



Executive Board

**Thursday, 11 December 2025 2.00 p.m.
The Boardroom, Municipal Building**

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'R. Ferguson'.

Interim Chief Executive

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

PART 1

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2. DECLARATION OF INTEREST	
Members are reminded of their responsibility to declare any Disclosable Pecuniary Interest or Other Disclosable Interest which they have in any item of business on the agenda, no later than when that item is reached or as soon as the interest becomes apparent and, with Disclosable Pecuniary interests, to leave the meeting during any discussion or voting on the item.	
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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 paragraph 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, 13 November 2025 in The Boardroom, Municipal Building

Present: Councillors Wharton (Chair), Bevan, Ball, Dennett, Harris, T. McInerney, P. Nolan, Thompson, Wall and Wright

Apologies for Absence: None

Absence declared on Council business: None

Officers present: G. Cook, M. Reaney, E. Dawson, W. Rourke and G. Ferguson

Also in attendance: John Houghton - Hope Street Strategy Company

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

	<i>Action</i>
EXB58 MINUTES	<p>The Minutes of the meeting held on 23 October 2025, were taken as read and signed as a correct record.</p>
EXB59 URGENT DECISIONS	<p>The Board received a report from the Interim Chief Executive, which provided information on an urgent decision taken since the last meeting of the Board.</p> <p>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 Director Finance and/or the Director Legal and Democratic Services, where necessary.</p> <p>One urgent decision had been made since the last meeting of the Board and full details were published on the Council's website.</p> <p>RESOLVED: That the urgent decision taken since the last meeting of the Executive Board be noted.</p>

N.B. Councillor Wright declared an Other Registrable Interest in the following item of business as she is a member of the Halton Housing Trust Board.

DEPUTY LEADER'S PORTFOLIO

EXB60 PLAN FOR NEIGHBOURHOODS FUND, RUNCORN

The Board received a presentation from John Houghton on behalf of the consultancy Hope Street Strategy Company who were drafting the Vision and Regeneration Plan for the Plan for Neighbourhoods Fund (PfN), Runcorn. The presentation outlined engagement which had taken place to develop the 10 proposals, the vision and impact of the Plan and the next steps.

In the Spring 2024, the then Government announced Phase 2 of their Long-Term Plan for Towns (LTPT) programmed which identified Runcorn as one of 20 additional towns across the country that would benefit from an allocation of £19.5m to invest over a 10-year period in local priorities.

In March 2025, the LTPT was renamed PfN by the new Government and the timeline for delivery was pushed back to April 2026. The intention remained that the £19.5m funding (25% revenue/75% capital) over a 10-year period would provide long term certainty to deliver a range of interventions. A funding profile was provided at Appendix 1 and a full list of interventions, including sub-interventions was provided at Appendix 2. A robust assessment process for determining which projects to be taken forward would need to be developed and this would be undertaken by a sub-panel of the Runcorn Town Neighbourhood Board, alongside officers.

It was noted that in order to access the funding, the Council would need to produce a Regeneration Plan for the agreed area by 28 November 2025, along with a 4-year investment plan. Hope Street Strategy Company had been employed to develop the Regeneration Plan.

RESOLVED: That the Board note the update and associated presentation.

CORPORATE SERVICES PORTFOLIO

EXB61 DETERMINATION OF COUNCIL TAX BASE 2026/27 - KEY DECISION

The Board considered a report of the Director of Finance, on the requirement for the Council to determine the Council Tax Base for its area and the Council Tax Base for each of the Parishes.

The Council Tax Base was the measure used for calculating Council Tax and was used by both the billing authority (the Council) and the major precepting authorities (Cheshire Fire Authority, Cheshire Police and Crime Commissioner and the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority), in the calculation of their Council Tax requirements. It was arrived at in accordance with a prescribed formula which represented the estimated full year number of chargeable dwellings in the Borough expressed in terms of the equivalent Band 'D' dwellings.

Taking account of all the relevant information and applying a 97% collection rate, the calculation for 2026-27 gave a base figure of 37,115 for the Borough as a whole. The Council Tax Base figure for each of the Parishes was noted.

Reason for Decision

To seek approval for the Council Tax Base for the Borough and also the Council Tax Base for each of the Parishes.

Alternative options considered and rejected

The Council was required to determine annually the Council Tax Base and to notify the Cheshire Fire Authority, the Cheshire Police & Crime Commissioner, Liverpool City Region Combined Authority, the Environment Agency and Parish Councils.

Implementation date

The Council Tax Base 2026/27 would be implemented from 1 April 2026.

RESOLVED: That Council be recommended to approve:

- 1) setting the 2026/27 Council Tax Base at 37,115 for the Borough and that the Cheshire Fire Authority, the Cheshire Police and Crime Commissioner, Liverpool City Region Combined Authority and the Environment Agency be so notified; and
- 2) setting the Council Tax Base for each of the Parishes

Director of Finance

as follows:

Parish	Tax Base
Hale	675
Halebank	540
Daresbury	424
Moore	338
Preston Brook	368
Sandymoor	1,739

EXB62 2025/26 COUNCILWIDE SPENDING AS AT 30 SEPTEMBER 25

The Board received a report from the Director of Finance, advising of the Council's overall revenue and capital net spending position as at 30 September 2025, together with a 2025/26 forecast outturn position.

Appendix 1 presented a summary of spending against the operational revenue budget up to 30 September 2025 and Appendix 2 provided detailed figures for each individual Department. It was reported that in overall terms the net Council spend as at 30 September 2025 would be over the approved budget by £2.658m. The outturn forecast for the year estimated that net spending would be over budget by £4.672m if no corrective action was taken. Appendix 3 detailed the Council approved savings covering 2025/26 and 2026/27, together with information on progress to date. Appendix 4 presented the Capital Programme as at 30 September 2025, highlighting the schemes which had been revised. Appendix 5 set out the Budget Risk Register as at 30 September 2025.

RESOLVED: That

Director of
Finance

- 1) Executive Directors continue to implement the approved 2025/26 saving proposals as detailed in Appendix 3;
- 2) Executive Directors continue to identify areas where they can further reduce their directorate's spending or generate income, in order to ensure the Council wide forecast outturn overspend position for the year remains within budget;
- 3) this report be shared with each Policy and Performance Board in order to ensure they have a full appreciation of the councilwide financial position, in addition to their specific area of responsibility; and

- 4) Council be asked to approve to the revisions to the capital programme set out in paragraph 3.25 and incorporated within Appendix 4.

EXB63 TREASURY MANAGEMENT 2025-26 HALF YEAR UPDATE

The Board considered a report from the Director of Finance, which presented the Treasury Management Half Year Report as at 30 September 2025.

These reports updated Members on the activities undertaken on the money market during the first half of the financial year to 30 September 2025, as required by the Treasury Management Policy.

The report provided supporting information on the economic outlook, interest rate forecast, short-term borrowing rates, longer term borrowing rates, borrowing and investments, budget monitoring, new long-term borrowing, policy guidelines and treasury management indicators. It was noted that no debt rescheduling had been undertaken during the quarter.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE PORTFOLIO

EXB64 HOME TO SCHOOL AND POST 16 TRAVEL AND TRANSPORT POLICY FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE WITH SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS AND DISABILITIES (SEND) POLICY 2026-2027 RECOMMENDATIONS - KEY DECISION

The Board considered a report of the Executive Director - Children's Services, that provided an update on the consultation process that had taken place from 2 April to 6 May 2025, on the Home to School and Post 16 Travel and Transport Policy for Children and Young People with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities 2026-27. A copy of the Policy was attached to the report and would be implemented from 1 September 2026 for all new applicants for travel support.

Reason(s) for Decision

To agree changes to the Home to School and Post 16 Travel and Transport Policy for Children and Young People with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Policy 2026-

27

Alternative Options Considered and Rejected

Given the current financial position of the Council and the significant pressure on this current Home to School Transport budget, to do nothing would impact the local authority's ability to set a balanced and sustainable budget.

Implementation Date

All aspects of this policy would be implemented from 1 September 2026 for all new applicants for travel support.

RESOLVED: That the 2026-27 Home to School & Post 16 Travel and Transport Policy for Children and Young People with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) be approved.

Executive Director
of Children's
Services

N.B. Councillor Bevan declared an Other Registrable Interest in the following item of business she is a member of the Fortuna Female Society.

**EMPLOYMENT, LEARNING AND SKILLS AND
COMMUNITY PORTFOLIO**

EXB65 CULTURE

The Board considered a report of the Executive Director Environment and Regeneration, which provided an update on the Culture Work Programme and Borough of Culture approach for 2026 and beyond. Halton was scheduled to deliver Borough of Culture in 2026 and the report set out the draft programme for the year.

It was noted that new arrangements for the future programme of Borough of Culture had been in place since 2018. Liverpool City Region (LCR) Chief Executives had met earlier this year and the LCR Neighbourhoods and Communities Directors Group had met in March 2025. An experienced consultant had also been procured to engage with key delivery stakeholders across the LCR and this had provided recommendations on the future of the programme.

RESOLVED: That the Board

- 1) approves the 2026 year of culture work programme;
- 2) supports a forward culture approach; and

Executive Director
Environment &
Regeneration

- 3) agrees a proposal to explore a music festival for Halton in 2027.

HOUSING AND ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY PORTFOLIO

EXB66 APPROVAL OF THE BOROUGH WIDE HOUSING STRATEGY - KEY DECISION

The Board considered a report of the Executive Director - Environment and Regeneration, that sought approval to make a recommendation to Council for the approval of a Borough wide Housing Strategy (A copy of the Strategy document was attached to the report). It was noted that a six-week public consultation exercise was taking place until 16 November 2025, on the draft Strategy and a summary of the responses received to date was reported.

Following the closure of the consultation exercise, comments would be reviewed, and any final changes would be made to the Strategy. In order to expedite this process it was recommended that the Board gave delegated approval to the Executive Director - Environment and Regeneration, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Housing and Environmental Sustainability, to agree any final revisions to the Strategy.

Reason for Decision

Approval of a new five-year Borough wide Housing Strategy for Halton to allow implementation.

Alternative options considered and rejected

Not applicable.

Implementation date

Five Year Strategy 2026-2031.

RESOLVED: That the Board

- 1) note the progress on the production and consultation of the draft Housing Strategy for Halton 2026 – 2031 (Appendix A) and supporting evidence document (Appendix B);
- 2) provides delegated approval to the Executive Director - Environment and Regeneration, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Housing and Environmental

Executive Director
Environment &
Regeneration

Sustainability to agree any final revisions to the draft Housing Strategy; and

- 3) Council be recommended to approve the revised Housing Strategy.

EXB67 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.

CORPORATE SERVICES PORTFOLIO

EXB68 VICTORIA PARK CHARITY

This item was deferred until a future meeting.

MINUTES ISSUED: 19 November 2025

CALL-IN: 26 November 2025 at 5.00 pm.

Any matter decided by the Executive Board may be called in no later than 5.00pm on 26 November 2025.

Meeting ended at 2.44 p.m.

REPORT TO: Executive Board

DATE: 10 December 2025

REPORTING OFFICER: Interim Chief Executive

PORTFOLIO: Leader

SUBJECT: Urgent Decisions

WARDS: Borough Wide

1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 To bring to the attention of Executive Board urgent decision/s taken since the last meeting.

2.0 RECOMMENDATION: That the report is noted.

3.0 SUPPORTING INFORMATION

- 3.1 The Council's Constitution gives authority to the Chief Executive to take urgent decision/s which are required before the next formal meeting of Executive Board.

These must be made in consultation with the Leader of the Council where practicable, and with the Operational Director – Finance and/or Operational Director – Legal and Democratic Services, where necessary. They must also be reported for information to the next practically available meeting of the Board.

- 3.2 More information on each can be found on the Council's website:

<http://councillors.halton.gov.uk/mgDelegatedDecisions.aspx?bcr=1>

- 3.3 The urgent decision/s taken since the last meeting of Executive Board:

Date Decision taken	Decision details
14 November	Emergency Waiver sign off for provision of a SEND Mediation and Dispute Resolution Service

4.0 POLICY IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 There are none other than the constitutional requirement to report urgent decisions for information.

5.0 OTHER IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 None.

6.0 IMPLICATIONS FOR THE COUNCIL'S PRIORITIES

None.

7.0 RISK ANALYSIS

7.1 The report is for information, and there are no risk issues arising from it.

8.0 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES

8.1 None.

9. CLIMATE CHANGE IMPLICATIONS

9.1 There are no climate change implications.

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

10.1 No background papers were used in the preparation of this report. Further information on the decision/s taken is available from the link in Paragraph 3.2.

REPORT TO:	Executive Board
DATE:	11 th December 2025
REPORTING OFFICER:	Director of Transformation (Interim)
PORTFOLIO:	Corporate Service
SUBJECT:	Financial Recovery, Change and Innovation Resource April 2026 onwards – Key Decision
WARD(S)	All

1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 This report seeks approval to establish and resource a dedicated Financial Recovery, Change and Innovation function for the Council from April 2026, following the conclusion of the current Transformation Programme and its associated funding on 31st March 2026.

The purpose of this proposal is to ensure the Council has the capacity, capability, and governance structures required to deliver the scale and pace of change necessary to achieve financial sustainability.

2.0 RECOMMENDED: That

- 1) the report be noted; and
- 2) the Board approves the establishment of a Change and Innovation Unit (CIU) to support the Financial Recovery and Corporate Plan from 1st April 2026.

3.0 SUPPORTING INFORMATION

- 3.1 The Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) reports that based upon current levels of spend, income, and forecast growth in service costs and demand across the Council, by 2030/31 the cumulative deficit or funding gap on the Council's budget will have reached £118.613m. The position is clearly unsustainable and action must be taken over the MTFS period to ensure the Council has a balanced budget position by 2030/31 at the latest, along with removing the dependence upon Exceptional Financial Support. (Ref Medium-Term Financial Strategy 2026/27 – 2030/31, Executive Board 11 Sept 25).
- 3.2 A Financial Recovery Plan is currently being developed with the aim of demonstrating how the Council can return to a sustainable budget

position by 2030/31. Fundamental to the delivery of this plan is the need to ensure there is sufficient capacity and skills in the organisation to effectively deliver the required savings, including change management and a Project Management Office (PMO) approach to deliver greater reductions at an accelerated pace.

- 3.3 In 2022 the Council approved a 3-year Transformation Programme which comes to an end on 31st March 2026. To this end, £2.5M has been included in the MTFS from 2026/27 to 2028/29 to fund a Change Programme in order to deliver the required savings outlined in the financial recovery plan. Future funding arrangements will need to be considered thereafter. Despite the structure of the Programme yet being agreed for April 2026 onwards, it was considered prudent to include this in the MTFS as the scale of the financial challenges facing the Council mean that there is little alternative but to invest in the transformation of services.
- 3.4 Resources within the current Transformation Delivery Unit (TDU) are varied with most employees being seconded from substantive roles across the Council and others being appointed on a fixed term basis. All contractual end dates are aligned to 31st March 2026 when the current funding arrangement expires. This resource is complimented by several agency/consultancy placements, which bring to the unit expertise that does not exist internally. These placements are reviewed and extended periodically based on programme needs and are also currently aligned to end on 31st March 2026.
- 3.5 To support the Financial Recovery Plan and the MTFS, it is proposed that a new Change and Innovation Unit (CIU) be established from 1st April 2026 ongoing. The CIU would provide the Council with a long-term dedicated resource to support change and innovation projects with the initial 3-year focus being on supporting the Financial Recovery Plan and the Council's Corporate Plan. Given the tenure of the current contract arrangements and the rights accrued, appointments to the CIU would be on a permanent basis. Some flexible budget would also be retained to buy-in expertise on an as and when needed basis.
- 3.6 The benefits of this approach would be organisational wide and span beyond the unit itself. The unit will be key to the delivery of large elements of the Financial Recovery Plan and in supporting operational services to deliver the changes required. It will provide a corporate oversight and reporting mechanism, through a central Programme Management Office which will support Senior Management and Members in leading the change. From a resourcing perspective, it will provide the opportunity for greater stability for the Council; to those applying for roles within the unit, and for those currently in a substantive post-backfill chain of

temporary contracts by moving to a model that includes permanent roles.

3.7 As the current Transformation Programme ends on 31st March 2026, to allow for a seamless transition to the proposed CIU, it is proposed for a mobilisation period be built in from 1st April to 30th June 2026, with the new CIU going live not later than the 1st July 2026 (following HBC staffing protocol principles). As section 3.4 indicates all current contractual end dates are 31st March 2026, to allow for seamless transition and recruitment into the new substantive structure, all current contracts will be required to be extended until 30th June 2026. Within the current contracts there are a number of secondments from other HBC services which will need to be extended to accommodate the aforementioned.

3.8 Why CIU is Different

The new Change and Innovation Unit (CIU) will represent a significant step change from the current Transformation Programme. It will operate in a more holistic and integrated manner, working directly with Executive Directors to support and deliver their Financial Recovery Plans.

The CIU will introduce a fundamentally different approach to drive change and financial sustainability. It will embed change management principles alongside traditional project management methodologies, moving away from the current “Deliverology” model that has resulted in a ring-fenced, siloed programme of activity.

This shift will ensure:

- Greater emphasis on agility, pace, outcomes, and benefits realisation.
- Direct collaboration with directorate leadership teams and financial management, integrating transformation into core business operations.
- A focus on driving organisational change at scale, aligned with financial recovery priorities.

Innovation will not be an optional extra; it will need to be the engine that drives the scale and pace of change to deliver savings. By embedding innovative practices onto service design and delivery the Council can accelerate change and reduce costs. The proposed CIU will ensure innovation is applied strategically – turning ideas into measurable outcomes.

By combining strategic oversight with practical delivery, the CIU will create a more agile and outcome-driven environment for change and innovation.

To achieve all the above, it will be fundamental to evolve the governance arrangements for the programme. These are currently

being worked up and will require consideration of the findings of the CIPHA review/ report (further updates to follow). But essentially will ensure that the CIU is a single point of oversight for all activity relating to Financial Recovery, not a separate standalone programme as it is at present. This will ensure a single organisational approach to reducing our spend. The single point of oversight will also allow greater prioritisation of workstreams that link directly to the Corporate and Financial Recovery Plans, ensuring more efficient resource management across the organisation.

4.0 POLICY IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 The current staffing protocol will apply to all employees as part of the proposed changes

5.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 As noted in section 3.3, £2.5M has been allocated within the Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) for the period 2026/27 to 2028/29 to fund a Change Programme. This investment is essential to deliver the savings required under the Financial Recovery Plan and to support the Council's transition to a sustainable budget position. Future funding arrangements will need to be considered thereafter.

6.0 IMPLICATIONS FOR THE COUNCIL'S PRIORITIES

- 6.1 Improving Health, Promoting Wellbeing and Supporting Greater Independence

The new CIU will support the delivery of the priorities set out within the Corporate Plan (2024-2029) and the Council's Financial Recovery Plan (2025-2031). It will work with colleagues across the Health and Care landscape to encourage good quality health, wellbeing and social care, supporting the people of Halton to feel safe, be active, happy and lead their best lives.

- 6.2 Building a Strong, Sustainable Local Economy

The new CIU will support the delivery of the priorities set out within the Corporate Plan (2024-2029) and the Council's Financial Recovery Plan (2025-2031). It will work with colleagues and partners as required to support the aims of fostering a strong, diverse local economy where there is access to good jobs and

successful businesses in our community, providing opportunities for all.

6.3 Supporting Children, Young People and Families

The new CIU will support the delivery of the priorities set out within the Corporate Plan (2024-2029) and the Council's Financial Recovery Plan (2025-2031). It will work with colleagues and partners to deliver high quality services to Children, Young People and Families, to support families to nurture and protect every Child and Young person, ensuring Children and Young people meet their full potential and families flourish.

6.4 Tackling Inequality and Helping Those Who Are Most In Need

The new CIU will support the delivery of the priorities set out within the Corporate Plan (2024-2029) and the Council's Financial Recovery Plan (2025-2031). It will work with colleagues and partners with the aim of addressing inequalities by helping the people of Halton to receive the good quality and accessible advice, information and services that they need to achieve their aspirations and ambitions.

6.5 Working Towards a Greener Future

The new CIU will support the delivery of the priorities set out within the Corporate Plan (2024-2029) and the Council's Financial Recovery Plan (2025-2031). It will work with colleagues, partners and the community to help keep our neighbourhoods clean and tidy, and create a sustainable environment for current and future generations.

6.6 Valuing and Appreciating Halton and Our Community

The new CIU will support the delivery of the priorities set out within the Corporate Plan (2024-2029) and the Council's Financial Recovery Plan (2025-2031). It will work with colleagues as required to support Halton's residents to live in decent and affordable homes, surrounded by safe and thriving communities.

7.0 RISK ANALYSIS

7. The primary risk of not agreeing to establish a Change and Innovation Unit (CIU) from April 2026 is that the Council will lack the capacity and capability to deliver the scale and pace of change required to achieve financial sustainability. Without a dedicated resource, the organisation will struggle to implement the Financial

Recovery Plan and meet the targets set out in the Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS). This could result in:

- Failure to deliver required savings leading to an unsustainable budget position by 2030/31.
- Continued reliance on Exceptional Financial Support, which is not a viable long term solution.
- Increased pressure on operational services and leadership teams, reducing services' quality and outcomes.

7.2 Additional Risks

- Loss of organisational momentum: The end of the current Transformation Programme on 31st March 2026 without a successor structure could create a gap in delivery capacity.
- Staffing instability: Current secondments and fixed-term contracts will expire, leading to loss of skills and knowledge critical for change delivery.
- Governance fragmentation: Without a single point of oversight, change initiatives may become siloed, reducing efficiency and alignment with corporate priorities.

8.0 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES

8.1 All members of staff will be treated as per staff protocols and policy.

9.0 CLIMATE CHANGE IMPLICATIONS

9.1 N/A

10.0 REASON(S) FOR DECISION

Agreement for funding to resource a Financial Recovery, Change and continuous Improvement function for the council from April 2026 following the end of the transformation programme and its funding on 31st March 2026.

10.1 ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED AND REJECTED

N/A

10.2 IMPLEMENTATION DATE

1st April 2026.

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

Document Officer	Place of Inspection	Contact
Medium-Term Financial Strategy 2026/27-2030/31	Municipal Building	Lisa Taylor/ Ed Dawson

REPORT TO: Executive Board

DATE: 11th December 2025

REPORTING OFFICER: Director of Finance

PORTFOLIO: Corporate Services

SUBJECT: Discretionary Non-Domestic Rate Relief

WARD(S) Borough-wide

1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to consider three applications for discretionary non-domestic rate relief, under Section 47 of the Local Government Finance Act 1988.

2.0 RECOMMENDED: That

- (i) **Discretionary rate relief for any new applications received during 2025/26, be awarded at the rates approved on 25 February 2025 for the renewal of existing awards, as outlined in paragraph 3.5;**
- (ii) **The application for 10% discretionary rate relief from the National Council Of Young Men's Christian Associations (Incorporated) in respect of 12 Runcorn Shopping Centre, Runcorn, Cheshire, WA7 2BS with effect from 04 September 2025, be rejected;**
- (iii) **The application for 10% discretionary rate relief from Widnes Gymnastics Academy in respect of Unit 10 Widnes Business Park , Foundry Lane with effect from 25 August 2025, be approved;**
- (iv) **The application for 10% discretionary rate relief from Widnes Gymnastics Academy in respect of Unit 11 Widnes Business Park , Foundry Lane with effect from 25 August 2025, be approved.**

3.0 SUPPORTING INFORMATION

- 3.1 Under the amended provisions of the Local Government Finance Act 1988, the Council is able to grant discretionary rate relief to any business ratepayer. This relief had previously only been available to organisations that were a registered charity, a community amateur sports club or a not-for-profit organisation.

- 3.2 From 1st April 2017 the Council became responsible for meeting the full cost of all mandatory and discretionary relief granted, as part of the Liverpool City Region 100% Business Rates Retention Pilot Scheme.
- 3.3 Three applications for discretionary rate relief have been received as outlined below.
- 3.4 On 25 February 2025 the Board approved the renewal from 1 April 2026 of existing discretionary rate relief awards, for a period of three years in order to provide certainty for the organisations.
- 3.5 It was also agreed given the Council's financial challenges, to reduce the relief percentages awarded to 10% (charities), 10% (CASCs) and 75% (not-for-profits). It is proposed to apply the same reduced percentages for any new discretionary rate relief applications during 2025/26.
- 3.6 Historically, the Council has chosen to only support organisations who operate solely or mainly within the Borough with discretionary rate relief.

**National Council of Young Men's Christian Associations (inc)
12 Runcorn Shopping Centre, Runcorn, WA7 2BS**

- 3.7 The National Council of Young Men's Christian Associations (incorporated) is a registered charity whose charitable objects are stated as to advance the Christian faith, including by:
 - (i) promoting a Christian environment inspired and motivated by the life, example and teaching of Jesus Christ where people of faith and people of none work together for the transformation of communities;
 - (ii) enabling people of all ages and in particular young people to flourish through experiencing and responding to the love of god demonstrated by the life, example and teaching of Jesus Christ; to further the work of Young Men's Christian Associations (YMCAs) in all parts of the world;
 - (iii) to support, represent and develop the work of YMCAs in England and Wales helping them transform communities so that all young people truly belong, contribute and thrive.
 - (iv) By working with YMCAs that understand local issues, the YMCA movement in England and Wales meets the real needs of young people, supporting them in a way which is nationally significant but locally relevant; to provide and promote the provision in the interests of social welfare of facilities for recreation and other leisure time occupation for men and women with the object of improving their conditions of life; to provide and promote education for people of all ages and in particular young people with the object of developing their

physical, mental or spiritual capacities; to relieve and promote the relief of people of all ages and in particular young people who are in conditions of need, hardship or distress by reason of their social, physical, emotional, spiritual or economic circumstances; and to provide and promote the provision of residential accommodation including social housing for people of all ages and in particular young people who are in need, hardship or distress by reason of their social, physical, emotional, spiritual or economic circumstances.

- 3.8 The charity operates worldwide. Historically, the Council has chosen to only support organisations who operate solely or mainly within the Borough with discretionary rate relief.
- 3.9 The application for discretionary rate relief relates to 12 Runcorn Shopping Centre which the organisation opened as a charity shop selling donated items on 04 September 2025.
- 3.10 As a registered charity, the cost to the Council of 80% mandatory relief is £5,257.41 from 04 September 2025 to 31 March 2026. The annual cost of awarding a further 10% discretionary rate relief would be £657.18 for this period as detailed in the Appendix.

**Widnes Gymnastics Academy
Unit 10 and Unit 11 Widnes Business Park , Foundry Lane,
Widnes, Cheshire, WA8 8UD**

- 3.11 Widnes Gymnastics Academy is a registered charity. The organisation's main stated objects are: to provide facilities for recreation or other leisure time occupation and in particular facilities for participation in the sport of gymnastics in the interests of social welfare for young people living in the Halton and the surrounding area who have need of such facilities by reason of their youth or age with a view to improving conditions of life of such persons.
- 3.12 The premises are used as a club by the group and offers coaching and competitive opportunities in the sport in the UK and USA. The institute is affiliated to British Gymnastics, the appropriate governing body.
- 3.13 As a registered charity the organisation qualifies for 80% mandatory rate relief and has applied for additional discretionary rate relief from 25 August 2025.
- 3.14 In respect of Unit 10 the cost to the Council of 80% mandatory relief is £4,970.04 from 25 August 2025 to 31 March 2026. The cost to the Council of awarding a further 10% discretionary rate relief is £621.26 for the same period as detailed in the Appendix.

- 3.15 In respect of Unit 11 the cost to the Council of 80% mandatory relief is £3,772.44 from 25 August 2025 to 31 March 2026. The cost to the Council of awarding a further 10% discretionary rate relief is £471.55 for the same period as detailed in the Appendix.

4.0 POLICY IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 The Board is required by the regulations to consider each application on its own merit. Any recommendations provided are given for guidance only, are consistent with Council policy and, wherever possible, previous decisions.

5.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 The Appendix presents the potential costs to the Council of granting rate relief in each instance.

6.0 IMPLICATIONS FOR THE COUNCIL'S PRIORITIES

6.1 Improving Health, Promoting Wellbeing and Supporting Greater Independence.

The National Council of Young Men's Christian Associations (inc) promotes and provides facilities for recreation and other leisure time occupation for men and women with the object of improving their conditions of life. Widnes Gymnastics Academy provides gymnastics facilities in the interests of social welfare for young people living in the Halton. in the interests of social welfare for young people living in the Halton.

6.2 Building a Strong, Sustainable Local Economy
There are no implications.

6.3 Supporting Children, Young People and Families.

Widnes Gymnastics Academy provides gymnastics facilities in the interests of social welfare for young people living in the Halton and the surrounding area who have need of such facilities by reason of their youth or age with a view to improving conditions of life of such persons

6.4 Tackling Inequality and Helping Those Who Are Most In Need.
There are no implications

6.5 Working Towards a Greener Future
There are no implications.

6.6 Valuing and Appreciating Halton and Our Community
There are no implications.

7.0 RISK ANALYSIS

- 7.1 There are no risks associated with the proposed action.

8.0 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES

- 8.1 The applicants offer their services to all sections of the community, without any prejudice.

9.0 CLIMATE CHANGE IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 There are none.

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

- 10.1 There are none under the meaning of the Act.

APPENDIX I – 2025/26 PART YEAR COST OF RELIEFS							
Ratepayer	Address	Rates Liability 2025/26 Part-Year £	Mandatory Rate Relief Awarded %	Cost of Mandatory Relief to HBC in 2025/26 £	Amount of Discretionary Rate Relief If awarded %	Cost of Disc. Rate Relief to HBC in 2025/26 £	Cost of Mandatory & Disc. Relief for 2025/26 £
National Council Of Young Men's Christian Associations	12 Runcorn Shopping Centre, Runcorn	6,571.76	80%	5,257.41	10%	657.18	5,914.59
Widnes Gymnastics Academy	Unit 10 Widnes Business Park, Foundry Lane, Widnes	6,212.55	80%	4,970.04	10%	621.25	5,591.29
Widnes Gymnastics Academy	Unit 11 Widnes Business Park, Foundry Lane, Widnes,	4,715.55	80%	3,772.44	10%	471.55	4243.99

REPORT TO: Executive Board

DATE: 11 December 2025

REPORTING OFFICER: Director of HR & Corporate Affairs (Interim)

PORTFOLIO: Corporate Services

SUBJECT: Directorate Performance Overview Reports for Quarter 2
2025 - 2026

WARD(S) Boroughwide

1.0 PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To report the Council's performance for the second quarter period to 30th September 2025.
The reports detail progress against key objectives / milestones and performance targets and describes factors affecting each of the Directorates.

2.0 RECOMMENDED:

- 1) Executive Board note the information contained in the reports**
- 2) Consider the progress and performance information and raise any questions or points for clarification.**

3.0 SUPPORTING INFORMATION

- 3.1 It is essential that the Council maintains a planning and performance framework that allows the identification and on-going monitoring of key activities and performance measures that meet organisational needs. Performance management will also continue to be important in our demonstration of value for money and outward accountability.
- 3.2 The Directorate Performance Overview Reports provide a strategic summary of the key issues arising from performance in the relevant quarter for each Directorate and being aligned to Council priorities or functional areas. Such information is central to the Council's performance management arrangements and the Executive Board has a key role in monitoring performance and strengthening accountability.

- 3.3 Information for each of the Council's Directorates, including the implementation of high-risk mitigation measures, is contained within the following appendices:

Appendix 1 – Corporate & Inclusion Report
Appendix 2 – Health & Social Care Report
Appendix 3 – Children's Services Report

4.0 POLICY IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 The Council's Performance Management Framework will continue to form a key part of the Council's policy framework.

5.0 OTHER IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 These reports would also be available to support future scrutiny arrangements of services by Members and Inspection regimes for Ofsted and Adult Social Care.

6.0 IMPLICATIONS FOR THE COUNCIL'S PRIORITIES

- 6.1 Existing and future performance frameworks at both local and national level are linked to the delivery of the Council's priorities.
- 6.2 The provision of Directorate Overview Reports to Executive Board, that include progress in relation to objectives/ milestones and performance indicators will support organisational improvement and accountability.

7.0 RISK ANALYSIS

- 7.1 The Council performance management framework allows the authority to both align its activities to the delivery of organisational and partnership priorities and provide appropriate information to all relevant stakeholders in accordance with the "transparency agenda".

8.0 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES

- 8.1 There are no specific equality and diversity issues relating to this report.

9.0 CLIMATE CHANGE IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 Not applicable

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

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

Directorate Overview Report – Corporate & Inclusion – Quarter 2

Reporting Period: 1st July – 30th September

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 This report provides an overview of issues and progress against key service objectives/milestones and performance targets, during the second quarter of 2025/26 for service areas within the remit of the Corporate & Inclusion Board.
- 1.2 It covers key priorities for development or improvement in the various functional areas reporting to the Board in relation to the Council's priority of Corporate Effectiveness and Business Efficiency i.e.:
 - Finance
 - Operational HR Division, Chief Executives Delivery Unit
 - ICT Infrastructure
 - Legal and Democracy
 - Catering, Stadium and Registration Services
 - Property Services
- 1.3 The way in which traffic light symbols have been used to reflect progress to date is explained within Section 5 of this report.

1.4 Corporate Priorities



2.0 High Priority Equality Actions

- 2.1 Equality issues continue to form a routine element of the Council's business planning and operational decision making processes. Additionally the Council must have evidence to demonstrate compliance with the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) which came into force in April 2011.
- 2.2 The Council's latest annual progress report in relation to the achievement of its equality objectives is published on the Council website and is available via:

<http://www4.halton.gov.uk/Pages/councildemocracy/Equality-and-Diversity.aspx>

3.0 Performance Overview

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

Finance

Key Objectives / milestones

Corporate Priority	Priorities 1 - 6 Building a Resilient and Reliable Organisation
FS01	Higher proportion of council tax income due for the year to be collected compared to the previous year

Milestone	Progress Q2	Supporting Commentary
On a quarterly basis, the in-year collection rate will be compared to the same point of the previous year		<p>Council tax collection for the period ending 30 September 2025 is 53.71% which is 0.11% down on the same period for last year.</p> <p>Debt relating to previous years continues to be collected, the Council utilises powers through charging orders and attachment to earnings/benefits to secure debts.</p>

		<p>£1.634m has been collected in relation to previous year debt, equivalent to 8.35% of outstanding debt as at 31 March 2025. This is an improvement of £0.263m compared to the same period in 2024/25.</p> <p>For 2024/25 the Council's in-year council tax collection rate was 93.98% which compares to the national collection rate of 95.9%. Council tax collection rates are impacted by deprivation, where it is evidenced the higher the deprivation the lower the collection rate. Despite this Halton outperforms a number of unitary and met authorities who have a lower deprivation ranking.</p>
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Corporate Priority	Priorities 1 - 6 Building a Resilient and Reliable Organisation
FS02	Higher proportion of business rates income due for the year to be collected compared to previous year

Milestone	Progress Q2	Supporting Commentary
On a quarterly basis, the in-year collection rate will be compared to the same point of the previous year		<p>Business rate collection for the period ending 30 September 2025 is 58.6% which is 0.16% lower than the collection rate at the same point last year.</p> <p>Despite the collection rate being lower on the same point last year it is worth noting 2024/25 collection rates were the highest in over a decade. The collection rate at 30 September 2025 remains high and is the third highest collection rate over the past decade.</p> <p>£0.736m has been collected in relation to previous year debt.</p>

Corporate Priority	Priority 4 - Tackling inequality and helping those who are most in need
FS 03	Reducing the average time for processing new Housing Benefit and Council Tax Reduction claims by 1 day, compared to the previous year, to an average of 21.65 days.

Milestone	Progress Q2	Supporting Commentary
On a quarterly basis, the average processing times will be compared to the same quarter last year (Q1 2024/25 20.83 days).		<p>Q2 2025-26 25.01 days Q1 2025-26 27.26 days Q4 2024-25 18.97 days Q3 2024-25 18.94 days Q2 2024-25 19.58 days Q1 2024-25 20.83 days</p> <p>In the second quarter there has been an improvement of over two days in the speed of processing for new claims compared to quarter one. The Benefits Service has recruited three Benefit Officers in August 2025 and they should have a positive impact on processing times later in the year. At this stage of the year, it is too early to predict whether the target of 21.65 days will be achieved.</p>

Corporate Priority	Priority 4 – Tackling inequality and helping those who are most in need
FS 04	Reducing the average time for processing notifications of changes in circumstances for Housing Benefit and Council Tax Reduction by 1 day, compared to the previous year, to an average of 8.55 days.

Milestone	Progress Q2	Supporting Commentary
On a quarterly basis, the average processing times will be compared to the same quarter last year (13.70 days).		<p>Q2 2025-26 19.17 days Q1 2025-26 14.30 days Q4 2024-25 9.16 days Q3 2024-25 12.19 days Q2 2024-25 15.62 days Q1 2024-25 13.70 days</p>

		<p>The performance for changes in circumstances has deteriorated in quarter two compared to quarter one in part because of the large number of transactions being sent by the DWP in respect of council tax reduction claims. The volume of these transactions varies throughout the year and in quarter two the numbers were high. The Benefits Service has recruited three Benefit Officers in August 2025 and they should have a positive impact on processing times later in the year. At this stage of the year it is too early to predict whether the target of 8.55 days will be achieved.</p>
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Corporate Priority	Priority Two - Building a strong, sustainable, local economy
FS 05	Ensuring 90% of all suppliers' invoices are paid within 30 days, including those which are disputed invoices.

Milestone	Progress Q2	Supporting Commentary
On a quarterly basis, the proportion of suppliers' invoices paid within 30 days will be assessed		<p>As of the end of Quarter 2, 91.22% of the Council's supplier invoices for the current financial year were paid within 30 calendar days of receipt. This marks a slight improvement compared to Quarter 1, where the figure stood at 90.92%.</p> <p>This performance reflects the Council's ongoing commitment to prompt payment practices, which help foster positive and reliable relationships with suppliers. It is important to note that this metric includes all invoices, including those subject to disputes or delays due to queries, ensuring a comprehensive view of payment performance.</p>

Corporate Priority	Priorities 1 - 6 Building a Resilient and Reliable Organisation
FS 06	Higher proportion of historic sundry debt to be collected compared to the same point the previous year

Milestone	Progress Q2	Supporting Commentary
On a quarterly basis, the collection rate for the total outstanding historic debt (balance as at the previous year-end) will be compared to the same point the previous year		<p>As at 31 March 2025, the total outstanding historic debt stood at £19,407,241. By 30 September 2025, 59.56% of this debt had been successfully recovered, representing an improvement compared to 55.01% at the same point in the previous year.</p> <p>This positive trend is partly attributed to the continued support provided by the Council's external debt collection agency in those cases where normal in-house recovery action has not been successful. Additionally, Adult Social Care has recently appointed two extra staff members to support recovery efforts, which is expected to further enhance collection rates in the coming months.</p> <p>The Council has also seen a notable improvement in the recovery of debt raised during the current financial year (2025/26). At the end of Quarter 2, 79.82% of this debt had been collected, compared to 62.19% at the same stage last year.</p>

Operational HR Division, Chief Executives Delivery Unit

Key Objectives / milestones

Corporate Priority	Priorities 1 - 6 Building a Resilient and Reliable Organisation
CXDU 01	Reduction in Sickness absence across the Council - Review and amend policy to focus on attendance, train and empower managers to apply procedure timely.

Milestone	Progress Q2	Supporting Commentary
Reduce the sickness absence days FTE average across the Council by March 2026 Total 14.19 days for 2024/2025.		3.52 Q1 2025/26 - 3.57 Q2 2024/25 – 3.69
Reduce the average cost of absence across the council by March 2026	 	£1,480.55 Q1 2025/26 - £1,561.79 Q2 2024/25 - £1,246.94

Corporate Priority	Priorities 1 - 6 Building a Resilient and Reliable Organisation
CXDU 02	Promote increased stability of the workforce across the organisation - Improve the Employer value proposition of HBC to Attract and retain talent and become an Employer of choice.

Milestone	Progress Q2	Supporting Commentary
Improve turnover rate with a target of 13%		17.24%

Workforce Stability: 87.12%		Q1 2025/26 Turnover 17.32% Q2 2024/25 Turnover 13.8% There is no cost associated with this as data does not take into account level and salary of leavers and starters. Calculated at Turnover: No leavers/No employees * 100
Improve workforce stability rate with a minimum 88% target	 	85.49% Q1 2025/26 Stability 85.73% Q2 2024/25 stability 89.24%

Corporate Priority	Priorities 1 - 6 Building a Resilient and Reliable Organisation
CXDU 03	Reduce flexible workforce (agency) spend and deployment across the organisation

Milestone	Progress Q2	Supporting Commentary
Reduce agency costs across organisation by March 2026	 	Total Spend £3,319,643.57 Connect2Halton £2,933,216.56 Off contract £386,427.01 Q1 2025/26 - £3,397,163.09 Q2 2024/25 - £3,988,737.08
Reduce agency usage by March 2026		672 agency placements

Corporate Priority	Priority 1-6 - Resilient and Reliable Organisation
CXDU 04	To increase the number of post filled 1st time To reduce the proportion of vacancies required advertisement

Milestone	Progress Q2	Supporting Commentary
To reduce the proportion of vacancies required re-advertisement	 	9% Q1 2025/26 – 9% Q2 2024/25 - 6%
To increase the number of post filled 1 st time	 	85% Q1 2025/26 – 84% Q2 2024/25 - 94%

ICT

Key Objectives / milestones

Corporate Priority	Priorities 1 - 6 Building a Resilient and Reliable Organisation
ICT 01	LD1 Average availability of the Council's M365 Systems 24/7 - 365.

Milestone	Progress Q2	Supporting Commentary
2023 – 2026 is seeing the delivery of the Azure and Microsoft M365 E5 platforms – through 2025 the teams continue to deliver updates with key technical partners, new integrated systems and further deployments of Cloud and on-premise deliveries as part of this major technology change programme.		This programme's Phase 1 objective has been the full transformation from legacy telephony and contact centre systems to modern, integrated communication and data analysis infrastructure. The programme includes decommissioning outdated hardware, Cloud application deployment, implementing new cloud-based contact centre solution, building a secure on-premise and hybrid data Lakehouse.

	<p>Whilst delivering a business intelligence platform that supports the Halton operational and strategic goals.</p> <p>These huge programmes of work will offer new and innovative platform technologies for the wider organisation to build upon this is not just a technical project set but a platform for the authority to innovate with process change and digital first strategies.</p> <p>The delivery of the new Telephony solution completed in October will enhance the development of the Salesforce delivery bringing with it Ai technologies and developments such as citizen portals and a greater level of integrated services at the front end through the authority's web site and social media presences.</p> <p>As noted within the previous quarter the centralisation of the authority's data assets is again a major project that will allow the delivery of accurate live reporting as well as form the base for Ai into the future.</p> <p>Ai is a complex beast and not something the authority can afford to buy off the shelf not only because of the cost in monetary terms but the cost of accuracy and the delivery needs of the authority many will be impatient to implement pockets of Ai but the HBC technical strategy is clear our objective is to containerise specific Ai deliveries and deliver the Knowledge based systems first then moving onto the more complex capabilities of generative Ai projects in test over Q3/Q4.</p>
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Corporate Priority	
ICT 02	LD2 Security Incidents across each reporting quarter

Milestone	Progress Q2	Supporting Commentary
The software packages and monitoring solutions will be in place by the 2nd quarter 2025. This will include the delivery of DR and BCM opportunity through this new open-source platform. The Platform will be based upon a small proportion of paid for solutions with the balance based upon pure open-source technologies releasing further savings into the future.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<p>As above we discussed the centralisation of data in order to deliver a standardised reporting platform allowing live data to be reported against in some cases improving the authority's accuracy and future planning efforts. Added to this we will be replacing the ageing HR and Pay platforms and linking them to a new cloud-based Finance system this will be the same finance solution we have successfully hosted in partnership with the Liverpool City Region, Mersey Travel and Sefton MBC.</p> <p>This platform will form the new ERP base supported by the data project over the next 12 months. This needs to be noted that this project is a considerably complex and time-consuming effort and will be reported against over the coming quarters and into the next financial year.</p> <p>This platform has now completed the technical development; phase 2 of the project has commenced defining the reporting requirements and dashboard requirement.</p>

Corporate Priority	Priorities 1 - 6 Building a Resilient and Reliable Organisation
ICT 03	LD3 Number of resolved customer contacts – Contact Centre

Milestone	Progress Q2	Supporting Commentary
On a quarterly basis, the delivered process and the number of contacts will be reported with an objective of delivering contact through all digital means, reducing wait times and improving resolution at 1 st contact for those services that will allow. With the colossal amount of work being undertaken within this area through the delivery of the Sales-Force CRM, AI and new Telephony that will now integrate with the new internal platforms and remove the old Skype telephony solution by October 2026.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<p>30,211 individual call contacts across Quarter 2</p> <p>The new Contact Centre Solution went live on the 15th of October, the new cloud-based solution is now operating successfully linked to the authorities current CRM solution with plans over the next quarter to deploy and link this system to the new Salesforce CRM and supporting systems when this goes live later in the year.</p>

Corporate Priority	Priority 4 - Tackling inequality and helping those who are most in need
ICT 04	LD4 Number of resolved contacts – One Stop Shop's

Milestone	Progress Q2	Supporting Commentary
The partnerships within the shop's continuing to increase at a pace and a programme of work linked to the Transformation programme owned by the department. This is currently under development to increase the levels of services available and looking to partner with key external agencies. Integration and an HBC staffing presence within the NHS Halton Health Hubs has been agreed with a 3 rd quarter 2026 target for the Runcorn opening.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<p>30,144 individual face to face interactions across Quarter 1</p> <p>The Customer Journey transformation strategy outlines a comprehensive approach to enhancing the full customer journey using personalised web portals, chatbots, mobile technologies, social media integration, and the latest AI and chat technologies.</p>

	<p>The goal is to seamlessly link the authority's contact centre and shops with these technologies, improving both face-to-face and digital customer experiences while ensuring accessibility for all, including those with limited access to technology. This strategy will also integrate with existing CRM and Office 365 technologies to improve internal and external client interactions from contact to resolution. Digital poverty remains an issue within Halton as it does in many areas across the Northwest new ways of interacting with this client base will be part of the customer journey programme, but the shops remain an essential aspect of the front door into the council for many.</p> <p>This programme of work will also be linked to a newly agreed partnership with NHS led Halton Health Hubs – discussions continue to evaluate the options for a presence within the new Runcorn Old Town hub and also to offer an NHS presence within the HBC locations. The management within this area are discussing options to increase the number of council services within the locations bringing services into the community on a face-to-face basis. Digital poverty and low digital skills make sure not all interactions can be digital.</p>
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Legal & Democracy

Key Objectives / milestones

Corporate Priority	Priorities 1 - 6 Building a Resilient and Reliable Organisation
LD 01	To ensure that decision makers are supported through the provision of timely and accurate advice and information and are kept informed of changing legislation and responsibilities

Milestone	Progress Q2	Supporting Commentary
Revised Constitution to be approved by Annual Council each May	 	Approved by Annual Council in May 2025

Corporate Priority	Priorities 1 - 6 Building a Resilient and Reliable Organisation
LD 02	To provide efficient and effective Democratic Support Services that provides Elected Members, as key decision makers, with the necessary information, support and training opportunities to fulfil their individual potential and management and governance role effectively

Milestone	Progress Q2	Supporting Commentary
Inductions to be completed by June following election and offer of MAPs to be monitored on a quarterly basis	 	There were no local elections in May 2025, and no new Member Inductions have taken place this year. All Members have now been issued with a MAP. 90% of Members have now attended at least one training course

Corporate Priority	Priorities 1 - 6 Building a Resilient and Reliable Organisation
LD 03	Ensure that prosecutions are carried out expeditiously by monitoring average time taken to issue from receipt of full instructions. The target is within 10 working days.

Milestone	Progress Q2	Supporting Commentary
On a quarterly basis, the average processing times will be compared to the target	 	All prosecutions have been issued within 10 working days from receipt of full instructions.

Corporate Priority	Priorities 1 - 6 Building a Resilient and Reliable Organisation
LD 04	Ensure that care cases are carried out expeditiously by monitoring average time taken to file application for Care proceedings at Court from receipt of all written evidence from client department. The target is within 3 working days

Milestone	Progress Q2	Supporting Commentary
On a quarterly basis, the average processing times will be compared to the target: Children's – 24 cases issued	 	Decline in hearings issued and timeline targets have been met.

<u>Catering Stadium & Registration Services</u>
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Key Objectives / milestones

Corporate Priority	Priority Three – Supporting Children, Young People and Families. Priority Four - Tackling Inequality and Helping Those Who Are Most in Need. Registrars
ERD 26	Provide accessible and efficient Registration Service to Halton residents.

Milestone:	Progress Q2	Supporting Commentary
95% of Births registered (or declarations) within 5 working days of request.	 	98% (National benchmark is 95%)
95% of Deaths registered (or declarations within 2 working days of request). <i>95% is national benchmark.</i>	 	95.6% (National benchmark is 95%) Customer attendance / choice impacted
90% of customers seen early, on time or within 10 minutes of their appointment time.	 	99.67% (National Benchmark is 90%) Figure due to late arrival of customers, not due to previous appointments over running.

Corporate Priority	Priority Two – Building a Strong Sustainable Local Economy. Widnes Market
ERD 36	Provide a variety of affordable trading spaces at Widnes Market

Milestone:	Progress Q2	Supporting Commentary
Achieve a minimum of 80% indoor stall occupancy	 	82% occupancy rate. The market experiences good trader occupancy levels in an economy where many local markets are suffering from reduced trader numbers, with the national average of local market occupancy rates at 72% (in accordance with the 2023 survey from NABMA) 5% reduction on the same period in the previous year, this is attributed to the retirements of traders and the reduction in stall sizes without a loss of trader.

		In addition, not included in the figures the market has supported 31 community stalls across the period.
Achieve a minimum of 80% outdoor stall occupancy levels	 	78.75% a slight reduction of 2.5% on the same period 2024/25. Widnes outdoor market regular trading days are Monday, Friday and Saturday with the Flea and Collectors market on Wednesday. A combined flea and retail trading day was introduced on Thursdays in April 2022 and uptake on this day each week is low in comparison to established regular days which reduces the overall occupancy in terms of data analysis, however, operates at no additional cost to the Council.
Achieve minimum annual overall footfall of 585,000	 	363,686 visitor footfall is down by 9.7% on the same period last year, the national average footfall across the markets and retail sector has reduced in the same period by 7.45%
Strive for minimum 120% service budget recovery.	 	147.78% , an increase from 121.95% in the previous quarter.

Corporate Priority	Priority One – Improving Health, Promoting Wellbeing and Supporting Greater Independence. Priority Three – Supporting Children, Young People and Families. Priority Six - Valuing and Appreciating Halton and our Community The DCBL Stadium
ERD 37	Provide affordable space for business, community, cultural and recreational activities to take place.

	Progress Q2	Supporting Commentary
Achieve minimum 55% meeting space occupancy.	 	72.08% a decrease in usage of meeting space from 75% in Q1 however an increase from the same period in the previous year at 42.3% .

Achieve minimum 55% meeting space occupancy.	 	42.97% a slight increase from 41.03% in Q1 however a decrease from 50.4% in the same period in the previous year. This decrease can be attributed to periods of closure of the conference suites over the period for essential building maintenance.
Achieve minimum 55% sports hall occupancy	 	66% a slight increase from 64% in Q1 and an increase from 57.69% in Q2 24/25.
Achieve minimum 75% 4G pitch occupancy levels	 N / A	Winter occupancy commences in Q3, although the pitch is available for use outside of peak-season, this is low level and doesn't inform comparable data.
95% Customer satisfaction 4/5 star reviews	 	<p>100% of returns rated the stadium in terms of 'Quality of Venue' between 4 and 5 stars.</p> <p>80% of returns rated the stadium in terms of 'Quality of Catering' between 4 and 5 stars.</p> <p>100% of returns said they would likely or very likely use the stadium again.</p> <p>100% of customers would likely or very likely recommend the stadium to others. (1 star being very poor and 5 stars being excellent)</p> <p>Overall, 100% of customers rated the stadium very good or excellent.</p>
53% Service budget recovery annual target.	 	<p>47%, a marginal reduction from Q1 47.06%</p> <p>Overall, the Stadium achieved 62.32% in 24/25 and 64.46% in 23/24. Christmas event and the start of the new season in Q4 should contribute to increased budget recovery in the remaining quarters.</p>

Property Services

Key Objectives / milestones

Corporate Priority	Priority Two – Building a Strong, Sustainable Local Economy. Priority Three – Supporting Children, Young People and Families. Priority Five – Working Towards a Greener Future. Priority Six - Valuing and Appreciating Halton and our Community. Asset Management & Valuation
ERD 07	Provide Support for the Council's Corporate Priorities through the Provision of Property Advice

Milestone	Progress Q2	Supporting Commentary
To achieve full cost recovery for the service whilst providing support to departments with their property requirements.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Asset Management have introduced a recharge policy for providing services to other departments. This is implemented by a case-by-case instruction form requiring the department to provide a cost code to be recharged.

Corporate Priority	Priority One – Improving Health, Promoting Wellbeing and Supporting Greater Independence. Priority Three – Supporting Children, Young People and Families. Priority Five – Working Towards a Greener Future. Property Services
ERD 09	Rationalise the Council's main office accommodation to deliver revenue savings.

Milestone	Progress Q2	Supporting Commentary
Exec Board approval to rationalise the Council's accommodation and progress with associated works including the review of the desk ratio policy.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Executive Board gave approval at the September meeting to develop options for the future use of the Council's office accommodation.

Corporate Priority	Priority Five – Working Towards a Greener Future. Property Services
ERD 10	Reduce Carbon Emissions from the Council's Property Portfolio

Milestone	Progress Q2	Supporting Commentary
Deliver the solar connection to the Leisure Centre by March 2026	U	The tender documentation for the project will be going out for pricing within the next few weeks. The procurement process inclusive of the tender evaluation will likely mean that the project won't be completed by 31 st March, however it is hoped the scheme will be on site by then.
Carry out decarbonisation measures on a minimum of 2 buildings to produce carbon emission reductions to contribute towards 1.5% by March 2026	U	<p>The decarbonisation works at Picow Farm Depot have been tendered and a preferred contractor has been appointed. A design meeting has been held with the contractor, and they are now tasked with refining the design to meet our specific needs. The current programme for Picow is that works will be complete by 31st March 2026.</p> <p>The decarbonisation works at Runcorn Town Hall and Kingsway Learning Centre are currently out to tender in conjunction with other buildings within the City Region. These projects will be delivered later in 2026/27.</p>

4.0 Financial Statements

Finance Department

Revenue Budget as at 30 September 2025

	Annual Budget £'000	Budget to Date £'000	Actual Spend £'000	Variance (Overspend) £'000	Forecast Outturn £'000
Expenditure					
Employees	7,460	3,690	3,577	113	226
Insurances	1,048	694	576	118	234
Supplies & Services	1,129	380	433	(53)	(108)
Rent Allowances	31,500	13,021	13,021	0	0
Concessionary Travel	1,902	783	751	32	65
LCR Levy	1,902	0	0	0	0
Bad Debt Provision	223	0	0	0	(65)
Non HRA Rent Rebates	70	41	13	28	57
Discretionary Social Fund	106	50	1	49	99
Discretionary Housing Payments	279	107	109	(2)	(3)
Household Support Fund Expenditure	1,106	1,106	1,106	0	0
Total Expenditure	46,725	19,872	19,587	285	505
Income					
Fees & Charges	-351	-220	-237	17	33
Burdens Grant	-58	-51	-58	7	14
Dedicated schools Grant	-150	0	0	0	0
Council Tax Liability Order	-670	-530	-574	44	87
Recovery of Legal Costs	-10	-5	0	(5)	(10)
Business Rates Admin Grant	-157	0	0	0	1
Schools SLAs	-319	-309	-308	(1)	(1)
LCR Reimbursement	-1,902	0	0	0	0
HB Overpayment Debt Recovery	-300	-122	-57	(65)	(129)
Rent Allowances	-30,700	-12,215	-11,959	(256)	(512)
Non HRA Rent Rebate	-70	-49	-34	(15)	(31)
Discretionary Housing Payment Grant	-279	-94	-93	(1)	(2)
Housing Benefits Admin Grant	-453	-227	-227	0	0
Housing Benefits Award Accuracy	0	0	-22	22	22
Universal Credits	-5	-3	0	(3)	(5)
Household Support Fund Grant	-1,106	-2	-2	0	(1)
VEP Grant	0	0	0	0	3
CCG McMillan Reimbursement	-89	-22	-22	0	0
Reimbursements & Grant Income	-187	-147	-277	130	260
Transfer from Reserves	-27	-13	-13	0	0
Total Income	-36,833	-14,009	-13,883	(126)	(271)
Net Operational Expenditure	9,892	5,863	5,704	159	234
Recharges					
Premises Support	493	247	247	0	0
Transport	0	0	0	0	0
Central Support	2,092	1,046	1,046	0	0
Asset Rental Support	0	0	0	0	0
HBC Support Costs Income	-6,814	-3,407	-3,407	0	0
Net Total Recharges	-4,229	-2,114	-2,114	0	0
Net Departmental Expenditure	5,663	3,749	3,590	159	234

Comments on the above figures

Net spend for the Finance Department is forecast to be £0.234m below budget at financial year-end. Reporting at the end of July 25 had projected net expenditure above budget of £0.331m. The differential between periods is largely due to an increase of monthly rent allowances income. M4 net effect was a shortfall on income target of £1.205m, but the shortfall is now anticipated to be lower at £0.512m. The rental allowance income subsidy had been reducing year on year as Housing Benefit claimants are being transferred onto Universal Credit.

Employee costs are forecasted to underspend £0.226m largely due to unable to recruit to key vacancies, budgeting for posts which have been deleted and managing other vacant positions throughout the year.

Concessionary Travel spend is forecast to be £0.065m under budget at the end of the financial year-end, this is based on an estimate of passenger numbers provided by concessionary travel partners.

Discretionary Social Fund has not been utilised over the recent years due to the increased funding option of Household Support Fund being used, the department is forecasting an underspend of £0.099m.

Supplies and Services forecast overspend of £0.108m is due to audit fees and bank charges, based on previous years expenditure and the increasing costs coming through Stripe / Worldpay and Merchant Acquirer price increases for card fee rates, more customers choosing card payment as their preferred payment.

The business rates team are still engaging with Inform CPI Ltd (Analyse Local) who specialise in identifying new business rate premises that have not been included within the rating list. This will help increase income on the Collection Fund through additional business rate billing.

There has been a reduction of insurance premiums through negotiating better terms/changing providers. Public liability claimant damages have significantly reduced from previous years however motor liability claims have increased and along with movement in insurance provision results in an underspend position of £0.234m. This variance can will fluctuate due the unpredictable nature on public liability claims. July had been showing a £0.180m underspend.

Reimbursement & grant income has increased due to receiving unbudgeted income from Natwest purchase card rebates and administration income relating to Household Support Fund resulting in a favourable outturn position of £0.260m

Approved 2025/26 Savings

Finance

Service Area	Net Budget £'000	Description of Saving Proposal	Savings Value		Current Progress	Comments
			25/26 Agreed Council 01 February 2023 £'000	25/26 Agreed Council 05 March 2025 £'000		
Internal Audit	300	Restructure in light of potential retirements over the next two years within the Internal Audit Team.	50	0	U	It appears unlikely that the proposed £50k budget saving will be fully realised this year, if at all
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	0	X	Increase in costs to be applied from 2026/27, dependent on Government not fixing maximum summons charges.
Debt Management		Debt Management – undertake a review of debt management policies and procedures, in order to implement a more robust approach to debt management and debt recovery, considering options such as seeking payment in advance wherever possible, to improve cashflow and reduce the risk of non-recovery.	0	100	U	Is currently being reviewed by the Transformation team.
Total Finance Department			90	100		

Chief Executive's Delivery Unit

Revenue Budget as at 30 September 2025

	Annual Budget	Budget to Date	Actual Spend	Variance (Overspend)	Forecast Outturn
	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
Expenditure					
Employees	3,569	1,757	1,737	20	41
Employees Training	99	59	43	16	33
Apprenticeship Levy	330	123	149	(26)	(52)
Supplies & Services	412	246	257	(11)	(23)
Agency	3	3	3	0	0
Total Expenditure	4,413	2,188	2,189	-1	-1
Income					
Fees & Charges	-241	-168	-179	11	20
Schools SLA Income	-580	-536	-495	(41)	(81)
Total Income	-821	-704	-674	(30)	(61)
Net Operational Expenditure	3,592	1,484	1,515	(31)	(62)
Recharges					
Premises Support	157	79	79	0	0
Transport Support	0	0	0	0	0
Central Support	1,008	504	504	0	0
Asset Rental Support	53	0	0	0	0
Recharge Income	-3,653	-1,826	-1,826	0	0
Net Total Recharges	-2,435	-1,243	-1,243	0	0
Net Departmental Expenditure	1,157	241	272	(31)	(62)

Comments on the above figures

The Chief Executive Delivery Unit Department (CxDU) is projecting an outturn position above the approved budget profile by £0.062m.

Forecasting an underspend against budget of £0.041m on salary costs due to unfilled vacant positions. However, July position was £0.091m, this has significantly reduced due to 2 apprenticeships becoming Policy Officers.

Apprenticeship Levy will maintain overspend as consistently incurring monthly costs of £0.031m against a £0.330m budget. Currently projecting a £0.052m against budget.

The School SLA Income has been reducing as some schools have become academies and are not buying back our services.

Capital Programme 2025/26

	2025/26 Original Allocation	2025/26 Revised Allocation	Cumulative Spend to 30 Sept 2025	Cumulative Forecast Spend to 30 Nov 2025	Cumulative Forecast Spend to 31 Jan 2026	Cumulative Forecast Spend to 31 March 2026	Allocation remaining	2026/27 Forecast Allocation
Transformation Programme	1,538.0	2,465.7	1,212.2	1,631.8	1,920.1	2,169.7	296.0	
Accelerated Growth	0.0	650.7	328.2	445.5	553.0	650.7	0.0	
Chief Executives Directorate Total	1,538.0	3,116.4	1,540.4	2,077.3	2,473.2	2,820.4	296.0	0.0

ICT Department**Revenue Budget as at 30 September 2025**

	Annual Budget £'000	Budget to Date £'000	Actual Spend £'000	Variance (Overspend) £'000	Forecast Outturn £'000
Expenditure					
Employees	5,899	2,894	2,803	91	183
Supplies & Services	1,063	682	608	74	147
Capital Finance	496	159	150	9	17
Computer Repairs & Software	1,724	1,962	1,974	(12)	(25)
Communication Costs	138	53	86	(33)	(66)
Premises	139	74	71	3	5
Transport	3	1	1	0	1
Other	4	1	4	(3)	(5)
Total Expenditure	9,466	5,826	5,697	129	257
Income					
Fees & Charges	-849	-239	-257	18	37
Schools SLA Income	-659	-512	-364	(148)	(295)
Transfer from Reserves	0	0	-3	3	3
Total Income	-1,508	-751	-624	(127)	(255)
Net Operational Expenditure	7,958	5,075	5,073	2	2
Recharges					
Premises Support	373	187	187	0	0
Transport	22	11	11	0	0
Central Support	1,391	696	696	0	0
Asset Rental Support	1,494	0	0	0	2
HBC Support Costs Income	-10,969	-5,484	-5,484	0	0
Net Total Recharges	-7,689	-4,590	-4,590	0	2
Net Departmental Expenditure	269	485	483	2	4

Comments on the above figures

It is currently forecast net spend for the department will be £0.004m below the approved budget at the end of the financial year. This position has changed from the end of July 25 which was £0.119m below budget, largely due to the under recovery of School SLA income.

The main pressures faced by the ICT Department is now in relation to the IT infrastructure, with the move to Microsoft 365, staff have been able to utilise much more efficient hardware. However, the software utilised by the new hardware is at a premium and will be a continuous pressure and the Council will need to react to as prices fluctuate.

Budgets have been reallocated to align where expenditure has occurred.

Employees are forecasting to underspend by £0.183m due to the difficulty in recruiting skilled staff.

Supplies & Services was forecasted to overspend £0.202m in M4 but is now showing an underspend of £0.147m due to the Dell Technologies rental charges now allocated to Capital Financing.

There has been a substantial increase in communication costs resulting in a projected £0.066m overspend for BT & Vodafone quarterly bundle charges. This has reduced from £0.087m in M4.

Schools SLA income was forecasting to be £0.098 below budget in M4. The School SLA recharges have since been posted and the actual position is £0.295m below the budgeted income target. The reduction is due to more schools becoming academies and are declining in buying back departmental services.

Capital Programme 2025/26

	205/26 Original Allocation	2025/26 Revised Allocation	Cumulative Spend to 30 Sept 2025	Cumulative Forecast Spend to 30 Nov 2025	Cumulative Forecast Spend to 31 Jan 2026	Cumulative Forecast Spend to 31 March 2026	Cumulative Allocation remaining	2026/27 Forecast Allocation
IT Rolling Programme	805.6	1,305.6	828.9	937.5	1,100.5	1,305.6	0.0	1,200.0
Total IT Rolling Programme	805.6	1,305.6	828.9	937.5	1,100.5	1,305.6	0.0	1,200.0

Legal and Democratic Services Department

Revenue Budget as at 30 September 2025

	Annual Budget £'000	Budget to Date £'000	Actual Spend £'000	Variance (Overspend) £'000	Forecast Outturn £'000
Expenditure					
Employees	2,314	1,094	855	239	477
Agency Related Expenditure	63	63	165	(102)	(203)
Supplies & Services	181	112	95	17	35
Civic Catering & Functions	21	3	1	2	5
Legal Expenses	418	98	170	(72)	(146)
Transport Related Expenditure	8	3	3	0	0
Other Expenditure	1	1	1	0	(1)
Total Expenditure	3,006	1,374	1,290	84	167
Income					
Fees & Charges Income	-75	-27	-10	(17)	(34)
School SLA's	-100	-88	-77	(11)	(23)
Licence Income	-370	-127	-112	(15)	(30)
Total Income	-545	-242	-199	(43)	(87)
Net Operational Expenditure	2,461	1,132	1,091	41	80
Recharges					
Premises Support	62	31	31	0	0
Transport Recharges	0	0	0	0	0
Central Support Recharges	275	138	138	0	0
Asset Rental Support	0	0	0	0	0
Support Recharge Income	-2,475	-1,237	-1,237	0	0
Net Total Recharges	-2,138	-1,068	-1,068	0	0
Net Departmental Expenditure	323	64	23	41	80

Comments on the above figures

As at the end of July 2025 the department was reporting a net overspend against budget of £0.019m. This has significantly reduced, the revised position is now £0.080m below budget.

Employee costs will now be less than the revised budget due to the difficulties in recruiting to the vacant positions and retaining current staff as well as savings in Democratic Services due to a non-election year saving on election payments.

As a result of the number of vacancies that exist within the department and outstanding workload, agency staff are required to maintain the service. The main area of concern for the department is the volume of agency costs resulting from hard to fill vacant posts. These costs are currently expected to total £0.203m at the end of the financial year however this could increase to meet caseload demands.

Legal expenses are forecast to be over the approved budget by £0.146m, largely as a result of the limited number of staff available to clear an increasing caseload. As recruitment is undertaken these costs are expected to slowly reduce. The impact of transformation and recovery work in Children Services, as well as alternatives to agency staff such as attractive market supplements should help drive down the overspend in the department.

Approved 2025/26 Savings

Legal and Democratic Services

Service Area	Net Budget £'000	Description of Saving Proposal	Savings Value		Current Progress	Comments
			25/26 Agreed Council 01 February 2023 £'000	25/26 Agreed Council 05 March 2025 £'000		
Members		Deputy Mayor – cease provision of the Deputy Mayor's allowance, whilst retaining a nominated Deputy Mayor.	0	6	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Achieved.
Total Legal and Democratic Services			0	6		

COMMUNITY & GREENSPACERevenue Budget as at 30th September 2025

	Annual Budget £'000	Budget to Date £'000	Actual Spend £'000	Variance (Overspend) £'000	Forecast Outturn £'000
Expenditure					
Employees	15,451	7,788	7,486	302	603
Agency - Covering vacancies	20	12	12	0	0
Agency - In addition to establishment	16	16	199	(183)	(274)
Premises	3,304	1,562	1,609	(47)	(93)
Supplies & Services	3,659	1,514	1,639	(125)	(249)
Transport	117	66	83	(17)	(33)
Extended Producer Responsibility	500	0	0	0	0
Other Agency Costs	454	209	228	(19)	(39)
Other Expenditure	187	13	13	0	0
Waste Disposal Contracts	7,121	1,125	1,133	(8)	(16)
Transfers to Reserves	1,091	0	0	0	0
Total Expenditure	31,920	12,305	12,402	(97)	(101)
Income					
Sales Income	-1,359	-687	-691	4	8
Fees & Charges Income	-6,300	-3,622	-3,709	87	174
Rental Income	-1,118	-465	-428	(37)	(73)
Government Grant Income	-5,210	-1,319	-1,319	0	0
Reimbursement & Other Grant Income	-871	-371	-371	0	0
SLA Income	-23	0	0	0	0
Internal Fees Income	-216	-39	-129	90	179
Capital Salaries	-236	-15	0	(15)	(31)
Transfers From Reserves	-619	-4	-4	0	0
Total Income	-15,952	-6,522	-6,651	129	257
Net Operational Expenditure	15,968	5,783	5,751	32	156
Recharges					
Premises Support	1,657	829	829	0	0
Transport Support	2,433	1,270	1,312	(42)	(84)
Central Support	4,297	2,148	2,148	0	0
Asset Rental Support	199	0	0	0	0
Recharge Income	-843	-422	-422	0	0
Net Total Recharges	7,743	3,825	3,867	(42)	(84)
Net Departmental Expenditure	23,711	9,608	9,618	(10)	72

Comments on the above figures

Net spend against the Community and Greenspaces department has seen an improvement to the net outturn position since the previous report at 31st July 2025. The forecasted outturn is now expected to fall £0.72m under the approved budget profile (in comparison to £0.123m overspend previously forecasted).

Employee spend continues to be an area providing underspend for the department into the new financial year, forecast spend being £0.603m under the approved budget profile. There continue to be vacancies held for restructures taking place contributing to the underspend. However, as a result of this, in order to facilitate the very visible services provided to the residents of Halton, both Agency and Supplies & Services expenditure is forecasted to be (£0.274m and £0.249 respectively) above the approved 2025/26 budget.

Estimated spend on premises costs is forecast to be £0.093m over budget in 2025/26. The Stadium utility costs are notably higher than the available budget and will continue to be a budget pressure this year. There is more focus on internal services that can be provided (See £0.179m forecast

overachieved Internal Fees Income), and should this continue it can be utilised to offset the premises costs in subsequent financial years.

Supplies and Services is forecasting an overspend of £0.249m which is a budget pressure throughout the Department, and is primarily caused by inflationary cost increases of key goods and services over recent years. There is a risk if the Council were to contain these costs within the budget profile there would be a reduction in the service provided.

Historically, Waste Disposal Contracts had contributed to an underspend for the department, however, due to the rise in costs last year, expenditure is now likely to fall close to the approved budget profile. It is worth noting, as the size of the contracts are very large, small percentage changes to the invoices can have significant impacts on the outturn position of the department, and with invoices being received several periods after the costs are incurred, the outturn position may change throughout the year. Within 2025/26 there has been a budget line created for the Extender Producer Responsibility Scheme, this funding has been provided to manage packaging waste. In order to facilitate the scheme and ensure compliance, £0.500m has been forecasted to be utilised within the financial year, should there be any budget underutilised by 31st March 2026 this will require carrying forward into the 2026/27 financial year.

Income for the Community and Greenspaces Department is on track to be higher than the approved budget by £0.257m. The aforementioned internal fee focus by the Stadium is contributing to this as well as increasing usage of internal room hire across the buildings within the Department. The benefit of this income staying within the council rather than going to external suppliers is offset by some other income targets being unachievable. The main contributor to the overachievement however is with Halton Leisure Centre, income is remaining consistently high and forecasts have been adjusted as such to reflect this. In comparison to last financial year, the outturn income figure is expected to rise by approximately 99%.

There also continues to be pressures with the Brindley as the extension works are underway, income did fall within the previous financial year, and is currently forecast to do the same this year. Once the works are completed the income is likely to rise again, however, this will require close monitoring as the utility expenditure will also increase with the larger site.

APPROVED BUDGET SAVINGS COMMUNITY AND GREENSPACES DEPARTMENT

Service Area	Net Budget £'000	Description of Saving Proposal	Savings Value		Current Progress	Comments
			25/26 Agreed Council 01 February 2023 £'000	25/26 Agreed Council 05 March 2025 £'000		
Stadium & Catering Services	12	Cease to deliver the school meals service, which has made significant losses of over	12	0	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	School meals service has ceased and is reflected in the 25/26 budget.

Service Area	Net Budget £'000	Description of Saving Proposal	Savings Value		Current Progress	Comments
			25/26 Agreed Council 01 February 2023 £'000	25/26 Agreed Council 05 March 2025 £'000		
– School Meals		£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.				
Green Waste		Green Waste – increase green waste charges from £43 to £50 per annum, to bring Halton onto a comparable basis with charges levied by neighbouring councils.	0	100	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Green waste charges have been increased to £50.
Area Forums		Area Forums – cease the funding for Area Forums.	0	170	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Area forum budgets have been removed in 25-26
Total Community & Greenspace Dept			12	270		

Capital

Scheme Detail	2025/26 Original Allocation	2025/26 Revised Allocation	Cumulative Actual Spend to 30 Sept 2025	Cumulative Forecast Spend to 30 Nov 2025	Cumulative Forecast Spend to 31 Jan 2026	Cumulative Forecast Spend to 31 March 2026	Allocation remaining	2026/27 Forecast Allocation
	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000		£000
Stadium Minor Works	22.1	22.1	24.6	24.6	24.6	24.6	-2.5	30.0
Halton Leisure Centre	99.7	99.7	89.3	86.8	88.8	90.8	8.9	0.0
Children's Playground Equipment	67.8	67.8	50.5	60.5	60.5	65.0	2.8	65.0
Landfill Tax Credit Schemes	340.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Upton Improvements	13.0	13.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	13.0	0.0	0.0
Crow Wood Park Play Area	12.0	12.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	12.0	0.0	0.0
Open Spaces Schemes	600.0	770.0	564.5	600.0	650.0	770.0	0.0	600.0
Runcorn Town Park	450.6	450.6	0.0	0.0	60.0	125.0	325.6	280.0
Spike Island / Wigg Island	1,841.6	250.0	152.5	170.0	180.0	250.0	0.0	1,591.6
Pickerings Pasture Cafe	469.2	450.0	110.3	175.0	300.0	450.0	0.0	19.2
Cemetery Infrastructure work	469.1	469.1	0.0	89.0	207.0	410.0	59.1	683.0
Stadium Public Address System	810.0	346.0	34.9	176.0	286.0	346.0	0.0	379.0
Litter Bins	20.0	20.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	20.0	0.0	20.0
Replacement Cremator	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	20.0
Stadium Steelwork Repairs	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	600.0
Brindley Lighting	0.0	200.0	0.0	100.0	150.0	200.0	0.0	0.0
Grangeway Court Refurbishment	0.0	52.0	8.0	10.0	16.0	52.0	0.0	948.0
CCTV Infrastructure Works	0.0	105.0	1.2	5.0	50.0	105.0	0.0	395.0
Total Community & Greenspaces	5,215.2	3,327.3	1,035.8	1,496.9	2,072.9	2,933.4	393.9	5,630.8

There were some delays to capital projects starting within the last financial year due to staffing issues. These are likely to be completed within the 2025/26 capital scheme. In regards to the cemetery infrastructure work there is potential to receive grant/external funding rather than rely solely on borrowing. The *replacement cremator* line is in relation to a cremator installed last year, however the contractors are requiring some additional works required to get it fully commissioned and proper emissions testing to be carried out. Management are currently reviewing options, where possible this will be funded from underspend from other schemes.

Revenue Operational Budget at 30 Sept 25

	Annual Budget	Budget to Date	Actual Spend	Variance (Overspend)	Forecast Outturn
	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
Expenditure					
Employees	3,864	2,456	2,331	125	251
Agency - covering vacancies	0	0	172	(172)	(259)
Repairs & Maintenance	1,687	877	877	0	0
Premises	174	136	137	(1)	(1)
Energy & Water Costs	1,043	393	346	47	93
NNDR	647	647	635	12	12
Rents	157	80	79	1	1
Economic Regeneration Activities	43	8	8	0	0
Security	508	82	84	(2)	(4)
Supplies & Services	516	261	261	0	0
Supplies & Services - Grant	772	272	272	0	0
Grants to Voluntary Organisations	72	29	29	0	0
Total Expenditure	9,483	5,241	5,231	10	93
Income					
Fees & Charges Income	-407	-203	-239	36	72
Rent - Commercial Properties	-906	-352	-351	(1)	(1)
Rent - Investment Properties	-38	-19	-18	(1)	(1)
Government Grant	-854	-705	-705	0	0
Reimbursements & Other Grant Income	-149	-149	-149	0	0
Schools SLA Income	-55	-48	-48	0	0
Recharges to Capital	-260	-47	-47	0	0
Transfer from Reserves	-574	-522	-522	0	0
Total Income	-3,243	-2,045	-2,079	34	70
Net Operational Expenditure	6,240	3,196	3,152	44	163
Recharges					
Premises Support	2,738	1,369	1,369	0	0
Transport	26	13	13	0	0
Central Support	2,878	1,439	1,439	0	0
Asset Rental Support	4	0	0	0	0
HBC Support Costs Income	-9,342	-4,671	-4,671	0	0
Net Total Recharges	-3,696	-1,850	-1,850	0	0
Net Departmental Expenditure	2,544	1,346	1,302	44	163

Comments on the above figures

Finance maintains regular communication with the department to monitor and analyse expenditure, helping to identify potential savings that can support both current and future priorities. In today's climate of tight budgets, achieving these efficiencies is more important than ever.

The latest report indicates that the department is projected to be under budget by £0.163 million at year-end. This improved forecast is largely due to increased income from fees and charges, following the reconciliation of service charge invoices, as well as a review of repairs and maintenance spending throughout the year.

Supporting Information

Maximising grant funding remains a key priority, supported by diligent account monitoring and careful planning. Specific projects have been identified, with staff time allocated to ensure delivery aligns with funding objectives. Compliance with grant conditions is maintained at every stage, and this focused approach will continue throughout the year.

Maintaining a fully staffed team is essential to fulfilling statutory and contractual obligations and driving forward the borough's regeneration agenda. Despite the introduction of a market supplement, recruitment for key roles, particularly surveyors, recruitment continues to be challenging due to a limited pool of qualified candidates. On a positive note, the successful appointment of Project Managers marks a significant step forward and is expected to reduce reliance on agency staff, helping to manage costs more effectively. Agency staffing costs are currently projected at £0.259 million for this financial year. These roles are critical to the delivery of regeneration activity. Without them, there is a risk of project delays, which could impact future revenue from business rates and council tax. Where possible, staffing costs are recovered through capital budgets and external funding streams.

The financial impact of vacant properties across the borough continues to present a significant budgetary challenge. In addition to the loss of rental income while these properties remain unoccupied, further costs are incurred for utilities, repairs, and ongoing maintenance. As of the end of July, total costs stood at £0.136 million, rising to £0.154 million over the past two months. To help reduce these expenses, it is essential to accelerate leasing activity or explore interim uses, such as short-term rentals or community-based initiatives, that could generate income and offset costs. However, several properties are currently in poor condition and will require refurbishment before they can be considered for letting.

Despite a notable rise in energy costs over recent years, the department is currently forecasting a year-end underspend of £0.093 million. However, this projection may be reduced if energy usage increases, particularly as more staff return to the office or if demand rises due to seasonal temperature fluctuations.

The Repairs and Maintenance programme is subject to ongoing review to ensure expenditure remains within the allocated budget. It is projected that costs will be contained within budget for the remainder of the financial year. Regular monitoring will continue to ensure early identification of any emerging pressures, allowing for timely intervention and mitigation where possible.

Approved 2025/26 Savings

Please see Appendix A for details of progress towards achieving budget efficiency savings agreed by Council in March 25.

Capital Budget at 30 Sept 25

	2025/26 Original Allocation	2025/26 Revised Allocation	Cumulative Actual Spend to 30 Sept 2025	Cumulative Forecast Spend to 30 Nov 2025	Cumulative Forecast Spend to 31 Jan 2026	Cumulative Forecast Spend to 31 March 2026	Allocation remaining	2026/27 Forecast Allocation
	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000		£000
Equality Act Improvement Works	303.5	303.5	0.0	150.0	236.0	303.5	0.0	300.0
Foundry Lane Residential Area	3,520.9	3,520.9	878.0	1,020.9	1,200.0	3,520.9	0.0	0.0
Property Improvements	231.1	231.1	111.2	133.2	153.6	231.1	0.0	200.0
Town Deal	21,823.1	18,949.5	4,986.3	8,663.1	11,300.7	13,210.2	5,739.3	2,873.6
UK Shared Prosperity Fund	101.2	101.2	0.0	20.0	55.0	102.2	-1.0	0.0
Runcorn Waterfront Residential Development	82.0	82.0	4.2	33.3	56.4	82.0	0.0	0.0
Changing Places	17.0	17.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	17.0	0.0	0.0
Kingsway Centre Demolition	708.0	708.0	293.0	438.0	488.0	538.0	170.0	0.0
Sci-tech Daresbury Project Violet	2,200.0	2,200.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	2,200.0	0.0	0.0
Astmoor Masterplan	81.6	81.6	0.0	0.0	30.0	81.6	0.0	0.0
Sci-tech Daresbury - CPO	3,000.0	3,000.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	3,000.0	0.0	0.0
Warm Homes Plan	0.0	587.6	0.0	0.0	0.0	587.6	0.0	0.0
Total Economy, Enterprise & Property	32,068.4	29,782.4	6,272.7	10,458.5	13,519.7	23,874.1	5,908.3	3,373.6

Comments on above figures

Foundry Lane

The development at Foundry Lane continues to progress at pace, with several key milestones achieved over the past two months. On-site operations remain well-coordinated and steady, keeping firmly on track to deliver this exciting new housing scheme.

All remaining homes scheduled for completion by 26 November.

To maintain momentum, outline planning permission has now been submitted for Phase 2, ensuring the next stage of development can move forward without delay.

Sci-Tech Daresbury Project Violet

The LCR CA have approved the full business case for the lab building and the grant funding agreement is currently being drafted. The second building which was initially expected to be office space is currently being reviewed as a potential second lab construction, with an outline business case being prepared for the CA. The current programme anticipates tendering the project and contract award in late 2025 and construction commencing in July 2026.

Property Improvements

Various works undertaken as and when required, works ongoing, the budget will be spent at year end

Changing Places

Works complete, all retention monies to be paid.

Town Deal

All Town Deal funded projects are progressing at different stages of work.

The Brindley extension started on site August 2024. Estimated date for completion is April 2026. RIBA stage 4 of the Brindley Green has started following submission of the planning application.

The youth centre -part of the Creative and Digital Skill centre - started September 2024, with the new build now well advanced with interior work now taking place. The roof of the wintergarden is now in place. Completion is expected March 2026.

The Health Hub started work on site April 2025, after the library vacated to temporary location. The construction work is expected to be completed November 2025 followed by commissioning by the NHS.

The Runcorn Street art was delivered in May 2025. A celebration event was held 26 July. This project is completed

The construction of the Temple Hall started March 2025, with foundation complete. All steelwork is up, and block walls erected, with outer skin of brick work progressing well. Practical completion is expected by the end of 2025.

The construction of two canal trip boats has been ordered at a boatyard in Liverpool, with one boat having been launched in Runcorn on the canal 26 July.

The over 55s apartment block Mercia House is under construction at High Street has now all doors and windows in, and external brickwork is well advanced. Legacie are preparing for the external landscaping.

HBC has entered into a pre-construction service agreement with F Parkinsons through a design and build route for the Enterprise Facility.

Design work progresses on the remaining projects.

Kingsway Leisure Centre Demolition

The demolition works are now complete.

UKSPF

New reduced allocation for 25/26 which is for town centre improvements.

Sci-tech Daresbury Project – CPO

The JV continues to develop the required documentation to make the CPO in order to secure land for the delivery of the Sci-Tech Daresbury masterplan. It is anticipated that the CPO process will run during 2026 with funds only required at the conclusion of that project or shortly after. The majority of spend is potentially in 26-27 at the earliest.

ECONOMY, ENTERPRISE AND PROPERTY DEPARTMENT

APPENDIX A

Service Area	Net Budget £'000	Description of Saving Proposal	Savings Value		Current Progress	Comments
			25/26 Agreed Council 01 February 2023 £'000	25/26 Agreed Council 05 March 2025 £'000		
Asset Management		Accelerate the lease or sale of surplus land, non-operational buildings, surplus space within building, etc. to either generate lease rentals or capital receipts to help fund capital schemes and thereby reduce future capital financing costs.	0	100	U	It is not expected this saving will materialise in the current year.

5.0 Application of Symbols

Symbols are used in the following manner:

Progress Symbols

<u>Symbol</u>	<u>Objective</u>	<u>Performance Indicator</u>
Green		Indicates that the <u>objective is on course to be achieved</u> within the appropriate timeframe.
Amber		Indicates that it is <u>uncertain or too early to say at this stage</u> whether the milestone/objective will be achieved within the appropriate timeframe.
Red		Indicates that it is <u>highly likely or certain</u> that the objective will not be achieved within the appropriate timeframe.

Direction of Travel Indicator

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

Directorate Overview Report - Health & Social Care

Reporting Period: Quarter 2 – Period 1st July 2025 – 30th September 2025

1.0 Introduction

This report provides an overview of issues and progress against key service area objectives and milestones and performance targets, during the second quarter of 2025/26 for service areas within the remit of the Health & Social Care Policy and Performance Board. These areas include:

- Adult Social Care (including housing operational areas)
- Public Health *NB. Quarter 2 data is not yet available*

2.0 Key Developments

2.1 There have been a number of developments within the Adults & Public Health Directorates during the second quarter which include:

Adult Social Care

Housing Strategy

The Council's housing strategy which has a strong focus on supported housing has been presented to elected members and is now out for consultation. A supported housing prospectus is to be developed to include our requirements for specialist supported housing and expectations from housing providers.

Rough Sleeper Strategy

The rough sleeper strategy 2022 – 2026 is due for review and presently underway. Upon completion a draft version will be presented to SMT for approval.

Homelessness Strategy

A review of the homelessness strategy is underway, consultation with service users and providers completed. Draft version of strategy is to be presented to SMT for approval in December 2025

Re-tender of the Single Homelessness Supported Accommodation Service (Halton Lodge, Brennan Lodge)

A re-tender exercise is underway for the service and will be subject to the new Procurement Regulations (2023). A new contract for the service will commence on 1st May 2026.

Bredon

Following a report taken to the Transformation Programme Board on Bredon Respite service, a request was made to look at options for transforming the wider provision including the respite service, crisis accommodation, day service provision and office space.

A preliminary market engagement process has been undertaken to gauge provider interest in working with the Council on this opportunity. Responses will be reviewed and a report will be taken to Adults Senior Management Team in November with options to progress.

Youth Protocol / Strategy

Joint review of youth protocol being undertaken with Children's Services to develop a clear pathway plan for young people when presenting as homeless. The youth strategy is also being reviewed and a draft version will be presented to SMT for approval November 2025.

Learning Disability Strategy

The final version of the strategy has been agreed by the working party and the ALD Partnership Board. Work is underway on the final design and an easy read version which will be taken to ALD Partnership Board in October.

Vulnerable Adults Supported Accommodation

The legal agreements between the Council and Halton Housing are now in place for the Council's capital grant contribution to the development and the nominations agreement for referrals into the service. Work is underway on site and the development of 3 accessible 2 bedroom bungalows and a 10 apartment 'own front door' provision is on course for completion by September 2026.

Cessation of Halton Borough Council's Community Meals Service

Work is underway to prepare for the cessation of the Council's Community Meals service on 31st March 2026. A multi-disciplinary group has been convened and is meeting regularly to review actions and progress. The group includes representation from HR, Transportation/Logistics, Commissioning, Care Management, Communications, Finance, Stadium Catering & Admin. All current Service Users have been notified by letter and are being contacted by Care Management to explore options for alternative meals provision. The aim is to manage a gradual reduction in the service up to 31st March 2026. No new referrals are being accepted into the service.

3.0 Emerging Issues

3.1 A number of emerging issues have been identified during the second quarter that will impact upon the work of the Adults & Public Health Directorates including:

Adult Social Care

Re-tender of the Homeless Families Supported Accommodation Service (Grangeway Court)

Work is being undertaken to prepare for a re-tender exercise for the service and will be subject to the new Procurement Regulations (2023). A new contract for the service will commence on 2nd August 2026. Work is being undertaken with Children's directorate and Corporate services to expand the Service Specification to include development of the site at Grangeway Court to incorporate 12 additional accommodation units that will be utilised primarily for Domestic Abuse and may include people/families experiencing homelessness.

Asylum / Refugee Homelessness

Due to the change in discontinuation notice period from 56 days to 28 days this has resulted in an increase in presentations from asylum seekers receiving positive refugee decisions.

Many clients do not meet the homelessness criteria, resulting in an increase in rough sleeping within the Borough and further legal challenges, which can prove costly to the Local Authority. It is anticipated that there will continue to be an increase across this cohort which is being closely monitored.

4.0 Risk Control Measures

Risk control forms an integral part of the Council's Business Planning and performance monitoring arrangements. During the development of Directorate Business Plans, services were required to undertake a risk assessment of all key service objectives with high risks included in the Directorate Risk Registers.

5.0 Progress against high priority equality actions

There have been no high priority equality actions identified in the quarter.

6.0 Performance Overview

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

Adult Social Care

Key Objectives / Milestones

Universal Prevention & Wellbeing: Universal Services that connect people with their communities		
Ref	Milestones	Q2 Progress
DO1.1	Creation of a Universal offer for Wellbeing	
DO1.2	Evaluation from service users, carers and families and partners to feed into service development and commissioning processes	
DO1.3	Proportion of people aged 65 and over discharged from hospital into reablement and who remained in the community within 12 weeks of discharge (ASCOF 2D)	
DO1.4	Proportion of Carers in receipt of Direct Payments	
DO1.5	Proportion of Carers who receive self-directed support	

Supporting Commentary

Ref	Supporting Commentary
DO1.1	<p>Following a change at the 'Front Door' of Adult Social Care to a Prevention and Well-Being Service, which is supporting people to have access to information and support from Well-Being Officers to access preventative services and equipment in the community. We have developed an on-line and paper information pack, 'Living Well in Halton', which gives people information to access information for all areas of life, allowing people to access their own support moving forward. We have developed information support to practitioners, on which services and professionals in statutory and voluntary sector services are appropriate in meeting the needs of people who have been traditionally 'hard to reach'.</p> <p>Moving forward we will be developing a well-being offer at other entrances into Adult Social Care and improving our on-line information.</p>
DO1.2	Work is being completed to reinstate the survey. Any coproduction activity that is undertaken will also impact on this.
DO1.3	<p>2024/25 Actual = NA 2025/26 Target = 85% 2025/26 Q2 = NA</p> <p>There have been changes to the ASCOF metrics since the change from Short- and Long-Term submission to Client Level Data. This metric now replaces the previous ASCOF 2B (91 days) and therefore, there is no comparable information available. The Q2 submission is not yet available.</p>
DO1.4	<p>2024/25 Actual = 98% 2025/26 Target = TBA 2025/26 Q2 = 99%</p> <p>Compared to Q2 for last year both figures are the same at 99%.</p>
DO1.5	<p>2024/25 Actual = 98% 2025/26 Target = TBA 2025/26 Q2 = NA</p> <p>There is no data available for this measure at present, we will update this as soon as it is available.</p>

Independent at Home: Timely interventions that focus on strengths, wellbeing and independence. A responsive and co-ordinated offer of support in times of crisis or escalating need.

Ref	Milestones	Q2 Progress
DO2.1	Percentage of people who are signposted to services	u
DO2.2	Proportion of people who received short-term services during the year - who previously were not receiving services where no further request was made for ongoing support (ASCOF 2A)	u
DO2.3	Proportion of people aged 65 and over discharged from hospital into reablement and who remained in the community within 12 weeks of discharge (ASCOF 2D)	u
DO2.4	Number of People admitted into Reablement Service	u
DO2.5	Number of people admitted into Intermediate Care Beds	u

Supporting Commentary

Ref	Supporting Commentary
DO2.1	2024/25 Actual = 27% 2025/26 Target = 35% 2025/26 Q2 = NA There is no data available for this measure at present, we will update this as soon as it is available.
DO2.2	2024/25 Actual = 57.5% (532 service users of which 306 were not in receipt of long term services) 2025/26 Target = TBA 2025/26 Q2 = NA The Q2 figure is taken from the latest Client Level Data, however, this is not due to be submitted until 31 October 2025. The Q2 figure will be updated after it has been validated
DO2.3	2024/25 Actual = NA 2025/26 Target = 85% 2025/26 Q2 = 115* There have been changes to the ASCOF metrics since the change from Short- and Long-Term submission to Client Level Data. This metric now replaces the previous ASCOF 2B (91 days) and therefore, there is no comparable information available. *115 figure is for all service users aged 65+ admitted to Reablement from hospital during Q2.
DO2.4	2024/25 Actual = 520 2025/26 Target = 520 2025/26 Q2 = 137

	<p>The aim for 2025/26 is to maintain the 2024/25 level of admissions made into the Reablement Service. At the end of Q2, it is too early to say at this stage whether the target will be achieved.</p>
DO2.5	<p>2024/25 Actual = 161 2025/26 Target = 160 2025/26 Q2 = NA</p> <p>The aim for 2025/26 is to maintain the 2024/25 level of admissions made into the Oakmeadow Intermediate Care Beds.</p>

Care in the Home: Providing support in people's own homes, which is personalised, safe, and compassionate, creating an enabling environment for them to thrive, including for those with Complex Needs.

Ref	Milestones	Q2 Progress
DO3.1	Proportion of people who are supported in their own homes.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
DO3.2	DO3.2: Proportion of people who receive long-term support who live in their home or with family (ASCOF 2E)	<input type="checkbox"/> u
DO3.3	Proportion of section 42 safeguarding enquiries where a risk was identified, and the reported outcome was that this risk was reduced or removed (ASCOF 4B)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
DO3.4	Proportion of people using social care who receive self-directed support, and those receiving direct payments (ASCOF 3D)	<input type="checkbox"/> u

Supporting Commentary

Ref	Supporting Commentary
DO3.1	<p>2024/25 Actual = TBA 2025/26 Target = TBA 2025/26 Q2 = 79%</p> <p>The Q2 figure has been taken from the latest Client Level Data, however, this is not due to be submitted until 31 October 2025 and may be subject to change after it has been validated.</p>
DO3.2	<p>2024/25 Actual = NA 2025/26 Target = TBA 2025/26 Q2 = 71%</p> <p>The Q2 figure has been taken from the latest Client Level Data, however, this is not due to be submitted until 31 October 2025 and may be subject to change after it has been validated.</p>
DO3.3	<p>2024/25 Actual = 94.5% 2025/26 Target = TBA 2025/26 Q2 = 96%</p> <p>During Q2 2025/26 the results of a S42 enquiry where the outcome was that the risk was identified and removed or reduced is 96%.</p>

	This is an increase compared to Q2 2024/25 at 84.4% and evidences the hard work of the safeguarding team in keeping Halton residents safe from harm and abuse.
DO3.4	2024/25 Actual = 76.3% 2025/26 Target = TBA 2025/26 Q2 = NA There is no data available for this measure at present, we will update this as soon as it is available.

Good, Local, Affordable, Quality Care: Developing a care and support market, that provides choice, sufficiency and person-centred care		
Ref	Milestones	Q2 Progress
DO4.1	Develop & Publish Halton Adult Social Care Market Position Statement.	u
DO4.2	Work with providers on the effective deployment of the Market Sustainability Improvement Funding.	✓
DO4.3	New accommodation provision – increased number of “own front door” services.	u
DO4.4	Number of adults with learning disabilities who are in paid employment	u
DO4.5	Blended model of care (digital tech) to improve flexibility and independence and realise savings	u

Supporting Commentary

Ref	Supporting Commentary
DO4.1	Work on the refresh will be undertaken during Q3/Q4. Commencement has been delayed due to the re-tendering of the Single Homeless and Homeless Families contracts.
DO4.2	Consultation is undertaken annually with providers in order to understand the market pressures and utilise the funding to set sustainable fee uplifts in line with governments target areas.
DO4.3	No new provision to date, but work in progress with Halton Housing to deliver a 10 unit own front door scheme by September 2026
DO4.4	2024/25 Actual = 22 2025/26 Target = 22 2025/26 Q2 = 18
DO4.5	The Supporting Independence Through Technology (SITT) pilot finished and an evaluation of the pilot was undertaken. This indicated that there are potential savings to be made from a blended model of care, as well as improved outcomes for people. Work is

	<p>progressing to implement the savings from the pilot and then a roll-out to other areas will be taken forward, as part of the new Transformation Plan.</p> <p>Working in collaboration with the University of Chester, a funding bid for digital technology was submitted for the NIHR grant which has made it through to Stage 2 – Full Application.</p>
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A Confident, Sufficient and Skilled Workforce: A skilled workforce that is recognised, respected and valued

Ref	Milestones	Q2 Progress
DO5.1	Development of Workforce Strategy	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
DO5.2	Proportion of staff in the formal care workforce leaving their role in the past 12 months (ASCOF 6A)	<input type="checkbox"/> u

Supporting Commentary

Ref	Supporting Commentary
DO5.1	Workforce strategy for Adult Social Care in the borough has now been completed and a strategic group has formed to ensure delivery.
DO5.2	2024/25 Actual = 150 2025/26 Target = TBA 2025/26 Q2 = NA The 2024/25 Actual figure has been updated and includes permanent and temporary staff leaving their role. This is an annual submission from the Adult Social Care Workforce Data Set; information will not be available until the submission has been validated. 2025/26 data will be published in April 2026.

Public Health

Key Objectives / Milestones

Information is not yet available.

Appendix 1 – Financial Statements**COMMUNITY CARE****Revenue Budget as at 30th September 2025**

	Annual Budget £'000	Budget to Date £'000	Actual Spend £'000	Variance (Overspend) £'000	Forecast Outturn £'000
Expenditure					
Residential & Nursing	21,630	8,499	9,070	(571)	(824)
Domiciliary Care & Supported living	16,703	7,237	7,780	(543)	(1,288)
Direct Payments	15,513	8,166	8,300	(134)	(292)
Day Care	712	318	294	24	52
Total Expenditure	54,558	24,220	25,444	(1,224)	(2,352)
Income					
Residential & Nursing Income	-13,081	-5,657	-5,669	12	14
Community Care Income	-3,115	-1,198	-1,133	(65)	(140)
Direct Payments Income	-1,034	-398	-456	58	163
Income from other CCGs	-471	-165	-165	0	0
Market sustainability & Improvement Grant	-2,796	-1,398	-1,398	0	0
Adult Social Care Support Grant	-6,102	-3,051	-3,051	0	0
War Pension Disregard Grant	-54	0	0	0	0
Total Income	-26,653	-11,867	-11,872	5	37
Net Operational Expenditure	27,905	12,353	13,572	(1,219)	(2,315)

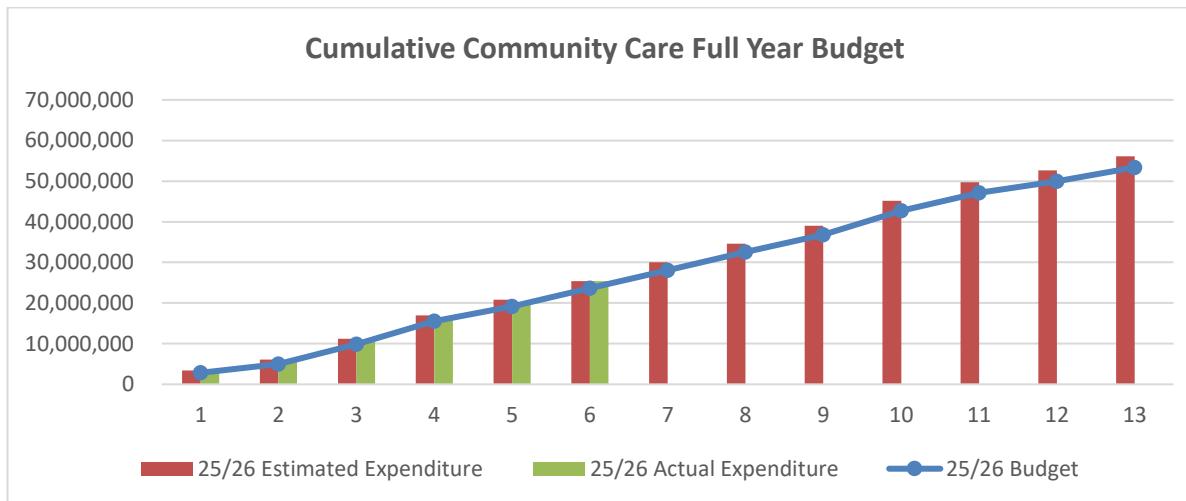
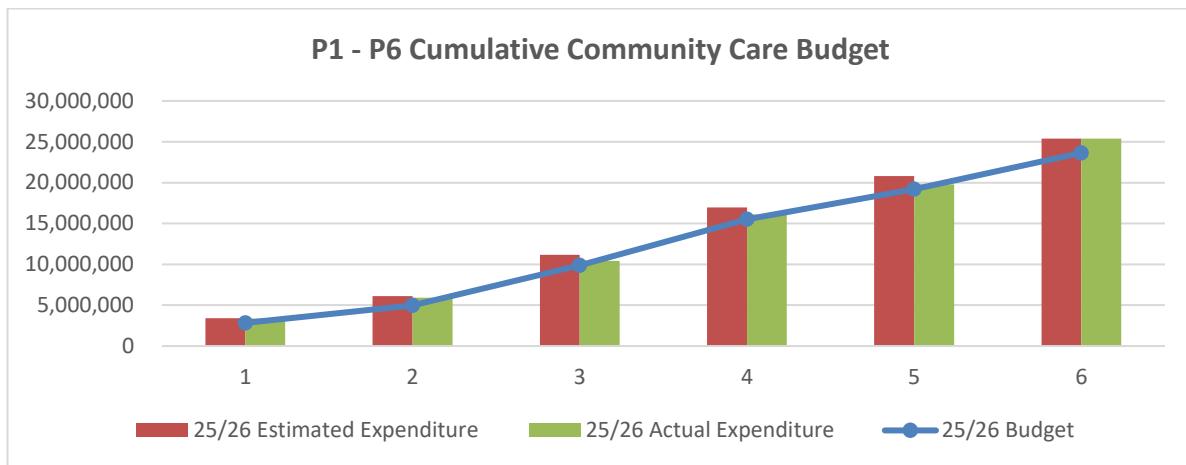
Comments on the above figures:

The net spend position for the community care budget at the end of September 2025 is currently £1.219m over the available budget and the year-end anticipated spend is forecast to be £2.315m over planned budget.

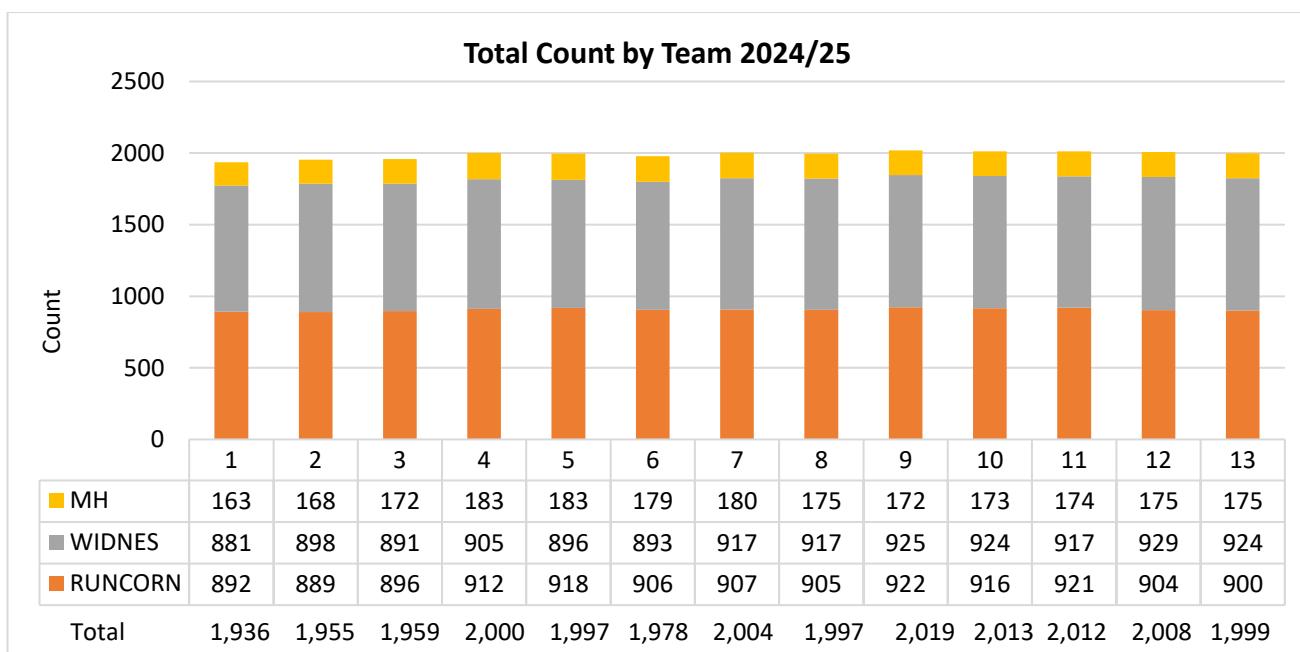
As previously reported, there has been a change to the methodology of the forecast for these services. The monthly actual financial performance is being tracked closely against predicted spend and in September we reduced our expected year-end forecast from £2.627m to £2.315m due to the impact of the recovery plan. Currently focus is on the following areas to try to reduce spend.

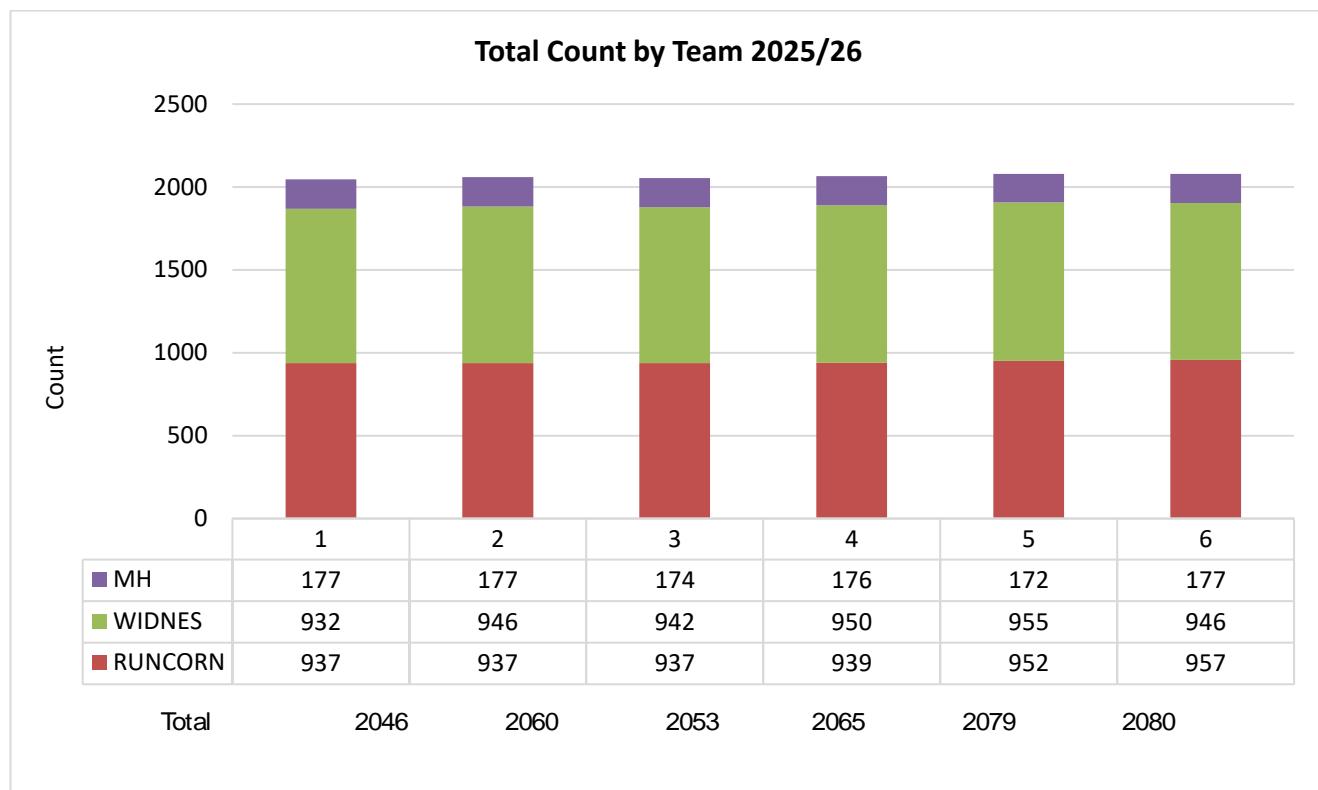
- Reduction of 1 to 1 packages of care if health's responsibility
- Review 15 minutes packages of domiciliary care to identify medicine prompts which are health's responsibility
- Ensure assessments carried out on discharge from hospital are complete and appropriate
- Maximise internal care home capacity

The graphs below show actual spend against expected spend and planned budget. In September actual spend exceeded predicted spend for the first time however as it is not deemed material (£11k) the year end forecast has not been revised at this point in time.



The graphs below show the total numbers of service users for all services as a whole, residential/nursing, domiciliary/supported living and direct payments. The average total count for 2024/25 was 1,991 and the average for 2025/26 is currently 2,064 an increase of 3.7%. Numbers across the teams this year are pretty static and there have been no major changes.

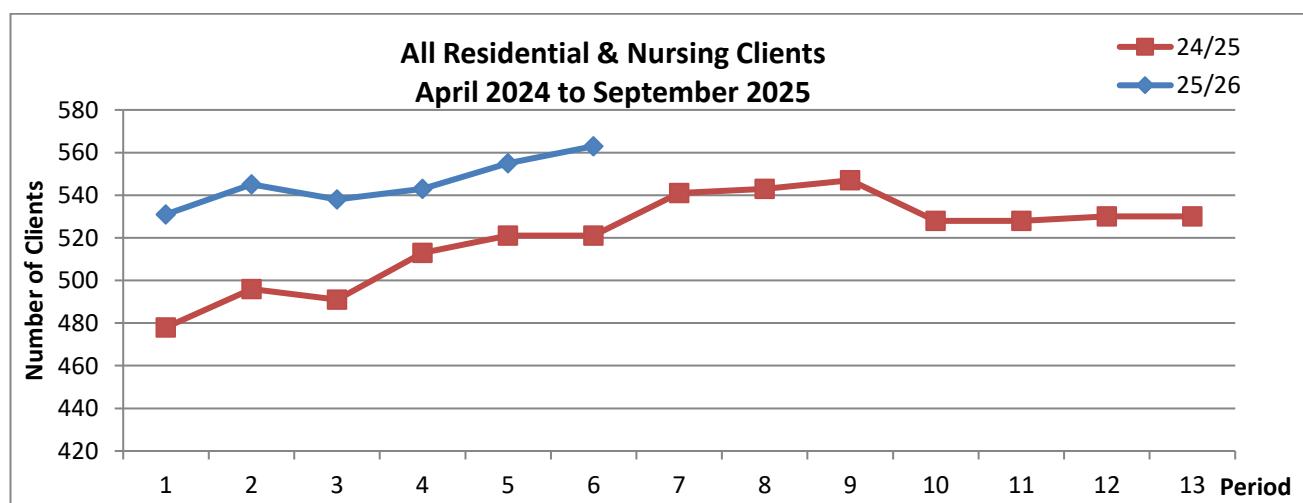




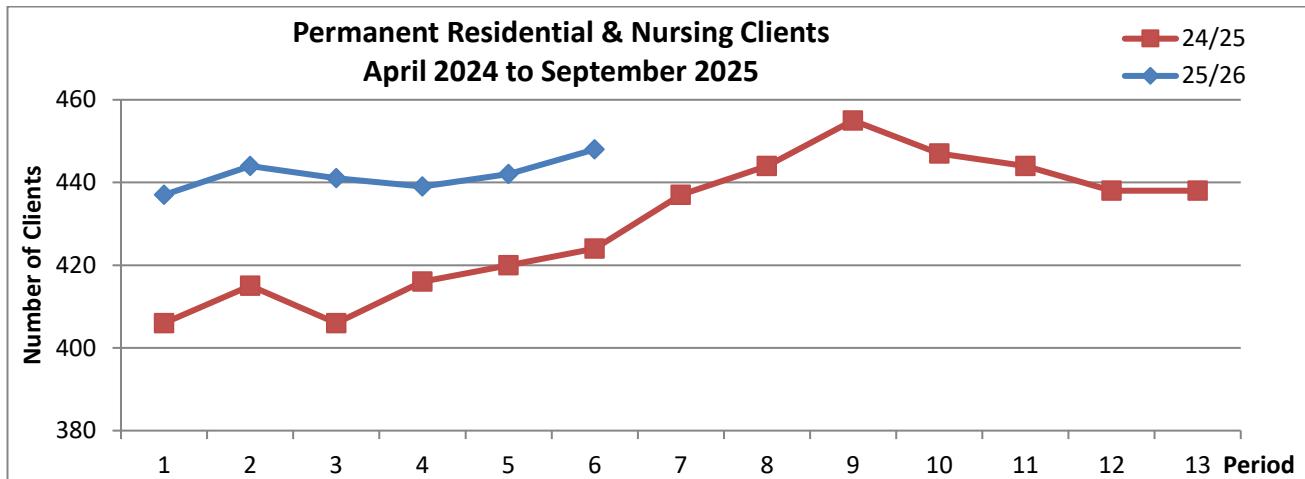
Further analysis of individual service budgets is provided below.

There are currently 563 residents in external residential/nursing care as at the end of September 2025. In April there were 531, therefore an increase of 6%. Compared to 530 at the end of 2024/25, an increase of 6.2%. Compared to the 2024/25 average of 520 this is an increase of 8.2%. The average cost of a package of care is currently £931.27 compared to £850.24 at the end of 2024/25 an increase of 9.5%. Supplementary invoice payments so far amount to £293k.

The graph below illustrates the demand for all residential and nursing placements.



The above external care home data can be further split out to show short stay and permanent placements as in the graphs below.

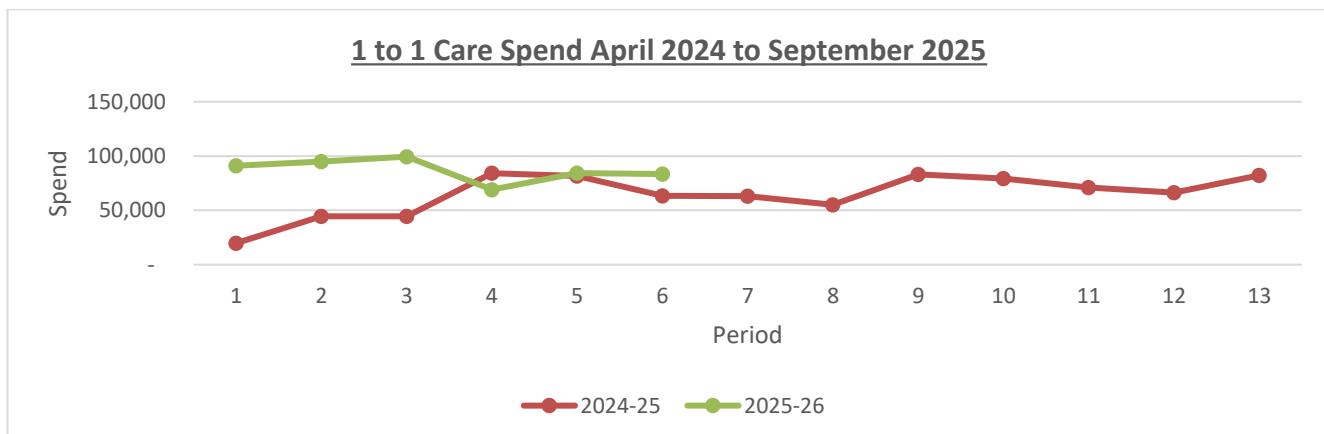
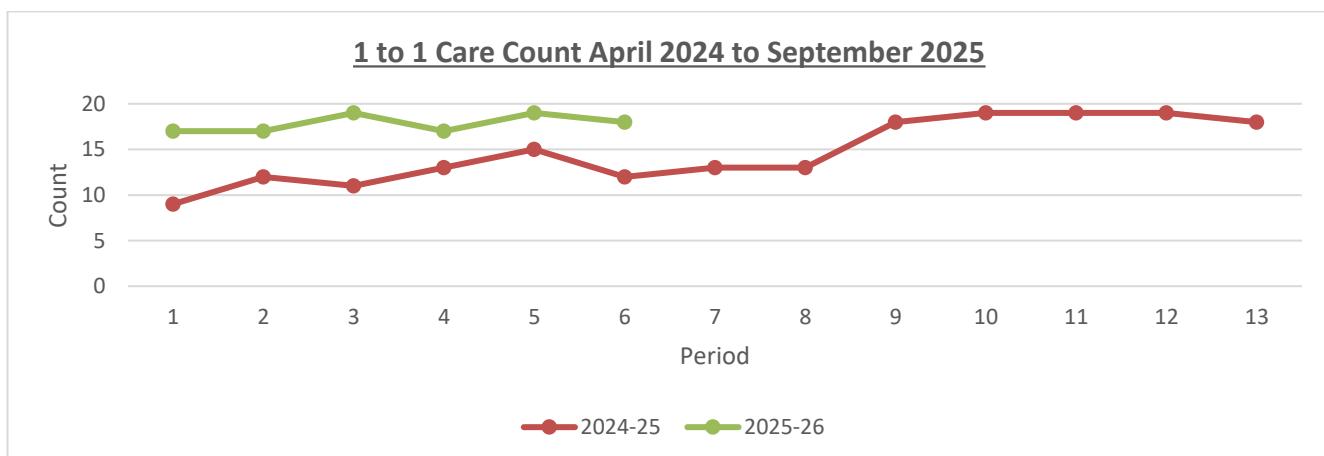


1 to 1 Support In Care Homes

Payments for 1 to 1 support continue to exert pressure on the budget. These are generally to mitigate the risk from falls particularly on discharge from hospital. The full year cost for 2024/25 was £837,882.

The graph below shows the count of service users receiving 1 to 1 care by period. Currently there are 18 compared to 13 at the same point last year. This is an increase of 38%, and an increase of 5% since last reported in July. These should reduce as packages continue to be reviewed, however some new packages coming through are still including 1 to 1 care.

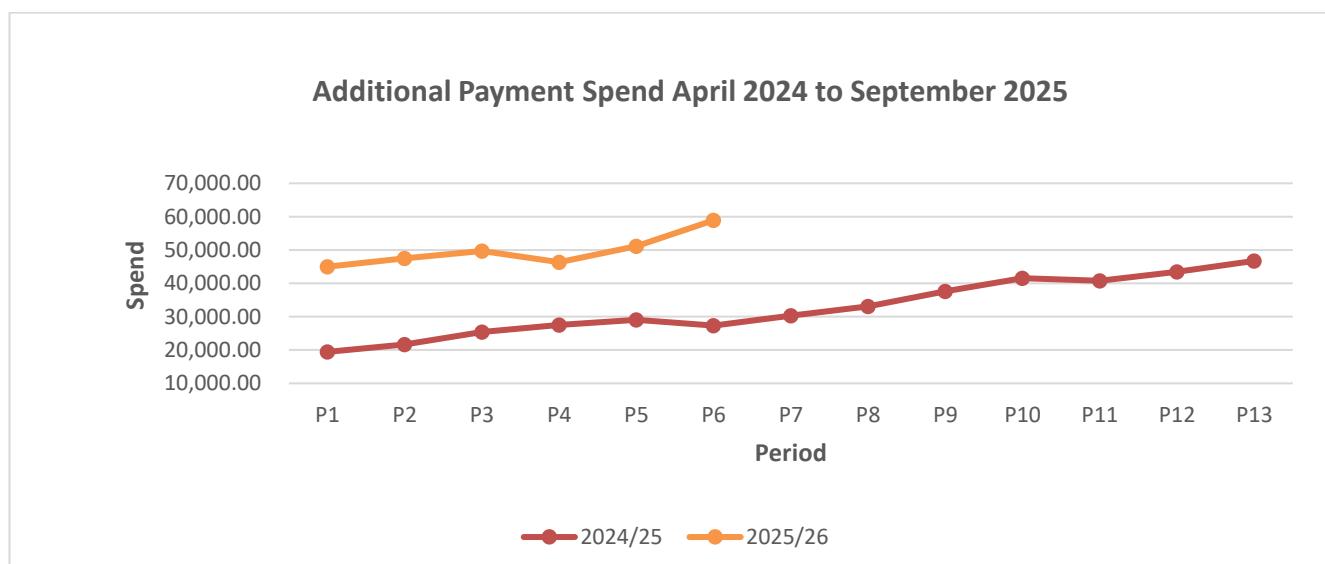
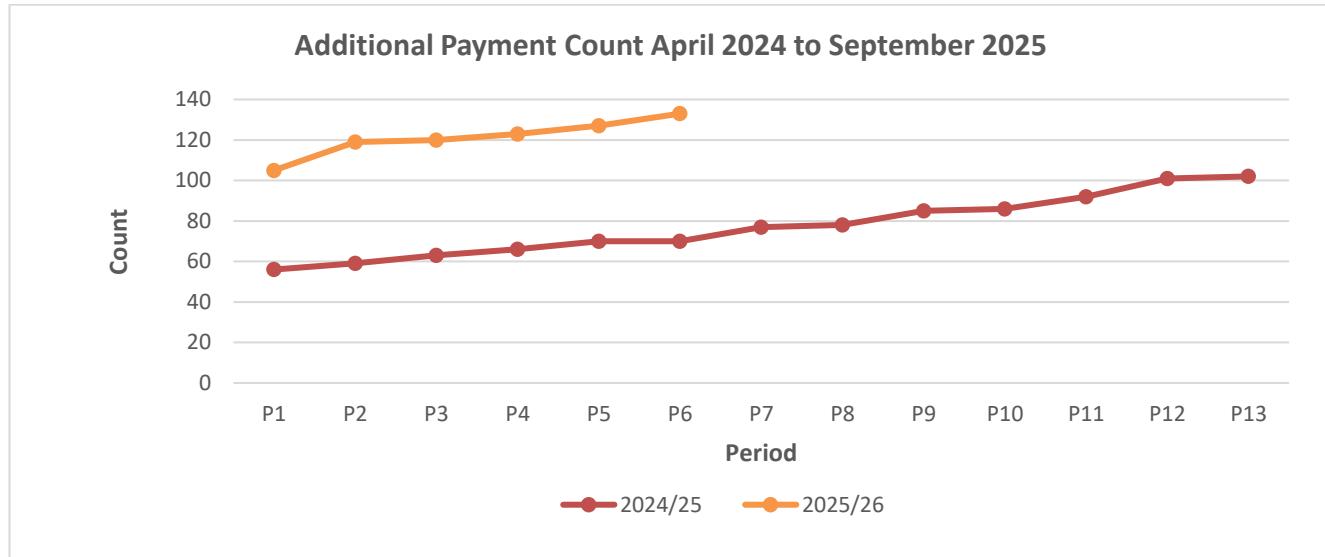
Care homes are being asked to provide monitoring reports as part of the review process to establish if there is a need for 1 to 1 care.



Additional Payments 2025/26

Additional payments to providers rose sharply throughout 2024/25, both in and out of the borough. These are where the care home charges an additional amount on top of the contracted bed rate. The cost of this for 2024/25 was £423,894.

The graphs below illustrate the count of service users with an additional payment by period. This clearly shows a steady increase in numbers and costs for 2025/26, the spend up to September is £298,913.80. If numbers and costs remain the same the forecast spend for the year will be approximately £711k. This is an increase of 17.5% from July where the estimate was £605k.



High Cost Packages

The number of permanent packages of care over £1k per week are tabled below:

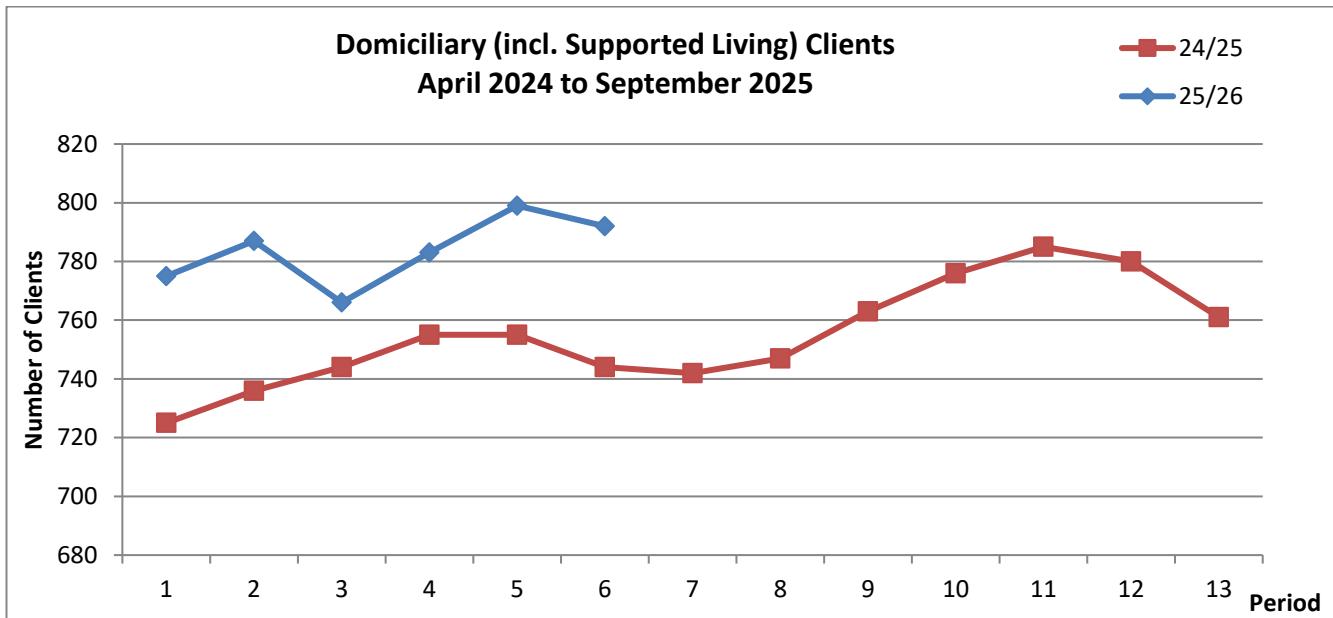
Weekly Cost £	No of Permanent PoCs					
	PERIOD 1	PERIOD 2	PERIOD 3	PERIOD 4	PERIOD 5	PERIOD 6
1000-1999	60	61	61	57	55	55
2000-2999	23	28	25	27	31	31
3000-3999	6	6	6	6	7	7
4000-4999	9	8	8	8	8	8
5000-5999	5	5	5	5	6	6
6000-6999	2	2	3	3	3	4
7000-7999			1	1	1	1
8000-8999	1	1	1			
>10,000						
Total	106	111	110	107	111	112
Over £1,000 Out of Borough	76	80	81	78	79	83
Over £1,000 Joint Funded	47	48	51	51	52	54

Since the beginning of the financial year the number of permanent packages over £1k has increased from 106 to 112. Out of borough placements over £1k has increased 9.2% from 76 to 83. Joint funded packages of care over £1k has increased 14.8% from 47 to 54. The weekly care charge has increased from £250k in April to £283k in September, an increase of 13.2%

Domiciliary Care & Supported Living

As at September there are 792 service users receiving a package of care at home, compared to the average in 2024/25 of 754, an increase of 5%. However compared with September 2024 the increase is 6.5%. The average cost of a package of care is currently £521.71 compared with the average of £450.64 in 2024/25 an increase of 15.7%.

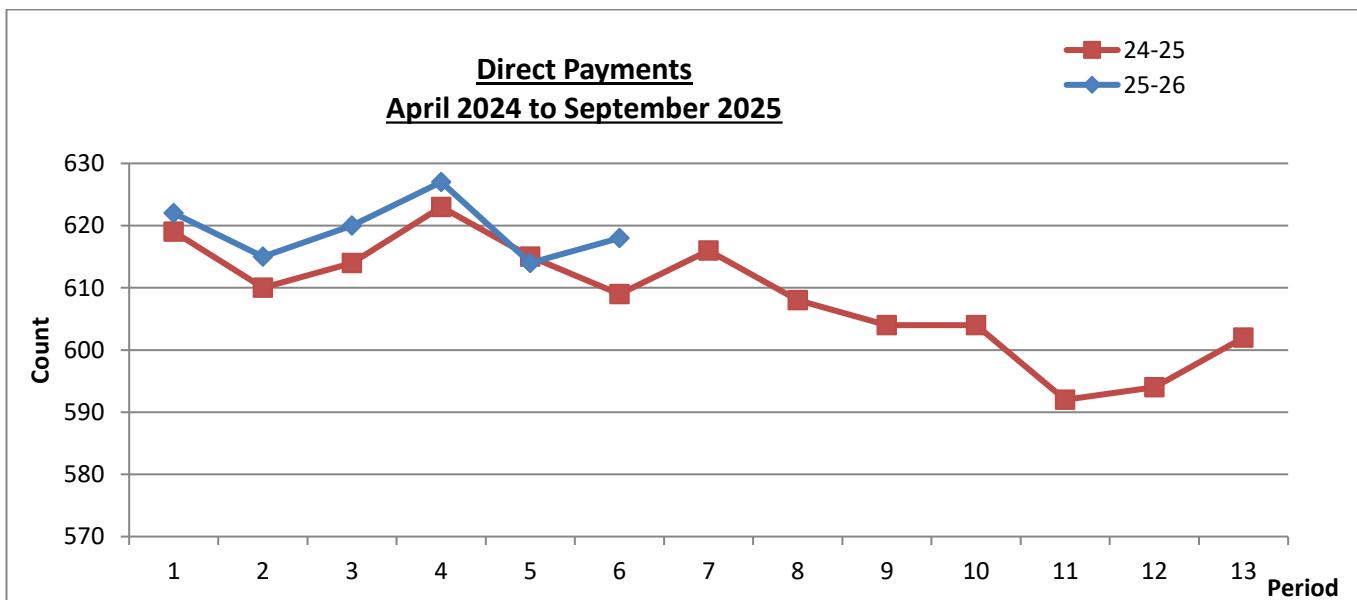
The graph below illustrates the demand for the service from April 2024 to September 2025.



Direct Payments

The average number of clients who received a Direct Payment (DP) in September was 618 compared with 622 in April, a small decrease. The average cost of a package of care has also decreased from £571.26 to £485.80, a reduction of 14.9%. The financial impact of this is a reduction in spend of approximately £200k per month.

The graph below shows movement throughout the year.



The Community Care budget as a whole is very volatile by nature as it is demand driven, with many influential factors. It will continue to be closely monitored and scrutinised in year to quantify pressures on the financial performance. The Community Care budget recovery group continues to meet regularly to identify savings and cost avoidance actions to try to mitigate some of the risk of overspend against this budget.

Care Homes DivisionRevenue Budget as at 30th September 2025

	Annual Budget £'000	Budget to Date £'000	Actual Spend £'000	Variance (Overspend) £'000	Forecast Outturn £'000
Expenditure					
Madeline Mckenna					
Employees	790	395	344	51	123
Agency - covering vacancies	0	0	43	(43)	(90)
Other Premises	90	42	36	6	5
Supplies & Services	26	10	11	(1)	2
Food Provison	51	21	28	(7)	(4)
Private Client and Out Of Borough Income	-127	-42	-42	0	6
Reimbursements & other Grant Income	-34	-17	-17	0	0
Total Madeline Mckenna Expenditure	796	409	403	6	42
Millbrow					
Employees	2,245	1,123	626	497	937
Agency - covering vacancies	0	0	534	(534)	(1,200)
Other Premises	117	53	71	(18)	(34)
Supplies & Services	72	32	29	3	16
Food Provison	81	34	41	(7)	(2)
Private Client and Out Of Borough Income	-13	-4	0	(4)	(9)
Reimbursements & other Grant Income	-685	-316	-320	4	(23)
Total Millbrow Expenditure	1,817	922	981	(59)	(315)
St Luke's					
Employees	4,093	2,046	1,203	843	1,958
Agency - covering vacancies	62	31	890	(859)	(2,100)
Other Premises	156	70	93	(23)	(54)
Supplies & Services	67	29	34	(5)	(8)
Food Provison	128	64	84	(20)	(34)
Private Client and Out Of Borough Income	-152	-58	-31	(27)	(9)
Reimbursements & other Grant Income	-1,546	-644	-657	13	79
Total St Luke's Expenditure	2,808	1,538	1,616	(78)	(168)
St Patrick's					
Employees	2,081	1,016	536	480	993
Agency - covering vacancies	0	0	583	(583)	(1,166)
Other Premises	144	54	66	(12)	0
Supplies & Services	67	30	35	(5)	8
Food Provison	127	64	57	7	12
Private Client and Out Of Borough Income	-99	-49	-5	(44)	(93)
Reimbursements & other Grant Income	-716	-330	-298	(32)	(39)
Total St Patrick's Expenditure	1,604	785	974	(189)	(285)
Care Homes Divison Management					
Employees	326	163	93	70	123
Care Home Divison Management	326	163	93	70	123
Net Operational Expenditure	7,351	3,817	4,067	(250)	(603)
Recharges					
Premises Support	65	32	32	0	0
Transport Support	0	0	0	0	0
Central Support	663	332	332	0	0
Asset Rental Support	0	0	0	0	0
Recharge Income	0	0	0	0	0
Net Total Recharges	728	364	364	0	0
Net Departmental Expenditure	8,079	4,181	4,431	(250)	(603)

Comments on the above figuresFinancial Position

The care home division is made up of the following cost centres, Divisional Management Care Homes, Madeline Mckenna, Millbrow, St Luke's and St Patrick's.

The spend for the first six months of the 2025/26 Financial Year to 30th September is £0.250M above profile, with an estimated spend above budget for the year of £0.603M. This primarily relates to unbudgeted agency staffing costs.

The projected outturn compares favourably to the previous report based on spend until the end of July, when a net overspend of £0.832M was projected for the full year. A number of residents who receive funding for 1:1 support have now had funding to the homes confirmed, and income has been received for the first 6 months of the financial year.

Supporting Information

Employee Related expenditure

Employee related expenditure is over budget profile at the end of September 2025 by £0.078M, with the expected outturn at the end of financial year being £0.422M over budget. Projections take into account agency spending patterns over the previous 3 financial years.

Recruitment of staff is a continued pressure across the care homes. There remains a high number of staff vacancies across the care homes. A proactive rolling recruitment exercise is ongoing within the care homes and is supported by HR.

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 September 2025 total agency spend across the care homes reached £2.050M, the cost of this has partially been offset by staff vacancies.

Premises Related Expenditure

Premises related expenditure is over budget profile at the end of September by £0.047M and is forecast as an estimated overspend at the end of the financial year 2025/26 of £0.083M.

Repairs and maintenance continue to be a budget pressure across all the care homes. The recruitment of a facilities manager would help to reduce these costs. Budget for this post has been made available but the recruitment to this position has so far been unsuccessful.

Income

Income Targets include those for privately funded residents, out of borough placements, and reimbursements from the ICB in respect Of Continuing Health Care, Funded Nursing Care, and Joint Funded placements. Income across all headings is currently projected to be under-achieved by £0.088M for the full year, although income can be volatile depending on the changing nature of resident's funding.

Approved 2025/26 Savings

Although there are no approved savings for the care home division in financial year 2025/26 increasing the occupancy rate of the care homes is part of the recovery plan for the community care budget. Maximising inhouse placements impacts directly on the community care budget helping to minimise costs incurred on externally commissioned residential & nursing placements. Occupancy on 29th September was 100% in Madeline Mckenna, St Lukes & St Pats with Millbrow less at 86

Risks/Opportunities

The demand for agency staff within the care homes has been significantly high for several years.

Currently agency staff are being used for a variety of different reasons, to cover vacant posts, maternity leave and sickness absence.

The forecasts for agency staff are continuously reviewed to account for fluctuations in demand, however, the difficulty in the recruitment of new staff and the inability to retain existing staff has resulted in continued reliance on agency staff. The expectation is that the use for agency staff will be an ongoing issue.

COMPLEX CARE POOL BUDGET

Revenue Budget as at 30th September 2025

	Annual Budget £'000	Budget to Date £'000	Actual Spend £'000	Variance (Overspend) £'000	Forecast Outturn £'000
Expenditure					
Intermediate Care Services	6,318	2,755	2,605	150	289
Oakmeadow	2,040	971	968	3	6
Community Home Care First	1,941	490	198	292	617
Joint Equipment Store	880	220	220	0	0
Contracts & SLA's	3,262	-28	-28	0	0
Inglenook	134	67	53	14	27
HICaFs	3,729	660	705	(45)	(124)
Carers Breaks	445	176	174	2	0
Carers centre	365	-15	-15	0	0
Residential Care	7,236	3,318	3,318	0	0
Domiciliary Care & Supported Living	4,336	2,168	2,168	0	0
Pathway 3/Discharge Access	426	183	183	0	0
HBC Contracts	72	43	43	0	0
Healthy at Home	28	-28	-28	0	0
Capacity	30	20	13	7	12
Total Expenditure	31,242	11,000	10,577	423	827
Income					
BCF	-15,032	-7,516	-7,516	0	0
CCG Contribution to Pool	-2,959	-1,480	-1,480	0	0
Oakmeadow Income	-2	0	0	0	0
Total Income	-17,993	-8,996	-8,996	0	0
ICB Contribution Share of Surplus	0	0	0	0	(414)
Net Operational Expenditure	13,249	2,004	1,581	423	413

Comments on the above figures:

The financial performance as at 30th September 2025 shows a significant underspend for the Complex Care Pool which is currently forecast to be the case through to the end of the financial year.

Intermediate Care Services is under budget to date by £0.150m, with an underperformance of £0.289m expected at the end of the financial year. This position is more favourable than Period 4 due to a reduction in spend on agency staff. However, the forecasts for unbudgeted spend on general computer supplies and services in Reablement has also been reduced following further analysis of the contracts.

Oakmeadow is currently under budget by £0.003m with an expected year end underperformance of £0.006m. This is due to a lower than anticipated expenditure on staffing, with spend on agency staff lower than expected for the first part of the year, but gradually increasing since period 5.

The overspend on HICaFS is primarily due to the use of agency staff to cover vacancies. In the previous financial year, this overspend was offset by the underperformance on the Warrington and Bridgewater HICaFS contracts. At present no contract spend information is available, therefore contracts are currently forecast to spend to target, however, any underperformance on the contracts in this financial year will reduce the budget pressure on this service.

Community Home Care First is currently indicating a £0.617m underperformance. The forecasts since period 4 have been revised to reflect actual spend to date and current contractual

agreements with providers. Costs have notably reduced, due to significantly lower payments to providers for agency staff cover. This is a demand led budget and spend can fluctuate throughout the year, however current forecasting adopts a prudent approach, including additional estimates for winter pressures. It is expected that spend for the year will be considerably lower than previous years for this service.

Inglenook is expected to be £0.027m under budget by the end of the financial year. At present there are two clients using the service, however one client is funded by Continuing Health Care, which minimises the expenditure on this budget.

Carer's Breaks is expected to spend in line with allocated budget, indicating a slight increase in spend since period 4 due to an increased uptake in this service.

Pathway 3 is currently forecast to spend to target at the end of the financial year, however, as this is a demand led budget it carries the risk that the spend will increase further, potentially resulting in a more unfavourable position.

There is a slight underspend on the Capacity contract for improving residential care. This is due to majority of the contract costs being incurred during 24/25, leaving a surplus of £0.012m in this financial year.

The forecast outturn for year end is currently showing a substantial underspend. However, in accordance with the section 75 agreement any unallocated underspends at year end will be shared between the partners. The Halton Borough Council allocation will be used to contribute towards the pressures within community care.

Pooled Budget Capital Projects as at 30 September 2025

Scheme Detail	205/26 Original Allocation £000	2025/26 Revised Allocation £000	Cumulative Spend to 30 Sept 2025 £000	Cumulative Forecast Spend to 30 Nov 2025 £000	Cumulative Forecast Spend to 31 Jan 2026 £000	Cumulative Forecast Spend to 31 March 2026 £000	Allocation remaining £000	2026/27 Forecast Allocation £000
Adults Directorate								
Grants - Disabled Facilities	2,200.0	2,000.0	318.0	1,300.0	1,600.0	2,000.0	0.0	700.0
Stair Lifts	400.0	650.0	268.0	400.0	500.0	650.0	0.0	700.0
Joint Funding RSL Adaptations	300.0	250.0	120.0	160.0	200.0	250.0	0.0	300.0
Madeline McKenna Residential Home	300.0	200.0	35.0	130.0	160.0	200.0	0.0	0.0
Millbrow Care Home	200.0	200.0	29.0	130.0	160.0	200.0	0.0	0.0
St Lukes	50.0	200.0	104.0	130.0	160.0	200.0	0.0	0.0
St Patricks	200.0	200.0	29.0	130.0	160.0	200.0	0.0	0.0
Care Home Refurbishment	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Telehealthcare Digital Switchover	135.0	135.0	0.0	0.0	135.0	135.0	0.0	0.0
Oakmeadow and Peelhouse Network Improvements	40.0	40.0	0.0	25.0	35.0	40.0	0.0	0.0
Crow Wood Lane Specialist Housing	250.0	250.0	0.0	160.0	200.0	250.0	0.0	0.0
Adults Directorate Total	4,075.0	4,125.0	903.0	2,565.0	3,310.0	4,125.0	0.0	1,700.0

Actual spend for Disabled Facilities Grants/Stair Lifts and RSL adaptations are marginally below the capital allocation overall. Minor adjustments to the capital allocations have been made from the original allocations to reflect spending patterns within the 3 schemes, although the total allocation across the 3 schemes remains unchanged.

The £400,000 Telehealthcare Digital Switchover scheme was approved by Executive Board on 15 July 2021. Significant capital investment is required to ensure a functional Telehealthcare IT system is in place prior to the switchoff of existing copper cable based systems. Procurement commenced in 2022/23 with an initial purchase to the value of £100,000. It is anticipated that the scheme will be completed in the current financial year, fully funded from the residual capital allocation of £135,000.

The Crow Wood Specialist Housing scheme represents a capital grant allocated to Halton Housing as a contribution to a new development at Crow Wood Lane in Widnes. The development consists of 10 one bed apartments, and three one bed bungalows, to be used solely for meeting the Borough's housing need. The grant was paid in full in October, and spend will be reflected in future reports.

Adult Social Care Commissioning have been working with Halton Housing to develop the service to be provided within the proposed accommodation to meet the Borough's identified needs. The use of accommodation and services provided will be governed by an agreement between the Council and Halton Housing. This is similar to existing arrangements in place in respect of Barkla Fields also managed by Halton Housing.

The scheme is designed to support reducing the need for out of Borough placements and also reduce voids within out-dated provision within the Borough.

On 16th June 2022 Executive Board approved a £4.2M refurbishment programme in respect of the four Council owned care homes, initially to be completed within a three year timescale. Spend to 31 March 2024 amounted to £0.947m, leaving available funding of £3.253M at the start of the current financial year.

At present, detailed costing proposals are in development, with further revisions to the capital allocations to be submitted at a later date. The 2025-26 capital allocations against each home therefore just reflect ongoing minor refurbishment costs. The allocations have been revised slightly since the originals to reflect projected spend across the 4 homes, although total funding across all 4 homes remains unchanged.

Adult Social Care**Revenue Operational Budget as at 30 September 2025**

	Annual Budget £'000	Budget to Date £'000	Actual Spend £'000	Variance (Overspend) £'000	Forecast Outturn £'000
Expenditure					
Employees	18,788	9,394	8,727	667	983
Agency- Covering Vacancies			906	(906)	(1,454)
Premises	498	290	251	39	78
Supplies & Services	698	465	568	(103)	(176)
Aids & Adaptations	37	18	21	(3)	6
Transport	341	170	166	4	9
Food & Drink Provisions	228	133	74	59	96
Supported Accommodation and Services	1,408	704	554	150	293
Emergency Duty Team	157	34	33	1	(7)
Transfer To Reserves	295	13	13	0	0
Contracts & SLAs	1,044	451	458	(7)	(2)
Housing Solutions Grant Funded Schemes					
Homelessness Prevention	548	250	224	26	0
Rough Sleepers Initiative	167	84	82	2	0
Trailblazer	75	38	38	0	0
Total Expenditure	24,284	12,044	12,115	(71)	(174)
Income					
Fees & Charges	-1,044	-435	-317	(118)	(253)
Sales & Rents Income	-538	-291	-286	(5)	(12)
Reimbursements & Grant Income	-2,182	-1,000	-852	(148)	(301)
Capital Salaries	-117	-58	-58	0	0
Housing Schemes Income	-783	-727	-727	0	0
Total Income	-4,664	-2,511	-2,240	(271)	(566)
Net Operational Expenditure	19,620	9,533	9,875	(342)	(740)
Recharges					
Premises Support	789	395	395	0	0
Transport	792	396	401	(5)	(11)
Central Support	4,039	2,020	2,020	0	0
Asset Rental Support	13	0	0	0	0
HBC Support Costs Income	-112	-56	-56	0	0
Net Total Recharges	5,521	2,755	2,760	-5	-11
Net Departmental Expenditure	25,141	12,288	12,635	(347)	(751)

Comments on the above figures

The above information relates to Adult Social Care, excluding Community Care and Care Homes.

Net Departmental Expenditure is currently £0.347m over budget profile at the end of the sixth period of the financial year. Current expenditure projections indicate an overspend for the full financial year in the region of £0.751m.

Comparison to previous year outturn and period 4 forecasted outturn

The outturn position for financial year 2024/25 was £0.545m over budget. Based on the estimated outturn position for 2025/26, there is an expectation that the estimated outturn overspend will be £0.206m higher than the last financial year.

The outturn position for period 4 was £0.698m over budget. Based on the estimated outturn position for period 6, there is an expectation that the estimated outturn overspend will be £0.053m higher than period 4.

Employee related spend

The projected full-year cost is above the annual budget by £0.471m. This a reduction of £0.235m from the projected full year over budget spend as at period 4.

Factors relating to the projected overspend include;

Unbudgeted agency costs are in respect of covering vacant posts, particularly in terms of front line Care Management and Mental Health Team posts. However, there has been a reduction in Agency staff use by 3 Agency staff members since June 2025, the reduction of use of these Agency staff members has been reflected in the forecasted spend until the end of the financial year. Agency spend across the division as a whole at the end of September 2025 stood at £0.906m, with a full year spend of £1.454m projected. This is partially offset by a forecasted underspend on the staffing budget of £0.983m.

During previous agreed savings, the budget for Care Arrangers posts was removed. This has not been addressed within the staffing, resulting in a projected unbudgeted spend of £0.096m during 2025/26 financial year.

Within period 4 reports, it was reported of an unbudgeted Market Supplement which has been awarded to social workers across the division. To assist with easing budgetary pressures, the budget to cover the market supplement has been provided on a temporary basis, initially for 12 months, resulting in an increase in budget of £0.391m. This increased budget is reflected within the figures above and has assisted in the reduction of the full-year forecasted over budget spend between this report and the report from period 4.

Supplies and Services related spend

The projected £0.176m forecasted full-year spend above budget relates to an increased volume of caseload in respect to Deprivation of Liberty Standards (DoLs) assessments. Spend to September 2025 was £0.097m, with a total spend for financial year forecast at £0.233m.

Transport related spend

The transport and transport recharge budgets were substantially increased for 2025/26 financial year. Due to this, the forecasted spend is broadly to budget.

Housing Strategy related spend

Housing strategy initiatives included within the report include the Rough Sleeping Initiative and the Homelessness Prevention Scheme. The Homelessness Prevention Scheme is an amalgamation of the previous Flexible Homelessness Support and Homelessness Reduction Schemes, and is wholly grant funded. It is assumed that unspent funding is carried forward to the following financial year.

Income

Income for the Department as a whole is under the budgeted income target by £0.271m with a projected under achieved target at the end of the financial year being £0.566m. The main areas making up the under achievement of target income are Community Meals, Telehealthcare and Transport. Within the projected income figures for the remainder of the financial year is a further reduction of income for Community Meals in the run up to the end of the service in March 2026. There has been a drop in forecast income for the Supported Housing Network, funding of a significant care package through to the end of the year will no longer materialise.

2025/26 Savings

Savings targets including in the budgets for Positive Behaviour Service of £0.250m and Telehealthcare of £0.280m are unlikely to be achieved.

Progress against 2025/26 approved savings for the Adult Social Care Directorate are included at Appendix A.

2025/26 Adult Social Care Directorate Savings

Appendix A

Service Area	Net Budget £'000	Description of Saving Proposal	Savings Value		Current Progress	Comments
			25/26 Agreed Council 01 February 2023 £'000	25/26 Agreed Council 05 March 2025 £'000		
Housing Solutions	474	Remodel the current service based on good practice evidence from other areas.	125	0	u	Currently Under Review
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.	100	0	✓	Achieved
Community Wardens/Telecare Service		Community Wardens/Telecare Service – a review will be undertaken of the various options available for the future delivery of these services, with support from the Transformation Delivery Unit.	0	280	x	Unlikely to be achieved – currently forecast overspend position

Care Management Community Care Budget		Community Care – continuation of the work being undertaken to review care provided through the Community Care budget, in order to reduce the current overspend and ongoing costs.	0	1,000	x	Unlikely to be achieved – currently forecast overspend position
Various		Review of Service Delivery Options – reviews will be undertaken of the various service delivery options available for a number of areas including; Day Services, Halton Supported Housing Network, In-House Care Homes, Reablement Service and Oak Meadow.	0	375	u	Currently Under Review
Total ASC Directorate			225	1,655		

PUBLIC HEALTH & PUBLIC PROTECTION DEPARTMENT**Revenue Budget as at 30 September 2025**

	Annual Budget	Budget to Date	Actual Spend	Variance (Overspend)	Forecast Outturn
	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
Expenditure					
Employees	5,692	2,654	2,471	183	365
Other Premises	6	3	0	3	6
Supplies & Services	375	89	198	(109)	(219)
Contracts	6,917	2,833	2,920	(87)	0
SLA's	488	60	45	15	21
Transport	4	2	1	1	0
Transfer to Reserves	550	0	0	0	(150)
Grants to Voluntary Organisations	20	0	0	0	0
Other Agency	24	24	24	0	0
Total Expenditure	14,076	5,665	5,659	6	23
Income					
Fees & Charges	-122	-75	-68	(7)	(14)
Reimbursements & Grant Income	-203	-229	-243	14	27
Transfer from Reserves	-428	-357	-357	0	13
Government Grant Income	-12,923	-6,666	-6,672	6	0
Total Income	-13,676	-7,327	-7,340	13	26
Net Operational Expenditure	400	-1,662	-1,681	19	49
Recharges					
Premises Support	209	104	104	0	0
Transport Support	24	12	13	(1)	(2)
Central Support	1,937	988	988	0	0
Asset Rental Support	0	0	0	0	0
Recharge Income	-669	-335	-335	0	0
Net Total Recharges	1,501	769	770	(1)	(2)
Net Departmental Expenditure	1,901	-893	-911	18	47

Comments on the above figures**Financial Position**

The current financial position shows the net spend for the department is £0.018m under the budget profile. The estimated department outturn position excluding the ring fenced public health grant for 2025/26 is £0.047m net spend under available budget.

Employee costs are expected to be £0.365m under budget profile. This is due to a number of vacancies and some reduced hours within the main Public Health department and the Health Improvement Team.

Budget pressures to be aware of are supplies and services which are currently forecasting a £0.219m overspend and contracts are currently forecast to balance to budget, however, there are a number of contracts which are due for renewal and in the current financial climate are likely to increase significantly. Also £0.254m has been used from Public Health grant reserves to balance the current year budget. This leaves a forecast balance of £1.147m in the Public Health grant reserve, excluding any underspend from current year.

The department is proactive and work is currently being done to identify any areas where savings can be made as the use of reserves from previous years will not be available to balance future budgets.

APPENDIX 2 – Explanation of Symbols

Symbols are used in the following manner:

Progress		Objective	Performance Indicator
Green		Indicates that the <u>objective is on course to be achieved</u> within the appropriate timeframe.	<i>Indicates that the annual target is on course to be achieved.</i>
Amber		Indicates that it is <u>uncertain or too early to say at this stage</u> , whether the milestone/objective will be achieved within the appropriate timeframe.	<i>Indicates that it is <u>uncertain or too early to say at this stage</u> whether the annual target is on course to be achieved.</i>
Red		Indicates that it is <u>highly likely or certain</u> that the objective will not be achieved within the appropriate timeframe.	<i>Indicates that the target <u>will not be achieved</u> unless there is an intervention or remedial action taken.</i>

Direction of Travel Indicator

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

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

Directorate Overview Report Children's Services

Directorate: Children's Services

Departments: Children Social Care and Early Help, Education

Period: Quarter 1 – 1st July 2025 – 30th September 2025

1.0 Introduction

This quarterly monitoring report covers the **Children's Services Directorate's** second quarter period up to 30 September 2025.

It describes commentary and progress against 'key' milestones for the service in line with the Halton children and young people's plan.

2.0 Data Quality Statement

The author provides assurance that the information contained within this report is accurate and valid and that every effort has been made to avoid the omission of data.

Where data has been estimated, it has been sourced directly from partner or other agencies, or where there are any concerns regarding the limitations of its use, this has been clearly annotated.

3.0 Appendices

Appendix 1: Progress Against Objectives / Milestones

Appendix 2: Explanation of Symbols

Appendix 3: Progress Against Performance Indicators

Appendix 4: Financial Statement

Appendix 1: Progress Against Objectives / Milestones



Corporate Priority	Priority 1 – Improving Health, Promoting Wellbeing and Supporting Greater Independence. Priority 3 – Supporting Children, Young People and Families Priority 4 – Tackling inequality and helping those who are in most need
CYP P1	Safely reduce the number of children needing to be looked after by the Local Authority and improve safeguarding.

Milestone		Progress Q2	Supporting Commentary
P1.1	Increase in the number of families accessing support through the Family Hub on a quarterly basis (Source – Early Help)		In Q2 2025/26 Family Hub Attendances increased to 12128 - a 2% increase on the previous quarter. Q2 0225/26 individuals attending a Family Hub rose by 23.5% to 3940 individuals in the quarter. This would suggest that reach is also improving 'Fun Days' and the summer activity programme in August 2025 may account for some of the increase, but there is a steady increase in people using the Hubs month on month. Strong partnership work, outreach and community engagement would account for this continued increase and that the Hubs are now well embedded in the community
P1.2	Increase the number of successful Public Law Outline/Pre-proceedings outcomes i.e. prevent Children entering care (Source – Children in Need and Child Protection)		During Q2 2025/26, Pre-Proceedings ceased for 22 children. Of these, 55% (12 children) concluded with an outcome to issue care proceedings, whilst 45% (10 children) stepped down to continue receiving support through Child Protection planning. This represents an increase in the proportion of successful step downs compared to Q1 2025/26, where only 35% stepped down. At the end of Q2 2025/26, there were 15 children with ongoing Pre-Proceedings.
P1.3	Decrease the number of Children in Care (CIC) on a quarterly basis (Source – Children in Care)		Halton have an improved emphasis on achieving permanency for our children and young people by way of discharging care orders where appropriate, ensuring stable and lasting arrangements that support their long-term wellbeing. It's fair to say we have a journey ahead of us, and achieving permanency for our children and young people remains a key area of focus. Halton are committed to continuous improvement, ensuring that every decision supports long-term stability, belonging, and wellbeing.

			<p>The Permanency Panel serves as a key mechanism for reviewing the care plans of our children and young people. Through this process, each child's individual permanency pathway is considered, and timescales are agreed that reflect their unique needs and circumstances. The panel ensures that planning remains focused, timely, and aligned with our commitment to securing stable, long-term outcomes.</p> <p>At the end of September 2025 384 children in care, which is an increase on the number at the end of March 2025. This is as a result of an increase in entrants to care and a reduction in the number exiting care. Analysis is undertaken quarterly on entrants to care to understand the rationale. Development of the Edge of Care service, launched in June 2025, has already seen some positive impact with less children entering residential provision as a result of the intensive support.</p> <p>25 children were discharged from care in Q2 2025/26.</p>
P1.4	<p>Increase the number of partner led Multi Agency Plans (MAPS) (Source – Early Help)</p>		<p>We have completed a further two MAP training sessions in September 2025 aimed at external settings. 22 practitioners attended the training.</p> <p>Virtual School has secured funding for six Education Support Practitioners on fixed term contracts. The posts will support education settings in building their confidence around Eclipse and the MAP process. The workers will link in with the Locality Teams for support and guidance and then work with named schools across the Borough with MAP cases that are identified from Integrated Contact and Referral Team (ICART). The focus will be attendance and educational neglect. The workers will be able to support external users in ensuring any data in Eclipse is being recorded correctly, which will support our performance data. Workers will be MAP trained and this will support any MAP training offered via the partnership.</p> <p>A task was recently undertaken to complete a data tidy up of external MAPS to ensure the data we have on external MAPS is correct. This entailed closing down historical forms, completing forms that were showing as incomplete and adding closure forms to cases where this was required. There are currently 32 open MAPS to external settings. However, the report is not currently showing MAPS open to nurseries or pre-schools. Work is being undertaken to ensure these setting are captured in future.</p>

		Feedback and discussions with external stakeholders indicate a positive shift in the culture surrounding the MAP process. External settings are increasingly receptive when a case is screened and a MAP is identified as necessary, and they are more willing to initiate the process.
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Corporate Priority	Priority 1 – Improving Health, Promoting Wellbeing and Supporting Greater Independence. Priority 3 – Supporting Children, Young People and Families Priority 4 – Tackling inequality and helping those who are in most need		
CYP P2	Improve the stability of care placements.		
Milestone	Progress Q2	Supporting Commentary	
P2.1	<p>Reduce the number of Children in Care (CIC) who moved between placements (Source – Children in Care)</p>		<p>We have implemented a new stability meeting process with external providers. The new process ensures that through the service contracts notice cannot be provided unless a stability meeting has been requested. For some of our children this process may not be appropriate for example where there is risk to or from others in the provision. stability meetings proactively consider each child's individual circumstances and support needs. By identifying risks early and coordinating timely interventions, these meetings play a vital role in reducing placement breakdowns and promoting continuity of care.</p> <p>Placement stability has improved with 10.4% of children in care experiencing 3+ placements in the last 12 months. Joint working between commissioning placements service and social care to improve the quality of referrals which in turn will improve matching of placements and support placement stability.</p>
P2.2	<p>Reduce the number of Children in Care who are/were placed in out of Borough in residential care (Source – Children in Care)</p>		<p>The newly established Medium Cost Placement Panel and High-Cost Placement Panel provides a structured forum to review the placements of children and young people, assessing whether current arrangements are meeting their needs and remain the right plan. It also offers a space for</p>

			<p>scrutiny and constructive challenge, particularly where alternative provision may be more appropriate to ensure better outcomes.</p> <p>At the end of September 2025, 52 children are placed out of borough in Children's Homes.</p> <p>Work is progressing in relation to the future provision set out in our Sufficiency Strategy which will support improvement in this measure to bring some of our children back into Halton in our own provision. One home is awaiting registration from Ofsted.</p>
P2.3	Reduce the costs of out of borough residential placement placements (Source – Placements)	U	<p>We recently held a Halton Residential and Supported Accommodation Providers Event whereby plans to work more effectively together to unlock the beds within Halton, and place more effectively within our own borough were progressed. The group will meet quarterly to progress further.</p> <p>A High-Cost Placement Panel is in place to review and evaluate all placements, which captures all OOB residential placements. Through this panel, placement costs are scrutinised, and plans are put in place to assess the outcomes for children, balanced with their needs, the success of the placement in meeting these and the benefits of those children being brought back into borough. A similar exercise is completed for Supported Accommodation placements, and meetings are arranged for the Placements Team and Social Worker to review.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Residential Cost Avoidance - TBC as finance need time to calculate the projections of the reductions and we don't have the figures. <p>Supported Accommodation Cost Avoidance - £815,412.</p> <p>Finance reports continue to demonstrate a downward trajectory in the placement costs, this has been achieved through work with contracts and placement team, more rigorous challenge to providers, edge of care and downward trajectory of children entering care.</p> <p>Residential placements costs forecast for end of year is £27,725,00 at end of August 2025, which is reduced from the forecast at the end of April (£28,400,096) but remains above budget of £27,517,210.</p>

P2.4	Reduce the number of Children in Care (CIC) who are placed in independent fostering agencies (Source – Children in Carel)	U	<p>Internal fostering searches are undertaken for all children requiring a foster placement, ensuring we maximise the use of our in-house resources. Increasingly, we are exploring creative placement solutions with our existing foster carers, including the use of exemptions and temporary approvals where appropriate. This approach supports continuity of care and enables more flexible responses to the individual needs of children and young people.</p> <p>Greater emphasis is now placed on convening family network meetings to explore the potential of family and connected persons as the first option for care and support. This approach strengthens early planning and promotes stability by identifying safe, familiar alternatives that align with the child's best interests.</p> <p>The sufficiency issue of foster placements is a national issue & Halton as with other LA's have been unable to recruit to demand.</p> <p>It must be noted that in order to reduce the cost of residential provision and increase our cared for children's ability to live within family environments. It is therefore expected that the IFA placements will increase.</p> <p>120 children are placed in foster placements with providers other than our fostering service at the end of September. We continue to work with Foster4 to increase our inhouse capacity.</p>
P2.5	Reduce the costs of out of borough independent foster placements (Source – Children in Care)	U	<p>There is a drive to recruit and retain more in-house foster carers to reduce reliance on external agencies, this is both internally within the Local Authority and with Foster4.</p> <p>Independent Fostering Agency costs forecast for end of year is £6,713,000 which has increased from the forecast in April (£5,056,476) and is above the budget of £5,469,050.</p> <p>It should be noted that as spend on residential decreases that spend on IFA is likely to increase (to a lesser extent) as we move children from residential to IFA placements.</p> <p>Resource Panel has scrutiny of externally commissioned placements and will closely monitor additional placement costs which may be agreed for individual children outside of the framework agreed rates.</p>
P2.6	Increase the number of Halton Foster Carers and kinship carers (Source – Children in Carel)	U	<p>A representative from the Fostering Service now attends legal advice meetings to facilitate early conversations around family and connected</p>

		<p>carers. This proactive involvement supports the timely identification of potential carers and enables early initiation of Regulation 24 assessments where appropriate. Alongside this, we are increasing the use of family network meetings to explore safe and sustainable care options within the child's extended network, promoting stability and reducing reliance on external placements.</p> <p>At the end of September 2025, 52 of our children in care are placed with relatives or friends in kinship arrangements and 73 are placed with Halton foster carers. This is similar position to the end of March 2025 (54 kinship placements, 70 with Halton foster carers).</p>
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Corporate Priority		Priority 1 – Improving Health, Promoting Wellbeing and Supporting Greater Independence. Priority 3 – Supporting Children, Young People and Families Priority 4 – Tackling inequality and helping those who are in most need	
CYP P3		Improve SEND provision	
Milestone		Progress Q2	Supporting Commentary
P3.1	Increase the % of Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCP) completed within 20 weeks (academic year cumulative to end of quarter) (Source – SEND)	U	Q2 2025/26 position 57.5% (in-line with SEN2 2025 position and ahead of national position at that point). Open assessments at this stage indicate good timeliness, but this will depend upon team capacity moving forwards.
P3.2	Increase the % of Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCP) Annual reviews that are carried out within 12 months. (Source – SEND)	✓	Q2 2025/26 position 67.2% - Much improved position from previous quarter and looking at regional and national available data this is well ahead of benchmarking averages
P3.3	Decrease the proportion of children subject to an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) placed in independent and out of borough provisions (Source – Commissioning)	✓	Plans to develop High Needs Units have developed significantly and Expressions of Interest Applications have been distributed to Mainstream Schools to coproduce and fund Additional Resource Provisions (ARP's) which will significantly reduce the need for independent and out of

P3.4	Decrease the spending on independent and out-of-borough (OOB) provision for Special Educational Needs and Disability Children (SEND) (Source – Commissioning)		<p>borough provisions. The volume of which is not yet known until after the closing date of applications, however, interest and enthusiasm is high.</p> <p>A dedicated Quality Assurance and Education and health care plan Reviewing Officer post has been recruited to in September 2025 to focus on these placements with a view to assess and evaluate the whole cohort. Evaluation data will be presented via the Vulnerable Learners Board. Q2 2025/26 position at 7.8% - Difficult to say what direction this will go in quarter-by-quarter as it is dependent upon the needs of the children for whom plans are being created or amended</p>
P3.5	Speech and Language Therapy (SaLT) – Increase the number of assessments done within four weeks of referral receipt (unless assessment to be undertaken within setting/school) (Source – Commissioning)		<p>The Local Authority and the Integrated Care Board continue to work with the provider to improve across all aspects of the service, and the service has been realigned in terms of their priorities. The contract with the current provider is ending in October 2025 and we will be moving to a new model, therefore the current provider is working on a waiting list initiative to aid with the transition. The local authority has commissioned additional resources in five independent providers to support Education Health Care Plans-related work with children with speech, language and communication difficulties and Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD) need. These providers have been allocated 544 young people, which is 48% of children on Education and Health and Care Plan (for speech and language). They are undertaking assessments and carrying out direct work where appropriate 57% of these assessments have been completed.</p>
P3.6	Speech and Language Therapy (SaLT) Increase the number where treatment commenced within 12 weeks of referral receipt (Source – Commissioning)		<p>The Local Authority and the Integrated Care Board continue to work with the provider to improve across all aspects of the service, and the service has been realigned in terms of their priorities. The contract with the current provider is ending in October 2025 and we will be moving to a new model, therefore the current provider is working on a waiting list initiative to aid with the transition. The local authority has commissioned additional resources in five independent providers to support Education Health Care Plans-related work with children with speech, language and communication difficulties and Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD) need. These providers have been allocated 544 young people, which is 48% of children on Education and Health and Care Plan (for speech and language). They are undertaking assessments and carrying out direct work where appropriate 57% of these assessments have been completed.</p>

Corporate Priority	Priority 1 – Improving Health, Promoting Wellbeing and Supporting Greater Independence. Priority 3 – Supporting Children, Young People and Families Priority 4 – Tackling inequality and helping those who are in most need
CYP P4	Increase number of children attending schools graded good or outstanding and improve attainment outcomes at all Key Stages.

Milestone		Progress Q2	Supporting Commentary
P4.1	Increase the % of Early Years settings (pre-schools, day care, out of school clubs, childminders) with overall effectiveness of Good or Outstanding (snapshot end of quarter). (Source – Early Years)	U	There has been no change since Q1 2025/26, Halton State-funded Nursery Schools maintain 100% good or outstanding and 99% (an increase of 1% from the same time last year) of all Early Years settings (pre-schools, day care, out of school clubs, childminders) were good, outstanding or met. Currently one childminder has a requires improvement judgement.
P4.2	Increase the % of schools and settings with overall effectiveness of Good or Outstanding: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Primary Schools• Secondary (Source – Education)	✓	<p>Primary: Year-end position for 2024-25 academic year in Q2 had 86% of primary schools good or outstanding in all areas, however of the 14 inspections of primary schools carried out in 2024-25, 100% were graded good or outstanding in all inspection areas, and 100% of ungraded inspections were classed as either standards being maintained or improving significantly.</p> <p>Secondary: Year-end position for 2024-25 academic year in Q2 had 71% of secondary schools good or outstanding in all areas, however of the two secondary schools inspected in 2024-25, one school moved to good or outstanding in all inspection areas and the other moved to good or outstanding in all but one inspection area.</p>

Corporate Priority	Priority 1 – Improving Health, Promoting Wellbeing and Supporting Greater Independence. Priority 3 – Supporting Children, Young People and Families Priority 4 – Tackling inequality and helping those who are in most need	
CYP P5	Improve pastoral and behaviour support and reduce the need for children to be excluded.	
Milestone		Progress Q2
P5.1 Reduce the number of incidents of School Suspensions (academic year cumulative to end of quarter) (Source – Education Welfare)		
P5.2 Reduce the number of children subject to School suspensions (academic year cumulative to end of quarter) (Source – Education Welfare)		
P5.3 Reduce the number of permanent exclusions (academic year cumulative to end of quarter) (Source – Education Welfare)		
P5.4 Increase the % of early Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCP) reviews for SEND Children subject to school exclusion (Source – SEND)		
Corporate Priority	Priority 1 – Improving Health, Promoting Wellbeing and Supporting Greater Independence. Priority 3 – Supporting Children, Young People and Families Priority 4 – Tackling inequality and helping those who are in most need	
CYP P6	Improve attendance at school, college and in Early Years settings including sufficiency of places.	

Milestone	Progress Q2	Supporting Commentary
<p>P6.1 Child Care Expansion roll out - Increase the number of eligible working parents who access childcare support:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> From April 2024, eligible working parents of 2-year-olds who access 15 hours childcare support. From September 2024, eligible working parents of children from the age of nine months to 3-year-olds who access 15 hours childcare support <p>(Source – Early Years)</p>	U	<p>Uptake data remains unchanged from Q1 2025/06. Data is based on the termly headcount. The Autumn term headcount has not yet been finalised; this is due to be completed by 10th October 2025. Therefore, the current data continues to reflect the May 2025 headcount.</p> <p>The expansion to 30 hours of funded childcare for eligible children of working parents came into effect in September 2025. Any changes in the uptake of places due to the expansion will be reflected in the next quarter's data.</p> <p>At May 2025 headcount, 507 2-Year-olds of working parents accessed funded hours. This compares to a figure of 503 at the same point last year (May 2024 headcount).</p> <p>At May 2025 headcount, 551 under 2-year-olds of working parents accessed funding hours, compared to 513 at the same point last year (May 2024 headcount)</p>
<p>P6.2 Increase number of eligible children for the vulnerable 2- year-old funding accessing Early Years (EY) provision (internally collected termly information – may not match to published data from census)</p> <p>(Source – Early Years)</p>	U	<p>Uptake data remains unchanged from Q1 2025/26. Data is based on the termly headcount. The Autumn term headcount has not yet been finalised; this is due to be completed by 10/10/2025. Therefore, the current data continues to reflect the May 2025 headcount.</p> <p>From April 2025, the process for accessing funding for disadvantaged two-year-olds was strengthened to reach more families who have not yet engaged with the offer. Any parents identified on the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) list who had not yet generated their funding code can now contacted by the Family Hub team to offer support.</p> <p>Between April and August 2025, 112 families were contacted through this approach.</p> <p>At May headcount 2025, 303 children eligible for the disadvantaged 2-Year-old funding accessed their funded hours. 381 families were identified in April 2025 on the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) list as</p>

			eligible for funding. The percentage of eligible 2-year-olds accessing a place is % compared to 77% Q4 2024/25.
P6.3	Increase the % taking up of Early Years Entitlement for 3- to 4-year-olds. (Source – Early Years)	U	Uptake data remains unchanged from Q1 2025/26 as it is based on the termly headcount. The Autumn term 2025 headcount has not yet been finalised; this is due to be completed by 10/10/2025. There the current data continues to reflect the May 2025 headcount. At May headcount 1913 children accessed 3 & 4-year-old Funded Early Years Entitlement. 89% take up out of 2170 are accessing 3 & 4-Year-old Funded Early Years Entitlement in Halton.
P6.4	Increased attendance at schools: a) Primary b) Pupil Referral Unit (PRU) c) Secondary d) Special (Source – Education Welfare)	U	The attendance at the end of the last academic year (July 2025) was: a) Primary attendance has dropped from Q1 at 94.8% to 94.5% in Q2 b) PRU attendance has risen from 43% in Q2 to 45.1% in Q2 c) Secondary attendance has dropped from 90% in Q1 to 89.3% in Q2 d) Special school attendance has slightly decreased from 87.9% in Q1 to 87.5% in Q2 This is a reduction in attendance in September 2025 compared to Q2 September 2024 which was: - a) 95.58% in 2024 compared to 94.5% in September 2025 c) 92.52% in 2024 compared to 89.3% in September 2025 d) 91.50% in 2024 compared to 87.5% in September 2025
P6.5	Reduce the number of children who are Electively Home Educated (EHE) including those open to Children in Need or Children Subject to a Child Protection Plan (CPP) a) Children in need (CIN) b) Children subject to a child protection plan (CP) c) Children with special educational needs or disability (SEND) (Source – Education)	U	The current number of EHE pupils is 257, which is higher than the figure in Q2 2024/25 last year of 207. It is lower than the figure at the end of July 2025, however 20% of those pupils were Year 11. a) 7 b) 3 c) 12 have an EHCP, one is undergoing statutory assessment and 85 are recorded as SEN Support

P6.6	<p>Reduce the number of children who are missing education.</p> <p>a) Children in need (CIN) b) Children subject to a child protection plan (CP) c) Children with special educational needs or disability (SEND)</p> <p>(Source – Education)</p>		<p>The number of children on the tracking list as of end 2025 is 22, a decrease from the previous quarter of 54.</p> <p>There are however three confirmed CME cases, two of which are SEN Support.</p> <p>Of the 22 CME tracking pupils there are:</p> <p>a) 2 CIN b) 2 CPP c) 4 SEN Support pupils</p>
P6.7	<p>Reduce the number of children Not in Receipt of Full-time education (NIROFTI)</p> <p>a) Children in need (CIN) b) Children subject to a child protection plan (CP) c) Children with special educational needs or disability (SEND)</p> <p>(Source – Education)</p>		<p>There are currently 48 pupils on a part-time timetable, with 14 in year 11. In comparison to 61 pupils in the Q1 2025/26 report.</p> <p>a) 2 b) 2 c) 11 have an EHCP, four are undergoing statutory assessment and 19 are recorded as SEN Support</p>
P6.8	<p>Reduce the number of children accessing alternative provision (Bridge School) or educated other than at school.</p> <p>a) Children in need (CIN) b) Children subject to a child protection plan (CP) c) Children with special educational needs or disability (SEND)</p> <p>(Source – Education)</p>		<p>The current number of pupils attending The Bridge School is 81, which is lower than the figure of 93 pupils at the end of July 2025, due to the majority of pupils being in year 11.</p> <p>a) 13 b) 2 c) 7 have an EHCP, one is undergoing statutory assessment and 65 are recorded as SEN Support</p> <p>The current number of pupils recorded as Education other than at school (EOTAS) is 24. This is lower than the 29 at the end of July 25 and the 38 at the end of Q1 2025/26.</p> <p>a) 2 b) 0 c) 21 have an EHCP, three are undergoing statutory assessment and one is recorded as SEN Support</p>

Corporate Priority	Priority 1 – Improving Health, Promoting Wellbeing and Supporting Greater Independence. Priority 3 – Supporting Children, Young People and Families Priority 4 – Tackling inequality and helping those who are in most need
CYP P07	Improve professional practice including the quality of children and families' social work.

Milestone		Progress Q2	Supporting commentary																									
P7.1	Increase the number of audits grades as good in the sub section 'Identifying & Responding to Need, Abuse & Thresholds' (Source – Audit)	U	During Q2 2025/26 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 12.5% Early help were graded Outstanding 25% were graded Good 7% of help and protect were graded 'Good' 																									
P7.2	Increase the number of audits grades as good in the sub section 'Providing Effective Help' (Source – Audit)	U	During Q2 2025/26 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 37.5% Early Help were graded Good or above (Down) 14% of help and protect were graded 'Good' (Down) 29% Children in Care were graded 'Good' (static) 30% Care Leavers were graded 'Good' (down) 																									
P7.3	Increase the number of children who benefit from management oversight and supervision graded 'good' through the audit sub section 'Making Good Decisions & Management Oversight.' (Source – Audit)	U	During Q2 2025/26 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 12.5% Early help were graded Outstanding 25% were graded Good 7% of help and protect were graded 'Good' 																									
P7.4	Increase the number of children's casefiles receiving an overall grade of 'Good' through the audit process (Source – Lynette Lofthouse)	U	<table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th rowspan="2">Grade</th> <th colspan="4">Early Help</th> </tr> <tr> <th>Q4</th> <th>Q1</th> <th>Q2</th> <th>Trajectory</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Good</td> <td>80%</td> <td>71%</td> <td>37.5%</td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>RI</td> <td>20%</td> <td>29%</td> <td>62.5%</td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>IA</td> <td>0%</td> <td>0%</td> <td>0%</td> <td></td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Grade	Early Help				Q4	Q1	Q2	Trajectory	Good	80%	71%	37.5%		RI	20%	29%	62.5%		IA	0%	0%	0%		
Grade	Early Help																											
	Q4	Q1	Q2	Trajectory																								
Good	80%	71%	37.5%																									
RI	20%	29%	62.5%																									
IA	0%	0%	0%																									

Grade	Help & protect			
	Q4	Q1	Q2	Trajectory
Good	14%	15%	3.5%	⬇️
RI	48%	70%	86%	⬆️
IA	38%	15%	10%	⬇️

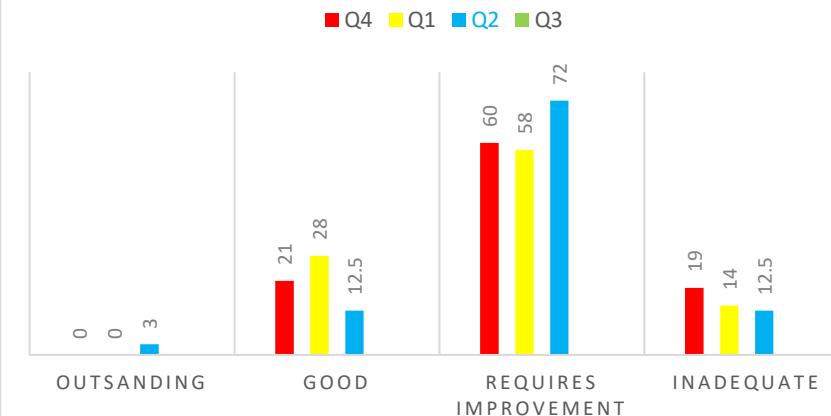
Grade	Children in Care			
	Q4	Q1	Q2	Trajectory
Good	0%	14%	23.5%	⬆️
RI	93%	64%	59%	⬆️
IA	7%	21%	18%	⬇️

Grade	Care Leavers			
	Q4	Q1	Q2	Trajectory
Good	43%	27%	20%	⬇️
RI	57%	63%	60%	⬇️
IA	0%	9%	20%	⬆️

Q1 2025/26 practice has shown an upturn when compared with previous Q4 2025/26, Good has improved by 7% to 28%. RI has decreased by 2% and IA has decreased by 5%. (Q2 comments not yet available)

- 3% of Children's audits were graded Outstanding. 
- 12.5% of audits were graded as **Good** 
- 72% were graded as **Requires Improvement** 
- 12.5% were graded as **Inadequate** 

OVERALL GRADINGS %



P7.5 Increase the number of social workers accessing training through the Social Work Academy (Source – Social Work Academy)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<p>The Social Work academy have continued to offer training to support the improvement plan and practice improvement throughout children's social care. This continues to be well received.</p> <p>Managers and practitioners have been provided training in the following areas:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Trauma informed practice ■ Assessments, Plans and visits ■ Motivational interviewing ■ MALD specialist assessment training ■ Report writing training ■ ASYE training ■ Supervision and management oversight ■ 1:1 reflective discussions <p>In Q2 2025/26 a total of 164 staff accessed the above training. This is a slight reduction to Q1 (189) however, expected due to the holiday period. Regular training is available to staff through the Social Work Academy training offer in line with the Children's improvement plan as</p>
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			well as: 1:1 support and ASYE programme which continues to be promoted each week.
P7.6	Increasing the number of permanent staff (Source – Children’s Social Care)	Refer Comment	<p>The sufficiency strategy to reduce agency numbers and increase permanent staff continues to be on track. The Local authority is utilising the Approach program to train and recruit social workers. This program sees multiple students (nine in the most recent cohort) to increase the permanent staff numbers. The approach program allows us to support the training of social workers and provide permanent posts to those successfully completing their ASYE. The cohort is split into two groups one in Duty and Assessment and one in Children in need/Child Protection service. Whilst the students may not stay within those teams staffing as needed.</p> <p>codes are allocated to each of the students in anticipation of the successful completion of the course. This will see agency numbers drop again in 12 months. Whilst this is the projected plan, the local authority continues to discuss with agency staff the benefits of permanent working to encourage transfer to permanent posts, and the recruitment campaign continues.</p>
P7.7	Reduce the number of agency workers and associated costs. (Source – Children’s Social Care)	Refer Comment	<p>The agency rates continue to fall for permanent posts and is down to 28.6. The new government rules whilst having a longer-term positive impact does cause some complexities in the short term. Emergency cover arrangements for situations such as sickness means that posts can be left uncovered for a period of a month due to new agency rules around notice periods. The new rules due to be introduced around three years post qualifying in a permanent role will be a positive and we are seeing a number of agency workers who do not meet this criteria converting to permanent posts, which should be reflected in the next quarter’s data.</p>

Corporate Priority	Priority 1 – Improving Health, Promoting Wellbeing and Supporting Greater Independence. Priority 3 – Supporting Children, Young People and Families Priority 4 – Tackling inequality and helping those who are in most need
CYP P8	Reducing Child obesity

Milestone		Progress Q2	Supporting commentary
P8.1	Increase % breast feeding and initiation and maintenance at 6 – 8 weeks (Source – Health Engagement)		Target is an annual increase of 0.5% at 6-8 weeks. Most recent data (Q1 2025/26) shows a further significant increase on 2024-25 rates: Breastfeeding initiation: 2024/25 = 55.1%. Q1 2025/26 = 60.9% Breastfeeding at 10-14 days: 2024/25 = 48.1%. Q1 2025/26 = 55.3% Breastfeeding at 6-8 weeks: 2024/25 = 35.4%. Q1 2025/26 = 41.2% Lots of ongoing work to improve the culture of breastfeeding in the borough and protect the future of breastfeeding for next generations. In addition to universal infant feeding support service offered to all families in the antenatal and postnatal periods.
P8.2	Maintain/increase the number of schools engaging in the Healthy Schools Programme which includes whole School approaches to tackling obesity. (Source – Health Engagement)		New school year commenced, with 13 Healthy Schools sign up visits already completed in September 2025. New this year – schools can opt to work towards Bronze Healthy Schools award for engaging with their annual visit. Silver awards when they evidence whole-school approaches to health and wellbeing, and Gold for completed an evidence-based self-assessment framework specifically focussing on whole-school approaches to healthy weight.
P8.3	Increase the number of parents of children age under 5 accessing the 'HENRY' Programme (Source – Health Engagement)		New key performance indicators agreed with 0-19 service to refer ten families per quarter. 18 referred via all routes, including self-referral this Q2 2025/26. Current course ongoing. Training for staff to deliver additional HENRY 5-12 programme started this quarter, with the new course launching in January 2026.

Corporate Priority	Priority 1 – Improving Health, Promoting Wellbeing and Supporting Greater Independence. Priority 3 – Supporting Children, Young People and Families Priority 4 – Tackling inequality and helping those who are in most need
CYP P9	Improve access to positive opportunities.

Milestone		Progress Q2	Supporting Commentary
P9.1	Increase the number of care leavers accessing the Care leavers group (Source – Care Leavers)		Halton now have a hub in Liverpool supporting the unaccompanied asylum-seeking children cohort and young people out of area which has increased numbers. We have also included more services attending the hub which are providing a more variety of support which is attracting more young people.
P9.2	Increase the engagement for Children in Need, Children in Care and Care Leavers via Barnardo's contract Source – Commissioning)		With support from the local authority, via the Emotional Health and Wellbeing Board, Barnardo's currently have no waiting list, and referrals are flowing effectively. Halton recently held a Residential and Supported Accommodation Providers Event whereby Barnardo's and another provider presented the service to highlight the availability and referral routes.

Corporate Priority	Priority 1 – Improving Health, Promoting Wellbeing and Supporting Greater Independence. Priority 3 – Supporting Children, Young People and Families Priority 4 – Tackling inequality and helping those who are in most need		
CYP P10	Improve Mental Health provision.		
Milestone			Progress Q2
P10.1	Increase the numbers of Primary and Secondary school educators being trained as 'Thrive' Licensed Practitioners. (Source – Family Thrive)		Roll out of this training is now complete. 81% of schools took up the offer. Additional unallocated places have now been distributed to schools who wanted more practitioners. We have also been able to train a number of 'Family Thrive' practitioners with the surplus left.
P10.2	Increase the number of strengths and difficulties questionnaires (SDQ) completed for Children in Care (Source – Children in Care / Health)	Refer comment	This annual indicator is for children in care 12 months at year end 31 st March 2026. SDQ score required for age 4-17 at point of health assessment 2024/25 showed a reduction on previous year (2023/24). Reasons for no SDQ score is mostly out of borough not returning SDQ form or not completed and returned by carers or refused. <i>Performance Team</i> .
P10.3	Increase the number of health assessment (initial and review) for Children in Care (Source – Children in Care / Health)	Refer comment	This annual indicator is for children in care 12 months at year end 31 st March 2026. 2024/25 showed a reduction on previous year 2023/24. <i>Performance Team</i> .
P10.4	Reduce the number of children who are accessing education under Section 19 (Source – Education Welfare)		There were two primary children who have EHCPs permanently excluded in Q2, compared to one Q1. However, one was recently overturned at an Independent Review Panel, so only one stands as a permanent exclusion in this quarter.
P10.5	Reduce the % waiting time for Children in Care (CIC) to access Mental Health provision (Source – Children in Care)	Refer comment	There is an identified escalation process in place for children in Care accessing CAMHS is required. Emotional wellbeing panel takes place monthly, and Halton CAMHS attend to review any referrals.

Corporate Priority	Priority 1 – Improving Health, Promoting Wellbeing and Supporting Greater Independence. Priority 3 – Supporting Children, Young People and Families Priority 4 – Tackling inequality and helping those who are in most need
CYP P11	Strengthen the voice of children and young people.

Milestone		Progress Q1	Supporting Commentary
P11.1	Increase the number of 'good' gradings within Children Social Care casefile audits for the child's voice and how it informs their plans (Source – Audit)		During Q2 2025/26 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 37.5% in Early Help were graded 'good' or above (Down) 3% Help & Protect were graded 'good' (Down) 24% Children in Care were graded 'good' (Down)
P11.2	Increase the number of children and young people involved with the Children in Care Council (CICC) (Source – Children in Care)		We have a further five children accessing the CICC and activities. One is by use of text message and community group. Four are attending the sessions and meetings on a regular basis bringing the total now to 14 this is not counting the co-chair Care leaver. All attend informal meetings and feedback and into formal meetings via community what's app group, if they don't wish to attend the formal setting and meeting.

Corporate Priority	Priority 1 – Improving Health, Promoting Wellbeing and Supporting Greater Independence. Priority 3 – Supporting Children, Young People and Families Priority 4 – Tackling inequality and helping those who are in most need
CYP P12	Improve pathways into meaningful employment with training and both Further and Higher Education

Milestone		Progress Q2	Supporting Commentary
P12.1	Reduce the percentage of 16–17-year-olds not in education, employment or training or whose activities are not known to the council (Source – Education and Employment)	U	<p>Average not in education, employment and training (NEET) and Not Known figure is 7.6%. This compared favourably to the same period in 2024 where the figure was 8.8% and continues the reduction in NEET and Not Known figures seen in Q1 2025/26</p> <p>Despite this positive progress maintaining a reduction in NEET figures is threatened by the lack of post 16 provision in Halton and the withdrawal of a provider in July 2025. An application for additional post 16 provision to fill the gap has been made to the Department for Education, who have accepted there is a case for additional provision. The Department for Education is seeking further consultation with post 16 providers who would consider expanding delivery in Halton. This will take place during October 2025.</p>
P12.2	Increase the number of good quality pathway plans as identified through the audit process for Care Leavers (Source – Audit)	U	<p>Q2 2025/26 the sub-grade ‘support into adulthood’ which asks the auditor to consider and summarise the work that has taken place, how stability and permanence has been achieved leading to good outcomes for the child/YP and what this means for the child/YP currently sits at 20% graded as ‘Good’.</p>

Appendix 3: Progress Against Performance Indicators

	STRATEGIC ISSUES	BASELINE POSITION	OUTCOMES AT END OF YEAR 1	OUTCOMES AT END OF YEAR 3	INTERVENTIONS	KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS
A	Develop and embed Family Hubs and extend their provision to include 19 to 25 age range with additional needs					
B	Wraparound Care Programme - Submitted a supply and demand analysis to the DFE, recruit a Wraparound care coordinator to lead on expanding the project.					
C	Pause Project - secure further funding from partners for 3-5 years submit funding bud					
D	Utilise the grant of £1m from Delivering Better Value (DBV) programme.					
E	Implement redevised structure for children in need service.					
F	SEND - Commission a specialist equipment provider to meet the needs of children and young people with SEND in Halton schools/settings.					
G	SEND - 'Tell it once' framework co-produced and launched.					
H	SEND - Complete a multi-agency joined up review of current ICT systems and processes understanding current ICT platforms used for information storing and sharing and how they interlink.					
I	Halton Alternative Provision Strategy and Alternative Provision offer co-produced with all system partners.					
J	Review the Neglect Strategy.					
K	Develop a Section 19 Policy and establish an Education Inclusion Panel to determine when					

	the LA Section 19 duty applies and education offer.				
L	Halton Priority education Action Area Plan, £1.8M allocated across 3 years to tackle attendance and attainment.	What has gone on in the quarter towards achieving that, what the update, i.e., meeting and outcome or decision making			
M	Deliver new statutory duties under the DfE 'Working Together to Improve School Attendance.'				
N	Submit a bid to the DfE for new post 16 provision in Halton				
O	Support the Right to succeed agenda - Halton Lea Cradle to Career 2024-26 for the design, delivery and reporting of a youth offer.				
P	Establish 'The Food Active Healthy and Active Futures Pledge', a whole school approach to tackling obesity.				
Q	National Child Measurement Programme (data provided annually)				

Appendix 4: Financial Statements

Not available until end October 2025

Progress Symbols are used in the following manner

Progress		Milestone
Green	✓	Indicates that the milestone is on course to be achieved within the appropriate timeframe.
Amber	U	Indicates that it is uncertain, or too early to say at this stage whether the milestone will be achieved within the appropriate timeframe.
Red	✗	Indicates that it is unlikely or certain that the objective will not be achieved within the appropriate timeframe.

REPORT TO: Executive Board

DATE: 11th December 2025

REPORTING OFFICER: Executive Director Environment and Regeneration

PORTFOLIO: Community Safety
Housing and Environmental Sustainability

SUBJECT: Pride in Place, Impact Fund

WARD(S) Widnes Wards

1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

1.1 This report provides an update on the recently announced Pride in Place Impact Fund (PiPIF) and the considerations around how to deploy this funding within the required timescales.

2.0 RECOMMENDATION: That Executive Board

- 1. Acknowledge the £1.5million allocation being made available and note that the Chief Executive has signed the associated memorandum of understanding on behalf of the Council.**
- 2. Approves delegated authority to the Executive Director for Environment and Regeneration (in consultation with the Portfolio Holders for Community Safety and Housing and Environmental Sustainability) to progress projects that meet the strategic objectives of the fund, with specific projects to be determined by Executive Board.**
- 3. Note the timeline for submission of key documents to MHCLG (first submission in February 2026) and that the Council will act as Accountable Body for the funding).**
- 4. Approves delegated authority to the Director, Economy, Enterprise and Property (in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Corporate Services) to arrange for all required documentation to be completed to the satisfaction of the Director, Legal and Democratic Services in relation to any necessary proposed project activities.**

3.0 SUPPORTING INFORMATION

- 3.1 In the 2025 Spending Review, the Government announced funding for up to 350 places as the cornerstone of their support for communities. This included 95 places selected for the PiPIF. The funding will be delivered by local authorities and targeted at areas 'in need' with the aim of building strong, resilient, prosperous, and inclusive communities.
- 3.2 Whilst the Pride in Place Programme will target transformation over the longer term there was a recognition for immediate support to ensure other areas are able to deliver visible improvements to high streets and improve places and spaces of community value. The PiPIF is intended by Government to provide that support and an allocation of £1.5million has been committed to Halton.
- 3.3 Working with local stakeholders, including the local MP, Government has outlined that local authorities are best placed to manage investment that will increase pride in these neighbourhoods, which in turn will draw in private investment, creating economic growth and opportunity.
- 3.4 The funding will be devolved directly to Halton Borough Council and the main driver is that funding is used to achieve visible impacts by March 2027. There are three overarching themes that the funds can be deployed on:
- a. Community spaces: creating, extending, improving or refurbishing existing community facilities and enabling community organisations to take control or ownership of underused but valued local assets.
 - b. Public spaces: enhancing the physical environment in public spaces - examples of initiatives include new or improved green spaces or public squares, improved outdoor play, sports and leisure spaces, installing street furniture, public art or wayfinding.
 - c. High street and town centre revitalisation: making these areas more attractive and welcoming places where people congregate and which encourage economic activity. Examples of initiatives that could be funded are shop frontage improvements, adaptations that bring premises back into use, streetscape improvements, public art, trails and wayfinding, and creating or improving the infrastructure for regular markets.
- 3.5 The guidance outlines that local authorities will act as the accountable body for the PiPIF, working with local stakeholders to identify and invest in themes that meet local need, collaborating to

determine outcomes that will deliver the most benefits to local residents and breathe new life into the areas in which they live.

- 3.6 To maximise the impact of the PiPIF and broaden its reach, local authorities are encouraged to explore opportunities to leverage funding and/or seek match funding for initiatives. Where possible, this may help to unlock additional support and accelerate progress on shared priorities for local pride.
- 3.7 The £1.5million capital funding allocation is intended to be deployed over the 2025-26 and 2026-27 financial years. Funding is broken down equally across the two years, 50% in 2025-26 and 50% in 2026-27 and it has to be fully committed by March 2027.
- 3.8 Initial key roles and responsibilities in the delivery of the programme will include:
- Officer lead – Director EEP
Member leads – Portfolio Holder for Housing and Environmental Sustainability and Portfolio for Community Safety
Monitoring and Compliance – Programmes Office, HBC
Project Development and Delivery – Regeneration Team, HBC, plus partners
- 3.9 On 17th April 2025 Executive Board approved the Widnes Town Centre Regeneration Framework. Delegated authority was given to pursue further investigations into identifying associated project areas and opportunities. Officers have been pursuing this workstream since and are aware of a range of options that align with the PiPIF. Early opportunities could include:
- Strategic acquisitions
 - Environmental enhancements and Enforcement
 - Improvement of spaces in public use
 - Public art
 - Lighting and CCTV upgrades
 - Public realm
- 3.10 PiPIF reporting must be completed online using a MHCLG digital tool. In February 2026, local authorities will be asked to submit:
- a progress summary, including stakeholder and MP engagement.
 - an initial spend forecast for the period September 2025 to March 2026 across the 3 PiPIF objectives.
 - an initial spend forecast for the full periods September 2025 to March 2027 across the 3 PiPIF objectives.

Local authorities will be asked to provide financial reporting in May 2026, October 2026 and June 2027. These reports will collect actual

spend, commitment levels and forecasts under the 3 PiPIF objectives.

- 3.11 As well as financial reporting, local authorities will be asked to provide the following in May 2026, October 2026 and June 2027:
- number of PiPIF metrics achieved under each objective.
 - a progress update including details of engagement undertaken with stakeholders.

4.0 POLICY IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 The potential investment described in this report will align with the Council's strategic policies contained in the Local Plan, the Mersey Gateway Plus Regeneration Strategy and the Local Transport Plan.
- 4.2 The Framework aligns with existing local and national policy objectives, supporting economic growth, sustainability, and community well-being. Its implementation may require updates to planning policies, investment strategies, and partnership agreements to ensure effective delivery.
- 4.3 Consideration will also need to be given to how the Framework interacts with emerging policies, including those related to housing, transport and environmental sustainability.
- 4.4 Ensuring alignment with the Local Plan and broader strategic priorities will be essential to securing funding and stakeholder support.

5.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 Local authorities will be paid their 2025-2026 PiPIF allocation following the signing of the Memorandum of Understanding with MHCLG.
- 5.2 The allocation is to be spent over 2025-26 and 2026-27. Funding is broken down equally across the two financial years, 50% in 2025-26 and 50% in 2026-27.
- 5.3 The PiPIF allocation is 100% capital funding. Funding must be fully committed by March 2027.
- 5.4 The 2026-2027 allocation will be paid in the period April - June 2026, subject to submission of a satisfactory February 2026 return.
- 5.5 Any uncommitted funding as of 31 March 2027 or funding that is committed by that date and then subsequently unspent must be repaid to MHCLG.

5.6 There is no match funding requirement; however, opportunities for drawing in additional funding should be considered to add value.

6.0 IMPLICATIONS FOR THE COUNCIL'S PRIORITIES:

6.1 Improving Health, Promoting Wellbeing and Supporting Greater Independence

Possible positive implications depending on which opportunities are implemented and under what themes in due course.

6.2 Building a Strong, Sustainable Local Economy

Potential for job creation and inward investment depending on which opportunities are implemented and under what themes in due course.

6.3 Supporting Children, Young People and Families

Possible positive implications depending on which opportunities are implemented and under what themes in due course.

6.4 Tackling Inequality and Helping Those Who Are Most In Need

Possible positive implications depending on which opportunities are implemented and under what themes in due course.

6.5 Working Towards a Greener Future

Any spending will be aligned to relevant environmental policies and building regulation standards.

6.6 Valuing and Appreciating Halton and Our Community

Projects could help to create a range of enhancements in the built environment for local people to enjoy depending on which opportunities are implemented and under what themes in due course.

7.0 Risk Analysis

7.1 With any funding and regeneration programme there are risks associated with uncertainty arising from various aspects of the process, such as securing further funding, material availability and fluctuating prices, severe weather, securing regulatory consents, environmental factors and from unexpected issues when work starts (such as contamination, uncharted utilities) and delays in recruitment etc.

These risks are impossible to eradicate and are dealt with through a robust risk register which is regularly reviewed in conjunction with clear mitigation plans. If any of these key risks arise in project delivery, the consequence usually translates into increased costs and extended programmes for completion of the works.

8.0 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES

- 8.1 The PiPIF intends to be positively impactful for local people, and equality and diversity implications will be considered in the development of individual project plans, and it is likely that Equality Impact Assessments will be undertaken at the appropriate times.

9.0 CLIMATE CHANGE IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 The development of a Delivery Plan will look to ensure that proposals make a positive contribution towards the Council's commitment to achieving "Net Zero" emissions, supporting the Council's Climate Change Action Plan.

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

Executive Board 17th April 2025 – Ref 119 – "Widnes Town Centre Regeneration Framework"

REPORT TO:	Executive Board
DATE:	11 th December 2025
REPORTING OFFICER:	Executive Director of Children's Services
PORTFOLIO:	Children Young People and Families
SUBJECT:	Childrens Services Commissioned Contract Extensions
WARD(S)	All Wards

1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 This report seeks to gain approval for a series of staged extensions via requests for various contractual waivers, in compliance with Procurement Standing Orders 1.14.4.3 and 1.14.4 iv, seeking to waive parts 3.1 and 3.2 of Procurement Standing Orders. This covers several contracts identified in the report and an overarching rationale is provided, alongside individual contractual considerations.

2.0 RECOMMENDED: That

1. The report be noted;
2. Approval be given to the Emotional Health and Wellbeing contract with Barnardo's being extended for 12 months, in pursuance of Procurement Standing Order 1.14.3 (non-emergency procedures – not exceeding a value threshold of £100,000), seeking to waive parts 3.1 and 3.2 of Procurement Standing Orders;
3. Approval be given to the Advocacy and Independent Visitor (CRAIV) contract with NYAS being extended for 6 months, in pursuance of Procurement Standing Order 1.14.3 (non-emergency procedures – not exceeding a value threshold of £100,000), seeking to waive parts 3.1 and 3.2 of Procurement Standing Orders;
4. Approval be given to the Personal Assistant Services contract with Positive Futures Consultancy being extended for 12 months, in pursuance of Procurement Standing Order 1.14.3 (non-emergency procedures – not exceeding a value threshold of £100,000), seeking to waive part 3.1 and 3.2 of Procurement Standing Orders;
5. Approval be given to the Specialist Children's Domestic Abuse Service contract with The Children's Society being extended for 6 months, in pursuance of Procurement Standing Order 1.14.3 (non-emergency procedures – not exceeding a value threshold of £100,000), seeking to waive part 3.1 and 3.2 of Procurement Standing Orders;

6. Approval be given to the Friendships Groups contract with VIBE being extended for 6 months, in pursuance of Procurement Standing Order 1.14.3 (non-emergency procedures – not exceeding a value threshold of £100,000), seeking to waive part 3.1 and 3.2 of Procurement Standing Orders;
7. Approval be given to the Specialist Seating contract with Newlyn Healthcare being extended for 12 months, in pursuance of Procurement Standing Order 1.14.3 (non-emergency procedures – not exceeding a value threshold of £100,000), seeking to waive part 3.1 and 3.2 of Procurement Standing Orders;
8. Approval be given to the Supported Accommodation contract with P3 being extended for 12 months, in pursuance of Procurement Standing Order 1.14.4 (non-emergency procedures – exceeding a value threshold of £100,000), seeking to waive part 3.1 and 3.2 of Procurement Standing Orders;
9. Approval be given to the PAUSE and REACH Programmes contract with PAUSE Halton being extended for 12 months, in pursuance of Procurement Standing Order 1.14.4 (non-emergency procedures – exceeding a value threshold of £100,000), seeking to waive part 3.1 and 3.2 of Procurement Standing Orders;
10. The re-commissioning of each service, via open competitive tender, or otherwise, at the extended contract end dates, be undertaken by the Children's Head of Commissioning and Quality Assurance in liaison with the Portfolio Holder for Children's.

3.0 SUPPORTING INFORMATION

- 3.1 The Childrens Commissioning function has undergone a restructure in terms of staffing, and alongside this has also reviewed its current practices and processes. Due to the previous structure of the team, there has not been the capacity to fully review and plan for the appropriate re-commissioning of the various contracts in place. This has resulted in the over use of rolling waivers, and direct awards, to maintain service delivery with its many providers. This has meant that there has been very few open competitive tendering processes, and it is not clear that the local authority are receiving the best service, at the most cost effective price.
- 3.2 In addition, the internal Audit Report into Childrens Commissioning (July 2024) highlighted that there was minimal to no assurance that processes were being followed and that there was insubstantial evidence that commissioning functions were cost-effective and followed due process. The commissioning team has worked diligently to support all of the recommendations following the restructure and, when the Audit was repeated as a follow up in July 2025, all areas were improved and exceeded. Childrens Commissioning now has substantial assurance across all areas of its functionality, and, part of the improvement plan was a staged and procedural

approach to contracting. These extensions will assist in staggering the workflow and limits the additional barriers outlined below.

- 3.3 There is also consideration around the interdependencies of other departments currently relying on Childrens Commissioning to facilitate their commissioning functions. There is no integrated commissioning approach in Halton, which means that only Childrens and Adults Services have dedicated commissioning support. Departments and directorates such as Community Safety do not, and therefore, this workload is being disseminated into Childrens. There are plans to formalise this with Community Safety, however, these are not yet clear.
- 3.4 The progression of some of this current work (Grangeway Court Homelessness/DA Services in particular) is causing delays and therefore having a direct impact on the progression of Childrens projects, namely, the progression of Maya Court for Supported Accommodation, leading to an extension request for the current contract.
- 3.5 In conjunction, and partly in relation to the above, this has meant that every year, each contract is due for renewal in March/April (Quarter 4), and has created a bottleneck effect, which is further compounding the effectiveness of fully scrutinising and exploring options for each individual contract.
- 3.6 This is further compounded by the parameters of the local authorities budget setting timeframes, and the receipt of the annual budget specifics in November, result in very little time to plan and execute effective commissioning processes prior to April. An effective, open, competitive tender should realistically take between 6 and 8 months to fully scrutinise the contract, plan and execute meaningful consultation with stakeholders, and map out the specification in line with coproduction principles.
- 3.7 Coupled with this, the commissioning team also manage and oversee the Holiday Activity and Food (HAF) Fund, the Youth Grants Fund and the Short Breaks Allocations. These are static in the calendar year and must be distributed between January and April. Inevitably, this further reduces the teams capacity in Quarter 4, and creates a subsequent tighter capacity issue during this period.
- 3.8 Currently, 18 of the contracts we hold are coming to an end in April 2026, and to fully review and effectively appraise the spend and outcomes of these will be difficult given the above pressures and also taking into account our procurement colleagues capacity across the directorates at this time. We are proposing a series of short extensions, to be granted to the current providers of the named contracts.

This will serve a number of purposes:

- The short 6/12 month extension waivers will allow us to spread our focused workplan more equitably across the financial year, resulting in contract end dates of April and October respectively across our portfolio. This will allow dedicated focus on each contract.
- Varied contract end dates will grant each of the allocated commissioning officers time and space to fully review the contract, allowing for more options to be considered, including the use of open and competitive tenders, or longer

term direct awards, based on quality audits of the outcomes achieved across the specification key performance indicators.

- Our procurement colleagues will also have the time to plan the preferred options into their annual work schedules, and be in a more comfortable place to assist in the completion of the required procurement functions.

The contracts which have been identified for a short term extension, are:

3.9 **Contract 1**

Incumbent Provider – Barnardo's

Contract Name – Emotional Health and Wellbeing (CIC/CL)

Proposed Contract Extension Length - 12 month 01/04/26 to 31/03/27

Proposed Cost of Contract Extension - £180,000

Statutory Function: Yes

Proposed Finance: Jointly funded via Childrens Social Care (£148,000 - 8242) and Supporting Families (£32,000 - 8269)

Individual Rationale: The current contract is performing well in relation to the core KPI's and meeting all required expectations. We require a review of this service in line with wider scoping alongside the ICB through the Joint Commissioning Stocktake and the Joint Commissioning Board. In the interim, should a contract not be in place, this could potentially impact on demand into CAMHS, as well as driving up costs for specialist interventions for CIC and CL through Continuing Care panels. There is also consideration around the provision for assessment and intervention services for young people who display sexually harmful behaviour (SHB), which are currently being spot purchased via the above. From September 2025 All staff have completing training in both AIM3 and the Good Lives model in order to be able to deliver the Barnardo's programme of specialist therapeutic provision for children who have experienced sexual abuse (CSA) or are showing harmful sexual behaviour (HSB) to other children.

There has also been an agreement to reduce management hours to bring in an additional part time therapist to support with demand at the same financial ceiling. The service has made excellent progress in reducing the previous waiting list to zero, and all current children who are referred are receiving the service they require as quickly as possible.

During this current contractual period, we have built a greater understanding of the mental health landscape, via joint mapping with the ICB, through the Joint Commissioning Stocktake, and the rejuvenation of the Children and Families Joint Commissioning Partnership. The Children and Families Joint Commissioning Strategy has been developed and is ready for publication and distribution, within which is a clear priority to focus on Emotional Health and Wellbeing as a primary workflow strand. We are currently in a position to strengthen a contract offer which best meets the needs of the children and young people of Halton.

The ICB have confirmed that they are not in a position to contribute their previously provided £40,000 to funding the extension waiver period, and we would look to

negotiate with the provider around the service delivery model, to remain in line with the reduced financial envelope.

Potential Commissioning Intentions: Complete the 12 month extension with a view to fully review the ongoing work with the ICB and additional system partners around the landscape of services for children's emotional health and wellbeing. This will further inform any potential for joint working or pooled budgets via the Joint Commissioning Board. We will complete some early soft market testing to understand the breadth of other providers who could deliver on the service. This will be in addition to reviewing the need for a bespoke service around SHB, following a review of need/demand from children's social care operational teams.

3.10 Contract 2

Incumbent Provider – National Youth Advocacy Service (NYAS)

Contract Name – Childrens Advocacy and Independent Visiting (CRAIV)

Proposed Contract Extension Length - 6 month extension 01/04/26 to 30/09/26

Proposed Cost of Contract Extension - £35,000

Statutory Function: Yes

Proposed Finance: Existing Social Care Budget (8236)

Individual Rationale: The current contract is performing well in relation to the core KPI's and meeting all required expectations. This is an incredibly proactive contract which delivers on statutory functions, combining advocacy with the independent visiting function, therefore, there can be no gap in service provision. NYAS are experts in children's advocacy, providing:

- Issue based Advocacy
- Care Leaver Advocacy
- Residential Visiting Advocacy
- Independent Mental Health Advocacy
- Non-Instructed Advocacy
- Parent Advocacy
- Peer Mentor Advocacy
- Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards (DoLS)/Liberty Protection Safeguards (LPS)

Independent Visitors are also commissioned within this contract, these are trained adult volunteers who provide children and young people in care with long lasting friendship and support. Access to independent visiting sessions is a statutory entitlement for children and young people who are living with a foster family or in residential care. They complement the vital role of social workers and carers in contributing to and promoting the young person's developmental, social, emotional and cultural needs. However, there are also wider considerations on how this service interacts with the changing landscape of emotional health and wellbeing in Halton, NYAS are an integral part of the emotional health and wellbeing panel, and have embedded processes extremely well in Halton. There are limited providers across the Northwest who offer this specialist service, and do it well.

Potential Commissioning Intentions: Complete the 12 month extension with a view to fully review the ongoing work with the ICB and additional system partners around the landscape of services for children's emotional health and wellbeing. This will further inform any potential for joint working or pooled budgets via the Joint Commissioning Board. We will complete some early soft market testing to understand the breadth of other providers who could deliver on the service. This will be in addition to reviewing the need for a bespoke service around SHB, following a review of need/demand from children's social care operational teams.

3.11 Contract 3

Incumbent Provider – Positive Future Consultancy

Contract Name – Personal Assistant Recruitment Service

Proposed Contract Extension Length - 12 month extension 01/04/26 to 31/03/27

Proposed Cost of Contract Extension - £27,500

Statutory Function: Yes

Proposed Finance: Short Breaks Funding (5018-8032-D115)

Individual Rationale: The current contract supports families with children assessed as requiring a Personal Assistant and who require support to recruit their own PA where they may not have the links within their local network and have struggled to identify assistants. It is highly valued by the families that have benefited from the service.

The landscape of Short Breaks is changing in Halton, and there is potential, through developing work designed to redesign thresholds. This may mean that those children who are assessed at being Level 2 may be redirected to commissioned providers. This will mean that services such as this will be integral to supporting children who are not due to enter higher level services, and this work will take approximately six months to complete. This extension will allow continuity of a critical service whilst these developments are finalised.

The provider works closely with the Short Breaks Team and Direct Payments Team, they are not an agency but manage the recruitment and interview process, and support the training and development of the PA and parent as an employer. It is a unique service that isn't replicated within our local region. The contract payment terms provide for payment by results and a quarterly fee to account for the administration of the service, which is a significant part of the process - advertising, shortlisting, interviewing and matching prospective PAs with children. A review of the service is required to fully scope out the potential of the contract going forward.

Potential Commissioning Intentions: Complete the 12 month extension and conduct a full review of the service.

3.12 Contract 4

Incumbent Provider – The Childrens Society

Contract Name – Specialist Childrens Domestic Abuse Support Services

Proposed Contract Extension Length - 6 month extension 01/06/26 to 30/11/26

Proposed Cost of Contract Extension - £110,000

Statutory Function: Yes

Proposed Finance: Community Safety DA funding (£48,930 – 7378 and £22,500 – 7378) and Supporting Families (£38,570 – 8269)

Individual Rationale: The current contract is performing well and meeting all required expectations. It supports direct intervention for adults and families that are on a plan including those through pre-proceeding route. A review of the service provision alongside the changes with the Safeguarding model and families first approach would be beneficial as domestic abuse is still one of the key reasons for referrals into children's services. This contract delivers on a statutory function under the Domestic Abuse Duty so there can be no gap in service provision.

Potential Commissioning Intentions: Complete the short-term extension with a view to review the ongoing work with children Families First reforms and required Safeguarding models and DA commissioning requirements with community safety in line with the new DA JSNA and consideration for statutory requirements under the domestic abuse duty.

3.13 Contract 5

Incumbent Provider – VIBE

Contract Name – Friendship Groups

Proposed Contract Extension Length - 6 months 01/04/26 to 30/09/26

Proposed Cost of Contract Extension - £30,000

Statutory Function: Yes

Proposed Finance: Short Breaks Funding (5018-8032-D116)

Individual Rationale: The current contract is performing well in relation to the core KPI's and meeting all required expectations, with families feeding back that they highly value the service. It provides a short break for families and provides support for disabled children aged 12 up to the age of 18 to access a service with their peers providing equality of opportunity for disabled children compared with their non-disabled peers. Children take part in activities including Lord Derby Awards. We need a review of this service to account for parent feedback that has highlighted a need to further develop the service for children that are able to transition from the Short Breaks Play Service. If successful, this would increase capacity within Friendship groups and open much needed places within the Play Service as children make the transition to Friendship Groups.

Again, Short Breaks is changing in Halton, and there is potential, through developing work designed to redesign thresholds. This may mean that those children who are assessed at being Level 2 may be redirected to commissioned providers. This will mean that services such as this will be integral to supporting children who are not due to enter higher level services, and this work will take approximately six months to complete. This extension will allow continuity of a critical service whilst these developments are finalised.

Potential Commissioning Intentions: Complete the 6 month extension and scope out requirements with parents to support this area of work in line with Early Help and the Families First agenda. We will complete a pre-market engagement to understand

what other providers could provide with a view to going out to market to award a new contract from 1st October 2026.

3.14 **Contract 6**

Incumbent Provider – Newlyn Healthcare

Contract Name – Specialist Seating Service

Proposed Contract Length - 12 months 01/11/25 to 31/10/26

Proposed Cost of Contract Extension - £75,000

Statutory Function: Yes

Proposed Finance: High Needs Block (8160)

Individual Rationale: The pilot service started April 2025, bringing unused specialist seating into storage to be repurposed; servicing in-use seating to maintain the life of the equipment, supporting the movement of seating between settings so that it travels with the child, and opening up seating options for children in early years.

Prior to the pilot it was estimated that there was approximately 45 chairs being used by children in Halton schools, this was based on feedback collected through questionnaires. It is now anticipated that this is closer to 120 chairs and the budget set aside to deliver the service will be realised early in quarter 3.

Potential Commissioning Intentions: Direct award a new contract to Newlyn Healthcare from 1st November 2025 to 31st October 2026 to continue the pilot and enable the continued development, review and refinement of the service. Scope out requirements for a joint service to support this area of work with Liverpool City Council and potentially Warrington Local Authority as part of the SEND Improvement Plan.

3.15 **Contract 7**

Incumbent Provider – P3

Contract Name – Supported Accommodation Block Contract

Proposed Contract Extension Length - 12 months until 31st March 2027

Proposed Cost of Contract Extension - £275.571

Statutory Function: No

Proposed Finance: Core Social Care Budget (8033)

Individual Rationale: The current contract is performing well and meeting all required expectations. The contract has robust evidence to highlight cost saving to council and other partners by reducing the need for external supported accommodation placements. Given the market trajectory, the same five placements may result in annual expenditure of above £336,000, and more if inflationary uplifts are exaggerated year on year.

This contract was due to be recommissioned to incorporate the Maya Court development, and a new specification would include the support element incorporating Lavender House, the existing two trainer flats, and Maya Court, under a larger specification.

The service is also due to transition from Lavender House to Park House in Appleton Village, unfortunately, this process is also now halted, and is being managed by Property Services due to historical lease issues. This extension will allow the incumbent provider to remain in situ and properly transition the service across to the new provision.

Unfortunately, there have also been delays in the Grangeway Court development which have directly impacted on the vacation of Maya Court. The development is now expected to take 12 months and this extension would allow the current contract to continue and have time remaining to commission the wider project within the new and expanded specification.

Potential Commissioning Intentions: Complete the 12 month extension, transition the service to the new setting, and redesign the service to incorporate Lavender/Park House, the existing two trainer flats, and Maya Court, before March 31st 2027.

3.16 Contract 8

Incumbent Provider – PAUSE

Contract Name – PAUSE Halton

Proposed Contract Extension Length - 12 months until 31st March 2027

Proposed Cost of Contract Extension - £ 195,871

Statutory Function: No

Proposed Finance: Supporting Families Funding (8269)

Individual Rationale: The current contract is performing well and meeting all required expectations. The contract has robust evidence to highlight cost saving to council and other partners by reducing number of children into the care system.

Potential Commissioning Intentions: This will be the final year of funding available of this project and this will be explained to the provider. During this extension, we will scope out requirements to support this area of work in line with social work reforms and Families First agenda and changes in service delivery across the council.

4.0 **POLICY IMPLICATIONS**

4.1 The services highlighted within this report are considered integral to supporting the various existing strategies within Halton, as well as those currently in development. These include:

- The Children and Families Partnership Plan
- The SEND Strategy
- The Children and Families Joint Commissioning Strategy 2025-2028

4.2 In addition, these services also support the improvement journeys of both the ILACS Inspection outcomes and the Area SEND Inspection outcomes.

5.0 **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

5.1 The financial implications are that existing budgets would have to be projected and ring-fenced for different points of the financial year.

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

6.1 Improving Health, Promoting Wellbeing and Supporting Greater Independence

All of the contracts above relate directly to the well-being of our younger residents and support the pathway to greater independence in adult life.

6.2 Building a Strong, Sustainable Local Economy

Each of the contract extensions will continue to support local providers in being able to provide the much needed services in the local area.

6.3 Supporting Children, Young People and Families

As above, all of the contract extensions are statutory functions of the council in relation to supporting children and families.

6.4 Tackling Inequality and Helping Those Who Are Most In Need

The contract extensions are designed to continue the support for vulnerable children who require the most support in our borough.

6.5 Working Towards a Greener Future

Not Applicable.

6.6 Valuing and Appreciating Halton and Our Community

Not Applicable.

7.0 **RISK ANALYSIS**

7.1 The risks are highlighted previously in the body of the report and are related to capacity of both the commissioning teams, procurement, budget setting timeframes and the current volume of contracts which are in waiver and end in March each year.

8.0 **EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES**

8.1 There are no EDI issues or concerns, all of the proposed extension periods are for statutory and non-statutory contracts which positively and actively promote inclusion and equality, actively defending and advocating for the rights of children.

9.0 **CLIMATE CHANGE IMPLICATIONS**

9.1 None.

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

'None under the meaning of the Act.'

REPORT TO: Executive Board

DATE: 11th December 2025

REPORTING OFFICER: Executive Director Environment and Regeneration

PORTFOLIO: Environment and Urban Renewal

SUBJECT: Waste Management Update

WARD(S) Borough wide

1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

1.1 To provide Members with an update on the continuing work in the development of new Strategic, Policy and Service Plan documents in respect of the Council's Waste Management Services.

2.0 RECOMMENDED: That

- 1) Members endorse the current programme of work, as set out within this report, which is being undertaken to support the Council in meeting its Strategic aims and objectives with regards to the management of waste in Halton; and**
- 2) A further report be presented to the Executive Board in Spring 2026.**

3.0 SUPPORTING INFORMATION

3.1 At their meeting of 11th September 2025, Members of the Executive Board received a report setting out the wide range of drivers that necessitate the need for significant change in how household waste in Halton is collected, including new Legislative requirements, that will have both cost and service redesign implications for the Council. Members were advised that the scale and the pace of change required is unprecedented.

3.2 Members endorsed that further work on the Council's preferred options to meet the Council's Legislative Obligations be progressed. Members were advised that a further report would be presented to Executive Board in respect of the development of the Council's Waste Strategy, Policies and Service Plans and this report provides Members with an update on the continuing programme of work in this regard.

3.3 Waste Strategy and Policy Development

Officers are drafting a new Halton Waste Strategy document which will be presented to Members for consideration in Spring 2026.

The Halton Waste Strategy will sit under the LCR Zero Waste Framework, and LCR Zero Waste Strategy, both of which have been endorsed by the Council's Executive Board.

- 3.4 The Halton Waste Strategy will set out the strategic aims of the Council with regards to dealing with waste within the borough but will not be limited to the collection of residual waste and recycling but will also include details of the other elements of how the Council manages waste and responds to the waste minimisation agenda.
- 3.5 Achieving the aims and objectives set out within the Halton Waste Strategy will be underpinned by a new Waste Policy that is currently being developed and will also be presented to Members of the Executive Board.
- 3.6 Work on developing both the Waste Strategy and Waste Policy is progressing well, with support from a number of Teams across the Council, including two Local Government Association Impact Graduates working within the Chief Executive's Delivery Unit.
- 3.7 Environment Services Transformation Programme
Given the scale of essential change required, not only to the waste management service but also other operational services across the Environment Services Division, additional resource has been secured through the Transformation Delivery Unit to support the work required to deliver that change. This support included a service expert being appointed in August 2025 as Project Lead and a Programme Manager was also appointed and commenced on 10th November.
- 3.8 The Transformation work across the Environment Services Division is focussing on three broad areas:
 - Designing optimised, highly efficient services that deliver upon the Council's increased statutory responsibilities and help achieve waste minimisation
 - Reducing spend
 - Increasing income where possible
- 3.9 The service redesign is progressing well and work to date has included:
 - Assembling data and information to form a picture of our services – including what they cost, how they operate and what outcomes they deliver
 - Reviewing current available Resources and Assets
 - Meetings with Managers and Staff across the Division
 - Listening to, and taking on board, colleagues' views and thoughts

- Looking at Best Practice delivery that could be adopted in Halton
- 3.10 The next steps in the work programme will include establishing a number of thematic work groups and beginning to consider and plan how services may look in the future.
- 3.11 One of the work streams will be 'Route Optimisation', which is a project that will involve a procurement exercise to appoint a suitably qualified and experienced contractor to analyse a series of different options to help identify the most efficient and cost-effective service delivery model to be introduced in Halton. This piece of work will capture all waste collection services, including the new food waste collections that will be introduced in 2026.
- 3.12 The target date is for all new services to be introduced and operating by October 2026.
- 3.13 Workforce Engagement
The Council's Environment Services workforce and Managers have been fully engaged throughout the developing Transformation work programmed. Quarterly full workforce engagement sessions were initially held; however, these sessions will be held monthly from mid-December and thereafter. The Trade Unions and HR Business Partners have also been in attendance at the workforce engagement sessions along with colleagues from the Council's Communications and Marketing Team, who have supported with send out monthly staff bulletins.
- 3.14 Members of staff, management, Trade Unions and HR representatives will also be invited to take part in the work groups referred to in paragraphs 3.7 – 3.12.
- 3.15 Communications and Community Engagement
As previously reported to Members, ensuring the co-operation of the residents of Halton is key to the Council being successful in achieving its strategic and service level aims and objectives. Similarly, the introduction of new and redesigned services, and the need to inform residents of new requirements placed upon them, will all need to be supported by the delivery of comprehensive and effective communications and community engagement activity.
- 3.16 Members supported the investment needed to develop and deliver an effective communications and behaviour change programme and work is progressing towards bringing in the required additional staffing resources to deliver that programme, as is, work to develop a Communications Plan.
- 3.17 Behaviour change and community engagement on waste matters will also be one of the Transformation work streams referred to in

paragraphs 3.7 – 3.12.

3.18 **Food Waste**

Members will be aware of the requirement for the Council to implement a weekly food waste collection service to every household in 2026, and that, the vehicles and caddies required to deliver this service have been ordered.

3.19 With regards to staffing implications, the delivery of the food waste collections will require a minimum of 7 new HGV drivers and 14 waste collection operatives.

3.20 Council officers are currently looking at options for the appointment to these new posts which will include a combination of providing training opportunities to existing Environment Services operational staff who may wish to up-skill to become HGV drivers, providing opportunities for staff across other Council services areas and also employment opportunities for the recruitment of new Council employees. Recruitment will include working with Halton People Into Jobs and options for Apprenticeship opportunities will also be explored.

4.0 POLICY IMPLICATIONS

4.1 There are no new Policy implications arising from this report, however, Policy implications will arise from the subject matters contained within this report that will be presented into Members future reports.

5.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

5.1 The report refers to increased staffing and resource requirements to deliver the Council statutory obligations, and the government has provided enabling monies to support the implementation.

6.0 IMPLICATIONS FOR THE COUNCIL'S PRIORITIES

6.1 Improving Health, Promoting Wellbeing and Supporting Greater Independence

Waste has a direct effect on public health; effective and efficient household waste collection mitigates potential health implications related to accumulated waste.

6.2 Building a Strong, Sustainable Local Economy

The waste sector and local arrangements to deal with waste provides significant employment opportunities and contributes more than £3.4m to Halton's economy and a further £2.8m to the regional economy annually on waste.

The opportunities for up-skilling of existing staff and the recruitment

of new Council employees will have a further positive impact upon local people and the local economy.

6.3 Supporting Children, Young People and Families

The Council's services are universal. There are opportunities through the behaviour change work to engage children and young people to be champions of waste and recycling approaches at home.

6.4 Tackling Inequality and Helping Those Who Are Most In Need

The household services are a universal offer however, there are adjustments for those that need additional support such as the assisted collection whereby waste staff will collect and return the bins to properties.

In delivering behaviour change there will be targeted additional efforts were required.

6.5 Working Towards a Greener Future

Once introduced, the new services and initiatives referred to in this report will have a positive impact on the Council's actions towards delivering climate change improvements.

6.6 Valuing and Appreciating Halton and Our Community

The volume of change and investment to household waste arrangements demonstrates investment to Halton's residents. Most residents and households will be keen to contribute what they can to the environmental agenda and providing appropriate tools and household collections will enable this.

7.0 Risk Analysis

7.1 Whilst there are risks associated with the Council failing to meet its statutory waste obligations, there are no specific risks associated with this report.

8.0 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES

8.1 None to report.

9.0 CLIMATE CHANGE IMPLICATIONS

9.1 Once introduced, the new services and initiatives referred to in this report will have a positive impact on the Council's actions to contribute towards the climate change improvements and will support the Council's response to the climate emergency.

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

Document	Place of Inspection	Contact Officer
Executive Board Report - Waste Management Update - 16 th January 2025	Council Website	Jimmy Unsworth
Executive Board Report - Waste Management Update - 11 th September 2025	Council Website	Jimmy Unsworth

REPORT TO: Executive Board

DATE: 11th December 2025

REPORTING OFFICER: Executive Director Environment and Regeneration

PORTFOLIO: Employment Learning, Skills and Community

SUBJECT: Connect to Work Programme

WARD(S) Borough wide

1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 To inform Executive Board of the opportunity for the Council to participate in the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority's (LCRCA) delivery of the national Connect To Work programme and seek delegated authority to negotiate and execute related Grant Funding Agreements.

2.0 RECOMMENDATION: That

- 1) Executive Board approve the indicative £2,170,118 funding allocation from the LCRCA for delivery of the Halton Connect to Work programme; and**
- 2) Delegate authority to the Executive Director Environment and Regeneration, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Employment Learning, Skills and Community, the Director of Finance / Section 151 Officer and the Director of Legal and Democratic Services, to negotiate and execute Grant Funding Agreements for delivery of the Connect To Work programme.**

3.0 SUPPORTING INFORMATION

- 3.1 The new Connect To Work programme is a key strand of the Government's Get Britain Working Strategy. It is designed to help people with health conditions, disabled people, and those with more complex barriers to work, who are outside the labour market, in 'hidden unemployment', and who wish to be in employment, to find a suitable job and sustain work. It will also help those in work but at risk of falling out of the labour market (and who will struggle to get back into work if they lose their job) to retain employment. The programme is voluntary (non-mandatory) and designed to tackle economic inactivity.
- 3.2 The Connect To Work programme is designed to deliver the evidence-

based supported employment model, 'place, train and maintain', building on the existing DWP-funded supported employment programmes, Local Supported Employment (LSE) and Individual Placement and Support in Primary Care (IPSPC). The programme will operate a five-stage model to help people into work and to retain work over a 12 month period. The five stages are: engagement, vocational profiling, employer engagement, job matching and on and off the job support.

- 3.3 The Connect To Work programme will be delivered across all areas of England by 45 Accountable Bodies. In the Liverpool City Region, the Lead Accountable Body will be LCRCA. Funding is scheduled to run across a 5-year period from 2025/26 to 2030/31 and will be routed to the LCRCA via a Section 31 grant.
- 3.4 The Connect To Work programme applies two evidence-based models of supported employment designed to support individuals with health conditions, disabilities, or complex needs into sustainable employment, but differ in approach and application:
- 3.5 **Supported Employment Quality Framework (SEQF)**
Approach: structured and phased – includes vocational profiling, job matching, and preparatory training.
Target Group: often used for individuals with autism, learning disabilities, or more complex barriers.
Key Features: Greater flexibility in delivery approach; emphasis on long-term job retention; Delivered in line with SEQF standards.
- 3.6 **Individual Placement and Support (IPS)**
Approach: "Place then train" – individuals are rapidly placed into competitive employment with ongoing, tailored support.
Target Group: Initially designed for individuals with severe mental health conditions but now applied more broadly.
Key Features: High fidelity to the IPS model is required; integration with health services; focus on mainstream employment.
- 3.7 The Connect To Work programme currently mandates a 75% IPS/ 25% SEQF mix of delivery; however, in Year 1, flexibility has been granted to LCRCA to allow IPS-only delivery, supporting earlier mobilisation and workforce planning. Both models are integral to achieving inclusive employment outcomes across the Liverpool City Region. The LCRCA has provisionally offered each of the six City Region local authorities the opportunity to deliver IPS in their local area; however, they have stated their intention is to centrally commission the SEQF element of the programme for the Liverpool City Region.
- 3.8 The allocated unit cost varies nationally across areas from £3,500 up to £4,400. The ringfenced Connect To Work programme grant will be paid to Accountable Bodies under Section 2 of the Employment and

Training Act (1973) and will be paid quarterly in arrears based on allowable eligible expenditure; therefore, this is not a payment by results funded programme (which the Council has current experience of delivering).

- 3.9 A core principle of the Connect to Work Supported Employment model is person centred employment support provision that is integrated, where appropriate, with support for the participants' other needs, e.g. social care, probation, health, etc. Participants cannot be on the Connect to Work programme at the same time as they are being supported by another intensive employment programme.
- 3.10 12 months support will be provided to 'out of work' participants with 4 months of support for those who join the programme and already have a job but are at risk of falling out of the labour market. The programme recognises that not all participants will be able to manage full time employment with outputs.
- 3.11 The programme was due to roll out from October 2025, but it is now expected to roll out from January 2026, on a phased basis over two years initially, with a further additional three years indicated, taking the programme up to 2030. Nationally it is targeted to help 100,000 people to seek sustained work.
- 3.12 The LCRCA is the Lead Accountable Body for the Liverpool City Region and they will be required to work in partnership with local authorities and DWP to design and deliver the programme locally, including governance arrangements. The programme will be underpinned by a fidelity assurance system (quality framework), and this will be assessed within the first year of delivery.
- 3.13 Table 1 below shows the maximum funding envelope available to the LCRCA as confirmed by DWP, based on a unit cost of £3,500, and funding cannot be moved across financial years.
- 3.14 **Table 1: Liverpool City Region Connect to Work Allocation by Financial Year**

Year 1 (25/26)	Year 2 (26/27)	Year 3 (27/28)	Year 4 (28/29)	Year 5 (29/30)	Total
£3.5m	£9.4m	£13.1m	£12.9m	£6.5m	£45.4m
- 3.15 The LCRCA has projected central management costs as detailed below in Table 2, which is a percentage of the overall Connect to Work allocation by financial year.
- 3.16 **Table 2: Liverpool City Region Combined Authority Programme Management Costs**

Year 1 (25/26)	Year 2 (26/27)	Year 3 (27/28)	Year 4 (28/29)	Year 5 (29/30)	Total
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£746,990	£867,940	£995,000	£918,840	£814,580	£4,343,350
21.34%	9.23%	7.60%	7.12%	12.53%	9.57%

- 3.17 The LCRCA's intention is to submit a final delivery plan to DWP in November 2025, with DWP projecting a 9-week turnaround to finalise negotiations and issue a Grant Funding Agreement. Connect to Work IPS delivery will not commence until January 2026 at the earliest given that Grant Funding Agreements will need to be entered into with the six City Region local authorities and programmes mobilised, etc.
- 3.18 DWP's proposed funding profile for the Liverpool City Region presents further inherent challenges for early mobilisation as the initial funding is significantly lower than anticipated. The LCRCA has also raised concerns with DWP regarding the mismatch between funding availability and delivery expectations, especially the limited flexibility to reallocate funds across years.
- 3.19 The LCRCA has worked closely with local authorities to finalise cost plans (Grant Cost Register) and ensure that delivery remains viable within the funding envelope. A key priority is to retain regional expertise and capacity, while mitigating the risk of staffing gaps as the Connect To Work programme scales up and transitions into future employment support models.
- 3.20 The funding envelope for The Connect To Work programme is extremely challenging, and it should be noted that, at this point, no other funding has been announced within the employment support space after the current year once the UK Shared Prosperity Fund programme completes in March 2026.
- 3.21 Table 3 below provides indicative allocations for the Connect To Work programme delivery in Halton; however, at this stage there is no Grant Funding Agreement that definitively sets out the final funding allocations, volumes of outputs, eligibility criteria, or any other aspect of the programme.
- 3.22 **Table 3: Halton's Connect to Work (IPS) Allocation by Financial Year (indicative)**
- | Financial Year | £ | Participant Numbers |
|----------------|------------------|---------------------|
| Year 1: 25/26 | 200,362 | 71 |
| Year 2: 26/27 | 440,232 | 156 |
| Year 3: 27/28 | 620,840 | 220 |
| Year 4: 28/29 | 615,196 | 218 |
| Year 5: 29/30 | 293,488 | 52 |
| Total | 2,170,118 | 717 |

- 3.23 HBC's Halton People into Jobs (HPIJ) service is ideally placed to deliver the IPS element of this programme given its previous highly successful record in delivering other employment support

programmes.

4.0 POLICY IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 The new Connect To Work programme is a key plank in the Government's Get Britain Working Strategy.
- 4.2 LCRCA is currently working with Government on its next Integrated Settlement, which will include Employment Support. The LCRCA has recently commissioned a piece of work about the Future of Employment Support in Liverpool City Region, to inform future policy around this piece of work.

5.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 The Connect To Work programme will be funded through a Section 31 grant from DWP to the LCRCA, which would then allocate funding to local authorities, including Halton, via a Grant Funding Agreement(s). The current indicative allocations for the Council over the programme set out in Table 3
- 5.2 The funding profile presents challenges for early mobilisation and long-term planning. The Council would need to manage delivery within the constraints of the annual allocations and ensure that expenditure aligns with the agreed funding envelope.
- 5.3 The Connect To Work programme funding would support existing staff and may fund additional posts required to meet delivery targets.
- 5.4 The Council will be required to report on expenditure and outcomes in line with the terms of the Grant Funding Agreement(s). Finance officers would support the development of robust financial monitoring arrangements to ensure compliance and value for money. Finance officers would continue to work closely with programme leads to finalise cost plans, assess financial risks, and ensure that the programme is delivered within budget and in accordance with the Council's financial governance framework.

6.0 IMPLICATIONS FOR THE COUNCIL'S PRIORITIES

6.1 Improving Health, Promoting Wellbeing and Supporting Greater Independence

The Connect To Work programme is designed to deliver direct and meaningful benefits to residents across Halton, particularly those who are economically inactive due to health conditions, disabilities, or complex personal circumstances. The programme would provide tailored, person-centred support to residents including one-to-one coaching, job matching, and in-work support, helping individuals to overcome barriers and achieve sustainable employment.

HPIJ customers are signposted to various health and wellbeing initiatives that are delivered by Halton Borough Council and other external agencies including those to support individuals with a range of complex health barriers and promote greater independence. A high proportion of customers that access HPIJ is well versed at delivering support to economically inactive and socially isolated residents.

6.2 Building a Strong, Sustainable Local Economy

The Connect to Work programme supports those who are unemployed, economically inactive and with health conditions to prepare for and apply for local jobs. A high proportion of residents supported into work now live and work locally, contributing towards the local economy. HPIJ also provides 'in work support' to help individuals retain employment, contributing to a strong and sustainable workforce for many Halton employers.

6.3 Supporting Children, Young People and Families

Helping individuals into work has wider benefits for families and communities, including improved financial stability, reduced reliance on public services, and increased community participation. Whilst Cared for Children and Care Leavers are not primary target groups, the programme's inclusive design and flexible delivery model will ensure that care-experienced young people can also benefit from support where eligible, contributing to better long-term outcomes.

6.4 Tackling Inequality and Helping Those Who Are Most In Need

The programme specifically targets individuals who are furthest from the labour market, including those with mental health conditions, learning disabilities, and long-term health issues.

6.5 Working Towards a Greener Future

The programme would be delivered through existing HPIJ infrastructure, including town centre locations in Widnes and Runcorn, thereby minimising the need for new premises and reducing the environmental impact associated with construction or additional energy use.

6.6 Valuing and Appreciating Halton and Our Community

Through building on the existing HPIJ infrastructure, the programme would ensure that residents can access support in familiar, accessible town centre locations. This localised delivery model reduces travel barriers and increases engagement.

The programme is designed to be accessible to residents across all wards, ensuring that support is not concentrated in specific areas but equitably distributed based on need.

Delivery would take place in Widnes and Runcorn town centres, providing accessible, visible, and well-connected locations for

residents to engage with employment support services.

The Connect To Work programme would enhance collaboration with local organisations, including community groups, health services, and Jobcentre Plus, enabling more joined-up and responsive support tailored to the needs of each locality.

7.0 Risk Analysis

- 7.1 Funding risk: the funding profile for the programme is uneven, with a low allocation in Year 1 and a steep increase in subsequent years. There is also uncertainty beyond March 2026 when UKSPF support ends. This creates challenges for long-term planning and sustainability.
- 7.2 Staffing and capacity risk: the ability to retain skilled staff is a key risk, due to the delay in the Connect to Work programme commencing and funding for other employment support programmes, delivered by HPIJ, coming to an end.
- 7.3 Programme mobilisation: delays in finalising the Grant Funding Agreement or receiving confirmation of delivery expectations from the LCRCA or DWP could impact HPIJ's ability to mobilise the programme effectively in Year 1 to deliver challenging outcomes.
- 7.4 Performance/outcomes: the programme is outcomes-based, and underperformance could result in reputational risk or financial clawback, although details of such are still to be understood. Robust monitoring and evaluation processes will be essential.
- 7.5 Integration with existing employment/health support provision: aligning the Connect To Work programme with existing employment and health services requires effective coordination. Poor integration could lead to duplication, inefficiencies, or gaps in support.

8.0 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES

- 8.1 The programme is designed to reduce inequalities in access to employment and aligns with the Council's corporate priority: 'Valuing and appreciating Halton and our community'.
- 8.2 HPIJ supports many customers from a diverse range of backgrounds, many with protected characteristics, into a range of positive outcomes.
- 8.3 HPIJ has played an integral role in Halton Borough Council achieving Disability Confident Leader (level 3 status).

9.0 CLIMATE CHANGE IMPLICATIONS

None to report

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

‘None under the meaning of the Act.’

By virtue of paragraph(s) 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A
of the Local Government Act 1972.

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