

Public Document Pack



Children Young People and Families Policy and Performance Board

Monday, 24 January 2022 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 for further information.
The next meeting of the Board is to be confirmed.*

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

Part I

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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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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, 8 November 2021 in the Council Chamber - Town Hall, Runcorn

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

Apologies for Absence: Councillors C. Plumpton Walsh and Goodall

Absence declared on Council business: None

Officers present: A. Jones, T. Coffey, J. Farrell, S. Williams, M. West, P. McPartland and J. Lloyd

Also in attendance: None

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

	<i>Action</i>
CYP16 MINUTES	
<p>The Minutes of the meeting held on 13 September 2021 were taken as read and signed as a correct record.</p>	
CYP17 PUBLIC QUESTION TIME	
<p>It was confirmed that no public questions had been received.</p>	
CYP18 EXECUTIVE BOARD MINUTES	
<p>The minutes relating to the Children and Young People Portfolio, that had been considered by the Executive Board since the last meeting of this Board, were attached at Appendix 1 for information.</p>	
CYP19 HEADTEACHER OF THE VIRTUAL SCHOOL'S ANNUAL REPORT FOR HALTON CHILDREN IN CARE	
<p>The Board considered a report of the Strategic Director – People, which presented the Headteacher's Virtual School's Annual Report for Halton Children in Care (CIC).</p>	

The Annual Report was appended to the report and provided detailed data, analysis and summary of the work of the Virtual School, during the academic year 2020-21.

It was noted that due to the impact of Covid-19, a decision was made to suspend all primary tests and to change to teacher assessment for the allocation of GCSE results. Members noted that because of this, it was not possible to provide yearly comparisons for end of Key Stage progress and attainment. Further, whilst some school attendance did resume for parts of the academic year, there was a national lockdown in the spring term, which meant it was again difficult to provide yearly comparisons.

The Board was advised that the work of the Virtual School had continued throughout the academic year. The full Annual Report provided detailed analysis of how Halton's Children in Care had performed against each of the individual key performance indicators; how they had been supported in order to mitigate against the impact of Covid restrictions; gave a summary of the School's progress towards its identified key priorities for the academic year 2020-21; and identified the priorities for the School in 2021-22.

Following presentation of the item Members raised the following:

80% of CIC were in good/better schools – how were you assuring the wellbeing of the 20% that were not

By constantly reviewing the provision on an individual needs basis so through termly progress meetings (outside of the PEP reviews); looking at the work being done in the school and outcomes during the school day; pastoral support offered; and monthly meetings to keep on top of any pupils that were a cause for concern.

How do you deal with telling a school that they did not meet the needs of a child

Usually the school would agree, if the child was not making progress at a particular school then it was important that they found a placement which could change this to better the outcome for the child.

Where were unaccompanied asylum seekers taught

They must have a placement in a school or college to be able to receive the education, whether this be virtual due to Covid or physically attending.

Did asylum seekers come from the dispersal system

The vast majority did, but some self-presented. The Home Office carried out an age assessment but some say they are below 18, which triggers statutory responsibilities upon the Local Authority (LA), at the expense of the LA.

The phrase 'stuck PEPs' – this was explained in relation to Riverside College, where quality assurance raised issues in relation to the recording of information on PEP's for children not being robust enough, so the quality of them required improvement. The Virtual School were working with them to improve this to ensure all information was entered into the PEPs within a clear timeframe.

RESOLVED: That the Board

- 1) notes the information provided; and
- 2) accepts 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.

CYP20 CHILDCARE SUFFICIENCY ASSESSMENT REVIEW
AUTUMN 2021 – 2022

The Board considered a report from the Strategic Director – People, which provided a summary of the revised Childcare Sufficiency Assessment (CSA) Report.

It was noted that 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)*, required all local authorities in England to undertake and provide an annual childcare sufficiency report to elected Council Members on how they were meeting their duty to secure sufficient childcare and to make it available to the public. In accordance with this, Halton's Childcare Sufficiency Assessment had been reviewed and updated – this was attached to the report.

The CSA report detailed achievements since the last review and outlined Halton's current position. It also highlighted any gaps in provision and explained how these were being addressed. The report also shared how Covid-19 was impacting the childcare sector and identified any potential sustainability concerns for some providers.

Members' debated the following:

- The cost of childcare for families – this was dependent upon the age of the child and the premises costs of the setting, so was variable;
- Requirements to be a childminder – they could take children up to the age of 8 and had to be registered with Ofsted and adhere to certain planning conditions;
- The difference between a childminder and a nursery;
- Provision for 3 and 4 year olds – this was clarified – all 3 and 4 year olds with working parents were entitled to 30 hours free childcare;
- Parents were free to shop around to suit their work commitments for example and were allowed to use two settings to equal the 30 hours if desired.

RESOLVED: That the Board approves the revised Childcare Sufficiency Assessment.

CYP21 ANNUAL REPORT - COMMENTS, COMPLAINTS AND COMPLIMENTS RELATING TO CHILDREN'S SOCIAL CARE SERVICES 1ST APRIL 2020- 31ST MARCH 2021

The Board was presented with the Annual Reports for Comments, Complaints and Compliments relating to Children's Social Care Services from 1 April 2020 to 31 March 2021.

The report provided analysis on complaints processed under the *Children Act 1989 Representations Procedure*, and evidenced how feedback from service users had been used to improve service delivery. It was reported that the aim of the Children Act 1989 Representations Procedure was for children and young people to have their concerns resolved swiftly and wherever possible, by the people who provided the service locally. It was noted that a complaint may generally be defined as an expression of dissatisfaction or disquiet in relation to an individual child or young person, which required a response.

Members were advised that there were four categories to the representation process: Statutory Complaints; Representations; Customer Care Issues; and Compliments. Commentary on these was provided in the report which also presented detailed information and data relating to the numbers of complaints received between 1 April 2020 and 31 March 2021.

The report also detailed feedback on compliments

made by clients and positive feedback from workers / professionals relating to Children's Services in the Directorate. The positive impact and outcomes on the lives of people accessing services in this Directorate were highlighted.

Members welcomed the report and recognised the good work that was carried out, as presented in the feedback examples from Child Protection and Children in Need, Children in Care and Care Leavers, and Team around the Family. It was also understood that managing complaints was also about managing a client's expectations which these days was much higher, due to improved technology and communication. People forget that staff had caseloads to manage and were not available all the time; this was also exacerbated during the Covid-19 pandemic.

RESOLVED: That the reports presented be accepted as the mechanism by which Elected Members can monitor and scrutinise children's social care complaints and compliments.

Meeting ended at 8.15 p.m.

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

DATE: 24 January 2022

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: 24 January 2022

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 and Young People Policy and Performance Board

EXECUTIVE BOARD MEETING 18 November 2021

EXB50	THE FUNDING FORMULA FOR MAINSTREAM SCHOOLS AND ACADEMIES FOR 2022-23
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The Board considered a report of the Strategic Director – People, which presented the proposal for the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) Schools Block Funding Formula for Halton’s mainstream schools and academies for the Council’s financial year 2022-23.

The report described how the DSG was split and how the National Funding Formula (NFF) was used by the Department for Education (DfE) to calculate the Schools Block element of the DSG allocated to Halton.

The Board was required to make a decision on the funding formula to be adopted for 2022-23. Further to the consultation paper sent to all schools (appendices A and B) and after its consideration at Schools Forum, it was agreed by them that the adoption of the NFF method, principles and rules should continue to be applied to mainstream schools and academies.

The Board was also requested to support the disapplication request to the DfE to transfer 1% of DSG from Schools Block to the High Needs Block, due to the continuing pressures on the High Needs Block budgets. Again, a consultation had been carried out on this proposal with schools, set out in appendices C and D and the proposal was considered at Schools Forum on 3 November, where this was supported.

RESOLVED: That the Board

- 1) approves the continuation of the National Funding Formula for 2022-23; and
- 2) supports the disapplication request to transfer 1% of DSG from Schools Block to High Needs Block.

REPORT TO:	Children, Young People & Families Policy & Performance Board
DATE:	24 th January 2022
REPORTING OFFICER:	Strategic Director, People
PORTFOLIO:	Children & Young People
SUBJECT:	Ofsted Focused Visit
WARD(S)	Borough-wide

1.0 **PURPOSE OF THE REPORT**

1.1 Members of the Board to receive a presentation following the Ofsted focused visit which took place in October 2021 and the subsequent actions taken in response to their findings.

2.0 **RECOMMENDATION: That Members of the Board:**

- i) **Note the steps that have been taken and the role of the Improvement Board;**
- ii) **Agree with the future reporting arrangements to this Board.**

3.0 **SUPPORTING INFORMATION**

3.1 Halton received a focused visit to its children's services department on 13 and 14 October 2021 and inspectors looked at the arrangements for children in need, including those who are subject to a child protection plan.

3.2 This visit was carried out in line with the inspection of local authority children's services (ILACS) framework. However, the delivery model was adapted to reflect the COVID-19 context. The lead inspector and the Strategic Director, People agreed arrangements to deliver this visit effectively while working within national and local guidelines for responding to COVID-19. This visit was carried out fully on site. Inspectors used video calls for some discussions with social workers.

4.0 **POLICY IMPLICATIONS**

4.1 None identified.

5.0 **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

5.1 None identified.

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

6.1 **Children & Young People in Halton**

Having a strong and robust framework for identifying and responding across all agencies is the key to ensuring that children and young people are safe and protected, and partners are clear about their responsibilities and role in working together.

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

None identified.

6.3 **A Healthy Halton**

Children and young people whose health needs and level of development is potentially compromised are identified early and multi-agency support is in place to support them.

6.4 **A Safer Halton**

Children who are at risk of harm are identified quickly and services work together to minimise the risk of harm and take action to formally protect children in a timely way.

6.5 **Halton's Urban Renewal**

None identified.

7.0 **RISK ANALYSIS**

7.1 All key stakeholders are committed to working together to ensure a robust and consistent approach to protect children in Halton.

8.0 **EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES**

8.1 Issues arising from a child's equality and diversity needs will inform the decision-making at the point of contact and it will be ensured that the voice of the child is to the forefront.

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

None.

REPORT TO:	Children, Young People & Families Policy and Performance Board
DATE:	24 th January 2022
REPORTING OFFICER:	Tracey Coffey, Operational Director and Chair of the Cheshire Youth Justice Board
PORTFOLIO:	Children & Young People
SUBJECT:	HMI Inspectorate of Probation Report of Cheshire Youth Justice Service
WARD(S)	Borough-wide

1.0 **PURPOSE OF THE REPORT**

- 1.1 Cheshire Youth Justice Service (CYJS) provides the statutory services for children and young people who are at risk of offending or have committed offences. CYJS is a partnership of Halton, Warrington, Cheshire East and Cheshire West local authorities, together with Cheshire Police, Cheshire Police and Crime Commissioner, the respective clinical commissioning groups in each LA area, Her Majesty's Court and Tribunal Service (HMCTS) and the National Probation Service.
- 1.2 CYJS was subject to a joint inspection, led by Her Majesty's Probation Inspectorate, supported by Ofsted, the Care Quality Commission and Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire Services Inspectorate in 2 blocks in July 2021, and the report was published in December 2021.
- 1.3 This report is to share the findings of the inspection; the overall judgement was that CYJS is Good, with three outstanding areas and one are for improvement. The report states that Cheshire YJS has the highest overall rating score nationally to date for a joint inspection.
- 1.4 An action plan to address the 4 recommendations will be approved by the Youth Justice Management Board in December 2021, who will monitor its progress.

2.0 **RECOMMENDATION: That:**

- i) **the report be noted; and**
- ii) **The Board thank the staff, partners, children and young people and their families and volunteers for their contribution.**

3.0 SUPPORTING INFORMATION

- 3.1 The inspection considers 12 rating standards across three domain areas: organisational delivery, court disposal and out of court disposals. It involved reviewing case records, interviews with a range of agency representatives and frontline staff, volunteers and young people and their families.
- 3.2 Outstanding ratings were given to standards for governance and leadership, and for implementation, delivery and joint working on out of court disposals. One standard was rated requiring improvement for planning in court disposals and the remaining 8 standards were rated as good.
- 3.3 The report notes that the service has a clear ambition for children, sustained and effective partnership and generally sound operational delivery. The Board has been highly effective in setting out priorities for the service, which managers and staff have been able to translate into the services delivered and available for children. Board members took appropriate steps to understand the needs of children.
- 3.4 Several strengths were noted, including the effective partnerships that had been developed and sustained about 4 local authority areas in a complex partnership, and the response to ensuring services were maintained during Covid-19. There is a strong shared culture of co-operation and learning, with excellent access to health services and education.
- 3.5 Importantly, the service develops good relationships with children, understanding the factors that had led them to offend and inspectors were pleased to find the needs of children and their victims were both given priority.
- 3.6 Inspectors have made a number of recommendations to support the service and its development. For CYJS there are 3 recommendations:
- To work with the police to make sure there is police representation at all risk management meetings and the role of the police is consistently considered in all appropriate cases, to ensure risks are managed
 - To work with the management board to ensure funding for Divert is part of the mainstream YJS budget, to enable its success to be sustained
 - To provide effective management oversight that improves the planning to manage the risk of harm to others, especially in medium risk cases
- 3.7 There are two recommendations for Cheshire Constabulary:

- To clarify the roles and tasking priorities of police officers to ensure they support the work of the YJS in line with national guidance, including decision making for out of court disposals
- To ensure all seconded police officers are skilled, knowledgeable and trained, particularly with regards to safeguarding and child exploitation, to increase their effectiveness in their role with the YJS

3.8 There is one recommendation for the chair of the management board:

- To provide staff with safe, confidential and accessible places to work with children

3.9 The police officer roles and contribution work effectively but are not fully in line with the mandated national guidance on embedding full time dedicated police officers in the YJS, leading to some lack of clarity about roles and deployment and their availability and contribution to meetings and decision-making.

3.10 Divert is a scheme that assesses the risk and needs of children arrested for lower level offences and intervenes to provide multi-agency support without criminalising children unnecessarily. Cheshire's Divert scheme has been recognised as a national pathfinder scheme but it has been funded largely by the PCC through an annual grant (£198k) that has not increased for several years. This scheme is not statutory and PCCs are not mandated to fund local Youth Justice Services, but Divert has had a demonstrably positive impact in maintaining lower than average numbers of first time entrants to the criminal justice system (which is a kpi for local authorities).

3.11 There is an expectation within national standards that each YJS is funded to deliver pre-court diversionary activity but how this is done and how it is funded is not prescribed. The joint inspection recommended the Youth Justice Partnership Board ensure the sustained success of Divert by mainstreaming it and committing to recurrent funding. This will be a challenge given the financial constraints for all partners.

3.12 Each local authority has a range of places to see children, but the accessibility and suitability varies across each area. Again, the cost of identifying, hiring, providing, altering provision will provide a challenge in the context of reducing budgets and the need to identify savings.

3.13 An action plan will be developed and agreed by partners at the YJS Board meeting in December 2021.

4.0 **POLICY IMPLICATIONS**

4.1 As highlighted above, some of the recommendations have significant

cost implications for all partners and their contribution to CYJS. The Board will strive to deliver as far a possible within the existing budget and any request for increased funding is supported by a business case that has explored all options, including the use of existing resources.

5.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

5.1 None identified.

6.0 IMPLICATIONS FOR THE COUNCIL'S PRIORITIES

6.1 Children & Young People in Halton

Children who have offended or are at risk of offending may suffer poorer outcomes for their health, well-being, education and employment and potential to be active and committed citizens of Halton without specialised support. It is also a legal requirement for each local authority to provide a youth justice service.

6.2 Employment, Learning & Skills in Halton

As above.

6.3 A Healthy Halton

As above.

6.4 A Safer Halton

CYJS supports and protects the victims of crime in Halton by working with children and partners to prevent and reduce the impact of offending

6.5 Halton's Urban Renewal

None identified.

7.0 RISK ANALYSIS

7.1 An increase in the risk of children re-offending with a reduced service from the CYJS would mean a significant increase in harm to members of the community but also to children whose outcomes would be severely reduced and lead to increased cost in terms of their education, care and health.

8.0 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES

8.1 Children from a black or minority ethnic background can be over-represented in the profile of children who offend, and all partners must undertake their duties in a non-discriminatory way and be alert to

factors which may lead to over-representation as a consequence of their actions.

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

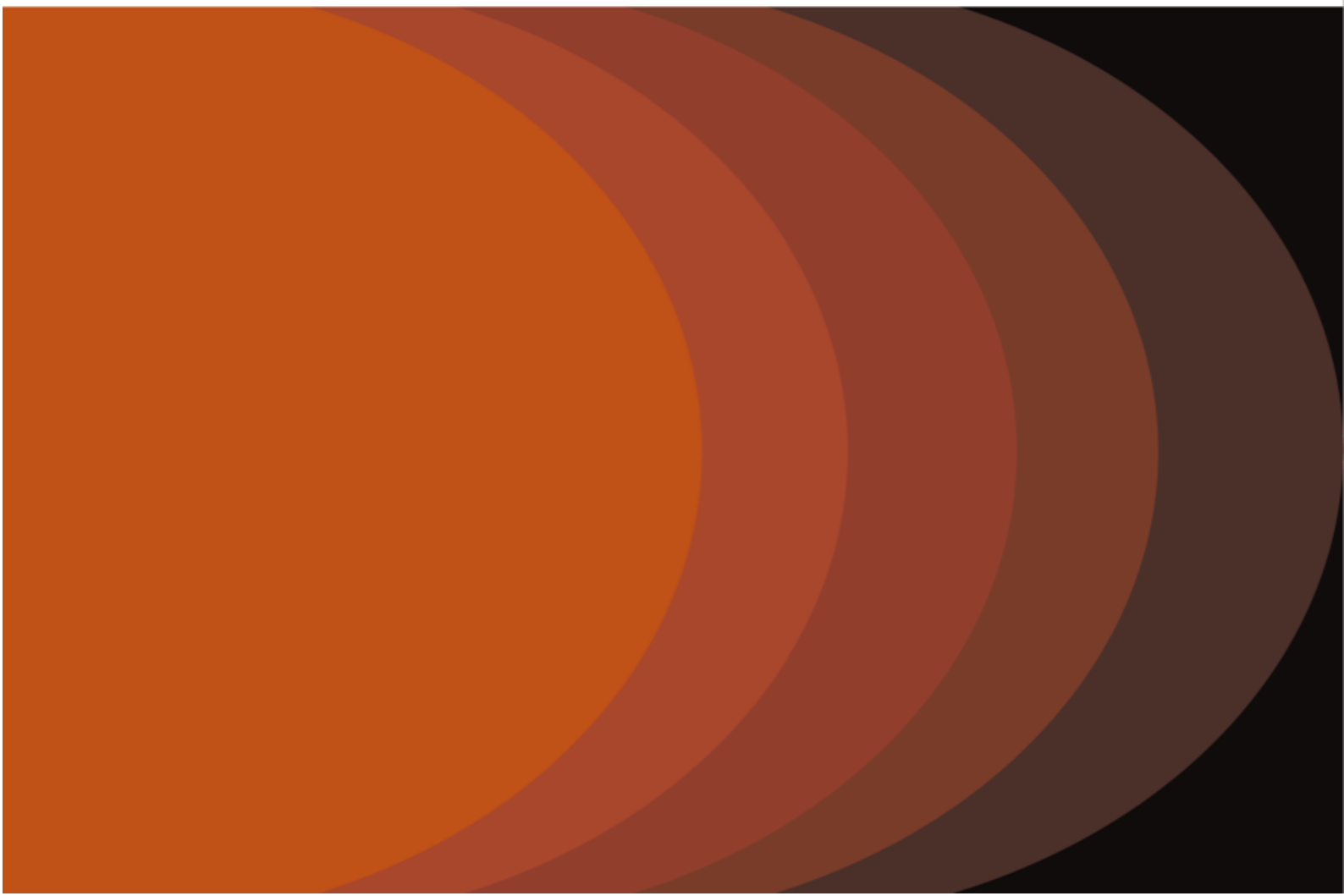
None.



An inspection of youth offending services in

Cheshire Youth Justice Service

HM Inspectorate of Probation, December 2021





Acknowledgements

This inspection was led by HM Inspector Yvonne McGuckian, supported by a team of inspectors and colleagues from across the Inspectorate. HM Inspectorate of Probation was joined by colleague inspectors from police, health, social care and education. We would like to thank all those who helped plan and took part in the inspection; without their help and cooperation, the inspection would not have been possible.

The role of HM Inspectorate of Probation

Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Probation is the independent inspector of youth offending and probation services in England and Wales. We report on the effectiveness of probation and youth offending service work with adults and children.

We inspect these services and publish inspection reports. We highlight good and poor practice, and use our data and information to encourage high-quality services. We are independent of government, and speak independently.

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Foreword

This inspection is part of our four-year programme of youth offending service (YOS) inspections. We have inspected and rated Cheshire Youth Justice Service across three broad areas: the arrangements for organisational delivery of the service, the quality of work done with children sentenced by the courts, and the quality of out-of-court disposal work. Overall, Cheshire was rated as 'Good'.

This joint inspection, assessing the quality of work by the Youth Justice Service, highlights a clear ambition for children, sustained and effective partnerships, and generally sound operational delivery. Cheshire has achieved the highest score of any of the joint inspections undertaken with colleague inspectors from the police, health, social care and education that we have completed to date.

The board was highly effective in setting out the priorities for the service, which managers and staff have been able to translate into the services delivered to and available for children. Board members were clear in their roles and responsibilities and ensured they took appropriate steps to understand the needs of children who came into contact with the service.

We noted several strengths, including the ability of managers to establish and maintain effective partnerships with four different local authorities. This has been sustained over time and remained consistent during periods of significant change, including the Covid-19 pandemic. The cooperation and shared culture of learning across the partnership were evident, leading to a service that used evidence and research effectively in the development and delivery of services. This had positive benefits for children, including excellent access to health services and support to remain in education, training or employment.

Staff formed good relationships with children, understanding the factors that had led them to offend, and we were pleased to find that the needs of children and victims were both given priority.

There are some areas for the partnership to consider which could enhance the service children receive. These include clarification around the deployment and use of police officers within the service, to ensure that the current provision fits with mandated guidance and is effective in supporting the service to deliver high-quality work with children.

The range and access to suitable buildings which meet children's needs should be reviewed. There are limited places to work with children and victims, and it is our assessment that this is having a detrimental impact on case work. This has been exacerbated by Covid-19 but was also an issue prior to the pandemic.

There is a positive pathfinder programme in place to divert children from the criminal justice system. However, funding for this is not yet part of the mainstream YJS budget. It is important that the partnership proactively considers how to ensure the strong diversionary practice through the programme is sustained.














In this report we make a number of recommendations, which, if implemented, we hope will support Cheshire to continue to deliver a high-quality service for children.



Justin Russell

Chief Inspector of Probation

Ratings

Cheshire Youth Justice Service		Score	26/36
Overall rating		Good	
1. Organisational delivery			
1.1	Governance and leadership	Outstanding	
1.2	Staff	Good	
1.3	Partnerships and services	Good	
1.4	Information and facilities	Good	
2. Court disposals			
2.1	Assessment	Good	
2.2	Planning	Requires improvement	
2.3	Implementation and delivery	Good	
2.4	Reviewing	Good	
3. Out-of-court disposals			
3.1	Assessment	Good	
3.2	Planning	Good	
3.3	Implementation and delivery	Outstanding	
3.4	Joint working	Outstanding	

Executive summary

Overall, Cheshire YJS is rated as: 'Good'. This rating has been determined by inspecting it in three areas of its work, referred to as 'domains'. We inspect against 12 'standards', shared between the domains. The standards are based on established models and frameworks, which are grounded in evidence, learning and experience. They are designed to drive improvements in the quality of work with children who have offended.¹ Published scoring rules generate the overall YOS rating.² The findings and subsequent ratings in those domains are described below. Our fieldwork was conducted between 12 and 16 July 2021, and 26 and 30 July 2021. We note the case sample and the inspection all occurred during the period of Covid-19, and Cheshire had maintained strong service delivery despite the challenges the pandemic presented.

1. Organisational delivery



Organisational delivery was very strong. Governance and leadership have been rated as 'Outstanding', and staffing, partnerships and services, and information and facilities have all been rated as 'Good'. Cheshire YJS has a complex set of partnership arrangements. The management board and management team have worked consistently well in establishing and maintaining positive professional relationships and partnerships that support them to deliver effective services to children.

Cheshire YJS covers four local authorities: Cheshire East, Cheshire West and Chester, Halton, and Warrington. There are 185 sites that provide education and 79 care homes. Twenty per cent of YJS cases had child in care or care leaver status as at April 2021. The YJS borders 15 other local authorities and is close to Manchester, Liverpool and Birmingham. There is one police force, Cheshire Constabulary, and a wide range of health providers. This picture is not static, and managers, staff, and partners make considerable efforts to ensure any changes cause minimal disruption to service delivery.

A few issues need addressing to enable the YJS to flourish and build on its rating of 'Good', most notably the lack of clarity around the role and tasking processes of police officers and the need to define these more clearly in line with statutory guidance. Accommodation and accessing safe and suitable places to see children are also areas requiring development. While the YJS has developed some workarounds, longer-term solutions are needed. The board will need to consider the implications of these and explore how to rectify them as a priority.

We were impressed with the YJS's use of evidence and academic research to inform and develop practice and services. This is some of the strongest we have seen.

We interviewed the YOT manager and the chair of the management board. We held meetings with other members of the board and key stakeholders. Inspectors from the Care Quality Commission, Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services

¹ HM Inspectorate of Probation's standards can be found here:

<https://www.justiceinspectorates.gov.uk/hmiprobation/about-our-work/our-standards-and-ratings/>

² Each of the 12 standards is scored on a 0–3 scale in which 'Inadequate' = 0; 'Requires improvement' = 1; 'Good' = 2; 'Outstanding' = 3. Adding these scores produces a total score ranging from 0–36, which is banded to produce the overall rating, as follows: 0–6 = 'Inadequate', 7–18 = 'Requires improvement', 19–30 = 'Good', 31–36 = 'Outstanding'.

and inspectors with education and social care expertise were part of our inspection team. They interviewed stakeholders and reviewed some of the work in cases we had assessed in the first part of our inspection. They looked in detail at how partners supported the YJS's work.

Key findings about organisational delivery are as follows:

- the board has a clear and agreed vision and strategy for the children that the YJS works with. The vision is shared across the partnership and has been translated effectively into service delivery. This vision recognises that, in the early stages, children's outcomes are better if they are diverted from the justice system. It also recognises the importance of a child-first approach, while ensuring the impact of crime on victims is not minimised
- this positive, child-focused culture is embedded across the many partner organisations working with the YJS. The YJS values its arrangements with partners, providers and agencies, and works hard at all levels to maintain effective relationships and pathways into services. The scale of this task is significant, and some initiatives take shape over a long period of time. The maturity of the partnerships and willingness to challenge each other are strengths
- staff from all agencies demonstrated good knowledge, skills and experience. All staff were passionate about their work and dedicated to delivering a child-focused service. Staff were flexible and innovative in their approach to supporting children, building trust-based and therapeutic relationships
- local, regional and national evidence is used to review and revise services. We found such examples across the partnership, aided by mature and open relationships. We identified numerous examples of the use of learning to improve practice, including learning from inspections and reviews. The YJS uses research effectively to guide service delivery.

But:

- a lack of clarity around the deployment and use of police officers within the service has led to confusion around how the current provision fits with mandated guidance, and raised questions regarding the effectiveness of the police role in supporting the service to deliver high-quality work with children
- the YJS uses community venues, including children's centres, youth clubs and libraries, to see children. However, in some areas, it can be hard to find a suitable space and staff have reported challenges in finding appropriate venues and confidential places to work with children. It is noted the Covid-19 pandemic has exacerbated some of these issues. Previously used venues also now have reduced capacity, which is presenting additional pressures.

2. Court disposals



We took a detailed look at 31 community sentences and three custodial sentences managed by the YJS. We also conducted 33 interviews with the relevant case managers. We examined the quality of assessment; planning; implementation and delivery of services; and reviewing. We inspected each of these elements in respect of work done to address desistance. For services to keep the child safe, we assessed the quality of planning and implementation and delivery in the 30 cases where we expected meaningful work to take

place. Similarly, for work to keep others safe, we assessed the quality of planning and implementation and delivery in the 28 cases where meaningful work was required.

In this service, work to support desistance was the strongest area: 74 per cent of cases met all our quality requirements for assessment, 85 per cent for planning and 88 per cent for implementation and delivery. The quality of assessment, planning and review of safety and wellbeing and risk of harm to others was more mixed. Assessment and planning for work to address safety and wellbeing issues met our standards in 68 per cent and 67 per cent of cases respectively; but planning to address the safety of others was only sufficient in 54 per cent of cases, leading to a rating of 'Requires improvement' for that standard. Although reviewing of work to address desistance met our standards in 83 per cent of cases, reviewing of work to manage the safety and wellbeing of the child and the safety of others was sufficient in only 65 and 71 per cent of cases respectively.

Our key findings about court disposals are as follows:

- the delivery of interventions to manage and respond to desistance and safety and wellbeing factors is strong and staff focus on this consistently. We saw some good joint work with social workers, education providers and staff in residential homes
- health interventions are a strength, and all children are offered a health assessment
- assessments are detailed and analytical, and planning to meet children's desistance needs is supported by specialist assessments, including of speech and communication needs; education, training and employment; and mental health
- staff carry out appropriate assessment of the needs and wishes of victims. Victim awareness sessions for children and restorative justice for victims are embedded in practice
- delivery of interventions is well sequenced and tailored to meet individual needs. Children receive support from a range of professionals who build trusting and positive relationships with them
- most children attend school and are supported to maintain their attendance. This is a key desistance factor.

But:

- management oversight of cases classified as medium risk of harm is not fully effective
- planning to manage risk of harm needs to improve so that it is specific to the individual risks posed and contains clear actions that would need to be taken if the child's circumstances were to change
- assessments should consider the needs and experiences of black, Asian and minority ethnic children. Staff need support to speak to children with confidence about any discrimination they have faced and to understand issues of self-identity
- there is limited support for children who are exploited and a lack of work to proactively target perpetrators, to break the cycle of abuse.

3. Out-of-court disposals



We inspected 23 cases managed by the YJS that had received an out-of-court disposal. These consisted of two youth conditional cautions, two youth cautions, and 18 community resolutions. We also reviewed one case where the outcome was no further action, but an assessment had been undertaken, a plan produced, and interventions delivered. We interviewed the case managers in the 23 cases.

We examined the quality of assessment; planning; and implementation and delivery of services. Each of these elements was inspected in respect of work done to address desistance. For the 12 cases where there were factors related to harm, we also inspected work done to keep other people safe. In the 20 cases where safety and wellbeing concerns were identified, we looked at work done to safeguard the child. We also looked at the quality of joint working with local police in the two youth conditional caution cases.

Our key findings about out-of-court disposals are as follows:

- staff undertake insightful, well-evidenced and analytical assessments of the reasons that children offend and the risks they pose to others
- there is good use of out-of-court disposals to prevent children from entering the criminal justice system
- all children can access the same wide range of support services, regardless of the type of contact they have with the YJS
- interventions are proportionate to need and delivered quickly
- plans take the child's views and wishes into account
- staff maintain good contact and engagement with parents throughout the case
- exit planning is proactive and enables children to access services in the community once contact ends.

But:

- staffing on the Divert team is stretched and some cases are allocated to staff who are not sufficiently experienced to manage them
- the out-of-court decision-making process needs to be reviewed, with a consistent police officer involved to resolve delays and ensure effective joint work is undertaken
- contingency planning to manage safety and wellbeing is inconsistent, and sometimes underestimates the issues faced by the child
- support for children who are exploited is underdeveloped; staff rely too much on the child's and parents' ability to manage the risks. There needs to be an effective multi-agency response to reduce the risks of exploitation, which targets and disrupts perpetrators.

Recommendations

As a result of our inspection findings, we have made six recommendations that we believe, if implemented, will have a positive impact on the quality of youth offending services in Cheshire YJS. This will improve the lives of the children in contact with youth offending services, and better protect the public.

The Cheshire Youth Justice Service should:

1. work with the police to make sure that there is police representation at all risk management meetings and the role of the police is consistently considered in all appropriate cases, to ensure risks are effectively managed
2. work with the management board to ensure funding for Divert is part of the mainstream YJS budget, to enable its success to be sustained
3. provide effective management oversight that improves the planning to manage risk of harm to others, especially in medium-risk cases.

Cheshire Constabulary should:

4. clarify the roles and tasking priorities of police officers to ensure they effectively support the work of the YJS in line with national guidance, including decision-making for out-of-court disposals
5. ensure that all seconded police staff are skilled, knowledgeable, and trained, particularly with regards to safeguarding and child exploitation, to increase their effectiveness in their role within the YJS.

The chair of the management board should:

6. provide staff with safe, confidential and accessible places to work with children.

Background

Youth offending teams (YOTs) work with children aged 10 to 18 who have been sentenced by a court, or who have come to the attention of the police because of their offending behaviour, but have not been charged – instead, they were dealt with out of court. HM Inspectorate of Probation inspects both these aspects of youth offending services. We use the terms child or children to denote their special legal status and to highlight the obligations of relevant agencies such as social care, education and health to meet their safety and wellbeing needs.

YOTs are statutory partnerships, and they are multi-disciplinary, to deal with the needs of the whole child. They are required to have staff from local authority social care and education services, the police, the probation service and local health services.³ Most YOTs are based within local authorities; however, this can vary.

YOT work is governed and shaped by a range of legislation and guidance specific to the youth justice sector (such as the National Standards for Youth Justice) or else applicable across the criminal justice sector (for example Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangements guidance). The Youth Justice Board for England and Wales (YJB) provides some funding to YOTs. It also monitors their performance and issues guidance to them about how things are to be done.

Cheshire has a complex set of partnership arrangements, including 185 sites that provide education and 79 children's residential homes. Approximately 750 children from out of the area are placed in Cheshire. Twenty per cent of YJS cases involve children who are in care or have care leaver status (April 2021). The YJS borders 15 other local authorities with proximity to Manchester, Liverpool and Birmingham. Transport links are exceptional, and this drives some of the county lines issues.

The area is predominantly white, with white people making up 96 per cent of the population. The traveller community has a presence in some areas of the county.

The YJS in its current form, covering Cheshire East, Cheshire West and Chester, Halton, and Warrington, has existed since November 2016. Before that, there were several versions of the service (Halton and Warrington, and Halton, Warrington and Cheshire West). The design of a single pan-Cheshire service was constrained to some extent by the existing structures and legacies of human resources/staffing arrangements.

Cheshire has a single police force covering the whole area and the YJS is coterminous with the police, probation services and courts. This has enabled it to achieve some economies of scale and has been beneficial for service delivery and the quality of work in some areas. However, the added complexity of working with four local authorities, four safeguarding partnerships, four community safety partnerships and multiple health providers has not been without its challenges in an area of approximately 1,000 square miles, with a population of 1.1 million and over 250,000 children.

Cheshire YJS covers some urban areas of deprivation (Widnes, Runcorn and parts of Warrington, Chester, Crewe and Macclesfield), as well as large rural areas and a collection of smaller towns, such as Winsford, Northwich and Congleton.

The volume of work and demands on services fluctuate and are not always evenly distributed across the four local authorities. This means the YJS is not simply four 'mini YOTs' and must have a more flexible and nuanced operational delivery model. It is currently

³ The *Crime and Disorder Act (1998)* set out the arrangements for local YOTs and partnership working.

organised into several cluster areas (north, south, east and west) so that case managers and colleagues 'only' have to deal routinely with two of the four local authority areas. A small number of specialist workers cover all of Cheshire. This includes workers who supervise harmful sexual behaviour, and the Divert team (out-of-court disposals), which works across Cheshire but links children to the applicable local authority early help or children's social care departments as required.

Delivering a shared service across multiple local authorities is complex and challenging, not least because of the need to access multiple (and different) children's services information management systems. The plethora of systems and access passwords is an ongoing issue, but the YJS's ChildView case management system and all YJS staff laptops and iPhones are supported by Halton Borough Council, which allows for levels of consistency of approach.

Contextual facts

Youth justice information

163	First-time entrant rate per 100,000 in Cheshire YJS ⁴
207	First-time entrant rate per 100,000 in England and Wales Error! Bookmark not defined.
40.5%	Reoffending rate for Cheshire YJS ⁵
38.5%	Reoffending rate in England and Wales ⁶

Population information⁷

1,066,647	Total population in local authority (June 2020)
97,544	Total youth population (10–17 years) in local authority (June 2020)

Caseload information⁸

Age	10–14	15–17
Cheshire YJS	23%	77%
National average	22%	78%

Race/ethnicity	White	Black and minority ethnic	Unknown
Cheshire YJS	96%	5%	0%
National average	69%	28%	3%

Gender	Male	Female
Cheshire YJS	86%	14%
National average	85%	15%

⁴ Youth Justice Board. (2019). *First time entrants, January 2019 – December 2019*.

⁵ Ministry of Justice. (2019). *Proven reoffending statistics, January 2018 – December 2018*.

⁶ Youth Justice Board. (2019). *Youth Justice annual statistics: year to year*.

⁷ Office for National Statistics. (2019). *UK Population estimates, mid-2018*.

⁸ Youth Justice Board. (2019). *Youth Justice annual statistics: year to year*.

Additional caseload data⁹

215	Total current caseload, of which:
83	Court disposals
132	Out-of-court disposals

Of the 83 court disposals

81	Total current caseload on community sentences
2	Total current caseload in custody
4	Total current caseload on licence

Of the 132 out-of-court disposals

68	Total current caseload with youth caution
6	Total current caseload with youth conditional caution
68	Total current caseload: community resolution or other out-of-court disposal

Education and child protection status of caseload

14.7%	Current caseload 'Looked After Children' resident in the YOT area
10.4%	Current caseload 'Looked After Children' placed outside the YOT area
5.5%	Current caseload with child protection plan
19%	Current caseload with child in need plan
3%	Current caseload aged 16 and under not in school/pupil referral unit/alternative education
17.8%	Current caseload aged 16 and under in a pupil referral unit or alternative education
41.9%	Current caseload aged 17+ not in education, training or employment

For children in the inspected cases subject to court disposals¹⁰

Offence types ¹¹	%
Violence against the person	56%
Burglary	9%
Fraud and forgery	3%
Arson	3%

⁹ Information supplied by Cheshire YJS. Figures do not add up to 100 due to rounding.

¹⁰ Figures do not add up to 100 due to rounding.

¹¹ Data from the cases assessed during this inspection.

Criminal damage	3%
Drug offences	18%
Summary motoring offences	9%



1. Organisational delivery

We found a strong, clear-sighted board and management team that had translated the shared vision for children into effective service delivery. There were many examples of innovation and understanding, and the evidence base for the YJS's work was a strength. The open and mature relationships at senior level enabled challenge and promoted the needs of this cohort of children.

Strengths:

- Governance and leadership were excellent, with many examples of cooperative work between the four local authorities and numerous partners.
- The partners had a clear and shared vision for the service, which had been effectively translated into practice.
- Board members were appropriately focused on practice and service delivery, as well as maintaining strategic oversight and partnership links.
- Staff were well trained, knowledgeable and committed to working with children and families.
- Partnerships, although complex, worked well together to provide a wide range of services.

Areas for improvement:

- The lack of identified YJS police officer resource is a gap in staffing.
- There are insufficient suitable, safe and accessible premises for staff to meet children and victims.
- The response to child exploitation is underdeveloped. Parents and children need better targeted support.

Organisations that are well led and well managed are more likely to achieve their aims. We inspect against four standards.

1.1. Governance and leadership



The governance and leadership of the YOT supports and promotes the delivery of a high-quality, personalised and responsive service for all children.

Outstanding

Key data¹²

Total projected budget for the current financial year – 2020/2021	£2,801,086 (of which YJB Good Practice Grant £1,003,017) ¹²
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In making a judgement about governance and leadership, we take into account the answers to the following three questions:

Is there a clear local vision and strategy for the delivery of a high-quality, personalised and responsive service for all children?

The board has set a clear and agreed vision and strategy for children who encounter the YJS. This is predicated on evidence that, in the early stages, children's outcomes are better if they are diverted from the justice system. The vision balances a child-first approach with ensuring that the impact of crime on victims is not minimised. The strategy has been shared across the partnership, with each of the four local authorities and numerous partners implementing the overarching strategy in line with locally set priorities. The vision has been translated effectively into the services delivered. Two examples of strategic innovation are the YJS being awarded pathfinder status due to the success of the Divert programme and the use of academic research.

The board and YJS management team have made considerable efforts to maintain relationships and to embed the YJS's culture across many partners and over a sustained period. This has taken time and commitment. It has resulted in the YJS developing initiatives over time and sustaining its approaches, despite changes within the partnership.

The board is effective, challenging and well run by members. The board chair is well engaged and a strong advocate for the YJS. Challenge is encouraged and recognised as a strength. The board membership includes an academic who focuses and informs its work, so that decisions are in line with the evidence base. Membership is reviewed, and changes made to improve attendance and representation.

The membership of the board is appropriate and representative of the various partners. Members have the right level of authority to make effective strategic decisions, for example on resource allocation. The recent appointment of a new education representative is intended to improve oversight of this important aspect of multi-agency work.

There is a strong emphasis on health care throughout the service. Health care is represented at the board by a person of the correct seniority to make decisions. This board member chairs a health subgroup and a community of interest with health staff working within the YJS. Both provide the board member with excellent information on operational and strategic work.

Education, training and employment (ETE) feature well in the YJS's broader statutory priorities. The board's priorities are aligned with the needs of the service and wider priorities

¹² Information supplied by YOT.

set by partners. The board understands that ETE are key desistance factors and gives them priority. The board has been able to balance competing demands and has taken a proactive approach in leading some areas of practice. One of the examples is the work undertaken by the YJS and the police to reduce the number of children excluded from school for possession of weapons. Most school-age children are in some form of provision: most are in school, and just three per cent are not in any form of education. The situation for those aged over 17 is not as positive, with 42 per cent not in employment or training.¹³ This figure has increased as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic.

Managers and the board are self-aware and put in place measures to assess the quality and impact of provision and sharpen their own oversight. We found various examples where the board had used audits well to help them focus on aspects of service delivery. In 2020 the management team completed an ETE audit, which accurately identified strengths and areas for improvement.

The work of the board is visible to staff across the partnership.

Do the partnership arrangements actively support effective service delivery?

We found evidence of some excellent support from partner organisations, which was making a difference to children. Health services provided strong representation on the board. The current representative has developed a number of proactive methods of overseeing the quality of work with, and needs of, this group of children. These included chairing quarterly health meetings with respective trust managers, health practitioners and the YJS health lead. As a result of this meeting, staff have developed their own groups to share best practice and review consistency. The board member had also attended meetings with Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS) staff and meetings to consider children at high risk of harm to familiarise himself with the work of the YJS. This translated into several benefits for the service, including a fully staffed health care team. An increase in the number of speech and language therapists has meant improved access to the service and better outcomes for children. The team is highly experienced, motivated, passionate and flexible. We found an excellent health offer for children across Cheshire, irrespective of postcode, from the point of arrest to after sentencing, including examples of health transition plans for when children were no longer supervised by the YJS.

Although there is a lack of clarity around the police officer roles within the YJS team itself, the police nevertheless provide significant support for youth justice services across Cheshire through the Complex Youth team (pre-criminalisation), Navigate (high-risk children within the YJS), child sexual exploitation and criminal exploitation coordinators, and problem-solving teams in local policing units.

We heard of good initiatives to prevent the unnecessary criminalisation of children, which were not restricted to children in care.

Cheshire has eight identified police officers working in youth justice through the Complex Youth and Navigate teams. There is a lack of clarity around the roles in terms of police officers within the YJS team itself. This needs prioritising to ensure it fits with national guidance from the Youth Justice Board, College of Policing and National Police Chief Council.

When provided, co-located YOT police officers often ensure there is effective police oversight of the full cohort of children within the YOT. They also enable the free flow of intelligence, both hard and soft, that is invaluable in combating youth crime.

¹³ Information supplied by the YOT.

Risk management meetings were held for children identified as posing a high risk of harm to themselves or the wider public. Where such a child was managed under Navigate, a member of the Navigate police team would attend to provide an update on intelligence. For all other children, police attendance was left to local officers, many of whom were unable to attend because of other commitments. This could result in the YJS having an incomplete picture of the risks currently posed by and to a child.

Senior managers and the board were proactive in their scrutiny of ETE. They had put in place measures such as quarterly scorecards to assess the quality of provision and sharpen their own oversight. In 2020, the management team completed an audit, which accurately identified strengths and areas for improvement. These included sustaining ETE opportunities for YJS children and managing the impact of Covid-19 restrictions on children's learning.

The proportion of children who remained engaged in education during the period of Covid-19 restrictions was broadly similar to the previous (pre-Covid-19) year. However, more children had been placed on reduced timetables by schools. Managers were not entirely clear about the reasons for this.

Does the leadership of the YOT support effective service delivery?

YJS leaders and managers drive the culture within the service and provide an effective link between the board and the service. 85 per cent of staff who completed the survey said they were sufficiently aware of the board's activities. The board sets aside part of each of its meetings to look at practice issues. Staff have prepared reports for these and have spoken to board members directly.

Leaders and managers have a shared understanding of the risks to the service, and consider the action needed to mitigate these. The management team has taken pragmatic decisions that enable it to reduce the impact of risks. This was most evident in the management of the Covid-19 arrangements. Senior managers understood and managed the impact of Covid-19 for staff and children. This involved retaining services for those in greatest need, protecting staff and promoting mental and emotional wellbeing. Managers ensured that staff were kept up to date with emerging information, and staff appreciated the initial weekly bulletin from the head of service.

The connection between the board and frontline staff was strong and direct, allowing them to share information. The YJS had achieved this in a variety of ways, including through staff attendance at board meetings, and managers' oversight of practice through complex case panels. The health representative on the board chaired a health sub-group.

The leadership team promotes the use of evidence-based approaches, commissioning reviews and research to improve outcomes for all children. The work to reduce the criminalisation of children in care and its extension is a good example of this and is applied to all children in care. This is a significant undertaking, given the numbers in the area.

The leadership team has an open approach to learning and supports staff to suggest ideas for improvement. The member of staff responsible for note-taking at board meetings made a suggestion about data-sharing. This was taken up and has resulted in greater challenge and openness.

1.2. Staff

Staff within the YOT are empowered to deliver a high-quality, personalised and responsive service for all children.

Good

Key staffing data¹⁴

Total staff headcount (full-time equivalent, FTE)	77.25
Total headcount qualified ¹⁵ case managers (FTE)	17.9
Total headcount other case managers (FTE)	37
Vacancy rate (total unfilled posts as percentage of total staff headcount)	1.11%
Vacancy rate: case managers only (total unfilled case manager posts as percentage of total case manager headcount)	4.17%
Average caseload per case manager (FTE)	7
Average annual sickness days (all staff)	4.20
Staff attrition (percentage of all staff leaving in 12-month period)	5.43%

In making a judgement about staffing, we take into account the answers to the following four questions:

Do staffing and workload levels support the delivery of a high-quality, personalised and responsive service for all children?

In general, staffing and workloads support effective service delivery. As the ratings in domains two and three show, YJS workers spend time understanding children's needs, the reality of their lives and the effect of any trauma experienced. Workers prioritise relationship-building, which means that sometimes they will take a step back. This occurs when a child already has, or needs to build, a relationship with another trusted adult. Where we saw this, it was in the child's best interests, and the YJS worker supported the main contact.

Staffing levels for health workers are monitored proactively and reviewed against local health needs. This had resulted in growth in the health team, which meant there was excellent provision across each borough.

Workloads within the YJS are managed and monitored. Caseloads are mainly manageable and there is only one vacancy. The staff team is stable and experienced. The Divert team, which deals with children who receive out-of-court disposals, is stretched. Because of this, work is allocated to case-holding staff and on occasion to staff who do not normally undertake case work.

¹⁴ Information supplied by YOT and reflecting the caseload at the time of the inspection announcement.

¹⁵ Holding a recognised social work or youth justice qualification.

Team managers and senior practitioners actively monitor workloads. Allocation of new work takes account of a range of factors, including complex cases, court work and geography. There are arrangements to cover absences.

Case managers often have cases from more than one local authority. A team of intervention workers provides support in delivering the planned interventions. These workers have a detailed knowledge of services available in the four local authority areas.

Do the skills of YOT staff support the delivery of a high-quality, personalised and responsive service for all children?

Staff from all agencies demonstrated good knowledge, skills and experience. All staff were passionate about their work and dedicated to delivering a child-focused service. Staff were also flexible and innovative in their approach to supporting children, building trust-based and therapeutic relationships.

There is a highly skilled, stable and experienced health team, which manages the risks and vulnerabilities of children effectively. Managers trust workers' judgement, which allows staff to do what they think is right for the child.

Probation staff focus on transition cases and continue to work with children after they turn 18. This provides continuity for children, who are then supervised by the probation service. We saw cases where this had been effective, as in the following practice example.

Good practice example

Sean received a 12-month youth rehabilitation order 10 days before his 18th birthday. He continued to be supervised by the YJS until two months after this, when he transferred to the probation service with 10 months of his order still to run. His conviction was for offences of fraud by false representation, primarily to pay off a drug debt he had accrued. He was a looked after child. For the greater part of the YJS's period of management, Sean was living out of the area for his own safety. He returned to his home area, where the risk was, in the last two months of his order. This transition period focused on monitoring his behaviour and risks as well as providing welfare support and advice to assist his move to adult probation.

Most of the initial delivery was undertaken by phone due to the Covid-19 restrictions, with Cheshire YJS workers continuing to manage the case rather than arrange for caretaking. The case manager kept in contact with him and his allocated seconded probation officer, who was co-working the case. Sean's return to his home area prompted a change in the allocated Community Rehabilitation Company office. However, once transition meetings started, the focus was on ensuring that he was fully informed and prepared for the move to adult services.

The service uses the specific skills of staff well. Complex cases are managed by social workers, probation officers, or case managers with other relevant professional qualifications and these staff also offer support to colleagues about safeguarding and child protection processes. ETE workers are tenacious and knowledgeable. They facilitate the exchange of information between educational and training providers and case workers. They also work alongside schools to prepare risk assessments so that children can remain in school.

Some staff reported that they lack the confidence to discuss issues of race and discrimination with children. Data in domains two and three shows that issues of race are

not always given the prominence they should. However, the YJS has undertaken work to identify the specific needs of girls and children from the traveller community.

Cheshire is a predominantly white area, with white people comprising 96 per cent of the total population. The percentage of children from a black, Asian and minority ethnic background who have been sentenced or cautioned, at five per cent, is much lower than we often find. The national average is 26 per cent. Of the staff, 2.2 per cent are from a black, Asian and minority ethnic group.¹⁶

Does the oversight of work support high-quality delivery and professional development?

Staff who completed our survey said that supervision was either very good (90 per cent) or good (10 per cent). This was confirmed in our discussions with staff. Case managers value supervision and reflective case management sessions. Line management arrangements are consistently applied and helpful to staff. Staff come well prepared, which is an expectation of the service.

In statutory case work, management oversight is provided on request and for cases where the case manager has assessed that there is a high risk of reoffending, safety and wellbeing concerns or harm. The YJS made this decision to help staff develop skills and competence. We found that there was a lack of management oversight in cases where a medium risk of harm was identified, leading to some deficiencies, particularly in contingency planning to manage the risk of harm and where the risk involved exploitation. These factors led to the only judgment of 'Requires improvement' given for case work.

We found that planning to address the specific needs of victims was sufficient in 47 per cent of the medium-risk cases and in 71 per cent of high-risk cases. While staff felt that management oversight in the cases was always sufficient, we disagreed, judging it sufficient in 86 per cent of the high-risk cases but in only 62 per cent of medium-risk cases. In our view, there is a potential gap in oversight of cases where risks are increasing or changing, and on the cusp of becoming high risk.

Induction processes are in place and used as needed. This includes induction and training for board members and volunteers.

Partnership workers are well supervised and respond well to supervision.

YJS staff were very positive about the way in which managers supported their work. Performance management of staff is both challenging and effective. Poor performance is addressed fairly and thoroughly when the need arises.

Although social workers in Cheshire East do not receive structured supervision from a qualified social worker, which is a requirement of professional standards, the supervision they do receive is of a good standard.

Line managers give verbal praise to recognise good and exceptional practice, but formal arrangements are more limited.

Are arrangements for learning and development comprehensive and responsive?

Good training plans are in place for most staff and volunteers. This includes offers of both formal and informal training. Volunteers and the support staff team spoke positively about the support they received, including training in trauma.

¹⁶ Information supplied by the service.

Learning from serious incidents is underdeveloped. Processes are in place to disseminate learning; however, staff could only describe general feedback, such as 'information-sharing needs to be better', rather than being able to give examples of direct and focused learning.

The collaboration between the local authorities and agencies to learn and share best practice is a strength. This benefits the work with children when they move across borders and with children who are placed by another local authority in one of the four Cheshire areas.

Administrative and support staff felt that their professional development was a high priority. Because of this, staff working on the support service were highly motivated.

1.3. Partnerships and services



A comprehensive range of high-quality services is in place, enabling personalised and responsive provision for all children.

Good

Caseload characteristics¹⁷

Percentage of current caseload with mental health issues	46%
Percentage of current caseload with substance misuse issues	54.6%
Percentage of current caseload with an education, health and care plan	35%

In making a judgement about partnerships and services, we take into account the answers to the following three questions:

Is there a sufficiently comprehensive and up-to-date analysis of the profile of children, to ensure that the YOT can deliver well-targeted services?

The analysis of children's needs was informed by a wide range of sources, including AssetPlus data, children's experiences, academic learning from the evidence base and data and information from partner agencies.

The health needs assessment is to be refreshed, even though the service has met all the objectives in the current plan. This is an example of a partner striving to future-proof service delivery.

The YJS's understanding of needs relating to child sexual exploitation and child criminal exploitation is developing. At the time of the inspection, the pan-Cheshire partnership was planning further analysis to protect children from these risks. Multi-agency meetings to identify the children at risk are in place. This is a complex picture in the Cheshire area. The partnership has taken its time to understand the profile and nature of the issues, drawing on leading academics to guide and evaluate the work. In case work, we found little evidence of practical support for children who were being exploited.

The YJS was instrumental in the decision of the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner to carry out a review to ensure that black, Asian and minority ethnic children in Cheshire are not over-represented in the criminal justice system. This was proposed by the YJS head of service at the Criminal Justice Board and taken forward by the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner. The service's data indicates that over-representation in the YJS caseload is

¹⁷ Data supplied by the service.

not an issue of concern, since the proportion of black, Asian and minority ethnic children is broadly in line with population figures. The review will enable black, Asian and minority ethnic children and traveller families to describe their experiences and perceptions of the criminal justice system. The report will be considered by the Cheshire Criminal Justice Board in late 2021. It was positive to find that this area of work forms part of the current youth justice plan and will remain a priority.

There is ongoing assessment of the effectiveness of the Divert programme. However, further understanding of the use of the police outcome of no further action, when recommended by the YJS, is needed. While it was clear that this outcome was benefiting children, especially those who are looked after, planning of the work to break the cycle of offending was not always robust enough. We found a small number of examples where, in our view, the potential consequences of the child's behaviour were not fully recognised or where discrepancies between the accounts given by the police and by the child were not cross-checked. In one case, the child gave a substantially different account to the victim. The failure to accurately understand what had happened meant that there was not a full understanding of the potential for risk of harm.

Does the YOT partnership have access to the volume, range and quality of services and interventions to meet the needs of all children?

Children benefit from a wide and comprehensive range of services and interventions, which enable a personalised and responsive service. All children were offered a health screening appointment. Health care staff collaborate with providers in planning to ensure that children's health needs continue to be met when they transition from the service. Although there was no formal primary care pathway, health care professionals were aware of the appropriate services and referred children to them as required.

While delivery models and structures differed across the wide range of ETE providers, partnership managers were confident and positive about how well ETE and YJS workers connected with specialist services such as the Virtual School, special educational needs and disability (SEND) services, ETE, post-16 education, safeguarding and early help. There is a very good focus on the needs of the individual child. It was positive that this approach was mirrored in each local authority area.

ETE are seen as critical to the child's desistance and are part and parcel of the YJS service. They are an influential part of the work. An example is the work carried out to ensure that children are not automatically excluded from school if they are found in possession of a knife or weapon. Very few children attend the pupil referral unit, and when they do plans are in place to move them into provision that can meet their needs.

SEND leads check that all children entitled to education, health and care plans (EHCPs) have them and that the plans are implemented. Unusually, they also sign off all plans. Where needed, EHCPs are also produced for children aged 15 and 16 to support their transition into further education. This is an example of proactive and child-centred service provision.

A very good range of interventions are available through the four local authority social care services, who work well with YJS case managers. Of note is the work and support available to children in care who live out of their local area. The service responds to these children in the same way as it does Cheshire's own looked after children. This is a significant commitment, given the numbers of children in the area. Senior managers in social care hold other local authorities to account if they find that they are not supporting children adequately.

Work done by the police with children who are part of the complex case service, including those on integrated offender management (IOM), focuses on building key relationships so that the child's needs and risks are better understood.

The YJS's range of interventions are often used to support existing work by other agencies. These include services provided for girls that recognise their particular needs, including the need for some girls to be seen in a gender-specific venue.

Are arrangements with statutory partners, providers and other agencies established, maintained and used effectively to deliver high-quality services?

A key strength of the service is the way it has been able to establish and maintain relationships and services across a complex and varied partnership group. It was clear that these relationships were based on trust and a mutual understanding of roles and responsibilities. The relationships were open and mature, enabling effective challenge and the development of services and evidence-based working practices.

The YJS has been influential in driving innovation and keeping the partnership focused on the children who need its services.

The YJS values the arrangements with partners, providers and agencies, and works hard at all levels to maintain effective relationships and pathways into services. The scale of this task is significant, and some initiatives take shape over a long period of time. The maturity of the partnership sets the tone and culture at all levels.

There are well-developed links between the YJS police and local policing teams to address anti-social behaviour and low-level criminality involving children.

Transition arrangements for children moving to probation are good. They are supported by the North West Transitions group, which facilitates a coordinated approach for youth-to-adult transitions across the region.

The outcome of out-of-court disposals is made by recommendation from the YJS to the police officer in charge of the case. The individual officer then has the option to decide whether the recommendation is appropriate to the case. Escalation processes are in place to resolve disagreements. In the cases we assessed in domain three, we found that all the proposals were appropriate and proportionate. Further limited enquiries in week two showed some inconsistencies in decisions made and a limited ability for officers in charge to challenge recommendations.

There are a range of multi-agency panels and meetings to manage desistance, safety and wellbeing and risk of harm. The focus on victims is promoted by dedicated staff who prompt case managers to think about the impact of offending on the family, parents and victims.

Restorative justice is recognised as a powerful element of case work. The team has undertaken 12 restorative justice conferences during the Covid-19 period.

Involvement of children and their parents and carers

Children and their parents and carers have been consulted about the services they have received. The management team has held a series of conversational audits, discussions with individuals based on themes. The outcome of these has been fed back to the board.

The board has ambitions to increase the involvement and influence of children, parents and carers. Plans are taking shape about how this can be achieved.

We received very few survey responses from children. Those who did respond were positive about the workers who had supported them.

1.4. Information and facilities



Timely and relevant information is available and appropriate facilities are in place to support a high-quality, personalised and responsive approach for all children.

Good

In making a judgement about information and facilities, we consider the answers to the following four questions:

Are the necessary policies and guidance in place to enable staff to deliver a quality service, meeting the needs of all children?

The service has a wide range of relevant, up-to-date policies and procedures in place. These were accessible to staff via an intranet system, and staff were confident in accessing them. Staff have to navigate a range of services and access points, so access to the right information at the right time was critical. We found that managers were helpful in guiding staff to access the right service. Importantly, staff felt able to ask for help if arrangements were not clear or had recently changed.

Does the YOT's delivery environment(s) meet the needs of all children and enable staff to deliver a quality service?

The YJS uses community venues, including libraries, community hubs and youth centres, to see children. The YJS footprint covers a wide geographical area, comprising towns and rural areas. The areas are not equally well served by accessible community venues for staff to undertake face-to-face work with children and for restorative meetings. In some areas, it can be hard to find a suitable space. During the Covid-19 pandemic, staff have contacted children by phone or through socially distanced home visits. As restrictions have eased, some previously used venues now have reduced capacity.

The difficulty in finding suitable venues was a strong theme in the staff survey. Staff were frustrated that they struggled to find suitable venues to see children and victims, in order to undertake work in a confidential space. Although managers knew that this was challenging, the size and scale of the issue was perceived differently by staff and their managers.

While health care staff also found that their working environment was not always conducive to delivering therapeutic interventions, they had access to more suitable rooms. There had been no apparent investigation by the YJS or the management board to see if these rooms could be accessed by non-health staff if no alternative venues could be found.

One member of staff told us:

"We cover a large area and have no designated office where we see our young people. A lot of time can be spent/wasted in travelling to different areas/appointments. Time which could be spent better and focused towards our young people".

Another comment received in the staff survey was:

"The partnership should ensure youth justice staff can access safe, suitable, child friendly spaces in which they can do sessions with children close to their own homes. Currently children are mainly seen either in their own home (not always appropriate), in their educational placement (also not always conducive to good engagement), in a municipal office (very 'corporate' and not child friendly) or in a public venue such as a library or coffee

shop. The YOT itself should not have its own building, as this potentially stigmatises our service users, but we should have designated rooms or spaces where we can see children in the community, children's or family centres in every town across Cheshire".

Do the information and communication technology (ICT) systems enable staff to deliver a quality service, meeting the needs of all children?

IT systems are in place to allow staff to work remotely. This enabled the swift move to home working at the start of the Covid-19 pandemic, ahead of the government announcement. The performance and information team are skilled and provide a wide range of information quickly in response to the needs of the board, team and service managers.

Specified staff have read-only access to a wide range of partnership systems, including the social care systems and Niche, the police system. This gives only partial access to information and does not give the same level of information a police officer would have access to.

Managers use performance information well to monitor performance at team and individual level. Monthly performance meetings are chaired by the operational manager, who gives staff high-level feedback on themes.

Health care staff have developed robust systems, agreed with the YJS, to ensure relevant information is readily accessible. This is used well to inform assessments and work with children.

Is analysis, evidence and learning used effectively to drive improvement?

Local, regional and national evidence is used to review and revise services. We found examples of this across the partnership. For example, we identified numerous examples of learning being used to improve practice, including learning from inspections and reviews. This was aided by mature and open relationships between partner organisations.

Evidence-based data was presented to the board to demonstrate how health needs were met. The YJS was proactive in identifying and addressing gaps to consistently improve service provision.

The YJS has actively sought the views of children and their parents and carers through structured conversational audits. It is using this information to improve services.

The YJS uses research effectively to guide service delivery. It has established working groups to consider how to work in a trauma-informed way, which has given staff and volunteers the opportunity to change practice. The development of child-appropriate language in referral panel reports is one example.

Divert cases are subject to routine external scrutiny by a multi-agency criminal justice panel. There is a high level of agreement between the YJS and the panel.



2. Court disposals

We took a detailed look at 31 community sentences and three custodial sentences managed by the YJS. We also conducted 32 interviews with the relevant case managers. We examined the quality of assessment; planning; implementation and delivery of services; and reviewing. Each of these elements was inspected in respect of work done to address desistance. For services to keep the child safe, we only assessed the quality of planning, and implementation and delivery in the 30 cases where we expected meaningful work to take place. Similarly, for work to keep others safe, we assessed the quality of planning, and implementation and delivery in the 28 cases where meaningful work was required.

In this service, work to support desistance was the strongest area. For desistance, 74 per cent of cases met all our quality requirements for assessment, 85 per cent for planning and 88 per cent for implementation and delivery. The quality of assessment planning and review of safety and wellbeing and risk of harm to others was mixed. Assessment and planning for work to address safety and wellbeing issues met our standards in 68 per cent and 67 per cent of cases respectively; but planning to address safety of others was only sufficient in 54 per cent of cases, leading to a rating of 'Requires improvement' for that standard. Reviewing of work to address desistance met our standards in 83 per cent of cases; however, reviewing of work to manage safety and wellbeing of the child and safety of others was sufficient in only 65 and 71 per cent of cases respectively.

Strengths:

- Assessments are detailed and analytical, and planning to meet children's desistance needs is supported by specialist assessments, including of speech and communication needs, ETE and mental health.
- Staff carry out appropriate assessment of the needs and wishes of victims. Victim awareness sessions for children and restorative justice for victims are embedded in practice.
- Delivery of interventions is well sequenced and tailored to meet individual needs. Children receive support from a range of professionals who build trusting and positive relationships with them.
- Most children attend school and are supported to maintain their placement. This is a priority for the partnership, as it recognises the importance of this as a key desistance factor.

Areas for improvement:

- Planning to manage risk of harm needs to improve so that it is specific to the individual risks posed and contains clear actions that would need to be taken if the child's circumstances were to change.
- Assessments should consider the needs and experiences of black, Asian and minority ethnic children. Staff need support to speak to children with confidence about any discrimination they have faced and to understand issues of self-identity.

- There is limited support for children who are exploited and a lack of work to proactively target perpetrators, to break the cycle of abuse.

Work with children sentenced by the courts will be more effective if it is well targeted, planned and implemented. In our inspections, we look at a sample of cases. In each of those cases, we inspect against four standards.

2.1. Assessment



Assessment is well-informed, analytical and personalised, actively involving the child and their parents/carers.

Good

Our rating¹⁸ for assessment is based on the following key questions:

	% yes
Does assessment sufficiently analyse how to support the child's desistance?	74%
Does assessment sufficiently analyse how to keep the child safe?	68%
Does assessment sufficiently analyse how to keep other people safe?	71%

In over 70 per cent of cases, assessments sufficiently analysed the child's desistance and risk of harm to others. Assessments of children's safety and wellbeing were almost as good. As a result, we rated this area of the YJS's work as 'Good'.

Does assessment sufficiently analyse how to support the child's desistance?

Assessments were sound, drew on all of the available information and drew appropriate conclusions. There was a particularly strong focus on the child's strengths and protective factors in 32 of the 34 cases. The child's motivation and ability to comply with the court order were also considered, based on the child's reactions and any previous experience of supervision. Information on the child's social and familial context included the parents' or carers' perspective, any social care history and views expressed by the child. This enabled workers to identify not only factors related to offending, but also where the child was vulnerable to specific offending, such as exploitation by local drug dealers and county lines.

The needs and wishes of victims were properly assessed in 17 of the relevant 25 cases. This was consistent across both the medium and high risk of harm cases.

Attention to children's experience of racial discrimination and self-identity was not as strong as attention to social context. In one case, the inspector noted:

'The child is recorded as a black male (unspecified ethnicity) yet there is no reference to or acknowledgement of any relevant cultural considerations or significance of the young person's racial identity'.

Does assessment sufficiently analyse how to keep the child safe?

Where a child had experienced trauma, any known or suspected effects were recorded. This was helpful to all professionals who came into contact with the child, often providing

¹⁸ The rating for the standard is driven by the lowest score on each of the key questions, which is placed in a rating band, indicated in bold in the table. See Annexe 1 for a more detailed explanation.

explanations for why the child struggled to build relationships and specific triggers to emotional harm.

At the assessment stage, staff had access to a wide range of information, which they added to the assessment. Of note was the information gained from speech, language and communication assessments, which outlined any difficulties in the child's ability to understand and communicate. From an early stage, this information was used to help staff understand how best to speak to the child.

Assessments analysed existing controls and interventions to promote the safety and wellbeing of the child. However, in our view these were then used to reduce the assessed level of safeguarding needs, rather than provide a realistic assessment of need. This served to underestimate the actual safety and wellbeing issues faced by children. As a result of this, the assessments were not always sufficiently analytical.

Assessments clearly identified and analysed any risks to the safety and wellbeing of the child in 22 of the 34 cases. Where we judged this aspect of work to be insufficient, the assessment often underestimated the impact of the child's behaviour on their safety and wellbeing, although it was often seen as an issue for desistance. In one example, the inspector recorded that:

'The child received a 10-month referral order for possession with intent to supply cannabis. They reported that they were smoking £70 worth of cannabis daily so had taken to dealing to support the 'habit' and to stop them from getting into debt. The risks involved in this lifestyle were not considered to put the child at risk, nor was the health impact of the relatively high daily usage. Consequently, neither were analysed with regards to keeping the child safe'.

Does assessment sufficiently analyse how to keep other people safe?

Of the 34 cases we assessed, there were identifiable risk factors in 30. These were sufficiently assessed in 21 cases.

The assessments drew on a wide range of information, which was then used to understand the context of the child's offending. Both convictions and negative behaviours were analysed to understand the circumstances and nature of any actual or potential harm to the child.

Conclusions and classifications were justified and well evidenced. In discussions with inspectors, case managers demonstrated that they had detailed knowledge of the harm caused to victims and effect that the incident had on them.

Assessments clearly identified how and when the risks would present.

The following comment from an inspector is an example of what we found:

'The assessment of risk is thorough and makes a clear distinction between the risk in the community and custody and the differences between the two. It focuses on potential risks from all non-offending and non-convicted behaviour and not just on the risks associated with the index offence. There is also a recognition of the increasing gravity of behaviour being undertaken by the young person'.

Where we judged assessments to be insufficient, this was because the YJS worker had not considered any existing controls and interventions to manage and minimise the risk of harm presented by the child. In particular, they relied too much on safety plans put in place by children's social care to protect vulnerable family members and siblings. We found that the assessments stated that plans were in place, but the worker had not considered whether these were adequate to manage identified risk of harm to others from the YJS's perspective.

This was most evident where a child in need plan had been put in place, but the family was unlikely to be able to manage the risks without significant support. Examples included where the risk came from the community, such as drug dealers turning up at the family home to retrieve drugs or money.

2.2. Planning



Planning is well-informed, holistic and personalised, actively involving the child and their parents/carers.

Requires improvement

Our rating¹⁹ for planning is based on the following key questions:

	% yes
Does planning focus sufficiently on supporting the child's desistance?	85%
Does planning focus sufficiently on keeping the child safe?	67%
Does planning focus sufficiently on keeping other people safe?	54%

Planning to promote desistance factors was strong, and this was the main focus of planning. However, we found omissions in planning to keep victims safe and a lack of effective contingency planning to manage and reduce predictable behaviours. Planning to keep other people safe was the weakest area of work and resulted in the only rating of 'Requires improvement' that the YJS received. It should be noted that the score of 54 per cent is very close to the rating boundary for 'Inadequate', which is set at under 50 per cent of the work.

Does planning focus sufficiently on supporting the child's desistance?

Planning to support the child's desistance was very strong, in part because children, parents and carers were involved in developing the plans. We saw this in the work of referral order panels, which had worked hard to produce meaningful and clear objectives. This was supported using the 'my ideas for a contract' consultation document that was given to children before panel meetings. We saw this used consistently, and panel members often incorporated the child's ideas for work.

Case managers worked hard to discuss desistance plans with parents. We found meaningful engagement in 31 of the 34 cases.

Plans were strengths-based, often reinforcing the things that children were good at and supporting them to become involved in positive and age-appropriate behaviours.

There was clear identification of work that was statutory and therefore enforceable and those activities that were voluntary.

In all but one case, planning was proportionate to the court outcome. Interventions were well sequenced and planned for quickly.

Services and interventions to address offending-related factors were identified in plans, and we saw good identification of relevant interventions from partner agencies. Supporting the child's education, employment or training was a common feature of planning.

¹⁹ The rating for the standard is driven by the lowest score on each of the key questions, which is placed in a rating band, indicated in bold in the table. See Annexe 1 for a more detailed explanation.

The expressed views and wishes of victims were incorporated into planned work in 21 of the relevant 27 cases.

We found clear links to the plans of other agencies, and reference was made to existing planning by social care, health and education providers. Desistance factors were relevant and appropriate, for example consolidation of actions contained in EHCPs or mental health planning.

Does planning focus sufficiently on keeping the child safe?

The safety and wellbeing of the child was supported through effective planning in 24 of 30 cases where it was required. As we found with desistance, the necessary controls and interventions were identified in 22 of the 30 cases.

Again, we saw links to plans produced by other agencies, or via other forums. However, for safety and wellbeing there was sufficient alignment in just 19 of 28 cases. Although a range of actions may have been identified, there was a lack of clarity about which specific actions needed to be taken to reduce risks. An example was interventions to disrupt criminal exploitation. These tended to consist of work with the child so that they recognised the risk to themselves of the exploiters; however, some planning relied on the child or parent to manage the risks or to remove themselves from the dangers. This was unrealistic.

The main factor that affected the quality of planning in this area was a lack of contingency planning. This was sufficient in just 13 of the 30 cases. One inspector noted this in a case:

'Planning provides interventions to address all the factors identified linked to safety and wellbeing. There are separate 'targets' for engaging with child in need arrangements and addressing the risk of the child being exploited. But there is no contingency planning to deal with a breakdown or non-engagement in child in need arrangements or an increase in criminal exploitation concerns. While the likely action to deal with the change may have been the same as the actions to manage other risks, the actual circumstances that would give rise to the concerns were not clearly recorded so could easily have been missed if they happened, which would not have kept the child safe.'

Does planning focus sufficiently on keeping other people safe?

This was the weakest area of work we found. Planning to promote the safety of other people sufficiently addressed risk of harm in just over half of the relevant cases.

More often than not, planning involved other agencies and included the right interventions and controls (19 of 28 cases). However, plans failed to address the specific concerns of victims in less than half of the situations where this was needed. It was better in the cases classified as high risk.

Contingency planning was sufficient in just 12 of the 28 cases we assessed. This was often due to a lack of clarity and coordination of actions when there were multiple plans in place. We also noted that actions were spread across the agencies when, in our view, the YJS should have taken a more focused role in managing the risks to others.

The following comments from an inspector about one case were typical of what we found.

'Stephen's risk of harm spanned both the home, and the community amongst peer groups. Insufficient attention was given to the role that parents would play in monitoring his behaviour. Information was shared by the police, and the plan was for Stephen be open to the complex team and allocated a police officer. However, there was insufficient understanding around what role that police officer would take to mitigate risk. External

controls that may have been used, including parental boundaries, and access to knives at home, were not referenced as this appeared to be the role of social care child in need planning, but social care did not specifically reference some pertinent issues related to harm to others within their plan’.

We saw a lack of effective contingency planning for both medium-risk cases (eight of 21) and high-risk cases (four out of seven). Contingency planning was too generic. There were similar actions on most plans, such as sharing information and holding meetings. Very few direct and clear actions were listed. Contingency planning relied on the knowledge of the case manager and other workers, rather than being well recorded and accessible to all professionals.

2.3. Implementation and delivery



High-quality, well-focused, personalised and coordinated services are delivered, engaging and assisting the child.

Good

Our rating²⁰ for implementation and delivery is based on the following key questions:

	% yes
Does the implementation and delivery of services effectively support the child’s desistance?	88%
Does the implementation and delivery of services effectively support the safety of the child safe?	80%
Does the implementation and delivery of services effectively support the safety of other people?	68%

The YJS evidenced some highly effective work undertaken by its own and partnership staff. Actions were routinely and consistently taken to support desistance and to keep the child safe. Had the same levels been achieved for keeping other people safe and managing risk to others, this standard would have been ‘Outstanding’; instead, it was rated ‘Good’.

Does the implementation and delivery of services effectively support the child’s desistance?

Work to build a trusting relationship with the child was given priority and was achieved successfully in almost all cases. Staff were skilful and demonstrated persistence in working with children. They balanced the use of encouragement and enforcement well to set boundaries and help children understand what was expected of them.

Interventions and support to build on the child’s strengths and protective factors were evident in the work. These included support for children to undertake positive activities such as sport and art, and to maintain education. Work to keep children in school if they were found in possession of a weapon was very strong. The YJS had worked well with the police to make sure that, if a school called out the police, they could ask pertinent questions about the child and incident to assist the school’s decisions to exclude the child or not and to make a risk-based response. This included helping the school to understand the context of the

²⁰ The rating for the standard is driven by the lowest score on each of the key questions, which is placed in a rating band, indicated in bold in the table. See Annexe 1 for a more detailed explanation.

incident and supporting it to manage risk. We saw numerous examples of children being reintegrated into school with support.

Care was taken to ensure that children could access suitable support from universal services, once they had finished contact with the YJS. Children were able to keep in contact with the YJS workers on a voluntary basis at the end of their orders if they wished.

Staff demonstrated flexibility in working with children during the Covid-19 arrangements and as these changed.

Good practice example

We assessed the case of a vulnerable girl. In an interview with inspectors, the intervention worker explained how delivery of interventions started slowly, as the child was not very motivated to engage. They also identified that the Covid-19 restrictions, which had limited contact to telephone calls, had hampered her engagement. Once face-to-face meetings resumed, the child's engagement improved. Some interventions were prioritised, but the case manager explained that delivery was 'young person and crisis led' because of the dynamic nature of the child's lifestyle. Nevertheless, at just over the halfway point of the order, structured interventions were delivered to address substance misuse, perspective taking, empathy and healthy relationships. There was evidence of good partnership working and coordination by the case manager. Although the child (now 18) is alleged to have committed a further offence, the case manager felt significant progress had been made so far, evidenced by her improved engagement with the support offered. This would be an important factor as the girl transitioned to adult services.

Does the implementation and delivery of services effectively support the safety of the child?

Effective work was undertaken to keep children safe in the majority of cases. Due to children's complex needs, this was often multi-agency work. We saw some very good joint work with staff in residential homes and work to support parents in managing their child's wellbeing, and some excellent support from health workers and the police.

Children were able to access mental health provision quickly for assessment and support. There were no waiting lists.

Where the police were involved in cases, they undertook home visits and offered support to children.

Contact and joint work between YJS and social workers were often good and well-coordinated. One of the features of the work was the consideration of the roles each would take. We found examples where the YJS worker delayed their interventions to allow social workers to reconnect with children and joint work aimed at stabilising children in crisis.

Work with other youth offending teams was good. The YJS often retained case management to provide continuity and until an effective caretaking arrangement could be established. In one case the inspector found that:

'Delivery of interventions and support from CAMHS and the speech and language therapist for the child contributed towards keeping him safe. Regular multi-agency meetings were held between CAMHS, education and health, with a focus on keeping the child safe. Additionally, the CAMHS worker completed sessions directly with the child's mother, to

develop skills to better manage her son's behaviour at home, enabling her to help keep her son safe.

During periods of remote working, the case manager reported that they arranged regular Skype meetings between all professionals working with the child to share updates on his progress/their progress in working with him'.

Does the implementation and delivery of services effectively support the safety of other people?

The services delivered were sufficient to manage and minimise the risk of harm in 19 of the 28 relevant cases. In some cases, planned interventions had not taken place. In others, the nature of interventions did not focus on the distinct risks that the child posed to others.

There was sufficient involvement of other agencies in managing the risk of harm in 17 of the 23 cases where this was needed.

It was positive to see that interventions to keep victims safe and help them recover were completed in three-quarters of the relevant cases. Restorative justice approaches were used, helping children to understand the impact of their actions. Victim awareness work was undertaken with the majority of children and, where possible, reparation was undertaken.

We spoke to the manager of a shop that had been broken into by two boys. She told us that having the opportunity to speak to both boys had helped her explain the fear and distress her staff team had felt. She was also able to tell the boys that they could come back into the shop, which one of them has done. She was really pleased to see the progress he has made.

2.4. Reviewing



Reviewing of progress is well-informed, analytical and personalised, actively involving the child and their parents/carers.

Good

Our rating²¹ for reviewing is based on the following key questions:

	% yes
Does reviewing focus sufficiently on supporting the child's desistance?	83%
Does reviewing focus sufficiently on keeping the child safe?	65%
Does reviewing focus sufficiently on keeping other people safe?	71%

Reviewing was an active and ongoing activity. Case managers and partner workers, in the main, exchanged information well and frequently. Systems were in place for staff to seek support and advice when reviewing the changes to the child, their situation and any progress made. Again, work to support desistance was the strongest area of practice. For this standard, the reviewing of safety and wellbeing was rated 'Good'.

Does reviewing focus sufficiently on supporting the child's desistance?

²¹ The rating for the standard is driven by the lowest score on each of the key questions, which is placed in a rating band, indicated in bold in the table. See Annexe 1 for a more detailed explanation.

Reviews were held in response to significant events and changes. They were carried out quickly and work was adapted as necessary. The reviews around desistance needs were robust. Any changes remained focused on what the child was doing well. Progress was actively identified, and feedback given to children.

Work to keep children motivated was excellent. Staff took time to help children see that they could make the necessary changes and that they were not on their own. It was evident to the inspection team that, for many children, the belief that staff had in them was critically important.

When things changed, or there were setbacks, parents and children were able to talk about what had happened. They were kept fully informed and engaged well with staff. Staff gave us many examples of how they were able to have open and direct discussions with children and parents. These led to agreed and owned changes to plans for future work.

When other professionals were involved, collaborative working focused on what additional support could be given and on assessing how the team around the child might need to change their approach.

A wide range of events triggered reviews, including children finishing interventions and formal review panel meetings. Children were praised when they did well, including being taken back to court for early revocation.

Does reviewing focus sufficiently on keeping the child safe?

There was good exchange of information to alert agencies to changes in safety and wellbeing. This included self-reporting and disclosures made by the child, parents and carers.

Staff actively sought information about children's time in custody and were proactive in asking the youth custody estate to take action to ensure the child's safety. Examples included a child moving from one establishment to another, and a change of unit. We also saw classifications of safety and wellbeing being changed, and the children's social care team increasing children from 'child in need' to 'child protection' status.

In a few cases, nine of 23, not enough action was taken to respond to changes.

Does reviewing focus sufficiently on keeping other people safe?

As with safety and wellbeing, effective information-sharing was key to identifying trigger events that led to reviews being undertaken. This usually worked well. However, there were some notable gaps.

Information on some incidents, such as arrests, was notified to the YJS but because there was no specified YOT police officer, the staff didn't have a direct way of finding out the details.

Arrangements for police attendance at high-risk panels were inconsistent. There was good attendance for children on IOM and Navigate caseloads, but attendance by the arresting officer in most cases was poor. This left gaps in intelligence and information-sharing.

Reviewing of risk of harm led to the necessary adjustments in the ongoing plan of work in 12 of the 19 cases where this was needed. This was particularly evident in the medium-risk cases where there was no routine management oversight. There were points where interventions could have been considered to identify and respond when risks are increasing or changing.

The formal Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangements work well and were used when required.



3. Out-of-court disposals

We inspected 23 cases managed by the YJS that had received an out-of-court disposal. These consisted of two youth conditional cautions, two youth cautions, and 19 community resolutions. We interviewed the case managers in all of the 23 cases.

We examined the quality of assessment; planning; and implementation and delivery of services. Each of these elements was inspected in respect of work done to address desistance. For the 19 cases where there were factors related to harm, we also inspected work done to keep other people safe. In the 14 cases where safety and wellbeing concerns were identified, we looked at work done to safeguard the child. We also looked at the quality of joint working with local police.

Diverting children from the criminal justice system to improve their outcomes is a key objective of this service. The Divert programme is a pathfinder, which other YOTs are looking at. While this approach generally works well for Cheshire, there are some areas for consideration.

Divert is focused on the point of arrest, to divert the child from ending up in the criminal justice system. On arrest, where the offence allows for the possibility of an out-of-court disposal, the police contact the YJS, which conducts a comprehensive assessment and prepares an action plan, overseen by the service, involving a package of services to address the person's needs and help divert them from future offending. The police, Crown Prosecution Service, courts, Police and Crime Commissioner, local authorities, and Clinical Commissioning Groups are fully engaged with the scheme, which has the strap line 'Diversion is better than Court'. It has pathfinder status with the YJB and refers children into appropriate services, including education, health and early help.

Strengths:

- There is good use of out-of-court disposals to prevent children from entering the criminal justice system.
- Staff undertake insightful, well-evidenced and analytical assessments of the reasons that children offend and the risks they pose to others.
- All children can access the same wide range of support services, regardless of the type of contact with the YJS.
- Interventions are proportionate to need and delivered quickly.
- Plans take the child's views and wishes into account.
- Staff maintain good contact and engagement with parents throughout the case.
- Exit planning is proactive and enables children to access services in the community once contact ends.

Areas for improvement:

- The decision-making process for out-of-court disposals needs to be reviewed. A consistent police officer should be involved to resolve delays and ensure that the police are satisfied with decisions that are made.

- Contingency planning to manage safety and wellbeing is inconsistent, and sometimes underestimates the issues faced by the child.
- Support for children who are exploited is underdeveloped; staff rely too much on the child's and parents' ability to manage the risks.

Work with children receiving out-of-court disposals will be more effective if it is well targeted, planned and implemented. In our inspections, we look at a sample of cases. In each of those cases, we inspect against four standards.

3.1. Assessment



Assessment is well-informed, analytical and personalised, actively involving the child and their parents/carers.

Good

Our rating²² for assessment is based on the following key questions:

	% yes
Does assessment sufficiently analyse how to support the child's desistance?	87%
Does assessment sufficiently analyse how to keep the child safe?	70%
Does assessment sufficiently analyse how to keep other people safe?	96%

Assessments of desistance and risk of harm to others were excellent. They were undertaken with rigour and skill and consistently done very well. The assessment of safety and wellbeing was also done well but not as often, resulting in a rating of 'Good' for this standard.

Does assessment sufficiently analyse how to support the child's desistance?

The YJS uses both AssetPlus and a locally produced assessment tool. Staff understand the principles of assessment and analysis and apply them equally well to both formats.

Assessments are undertaken before decisions are made on disposals and are used to inform the police of the YJS's recommended outcome. The child's understanding of the incident, their behaviour and their acceptance are analysed alongside their attitudes and motivation. These strengths-based assessments use information and assessments from other sources. In one case the inspector recorded:

'The assessment of the child is well triangulated and involved him and his parent. An early help assessment was already in place and a Team around the Family already working diligently with the family. In this sense, the case manager's role was straightforward, as she was able to incorporate the assessments already in place into her own offence analysis to provide a comprehensive overview of the child and his needs.'

Parents and carers were routinely involved in the assessment. Their views and perceptions were clearly acknowledged. Staff were able to skilfully balance and analyse situations where the carer was also the victim. The assessment outlined any tension and conflict.

²² The rating for the standard is driven by the lowest score on each of the key questions, which is placed in a rating band, indicated in bold in the table. See Annexe 1 for a more detailed explanation.

The views and wishes of victims were always included in assessments and used well to inform the potential outcome and decisions.

All assessments are countersigned by managers, who not only check the quality of the assessment but also look to provide some continuity of recommendations.

Does assessment sufficiently analyse how to keep the child safe?

In 17 of the relevant 23 cases, the assessments clearly identified and analysed any risks to the safety and wellbeing of the child. Classifications were appropriate and reasonable.

As the service is trying to avoid criminalisation of children who are being exploited, there are some structural difficulties that the partnership has not yet overcome. In particular, there are difficulties in addressing the risks to safety and wellbeing when they come from outside the family home. The systems in place for child protection are based on the risk coming from within the family. Children who are being exploited do not fit easily into this system.

As the approach to contextual safeguarding is being developed, this has the potential to leave children, families and workers in difficult situations. The assessments we saw correctly identified exploitation and vulnerability to this risk.

The children who received out-of-court disposals were just as vulnerable as those who got court orders. In our view, this applied in 20 of the 23 cases. They presented with a range of factors, and not all were apparent at the first contact with the YJS. Some factors only became evident over time, when children got to know and trust case managers.

Does assessment sufficiently analyse how to keep other people safe?

Assessment of risk to others was done very well. Staff used all available information and identified all key harmful behaviours. The nature of risks was clear, as were the situations where the risks might be imminent. Behaviours and intentions were analysed to form a clear picture of risk as it emerged. Assessments for out-of-court disposals were supplemented by specialist assessments, including speech and communication, emotional and mental health screening, and good information from schools about attendance and behaviour.

Information from the police was of variable quality. Staff often had to rely on the information provided by the arresting officer. There were occasions where further information was required to complete the assessment, and staff struggled to contact the individual officer due to shifts and operational duties. Escalation processes were used when needed to try and avoid delay.

3.2. Planning



Assessment is well-informed, analytical and personalised, actively involving the child and their parents/carers.

Good

Our rating²³ for planning is based on the following key questions:

	% yes
Does planning focus on supporting the child's desistance?	91%
Does planning focus sufficiently on keeping the child safe?	75%

²³ The rating for the standard is driven by the lowest score on each of the key questions, which is placed in a rating band, indicated in bold in the table. See Annexe 1 for a more detailed explanation.

Does planning focus sufficiently on keeping other people safe?	83%
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The quality and consistency of planning followed the same pattern as assessments. Planning was very good for desistance and risk and good for safety and wellbeing. This resulted in a rating of 'Good'.

Does planning focus on supporting the child's desistance?

All of the plans we assessed were proportionate to the incident and the outcome that was subsequently recommended.

Staff set out the services most likely to support desistance and tailored these to the child's individual needs and preferences. Planning was holistic. Children were offered support in a range of areas to support desistance from offending, often in support of plans already in place by social care.

Aims and objectives were realistic and included referrals to specialists. Children were encouraged to accept help and support. Parents, carers and children were involved in planning in all cases. Case workers made sure that they understood that interventions were voluntary but would be beneficial.

In all but one case, the needs and wishes of victims were incorporated and there was a strong emphasis on victim awareness and repairing any harm caused.

Does planning focus sufficiently on keeping the child safe?

Planning promoted the safety and wellbeing of the child in 16 of the 20 cases. Contingency planning was effective in 13 cases.

In all of the cases where we judged planning to be insufficient, this was due to a lack of robust planning for criminal exploitation. Actions in early help, child in need and child protection plans did not provide for any clear disruption activity.

Does planning focus sufficiently on keeping other people safe?

In all but one of the relevant plans, there were actions designed to keep other people safe. These included work on consequential thinking and referrals for parenting support to repair relationships with families and to make sure that other services were effective. In one case, a boy had assaulted his teacher at school. His EHCP recommended that he be given more support in school, including one-to-one support, to help him manage his work and reduce his anxiety and frustrations, which had led to him assaulting teaching staff. This had not been provided by his placing authority. As a result of the YJS intervention, this was funded by the placing authority. This was an effective way to reduce risk of harm to others.

The area of planning to manage risks to others was not as positive as contingency planning. This was sufficient in seven of the 12 cases.

3.3. Implementation and delivery



High-quality, well-focused, personalised and coordinated services are delivered, engaging and assisting the child.

Outstanding

Our rating²⁴ for implementation and delivery is based on the following key questions:

	% yes
Does service delivery effectively support the child's desistance?	87%
Does service delivery effectively support the safety of the child?	90%
Does service delivery effectively support the safety of other people?	83%

This standard has been rated as 'Outstanding'.

Does service delivery effectively support the child's desistance?

The services delivered met the desistance needs of children in 18 of the 22 cases and were well targeted and sequenced.

The methods of delivery were affected by Covid-19, and some had to be delivered by video or telephone. It was clear that, despite this, staff adapted the way they worked to fit in with the children's preferred communication method and any learning difficulties, and they involved parents.

We found numerous examples of effective service delivery. The following example captures the support provided to many children:

Good practice example

The child was on work experience, so appointments were fitted around this. Referrals were made to Journey First to support his transition from school to college. Although no concerns were raised within the screening tool, one professional identified that he may have some communication difficulties in particular circumstances. This was swiftly followed up by the case manager. A speech and language therapy assessment was undertaken and a copy provided for the boy to take to college. The YJS officer delivered emotional resilience work, substance misuse and peer pressure work that was appropriate to the assessment and the plan. Exit planning was excellent, with the boy being able to access support from Journey First for up to 12 months following completion of the out-of-court disposal.

Does service delivery effectively support the safety of the child?

Services to promote safety and wellbeing were used well in 18 of the 20 relevant cases. We found good joint work, especially around speech, language and communication needs and CAHMS. Where children were part of the complex cases cohort, this was used effectively to manage risks of exploitation.

²⁴ The rating for the standard is driven by the lowest score on each of the key questions, which is placed in a rating band, indicated in bold in the table. See Annexe 1 for a more detailed explanation.

Again, we found good joint work with social workers, who were able to take actions to support existing plans. The YJS staff made effective decisions about when to and when not to deliver work directly, especially when the child was already involved with social care.

The views of parents and other professionals were taken seriously, as the following example showed.

Good practice example

Towards the end of the diversion, the case manager re-assessed the safety risk of the child and increased the classification to medium risk. This was prompted by the school's and parents' concerns relating to drug use.

The case manager took action to try and re-engage the child with the community drugs teams. They liaised with the police education officer to form a plan for the child's exit from the YJS, and to discuss the child's associated risks at a contextual safeguarding meeting.

Does service delivery effectively support the safety of other people?

There were 10 cases where services were needed to reduce and manage risk of harm. In eight of these, we found a good focus on protecting the victims. YJS staff had used interventions around knife crime and conflict resolution. In the two cases we assessed in which insufficient work had taken place, both relied on the mother's ability to manage risks. In both cases this was over-optimistic.

3.4. Joint working



Joint working with the police supports the delivery of high-quality, personalised and coordinated services.

Outstanding

Our rating²⁵ for joint working is based on the following key questions, based on two cases where a youth conditional caution was issued:

	% yes
Are the YOT's recommendations sufficiently well-informed, analytical and personalised to the child, supporting joint decision making?	100%
Does the YOT work effectively with the police in implementing the out-of-court disposal? ²⁶	100%

We looked at two cases where a youth conditional caution had been given and assessed them against our standards. In both, we found effective work, which resulted in a rating of 'Outstanding'. The comments that follow apply to the whole of the out-of-court disposal scheme, not just these two cases.

²⁵ The rating for the standard is driven by the lowest score on each of the key questions, which is placed in a rating band, indicated in bold in the table. See Annexe 1 for a more detailed explanation.

²⁶ This question is only relevant in youth conditional caution cases.

Are the YOT's recommendations sufficiently well-informed, analytical and personalised to the child, supporting joint decision-making?

The current out-of-court disposal process needs reviewing. In Cheshire Constabulary, community resolutions can be issued by an investigating officer. These community resolutions can have interventions attached to them, including restorative justice or a referral to the Divert team.

All referrals to Divert and cautions are sent to a YJS manager. All cases, except for serious offences referred to the Crown Prosecution Service, are referred by the officer in the case (OIC) to the YJS for a decision. There is no out-of-court disposal panel. Given that the YJS covers four local authorities, it has taken the reasonable view that it would be impractical and overly time-consuming to run four panels.

Once a referral is received, research on previous police interaction with the child is undertaken. A victims' officer obtains the view of the victim, and a case worker conducts an assessment of the child (either in person or over the phone).

The Divert manager then quality-assures the assessment where the case worker has recommended a particular outcome. This is sent back to the OIC. Except in exceptional cases, this recommendation is the final decision (there is an escalation process where the OIC does not agree with the recommendation).

Cautions/conditional cautions are administered by local police sergeants. The full range of outcomes are available, ranging from no further action through to a charge to court. Most outcomes are complemented by an intervention.

In Cheshire, no further action is used purely as a recorded outcome for the police system, meaning that there is no trace of offending behaviour on police systems. These can adversely affect the child in later life. This is a good outcome for the child. This outcome does not mean that the YJS takes no action. In order to recommend no further action, an assessment is always undertaken, and support and interventions are usually offered to support the child's desistance.

In a number of the cases reviewed, there were delays in the submission of cases from the police, delays in assessments and delays in implementing the recommendation from the YJS.

80 out-of-court disposal cases are reviewed by a scrutiny committee every year. There is a high level of agreement between the YJS and the committee.

Does the YOT work effectively with the police in implementing the out-of-court disposal?

In the two cases where a youth conditional caution had been issued, the police were notified when the child had completed the requirements of the caution. We saw an update to the OIC in one case and in the other the update was given to the complex case police officer who has some oversight and responsibility for the child in relation to exploitation.

Annexe 1: Methodology

HM Inspectorate of Probation standards

The standards against which we inspect youth offending services are based on established models and frameworks, which are grounded in evidence, learning and experience. These standards are designed to drive improvements in the quality of work with children who have offended.²⁷

The inspection methodology is summarised below, linked to the three domains in our standards framework. We focused on obtaining evidence against the standards, key questions and prompts in our inspection framework.

Domain one: organisational delivery

The youth offending service submitted evidence in advance and the chair of the YJS management board and Head of Service delivered a presentation covering the following areas:

- How do organisational delivery arrangements in this area make sure that the work of your YOS is as effective as it can be, and that the life chances of children who have offended are improved?
- What are your priorities for further improving these arrangements?

During the main fieldwork phase, we conducted 56 interviews with case managers, asking them about their experiences of training, development, management supervision and leadership. The second fieldwork week is the joint element of the inspection. HM Inspectorate of Probation was joined by colleague inspectors from police, health, social care and education. We followed up issues which had emerged from the case inspections. We held various meetings, which allowed us to triangulate evidence and information. In total, we conducted 52 meetings, which included meetings with managers, partner organisations, and staff. The evidence collected under this domain was judged against our published ratings characteristics.²⁸

Domain two: court disposals

We completed case assessments over a one-week period, examining case files and interviewing case managers. 60 per cent of the cases selected were those of children who had received court disposals six to nine months earlier, enabling us to examine work in relation to assessing, planning, implementing and reviewing. Where necessary, interviews with other people significantly involved in the case also took place. In some individual cases, further enquiries were made during the second fieldwork week by colleague inspectors from police, health, social care or education.

We examined 34 court disposals. The sample size was set to achieve a confidence level of 80 per cent (with a margin of error of five), and we ensured that the ratios in relation to gender, sentence or disposal type, risk of serious harm, and risk to safety and wellbeing classifications matched those in the eligible population.

²⁷ HM Inspectorate's standards are available here: <https://www.justiceinspectorates.gov.uk/hmiprobation/about-our-work/our-standards-and-ratings/>

Domain three: out-of-court disposals

We completed case assessments over a one-week period, examining case files and interviewing case managers. 40 per cent of cases selected were those of children who had received out-of-court disposals three to five months earlier. This enabled us to examine work in relation to assessing, planning, implementing and joint working. Where necessary, interviews with other people significantly involved in the case also took place. In some individual cases, further enquiries were made during the second fieldwork week by colleague inspectors from the police, health, social care or education.

We examined 23 out-of-court disposals. The sample size was set to achieve a confidence level of 80 per cent (with a margin of error of five), and we ensured that the ratios in relation to gender, sentence or disposal type, risk of serious harm, and risk to safety and wellbeing classifications matched those in the eligible population.

In some areas of this report, data may have been split into smaller sub-samples – for example, male/female cases. Where this is the case, the margin of error for the sub-sample findings may be higher than five.

Ratings explained

Domain one ratings are proposed by the lead inspector for each standard. They will be a single judgement, using all the relevant sources of evidence. More detailed information can be found in the probation inspection domain one rules and guidance on the website.

In this inspection, we conducted a detailed examination of a sample of 34 court disposals and 23 out-of-court disposals. In each of those cases, we inspect against four standards: assessment, planning, and implementation/delivery. For court disposals, we look at reviewing; and in out-of-court disposals, we look at joint working with the police. For each standard, inspectors answer a number of key questions about different aspects of quality, including whether there was sufficient analysis of the factors related to offending; the extent to which children were involved in assessment and planning; and whether enough was done to assess and manage the safety and wellbeing of the child, and any risk of harm posed to others.

For each standard, the rating is aligned to the key question with the smallest percentage of inspected cases judged to be satisfactory against that question. recognising that each key question is an integral part of the standard.

Lowest banding (key question level)	Rating (standard)
Minority: less than 50% of inspected cases judged sufficient on the key question	Inadequate
Too few: only 50-64% of inspected cases judged to be sufficient	Requires improvement
Reasonable majority: 65-79% of cases	Good
Large majority: 80% or more of cases	Outstanding ☆

We use case sub-samples for some of the key questions in domains two and three. For example, when judging whether planning focused sufficiently on keeping other people safe, we exclude those cases where the inspector deemed the risk of serious harm to be low. This approach is justified on the basis that we focus on those cases where we expect meaningful work to take place.

An element of professional discretion may be applied to the standards ratings in domains two and three. Exceptionally, the ratings panel considers whether professional discretion should be exercised where the lowest percentage at the key question level is close to the

rating boundary, for example between 'Requires improvement' and 'Good' (specifically, within five percentage points of the boundary; or where a differing judgement in one case would result in a change in rating; or where the rating is based upon a sample or sub-sample of five cases or fewer). The panel considers the sizes of any sub-samples used and the percentages for the other key questions within that standard, such as whether they fall within different bandings and the level of divergence, to make this decision.

Overall provider rating

Straightforward scoring rules are used to generate the overall provider rating. Each of the ten standards will be scored on a 0-3 scale as listed in the following table.

Score	Rating (standard)
0	Inadequate
1	Requires improvement
2	Good
3	Outstanding ☆

Adding the scores for each standard together produces the overall rating on a 0-30 scale as listed in the following table.

Score	Rating (overall)
0-6	Inadequate
7-18	Requires improvement
19-30	Good
31-36	Outstanding ☆

We do not include any weightings in the scoring rules. The rationale for this is that all parts of the standards framework are strongly linked to effective service delivery and positive outcomes, and we have restricted ourselves to those that are most essential. Our view is that providers need to focus across all the standards, and we do not want to distort behaviours in any undesirable ways. Furthermore, the underpinning evidence supports including all standards/key questions in the rating, rather than weighting individual elements.

Annexe 2: Inspection data

The answers to the key questions that determine the ratings for each standard are underpinned by answers to more detailed 'prompts'. These tables illustrate the proportions of the case sample with a satisfactory 'yes' response to the prompt questions. It should be noted that there is no mechanistic connection between the proportion of prompt questions answered positively, and the overall score at the key question level. The 'total' does not necessarily equal the 'sum of the parts'. The summary judgement is the overall finding made by the inspector, having taken consideration of the answers to all the prompts, weighing up the relative impact of the strengths and weaknesses.

Domain two: court disposals

2.1. Assessment	
Does assessment sufficiently analyse how to support the child's desistance?	% Yes
Is there sufficient analysis of offending behaviour, including the child's attitudes towards and motivations for their offending?	79%
Does assessment consider the diversity and wider familial and social context of the child, utilising information held by other agencies?	71%
Does assessment focus on the child's strengths and protective factors?	94%
Does assessment analyse the key structural barriers facing the child?	59%
Is sufficient attention given to understanding the child's levels of maturity, ability and motivation to change, and their likelihood of engaging with the court disposal?	82%
Does assessment give sufficient attention to the needs and wishes of the victim/s, and opportunities for restorative justice?	68%
Is the child and their parents/carers meaningfully involved in their assessment, and are their views taken into account?	81%
Does assessment sufficiently analyse how to keep the child safe?	
Does assessment clearly identify and analyse any risks to the safety and wellbeing of the child?	65%
Does assessment draw sufficiently on available sources of information, including other assessments, and involve other agencies where appropriate?	82%
Does assessment analyse controls and interventions to promote the safety and wellbeing of the child?	84%

Does assessment sufficiently analyse how to keep other people safe?	
Does assessment clearly identify and analyse any risk of harm to others posed by the child, including identifying who is at risk and the nature of that risk?	70%
Does assessment draw sufficiently on available sources of information, including past behaviour and convictions, and involve other agencies where appropriate?	90%
Does assessment analyse controls and interventions to manage and minimise the risk of harm presented by the child?	63%

2.2. Planning

Does planning focus sufficiently on supporting the child's desistance?	% Yes
Does planning set out the services most likely to support desistance, paying sufficient attention to the available timescales and the need for sequencing?	74%
Does planning take sufficient account of the diversity and wider familial and social context of the child?	76%
Does planning take sufficient account of the child's strengths and protective factors, and seek to reinforce or develop these as necessary?	94%
Does planning take sufficient account of the child's levels of maturity, ability and motivation to change, and seek to develop these as necessary?	79%
Does planning give sufficient attention to the needs and wishes of the victim/s?	78%
Is the child and their parents/carers meaningfully involved in planning, and are their views taken into account?	91%
Does planning focus sufficiently on keeping the child safe?	
Does planning promote the safety and wellbeing of the child, sufficiently addressing risks?	80%
Does planning involve other agencies where appropriate, and is there sufficient alignment with other plans (e.g. child protection or care plans) concerning the child?	68%
Does planning set out the necessary controls and interventions to promote the safety and wellbeing of the child?	73%

Does planning set out necessary and effective contingency arrangements to manage those risks that have been identified?	43%
Does planning focus sufficiently on keeping other people safe?	
Does planning promote the safety of other people, sufficiently addressing risk of harm factors?	54%
Does planning involve other agencies where appropriate?	73%
Does planning address any specific concerns and risks related to actual and potential victims?	54%
Does planning set out the necessary controls and interventions to promote the safety of other people?	68%
Does planning set out necessary and effective contingency arrangements to manage those risks that have been identified?	43%

2.3. Implementation and delivery

Does the implementation and delivery of services effectively support the child's desistance?	% Yes
Are the delivered services those most likely to support desistance, with sufficient attention given to sequencing and the available timescales?	85%
Does service delivery reflect the diversity and wider familial and social context of the child, involving parents/carers or significant others?	71%
Does service delivery build upon the child's strengths and enhance protective factors?	94%
Is sufficient focus given to developing and maintaining an effective working relationship with the child and their parents/carers?	94%
Does service delivery promote opportunities for community integration including access to services post-supervision?	94%
Is sufficient attention given to encouraging and enabling the child's compliance with the work of the YOT?	100%
Are enforcement actions taken when appropriate?	89%
Does the implementation and delivery of services effectively support the safety of the child?	
Does service delivery promote the safety and wellbeing of the child?	83%
Is the involvement of other organisations in keeping the child safe sufficiently well-coordinated?	80%

Does the implementation and delivery of services effectively support the safety of other people?	
Are the delivered services sufficient to manage and minimise the risk of harm?	68%
Is sufficient attention given to the protection of actual and potential victims?	71%
Is the involvement of other agencies in managing the risk of harm sufficiently well-coordinated?	74%

2.4. Reviewing

Does reviewing focus sufficiently on supporting the child's desistance?	% Yes
Does reviewing identify and respond to changes in factors linked to desistance?	90%
Does reviewing focus sufficiently on building upon the child's strengths and enhancing protective factors?	87%
Does reviewing consider motivation and engagement levels and any relevant barriers?	90%
Is the child and their parents/carers meaningfully involved in reviewing their progress and engagement, and are their views taken into account?	83%
Does reviewing lead to the necessary adjustments in the ongoing plan of work to support desistance?	77%
Does reviewing focus sufficiently on keeping the child safe?	
Does reviewing identify and respond to changes in factors related to safety and wellbeing?	69%
Is reviewing informed by the necessary input from other agencies involved in promoting the safety and wellbeing of the child?	81%
Does reviewing lead to the necessary adjustments in the ongoing plan of work to promote the safety and wellbeing of the child?	63%
Does reviewing focus sufficiently on keeping other people safe?	
Does reviewing identify and respond to changes in factors related to risk of harm?	71%
Is reviewing informed by the necessary input from other agencies involved in managing the risk of harm?	86%

Is the child and their parents/carers meaningfully involved in reviewing their risk of harm, and are their views taken into account?	71%
Does reviewing lead to the necessary adjustments in the ongoing plan of work to manage and minimise the risk of harm?	63%

Domain three: out-of-court disposals

3.1. Assessment	
Does assessment sufficiently analyse how to support the child's desistance?	% Yes
Is there sufficient analysis of offending behaviour, including the child's acknowledgement of responsibility, attitudes towards and motivations for their offending?	91%
Does assessment consider the diversity and wider familial and social context of the child, utilising information held by other agencies?	91%
Does assessment focus on the child's strengths and protective factors?	96%
Does assessment analyse the key structural barriers facing the child?	81%
Is sufficient attention given to understanding the child's levels of maturity, ability and motivation to change?	96%
Does assessment give sufficient attention to the needs and wishes of the victim/s, and opportunities for restorative justice?	100%
Is the child and their parents/carers meaningfully involved in their assessment, and are their views taken into account?	95%
Does assessment sufficiently analyse how to keep the child safe?	
Does assessment clearly identify and analyse any risks to the safety and wellbeing of the child?	77%
Does assessment draw sufficiently on available sources of information, including other assessments, and involve other agencies where appropriate?	82%
Does assessment sufficiently analyse how to keep other people safe?	
Does assessment clearly identify and analyse any risk of harm to others posed by the child, including identifying who is at risk and the nature of that risk?	95%

Does assessment draw sufficiently on available sources of information, including any other assessments that have been completed, and other evidence of behaviour by the child?	100%
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3.2. Planning

Does planning focus on supporting the child's desistance?	% Yes
Does planning set out the services most likely to support desistance, paying sufficient attention to the available timescales and the need for sequencing?	91%
Does planning take sufficient account of the diversity and wider familial and social context of the child?	96%
Does planning take sufficient account of the child's strengths and protective factors, and seek to reinforce or develop these as necessary?	96%
Does planning take sufficient account of the child's levels of maturity, ability and motivation to change, and seek to develop these as necessary?	95%
Does planning take sufficient account of opportunities for community integration, including access to mainstream services following completion of out-of-court disposal work?	100%
Does planning give sufficient attention to the needs and wishes of the victim/s?	95%
Is the child and their parents/carers meaningfully involved in planning, and are their views taken into account?	91%
Does planning focus sufficiently on keeping the child safe?	
Does planning promote the safety and wellbeing of the child, sufficiently addressing risks?	80%
Does planning involve other agencies where appropriate, and is there sufficient alignment with other plans (e.g. child protection or care plans) concerning the child?	85%
Does planning include necessary contingency arrangements for those risks that have been identified?	68%
Does planning focus sufficiently on keeping other people safe?	
Does planning promote the safety of other people, sufficiently addressing risk of harm factors?	92%

Does planning involve other agencies where appropriate?	83%
Does planning address any specific concerns and risks related to actual and potential victims?	89%
Does planning include necessary contingency arrangements for those risks that have been identified?	58%

3.3. Implementation and delivery

Does service delivery support the child's desistance?	% Yes
Are the delivered services those most likely to support desistance, with sufficient attention given to sequencing and the available timescales?	82%
Does service delivery reflect the diversity and wider familial and social context of the child, involving parents/carers or significant others?	91%
Is sufficient focus given to developing and maintaining an effective working relationship with the child and their parents/carers?	100%
Is sufficient attention given to encouraging and enabling the child's compliance with the work of the YOT?	95%
Does service delivery promote opportunities for community integration, including access to mainstream services?	91%
Does service delivery effectively support the safety of the child?	
Does service delivery promote the safety and wellbeing of the child?	90%
Is the involvement of other agencies in keeping the child safe sufficiently well utilised and coordinated?	85%
Does service delivery effectively support the safety of other people?	
Is sufficient attention given to the protection of actual and potential victims?	85%
Are the delivered services sufficient to manage and minimise the risk of harm?	83%

3.4. Joint working

Are the YOT's recommendations sufficiently well-informed, analytical and personalised to the child, supporting joint decision making?	% Yes
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Are the recommendations by the YOT for out-of-court disposal outcomes, conditions and interventions appropriate and proportionate?	100%
Do the recommendations consider the degree of the child's understanding of the offence and their acknowledgement of responsibility?	100%
Is a positive contribution made by the YOT to determining the disposal?	100%
Is sufficient attention given to the child's understanding, and their parents/carers' understanding, of the implications of receiving an out-of-court disposal?	96%
Is the information provided to inform decision making timely to meet the needs of the case, legislation and guidance?	95%
Is the rationale for joint disposal decisions appropriate and clearly recorded?	90%
3.2.1 Does the YOT work effectively with the police in implementing the out-of-court disposal? ²⁹	
Does the YOT inform the police of progress and outcomes in a sufficient and timely manner?	100%
Is sufficient attention given to compliance with and enforcement of the conditions?	100%

²⁹ This question is only asked in youth conditional caution cases.

REPORT TO:	Children, Young People & Families Policy & Performance Board
DATE:	24 th January 2022
REPORTING OFFICER:	Strategic Director, People
PORTFOLIO:	Children, Education & Social Care
SUBJECT:	School Improvement Monitoring and Brokering Grant Consultation October 2021- November 2021
WARD(S)	Borough-wide

1.0 **PURPOSE OF THE REPORT**

1.1 The report aims to share a summary of the DFE Consultation that was launched on 29th October 2021 and closed on 26th November 2021 regarding DFE proposed changes to the Local Authority School Improvement Monitoring and Brokering Grant (SIMB) funding and the role of the Local Authority in relation to School Improvement. The report will also outline the potential impact of this paper on schools and wider LA services across the region. The outcome from the responses and plans following consultation moving forwards were due to be published either late December 2021 or early in the New Year 2022. As of 4th January 2022, the government website states that feedback is still being analysed but will be published soon.

2.0 **RECOMMENDATION: That:**

- i) **Members are aware of the key risks and issues which may arise from this consultation if plans proposed do evolve**
- ii) **Members will consider future proposals to new ways of working with schools if this grant is reduced and/or fully removed.**

3.0 **BACKGROUND**

3.1 Under Section 72 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006, the Local Authority have a statutory duty to act as champions of excellence for education and to risk assess and monitor it's maintained schools. The Local Authority also have a duty to provide support and challenge to schools; encourage good and outstanding maintained schools to take responsibility for their own improvement and support other schools, whilst also issuing warning notices for schools causing serious concern.

4.0 REFORMING HOW LOCAL AUTHORITIES' SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT FUNCTIONS ARE FUNDED - DFE CONSULTATION - 29TH OCTOBER 2021- 26TH NOVEMBER 2021

4.1 On 29th October 2021, DFE launched a consultation to consider the future funding arrangements of the Local Authority School Improvement Monitoring and Brokering Grant. This consultation outlined that it would consult on:

- Removing the School Improvement Monitoring & Brokering Grant ('the Grant'), which is currently allocated to local authorities to support school improvement activities; and
- Make provisions within the School and Early Years Finance (England) Regulations for the financial year (FY) 2022-23 to allow local authorities to fund all of their school improvement activity (including all core school improvement activities) via de-delegation from schools' budget shares.
- The document outlined that the plan would be to reduce the school improvement monitoring and brokering grant by 50% from 1st April 2022-31st March 2023 and then fully remove the funding from 1st April 2023.
- The consultation suggested that as schools would be receiving on average 3.2% increases in core funding, then schools could agree to use some of this funding to fund school improvement work.

5.0 WIDER CONSULTATION DOCUMENT RATIONALE

5.1 The consultation assumed the position that:

- Council school improvement activity can be based on "core" school improvement activity and "additional" improvement services. Core was deemed to be roles identified within the Schools Causing Concern guidance which included roles such as issuing warning notices; removal of delegated budget; intervening to appoint an Interim Executive Board (IEB). Additional school improvement was viewed to be school improvement activities that were additional to core and may be funded through traded services or de delegated funding from school budget shares.
- As more schools were now academy schools nationally, the rationale was that the Local Authority had less maintained schools for which it was responsible so should be funded to reflect this change and that additional school improvement activities would reflect local arrangements and could be funded through a traded services model for which school leaders could select to buy in such services.
- Effective councils acted early to identify risks and intervene early to reduce risks therefore few warning notices were being issued. The rationale has therefore been taken that there is no need to have a distinction between core and

additional school improvement activity therefore all school improvement could be funded through a traded model or de delegating school budget shares to fund improvement activities across the local authority area

- Schools will be receiving a 3.2% uplift in their budgets next year, therefore it is only right that schools use some of this budget to spend on school improvement functions and places decision on where to source this support in school leaders hands.
- The consultation stated that by top slicing from budgets via de delegation this would align maintained schools with the way in which academy schools are funded and would enable a smooth transition to becoming part of a multi academy trust in line with the government's position. It did not make the distinction that academy schools automatically have funding top sliced from their academy trust and do not need to consult or approve this funding allocation, whereas under this consultation maintained schools would need to be consulted to de-delegate any funding streams.

6.0 **PROPOSED TIMING FOR SUGGESTED CHANGES**

- 6.1 The consultation proposes that the removal of the grant is phased so that it would be reduced to 50% of the current amount on a per school basis in Financial Year 2022-23 and completely removed for the beginning of the financial year 2023-24.

Current Grant Funding:

- 6.1.1 Halton Local Authority received £167,814 for the year April 2021-2022, a decrease from £183,337 in the financial year 2020-2021. This money is used to fund educational, statutory local authority duties. This includes a range of duties such as leading on training, advice and administering statutory assessment and moderation; acting as the Appropriate Body for Early Career Teachers (ECT) or legacy Newly Qualified Teachers (NQT)'s; acting as the Directors representative to support governors in the recruitment of headteachers and school leaders, whilst championing excellence in schools, supporting an increase in the capacity of a school led system, whilst risk assessing and monitoring schools and providing challenge and support to lead to improvement and delivering improvement networks, leadership training and continuing professional development. Wider partnership work including support, advice and training for governors; Early Help, SEND/Inclusion partnerships working; Early Years; Health and Covid support/monitoring and Public Health multi agency partner support is also provided by the small team fulfilling these roles. Educational professionals funded through this funding also play a key role in leadership of Early Years and providing support and being part of the Covid outbreak management support and planning throughout

the pandemic.

- 6.1.2 As a Local Authority Halton have a very high proportion of maintained schools with 88% of primary schools maintained schools; 100% nursery schools are maintained; 50% of special schools are maintained; the pupil referral unit is a maintained school and 25% of secondary schools are maintained.

Risks:

- 6.1.3 If the plans to reduce the SIMB grant by 50% from 1st April 2022 would pose huge risks to schools and the education sector as this grant provides the funding for key educational duties and responsibilities. Given the timing of the consultation the results are not yet published and there is therefore insufficient time to draft a paper to consult with schools forum or Elected Members as to how this important work will be continued or funded prior to potentially losing significant funding. Currently there is no information published as to whether the Local Authority Statutory duties are changing and if so what their role would be and how they would be funded. This also disproportionately impacts negatively on small Local Authorities with very limited funding and small teams, therefore very little capacity for other areas to supplement these key areas financially. As an area with a high proportion of maintained schools which we highly value, this is a concerning policy change which could impact on a large number of maintained schools. It would also negatively impact on the capacity to work in partnership with the entire school system including the academy sector if funding was reduced or removed.
- 6.1.4 In order for this work to continue to ensure that schools are providing a high quality education this would require de delegation of funding from maintained schools or a move towards a traded model. However given the nature of some of the work, it is unlikely that a school causing concern would select a traded model from some of the challenge and accountability functions that go alongside school improvement support and capacity building.
- 6.1.5 If such work and improvement work was not carried out the risks would be that the quality of education could suffer as a result. Any drop into an Ofsted category of concern would lead to a forced Academy order for schools to convert to academy status. This would impact far wider than the education sector as a loss of maintained schools is likely to lead to a reduction of purchasing service level agreements for services such as HR, payroll, school meals, property services, cleaning services; legal services, educational welfare officers; educational psychologists; IT support etc. This could potentially negatively impact upon loss of wider council services as well as having a reduced role in the educational offer of the Borough.

- 6.1.6 Currently as the consultation response is not published nor are any changes to the role of the Local Authority in School Improvement duties there will be no policy changes as yet. However given this is likely to have such a significant impact if the proposals do go ahead, it was important to alert members and schools to the potential changes on the horizon. Once the response is published plans and potential policy changes will be shared as soon as possible to ensure Halton maintained schools continue to have a high quality educational support offer.

7.0 **POLICY IMPLICATIONS**

- 7.1 None currently, until the consultation response is published

8.0 **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 8.1 Potential loss of funding for educational school improvement support for maintained schools and potential risk to educational professionals roles. Potential risk to wider council services and less buy in to council services.

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

Likely to impact on council offer to maintained schools unless consultations agree to de-delegation of funding. There may be an increase in academy conversions of schools.

9.1 **Children & Young People in Halton**

None currently, until the consultation response is published.

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

Potential risk to educational professionals' roles. Potential risk to wider council services and less buy in to council services impacting on number of roles required.

9.3 **A Healthy Halton**

None identified

9.4 **A Safer Halton**

None identified

9.5 **Halton's Urban Renewal**

None identified

10.0 **RISK ANALYSIS**

10.1 None identified

11.0 **EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES**

11.1 None identified

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

Document	Place of Inspection	Contact Officer
School Improvement Monitoring and Brokering Grant Consultation October 2021- November 2021	www.gov.uk	Divisional Manager for Education 0-19
Section 72 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006	www.gov.uk	Divisional Manager for Education 0-19
Schools Causing Concern Guidance September 2020 – Guidance regarding Local Authority Statutory Duties in relation to schools causing concern	www.gov.uk	Divisional Manager for Education 0-19

REPORT TO:	Children, Young People and Families Policy and Performance Board
DATE:	24 th January 2022
REPORTING OFFICER:	Strategic Director, People
PORTFOLIO:	Children & Young People
SUBJECT:	Halton Local Area SEND Strategy 2021-25
WARDS:	Borough wide

1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 To advise the board on the recently approved local area SEND Strategy for 2021-2025 (see appendix 1).

2.0 RECOMMENDATION: That

- 2.1 Members are asked to consider the presentation and raise any questions they may have on the SEND strategy and its implementation.
- 2.2 Member request annual progress updates on the delivery of the SEND strategy to ensure that leaders remain informed and able to enquire and intervene as deemed necessary.

3.0 SUMMARY

- 3.1 The Children and Families Act 2014 and SEND Code of Practice 2015 set out the statutory requirements and practice required from local areas to meet the needs of children and young people (0-25) with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND).
- 3.2 The SEND Code of Practice requires statutory bodies in local areas to work together to meet the education, health and care needs of children and young people with SEND. The Halton SEND Strategy for 2021-25 therefore will be a joint strategy under the governance of the Halton Health and Wellbeing board and Children's Trust and it is not the sole responsibility of Halton Borough Council to deliver.
- 3.3 The Halton SEND Strategy for 2021-25 has been co-produced in partnership with other statutory bodies from education and health including schools, and the CCG, as well as parent carer and young people's representatives.

- 3.4 Across the Halton local area the responsibility for improving the outcomes, life chances, services and provision in relation to special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) sits with the SEND Strategic Partnership. The partnership will own and oversee the area's SEND Strategy to ensure that the outcomes are improving and objectives from the strategy are being met. The Strategic Partnership is currently focussed on the development of the performance management tools and delivery action plans to enable this to happen in a realistic but ambitious way.

4.0 IMPLICATIONS FOR THE COUNCIL'S PRIORITIES

4.1 Children & Young People in Halton

The purpose of the 2021-2025 Halton SEND Strategy is to improve outcomes for, and the lived experience of, children and young people with SEND and their families. Currently children recognised as having a special educational needs and/or disability make up over 17% of the areas school age population therefore the strategy will make a significant contribution towards ensuring that Halton's children and young people have the best possible start in life.

4.2 Employment, Learning & Skills in Halton

Young people with SEND and Learning difficulties are disproportionately likely to be NEET or unemployed. Elements of the strategy are aimed at improving employability and skills for these young people leading to meaningful employment.

4.3 A Healthy Halton

Children and young people with SEND are disproportionately likely to be overweight, lack opportunities to access healthy lifestyles and leisure activities and die young. Improving health outcomes for these children and young people is a core objective of SEND Strategic Priority 3: Preparation for Adulthood.

4.4 A Safer Halton

None.

4.5 Halton's Urban Renewal

None.

5.0 RISK ANALYSIS

- 5.1 Without a coherent and joined up strategic approach to meeting the needs and improving the life outcomes and lived experience of children and young people and their families it will be considerably more challenging for the local area to meet its statutory and morale duties.
- 5.2 Individual objectives within the strategy will in some cases contain projects that may require separate risk analysis. Where this is the case these will be overseen by the SEND Strategic Partnership.

6.0 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES

- 6.1 Individual objectives within the strategy will in some cases contain projects that require separate and individual equality impact analysis and assessment as part of good practice. Where this is the case these will be overseen by the SEND Strategic Partnership.

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

None



SEND Strategy 2021-2025

Introduction

Halton is committed to ensuring inclusive education, health and social activities of children and young people aged 0-25 years.

We expect that all services will work to enable all children and young people to develop, learn, participate and achieve their best possible outcomes.

Children's human rights are written down in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) to protect children and young people's rights around participation in society/their local community; protection from discrimination and exploitation; and provision covering their welfare e.g. education, healthcare etc. The UNCRC also says that **all adults** must do what is best for children and young people – this means that **we all** have a role to play to ensure that these rights are honoured.

The UNCRC says that all children and young people have rights and should be supported to:

- live, develop, be well informed, included and can make their own choices;
- be enabled to flourish and thrive for who they are as people as they grow up;
- be heard, have their views respected and participate in society as anybody else;
- have equal access, opportunities, be safe and not be discriminated against.

Vision

In Halton, the rights within the UNCRC will be at the heart of our practice.

Halton SEND Strategic Partnership believes that **every** child and young person has a right to thrive, flourish and lead an ordinary life. This should be without being labelled or restricted, no matter what their disability or ability.

We want every child and young person to:

- feel safe; valued; included and connected;
- be given opportunities to be active and for physical and mental health;
- be empowered to make choices that shape their lives with appropriate supportive relationships.

Principles

This Strategy sets out the plans we will put in place over the next five years, so that we can drive forwards our vision, priorities, outcomes and performance indicators to improve our practice.

To do this, we will need to:

- have improved our culture, ethos and practice with better processes and communication for working better together;
- ensure that children, young people and families have access to the right support, at the right time and at the right level to meet their needs;
- pave the way for children and young people as they grow up to thrive and flourish in their future life;
- offer **inclusive** education or learning opportunities in an appropriate setting serving their needs.

What do we mean by inclusive?

Inclusion is like the golden thread that has a direct influence on all aspects of children, young people and families' lives.

Attending

- ✚ Able to learn/train within environments which best meet their needs;
- ✚ Engaged in the life of their local community with groups/organisations/services that have inclusive culture and values.

Included

- ✚ Voices are heard and they are involved in decisions about things in their life;
- ✚ Opportunity to participate and engage as fully as possible in all aspects of their life;
- ✚ Enabled and supported to participate in learning/training.

Achieving

- ✚ Able to achieve their full potential;
- ✚ Have access to a developmentally appropriate curriculum or training/learning that is tailored to meet their needs.

Supported

- ✚ Their life is benefitted by the ethos, culture, teaching practices and relationships provided through groups, organisations, services and education settings;
- ✚ They are supported to overcome set-backs and barriers in their life.

Our Priorities

We believe the following priorities will help us to drive the work of Halton Children's Trust to meet the needs of children and young people with SEND.

Working Better Together

By working better together needs are identified early and met at the right time, by services that are fully inclusive in practice and processes.

Preparing for Adulthood

We will maximise young people's ability to thrive, be independent and reach their goals for adult life.

Empowerment (Communication and Co-production)

Professionals will work positively with children, young people and families to provide them with access to the information they need to build provision and services together.

Inclusive Education for CYP with SEND

Children and young people can fulfil their potential supported by educational settings.

Our Key Outcomes

<p style="text-align: center;">Priority: Working Better Together</p> <p>How will we know we have achieved it?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Families will have to repeat themselves less often “tell it once”. • Support will have been identified earlier for children and young people to have the “right support, at the right time and at the right level” which changes to meet their needed as they grow up. 	<p style="text-align: center;">Priority: Preparing for Adulthood</p> <p>How will we know we have achieved it?</p> <p>Young people will tell us they:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Feel healthy and feel safe • Have job and control of their money • Feel valued, included, active and involved • Have a choice of housing • Have friends and a social life • Have intimate relationships
<p style="text-align: center;">Priority: Empowerment (Communication and Co-production)</p> <p>How will we know we have achieved it?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children, young people and families tell us they feel in control, well supported and able to influence the system of support for their child/young person. • Children, young people and families tell us that they feel respected and that their voice is heard by services. • Feedback from children, young people and families regularly sought and acted upon. • Children, young people and families tell us that we have provide them with easily accessible, jargon-free information that we have developed and produced together. 	<p style="text-align: center;">Priority: Inclusive Education for CYP with SEND</p> <p>How will we know we have achieved it?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pupils’ progress and achievement will be in line with their peers compared to statistical neighbours and national benchmarks. • More pupils with EHCPs educated within mainstream schools, with fewer pupils educated outside the Borough.

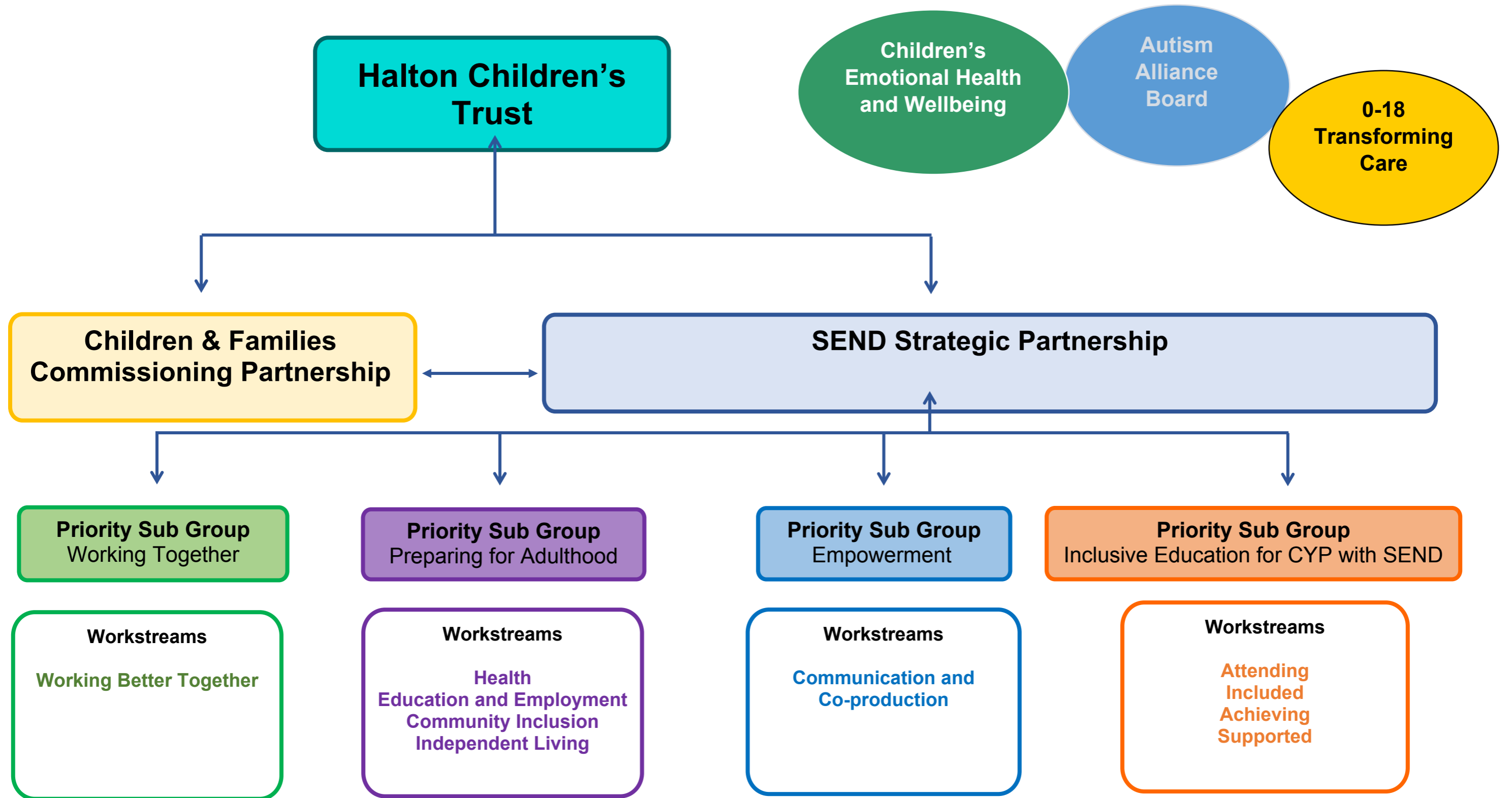
Who will be accountable for delivering this Strategy?

The SEND Strategic Partnership is responsible for leading this strategy and accountable to Halton Children’s Trust for delivery and achievement of the priorities and outcomes over the next five years.

Priority Groups will sit underneath the SEND Strategic Partnership and will develop action plans to drive forwards the work within each priority which will outline the objectives, actions, timescales and a clear set of performance indicators that will be used to review and monitor progress.

The need to establish improved feedback mechanisms from children, young people and families is a key element in being able to accurately measure the success of this Strategy.

SEND Strategy Governance 2021-2025



Working Better Together Priority

By working better together needs are identified early and met at the right time, by services that are fully inclusive in practice and processes.

Working together, we will:

- Develop and monitor a set of creative and challenging outcomes measures to improve collective understanding about where we currently are in Halton delivering SEND services.
- Review and improve the health pathways to reduce delays in diagnosis and ensure appropriate post-diagnostic support is available.
- Improve awareness and use of learning disability annual health checks at 14 years+ and hospital passports with GPs and families to better support and meet the needs of young people.
- Review, revise and further embed the SEND Joint Commissioning Framework to ensure services provided are good quality, accessible, inclusive and support children and young peoples' right to lead a diverse and flourishing life.
- Improve person centred practices and information sharing systems/protocols between education, health and social care services/partners to deliver a Halton "tell it once" approach so that families can avoid having to repeatedly provide the same information and enables more timely assessments for children and young people.
- Support children and young people's access to education/learning by implementing integrated arrangements for specialist equipment (through Halton's Specialist Equipment Policy).
- Identify earlier the support needed by children and young people, so the "right support, at the right time and at the right level" is available and reviewed/monitored to address any changes needed as they grow up.
- Ensure timely and appropriate access to additional support funding for early years settings and that the referral routes and processes are well understood.

Preparing for Adulthood (PfA) Priority

We will maximise young people's ability to thrive, be independent and reach their goals for adult life.

Note: These objectives flow from actions already taken through the PfA 'vision' or work to do that was identified as part of the existing PfA action plan.

Health	Education and Employment	Community Inclusion	Independent Living
<p>Working together we will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve awareness and equip children, young people and families to be empowered, confident and capable to make decisions about their life and manage their own health needs. • Improve communication links between professionals and families, provide clear information for families relating to services. • Provide better health transition processes and support to meet the needs of children and young people to access schools/settings is effectively sourced and delivered e.g. post-diagnosis support, Speech and Language Therapy, Occupational Therapy. • Promote and encourage children, young people and families around leading a healthy lifestyle. This includes physical, emotional and mental health. 	<p>Working together we will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have a clear education pathway that includes a range and flexibility of Key Stage 4 and 5 provision. • Have in a place a clear pathway to employment that provides a wide range of opportunities through education that includes work experience, supported employment, and further development of supported internships and supported apprenticeships that lead to paid work and a career. • Improving awareness and better planning for seamless transition to their next phase of education and employment. • Raise awareness about positive inclusion to support increased opportunities for young people with SEND for employment with local employers. • Improve the timing, delivery, communication and support within educational settings for children and young people to access specialist careers support, advice and guidance to ensure they have a good transition to education, employment and training. 	<p>Working together we will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promote a SEND friendly Borough with inclusive communities by working together with the business and voluntary sector communities to improve social inclusion for young people with SEND. • Strengthen the support provided to children and young people to develop the skills they need as they grow up e.g. increase their independence, travel training, involvement in their local community, employability and future aspirations. • Ensure that children and young people have access to robust information, advice, support and guidance that meets their needs which enables seamless transitions e.g. between schools/settings, services and children to adults. • Support, nurture and encourage children and young people to develop their circle of friends and relationships with others as they grow up. 	<p>Working together we will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure that professionals understand the needs of children and young people, so they can access person centred support/services which help focus their strengths and links with social and community networks. • Increase the use of assistive technology and equipment to support independence. • Ensure that vulnerable young people including those with SEND have access to universal and targeted youth services, support that recognises their vulnerability to exploitation and improves their education of areas such as, illegal substances, social media, healthy relationships etc • Ensure Halton Housing Strategy reflects the needs of young people with SEND for sufficient provision of appropriate accommodation and care to support independent living, ensuring that we are planning for their future need. • Providing support to carers to ensure they can continue in their role, whilst accessing education, employment and leisure services. • Improve person centred processes including better information sharing systems between education, health and social care services/partners.

Empowerment Priority (Communication and Co-production)

Professionals will work positively with families and provide them with access to the information they need to build provision and services together.

Working together, we will:

- Develop a Co-production Charter with children, young people and parents/carers to set out our commitments and the value of parent/carer, child and young person's voice. The charter will have **accountability** at its heart and be supported by a programme of workforce development across the system.
- Ensure that children, young people and their parents/carers are made aware of their right to access easy-read, jargon free, impartial information, advice and support.
- Ensure high quality, accessible communication and support is available to children, young people and their parents/carers through regular updates and information sharing via the Local Offer, Halton SENDIASS, Halton SEND Carer Forum (HSCF), SEND Strategic Partnership etc.
- Further develop and maintain a co-produced accessible, accurate and comprehensive Local Offer.
- Develop regular feedback processes for parents/carers, children and young people to understand how well we are doing and to inform improvements as needed.
- Maximise transparency of decisions, improve communication and accessibility of all our processes.
- Celebrate the achievements of our children and young people.
- Strengthen and widen our engagement in working better together with children, young people and their parents/carers.
- Increase the wider shared understanding of what we mean by 'independence' to enable young people to take measured risks e.g. increase the use of independent travel training.
- Co-produce a workforce development toolkit that supports an inclusive culture, high standards and the fulfilment of everyone's potential.
- Ensure children and young people no longer feel: "Young people who have disabilities believe that there is a 'them and us' divide among their peers in Halton. They are appreciative of the initiatives which leaders support but want to see more being done at a strategic level" (quote taken from Local Area SEND Inspection 2017).

Inclusive Education for CYP with SEND Priority

Children and young people can fulfil their potential supported by inclusive schools/settings.

Attending	Included	Achieving	Supported
<p>Working together we will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve access to inclusive mainstream provision for children and young people with SEND by better enabling schools to provide support. • Develop a SEND Sufficiency Strategy to ensure that Halton has sufficient, appropriate education provision to meet the needs of children and young people in the Borough. • Improve attendance rates for children and young people in schools, by developing a clear understanding of non-attendance and ensuring that a full time offer is available to all. • Improve schools' confidence and understanding to deliver provision to children and young people with SEND, in order to increase access to mainstream education of children and young people with EHCPs. 	<p>Working together we will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Foster and support schools and settings to have nurturing and enabling environments to ensure that the individual needs of children and young people are well met and that they are fully included. • Ensure that inclusion funding for early years settings is accessible, timely and supports inclusion. • Have clear, easily understood processes and improved access to the required support for example, equipment, personal budgets etc. • Develop and maintain a range of outreach services to support children and young people to remain in mainstream education. 	<p>Working together we will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve the progress and attainment rates for children and young people at SEN Support and with EHCPs across all key stages. • Ensure that a rigorous system is in place and monitored in order to track the achievement of pupils at a local area level across all educational provision. • Ensure the Graduated Approach is used more effectively by schools/settings to improve inclusive practices, earlier identification and intervention for children and young people at SEN Support level. • Ensure that an alternative provision offer that meets the needs of Halton's children and young people is developed (Sufficiency Strategy). • Ensure that every child has access to a developmentally appropriate and varied curriculum tailored to meet their needs. • Improve support within schools/settings for children and young people to access specialist careers support, advice and guidance. 	<p>Working together we will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide high quality individual support plans and EHCPs with clear and appropriate outcomes. • Improve the multi-agency engagement by all partners within the EHCP assessment and review process to ensure that assessed needs are based on a multi-agency approach/advice for education, health and social care support required by the child/young person to achieve positive outcomes. • Maintain a range of training and support for parents and siblings that is accessible, well communicated. • Ensure health and care needs assessments are undertaken as part of the EHC process to make plans more holistic. • Ensure that the EHCP assessment and review process is clear, transparent, used, monitored and well understood across all agencies, partners and in particular with young people and families. • Increase the access and availability of personal budgets. • Provide better details of pathways to emotional health and well-being support for children and young people, which considers the specific needs of children and young people with SEND. • Provide good wraparound pre, post and no support by appropriately trained staff for children, young people and their families. Ensuring that young people are supported to understand their own diagnosis.

REPORT TO:	Children, Young People and Families Policy and Performance Board
DATE:	24 January 2022
REPORTING OFFICER:	Strategic Director, Enterprise, Community & Resources
PORTFOLIO:	Children, Young People and Families
SUBJECT:	Performance Management Report for Quarter 2 2021/22
WARD(S)	Borough wide

1.0 PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To consider, and to raise any questions or points of clarification, in respect of performance management for the second quarter period 01 July 2021 to 30 September 2021.
- 1.2 Key priorities for development or improvement in 2021/22 were agreed by Members and included in the Business Plan, for the various functional areas reporting to the Board as detailed below:
 - Education, Inclusion, Provision Services
 - Children and Families Services

The report details progress made against objectives and milestones and performance targets and provides information relating to key developments and emerging issues that have arisen during the period.

2.0 RECOMMENDED: That the Policy and Performance Board

- 1) Receive the second quarter's performance management report;**
- 2) Consider the progress and performance information and raise any questions or points for clarification; and**
- 3) Highlight any areas of interest and/or concern where further information is to be reported at a future meeting of the Board.**

3.0 SUPPORTING INFORMATION

- 3.1 Departmental objectives provide a clear statement on what services are planning to achieve and to show how they contribute to the Council's strategic priorities. Such information is central to the Council's

performance management arrangements and the Policy and Performance Board has a key role in monitoring performance and strengthening accountability.

4.0 POLICY IMPLICATIONS

4.1 There are no policy implications associated with this report.

5.0 OTHER IMPLICATIONS

5.1 There are no other implications associated with this report.

6.0 IMPLICATIONS FOR THE COUNCIL'S PRIORITIES

6.1 Departmental service objectives and performance measures, both local and national are linked to the delivery of the Council's priorities. The introduction of a Thematic Priority Based Report and the identification of business critical objectives/ milestones and performance indicators will further support organisational improvement.

6.2 Although some objectives link specifically to one priority area, the nature of the cross - cutting activities being reported, means that to a greater or lesser extent a contribution is made to one or more of the Council priorities.

7.0 RISK ANALYSIS

7.1 Not applicable.

8.0 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES

8.1 Not applicable.

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

Not applicable

Children and Young People Priority Based PPB Report

Reporting Period: Quarter 2 2021/22

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 This report provides an overview of issues and progress that have occurred during the period of the report towards the priority of Children and Young People (CYP). The way in which traffic light symbols have been used to reflect progress is explained within Appendix 1 (section 8).
- 1.2 Please note initials have been provided to indicate which officer is responsible for the commentary to aid Members, as requested by the Children and Young People Policy and Performance Board. A key is provided in Appendix 1 (section 8).

2.0 Key Developments

2.1 **Child in Need Teams Restructure**

The restructure of the Child in Need Teams has been approved at Steering Group. Following the Ofsted Focus Visit the implementation will be incremental, with full implementation on 4th January 2022. The restructure is informed by staff feedback, that is, the current remit of the team is too broad, and this is linked to the outcome of Ofsted Inspection in March 2020 that identified drift and delay. The new structure will consist of the Assessment and Support Team (Duty); Children and Family Support Team (Long Term Team) to ensure families are receiving appropriate support and intervention at the earliest opportunity. The restructure will also include the Systemic Hub, Halton is committed to embedding a Systemic Model of Practice. This team will provide intensive therapeutic support to families, supporting children to remain at home with their families. The Systemic Hub will also support embedding the practice model across the service and partnership.

2.2 **Early Help**

Team around the Family (TAF) Early Help have been successful in securing funding to recruit a parenting coordinator role. This role will play a vital part in the development and vision of the parenting offer in Halton including a dedicated web based advice and information parenting hub.

The Early Help health engagement Officers are now based within some GP surgeries at least one day a week. This has increased relationships and partnership working with the GP's and has enabled better access and support for families' reducing the time they will need with GP appointments.

The reducing parental conflict agenda is currently been delivered through localities and children centres. We have recruited an ambassador role for this project who will develop a training package to roll out to embed this agenda into the work of all professionals working with families.

2.3 **Early Years Foundation Stage Reforms**

Early Years has a new statutory framework which is effective from 1st September 2021 and has a range of changes to learning and development requirements; safeguarding and welfare updates; assessment and consideration of teacher workload. Aims of this new framework include:

- Improve outcomes at age 5, particularly in language and literacy
- Reduce workload, such as unnecessary paperwork

All schools and early years' providers in England must follow the new EYFS framework from September 2021.

There are key documents which support the changes:

- Statutory framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage Setting the standards for learning, development, and care for children from birth to five
- Changes to the Early Years Foundation Stage
- Development matters- the non-statutory guidance (updated July 2021)

2.4 **Numeracy and Literacy Catch Up Funding**

In mid-July the DfE announced a £10 million catch-up scheme to provide specialist training and materials to support focused sessions to boost pupils' numeracy and literacy skills. Beginning in the autumn term, schools will be prioritised if they have high proportions of pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds. Maths sessions will target pupils in KS1 and Year 7. English support includes, for eligible primary schools, a grant of up to £6000 for validated phonics programmes.

2.5 **Nurture Strategy**

Halton's nurture network have devised a revised Nurture Strategy. Early research shows that children and young people's wellbeing has decreased during the coronavirus pandemic. Children with special educational needs and disabilities, children from disadvantaged backgrounds and children from the Black Asian and Minority Ethnic backgrounds are also recognised as experiencing higher levels of anxiety and lower personal wellbeing than children without these characteristics.

The revised Nurture Strategy is designed to be more practical for schools and settings to use and support them in supporting children and young people's emotional health and wellbeing. It also contains some useful school case studies, building on the excellent provision developed in Halton schools. These case studies also explain the cost implications and systems which may need to be considered when developing this approach. Alongside this there are also practical tips and resources for schools regardless of whether schools identify themselves as having developed nurture provision or not. There is also a dedicated section on nurture provision in Early Years linked to the Revised Early Years Development Matters Framework.

Halton continue to have a well-attended Nurture Network who meet on a half termly basis. They provide mutual support and training for schools. This is delivered by Halton SEN Service alongside the Education Psychology

2.6 **14-19 Secondary Schools Update to Guidance: Careers, Education, Training**

In July 2021 the Government updated their statutory guidance document relating to Careers guidance. The main updates were:

- Bringing together the statutory guidance for schools and the guidance for colleges on careers guidance into a single document;
- New section to bring the key points for governors and senior leaders into one place;
- Text added to describe the range of support made available by the department, particularly through The Careers & Enterprise Company and the National Careers Service, to help schools and colleges achieve the Gatsby Benchmarks;
- New paragraphs explaining the importance of the skills and technical education reforms set out in the department's white paper, 'Skills for Jobs: Lifelong Learning for Opportunity and Growth' and how schools and colleges should highlight the opportunities these reforms will create for students;
- Text added to make it clear that schools and colleges should not promote HE as a better or more favourable route than FE and apprenticeships; and should inform

students when evidence suggests that courses they are considering lead to poor career outcomes;

- Changes to reflect the coverage of careers guidance in Ofsted's Education Inspection Framework, published in 2019 and Ofsted's school inspection handbook, updated in June 2020;
- References to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and how schools and colleges can adapt their careers provision.

2.7 Targeted Youth Outreach Service

The new Halton targeted outreach service was launched in July 2021. Between July to September, Vibe (the provider) has completed 72 sessions across the Halton area. This equates to 216 hours of outreach youth work on the streets in Halton comprising 719 contacts during Thursday evenings, 770 contacts on Friday evenings, and 670 contacts on a Saturday evening. During these sessions, they have actively engaged with, and signposted approximately 1074 young people contacts in the Runcorn area WA7 and 1085 young people contacts in the Widnes area, a total of 2159 contacts with young people.

2.8 Specialist Provision

Officers continue to work with special school colleagues to expand specialist provision in Halton. Work was undertaken during the summer break at Cavendish School with some internal adaptations and modernisation to assist the school in meeting additional demand. Discussions are also continuing with the School to explore options in terms of a 2 classroom extension to add further capacity.

3.0 Emerging Issues

3.1 Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children

There continues to be a significant increase in the number of Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children being accommodated. This is due to the dispersal of these young people into a Hotel in Runcorn.

3.2 Recruitment and Retention of Children's Social Care Staff

Recruitment and retention of staff remains challenging, this is a national issue.

3.3 Referrals to Social Care

There continues to be an increase in referrals and complexity of cases. As predicted there continued to be an increased in cases over the school summer holidays and then when children returned to school.

3.4 Eclipse Families, Children and Young People System

Eclipse data recording system has been rolled out and training has been completed. The systemic continues to present numerous challenges for workers at all levels, due to the complexities of the system and the impact on capacity for teams.

3.5 Early Help

Demand for Early Help services have significantly increased over the last 12 months in particular. This is very challenging to balance with staffing issues. We have had early retirements, long term sickness, secondments and promotions to deal with. Early intervention in iCART has seen a rapid increase in referrals. The team has been up and running for five years

now and has the same staffing structure but referrals have increased by 50%. This is a challenge and will require an urgent review in the coming months.

Children Centres have been open during the pandemic but still operate under covid restrictions so the demand for services to resume is out weighing the capacity to deliver. We are targeting services to the most vulnerable families but this has reduced the capacity to deliver universal support.

3.6 **Virtual School**

Overall Personal Education Plan (PEP) quality assurance has been impacted upon by the difficulties schools have experienced in utilising the new Eclipse system, and also the disruption to learning experienced by our children in care due to high levels of transmission, so there has not been the continuing improvement hoped for. To seek to resolve this, the Virtual School, in consultation with Designated Teachers, have made the decision to move to a new online ePEP platform which will streamline the process and provide greater clarity around improving quality.

3.7 **Attendance of Children in Care**

Attendance in the Secondary cohort of children and young people in care has been impacted by a small number of pupils who have been discharged from secure accommodation and then requiring specialist or bespoke provision, both of which have been hard to source prior to their move in the pandemic climate. There has also been an increase in the number of Unaccompanied Asylum Seeker Children. Delays in age assessments and the need to develop their English to enable them to access a school have meant that they have had periods of time not on a school roll. They young people are also predominantly placed outside of Halton. However, ESOL tuition has been provided as soon as they have come into care. Once age has been verified, then school places have been sourced.

3.8 **Placements**

The national shortage of both secure accommodation and placements has impacted upon where our children and young people have been placed when requiring a move, particularly in an emergency or following discharge from secure provision. However, Children's Social Care, the Placements Team and the Virtual School have worked hard to minimise the disruption to the child or young person's education. The Headteacher of the Virtual School attends the Placement Resource Panel so getting early alerts around any placement issues but also challenging any decisions that would disrupt the child's education. However, when this cannot be avoided through emergency then the relevant PEP and Progress Coordinator is fully included in the process and identifying appropriate provision in the area. If this cannot be facilitated at the same time then a tuition package is provided whilst this is resolved.

4.0 **Performance Overview**

The following information provides a synopsis of progress for both milestones and performance indicators across the key business areas that have been identified by the Directorate. It should be noted that given the significant and unrelenting downward financial pressures faced by the Council there is a requirement for Departments to make continuous in-year adjustments to the allocation of resources in order to ensure that the Council maintains a balanced budget. Whilst every effort continues to be made to minimise any negative impact of such arrangements upon service delivery they may inevitably result in a delay in the delivery of some of the objectives and targets contained within this report.

Objective: Improve outcomes for children and young people through effective multi-agency early intervention (PED01)

Ref	Measure	20/21 Actual	20/21 Target	Current	Direction of Travel	Quarterly Progress
PED01 01	Increase the number of children with an early help assessment (measured as those subject to MAP, pre-MAP or specific target interventions in Children's Centres at any point in the year) (financial year cumulative to end of quarter)	716 EH Intervention 170 MAP (prov)	N/A	494 EH Intervention 226 MAP (prov)	N/A	N/A

Supporting Commentary: Val Armor

These figures are provisional at this time due to a change in recording processes we are still in talks with OLM around the reporting on early help work.

Early help assessments have seen a steady increase year on year however the data is still provisional due to the changeover of data systems.


The assessments which have transitioned from CAF (Common Assessment Framework) to MAP (Multi Agency Plan) for internal staff only are now on the eclipse system, there is continued work at the MAP working group with regards to the roll out of the MAP for external partners. Training for schools and early years settings is now complete and training for health staff has commenced and will end early November, there will be ongoing support offered through the MAP ambassador roles in the locality teams.

We have now created an easy leaflet and guidance for parents and carers about the MAP process and also one for children and young people to help them understand the process.

Early help provision in locality and children centres has continued throughout the lockdown and creative ways have successfully been explored and implemented to support families from a virtual platform. The children centres are now in a position to offer some small group work in doors and are concentrating on the 0-2 agenda for families with young babies in lockdown. Universal services have commenced within the centres but we are still working in restrictions due to COVID and rising numbers. This has impacted upon the number of people accessing as we cannot meet current demand due to room capacity and staff sickness.

Early Help locality teams have been inundated with referrals to open early help assessments. This has put huge pressure on the teams to allocate all cases. A RAG rating and priority based system is currently in place to allocated the families who need the most support and help.


The request for MAP's in the under 5 age group for children centres has also increased and staff are now holding many caseloads as well as delivering the core offer through to universal and targeted services.




PED01 02	Improve overall attendance at schools: Primary –Pri PRU – PRU Secondary – Sec Special – Spec Total	LA 92.8% Pri 93.2% Sec 92.8% Spec 88.7% PRU 62.5% (2019/20)	95%	LA 92.6% Pri 94.4% Sec 90.7% Spec 85.4% PRU 69.1% (Up to 1 st half term)		Refer comment
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Supporting Commentary: Debbie Houghton/Scott Middlehurst





Attendance has improved in primary and secondary but reduced in special schools and the PRU.












One of the main reasons for absence is authorised absence due to Covid, in the spring term as children with EHCPs or open to Social Care were given an authorised absence if they choose not to attend and from September 2021 not attending due to Covid had to be classed as an illness code again an authorised absence. Previously it was an X code which didn't impact on attendance.





Ref:	Milestones	Quarterly Progress
PED01a	Work with schools to maintain the level of attendance at Primary and Secondary Schools. Martin West / Debbie Houghton (March 2022)	
<u>Supporting commentary: Debbie Houghton</u> Education Welfare Service continue to work with schools and families to support attendance, but remain faced with continuing absences due to COVID for both pupils and school based staff.		





PED01b	Implement Pause project and support women to make positive choices, improving their relationships with their children and preventing further children being taken into care. (Val Armor March 2022)	
<p><u>Supporting commentary:</u> Val Armor</p> <p>The PAUSE project went live in Halton on 1st April 2021. Since implementation staff have been recruited and trained. There are currently 13 women engaged in the programme. The project is overseen by Divisional Manager for early help and strategically there is a project board chaired by Halton Director of Children's Services. This is joint project with Knowlsey and funding is through Liverpool City Region. The service is going well and has already started to make an impact on the women.</p> <p style="text-align: center;"> 2021 Q1 Report - Halton Knowsley - Bo</p> <p>A quarterly report is available here</p>		
PED01c	Revise Halton's parental offer that will include further developmental of reducing parental conflict training (Val Armor March 2022)	
<p><u>Supporting commentary:</u> Val Armor</p> <p>Halton offers a variety of parenting support groups from low level 'terrific twos' and 1-1 support through to evidence based parenting such as Nurture and Triple P. The reducing parental conflict agenda is also part of the early help division and will be rolled out borough wide. Some of this training took place pre Covid-19 however the pandemic had an impact on further training. We have successfully recruited to the Ambassador role for RPC and this role will develop the training package for all practitioners which will be embedded in everyday work in the borough. After years of trying to coordinate parenting across the borough, we have now secured funding for a three year parenting coordinator post. We successfully recruited to this post end of October and the role will commence hopefully in December. This will help to create a parenting offer and online parenting hub for Halton families.</p>		

Objective: Keeping Children and Young People safe by improving practice (PED02)

Ref:	Measure	20/21 Actual	20/21 Target	Current	Direction of Travel	Quarterly Progress
PED02 01	Monitor the rate of referrals to Children's Social Care per 10000 0-18 year olds (Forecast annualised rate at end of financial year)	465	500 (full year)	592		
<p><u>Supporting commentary:</u> Angela Povey</p> <p>The rate of referrals projection remains above the annual target. It is difficult to directly link the increase to the impact of Covid-19, we continue to experience a high level of complex cases and increase in none accidental injuries. We continue to use the assessment toolkit in order to improve the quality of referrals, ensuring we have all relevant information at the earliest opportunity for children to receive the appropriate level of support as soon as possible. The Multi-Agency Contact challenge meetings continue to review and monitor the responses and decision making.</p>						
PED02 02	Monitor the rate of children in need (CIN) per 10000 0-18 year olds (snapshot at end of quarter)	221	380	214		
<p><u>Supporting commentary:</u> Angela Povey</p> <p>The rate of children in need has reduced slightly, although figures have fluctuated. As outlined above, we have continued to experience an increase in complex of cases. The conversion to referral/allocation has also increased slightly. This further evidences CIN cases are being effectively managed, seeing the throughput of cases. Whilst we are unable to evidence the increase is a direct link between children returning to school and Covid-19 restrictions easing, the data throughout the year would support this hypothesis. The temporary Duty and Assessment Team has continued to support the progression of cases and plans and alleviate the additional pressures due to capacity within the CIN Teams. Due to the success of the temporary Duty and Assessment team, as outlined above, the restructure of the CIN Teams will embed this within the permanent structure for the Children in Need Service.</p>						









Ref:	Measure	20/21 Actual	20/21 Target	Current	Direction of Travel	Quarterly Progress
PED02 03	Monitor the rate of children subject to a child protection plan per 10000 0-18 year olds (snapshot at end of quarter)	50	45	49		
<p><i>Supporting commentary: Angela Povey</i> Child Protection cases have remained consistent, which is lower than previous years. Q2 2021-22 shows Halton is below local comparator averages but in line with England average. We have continued to see an increase of complex cases particularly in children under 5 years old. We have seen an increase in allocations/referrals, this correlates with the increase of contacts received. The temporary Duty and Assessment Team has continued to support the progression of cases and plans. The introduction of the overview panel is now embedded in practice, this ensures senior management oversight and review of cases were children have been subject to lengthy Child Protection plans.</p>						
PED02 04	Monitor the rate of children in care per 10000 0-18 year olds (snapshot at end of quarter)	103	90	114		
<p><i>Supporting commentary: Liz Davenport</i> There has been an increase in Q2.</p>						
PED02 05	Reduce the number of children and young people who enter the care system (financial year, cumulative to end of quarter)	75	68	68 (Apr-Sept)		
<p><i>Supporting commentary: Angela Povey</i> Halton have continued to experience an increase in children and young people who enter the care systemic, this has been impacted by a number of contributing factors, including; increase in significant injuries to children under 5 years old; cases blocked within Court Proceedings (this is a national issue); significant increase of referrals in respect of unaccompanied asylum seeking children (this is due to the dispersal of these young people into a local Hotel in Runcorn), there are currently 35 ongoing assessments in relation to unaccompanied asylum seeking children, these young people are children in care.</p> <p>The proposed restructure of the Child in Need Teams will strengthen support to families at the earliest opportunity, this will include the formulation of a Systemic Hub, who will work therapeutically with children and families to prevent family breakdown and will support children and young people remaining at home. The restructure will be implemented on 1st November 2021.</p>						
PED02 06	Reduce the average caseload in Children in Need Teams (snapshot end of quarter)	22	18	22		
<p><i>Supporting commentary: Angela Povey</i> The average caseload remains consistent and has decreased and is close to target. The introduction of the temporary Duty and Assessment Team has enabled the CIN Teams to focus on CIN cases in order to progress plans and appropriately reduce the level of need and progress cases to Early Help where appropriate.</p>						
PED02 07	Increase the proportion of missing incidents where a return interview is completed (financial year, cumulative to end of quarter)	88%	85%	64%		
<p><i>Supporting commentary: Clare Hunt</i> For this time period, there have been 75 return interviews completed with 47 young people by the commissioned service. 64% of young people completed a return interview and 84% were completed within 72 hours. Declines for return interviews have increased with 46 incidents.</p>						
PED02 08	Reduce the number of children who repeatedly run away in Halton (in last 12 months, snapshot end of quarter)	38	N/A	9		N/A
<p><i>Supporting commentary: Liz Davenport; Clare Hunt</i> For this reporting period, there has been a total of 160 notifications, a decrease of 26% from the previous quarter, there have been nine CYP with repeat missing incidents. Five of the nine repeat CYP are in care, one CYP are home accommodated, two are young people in 20 mile radius and one are CYP from Other Local authority. The nine CYP that made five or more incidents during the quarter, accounted for 49% of all missing incidents in the quarter. 12% of all CYP for the quarter are within the repeat cohort. All of the CYP that fit in this cohort received at least one return home interview during the quarter, there was one declined interviews. The commissioned service has supported the repeat cohort to reduce missing episodes this quarter through direct work, taking a different approach both with face to face and virtual contacts</p>						



Ref:	Measure	20/21 Actual	20/21 Target	Current	Direction of Travel	Quarterly Progress
PED02 09	Reduce the number of children who go missing in the year (number of children recorded as missing in last 12 months, snapshot end of quarter)	243	N/A	74	Refer comment	N/A
<p><i>Supporting commentary: Angela Povey; Liz Davenport; Clare Hunt</i> There has been a decrease since last quarter of 55 missing incidents. There was also a decrease in the number of CYP making these incidents, 74 compared to 80 in the previous quarter. These decreases are partly attributable to the impact of the direct work completed with a number of the repeat cohort who have significantly reduced the number of missing incidents compared to the previous quarter. The significant reasons that CYP reported as the reasons for missing this quarter were boundary issues, whereabouts unknown and family conflict. Boundary issues and whereabouts unknown are consistent with the significant reasons reported by professionals as the reason for missing incidents, in addition to peer pressure also. There is a small cohort of young people who are repeat missing from care.</p>						
PED02 10	Record the number of young people flagged as at risk of Child Sexual Exploitation (snapshot end of quarter)	19	20	31		
<p><i>Supporting commentary: Angela Povey</i> Young people continue to be appropriately recorded as at risk of Child Sexual Exploitation within our new case management system. The multi-agency monthly CSOG meeting reviews children who are high risk of child sexual exploitation.</p>						
PED02 11	Record the number of young people flagged as at risk of Child Criminal Exploitation (snapshot end of quarter)	35	12	45		
<p><i>Supporting commentary: Angela Povey</i> Young people continue to be appropriately recorded as at risk of Child Sexual Exploitation within our new case management system. The multi-agency monthly CSOG meeting reviews children who are high risk of child sexual exploitation.</p>						

Ref:	Milestones	Quarterly Progress
PED02a	Embed a systemic model of social work practice across the whole service; social workers, managers and senior leaders. Tracey Coffey (March 2022)	
<p><i>Supporting commentary: Tracey Coffey</i> A number of the original cohort of workers trained in Systemic have left the authority, this has impacted on the full implementation of systemic practice in Halton; the implementation has been reenergised through the commencement of additional training and there will be a Systemic Practise Team in place early 2021</p>		
PED02b	Review and update Workforce Strategy in line with the Knowledge and Skills framework and the Professional Capabilities Framework. Developing the competencies, skills and knowledge of the workforce making them motivated, stable and ambitious will improve the outcomes for families and keep them at the heart of everything we do. Tracey Coffey (March 2022)	
<p><i>Supporting commentary: Tracey Coffey</i> Further work will be undertaken around this area in the OFSTED Improvement Plan</p>		
PED02c	Implement redevised structure for children and need service to ensure better resilience and management accountability to provide a safe and structured environment for social workers. (March 2022 Angela Povey)	
<p><i>Supporting commentary: Angela Povey</i> The restructure of the Child in Need Teams has been approved at Steering Group and was to be implemented on 1st November 2021 (now deferred to January 2022). The restructure is informed by staff feedback, that is, the current remit of the team is too broad, and this is linked to the outcome of Ofsted Inspection in March 2020 that identified drift and delay. The new structure will consist of the Assessment and Support Team (Duty); Children and Family Support Team (Long Term Team) to ensure families are receiving appropriate support and intervention at the earliest opportunity. The restructure will also include the Systemic Hub, Halton is committed to embedding a Systemic Model of Practice. This team will provide intensive therapeutic support to families, supporting children to remain at home with their families. The Systemic Hub will also support embedding the practice model across the service and partnership.</p>		
PED02d	Implement redevised quality and assurance framework to monitor improvements in practise (Tracey Coffey 2022)	
<p><i>Supporting commentary: Tracey Coffey</i> Following a peer audit the quality assurance framework will be reviewed</p>		

Linking the audit process more clearly to service model and expected practise standards. Terms of reference and membership of the QA meeting will also be reviewed to take into account inclusivity of social workers as well as managers.

Objective: Improve outcomes for Children in Care and Care Leavers (PED03)

Ref:	Measure	20/21 Actual	21/22 Target	Current	Direction of Travel	Quarterly Progress
PED03 01	Reduce the number of children who are placed in residential care (snapshot at end of quarter)	34	20	38		
<p>Supporting Commentary: Liz Davenport/ Sam Murtagh The permanency leadership board manages the step down to foster care project. A number of children and young people are in the targeted cohort where placements and regional events are sought to safely return them to foster care. A quarterly panel has recently been undertaken whereby social workers attend with an updated assessment of their CIC and the cohort of children has been amended to support more CIC moving to foster care with one young person having successfully transitioned from Residential to foster care in Q2 .The increase in Residential numbers is echoed across the neighbouring local authorities and in line with the increase of children and young people entering care.</p>						
PED03 02	Reduce the number of children who are placed in independent fostering agencies (snapshot at end of quarter)	49	35	52 (prov)		
<p>Supporting Commentary: Liz Davenport/Sam Murtagh All placements are tracked through the resource and placements meeting where sourcing Halton's mainstream foster carers is a primary focus. The current level of sufficiency due to increase of Children in Care is resulting in the use of Independent Fostering Agencies, and in some circumstances residential, however as foster carers approvals are also tracked there are means to place with in house carers planned. Halton have in the last quarter seen a small number of foster carers retire which impacts on use of IFA placements, however we currently have seven assessments of potential new foster carers is underway</p>						
PED03 03	Maintain the percentage of Care Leavers in suitable accommodation (snapshot at end of quarter)	94%	95%	98%		
<p>Supporting Commentary: Liz Davenport/Sam Murtagh 74 of 76 Former Relevant Care Leavers are in touch The care leaver's accommodation group runs monthly and tracks all care leavers requiring independent accommodation. This is a multi-agency meeting with housing providers. The panel has successfully moved a growing number of Care Leavers into their own accommodation via this route Recently a further Registered Social Landlord has joined the group. Ashley house is due to be commissioned which will also provide suitable accommodation. Furthermore we have successfully obtained a two bedroom flat from Halton Housing Trust in Widnes, which is utilised to support and develop Care Leavers independent living, prior to moving onto their own tenancy. Talks have also begun sourcing a 2nd trainer flat in the Runcorn area of the borough – a viewing is planned imminently (SM)</p>						
PED03 04	Increase the percentage of Care Leavers in Education, Employment or Training (snapshot at end of quarter)	39%	65%	38%		
<p>Supporting Commentary: Liz Davenport 74 of 76 former Relevant Care Leavers are in touch. Cooperative work with the Virtual school and head is underway to improve progress in this are through stronger links with local FE to promote education and training.</p>						
PED03 05	Benchmarking year – Percentage of CIC Residential and Leaving Care placements that have received a Quality Assurance Visit from the Placements Team within the previous 12 months (cumulative from April to end of quarter)	N/A	N/A	Residential 40% Leaving Care 78%	N/A	N/A
<p>Supporting Commentary: Sam Murtagh The increase in Children In Care numbers have impacted on the increased numbers of placements being required at the same time as taking more team resource to placement search for young people with complexity . This in turn impacts on the requirement for a quality monitoring visit as well as some previously visited providers now requiring a further annual visit. The Placement team have prioritised visits for the coming quarter to increase the p with each Officer completing a minimum of 2 visits each month. The 80% target has been slightly missed for Leaving Care provision this quarter with 14 of the 18 providers having received a visit within the last 12 months. (SM)</p>						

PED03 06	Report on the budget spent on independent and out of borough placements for Children in Care (Forecast end of year) (Liz Davenport/Sam Murtagh)	Year end Residential £9,695,579 IFA £2,201,092 Total £11,896,671 (*these figures include all Covid-19 related costs)	Projected 9,583,822	Year end Residential £12,808,229 IFA £2,657,459 Total £15,465,688 (these figures include all Covid 19 costs)		
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Supporting Commentary: Liz Davenport/Sam Murtagh

In order to address these rising costs, the following initiatives have been introduced help to reduce spend in this area: Residential Step Down ,Supported Lodgings, Care Leavers Training Flat, In House Care Leaver/Edge of Care accommodation – Liz Davenport




Since the start of the financial year there has been over a 10% increase in the numbers of Residential placements, a 6% increase in the use of IFAS (Independent Fostering Agencies) and a significant increase in the numbers of Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children – at the start of the financial year this was 4 and is now 43 accounting for a total spend of £961,188, the increase in numbers is also compounded by the diminished availability of qualified workers to undertake appropriate age assessments – this is currently being addressed with the Home Office.

There is also ongoing work to build a children's home within the borough to be operated by a social enterprise to begin reduce reliance on the private Residential sector. The increase in budget costs is directly linked to the increase in the Children in Care overall numbers. Currently a number of land sites in the borough are being explored for this purpose (SM)

PED03 07	Report on number of children placed within 20 miles of Halton	N/A	N/A	52 (prov)	N/A	N/A
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Supporting Commentary: Sam Murtagh

There are 52% placed in Halton. Further work about postcode mapping is required by research and intelligence colleagues to outline the percentage of children placed within 20 miles of the borough (SM)

Ref:	Milestones	Quarterly Progress
PED03a	Ensuring all children in care achieve permanency in a timely way. (Liz Davenport/ Angela Povey March 2022)	
<p>Supporting Commentary: Liz Davenport/ Angela Povey</p> <p>The progress of Long Term matching to achieve permanency is tracked via weekly PIMMS meeting and on a monthly basis during CIC and Fostering Management meeting in addition to Resource and Placement Panel. Where adoption is the child's plan monthly tracker meetings identify cases from care proceedings to track early and those children already subject to a Placement Order. Currently we have successfully identified families for all children subject to a pan of adoption.</p>		
PED03b	Ensure that Safeguarding Unit escalate any delays or concerns using escalate policy (Susanne Leece March 2022)	
<p>Supporting Commentary: Susanne Leece</p> <p>The Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO) dispute resolution process was reviewed and strengthened in Q3 2020/21. As a result there was an increase in the number of formal escalations during Q3 and Q4 2020/21, however, the application of the procedure by IRO team at this formal level, is not yet consistent and the number of formal escalations in Q1 and Q2 2021/22 have reduced.</p> <p>In the last report it was noted that there was anecdotal evidence that there was greater challenge at an informal stage by the IRMs with a greater ability to resolve issues without having to progress to formal process. Eclipse is being used to capture these more informal discussions/challenges and we are working on using the system to extract data in terms of the number of recorded informal escalations.</p> <p>A number of development sessions with the IROs are being undertaken during Q3 2021/22 to increase consistency into their responses to any drift or delay in planning.</p>		
PED03c	Review and quality assure the commissioning of services for Children in Care and Care Leavers to ensure that they meet the needs of Halton's population and inform future commissioning decisions (March 2022 Sam Murtagh)	
<p>Supporting Commentary: Sam Murtagh</p> <p>A Liverpool City Region framework for Fostering the Residential placements has now been fully implemented. One of the positive outcomes has been two Halton young people moving from Residential to a Fostering placement via a step down process. Work has now begun on a procurement for a Halton based Leaving Care group support provider – engagement</p>		

sessions have taken place on site with 14 potential providers outlining our requirements/expectations. Work also continues with the LA Assets team and Regeneration team regarding the potential development of a children's home on a development site in Runcorn as well as a scoping exercise of all available land sites in the borough for Residential purposes Work is planned for the next quarter with local Residential providers to discuss their plans for increasing their capacity locally utilising the change in OFSTED legislation regarding multiple building registration to increase local placement sufficiency(SM)

PED03d Through the quality assurance of Personal Education Plans (PEP), identify areas of need and support to improve outcomes for individual Children in Care (March 2022 Sharon Williams)



Supporting Commentary: Sharon Williams

At the end of the academic year 2020-21 percentage PEP completion was as follows:

Early Years 80%; Primary 100%; Secondary 85%; Post 16 68%, meaning that overall 89% of children and young people in care had a PEP completed.

Of the PEPs completed the percentage rated as at least good were as follows:

Early Years 80%; Primary 94%; Secondary 67%, Post 16 53%, meaning that overall 88% of PEPs completed were judged as good or better.

As can be seen from the data above there is still more work to be done in Post 16 both in terms of completion and quality. The main reason for the lower quality in the Secondary phase was around SMART target setting and also issues with Eclipse.

We have addressed the issues with Eclipse by moving to an online ePEP through Welfare Call. Training has been completed with all education provisions and to date feedback has been good. With regards to the quality issues, training has been provided by the Phase PEP Coordinators to address specific issues and share good practice. The training also addressed the need for creative uses of Pupil Premium Plus to address lost learning and recovery as our young people are reporting being 'screen tired' so the more traditional online catch up is not engaging them in the usual way.

The Virtual School has restarted its activity programme to support our children in care in transferable skill development. In addition to this every child in care has received a 'Keeping in Touch' packs over the Summer) which contain fun curriculum based activities to support continued learning at home. 1:1 tuition and book parcels have continued to be offered to pupils whose PEPs identify these as appropriate strategies. Also our new Education Support Workers are providing some direct work sessions aimed at encouraging engagement in learning and also modelling/coaching carers and parents on how to establish effective learning at home routines and practices.

Objective: Improve the offer for children and young people with disabilities and those with Special Educational Needs (PED04)

Ref:	Measure	20/21 Actual	21/22 Target	Current	Direction of Travel	Quarterly Progress
PED04 01	Increase the percentage of Education Health Care Plan assessments completed within 20 weeks (academic year cumulative to end of quarter)	2021 YTD= 80.9%	75%	80.5%		

Supporting Commentary: Adrian Leach

Despite the highest ever number of referrals for assessment in the last term of 2020/21 and the highest September and October figure for requests to assess the SENAT team have continued to maintain a high level of plans delivered within 20 weeks. Reporting back from the monthly DfE Covid SEN report indicates that this puts Halton in the top 30% of local authorities nationally. The national average is currently 55% completed in 20 weeks.

PED04 02	Reduce the number of incidents of fixed term exclusion (academic year cumulative to end of quarter)	707	500	498 (2020-2021 academic year)		
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Supporting Commentary Vanessa Nice / Scott Middlehurst

In 2020-2021 there were 498 fixed-term exclusions (now called suspensions by the DfE). Of these;







84.9% were for children in KS3 & KS4



75.7% were given to boys




50.6% were given to children with SEN. This is higher than national figures and an inclining trend.







62.45% were given to children entitled to free school meals.. This is higher than national figures and an inclining trend.

24.9% were given for persistent disruptive behaviour and 24.3% were given for verbal abuse or threatening behaviour towards adults. These two categories will inform the support offered to individual teachers and school-wide by HBSS this academic year




PED04 03	Reduce the number of children subject to fixed term exclusions (academic year cumulative to end of quarter)	349	350	304 (2020-2021 academic year)		
<p>Supporting Commentary: Vanessa Nice / Scott Middlehurst This figure relates to the 2020-2021 academic year. This is a decrease from 347 the previous academic year. The new School Behaviour checklist and Toolkit (SBT&C) has been introduced so that children with challenging behaviour are identified and supported at an early stage. This also encourages schools to consider whether the child has unmet SEMH needs.</p>						
PED04 04	Reduce the number of children subject to a permanent exclusion (academic year cumulative to end of quarter)	21	30	15 (2020-2021 academic year)		
<p>Supporting Commentary: Vanessa Nice / Scott Middlehurst This figure relates to the 2020-2021 academic year. This is a reduction from 21 in 2019-2020 and 48 in 2018-2019. There have been three Permanent exclusions in Autumn 2021</p>						
PED04 05	Report on the proportion of children subject to Education Health Care Plan (EHCP) placed in independent and out of borough provisions (snapshot end of quarter) – long term target is to reduce	N/A	94%	7.1%		N/A
<p>Supporting Commentary: Adrian Leach There has been a slight increase in the proportion of pupils with an EHCP being placed out of borough over the course of the reporting year. This is due primarily to the available appropriate provision within Halton having reached and in many cases exceeded its capacity. Over the last three to four years Halton Council have worked in partnership with school colleagues to ensure that we continue to meet the needs of Halton children this has allowed us to achieve the development of a number of satellite provisions (Brookfields at The Grange, and Ashley) as well as build capacity in the sector. However with severely limited capital funds and the end of the SEND Capital Grant the limits of the current special estate have been reached. This causes new who are unable to remain in mainstream to be placed out of borough.</p>						
PED04 06	Report on the budget spent on independent and out of borough (OOB) provision for SEND (Forecast end of year)	ISS/NMSS OOB Schools end of year £4,280,879 Overspend of £1,108,429	£250000 reduction	ISS/NMSS OOB Schools end of year £5,272,786. 68	N/A	
<p>Supporting Commentary: Sam Murtagh Within this last quarter there has been a significant increase in the numbers of requests for out of borough (OOB)/ ISS/ None Maintained Special School placements (NMSS). For context there were 27 referrals for NMSS placements received between Sept 20 and August 21, 10 of these were made in July and August 2021 for September 2021 places. There has also been an increase in the number of children placed in the last year:- as of Sept 2020 - 77 children were placed in 26 NMSS settings increasing in Sept 2021 to 87 children placed in 29 NMSS settings. This in turn is leading to most local OOB provision, especially for social emotional mental health needs being full resulting in increased travel time and transport costs. Work continues on a special educational needs and disability (SEND) Sufficiency Strategy being collated by the Divisional Manager Inclusion that will offer a number of opportunities in relation to types of provision locally available in Halton – it is planned this will in turn result in the reduced requirement for Out of Borough SEN placements. New providers wishing to open some smaller provision in the borough are being communicated with.</p>						
PED04 07	Increase the percentage of children subject to EHCP placed in mainstream provision (snapshot end of quarter)	26.3%	65%	Refer comment	N/A	N/A
<p>Supporting Commentary: Adrian Leach The 2020 SEN2 data shows that Halton is narrowing the gap to national with respect to the proportion of pupils with an EHCP educated in mainstream schools. Cumulatively in 2021 42.5% of children with new EHCPs have been placed in mainstream schools. This is expected to lead to a narrowing of the gap to national rates when the 2021 figures are released in Feb 2022. This metric is important as evidence shows us that children with SEND achieve better outcomes and are more prepared for adulthood if they can access a broader mainstream curriculum and school community</p>						




PED04 08	Monitor the percentage of Special Schools with overall effectiveness of Good or Outstanding	100%	100%	100%		
<i>Supporting Commentary: Jill Farrell</i> All special schools are good or outstanding graded by Ofsted						
PED04 09	Increase the percentage of Education Health and Care plans for Child Protection and Children in Care completed in 16 weeks (academic year cumulative to end of quarter) (Adrian Leach)	N/A	75%	Refer comment	N/A	N/A
<i>Supporting Commentary: Adrian Leach</i> This is a new and aspirational metric for 2021/22. It is not part of any official reporting or monitoring by regulators and as such there is no pre-existing reporting mechanism. Work is still underway to develop the reporting capacity in Synergy to be able to monitor this metric and as such it has not yet been baselined. Moreover due to the reduced capacity and high levels of demand for new EHCPs experienced by SENAT there has not been the opportunity to focus on this cohort specifically.						

Ref:	Milestones	Quarterly Progress
PED04a	Develop and Implement the Social Emotional and Mental Health Strategy (SEMH) by March 2022. Impact to be monitored through the action plan. (Adrian Leach)	
<i>Supporting Commentary: Adrian Leach</i> SEMH is one of four areas of need recognised by the 2015 SEND Code of Practice. Halton has experienced a significant rise in SEMH needs over the last few years in line with many other local authority areas. Because of the central importance in identifying early pupils SEMH needs and helping schools to meet them effectively the objectives and outcomes for pupils with SEMH needs are fully embedded into the local areas SEND Strategy 2021-25. In particular the Inclusive Education Priority focused on understanding the causes of SEMH needs and the associated behaviour and identifying them and managing them more effectively		
PED04b	Review the current framework of support for children and young people with disabilities, including short breaks provision (Sam Murtagh March 2022)	
<i>Supporting Commentary: Sam Murtagh</i> All short breaks provision will be re-commissioned in the coming months with all current contracts ending on 31 st March 2022. Information has begun to be captured from families and young people in terms of future short breaks provision – this work will continue in the coming quarters prior to the re-writing of service specifications and requests being made for families and young people to be directly involved in the commissioning process. An event is planned next quarter with the Parent/Carer Forum (SM)		
PED04c	Review direct payments with all recommissions co-produced with parents and young people. (March 2022 Val Armor)	
<i>Supporting Commentary: Val Armor</i> The direct payments component has been delayed due to Covid-19 as the priority has been to maintaining commissioned service support to the most vulnerable young people, particularly during the national lockdown. The current commissioned providers have continued to work extremely hard to offer innovative ways of supporting young people with disabilities and their families throughout, zoom calls, online design activities, social activities, shopping delivery etc. – some services have continued to offer face to face services to our most vulnerable young people. All short breaks services have been commissioned in a co-produced manner involving parents and young people, an example of this has been the setting up of swimming lessons for young people with disabilities – this came from a conversation with a number of parents when we were evaluating the most recent tenders for short breaks – unfortunately due to the national lockdowns and government restrictions the lessons were only able to be delivered for three weeks however the funds remain in place for when they are able to be delivered in a safe manner. With the planned National roadmap published plans are ongoing to start the lessons as soon as possible and over deliver if possible All commissioned short breaks now in place with regular performance reports being submitted and interrogated. A grant application with NHS England for additional funding (£10k) for the delivery of different types of short breaks for young people who have had services disrupted due to Covid-19 was successful with delivery taking place in the Easter holidays. The feedback about the collaborative bid (Commissioning, CCG, Disabled children services) from the evaluators was extremely positive. Work has also started linking in with the Holiday Activity Fund which is focussed on young people who access Free School Meals for support delivery during summer school holidays based on nutrition, enrichment, a healthy lunch and physical activity.		
PED04d	Improve quality and timeliness of Education Health and Care Plans. (March 2022 Adrian Leach)	






Ref:	Milestones	Quarterly Progress				
	<p><u>Supporting Commentary: Adrian Leach</u> AN EHCP Improvement Plan is in place to monitor progress in timeliness and quality of EHCPs. The plan is divided into four work stream areas: Resources and Staffing, Quality Assurance, Process efficiency and Monitoring, MI and ICT. A range of quality improvements have been implemented within this framework. Quality assurance checks across health and inclusion are in place during fortnightly Partnership Panel meetings where plans are QA'd and decisions to assess or issue draft EHCPs are made. In addition termly multiagency QA meetings are held to evaluate EHCPs. Feedback from these processes have informed an improvement in consistency, clarity and appearance of plans with improved specificity and clarity in outcomes and provision in the plans. There remains work to do to build on these improvements and this is being supported by investment across the SENAT with most of the team undertaking the L4 SEN Casework Award (the only professionally accredited training course for EHCP Co-ordinators. Over 2020/21 Halton has continued to make great strides with respect to the timeliness of EHCPs and Halton is on track to be in the top third of local authorities with 80% of EHCPs delivered within 20 weeks by the end of 2021. This compares well to the position in 2019 where only 35% were delivered in 20 weeks</p>					
PED04e	Quality assure all provision currently being utilised to ensure that provision meets the needs of our children and young people (March 2022 Sam Murtagh)					
	<p><u>Supporting Commentary: Sam Murtagh</u> The quality monitoring visits that restarted in the autumn term in line with National lockdown requirements – as at academic year end with 17% of NMIS schools had received a monitoring visit which covered 40% of pupils placed within independent and non-maintained settings. The two quality monitoring visits planned in for quarter 2 took place, meaning that 24% of NMIS schools have now received a monitoring visit covering 46% of children placed. Outcomes from one of the visits has led to a suspension on referrals whilst improvement plans are implemented. A further monitoring visit to assess progress being made at the school will take place in November 2021. There are four visits planned for quarter 3, and two learning walks for schools that have been previously visited but the learning walks couldn't take place due to COVID restrictions. One of the visits this quarter we were accompanied by the Designated Clinical Officer to confirm the providers clinical offer in place was appropriate. We are also working closely with the Safeguarding Children In Education (SCIE) OFFICER</p>					
PED04f	Review in borough specialist provision and revise to meet the needs of Halton's children and young people (March 2022 Adrian Leach)					
	<p><u>Supporting Commentary: Adrian Leach</u> Officers within the Local Authority have undertaken a series of meetings with special school head teachers to assess supply and demand for places going forward. It is proposed that some capital development will be undertaken to add capacity.</p>					
Objective: Raise achievement across Early Years and all Key Stages, and diminish the difference between vulnerable groups and their peers (PED05)						
Ref:	Measure	20/21 Actual	21/22 Target	Current	Direction of Travel	Quarterly Progress
PED05 01	Ensure all eligible children for the vulnerable 2 year old funding access quality EY provision (internally collected termly information – may not match to published data from Jan census)	85	100% of eligible	91		
	<p><u>Supporting Commentary: Jill Farrell / Belinda Yen/Gail Hodgkinson-Vaughan</u> The DfE provided a target of 564 children to be placed. Halton have placed 516 (not including 3 Out of Borough (OOB) settings) which equates to 91%. This number is slightly higher than usual; process of placement continues as normal, however some places were declined until parents felt more comfortable for their children to return/commence due to the effects of the pandemic. 100% of day care and pre -school settings are good or outstanding; funded two year olds are only placed in good/outstanding Childminders provision.</p>					
PED05 02	Increase the take up of Early Years Entitlement for 3 to 4 year olds.	97%	96%	91%		
	<p><u>Supporting Commentary: Jill Farrell / Belinda Yen/Gail Hodgkinson-Vaughan</u> The current 91% figure is based on national data produced from the January annual census as recorded in July's LAIT figures. This does not include any quarterly breakdown and as take up increase throughout the year with Early Years children this is not a fully reflective view of spring and summer term increases. Previous figures were based on local quarterly information which is not currently available so there is no drop from the actual figure as it was a different source and measurement. There has been some decline in uptake due to parental anxiety of sending children to provision during the Covid-19 pandemic. This encouragement and marketing of the benefits of accessing free early years entitlement is being promoted across a range of early years and multi- agency teams.</p>					



PED05 03	Monitor the percentage of Early Years settings (pre-schools, day care, out of school clubs, childminders) with overall effectiveness of Good or Outstanding (snapshot end of quarter)	95%	N/A	Refer comment	N/A	N/A
<i>Supporting Commentary: Jill Farrell / Belinda Yen/Gail Hodgkinson-Vaughan</i> Processes are in place to monitor the effectiveness of all provisions. However due to the COVID pandemic inspections were paused until the summer term unless settings were newly registered or in a category of concern. Full inspections have now recommenced. Since Quarter 1, one Day Care setting has been inspected, moving from 'Outstanding' to 'Good' and one Pre-School was inspected and graded 'Good' (first inspection).						
ED05 04	Monitor the percentage of Primary schools with overall effectiveness of Good or Outstanding N.B. 6 out of the 8 schools are academies. (snapshot end of quarter)	N/A	N/A	84%	N/A	N/A
<i>Supporting Commentary: Jill Farrell</i> Since September 1 st 2021, since the revised Education Inspection Framework has been introduced, Halton have to date experienced three primary school inspections. None of these reports are as yet published so cannot be shared, however the new framework is extremely rigorous and places a strong focus upon the quality of education and scrutinises the role of governors and middle leaders. This framework is very much addressing a broad and balanced curriculum with in depth learning of "sticky knowledge" so that pupils embed their learning and make focused connections across all areas of learning applying knowledge to a breadth of areas.						
PED05 05	Monitor the percentage of Secondary schools with overall effectiveness of Good or Outstanding (snapshot end of quarter)	N/A	N/A	50%	N/A	N/A
<i>Supporting Commentary: Jill Farrell</i> The revised Education Inspection Framework was introduced in September 2021. To date no Halton secondary schools have been inspected under this framework. Of the 8 mainstream secondary schools; six are academy schools and one school has a directive academy order to convert. Ofsted inspections are therefore the same as they were pre pandemic with 50% of schools rated good or outstanding.						





Ref:	Milestones	Quarterly Progress
PED05a	Monitor and evaluate educational outcomes of all pupils, vulnerable pupils (CIC: EHCP etc.), disadvantaged pupils and the impact of funding streams (including Free EY Entitlement, Catch Up funding, Pupil Premium, Sports Premium etc.) to raise achievement for all and diminish the difference between vulnerable groups and their peers (March 2022 Jill Farrell)	
<i>Supporting Commentary: Jill Farrell</i> Statutory assessments were paused for 2020 and 2021 in Early Years and Primary phases. Secondary assessments were graded through Teacher Assessed Grades, but results will not be published so we are unable to report about outcomes. The principles of improving outcomes for children and young people do however remain and are developed across all educational provisions. Statutory assessments are returning for the academic year 2021-2022.		
PED05b	Monitor and evaluate the impact of COVID-19 lockdown and remote learning offer on all pupils and vulnerable pupils learning (March 2022, Jill Farrell)	
<i>Supporting Commentary: Jill Farrell</i> Remote learning offer was the prime focus for Associate School Improvement Advisor (ASIA) visits during the spring term 2021 and has continued as a key enquiry. The impact of Covid-19 has been shared in reading/maths audits but was only able to share qualitative statements, not any quantitative measures. Schools have reported impact on learning to varying degrees depending upon individual circumstances. Catch up funding has been used to support interventions and addressing any gaps in learning, but the national tutoring programme has been limited in the region with schools reporting difficulty in finding available tutors or varying quality of offer.		
PED05c	Review the process of risk assessment for schools and settings to target support and drive improvement (March 2022 Jill Farrell)	
<i>Supporting Commentary: Jill Farrell</i> Schools are categorised based on a range of indicators indicating school capacity to continue improvement or any vulnerabilities. Due to the cancellation of statutory assessments the process has been revised and is based on factors including capacity and or experience of effective leadership. Over the last academic year, primary schools have seen a 20% turnover in headship and this has also impacted throughout all stages of leadership structures. Support and training is in place for all levels of leadership as is future succession planning across schools. Cross service monitoring group coordinates a risk assessment across a range of services which may impact upon schools capacity to improve and or identified vulnerabilities requiring support.		

Ref:	Milestones	Quarterly Progress
PED05d	Build engagement, capacity and governors understanding of the strategic roles and responsibilities (March 2022 Jill Farrell)	
<p><i>Supporting Commentary: Jill Farrell</i> Governors training, advice and support contract is commissioned with Entrust Governor services. In addition termly governors' briefings and reports are led by HBC education colleagues and shared with key updates. Schools who buy into this service level agreement gain access to NGA Gold membership and Modern Governor training as well as Entrust training sessions. Bespoke governor training is delivered by school improvement colleagues within targeted schools and governors are supported with head teacher and leadership recruitments. During COVID, training take up decreased so is a renewed area of focus and Halton Reminder of Governor group will be supported to regroup and drive governance across the system. Governors are also represented systemically across Halton Learning Alliance and key regional priorities are shared to increase awareness.</p>		
PED05e	In partnership with schools, review and design an effective educational vision for the region that meets pupils needs whilst raising ambitions (March 2022 Jill Farrell)	
<p><i>Supporting Commentary: Jill Farrell</i> Halton Learning Alliance has been successfully launched and four key work streams identified; Early Language Communication and language Acquisition; Inclusive Education; Curriculum for future schooling and health and wellbeing of pupils and the workforce. Each group is devising priorities and plans which will raise ambition for all children and young people across Halton</p>		
PED05f	Launch Halton Learning Alliance Strategic Partnership to develop an inclusive, ambitious approach developing contributing, successful citizens locally, nationally and globally. All educational stakeholders and community members acting with morale purpose for Halton children, young people and community members (March 2022, Jill Farrell)	
<p><i>Supporting Commentary: Jill Farrell</i> Halton Learning Alliance has been successfully launched. The shadow board are working on four key priorities coming out of a shared vision for Halton. This will form a strategic action plan which will report against key indicators once formulated by all stakeholders. Each working group have now met; a newsletter for Halton Learning Alliance is being devised and a website developed to share the visions and work of HLA across Halton. Currently gaining capacity from the wider school led system is challenging due to ongoing pandemic pressures.</p>		

Objective: Improve participation and skills for young people to drive Halton's future (PED06)

Ref:	Measure	20/21 Actual	21/22 Target	Current	Direction of Travel	Quarterly Progress
PED06 01	Maintain the percentage of 16-17 year olds not in education, employment or training (snapshot end of quarter, end of year information February)	3.4%	4.0%	4.4%		
<p><i>Supporting Commentary: Háf Bell</i> Current measure reported is the latest verified data from August 2021 and is compared to August 2020. Whilst the progress in Quarter 2 2021 is better than Quarter 2 2020 it's too early to assess whether the overall target for 2021/22 will be met because this depends on the progression of young people into education, training or employment from September 2021 onwards.</p>						
PED06 02	Maintain the percentage of 16-17 year olds whose activity is not known (snapshot end of quarter, end of year information February)	0.6%	0.3%	0.6%		
<p><i>Supporting Commentary: Háf Bell</i> Current measure reported is the latest verified data from August 2021 and is compared to August 2020. Whilst we look to be on course to meet the target all destination information needs to be rechecked again from September 2021 onwards, therefore we don't yet know how successful our tracking exercise will be in autumn 2021.</p>						
PED06 03	Increase the percentage of 16-17 year olds with an offer of learning (September guarantee)	96.8%	98%	98%	95.6%	
<p><i>Supporting Commentary: Háf Bell</i> Current progress in verifying offers of learning is further ahead than this time last year. As part of the process we are finding more young people who are in employment without training, which doesn't qualify as an offer of learning. For this reason we anticipate not achieving the target for 2021/22.</p>						

PED06 04	Increase the percentage of 16-17 year olds participating in education or training that meets the Government definition of full participation (known as Raising the Participation Age)	92.9%	92%	90.3%		
<p>Supporting Commentary: Háf Bell <i>Current measure reported is the latest verified data from August 2021 and is compared to August 2020. Whilst we look to be on course to meet the target all destination information needs to be rechecked again from September 2021 onwards. In 2020/21 fewer young people progressed to employment without training, which doesn't meet the definition of full participation. It is anticipated this was influenced by the effects of the pandemic on businesses and could change for 2021/22.</i></p>						

Ref:	Milestones	Quarterly Progress
PED06a	Closely monitor the cohort of young people not in education, employment or training and identify common patterns/issues to inform actions, guide the effective use of resources and to identify any future commissioning needs (Háf Bell) (March 2022)	
<p>Supporting Commentary: Háf Bell <i>Analysis of cohort and discussions with those working with young people have informed the re-commissioning of a service to encourage, enable and assist young people to participate in education, employment or training from April 2022.</i></p>		
PED06c	Work with schools, the College and training providers to review the post 16 offers of learning made to young people and increase the amount of offers made before the end of an academic year. (July 2022) (Háf Bell)	
<p>Supporting Commentary: Háf Bell <i>Plans are in place to progress this work with institutions from spring term 2022.</i></p>		
PED06d	Work with schools, the College and training providers to report where young people progress to Post 16 as quickly as possible so those who haven't progressed can be identified and contacted to offer support (October 2021) (Háf Bell)	
<p>Supporting Commentary: Háf Bell <i>Whilst institutions have been working well with us we have found inaccuracies in data provided that hindered our ability to identify where young people had progressed too efficiently.</i></p>		
PED06d	Work with Post 16 education and training providers in the borough to support the development of provision that does have clear progression opportunities (March 2022) (Háf Bell)	
<p>Supporting Commentary: Háf Bell <i>Staff capacity issues due to a long term absence from work is currently hindering the progression of this work stream. We anticipate this should not be an issue by Q4 2021/22.</i></p>		

5.0 Financial Summary






Children and
Families Q2 Final.do



EIP Q2 2021.22
Final.docx




6.0 Appendix I

6.1 Symbols are used in the following manner:

Progress		Milestone	Measure
Green		Indicates that the milestone is on course to be achieved within the appropriate timeframe.	Indicates that the annual target is on course to be achieved.
Amber		Indicates that it is uncertain, or too early to say at this stage whether the milestone will be achieved within the appropriate timeframe.	Indicates that it is uncertain or too early to say at this stage whether the annual target is on course to be achieved.
Red		Indicates that it is unlikely or certain that the objective will not be achieved within the appropriate timeframe.	Indicates that the target will not be achieved unless there is an intervention or remedial action taken.

6.2 Direction of Travel indicator

Where possible measures will also identify a direction of travel using the following convention:

Green		Indicates that performance is better compared to the same period last year.
Amber		Indicates that performance is the same as compared to the same period last year.
Red		Indicates that performance is worse compared to the same period last year.
N/A		Indicates that the measure cannot be compared to the same period last year.

6.3 Key for responsible officers:

MW Martin West, Interim Operational Director, Education, Inclusion and Provision Service

TC Tracey Coffey, Operational Director, Children and Families Service

CHILDREN & FAMILIES DEPARTMENT**Revenue Budget as at 30th September 2021**

	Annual Budget £'000	Budget to Date £'000	Actual £'000	Variance (Overspend) £'000	Forecast Outturn £'000
Expenditure					
Employees	9,539	4,620	4,723	(103)	(222)
Premises	270	120	89	31	52
Supplies & Services	784	275	483	(208)	(417)
Transport	113	37	39	(2)	(7)
Direct Payments/Individual Budgets	904	435	429	6	11
Commissioned Services	224	90	62	28	53
Out of Borough Residential Placements	7,682	2,668	4,590	(1,922)	(4,045)
Out of Borough Adoption	7	4	0	4	7
Out of Borough Fostering	2,375	997	1,066	(69)	(173)
In House Adoption	357	123	125	(2)	(11)
Special Guardianship	1,756	833	850	(17)	(43)
In House Foster Carer Placements	2,358	1,148	1,263	(115)	(251)
Care Leavers	292	135	89	46	103
Family Support	53	26	32	(6)	(13)
Contracted Services	3	1	1	0	(1)
Early Years	131	64	216	(152)	(366)
Emergency Duty Team	116	9	15	(6)	(15)
Youth Offending Service	251	64	62	2	4
Total Expenditure	27,215	11,649	14,134	(2,485)	(5,334)
Income					
Fees & Charges	-30	-7	-4	(3)	(5)
Sales Income	-4	-2	-1	(1)	(2)
Rents	-42	-14	-18	4	6
Reimbursements & Grant Income	-593	-231	-203	(28)	(49)
Transfer from Reserves	-67	-75	-75	0	0
Dedicated School Grant	-50	0	0	0	0
Government Grant Income	-4,164	-2,128	-2,128	0	0
Total Income	-4,950	-2,457	-2,429	(28)	(50)
Net Operational Expenditure	22,265	9,192	11,705	(2,513)	(5,384)

	Annual Budget £'000	Budget to Date £'000	Actual £'000	Variance (Overspend) £'000	Forecast Outturn £'000
Covid Costs					
Employees	0	0	246	(246)	(288)
Supplies & Services	0	0	13	(13)	(23)
Transport	0	0	0	0	(1)
Commissioned Services	0	0	23	(23)	(46)
Out of Borough Residential Placements	0	0	348	(348)	(782)
In House Foster Carer Placements	0	0	1	(1)	(1)
Care Leavers	0	0	2	(2)	(9)
Family Support	0	0	2	(2)	(2)
Emergency Duty	0	0	11	(11)	(21)
PPE	0	0	0	0	(1)
Covid Loss of Income					
Nursery Parental Income	0	0	0	0	(1)
Government Grant Income					
Government Grant Income	0	0	-646	646	1,175
Net Covid Expenditure	0	0	0	0	0
Recharges					
Premises Support	139	69	69	0	0
Transport Support	19	9	9	0	0
Central Support	2,626	1,313	1,313	0	0
Recharge Income	-124	-142	-142	0	0
Net Total Recharges	2,660	1,249	1,249	0	0
Net Departmental Expenditure	24,925	10,441	12,954	(2,513)	(5,384)

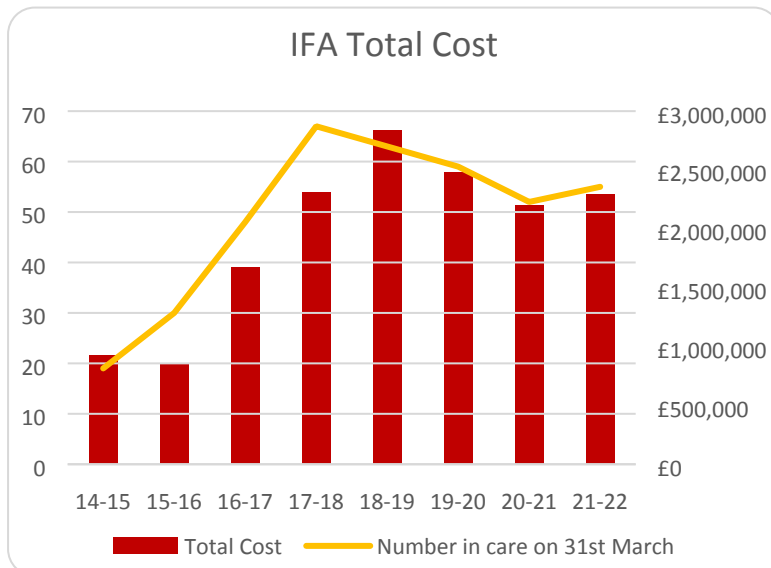
Comments on the above figures

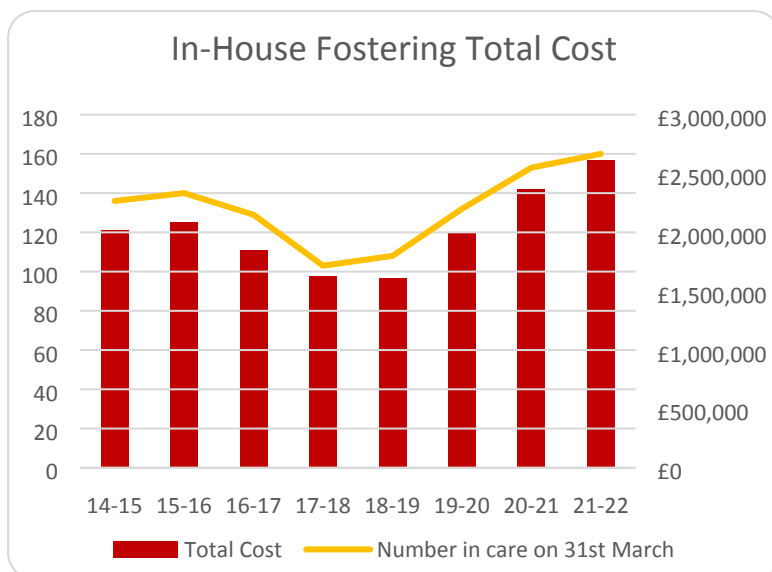
The net departmental expenditure is £2.513m above budget profile at the end of the second quarter of the financial year, with the majority directly relating to Social Care Services. Additional growth budget was provided in 21/22 of £0.628m for Residential Care Placements and £0.238m to fund additional staffing following the restructure within the Children in need Division. Agreed savings of £0.016m leave a net growth of £0.850m. The expected outturn position for the Children and Families Department is anticipated to be circa £5.384m over budget based on the current levels of service support. This compares to the department overspend against budget of £1.179m for the period ending 31 March 2021.

Employee costs are currently £0.103m above budget profile in the second quarter. There continues to be a number of vacant posts proving difficult to fill and so the use of agency staff has contributed to this overspend. Current spend in Quarter 2 for agency staff is £0.908m or 20% of employees budget to date. This includes spend for 40% of the costs of the agency Duty and Assessment team working within the Children in Need Division. Recruitment is underway to fill the current vacancies and also to recruit to the new Duty and Assessment Team, which is being introduced following the restructure of the Children In Need Division. It is anticipated that the use of agency staff should reduce in the second half of the financial year should the new team be successfully recruited to and current vacancies filled. At the end of this quarter, there is an unachieved staff turnover target of £0.184m and an unidentified efficiency saving of £0.243m. Action needs to be taken immediately to identify how these savings will be achieved to reduce further pressure on the budget.

Supplies and Services expenditure is £0.208m above budget profile at the end of Quarter 2. This overspend continues to be the result of high levels of expenditure against the Children in Care budget which includes many ongoing regular payments including children’s respite and therapy, nursery fees and translation costs. There are also a handful of home support packages, which have recently been introduced, that monitor and support parents in the home with a view to preventing children from entering care.

Consultancy costs also contribute largely to the overspend in supplies and services and are expected to be £0.201m over budget at the end of the financial year. The majority of these costs relate to the ongoing consultancy work currently undertaken in relation to in-house fostering. Whilst these costs are high, the success of the fostering project has resulted in a large increase in the number of in-house foster carers, enabling more children to be accommodated in-house rather than in high cost Independent Fostering Agency (IFA) placements. Further training has also been provided to enable in-house carers to take on more specialist placements, such as Mother and Baby placements, this has resulted in a reduction in the numbers of children going into IFA placements and the increased demand for foster care being met mostly by our own in-house provision. The graphs below illustrate the numbers in foster placement and the associated costs:





Out of Borough Residential Care continues to be the main budget pressure for the Children and Families Department as the cost of residential care has continued to increase year on year. This budget was given additional growth of £0.682m for this financial year to alleviate the pressure, however residential care is currently £1.922m over spent at the end of Quarter 2, and forecasts for residential placements indicate an overspend against budget of approximately £4,045 up to the end of the year. This does not include packages funded from the COVID budget, currently forecast at £0.782m for the full financial year.

The costs have increased significantly from Quarter 1 and this is in part due to the changes of placements within the period. Although numbers of young people in residential care hasn't particularly increased, the costs relating to these packages has. This is due to a number of older children placed in lower cost leaving care placements moving into their own accommodation offsetting the number of children entering care placements, with the costs being significantly higher.

The increase is also partly due to the increasing number of Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (UASC) currently placed in care, numbers of which have increased considerably over the year to date.

The table below details the costs of residential care, IFA and UASC placements.

	Annual Budget	Budget to Date	Actual	Variance (Overspend)	Forecast Outturn
	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
Expenditure					
Out of Borough Residential Placements	7,641	2,647	4,445	(1,798)	(3,491)
UASC - Out of Borough Residential Placements	41	21	145	(124)	(554)
Out of Borough Fostering	2,375	997	957	40	84
UASC - Out of Borough Fostering	0	0	109	(109)	(257)
Total Expenditure	10,057	3,665	5,656	(1,991)	(4,218)

Funding is available from the Home Office for UASC, however this funding will only be granted subject to certain criteria and only once the relevant age assessments have been carried out and submitted. This can be a lengthy process and so income to offset this spend has only been included for those UASC classed as valid from the Home Office. Once confirmation is received from the Home Office that funding is granted, projections will be updated to offset overspend against the additional income.

The table below breaks down the current residential placements based on costs and placement type.

Residential Care

Provision	Weekly Costs	30th Sept 21		30th June 21		31 March 21	
		No. Placed	Estimated cost for the year	No. Placed	Estimated cost for the year	No. Placed	Estimated cost for the year
Residential	£2000 - £3000	4	516,859	6	692,500	4	358,048
Residential	£3001 - £4000	18	3,306,204	16	2,970,377	15	2,784,509
Residential	£4001 - £5000	16	3,424,050	12	2,964,877	10	1,831,251
Residential	£5001 - £10000	8	2,632,775	7	2,245,845	8	1,881,495
Secure	£5212 - £8750	3	1,048,694	3	1,118,635	3	971,407
Leaving Care	£300 - £3487	15	1,059,473	22	1,041,312	23	1,809,338
Parent & Child	£581 - £2,053	1	116,066	2	105,025	2	127,589
Total:		65	12,104,121	68	11,138,571	65	9,763,637

UASC Residential Care

Provision	Weekly Costs	30th Sept 21		30th June 21	
		No. Placed	Estimated cost for the year	No. Placed	Estimated cost for the year
UASC	£300-£400	35	494,312	16	280,274
UASC	£400-£5000	2	268,713	0	0
Total:		37	763,025	16	280,274

Processes are in place to identify those children able to step down from residential care into foster care, with one young person already successfully transferred from long-term residential care. This is a great achievement and should provide a better outcome not only financially, but also for those young people involved.

The new in-house Supported Lodgings service is still recruiting for carers, with two young people already identified for placement within this provision. This will support those young people who are leaving care and taking the first steps towards independence. This service is new to Halton and the costs of this service will be far less than the costs of current leaving care provision, and as well as the financial benefits, the service will provide a much more home like and supportive environment for young people.

In House fostering is currently £0.115m over budget profile and is expected to be £0.251m over budget at the end of the financial year. This is due to the aforementioned increase of in-house foster carers and the ability to accommodate more young people in-house. An additional £0.150m was transferred from the IFA budget to offset some of this additional spend however further growth is needed in order to fully cover the additional costs. Work is continuing to recruit and retain Halton's in-house foster carers, so costs could increase further still. However, as previously reported, the ability to accommodate young people within in-house provision provides a substantial saving in comparison to IFA or residential care.

The Early Years net divisional expenditure is £0.152m over budget profile at the end of the second quarter with the full year outturn position expected to be £366k over budget. This is due to the underachievement of parental income due to income targets based upon the Early Years provision having high occupancy levels. This underachievement of income will continue throughout 2021/22 and currently there is no possibility that they will become self-sustaining and will therefore continue to be a significant budget pressure going forwards. It is probable that the effects of the global pandemic will be long lasting and have a significantly detrimental effect on the already strained financial position of the Early Years provision for the foreseeable future.

Income is currently £0.028m under budget profile with full year projections of £0.050m under achieved. This is primarily due to an income generation target that has been included for the new Leaving Care provision on the Inglefield site. This is a four-bedroom accommodation with the potential to rent one bedroom to other Local Authorities.

COVID related costs for the Children and Families Department are currently £0.646m at the end of the second quarter.

Employee costs relate to agency social work staff who have been employed to assist with the added pressures of the pandemic as current Social Work teams already have a large number of vacancies. This includes the costs for the 60% contribution to the Duty and Assessment team previously mentioned in the report who are dealing with the significant increase in referrals as a result of the crisis.

The majority of COVID costs relate to Out of Borough Residential care. These costs include:

- Additional support provided to young people in residential settings to enable them to cope with the current crisis and the lockdown conditions
- The additional costs of accommodating young people in higher cost placements due to the restrictions brought on by the lockdown period and the limited number of placements available.
- The additional costs incurred due to the inability to transition children from residential care into leaving care placements due to the lockdown restrictions.
- The costs of post-18 residential provision for those young people who are unable to transfer to independent living due to the reduced availability of accommodation resulting from the pandemic.

COVID costs for the Children and Families Department are projected to be £1.175m up to the end of March 22.

Education, Inclusion and Provision Department**Revenue Operational Budget as at 30 September 2021**

	Annual Budget	Budget to Date	Actual	Variance (Overspend)	Forecast
	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	Outturn
					£'000
Expenditure					
Core Funded					
Employees	3,105	1,663	1,636	27	54
Premises	3	0	0	0	0
Supplies & Services	825	457	416	41	87
Transport	6	1	0	1	0
Schools Transport	1,323	362	528	(166)	(406)
Commissioned Services	1,583	792	792	0	0
Grants to Voluntary Organisations	35	10	10	0	0
Capital Financing	1	0	0	0	0
Grant Funded					
Employees	3,344	1,602	1,602	0	0
Premises	24	0	0	0	0
Supplies & Services	576	38	38	0	0
Transport	1	0	0	0	0
Schools Transport	21	1	1	0	0
Independent School Fees	5,422	2,831	2,831	0	0
Inter Authority Special Needs	383	42	42	0	0
Pupil Premium Grant	191	10	10	0	0
Nursery Education Payments	7,527	3,506	3,506	0	0
Grants to Voluntary Organisations	276	106	106	0	0
Total Expenditure	24,646	11,421	11,518	(97)	(265)
Income					
Fees & Charges Income	-91	-71	-75	4	8
Government Grant	-17,362	-8,136	-8,136	0	0
Reimbursements & Other Grant Income	-544	-287	-287	0	0
Schools SLA Income	-350	-270	-270	0	0
Transfer from Reserves	-556	-556	-556	0	0
HBC Support Costs Income	-22	-22	-22	0	0
Total Income	-18,925	-9,342	-9,346	4	8
Net Operational Expenditure	5,721	2,079	2,172	(93)	(257)
Covid Costs					
Emergency Childcare Payments	0	0	20	(20)	(20)
Schools Transport Contract Costs	0	0	12	(12)	(12)
Government Grant Income					
Government Grant Income	0	0	-32	32	32
Net Covid Expenditure	0	0	0	0	0
Recharges					
Premises Support	129	64	64	0	0
Transport Support	440	220	243	(23)	(46)
Central Support	1,987	994	994	0	0
Asset Rental Support	17	0	0	0	0
Net Total Recharges	2,573	1,278	1,301	(23)	(46)
Net Departmental Expenditure	8,294	3,357	3,473	(116)	(303)

Comments on the above figures

The net Departmental expenditure of £8.294m is £0.116m over budget at the end of quarter two and based on available information the outturn forecast for 2021/22 is currently projecting an overspend against budget of £0.303m.

Core funded employee costs are £0.027m below the budget for the year to date and based on current information which includes a number of vacancies it is envisaged overall this budget head will have a forecasted underspend for the year in the region of £0.054m.

Supplies and services costs are forecast to be under budget at year-end by an estimated £0.087m. This is due to budget holders across the Department closely monitoring all spend in this area.

Schools Transport is the main budget pressure for Education, Inclusion and Provision. The Council has a statutory responsibility to provide Special Educational Needs (SEN) pupils with transport. Year on year the demand for this service is increasing in line with the increasing number of pupils with SEN within the Borough. It is worth noting though that this situation is not unique to Halton, it is a pressure across all Councils. This concern has been recognised and the budget has been given an additional £0.671m in 2021/22 in order to help ease some of this pressure. However, despite this budget growth schools transport is £0.166m over budget at the end of quarter 2 and it is forecast based on current demand spend will exceed the annual budget by £0.406m by the end of March 2022.

Capital Projects as at 30 September 2021

Capital Expenditure	2021/22 Capital Allocation £'000	Allocation to Date £'000	Actual Spend £'000	Total Allocation Remaining £'000
Asset Management Data	25	9	4	21
Capital Repairs	1,111	800	764	347
Asbestos Management	12	10	9	3
Schools Access Initiative	50	20	9	41
Basic Needs Projects	606	0	0	606
Fairfield Primary School	6	0	0	6
Kitchen Gas Safety	0	0	34	(34)
Small Capital Works	7	7	18	(11)
SEND allocation	77	7	35	42
Healthy Pupil Capital Fund	753	0	0	753
Chesnut Lodge	986	4	3	983
Ashley at The Heath	0	0	10	(10)
Woodside KS2 Resource Base	4	2	2	2
Net Expenditure	3,637	859	888	2,749

Comments on the above figures

Asset Management (CAD plan updates and Condition Surveys) works, kitchen gas safety works and small capital works will continue in response or in line with any emergency Health and Safety issues.

The majority of the Capital Repairs works were completed during the summer holidays. Remaining works are mostly single glazing replacement, which will be programmed in for 2022.

Some schools have applied for Access Initiative funding and works are either complete or due to be completed by the end of the academic year.

Asbestos programme surveys are being updated and remedial work carried out where necessary.

The SEND allocation comprises of two funding sources: Special Provision Capital Fund (SPCF) and the more recent allocation of High Needs Provision Capital Fund (HNCF). The balance of the SPCF allocation will be used to support the SEMH Free School project, which is being procured by the DfE. A feasibility study is currently being progressed to create additional teaching space at Cavendish School. If this project goes ahead, the HNCF will be utilised.