



Children's Trust Joint Committee

A meeting of the Children's Trust Joint Committee will be held at The Council Chamber, County Hall, Northampton on Wednesday 15 February 2023 at 1.00 pm

Agenda

1.	Apologies for Absence and Notification of Substitute Members
2.	Minutes (Pages 5 - 8) To confirm the minutes of the meeting held on the 7 th September 2022.
3.	Declarations of Interest Members are asked to declare any interest and the nature of that interest which they may have in any of the items under consideration at this meeting.
4.	Chair's Announcements To receive communications from the Chair.
5.	Urgent Business The Chairman to advise whether they have agreed to any items of urgent business being admitted to the agenda.
6.	Northamptonshire Children's Trust Business Plan and 2023/24 Contract Sum (Pages 9 - 106)

Proper Officer
7 February 2023

Children's Trust Joint Committee Members:

Councillor Fiona Baker
Councillor Jonathan Nunn

Councillor Matt Golby

Information about this Agenda

Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence and the appointment of substitute Members should be notified to democraticservices@westnorthants.gov.uk prior to the start of the meeting.

Declarations of Interest

Members are asked to declare interests at item 2 on the agenda or if arriving after the start of the meeting, at the start of the relevant agenda item

Local Government and Finance Act 1992 – Budget Setting, Contracts & Supplementary Estimates

Members are reminded that any member who is two months in arrears with Council Tax must declare that fact and may speak but not vote on any decision which involves budget setting, extending or agreeing contracts or incurring expenditure not provided for in the agreed budget for a given year and could affect calculations on the level of Council Tax.

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Or by writing to:

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One Angel Square
Angel Street
Northampton
NN1 1ED

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Children's Trust Joint Committee

Minutes of a meeting of the Children's Trust Joint Committee held at The Council Chamber, Swanspool House, Doddington Road, Wellingborough, NN8 1BP on Wednesday 7 September 2022 at 2.00 pm.

Present

Councillor Matt Golby
 Councillor Jonathan Nunn
 Councillor Lloyd Bunday
 Councillor Jason Smithers

Substitute Members: Councillor Mark Hughes

Also Present:
 Anna Earnshaw, Chief Executive (WNC)
 Rob Bridge, Chief Executive (NNC)
 Tony Challinor, Assistant Director of Commissioning and Partnerships
 Marie Devlin-Hogg, AD of Human Resources (NNC)
 AnnMarie Dodds, Executive Director of Children's Services (NNC)
 Colin Foster, Chief Executive (NCT)
 Janice Gotts, Executive Director of Finance (NNC)
 Gabriella Mercuri, Head of Learning & Development (NNC)
 Rory Seymour, Commissioning Manager Children's Services
 Susan Tanner, AD Commissioning and Partnerships (NNC)

1. Apologies

Apologies for non-attendance were received from Councillors Fiona Baker and Scott Edwards. Councillor Mark Hughes substituted for Councillor Baker.

In the absence of the host Co-Chair the Committee agreed that Councillor Jason Smithers would chair the meeting

2. Notification of requests to address the meeting

None

3. Declarations of Interest

None Declared

4. Minutes

RESOLVED that: that the minutes of the meeting of the Children's Trust Joint Committee held on 4 May 2022 be agreed.

5. **Chair's Announcements**

None

6. **Urgent Business**

None

7. **Annual Report of Northamptonshire Children's Trust**

At the Chair's invitation the Executive Director of Children's Services (NNC) introduced the report, highlighting the following points:

- The Intelligent Client Function had produced the Annual Report in accordance with the relevant requirements.
- It had been questioned that the Annual Report had not been made public. The Service Delivery Contract specified the process for producing the Annual Report and the content, as set out in the report to the Committee.
- The Annual Report would now be considered through the democratic process at North Northamptonshire and West Northamptonshire Councils. It was scheduled to go to Full Council in North Northamptonshire in November 2022 after first going to Overview & Scrutiny.

The Chair invited Committee members to raise any points that they wished the Committee to consider.

Councillors Golby and Nunn confirmed that the Annual Report would be subject to similar consideration by the democratic process at West Northamptonshire Council.

The Executive Director of Children's Services (NNC) advised that the Annual Report would be circulated to Committee members following the current meeting.

RESOLVED that: the Children's Trust Joint Committee:

- a) Noted that the Annual Report was completed in line with the service delivery contract.
- b) Noted the proposal to further discuss and agree any amendments to the Service Delivery Contract following the Ofsted Inspection of the Local Authority Children's Services (ILACS) due to take place in Autumn 2022 and the plan to bring these proposals to a future Joint Committee meeting for approval.
- c) Recommended that in subsequent years an annual report is taken to both Councils' Full Council meetings for consideration.

8. **Changes to the Learning and Development Support Service delivered to Northamptonshire Children's Trust**

At the Chair's invitation the Chief Executive of Northamptonshire Children's Trust introduced the report, highlighting the following points:

- The proposed changes were being presented to the Committee as they concerned disaggregation of services.
- The proposed changes had been considered by the Support Services Board.
- He put on record his thanks to the Head of Learning & Development and her team for the previous support provided to Northamptonshire Children's Trust. The Trust did not plan to procure services from an alternative source.

The Chair invited Committee members to raise any points that they wished the Committee to consider. There were none.

RESOLVED that: the Children's Trust Joint Committee:

- a) Approved the partial transfer of the Learning and Development Support Service delivered to Northamptonshire Children's Trust from North Northamptonshire into Northamptonshire Children's Trust from 1st November 2022.
- b) Noted the continued delivery of some elements of Learning and Development by North Northamptonshire Council via service level agreement

The meeting closed at 2.15 pm

Chair: _____

Date: _____

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WEST NORTHAMPTONSHIRE COUNCIL AND NORTH NORTHAMPTONSHIRE COUNCIL CHILDREN'S TRUST JOINT COMMITTEE

15TH FEBRUARY 2023

Cllr Fiona Baker – Children, Families & Education (WNC)

Cllr Scott Edwards – Children, Families, Education & Skills (NNC)

Report Title	Northamptonshire Children's Trust Business Plan and 2023/24 Contract Sum
Report Author	<p>Richard Woodward, ICF Programme Lead, North Northamptonshire Council, Richard.woodward@northnorthants.gov.uk</p> <p>Susan Tanner, Assistant Director Commissioning & Partnerships, North Northamptonshire Council, susan.tanner@northnorthants.gov.uk</p>

Contributors/Checkers/Approvers

West MO	Catherine Whitehead	7 th February 2023
West S151	Martin Henry	7 th February 2023
Other Director/SME	AnnMarie Dodds, Executive Director of Children's Services North Northamptonshire Council	Emailed 2 nd February 2023
Head of Communications	Becky Hutson	7 th February 2023

List of Appendices

Appendix A – NCT Savings Proposals 2023/4 – 2027/28

Appendix B – Children’s Trust Business Plan 2023-24 - 2026-27

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1. To seek the Children’s Trust Joint Committee’s approval of the NCT Business Plan for 2023/24 – 2026/27 and to note the Trusts provisional contract sum for 2023/24.

2. Executive Summary

- 1.2. The contractual agreements between NCT and the Councils give a deadline of 30 November for agreeing the provisional contract sum for the following financial year. This is also the deadline for the Trust to submit their Business Plan to the councils for approval.
- 1.3. From September to November 2022 the Trust and the Councils worked together to agree a provisional contract sum for the 2023-24 financial year. A provisional contract sum was agreed between the Council’s and the Trust at a meeting of the Strategic Group on the 30th November 2022.
- 1.4. Cabinet in West Northamptonshire Council and Executive at North Northamptonshire Council received draft budget reports at their respective meetings on December 2022 and November 2022 which included details of the provisional contract sum for 2023/24 for the Trust.
- 1.5. At the same time the Trust have also been working on their Business Plan. This sets out the vision and strategic objectives for the Trust as well as their financial strategy. The approval of the Business Plan is a matter reserved for both councils as owners of the Trust and has therefore been brought to the Children’s Trust Joint Committee for approval by both councils.
- 1.6. The Business Plan and financial proposals in the provisional contract sum build on the recent ILACS Ofsted inspection, which was encouraging, highlighted the tangible progress being made and the commitment of colleagues at the Council and the Children’s Trust working in partnership in improving services, alongside areas to focus on further development.

3. Recommendations

- 3.1 It is recommended that the Cabinet/Committee:
- a) To note the provisional contract, sum for Northamptonshire Children’s Trust for the 2023/24 financial year.
 - b) Approve the Northamptonshire Children’s Trust Business Plan for the 2023/24 – 2026/27 period.

4. Reason for Recommendations

- To set the budget for Northamptonshire Children’s Trust for the next financial year
- To facilitate the setting of both councils’ budgets for the 2022/23 financial year and to meet the duty for them to set a balanced budget
- To meet the requirements set out in the contractual agreements between the Councils and the Trust

5. Report Background

- 5.1 North Northamptonshire Council and West Northamptonshire Council are committed to supporting Northamptonshire Children’s Trust to deliver the Children’s Social Care and Early Help services across Northamptonshire. Both take their corporate parenting role very seriously and want to support children, young people and families to thrive in their community.
- 5.2 Children’s Services in Northamptonshire were judged ‘inadequate’ by Ofsted in 2013, whilst this judgement improved to ‘requires improvement to be good’ in 2016 but by 2019 they were judged ‘inadequate’ again.
- 5.3 Northamptonshire Children’s Trust (NCT) was partially formed on 1st November 2020 and fully launched on 1st April 2021.
- 5.4 Ofsted conducted inspections of West Northamptonshire and North Northamptonshire Local Authority Children’s Services between 3rd-14th October 2022 and were both judged as “Requires improvement to be good”.
- 5.5 From 1 April 2021, after the abolition of Northamptonshire County Council, North Northamptonshire Council and West Northamptonshire Council became joint owners of Northamptonshire Children’s Trust (NCT) with each council owning a 50% share. Whilst the Trust is operationally independent of the Councils, the Councils still retain significant control over NCT and are responsible for making decisions on a number of ‘reserved matters’ that are set out in the Trust’s Articles of Association.
- 5.6 One of these reserved matters is annual approval of the Trust’s Business Plan. The Articles of Association set out that on or before 15 September 2022, NCT should prepare and submit a draft Business Plan to the councils for the 3 years starting on 1 April 2023. On or before 30 November 2022, NCT should prepare a draft Business Plan for approval by the councils including any amendments agreed by the Board and the councils.
- 5.7 The Business Plan should include relevant information under the following headings:
- introduction
 - strategic framework
 - working with partners
 - priorities and objectives
 - financial strategy and plans
 - profit and loss account
 - cash flow statement
 - revenue budget and working capital requirements.

- 5.8 The Councils have established the Children’s Trust Joint Committee to discharge the functions of the Councils that relate to the joint ownership of NCT. The committee is therefore able to make decisions related to reserved matters such as the approval of the Business Plan.
- 5.9 The Trust previously developed a Business Plan covering the period 2022/23-2025/26. This was approved by the Children’s Trust Joint Committee in December 2021.
- 5.10 At the same time as developing the Business Plan, as part of the contractual governance processes, the Councils and the Trust must negotiate the provisional contract sum for the following year. The Strategic Group (a group that oversees the contractual agreements that includes Children’s Services lead members, senior council officers and senior NCT officers) must meet to discuss and agree the contract sum by 30 November. In agreeing the provisional contract sum the parties should consider a range of factors such as inflation and demography, although these factors are without limitation.
- 5.11 Once the Strategic Group has agreed the provisional contract sum, the councils and NCT must seek internal approval of the sum by the 15 January.
- 5.12 The Children’s Trust Joint Committee approved the provisional contract sum for 2022/23 in December 2021 which went to be approved by both Council’s at full council.

6. Issues and Choices

6.1 Contract Sum Negotiation Process

- 6.1.1 The initial contract sum was submitted on 15th September 2022 which was in accordance with the contract. The Intelligent Client Function led a working party (with representatives from both Councils and NCT) which held weekly meetings to undertake a detailed a review of the contract submission.
- 6.1.2 The proposed contract sum has been through several iterations following discussion between the parties and discussions concluded with a detailed budget discussion between the councils and the Trust at the Strategic Group on the 17th November 2022. This was attended by:
- The Executive Members for children’s services for both Councils, as well as the Leader and Executive Member of Finance for North Northamptonshire Council.
 - The Chief Executives and Chief Finance Officers of both Councils
 - The Director of Children’s Services of both Council’s
 - The Trust Chair, Chief Executive, Director of Finance and Resources and Director of Social Care
 - Officers from the Councils’ Intelligent Client Function
- 6.1.3 Following this, the parties were able to agree a provisional contract sum at an extraordinary meeting of the Strategic Group on the 30th November 2022.

6.2 Provisional Contract Sum

- 6.2.1 The provisional contract sum agreed between the councils and the Trust for 2023/24 is £141.429m plus a drawdown payment of £9,509m totalling £150.938m – a net increase across the County of £13.488m from the current year, which is indicative of the national picture of rising

costs of children’s social care, and a position that has been informed by the forecast outturn for this financial year.

	North £'000	West £'000	Total £'000
Contract Sum	66,654	84,284	150,938
Less Drawdown Payment	(4,199)	(5,310)	(9,509)
Base Contract Sum	61,446	78,974	141,429
One-Off Funding	991	1,252	2,243
Total	63,446	80,226	143,672

- 6.2.2 The provisional contract sum of £150.938m has been split into two parts, this consists of a Base Contract Sum (£141.429m) and a “drawdown payment” relating to actuals on agreed elements of demand led services (£9.509m) which will be based on the 2022/23 and 2023/24 outturn position, which ensures we only lock in actual demand costs in the contract sum.
- 6.2.3 Generally North Northamptonshire Council will contribute 44% of the contract sum and West Northamptonshire Council 56% as per the disaggregation principles that were agreed as part of the creation of Northamptonshire’s Children’s Trust. However, there are some grant income streams where it has been agreed this funding will be paid to NNC and passported to the Trust.
- 6.2.4 This provisional contract sum has been arrived at following robust challenge from the councils. It has taken into account a range of factors including the Trust’s Business Plan and key priorities, the resources available to both councils, demographic pressures, inflationary pressures and the savings to be delivered by the Trust.
- 6.2.5 In order to keep within the 2023/24 provisional contract sum, the Trust have set out £7.672m worth of savings to be delivered in the financial year. These savings proposals are set out in Appendix A. Appendix A also sets out savings for the 2024/25, 2025/26 and 2026/27 financial years as part of the Trusts Medium Term Financial Strategy. These proposals are only indicative at this stage and will form the basis for future contract sum negotiations.
- 6.2.6 The proposed savings and service improvements included in the provisional contract sum are predicated on additional one funding requests received from the Trust for investment of £2.243m revenue and £0.584m of capital, both of which are not included in the 2023-24 contract sum. It should be noted that although this investment has been agreed in principle, each investment will require a full business case to be submitted to and approved by the councils. This may lead to some adjustment to the exact investment required. These requests are summarised in the following table and will be subject to separate detailed business cases in accordance with each Council’s governance process as required.

Revenue Items	Amount £,000
Early Help to address complexity and increase statutory social work step down.	400
Foster Care – This is an investment in developing NCT to operate as an Independent Fostering Agency (IFA). This approach will improve practice and increase the number of in-house Foster Carers therefore reduce placement costs.	250
Valuing Care Proposal – additional resources to deliver savings of £3.8m to the Placements Budget	1,300
Children’s Homes – Initial set up costs	294
Total	2,243
NNC Contribution (44.16%)	991
WNC Contribution (55.84%)	1,252

Capital Items	Amount £,000
Refresh IT programme	234
Fostering - Rolling programme of capital maintenance	300
Minor Works - Capital	50
Total	584
NNC Contribution (44.16%)	258
WNC Contribution (55.84%)	326

6.2.7 The Children’s Trust Joint Committee is asked to note the provisional contract sum for the 2023/24 financial year. It should be noted that this will become part of both councils’ budget and will be subject to the approval and scrutiny processes of each council.

6.3 NCT Business Plan

6.3.1 At the same time as negotiating the provisional contract sum with the Councils, NCT have been developing their business plan for 2023/24 - 2026/27. This builds on the previous iteration of the Business Plan that was approved by Children’s Joint Committee in December 2021.

6.3.2 The overall strategic framework and key priorities remain the same as the previous business plan, which were developed in consultation with both councils as well as children, young people, and key partners. The strategic framework and key priorities align with updates to the Social Care Improvement Plan following Ofsted Monitoring Visits.

6.3.3 The Business Plan sets out NCT’s overall vision to have “Children, Young People and Families at the heart of all we do – in every action we take and every decision we make.”

6.3.4 The Plan also states NCT’s Strategic Priorities for the duration of the Business Plan. These priorities are based on NCT’s vision, ambitions, quality assurance, Ofsted feedback and discussions with Children, Young People and Families. The updated improvement plan details how the Trust will deliver these priorities and what this will mean for Children, Young People and Families. The Trust’s Strategic priorities are in the diagram below:



6.3.5 It should also be noted that per the terms of the Department for Education intervention, the Secretary of State for Education has consultation rights over the contents of the Business Plan.

7. Implications (including financial implications)

7.1 Resources and Financial

7.1.1 Once the provisional contract sum is approved, this will form a part of both council's draft budgets for the next financial year. This means it will be subject to the governance and scrutiny processes each council has in place for its budget setting process.

7.1.2 When the Trust was being developed, detailed work was completed to calculate how costs would be split between North and West Northamptonshire Councils. This was based on the relative populations and demand for children's social care services in each council area. It was agreed that West Northamptonshire would contribute 56% and North Northamptonshire Council would contribute 44% exclusive of any specific grants that are given directly to NNC to passport to the Trust. Further work is being completed by both councils to understand grant income assumptions and therefore the split of the contract sum as part of the councils' budget setting processes.

7.1.3 The provisional contract sum for 2023/24 is an overall increase of £13.488m compared to the 2022/23 financial year, which is approximately £7,532m for West Northamptonshire and £5,956m for North Northamptonshire.

7.2 Legal

7.2.1 The relationship between NCT and the councils is governed by a series of contractual and legal agreements. The finance mechanism of the Service Delivery Contract states that the parties must

agree the provisional contract sum by 30 November. This must then be approved internally by the councils and the trust by 15 January.

7.3 Risk

7.3.1 There is a risk that the cost of services delivered by NCT in the 2023/234 financial year exceed the agreed contract sum. The Trust have especially alerted to the councils the risks of continued risk of overspend on the budget for placements of children in care. This is a demand-led budget which causes challenges in forecasting demand and expenditure and a small number of high-cost emergency placements can have a significant impact on the budget. If NCT were to overspend on their agreed budget, in the first instance they would look for in-year mitigations to manage the overspend. If these mitigations were not sufficient, then the Trust is able to seek additional funding through the 'in-year change request' mechanism set out in the Service Delivery Contract.

7.3.2 There is a risk that the proposed savings are found to be not deliverable. There has been significant scrutiny of the proposed savings through the contract sum negotiation process but there remains a risk some might not be delivered. The process has again highlighted that proposed savings against the placements budget are particularly risky. The councils and the Trust have committed to work together in partnership to manage this including working with partners to ensure they are making the appropriate contributions to the placement budget.

7.3.3 There is a risk that the strategic direction as detailed in the NCT Business Plan becomes misaligned with those of the two owning councils. However, the approval of the Business Plan is a reserved matter for the Councils which gives the chance for both councils to provide feedback and ensure the strategic directions are aligned. Additionally, in developing the Business Plan NCT have engaged with both councils' senior officers and lead members.

7.4 Consultation

7.4.1 This report has not been subject to any consultation.

7.5 Consideration by Overview and Scrutiny

7.5.1 This report has not been considered by the overview and scrutiny committees of either council.

7.6 Climate Impact

7.6.1 There is no specific climate impact arising from this report.

7.7 Community Impact

7.7.1 There is no specific community impact arising from this report.

7.8 Communications

7.8.1 The councils and NCT work together to communicate the priorities, objectives and outcomes of the proposed business plan and associated strategies to ensure residents and stakeholders are kept regularly informed and engaged about children's services across Northants.

8. Background Papers

8.1 None

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NCT Savings Proposals 2023/24 - 2026-27

NCT	Short Description	Detailed Description of Option / Idea	Indicative Future Yr. Budget Savings			
			2023/24	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27
			£'000s	£'000s	£'000s	£'000s
NCT 01	Review of Social Care Staffing	As at Sept 22 there are 7949 statutory SW cases in in the system. From social worker			500	500
NCT 02	Review of Social Care Transport	Review of current/historic eligibility of social care transport provision . The review will need to factor into arrangements with both in house and agency fostering and the external placement review.	100	100	100	-
NCT 03a	Review of placements supply	Development of additional in house capacity. Initial bids submitted with business case detailing annual savings of £1.2m. Further discussions with property colleagues around additional capacity for future years savings.	600	1,200	1,200	-
NCT 03b	Supporting families to stay together	Continue development of Early Help offer from very low starting point. ImPower have developed a valuing care model which successfully support Lincolnshire to better manage placement costs. A proposal for Northamptonshire has been submitted. Cost (£300kpa). This has been shown to drive savings of £1m pa. Net saving of £700k. Year one has an additional cost of c£200k for the placement monitoring tool from PeopleToo	600	700	700	700
NCT 04	Increase provision in supported accommodation	Initial discussions with property colleagues WNC/NNC about potential properties for use as supported accommodation. Property visits undertaken and some properties identified currently undergoing feasibility studies.	240	240	240	
NCT 05	NCT Service Review	Review of existing structures post inspection, Spans and Layers service review		240	240	
NCT 08	Review of Business Operations	A full service review is underway around the support functions within the Trust in order to streamline operations within the Trust. Support services are disaggregated across the trust leading to duplication and inefficiency. There are a number of legacy systems and processes, which are being reviewed to ensure a safe transition to the implementation of the new ways of working. The delivery of savings is dependent upon the investment in IT infrastructure, including the implementation of a new social care case management system to maximise resources and deliver efficiencies.	70	70	180	90
NCT 10	Review and digitalisation of conferences & admin costs	Review of meeting & admin costs. Digitalisation of meetings with a move from minute taking and Admin, it is anticipated that this will lead to a reduction in times and admin support.	-	45	45	-
NCT 11	Review of Children's Legal Costs	Review of Children's Legal Costs budget against Spend. Both councils looking at alternative delivery options for services	100	400	600	-
NCT 12	Review of Contracts	NCT has launched a Commissioning Strategy and Framework 2021-25 setting out our overall vision and plan to use commissioning to contribute to the delivery of our Business Plan, and to improve outcomes for children, young people and families and to support our staff to do their work effectively and efficiently. The Commissioning Strategy and Framework is also intended to inform our Board, stakeholders, partners and our staff of the purpose of our commissioning.	100	100	100	

NCT	Short Description	Detailed Description of Option / Idea	Indicative Future Yr. Budget Savings			
			2023/24	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27
			£'000s	£'000s	£'000s	£'000s
NCT 13	Asset Management Strategy	Continuing to work in partnership with both councils in the development of their respective asset strategies. We are currently reviewing our accommodation needs as we imbed new ways of working in the post COVID environment. This will be supplemented by the request for investment of the IT infrastructure and the move to more mobile working.	200	200	100	-
NCT 14	Increase in In house Fostering	Increasing proportion of all foster placements met in- house to 75%	620	1,000	1,000	-
NCT 15	Review of External placements to develop effective Joint Funding Commissioning	Increasing funding for existing joint packages and securing funding where funding is not currently received. Work is on going for the terms of reference for the Multi Agency Resource panel. Historic and benchmarking analysis shows lower level of contributions compared to statistical neighbours	627	627	-	-
NCT 16	Consolidate Business Analyst team	Strategy Performance & Business Change Consolidate Business Analysts	-	42	-	-
NCT 06	Review of Care Costs	Review of all social care provision	200	-	-	-
NCT 07	Review of Non Essential Budgets including mileage, supplies and provisions.	Non-payroll budget review - Review of detailed budget lines if any savings can be found on transport (mileage), supplies, printing and media provisions.	50	50	50	50
NCT 09	Review of Learning Development/ Social work academy	Review of management arrangements and operation of LD and Social work academy. Creation pf NCT learning academy	65	-	-	-
NCT 17	Implementation of Treasury Management Policy	Implementation of Treasury management policy	900	-	-	-
NCT 18	Targeted work with Children in Complex Settings	120 children in the highest cost placements cost c£37m of the placements budget. This project woul dbe overseend by OCG operating as the Valuing Care Board. A Social Work Project Team would work with the children alongside theraputic support to enable childrne to step down into less complex placements	3,200			
			7,672	5,014	5,055	1,340



Northamptonshire
Children's Trust

Northamptonshire Children's Trust

Business Plan 2023/24 - 2026/27



Northamptonshire Children's Trust

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Northamptonshire
Children's Trust



Section 1

Introduction

Foreword

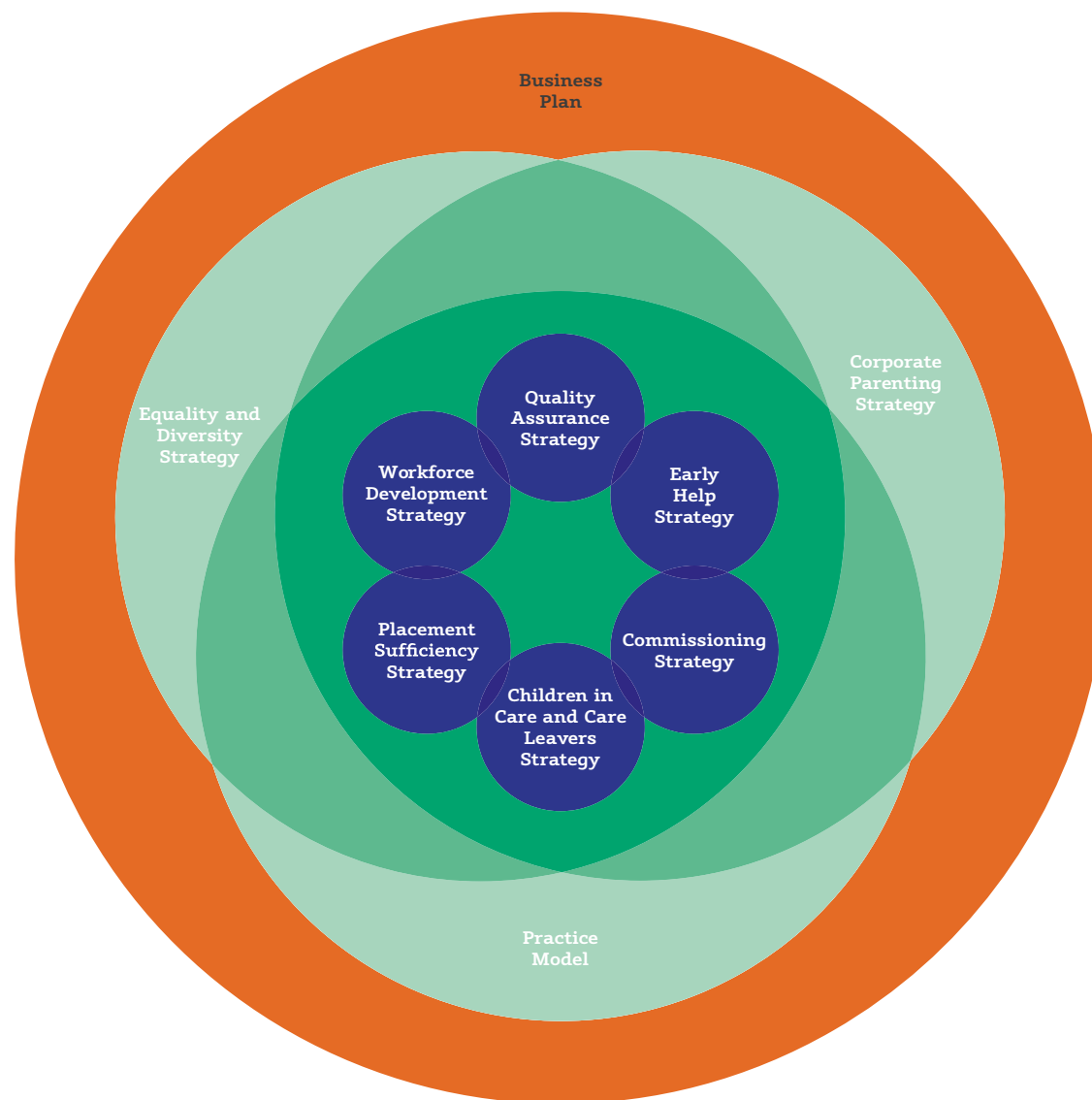
This Northamptonshire Children's Trust Business Plan really matters to us. It sets out our commitment to the children, young people and families of Northamptonshire. We are on a journey to improve services through Northamptonshire Children's Trust.

Our vision is to put children, young people and families at the heart of all we do, in every decision we make and every action we take. We are ambitious for all Children, Young People and Families and we have a critical role to making a difference to their outcomes and within Northamptonshire.

Our purpose is to relentlessly improve outcomes for children, young people and families through excellence in practice. We ask that our staff and stakeholders do the best job possible, every single day and because that is what children, young people in families deserve and have a right to expect.

The aims of this strategy are to:

- Set a clear strategic vision and priorities
- Make clear our commitment to enabling the voice of children and young people
- Explain how we will work with children, young people and families through our strategic framework
- Show strong financial planning, strong governance, and effective management of all of our resources



Foreword (cont)

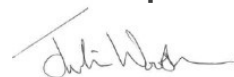
We always start with a simple question: What is life like for children, young people and families in Northamptonshire? And then we ask: How can we help make it better?

We take our responsibility seriously alongside everyone who works with and cares about children and young people. We are committed to do all that we can to ensure children, young people and families live safely, are safe, fulfil their potential, develop resilience and enjoy good health and wellbeing. This includes being involved and respected at home, at school, in their communities and, most importantly, being part of all decisions that affect them. We want to send a clear message about how important their welfare is to us and how important they are to our future.

Our vision and strategic framework have been developed with partners, the children's workforce and side by side with children, young people and families. We recognise that we can only improve outcomes for children, young people and families through effective partnership working. Whilst this plan focuses on Northamptonshire Children's Trust, it should be noted that the Trust supports, commissions and works with many other stakeholders including; voluntary organisations, the Northamptonshire Parent Carer Forum, North Northamptonshire Health and Wellbeing Board, West Northamptonshire Health and Wellbeing Board, Northamptonshire Integrated Care System and the Northamptonshire Safeguarding Children Partnership. In each of these arrangements there is a clear strategy and action plan and this business plan compliments them. We can only make a difference if we work together towards a set of common aims.

North Northamptonshire Council and West Northamptonshire Council are committed to supporting Northamptonshire Children's Trust to deliver the Children's Social Care and Early Help services across Northamptonshire. Both take their corporate parenting role very seriously and want to support children, young people and families to thrive in their community.

Northamptonshire Children's Trust



Julian Wooster, Chair



Colin Foster, Chief Executive

North Northamptonshire Council

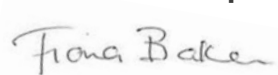


Cllr Scott Edwards, Lead member,
Children's Services

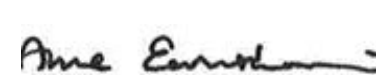


Rob Bridge, Chief Executive

West Northamptonshire Council



Cllr Fiona Baker,
Lead member, Children's Services



Anna Earnshaw, Chief Executive

1.1 Children's Services improvement journey

Children's Services in Northamptonshire were judged 'inadequate' by Ofsted in 2013, whilst this judgement improved to 'requires improvement to be good' in 2016 but by 2019 they were judged 'inadequate' again.

Northamptonshire Children's Trust (NCT) was partially formed on 1st November 2020 and fully launched on 1st April 2021.

When Ofsted conduct a re-visit under the ILACS framework we commit to working hard to ensure our improvement is recognised with a minimum judgement of 'requires improvement to be good' improving on towards good and better. The DfE statutory intervention notice applies to both North Northamptonshire Unitary Council and West Northamptonshire Unitary Council who are required to support the effective delivery of Children's Social Care, family support and youth offending services through NCT. This relies on the best possible people delivering the best possible services as part of the best possible partnership with the voice of the child at the centre of practice.

Our six strategic priorities for improvement are detailed within the improvement plan, these are:

Effective leadership - Improvement will be driven by a stable NCT senior leadership team that provides strategic leadership and direction, clarity of the vision for the service and sets clear priorities and expectations.

Recruit, retain and develop an awesome workforce - Staff are our most valuable resource. We need to recruit, develop and retain committed, skilful and child-centred staff and provide them with the environment in which good practice will flourish.

Strong Relationship-based practice - Ensuring our practice model is child-centred at its heart and evidenced through all that we do.

Insightful quality assurance and learning - We know ourselves and our practice well through rigorous quality assurance.

Healthy partnerships - We will work strategically with our core partners to share responsibility for driving our improvement plan, and all our staff will pursue effective multi-agency practice.

Robust and effective resource management - We will be an effective, high performing Trust with high standards of resource management.

1.1 Children's Services improvement journey (cont)

Overview of Trust requirements and characteristics

The Trust has been established as a company limited by guarantee, wholly owned by North Northamptonshire and West Northamptonshire Councils, to provide a long term and sustainable platform to realise improved performance and deliver high quality and innovative social care services to children, young people and their families within Northamptonshire.

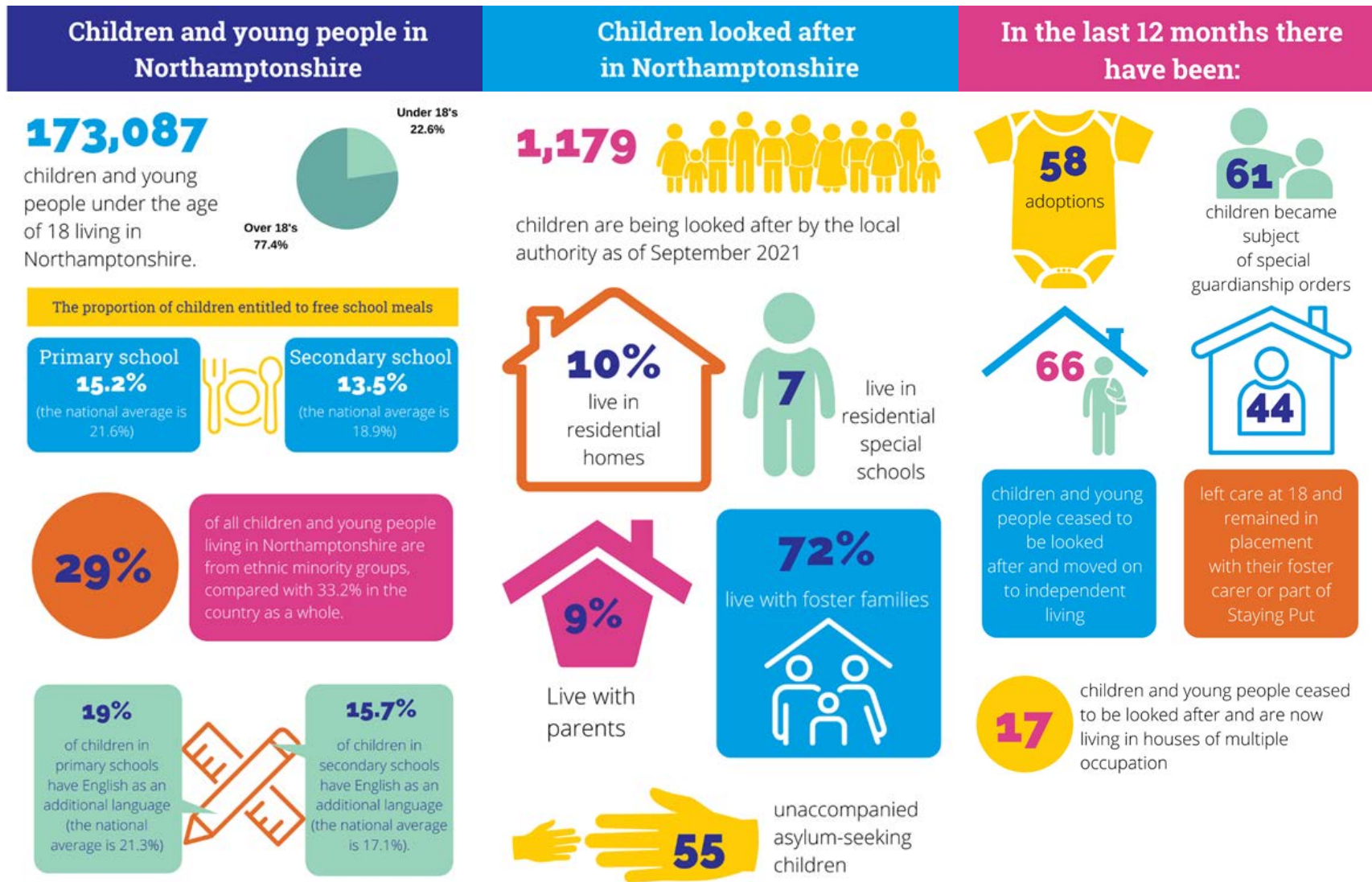
NCT is a non-profit distributing 'Teckal' compliant company that demonstrates day-to-day operational independence in the management and delivery of children's social care services in Northamptonshire through a strong board of executive and non-executive directors.

In conjunction with partner agencies, North Northamptonshire Council, West Northamptonshire Council and the Trust will work together collaboratively to:

- Promote the welfare and safeguard children in line with key children's legislation and statutory guidance;
- provide family support to vulnerable children and their families to enable them to cope with difficulties;
- support children to live safely with their immediate and extended families wherever possible;
- meet the needs of looked after children and those leaving care; and support disabled children and their families.



1.2 Local Context





**Northamptonshire
Children's Trust**

Section 2

Who we are



Northamptonshire Children's Trust

2.1 Our Vision

Our vision, strategic framework, outcomes framework and conditions for success were developed through extensive consultation with children, young people, parents, families, staff and our strategic partners. It has

included feedback from several '58 minute' sessions led by the Chief Executive of the Trust who discussed ideas with the workforce.

Our Vision is:

“ Children, Young People and Families at the heart of all we do - in every decision we make and every action we take ”

2.2 Our Ambition and Values

The voice of children and young people informs our values. Our Children in Care Council and Care Leavers group have told us that:

“Many of us have a hard time with the one life we have and just want someone to help us through”

“We just ask for someone to listen, someone trustworthy as trust is a valuable commodity in our lives”

“Life is full of frightening turns, made harder by the pressures we already face. So we kindly ask for help during those times, to be there when we need you”

“Sometimes we just need someone to talk to, so respect and compassion are important qualities. Other times we require help with our future, work, school, socialising”

“We ask for commitment. Someone who is at least a phone call away. We don’t want to sound hard but we’ve already dealt with neglect”

“Some of us have seen the worst people have to offer and we look to you for guidance. So your hard work and pride in your work is important to us”

To meet the challenges faced by communities, we will have a relentless focus on our impact and outcomes for children and young people based on local needs and priorities. Delivering our vision for children, young people and families is not just a job for Northamptonshire Children’s Trust, but is a shared responsibility with our strategic partners, and the wider public and voluntary sector. To achieve this we will:

- Ensure that the voice of children and young people drives all of our practice.
- Strengthen relationships with parents and carers, and our service offer will be shaped by them and by the direct involvement of children and young people. The co-production of effective solutions to local priorities, including financial challenges, will be evident in our successful delivery of this business plan, as well as our response to emerging issues.
- Focus our early help services on building resilience in families so that they are better able to help, support and protect their children without the need for statutory interventions.
- Consistently use reflective, collaborative and strengths-based approaches to working with the whole family so that parents are able to make positive and lasting changes to the care they provide to their children.
- Invest in integrated services and joint commissioning with our partners, bringing together our collective ideas, talent and resources to better meet the needs of children and young people, especially those with the most complex needs.
- Promote strong and meaningful relationships with our partner organisations and our whole-system approach to improving services and outcomes for children and young people.
- By the end of this 12-month business plan, have established strong and financially stable foundations.

Our Ambition is:

“ Our ambition is to make a sustainable improvement to the lives of children, young people and families ”

2.2 Our Values and Ambition (cont)

These are our Trust values:

- Be child focused and work with the whole family
- Make a difference with trust and integrity
- Concentrate on the best solution
- Act with respect, kindness and compassion
- Communicate well
- Do the best job of your life every single day



We use our core values to inform practice where:

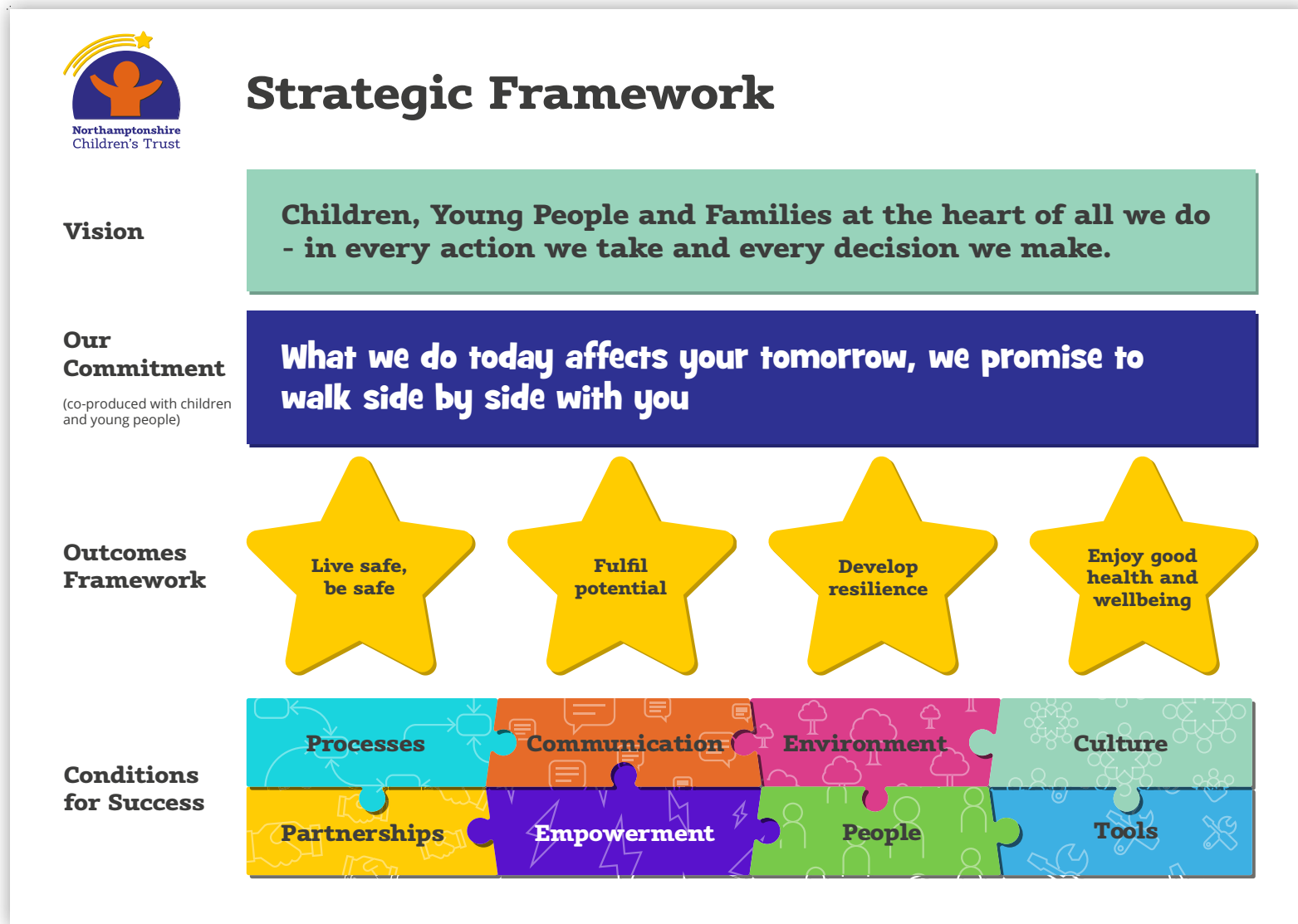
- Children and families who do need to access support, services will be responsive, of a high quality and focused on achieving resilience.
- We recognise the strengths that are present in every family and help families to arrive at their own solutions to their own difficulties; we believe children are best raised within their birth family network and will do all we can to support this.
- We work with children and their families to ensure that they receive the support and services they need to live happy, healthy and successful lives.
- We work to ensure that positive opportunities and effective help are available at the earliest opportunity – enabling children and their families to make the choices that mean they can thrive and achieve.
- We listen and observe attentively to children, young people and families, and respond to what they are telling us in order to inform how we improve the delivery of our services.
- We promote relationship-based practice and prioritise the continuity of relationship between practitioners and families.
- We believe in recruiting and retaining a stable and resilient workforce which will empower and enable children, young people and families to achieve their full potential.
- We strengthen partnership working so that children and families experience consistent joined up approaches to assessing and meeting their needs.

2.3 A Poem

hurt, abuse, pain. I feel alone.
They took me away.
Scared, worried, nervous.
I don't want to do this on my own.
It's hard to concentrate and feeling like
I fit in.
I always feel different. I never settle in
My Education fell behind.
I just existed. Although they were kind.
Day by Day hour by hour
I missed my mum and my dad and
the fun we had. Although the abuse
made me sad.
They say I can't see them. I know why.
But what they don't know. Is that it
hurts like mad. My tears are on my
pillow even though they were bad.

This young person is supported by a member of the Northamptonshire Children's Trust team - enabling and empowering practice supports children and young people to understand their thoughts and feeling and express themselves in their own way and on their own terms.

2.3 Our Strategic Framework



Our strategic framework overview encapsulates what matters to us on one page. It includes our vision, our commitment to children and young people, our outcomes framework and our conditions for success.

2.4 Our Commitment to Children and Young People

Our commitment to children and young people was written by them, they asked us to make this commitment which we will.

“ What we do today affects your tomorrow, we promise to walk side by side with you ”

2.5 Our Objectives and Outcome Framework

Northamptonshire Children's Trust outcomes framework is co-ordinated into four areas.

We are committed to enable children, young people and their families to:



The objectives of Northamptonshire Children's Trust to provide social care, youth offending and other related services and support to children, young people and their families for the advancement of the community, and in particular:

- a. to provide high quality and coordinated services in connection with children, young people and their families, including in relation to children's safeguarding, children in care and at the edge of care, children leaving care and adoption and fostering services;
- b. to innovate and to secure improvements in the quality and effectiveness of the services provided to children, young people and their families in respect of social care, family support and youth offending service and (subject to the Company's overriding duty to keep children and young people safe from harm) to demonstrate

- c. value for money considerations;
- c. to advance and promote social care, family support and youth offending services available to children, young people and their families;
- d. to work collaboratively with other agencies to identify the individual social care needs of children and young people and to establish suitable arrangements to prepare for and meet such needs;
- e. to make a positive and effective contribution to multi-agency early intervention support for children, young people and their families to avoid the need for more intensive social care support;

Outcomes framework details can be found in appendix 1

2.6 Our Conditions for Success

Our conditions for success were developed by our workforce through '58 minute' sessions with the Chief Executive and developed further by our practitioners group and equalities group. Our conditions for success are all about how we operate as a whole system and they fit together like a jigsaw – each piece is reliant on every other piece to make a full picture.



We will work together meaningfully with openness towards shared goals.
Children, Young People and Families will benefit from us working side by side with them.



We will enable all to be the best they can be and develop an awesome workforce.
Children, Young People and Families will benefit from a highly skilled, motivated workforce.



We will ensure that all voices are listened to, heard and valued.
Children, Young People and Families will benefit from clear communication at all times.



We will create accessible and welcoming spaces to work collaboratively and privately with colleagues.
Children, Young People and Families will benefit from the best work environment we can create.

2.6 Our Conditions for Success (cont)

Processes

We will empower our system to deliver the best support by having clear, up to date policies which enable slick processes.

Children, Young People and Families will benefit from a system that works effectively, efficiently and is delivered with care.

Tools

We will support a confident and competent workforce who have the tools they need to aspire to excellence.

Children, Young People and Families will benefit from everybody having the right toolkit to do their best work.

Empowerment

We are all leaders and will strive at all levels of the organisation to build respect, trust and a positive learning culture where diversity is celebrated and equality is embedded.

Children, Young People and Families will benefit from a confident and empowered workforce who are culturally competent and understand social graces.

Culture

We will treat each other with kindness, compassion and respect.

Children, Young People and Families will benefit from everybody giving their very best, every single day.

2.7 Our Current Service Performance Overview



2.8 Strategic Priorities April 2022-March 2026

Based on our vision, ambitions quality assurance, Ofsted feedback and discussions with children, young people and families, we have identified six strategic priorities for our business plan for the next 3 years. Our updated Improvement Plan (Appendix 4.4) details how the Trust will deliver these priorities and what this will mean for Children, Young People and Families.



2.8 Strategic Priorities April 2022-March 2026 (cont)

Strategic Priority	What we will achieve for Children Young People and Families?	Aim	What we will achieve by March 2022
Effective leadership	Our Improvement will be driven by a stable senior leadership team that provides strategic leadership and direction, clarity of the vision for the service and sets clear priorities and expectations. The senior leadership team will be visible to and engage with all staff.	Every manager at all levels will be a leader for improvement in Northamptonshire with a clear understanding of their responsibilities and accountabilities and will know what good looks like.	High quality of management decision-making, oversight and challenge. Quality assurance board to enable strategic oversight
Recruit, Retain and Develop an Awesome Workforce	Improvement for children and families will be delivered by our staff, who are therefore our most valuable resource.	Recruit, develop and retain committed, skilful and child-centred staff and provide them with the system conditions in which good practice will flourish.	Stability and sustainability of the workforce through an increase in permanent employees. Caseloads that enable all children to have an allocated social worker and workers to have manageable workloads. Sufficient capacity to deliver high practice standards Investing in our workforce so that we are knowledgeable and up to date in practice. Team, Service and Strategic Managers providing rigorous and effective oversight and support

2.8 Strategic Priorities April 2022-March 2026 (cont)

Strategic Priority	What we will achieve for Children Young People and Families?	Aim	What we will achieve by March 2022
Strong Relationship Based Practice	We are focused upon evidence based practice that works with children, young people and families to help them achieve positive changes. Our practice model is child-centred at its heart and evidenced through all that we do.	Our primary practice framework is Signs of Safety, which will deliver practice that is rooted in the relationships that our practitioners form with children and families, and is a strengths-based approach building upon the assets in the family network.	<p>Clear reunification plans and support services for children returning home where it is safe to do so.</p> <p>All practitioners understand the standards of good practice and purpose of our involvement and intervention in families' lives</p> <p>Our practice is child-centred alongside effective work with the whole family network</p> <p>Purposeful, planned and focused visits with children and young people to ensure that their needs are understood.</p> <p>The quality of social work assessments and plans so that they are consistently timely and are effective in improving children's experiences.</p> <p>Pathway plans that include clearly defined objectives for young people.</p>

2.8 Strategic Priorities April 2022-March 2026 (cont)

Strategic Priority	What we will achieve for Children Young People and Families?	Aim	What we will achieve by March 2022
Insightful Quality Assurance and Learning	We know ourselves and our practice well through rigorous Quality Assurance.	We are a learning organisation and our approach seeks to ensure that learning is captured from a range of sources centred upon collaborative case audits, feedback from children and families, staff and understanding our data. We will ensure that learning is then acted upon to drive effective improvement.	<p>Our practice is solid and continuously improving</p> <p>All managers know the quality of practice in their service and drive learning and practice improvements</p> <p>We can evidence learning and improvement as a result of our Quality Assurance activity</p> <p>The use of Quality Assurance activity through learning discussions and escalations to inform and improve practice.</p> <p>Action planning in response to the findings of serious case reviews.</p>
Healthy Partnerships	Effective partnership working is essential to good practice.	We will work strategically with our core partners to share responsibility for driving our improvement plan, and all our staff will pursue effective multi-agency practice.	<p>Children are protected through effective Multi-Agency Safeguarding. The identification of and response to risk when contacts relating to safeguarding concerns for children are received into the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH).</p> <p>Children in Care and Care Leavers have the full range of their needs met by all partners</p> <p>Children and families receive effective early help from all partners</p>

2.8 Strategic Priorities April 2022-March 2026 (cont)

Strategic Priority	What we will achieve for Children Young People and Families?	Aim	What we will achieve by March 2022
Robust and Effective Resource Management	We understand the key drivers of the budget and budget managers understand the financial impact of their decisions. Budget managers will be equipped with support and systems to effectively monitor and forecast.	Develop a culture of shared budget responsibility with all staff being responsible for ensuring that every pound spent is maximising positive outcomes for children and young people and is in line with budget control processes.	<p>Strong budget management and forecasting systems and processes will be embedded throughout the Trust.</p> <p>Delivering our Sufficiency Strategy so we have sufficient stable placements that meet the needs of our children and young people.</p> <p>Managing demand for specialist support and improving outcomes through effective earlier intervention.</p> <p>Benchmarking undertaken with statistical neighbours and throughout the social care sector to ensure services are delivered efficiently and effectively, exploring the use of innovative models and best practice.</p>

2.9 Our Quality Assurance

Northamptonshire Children's Trust has a very clear Quality Assurance (QA) framework and collaborative learning process which enables a strong understanding of the quality of practice and continuous improvement.

Our focus can be described as taking a 'so what' approach: Everything must relate fundamentally to seeking to improve our four key outcomes for children, young people and families and to demonstrate how these are met. Our measure of quality is the impact we have on children's lives, therefore our focus is on children's experiences and outcomes.

The voice of the child, family and our workforce are essential elements of the QA framework. They help us to understand the difference we make and ensure that we are delivering child centred support. Quality assurance and improvement is everyone's business and is part of our day to day work.

The focus for our quality of practice are:

- Child centred: The experiences, progress and outcomes of the child or young person on their journey with us is central to our approach
- Restorative: Instead of a top down, critical approach, our quality assurance work takes place with and alongside practitioners as an opportunity for reflection and learning. It is characterised by both high support and high challenge.
- Outcomes based: In line with our core approach, our focus is on outcomes rather than processes.
- Positive: Our approach to quality assurance is a positive learning experience – looking at informing and encouraging improvement
- and supporting the development of practitioners, services and systems

- Reflective: Our Quality Assurance framework is designed for reflective practice and shared learning.

Quality Assurance activity and findings are monitored on a monthly basis through the Quality Assurance Board. By quantifying the qualitative we are able to see the overall and service/ team level of quality, areas of good practice and for improvement. The Quality Assurance reporting and governance structure has been established to ensure clear oversight, sign off of recommendations as a result of Quality Assurance activity, and monitoring of progress to promote continued learning across Northamptonshire Children's Trust.

NCT's Senior Leadership Team (SLT) is responsible for not only endorsing findings, recommendations and future development work but also for ensuring that information is disseminated effectively to the workforce. SLT provides assurance to the Trust Board and the Councils in relation to the Quality Assurance processes that are in place, their effectiveness, the impact on services and improvement, and ultimately ensuring that children of Northamptonshire are receiving high quality services and good experiences when receiving support from us.



Northamptonshire
Children's Trust

Section 3

Partnerships and Trust Overview

3.1 Our Relationship with Strategic Partners

We believe that keeping vulnerable children and young people safe from harm is everyone's responsibility and that collectively we will only be successful if all partners work together across the county. Everyone who works with children, families and young people in Northamptonshire shares responsibility for improving outcomes for the most vulnerable children, young people and families.

Given this collective responsibility and the Trust's commitment to

collaborative and integrated working, the Trust is committed to being fully involved and playing an active role working alongside our strategic partners in the Northamptonshire Safeguarding Children Partnership. Early engagement between the Trust and strategic partners has taken place; further and ongoing engagement will be undertaken to ensure that children receive high quality and joined up services through our safeguarding partnership and integrated care system (ICS).

Tier 4 - Child in need of protection

NCT Children's Social Care; Youth Offending Service; Children, Adolescent and Mental Health Services (CAMHS); family and young people support services; specialist health services; voluntary services

Tier 3 - Targeted Services

NCT Children's Social Care; special educational need services; specialist health or disability services; family and young people support services; Youth Offending Team; targeted drug and alcohol services; Children and Adolescents Mental Health Service (CAMHS); family and young people support services; voluntary and community services

Tier 2 - Early Help

Early help assessments; Youth crime prevention services; targeted drug and alcohol information, advice and education, including harm reduction advice to support informed choices; health; education; children's centres and early years; educational psychology; educational welfare; specialist play services; voluntary and community services; parenting programmes

Tier 1 - Universal services

Education; children's centres and early years services; health visiting service; school nursing; GP; play services; police; housing; voluntary and community sector

3.1 Our Relationship with Strategic Partners (cont)

Our relationship with North Northamptonshire Council and West Northamptonshire Council

A strong strategic partnership is emerging and the Trust will be a reliable and effective partner. This will help each organisation achieve their priorities. Improved outcomes for children, young people and families depend upon the Councils and the Trust

The Councils retain statutory accountability for children's services, and they continue to provide and commission all those services for children that are not within the Trust; Corporate parenting, education support, school safeguarding, special educational needs and disabilities co-ordination (although support for children with SEND is certainly our business too), school admissions and place planning, virtual school for children in care, and early years services. The 'dependencies' have been set out in the Service Specification of the Trust Service Delivery Contract. These reflect arrangements and services for children that the Council must put in place to enable the Trust to achieve its priorities and performance targets.

The Councils' Corporate Parenting Role

Elected members are the corporate parents for Northamptonshire's Looked After Children and have a collective responsibility across services and local authorities to safeguard and promote their life chances. North Northamptonshire Council and West Northamptonshire Council will ensure the appropriate contribution from education and other retained children's services, housing services and the Councils universal services in supporting Looked After Children.

North Northamptonshire Council and West Northamptonshire Council will support the Northamptonshire Corporate Parenting

Board. The Trust will provide professional expertise and advice to the Corporate Parenting Board, in order to help the Councils discharge their responsibilities. This includes (but is not limited to) the provision

In addition to the dependencies listed above, the Trust is supported by North Northamptonshire Council and West Northamptonshire Council in relation to a number of key strategic and operational dependencies that include (not an exhaustive list):

Strategic dependencies

- **Working in partnership**
The Councils will work in partnership with the Trust to implement and maintain ways of working and cooperative arrangements in relation to retained services, consulting and working in partnership with the Trust in respect of any proposed changes to retained services that will impact on the Trust.
- **Acting on inspection findings**
Following any regulatory inspection, the Councils are responsible for implementing certain actions in relation to the services/other statutory functions for which the Councils are responsible/which have a direct impact on the performance by the Trust.
- **Access to grant funding**
The Councils will support the Trust in making applications (including providing required information) for grant funding relating to services that the Trust is required/contracted to provide.

Operational dependencies

- **Support Services Board**
The Trust will hold the Councils to account for the performance of all

3.1 Our Relationship with Strategic Partners (cont)

the support services that they deliver under service level agreements in accordance with the Support Services Agreement.

- **Property**
The Councils are required to ensure that the Trust has access to properties required to deliver the services. This includes both Councils' owned properties and those owned by third parties.
- **Information transfer**
The Councils will ensure that the Trust has access to all available information required by the Trust to deliver the services and functions identified within the contract.
- **Assets and supply contracts**
The Councils will ensure the Trust's access to the assets and supply contracts, in accordance with the agreed schedule.

Joint working protocols

The Trust and the Councils have agreed a series of protocols covering the areas that fall outside of both the Service Delivery Contract and the Service Specification – in essence a framework for how people will work together and set the parameters for expected ways of working.

Our relationship with Strategic Partners

The Trust is committed to working collaboratively with partners to improve outcomes for children, young people and families. Early engagement between the Trust and strategic partners has taken place; further and ongoing engagement will be undertaken to ensure that children receive high quality and joined up services.

- **Early help**

The Trust, North Northamptonshire Council and West Northamptonshire Council will promote and create opportunities for co-operation with local partners to build the best possible Early Help Offer to improve the well-being of children and young people. Families should be supported to stay together where it is sage to do so.

- **Schools**
The Trust will maintain constructive and cooperative relationships with all schools who are an essential partner in safeguarding children and young people.
- **Early Years providers**
The Trust will maintain constructive and cooperative operational relationships with early years' providers.
- **Adult Social Care**
The Trust will ensure that an effective working relationship is maintained with adult social care services within the Councils. Communication, cooperation and collaboration between the Trust and adult social services is critical to achieving the service outcomes, particularly as related to children's transition to adulthood, children at risk of parental mental health, substance misuse, children with disabilities and domestic abuse.
- **Health Providers (including Clinical Commissioning Group and Public Health)**
The Trust will work through the Integrated Care System (ICS) to carry out their duties as strong and effective partners in respect of safeguarding and delivering children's care in an integrated way.
- **Police**
The Trust will ensure that an effective working relationship is maintained with police services. This includes multi-agency front

3.1 Our Relationship with Strategic Partners (cont)

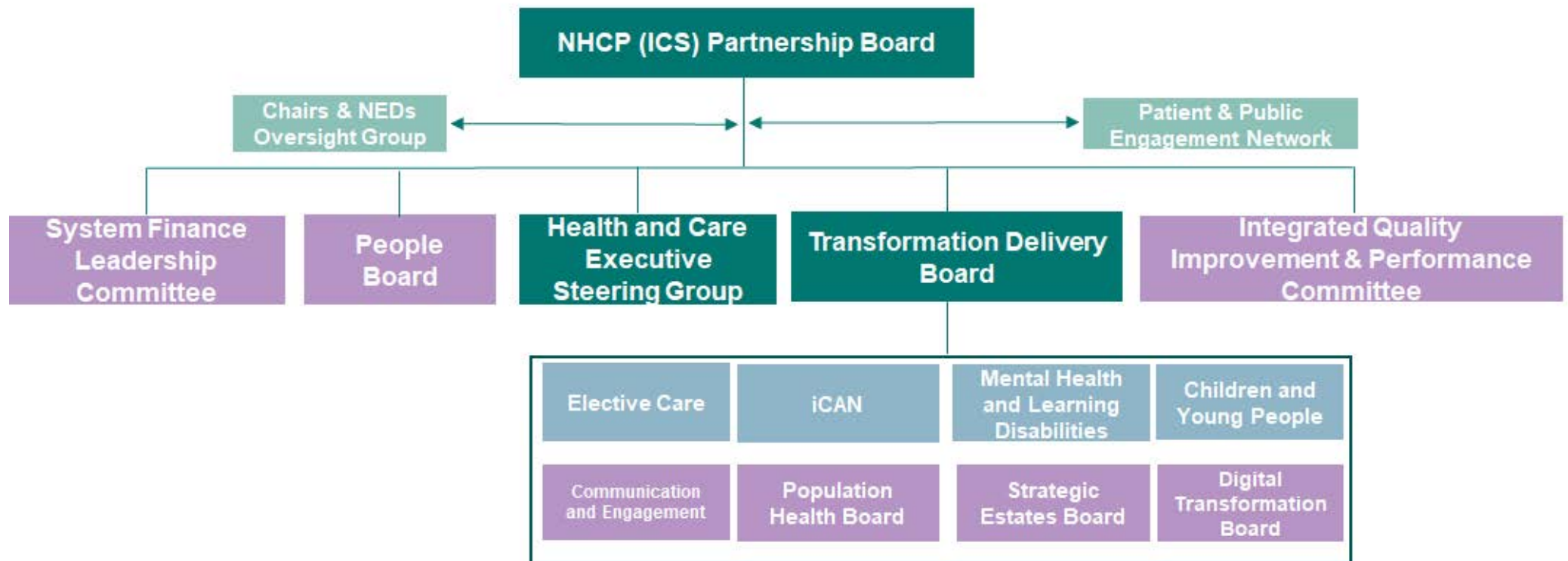
door arrangements and safeguarding services. Communication, cooperation and collaboration between the Trust and police services is key to achieving the service outcomes.

- **Voluntary and community sector (VCS) partners**
The Trust will manage relevant operational relationships with the VCS, playing an active role in promoting a healthy and engaged voluntary sector that provides good quality services for local people and to engage with the VCS as partners in the development of services.



3.1 Our Relationship with Strategic Partners (cont)

NCT is a full partner in the integrated care system alongside colleagues in other agencies. We are heavily involved in the 'children and young people pillar' and contribute across the system to improve services and outcomes for children, young people and families.



3.2 Our Resources and Services

The Trust is commissioned by the North Northamptonshire Council and West Northamptonshire Council to deliver services relating to the following:

- **Early Help Services**
- **Children’s Social Care Services**
- **Children’s residential homes**
- **Fostering**
- **Adoption**
- **Care Leaver Services**
- **Youth Offending Services**
- **Business Support**
- **Corporate parenting alongside all partners**

Commissioning of services relating to the functions above, for example legal services

For the Trust to succeed in its ambition to make a sustainable improvement to the lives of children, young people and families, the Trust will be reliant upon the strong partnership with the Councils and of their performance of a number of support services which they are responsible for. The following support services are provided to the Trust by the Councils through ‘service level agreements’ whose performance are routinely monitored through a joint Support Services Board:

Finance services	HR services	IT services	Customer services	Miscellaneous business support
Internal Audit	Health, Safety and Wellbeing	ICT	Complaints team	Procurement
Finance operations	HR Policy & projects	Business systems and change	Customer services	Property services
Payments team and direct Payments team	Learning & Development	Report development		
Insurance	Payroll & HR transactions	Web team		

3.3 Our Financial Strategy and Plans

Northamptonshire Children's Trust Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) focuses on achieving financial sustainability over the business plan period and explain how the business plan programmes align with financial priorities. In setting the medium term budget, we have focused on making informed recommendations that align with our commissioning Councils' affordability objectives as well as making best use of available funds to achieve the best outcomes for children and young people.

The financial implications, in terms of spend and savings will be carefully monitored over the plan period. It is clear that the coming years will be financially challenging, given the ongoing pressure on wider public sector budgets and national increases in levels of need for children's services. It is of paramount importance that the organisation continues to work with commissioning partners to ensure a mutual understanding of existing and emerging pressures and reaches agreement on the level of funding available and how that funding should be prioritised to achieve the best possible outcomes for the children and young people we support.

The organisation will be following three overarching financial principles over the coming years. Our aims are to;

1. **Achieving value for money**

The Trust will deliver good quality services and is working proactively towards improving services in line with inspection findings. The Trust will maximise the economies of scale through both the delivery and procurement of services. Key priorities will be the effective commissioning of placements and the recruitment and retention of a highly skilled workforce, Benchmarking will be undertaken with statistical neighbour's and throughout the social care sector to ensure services are delivered efficiency and effectively, exploring the

use of innovative models and best practice.

2. **Maximise resources available to frontline services**

Regularly reviews budgets to ensure that resources available to frontline services are maximised and there is a sufficient balance to ensure that frontline services have the infrastructure to ensure they can continue to support children and families.

The following four aspects are important in achieving this objective.

- Adequate needs-led budget growth and achievement of savings
 - Maximise income generation
 - Periodic review of emerging priority areas
 - Business plan programmes facilitate the effective use of resources
- ### 3. **Shared budget responsibility**
- The Trust will develop a culture of shared budget responsibility with all staff being responsible for ensuring that every pound spent is maximising positive outcomes for children and young people and is in line with budget control processes. The newly established Transformation and Efficiencies programme board will provide a management framework to ensure projects are identified, monitored and delivered and support resources are deployed effectively. Progress against the plan and on the associated spend and savings implications will be monitored on an ongoing basis with the relevant leadership team having overarching oversight.

Financial Planning

Northampton Children's Trust is still in its first contract sum period from November 2020 – March 2022. The financial position remains

3.3 Our Financial Strategy and Plans (cont)

TBC

3.4 Risk Management

Our risk management framework helps to ensure we identify and manage those risks that could affect our ability to deliver the company's objectives. The management of risk is embedded in our day-to-day business activities, and well-established processes and policies are in place. All of our employees have a role in reducing risk through our internal control framework. Risks are recorded in a Trust risk register which is regularly reviewed by the Senior Leadership Team and reported to the Finance, Resources and Audit Committee of the Board of Directors.

The risk register includes strategic and operational risks.

- Strategic risks are the direct responsibility of the Senior Leadership Team and concern the overall direction of the Company and its sustainability.
- Operational risks concern day-to-day activities which need to be managed in order for services to be delivered. They are managed by individual service managers and are regularly reported to service directors.

The detailed risk register is shown at Appendix 8.



3.5 About Northamptonshire Children’s Trust and our Business Plan

Local Government Reorganisation

Local government in Northamptonshire is facing its biggest change in over 40 years. As of 1st April 2021 North Northamptonshire Council and West Northamptonshire Council replaced the eight previous councils in Northamptonshire. They are unitary authorities and are responsible for all public services provided to residents in their areas.

Our Governance

- **Owned by the North Northamptonshire and West Northamptonshire Councils**

The Trust was established as a company limited by guarantee on 1st November 2020, with the sole member at the point of contract commencement being Northamptonshire County Council. At this point only, core children’s social care services had been transferred to the Trust. On 1st April 2021 (vesting day), the County Council ceased to exist. At that point, North Northamptonshire Council and West Northamptonshire Council became the two members (owners) of the Trust, and the remaining infrastructure staff were transferred to the Trust.

- **Operational independence**

North Northamptonshire Council and West Northamptonshire Council, as the owners of the Trust, agree that Trust senior leadership team (which is accountable to the Trust Board) have unfettered operational independence in respect of the day-to-day management and performance of the services and functions that transfer at the point of contract commencement. The Councils will commission the contract and the performance of the Trust via the Director of Children’s Services. The Trust will also hold the Councils to account for the delivery and performance of support services and

related Council dependencies.

- **Reserved powers**

Although operationally independent of North Northamptonshire Council and West Northamptonshire Council, the Councils retain ‘reserved powers’ for certain significant matters including, for example, any appointment and/or removal of the Chief Executive or a Council appointed Director and/or any changes to the terms of such appointments; any changes/amendments to the Articles; the entering into by the Trust of any new third party contracts for the provision of services etc.

- **Governance Side Agreement**

A Governance Side Agreement is in place between the DfE, North Northamptonshire Council and West Northamptonshire Council, describing those areas of the Trust’s governance over which the DfE retains some control, or influence, whilst children’s social care services remain subject to Government intervention.

- **Role of the Trust Board**

The role of the Trust Board is to set the strategic aims of the Trust, oversee the management of the Trust and hold the executive team to account. It is the responsible body for the performance of the Trust in terms of delivering its legal and contractual obligations and achieving outcomes for children and young people in Northamptonshire.

For the period during which children’s social care services remain subject to Government intervention, the Chair of the Board is appointed by the Secretary of State for Education.

- **Structure of the Trust Board**

The Trust Board contains a wide portfolio of expertise and knowledge in children’s services, commercial, financial and other

3.5 About Northamptonshire Children's Trust and our Business Plan (cont)

disciplines. The Board provides support and challenge on the direction and strategy of the Trust. The Board comprises of:

- A non-executive Director selected as Chair; the Chief Executive of the Trust;
- up to 3 additional Executive Directors appointed by the Board;
- up to four Independent Non-Executive Directors appointed by the Board;
- up to four Council Directors nominated by the North Northamptonshire Council / West Northamptonshire Council and appointed by the Board.

The number of Council Directors shall not exceed the number of Independent Non-Executive Directors at any time.

- **Board committee structure**
The Trust Board has established two supporting committees; one covering finance, resources and audit, and a second covering practice, performance and quality. The membership of each committee is three independent Non-Executive Directors, a Council appointed Non-Executive Director, and an Executive Director.
- Both boards report into the Trust Board. All boards and their inter-dependencies can be seen in appendix 9

What is the business plan?

The Interim Business Plan for Northamptonshire Children's Trust for 2021 to 2022 is our organisation's most important strategic document. It articulates our vision for the Trust together with the most important outcomes that we want to achieve for children in partnership with our owning Councils and local strategic partners. It also sets out our objectives for what we want the Trust to be and how we will change and develop in order to deliver these outcomes. Against each of our strategic

outcomes, the business plan sets out priority activities that we will focus on delivering over the next year, while also providing a platform for improvement over the longer term. These are the key priorities that will enable us to deliver our vision.

The intention of our business plan is a high-level strategic document which provides a clear framework for decision-making about our services and how we prioritise and allocate our resources. Whilst this is a one-year interim business plan a three-year business plan for 2022/25 will be developed and which will be in place on 1st April 2022.

How we have developed the business plan

The priorities in our business plan are based on a sound understanding of the local needs of children, young people, and families across the county. We have developed a strong evidence base for our plan using demographic trends, performance data, needs analyses, and feedback from Ofsted (through inspection and monitoring visits), alongside more qualitative feedback about the effectiveness and impact of our services. Additionally, the content of the business plan has been informed through extensive consultation with: Children, young people, and families; staff; and strategic partners. The feedback from these engagements has helped to shape the Trust's vision, values and conditions for success.

How we will measure our progress?

We will monitor progress in two ways. Firstly, by being clear about our priority activities, when we expect these to be delivered and monitoring our progress against our improvement plan. Secondly, through a set of key performance indicators (Appendix 5). These have been agreed with

3.5 About Northamptonshire Children’s Trust and our Business Plan (cont)

the Councils as part of our contract with them and by the Trust Board of Directors to monitor and assure that the Trust is improving outcomes for children and young people. There is regular monitoring and scrutiny of our performance, with progress against the key performance indicators reported publicly to each of the owning Councils.

Annual Review

Each year the business plan priority areas will be reviewed and updated. The annual review of the contract between the Trust, North Northamptonshire Council and West Northamptonshire Council provides the opportunity to consider: The quality of practice and outcomes for children; how the Trust discharges the Councils’ functions; and if any Changes are required to the contract.

The annual review will also assess our progress at implementing priorities in the previous year, as well as refreshing our priorities and activities for the year ahead.

The Coronavirus Pandemic and this Business Plan.

The majority of 2020 was affected dramatically in the UK and worldwide by the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic. It is fair to say that no single event has had such a profound effect on the lives of people in this country since the nineteenth century. The pandemic will have a substantial impact on our country, county and more specifically the children, young people and families presently supported and those yet to access support. The impact to date on services delivered by the Trust, has necessitated an extensive programme of work, as well as diversion of resources to in order to continue to provide high quality services.

While the full ramifications of the pandemic are still to be fully known and will inevitable impact on aspects of our plans, it has provided

the opportunity to be innovative and creative, establishing new ways of delivering our services; for example, through the increased use of digital solutions. Going forward, as part of our recovery planning we will be reviewing the lessons learnt and will apply best practice to our service delivery so we can continue to effectively meet the needs of our children, young people and families. For example, supporting the mental health of looked after children appropriate contact arrangements.

COVID-19 health protection board

As co-opted member of Northamptonshire COVID-19 health protection board the Trust contributes as the need arises, working in accordance with the countywide outbreak prevention and control plan.



Northamptonshire
Children's Trust

Section 4

Appendices

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Appendix 1 – Outcomes Framework



Outcome 1

- 1a) Children in need of support and protection are identified early and have their needs assessed in a timely and effective way
- 1b) The level of intervention is always proportionate to the assessed level of risk and need and children are supported to remain with their families where it is safe to do so
- 1c) When children become looked after they do so at the right time and are cared for in the right placement
- 1d) Children, young people and their families are able to access local services



Outcome 2

- 2a) Children in Care access high quality education and training and feel motivated and ambitious about their future
- 2b) Children in Care and Care Leavers are able to make the most of the choices available to them after leaving school, engage positively in post 16 learning and successfully transition to adulthood

Appendix 1 – Outcomes Framework (cont)



Outcome 3

- 3a) Children and Young People have strong relationships with their family members and the whole family builds resilience, feeling part of and pride in their community
- 3b) Strong community partnerships reduce the risk of exploitation and abuse



Outcome 4

- 4a) Children receive timely support and intervention to promote health and wellbeing
- 4b) Children, young people and their families are encouraged and supported to lead a healthy lifestyle

Appendix 2 – Northamptonshire Children’s Trust Improvement Plan

Key Improvement Priorities

October 21- December 22

Effective Early Help offer with better step down from social care - meaning children and families receive the right support at the right time and preventing escalation of needs

High quality social care referrals at our front door - resulting in children and families receiving the right support in a timely way and reducing unnecessary social work intervention




The best Social Workers join and stay - meaning children and families benefit from consistently good quality social work practice built on strong and continued professional working relationships. Social workers have reduced caseloads and high quality supervision

Consistently good quality assessments and plans - so our practice makes a lasting difference for children and families




Placements that provide excellent care and support - they must meet the needs of our children and be available when we need them

RAG Criteria

Delivery Rag

-  **Red** Not on track to meet delivery date, mitigation or escalation required
-  **Amber** Work in progress, some risk to delivery and/ or delivery date and mitigation applied
-  **Green** On track to meet delivery date or completed

Outcome Rag

-  **Red** Outcomes at risk/ not achieved, mitigation or escalation required
-  **Amber** Progress towards the agreed outcomes being made
-  **Green** Satisfactory outcomes achieved (in line or above comparators)

Appendix 2 – Northamptonshire Children’s Trust Improvement Plan (cont)

1. Excellent Leadership

Our improvement will be driven by a stable senior leadership team that provides strategic leadership and direction, clarity of the vision for the service and sets clear priorities and expectations. The senior leadership team will be visible to and engage with all staff.

Ofsted 2019 2a The quality of management decision-making, oversight and challenge

Ref	Actions	Lead and Support	Timescale	Measure of Progress	Direction of Travel since last update	RAG delivery	RAG outcomes	Progress Update
1.1	<p>Development of the Corporate Parenting Board responsibilities in order for them to champion improvements</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deliver CP training for CPB Members and wider council and partner colleagues • Strengthen CPB, eg through CPB member leads for specific areas, involvement in QA and engagement with children in care and care leavers • Increase range of apprenticeships and EET options within councils and NCT • Implement a QA process for Corporate parenting board to enable progress to be monitored. • Increase care experienced young people’s membership on the board 	Chief Exec, AD Corporate Parenting, DCS, Lead Members	Mar 22	<p>Clear understanding from all Corporate Parenting Board members of their responsibilities as evidenced through Corporate Parenting Board meetings</p> <p>Positive impact on experiences of children in care, including children with disabilities, evidenced by Corporate Parenting Board and Member activity - as evidenced through you said we did</p> <p>Demonstrating effective overview of Corporate Parenting related issues</p> <p>QA process shows that Pledges set out by the Corporate Parenting Board are being achieved.</p>	↑	Green	Amber	Corporate Parenting training for all Members of NNC and WNC completed June Revised Corporate Parenting Board structure in place from June 21 following elections Terms of Reference updated and recruitment of young members in progress CPB regularly reviews the NCT scorecard and an additional session planned for Dec to enable members to increase understanding of what the measures mean to enable them to challenge CPB is undertaking deep dive sessions on particular topics, led by subject matter experts including children and young people Impact includes: - Council tax exemption for care leavers in place from April 21 NNC and WNC - WNC hosting ‘Boss it Brunch’ career October 21 – for care leaver career opportunities - Timeliness of LAC health reviews has been escalated within health services - An important function of the Board is to celebrate the achievements of children and young people and this is done at each Board meeting

Appendix 2 – Northamptonshire Children’s Trust Improvement Plan (cont)

Ref	Actions	Lead and Support	Timescale	Measure of Progress	Direction of Travel since last update	RAG delivery	RAG outcomes	Progress Update
1.2	<p>Improve the consistency of quality of management oversight and supervision to ensure it is meaningful and purposeful (to include reflection, views of children and professionals, analysis, challenge and time-bound actions to progress plans and improve children's circumstances)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Refresh and launch Practice Model, Practice Standards and Supervision Policy and share best practice examples All social care team and service managers to complete management oversight and supervision training to include focus on recording Provide bespoke development, mentoring and coaching for managers from PIP, RIP and SWA Complete NCT leadership development programme for all managers in NCT Implementation of QAF within Children and Family Support Service (CFSS), includes management oversight and supervision 	<p>Principal SW</p> <p>AD Safeguarding & AD Corporate Parenting</p> <p>PIP Lincs, Principal SW</p> <p>Chief Exec</p> <p>AD CFSS and QA Manage</p>	<p>Sept 21</p> <p>Mar 22</p> <p>Mar 22</p> <p>Mar 22</p> <p>Sep 21</p>	<p>Feedback from staff survey and QA activity shows staff experience good quality support from their managers</p> <p>Quality assurance activity (including observations of supervisions) shows increase in quality of management oversight and supervision which has positive impact on practice and outcomes for children</p>	↑	Green	Amber	<p>Leadership Development Programme for all line managers commenced June -clarity on strengths based, collaborative approach. Enabling leaders to lead more effectively, setting expectations</p> <p>Practice Standards, Practice Model and Supervision Policy reviewed, published in July and formally launched in September</p> <p>Management oversight, supervision and brilliant basics training delivered and being rolled out/ followed up</p> <p>Learning Hub now live on intranet, including best practice examples</p> <p>PIP improvement support for services in place and mentoring for managers,</p> <p>Bespoke support from RIP for 7 team managers and 3 service managers and coaching/ mentoring from PIP and Social Work Academy. Additional 20 places on PSDP being finalised for starting in 21/22</p> <p>Supervision and Management Oversight QA shows some examples of good practice and further improvement required. Staff consistently feed back that they feel supported by managers</p> <p>QA framework adopted in practice by CFSS (Sept 21)</p> <p>Ofsted Feb 21 MV findings:</p> <p>Overall quality of service remains inconsistent and management oversight is not sufficiently robust</p> <p>Frontline management oversight, challenge and formal supervision inconsistent</p> <p>Workforce reported that they felt supported. However consistency in practice and robust management oversight remains and issue</p> <p>Ofsted July 21 MV comments:</p> <p>Supervision records vary in quality</p> <p>Practice model and revised supervision template helping to bring clarity and direction on next steps and what needs to happen to improve child's life</p>

Appendix 2 – Northamptonshire Children’s Trust Improvement Plan (cont)

Ref	Actions	Lead and Support	Timescale	Measure of Progress	Direction of Travel since last update	RAG delivery	RAG outcomes	Progress Update
1.3	Improve equality, address inequalities and discrimination and celebrate diversity			Feedback from workforce shows progress and improvement with regards to equality and diversity issues	↑	Green	Amber	<p>Equalities steering group and Forum in place-workforce led sessions raising awareness of equalities needs and experiences</p> <p>Planning for Equalities Week in November</p> <p>Culturally sensitive practice training developed by members of steering group with young people</p> <p>Review of Equality Impact Assessment tool and guidance in progress</p> <p>Workforce communications increasingly sharing and celebrating more diverse range of events and festivals</p> <p>81% of attendees at Forum in summer 21 said they felt that things were changing in NCT and that more conversations were taking place about inequality, including in team meetings.</p>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Deliver Equalities Strategy and Anti Racism Statement, including our equalities commitment to children, young people and our workforce 	AD QA & Commissioning	Mar 24					
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use our Equalities Forum to educate and support each other, share best practice and provide space to share experiences 		Mar 22					
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Celebrate diversity, increase understanding and skills through Equalities Week 		Nov 21					
1.4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Monitor impact of managers' review of children's circumstances at 9 and 15 months on reducing drift and delay for repeat CP plans and lengthy CP plans Review impact every 6 months and report to QA Board Implement any improvement actions identified through 6 monthly impact reviews 	AD Safeguarding	Feb 22	Reduction in repeat CP Plans to align with comparators Maintain CP Plan 2+ years below comparators	↔	Green	Amber	<p>Reviews of child protection cases at 9 and 15 months is taking place via service managers.</p> <p>Decisions re PLO are considered at the 9 month child protection conference review in all cases.</p> <p>First analysis report presented to Improvement Board in Summer 21</p> <p>CP plans 2+ years 2% YTD at Sept 21, below comparators</p> <p>Repeat CP Plans are above comparators and previous years - continued focus on reducing on repeat plans including improving quality of safety plans.</p>

Appendix 2 – Northamptonshire Children’s Trust Improvement Plan (cont)

2. Recruit, Retain and Develop an Awesome Workforce

Improvement for children and families will be delivered by our workforce, who are therefore our most valuable resource.

Ofsted 2019 3b Social worker caseloads that enable all children to have an allocated social worker and workers to have manageable workloads.

Ofsted 2019 3d Stability and sustainability of the social care workforce.

Ref	Actions	Lead and Support	Timescale	Measure of Progress	Direction of Travel since last update	RAG delivery	RAG outcomes	Progress Update
2.1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improve our Continuous Professional Development Offer for social workers to support recruitment and retention Create online Learning Hub bringing CPD offer, resources and best practice examples together in one place Review L&D programme to meet needs of social care workforce offer routes into social work roles: social worker apprenticeships, Step Up to Social Work, Front line Promote career progression opportunities and support workforce to benefit from them (eg senior social worker posts) 	AD Quality Assurance & Commissioning Head of HR & OD	Mar-22	<p>Social Worker Apprenticeship and Step Up places offered and completion rates</p> <p>ASYE retention measure (Year 2 and beyond)</p> <p>Decreased workforce turnover</p> <p>Regular monitoring of Learning and Development SLA showing that goals are being met</p>	↑	Green	Amber	<p>Workforce Strategy refreshed. SLA in place for L&D support service. Service learning needs analysis in progress and L&D children’s programme being reviewed for 22/23</p> <p>Bespoke CPD to meet our needs developed by our workforce and rolled out (Equalities Me and My sessions, management oversight, supervision, QA)</p> <p>Formal Teaching Partnership progressing following successful DfE bid</p> <p>Refreshed induction</p> <p>Signs of Safety trajectory plan in place, delivery supported by SofS project manager. Additional Practice Champions trained and Signs of Safety training available for all workforce</p> <p>PSW attending team meetings, PSW newsletter well received</p> <p>Social worker pipeline plan in place. 10 Step Up Students recruited for Jan 22.. 8 Step up Graduates started as NQSWs in May. 10 additional Practice Educators trained to support social work students. Application to Frontline in progress for Sept 22 programme</p> <p>Making research count membership in place with colleagues benefitting from attending webinars</p> <p>Learning Hub live on the intranet and being developed</p> <p>Monitor SLA with Learning and Development.</p> <p>Slight reduction in turnover seen across NCT</p>

Appendix 2 – Northamptonshire Children’s Trust Improvement Plan (cont)

Ref	Actions	Lead and Support	Timescale	Measure of Progress	Direction of Travel since last update	RAG delivery	RAG outcomes	Progress Update
2.2	<p>Improve our working conditions to support recruitment and retention of social workers</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deliver improved induction • Review HR Policies and Procedures • Deliver conditions for success - including improved finance and business processes • Monitor caseloads and take mitigating action 	<p>Director of Finance & Resources Director of Social Care Head of HR & OD</p>	Mar-22	<p>Decreased workforce turnover Reduced vacancies and agency rate</p>	↑	Green	Amber	<p>Conditions for success being delivered through business plan. Participants on leadership development programme improving processes</p> <p>Some positive impact of flexible and home working arrangements during COVID: reduced sickness rates, positive feedback from workforce - lessons learnt to inform future policy. workforce survey completed 500 returns - informing agile working policy</p> <p>Equalities steering group and Forum in place- staff led awareness raising sessions re protected characteristics. Equalities Survey completed. Equalities Strategy & Anti Racism Statement completed</p> <p>Financial approval processes to be reviewed. Changes requested to ERP to reduce burden on managers</p> <p>Pay increments introduced from Apr 21. New recruitment and retention package of hard to recruit posts to be launched Nov 21</p> <p>Agency rate has reduced since Nov 20. Challenges remain in DAAT, Safeguarding, Court teams. Mitigating action in place</p> <p>Slight reduction in turnover seen across NCT</p>

Appendix 2 – Northamptonshire Children’s Trust Improvement Plan (cont)

Ref	Actions	Lead and Support	Timescale	Measure of Progress	Direction of Travel since last update	RAG delivery	RAG outcomes	Progress Update
2.3	<p>Improve our offer to social workers in hard to recruit teams</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Implement revised recruitment and retention bonus offer, with better incentives for hard to recruit to posts / teams 	<p>Director of Finance & Resources Director of Social Care</p>	Mar-22	Reduced proportion of Social Work vacancies and agency workers in Safeguarding, DAAT and Court teams	↑	Green	Amber	<p>Pay increments introduced from Apr 21. New recruitment and retention package of hard to recruit posts to be launched Nov 21</p> <p>Dedicated Recruitment team and Weekly recruitment panels in place</p> <p>Agency rate has reduced since Nov 20. Challenges remain in DAAT, Safeguarding, Court teams. Mitigating action in place. Need more perm starters in priority teams and to reduce turnover.</p> <p>NQSWs recruitment: 9 started Jan , 13 started in May (including 8 Step Up graduates) 14 started Sept 10 Step Up students will start in Jan22.</p> <p>Front Line - we are applying to be part of the programme from Sep 22</p> <p>Focus on improving agency, permanent, international recruitment</p>
2.4	<p>Improve the efficiency of our recruitment processes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> increase business support officers input to process and reduce admin demand on managers increase speed of approval and recruitment, appointment process 	Director of Finance & Resources	Dec-22	<p>Reduced time from point of identifying need to recruit to appointment</p> <p>Reduced proportion of social worker vacancies</p>	↑	Green	Amber	<p>Plans in place to enable business support to have more input to ERP Gold</p> <p>ERP backend processes being reviewed to streamline where possible</p> <p>All recruitment support now in Finance and Resources leading to improved working practices</p>
2.5	<p>Deliver creative and targeted recruitment campaigns which result in increase the appointment of permanent social workers</p>	Director of Finance & Resources	Dec-22	Reduced vacancies and agency rate	↑	Green	Amber	<p>NCT Social media recruitment campaign ongoing</p> <p>Re-launch of campaign planned following finalisation of recruitment and retention offer</p>

Appendix 2 – Northamptonshire Children’s Trust Improvement Plan (cont)

3. Strong Relationship Based Practice

We are focused upon evidence based practice that works with children, young people and families to help them achieve positive changes. Our practice model is child centred at its heart and evidenced through all we do.

Ofsted 2019 1a - The identification of and response to risk when contacts relating to safeguarding concerns for children are received into the MASH.

Ofsted 2019 1b - Timely and purposeful visits to children to ensure that their needs are understood.

Ofsted 2019 1c -The quality of social work assessments and plans so that they are consistently timely and are effective in improving children's experiences.

Ofsted 2019 1d - The identification of and response to risk in relation to long-standing concerns of chronic neglect.

Ofsted 2019 1e - The response to children at risk of exploitation to ensure that their vulnerabilities are fully recognised and lead to intervention to keep them safe.

Ofsted 2019 1f -Clear reunification plans and support services for children returning home.

Ofsted 2019 1g -Timely transition planning for disabled children in care to reduce uncertainties and anxieties for them and their families.

Appendix 2 – Northamptonshire Children’s Trust Improvement Plan (cont)

Ref	Actions	Lead and Support	Timescale	Measure of Progress	Direction of Travel since last update	RAG delivery	RAG outcomes	Progress Update
3.1	<p>Fully implement the Signs of Safety Practice Model across NCT to improve the quality of practice and outcomes for children</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deliver Signs of Safety Trajectory Plan and Key deliverables at partnership, organisation and service levels • Equip and support workforce through CPD offer that reflects and supports Signs of Safety • Review and develop Signs of Safety CPD for partners 	Director of Social Care	Mar-22	<p>Practice Model agreed and known by workforce</p> <p>Positive feedback from L&D participants regarding impact on practice</p> <p>Quality assurance activity shows improvement in consistency of use and quality of Signs of Safety</p> <p>SofS used across interventions with positive impact on practice and culture</p> <p>Adoption of language and approach within all parts of the organisation</p> <p>QA activity shows improvement in partnership working within SofS model that has impact for children</p>	↑	Green	Amber	<p>Practice Standards, Practice Model and Supervision Policy revised in line with Trust business plan for launched Sept 21</p> <p>Signs of Safety trajectory plan in place</p> <p>Signs of Safety Project Manager in post and additional Advanced Practitioners being recruited</p> <p>Key deliverables are in place and programme plan in development</p> <p>Signs of Safety bite size sessions have been delivered since Oct 20</p> <p>Further 5 day intensive training is in place for 2021 to develop additional Practice Champions .- focus on ensuring all front line managers have completed</p> <p>University of Northampton undertaking 12-18 month research project into impact of Signs of Safety</p> <p>PIP supporting MASH/DAAT/Safeguarding and CIC to embed Signs of Safety</p> <p>QA activity is showing improvement in use of SofS though still a way to go to achieve consistently good practice</p> <p>Ofsted focused visits found better quality child in need and child protection assessments, using Signs of Safety, capturing lived experience of children and most visits demonstrating a child focus.</p> <p>Ofsted Feb 21 MV found:</p> <p>Embedding the Trust’s strengths based model of social work practice is showing signs of progress e.g. recording of reviews</p> <p>Ofsted July MV 21 MV commented:</p> <p>the new practice model is helping to improve the quality of practice and the experiences and progress of children</p> <p>the strengths based model of practice is helping to inform children’s assessment and plans, however it is not yet embedded into practice</p>

Appendix 2 – Northamptonshire Children’s Trust Improvement Plan (cont)

Ref	Actions	Lead and Support	Timescale	Measure of Progress	Direction of Travel since last update	RAG delivery	RAG outcomes	Progress Update
3.2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Evidence good quality engagement of children and families and meaningful relationships with practitioners Consistent and appropriate use of direct work tools to inform assessments and plans (evidenced on case records) Evidence of relationship based practice with families Safety Planning and Family Network meetings undertaken with all families IROs consistently seek views of children and promote attendance at reviews Safeguarding QA Service to encourage views of children are heard and attendance of children promoted in CP Conferences DCT to ensure voice of disabled children is present in meetings Increase the partnership engagement and use of Early Help assessment and support plan with families. 	<p>AD Children and Family Support Service and YOS</p> <p>AD Safeguarding</p> <p>AD Corporate Parenting</p> <p>AD Quality Assurance & Commissioning</p>	Mar-22	<p>Quality assurance activity shows improvement in voice of child and relationship based engagement of parents in informing assessments and plans .</p> <p>Evidence of children and young people’s involvement in planning</p> <p>Children and young people participating in conferences, reviews, meetings with their views informing assessments, plans and reviews of progress</p>	↑	Green	Amber	<p>Clear expectation that voice of the child is considered/recorded by all Social Workers. Voice of the child more evidenced through work completed - recognised by Ofsted Focused Visit. Further progress to be made to increase range of engagement across all cohorts of children and at individual, service and strategic levels through the CYP Engagement Strategy</p> <p>MOMO to be implemented to increase range and depth of participation with more children and young people</p> <p>Child’s voice is integrated into the QA audit tool and QA Board includes Voice of Child regular agenda item.</p> <p>Young Inspectors participation in Practice Weeks, with focus on voice of child</p> <p>Ofsted Focused Visits finding better quality child in need and child protection assessments, using Signs of Safety, capturing lived experience of children and most visits demonstrating a child focus.</p> <p>Ofsted focused visits finding increasing examples of direct child centred work that informs plans and planning.</p> <p>MOMO being commissioned to increase range and depth of participation with more children and young people</p> <p>Partnership training plan for SofS in development</p> <p>Ofsted Feb 21 MV found:</p> <p>Children in Care Council and Young Inspectors have a strong voice and has had a significant impact in shaping services. They were described as inspirational by the Inspectors</p>

Appendix 2 – Northamptonshire Children’s Trust Improvement Plan (cont)

Ref	Actions	Lead and Support	Timescale	Measure of Progress	Direction of Travel since last update	RAG delivery	RAG outcomes	Progress Update
3.3	<p>Ensure all visits are purposeful</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Purpose of visit is in line with child’s plan and pertinent information is clearly recorded • Regular QA activity to provide feedback 	AD Safeguarding AD Corporate Parenting	Mar-22	QA activity shows meaningful and purposeful visits on case recordings	↔	Green	Amber	CRPD cycle in place to provide regular feedback on quality Some good practice examples seen, further consistency is required
3.6	<p>Enable children to remain or return to the care of their families wherever safe and possible</p>			Reduced rate of children in care Increased rate of children in care cared for by family / connected person	↑	Green	Amber	FGC pilot making a difference in reduction of cases escalating. Seeking alternative funding sources as unlikely to deliver as an invest to save beyond current DfE funding Family Solutions Team fully operational with workflow referral processes in place and clear links to all operational panels - ie Gateway Panel and Child in Care Panel.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review impact of FGC pilot, develop and agree options for mainstreaming from June 22 	AD QA & Commissioning	Jan 22					
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development of Family Solution, Family Support (Edge of Care) 	AD CFSS	Dec 21					
3.7	<p>Ensure all assessments and plans consider children’s unique characteristics, including ethnicity, culture and heritage</p>	AD Safeguarding AD Corporate Parenting	Mar-22	QA activity shows improvement	↔	Green	Amber	CRPD tool has focus on individual needs. 69% CRPDs over last 12 months scaled above 5 out of 10 (10 being exceeds good quality) for child, family and identity Early Help Assessment has been review and there is focus on unique characteristics of the Child and Family. Cultural competency training developed with input from young people

Appendix 2 – Northamptonshire Children’s Trust Improvement Plan (cont)

Ref	Actions	Lead and Support	Timescale	Measure of Progress	Direction of Travel since last update	RAG delivery	RAG outcomes	Progress Update
3.8	Improvement in the consistency of quality in Assessments (ensuring all include children’s family history, cultural genograms, consideration of fathers/ male carers, current concerns, and needs, lived life of child, thorough analysis of all issues affecting the child and rationale for next steps)	AD Safeguarding AD Corporate Parenting	Mar-22	Timeliness of assessments in line with comparators and targets Quality assurance activity shows improvement in consistency of quality % Re-referrals	↑	Green	Amber	<p>Quality Assurance activity and Ofsted identifying improvements and some good practice although overall inconsistency remains.</p> <p>IRO / CP Chair oversight & escalation processes in place to capture early identification of concerns for management review & actions to address. Reduction in CP Chair escalations in Q1 21-22 due to less drift being seen and more concerns being resolved informally and not needing formal escalation - highlights improved working relationships between services</p> <p>Practice in safeguarding is improving evidenced by performance; feedback from service users/judiciary/ gateway panels. PIP are implementing support plan in safeguarding teams from Oct 21. They are currently providing mentoring support for a number of line managers.</p> <p>Case progression manager is supporting sw’s to improve quality of reports in PLO and proceedings - working alongside and via QA activity. PIP also supporting. PLO working group recommendations are progressing.</p> <p>Action plans from QA activity and Practice Weeks are being implemented.</p> <p>Ofsted focused visit found Quality and impact of decision making for disabled children are satisfactory.</p> <p>Ofsted focused visit found tangible improvements in quality of social work practice . Impact not yet seen on % of re-referrals (34% which is above comparators). Improvement work with mash and DAAT ongoing including reflective group learning sessions.</p> <p>Ofsted Feb 21 MV found:</p> <p>Most social workers know their children well and have a clear understanding of their needs</p> <p>Majority of children are visited within statutory timescales</p>

Appendix 2 – Northamptonshire Children’s Trust Improvement Plan (cont)

Ref	Actions	Lead and Support	Timescale	Measure of Progress	Direction of Travel since last update	RAG delivery	RAG outcomes	Progress Update
3.8	Improvement in the consistency of quality in Assessments (ensuring all include children’s family history, cultural genograms, consideration of fathers/ male carers, current concerns, and needs, lived life of child, thorough analysis of all issues affecting the child and rationale for next steps)	AD Safeguarding AD Corporate Parenting	Mar-22	Timeliness of assessments in line with comparators and targets Quality assurance activity shows improvement in consistency of quality % Re-referrals	↑	Green	Amber	The vast majority of children have an up to date assessments that identifies their needs Further improvement needed on: Some assessments are not comprehensive and are limited in analysis and do not consider the children’s wider needs Some care plans are not actioned in a timely way leading to delays in meeting needs and achieving permanence Quality of recording care plans inconsistent with some not indicating what success looks like for a child Risk assessment and safety plans for children at risk of exploitation are inconsistent and safety plans are not always updated Supervision records do not reflect on children’s circumstances and miss opportunities to drive forward plans with actions not being specific or given a timescale
3.9	Improvement in the consistency of quality in Plans (ensuring all are focused, have clear, realistic and time-bound actions to improve children’s circumstances and focus on what plan is seeking to achieve to improve children’s outcomes (not adult focused) and include specific contingency plans)	AD Safeguarding AD Corporate Parenting	Mar-22	Timeliness of plans in line with comparators and targets Quality assurance activity shows improvement in consistency of quality	↑	Green	Amber	Continuing to embed Sos and use of appropriate tools e.g. words and pictures and use of timelines/ trajectory plans. Work is completed with families to ensure aims and objectives are realistic with clear anticipated outcomes. Use of contingency plans is increasing as the sofs model embeds. Practice is not consistent across the service yet. Supervision and management oversight is happening and quality is improving. The quality assurance framework will review plans to test progress. 72% CRPDs over last 12 months scaled above 5 for care planning (where 10 exceeds good quality)

Appendix 2 – Northamptonshire Children’s Trust Improvement Plan (cont)

Ref	Actions	Lead and Support	Timescale	Measure of Progress	Direction of Travel since last update	RAG delivery	RAG outcomes	Progress Update
3.10	<p>Improvement in the consistency of quality in Safety Plans</p> <p>(ensuring that all are written so children and families can understand them, are updated when circumstances change, are robust, include full network and explicit contingency arrangements)</p>	AD Safeguarding AD Corporate Parenting	Mar-22	Quality assurance activity shows improvement in consistency of quality	↔	Green	Amber	<p>Further training available to support drawing up of safety plans. Template and best practice examples in place</p> <p>Practice Champions and AP’s supporting practice. Direct work including safety planning with children and families is evident but not consistent across the service. Family network meetings are taking place but not consistently. Family group conferences are taking place for 50% cases in PLO and will move to 100% of case in PLO following the pilot ending. Supervision and management oversight is overseeing safety planning.</p>
3.11	<p>Continue to achieve effective planning and increase engagement with care leavers</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> improve quality and effectiveness of early pathway planning Up to date risk assessments and pathway plans 	AD Corporate Parenting	Mar-22	<p>Achieve target of 95% of Care Leavers with an up to date Pathway Plan</p> <p>Increase % of Care Leavers with a PA</p> <p>Maintain % of Care Leavers in EET and Suitable accommodation in line with or above comparators</p> <p>Quality assurance activity show consistent good quality and timely pathway planning</p>	↑	Green	Amber	<p>81.6% of children and young people have up to date pathway plans (September 21)</p> <p>91 % in suitable accommodation (YTD 21- 22 at Sept) above England average</p> <p>60.2% in EET (YTD at Sept 21) above England and stat neighbour averages</p> <p>All homeless young people are reviewed by team managers with clear actions taken to seek to resolve individual housing arrangements</p> <p>Pathway plan for young people aged 18+ developed with young people and completed by them has facilitated greater focus on goals and aspirations</p> <p>QA activity (Sept 21) found the majority of Pathway Plans reviewed have a clear exploration of the young person’s needs and how they like to be supported, with the voice of the young person present in the majority even when young people are non-verbal</p>

Appendix 2 – Northamptonshire Children’s Trust Improvement Plan (cont)

4. Insightful Quality Assurance and Learning

We know ourselves and our practice well through rigorous quality assurance.

Ofsted 2019 2b The use of quality assurance activity such as case auditing and escalations to inform and improve practice.

Ofsted 2019 2c Action planning in response to the findings of serious case reviews.

Ref	Actions	Lead and Support	Timescale	Measure of Progress	Direction of Travel since last update	RAG delivery	RAG outcomes	Progress Update
4.1	4.1 Delivery of QA Framework <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Auditing • Practice weeks • Performance clinics • Training and coaching for audit consistency • Escalations • Quarterly QA reports shared with workforce • Review of QAF in light of new Trust Strategy • Regular Quality Board, chaired by Chief Exec to be established 	AD Quality Assurance & Commissioning	Mar-22	Increase in amount and range of QA activity across services that provides understanding of quality of practice Improvement in consistency of quality of QA activity (as confirmed by moderation) % Escalations resolved in timescale QA Board Minutes	↑	Green	Amber	CIC Practice week July and Safeguarding Practice Week completed Dec. Fostering PW completed Apr. Children and Family Support Service PW to take place Feb 21 Increasing quality of CRPDs and more completed side by side. Further to go with managers prioritising QA and consistency of quality of CRPDs QA training in place - 1-2-1 support ongoing Performance clinics in place across social care services with standard terms of reference Ofsted focused visit identified that our QA activity identified same themes as inspection, and confirmed variability in quality of QA Ofsted focused visit identified QAF and findings from audit activity are underpinning improvements to practice QA Board, chaired by Chief Exec in place QA Strategy and Framework refreshed in line with NCT business plan, Collaborative Reflective Practice Discussions CRPDs and cycle in place from April 21 Ofsted Jul 21 MV commented: Senior leaders have a comprehensive and thorough oversight of quality, strengthened by the development of the QA Board Practice weeks, which include the involvement of young inspectors, influence and drive improvements in SW practice in order to improve children's experiences

Appendix 2 – Northamptonshire Children’s Trust Improvement Plan (cont)

Ref	Actions	Lead and Support	Timescale	Measure of Progress	Direction of Travel since last update	RAG delivery	RAG outcomes	Progress Update
4.2	<p>4.2 Learning Loops are in place and influence practice</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learning and practice development opportunities are available to workforce in a range of mediums and through communication structures • Management oversight and audit • Peer Thematic Audit • Practice week • SCR/Practice Review • PIP 	AD Quality Assurance & Commissioning	Mar-22	<p>Evidence of casework actions to complete audit recommendations</p> <p>Evidence of actions to implement thematic/SCR recommendations</p> <p>QA Board Minutes</p>	↑	Green	Amber	<p>Learning from QA activity being shared in workforce and leaders’ newsletters, service management team meetings. Action plans developed by services in response to QA activity and Practice Weeks</p> <p>Audit team completing learning reviews and appreciative inquiry sessions. QA, SofS and Social Work Academy delivering training sessions with managers in response to QA findings.</p> <p>6 step briefings used to disseminate audit findings</p> <p>Learning hub developed live on intranet</p> <p>PSW newsletter well received</p> <p>Ofsted focused visit identified QAF and findings from audit activity are underpinning improvements to practice</p> <p>Ofsted focused visit found increasing examples of direct child centred work that informs plans and planning</p> <p>QA Board, chaired by Chief Exec provides strategic oversight of quality</p> <p>Ofsted Feb MV said:</p> <p>More for IROs to do in consistently seeking the view of children and promoting attendance at reviews</p> <p>Ofsted Jul 21 MV commented:</p> <p>Senior leaders have a comprehensive and thorough oversight of quality, strengthened by the development of the QA Board</p> <p>Practice weeks, which include the involvement of young inspectors, influence and drive improvements in SW practice in order to improve children’s experiences</p> <p>CP Chairs providing appropriate scrutiny and escalation but this is not always effective in making a difference for children</p>

Appendix 2 – Northamptonshire Children’s Trust Improvement Plan (cont)

Ref	Actions	Lead and Support	Timescale	Measure of Progress	Direction of Travel since last update	RAG delivery	RAG outcomes	Progress Update
4.3	<p>Ensure CP Chair and IRO escalations have the impact of improving experiences of and outcomes for children</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review current process and barriers and implement improvements 	AD Quality Assurance & Commissioning	Mar-22	Improvement in % escalations resolved in timely manner QA shows positive impact of escalations for children	↔	Green	Amber	

Appendix 2 – Northamptonshire Children’s Trust Improvement Plan (cont)

5. Healthy Partnerships

Effective partnership working is essential to good practice.

Ofsted 2019 3a Strategic development of Early Help services to ensure that children’s needs are identified and responded to at the earliest opportunity.

Ref	Actions	Lead and Support	Timescale	Measure of Progress	Direction of Travel since last update	RAG delivery	RAG outcomes	Progress Update
5.1	<p>Early Help is strengthened across the partnership and front door demand is reduced with right children being referred at right time</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deliver Early Help Strategy Action Plan • Children and Family Support Service Pathways • Partner training re thresholds and SofS • PAUSE • refresh of mash model for contacts • Improved quality of referrals 	NSCP Early Help sub group and AD Children and Family Support Service	Mar-22	<p>Increased Children and Family Support Service Assessments and interventions</p> <p>Reduced % of contacts that lead to no further action</p> <p>Increased % of contacts that lead to referral</p> <p>Reduced % referrals with a previous referral in the last 12 months in line with comparators</p>	↑	Green	Amber	<p>Early Help Strategy agreed by NSCP, action plan now being delivered. This is expected to increase early support and reduce inappropriate contacts to social care</p> <p>Children and Family Support Service in-house service specification and business plan developed Review and implement improved access to support for all services.</p> <p>Establish closer partnership working, introduce new West and North Partnership Networking Events Increase Partnership Training and Development to use EHA and support plans at the earliest opportunity.</p> <p>NSCP Early Help Subgroup to consider scorecard data which reflects EHA use and all other contributing data to demonstrate impact of early help offer.</p> <p>Improvements made with Supporting Families PBR and the governance of this programme will now sit with the EH Safeguarding Subgroup.</p> <p>Pause went live in October 20- positive impact</p> <p>Increasing number of initial contacts signposted to Children and Family Support Service, Children and Family Support Service workers facilitate the right support whether that is provided by our Internal Children and Family Support Teams or partners in the locality area.</p> <p>Contacts to referrals steadily increasing (31% YTD 21-22 at Sept 21 compared to 25% in 20/21)</p> <p>Partner SofS training plan in development</p>

Appendix 2 – Northamptonshire Children’s Trust Improvement Plan (cont)

Ref	Actions	Lead and Support	Timescale	Measure of Progress	Direction of Travel since last update	RAG delivery	RAG outcomes	Progress Update
5.2	<p>Ensure children receive the right support at the right time according to their needs</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Implement Children and Family Support Services service specification. Ensure step down processes are efficient, timely and impactful Strengthen partnership collaboration working through Partnership Co-ordinators and Early Help MASH Co-ordinators. 	AD Children and Family Support Service and YOS	Mar-22	Reduced CIN rate Reduced CP rate Reduced CIC rate	↑	Green	Amber	CFSS specification is complete including the Business Implementation Plan. CFSS have implemented a new Step Down process which is under review. CFSS Partnership Co-ordinator and MASH Co-ordinator have been revised to strengthen their partnership Children and Family Support Service inclusion in MASH Pods and matrix management implemented Feb 21 - strengthening offer of Children and Family Support Service through MASH delivery CIN and CP rate has reduced from previous years, CLA rate has remained steady from last year
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review impact of commissioned family support services, review options for future delivery from 2024 	AD QA & Commissioning	Mar-22					
5.3	<p>Clear transition pathway for all children requiring support from adults services</p>	Adults Transition Manager AD Corporate Parenting	Mar 22	Timely CIN meetings for children in transition to adulthood Timely referrals and decisions to Moving Into Adulthood Panel	↔	Green	Amber	There are closer working relationships with Adult Social Care and processes and timescales for children referred to Adult Social care have been strengthened. The implementation of the Moving in to Adulthood Panel (MIAP) and referral process has led to improved outcomes. Further improvements so that the system of transition as a whole is enabling earlier allocation and assessment, in particular for children and young people with Mental Health difficulties Development of system wide approach to health and social care intervention through ICS

Appendix 2 – Northamptonshire Children’s Trust Improvement Plan (cont)

Ref	Actions	Lead and Support	Timescale	Measure of Progress	Direction of Travel since last update	RAG delivery	RAG outcomes	Progress Update
5.4	<p>Robust and effective partnership identification of and response to risk in the MASH</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consistent application of thresholds • Effective Domestic abuse triage 	Rich Tompkins with AD Safeguarding	Mar-22	<p>Quality assurance activity shows increase in consistency of quality in identification and response to risk in the MASH</p> <p>Timely submission and screening of DA notifications</p> <p>Reduced rate of s47 in line with comparators</p> <p>Actions from strategy meetings to be clearly identified and actioned and outcome reported in s47 and risks identified and recorded in s47</p> <p>Reduction in the use of PPO</p> <p>Reduced number of repeat CP plans in line with comparators</p>	↔	Green	Amber	<p>The process for Domestic Abuse notifications has been further refined in the MASH. All high and medium risk Domestic Abuse notifications where children are present or involved are progressed through the MADRA (Multi Agency Daily Risk Assessment) meeting, and in addition to this the standard risk Domestic Abuse notifications where there have been 3 incidents of Domestic Abuse within a 12-month period and those where professional judgement identifies risks to the child. Madra will be reviewed for effectiveness and overseen through the MASH Strategic Group.</p> <p>Ofsted focused visit found this helps ensure risks are understood and sensitive child and victim centred safety plans are implemented quickly</p> <p>Use of PPO 's being reviewed alongside police.</p> <p>2 education posts in place in the MASH to provide additional support to schools.</p> <p>PIP support in place for staff. Recommendations via PIP about S.47's in June 21 are being implemented and work will be continually supported by PIP.</p> <p>Mash model refresh to be implemented after 1/11/21. Currently working with partners to review model to strengthen thresholds including consent and to ensure contacts are moved to the right service right time at the earliest opportunity. Model to be reviewed at mash steering group 1/10/21. Implementation plan will be presented.</p>

Appendix 2 – Northamptonshire Children’s Trust Improvement Plan (cont)

Ref	Actions	Lead and Support	Timescale	Measure of Progress	Direction of Travel since last update	RAG delivery	RAG outcomes	Progress Update
5.5	<p>Effective identification of and response to children at risk of exploitation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development of youth strategy and offer • Full engagement with Community Safety partnership activity. • Child exploitation strategy and development implementation 	AD Children and Family Support Service & AD Safeguarding	Mar 22	<p>Good quality risk assessments that are kept updated</p> <p>No of young people supported and outcomes</p> <p>Understanding of top 10 high risk YP across the partnership</p> <p>Data set that enables identification of risks/ trends</p>	↑	Green	Amber	<p>Vulnerable Adolescents Strategy completed Dec 2020, Exploitation Strategy being finalised</p> <p>New Youth Support service configuration, including Missing Children response, implemented 1st September 2020, enabling a more responsive and preventative service for exploited and vulnerable teenagers and their families.</p> <p>Vulnerable Adolescents Panel operational from the 3rd December - 6 month review completed and now utilising intelligence to revise offer</p> <p>YOS Prevent and deter offer to pre court disposals supporting this priority</p> <p>Ofsted focused visit found effective collaborative work with partners helping to prevent or reduce harm to missing and exploited children, however targeted services for adolescents are currently fragmented</p> <p>TCE multi-agency project progressing to support work on Exploitation strategy</p> <p>Vulnerable adolescents mentoring project progressing - NCT and partner mentors recruited and being trained</p> <p>Single point of contact in safeguarding service identified for police operations and regular meetings/sharing of information</p> <p>Ofsted Feb MV said:</p> <p>Prompt multi- agency response when children go missing from care and independent return interview provided to children in care</p> <p>Previous actions had been completed by Apr 21. This remains an action on the plan to review and develop as unitary Education Service now in place and perm AD Children and Family Support Service has started and will review progress and further improvements to be made</p>

Appendix 2 – Northamptonshire Children’s Trust Improvement Plan (cont)

Ref	Actions	Lead and Support	Timescale	Measure of Progress	Direction of Travel since last update	RAG delivery	RAG outcomes	Progress Update
5.6	<p>5.5a Mental Health Outcomes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mental Health pathways for children in care and care leavers Care Leavers health passports develop Mental Health support teams in schools children have up to date health reviews and dental checks 	AD Corporate Parenting	Mar-22	<p>Clear MH pathways for children in care, care leavers and vulnerable children</p> <p>Timely mental health assessments</p> <p>Reduction in % CAMHS referrals not accepted</p> <p>Reduction in number of children and young people presenting at A&E for self harm and/ or suicide ideation</p>	↑	Green	Amber	<p>Public Health funded projects for children’s mental health progressing well. 2 care leaver apprentices in place in Leaving care, champions in housing and mental health. Majority of Personal Advisors have received emotion coaching. Some challenges in identifying adult MH worker to join Leaving Care Team but this is progressing. Referrals being received for carer leavers to engage with the project. Too early as yet to identify outcomes and determine impact.</p> <p>Fostering Support project funded through Public Health now operational and referrals being received for this project. Options for provision of therapeutic work being reviewed.</p> <p>Young People’s Children and Family Support Service Mentoring Service now in operation as part of the internal Children and Family Support services Youth Support Team</p> <p>Additional MH funding for Northants announced Apr 21 via CCG to strengthen community based support</p> <p>All Children in Care are now able to access mental health consultation where next steps are agreed</p> <p>Ofsted MV said:</p> <p>Not all children have up-to-date initial and review health assessment and dental checks but the inspectors acknowledge that this has been hindered by COVID and that there is a plan in place to remedy</p> <p>CAMHS for children in care offer a comprehensive range of services for children and carers and have appropriate oversight for children out of county</p>

Appendix 2 – Northamptonshire Children’s Trust Improvement Plan (cont)

Ref	Actions	Lead and Support	Timescale	Measure of Progress	Direction of Travel since last update	RAG delivery	RAG outcomes	Progress Update
5.6	5.5b Improved Health Outcomes <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Care Leavers health passports children have up to date health reviews and dental checks 	AD Corporate Parenting	Mar-22		↔	Green	Amber	Health passport process begins at 16 and Pathway Plan for Care Leavers includes check that this is place and young person knows how to access Timeliness of health assessments and reviews and dental checks remains a concern. Additional resource has been requested from CCG to increase capacity
	5.5c Housing needs are met <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Access to emergency accommodation Joint pathway for 16 and 17 year olds 	AD Children and Family Support Service	Mar-22	Reduction in number of 16-17 year olds coming into care as s.20	↑	Green	Amber	<p>NCT Children and Families Support Service has established a steering group for 16/17 yrs old Housing Options / Homelessness. The terms of reference has been agreed and the action plan developed following guidance from Department for Levelling up, Housing and Communities (meeting scheduled 16th November with this Dept).</p> <p>A revised Joint Housing Options Protocol will be agreed with clear lines of accountability and partnership working arrangements.</p> <p>A Housing Representative now sits on the Children and Family Support Service Partnership, Housing have allocated single points of contact across the county to support the Partnership approach.</p> <p>Unitary ADs for Housing & Communities now in place- working together to prioritise key working protocols . Strategic and Operational Groups set up</p> <p>Joint Housing Protocol for Care Leavers is being refreshed to be operational from December 2021.</p>

Appendix 2 – Northamptonshire Children’s Trust Improvement Plan (cont)

Ref	Actions	Lead and Support	Timescale	Measure of Progress	Direction of Travel since last update	RAG delivery	RAG outcomes	Progress Update
5.6	<p>5.5d Educational needs are met</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Children in care are in appropriate educational placements to meet their need Reduce number of children in care who are excluded Performance clinics to monitor PEPs 	Head of Virtual School with AD Corporate Parenting	Mar-22	<p>Reduction in proportion of children in care on part time timetables, home tuition or in alternative education for too long</p> <p>Reduction in proportion of children in care who are excluded from school</p>	↑	Green	Amber	<p>Children in care at risk of being excluded or already excluded are discussed at the Vulnerable Pupils Panel held on a 3 weekly basis. Remedial activity planned and delivered.</p> <p>Multi agency weekly meeting review all children who are excluded or at risk to ensure that they have oversight and multi-agency input that plans interventions and promotes an outcome focus for education placements to be achieved.</p> <p>Virtual School monitors quality of PEPs which are led by schools.</p> <p>Both Post 16 PEP quality and PEP completion/ compliance has improved from 46% and 49% in 2018/19 to 79% and 86% in 2019/20 (Virtual School Annual Report 2020). Early indications into the 2020/21 data demonstrate this continuing upward trend (data awaiting verification).</p> <p>Proportion of young people 16+ who are NEET has continued to reduce year on year over the previous 3 academic years</p>

Appendix 2 – Northamptonshire Children’s Trust Improvement Plan (cont)

6. Robust and Effective Resource Management

We understand the key drivers of the budget and budget managers understand the financial impact of their decisions. Budget managers will be equipped with support and systems to effectively monitor and forecast. Ofsted 2019 3c Sufficiency of placements that meet children’s needs

Ref	Actions	Lead and Support	Timescale	Measure of Progress	Direction of Travel since last update	RAG delivery	RAG outcomes	Progress Update
6.1	6.1a Monthly robust oversight and monitoring in place <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Performance clinics Budget monitoring and forecasting Establishment monitoring Quality Assurance Board 	All ADs	Mar-22	Performance issues identified and addressed Savings are achieved and services are delivered within budget. - Deficits are understood and mitigations are in place	↑	Green	Amber	Performance clinics in place with consistent TOR, successes celebrated at clinics. Daily performance reports available to all managers including exception reporting. NCT transformation and efficiencies board oversees progress of projects to improve efficiency Improvement in budget oversight and forecasting supported by Finance and Resources in place from Apr 21

Appendix 2 – Northamptonshire Children’s Trust Improvement Plan (cont)

Ref	Actions	Lead and Support	Timescale	Measure of Progress	Direction of Travel since last update	RAG delivery	RAG outcomes	Progress Update
6.2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 6.2a Deliver the Sufficiency Strateg -Increase in house mainstream and specialist foster carers QA of fostering, residential framework and ISA Increase availability of quality emergency provision Implement revised statements of purpose for block contract homes Review inhouse residential home statements of purpose Increase range of providers accessed via frameworks Improve joint commissioning of support with adults and health colleagues improve placement request and finding processes Submit DfE capital bid 	<p>AD Corporate Parenting</p> <p>AD Quality Assurance & Commissioning</p>	Mar-22	<p>Increase in no of in-house specialist foster carer placements</p> <p>Increase in no. of in-house standard foster carers</p> <p>Increase in in-house foster carer placement utilisation rate</p> <p>% CiC with in-house carers</p> <p>Reduced spend in placements</p>	↑	Green	Amber	<p>Reduction in children in residential homes achieved over period of last strategy - currently below comparators</p> <p>Placement Review Project achieved £1m savings 20/21 and positive impact for children, savings continue to be made in 21/22</p> <p>IFA step down fostering placements in place</p> <p>Public Health project for in-house fostering supporting children’s mental health progressing</p> <p>Resilience and mainstream foster carer recruitment continuing, 5 resilience and 12 mainstream foster carers have been approved to date with more in progress</p> <p>Permanency tracking arrangements introduced in June - showing improvements.</p> <p>Just under 10% increase in number of available foster placements (excluding friends and family) which has led to 40 more children placed in in-house foster placements than were placed at 31st March 2020.</p> <p>IFA and Residential Care Framework re-opened increased range of provision</p> <p>Tender for additional emergency homes in progress</p> <p>Options to join other frameworks being considered</p> <p>DfE Capital bid submitted</p> <p>Improvements identified for placement request and finding processes, being implemented</p> <p>Initial discussions with adults re integrated commissioning</p> <p>Ofsted Feb MV said:</p> <p>Tangible improvements in placements sufficiency</p>

Appendix 3 – Trust Board Members

The Trust Board comprises of directors and Non-Executive Directors. The Executive Directors are responsible for running the organisation and for making sure that it delivers on its statutory obligations. They are also responsible for making sure that the Trust performs at the

highest possible level – offering the best possible services to children, young people, and families within Northamptonshire. The Non-Executive Directors are appointed for their expertise and take part in decision making at Board meetings.



Julian Wooster, Chair to the Board

Julian grew up in West London. He has always had an interest in strengthening disadvantaged communities and his first degree was in urban planning. He joined the social work profession after volunteering in a drugs crisis rehab centre, starting as a social work assistant. He has been involved in the social work profession for 34 years.

He says that his toughest social work job was in the East End of London well before the redevelopment. He recalls the level of material poverty and violence: “the friendly East End by then no longer existed”. This was before the profession became specialist, so Julian worked with all need groups including carrying out mental health assessments: “my favourite role was that of a frontline team manager, where I learnt most about team work and about how I can support others by changing my approach”.

Julian has extensive senior managerial experience, 10 years a Director of Children’s Services in Somerset and Portsmouth, 8 years as deputy director in Hillingdon and Wandsworth and 3 years leading Cambridgeshire’s social work teams.

On a personal level he has three adult children and reflecting how families have become more dispersed his eldest son and grandchildren are permanently resident in the USA, his daughter is in Liverpool and he has a brother in New Zealand. He relaxes by enjoying the natural environment, including through photography.

Appendix 3 – Trust Board Members



Colin Foster, CEX of Northamptonshire Children's Trust

Colin is an experienced Director of Children's Services and has 17 years public sector experience in Children's Services. In December 2022 Colin will have been with NCT for 2 years. Before this he changed career from commercial management where he undertook a number of roles in the UK, USA, Europe and then Asia. He was inspired whilst doing voluntary work in Asia and the UK, when he decided to commit his career to helping children and then qualified to MA level. Colin has a proven track record in improving Children's Services and gets up in the morning to make a sustainable difference to the lives of children, young people and families through enabling colleagues and ensuring delivery of the best possible services. He asks everyone in the Trust to do the best job of their life, every single day, because children, young people and families deserve nothing less.

Colin has two teenage children who keep him busy at home and is volunteer football coach in the community and has been doing that for over 10 years which is very rewarding. He has enjoyed working with the players and he says it has been great to watch them grow and develop their skills since they were 5 years old.



Andrew Tagg, Director of Finance & Resources

Andrew joins the Trust with over 30 years' experience within Local Government holding a number of senior management roles. Previously he was the Bi- Borough Children's Services Director of Operations and Programmes for Westminster and Kensington and Chelsea and was part of the team that created the innovative Tri-Borough children's services model.

Within the Trust he provides financial expertise and leads the Trust's strategic operations and business planning processes through the management of a range of support services.

Andrew is passionate about developing high quality, efficient and effective services for children, young people and their families and maximising the use of resources.

Appendix 3 – Trust Board Members



Cornelia Andrecut, Director of Children’s Social care

Cornelia’s particular strength is her drive for improvement and the ability to create the conditions for high aspiration, high performance and a highly effective working environment. Cornelia is very passionate about improving outcomes for children and families and has contributed to better children’s services in Northamptonshire; initially as an Improvement Director for Lincolnshire County Council and the East Midlands Regional Improvement and Innovation Alliance, prior to joining Northamptonshire on a permanent basis. Having extensive leadership experience in public services, which includes social care, early help and the integration of Public Health into the Local Authority, Cornelia is both a qualified nurse and a registered social worker. Cornelia brings a ‘can do’ attitude and approach to everything she does and is determined to use her energy and passion to continue improving outcomes for children and families in Northamptonshire Children’s Trust.



Clare Chamberlain, Independent Director

Clare was the Executive Director of Children’s Services for the London Tri-Boroughs. She has worked as a social worker and manager in both adults and children’s services for close to 45 years, holding a number of senior management roles. She has also undertaken freelance work, including serious case review investigations. She worked in the voluntary sector leading a national project about children in care and was independent chair of the Hampshire LSCB. Most recently Clare has been one of the DfE Children’s Commissioners in Northamptonshire. She also leads the national Practice Leaders Development Programme.



Rebecca Peck, Council Nominated Director

Rebecca is Assistant Chief Exec for West Northants. Rebecca has previously held senior leadership roles for the London Borough of Sutton, Royal Borough of Kingston-upon-Thames and Milton Keynes Council, leading on areas including digital, transformation, customer service and statutory children’s complaints.

Rebecca is a Northamptonshire resident and is passionate about transforming local public services. Rebecca will be working with the Trust Board to deliver improved outcomes for children, young people and their families.

Appendix 3 – Trust Board Members



Joshua Imuere, Council Nominated Director

Joshua is an experienced charity chief executive who has directed successful transformation programmes across the UK, in order to strengthen the voice of underrepresented groups and forge perennial alliances; recovering charities from risk of closure, re-aligning their core purpose and embedding the right operational systems for sustainability.

Over the last 17 years he has developed expertise in change management, informal education, place-based approaches, and youth leadership, using them at the helm of youth charities such as Art Against Knives and SYLA, both of which he substantially grew in terms of their reach and scale. Joshua is the vice chair of the practice, performance and quality subcommittee of board.



Samantha Fitzgerald, Council Nominated Director

Samantha is the Assistant Director for Adult Services in North Northamptonshire's Adult, Communities and Wellbeing Directorate.

She is a registered Social Worker and has worked in adult services for over 20 years, both as a practitioner and manager. She has experience of working within Mental Health, Health Partnerships and wider Adult Social Care. Her roles to date have involved working closely with other statutory partners and the voluntary sector to improve outcomes for adults in Northamptonshire.



Darren Hickman, Council Nominated Director

Darren was the Finance and Relationship Director for the Insurance Company of Santander Bank, until December 2019. During his 37 years at the bank he has held a variety of executive positions including operational management, marketing, IT and change management.

Whilst working for the bank he has also undertaken several external non-executive director (NED) and pension trustee roles spanning 18 years. For the last 6 years he has been proud to serve as a NED for a large NHS trust, providing all-age mental health and community care. In November 2020 he was also appointed as a NED for a local building society.

Darren is looking forward to using his skills to assist the new Trust to deliver enhanced children's services in Northamptonshire.

Appendix 3 – Trust Board Members



Colin Cross, Independent Director

Colin brings over 30 years of experience of leading service delivery organisations serving clients in the public and private sector, both nationally and overseas.

He has worked for major international companies such as IBM and Capgemini. He looks forward to drawing upon his financial management, service delivery, operational improvement and strategic planning expertise to help improve the lives of Northamptonshire’s children and young people. Colin is Vice-Chair of the Finance, Resources and Audit Committee, and a member of the Practice, Performance and Quality Committee. Colin lives on the Northants/Bucks border and is married with two grown-up children. He has a keen interest in sport and travel.



John O'Brien, Independent Director

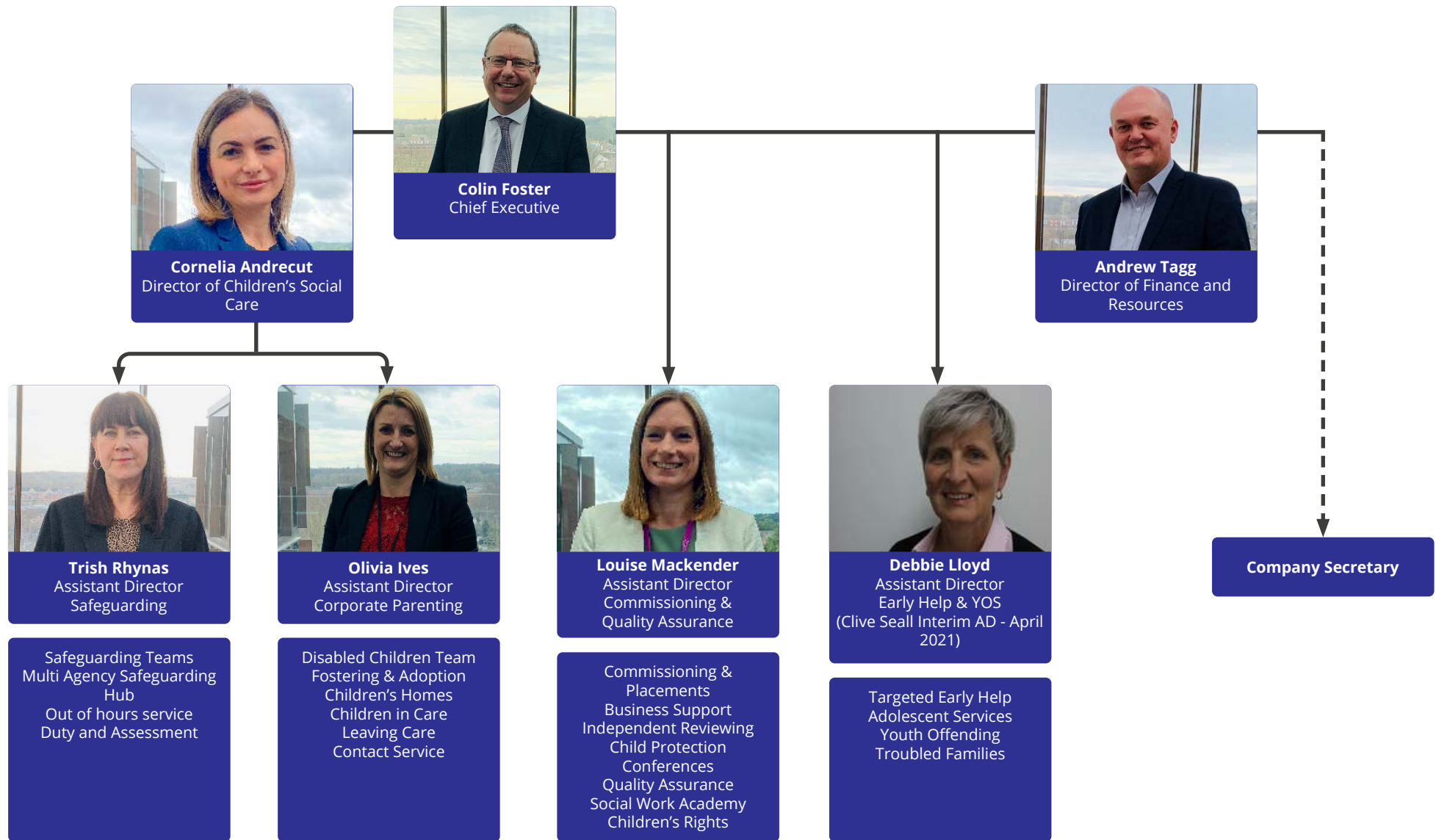
John served as Chief Executive of London Councils – the organisation that supports the 33 London local authorities – between 2007 and 2021, working closely with elected members, senior officers and a range of partners across London, including health, police, business, the voluntary and community sector and Transport for London. He previously worked in central government at the former DCLG, in the private sector, within local government directly and on behalf of the sector at the IDeA and LGA. He uses that range of experience to contribute to the work of the Trust on behalf of children, young people and families across North and West Northamptonshire. In October 2021 he was appointed as the Chair Designate of the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Integrated Care System.



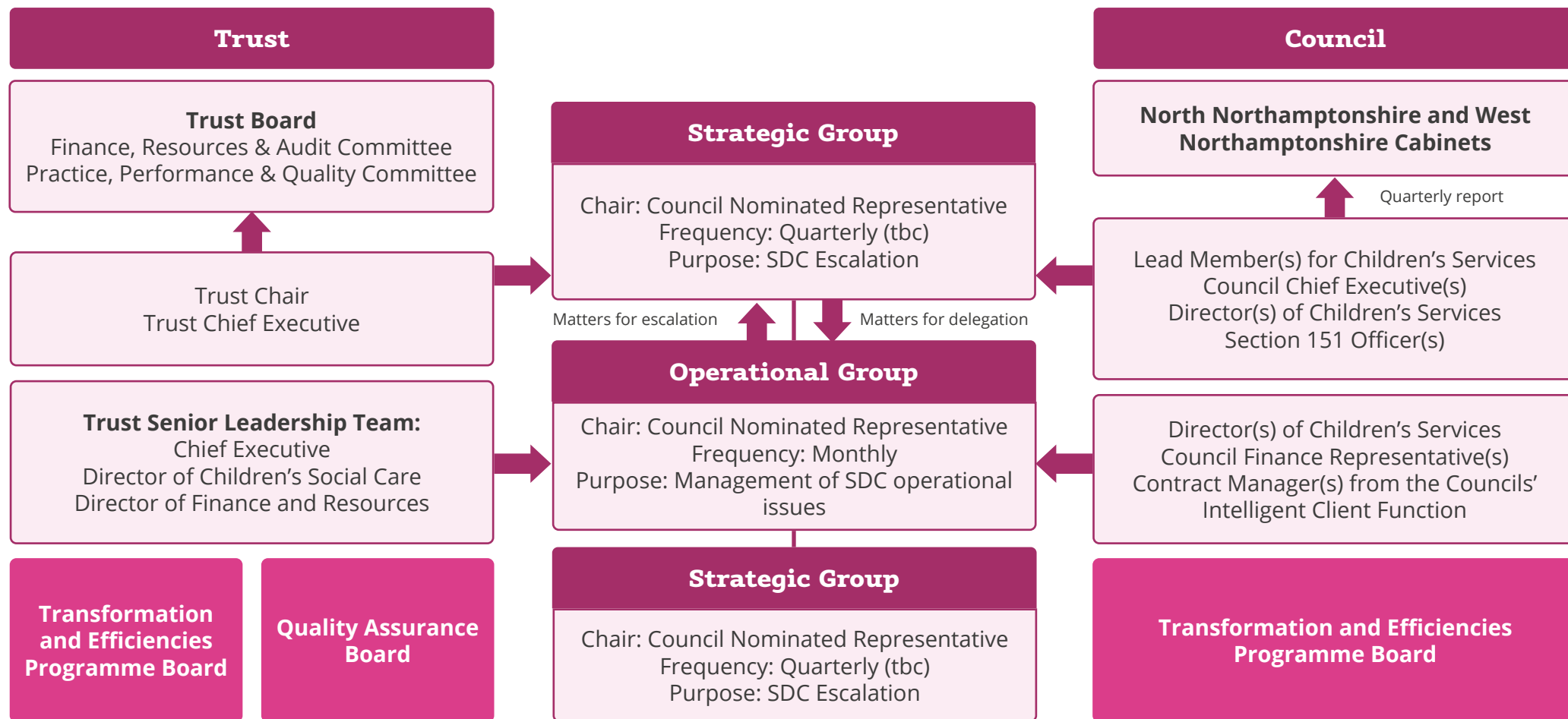
Hilary Daniels, Independent Director

Hilary is a qualified accountant who has worked as a Director of Finance in Local Government and as a Finance Director and Chief Executive in the NHS, where she both commissioned and managed significant provider services including CAMHS and other children’s services. She is an experienced Non-Executive Director, usually taking finance, audit and governance leads. Hilary has lived in Northamptonshire for 25 years and is passionate about providing quality services. A keen gardener, Hilary also enjoys walking in the local countryside. She is a bell ringer, and over the last few years has enjoyed teaching others to do so.

Appendix 4 – Trust Executive Management Structure



Appendix 5 – Governance arrangements



Strategic Partner engagement

Northamptonshire Children's Safeguarding Partnership Board; MASH Strategic Group and MASH Partnership Meeting; Northamptonshire Health Care Partnership Strategic Executive and NHCP Partnership Board; Northamptonshire Integrated Care System (ICS); Health and Wellbeing Board; Northamptonshire's Disabled Children and Young People's Delivery Group; Community Safety Board/Partnership; Youth Offending Board; Local Family Justice Board; Corporate Parenting Board; East Midlands Regional DCS Meeting and sub-groups.

Appendix 6 – Contractual Key Performance Indicators

At the time of writing the targets are still being discussed, the table below shows the last complete year of data available which is 2019/20.

	KPI	2019/20 performance
KPI 1	Percentage of all referrals with a decision within 2 working days	83%
KPI 2	Percentage of referrals with a previous referral within 12 months	33%
KPI 3	Percentage of Single Assessments authorised within 45 working days	87%
KPI 4	Percentage of Single Assessments closing with no further action	34%
KPI 5	Percentage of Initial Child Protection Conferences held within 15 days of a strategy discussion being initiated	68%
KPI 6	Percentage of children that became the subject of a Child Protection Plan for the second or subsequent time	26%
KPI 7	Children who have been in care 2.5 years or more, and of those, who have been in the same placement for 2+ years/ placed for adoption (%)	63%
KPI 8	Percentage of Children in Care with three or more placements in the previous 12 months	12%
KPI 9	Percentage of young people now aged 17-21 and in employment, education or training who were looked after when aged 16	55%
KPI 10	Percentage of young people now aged 17-21 and living in suitable accommodation who were looked after when aged 16	89%
KPI 11	Percentage of qualified social workers with caseloads above target	17%
KPI 12	% of children placed more than 20 miles from their homes, outside LA boundary	19%

Appendix 6 – Contractual Key Performance Indicators (cont)

	KPI	2019/20 performance
KPI 13	Percentage of stage 1 complaints responded to within 10 working days.	n/a*
KPI 14	Stage 2 investigations as a % of stage 1 complaints received within the year	n/a*
KPI 15	budget % variances (forecast to budget)	n/a*
KPI 16	Percentage of social worker vacancies	n/a*
KPI 17	Percentage of Social Worker posts filled with agency staff	n/a*
KPI 18	Average time between the LA receiving court authority to place a child and deciding on a match	147.2 days**
KPI 19	Percentage of children in care who were placed for adoption within 12 months of an agency decision that they should be adopted	89%
KPI 20	Numbers of data breaches reported or self-reported to the ICO per quarter	3
KPI 21	Percentage of children leaving care due to permanence (Special Guardianship Order, adoption, residence order)	24%

NOTE The targets for 2021/22 are currently under review with the Trust's stakeholders, and are due to be finalised by April 1st, 2021

* New measures that will be collected such that historic data is not available for 2019/20

** Provisional figure, not yet finalised and published by DfE

Appendix 7 - Projected Profit and Loss Account

TBC

Appendix 8 – Strategic Risk Register

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Northamptonshire
Children's Trust

Northamptonshire Children's Trust
One Angel Square
Angel Street
Northampton
NN1 1ED

www.nctrust.co.uk

Company no: 12430084

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