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**Emma Ing HMI**  
Regional Director, East Midlands

4 June 2018

Colin Pettigrew  
Corporate Director, Children, Families and Cultural Services  
Nottinghamshire County Council

Sent by email to:

Dear Colin

### **Social Care Annual Conversation – 17 May 2018**

Thank you for meeting with Nick McMullen and me to consider your self-evaluation and to discuss developments in children's services in Nottinghamshire. This letter should be read alongside the contents of your self-evaluation which we have noted. We found that your self-evaluation is thorough and highlights strengths in practice as well as some areas for improvement. You appear to make good use of audit to inform yourselves about the quality of practice. All areas of improvement are accompanied by succinct plans with information about how impact will be measured.

#### **Local authority context**

The authority has experienced several changes of political party leadership over the past decade but has always received strong political support for children's services. There is a stable senior leadership team with additional capacity that has been added over the last six months. An increasing population is forecasted to present budgetary challenges, however in the short term you have managed to secure additional funding for front line services.

#### **Progress since last inspection**

Your last SIF inspection in May 2015 judged all areas good with the exception of experiences and progress of care leavers which was judged requires improvement. Since then you have had a focused visit where inspectors evaluated the local authority's arrangements for its care leavers, including the preparation of relevant children in care for the transition to adulthood.

The local authority has remained committed to an early help offer with significant funds invested. This has allowed you to strengthen step down processes through your children's centres and family service. This has contributed to a reduction in your Child in Need numbers, with families being provided timely and bespoke support.



You have identified understanding and application of thresholds by partner agencies as an issue and are doing further work on this through the MASH. You have also recently experienced an unusually high number of serious incidents involving non-accidental injuries to young children. There may be a number of factors contributing to this and you will continue to monitor for any service implications.

You have worked hard to develop the corporate parent responsibility across Nottinghamshire's District Councils. Gedling has already agreed to council tax exemption for care leavers and you are confident that other districts will do likewise.

Workloads and workforce stability remain a core challenge, however a recent health check has shown the majority of staff are positive about working for the local authority. You have been successful in training new social workers through your university partnership which has resulted in a reduction in agency numbers. However, this has created a high number of inexperienced newly qualified social workers in your front line teams. In order to support social worker caseloads you have incorporated some administration support which has demonstrated a positive impact with caseload management. You are currently looking to secure further funding to increase the levels of support.

### **Future plans**

You advised us that your focus would be improving consistency and quality of practice moving forward. This would be supported by further embedding learning and training for staff in using your assessment tools. Ultimately you hope this will lead to better case progression and improved outcomes for children.

### **Future inspection**

We discussed the future of local authority inspection and advised that your next activity would likely be a focused visit. We reflected on the areas where a focused visit might be useful and agreed on your front door and first line response. This would be in line with the areas identified in our ILACS framework.

Please pass on our thanks to colleagues for their input into the annual conversation. I look forward to hearing about further developments in Nottinghamshire.

Yours sincerely

**DPA**

**Emma Ing HMI**  
Regional Director  
East Midlands