

# Public Document Pack



## Children Young People and Families Policy and Performance Board

Monday, 8 November 2021 at 6.30 p.m.  
Council Chamber - Town Hall, Runcorn

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'David Walsh'.

**Chief Executive**

### **BOARD MEMBERSHIP**

Councillor Geoffrey Logan (Chair)	Labour
Councillor Carol Plumpton Walsh (Vice-Chair)	Labour
Councillor John Abbott	Labour
Councillor Irene Bramwell	Labour
Councillor Chris Carlin	Labour
Councillor Louise Goodall	Labour
Councillor Valerie Hill	Labour
Councillor Eddie Jones	Labour
Councillor Kath Loftus	Labour
Councillor Margaret Ratcliffe	Liberal Democrats
Councillor Aimee Teeling	Labour

*Please contact Ann Jones on 0151 511 8276 or e-mail  
[ann.jones@halton.gov.uk](mailto:ann.jones@halton.gov.uk) for further information.*

*The next meeting of the Board is on Monday, 24 January 2022*

**ITEMS TO BE DEALT WITH  
IN THE PRESENCE OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC**

**Part I**

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<b>2. DECLARATION OF INTEREST (INCLUDING PARTY WHIP DECLARATIONS)</b>	
Members are reminded of their responsibility to declare any Disclosable Pecuniary Interest or Other Disclosable Interest which they have in any item of business on the agenda, no later than when that item is reached or as soon as the interest becomes apparent and, with Disclosable Pecuniary interests, to leave the meeting during any discussion or voting on the item.	
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<b>5. DEVELOPMENT OF POLICY ISSUES</b>	
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***In accordance with the Health and Safety at Work Act the Council is required to notify those attending meetings of the fire evacuation procedures. A copy has previously been circulated to Members and instructions are located in all rooms within the Civic block.***

**CHILDREN YOUNG PEOPLE AND FAMILIES POLICY AND PERFORMANCE  
BOARD**

*At a meeting of the Children Young People and Families Policy and Performance Board on Monday, 13 September 2021 in the Council Chamber - Town Hall, Runcorn*

Present: Councillors Logan (Chair), Abbott, Bramwell, Carlin, Goodall, V. Hill, Jones, Loftus, Ratcliffe and Teeling

Apologies for Absence: Councillor C. Plumpton Walsh

Absence declared on Council business: None

Officers present: M. Vasic, A. Jones, J. Farrell, L. Davenport, B. Holmes and C. Hunt

Also in attendance: One member of the press

**ITEMS DEALT WITH  
UNDER DUTIES  
EXERCISABLE BY THE BOARD**

	<i>Action</i>
CYP9 MINUTES	
<p>The Minutes of the meeting held on 14 June 2021 were taken as read and signed as a correct record.</p>	
CYP10 PUBLIC QUESTION TIME	
<p>The Board was advised that there were no public questions submitted.</p>	
CYP11 HALTON'S RESPONSE TO SEXUAL VIOLENCE AND SEXUAL HARASSMENT BETWEEN CHILDREN IN SCHOOLS AND COLLEGES	
<p>The Board received a presentation on Halton's response to Ofsted's review into Sexual Violence and Sexual Harassment (SVSH) in schools and the DfE's subsequent updated guidance.</p>	
<p>The presentation outlined some background in respect of the review, its key findings and recommendations. Halton's response following the review was discussed and details of the training that had taken place for headteachers, governors, all school staff and safeguarding leads was</p>	

highlighted. It was noted that the model safeguarding policy had been updated to reflect the statutory guidance.

The following responses were provided to Members' questions:

- The introduction of trousers to the female uniform – this was a decision for Governing bodies, the Council could only provide guidance on this;
- Some schools did not follow their own guidance concerning incidents of SVSH – this must be enforced in schools and it must be understood that a zero tolerance approach is needed;
- Action needed to be taken against the perpetrators as it seems that the victims are the ones who are expected to change their behaviour – yes support was needed for them as well as the victim and this was included in the guidance;
- Clarity over the involvement of the Police – Police officers were available offering support to schools and this advice would be included as part of the action plan moving forward. Guidance was already in place to advise schools at what point the Police should become involved;
- Prevention measures – the curriculum has been expanded upon to include this as a priority; and
- The Lead Officer for Safeguarding Children in Education was available to offer support to Governors in the safeguarding role within their school, as well as headteachers.

Further to the above, it was noted that parents were able to report incidents of SVSH in an official capacity according to a school's complaints policy. Also, from 1 September Ofsted would be compiling statistics relating to incidents on a national level.

It was commented that locally, moving forward would involve data gathering from Halton's schools on a monthly basis, to identify trends that the Authority could respond to. It was recognised that the normalisation of this kind of behaviour was completely unacceptable and the Board welcomed the response to this so far and the updated guidance in respect of this.

**RESOLVED:** That the presentation and comments made be noted.

CYP12 CHILDREN IN CARE, CARE LEAVERS, FOSTERING AND ADOPTION

The Board considered a report of the Strategic Director – People, which provided an overview on the current issues and progress for Children in Care (CIC), Care Leavers (CL) and developments in the service to address the needs and demand.

This included a summary on the fostering service, the arrangements for the use of Ashley House and the recently launched Supported Lodgings Service, both for care leavers.

Further to Members questions, it was noted that the adoption process could take between 11 to 16 weeks, however this is often dependant on court proceedings as these were often delayed, particularly at the moment with the impacts of the pandemic.

RESOLVED: That the report is noted.

CYP13 EDUCATIONAL POSITION AND UPDATES 2021

The Board received a report of the Strategic Director – People, which provided an annual report regarding the educational position in Halton along with key updates.

It was noted that due to the cancellation of Early Years and Primary Assessments and the changes due to Covid-19 for Secondary and Post 16 Assessments, performance data was not available this year. Further, due to the subsequent Department for Education's response, there had been many changes to educational provision, assessment and examination during 2020. The validated national results would not be published this year for the second consecutive year.

The report provided Members' with updates in the following areas:

- Statutory assessment and key issues;
- Educational challenges for September 2021 onwards and strategies to support;
- The National Tutoring Programme;
- Catch Up Premium; and
- The return to school / Education in September 2021.

Members were reassured that when the statistics did become available they would be shared with them.

RESOLVED: That the report and comments made be noted.

CYP14 SUPPORTING FAMILIES UPDATE

The Board considered a report of the Strategic Director – People, which provided an update of the Supporting Families Programme and its current performance levels.

It was noted that the Troubled Families Programme was due to end in March 2020, however the ongoing evaluation evidence demonstrated the benefits of the Programme, so it had continued into 2020-22. Government had committed £165m for local authorities through the Troubled Families Programme, which would provide intensive support to families facing multiple problems. Members were advised that the Programme would still utilise the Troubled Families Outcome Plan, which provided a partnership wide framework that states the significant and sustainable outcome measures applicable to families identified for support.

It was reported that following an announcement made by the Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) in March this year, the Programme would now enter a new phase – details of this were outlined in the report. Members were also provided with an update specific to Halton and performance data since the Programme began in 2013. The 100% ‘payment by results’ achievement for Halton was welcomed, especially as only 19% of areas had achieved this.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

CYP15 PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT REPORTS FOR QUARTER 1 OF 2021/22

The Board received the Performance Management reports for quarter one of 2021-22 (1 April 2021 to 30 June 2021).

It was noted that the key priorities for development or improvement in 2020-21 were agreed by Members and included in the Local Authority’s Business Plan, for the various functional areas reported to the Board as follows:

- Education, Inclusion and Provision Services; and
- Children and Families Services.

The reports detailed progress made against objectives, milestones and performance targets and provided information relating to key developments and emerging issues that had arisen during the period.

RESOLVED: That the quarter one Performance Management reports be received.

*Meeting ended at 7.55 p.m.*

**REPORT TO:** Children, Young People and Families Policy & Performance Board

**DATE:** 8 November 2021

**REPORTING OFFICER:** Strategic Director, Enterprise, Community and Resources

**SUBJECT:** Public Question Time

**WARD(s):** Borough-wide

### **1.0 PURPOSE OF REPORT**

- 1.1 To consider any questions submitted by the Public in accordance with Standing Order 34(9).
- 1.2 Details of any questions received will be circulated at the meeting.

### **2.0 RECOMMENDED: That any questions received be dealt with.**

### **3.0 SUPPORTING INFORMATION**

3.1 Standing Order 34(9) states that Public Questions shall be dealt with as follows:-

- (i) A total of 30 minutes will be allocated for dealing with questions from members of the public who are residents of the Borough, to ask questions at meetings of the Policy and Performance Boards.
- (ii) Members of the public can ask questions on any matter relating to the agenda.
- (iii) Members of the public can ask questions. Written notice of questions must be given by 4.00 pm on the working day prior to the date of the meeting to the Committee Services Manager. At any one meeting no person/organisation may submit more than one question.
- (iv) One supplementary question (relating to the original question) may be asked by the questioner, which may or may not be answered at the meeting.
- (v) The Chair or proper officer may reject a question if it:-
  - Is not about a matter for which the local authority has a responsibility or which affects the Borough;
  - Is defamatory, frivolous, offensive, abusive or racist;



- Is substantially the same as a question which has been put at a meeting of the Council in the past six months; or
  - Requires the disclosure of confidential or exempt information.
- (vi) In the interests of natural justice, public questions cannot relate to a planning or licensing application or to any matter which is not dealt with in the public part of a meeting.
- (vii) The Chair will ask for people to indicate that they wish to ask a question.
- (viii) **PLEASE NOTE** that the maximum amount of time each questioner will be allowed is 3 minutes.
- (ix) If you do not receive a response at the meeting, a Council Officer will ask for your name and address and make sure that you receive a written response.

Please bear in mind that public question time lasts for a maximum of 30 minutes. To help in making the most of this opportunity to speak:-

- Please keep your questions as concise as possible.
- Please do not repeat or make statements on earlier questions as this reduces the time available for other issues to be raised.
- Please note public question time is not intended for debate – issues raised will be responded to either at the meeting or in writing at a later date.

#### **4.0 POLICY IMPLICATIONS**

None.

#### **5.0 OTHER IMPLICATIONS**

None.

#### **6.0 IMPLICATIONS FOR THE COUNCIL'S PRIORITIES**

6.1 **Children and Young People in Halton** - none.

6.2 **Employment, Learning and Skills in Halton** - none.

6.3 **A Healthy Halton** – none.

6.4 **A Safer Halton** – none.

6.5 **Halton's Urban Renewal** – none.

**7.0 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES**

7.1 None.

**8.0 LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS UNDER SECTION 100D OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972**

8.1 There are no background papers under the meaning of the Act.

**REPORT TO:** Children, Young People and Families Policy and Performance Board

**DATE:** 8 November 2021

**REPORTING OFFICER:** Chief Executive

**SUBJECT:** Executive Board Minutes

**WARD(s):** Boroughwide

## **1.0 PURPOSE OF REPORT**

- 1.1 The Minutes relating to the Children and Young People Portfolio which have been considered by the Executive Board are attached at Appendix 1 for information.
- 1.2 The Minutes are submitted to inform the Policy and Performance Board of decisions taken in their area.

## **2.0 RECOMMENDATION: That the Minutes be noted.**

## **3.0 POLICY IMPLICATIONS**

- 3.1 None.

## **4.0 OTHER IMPLICATIONS**

- 4.1 None.

## **5.0 IMPLICATIONS FOR THE COUNCIL'S PRIORITIES**

### **5.1 Children and Young People in Halton**

None

### **5.2 Employment, Learning and Skills in Halton**

None

### **5.3 A Healthy Halton**

None

### **5.4 A Safer Halton**

None

### **5.5 Halton's Urban Renewal**

None

**6.0 RISK ANALYSIS**

6.1 None.

**7.0 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES**

7.1 None.

**8.0 LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS UNDER SECTION 100D OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972**

8.1 There are no background papers under the meaning of the Act.

**Extract of Executive Board Minutes relevant to the Children, Young Peoples and Families Policy and Performance Board**

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**EXECUTIVE BOARD MEETING HELD ON 14 OCTOBER 2021**

<b>EXB 36</b>	<b>REQUEST FOR HALTON BOROUGH COUNCIL TO LEAD THE PROCUREMENT OF AN IAG SERVICE FOR HALTON, KNOWSLEY AND WIRRAL LOCAL AUTHORITIES</b>
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The Board considered a report of the Strategic Director – People, which requested approval for Halton Borough Council to lead the procurement of services to encourage, enable and assist young people to participate in education and training.

It was reported that local authorities had a duty to make available to all young people aged 13-19 and to those between 20 and 25 with an Education, Health and Care Plan; support that would encourage, enable and assist them to participate in education or training. Since April 2014 the 14-19 Team within Halton had implemented the Halton Participation Strategy to meet these duties, as required under Section 68 of the Education and Skills Act 2008.

The report outlined Halton's previous collaborations with Knowsley, Liverpool and Wirral Authorities, to commission a service to provide information, advice and guidance to young people where Halton took the lead.

Knowsley and Wirral Local Authorities had once again requested Halton to act as lead for the upcoming procurement process. In order to make this procurement process as efficient as possible for the authorities involved, approval was sought for Halton to lead the procurement process for a joint service across Halton, Knowsley and Wirral Local Authorities, beginning April 2022.

Details on the procurement process, the expected contract values and benefits of the proposal were provided.

**RESOLVED:** That the Board

- 1) notes the report; and
- 2) approves Halton Borough Council acting as lead in a joint procurement process with Knowsley and Wirral Local Authorities.

<b>REPORT TO:</b>	Children, Young People & Families Policy & Performance Board
<b>DATE:</b>	8 November 2021
<b>REPORTING OFFICER:</b>	Sharon Williams, Headteacher of Halton Virtual School, People Directorate
<b>PORTFOLIO:</b>	Children, Young People and Families
<b>SUBJECT:</b>	Headteacher of the Virtual School's Annual Report for Halton Children in Care
<b>WARD(S)</b>	All

### 1.0 **PURPOSE OF THE REPORT**

- 1.1 To provide the Board with the Headteacher of the Virtual School's annual report on the education outcomes and achievement of Halton Children in Care.

### 2.0 **RECOMMENDATION: That the Board**

- i) **note the information provided; and**
- ii) **accept the Headteacher of the Virtual School's annual report as an accurate account of the performance on the education outcomes and achievement of Halton Children in Care.**

### 3.0 **SUPPORTING INFORMATION**

- 3.1 Please see the attached report for the detailed data, analysis and summary of the work of Halton Virtual School during the academic year 2020-21.
- 3.2 Due to the impact of the COVID 19 pandemic a decision was made to suspend all Primary tests and to change to teacher assessment for the allocation of GCSE results. This means that it is not possible to provide yearly comparisons for end of Key Stage progress and attainment. Whilst full school attendance did resume for parts of the academic year there was a national lockdown in the Spring term which means it is again difficult to provide yearly comparisons.
- 3.4 The work of the Virtual School has continued throughout the academic year and the full annual report does provide detailed analysis of how Halton Children in Care have performed against each of the individual key performance indicators, how they have been supported in order to mitigate against the impact of the COVID

restrictions and also a summary of the Virtual School’s progress towards it’s identified key priorities for the academic year 2020-21 and identifying the priorities for the Virtual School in 2021-22.

3.5 As this is a covering report it only provides a summary of the overall performance of the children and young people and a summary of the Virtual School’s performance for 2020-21.

3.6 **Children in care overall performance against key education outcomes**

Halton Virtual School operate an ‘At Risk Register’ so that we can track and prioritise those children and young people in care who are at risk of not achieving good educational outcomes. On the At Risk Register good performance is considered to be when a child in care:

- Is making at least expected progress across all key subject areas in their phase of education.
- Is currently or likely to achieve age related expectations in all key subject areas
- Has attendance that is above 95%
- Has had no fixed term exclusions
- Is accessing their full educational entitlement
- Has not had any time off school roll

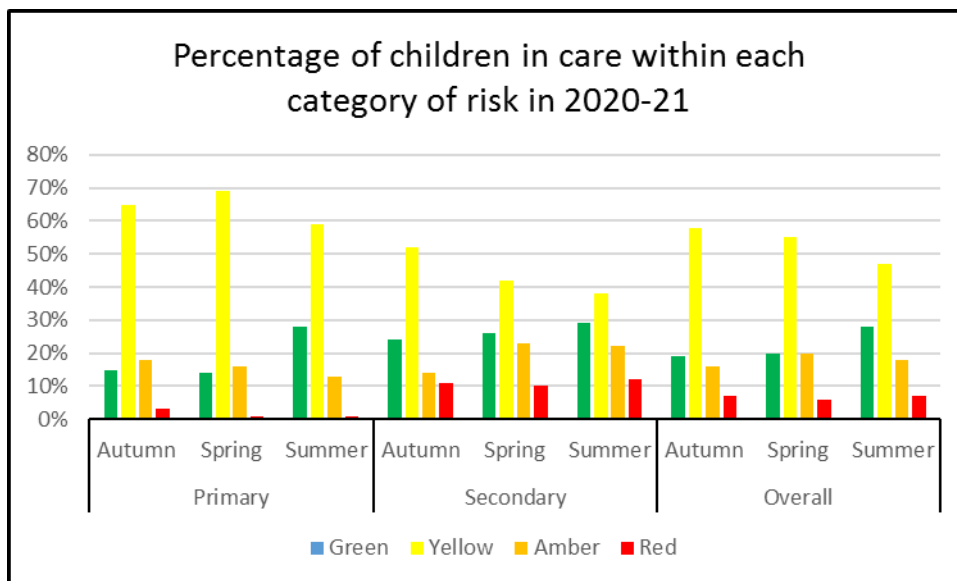
A child will be flagged in the following way against these criteria:

	Has no flags against any of the key performance indicators
	1 flag - Is not making at least expected progress/not going to achieve age related expectations <b>OR</b> is not achieving 1 other performance indicator
	2 flags - Is not making at least expected progress/not going to achieve age related expectations <b>AND</b> is not achieving 1 other performance indicator
	3 or more flags - Is not making at least expected progress/not going to achieve age related expectations <b>AND</b> is not achieving 2 or more other performance indicator

Positive performance is a reduction in the percentage of children who are flagged as red and an increase in the percentage of those flagged as green.

The chart below shows the percentage of children in each of the risk categories across the academic year. As can be seen, despite the significant impact of the disruption to learning as a result of the pandemic, there has been an increase in the number being flagged as green across the academic year. This is as a result of the

collaborative work lead by the Virtual School and including schools and Children’s Social Care. This collaboration has helped to mitigate the risks of children and young people not achieving good educational outcomes in challenging circumstances.











3.7 Performance of Halton Virtual School against its key priorities for 2020-21:

- ✓ = Good Performance
- ≈ = there is some improvement but there is still concern
- ✗ = an area of underperformance

Priority	Achieved	Analysis
To ensure that all Halton children in care continue to access their educational entitlement throughout the COVID 19 pandemic.	✓	Despite the challenges of high transmission rates in Halton, children in care attendance and engagement throughout the academic year remained good. During the lockdown period engagement in remote learning was tracked on a daily basis and dynamic risk assessments were continually updated ensuring that any issues were addressed without delay. When a young person could not access their education provision a support package was put in place until this was resolved.
Close the attainment gap between Halton children in care	≈	All Primary tests were suspended due to the pandemic and KS4 attainment was marked using teacher assessments not formal



<p>and their non-care experienced peers, with a particular focus on achieving the higher grades in Key Stage 4.</p>		<p>exams as a result of interrupted learning. There were positive signs in the grades awarded to KS4 pupils although the achievement at the higher levels is still an area of focus. From PEP data there are signs that children in care are continuing to make at least expected progress and this is positive considering the lost learning time the children have experienced.</p>
<p>Improve the quality of Personal Education Plans, including Early Years and Post 16, with a particular focus on target setting, impact measures for Pupil Premium Plus and tracking the curriculum accessed.</p>		<p>There have been issues with the migration to the new CSC Eclipse system which has resulted in some schools struggling to complete the PEPs. However, PEP completion and quality have both improved or at least been maintained despite the challenges.</p>
<p>Commission and conduct a Halton Virtual School Pupil Premium Plus Review to ascertain impact, areas of good practice and areas for development.</p>		<p>Due to the impact of the pandemic it has not been possible to complete this. However, sharing of good practice has taken place with our schools.</p>
<p>To continue to improve the number of secondary age young people in care having attendance above 95%</p>		<p>Secondary aged young people have been particularly impacted by the higher transmission rates both within Halton and the NW region resulting in bubbles collapsing and self-isolation. In addition increases in the number of Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (UASC) and challenges in securing care placements have resulted in some young people having periods of time not on roll. However, given all of the above secondary attendance has been positive on the whole.</p>

Reduce the number of children in care receiving one or more fixed term exclusion, and the length and the frequency.		Fixed term exclusions have been low across all phases of education.
Monitor and risk assess the progress of any child in care attending a school rated as Requires Improvement or below by Ofsted, including undertaking additional support and challenge visits to the school.		Despite the impact of the pandemic and national lockdown progress measures have continued to be monitored and risk assessed on a termly basis. Support and Challenge visits have continued remotely. Data analysis has shown that progress of children in care has improved across all areas from previous years but there is still more improvement needed to close the gap with their non-care peers and to mitigate against lost learning due to the pandemic.
Develop a SEND dashboard in order to more effectively monitor the outcomes, support and quality of provision.		Quality assurance visits to Specialist provisions could not be carried out due to COVID restrictions. Therefore the dashboard could not be fully developed. However, SEND children in care continued to be monitored in the same way as all other children.
Embed the direct working approach for 16 – 19 year olds to continue to improve engagement in Education, Employment and Training with a particular focus on apprenticeships.		A new KS4 and Post 16 Employability Officer and also a Post 16 PEP Coordinator have been appointed and direct work has begun. Due to the pandemic it has been challenging for young people to access their chosen EET provision but this is being tracked and the young people are being supported to maintain their engagement.
Improve capacity within the Virtual School to extend the direct approach to include 19-22 year		The KS4 and Post Employability Officer has begun to deliver direct work to our care leavers and support them around their engagement in EET. This is in its infancy so more time will be

old care leavers.		needed to see the impact.
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#### 4.0 **POLICY IMPLICATIONS**

4.1 Please see below regarding national policy changes that will have implications for the support provided through Halton Virtual School.

#### 5.0 **OTHER/FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

5.1 Halton Virtual School relies heavily on the use of Pupil Premium Plus funding from the Government to support the educational outcomes of Children in Care. This includes support provided through the Personal Education Plan, for the staffing required to carry out its duties to a high and effective standard, and the ability to commission specialist psychological assessments, as well as provide direct curriculum support for the children and young people. There is currently an agreement that this funding will remain in place until 2022 but that it will be reviewed to take into account other budgetary changes and pressures, particularly in light of the impact of the COVID pandemic.

5.2 There is a major risk to the outcomes of our most vulnerable children if this funding ceases because Halton Virtual School will no longer be able to provide the high level and necessary educational support for our children in care. Halton's ILACS inspection in 2020 stated that the Virtual School required more capacity in order to keep delivering its very good work so the grant funding has been used to meet this suggestion (details of the staffing structure are contained within the full annual report). If the grant funding used by the Virtual School ceases this will have a direct impact on its capacity to meet not only the statutory requirements but continue to deliver its Ofsted validated bespoke support model to Halton's children in care. Therefore, Council funding of at least the same level will need to be identified to mitigate against this.

5.3 Halton Virtual School continues to look to provide additional employment and training opportunities for Care Leavers through access to apprenticeships and work programmes. There needs to be a review of funding opportunities to support these and also creative opportunities both within the Council and within local businesses.

#### 6.0 **IMPLICATIONS FOR THE COUNCIL'S PRIORITIES**

##### 6.1 **Children & Young People in Halton**

The educational outcomes of Children in Care remain a key priority for the Council.

6.2 **Employment, Learning & Skills in Halton**

If Children in Care do not achieve their expected educational outcomes, there is a high risk that they will become NEET and therefore not achieve employment which fulfils their aspirations or enables them to be active participants in the community.

6.3 **A Healthy Halton**

Research has demonstrated that issues related to the emotional health and well-being have a significant impact upon the educational outcomes for Children in Care. Timely and effective services are vital in providing emotional support for our young people to enable them to have positive engagement in their learning and achieve their potential.

6.4 **A Safer Halton**

Due to their lived experiences Children in Care can be at higher risk of child sexual exploitation, and episodes of missing from care or school. Research does indicate that these factors all have a negative impact upon educational outcomes for our children and young people in care. Therefore, all agencies need to provide proactive support in order to keep children in care safe.

6.5 **Halton's Urban Renewal**

None identified.

7.0 **RISK ANALYSIS**

7.1 If the outcomes for our Halton Children in care do not improve then there is a continued risk that they are more likely to become NEET and not become active and positive partners in their community.

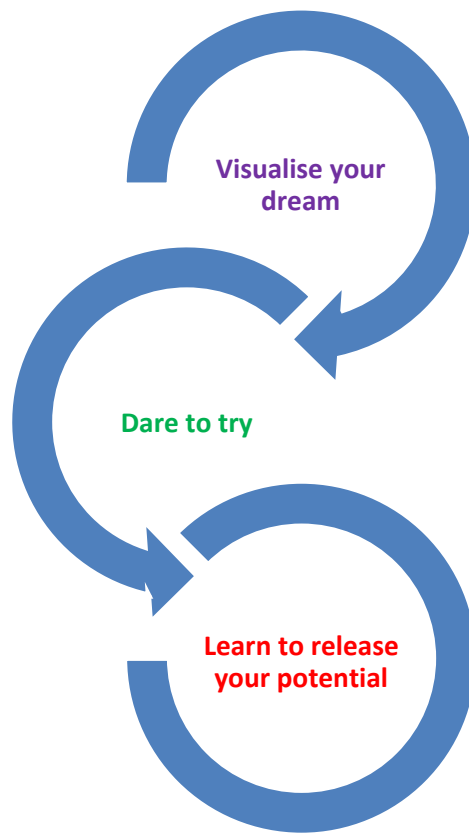
8.0 **EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES**

8.1 Children in Care continue to be a vulnerable group whose life experiences of trauma, neglect and abuse mean that they have not had the same start to life as other young people.

9.0 **LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS UNDER SECTION 100D OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972**

None.

VIRTUAL  SCHOOL



# Annual Report

## 2020-21

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## Executive Summary



This report provides an overview of the work of the Virtual School within the academic year 2020-21.

### Where we were the previous year, 2019-20

#### Summary of performance against Key Priorities

-  = Good Performance
-  = there is some improvement but there is still concern
-  = an area of underperformance

Priority	Achieved	Analysis
Close the attainment gap between Halton children in care and their non-care peers, with a particular focus on those in Key Stage 4.		Due to COVID 19 restrictions only GCSE results were awarded and these were based on teacher assessments. Performance improved in all areas with the exception of the higher grades. This remains a focus for the Virtual School.
Improve the quality of Personal Education Plans, including Early Years and Post 16, with a particular focus on target setting, impact measures for Pupil Premium Plus and tracking the curriculum accessed.		Due to COVID 19 formal education was suspended from March 2020, therefore, the PEPs were amended to reflect the new circumstances so a year on year comparison is not possible. Pupil Premium Plus was also not able to be utilised in the same way as no formal teaching was undertaken for the Spring and Summer terms.
Commission and conduct a Halton Virtual School Pupil Premium Plus Review to ascertain impact, areas of good practice and areas for development.		Due to COVID 19 restrictions it was not possible to complete this.
Reduce the number of children in care receiving one or more fixed term exclusion, and the length and the frequency.		Due to COVID 19 restrictions formal education was suspended from March 2020. However, for the time pupils were in school there was a reduction in exclusions for the Autumn and Spring terms in comparison with the previous year.
Monitor and risk assess the progress of any child in care attending a school rated as Requires Improvement or below by Ofsted, including undertaking additional support and challenge visits to the school.		Due to COVID 19 restrictions formal education was suspended from March 2020 therefore progress measures cannot be compared across the years. However, challenge and support visits were undertaken in the academic year

		up to the suspension of formal education.
Develop a SEND dashboard in order to more effectively monitor the outcomes, support and quality of provision.		Due to the suspension of formal education as a result of COVID 19 restrictions progress and attendance outcomes for SEND pupils could not be formally monitored from March 2020.
Embed the direct working approach for 16 – 19 year olds to continue to improve engagement in Education, Employment and Training with a particular focus on apprenticeships.		COVID 19 restrictions and the loss of capacity within the Virtual School have impacted on progress in this area.

## What we did this year in 2020-21

### Children in care overall performance against key education outcomes

Halton Virtual School operate an ‘At Risk Register’ so that we can track and prioritise those children and young people in care who are at risk of not achieving good educational outcomes. On the At Risk Register good performance is considered to be when a child in care:

- Is making at least expected progress across all key subject areas in their phase of education.
- Is currently or likely to achieve age related expectations in all key subject areas
- Has attendance that is above 95%
- Has had no fixed term exclusions
- Is accessing their full educational entitlement
- Has not had any time off school roll

A child will be flagged in the following way against these criteria:

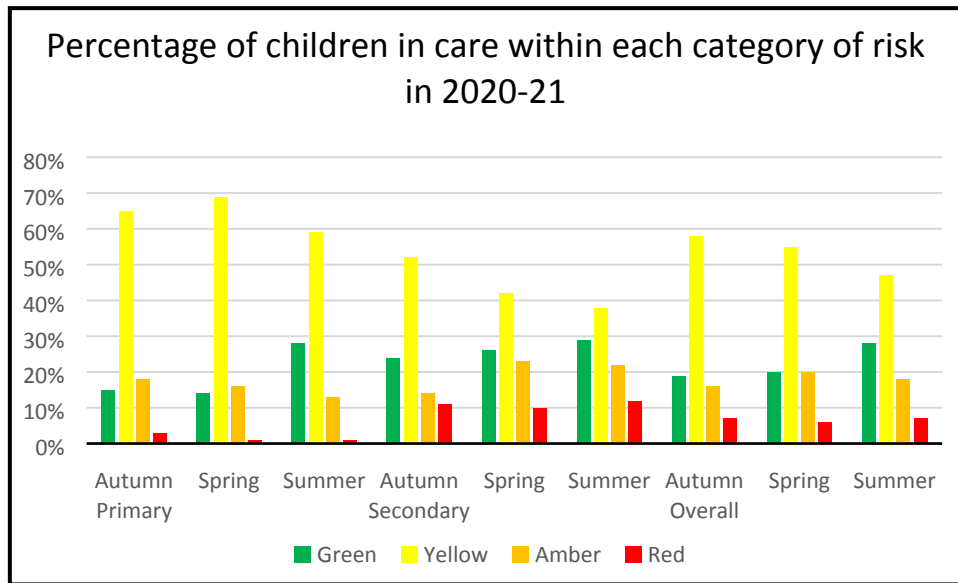
	Has no flags against any of the key performance indicators
	1 flag - Is not making at least expected progress/not going to achieve age related expectations <b>OR</b> is not achieving 1 other performance indicator
	2 flags - Is not making at least expected progress/not going to achieve age related expectations <b>AND</b> is not achieving 1 other performance indicator
	3 or more flags - Is not making at least expected progress/not going to achieve age related expectations <b>AND</b> is not achieving 2 or more other performance indicator

Positive performance is a reduction in the percentage of children who are flagged as red and an increase in the percentage of those flagged as green.

The chart below shows the percentage of children in each of the risk categories across the academic year. As can be seen, despite the significant impact of the disruption to learning as a result of the pandemic, there has been an increase in the number being flagged as green across the academic year. This is as a result of the collaborative work lead by the Virtual School and including schools and



Children’s Social Care. This collaboration has helped to mitigate the risks of children and young people not achieving good educational outcomes in challenging circumstances.







**Summary of performance against the Key Priorities identified for the current academic year**







COVID 19 pandemic continued to disrupt the education of children in care during the academic year 2020-21. Whilst schools returned to full attendance in Autumn 2020 and Summer 2021 terms, the high transmission rates in Halton and the NW region as a whole did mean that a high percentage of children and young people continued to have interrupted learning. Spring 2021 term was impacted by a national lockdown. Whenever children were not able to access the classroom, learning took place remotely. The Virtual School has continued to operate with a ‘business as usual’ approach as much as possible and as can be seen some positive progress has been made – although the COVID 19 restrictions have impacted as some areas so we are not as far on as we would have hoped.

In the following report a summary of the outcomes has been provided but due to the challenging circumstances it has not always been possible to compare this academic year with the previous year.

Below are the overarching key priorities identified for 2020-21:

-  = Good Performance
-  = there is some improvement but there is still concern
-  = an area of underperformance

Priority	Achieved	Analysis
To ensure that all Halton children in care continue to access their educational entitlement throughout the COVID 19 pandemic.		Despite the challenges of high transmission rates in Halton, children in care attendance and engagement throughout the academic year remained good. During the lockdown period engagement in remote learning was tracked on a daily basis and dynamic risk assessments were continually updated ensuring that any issues were addressed

		without delay. When a young person could not access their education provision a support package was put in place until this was resolved.
Close the attainment gap between Halton children in care and their non-care experienced peers, with a particular focus on achieving the higher grades in Key Stage 4.		All Primary tests were suspended due to the pandemic and KS4 attainment was marked using teacher assessments not formal exams as a result of interrupted learning. There were positive signs in the grades awarded to KS4 pupils although the achievement at the higher levels is still an area of focus. From PEP data there are signs that children in care are continuing to make at least expected progress and this is positive considering the lost learning time the children have experienced.
Improve the quality of Personal Education Plans, including Early Years and Post 16, with a particular focus on target setting, impact measures for Pupil Premium Plus and tracking the curriculum accessed.		There have been issues with the migration to the new CSC Eclipse system which has resulted in some schools struggling to complete the PEPs. However, PEP completion and quality have both improved or at least been maintained despite the challenges.
Commission and conduct a Halton Virtual School Pupil Premium Plus Review to ascertain impact, areas of good practice and areas for development.		Due to the impact of the pandemic it has not been possible to complete this. However, sharing of good practice has taken place with our schools.
To continue to improve the number of secondary age young people in care having attendance above 95%		Secondary aged young people have been particularly impacted by the higher transmission rates both within Halton and the NW region resulting in bubbles collapsing and self-isolation. In addition increases in the number of Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (UASC) and challenges in securing care placements have resulted in some young people having periods of time not on roll. However, given all of the above secondary attendance has been positive on the whole.
Reduce the number of children in care receiving one or more fixed term exclusion, and the length and the frequency.		Fixed term exclusions have been low across all phases of education.
Monitor and risk assess the progress of any child in care attending a school rated as Requires Improvement or below by Ofsted, including undertaking additional support and challenge visits to the school.		Despite the impact of the pandemic and national lockdown progress measures have continued to be monitored and risk assessed on a termly basis. Support and Challenge visits have continued remotely.

		Data analysis has shown that progress of children in care has improved across all areas from previous years but there is still more improvement needed to close the gap with their non-care peers and to mitigate against lost learning due to the pandemic.
Develop a SEND dashboard in order to more effectively monitor the outcomes, support and quality of provision.	≈	Quality assurance visits to Specialist provisions could not be carried out due to COVID restrictions. Therefore the dashboard could not be fully developed. However, SEND children in care continued to be monitored in the same way as all other children.
Embed the direct working approach for 16 – 19 year olds to continue to improve engagement in Education, Employment and Training with a particular focus on apprenticeships.	≈	A new KS4 and Post 16 Employability Officer and also a Post 16 PEP Coordinator have been appointed and direct work has begun. Due to the pandemic it has been challenging for young people to access their chosen EET provision but this is being tracked and the young people are being supported to maintain their engagement.
Improve capacity within the Virtual School to extend the direct approach to include 19-22 year old care leavers.	≈	The KS4 and Post Employability Officer has begun to deliver direct work to our care leavers and support them around their engagement in EET. This is in its infancy so more time will be needed to see the impact.

#### Other key performance during 2020-21:

The numbers of children having either a school and/or a placement move during the academic year has remained low. This has been as a result of good joint working between the Virtual School, social workers and the Placements Team.

Monitoring of all other key indicators did continue throughout the academic year but this has again been complicated by the COVID restrictions. Nonetheless these outcomes remained positive for our children and young people in care.

As a result of feedback from our schools and social workers no face to face training or activity support has taken place due to COVID 19 restrictions. However, virtual support has been provided to professionals and young people alike.

## What we will focus on next year in 2021-22

Priority	Rationale
To continue to mitigate against the risk of lost learning and to increase the percentage of children who are achieving good educational outcomes.	We need to track performance against all key indicators and ensure that children in care are able to access all support necessary to enable them to achieve good outcomes. We need to challenge schools around their use of catch up funding and utilise the Recovery Premium. We need to work collaboratively with CSC to reduce care and placement moves which potentially adds to further lost learning and instability.
Close the progress and attainment gap between Halton children in care and their non-care experienced peers, with a particular focus on achieving the higher grades in Key stage 4.	Although there has been an increase in children in care making progress they are still not performing as well as their non-care peers. This is particularly evident at Key Stage 4 especially with higher levels in English and Maths. It is an important area of focus as it opens up more career avenues for our young people.
Continue to improve the quality of Personal Education Plans, including Early Years and Post 16, with a particular focus on target setting, impact measures for Pupil Premium Plus and tracking the curriculum accessed.	The PEP is the key document that ensures that children in care are able to achieve their full potential and access the support they need to do this. Although both completion and quality of PEPs is improving the evidence shows that there needs to be a greater focus on improving the SMART targets and creative use of PP+. Early Years and Post 16 also remain areas that need to improve.
Commission and conduct a Halton Virtual School Pupil Premium Plus Review to ascertain impact, areas of good practice and areas for development.	It has not been possible to achieve this due to COVID restrictions but it remains an important tool to understand how our use of PP+ can have greater impact on improving the outcomes for all children in care.
Develop a Post 16 Pupil Premium Plus model to provide additional support and improve retention.	The DfE are conducting a pilot into the use of Post 16 PP+ and whilst Halton did not bid for this we have embraced the concept as a way of improving our Post 16 young people's outcomes and also the quality of Post 16 PEPs.
To continue to improve the number of secondary age young people in care having attendance above 95%	Whilst attendance has remained good in spite of the challenges during the pandemic there still needs to be a focus on KS4 pupils who can become disengaged, particularly when they are experiencing other life issues.
Reduce the number of children in care receiving one or more fixed term exclusion, and the length and the frequency.	It will be important to continue to monitor the impact of returning to education on the social, emotional and behavioural needs of children in care and to ensure that exclusions and resulting time out of school is minimised.
Continue to monitor and risk assess the progress of any child in care attending a school rated as Requires Improvement or below by Ofsted, including undertaking additional support and challenge visits to the school.	We need to ensure that a child in care is not being further disadvantaged by being educated in a school judged as requiring improvement. We need to ensure that they are accessing quality first teaching and all the support they require to make progress.

<p>Develop a SEND dashboard in order to more effectively monitor the outcomes, support and quality of provision.</p>	<p>There have been challenges in placing children requiring specialist education provision due to the national shortage of places. We need to ensure that a child can be effectively supported in a school that best meets their needs and that it will provide high quality provision.</p>
<p>Embed the direct working approach for 16 – 22 year olds to continue to improve engagement in Education, Employment and Training with a particular focus on apprenticeships.</p>	<p>Due to impact of the pandemic the number of young people who are NEET has risen. We now need to support them to re-engage in a career path of their choosing and ensure they have clear progression routes. This will include delivering bespoke CIAEG as required and supporting them through direct work to maintain their engagement.</p>
<p>To develop a proactive and bespoke package of support for UASC.</p>	<p>There has been an increase in the number of UASC. The young people arrive with very little English making it hard to find appropriate education provision for them. Whilst we do currently provide them with support it is done on an ad hoc basis rather than through a bespoke proactive offer of support.</p>

## CONTEXT

Halton is a small borough which consists of two towns, Runcorn and Widnes. The population is 129,759 of which around 25,954 are children and young people (0-15).

At the time of writing, the Index of Deprivation Measure (IDM) places Halton as the 23<sup>rd</sup> most deprived area nationally, a deterioration from previous IDMs. Alongside this we have the 8<sup>th</sup> highest national Free School Meal population for Nursery and Primary and 4<sup>th</sup> highest for Secondary. Over half the wards in the borough have a third or more children living in poverty. The local economy is amongst the fastest growing in the Liverpool City region, and has a good proportion of high value industries. However, the educational profile of the borough is not at a level to take advantage of some of the job opportunities.

The purpose of the Virtual School is to enable all children and young people in care to Halton to become resilient and effective independent learners, so that they can achieve their full potential and become full and active participants in society.

### Halton Virtual School Team

Role	Name	Funding	New or existing – contract type
Headteacher of the Virtual School	Sharon Williams	Core funded	Existing - permanent
Primary and Early Years PEP and Progress Coordinator	Joanne Lloyd	Pupil Premium Plus	Existing – ongoing grant
Secondary and Post 16 PEP and Progress Coordinator	Peter McPartland	Pupil Premium Plus	Existing – ongoing grant
Early Years Education Support Worker	Gemma Donaldson	Pupil Premium Plus	New – ongoing grant
School Age Education Support Worker	Min Ling Lee-Tai	Core funded	Existing – permanent
School Age Education Support Worker	Louisa Rees	Core funded	Existing - permanent
Post Looked After and Placed with Families Education Support Worker	David Bradshaw	Sec 31 Grant - PLAC	New – ongoing grant
Post 16 PEP Coordinator	Kelly Franklin	Youth Service grant	New – fixed term 2 years
KS4 and Post 16 Employability Officer	Ian Wilson	Troubled Families grant	New – fixed term 2 years

We have worked hard to expand the Virtual School in response to the feedback provided in Halton’s ILACS inspection which stated that more capacity was needed to further improve the good work of the Virtual School. We have ensured that our key priority areas of Early Years and Post 16 have benefited from this increase. However, we have also recognised that as Halton has a high number of children and young people placed within their families, that additional support was also required for this cohort.

Due to the nature of LA funding, a large number of these posts are grant funded and on short term fixed contracts or rolling contracts with the confirmation of the continuation of the grant. In fact there are only 3 permanent posts within the Virtual School as a whole. This presents a risk to the work of the Virtual School and the LA as a whole in fulfilling its statutory duty to promote the education of children in care and post looked after children. These vital roles will cease if the grants end or further funding is not found.

We work closely with a number of other services within the LA and have additional capacity as a result of corporate parenting responsibilities:

- Named SEN Case Worker – provides support with EHCPs and finding appropriate specialist provision
- Named Education Welfare Officer – provides attendance alerts and advice
- Education Psychology – commissioned to provide training and advice for schools
- Named YOS officer – provides support with YOS risk assessments and securing appropriate education provision
- Named 14-19 Case Worker – ensures priority is given to tracking our post 16 young people accessing education within Halton

We support and promote the education of all children in care (CIC) to Halton regardless of where they are living or being educated, from the age of 3 until they have completed their formal education. For the purposes of national performance reporting the cohort of children and young people consists of those that have been in care to Halton for at least 12 months from 31<sup>st</sup> March 2021. However, we do support, monitor and evaluate the educational outcomes of all children from the first day they enter care. The following information is accurate at the end of the academic year 2020-21.



Governance of the Virtual School is undertaken by the Children in Care and Care Leavers Partnership Board which has multi-disciplinary membership, including Headteacher representation and the Director of Children and Adults Services, and is chaired by the Lead Member for Children and Young People. In addition further scrutiny and oversight is provided by Elected Members through the Children and Young People’s Policy and Performance Board.

A key area for the Virtual School is to ensure that there is collaborative working with all services that help to support and promote the education of children in care and care leavers. This includes professionals from Children’s Social Care, other services across the Local Authority, Schools, carers, key partners and most importantly the children and young people. The Virtual School team achieves this by the following:

- Being fully active support members to the Children in Care and Care Leavers Council attending each session and regularly consulting with the members on educational issues.
- Membership of the Fostering Panel to ensure that providing support for education is a key part of carer’s assessments and when placing and matching children to carers.
- Membership of the Foster Carers Forum to ensure that any education related issues for foster carers can be addressed as they arise, including provision of training.



- Membership of the Placement Resource Panel and the Out of Borough Resource Panel to ensure that education provision is not disrupted without the agreement of the Headteacher of the Virtual School and only in exceptional circumstances.
- Membership of the Emotional Health and Wellbeing Panel to ensure that support is provided both in school and at home.
- Membership and Chair of the North West Virtual Heads network group focusing on sharing good practice, developing strategies to overcome shared challenges and to plan effectively on a regional footing.
- Membership of Halton's associations of Primary and Secondary Headteachers.

### NOTE

**Unless stated the data within this report covers ALL children in care in 2020-21 and not only those in care for 12 months or more. The Attainment and Progress section focuses on the 12 month cohort only.**

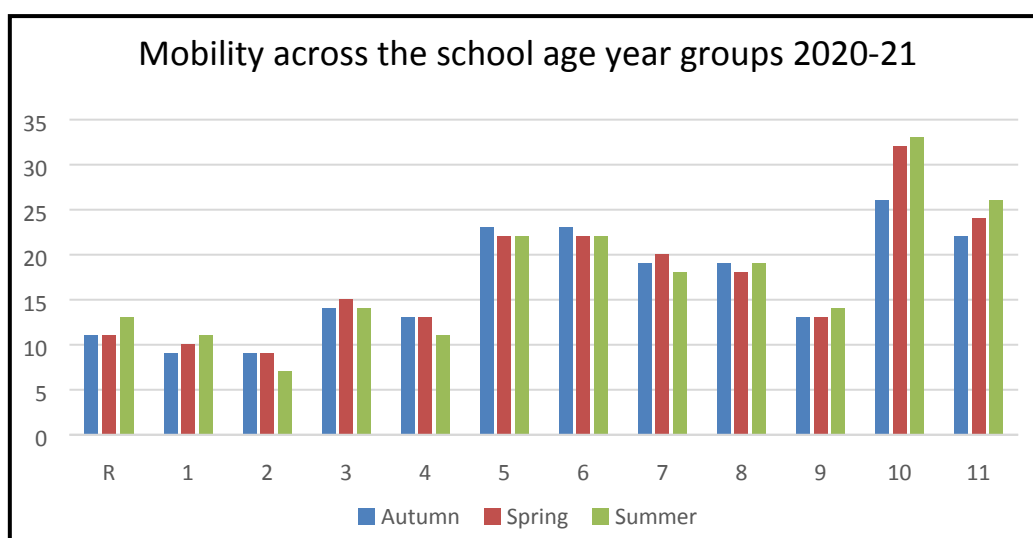
## Profile and Demographics

### Joiners and Leavers

The total number of children in care continues to increase and at the end of the academic year 2020 – 21 the total number was 295, 3 – 19 year olds; this is a 4.6% increase on the end of the previous academic year 2019-20 and there have been previous increases of 11.6% (2017-18 to 2018-19) and 12.8% (2018-19 to 2019-20).

For the school age cohort in August 2020- July 2021 there were 17 Primary aged children who came into care with 14 leaving care. There were 16 young people who came into care in the Secondary phase and 8 who returned home. Years 10 and 11 had the most additions to their cohort a number of whom are Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (UASC). It is significant when young people come into care during KS4 as they are late entries into care who have had significant disruption due to previous issues combined currently with the impact of COVID 19 restrictions, which may impact negatively on their end of key stage outcomes.

Yr	Joiners	Leavers	Net
R	4	2	2
1	4	1	3
2	1	2	-1
3	1	1	0
4	1	3	-2
5	2	2	0
6	4	3	1
7	0	2	-2
8	1	1	0
9	1	0	1
10	7	2	5
11	7	3	4



## Placement and School Moves

The national research 'Education Matters in Care' suggests that any placement move will have a detrimental impact on a child's educational attainment unless it is carefully planned, timed and supported:

'Being able to stay at the same school and avoid disruption to their education has a strong association with educational attainment for looked after children.'

In addition, Sonia Jackson's research suggests that every school move sets a child back by at least 6 months educationally.

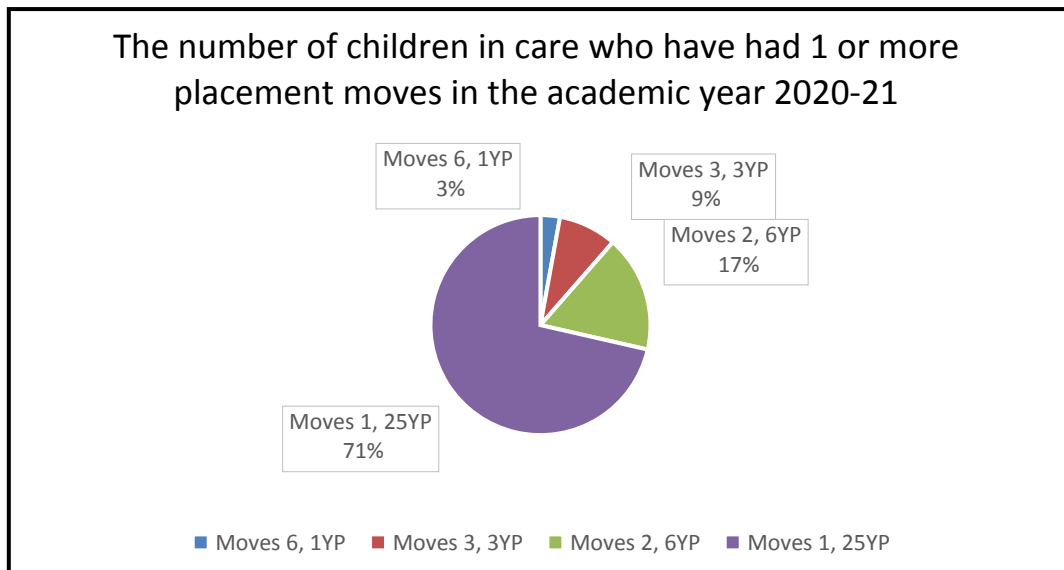
Care Planning Regulations and the statutory duty on local authorities 'Promoting the education of looked after and previously looked after children' clearly state that:

- The views of the Headteacher of the Virtual School should be given appropriate weighting as part of any decisions on placement moves.
- When a child comes into care everything should be done to maintain the child's existing school.
- Where this is not possible and there is a planned entry to care or placement move, then the school should be arranged at the same time as the care placement.
- If a child needs to move in an emergency and the existing school cannot be maintained, then a school should be sourced within 20 school days at the latest.
- A school with an Ofsted rating of Good or better should be prioritised when sourcing a new school for a child in care.

### Placement moves

There were 31 children and young people who had 1 or more placement move during the academic year 2020-21. This number is a reduction of 3 on the previous year, due in part to the impact of COVID 19 restrictions. Of these:

- 25 had 1 placement move which in the majority of cases was related to moving to a long term placement.
- 6 had 2 placement moves
- 3 had 3 placement moves
- 1 had 6 placement moves.

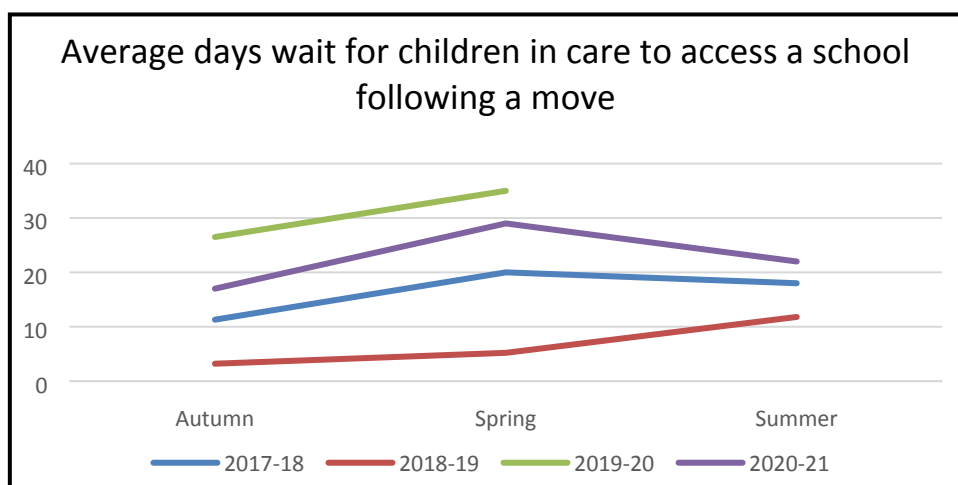


School moves

There were 19 children and young people who had a school move during the academic year, 15 had 1 move, whilst 4 had 2 moves.

There were 15 young people who have had periods of time not on a school roll. There are a high number of UASC in this cohort and it has been difficult to source an appropriate education provision as a result of delays in the age assessment confirming they are of statutory school age and also due to their very low levels of English. There were also 3 young people who had been discharged from secure accommodation and due to the impact of the pandemic care placements and specialist education provision have been hard to acquire at the same time. For all young people awaiting a school place the Virtual School provides tuition and sources an appropriate provision as soon as possible.

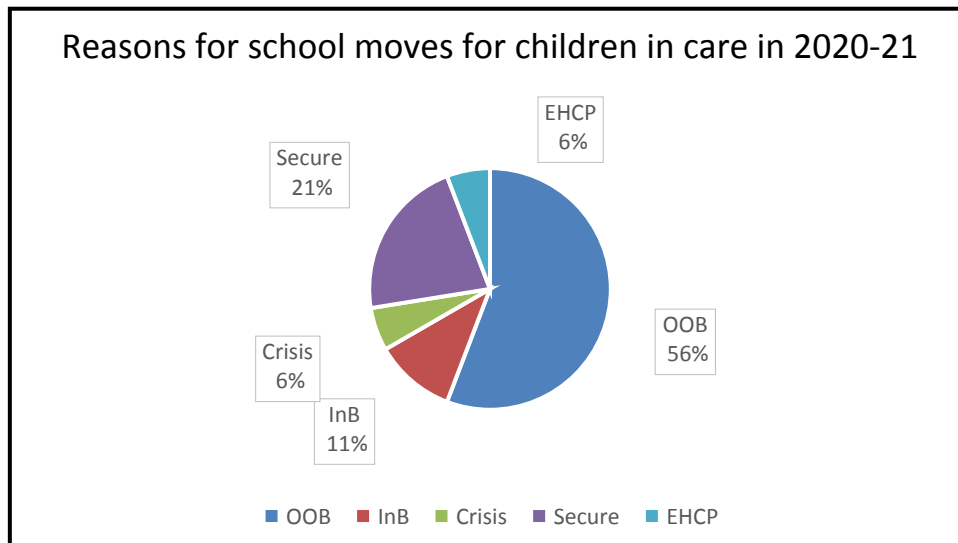
The average wait for a school place across the whole academic year was 22 days which is above the required 20 days. This figure was particularly impacted by UASC.



There were 13 children and young people who had both a school and placement move during 2020-21. Of these children:

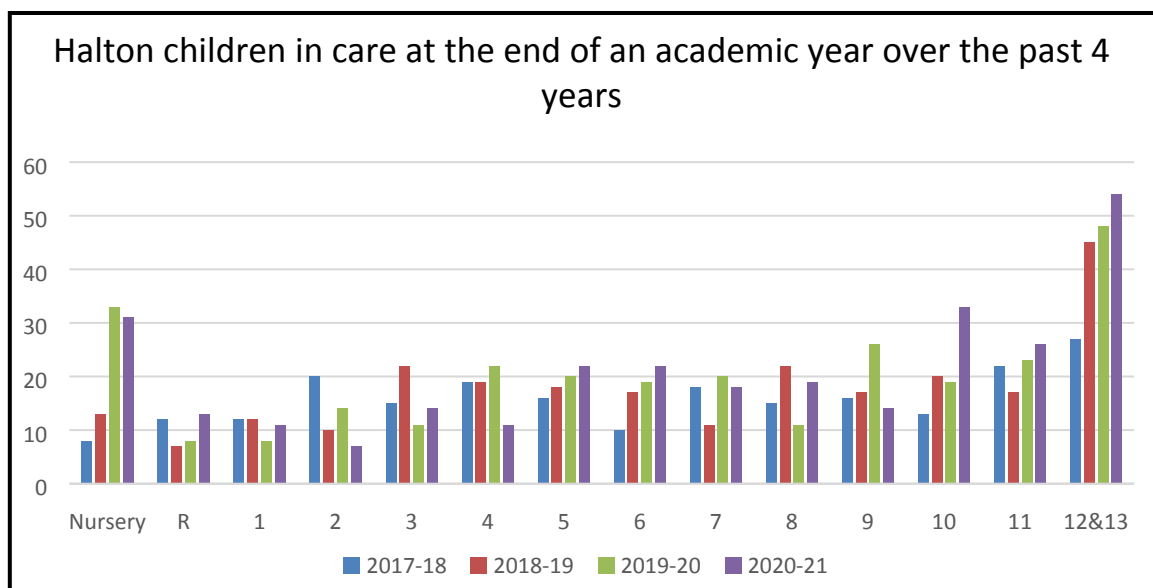
- 5 had both 1 school and 1 placement move
- 3 had 1 school move and 2 placement moves
- 1 had 2 school moves and 1 placement move
- 2 had 2 school and placement moves each
- 1 had 2 school moves and 3 placement moves
- 1 had 2 school moves with 6 placement moves

The chart below shows the reasons for a school move taking place in 2020-21

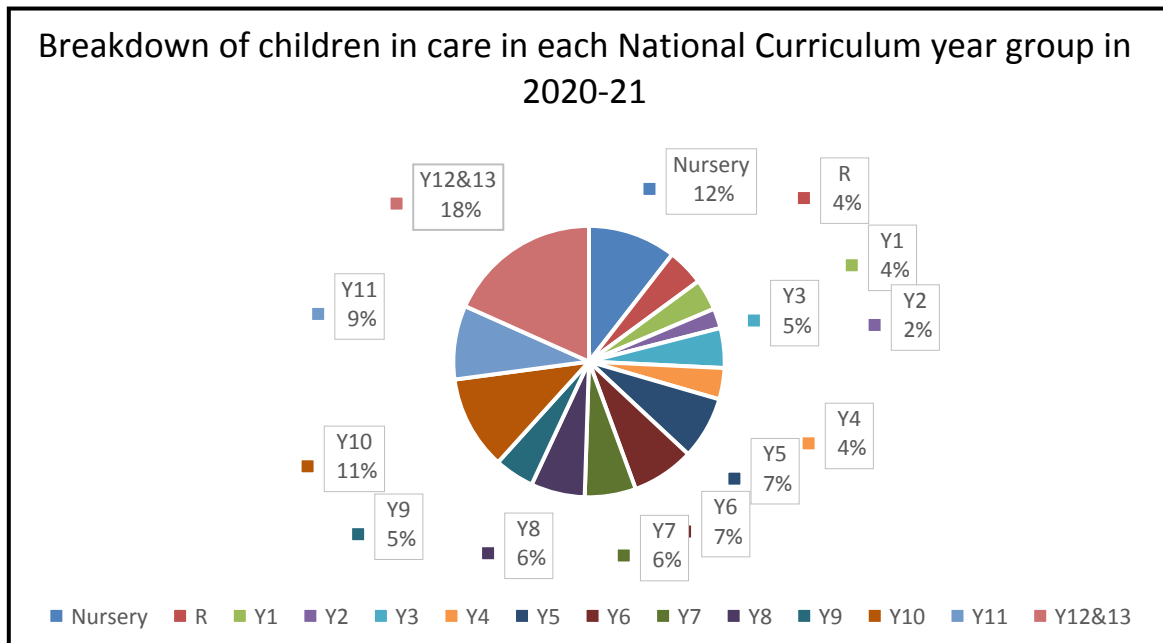


**School Phase**

The chart below shows a breakdown of children in care by each national curriculum year group for this current year 2020-21 and the previous 3 academic years. There are clear growth areas in pre-school aged children, Years 5 and 6 in Primary and particularly in the older age groups from Year 10 onwards.



The chart below shows the percentage of children in care across the national curriculum year groups for the period of August 2020-July 2021



**School Ofsted ratings**

When a child comes into care it is not appropriate to simply move them from their school because the school is rated as less than Good. However, Halton Virtual School does undertake a risk assessment which takes into account knowledge of the school’s overall performance, pastoral support systems, the child’s progress and individual circumstances. Once this risk assessment has been completed and the view of the Virtual School is that a school move would be appropriate in the best interests of the child, then discussions take place with the child’s social worker, parent/carer, and Independent Reviewing Officer and a supported transition plan is put in place.

This same process is undertaken if a school has an adverse Ofsted inspection and judgement and children in care are currently on roll.

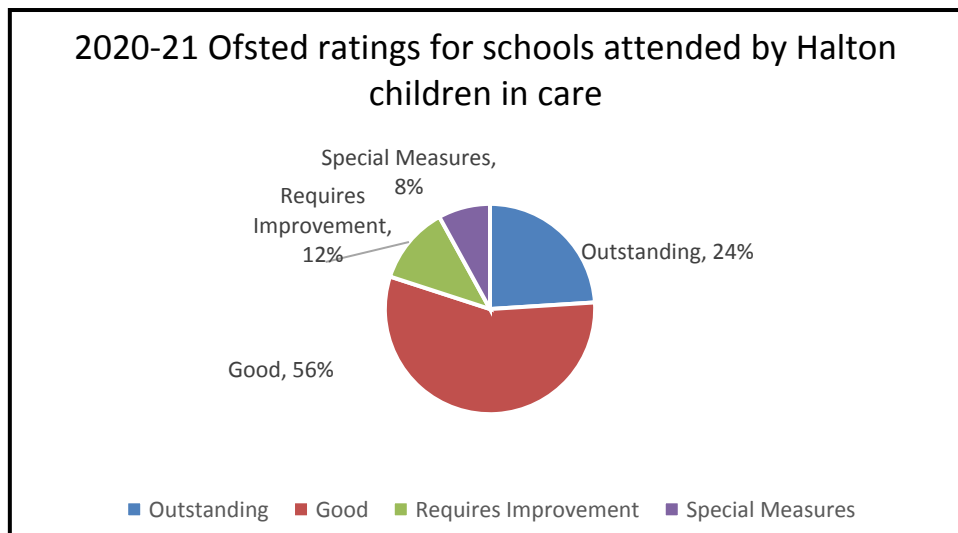
Whenever there is a decision that a child in care remains in a school that is rated as Requires Improvement or below, rigorous monitoring of the child’s progress and outcomes is undertaken, particularly through scrutiny of the Personal Education Plan.

All school moves for children in care must be agreed by the Headteacher of the Virtual School prior to the move taking place, unless in emergency and exceptional circumstances. When a request for a school move is made, the Virtual School complete an analysis of any recent Ofsted inspections of possible schools, speak to key staff including the Designated Teacher and where appropriate other local authority Virtual Schools. This is to ensure that the school chosen can meet all of the child’s needs.

When a child is transitioning into Reception or to secondary school, the Virtual School provide advice and guidance to social workers and carers to ensure that all children are placed in suitable provision, with priority being given to schools that are judged as Good or better. The Headteacher of the Virtual School makes the final decision.

As a result of the COVID 19 pandemic, Ofsted suspended their inspections of schools, however, they reserved the right to carry out an inspection if the school were overdue and/or there were concerns.

The chart below covers the Ofsted ratings of all schools attended by children in care in Halton and out of borough.



80% of children in care across both phases are attending schools that are judged to be Good or better. Whilst this is a slight decrease of 3% from the previous year it is still significantly higher than previous years. This improvement has come about because of the work that the Virtual School undertakes in sourcing the best school for our children and young people, this figure rises to 93% for those educated outside of Halton as this is when the Virtual School has sourced the provision. However, we do need to be mindful of the fact that the School Inspection Framework has also changed and this has impacted on some of the judgements this year.

Key priority for 2021-22

- Continue to monitor and risk assess the progress of any child in care attending a school judged as Requires Improvement or below by Ofsted, including undertaking additional support and challenge visits to the school.

Key actions for 2021-22:

- Through termly tracking identify all schools’ whose Ofsted judgement has changed so that the PEP and Progress Coordinator can then carry out a challenge and support visit to discuss progress of the children attending that school.
- The Virtual School will continue to work closely with social workers and carers in discussions around school admissions and transitions to ensure that children in care are only placed in schools that are Requires Improvement in exceptional circumstances.
- Work closely with our ASIAs to ensure that schools judged as Requires Improvement or below are making progress to achieve a better Ofsted outcome.

**Special Educational Needs and Disabilities**

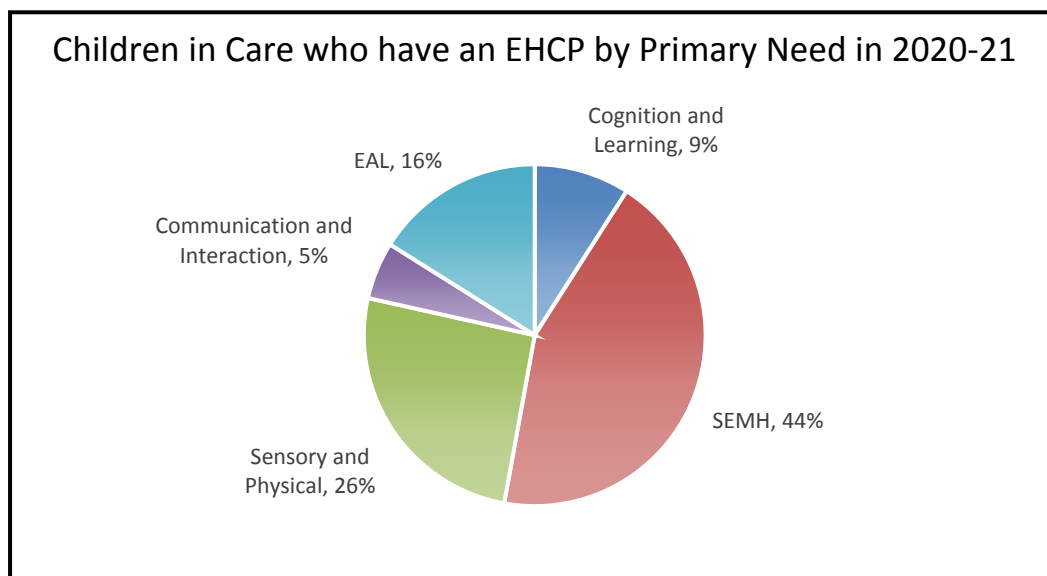
Children in care are significantly more likely to have additional needs than their non-care experienced peers, and are more likely to have an Education, Health and Care Plan.

As corporate parents Halton SEND services and the Virtual School have agreed that we need to retain responsibility for our most vulnerable children in care who are living outside of Halton but not in a stable placement and are in need of a statutory assessment. In these circumstances the Virtual School commission the Education Psychology Service to undertake the assessments and an SEN Caseworker is allocated to ensure the assessment is completed at least within the statutory timeframe. This decision has been made to ensure that the assessment process is not disrupted should the placement breakdown and to minimise the number of local authorities involved in completing the assessment. For all other children placed outside of Halton in stable placements it is the resident authority that undertake the assessment as per the Belongings Regulations.

There is a named SEN Caseworker and link Education Psychologist for each school within Halton and they monitor children in care as part of their discussions with schools. In addition to this the Virtual School has a named SEN Caseworker whose focus is those placed out of borough and on an EHCP. The case worker ensures that provision and targets within the EHCP are aligned with the termly Personal Education Plan.

In order to ensure that children in care have early identification of their needs and appropriate timely support, the Virtual School have commissioned bespoke children in care education psychology time and this is used to support our most vulnerable children who require statutory assessment but are being educated out of Halton; this time is also used for joint support and challenge meetings between schools, the school EP and the PEP and Progress Coordinator. This ensures that children in care are discussed on at least a termly basis and the graduated approach is implemented in a timely manner.

The following chart shows the percentage of Halton children in care who have an EHCP and the primary reason.



I have included EAL as although it is not within the SEN Code of Practice is it an additional barrier that our increasing number of UASC face in accessing their educational entitlement.

Work undertaken by the Virtual School:

- We have ensured that despite the challenging situation there has been no drift where applications for an EHCP have needed to be made or whilst the child or young person is



undergoing statutory assessment. This has been facilitated by the PEP Coordinators and by our commissioned EP support.

- The Virtual School has continued to work with our SEN Commissioning and SEN Assessment Teams to ensure that when a new specialist provision is required this is done as promptly as possible, including if the child is placed out of Halton on an emergency. However, this has been a challenge at times due to the impact of the pandemic.
- We have supported social workers and carers to complete their elements of any assessment or annual review documentation to ensure that the EHCP is comprehensive and holistic so better meeting the child's needs.
- We have supported, through Pupil Premium Plus, any child in care who has struggled with returning to school both academically and emotionally.
- Whilst a joint 'hands on' quality assurance process for our out of borough provisions was developed with our SEND Commissioning Service it was initially impacted by COVID restrictions. However, this took place remotely and once appropriate has become face to face again.
- During the national lockdown the Virtual School made regular contact with all our children with SEND and ensured that they were engaging in their learning as identified in their dynamic risk assessment. Their engagement was tracked on a daily basis and any issues were dealt with without delay.

### **Key Priority for 2021-22**

- Develop a SEND dashboard in order to more effectively monitor the outcomes, support and quality of provision.

### **Key Actions 2021-22**

- Continue with the joint school, EPS and Virtual School SEND support and challenge meetings with targeted Halton Primary and all Secondary schools to address early identification of need. This will ensure that schools are assessing needs and under performance early, providing appropriate and timely support and requesting statutory assessment without delay as determined by evidence.
- Resume implementation of an Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) approach within two schools to develop whole school understanding and strategies to meet the SEMH needs of children in care. This has to be suspended previously due to COVID restrictions.
- Resume implementation of a PIVOTAL approach to behaviour management support within 4 schools so that SEMH needs of children are more effectively identified and managed without escalation to exclusion. This had to be suspended previously due to COVID restrictions.
- Further enhance scrutiny of SEND provision and related under performance through the termly Personal Education Plans, including challenging schools to request statutory assessment in a timely manner.
- Continue to provide training to develop understanding and awareness of the additional needs and impact of trauma on the learning of children in care.
- Resume implementation of a robust quality assurance process of all out of borough specialist provision attended by Halton children in care.
- Member of the Virtual School to become a SEN Partnership Panel member.

## How academically successful have our children in care been in 2020-21?

### Attainment and Progress

Whilst the Virtual School scrutinises and monitors the performance of all children in care to Halton, there is only a statutory requirement to nationally report on educational outcomes for those who have been in care for 12 months or more. The data within this section refers only to those children and young people who meet this statutory requirement.

Due to very small cohorts caution is needed in interpreting the educational outcomes for Halton children in care. Although the data may indicate differences between previous years the low numbers make it difficult when making comparisons or looking for generalisations across the cohorts.

Total numbers of children in care for 12 months covering all key stages					
Year	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21
Number	61	69	72	52	73

### What is a good educational outcome?

#### Context:

That a child has been in care for at least 12 months, living in a stable placement, with at least 95% attendance at a Good or better school, with no fixed term exclusions, and making at least expected progress from their starting point.

#### At Early Years Foundation Stage:

- A child has achieved the measure of Good Level of Development (GLD)

#### At Year 1 Phonics:

- A child has achieved the threshold of 32 or more in the Phonics test

#### At Key Stage 1:

- A child has achieved the Expected Standard in each subject area (Reading, Writing, and Maths) and in the 3 combined areas (RWM).

#### At Key Stage 2:

- A child has achieved the Expected Standard in each subject area (Reading, Writing, and Maths) and in the 3 combined areas (RWM). In addition the child had made at least their expected progress in Reading, Writing and Maths, from their educational starting point at Key Stage 1 (this indicated by a positive number).

## At Key Stage 4:

- A young person has achieved English and Maths at grade 5 or above and that they have achieved highly on Attainment 8 and have a positive Progress 8 score.

## Attendance and Exclusions:

- A child or young person's attendance has been above 90% for the academic year (the Persistent Absence benchmark). However, Halton Virtual School have set an attendance target of above 95% for the academic year as an internal measure of success.
- In addition they have had no fixed term exclusions or been permanently excluded from school.

## EET:

- A young person should be actively engaged in Education, Employment or Training (EET) from the age of leaving school until at least 19 years old.

## **Educational performance across the Key Stages for children in care for 12 months or more in 2020-21**

Due to the impact of the pandemic the Government decided not to hold the end of Key Stages tests in Primary schools and not to award any teacher assessments either. Therefore, there has been no requirement for schools to provide data for Early Years Foundation Stage Good Level of Development, Y1 or Y2 Phonics, end of Key Stage 1 or end of Key Stage 2. This means that no formal assessment data can be compared with previous years.

The Government did decide that results would be provided for those pupils who should have taken GCSEs at the end of Year 11. Schools could decide how to collect evidence of attainment and then collate these into an overall teacher assessment. In Halton this was done via a blend of portfolio work and in-school assessments.

The Virtual School liaised closely with all secondary schools to ensure that the teacher assessments provided took into account, where possible and appropriate, the extenuating circumstances that some of our young people had been facing throughout the academic year.

## Key Stage 4

There were 17 young people in the cohort who had been in care for 12 months or more:

- 9 of whom were male.
- 9 were educated in Halton schools.
- 10 schools attended by Halton young people in care in Y11 were rated as Good or better by Ofsted.
- 41% had an EHCP, 29% were educated in non-mainstream provision.
- 53% were placed in residential provision, 53% lived out of borough, and 6% were placed with parents.
- In Year 11, 53% had attendance below 95%, with all but 1 young person in this group having attendance below 90% as well.
- Across Key Stage 4, 5 young people had attendance below 95% both years and of this group, 4 young people had attendance below 90% for both years.

- 1 young person was unable to access full time provision based on a psychology assessment, 1 young person could not access education based on a Court risk assessment, 2 young people had periods of time in secure and the remaining young people had unauthorised absences.
- 17.5% had periods of fixed term exclusions during Key Stage 4, however, all exclusions were below 5 days.
- 1 young person accessed alternative provision and 3 young people had periods on a reduced timetable to re-engage them in their education.
- 4 young people had a school move during KS4, 2 young people as a result of moving into secure and 2 young people following a move out of borough.

Due to the way the GCSE grades were awarded this year there cannot be a like for like comparison with previous years. However, performance does show that young people did achieve in line with their PEP predictions.

2020-21	E4+	E5+	M4+	M5+	EM4+	EM5+	SC4+	SC5+	5GCSEs EM4+	5GCSEs EM4+	5GCSEs 4+	5GCSEs 5+
% CIC achieving	35	23.5	18	6	18	6	23.5	0	18	0	18	0

### Summary

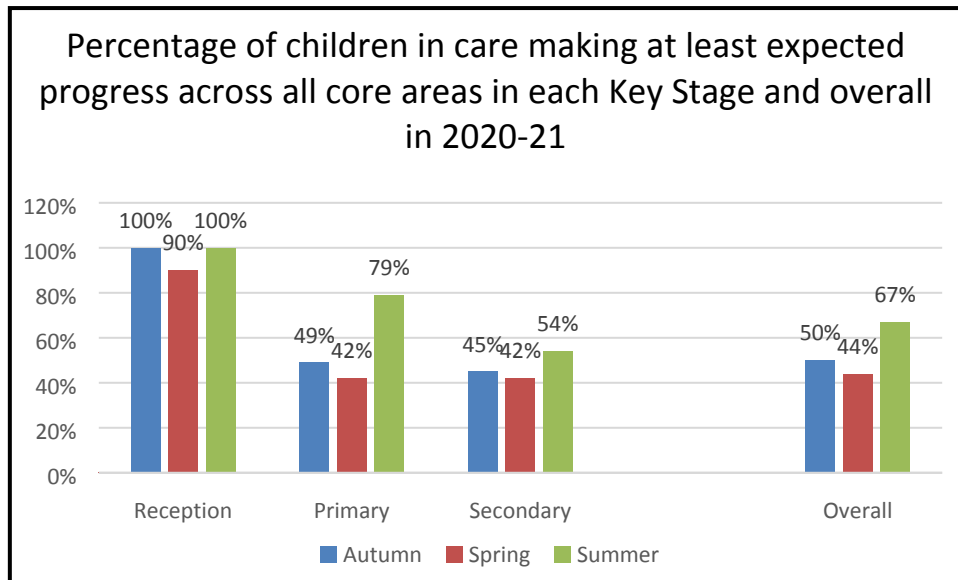
Attainment	n	Improvements were made in both single English and Maths at all levels. Performance on the combined measure at Grade 5+ also improved. However, there are still no young people in care in Halton achieving 5 GCSEs including the combined English and maths at grade 5. This is a priority focus for the next academic year.
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### What the Virtual School has done and its impact:

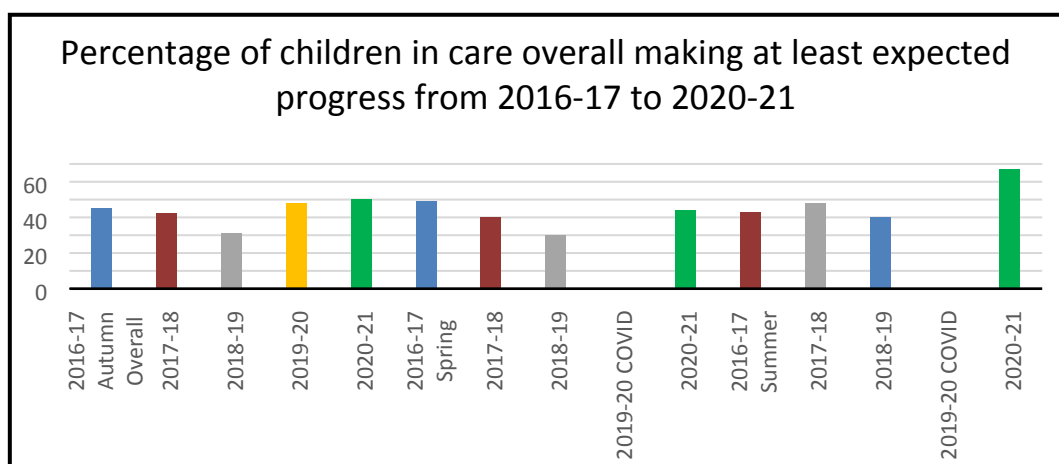
- Scrutinised the appropriateness of the targets within each PEP and ensured that the Pupil Premium Plus funding had impact.
- The Secondary PEP and Progress Coordinator held termly challenge and support visits with schools to discuss individual young people’s progress and the impact of Pupil Premium Plus interventions. This ensured that the interventions were targeted at the areas of development identified through their outcomes.
- Progress Improvement Clinics were chaired by the Director of Children’s and Adults Services with the aim of removing any barriers to Key Stage 4 young people making the maximum progress they can.
- Provided one-to-one tuition on core subjects when identified as an area of development in the PEP.
- Maintained contact with the young people and their carers to ensure that all resources and support were made available as required.
- Provided appropriate IT equipment to enable the young people to continue to access learning remotely.
- Worked closely with Secondary Designated Teachers to ensure that the young people had the opportunity to complete their work portfolios and assessments prior to the Teacher Assessed grades being awarded.

Progress of other children in care:

Halton Virtual School monitor the progress of all children in care on a termly basis using data provided by schools through the PEP and the termly data collection. As can be seen from the chart below despite the disruption to learning experienced through the Spring term children and young people did continue to make at least expected progress.



Whilst the data in the chart below is cohort specific it does demonstrate that the support provided by schools and Halton Virtual School has ensured that our children and young people have continued to make expected progress at similar rates to previous academic years. This is important in mitigating against the impact of the disruption they have experienced in the last 2 academic years. However, we still need to continue to prioritise all support required to ensure that our children in care do recover any lost learning and continue to close the gap on their non-care experienced peers. This is being done through close scrutiny of the PEPs, termly attainment data and also access to catch up support and Recovery Premium.



Other work undertaken by the Virtual School to promote continued engagement with learning:

- Virtual School have been working with carers and schools to ensure that children and young people in care have been able to access learning online during the COVID restrictions.
- Monitored on a daily basis engagement in remote learning during the national lockdown.

- The Virtual School worked to ensure that as many children and young people in care as possible were provided with a DfE laptop and router as required. Along with the IT equipment that the Virtual School have already provided this now means that only a very small number of children who have complex needs do not have IT access – the Virtual School are looking into purchasing the correct equipment for these children so that they do not miss out.

**Key Priorities 2021-22:**

- Ensure that all Halton children in care continue to access their educational entitlement
- Close the progress and attainment gap between Halton Children in Care and their non-care experienced peers, with a particular focus on Key Stage 4.

Key actions for 2021-22:

- Provide support for those young people who will need to re-sit their English and Maths GCSEs
- Strengthen transition support from the end of the secondary phase to post 16 to ensure that all appropriate support is put in place to maintain post 16 engagement.
- Strengthen our Key Stage 3 and 4 Activity Programme and look to enhance skill development as well as curriculum knowledge and understanding.
- Undertake question level analysis with our Primary and Secondary schools to ensure that our children and young people are ready and prepared for the examinations.
- Work with our Secondary schools to conduct ‘deep dives’ to gain a greater understanding of why our KS4 pupils are not achieving the higher grades.

Progress	≈	Data shows that children in care have continued to make progress in spite of the disruption to learning. However there is still some who are not making the progress they should.
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**Attendance and Exclusions**

**NOTE: The data presented in this section covers all children in care through the academic year of 2020-21 up until 23<sup>rd</sup> March when formal education was suspended due to COVID regulations. Attendance was still monitored after this point but was subject to individual risk assessments.**

Regular school attendance is a key part of giving any child the best possible start in life. However, it is highly likely that a child who comes into care has already missed some time in school, and for some this is a considerable amount. Therefore, it is vital that children in care are supported to attend regularly to mitigate against the impact of previously lost learning. Government research has shown that:

- 14 days absence across Years 3 – 6 (Key Stage 2) makes it less likely for a child to achieve the expected standards in their subjects. (This equates to 84 lessons missed)
- 7 days absence across Years 10 and 11 (Key Stage 4) reduces the prospects of the young person achieving 5 GCSEs at Level 5 or above. (This equates to 42 lessons missed)

Attendance during one school year	Equivalent days	Equivalent sessions	Equivalent weeks	Equivalent lessons missed
95%	9 days	18 sessions	2 weeks	54 lessons
90%	19 days	38 sessions	4 weeks	114 lessons

85%	29 days	58 sessions	6 weeks	174 lessons
80%	38 days	72 sessions	8 weeks	228 lessons
75%	48 days	96 sessions	10 weeks	288 lessons
70%	57 days	114 sessions	11.5 weeks	342 lessons
65%	67 days	134 sessions	13.5 weeks	402 lessons

Halton Virtual School commission a company called 'Welfare Call' to monitor the attendance and exclusions of all Halton children in care regardless of where they are educated. This is done by daily contact with all schools and alternative providers to ensure that attendance is tracked and recorded appropriately and to comply with safeguarding procedures.

Whilst the DfE have determined below 90% attendance to constitute persistent absence, Halton Virtual School monitor both below 90% and 95% attendance, with the latter aspiration target being the benchmark for analysis.

#### **Attendance 2020-21:**

Given the COVID restrictions and the national lockdown during the Spring term it has been a difficult year for school attendance. However, the Virtual School has ensured that each child in care had a dynamic multi-agency risk assessment which enabled them to continue to access their education in the best way possible for them.

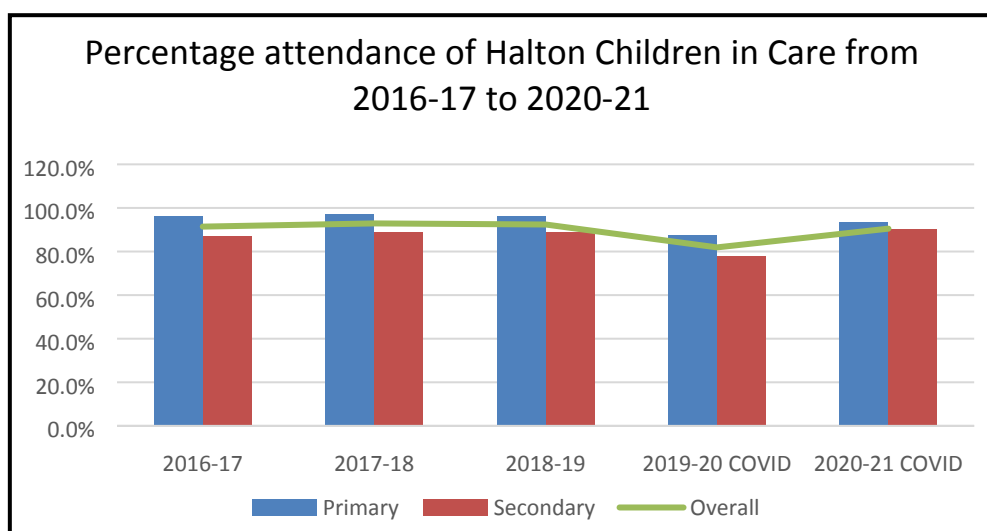
The Virtual School maintained Welfare Call monitoring attendance processes throughout the year, but developed a bespoke approach during the lockdown period until schools reopened for the summer term. This approach was developed as a result of the high transmission rates within Halton as an additional measure of safeguarding our children and young people in care. This included constantly reviewing the dynamic multi-agency risk assessment for each child and through that process deciding if the child should access remote learning at home rather than attend school. If this decision was made then engagement with remote learning data was gathered from the schools on a daily basis with a baseline of 95% engagement being set to warrant an attendance mark for that day – this was done to allow for any technical difficulties and also in recognition that some schools provided both remote teaching and off line resources to be completed. The Virtual School team also contacted both carers and young people to ensure they had everything they needed to complete their remote learning and to address any issues of non-engagement with a view to the child returning to school. Therefore for the period of the national lockdown the attendance for each child was calculated based not only on being in the classroom but also engagement with remote learning above 95%.

#### Attendance of all children in care 2020-21

Average % attendance	Primary	Secondary	Overall
Autumn	96.5%	90.1%	93.3%
Spring	96.4%	83.5%	90%
Summer	96.5%	84.5%	90.5%

Attendance of all children in care over the past 5 years (COVID impact in 2019-20 and 202-21):

	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20 COVID	2020-21 COVID
Primary	96.0%	97.1%	96.2%	87.5%	93.3%
Secondary	86.9%	88.7%	88.6%	77.9%	90%
Overall	91.4%	92.9%	92.4%	81.9%	90.5%



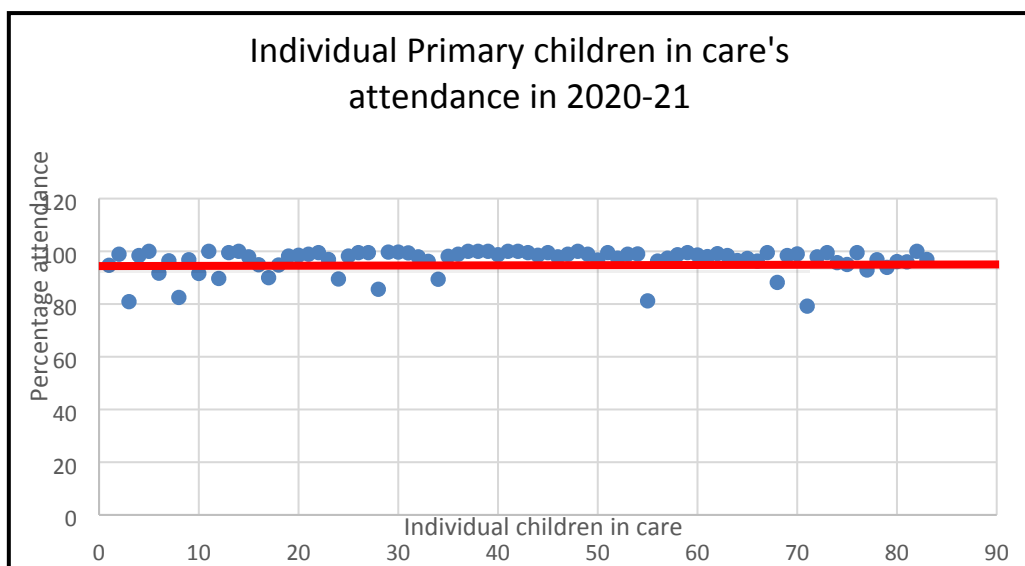
As can be seen, in spite of the pandemic the attendance of Halton children in care has remained positive with only a relatively low drop overall.

During 2020-21:

19 Primary children had attendance below 95% - of this cohort;

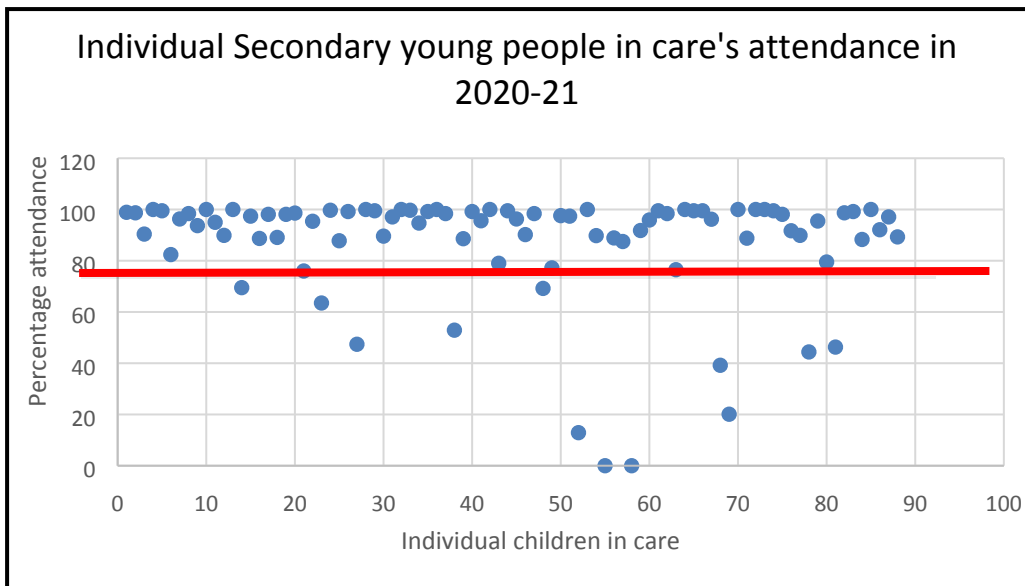
- 10 children live with parents/family members and 2 live in residential accommodation
- 5 came into care during the academic year
- The main reasons for absence were illness (60 days lost learning) and authorised absences (62 days lost learning)
- 9 children had unauthorised absences (30 days lost learning).
- 2 children had time not on roll of a school, 1 child was 2 days late starting Reception and 1 because of an emergency placement move (which occurred in the national lockdown) and requiring specialist education provision (39 days not on roll).
- 2 children had a holiday in term time (5 days lost learning each)
- 2 children also received fixed term exclusions (5 days lost learning)
- 2 children had emergency placement moves out of borough
- 1 child has profound health issues.





51 secondary pupils had attendance below 95% - of this cohort:

- 11 young people live with parents/family and 26 are placed in residential settings
- 11 young people came into care during the academic year.
- 6 are UASC – all these young people had a delay in their age assessments and extremely low levels of English so making it challenging to find education provision.
- The main reasons for absence were unauthorised (678 days lost learning), illness (178 days lost learning) and authorised absences (172 days lost learning)
- 30 young people had unauthorised absences. 17 of these live in residential accommodation, 9 are with family, 3 were new into care and 5 had missing from care episodes.
- 28 young people had authorised absences. 2 were new into care, 19 live in residential accommodation and 5 are living with family.
- 14 young people had periods of not being on roll, of these 3 had multiple times within secure accommodation, 2 had mental health issues meaning that they were not able to access education at that time, 2 had emergency placement moves and required specialist education provision once they had moved, 1 could not access education due to Court restrictions, and 6 were UASC.
- 10 young people had periods of reduced timetables, 4 young people required this to stabilise their education placements due to high risk of exclusion, 3 due to mental health issues, 1 because of profound health issues and 2 following discharge from secure accommodation.
- 4 young people had exclusions (17.5 days lost learning)
- 8 girls experienced mental health issues through the year which impacted upon their access to education.
- 4 young people had periods of time in secure accommodation



In order to ensure that attendance marks were not impacted by COVID measures the DfE introduced the use of an X code which covered periods when bubbles were collapsed and for self-isolation. Whilst the children and young people were able to access remote learning they were not in the classroom. As the table below shows this situation arose for some young people multiple times over the academic year causing disruption to their learning.

Primary X codes	Aut	Spr	Sum
Days	450	34.5	99
# CIC	56	11	20
% cohort	56%	10.8%	20.4
# CIC 1 time	41	11	37
# CIC 2 times	12	0	16
# CIC 3 times	3	0	2

Secondary X codes	Aut	Spr	Sum
Days	617.5	69.5	129
# CIC	69	12	27
% cohort	69.7%	11.2%	24.5%
# CIC 1 time	40	10	20
# CIC 2 times	17	2	6
# CIC 3 times	10	0	2
# CIC 4 times	2	0	0

Attendance	<span style="color: green;">✔</span>	Data shows that attendance for both passes has stayed above the persistent absence rate of 90% despite the challenges of the pandemic and has broadly stayed in line with pre-pandemic rates.
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**Exclusions**

There have been no permanent exclusions of a child in care since the Headteacher of the Virtual School has been in post.

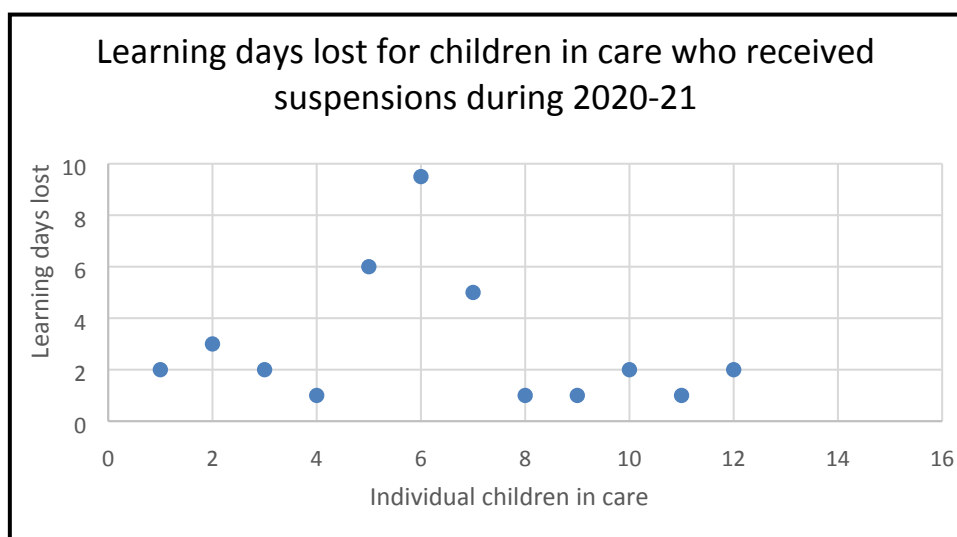
Use of exclusions was re-instated from September following the Government’s decision to suspend their use during the previous academic year.

Work was done with all schools attended by our children and young people in care to remind them of the additional anxieties and challenges that our cohort often face. These issues could be exacerbated due to the anxiety of returning to a more open society and a relaxing of rules within schools.

Percentage of children in care receiving 1 or more fixed term exclusions in 2020-21:

	Autumn	Spring	Summer
Primary	1	1	1
Secondary	6.1	0.9	5
Overall	3.5	1	2.9

As can be seen from the graph below this has resulted in a low number of children in care receiving an exclusion during this academic year and a reduction in the number of days lost learning. In order to mitigate against this individual plans were put in place to reduce the possibility of repeated exclusions. All 3 Primary pupils only had 1 period of exclusion and of the 9 Secondary pupils only 2 had more than 1 exclusion.



Analysis of exclusions 2020-21:

3 Primary children had 1 or more periods of fixed term exclusions

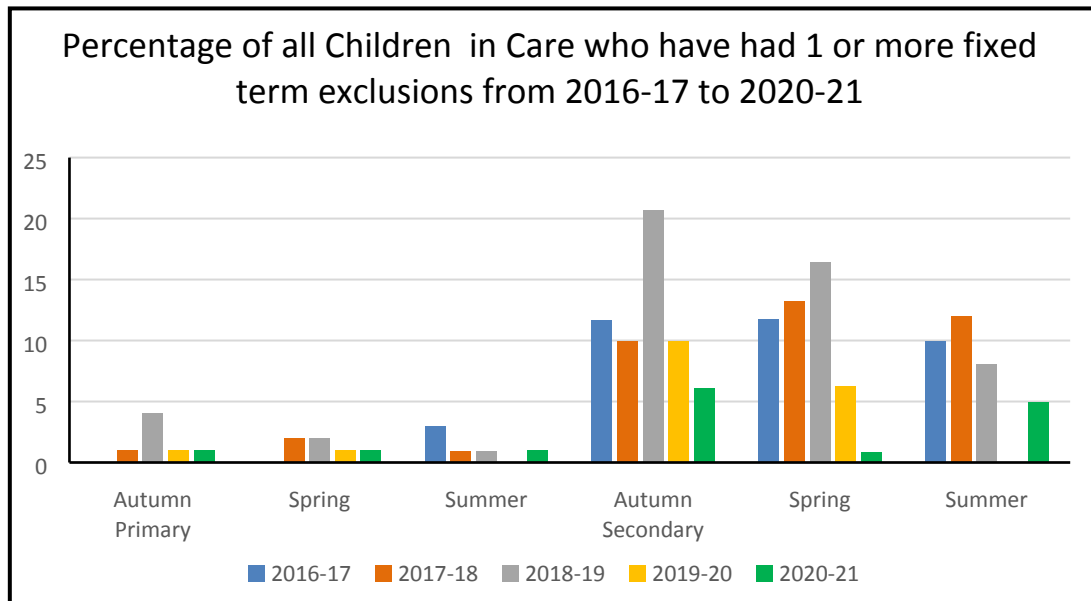
- 2 were educated out of borough
- 1 was in residential provision and 1 placed with family
- 1 had an EHCP, was in specialist SEMH provision and had an emergency placement move out of borough (Number 2 on the chart above)
- Total days lost learning for Primary children was 7 days

9 Secondary pupils had 1 or more periods of fixed term exclusions:

- 3 young people attend out of borough schools and 6 attend Halton schools.
- 2 have an EHCP
- 3 attend specialist provision or a PRU
- 4 live in residential provision and 2 are placed with family
- There are 6 girls, 4 of whom were in Y9 and Y10

- 2 young people had 3 periods of exclusion (Numbers 5 and 6 on the chart above)
- Total days lost learning for Secondary young people was 9.5 days

As can be seen from the chart below although the last 2 academic years children have had disruption to their access to school, there has still be a positive decrease in the number of children in care experiencing fixed term exclusions and particularly repeated exclusions. This has been as a result of the work by Halton Virtual School in raising awareness of the impact of trauma and neglect on children’s behaviours leading to more inclusive practice and the positive support provided through the individual child needs led model of Pupil Premium Plus.



Exclusions	✔	Exclusion rates have remained low across both phases and overall.
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What the Virtual School has done and its impact:

- Provided support and advice to schools who were experiencing difficulties managing challenging behaviour.
- Provided tailored packages of support to high risk pupils
- Provided attendance support through Pupil Premium Plus
- Commissioned specialist assessments to support schools to meet the needs of complex children
- Supported schools to undertake the graduated approach in relation to SEMH needs.
- Supported schools in applying for and securing an EHCP when appropriate.
- Provided ongoing advice to increase awareness and improve practice in meeting the needs of children with attachment difficulties

**Key Priorities for attendance and exclusions 2021-22:**

- Continue to improve the number of secondary age young people in care having attendance above 95%
- Continue to reduce the number of children in care receiving one or more fixed term exclusion, and the length and frequency
- To enable our UASC to access education as soon as possible.

## Key actions 2020-21:

- Continue to work with the Education Welfare Officer (EWO) to provide early alerts of any child who has had more than 3 days absence and those whose attendance is falling below 95%. The EWO will provide advice and guidance to carers around proactive support for attendance and also liaise with a school link EWO to ensure that issues related to school are addressed.
- Resume our work on developing 'Adverse Childhood Experiences Aware' (ACEs) schools which will focus on increasing awareness of the impact of ACEs and toxic stress and the impact they have on a child's resilience and ability to learn.
- Resume our work with the Behaviour Support Service to implement the PIVOTAL Approach to managing behaviour within 4 pilot schools.
- Work with our secondary schools to develop more bespoke and proactive support for children in care who are presenting with behaviour issues, particularly girls who are experiencing emotional and anxiety related issues.
- Develop a bespoke and proactive support package for UASC so enabling them to access full time education provision in a more timely manner.

## Accessing Alternative provision

The Bridge School (Halton's PRU) provide an Engagement Programme for Y10 and Y11 young people who require access to alternative provision. This alternative provision is quality assured by The Bridge School.

If a school purchases alternative provision placements for young people with providers who are not part of The Bridge School Engagement Programme, then it is the school's responsibility to quality assure the provision.

Agreement must be gained from the Headteacher of the Virtual School prior to a young person in care being placed on alternative provision. This is to ensure that the provision will meet the educational needs of the young person and their long term aspirations. Scrutiny of the outcomes of these young people is undertaken through the termly Personal Education Plan.

Any alternative provision that is not through the Engagement Programme is quality assured by the Secondary PEP and Progress Coordinator. If the provision is via the Engagement Programme the Secondary PEP and Progress Coordinator liaises with The Bridge School to ascertain quality assurance outcomes.

### Access to alternative provision 2020-21:

Due to the ongoing COVID restrictions access to Alternative Provision during the academic year was limited. However, 4 young people did access alternative provision at some point, with 1 young person accessing across all 3 terms, the remaining young people only accessed alternative provision for 1 term. 3 of the young people were accessing their alternative provision to enhance their skills and for post 16 progression, with the final young person having access as a result of a permanent exclusion prior to coming into care.

## **Post 16 Access to Education, Employment and Training**

The Virtual School provide support and guidance for all young people in care or care leavers up to the age of 25 around access to Education, Employment and Training (EET), and provide advice and guidance for their social workers or PAs as appropriate.

Halton's ILACS inspection in March 2020 highlighted that the Virtual School required more capacity to further develop its good work, in particular around support for our Post 16 cohort. As a result of this we have created 2 new roles, a Post 16 PEP Coordinator and also a KS4 and Post 16 Employability Officer. The purpose of these 2 roles is to improve the engagement of Post 16 young people in care and care leavers in EET and to also ensure that they have access to direct support to explore a range of EET options and achieve good post 16 outcomes. The Post 16 PEP Coordinator focuses on those in FE and moving to HE, ensuring that PEPs are high quality and the young people have all the support they require to achieve their educational outcomes. The KS4 and Post 16 Employability Officer focuses on those who may require more bespoke guidance on choosing a Post 16 career path, including developing and improving our apprenticeship support or moving into employment when age appropriate. The KS4 and Post 16 Employability Officer also undertakes direct work with young people who are or at risk of becoming NEET (Not Engaged in Education, Employment and Training) and this has been extended from previous years to now include young people up to the age of 22 years (which was an area for improvement from the last inspection).

Planned transition meetings during the Spring and Summer terms take place between the Secondary PEP and Progress Coordinator and both the Post 16 officers for early identification of those leaving school who may become NEET, or who are unclear about their chosen career path.

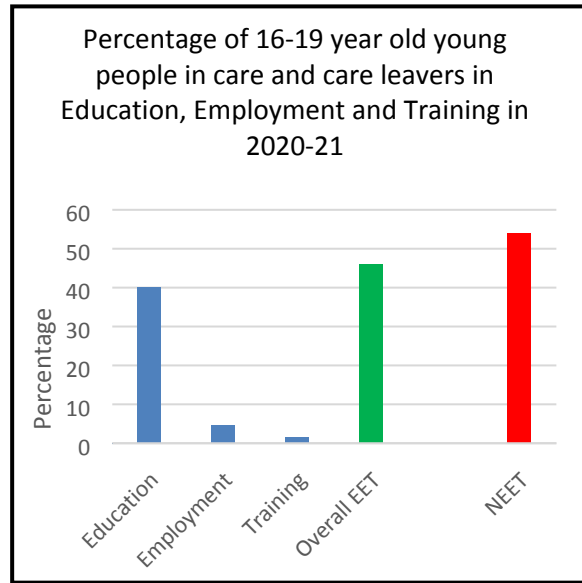
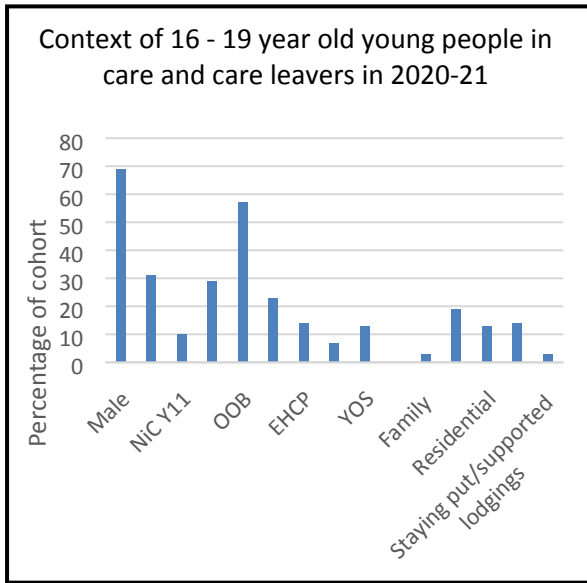
Monthly tracking is undertaken by the Post 16 PEP Coordinator to ensure that there are early alerts for young people who are at risk of becoming NEET as well as those currently NEET. The direct work to re-engage this group, undertaken by the KS4 and Post 16 Employability Officer, is to ensure that the views of the young person are heard and that any barriers are addressed when formulating a plan for re-engagement. Both Post 16 Officers work with young people regardless of where they live or are educated, and they also liaise with the 14-19 team if the young person is resident in Halton and their equivalents out of area, other agencies, providers, social workers and PAs.

Creating the right apprenticeship opportunities and support structure remains a struggle for us in the current financial and political climate. However, the KS4 and Post 16 Employability Officer is working closely with the Apprenticeship Hub to ensure that children in care and care leavers have access to high quality information regarding apprenticeships and also support to enable them to apply if they want to. In addition to this we are working with other parts of the Council to develop a Care Leaver Apprenticeship Strategy to broaden the support our young people can access but also increase their range of opportunities.

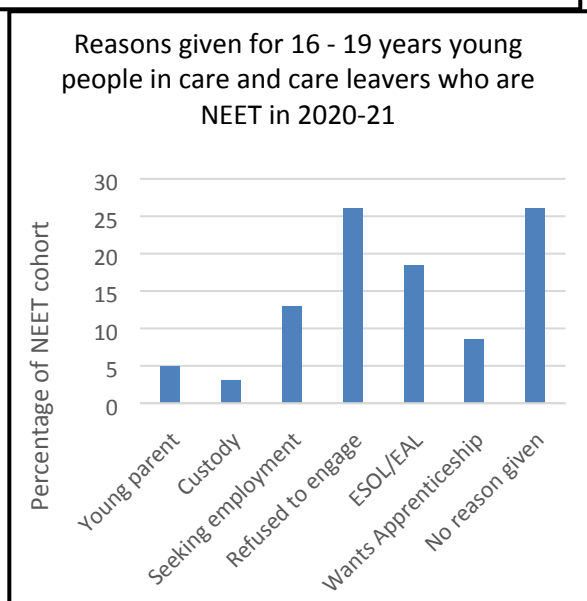
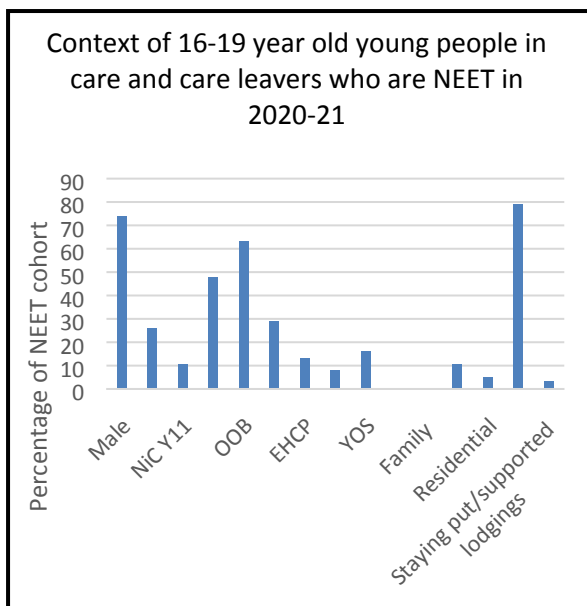
As a result of COVID restrictions, Post 16 learners have experienced a lot of disruption not only to their college courses, but also to apprenticeship and traineeships opportunities. Employment opportunities have also been impacted due to the uncertain economic climate.

Outcomes for our 16-19 year old young people in care:

The overall cohort is 70 young people of which 46% are EET



There are 38 young people who are NEET

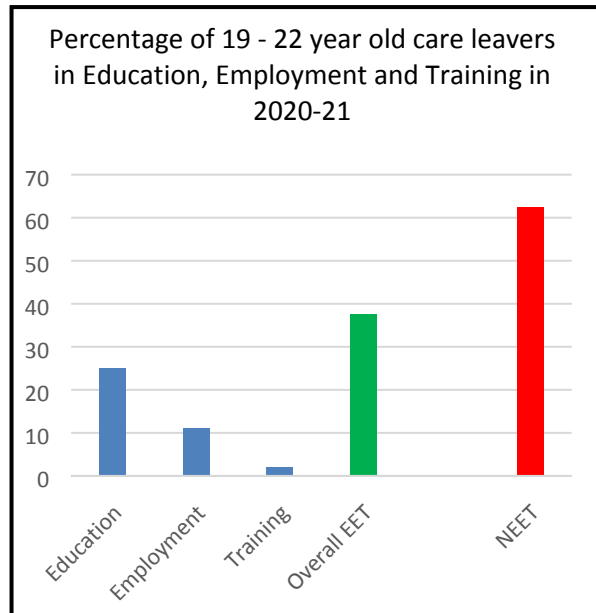
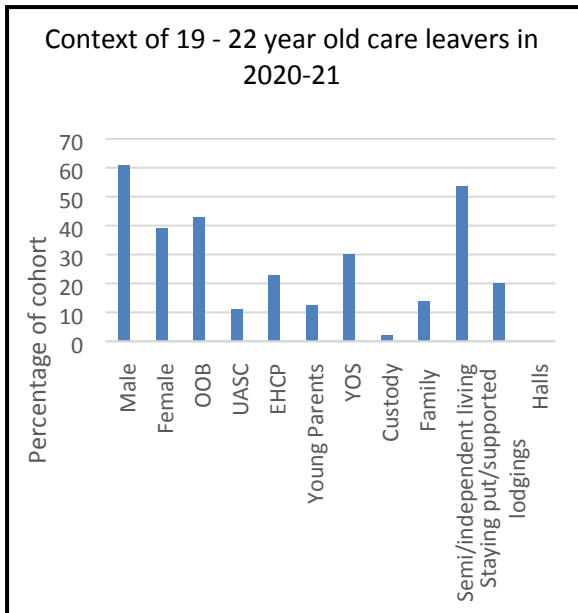


The chart above gives the main reasons for being NEET. Of those who refused to engage in EET activities, 5 lived outside of Halton. There has been a sharp increase in the number of UASC who have very limited English and would therefore struggle accessing mainstream FE. For each of these young people they have an ESOL support package in place with a view to then enrolling them at college once their career aspirations are more fully understood.

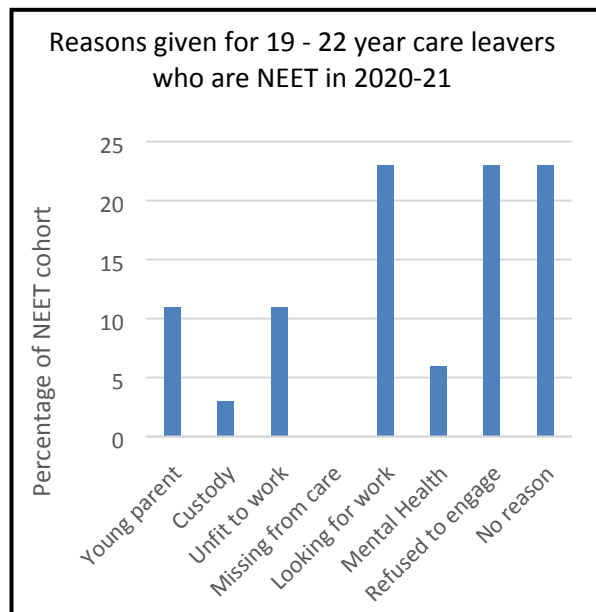
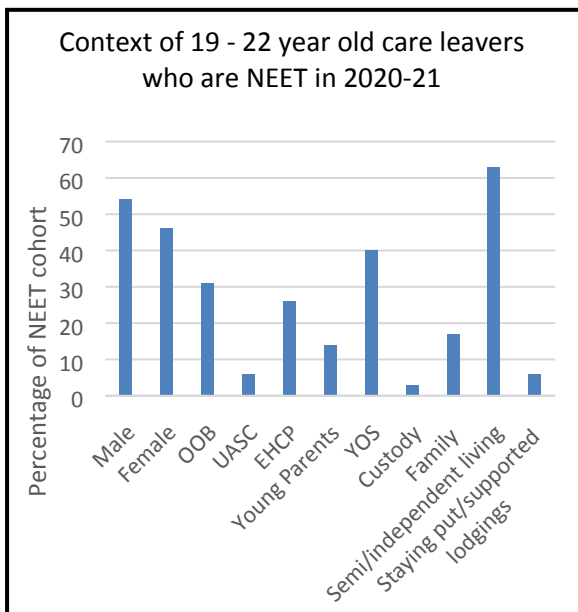
Outcomes for our 19 - 22 year old care leavers:

The overall cohort is 56 young people of which 37.5% are EET





There are 35 young people in this cohort who are NEET:



Of our overall Post 16 cohort 2 young people are accessing higher education courses and 1 young person has joined the Navy. Unfortunately we currently do not have any young people on an apprenticeship, as the COVID restrictions have impacted upon this area of opportunity.

What the Virtual School has done and its impact:

- Created 2 new roles within the Virtual School to have a greater focus on post 16.
- A dedicated member of the team now has a direct work case load of young people who are at risk of becoming NEET.
- Strengthened transition support from the end of the secondary phase to post 16 to ensure that all appropriate support is put in place to maintain post 16 engagement.

- Reviewed approaches used by other local authorities and is working towards implementing an improved model of support for care leavers, with a particular focus on increasing access to apprenticeships.

### **Key Priorities for 2021-22:**

- To improve the percentage of Post 16 young people in care and care leavers 16 – 22 years who are in EET.
- Embed the direct working approach for 16 – 22 year olds to continue to improve engagement in Education, Employment and Training with a particular focus on ensuring that they are accessing their chosen career pathway.
- Improve support for those young people who wish to undertake an apprenticeship.

### Key actions for 2020-21:

- Ensure all young people in care and care leavers receive an appropriate offer of learning and progress onto a suitable and sustained learning programme of employment.
- Improve the number of apprenticeship opportunities for care leavers
- Establish the Care Leaver Apprenticeship Strategy to focus on removing barriers to care leavers accessing support and employment opportunities both within the Council and the broader community.
- Re-establish the work with colleagues in Adult Social Care to establish a graduated programme from work experience to possible apprenticeships within the local care home sector – this was suspended due to COVID restrictions.
- Develop closer links with the Chamber of Commerce and Halton Employment Partnership, with a view to increasing apprenticeship possibilities.
- Work with colleagues who are looking at Supported Internships to ensure that appropriate care leavers are prioritised for opportunities within the programme.

## Personal Education Plans

The statutory guidance 'Promoting the education of looked after and previously looked after children' (February 2018) places a duty on Local Authorities to maintain a Personal Education Plan

(PEP) for every child in care in an educational setting up to the end of the school year that s/he turns 18 (Year 13). On coming into care a PEP must be initiated and completed no later than 20 working days so that it can inform the first statutory review (28 days) and then be reviewed termly from that point on.

For a PEP to be high quality and effective, the guidance states that it should be:

A 'living', evolving, comprehensive and enduring record of the child's experience, progress and achievement (academic and otherwise), and inform any discussion about education during statutory reviews of the child's wider care plan' (Para 23 pg 15)

It is a process that should enable each child or young person to make at least expected progress and fulfil their potential. It should reflect the importance of a personalised approach to learning that meets the identified educational needs of the child, raises aspirations and builds life chances.

As the PEP is an integral part of the care plan it is the responsibility of the child's social worker to initiate the first PEP and ensure each PEP is completed from that point onwards. However, the guidance is clear that the quality of the PEP is the joint responsibility of the Local Authority and the school.

The role of the school, via the Designated Teacher, is to ensure that all appropriate educational information is shared, that SMART targets are set to accelerate the progress of the child in their education, that all appropriate support is in place for the child to be successful within their provision, and to demonstrate the impact of any Pupil Premium Plus funding. The Designated Teacher leads on how the PEP is developed and used in school to make sure the child's progress towards education targets is monitored.

The role of the Virtual School is to ensure that there are effective systems in place to ensure social workers, Designated Teachers and schools, carers and IROs understand their role and responsibilities in initiating, developing, reviewing and updating the child's PEP and how they help meet the needs identified in that PEP; ensure that PEPs are up-to-date, effective and high quality and focus on educational outcomes; ensure that all children in care (aged 3 – 18), wherever they are placed, have such a PEP; undertake regular quality assurance of all PEPs.

The Virtual School track on a termly basis the number and quality of PEPs completed. This is then reported to schools and also senior Children's Social Care managers.

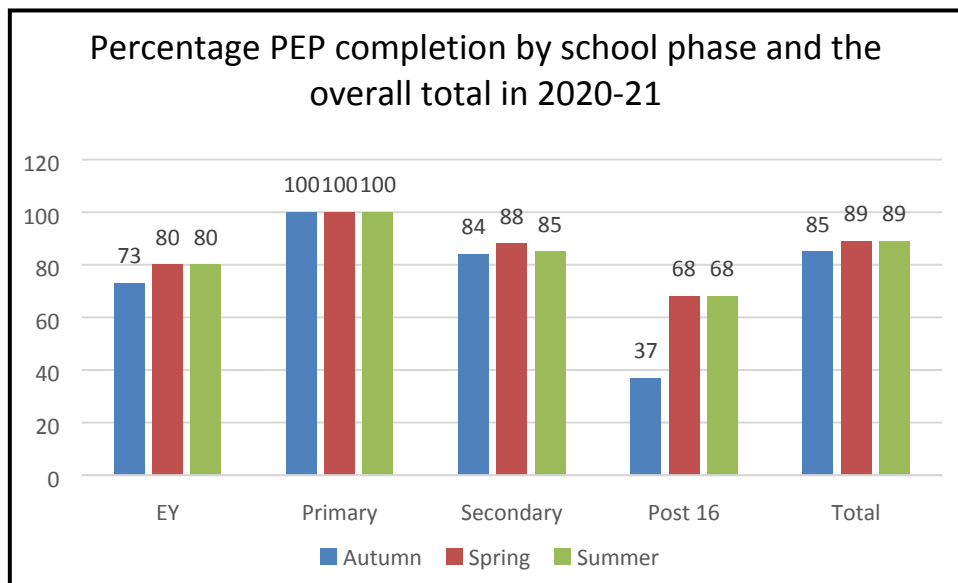
### **PEP Completion**

In alignment with CSC the Virtual School migrated the PEPs from being uploaded on to CareFirst to being completed online via the new Eclipse system. Training was delivered to all designated professionals in all phases of education and social workers. However, the new process created many problems for schools in particular when trying to complete the PEP. Therefore, some of the PEPs had to be uploaded manually on to the system by the PEP and Progress Coordinators which created its own capacity issues and built delay into the process. Following feedback from schools and social workers at the end of the academic year, the Virtual School made the decision to remove the PEPs from Eclipse and commission a new online ePEP from Welfare Call, a company we already use for attendance and assessment data collection. This new ePEP is something that a number of our schools are already familiar with as it is used by a number of other LAs nationally and regionally. The new online PEP will be rolled out in the next academic year 2021-22.

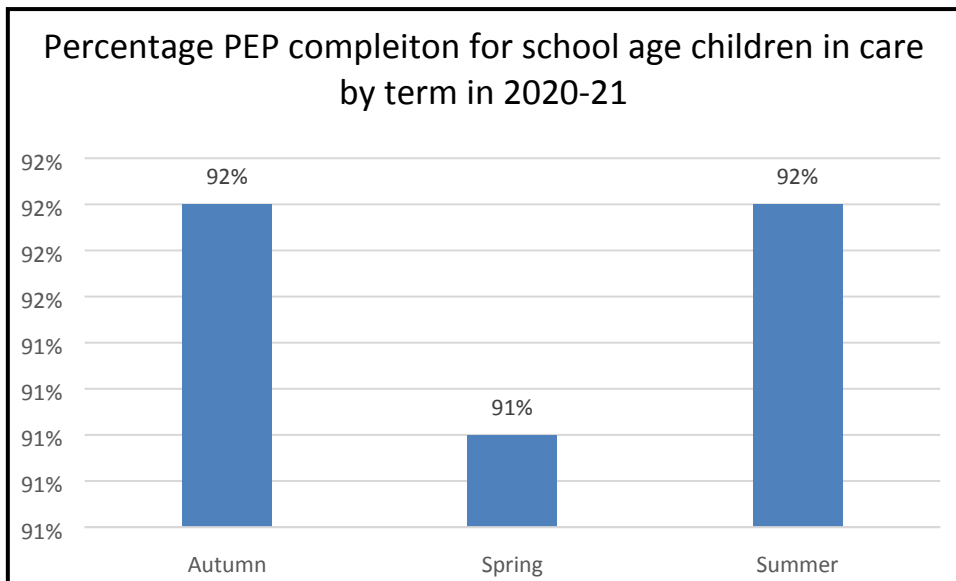
Work undertaken by the Virtual School to ensure statutory compliance with PEP completion and quality assurance:

- PEPs have been used as one of the monitoring mechanisms to ensure that our children in care have accessed their education throughout the pandemic, including the lockdown in the Spring term.
- PEPs have provided a clear mechanism to address any concerns foster carers have had in supporting children and young people with their education at home and in reducing anxieties around children and young people returning to school.
- PEPs have focused on identifying interventions to support transition of young people back into education settings and have allowed schools to plan ahead including providing any extra support required to facilitate reintegration. This has included virtual tours of school prior to a child or young person’s return.

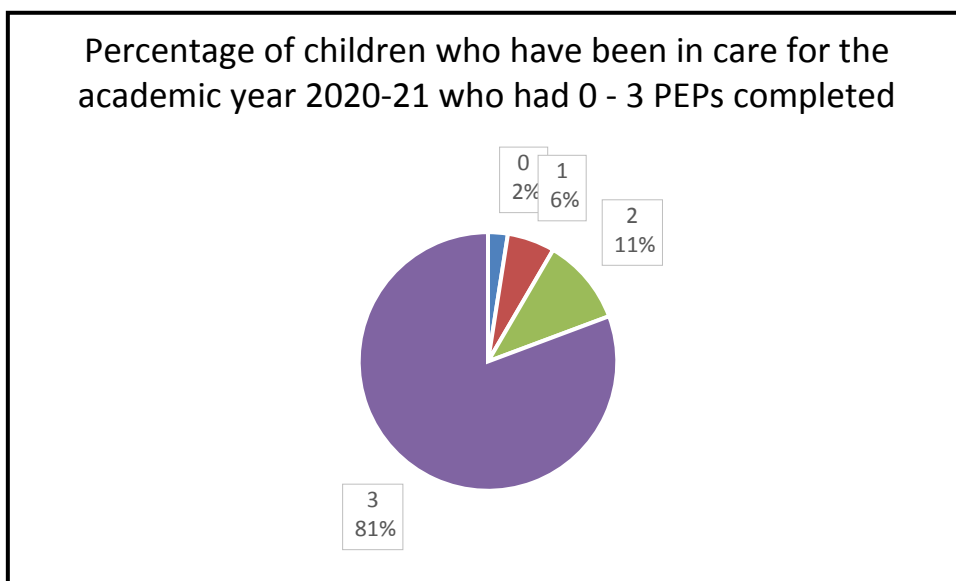
For 2020-21, overall PEP completion for the Autumn term was 85%, this improved in the Spring term to 89% and this rate was sustained in the Summer term. As can be seen by the chart below Primary PEP completion was 100% across all terms. The rates in the other phases were impacted by issues with the Eclipse system as the EY settings had difficulty accessing the system. Within Secondary and Post 16 there are a higher number of out of borough provisions who also struggled with the system. However, there has been positive impact from the additional capacity of the Early Years Education Support Worker and the Post 16 PEP Coordinator, where rates rose once they had been appointed.



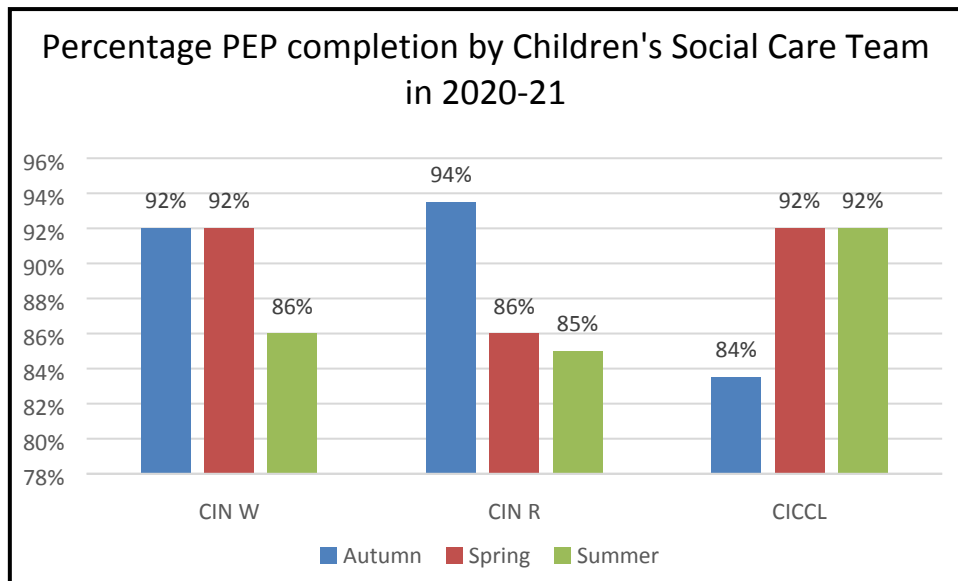
The chart below shows the completion rate for school age children across the full academic year and this demonstrates that despite a slight dip in the Spring term the PEP completion rate has remained consistently high in spite of the challenging circumstances.



The chart below shows the number of PEPs completed for those children and young people who have been in care for the whole of the academic year 2020-21. As can be seen there is a high percentage who have had a PEP each term as per the statutory requirement. There were 5 children who did not have a PEP at all over the year. One child has been placed for adoption out of borough and has not accessed nursery provision as part of his adoption plan. For the remaining 4 young people (2 Secondary and 2 Post 16) PEP meetings actually occurred each term and support was put in place but no paperwork was provided so the PEPs could not be counted as complete. This has been addressed by the relevant PEP Coordinator.

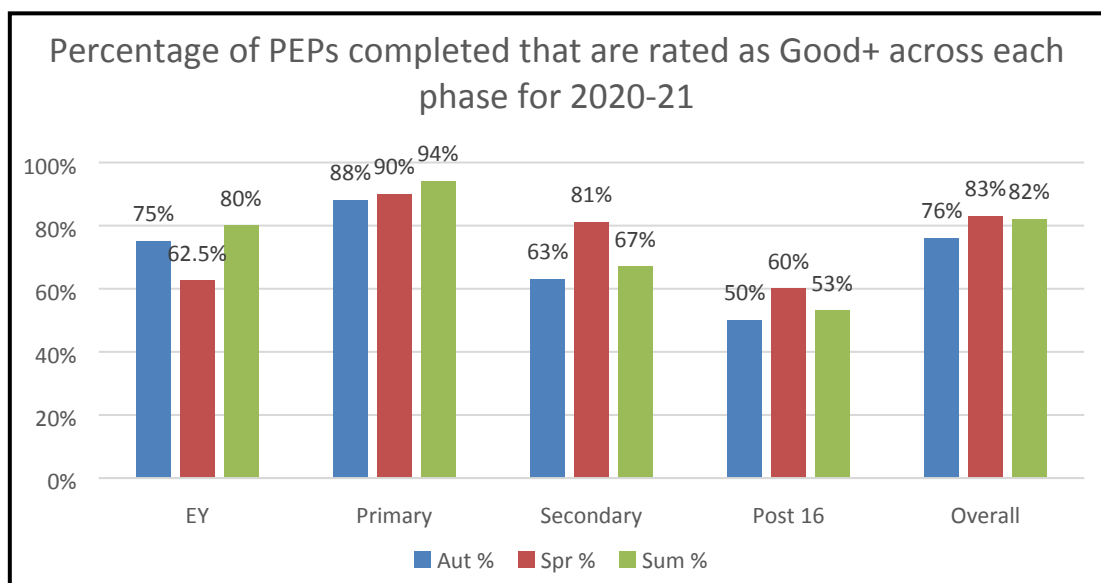


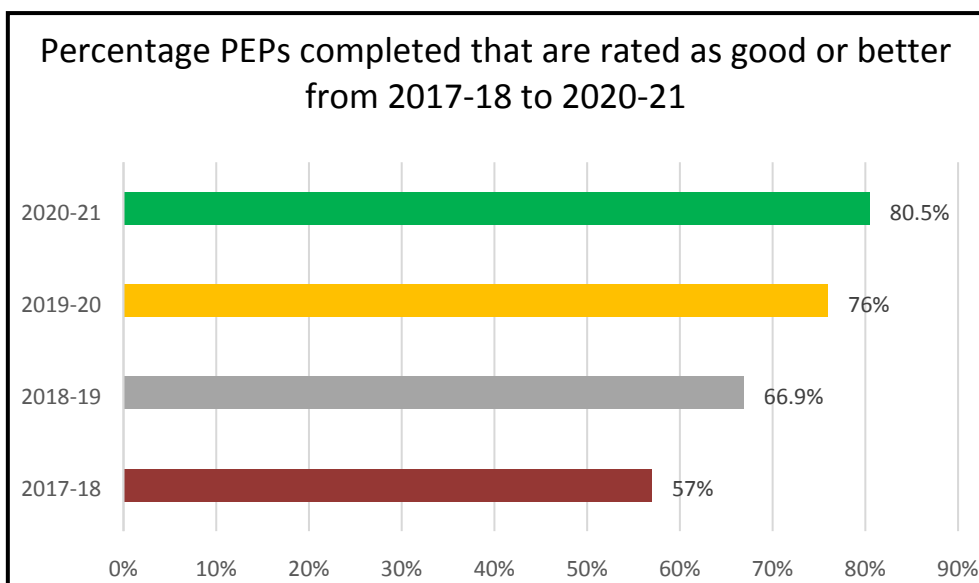
The chart below shows the PEP completion rate by CSC teams. There have been capacity issues within the CIN teams as a result of transmission rates of COVID and also the agreement that workers who had gained positions elsewhere could now move to their new posts resulting in some instability. However, PEP and Progress Coordinators have ensured that new members of staff were fully aware of their roles and responsibilities around PEPs and so the completion rates have remained relatively high.



### Quality Assurance

The Virtual School quality assure every PEP that is completed each term and provide feedback to schools around areas of improvement. Analysis has shown that in Post 16 and Secondary PEPs it is the SMART targets and impact of Pupil Premium Plus sections that continue to need improvement. However, the overall percentage of PEPs that are rated as Good or better is increasing each year.





#### **Key Priority for 2021-22:**

- Improve the quality of Personal Education Plans, including Early Years and Post 16, with a particular focus on target setting, impact measures for Pupil Premium Plus and tracking the curriculum accessed.

#### **Key Actions for 2021-22:**

- To embed the new Welfare Call online ePEP system and address any barriers to completion as they occur.
- To continue to support social workers to improve the completion across all phases. This will be done in collaboration with team and Divisional Managers through their performance clinics.
- To continue to provide support and challenge to schools to improve the quality of all PEPs. This will be done through the termly support and challenge meetings and also through Designated Teacher network meetings.
- Build on the positive feedback to schools by completing quality assurance in 'real time' with targeted schools to drive improvements.
- Develop an accountability framework to address schools that have 'stuck' PEPs.
- Deliver SMART target training across all schools that have PEPs judged as Requiring Improvement or below.
- Further develop capacity within the Virtual School to drive improvements in PEP completion and quality.
- To establish a network of Post 16 providers to offer support and training and also target improving PEP quality. This will be done through the work of the Post 16 PEP Coordinator, social workers and PAs.
- To work directly with Riverside College to ensure that the completion and quality of their Post 16 PEPs improve – this will be done through the work of the Post 16 PEP and Progress Coordinator.
- To review our PEPs to ensure that we are tracking the child's journey through the curriculum to ensure that it is broad and balanced, they are accessing their entitlement and that any learning 'building blocks' that are missing are addressed.
- Halton is leading on a cross LA PEP quality assurance group to ensure that are judgements are sound.

## Pupil Premium Plus

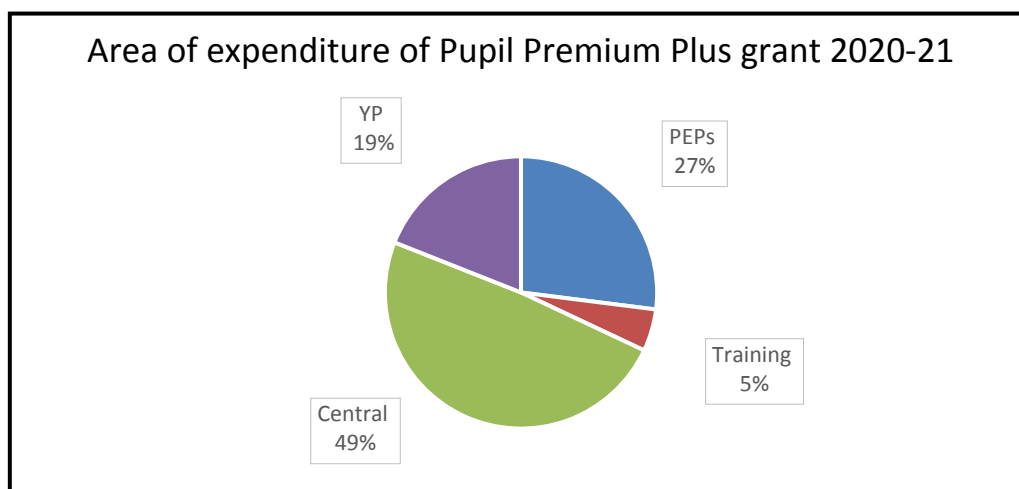
Children and young people who have been in care for 1 day or more and are of statutory school age are entitled to access Pupil Premium Plus funding (PP+). The PP+ allocation of £2300, is made per child for the number of children looked after for at least one day as recorded in the March Children Looked After Data Return (SSDA903) and aged 4 to 15 at 31 August the previous year. The funding runs in line with the financial year (1<sup>st</sup> April – 31<sup>st</sup> March) and not an academic year. The conditions of grant clearly state that the grant allocation must be managed by the Headteacher of the Virtual School and does not go directly to the school the child is attending. The total grant is the number of eligible children multiplied by £2300. This does not mean that every single child has to be allocated the full £2300. The Headteacher can manage the grant in the best interests of individuals or the full cohort. The Virtual School can top slice the PP+ grant and retain this centrally in order to undertake additional activities, projects or to more effectively discharge some of its statutory duties.

Halton have adopted an individual child needs led model for the allocation of PP+. This is in recognition that the needs of each child can vary significantly over time depending on their life experiences and the barriers to learning that they encounter. Each individual child's needs and circumstances are taken into account and the allocation of funding is managed carefully and robustly through the completion of effective, timely and high quality PEPs.

### PP+ expenditure 2020-21:

One of our priorities for this academic year was to undertake a review of the impact of our PP+ expenditure, which was acknowledged in the Ofsted ILACs inspection as a good step towards identifying key areas of impact. However, given the COVID restrictions this was put on hold.

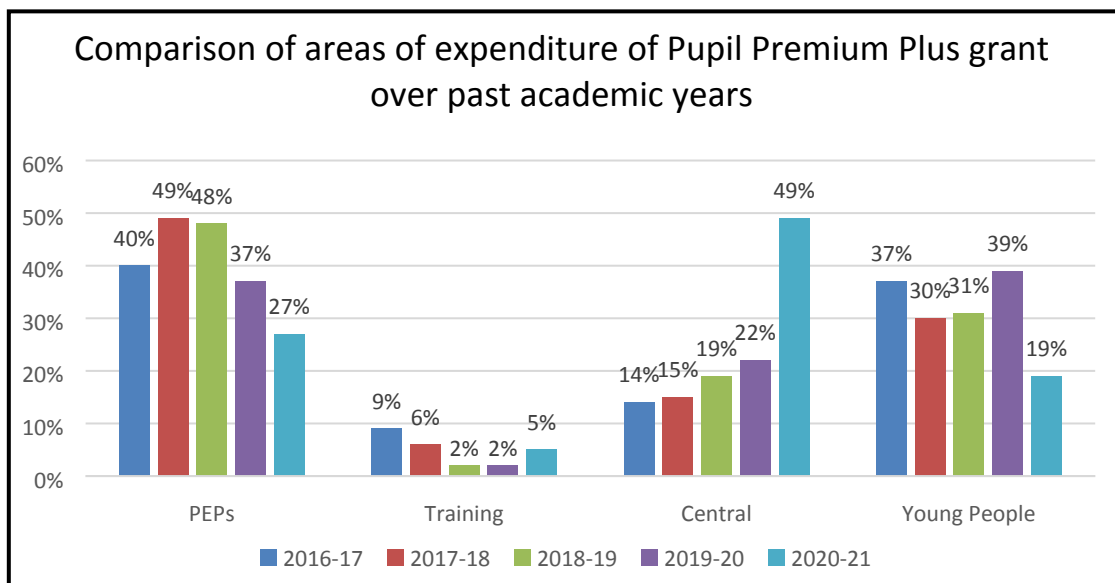
The PP+ grant is awarded on a financial year basis and for 2020-21 the total grant allocated for Halton was £551, 235. The chart below demonstrates that through PEP allocation and other Virtual School support 46% was spent directly on the children and young people to improve their educational outcomes. Whilst PP+ has continued to be made available to schools, the PEP allocation of funding has been impacted as a result of COVID restrictions and interruptions to education.



Training was impacted by COVID restrictions and so is a much lower amount than previous years. The centrally retained portion is for the attendance service the Virtual School commission, for



dedicated Education Psychology time, purchasing of Boxall Profile licences, and for staff within the Virtual School. It is important to note that this central allocation is vital to ensuring that we are able to track the educational outcomes and also provide support for both schools and children in care.



**Key Priority for 2021-22:**

- To undertake a Pupil Premium Plus review to look more closely at the best evidence based impact approaches.
- To develop a system of support for our Post 16 young people

**Key Actions for 2021-22:**

- To continue to scrutinise the use and impact of PP+ funding through the PEPs and the termly support and challenge progress meetings.
- To develop and share a good practice guide with our local schools and across the region through the Designated Teachers network meetings and the regional meetings.
- To review and disseminate the EEF Toolkit for PP+ to all schools to ensure that they are utilising evidence based approaches.
- To deliver training at our annual conference on effective use of PP+
- Work with our Post 16 providers to develop a Post 16 PP+ fund linked to the PEP and aimed at improving educational outcomes and retention.

## Additional work of the Virtual School

### Training and Development

The Virtual School usually offers a comprehensive training programme that is based on feedback from schools and analysis of the educational experiences of our children in care. Any costs incurred are covered through the Pupil Premium Plus grant. However, following feedback from schools and social workers this was suspended for this academic year. In its place, PEP Coordinators offered a more bespoke approach of improving practice through the Support and Challenge Progress meetings, the joint meetings with the school EP and the Designated Teacher and via feedback on the PEPs.

#### Training priorities for 2021-22

- Host an annual conference focused on improving the quality of PEPs, using the new online PEP system and partnership workshops on key areas for development.
- Re-instate the network meetings for each phase.
- Further developing and embedding our trauma informed practice across all settings
- Working with Halton's Education Psychology Service and Behaviour Support Service to further develop our package of training focused on supporting mental health issues, including anxieties as a result of the pandemic.
- Linked in to the need for promoting catch up learning and recovery, work with our Designated Teachers to source and deliver training on our identified areas for improvement – for example, Writing in Primary and Maths across all areas. In addition to this to keep this training programme current using progress analysis from the PEPs.

### Additional learning and literacy support

Halton Virtual School provides a high level of 'outside the classroom' educational support for our children and young people in care. We have worked hard to find different and creative ways to continue this support despite the COVID restrictions being in place.

The Virtual School coordinate additional one-to-one tuition for any Halton child in care who requests support with a subject regardless of where they are educated or living. The tutors are always qualified teachers and subject specialists and provide regular tuition reports. Whilst our original 1:1 tuition offer has been face to face, we have responded to the current situation and moved to provide online tuition. This has continued throughout the academic year and over the holidays to support children and young people to remain engaged in their learning and to mitigate against falling behind. We have also ensured that face to face tuition has taken place for children and young people who have stated a preference this.

In partnership with a local bookshop (The Curiosity Book shop) the Virtual School send an individualised book parcel to each identified child in their placement on a half termly basis. The children are identified through analysis of the PEP outcomes and also all Reception age children receive them. The parcels are tailored to the child's interests and their reading and writing levels. The aims of the book parcels are to encourage a love of reading at home; and improve reading ages and vocabulary development. 21 children and young people received the parcels during the academic year.

The Virtual School also has a yearly subscription to Storytime Magazine which is sent out each month to identified children in Key Stage 2 and when appropriate to some Key Stage 3 children. The magazines are brightly illustrated and have short stories. The aim of the magazines are to encourage a love of reading at home particularly for those who struggle accessing a book and to improve reading age and vocabulary development. 45 children have had the Storytime magazine this year.

The Virtual School website ([www.myvirtualschool.org](http://www.myvirtualschool.org)) has been enhanced and regularly updated with curriculum links particularly Maths and English and other subjects; resources to support learning at home; other activities to support carers in keeping children and young people engaged in their learning such as virtual tours of museums, cross curricular activities, coding projects, arts & craft ideas, fun ideas from famous authors etc. A new section with ideas and resources to support Mental Health and Emotional Wellbeing has also added.

### Keeping in Touch Packs:

As the Virtual School's Activity Day programme could not be delivered due to COVID restrictions we decided to develop 'Keeping in Touch' packs which were sent out to 280 children and young people aged 0 to 16 years for the holidays with resources and activity ideas, including opportunities for them to engage in some activities virtually with the Virtual School. Packs were tailored to different age groups and specific SEN needs.

The items and activities were designed to:

- Improve reading skills,
- Develop creative writing and use of language skills,
- Encourage STEM by giving them hands on experiments to do using household items,
- Develop number, logic and strategy skills through card games and activities,
- Improve fluency of multiplication.

The variety of items included:

- Virtual School Newsletter – giving them ideas of things to do and guiding them to the website.
- Worksheets
- Competitions
- Books
- Games
- Creative activities
- Wellbeing packs

Feedback from children, young people, carers and social workers has been overwhelmingly positive. Some young people who have never engaged in our activity programme have enjoyed receiving the parcels and completing the activities. Therefore, even though we are planning to run our activity day programme as usual next year we will retain the 'Keeping in Touch' packs as well.

### **Activity and Support Programme**

During the school holidays the Virtual School usually provide a range of activity days to engage and support our children and young people to develop a variety of academic, personal and independence skills. Some days are fully developed and led by the Education Support Workers within the Virtual School and others are delivered in partnership with other guests, agencies and providers. All the activity programme is funded through the Pupil Premium Plus grant.

Due to COVID restrictions we had to suspend the activities planned for this academic year. However, we were able to run some days over the summer holidays using COVID risk assessments and measures.

Target group	Details	Aims
<b>Teddy Bear's Picnic</b>		
Pre-school	An AM/PM session to be held at Norton Priory where parents and carers will be invited to come along with their children to enjoy some fun outdoor activities.	To enhance and embed Parent/Carer child interaction and engagement with activities
<b>Forest Schools</b>		
Reception and KS1	<p>A child led woodland adventure. Based around a traditional tale followed by activities led by children's imaginations and interests linked to the story.</p> <p><b>Curriculum links:</b>            PSED/PSHE - Confident to try new activities, to work together and to talk about their ideas and take other's ideas into account.            Communication and language/spoken language – Maintaining attention, joining in with discussions and bringing narrative to their experiences.            Science – Exploring the environment.            Expressive arts and design/art and design – exploring and using different materials. Bringing imagination into play.</p>	<p>To take part in outdoor activities promoting well-being and communication.</p> <p>To work together – building relationships.</p> <p>To use problem-solving skills.</p> <p>To explore the area imaginatively and create their own stories.</p>
<b>Animal Olympics</b>		
KS2 Secondary	<p>A range of activities including mini sports day, team games, quizzes, arts and crafts all based on the theme of the Olympics.</p> <p><b>Curriculum links:</b>            PSHE – intrapersonal skills – building confidence, self-expression and resilience.            D&amp;T skills            PE skills            Improved mental health and well being            Problem solving skills</p>	<p>Take part in physical activities to help promote health and wellbeing.</p> <p>To build an animal Olympic team for entering into the "Animal Olympics".</p> <p>To take part in Olympic themed activities.</p>
<b>Moving Up</b>		
Year 6	A trip to Round Ponds Adventure in Frodsham for some fun outdoor activities including bush craft and raft building.	<p>To celebrate the end of primary school.</p> <p>A chance for personal development.</p>

	<p><b>Curriculum links:</b>                  Transition – managing change positively and knowing where they can go for support if needed.                  PSHE – intrapersonal skills – building confidence and resilience.                  PSHE – intrapersonal skills – communication and team work.                  P.E</p>	<p>Offer support around transition to secondary school.</p>
<b>Next Steps</b>		
Year 11	<p>A trip to Round Ponds Adventure in Frodsham for some fun outdoor activities including vertical challenge, abseil and raft building.  <b>Curriculum links:</b>                  Transition – managing change positively and knowing where they can go for support if needed.                  PSHE – intrapersonal skills – building confidence and resilience.                  PSHE – intrapersonal skills – communication and team work.                  P.E</p>	<p>To celebrate the end of secondary school.                  A chance for personal development.                  Offer support around transition to post-16.</p>

Some feedback from our young people:

*My favourite activity was the raft building and jumping into the water at the end*

*I can't believe I got to the top – and I didn't break any of my nails!" (This YP managed to get to the top of a vertical climb challenge with a revolving barrel, rope net and wooden beams whilst managing to keep all her nail extensions intact – double achievement!)*

*Can we come again?*

*It's great to have these activities.*

*I am really looking forward to coming back again and to see you next time*

## Key actions for 2020-21:

- To deliver our full activity day programme either face to face or remotely
- To develop the website to improve communication with and support for carers and children and young people in care.
- To continue to send the Keeping in Touch packs out to all children and young people over Easter and Summer holidays
- To develop a model of direct support sessions delivered by the Education Support Workers. These sessions will be focused on developing and supporting good home learning, through modelling to parents and carers whilst providing homework support for the children.

## Key Priorities for 2021-22

Priority	Rationale
To continue to mitigate against the risk of lost learning and to increase the percentage of children who are achieving good educational outcomes.	We need to track performance against all key indicators and ensure that children in care are able to access all support necessary to enable them to achieve good outcomes. We need to challenge schools around their use of catch up funding and utilise the Recovery Premium. We need to work collaboratively with CSC to reduce care and placement moves which potentially adds to further lost learning and instability.
Close the progress and attainment gap between Halton children in care and their non-care experienced peers, with a particular focus on achieving the higher grades in Key stage 4.	Although there has been an increase in children in care making progress they are still not performing as well as their non-care peers. This is particularly evident at Key Stage 4 especially with higher levels in English and Maths. It is an important area of focus as it opens up more career avenues for our young people.
Continue to improve the quality of Personal Education Plans, including Early Years and Post 16, with a particular focus on target setting, impact measures for Pupil Premium Plus and tracking the curriculum accessed.	The PEP is the key document that ensures that children in care are able to achieve their full potential and access the support they need to do this. Although both completion and quality of PEPs is improving the evidence shows that there needs to be a greater focus on improving the SMART targets and creative use of PP+. Early Years and Post 16 also remain areas that need to improve.
Commission and conduct a Halton Virtual School Pupil Premium Plus Review to ascertain impact, areas of good practice and areas for development.	It has not been possible to achieve this due to COVID restrictions but it remains an important tool to understand how our use of PP+ can have greater impact on improving the outcomes for all children in care.
Develop a Post 16 Pupil Premium Plus model to provide additional support and improve retention.	The DfE are conducting a pilot into the use of Post 16 PP+ and whilst Halton did not bid for this we have embraced the concept as a way of improving our Post 16 young people's outcomes and also the quality of Post 16 PEPs.
To continue to improve the number of secondary age young people in care having attendance above 95%	Whilst attendance has remained good in spite of the challenges during the pandemic there still needs to be a focus on KS4 pupils who can become disengaged, particularly when they are experiencing other life issues.
Reduce the number of children in care receiving one or more fixed term exclusion, and the length and the frequency.	It will be important to continue to monitor the impact of returning to education on the social, emotional and behavioural needs of children in care and to ensure that exclusions and resulting time out of school is minimised.
Continue to monitor and risk assess the progress of any child in care attending a school judged as Requires Improvement or below by Ofsted, including	We need to ensure that a child in care is not being further disadvantaged by being educated in a school judged as Requiring Improvement. We need to ensure that they are accessing quality first teaching and all the support they require to make progress.

<p>undertaking additional support and challenge visits to the school.</p>	
<p>Develop a SEND dashboard in order to more effectively monitor the outcomes, support and quality of provision.</p>	<p>There have been challenges in placing children requiring specialist education provision due to the national shortage of places. We need to ensure that a child can be effectively supported in a school that best meets their needs and that it will provide high quality provision.</p>
<p>Embed the direct working approach for 16 – 22 year olds to continue to improve engagement in Education, Employment and Training with a particular focus on apprenticeships.</p>	<p>Due to the impact of the pandemic the number of young people who are NEET has risen. We now need to support them to re-engage in a career path of their choosing and ensure they have clear progression routes. This will include delivering bespoke CIAEG as required and supporting them through direct work to maintain their engagement.</p>
<p>To develop a proactive and bespoke package of support for UASC.</p>	<p>There has been an increase in the number of UASC. The young people arrive with very little English making it hard to find appropriate education provision for them. Whilst we do currently provide them with support it is done on an ad hoc basis rather than through a bespoke proactive offer of support.</p>



<b>REPORT TO:</b>	Children, Young People & Families Policy & Performance Board
<b>DATE:</b>	8th November 2021
<b>REPORTING OFFICER:</b>	Strategic Director, People
<b>PORTFOLIO:</b>	Children, Education & Social Care
<b>SUBJECT:</b>	Childcare Sufficiency Assessment Review Autumn 2021 – 2022 (CSA)
<b>WARD(S)</b>	Borough-wide

## 1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

1.1 The report aims to provide a summary of the revised Childcare Sufficiency Assessment Report. It details any achievements since the last review and outlines Halton's current position. It also highlights any gaps in provision and how these are being addressed. The report shares the effects of how Covid-19 are impacting the childcare sector and identifies any potential sustainability concerns for some providers.

## 2.0 RECOMMENDATION: That:

- i) **Members approve the revised Childcare Sufficiency Assessment.**

## 3.0 BACKGROUND

3.1 Sections 6 and 7 of 'The Childcare Act' (2006) and the associated statutory guidance: 'Early Education and Childcare – Statutory guidance for local authorities' (March 2018), requires all Local Authorities in England to undertake and provide an annual childcare sufficiency report to elected council members on how they are meeting their duty to secure sufficient childcare and to make it available to the public.

3.2 In accordance with the above, Halton's Childcare Sufficiency Assessment (CSA) has been reviewed and updated. The purpose of the document is to:

- Assist parents to find suitable childcare across the borough;
- Help inform the Local Authority regarding supply and estimated demand for childcare places in all age ranges, in particularly for the Free Early Years Entitlement places;
- Provide information for anyone who is considering setting up new childcare provision in the borough or becoming a

childminder.

#### 4.0 **ACHIEVEMENTS SINCE LAST CSA REVIEW**

4.1 Since producing the last CSA Review, the following have been achieved:

- The percentage of Day Nurseries with a good or better Ofsted outcome has remained at 100% (excluding two nurseries which has not been inspected yet-inspection was paused due to Covid);
- We have increased the number of childminders who are able to deliver the Free Early Years Entitlement for 2, 3 and 4 year olds from 45 to 46;
- We continue to fund an average of 540 funded 2 year old children per term;
- From September 2017, 30 hours childcare was introduced for working parents. Currently 100% of day nurseries, 75% of pre-schools, 100% of nursery schools, 14% of nursery classes, 67% of nursery academies are offering the extended hours. This is in addition to the 46 childminders registered to deliver the FEYE for 15 or 30 hours
- We have been able to secure sufficient, high quality childcare for all vulnerable children and children of critical worker parents/carers who required a place, during lockdown.

#### 5.0 **SUMMARY OF CSA REVIEW**

5.1 The CSA provides the following information:

- A brief introduction to the review, outlining it's purpose and rationale;
- A description of the Halton context;
- A statement about Safeguarding;
- An update re the revised Early Years Foundation StageFramework;
- Details of Halton's market segments and their characteristics;
- Details of Halton's Early Years market, including;
  - the percentage of Free Early Years Entitlement places by sector;
  - the numbers of 3 & 4 year old places by setting type;
  - the number of early years settings;
  - Ofsted grades for all sectors;
- The supply and estimated demand of childcare places;
- A brief outline of Halton's SEND provision, Disability Access Fund (DAF) and Early Years Pupil Premium (EYPP);
- Details of the affordability and flexibility of Halton's childcare, sustainability and staffing;
- Rates of pay and flexibility

- An overview of the changes in childcare places since the last CSA and projected new places;
- Guidance around financial help with childcare costs;
- Details of any apparent gaps in provision and an action plan to show how these gaps will be met;
- Early indications of how the effects of Covid-19 are impacting childcare and sustainability in Halton.

## 6.0 **CURRENT POSITION**

6.1 Overall, the Halton Childcare Sufficiency Assessment (CSA) Review 2021-2022 continues to reflect a vibrant, sufficient and high quality Early Years and Childcare market that delivers choice, high quality and affordable service to parents and carers. Halton as a borough has sufficient childcare places to meet demand.

6.2 However, this review has been undertaken at a time when the Early Years Sector is under increasing pressure due to the Coronavirus pandemic. Although, early indications show that the sector remains sustainable at present, it is still too early to determine the full impact of Covid-19. This will need to be carefully monitored over the coming months.

6.3 The report does identify some gaps in provision at ward level, not borough level. These are as follows:

- Widnes overall has a deficit of approximately 73 places for 0-2 year olds.
- Halton Brook CCRA has a deficit of approximately 30 places for funded 2 year olds.
- Windmill Hill CCRA has a deficit of approximately 81 extended entitlement places and 16 places for out of school care for 5-10 year olds.
- Kingsway CCRA has a deficit of approximately 60 places for funded 2 year olds.
- Upton CCRA has a deficit of approximately 97 universal FEYE places, 68 places for Extended Hours and 8 places for out of school care for 5-10 year olds.

However, it is important to remember that parents do not always access childcare in the ward where they live and children do not always attend a school in the ward where they live.

6.4 With regards to the shortage of funded 2 year old places in Halton Brook CCRA, the Two Year Old Funding Officer reports that it has always been possible to find an alternative place in the area. Furthermore, if parents have requested a particular setting where there are no available spaces, they have been happy to wait for availability.

- 6.5 With regards to the shortage of Universal places in the Windmill Hill CCRA, families are willing to travel to other wards for their FEYE. This may mean accessing a setting, which is outside the Windmill Hill CCRA or even out of the borough.
- 6.6 Concerning the shortage of out of School places in this area, local knowledge would support the fact that, in reality, no such shortage exists. In addition, the majority of primary schools offer after school activities, which parents may use as childcare.
- 6.7 With regards to the shortage of funded 2 year old places in the Kingsway CCRA, a new nursery has recently opened in Farnworth Ward (summer 2021). Although this new nursery is not situated in the Kingsway CCRA, geographically it is located close by and parents may be willing to travel. Their current supply figures have been included in the tables, however, the nursery are classing themselves as only currently open for Phase One of their refurbishment. Phase Two, which should be completed in the near future, will include another building and will therefore increase overall capacity in the general Farnworth/Kingsway areas.
- 6.8 The shortage of 3 & 4 year old FEYE places (both Universal and Extended) in the Upton CCRA would appear to be due to the expansion of new housing estates in that area. The new Day Nursery which has recently opened in Farnworth ward will help to alleviate the shortage of 3 and 4 year old places in the Upton RA.
- 6.9 An Action Plan is included in the CSA showing how the Local Authority will work with a range of partners to address the above gaps to ensure sufficiency.

7.0 **POLICY IMPLICATIONS**

- 7.1 Impact of Covid will continue to be monitored. Occupancy rates are lower than normal which is adding pressure and sustainability concerns to some providers. Loss of providers could in the future impact on sufficiency, although will depend on whether demand also continues to reduce due to more home working and changes in working patterns as a result of Covid. Sufficiency strategies may need revisions in future depending upon whether such changes become permanent.

8.0 **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 8.1 Currently none identified, but some providers are facing challenges of sufficiency due to reduction in occupancy; less staffing flexibility; increased cleaning and equipment costs due to Covid making some financially vulnerable.

**9.0 IMPLICATIONS FOR THE COUNCIL'S PRIORITIES**

Close working with the sector will continue to monitor demand and supply with uptake and changing demographics and falling birth rates.

**9.1 Children & Young People in Halton**

Research has proven that the earliest years of a child's life are crucial to their development for laying the foundations of success at school and in later life. In Halton, we want to ensure we have high quality childcare available for all parents or carers that need it, in all age ranges. The Family and Childcare Trust Childcare Survey (2018) states: *'Childcare supports parents to work, keeps valuable skills in the workforce, helps children do better at school and can narrow the gap between disadvantaged children and their peers'*.

**9.2 Employment, Learning & Skills in Halton**

High quality childcare which results in children experiencing success within education will increase training and employment opportunities for pupils and students.

**9.3 A Healthy Halton**

Raising children's achievements through access to affordable and sustainable early years childcare provision will have a positive impact on the emotional health and wellbeing of challenging pupils and students. Access to quality provision also plays a key role in the early development of language and communication skills which are essential to future learning, vocabulary development and access to the wider curriculum and developing and maintaining relationships

**9.4 A Safer Halton**

None identified

**9.5 Halton's Urban Renewal**

None identified

**10.0 RISK ANALYSIS**

10.1 Raising children's achievements through access to affordable and sustainable early years childcare should reduce incidents of challenging behaviour.

**11.0 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES**

- 11.1 Raising children’s achievements through access to affordable and sustainable early years childcare provision should ensure that all children are able to receive timely support and intervention, thereby reducing inequalities in life chances.

12.0 **LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS UNDER SECTION 100D OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972**

Document	Place of Inspection	Contact Officer
The Childcare Act 2006	<a href="http://www.legislation.gov.uk">www.legislation.gov.uk</a>	Operational Director – Education Inclusion and Provision & Operational Director Resources
Early Education and Childcare – Statutory Guidance for Local Authorities (March 2018)	<a href="http://www.gov.uk">www.gov.uk</a>	Operational Director – Education Inclusion and Provision & Operational Director Resources

# Childcare Sufficiency Assessment Report



**Review  
2021-2022**

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Research has proven that the earliest years of a child's life are crucial to their development for laying the foundations of success at school and in later life. In Halton, we want to ensure we have high quality childcare available for all parents or carers that need it, in all age ranges. The Family and Childcare Trust Childcare Survey (2018) states: *'Childcare supports parents to work, keeps valuable skills in the workforce, helps children do better at school and can narrow the gap between disadvantaged children and their peers'*.

## 2. PURPOSE

Sections 6 and 7 of 'The Childcare Act' (2006) and the associated statutory guidance: 'Early Education and Childcare – Statutory Guidance for Local Authorities' (March 2018), require all Local Authorities in England to undertake and provide an annual childcare sufficiency report to elected council members on how they are meeting their duty to secure sufficient childcare, and to make it available to the public.

The Act places a statutory duty upon Local Authorities to play a strategic role in facilitating the childcare market, ensuring there is secure, sufficient childcare, so far as is reasonably practicable, for working parents, or parents who are studying or training for employment, for children aged 0-14 (or up to 18 years for disabled children). The Childcare Sufficiency Assessments give Local Authorities the chance to work with local partners, filling gaps in the market and shaping childcare services in their area, to meet the needs of local families.

The Local Authority is not under a duty to provide the childcare directly. It is intended that formal childcare should, in the main, be delivered by providers in the private and voluntary sectors.

The information in this document has been produced to:

- Assist parents to find suitable childcare across the borough;
- Help inform the Local Authority regarding supply and estimated demand for childcare places in all age ranges, but in particular for the Free Early Years Entitlement places;
- Help anyone who is considering setting up new childcare provision in the borough or becoming a childminder.

Whilst the information presented in this CSA Review provides a 'snapshot' of supply and demand for childcare places in Halton, this can change on a regular basis. Moreover, the impact of COVID-19 has yet to be determined, although present indicators show that the childcare market in Halton continues to be secure and sustainable. However, Early Year's providers have expressed fears around what the future may hold, due to the uncertain nature of the pandemic. The potential impact of COVID-19 is explored in detail in section 25.

**Note: Halton Borough Council does not guarantee the accuracy of this CSA Review, nor does the council accept any liability for any direct or indirect loss, damage or any other consequences arising from the use of the information in this document.**

## 3. RATIONALE

Not all families require childcare. Some parents do not work, whilst others work flexibly. Furthermore, some parents rely on extended family members, such as grandparents, rather than

use formal childcare. Because of these factors, it is difficult to accurately calculate the number of children that will require childcare in Halton. The impact of COVID-19 will also continue to have an effect, although to what extent remains to be seen.

In order to assess the level of demand for all forms of childcare provision across all market segments, a range of demand factors have been applied to the total child population by ward and age range.

The factors applied where relevant are:

- Percentage impact of unemployment rate
- Percentage impact of “day to day activities limited a little” (*this category was previously known as Limiting Long Term Illness*)
- 100% Full Time Equivalent (FTE) place take-up, less average % usage
- Average household income as a % of the LA average
- Average % vacancy
- Percentage of part-time working
- Discount for children attending schools out of borough
- Percentage impact of Extended School Services
- Percentage impact of partners looking after children
- Own holiday cover
- A percentage discount for 3 and 4 year olds based on date of birth

These factors will have varying impacts on the ultimate demand for formal childcare, for example, the higher the rate of unemployment and limited day to day activities within a ward, the lower the demand for formal childcare, whereas the higher the level of household income, the greater the demand.

It must also be noted that, unlike school place planning, which is based on compulsory attendance and defined school catchment areas, early education and childcare trends can be unpredictable. Families are able to choose whether or not they take up a place and are free to access early education and childcare wherever they wish cross the borough, or even in other boroughs. Therefore, whilst some choose to access close to where they live, others may prefer to take up places closer to where they work. When it comes to the Free Early Years Entitlement (FEYE), most families use all the hours available to them. However, some choose only to access part of their entitlement. This can make it difficult to accurately forecast the number of places needed.

Childcare market management is further complicated by the fact that providers can change the age profile of the places they offer without notice. These factors make precise forecasting extremely difficult and mean that caveats must be applied to information within the Childcare Sufficiency Assessment (CSA).

**We would like to take this opportunity to thank everyone involved in producing this document including:**

- **All the childcare providers who completed our surveys; and**
- **Members of Halton Borough Council’s Early Years Team**

#### 4. ACHIEVEMENTS SINCE THE LAST CSA REVIEW

Since producing the Action Plan for the last CSA Review, the following have been achieved:

- The percentage of Day Nurseries with a good or better Ofsted outcome has remained at 100% (excluding two nurseries, who have not been inspected yet);
- We have maintained the number of childminders who are able to deliver the Free Early Years Entitlement for 2, 3 and 4 year olds. Numbers increased from 45 to 46;
- We continue to fund an average of 540 funded 2 year old children per term;
- From September 2017, 30 hours childcare was introduced for working parents. Currently 100% of day nurseries, 75% of pre-schools, 100% of nursery schools, 14% of nursery classes, 67% of nursery academies are offering the extended hours. This is in addition to the 46 childminders registered to deliver the FEYE for 15 or 30 hours;
- We were able to secure childcare for all vulnerable children and children of critical worker parents/carers who required a place, during lockdown.

#### 5. CONTEXT

Halton is a largely urban area. Its' two biggest settlements are Widnes and Runcorn, situated 10 miles upstream from Liverpool, and separated by the River Mersey. It consists of 21 wards (although this has been reduced to 18 wards in the recent ward boundary changes - see original map on page 7 and the new map on page 8). The ethnic composition of Halton remains predominantly white, with 97.8% of the population falling into this category. This is significantly higher than found regionally or nationally, suggesting a relative lack of ethnic diversity. From the 2011 School Census, the main first language other than English was Polish. Christianity is the main religion in Halton, well above the national average. However, this has dropped from the 2001 Census with more people stating no religion (a trend seen nationally).

Halton shares many of the social and economic problems associated with its neighbours on Merseyside. The 2019 Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) is one of the most comprehensive sources of deprivation indicators, and shows that Halton is ranked 13<sup>th</sup> out of 'the 20 local authority districts with the highest proportion of neighbourhoods in the most deprived 10% of neighbourhoods nationally'.

A more in-depth breakdown of Halton's context may be found by following this link: <https://www3.halton.gov.uk/Pages/councildemocracy/pdfs/CensusandStatistics/Halton%20Borough%20Profile.pdf>

It is acknowledged that high quality early years and childcare provision between the ages of 0-4 years is crucial to the life chances of children, and as such makes a major contribution to breaking cycles of deprivation, thus reducing the gap in educational achievements and improving future job prospects.

Halton's ambition is to build stronger, safer communities which are able to support the development and learning of children and young people so they grow up feeling safe, secure, happy and healthy, ready to be Halton's present and Halton's future. This vision is brought to life in Halton's Children, Young People's and Families Plan 2018-2021, which sets out clear,

measurable goals, in order to achieve this ambition. The plan draws on the collaboration of parents, the Council, schools, health, police, voluntary sector and young people.

### **Safeguarding**

Children learn best when they are healthy, safe and secure and it is a requirement for all adults working with children to take the necessary steps to safeguard children. Childcare providers must also ensure the suitability of adults who have contact with children, have the necessary policies and procedures in place and ensure that all staff are adequately trained in child protection.

The Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage 2021 sets out the responsibility for Early Years and Childcare and states that early year's providers must:

- Train all staff to understand their safeguarding policy and ensure that all staff have up to date knowledge of safeguarding issues and that training made available by the provider must enable staff to identify signs of possible abuse and neglect at the earliest opportunity and to respond in a timely and appropriate way. complete safeguarding training that enables them to recognise signs of potential abuse and neglect; and
- have a practitioner who is designated to take lead responsibility for safeguarding children within each early years setting and who should liaise with local statutory children's services agencies as appropriate. This lead should also complete child protection training.

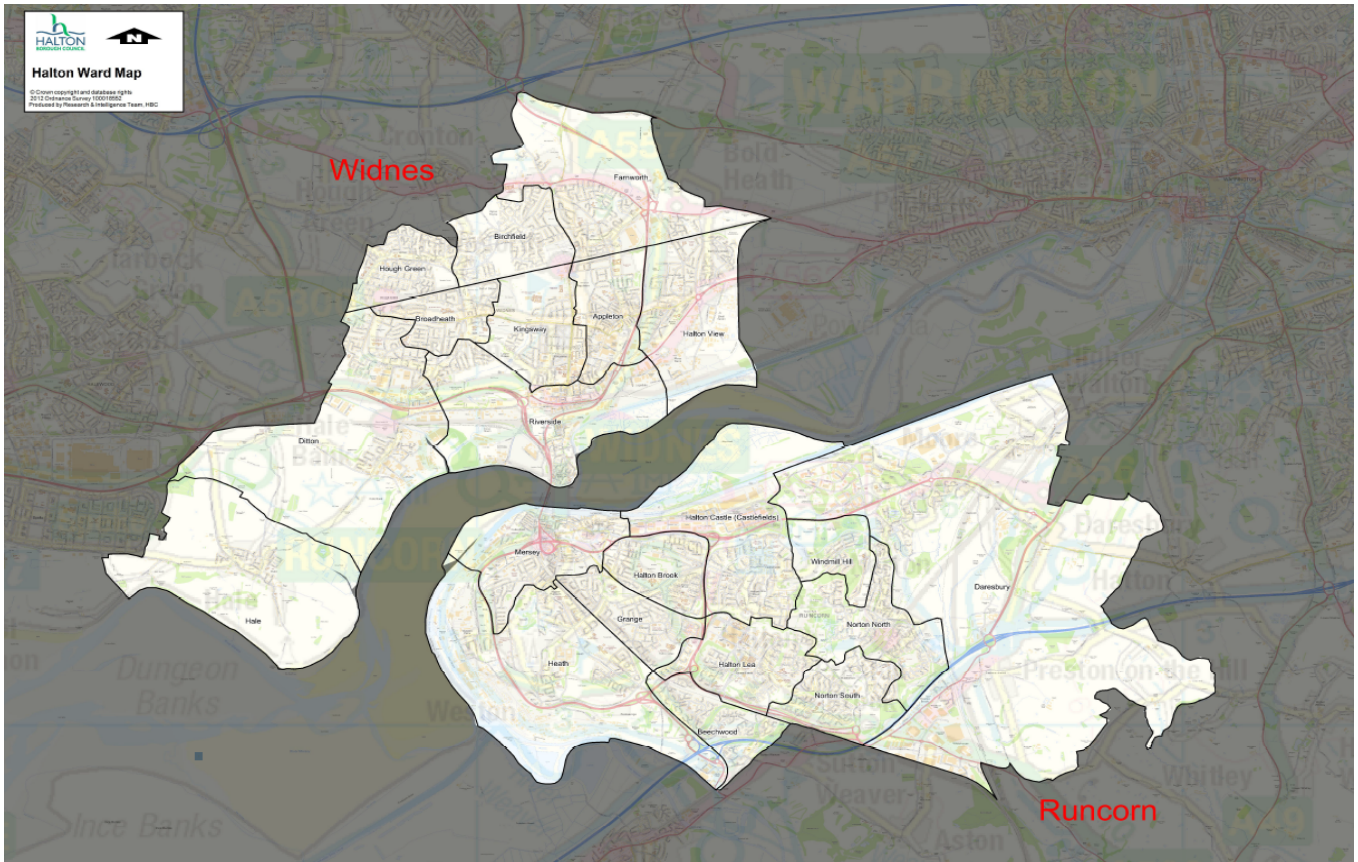
Settings are encouraged to ensure that their staff attend appropriate safeguarding training to ensure that they meet the requirements of the relevant legislation and also ensure that they have appropriate policies and procedures in place. All settings are requested to complete a safeguarding audit on an annual basis to ensure that they review their safeguarding practices regularly.

### **Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) Statutory Framework**

The EYFS sets the standards that all early years providers must meet to ensure that children learn and develop well and are kept healthy and safe. It promotes teaching and learning to give children the broad range of knowledge and skills that provide the right foundation for good future progress through school and life.

A revised framework came into effect on 1<sup>st</sup> September 2021.

## 6. ORIGINAL MAP OF RUNCORN AND WIDNES (split by wards)



### WARD BOUNDARY CHANGES

An electoral review of Halton was carried out in 2019. The aim of the electoral review was to establish wards, which had equal numbers of voters.

Following the review and recommendations made by the Local Government Boundary Commission, some Halton wards have been merged and the boundaries moved. The number of Halton wards have been reduced from 21 to 18. The new ward names are:

Appleton

Bankfield

Beechwood & Heath

Birchfield

Bridgewater

Central & West Bank

Daresbury, Moore & Sandymoor

Ditton, Hale Village & Halebank

Farnworth

Grange

Halton Castle

Halton Lea

Halton View

Highfield

Hough Green

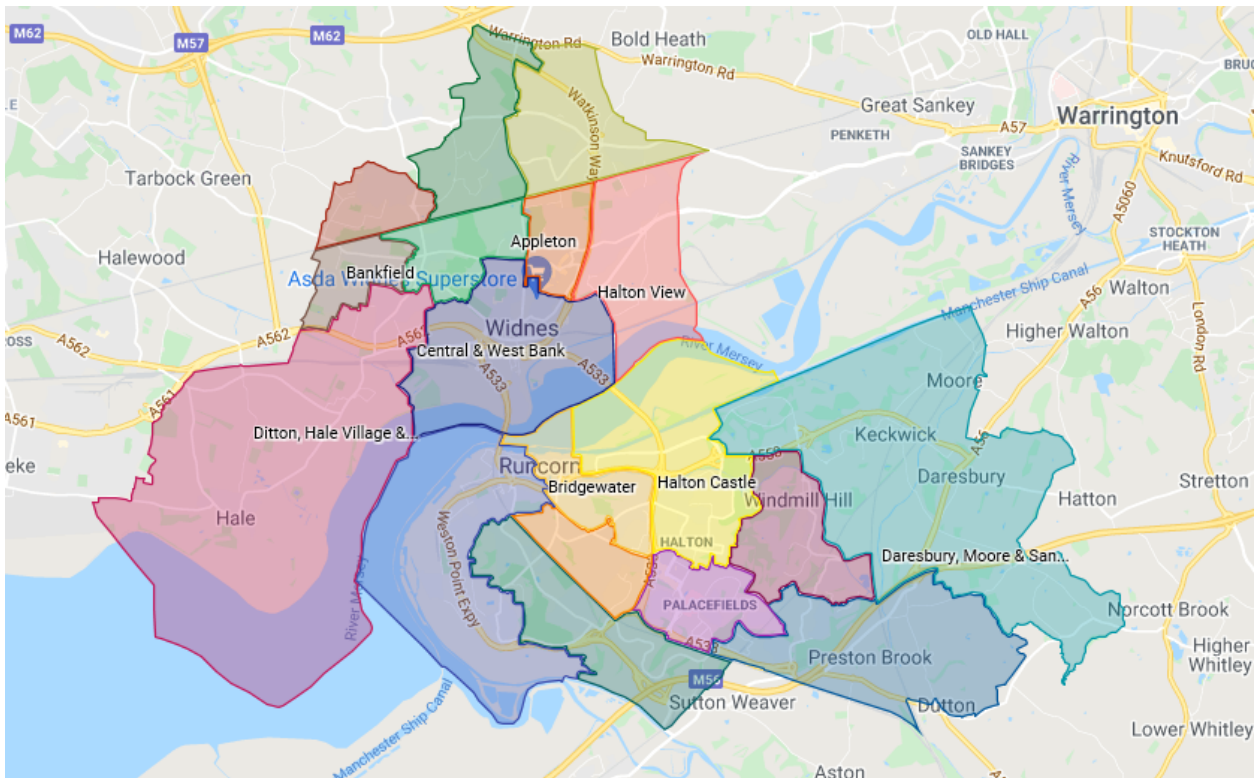
Mersey & Weston

Norton North

Norton South & Preston Brook



**MAP OF NEW WARDS AND BOUNDARY CHANGES FROM 2020**



**NEW CHILDREN’S CENTRE REACH AREAS (BASED ON NEW WARD BOUNDARIES)**

RUNCORN	
Children’s Centre Name	Wards covered by the Reach Area
<b>Brookvale</b>	Norton South & Preston Brook Halton Lea
<b>Halton Brook</b>	Bridgewater Halton Castle
<b>Halton Lodge</b>	Beechwood & Heath Grange
<b>Windmill Hill</b>	Daresbury, Moore and Sandymoor Norton North

WIDNES	
Children’s Centre Name	Wards covered by the Reach Area
<b>Ditton</b>	Bankfield Ditton, Hale & Hale Village
<b>Kingsway</b>	Central & West Bank Highfield
<b>Upton</b>	Birchfield Hough Green
<b>Warrington Road</b>	Appleton Farnworth Halton View

**NOTE:** Although we acknowledge the ward boundary changes and new Children’s Centre Reach Areas, this CSA is based on the original wards and CCRA’s. This is due to the fact that the updated population figures for the new wards are not available yet. It is hoped that the updated population figures based on the 2021 Census, will become available in 2022 and will, therefore, be reflected in the 2022-2023 CSA.

## 7. POPULATION OF HALTON

The table below shows the population of the children and young people in Halton, identified by age and ward.

Ward	Age Ranges																			Total	
	0-1	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18		19
Appleton	103	114	114	90	96	91	101	99	79	101	94	82	92	91	61	65	60	58	78	43	1712
Beechwood	28	34	30	36	26	36	22	39	41	34	35	39	43	46	29	36	27	28	34	27	670
Birchfield	64	60	60	70	70	80	90	110	90	110	120	110	100	110	110	90	110	90	90	90	1791
Broadheath	71	64	70	87	71	67	81	70	80	85	85	89	90	84	90	72	63	69	69	54	1511
Halton Castle	85	84	83	78	94	76	89	84	90	95	104	98	97	106	79	78	78	76	81	81	1736
Daresbury	57	61	60	58	58	63	57	65	71	59	62	71	75	67	60	70	71	54	61	46	1246
Ditton	79	92	87	89	90	86	89	104	99	88	76	92	85	87	64	81	70	70	80	69	1677
Farnworth	95	114	125	101	122	120	144	124	116	101	117	102	107	105	118	108	100	91	85	85	2180
Grange	70	85	95	93	91	121	93	105	106	111	98	98	111	106	103	84	74	81	103	74	1902
Hale	20	19	15	15	25	11	10	14	17	14	14	13	22	13	21	14	11	15	20	9	312
Halton Brook	67	89	78	87	196	84	95	107	112	117	83	102	82	102	102	87	83	93	87	78	1831
Halton Lea	66	61	75	73	71	80	81	82	76	103	88	90	94	81	94	81	89	88	87	77	1637
Halton View	71	66	75	74	87	60	65	65	66	69	66	85	65	70	65	67	53	64	63	53	1349
Heath	29	49	44	50	54	49	57	57	58	58	61	71	61	71	62	60	61	61	49	45	1107
Hough Green	69	70	72	99	84	96	86	82	107	87	78	76	81	68	66	61	68	84	68	70	1572
Kingsway	67	67	92	80	82	94	101	89	87	123	119	107	85	119	101	87	87	95	105	72	1859
Mersey	100	96	90	91	95	100	117	84	76	93	91	70	67	77	65	65	56	67	78	67	1645
Norton North	46	65	69	72	82	68	84	69	89	87	82	94	84	97	83	106	75	81	55	68	1556
Norton South	80	84	75	91	90	103	115	116	110	123	99	116	103	106	100	86	86	77	87	68	1915
Riverside	101	81	72	87	83	79	97	91	90	95	78	86	76	79	51	62	58	65	53	46	1530
Windmill Hill	29	30	36	50	45	36	37	39	41	34	50	49	43	37	37	32	31	29	28	31	744
<b>Total</b>	<b>1397</b>	<b>1485</b>	<b>1517</b>	<b>1571</b>	<b>1610</b>	<b>1598</b>	<b>1711</b>	<b>1690</b>	<b>1698</b>	<b>1786</b>	<b>1695</b>	<b>1738</b>	<b>1667</b>	<b>1721</b>	<b>1558</b>	<b>1488</b>	<b>1408</b>	<b>1432</b>	<b>1456</b>	<b>1256</b>	<b>31482</b>

Figures may not sum exactly due to rounding

Source: ONS 2019

## 8. CHILDCARE MARKET SEGMENTS

The childcare market in Halton, in common with all local authority areas, is sub-divided into a number of specific market segments; this differentiation is based on the age of the child and the type of provision that is being delivered.

It is important to recognise each of these market segments have distinct characteristics, which will influence demand and determine the most appropriate geographical area for the measurement of childcare sufficiency.

Table 1 provides details of Halton's market segments and their characteristics.

**Table 1**  
**Market Segments**

<b>Market Segment</b>	<b>Characteristics</b>
<b>0-2 Year Old Full Day Care</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Supply is predominantly provided by PVI Day Nurseries and Childminders</li> <li>• Parents are required to pay for this provision, therefore price and other economic factors determine the level of demand</li> <li>• Provision accessed by working parents</li> <li>• Parents can take 12 months maternity/paternity leave so children may be 1 year old before they start using formal childcare</li> </ul>
<b>2 Year Old Free Early Years Entitlement</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Supply predominantly provided by Day Nurseries and PVI Pre-schools</li> <li>• Demand is determined by Government eligibility criteria.</li> <li>• Places are preferred close to child's home</li> </ul>
<b>2 Year Olds Fee Paying</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Places supplied by Day Nurseries, Pre-schools and childminders</li> <li>• Used by parents not entitled to the 2 Year Old Free Early Years Entitlement</li> </ul>
<b>3 &amp; 4 Year Old Free Early Years Entitlement Universal 15 hours plus Extended 15 hours</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Places supplied by Day Nurseries; Pre-schools; Maintained Nursery Classes, Maintained Nursery Schools, Nursery classes in Academies, Childminders and possibly Out of School Clubs</li> </ul>
<b>3 &amp; 4 Year Old Wraparound</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The supply is predominantly provided by PVI Day Nurseries; Pre-schools; and childminders</li> <li>• Parents are required to pay for this provision, therefore price and other economic factors determine level of demand</li> <li>• Provision accessed by working parents</li> </ul>
<b>5-10 Year Old After School</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Places provided by a range of PVI and maintained sector settings</li> <li>• Parents are required to pay for provision, therefore economic factors influence demand. Places are generally on school site or close to school</li> </ul>
<b>5-10 Year Old Holiday Provision</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Places provided by PVI sector settings. Parents are required to pay for provision, therefore economic factors influence demand</li> <li>• Parents generally are able to drop-off and collect their children travelling to and from work; therefore places can be accessed across a wider area</li> </ul>

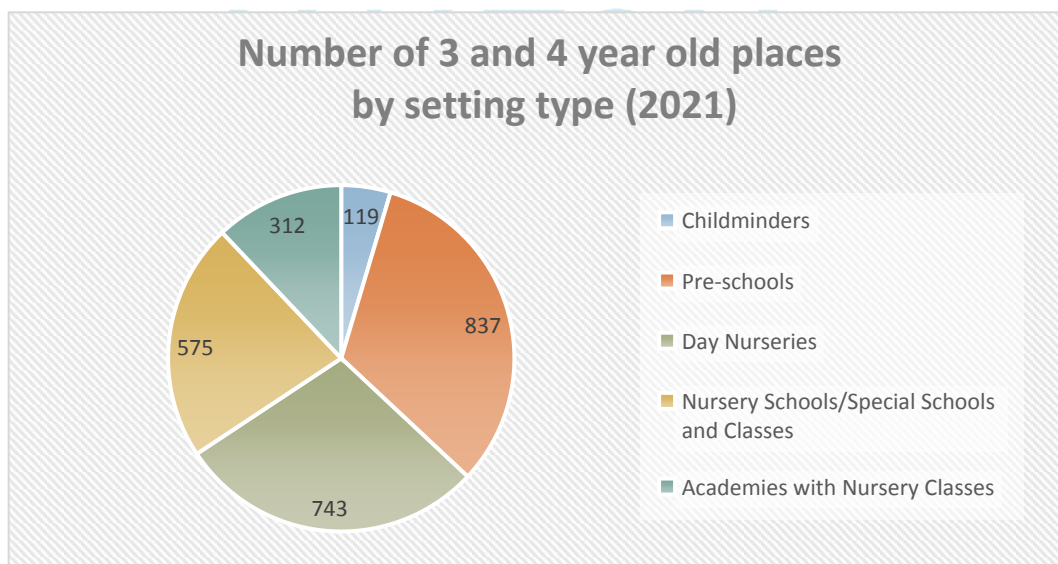


Table 2 shows the Children’s Centre Reach Areas in Runcorn and Widnes and their respective wards.

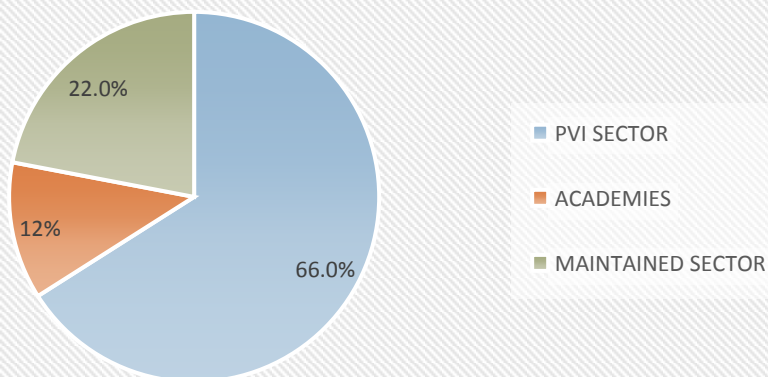
**Table 2**  
**Children’s Centre Reach Areas (CCRAs)**

RUNCORN		WIDNES	
Children’s Centre Name	Wards covered by the Reach Area	Children’s Centre Name	Wards covered by the Reach Area
<b>Brookvale</b>	Beechwood Halton Lea Norton South	<b>Ditton</b>	Broadheath Ditton Hale
<b>Halton Brook</b>	Halton Brook Halton Castle	<b>Kingsway</b>	Kingsway Riverside
<b>Halton Lodge</b>	Grange Heath Mersey	<b>Upton</b>	Birchfield Hough Green
<b>Windmill Hill</b>	Daresbury Norton North Windmill Hill	<b>Warrington Road</b>	Appleton Farnworth Halton View

**9. STRUCTURE OF THE HALTON EARLY YEARS MARKET**



**Percentage of Free Early Years Entitlement Places by Sector (2021)**



**Percentage of Early Years Settings split by sector (2021)**

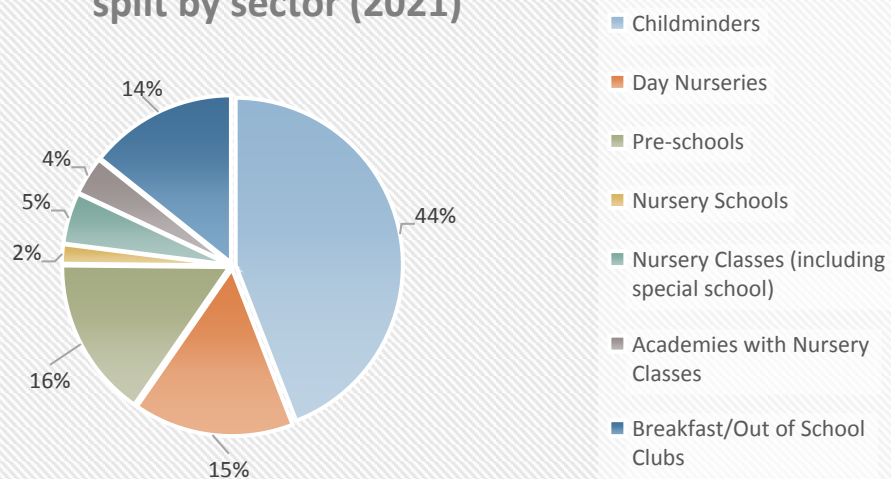


Table 3 below gives an overall picture (as at August 2021) of the size and scale of the current Private, Voluntary and Independent (PVI) and maintained childcare in Halton, by sector and ward.

**Table 3 Overall Numbers of Childcare Providers by Type**

	No of Childminders	No of Day Nurseries	No of Pre-schools	No of Nursery Schools	No of Nursery Classes	No of Academies with Nursery Classes	No of SEN Nursery Classes	No of Breakfast and Out of School Clubs	No of Holiday Clubs	TOTALS
Appleton	4	4	1	0	1	0	0	3	2	15
Beechwood	2	1	1	0	0	0	0	1	1	6
Birchfield	4	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	4
Broadheath	3	2	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	7
Daresbury	7	1	3	0	0	0	0	2	0	13
Ditton	5	1	3	0	1	0	0	2	0	12
Farnworth	9	2	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	13
Grange	2	2	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	6
Hale	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	2
Halton Brook	2	0	1	0	1	1	0	1	1	7
Halton Castle	3	1	1	0	2	2	0	1	1	11
Halton Lea	1	2	2	0	1	1	0	1	1	9
Halton View	2	1	0	1	0	0	0	2	0	6
Heath	3	3	3	0	0	0	0	1	1	11
Hough Green	4	1	2	0	0	0	0	2	0	9
Kingsway	1	1	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	4
Mersey	2	1	2	0	0	0	0	1	1	7
Norton North	9	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	11
Norton South	6	1	1	0	1	0	0	1	0	10
Riverside	2	1	0	0	0	1	0	1	1	6
Windmill Hill	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	1	0	3
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>71</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>172</b>

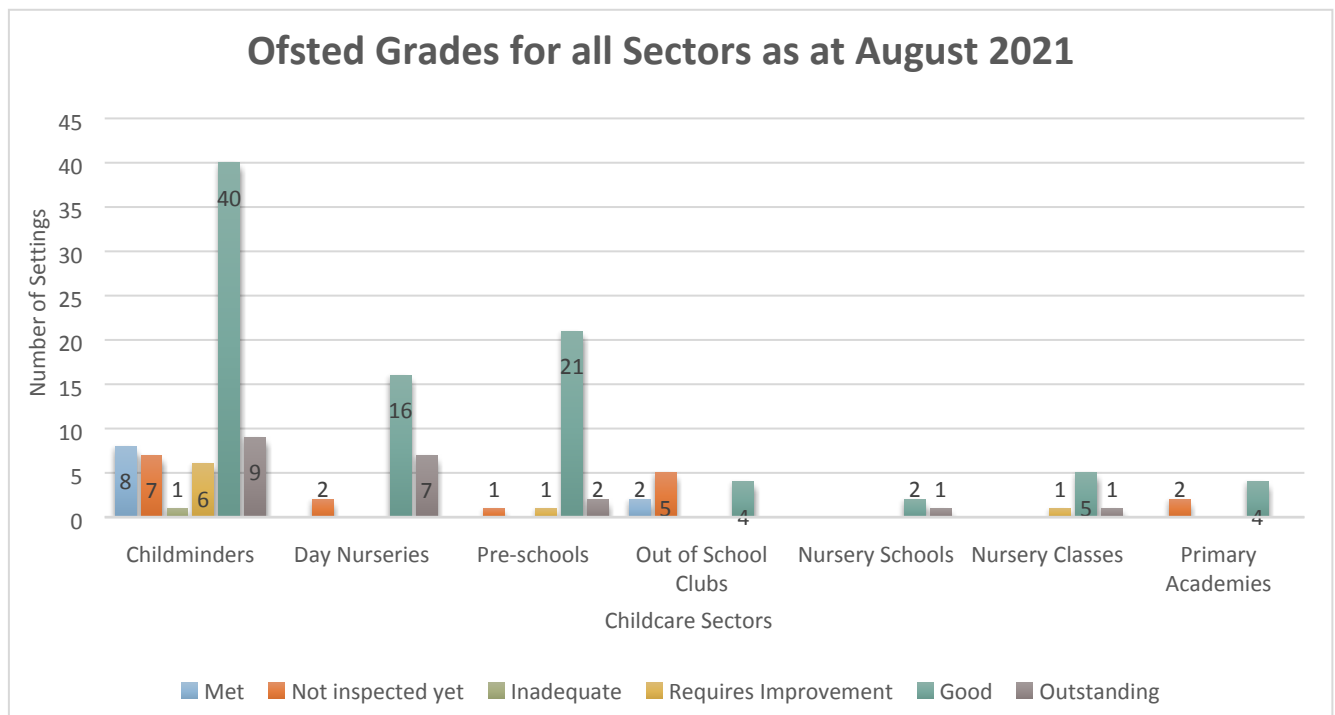
Note: Two out of school clubs and two holiday clubs, have not been included in the above figures as they are not currently offering a service but are still registered with Ofsted,

**10. QUALITY OF CHILDCARE**

It is acknowledged that the quality of childcare is a significant factor affecting a child’s future. High quality early education improves children’s school readiness.

Ofsted is the sole arbiter of quality and through the inspection process, each childcare setting will receive one of four grades: outstanding, good, requires improvement or inadequate.

The table below compares the Ofsted grades for all sectors in Halton, as at August 2021.



*Note: Some childminders and OSCs have a MET grade, due to the fact that they did not have any early years children on roll at the time of inspection.*

## 11. SUPPLY AND ESTIMATED DEMAND OF CHILDCARE PLACES

The following tables show the current potential number of childcare places available in each market segment and the estimated demand for places in each.

With regards to the FEYE for 3 and 4 year olds, the summer term always has the highest occupancy and the autumn term the lowest. This is due to single point entry, as children who have turned 4 move into reception in September. Therefore the supply figures used in this Assessment are a 'snap-shot' from a particular week in May 2021.

Like any other business, childcare providers will respond flexibly to meet the demand of the local market, therefore the figures in this report can be subject to change.

**0-2 Year Olds** – This age range of childcare is delivered by day nurseries and childminders.

Not every child in this age range will require formal childcare. Maternity Leave and Shared Parental Leave, which allows parents to take up to twelve months off work after the birth of the child and can be shared between both parents, can reduce the demand for formal childcare for 0-1 year olds.

Table 4 details the supply and estimated demand for 0-2 Year Old Full Daycare

**Table 4 0-2 Year Old Full Daycare**

Town	0-2 year old FDC	
	Supply	Demand
Runcorn	440	352
Widnes	372	445
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>812</b>	<b>797</b>
	<b>15 surplus places overall</b>	

*Population Source: ONS 2019 population estimates  
Supply – Childcare Provider Surveys 2021  
Demand Source – Halton Demand Analysis 2021*

The Sufficiency Factor of 15, is less than last year's sufficiency factor of 31. This can be explained by the fact that a few settings have closed and others have amended their numbers to drop the number of places offered for 0 to 2 year olds. This enables them to increase the number of 3 to 4 year olds they can accommodate. Historically, we have seen settings change their age allocations throughout the terms to ensure they can accommodate as demand changes.

Table 5 below gives the results from the Childcare Surveys from the Day Nurseries and childminders (who responded) detailing whether they could meet demand for 0-2 Year old places during week commencing 17<sup>th</sup> May 2021.

**Table 5 Could you meet demand?**

Childcare Market - could you meet demand for places for 0-2 Year Olds during w/c 17 <sup>th</sup> May 2021?				
Day Nurseries		Childminders		
Yes	No	Yes	No	No answer or N/A (some childminders do not take all age ranges)
83%	17%	63%	5%	32%

Source: Childcare Provider Surveys 2021 \*19 childminders responded to surveys (27%)

The supply figures show we have an excess of approximately 15 places in this age range and can therefore meet demand across the two towns. The “Could you meet demand?” table also supports this, as it shows that day nurseries and childminders generally can meet demand for 0-2 years.

**2 Year Old Free Entitlement (FEYE)** – This type of childcare is delivered by day nurseries, pre-schools and childminders.

Demand for funded 2 year olds is calculated differently to other age ranges, as the figures are provided by the DfE.

Each Local Authority receives a DfE list 8 times a year. These lists provide details of parents’ names and addresses, drawn from the DWP, who are deemed eligible to receive the funding. The information provided is, generally, three months old before it reaches each Local Authority. Postcards are sent out half termly to prospective families, prompting parents to complete a referral form. Children are placed at the setting of choice, depending on space available. Professionals across Halton, from Health, Early Help, Social care and Early Years settings, also complete referral forms with parents.

Over the past few years the termly DfE list has steadily risen in numbers. Since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, more parents have become eligible due to changes in personal circumstances. The number of children funded in Halton is, approximately, 540 plus per term.

Table 6 below shows Halton’s current supply and demand as estimated by the DfE in July 2021 for the 2 Year Old Free Entitlement, split by Children Centre Reach Areas:

Table No 6 2 Year Old Free Entitlement

Children's Centre Reach Area	2 year old FEYE	
	Supply	Demand
Brookvale	111	91
Halton Brook*	45	75
Halton Lodge	168	92
Windmill Hill	87	50
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>411</b>	<b>308</b>
Ditton	97	72
Kingsway*	24	84
Upton	45	44
Warrington Road	192	63
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>358</b>	<b>263</b>
<b>GRAND TOTAL</b>	<b>769</b>	<b>571</b>
	<b>198 surplus places overall</b>	

Population Source: ONS 2019 population estimates  
Supply – Childcare Provider Surveys 2021  
Demand Source – DfE List July 2021

The Sufficiency Factor of 198 is similar to that of last year, which was 191.

Table 7 gives the results from the Childcare Surveys from the Day Nurseries, Pre-schools and childminders (who responded) detailing whether they can meet demand for 2 Year old places during week commencing 17<sup>th</sup> May 2021.

Table 7 Could you meet demand?

Childcare Market – could you meet demand for places for 2 Year Olds during w/c 17 <sup>th</sup> May 2021						
Day Nurseries		Childminders			Pre-schools	
Yes	No	Yes	No	No answer or N/A (some childminders do not take all age ranges)	Yes	No
88%	13%	63%	5%	32%	81%	19%

Source: Childcare Provider Surveys 2021 \*19 childminders responded to surveys (27%)  
Not all the pre-schools take 2 year olds

The supply figures show we can meet the DfE estimated demand overall, despite an apparent deficit of places in Halton Brook and Kingsway CCRA's. However, as noted above, settings will change their age allocations throughout the terms to ensure they can accommodate as demand changes. The "Could you meet demand?" table indicates that day nurseries, childminders and pre-schools can generally meet demand for funded 2 years. The most difficult term for placing 2 year olds is the summer term, as most settings have filled their places by this time of year.

**3 and 4 Year Old Free Early Years Entitlement Places (Universal Hours)** – This type of childcare is delivered by day nurseries, pre-schools, maintained nursery schools, classes, academies and childminders.

Table 8 below shows Halton’s current supply and estimated demand for the 3 and 4 Year Old Universal Entitlement, in each of the Children’s Centre Reach Areas:

**Table No 8 3 & 4 Year Old Free Entitlement (Universal Hours)**

Children's Centre Reach Area	3 & 4 year old FEYE Universal Hours	
	Supply	Demand
Brookvale	368	259
Halton Brook	384	238
Halton Lodge	377	318
Windmill Hill	290	245
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>1419</b>	<b>1060</b>
Ditton	366	253
Kingsway	221	222
Upton*	118	215
Warrington Road	462	382
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>1167</b>	<b>1072</b>
<b>GRAND TOTALS</b>	<b>2586</b>	<b>2132</b>
	<b>454 surplus places overall</b>	

Population Source: ONS 2019 population estimates  
 Supply – Childcare Provider Surveys 2021  
 Demand Source – Halton Demand Analysis 2021

**Table 9 Could you meet demand?**

Childcare Market - could you meet demand for places for 3 & 4 Year Olds 15 Universal Hours during w/c 17 <sup>th</sup> May 2021?						
Day Nurseries		Childminders			Pre-schools	
Yes	No	Yes	No	No answer or N/A (some childminders do not take all age ranges)	Yes	No
<b>83%</b>	<b>17%</b>	<b>69%</b>	<b>5%</b>	<b>26%</b>	<b>83%</b>	<b>18%</b>

Source: Childcare Provider Surveys 2021

\*19 childminders responded to surveys 27%

Table 8 shows we have approximately 454 excess places for the Universal Hours in total across the borough. Table 9 also indicates that providers can meet demand for the majority of time. The only area where there appears to be a deficit of places is Upton CCRA.



**3 and 4 Year Old Free Early Years Entitlement Places (Extended Hours)** – This type of childcare is delivered by day nurseries, pre-schools, maintained nursery schools, classes, academies, childminders and, potentially, out of school clubs.

Table 10 below shows Halton’s current supply and estimated demand for the 3 and 4 Year Old Extended Hours, split Children Centre Reach Areas:

**Table 10 3 & 4 Year Old – Extended Hours**

Children's Centre Reach Area	3 & 4 Year old – Extended 15 Hours	
	Supply	Demand
Brookvale	112	81
Halton Brook	63	54
Halton Lodge	183	95
Windmill Hill*	46	127
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>404</b>	<b>357</b>
Ditton	104	86
Kingsway	52	51
Upton*	52	120
Warrington Road	180	133
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>388</b>	<b>390</b>
<b>GRAND TOTALS</b>	<b>792</b>	<b>747</b>
	<b>45 surplus places overall</b>	

Population Source: ONS 2019 population estimates  
Supply – Childcare Provider Surveys 2021  
Demand Source – Halton Demand Analysis 2021

**Table 11 Could you meet demand?**

Childcare Market – could you meet demand for places for 3 & 4 Year Olds 15 Extended Hours during w/c 17 <sup>th</sup> May 2021?						
Day Nurseries		Childminders			Pre-schools	
Yes	No	Yes	No	No answer or N/A (some childminders do not take all age ranges)	Yes	No
83%	17%	63%	5%	32%	91%	18%

Source: Childcare Provider Surveys 2021

\*19 childminders responded to surveys (27%)

Not all the pre-schools offer extended hours

Table 11 indicates that providers can meet demand for the majority of time.

Table 10 shows, overall, we have sufficient supply of places except in Windmill Hill and Upton CCRA's. The 15 extended hours can be used any time between 6am and 8pm, as long as no

session is longer than 10 hours per day and the child doesn't attend more than two sites on any one day. This gives parents the flexibility to use breakfast and after school care as part of the extended hours. For example, a child could attend a breakfast club and pre-school on one site in the morning and a childminder in the afternoon, still allowing the parent to work a long day.

The most difficult term for placing 3 year olds is the summer term, as most settings have filled their places by this time of year. The autumn term generally has the lowest occupancy, as any 4 year olds will have left to go to reception class.

**Impact of 30 Hours (Extended Offer)**

Since the Extended 15 hours was introduced in September 2017 the take-up had steadily increased, until last year when numbers dropped slightly. We believe this is due to the pandemic. (see graph on page 21, which shows termly take up).

**3 and 4 Year Old Wraparound** – This type of childcare is predominantly delivered by day nurseries, pre-schools and childminders.

Table 12 below shows Halton's current supply and estimated demand for the 3 and 4 Year Old Care, split by town:

**Table 12 3 and 4 Year Old Wraparound**

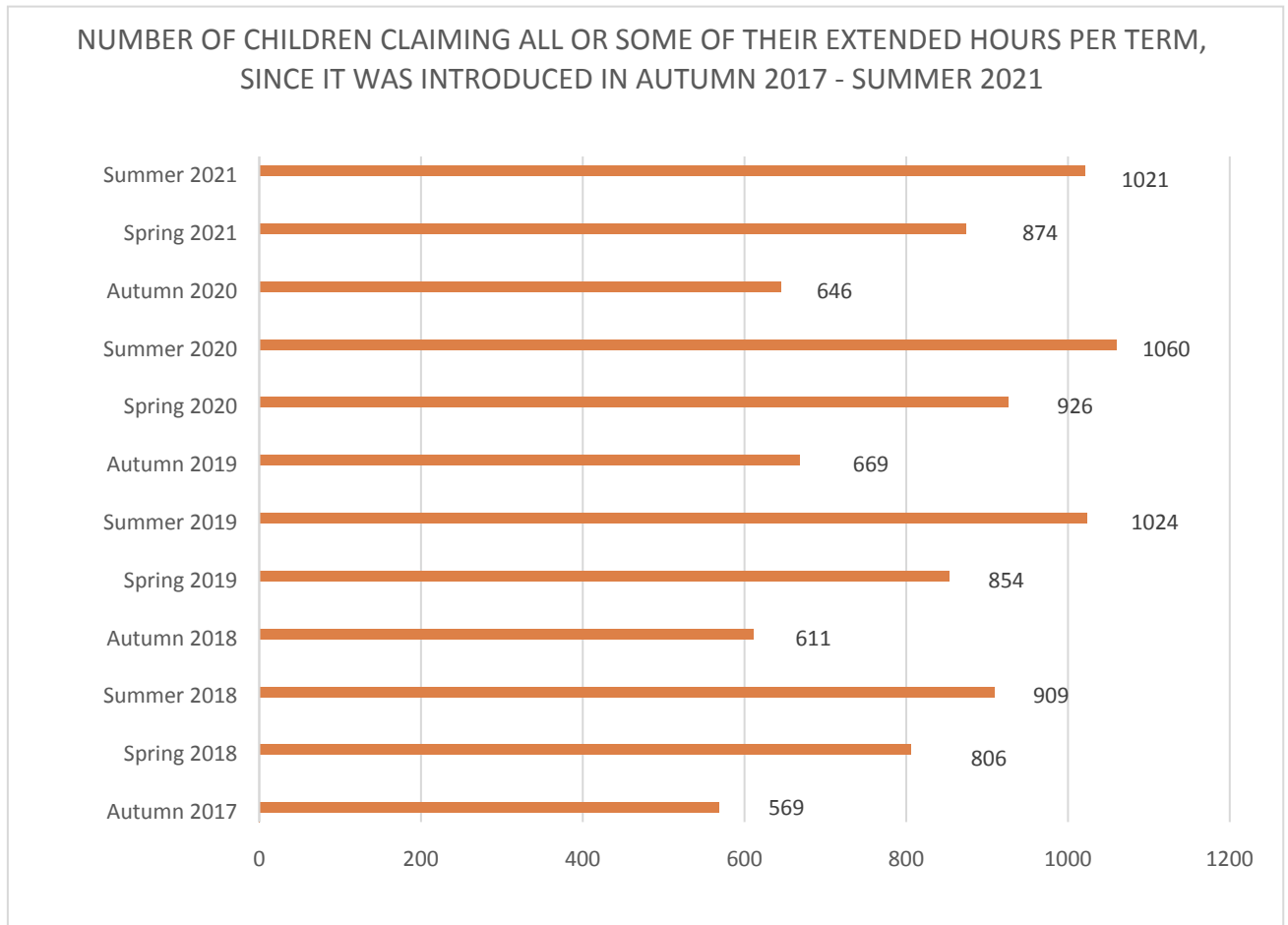
Town	3 & 4 year old Wraparound	
	Supply	Demand
Runcorn	341	225
Widnes	300	273
Totals	641	498
<b>143 surplus places overall</b>		

*Population Source: ONS 2019 population estimates  
 Supply – Childcare Provider Surveys 2021  
 Demand Source – Halton Demand Analysis 2021*

The supply figures show we can meet demand across the both towns for Wraparound Care.

**Supply of Extended Hour Places compared to Take-Up**

The graph below shows the number of children claiming Extended Hours entitlement since the Extended Offer was introduced in Autumn 2017.



We have continued to estimate demand for Wraparound Care because some families who are only entitled to 15 universal hours may need a few extra Wraparound hours. However, we may have over-estimated demand for Wraparound care, as parents who are working the equivalent of 16 hours on minimum wage will be entitled to 30 hours. They will, therefore, use less Wraparound and more Extended Hours. It is expected that in the future, demand for Wraparound places will reduce and the supply of places allocated for Wraparound can be added to the Extended Hours supply. This will result in a larger stock of places.

In addition, we have spare capacity of approximately 454 places in the Universal Hours supply (see Table 8) which could also be used for Extended Hours, if required.

It must also be noted that the estimated supply and demand is based on Spring 2021 data and this tends to increase in the Summer Term and decrease in the Autumn Term.

A further consideration is that there are some children living in Halton who claim some or all of their FEYE in neighbouring authorities (universal and/or extended hours). Conversely, some children live outside of Halton but claim their FEYE at childcare providers based in Halton.

### 5-10 Year Old Before and After School Provision

Ofsted allows before and after school providers to determine the number of children they provide care for, up to a maximum number, determined by the size of their premises. It is up to each provider, therefore, to ensure that they have the correct staff:child ratio in place for the ages of the children attending the setting.

Instead of having a separate registration for school aged children, day nurseries, childminders etc. have extended their provision to offer places to older children before and after school and during the holidays. Many schools also run breakfast and afterschool clubs, which are exempt from separate registration by Ofsted.

Table 13 below, shows supply and estimated demand for out of school care, split by CCRA.

**Table 13 5-10 Year Old Before and After School Provision**

Children's Centre Reach Area	5-10 Year Old Out of School	
	Supply	Demand
Brookvale	106	96
Halton Brook	79	51
Halton Lodge	93	63
Windmill Hill*	136	152
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>414</b>	<b>362</b>
Ditton	117	50
Kingsway	38	13
Upton*	104	112
Warrington Road	298	100
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>557</b>	<b>275</b>
<b>GRAND TOTALS</b>	<b>971</b>	<b>637</b>
	<b>334 surplus places overall</b>	

Population Source: ONS 2019 population estimates  
 Supply – Childcare Provider Surveys 2021  
 Demand Source – Halton Demand Analysis 2021

The analysis of the 5-10 year old Out of School market (Table 13) indicates that there is sufficient childcare provision in six Children's Centre Reach Areas with deficit of places in Windmill Hill and Upton CCRA's.

**Table 14 Could you meet demand?**

Childcare Market – during w/c 17 <sup>th</sup> May 2021 could you meet demand for age 5+ places ?			
Breakfast Clubs		Out of School Club	
Yes	No	Yes	No
100%		95%	5%

Source: Childcare Provider Surveys 2021  
 (not all OSCs run a breakfast club)

The above table shows that the majority of providers are able to accommodate demand for before and after school provision.

Most schools offer extra-curricular after school activities for both primary and secondary aged children, and parents will use these as ‘childcare’. Consequently, use of these activities combined with informal childcare, such as family and friends, means that there is a lower demand for out of school care than would be expected. However, it should be noted, that these activities often only run for up to an hour and are not always consistent. Furthermore, they can be cancelled at short notice and vary from term to term. This makes the collation of any information regarding the provision of before and after school care more difficult as it is not possible to collect consistent data around extra-curricular activities.

Latest figures show that approximately 874 primary school age children, who live in Halton, attend schools in neighbouring authorities. A small discounting factor has been applied to the figures in Table 13 to take account of the fact that these children will be expected to attend Out of School provision in the borough where their school is, thereby reducing demand in Halton.

### 5-10 Year Old Holiday Provision

Table 15 below, shows supply and estimated demand for Holiday Care split by town.

**Table 15 5-10 Year Old Holiday Provision**

Town	5-10 year old Holiday	
	Supply	Demand
Runcorn	388	212
Widnes	293	186
<b>OVERALL TOTAL</b>	<b>681</b>	<b>398</b>
<b>283 surplus places overall</b>		

Population Source: ONS 2019 population estimates  
 Supply – Childcare Provider Surveys 2021  
 Demand Source – Halton Demand Analysis 2021

**Table 16 Could you meet demand?**

Could you meet demand for age Holiday Care places for age 5+ during May 2021 half term				
Holiday Care		Childminders		
Yes	No	Yes	No	No answer or N/A (some childminders do not take all age ranges)
100%		58%	0%	42%

Source: Childcare Provider Surveys 2021 \*19 childminders responded to surveys (27%)

The impact of Covid-19 has meant that supply and demand for out of school and holiday provision for 5-10 year olds has been affected. Supply has been reduced due to the need to

have smaller group sizes in order to minimise the risk of infection. Demand has reduced owing to the fact that some families are no longer requiring this provision due to a change in personal circumstances related to the pandemic.

### **11-14 Year Old Out of School and Holiday Care**

Many parents and carers consider children within this age group to be 'old enough to look after themselves'. Therefore, families tend to access more informal arrangements for childcare, through play schemes, leisure and recreational activities.

With this in mind, Halton Borough Council is pro-active in commissioning a variety of services from different organisations to provide short breaks, educational, artistic and sporting activities for young people across the borough. For the purposes of the CSA, these activities are classed as 'childcare' for ages 11-19. The activities are held at various times during the evenings, weekends and school holidays throughout the year;

- Halton Play Council ([www.haltonplaycouncil.co.uk](http://www.haltonplaycouncil.co.uk))
- Polaris  
([https://www.polarischilddrensservices.co.uk/project\\_category/emotional-health-wellbeing/](https://www.polarischilddrensservices.co.uk/project_category/emotional-health-wellbeing/))
- Halton Speak out- ([www.haltonspeakout.co.uk](http://www.haltonspeakout.co.uk))

Full information on the different organisations that work with 11-19 year olds in Halton can be found on Halton's [Local Offer](#) and [Family Information Service](#) websites.

## **12. HALTON SEND PROVISION**

Local Authorities have a legal responsibility to publish a Local Offer. Schools and early years providers must provide information for parents on how they support children with SEND and should regularly review and evaluate the quality and breadth of the support they offer. The [Local Offer](#) is published on the Halton Borough Council website.

In addition, childcare providers can apply for 'Top-up Funding'. The purpose of this funding is to support providers to address the needs of individual children with SEND. Currently, there are three opportunities a year for providers to apply for Top-up Funding. Once awarded, the funding remains in place for twelve months.

Halton's Families Information Service (FIS) offers a Brokerage Service to parents, which helps to find suitable childcare for their child's disability/additional needs.

Table 17 gives details from the Childcare Surveys regarding how many children were attending various types of childcare during week commencing 17<sup>th</sup> May 2021, who were on a SEND Support Plan or in receipt of an Education Health Care Plan.

**Table 17** Number of children attending childcare with SEND

	Number of children who:	
	were on a Support Plan?	have an EHCP?
Day Nurseries	135	16
Pre-schools	57	8
Childminders	0	0
Out of School Clubs	10	4
Maintained Nursery Schools	24	6
Nursery Classes/Special Schools	7	5
Primary Academies	9	1
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>242</b>	<b>40</b>

Source: Childcare Provider Surveys 2021

### 13. DISABILITY ACCESS FUND (DAF)

From April 2017, the Government introduced the Disability Access Fund (DAF) for early years providers, to support children with disabilities and/or special educational needs.

DAF should be used by early years providers to make reasonable adjustments to their settings and/or help build inclusive capacity (this may be for the child in question or to benefit children as a whole attending the setting). Detailed information about the DAF eligibility criteria, entitlement, documentary evidence required, procedure, payment and application process can be found in the DAF section on the Local Offer Website.

The DAF funding is a one-off payment of £615 per year, which is paid directly to the childcare provider. It is available to 3 and 4 year olds who are in receipt of Disability Living Allowance (DLA) and who are claiming FEYE.

Table 18 below shows the number of children who have received DAF, since its introduction in 2017.

**Table 18**  
**Number of Children who have received DAF each term**

Term	Number of children who have received DAF
Summer 2017	4
Autumn 2017	28
Spring 2018	15
Summer 2018	55
Autumn 2018	17
Spring 2019	13
Summer 2019	30
Autumn 2019	16
Spring 2020	17
Summer 2020	10
Autumn 2020	11
Spring 2021	19
Summer 2021	13

Source: Synergy Database

#### 14. AFFORDABILITY OF HALTON CHILDCARE

This section gives details of the average prices for the various sectors as at July 2021.

DAY NURSERIES	Full Day 10 hrs £ 2020	Full Day 10 hrs £ 2021	Half Day/ Session 5hrs £ 2020	Half Day/ Session 5 hrs £ 2021	Weekly £ 50hrs £ 2020	Weekly £ 50hrs £ 2021
Halton overall	43.83	44.58	26.47	26.06	209.43	209.00
Runcorn	45.69	46.08	27.75	28.41	212.01	215.80
Widnes	42.12	43.07	25.18	25.86	207.04	200.50

Not all providers gave this information Halton Childcare Provider Surveys 2021 and FIS

PRE-SCHOOLS	3 Hour Session Price (for 3 and 4 Year Olds not entitled to FEYE) £ 2020	3 Hour Session Price (for 3 and 4 Year Olds not entitled to FEYE) £ 2021
Halton overall	11.00	11.54
Runcorn	11.48	11.58
Widnes	9.40	11.41

Not all providers gave this information Halton Childcare Provider Surveys 2021 and FIS



OUT OF SCHOOL CLUBS	Breakfast Club £ 2020	Breakfast Club £ 2021	3-6pm/ 6.30pm £ 2020	3-6pm/ 6.30pm £ 2021
<b>Halton overall</b>	<b>4.76</b>	<b>4.74</b>	<b>9.49</b>	<b>9.49</b>
<b>Runcorn</b>	<b>5.16</b>	<b>5.13</b>	<b>9.36</b>	<b>9.56</b>
<b>Widnes</b>	<b>4.40</b>	<b>4.43</b>	<b>9.60</b>	<b>9.43</b>

*Not all providers gave this information Halton Childcare Provider Surveys 2021*

HOLIDAY CLUBS	Full Day £ 2020	Full Day £ 2021	Half Day £ 2020	Half Day £ 2021
<b>Halton overall</b>	<b>23.70</b>	<b>24.50</b>	<b>13.80</b>	<b>14.38</b>
<b>Runcorn</b>	<b>23.18</b>	<b>24.00</b>	<b>13.68</b>	<b>14.60</b>
<b>Widnes</b>	<b>25.33</b>	<b>25.25</b>	<b>13.50</b>	<b>14.00</b>

*Not all providers gave this information Halton Childcare Provider Surveys 2021*

CHILDMINDERS	HOURLY RATE 2020 £	HOURLY RATE 2021 £
<b>Halton</b>	<b>4.62</b>	<b>4.65</b>

*Not all providers gave this information*

*Source: Halton Childcare Provider Surveys 2021 and FIS*

**Table 19**  
**Average Charges Comparison Table**

Table 19 gives the Halton average rates for 2021 compared to the North West and England averages.

	Day Nursery 10hrs per day £ (age under 3)	Day Nursery 25hrs per week £ (age under 3)	Day Nursery 50hrs per week £	Childminder Hourly Rates £	After School 3 hour session £
<b>Halton average</b>	<b>44.58</b>	<b>104.40</b>	<b>209.00</b>	<b>4.65</b>	<b>9.49</b>
<b>North West average</b>	<b>44.37</b>	<b>120.25</b>	<b>221.86</b>	<b>3.99</b>	<b>10.34</b>
<b>England average</b>	<b>51.62</b>	<b>134.73</b>	<b>258.08</b>	<b>4.60</b>	<b>12.51</b>

*Source: Halton Childcare Provider Surveys 2021  
Coram Family and Childcare - Childcare Survey 2021*

The above table shows that the average Halton day nursery daily rates (10 hours per day) is higher than the North West but lower than the England average.

Halton's 25 and 50 hours per week are lower than the North West and England averages.

Halton childminders average hourly rates are above the North West and England averages.

A three hour after school session in Halton, costs less than the North West and England averages.

## 15. SUSTAINABILITY

All childcare providers need to ensure they remain financially sustainable by ensuring they have sufficient children attending each term to cover their costs. However, childcare also needs to be affordable to parents.

To help providers with marketing their vacant places, the Families Information Service offers free advice to parents detailing local childcare providers suitable to their needs.

The FEYE funding rates for 2, 3 and 4 year olds paid to providers are determined by the amount of income received from the Government each financial year.

In April 2017, as part of the 3 and 4 year old FEYE funding, Halton introduced an additional 'Quality Supplement', which is paid to providers who have staff with a Level 5+ relevant childcare qualification.

## 16. STAFFING

Staffing costs are the largest expense for childcare providers and increase each year. Staff must be paid at least the minimum wage. An additional expense is the recent introduction of the Work Place Pension scheme. This will have financial implications for childcare providers regarding their sustainability.

A common difficulty childcare providers have is recruiting high quality, well experienced staff. Staff of this calibre expect higher wages, however, the childcare sector is traditionally amongst one of the lowest paid professions. Consequently, young people are not taking up childcare as a career.

Table 20 gives details of the number of staff employed in the PVI sector and whether male or female:

**Table 20**  
**Number of Staff Employed**

	Staffing		
	Total	Female	Male
Pre-schools	149	146	3
Day Nurseries	440	430	10
Out of School Clubs	128	122	6
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>717</b>	<b>698</b>	<b>19</b>
<b>TOTALS %</b>		<b>97%</b>	<b>3%</b>

Source: Childcare Surveys 2021

## 17. AVERAGE HOURLY RATES OF PAY – PVI SECTOR

	Manager £	Deputy/ Supervisor £	Room Leader/ Senior (L3+) £	Level 3 Assistant £	Level 2 Assistant £
<b>Day Nurseries</b>	<b>13.30</b>	<b>11.09</b>	<b>9.91</b>	<b>9.39</b>	<b>9.01</b>

Source – Childcare Provider Surveys 2021 but not all settings provided this information

	Manager £	Deputy/ Supervisor £	Senior Practitioner (L3+) £	Level 3 Assistant £	Level 2 Assistant £
<b>Pre-schools</b>	<b>12.46</b>	<b>10.39</b>	<b>9.62</b>	<b>9.09</b>	<b>8.06</b>

Source – Childcare Provider Surveys 2021 but not all settings provided this information

	Manager £	Deputy/ Supervisor £	Level 3 Assistant £	Level 2 Assistant £
<b>Out of Schools</b>	<b>10.93</b>	<b>9.61</b>	<b>9.03</b>	<b>8.30</b>

Source – Childcare Provider Surveys 2021 but not all clubs provided this information

## 18. EARLY YEARS PUPIL PREMIUM (EYPP)

In April 2015, the Government introduced Early Years Pupil Premium (EYPP). This is additional funding designed to narrow the attainment gap between young children from low-income families and their peers.

Early Years Providers receive an extra £302 per year, paid termly, for each eligible 3 and 4 year old claiming the Universal Hours of the Free Early Years Entitlement (FEYE). This is dependent upon the family receiving one of the following:

- Income Support
- Income-based Jobseeker's Allowance
- Income-related Employment and Support Allowance
- Support under part VI of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999
- The guaranteed element of State Pension Credit
- Child Tax Credit (provided they are not also entitled to Working Tax Credit and have an annual gross income of no more than £16,190)
- Working Tax Credit run-on, which is paid for 4 weeks after they stop qualifying for Working Tax Credit
- Universal Credit – For places starting in the summer term of 2018 (on or after 1st April 2018), or any subsequent term, if a parent is entitled to Universal Credit they must have an annual net earned income equivalent to and not exceeding £7,400, assessed on up to three of the parent's most recent Universal Credit assessment periods, or,
- They are currently being looked after by a local authority in England or Wales
- They have left care in England or Wales through:

- an adoption order
- a special guardianship order
- a child arrangements order

To ensure the funding is being utilised effectively, Ofsted inspectors will look at how settings are using the funding to help disadvantaged pupils and 'narrow the gap'.

When evaluating the achievement of pupils, inspectors will consider how well:

- Pupils make progress relative to their starting points
- Pupils are prepared for the next stage of their education
- Gaps are narrowing between the performance of different groups of pupils
- Pupils who are eligible for the EYPP have achieved since joining the setting

Once a child is eligible for EYPP, the childcare providers will receive the funding each term until the child moves into Reception Class.

## **19. FLEXIBILITY OF HALTON CHILDCARE**

This section provides details on how the various childcare sectors offer flexibility, especially for those parents working irregular hours.

### **Childminders**

There are currently 71 Ofsted Registered childminders in Halton (37 in Runcorn and 34 in Widnes).

Childminders can care for up to six children aged under 8 years of age – usually no more than one under 1 year old and two between the ages of 1-5 years old. They can also care for a number of children over the age of 8. If they work with another childminder or have an assistant, they can care for more.

Childminders in Halton offer a flexible service to suit parent's needs, in particular, with regards to early starts and late finishes. They provide breakfast, after school and holiday care services.

Many of the childminders delivering the FEYE are able to offer all, or some, of the FEYE hours. They also offer a drop off/pick up service to pre-schools/day nurseries/nursery schools/classes and deliver wrap-around care.

Opening hours for Halton childminders generally range between 7am-6pm, some also try to accommodate shift patterns.

**Table 21 – Number of Childminders Registered to Deliver the FEYE**

<b>NUMBER OF CHILDMINDERS REGISTERED TO DELIVER THE FEYE</b>					
	<b>Summer 2017</b>	<b>Summer 2018</b>	<b>Summer 2019</b>	<b>Summer 2020</b>	<b>Summer 2021</b>
<b>Number of Ofsted Registered Childminders</b>	<b>96</b>	<b>84</b>	<b>82</b>	<b>76</b>	<b>71</b>
<b>Number of Childminders set up to deliver FEYE</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>49</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>56</b>	<b>46</b>
<b>% of Childminders set up to deliver FEYE</b>	<b>47%</b>	<b>58%</b>	<b>61%</b>	<b>74%</b>	<b>65%</b>

### **Day Nurseries**

All 25 day nurseries (including the two maintained) offer full day care to children between the ages of 0-5 years. They generally open 8am-6pm (however, some do open earlier/later).

All day nurseries in Halton offer the Free Early Years Entitlement.

Approximately 83% of the day nurseries extend the Free Early Years Entitlement over more than 38 weeks.

In Halton, 5 day nurseries also offer breakfast, after school and holiday care for children aged between 4-11+ years of age. This has reduced by two since the last CSA was produced. These two nurseries have stopped offering this service due to lack of demand and hope this is a temporary occurrence due to the pandemic.

### **Pre-schools**

All 25 Halton pre-schools offer the Free Early Years Entitlement (FEYE). The majority are open for morning and afternoon sessions, however, a few only open for either morning or afternoons. All open term time only and are therefore able to offer the Early Years Free Entitlement over 38 weeks. Of the 25 pre-schools, 19 offer 30 hours.

Flexibility is further increased as 13 pre-schools also offer a lunch club. This enables parents to use their free entitlement for part of the day and pay for any additional hours, at a considerably lower rate than a day nursery.

Three pre-schools also have before and after school clubs on the same site. This enables families to extend their daily childcare usage for more hours, which gives the child consistency of care. These families can split some of their 30 hours (if entitled) between the breakfast/after school club and pre-school.

## Out of School and Holiday Clubs

Halton currently have 23 registered Out of School Clubs and 9 Holiday Clubs. Since the last CSA, two clubs have closed down permanently and two are still registered with Ofsted but are not currently offering a service. We are unsure, at this point, if these will be permanent closures. Their numbers have not been included in the supply figures for this CSA or in the overall numbers in Table 3 (See page 13).

Opening times for breakfast clubs range between 7:30am-9am, and after school clubs generally run between 3pm-6pm.

Some primary schools in Halton run their own breakfast clubs. The majority of remaining primary schools have access to either an independently run (Ofsted registered) breakfast club on the school site or, off-site registered OSCs/childminders who offer breakfast clubs and a drop-off service.

The majority of primary schools offer extra-curricular or after school activities ranging from 1-2 sessions per week, for up to 5 sessions per week. Many of these activities are free and reduce demand for formal after school care run by Ofsted registered clubs.

Families may use after school activity clubs for their childcare needs as they are usually less expensive or, in some cases, free of charge. However, these clubs are not consistent as they may not cover the whole term and can be cancelled at short notice. These activities can reduce demand for formal OSC care.

Holiday Clubs generally open between 7:30/8:00am and 6:00/6.30pm.

*\*Source: Childcare Provider Surveys 2021*

## 20. CHANGE IN CHILDCARE PLACES SINCE LAST CSA AND PROJECTED NEW PLACES

Table 22 below gives details from the Childcare Surveys regarding whether the PVI sector intend to create more places or open further settings in Halton, in the next 18 months:

**Table 22**  
**Changes in Childcare Places**

Provider Type	Future plans to expand			Opening another setting		
	Yes	No plans at present	No plans at all	Yes	Maybe	No
Pre-schools	0	62.5%	37.5%	0	4%	96%
Day Nurseries	12.5%	41.5%	46%	8%	12%	80%
Out of Schools Clubs	5%	32%	63%	0	0	100%

*Source – Childcare Provider Surveys 2021*

This section details any settings who have closed, opened, or are hoping to open, since the last CSA.

*Note: The number of places for any settings which have already closed have been deducted from the Supply figures, however, any new settings **due** to open have not been included in the Supply and Demand Tables in Section 11.*

### **Day Nurseries**

A new day nursery in Farnworth Ward, registered for approximately 84 children aged between 0-4 years, opened in summer 2021.

An existing day nursery in Farnworth Ward has received planning permission to extend, which will accommodate approximately an extra 48, 3 and 4 year olds.

One Day Nursery closed in Hough Green ward in 2020. However, the building has subsequently been bought and is being developed/re-furbished into a new day nursery.

A Day Nursery in Mersey ward has had an extension. From September 2021 the nursery will be able to accommodate a further 33 pre-school children, taking overall capacity for the nursery to 91.

### **Out of School/Holiday Clubs**

One Out of School Club has closed in Heath Ward.

An Out of School Club closed in Beechwood ward, however, another OSC has been set up in the same ward.

We have a proposed new OSC in Mersey ward.

One existing OSC based in Grange ward has submitted plans to extend enabling them to accommodate an additional 38 children.

### **Sessional Care**

Two pre-schools have closed permanently, one in Mersey ward and one in Appleton ward. Neither of these closures have been due to the pandemic.

A Pre-school in Halton Brook Ward, which were looking into the possibility of expanding their capacity to provide care for under 2's, have put these plans on hold due to the pandemic.

One primary school has opened their own pre-school in Hough Green ward.

### **Childminders**

The number of registered childminders in Halton has reduced from 76 to 71.

## **21. HELP WITH CHILDCARE COSTS**

The cost of childcare can be a major expense and this may be a deciding factor in whether parents return to work or training and, if so, whether they use 'formal' (registered or approved) or 'informal' (family and friends) childcare.

Financial help is available, providing the childcare provider is a:

- Registered childminder/play scheme/nursery or club
- Childminder with an Ofsted registered Childminding Agency
- Registered school

The Government introduced the '[Childcare Choices](#)' website which provides details of all the financial help available towards the cost of childcare. This is a 'one-stop shop' which allows parents/carers to see if they are eligible and, if so, to apply directly on-line. The website contains information regarding:

- 15 hour free childcare for two year olds (FEYE)
- 15 hours universal childcare for all 3 and 4 year olds (FEYE)
- 30 hours extended entitlement for 3 and 4 year olds of working parents (FEYE)
- Tax Free Childcare\*
- Tax Credits towards Childcare
- Universal Credit towards Childcare
- Financial support whilst studying

The website also has a calculator, which gives estimates of amount of help available to enable parents decide which scheme is the most beneficial to them financially.

The date the child becomes eligible for FEYE depends on the child's birthday.

If child's birthday is between	Child becomes eligible
1 January to 31 March	<b>The beginning of term on or after 1 April</b>
1 April to 31 August	<b>The beginning of term on or after 1 September</b>
1 September to 31 December	<b>The beginning of term on or after 1 January</b>

**Example:** If child was born on 15<sup>th</sup> April, the child is eligible from the next term, which starts September.

Since September 2018, Foster Carers who work the equivalent of 16 hours on minimum wage, outside of their foster caring role, may also be entitled to claim 30 hours childcare (subject to specific criteria). Foster Carers should contact their Social Worker for more information.



## 22. DETAILS OF WHICH OUT OF SCHOOL CLUBS PICK UP FROM WHICH SCHOOLS

Below is a list of all Halton schools, split into Runcorn and Widnes, giving details of which out of school clubs drop off/pick up from them (as at August 2021):

### RUNCORN

RUNCORN SCHOOLS	Out of School Clubs who offer a pick up/drop off service to this school
Astmoor Primary	Acorn Link Club
Beechwood Primary	
Bridgewater Park Academy	Acorn Link Club
Brookvale Primary	Brookvale OSC ( <i>on school site</i> )
Castle View Primary	Grange Link Club ( <i>pick up only</i> ) Willow Link Club
Cavendish High School	
Daresbury Primary	Daresbury Kids Club ( <i>on school site</i> )
Gorsewood Primary	
Hallwood Park Primary	
Halton Lodge Primary	Willow Link Club
Hillview Primary	New Shoots Link Club ( <i>on school site</i> ) Willow Link Club
Moore Primary	Cygnets of Moore ( <i>on school site</i> )
Murdishaw West Primary	
Ormiston Bolingbroke Academy	
Our Lady Mother of the Saviour	Palace Fields Link Club
Palace Fields Primary Academy	Palace Fields Link Club ( <i>on school site</i> )
Pewithall Primary	Willow Link Club
Runcorn All Saints	
St Augustine's Primary	Acorn Link Club
St Berteline's Primary	
St Chad's High School	
St Clement's Primary	Willow Link Club
St Edward's Primary	Willow Link Club
St Martin's Primary	
St Mary's Primary	Acorn Link Club
The Brow Primary	Willow Link Club
The Grange Academy	Grange Link Club ( <i>on school site</i> )
The Heath High School	
The Holy Spirit Primary	Willow Link Club
Victoria Road Primary	Early Learners OSC
Westfield Primary	
Weston Point Primary	Willow Link Club
Weston Primary	
Windmill Hill Primary	Windmill Hill Nursery ( <i>on school site</i> )
Woodside Primary	Willow Link Club

## WIDNES

WIDNES SCHOOLS	Out of School Clubs who offer a pick up/drop off service to this school
All Saints Upton Primary	Upton Link Club <i>(on school site)</i>
Ashley Special School	
Brookfields Special School	
Chesnut Lodge Special School	
Ditton Primary	Early Learners Link Club
Fairfield Infants	Kids Space Ltd <i>(on school site)</i>
Fairfield Juniors	Kids Space Ltd <i>(on school site)</i>
Farnworth Primary	Wizzkids <i>(on school site)</i>
Hale Primary	Kids Club Hale <i>(on school site)</i>
Halebank Primary	
Lunts Heath Primary	Early Learners Link Club
Moorfield Primary	Funky Monkey's Kids Club
Oakfield Primary	
Our Lady of Perpetual Succour	Our Lady's 1st Steps Link Club <i>(on school site)</i>
Simms Cross Primary	
St Basil's Primary	St Basil's Link Club <i>(on school site)</i>
St Bede's Infants	The Village Care Club <i>(on school site)</i> Early Learners Link Club
St Bede's Juniors	Early Learners Link Club
St Gerard's Primary	
St John Fisher Primary	St John Fisher Care Club <i>(school site)</i>
St Michael's Primary	St Michael's Link Club <i>(on school site)</i>
St Michaels with St Thomas (previously known as Spinney)	
St Peter & Paul High School	
The Bankfield High School	
Wade Deacon High School	
Widnes Academy	Jiggy's Childcare (West Bank)

*Any out of school clubs who are still registered with Ofsted but are not currently operating a service, have been removed from these lists*

*Note: Some childminders will also offer a pick up/drop off service to the schools in Runcorn and Widnes*

## 23. 'AT A GLANCE' TABLE

Table 23 shows 'at a glance' which areas have sufficient/insufficient places to meet demand in each age range/childcare category.

Please note: some childcare sectors are measured by Children's Centre Reach Areas and others are measured by town.

**Table 23 – 'At a Glance' Table**

**Key:** ✓ = Sufficiency X = Insufficiency (includes number of places)

Ward	0-2 Year Old Places <i>(measured by town)</i>	2 Year Old Places FEYE <i>(measured by CCRA area)</i>	3 & 4 Year Old FEYE Universal hours <i>(measured by CCRA area)</i>	3 & 4 Year Old FEYE Extended hours <i>(measured by CCRA area)</i>	3 & 4 Year Old Wrap-Around Care <i>(measured by town)</i>	5-10 After School Care <i>(measured by CCRA area)</i>	5- 10 Year Old Holiday Care <i>(measured by town)</i>
RUNCORN	✓				✓		✓
WIDNES	X (-73)				✓		✓
BROOKVALE CCRA		✓	✓	✓		✓	
HALTON BROOK CCRA		X (-30 places)	✓	✓		✓	
HALTON LODGE CCRA		✓	✓	✓		✓	
WINDMILL HILL CCRA		✓	✓	X (-81 places)		X (-16 places)	
DITTON CCRA		✓	✓	✓		✓	
KINGSWAY CCRA		X (-60 places)	✓	✓		✓	
UPTON CCRA		✓	X (-97 places)	X (-68 places)		X (-8 places)	
WARRINGTON CCRA		✓	✓	✓		✓	

## 24. GAPS IN PROVISION

Table 23 indicates that the majority of areas in Halton have sufficient supply of childcare places in all age ranges except for the following:

- Widnes overall has a deficit of approximately 73 places for 0-2 year olds.
- Halton Brook CCRA has a deficit of approximately 30 places for funded 2 year olds.
- Windmill Hill CCRA has a deficit of approximately 81 extended entitlement places and 16 places for out of school care for 5-10 year olds.
- Kingsway CCRA has a deficit of approximately 60 places for funded 2 year olds.
- Upton CCRA has a deficit of approximately 97 universal FEYE places, 68 places for Extended Hours and 8 places for out of school care for 5-10 year olds.

However, it is important to remember that parents do not always access childcare in the ward where they live and children do not always attend a school in the ward where they live.

### Halton Brook CCRA

With regards to the shortage of funded 2 year old places in Halton Brook CCRA, the Two Year Old Funding Officer reports that it has always been possible to find an alternative place in the surrounding area. Furthermore, if parents have requested a particular setting where there are no available spaces, they have been happy to wait for availability.

### Windmill Hill CCRA

With regards to the shortage of Universal places in the Windmill Hill CCRA, families are willing to travel to other wards for their FEYE. This may mean accessing a setting, which is outside the Windmill Hill CCRA or even out of the borough.

Concerning the shortage of out of School places in this area, local knowledge would support the fact that, in reality, no such shortage exists. In addition, the majority of primary schools offer after school activities, which parents may use as childcare.

### Kingsway CCRA

With regards to the shortage of funded 2 year old places in the Kingsway CCRA, a new nursery has recently opened in Farnworth Ward (summer 2021). Although this new nursery is not situated in the Kingsway CCRA, geographically it is located close by and parents may be willing to travel. Their current supply figures have been included in the tables, however, the nursery are classing themselves as only currently open for Phase One of their refurbishment. Phase Two, which should be completed in the near future, will include another building and will therefore increase overall capacity in the general Farnworth/Kingsway areas.

### Upton CCRA

The shortage of 3 & 4 year old FEYE places (both Universal and Extended) in the Upton CCRA would appear to be due to the expansion of new housing estates in that area.

These figures appear high this year due to the closure of a large day nursery last Christmas. However, the building is currently being re-developed and will be opening again as a new nursery in 2022.

In recent years, prospective childcare providers have considered developing childcare in this CCRA, notably the Birchfield ward. However, no suitable buildings appeared to be available and it was proving too costly to buy land to build premises.

However, the new Day Nursery which has recently opened in Farnworth ward will help to alleviate the shortage of 3 and 4 year old places in the Upton RA. In particular it will help the Birchfield ward, as Birchfield ward is next to Farnworth Ward (see map on page 7) and parents are willing to travel across wards to receive their free childcare.

In addition, Birchfield and Hough Green wards are both on the edge of neighbouring authorities e.g. St Helens, Knowsley and Warrington. They are also in close proximity to the M62 motorway. This means that if parents work further afield, they may choose to claim their Universal/Extended FEYE in a childcare setting nearer to their work, thereby reducing demand for places in Halton.

With regards to the shortage of out of School places, local knowledge would support the fact that, in reality, no such shortage exists. In addition, the majority of primary schools offer after school activities, which parents may use as childcare.

#### **DEFICIT OF WRAPAROUND PLACES FOR 3 AND 4 YEAR OLDS IN WINDMILL HILL, UPTON AND KINGSWAY WARDS**

As mentioned in the Wraparound childcare section on page 20, we may have over-estimated demand for Wraparound care, as any parents who are working the equivalent of 16 hours on minimum wage will be entitled to 30 hours. They will, therefore, use less Wraparound and more Extended Hours. It is expected that in the future, demand for Wraparound places will reduce and the supply of places allocated for Wraparound can be added to the Extended Hours supply. This will result in a larger stock of places.

We currently have an excess of 116 wraparound places in Runcorn and 27 in Widnes, which could be converted to extended hour places, if required.

#### **25. COVID-19 – EFFECTS ON CHILDCARE AND SUSTAINABILITY**

The outbreak of the Coronavirus (Covid-19) pandemic has radically changed the way we live our lives. It is still too early to know the full extent of the impact Covid-19 will have on the Early Years childcare sector. However, it is inevitable that some repercussions will be felt.

Early Years providers in Halton have already faced challenges over the past eighteen months due to Covid-19. The main challenges have been around staffing/recruitment, learning and development, supporting children with SEND and reduction in occupancy (See table below).

Type of Setting	What are the Key Challenges providers are facing as a result of COVID-19?			
	Staffing /Recruitment	Learning and Development	Supporting children with SEND	Reduction in Occupancy
Pre-Schools	16%	16%	36%	52%
Day Nurseries	50%	29%	37.5%	33%
Childminders	0	10%	0	21%
Out of School Clubs	22%	13%	4%	57%

*\*Percentages based on number of settings who returned their CSA surveys*

### STAFFING/RECRUITMENT

Settings have reported staffing and recruitment issues, such as:-

- Staff sickness due to Covid 19 and/or isolating has created staffing shortages and settings have had to reduce the numbers of children who can attend or, in extreme circumstances, had to close temporarily;
- Staff working in bubbles has resulted in the possibility of having too many staff in one room and the inability to move staff around to cover staff absences in other rooms;
- Not being able to release staff to attend training;
- The bridge toll has had a major impact on people travelling from Merseyside;
- There is a general difficulty in being able to recruit suitably qualified staff.

### LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT

- Children not in setting for 6 months therefore unable to assess development.

### SUPPORTING CHILDREN WITH SEND

Early Years providers are seeing an influx of children with SEND coming into their settings, especially in the areas of Communication and Language and SEMH. Other issues include:-

- Increase in number of children with SEND due to Covid 19;
- Support services have been either reduced or re-deployed, e.g. EP Consultation Groups;
- Outside agencies have not been able to come in and observe children and provide support to settings. Whilst SEND children are supported as much as possible via online platforms, the results are not the same as seeing a child in person and working with other professionals being able to visit the setting;
- Transition has been very challenging as visits to providers have been restricted due to the pandemic;
- Reduction in income has meant that some settings are unable to offer as much 1:1 time as they would normally do;
- Staffing levels mean 1-1 support can be difficult;
- Delayed referrals;

## REDUCTION IN OCCUPANCY

Settings are seeing a reduction in numbers and less children attending than previous years. Settings have suggested the following reasons for this:-

- Impact of Covid-19;
- Loss of parental confidence due to the pandemic;
- Parental anxiety around infection;
- Change in parental circumstances, e.g. working from home, resulting in parents requesting fewer hours for childcare;
- Low birth rate;

The impact of a reduction in occupancy has been:-

- Reduction in income for setting;
- Reduction in services being offered;
- Laying off staff/staff working fewer sessions;
- Settings operating on minimum ratios;
- Loss of income has meant there has been no money available to purchase additional resources to support children.

## KEY CHALLENGES

Settings also reported other key challenges:-

- Remembering to complete the daily/weekly Covid updates;
  - Parental Anxiety around infection – additional phone calls home to check in with vulnerable families and offer support remotely;
  - Increased expenditure to cover cleaning costs and PPE;
  - Not being able to fundraise. Fundraising usually pays for all the extras such as party days, trips, visitors to the setting, new equipment. It also helps keep financial reserves up in case of emergencies such as redundancy, major building work. The receipt of the LCR grant has helped alleviate some of this;
  - Insurance does not cover Covid, so any closures mean loss of income to the business. This impacts on staff as settings are then unable to cover the cost of staff isolating and not all staff are able to claim the government payment;
  - Constant disruption to operating and fear of what is happening next;
  - Settling in children who have spent months at home;
  - When parents returned to work after being furloughed, this resulted in numbers rising dramatically and some settings struggled to meet demand, especially for 2yr funded places;
- In addition to the above, Childminders have identified the following issues:-
- Temporary closures and loss of income;
  - Parents giving notice but refusing to pay notice period;
  - Schools not being open due to children staying at home through lockdown;
  - Threat of isolation - concerns over parents moving children to another setting as a result of Covid and the financial impact this will have on sustainability.

In addition to the above, Out of School Clubs have identified the following issues:-

- Increased staffing costs due to having to operate in bubbles;
- Extended hours required as schools have implemented staggered start/finish times;
- The users of Out of School Clubs are working parents that do not receive any help towards their childcare so this is not a priority. Consequently, many parents have made alternative cheaper arrangements;
- Families' incomes have dropped but cost of childcare has remained the same;
- Rise in cost of running setting, extra equipment, and extra staff, supporting isolating staff, stress, and paperwork, has made the small budget and running costs outweigh the income generated.

Type of Setting	Percentage of settings who foresee Sustainability Issues during the following terms		
	Autumn 2021	Spring 2022	Summer 2022
Pre-Schools	24%	24%	20%
Day Nurseries	33%	25%	21%
Childminders	21%	16%	16%
Out of School Clubs	17%	9%	13%

*\*Percentages based on number of settings who returned their CSA surveys*

The main reasons given as to why sustainability may be an issue are as follows:-

- Unusually low numbers for September 21;
- Less demand for places;
- The opening of new childcare provision causing increased competition, whilst the numbers of children are not growing;
- Increasing costs and FEYE payments not rising at a commensurate rate;
- Finances have been significantly stretched due to staff absences, extra cleaning materials, PPE and extra hours for staff to be trained on Covid issues;
- Settings building up large deficits due to the extra costs caused by the pandemic;
- Increase in the minimum wage;
- Waiting lists are not as high as in previous years;
- Smaller numbers of children claiming extended hours compared to last year;
- Settings are making cuts in order to remain sustainable;
- Unsure of demand for the new academic year to sustain current staff;
- Difficult to predict what the future may hold which makes planning very difficult!;
- The demand for childcare is very sporadic. Childminders are finding that contracts for full days are decreasing whilst contracts for part days and 'odd' hours here and there are increasing. For childminders these are always financially viable. This has been made worse by the fact that most parents use the full 30 hours at nurseries and pre-schools;
- Isolation is a constant worry - no income could result in permanent closure;
- Expenditure, such as, rent can be very high and is not sustainable longer term unless numbers increase.



## 26. CONCLUSION

Overall, the Halton Childcare Sufficiency Assessment (CSA) Review 2020-2021 continues to reflect a vibrant, sufficient and high quality Early Years and Childcare market. Despite the pandemic, new provisions are opening up and parents and carers continue to have a wide choice of high quality and affordable childcare services.

At the time of this review the impact of Covid-19 is just beginning to filter through and any potential effects will need to be carefully monitored.

The report does identify some gaps in provision and the Action Plan below details how the Local Authority will work with a range of partners to address these gaps to ensure sufficiency.





## CHILDCARE SUFFICIENCY ASSESSMENT ACTION PLAN 2021-2022

<b>OBJECTIVE 1 – IMPACT OF COVID-19</b>	<b>ACTION REQUIRED</b>	<b>BY WHOM AND WHEN</b>
To continue to monitor the impact of Covid-19 on the childcare sector	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Continue to collect information from our early years providers to gain local intelligence around the impact of Covid-19 through termly sector meetings</li> </ul>	Early Years Team – Termly
<b>OBJECTIVE 2 – GAPS IN PROVISION</b>	<b>ACTION REQUIRED</b>	<b>BY WHOM AND WHEN</b>
Halton Brook and Kingsway CCRA – shortage of 2 Year Old Funded Places	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Continue to monitor DfE estimates.</li> <li>○ Encourage existing providers in this area to expand their provision or re-configure their buildings, if possible, to accommodate more funded 2 Year Olds.</li> <li>○ Encourage new providers to enter the local childcare market in these areas.</li> <li>○ Promote the FEYE funding to childminders with either a Good or Outstanding Ofsted Grade and encourage them to register to deliver the FEYE.</li> </ul>	Early Years Team – ongoing
Windmill Hill and Upton CCRA – shortage of Universal and Extended Entitlement Places for 3 and 4 Year Olds	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Encourage existing providers in these areas to expand their provision or re-configure their buildings, if possible, to accommodate more funded 3 and 4 Year Olds.</li> <li>○ Encourage new providers to enter the local childcare market in these areas.</li> <li>○ Promote the Universal and Extended FEYE funding to childminders and encourage them to register to deliver the FEYE.</li> <li>○ Promote the Extended FEYE funding to maintained nursery schools/classes not currently offering the extended offer.</li> <li>○ Promote the Extended FEYE funding to Out of School Clubs and encourage them to register to deliver the FEYE.</li> </ul>	Early Years Team – ongoing

Windmill Hill and Upton CCRA – shortage of Out of School Places for 5-10 Year Olds	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Encourage existing Out of School Clubs to offer a drop off/pick-up service to the schools where there is no provision.</li> <li>○ Encourage new providers to enter the local childcare market in these areas.</li> <li>○ Ensure schools in these areas make parents aware that they have the 'Right to Request' Wraparound and/or Holiday Care. Schools should work with local providers to offer a service or offer the service themselves. For link to DfE guidance click <a href="#">Here</a></li> </ul>	Early Years Team – ongoing
<b>OBJECTIVE 3 – PROMOTIONAL ACTIVITY</b>	<b>ACTION REQUIRED</b>	<b>BY WHOM AND WHEN</b>
<p>Continue to promote:</p> <p>Free Early Years Entitlement (FEYE) for 2, 3 and 4 Year olds</p> <p>Tax Free Childcare (TFC) to parents and childcare providers</p> <p>Disability Access Fund (DAF) to childcare providers</p> <p>Early Years Pupil Premium (EYPP) to childcare providers</p> <p>Local Offer website to parents of children with SEND</p>	All via literature, social media, HBC Website, outreach events (when possible)	Early Years Team, especially FIS, Local Offer Team - ongoing
<b>OBJECTIVE 4 – ENSURE HALTON CONTINUES TO HAVE A CHOICE OF HIGH QUALITY CHILDCARE IN DIFFERENT AGE GROUPS</b>	<b>ACTION REQUIRED</b>	<b>BY WHOM AND WHEN</b>
Ensure all Halton childcare providers remain high quality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Continue to offer support, guidance and training to existing and new childcare providers regarding EYFS, Safeguarding and Welfare requirements and Learning and Development</li> </ul>	Early Years Team - ongoing, especially the Quality Improvement Officer and the Safeguarding and Welfare Officer

**27. GLOSSARY OF TERMS AND DEFINITIONS**

<b>ABBREVIATION</b>	<b>DEFINITION</b>
CCRA	Children’s Centre Reach Area
CSA	Childcare Sufficiency Assessment
DAF	Disability Access Fund
DfE	Department for Education
DLA	Disability Living Allowance
DWP	Department for Work and Pensions
EHCP	Education Health Care Plan
EYPP	Early Years Pupil Premium
FIS	Families Information Service
FEYE	Free Early Years Entitlement
FTE	Full Time Equivalent
HBC	Halton Borough Council
HCYPSP	Children and Young People Safeguarding Partnership
HMRC	Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs
IMD	Index of Multiple Deprivation
PVI	Private, Voluntary and Independent
Ofsted	Office for Standards in Education
ONS	Office of National Statistics
OSC	Out of School Club
SEND	Special Educational Needs and/or Disabilities

**Definition of a ‘Reach’ Area**

A Reach Area is a number of wards based around a Children’s Centre that is meaningful and accessible to local parents.

**28. REFERENCES**

Halton Children & Young People’s Plan 2018-2021

[www.gov.uk](http://www.gov.uk)

[www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)

Halton Families Information Service

Halton council democracy statistics and census information

Halton’s Synergy Children’s Database (Servelec)

2011 Census

Office of National Statistics

Childcare Provider Surveys 2021

Coram Family and Childcare – Childcare Survey 2021

Child and Family Poverty – Department for Work and Pension Statistics (2011)

Proportion of children in out-of-work benefit households measure for 2014 – Department for Work and Pensions (2015)

Working Together to Safeguard Children (2018)

**29. CONTACTS**

If you would like any further information regarding this CSA Review, contact:

Gail Vaughan-Hodkinson, Early Years Team Lead on 0151 511 8815  
or e-mail: [Gail.vaughan-hodkinson@halton.gov.uk](mailto:Gail.vaughan-hodkinson@halton.gov.uk)

For any general information regarding childcare in Halton, contact:

Families Information Service on 0151 511 7375,  
e-mail: [haltonfis@halton.gov.uk](mailto:haltonfis@halton.gov.uk) or visit: [www.halton.gov.uk/fis](http://www.halton.gov.uk/fis)

For advice on how to set up childcare, see document entitled:

“Local Authority Guide to setting up childcare provision on non-domestic premises”.

Click [Here](#)





**REPORT TO:** Children, Young People & Families Policy and Performance Board

**DATE:** 8<sup>th</sup> November 2021

**REPORTING OFFICER:** Strategic Director, People

**SUBJECT:** Annual Report - Comments, Complaints and Compliments relating to Children's Social Care Services 1<sup>st</sup> April 2020- 31<sup>st</sup> March 2021.

**PORTFOLIO:** Children, Education and Social Care

**WARDS(S):** Borough Wide

## **1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT**

- 1.1 To meet the statutory requirement to publish an Annual Report which provides an analysis on complaints processed under the Children Act 1989, Representation's Procedure and evidence how feedback from service users has been used to improve service delivery.
- 1.2 To provide the Board with an update and feedback on compliments made by clients and positive feedback from workers/professionals relating to Children Services in the People Directorate. This report will demonstrate the positive impact and outcomes on the lives of people accessing services in this Directorate.

## **2.0 RECOMMENDATION: That**

- 2.1 **The reports presented are accepted as the mechanism by which Elected Members can monitor and scrutinise children's social care complaints and compliments.**

## **3.0 SUPPORTING INFORMATION**

- 3.1 The aim of The Children Act 1989 Representations Procedure is for Children and Young People to have their concerns resolved swiftly and wherever possible by the people who provide the service locally.
- 3.2 A complaint may generally be defined as an expression of dissatisfaction or disquiet in relation to an individual child or young person, which requires a response.
- 3.3 There are 4 categories to the representation process.
  - i. Statutory Complaints - the complainant is eligible as stated in the Representations Procedure to make a formal complaint.

- ii. Representations - where a complainant is not eligible under the Statutory Complaints Procedure to make a formal complaint, but their comments are noted and responded to. If it is not a complaint under the Statutory Procedure then the Corporate Complaints procedure may apply. These will often be as complex and take as much time as a statutory complaint and are recorded as Customer Care issues.
- iii. Customer Care issues – can also include advice and guidance, signposting, problem solving and early resolution to prevent complaint escalation.
- iv. Compliments – positive feedback

#### **4.0 POLICY IMPLICATIONS**

- 4.1 Where identified through the complaints process, policies can be amended to improve service delivery. The learning taken from complaints, comments and compliments ensures the ongoing development of services to provide better outcomes for children, young people and their families.
- 4.2 Halton Council is a member of the North West Regional Complaints Managers Group. The aim of the regional groups, which meet bi-monthly, is to provide a forum in which peer professionals can discuss and learn about regional and national issues. Here there are opportunities to develop local practice standards, discuss performance and problem solve. The group also discuss proposed changes to legislation and procedures and prepare consultation responses where necessary.

#### **5.0 RISK ANALYSIS**

- 5.1 Failure to implement an efficient service could result in the Local Authority being challenged for not dealing with complaints in a timely and efficient manner and could result in the customer not receiving a service which could then detrimental to their safety and wellbeing.
- 5.2 Investing in a timely and thorough complaint investigation and response at Stage 1 identifies potential savings for the Local Authority which can prevent the complaints progressing to Stage 2 where there is a cost. It also prevents staff resources being directed to Stage 2 investigations.
- 5.3 Failure to meet the standards as prescribed in the Children Act 1989 Representations Procedure and the Guidance “Getting the Best from Complaints” can potentially impact on the overall findings of an Ofsted Inspection.

#### **6.0 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES**

- 6.1 No matter who makes a complaint or a compliment they receive the same equality of access and provision.



## **7.0 IMPLICATIONS FOR COUNCIL PRIORITIES**

### **7.1 Children and Young People**

The learning taken from complaints and compliments ensures the ongoing development of services to provide better outcomes for children, young people and their families. The transparency of the process enables children, young people and their families to challenge our provision of services if they feel unhappy about any aspect of it and provides independent oversight if required.

### **7.2 Employment, Learning & Skills in Halton**

Any findings from a comment, complaint or compliment relating to this priority will be used to inform the relevant service.

### **7.3 A Healthy Halton**

Any findings from a compliment relating to this priority will be used to inform the relevant service.

### **7.4 A Safer Halton**

Any findings from a compliment relating to this priority will be used to inform the relevant service.

### **7.5 Halton's Urban Renewal**

Any findings from a comment, complaint or compliment relating to this priority will be used to inform the relevant service.

## **8.0 LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS UNDER SECTION 100D OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972**

<b>Document</b>	<b>Place of Inspection</b>	<b>Contact Officer</b>
Representation Procedure 1989	Rutland House	Dorothy Roberts Principal Policy Officer

# Compliments Annual Report

## People Directorate Children's Services

2020 / 21



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## **1. Introduction**

The report details the compliments that have been formally recorded for the period 1 April 2020 to 31 March 2021 in respect of the Children’s Services Department of the People Directorate.

A compliment is “*an expression of praise, commendation, admiration or respect,*” for someone and for something they have done, it is given freely.

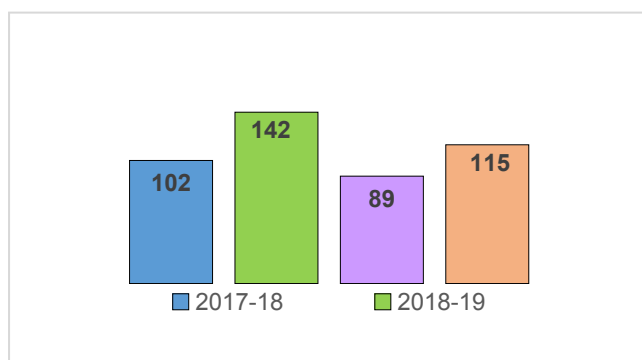
There is a statutory complaint process for Children's Social Care that handles negative feedback and affords customers the opportunity to let us know when we have not performed to their expectation. Complaints get logged, formalised and circulated however, compliments and thanks were often just expressed to one individual and never acknowledged again. It is these comments that make the job rewarding and that measure our success or impact on a family and so this report was developed to capture those positive comments and balance this negative input from complaints, with the positive feedback and compliments that are received.

It's hard to quantify the impact of a compliment, much less to describe its effect in a few bullet points. Nonetheless, here are a few observations about compliments.

- Compliments are a measure of awareness from our Service Users; it is their acknowledgment of the positive relationships developed with staff supporting them and of the good developments and positive effects services have had on their family.
- Staff benefit from receiving compliments, knowing that they are noticed and that they are valued is powerful in motivating continued efforts enhancing their performance and contributing to their improved skills.
- Compliments affirm the right behaviour and actions. If someone is questioning their ability or actions, a compliment can give them a clear sense of their direction. People strive to do more of what brings praise from others, it stimulates and strengthens their purpose and enthusiasm for their work.
- Compliments can be used as a form of quality assurance, on a service level compliments can influence the development or continuation of service provision, identifying the things that need to be kept or identifying what needs to change.



## 2. Customer Feedback Data



There have been 26 more compliments and positive feedback recorded this year.

A number of the compliments make reference to the COVID-19 pandemic and support provided during lockdowns.

### Number of Service Users providing a Compliment for Children Services

	17-18	18-19	19-20	20-21
%	72%	70%	63%	60%
Number	73	100	56	68

### Number of Professionals who provided positive feedback to services

	17-18	18-19	19-20	20-21
%	28%	30%	37%	40%
Number	29	42	33	47

Recognition from external agencies and other internal departments demonstrate good working relationships. Recognising the value of working together and the contribution each makes to achieve positive outcomes for families is a recognition of the excellent work undertaken in Halton.

### How Service User Compliments are received

Electronic communication unsurprisingly given COVID-19 continues to be the most accessible means to provide compliments and positive feedback with;

- 53% using email
- 7 % providing verbal feedback
- 5% purchasing a card
- 24% completing feedback forms
- 3% writing a letter
- 8% via text or Teams CHAT

### Compliments by Operational Department

The Children's Services compliments report relates to the Education, Inclusion & Provision Department (EIP), and the Children and Families Service Department (C&F).

	17-18	18-19	19-20	20-21
C&F	78%	71%	75%	79%
EIP	22%	29%	25%	21%

## 3. Children and Families Service

Year	Total
------	-------

17-18	80
18-19	101
19-20	67
20-21	92

	17-18	18-19	19-20	20-21
<b>CIN</b>	33%	31%	25%	44%
<b>CIC</b>	14%	14%	42%	14%
<b>TAF</b>	53%	55%	33%	42%

### 3.1 Child Protection and Children in Need

1. Email - It was a challenging case but the compliments received from Mum has made it all worthwhile. Mum is care experienced herself and struggled at times with the assessment process in regards to her children. Email from mum - Not sure of the word, but THANK you for being you. You are a brilliant social worker a proper one, and one that is the bench mark for all others, honestly for first time ever I felt heard and understood. THANKYOU. (Client)
2. Email - Just wanted to pass on some comments made about how his involvement and hard work has made some positive differences to a family who are now in position to close to Children Social Care. We completed our last home visit to Y and his mother last night. The case has moved from very complex with some very concerning behaviours presented by Y to one that is now allowing us to confidently recommend closure. During our visit we talked about how things have been in the past compared to how the family think they are now and mum was very complimentary to the help and support she has received from him. She said she felt they would not be in the position they are now if it wasn't for his support and advice. (Professional)
3. Email - The social services (yourself) and the schools have been a great help and I appreciate it, if I didn't at first, my head was all over the place. (Client)
4. Email - Just to pass on that I appreciated her work around today's conference. Her report was clear, well-structured and reasoned. Her outline plan was excellent and written in a good tone. She presented the case well and came across as a solid case-manager, with a good working relationship. (Professional)
5. Email - I know we didn't necessarily agree on Tuesday, but I just wanted to thank you for your part in our collaborative approach to the expectations document on Wednesday. I thought we worked really well & efficiently together on it – despite the later criticism! (Professional)
6. Email - I just wanted to say, I am so impressed with the way in which she has just dealt with client in the virtual viability call. The client tried her best to avoid answering direct questions and was pretty challenging to interview but she was firm, to the point, calm and persistent in order to get answers to the questions being asked. An extremely good technique, excellent interview style used perfectly. Very well done. (Professional)
7. Email - I think it is worthy of recognition all of the hard work that she has put in to his case, he clearly has a good relationship with her and her dedication and commitments is always apparent. She maintains regular contact with all professionals involved to share all relevant information in order to safeguard him. (Professional)
8. Email - She came into our lives after malicious allegations from their father, but I am thankful for this, if he had not I would never of met her. That woman is like an Angel to me and my children. Upon meeting her I realise I was a broken women without her I am not sure if I would of woken up and realised this, by being strong, caring and mainly amazing at her job this woman made me see not just my sense, but my worth! And that is something I cannot thank her enough for. My children are happy, I am happy and I believe that is all down to her, without her I would still be plodding through life whereas now, I am waiting to start my diploma

in Law at university and my driving lessons and be the person I always wanted to be. There were times I cried, times I laughed. I was always worried about the stigma around social services, now I realise without people like her doing the hard job she does there would be a lot more people walking around sad, unhappy and abused. This woman needs to be recognised in my eyes as a hero, as saving me is what she has done. She was strong and always told me straight, some things are hard to hear but I know this was her pushing me to be the real me, better me. When she closed our case I cried because of the impact she has had on our lives, she is a truly a special woman and I could not of asked for a social worker to come in my life that knows her job, knows herself, knows when to pass a tissue and cleaning tips and turn someone's life around. Thank you so much, an email doesn't feel enough but I couldn't get it out through crying last time we met, I hope you get the recognition you deserve, what might seem so little to some, means so much to others. Thank you (Client)

9. Email - I spoke to him just after the meeting yesterday to check that he understood what had been said and was happy that he knew what was happening. He told me it was the best meeting he has been involved in with your clients as she explained everything very clearly. (Professional)
10. Email - I just wanted to pay a massive compliment to him on the work he has completed on my case. The feedback from the father was that he was able to point out useful strategies that made him think twice about his behaviour and understand issues from his past he hadn't previously addressed. The father said he found him relatable and the work completed has stuck in his mind which he was able to relay in my risk assessment of him. A complex case so well done. (Professional)
11. Email - I want to send this email to thank her for everything she has done for my family she is an amazing social worker and has always been here when we have needed her. It will be a great loss to us when she leaves and I want you and her to know we appreciate absolutely everything she does. So thank you very much. (Client)
12. Email - Just want to let you know that I'm gutted you are leaving the authority! Where are you going? Whoever they are, they are very lucky to have you, as I could always rely on you to get the job done and keep me informed along the way! It's been lovely working with you. (Professional)
13. Text - Thank you for all you've done for us, wouldn't be this far if it wasn't for you. (Client)
14. Email - I hope you and your team all manage to get some rest during the summer and a massive thank you to all the hard work of everyone in the iCART team and for everything they do for our students. (Professional)
15. Verbal - Just emailing to say that when I spoke with mother she wanted to say how happy she was with the work the social worker and community support worker were doing for her and her family. She commented that both were meeting their needs to a really high standard and were going 'above and beyond' for them. (Professional)
16. Text - We will miss you when you are no longer involved with us. I know my daughters will always keep their worry monsters now and remember you which is lovely. You have made a big difference to the children's lives with everything you do so, thank you. X (Client)
17. Verbal - Thank you for everything you have done, we know it hasn't been easy, and I know we have had our ups and our downs, I really appreciate everything you have done for my kids. (Client)
18. Verbal - Just thought I would share that the Judge commended you in his judgement on the three older children. He commended you on your consistent and quality work throughout these proceedings (something that he commented is a rare occurrence). He stated she

managed to build up a trusting relationship with all involved especially the oldest child and even parents. Well done. (Professional)

19. Email - At a time when everything in our world has brought new challenges and difficulties for everyone, I just wanted to say what an absolute star she has been to work with. I am aware that she has been very busy, not unlike others, but the number of times our paths have crossed in recent weeks with a large number of assessments for various family members at incredibly short notice has been too many to even count right now! Each time, I have been impressed by her calm, measured approach, knowledge of her children as well as her commitment to get things right for those children. It's a real pleasure to work with her. (Professional)
20. Email - I have been very impressed with her work throughout these complex proceedings. The relationships she has formed with both the children and the parents have been excellent, and in difficult circumstances. This case has produced a plethora of work to be completed, and I have been consistently happy to read detailed and well thought out reports. I want to echo the judge's commendation of her, she has worked so tirelessly and is one of the most child focussed Social Worker's I have come across as a Guardian. It is a real shame that she is leaving and will not be around to see the conclusion of these proceedings, given how hard she has worked. It has been a real pleasure working with her and she has set a high bar in terms of communication and partnership working. I don't provide feedback on every case, but felt compelled to highlight the excellent quality of work and relationships she has cultivated throughout her work on this case. It says it all that, all who I have spoken to, the foster carers, the legal professionals, the Judge and even, (particularly amazing given the circumstances) the parents have nothing but praise for her. (Professional)
21. Email - I wanted to pass on a huge compliment, her standard of work, which is consistently brilliant. She keeps myself well informed, has a great relationship with the children and young people she works with and has a good working relationship with parents, even when some of them can be verbally abusive to her. (Professional)
22. Card - Thank you for all the support you have shown me and the children through this difficult time in our lives. The work you do is amazing, we are forever grateful. (Client)
23. Card from children - Thank you for being our friend and for helping us. (Client)
24. Email - 'Just wanted to let you all know that the Judge granted a Care Order and Placement Order today and praise was given to the Social Worker for offering consistent support to the family and for providing fair and balanced assessments. Also he mentioned it was a rare commodity that the same Social Worker held the case from pre-birth which he found helpful'. (Professional)
25. Email - Just a short email to say it was lovely working with you both. I hope he finds a lovely family and I wish him all the very best for the future. Thank you for assisting me with this case and I hope to work with you again soon. (Professional)
26. Text - Whoever was just sent out to me was genuinely the loveliest duty social worker I've ever had at my house. No judgement and didn't try and make me feel small for the mess, very understanding too. (Client)
27. Email - It may be a little crazy at times but you are without doubt the best team ever and I have loved being part of it! Not only have you helped me grow professionally you have all got me through some of my toughest times personally, something I will forever grateful for. (Professional)
28. Text - Thank you for all you have done for us, I know we had a bumpy ride but no road is perfectly smooth lol, wish you all the best. (Client)



29. Email - Just a note to pass on some positive feedback for the 2 Social Workers. He wanted to acknowledge the positive working relationship with social care but in particular wanted to highlight that they in terms of their positive solution focused approach to working with them as an organisation and supporting families during COVID. He felt both staff members were a great asset to Halton's Social Care teams. (Professional)
30. Email - I would just like to thank you for taking the time to go through the relevant information I needed here to make a threshold safeguarding decision for her, she is a vulnerable young person. That was really helpful as mum has asked for support for her. (Professional)
31. Email - I don't suppose we do this enough.... But we would like to thank you for your work today and the decision making for a young person whom we had significant concerns about... Have a great weekend. (Professional)
32. Email - Just reading your screening for her and all I can say mate..... is fantastic :) (Professional)
33. Email - I just wanted to let you know how very grateful I am for everything you're doing and have done for my daughter and !! I'm blown away by the kindness and support you've to us! The furniture you've managed to get me and the school allowing to store there is fantastic! I feel so free and each day feel my wings are growing that bit more and it's all down to you and the other professionals involved! I felt worthless and trapped not that long ago! The FREEDOM and ability to live my life I can never repay you for!! (Client)
34. Card - Thank you for all the time spent with us, best wishes. (Client)
35. Email - Just a short email to say thank you as I close my Cafcass laptop for the last time. It's been a privilege to work with you and I just wanted to acknowledge your hard work and dedication to the children before I leave. Your investment in their wellbeing and respective futures is not only apparent from your comprehensive and considered court reports but from the amount of time you have spent supporting him during times when he is clearly struggling and feeling lost. This has not gone unnoticed by all professionals including the Judge. It seems that you are the only person he trusts and I do not underestimate how much time, commitment and effort it must have taken for you to be regarded by him in this way. I wish you all the best. (Professional)
36. Card - Thank you so much for all you have done for our family and the help you have provided. (Client)
37. Email with photo - We just wanted to say a massive thank you for everything! This would not have been possible without you, thank you for all your help and support along the way. The boys were made up there were lots of tears and cuddles of happiness. Thanks x. (Client)
38. Email - I just wanted to pass on my thanks to you and your teams for the effective response to the safeguarding of A. This has greatly assisted the counter terrorism police team in managing the short term risks associated with his arrest and has enabled the development of robust safeguarding plans for A and his sister. I know that all involved, iCART, Children in Care have worked particularly hard on this and I am extremely grateful for all your efforts. (Professional)
39. Email - As social workers, we always hear about the bad stuff, the stuff we are not doing well, not doing quickly enough or not doing well enough so I wanted to share some good stuff coming from your side of the service. I am seeing almost all referrals for viabilities and assessments now coming to front-load cases that are in pre-proceedings or heading that way. I get calls or emails several times a day from different SW's to ask advice about whether someone should be considered for assessment or whether circumstances will impact in terms

of family and friend assessments. I am seeing much more thought at an earlier stage about what long term planning might look like, I think whilst there is still a way to go in the way we think about contact in long term plans, we are now developing that dialogue and starting to evoke that thought process and discussion. I have been fortunate enough to be able to build some really positive working relationships particularly with the newly qualified staff and they are all confident to approach me to ask questions which is great and hopefully assists colleagues who I know are incredibly busy. You have some really good social workers in your teams and I have been really impressed with the standard of work I've seen from them. I'm not really a warm and fluffy kind of person I don't think but just wanted to share that in the midst of all the nonsense and stress and rubbish that the job can bring, we do have some real gems. (Professional)

40. Report - Email - I just wanted to let you know that I have been working with the School to support them with a couple of cases and wanted to pass on my thanks to you. They have been very complimentary about the advice and support you provided. Thanks ever so much! I thought it would be nice to pass on some good news on a Friday! (Professional)

### **3.2 Children in Care and Care Leavers**

41. Form - On behalf of the School, I would like to formally thank all Halton Staff for the support with C throughout the last 5 years. I would especially like to thank the worker for her constant presence in C's life over these 5 years as she has had so many changes in placements. The worker has always been there for C when placements have broken down and C needed reassurance both in home and at school. (Professional)
42. Email - Inglefield: Shut doors due to coronavirus epidemic but have kept in regular contact via phone and email. Am extremely grateful for the care and consideration they show not just to my son but my whole family. And yes even for the hugely helpful tips and links sent via email. (Client)
43. Email - Just wanted to let you know that during lockdown he has been very supportive and always answered all my calls and emails quickly. He has listened to everything I have said in supervision and always keeps me updated and answers all of my questions, which are a lot sometimes! He also puts up with my rants as well! I know we always get told we are doing a good job etc but we couldn't do it without you and him and in this especially strange and unfamiliar time he has been a good support through supervisions. So thought I would let you know it's appreciated. (Professional)
44. Verbal - Reflecting on earlier days in lockdown and the benefits gained from regular wellbeing calls, thanks for the continuous support throughout. (Client)
45. Verbal - I think you're doing a marvellous job of holding the group together. (Client)
46. Email - I just wanted to send a compliment to all of the Children's Services teams that have just cracked on throughout COVID-19 and carried on looking after the most vulnerable throughout the time. We've certainly had our ups and downs, and they've kept me nice and busy throughout COVID! But I'm amazed generally how things changed overnight (lockdown, home working etc.) and how there was little (well, really no!) transition period and the teams just adapted; conferences and meetings held virtually, seamless responses to emergency situations, continued partnership working and a strong ability to find creative solutions when the resource landscaped changed rapidly, and continues to do. We'll all no doubt look back and learn at how to do things differently in the future, but I'm certainly not complaining and think everyone's just knuckled down and got on fantastically without fanfare – extraordinary work from people who will be modest that they are 'just doing their jobs'. Well done to everyone – they make me proud to be part of team Halton and should have this cascaded back! (Professional)

47. Report, Independent Visitor (regulation 44) - I called the parents of tracked child. They were very complimentary about the staff at Inglefield. I first spoke to father: He said the staff are 'sound' and key worker is 'dead sound'. (Professional)
48. Text - Brilliant, thanks so much for not giving up on him. (Client)
49. Email - Thank you so much for your help today in gathering evidence for the CHC checklist, you clearly know her really well and knew exactly where to find the evidence needed. You are the most helpful person I have worked with on this and you were able to give me much information. Thanks again. (Professional)
50. Email - Just remember you and your team do an amazing job and although I have not met anyone personally, you have all been a great support to myself. (Professional)
51. Email - I appreciate the exploration of her exposure to his viewpoints and how dad is addressing this ..... Thank you so much to you and your team for your professional response which has provided reassurance and identified how we can support the family. (Professional)
52. Email - Thought I would drop you an email to give you some lovely feedback I had on a Quality Monitoring about you. The Deputy Manager credited you on your work you've done with our young person in placement. They believe that you're very approachable and have championed the young person and also supported the placement team in their efforts whilst our Young person has been with them. Thought that was lovely to hear so wanted to let you know. (Professional)

### **3.3 Team around the Family**

53. Email - I have worked with her numerous times as she has supported families whose children attend the school. I have always found her to be really transparent and straight forward with her support. As I am new to the role she has provided me with invaluable support and guidance. If I ever need help or advice she is always happy to help me, she is an absolute fountain of knowledge! I honestly cannot praise her enough, I would be lost without her. We will often have professional chats and look at how we can improve on things for the families we both support. We communicate often regarding the families to provide clear, continuous support. I believe our good working relationship is vital to providing the best support and outcomes for the families we are involved with. (Professional)
54. Verbal - I don't know what it is about you but you've just made me feel like opening up. I was really anxious, but that first visit and the way you were made me realise that you weren't out to get me and you were here to help. (Client)
55. Email - A big thank you to you both for listening to me the other day. As an intensive care front line worker, working extra shifts, life has become extremely stressful. (Client)
56. Email - During screening I have gathered information from Professionals and just wanted to feed back that a professional spoke very positively of the work and extensive support that she gave to the family which at times were under difficult circumstances due to the ongoing conflict between Parents, she was a huge support to them at that time. I have also found her closing summary CAF notes and direct work to have been clear and concise to enable me to clearly see the work completed and if there was any further role for their service. Today I had a case discussion with her due to mum requesting support again via Locality but during screening I couldn't see that there was a further role. Kelly was able to re-call the family and the work she completed and was happy to discuss the case further and very helpful in assisting me with my outcome. Its time like this when we realise how important these calls are from Multi agency working with the people who know the family best. (Professional)

57. Email - Coordinated support has really made a difference to the family. I have spoken with yourself a couple of times during the lockdown period too. Weekly calls from the school has particularly enjoyed the video stories as he can see and hear his teachers voice and so this will be familiar to him when he returns to school. Our community nurse has been amazing, regularly contacting us, keeping us well stocked with supplies. Physio/OT have been at the end of the phone/email and readily available to assist and advice with equipment the OT has been as fast as a whippet lol. Our care provider has kept in touch weekly and been really good at providing PPE for their staff and they have worked to a high standard tending to all of his personal care and also been a big companion for him he has a lovely relationship with them and they are very well aware of all his facial expressions which is how he mainly communicates. We have felt very supported throughout. (Client)
58. Email - A lot of this departments work is normally done via home visits, meetings and phone coronavirus changed all of that. I have kept in regular contact via email and phone. I know have a greater respect for all social workers. It's not a easy job and to have your normal ways of working changed completely is tough for anyone to handle. Having people like this to talk to and ask for help has made a huge difference. It is from the heart when I say social workers in general are overworked and deserve a pay raise. A lot of people underappreciate the work they do. Me and my family hold a great respect for her and the whole team of social workers. And would like to thank them for all there help and consideration during these tough times for everyone.
59. Report - So grateful for your support which pulled me through – couldn't have done it without you! (Client)
60. Report - Knowing that we have your support makes a real difference I couldn't thank you enough for your help. (Client)
61. Report - Thank you so much. Overwhelmed with the help and support I am receiving from yourself and school. We cannot thank you enough. (Client)
62. Report - Thank you for all your help last week, I couldn't even think straight with everything going on – feel loads better I have had a bit of time to myself today, I needed it so thank you. (Client)
63. Report - Thanks for your email and your kind words as well that meant a lot to read that and you've definitely made me feel better with your words and your offer of help as well I really do need it at the minute. (Client)
64. Report - I feel like everything slowly falling into place after so long. Thank you so much for the help and support you've given me, you've been my hero through this and I really can't thank you enough. (Client)
65. Report - The children's centre have been fantastic, I didn't know where to turn so I went to the council for help. I got a call and everything was sorted, I know who to call now if I need advice, just fantastic, thank you so much! (Client)
66. Report - Thank you for enabling me to provide much needed sensory equipment for my daughters during lockdown, it has been an amazing help along with all the support you have provided. I've felt so comfortable calling or texting either of you for support or advice- we couldn't have done it without you. I appreciate everything you all do for us and being there for me x. (Client)
67. Report - It was really helpful speaking to you earlier, I just feel so helpless because I can't fix everything for R, and you've given me some hope that there is actually light at the end of the tunnel! (Client)

68. Report - Thanks for helping, I always seek help and anything I can do best for the kids I always have. Thanks for understanding and being helpful, you're a star. (Client)
69. Verbal - Customer has phoned to pass on her compliments and thanks for the great support and help throughout the Covid lockdown from her early help worker. She says this support has been invaluable and as a young single mother she is not sure she would have coped without her help. Customer has asked for her thanks and appreciation to please be passed onto her and the team. (Client)
70. Report - She deserves extra credit for being the only person that's ever tried helping me and my son that's actually succeeded. I am genuinely very grateful for all her help and advice. I can now positively look forward to the future. (Client)
71. Report - She was such a lovely and informative lady, she listened to my concerns and didn't make me feel like I was a failure. She kept the session light, fun and interactive and made some very positive recommendations to try out. I would highly recommend this workshop to other struggling families. (Client)
72. Verbal - At the end of our final session mum gave me a box of chocolates and a card thanking me for all the information I have given her over the past month. She said she has found the sessions really helpful and has enjoyed receiving all of the relevant information and guidance to support the first year of being first time parents. She is really hopeful that we can facilitate groups again soon as she finds them a valuable resource. (Client)
73. Email - I just wanted to share some feedback from a CAF Review meeting this morning. She has been supporting a 17yr old and his mum for just under a year. Initially the family were reluctant to accept help but Mum had long standing chronic alcohol dependency which was having a significant impact on him as a young carer and upon their mother/son relationship. Today's CAF review was held as a closure meeting, both were hugely appreciative of all her support and the input from multi agency partners. Evidence that Mums liver is beginning to repair was shared, but of most significance was her sons comments, he talked about how his mum was 'just his mum now' rather than someone he just had to look after making the comment "I'm happy now". (Professional)
74. Card - Thank you very much for your support over the past months. You have been a great help to us all. (Client)
75. Feedback form - You have been there to support me fully. I was really worried this support meant social care involvement but you explained fully and I felt at ease speaking to you. It's comforting to know I can pick up the phone and there are people to speak to. I have everything I need to support my family now and with the support offered through changing lives, CAB and the Health visitor. I feel on cloud 9 and in a much better place than previously. Thank you. ( Client)
76. Email - I felt I had to email you to say a huge thank you for allowing myself and partner to take part in the baby massage sessions. This has meant more to us than you will ever know. After waiting so long for our first baby, having him right in the middle of lockdown was far from how we'd imagined having our precious miracle. It was a very scary and negative experience having to go into hospital alone for induction, it was definitely not what we had planned. I have never felt so alone and isolated in all my life. I ended up having an emergency section after being in labour for 33 hours. My partner had to leave after spending only 2 hours with our son, it was heart breaking. I'd dreamt of the day I had our baby, and having family come visit with flowers and balloons, it should have been the most special and the best time of your life, but it was far from this. We wanted to try and concentrate on positive things, such as groups and meeting other new mums and enjoy all the things I'd looked forward to for my maternity leave. I felt this would definitely help with my mental health, but was then told that all free groups had stopped. This was another huge blow. I decided to try the children's Centre

out of desperation, and it was one of the best calls we made. To hear somebody, who listened, and actually had empathy brought me to tears, she was just so, so lovely. It was the first time in a long time, we'd come across someone who actually understood the situation we were in, which meant the world to us. We felt we'd been listened to. She made us feel valued, and went above and beyond to help us. Being able to attend every Monday has been a lifeline for us, she is one of loveliest people we have met in a long time, and we can't speak highly enough of her. She has been a great teacher, and has been very informative during every session. She is such a warm and caring person, and has been empathetic during sessions when I have offloaded! She really is an asset to your team. I was recently referred for a mental health assessment, but it's groups like this that help with my mental health, and I feel attending groups lifts my mood and gives structure to my week. A reason to get up, dressed, and get out of the house! I believe it's a preventative measure, as it's not good for anyone, never mind a new mum to be sat at home all day. I feel I am speaking on behalf of many new parents out there, as we all feel there is a huge need for these services. It has been so refreshing to meet her, the world definitely needs more of her right now! We felt we had struck gold, and we have been extremely grateful for all her help, advice and support. She has given us confidence, and reassurance on numerous things, something again that has meant a lot to myself and partner. Having the face to face contact has been extremely beneficial and important to us, so we thank you again for giving us this opportunity, we are extremely grateful. (Client)

77. Card - Thank you for everything! We will miss coming to see you. Please keep in touch, I would love to be able to tell you the outcome of everything. (Client)

78. Email - I want to thank you for your continued support via phone calls/texts and emails to my family. As a mum who moved back to Halton after living in Warrington for many years, I can say with great confidence that the support is the best support I have received as I had little to no interaction nor support from Warrington services. During the Covid period, you made sure I was kept updated with support options, was proactive in keeping in contact and even offered your services for food delivery if we could not leave home. Thank you so much for that. Knowing we had that support should we need it eased our stress so much. Since I have moved to Halton, the service and support you have provided myself and my two ASD boys has been second to none. I hope we continue to work together to ensure my boys have access to the services they need in order to reach their full potential. Thank you again! (Client)

79. Letter - I would like to thank you and the service that you have provided over the past year. It has been really easy to phone you and ask for your advice and guidance. Just knowing that you were there when I needed you was amazing feeling. I know with the strategies you have gone through I will be ok. Thank you for all the support. (Client)

80. Feedback form - The disabled children's team has been a great source of information, particularly sign posting to events/ activities I otherwise wouldn't have found out about. She has been in regular contact to ensure as service users we are gaining as much out of the team as possible, I don't think anyone was equipped to spend a number of months at home with the option of exercise once daily. The budget meant I could purchase equipment I otherwise wouldn't have to support my son's needs and meant he could access them under my supervision without the need for my full attention, so I could continue in work at home. (Client)

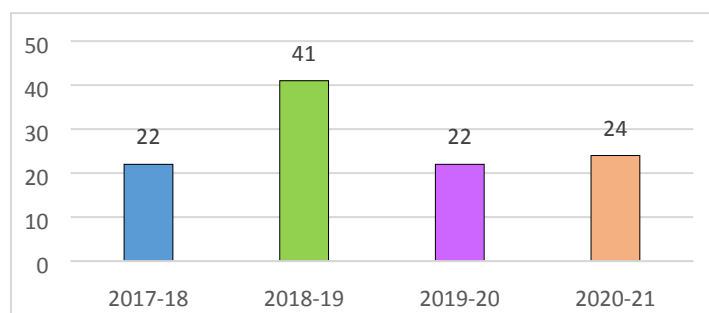
81. Feedback form - The Disabled Children's Team has been in close contact making sure that we receive the best support and care possible. During these challenging times she made regularly contact via phone or email, we received info and updates in regards to any activities available for our children and updates about using the funds during lockdown period. She offered guidance and made sure we are all ok. Having two children with special needs, all this support was very beneficial and appreciated. During lockdown, the help has been overwhelming. We were allowed to use the budget to buy things for kids to use indoors, there are so little things we can do with them during these times and all of this has helped a lot.

This has been a big help to keep them busy and entertained and gave us some space for relaxation. We thank you all very much for all the help and support. (Client)

82. Text - Feeling super proud of our little family this week, things are looking so positive. She had physio yesterday and her professionals are made up with her progress. We had a lovely present of our amazing play partner, the health nurse has nominated us for a Christmas hamper as well. We feel super lucky, and so supported today. We're a very luck little family x. (Client)
83. Email - Just wanted to drop you a quick email to say a big thank you to you both for your support shown to me. (Professional)
84. Letter - I would like to appreciate them for the support I received. The kids and I want to say thank you, in a short time we have known you, and you've helped us with lots of problems. You have offered good support for my family. She will always explain things to me, so I fully understand what was happening. She offered advice and support that benefited me and my family. Thank you so much, god bless you. (Client)
85. Feedback form - My family have and continue to be fully supported. We have been contacted via phone calls and Facetime throughout lockdown to check we were all safe and well and to check on my daughter's health, progress and any needs she may have. Our family support worker is always there for a chat and helped out finding services and phone numbers and passed on information that may be useful to us. We were put in touch with emergency food services when we were shielding, making sure we had access to medical services, helped with resources for activities for my daughter, given ideas for activities, ensuring we were all getting enough exercise. When confined to a house for such a long time it was such a breath of fresh air to have someone supporting you and your family. Our family support worker feels like an extension of our family, easy to talk to, there for us, we feel that she cares, she is absolutely amazing and has such a connection with our family and our daughter has built up a trusting relationship with her. In such challenging times we knew we could count on her even though it was also very challenging for her also. (Client)
86. Feedback form - It's been invaluable knowing that people can understand the difficulties experienced by families with disabled children, reach out when you need it and help- I'd honestly would have been lost without the support. The way things are and have been handled have been with the uttermost respect, dignity and best interests. It has been easy to gain support and access if I require it for the children. The continuity of support and touching base and contact via email is invaluable. You have literally changed our life, my children are doing so well they are socialising and doing activities every chance we can get (well as much as you can during a pandemic). Thank you from the bottom of my heart and from my children. Maybe give the team a pay rise.... They do a fab job. (Client)
87. Feedback form - Having the CAF meetings helped massively with school issues and for Dad to understand more about his son and his ADHD. I am happy and my son has improved in his schoolwork and behaviour. The Systemic session helped to put our point across and to work together. The food bank/church donation was a great help when I had Covid and could not get out. The activity packs have been really helpful and loads to do together – he loved them!" The support has helped me loads and my son is better behaved with a good relationship with his Dad and we communicate better. I feel confident in contacting housing or school myself and able to cope. Thank you, it has definitely helped. (Client)
88. Email - I just wanted to compliment you on your amazing worker, I am so sad to hear she is moving on as she is an absolute diamond. Nothing is ever too much for her and she is always supportive and understanding. I know she hasn't been with us long but she has definitely made an impact. Her sensitivity and humour has really helped us in getting through these very hard times. Thanks for your time x. (Client)

89. Email - I hope you are OK I thought I would keep you updated with everything my son is waiting on his medication my daughter is now in her big girl bed and she has done amazing, mummy and daddy have their bed back. We have started our decorating, we have done the living room just waiting on new flooring, and we have a skip coming to move all the rubbish in the cupboard. Thank you for the kick up the bum I needed because I am slowly getting our house a home. We have safety gates everywhere now, daughter B is doing a lot better and so is Son B has his hearing test which Chatterbugs referred him for coming up. Again thank you for everything. We are still working with her and all is going great. (Client)
90. Letter - Thank you for all you have done for my family. I feel like I've grown in confidence as a person with your help and support. I very much appreciate all the support you have given us over the past year. We will miss you. Thanks again. (Client)
91. Report - I really enjoyed all of the session which was conducted via telephone contact due to the current pandemic. I was slightly worried that I wouldn't learn anything new or that it would be going over old material that I already knew; but she was such a wonderful lecturer and although it was just me on the phone she kept it enjoyable and fun and I learnt quite a few new tips some of which I'm currently working through. I would say from personal experience I found the telephone consultation excellent and feel that more families would benefit from this method as opposed to attending a group and the option should be more readily available when normality returns. (Client)

#### 4. Education, Inclusion & Provision Department



##### 4.1 Inclusion 0 - 25

92. Email - Just wanted to thank you for having our back, I was so worried when I spoke to them this morning. (Client)
93. Email - I am so lucky to work with such a great bunch and to have external people like yourself who are very much part of our team.....that's why things work. (Professional)
94. Email - I have recently had to support family with SEN support and advice in another Authority, and it really made me appreciate what an absolutely fantastic job Halton do for our SEN children. You are all amazing and I know you do a fabulous job of supporting so many children, in so many ways! I don't suppose you get to see the true impact when you are doing the paperwork side of things. But you do need to know that the difference things like; dual placements, Educational Psychologist consultations, SENCo Clusters, SEN team advice and drop in clinics, discretionary EY Top up and EHC funding and the support that goes with it ...have made such a difference to the children at our Primary School. I feel very passionate about how much support there is for such a little authority! (Professional)
95. Email - Education: They did an amazing job finding and allocating my son a new better school. Despite being thrown into panic by his previous school expelling him just before lockdown and I can only respect them for their hard work and time taken. My son is a lot happier in his



new school and it's thanks to the hard work of not just one but all of the special educational needs team in Halton. (Client)

96. Email - I cannot thank you enough for all the support you have shown my sons. (Client)
97. Email - We were overwhelmed and extremely happy with the news. We are truly grateful for this and the support we have received especially for our son's future. I am sure in time, he will look back and be grateful for yours and Halton Council support with this and his future. Thanks again I am really grateful. (Client)
98. Email - Just wanted to say, being a 'newby' in Halton SEN world, the Halton local offer and the support materials are just fab! It is taking me a little while to navigate it but all the cognitive load theory and phonological awareness packs etc are so useful as an acting SENCo. The opportunity to refer in to specialist teachers and group consultation for EP is amazing and so supportive. It isn't often people pass on thanks or appreciation but I've been blown away by what is on offer to Halton schools. Thank you really appreciate it. (Professional)
99. Feedback form - The help offered by SENDIASS was to hand on the same day I asked for help and advice. I felt very lost and alone at the point I received my son's diagnosis, and this immediate support was very welcome and I immediately felt supported. The prompt response was unexpected, but really important! (Client)
100. Feedback form - I have felt like I was on my own and did not understand the process of applying for an ECHP plan. SEND partnership have been so supportive and knowledgeable about the process and guided me through every step. I would not have started or got where we are without their full support and guidance. Send partnership have been our lifesaver, if we did not have the information - they did, they have been the back bone to the whole process, so grateful to have them at the end of the phone. (Client)
101. Feedback form - The information and advice given was been of great help. Before speaking with the team and I was very worried and upset as I had no clue where to begin in looking at a change of school placement for my son. The process was explained to me very clearly and was followed by information by email. I felt much more confident speaking in meetings with the school and during the EHCP review. (Client)
102. Feedback form - I feel having Halton SEND has helped empower me to have a positive role in relationships with local authority in making decisions for my Son this has now led to him actually starting his journey of advocating successfully himself with the local authority as he is approaching post 16, I feel it's been very beneficial to myself as a parent and my Son. (Client)
103. Feedback form - So far I am confident that SENDIASS will be a great source of support for me going forward. I look forward to receiving guidance from the team, and it's very reassuring to know they are there with their wisdom and knowledge. (Client)
104. Feedback form - Huge thanks for your service, it seems great so far! (Client)
105. Feedback form - Absolutely been a life saver, very understanding and lovely friendly service provided. Always happy to help and I feel nothing is too much trouble. Keep up the good work (Client)

#### **4.2 Policy, Provision & Performance**

106. Text - I just want to thank you so much with all my heart for everything you have done for my daughter and arranging today. I was so happy seeing how happy and excited she is to start college, not seen that happy girl in a long time so thank you so much from my heart means

the world to me as 6 months ago I did not think we would be able to get her to college so thank you very much xx (Client)

107. Email - I just wanted to take this opportunity to say thank you for your support, for our school you've always given good advice and I know you've tried to help whenever you can. It's been much appreciated. (Professional)
108. Email - Thank you to you for your support with the project. (Professional)
109. Email - I just wanted to express my gratitude for the amazing work the team did promoting NCS during autumn. Thanks to their efforts, Halton went from under 50 young people accessing the autumn programme to over 350. Young people involved in the programme had a great time and provided an NPS score of 87. They accessed climbing walls, archery, science projects, bush craft, motivational speakers to name a few. On top of this; - 248 young people received First Aid certificates, 251 young people received Be Internet Citizens certificates and 231 young people received a certificate from the Prime Minister. I can't thank the Halton team enough, as they really did go above and beyond. Halton is now is being talked about nationally as best practice, with regards to NCS. Can you please pass on my thanks to everyone involved. (Professional)

### **4.3 Education 0-19yrs**

110. Email - I have benefited greatly from the training that I have received and have looked to implement various strategies in the classroom with considerable success. My behaviour management still requires some improvement; however, I am confident that I have made large strides in this area. I have seen a significant improvement in my classes, especially my challenging Year 9 class. The classroom environment has been much calmer, and this has led to more rapid progress, illustrated by their improved results in summative tests. The behaviour specialist has provided me with various useful techniques to address poor behaviour and she has been very positive and encouraging with me in her feedback. (Professional)
111. Email - She asked me to pass on her thanks to everybody in the Early Years Team, and to Snr Management. She said that she feels really well supported by the LA during this current situation. She appreciates the daily updates from the Director, my daily phone calls to check her attendance numbers (which can sometimes be her only adult conversation of the day), and the fact that she continues to be paid on time. She really was full of praise for everybody and the job we are doing. (Professional)
112. Text - She is doing well and I think she is now in the right setting. I know gifts are a no due to everything going on but I really want to say thank you and your boss for all you have done. It's been a struggle and I don't think I could have done it all on my own. You have been amazing and I wish you all the best. Much appreciated and take care. (Client)
113. Team's Chat - I have just finished delivering the graduated approach launch and thought I would share the feedback we received on the teams chat. The session was very positive. The SENCOs all seemed genuinely pleased to be given the documents and shared verbally as well as on the chat just how brilliant and useful the documents are and how helpful it is to have it all in one place on the Local offer. The work put in with this has been immense and also difficult to do virtually. Thanks everyone. I for one could not wish for a greater more proactive bunch to work with. Comments include - Really supportive tool, a great resource, looks good and easy to use, if we can reference these on our support plans it shows clearly what we have done, so glad I attended this workshop, thank you for such an excellent and really informative meeting. (Professionals)

### **4.4 Commissioning**

114. Email - Just wanted to re-affirm what a fantastic member of staff you have in her; aside from being incredibly likeable and easy to get on with, she is hard working, quick to respond and incredibly dedicated to her job which is refreshing. All too often, our days are spent battling with other professionals. She very much embodies a 'well we're here now, so how can we get out of it' attitude which much more helpful and contributes to a joined-up working culture to get the best outcomes for our young people. (Professional)
115. Email - Hopefully we have some more young people form Halton with us in the near future as both your and everyone there have been really good to us and your support is always appreciated. (Professional)



# Complaints Annual Report Children's Social Care Services 2020 / 21



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## 1. Introduction

The report covers Children's Social Care Services for the period 1 April 2020 to 31 March 2021, it details the complaints and compliments that have been formally recorded during this period. A temporary amendment made to the Complaint Regulations (Children Act 1989 Representations Procedure) occurred due to COVID – 19 and is detailed in this report but, aside from this, the remainder of this introduction and chapter 2 'The Statutory Process' are unchanged from last year's report.

The Children's Act 1989 require all local authorities with Children's Social Care responsibilities in England and Wales to have a complaints procedure. The aim of The Children Act 1989 Representations Procedure is for Children and Young People to have their concerns resolved swiftly and wherever possible by the people who provide the service locally. 'Getting the Best from Complaints' provides guidance for local authorities on implementing the Children's Act and defines a complaint as being:

**A complaint may generally be defined as an expression of dissatisfaction or disquiet in relation to an individual child or young person, which requires a response.**

Statutory complaints relate to the provision of Children's Social Care and are handled in line with the national regulations referred to above, the key stages of which are set out in section 2 of this report: stage 1 - local resolution; stage 2 – investigation; stage 3 - review panel and section 4 - referral to the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman.

Complaints about Children's Social Care Services that do not fall under The Children Act 1989 Representations Procedure may be responded to under the local Council's Corporate Complaints Procedure which is set out in section 3 of this report. Some complaints may be addressed in accordance to internal HR procedures.

It is a requirement of The Children Act 1989 Representations Procedure for the local authority to have a designated officer who is responsible for the management of the procedure and who is independent of social care operational line management and of direct service providers. In order to contribute effectively to service development, the Complaints Management function is managed by the Principal Policy Officer based within the Policy, Provision and Performance Division in the Education, Inclusion & Provision Department.

There are other customer contacts which allow early resolution to prevent complaint escalation and this can include advice and guidance, signposting and problem solving direct with the customer. Another and very positive aspect is the recording and reporting of compliments and positive feedback received by the People (Children Services) Directorate.

This Annual Report is produced in line with national guidance and is designed to share information more widely with members of the public.

## 2. The Children's Social Care Statutory Complaints Process

The aim of complaint procedures is to resolve any dissatisfaction promptly, effectively and transparently and to inform service improvements to prevent service users experiencing the same issues in the future. We cannot promise to deliver the outcomes that complainants want, but we do make sure that complaints are dealt with as quickly and as thoroughly as possible.

**STAGE 1** – the complaint will be allocated to the appropriate team manager who is asked to investigate the complaint. We always aim to resolve the problem as quickly as possible (within 10 working days) however, sometimes the complaint is complex so may take up to 20 working days.

If a complainant is dissatisfied with the response or investigation at Stage 1 and feels that the complaint is not resolved, they or their representative can request to go to Stage 2.



**STAGE 2** - An external Independent Person is commissioned by Children's Services to further investigate the complaint. The Investigating Officer and Independent Person will aim to produce a report within 25 working days. However, if the case is complex, they can have a maximum of 65 working days in which to produce their reports. Once the reports have been finalised they are sent to the Adjudication Officer (usually the Head of Service) who will, after careful consideration of the reports, provide the complainant with a written response to their complaint.

If the complainant still remains dissatisfied with the decision/outcome following the independent investigation at Stage 2, they can ask to have their complaint reviewed by the Complaints Review Panel.



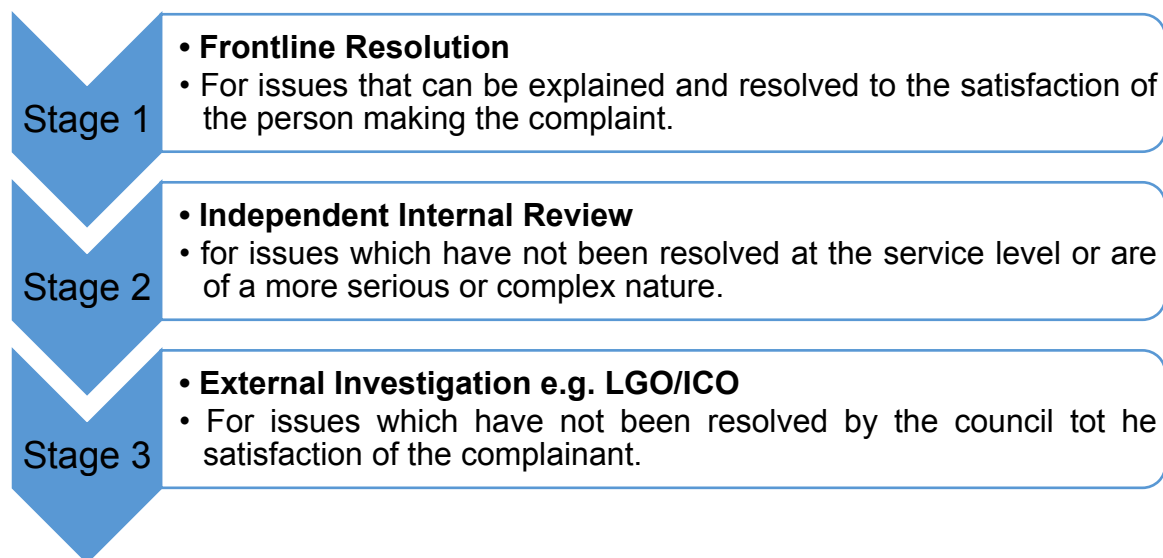
**STAGE 3** -. The Complaints Review Panel is made up of three external people who will review the complaint, but they will not reinvestigate or consider new complaints. The complainant can attend the panel meeting if they choose to and can bring a friend or someone they can trust.



**STAGE 4** – If a complaint cannot be resolved locally, it can be investigated by the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO). A complainant has the right to self-refer their complaint to the LGSCO at any stage during the complaint process. However, the LGSCO normally allows the Local Authority the opportunity to process a complaint through every stage of the complaints procedure, before investigating it themselves.

### 3. The Corporate Complaints Process

The Corporate Complaints Procedure consists of a two stage internal process.



The Council try to respond to all Stage 1 complaints within 10 working days of receipt.

Where a Stage 2 review is undertaken the Independent Investigating Officer will aim to respond within 28 working days of receipt of the request.

The following types of complaints cannot progress beyond Stage 1 of the Procedure.

- Complaints about a Council policy or decision rather than the way that the policy or decision has been carried out.
- Complaints against the conduct of individual employees. Should such matters need to be progressed, after a Stage 1 response has been provided to the complainant, this will be done through the Council's internal management procedures.
- A decision where regulatory powers are being exercised (such as licencing and planning) unless the complaint relates to the way the matter has been administrated.
- Matters for which there is a right of appeal, a legal remedy, or where legal proceedings are ongoing.
- Matters that are of a general nature and do not relate to the provision, or lack of provision, of a service at an individual level.



#### 4. Which Complaint Procedure should be used?

The statutory guidance, Getting the best from complaints, sets out which of a council's children's social care functions that can be considered under the procedure. The guidance should always be read alongside the Children Act 1989, the Adoption and Children Act 2002 and the associated regulations referred to in the guidance itself.

The procedure covers complaints about councils' actions under Part 3 and some of Parts 4 and 5 of the Children Act 1989, as well as some adoption and special guardianship services. Generally, assessments and services in the following areas should be considered under the Statutory Procedure:

Children in need	Looked after children
Special Guardianship support	Post-adoption support

#### Complaints about the following tend to be exempt:

- Early Help
- Child protection including S47 enquiries and conferences
- Assessments of potential foster carers and adopters
- Foster carer registration
- Section 7 and Section 37 court reports

While these may be excluded from the Statutory Procedure, this does not prevent councils investigating them, it is expected that councils assess each complaint on its own merits and apply other procedures, such as the Corporate Complaints Procedure.

As a Council we do receive complaints where there is an overlap between those areas which are inside and outside the scope of the procedure, for example a case may have been at Section 47 Child Protection Conference and stepped down to Child in Need or, a Section 47 investigation concluded finding no concerns of a safeguarding nature and was instead referred to Early Help services for support.

The guidance allows councils to use their discretion to consider all parts of a complaint in a single investigation and response. Complainants should not be disadvantaged by any overlap between complaint procedures. Councils should consider which procedure is likely to produce the best result for the complainant and the child or young person.

## 5. COVID – 19

There is not a single area of local government that has not been affected by the COVID-19 pandemic and for the management of complaints this is also true.

The Coronavirus Act 2020 was introduced to Parliament on Thursday 19th March 2020 and became law on Wednesday 25th March 2020. The legislation and government guidance issued in response to the Covid-19 outbreak has changed during the period of crisis and it continues to change and be updated.

It did as suspected at the onset have profound implications for social work practice, education provision, health provision and every other possible provision for service users, these changes affected the way councils and care providers worked during the crisis. Understandably there was a need to focus resources on tackling the coronavirus pandemic and undoubtedly it will have a major and long-lasting impact on a range of council and care provider services. In terms of the impact of COVID – 19 on complaints:

Amendments were made to the Children Act 1989 Representations Procedure and came into force on 24th April 2020 reverting back on the 25th September 2020, specifically this was in reference to stage 3 Review Panels, the time scale changed to '*or as soon as is reasonably practicable*'.

The Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO) suspended all casework activity that demanded information from, or action by, local authorities and care providers in March 2020 to allow organisations to concentrate on their response to the crisis and protect the Councils capacity. They monitored the situation and government guidance in order to reengage with councils and complainants at the appropriate time and when the government guidance allowed. On the 4<sup>th</sup> May 2020 the LGSCO issued guidance 'Good Administrative Practice during the response to COVID – 19' whilst recognising that complaint handling capacity would be reduced there was still very clearly the expectation that we continue to respond to complaints appropriately. The LGSCO in early May 2020 re-opened its helpline on reduced hours, to give general advice to the public and recommenced with complaints handling on the 29th June 2020.

For Children's Social Complaints in Halton, it was business as usual in terms of accepting and acknowledging the complaint. There was the significant challenge with Principal Manager's capacity to, on top of the impact of COVID -19 on their service, to be able to find the time to investigate and respond to the complainant within timescales.

The requirement of the Representation Procedure is to have an officer (Principal Policy Officer) facilitate the process however this year has been '*unprecedented*' and this did in effect result in the Principal Policy Officer assisting managers greatly in the investigations and responses in order to take pressure off the front line but mainly, to ensure complainants received a thorough investigation and response in a timely manner.

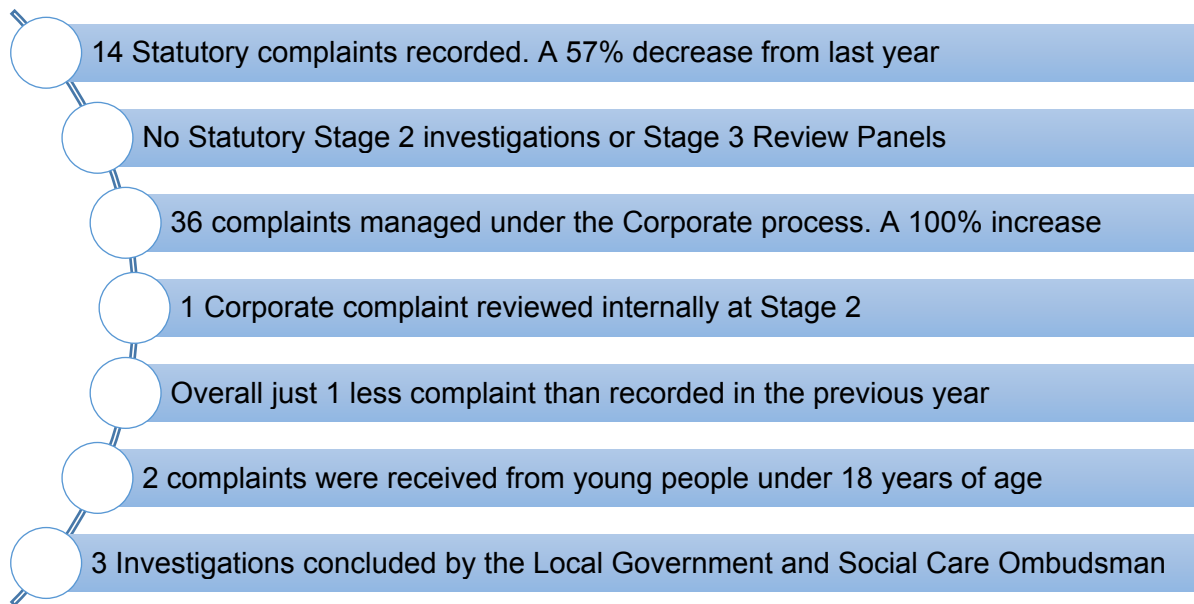
The impact of COVID-19 will be seen further in this report and referenced throughout.

## 6. Key Messages

Complaints and compliments are feedback received from our service users. Effective feedback, both positive and negative is very helpful, it highlights areas for development as well as strengths that can be used to improve services.

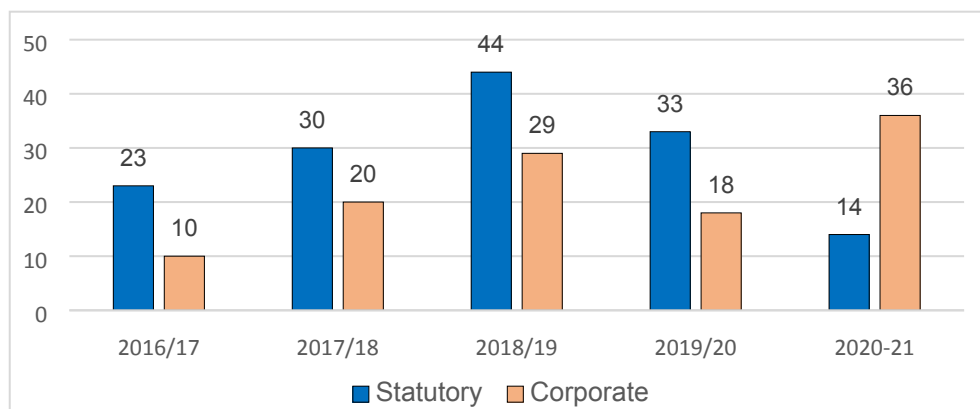
Managing a customer expectations and demands is always challenging in the area of Children and Families Services, understandably it can be a very emotive time for families.

For most of us in our day to day work there is that opportunity to pick up on those small signs of frustration, receive that feedback and address it there and then but sometimes regardless of best efforts or intentions they will escalate to a complaint.



## 7. Customer feedback data

### 7.1 Number of complaints Children and Families Division



	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020-21
Total Complaints	33	50	73	51	50

The Principal Policy Officer has been in post for 12 years, whilst the overall number of complaints has remained similar, this is the first time that the number of complaints investigated under the corporate process has exceeded those under the statutory process. There are a number of things to consider in respect of this.

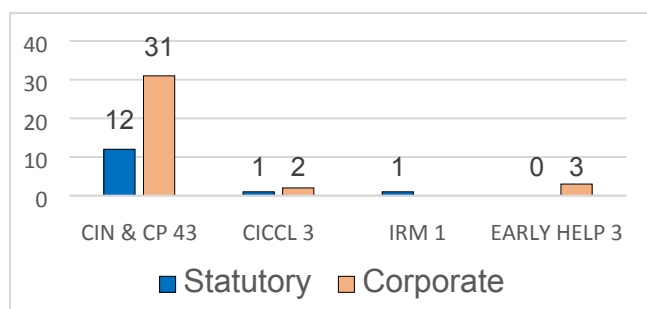
Because of the lockdown, children were less visible and so the number of contacts coming into Children's Social Care decreased. Whilst there were peaks when lockdown eased overall, during the financial year 2021 provisional figures\* indicate a drop in Children's Social care contacts being screened by the integrated Contact and Referral Team (iCART), and less referrals being made to Children's Social Care for assessment. That reduction in contacts and referrals may correlate with the reduced number of complaints under the Social Care Complaints procedure.

	2019-2020	2021-2021*	% Reduction
iCART Social Care Contacts	4067	2656	35%
Children Social Care Referrals	1656	1338	19%

Other considerations include the national and localised lock downs resulting in changes to service provision, some services were cancelled/postponed indefinitely, if services are not provided, it will not generate complaints about it. Safeguarding services understandably continue and for those children assessed as being at high risk, visits in person continued. Where it was assessed as safe to do so, visits were undertaken virtually (video/telephone calls) which from a families point of view can perhaps feel less invasive/stressful particularly for parents with mental health issues. Direct work being undertaken in local parks or whilst on a walk perhaps felt like a less official and more neutral environment and led to a more natural conversation which could perhaps lead to less statutory complaints. Where services were not provided, families may have felt that the measures taken by the department in response to the pandemic would have been reasonable in the circumstances.

During Lockdown Family Court matters continued, reports were still required which would be addressed as a corporate complaint.

## 7.2 The teams the complaints are made about



The greatest number of complaints continues to be in the Children in Need and Child Protection Division, it is the frontline service dealing with a large number of cases with very difficult issues to address.

## 7.3 Who is contacting us and how

48 of the 50 complaints were received from adults (parents, carers other parties), the number of complaints received from children and/or young people (2) remains low which is the case historically and nationally.

3 Complaints were in relation to children with disabilities.

Halton has a 97.8% white population. No complaints were from an ethnic minority.

E-mailing complaints continues to be the preferred method to make a complaint, this is probably due to the ease of access on mobile devices and the desire for them to have their own written record. COVID-19 has restricted movement in terms of post and access to Halton Direct Link offices and so this is reflected in the increased emails.

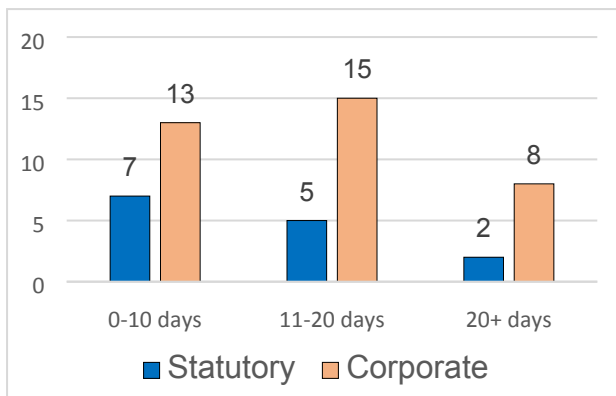
	2017-18		2018-19		2019-20		2020-21	
Email	19	64%	19	43%	19	58%	43	86%
Telephone	10	33%	14	32%	8	24%	5	10%
Complaint Form	0	4%	5	11%	4	12%	2	4%
Letter	1	3%	6	14%	2	6%		

Halton Borough Council commissions the National Youth Advocacy Service (NYAS) to support Children in Care and Care Leavers, if they want one. All young people in contact with the team are offered access to an advocate so that their voices can be heard and their issues discussed, this can often be at the point of service delivery where the matter can be resolved rather than progressing to a complaint.

## 7.4 How quickly do we respond to complaints

In regards to Statutory timescales despite COVID-19 there was an improvement in meeting these. In 2019-20 there were 67% of complaints responded to within 20 working days, in 2020-21 it is 86% however, the number of complaints responded to under this procedure is lower.

	% within 10 days	% within 20 days	% over 20 days
<b>2020-21</b>	<b>50%</b>	<b>35%</b>	<b>15%</b>
<b>2019-20</b>	<b>30%</b>	<b>67%</b>	<b>33%</b>
<b>2018-19</b>	<b>23%</b>	<b>66%</b>	<b>34%</b>
<b>2017-18</b>	<b>73%</b>	<b>91%</b>	<b>9%</b>



Whilst Statutory complaint numbers were lower, overall the number of Statutory and Corporate complaints was comparable (previously 51, this year 50). Taking this into consideration, 80% of complaints were responded to within 20 working days.

The accurate definition of complaints by the Principal Policy Officer means that multiple issues are often identified within

each complaint, this assists investigating managers to respond quickly and accurately but, it should also be noted that due to COVID-19 the Principal Policy Officer provided more assistance in this year than the guidance would allow, there is a difference between facilitating the complaint process and being part of it, the guidance requires independence and transparency from the service provider.

Despite the challenges faced this year complaints have been responded to in a timely manner. Responses that took longer were either complex, lengthy or due to staff capacity/availability.

### 7.5 Stage 2 investigations

No stage 2 external independent investigations took place under the statutory complaints procedure.

The Corporate Complaints team did review one complaint at Stage 2 and concluded that each of the matters raised had been fully and properly considered and that a detailed explanation had been provided. Where there are conflicting accounts of what occurred the Council is unable to objectively determine which account is correct.

### 7.6 Stage 3 Review Panels

No Stage 3 Review Panels took place under the statutory complaints procedure.

### 7.7 Complaint outcomes and themes

We record complaints under 3 main categories, 'service provision' is about how we have done things, and it's about how we have delivered it and the quality. 'Assessment and review' is about the process, have we done what we should have done in accordance to policy, procedure or regulations as well as challenges to the content of the assessment and the outcome of it.

The Complaints Procedures are not designed to deal with allegations of misconduct by staff however they will be interwoven into the complaint. Complaints about staff conduct are often linked to the decisions they have made or the service they have provided and so for recording purposes we look at the context of the complaint. Complaints received about staff conduct do not necessarily mean that they are making poor decisions, rather, it is an indicator that complainants do not agree with the rationale or policy on which the decision is based. Complainants will disagree with the

social workers analysis of the information and the judgement made, this then leads to complaints about their conduct and these can be difficult to manage. Complaints of this nature would be responded to under Stage 1 of the Corporate Procedures only. Should any further action be required this would be dealt with in accordance to the organisations disciplinary procedures.

In the majority of cases, complaints have multiple issues that need responding to and that will cross over all three categories and so the Principal Policy Officer taking into consideration the main crux of the complaint, the desired outcome, and the complaint findings will determine the category. In 2020-21;

- 50% were categorised as Assessment / Review Process
- 46% as Service Provision
- 4% in respect of staff

Once a complaint has been concluded it will be recorded as being

- Upheld - this means that the service made mistakes or provided a poor service that amounted to maladministration or service failure.
- Not upheld – the service acted correctly
- Partly upheld - where there are complaints with multiple issues there may be a mix of complaints that were up held and not upheld and so overall for recording purposes they will be recorded as partly upheld but, it can also be recorded as this if it is a single element where it was not wholly the fault of the service.

	Upheld	Not upheld	Partly upheld	Total
Assessment / Review Process	4	16	5	25
Service Provision	1	16	6	23
Staff	0	1	1	2
Total	5	33	12	50

14 Complaints were linked to Cases in the Court arena. In terms of Section 7 and Section 37 court reports, whilst the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO) can decide not to investigate because another body, such as Court, is better placed to consider it, there is no such limit placed on Councils. Whilst the guidance allows councils to decide not to investigate a complaint if it would prejudice a concurrent investigation, including those in court proceedings, we do not refuse to accept a complaint because it is in the Court arena. Wherever possible we investigate all matters and provide a response to the complainant, this allows for work submitted or, to be submitted to the Court to be checked and the accuracy confirmed but ultimately, these reports have been produced at the order of a Court, to be used in Court and the Court is the higher authority. These reports form part of the Council's evidence and will include the professional views and opinions of the Social Worker which is what the Court have requested and also what is usually the area of the complainants dissatisfaction so, whilst a response to the complaint and explanations may be provided to aid clarification, families will/may be advised to challenge the content, views and analysis of the Social Worker in these reports, in the Court arena. Because Council's can investigate matters which the LGSCO do not have jurisdiction to consider, these matters are recorded under corporate complaints and at Stage 1 as there is no recourse to Stage 2 due to the legal proceedings.

The below table, whilst not capturing every single element of every complaint made does give an indication of the areas of the service or aspects of work that generates complaints. The world of Children Social Care complaints is unique, families often do not want Social Workers involved however, the statutory duty to safeguard requires them to be involved and so before any work commences, conflict can be there at the onset.

Not providing immediate response to text, calls or emails	17	14 x Not upheld 3 x Partly upheld
Biased / discriminated in the other parties favour	14	Not upheld
Disagree with content of the report/assessments/information held in records	6	Not upheld
Concerns are being ignored/not taken seriously	6	Not upheld
Child in Need meeting (e.g.not invited, cancelled, what is it)	6	5 Upheld 1 x Partly upheld
Child contact – arrangements/adherence	5	1 x Upheld 4 x Not upheld
Attitude, tone, content of Social Workers response, feel intimidated	4	1 x Partly upheld 3 x Not upheld
Changed decision or conflicting information given	3	Not upheld
Children Social Care involvement, not necessary	3	Not upheld
Child contact – COVID-19	2	Not upheld
Time taken to commence parenting assessment	2	Not upheld
His call was terminated, he was not erratic or shouting	2	Not upheld
Address shared when asked not to	2	1 x Upheld 1 x Not upheld
Social worker not visited home to see if safe (COVID_19)	2	Not upheld
Factual error (date) in the court report	2	Upheld
Delay in assessment progressing	2	1 x Upheld 1 x Not upheld
Social worker – missed appointments	2	Upheld
Communication between agencies	2	Not upheld
Not received / delay in receipt of documentation (COVID-19)	2	Upheld
Unannounced visits	2	Not upheld
Was not given information or kept informed	2	Not upheld
Social worker requested GP to change medication	1	Not upheld
Child protection category changed outside of meeting	1	Upheld
Not happy about change of Social Worker, positive relationship	1	Partly upheld
Supervision of contact arrangements	1	Not upheld
Child not accommodated when asked for	1	Not upheld
CAF Meetings, (Split between parents, technology) COVID-19	1	Not upheld
Number of allocated social workers for the duration	1	Partly upheld
Statutory visits were late	1	Upheld
Completed two financial assessment forms	1	Not upheld
Home visit arranged only gave 24 hours' notice	1	Not upheld
Foster care provision for the children	1	Not upheld
Time of day Social Worker sent email (evening/early morning)	1	Partly upheld
Staff not maintaining social distancing, wearing PPE correctly	1	Not upheld
Social worker lied, gave different advice	1	Not upheld
Quality of Assessment – not representing the child's voice	1	Upheld
Felt being accused of breaking lockdown rules	1	Not upheld
Child is to be put up for adoption and that family members have not been assessed (understanding/communication)	1	Not upheld



## 7.8 The Local Government & Social Care (LGSCO)

Halton received 4 enquiries from the LGSCO in relation to complaints in this financial year. 1 did not progress to investigation, the other 3 did.

Local Government &  
Social Care  
**OMBUDSMAN**

**Case 1** - the Council did not respond to the complaint because we were unable to establish that the complaint made in his name, was actually made by him, the complaint letter was not signed. When a social worker visited to ask him to sign a complaint letter, he declined. Investigating a complaint requires the Council to process personal information and consent is required. The LGSCO found that the Council was right to make sure he made the complaint before responding and therefore found no fault by the Council.

**Case 2** – The LGSCO found that the Council did not clearly explain the section 47 enquiry process or explain why it changed its supervision arrangements for Mrs X's daughter. The complainant was clear that she wanted one single response to her issues which also involved Warrington & Halton Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust and Halton Clinical Commissioning Group's. This led to the LGSCO also criticising the complaint handling across all organisations. A number of other issues were also investigated for which no fault was found.

**Case 3** – The LGSCO found the council was at fault when it wrongly told her husband that he could not return home. The Council also failed to explain the purpose of Child in Need meetings and delayed providing her with a document after repeated requests. Again a number of other issues were investigated for which no fault was found. The LGSCO again also criticised the complaint handling, this complaint was received as the first lockdown commenced and so pressures on the service at that time did impact on this.

## 7.9 Actions taken and learnings

As the table above (7.7) shows, a number of customers raised complaints when they could not get in touch with their allocated social worker immediately or directly. This was a similar theme in the previous years, there is an expectation that Social Workers will be there to provide an immediate response. Social workers are working with a number of other families so when they are out of the office or due to COVID-19 in telephone conferences they are not available to take calls or respond to messages, they cannot provide instant responses. Of the 17 complaints made only 3 were found upheld in failing to provide a timely response.

The LGSCO complaint investigations identifies actions for the Council in order to improve service delivery. In Case 2, the LGSCO found that the Council did not clearly explain the Section 47 enquiry process and in Case 3 the Council failed to explain the purpose of Child in Need meetings. The LGSCO in their analysis identified that as the Social Worker did not record the exact infinite detail of what their conversation entailed at the time, the conversation therefore did not occur, whilst investigating it internally at Stage 1, the Social Worker provided a statement confirming this however, this was

discounted, they found that on the balance of probabilities, as the complainant raised the issue as a complaint they must not have been informed.

As a result of this, the Assessment Pack given to families at the beginning of their involvement has been reviewed to capture this information, it explains the processes and types of questions asked during the assessment, and this will ensure that families are consistently given the same information at the onset. It also captures some other themes raised in complaints such as the availability of staff when ringing and leaving messages so that they can understand why they may not get an immediate response as well as a section on 'frequently asked questions'.

Children may wish to someday access their records and so what a Social Worker records is important, their file can in effect become their autobiography. The Case Recording Policy has been updated and relaunched to emphasise the importance of accurate case recording.

In terms of criticising the complaint handling, in Case 2, the Council was criticised for engaging the statutory process when it was a Section 47 enquiry citing that corporate procedures were applicable. It was perhaps a little frustrating that shortly after this complaint concluded the LGSCO published a focus report in which it stated '*We expect councils to assess each complaint on its own merits. We would not criticise a council for deciding to investigate these matters under the statutory complaint procedure*'. There were other issues however, how the cross boundary complaint was handled, we are in the process of agreeing a protocol with Health partners should any arise in the future. In order to address Managers understanding of the process the LGSCO requested that their focus reports be shared with Social Care Managers to aid their understanding of the process.

Learning from complaints is discussed by investigating managers with both individuals (where appropriate) and their teams and is also shared with the relevant service area by heads of service. The Children Services Department have recently reviewed and updated their Quality Assurance framework ensuring a formal route for the reporting of complaint outcomes and themes so that where necessary they can be mapped and addressed through staff training, supervision and practice/policy development.

The Principal Policy Officer will continue to work proactively alongside managers making enquiries and challenging findings in order to help catch issues quickly and resolve dissatisfaction locally to prevent unnecessary escalation.

## 7.10 Complaints Training and Procedures

No training sessions took place in this financial year in part due to COVID-19 and in order not to place additional stress on front line services. Training did occur for the new Duty and Assessment Team as part of their induction which has also occurred for some other staff new to the Council.

## 8. Compliments

A separate report is compiled that records all the positive comments received and so this is a snapshot. The number of compliments and positive feedback has increased this year with a number of them making reference to the support provided during the COVID-19 pandemic and lockdown periods.

Year	Total
17-18	80
18-19	101
19-20	67
20-21	92

Staff are reminded of the importance to report compliments, it can be helpful feedback giving a flavour of what works well and what support families value. Staff also benefit, knowing that they are valued is powerful in motivating and enhancing their performance.

It is important to remember that all the Divisions, Team around the Family, Children in Need, Children in Care and the Safeguarding Unit work together to support families. As an example, a child on a Child Protection Plan could be open to the Child in Need Division and the Safeguarding Unit.

	17-18	18-19	19-20	20-21
CIN	33%	31%	25%	44%
CIC	14%	14%	42%	14%
TAF	53%	55%	33%	42%

Email - She came into our lives after malicious allegations from their father, but I am thankful for this, if he had not I would never of met her. That women is like an Angel to me and my children. Upon meeting her I realise I was a broken women without her I am not sure if I would of woken up and realised this, by being strong, caring and mainly amazing at her job this woman made me see not just my sense, but my worth! And that is something I cannot thank her enough for. My children are happy, I am happy and I believe that is all down to her, without her I would still be plodding through life whereas now, I am waiting to start my diploma in Law at university and my driving lessons and be the person I always wanted to be. There were times I cried, times I laughed. I was always worried about the stigma around social services, now I realise without people like her doing the hard job she does there would be a lot more people walking around sad, unhappy and abused. This woman needs to be recognised in my eyes as a hero, as saving me is what she has done. She was strong and always told me straight, some things are hard to hear but I know this was her pushing me to be the real me, better me. When she closed our case I cried because of the impact she has had on our lives, she is a truly a special woman and I could not of asked for a social worker to come in my life that knows her job, knows herself, knows when to pass a tissue and cleaning tips and turn someone's life around. Thank you so much, an email doesn't feel enough but I couldn't get it out through crying last time we met, I hope you get the recognition you deserve, what might seem so little to some, means so much to others. Thank you (Client)

Verbal - Thank you for everything you have done, we know it hasn't been easy, and I know we have had our ups and our downs, I really appreciate everything you have done for my kids. (Client)

Email - Inglefields: Shut doors due to coronavirus epidemic but have kept in regular contact via phone and email. Am extremely grateful for the care and consideration they show not just to my son but my whole family. And yes even for the hugely helpful tips and links sent via email. (Client)

Email - A big thank you to you both for listening to me the other day. As an intensive care front line worker, working extra shifts, life has become extremely stressful. (Client)

Text - Feeling super proud of our little family this week, things are looking so positive. She had physio yesterday and her professionals are made up with her progress. We had a lovely present of our amazing play partner, the health nurse has nominated us for a Christmas hamper as well. We feel super lucky, and so supported today. We're a very luck little family x (Client)

Letter - I would like to appreciate them for the support I received. The kids and I want to say thank you, in a short time we have known you, you have helped us with lots of problems. You have offered good support for my family. She will always explain things to me, so I fully understand what was happening. She offered advice and support that benefited me and my family. Thank you so much, god bless you. (Client)

Letter - Thank you for all you have done for my family. I feel like I've grown in confidence as a person with your help and support. I very much appreciate all the support you have given us over the past year. Me and the kids will miss you. Thanks again. (Client)

Email - Just wanted to pass on some comments made about how his involvement and hard work has made some positive differences to a family who are now in position to close to Children Social Care. We completed our last home visit to Y and his mother last night. The case has moved from very complex with some very concerning behaviours presented by Y to one that is now allowing us to confidently recommend closure. During our visit we talked about how things have been in the past compared to how the family think they are now and mum was very complimentary to the help and support she has received from him. She said she felt they would not be in the position they are now if it wasn't for his support and advice. (Professional)

Email - I just wanted to pay a massive compliment to him on the work he has completed on my case. The feedback from the father was that he was able to point out useful strategies that made him think twice about his behaviour and understand issues from his past he hadn't previously addressed. The father said he found him relatable and the work completed has stuck in his mind which he was able to relay in my risk assessment of him. A complex case so well done. (Professional)