

Public Document Pack



Children Young People and Families Policy and Performance Board

Monday, 13 November 2023 at 6.30 p.m.
Civic Suite, Town Hall, Runcorn

S. Young

Chief Executive

BOARD MEMBERSHIP

Councillor Geoffrey Logan (Chair)	Labour
Councillor Carol Plumpton Walsh (Vice-Chair)	Labour
Councillor Sandra Baker	Labour
Councillor Victoria Begg	Labour
Councillor Louise Goodall	Labour
Councillor Eddie Jones	Labour
Councillor Peter Lloyd Jones	Labour
Councillor Tony McDermott	Labour
Councillor Christopher Rowe	Liberal Democrats
Councillor Mike Ryan	Labour
Councillor Aimee Skinner	Labour

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ann.jones@halton.gov.uk for further information.
The next meeting of the Board is on Monday, 22 January 2024*

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

Part I

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1. MINUTES		1 - 7
2. DECLARATION OF INTEREST (INCLUDING PARTY WHIP DECLARATIONS)		
	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, 11 September 2023 in the Civic Suite, Town Hall, Runcorn

Present: Councillors Logan (Chair), C. Plumpton Walsh (Vice-Chair), Baker, Goodall, Jones, P. Lloyd Jones, McDermott, Rowe, Ryan and Skinner

Apologies for Absence: None

Absence declared on Council business: None

Officers present: J. Farrell, A. Jones and J. Wilson

Also in attendance: C. Harris and V. Shepherd – Halton Carers Centre

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

	<i>Action</i>
CYP8 MINUTES	
<p>The Minutes of the meeting held on 12 June 2023 were taken as read and signed as a correct record.</p>	
CYP9 PUBLIC QUESTION TIME	
<p>It was confirmed that no public questions had been received.</p>	
CYP10 CHILDREN, YOUNG PEOPLE & FAMILIES PPB ANNUAL REPORT 2022-23	
<p>The Chair presented the Children, Young People and Families Policy and Performance Board's Annual Report for 2022-23.</p> <p>RESOLVED: That the 2022-23 Annual Report be received and noted.</p>	
CYP11 YOUNG CARERS UPDATE	
<p>The Board received an update on the work and achievements of Halton Carers Centre, which was at the request of the Chair.</p>	

Members welcomed Carl Harris, CEO of Halton Carers Centre and his colleague Vikki Shepherd, Young Carers Support Worker. They reported that the Carers Centre was the primary organisation working with young carers in Halton. Their aim was to enhance wellbeing, build skills and increase knowledge for both young and adult carers in Halton.

According to the 2021 census, 2.7% of children and young people in Halton were identified as having a caring role; this was the highest proportion of unpaid carers amongst younger age groups in the Country. Currently there were 954 young carers aged between 5-17 registered with Halton Carers Centre.

The guests outlined how the Halton Young Carers Team supported registered young carers; gave examples of the tasks they may have to do at home; and explained the effects that these responsibilities can have on a young person. Appended to the report was the *Halton Borough Council 2022/23 Carers Report – Quarter 4*, which gave detailed information on Halton Carers Centre statistics for that period, which included activities and support information for the quarter and for the full year 2022/23.

Following the presentation Members raised questions and the following additional information was provided in response to these:

- The Centre did have and maintained links with other organisations for purposes such as raising awareness and arranging respite activities and days out for young carers;
- Concern for young carers was expressed;
- It was very difficult to identify a child who was a carer, which could take up to 4 years;
- With regards to increasing GP links, one member informed of the *Patient Participation Group*, which was a good way of being able to communicate with GP's;
- The Centre had a team of 3 support workers plus the CEO and would like additional funding to be able to recruit another support worker, to be able to increase outreach in schools for example;
- Only 27 schools were being engaged with by the Carers Centre at the moment;
- One Member, who was a SEND teacher, offered her services in the music and art area and invited the Centre to make contact if they wished to arrange an activity relating to the arts;

- The educational attainment of young carers was discussed and noted that this would need to be tracked for a young carer as it was with any other pupil and vulnerable group;
- Regarding absence and lateness from school, it was important that schools were aware of the reasons as to why a young carer may be late or absent from school and how they could try to mitigate this;
- Home visits were made to 'primary carers' of which there were 52 in Halton;
- Approximately 40% of young carers cared for parents with alcohol and drug misuse problems;
- Concerns were raised regarding the fact that Halton was identified as having the highest proportion of unpaid carers amongst younger age groups in the Country;
- School absence was a concern and schools needed help to be able to identify young carers, so they could seek support to enable them to support the young person; and
- Officers would share the Carers Centre details with the relevant teams within the Council, so that connections could be made.

Funding was explained – 58% came from Halton Borough Council and the Integrated Care Board (ICB) and 42% came from outside funding. The Centre aspired to increase respite activities and days out for young carers but funding was limited for this purpose. Activities such as training, gardening, bee keeping, mental health awareness, first aid training, healthy eating and cooking had previously taken place for young carers and staff would like this to continue, as it reduced feelings of isolation many young carers experienced in their lives, as they are able to mix with people in the same situation.

A copy of the most recent Newsletter was passed to Members for information, this included details of days out arranged for young carers, such as Gulliver's World, Blue Planet, kayaking and therapy and podiatry treatments.

On behalf of the Board the Chair thanked Mr Harris and Ms Shepherd for attending the meeting today and sharing a valuable insight into the work of the Halton Carers Centre.

RESOLVED: That the information and comments made be received.

Operational
Director
Education,
Inclusion and
Provision

CYP12 OVERVIEW OF CHILDREN'S SOCIAL CARE

The Board considered a report of the Interim Executive Director, Children's Services, which provided an update on Children's Early Help and Social Care in relation to unresolved issues in performance, quality, and practice.

It was reported that since the Ofsted Inspection known as ILACS (March 2020) there had been a continuous circle of priorities and plans, audits and reviews; two Ofsted Focus Visits including one which led to the issue of a DfE Improvement Notice (Jan 2022); and the creation of a Children's Improvement Board.

It was noted that staff changes at senior levels was stabilising and the appointment of a new Director of Children's Services, who starts in October 23, provided the context for the creation of a twelve week priority plan. The twelve week priority plan will focus its work in ensuring that children of the Borough were safe, which was distilled in three priorities: *see children, hear children, help children*. The focus of the twelve week plan, of which 6 weeks now remained, was described for Members.

The Board discussed the plan, and the following information was provided in response to questions:

- Identification of child neglect at an early age was best and at the right place at the right time, so that support could be built around the family to be able to help them and prevent entry of a child to the care system;
- Halton has good early years educational provision and health services which were able to support the identification of child neglect;
- Ensuring children received the right help at the right time was crucial and management oversight is essential for this to happen;
- Part of the 12 week priority plan included building morale amongst staff and motivating them going forward;
- The remaining 6 weeks of the plan would include a focus on the quality of plans put in place for children in need of help;
- A social work academy was being set up to enable a 'grow your own' approach to recruitment – this would provide training support for 10 newly qualified social workers each year;
- It was important to make the 'Halton offer' more attractive to potential employees, both newly qualified and to those with experience, as a mix of both was

needed; and

- There were currently 26 agency staff within the service.

RESOLVED: That the Board

- 1) receives the update; and
- 2) is aware of the key challenges in children's social care and their implications for the Borough.

CYP13 SUMMARY OF 2023 PROVISIONAL UN-VALIDATED ATTAINMENT OUTCOMES

The Board considered a report of the Interim Executive Director Children's Services, which presented the provisional 2023 educational outcomes for Halton's children and young people.

It was noted that the Board regularly received reports on educational attainment and other educational developments and issues in the Borough, as part of the overview and scrutiny role for Children's Services in Halton. The report provided feedback on Statutory Educational Assessments throughout the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) and statutory assessments undertaken in the summer term throughout the primary, secondary and post 16 phases of education. It was noted that this series marked the return of non-compensated statutory assessment, post pandemic.

A summary of 2023 outcomes was provided for the Board for Early Years Good Level of Development (GLD), key stage one phonics and key stage 1, 2, 4 and 5 provisional unvalidated attainment information. The information provided also showed pre pandemic and 2022 performance, to gain an insight into the Borough's prior educational position and then the provisional results achieved this academic year.

Members were also advised of recent educational developments – the Priority Education Investment Area (PEIA) of which Halton was one, and Delivering Better Values Programme, which Halton was part of.

After receiving the information Members raised questions about foreign languages uptake in Halton which appeared to be declining, and the destinations of young people post 16. It was recognised that data on the latter was not available to local authorities.

Concerns were also raised on attendance figures, which had not recovered to pre pandemic levels. Officers advised that attendance was tracked and funding was being made available from the DfE for Attendance Support Officers, as part of the Priority Education Investment Area. This was a distinct role, with education welfare service continuing with the statutory attendance role. It was shared that Halton had also experienced a decline in attendance at its special schools, so this would be also be looked at further.

RESOLVED: That the Board

- 1) receive the presentation; and
- 2) note the key updates and implications for the Borough.

Operational Director Education, Inclusion and Provision - and

CYP14 PERFORMANCE MONITORING FOR QUARTER 4 OF 2022/23

The Board received the Performance Management reports for quarter 4 of 2022-23 (1 January 2023 to 31 March 2023). It was noted that these were emailed to Members on 12 July 2023, as soon as they were finalised.

The key priorities for development or improvement in 2022-23 were agreed by Members and included in the Local Authority's Business Plan for the following Departments:

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

The reports detailed progress made against objectives, milestones and performance targets and provided information relating to key developments and emerging issues that had arisen during the period. Members were requested to consider the progress and performance information and highlight any areas of interest and/or concern, where further information could be reported at a future meeting of the Board.

RESOLVED: That the Performance Management reports for quarter 4 of 2022-23 be received.

CYP15 PERFORMANCE MONITORING FOR QUARTER 1 OF 2023/24

The Board received the Performance Management reports for quarter 1 of 2023-24 (1 April 2023 to 30 June

2023).

The key priorities for development or improvement in 2023-24 were agreed by Members and included in the Local Authority's Business Plan for the following Departments:

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

The reports detailed progress made against objectives, milestones and performance targets and provided information relating to key developments and emerging issues that had arisen during the period. Members were requested to consider the progress and performance information and highlight any areas of interest and/or concern, where further information could be reported at a future meeting of the Board.

Family Hubs were highlighted – it was reported that the Family Hub on the Runcorn side would be at Brookvale. The Chair requested to know the opening date and the process put in place for the selection of the location for the Hub. This would be sent following the meeting and reported to a future meeting of the Board.

Members discussed the academisation of schools in Halton. It was confirmed that Local Authorities were not permitted to establish a Multi Academy Trust (MAT).

RESOLVED: That the Performance Management reports for quarter 1 of 2023-24 be received.

Operational
Director -
Education, and
Inclusion
Provision

Meeting ended at 8.50 p.m.

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

DATE: 13 November 2023

REPORTING OFFICER: Chief Executive

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 & Families PPB
DATE:	13 November 2023
REPORTING OFFICER:	Corporate Director, Chief Executive's Delivery Unit
PORTFOLIO:	Leader
SUBJECT:	The Corporate Plan - The Big Conversation Update
WARD(S)	Borough Wide

1.0 **PURPOSE OF THE REPORT**

- 1.1 To share with Children, Young People & Families PPB an update on 'The Big Conversation', which is integral to formulating a new Council Corporate Plan, to take effect from April 2024.

2.0 **RECOMMENDED: That**

- 1) **the report be noted; and**
- 2) **that Children, Young People & Families PPB continues to endorse the approach to facilitate 'The Big Conversation'.**

3.0 **Supporting Information**

3.1 Background

The Big Conversation is about engaging with the public so that they understand the challenges that the Council is facing.

It is an approach between the Council and those who live or work in Halton to work together in order to create an improved borough in all aspects of everyday life.

A Stakeholder Analysis together with a Communications Plan was developed in order to generate and establish as many opportunities as possible to involve all our stakeholders in many different and varied ways.

The Big Conversation consultation is open until November 30th 2023.

- 3.2 Breakdown of responses by source, as of October 4th 2023:

Total Number of responses: 777

No reply	41
Inside Halton	37
HBC Staff	220
Councillors	-
Comms Flyer	9
Comms Poster	-
Comms Desktop	-
Comms Outdoor	-
Comms Partner	-
Comms Short URL	5
Comms Media	43
Comms Banner	-
Comms School	-
Comms Staff Poster	-
Comms Bin Wagon	-
Comms Meta Advert	197
Comms Organic Facebook	94
Comms Organic X	9
Comms Organic Threads	1
Comms Organic LinkedIn	4
Comms Chamber Newsletter	-
Comms Business Improvement Growth	-
Comms Carers Centre	116
Comms Adult Social Care	-
Comms TUC	1
TOTAL NUMBER OF RESPONSES	777

3.3 **Promotion, Consultation & Engagement:**

3.3.1 Consultation opportunity has been targeted to the following places / groups as detailed below. The number indicates the potential responses available;

- Social Media Impressions: 234,487 (times the survey was delivered to feeds on Facebook, Instagram, Messenger, Threads, LinkedIn and X)
- 1st Tuesday Business Event: 60
- Active Ageing Get Together Forum: 115

- Grangeway Community Centre: 30
- Dementia Group: 15
- Halton Patient Participation Group: 24
- Heads of Primary Schools: 60
- Runcorn Shopping city (specific) Adults: 44, Under 16`s: 6
- Widnes Market (specific) Adults: 30, Under 16`s: 10
- School Circular: 100 staff (serving 18,388 pupils)
- HBC Employees: 3000

Note that it's difficult to put an exact figure on the actual footfall for Runcorn Shopping Centre and Widnes Market, but based on estimated weekly footfall a conservative best guess would be:

Runcorn Shopping Centre: 500 – 1,000

Widnes Market: 500 – 1,000

3.3.2 Specific Forums and Venues attended / Scheduled to attend:

- **HBC Workforce**
Email to HBC Workforce: July 28th

Stephen Young Video message: September 5th
- **General Public**
Inside Halton Magazine: Summer edition
- **Businesses**
Halton Chamber of Commerce Network Meeting: September 5th

Halton & Warrington Business Fair: November 9th

Sci-Tech Daresbury Business Breakfast: November 10th

Newsletters - Halton Chamber of Commerce
Business Improvement Growth
- **Partners**
Halton Patient Participation Group: September 28th

Halton TUC

Newsletters - Bridgewater Community Healthcare NHS
Halton Patient Participation Group
- **Adult Services**
Healthy & Active Ageing Event (Runcorn Shopping Centre):
September 18th

Dementia Group: Widnes (September 29th) and Runcorn
(October 11th)

Partners in Prevention Event (Widnes Market): September 21st

Healthy and Active Ageing Event Get Together: Runcorn (October 9th) / Widnes (October 17th)

Newsletters – Young Carers and Adult Carers

- **Children Services**

Primary Schools Heads Meeting: September 21st
(with an email follow up: September 21st)

Children`s Provider Network Meeting: October 4th

Halton Youth Cabinet: October 12th

Family Hub Centres – Kingsway (October 12th) and Windmill Hill (October 24th)

Riverside College: October 17th

Newsletters – Schools e-circular: September 4th

3.4 **Emerging Themes:**

3.4.1 A reminder that the 5 suggested themes identified were:

- Tackling inequality, helping those who are most in need
- Building a strong, sustainable local economy
- Supporting children, young people and families
- Improving health, promoting wellbeing and supporting greater independence
- Working towards a greener future

3.4.2 Level of agreement to all of the 5 suggested themes is very high, with the highest level of agreement being: 'Improving health, promoting wellbeing and supporting greater independence', and the lowest being 'Working towards a greener future'.

3.4.3 In terms of how can the Council can support these themes, the top 3 identified so far are:

- 'Provide opportunities for young people to engage with their local community and do things that interest them, keep them safe and make them happy'.
- 'Create vibrant town centres for everyone to enjoy across the Borough'
- 'Continue to ensure local people are able to enjoy the Borough`s parks and green spaces'

3.4.4 In terms of the ways our stakeholders can support the identified

themes, these were as follows:

- 'Spending money with local shops and businesses'
- 'Doing their best to stay healthy and active'
- 'Look out for children and the vulnerable'

3.4.5 Identifying other potential corporate themes, the top 3 were:

- Business / Regeneration / Employment
- Environment: litter / pavements / greenery overgrowth
- Crime / Police / Antisocial behaviour

3.4.6 Given only 1% of respondents were aged between 16-24 years to-date, the current desires and commitments could change significantly when we have engaged with a greater number of young people. Nationally, younger people appear to be more concerned about the climate change agenda, and therefore the lack of support for green spaces and recycling efforts may change in December once the final sum of raw data is available.

Nevertheless, there is evident support for the provision of learning and skills services that nurture young adults and provide sustainable career opportunities for the whole borough; which is subsequently supported by the desire of a strong local economy – which residents are willing to invest in.

3.5 **Gaps and actions required:**

3.5.1 Demographic – there is a clear gap in the 16 - 24 year olds age bracket.

Actions:

- Target young adults at Riverside college/post 16 education settings
- Planned visits to Family Hubs (Kingsway and Windmill Hill)
- Sharing the Big Conversation on forms of social media which would target specifically this age group, eg Instagram and Messenger.

3.5.2 Geographical areas – analysis has shown that response has been low in 4 wards, 2 in Widnes, (Ditton, Hale Village and Halebank and Bankfield) and 2 in Runcorn, (Halton Lea and Norton South and Preston Brook)

Action:

These areas will targeted by iWalkers on Saturday, November 4th. Ward members will be advised that this will be taking place.

3.5.3 Work on-going in terms of indenting specific stakeholder groups that we haven't actively engaged with as yet, such as Faith groups and the visually impaired.

3.5.4 The introduction of iWalkers, who wear screens that can feature multiple images and videos, as well as pass out flyers and collect information. On the day they will also add someone to a Whatsapp

group and send images for social media and updates about the days progress.

3.6 Timeline:

- Mid-October onwards – gaps identified and addressed
- November 30th 2023: Consultation ends.
- December 2023: Analysis undertaken – key priorities identified.
- January – February 2024: Summary developed / shared with stakeholders via drop-in sessions within council buildings and open engagement at community spaces.
- March 2024: Corporate Plan finalised and approved at key forums.
- April 2024: the New Corporate Plan is launched.

4.0 POLICY IMPLICATIONS

4.1 There are no specific policy implications at this stage; however ultimately there will be a new contemporary and relevant Halton Borough Council Corporate Plan.

5.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

5.1 There will be a potential financial implication around the engagement of 2 iWalkers, at a cost of £1,200 per day for 8 hours.

6.0 IMPLICATIONS FOR THE COUNCIL'S PRIORITIES

6.1 The Corporate Plan is Halton Borough Council's key strategic document. This plan sets out the main vision, themes and values of the Council.

'The Big Conversation' will help to determine the Council's new set of priorities, which will be translated into the plan.

7.0 RISK ANALYSIS

7.1 The major risk is that we do nothing and roll out the same priorities as we have done in previous years. To this end the current Corporate Plan is a losing relevance and doesn't fully engage with either the workforce or the people of Halton in the contemporary environment.

7.2 The Council is serious about 'Reimagining Halton', aligned with that commitment, this is a perfect opportunity to undertake a meaningful

piece of work which will engage the people of Halton and together with our workforce determine a set of new priorities, which will make a difference and take Halton forward over the next 3 – 5 years.

8.0 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES

8.1 Equality and Diversity may well be a specific Corporate Plan priority, but if not then it will certainly underpin the Plan. An Equality Impact Assessment will be undertaken as part of the policy development process.

The consultation process has been designed to be inclusive.

9.0 CLIMATE CHANGE IMPLICATIONS

9.1 At this stage there is nothing specific to highlight within the context of this report; however there is a distinct possibility that as a result of 'The Big Conversation' climate implications will form one, or a key part of on, of the Council's key priorities.

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

10.1 None under the meaning of the Act.

REPORT TO:	Children, Young People & Families Policy & Performance Board
DATE:	13 November 2023
REPORTING OFFICER:	Executive Director – Children
PORTFOLIO:	Children and Young People
SUBJECT:	Sufficiency Duty Report 2023-2024 (previously known as the Childcare Sufficiency Assessment Review (CSA))
WARD(S)	Borough-wide

1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 The report aims to provide a summary of the revised Sufficiency Duty Report. It details information about Halton's childcare sector and outlines the projected supply and estimated demand for childcare places over the next twelve months. It also highlights any gaps in provision and how these are being addressed.

The report outlines information regarding the expansion of the early years entitlements, due to launch in April 2024, together with initial estimates around how the demand for new places will impact upon the childcare market in Halton.

The report shares information on other factors impacting on childcare and sustainability, at both local and national level, such as the impact of COVID-19, the cost of living crisis and difficulties in recruiting and retaining staff. However, despite the challenges facing the early years sector, the childcare market in Halton continues to be secure and sustainable.

- 2.0 **RECOMMENDATION: That the revised Sufficiency Duty Report (previously known as the Childcare Sufficiency Assessment) be noted.**

3.0 BACKGROUND

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

- 3.2 In accordance with the above, Halton's Sufficiency Duty Report has been reviewed and updated (SDR). The purpose of the document is to:
- Assist parents to find suitable childcare across the borough;
 - Help inform the Local Authority regarding supply and estimated demand for childcare places in all age ranges, in particularly for the Free Early Years Entitlement places;
 - Provide information for anyone who is considering setting up new childcare provision in the borough or becoming a childminder.

4.0 **SUMMARY OF SDR**

- 4.1 The SDR provides the following information:
- A brief introduction to the review, outlining it's purpose and rationale;
 - A statement about safeguarding.
 - A description of the Halton context;
 - Information regarding the quality of childcare, including reference to the Early Years Foundation Stage Framework and the role of Ofsted;
 - Details of Halton's childcare market segments;
 - The supply and estimated demand of childcare places;
 - A brief outline of Halton's SEND provision, Disability Access Fund (DAF) and Early Years Pupil Premium (EYPP);
 - Details of the affordability, sustainability and staffing of Halton's childcare market;
 - Average hourly rates of pay and flexibility of childcare in Halton;
 - Details about the projected expansion of funded childcare;
 - Guidance around financial help with childcare costs;
 - Details of other factors impacting on childcare and sustainability.

5.0 **CURRENT POSITION**

- 5.1 Overall, the Halton Sufficiency Duty Report 2022-2023 continues to reflect a sufficient, flexible and high quality Early Years and Childcare market that delivers a wide choice of affordable childcare services to parents and carers. Halton as a borough has sufficient childcare places to meet demand.

However, the Early Years sector have indicated that there are continuing concerns around recruitment and retention of staff, the high numbers of children coming into settings with Special Educational Needs, and the reduction of numbers of children, especially in Pre-Schools. There are also concerns around the increasing costs of fuel and overheads, which are not reflected in the funding figures.

The implications of the Spring budget cannot yet be predicted and therefore the impact on sufficiency is unknown at this time. However, the local authority will continue to engage proactively with the sector to identify any potential reduction in sufficiency to ensure that the childcare market in Halton remains vibrant and buoyant.

The report shows that the majority of areas in Halton have sufficient supply of childcare places in all age ranges, as follows:

- **0-1 Year olds** – The sufficiency analysis shows a surplus across the borough of 81 places, 37 surplus places in Runcorn and 44 in Widnes;
- **2 Year Olds** - The sufficiency analysis shows a surplus across the borough of 288 places, 214 places in Runcorn and 73 in Widnes;
- **3 and 4 Year Olds** – The sufficiency analysis shows a surplus across the borough of 499 places, 385 in Runcorn and 114 in Widnes;
- **Childcare for Children Over 5** – Although It is difficult to determine the exact number of places available for out of school hours and holiday care, some data is held on the places available at OfSTED Registered Providers. Taken together with information from provider surveys, which report a significant level of vacancies for wraparound and holiday care places this suggests that there is sufficiency in the sector within Halton.

6.0 POLICY IMPLICATIONS

6.1 The expansion of funded childcare is expected to have an impact on the sufficiency of places. Ongoing analysis is being undertaken, both locally and nationally, to assess the likely numbers of additional childcare places that will be needed at each stage of the expansion. Initial estimates suggest that there are sufficient places in Halton to accommodate the first phase of the expansion for 2 year olds, commencing in April 24.

6.2 The government will invest £289m over two academic years, from September 2024, to enable schools and local areas to set up wraparound childcare provision. This is the first step in the government's ambition for all parents of primary school children who need it to access childcare in their local area from 8am – 6pm.

There are several possible delivery models ranging from:

- School-based provision, delivered by school;
- School-based provision, delivered by private provider;
- Cluster/hub model (on or off a school site);
- Childminders.

Funding will be provided to local authorities for both internal costs and delivery costs. LAs will be expected to map supply and demand, and to adopt a model that best suits their local needs.

It is expected that by September 2026, most parents will be able to access the provision they need. By the end of the scheme, provision should be self-sustaining with continued support from local authorities.

7.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 The Dfe will be releasing money to Local Authorities to support the expansion of early years childcare and Wraparound Programme. The money will be used to cover administrative costs by the LA and support providers to set-up new provision or expand existing provision.

8.0 IMPLICATIONS FOR THE COUNCIL'S PRIORITIES

Close working with the sector will continue to monitor demand and supply and to determine how expansion is impacting on the childcare market.

8.1 Children & Young People in Halton

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

8.2 Employment, Learning & Skills in Halton

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

8.3 A Healthy Halton

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

8.4 A Safer Halton

None identified

8.5 Halton’s Urban Renewal

None identified

9.0 RISK ANALYSIS

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

10.0 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES

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

11.0 CLIMATE CHANGE IMPLICATIONS

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
The Childcare Act 2006	www.legislation.gov.uk	Operational Director – Education Inclusion and Provision & Operational Director Resources
Early Education and Childcare – Statutory Guidance for Local Authorities (March 2018)	www.gov.uk	Operational Director – Education Inclusion and Provision & Operational Director Resources

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

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

Introduction

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

1. Purpose

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

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

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

The information in this document has been produced to:

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

Whilst the information presented in this Sufficiency Duty Report provides a 'snapshot' of supply and demand for childcare places in Halton, this can change on a regular basis. Despite the impact of COVID-19, recruitment and retention issues and an increase in the cost of living, the childcare market in Halton continues to be secure and sustainable. However, with the 'biggest expansion of early years childcare England has ever seen', commencing from April 2024, it will be important to continue to monitor the market to ensure this sufficiency remains.

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

2. Rationale

Not all families require childcare. Some parents do not work, whilst others work flexibly. Furthermore, some parents rely on extended family members, such as grandparents, rather than use formal childcare. Because of these factors, it is difficult to accurately calculate the number of children that will require childcare in Halton.

In order to assess the level of demand for childcare provision across all market segments, an analysis of population and uptake trends has been undertaken. PCT GP registration data is used to identify the population of 0-1 Year Olds, 2 Year Olds, 3 and 4 Year Olds and 5-10 Year Olds by ward. Headcount data and Provider Surveys are used to identify how many children in each age group are accessing a childcare place. This information is used to calculate the % of children in each age group who have accessed a childcare place in each of the past three years. The trend identified is used to inform estimates based on the current population of children. The data is analysed at ward level as the percentage of children accessing childcare can vary significantly between wards.

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

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

3. Safeguarding

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

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

- Train all staff to understand their safeguarding policy and ensure that all staff have up to date knowledge of safeguarding issues and that training made available by the provider must enable staff to identify signs of possible abuse and neglect at the earliest opportunity and to respond in a timely and appropriate way. Complete safeguarding training that enables them to recognise signs of potential abuse and neglect; and

- Have a practitioner who is designated to take lead responsibility for safeguarding children within each early years setting and who should liaise with local statutory children's services agencies as appropriate. This lead should also complete child protection training.

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

4. Context

Halton is a largely urban area. Its two biggest settlements are Widnes and Runcorn, situated 10 miles upstream from Liverpool, and separated by the River Mersey. It consists of 18 wards. The ethnic composition of Halton remains predominantly white, with 96.5% of the population falling into this category (Census 2021). This is significantly higher than found regionally or nationally, suggesting a relative lack of ethnic diversity. The main language of 97.3% of the population is English. Christianity is the main religion in Halton, 58.6% of people identified as Christian on the 2021 Census. 35.2% of the population have no religion.

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

A more in-depth breakdown of Halton's context may be found by following this link: <https://www4.halton.gov.uk/Pages/councildemocracy/CensusandStatistics/CensusandStatistics.aspx>.

5. Quality of Childcare

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

The **Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) Statutory Framework** sets out the standards that all early years providers must meet to ensure that children learn and develop well and are kept healthy and safe. It promotes teaching and learning to give children the broad range of knowledge and skills that provide the right foundation for good future progress through school and life. A revised framework came into effect on 1st September 2021.

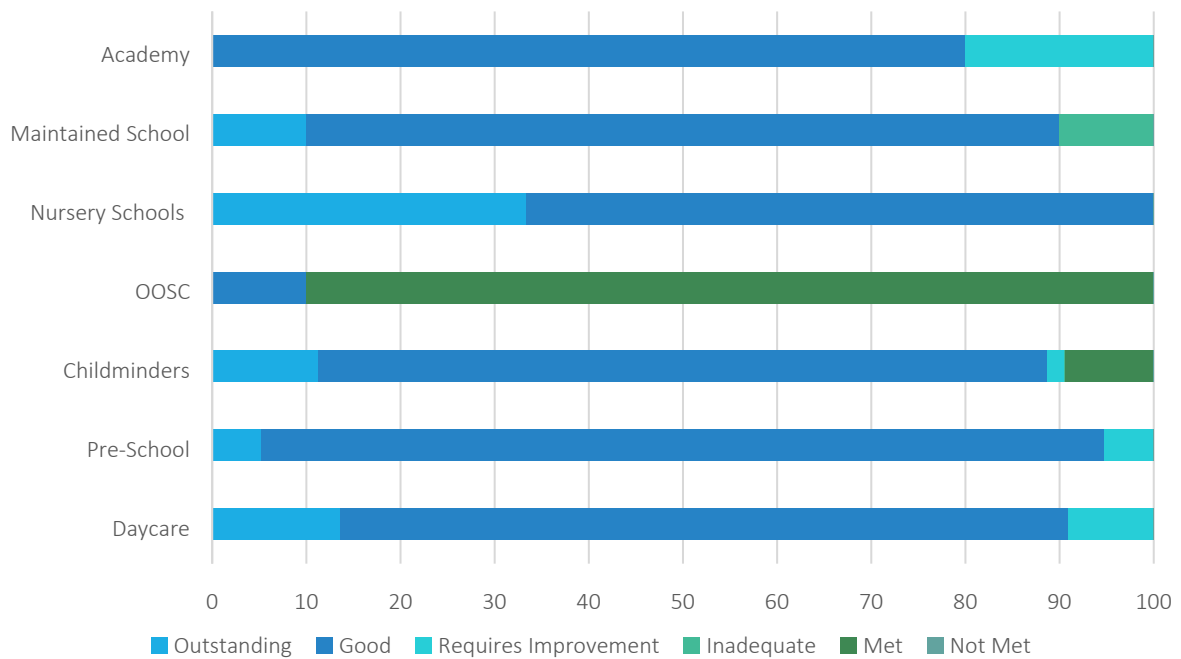
OfSTED

Ofsted is the sole arbiter of quality and through the inspection process, each childcare setting will receive one of four grades: 'Outstanding', 'Good', 'Requires Improvement' or 'Inadequate'. Some childminders have received a 'Met' grade, this is due to the fact that they did not have any early year's children on roll at the time of inspection. Out of School Clubs (OSC) can only receive a 'Met' or 'Not Met' grade.

Table 1 : Ofsted grades for Early Years sector in Halton (August 2023)

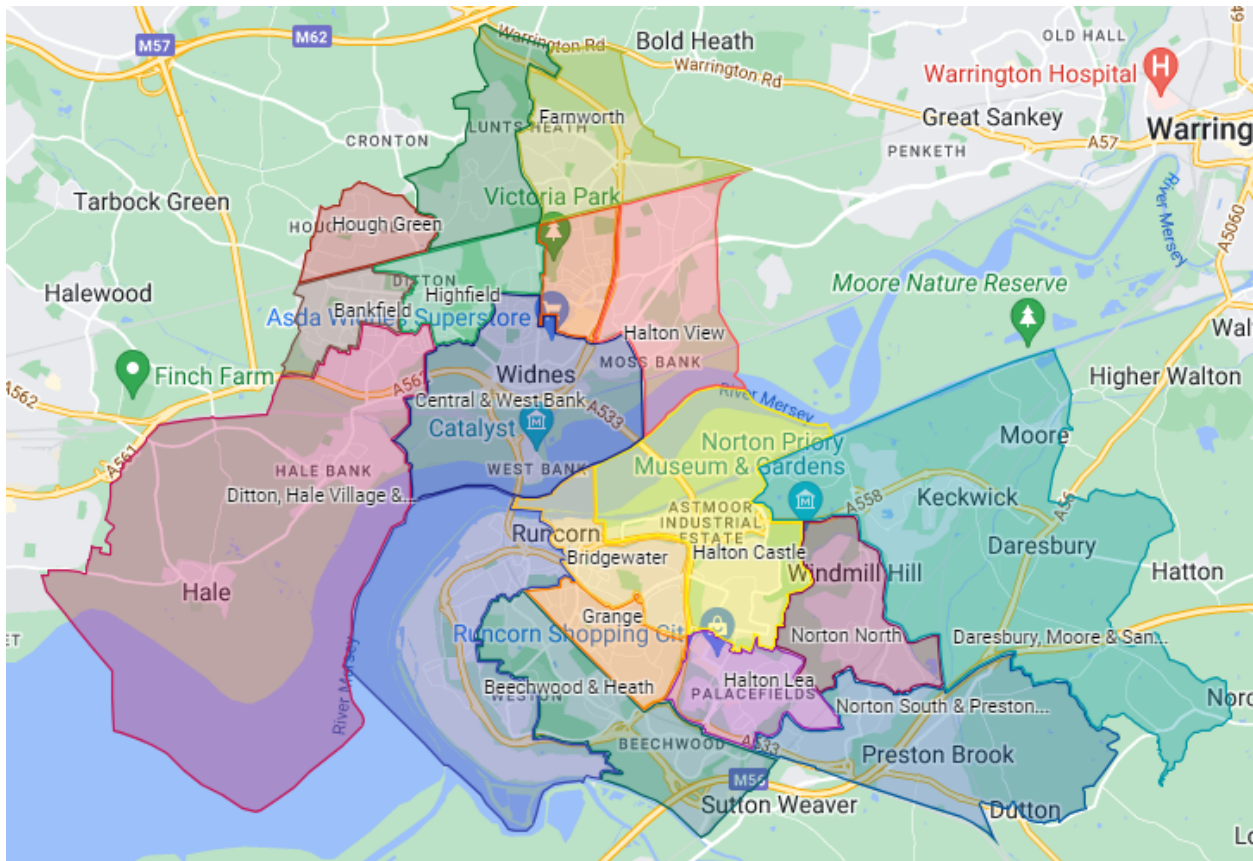
Current OfSTED Grades - Percentage of Inspected Settings						
	Outstanding	Good	Requires Improvement	Inadequate	Met	Not Met
Daycare	13.64	77.27	9.09	0.00	0.00	0.00
Pre-School	5.26	89.47	5.26	0.00	0.00	0.00
Childminders	11.32	77.36	1.89	0.00	9.43	0.00
OOSC	0.00	10.00	0.00	0.00	90.00	0.00
All PVI's	9.62	73.08	3.85	0.00	13.46	0.00
Nursery Schools	33.33	66.67	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Maintained School	10.00	80.00	0.00	10.00	0.00	0.00
Academy	0.00	80.00	20.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
All Schools	11.11	77.78	5.56	5.56	0.00	0.00
All Early Years	10.71	79.46	4.46	0.89	4.46	0.00

% OfSTED Grade by Sector (August 2023)



6. Map of Runcorn and Widnes (split by wards)

MAP OF WARDS 2021



Map Source: [Halton Wards 2021 - Google My Maps](#)

CHILDREN’S CENTRE/FAMILY HUB REACH AREAS (BASED ON WARD BOUNDARIES)

RUNCORN		WIDNES	
Children’s Centre / Family Hub	Wards covered by the Reach Area	Children’s Centre / Family Hub	Wards covered by the Reach Area
Brookvale	Norton South & Preston Brook Halton Lea	Ditton	Bankfield Ditton, Hale & Hale Village
Halton Brook	Bridgewater Halton Castle	Kingsway	Central & West Bank Highfield
Halton Lodge	Beechwood & Heath Grange Mersey & Weston	Upton	Birchfield Hough Green
Windmill Hill	Daresbury, Moore and Sandymoor Norton North	Warrington Road	Appleton Farnworth Halton View

7. Population of Halton

Table 2: Population of children and young people in Halton, identified by age and ward

Ward	0-1	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	Total
Appleton	68	87	59	75	73	83	87	72	83	95	69	90	67	76	81	77	51	63	55	54	1465
Bankfield	61	57	64	68	79	86	79	69	71	86	87	96	81	88	87	82	73	81	59	72	1526
Beechwood & Heath	54	49	53	61	67	66	58	67	70	84	82	66	91	77	73	101	71	75	74	57	1396
Birchfield	65	70	71	90	75	91	102	92	132	110	101	109	117	124	127	117	114	122	115	89	2033
Bridgewater	117	84	75	97	93	107	95	100	104	104	100	101	85	86	90	101	99	84	76	113	1911
Central & West Bank	71	95	105	81	103	83	98	103	91	93	103	120	116	89	110	124	87	125	83	81	1961
Daresbury, Moore & Sandymoor	39	59	67	56	64	56	65	41	62	61	66	46	48	68	58	63	55	64	54	44	1136
Ditton, Hale Village & Halebank	82	96	91	100	102	105	98	95	99	113	101	96	92	87	94	82	84	77	67	70	1831
Farnworth	71	79	84	109	96	92	97	98	111	89	91	82	90	90	84	89	100	97	84	62	1795
Grange	88	97	76	93	107	119	93	104	95	109	104	110	100	125	119	112	112	81	73	95	2012
Halton Castle	96	84	77	73	84	75	91	79	88	79	97	92	85	98	93	87	74	73	74	62	1661
Halton Lea	48	51	74	60	79	80	66	82	87	118	87	104	80	101	75	91	97	84	84	59	1607
Halton View	71	78	73	69	91	81	87	74	74	69	75	63	82	73	77	69	63	71	53	60	1453
Highfield	47	60	63	49	68	64	54	74	70	75	69	75	84	82	70	72	72	65	53	58	1324
Hough Green	64	97	114	62	62	73	78	94	75	88	79	80	86	84	71	61	80	53	70	74	1545
Mersey & Weston	90	99	77	101	85	81	82	100	95	92	64	99	81	77	108	72	75	71	59	69	1677
Norton North	57	90	67	85	89	101	96	92	105	103	113	101	107	105	91	119	103	94	77	71	1866
Norton South & Preston Brook	73	86	77	80	84	86	94	98	107	116	103	95	98	115	106	103	99	97	75	66	1858
Total	1262	1418	1367	1409	1501	1529	1520	1534	1619	1684	1591	1625	1590	1645	1614	1622	1509	1477	1285	1256	30057

8. Childcare Market Segments

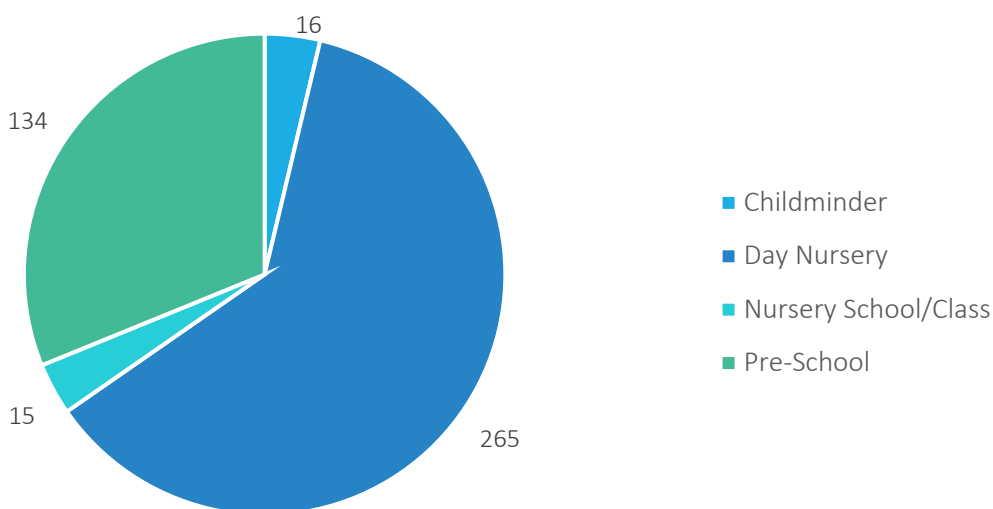
The childcare market in Halton, in common with all local authority areas, is sub-divided into a number of specific market segments; this differentiation is based on the age of the child and the type of provision that is being delivered.

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

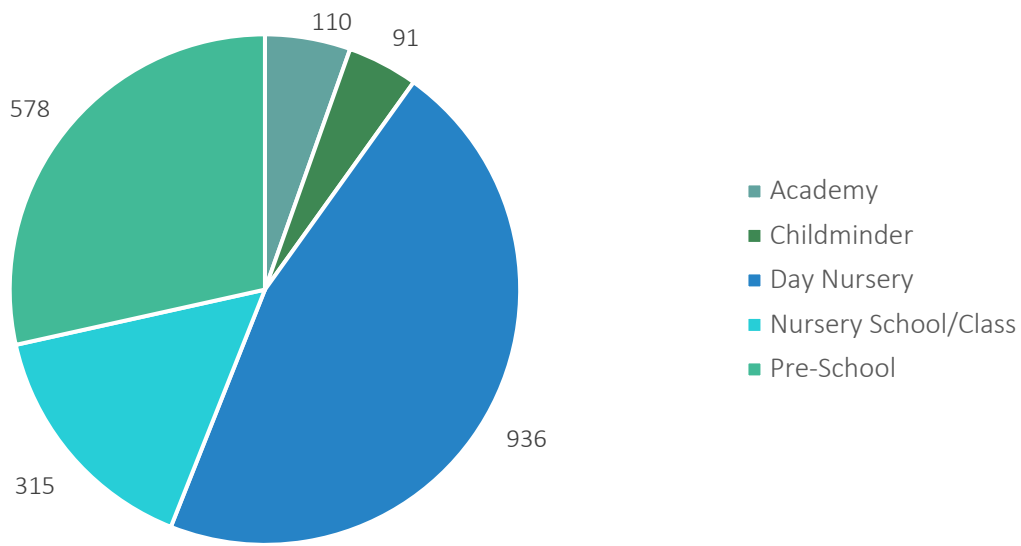
The Halton Early Years Market

The charts below show the distribution of FEYE places across the childcare sector.

Number of 2 Year Olds receiving FEYE by Setting Type (2023)



Number of 3 & 4 Year Olds receiving 15 hours FEYE by Setting Type (2023)



Number of 3 & 4 Year Olds receiving Extended Entitlement FEYE by Setting Type

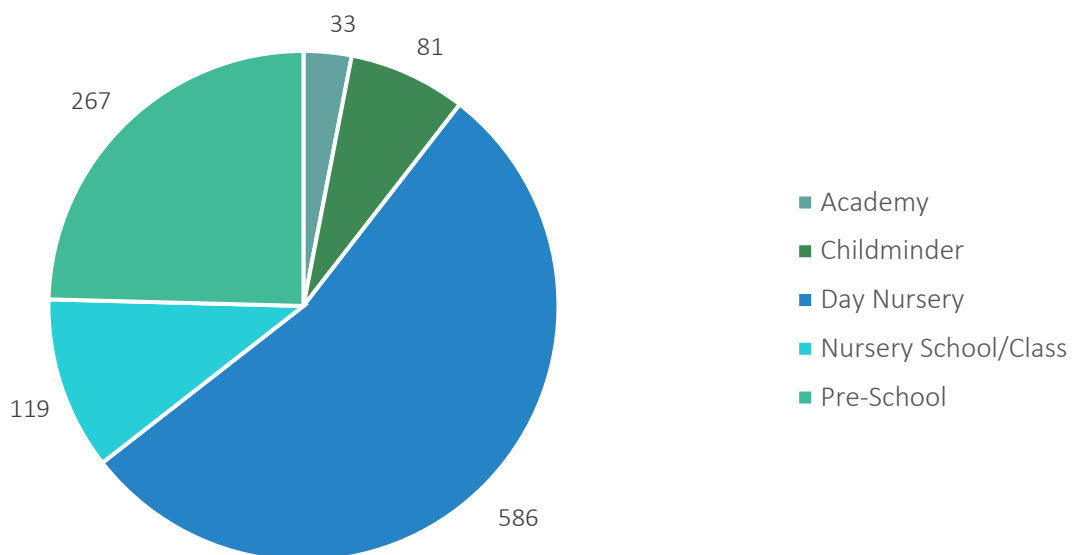


Table 3: Overall Numbers of Childcare Providers by Type, Ward and Children’s Centre/Family Hubs Reach Areas (August 2023)

Wards	Children Centre/ Family Hub Reach Areas	No of Childminders	No of Day Nurserie s	No of Pre- schools	No of Nursery Schools	No of Nursery Classes	No of Academies with Nursery Classes	No of SEN Nursery Classes	No of Breakfast and Out of School Clubs	No of Holiday Clubs	Totals
Appleton	Warrington Road	2	3	1	0	0	0	0	3	1	10
Bankfield	Ditton	3	1	1	0	1	0	0	1	1	8
Beechwood & Heath	Halton Lodge	1	2	3	0	0	0	0	3	0	9
Birchfield	Upton	4	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	4
Bridgewater	Halton Brook	1	0	0	0	1	1	0	1	1	5
Central & West Bank	Kingsway	1	2	0	0	1	2	0	0	0	6
Daresbury, Moore & Sandymoor	Windmill Hill	4	1	2	0	0	0	0	2	0	9
Ditton, Hale Village & Halebank	Ditton	1	0	2	0	0	0	0	1	0	4
Farnworth	Warrington Road	7	2	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	10
Grange	Halton Lodge	2	2	2	0	0	0	0	1	1	8
Halton Castle	Halton Brook	4	1	1	0	1	2	0	0	0	9
Halton Lea	Brookvale	1	1	0	0	2	1	0	1	1	7
Halton View	Warrington Road	3	0	0	1	0	0	0	2	1	8
Highfield	Kingsway	1	1	0	2	0	0	1	1	0	7
Hough Green	Upton	5	1	1	0	1	0	0	2	0	10
Mersey & Weston	Windmill Hill	4	3	2	0	0	0	0	3	1	13
Norton North	Windmill Hill	9	0	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	12
Norton South & Preston Brook	Brookvale	4	1	3	0	1	0	0	1	1	11
Totals		57	21	21	3	8	6	1	23	8	150

9. Supply and Estimated Demand of Childcare Places

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

With regards to the FEYE for 3 and 4 year olds, the summer term always has the highest occupancy and the autumn term the lowest. This is due to single point entry, as children who have turned 4 move into reception in September. Therefore, the supply figures used in this Assessment are a ‘snap-shot’ from a particular week in May 2023.

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

0-1 Year Olds – Childcare for this age range is delivered by day nurseries and childminders.

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

Table 4: Supply and estimated demand for 0-1 Year Olds split by Children Centre Reach Areas

0-1 Year Old Places			
CCRA	Estimated Demand	Estimated Supply	Sufficiency
Brookvale	56	36	-20
Halton Brook	75	30	-45
Halton Lodge	125	286	161
Windmill Hill	81	22	-59
Ditton	68	66	-2
Kingsway	63	52	-11
Upton	79	24	-55
Warrington Road	131	242	111
Runcorn	337	374	37
Widnes	340	384	44
Halton Overall	677	758	81
81 Surplus places overall			
<i>Population Source: PCT GP Registration Data – May 2023</i>			
<i>Supply: Childcare Provider Surveys 2022/23</i>			
<i>Demand Source: Halton Demand Analysis 2023</i>			

The sufficiency analysis shows a surplus across the borough of 81 places, 37 surplus places in Runcorn and 44 in Widnes. Supply from this age group is provided by day nurseries and Childminders. There are childminders across all CCRA's. In Runcorn there is plentiful supply of places in day nurseries in Mersey and Weston, Beechwood & Heath and Grange with fewer day nurseries elsewhere. Proposed new day nurseries in Halton Lea and Daresbury, Moore & Sandymoor will increase supply in Halton Brook and Windmill Hill CCRA's for this age group. In Widnes there is provision from day nurseries and childminders in each CCRA. The highest number of day nursery places are in the Warrington Road CCRA where there is a large surplus of places. This is able to top-up supply in Kingsway and Upton where supply is lower.

The Childcare Provider Survey supports the analysis that there are sufficient places within this age group. Reported occupancy for 0-1 places is below 70% across the borough.

2 Year Olds – Childcare for this age range is delivered by day nurseries, pre-schools and childminders.

Currently 2 Year Olds may access a paid place or access a funded 15 hour place based on DfE criteria. The number of children funded in Halton is, approximately, 523 per term. From April 2024 the children of working parents will also be able to access a 15 hour funded place.

Table 5: Supply and estimated demand for 2 Year Olds split by Children Centre Reach Areas

2 Year Old Places			
CCRA	Estimated Demand	Estimated Supply	Sufficiency
Brookvale	102	76	-26
Halton Brook	126	90	-36
Halton Lodge	196	416	220
Windmill Hill	101	158	57
Ditton	105	178	73
Kingsway	102	86	-16
Upton	101	55	-46
Warrington Road	178	239	61
Runcorn	526	740	214
Widnes	485	558	73
Halton Overall	1010	1298	288
288 Surplus places overall			
<i>Population Source: PCT GP Registration Data – May 2023</i>			
<i>Supply: Childcare Provider Surveys 2022/23</i>			
<i>Demand Source: Halton Demand Analysis 2023</i>			

The sufficiency factor of 288 shows that there are ample places available for this age range across Halton. However, there would appear to be deficit places in Brookvale, Halton Brook, Kingsway and Upton. This analysis is based upon children accessing a 15 hour place. Some parents will choose to access childcare for more than 15 hours, this will reduce the overall supply of 15 hour places. Following the initial expansion of the Early Years Entitlement in April 2024 further information will be available on the number of 2 year olds accessing more than 15 hours of childcare.

3 and 4 Year Olds— Childcare for this age range is delivered by day nurseries, pre-schools, maintained nursery schools, classes, academies and childminders.

All supply and demand figures are based on 15 Hour places. The proportion of children currently accessing 30 hours places and wraparound care has been factored into these calculations.

Table 6 - Supply and estimated demand for 3 & 4 Year Old Places split by Children Centre Reach Areas

3 & 4 Year Old Places			
CCRA	Estimated Demand	Estimated Supply	Sufficiency
Brookvale	349	370	21
Halton Brook	354	420	66
Halton Lodge	546	895	349
Windmill Hill	381	330	-51
Ditton	394	388	-6
Kingsway	386	432	46
Upton	325	210	-115
Warrington Road	522	711	189
Runcorn	1630	2015	385
Widnes	1627	1741	114
Halton Overall	3257	3756	499
499 Surplus places overall			
<i>Population Source: PCT GP Registration Data May 2023</i>			
<i>Supply: Childcare Provider Surveys 2022/23</i>			
<i>Demand Source: Halton Demand Analysis 2023</i>			

Table 6 shows we have approximately 499 excess 15 Hours places for 3 & 4 Year Olds in total across the borough. The only areas where there appears to be a deficit of places are Windmill Hill CCRA and Upton CCRA. The population of 3&4 Year Olds is decreasing, however the % accessing a Universal Hours place is increasing. The % of children accessing Extended Hours is also increasing, 49.5% of 3 & 4 year olds accessed some Extended Hours in Summer 2023. 13.3% also accessed paid wraparound provision in addition to their funded hours.

Distribution of Supply of Places

Table 7 indicates that there is a sufficient supply of places in Halton in all age ranges. However, the supply of places is not always distributed evenly across Wards and Children's Centre Reach Areas.

The average distance travelled by Funded Children living in Halton and accessing provision in Halton is 0.88 miles. 87% of Halton's 2 Year Old Funded Children and 85% of Halton's 3&4 Year Old Funded children live less than 2 miles from their chosen setting. (Based on Summer 2023 Headcount data).

It is important to remember that parents do not always access childcare in the ward where they live, parents may choose a setting based on considerations other than distance from home.

Table 7 shows 'at a glance' which areas have sufficient/insufficient places to meet demand in each age range/childcare category.

Table 7 – ‘At a Glance’ Table

Children's Centre /Family Hub Reach Area	0-1 Year Old Places	2 Year Old Places	3 & 4 Year Old Places
Brookvale		N (-26)	Y
Halton Brook		N (-36)	Y
Halton Lodge		Y	Y
Windmill Hill		Y	N (-51)
Ditton		Y	N (-6)
Kingsway		N (-16)	Y
Upton		N (-46)	N (-115)
Warrington Road		Y	Y
Runcorn	Y	Y	Y
Widnes	Y	Y	Y
Halton Sufficiency Overall	Y	Y	Y

Key: Y =Sufficiency N = Insufficiency (includes number of places)

Childcare for Children Over 5

Ofsted allows before and after school providers to determine the number of children they provide care for, up to a maximum number, determined by the size of their premises. It is up to each provider, therefore, to ensure that they have the correct staff:child ratio in place for the ages of the children attending the setting. Instead of having a separate registration for school aged children, day nurseries and childminders have extended their provision to offer places to older children before and after school and during the holidays. Many schools also run breakfast and afterschool clubs, which are exempt from separate registration by Ofsted.

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

It is difficult to determine the exact number of places available for out of school hours and holiday care. Some data is held on the places available at OfSTED Registered Providers. However, this information does not include extra-curricular clubs run by schools or non-registered holiday activities available at leisure, sports or arts centres. The information that follows details the number of OfSTED registered providers of out of school hours childcare and the estimated number of places available. As information is not held by the local authority on the number of children who require out of school care, the number of children who attend, and how often children attend, it is very difficult to accurately assess demand. Population data to which a number of discounting factors (based on ONS Labour Force Data and DfE Childcare and Early Years Survey of Parents) have been applied is used to give a broad guide to potential demand. Taken together with information from Halton out of school providers who report a significant level of vacancies for wraparound and holiday care places this suggests that there is sufficiency in the sector within Halton.

Table 8: Estimated supply of 5-10 Year Old Before and After School Provision

5-10 Year Old Before and After School Provision		
CCRA	Estimated Supply of Breakfast Places	Estimated Supply of After School Club Places
Brookvale	345	100
Halton Brook	196	86
Halton Lodge	375	190
Windmill Hill	273	134
Ditton	254	154
Kingsway	114	28
Upton	106	106
Warrington Road	317	351
Runcorn	1189	510
Widnes	791	639
Halton Overall	1980	1149
<i>Supply: Childcare Provider Surveys 2022/23 Census Out of Hours Childcare Data January 2023</i>		

Table 9: Estimated demand for wraparound care for 5-10 Year Olds

5-10 Year Old Wraparound Care Demand	
CCRA	Estimated Demand Wraparound
Brookvale	138
Halton Brook	139
Halton Lodge	203
Windmill Hill	132
Ditton	140
Kingsway	118
Upton	150
Warrington Road	195
Runcorn	612
Widnes	603
Halton Overall	1215
<i>Halton Demand Analysis 2023</i>	

Table 10: 5-10 Year Old Before and After School Provision - Number of Providers

Providers offering Before & After School Provision 5-10 Year Olds		
CCRA	Before school childcare/ breakfast club	After School Childcare/ After School Club
Brookvale	10	9
Halton Brook	7	5
Halton Lodge	7	7
Windmill Hill	13	12
Ditton	8	8
Kingsway	4	3
Upton	9	9
Warrington Road	19	18
Runcorn	37	33
Widnes	40	38
Halton Overall	77	71
<i>Supply – Childcare Provider Surveys 2022/23 School Census Out of Hours Childcare Data January 2023</i>		

Out of School Clubs – School Pickup Service

Details around Out of School Clubs and Childminders and the schools to which they offer a pickup and drop off service is available from the Halton Family Information Service.

Wraparound Programme

The government will invest £289m over two academic years, from September 2024, to enable schools and local areas to set up wraparound childcare provision. This is the first step in the government's ambition for all parents of primary school children who need it to access childcare in their local area from 8am – 6pm.

There are several possible delivery models ranging from:

- School-based provision, delivered by school;
- School-based provision, delivered by private provider;
- Cluster/hub model (on or off a school site);
- Childminders.

However, it is expected that Local Authorities will adopt a model that best suits their local needs and could be combination of approaches.

Funding will be provided to local authorities for both internal costs and delivery costs. LAs will be expected to map supply and demand, including identifying schools with no provision, un-met need and limited hours. Local authorities will also be expected to support schools/trusts or providers to set up/scale up existing provision, including testing innovative and sustainable solutions. Schools/trusts will have the option to deliver themselves, use PVI's/childminders, or look off site (with transport). It is

expected that by September 2026, most parents will be able to access the provision they need. Programme funding will be tapered over 5 terms, with ongoing support from the LA and delivery partners. By the end of the scheme, provision should be self-sustaining with continued support from local authorities.

5-10 Year Old Holiday Provision

Table 11: Number of Ofsted registered settings providing 5-10 Year Old Holiday care and the estimated number of places available

5-10 Year Old Before and After School Provision		
CCRA	Estimated Supply of Holiday Care	OfSTED Registered Settings Providing Holiday Care
Brookvale	40	8
Halton Brook	86	5
Halton Lodge	153	8
Windmill Hill	72	11
Ditton	24	4
Kingsway	48	2
Upton	48	7
Warrington Road	133	16
Runcorn	351	32
Widnes	253	29
Halton Overall	604	61

*Supply: Childcare Provider Surveys 2022/23
School Census Out of Hours Childcare Data January 2023*

Table 12: Estimated demand for holiday care for 5-10 Year Olds

5-10 Year Old Holiday Care Demand	
CCRA	Estimated Demand Holiday Care
Brookvale	64
Halton Brook	65
Halton Lodge	95
Windmill Hill	62
Ditton	66
Kingsway	55
Upton	70
Warrington Road	91
Runcorn	286
Widnes	282
Halton Overall	569

Halton Demand Analysis 2023

11-14 Year Old Out of School and Holiday Care

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

Halton provides FREE activities and food to children and young people via the Holiday Activity and Food (HAF) Programme. Eligibility criteria apply. This programme runs during the Easter, Summer & Christmas breaks. The activities aim to engage children aged between 4-17 years. However, many are targeted at the cohort of 11-14 years.

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

- o Halton Play Council www.haltonplaycouncil.co.uk
- o The Vibe www.vibe.org/halton

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

10. Halton SEND Provision

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

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

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

11. Disability Access Fund (DAF)

Disability Access Funding (DAF) is available for early years provider to support children who have disabilities and/or special educational needs. It should be used to make reasonable adjustments to their settings and/or help build inclusive capacity (this may be for the child in question or to benefit children as a whole attending the setting).

Detailed information about DAF eligibility criteria, entitlement, documentary evidence required, procedure, payment and application process can be found in the DAF section on the [Local Offer Website](#).

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

12. Early Years Pupil Premium (EYPP)

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

Early Years Providers receive an additional payment per year, paid termly, for each eligible 3 and 4 year old claiming the Universal Hours of the Free Early Years Entitlement (FEYE).

13. Affordability of Halton Childcare

The table below gives details of the average prices for day nurseries, pre-schools and childminders as at May 2023.

Table 11: Average Prices by Early Years Sector

	£ Per Hour	£ Per Half Day	£ Per Full Day	£ Per Week
Day Nurseries	6.95	31.75	51.30	243.82
Pre-Schools	5.11	14.69	34.62	175.73
Childminders	4.77	24.08	41.67	207.50

Halton Provider Survey 2023
Important Note: For most day nurseries a full day is 10 hours, for pre-schools a full day is 6 hours (2 three hour sessions)

Table 12: Average Prices for Out of School Clubs

	Session Length	£ Per Session
Breakfast Club	45 minutes – 1 hours	3.80
After School Club	2.5 – 3 hours	9.38
Holiday Club	Half Day	14.19

Halton Provider Survey 2023

The table below gives the Halton average rates for 2023 compared to the North West and England averages.

Table 13: Average Charges Comparison Table

	Day Nursery 25 Hrs Per Week £	Day Nursery 50 Hrs Per Week £	After School Club 3 Hour Session Per Week £	Childminder After School 3 Hour Session Per Week £
Halton Average	134.35	243.82	46.86	71.52
North West Average	130.02	255.22	62.33	56.14
England Average	146.00	283.95	67.68	72.46

Halton Provider Survey 2023
Coram Family & Childcare Survey 2023

The table above shows that Halton’s 50 hours per week rates are lower than the North West and England averages. Halton’s 25 hours per week rates are lower than England but higher than North West.

A three hour after school session in Halton, costs less than the North West and England averages. The Halton figures include prices of after school care provided by schools which tends to be lower than private providers.

14. Sustainability

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

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

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

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

15. Staffing

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

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

Table 14 - Number of Staff Employed in the PVI Sector

Staffing			
	Total	Female	Male
Pre-schools	141	139	2
Day Nurseries	420	410	10
Out of School Clubs	41	39	2
TOTALS	602	588	14
TOTALS %		97.7%	2.3%

Source: Childcare Survey 2022/23

16. Average Hourly Rates of Pay – PVI Sector

Table 15: Average Rates of Pay - Day Nurseries

	Manager £	Deputy/ Supervisor £	Room Leader/ Senior (L3+) £	Level 3 Assistant £	Level 2 Assistant £
Day Nurseries	15.71	12.62	11.51	10.63	10.50

Source: Childcare Provider Survey 2023. Not all settings provide this information.

Table 16: Average Rates of Pay – Pre Schools

	Manager £	Deputy/ Supervisor £	Senior Practitioner (L3+) £	Level 3 Assistant £	Level 2 Assistant £
Pre-schools	13.43	12.02	11.43	10.90	10.42

Source: Childcare Provider Survey 2023. Not all settings provide this information.

Table 17: Average Rates of Pay – Out of School Clubs

	Manager £	Deputy/Senior Supervisor £	Playworker £
Out of Schools	13.82	11.77	11.28

Source: Childcare Provider Survey 2023. Not all settings provide this information.

17. Flexibility of Childcare in Halton

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

Childminders

There are currently 59 Ofsted Registered childminders in Halton (31 in Runcorn and 28 in Widnes).

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

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

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

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

Day Nurseries

All 23 day nurseries offer full day care to children between the ages of 0-5 years. They generally open 8am-6pm (however, some do open earlier/later). All day nurseries in Halton offer the Free Early Years Entitlement.

In Halton, 5 day nurseries also offer breakfast, after school and holiday care for children aged between 4-11+ years of age.

Pre-schools

All 24 Halton pre-schools offer the Free Early Years Entitlement (FEYE). The majority are open for morning and afternoon sessions, however, a few only open for either morning or afternoons. All open term time only and are therefore able to offer the FEYE over 38 weeks. Of the 24 pre-schools, 23 offer 30 hours. Flexibility is further increased as 18 pre-schools also offer a lunch club. This enables parents to use their free entitlement for part of the day and pay for any additional hours, at a considerably lower rate than a day nursery.

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

Out of School and Holiday Clubs

Halton currently have 23 registered Out of School Clubs and 6 Holiday Clubs.

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

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

The majority of primary schools offer extra-curricular or after school activities ranging from 1-2 sessions per week, for up to 5 sessions per week. Many of these activities are free and reduce demand for formal after school care run by Ofsted registered clubs. Some Primary Schools also run their own after school clubs which operate until 5:30-6:00pm.

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

Halton’s Family Information Service holds up to date information on the schools which each out of school clubs drop off/pick up from. Further information is available at [Family Information Service \(halton.gov.uk\)](http://www3.halton.gov.uk/pages/educationandfamilies/familiesinformationservice/Families.aspx) (www3.halton.gov.uk/pages/educationandfamilies/familiesinformationservice/Families.aspx)

Changes to Provision

Table 18: Settings who have closed, opened, or are hoping to open, since the last SDR.

	Settings Closed	Proposed to Close	Opened	Proposed to Open
Day Nurseries	2	0	0	2
Pre-Schools	1	0	2	0
Childminders	2	0	1	3
Out of School Clubs	3	0	2	0

18. Expansion of Funded Childcare

As announced in the 2023 Spring Budget, the early education and childcare entitlements will be expanded to include children aged 9 months and above. This expansion will take place in stages, as follows:-

- from April 2024, working parents of 2-year-olds will be able to access 15 hours of free childcare per week (over 38 weeks a year) from the term after their child’s birthday;
- from September 2024, this will be extended to parents of children aged 9 months and above;
- from September 2025, working parents will be able to access 30 free hours per week (over 38 weeks a year) for children from age 9 months up until 1 September following his or her fifth birthday.

- A child will be entitled to the additional free hours from the term after both of the following conditions are satisfied: (1) the child has attained the specified age of eligibility; (2) the child’s parent has a current positive determination of eligibility from HMRC i.e., a valid eligibility code.

The expansion of funded childcare is expected to have an impact on the sufficiency of places. Ongoing analysis is being undertaken, both locally and nationally, to assess the likely numbers of additional childcare places that will be needed at each stage of the expansion. Not every child who becomes eligible for the entitlement will need an additional childcare place. Many children are likely to be already accessing paid provision, some will be accessing an existing 2 Year Old Funded place and some parents will choose not to use formal childcare.

April 2024 – 15 Hours Free Childcare for Working Parents of 2 Year Olds

Initial estimates based upon population data, the estimated number of parents eligible for the new entitlement and the DfE projected demand level have been calculated. These estimates suggest that there are sufficient places in Halton to accommodate the initial phase of the expansion in April 2024.

Table 19: The estimated additional demand for places April 2024.

	Estimated New Demand for Places – April 2024
Runcorn	66
Widnes	72
Halton	138
<i>Population Source: PCT GP Registrations Data May 2023</i>	
<i>Demand Source: Halton Demand Analysis 2023</i>	
<i>DfE Central Scenario Estimate</i>	

September 2024 – 15 Hours Free Childcare for Working Parents of 9 Months and Over

Table 20: The estimated additional demand for places September 2024.

	Estimated New Demand for Places – September 2024
Runcorn	170
Widnes	171
Halton	341
<i>Population Source: PCT GP Registrations Data May 2023</i>	
<i>Demand Source: Halton Demand Analysis 2023</i>	
<i>DfE Central Scenario Estimate</i>	

September 2025 – 30 Hours Free Childcare for Working Parents of 9 Months and Over

Table 21: The estimated additional demand for places September 2025.

	Estimated New Demand Places – September 2025
Runcorn	342
Widnes	330
Halton	672
<i>Population Source: PCT GP Registrations Data May 2023</i>	
<i>Demand Source: Halton Demand Analysis 2023</i>	
<i>DfE Central Scenario Estimate</i>	

These initial estimates will be reviewed periodically prior to and during the roll out of the new entitlements to ensure the accuracy of estimates and to inform planning.

19. Help with Childcare Costs

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

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

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

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

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

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

20. Other Factors Impacting on Childcare and Sustainability

The outbreak of the Coronavirus pandemic in 2020 has radically changed the way we live our lives. The early years sector, both locally and nationally, has seen a change in the way families are accessing early education. Parental work patterns have altered and there is a greater dependency on family members to support with childcare.

The early years sector are also feeling the effects of the cost of living crisis. The increase in the national minimum wage, together with an increase in overhead costs, is having a detrimental effect on some settings, especially the smaller pre-schools.

Early Years settings are seeing qualified staff withdrawing from the sector to pursue better paid employment with less pressure and responsibility. Some staff are experiencing burn out post Covid and have chosen to take early retirement or leave the profession altogether. This, coupled with the fact that increased numbers of children attending the provision are presenting with additional needs, including behavioural challenges, is contributing to a national shortage of suitably qualified early years practitioners.

Despite the acknowledgment of the increased number of young children with significant additional needs, statutory staff ratios remain the same and funding has not increased to reflect the increased support needs of the children.

Local intelligence indicates that several providers, although currently reporting that they are sustainable, are extremely concerned for their ongoing financial viability for the coming financial year in the absence of any additional support funding. Some report that in order to remain sustainable they have had to make the difficult decision to reduce staff numbers with a knock-on effect on the number of childcare places they are currently able to offer, others have had to reduce the number of places on offer due to staff leaving.

Moving forwards, providers will need to ensure that they can viably continue to supply early education and childcare places at a time of economic uncertainty and a market that has yet to re-stabilise.

In the Government's 2023 Spring Budget, the Chancellor announced a range of measures to support early education and help parents with childcare so they can return to work more easily. This expansion to childcare is the largest ever seen in England and Local Authorities will need to carefully monitor the market to ensure sufficiency of places is maintained.

21. Conclusion

Halton continues to provide a sufficient, flexible and high-quality early years and childcare market. Despite the challenges being faced by the early years sector, new provisions are opening up and parents and carers continue to have a wide choice of high quality and affordable childcare services.

However, the Early Years sector have indicated that there are continuing concerns around recruitment and retention of staff, the high numbers of children coming into settings with Special Educational Needs, and the reduction of numbers of children, especially in Pre-Schools. There are also concerns around the increasing costs of fuel and overheads, which are not reflected in the funding figures.

The implications of the Spring budget cannot yet be predicted and therefore the impact on sufficiency is unknown at this time. However, the local authority will continue to engage proactively with the sector to identify any potential reduction in sufficiency to ensure that the childcare market in Halton remains vibrant and buoyant.

Glossary of Terms and Definitions

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

Definition of a ‘Reach’ Area

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

References

www.gov.uk

www.ofsted.gov.uk

[Halton Families Information Service](#)

[Halton council democracy statistics and census information](#)

[Halton’s Synergy Children’s Database \(Servelec\)](#)

2021 Census

Office of National Statistics

Childcare Provider Surveys 2023

Coram Family and Childcare – Childcare Survey 2023

Contacts

For further information regarding childcare in Halton, please contact 'Halton Families Information Service' on 0151 511 7375, e-mail: haltonfis@halton.gov.uk or visit: www.halton.gov.uk/fis

For advice on how to set up childcare, please refer to the 'Local Authority Guide to setting up childcare provision on non-domestic premises', which may be accessed via the following link -[Setting up Childcare in Halton](#)

REPORT TO:	Children and Young People and Families Policy and Performance Board
DATE:	13 th November 2023
REPORTING OFFICER:	Executive Director - Children
PORTFOLIO:	Children and Young People
SUBJECT:	Halton's Virtual School Annual Report 2022-23
WARD(S)	Borough Wide

1.0 **PURPOSE OF THE REPORT**

- 1.1 To provide the board with the Headteacher of the Virtual School's Annual Report 2022-23 on the educational outcomes and achievement for Halton's Children in Care, and the school's wider work across children's services.

2.0 **RECOMMENDATION: That the Board:**

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

3.0 **SUPPORTING INFORMATION**

- 3.1 Please see the attached report for the detailed data, analysis and summary of the work of Halton Virtual School during the academic year 2022-23.
- 3.2 The work of the Virtual School has continued throughout the academic year and the full annual report provides detailed analysis of how Halton's Children in Care have performed against each of the individual key performance indicators, as well as a summary of the Virtual School's progress towards its identified key priorities for the academic year 2022-23 and the priorities for the Virtual School in 2023-24.

4.0 **POLICY IMPLICATIONS**

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

5.0 **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

5.1 Halton Virtual School relies heavily on the use of Pupil Premium Plus funding from the Government to support the educational outcomes of Children in Care. This includes support provided through the Personal Education Plan, for the staffing required to carry out its duties to a high and effective standard, and the ability to commission specialist services such as psychological assessments, for example, as well as provide direct curriculum support for the children and young people. There is currently an agreement that this funding will remain in place until 2024 but that it will be reviewed to take into account other national budgetary changes and pressures. However, in recent years the remit of the Virtual School has only expanded and there is an expectation that this will continue.

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

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

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

6.1 **Children & Young People in Halton**

The educational outcomes for children in care, care leavers, post looked after children and those with a social worker remain a key priority for the council.

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

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

6.3 **A Healthy Halton**

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

6.4 **A Safer Halton**

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

6.5 **Halton's Urban Renewal**

None

7.0 **RISK ANALYSIS**

7.1 If the outcomes for our Halton Children in care do not improve, then there is a continued risk that they are more likely to become NEET and not become active and positive partners in their community. The expanded remit of the Virtual School is working with wider children's Services and partners to mitigate this risk and therefore a risk assessment is not required.

8.0 **EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES**

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

9.0 **CLIMATE CHANGE IMPLICATIONS**

9.1 None

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

10.1 None under the meaning of the Act.



HALTON'S VIRTUAL SCHOOL

Annual Report 2022-2023

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Introduction

The statutory duties of the Headteacher of the Virtual School include the production of an annual report to inform key stakeholders about the work of the Virtual School over the course of the year. The following report is a summary of work undertaken and the achievements of the children whose education we oversee.

The Virtual School is responsible for promoting the educational achievement of Looked-After Children (LAC) and strategic oversight for Post Looked-After Children (PLAC) and Children with a Social Worker (CWSW). For Looked-After Children, this includes the oversight and management of the Personal Education Plan (PEP) process and distribution of the Pupil Premium + funding. For PLAC and CWSW, the virtual school has a strategic role in offering support, challenge and training to remove barriers to learning and raise the profile of education as a priority in plans.

There have been a number of changes within the leadership of the Virtual School this year. The new Headteacher joined the team in August 2022, but since January 2023 they have also acted in the role of Divisional Manager for Education (0-19). Consequently, the Virtual School has appointed a Deputy Headteacher, Joanne Lloyd, who has managed the daily running of the school, with strategic oversight by the Headteacher.

Over this past academic year, we have focused on four key priorities, identified through the previous year's self-evaluation:

- To reduce the number of LAC leaving statutory education not in education, employment or training (NEET)
- To develop a high-quality moderation process for PEPS
- To embed a strategic delivery plan for the implementation of the expansion of duties to encompass all children with a social worker.
- To develop a more rigorous and robust Quality Assurance and governance model for the virtual school

This report shares a summary of our progress against each of these objectives, as well as wider performance measures, and our areas of focus for the 2023-2024 academic year.

Further documentation relating to the work of the Virtual School (including our policies and guidance documents) can be found on our website <https://www.myvirtualschool.org/>

Staffing and Governance Structure of the Virtual School

As well as the leadership changes outlined previously, Gemma Donaldson, our early year’s co-ordinator, returned from maternity leave in May 2023. We also bid farewell to Rachael Williams (Primary PEP Lead) at the end of the summer term. We have successfully recruited a replacement, Sarah Rawnsley, who will join the team from the 1st of September 2023.

Over the academic year, the Virtual School has worked alongside the corporate parenting board to establish the ‘operational group’, who now act as the governing body for the Virtual School. They receive termly performance reports, through which they hold the school to account, as well as identify ways in which the Corporate Parenting Board can strengthen their role as corporate parent.

Halton Virtual School structure 2022-2023

Corporate Parenting Board			
Corporate Parenting Operational Group / Virtual School Governing Body			
Virtual School Senior Leadership Team			
Role	Name	Funding	Contract type
Headteacher of the Virtual School	Benjamin Holmes	Core funded	Permanent
Interim Deputy Headteacher Primary and Early Years PEP and Progress Team Leader	Joanne Lloyd	Pupil Premium Plus	Ongoing grant
Secondary and Post 16 PEP and Progress Team Leader	Peter McPartland	Pupil Premium Plus	Ongoing grant
Virtual School PEP and Wider Duties Team			
Early Years Education Support Worker (0.8)	Gemma Donaldson	Pupil Premium Plus	Ongoing grant
Primary PEP Co-ordinator	Rachael Williams	Sec 31 SW Expansion	Ongoing grant
Secondary PEP Co-ordinator	Alys James	Sec 31 SW Expansion	Ongoing grant
KS4 and Post 16 Education and Employability Officer	Ian Wilson	Troubled Families grant	From Sept '24 ongoing grant
Post Looked After Support Worker and Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children	David Bradshaw	Sec 31 Grant – PLAC / SW Expansion	Ongoing grant
School Age Education Support Worker	Min Ling Lee-Tai	Core funded	Permanent
Safeguarding Children in Education Officer	Maria Needham	DSG Funded	Permanent

As well as their 'core' roles outlined above, the Virtual School team provide consultative support and guidance to schools for Children with a Social Worker. This includes support for behaviour, attendance, mental health & wellbeing and SEND.

Through the expansion of duties, it has enabled the Virtual School to have much stronger engagement in multi-agency panels and boards across Halton. This includes:

- Halton Children and Young People's Safeguarding Partnership Executive Board and all Sub-Groups (Including the Safeguarding Practice Group and the Contextual Safeguarding Strategic Group)
- Halton SEND Strategic Partnership Board and 'The Journey' Sub-Group
- 'Team Around the School' Meetings for those at risk of suspension or extreme persistent absence
- Emotional Health and Wellbeing Panel
- Membership on Halton's Primary and Secondary Headteachers Networks
- Membership on all National Association of Virtual School Headteacher's (NAVSH) NW Sub-Groups
- Halton's Children's Services Permanence Panel
- Halton's Fostering Panel
- Contextual Safeguarding Operational Group
- Children's Services Improvement Board
- Resource and Placement Panel
- NW 5 Boroughs Post-Looked After Network
- Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET) Panel

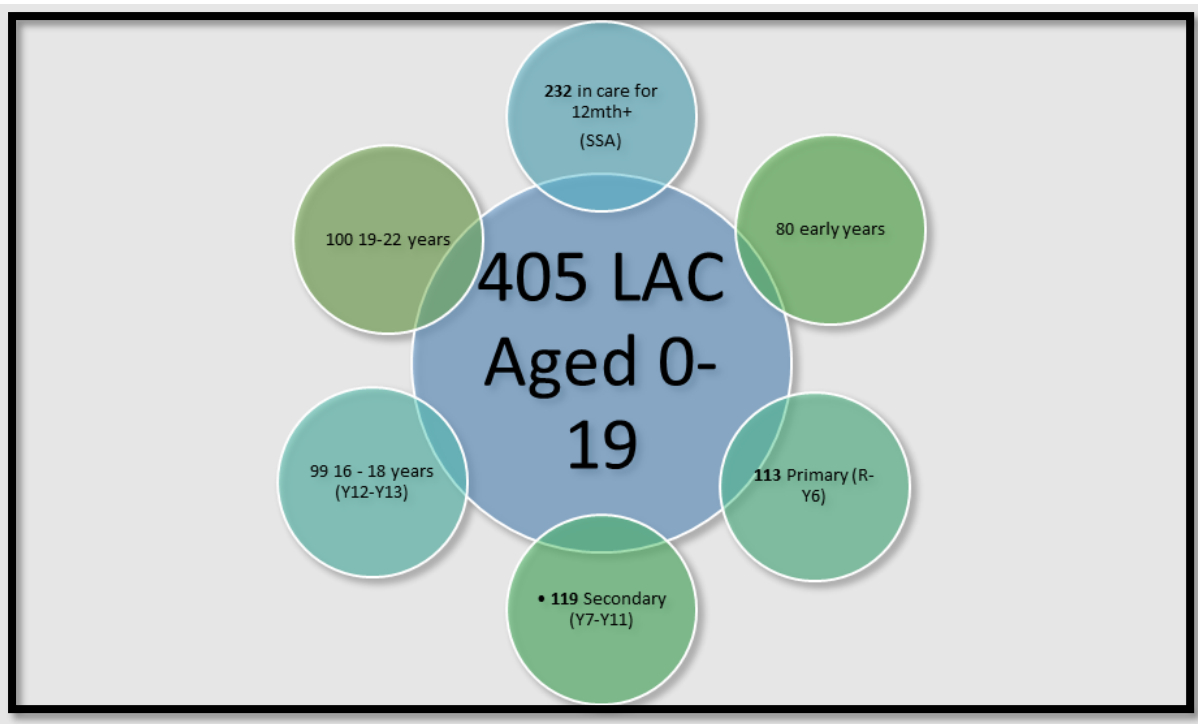
Our SCIE Officer also attends numerous panels including MARAC, Working Together Meetings for Early Help and as the chair of all DSL Networks and Workshops.

During the 2023-2024 academic year, the Virtual School will evolve into two distinct teams. One team will focus on our core function relating to PEPs and educational outcomes, while our new 'Engagement Hub' will support children and young people, their carers and schools to remove any barriers to learning. This will include access to Speech and Language and Educational Psychology Services, as well as direct work with our Education Support Worker where attendance or behaviour concerns have been identified and the commissioning of additional services or provision, such as alternative provision and 1:1 tuition may be required. The development of this 'engagement hub' is expanded within our delivery plan at the end of this report and will be communicated across children's services, education providers and key stakeholders.

Our Cohort in 2022-2023

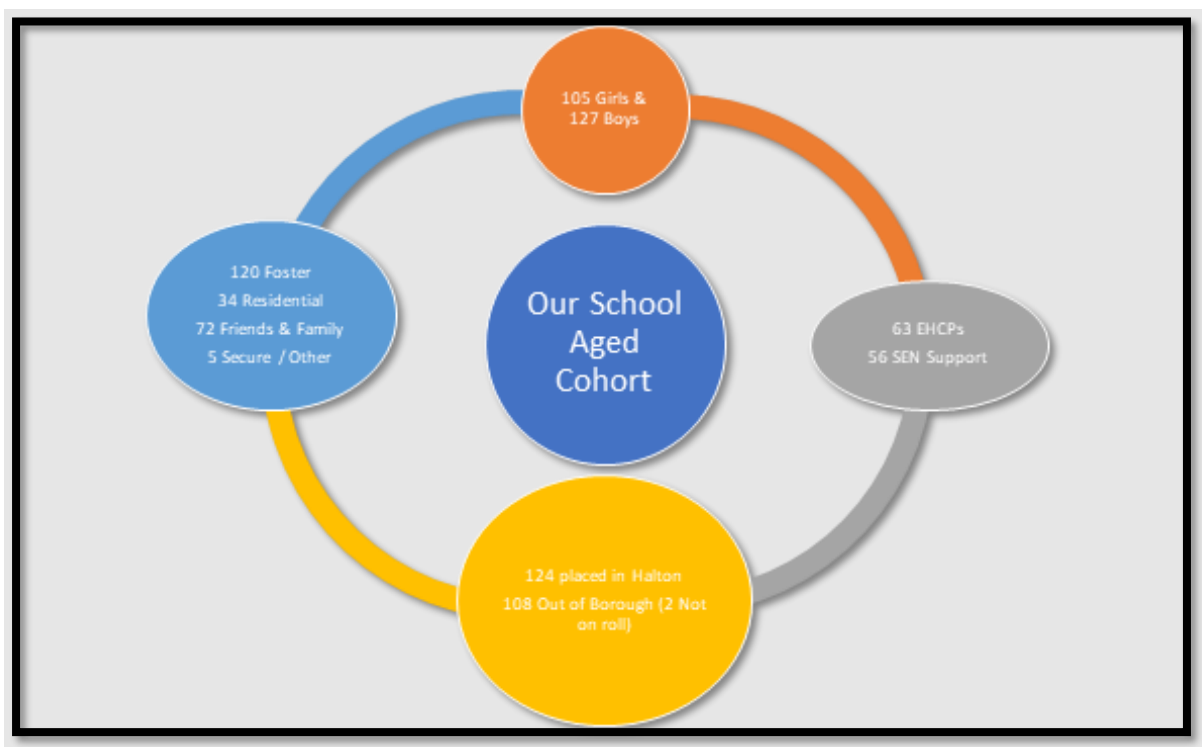
Due to the nature of our work, the cohort of children and young people whom we support is continually evolving as children enter care and also leave care.

Over the course of the academic year, our cohort of children and young people has included:



*Cumulated total for 22/23 academic year.

As of 31st August there were 386 children with an episode of care.



Placement moves.

During 2022-23 we continued to see a high number of CYP (Children and Young People) who experienced a placement move with 56 children and young people having 1 or more placement moves (down 1 from 2021-22).

Of these:

- 40 had 1 placement move (up from 36)
- 8 had 2 placement moves (down from 14)
- 6 had 3 placement moves (down from 7)
- 2 had 4 placement moves (there were no CYP that had this last year)

Whenever there is a placement move, we will always work closely with Social Care and Education to ensure minimal disruption to education and challenge where we feel it would have a detrimental impact and also could impact upon them accessing their current education provision.

School moves

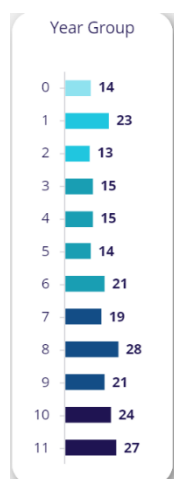
There were 19 children and young people who had a school move during the academic year 2022-2023 (down from 33 last year) outside of anticipated phase / key stage transfers.

There were 4 young people who have had periods of time not on a school roll, down from 19 in the previous academic year.

These are two areas in which we work tirelessly to ensure Children and Young People are able to remain on roll at their current school. However, we will also listen closely to their wishes and feelings within PEP meetings and will consider all direct requests where children ask to move schools. This process has been strengthened following feedback and challenge from our Children in Care Council.

A school move will also be considered whenever a child’s school receives an Ofsted rating of Requires Improvement or Inadequate, although this does not mean a move will always be in the child’s best interests despite the grading.

To ensure that the Virtual School is involved in all decisions to move schools, we have improved the rigour of processes used within Social Care to alert us to potential school move requests, which has impacted upon greater alerting and early intervention and support being actioned by the school.



School Phase

The chart below shows a breakdown of children in care by each national curriculum year group for 2022/23. There are clear growth areas in pre-school aged children and within secondary.

New into Care and Discharged from Care

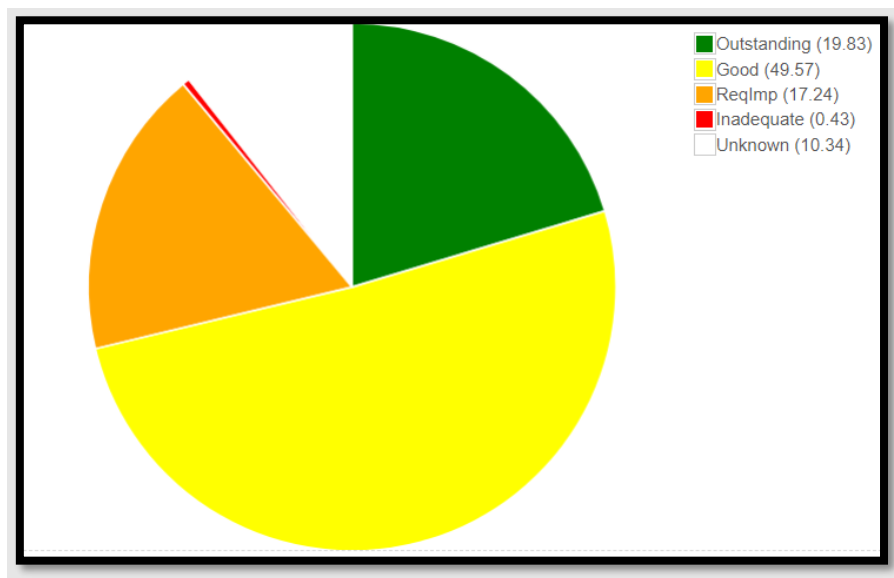
Understandably, our cohort is ever-changing as children come into care and are discharged.

This year, our numbers have increased with 47 discharged but 63 children entering care.

Ofsted Ratings

The statutory guidance ‘Promoting the education of looked after children’ states that schools judged by Ofsted to be ‘Good’ or ‘Outstanding’ should be prioritised for looked after children in need of a new school and that, unless there are exceptional, evidence-based reasons, looked after children should never be placed in a school judged to be ‘Inadequate’.

At the end of the academic year, 75% of Halton’s looked after children in Reception to Year 11 attended ‘Good’ or ‘Outstanding’ schools which have a rating. This is in comparison to 81% at the end of 2021/2. The 10% ‘unknown’ are schools which have not yet received an Ofsted rating, such as schools who have recently opened or have converted to an academy. The majority of children who attend Requires Improvement or Inadequate schools were already attending these schools prior to entering care or before the school moved into this category and upon review it was deemed in the child’s best interests to remain at the school.



Special Educational Needs and Disabilities

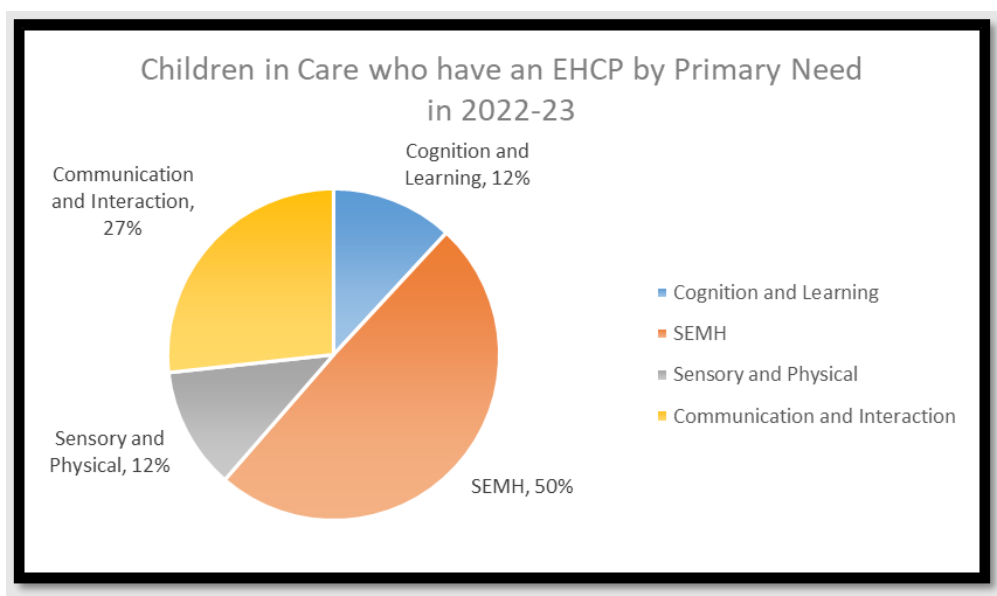
Children in care are significantly more likely to have additional needs than their non-care experienced peers, and are more likely to have an Education, Health and Care Plan.

As corporate parents, Halton SEND services and the Virtual School have agreed that we need to retain responsibility for our most vulnerable children in care who are living outside of Halton but not in a

stable placement and are in need of a statutory assessment, whilst working in line with the 'Belonging Regulations'. In these circumstances the Virtual School commission the Educational Psychology (EP) Service to undertake the assessments and an SEN Caseworker is allocated to ensure the assessment is completed at least within the statutory timeframe.

This decision has been made to ensure that the assessment process is not disrupted should the placement breakdown and to minimise the number of local authorities involved in completing the assessment. For all other children placed outside of Halton in stable placements it is the resident authority that undertake the assessment as per the Belongings Regulations.

All EHCPs are reflected within the termly Personal Education Plans, but with 50% of current plans having Social, Emotional and Mental Health as the primary category of need this is reflected in the training offered to individual schools and through our training calendar (and use of EP time) to support schools in enabling our children to flourish and thrive.



Academic Outcomes in 2022-2023

Attainment and Progress

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

Due to very small cohort numbers and the fluctuation in children coming into (and leaving) care, caution is needed in interpreting the educational outcomes for Halton children in care. Although the data may indicate differences between previous years the low numbers make it difficult when making comparisons or looking for generalisations across the cohorts as they are very specific to the needs to the individual children and young people.

Instead, through the PEP process we analyse the progress of each individual child and young person based upon their starting points and the targets set for their academic outcomes.

Early Years Foundation Stage

There were 10 young people in the EYFS cohort who had been in care for 12 months or more at the time of assessment.

Of these, 30% achieved a 'good level of development' (GLD).

Our Reception cohort continue to cause a concern. Throughout the year, this year group has had the lowest attendance figures, with a high number placed at home with parents.

This year group was significantly impacted during the COVID19 pandemic, and a high level of support will be needed moving forward.

Out of the Reception cohort:

- 2 children were going through an adoption move.
- 1 child had a school move.
- 4 children had 1 placement move.
- 2 children had 2 school moves.
- 1 child had 3 school moves.
- 1 child had 4 school moves.

	2019-19	2021-22	2022-23
GLD	29%	60%	30%

Year 1 Phonics

	2018-19	2021-22	2022-23
Year 1 Phonics	62.5%	33%	57%

Key Stage 1 Outcomes

	2018-19	2021-22	2022-23
Number in Cohort	11	16	17
Reading	57%	31%	21%
Writing	43%	25%	21%
Maths	43%	38%	25%
Combined	43%	25%	23%

Key Stage 2 Outcomes

	2018-19	2021-22	2022-23
Number in Cohort	11	29	18
Reading	33%	28%	55%
Writing	40%	31%	55%
GPS	54%	24%	72%
Maths	33%	36%	55%
Science	54%	28%	61%
Combined in RWM	33.3	28%	44%

Primary Outcomes Analysis

The Primary Outcomes data identifies that our children's results at Key Stage 2 are typically better than those in the earlier years. For example, this year's end of KS2 cohort have sustained or improved their overall attainment compared to their Key Stage 1 outcomes in 2019. Individual pupil progress will continue to be measured through PEPS and to ensure even earlier identification of support through targeted plans, during 2023/24 we will be implementing the use of 2-Year-Old PEPS within Halton.

Key Stage 4 Outcomes

	2018-19	2021-22	2022-23
Number in Cohort		33	20
9 - 4 English	8%	42%	15%
9 – 4 Maths	33%	30%	15%
9 – 4 English & Maths	8%	24%	0%
9-5 English	0%	27%	5%
9-5 Maths	0%	9%	0%
9 – 5 English & Maths	0%	9%	0%

KS4 Analysis

Whilst this year's results at the end of KS4 did not mirror those of the previous cohort, there are a number of individual success stories which reflect the work of the schools and Virtual School colleagues in supporting the academic progress of our young people. Due to the lower results, this will heighten the importance of our work in supporting our 16+ cohort in progressing into education, employment or training from September alongside colleagues within the Local Authorities 14-19 team and supporting with the completion of exam resits in the new academic year.

Progress of all Pupils

As well as outcomes, we closely monitor the progress made through the PEP process. Where progress slows or is not on-track based upon their starting points, we work with schools, carers and social workers to use Pupil Premium + in order to provide additional support.

Summer Term 2022-23			
Year	Total No	Number with Expected Progress	% Expected Progress
R	22	8	36%
1	12	10	83%
2	12	6	50%
3	10	10	100%
4	11	10	91%
5	14	12	86%
6	16	15	94%

R	22	8	36%
KS1	24	16	67%
KS2	51	47	92%
TOT	97	71	73%
KS1&2	75	63	84%

Summer Term 2022-23			
Year	Total No	No Ex Pr	% Ex Pr
7	27	26	96
8	23	17	74
9	23	21	91
10	26	11	42
11	19	10	37

KS3	73	44	60%
KS4	45	21	46%
TOT	118	65	55%

This data identifies that our cohort have made good or better progress overall in Key Stages 1, 2 and 3, but this dips in EYFS and Key Stage 4 with our youngest and oldest cohorts. We will therefore feed this into our improvement plan for 2023-24 to improve the scrutiny and challenge for these year groups to ensure that progress increases in these year groups.

Attendance and Exclusions

Regular school attendance is a key part of giving any child the best possible start in life. However, it is highly likely that a child who comes into care has already missed some time in school, and for some this is a considerable amount. Therefore, it is vital that children in care are supported to attend regularly to mitigate against the impact of previously lost learning, in line with 'Working Together to Improve School Attendance 2023'.

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

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

Attendance 2022-23

Average % attendance	Primary	Secondary	Overall
Autumn	98%	84%	90%
Spring	97%	82%	88%
Summer	97%	77%	87%

Attendance of all children in care over the past 6 years

	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20 COVID	2020-21 COVID	2021-22	2022-23
Primary	97.1%	96.2%	87.5%	93.3%	95.3%	97%
Secondary	88.7%	88.6%	77.9%	90%	84.6	79%
Overall	92.9%	92.4%	81.9%	90.5%	90%	88%

Where attendance is below 95%, this will need to be explored within the PEP and where a concern is raised (for example if there are unauthorised absences, or a deterioration in school attendance), then this should be reflected in the PEP targets and actions as an area of priority.

Exclusions

There have been no permanent exclusions of a child in care to Halton since the role of the Headteacher of the Virtual School was established.

The Virtual School work closely with school leaders and offer training to all schools in Halton (as part of the expansion of our duties) to remind them of the additional anxieties and challenges that our cohort often face. This will be expanded further at our Autumn conference in September 2023 and throughout the next academic year as we offer additional trauma informed practice training.

Percentage of children in care receiving 1 or more suspension in 2022-23:

	Autumn	Spring	Summer
Primary	0%	1%	0%
Secondary	8%	10%	10%
Overall	5%	5%	5%

1 Primary child had 1 or more periods of fixed term exclusions:

- 100% were educated out of borough.
- 100% were in residential provision.
- 0% had an EHCP and / or were in specialist provision.
- Total days lost learning for Primary children was 2.

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

- 31% were educated out of borough.
- 42% were in residential provision.
- 15% had an EHCP and / or were in specialist provision.
- Total days lost learning for Secondary age young people was 128.5 days.

In comparison to previous years, there has been a positive decrease in the number of children in care experiencing suspensions and particularly repeated exclusions. This has been as a result of the work by Halton Virtual School in raising awareness of the impact of trauma and neglect on children’s behaviours leading to more inclusive practice and the positive support provided through the individual child needs led model of Pupil Premium Plus.

Virtual School Actions and Impact on Exclusions

- Provided support and advice to schools who were experiencing difficulties managing challenging behaviour.
- Established and attended multi-agency, weekly ‘Team Around the School’ meetings in all secondary schools for children and young people at risk of suspension.
- Provided tailored packages of support to high-risk pupils.
- Provided attendance support through Pupil Premium Plus.

- Commissioned specialist assessments to support schools to meet the needs of complex children.
- Supported schools to undertake the graduated approach in relation to SEMH needs.
- Supported schools in applying for and securing an EHCP when appropriate.
- Provided ongoing advice to increase awareness and improve practice in meeting the needs of children with attachment difficulties.
- Worked with SEND colleagues to support identification of appropriate education placements.

Accessing Alternative provision

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

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

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

If the provision is via the Engagement Programme the Secondary PEP and Progress Coordinator liaises with The Bridge School to ascertain quality assurance outcomes.

Number of CYP who accessed AP during 22/23	Part Time	Full Time Partial Year	Full Time Whole Year
Primary	0	0	0
Secondary	8	1	2
Overall	8	1	2

Post 16 Access to Education, Employment and Training

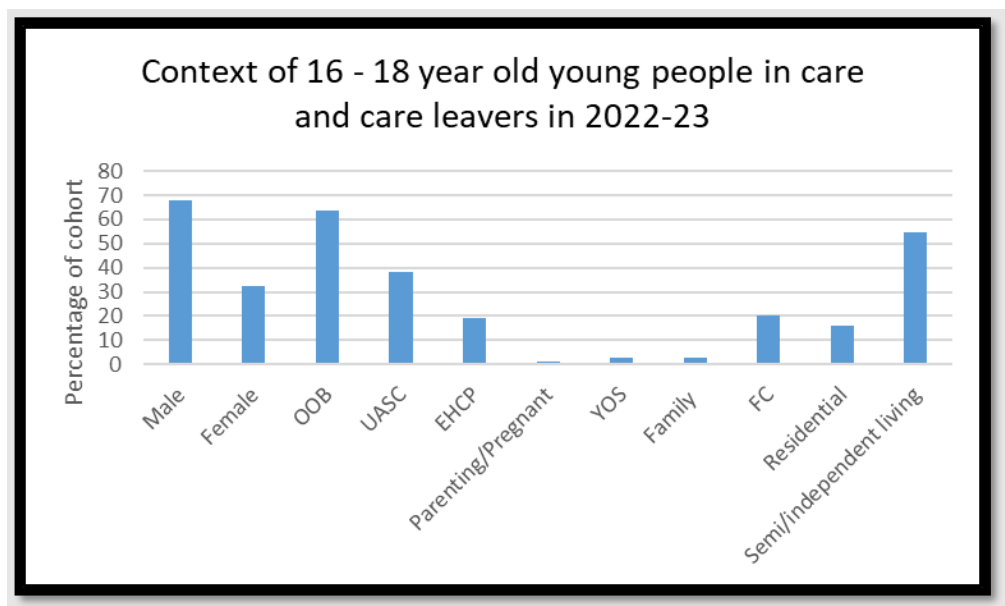
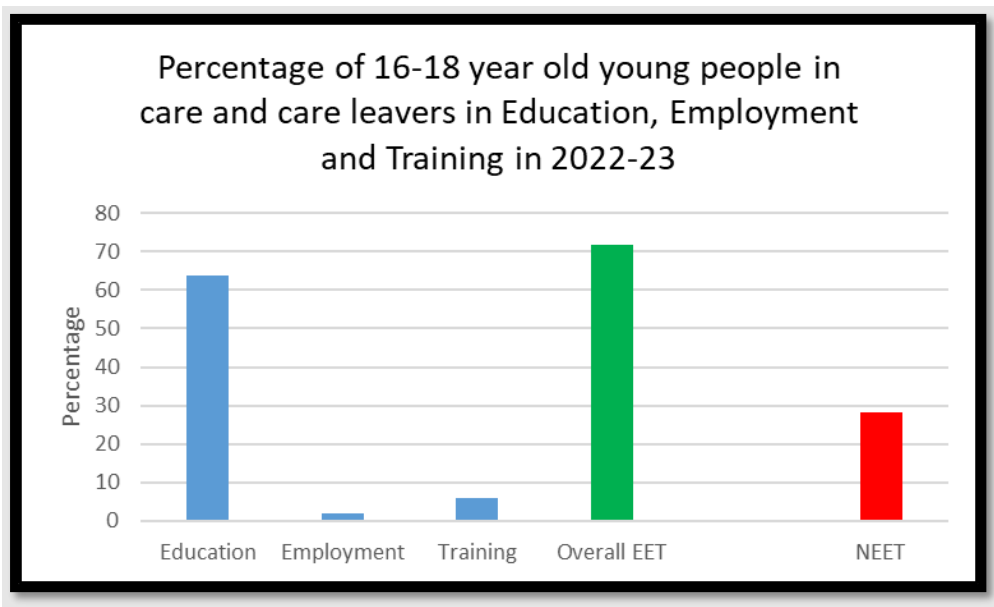
The Virtual School provide support and guidance for all young people in care or care leavers up to the age of 25 around access to Education, Employment and Training (EET), and provide advice and guidance for their social workers or PAs as appropriate.

Halton’s ILACS inspection in March 2020 highlighted that the Virtual School required more capacity to further develop its good work, in particular around support for our Post 16 cohort. As a result, our KS4 and Post 16 Employability Officer works to improve the engagement of Post 16 young people in care and care leavers in EET and to also ensure that they have access to direct support to explore a range of EET options and achieve good post 16 outcomes. This is through the use of our Post 16 PEP and NEET PEP (Not in Education, Employment or Training) process.

Monthly tracking is undertaken to ensure that there are early alerts for young people who are at risk of becoming NEET as well as those currently NEET. The direct work to re-engage this group, undertaken by the KS4 and Post 16 Employability Officer, is to ensure that the views of the young person are heard and that any barriers are addressed when formulating a plan for re-engagement.

Creating the right apprenticeship and traineeship opportunities and support remain a struggle for us in the current financial and political climate. However, the KS4 and Post 16 Employability Officer is working closely with the Apprenticeship Hub to ensure that children in care and care leavers have access to high quality information regarding apprenticeships and also support to enable them to apply if they want to.

Outcomes for our 16–18-year-old young people in care



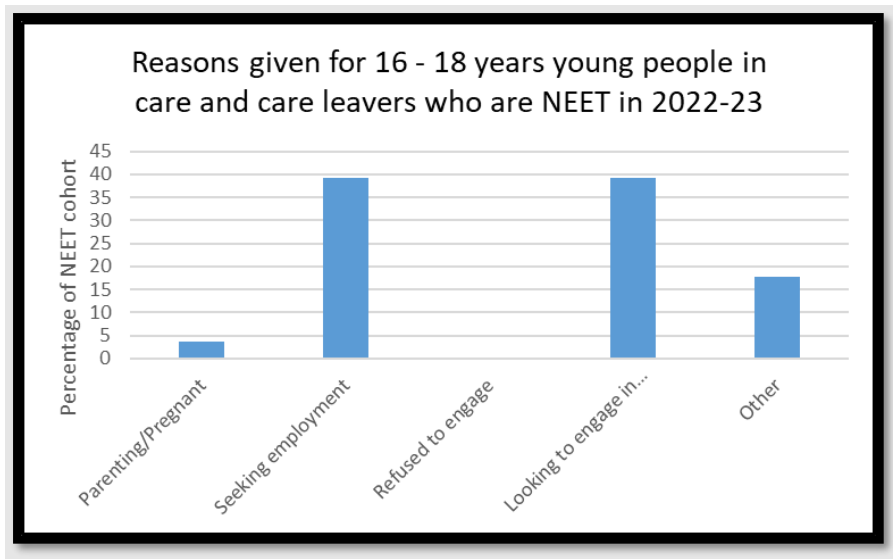
OOB = Out of Borough

UASC = Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Child

EHCP = Education, Health and Care Plan

YOS = Youth Offending Service Involvement

FC = In Foster Care



The overall cohort is 99 young people of which 72% are in education, employment or training.

There are 28 young people who are not in education, employment or training within this cohort.

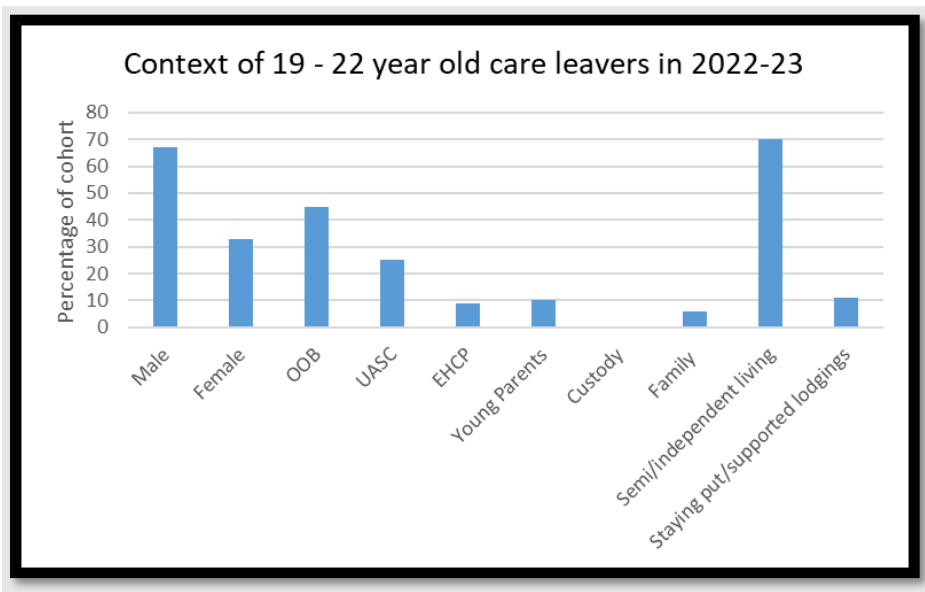
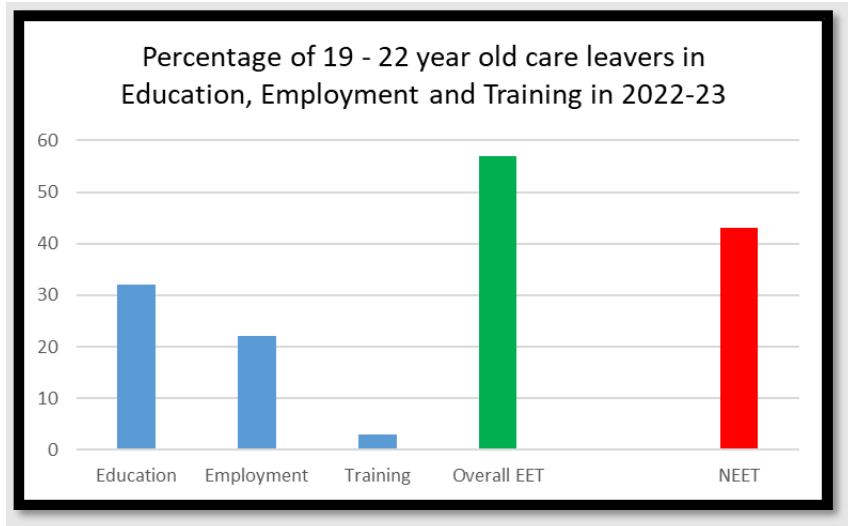
Halton Virtual School liaise with the authorities 14-19 Team referring to Career Connect for bespoke support back into EET via, 1:1 Careers Information, Advice and Guidance (CIAG), job search, applications and CV support.

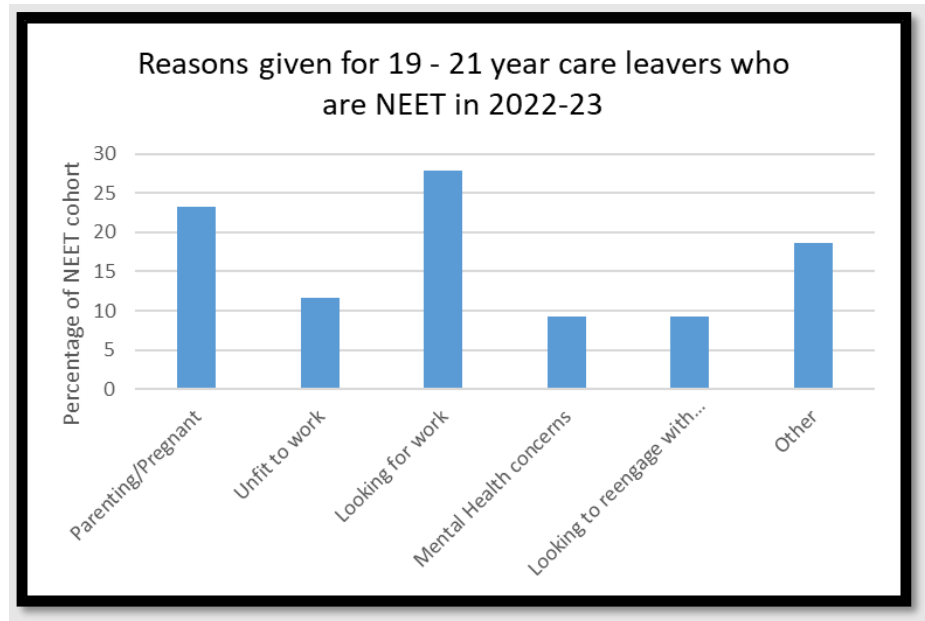
For the more vulnerable of the cohort, support and referrals can be tailored to include Disability Employment Advisers, Princes Trust Volunteers, Talent Match, Housing and Complex Youths.

Of those who refused to engage in education, employment or training, 18 live outside of Halton. There has been an increase in the number of Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children (UASC) who have very limited English and would therefore struggle accessing mainstream Further Education. For each of these young people, they have an ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages) support package in place, with a view to then enrolling them at college once their career aspirations are more fully understood.

During 2022-23 we have established the use of a NEET PEP alongside a NEET panel with our social care and Personal Advisor colleagues to provide further support, actions and accountability for engaging this group of Young People.

Outcomes for our 19- 22-year-old care leavers





Of these 100 young people, 57% are currently accessing education, employment or training (EET) but there are 43 young people in this cohort who are not (NEET).

As a virtual school, for our Care Leaver NEET cohort, we offer signposting to local services such as Halton People into Jobs, Households into Work and Halton Adult Education Service as well as advice and guidance in supporting our Leaving Care cohort alongside our Personal Advisor colleagues.

Personal Education Plans

The statutory guidance 'Promoting the education of looked after and previously looked after children' (February 2018) places a duty on Local Authorities to maintain a Personal Education Plan (PEP) for every child in care in an educational setting up to the end of the school year that s/he turns 18 (Year 13). On coming into care, a PEP must be initiated and completed no later than 20 working days (aspirational goal of within 10) so that it can inform the first statutory review (28 days) and then be reviewed termly from that point on.

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

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

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

The role of the Virtual School is to ensure that there are effective systems in place to ensure social workers, Designated Teachers and schools, carers and IROs understand their role and responsibilities in initiating, developing, reviewing and updating the child's PEP and how they help meet the needs

identified in that PEP; ensure that PEPs are up-to-date, effective and high quality and focus on educational outcomes; ensure that all children in care (aged 3 – 18), wherever they are placed, have such a PEP; undertake regular quality assurance of all PEPs.

The Virtual School track on a termly basis the number and quality of PEPs completed. This is then reported in our termly performance reports to our Governing Body.

Statutory Compliance and Quality Assurance

The PEP completion rate has remained consistently high in spite of the challenging circumstances throughout this year.

	Autumn	Spring	Summer	Full Year
Early Years	100%	100%	100%	100%
Primary	100%	100%	98%	99%
Secondary	96%	89%	95%	93%
Post 16	79%	80%	95%	87%
Combined	89.5%	90%	97%	93.5%
New into Care in Timescale	86%	57%	75%	71.5%

Quality Assurance

The Virtual School quality assure every PEP that is completed each term and provide feedback to schools around areas of improvement. Analysis has shown that in Post 16 and Secondary PEPs it is the SMART targets and impact of Pupil Premium Plus sections that continue to need improvement.

However, the overall percentage of PEPs that are rated as Good or better is increasing each year.

During 22/23 we implemented a new moderation process from Spring 2023 for PEPs to ensure consistency across schools, PEP co-ordinators and age ranges. This resulted in an increase in amber graded PEPs due to increased rigour, but training and support and been provided to respond to this, as well as providing high quality materials to Designated Teachers to support the completion of future PEPs. It is therefore anticipated that figures will continue to increase yet retaining our new higher standards in the quality of submissions.

Good or Better PEPS	Autumn	Spring	Summer	Full Year
Early Years	100%	52%	41%	64%
Primary	84%	62%	81%	76%
Secondary	67%	64%	66%	66%
Post 16	77%	78%	88%	81%
Combined	82%	64%	69%	72%

During 23/24 we will work to enhance the moderation of PEPs to be multi-agency and consistent with neighbouring Virtual Schools.

Our PEP policy and supporting documents expand upon what ‘makes an effective (green or gold) PEP.

Pupil Premium Plus and Wider Funding

This year, the total grant allocated for Halton was £646,261.

47% (£324,130) was spent directly on the children and young people to improve their educational outcomes through distributed payments to schools and education provision.

	2021 - 22	2022- 23
PEP Allocation	27%	33%
Direct YP Support	19%	14%
Training	5%	2%
Centrally Retained	49%	51%

The centrally retained portion is for the attendance service the Virtual School commission, dedicated Education Psychology time (and the training they delivery), speech and language support (from 23/24), purchasing of Boxall Profile licences, and for staff within the Virtual School. It is important to note that this central allocation is vital to ensuring that we are able to track the educational outcomes and also provide support for both schools and children in care.

During the 23/24 academic year, we aim to benchmark the spending of PP+ in comparison to other LAs and Virtual Schools and develop greater measurement of IMPACT of spending, which will feed into the longer-term planning for the virtual school.

School’s use the funding allocated through the PEPs to commission support themselves (including tuition, nurture and emotional literacy support, or 1:1 support and access to additional interventions), to enhance the curriculum, offer opportunities to nurture talents, or support them in their talents and academic interests.

Post Looked After Children

238 school age pupils known to be previously looked after are currently attending Halton schools.

Children and young people who have experienced early life trauma can continue to experience a range of challenges in school. We understand the long-term impact of trauma, and this informs the support and guidance we give to parents, carers and professionals who live and work with previously looked after children. The Virtual School’s relationship with Together for Adoption (TFA) is strong and collaborative working is good. We have participated in half termly meeting sessions convened by TFA.

Additionally, Halton works very closely within a sub region of other Virtual Schools, to upskill staff and share good practice and resources. The quality of Halton Virtual School resources has been recognised and distributed throughout schools in the borough.

Improved knowledge and communication have led to an increase in adoptive parents contacting the Virtual School for a range of advice to reduce difficulties for their children at school, or to recommend school placements that might match their needs. Halton's Virtual School has delivered a training session for those parents who have already adopted, those in the process of being assessed or at the matching stage. Content includes the role of the Virtual School, potential difficulties previously looked after children can experience at key points such as school transition, why additional support is needed and how to access this. Our contribution to the effectiveness of the TFA is enhanced by a member of the Virtual School being a member of the adoption panel.

Areas of Celebration

- Support and advice to schools, adoptive parents, Special Guardianship Order (SGO) carers and local authority social care staff
- Providing a channel of communication and support for parents and carers of children / YP transitioning from LAC to PLAC.
- Signposting, advising, and directing for all PLAC related concerns.
- Despatching of resource documents and instruction manuals to schools for PLAC matters including census guidance and provision suggestions.
- Designated training for adopter parents and SGO carers.
- Working closely in conjunction with adoption agency (TFA) to refine offers and training for parents / carers.
- PLAC updates for schools on our VS newsletter and bulletins
- Updating Virtual School website's PLAC tab so that it can be used as a resource.
- Providing guidance regarding accessing additional support networks and funding for PLAC e.g., ASF, Barnardo's and Resolve.
- Development of a PLAC Personal Education Plan.
- Termly networking meetings with Virtual School PLAC leads in the North-West to share information, ideas and collaborative learning experiences.
- Specific point of contact within the VS team.
- Data collection of school age PLA children / YP.
- Raising the profile of the role of the virtual school for children previously looked after ensuring provision and support is in place.
- Responding to requests for information and advice to parents and colleagues working in adoption services. Support is provided in relation to requests from the Admissions team to place previously looked after children (PLAC) in a suitable education setting.

Areas of Development and Targets for 2023 – 2024

- New flightpath support package for all children leaving care: including active communication with schools, carers and other services following care discharge. This will provide the backbone for an extended offer for Halton’s children who were formerly in care and will be a pro-active vehicle to prevent potential crises occurring.
 - Robust challenge and refinement of local adoption agency (Together for Adoption’s) training calendar.
 - Delivery of a ‘coffee morning’ surgery every two months for adoptive parents and SGO carers connected to Halton.
 - Refinement and rolling out to schools of PEP style document for children formerly in care.
 - In person visits to schools to meet Designated Teachers in order to raise the profile of the Children Formerly Looked After Offer / tangible support for Children with a Social Worker (CWSW).
- *Delivery of joint cross authority training for schools focussed on the ‘adoption journey’. Training to be organised and facilitated by the Northwest Five Borough Partnership (Halton, Cheshire West, Wigan, Warrington, St. Helens).

Children with a Social Worker (CWSW)

The expansion of our role to offer strategic support for all children with a social worker has been a key focus for the Virtual School this year.

We have co-produced and launched a new ‘Team Around the School’ model for children at risk of exclusion within 100% of our secondary schools. We have also enhanced our presence on key multi-agency groups to support those at risk of exploitation.

We have launched the use of CPOMS Engage as a Virtual School to provide instant access to attendance data and enable us to provide immediate support and guidance to schools.

Our Safeguarding Children in Education Officer also provides active support to schools relating to escalations, case support and training for DSLs.

Our key focus for 2023/24 will be the expansion of our use of CPOMS and redefining Educational Neglect across the Authority; working with schools, social care and the safeguarding partnership to review the neglect strategy and where school attendance sits within our continuum of need.

Training and Development

During 2022-23, the Virtual School delivered training and hosted network meetings to 109 delegates from across 105 Schools.

Training and support were provided in relation to three key aims this year, to ensure we get our core business to the highest standard possible, especially following the increased expectations around what constitutes a 'good' PEP:

- New to the Role of Designated Teacher
- Quality PEPs and Smart Targets
- Termly DT Network Meetings

Our Virtual School Conference for Safeguarding Leads, Designated Teachers, Headteacher and Social Care takes place on 27th September 2023 with over 150 delegates expected to join us for what is sure to be a fantastic day's professional development!

Additional learning and literacy support

Halton Virtual School provides a high level of 'outside the classroom' educational support for our children and young people in care.

The Virtual School coordinate additional one-to-one tuition for any Halton child in care who requests support with a subject, regardless of where they are educated or living. The tutors are always qualified teachers and subject specialists and provide regular tuition reports. Whilst our original 1:1 tuition offer has been face to face, we have responded to pupil voice and moved to provide online tuition where preferred.

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

The Virtual School also has a yearly subscription to Storytime Magazine which is sent out each month to identified children in Key Stage 1 and when appropriate to some Key Stage 2 children. The magazines are brightly illustrated and have short stories. The aim of the magazines are to encourage a love of reading at home particularly for those who struggle accessing a book and to improve reading age and vocabulary development. 44 children have had the Storytime magazine this year.

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

2022 – 2023 Virtual School Action Plan

A summary of our Action Plan for the previous academic year

Priority	Action / Areas of Focus	Progress / Desired Outcome	End of year review & RAG Rating
To reduce the proportion of LAC becoming NEET whilst in care or as a care leaver.	Implement the use of a NEET PEP for 16–18-year-olds.	NEET PEP had now been introduced and is completed via the Welfare call system. SMART Target & QA guidance produced to support the completion of these documents to ensure these are completed to a high standard.	P16 NEET PEP, 100% completion in the summer term. This area will continue to be a focus to improve the quality of the NEET PEP document.
	Stabilise team structure within Virtual School for Post-16 support with PEPs and Employability		Clear roles across the whole Virtual School agreed with development of Post 16 Education Officer role to include PEPS.
	Launch Traineeship Model within HBC and broaden post-16 offer (including CSCS Cards and Apprenticeships)	<p>We have developed the traineeship model across the authority which has been a collaborative piece of work between the virtual school and the 14 –19 team. This has supported three young people on to this offer who are working towards completion of their traineeship by the end of the year and will be supported to move to employment, apprenticeship or college course following the completion.</p> <p>The Virtual school was able to commission a CSCS card course and six young people able to successfully complete.</p> <p>April - 4 young people have attended to meet with managers at various placements since February 2023, with 1 YP is due to start w/c 08.05.23 at Waste Services.</p> <p>In collaboration with the 14-19 Team, the Traineeship offer is now extended to placements across 6 Directorates with 2 new potential placements in Adult Services.</p>	<p>The collaboration with both Power in Partnership and 14-19 Team has been very productive in securing the placements and underpinning the educational element to the programme. The Traineeship offer has been launched but requires further embedding to ensure the clear communication is in place with all agencies to allow the young people to maintain their placements and to successfully complete this element.</p> <p>Next steps are to further develop the outcomes for young people on completion of the traineeship and what can be offered as a progression route.</p>
	Improve the completion rate and quality of PEPs within Post-16 sector	<p>The profile of the post 16 PEP has been raised by working closely with social care teams. SMART Target & QA guidance produced for settings.</p> <p>Autumn – Leadership team conducted random moderation of each cohort. Individual feedback provided, followed by team training on PEP QA.</p> <p>Spring – Leadership team conducting mid-term moderation to identify any emerging themes and address with PEP Leads where necessary. Random moderation will be completed at end of term, followed by individual moderation.</p>	<p>There has been an increase in the percentage of PEPs completed in the summer term compared with the same period last year. NEET PEP completion has been 100% in the summer term.</p> <p>There has been a reduction in the quality of the PEP with more being graded as inadequate. This is still going to be an area for development across the next academic year.</p>
Develop a high quality, multi-agency moderation process	Implement PEP deadline each term to allow time for analysis and moderation	Completed and continue to monitor – further challenge will be implemented from summer 2023 to prevent drift and delay. Identified	PEP deadline introduced, will continue to review into next academic year.

of PEPs, to continue to build upon the progress and attainment within all Key Stages		new into care PEP requires greater oversight – allocated team member to lead upon these.	
	Establish internal moderation process for VS team	Autumn – Leadership team conducted random moderation of each cohort. Individual feedback provided, followed by team training on PEP QA. Spring – Leadership team conducting mid-term moderation to identify any emerging themes and address with PEP Leads where necessary. Random moderation will be completed at end of term, followed by individual moderation. Summer – Continue with model identified above and Implement ToR for multi-agency moderation panel	Following initial moderation identifying inconsistent judgements across the Key Stages, further internal training, development of policies and guidance materials have been produced and implemented. Further moderation has demonstrated greater accuracy and consistency of judgements and standardised systems are now embedded.
	Develop ‘model’ PEPs to show good practice, including use of PP+ & analysis of impact	Examples for all age ranges written and shared with settings – Jan 2022. These will be updated for the summer term to reflect any changes to PEP document. SMART Target & QA guidance produced for settings. PP+ Autumn analysis to take place at end of Spring term to analyse impact of spending across the term. Examples of positive impact of PP+ spending will be shared with settings. April 2023 – Analysis completed and included in Performance Report – to be discussed at Team meeting and shared with settings. SMART target training has been rolled out to all designated teacher and lead by PEP leads.	These were shared at network meetings, included in PEP & PP+ policy, will be shared again in September 2023.
	Write a PEP policy and disseminate out to all professionals to provide consistency and clarity.	Written in Dec and will be shared by corporate parenting board – Jan 2023. April 2023 – Shared with Social care & settings, to be uploaded to website	Completed – Jan 2023
	Launch multi-agency moderation panel with feedback disseminated to social care and schools	ToR to be written in Spring/Summer 2023 due to internal moderation process being developed.	Due to internal moderation & capacity issue within other teams, this needs to take place in the next academic year.
	Develop prioritisation and targeted support / attendance of VS at PEPs based on needs-based analysis	Weekly cohort discussions take place between PEP Lead and Team member. Termly cohort analysis takes place at the start of each term to identify settings/young people that need to be a priority. Clear line of escalation needs to be embedded within the team.	Completed – termly meetings held with Deputy Head/Team Leader to prioritise attendance at meetings by PEP Leads.
	Embed a high-quality strategic model for the implementation of the expansion of duties to encompass all children with a social worker (CWSW).	Create a baseline data collection to identify areas of focus and need	January 2023 – At risk register completed and data analysis completed to inform areas of focus for team for Spring 2023. CPOMS Engage commissioned to create instant communication pathway with education provision and enable access to attendance, behaviour and safeguarding data.
Embed the role of the SCiE Officer within the VS and attendance within the HCYPSP.		Achieved – started with the team in January 2023. Resulted in greater consultation of CWSW advice within VS.	
Develop training programme for DSLs, HTs, ECTs, SWs and other key professionals based upon areas of focus identified within data and through discussion		April 2023 – SMART Target training rolled out to all DSLs, DTs & Social workers. New to DT role completed termly. Education Champions Guidance developed for induction of new social workers.	Training focus has prioritised quality of PEPs and Smart Targets. Instead, developed the Team around the School model to prevent suspensions.

	with schools – including trauma informed		DSL training delivered by SCIE Officer. Training calendar with greater focus on CWSW - including trauma informed practice and educational neglect. Bespoke training also embedded through Right to Succeed Project's Education Subgroup – chaired by the HT of the Virtual School.
	Work with 'Education, Inclusion, and Provision division' to develop 'pupils causing concern' meetings and a graduated response for those at risk of perm ex.	Monthly 'pupils causing concern' meetings held with VS Leadership team to discuss CIC cohort and raise any setting/placement concerns. April 2023 –ToR written & shared with social care & health, 1st meeting date to be arranged with Principal Managers Project has evolved and has taken the format of a round robin visit to each secondary provision in the borough. Attendees included senior / pastoral leads from high school, HBC school improvement, Virtual School, Health team, Attendance, SEND Team, Education Psychology. Each session (12 in total) takes the form of an information gathering exercise where behaviour policies, strategies and systems are discussed; achievements celebrated and points for development addressed. Eventually to be followed up with training, support and guidance from the LA.	Completed – May 2023. Impact will be measured from September 2023 by tracking the outcomes for those children discussed and their onward journeys.
	Review the impact of support and liaise with colleagues across the Northwest to measure impact of expansion work.	Joined group for CWSW across NW VS's. To continue to develop through summer 2023	Limited cross-authority work has been completed following conference in Summer 2023 – this will be actioned in Autumn 2023.
Develop a more rigorous and robust performance and quality assurance model, including the implementation of a PEP deadline, greater analysis of standards (including the completion rate for initial PEPs within 10 days) and reintegration within the corporate parenting board.	Develop an improved 'new into care' PEP process	Oct 2022 – new 'initial PEP' process in place. Needs time to embed to see impact. Mar 2022 – Initial PEP process needs more time to embed given that within social care there have been a lot of changes and new social workers need to become more familiar with Halton's PEP process including initial PEPs. . April 2023 – Initial PEP data analysis started being collated and reviewed for impact	Lead for new into care PEPs is now fully trained and leading upon this. Further communication of data and expectations with social are required – scheduled for team meeting in September 2023. Data demonstrates impact on timeliness and quality of new into care PEPs
	Develop a new performance reporting process to provide greater accountability and challenge with schools and social care on a termly basis.	Worked with colleagues to relaunch corporate parenting board and a new working group, which acts as the governance for the VS and receives performance reports – launched in Spring 2023 – will now measure impact and challenge to other services as well as to the VS. Performance clinics within EIP will then also feed into this work from May 2023	Completed – monthly meetings take place with senior social care managers, including a focus on data and performance measures.
	Provide regular reports and updates to the governance board, corporate parenting board and the CIC (children in care) Council	Established and launched with operational group of the Corporate Parenting board – January 2023.	Corporate Parenting Boards Operational Group established and acting as governing body for Virtual School – Terms of Reference identify 3 meetings annually to focus on Virtual School for greater

			accountability, oversight and challenge.
	Write a Belonging Strategy, including for those with an EHCP	Written. To be shared with colleagues in the SEN division before being shared more widely.	Written, needs to be discussed with senior management and shared across the authority. Delayed due to discrepancy between Local Authorities. DfE webinar scheduled for Autumn 23.
	Ensure timescales for QA and PP+ analysis is measurable, and impact is demonstrable.	Timescales implemented in Autumn 2022. Impact of moderation to be analysed in April 2023. April 2023 – Analysis has been completed & included in Performance Monitoring Report	Deadlines have now been established but not yet fully adhered to. This has impacted upon the amount of direct work which can be completed with schools around the quality of documents and delivery of bespoke training. This will be reinforced during Autumn 2023 conference, to bring us in line with other Virtual Schools.
	Implement 'Pupil Progress Meetings' to review attainment and achievement of pupils, using Analytics	Autumn progress meetings arranged for Jan 2023. April 2023 – Progress meetings to take place with PEP Leads in May	Initial meetings have been trialled, but further work to establish this will be required in 2023/24.

Our Plans for 2023-2024

A summary of our plans for this academic year can be found below. These are expanded within our delivery plan for the academic year, including timescales, success measures and identified actions.

To increase the number of Children in Care and Care Leavers in Education, Employment or Training & widen participation whilst in care or as a care leaver.

- Develop and embed a Care Experienced apprenticeship pathway programme with ring fenced investment, funding and commitment.
- Halton to adopt Care Experience as a Protected Characteristic to ensure that all our Care Experienced cohort will not be discriminated against and will continue to be supported in all aspects of their lives with unfettered access to services including, housing, accommodation, health, education, training and employment.
- Strengthen our Post 16 offer through the introduction of the new Post 16 Grant.
- Develop a mentoring program to support young people who are disengaged in education. This program will work directly with young people and carers to support reengagement with education, employment, or training.
- Improve the completion and quality of Post 16 PEPs and NEET PEPs
- The development of a formalised Virtual School offer of support for all Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children (UASC) entering Halton's care. Including:
 - Temporary English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) provision and tuition prior to gaining a substantive educational place.
 - A laptop (registered through the PEP process) following entry into an established and assured educational provider.
 - Hand-in-glove partnership and communication with the engagement teams from outside of borough if a UASC becomes NEET.

- Tracking and support of NEET UASC through Halton's NEET panel and direct abetment from personal assistants.
- Deployment of Halton's 14-19 team should a UASC residing in Halton become NEET.

Develop an 'Engagement Hub' within the Virtual School

- Provide bespoke support, challenge and guidance for all vulnerable children across Halton to remove barriers to learning and provide access or signposting to support, services and training.
- Specialist support for attendance, educational neglect, mental health, challenging behaviours including persistent disruptive behaviour resulting in being at risk of suspension or exclusion.
- Access to commissioned 1:1 work with our education support worker.
- Support for those with SEND to get the right support when it is needed including access to our new S&L service and our educational psychologist.

Enhance our training offer and engagement with Social Care

- Launch our new multi-agency conference model for training and enhancing multi-agency working.
- Launch a new training cycle for social workers to upskill and develop knowledge around the education system for social care colleagues who are working within the remit of 'children with a social worker'. Lead on the training of social care relating to 'Working Together to Improve School Attendance.'
- Redefine Educational Neglect within Halton through the safeguarding partnership.
- As part of our work to improve attendance and reduce suspensions and permanent exclusions, the virtual school are looking to develop a training package to support education colleagues in the area of attachment, trauma and mental health training.

Develop a more rigorous and robust performance and accountability framework.

- Early identification of need, linked to initial PEPs, the launch of new multi-agency 2-year-old PEP with health colleagues and the continued close working relationship/sharing of information with the SEND team through monthly meetings with SEN Team Manager, to escalate cases to avoid drift and delay with statutory assessments.
- Refine and enhance the Virtual School's use of Eclipse and CPOMS
- Develop the use of Performance and Accountability meetings alongside the use of a monthly scorecard for the virtual school to be shared across social care and education.
- Multi-agency moderation panel launch on the 4th of December, linked to better collaboration between education and social care, with a shared vision of the progress of the child.
- Closer working relations with neighbouring local authorities to improve consistency in the use of the Belonging Regulations and peer review of PEPs.
- Appoint a new data and performance analyst / business manager (0.4) to enhance our oversight and accountability through performance indicators.