



Children Young People and Families Policy and Performance Board

**Monday, 9 June 2025 at 6.30 p.m.
Civic Suite, Town Hall, Runcorn**

S. Young

Chief Executive

BOARD MEMBERSHIP

Councillor Geoffrey Logan (Chair)	Labour
Councillor Louise Goodall (Vice-Chair)	Labour
Councillor Sandra Baker	Labour
Councillor Eddie Dourley	Labour
Councillor Mike Fry	Labour
Councillor Eddie Jones	Labour
Councillor Peter Lloyd Jones	Labour
Councillor Carol Plumpton Walsh	Labour
Councillor Margaret Ratcliffe	Liberal Democrats
Councillor Mike Ryan	Labour
Councillor Aimee Skinner	Labour

***Please contact Gill Ferguson on 0151 511 8059 or e-mail
gill.ferguson@halton.gov.uk for further information.
The next meeting of the Board is on Monday, 8 September 2025***

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

Part I

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

CHILDREN YOUNG PEOPLE AND FAMILIES POLICY AND PERFORMANCE BOARD

At a meeting of the Children Young People and Families Policy and Performance Board on Monday, 20 January 2025 in the Civic Suite, Town Hall, Runcorn

Present: Councillors Logan (Chair), C. Plumpton Walsh (Vice-Chair), Baker, Begg, Jones, P. Lloyd Jones, Ratcliffe and Ryan

Apologies for Absence: Councillors Goodall and McDermott

Absence declared on Council business: None

Officers present: A. Jones, Z. Fearon, B. Holmes, K. Appleton, D. Roberts, H. Bell and M. Stapleton-Chambers

Also in attendance: None

ITEMS DEALT WITH UNDER DUTIES EXERCISABLE BY THE BOARD

	<i>Action</i>
CYP27 MINUTES	
The Minutes of the meeting held on 11 November 2024 were taken as read and signed as a correct record.	
CYP28 PUBLIC QUESTION TIME	
It was confirmed that no public questions had been received.	
CYP29 QUARTERLY MONITORING REPORT 1ST JULY 2024 – 30TH SEPTEMBER 2024 - Q2	
The Board received the quarterly monitoring report (QMR) for quarter two (1 July 2024 to 30 September 2024) for Children's Social Care and Early Help and Education Departments.	
The reports informed Members of the key performance indicators identified to measure progress against each of the priorities identified within the Children and Young People Plan.	

It was noted that the new format and content of the QMR was agreed by the Board at the November 2024 meeting. This was then updated to correlate with the priorities identified in the newly launched Children and Young People's Partnership Plan 2024-27, and to comply with the new Corporate QMR reporting template.

Members commented that progress against many of the milestones was in 'amber' so appeared to have stalled, and challenged the reasons for this. The Chair also commented that he had challenged the schools SEND transport policies as there were savings to be made there, as well as in other areas – residential placements, outside foster agencies and court costs. It was agreed that a meeting would be set up to discuss these four areas in particular. Officers would provide relevant information on demand for the services, costs and strategies currently being used. In relation to SEND transport, examples of types of requests being dealt with would be presented at the meeting, to assist Members.

In response to the queries over the amber status' the following additional information was provided in response to questions:

P1.4 – Partner led MAPS – there was work going on in the background and Officers were working with the Early Help Improvement Board and other partners. Additional data would be available in Q3;

P6.5 – in relation to the Local Authority's role in ensuring children who were electively home educated (EHE) were safeguarded and received a suitable education, the Government was progressing a Bill in Parliament which would legislate this;

P6.5/6 – in cases where there was a concern following an inspection, over the quality of education received by a child who was EHE, a Schools Attendance Order could be issued via the Court and the child would be admitted to mainstream education using 'in year fair access';

P5.3 – The two new members of Quality Assurance staff were now in post and had visited all schools. In relation to exclusions it was noted that there was a change in the reasons for being excluded, as incidents relating to drugs possession and use had increased and schools operated a zero tolerance policy towards this. Drugs were being found in adapted vapes and Ketamine and snuff had been discovered recently in secondary schools. Officers advised that a multi-agency partnership meeting was planned to discuss this issue – Councillors Lloyd Jones and Ryan requested to know the details of this so they could attend;

P3.1 – there were improvements in EHCP completions and more were expected in quarter 3; and

P7.7 – agency costs were coming down and social care staff were using Connect Halton for recruitment, in liaison with HR. It was confirmed that the Council did not pay ‘finders fees’ for agency staff who became employed by the Council full time.

RESOLVED: That the quarterly monitoring report be accepted as the mechanism by which Members could monitor and scrutinise progress going forward.

Executive Director
of Children's
Services

CYP30 SERVICES FOR CHILDREN AND FAMILIES IN HALTON IMPROVEMENT PLAN

The Board received a report from the Executive Director of Children’s Services, which shared the submitted Services for Children and Families in Halton’s Improvement Plan and provided an update against the 12 key areas of improvement.

The ILACS (Inspecting Local Authority Children’s Services) Areas of Improvement document was appended to the report, from A1 to A12 and these were presented to the Board one by one.

It was reported that budgetary decisions throughout the improvement journey would be informed by the priorities identified within the Improvement Plan. The Finance and Investment Board would track spend and the impact this was having on the outcomes for Children and Young People and families. One Member requested to know the membership of the Finance and Investment Board, referred to in paragraph 5.1. This would be sought and sent following the meeting.

In response to Members questions regarding A3 - Quality of Social Work Practice - Plans, Assessments and Planning, it was commented that 1.1 support and targeted work had been undertaken by the Social Work Academy, this included assessment training. The impacts of the training were already being felt, for example the numbers of child court cases were reducing and positive financial benefits were being seen. Further impacts would be reported at a later date when the results of audits carried out in December 2024 were available.

RESOLVED: That the Improvement Plan be accepted as the mechanism by which Elected Members can monitor and scrutinise progress going forward.

Executive Director
of Children's
Services

CYP31 A REPORT ON THE WORK TO DATE ON DBV AND IMPACT

The Board considered a report from the Director of Children's Services, which provided a progress update, (against the targets set out in the DBV Grant) on the Delivering Better Values (DBV) project, covering the period of the third quarter, from October 2024 to January 2025.

DBV was a Department for Education (DfE) programme working to identify and implement local opportunities to improve the outcomes for children and young people with SEND, across 54 Local Authorities and to aid local systems (alongside existing local and other DfE programmes) in their objective of achieving financial sustainability.

Halton was identified as being eligible to apply for the DBV grant funding so an application was submitted. Halton was awarded the full grant of £1m which provided an opportunity to positively transform inclusive practices across Halton.

The report provided detailed updates on the work being carried out in workstreams 1 and 2, and described the next steps to be taken.

Further to Members questions on the Programme, the following information was provided:

- Some schools, including academies, were initially hesitant to participate in the DBV Programme, for a number of reasons, such as waiting to see results before committing. The Council's Quality Assurance Officers were also now in place and monitored the Programme. Most Academy Trusts in Halton were now participating in the Programme;
- In order to select two High Dependency Pilot Units within secondary schools for the exploration of invest to save measures, Officers requested expressions of interest from schools at the Halton Association of Secondary Headteachers (HASH) meeting. Once they were received, the schools were visited and the ones that offered the best existing resources were selected;
- The numbers of children in Halton that received extra time for exams – this was not to hand so would be sent following the meeting, with last year's figures for comparison; and
- The PRU was intended a temporary measure for

excluded children, however some got stuck there. Some obtained EHCP's but the aim was to diagnose these children whilst in mainstream schools, to avoid later misdiagnosis or exclusion.

Executive Director
of Children's
Services

RESOLVED: That the report is noted.

CYP32 NUMBER OF YOUNG PEOPLE WHO ARE NOT IN EDUCATION, EMPLOYMENT, OR TRAINING (NEET) AND WHOSE ACTIVITY IS NOT KNOWN TO THE LOCAL AUTHORITY

The Board considered a report from the Executive Director of Children's Services, which gave the annual NEET (Not in Education, Employment or Training) and 'Not Known' figures for Halton and the reasons for growth of the number of young people who were NEET.

The Education and Skills Act 2008 placed two raising participation age related duties on local authorities regarding academic aged 16-17 year olds as follows:

- To promote the effective participation in education and training of 16 and 17 year olds in their area, with a view to ensuring that those persons fulfilled the duty to participate in education or training; and
- To make arrangements to identify 16 and 17 year olds who were not participating in education or training.

The report and accompanying presentation described the work of the 14-19 Team at Halton who provided careers guidance and support to those who were not participating and informed how they worked with schools to support young people to transition from Year 11 into Post 16 education.

It was noted that paragraph 3.10.5 required a correction. The percentage referred to in 2021 should read 95.8%, not 98.8%.

The reasons why NEET and Not Known figures were rising were outlined in the presentation. There were multiple issues affecting provision in Halton, these were outlined and the provision that remained was presented to the Board.

Members were provided with statistics for Halton against national, regional, LCR and statistical neighbours where it was noted that Halton had seen the highest overall increase in NEETS since 2018/19.

The following responses were provided to Members questions:

- Following encouragement and hard work from the Council, *The Growth Company* was now in Halton, based at Murdishaw Community Centre. They were funded by the Department for Education (DfE), this was explained to the Board. They were offering 30 Level 1 and 2 places currently and hoped to increase this once they had more capacity;
- In relation to Council properties, an Education Officer was a member of the Asset Management Working Group who were looking at potential vacant properties for future use by other post 16 providers;
- The possibility of the Council setting up its own provision for 16-18 year olds was unlikely due to funding, as there would be set up costs to pay for and there would be a gap one year before any DfE funding was made available. The Growth Company had set up in Halton despite these risks; and
- Further information on The Growth Company in relation to progression for students and attendance of Widnes students would be provided.

Members understood the challenges faced with provision and welcomed the introduction of Level 1 and 2 courses for students by this company, as there were no others being offered in Halton.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

CYP33 COUNCILWIDE SPENDING AS AT 30 NOVEMBER 2024

The Board received a report from the Director of Finance, which gave the Council's overall revenue and capital spending position as at 30 November 2024, together with the latest 2024-25 outturn forecast.

On 16 January 2025, Executive Board received the attached report and appendices, which presented details of Councilwide revenue and capital spending by each department and outlined the reasons for key variances from budget.

Executive Board has requested that a copy of the report be shared with each Policy and Performance Board for information. This is to ensure that all Members had a full appreciation of the Councilwide financial position, in addition to their specific areas of responsibility.

Executive Director
of Children's
Services

RESOLVED: That the Councilwide financial position
as outlined in the report be noted.

Meeting ended at 8.35 p.m.

REPORT TO: Children, Young People & Families PPB

DATE: 9 June 2025

REPORTING OFFICER: Chief Executive

SUBJECT: Public Question Time

WARD(S) Boroughwide

1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

1.1 To consider any questions submitted by the Public in accordance with Standing Order 34(9).

1.2 Details of any questions received will be circulated at the meeting.

2.0 RECOMMENDATION: That any questions received be dealt with.

3.0 SUPPORTING INFORMATION

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

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

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

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

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

4.0 **POLICY IMPLICATIONS**

4.1 None identified.

5.0 **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

5.1 None identified.

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

6.1 **Improving Health, Promoting Wellbeing and Supporting Greater Independence**

None identified.

6.2 **Building a Strong, Sustainable Local Economy**

None identified.

6.3 **Supporting Children, Young People and Families**

None identified.

6.4 **Tackling Inequality and Helping Those Who Are Most In Need**

None identified.

6.5 **Working Towards a Greener Future**

None identified.

6.6 **Valuing and Appreciating Halton and Our Community**

None identified.

7.0 **RISK ANALYSIS**

7.1 None.

8.0 **EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES**

8.1 None identified.

9.0 **CLIMATE CHANGE IMPLICATIONS**

9.1 None identified.

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

10.1 None under the meaning of the Act.

REPORT TO: Children, Young People & Families PPB

DATE: 9 June 2025

REPORTING OFFICER: Chief Executive

SUBJECT: Executive Board Minutes

WARD(S) Boroughwide

1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

1.1 The Minutes relating to the Children, Young People and Families Portfolio which have been considered by the Executive Board are attached at Appendix 1 for information.

1.2 The Minutes are submitted to inform the Policy and Performance Board of decisions taken in their area.

2.0 RECOMMENDATION: That the Minutes be noted.

3.0 POLICY IMPLICATIONS

3.1 None.

4.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

4.1 None.

5.0 IMPLICATIONS FOR THE COUNCIL'S PRIORITIES

5.1 Improving Health, Promoting Wellbeing and Supporting Greater Independence

None.

5.2 Building a Strong, Sustainable Local Economy

None.

5.3 Supporting Children, Young People and Families

None.

5.4 Tackling Inequality and Helping Those Who Are Most In Need

None.

5.5 **Working Towards a Greener Future**

None.

5.6 **Valuing and Appreciating Halton and Our Community**

None.

6.0 **RISK ANALYSIS**

6.1 None.

7.0 **EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES**

7.1 None.

8.0 **CLIMATE CHANGE IMPLICATIONS**

8.1 None identified.

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

9.1 None under the meaning of the Act.

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

EXECUTIVE BOARD MEETING HELD ON 16 JANUARY 2025

EXB 72	SCHOOLS ADMISSIONS ARRANGEMENTS 2026-27 – KEY DECISION
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The Board received a report of the Executive Director – Children’s Services, which requested the approval of the School Admissions Policy, Admission Arrangements and Co-ordinated Schemes, for admission to primary and secondary schools, including Academy, Free School and Voluntary Controlled schools for the September 2026 intake.

The Board was advised that on 1 October 2024, the Local Authority issued a statutorily required consultation on the proposed admission arrangements and co-ordinated admission schemes for the September 2026 intake for primary and secondary schools (attached as appendices 1 and 2 respectively). The primary scheme also included the proposed oversubscription criteria for community and voluntary controlled schools for whom the Local Authority was the admission authority.

The report provided details of the consultation, which ran until 12 November 2024. It was noted that no amendments to the oversubscription criteria were suggested, as these reflected the criteria worked well and met the requirements of the Department for Education’s School Admissions Code.

It was noted that all Halton’s secondary schools were either academies, free schools or voluntary aided and were therefore their own admission authorities, with responsibility for consulting and determining their own admissions criteria and their own Published Admission Number (PAN).

Reason(s) for Decision

Local Authorities as the admission authority for community and voluntary schools are required to consult and then determine their admission arrangements annually, and are also required to determine coordinated schemes for primary and secondary admission rounds that apply to all schools.

Alternative Options Considered and Rejected

None

Implementation Date

The implementation date is September 2025 which is when the timetabled process for the September 2026 intake commences.

RESOLVED: That the Board approves the Coordinated Scheme for Admission to Primary Schools – which also contains the Local Authority's admissions criteria to community and voluntary controlled schools, and approves the Co-ordinated Scheme for admission to secondary schools, both of which will apply to the September 2026 intake.

EXB73	CAPITAL PROGRAMME 2025-26 – KEY DECISION
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The Board considered a report of the Executive Director – Children's Services, which provided a summary of the capital funding received by the Council from central Government to support capital works and programmes within schools for 2025/26.

The Board was advised that the Department for Education (DfE) had not announced the School Condition Allocation Capital Grant for 2025/26 however, given the timescales for some of the proposed capital projects, there was a requirement to present this report, so it was compiled using the 2024/25 allocation, which was £704,785.

The report set out details of the indicative funding available to support capital projects across the schools estate and also explained how the School Condition Allocation would be utilised.

Reason(s) for Decision

The Council was required to demonstrate appropriate identification of need against spend from the School Condition Allocation Grant. The work would provide schools with a suitable learning environment and manage the condition of the educational buildings we are responsible for.

Alternative Options Considered and Rejected

None.

Implementation Date

It is intended that all works would be completed by March 2026.

RESOLVED: That

- 1) the position regarding capital funding from the Department for Education for 2025/26 be noted;
- 2) the proposals to be funded from the School Condition Capital Allocation and Basic Need Funding be approved; and
- 3) the capital allocations are put forward for inclusion in the budget report to full Council.

EXECUTIVE BOARD MEETING HELD ON 20 FEBRUARY 2025

EXB 89	PERMISSION TO CONSULT – HOME TO SCHOOL TRANSPORT FOR PUPILS WITH SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS & DISABILITIES – KEY DECISION
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The Board considered a report which sought approval to commence a consultation with stakeholders and partners with a view to determining a new policy on sustainable travel and transport for children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities. In accordance with the DfE Statutory Guidance, provision of assisted home to school transport is for eligible SEND pupils of statutory school age, 5-16 years of age. The Council currently provides a transport service to early years children and post 16 SEND students, which falls outside of their statutory duties.

The Board was advised that the number of SEND pupils requiring specialist transport had significantly increased over the past number of years. This was a trend that appeared to be replicated in every other local authority across the country. A comparison in Halton was provided in the report for between 2012 and 2024 for in Borough and out of Borough transport.

It was proposed that the Local Authority consults with parents/carers, educational establishments and other interested parties on revised travel solutions. The consultation would take the form of two parts:

Part A: Flexible travel arrangements and increasing independence

This would include, personal travel budgets, escalation of independent travel training, centralised picks ups and mobility vehicles.

Part B: Reviewing discretionary transport

This would include distance criteria, provision of transport for pupils under the age of 5 years, post 16 transport and governance changes.

Reason(s) for Decision

The report seeks the Board approval to commence a consultation with stakeholders and partners with a view to determining a new policy on sustainable travel and transport for children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities.

Alternative Options Considered and Rejected

The alternative option would be to not consult on Home to School Transport provision and continue with the current policy.

Implementation Date

June 2025 report back to Executive Board.

RESOLVED: That the Board

- 1) note the report;
- 2) approve the commencement of a consultation with stakeholders and partners with regard to implementing a new Home to School and College Travel and Transport Policy for Children and Young People with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities from September 2025; and
- 3) confirm they support the overall process.

EXECUTIVE BOARD MEETING HELD ON 13 March 2025

EXB110	SERVICES FOR MISSING FROM HOME AND CARE FOR YOUNG PEOPLE ACROSS CHESHIRE FOR HALTON, CHESHIRE WEST & CHESTER AND WARRINGTON: REQUEST FOR WAIVER OF STANDING ORDERS
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The Board considered a request for a waiver in compliance with Procurement Standing Order 1.14.4 iv of part 3.1 and 3.2 of Procurement Standing Orders to allow the continuation of a contract with We are With You to deliver on behalf of the Council, the Tri-Party Missing from Home and Care Service, for a period of one year from 1 July 2025 to 30 June 2026. We are With You was commissioned to deliver the Pan Cheshire Missing from Home and Care Service across Warrington, Cheshire West and Halton.

RESOLVED: The Board approve that the contract with We are With You should be extended for a further twelve months without going through the Procurement process, 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.

EXECUTIVE BOARD MEETING HELD ON 17 APRIL 2025

EXB122	RECRUITMENT OF TWO SPECIALIST FOSTER CARERS
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The Board considered a report of the Executive Director, Children's Services, which sought approval to the invest to save proposal of recruiting 2 Specialist Foster Carer's as an additional care option for our Children and Young People with complex needs in Care. The report set out the benefits to the child and to the Council of a Specialist Foster Carers Scheme.

RESOLVED: The Board approve the recruitment of 2 Specialist Foster Carers as part of a scheme that aims to move children and/or young people from high cost residential placements into a foster care, family environment.

EXB123**HALTON PROVISION OF INTERNAL SUPPORTED
ACCOMMODATION**

The Board considered a report of the Executive Director, Children's Services, that outlined the background and current position of the supported accommodation contract and proposed options around re-procurement of the Service.

RESOLVED: That

- 1) the report be noted and options appraised;
- 2) approval is granted to the recommendation that the contract with People, Potential, Possibilities (P3) should be extended for a further twelve months without going through the 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;
- 3) a 12 month extension of the internal Supported Accommodation Contract, inclusive of the inflationary uplift be approved;
- 4) permission is granted for the Head of Commissioning and Placement, and the Head of Children in Care and Care Leavers, to implement the building transfer; and
- 5) the re-commissioning of the service, via open competitive tender by March 2026, and delegation of responsibility to the Head of Commissioning to undertake any further necessary steps be approved.

REPORT TO:	Children, Young People and Families Policy and Performance Board
DATE:	9 th June 2025
REPORTING OFFICER:	Executive Director of Children's Services
PORTFOLIO:	Children, Young People and Families
SUBJECT:	Performance Management Report for Quarter 3 & 4 2024/25
WARD(S)	Borough wide

1.0 PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To consider, and to raise any questions or points of clarification, in respect of performance management for Quarter 3 – 1st September to 31st December 2024 and Quarter 4 - 1st January 2025 – 31st March 2025
- 1.2 Key priorities for development or improvement in 2023/24 were agreed by Members and included in the Business Plan, for the various functional areas reporting to the Board as detailed below:
 - Education, Inclusion, Provision Services
 - Children and Families Services

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

2.0 RECOMMENDED: That the Policy and Performance Board

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

3.0 SUPPORTING INFORMATION

- 3.1 Departmental objectives provide a clear statement on what services are planning to achieve and to show how they contribute to the Council's strategic priorities. Such information is central to the Council's performance management arrangements and the Policy and Performance Board has a key role in monitoring performance and strengthening accountability.

4.0 POLICY IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 There are no policy implications associated with this report.

5.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 There are no policy implications associated with this report.

6.0 IMPLICATIONS FOR THE COUNCIL'S PRIORITIES

6.1 Children & Young People in Halton

Have a strong and robust framework for identifying and responding across all agencies is key to supporting children and young people, and partners are clear about their responsibilities and role in working together.

6.2 Employment, Learning & Skills in Halton

Having a strong and robust framework to ensure that children, young people and families are supported in their learning and future employment and skills development.

6.3 A Healthy Halton

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

6.4 A Safer Halton

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

6.5 Halton's Urban Renewal

None

7.0 RISK ANALYSIS

- 7.1 Not applicable.

8.0 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES

- 8.1 Not applicable.

9.0 CLIMATE CHANGE IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 Not applicable.

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

- 10.1 None within the meaning of the Act

Departmental Quarterly Monitoring Report

Directorate: Children's Services

Departments: Children Social Care and Early Help, Education

Period: Quarter 3 - 1st October 2024 – 31st December 2024

1.0 Introduction

This quarterly monitoring report covers the **Children's Services Directorate's** first quarter period up to 31st December 2024.

It describes key developments and progress against 'key' milestones and performance indicators for the service in line with the Corporate 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 Q3	Supporting Commentary
P1.1	Increase in the number of families accessing support through the Family Hub on a quarterly basis (Source – Early Help)		Attendance remains stable, as it has for last 12 months, after a dramatic increase in 2023. This quarter saw a slight increase of 230 to 11127.
P1.2	Increase the number of successful Public Law Outline/Pre-proceedings outcomes i.e. prevent Children entering care (Source - Rebecca Gamble - Andy Jones)		During this period, Halton concluded the pre-proceeding phase for 25 children. Of these, care proceedings were initiated for six children, while the remaining 19 successfully stepped down from pre-proceedings. This demonstrates that during this period, the pre-proceeding phase was approximately 76% more likely to successfully divert cases away from court proceedings.
P1.3	Decrease the number of Children in Care (CIC) on a quarterly basis (Source – Children in Care)		376 in Care at end of Q3 2024/25 with 374 at the end of Q2 2024/25. Similar numbers.
P1.4	Increase the number of partner led Multi Agency Plans (MAPS) (Source – Early Help)		External held MAPS have not increase according to the data, however upon greater scrutiny of Eclipse lack of appropriate recording of external Lead Professionals could be a contributing factor. Steps have now been taken to address this issue but it is not expected that we will see a huge spike in numbers following this. On a positive note, our Health colleagues are now completing MAPS. The numbers are still low but definitely an improvement. Going forward, all external MAP training will now be offered via the Safeguarding Partnership and we are just in the process of updating the website with all the documents. We also have an Early Help task & Finish group that has met on x1 occasion to look at the barriers around external MAPS and what we can do to improve the uptake.

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 Q3	Supporting Commentary
P2.1	Reduce the number of Children in Care (CIC) who moved between placements (Source – Children in Care)		9% at end of Q3 2024/25 with 10% at the end of Q2 2024/25 , 12% at end of Q1 2024/25. Showing a reduction so far this reporting year.
P2.2	Reduce the number of Children in Care who are/were placed in out of Borough in residential care (Source – Children in Care)		Q3 2024/25, 14% in borough (86% out). Q2 2024/25, 16% in borough (84% out), Q1 2024/25, 17% in borough (83% out). Plans are in place to re-establish our in-area provision for Children in Care and Care Leavers throughout 25/26 to manage expectations. The sufficiency strategy and action is being overseen by the re-established sufficiency board.
P2.3	Reduce the costs of out of borough residential placement placements (Source – Children in Care)		Relaunched resource panel which sits weekly providing scrutiny and oversight value for money placement choices. Started to see cost avoidance opportunities. In house provision mentioned in P2.2 will help and looking at partnering with not-for-profit residential provider. High cost placement meeting has been established chaired by Zoe Fearon, Executive Director of Children’s Services.
P2.4	Reduce the number of Children in Care (CIC) who are placed in independent fostering agencies (Source – Children in Care)		Q3 2024/25, 100 children. Q2 2024/25, 94 children placed in Independent Fostering Agencies with 94 in Q1 2024/25. Sufficiency Board will be looking at this area.
P2.5	Reduce the costs of out of borough independent foster placements (Source – Children in Care)		As above (P2.4)
P2.6	Increase the number of Halton Foster Carers and kinship carers (Source – Children in Care)		Q3 2024/25, 18%. Q2 2024/25 17% of all Children in Care are with a Kinship Carer, with Q1 2024/25 being at 16%. Q3 2024/25, 63% maintains same as Q2 2024/25 and Q1 2024/25, 63% of Halton’s Children in Care are with Foster Carers.

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 Q3	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)		Rate at 58.1% at the end of Q3 2024/25. Although down from end of Q2 2024/25, this marks a 31.2% improvement from the formal SEN2 2024 position and is likely to represent the SEN2 2025 formal position. National data on this is not available until June/July 2025.	
P3.2	Increase the % of Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCP) Annual reviews that are carried out within 12 months (Source – SEND)		Rate at 60.8% at end of Q3 2024/25. This is down from Q3 2024/25, but rates vary from month to month and no national or other LA comparators are available until June/July 2025, with the release of SEN2 formal data.	
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 – Placements and Commissioning)		There were 136 CYPs currently placed in Independent Non-maintained Special Schools and a further 20 open referrals that are awaiting placement. This represents 7.9% of the CYPs with EHCPs in the Borough down from 8.0% in November 2024. Although, there is a slight drop in the percentage of CYPs with EHCPs placed in Non maintained independent special schools (INMSS), the actual number has slightly increased from 133 in November 2024 and 135 in December 2024 compared to the current number at 136. Of this number, 38 CYPs are attending INMISS within the Borough while the remaining 98 CYPs are placed in INMISS out of Borough.	
P3.4	Decrease the spend on independent and out of borough (OOB) provision for Special Educational Needs and Disability Children (SEND) (Source – SEND)		A “High Cost Placement” has previously been considered however the development of a new panel to compliment Resource Panel has meant that referral routes have to be reconsidered alongside financial aspects, the current progress of the child, and any associated detriment to a potential placement move. This is being considered as part of PAP3 within the SEND Improvement Plan.	
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 – Placements and Commissioning)		The LA 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. Improvements have been made across staffing levels and concentrated work has been undertaken in special schools and resource bases. Performance is good around dysphagia, Youth Offending Service and early years cohorts. Targets are in place for Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) and targets are being reviewed to show improvements with assessment rates. The LA 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 ASD need.	
P3.6	Speech and Language Therapy (SaLT) – Increase the number where treatment commenced within 12 weeks of referral receipt (Source – Placements and Commissioning)			





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 Q3	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)		Halton State-funded Nursery Schools maintain 100% 99% of all Early Years settings (pre-schools, day care, out of school clubs, childminders) were Outstanding or Met.	
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 - Schools)		Overall grades are no longer available following Ofsted inspections of schools. As at end of Q3 2024/25, including short inspections, eleven schools in Halton have been inspected under the new framework, with all schools achieving good or outstanding across all inspection areas, and schools receiving short inspections maintaining their previous ‘good’ outcomes. Whilst several schools await inspection under the new framework it is difficult to compare against national and other LA positions, however the trend this academic year is positive.	

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 Q3	Supporting Commentary																								
P5.1	Reduce the number of incidents of School Suspensions (academic year cumulative to end of quarter) (Source – Education Welfare)		Number suspensions up to December 2024 = 654. (September is the start of a new academic year) Suspensions result in missed learning so impact on a child’s attendance and can impact on academic achievement. Schools have the opportunity to bring to Team around the School (TAS) any children where they are struggling to manage behaviour concerns. TAS is a multi-agency group of professionals including health, early help, education psychologists, SEND and Education Welfare to provide advice and strategies to school to address behaviour concerns.																								
P5.2	Reduce the number of children subject to School suspensions (academic year cumulative to end of quarter) (Source – Education Welfare)		Number of children receiving a suspension up to December 2024 = 373																								
P5.3	Reduce the number of permanent exclusions (academic year cumulative to end of quarter) (Source – Education Welfare)		Number of permanent exclusions up to December 2024 = 23 (1 post 16 child) which is higher than this point last year which was 16. Drug and alcohol seems to be the main concern with eight this year to date. To compare we had three overall last year. <table><tr><th rowspan="3">Exclusions 2024/2025</th><th rowspan="2">Exclusions to Date</th><th colspan="2">Primary</th><th colspan="2">Secondary</th><th>Post 16</th></tr><tr><th colspan="2">3</th><th colspan="2">19</th><th>1</th></tr><tr><th>KS1</th><th>KS2</th><th>KS3</th><th>KS4</th><th>KS5</th></tr><tr><td></td><td>23</td><td>0</td><td>3</td><td>7</td><td>12</td><td>1</td></tr></table>	Exclusions 2024/2025	Exclusions to Date	Primary		Secondary		Post 16	3		19		1	KS1	KS2	KS3	KS4	KS5		23	0	3	7	12	1
Exclusions 2024/2025	Exclusions to Date	Primary				Secondary		Post 16																			
		3			19		1																				
	KS1	KS2	KS3	KS4	KS5																						
	23	0	3	7	12	1																					
P5.4	Increase the % of early Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCP) reviews for SEND Children subject to school exclusion (Source – SEND)		10 children with EHCP were permanently excluded in 2023/24 academic year, 50% of them had their plan reviewed within the 12-month statutory time limit.																								




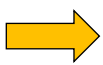
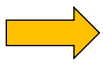
Corporate Priority	Priority 1 – Improving Health, Promoting Wellbeing and Supporting Greater Independence. Priority 3 – Supporting Children, Young People and Families Priority 4 – Tackling inequality and helping those who are in most need
CYP P6	Improve attendance at school, college and in Early Years settings including sufficiency of places.

Milestone		Progress Q3	Supporting Commentary																	
P6.1	Child Care Expansion roll out - Increase the number of eligible working parents who access child care support: <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 (Source – Early Years)		474 2-Year-Old of working parents accessed funded hours. 506 Under 2s of working parents accessed funding hours. Figures from September 2024 headcount. Numbers refer to children accessing any funded hours for working parents, up to and including the maximum 15-hour entitlement. Under 2s eligibility began in September 2024. 2-Year-Old eligibility began in April 2024, the number of 2 years old accessing funded hours for working parents was 503.																	
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) (Source – Early Years)		394 2-Year-Old eligible for the vulnerable 2-Year-Old funding accessed funded hours Figures from September 2024 headcount. 423 out of 437 target placed by 27 th November 2024 (97% placed). 97% attending Good or above Early Years providers																	
P6.3	Increase the % taking up of Early Years Entitlement for 3- to 4-year-olds. (Source – Early Years)		1260 - & 4-year-old children accessed Early Years Entitlement. 90.2% take up 1260 (on September 2024 headcount) out of 1397 (on Primary Care Trust GP registrations list October 2024) are accessing - & 4-Year-Old Early Entitlement for 3 & 4 Year olds in Halton.																	
P6.4	Increased attendance at schools: <ul style="list-style-type: none">a) Primaryb) Pupil Referral Unit (PRU)c) Secondaryd) Special Source – Education Welfare)		<table><tr><td>September 2024</td><td>December 2024</td><td>September - December change</td></tr><tr><td>a) 95.58%</td><td>a) 94.74%</td><td>a) -0.84%</td></tr><tr><td>b) 52.65%</td><td>b) 49.20%</td><td>b) -3.45</td></tr><tr><td>c) 92.52%</td><td>c) 91.19%</td><td>c) -1.33%</td></tr><tr><td>d) 91.50%</td><td>d) 90.21</td><td>d) -1.29%</td></tr></table>	September 2024	December 2024	September - December change	a) 95.58%	a) 94.74%	a) -0.84%	b) 52.65%	b) 49.20%	b) -3.45	c) 92.52%	c) 91.19%	c) -1.33%	d) 91.50%	d) 90.21	d) -1.29%	<p>Source: Wonde data – September 2024 (dated 28th), December 2024 (dated 4th Jan 2025)</p>	
September 2024	December 2024	September - December change																		
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d) 91.50%	d) 90.21	d) -1.29%																		


P6.5	<p>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)</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) (Source – Education Welfare)</p>		<table><tr><td></td><td>Sep 24</td><td>Oct 24</td><td>Nov 24</td><td>Dec 24</td></tr><tr><td>EHE</td><td>232</td><td>230</td><td>233</td><td>238</td></tr><tr><td>a)</td><td>1</td><td>1</td><td>3</td><td>3</td></tr><tr><td>b)</td><td>3</td><td>4</td><td>4</td><td>5</td></tr><tr><td>c)</td><td>12</td><td>12</td><td>10</td><td>10</td></tr></table> <p>Source: Synergy</p>		Sep 24	Oct 24	Nov 24	Dec 24	EHE	232	230	233	238	a)	1	1	3	3	b)	3	4	4	5	c)	12	12	10	10
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c)	12	12	10	10																								
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) (Source – Education Welfare)</p>		<p>0 children confirmed as missing education.</p> <p>Children on the tracking list who currently do not have a school named on the data management system is 71 which is less than the previous quarter. At the start of September 2024 there are a number of children who attend an out of borough school in a neighbouring LA or who have a school place following a transition point who don't turn up for school. All of these children are tracked by the Children Missing in Education Officer within the Education Welfare Service team to identify their whereabouts working together with schools and other agencies. This number tends to reduce after September but reflects movements of children in and out of borough both to neighbouring LAs and other areas. The Children Missing Education officer works closely with other LAs to track and support children back into education.</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) (Source – Education Welfare)</p>		<p>Children identified as accessing a part time timetable is 114 a slight increase on last quarter.</p> <p>A part time timetable is put in place with the agreement of parent and school for a short time period to support a child who may be struggling for a number of reasons to access a full time offer at that time. This enables school to work with parents, the child and other professionals to support the child and address the barriers to attendance that were identified. A PTT cannot be used for behaviour reasons.</p>																									
P6.8	<p>Reduce the number of children accessing alternative provision 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) (Source – SEND)</p>		<p>The information that we have linked to Alternative Provision is children who attend the Bridge School – for future reports this data will be available broken into the groups.</p> <p>We do now have the data available for electively home educated children who are Children in Need (CIN) or Children subject to a child protection Plan (CPP). This is now shared monthly. Latest figures five CPP and two CIN.</p>																									


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

Milestone		Progress Q3	Data and any supporting commentary
P7.1	<p>Increase the number of audits grades as good in the sub section 'Identifying & Responding to Need, Abuse & Thresholds' (Source – Safeguarding Unit)</p>		<p>October 2024</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 75% Early Help were graded 'good' 25% Help & Protect were graded 'good' <p>November 2024</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 75% Early Help were graded 'good' 11% Help & Protect were graded 'good'
P7.2	<p>Increase the number of audits grades as good in the sub section 'Providing Effective Help' (Source – Safeguarding Unit)</p>		<p>October 2024</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 75% in Early Help were graded 'good' 25% Help & Protect were graded 'good' 0% Children in Care were graded 'good' 20% Care Leavers were graded 'good' <p>November 2024</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 75% Early Help were graded 'good' (33% Outstanding) 11% Help & Protect were graded 'good' 29% Children in Care were graded 'good' 33% Care Leavers were graded 'good'



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 – Safeguarding Unit)		October 2024 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 50% in Early Help were graded 'good' 25% Help & Protect were graded 'good' 0% Children in Care were graded 'good' 40% Care Leavers were graded 'good' November 2024 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 75% Early Help were graded 'good' 11% Help & Protect were graded 'good' 29% Children in Care were graded 'good' 67% Care Leavers were graded 'good'
P7.4	Increase the number of children's casefiles receiving an overall grade of 'Good' through the audit process (Source – Safeguarding Unit)		October 2024 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 0% Early Help were graded 'inadequate' 33% Help & Protect were graded 'inadequate' 20% Children in Care were graded 'inadequate' 0% Care Leavers were graded 'inadequate' November 2024 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 0% Early Help were graded 'inadequate' 55% Help & Protect were graded 'inadequate' 17% Children in Care were graded 'inadequate' 0% Care Leavers were graded 'inadequate' <p>Similar to Q2 2024/25, the continued number of inadequate gradings may reflect more robust auditing rather than a reduction in the quality of practice.</p> <p>Given the Quality Assurance measures in place, we are confident that this does not reflect a deterioration in practice, rather as an organisation we are beginning to form a shared understanding of what good looks like based on the Ofsted grade descriptors.</p>
P7.5	Increase the number of social workers accessing training through the Social Work Academy (Source – Social Work Academy)		<p>In Q3 2024/25 there has been an increase in the number of Social Workers accessing training through the Social Work Academy.</p> <p>Q2 2024/25, 202 practitioners attended training through the Social Work Academy.</p> <p>Increased to 236 in Q3 2024/25, this includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Trauma informed practice Plans and planning training Training support with Newly Qualified Social Workers 1:1 training support
P7.6	Increasing the number of permanent staff (Source – Katherine Appleton)		<p>Halton's head of workforce started in September 2024. This role will support the LA around their recruitment strategy, the staff progression offer, will oversee the social work academy and undertake the role of PSW.</p> <p>Since commencement of the post there has been swifter progress on the recruitment process, reducing the delay in getting adverts out and the coordination of interviews. The number of permanent staff has increased and we are progressing recruitment of additional teams to improve the quality of services and reduce numbers of children coming into care.</p>
P7.7	Reduce the number of agency workers and associated costs (Source – Katherine Appleton)		<p>Children's Social Care continue to serve notice on agency workers when the posts are appointed to. We have remained firm on adhering to the regional payrates. Connect2 Halton was launched and agency staff are all logged through Connect2. Agency staff numbers continue to follow a downward trajectory</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 Q3	Data and any supporting commentary
P8.1	Increase % breast feeding and initiation and maintenance at 6 – 8 weeks (Source – Health)	Refer comment	** Data due early - mid February 2025** Target is an annual increase of 0.5% at 6-8 weeks.
P8.2	Maintain/increase the number of schools engaging in the Healthy Schools Programme which includes whole School approaches to tackling obesity. (Source – Health)		37 schools were signed up by the end of Q3 2024/25. Q3 is the busiest quarter for school sign ups every year once the new school year is under way. Aim is for 100% of schools to engage by July 2025.

P8.3	Increase the number of parents if children age under 5 accessing the 'HENRY' Programme (Source – Health)		17 referrals received this quarter. Eight commenced on a course, nine did not engage. Huge majority of referrals are self-referral. This is the only evidence-based obesity prevention programme for children in Halton and is relatively new, so there is a focus on embedding this in to the Start for Life pathway.
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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 P9	Improve access to positive opportunities.

Milestone		Progress Q3	Supporting Commentary
P9.1	Increase the number of care leavers accessing the Care leavers group (Source – Inclusion & Participation)		We have seven committed members to the care leaver forum, the group is seeing some challenge due to work commitments and personal circumstances, Care Leavers Principal Officer and) Head of Service Commissioning and Placements have decided on a maximum capacity of 10 to the care leaver forum group. We have provided more activities through the drop-in service which has attracted more of the unaccompanied asylum seekers to events and support available. We will increase capacity of this cohort when we establish point of contact/hub in Liverpool as the transport can be challenging factor. Both social media links have strong on-going usage for support.
P9.2	Increase the engagement for Children in Need, Children in Care and Care Leavers via Barnardo's contract (Source – Placements and Commissioning)		Barnardo's continue to manage a waiting list, however this is being proactively progressed within the resources available. We have held very productive meetings with Barnardo's and other providers of emotional health and wellbeing services to map out the mental health landscape, with a view to formally collaborating with the Integrated Care Board to scope a cohesive system-wide approach. A report concerning the future of the contract has been generated outlining the contributing factors, the financial situation including funding deficits, and options available in relation to long term service delivery.



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 Q3	Supporting Commentary
P10.1	Increase the numbers of Primary and Secondary school educators being trained as 'Thrive' Licensed Practitioners. (Source – SEND)		In summary to date 75% of schools have engaged regarding the project. We don't foresee any great further rise in the %. Induction trainings for Halton staff have now been delivered with 474 staff taking part. In addition we have also trained Educational Psychologist team, Early Years Foundation Stage Team and Specialist teachers team, so that they can support schools through their work.
P10.2	Increase the number of strengths and difficulties questionnaires completed for Children in Care and Care Leavers (Source – Children in Care / Health)	Refer comment	This is an annual indicator and collected after the 903 Annual Return for children in care 12 months at the end of the reporting year (31/03/2025)
P10.3	Increase the number of health assessment (initial and review) for Children in Care (Source – Children in Care Health)	Refer comment	This is an annual indicator and collected after the 903 Annual Return for children in care 12 months at the end of the reporting year (31/03/2025)
P10.4	Reduce the number of children who are accessing education under Section 19 (Source – Education Welfare)		Autumn Term 2024 – there is now a process in place for Section 19 applications to be considered. A Section 19 Inclusion panel has been established; legal support is part of this. A range of recommendations have been put in place for children following the panel meetings including short term tuition (2 weeks) whilst a school is supported to develop a suitable plan.
P10.5	Reduce the % waiting time for Children in Care (CIC) to access Mental Health provision (Source – Children in Care / Health)	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 Q3	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 – Safeguarding Unit)		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> October 2024 -75% in Early Help were graded ‘good’ -8% Help & Protect were graded ‘good’ -0% Children in Care were graded ‘good’ -40% Care Leavers were graded ‘good’ November 2024 -75% in Early Help were graded ‘good’ -10% Help & Protect were graded ‘good’ -29% Children in Care were graded ‘good’ -50% Care Leavers were graded ‘good’
P11.2	Increase the number of children and young people involved with the Children in Care Council (Source – Inclusion & Participation)		<p>We have a further two children attending the Children in Care Council, with meetings both informal and formal going ahead in February 2025 with new members.</p> <p>It was agreed while more involvement is needed we are limited due to ratios per adult to child for informal and transport of the children to the meetings can sometimes be a challenge for foster parents. We have a fix 10 members at this point.</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 P12	Improve pathways into meaningful employment with training and both Further and Higher Education

Milestone		Progress Q3	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 – 14-19 Team)		Q3 2024/25 = 5.6% which is identical to Q3 2023/24. The rate is remaining steady compared to last year, therefore the target to reduce the figure will not be achieved by Q3 2024/25.
P12.2	Increase the number of good quality path way plans as identified through the audit process for Care Leavers (Source – Care Leavers Service)		This remains in progress as there has been some minor improvements and training completing, but remains a longer piece of work due to high caseloads. This will be a focus area when we have fully recruited to the team

Appendix 3: Progress Against Performance Indicators

For Q4 only




Appendix 4: Financial Statements

Education, Inclusion & Provision Department – Revenue Budget as at 30 November 2024

Children & Families Department - Revenue Budget as at 30 November 2024

Most recent available at Q3

Progress Symbols are used in the following manner

	Performance indicator
	Indicates that the annual target <u>is on course to be achieved</u> .
	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.
	Indicates that the target <u>will not be achieved</u> unless there is an intervention or remedial action taken.

Education, Inclusion & Provision Department**Revenue Budget as at 30 November 2024**

	Annual Budget £'000	Budget to Date £'000	Actual Spend £'000	Variance (Overspend) £'000	Forecast Outturn £'000
Expenditure					
Employees	7,313	4,887	5,108	(221)	(283)
Agency - covering vacancies	0	0	199	(199)	(290)
Agency - addition to establishment	72	48	14	34	58
Premises	14	12	11	1	3
Supplies & Services	4,152	2,676	2,617	59	88
Independent School Fees	9,113	5,618	5,618	0	0
Schools Contingency	225	157	157	0	0
Transport	43	23	30	(7)	(10)
Schools Transport	2,341	1,033	1,536	(503)	(754)
Early Years Payments	10,372	6,995	6,995	0	0
Early Years Pupil Premium	154	94	94	0	
Commissioned Services	1,719	890	1,090	(200)	(300)
Inter Authority Special Needs	1,175	795	795	0	0
Grants to Voluntary Organisations	182	84	77	7	10
Capital Financing	4,608	2,805	2,805	0	1
Total Expenditure	41,483	26,117	27,146	(1,029)	(1,477)
Income					
Fees & Charges Income	-424	-414	-414	0	(14)
Government Grant Income	-7,747	-5,300	-5,300	0	0
Dedicated Schools Grant	-23,331	-15,554	-15,554	0	0
Inter Authority Income	-366	-216	-216	0	0
Reimbursements & Other Grant Income	-1,779	-1,098	-1,098	0	0
Schools SLA Income	-473	-383	-399	16	24
Transfers from Reserves	-84	0	0	0	0
Total Income	-34,204	-22,965	-22,981	16	10
Net Operational Expenditure	7,279	3,152	4,165	(1,013)	(1,467)
Recharges					
Premises Support	344	229	229	0	0
Transport Support	528	352	445	(93)	(131)
Central Support	1,603	1,069	1,069	0	0
Asset Rental Support	17	0	0	0	0
Recharge Income	0	0	0	0	0
Net Total Recharges	2,492	1,650	1,743	(93)	(131)
Net Departmental Expenditure	9,771	4,802	5,908	(1,106)	(1,598)

Financial Position

Net departmental expenditure is £1.106m over budget at the end of November, based on available information. The forecast outturn for 2024/25 is currently an overspend against budget of £1.598m. The main variances being school transport, commissioned services and staffing.

Employee expenditure, including agency staff, is forecast to be £0.515m over budget at year end, including honorarium costs to cover long term absence. There are a number of vacant positions across the department some of which are filled by agency staff, estimated to be £0.290m for the year.

The employee overspend is largely due to two services that were previously grant funded (Psychology Service and Assessment Co-ordinators). These services are no longer eligible for this funding, hence an increase to core funded employees.

However, the forecasted overspend for employees has decreased since the last reporting period due to a review of some services resulting in some posts being deleted and others being identified as eligible for grant funding.

Attached at Appendix A are the agreed savings for the department, two targets (EIP2 and EIP5 totalling £0.228m) are yet to be realised and as a result add to the negative variance against the employee budget.

Supplies and services costs are forecast to be under budget at year-end by approximately £0.880m. All spend in this area is essential spend only and the budget holders across the department closely monitor all spend.

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

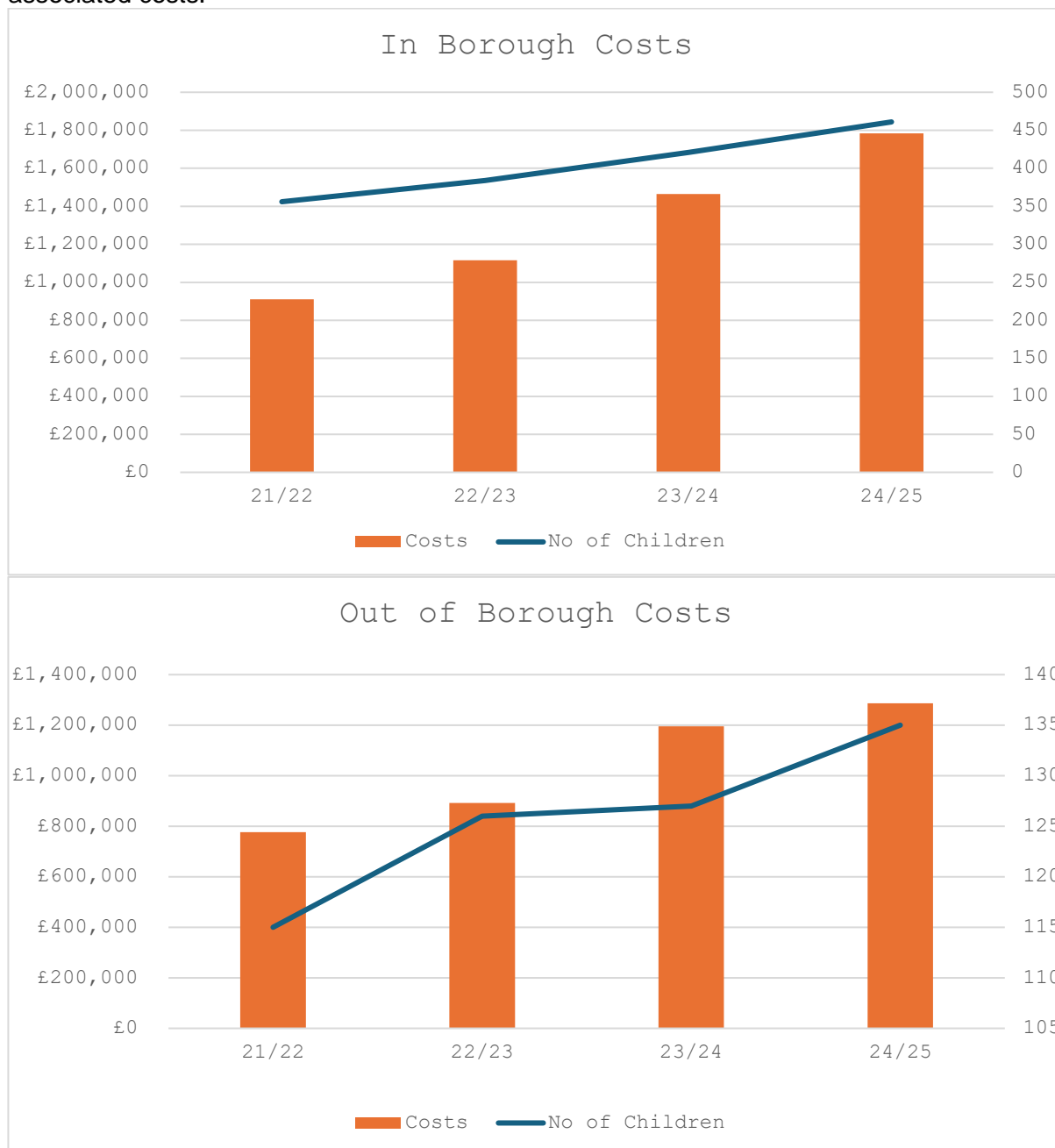
The table below illustrates the split between the two areas, and how each areas spend compares to the budget.

2024-25 as at Nov-24					
Area	Number of Users	Budget £000	Projected Spend £000	Variance £000	Average Cost per User
In Borough	461	1,826	1,783	43	£3,869
Out of Borough	135	489	1,286	(797)	£9,528
Total	596	2,315	3,070	(754)	

The current records show 596 service users, the majority of which attend schools within the Borough. The Out of Borough overspend has increased from the previous reporting period to £0.852m.

During the current Academic year, it is anticipated that these figures will increase, based on historic information. The demand for the School Transport service continues to increase in line with the increasing number of pupils with SEN within the Borough.

The graphs below show the trend in the number of SEN children using this service and the associated costs.



It is worth noting that this situation is not unique to Halton and is a burden across all Councils nationwide. There is a task within the Transformation Programme to investigate this and advise on how the Council can reduce the costs in this area.

Income figures have changed compared to previous reports due to the reallocation of miscodes (e.g. SLA Technical Support). Education Welfare Service & Careers Education Service are predicted to underachieve against income targets based on previous years and information obtained from the services.

Transport Recharges are expected to overspend by £0.131m (as in previous reports, the increase in running costs continues to rise).

Approved 2024/25 Savings

Please see Appendix A for full details.




Capital Projects as at 30 November 2024

Scheme Detail	2024/25 Original Allocation £000	2024/25 Revised Allocation £000	Q1 Spend £000	Q2 Spend £000	Q3 Spend £000	Q4 Spend £000	Total Spend £000	Allocation remaining £000	Comments
Childrens Directorate									
Education, Inclusion & Provision									
Capital Repairs	749.0	749.0	151	531	50	0	732.0	17.0	All Capital repairs are completed, just waiting final payments.
SEND capital allocation	3,355.2	3,355.2	178	519	322	0	1,019.0	2,336.2	Many of the repairs and SEND works are completed over the summer holidays and are mainly complete. Retentions due in 2025/26.
High Needs Provision Capital	255.6	448.0	0	0	0	0	0.0	448.0	This is the current unallocated figure. Discussions are taking place regarding priorities across the Education Estate, this funding will be used to address these.
Basic Need Projects	600.8	600.8	0	0	0	0	0.0	600.8	Currently unallocated.
Childcare Expansion	314.8	314.8	0	0	0	0	0.0	314.8	This is still in its infancy so no expenditure to date. 80% is for Early Years projects and 20% for additional works.
Total Education, Inclusion & Provision	5,275.4	5,467.8	329.0	1,050.0	372.0	0.0	1,751.0	3,716.8	

EDUCATION, INCLUSION AND PROVISION DEPARTMENT

Review of Agreed Savings

APPENDIX A

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

CHILDREN & FAMILIES DEPARTMENT**Revenue Budget as at 30 November 2024**

	Annual Budget £'000	Budget to Date £'000	Actual Spend £'000	Variance (Overspend) £'000	Forecast Outturn £'000
Expenditure					
Employees	15,544	9,828	11,607	(1,779)	(2,618)
Other Premises	415	199	227	(28)	(24)
Supplies & Services	1,725	1,612	1,966	(354)	(589)
Transport	360	210	176	34	44
Direct Payments	1,097	701	827	(126)	(206)
Commissioned services to Vol Orgs	224	134	134	0	0
Residential Care	17,727	9,509	14,895	(5,386)	(7,194)
Out of Borough Adoption	96	48	0	48	96
Out of Borough Fostering	4,253	2,336	3,051	(715)	(955)
In House Adoption	548	304	253	51	63
Special Guardianship Order	2,510	1,577	1,617	(40)	(59)
In House Foster Carer Placements	2,739	1,738	1,532	206	310
Lavender House Contract Costs	234	141	128	13	15
Home Support & Respite	340	177	224	(47)	(73)
Care Leavers	248	215	295	(80)	(130)
Family Support	53	27	39	(12)	(18)
Contracted services	3	2	2	0	0
Early Years	0	0	0	0	0
Emergency Duty	132	37	72	(35)	(51)
Youth Offending Services	321	124	169	(45)	(73)
Transfer to Reserves	8	0	0	0	0
Total Expenditure	48,577	28,919	37,214	(8,295)	(11,462)
Income					
Fees & Charges	-33	-9	0	(9)	(12)
Sales Income	-4	-3	0	(3)	(5)
Rents	-81	-41	-37	(4)	0
Reimbursement & other Grant Income	-787	-598	-506	(92)	(137)
Transfer from reserve	-82	-82	-82	0	0
Dedicated Schools Grant	-50	0	0	0	0
Government Grants	-10,528	-8,189	-8,143	(46)	(86)
Total Income	-11,565	-8,922	-8,768	(154)	(240)
Net Operational Expenditure	37,012	19,997	28,446	(8,449)	(11,702)
Recharges					
Premises Support	398	266	266	0	0
Transport	16	11	11	0	0
Central Support Recharges	2,274	1,516	1,516	0	0
Asset Rental Support	0	0	0	0	0
Internal Recharge Income	-955	-637	-637	0	0
Net Total Recharges	1,733	1,156	1,156	0	0
Net Departmental Expenditure	38,745	21,153	29,602	(8,449)	(11,702)

Financial Position

The net departmental expenditure is estimated to be over budget profile at the end of financial year 2024/25 by £11.702m with the majority relating to Social Care Services.

Growth budget of £6.079m has been provided to support pressured areas for financial year 2024/25 but unfortunately this has not been sufficient to support the increasing spend across the service.

The overall forecast financial position at the end of 2024/25 has reduced by £0.631m since last reported at 30 September 2024.

Significant investment as part of a Children's Social Care improvement plan and redesign of the service has been provided to support the improvement journey. Although, there has been a reduction in forecast overspend, it's important to focus on that the level of spend across the service remains a similar level. The reduction in overspend is due to the increased funding that has been provided as well as some reductions in other areas.

The Children's and Families Department forecast overspend is still an area of serious concern and the issues remain the same. The difficulty in the recruitment of social workers and the subsequent extortionate agency costs, along with the spiralling costs of residential placements. This has been an ongoing problem for a number of years. Urgent action to reduce these costs should now be taken as a priority as this level of spend cannot be sustained without resulting in significant financial harm to the Local Authority.

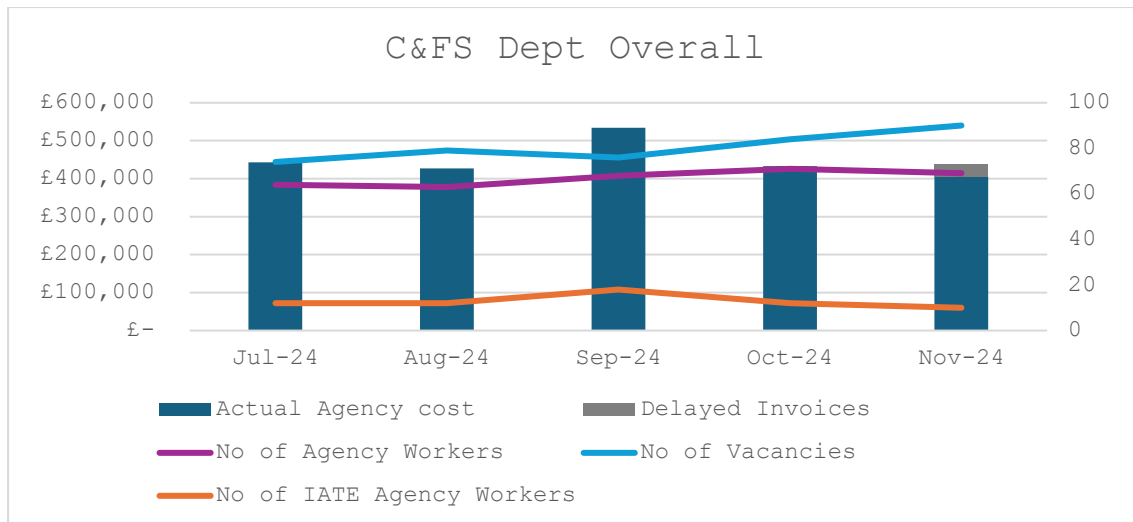
Please see below for further details

Employee Expenditure

Employee costs are forecast to be over budget profile at the end of financial year 2024/25 by £2.618M this is a reduction of £0.438m based on information available at 30 September 2024 when last reported.

The reduction mainly relates to an agreed investment within children's services which has resulted in the establishment of 33 new roles across the department. Agency staff that were previously in addition to the establishment (IATE) are no longer considered as IATE. Additional in-year budget of £0.370m (funded from contingency) has been provided for some of the newly established posts which has helped reduce the overspend position.

The chart below demonstrates agency cost that cover the month of April to November based on the period that was worked, the number of agency members of staff where an invoice has been received for within each period, the number of vacancies across the department and the number of staff that are currently in addition to the establishment (IATE).



The chart above shows the level of agency spend has remained consistent throughout with a peak in September due to this being a 5 weekend month. The number of agency has reduced slightly which has helped reduce the employee forecast position.

Agency spend forecast across the department is expected to remain high for financial year 2024/25, at 30 November 2024 agency spend was £3.655m

Various workstreams are in place to target the difficulties in recruitment, including a recruitment work group, social work academy and market supplements for applicable posts.

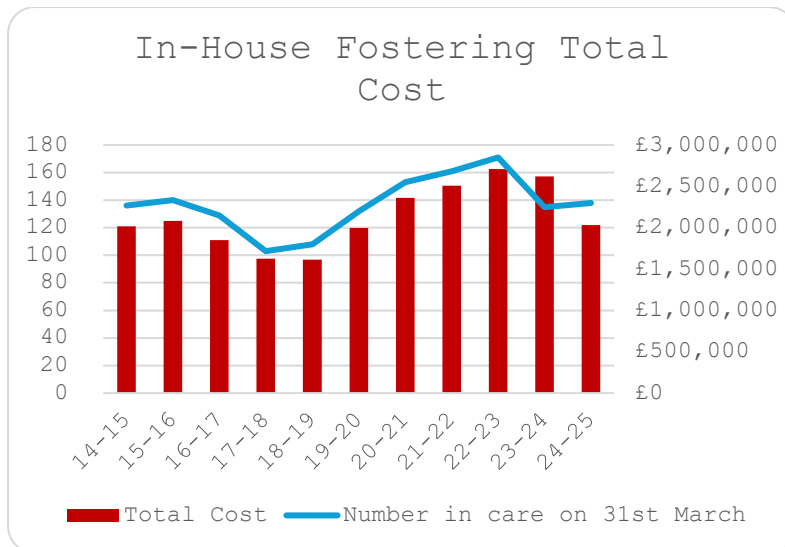
One area of concern relates to the number of staff that remain in addition to the establishment (IATE). These are agency staff that are currently not allocated to an established role within their respective team. This figure currently stands at 10 across the service. Work should now be undertaken to reduce the level of staff that are in addition to the establishment if they do not form part of the redesign improvement plan.

Supplies and Services

Supplies and services expenditure is forecast to be £0.589m over budget profile at the end of financial year. Supplies and services is diverse and covers a number of areas including nursery fees, consultancy, translation costs, equipment and support provided to young people.

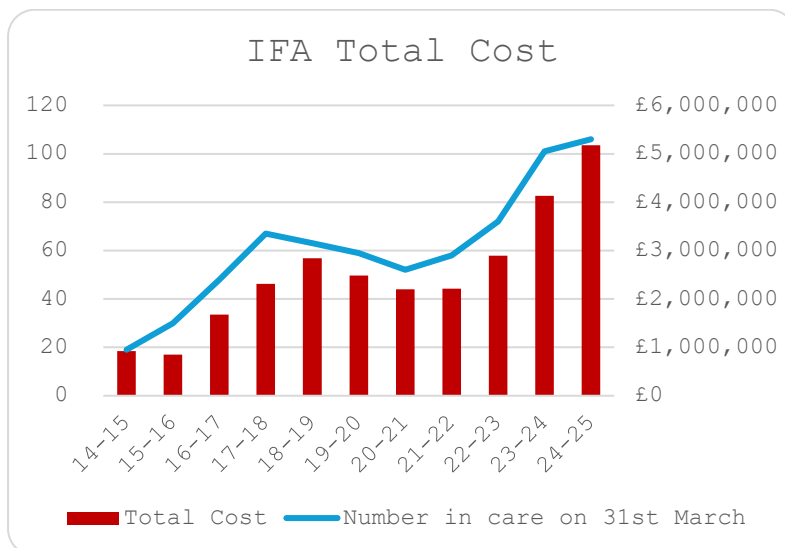
Fostering

Inhouse fostering placements is estimated to be £0.310m under budget profile for financial year 2024/25. Inhouse fostering budgets were increased to support the budget pressure in this area.



Work continues to recruit and retain Halton's In-house foster carers, along with training to develop carers enabling them to accommodate more specialist placements and support and mentor each other. This therefore means that costs could increase. However, the ability to accommodate young people within in-house provision provides a substantial saving in comparison to Independent Fostering Agency (IFA) or residential care.

Increasing numbers of children in care and insufficient in-house fostering provision has meant increased reliance on IFA. Higher numbers of children placed within IFA provision and increased IFA rates has resulted in an estimated forecast overspend for the end of 2024/25 as £0.955M



Special Guardianship Order

Special Guardianship Order (SGO) at the end of financial year 2024/25 is estimated to be over budget profile by £0.590m

These are long term placements for young people, where the carers are granted parental responsibility for the young person in their care. This is a positive outcome for the young person as these are stable placements and the children are no longer classed as a 'child in

care'. They are also less expensive than other placements so they are financially beneficial too.

Residential Care

Out of Borough Residential Care continues to be the main budget pressure for the Children and Families Department as the costs of residential care have continued to rise year on year. The numbers of young people in residential placements remains high and the cost of placements is rising significantly year-on year.

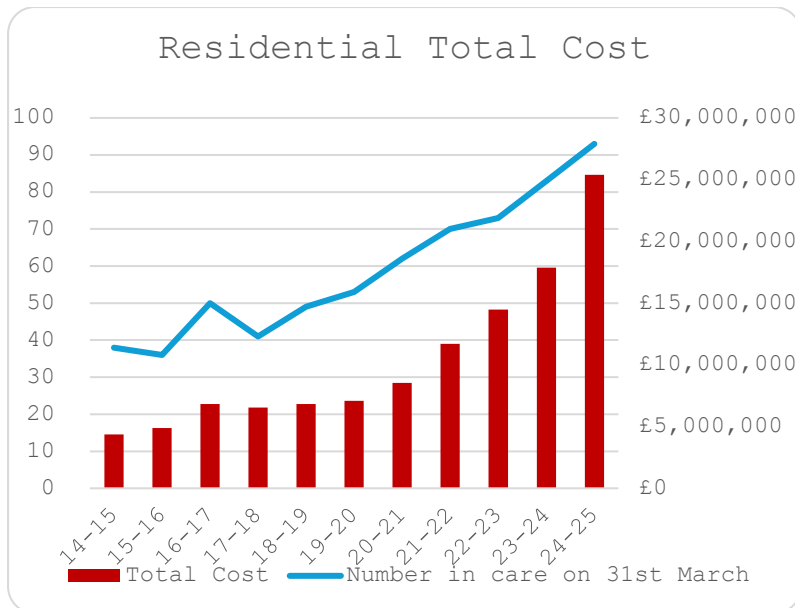
Provision	Weekly Costs	30-Nov-24		30-Sep-24	
		No. Placed	Estimated cost for the year	No. Placed	Estimated cost for the year
Residential	£1000 - £3000	4	476,360	3	425,275
Residential	£3001 - £5000	25	4,956,870	26	5,642,774
Residential	£5001 - £7000	26	7,413,389	27	7,989,196
Residential	£7001 - £15982	17	9,291,964	14	8,215,999
Secure	£6397 - £8137				
Leaving Care	£443 - £7175	14	2,341,056	18	2,643,101
Parent & Child	£2000 - £5500	7	913,562	6	715,298
Total:		93	25,393,201	94	25,631,643

At the end of financial year 24/25 the estimated overspend is £7.194m over budget for residential placements this has reduced by £0.200m since last reported.

Overall cost of packages are increasing due to the complexity of support the young people require as well as standard package cost increases. This is a national issue and market factors such as low supply and high demand have resulted in the costs of residential care packages rising significantly over the last year, meaning that the level of spend is unsustainable at the current rate.

A number of initiatives are taking place to try and address the issue including a High Cost Placement Panel where high cost packages are individually scrutinized to ensure the placement is the right for the young person and at the best available cost for the placement.

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



UASC Residential Care

The number of Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children (UASC) currently placed in care has remained steady.

Funding for financial year 23/24 has now been paid by the Home Office for both UASC and Leaving Care. Funding for 24/25 is yet to be agreed but we are hopeful this will be confirmed in the coming months.

Provision	Weekly Costs	30-Nov-24		30-Sep-24	
		No. Placed	Estimated cost for the year	No. Placed	Estimated cost for the year
UASC	£300-£500	30	408,078	36	460,218
UASC	£500-£5000	21	768,754	21	785,402
Total:		51	1,176,832	57	1,245,619

Income

Income is forecast to be underachieving at the end of financial year 2024/25 by £0.240m, The underachievement relates to Social Work Academy funding not meeting the original expected levels and the number of NHS joint funded packages reducing.

Departmental Quarterly Monitoring Report

Directorate: Children's Services

Departments: Children Social Care and Early Help, Education

Period: Quarter 4 - 1st January 2025 – 31st March 2025

1.0 Introduction

This quarterly monitoring report covers the **Children's Services Directorate's** fourth quarter period up to 31 March 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: 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 Q4	Supporting Commentary
P1.1	Increase in the number of families accessing support through the Family Hub on a quarterly basis (Source – Early Help)		There has been an increase of 9% in attendances at the family hubs since Q3 from 11,176 to 12,444. There have been 129 individual sessions delivered in Q4. Work continues to ensure all partners, children and families in the borough fully understand the support on offer and where families can go for help to their local family hub. Family hub link workers will strengthen this partnership with schools, early years settings and health services in the borough. Since we launched family hub online services this has widened our offer and accessibility of resources this has been really successful and since launching in July over 19,000 users have registered, 36, 000 pages have been accessed the most popular pages accessed are timetable, SEND, Babies and start for life information. Halton was recently invited to share the work we have started of father inclusive practice and baby showers at a recent ADCS good practice forum.
P1.2	Increase the number of successful Public Law Outline/Pre-proceedings outcomes i.e. prevent Children entering care (Source - Rebecca Gamble - Andy Jones)		Pre-proceedings concluded for 30 cyp. Care proceedings were initiated for six children, the remaining 24 were successfully stepped down. Demonstrating 80% were diverted away from court proceedings, indicating that during this period, the pre-proceedings phase was significantly more likely to achieve successful diversion than to progress to care proceedings –contributing to a reduction entrants into care.
P1.3	Decrease the number of Children in Care (CIC) on a quarterly basis (Source – Children in Care)		369 in Care at end of Q4 2024/25 (provisional) shows a reduction on previous quarter. (376 Q3 2024/25) (374 Q2 2024/25)
P1.4	Increase the number of partner led Multi Agency Plans (MAPS) (Source – Early Help)		External MAPs have seen an increase each month January 46 February 64 March 73 however this is a slight increase since last quarter. Work has been completed with schools by the locality manager to offer help and support on MAPs. The process has followed a you said we listened approach however more work is needed to support schools. There also needs to be more challenge at the front door when referrals are received which the diversion workers will help with this. The health role in iCART is now more proactive supporting health visitors to take the lead professional role, this is early days. There has been further training for schools on eclipse and MAP training. The director for CSC and EH has also attended head teachers briefings to strengthen the strategic relationship.

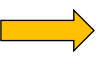

Corporate Priority	Priority 1 – Improving Health, Promoting Wellbeing and Supporting Greater Independence. Priority 3 – Supporting Children, Young People and Families Priority 4 – Tackling inequality and helping those who are in most need
CYP P2	Improve the stability of care placements.

Milestone		Progress Q4	Supporting Commentary
P2.1	Reduce the number of Children in Care (CIC) who moved between placements (Source – Children in Care)	Refer Comment	Q4 2024/25, 11% Placement moves (provisional). Shows and increase of placement moves compared to previous quarter, to be considered that some moves may be a positive move. Q3 2024/25, 9%. Q2 2024/25, 10%. Q1 2024/25, 12%.
P2.2	Reduce the number of Children in Care who are/were placed in out of Borough in residential care (Source – Children in Care)		Q4 2024/25, 14% of residential placements were in borough (provisional). Same as previous quarter. Q3 2024/25, 14%. Q2 2024/25, 16%. Q1 2024/25, 17%. Plans are in place to re-establish our in-area provision for Children in Care and Care Leavers throughout 25/26 to manage expectations. The sufficiency strategy and action is being overseen by the re-established sufficiency board.
P2.3	Reduce the costs of out of borough residential placement placements (Source – Children in Care)		The Resource Panel and High-Cost Placement Panel consistently feed into both the Sufficiency Board and the Financial Accountability Board. The High-Cost Placement Panel has generated cost reductions of over £1 million in stepped down packages of care and support across all age ranges, and setting types. The Sufficiency Strategy has been ratified across the Local Authority and will build dedicated capacity for Halton Children in





			Halton Settings and reduce the need for expensive out of borough placements, across residential and supported accommodation provisions.
P2.4	Reduce the number of Children in Care (CIC) who are placed in independent fostering agencies (Source – Children in Care)		Q4 2024/25 103 children placed in Independent Fostering Agencies (provisional). Very slight increase. Q3 2024/25, 100 children. Q2 2024/25, 94 children. Q1 2024/25, 94 children. Sufficiency Board will be looking at this area.
P2.5	Reduce the costs of out of borough independent foster placements (Source – Children in Care)		As above (P2.4)
P2.6	Increase the number of Halton Foster Carers and kinship carers (Source – Children in Care)		Q4 2024/25, 15% of all Children in Care are with a Kinship Carer (provisional). Q3 2024/25, 18%. Q2 2024/25, 17%. Q1 2024/25, 16%. Q4 2024/25, 65% of Halton's Children in Care are with Foster Carers (provisional). Shows an increase on previous quarter. Q3 2024/25, 63%. Q2 2024/25 and Q1 2024/25, 63%.
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 Q4	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)		Rate at 91.3% at end of Q4. SEN2 period covers January to December, not academic year, but this is a marked improvement on Q3 position of 58.1%. Performance tends to drop off by the end of the collection period (Dec), so Q4 is likely to be the most positive data. National comparator data available in June 2025.
P3.2	Increase the % of Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCP) Annual reviews that are carried out within 12 months (Source – SEND)		Rate at 52.9% by end of Q4, down from 60.8% end of Q3. There are several reasons for this, including staff sickness, prioritizing transition plans, paperwork not being returned by schools on time and a significant increase in the number of schools requesting a change of placement. Agency staff have been employed recently, and the hope is that this will start to head back up.
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 – Placements and Commissioning)		Work continues to decrease the proportion of children placed in non-maintained and independent special schools (NMISS). This includes the development of an Alternative Provision Strategy, which includes a process to identify and quality assure Alternative Provision providers, and Team around the School meetings continue alongside the roll out of activities linked to the Delivering Better Value programme such as the Thrive Approach which is moving into year 2. At the end of quarter 4 a small increase finds that 136 children and young people are placed in 36 NMISS settings; 35 children are attending NMISS at 3 schools within the Borough while the remaining 101 children are placed in NMISS out of Borough. There are currently 21 open placement searches for NMISS. Numbers in NMISS represents 7.8% of the CYPs with EHCPs in the Borough down from 7.9% in December 2024. Although, there is a slight drop in terms of the percentage of all CYPs with EHCP in the Borough, the number of the CYPs placed in INMSS continue to rise.
P3.4	Decrease the spending on independent and out of borough (OOB) provision for Special Educational Needs and Disability Children (SEND) (Source – SEND)		The development of strategies to support a decrease in spending within the independent schools is being seen with the development of Halton's SEND Sufficiency Strategy, Education Strategy and Alternative Provision Strategy. Work continues to implement the Thrive Approach which is a tool used by schools across the borough to support improvements in attendance, attainment and behavior and after an initial roll-out of training and CPD across schools, the Borough is now moving into an implementation phase. The roll-out of School Resource Bases has increased the variety of provisions available in the borough. The Borough works collaboratively with NW Regional colleagues to consider and negotiate non-maintained and independent school fee uplift applications.
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 – Placements and Commissioning)		The LA 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. Improvements have been made across staffing levels and concentrated work has been undertaken in special schools and resource bases. The LA has commissioned additional

P3.6	Speech and Language Therapy (SaLT) – Increase the number where treatment commenced within 12 weeks of referral receipt (Source – Placements and Commissioning)		resources in five independent providers to support Education Health Care Plans-related work with children with speech, language and communication difficulties and ASD need. With these providers once the requirement for intervention has been identified treatment is commencing within 12 weeks.
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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 P4	Increase number of children attending schools graded good or outstanding and improve attainment outcomes at all Key Stages.

Milestone		Progress Q4	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)		Halton State-funded Nursery Schools maintain 100% 99% of all Early Years settings (pre-schools, day care, out of school clubs, childminders) were Outstanding or Met.
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 - Schools)		By end of Q4 2024/25, all local authority maintained (community and voluntary controlled) schools were judged as good or outstanding across the range of inspection categories, with all primary schools inspected under the new inspection framework receiving good or outstanding in all categories since September 2024. Following inspections of The Heath School and Blessed Carlo Acutis, performance of secondary schools in Halton has improved greatly, with just one school (Ormiston Bolingbroke Academy) with categories judged as requires improvement (3) in its most recent inspection in May 2023. Special schools continue to maintain a 100% good or outstanding judgments record across all categories.








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 Q4	Supporting Commentary																																				
P5.1	Reduce the number of incidents of School Suspensions (academic year cumulative to end of quarter) (Source – Education Welfare)		<p>No of incidents of school suspensions cumulative to end of March is 1211 but there has been a reduction in numbers compared to the last quarter.</p> <p>Suspensions result in missed learning so impact on a child’s attendance and can impact on academic achievement. Schools have the opportunity to bring to Team around the School (TAS) any children where they are struggling to manage behaviour concerns. TAS is a multi-agency group of professionals including health, early help, education psychologists, SEND and Education Welfare to provide advice and strategies to school to address behaviour concerns.</p>																																				
P5.2	Reduce the number of children subject to School suspensions (academic year cumulative to end of quarter) (Source – Education Welfare)		The number of children subject to a school suspension is 604 from September 24 to end March 25. However there is a reduction in Q4 from Q3 with 231 this quarter compared to 373 last quarter.																																				
P5.3	Reduce the number of permanent exclusions (academic year cumulative to end of quarter) (Source – Education Welfare)		<p>Number of permanent exclusions from September 2024 to end of March 25 = 42 (1 post 16 child) 17 of which are as a result of drug and alcohol use compared to 3 overall last year. However numbers of permanent exclusions have decreased since last quarter</p> <table border="1"><tr><td></td><td colspan="5">Sept 24 – end March 25</td></tr><tr><td>Overall</td><td colspan="5">42</td></tr><tr><td>D&A</td><td colspan="5">17</td></tr><tr><td>By Key Stage</td><td>1</td><td>2</td><td>3</td><td>4</td><td>5</td></tr><tr><td>Overall</td><td>0</td><td>4</td><td>15</td><td>22</td><td>1</td></tr><tr><td>Of those D&A</td><td>0</td><td>0</td><td>8</td><td>9</td><td>0</td></tr></table>		Sept 24 – end March 25					Overall	42					D&A	17					By Key Stage	1	2	3	4	5	Overall	0	4	15	22	1	Of those D&A	0	0	8	9	0
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P5.4	Increase the % of early Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCP) reviews for SEND Children subject to school exclusion (Source – SEND)		No child with an EHCP was permanently excluded in Q4, a decrease from one exclusion in Q3. Throughout the 2024/25 academic year, only one child with an EHCP has been permanently excluded, cumulative to the end of Q4.																																				




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 Q4	Supporting Commentary																				
P6.1	<p>Child Care Expansion roll out - Increase the number of eligible working parents who access child care 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 (Source – Early Years) 		<p>508 2-Year-Old of working parents accessed funded hours.</p> <p>541 Under 2s of working parents accessed funding hours.</p> <p>Figures from January headcount 2025. Numbers refer to children accessing any funded hours for working parents, up to and including the maximum 15-hour entitlement.</p> <p>Under 2s eligibility began in September 2024.</p> <p>2-Year-Old eligibility began in April 2024, the number of 2 years old accessing funded hours for working parents was 503.</p>																				
P6.2	<p>Increase number of eligible children for the vulnerable 2- year-old funding accessing Early Years (EY) provision</p> <p>(internally collected termly information – may not match to published data from census) (Source – Early Years)</p>		<p>329 2-Year-Old eligible for the vulnerable 2-Year-Old funding accessed funded hours.</p> <p>Figures from January headcount 2025headcount.</p> <p>77% attending Good or above Early Years providers.</p> <p>A decline nationally in up take of 2-year-old disadvantaged funding. Percentage higher than LAIT data.</p> <p>There has been a change in the way uptake is calculated using headcount and DWP list, alongside a change in how we are placing 2-year-olds. This is a more accurate calculation and would explain the drop in percentage.</p>																				
P6.3	<p>Increase the % taking up of Early Years Entitlement for 3- to 4-year-olds. (Source – Early Years)</p>		<p>1634 -3 & 4-year-old children accessed Early Years Entitlement. 88.1% take up 1634 (on January 2025 headcount) out of 1855 (on Primary Care Trust GP registrations list October 2024) are accessing - 3 & 4-Year-Old Early Entitlement for 3 & 4 Year olds in Halton.</p>																				
P6.4	<p>Increased attendance at schools:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Primary b) Pupil Referral Unit (PRU) c) Secondary d) Special <p>Source – Education Welfare)</p>	 	<p>By the end of Q4 2024/25:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Primary rate at 94.7%, equal to end Q3 2024/25 - PRU rate at 48%, down from 49.2% end of Q3 2024/25 - Secondary rate at 90.5%, down from 91.1% end of Q3 2024/25 - Special rate at 88.3%, down from 90.2% end of Q3 2024/25 <p>That said, with the exception of pupils at PRU, all attendance rates have improved from the same period last year across primary, secondary and special sectors.</p>																				
P6.5	<p>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)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Children in need (CIN) b) Children subject to a child protection plan (CP) c) Children with special educational needs or disability (SEND) <p>(Source – Education Welfare)</p>		<p>Figures have been rising during Q4 2024/25 (283)</p> <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th></th><th>Jan</th><th>Feb</th><th>Mar</th></tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>EHE</td><td>265</td><td>269</td><td>283</td></tr> <tr> <td>a)</td><td>5</td><td>8</td><td>9</td></tr> <tr> <td>b)</td><td>2</td><td>2</td><td>2</td></tr> <tr> <td>c)</td><td>12</td><td>13</td><td>14</td></tr> </tbody> </table>		Jan	Feb	Mar	EHE	265	269	283	a)	5	8	9	b)	2	2	2	c)	12	13	14
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a)	5	8	9																				
b)	2	2	2																				
c)	12	13	14																				
P6.6	<p>Reduce the number of children who are missing education.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Children in need (CIN) b) Children subject to a child protection plan (CP) c) Children with special educational needs or disability (SEND) <p>(Source – Education Welfare)</p>		<p>0 children confirmed as missing education.</p> <p>Children on the tracking list who currently do not have a school named on the data management system is 28 which is significantly less than the previous quarter.</p> <p>The Children Missing Education officer works closely with other LAs to track and support children back into education.</p>																				
P6.7	<p>Reduce the number of children Not in Receipt of Full-time education (NIROFTI)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Children in need (CIN) b) Children subject to a child protection plan (CP) c) Children with special educational needs or disability (SEND) <p>(Source – Education Welfare)</p>		<p>Number of children accessing a part time timetable as at 31/03/25 is 74 with over half of these children identified as having SEND. This is a significant reduction on the last quarter data of 114.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) CIN - 12 b) CPP - 7 c) SEND - 38 <p>A part time timetable is put in place with the agreement of parent and school for a short time period to support a child who may be struggling for a number of reasons to access a full time offer at that time. This enables school to work with parents, the child and other professionals to support the child and address the barriers to attendance that were identified. A PTT cannot be used for behaviour reasons.</p>																				
P6.8	<p>Reduce the number of children accessing alternative provision (Bridge School) or educated other than at school.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Children in need (CIN) b) Children subject to a child protection plan (CP) c) Children with special educational needs or disability (SEND) <p>(Source – SEND)</p>		<p>There were 38 children receiving tuition arranged by the local authority under S19 in quarter 4. Numbers of children being referred to the LA as unable to attend school due to health needs particularly mental health is increasing. A significant proportion (79%) of this cohort are those with SEND either an EHCP, SEN Support or undergoing statutory assessment.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) 2 - CIN b) 0 - CPP 																				

			c) c) Of the 38 EHCP – 13 SEN Support – 10 Undergoing Stat Assessment – 7
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 Q4	Data and any supporting commentary																																																												
P7.1	Increase the number of audits grades as good in the sub section ‘Identifying & Responding to Need, Abuse & Thresholds’ (Source – Safeguarding Unit)		During Q4 2024/25 <ul style="list-style-type: none">82% Early Help were graded ‘good’21% 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 – Safeguarding Unit)		During Q4 2024/25 <ul style="list-style-type: none">82% in Early Help were graded ‘good’24%Help & Protect were graded ‘good’6% Children in Care were graded ‘good’36% Care Leavers were graded ‘good’																																																												
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 – Safeguarding Unit)		During Q4 2024/25 <ul style="list-style-type: none">82% Early Help were graded ‘good’9%Help & Protect were graded ‘good’0% Children in Care were graded ‘good’ 36% Care Leavers were graded ‘good’																																																												
P7.4	Increase the number of children’s casefiles receiving an overall grade of ‘Good’ through the audit process (Source – Safeguarding Unit)		<table><tr><th>Grade</th><th colspan="2">Early Help</th></tr><tr><td></td><td>Q3</td><td>Q4</td></tr><tr><td>Good</td><td>75%</td><td>80%</td></tr><tr><td>RI</td><td>25%</td><td>20%</td></tr><tr><td>IA</td><td>0%</td><td></td></tr></table> <table><tr><th>Grade</th><th colspan="2">Help &protect</th></tr><tr><td></td><td>Q3</td><td>Q4</td></tr><tr><td>Good</td><td>9%</td><td>14%</td></tr><tr><td>RI</td><td>48%</td><td>48%</td></tr><tr><td>IA</td><td>43%</td><td>38%</td></tr></table> <table><tr><th>Grade</th><th>CIC</th><th>CIC</th></tr><tr><td></td><td>Q3</td><td>Q4</td></tr><tr><td>Good</td><td>18%</td><td>0%</td></tr><tr><td>RI</td><td>64%</td><td>93%</td></tr><tr><td>IA</td><td>18%</td><td>7%</td></tr></table> <table><tr><th>Grade</th><th colspan="2">Care Leavers</th></tr><tr><td></td><td>Q3</td><td>Q4</td></tr><tr><td>Good</td><td>18%</td><td>43%</td></tr><tr><td>RI</td><td>82%</td><td>57%</td></tr><tr><td>IA</td><td>0%</td><td>0%</td></tr></table>	Grade	Early Help			Q3	Q4	Good	75%	80%	RI	25%	20%	IA	0%		Grade	Help &protect			Q3	Q4	Good	9%	14%	RI	48%	48%	IA	43%	38%	Grade	CIC	CIC		Q3	Q4	Good	18%	0%	RI	64%	93%	IA	18%	7%	Grade	Care Leavers			Q3	Q4	Good	18%	43%	RI	82%	57%	IA	0%	0%
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P7.5	Increase the number of social workers accessing training through the Social Work Academy (Source – Social Work Academy)		Social Work academy have continued to offered training to support the improvement plan and improvements in the service. This continues to be well received.																																																												
P7.6	Increasing the number of permanent staff (Source – Katherine Appleton)		Permanent staffing is increased and continues to increase through recruitment and training programmes.																																																												
P7.7	Reduce the number of agency workers and associated costs. (Source – Katherine Appleton)		Agency staffing has reduced to 36%																																																												



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 Q4	Data and any supporting commentary
P8.1	Increase % breast feeding and initiation and maintenance at 6 – 8 weeks (Source – Health)		Target is an annual increase of 0.5% at 6-8 weeks. Published Q4 data is not yet available, but preliminary data indicates a further increase of breastfeeding at 6-8 weeks up 1% from Q3. This gives an average increase of 8% for breastfeeding at 6-8 weeks across 2024/25, compared to 2023/24.
P8.2	Maintain/increase the number of schools engaging in the Healthy Schools Programme which includes whole School approaches to tackling obesity. (Source – Health)		We are on track to engage 100% of primary schools again this year. Final remaining sign-up visits to be scheduled in by early June. Four schools have also engaged with the Food Active Pledge for Healthy and Active Futures, which is an evidence-informed framework for the prevention and reduction of obesity through a whole-school approach, targeted at schools in IMD 1&2. A further four schools will be recruited in Q1 and Q2 of 2025-26.
P8.3	Increase the number of parents of children age under 5 accessing the 'HENRY' Programme (Source – Health)		14 referrals this quarter. 11 commenced on the programme, with nine completing. Halton annual data from HENRY indicates that those completing HENRY showed increases in family lifestyle score, parenting confidence, parenting efficacy, emotional wellbeing, healthy eating score, consumption of fruit and veg and water, reduction in energy-dense snacks and sugary drinks, increased physical activity and reduced screen time. Ambition to increase referrals to enable more frequent courses.

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 Q4	Supporting Commentary
P9.1	Increase the number of care leavers accessing the Care leavers group (Source – Inclusion & Participation)		We have now sourced a new hub space in Liverpool which has extended the number accessing support. The hub runs each week with the relevant Personal advisors available. What's app group is being developed, and future care leaver forum meetings will be held here this has increased numbers currently 12 of the Liverpool cohort that previously did not have access due to location. Numbers will continue to grow, and launch is set for early June to advertise the group and service in this area.
P9.2	Increase the engagement for Children in Need, Children in Care and Care Leavers via Barnardo's contract (Source – Placements and Commissioning)		Barnardo's continue to be an active part of the EHWPB Board and continue to manage a waiting list, however this is being proactively progressed within the resources available. The contract has been renewed and very productive meetings with Barnardo's and other providers of emotional health and wellbeing services have been held to map out the mental health landscape, with a view to formally collaborating with the Integrated Care Board to scope a cohesive system-wide approach. This is due to culminate in a workshop (14/05/25) to formalise the pathways and routes through our system. This will include transition and step down to Pure Insight, which will allow for more flexible throughput.

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 Q4	Supporting Commentary
P10.1	Increase the numbers of Primary and Secondary school educators being trained as 'Thrive' Licensed Practitioners. (Source – SEND)		In summary to date 79% of schools have engaged regarding the project. We do not foresee any great further rise in the %. Induction trainings for Halton staff have now been delivered. Training for Educational Psychologist team, Early Years Foundation Stage Team and Specialist teachers team, has taken place, so that they can support schools through their work.
P10.2	Increase the number of strengths and difficulties questionnaires completed for Children in Care and Care Leavers (Source – Children in Care / Health)	Refer comment	This is an annual indicator and collected after the 903 Annual Return for children in care 12 months at the end of the reporting year.
P10.3	Increase the number of health assessment (initial and review) for Children in Care (Source – Children in Care Health)	Refer comment	This is an annual indicator and collected after the 903 Annual Return for children in care 12 months at the end of the reporting year.
P10.4	Reduce the number of children who are accessing education under Section 19 (Source – Education Welfare)		There is now a process in place for Section 19 applications to be considered. A Section 19 Inclusion panel has been established; legal support is part of this. A range of recommendations have been put in place for children following the panel meetings including short term tuition (2 weeks) whilst a school is supported to develop a suitable plan.
P10.5	Reduce the % waiting time for Children in Care (CIC) to access Mental Health provision (Source – Children in Care / Health)	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 Q4	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 – Safeguarding Unit)		During Q4 2024/25: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 100% in Early Help were graded 'good' 33% Help & Protect were graded 'good' 0% Children in Care were graded 'good' 36% Care Leavers were graded 'good'
P11.2	Increase the number of children and young people involved with the Children in Care Council (Source – Inclusion & Participation)		Halton have additional children attending the face-time sessions which has increased our numbers by a further 4 children. We are aiming for summer activity sessions open to all children in care to promote further the work we do and the group as a whole. Across social media, community media groups, in person and 1-2-1 meetings we have now a strong 17 children and young people having an input on challenges, policy, planning and the hire of future staff. We expect this number to grow even further by Q1 2025/26.

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 Q4	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 – 14-19 Team)		Q4 2024/25 = 6.2% which is identical to Q4 2023/24. The rate is remaining steady compared to last year, therefore the target to reduce the figure has not been achieved for 2024/25.
P12.2	Increase the number of good quality pathway plans as identified through the audit process for Care Leavers (Source – Care Leavers Service/Audit)		There is pathway plan training being rolled out in July 2025. A Pathway Plan reviewing officer has been created in the structure, their role is to drive up the quality of pathway plans and scrutinise the delivery of plans. The successful candidate takes up the post end of May 2025.

Appendix 3: Financial Statements

Education, Inclusion & Provision Department revenue budget as at 31 March 2025

Children & Families Department revenue budget as at 31 March 2025

Progress Symbols are used in the following manner

	Performance indicator
	Indicates that the annual target <u>is on course to be achieved</u> .
	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.
	Indicates that the target <u>will not be achieved</u> unless there is an intervention or remedial action taken.

Education, Inclusion & Provision Department**Revenue Budget as at 31 March 2025**

	Annual Budget	Actual Spend	Variance (Overspend)
	£'000	£'000	£'000
Expenditure			
Employees	7,449	7,592	(143)
Agency - covering vacancies	0	271	(271)
Agency - addition to establishment	86	25	61
Premises	14	11	3
Supplies & Services	3,793	3,854	(61)
Independent School Fees	10,410	10,410	0
Schools Contingency	441	441	0
Transport	43	60	(17)
Schools Transport	2,356	3,118	(762)
Early Years Payments	12,320	12,320	0
Early Years Pupil Premium	257	257	0
Commissioned Services	1,918	2,116	(198)
Inter Authority Special Needs	1,415	1,415	0
Grants to Voluntary Organisations	112	176	(64)
Capital Financing	3,200	3,033	167
Total Expenditure	43,814	45,099	(1,285)
Income			
Fees & Charges Income	-440	-451	11
Government Grant Income	-8,442	-8,442	0
Dedicated Schools Grant	-27,114	-26,963	(151)
Inter Authority Income	-274	-274	0
Reimbursements & Other Grant Income	-1,717	-1,718	1
Schools SLA Income	-518	-478	(40)
Transfers from Reserves	-176	-596	420
Total Income	-38,681	-38,922	241
Net Operational Expenditure	5,133	6,177	(1,044)
Recharges			
Premises Support	344	344	0
Transport Support	528	738	(210)
Central Support	1,605	1,605	0
Asset Rental Support	2,514	2,514	0
Recharge Income	0	0	0
Net Total Recharges	4,991	5,201	(210)
Net Departmental Expenditure	10,124	11,378	(1,254)

Financial Position

Net departmental expenditure is £1.254m over budget at the end of 2024/25. Throughout the year it had been forecast to be over budget by approximately £1.240m at year end. The main variances being school transport and staffing.

Employee Expenditure

Employee expenditure, including agency staff, is £0.353m over budget at year end. There are a number of vacant positions across the department some of which are filled by agency staff, at a cost of £0.271m for the year.

The employee overspend is largely due to two services, Psychology and SEN Assessment, posts were previously funded from the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG). The Department for Education recently advised that these costs cannot be DSG funded because they do not meet the grant conditions. Therefore this cost has fallen upon the Council's budget at a cost of £0.860m.

Agreed departmental savings of £0.080m for the SEN Assessment Team detailed in Annex A have not been achieved for the same reason above.

The forecasted overspend for employees has decreased by £0.094m since the last reporting period due to a review of some services resulting in some posts being deleted and others being identified as eligible for grant funding.

Schools Transport

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

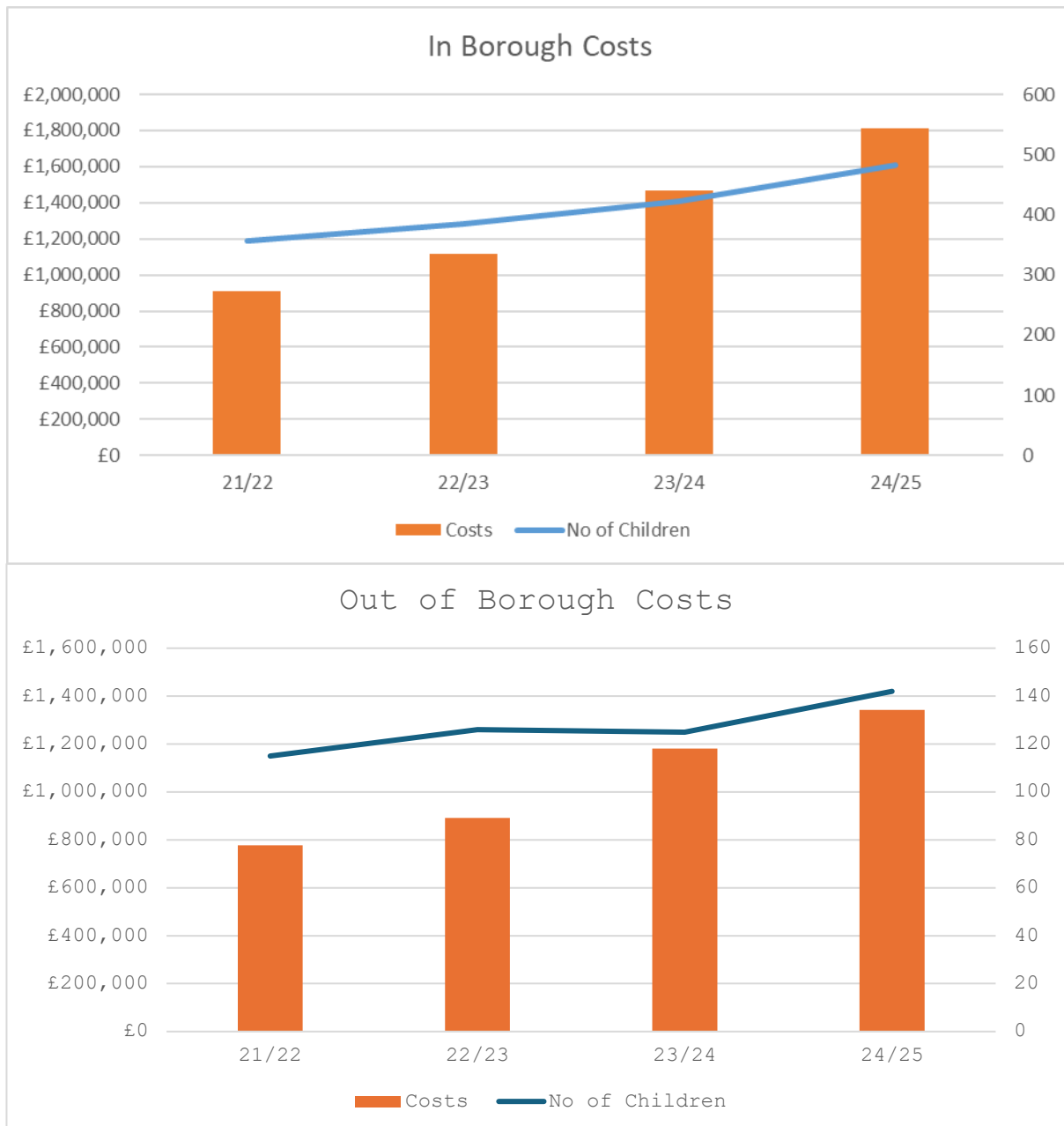
The table below illustrates the split between the two areas, and how each areas spend compares to the budget.

2024-25					
Area	Number of Users	Budget £000	Spend £000	Variance £000	Average Cost per User
In Borough	486	1826	1789	37	£3,728.22
Out of Borough	146	530	1329	(799)	£9,200.53
Total	632	2356	3118	(762)	

As at 31 March 2025 there were 632 service users, 8 more than previously reported in January 2025. The majority of which attend schools within the Borough, 486 compared to 146 out of the Borough. The out of Borough overspend is £0.799m at the end of the financial year. The demand for the School Transport service is increasing in line with the increasing number of pupils with SEN within the Borough.

In setting the 2025/26 budget, growth has been added to increase the annual budget to £2.995m, which this is still significantly short of projected spend of £3.648m. There is a consultation underway to review the home to school transport policy, with changes from the new academic year for new and existing service users.

The graphs below show the trend in the number of SEN children using this service and the associated costs.



It is worth noting that this situation is not unique to Halton and is a burden across all Councils nationwide.

Income

Income has overachieved due to a review of departmental earmarked reserves and £0.420m being released to the General Fund.

Transport Recharges

Transport Recharges overspent by £0.210m. As in previous reports, the increase in running costs continues to rise.

Approved 2024/25 Savings

Please see Appendix A for full details.

Capital Projects as at 31 March 2025

	2024/25 Revised Allocation £000	Actual Spend to 31 March 2025 £000	Allocation remaining £000
Childrens Directorate			
Capital Repairs	749.0	741.2	7.8
Basic Need Projects	0.0	0.0	0.0
SEND capital allocation	1,529.2	1,532.2	(3.0)
Family Hubs & Start for Life	110.4	112.8	(2.4)
Asbestos Management	0.0	2.9	(2.9)
Asset Management	0.0	23.6	(23.6)
Small Capital Works - Schools	0.0	54.9	(54.9)
Access Initiative	0.0	22.6	(22.6)
Grange BSF	0.0	49.3	(49.3)
Childrens Directorate Total	2,388.6	2,539.5	(150.9)

Comments on the Above Figures




There are a number of capital schemes where spend for the year exceeds the revised budget as reported to Executive Board on 13 March 2025. Where this is the case funding for overspend against allocation will come from external grant.

The main item of expenditure is in relation to SEND Capital Allocations. Many of the repairs and SEND works are completed over the summer holidays and are mainly complete. Some retentions will be due in 2025/26.

EDUCATION, INCLUSION AND PROVISION DEPARTMENT

Review of Agreed Savings

APPENDIX A

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

CHILDREN & FAMILIES DEPARTMENT**Revenue Budget as at 31 March 2025**

	Annual Budget	Actual Spend	Variance (Overspend)
	£'000	£'000	£'000
Expenditure			
Employees	16,311	17,761	(1,450)
Other Premises	430	390	40
Supplies & Services	2,907	3,496	(589)
Transport	360	312	48
Direct Payments	1,097	1,074	23
Commissioned services to Vol Orgs	224	209	15
Residential Care	19,594	25,550	(5,956)
Out of Borough Adoption	96	0	96
Out of Borough Fostering	4,408	5,211	(803)
In House Adoption	548	505	43
Special Guardianship Order	2,510	2,520	(10)
In House Foster Carer Placements	2,788	2,301	487
Lavender House Contract Costs	234	219	15
Home Support & Respite	478	347	131
Care Leavers	290	472	(182)
Family Support	53	50	3
Contracted services	3	4	(1)
Emergency Duty	132	175	(43)
Youth Offending Services	321	335	(14)
Transfer to Reserves	149	149	0
Finance Costing	2	2	0
Total Expenditure	52,935	61,082	(8,147)
Income			
Fees & Charges	-54	-34	(20)
Sales Income	-4	-2	(2)
Rents	-97	-97	0
Reimbursement & other Grant Income	-1,092	-914	(178)
Transfer from reserve	-214	-214	0
Dedicated Schools Grant	-50	-50	0
Government Grants	-14,150	-14,064	(86)
Total Income	-15,661	-15,375	(286)
Net Operational Expenditure	37,274	45,707	(8,433)
Recharges			
Premises Support	669	669	0
Transport	16	17	(1)
Central Support Recharges	2,274	2,274	0
Asset Rental Support	0	0	0
Internal Recharge Income	-967	-967	0
Net Total Recharges	1,992	1,993	(1)
Net Departmental Expenditure	39,266	47,700	(8,434)

Financial Position

The net departmental expenditure is over budget at the end of the financial year by £8.433m with majority of this relating to Social Care Services.

Growth budget of £6.079m has been provided to support pressured areas for financial year 2024/25 but unfortunately this has not been sufficient to support the increasing spend across the service.

The overall overspend position at the end of 2024/25 has reduced by £1.654m since the forecast was last reported at 31 January 2025.

Significant investment as part of a Children's Social Care improvement plan has helped to reduce the overspend position as well as reductions in agency and placement costs.

Although there is a reduction in the overspend position compared to previous forecast, the Children's and Families department is still an area of serious concern and the issues remain the same. The difficulty in the recruitment of social workers and the subsequent extortionate agency costs, along with the spiralling costs of residential placements. This has been an ongoing problem for a number of years.

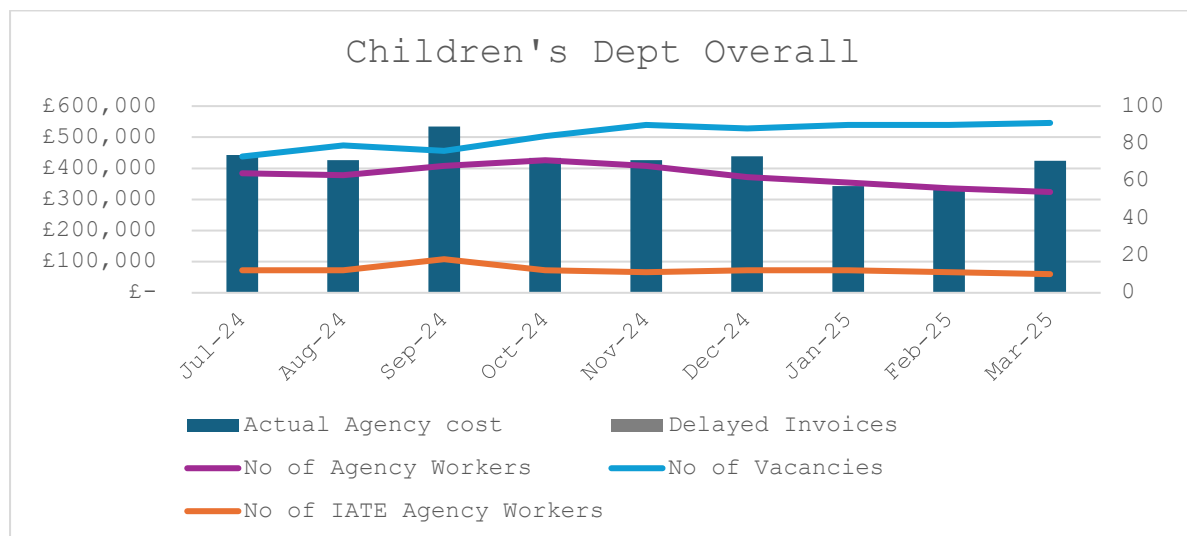
Please see below for further details

Employee Expenditure

Employee costs are over budget at the end of financial year 2024/25 by £1.450m this is a reduction of £0.544m since last reported.

The reduction mainly relates to an agreed investment within children's services which has resulted in the establishment of new roles across the department. Agency staff that were previously in addition to the establishment (IATE) and are no longer considered as IATE. Additional in-year budget of £0.714m (funded from contingency) has been provided for some of the newly established posts which has helped reduce the overspend position.

The chart below demonstrates agency cost that cover the financial year July to March 2025 based on the period that was worked, the number of agency members of staff that the Council have received an invoice for within each period, the number of vacancies across the department and the number of staff that are currently in addition to the establishment (IATE).



Agency spend across the department has remained high, total agency spend for financial year 2024/25 was £5.089m.

Various workstreams are in place to target the difficulties in recruitment, including a recruitment work group, social work academy and market supplements for applicable posts.

The chart above shows the level of agency has consistently reduced since October this is due to a number of agency converting to vacant positions and external recruitment which has resulted in agency staff being stepped down.

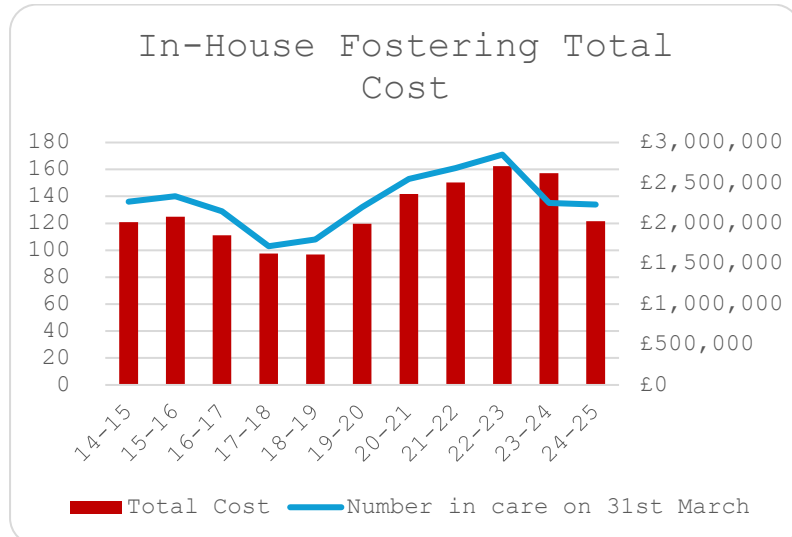
One area of concern relates to the number of staff that remain in addition to the establishment (IATE). These are agency staff that are currently not allocated to an established role within their respective team. This figure currently stands at 10 across the service which is a reduction since last reported at the end of January. Work should now be undertaken to reduce the level of staff that are in addition to the establishment if they do not form part of the redesign improvement plan.

Supplies and Services

Supplies and services expenditure is forecast to be £0.589m over budget at the end of the financial year. Supplies and Services is diverse and covers a number of areas including nursery fees, consultancy, translation costs, equipment and support provided to young people.

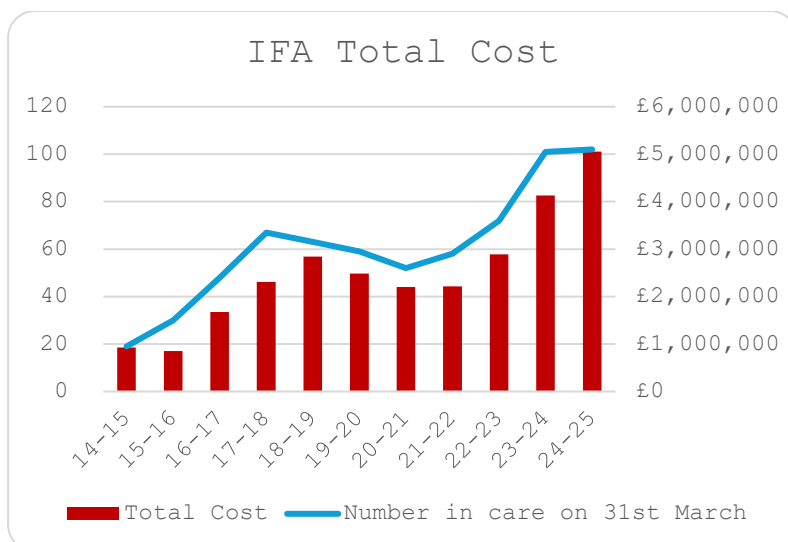
Fostering

Inhouse fostering placements is £0.487m under budget for financial year 2024/25. Inhouse fostering budgets were increased to support the budget pressure in this area.



Work continues to recruit and retain Halton's In-house foster carers, along with training to develop carers enabling them to accommodate more specialist placements. This therefore means that costs could increase. However, the ability to accommodate young people within in-house provision provides a substantial saving in comparison to Independent Fostering Agency (IFA) or residential care.

Increasing numbers of children in care and insufficient in-house fostering provision has meant increased reliance on IFA. Higher numbers of children placed within IFA provision and increased IFA rates has resulted in an overspend for the end of 2024/25 of £0.803m



Special Guardianship Order

Special Guardianship Order (SGO) cost at the end of financial year 2024/25 is over budget by £0.010m

These are long term placements for young people, where the carers are granted parental responsibility for the young person in their care. This is a positive outcome for the young person as these are stable placements and the children are no longer classed as a 'child in care'. They are also less expensive than other placements so they are financially beneficial too.

Residential Care

Out of Borough Residential Care continues to be the main budget pressure for the Children and Families Department as the costs of residential care have continued to rise year on year. The numbers of young people in residential placements remains high and the cost of placements is rising significantly year-on year.

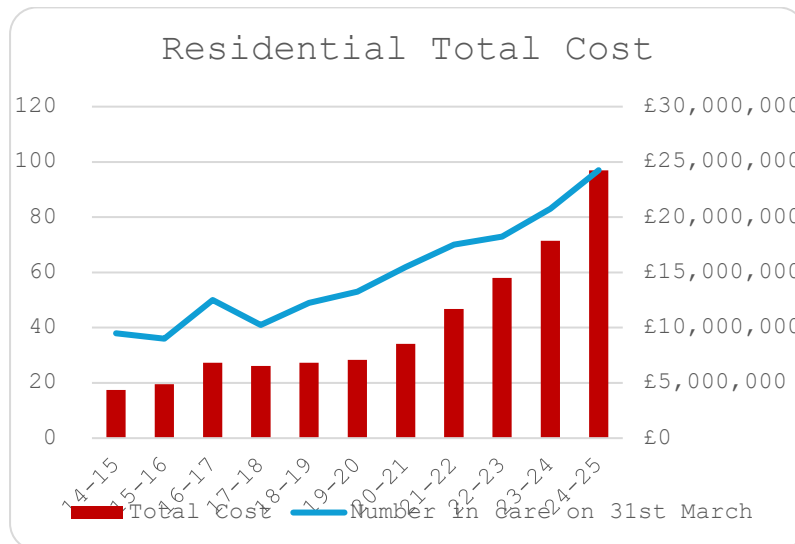
Provision	Weekly Costs	31-Mar-25		31-Jan-25	
		No. Placed	Estimated cost for the year	No. Placed	Estimated cost for the year
Residential	£1000 - £3000	6	838,280	4	488,662
Residential	£3001 - £5000	32	5,779,924	27	5,108,252
Residential	£5001 - £7000	20	5,478,530	26	6,737,694
Residential	£7001 - £15982	18	9,323,003	16	9,452,930
Secure	£6397 - £8137	1	53,295		
Leaving Care	£443 - £7175	11	2,058,824	11	2,134,843
Parent & Child	£2000 - £5500	9	717,242	7	774,025
Total:		97	24,249,098	91	24,696,405

Overall cost of packages are increasing due to the complexity of support the young people require as well as standard package cost increases. This is a national issue and market factors such as low supply and high demand have resulted in the costs of residential care

packages rising significantly over the last year, meaning that the level of spend is unsustainable at the current rate.

A number of initiatives are taking place to try and address the issue including a High Cost Placement Panel where high cost packages are individually scrutinized to ensure the placement is right for the young person and at the best available cost for the placement.

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



UASC Residential Care

The number of Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children (UASC) currently placed in care has remained steady.

Funding for 24/25 for the period April to September for both UASC and Leaving Care have been received and the remaining funding should be received in the next few months.

Provision	Weekly Costs	31-Mar-25		31-Jan-25	
		No. Placed	Estimated cost for the year	No. Placed	Estimated cost for the year
UASC	£300-£500	23	391,134	25	399,785
UASC	£500-£5000	25	772,950	24	773,079
Total:		48	1,164,084	49	1,172,864

Income




Children and Families have underachieved on income in financial year 2024/25 by £0.286m, the underachievement relates to not receiving all grant income that was originally expected for the Social Work Academy and the number of joint funded NHS packages reducing.

Approved 2024/25 Savings

Please see Appendix A for full details.

CHILDREN & FAMILY SERVICES DEPARTMENT

APPENDIX A

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

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

DATE: 9 June 2025

REPORTING OFFICER: Executive Director of Children's Services

PORTFOLIO: Children, Young People and Families

SUBJECT: Agency Staffing and Court Costs

WARD(S) Borough Wide

1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 For the Board to scrutinise progress being made in the reduction of agency staffing and court costs

2.0 RECOMMENDED: That the report be noted.

3.0 SUPPORTING INFORMATION

- 3.1 Improvements in the quality of assessments, plans and planning is supporting a reduction in the number of applications being made to the courts. The LA has made progress in concluding the number of children already in court with a reduction from 130 in Feb 2024 to 70 in March 2025. Of the new applications presented to court only 8 of those children have had an interim care order granted with direction that the children remain in the home. This is a reduction and implies that the quality of assessments has improved.
- 3.2 Public Law Outline has also been improved. More families are considered through the PLO process prior to applications being made to court. There has been a 50% increase in the number of families that has benefited from PLO since December 2023. This increase is having a positive impact on the timeliness of concluding court cases where the risks could not be reduced. Our average timeliness of hearings was 80 Weeks in April 2024 and is now at 33 weeks as of March 2025 (the concluding of longer term cases impacts on the timeliness as this measure is taken based on the length of time it has taken to conclude.) The current average time to conclude is between 29 weeks and 32 weeks.
- 3.3 Number of children coming in to care is down from 44.0 – 39.0. with over 400 in care last year we have seen this drop to 355 this year. Whilst there remains fluctuations there is a downward trajectory.

3.4 Agency numbers continue to reduce with 'in addition to establishment' posts significantly reduced as exit strategies and joint working with Finance, HR and the senior managers demonstrating effective in addressing this previous culture.

3.5 Agency rates have reduced from 63% to 36% and the number of applicants has increased. Agency workers are starting to convert particularly in the Child In Need teams and Children in Care.

3.6 The agency rates continue on a downward trajectory.

4.0 **POLICY IMPLICATIONS**

4.1 No Implications

5.0 **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

5.1 The work in PLO has mitigated costs of £19,656,000 if all those children had come into residential care in an average costed placement of 7K per week. For those children already in care, in the last 6 months, 19 have a plan of Special Guardianship Order /Child Arrangement Order. A further 53 children have a care plan of return to family in the last 6 months. We continue to look at the discharges of children from care where the legal order is not longer required and where it is safe to do so.

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

6.1 **Improving Health, Promoting Wellbeing and Supporting Greater Independence**

Were safe to do so the legal responsibility for children in care returning to family and discharged from our care promotes the child's wellbeing.

6.2 **Building a Strong, Sustainable Local Economy**

No Impact.

6.3 **Supporting Children, Young People and Families**

Were safe to do so the legal responsibility for children in care returning to family and discharged from our care promotes the child's wellbeing.

6.4 **Tackling Inequality and Helping Those Who Are Most In Need**

Were safe to do so the legal responsibility for children in care returning to family and discharged from our care promotes the child's wellbeing.

6.5 **Working Towards a Greener Future**

No Impact

- 6.6 **Valuing and Appreciating Halton and Our Community**
No Impact.

7.0 **RISK ANALYSIS**

- 7.1 Childrens social care continue to work towards reducing the cost of staffing and care. The targets set in terms of savings can in some instances be impacted upon by the rising costs of care within residential and private fostering companies. Our continued focus on offering the right care to families to mitigate the needs of intervention continue to be a priority and in the longer term will support the reduction in council spends.

8.0 **EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES**

- 8.1 No impact.

9.0 **CLIMATE CHANGE IMPLICATIONS**

- 9.1 Reduction in children coming into care will support greener agenda as will reduce carbon emissions through travel for family time.

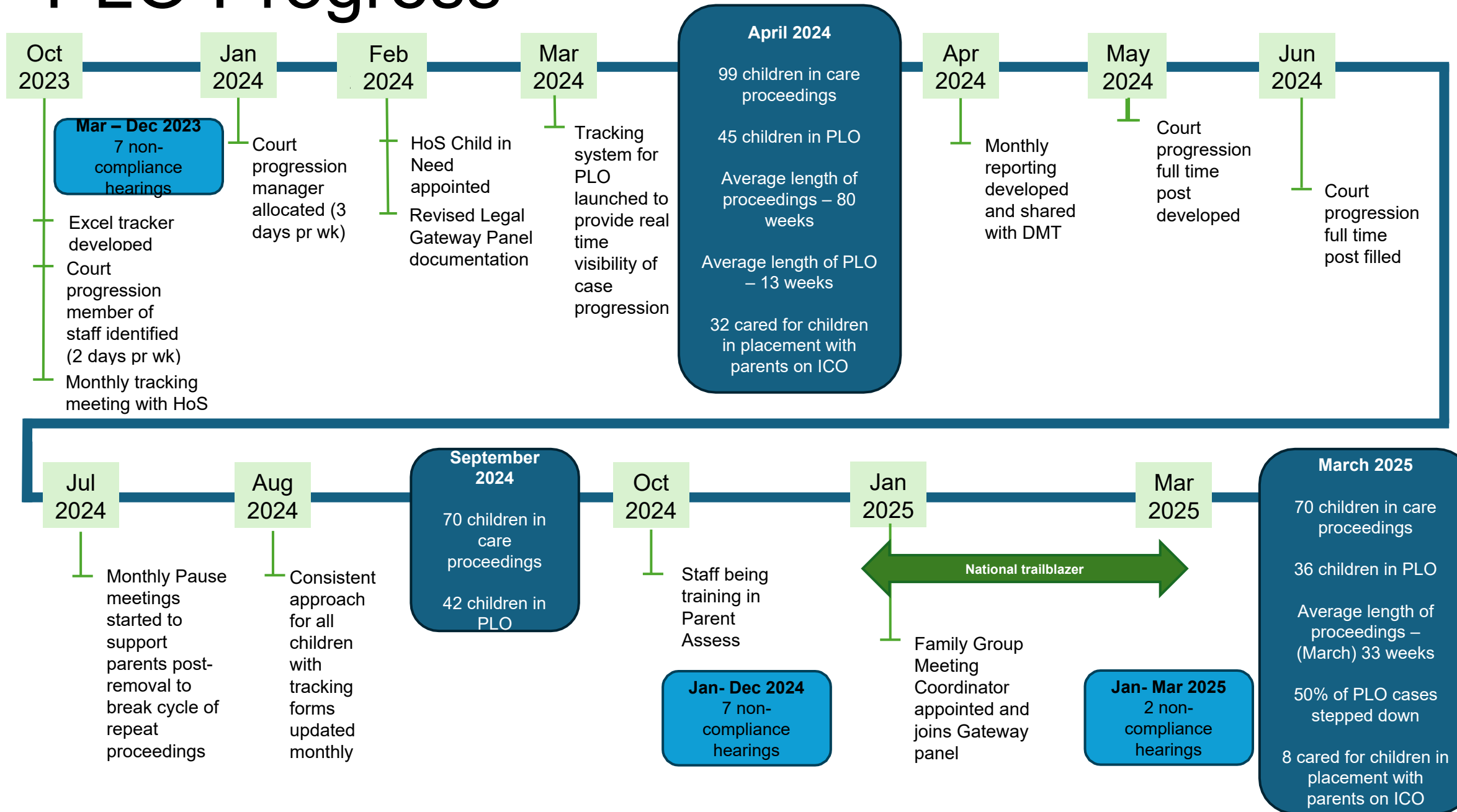
10.0 **LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS UNDER SECTION 100D OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972**

‘None under the meaning of the Act.’

PPB Progress on Agency and court costs

Director CSC
Katherine Appleton

PLO Progress





Progress

- Between December 2023 and April 2025 the number of children in pre-proceedings rose by 50%.
- Over same period our care proceedings reduced by 40% for children.
- This is a positive impact of frontloading at pre-proceedings, leading to more timely planning and a reduced need for court intervention.
- The effective use of pre-proceedings is helping more children and families avoid the need for care proceedings.
- Between April 2024-April 2025 52 families involving 98 children concluded their pre-proceedings work. Of these, 25 families (54 children) were successfully supported to step down without the need to issue care proceedings.
- The increased use of pre-proceedings is also having a positive impact on the timeliness of care proceedings.
- April 2024 – March 2025 a significant reduction in the average duration of concluded care proceedings. Monthly duration 2024 ranged between 52 and 87 weeks prior to October 2024. Consistent and sustained progress since October 2024 with average duration between 29 and 32 weeks reflecting improved case management and earlier decision-making

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Progress

- Numbers of children coming into care is reducing 44.0 in 23/24 to 39.0 24/25.
- Actual numbers of CIC rose to over 400 last year and reduced to 355 this year, there continues to be fluctuations, but the trajectory is downwards.
- Placement expenditure is coming down.
- EOC is live in June

Areas of focus

1

Reduce the number
of C2 applications
made to court

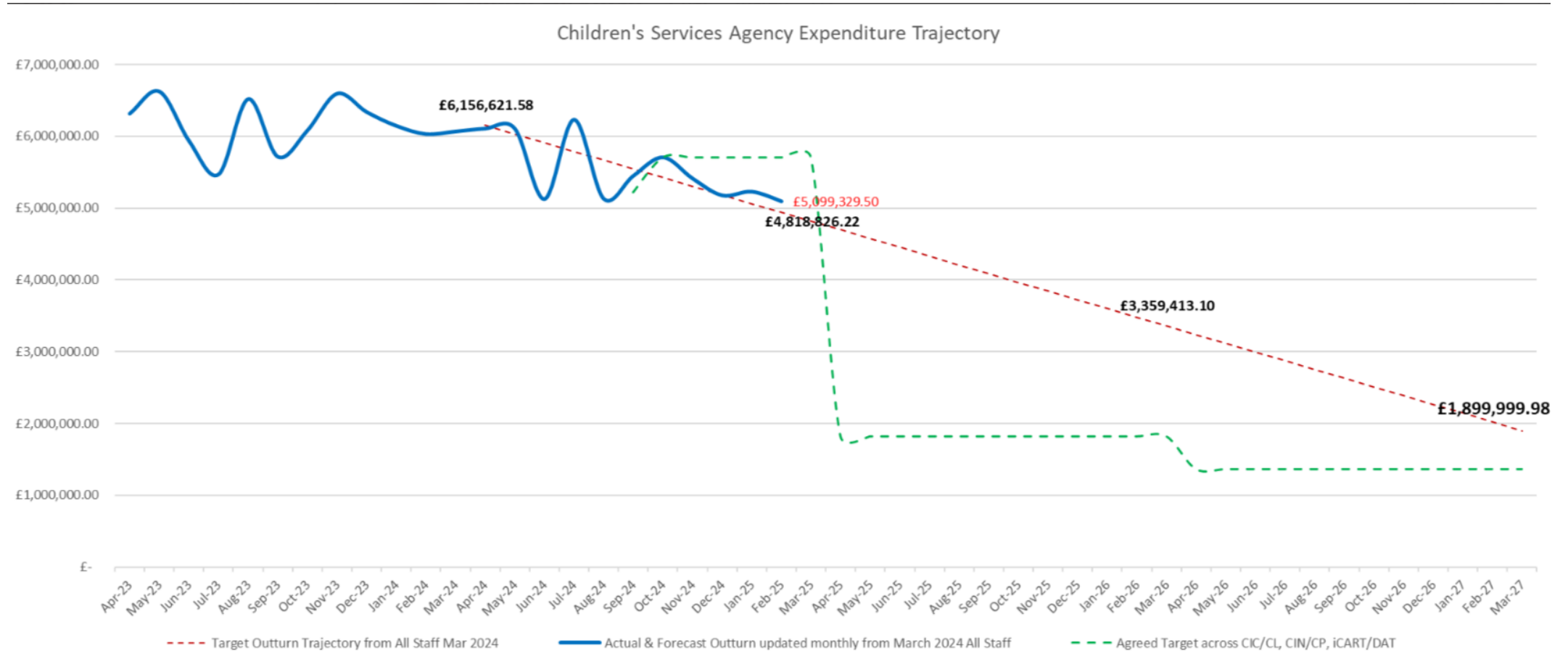
2

Continue to
strengthen the
quality of
assessment, plans
and Planning

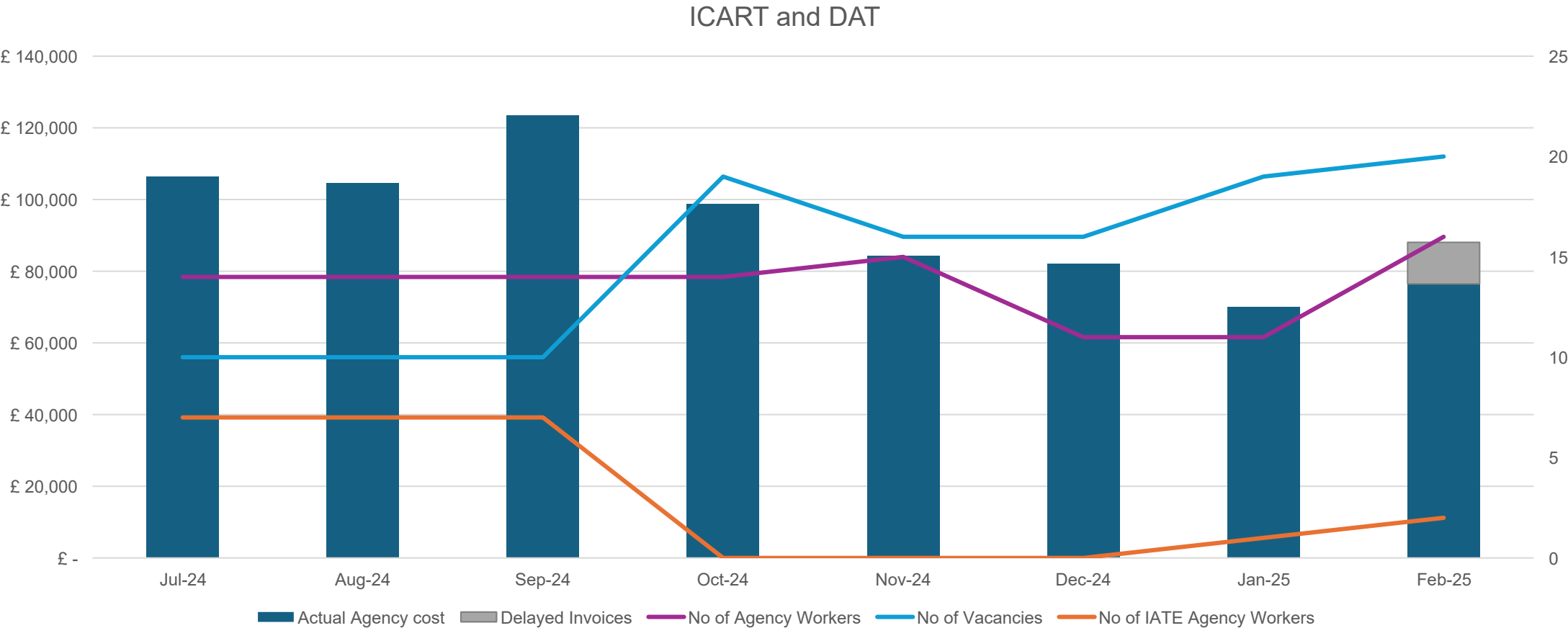
3

Continue to progress
families through PLO
providing opportunity
for progress and step
down

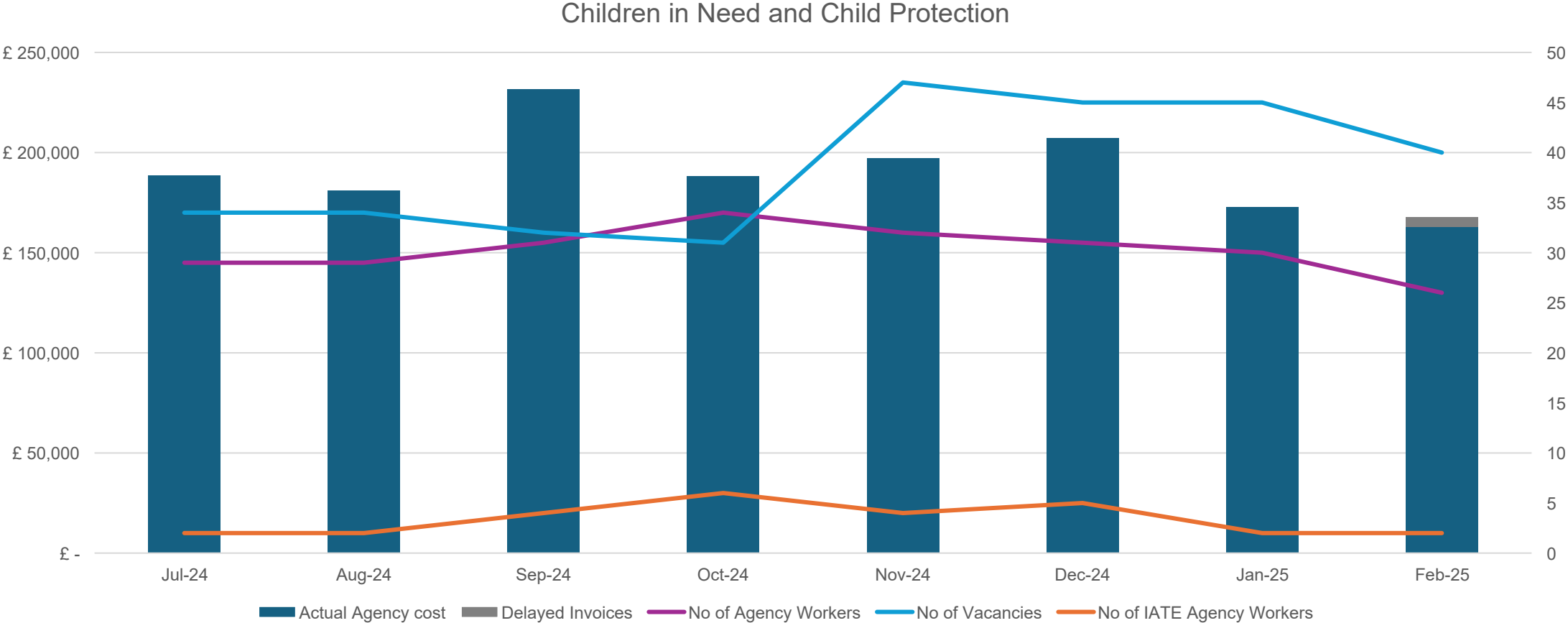
Agency trajectory



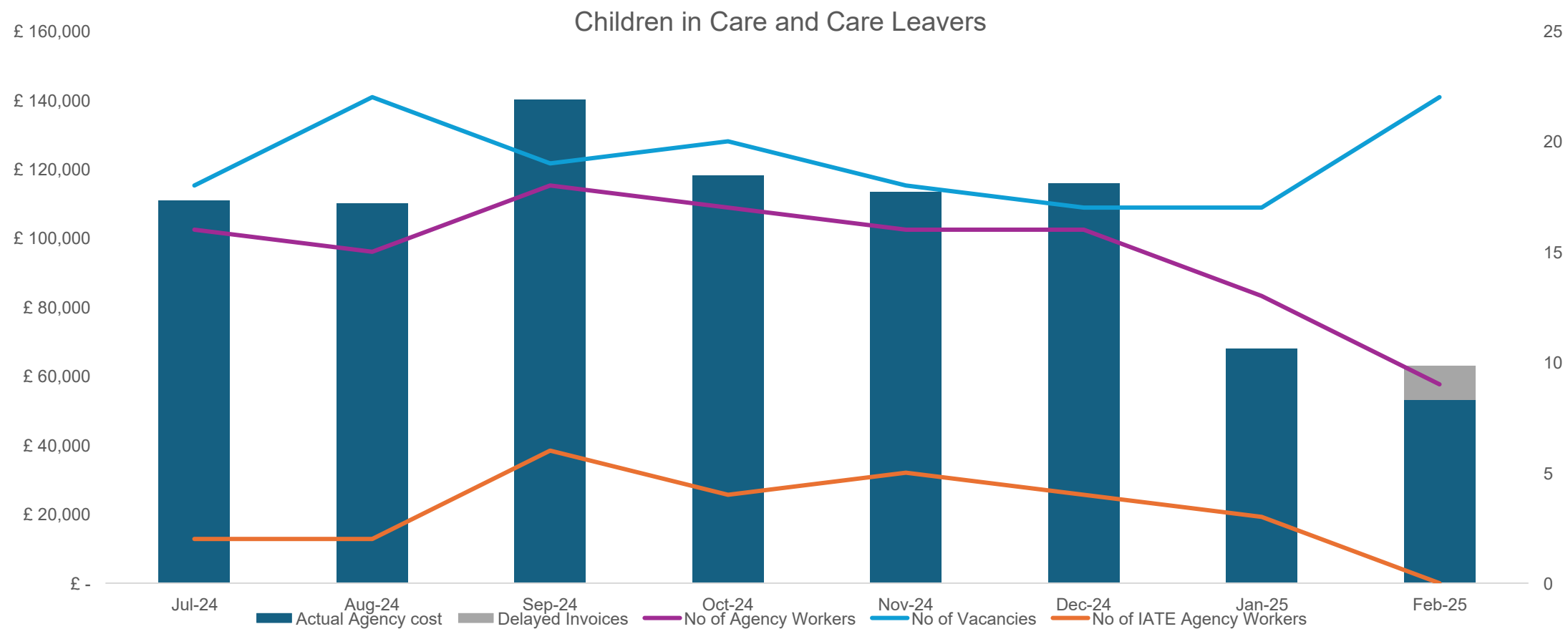
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**Children, Young People and Families
Policy and Performance Board
Annual Report
2024 -25**

Introduction



I have been the Chair of the Children, Young People and Families Policy and Performance Board since June 2021, and I am very pleased to report on the work of the Board during 2024/25.

The Board continues to take its scrutiny responsibilities very seriously and during the past 12 months the Board has had the opportunity to comment on a number of proposals and developments, as outlined in this report.

I would like to acknowledge the help and support given to the Board over the past year by the Operational Directors in the Children Services Department.

Finally, I would just like to take this opportunity to pass the Board's sincere thanks onto all the dedicated staff working across Children Services in Halton, without this level of dedication and the continued hard work we certainly would not be able to continue to deliver quality services and care to the children, young people and families of Halton. Thankyou!!!

I look forward to 2025/26 and the continued challenge of ensuring the quality of services for children, young people and families within Halton are of the highest standard.

Cllr Geoffrey Logan, Chair

Membership

The Board:

- [Councillor Geoffrey Logan](#) (Chair)
- [Councillor Carol Plumpton Walsh](#) (Vice-Chair)
- [Councillor Sandra Baker](#)
- [Councillor Victoria Begg](#)
- [Councillor Louise Goodall](#)
- [Councillor Eddie Jones](#)
- [Councillor Peter Lloyd Jones](#)
- [Councillor Tony McDermott](#)
- [Councillor Margaret Ratcliffe](#)
- [Councillor Mike Ryan](#)
- [Councillor Aimee Skinner](#)

The Lead Officer for the Board is Benjamin Holmes, Operational Director, Education, Inclusion and Provision, Children's Services.

The Executive Portfolio Holder for Children and Young People is Councillor Tom McInerney.

Responsibility:

The primary responsibility is to focus on the work of the Council (and its Partners) in seeking to ensure that children and young people in Halton have the best possible start in life and the opportunity to fulfil their potential and succeed, and to scrutinise progress against the Corporate Plan in relation to the Children and Young People Priority.

This Report is a summary of some of the topics scrutinised by the Children, Young People and Families Policy and Performance Board during the cycle of its meetings. The Board have met four times in 2024 -25. Minutes of the meetings can be found on the [Halton Borough Council website](#).

The Board received a presentation on the development of Halton's new [Halton Children, Young People's Partnership Plan 2024-27](#) which set out the actions to be taken over the next three years to make progress towards achieving our ambition that all children and young people in Halton are **safe, happy, healthy and succeeding**.

It provided an analysis of the challenges that children and young people living in the borough face and defined twelve priority issues that must be addressed, alongside the actions and areas of focus that will form the basis of work moving forward.

The Children and Young People's plan supports the Council to achieve its Corporate Plan priorities and underpins the work of all those that support children and young people in Halton, including Children's Services, schools, college, early years settings, police, health and the third sector.

The Board were assured that individual consultation had taken place with young people from various organisations, that the SEND cohort were adequately represented in the plan and that preventative measures to children coming in to key were key areas of focus.

Performance Monitoring

The purpose of the QMR (Quarterly Monitoring Report) is to allow the Board to consider, and raise any questions or points of clarification, in respect of performance management. The reports detail progress made against objectives, milestones and performance targets and provide information relating to key developments and emerging issues arising during the reporting period. Members were requested to consider the progress and performance information and highlight any areas of interest and/or concern.

The format of the QMR changed from December 2024 in order to comply with the new corporate reporting template. The content i.e. performance measures also changed from what has been reported previously in order to correlate with the priorities identified in the newly launched Children and Young People Plan (September 2024) and to ensure it correlated with the Business Plan.

Children Social Care

Children Social Care have reported provided updates on progress at each Board Meeting. Children Social Care are on an improvement journey, in 2020 an ILACS ([Inspecting Local Authority Children's Services](#)) found that services required improvement, in 2021 two areas of priority action were given which led to the creation of an improvement board.

In November 2023 Halton appointed a permanent Executive Director, Children Services and in January 2024 a permanent Director of Children's Social Care and Early Help. This led to a re-focus for children's social care and a request for corporate support to significantly improve services.

The board heard that,

- A stable senior leadership team is in place and the creation of specific roles i.e. permanent Head of Service for practice improvement, this role will also incorporate the Principal Social Worker role which is a key role for Halton's regional and national engagement. And a Programme Management Lead to oversee the Improvement Plan.

- A workforce board was created producing a recruitment and retention strategy, with the ambition and goal to create a stable and sustainable Children Social Care workforce. Agency staff were reducing.
- The new Connect2Halton recruitment service would be used going forward to recruit temporary staff when required. In the long term, this would reduce costs for the Council.
- The newly created Social Work Academy had responsibility for the oversight of newly qualified Social Workers and ensuring they are supported in their first year of practice.
- Step up to social work opportunities and apprenticeships to become social worker initiatives are also managed and supported within the Academy.
- There has been success in attracting newly qualified social workers to work in Halton.
- The Academy delivers a cohesive training plan linked to need and knowledge gaps.
- A service redesign is underway, one of those being a Discharge from Care Team. To combat the high numbers of children and young people in care who are subject to statutory orders but live at home with their parents. Some of these children require a legal process to discharge their legal orders. 3 experienced Social Workers were recruited on fixed term contracts. An "Edge of Care" service will also provide intensive support and prevention services for children and families at risk of needing to become looked after by a local authority.
- Every Council in the country is experiencing financial challenges primarily in children's services driven by profiteering from private companies offering care places to children at hugely inflated costs. The Board heard some of the initiatives to combat this including a High-Cost Place Panel now being in place.
- Sufficiency around provision and having sufficient foster carers for Halton children has been a challenge for many years. An ambitious sufficiency strategy to develop provision as well being part of a regional approach to increasing the number of foster carers through a project called "Mockingbird". The Board heard how this approach to fostering a global award winning and pioneering programme is led by The Fostering Network in the UK, the approach supports local authorities to create and increase sustainable foster care. It is an evidence-based model structured around the support and relationships an extended family provides; this is mirrored by created "family of foster carers" who offer support to the substantive carer like a family member would. Halton is very excited to be part of the regional approach and what it will mean for our children.
- Halton's Corporate Parenting Board was refreshed and revised to ensure it is effective and harnessed the corporate support required for our children and young people.
- Partnership arrangements were reviewed and codesigned with partners. The new arrangements were launched. There is now a business manager in place and an independent scrutineer. A key joint priority setting day took place in June with an agreed approach to the priorities for the partnership over the next 3 years.

The Board was informed that on 12 July 2024, Ofsted published a report rating Halton Borough Council children's service as inadequate following an inspection that took place between 13 and 24 May 2024. The council was given 90 days to prepare an improvement action plan in response. This was submitted 21 October 2024. Following the publication of the Ofsted report a statutory direction was issued by the Secretary of

State to Halton Borough Council and Steven Walker was appointed as Commissioner for Children's Services in Halton. Progress against the improvement plan is overseen by the Improvement Board, independently chaired by Stuart Smith (Department for Education Improvement Advisor). The Board meets on a monthly basis and has adopted a thematic approach in its focus on the outlined areas of the overall plan. Ofsted will monitor progress against the improvement plan and conduct a series of monitoring visits following an inadequate inspection judgement. The first monitoring visit to Halton took place in January 2025.

The Board heard that by strengthening Halton's service delivery it can support families to remain together safely due to being able to access services at an earlier stage, improving coping strategies. Provision of care will support the development of independence for our children so that they can live in suitable accommodation and have regular contact with services that support; emotional wellbeing, reduce isolation and respond to changing situations.

SEND (Special educational Needs and Disabilities)

The Board were reminded that in November 2023, Halton SEND Local Area Partnership were inspected by Ofsted and the Care Quality Commission (CQC); the purpose - to evaluate the effectiveness of the area's partnership SEND arrangements in improving experiences and outcomes for children and young people with SEND. The Inspection found widespread and/or systemic failings leading to significant concerns about the experiences and outcomes of children and young people with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND.) As a result of this inspection, His Majesty's Chief Inspector required the local area partnership to prepare and submit a priority action plan (area SEND). The priority action plan was developed in partnership with stakeholders from across the area and was subsequently approved by Ofsted and the Care Quality Commission. The inspectorate identified 5 priority areas for improvement.

It was reported that the Area Priority Action Plan was developed in partnership with stakeholders from across the area and was subsequently approved by Ofsted and the Care Quality Commission. The Board were provided with the Priority Action Plan and provided with updates throughout this reporting year.

The Board heard that.

- A multi-agency partnership Board was created to drive and monitor improvements, an independent chair was appointed. (HSSIB) Halton SEND Strategic Improvement Board.
- Appointing the SEND programme Manager was a key post to drive forward progress across all priorities in the action plan.
- Parent Carer Surveys were completed and the findings reported back to the Board.

Delivering Better Value (DBV)

The Board heard that Halton were successful in their bid for 'Delivering Better Value (DBV). This is a Department for Education programme working to identify and implement local opportunities to improve the outcomes for children and young people with SEND across 54 LAs, and aid local systems (alongside existing local and other DfE programmes) in their objective of achieving financial sustainability. Halton was given £1m grant funding, primarily to build resilience across all educational systems to

support and include learners with Social, Emotional Mental Health Needs. The initiatives outlined in our bid were designed to allow schools and settings to support SEND children effectively, without necessarily having to request an Education Health and Care assessment, alleviating the demand for specialist placements, and reducing both the risk of out of borough placement and permanent exclusions. The grant was split into two workstreams (1) Behaviour Support Change programme; and (2) Inclusion Framework. This additional resource presented a significant opportunity to positively transform inclusive practices across Halton. During this reporting year there have been reports showing the progress and success of the project.

Supporting Families Programme

In September 2024, the Board received a report on the Supporting Families Programme, it provided information on performance, funding and commissioned services it provided, as well as a case study example, showing how one family had engaged positively with the Programme. The report highlighted that from April 2024 the Supporting Families Programme had transferred to the Department of Education from the Department of Levelling Up, Housing & Communities (DLUHC). This move formed part of the government's ambitious set of reforms to drive improvement in the way they support families and protect children, as set out in the Implementation Strategy for children's social care reform, Stable Homes, Built on Love. The transfer of Supporting Families to DfE would enable the Education Secretary to deliver a coordinated, whole system of support for children and families, as well as ensuring services are sustainable for local government. The programme's model of stepping beyond single policy agendas to drive local integration and whole family support would be key for the reforms around Family Help. At the time of this report being written, the Department of Education had not confirmed if the supporting families programme would continue, at that time the programme would therefore end on 31st March 2025.

Comments, Complaints and Compliments

The Board received the Annual Report – Comments, Complaints and Compliments, relating to Children's Social Care Services from 1 April 2023 to 31 March 2024. The Annual Report, a statutory requirement, provided an analysis of complaints processed under the Children's Act 1989 Representation's Procedure and evidenced how feedback from service users had been used to improve delivery. The report also provided Members with an update and feedback on compliments made by clients and positive feedback from workers / professionals relating to Children's Services in the Directorate. The report demonstrated the positive impact and outcomes on the lives of people accessing services in this Directorate.

Virtual School

The Board received the Headteacher of the Virtual School's Annual Report for 2023-24, on the educational outcomes and achievement for Halton's Children in Care, and the school's wider work across Children's Services.

The Annual Report provided Members with information on the work of the Virtual School throughout the academic year and presented detailed analysis of how Halton's Children in Care had performed against each of the individual key performance indicators. This included a summary of the Virtual School's progress towards its identified key priorities for the academic year 2023-24, and the priorities for the school in 2024-25.

School Attendance Guidance

A report was presented to the Board outlining changes in school attendance policies, following the release of the Department for Education's (DfE) Working Together to Improve Schools Attendance guidance, in August 2024. The report highlighted the key changes, as well as their implications and responsibilities of local authorities. It was noted that the new measures were now operational across Halton's schools and all schools had fully complied. The new measures were designed to promote regular attendance, enhance monitoring and offer targeted support to pupils facing barriers.

School Performance Outcomes

The Board received a presentation on the validated school performance data which was published on 24 October 2024. Performance outcomes for schools across Halton at the end of Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) and Key Stages 2 and 5 were shared with the Board. It was reported that the outcomes for Key Stage 4 had been delayed by the Department for Education (DfE) and were expected in December 2024.

NEET (Not in Education, Employment or Training)

The Board considered a report which gave the annual NEET (Not in Education, Employment or Training) and 'Not Known' figures for Halton and the reasons for growth of the number of young people who were NEET. The report and accompanying presentation described the work of the 14-19 Team at Halton who provided careers guidance and support to those who were not participating and informed how they worked with schools to support young people to transition from Year 11 into Post 16 education. Members understood the challenges faced with provision.

Work Scrutiny Topics 2024-25

During 2024-2025, there were two particular areas focussed on through scrutiny groups; high-cost residential placements and SEND Home to School Transport. Scrutiny groups were used as an opportunity to explore in detail the work being undertaken by officers to reduce the necessity to place our children and young people in such places of care, and instead what we, as an authority, can do to increase the capacity within other areas, as well as to reduce the need for children to enter care.

The group also explored in detail the current SEND home to school transport policy, the authorities spend in this area and the ways in which this policy could be updated to reflect the statutory duties of the local authority, while also ensuring that families are able to access support, when appropriate, to enable their children to access education as a provision suitable for their needs. As an outcome, it was agreed that the authority should proceed to complete a public consultation on possible changes to the policy, with the responses begin reported back in the 2025/26 year.

Work Scrutiny Topics 2025-26

A particular focus in 2025-26 will be the provision available for Post 16 learners across the borough, including those with SEND, to reduce the number of children and young people leaving school at 16 and not entering education, employment or training (NEET).

Underpinning all of this work is the moral imperative. We are not merely intent on making efficiencies and savings. We, the members and officers working in Children's services, are determined to do the best for the families and children of Halton. This

might involve reviewing individual needs of particular families which require consideration beyond the confines of legislation.

We must not be afraid to take actions that ensure that no family is left behind. Every child matters

REPORT TO:	Children and Young People and Families Policy and Performance Board
DATE:	9 June 2025
REPORTING OFFICER:	Executive Director of Children's Services
PORTFOLIO:	Children, Young People and Families
SUBJECT:	DfE Commissioner Recommendations progress report
WARD(S)	Borough Wide

1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 To provide the board with the progress against the DfE Commissioner Recommendations.

2.0 RECOMMENDATION: That the Board note the information provided.

3.0 SUPPORTING INFORMATION

- 3.1 The Department for Education (DfE) Commissioner report was published in February 2025. The Commissioner confirmed in the report that the Council had *"demonstrated that it has the capacity and capability to improve itself, in a reasonable timeframe, and the evidence is sufficiently strong to suggest that long-term sustainable improvement to children's social care can be achieved should operational service control continue to remain with the Council"*.
- 3.2 The Commissioner recommended the Improvement Advisor from DfE remained in place until the next full inspection of Children's Services was concluded and that regular progress reviews be undertaken,
- 3.3 The report included 24 recommendations in relation to Halton Borough Council, the Halton Safeguarding Children's Partnership and the Improving Services for Children Board.
- 3.4 In March 2025 the first quarterly progress review was undertaken and the presentation attached provided as evidence of progress against each of the recommendations in the Commissioner Report. 21% of the recommendations have been completed and a further 71% of the recommendations are in progress and on track to be achieved in timescale. The two remaining actions are in progress but with some delays.

- 3.5 At the closure of the meeting the DfE Improvement Advisor confirmed that he was satisfied with the progress made.

4.0 POLICY IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 None

5.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 None

6.0 IMPLICATIONS FOR THE COUNCIL'S PRIORITIES

6.1 Improving Health, Promoting Wellbeing and Supporting Greater Independence

Recommendations from the DfE Commissioner will impact on the scrutiny of Council work which is wider than just for Children and Families. As a result there are implications for all of the Council's priorities, specifically in relation to the scrutiny of activity and performance of Council services.

6.2 Building a Strong, Sustainable Local Economy

Recommendations from the DfE Commissioner will impact on the scrutiny of Council work which is wider than just for Children and Families. As a result there are implications for all of the Council's priorities, specifically in relation to the scrutiny of activity and performance of Council services.

6.3 Supporting Children, Young People and Families

The focus for most of the recommendations is in relation to improving the arrangements for the delivery of services to children, young people and families in Halton, specifically for those children who are identified as in need of additional support. In delivering against the recommendations Halton Borough Council and partners will provide improved support for children, young people and families.

6.4 Tackling Inequality and Helping Those Who Are Most In Need

The focus for most of the recommendations is in relation to improving the arrangements for the delivery of services to children, young people and families in Halton, specifically for those children who are identified as in need of additional support. In delivering against the recommendations Halton Borough Council and partners will provide improved support for children, young people and families.

6.5 Working Towards a Greener Future

Recommendations from the DfE Commissioner will impact on the scrutiny of Council work which is wider than just for Children and Families. As a result there are implications for all of the Council's priorities, specifically in relation to the scrutiny of activity and performance of Council services.

6.6 Valuing and Appreciating Halton and Our Community

Recommendations from the DfE Commissioner will impact on the scrutiny of Council work which is wider than just for Children and Families. As a result there are implications for all of the Council's priorities, specifically in relation to the scrutiny of activity and performance of Council services.

7.0 Risk Analysis

- 7.1 Should a progress review carried out by Department for Education and Improvement Advisors conclude that insufficient progress is being made, or if Ofsted Monitoring Visits raise serious concerns, a Children's Commissioner would be appointed to strengthen the oversight, support and challenge to the authority.

8.0 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES

- 8.1 None identified.

9.0 CLIMATE CHANGE IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 None identified.

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

'None under the meaning of the Act.'



DfE Commissioner Report Recommendations Progress March 2025



Summary

- An update on progress made by March 2025 has been provided in the slides that follow.
- Each action has been RAG rated to look at progress and likelihood of achieving in line with the timescales set out.
- 21% recommendations have been completed (5)
- 71% of the recommendations are in progress and on track to be achieved in timescale (17)
- Two actions are in progress, but have been delayed.

Key

Completed

In progress and on track to be achieved in timescale

In progress but some delays

Not in progress or challenge in meeting the timescales

- The evidence from the recent monitoring visit suggests some further work to be undertaken to get consistency in practice for strategy discussions
- Action planning for Corporate Parenting Board in progress but unclear if it will be completed prior to the April CPB

Children's Services

Seen, Heard, Safe & Supported.

Recommendation	Lead	Progress – March 2025	Status
1. Within the next six months, Halton Borough Council should review their governance arrangements for Policy & Performance Boards to ensure that they are consistent with statutory guidance issued by the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities	John Morrissy	<p>Proposal developed for review of Scrutiny arrangements across Halton, based on revised DLUHC guidance, and the Centre for Governance and Scrutiny SIR (scrutiny improvement review) methodology. This will include reviewing the following areas and agreeing an action plan.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• A self-assessment of our current practice against the key cultural elements listed in paragraph 12 of the DLUHC guidance• Our training and development offer in relation to scrutiny, including our induction offer for new members of the council, and for those new to PPBs; and how we support scrutiny members in having an independent mindset and feeling empowered to challenge & probe• Our structure and officer resource for supporting scrutiny• How we communicate the role of scrutiny to the public• Our arrangements for identifying, recruiting and supporting co-opted members and technical advisers <p>This review to be undertaken in Q1 (April – June 2025).</p>	In progress & On track

Children's Services

Seen, Heard, Safe & Supported.

Recommendation	Lead	Progress – March 2025	Status
2. The Executive Director of Children's Services should routinely attend the Children Young People & Families Policy and Performance Board	Zoe Fearon	Children's Services Executive Director attends all PPB meetings	Completed
3. The Council should work with local partners to consider the impact and learning of the Priority Area Programme and develop sustainable plans beyond the end of the programme.	Ben Holmes	Education Strategy 2030 is progressing and on track for a summer 2025 launch. Vision and Priority Setting session delivered in March 2025 with 50+ Headteachers and Partners, facilitated by Prof Janet Lord and DfE Advisor, Nick King, alongside Ben Holmes. Further consultation with Parents, YP and Professionals to be scheduled across the summer term.	In progress & On track
4. The Halton Improvement Board for Services to Children should receive bimonthly reports from the SEND Improvement Board and on the DBV programme to strengthen support and challenge	Ben Holmes	This is in place with the first report presented at February 2025 Improvement Board and on forward plan to report to every other meeting. Programme Management Improvement Leads for SEND and CSC to coordinate reporting to the Boards with consistent approach.	Completed

Children's Services

Seen, Heard, Safe & Supported.

Recommendation	Lead	Progress – March 2025	Status
5. The authority should work with the DfE Improvement Advisor and their Improvement Partner to identify an appropriate practice model to then be implemented across Children's Services in the next 12 months. It should then be an ongoing priority to consistently embed this model across children's services.	Katherine Appleton, Wendy Harrison, Val Armor & Zoe Fearon	Trauma Informed & Systemic Practice training has been rolled out with Motivational Interviewing next to be rolled out which will form our practice model. Conversations underway to look at response to Families First with strategic lead identified which will support both recommendations 5 and 11 Exploration of Family Safeguarding model is underway with data analysis in progress via Hertfordshire Consideration of SLIP support is underway.	In progress & On track
6. The Council should ensure that processes enable social care posts to be advertised without delay and safe recruitment processes enable prompt commencement.	Hayley Hamlett	Systems are in place and additional resourcing officer based in SW Academy to progress social care posts quickly. All recruitment activity is reported to Workforce Board and governance through the Improvement Board. Performance in February evidenced reduction in total time to hire by 20.41 working days from Q2-Q3 and the average number of days completing pre-employment checks for all roles in Children's Social Care reduced by 13.59 working days Linked to Area 11 on the Improvement Plan	Completed

Children's Services

Seen, Heard, Safe & Supported.

Recommendation	Lead	Progress – March 2025	Status
7. Systems are in place and additional resourcing officer based in SW Academy to progress social care posts quickly. All recruitment activity is reported to Workforce Board and governance through the Improvement Board. Linked to Area 11 on the Improvement Plan	Wendy Harrison	Reporting in place from the SW Academy to both Workforce Board and Improvement Board. Linked to Area 11 on the Improvement Plan	Completed
8. The Council should reduce its use of agency social workers to at least the national average within two years of the publication of this report.	Wendy Harrison	This is in progress and reduced from 68% to 36% in the last 12 months. Plans in place to further reduce the use of agency workers. Recruitment & Retention Strategy and Workforce Strategy now in place. This is monitored at the Workforce Board and reporting in place to the Improvement Board. Linked to Improvement plan areas A6 & A11	In progress & On track

Children's Services

Seen, Heard, Safe & Supported.

Recommendation	Lead	Progress – March 2025	Status
9. The Executive Director must play a leadership role in driving the strategic agenda for Children's Services and the wider partnership. She should agree a set of clear strategic objectives with staff and partners, with clear actions and ambitious timescales for their delivery.	Zoe Fearon	<p>Children and Young People's Plan co-produced with partners and key stakeholders setting out ambitions and strategic plans to drive improvements for CYP in Halton launched in November 2024.</p> <p>Strategies to support the delivery are in development</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• SEND Strategy• Education Strategy• AP Strategy• Reducing Children in Care strategy <p>The next Corporate Parenting Strategy to be co-produced over the next six months</p> <p>HSCP developed the Business Plan following the priority setting session where three priorities were agreed (Neglect, Domestic Abuse, Complex Safeguarding)</p>	Completed



Children's Services

Seen, Heard, Safe & Supported.

Recommendation	Lead	Progress – March 2025	Status
10. Senior Leaders in Children's Services should hold monthly or bimonthly whole service management meetings that bring together managers from social care and early help and prevention services.	Katherine Appleton	Monthly meetings set up (Aiming High) which covers all managers from social care and early help and prevention services. Twice yearly meetings for full Children's Services cohort (first meeting held, next meeting being set up). Additional Leadership & Management training offer being explored for Children's Services managers as part of an ongoing induction programme.	In progress & On track
11. Working with the DfE Improvement Advisor, within the next six months, Senior Leaders in Children's Services should review whether they should implement a locality practice model linked to the Family Hubs in order to bring teams closer to local communities and support more integrated working across teams.	As per Recommendation 5		In progress & On track

Children's Services

Seen, Heard, Safe & Supported.

Recommendation	Lead	Progress – March 2025	Status
12. Within the next six months Halton Borough Council should set out its ambition for children and young people in a way that raises the profile and importance of children and young people. Consideration should be given to using an approach similar to becoming a 'Child Friendly Authority' to create a recognised 'brand' for all activity focused on children and young people and to support the engagement of partners, business and communities.	Corporate Management Team	Discussions have started with Corporate Management Team (CMT) Session planned (April 2025) with Stuart Smith to support CMT in developing their approach and response	In progress & On track
13. In the next three months, the Council should review its internal processes, particularly in relation to finance and HR to ensure that they do not cause significant or unnecessary delay to improvement and efficiencies.	Stephen Baker & Hayley Hamlett	HR and finance routinely represented at Joint Children's Services DMT to report on progress and respond to any challenges. Transformation Delivery Unit are undertaking process mapping to support identification of any efficiencies and improvements.	In progress & On track

Children's Services

Seen, Heard, Safe & Supported.

Recommendation	Lead	Progress – March 2025	Status
14. The local authority should consult with the Local Government Association regarding the training that should be provided to members of the Children, Young People & Families Policy and Performance Board. Training should be provided to Board annually to support them in their role.	Ben Holmes & John Morrissy	Training has been offered from Local Government Association. Dates to be agreed. The proposed scrutiny review and action plan will include training and support for all members; but in the short terms we will support Children's PPB members with guides and materials including: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• LGA Councillor workbook on Scrutiny• Centre for Governance and Scrutiny Guide to scrutiny of Children's Services	In progress & On track

Children's Services

Seen, Heard, Safe & Supported.

Recommendation	Lead	Progress – March 2025	Status
15. The Children Young People & Families Policy and Performance Board should ensure that the Board has access to expert to advice through the use of coopted members.	John Morrissy	<p>The proposed scrutiny review and action plan (April – June 2025) will include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Producing guidance for scrutiny / PPB chairs regarding co-opted members and technical advisers• Developing training and support for co-opted members and technical advisers• Agreeing how will we identify and recruit them• Established a clear budget and process for procuring this support, which is communicated to PPB Chairs <p>In the short term, we will support the Children's PPB by notifying the chair of the existing arrangements for co-option and providing suggested names for individuals who may be useful co-optees.</p>	In progress & On track

Children's Services

Seen, Heard, Safe & Supported.

Recommendation	Lead	Progress – March 2025	Status
16. The Children, Young People & Families Policy and Performance Board should undertake at least two Board inquiries a year. The findings of these enquiries, along with the DCS response, should be presented to Executive Board and copied to the Halton Improvement Board for Services to Children.	John Morrissy	<p>Deep dive undertaken and presented to PPB in Q4 2024-25. The theme was in relation to Finances.</p> <p>The proposed scrutiny review and action plan (April – June 2025) will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Align process and practice for Board Inquiries / Evidence Sessions / Deep Dives across all PPBs;• Identify any necessary training and support for members and officers involved in these sessions• Clarify how recommendations from these sessions will be reported to Exec Board	In progress & On track

Children's Services

Seen, Heard, Safe & Supported.

Recommendation	Lead	Progress – March 2025	Status
17. In the next six months, the Council should develop a single Corporate Parenting action plan with clear actions to be delivered. This plan should at least bring together existing actions, as well as the recommendations from the National Adviser for Care Leavers. The plan and progress against the plan should be reported to the Executive Board, Corporate Management Team and Halton Improvement Board for Services to Children.	Jamie Pope	<p>Action plan in development and will be presented to Corporate Parenting Board in April, CMT April, Executive Board in May.</p> <p>The recommendations from the National Adviser and Improvement Plan have been combined and will be submitted to the Improvement Board in March 2025 with progress and impact report. Linked to Improvement Plan Area 1</p>	In progress, some delays

Children's Services

Seen, Heard, Safe & Supported.

Recommendation	Lead	Progress – March 2025	Status
18. Now that the Corporate Senior Leadership Team are aware of the range of challenges facing Children's Services, they should work with the Director of Children's Services to produce a plan that sets out how each Directorate will support Children's Services to improve. Plans should at least include actions to: safely and appropriately reducing the number of children entering care; reduce the impact of poverty on children; ensure that children and young people are accessing their entitlement to education; the recruitment and retention of foster carers; the recruitment and retention of social workers; increase the number of care leavers in education employment and training; increase the number of care leavers in suitable accommodation.		As per Recommendation 12	In progress & On track

Children's Services

Seen, Heard, Safe & Supported.

Recommendation	Lead	Progress – March 2025	Status
19. The HSCP should work with the Independent Scrutineer to monitor progress and impact on practice and outcomes of the Business Plan on a quarterly basis	Susanne Leece & Anna Berry	Reporting in place and being completed through the workplan of the Independent Scrutineer. Reported in the February 2025 Improvement Board report from the HSCP Business Manager.	In progress & On track
20. The Independent Scrutineer should provide a report on the impact of their work to the Halton Improvement Board for Services to Children at least twice a year.	Susanne Leece & Anna Berry	Planned to align with Annual report for the HSCP, with a further update mid-year.	In progress & On track
21. The HSCP should produce a clear plan to ensure that: - Strategy discussions in Halton take place within the timescales set out in Working Together 2023 - Strategy discussions are attended by the key partners involved with the child/young person and if, in exceptional circumstances, this is not possible, the agency provides information to support decision-making	Susanne Leece & Katherine Appleton	Practice guidance updated and launched Training delivered Multi-agency meeting in place to scrutinise practice and performance Strategic meeting held to agree additional resources to commence in April 2025. Reporting in place for the Improvement Board – latest data for Improvement Board showed 100% attendance from all partners at strategy meetings Linked to A1 & A2 on Improvement Plan	In progress – some delays

Children's Services

Seen, Heard, Safe & Supported.

Recommendation	Lead	Progress – March 2025	Status
<p>22. The HSCP should produce a monthly report that sets out</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- the number of strategy discussions held each month;- the number held within timescales set out in Working Together 2023; and- the number of key partners (health, education including early years where relevant, police and children's social care) that attended each meeting. <p>This report should be sent to the three lead safeguarding partners as designated in Working Together 2023, as well as the Independent Scrutineer and the Department for Education Improvement Advisor.</p>	Gray Prince	<p>Performance information provided monthly as part of the Improvement Board Vital Signs report.</p> <p>Reporting through HSCP to begin in March using the Strategy meeting multiagency scrutiny group to receive the performance information and feed learning and actions to the Strategic Safeguarding Partnership meeting and the Safeguarding Executive Group.</p> <p>Linked to A1 and A2 in the Improvement Plan.</p>	In progress & On track

Children's Services

Seen, Heard, Safe & Supported.

Recommendation	Lead	Progress – March 2025	Status
<p>23. The HSCP should undertake quarterly audits of a sample of section 47 investigations to ensure that they are robust, and in particular, that;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - they result in a robust plan that addresses the child protection concerns identified - children are seen during the enquiries, and where appropriate to their age, seen alone and that this is clearly recorded on the child's record. 	Gray Prince & Susanne Leece	<p>S47 audit was undertaken in November 2024.</p> <p>The HSCP QA Framework identifies quarterly audit activity. Proposal is that all thematic audits will look at the S47 investigations to approach this, in addition to the standalone audits undertaken around S47.</p> <p>Neglect is the theme for the audit undertaken in Q4 2024-25, learning is currently being collated.</p> <p>HSCP QA post has been agreed to better support the HSCP to undertake more coordinated multiagency activity.</p>	In progress & On track
<p>24. To support the Halton Improvement Board for Services to Children to take a more strategic focus, within the next nine months, the Board should hold three 'Turning the Curve' events on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Safely and appropriately reducing the need for children to enter care - Reducing the impact of poverty on children and young people - Improving school attendance 	Gray Prince & Susanne Leece & Ben Holmes	<p>Poverty & Neglect workshop held in November 2024</p> <p>Safely keeping children at home workshop held in February 2025</p> <p>Improving School Attendance event being prepared for Summer Term 2025 – Impact to be monitored via Vulnerable Learners Partnership Board.</p> <p>Next steps are to close the loop on the learning from the events and bring this back</p>	In progress & On track

REPORT TO:	Children, Young People & Families Policy & Performance Board
DATE:	9 June 2025
REPORTING OFFICER:	Executive Director Children's Services
PORTFOLIO:	Children, Young People & Families
SUBJECT:	Early Years Sufficiency Duty Report 2025
WARD(S)	Borough Wide

1.0 **PURPOSE OF THE REPORT**

- 1.1 The report aims to provide a summary of the revised Sufficiency Duty Report. It details information about Halton's childcare sector and outlines the current and projected supply and estimated demand for childcare places over the next twelve months. It also highlights any gaps in provision and how these are being addressed.
- 1.2 The report outlines information regarding the expansion of the early years entitlements, launched in April 2024, together with estimates around how the demand for new places will impact upon the childcare market in Halton.
- 1.3 The report shares information on factors impacting on childcare both locally and nationally, including the expansion of funded childcare for working parents of children aged 9 months to 2 years, the expansion of wraparound care, the difficulties in recruiting and retaining staff in early years. The report details the sufficiency of childcare across sectors and strategies to address future challenges.

2.0 **RECOMMENDATION: That**

- 1) the report be noted; and**
- 2) the Board endorses the revised Sufficiency Duty Report.**

3.0 **SUPPORTING INFORMATION**

3.1 **Background**

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

available to the public.

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

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

3.3 **SUMMARY OF SDR**

The SDR Provides the following information:

- The purpose of the Sufficiency Duty Report
- Information about the national context, including childcare expansion
- Information about the local context, including population and demographics
- Details of current Early Years childcare provision including location, choice, flexibility and affordability
- Provision for children with SEND
- Quality of Provision
- Supply and Demand Analysis
- Details of childcare for school-age children
- The sufficiency strategy and future plans

3.4 **CURRENT POSITION**

The childcare expansion announced in 2023 Spring budget set out 2 key policies to be rolled out, all children of working parents from 9 months old to received 30 hours funded childcare by September 2025 and all school age children to have access wraparound care by September 2026.

3.5 2-year-olds from families receiving additional support (formerly known as disadvantage funding) continue to receive 15 hours funded entitlements.

3.6 The Halton Sufficiency Duty Report 2025 reflects that there is currently a sufficient, flexible and high quality Early Years and Childcare market that delivers a wide choice of affordable childcare services to parents and carers. Currently, Halton as a borough has sufficient childcare places to meet demand and has continued to do so through the first two phase of the childcare expansion. The third phase of expansion in September 2025 is predicted to increase the demand for childcare places for children aged 2 and under.

3.7 The report shows that currently there is a sufficient supply of

childcare places across Halton, as follows:

- 0-1 Year olds – The sufficiency analysis shows a surplus across Halton of 127 places, 37 surplus places in Runcorn and 90 surplus places in Widnes
- 2 Year olds - The sufficiency analysis shows a surplus across Halton of 505 places, 208 surplus places in Runcorn and 297 surplus places in Widnes
- 3 & 4 Year olds - The sufficiency analysis shows a surplus across Halton of 450 places, 191 surplus places in Runcorn and 259 surplus places in Widnes

3.8 As the full expansion rolls out in September 2025, projected estimates indicate that we will continue to have sufficient places for 2 year olds, however a shortfall of places for babies 9 – 23 months is projected.

3.9 Although sufficient places are projected for 2 year olds it is important to protect places for eligible 2 year olds from families receiving additional support (FRAS) from the anticipated increase in 2 year old places of families claiming the working entitlement.

3.10 The report shows the projected estimates of sufficiency for the final phase of childcare expansion in September 2025, as follows:

- 0-1 Year olds – The projected estimates show a deficit of places across Halton of -96 places, -48 places in Runcorn and -48 surplus places in Widnes
- 2 Year olds - The projected estimates show a surplus of places across Halton of 146 places, 27 places in Runcorn and 119 places in Widnes

3.11 The National Wraparound Programme has seen a large increase in the availability of term time wraparound childcare for primary aged children. 96% of mainstream primary schools now have access to onsite or offsite before and after school care, this is likely to increase to 100% by September 2025.

3.12 The early years sector have indicated that there are continuing concerns around recruitment and retention of staff, this is reflective of the national situation in regards to early years recruitment. As a response the government has launched a national recruitment campaign.

4.0 **POLICY IMPLICATIONS**

4.1 Halton is taking a proactive approach to address the potential shortfall in childcare places through the development of a sufficiency strategy and workforce development plan.

- 4.2 The key components of the sufficiency strategy and workforce development plan include;

The Childcare Expansion Capital Grant which has been targeted to create new places for 2 year olds and under, this specifically addresses gaps in provision and protects the sufficiency of places for eligible 2 year olds (FRAS) from the likely increase in demand on places from parents claiming working entitlements.

School Based Nurseries, An increase in school based nurseries has the potential to create flexibility in the market to release more spaces for younger children in PVI settings. The DFE School Based Nurseries Capital Grant has enabled schools to fund new nursery classes.

Recruitment of childminders and raising awareness of new childminder flexibilities. The new flexibilities allow childminders to consider new models of delivery such as working from a community hall or school. This also allows for an increase to 4 people that can work together under a childminders registration.

Early Years workforce development This includes a wide promotion of government campaign resources and borough-wide targeted recruitment campaigns, collaboration with key partners such as job centres, colleges to develop pathways for students entering the workforce, and promoting new career development opportunities for level 3 qualifications and graduate pathways.

RELATED NATIONAL POLICIES

Early Education and Childcare

[Early education and childcare - GOV.UK](#)

This statutory guidance from the Department for Education is for English local authorities on their duties to secure childcare free of charge for qualifying children.

Childcare Expansion Capital Grant

[Childcare Expansion Capital Grant - Allocations Guidance](#)

This funding is intended to support the expansion of childcare places. The department is providing £100m of capital funding in 2023-24 to support local authorities in delivering the expansion of the 30-hours early years entitlement for working families and of wraparound provision in primary schools.

Early Years Workforce Development

[Do something big - Early Years Careers](#)

The Government has launched a national recruitment campaign to encourage new workers into the sector

School Based Nurseries

[Establishing school-based nursery provision - GOV.UK](#)

This publication provides non-statutory guidance from the Department for Education (DfE). It has been produced to help schools, governing bodies and childcare providers to establish nursery provision on school sites, in collaboration with local authorities and responsible bodies.

Wraparound Childcare

[Wraparound childcare: guidance for local authorities - GOV.UK](#)

This guidance explains the role of local authorities and the funding to expand the availability of wraparound care in their areas from September 2024.

5.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 The childcare expansion capital grant must be used to support the childcare expansion. Halton is targeted the use of Capital Grants on projects to create places for 2 year-olds and under.

6.0 IMPLICATIONS FOR THE COUNCIL'S PRIORITIES

6.1 Improving Health, Promoting Wellbeing and Supporting Greater Independence

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

6.2 Building a Strong, Sustainable Local Economy

Parents being able to access childcare enables them to work and supports childcare businesses to become sustainable offering employment opportunities and training through apprenticeships.

6.3 Supporting Children, Young People and Families

Children's experiences and relationships in their earliest years fundamentally shape their future. A positive experience of early education can help children overcome disadvantage and fulfil their full potential.

6.4 Tackling Inequality and Helping Those Who Are Most In Need

Inequality can impact on children's health, development and learning. A high-quality early education and childcare can play a part in redressing inequalities, children can make progress when they receive the right support. Working in an integrated way across education, health and care offers timely support and intervention to families who need it most.

6.5 **Working Towards a Greener Future**

None

6.6 **Valuing and Appreciating Halton and Our Community**

Attending a school or early years setting can help support children and families to develop a sense of belonging within their community.

7.0 **RISK ANALYSIS**

7.1 There is a risk that without adopting a sufficiency strategy, Halton will have insufficient childcare places and children would not be able to access their early years education which would be a disadvantage to them starting school.

8.0 **EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES**

8.1 All early years providers have duties under the Equality Act 2010 and must comply with the SEND code of practice and requirements of the EYFS in regards to their responsibilities to inclusion and equality.

9.0 **CLIMATE CHANGE IMPLICATIONS**

9.1 None

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

10.1 **Childcare act 2006**

<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/>

10.2 **Early years foundation stage – Statutory guidance**

[Early years foundation stage \(EYFS\) statutory framework - GOV.UK](#)

10.3 **Early Education and Childcare**

[Early education and childcare - GOV.UK](#)

10.4 **Childcare Expansion Capital Grant**

[Childcare Expansion Capital Grant - Allocations Guidance](#)

10.4 **Early Years Workforce Development**

[Do something big - Early Years Careers](#)

10.5 **School Based Nurseries**

[Establishing school-based nursery provision - GOV.UK](#)

10.6 **Wraparound Childcare**

[Wraparound childcare: guidance for local authorities - GOV.UK](#)

Childcare Sufficiency Duty Report 2025 Review



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What is a Childcare Sufficiency Duty Report?

Local Authorities have a statutory duty to ensure that sufficient childcare places are available for working parents, or parents who are studying or training for employment, for children aged 0 to 14 or up to 18 for disabled children. The Childcare Sufficiency Duty Report gives details of the type and amount of childcare available, the quality of this provision and if the places available are sufficient for the local population.

This statutory duty is outlined in Sections 6 and 7 of the Childcare Act (2006) and associated statutory guidance.

The purpose of the Childcare Sufficiency Duty report is:

- to provide information to elected council members on how the Local Authority is meeting their statutory duty to ensure sufficient childcare places
- to provide information for parents and carers on the type, quality, affordability and accessibility of childcare available
- to provide information on the current and projected supply and demand of childcare

This report will provide information on the childcare provision available for:

- Children taking up funded early education and childcare places
- School aged children needing wraparound childcare (8am-6pm during term time)
- Children needing holiday care
- Children with special educational needs or disabilities
- Children from families in receipt of the childcare element of Working Tax Credit or Universal Credit
- Children with parents who work irregular hours

The information presented in this Sufficiency Duty Report accurately reflects the current supply and demand for childcare places in Halton at the time of writing.

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

Rationale

Childcare, by design, is flexible to meet the needs of different families with a variety of needs and requirements. Families can choose childcare to meet their individual circumstances, this means variation. Families can make a choice of whether or not to access early education and childcare. They can choose the age of their child when they begin to access childcare. Families are able to choose how many hours childcare they wish to access and where they want to access childcare, this may be in a different part of Halton to where they live or in another Local Authority. All of these factors make it difficult to accurately calculate the number of children that will require childcare and the amount of childcare hours each child will require.

The childcare sector is similarly variable. Places available within settings can change depending upon the age and needs of children attending settings and the level of staffing available to meet the needs of children. These factors make precise forecasting challenging and mean that caveats must be applied to information within the Sufficiency Duty Report.

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

National Context - Government Childcare Expansion

The childcare sector continues to undergo significant change following the Chancellor's announcement of childcare reforms in the Spring Budget 2023. The reforms set out plans for two key policies, to expand funded childcare hours to include children of eligible working parents in England from the age of 9 months old, and for all primary aged children to be able to access wraparound care. This measure is intended to support increased parental participation in the labour market.

The final phase of the early years childcare expansion is scheduled for implementation in September 2025. By this time, eligible working parents of children aged 9 months to 4 years old will be entitled to up to 30 hours of funded childcare per week. 2 year olds from families receiving additional support (FRAS) will continue to be entitled to 15 hours per week, this was formerly known as funding for disadvantaged two-year-olds. The ambition for the wraparound programme is for all primary school age children to be able to access before and after school childcare by September 2026.

At present, the full scope and uptake from parents of these new entitlements remains unknown.

Within early years, the anticipated increase in demand for childcare places has broader implications beyond the physical capacity of current early years providers which will impact on the sufficiency of childcare places. It includes national challenges relating to the recruitment and training of new early years practitioners in the workforce, and the influence of other government initiatives—such as the expansion of school-based nurseries, and new flexibilities for childminders to operate on non- domestic premises.

As the implementation of the expanded childcare offer continues to unfold, the early years sector is facing transformation, offering new possibilities for models of childcare and delivery approaches.

About Halton – The Local Context

Halton Borough Council was created as a unitary authority in 1998 with the two largest settlements of Widnes and Runcorn facing each other across the River Mersey.

Halton is part of the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority. This is one of the few City Regions to have secured a Devolution Agreement with the Government, meaning decision making and resources around key priorities are managed locally.

Population & Demographics

The population of Halton is 128,964. 6.8% of the population is under 5 years of age. 16% of the population is between 5 and 14 years old.

The table below shows the projected population figures for 2025-2035 by age group.

Projected Year	All Ages	Age 0 - 4	Aged 5-9	Aged 10-14
2025	131,793	6,954	7,822	8,538
2026	132,154	6,922	7,674	8,505
2027	132,504	6,900	7,545	8,437
2028	132,845	6,882	7,451	8,292
2029	133,158	6,870	7,419	8,167
2030	133,472	6,867	7,378	8,018
2031	133,790	6,870	7,348	7,872
2032	134,084	6,884	7,327	7,744
2033	134,376	6,906	7,312	7,655
2034	134,666	6,938	7,302	7,624
2035	134,952	6,976	7,298	7,587

Source: ONS Population Projections, NOMIS.

The population of Halton experiences higher levels of deprivation than are found nationally. 30% of the population are living in areas of high deprivation. 22.3% of the working age population are on Universal Credit (LG Inform Nov 2024). The average yearly earnings of a Halton resident are £33318.

30.4% of 16-64 year olds are qualified to Level 4 and above, this is the lowest level in the Liverpool City Region. The average Attainment 8 score at GCSE in 2022/23 was 42.6, this is lower than the North West and England average.

96.5% of the population is White, and 97.3% speak English as their main language. 4.8% of people were born outside of the UK.

All data is sourced from the Halton Data Profile unless stated otherwise ([Local Area Profiles and data for Runcorn and Widnes](#)).

Early Years Childcare Provision in Halton

Early Years Childcare in Halton is provided by a range of provider types. This is similar to other Local Authority areas nationally. Day nurseries, pre-schools, childminders, maintained nursery schools and nursery classes within primary schools all offer early years childcare within Halton. This mix of provision types allows families to choose the provision which best meets the needs of their children and their family.

There are currently 115 Early Years Providers operating within Halton (January 2025). This comprises of 21 day nurseries, 19 pre-schools, 55 childminders, 3 maintained nursery schools and 17 nursery classes within primary schools.

The table below shows the type and location, by ward, of the Early Years provision across Halton.

Ward	Child-minder	Nursery School	Pre-School	Day Nursery	Nursery Class	Grand Total
Appleton	3		1	3	1	8
Bankfield	3		1	2	1	7
Beechwood & Heath			1	2		3
Birchfield	5			1		6
Bridgewater	3		1		2	6
Central & West Bank	2			2	2	6
Daresbury, Moore & Sandymoor	3		2	1		6
Ditton, Hale Village & Halebank	1		2		1	4
Farnworth	4			1		5
Grange	1			2		3
Halton Castle	4		1	1	3	9
Halton Lea	1		1	1	3	6
Halton View	3	1				4
Highfield		2			1	3
Hough Green	5		1	1	1	8
Mersey & Weston	4		4	3		11
Norton North	9		3			12
Norton South & Preston Brook	4		1	1	2	8
Grand Total	55	3	19	21	17	115

Early Years providers in Halton, January 2025

Provision for 0-1 Year Olds

Childcare provision for this age group is provided by day nurseries and childminders.

Since 1st September 2024 children aged 9 months and above with eligible working parents are entitled to 15 hours funded childcare (38 weeks per year). This is an equivalent of 570 hours per year. Children become eligible the term after they turn 9 months old; for example a child would be eligible on the 1st April if they turn 9 months old between 1st January and 31st March. From 1st September 2025 the funded hours entitlement for children aged 9 months and above with eligible working parents increases to 30 hours a week (38 weeks per year), 1140 hours per year.

Parents and carers can use the Childcare Choices website ([Homepage | Childcare Choices](#)) for information on eligibility for funded childcare hours.

The use of formal childcare will vary for this age group; some families will not require formal childcare, some will access some or all of their funded entitlement and some families will pay for all childcare or additional hours of childcare.

The introduction of funded childcare places for this age group is expected increase in demand. This is explored in further detail in the supply and demand analysis within this report.

Provision for 2 Year Olds

Childcare provision for this age group is provided by day nurseries, childminders and some pre-schools, nursery classes and maintained nursery schools.

2 year olds from families receiving additional support (FRAS) are eligible to 15 hours funded childcare for 38 weeks per year. This is an equivalent of 570 hours per year. Children become eligible the term after they turn 2 years old; for example a child would be eligible on the 1st April if they turn 2 years old between 1st January and 31st March.

Eligible 2-year-olds (FRAS) can claim up to 15 hours of funded early years provision if:

- the parent(s) claim one of the following benefits:
 - Income Support
 - income-based Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA)
 - income-related Employment and Support Allowance (ESA)
 - Universal Credit – if a parent is entitled to Universal Credit and they have an annual net earned income equivalent to and not exceeding £15,400, assessed on up to three of the parent's most recent Universal Credit assessment periods
 - tax credits and they have an annual income of up to £16,190 before tax
 - the guaranteed element of State Pension Credit

- support under Part 6 of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999 (support for asylum seekers)
- the Working Tax Credit 4-week run on (the payment you get when you stop qualifying for Working Tax Credit)
- the child has a statement of special educational needs made under section 324 of the Education Act 1996
- the child has an Education, Health and Care plan prepared under section 37 of the Children and Families Act 2014
- the child is in receipt of Disability Living Allowance under section 71 of the Social Security and Contributions and Benefits Act 1992
- the child is looked after by a Local Authority (under section 22(1) of the Children Act 1989) or by a Local Authority in Wales within the meaning given by section 74(1) of the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014
- the child is no longer looked after by a Local Authority as a result of an adoption order, a special guardianship order or a child arrangement order (within the meaning of section 8(1) of the Children Act 1989 or section 74(1) of the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014) which relates to either or both of the following:
 - with whom the child is to live
 - when the child is to live with any person

Since 1st April 2024 children aged 2 and above with eligible working parents are entitled to 15 hours funded childcare for 38 weeks per year. This is an equivalent of 570 hours per year. Children become eligible the term after they turn 2 years old; for example a child would be eligible on the 1st April if they turn 2 years old between 1st January and 31st March. From 1st September 2025 the funded hours entitlement for children aged 2 years and above with eligible working parents increases to 30 hours a week (38 weeks per year), 1140 hours per year.

Parents and carers can use the Childcare Choices website ([Homepage | Childcare Choices](#)) for information on eligibility for funded childcare hours.

The use of formal childcare will vary for this age group; some families will not require formal childcare, some will access some or all of their funded entitlement and some families will pay for all childcare or additional hours of childcare.

The introduction of funded childcare places for 2 year olds of working parents has increased the demand for childcare places for this age group. This is expected to increase further in September 2025 when 2 year olds of working parents become eligible for 30 hours a week for 38 weeks a year of funded entitlement. This is explored in further detail in the supply and demand analysis within this report.

Provision for 3-4 Year Olds

Childcare provision for this age group is provided by day nurseries, childminders, pre-schools, maintained nursery schools and nursery classes within primary schools.

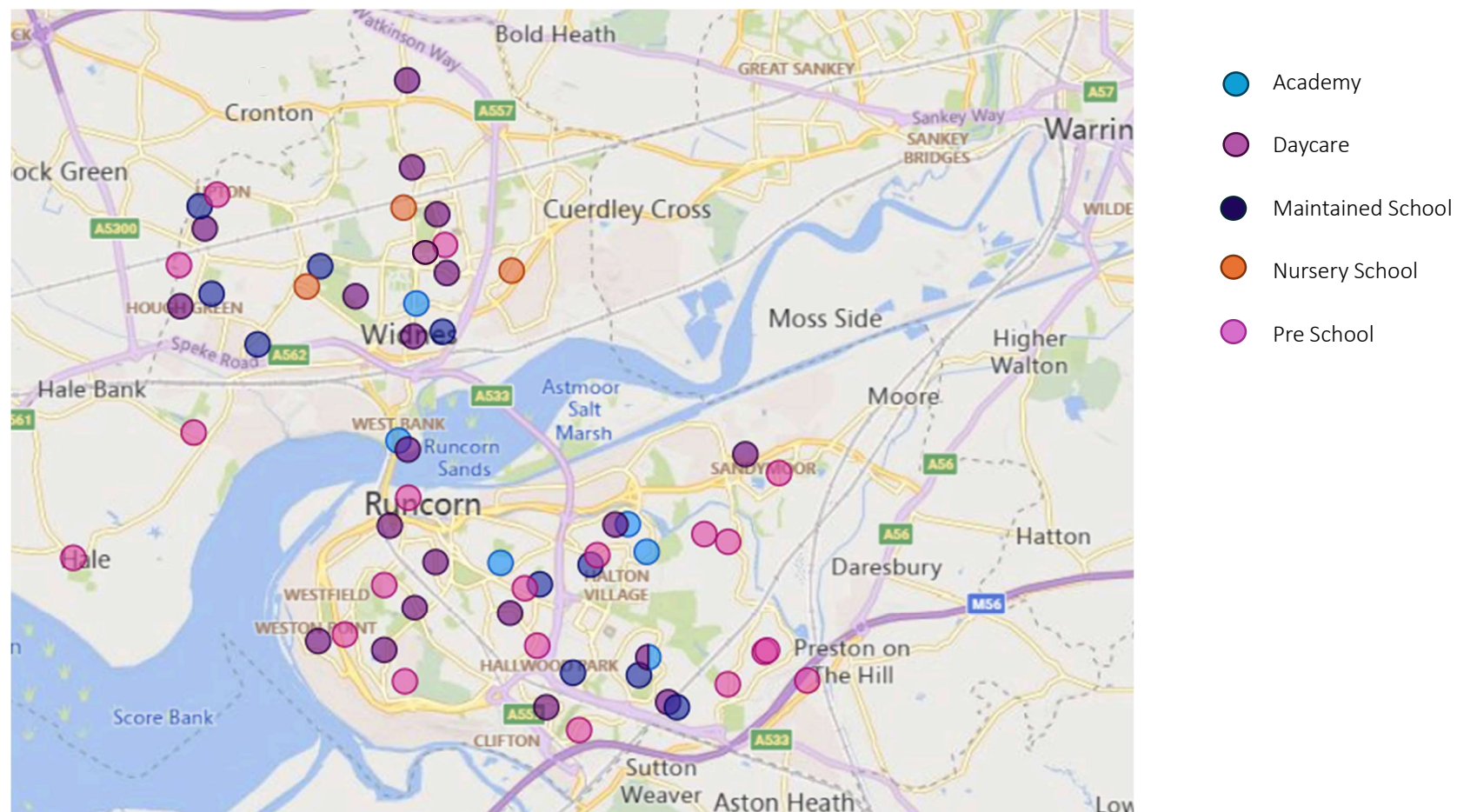
All children are entitled to the universal entitlement of 15 hours per week (38 weeks per year), equivalent to 570 hours per year from the term following the child's 3rd birthday until the child reaches compulsory school age

Children aged 3 & 4 with eligible working parents are entitled to 30 hours funded hours childcare for 38 weeks per year. This is an equivalent of 1140 hours per year.

Parents and carers can use the Childcare Choices website ([Homepage | Childcare Choices](#)) for information on eligibility for funded childcare hours.

Location of Childcare

The map below shows the location of Early Years provision in Halton.



Choice & Flexibility of Early Years Childcare

Across Halton there is a range of childcare options available to suit the differing needs of children and their families. Families are able to choose between home based provision provided by childminders, or group based provision provided by day nurseries, pre-schools, nursery schools and nursery classes within schools. Families can opt for provision which is open all year round e.g. day nurseries and childminders or term time only provision, provided by pre-schools, school based provision and some childminders. Some families may choose to access more than one type of provision.

Group Based Providers

60

Home Based Providers

55

Providers Open Year Round

76

Providers Open Term Time

39

The childcare market in Halton, in common with all Local Authority areas, is comprised of a variety of provision, with distinct characteristics. Each sector of the market is well represented across Halton.

Day Nurseries

21

Pre-Schools

24

Childminders

55

Nursery Schools

3

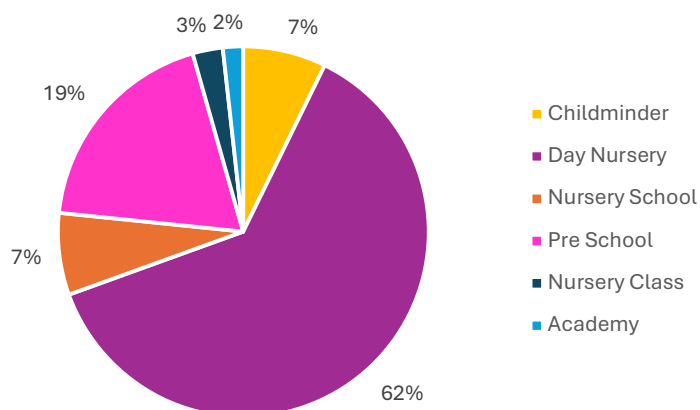
Nursery Classes – Maintained School

5

Nursery Classes- Academy

7

The chart below illustrates the percentage of children accessing a funded place by sector type.



Provider Opening Times	
6:00am	1
6:30am	1
7:00am	8
7:30am	30
7:45am	3
8:00am	26
8:15am	1
8:30am	9
8:45am	8
9:00am	11
9:30am	1

Provider Closing Times	
11:45am	2
2:30pm	1
3:00pm	10
3:15pm	9
3:45pm	1
4:00pm	2
4:30pm	1
5:00pm	9
5:15pm	1
5:30pm	20
5:45pm	1
6:00pm	38
7:00pm	1

Affordability of Childcare

The expansion of funded childcare, discussed elsewhere in this document, has reduced the costs of childcare for many families since the beginning of the expansion in April 2024. The increase in the number of funded hours available to 30 hours per week from September 2025 will reduced costs further.

National data shows that childcare costs for a part-time nursery place for a child aged 2 or under have reduced across England.

The table below using data from Coram Childcare Survey 2025 shows the national cost of 25 hours childcare after working parent entitlements have been taken into account (paying for 10 hours).

	2024	2025
Children Aged Under 2	£159.61	£70.51
Children Aged 2 Years	£153.69	£66.34

However, not all families are eligible for the working parent funded entitlements. For families to be eligible both parents (or sole parent in a lone parent household) must expect to earn equivalent to the National Minimum Wage for 16 hours a week but no more than £100,000 adjusted net income annually.

Childcare costs for paid hours vary by sector and by the age of the child. The average cost of provision in Halton is shown below . It should be noted that the costs shown for pre-schools reflect the shorter opening hours compared with day nurseries and childminders.

Day Nursery Provision	
Costs per day for non-funded hours	
0-1 Year Olds	£60.89
2 Year Olds	£59.92
3-4 Year Olds	£59.60

Pre School Provision	
Costs Per Day for non-funded hours	
2 Year Olds	£26.33
3-4 Year Olds	£26.33

Childminder Provision	
Costs per day for non-funded hours	
0-1 Year Olds	£46.36
2 Year Olds	£43.93
3-4 Year Olds	£43.07

In addition to the funded hours available to working parents the government offers additional forms of financial support to help families with the cost of childcare, including the childcare element of Universal Credit and Tax free childcare.

The different types of provision in Halton, allow greater accessibility for families to find a childcare provider that meets differing family circumstances, meaning parents can make a suitable choice for their child which matches their financial situation whether they need full day care, afterschool care, holiday care, or sessional care.

The Department for Education updated statutory guidance on how Early Years providers should deliver the funded early years entitlements, including clarification on the rules on additional charges, which came into effect on 1st April 2025. Any additional charges must be made clear and upfront to parents and must not be included as a condition for parents accessing entitlements for their child.

Halton Early Years team will work with providers proactively around their charging policies, offering audits and advice to ensure that the entitlements are free at the point of use and that families who cannot afford to pay are not excluded.

Provision for Children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities

Within Halton, provision for Early Years children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities is delivered by all areas of the sector. In Summer 2024 there were no specialist Early Years places available in Halton. However, all childcare settings must have regard for the SEND code of practice and are required to be inclusive and be accessible to children with a range of needs.

Halton has seen an increase in children being identified as having Special Educational Needs in the Early Years. This trend is reflected nationally. It is important to note that some children's needs may not present until they are in school or they may not be known to any services until this point. As such, when assessing the sufficiency of childcare places for children with SEND it is necessary to use the information held by the Local Authority for children across Reception, Year 1 and Year 2 to identify the proportion of Early Years children with additional needs.

There is a direct correlation between disadvantage and SEND. Halton has higher levels of deprivation than are found nationally. In July 2024, 59.8% of Halton children accessing a universal childcare place were living in the top 30% of most deprived areas in the country. Locally, children affected by disadvantage are more likely to have Special Educational Needs.

The table below shows the % of children in Reception, Year 1 and Year 2 (November 2024) who are receiving support for Special Educational Needs.

	% No SEN	% EHCP	% SEN Support	% All SEN
Runcorn	80.80	5.52	13.68	19.20
Widnes	82.21	3.63	14.16	17.79
Halton	81.49	4.60	13.91	18.51

Data collected from Childcare Providers for sufficiency planning indicates the number of places available for Early Years children across Halton (Supply of Places for Early Years Children column below). Based on upon the percentage of children with SEND in Reception, Year 1 and Year 2 the table below shows the number of places that should be available for children with SEND (Supply for Early Years children with SEND).

	Supply of Places for Early Years Children	Supply for Early Years children with SEND
Runcorn	2243	430
Widnes	2333	415
Halton	4576	845

The table below shows the % of children with SEND in Reception, Year 1 and Year 2 who were not in a Halton Early Years setting in the summer term before starting school. The percentage of children with SEND who were not accessing an place in a Halton early years setting is lower than those children without SEND. This indicates that there are sufficient places for children with SEND and that inclusive places are available within the sector.

	All	No SEN	EHCP	SEN Support
Runcorn	11.36	12.04	5.96	10.37
Widnes	10.20	10.91	6.19	7.55
Halton	10.80	11.48	6.05	8.97

Of those children who are shown as not accessing a place within a Halton setting there will be a number of reason for this. Some children may be accessing a place outside of Halton, some parents may choose not to access a place, some may have recently moved to the area, some may not have found a place in a specific setting.

The table below shows the average hours attendance of SEN children compared with those without SEN. Children with SEND attend for slightly less hours per week than those without SEND. The reasons for this will vary depending on individual circumstances; including parental choice of hours attended and the hours available at a chosen setting. A likely factor is that not all families are entitled to 30 hours weekly funding . Families without two working parents (or one in a single parent household) are not entitled to the extended entitlement of an additional 15 hours per week (30 hours in total).

	Average Hours at Setting - All	Average Hours at Setting - No SEN	Average Hours at Setting - EHCP	Average Hours at Setting - SEN Support
Runcorn	23.48	24.09	21.31	21.22
Widnes	24.54	25.04	22.84	22.38
Halton	24.06	24.59	22.07	21.96

Support available to providers to help children with SEND access Early Years provision

Support is available for Early Years providers to help children with SEND to access their Early Years entitlements. Providers can access workshops and training for SENCOs and practitioners, they can receive guidance from a range of other professionals, including Health Professionals, Educational Psychologists, Speech and Language, and Specialist teachers.

Halton's Families Information Service (FIS) offers a Brokerage Service to assist parents in finding suitable childcare for children with disabilities or additional needs.

Funding Support for Children with SEND

There are several funding streams available to support children with SEND or developmental delay to help early years providers meet children's individual needs:

- 1. Special Educational Needs Inclusion Funding (SENIF)**
SENIF can be applied for by providers to support children with SEND who are claiming Funded Early Years Entitlement (FEYE) from 9 months old until they reach compulsory school age. Funding is allocated at a monthly panel and can be used to enhance staff ratios, support practitioners in implementing specific interventions, and fund training, if appropriate. SENIF can be claimed up until the receipt of an Education, Health and Care plan for eligible children.
- 2. Disability Access Funding (DAF)**
DAF is a one-off annual payment paid directly to the childcare provider, available to children who receive Disability Living Allowance (DLA) and are claiming FEYE. This funding is intended to help providers make reasonable adjustments to their settings and enhance inclusive capacity. Detailed eligibility criteria for DAF can be found in the DAF section on Halton's Local Offer website.
- 3. Early Years Pupil Premium (EYPP)**
The Early Years Pupil Premium (EYPP) is additional funding designed to narrow the attainment gap between children from low-income families and their peers. This funding is provided to Early Years Providers for eligible children aged 9 months and above who are accessing FEYE. The payment is made termly to the provider, with the amount varying depending on the child's eligibility.

Quality of Provision

It is widely acknowledged that a high quality early education and care makes a positive difference to children's learning and is fundamental in shaping a child's future.

The **Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) Statutory Framework** outlines the standards that all early years providers must meet to ensure children learn, develop, and are kept healthy and safe. It supports teaching and learning to equip children with the broad range of knowledge and skills necessary for future success in both school and life.

The **Halton Early Years Team** provides quality assurance to Early Years providers and facilitates access to high-quality training and signposts providers to further support when needed.

Ofsted is the regulator of quality in Early Years education. Through the inspection process, each childcare setting is awarded one of four grades: 'Outstanding,' 'Good,' 'Requires Improvement,' or 'Inadequate.' Some childminders may receive a 'Met' grade, which indicates that they did not have any early years children on roll at the time of the inspection.

	Outstanding	Good	Requires Improvement	Inadequate	Met	Not Met
Daycare	10.53	89.47	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Pre-School	5.26	94.74	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Childminders	10.00	78.00	2.00	0.00	10.00	0.00
Nursery Schools	33.33	66.67	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Maintained School	0.00	90.00	10.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Academy	0.00	83.33	16.67	0.00	0.00	0.00
All Early Years	8.41	84.11	2.80	0.00	4.67	0.00

% Ofsted grades – January 2025

Supply and Demand Analysis

Local Authorities are required by legislation, so far as is reasonably practicable, to secure sufficient childcare places. The following assessment uses local and national data sources to assess the current supply of childcare places across Halton and to assess the demand for those places. The analysis will include the current demand and the projected demand from September 2025 when the amount to funded childcare hours increases for children 9 months to 3 years old.

Data Sources & Methodology

- **Number of Children**
Population is derived from the NHS PCT GP Registrations data. This is updated three times a year.
- **Supply of Childcare & Vacancy Rates**
Number of childcare places is based upon data provided to us by childcare providers on a termly basis via Synergy online portal.
- **Funded Early Education**
The number of children accessing funded early education places is based on Early Years headcounts completed by providers on a termly basis.

Sufficiency of places is assessed using the population data and uptake information to assess demand for places and comparing this to the supply of places available identified from the information from childcare providers. An assessment is made for each age group and geographical area.

The assessment of sufficiency that follows is based upon the population, take up rates and places available in the Summer Term 2024. Summer term data is used as this is when demand for early education places is at its highest.

Sufficiency of Places for 0-1 Year Olds

Provision across Halton has contained sufficient places to meet the demand for childcare for 0-1 Year olds in Summer 2024. Provision for this age group was paid provision in Summer 2024. From September 2024 eligible working parents are entitled to 15 hours funded childcare for children between 9 and 23 months, this will rise to 30 hours funded childcare from September 2025. In Halton, children of this age group access 26 hours of childcare per week. The place sufficiency assessment is based upon the average weekly attendance.

There is a greater supply of places in Widnes, leading to more surplus places for this age group. In Widnes, at ward level, Ditton, Hale Village and Halebank, Halton View and Highfield show a deficit of places. This is because no day nursery provision exists within these wards. However, surplus places exist in their neighbouring wards; Central & West Bank, Farnworth and Appleton. In Runcorn, Bridgewater, Daresbury, Moore & Sandymoor, Norton North and Norton South experience a deficit of places whereas Beechwood & Heath, Grange and Mersey & Weston has surplus places.

	Demand	Supply	Sufficiency
Runcorn	237	274	37
Widnes	255	345	90
Halton	492	619	127

The occupancy rates below show that, in Summer 2024, there were vacant places for the 0-1 year old age group across Halton. Occupied and vacant places information is sought from providers on a termly basis. Not all providers choose to provide this information.

	% Occupancy
Runcorn	85%
Widnes	75%
Halton	80%

Projected Sufficiency of Places for 0-1 Year Olds – September 2025

From September 2025 children aged 9-23 months of working parents will be eligible for 30 hours free childcare. This is expected to increase the number of parents accessing a childcare place for children under 2 years old and is expected to increase the average number of hours childcare access by this age group.

Population data, demographic data and uptake trends have been used to produce projections of the likely demand for places from September 2025. This has been analysed alongside the latest local data on the supply of places from the Early Years sector.

Using the latest available data, a shortfall of places is predicted for this age group across Halton as a whole. The shortfall is expected to affect both Runcorn and Widnes to a similar extent. Provision for this age group comes from day nurseries and childminders, with day nurseries providing 84% of all funded places in January 2025. As such the supply of places is not distributed evenly throughout wards, some wards do not contain any day nurseries. Where this is the case provision is available in neighbouring wards.

	Projected Demand	Current Supply	Projected Shortfall/ Surplus
Runcorn	315	267	-48
Widnes	331	283	-48
Halton	646	550	-96

Sufficiency of Places for 2 Year Olds

Provision across Halton contained sufficient places to meet the demand for childcare for 2 Year olds in Summer 2024. Provision for this age group in Summer 2024 was a combination of paid childcare, funded 15 hour childcare entitlement for working parents and funded 15 hour childcare entitlement for families receiving additional support (FRAS). From September 2025 eligible working parents will be entitled to 30 hours free childcare per week. In Halton, children

of this age group access 21 hours of childcare per week. The place sufficiency assessment is based upon the average weekly attendance.

	Demand	Supply	Sufficiency
Runcorn	454	662	208
Widnes	414	711	297
Halton	868	1373	505

The occupancy rates below show that, in Summer 2024, there were vacant places for the 2 year old age group across Halton. Occupied and vacant places information is sought from providers on a termly basis. Not all providers choose to provide this information.

	% Occupancy
Runcorn	89%
Widnes	81%
Halton	85%

Projected Sufficiency of Places for 2 Year Olds – September 2025

From September 2025 children aged 2 years old of working parents will be eligible for 30 hours free childcare. This is expected to increase the number of parents accessing a childcare place for 2 years old and is expected to increase the average number of hours childcare access by this age group.

Population data, demographic data and uptake trends have been used to produce projections of the likely demand for places from September 2025. This has been analysed alongside the latest local data on the supply of places from the Early Years sector.

Using the latest available data, it is predicted that there will be sufficient places for this age group across Halton as a whole.

	Projected Demand	Current Supply	Projected Shortfall/ Surplus
Runcorn	585	612	27
Widnes	440	559	119
Halton	1025	1171	146

Sufficiency of Places for 3&4 Year Olds

Provision across Halton contained sufficient places to meet the demand for childcare for 3&4 Year olds in Summer 2024. Provision for this age group in Summer 2024 was a combination of paid childcare, funded 30 hour childcare entitlement for working parents and universal funded 15 hour childcare entitlement for all children. In Halton, children of this age group access 25 hours of childcare per week. The place sufficiency assessment is based upon the average weekly attendance.

	Demand	Supply	Sufficiency
Runcorn	1116	1307	191
Widnes	1018	1277	259
Halton	2134	2584	450

The occupancy rates below show that, in Summer 2024, there were vacant places for the 3&4 year old age group across Halton. Occupied and vacant places information is sought from providers on a termly basis. Not all providers choose to provide this information.

	% Occupancy
Runcorn	84%
Widnes	85%
Halton	84%

Term-Time Childcare for School Age Children

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

National Wraparound Programme

As part of the government's childcare expansion, the Department for Education have set out the ambition for all parents of primary school age children who need it to be able to access wraparound childcare from 8am-6pm during term time.

Wraparound childcare can be provided by:

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

This programme began in September 2024 with the aim that provision will be available for all families by September 2026. Across Halton funding has been used to establish new provision where none previously existed, to expand the places available at existing provision to allow more families to access a place and to increase the number of hours provision offered each day to increase flexibility and accessibility for families.

Wraparound provision is paid for by parents and varies in cost. Parents who are eligible may be able to access help with childcare costs by using Tax-Free Childcare, the childcare element of Universal Credit or Learner Support whilst studying.

The table below show the percentage of mainstream primary schools where children can currently access onsite or offsite before school and after school childcare. The aim is for children attending all mainstream primary schools to have access to wraparound provision by September 2026.

	Before School	After School
Runcorn	100%	94%
Widnes	100%	100%
Halton	100%	96%

Holiday Childcare for School Age Children

The information about the number of children attending holiday care is not held by the local authority, it is therefore more difficult to understand the patterns of demand from parents.

The enquiries received by the Family Information Service from parents regarding holiday clubs do not indicate a sufficiency shortfall for school holiday provision.

Halton has 29 Ofsted registered providers for holiday care. This is available for varying age groups of school age children and children with SEND.

In addition to holiday clubs, parents have wider choices when considering their childcare options such as after school activity clubs and holiday sports clubs. Due to the specific focus of these clubs such as sports or dancing for children over the age of 8, they do not need to be registered or regulated by Ofsted, and are therefore not officially considered childcare. For parents this means they will not be able to use financial support such as Tax-free childcare when paying for these clubs.

Halton provides free activities and food to children and young people via the Holiday Activity and Food (HAF) Programme. This programme runs during the Easter, Summer & Christmas breaks. The activities aim to engage children aged between 4-17 years, eligibility criteria applies.

Sufficiency Strategy and Future Plans

The supply and demand analysis indicates there is likely to be a shortfall in childcare places, in some age ranges, as the expansion rolls out. This reflects the national picture of the childcare expansion. Data from Childcare Works (DfE delivery partner for the childcare expansion programme) indicates that 89,000 additional childcare places are needed and 45,000 additional workers are needed nationally to support the full rollout of the childcare expansion.

Halton is taking a proactive approach to address the potential shortfall in childcare places through the development of a sufficiency strategy. This approach focuses on both expanding the availability of childcare places and enhancing the flexibility and awareness of existing childcare options. In addition to developing capacity in the early years workforce.

The key components include;

The Childcare Expansion Capital Grant which has been targeted to create new places for 2 year olds and under, this specifically addresses gaps in provision and protects the sufficiency of places for eligible 2 year olds (FRAS) from the likely increase in demand on places from parents claiming working entitlements.

School Based Nurseries, in Halton 2 schools have been successfully awarded funding from the DfE School Based Nurseries Capital Grant. An increase in school based nurseries has the potential to create flexibility in the market to release more spaces for younger children in PVI settings.

Recruitment of childminders and raising awareness of new childminder flexibilities, childminders provide care for 2 year olds and under. The new flexibilities allow childminders to consider new models of delivery such as in a work from a community hall or school, enabling an increase to 4 people that can work together under a childminders registration.

Early Years workforce development This includes a wide promotion of government campaign resources, collaboration with job centres, holding recruitment fairs, Borough-wide targeted recruitment campaigns, engaging with key partners such as colleges to develop pathways for students entering the workforce, and promoting new career development opportunities for level 3 qualifications and graduate pathways.

REPORT TO:	Children, Young People & Families Policy and Performance Board
DATE:	9 th June 2025
REPORTING OFFICER:	Executive Director of Children's Services
PORTFOLIO:	Children, Young People and Families
SUBJECT:	Home to School Transport for Pupils with Special Educational Needs & Disabilities
WARD(S)	Borough Wide

1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide an update to members and officers around the Home to School Transport consultation.
- 1.2 Local Authorities are required to publish a Home to School Transport policy each year when deciding which schools to apply for during the normal admissions round. Key within this responsibility, is that the policy is governed by statutory guidelines.
- 1.3 Under section 508A of the Education Act 1996 a general duty is imposed on local authorities to assess the school travel needs of their area and to promote the use of sustainable modes of travel. Section 508B of the Act provides a statutory duty on LAs to provide home to school travel arrangements for "eligible children". Eligible children are defined in Schedule 35B of the Act, to qualify as an "eligible child", the child must be of compulsory school age (5-16).
- 1.4 Following agreement by Executive Board on 25th February a Home to School Transport consultation was launched on proposed changes to the delivery of Home to School Transport services for children and young people. The consultation opened on 2nd April 2025 and closed on 6th May 2025. It is proposed that any changes following the consultation would be effective for in year school applications from the start of 2025/2026 academic year (this is the earliest possible change).

2.0 RECOMMENDATION: That members and officers:

- 1. Note the content of the report; and
- 3. Confirm that they support the overall process.

3.0 **SUPPORTING INFORMATION**

3.1 Halton Borough Council has been changing the way it works to respond to continuing pressures on local budgets. The council has estimated a budget deficit of 29.385 million in 2025/26. It is imperative the Council seeks to set out how it will aim to balance the budget in future. This can only be done through growing income receipts or looking to rationalise current levels of expenditure. In order to address this huge funding gap, work has been undertaken to address the significant financial challenges the council is facing.

3.2 The Home to School Transport budget has significantly increased over the past number of years. This is a trend that appears to be replicated in other Local Authorities across the country with overall spending being under increasing pressure. A key factor associated with the increase in the cost of delivering Home to School Transport (HtST) services is the national growth of Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs) following a change in legislation in 2014. Transport eligibility rules mean that the growing numbers of children with EHCPs results in increased demand for transport and, on occasions, more complex travel services. EHCP growth, combined with increasing charging from transport organisations, and a limited number of local specialist school places are cited as key factors leading to increased costs. The council also currently provides a level of discretionary transport, above the statutory requirements.

3.3 Halton Borough Council has recently sought residents' views on several proposals regarding the current Home to School Transport Policy.

3.4 **Consultation**

Following Executive Report agreed on 25th February a consultation was published on 2nd April until the 6th May.

3.5 Two separate consultations were launched, one for parent carer and young people which incorporated all the proposals across the different areas. A separate consultation was provided for stakeholders and residents of Halton asking only the relevant experiential questions, alongside their views on the proposals.

3.6 The consultation comprised of two parts:

Part A: Flexible travel arrangements and increasing independence

Part B: Reviewing discretionary transport

3.7 **Part A: Flexible travel arrangements and increasing independence**

3.8 **Personal Travel Budgets (PTB)**

Under our existing travel and transport policies, the Council can provide funding directly to parents and carers to make their own travel arrangements for their eligible child or young person. Personal travel budgets provide financial assistance to parents or carers to enable them to take responsibility for

transporting their child to school. In Halton, we currently call this “Parental Mileage” and this is currently offered at 45p per round trip from home to school (to those who qualify).

What is the change being considered?

To promote the take up of personal budgets

3.9 **Escalation of Independent Travel Training**

The current Home to School policy references the expectation of travel training to be considered for children and young people of year 8 onwards who are assessed through Education, Health and Care Annual Reviews. “As part of the review process, young people in Year 8 onwards identified as being suitable, will be expected to be considered for Independent Travel Training”. Independent travel training provides a cost-effective way of supporting the SEND transport model and helps to promote social inclusion and independence in line with the preparation for adulthood agenda.

What is the change being considered?

That Independent Travel Training should be a formal part of the annual review conversation with children and families, where applicable, as a commitment to promoting and supporting independence.

3.10 **Centralised Pick ups**

In Halton, all transport is arranged from home addresses. A centralised pick-up point would be a nominated identified safe area where pupils would meet to access arranged transport, either with or without parental support. This would mean that the child or young person would not be collected from the home address but from the alternative pick up point. The use of centralised points would be based on robust risk assessments and be used for pupils only where it is deemed safe. This is permitted by the Department for Education statutory guidance for capable pupils.

What change is being considered?

Centralised pick up points to be offered to capable pupils.

3.11 **Motability Vehicles**

Department for Education guidance states that mobility cars can't be taken into account when assessing a young person's transport eligibility. However, where a young person has a mobility car assigned for their purpose, in law on the young person's 18th birthday the vehicle officially becomes theirs and can be taken into consideration when assessing the need for transport.

Halton Borough Council currently offers transport to those aged 18 and above who have a Motability vehicle.

What change is being considered?

Withdraw the current offer to over 18 with a Motability vehicle. This would mean that no home to school transport would be provided for pupils over the age of 18 with a Motability Vehicle.

3.12 Part B: Reviewing discretionary transport

3.13 Distance Criteria after 8 years of age

To qualify for travel assistance, a pupil's distance from home to school should be;

A: More than two miles if under 8 or if meeting the low-income criteria.

B: More than three miles if over eight years of age.

Currently there is no review of travel assistance once a child reaches 8 years of age. In some cases, children continue to receive transport.

What change is being considered?

Reaching 8 years of age will trigger a review of travel assistance.

3.14 Provision of transport for pupils under the age of 5 years

There is no statutory requirement to provide transport for pupils under the age of 5. Halton Borough Council does currently provide home to school transport for pupils under the age of 5 and there is currently no charge for providing this service.

What changes are being considered?

No change to the current offer

Pupils under the age of 5 will continue to receive home to school transport.

Keep the current offer with restrictions

This means that pupils will be expected to travel by the most cost-effective means available: travel pass, Personal Travel Budgets, a seat on a contract vehicle (coach, minibus or taxi). The use of a contracted vehicle would only be agreed where it is the least expensive option.

Keep the Current Offer with the introduction of an annual contribution

Charge towards costs. This cost is proposed to be £750 per child, per academic year (£500 for qualifying low income).

Withdraw the current offer

This would mean that no home to school transport would be provided for pupils under the age of 5.

3.15 Post 16 Transport

There is no statutory requirement to provide transport for pupils over the age of 16. Halton Borough Council currently provides home to school transport for pupils between the age of 16-19.

There is a charge for this service, this is £370 per academic year per child (£250 for low income families).

What changes are being considered?

No change to the current offer

Pupils over the age of 16 will continue to receive home to school transport.

Keep the current offer with restrictions

This means that pupils will be expected to travel by the most cost effective means available: travel pass, Personal Travel Budgets, a seat on a contract vehicle (coach, minibus or taxi). The use of a contracted vehicle would only be agreed where it is the least expensive option.

Keep the current offer with an increase of the annual contribution charge towards costs

Charge to rise to £750 per child, per academic year (£500 for low income).

Withdraw the home to school transport offer

This would mean that no home to school transport would be provided for pupils over the age of 16

3.16 Promotion of Consultation

Information around the consultation and the link were promoted through a variety of channels encouraging young people, parents, carers and residents of Halton to take part.

Social Media Campaign: The consultation and link was promoted several times during the consultation period. Analytics highlight that the posts reached 20, 945 people through the social media campaign, 12,000 people interacted with the post with 100 people interacting, 29 comments and 43 shares.

Local Offer: Push notifications sent to 252 people who had registered their interest in SEND related matters on family Hub online and the local offer. During the time of the consultation, the local offer received 2,669 visitors.

Inclusion matters newsletter: The consultation was promoted through both the April and more recently, the May Inclusion Matters newsletter. This newsletter was sent to 564 recipients across the SEND partnership including HBC colleagues, schools, partners and stakeholders. At the time of writing the newsletter had been read by 207 people (37.5% of the recipients).

Director of Children's Services' Newsletter: The consultation was promoted internally to 309 colleagues through the weekly children services newsletter.

Halton Borough Schools: The consultation and link was sent multiple times to all primary, secondary and Early Years settings through distribution channels capturing all education settings across Halton.

Face to face sessions: Parents were invited to face to face sessions on 24th April (Halton Parent Carer Forum), 29th April (Ashley High School) and 30th April (Brookvale Children's Centre, hosted by Cavandish High School). Through those events we have spoken in person to around 50 people including parents, carers, teachers and young people about the consultation so far. This allowed those who attended the events to discuss the consultation, ask questions, clarify information, make suggestions and raise any concerns.

3.17 Consultation Engagement

Parent Carer and Young Person Responses

At the time of writing the consultation has generated 137 responses to the parent and young person consultation. Of the 112 responses 96% was completed by parents, 4% by young people, 61% of those responded are currently receiving transport with a further 17% responding they are not currently in receipt of any transport.

12% of respondents reported they/their children were post 16 student with 3% reporting their children were under 5 years of age. 7% of respondents currently receive a personal budget with a further 3% reporting they have engaged in ITT in the last 2 years.

Other Stakeholders Responses

This consultation has generated 76 responses from the stakeholder consultation with 59% of respondents identifying at Halton residents, 29% from education setting and 7% being transportation providers and 5% recorded as “other”.

3.18 Next Steps

The next steps are for responses from the consultation to be collated and analysed. Following this the key findings and any recommendations for future amendments to the Home to School Transport Policy will be shared with Children’s Leadership Team, Council Management Team and full Council Executive board.

4.0 POLICY IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 All of the above will require an amendment to the current “Home to School and College Travel and Transport Policy for Children and Young People with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND)”

5.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 The report “Permission to Consult- Home to School Transport for Pupils with Special Educational Needs Disabilities” was discussed at Halton’s Executive Board on 25th March 2025. This report detailed the considerable potential budgetary savings from the identified proposals. This may be through one or a combination of the above proposals.

6.0 IMPLICATIONS FOR THE COUNCIL’S PRIORITIES

6.1 Improving Health, Promoting Wellbeing and Supporting Greater Independence

Changes in this policy will encourage an increase in promoting wellbeing though encouraging a reduction in overreliance on transport and promote the use of walking and cycling to school, where applicable. For example, a personal budget could be used to buy bikes for children and carers to travel to

school. Where children can use active travel options including public transport, walking and cycling key health benefits are achieved.

In addition, a key feature of the policy change will be to encourage greater independence both in childhood and into adulthood by increasing focus on independent travel training.

6.2 **Building a Strong, Sustainable Local Economy**

None.

6.3 **Supporting Children, Young People and Families**

Provision of assisted home to school transport enables children and young people with SEND to travel to appropriate schools where they have been placed and where their specialist needs are catered for.

6.4 **Tackling Inequality and Helping Those Who Are Most In Need**

Halton's current charging structure for post 16 contributions offers a reduction for those on a low income. A universal increase in charges would disproportionately impact on lower income families. Other mitigations against increased charges also exist such as 16-19 bursary which is accessible to students on a low income. Halton currently have a lower contribution rate for low income families.

6.5 **Working Towards a Greener Future**

Where children can use active travel options including walking and cycling key environmental benefits are achieved. Public transport and active travel modes provide alternative sustainable options to private forms of transport which is conducive to lowering harmful emissions.

6.6 **Valuing and Appreciating Halton and Our Community**

N/A.

7.0 **RISK ANALYSIS**

7.1 Failure to achieve any of the above will have a negative impact on the Council budget for provision of home to school transport for children with SEND.

Failure to engage fully with parents and stakeholders and work with them through any period of change may result in legal challenges, reputational damage and loss of trust.

8.0 **EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES**

8.1 Protected Characteristics under the Equality Act 2010 are age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity,

race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation. Given the nature of the proposed changes, there is an impact to those defined by both age and disability.

9.0 CLIMATE CHANGE IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 The council is committed to creating sustainable environments for current and future generations. Any recommendations made following consultation with consider environmental impacts and sustainable methods of travel will be considered as a priority.

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

Permission to Consult- Home to School Transport for Pupils with Special Educational Needs Disabilities- 25.02.2025

REPORT TO:	Children and Young People and Families Policy and Performance Board
DATE:	9 th June 2025
REPORTING OFFICER:	Executive Director of Children's Services
PORTFOLIO:	Children, Young People and Families
SUBJECT:	Inglefield OFSTED report
WARD(S)	Borough Wide

1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 For council members to be sighted on the outcome of the OFSTED inspection on Inglefield care home.

2.0 RECOMMENDATION: That the report be noted

3.0 SUPPORTING INFORMATION

- 3.1 Ofsted visited Inglefield for an inspection and determined the provision to be good across the board.

4.0 POLICY IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 No policy implications.

5.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 No implications.

6.0 IMPLICATIONS FOR THE COUNCIL'S PRIORITIES

- 6.1 **Improving Health, Promoting Wellbeing and Supporting Greater Independence**
No implications.

- 6.2 **Building a Strong, Sustainable Local Economy**
No Implications.

- 6.3 **Supporting Children, Young People and Families**
No implications.

- 6.4 **Tackling Inequality and Helping Those Who Are Most In Need**
No Implications.

- 6.5 **Working Towards a Greener Future**
No implications.
- 6.6 **Valuing and Appreciating Halton and Our Community**
No Implications.
- 7.0 **RISK ANALYSIS**
- 7.1 No risks Identified.
- 8.0 **EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES**
- 8.1 No Implications.
- 9.0 **CLIMATE CHANGE IMPLICATIONS**
- 9.1 No implications.
- 10.0 **LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS UNDER SECTION 100D OF
THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972**
- 10.1 **‘None under the meaning of the Act.’**

SC039559

Registered provider: Halton Borough Council

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

This local authority home is registered to provide short breaks for up to four children who may have learning disabilities, physical disabilities and sensory impairment.

At the time of this inspection, 15 children were receiving short breaks at the home. Three children have left the home, all of whom have moved on to adult services.

The manager registered with Ofsted in September 2023.

Inspection dates: 25 and 26 February 2025

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account	good
---	-------------

How well children and young people are helped and protected	good
---	------

The effectiveness of leaders and managers	good
---	------

The children's home provides effective services that meet the requirements for good.

Date of last inspection: 22 February 2024

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
22/02/2024	Full	Good
15/03/2023	Full	Good
16/11/2021	Full	Good
25/02/2020	Full	Good

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

Children enjoy their short breaks at this home. One parent said their child 'shrieks with excitement' when they know they are staying. Another child refers to the home as the 'children's hotel'. This is a view that is shared by the manager and his team, who work hard to ensure that children get the most from their short breaks.

The home is designed and furnished to meet the needs of all the children who come to stay. It is bright, welcoming and fun. There is a separate sensory room, therapy room and gym. The walls are covered in photos of smiling children taking part in activities both inside and outside of the home. The home also has a well-resourced playroom and a book corner. As a result, children's sensory needs are also well met.

The staff encourage children's individual communication styles and work hard to ensure that their voices are heard with regards to making choices and respecting their decisions. However, children are not regularly consulted about the quality of the care that they receive, including their feedback about the staff. Both of which are missed opportunities to make further improvements.

Bedrooms are nicely decorated and children can choose which room they stay in. The staff ensure that the rooms are prepared for children with their favourite items to make their stay comfortable. However, all children are visually checked on every hour throughout the night. This impacts children's privacy and has not been assessed as necessary or proportionate.

The staff plan monthly themes for the children that include activities and outings. Recent examples include space month and science month. The creativity of the staff in bringing these themes to life for children combine fun and education that have included star gazing, visits to the planetarium and science experiments.

Children make noticeable progress during their short breaks at this home. Some examples of this include, children now sleeping through the night, children responding to fire drills, and developing their independence skills. One child, whose nights are soon to decrease due to the progress they have made, is pleased with their achievements and has been involved in the decision to stay less frequently.

How well children and young people are helped and protected: good

The manager is keen to develop safeguarding practices and since the last inspection has focused on staff understanding deprivation of liberty and fire safety. Additional training and research have resulted in changes to practice that benefit children coming to stay. For example, staff ensure that children receive the appropriate capacity assessments, and changes are made to personal emergency evacuation plans when necessary.

Children have good relationships with the staff, and the staff know them well. As a result, staff can de-escalate incidents. There has been one incident involving restraint since the last inspection, and this was necessary and proportionate. However, the record does not capture all the details required.

Most of the children require medication to be administered alongside some more complex procedures to ensure their well-being. The staff are appropriately trained and competent in providing this care. As a result, there have not been any medication errors or discrepancies.

Staff are guided by support plans and risk assessments that are regularly reviewed. However, these do not include agreed guidelines on how staff should assess the risk to a child following them banging their head or whether medical advice should be sought.

The manager ensures that the service is very much part of the local community. He has established links with the local police and fire brigade, who come out to visit the children in their vehicles. This promotes a positive impression of the emergency services, which some children previously found difficult.

The staff work in partnership with families to support children with other issues that they may be experiencing at home. For example, supporting them with grief and loss and providing bespoke care and additional stays when required. Additionally, the manager has introduced a direct link to the National Youth Advocacy Service.

The manager ensures that the home environment is safe and well maintained for children.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

The manager is suitably experienced and qualified and is supported by a deputy manager. Together, they are a strong leadership team, whose members are committed to the children and motivated to ensure that they have positive experiences during their stays.

A key achievement since the last inspection is that the manager has now recruited a full staff team. This improvement has been noted from parents, professionals and staff alike.

The manager holds regular team meetings that are now split into a team agenda and child-focused discussions. This ensures that the children are prioritised and there is the opportunity to discuss all children. This means that the staff have the information they need to support the children effectively.

The staff feel supported by the management team, and they receive regular child-focused supervision sessions that allow them to reflect on their practice and be provided with the necessary advice and guidance.

The manager demonstrates a commitment to his own and the staff's continued professional development. He has sourced appropriate training for the staff as well as signing up to forums that will continue to support him in his role.

The manager has a good management oversight, with systems in place to ensure that this is thorough.

What does the children's home need to do to improve?

Statutory requirement

This section sets out the actions that the registered person(s) must take to meet the Care Standards Act 2000, The Children's Homes (England) Regulations 2015 and the 'Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards'. The registered person(s) must comply within the given timescales.

Requirement	Due date
<p>The registered person must ensure that—</p> <p>the privacy of children is appropriately protected;</p> <p>children can access all appropriate areas of the children's home's premises; and</p> <p>any limitation placed on a child's privacy or access to any area of the home's premises—</p> <p>is intended to safeguard each child accommodated in the home;</p> <p>is necessary and proportionate;</p> <p>is kept under review and, if necessary, revised; and</p> <p>allows children as much freedom as is possible when balanced against the need to protect them and keep them safe. (Regulation 21 (a)(b)(c)(i)(ii)(iii)(iv))</p> <p>This relates specifically to the registered person reviewing children's plans around being visually checked on throughout the night.</p>	11 April 2025

Recommendations

- The registered person should ensure that the staff assess the risk to children when they self-injure by banging their head and make the necessary arrangements to ensure the children's wellbeing. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 42, paragraph 9.5)
- The registered person should ensure that any use of restraint is appropriately recorded in line with regulation 35. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 49, paragraph 9.59)
- The registered person should ensure that the staff consult regularly with children on their views about the home's care to inform and support continued improvement in

the quality of care provided. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 22, paragraph 4.11)

Information about this inspection

Inspectors have looked closely at the experiences and progress of children and young people, using the social care common inspection framework. This inspection was carried out under the Care Standards Act 2000 to assess the effectiveness of the service, how it meets the core functions of the service as set out in legislation, and to consider how well it complies with The Children's Homes (England) Regulations 2015 and the 'Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards'.

Children's home details

Unique reference number: SC039559

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: Halton Borough Council

Registered provider address: 3rd Floor Rutland House, Halton Lea, Runcorn WA7 2GW

Responsible individual: Jamie Pope

Registered manager: Phillip Woods

Inspector

Kerri Lynch, Social Care Inspector

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REPORT TO:	Children, Young People and Families Policy and Performance Board
DATE:	9 June 2025
REPORTING OFFICER:	Executive Director of Children's Services
PORTFOLIO:	Children, Young People and Families
SUBJECT:	Residential and Supported Accommodation Sufficiency Update
WARD(S)	All Wards

1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 This covering report provides an updated position around the Residential and Supported Accommodation Sufficiency programme of work which also incorporates A7 within the Improvement Plan. A presentation will be shared at the meeting.

2.0 RECOMMENDED: That

- 1) the report and attached presentation be noted; and
- 2) the Board offers comment and direction on progress to date.

3.0 SUPPORTING INFORMATION

- 3.1 A supporting presentation is also provided to appraise members of the Residential and Supported Accommodation Sufficiency programme and its progress.
- 3.2 Within the wider Childrens Sufficiency Improvement Journey the following are of note:
- A full restructure of the Commissioning Team is complete which will allow for the continued Contract Management of the revised Contract Register, through the developing Performance Framework. A refreshed Contracts Register is now in place and contracts are now RAG rated in terms of renewal timeframes and provider compliance and performance. The Contract monitoring arrangements are now embedded within the completed Children and Young Peoples Quality and Performance Monitoring Framework (QPMF). The Contracts Register is now supported by a dedicated commissioning workplan, which is shared with Procurement colleagues

- The placement team has received additional officers within the establishment, and roles have been clarified within new and updated job profiles to allow for autonomy and more focused working practices. This has facilitated link worker/point of contact roles to provider cohorts of IFA, Residential and Supported Accommodation Providers. Meetings have been held with providers who have attempted to serve notice/terminate placements, and immediate notice has been avoided. Additional support has been implemented to stabilise placements, which has avoided notice, termination and potential unnecessary moves to additional (high cost) placements. We will imminently strengthen our Individual Placement Agreements to enforce the need for pre-emptive Stability Meetings.
- We have strengthened relationships with Procurement colleagues and have shared workplans to ensure continuity of compliance with regulation and standing orders.
- Commissioning receive a weekly overview of all planning applications in the borough and consult on those involving children's settings. Providers are now actively encouraged to engage with Commissioning prior to any planning application to understand priorities. To date, Commissioning have supported 4 applications, and successfully challenged 4 applications in the local area, meaning that only good providers operate in Halton. The next development is to work with Planning Committee Elected Members to consider the concerns raised by Childrens Services are equal to material considerations, whilst respecting planning laws and conventions.
- The Supported Accommodation Block Contract renewed for 12 months with a view to future expansion through the development of the two Care Leavers Foyers across the borough, within the contract.
- Service Level Agreement with Juno has been approved within the wider Sufficiency Strategy for four children's homes and the finer details are being jointly agreed across the partnership arrangement. There is a detailed project plan which incorporates all elements of the individual developments, providing a holistic overview of the programme as a whole.
- The Children and Young Peoples Quality Performance and Monitoring Framework (QPMF) is complete and has been shared with operational leads and Directors. Dedicated forms have been adapted, amended and developed to respond to scheduled visits and "emergency" QA requirements. This will be shared with providers during Provider Forums.

- We are now part of the North West regional QA group and are taking a regional stance on uplifts. A review of internal processes is complete, and a combined Placement Request and AA form is in place. The referrals process has been streamlined and a uniform route identified via the combined PR and AA document. Work has been completed within Eclipse around anonymity and confidentiality. Regional consultation with providers around issues and concerns has been listened to and social workers have been encouraged to attend the regional training with the full support of operational team managers and service leaders.
- We are engaging PNW to be involved in changes to the Regional Frameworks, to ensure that Halton are integral to sub-regional engagement with providers. We will proactively engage LCR to uniformly support realistic fee uplift requests in November every year. All fee uplifts will be considered in relation to outcomes for children and young people.
- High-cost placement tracker implemented in April 2024. Tracking and monitoring of High-cost placements and whether they are meeting the needs of children takes place monthly. There has been an annual cost avoidance of just over £1,000,000 due to activity within this group.

Through the above developments, we are seeing positive improvement and successes in:

- The quality assurance checks on providers is improving the safety of children in residential provisions by increasing the scrutiny of care afforded to them.
- Services have a better understanding of the needs in the borough and actively developing services that meet our childrens needs.
- Relationships with the planning team have seen appropriate challenge to applications of care homes being built in the area that do not prioritise our children and do not provide good care.
- Regional approach to uplifts by providers means that we can work together in the North West to regulate the cost of placements for children.
- Engagement with Juno who will reinvest profits into our early help model focusing on future needs of children. Keeping them home safely with families

4.0 POLICY IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 The programme supports the Children and Young Peoples Plan, in its entirety.

5.0 **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 5.1 There are evidenced financial savings and cost avoidance which are possible and being achieved within both the Residential and Supported Accommodation programme and the satellite actions detailed above within A7 of the Improvement Plan.
- 5.2 As described within the slide deck, there are potential long-term savings in the partnership agreement with JUNO. The priority in borough placements, at a reasonable fixed rate, will progressively avoid external or out of borough placements as each home comes online. The mixed asset ownership allows for lower placement fees due to low rental arrangements and the sharing of resources.
- 5.3 The internal configuration of existing council-owned assets means that effective collaboration with Asset Management, Regeneration and Planning, has resulted in new funding streams being accessible and reducing capital spend wherever possible.

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

6.1 **Improving Health, Promoting Wellbeing and Supporting Greater Independence**

The programme has dedicated focus' in all areas under the Children's Home (England) and Supported Accommodation Regulations, and the renewed service specifications and Partnership Agreement will be defined and triangulated around these.

6.2 **Building a Strong, Sustainable Local Economy**

The service is significantly beneficial in terms of finance, per placement. It also keeps young people close to home, with a view to encourage both local residents and care leavers into local care-related employment opportunities in the new services.

6.3 **Supporting Children, Young People and Families**

This area is self-defined in the Partnership Agreement and various service specifications and within the ethos of the service being delivered.

6.4 **Tackling Inequality and Helping Those Who Are Most In Need**

Our Children in Care and Care Leavers are some of the most vulnerable residents and the service is dedicated to inclusive support which is focused on building resilience and independence, moving young people away from disadvantage, and promoting their success.

6.5 **Working Towards a Greener Future**

The whole programme revolves around collaboration with Housing and Regeneration to incorporate all current strategies, redevelopment of

existing and unused assets, and future developments. All Children's Homes and Supported Accommodation provisions will be project managed collaboratively and will strive to be environmentally friendly.

6.6 Valuing and Appreciating Halton and Our Community

The programme strives to develop local provision for local children, and build resilience within the community.

7.0 RISK ANALYSIS

7.1 In terms of risk, there is a low potential for the Partnership Agreement to develop in line with central government initiatives and financial developments. Fees set in 2025 may not be applicable in future years due to international events and national changes in budgets.

7.2 To mitigate this, we have incorporated an annual review to discuss and agree any variations which may be requested.

8.0 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES

8.2 Equality and Diversity are at the heart of the Partnership Agreement and in the specifications for each provision. These principles are also reinforced by national legislation, the regulatory body (Ofsted), and the Quality Standards.

The proposed provisions are also considered in terms of equity across the borough. We have strived to position the proposed developments in consideration of the Merseyflow Bridge and young people's preferred preferences in terms of where they live, are educated and choose to be employed.

9.0 CLIMATE CHANGE IMPLICATIONS

9.1 The whole programme revolves around collaboration with Housing and Regeneration to incorporate all current strategies, redevelopment of existing and unused assets, and future developments.

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

10.1 **'None under the meaning of the Act.'**

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

DATE: 9 June 2025

REPORTING OFFICER: Finance Director

PORTFOLIO: Corporate Services

SUBJECT: Councilwide Spending as at 31 January 2025

WARD(S): Borough-wide

1.0 PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To report the Council's overall revenue and capital spending position as at 31 January 2025, together with the latest 2024/25 outturn forecast.

2.0 RECOMMENDED: That;

- (i) **The Council's overall financial position as at 31 January 2025 as outlined in the Appendix, be noted.**

3.0 SUPPORTING INFORMATION

- 3.1 On 13 March 2025 the Executive Board received the report shown in the Appendix. This presented details of Councilwide revenue and capital spending by each Department as at 31 January 2025 along with forecasts to year-end, and outlines the reasons for key variances from budget.
- 3.2 Given the scale of the Council's current financial challenges, Executive Board requested that a copy of the report be shared with each Policy and Performance Board for information. This is to ensure that all Members have a full appreciation of the Councilwide financial position, in addition to their specific areas of responsibility.
- 3.3 The report is presented to Executive Board every two months and the attached report covers the period 1 April 2024 to 31 January 2025. It includes details of spending to date by each Department against both the revenue budget and capital programme.
- 3.4 Within the report Appendix 1 provides a Councilwide summary of revenue spending, while Appendix 2 presents details relating to each Department. The latest forecast of revenue spending to year-end compared to budget is also provided.
- 3.5 Appendix 3 presents spending to date against the Capital Programme. Appendix 4 indicates progress with implementation of previously approved budget savings for 2024/25 and 2025/26.

4.0 POLICY IMPLICATIONS

4.1 None.

5.0 IMPLICATIONS FOR THE COUNCIL'S PRIORITIES

5.1 **Improving Health, Promoting Wellbeing and Supporting Greater Independence**

5.2 **Building a Strong, Sustainable Local Economy**

5.3 **Supporting Children, Young People and Families**

5.4 **Tackling Inequality and Helping Those Who Are Most In Need**

5.5 **Working Towards a Greener Future**

5.6 **Valuing and Appreciating Halton and Our Community**

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

6.0 RISK ANALYSIS

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

6.2 A budget risk register of significant financial risks is maintained and is included at Appendix 5 of the attached report.

7.0 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES

7.1 None.

8.0 CLIMATE CHANGE IMPLICATIONS

8.1 None

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

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

APPENDIX

REPORT TO: Executive Board

DATE: 13 March 2025

REPORTING OFFICER: Finance Director

PORTFOLIO: Corporate Services

SUBJECT: 2024/25 Spending as at 31 January 2025

WARD(S): Borough-wide

1.0 PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.2 To report the Council's overall revenue net spend position as at 31 January 2025 together with a 2024/25 forecast outturn position.

3.0 RECOMMENDED: That;

- (ii) Executive Directors continue to identify areas where they can further reduce their directorate's spending or generate income, in order to reduce the councilwide forecast outturn overspend position;
- (iii) Executive Directors continue to implement the approved savings proposals for 2024/25 and 2025/26 as detailed in Appendix 4;
- (iv) Council be asked to approve the revisions to the capital programme set-out in paragraph 3.22 and incorporated within Appendix 3;
- (v) 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 areas of responsibility.

3.0 SUPPORTING INFORMATION**Revenue Spending**

- 3.1 Appendix 1 presents a summary of spending against the operational revenue budget up to 31 January 2025 and Appendix 2 provides detailed figures for each individual Department. In overall terms, net Council spending as at 31 January 2025 is £15.487m over budget. The outturn forecast for the year estimates that net spending will be over budget by £18.906m if no corrective action is taken.

- 3.2 The forecast outturn overspend has improved by £1.851m from the amount reported on 16 January 2025. Whilst the financial position for the year remains deeply concerning the forecast outturn is a significant improvement. The improvement largely relates to reduced net spend estimates across Children Services. Further information regarding significant departmental variances is included within the report and departmental figures are included in Appendices 1 and 2.
- 3.3 Over the two month period since the last reported position, financial focus workshops led by the Chief Executive have taken place with each Directorate's senior leadership team on a monthly basis. These workshops are looking for urgent ways to reduce or stop spending, or generate income. The aim is that initiatives identified in these workshops will help reduce the overall forecast overspend position for the year.
- 3.4 Ordinarily, where net spend is exceeding available resources for the year, the Council would have used reserves to achieve a balanced position. Due to decreasing levels, the Council are not in a position to cover the forecast overspend for the year. Therefore, on 04 December 2024 Council approved an application to the Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government (MHCLG) for Exceptional Financial Support (EFS). The Government's EFS arrangement provides councils with exceptional permission to capitalise annual revenue costs and fund them from long term borrowing (over 20 years) from the Public Works Loans Board (PWLb). EFS provides permission to borrow and does not provide grant funding. On 20 February 2025 MHCLG confirmed the Deputy Prime Minister is minded to approve a capitalisation direction of a total not exceeding £52.8 million over the period 2024/25 and 2025/26. The position will only be confirmed following an external assurance review to be undertaken in the summer of 2025.
- 3.5 The Council's available useable reserves (general and earmarked) total £11.484m. This is well below that required to help provide a balanced budget position given the forecast outturn overspend. Further detail on reserves is provided at paragraph 3.19.
- 3.6 The forecast outturn figures reflect a prudent yet realistic view of spend and income levels through to the end of the year. Work will continue to update the financial position as more information becomes available. Included within the forecast position is the 2024/25 pay award which was paid in November 2024.
- 3.7 The largest pressure on the Council's budget continues to be within the Children & Families Department and the Adults Directorate. Against Children & Families net spend for the year is forecast to be £6.817m (16.2%) above 2023/24 actual spend. Against the Adults Directorate net spend for the year is forecast to be £4.557m (7.5%) higher than 2023/24 actual spend.
- 3.8 On 24 October 2024 the Board approved additional revenue funding of £4.2m per year, to help develop a programme around the stabilisation and redesign of Children's Social Care, following the Ofsted review. This

investment is focused upon proactive early intervention and prevention systems. It is envisaged that this investment will help control and reduce costs within Children's Social Care over the next few years, and these cost reductions will be built into future year budget targets.

- 3.9 The use and cost of agency staff continues to be one of the main contributing factors to the overspend position for the year. This is mostly evident within the Children & Families Department and the Council's in-house Care Homes. Initiatives and support from the Transformation Programme are ongoing to reduce reliance upon agency staff.
- 3.10 Analysis of agency spend for the year, together with comparative analysis of 2023/24 costs, is included in the table below. Note information for Q4 only includes data for one months, January.

	2024/25					2023/24
	Q1 £'000	Q2 £'000	Q3 £'000	Q4 to Date £'000	Total £'000	Total £'000
Adult Social Care	1,341	1,656	1,210	1,241	5,448	5,927
Chief Executives Delivery Unit	132	179	239	82	632	0
Children & Family Services	1,283	1,432	1,321	400	4,436	6,157
Community & Greenspace	116	129	104	33	382	336
Economy, Enterprise & Property	86	105	110	38	339	343
Education, Inclusion & Provision	99	78	53	14	244	393
Finance	14	42	31	8	95	56
Legal & Democratic Services	253	274	212	41	780	814
Planning & Transportation	94	85	19	3	201	206
Public Health & Public Protection	11	10	1	0	22	21
Total	3,429	3,990	3,300	1,860	12,579	14,253

- 3.11 Within the approved budget for the year is a £4m savings target against the Transformation Programme. To date budget savings of £0.129m have been identified against this target. In addition, the Transformation Delivery Unit (TDU) have identified cost reductions and cost avoidance measures, although these will not lead to an overall reduction in the budgeted target. Progress against transformation savings is reported monthly to the Transformation Programme Board.
- 3.12 The forecast overspend is significantly above that which has been recorded in recent years. Whilst the current year net budget for the Council has increased by £7.7m (5.45%), this is well below the forecast increase in net costs, currently estimated as an increase of £20.997m (14.1%).

Revenue - Operational Spending

- 3.13 Operational net spending for the first ten months of the year is higher than the budget to date by £15.487m Based on current forecasts it is estimated net spend will be over budget for the year by £18.906m if no further corrective action is taken.
- 3.14 Within the overall budget forecast position for the quarter, the key budget variances are as follows;

(i) **Children and Families Department**

The overall estimated forecast overspend position at the end of 2024/25 has reduced by £1.616m since last reported at 30 November 2024.

Significant investment as part of a Children's Social Care improvement plan has helped to reduce the forecast overspend position as well as reductions in agency and placement costs.

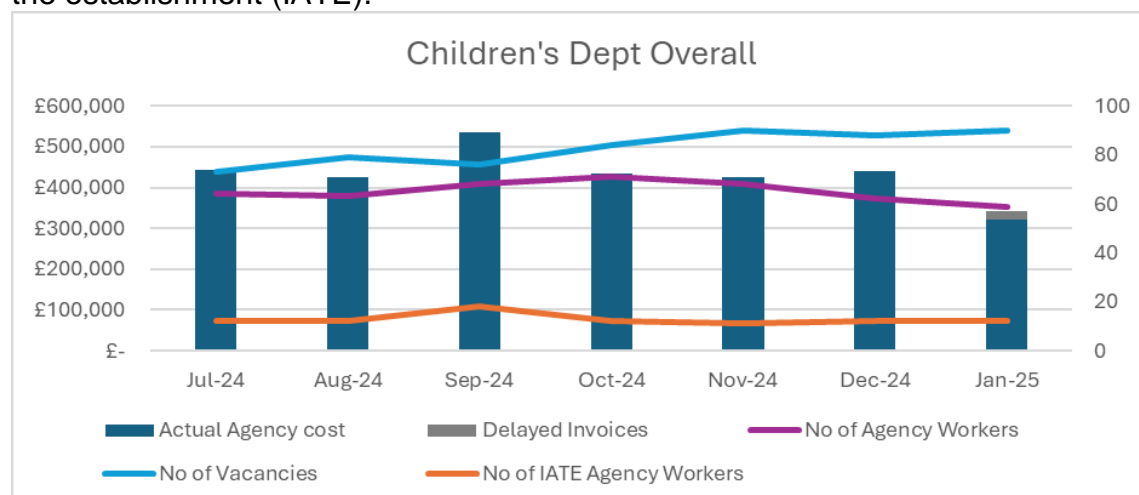
Although that there is a reduction in estimated forecast overspend across the Children's and Families department the overspend is still an area of serious concern and the issues remain the same. The difficulty in the recruitment of social workers and the subsequent extortionate agency costs, along with the spiralling costs of residential placements. This has been an ongoing problem for a number of years.

Employee Expenditure

Employee costs are forecast to be over budget profile at the end of financial year 2024/25 by £1.994m this is a reduction of £0.624m based on information available at 31 January 2025.

The reduction mainly relates to an agreed investment within children's services which has resulted in the establishment of new roles across the department. Agency staff that were previously in addition to the establishment (IATE) are no longer considered as IATE. Additional in-year budget of £0.501m (funded from contingency) has been provided for some of the newly established posts which has helped reduce the overspend position.

The chart below demonstrates agency cost that cover the month of April to January based on the period that was worked, the number of agency members of staff that the Council have received an invoice for within each period, the number of vacancies across the department and the number of staff that are currently in addition to the establishment (IATE).

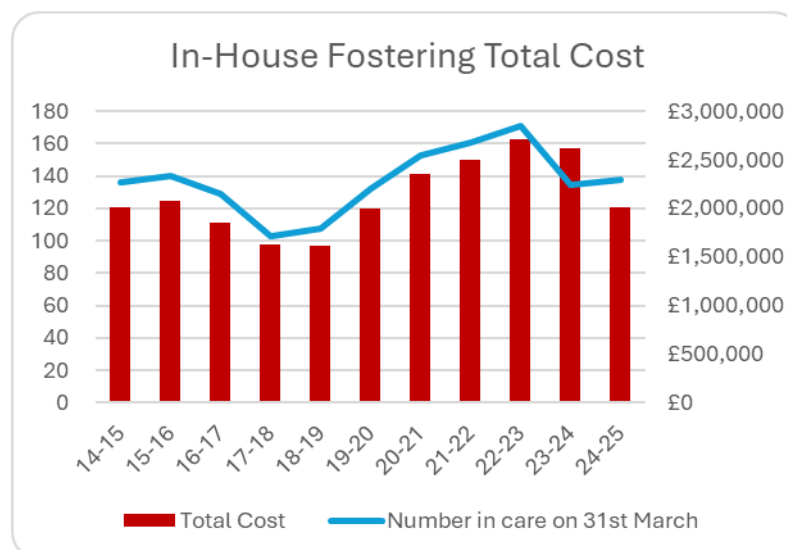


Various workstreams are in place to target the difficulties in recruitment, including a recruitment work group, social work academy and market supplements for applicable posts.

The chart above shows the level of agency has consistently reduced since October this is due to a number of agency converting to vacant positions and external recruitment which has resulted agency staff being stepped down.

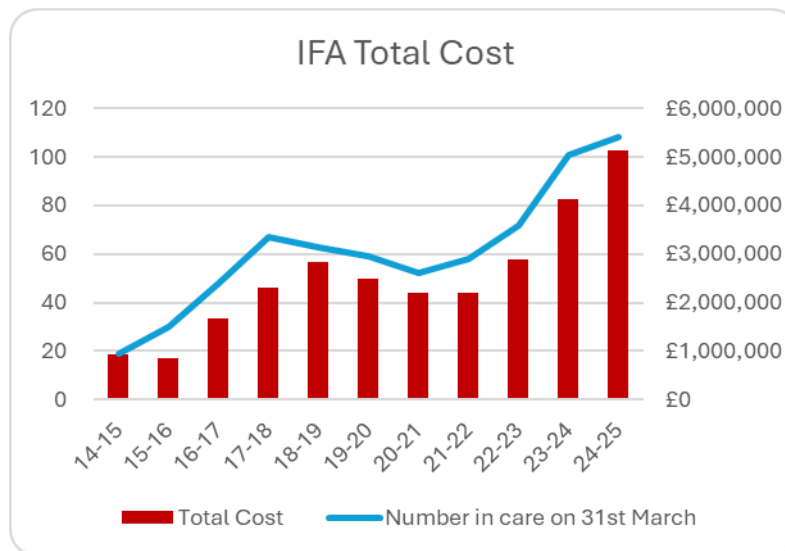
Fostering

Inhouse fostering placements is estimated to be £0.348m under budget profile for financial year 2024/25. Inhouse fostering budgets were increased to support the budget pressure in this area.



Work continues to recruit and retain Halton's In-house foster carers, along with training to develop carers enabling them to accommodate more specialist placements. This therefore means that costs could increase. However, the ability to accommodate young people within in-house provision provides a substantial saving in comparison to Independent Fostering Agency (IFA) or residential care.

Increasing numbers of children in care and insufficient in-house fostering provision has meant increased reliance on IFA. Higher numbers of children placed within IFA provision and increased IFA rates has resulted in an estimated forecast overspend for the end of 2024/25 as £0.886m.



Residential Care

Out of Borough Residential Care continues to be the main budget pressure for the Children and Families Department as the costs of residential care have continued to rise year on year. The numbers of young people in residential placements remains high and the cost of placements is rising significantly year-on year.

Provision	Weekly Costs	31-Jan-25		30-Nov-24	
		No. Placed	Estimated cost for the year	No. Placed	Estimated cost for the year
Residential	£1000 - £3000	4	488,662	4	476,360
Residential	£3001 - £5000	27	5,108,252	25	4,956,870
Residential	£5001 - £7000	26	6,737,694	26	7,413,389
Residential	£7001 - £15982	16	9,452,930	17	9,291,964
Secure	£6397 - £8137				
Leaving Care	£443 - £7175	11	2,134,843	14	2,341,056
Parent & Child	£2000 - £5500	7	774,025	7	913,562
Total:		91	24,696,405	93	25,393,201

At the end of financial year 24/25 the estimated overspend is £6.410M over budget for residential placements this has reduced by £0.784m since last reported.

Overall cost of packages are increasing due to the complexity of support the young people require as well as standard package cost increases. This is a national issue and market factors such as low supply and high demand have resulted in the costs of residential care packages rising significantly over the last year, meaning that the level of spend is unsustainable at the current rate.

A number of initiatives are taking place to try and address the issue including a High Cost Placement Panel where high cost packages are individually scrutinized to ensure the placement is

right for the young person and at the best available cost for the placement.

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



(ii) Adult Social Care Directorate

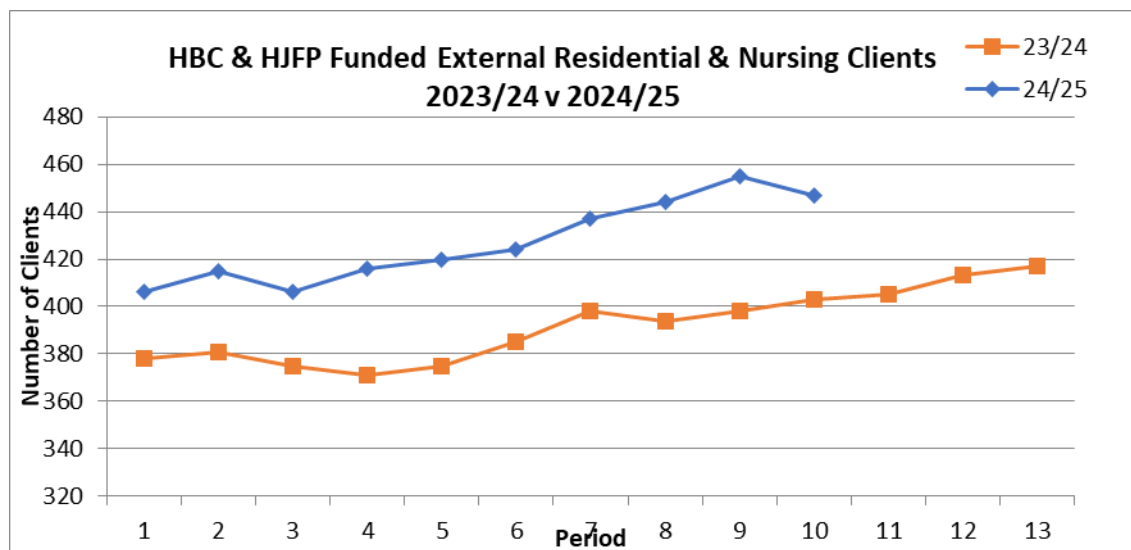
Community Care

At the end of January 2025 expenditure on Community Care services is over budget profile by £2.679m. It is anticipated that at the end of the financial year it will be overspent by £3.527m. This is an increase of £0.585m from the previous position reported at the end of November 2024.

Residential & Nursing Care

There are currently 447 residents in permanent external residential/nursing care as at the end of January 2025 compared to 444 in November, an increase of 0.6%. Compared to the 2023/24 average of 391 this is an increase of 14.3%. The average cost of a package of care in the current year for the same period has increased from £873.48 to £902.99 an increase of 3.3%. Based on this average cost, the 3 additional service users from November to January will cost approximately £0.032m to year end. In addition there is an increase in supplementary invoices during this period, amounting to £0.223m.

The graph below illustrates the demand for permanent placements.



Additional 1:1 hours in care homes currently cost the Council £0.023m per week. Spend to date is £0.596m for 30 individuals (27,432hrs), the forecast to year end is circa £0.803m.

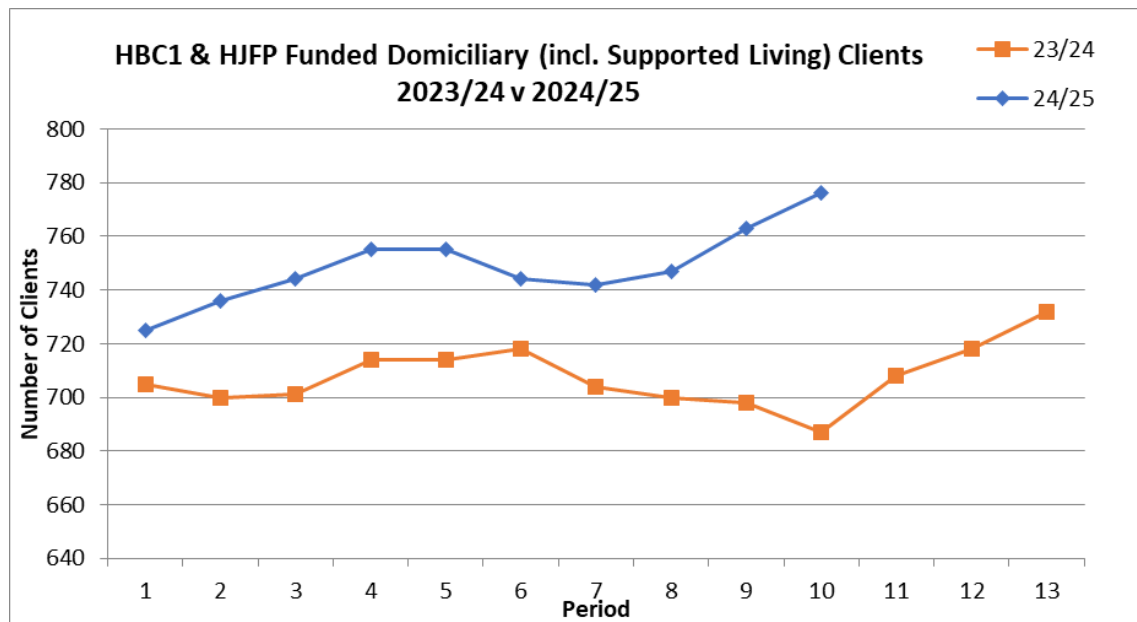
There are 76 care homes charging an additional payment over and above the contracted framework bed price. The current cost of additional payments is £0.012m per week, circa £0.610m per annum.

Domiciliary Care & Supported Living

There are currently 776 service users receiving a package of care at home compared to 747 in November, an increase of 29 (3.8%). However, the average number of service users during 2023/24 was 707, so there has been an increase of 9.8% demonstrating that demand for the service has increased this financial year.

The average cost of a package of care has increased by 5.3% from £450.89 to £475.14.

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

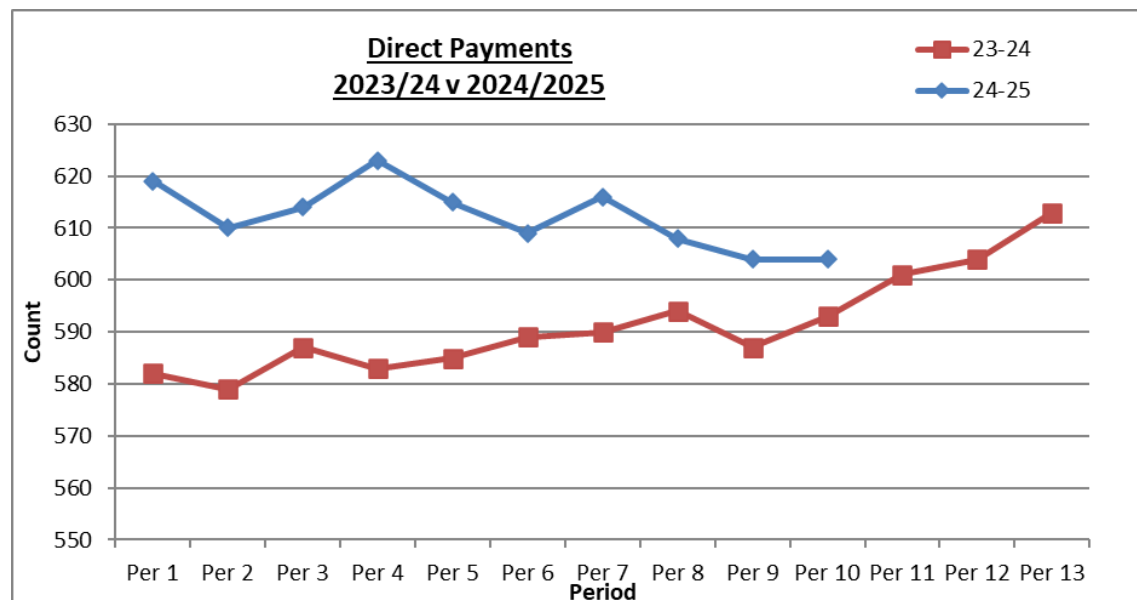


Direct Payments

In January 604 clients received a Direct Payment (DP) compared with 608 in November, a decrease of 0.6%. However, the average number of DP's in 2023/24 was 591, therefore there has been an increase of 2.2% on last year's average.

The average cost of a package of care has decreased since November from £471.94 to £438.54 in January, a reduction of 7.1%.

The forecast position for Direct Payments assumes an amount of £1.6m will be recovered from service users following an audit to seek assurance the DP is spent in line with their care and support needs. Variations to the amount recovered will directly affect the forecast.



Care Homes

The spend to 31 January 2025 across the Division is over budget profile by £1.020m. The forecast for the end of 2024/25 financial year is an estimated outturn position of £1.159m over budget. This is assuming the level of agency staffing continues at a similar rate and includes higher spend assumptions later in the financial year due to winter pressures surrounding staffing and utilities.

Recruitment of staff is a continued pressure across the care homes, where there remains a high number of staff vacancies. A proactive rolling recruitment exercise is ongoing, 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 January 2025 total agency spend across the care homes reached £3.034m, the cost of which has partially been offset by staff vacancies.

(iii) Education, Inclusion and Provision

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

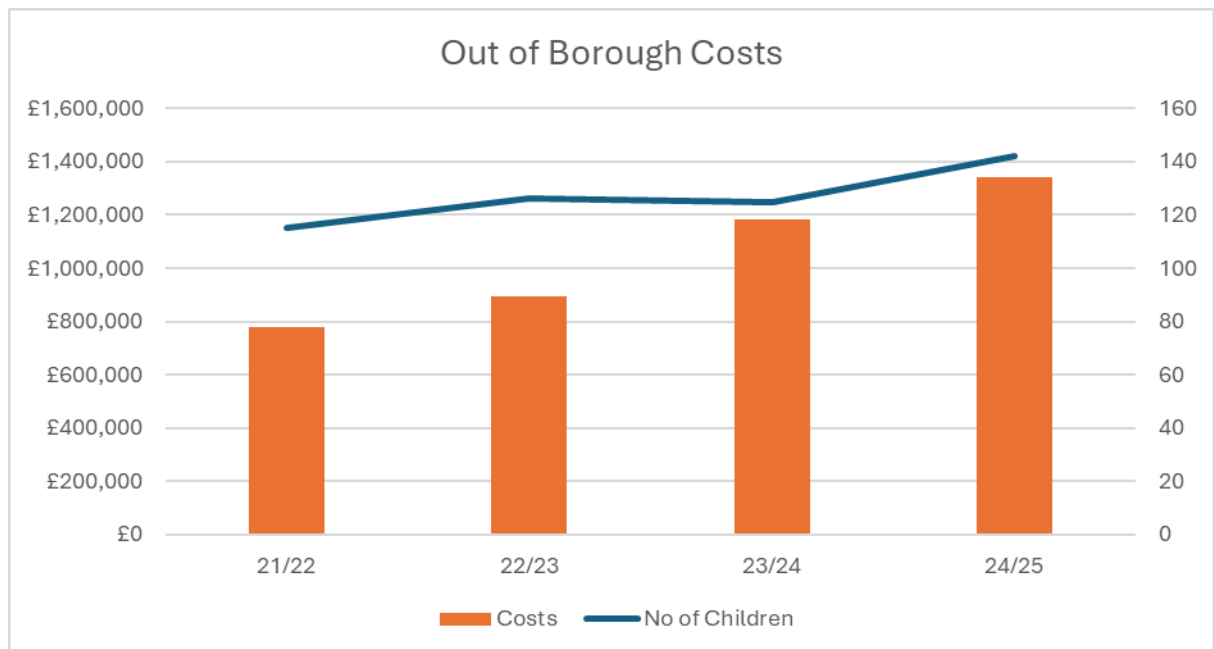
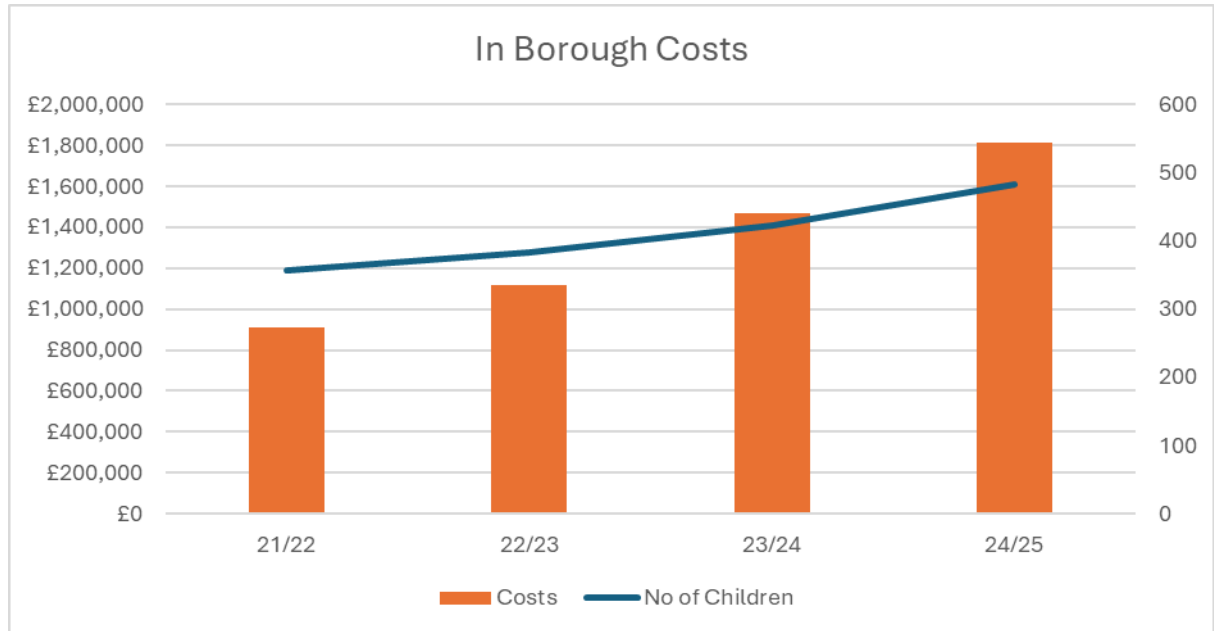
The table below illustrates the split between the two areas, and how each areas spend compares to the budget.

2024-25 as at Jan-25					
Area	Number of Users	Budget £000	Projected Spend £000	Variance £000	Average Cost per User
In Borough	482	1826	1812	14	£3,759.16
Out of Borough	142	491	1343	(852)	£9,459.70
Total	624	2317	3155	(838)	

The current records show 624 service users, the majority of which attend schools within the Borough. The Out of Borough overspend has increased from the previous reporting period from £0.797m to £0.852m.

During the current Academic year, it is anticipated that these figures will continue to rise, based upon historic information. The demand for the School Transport Service continues to increase in line with the increasing number of pupils with SEN within the Borough.

The graphs below show the trend in the number of SEN children using this service and the associated costs.



A further pressure on the departmental budget for the year relates to Psychology and SEN Assessment services provided to schools. For a number of years these costs have been funded by the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG). The Department for Education have recently advised that these costs cannot be DSG funded as

they are outside of scope in meeting the grant conditions. It is therefore currently assumed this cost will fall upon the Council's budget at a cost of £0.860m, until at such time other sources of funding are found.

Income figures have changed compared to previous reports due to a review of departmental earmarked reserves and £0.420m being released to the General Fund.

(iv) ICT Department

At the end of the 2024/25 financial year it is forecasted that the ICT and Administration Department will be over the approved budget profile by £0.596m.

The main pressures faced by the ICT and Administration Department is 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 the Council will need to react to as prices fluctuate.

(v) Community and Greenspaces Department

The net departmental expenditure is forecast to be £0.819m under budget at the end of the 2024/25 financial year. This is an improved position from the expected £0.616m forecasted at the end of November 2024.

The largest contributor to the underspend is in relation to spend on Employees, which is currently forecast to be £0.951m under the approved budget profile by the end of the financial year. There are several restructures taking place across the Department, therefore, in order to facilitate these a number of posts are currently being held vacant until the new structure is implemented. The most notable of these being the new structure being implemented when the new Halton Leisure Centre opens.

Collection Fund

- 3.15 The council tax collection rate through to the end of January 2025 is 89.01% which is 0.08% lower than the collection rate at the same point last year.

Debt relating to previous years continues to be collected, and the Council utilises powers through charging orders and attachment to earnings/benefits to secure debts. £2.205m (12.52%) has so far been collected this year in relation to previous years' debt.

- 3.16 Business rate collection through to the end of November 2024 is 92.70% which is 3.21% higher than the collection rate at the same point last year.

£2.057m has so far been collected this year in relation to previous years' debt.

Review of Reserves

- 3.17 As at 31 January 2025 the Council's General Reserve is unchanged from the previous period at £5.149m, which represents 3.44% of the Council's 2024/25 net budget. This is considered to be a minimum level.
- 3.18 There is a regular review of earmarked reserves undertaken to determine whether they can be released in part or in full to assist with funding the Council's current financial challenges, recognising that this only provides one-year funding solutions.

Reserves Summary

- 3.19 A summary breakdown of the Council's reserves is presented in the table below, showing the balance of reserves as at 31 January 2025.

Summary of General and Earmarked Reserves	
Reserve	Reserve Value £m
Corporate:	
General Fund	5.149
Transformation Fund	6.355
Capital Reserve	0.499
Insurance Reserve	1.000
Specific Projects:	
Adult Social Care	0.507
Fleet Replacement	0.454
Highways Feasibility Costs	0.102
Local Development Framework	0.494
Community & Environment	0.253
Mersey Valley Golf Club	0.483
Mersey Gateway	27.222
Various Other	0.554
Grants:	
Building Schools for the Future	6.529
Public Health	0.232
Supporting Families Performance Payments	0.114
Children's & Education	0.741
Domestic Abuse	1.186
Enterprise & Employment	0.112
Various Other	0.767
Total Earmarked Reserves	52.753

- 3.20 Held within the Transformation Reserve is £6.355m, set aside to help fund future balanced budgets, fund overspends, and meet a range of

potential spending commitments in future years associated with delivering the Transformation Programme.

- 3.21 The above table shows the diminishing level of reserves available to assist with funding any future budget overspends and balancing future budgets. Only the £11.484m of the General Fund and Transformation Reserve could now be used for these purposes, as all remaining reserves are committed for specific purposes. Use of these reserves will help contribute towards reducing the Council's overall forecast overspend position and mitigate against the level of Exceptional Financial Support required.

Capital Spending

- 3.22 Council approved the 2024/25 Capital Programme on 6 March 2024. Since then the capital programme has been revised to reflect a number of changes in spending profiles and funding as schemes have developed. Included in the list below is a number of schemes which have been revised where profiles have been moved forward to 2025/26. Appendix 3 brings all the separate elements together and report on the Council's total planned capital programme expenditure over the next three years. The schemes which have been revised within the programme are as follows:

- I. Basic Need Projects
- II. SEND capital allocation
- III. SCA unallocated
- IV. Childcare Expansion
- V. Stair Lifts
- VI. Joint Funding RSL Adaptations
- VII. Madeline McKenna Refurbishment
- VIII. St Lukes Care Home
- IX. St Patricks Care Home
- X. Foundary Lane Residential Area
- XI. Sci-tech Daresbury Project Violet
- XII. Port of Weston
- XIII. Street Lighting - Structural Maintenance
- XIV. Street Lighting – Upgrades
- XV. Risk Management
- XVI. Fleet Replacements
- XVII. Mersey Gateway Handback Land
- XVIII. Halton Smart Microgrid

- 3.23 Capital spending at 31 January 2025 totalled £33.9m, which represents 66.9% of the total revised Capital Programme of £50.7m (which assumes a 20% slippage between years).

Approved Savings

- 3.24 On 02 February 2023, Council approved savings proposals against the budget for the three year period 01 April 2023 to 31 March 2026. Appendix 4 lists those savings covering 2024/25 and 2025/26, together

with RAG rated information on progress to date with developing and implementing the target savings.

4.0 CONCLUSIONS

- 4.1 As at 31 January 2025, net revenue spend is forecast to be £18.906m over the budget for the year.
- 4.2 It is clear that Council reserves alone will not be sufficient to fund this pressure. As a result of this position and future budget challenges, the Council has successfully applied to Government for Exceptional Financial Support (EFS).
- 4.3 Departments should continue to ensure that all spending continues to be restricted throughout the remainder of the year, to ensure that the forecast outturn overspend is minimised as far as possible and future spending is brought in line with budget. This will assist with minimising the ongoing cost of EFS borrowing.

5.0 POLICY IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 None.

6.0 IMPLICATIONS FOR THE COUNCIL'S PRIORITIES

- 6.1 **Improving Health, Promoting Wellbeing and Supporting Greater Independence**
- 6.2 **Building a Strong, Sustainable Local Economy**
- 6.3 **Supporting Children, Young People and Families**
- 6.4 **Tackling Inequality and Helping Those Who Are Most In Need**
- 6.5 **Working Towards a Greener Future**
- 6.6 **Valuing and Appreciating Halton and Our Community**

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

7.0 RISK ANALYSIS

- 7.1 There are a number of financial risks within the budget. However, the Council has internal controls and processes in place to ensure that spending remains in line with budget as far as possible.
- 7.2 A budget risk register of significant financial risks has been prepared and is included at Appendix 5.

8.0 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES

8.1 None.

9.0 CLIMATE CHANGE IMPLICATIONS

9.1 None

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

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

Summary of Revenue Spending to 31 January 2025

APPENDIX 1

Directorate / Department	Annual Budget £'000	Budget To Date £'000	Actual To Date £'000	Variance (Overspend) £'000	January 2025 Forecast Outturn (o'spend) £'000	November 2024 Forecast Outturn (o'spend) £'000
Adult Social Care	22,925	19,355	19,734	(379)	(467)	(456)
Care Homes`	9,989	8,332	9,352	(1,020)	(1,159)	(1,245)
Community Care	16,460	15,255	17,934	(2,679)	(3,527)	(2,951)
Complex Care Pool	10,706	5,191	4,843	348	189	234
Adults Directorate	60,080	48,133	51,863	(3,730)	(4,964)	(4,418)
Finance	5,030	5,143	4,958	185	95	(162)
Legal & Democratic Services	-621	-482	492	(974)	(1,101)	(1,137)
ICT & Support Services	2,278	981	1,475	(494)	(596)	(657)
Chief Executives Delivery Unit	1,169	845	924	(79)	(90)	(14)
Chief Executives Directorate	7,856	6,487	7,849	(1,362)	(1,692)	(1,970)
Children & Families	38,866	28,142	36,665	(8,523)	(10,087)	(11,702)
Education, Inclusion & Provision	9,771	6,924	7,932	(1,008)	(1,240)	(1,598)
Children's Directorate	48,637	35,066	44,597	(9,531)	-11,327	(13,300)
Community & Greenspace	25,369	18,364	17,865	499	819	616
Economy, Enterprise & Property	2,335	1,031	944	87	116	123
Planning & Transportation	8,405	5,519	5,026	493	336	528
Environment & Regeneration Directorate	36,109	24,914	23,835	1,079	1,271	1,267
Corporate & Democracy	-4,477	-4,657	-2,649	(2,008)	(2,272)	(2,418)
Public Health Directorate	1,291	-962	-1,032	70	82	82
Total Operational Net Spend	149,496	108,981	124,463	(15,482)	(18,902)	(20,757)

Adult Social Care

APPENDIX 2

	Annual Budget	Budget to Date	Actual Spend	Variance (Overspend)	Forecast Outturn
	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
Expenditure					
Employees	17,595	14,633	13,695	938	1,127
Agency- Covering Vacancies	4	3	1,066	(1,063)	(1,275)
Premises	482	435	401	34	41
Supplies & Services	769	673	864	(191)	(229)
Aids & Adaptations	37	30	37	(7)	(9)
Transport	242	201	328	(127)	(149)
Food & Drink Provisions	214	178	166	12	14
Supported Accommodation and Services	1,385	1,154	979	175	210
Emergency Duty Team	115	36	36	0	0
Transfer To Reserves	210	0	0	0	0
Contracts & SLAs	1,090	910	906	4	6
<u>Housing Solutions Grant Funded Schemes</u>					
Homelessness Prevention	502	418	407	11	0
Rough Sleepers Initiative	167	75	67	8	0
Trailblazer	72	43	43	0	0
Total Expenditure	22,884	18,789	18,995	(206)	(264)
Income					
Fees & Charges	-910	-754	-732	(22)	(27)
Sales & Rents Income	-480	-423	-456	33	39
Reimbursements & Grant Income	-2,058	-1,051	-1,072	21	25
Capital Salaries	-121	-91	-91	0	0
Transfer from Reserves	-164	-164	-164	0	0
Housing Schemes Income	-703	-661	-666	5	0
Total Income	-4,436	-3,144	-3,181	37	37
Net Operational Expenditure	18,448	15,645	15,814	(169)	(227)
Recharges					
Premises Support	529	441	441	0	0
Transport Support	582	475	685	(210)	(240)
Central Support	3,465	2,887	2,887	0	0
Asset Rental Support	13	0	0	0	0
Recharge Income	-112	-93	-93	0	0
Net Total Recharges	4,477	3,710	3,920	(210)	(240)
Net Departmental Expenditure	22,925	19,355	19,734	(379)	(467)

Care Homes

	Annual Budget £'000	Budget to Date £'000	Actual Spend £'000	Variance (Overspend) £'000	Forecast Outturn £'000
Expenditure					
<u>Madeline Mckenna</u>					
Employees	698	582	553	29	30
Agency - covering vacancies	0	0	99	(99)	(119)
Other Premises	101	77	81	(4)	0
Supplies & Services	20	13	19	(6)	(6)
Food Provison	48	36	41	(5)	(1)
Total Madeline Mckenna Expenditure	867	708	793	(85)	(96)
<u>Millbrow</u>					
Employees	2,057	1,744	1,099	645	665
Agency - covering vacancies	3	3	846	(843)	(952)
Other Premises	129	100	128	(28)	(33)
Supplies & Services	61	45	75	(30)	(31)
Food Provison	78	33	39	(6)	1
Total Millbrow Expenditure	2,328	1,925	2,187	(262)	(350)
<u>St Luke's</u>					
Employees	2,883	2,451	1,920	531	685
Agency - covering vacancies	433	433	1,257	(824)	(999)
Other Premises	172	132	214	(82)	(89)
Supplies & Services	60	41	82	(41)	(42)
Reimbursements & other Grant Income	-248	-226	-226	0	0
Private Client Income 1:1	-81	-81	-81	0	0
Food Provison	120	100	117	(17)	(17)
Total St Luke's Expenditure	3,339	2,850	3,283	(433)	(462)
<u>St Patrick's</u>					
Employees	1,838	1,531	1,030	501	608
Agency - covering vacancies	42	42	832	(790)	(944)
Other Premises	157	121	122	(1)	(3)
Supplies & Services	64	47	42	5	8
Food Provison	122	102	92	10	11
Reimbursements & other Grant Income	-21	-21	-21	0	0
Total St Patrick's Expenditure	2,202	1,822	2,097	(275)	(320)
<u>Care Homes Divison Management</u>					
Employees	306	254	215	39	73
Supplies & Services	0	0	4	(4)	(4)
Care Home Divison Management	306	254	219	35	69
Net Operational Expenditure	9,042	7,559	8,579	(1,020)	(1,159)
<u>Recharges</u>					
Premises Support	264	220	220	0	0
Transport Support	0	0	0	0	0
Central Support	683	553	553	0	0
Asset Rental Support	0	0	0	0	0
Recharge Income	0	0	0	0	0
Net Total Recharges	947	773	773	0	0
Net Departmental Expenditure	9,989	8,332	9,352	(1,020)	(1,159)

Community Care

	Annual Budget	Budget to Date	Actual Spend	Variance (Overspend)	Forecast Outturn
	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
Expenditure					
Residential & Nursing	13,715	11,929	14,050	(2,121)	(2,758)
Domiciliary Care & Supported living	12,890	10,130	10,610	(480)	(624)
Direct Payments	14,125	13,063	13,289	(226)	(293)
Day Care	648	497	484	13	22
Total Expenditure	41,378	35,619	38,433	(2,814)	(3,653)
Income					
Residential & Nursing Income	-13,138	-10,345	-10,412	67	87
Community Care Income	-2,270	-2,000	-2,027	27	40
Direct Payments Income	-1,014	-882	-888	6	10
Income from other CCGs	-466	-446	-481	35	0
Market sustainability & Improvement Grant	-2,796	-2,330	-2,330	0	0
Adult Social Care Support Grant	-5,167	-4,306	-4,306	0	0
War Pension Disregard Grant	-67	-55	-55	0	(11)
Total Income	-24,918	-20,364	-20,499	135	126
Net Operational Expenditure	16,460	15,255	17,934	(2,679)	(3,527)

Complex Care Pool

	Annual Budget £'000	Budget to Date £'000	Actual Spend £'000	Variance (Overspend) £'000	Forecast Outturn £'000
Expenditure					
Intermediate Care Services	5,225	4,089	4,174	(85)	(103)
Oakmeadow	1,831	1,476	1,584	(108)	(129)
Community Home Care First	2,088	1,507	1,402	105	126
Joint Equipment Store	871	715	707	8	9
Development Fund	174	97	0	97	116
Contracts & SLA's	3,255	1,620	1,620	0	0
Inglenook	134	107	83	24	29
HICafs	3,703	2,468	2,275	193	231
Carers Breaks	554	436	332	104	126
Carers centre	371	361	342	19	23
Residential Care	7,265	5,435	5,435	0	0
Domiciliary Care & Supported Living	4,227	3,170	3,170	0	0
Pathway 3/Discharge Access	391	0	0	0	(41)
HBC Contracts	72	73	78	(5)	(6)
Total Expenditure	30,161	21,554	21,202	352	381
Income					
BCF	-13,484	-11,237	-11,237	0	0
CCG Contribution to Pool	-2,959	-2,387	-2,387	0	0
Oakmeadow Income	-19	-17	-13	(4)	(4)
ASC Discharge Grant Income	-1,631	-1,360	-1,360	0	0
ICB Discharge Grant Income	-1,282	-1,282	-1,282	0	0
Other Income	-80	-80	-80	0	0
Total Income	-19,455	-16,363	-16,359	(4)	(4)
ICB Contribution Share of Surplus					(188)
Net Operational Expenditure	10,706	5,191	4,843	348	189

Finance Department

	Annual Budget	Budget to Date	Actual Spend	Variance (Overspend)	Forecast Outturn
	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
Expenditure					
Employees	6,989	5,829	5,713	116	140
Insurances	975	859	685	174	209
Supplies & Services	417	406	479	(73)	(87)
Rent Allowances	35,500	29,583	29,583	0	0
Concessionary Travel	1,748	1,270	1,383	(113)	(136)
LCR Levy	1,748	0	0	0	0
Bad Debt Provision	77	0	0	0	(145)
Non HRA Rent Rebates	70	43	39	4	4
Discretionary Social Fund	106	90	12	78	94
Discretionary Housing Payments	300	199	186	13	16
Household Support Fund Expenditure	2,613	2,371	2,371	0	0
Total Expenditure	50,543	40,650	40,451	199	95
Income					
Fees & Charges	-335	-252	-254	2	2
Burdens Grant	-60	-62	-85	23	26
Dedicated schools Grant	-144	-16	0	(16)	(19)
Council Tax Liability Order	-581	-507	-604	97	116
Business Rates Admin Grant	-157	0	0	0	0
Schools SLAs	-312	-312	-307	(5)	(5)
LCR Reimbursement	-1,748	0	0	0	0
HB Overpayment Debt Recovery	-400	-325	-201	(124)	(149)
Rent Allowances	-34,700	-28,917	-28,717	(200)	(221)
Non HRA Rent Rebate	-70	-59	-61	2	0
Discretionary Housing Payment Grant	-300	-300	-277	(23)	(23)
Housing Benefits Admin Grant	-498	-415	-407	(8)	(9)
Housing Benefits Award Accuracy	0	-2	-12	10	12
Universal Credits	-5	-4	0	(4)	(5)
Household Support Fund Grant	-2,613	-1,303	-1,303	0	0
VEP Grant	0	0	-7	7	7
CCG McMillan Reimbursement	-87	-65	-70	5	5
Reimbursements & Grant Income	-185	-220	-440	220	263
Transfer from Reserves	-7	-7	-7	0	0
Total Income	-42,202	-32,766	-32,752	(14)	0
Net Operational Expenditure	8,341	7,884	7,699	185	95
Recharges					
Premises Support	377	314	314	0	0
Transport Support	0	0	0	0	0
Central Support	2,365	1,971	1,971	0	0
Asset Rental Support	0	0	0	0	0
Recharge Income	-6,053	-5,026	-5,026	0	0
Net Total Recharges	-3,311	-2,741	-2,741	0	0
Net Departmental Expenditure	5,030	5,143	4,958	185	95

Legal Services

	Annual Budget	Budget to Date	Actual Spend	Variance (Overspend)	Forecast Outturn
	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
Expenditure					
Employees	1,511	1,321	1,326	(5)	(7)
Agency Related Expenditure	0	0	780	(780)	(871)
Supplies & Services	388	345	306	39	46
Civic Catering & Functions	23	14	4	10	12
Legal Expenses	218	166	365	(199)	(240)
Transport Related Expenditure	11	11	7	4	6
Other Expenditure	0	3	3	0	0
Total Expenditure	2,151	1,860	2,791	(931)	(1,054)
Income					
School SLA's	-98	-95	-77	(18)	(20)
Licence Income	-304	-230	-228	(2)	(2)
Government Grant	-42	-42	-42	0	0
Reimbursement & Other Grants	-164	-164	-164	0	0
Fees & Charges Income	-74	-65	-44	(21)	(25)
Transfer from Reserves	-27	-27	-27	0	0
Total Income	-709	-623	-582	(41)	(47)
Net Operational Expenditure	1,442	1,237	2,209	(972)	(1,101)
Recharges					
Premises Support	53	44	44	0	0
Transport Recharges	0	0	0	0	0
Central Support Recharges	275	229	231	(2)	0
Asset Rental Support Costs	0	0	0	0	0
Support Recharge Income	-2,391	-1,992	-1,992	0	0
Net Total Recharges	-2,063	-1,719	-1,717	(2)	0
Net Departmental Expenditure	-621	-482	492	(974)	(1,101)

ICT & Support Services Department

	Annual Budget	Budget to Date	Actual Spend	Variance (Overspend)	Forecast Outturn
	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
Expenditure					
Employees	5,596	4,660	4,444	216	259
Supplies & Services	921	763	1,112	(349)	(420)
Capital Finance	100	84	43	41	49
Computer Repairs & Software	1,724	1,542	1,834	(292)	(350)
Communication Costs	13	0	123	(123)	(147)
Premises	159	130	108	22	27
Transport	3	2	2	0	0
Total Expenditure	8,516	7,181	7,666	-485	-582
Income					
Fees & Charges	-1,056	-533	-589	56	68
Schools SLA Income	-646	-622	-571	(51)	(62)
Reimbursements & Grant Income	0	3	20	(17)	(20)
Transfer from Reserves	-148	-148	-148	0	0
Total Income	-1,850	-1,300	-1,288	(12)	(14)
Net Operational Expenditure	6,666	5,881	6,378	(497)	(596)
Recharges					
Premises Support	550	458	458	0	0
Transport Support	19	18	18	0	0
Central Support	2,380	1,983	1,983	0	0
Asset Rental Support	1,494	0	0	0	0
Support Costs Income	-8,831	-7,359	-7,362	3	0
Net Total Recharges	-4,388	-4,900	-4,903	3	0
Net Departmental Expenditure	2,278	981	1,475	(494)	(596)

Chief Executives Delivery Unit

	Annual Budget	Budget to Date	Actual Spend	Variance (Overspend)	Forecast Outturn
	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
Expenditure					
Employees	3,304	2,689	2,776	(87)	(103)
Employees Training	99	82	65	17	21
Apprenticeship Levy	300	242	265	(23)	(27)
Supplies & Services	391	366	312	54	65
Total Expenditure	4,094	3,379	3,418	-39	-44
Income					
Fees & Charges	-223	-150	-142	(8)	(8)
Schools SLA Income	-565	-559	-522	(37)	(43)
Transfer from Reserves	0	0	-5	5	5
Total Income	-788	-709	-669	(40)	(46)
Net Operational Expenditure	3,306	2,670	2,749	(79)	(90)
Recharges					
Premises Support	174	145	145	0	0
Transport	0	0	0	0	0
Central Support	1,209	1,008	1,008	0	0
Asset Rental Support	53	0	0	0	0
HBC Support Costs Income	-3,573	-2,978	-2,978	0	0
Net Total Recharges	-2,137	-1,825	-1,825	0	0
Net Departmental Expenditure	1,169	845	924	(79)	(90)

Children & Families

	Annual Budget	Budget to Date	Actual Spend	Variance (Overspend)	Forecast Outturn
	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
Expenditure					
Employees	15,708	12,970	14,646	(1,676)	(1,994)
Other Premises	415	267	277	(10)	(14)
Supplies & Services	1,726	1,966	2,417	(451)	(571)
Transport	360	252	224	28	27
Direct Payments	1,097	822	1,053	(231)	(277)
Commissioned services to Vol Orgs	224	168	168	0	0
Residential Care	18,620	14,049	19,391	(5,342)	(6,410)
Out of Borough Adoption	96	0	0	0	96
Out of Borough Fostering	4,363	3,154	3,930	(776)	(886)
In House Adoption	548	380	272	108	131
Special Guardianship Order	2,510	1,960	1,993	(33)	(39)
In House Foster Carer Placements	2,739	2,150	1,859	291	348
Lavender House Contract Costs	234	176	164	12	15
Home Support & Respite	340	258	270	(12)	(13)
Care Leavers	277	251	378	(127)	(151)
Family Support	53	36	43	(7)	(9)
Contracted services	3	3	3	0	0
Early Years	0	0	0	0	0
Emergency Duty	132	38	72	(34)	(42)
Youth Offending Services	321	129	169	(40)	(47)
Transfer to Reserves	8	0	0	0	0
Total Expenditure	49,774	39,029	47,329	(8,300)	(9,836)
Income					
Fees & Charges	-33	-13	0	(13)	(14)
Sales Income	-4	-3	0	(3)	(4)
Rents	-81	-70	-70	0	0
Reimbursement & other Grant Income	-832	-904	-766	(138)	(167)
Transfer from reserve	-82	-82	-82	0	20
Dedicated Schools Grant	-50	0	0	0	0
Government Grants	-11,559	-11,260	-11,191	(69)	(86)
Total Income	-12,641	-12,332	-12,109	(223)	(251)
Net Operational Expenditure	37,133	26,697	35,220	(8,523)	(10,087)
Recharges					
Premises Support	2,274	1,895	1,895	0	0
Transport	398	332	332	0	0
Central Support Recharges	16	14	14	0	0
Asset Rental Support	0	0	0	0	0
Internal Recharge Income	-955	-796	-796	0	0
Net Total Recharges	1,733	1,445	1,445	0	0
Net Departmental Expenditure	38,866	28,142	36,665	(8,523)	(10,087)

Education, Inclusion & Provision

	Annual Budget	Budget to Date	Actual Spend	Variance (Overspend)	Forecast Outturn
	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
Expenditure					
Employees	7,390	6,158	6,318	(160)	(215)
Agency - covering vacancies	0	0	230	(230)	(290)
Agency - addition to establishment	72	60	14	46	58
Premises	14	12	11	1	3
Supplies & Services	4,597	3,041	3,069	(28)	(33)
Independent School Fees	10,201	8,743	8,743	0	0
Schools Contingency	295	295	295	0	0
Transport	43	33	41	(8)	(10)
Schools Transport	2,341	1,433	2,130	(697)	(837)
Early Years Payments	11,419	9,696	9,696	0	0
Early Years Pupil Premium	132	102	102	0	0
Commissioned Services	1,879	1,431	1,525	(94)	(111)
Inter Authority Special Needs	1,164	973	973	0	0
Grants to Voluntary Organisations	110	25	75	(50)	(60)
Capital Financing	4,661	3,507	3,506	1	1
Total Expenditure	44,318	35,509	36,728	(1,219)	(1,494)
Income					
Fees & Charges Income	-556	-530	-527	(3)	(4)
Government Grant Income	-8,339	-6,838	-6,838	0	0
Dedicated Schools Grant	-25,530	-21,275	-21,275	0	0
Inter Authority Income	-274	-274	-274	0	0
Reimbursements & Other Grant Income	-1,785	-1,343	-1,343	0	0
Schools SLA Income	-436	-374	-396	22	27
Transfers from Reserves	-119	0	-350	350	420
Total Income	-37,039	-30,635	-31,003	368	443
Net Operational Expenditure	7,279	4,874	5,725	(851)	(1,051)
Recharges					
Premises Support	344	287	287	0	0
Transport Support	528	427	582	(155)	(186)
Central Support	1,603	1,336	1,338	(2)	(3)
Asset Rental Support	17	0	0	0	0
Recharge Income	0	0	0	0	0
Net Total Recharges	2,492	2,050	2,207	(157)	(189)
Net Departmental Expenditure	9,771	6,924	7,932	(1,008)	(1,240)

Community & Greenspaces

	Annual Budget £'000	Budget to Date £'000	Actual Spend £'000	Variance (Overspend) £'000	Forecast Outturn £'000
Expenditure					
Employees	17,435	14,211	13,419	792	951
Agency - covering vacancies	0	0	182	(182)	(218)
Agency - in addition to establishment	0	0	200	(200)	(240)
Premises	3,455	2,466	2,532	(66)	(78)
Supplies & Services	2,243	1,622	1,748	(126)	(151)
Hired & Contracted Services	854	854	854	0	0
Book Fund	128	111	111	0	0
Food Provisions	388	334	304	30	36
School Meals Food	1,960	1,087	1,192	(105)	(126)
Transport	117	62	100	(38)	(45)
Other Agency Costs	429	425	425	0	0
Other Expenditure	0	0	67	(67)	(67)
Waste Disposal Contracts	7,002	3,562	3,326	236	284
Grants to Voluntary Organisations	64	50	24	26	30
Grants to Norton Priory	174	174	174	0	0
Total Expenditure	34,249	24,958	24,658	300	376
Income					
Sales Income	-1,373	-1,218	-1,209	(9)	(10)
Fees & Charges Income	-5,490	-4,623	-4,775	152	183
Rental Income	-235	-193	-241	48	57
Markets Income	-910	-738	-716	(22)	(26)
Government Grant Income	-1,628	-1,628	-1,628	0	0
Reimbursements & Other Grant Income	-703	-687	-687	0	0
School SLA Income	-1,313	-563	-563	0	0
School Meals Income	-3,598	-2,127	-2,210	83	100
Internal Fees Income	-322	-214	-293	79	95
Capital Salaries	-173	-129	-58	(71)	(85)
Transfers From Reserves	-15	-15	-15	0	202
Total Income	-15,760	-12,135	-12,395	260	516
Net Operational Expenditure	18,489	12,823	12,263	560	892
Recharges					
Premises Support	1,675	1,396	1,396	0	0
Transport	2,257	1,855	1,916	(61)	(73)
Central Support	3,897	3,247	3,247	0	0
Asset Rental Support	199	0	0	0	0
HBC Support Costs Income	-1,148	-957	-957	0	0
Net Total Recharges	6,880	5,541	5,602	(61)	(73)
Net Departmental Expenditure	25,369	18,364	17,865	499	819

Economy, Enterprise & Property

	Annual Budget	Budget to Date	Actual Spend	Variance (Overspend)	Forecast Outturn
	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
Expenditure					
Employees	5,075	4,438	3,991	447	536
Agency - covering vacancies	0	0	349	(349)	(407)
Repairs & Maintenance	1,706	1,478	1,560	(82)	(98)
Premises	136	120	120	0	0
Energy & Water Costs	1,248	920	830	90	108
NNDR	690	684	659	25	30
Rents	173	133	128	5	6
Economic Regeneration Activities	21	16	16	0	0
Security	544	417	473	(56)	(67)
Supplies & Services	506	305	335	(30)	(36)
Supplies & Services - Grant	2,090	812	812	0	0
Grants to Voluntary Organisations	75	107	107	0	0
Capital Finance	0	0	0	0	0
Transfer to Reserves	185	186	185	1	1
Total Expenditure	12,449	9,616	9,565	51	73
Income					
Fees & Charges Income	-987	-711	-771	60	72
Rent - Commercial Properties	-872	-758	-758	0	0
Rent - Investment Properties	-38	-32	-33	1	1
Government Grant	-2,510	-1,714	-1,714	0	0
Reimbursements & Other Grant Income	-193	-510	-492	(18)	(22)
Schools SLA Income	-227	-223	-210	(13)	(15)
Recharges to Capital	-295	-239	-243	4	5
Transfer from Reserves	-1,120	-1,165	-1,167	2	2
Total Income	-6,242	-5,352	-5,388	36	43
Net Operational Expenditure	6,207	4,264	4,177	87	116
Recharges					
Premises Support	2,074	1,728	1,728	0	0
Transport Support	30	22	22	0	0
Central Support	1,947	1,623	1,623	0	0
Asset Rental Support	4	0	0	0	0
Recharge Income	-7,927	-6,606	-6,606	0	0
Net Total Recharges	-3,872	-3,233	-3,233	0	0
Net Departmental Expenditure	2,335	1,031	944	87	116

Planning & Transportation Department

	Annual Budget £'000	Budget to Date £'000	Actual Spend £'000	Variance (Overspend) £'000	Forecast Outturn £'000
Expenditure					
Employees	5,814	4,831	4,440	391	469
Agency - covering vacancies	110	53	120	(67)	(81)
Agency - in addition to establishment	24	2	75	(73)	(88)
Efficiency Savings	-150	-125	0	(125)	(150)
Premises	193	169	127	42	51
Hired & Contracted Services	59	0	208	(208)	(166)
Planning Appeal Decision	0	0	0	0	(300)
Supplies & Services	144	178	340	(162)	(195)
Street Lighting	1,662	862	884	(22)	(25)
Highways Maintenance - Routine & Reactive	1,772	1,215	1,411	(196)	(235)
Highways Maintenance - Programmed Works	1,908	1,028	738	290	349
Fleet Transport	1,455	1,202	1,184	18	21
Bus Support - Halton Hopper Tickets	23	22	15	7	8
Bus Support	498	746	746	0	0
Agency Related Expenditure	8	8	49	(41)	(41)
Grants to Voluntary Organisations	31	31	31	0	0
NRA Levy	74	74	73	1	2
LCR Levy	1,059	794	794	0	0
Contribution to Reserves	359	359	359	0	0
Total Expenditure	15,043	11,449	11,594	(145)	(381)
Income					
Sales & Rents Income	-97	-80	-148	68	82
Planning Fees	-826	-691	-442	(249)	(299)
Building Control Fees	-245	-204	-190	(14)	(17)
Other Fees & Charges	-908	-760	-1,169	409	491
Grants & Reimbursements	-206	-131	-131	0	0
Government Grant Income	-240	-243	-253	10	0
Halton Hopper Income	-24	-20	-8	(12)	(15)
Recharge to Capital	-562	-91	-91	0	(36)
LCR Levy Reimbursement	-1,059	-1,036	-1,036	0	0
Contribution from Reserves	-1,036	-794	-794	0	0
Total Income	-5,203	-4,050	-4,262	212	206
Net Operational Expenditure	9,840	7,399	7,332	67	(175)
Recharges					
Premises Recharges	560	467	467	0	0
Transport Recharges	749	634	648	(14)	(17)
Central Recharges	1,534	1,278	1,278	0	0
Asset Charges	851	0	0	0	0
HBC Support Costs Income	-5,129	-4,259	-4,699	440	528
Net Total Recharges	-1,435	-1,880	-2,306	426	511
Net Departmental Expenditure	8,405	5,519	5,026	493	336

Corporate & Democracy

	Annual Budget £'000	Budget to Date £'000	Actual Spend £'000	Variance (Overspend) £'000	Forecast Outturn £'000
Expenditure					
Employees	412	343	293	50	17
Contracted Services	39	32	35	(3)	0
Supplies & Services	119	108	110	(2)	(23)
Premises Expenditure	5	5	7	(2)	0
Transport Costs	1	1	8	(7)	(9)
Members Allowances	983	819	823	(4)	0
Interest Payable - Treasury Management	1,341	1,118	1,826	(708)	(849)
Interest Payable - Other	115	96	179	(83)	(100)
Bank Charges	132	99	203	(104)	(100)
Audit Fees	348	261	27	234	0
Contingency	538	538	0	538	667
Capital Financing	2,409	2	2	0	301
Debt Management Expenses	20	17	4	13	0
Precepts & Levies	240	200	175	25	30
Transformation Efficiency Savings	-4,000	-3,333	0	(3,333)	(3,871)
Total Expenditure	2,702	306	3,692	(3,386)	(3,937)
Income					
Interest Receivable - Treasury Management	-4,152	-3,460	-4,358	898	1,078
Interest Receivable - Other	-19	-16	-16	0	0
Other Fees & Charges	-158	-128	-85	(43)	(61)
Grants & Reimbursements	-255	-85	-418	333	333
Government Grant Income	-377	-314	-504	190	315
Total Income	-4,961	-4,003	-5,381	1,378	1,665
Net Operational Expenditure	-2,259	-3,697	-1,689	(2,008)	(2,272)
Recharges					
Premises Support	21	17	17	0	0
Transport	0	0	0	0	0
Central Support	1,016	889	889	0	0
Asset Rental Support	0	0	0	0	0
HBC Support Costs Income	-3,026	-1,866	-1,866	0	0
Net Total Recharges	-1,989	-960	-960	0	0
Net Departmental Expenditure	-4,248	-4,657	-2,649	(2,008)	(2,272)

Public Health

	Annual Budget	Budget to Date	Actual Spend	Variance (Overspend)	Forecast Outturn
	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
Expenditure					
Employees	5,419	3,914	3,913	1	1
Agency - covering vacancies	0	0	0	0	0
Other Premises	6	0	0	0	0
Supplies & Services	388	283	248	35	42
Contracts & SLA's	8,112	6,218	6,188	30	36
Transport	4	3	2	1	1
Transfer to Reserves	19	19	19	0	0
Other Agency	24	24	24	0	0
Total Expenditure	13,970	10,461	10,394	67	80
Income					
Fees & Charges	-88	-116	-116	0	0
Reimbursements & Grant Income	-574	-559	-559	0	0
Transfer from Reserves	-1,714	-1,714	-1,714	0	0
Government Grant Income	-12,193	-11,984	-11,984	0	0
Total Income	-14,569	-14,373	-14,373	0	0
Net Operational Expenditure	-599	-3,912	-3,979	67	80
Recharges					
Premises Support	149	125	125	0	0
Transport Support	22	18	20	(2)	(2)
Central Support	2,387	1,990	1,990	0	0
Asset Rental Support	0	0	0	0	0
Recharge Income	-669	-557	-557	0	0
Net Total Recharges	1,889	1,575	1,577	(2)	(2)
Net Departmental Expenditure	1,291	-2,337	-2,402	65	78

Capital Programme as at 31 January 2025

Appendix 3

Scheme Detail	2024/25 Original Allocation £000	2024/25 Revised Allocation £000	Q1 Spend £000	Q2 Spend £000	Q3 Spend £000	Q4 Spend £000	Total Spend £000	Allocation remaining £000	2025/26 Allocation £000	2026/27 Allocation £000
Childrens Directorate										
Capital Repairs	749.0	749.0	151.0	531.0	50.0	1.0	733.0	16.0	550.0	
Basic Need Projects	600.8	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	600.8	
SEND capital allocation	3,355.2	1,529.2	178.0	519.0	356.0	65.0	1,118.0	411.2	1,781.0	
SCA unallocated	255.6	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	448.0	
Family Hubs & Start for Life	53.2	110.4	1.3	54.1	10.0	27.7	93.1	17.4		
Childcare Expansion	314.8	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	314.8	
Childrens Directorate Total	5,328.6	2,388.6	330.3	1,104.1	416.0	93.7	1,944.1	444.6	3,694.6	0.0
Adults Directorate										
Halton Carers Centre Refurbishment	199.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0		
Grants - Disabled Facilities	600.0	1,050.0	353.0	227.0	157.0	147.0	884.0	166.0	600.0	600.0
Stair Lifts	270.0	250.0	66.0	23.0	62.0	50.0	201.0	49.0	270.0	270.0
Joint Funding RSL Adaptations	270.0	250.0	53.0	24.0	81.0	49.0	207.0	43.0	270.0	270.0
Telehealthcare Digital Switchover	0.0	135.0	60.0	0.0	20.0	-20.0	60.0	75.0		
Oakmeadow & Peelhouse Network Improvements	0.0	40.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	40.0		
Madeline McKenna Refurbishment	0.0	120.0	9.0	73.0	2.0	7.0	91.0	29.0		
Millbrow Refurbishment	0.0	50.0	26.0	8.0	0.0	12.0	46.0	4.0		
St Lukes Care Home	0.0	120.0	10.0	14.0	7.0	74.0	105.0	15.0		
St Patricks Care Home	1,200.0	150.0	14.0	16.0	-1.0	86.0	115.0	35.0		
Adults Directorate Total	2,539.0	2,165.0	591.0	385.0	328.0	405.0	1,709.0	456.0	1,140.0	1,140.0

Capital Programme as at 31 January 2025 continued

Scheme Detail	2024/25 Original Allocation	2024/25 Revised Allocation	Q1 Spend	Q2 Spend	Q3 Spend	Q4 Spend	Total Spend	Allocation remaining	2025/26 Allocation	2026/27 Allocation
	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000
Environment & Regeneration Directorate										
Stadium Minor Works	30.0	30.0	7.9	7.7	0.0	22.2	37.8	-7.8	30.0	30.0
Halton Leisure Centre	8,997.0	8,997.0	2,030.0	3,045.4	3,229.2	469.0	8,773.6	223.4		
Children's Playground Equipment	67.8	67.8	1.0	1.0	40.0	0.0	42.0	25.8	65.0	65.0
Landfill Tax Credit Schemes	340.0	340.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	340.0	340.0	340.0
Upton Improvements	13.0	13.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	13.0		
Crow Wood Park Play Area	12.0	12.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	12.0		
Open Spaces Schemes	600.0	600.0	130.0	154.4	135.0	-11.0	408.4	191.6	600.0	600.0
Runcorn Town Park	468.6	468.6	0.0	6.8	0.0	3.0	9.8	458.8	280.0	280.0
Spike Island / Wigg Island	1,933.5	1,933.5	2.4	4.4	38.0	0.0	44.8	1,888.7		
Pickerings Pasture Cafe	503.0	503.0	9.7	1.2	1.1	0.0	12.0	491.0		
Replacement Cremator Widnes	308.0	308.0	0.0	77.3	7.0	0.0	84.3	223.7		
Litter Bins	20.0	20.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	20.0	20.0	20.0
3MG	134.5	134.5	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	134.5		
Murdishaw redevelopment	21.2	21.2	5.4	0.0	0.0	0.0	5.4	15.8		
Equality Act Improvement Works	293.2	93.2	8.7	17.6	59.6	3.8	89.7	3.5	300.0	300.0
Foundary Lane Residential Area	1,160.0	1,240.0	1.8	464.8	2.3	11.0	479.9	760.1		
Town Deal	11,352.9	11,552.9	174.9	261.8	940.0	588.0	1,964.7	9,588.2	7,190.4	
Property Improvements	360.2	460.5	4.3	131.1	286.6	136.3	558.3	-97.8	200.0	200.0
Runcorn Station Quarter	484.7	76.0	0.0	60.5	15.5	0.0	76.0	0.0		
Waterloo Building	0.0	75.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	1.3	1.3	73.7		
UK Shared Prosperity Fund	178.2	178.2	0.0	0.0	12.2	152.0	164.2	14.0		
Runcorn Waterfront Residential Development	484.7	268.7	8.6	122.9	61.5	0.2	193.2	75.5		
Changing Places	24.1	24.1	2.5	0.1	1.6	0.0	4.2	19.9		
Sci-tech Daresbury Project Violet	2,200.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	2,200.0	
Port of Weston	0.0	20.0	0.0	1.3	1.7	0.0	3.0	17.0	3,940.0	
Kingsway Leisure Centre Demolition	0.0	750.0	0.0	30.7	0.0	0.9	31.6	718.4		







Capital Programme as at 31 January 2025 continued

Scheme Detail	2024/25 Original Allocation £000	2024/25 Revised Allocation £000	Q1 Spend £000	Q2 Spend £000	Q3 Spend £000	Q4 Spend £000	Total Spend £000	Allocation remaining £000	2025/26 Allocation £000	2026/27 Allocation £000
Bridge and Highway Maintenance	0.0	2,265.6	280.8	313.0	20.0	114.0	727.8	1,537.8		
Runcorn Busway	0.0	0.0	227.4	80.0	371.0	237.0	915.4	-915.4		
ATF3 Murdishaw to Whitehouse	0.0	3,000.0	175.3	363.0	497.0	194.0	1,229.3	1,770.7		
ATF4 Widnes Town Centre Accessibility	0.0	114.5	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	114.5		
A56 Reconstruction (Delph Lane)	0.0	943.7	351.1	0.0	10.0	2.0	363.1	580.6		
Dukesfield ATL (Waterloo Bridge)	0.0	0.0	1.1	0.0	0.0	0.0	1.1	-1.1		
LCWIP Phase 2 Daresbury	0.0	3,861.7	629.3	56.0	15.0	1.0	701.3	3,160.4		
Additional Pothole Funding	0.0	429.1	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	429.1		
CRSTS	5,819.4	5,288.6	1,656.0	884.0	2,184.0	305.0	5,029.0	259.6		
Street Lighting - Structural Maintenance	1,025.6	250.0	0.0	37.0	94.0	21.0	152.0	98.0	975.6	200.0
Street Lighting - Upgrades	969.4	100.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	100.0	869.4	
East Runcorn Connectivity	5,851.7	5,851.7	452.5	207.0	810.0	1,670.0	3,139.5	2,712.1	5,851.7	5,851.7
Risk Management	597.8	50.0	4.9	0.0	0.0	0.0	4.9	45.1	667.8	120.0
Fleet Replacements	4,927.4	2,500.0	1,081.8	455.0	256.0	76.0	1,868.8	631.2	3,850.7	
Environment & Regeneration Directorate Total	49,390.3	53,054.5	7,247.4	6,800.4	9,187.5	4,085.1	27,320.4	25,734.1	27,380.6	8,006.7
Chief Executives Directorate										
IT Rolling Programme	1,026.9	1,026.9	27.7	668.2	20.0	24.0	739.9	287.0	700.0	700.0
Halton Smart Microgrid	11,000.0	1,000.0	0.0	0.0	128.0	0.0	128.0	872.0	10,000.0	
Transformation Programme	3,740.0	3,740.0	435.0	624.0	712.0	201.0	1,972.0	1,768.0	1,000.0	
Chief Executives Directorate Total	15,766.9	5,766.9	462.7	1,292.2	860.0	225.0	2,839.9	2,927.0	11,700.0	700.0
Grand Total	73,024.8	63,375.0	8,631.4	9,581.7	10,791.5	4,808.8	33,813.4	29,561.6	43,915.2	9,846.7



Progress Against Agreed Savings

Appendix 4

Adult Social Care




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

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


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

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

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




Legal and Democratic Services

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



Children and Families

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

Education, Inclusion and Provision

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


Community and Greenspace




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

Economy, Enterprise and Property

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

Policy, Planning and Transportation

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

<u>Symbol</u>	<u>Objective</u>
	Indicates that the <u>objective is on course to be achieved</u> within the appropriate timeframe.
	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.
	Indicates that it is <u>highly likely or certain</u> that the objective will not be achieved within the appropriate timeframe.

2024/25 Budget Risk Register as at 31 January 2025

Appendix 5

Risk No	Risk Identified	Impact	Likelihood	Risk Score	Risk Control Measures	Assessment of Residual Risk with Control Measures Implemented			Responsible Person	Timescale for Review	Progress Comments	Date Updated
						Impact	Likelihood	Risk Score				
1	Pay costs <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pay award Staff Turnover Saving Target Agency, casuals and overtime National Living Wage Pension Costs 	4	4	16	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Budget based upon individual staff members/vacancies Budget monitoring Contingency Balances Medium Term Forecast Engage with Cheshire Pension Scheme and pension actuary Recruitment and retention scheme children social care workers. Social Care Academy for children social care workers Connect to Halton 	3	3	9	ED/SB/Executive Directors	Monthly	2024/25 pay offer accepted and implemented November 2024. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> £1290 on all pay points from 1st April Equivalent to 5.77% on point 2 and 2.5% on point 43 2.5% on all pay points above 43 and below chief officer level Estimated 4% 2024.25 budget uplift will cover cost of pay award. Connect to Halton scheme went live September 2024, agency and casual appointments to be covered by the scheme.	31/01/25

2	Redundancy and Early Retirements	3	3	9	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Benefits Tracking Process • Future savings to take into account cost of redundancy and early retirements. • Seek Government approval to use capital receipts to fund transformation costs. • Transformation Reserve 	2	3	6	ED/SB	Quarterly	Tracker created to monitor redundancy costs in current year. Transformation reserve created to cover costs but limited reserves will impact use of this. Look to capitalise compulsory costs where possible where evidence exists it creates in a longer term saving.	31/01/25
3	Savings not achieved	4	3	12	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Budget monitoring • Contingency • Reserves / Provisions • Rigorous process in approving savings. • Review of savings at departmental and directorate level • Monthly budget monitoring • Medium Term Financial 	4	2	8	RR/ED/SB	Monthly	Savings for 2024/25 have been written into Directorate budgets. Budget savings monitored closely and if necessary offsetting savings sought. Transformation Programme Board meeting on monthly basis to discuss progress against programme.	31/01/25

					Forecast <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 2023/24 to 2025/26 savings agreed February 2023. RAG monitoring of savings included in quarterly monitoring reports. Transformation saving targets reported monthly through Transformation Programme Board. 							
4	Price inflation	3	3	9	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Prudent budget provision Latest forecast information used eg. utilities Budget monitoring Contingency Balances CPI/RPI monitoring 	3	3	9	ED/SB	Monthly	CPI for January 2025 is 3.0% and RPI is 3.6%. Office of Budget Responsibility (OBR) forecast inflation to be 2.6% in 2025 and 2.1% through to 2027. Rates are higher than forecast in September 2024 and remain above	31/01/25

					<ul style="list-style-type: none"> MTFS 						Governments 2% target.	
5	Review of LG Finance <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Business rates retention – 100% Pilot and Review Fair Funding Review National Public Spending Plans Social Care Green Paper 	4	4	16	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> MPs SIGOMA / LG Futures Liverpool City Region & Merseyside Treasurers Group Medium Term Financial Strategy Member of business rate retention pilot region Dialogue with DCLG 	3	3	9	ED/SB/NS/MW/MG	Weekly/ Monthly	Business rate retention pilot continues through to March 2026. Government are committed to providing more certainty on LG Finances through multi year settlements. Final settlement announced 03 February 2025, funding is higher than within financial forecast.	31/01/25
6	Treasury Management <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Borrowing Investment 	2	3	6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Treasury Management Strategy Link Asset Services advice Treasury Management planning and monitoring 	1	3	3	ED/SB/MG	Daily / Quarterly	Investment rates continue to be high relative to last decade. BoE base rate reduced to 4.5%, Impact of Exceptional Financial Support request to be	31/01/25

					<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Attendance at Networking and Benchmarking Groups Officer Training 						assessed with regards to timing of future borrowing.	
7	Demand led budgets <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Children in Care Out of borough fostering Community Care 	4	4	16	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Budget monitoring Contingency Balances Review service demand Directorate recovery groups Monthly budget monitoring 	4	4	16	ED/SB/NS/MW	Monthly	<p>Children in care, numbers and costs continue to exceed budget. Numbers of children in care and with protection plans reviewed on a weekly basis. Community care costs and numbers on increase, reviewed on a regular basis.</p> <p>Investment in Children Services following OFSTED inspection to be monitored with regard to control and reduction of future costs.</p>	31/01/25

8	Mersey Gateway Costs <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Costs Toll Income Funding Accounting treatment 	4	2	8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Regular monitoring with Crossing Board Capital reserve Government Grant Liquidity Fund 	2	1	2	ED/SB/MG	Quarterly	Arrangements in place to monitor spend and availability of liquidity fund.	31/01/25
9	Council Tax Collection	3	3	9	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Council tax monitoring on monthly basis Review of Collection Rate Collection Fund Balance Provision for bad debts Review recovery procedures Benchmarking 	3	2	6	ED/PG/SB/PD/BH/MG	Monthly	Collection rate to 31 January 2025 was 89.01% which is marginally lower than the rate of 89.09% at the same point last year. To 31 January 2025 £2.205m was collected in relation to old year debt.	31/01/25
10	Business Rates Retention Scheme	3	3	9	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review and monitoring of latest business rates income to baseline and estimate for year. Prudent allowance for 	3	1	3	ED/SB/LB/MG	Monthly	Collection rate to 31 January 2025 was 92.7% which is 3.21% higher than the rate at the same point last year. To 31 January 2025	31/01/25

					losses in collection <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prudent provision set aside for losses from valuation appeals • Regular monitoring of annual yield and baseline / budget position • Benchmarking Groups • Review recovery procedures 						£2.057m was collected in relation to old year debt.	
11	Income recovery <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Uncertainty to economy following Brexit, cost of living and high inflation 	3	3	9	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Corporate charging policy • Budget monitoring • Contingency • Balances • Income benchmarking 	3	2	6	ED/MM/SB	Monthly	Income shortfalls identified and cause of increased concern in certain areas are being closely monitored. Cost of living crisis adds to uncertainty over collection.	31/01/25
13	Capital Programme <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Costs • Funding • Key Major Projects 	4	3	12	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Project Management • Regular monitoring • Detailed financial analysis of new schemes to ensure they 	3	2	6	Project Managers/ED /SB/LH	Quarterly	Capital receipts have been fully committed therefore new capital schemes need to bring own funding.	31/01/25

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clawback of Grant • Availability and timing of capital receipts • Cashflow • Contractors 				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • are affordable • Targets monitored to minimise clawback of grant. • Contractor due diligence • Dialogue with Government departments. 							
14	Academy Schools <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Impact of transfer upon Council budget • Loss of income to Council Services 	2	4	8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Early identification of school decisions • DfE Regulations • Prudent consideration of financial transactions to facilitate transfer • Services continue to be offered to academies • Transfer Protocol 	1	3	3	ED/SB/NS	Monthly	Consideration given in MTFS for loss of funding.	31/01/25
15	Reserves <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Diminishing reserves, used to balance budget, fund overspend positions. 	3	4	12	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monitored on a quarterly basis, reported to Management Team and Exec Board • Benchmarking 	3	3	9	ED/SB	Quarterly	Monitored and reported on a regular basis. Council reserves at historic low levels. Reserves will need to be replenished within future	31/01/25

					<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Financial Forecast Programme to replenish reserves. 						budgets	
16	Budget Balancing <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Council has struggled to achieve a balanced budget position for a number of years. Forecast for current year is an overspend position of £19m. Reserves insufficient to balance current year budget. Before transformation targets, there is a forecast budget gap of £68.5m through to 2028/29. 	4	4	16	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Current year budgets monitored on a regular basis. Forward forecasting through to March 2029 reported on a prudent basis. Regular conversations with DHLUC re Council's financial position. LGA to undertake a financial assurance review. Transformation programme in place. 	4	4	16	ED/SB	Ongoing	Updated benchmarking to be reported to better inform Transformation Programme targets.	31/01/25

