

Public Document Pack



Executive Board

Thursday, 12 September 2024 2.00 p.m.
The Boardroom, Municipal Building

S. Young

Chief Executive

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

PART 1

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Members are reminded of their responsibility to declare any Disclosable Pecuniary Interest or Other Disclosable Interest which they have in any item of business on the agenda, no later than when that item is reached or as soon as the interest becomes apparent and, with Disclosable Pecuniary interests, to leave the meeting during any discussion or voting on the item.	
3. CORPORATE SERVICES PORTFOLIO	
(A) TREASURY MANAGEMENT ANNUAL REPORT 2023-24	9 - 15

*Please contact Gill Ferguson 0151 511 8059 or
gill.ferguson@halton.gov.uk for further information.
The next meeting of the Committee is on Thursday, 24 October 2024*

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PART II	
<p>In this case the Board has a discretion to exclude the press and public and, in view of the nature of the business to be transacted, it is RECOMMENDED that under Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, having been satisfied that in all the circumstances of the case the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information, the press and public be excluded from the meeting for the following item(s) of business on the grounds that it involves the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraphs 1 and 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A to the Act.</p>	
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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.

EXECUTIVE BOARD

At a meeting of the Executive Board on Thursday, 11 July 2024 in The Boardroom, Municipal Building

Present: Councillors Wharton (Chair), Ball, Harris, M. Lloyd Jones, Nelson, P. Nolan, Thompson and Wright

Apologies for Absence: Councillors Dennett and T. McInerney

Absence declared on Council business: None

Officers present: G. Cook, J. Middleton, S. Young, M. Reaney, E. Dawson, G. Ferguson, W. Rourke and S. Riley

Also in attendance: None

ITEMS DEALT WITH UNDER POWERS AND DUTIES EXERCISABLE BY THE BOARD

Action

EXB12 MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 13 June 2024 were taken as read and signed as a correct record.

LEADER'S PORTFOLIO

EXB13 URGENT DECISIONS

The Board received a report from the Chief Executive, which provided information on urgent decisions taken since the last meeting of the Board.

It was noted that the Council's Constitution gave authority to the Chief Executive to take urgent decisions, in consultation with the Leader of the Council and the Operational Director Finance and/or the Operational Director Legal and Democratic Services, where necessary.

Three urgent decisions had been made since the last meeting of the Board and full details were published on the Council's website.

RESOLVED: That the urgent decisions taken since the last meeting of the Executive Board be noted.

CORPORATE SERVICES PORFOLIO

EXB14 DELIVERY OF MANAGED DETECTION RESPONSE - KEY DECISION

The Board considered a report of the Director ICT and Support Services, which sought approval of a key project that would adopt/deliver innovative security technologies to address the evolving cyber threat landscape, reducing cyber risk and detection time, the primary aim of which would be to improve the security footprint of the Authority.

Following approval of the Halton Digital Strategy by Executive Board in April 2024, the IT Security Team had evaluated eight security offers and three had been chosen for final evaluation. Detailed evaluation had taken place and it was agreed that MDR offered the price point, level of service and had the in house resource to manage and maintain an essential key technology solution.

Reason(s) for Decision

The security of the authority, compliance with the DHLUC Cyber Assessment Framework (CAF)

Alternative Options Considered and Rejected

Following approval of the Halton Digital Strategy by Management Team and Executive Board in March and April 2024, the IT Security Team have evaluated eight security offerings within the marketplace this was narrowed down to three Tier 1 solutions, the offerings in question are cloud based remote management services primarily for threat detection, response and remediation.

Implementation Date

It is intended to initiate a 20 day proof of concept installation 24 June 2024 prior to any go live, this would also comply with additional cyber security requirement prior to the general election.

RESOLVED: That

- 1) the procurement of a MDR (Managed Detection Response) System for a single payment of £638,001, delivering over a five-year contracted term be approved; and

Director ICT and
Support Services

- 2) the investment strategy be approved.

EXB15 TRANSFORMATION PROGRAMME BOARD

The Board considered a report of the Corporate Director – Chief Executive’s Delivery Unit, which outlined a proposed model for a Transformation Programme Board, using Working Party principles. The Council’s Transformation Programme started on 1 April 2023, and it had grown in both scope and complexity. The Programme would be in place until 31 March 2026.

It was proposed that given the operation of the Transformation Programme would require more intensive governance between now and March 2026, a dedicated Transformation Programme Board would need to be established. The Board would:

- consist of the ten Executive Members of the Council, appointed as a Working Party;
- make recommendations to Executive Board as and when necessary; and
- receive recommendations from Policy and Performance Board Topic Groups as part of the Council’s scrutiny arrangements pertaining to Re-imagine Halton Transformation projects.

RESOLVED: That

- 1) the report is noted;
- 2) the establishment of a Transformation Programme Board be approved;
- 3) a Working Party consisting of the ten Executive Members be appointed to form the Transformation Programme Board, and make recommendations to the Executive Board, as required; and
- 4) the Board agrees to request and evaluate progress update reports from other Council Boards and Committees, on current and planned policy development work related to transformation project activity.

Corporate
Director - Chief
Executive's
Delivery Unit

EXB16 PRODUCTIVITY PLAN

The Board considered a report of the Corporate Director – Chief Executive’s Delivery Unit which outlined the requirement for a Productivity Plan to be submitted to the

Department for Levelling Up, Housing & Communities. A copy of a letter from the Minister for Local Government and the Productivity Plan were attached as appendices to the report.

Corporate
Director - Chief
Executive's
Delivery Unit

RESOLVED: That the Board endorses the Productivity Plan for submission to DLUHC

EXB17 2024/25 TO 2026/27 CAPITAL PROGRAMME

The Board considered a report of the Director of Finance, on the Council's total planned capital programme expenditure and associated funding over the next three years.

The 2024/27 Capital Strategy Statement was approved by Council on 6 March 2024. Subsequently, new capital grant allocations had been received and slippage to capital projects for 2023/24 had been rolled forward to 2024/25. The report brought all the separate elements together and outlined the planned capital programme expenditure and funding for the next three years.

RESOLVED: That Council be recommended to approve the updated capital programme for 2024-27, including forecast spend and funding, as set out in Table 1 and Table 2.

Director of
Finance

DEPUTY LEADER/CLIMATE CHANGE PORTFOLIOS

EXB18 KINGSWAY QUARTER, WIDNES TOWN CENTRE - KEY DECISION

The Board considered a report of the Executive Director, Environment and Regeneration, which sought agreement to progress delivery of Kingsway Quarter development. This included capital funding to undertake the demolition of Kingsway Leisure Centre, following its relocation to the new Halton Leisure Centre in 2025.

The Kingsway Quarter was identified as a priority development and a map of the site with an approximate site boundary was attached as Appendix A to the report. Architects had been commissioned to undertake a feasibility study and engage with Planning and Highways, and a series of technical survey and viability appraisals were also being undertaken. It was noted that this predevelopment work had been jointly funded by the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority and would be used to inform site marketing and disposal and prepare a 'Development Framework'.

In order to expediate the site's redevelopment, it was proposed that delegated responsibility should be delegated to the Director of Economy, Enterprise and Property, in consultation with the Deputy Leader and the Climate Change Portfolio holder, for site marketing and disposal on the basis of residential led development.

Reason(s) for Decision

The demolition work will result in significant expenditure by the Council.

Alternative Options Considered and Rejected

For the demolition and site clearance to proceed as soon as the site is vacated, to ensure that the risk of ASB is minimised, the work needed to be commissioned now. A key requirement is a bat survey which can only be carried out at specific times of the year when bats are active between May and September but ideally completed by end of August. Any delay risks Anti-Social Behaviour in the building following its decommissioning and ultimately a delay in the site being offered to market.

Implementation Date

A bat survey work needed to be commissioned mid-July to ensure timescales were met.

RESOLVED: That the Board

- 1) recommend Council adjust the Capital Programme for the sum of £750,000.00 to enable demolition of Kingsway Leisure Centre and associated preparation works to aid formal land disposal;
- 2) endorse the vision for Kingsway Quarter site for residential led development, as set out in para 3.6 of the report and in accordance with the wider Widnes Town Centre Strategy;
- 3) approves delegated authority to Director of Economy, Enterprise and Property, in consultation with Deputy Leader and Portfolio Holder for Climate Change, for site marketing and disposal; and
- 4) authorises the Director for Economy, Enterprise and Property to arrange for all required documentation for the transactions to be completed to the satisfaction of the Director of Legal and Democratic Services, in

Executive Director
Environment &
Regeneration

consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Corporate Services.

CLIMATE CHANGE PORTFOLIO

EXB19 LIVERPOOL CITY REGION STRATEGIC PLACE PARTNERSHIP

The Board considered a report of the Executive Director, Environment and Regeneration, that provided an update on the work of the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority and Homes England, to create a Strategic Place Partnership for the City Region. The new partnership model would provide improved governance arrangements to prioritise and coordinate support and investment for residential-led development and housing renewal projects across the Liverpool City Region. The report sought approval to take the necessary steps to contribute to formation of the new Partnership.

RESOLVED: That the Board

- 1) note the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority and Homes England are working with local authority partners to create a Strategic Place Partnership for the Liverpool City Region;
- 2) approves entering into a Strategic Place Partnership Memorandum of Understanding with partners, leading to production of a Business Plan and new governance arrangements to be established; and
- 3) provides delegated authority to the Director of Economy, Enterprise and Property, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Climate Change to agree details for the formation of the Strategic Place Partnership.

Executive Director
Environment &
Regeneration

EXB20 SCHEDULE 12A OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972 AND THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION) ACT 1985

The Board considered:

- 1) whether Members of the press and public should be excluded from the meeting of the Board during consideration of the following item of business in accordance with Section 100A (4) of the Local Government Act 1972 because it was likely that, in view of the nature of the business to be considered,

exempt information would be disclosed, being information defined in Section 100 (1) and paragraph 3 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972; and

- 2) whether the disclosure of information was in the public interest, whether any relevant exemptions were applicable and whether, when applying the public interest test and exemptions, the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighed that in disclosing the information.

RESOLVED: That as, in all the circumstances of the case, the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighed that in disclosing the information, members of the press and public be excluded from the meeting during consideration of the following items of business in accordance with Section 100A (4) of the Local Government Act 1972 because it was likely that, in view of the nature of the business, exempt information would be disclosed, being information defined in Section 100 (1) and paragraph 3 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972.

DEPUTY LEADER'S PORTFOLIO

EXB21 RUNCORN HEALTH AND EDUCATION HUB

The Board considered a report which sought approval for the refurbishment of the current Runcorn Library building into an NHS Health and Education Hub, with a subsequent lease of the building to the NHS, whilst re-locating the library service temporarily before integration in the extended Brindley Theatre.

RESOLVED: That the Board

- 1) approves the refurbishment of the asset and subsequent lease to NHS on the terms reported in section 3.4;
- 2) authorises the Executive Director, Environment and Regeneration, to arrange for all required documentation for the construction works and lease to the satisfaction of the Director Legal and Democratic, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Corporate Services; and
- 3) authorises the Executive Director, Children and Young People, to arrange for all required documentation for a Collaboration Agreement with

Executive Director
Environment &
Regeneration

the NHS to the satisfaction of the Director of Legal and Democratic Services, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Corporate Services.

ENVIRONMENT AND URBAN RENEWAL PORTFOLIO

EXB22 REPLACEMENT CREMATOR WIDNES CREMATORIUM - KEY DECISION

The Board considered a report which sought approval for the procurement and installation of a new cremator at Widnes Crematorium.

RESOLVED: That

- 1) delegated authority be granted to Executive Director – Environment and Regeneration, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Environment and Urban Renewal, to procure a replacement cremator and associated installation, service and maintenance contract; and
- 2) Council be recommended to include £308,000, in the 2024/25 Capital Programme for the scheme, as outlined in section 5.0 of the report.

Executive Director
Environment &
Regeneration

MINUTES ISSUED: 16 July 2024

CALL-IN: 23 July 2024 at 5.00 pm.

Any matter decided by the Executive Board may be called in no later than 5.00pm on 23 July 2024.

Meeting ended at 2.32 p.m.

Agenda Item

REPORT TO:	Executive Board
DATE:	12 September 2024
REPORTING OFFICER:	Finance Director
PORTFOLIO:	Corporate Services
TITLE:	Treasury Management Annual Report 2023-24
WARDS:	Borough-wide

1.0 PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide an update regarding activities undertaken on the money market as required by the Treasury Management Policy.

2.0 RECOMMENDATION: That

- 1) **the report be noted.**

3.0 SUPPORTING INFORMATION**Economic Outlook**

- 3.1 The following analysis of the economic situation has been provided by Capita Asset Services, the Council's treasury management advisors.
- 3.2 Against a backdrop of stubborn inflationary pressures, the Russian invasion of Ukraine, and war in the Middle East, UK interest rates have continued to be volatile right across the curve, from Bank Rate through to 50-year gilt yields, for all of 2023/24.
- 3.3 The Bank of England sprung no surprises in their March meeting, leaving interest rates at 5.25% for the fifth time in a row and, despite no MPC members no longer voting to raise interest rates, it retained its relatively hawkish guidance.
- 3.4 The UK economy has started to perform a little better in Q1 2024 but is still recovering from a shallow recession through the second half of 2023. Indeed, Q4 2023 saw negative GDP growth of -0.3% while year on year growth was also negative at -0.2%.

- 3.5 Unemployment is currently under 4%, against a backdrop of still over 900k of job vacancies, and annual wage inflation is running at above 5%. With gas and electricity price caps falling in April 2024, the CPI measure of inflation - which peaked at 11.1% in October 2022 – is now due to slide below the 2% target rate in April and to remain below that Bank of England benchmark for the next couple of years, according to Capital Economics.
- 3.6 Shoppers largely shrugged off the unusually wet weather in February, whilst rising real household incomes should support retail activity throughout 2024. Furthermore, the impact of higher interest rates on household interest payments is getting close to its peak, even though fixed rate mortgage rates on new loans have shifted up a little since falling close to 4.5% in early 2024.
- 3.7 As for equity markets, the FTSE 100 has risen to nearly 8,000 and is now only 1% below the all-time high it reached in February 2023. The modest rise in UK equities in February was driven by strong performances in the cyclical industrials and consumer discretionary sectors, whilst communications and basic materials have fared poorly. Despite its performance, the FTSE 100 is still lagging behind the S&P 500, which has been at an all-time high for several weeks.

Interest Rate Forecast

- 3.8 The following forecast has been provided by Capita Asset Services.

Link Group Interest Rate View	25.03.24												
	Mar-24	Jun-24	Sep-24	Dec-24	Mar-25	Jun-25	Sep-25	Dec-25	Mar-26	Jun-26	Sep-26	Dec-26	Mar-27
BANK RATE	5.25	5.25	4.75	4.25	3.75	3.25	3.00	3.00	3.00	3.00	3.00	3.00	3.00
3 month ave earnings	5.30	5.30	4.80	4.30	3.80	3.30	3.00	3.00	3.00	3.00	3.00	3.00	3.00
6 month ave earnings	5.20	5.10	4.60	4.10	3.70	3.30	3.10	3.10	3.10	3.10	3.10	3.10	3.10
12 month ave earnings	5.00	4.90	4.40	3.90	3.60	3.20	3.10	3.10	3.10	3.10	3.10	3.20	3.20
5 yr PWLB	4.50	4.40	4.30	4.20	4.10	4.00	3.80	3.70	3.60	3.60	3.50	3.50	3.50
10 yr PWLB	4.70	4.50	4.40	4.30	4.20	4.10	4.00	3.90	3.80	3.70	3.70	3.70	3.70
25 yr PWLB	5.20	5.10	4.90	4.80	4.60	4.40	4.30	4.20	4.20	4.10	4.10	4.10	4.10
50 yr PWLB	5.00	4.90	4.70	4.60	4.40	4.20	4.10	4.00	4.00	3.90	3.90	3.90	3.90

During the period of this report the bank base rate remained at 5.25%.

Treasury Management Annual Report 2023-24

3.9 The borrowing rates from September 2023 to March 2024 are shown below:

Short Term Borrowing Rates

	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Base Rate	5.25	5.25	5.25	5.25	5.25	5.25	5.25
Call Money (Market)	5.15	5.20	5.15	5.20	5.25	5.30	5.10
1 Month (Market)	5.25	5.25	5.30	5.40	5.15	5.25	5.25
3 Month (Market)	5.55	5.50	5.35	5.40	5.25	5.25	5.20

Longer Term Borrowing Rates

	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
1 Year (PWLB)	5.68	5.57	5.51	5.13	5.32	5.48	5.36
10 Year (PWLB)	5.25	5.29	4.96	4.37	4.73	4.96	4.74
25 Year (PWLB)	5.66	5.72	5.43	4.93	5.29	5.42	5.22

3.10 Market rates are based on rates provided by Reuters and PWLB rates are for new loans based on principal repayable at maturity. The rates are shown for the end of each month.

Borrowing and Investments

Turnover During the Period

	No of deals	Turnover £m
Short Term Borrowing	7	45
Short Term Investments	13	125

Position at Month End

	Sep £m	Oct £m	Nov £m	Dec £m	Jan £m	Feb £m	Mar £m
Total Borrowing	182	182	182	182	182	192	207
Total Investments	(112)	(107)	(102)	(94)	(99)	(89)	(92)
Call Account Balance	(12)	(15)	(18)	(12)	(6)	(14)	(13)

Investment Benchmarking

Benchmark	Benchmark Return %	Performance Oct - Mar %	Investment Interest Earned £000
1 day	5.19	4.90	383
1 month	5.26	4.61	30
3 month	5.36	5.53	1,190
6 month	5.36	5.37	116
9 month	5.35	5.30	208
12 month	5.35	5.35	301
Over 12 months	-	2.95	355
Property Fund	-	4.24	226
Total			2,809

- 3.11 The table above shows that the Council is close to the benchmark on all durations during 2023-24. The one day is performance is slightly under benchmark due to the rates in the Council's call accounts paying lower than benchmark, but it can be seen on the 3 months (where the majority of Council's investments have been held) the Council have over achieved the benchmark rates. If rates continue to drop through 2024-25 we should see longer term investments over-achieving against benchmarks as rates fall and the Council still hold investments at the previous higher rates

Budget Monitoring

- 3.12 Due to the interest rates being higher than predicted through 2023-24, and the council holding higher levels of investments, the Council over achieved on interest received by £1.764m. Due to the repayment of the LOBO (see below) and a lower of cash predicted during the last quarter of the year, the Council did need to undertake some short-term borrowing resulting in an overspend against budget of £0.139m, but this has resulted in an outturn variance of £1.625m from loans and investments during 2023/24.

Net Interest at 31st March 2024			
	Annual Budget £000	Actual £000	Variance £000
Investments	(3,560)	(5,324)	1,764
Borrowings	1,099	1,238	(139)
Total	(2,461)	(4,086)	1,625

New Long-Term Borrowing

- 3.13 Due to the Council's LOBO (Lender's Option, Borrower's Option) with Commerzbank being repaid in February 2024, the Council replaced this with a short-short term PWLB loan (13 months) maturing in April 2025. This will be

replaced with long-term borrowing when long-term rates drop further. The Council has not taken any further long term borrowing during the period.

Policy Guidelines

- 3.14 The Treasury Management Strategy Statement (TMSS) for 2023/24, which includes the Annual Investment Strategy, was approved by the Council on 08 March 2023. It sets out the Council's investment priorities as being:
- Security of capital;
 - Liquidity; and
 - Yield
- 3.15 The Council will also aim to achieve the optimum return (yield) on investments commensurate with proper levels of security and liquidity. In the current economic climate and the heightened credit concerns it is considered appropriate to keep the majority of investments short term and to ensure all investments are in line with credit rating methodology.

Treasury Management Indicators

- 3.16 It is a statutory duty for the Council to determine and keep under review the affordable borrowing limits. The Council's approved Treasury and Prudential Indicators were set out in the Treasury Management Strategy Statement and are reviewed in Appendix 1.

Debt Rescheduling

- 3.17 No debt rescheduling was undertaken during the quarter.

4.0 POLICY IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 None.

5.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 The financial implications are as set out in the report.

6.0 IMPLICATIONS FOR THE COUNCIL'S PRIORITIES

6.1 Improving Health, Promoting Wellbeing and Supporting Greater Independence

There are no direct implications, however, the revenue budget and capital programme support the delivery and achievement of all the Council's priorities.

6.2 Building a Strong, Sustainable Local Economy

There are no direct implications, however, the revenue budget and capital programme support the delivery and achievement of all the Council's priorities.

6.3 Supporting Children, Young People and Families

There are no direct implications, however, the revenue budget and capital programme support the delivery and achievement of all the Council's priorities.

6.4 Tackling Inequality and Helping Those Who Are Most In Need

There are no direct implications, however, the revenue budget and capital programme support the delivery and achievement of all the Council's priorities.

6.5 Working Towards a Greener Future

There are no direct implications, however, the revenue budget and capital programme support the delivery and achievement of all the Council's priorities.

6.6 Valuing and Appreciating Halton and Our Community

There are no direct implications, however, the revenue budget and capital programme support the delivery and achievement of all the Council's priorities.

7.0 RISK ANALYSIS

7.1 The main risks with Treasury Management are security of investment and volatility of return. To combat this, the Council operates within a clearly defined Treasury Management Policy and annual borrowing and investment strategy, which sets out the control framework

8.0 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES

8.1 None.

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

Treasury and Prudential Indicators – 2023/24

Prudential Indicators	2022/23	2023/24	
	Full Year Actual £000	Original Estimate £000	Full Year Actual £000
Capital Expenditure	27,549	50,230	44,202
Net Financing Need for the Year <i>(Borrowing Requirement)</i>	182	19,719	21,014
Increase / (Decrease) in CFR <i>(Capital Financing Requirement)</i>	(10,248)	8,090	1,861
Ratio of Financing Costs to Net Revenue Stream <i>(Proportion of cost of borrowing to Council's net revenue)</i>	6.1%	4.4%	3.6%
External Debt <i>(Borrowing plus PFI and lease liabilities)</i>	540,350	547,413	552,408
Operational Boundary <i>(Limit of which external debt is not expected to exceed)</i>	552,679	555,355	555,355
Authorised Limit <i>(Limit beyond which external debt is prohibited)</i>	626,305	634,395	634,395

Upper limit for principal sums invested for longer than 1 year	31/03/2023 £000	31/03/2024 £000
Upper limit of principal sums invested for longer than 1 year	40,000	40,000
Investments in excess of 1 years outstanding at year-end'	26,700	25,000

REPORT TO:	Executive Board
DATE:	12 September 2024
REPORTING OFFICER:	Finance Director
PORTFOLIO:	Resources
SUBJECT:	2024/25 Spending as at 31 July 2024 and Medium Term Financial Forecast
WARD(S):	Borough-wide

1.0 PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To report the Council's overall revenue net spend position as at 31 July 2024 together with a 2024/25 forecast outturn position. Report also includes an update on the Council's medium term financial forecast over the four years to 2028/29.

2.0 RECOMMENDED: That;

- (i) All spending is limited to only absolutely essential items;**
- (ii) Executive Directors continue the urgent action to identify areas where spending can be reduced or suspended for the remainder of the current financial year, or additional funding secured;**
- (iii) Council be requested to approve the revisions to the Capital Programme as set out in paragraph 3.21.**
- (iv) The updated Medium Term Financial Forecast included at Appendix 5 is noted.**

3.0 SUPPORTING INFORMATION

Revenue Spending

- 3.1 Appendix 1 presents a summary of spending against the operational revenue budget up to 31 July 2024 and Appendix 2 provides detailed figures for each individual Department. In overall terms, net Council spending as at 31 July 2024 is £6.561m over budget. The outturn forecast for the year estimates that net spending will be over budget by £19.777m if no corrective action is taken.
- 3.2 The forecast outturn overspend is reduced from the amount of £20.353m reported to Management Team at the end of May 2024. The position has

largely been reduced by a revised estimate of interest receivable, due to cash balances being higher than estimated for the first half of the financial year.

- 3.3 The forecast position is of great concern and action to reduce net spend must be taken immediately. Without action being taken the Council will not be in a position to provide a balanced budget by financial year-end.
- 3.4 Available reserves to the Council (General and Earmarked) is £11.581m. This level is well below that required to help provide a balanced budget position.
- 3.5 The figures reflect a prudent yet realistic view of spend and income levels through to the end of the year. Work will continue to progress on updating the financial position as more information is made available. Included within the forecast position is an estimate to allow for the 2024/25 pay deal based on latest available information. There is a risk that the overspend will increase further if the agreed pay deal is above the current offer.
- 3.6 DHLUC officers have been made aware of the Council's financial position and will continue to be updated. Discussions have also been undertaken with the LGA who have agreed to carry out a financial assurance review for the Council which is likely to cover a number of areas including robustness of the medium term financial strategy, reserves and demand pressures.
- 3.7 The largest pressure on the budget continues to be within the Children & Families Department, net spend for the year is forecast to be £8.771m (21.5%) above 2023/24 actual spend. There continue to be significant increases in the forecasts relating to salary (agency) costs and children in care.
- 3.8 The use and cost of agency staff continues to be one of the main contributing factors to the overspend position for the year. This is mostly evident within the Children & Families Department and the Care Homes Division. Initiatives and support from the Transformation Programme are ongoing to reduce reliance upon agency staff.
- 3.9 Analysis of agency spend for the year, together with comparative analysis of 2023/24 costs, is included in the table below.

	2024/25					2023/24
	April £'000	May £'000	June £'000	July £'000	Total £'000	Total £'000
Adult Social Care	349	558	434	602	1,943	5,927
Chief Executives Delivery Unit	36	55	41	51	183	0
Children & Family Services	331	525	427	550	1,833	6,157
Community & Greenspace	17	53	46	56	172	336
Economy, Enterprise & Property	35	21	30	35	121	343
Education, Inclusion & Provision	20	37	42	35	134	393
Finance	0	12	2	0	14	56
Legal & Democratic Services	59	108	86	99	352	814
Planning & Transportation	32	39	23	24	118	206
Public Health & Public Protection	3	4	4	3	14	21
Total	882	1,412	1,135	1,455	4,884	14,253

3.10 Within the approved budget for the year is a £4m target against the Transformation Programme. To date budget savings of £0.126m have been identified against this target. In addition, the Transformation Delivery Unit (TDU) have identified some reductions in mitigating and controlling costs although these will not lead to an overall reduction in the budgeted target.

3.11 The forecast overspend is significantly above that which has been recorded in recent years. Whilst the current year net budget for the Council has increased by £7.7m (5.45%), this is well below the forecast increase in costs, currently estimated as an increase of £21.868m (14.8%).

Revenue - Operational Spending

3.12 Operational net spending for the first two months of the year is higher than the budget to date by £6.561m Based on current forecasts it is estimated net spend will be over budget for the year by £19.777m if no further corrective action is taken.

3.13

Within the overall budget forecast position for the quarter, the key budget variances are as follows;

(i) **Children and Families Department**

Employee Expenditure

Employee costs are over budget profile at the end of financial year 2024/25 by £3.391m. There continues to be heavy reliance on agency staff to fill vacancies across the structure, including Social Worker and Practice Lead positions. This along with 11 agency staff recruited in addition to the current staffing structure is the cause for the overspend.

The current number of agency staff within the department is 63. Within the last month there have been a number of requests approved for further agency support. If all requests are filled the number of agency staff will likely increase to 72 in future months.

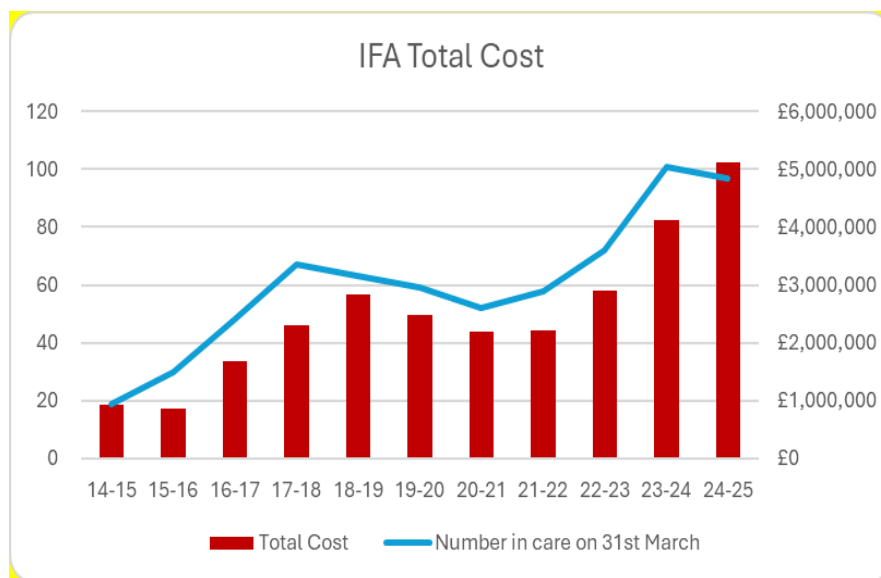
Various workstreams are in place to target the difficulties in recruitment, including a recruitment working group, Social Work Academy and a local offer for employees offering recruitment and retention bonuses for those working in Children’s Social Care.

Agency spend forecast across the department is expected to remain high for financial year 2024/25, at 31 July 2024 agency spend was £1.833m

Foster Care

Increasing numbers of children in care and insufficient in-house fostering provision has meant increased reliance on IFA. Higher numbers of children placed within IFA provision and increased IFA rates has resulted in an estimated forecast for the end of £0.869m over budget. This has reduced by £0.377m since 31 May 24.

A number of IFA placements have become unstable which has resulted in children being moved to more expensive residential accommodation.



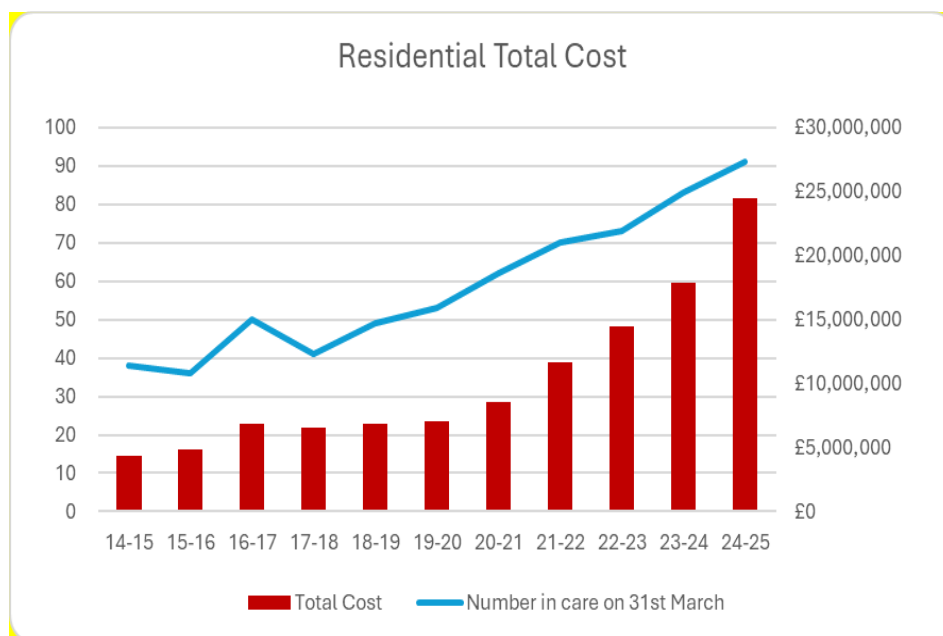
Residential Care

Out of Borough Residential Care continues to be the main budget pressure for the Children and Families Department as the costs of residential care have continued to rise year on year.

Provision	Weekly Costs	31-Jul-24		31 May 2024	
		No. Placed	Estimated cost for the year	No. Placed	Estimated cost for the year
Residential	£2000 - £3000	2	197,563	2	207,486.86
Residential	£3001 - £4000	14	2,576,320	14	2,397,335.01
Residential	£4001 - £5000	12	2,707,103	10	2,373,330.18
Residential	£5001 - £15000	38	15,556,103	35	14,767,645.72
Secure	£6397 - £8137				
Leaving Care	£443 - £7175	19	2,742,900	19	2,680,340.56
Parent & Child	£2000 - £5500	6	663,491	8	1,003,592.01
Total:		91	24,443,479	88	23,429,730.34

At the end of financial year 24/25 the estimated overspend is £6.626m over budget for residential placements. The number of children since last reported has also increased. Overall cost of packages are increasing due to the complexity of support the young people require as well as standard package cost increases.

The graph below illustrates the rising costs of Residential Care, for consistency this does not include the costs of Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children (UASC) as these costs were not included in previous years.



(ii) **Adult Social Care Directorate**

Community Care

From the information available and estimates for inflation and demographic increases, suggest an overspend of circa £2.1m for Community Care services at 31st March 2025.

The pressures on the budget continue from the previous financial year and are analysed in more detail below:

Residential & Nursing Care

There are currently 416 residents in permanent external residential/nursing care as at the end of July 2024 compared to the 2023/24 average of 390 this is an increase of 6.6%.

The current average cost of a package has increased from £789 (2023/24 average) to £887 an increase of 12.4%.

Extra 1 to 1 hours in external care homes cost £15,396 per week and the forecast to year end is currently circa £0.694m. Last year 2023/24, the cost of 1-1 care was £0.255m, therefore a forecast increase of £0.439m year on year.

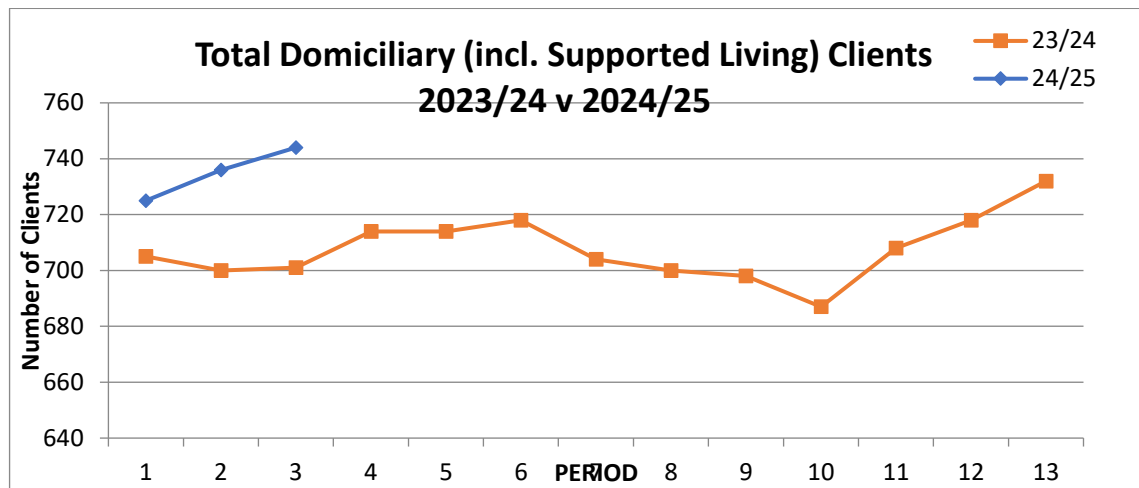
The table below shows the number of permanent external packages over £1,000 per week.

Weekly Cost £	No of Permanent PoCs			
	PERIOD 1	PERIOD 2	PERIOD 3	PERIOD 4
1000-1999	52	53	53	53
2000-2999	18	18	16	17
3000-3999	5	5	5	5
4000-4999	7	8	8	8
5000-5999	3	2	2	2
6000-6999	1	2	1	2
7000-7999		1	1	1
>10,000	1	1	1	1
Total	87	90	87	89

Domiciliary Care & Supported Living

Count and spend for this service group is only available up to the end of June 2024. There are 744 service users receiving a package of care at home compared to the 2023/24 average of 707, an increase of 5.2%. The average cost of a package of care is currently £494.96 compared to the 2023/24 average of £409.19.

The graph below illustrates the demand for the service from April 2023 to date.



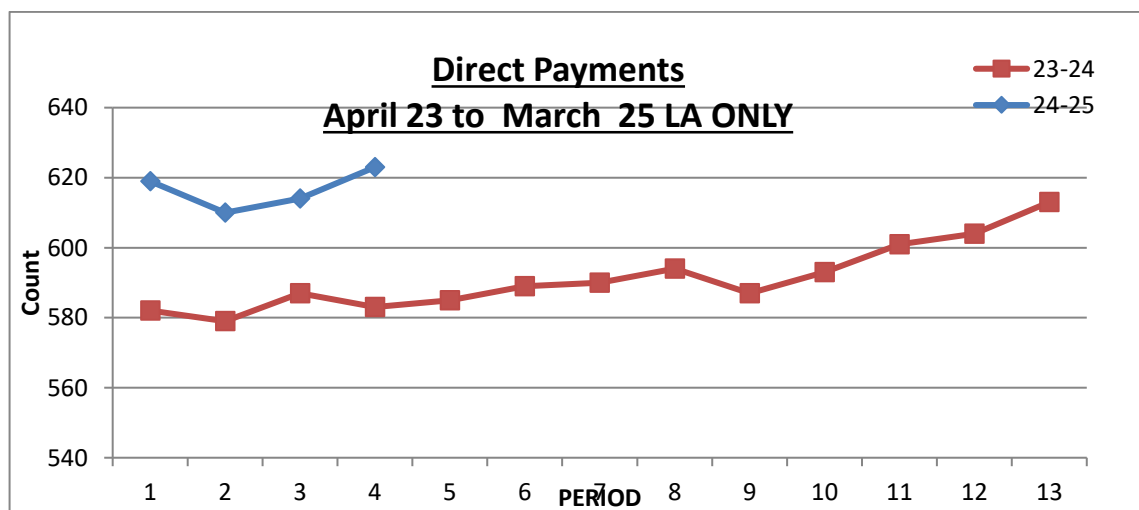
Direct Payments

623 clients received a Direct Payment (DP) in July compared to the 23/24 average of 591, an increase of 5.4%

The average cost of a package of care is currently £508.43. an increase of 4.1% on last year's average of £488.39.

There are currently 161 service users receiving a DP to pay care providers that have an hourly rate higher than the Councils domiciliary contracted rate of £21.18. This is exerting additional pressure on the budget. This budget has for many years experienced great pressure and costs will continue to exceed budget with demand at current levels.

The forecast position for Direct Payments assumes an amount of £1.4m will be recovered from users following an audit to seek assurance the DP is spent in line with care and support needs.



Care Homes

Expenditure across the 4 Council run care homes is forecast to be £1.290m above budget at 31 March 2025. This is a reduction from the overspend position of £1.767m forecast at the end of May 2024. The position is largely as a result of the pressures relating to staff recruitment.

Employee related expenditure is over budget profile at the end of July 2024 by £0.180m with the year-end outturn position forecast to be £1.168m over budget.

It has been assumed within the outturn forecast that the pay award offer of £1,290 will be accepted. This has been included within the forecasted outturn position. The additional cost to the Care Home division over and above the budget set aside for the pay award will be £0.188m.

Recruitment of staff is a continued pressure across the care homes. There remains a high number of staff vacancies and therefore a proactive rolling recruitment exercise is ongoing.

Due to pressures with recruitment and retention in the sector, heavy reliance is being placed on overtime and expensive agency staff to support the care homes. At the end of July 2024 total agency spend across the care homes reached £1.076m, the cost of this has partially been offset by staff vacancies.

(iii) Education, Inclusion and Provision

Schools Transport is the main budget pressure for Education, Inclusion and Provision. The Council has a statutory responsibility to provide Special Educational Needs (SEN) pupils with transport. This is split into two main areas of SEN pupils attending In Borough and out of Borough Schools.

The table below illustrates the split between the two areas, and how each areas spend compares to the budget.

2024-25 as at Jun-24					
Area	No Users	Budget £000	Projected Spend £000	Variance £000	Average Cost per User
In Borough	448	1,826	1,692	135	£3,777
Out of Borough	126	434	1,258	(824)	£9,983
Total	574	2,261	2,950	(689)	

A further pressure on the departmental budget for the year relates to Psychology and SEN Assessment services provided to schools.

For a number of years these costs have been funded by the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG). The Department for Education have recently advised that these costs cannot be DSG funded as they are outside of scope in meeting the grant conditions. It is therefore currently assumed this cost will fall upon the Council's budget at a cost of £0.860m, until at such time other sources of funding are found.

Collection Fund

- 3.14 Council tax collection for the year to 31 July 2024 is 36.23%, down 0.12% on this point last year. Cash collection for the year to date is £30.2m, this includes £1.0m (5.8%) collected in relation to previous year debt.
- 3.15 Business rates collection for the year to 31 July 2024 is 41.59%, up 2.26% on this point last year. Cash collection for the year is £29.4m, this includes £1.0m (12.4%) collected in relation to previous year debt.

Review of Reserves

- 3.16 As at 31 July 2024 the Council's General Reserve is unchanged from the previous year at £5.149m, which represents 3.44% of the Council's 2024/25 net budget. This is considered to be a minimum balance level.
- 3.17 There is a regular review of earmarked reserves undertaken to determine whether they can be released in part or in full to assist with funding the Council's current financial challenges, recognising that this only provides one-year solutions.

Reserves Summary

- 3.18 A summary breakdown of Council reserves is presented in the table below, this shows the balance of reserves as at 31 July 2024.

Summary of General and Earmarked Reserves	
Reserve	Reserve Value £m
Corporate:	
General Fund	5.149
Transformation Fund	6.432
Capital Reserve	0.499
Insurance Reserve	1.000
Specific Projects:	0
Adult Social Care	0.569
Fleet Replacement	0.328
Highways Feasibility Costs	0.964
Local Development Framework	0.494
Community & Environment	0.253
Mersey Valley Golf Club	0.483

Mersey Gateway	27.560
Various Other	0.668
Grants:	0
Building Schools for the Future	6.529
Public Health	1.881
Supporting Families Performance Payments	0.534
Children's & Education	0.741
Domestic Abuse	1.186
Enterprise & Employment	0.851
Various Other	0.767
	0
Total Earmarked Reserves	56.888

3.19 Held within the Transformation Reserve is £6.432m, set aside to provide funding for providing future balanced budgets and a range of potential spending commitments in future years associated with delivering the Transformation Programme.

3.20 The above table shows the diminishing level of reserves available to assist with funding any future budget overspends and balancing future budgets. Only the £11.581m of the General Fund and Transformation Reserve could now be used for these purposes, as all remaining reserves are committed for specific purposes. It is therefore essential over the coming year that councilwide spending is brought in line with budget and the Transformation Programme delivers the required budget savings.

Capital Spending

3.21 Council approved the 2024/25 Capital Programme on 6 March 2024. Since then the capital programme has been revised to reflect a number of changes in spending profiles and funding as schemes have developed. Appendix 3 brings all the separate elements together and report on the Council's total planned capital programme expenditure over the next three years. The schemes which have been revised within the programme (and the reasons for doing so) are as follows:

- i. Halton Carers Centre Refurbishment – Scheme not going ahead in current financial year so removed from 2024/25 programme.
- ii. Adult Social Care Schemes – Reallocation of Disabled Facilities Grant within Adult Social Care Schemes
- iii. Equality Act Improvement Works/Town Deal – Transfer of allocation to the Brindley Capital Scheme within the Town Deal
- iv. Runcorn Waterfront Residential Development - Slippage of allocation into 25/26

- v. Highways Schemes – Revised allocations due to 23/24 carry forwards being brought into 24/25 as schemes still progressing.
- 3.22 Capital spending at 30 June 2024 totalled £8.2m, which represents 12.5% of the total Capital Programme of £65.7m (which assumes a 20% slippage between years).

Approved Savings

- 3.23 On 02 February 2023, Council approved saving measures against the budget for the three year period 01 April 2023 to 31 March 2026. Appendix 4 lists those savings covering 2024/25 and 2025/26, together with RAG rated information on progress to date with developing and implementing the target savings.

Medium Term Financial Forecast

- 3.24 Attached at Appendix 5 is an update to the Council's medium term financial forecast. It covers the 4 year period from 2025/26 to 2028/29.
- 3.25 It presents the forecast position on a prudent basis, identifying a budget gap of £62.478m over the four year period. Further information is provided in the Appendix in terms of how the funding gap has been calculated.
- 3.26 The forecast position is provided before the implementation of savings against the Transformation Programme. In February 2023 Council had agreed a target of £20m against the Transformation Programme. It is clear that this target is insufficient to help provide a future balanced budget especially in light of lack of available reserves.
- 3.27 The forecast position is constantly being updated as further information comes to light regarding available funding, demand pressures, inflation and level of the current year overspend.

4.0 CONCLUSIONS

- 4.1 As at 31 July 2024, net revenue spend is forecast to be £19.777m over the budget to date.
- 4.2 It is clear Council reserves alone are insufficient to meet this pressure. Urgent corrective should be taken as soon as possible across all Council services to identify spend reductions.
- 4.3 Departments should ensure that all spending continues to be limited to what is absolutely essential throughout the remainder of the year, to ensure that the forecast outturn overspend is minimised as far as possible and future spending is brought in line with budget.

5.0 POLICY IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 None.

6.0 IMPLICATIONS FOR THE COUNCIL'S PRIORITIES

6.1 Improving Health, Promoting Wellbeing and Supporting Greater Independence

There are no direct implications, however, the revenue budget and capital programme support the delivery and achievement of all the Council's priorities.

6.2 Building a Strong, Sustainable Local Economy

There are no direct implications, however, the revenue budget and capital programme support the delivery and achievement of all the Council's priorities.

6.3 Supporting Children, Young People and Families

There are no direct implications, however, the revenue budget and capital programme support the delivery and achievement of all the Council's priorities.

6.4 Tackling Inequality and Helping Those Who Are Most In Need

There are no direct implications, however, the revenue budget and capital programme support the delivery and achievement of all the Council's priorities.

6.5 Working Towards a Greener Future

There are no direct implications, however, the revenue budget and capital programme support the delivery and achievement of all the Council's priorities.

6.6 Valuing and Appreciating Halton and Our Community

There are no direct implications, however, the revenue budget and capital programme support the delivery and achievement of all the Council's priorities.

7.0 RISK ANALYSIS

7.1 There are a number of financial risks within the budget. However, the Council has internal controls and processes in place to ensure that spending remains in line with budget as far as possible.

7.2 A budget risk register of significant financial risks is maintained and has been updated.

8.0 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES

8.1 None.

9.0 CLIMATE CHANGE IMPLICATIONS

9.1 None

10.0 LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS UNDER SECTION 100D OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1072

10.1 There are no background papers under the meaning of the Act

Summary of Revenue Spending to 31 July 2024

APPENDIX 1

Directorate / Department	Annual Budget £'000	Budget To Date £'000	Actual To Date £'000	Variance (Overspend) £'000	July 2024 Forecast Outturn (o'spend) £'000	May 2024 Forecast Outturn (o'spend) £'000
Adult Social Care	22,648	7,266	7,247	19	0	0
Care Homes`	10,081	3,395	3,614	(219)	(1,290)	(1,767)
Community Care	16,424	6,799	7,516	(717)	(2,128)	(2,141)
Complex Care Pool	10,704	-447	-489	42	128	48
Adults Directorate	59,857	17,013	17,888	(875)	(3,290)	(3,860)
Finance	5,031	2,492	2,328	164	(219)	(114)
Legal & Democratic Services	-618	-244	186	(430)	(858)	(678)
ICT & Support Services	2,278	943	1,104	(161)	(89)	(78)
Chief Executives Delivery Unit	1,170	6	4	2	6	(1)
Chief Executives Directorate	7,861	3,197	3,622	(425)	(1,160)	(871)
Children & Families	38,193	10,110	14,198	(4,088)	(11,617)	(11,472)
Education, Inclusion & Provision	9,771	8,662	9,249	(587)	(1,676)	(1,612)
Childrens Directorate	47,964	18,772	23,447	(4,675)	(13,293)	(13,084)
Community & Greenspace	25,531	2,426	2,475	(49)	324	311
Economy, Enterprise & Property	2,259	521	527	(6)	25	(1)
Planning & Transportation	8,405	1,250	1,204	46	(53)	(58)
Environment & Regeneration Directorate	36,195	4,197	4,206	(9)	296	252
Corporate & Democracy	-3,842	-1,820	-1,176	(644)	(2,373)	(2,912)
Public Health Directorate	1,461	-2,580	-2,647	67	43	122
Total Operational Net Spend	149,496	38,779	45,340	(6,561)	(19,777)	(20,353)

Adult Social Care

APPENDIX 2

	Annual Budget	Budget to Date	Actual Spend	Variance (Overspend)	Forecast Outturn
	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
Expenditure					
Employees	17,478	5,809	5,446	363	1,070
Agency- Covering Vacancies	4	1	347	(346)	(1,040)
Premises	481	238	241	(3)	0
Supplies & Services	486	170	166	4	0
Aids & Adaptations	37	12	9	3	0
Transport	242	81	97	(16)	(35)
Food Provision	214	71	56	15	10
Agency	672	224	229	(5)	(5)
Supported Accommodation and Services	1,385	461	458	3	10
Emergency Duty Team	115	0	0	0	0
Transfer To Reserves	282	0	0	0	0
Capital Financing	44	0	0	0	0
Contracts & SLAs	387	86	77	9	0
<u>Housing Solutions Grant Funded Schemes</u>					
Homelessness Prevention	369	139	139	0	0
Rough Sleepers Initiative	167	55	54	1	0
Total Expenditure	22,363	7,347	7,319	28	10
Income					
Fees & Charges	-1,063	-354	-342	(12)	(30)
Sales & Rents Income	-420	-199	-206	7	20
Reimbursements & Grant Income	-2,051	-534	-529	(5)	0
Capital Salaries	-121	-30	-30	0	0
Housing Schemes Income	-536	-345	-346	1	0
Total Income	-4,191	-1,462	-1,453	(9)	(10)
Net Operational Expenditure	18,172	5,885	5,866	19	0
Recharges					
Premises Support	529	176	176	0	0
Transport Support	581	87	87	0	0
Central Support	3,465	1,155	1,155	0	0
Asset Rental Support	13	0	0	0	0
Recharge Income	-112	-37	-37	0	0
Net Total Recharges	4,476	1,381	1,381	0	0
Net Departmental Expenditure	22,648	7,266	7,247	19	0

Care Homes

	Annual Budget £'000	Budget to Date £'000	Actual Spend £'000	Variance (Overspend) £'000	Forecast Outturn £'000
Expenditure					
<u>Madeline Mckenna</u>					
Employees	698	233	206	27	37
Agency - covering vacancies	0	0	35	(35)	(109)
Other Premises	101	21	25	(4)	(11)
Supplies & Services	20	7	7	0	(1)
Food Provison	48	16	17	(1)	(3)
Total Madeline Mckenna Expenditure	867	277	290	(13)	(87)
<u>Millbrow</u>					
Employees	2,056	685	417	268	656
Agency - covering vacancies	0	0	309	(309)	(947)
Other Premises	129	34	47	(13)	(44)
Supplies & Services	61	30	38	(8)	(23)
Food Provison	78	23	26	(3)	0
Total Millbrow Expenditure	2,324	772	837	(65)	(358)
<u>St Luke's</u>					
Employees	2,884	961	669	292	673
Agency - covering vacancies	119	119	438	(319)	(997)
Other Premises	172	48	65	(17)	(57)
Supplies & Services	59	17	29	(12)	(18)
Food Provison	132	36	42	(6)	(20)
Total St Luke's Expenditure	3,366	1,181	1,243	(62)	(419)
<u>St Patrick's</u>					
Employees	1,839	613	399	214	504
Agency - covering vacancies	33	33	351	(318)	(985)
Other Premises	157	38	45	(7)	(22)
Supplies & Services	64	19	14	5	14
Food Provison	122	25	23	2	5
Total St Patrick's Expenditure	2,215	728	832	(104)	(484)
<u>Care Homes Divison Management</u>					
Employees	362	121	94	27	60
Supplies & Services	0	0	2	(2)	(2)
Care Home Divison Management	362	121	96	25	58
Net Operational Expenditure	9,134	3,079	3,298	(219)	(1,290)
<u>Recharges</u>					
Premises Support	264	88	88	0	0
Transport Support	0	0	0	0	0
Central Support	683	228	228	0	0
Asset Rental Support	0	0	0	0	0
Recharge Income	0	0	0	0	0
Net Total Recharges	947	316	316	0	0
Net Departmental Expenditure	10,081	3,395	3,614	(219)	(1,290)

Community Care

	Annual Budget £'000	Budget to Date £'000	Actual Spend £'000	Variance (Overspend) £'000	Forecast Outturn £'000
Expenditure					
Residential & Nursing	14,434	4,882	4,961	(79)	(260)
Domiciliary Care & Supported living	13,587	2,900	2,985	(85)	(276)
Direct Payments	12,629	5,430	5,922	(492)	(1,602)
Day Care	405	57	119	(62)	(9)
Total Expenditure	41,055	13,269	13,987	(718)	(2,147)
Income					
Residential & Nursing Income	-13,182	-2,917	-2,927	10	33
Community Care Income	-2,270	-599	-596	(3)	(1)
Direct Payments Income	-1,014	-266	-260	(6)	(2)
Income from other CCGs	-135	-34	-34	0	0
Market Sustainability & Improvement Grant	-2,796	-932	-932	0	0
Adult Social Care Support Grant	-5,167	-1,722	-1,722	0	0
War Pension Disregard Grant	-67	0	0	0	(11)
Other Income	0	0	0	0	0
Total Income	-24,631	-6,470	-6,471	1	19
Net Operational Expenditure	16,424	6,799	7,516	(717)	(2,128)

Complex Care Pool

	Annual Budget	Budget to Date	Actual Spend	Variance (Overspend)	Forecast Outturn
	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
Expenditure					
Intermediate Care Services	5,293	1,415	1,461	(46)	(136)
Oakmeadow	1,818	559	629	(70)	(209)
Community Home Care First	2,111	613	500	113	340
Joint Equipment Store	871	276	276	0	0
Development Fund	583	0	0	0	0
Contracts & SLA's	3,243	77	77	0	0
Inglenook	127	23	8	15	45
HICafs	3,620	848	813	35	105
Carers Breaks	474	138	100	38	115
Carers centre	371	0	0	0	0
Residential Care	7,234	1,825	1,825	0	0
Domiciliary Care & Supported Living	4,227	1,057	1,057	0	0
Total Expenditure	29,972	6,831	6,746	85	260
Income					
BCF	-13,484	-4,495	-4,495	0	0
CCG Contribution to Pool	-2,865	-955	-955	0	0
Oakmeadow Income	-6	-2	0	(2)	(4)
ASC Discharge Grant Income	-1,631	-544	-544	0	0
ICB Discharge Grant Income	-1,282	-1,282	-1,282	0	0
Total Income	-19,268	-7,278	-7,276	(2)	(4)
ICB Contribution Share of Surplus			41	(41)	(128)
Net Operational Expenditure	10,704	-447	-489	42	128

Finance Department

	Annual Budget	Budget to Date	Actual Spend	Variance (Overspend)	Forecast Outturn
	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
Expenditure					
Employees	6,945	2,315	2,197	118	100
Agency - covering vacancies	0	0	22	(22)	(124)
Agency - in addition to establishment	0	0	0	0	0
Insurances	986	295	296	(1)	(5)
Supplies & Services	410	253	291	(38)	(117)
Rent Allowances	35,500	10,622	10,622	0	0
Concessionary Travel	1,748	0	2	(2)	(127)
LCR Levy	1,748	0	0	0	0
Transfer to Reserves	0	0	0	0	0
Bad Debt Provision	77	0	0	0	(145)
Non HRA Rent Rebates	70	23	17	6	(1)
Discretionary Social Fund	106	35	0	35	90
Discretionary Housing Payments	300	100	70	30	94
Household Support Fund Expenditure	2,480	763	763	0	0
Total Expenditure	50,370	14,406	14,280	126	(235)
Income					
Fees & Charges	-335	-87	-96	9	28
Burdens Grant	-60	-60	-78	18	18
Dedicated schools Grant	-144	-4	0	(4)	(13)
Council Tax Liability Order	-581	-341	-366	25	76
Business Rates Admin Grant	-157	0	0	0	0
Schools SLAs	-312	-312	-307	(5)	(7)
LCR Reimbursement	-1,748	0	0	0	0
HB Overpayment Debt Recovery	-400	-153	-157	4	14
Rent Allowances	-34,700	-8,726	-8,685	(41)	(123)
Non HRA Rent Rebate	-70	-23	-25	2	1
Discretionary Housing Payment Grant	-300	-100	-93	(7)	(21)
Housing Benefits Admin Grant	-498	-166	-163	(3)	(9)
Housing Benefits Award Accuracy	0	0	-12	12	12
Universal Credits	-5	-2	0	(2)	(5)
Household Support Fund Grant	-2,480	-729	-729	0	0
VEP Grant	0	0	-5	5	5
CCG McMillan Reimbursement	-87	-79	-85	6	(20)
Reimbursements & Grant Income	-151	-28	-47	19	53
Transfer from Reserves	0	0	0	0	7
Total Income	-42,028	-10,810	-10,848	38	16
Net Operational Expenditure	8,342	3,596	3,432	164	(219)
Recharges					
Premises Support	377	126	126	0	0
Transport Support	0	0	0	0	0
Central Support	2,365	788	788	0	0
Asset Rental Support	0	0	0	0	0
Recharge Income	-6,053	-2,018	-2,018	0	0
Net Total Recharges	-3,311	-1,104	-1,104	0	0
Net Departmental Expenditure	5,031	2,492	2,328	164	(219)

Legal Services

	Annual Budget £'000	Budget to Date £'000	Actual Spend £'000	Variance (Overspend) £'000	Forecast Outturn £'000
Expenditure					
Employees	1,511	683	674	9	28
Agency Related Expenditure	0	0	353	(353)	(632)
Supplies & Services	368	155	261	(106)	(4)
Civic Catering & Functions	23	8	2	6	12
Legal Expenses	218	19	19	0	(278)
Transport Related Expenditure	11	4	0	4	7
Other Expenditure	0	0	3	(3)	(3)
Total Expenditure	2,131	869	1,312	(443)	(870)
Income					
Land Charges	0	0	-29	29	85
School SLA's	-98	-84	-77	(7)	(20)
Licence Income	-301	-100	-79	(21)	(46)
Government Grant	-42	-42	-42	0	0
Reimbursement & Other Grants	-171	-171	-171	0	0
Fees & Charges Income	-74	-29	-14	(15)	(34)
Transfer from Reserves	0	0	-27	27	27
Total Income	-686	-426	-439	13	12
Net Operational Expenditure	1,445	443	873	(430)	(858)
Recharges					
Premises Support	53	18	18	0	0
Transport	0	0	0	0	0
Central Support	275	92	92	0	0
Asset Rental Support	0	0	0	0	0
HBC Support Costs Income	-2,391	-797	-797	0	0
Net Total Recharges	-2,063	-687	-687	0	0
Net Departmental Expenditure	-618	-244	186	(430)	(858)

ICT & Support Services Department

	Annual Budget £'000	Budget to Date £'000	Actual Spend £'000	Variance (Overspend) £'000	Forecast Outturn £'000
Expenditure					
Employees	5,596	1,922	1,817	105	318
Supplies & Services	921	464	610	(146)	(437)
Capital Finance	100	33	4	29	62
Computer Repairs & Software	1,724	1,576	1,674	(98)	(268)
Communication Costs	13	0	41	(41)	(142)
Premises	159	61	59	2	7
Transport	3	1	0	1	1
Total Expenditure	8,516	4,057	4,205	(148)	(459)
Income					
Fees & Charges	-1,056	-489	-489	0	0
Schools SLA Income	-646	-502	-483	(19)	(59)
Reimbursements & Grant Income	0	-13	-20	7	(19)
Transfer from Reserves	-148	-148	-148	0	448
Total Income	-1,850	-1,152	-1,140	(12)	370
Net Operational Expenditure	6,666	2,905	3,065	(160)	(89)
Recharges					
Premises Support	550	183	183	0	0
Transport Support	19	6	7	(1)	0
Central Support	2,380	793	793	0	0
Asset Rental Support	1,494	0	0	0	0
Support Costs Income	-8,831	-2,944	-2,944	0	0
Net Total Recharges	-4,388	-1,962	-1,961	(1)	0
Net Departmental Expenditure	2,278	943	1,104	(161)	(89)

Chief Executives Delivery Unit

	Annual Budget	Budget to Date	Actual Spend	Variance (Overspend)	Forecast Outturn
	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
Expenditure					
Employees	3,283	1,094	1,061	33	110
Employees Training	117	53	40	13	39
Apprenticeship Levy	300	68	105	(37)	(113)
Supplies & Services	395	67	77	(10)	(30)
Total Expenditure	4,095	1,282	1,283	-1	6
Income					
Fees & Charges	-223	-29	-35	6	17
Schools SLA Income	-565	-517	-509	(8)	(22)
Transfer from Reserves	0	0	-5	5	5
Total Income	-788	-546	-549	3	0
Net Operational Expenditure	3,307	736	734	2	6
Recharges					
Premises Support	174	58	58	0	0
Transport	0	0	0	0	0
Central Support	1,209	403	403	0	0
Asset Rental Support	53	0	0	0	0
HBC Support Costs Income	-3,573	-1,191	-1,191	0	0
Net Total Recharges	-2,137	-730	-730	0	0
Net Departmental Expenditure	1,170	6	4	2	6

Children & Families

	Annual Budget	Budget to Date	Actual Spend	Variance (Overspend)	Forecast Outturn
	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
Expenditure					
Employees	14,845	4,290	5,455	(1,165)	(3,391)
Other Premises	414	113	121	(8)	(25)
Supplies & Services	1,718	554	747	(193)	(580)
Transport	360	89	88	1	5
Direct Payments	1,097	451	487	(36)	(177)
Commissioned services to Vol Orgs	224	56	56	0	0
Residential Care	17,570	4,105	6,600	(2,495)	(6,626)
Out of Borough Adoption	96	32	0	32	96
Out of Borough Fostering	4,253	1,018	1,306	(288)	(869)
In House Adoption	548	54	31	23	68
Special Guardianship Order	2,510	672	695	(23)	(68)
In House Foster Carer Placements	2,739	790	704	86	259
Lavender House Contract Costs	234	60	55	5	15
Home Support & Respite	340	103	85	18	55
Care Leavers	235	110	117	(7)	(23)
Family Support	53	11	19	(8)	(22)
Contracted services	3	1	1	0	0
Early Years	0	0	0	0	0
Emergency Duty	132	0	0	0	(68)
Youth Offending Services	321	10	10	0	(140)
Total Expenditure	47,692	12,519	16,577	(4,058)	(11,491)
Income					
Fees & Charges	-33	-29	-25	(4)	(14)
Sales Income	-4	-1	0	(1)	(3)
Rents	-80	-16	-16	0	1
Reimbursement & other Grant Income	-533	-97	-86	(11)	(34)
Transfer from reserve	-5	-5	-5	0	10
Dedicated Schools Grant	-50	0	0	0	0
Government Grants	-10,358	-2,783	-2,769	(14)	(86)
Total Income	-11,063	-2,931	-2,901	(30)	(126)
Net Operational Expenditure	36,629	9,588	13,676	(4,088)	(11,617)
Recharges					
Premises Support	398	133	133	0	0
Transport	16	6	6	0	0
Central Support	2,274	758	758	0	0
Asset Rental Support	0	0	0	0	0
HBC Support Costs Income	-1,124	-375	-375	0	0
Net Total Recharges	1,564	522	522	0	0
Net Departmental Expenditure	38,193	10,110	14,198	(4,088)	(11,617)

Education, Inclusion & Provision

	Annual Budget £'000	Budget to Date £'000	Actual Spend £'000	Variance (Overspend) £'000	Forecast Outturn £'000
Expenditure					
Employees	7,351	2,112	2,319	(206)	(698)
Agency - covering vacancies	72	24	122	(98)	(217)
Agency - in addition to establishment	0	0	14	(14)	(14)
Premises	23	12	11	1	3
Supplies & Services	2,643	1,355	1,330	25	84
Independent School Fees	8,413	2,160	2,160	0	0
School Contingency	181	130	130	0	0
Transport	43	12	14	(2)	(10)
School Transport	2,336	519	728	(209)	(634)
Nursery Education Payments	6,193	2,065	2,065	0	0
Pupil Premium Grant	131	44	44	0	0
Commissioned Services	1,943	466	466	0	0
Inter Authority Special Needs	903	331	331	0	0
Grants to Voluntary Organisations	3,098	1,033	1,054	(21)	(60)
Capital Finance	4,442	1,402	1,402	0	1
Total Expenditure	37,772	11,666	12,189	(523)	(1,544)
Income					
Fees & Charges Income	-265	-189	-212	23	56
Government Grant Income	-5,859	-2,619	-2,619	0	0
Dedicated Schools Grant	-21,432	0	0	0	0
Inter Authority Income	-489	-204	-157	(47)	(123)
Reimbursements & Other Grant Income	-1,916	-547	-552	5	13
Schools SLA Income	-454	-275	-280	5	14
Transfer from Reserves	-78	0	0	0	0
Total Income	-30,493	-3,835	-3,820	(15)	(40)
Net Operational Expenditure	7,279	7,831	8,369	(538)	(1,584)
Recharges					
Premises Support	344	115	115	(0)	0
Transport Support	528	176	230	(54)	(92)
Central Support	1,603	535	535	0	0
Asset Rental Support	17	6	0	6	0
Recharge Income	0	0	0	0	0
Net Total Recharges	2,492	831	880	(49)	(92)
Net Departmental Expenditure	9,771	8,662	9,249	(587)	(1,676)

Community & Greenspaces

	Annual Budget £'000	Budget to Date £'000	Actual Spend £'000	Variance (Overspend) £'000	Forecast Outturn £'000
Expenditure					
Employees	17,358	3,700	3,457	243	1,146
Agency - covering vacancies	0	0	66	(66)	(262)
Agency - in addition to establishment	0	0	50	(50)	(101)
Premises	3,521	1,070	1,089	(19)	(71)
Supplies & Services	1,585	380	401	(21)	(80)
Hired & Contracted Services	510	83	83	0	0
Book Fund	128	53	53	0	0
Food Provision	388	115	108	7	36
School Meals Food	2,083	320	332	(12)	(42)
Transport	117	10	11	(1)	(9)
Agency Costs	441	100	148	(48)	(94)
Other Expenditure	0	0	41	(41)	(50)
Waste Disposal Contracts	7,002	0	0	0	255
Grants to Voluntary Organisations	64	16	12	4	35
Grant to Norton Priory	172	29	87	(58)	0
Total Expenditure	33,369	5,876	5,938	(62)	763
Income					
Sales Income	-1,373	-422	-422	0	(118)
Fees & Charges Income	-5,470	-1,952	-1,942	(10)	(50)
Rental Income	-235	-39	-71	32	26
Markets Income	-910	-152	-208	56	(79)
Government Grant Income	-643	-482	-482	0	0
Reimbursements & Other Grant Income	-703	-467	-467	0	0
School SLA Income	-1,313	-219	-250	31	(10)
School Meals Income	-3,598	-600	-562	(38)	(213)
Internal Fees Income	-286	-48	-15	(33)	61
Capital Salaries	-173	-29	-14	(15)	(5)
Transfers from Reserves	-14	-14	-14	0	0
Total Income	-14,718	-4,424	-4,447	23	(388)
Net Operational Expenditure	18,651	1,452	1,491	(39)	375
Recharges					
Premises Support	1,675	279	279	0	0
Transport	2,257	204	214	(10)	(51)
Central Support	3,592	599	599	0	0
Asset Rental Support	199	33	33	0	0
HBC Support Costs Income	-843	-141	-141	0	0
Net Total Recharges	6,880	974	984	(10)	(51)
Net Departmental Expenditure	25,531	2,426	2,475	(49)	324

Economy, Enterprise & Property

	Annual Budget	Budget to Date	Actual Spend	Variance (Overspend)	Forecast Outturn
	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
Expenditure					
Employees	4,342	1,812	1,709	103	308
Agency - covering vacancies	0	0	102	(102)	(305)
Agency - in addition to establishment	0	0	0	0	0
Repairs & Maintenance	1,689	700	741	(41)	(117)
Premises	146	119	119	0	0
Energy & Water Costs	1,221	281	267	14	62
NNDR	659	633	623	10	10
Rents	163	0	0	0	0
Economic Regeneration Activities	21	0	0	0	0
Security	544	173	172	1	4
Supplies & Services	482	119	106	13	40
Supplies & Services - Grant	1,074	169	169	0	0
Grants to Voluntary Organisations	67	44	44	0	0
Capital Finance	0		0	0	0
Transfer to Reserves	165	0	0	0	0
Total Expenditure	10,573	4,050	4,052	(2)	2
Income					
Fees & Charges Income	-721	-346	-361	15	46
Rent - Commercial Properties	-871	-196	-196	0	0
Rent - Investment Properties	-38	-14	-14	0	0
Government Grant	-1,531	-753	-753	0	0
Reimbursements & Other Grant Income	-306	-172	-170	(2)	(6)
Schools SLA Income	-234	-209	-192	(17)	(17)
Recharges to Capital	-348	-163	-163	0	0
Transfer from Reserves	-393	-384	-384	0	0
Total Income	-4,442	-2,237	-2,233	(4)	23
Net Operational Expenditure	6,131	1,813	1,819	(6)	25
Recharges					
Premises Support	2,074	691	691	0	0
Transport	30	10	10	0	0
Central Support	1,947	649	649	0	0
Asset Rental Support	4	0	0	0	0
HBC Support Costs Income	-7,927	-2,642	-2,642	0	0
Net Total Recharges	-3,872	-1,292	-1,292	0	0
Net Departmental Expenditure	2,259	521	527	(6)	25

Planning & Transportation Department

	Annual Budget	Budget to Date	Actual Spend	Variance (Overspend)	Forecast Outturn
	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
Expenditure					
Employees	5,409	1,621	1,571	50	151
Agency - covering vacancies	110	37	55	(18)	(54)
Agency - in addition to establishment	24	7	23	(16)	(48)
Efficiency Savings	-250	0	0	0	(150)
Premises	193	89	73	16	47
Hired & Contracted Services	59	0	37	(37)	(158)
Supplies & Services	144	155	197	(42)	(126)
Street Lighting	1,617	92	92	0	0
Highways Maintenance - Routine & Reactive	1,772	269	294	(25)	(74)
Highways Maintenance - Programmed Works	989	155	89	66	199
Fleet Transport	1,455	449	424	25	75
Bus Support - Halton Hopper Tickets	23	17	14	3	9
Bus Support	498	252	252	0	0
Capital Financing	0	0	0	0	0
Grants to Voluntary Organisations	31	31	31	0	0
NRA Levy	74	0	0	0	2
LCR Levy	1,059	265	265	0	0
Contribution to Reserves	359	0	0	0	0
Total Expenditure	13,566	3,439	3,417	22	(127)
Income					
Sales & Rents Income	-96	-60	-59	(1)	(2)
Planning Fees	-826	-310	-216	(94)	(282)
Building Control Fees	-246	-83	-68	(15)	(44)
Other Fees & Charges	-908	-351	-414	63	189
Grants & Reimbursements	-153	-52	-52	0	0
Government Grant Income	-111	-111	-111	0	0
Halton Hopper Income	-24	-4	-1	(3)	(9)
Recharge to Capital	-129	-36	-36	0	0
LCR Levy Reimbursement	-1,059	-265	-265	0	0
Contribution from Reserves	-174	-174	-174	0	0
Total Income	-3,726	-1,446	-1,396	(50)	(148)
Net Operational Expenditure	9,840	1,993	2,021	(28)	(275)
Recharges					
Premises Support	560	187	187	0	0
Transport	749	272	289	(17)	(52)
Central Support	1,534	511	511	0	0
Asset Rental Support	851	0	0	0	0
HBC Support Costs Income	-5,129	-1,713	-1,804	91	274
Net Total Recharges	-1,435	-743	-817	74	222
Net Departmental Expenditure	8,405	1,250	1,204	46	(53)

Corporate & Democracy

	Annual Budget £'000	Budget to Date £'000	Actual Spend £'000	Variance (Overspend) £'000	Forecast Outturn £'000
Expenditure					
Employees	412	137	114	23	0
Contracted Services	39	12	43	(31)	0
Supplies & Services	119	49	142	(93)	0
Premises Expenditure	5	5	7	(2)	0
Transport Costs	1	0	55	(55)	0
Members Allowances	983	328	316	12	0
Interest Payable - Treasury Management	988	366	488	(122)	(366)
Interest Payable - Other	357	119	72	47	(100)
Bank Charges	132	44	88	(44)	0
Audit Fees	348	87	-188	275	0
Contingency	1,052	351	0	351	1,052
Capital Financing	2,409	2	2	0	0
Debt Management Expenses	20	7	0	7	0
Precepts & Levies	240	40	35	5	(30)
Transformation Efficiency Savings	-4,000	-1,333	0	(1,333)	(3,874)
Total Expenditure	3,106	214	1,174	-960	-3,318
Income					
Interest Receivable - Treasury Management	-4,152	-1,384	-1,685	301	903
Interest Receivable - Other	-19	-6	-6	0	0
Other Fees & Charges	-158	-49	-1	(49)	0
Grants & Reimbursements	-255	-85	-85	0	0
Government Grant Income	-377	-126	-189	63	42
Transfer from Reserves	0	0	0	0	0
Total Income	-4,960	-1,650	-1,966	316	945
Net Operational Expenditure	-1,854	-1,437	-793	(644)	(2,373)
Recharges					
Premises Support	21	7	7	0	0
Transport	0	0	0	0	0
Central Support	1,016	355	355	0	0
Asset Rental Support	0	0	0	0	0
HBC Support Costs Income	-3,026	-746	-746	0	0
Net Total Recharges	-1,988	-384	-384	0	0
Net Departmental Expenditure	-3,842	-1,820	-1,176	(644)	(2,373)

Public Health

	Annual Budget £'000	Budget to Date £'000	Actual Spend £'000	Variance (Overspend) £'000	Forecast Outturn £'000
Expenditure					
Employees	5,243	1,436	1,410	26	7
Agency - covering vacancies	0	0	13	(13)	0
Premises	6	0	0	0	0
Supplies & Services	368	163	118	45	40
Contracts & SLA's	7,993	1,797	1,774	23	2
Transport	4	1	0	1	0
Transfer to Reserves	19	19	19	0	0
Other Agency	24	24	24	0	0
Total Expenditure	13,657	3,440	3,358	82	49
Income					
Fees & Charges	-83	-49	-35	(14)	(4)
Reimbursements & Grant Income	-252	-281	-282	1	0
Transfer from Reserves	-1,714	-65	-65	0	0
Capital Salaries	-13	-13	-13	0	0
Government Grant Income	-12,193	-6,297	-6,297	0	0
Total Income	-14,255	-6,705	-6,692	(13)	(4)
Net Operational Expenditure	-598	-3,265	-3,334	69	45
Recharges					
Premises Support	148	49	49	0	0
Transport Support	22	7	9	(2)	(2)
Central Support	2,389	796	796	0	0
Asset Rental Support	0	0	0	0	0
Recharge Income	-500	-167	-167	0	0
Net Total Recharges	2,059	685	687	(2)	(2)
Net Departmental Expenditure	1,461	-2,580	-2,647	67	43

Capital Programme as at 31 July 2024

Appendix 3

Scheme Detail	2024/25 Original Allocation	2024/25 Revised Allocation	24/25 Q1 Spend	24/25 Q2 Spend	24/25 Q3 Spend	24/25 Q4 Spend	24/25 Total Spend	24/25 Allocation remaining
	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000
Childrens Directorate								
Capital Repairs	749.0	749.0	151.0				151.0	598.0
Basic Need Projects	600.8	600.8	0.0				0.0	600.8
SEND capital allocation	3,355.2	3,355.2	178.0				178.0	3,177.2
SCA unallocated	255.6	255.6	0.0				0.0	255.6
Family Hubs & Start for Life	53.2	53.2	1.3				1.3	51.9
Childcare Expansion	314.8	314.8	0.0				0.0	314.8
Directorate Total	5,328.6	5,328.6	330.3	0.0	0.0	0.0	330.3	4,998.3
Adults Directorate								
Halton Carers Centre Refurbishment	199.0	0.0	0.0				0.0	0.0
Grants - Disabled Facilities	600.0	1,050.0	353.0				353.0	697.0
Stair Lifts	270.0	200.0	66.0				66.0	134.0
Joint Funding RSL Adaptations	270.0	150.0	53.0				53.0	97.0
Telehealthcare Digital Switchover	0.0	135.0	60.0				60.0	75.0
Millbrow Refurbishment	0.0	100.0	26.0				26.0	74.0
Madeline McKenna Refurbishment	0.0	50.0	9.0				9.0	41.0
St Lukes Care Home	0.0	50.0	10.0				10.0	40.0
St Patricks Care Home	1,200.0	50.0	14.0				14.0	36.0
Directorate Total	2,539.0	1,785.0	591.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	591.0	1,194.0

Capital Programme as at 31 July 2024 Continued

Scheme Detail	2024/25 Original Allocation £000	2024/25 Revised Allocation £000	24/25 Q1 Spend £000	24/25 Q2 Spend £000	24/25 Q3 Spend £000	24/25 Q4 Spend £000	24/25 Total Spend £000	24/25 Allocation remaining £000
Environment & Regeneration Directorate								
Stadium Minor Works	30.0	30.0	7.9				7.9	22.1
Halton Leisure Centre	8,997.0	8,997.0	2,030.0				2,030.0	6,967.0
Children's Playground Equipment	67.8	67.8	1.0				1.0	66.8
Landfill Tax Credit Schemes	340.0	340.0	0.0				0.0	340.0
Upton Improvements	13.0	13.0	0.0				0.0	13.0
Crow Wood Park Play Area	12.0	12.0	0.0				0.0	12.0
Open Spaces Schemes	600.0	600.0	130.0				130.0	470.0
Runcorn Town Park	468.6	468.6	0.0				0.0	468.6
Spike Island / Wigg Island	1,933.5	1,933.5	2.4				2.4	1,931.1
Pickerings Pasture Cafe	503.0	503.0	0.0				0.0	503.0
Replacement Cremator Widnes	308.0	308.0	0.0				0.0	308.0
Litter Bins	20.0	20.0	0.0				0.0	20.0
3MG	134.5	134.5	0.0				0.0	134.5
Murdishaw redevelopment	21.2	21.2	5.4				5.4	15.8
Equality Act Improvement Works	293.2	93.2	8.7				8.7	84.5
Foundary Lane Residential Area	1160.0	1160.0	1.8				1.8	1,158.2
Town Deal	11352.9	11552.9	174.9				174.9	11,378.0
Property Improvements	360.2	360.2	4.3				4.3	355.9
Runcorn Station Quarter	484.7	484.7	0.0				0.0	484.7
Woodend Unit 10 Catalyst Industrial Estate	0.0	0.0	1.2				1.2	-1.2
Waterloo Building	0.0	0.0	46.0				46.0	-46.0
UK Shared Prosperity Fund	178.2	178.2	0.0				0.0	178.2
Runcorn Waterfront Residential Development	484.7	268.7	8.6				8.6	260.1







Capital Programme as at 31 July 2024 Continued

Scheme Detail	2024/25 Original Allocation £000	2024/25 Revised Allocation £000	24/25 Q1 Spend £000	24/25 Q2 Spend £000	24/25 Q3 Spend £000	24/25 Q4 Spend £000	24/25 Total Spend £000	24/25 Allocation remaining £000
Changing Places	24.1	24.1	2.5				2.5	21.6
Sci-tech Daresbury Project Violet	2200.0	2200.0	0.0				0.0	2,200.0
Bridge and Highway Maintenance	0.0	2,265.6	281.0				281.0	1,984.6
Runcorn Busway	0.0	0.0	227.0				227.0	-227.0
ATF3 Murdishaw to Whitehouse	0.0	3,000.0	175.0				175.0	2,825.0
ATF4 Widnes Town Centre Accessibility	0.0	114.5	0.0				0.0	114.5
A56 Reconstruction (Delph Lane)	0.0	943.7	351.0				351.0	592.7
Dukesfield ATL (Waterloo Bridge)	0.0	0.0	1.0				1.0	-1.0
LCWIP Phase 2 Daresbury	0.0	3,861.7	629.0				629.0	3,232.7
Additional Pothole Funding	0.0	429.1	0.0				0.0	429.1
CRSTS	5,819.4	5,288.6	1,656.0				1,656.0	3,632.6
Street Lighting - Structural Maintenance	1,025.6	1,025.6	0.0				0.0	1,025.6
Street Lighting - Upgrades	969.4	969.4	0.0				0.0	969.4
East Runcorn Connectivity	5,851.7	5,851.7	453.0				453.0	5,398.7
Risk Management	597.8	597.8	5.0				5.0	592.8
Fleet Replacements	4,927.4	4,927.4	1,082.0				1,082.0	3,845.4
Early Land Acquisition Mersey Gateway	212.4	212.4	0.0				0.0	212.4
Directorate Total	49,390.3	59,258.1	7,284.7	0.0	0.0	0.0	7,284.7	51,973.4
Chief Executives Directorate								
IT Rolling Programme	1,026.9	1,026.9	27.7				27.7	999.2
Halton Smart Microgrid	11,000.0	11,000.0	0.0				0.0	11,000.0
Transformation Programme	3,740.0	3,740.0	0.0				0.0	3,740.0
Directorate Total	15,766.9	15,766.9	27.7	0.0	0.0	0.0	27.7	15,739.2
Total Capital Programme 24/25	73,024.8	82,138.6	8,233.7	0.0	0.0	0.0	8,233.7	73,904.9

Progress Against Agreed Savings

Appendix 4

Adult Social Care




	Service Area	Net Budget £'000	Description of Saving Proposal	Savings Value		Current Progress	Comments
				24/25 £'000	25/26 £'000		
ASC1	Housing Solutions	474	Remodel the current service based on good practice evidence from other areas.	0	125		Anticipated to be achieved, currently under review.
ASC2	Telehealthcare	680	Explore alternative funding streams such as Health funding or Disabled Facilities Grants.	170	0		Currently Under Review
			Increase charges / review income.	170	0		Charges were increased by 40% w.e.f. April 2024, so this should be achieved
			Cease the key safe installation service.	15	0		Service still being provided
ASC17/18	Quality Assurance Team	395	Review the activities of the Quality Assurance Team, given there are fewer providers for domiciliary care and the transfer of four care homes into the Council.	0	0		Saving implemented
			Merge the service with the Safeguarding Unit.	50	0		

ASC16	Shared Lives (Adult Placement Service)	115	Engage with an external agency currently operating Shared Lives to take over the running of this service. It is anticipated that this would provide an improved service.	58	0	u	Service currently still provided in-house, although a balanced budget will be attained for 2024/25 as a result of current temporary savings, and work is ongoing to ensure the 2025/6 structure can achieve the permanent savings target
ASC19	Voluntary Sector Support	N/A	Review the support provided by Adult Social Care and all other Council Departments, to voluntary sector organisations. This would include assisting them to secure alternative funding in order to reduce their dependence upon Council funding. A target saving phased over two years has been estimated.	200	100	✓	Anticipated to be achieved
ASC4	Positive Behaviour Support Service	349	Increase income generated in order to ensure full cost recovery, through increased service contract charges to other councils.	100	0	✓	Contracts being re-costed on renewal, saving anticipated to be achieved
				150	0	u	ICB funding not secured, although a balanced budget will be attained for 2024/25 as a result of current temporary savings, and work is ongoing to ensure the 2025/6 structure can

			Review the Integrated Care Board contribution for Adults, to ensure the full recovery of related costs.				achieve the permanent savings target
ASC15	Learning Disability Nursing Team	424	Cease provision of this service. The service is a Health related function rather than Adult Social Care, but this is a historical arrangement. The Integrated Care Board would need to consider how they want to provide this function.	424	0	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Costs now recharged to the ICB
ASC14	Care Management Community Care Budget	18,982	Attract £500k investment from the pooled budget (BCF) from 2024/25. Undertake work in years 1 and 2 to reduce reliance upon contracted services from 2025/26. Services are currently in the process of being redesigned on a “Strengths Based Approach” ie. focused upon prevention.	500	1,000	<input type="checkbox"/>	Position currently being reviewed.

Total Adult Social Care Department	1,837	1,225		
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Finance

Ref.	Service Area	Net Budget £'000	Description of Saving Proposal	Savings Value		Current Progress	Comments
				24/25 £'000	25/26 £'000		
F9	Internal Audit	300	Restructure in light of potential retirements over the next two years within the Internal Audit Team.	0	50		No official changes made yet
F13	Discretionary Support Scheme	221	Review the roles, procedures and structure of the team.	25	0		On track
F17	Council Tax	84	Increase the charges applied when a court summons is issued by 30% (£23), to achieve full cost recovery over the three year period.	40	40		On track
Total Finance Department				65	90		

Legal and Democratic Services

Ref.	Service Area	Net Budget £'000	Description of Saving Proposal	Savings Value		Current Progress	Comments
				24/25 £'000	25/26 £'000		
L4	Marketing, Design and Communications	45	Review the frequency of production of Inside Halton, as part of the wider consideration of the Council's communications strategy required for the Transformation Programme	15		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Budget adjusted inline with the savings in the ICT department
Total Legal Services Department				15	0		

Children and Families



Ref.	Service Area	Net Budget £'000	Description of Saving Proposal	Savings Value		Current Progress	Comments
				24/25 £'000	25/26 £'000		
C1	Ditton and Warrington Road Daycare Centres	52	Closure of Ditton and Warrington Road daycare centres, given the significant on-going net losses at both centres. Sufficient alternative provision exists nearby, as well as in the adjoining nursery schools.	26	0		Early Years has now closed and budget for 24/25 has been removed
C2	Children's Centres	1,293	Review the operation of Windmill Hill Children's Centre, where there is the potential to save on premises and staffing costs.	0	22		This is subject to further review as external factors are changing the original review parameters. Potential alternative funding also to be reviewed.
C3	Children with Disabilities and Inglefield	858	Explore the potential for selling Inglefield and then purchase two bungalows within the community to provide a more appropriate setting.	112	0		Amount was removed at budget setting as will not be achieved
Total Policy, Planning & Transportation Department				138	22		

Education, Inclusion and Provision


Ref	Service Area	Net Budget £'000	Description of Saving Proposal	Savings Value		Current Progress	Comments
				24/25 £'000	25/26 £'000		
EIP1	Education Psychology Service	339	There is excess demand from schools for the Education Psychology Service. The service is valued and there is opportunity to expand our offer and generate additional income.	52	0	✓	
EIP2	SEN Assessment Team	82	Consideration will be given to funding the full service costs from the High Needs Block of the Dedicated Schools Grant.	80	0	✗	DSG funding removed as does not comply with grant conditions.
EIP5	Commissioning	148	Review with Health colleagues how the Emotional Health and Wellbeing Service for Children in Care, Care Leavers and Carers could instead be provided by Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) as they are commissioned by the Integrated Care Board.	148	0	u	To be reviewed.
Total Education, Inclusion and Provision Department				280	0		

Community and Greenspace

Ref.	Service Area	Net Budget £'000	Description of Saving Proposal	Savings Value		Current Progress	Comments
				24/25 £'000	25/26 £'000		
COMM3	Sport & Recreation	471	Restructuring the roles and responsibilities of the Sports Development Team	36	0		✓ Restructure is currently underway
COMM5	Stadium & Catering Services – School Meals	12	Cease to deliver the school meals service, which has made significant losses of over £200,000 for a number of years and is forecast to make a similar loss by year-end. Work would be undertaken with schools over the next two years to support them to secure an alternative means of delivery, whether in-house or via an external provider.	0	12		✓ The cessation of the service is underway with the majority of schools ending their contracts by the end of the calendar year.
Total Community & Environment Department				36	12		

Ref.	Service Area	Net Budget £'000	Description of Saving Proposal	Savings Value		Current Progress	Comments
				24/25 £'000	25/26 £'000		
EEP4	Cleaning Services – Council Buildings	580	Review cleaning arrangements, with a focus on only emptying bins and cleaning toilets daily.	100	0		A review of the cleaning service is underway with some positions removed from the structure. The full savings will not be achieved until the accommodation review is complete.
EEP2	Caretaking & Security Services	641	A review and restructuring of caretaking arrangements.	52	0		Following advice from HR the restructure will not take place until the final quarter of the year.
Total Economy, Enterprise & Property Department				152	0		

Policy, Planning and Transportation

Ref.	Service Area	Net Budget £'000	Description of Saving Proposal	Savings Value		Current Progress	Comments
				24/25 £'000	25/26 £'000		
PPT6	Traffic	N/A	Consider introducing civil traffic enforcement for traffic violations. Employ private sector civil enforcement officers to issue fines and generate income. It would take 12 months to apply for powers from the DFT and put the scheme in place. The Environment & Urban Renewal Policy & Performance Board will consider this via a Topic Group.	150	0		Scheme has not gone ahead. Therefore no income will be generated as the traffic enforcement will not be carried out.
Total Policy, Planning & Transportation Department				150	0		

Symbol

Objective



Indicates that the objective is on course to be achieved within the appropriate timeframe.



Indicates that it is uncertain or too early to say at this stage whether the milestone/objective will be achieved within the appropriate timeframe.



Indicates that it is highly likely or certain that the objective will not be achieved within the appropriate timeframe.

Medium Term Financial Forecast

Appendix 5

1.1 Below table provides an updated on the Council's four year medium term financial forecast from 2025/26 to 2027/28.

	2025/26 Forecast	2026/27 Forecast	2027/28 Forecast	2028/29 Forecast
	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
Council Tax Growth	3,726	2,734	2,843	2,958
Business Rate Growth	-333	1,607	1,640	1,672
General Government Grant Growth	-500	80	82	84
Increase in Council Funding	2,892	4,422	4,565	4,714
Additional Cost Pressures:				
Contingency	1,000	2,000	2,000	2,000
Capital Programme	1,070	319	1,375	1,000
Pay & Price Inflation	4,807	5,164	5,639	5,814
Reverse 10% Supplies and Services Budgets	0	1,546	0	0
2024/25 Overspending Position	17,569	0	0	0
Increase in Service Demand	4,045	3,963	4,255	4,570
Childrens Improvement Programme	4,200	0	0	0
Cost Pressures - Other	916	131	118	119
Replenish Reserves	2,000	0	0	0
Business Rate Retention Reserve	0	4,332	0	0
Reduction in Grant	252	0	0	0
Total Cost Pressures	35,859	17,455	13,387	13,502
Agreed Savings February 2023	-1,349	0	0	0
2024/25 Savings Unachieved	217			
Funding Gap before Transformation Savings	-31,835	-13,033	-8,822	-8,788

1.2 The latest forecast shows a budget gap of £62.478m over the period to 2028/29. This position excludes Transformation targets, which in light of the budget gap need to be reviewed.

1.3 The forecast includes a number of estimates around pay and price increases, demand impact, grant income and changes to funding from council tax and business rates. The assumptions around those estimates are detailed below.

- The council tax base is inclusive of a 1% increase on the current year base plus increases around the change in council tax premium (for empty properties changing from 2 years to 1 year from April 2025) and a 100% premium being applied on second properties. The 2025/26 council tax base will be reported to Executive Board in November 2024.
- The increase to Council Tax being 4.99% in 2025/26 and 2.99% in the following years. The forecast increase being based on latest Office of Budget Responsibility Forecasts (OBR). Certainty around the referendum

cap on council tax increases for future years is not expected to be known until the autumn months at the earliest.

- Forecast in increase to income from business rates is set to 2% in each of the years of the forecast period. This position is continually being reviewed in light of any new hereditaments being added to the rating list and the impact of appeals against ratings. The business rate position for 2025/26 excludes any in-year surplus funds, valued at £2.472m in 2024/25.
- General Government grant income has been uplifted at 2% in each year of the forecast period. This will be updated as more information is known, which is expected to be on publication of the Government's Autumn Spending Review at the earliest.

1.4 Cost Pressures – Capital Programme

- Costs of the capital programme have been updated based on the latest capital programme. This includes the cost of principal loan repayments taken against the new leisure centre.
- A reduction in Council held cash reserves and forecast lower interest rates will have a cost impact on the interest receivable over the period, this cost has been built into the forecast.

1.5 Cost Pressures – Pay and Price Inflation.

- Reported CPI for July 2024 is 2.2% and longer term forecasts are for inflation to remain at around 2% over the reported period.
- Pay has been included at 2% for each year of the forecast. 2024/25 pay budgets were inflated by 4%, there is a risk to that being insufficient given ongoing pay negotiations.
- Price budgets will remain cash limited over the period of the forecast with the exception of contracts where inflation will cover the required increase. Largely this will be limited to growth of 2% with the exception of care contracts.
- Inflation against care contracts has been uplifted by 4% for 2025/26 and 2% for the following years. Inflation of 4% is linked to increase expectations to the 2025/26 National Minimum Wage increase, based on latest available information from the Low Pay Commission.
- Income inflation is fixed at 2% for each year of the forecast.

1.6 Reverse 10% Supplies & Services Cuts

- In setting the 2024/25 budget Council agreed to a 10% cut across property and highway maintenance budgets and general supplies and services. These cuts to budget are reversed in 2026/27, at a cost of £1.546m.

1.7 Cost Pressures – 2024/25 Contingency

- Contingency has been included at £1m for 2025/26 and £2m for later years.

1.8 Cost Pressures – 2024/25 Overspending Position

- Included within the forecast is the budget required to bring 2024/25 overspending departments to a balanced budget position (before inflation and demand growth), including:
 - Care Homes - £1.290m
 - Community Care - £2.128m
 - Legal - £0.858m
 - Children & Families - £11.617m
 - EIP - £1.676m
 - Note the above include budget to cover the current cost of agency staff and staffing for posts in addition to establishment. The Council have historically never budgeted for such costs.

1.9 Cost Pressures – Demand

- There are a number of ways in which the impact of service demand over a future period is considered. This can be based on local knowledge, wider impact across the North West, demographic changes or historical information. This forecast has built demand growth based on historical information, which is the most prudent approach given the uncertainty and high cost increases the Council has experienced over the past number of years. This includes:
 - Children's Social Care – Increase for demand and care complexity of 9.7% included in each year of the forecast. At a cost of £1.809m in 2025/26.
 - Adult Social Care – Increase in demand and care complexity of 4.9% included in each year of the forecast. At a cost of £1.886m in 2025/26.
 - SEN School Transport – Increase in demand of 11.2% in 2025/26 at a cost of £0.350m.

1.10 Cost Pressures – Children's Improvement Programme

- There is expectancy following the recent Ofsted inspection of an increase in costs being required for Children Services to support the improvement programme. Resources required are still being finalised but the 2025/26 forecast includes an amount of £4.2m to cover this.
- The above amount will lead to improvements and the potential reduction in costs for children in care. No reduction forecast has yet been included in the forecast, this will be updated as more certainty is known on the potential for cost reduction and over what period.

1.11 Cost Pressures – Other

- Included within the 2025.26 forecast is an amount of £1.133m to include growth across a number of services. This includes loss of income against the Youth Justice Service as the role of providing central services moves

to Cheshire West; £0.128 to fund the IT managed detection response system and a number of other smaller projects.

1.12 Replenish Reserves

- The drawdown against Council reserves over the past number of years has left the Council with an insufficient amount to cover uncertainty moving forward. The General Reserve position is £5.1m which is an absolute minimum. The forecast includes growth to reserves of £2m in each year of the forecast.

1.13 Rates Retention Reserve – Liverpool City Region Pilot

- The Council currently operate a pilot across the City Region where 99% of business rates are retained. This replaces the normal threshold of 50% of rates being retained. To allow for the growth in income the Council forgoes receipt of Revenue Support Grant and Improved Better Care Fund Grant. It is currently estimated the authority are in a betterment position as a result of the pilot by approximately £4.332m. No confirmation has been given to the pilot being extended post March 2026 and therefore the forecast assumes this funding is lost from 2026/27.

1.14 Funding Changes

- In the absence of available information, the forecast largely assumes specific Government Grants to remain at existing levels. The exception to this is a loss of £0.252m against the Services Support Grant which is expected to end in March 2025.

1.15 Savings Agreed February 2023

- In February 2023 Council agreed savings over a period of three years, 2025/26 includes an amount of £1.349m.
- Included is an amount of £0.217m for savings in 2024/25 which are unlikely to be achieved.

1.16 Transformation

- The above table excludes targets against the Transformation Programme, Council agreed to a target of £20m in February 2023, it is clear this amount is now insufficient to achieve a balanced budget position. Targets against the programme need to be revised based on the medium term funding gap.

REPORT TO:	Executive Board
DATE:	12 th September 2024
REPORTING OFFICER:	Executive Director – Children’s Services
PORTFOLIO:	Children and Young People
SUBJECT:	High Needs Provision Capital Allocations – Proposed Expansion of Special Educational Needs & Disability Provision: Statutory Consultation
WARD(S)	Borough wide

1.0 **PURPOSE OF THE REPORT**

1.1 In March 2024 the Council received notification from the Department for Education that it would receive a further allocation of £2.1M High Needs Provision Capital funding over a two year period to support the provision of new places and/or to expand existing provision for pupils and students with high needs.

1.2 Having previously consulted with schools on the opportunity to expand their existing Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) offer, or offer new SEND provision, this report seeks the Board’s approval to commence a statutory consultation to expand the number of SEND places available at Ashley School in Widnes through the provision of four additional classrooms to meet need for children and young people with a diagnosis of Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD), taking the total number of places available at the school site from 112 to 152.

2.0 **RECOMMENDED: That**

- 1) the Board approves commencement of a statutory consultation process for the expansion of Ashley School in Widnes for pupils with Autistic Spectrum Disorder to become a 152 place school.**
- 2) A further report is brought to the Board in December 2024 detailing the outcome of the statutory consultation and next steps.**

3.0 SUPPORTING INFORMATION

3.1 In March 2024 the Council received notification from the Department for Education that it would be allocated a further £2.1M (in addition to the £3.3M of capital funding High Needs Provision Capital Allocation previously received during 2022-24) to support the provision of new places or to expand existing provision for pupils and students with high needs (SEND).

3.2 Members approved a range of capital builds with the first tranche of funding, which, by September 2024, will have resulted in 117 additional SEND places in Halton’s primary and secondary schools, and a further circa 40 additional places at Halton’s special schools.

3.3 This report seeks members approval to commence with a statutory consultation to increase the SEND provision at Ashley School in Widnes, taking the total number of places available for age 11-19 students at the School from 112 to 152, through a proposal to build four additional classrooms at the school.

3.4 One of the proposed new classrooms will allow for the return to the main school site in Widnes of 8 pupils who are currently receiving their educational provision at Ashley’s off-site satellite provision operating out of The Bungalow in the grounds of The Heath School in Runcorn, with the further 3 proposed new classrooms being available for additional pupils and the proposed expansion of provision at Ashley School.

3.5 The proposed timeline for the consultation is detailed below:

23 rd September 2024	Start 4 week Statutory Consultation
21 st October 2024	End 4 week Statutory Consultation
12 th December 2024	Further report to the Executive Board on outcome of statutory consultation and next steps

3.6 The Statutory consultation will be undertaken in accordance with the DfE guidance: “Making significant changes (‘Prescribed alterations’) to maintained schools” January 2023. The full proposal will be published on the Local Authority’s website, and on the school’s website, and will set out:

- how copies of the proposal may be obtained;
- that anybody can object to, or comment on the proposal; the date that the representation period ends (21st October 2024); and
- the Local Authority’s address to which objections or comments should be submitted.

A brief notice must also be published in a local newspaper.

In addition, the LA will consult with:

- The school's governing body;
- the parents of every registered pupil at the school,
- Halton's special schools, and
- neighbouring local authorities.

3.7 Through this additional offer of specialist educational provision and support, Halton resident pupils will have access to provision in-borough where previously they may have attended out of borough provision which is costly both in terms of placement, and transport to facilitate attendance. Therefore, through the provision of additional in borough places, the requirement for expensive out-borough placements and associated transport costs, will significantly decrease.

4.0 **POLICY IMPLICATIONS**

4.1 The consultation on proposals to expand existing provision, which if supported, would lead to a proposed programme of expansion/capital works, that would ensure that the Council can continue to offer and expand its in-borough special educational needs provision wherever possible, will help to reduce expensive out-borough placement and associated transport costs, thereby supporting priorities within Halton's SEND Strategy and SEND Sufficiency Strategy, and meet need more locally within Halton.

4.2 The Council has a duty under the Department for Education and Department for Health's "Special educational needs and disability code of practice: 0 to 25 years" (2015) to support high quality provision to meet the needs of children and young people with SEND, with a focus on inclusive practice and removing barriers to learning. Through the offer of more localised specialist provision, the local authority can further build on its existing provision and continue to demonstrate the fulfilment of its duties in accordance with the code.

5.0 **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

5.1 Any capital works proposed will be funded from the High Need Provision Capital Allocation Grant allocated to the Council by the Department for Education.

5.2 Should the initial overall value of the project proposed exceed the amount of capital funding available, then the project will be value engineered to be met within budget. This has already been discussed with the school.

5.3 By investing in additional SEND provision in-borough the Council will reduce its High Needs expenditure, which is currently funded through the High Needs block of the Dedicated Schools Grant, a significant amount of which is currently spent on out of borough provision. It is important that preventative action is taken now to help reduce financial costs to the Council in the future, and by retaining Halton resident pupils at local provision, this will help drive down placement and travel costs for the Council longer term.

5.4 Circa £1.8M has been set aside for any proposed capital works at the School, but these costs are subject to refreshed feasibility studies and procurement processes and will be value engineered in agreement with the school to meet the capital funding available.

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

6.1 Improving Health, Promoting Wellbeing and Supporting Greater Independence

The proposal to expand Ashley School ensures that those children and young people with additional needs, whose needs can be met by the school are, in accordance with the SEND Code of Practice, helped in receiving successful preparation for adulthood, which includes preparation for independent living and employment.

6.2 Building a Strong, Sustainable Local Economy

None

6.3 Supporting Children, Young People and Families

Providing additional places at Ashley School will expand the offer in Halton of high quality provision to meet the needs of children and young people with SEND, evidences Halton's commitment to support the child or young person, and the child's parents, in order to facilitate the development of the child or young person. It also helps them achieve the best possible educational and other outcomes, preparing them effectively for adulthood, as set out in the Department for Education and Department of Health SEND Code of Practice.

6.4 Tackling Inequality and Helping Those Who Are Most In Need

None

6.5 Working Towards a Greener Future

None.

6.6 Valuing and Appreciating Halton and Our Community

By expanding existing provision at Ashley School, it is intended that more Halton resident pupils will have access to local specialist provision, and will therefore remain within the community, rather than having to attend out-borough specialist provision.

7.0 **RISK ANALYSIS**

7.1 The demand for specialist support for children and young people with SEND is increasing. By continuing to expand existing provision, and creating additional places, children and young people can receive the support they need within the borough which in turn will help to reduce expenditure within the High Needs Block of the Dedicated Schools Grant.

7.2 The Council has been allocated this funding from the Department for Education, as they also recognised a need for additional specialist places and provision in Halton, and through the proposed expansion of Ashley School, the Council will be able to demonstrate expenditure against need.

8.0 **EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES**

8.1 The High Needs Provision Capital Allocation provides capital funding to deliver new places, supporting learning in specialist provision and allows Halton resident pupils to be educated in-borough where possible. The Equality Act 2010 is continually referenced throughout the SEND Code of Practice and ensures that Local Authorities and schools fulfil their obligations in this regard.

9.0 **CLIMATE CHANGE IMPLICATIONS**

9.1 Through the introduction of additional local provision, there will be a reduction in the number of children and young people needing out of borough provision, which in turn will help reduce fuel costs/emissions. Any new build undertaken, would comply with the latest legislation and guidance and support energy efficiency in new buildings.

10.0 **REASON(S) FOR DECISION**

10.1 The Council is required to demonstrate appropriate identification of need against spend from the High Needs Capital Allocation Grant.

10.2 To deliver and implement the High Needs Provision Capital Funding programme.

11.0 **ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED AND REJECTED**

None.

12.0 **IMPLEMENTATION DATE**

It is intended that the additional provision, if approved, could be offered from September 2026.

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

Document	Place of Inspection	Contact Officer
Department for Education High Needs Provision Capital Allocations guidance (March 2024).	Children's Services Directorate	Martin West
Department for Education Making significant changes ('Prescribed alterations') to maintained schools" January 2023 guidance.	Children's Services Directorate	Martin West
Department for Education and Department for Health's "Special educational needs and disability code of practice: 0 to 25 years" (2015)	Children's Services Directorate	Martin West

REPORT TO:	Executive Board
DATE:	12 September 2024
REPORTING OFFICER:	Executive Director of Children's Services
PORTFOLIO:	Children and Young People
SUBJECT:	Youth Justice Plan 2024-27
WARD(S)	All

1.0 **PURPOSE OF THE REPORT**

- 1.1 Local authorities have a statutory duty to submit an annual Youth Justice Plan relating to their provision of youth justice services (YJS). Section 40 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 sets out the youth justice partnership's responsibilities in producing a plan. It states that it is the duty of each local authority, after consultation with the partner agencies, to formulate and implement a youth justice plan, setting out how youth justice services in their area are to be provided and funded, how they will operate and how they are performing against a range of national measures.
- 1.2 Halton have a shared service arrangement for Youth Justice with the other three Local Authorities in the sub-region and as such the Governance arrangements for Youth Justice are overseen by a pan Cheshire Management Board. The Youth Justice Service have drafted a three-year strategic plan 2024-27 in partnership with Cheshire Police and other statutory partners and it was approved by the Youth Justice Management Board on the 27th of June.
- 1.3 This report briefs the Executive Board on the content of the 2024-27 Youth Justice Plan for Cheshire and seeks formal sign off at full council on 23rd October 2024 in compliance with Youth Justice Board Guidance (Ministry of Justice) and Regulation 4 of the 'Local Authorities (Functions and Responsibilities) (England) Regulations 2000'.
- 1.4 There is provision within the national guidance for the Chair of the Youth Justice Management Board to be given delegated authority to approve the Youth Justice Plan on behalf of the local authority and for formal sign-off to then be sought retrospectively from Full Council. Given the timelines and complexity of doing this across four areas this has been the approach agreed by all four Local Authorities previously, and is recommended for the annual refresh of the Youth Justice Plan again next year.

2.0 RECOMMENDATIONS: That the Board

- 1) recommends the 2024-27 Youth Justice Plan for approval by the next full council; and**
- 2) gives delegates authority to the Director of Children Services, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Children, Young People and Families, to approve and submit an annual refresh of the Youth Justice Plan in 2025 prior to formal approval by Council next year.**

3.0 SUPPORTING INFORMATION

3.1 The Cheshire sub-region is a large complex area and the Youth Justice partnership between and across the four local authorities provides a powerful base to meet the various complexities and challenges faced by the county's children, families, and victims.

3.2 Despite the scale, Cheshire Youth Justice Service is a comparatively small organisation comprising fewer than 75 WTE staff, including seconded workers plus approximately thirty active volunteers. The human resource arrangements for the entire workforce currently involve eleven different employing organisations including police, probation, three different NHS Trusts and two independent providers (of speech and language therapists and substance misuse specialists). In April 2024 Halton Council and the other three local authorities approved the transition to a simpler fully hosted model for the Youth Justice Service which will see Cheshire West Council acting as 'lead authority' on behalf of the pan Cheshire partnership with effect from April 2025. However, the statutory responsibility for provision of Youth Justice Service (at place) remains with each of the four local authorities. Therefore an annual refresh of the three-year Youth Justice Strategic Plan will still be presented formally for approval at Cabinet and then full council in 2025 and beyond.

3.3 The national body responsible for inspecting Youth Justice Services are His Majesty's Inspectorate of Probation (HMiP) with national oversight provided by the Youth Justice Board (YJB – a quasi-autonomous governing body within the Ministry of Justice). Both HMiP and the national YJB recognise Cheshire YJS as being of a high standard. The former rated Cheshire YJS as 'Good' in the most recent 2021 full joint inspection (Governance and leadership were rated as 'Outstanding') and the latter affording pathfinder status for Cheshire's successful youth diversion programme.

- 3.4 The Youth Justice Plan has been produced in accordance with national Youth Justice Board guidance and follows their prescribed template to include: foreword from the Chair of the Management Board, Vision and Strategy, Governance, Leadership and partnership arrangements, Board development, Progress on previous years, Resources and services, Performance against National key performance indicators, Priorities, information on Children from groups which are over-represented, Prevention, Diversion, Education, Restorative approaches and victims, Serious violence and exploitation, Detention in police custody, Remands, Use of custody, Standards for children in the justice system, Workforce Development, Evidence-based practice and innovation, Service Development, Challenges, risks and issues.
- 3.5 Performance figures show that Cheshire YJS continue to achieve good levels of performance against the three main performance indicators: First Time Entrants to the criminal justice system (FTEs), Custody rates and re-offending (all detailed within the YJ Plan).
- 3.6 In 2023-24 there were only twenty-three Halton first time entrants to the justice system and only two Halton children sentenced to custody. Rates of Serious Youth Violence in Cheshire in 2023-24 were well below the national average at 2.7 offences per 10,000 children compared to a regional average of 4.7 and national average of 5.5. There is a lot more data and information detailed within the YJ Plan.
- 3.7 The priorities for Youth Justice across the sub region are described fully in the YJ Plan but include; 1) Further developing participation and relationship based practice to facilitate a culture of collaboration where children, volunteers and community groups are enabled to promote pro-social identity and desistance from crime 2) Ensuring the YJS support offer to victims is compliant with the new duty to collaborate responsibilities outlined in the Victim and Prisoners Act and 3) Design of a new comprehensive performance reporting and quality assurance framework, ensuring the service is data driven and makes full use of the management information system to drive practice and improve outcomes for children, families, and victims.
- 3.8 The Youth Justice Service have consulted with children, young people, parents, carers, and wider stakeholders in the development of the plan.

4.0 **POLICY IMPLICATIONS**

- 4.1 There are no policy implications, production and publication of a

Youth Justice Plan is a statutory requirement on all councils.

5.0 **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

5.1 Halton is one of several statutory financial stakeholders of the Youth Justice service and delivering the service on a shared basis with three other local authorities achieves considerable economy of scale thereby spending significantly less on youth justice than most councils. Halton Councils exact cash contribution for 2024-25 will be confirmed following confirmation of the annual pay award for staff but would be £330,228 (assuming an annual pay award settlement of a 4% increase on last year). The national Youth Justice Board is the single largest financial contributor to Cheshire Youth Justice Service with an annual grant of just over £1.2m.

5.2 Cabinet provided approval in March 2024 for the Youth Justice Service to move to a fully hosted model with Cheshire West Council hosting the service on behalf of all four local authorities and this will take effect from April 2025.

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

6.1 **Improving Health, Promoting Wellbeing and Supporting Greater Independence.** The Youth Justice Service works collaboratively with both the Integrated Care Board and health providers to support children to get the right help for what are often quite complex needs and avoid unnecessary criminalisation where possible. Children in the justice system are disproportionately impacted by health inequalities and the multi-disciplinary youth justice service includes access to mental health service and speech and language support.

6.2 **Building a Strong, Sustainable Local Economy.** The service supports young people and encourages them to be part of the local economy, reach their full potential and get the best start in life which aligns with these council priorities.

6.3 **Supporting Children, Young People and Families.** As above and the service supports children services and police to safeguard children from exploitation

6.4 **Tackling Inequality and Helping Those Who Are Most In Need.** Children in and on the cusp of the justice system are among the most vulnerable in Halton. The Youth Justice Service is a multi-disciplinary service that works in a child first, trauma informed and relational way to support this marginalised cohort of children and support them to desist from crime and enjoy a safe transition into adulthood.

6.5 **Working Towards a Greener Future.** Not applicable

6.6 **Valuing and Appreciating Halton and Our Community.** The Youth Justice Service promotes community participation through restorative justice and reparation. Enabling children who have offended to contribute positively in their community while also ensuring any risk they present to vulnerable people in the community is assessed and managed.

7.0 **RISK ANALYSIS**

7.1 No risks identified. Publication of a Youth Justice Plan is required by legislation outlined above

8.0 **EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES**

8.1 The strategic plan outlines areas of disproportionality within the cohort of children who are drawn into the criminal justice system and planned activity to have a positive impact on addressing this.

9.0 **CLIMATE CHANGE IMPLICATIONS**

9.1 No specific or relevant implications.

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

10.1 None under the meaning of the Act.

Youth Justice Services

Cheshire East, Cheshire West,
Halton and Warrington

Strategic plan 2024-27



Head of Service: Tom Dooks

Chair of the Management Board: Helen Brackenbury

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List of abbreviations

AYM	Association of Youth Offending Team Managers
CJB	Criminal Justice Board
CJS	Criminal Justice System
CJI	Centre for Justice Innovation
ETE	Education Training and Employment
FTE	First Time Entrant
GRT	Gypsy, Roma and Traveller
HNA	Health Needs Assessment
HMCTS	HM Courts and Tribunal service
HMIP	HM Inspectorate of Probation
ICB	Integrated Care Board
LGA	Local Government Association
JSNA	Joint Strategic Needs Assessment
JTAI	Joint Thematic Area Inspection
MOJ	Ministry of Justice
NS	National Standards
OCG	Organised Crime Group
OPCC	Office of the Police Crime Commissioner
PACE	Police and Criminal Evidence
PNC	Police National Computer
SVS	Serious Violence Strategy
SEND	Special Educational Needs and Disabilities
VRU	Violence Reduction Unit
YJAF	Youth Justice Application Framework
YJB	Youth Justice Board
YJS	Youth Justice Services (Cheshire)

Foreword

Cheshire has some unique opportunities and challenges, being one of only two youth justice services to operate over multiple local authorities' footprints and an entire policing constabulary area. This 3-year plan sets out a journey and commitment for a service that will be "child first" and evidence-based in its principles, recognising the traumatic impact of children's offending on victims - most of whom are other vulnerable children.

The last 12 months have seen an extended transition to embed a new leadership team following the retirement of a long-standing Head of Service and some significant infrastructure changes. This plan includes a proposal to simplify the operational arrangements by moving to a new fully hosted model for the service - with Cheshire West and Chester Council becoming the lead authority on behalf of the sub-regional partnership.

The murder of Brianna Ghey by two 15-year-olds in Warrington last year was shocking for everyone both in its brutality and pre-meditation. Intense media attention surrounded the trial and sentencing but the bravery and compassion shown by Brianna's mother, Esther Ghey has been inspirational. Youth Justice Services (YJS) is contributing to an independent learning review commissioned by Warrington Children's Safeguarding Partnership due to be published in summer 2024.

While offences such as these by children are incredibly rare in Cheshire, there is an increasing complexity and seriousness to some children's behaviour. Professionals sometimes have a difficult task in building trusted relationships with children to try and help keep them and those around them safe and move forward positively in their lives. Helping some children achieve an identity shift, to desist from offending and see a brighter future is not easy. It requires empathy, compassion and persistence – characteristics we in Cheshire are proud to have in such a skilled, dedicated, multi-disciplinary workforce.

The YJS Management Board is committed to delivering this plan and will oversee its progress, ensuring an annual refresh is produced and published through local channels.

Helen Brackenbury
Chair of YJS Management Board

Executive summary

It is evident from national research and two recently commissioned local needs analyses¹, that children entering the Youth Justice System experience multiple adversities and trauma. Early childhood exposure to violence, abuse, neglect, poverty, school exclusion and poor health among justice-involved-children are all disproportionate to the general 10-17 population. This understanding has influenced the strategic direction of travel for Youth Justice Services (YJS) across Cheshire. The priorities and content included in this plan will align with those relating to children and young people from across the four Cheshire places and with the public health approach to violence prevention as articulated in the Serious Violence Strategy² for the county. There has been a significant decrease in the overall number of children entering the justice system over several years, and the historically low levels have been sustained across Cheshire despite the backdrop of the cost-of-living crisis and other societal pressures. Some regions with similar reductions have witnessed an upturn in the last couple of years, so we are proud to see the sustained impact of our pan-Cheshire youth diversion model. We will work with the police to ensure national developments such as the new child gravity matrix for children is incorporated into the decision-making process for out-of-court disposals.

The previous Head of Service retired in the summer of 2023, with a long-standing Senior Manager appointed through an internal promotion. A new and very experienced Senior Manager was subsequently recruited externally and joined the service in February 2024, bringing new insight and fresh perspectives, so the right balance of continuity and change is assured. This is an exciting time for Cheshire and an opportunity to build on existing performance and partnership working, while modernising the service and embracing the latest national and international evidence on youth justice.

Some change has been forced on the service by financial inflationary pressures particularly in relation to the provision of ICT, but some of it is informed by what the latest research, evidence and data tells us about children, the offences they commit and the most effective ways of helping steer them away from crime.

This plan will outline a new “three pillars” vision for the service (Figure 1) which is rooted in the latest evidence and research on what works. But the new leadership team will also be implementing some modest service re-design intended

¹ [Public Health research institute HNA of Cheshire YJ service users July 2023](#)

² [Cheshire Serious Violence Strategy](#)

to retain the economies of scale and equity of service at a sub-regional level, while aligning more effectively with local place-based services for children, victims and caregivers.

YJS has a very good regional and national reputation for delivering positive outcomes for children, victims and caregivers and, in common with all youth justice services across England and Wales, will be reporting against 10 new key performance indicators (KPIs) in addition to the three main outcome measures First Time Entrants (FTE) to the justice system, reoffending and the use of custody.

In 2024-2025, Cheshire YJS will enter a period of substantial infrastructure and organisational change. The current shared service arrangements for youth justice delivery have evolved across the sub-region over two decades and have been through several iterations as Cheshire County Council separated into two unitary authorities and youth justice teams merged incrementally. A comprehensive review of governance arrangements undertaken in 2021, commented on the historical legacy arrangements of a service that had evolved over time with a complicated mix of cash and ‘in-kind’ contributions. One authority provides the ICT for YJS, another holds the accounts and all four employ the staff, and as local authorities have updated their own ICT systems and security compliance has tightened (and licensing costs increased) it has revealed a degree of organisational fragility.

Consequently, a sub-regional review into the governance arrangements, structure, and future sustainability of YJS as a pan-cheshire partnership, recommended the service should be ‘fully hosted’ by one local authority. This proposal was agreed by all statutory partners and formerly approved by all four councils in the spring of 2024 and will necessitate multiple workstreams to land the significant infrastructure change needed for a smooth transition by the end of this fiscal year. Cheshire’s Youth Justice Plan for 2024-2027 is written against the backdrop of this major organisational change so maintaining service continuity, while in transition to a hosted model is flagged in Section 3 as the principal risk for the partnership.

Service development priorities for the next 12 months include reviewing the pathway and joint decision-making process for out of court disposals, ensuring our offer to victims is fully aligned with the new Victims’ Bill, developing participation and designing a new performance management framework, which incorporates the 10 new national KPIs.

Vision

The vision for youth justice across Cheshire is:

‘To be a national leader in Youth Justice, where children and victims are at the heart of everything we do and where children are supported to achieve a positive, offence-free journey into adulthood.’

We will continue to value diversity, challenge social inequality and listen to children while developing trusted relationships that take their views into account. We understand the wider causes of offending behaviour are often rooted in trauma and social inequality, so trauma-informed practice and systemic ideas are at the heart of how we work. We will work in a restorative way and strive to achieve the best possible outcomes for our children. The YJS will work with partners on diverting children away from the formal Criminal Justice System (CJS) and will seek to detain a minimal number of children in custody, believing they are best supported to make changes in their lives whilst in the community, for all but the most serious of offences.

The latest research and evidence say services working with children who cause harm to others should adhere to Child First principles³ and be Trauma-Informed and Relationship-Based in the way they are configured and delivered. Cheshire has taken these tenets and adopted them as our three pillars (Figure 1) to inform the Youth Justice strategy from point of arrest, right through to the resettlement of children following release from custody.

Mission

Supporting children, young people and parents and carers to make positive changes through working collaboratively;

- Promoting safer communities and reducing the likelihood of reoffending and harm caused – by tackling the root causes of children’s offending.
- Listening and responding to the voice of the victim and empowering them to become involved.
- Connecting with children, helping them to understand the impact of their behaviour and achieve improved outcomes.

³ Child First recognises that children have different needs and vulnerabilities to adults and should not be treated in the same way

Regional and local context

The Cheshire footprint covered by YJS comprises the four unitary local authorities of Cheshire East, Cheshire West, Halton and Warrington (Figure 2). Each local authority area has a Children's Safeguarding and Community Safety Partnership and Cheshire is divided into three Probation delivery units (North, West and East) and has nine local policing units. The workforce of Cheshire YJS has staff employed by Warrington, Cheshire West and Cheshire East Councils and seconded workers from Halton Borough Council, Cheshire Constabulary, the Probation Service, three different NHS Trusts and two private providers. The service also has support in a variety of different roles from over 50 volunteers. This provides a strong partnership base to meet the various complexities and challenges faced by the county's children, caregivers and victims. An organisational structure chart of staff is shown in Appendix A along with ethnicity and gender and whole time equivalent and contract details (Appendix B).

Around 250,000 Cheshire residents are below the age of 18 with 101,077 aged 10-17. Across the four local authorities, there are over 1,000 cared for children. The large geographical area of 905 square miles does present some logistical challenges for the service, which has offices in Crewe, Winsford and Widnes. Staff work on a hybrid basis with additional virtual working areas in Macclesfield, Warrington, Chester, Runcorn, and Ellesmere Port. The children we work with tend to live in these larger more urban locations.

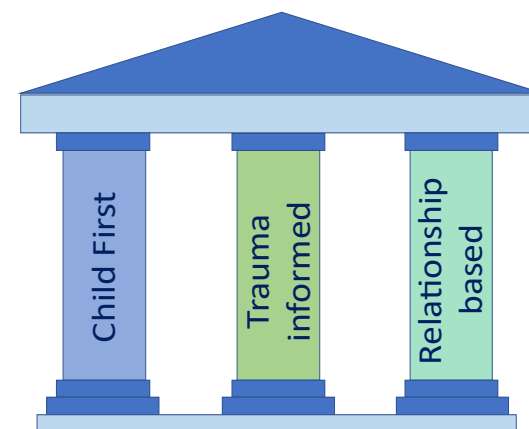


Figure 1. Cheshire YJS Three Pillars Strategic Vision

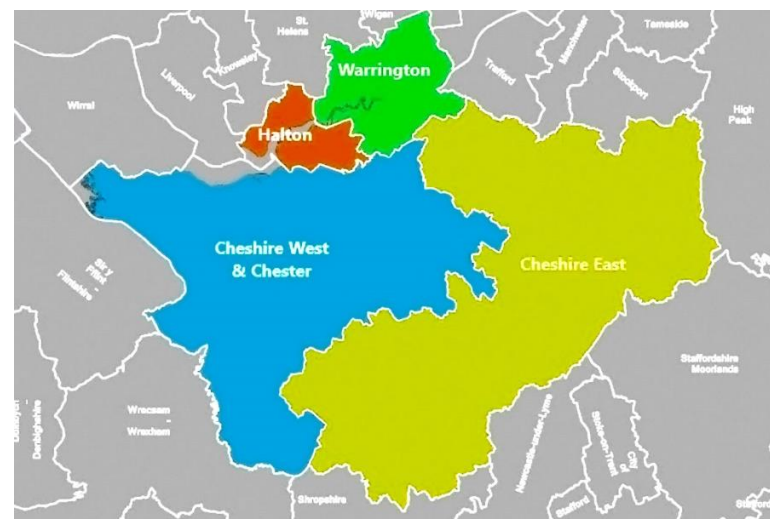


Figure 2. Cheshire and surrounding local authorities

Cheshire can be viewed as an affluent and rural county with pockets of urban deprivation. There is a marked difference in terms of local authority ranking of socio-economic indices and out of 317, Halton is ranked 23, Cheshire West 175, Warrington 183, and Cheshire East 228. Halton also has eight 'Left Behind' neighbourhoods with Cheshire East and Warrington having one each. Although highly diverse in terms of age, the county is not as diverse compared to other areas of England, with around 95% of residents identifying as 'White British'. The Gypsy, Roma, Traveller (GRT) community also has a presence in some areas. The region shares borders with 15 other local authority areas (Figure 2) and has excellent road and rail links to the three closest cities of Manchester, Liverpool, and Birmingham. Although these provide improved economic and lifestyle experiences, they also enable organised criminal activity such as County Lines and other forms of child exploitation. Cheshire Police have implemented a model for tackling County Lines and although the number fluctuates throughout the year, the average number identified has become more consistent, reducing from 44 in 2022-2023 to 38 in 2024 (range 32-63 and 22-68 respectively).

The place-based graphics presented in figure 3 show contextual demographic data provided by local authorities, Public Health England and from the internal YJS case management system. The information is presented for context only and comparisons between areas should be treated with caution because the data is not exactly like for like. The number of '*children with harmful sexual behaviour*' refers to the number of children resident in that local authority area who received specialist Harmful Sexual Behaviour (HSB) assessment and intervention from YJS following a conviction or out of court disposal for a sexual offence.

The volume of children in the justice system fluctuates between local authority areas but is broadly what would be expected based on population size relative to social deprivation. Cheshire East and Cheshire West have the largest populations and Halton the smallest, but levels of social deprivation are significantly higher in Halton. Local authority contributions to the service are made according to a percentage funding formula, calculated following a comprehensive zero-based review exercise into service demand and activity.

Youth Justice Services Plan 2024-2027

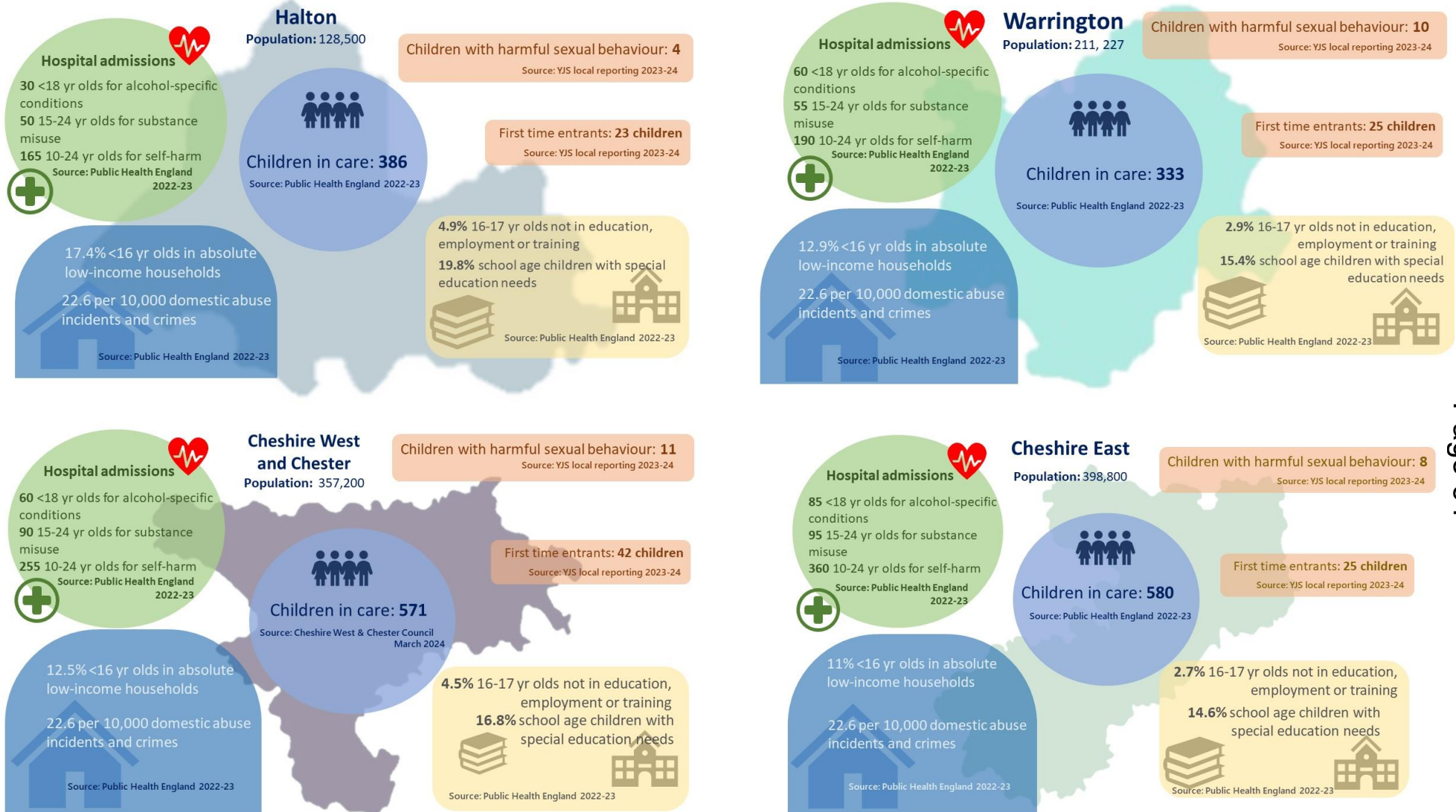
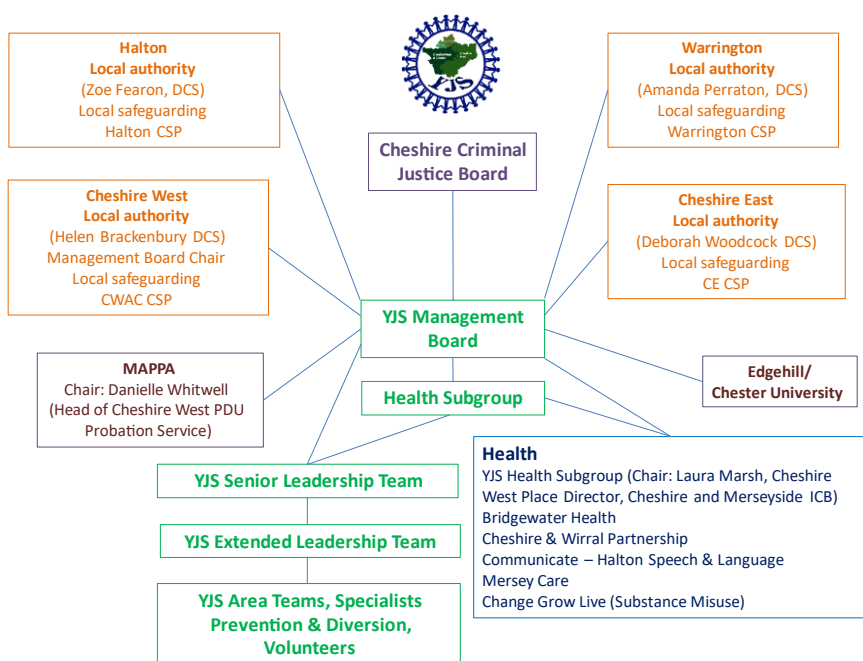


Figure 3. Figure place-based demographics for Halton, Warrington, Cheshire West and Chester and Cheshire East



DCS Director of Children’s Services. CSP Children’s Safeguarding Partnership, PDU Probation Delivery Unit, ICB Integrated Care Board

Figure 4. Sub-regional Youth Justice System Strategic Partnership

Cheshire YJS is also a core member of the four Children Safeguarding Partnerships, the Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangements (MAPPAs), and well linked to the Cheshire Integrated Offender Management model. These links have been enhanced by the adoption of a more youth justice-focussed role for the police officers, as recommended by the last HMIP inspection of Cheshire. YJS now has three police officers fully seconded and embedded within the service. A review will take place in 2024-2025, in partnership with Cheshire Constabulary to ensure the role of our seconded officers is in line with recently revised national guidance.

Cheshire does not have a Violence Reduction Unit (VRU) so as a sub-region, it does lack some of the investment, infrastructure and collaborative commissioning at scale brought by a VRU to urban metropolitan areas. Cheshire YJS

Governance, leadership and partnership arrangements

A strength of Cheshire YJS is the strategic and professional links it has with colleagues at a sub-regional level in the public, private, academic, and voluntary sectors (Figure 4). The YJS Head of Service is a core member of both the pan-Cheshire Criminal Justice Board (CJB) and Serious Violence Duty Partnership Board with senior youth justice management representation at the other CJB sub-groups (Reducing Reoffending, Disproportionality and Victims).

YJS is well placed to influence strategy and decisions at scale despite working in a complex governance landscape comprising four children’s safeguarding partnerships, four community safety partnerships and a plethora of other place-based and subregional strategic groups, where Cheshire YJS has a duty (or need) to cooperate.

is an example of how strong governance and leadership can oversee the delivery of an effective multi-agency / multi-disciplinary service across local authority boundaries. However, the intention to move to a single local authority hosted model reflects the need to simplify the operating environment, solve some of the organisational challenges and improve efficiency, enabling the YJS, to focus more time on delivering a quality service.

Neglect, Domestic Abuse and Exploitation often feature in the lives of justice-involved children and these are the priority thematic areas for all four safeguarding children partnerships. This plan specifically refers to the youth justice system but the strategic vision to improve outcomes for children, victims and communities across Cheshire is shared by the wider pan-Cheshire partnership. Timelines for approval at full council are complicated given the sub-regional arrangement. However, there is commitment from the four Directors of Children's Services to take this Youth Justice Plan (with an annual update) through their respective council governance channels.

Board membership and leadership

The Management Board Chair usually rotates every 2 years, across the four local authorities. Cheshire West and Chester Council's Director of Children's Services took over from Halton in 2022 and was due to handover the chairing to Warrington in April 2024. However, the Chair agreed to stay on to lead the Transitions Board overseeing the multiple project workstreams necessary to transition YJS to Cheshire West and Chester Council as a hosted service.

Board membership is fully constituted with membership at a sufficiently senior level from all statutory partners, supplemented by other key members including a leading academic advisor, an independent safeguarding advisor and a magistrate. Job descriptions and induction processes are in place for new Board members but the over-arching legal partnership agreement, which constitutes the service as a sub-regional arrangement, is due for review and will form one workstream of the Board overseeing transition to the hosted model. The Youth Justice partnership (Board) will utilise the children's committee of Cheshire and Mersey Integrated Care Board (ICB) to highlight service achievements and risks. The Director of Children's Services in Warrington bridges the Youth Justice Management Board and the children's committee of the ICB. Notwithstanding the financial pressures on the ICB, we will be signaling that cash contributions from health to YJS across Cheshire have not increased in line with inflation for several years, so a new funding formula to ensure equitable flow from Cheshire and Merseyside ICB to Place is required.

The YJS Management Health Sub-Group was established as the only explicitly sub-group of the Board because of the complexity of Health commissioning and provider arrangements across the sub-region. The Chair of the Health Sub-Group also acts as Management Board representative for health, while also ensuring connectivity to Place Directors and Cheshire and Merseyside ICB.

The subgroup commissioned the Public Health Research Institute at Liverpool John Moores University to undertake a comprehensive Health Needs Analysis (HNA). Published in 2023⁴, the HNA was based on in-depth analysis of 70% of the children Cheshire YJS worked with in 2022. To date, it is one of the most comprehensive and statistically valid studies into the presenting health needs (sometimes undiagnosed, and frequently unmet) of children in/on cusp of the justice system anywhere in the UK. In early 2024, the terms of reference of the health subgroup were reviewed and with the help of public health representation, the group will pivot towards informing the commissioning of services further upstream (at the place level). Since 2017, the Chair of the Health Sub-group has been a long-standing former Chief Clinical Officer and in June 2024, he will hand over this role to the Cheshire West and Chester Director of Place.

Given the multi-authority constitution elected members are not on the Youth Justice Management Board, but to raise their awareness of the service, we held a bespoke open day for them in February 2024. This was an opportunity for elected members to learn more about the child first, trauma-informed and relational way our staff, from different professional disciplines, work together across authorities to support children, caregivers and victims. The event was very positively received by elected members, and YJS staff also welcomed the opportunity to share real examples of how they make a positive difference to the lives of some of the county's most vulnerable people.

This 3-year strategic plan (and subsequent annual updates) will progress through formal local channels for scrutiny, oversight and formal sign off by all four councils in accordance with the legislative requirement after it has been approved by the sub-regional management board. This process will remain in place even after the service has transitioned to a fully

⁴ [Cheshire Youth Justice Services Health Needs Assessment Summary July 2023](#)

hosted model because each authority will retain the statutory requirement for provision, scrutiny and oversight of youth justice delivery in their area.

Under a new senior leadership team in 2024-2025, YJS has undertaken some re-design to mirror the area delivery units of policing and probation and to align more effectively with place-based services for children, caregivers and victims (see Section 10.3 Service Development).

1. Update on 2023-2024

1.1 Progress on priorities in previous plan

Priority 2023-2024	Progress, what have the outcomes/outputs been?
<p>Ensure transitional arrangements are in place following change of Head of Service in summer 2023</p>	<p>The long-standing Senior Manager in YJS was swiftly appointed to take over as Head of Service. This provided a degree of continuity but meant there was only one youth justice strategic manager covering four place-based partnerships until the replacement Senior Manager came into post in February 2024. YJS in Cheshire now has two very experienced senior leaders who will endeavour to build on the current strengths and reputation of the service to become outstanding.</p>
<p>Ensure the findings of the HNA are considered by relevant strategic partners to improve access to services for children in and at risk of entering the youth justice system</p>	<p>The completion of the HNA was a major undertaking and represents one of the most comprehensive (validated) analyses of the wider health needs of justice-involved-children undertaken anywhere in the UK in recent years.</p> <p>The Head of Service has presented findings at Health and Wellbeing Boards and several other partnership forums across the sub-region. Data and analysis from the HNA were provided to Crest Consultancy for their collation of a Strategic Needs Assessment to inform the Serious Violence Strategy (SVS) for Cheshire.</p> <p>A newly commissioned provider for Liaison and Diversion (Midland Partnership Foundation Trust [MPFT]) now covers the whole of Cheshire and there is improved provision, communication and a more effective pathway in place following productive meetings between YJS and MPFT.</p> <p>Issues are still being worked through with senior commissioners and Cheshire Wirral Partnership Trust around the dedicated speech and language therapy offer to justice-involved-children across Cheshire East and Cheshire West footprints, which is currently insufficient to meet the volume/demand revealed by the HNA. The Head of Service has written a paper to be tabled at Cheshire and Merseyside’s Integrated Care Board in summer 2024, outlining regional funding discrepancies and requesting a review of cash contributions to youth justice services across the Cheshire and Merseyside region.</p>
<p>Explore with an aspiration to move to a single host</p>	<p>A report providing the rationale and clear business case, with costings to deliver YJS as a fully hosted model, was completed in December 2023. This report was presented to corporate</p>

<p>arrangement to reduce inefficiency, inequity of employment and clarify partnership responsibilities, whilst also improving local Place based delivery and reporting models</p>	<p>leadership teams across Cheshire with approval to proceed given by cabinets (committee for Cheshire East Council) in spring 2024.</p> <p>This major infrastructure and organisational change project will be overseen by a Transitions Board, chaired by Cheshire West and Chester Council’s Director for Children and Families. Multiple workstreams will be established, a priority for the YJS partnership for 2024-2025 with a go-live date of April 2025.</p>
<p>Child-first, trauma-informed and relationship-based practice will continue to be embedded as routine</p>	<p>The new Head of Service has articulated Child First, Trauma-Informed and Relationship-Based Practice as the three key pillars upon which the service will continue to develop. The new Senior Manager launched the revised ‘area-based’ service design for 2024-2025.</p> <p>Cheshire YJS have further developed social prescribing through partnerships with the Canal and River Trust (fishing as mindfulness), Rage Fitness (Health and Wellbeing Centre) and other bespoke psychosocial therapeutic activities for children. The Local Government Association (LGA) and Youth Justice Board (YJB) have cited Cheshire’s social prescribing approach as an exemplar of innovative best practice.</p> <p>In 2023, the service rolled out Schwartz⁵ rounds to provide a safe reflective space for staff across all teams and levels (front line practitioners, back-office staff and managers) to share their experiences, thoughts and feelings on topics of their choice. This is an important but sometimes overlooked aspect of Trauma-Informed Service Development because staff can experience trauma vicariously. The Schwartz rounds in Cheshire are facilitated by specially trained in-house therapeutic practitioners and have been well received by staff who have attended them. Schwartz rounds will continue to run quarterly in 2024-2025 and beyond.</p>
<p>Embed Turnaround project with an expanding Prevention and Diversion Service to work with more children on the cusp of the youth justice system</p>	<p>Turnaround was embedded within the Prevention and Diversion Team with a c£300k Ministry of Justice (MOJ) Grant. This was used to recruit additional front-line practitioners and build reporting and management capacity to ensure the fulfilment of grant requirements. This opened pathways to work with children referred because of concerns over anti-social behaviour.</p>

⁵ [Schwartz Rounds](#)

	<p>By the end of March 2024, 135 children in Cheshire had been supported through the Turnaround project. Eighty-six of whom have successfully completed the programme, with the remaining 49 continuing to receive YJS support.</p> <p>The MOJ have confirmed Turnaround funding will end in March 2025 so YJS will ensure transition planning is in place prior to Q4. This will ensure children are supported into accessing alternative programmes of intervention, including newly commissioned delivery providers Remedi and Queensberry Alternative Provision.</p>
<p>Continue to develop anti-exploitation strategies in partnership with the Police, local authorities, and other partners such as health and education</p>	<p>Cheshire YJS is an active and influential participant in both pan-Cheshire and place-based partnership groups focusing on tackling criminal exploitation. Team Managers and local ‘exploitation champions’ attend contextual safeguarding operational meetings and share intelligence and contribute to ‘mapping’ meetings to help local responses. Exploitation of vulnerable children in/on the cusp of the justice system remains a high concern/high priority for the wider partnership and earlier targeted intervention and support for children to get ‘upstream’ was included in the Cheshire SVS.</p> <p>The YJS leadership team will continue to use our data and insights (e.g. from HNA) to inform and influence the wider partnership. A good example of this is YJS data being instrumental in influencing the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner (OPCC) to use Serious Violence Duty funding to commission the Voluntary Community Sector to provide targeted support. Services are now in place to help children identified by education, early help, and social care as being ‘at risk’ of exclusion and exploitation, if left unsupported.</p> <p>Organised criminality is dynamic to emerging markets and opportunities and there were some concerning reports from Merseyside that county lines had evolved to become international. A few Merseyside children were trafficked to distribute drugs for a Dubai-based (but Merseyside linked) organised crime group (OCG). Given the proximity and known lines from Merseyside into Cheshire, the YJS Head of Service raised this at the Youth Justice Management Board and at local Serious Organised Crime Strategic groups. At the start of 2024, Cheshire YJS also participated in Joint Targeted Area Inspection (JTAI) benchmarking exercises with partners.</p>

<p>Disproportionality review to be completed in line with the Cheshire CJB subgroup methodology</p>	<p>A response to the Lammy report was undertaken by the Disproportionality Sub-group to Cheshire CJB. YJS contributed data and insight to this work (see Section 7.1) and remains a member of the sub-group, which has renewed terms of reference under a new chair.</p>
<p>Explore potential of an early safeguarding diagnostic tool with CACI</p>	<p>This was explored as a tri-partite “Knowledge Transfer Partnership” with Edge Hill University and CACI (YJS software supplier) and an initial grant application to undertake the research and development necessary was made to Innovate UK. It subsequently transpired however YJS would become liable for two-thirds of the cost of employing research associates and because there was no cash in the budget and no obvious return on investment for the children we work with, it was ruled as unviable. CACI are a private organisation and are exploring other avenues for developing predictive analytics that may deliver them a commercial return on investment.</p>

Some other notable achievements in 2023-2024 include: -

- YJS were ‘early adopters’ of the new national Prevention and Diversion assessment tool, with Cheshire contributing to the development of a quality assurance tool at national level with the YJB.
- Our social prescribing model has been cited by the LGA, YJB and NHS England as innovative practice for supporting children and young people in or on the cusp of the justice system.
- Several children embraced an opportunity to visit Chester University to work alongside graphics students and professionals in the co-design of a new youth justice planning template (see Section 4). An example of the kind of child first, participatory practice and co-design the service will be developing over the next 3 years.
- Cheshire YJS helped to facilitate some ‘art therapy’ with a cared for child who was struggling with being under a deprivation of liberty order and her painting won a Koestler arts award (see Section 8).

2. Performance over the previous year

Performance against nationally measured targets continues to be strong. Since rolling out the Divert scheme in 2017 across all Cheshire local authorities, we have seen fewer children entering the CJS.

Total volume and rates per 100,000 are significantly below regional and national averages and Section 11.4 contains a longer-term trend of FTE data, disaggregated by local authority. Figure 5 shows initial sharp reductions in FTE with the low base level being sustained again in 2023 (NB the lowest level of FTE in 2021 was due to the impact of covid/lockdowns).

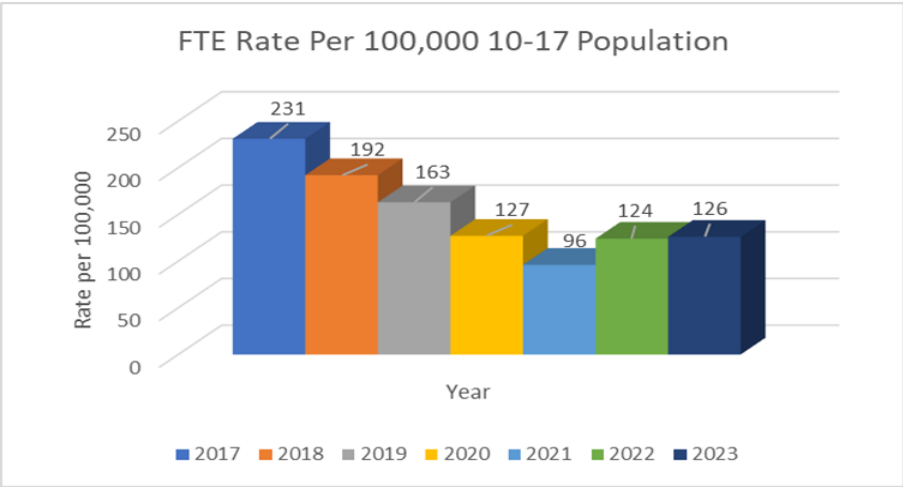


Figure 5. FTEs to the justice system in Cheshire

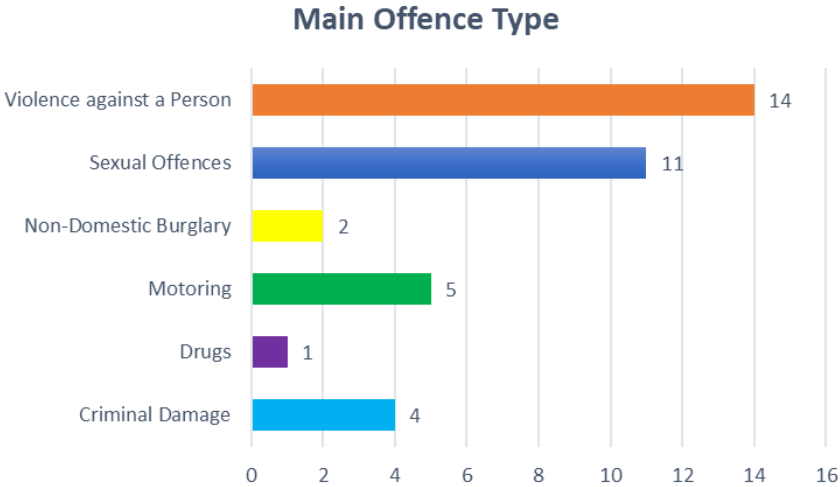


Figure 6. FTE offences in 2023

Figure 6 shows violent or sexual offences represent the bulk of those committed by children entering the justice system for the first time. This is what we would expect and is compatible with 'Child First' youth justice principles and an effective youth diversion scheme that ensures children are dealt with according to risk and need.

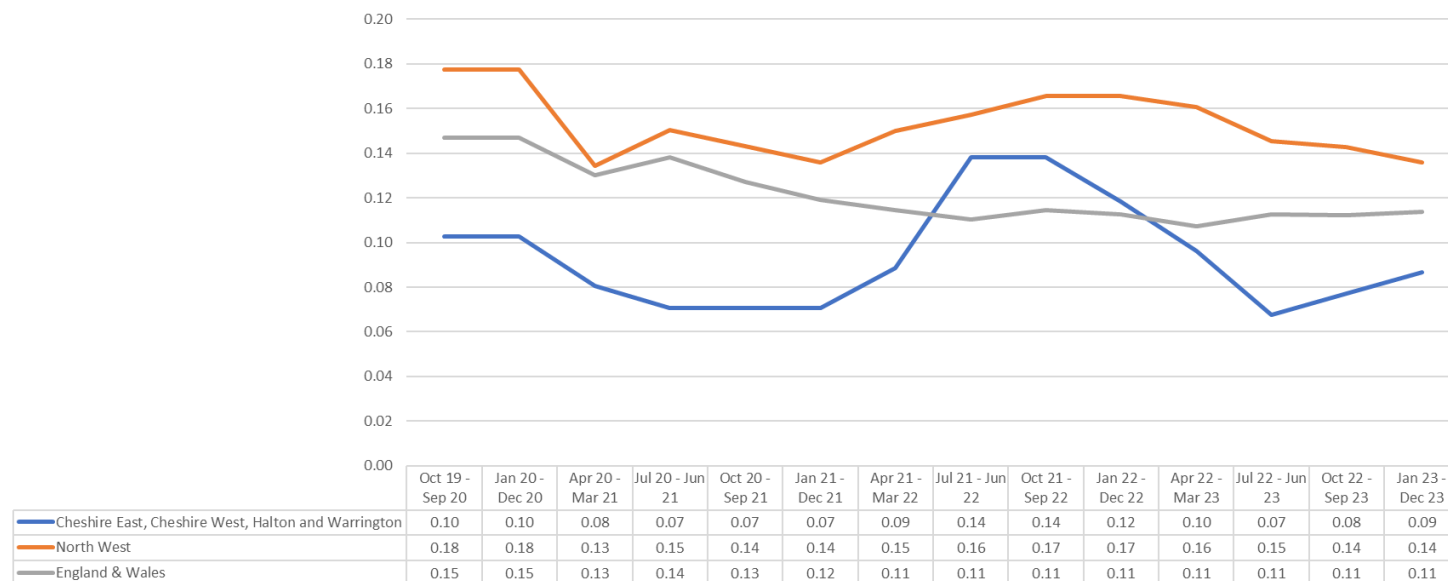


Figure 7. Custody Rate per 1,000 for Cheshire 10-17-Year-olds with regional and national comparisons

Source: National Youth Justice Application Framework (YJAF)

Cheshire also has consistently low numbers of children remanded and sentenced to custody (see Sections 11.9 and 11.10 for 2023-2024 place-based detail). Fewer than five children across the whole of Cheshire have been sentenced to custody in any quarterly period going right back to Q2 of 2019.

It is rare for there to be more than 10 children from the four places in Cheshire combined, serving custodial sentences at any one time. While reoffending rates of those children in the system are slightly higher than regional averages, this is attributable to the fact children sentenced by the courts tend to be those with whom we have already exhausted all diversionary options. They are the children who are often more entrenched in criminality and exploitation so require more intensive intervention and support.

We are also seeing consistently reliable results for those children subjected to out of court disposals, in terms of successful completions and reoffending rates, with fewer than one in 10 children diverted away from formal sanctions going on to reoffend.

As a service, we are committed to focusing our efforts on reducing reoffending by our children. However, as we continue to prevent children entering the system and, running parallel have relatively few children in custody, we recognise re-offending rates are understandably our area of greatest challenge. Figure 8 below provides the latest published re-offending data, taken from the Police National Computer (PNC). However, whilst this serves to give us a national picture, it is important to recognise the following limitations of this PNC data:-

- The re-offending of adults who we no longer work with or have been never known to us
- The re-offending of children from outside areas who have offended in Cheshire but are not or have never been open to Cheshire YJS
- PNC re-offending data is published 2-years behind the current quarter.

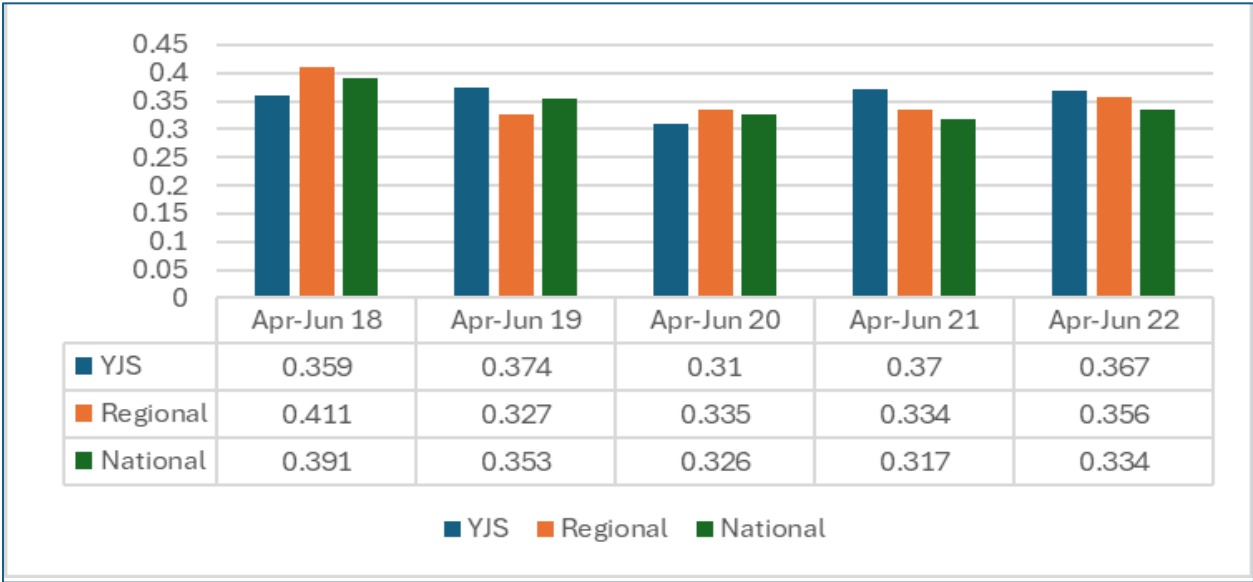


Figure 8. Binary reoffending data for YJS compared with regional and national rates 2018-2022
 Source: YJAF via PNC

Desistance from crime for children who experience significant adversity and trauma is not a linear journey. It requires long-term, trusted, relational support from professionals to try and help children achieve a shift toward a more positive self-identity. This is why the vision for the service is underpinned by the three key pillars of Child First, Trauma-Informed and Relational-Based Practice (Figure 1).

The KPI charts in Appendix A1 show performance against a range of other key performance metrics, introduced in 2023 by the national YJB, who have rated YJS as being in Performance Quadrant 2 (Satisfactory).

YJS will be developing a new comprehensive performance reporting and quality assurance framework in 2024 so the Management Board, partners and staff can all see the strengths and areas of challenge across the 10 KPIs. We will be data driven, making full use of the management information system to target our improvement activity in the areas where it is most needed.

2.1 National Standards Audit

Submission of a National Standards (NS) audit is a condition of the YJB national grant and the most recent NS audit was undertaken in October 2023, against NS2: Work in Courts. Cheshire YJS received positive feedback from the YJB Regional Oversight Manager on the quality of both the audit process and its findings.

This NS audit was a comprehensive quality assurance audit of the services delivered before, during and after children's appearances before the three magistrate courts and one crown court in Cheshire. Section A looked at Strategy, Section B on Reports and Section C on Process. Sections B and C involved a deep dive practice audit involving 20 cases.

There were nine areas in Section A 'Strategic performance' with four rated **Outstanding** and five rated as **Good**. Cheshire YJS enjoys a strong partnership with HM Court and Tribunal Service (HMCTS), Magistrates, Police and Crown Prosecution Service. The Head of Service is a member of Cheshire CJB and meets quarterly with youth bench magistrates who sit in Cheshire's three youth courts. A former chair of the Cheshire youth bench and a representative from HMCTS are also members of the Management Board.

For sections B (Reports) and C (Process), the audit revealed the overall quality of work was **Good** or **Outstanding**. One criterion required improvement and this related to the adequate referencing of the impact of the child’s offence on their victim, by authors of pre-sentence reports. Improvement action is being addressed through local changes to case management guidance, emphasis on managerial oversight and explicitly evidencing the possible impact on victims (even where victim personal statements are unavailable).

A priority for 2024-2025 will be to review the victim contact and support offer ensuring the service remains fully compliant with the Victims’ Code of Practice and the new Victims and Prisoners Act (see Section 11.6).

3. Risks and issues

The main risk to service delivery and the achievement of positive outcomes for children, victims and care givers, relates to the complexity of the pan-Cheshire shared service arrangements. A combination of escalating ICT costs due to national licensing and security compliance issues, as well as inefficiency that comes from having staff employed by authorities other than the one providing their ICT, has rendered the current arrangement unsustainable.

YJS staff currently must navigate four separate systems for corporate information such as finance and human resources. Lack of a sustainable ICT system will inhibit performance management, data collection and case recording and increase costs for each partner authority. In addition, the safety of children and the public could be compromised if these inefficiencies continue to impact on staff time. This results in less time spent with children and young people (and those harmed by children and young people).

The move to a hosted arrangement with Cheshire West and Chester Council as the lead authority, will mean a more productive and efficient organisation. This model will also provide financial transparency and the new legal memorandum of understanding will mitigate the risks associated with provision of ICT that is a cost Halton Borough Council can no longer absorb as a benefit in kind.

Not progressing to a fully hosted model (and agreeing a sustainable funding formula) will, over time, undermine the integrity of the YJS and compromise service delivery for our children, caregivers and victims.

All four councils have now confirmed their support for transitioning to a new hosted model, with each authority paying a management fee. The infrastructure work involved in transitioning the service will be significant and require multiple workstreams overseen by a Transitions Board.

As with any major organisational change and infrastructure project – particularly one involving decommissioning and transfer of ICT systems, there is a risk of service disruption, or the work not being completed within the intended timescale of this fiscal year. The Transitions Board, overseen by the Director for Children and Families in Cheshire West and Chester Council, will be responsible for agreeing any mitigation measures, should they be required.

4. Building on our strengths: Plan for 2024-2025

4.1 Child First

In Cheshire, we are committed to Child First principles. As mentioned earlier, these principles, along with Trauma-Informed and Relationship-Based Practice will inform all practice and development activity. We will continue to apply the principle of “*Would this be good enough for my child?*” and prioritise the best interests of children, recognise their needs, capacities, rights, and potential. As well as being child-focused, our work will be developmentally informed, acknowledge structural barriers and done with children rather than done to them.

YJS has made great strides in this direction of travel in the last couple of years but recognises there is more to do, particularly in relation to meaningful and active participation of children in the justice system.

This is why **Participation** is a strategic, operational and practice priority flowing from this Strategic plan.

The new Service Development Hub will be the engine room to drive forward participation across all areas of YJS. This will not be easy as children sentenced by the courts often feel they have no power and no voice and they have usually experienced significant trauma and adversity. Offending for many children is in part symptomatic of their own childhood abuse or neglect. YJS will hold a Service Development Day in July 2024, with **Participation** as the theme and have invited the leading children’s and social justice charity Peer Power to co-facilitate the session. Through the lived experience of their ‘peer leaders’, Peer Power will help YJS to better harness the power and potential of children and young people and be the catalyst for scaling up some of the co-produced (Child First) activity started in 2023-2024 and outlined below.

In summer 2023, a partnership project with a local community enterprise in Crewe ‘Recycle Cycles’, combined children gaining skills in bike maintenance with designing and painting a large outdoor container (Figure 9a). The inspiration for the design came from a child being encouraged to visualise his pathway toward a brighter future having participated in evening sessions on topics such as, healthy relationships and respect for women, substance misuse and self-esteem. A group of our children worked collaboratively with YJS staff and graphic design students at University of Chester to co-produce Figure 9b. This is now the cover of the planning document, *My Change Plan*, used with all YJS children.



Figure 9a. Original artwork created on a container by YJS children working with Recycle Cycles in Crewe



Figure 9b. Adapted artwork for *My Change Plan* made by YJS children in collaboration with YJS staff and graphic design students from University of Chester

The above artwork is one illustration of the kind of participatory practice Cheshire YJS will be seeking to build on over the coming years. It also exemplifies how we can take a strengths-based approach and co-produce with children. By knowing they have a voice in co-producing their own intervention plans, children will be more motivated to achieve the objectives and successfully complete their work with us.

Our relationship-based model also offers a way to improve the interactions children have with police officers. The Cheshire Youth Commission is facilitated by Leaders Unlocked, a social enterprise that delivers the Youth Commission peer-led model and exists to allow young people across the UK to have a stronger voice in their communities on issues that affect them. During October 2023 half term, YJS arranged two bespoke events with Cheshire Youth Commission enabling the voices of children with lived experience of the system, to be heard by the OPCC and other leaders and to inform policing in Cheshire. Five children open to YJS, participated in a bespoke workshop on relationships with the police. The workshops included interactive situational scenario activities, an animation film and quizzes to elicit rich feedback on justice-involved-children’s authentic lived experience.

“It was good to get listened to. I have not had the opportunity of this before in relation to my experiences with the Police. The person running the group seemed to be really interested.”
(Child)

Some children felt the Police should receive training around mental health issues, specifically neurodiversity and officers should have more awareness of how best to engage with neurodiverse children. (Cheshire HNA confirmed neurodivergent children are over-represented in the youth justice system). This was one of several recommendations made in the final report to the OPCC as part of the annual “Big Conversation” and YJS will facilitate a similar bespoke session with Leaders Unlocked later in 2024.

“I used to get regularly stopped and searched if I was stimming and under suspicion of drug use when I am actually just autistic.”
(Child)

“I just want to say a huge thank you to you and the team for giving us an opportunity to speak to the amazing young people you work with. They were my favourite sessions of this year”
(Project Manager, Leaders Unlocked)

Figure 10 shows a young person open to YJS helping a traffic officer wash his motorbike. This example of relationship-based practice was arranged by a Divert Worker who was aware of the young person’s interest in motorbikes.



Figure 10. Young person helps a traffic officer to wash his motorbike

5. Resources and services

The YJS operates as a complex shared service arrangement with pooled funding from four local authorities, statutory partners, Cheshire OPCC and the YJB core grant (see Appendix B Budget). Cheshire YJS will pool the YJB core grant with other funding to:

- Ensure we have a well-trained, supported and motivated team of staff, with the specialist skills to engage children, caregivers and victims;
- Continue to contribute towards funding our relationship-based practice model and further developing participatory work with children, care givers and victims;
- Continue to pool funding to develop social prescribing and other interventions with children to improve self-identity, health and wellbeing and reduce the likelihood of re-offending;
- Continue to develop diversionary and participatory interventions to divert children away from formal sanctions (supported by contributions from the OPCC);
- Ensure YJS can continue to provide robust, intensive supervision to children in the community to maintain public and judicial confidence and minimising the use of custody.

6. Board development

The YJS Management Board will continue to meet quarterly and receive reports from YJS and partners to facilitate scrutiny and discussion around key service delivery and performance areas. The Board's key purposes are:

- To determine strategic direction of YJS, ensuring all statutory partners are fully engaged.
- To oversee and monitor the operational work of YJS.
- To ensure YJS is adequately resourced to carry out its statutory function of preventing offending by children and young people.

The leadership, composition and role of the Management Board are critical to the effective delivery of local youth justice services and Cheshire has senior representation from all statutory partners. The YJS Management Board also has long standing representation from HMCTS, the Magistracy, children's safeguarding, and academia.

The main development area for 2024-2025 will be the overseeing of a parallel Transitions Board by the Chair of the YJS Management Board. This will ensure the smooth transition to the new hosted model with Cheshire West and Chester Council becoming lead authority on behalf of the partnership.

7. Workforce development

As a service, and in line with our three pillars vision, we are committed to learning and development. It is vital all staff have the appropriate skills and knowledge, are effective in their roles and equipped to deliver high-quality services to everyone they work with. We also place high value on relevant opportunities to promote personal growth and professional development.

As a pan-Cheshire partnership, we can maximise opportunities arising in each of the four Safeguarding Children Partnerships and local authority areas. In 2023-2024, in response to our HM Inspectorate of Probation (HMIP) 2021 inspection report and updated case management guidance, we commissioned and facilitated a broad range of learning and development opportunities. Cheshire YJS were also privileged this year to inputs from leading academics, with international reputations, for research on working with children in the justice system. The table below summarises the main staff development events held, highlighting how we have drawn on expertise from many sources.

Our commitment to the workforce will continue into 2024-2025 and we will seek to further strengthen workforce development through:

- Development of a more centralised approach to identifying training needs across the service
- Developing an enhanced training monitoring system and connecting with Cheshire West Learning and Development Team as we move to a single hosted model.
- Revising the Training Plan to be highly relevant, achievable, and accessible to the whole workforce.
- Continued membership of the Youth Justice Legal Centre, which brings timely and specialist legal advice for professionals and managers and access to a range of in-person training events and remote learning.

Table 1. Summary of key work force development activities in 2023-2024

Title	Course Type	Overview
Relationship Based Practice by Jackie Dwayne Limerick University	Academic Guest Speaker	Youth justice in Ireland is in a fortunate position as on the back of the research from Limerick, they were awarded funding to 2027 to implement RBP (Relationship Based Practice). Our approach has no additional resources and will come via the new development hub to ensure a more centralised approach but still drawing on what is available in local areas. Once children have finished their time with YJS we will be able to signpost them to groups/activities they have been linked to as part of exit plan to help sustain desistance from crime while avoiding dependency on YJS
Presentation on the Lundy Model by Laura Lundy Queen’s University Belfast	Academic Guest Speaker	Presentation covering the aspects of the Lundy Model of Child Participation we have adopted within the work of the Service Development Hub (see Section 8).
Child Participation in Youth Justice Research Louise Forde Brunel Law School	Academic Guest Speaker	Whole service presentation on participation in youth justice from Louise Forde again to back up work on participation which will be the theme of the Service Development Day.
YJLC Gravity Matrix Training	Commissioned	Training from Youth Justice Legal Centre to Prevention and Diversion staff and police officers on the application of revised gravity matrix for youth out of court disposals
Case management guidance	In-house	Major internal briefings and training on application of revised case management guidance
Equality and Diversity training	Commissioned	Delivered by Wipers Youth social enterprise. Specifically tailored training for youth justice professionals to improve cultural competency and awareness of disproportionality in the justice system

Having considered the local data analysis and in support of service priorities, the following training is currently planned for 2024-2025:

- Specialist Harmful Sexual Behaviour (AIM3) to broaden the pool of trained practitioners
- Court Skills
- UNITAS courses: Youth Diversion; Child First Effective Practice; Professional Certificate in Effective Practice
- Equality and Diversity for all staff.

8. Evidence-based practice and innovation

YJS will continue to root all intervention and support with children on the evidence base, but Cheshire will also explore new and innovative ways of connecting with children who find it difficult to access mainstream services. Our approach was described recently by an NHS England lead as the best application of social prescribing in a justice context that she had come across. It was also cited by the LGA as one of their *'innovation in local government'* case studies⁶.

Social prescribing in YJS emerged from the recognition that justice-involved-children often arrive with previously unmet health needs and traditional/clinical models of care had failed to reach them. An example being the socially prescribing of fishing as a mindfulness activity in partnership with the Canal and River Trust's 'Let's Go Fishing' programme (Figure 11).



Figure 11. 'Let's Go Fishing' Programme at Winsford

⁶ [Cheshire: Using social prescribing to reduce reoffending among young people | Local Government Association](#)

Adopting a psychosocial therapeutic approach, health workers in YJS are socially prescribing creative and flexible activities to help children improve their health and wellbeing. This has proven particularly effective for males who have experienced intra and/or extra familial violence and are often in a state of hyper-vigilance or hyper-arousal. Cognitive Behavioral Therapy is often ineffective with this increasingly large sub-set of our children, so the service has tailored the health offer to become far more psychosocial and adaptable to the needs (and interests) of the children we work with. Our health offer is also supportive towards addressing the impact of trauma.



The artwork in Figure 12 was created by a cared for child working with the YJS. “L” had experienced a lot of childhood trauma and was struggling with being in care under a deprivation of liberty for her own safety. She was being supported to make sense of her experiences through art therapy and discovered she had a real talent. YJS supported her to enter this piece for a Koestler arts award and it won a commendation award. On winning the award, she told her YJS worker it was the first certificate she had ever received in her life. This is a perfect illustration of the impact that child first, trauma-informed, and relational practice can have on children who have experienced complex trauma.

**Figure 12. ‘Day in the Life of a Deprivation of Liberty Order’
Koestler commendation award winning artwork 2023**

Cheshire YJS has a well-developed “*Research in Practice*” working group that was recognised by HMIP in 2021 as an exemplar of collaboration between academia and the youth justice sector. As mentioned above the group was able to secure several key researchers to speak to the service about their findings.

One such speaker was Professor Laura Lundy, a leading international authority on the meaningful participation of children and author of The Lundy Model (Figure 13). YJS will be adopting the Lundy Model as our frame of reference in developing Participation across all aspects of service delivery in 2024-2027.

The YJS is in a knowledge-transfer partnership arrangement with two local universities (Chester and Edge Hill University) and two senior lecturers in criminology, with a national profile for research on youth justice will co-chair the YJS Research group from 2024-2025. This collaboration will ensure Cheshire YJS retains a national reputation for evidence-based practice and stays at the leading edge of innovation in the sector.

Although YJS has been fortunate to have a number of key speakers talking to staff about the research behind participation, the Service Development Day in July 2024 will be the catalyst for the development of a participatory model across the service with Peer Power Youth facilitating the session.

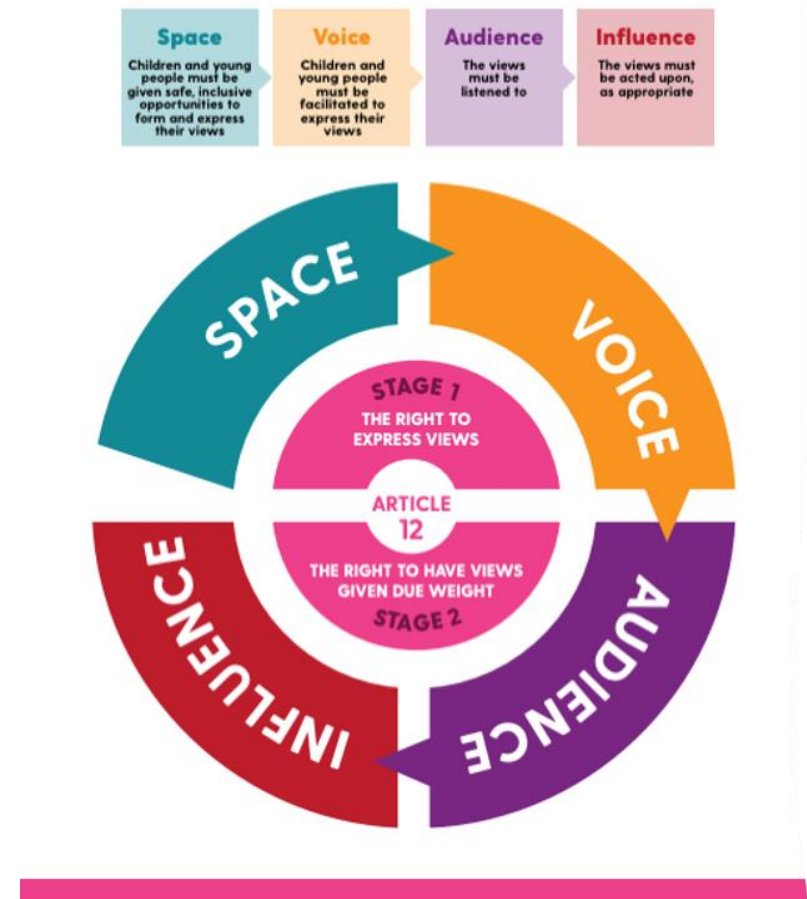


Figure 13. The Lundy Model of Child Participation

We have used previous service development days to launch Trauma-Informed Practice (2019) and Relationship-Based Practice (2022). The Service Development Hub will bring together a range of working groups focusing on various aspects of participation from involving children in staff recruitment to using technology to gain children’s views and ideas.

9. Evaluation

The HNA by the Public Health Research Institute at Liverpool John Moores University evaluated and validated the trauma-informed and relationship-based practice approach adopted by Cheshire YJS professionals. The passage below is taken directly from their full technical report, based on a statistically valid research sample of 70% of the children YJS were working with at the time:

“The (Cheshire YJS) offer now provides that key link into mental health, substance use and Speech Language Therapy support, through an equitable healthcare assessment available to all young people entering the YJS. This provided a key opportunity to assess and identify any unmet health needs in these three areas (and wider health and safeguarding needs), which may not have otherwise been identified, and for many was the first time they had access to such healthcare screening. This multi-agency approach not only allowed for quicker identification during the healthcare screening, but it also meant more timely specialist support for families who would have otherwise had long waiting lists to see specialists from CAMHS and SLT. This was identified as an effective way to open the door to this pathway of wider support, recognising that these health needs were associated to the offending behavior and need to be addressed to prevent further re-offendingThe Cheshire YJS model also provides an opportunity for multi-agency working, not only to provide that overarching multi-disciplinary offer for children and young people, but also in terms of how services work together across Cheshire....The HNA highlights the key work from YJS and wider services across Cheshire in support of families to reduce inequalities, improve wellbeing, and reduce offending. This required skilled, experienced staff working in a trauma-informed way, using a child-focused approach.”

10. Priorities for the coming year

Building on what we have achieved in the previous year, a service development plan outlining management activity will sit underneath this higher-level Strategic Youth Justice Plan and will be used to deliver against the new service development priorities for 2024-2025 summarised below:-

We will 'ramp-up' participation in creative ways right across the service and facilitate a culture of collaboration where children, volunteers and community groups are enabled to promote pro-social identity and desistance from crime. This will include co-production or co-design of plans, developing projects to support children to desist from crime and reduce harm to victims/communities.

We will develop a new comprehensive performance reporting and quality assurance framework, ensuring we are data driven and make full use of the management information system to drive practice development

We will refine our internal governance processes to ensure management and back-office functions help facilitate the delivery of high-quality services including enhanced training monitoring and a training needs assessment to inform the staff training plan

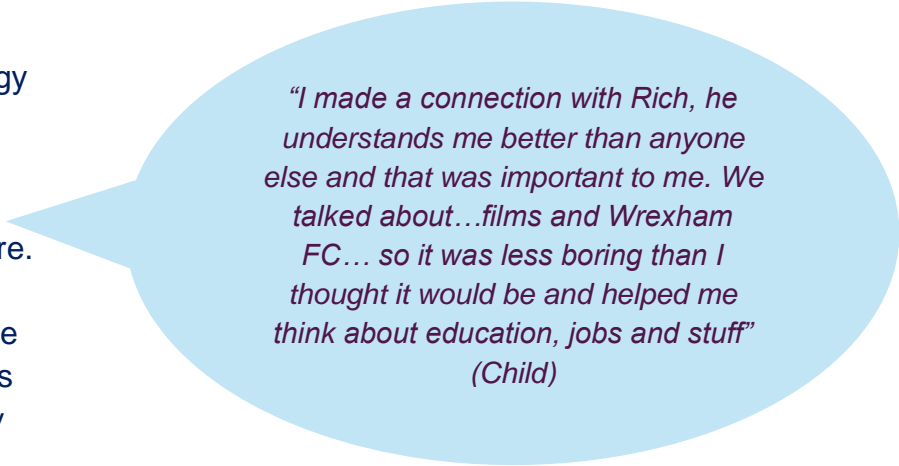
We will benchmark the YJS support offer to victims against the Victims Code of Practice, new Victims' Bill and HMiPs new inspection criteria (refining the role of Restorative Justice workers in YJS if required) identifying and progressing areas for development

In partnership with Cheshire Constabulary, we will review the current joint decision-making arrangements for the use of out of court disposals for our children. We will ensure they incorporate the Child Gravity Matrix and children are diverted to the appropriate service according to their level of risk and need

We will collaborate with partners to deliver against Priority 1 (Prevention) of Cheshire's 2024-2029 SVS by ensuring funding is targeted appropriately to support children at risk of involvement in SV

10.1 Standards for children

Cheshire YJS has developed a “conversational audit” methodology to undertake practice audits where managers visit or speak to children, caregivers and (where appropriate) victims too. This is now a ‘business as usual’ audit methodology for the service and has been adopted by some of our partners in children’s social care. Direct quotes from children, caregivers or partner agency professionals obtained through conversational audit are illustrative of the kind of trauma-informed, relational practice Cheshire YJS is striving to provide to the children we work with. This methodology will feature in this year’s audit on Victims and Restorative Justice. The new participatory model also aims to gather the views and ideas of the children we work with.



*“I made a connection with Rich, he understands me better than anyone else and that was important to me. We talked about...films and Wrexham FC... so it was less boring than I thought it would be and helped me think about education, jobs and stuff”
(Child)*

10.2 New performance framework

Striking the right balance between local place-based and pan-Cheshire performance reporting is a challenge for YJS and disaggregating Cheshire-wide data to place often renders the data invalid because the volumes are so low. But we will be developing a new performance management framework, using a mix of the recently introduced 10 national KPIs (Appendix A1) alongside better use of Child View (YJS case management system) so the Management Board and service really know our children.

10.3 Service development

It is critical for a sub-regional youth justice partnership to work closely with statutory agencies and community organisations at a local level, to properly support children in their own communities. To better facilitate this, YJS have implemented a modest service redesign for 2024-2025 to enable front-line professionals to work more closely and effectively with place-based partners. Figure 14 opposite shows how YJS will remain co-terminus with both police and probation footprints, while aligning closely to the four children’s services and community safety partnerships. The Staff Structure in Appendix A2 shows how our Teams align with place.

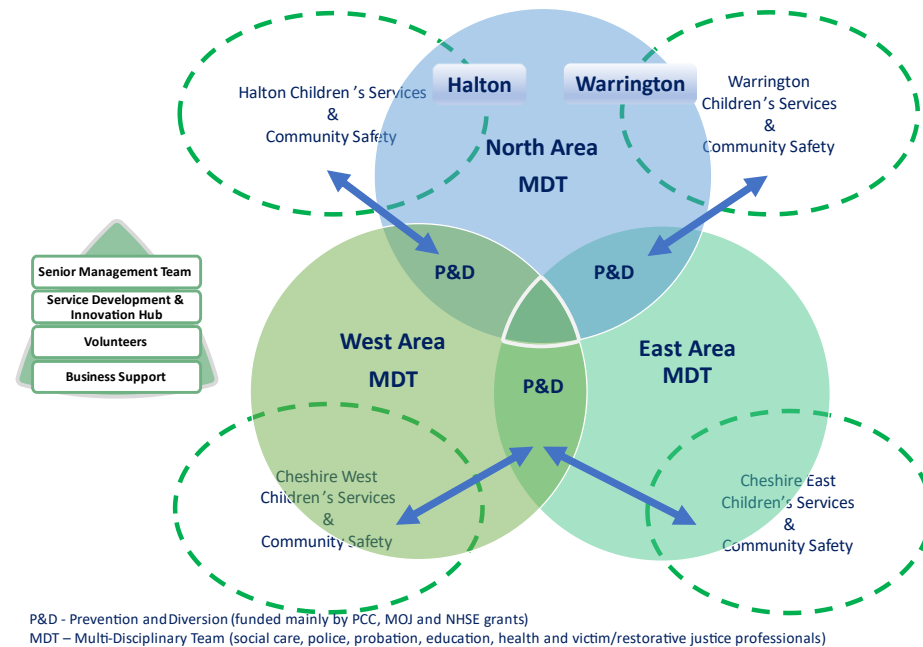


Figure 14. New Area-Based Service Design Model for YJS (from April 2024)

The service redesign aligns with the shift toward restorative and participatory approaches and the importance of supporting children to connect (or reconnect) with their local community. The new structure will empower front-line professionals and locality (area-based) operational managers to develop creative partnerships with the voluntary sector. By harnessing previously untapped human and social capital within communities (such as recruiting more local volunteers and establishing mutually beneficial partnerships with small local charities) we will be better able to help children, and some victims to move on positively beyond an offender (or victim) identity.

The new Service Development Hub will function as the central engine room for innovation within the service and the new leadership team will ensure quality of practice at a pan-Cheshire level, while empowering (through a distributed leadership model) creative area-based partnerships in the places where children, caregivers and victims live.

Cheshire YJS has also begun a review of our internal governance processes to ensure we are as productive as possible with a lean service spanning a large geography and complex network of partners. There are over 100 place-based and sub-regional partnership boards or groups and YJS needs to focus our human resource where it can have the greatest influence and improve outcomes for children in or at risk of entering into the justice system.

11. National priority areas

11.1 Children from groups which are over-represented

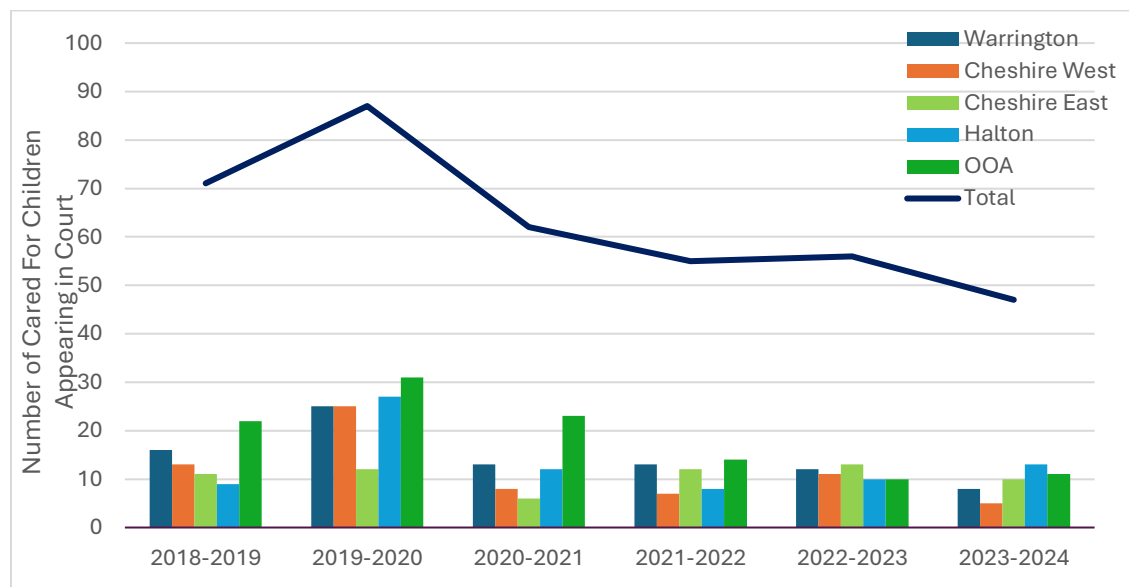


Figure 15. Number of cared for children appearing in Cheshire courts by local authority between April 2018-March 2024

The data above also includes children placed in Cheshire under the care of local authorities outside the county (out of area [OOA]) who receive the same diversionary options.

Sustained lower volumes since the protocol was produced in early 2020 is good evidence of what can be achieved through collective commitment at scale across YJS and Children's services.

A task and finish group are meeting to review the protocol in 2024-2025.

An over-represented group of children in the justice system are cared for children and care leavers. The YJS Management Board's response to data revealing disproportionality in this group was to agree a pan-Cheshire protocol. This aims to minimise the criminalisation of cared for children and care leavers and details a '3D' police and partnership response of "Discretion, Delay and Diversion".

Since the protocol was launched, there has been a clear downward trend of cared for children appearing in court (Figure 15). This shows the impact from a high point in 2019.

The high prevalence of our children struggling with health or neurodevelopmental difficulties prompted the Health Sub-group of the YJS Management Board to commission the Public Health Research Institute at Liverpool John Moore University to look at the health needs of children open to YJS (see Management Board and Leadership).

The HNA revealed a stark over-representation of neurodiversity in our children which has been replicated elsewhere due to wider determinants of health. Public health consultants on the Health Sub-group have used this analysis in a place-based Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA) and SEND specific Strategic Needs Analysis. The HNA revealed there is a correlated trajectory for children who ‘camouflage’ their SEND through disruptive behavior, experience fixed-term or permanent exclusion and then enter the CJS some time thereafter. In 2024, the Head of Service for YJS will continue to raise awareness at local Health and Wellbeing Boards and be a strong advocate for improved upstream identification and support for children with SEND.

“Karen understands C’s SEND. The team have been really understanding and flexible around C’s appointments and Karen worked hard to earn his trust. She was approachable and down to earth, and I appreciate the work she is doing with my son”
(Caregiver).

The alarming racial disparities in the youth justice system nationally are not replicated in Cheshire. Figure 16 and Table 2 below show the most current data available (offences committed in the year ending March 2023 and drawing from 2021 census data). Comparing the youth offending population with Cheshire’s 10-17-year-old population as a whole reveals white children are very slightly overrepresented and ethnic minority groups slightly underrepresented.

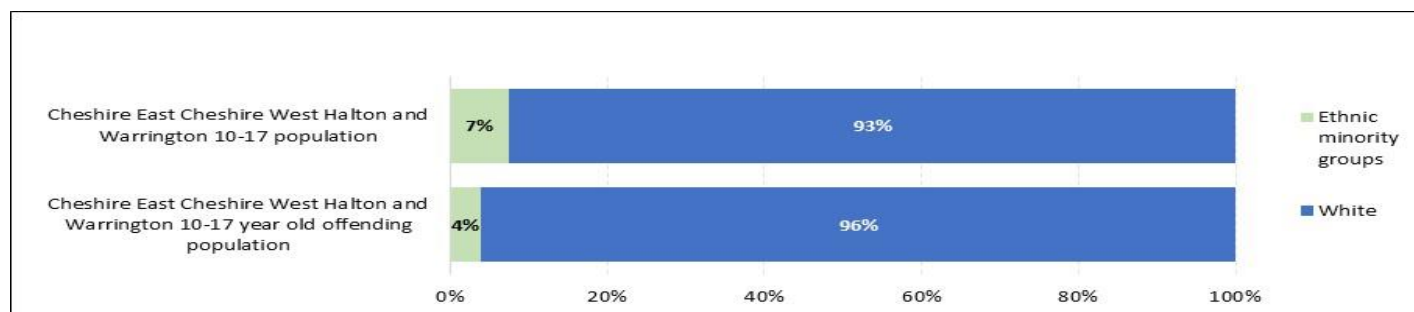


Figure 16. Ethnic minority groups vs white in the 10-17 population and offending population in Cheshire

Table 2. Ethnic minority groups vs white in the 10-17 population in Cheshire East, Cheshire West, Halton and Warrington

Ethnic group	2022/23 Offending Population	Share of total ⁽¹⁾	2021 Census 10-17 pop'n by ethnic group	Share of total % ⁽²⁾	% Point Difference	Overrepresented, offending pop'n >10 & statistically significant
Asian	1	0%	2,563	3%	-2%	No
Black	2	1%	561	1%	0%	No
Mixed	6	3%	3,603	4%	-1%	No
Other	0	0%	796	1%	-1%	No
Ethnic minority groups ⁽³⁾	9	4%	7,523	7%	-3%	No
White	218	96%	93,563	93%	3%	Yes



One potential area of *‘invisible over-representation’* in Cheshire that YJS has raised with partners at the CJB’s Disproportionality Sub-group, relates to children (or adults) from GRT communities. Anecdotal (and student) research suggests children from these communities are sometimes recorded on police and other criminal justice databases as White British, White Irish or White European.

There is a GRT self-identity classification, but some individuals choose not to identify themselves because of a cultural mistrust of authorities. Therefore, CJS data on arrest, detention, and sentencing in respect of GRT children may not be accurate. The cultural competence of staff is the key aspect here and Cheshire YJS do have an in-service GRT ‘champion’ who is well linked with specialist advocacy and support services. We will ensure our data is as accurate as possible by hearing from the child about their identity.

11.2 Policing

The Chief Superintendent with the portfolio of protecting vulnerable people, sits on the Management Board and all four Children's Safeguarding Partnerships. This valuable connectivity provides useful constructive challenge and support, for example, renewed focus on detention of children overnight in police custody (Section 11.8). Cheshire Constabulary delivered on the recommendations made by HMIP to place fully seconded police officers into YJS and the three officers in Cheshire work well as part of the multi-disciplinary teams. They have participated in both police and YJS-led training and have improved both the flow and response to intelligence in respect of harm to or from children.

The National Police Chief's Council guidance on the role of police officers within youth justice was recently updated⁷ and YJS and Cheshire Constabulary will be reviewing the job descriptions of seconded officers to strengthen focus on victims and prevention and diversion activity. The level of police resources dedicated to (or aligned with) Cheshire YJS will be explored

so the partnership can collectively meet our joint responsibilities for diversion and out of court disposals.

Cheshire Constabulary continue to invest in their Complex-Youths scheme which has dedicated officers delivering targeted prevention and support work with children on the cusp of the justice system. This is a voluntary scheme closely aligned to place-based contextual safeguarding partnership arrangements, with children at risk of criminal exploitation often identified for support. YJS officers and place-based youth officers routinely share intelligence to help safeguard children and disrupt criminal groups.

11.3 Prevention

Unlike many single local authority youth justice teams, YJS is not part of a wider adolescent and family support service providing a broader prevention offer. The funding and delivery model spanning four authorities means we are more of a purist youth justice service that only works with children *after* they have been arrested for an offence. Prevention and targeted youth support forms part of each local authority's early help offer with some sub-regional services commissioned by Cheshire OPCC. YJS will seek to align our diversionary work to continue to divert ***away from*** formal criminal sanctions when it is safe and appropriate to do so and ***into prevention*** projects entirely outside the justice

⁷ [NPCC Guidance on Role of Police Officer in Youth Justice Services](#)

system . The principles of avoiding ‘net widening’ and the unintended consequences of ‘labelling’ or entrenching a criminal self-identity for a child are critically important and are evidenced principles underpinning this strategy and continue to apply across Cheshire.

11.4 Diversion

The Head of Service for YJS holds the national portfolio on Diversion for the Association of YOT Managers (AYM) and engages with ministers, national charities and think tanks such as Criminal Justice Innovation in roundtables on best diversionary practice. Cheshire will continue an evidence-based approach to diversion that avoids criminalising children for behaviors symptomatic of trauma, abuse, and unmet need. This not only provides better outcomes and improved prospects for children but because children diverted away from receiving formal sanctions are less likely to re-offend, it also results in fewer victims.

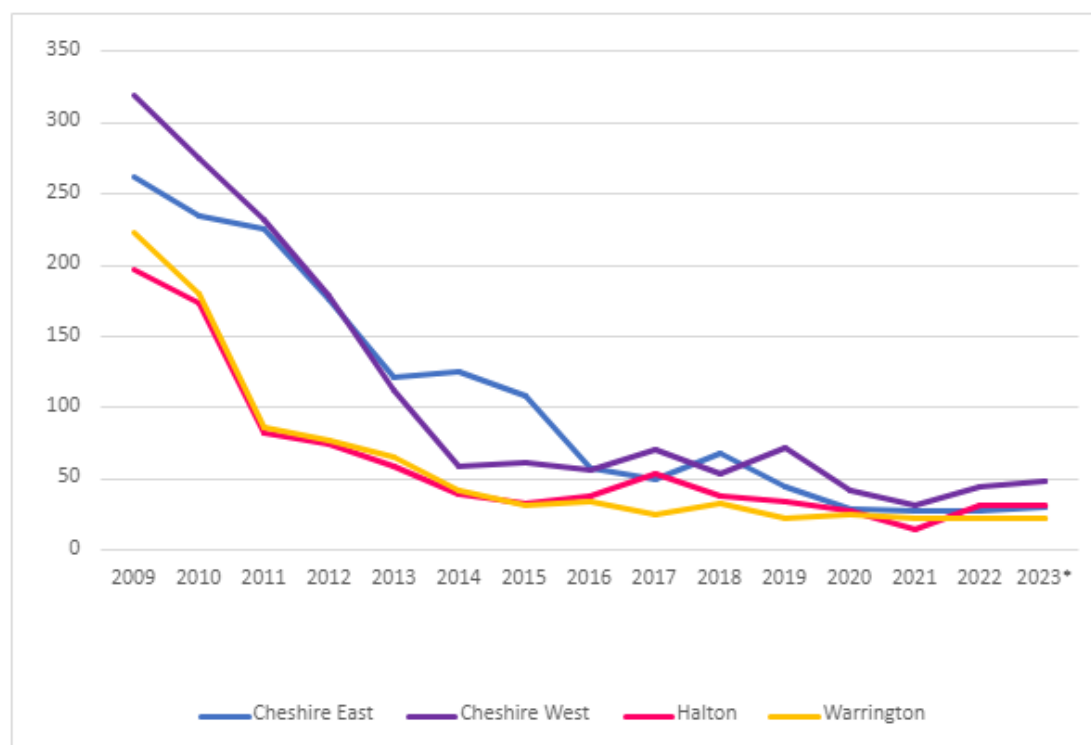


Figure 17. Trends in FTEs in Cheshire by local authority 2009-2023

Figure 17 shows significant reductions in FTEs since the incremental introduction of Divert across Cheshire. The current operating model began in Halton and Warrington in 2010, was introduced into Cheshire West in 2013 and Cheshire East in 2015. FTE numbers have remained low and stable below regional and national averages since 2016 when Cheshire

became a pan-Cheshire shared service, covering the entire policing footprint. This contrasts with many of our geographical and statistical 'Neighbours' that have begun to see an increase in FTEs in recent years.

The helpful 3-year grant investment from the MOJ (Turnaround Programme) will end in March 2025. This investment enabled YJS to get a little further upstream while also enabling us to support children and caregivers who needed longer or more intensive support. We will ensure individual children have transition plans in place where continued support beyond the end of the Turnaround programme is necessary. We will also work with the OPCC as part of the serious violence duty to ensure the new Voluntary and Community Sector providers (Remedi and Queensberry Alternative Provision) are targeting help and support to the right children, in the right ways, at the right time.

11.5 Education

Our HNA chimes with national research in showing a correlation between educational exclusion and subsequent entry to the CJS. Children who get excluded from school tend to be children who have experienced childhood trauma. There is a concerning trajectory (nationally not just in Cheshire) of early childhood exposure to violence and SEND being camouflaged as conduct issues leading to educational exclusion (for some children). Then a sub-set of these excluded children go on to use illicit drugs to self-medicate their trauma and criminal exploitation and criminality follows.

Audits and learning reviews across Cheshire also show the powerful protective effect education can have on children who have suffered childhood trauma. Positive self-identity and belonging are critical to helping children achieve desistance from offending, and the significant role education and training providers play in reducing risk through promoting pro-social identity cannot be overstated. Inclusive, trauma-informed-values-led-educational establishments not only manage risk well within their own environment, but also contribute hugely to reducing risk of harm in their communities.

Most children receiving YJS support are beyond school age, so the emphasis is more on helping them into post-16 training or employment, with flexible and bespoke support offers being most suitable for those children who have typically experienced considerable educational disruption. YJS has dedicated Education, Training and Employment (ETE) specialists for each of the four local authority areas to support children directly or indirectly by brokering tailored support in partnership with the respective local offer. As an inclusive-employment lead for post-16, the educational representative on the Board is a good advocate for justice-involved children and provides both challenge and support to managers in the service.

For a partnership that covers four local authorities, with over 100 high schools and post-16 colleges - the majority of which are academies - YJS and even Directors of Children’s Services have limited influence on admissions or exclusions. Promoting inclusion and supporting trauma-informed practice in educational settings is something Children’s Trusts have pushed and YJS will continue to advocate for the needs of children. The Head of Service will continue to provide data to inform local joint strategic need analyses and deliver presentations to forums of educational leaders. The KPI data in Appendix A1, shows the percentages of children who are in suitable education or training placements at the end of their intervention with YJS.

11.6 Restorative approaches and victims

Cheshire YJS will continue to work with victims and will deliver the full range of restorative support:

- **Restorative Justice Conferencing** – a structured meeting between the victim and the child
- **Direct Reparation** – repairing any damage caused by the child
- **Shuttle Mediation** – similar to the conferencing model but where both parties do not meet but have someone as the go-between
- **Letter of Apology/explanation** – child is supported to write to the victim
- **Indirect reparation** – work done within the community on placements.

*“Mark ensured my son’s issues were heard and a structure was put in place to ensure his safety”
(Caregiver of Victim)*

In 2023-2024, the YJS contacted and offered the above range of restorative approaches to 201 victims of youth crime. Assault is the most frequent offence type committed by children, but a quarter of all offences in 2023-2024 had no direct victim (e.g. drug and knife possession).

Sixteen direct restorative justice conferences between children and victims took place in 2023-2024. These meetings can be incredibly powerful and are handled sensitively by skilled professionals. We will continue to facilitate restorative meetings between children and their victims when it is appropriate to do so.

Cheshire YJS have a range of community partnership projects enabling children to contribute in practical ways to repair harm and develop a sense of pro-social identity. The photographs in Figure 18 show how a victim who did not want to

meet the children who assaulted him, asked if they could do something to improve the local park. This community reparation was arranged in partnership with the 'Friends of Winsford Town Park' community group.

Reviewing victim processes and ensuring the support offer from Cheshire YJS is in line with the new Victims and Prisoners Act is a priority for 2024-2025.



Figure 18. An example of where the victim suggested reparation by improving the local park

11.7 Serious violence, exploitation, and contextual safeguarding

This plan draws from and is closely aligned with the Cheshire SVS, which covers a 5-year period from 2024-2029, with annual reviews to reflect on progress against planned outcomes and update delivery plans against emerging trends.

YJS contributed data and insights to the production of a Strategic Needs Analysis (SNA), to inform the SVS and the Head of Service is a core member of the SV Duty Leadership Group. Cheshire has relatively low levels of SV so does not have the infrastructure of a Violence Reduction Unit (VRU). Lifting an approach from a large metropolitan city would be unlikely to deliver the same successes here so we have had to think differently about our approach. The SNA highlighted Domestic Abuse and Youth Intervention as two clear priority areas for reducing SV in Cheshire and revealed the extent to which SV affects children and young people. Amongst all forms of SV explored, children under 18 appear prominent amongst the victim and offender cohorts for possession of weapon offences and knife crime incidents.

Understandably, public concern about SV increases when people witness or experience it themselves – or when tragic events such as the murder of Brianna Ghey bring considerable media attention to it. Fear of knife crime and serious youth violence are also amplified by social media, with children being exposed to violent content that can distort their perceptions of safety in public spaces. Table 3 below shows in 2023, 28 serious violent offences were committed in Cheshire by children (convicted by the courts). This is a decrease of 19 from 2022 and the rate of serious youth violence (per 10,000 children) was only 2.7 for Cheshire in 2023 (less than 2022 and below both regional and national averages).

Table 3. Serious violence offences committed by children in Cheshire compared regionally and nationally

	Year ending December 2023							
	2020		2021		2022		2023	
YJS region	Number of SV offences	Rate of SV offences	Number of SV offences	Rate of SV offences	Number of SV offences	Rate of SV offences	Number of SV offences	Rate of SV offences
Cheshire East, Cheshire West, Halton and Warrington	58	5.9	32	3.2	47	4.5	28	2.7
North West	409	6.0	291	4.1	302	4.2	341	4.7
East Midlands	220	4.9	207	4.6	193	4.2	194	4.1
Eastern	327	5.5	348	5.8	316	5.2	369	6.0
London	1,143	13.8	1,030	12.4	868	10.4	859	10.5
North East	65	2.7	32	1.3	88	3.6	114	4.6
South East	366	4.5	307	3.8	283	3.6	321	4.1
South West	151	3.0	102	2.0	143	2.8	170	3.3
Wales	73	2.6	60	2.1	64	2.2	94	3.2
West Midlands	451	7.8	315	5.4	386	6.5	352	5.8
Yorkshire	259	5.0	250	4.8	263	5.0	255	4.9
England and Wales	3,464	6.3	2,942	3.9	2,906	5.2	3,069	5.5

The data in Figure 19 relates to numbers of arrests for knife crime across Cheshire. It confirms that while the number of children arrested for carrying or using knives increased slightly in 2022, it reduced in 2023 and have remained at broadly low levels for the last 5 years. Apart from two profoundly serious events with tragic outcomes, Cheshire has not seen the significant and sustained increase in knife crime experienced elsewhere in the country.



Volumes of youth knife crime have dropped in the current financial year, following a brief peak in 2022/23

Figure 19. Overall trend of knives and bladed items 2019-March 2024
 Chart reproduced with permission from Cheshire Constabulary

The comprehensive needs analysis that informed the Cheshire SVS showed 73% of youth justice children had convictions for violent offences, but also revealed a similar proportion of these children had themselves experienced violent victimisation *prior* to the onset of their own offending. Violence breeds violence and needs to be ‘treated’ in a similar way to transmittable diseases, which is why the Cheshire SVS has adopted a public health approach.

Contextual safeguarding partnerships are established at place and the YJS is an integral partner of these arrangements in all four areas. Good partnership and intelligence sharing with police (including cross border with Merseyside in particular, which is the major 'exporter' of county lines into Cheshire) ensures the National Referral Mechanism is applied appropriately. There have been several cross-force-operational examples of sensitively managed police investigations to tackle organised crime and protect Cheshire children, who have been exploited to supply drugs for high tier Merseyside OCGs.

YJS managers will continue to contribute to the design and delivery of multi-agency, contextual safeguarding training at place, particularly in relation to child criminal exploitation. Specialist independent experts in county-lines such as St Giles Trust via the joint Cheshire and Merseyside consortium training group have been commissioned. YJS also participates in safeguarding audits, rapid reviews, and independently chaired learning reviews when necessary.

11.8 Detention in police custody

Figure 20 shows the numbers of children detained overnight are extremely low and equates to fewer than five children per month across the three custody suites. This is typically fewer than 4% of children arrested by Cheshire police each month.

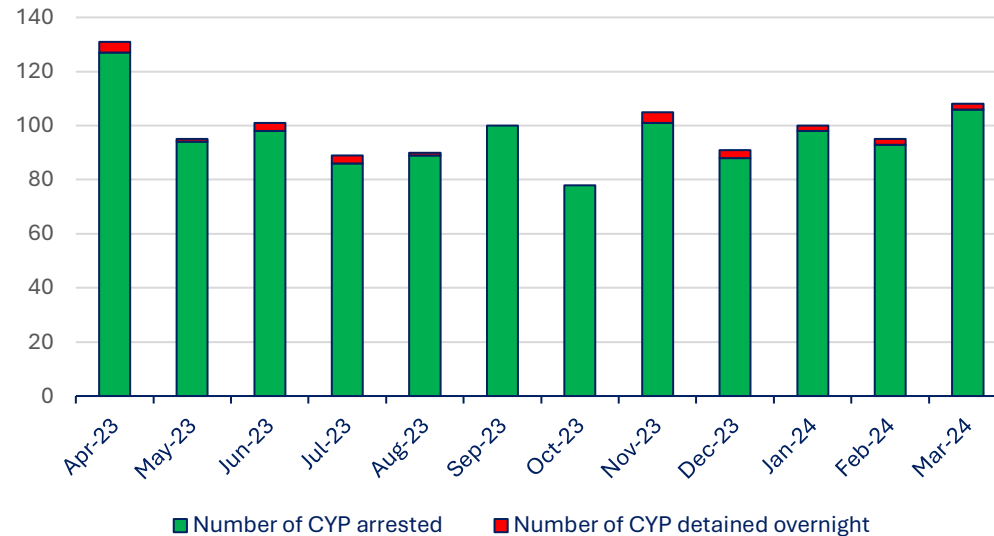


Figure 20. Numbers of children detained overnight in Cheshire compared to number of arrests from April 2023-March 2024

The low and unpredictable demand on local authorities for emergency Police and Criminal Evidence (PACE) beds means they have not always been available when required, so occasionally children are detained in police custody as a last resort. Overnight detentions in custody will continue to be a standing agenda item for scrutiny at the YJS Management Board and as a partnership, we are taking decisive action. From 2024, Directors of Children’s Services will receive a notification every time a child from their area is detained overnight due to an alternative PACE bed not being available. The police representative on the YJS Management Board is also the senior accountable officer for police on all four children’s safeguarding partnerships and has formally raised the paucity of PACE beds at executive partnership Boards. Cheshire and Merseyside Commissioners will be exploring shared PACE beds as part of the Commissioning Workstreams for both Fostering and Residential as there is a lack of sufficiency in both areas. Consideration is being given to Residential and other Safe Spaces, but Foster Care is the preferred option. Whilst numbers of children detained

are low for each individual local authority, collectively a solution could be viable. This workstream is led by a commissioning manager in St Helens Council on behalf of the Cheshire and Merseyside local authority Directors of Children's Services.

11.9 Remands

There were only seven children in total across Cheshire remanded to Youth Detention Accommodation in 2023-2024 (Figure 21). All remands were for serious offences where a community alternative to remand was not viable. Four of the seven remanded were charged with murder or attempted murder and the remainder for section 18 wounding with intent and possession with intent to supply class A drugs. The child remanded for drug offences had an extensive history of offending and several periods in secure welfare placements previously. He had offended while remanded into local authority care and presented a significant risk of harm to other cared for children he had 'introduced' to organised crime.

Cheshire YJS retains the confidence of the courts by ensuring children are assessed promptly for robust packages of bail support as an alternative to remand. We have a proactive partnership with local children's social care and policing regarding remands into local authority care, but, as mentioned in Section 11.8, options are constrained by the paucity of safe, suitable accommodation where risk (to victim or wider public) and the child's own complex needs can be adequately managed. Placement sufficiency for local authorities is a national issue that the Association of Directors of Children's Services and others are very vocal on because accommodation for children facing serious criminal charges is an added complexity (and cost).

Through the current national framework for remands, the MOJ provides local authorities with a small financial contribution toward the costs of remands (Table 4). The allocation is based on historical bed night data*. A consultation on the funding of remands to youth detention accommodation was published in early 2024 and Cheshire YJS responded on behalf of the partnership, highlighting Cheshire’s low remand number. Table 4 shows the uncontrollable costs incurred by Cheshire local authorities (particularly for Warrington) due to CJS timescales. Local authorities have no control over length of time from initial charge through to conclusion of trial and a fundamental review and fairer funding formula for remands is required.

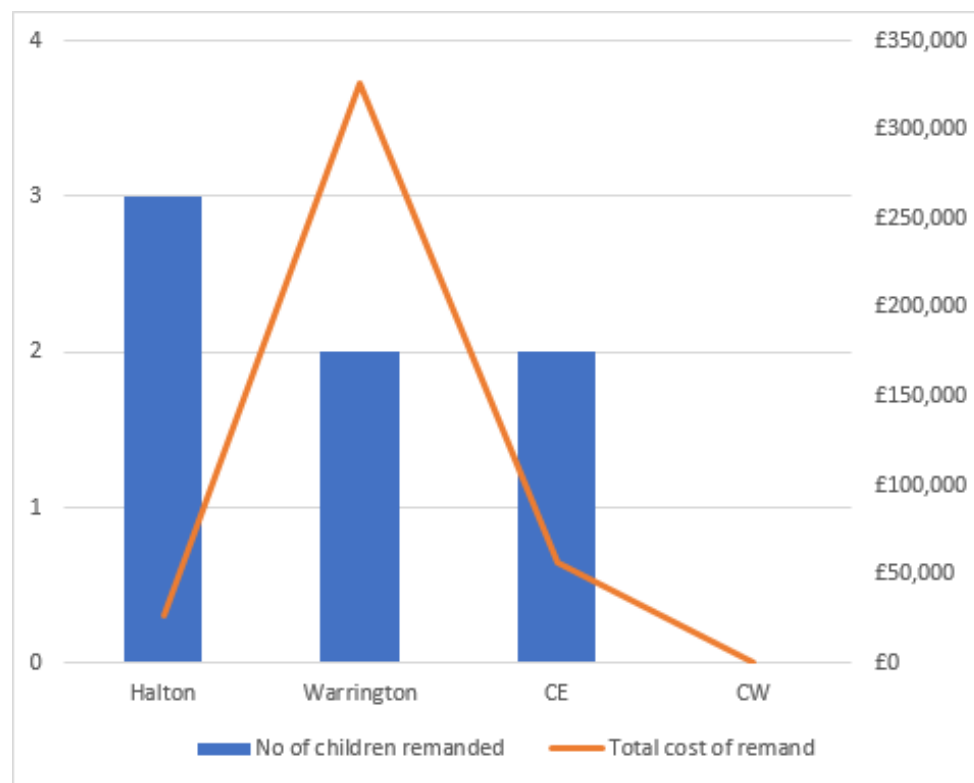


Figure 21. Number of children remanded in Cheshire 2023-2024

Table 4. Remand allocation from the MoJ for Cheshire East, Cheshire West, Halton and Warrington 2023-2024

Local Authority RIC	2023/24 Budget*	2023/24 Actual Spend	2023/24 Remaining/Deficit
Cheshire East	£107,483	£56,088	£51,395
Cheshire West	£18,859	£0	£18,859
Halton	£0	£26,896	-£26,896
Warrington	£11,740	£326,230	-£314,490
Total for YJS	£138,082	£409,214	-£271,132

Table 5 shows the number of bed nights children were remanded into local authority accommodation as a direct alternative to custody (note this is only for those children who were charged with offences that met the secure remand criteria).

The MOJ has committed to producing a national concordat relating to youth remands and is encouraging local Youth Justice partnerships to sign up to it. When the concordat is published, the Head of Service will ensure it is tabled at the YJS Management Board for consideration.

Table 5. Number of bed nights by local authority 2023/2024

Remand to local authority accommodation	2023/24 Bed Nights
Cheshire East	14
Cheshire West	0
Halton	122
Warrington	0
Total Cheshire wide for YJS	136

11.10 Use of custody and constructive resettlement

The number of children in Cheshire who receive a custodial sentence is low, with typically fewer than 10 children across the whole of the county serving custodial sentences at any one time. Use of custody is rightly reserved for those children who have committed serious crimes, usually for serious violent or sexual offences.

Table 6 shows in 2023-2024, custodial sentences were imposed on nine children from Cheshire ranging from four months to 23 years. The 23-year sentence being imposed on the 16-year-old Warrington child sentenced for murder.

All children released from custody before reaching 18 have individual resettlement plans in line with the principles of constructive resettlement. The low number in Cheshire means we do not have a specialist resettlement team but our children do benefit from the continuity of multi-disciplinary support (YJS worker plus health and education professionals) that follows them from court, through their time in custody and after release.

Table 6. Number and duration of custodial sentences imposed on Cheshire children in 2023-2024

Local Authority	Young Offenders Institute	Detention Training Order	Section 250	Section 259
Cheshire East	0	4 Months	27 Months (2yrs 3m) 50 Months (4yrs 2m)	0
Cheshire West	30 Months (2yrs 6m)	0	40 Months (3yrs 3m)	0
Halton	0	8 Months 12 Months	0	0
Warrington	0	0	54 Months (4yrs 6m)	276 Months (23 yrs)
Total for YJS	30 Months (2yrs 6m) (1 child)	24 Months (3 children)	171 Months (14yrs 3m) (4 children)	276 Months (23 yrs) (1 child)

11.11 Working with families



Frontline practitioners are encouraged to adopt a whole family approach in their work. Where relevant and appropriate, practitioners work collaboratively with Early Help, Social Care and other locality-based services to ensure that caregivers have access to help and support where this is needed.

As a service, we are committed to promoting this approach within practice and will be reviewing opportunities to strengthen this area over the coming years.

Caregivers are also a key strand in our work to develop participation.

To have such a breakthrough is really empowering and showcases the benefits of joint working with the family!!
 (Social Worker)

“I didn't know what to expect. I felt like we was going to be judged because of what's happened. But that's not what they've been about. Everybody has been fantastic. What's been a really awful experience personally for us, the help and support that's there and things that they've done has been amazing”
 (Parent)

Sign off, submission and approval		
Helen Brackenbury Chair of YJS Board Director of Children’s Social Care Cheshire West and Chester Council		27 June 2024
Tom Dooks YJS Head of Service		27 June 2024

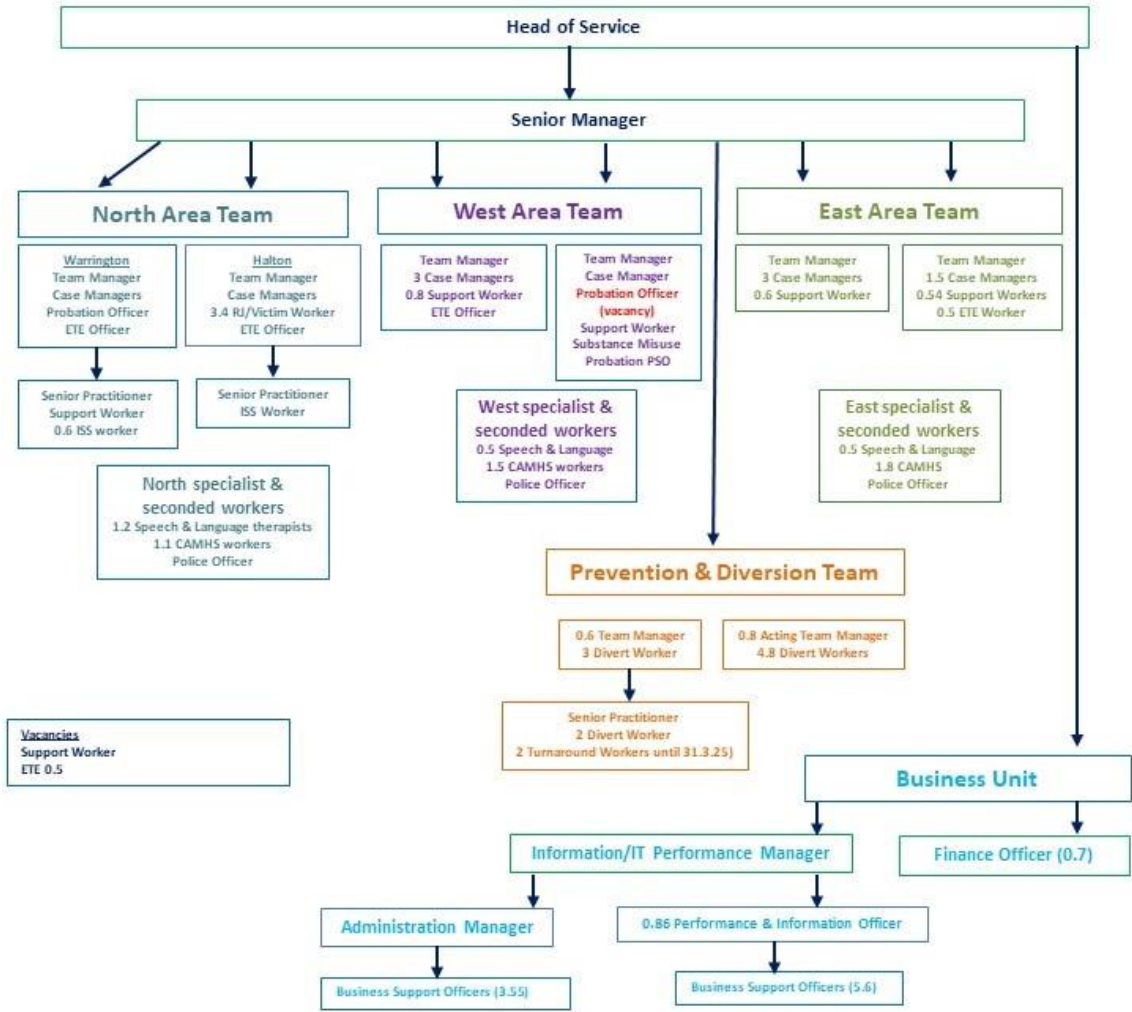
Appendices

Appendix A1: Key Performance Indicators (YJB data)

KPI	Explanation	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
KPI 1 – Accommodation	% of children in the community and being released from custody with suitable accommodation arrangements	100% (48/48)	100% (66/66)	98.9% (93/94)	100% (87/87)
KPI 2 – Education, Training & Employment	% of children in the community and being released from custody attending a suitable ETE arrangement	81.3% (39/48)	75.8% (50/66)	84% (79/74)	68.6% (67/87)
KPI 3 – Special Educational Needs and Disabilities /Additional Learning Needs	% of children who have an identified SEND need (or Additional Learning Need in Wales), are in suitable ETE and have a formal learning plan in place for the current academic year	100% (8/8)	90% (9/10)	92.9% (13/14)	78.6% (13/14)
KPI 4 – Mental healthcare and emotional wellbeing	% of children in the community and being released from custody with a screened OR identified need for an intervention to improve mental health or emotional wellbeing; and of that the % of planned/offered interventions; of that % of children attending interventions.	81.2% (36/48) Screened 55.5% (20/36) Offered 65% (13/20) Attended	51.5% (34/60) Screened 67.6% (23/34) Offered 78.2% (18/23) Attended	48.9% (46/94) Screened 65.2% (30/46) Offered 70% (21/30) Attended	67.8% (59/87) Screened 72.8% (43/59) Offered 93% (40/43) Attended
KPI 5 – Substance misuse	% of children with a screened OR identified need for specialist treatment/intervention to address substance misuse; and of that the % of children with planned or offered intervention/treatment; and of that the % number of children attending intervention/treatment.	16.6% (8/48) Screened 87.5% (7/8) Offered 100% (7/7) Attended	27.2% (18/66) Screened 77.7% (14/18) Offered 85.7% (12/14) Attended	43.1% (14/94) Screened 71.4% (10/14) Offered 100% (10/10) Attended	22.9% (20/87) Screened 75% (15/20) Offered 100% (15/15) Attended

KPI	Explanation	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
KPI 6 – Out of Court Disposals (OOCDS)	% of OOCDS disposal interventions that are completed/not completed.	91.7% (11/12)	90.6% (29/32)	98.2% (56/57)	95.8% (46/48)
KPI 7 – Management board attendance	Monitoring senior partner representation at management boards and monitoring if partners contribute data from their individual services that identify areas of racial and ethnic disproportionality.	5/5	2/5	3/5	5/5
KPI 8 – Wider services	% children who are currently on either an Early Help (EH) plan; on a child protection (CP) plan or classified as Child in need (CIN) or a looked after child (LAC).	31.3% (15/48)	57.6% (38/66)	48.9% (46/94)	50.6% (44/87)
KPI 9 – Serious youth violence	Proportion of children convicted for SYV on the YOT Children.	3.4% (7/206)	7.8% (16/205)	6% (11/182)	4.4% (8/181)
KPI 10 – Victims	Number of victims who consent to be contact by the YOT, and of those, the number of victims: engaged with about Restorative Justice opportunities; asked their view prior to OOCDS decision-making and planning for statutory court orders; provided information about the progress of the child's case (when requested) and provided with information on appropriate services that support victims (when requested).	TBC	TBC	TBC	TBC

Appendix A2. YJS Organisational Structure



Appendix B1: YJS Budget, Costs and Contributions

Agency	Staffing Costs	Payments in kind	Other delegated funds	Total
Youth Justice Board			*1,248,480	1,248,480
Local Authority	49,022	697,599	*1,651,138	2,397,759
Police	184,905			184,905
Police Crime Commissioner			217,928	217,928
Probation	144,638		15,500	160,138
Health	336,689		20,594	357,283
Other			2,500	2,500
Total	715,254	697,599	3,156,140	4,568,993

* Exact contributions may be subject to change

**Appendix B2: Staffing of the YJS by contract type;
No. of full-time equivalent staff**

Type of Contract	Strategic Manager	Operational Manager	Practitioner	Admin	TOTAL
Permanent	2	6.51	37.2	11.83	57.54
Fixed-term		0.8	3.54	1	5.34
Vacant			3		3
Seconded Probation			2		2
Seconded Police			3		3
Seconded Health (Substance Misuse)			0.2		0.2
Seconded Health (Mental Health)			3.9		3.9
Seconded Health (Speech/ language)			2.4		2.4
Total	2	7.31	55.24	12.83	77.38
Disabled (self-classified)	0	0	0	0	0

Appendix B3: Staffing of the YJS by sex and ethnicity; No. of individual people

Ethnicity	Managers Strategic		Managers Operational		Practitioners		Administrative		Referral Order Panel Volunteer		Total	
	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F
Asian											0	0
Black						1					0	1
Mixed		1						2	1		2	2
White	1		1	7	5	38		14	9	35	16	94
Any other ethnic group											0	0
Not known											0	0
Total	1	1	1	7	5	39	0	16	10	35	18	97



REPORT TO:	Executive Board
DATE:	12 th September 2024
REPORTING OFFICER:	Executive Director Environment and Regeneration
PORTFOLIO:	Climate Change and Urban Renewal
SUBJECT:	Halton Local Development Scheme (LDS)
WARD(S)	Borough wide

1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

1.1 This report seeks approval from the Board of the proposed update to the Local Development Scheme (LDS) (Appendix A). Councils are required to prepare and keep up to date Local Development Schemes that set out the timetable for production of their Local Plan(s). They identify and describe the Planning Policy documents that the Council intends to prepare and gives target dates for key stages in their production.

2.0 RECOMMENDED: That

- 1) the report be noted; and**
- 2) the Board approves the Strategy.**
- 3) The Halton Borough Council Local Development Scheme 2024 Revision (Appendix A) be formally adopted and shall have effect from September 2024; and**
- 4) Authority be delegated to the Director of Planning and Transport in consultation with the Executive Board Members for Environment and Urban Renewal and Climate Change to approve any minor changes to the wording and/or timelines of the production of documents in the Local Development Scheme as required.**

3.0 SUPPORTING INFORMATION

3.1 The statutory Development Plan is the set of Local Plans (also known as Development Plan Documents (DPDs)) that together form the statutory basis for determining whether or not planning permission should be granted.

3.2 The Local Plan for Halton currently comprises the adopted Delivery and Allocations Local Plan (2022) and the Joint Waste Plan (2013).

3.3 The Council also has the option to produce Supplementary Planning Documents (SPDs). Supplementary Planning Documents (SPD) (and

their predecessors, supplementary planning guidance) complement or expand upon local plan policies, for example, describing in more detail how an allocated site should be developed. An SPD cannot allocate new sites for development nor contain new policies for the use or development of land, and they must not conflict with the adopted DALP and Waste Local Plan. SPDs are subject to community involvement but do not require Independent Examination. They do not form a statutory part of the development plan for the authority but are a material consideration in the determination of any planning application to which they relate.

3.4 There is also a number of supporting and process documents that the Council is required to produce including:

- A Sustainability Appraisal (SA) is prepared alongside a planning document, to ensure that the document as a whole reflects a balance of sustainable development objectives (social, environmental and economic factors). The SA incorporates the requirements of the European Union (EU) Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) Directive 2001/42.
- A Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) is a requirement of the European Habitat Directive and seeks to assess the potential impact of a proposed plan in conjunction with the other plans and policies on one or more European Habitat sites. This is also referred to as the Appropriate Assessment (AA).
- An Infrastructure Delivery Plan (IDP) has been produced alongside the Local Plan to identify essential supporting infrastructure and services, how they will be delivered and by whom.
- A Statement of Community Involvement (SCI), which specifies how stakeholders and communities are involved
- A Local Development Scheme (LDS) that sets out details of each of the documents that will be produced, along with timescales and arrangements for their production.
- An Authority's Monitoring Report (AMR) setting out progress in terms of producing documents and in implementing policies.
- The LDS is a public statement of Halton Borough Council's policy team work programme. The process of making Local Plans is a lengthy one, made so by the detailed protocols set out in legislation and regulations.

4.0 POLICY IMPLICATIONS

4.1 Planning applications should normally be determined in accordance with the Development Plan.

"If regard is to be had to the development plan for the purpose of any

determination to be made under the Planning Acts the determination must be made in accordance with the plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.” [Section 38(6): Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004]

- 4.2 This is reiterated in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), which states that Plans should be reviewed at least every 5 years, and policies not reviewed within this time may be considered to be out-of-date. It is important, therefore, that Halton maintains an up-to-date Local Plan and that efforts are concentrated towards the most crucial elements of this.
- 4.3 Given resource constraints the current LDS is focussed on the delivery of Supplementary Planning Documents to support the policies in the recently adopted Delivery and Allocations Local Plan providing detailed guidance for the public, planners, housing providers, developers and their agents.

5.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 The LDS is a statutory ‘process document’ and as such has no direct financial implications beyond setting the timetable for the production of different planning documents that may incur expenditure on supporting evidence base or statutory assessments.

6.0 IMPLICATIONS FOR THE COUNCIL’S PRIORITIES

6.1 Improving Health, Promoting Wellbeing and Supporting Greater Independence

The LDS is a statutory ‘process document’ that sets out the programme for the updating of the Local Plan, which is intended to assist in the delivery of the Local Plan

6.2 Building a Strong, Sustainable Local Economy

The LDS supports the above by providing additional information to develop a strong and sustainable local economy through its policies.

6.3 Supporting Children, Young People and Families

The LDS supports the above by providing additional information to support Children, Young people and Families by its policies and strategies to encourage strong and vibrant communities to grow, learn and live in.

6.4 Tackling Inequality and Helping Those Who Are Most In Need

The LDS supports the above by providing additional information to develop a fair and equitable borough by providing policies that shape our community.

6.5 Working Towards a Greener Future

The LDS supports the above by providing additional information to guide developers and investors in the borough of the aspirations of the borough

to reduce its carbon footprint.

6.6 Valuing and Appreciating Halton and Our Community

The LDS contains policies that supports the delivery of affordable homes and the enhancement of the communities in which we will live and work.

7.0 RISK ANALYSIS

7.1 An LDS is a statutory document. Not having an up to date LDS puts the Authority at the risk of legal challenge. Stakeholders are entitled to rely upon forward notice of the Local Plans that will be produced and may directly impact on their assets or business.

7.2 The LDS is an explicit commitment to the delivery of the Local Plan over a definite period. Not having a specific and relatively fixed work programme for Local Plan delivery means that resources are not prioritised and used as effectively as they could be.

7.3 The risk of not having an up-to-date Local Plan needs to be fully understood. Without a current Local Plan, the development industry has no certainty over where different types of land use will be permitted; appeals against refusal of planning permission are more likely to be upheld in the developer's favour with the possibility of costs awarded against the Council. An up-to-date Local Plan is needed to retain local control over decision making.

8.0 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES

8.1 Building stronger communities through community engagement and good planning is a key aspect of the Local Plan. The Council is already committed to equality regardless of age, sex, caring responsibility, race, religion, marital status, maternity issues, gender reassignment, socio economic need, sexuality or disability and these commitments are reflected in the Local Plan as far as is relevant. Planning Policy documents are subjected to Equality Impact Assessments during their production to ensure compliance.

9.0 CLIMATE CHANGE IMPLICATIONS

9.1 The LDS provides an opportunity to shape and manage future development and its impact on the Climate by encouraging the use of new and innovative technologies to reduce its carbon footprint.

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

Document	Place of Inspection	Contact Officer
Halton Local Development Scheme 2021	Municipal Building, Widnes	Rebecca Taylor
The Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012 (as amended)	Municipal Building, Widnes	Rebecca Taylor
National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF 2023)	Municipal Building, Widnes	Rebecca Taylor
National Planning Practice Guidance (PPG)	Municipal Building, Widnes	Rebecca Taylor
Halton Delivery and Allocations Local Plan (DALP 2022)	Municipal Building, Widnes	Rebecca Taylor
Waste Local Plan (2013)	Municipal Building, Widnes	Rebecca Taylor

Halton Borough Council

LOCAL DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY - DRAFT 2024/5



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Introduction

- 1.1. This document is the Local Development Scheme (LDS) for Halton and sets out the documents that Halton Borough Council will produce, along with a timetable for the preparation and review of these documents. It provides the starting point for local communities, businesses, developers, service and infrastructure providers and other interested stakeholders to find out what local planning policy documents relate to their area and the timetable for their preparation. The Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 (as amended by the Localism Act 2011) requires local planning authorities to prepare, maintain and publish a LDS. Halton's LDS will be available to view online at [Background Documents \(halton.gov.uk\)](http://backgrounddocuments.halton.gov.uk)

Legal Context

- 1.2. The primary legislation that guides the planning system, including the production of Local Plans is set out in the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 with amendments from the 2008 Planning Act and 2011 Localism Act. Further detail on procedures for producing Local Plans is contained within the associated regulations, the latest being the Town and Country Planning (Local Development) (England) Regulations 2012 (as amended) which came into force in April 2012.
- 1.3. The Localism Act (2011) included a number of changes to the “plan-making” system including the ability for local communities to prepare neighbourhood development plans that would form part of the overall development plan for the area. Another important aspect of the legislative changes is the duty to co-operate which requires the Council to co-operate with other local planning authorities and prescribed bodies to maximise the effectiveness of the preparation of the Local Plan and supporting activities so far as it relates to a strategic matter.

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) was first published on 27 March 2012 and subsequently updated on 24 July 2018, 19 February 2019, 20 July 2021, 5 September 2023 and 19 December 2023 by the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG). It sets out the Government's planning policies for England and the Government's requirements for the planning system.

- 1.4. National Planning Practice Guidance was launched by MHCLG in March 2014, it is a completely online resource and is live, which means that guidance can be quickly amended in order to keep it up to date. It provides guidance from MHCLG to planning professionals to guide them in developing sites, making policies and taking decisions on planning applications.

Development Plan

- 1.5. The statutory Development Plan is the set of Local Plans (also known as Development Plan Documents (DPDs)) that together form the statutory basis for determining whether or not planning permission should be granted.

- 1.6. Local Plans are planning documents that contain policies for the use and protection or development of land, usually including the allocation of land for development. These must be in general conformity with government guidance, in particular the National Planning Policy Framework.
- 1.7. Neighbourhood development plans are defined by NPPF as a plan prepared by a parish council or neighbourhood forum for a designated neighbourhood area. In law this is described within the [Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004](#). They are required to undergo formal consultation and preparation procedures including an examination by an independent person and a public referendum. Subject to the successful completion of these procedures the neighbourhood development plan will ultimately be adopted by the council as part of the statutory development plan.
- 1.8. The Development Plan for Halton currently comprises: the Halton Delivery and Allocations Local Plan (2022) which incorporates a number of policies from the Core Strategy 2013 and the Joint Waste Local Plan (2013).
- 1.9. Parish Councils or neighbourhood forums have an option to produce Neighbourhood Plans on their own behalf and in their own timescale, the local development scheme does not seek to set this out. To date no parishes or neighbourhood areas in the Borough have yet begun the formal process to begin the development of such a plan.
- 1.10. Supplementary Planning Documents (SPD) (and their predecessors, supplementary planning guidance) complement or expand upon local plan policies, for example describing in more detail how an allocated site should be developed. A SPD cannot allocate new sites for development nor contain new policies for the use or development of land, and they must not conflict with the adopted development plan. SPDs are subject to community involvement but do not require independent Examination. They do not form a statutory part of the development plan for the authority but are a material consideration when assessing any planning application to which they relate.

Local Development Scheme

Halton Delivery and Allocations Local Plan

- 1.11. The recently adopted Local Plan provides a robust and up-to-date policy framework to guide future development within the Borough. Specifically, the Local Plan has:
 - a. Replaced selected policies from the Halton Local Plan Core Strategy (adopted April 2013) and the remaining saved policies of the Halton UDP (adopted April 2005).
 - b. Allocates land for residential, employment, retail, leisure and other land uses.
 - c. Designates areas protected for landscape, nature conservation, environmental and heritage reasons.
 - d. Provides policies to guide decision making in the development management process.

Halton Borough Council is currently preparing a number of supplementary planning documents to support the policy implementation of the adopted Halton Delivery and Allocations Local Plan (2022).

Officers are working closely with colleagues in the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority and the production of the LCR LDS, to ensure that they

The most recent revision of the NPPF in December 2023 has been reviewed against current DALP policies and have been found to be sound.

Timetable

- 1.12. More detail is provided in Appendix A.
- 1.13. The Council is liaising with partner authorities across the Liverpool City Region on the review and possible replacement of the Joint Halton and Merseyside Waste Local Plan.
- 1.14. Other planning documents intended to be prepared by the Council include:
 - a. Open Space SPD
 - b. Transport and Accessibility SPD
 - c. Housing of Multiple Occupation SPD
 - d. Climate Change SPD
 - e. House Extensions SPD

Indicative Timetable

	2023		2024				2025			
	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
Open Space SPD										
Transport & Accessibility SPD										
Housing of Multiple Occupation SPD										
Climate Change SPD										
House Extension SPD										

- I.15. The following supporting documents have been or are being produced by the Council to support the policy contained within the Local Plan and to provide more guidance to those undertaking development or to those making decisions on planning applications.
- I.16. We anticipate researching and developing SPDs in the following area's alongside this programme of works.
- Developer Contributions SPD,
 - Adding Social Value to Development.
- I.17. **Local Development Orders (LDO)** are policy instruments that extend permitted development rights for certain forms of development that the local authority considers to be suitable, either in general or limited to defined areas. LDOs are intended to simplify development. Development that conforms to an LDO would not require planning permission.

Process Documents

- I.18. A **Sustainability Appraisal Report (SA)** is prepared alongside a planning document, including the Local Plan, to ensure that the document as a whole reflects a balance of sustainable development objectives (social, environmental and economic factors). The SA incorporates the requirements of the European Union (EU) Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) Directive 2001/42.
- I.19. **Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA)** is a requirement of the European Habitat Directive and seeks to assess the potential impact of a proposed plan in conjunction with the other plans and policies on one or more European Habitat sites. This is also referred to as the Appropriate Assessment (AA).
- I.20. An updated **Infrastructure Delivery Plan (IDP)** has been prepared alongside the Local Plan to identify essential supporting infrastructure and services, how they will be delivered and by whom.
- I.21. **Authority Monitoring Report (AMR)** will set out whether the Council is on target to meet the milestones set out in the LDS, it will provide information on whether the policy targets included in the Local Plan are being achieved and will identify key issues that are relevant to the borough that should be used to revise the LDS if necessary.
- I.22. **Statement of Community Involvement (SCI)** – The Halton SCI was updated and approved in 2020. It sets out how the community will be involved in the preparation, alteration and review of planning policy documents produced by the Council and how they can be expected to be consulted on planning applications.
- I.23. **Annual Infrastructure Funding Statement (AIFS)** - is annual public report which provides a summary of developer contributions in line with government guidance.

3. Evidence Base

3.1 The key pieces of Halton's existing evidence base which will be used to support the Local Plan are set out below (please note that other existing evidence base documents may also be used, where required, alongside these):

A	Whole Plan Viability Study (HDH Planning & Development Ltd 2019)	The study assessed the viability impacts of emerging planning policies to ensure that the Local Plan, when taken as a whole, is viable and deliverable and providing evidence to support affordable housing provision from qualifying sites.
B	Liverpool City Region Strategic Housing and Employment Land Market Assessment (SHELMA) (GL Hearn 2017)	This study identifies housing and employment land needs for the City Region over the period to 2037
C	Liverpool City Region Strategic Housing and Employment Land Availability Assessment Vol.2 (March 2018) (GL Hearn)	This study quantifies the potential supply of land for large scale B8 (warehousing).
D	Joint Employment Land and Premises Study (BE Group, 2010)	The study assesses the quantity and quality of employment land in the Borough and recommends future allocations of employment land to maintain economic growth.
E	Halton Retail Study (England & Lyle 2017):	This is a capacity study looking to identify trading roles and performance of the Borough's main retail centres and to quantify the need, if any, for additional provision.
F	Halton Landscape Character Assessment (TEP, 2009):	This identifies, describes and maps areas according to various landscape character types.
G	Halton Open Space Study (PMP and HBC, 2006/2021).	The study assesses existing and future needs for open space, sport and recreation in Halton and the current ability to meet these needs.
H	Halton Strategic Flood Risk Assessment Level 1 (HBC, 2017)	Provides a detailed assessment of the extent and nature of the risk of flooding and the implications for future development.
I	Halton Level 2 Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (JBA, 2019)	Detailed flood risk assessment for individual potential development sites,

		focusing on risk from three primary watercourses.
J	Liverpool City Region Renewable Energy Capacity Study (Arup, 2010):	This study identifies Energy Priority Zones for the delivery of low and zero carbon technologies.
K	Cheshire Gypsy, Traveller and Travelling Showpeople Accommodation Assessment (June 2018)	Assessment of accommodation and related service needs of Gypsies, Travellers and Travelling Show people across Halton, Warrington and Cheshire.
L	Liverpool City Region and Warrington Green Infrastructure Framework Draft (Mersey Forest, 2013)	This Framework provides information and new perspectives on green infrastructure across the seven local authorities.
M	Liverpool City Region and Warrington Green Infrastructure Framework Action Plan (Mersey Forest, 2013):	This Plan identifies actions at a city region level that meet key priorities of the Green Infrastructure Framework.
N	Listed Buildings in Halton:	Compendium detailing each of the Listed Buildings in Halton, including location map and image(s) of the property or structure.
O	Mersey Gateway Regeneration Strategy (HBC and GVA, 2008)	This study details the opportunities that the Mersey Ga
P	Halton Green Belt Study: (HBC 2018):	This study reviews and assesses the Green Belt around Widnes and Hale, Runcorn, Moore, Daresbury and Preston-on-the-Hill.
Q	Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (2020)	This is the main mechanism to identify a deliverable and developable supply of sites in the Borough for housing.
R	Halton Housing Land Availability Report (annual update)	This report provides data on land availability and take-up (build) rates for housing within Halton
S	Halton Employment Land Availability Report (annual update)	This report provides data on land availability and take-up (build) rates for employment uses within Halton
T	Liverpool City Region Transport Plan for Growth: (2015)	This document combines the key elements from the Local Transport Plans for Merseyside and Halton
U	Playing Pitch Strategy: (2021)	This strategy assessed existing and future needs for playing pitch provision in Halton.
V	Halton Local List:	This document identifies the non-designated heritage assets in Halton.

W	Liverpool City Region Ecological Network (MEAS, 2015)	This study assessed existing and future needs for ecological site protection and potential enhancement.
X	Halton Non-Breeding Birds Survey (Avian Consulting 2019):	This survey identified functionally linked habitat associated with the Special Protection Area of the Mersey Estuary for overwintering non breeding wetland birds.

4. Delivery

- 4.1. There will always be an element of uncertainty associated with a document of this nature. It is legitimate to ask how reasonable and achievable the targets are set out above, and what issues may affect the overall delivery of the LDS.
- 4.2. An assumption has been made over the amount of time that will need to be allocated to public and stakeholder involvement. Whilst this has been based on past experience, it cannot accurately predict how many people will wish to engage with the Council on a particular project.
- 4.3. The programme has to be flexible in terms of staff, both the turnover and the allocation of work – neither can be fully accounted for over a three-year period.

Project Management and Resources

- 4.4. Preparation of the planning documents will be led by the Council's planning policy team. The work will be complemented by other council officers with specialist expertise in particular areas e.g. housing, urban design, heritage and conservation, leisure, transport, environment, health and legal. In addition, external resources may be called upon, including Merseyside Environmental Advisory Service (MEAS) and consultants for certain projects.
- 4.5. The Operational Director for Policy, Planning and Transportation has a strategic overview of the production of planning policy documents; the Principal Officer for Planning and Transport Strategy is responsible for the management of the programme and document production.
- 4.6. Elected member involvement in plan preparation is primarily via the Local Plan Working Party. This group provides advice and feedback to officers on a range of planning policy matters. The decision to submit the Local Plan to the Secretary of State and subsequent stages up to and including adoption will be via full Council resolution, but agreement to publicly consult on draft documents can be given by the Executive Board.

Monitoring and Review

- 4.7. To ensure that the plan process is achieving its objectives, the Authority Monitoring Report (AMR) will set out the progress and effectiveness of the plan preparation processes. The AMR is updated annually and will report key milestones in relation to the progress of the development plan documents such as the Annual Infrastructure Fund Statement (AIFS) and Halton's Employment Land Assessment (HELA) amongst other relevant items.
- 4.8. Unforeseen developments such as the closure of a major employer may lead to the requirement for the Local Development Scheme to be reviewed earlier as this may require new SPDs or DPDs to be produced urgently whilst other documents are delayed.

Risk Assessment

- 4.9. The table below identifies possible risks that could be encountered in the implementation of this LDS. It sets out an evaluation of the significance of the potential risk and the mitigation measures to manage risk should it occur.

	Risk	Likelihood	Issue	Mitigation
1	IT Systems	Medium	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Insufficient expertise • Resources – software, hardware and staff • Loss of data • Lack of access to data held by other teams • Changes to systems used could all lead to slippage in the programme. 	Staff training, appropriate resourcing, and improvements to data access could reduce these risks.
2	Staffing Issues	High	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Loss of experienced staff • Reduced numbers of staff • Sickness <p>Could lead to slippage in the programme, reduced staff moral and motivation, over work of existing staff potentially leading to sickness within the team and thereby increasing the issue.</p>	Prompt recruitment of new staff, or temporary staff and careful management of the work programme could reduce these risks.
3	Political Delay	Medium	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Committee cycle dates • Last minute changes and amendments • Change in National or Sub-Regional Government <p>Reporting procedures and long lead in times may lead to slippage in the programme.</p>	Ensuring involvement of members throughout the process and regular reviews of the programmed should help to reduce this risk.

	Risk	Likelihood	Issue	Mitigation
4	Change in National / Local Government Policy	High	All stages of Local Plan preparation are influenced by government policy. Changing policies/priorities and uncertainty for the Local Plan.	Ensure that policy team is abreast of changes in policy.
5	Team undertaking other work	High	Resources are finite (3 FTE). If the project team is required to input in to other priority areas of the Authority or Combined Authority, this is likely to cause slippage in the programme.	Local Plan to be a corporate priority ensuring team remain focused on delivery.
6	Volume of work greater than anticipated	Medium	This may include a higher number of representations than expected, new work areas, or additional evidence base requirements leading to slippage in the programme.	Ensure timetable is realistic and has a degree of built-in flexibility.
7	Duty to Co-operate	Medium	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Joint Working • Negotiation When working to differing timelines, priorities for joint working may differ and lead to delays in evidence or discussion taking place.	Ensure that timetables are realistic and reflect partner authorities' / organisations' ability to contribute to joint working.
8	Consultation Fatigue	Medium	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of responses • Lack of understanding with regard to the purpose/content of the plan. 	Ensure approach set out in the SCI is used, where possible adopt new ideas to improve consultation. Use plain English.
9	Need for further consultation	Medium	It can be hard to predict where and when extra consultation may be required but may be as a result of the Hearing or due to the levels of comments received.	Ensure timetable is realistic, reviewed regularly and has a degree of built in flexibility.
10	Need for specialist Input	High	It is normally possible to foresee where there is a need for specialist involvement therefore reducing the risk associated with this issue. However, on occasions e.g. where new Government guidance is created, it may be necessary to use specialists without additional time being built into the programme, therefore causing delays.	Ensure that policy team is abreast of changes in policy and allow for some flexibility in the AMR.

Acronyms

AMR	Authority Monitoring Report
CIL	Community Infrastructure Levy
CLG	Department of Communities and Local Government
DPD	Development Plan Document
LDO	Local Development Order
LDS	Local Development Scheme
NDP	Neighbourhood Development Plan
NPPF	National Planning Policy Framework
PPG	National Planning Policy Guidance
SA	Sustainability Appraisal
SCI	Statement of Community Involvement
SPD	Supplementary Planning Document

Appendix A:

Local Development Scheme Details

Open Space SPD		
Document Details		
Title	Open Space SPD	
Role and Content	Sets out detailed guidance for the public, planners, housing providers, developers and their agents, clarifying definitions and procedural matters in dealing with planning applications and Open Space requirements.	
Status	Material Consideration in the determination of planning applications.	
Geographical coverage	Borough wide	
Chain of Conformity	Conforms with the Delivery and Allocations Local Plan specifically policy HE1 and National Planning Policy Framework	
Timetable and Milestones		
Start	Begin collation of evidence and start engaging stakeholders in the early preparation of the document	
SA Scoping	Consultation on the scope of the Sustainability Appraisal	
Initial Consultation	Iterative process – identifying issues and options, developing preferred options and taking account of the evidence base	
Publication	Publish the final draft document and consult for 4 weeks on the content prior to adoption.	
Adoption	Document adopted and published	
Arrangements for Production		
Lead Department	Planning Policy	
Management arrangements	Executive Board approval will be required for public consultation on draft Plan(s). Full Council approval will be required for adoption.	
Resources	To be provided within the Planning Policy budget.	
Involving Stakeholders and Community	Consultation will be undertaken in line with the Regulations and the Statement of Community Involvement (SCI 2020).	
Post Production		
Monitoring	Monitored by the Authority Monitoring Report (AMR).	
Review	The effectiveness of this SPD will be reviewed through the data collected within the AMR.	
Transport and Accessibility SPD		
Document Details		
Title	Transport and Accessibility SPD	
Role and Content	This SPD will show how development can satisfy the requirements of accessibility policies contained within Halton's Development Plan. It will assist developers in ensuring that their proposals are accessible, promote sustainable travel patterns and minimise the congestion and pollution caused by vehicles. The main objective of the SPD is to ensure a good choice of travel modes to all new development.	

Status	Material Consideration in the determination of planning applications.	
Geographical coverage	Borough wide	
Chain of Conformity	Conforms with the Delivery and Allocations Local Plan specifically CSR 15 / C1 and National Planning Policy Framework	
Timetable and Milestones		
Start	Begin collation of evidence and start engaging stakeholders in the early preparation of the document	Commenced
SA Scoping	Consultation on the scope of the Sustainability Appraisal	
Initial Consultation	Iterative process – identifying issues and options, developing preferred options and taking account of the evidence base	
Publication	Publish the final draft document and consult for 4 weeks on the content prior to adoption.	
Adoption	Document adopted and published	
Arrangements for Production		
Lead Department	Planning Policy	
Management arrangements	Executive Board approval will be required for public consultation on draft Plan(s). Full Council approval will be required for adoption.	
Resources	To be provided within the Planning Policy budget.	
Involving Stakeholders and Community	Consultation will be undertaken in line with the Regulations and the Statement of Community Involvement (SCI 2020).	
Post Production		
Monitoring	Monitored by the Authority Monitoring Report (AMR).	
Review	The effectiveness of this SPD will be reviewed through the data collected within the AMR.	
Houses of Multiple Occupation SPD		
Document Details		
Title	Houses of Multiple Occupation SPD	
Role and Content	This SPD is intended to raise awareness and assist in the appropriate designation of HMOs to ensure quality, equitable distribution of the designated properties.	
Status	Material Consideration in the determination of planning applications.	
Geographical coverage	Borough wide	
Chain of Conformity	Conforms with the Delivery and Allocations Local Plan specifically CS(R)12, RD3, C2, and GR2, and National Planning Policy Framework	
Arrangements for Production		
Lead Department	Planning Policy	
Management arrangements	Executive Board approval will be required for public consultation on draft Plan(s). Full Council approval will be required for adoption.	
Resources	To be provided within the Planning Policy budget.	

Involving Stakeholders and Community	Consultation will be undertaken in line with the Regulations and the Statement of Community Involvement (SCI 2020).	
Timetable and Milestones		
Start	Begin collation of evidence and start engaging stakeholders in the early preparation of the document	
SA Scoping	Consultation on the scope of the Sustainability Appraisal	
Initial Consultation	Iterative process – identifying issues and options, developing preferred options and taking account of the evidence base	
Publication	Publish the final draft document and consult for 4 weeks on the content prior to adoption.	
Adoption	Document adopted and published	
Post Production		
Monitoring	Monitored by the Authority Monitoring Report (AMR).	
Review	The effectiveness of this SPD will be reviewed through the data collected within the AMR.	

Climate Change SPD

Document Details		
Title	Climate Change SPD	
Role and Content	Sets out detailed guidance for the public, planners, housing providers, developers and their agents, clarifying definitions and procedural matters in dealing with planning applications and Open Space requirements.	
Status	Material Consideration in the determination of planning applications.	
Geographical coverage	Borough wide	
Chain of Conformity	Conforms with the Delivery and Allocations Local Plan specifically policy CSR20 ,21 and HEI and National Planning Policy Framework	
Timetable and Milestones		
Start	Begin collation of evidence and start engaging stakeholders in the early preparation of the document	
SA Scoping	Consultation on the scope of the Sustainability Appraisal	
Initial Consultation	Iterative process – identifying issues and options, developing preferred options and taking account of the evidence base	
Publication	Publish the final draft document and consult for 4 weeks on the content prior to adoption.	
Adoption	Document adopted and published	
Arrangements for Production		
Lead Department	Planning Policy	
Management arrangements	Executive Board approval will be required for public consultation on draft Plan(s). Full Council approval will be required for adoption.	
Resources	To be provided within the Planning Policy budget.	

Involving Stakeholders and Community	Consultation will be undertaken in line with the Regulations and the Statement of Community Involvement (SCI 2020).	
Post Production		
Monitoring	Monitored by the Authority Monitoring Report (AMR).	
Review	The effectiveness of this SPD will be reviewed through the data collected within the AMR.	
House Extension SPD		
Document Details		
Title	House Extension SPD	
Role and Content	This SPD is intended to help householders, developers, agents and architects who are planning and designing an extension or alterations (householder development) to an existing residential property, including conservatories and outbuildings.	
Status	Material Consideration in the determination of planning applications.	
Geographical coverage	Borough wide	
Chain of Conformity	Conforms with the Delivery and Allocations Local Plan specifically RD3 and CSR 18 and National Planning Policy Framework	
Arrangements for Production		
Lead Department	Planning Policy	
Management arrangements	Executive Board approval will be required for public consultation on draft Plan(s). Full Council approval will be required for adoption.	
Resources	To be provided within the Planning Policy budget.	
Involving Stakeholders and Community	Consultation will be undertaken in line with the Regulations and the Statement of Community Involvement (SCI 2020).	
Timetable and Milestones		
Start	Begin collation of evidence and start engaging stakeholders in the early preparation of the document	
SA Scoping	Consultation on the scope of the Sustainability Appraisal	
Initial Consultation	Iterative process – identifying issues and options, developing preferred options and taking account of the evidence base	
Publication	Publish the final draft document and consult for 4 weeks on the content prior to adoption.	
Adoption	Document adopted and published	
Post Production		
Monitoring	Monitored by the Authority Monitoring Report (AMR).	
Review	The effectiveness of this SPD will be reviewed through the data collected within the AMR.	

REPORT TO:	Executive Board
DATE:	12 th September 2024
REPORTING OFFICER:	Executive Director Environment and Regeneration
PORTFOLIO:	Climate Change and Environment and Urban Renewal
SUBJECT:	Draft National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)
WARD(S)	Borough wide

1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 The purpose of the report is to advise Executive Board on the proposed reforms to the National Planning Policy Framework and to present the potential implications for Halton.

2.0 RECOMMENDATION: That

- 1. Members consider the proposed reforms and potential implications for Halton; and**
- 2. Members approve the delegation of preparing a response to government to the Director of Planning and Transportation in consultation with the portfolio holders for Climate Change and Urban renewal.**

3.0 SUPPORTING INFORMATION

- 3.1 The government is seeking views on a proposed approach to revising the NPPF.
- 3.2 The consultation closes on 24th September. It is proposed that Halton will develop a response to the consultation.
- 3.3 The Consultation also sets out proposals in relation to planning fees, local plan intervention criteria and appropriate thresholds for certain Nationally significant infrastructure projects.
- 3.4 The proposed reforms are predicated upon the view from government “that sustained economic growth is the only route to improving the prosperity of our country and the living standards of local people.”

- 3.5 The government believes that amendments to the planning framework and local plan coverage are vital to achieving this.
- 3.6 The proposals contained in the consultation document include:
- a. make the standard method for assessing housing needs mandatory, requiring local authorities to plan for the resulting housing need figure, planning for a lower figure only when they can demonstrate hard constraints and that they have exhausted all other options.
 - b. reverse other changes to the NPPF made in December 2023 which were detrimental to housing supply.
 - c. implement a new standard method and calculation to ensure local plans are ambitious enough to support the Government's manifesto commitment of 1.5 million new homes in this Parliament.
 - d. broaden the existing definition of brownfield land, set a strengthened expectation that applications on brownfield land will be approved and that plans should promote an uplift in density in urban areas.
 - e. identify grey belt land within the Green Belt, to be brought forward into the planning system through both plan and decision-making to meet development needs.
 - f. improve the operation of 'the presumption' in favour of sustainable development, to ensure it acts an effective failsafe to support housing supply, by clarifying the circumstances in which it applies; and, introducing new safeguards, to make clear that its application cannot justify poor quality development.
 - g. deliver affordable, well-designed homes, with new "golden rules" for land released in the Green Belt to ensure it delivers in the public interest.
 - h. make wider changes to ensure that local planning authorities are able to prioritise the types of affordable homes their communities need on all housing development and that the planning system supports a more diverse housebuilding sector.
 - i. support economic growth in key sectors, aligned with the Government's industrial strategy and future local growth plans, including laboratories, gigafactories, datacentres, digital economies and freight and logistics – given their importance to our economic future.
 - j. deliver community needs to support society and the creation of healthy places; and
 - k. support clean energy and the environment, including through support for onshore wind and renewables.
- 3.7 The government is seeking views on:
- a. whether to reform the way that the Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects (NSIP) regime applies to onshore

wind, solar, data centres, laboratories, gigafactories and water projects, as the first step of the Government's NSIP reform plans.

- b. whether the local plan intervention policy criteria should be updated or removed, so the Government can intervene where necessary to ensure housing delivery; and
- c. proposals to increase some planning fees, including for householder applications, so that local planning authorities are properly resourced to support a sustained increase in development and improve performance.

The document sets out how and when the Government expects every local planning authority to rapidly create a clear, ambitious local plan for high quality housebuilding and economic growth.

4.0 POLICY IMPLICATIONS

4.1 The draft NPPF includes a revised method for assessing housing needs (a formula to calculate number of homes needed by local authority) – 'the standard method' – is proposed. The outcome of the method seeks to support Government's ambition to deliver 1.5 million new homes over the next 5 years.

4.2 The revised method differs from the existing method in that it is calculated using a percentage (0.8%) of existing housing stock levels (rather than household projections as currently). It also applies a stronger affordability multiplier and removes the 'arbitrary' 35% 'urban uplift' (which currently applies to Liverpool).

4.3 This 'standard method' results in a local planning authority housing number. Government are 'absolutely clear that authorities may justify planning for a lower number only where they can evidence hard constraints to the planning inspectorate.'

4.4 The new formula increases targets across all regions relative to the existing standard method. A summary of the numbers for Halton under the existing and new method are shown below.

4.5

Halton Current Method	Proposed 'Standard Method'	Average annual net additions
203	540	172
DALP Figure (annualised)	350	

4.6 Halton's current Delivery and Allocations Local Plan (DALP) was adopted in 2022, and the guidance in NPPF (paragraph 34) remains that Local Plans should be reviewed every 5 years. The DALP would therefore need a review completed by March 2027.

- 4.7 In any future review of the DALP, based on the draft NPPF requirements, the following would need to be taken into account:
- 4.8 The need to release safeguarded land to meet development needs.
- 4.9 A review of the Green Belt to identify possible 'grey belt.'
- 4.10 50% of new homes on developments in the Green Belt need to be affordable.
- 4.11 Green Belt development will need to take into account provision of wider infrastructure e.g. schools, GP surgeries, care homes.
- 4.12 Brownfield development proposals on previous developed land to be reviewed positively. In Halton there is often a viability gap on brownfield sites to bring these sites forward into housing supply.
- 4.13 Need to demonstrate a 5-year housing land supply.
- 4.14 The release of Green Belt to address unmet needs for traveller's sites.
- 4.15 Going forward, it is proposed that any future review of Halton's DALP will require input from Members, previously this input was via the LDF Working Party. Further update reports will be presented to respective Council Committees, for example the Environment and Urban Renewal PPB and Exec Board.

5.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 There are no financial implications at this stage. However, Members are advised that a future review of the DALP will require significant resources for the Planning Team and if additional resources are not available existing duties and responsibilities will need to be reprioritised.

6.0 IMPLICATIONS FOR THE COUNCIL'S PRIORITIES

The proposed NPPF reforms will have implications for the Council's priorities as follows:

6.1 Improving Health, Promoting Wellbeing and Supporting Greater Independence

Chapter 6 of the document refers to strengthening planning obligations to provide more affordable and an expectation that housing needs assessments explicitly consider the needs of those who require social rent, see also 6.6 below.

6.2 Building a Strong, Sustainable Local Economy

The document promotes the support of economic growth in key sectors aligned with the government's industrial strategy and future local growth plans.

6.3 Supporting Children, Young People and Families

The document refers specifically to meeting the needs of looked after children stating that every child should have a loving, secure home close to their communities.

6.4 Tackling Inequality and Helping Those Who Are Most In Need

Please refer to section 6.1 above.

In addition, the document wishes to support a mix tenure of developments and developments that deliver a high percentage of social rent, or other affordable housing tenures should be supported.

6.5 Working Towards a Greener Future

There are a number of references to supporting green energy and the environment.

6.6 Valuing and Appreciating Halton and Our Community

The document recognises that meeting community needs goes beyond providing homes and jobs and refers to how planning processes support society in delivering a wide range of services and facilities to be sustainable and to support healthy living.

7.0 RISK ANALYSIS

7.1 As the published NPPF is a draft for consultation, there are no risks identified at this stage.

8.0 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES

8.1 The document and consultation seek views on the potential impacts of any of the proposals in line with the Equality Act 2010.

9.0 CLIMATE CHANGE IMPLICATIONS

9.1 Chapter 9 of the document seeks views on revisions to the NPPF to increase support for renewable energy schemes tackling climate change and safeguarding environmental resources.

9.2 Chapter 5 places emphasis on promoting Brownfield and Greenbelt developments.

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

<https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/proposed-reforms-to-the-national-planning-policy-framework-and-other-changes-to-the-planning-system#full-publication-update-history>

By virtue of paragraph(s) 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A
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