 attainment

According to the Department for Education figures, Nottingham City had 11 young people in care who were eligible to sit Key Stage 2 assessments based on those who were aged 10 at the start of the academic year (31st August) and had been in care for one year at 31st March 2014 (there were two additional children, but both have been held back a year and so are excluded from these calculations.) In addition 55% (6/11) of this cohort have a EHCP plan.

2.12 Of this KS2 CiC cohort:

Year 6 Reading

	2013	2014	2015	2014 National Average
L4+	58%	67%	73%	68%
L5			27%	

Reading scores were only published separately from 2013 onwards. L6 tests for all subjects only began in 2013.

Year 6 Writing

	2013	2014	2015	2014 National Average
L4+	53%	61%	64%	59%
L5			0%	

Writing scores were only published separately from 2013 onwards.

Year 6 English Grammar, Punctuation and Spelling

	2013	2014	2015	2014 National Average
L4+	32%	50%	54%	49%
L5			27%	

This test only began in 2013

Year 6 Maths

	2013	2014	2015	2014 National Average
L4+	58%	67%	73%	61%
L5			18%	

Year 6 Reading, Writing & Maths Combined

	2013	2014	2015	2014 National Average
L4+	53%	61%	64%	48%
L5			0%	

These combined scores were reported from 2013 onwards.

2.13 Compared to 2014 results the Maths, Reading, Writing and combined results were higher and in every subject the numbers of pupils achieving expected levels were a lot higher than those of 2014. The L4+ GPS was 4% higher than 2014. The most encouraging result was the combined which saw a 14% improvement on 2014. Nottingham's cohort of CiC who took KS2 in 2015 also made high levels of progress from their KS1 results: 10/11 made two levels of progress in Reading; 11/11 made two levels of progress in Writing and 10/11 made two levels of progress in Maths.

Looked After Young People at Key Stage 4:

2.14 2015 attainment

According to DfE figures, Nottingham City had 32 young people in care who were eligible to sit Key Stage 4 (GCSE) based on those who were aged 15 at the start of the academic year (31st August) and had been in care for one year at 31st March 2014 (there were two additional children, but both have been held back a year and so are excluded from these calculations.)

2.15 Of this KS4 CiC cohort:

Year 11 5+ A*-C GCSEs including English and Maths

<u>2012</u>	2013	2014	2015	2014 National Average
0%	15 %	10%	6 %	12%

Year 11 A*-C GCSEs in English and Maths ('the basics')

<u>2012</u>	2013	2014	2015	2014 National Average
0%	15 %	13%	13 %	14%

- 2.16 There has been a year-on-year decline in GCSE attainment (KS4), this has been mirrored nationally and has been seen when reviewing all pupils' attainment. One likely driver for this decline is the wide spread Wolf reforms introduced in 2014.
- 2.17 Nottingham City CiC pupils made better progress in their GCSEs than their peers nationally. The data for 2015 shows that GCSE outcomes for Children in Care in Nottingham are higher, with 44% of them achieving expected progress in Maths and English compared to national figures of 39% and 29% respectively.
- 2.18 The fixed term exclusion rate for Nottingham City CiC is similar to the England rate and lower than statistical neighbours. A close partnership has been established with schools and alternative learning providers to ensure that the potential exclusion of Children in Care is only considered after a number of other measures. Any exclusion is closely monitored and alternative education for the student is provided where possible to minimise the disruption to education and care placements. The challenge is that absence for Year 10 and 11 CiC is higher than for other year groups, as are fixed term exclusion rates.

Effective Intervention

- 2.19 It is clear that a continued sustained effort will be needed to make a meaningful impact on the educational attainment of Nottingham's looked after children and young people. The following actions are directed at securing this improvement.
- 2.20 The collection of termly attainment and daily attendance information. This allows better tracking and analysis of data and keeps in one place information on the educational experience of Children in Care. Welfare Call is commissioned to collect attendance, termly attainment and exclusion data on all Nottingham City CiC placed external to the Local Authority and those in the City.
- 2.21 Two tutoring agencies have been commissioned to provide high quality teaching for NCC children across the country and other LA CiC placed in the City awaiting school places. This is already ensuring young people are not without education.
- 2.22 The Virtual School has offered £500 additional Pupil Premium Plus funding to all schools with Key Stage 4 pupils who are at risk of not achieving their full potential in GCSE English and Maths. There is very good evidence that providing intensive 1:1 tuition for short, regular sessions over a set period of time can enable children to

catch up with their peers. This initiative is targeted and we will measure its impact in next year's results. This initiative is backed by the Education Endowment Foundation and the most up-to-date research on what works in raising attainment for disadvantaged pupils. We have also extended this offer to all schools with Year 5 and 6 pupils. The take up of this offer, especially at Key Stage 4, has been very positive and our Education Support Officers are making contact with the schools to follow up on tracking its impact.

- 2.23 Education Progress Grant funding was available in 2014/15. The predominant use of this was for 1:1 tuition and therapeutic work with a stronger emphasis on educational activities and impact on educational achievement.
- 2.24 Personal Education Plan (PEP) completion rates have improved again since last year. During the autumn term new Personal Education Plans were designed and updated to reflect recent changes in education practice. These new PEPs are now being used by all Social Workers and we expect to see a positive impact over the next six month cycle. The main improvement in the new PEPs is that they now allow for a more meaningful review of earlier targets, clearly linked to the use of Pupil Premium Plus funding. Capturing the voice of the child remains a key element.
- 2.25 Closer working relationships have been developed between the Virtual School and Social Care colleagues especially regarding the educational considerations required when arranging the placement of CiC. A rolling programme for training around education matters for Social Workers is being offered by the Virtual School team. The Virtual School represents the educational needs of CiC at every Placement Panel meeting throughout the year.
- 2.26 A named officer in the Admissions Team for CiC has sped up the admission process for the majority of Children in Care, including those placed in other local authorities.
- 2.27 Letterbox Club, which provides mathematics materials as well as literacy resources, is purchased for CiC in Years 1, 3, 5 and 7.
- 2.28 We have increased the capacity of the Virtual School to help challenge and support schools and education providers. We now have two new Education Support Officers to work alongside the existing team.
- 2.29 The Virtual School now has the support of a strong Virtual School Governing Body, which meets every term.
- 2.30 This year we are holding planning meetings with all our City schools which will analyse how Pupil Premium Plus funding is being used and assess its impact on driving up standards. The Virtual School will retain an element of PP+ funding to fund centrally driven interventions.
- 2.31 Support and advice has been provided to a range of professionals through termly training network meetings for Designated Teachers. Training is also provided for new Designated Teachers, School Governors and new Social Workers. We held a CiC Conference focusing on Attachment, Trauma and Resilience in May 2015.
- 2.32 The Virtual School supported both the Junior and Senior Big it Up Celebration events in 2015. The events were both very well attended. Pupils were joined by carers and family to celebrate their success.

2.33 This year has seen more robust monitoring of Pupil Premium Plus grants and pupil progress. Schools are required to outline with the VSH their intervention plan complete with timescales and costings. In addition, the new PEPs require schools to explain how they are using Pupil Premium Plus to directly improve the educational outcomes of Looked After Children.

2.34 This year the Virtual School is offering a bespoke programme for Nottingham City schools. Promoting the Achievement of Looked After Children (PALAC) is a pioneering evidenced-based research-led programme to support professionals to enhance the achievement and wellbeing of Children in Care. The Virtual School is working with staff from the Institute of Education at UCL on this project. The programme will be delivered by researchers who are recognised for their work on Children in Care both nationally and internationally. It supports school professionals through a process of re-thinking the school environment to help ensure that it actively supports the all-round education of Children in Care. The intention is to share the best practice to all our schools in over the next two years.

3. OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED IN MAKING RECOMMENDATIONS

3.1 There are no further options to those detailed in the report.

4. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS (INCLUDING VALUE FOR MONEY/VAT)

4.1 There are implications for the Virtual School budget, funded through DSG, regarding the staffing structure of the Virtual School and the activities it can provide to support Children in Care in education.

4.2 The Virtual School is part of the Achievement of Vulnerable Groups Team. The budget is impacted upon by schools choosing to become academies and the budget is reduced accordingly.

4.3 As much of the work of the Virtual School is about enabling schools to fulfil their statutory responsibilities and supporting Social Workers with the identification of good quality educational provision for Children in Care, the opportunities to sell services are limited. Previously, the Ethnic Minority Achievement (EMA) Team supported the Virtual School by providing income and salary savings to fund Virtual School activities. With the expected developments as a result of the recent changes to the Children and Families Directorate and School Forum decisions regarding funding, the income generated by the EMA team will be required to pay for salaries of those team members and not Virtual School activities.

5. RISK MANAGEMENT ISSUES (INCLUDING LEGAL IMPLICATIONS AND CRIME AND DISORDER ACT IMPLICATIONS)

5.1 There may be implications in the future regarding educational activities provided by the Virtual School as the budget may not be able to sustain staffing and pupil activities with the increase in school academisation and consequent reductions in DSG funding. There may be a role for EPG funding in this respect.

6. EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

6.1 There are no proposed changes to this service other than increasing its capacity to help ensure that all vulnerable Children in Care close the attainment gap with their peers. It would be valuable to look at the breakdown for this cohort and carry out an Equality Impact Assessment over the next few months as a measure of good practice.

7. LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS OTHER THAN PUBLISHED WORKS OR THOSE DISCLOSING CONFIDENTIAL OR EXEMPT INFORMATION

7.1 Information Management Team, Children in Care Provisional Results 2015.

8. PUBLISHED DOCUMENTS REFERRED TO IN COMPILING THIS REPORT

8.1 None