



**Children Young People and Families  
Policy and Performance Board**

**Monday, 8 September 2025 at 6.30 p.m.  
Civic Suite, Town Hall, Runcorn**

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'P. Alcock'.

**Interim 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 Isabelle Moorhouse on 01515113979 or  
[isabelle.moorhouse@halton.gov.uk](mailto:isabelle.moorhouse@halton.gov.uk) for further information.*

*The next meeting of the Board is on Monday, 10 November 2025*

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

**Part I**

<b>Item No.</b>	<b>Page No.</b>
<b>1. MINUTES</b>	<b>1 - 7</b>
<b>2. DECLARATION OF INTEREST (INCLUDING PARTY WHIP DECLARATIONS)</b>	
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.	
<b>3. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME</b>	<b>8 - 10</b>
<b>4. EXECUTIVE BOARD MINUTES</b>	<b>11 - 13</b>
<b>5. PERFORMANCE MONITORING</b>	
(A) <b>CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE (CYP) Q1 2025-26 MONITORING REPORT</b>	<b>14 - 73</b>
<b>6. DEVELOPMENT OF POLICY ISSUES</b>	
(A) <b>ANNUAL REPORT OF THE LOCAL AUTHORITY DESIGNATED OFFICER (LADO)</b>	<b>74 - 94</b>
(B) <b>QUARTERLY QUALITY ASSURANCE REPORT</b>	<b>95 - 113</b>
(C) <b>HALTON LOCAL AREA SEND PARTNERSHIP IMPROVEMENT PROGRAMME</b>	<b>114 - 117</b>
(D) <b>CARE EXPERIENCED AS A 'PROTECTED CHARACTERISTIC'</b>	<b>118 - 124</b>
<b>7. COUNCILWIDE SPENDING AS AT 31 MAY 2025</b>	<b>125 - 187</b>

*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, 9 June 2025 in the Civic Suite, Town Hall, Runcorn*

Present: Councillors Logan (Chair), Goodall (Vice-Chair), Baker, Dourley, Fry, Jones, P. Lloyd Jones, Ratcliffe, Ryan and Skinner

Apologies for Absence: None

Absence declared on Council business: None

Officers present: Z. Fearon, B. Holmes, P. Woods, K. Morrow, C. Johnson, S. Campbell and K. Appleton

Also in attendance: S. Smith – Co-Optee

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

		<i>Action</i>
CYP1	MINUTES	
	The Minutes of the meeting held on 20 January 2025, were taken as read and signed as a correct record.	
CYP2	PUBLIC QUESTION TIME	
	It was confirmed that no public questions had been received.	
CYP3	EXECUTIVE BOARD MINUTES	
	The minutes relating to the Children, Young People and Families Portfolio, taken from the Executive Board meetings held since the last meeting of this Board, were attached at Appendix one for information.	
CYP4	PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT REPORT FOR QUARTER 3 & 4 2024/25	
	The Board received the performance management reports for quarters 3 and 4 of 2024-25.	

The key priorities for development or improvement in 2024-25 were agreed by Members and included in the Local Authority's Business Plan for the following Departments:

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

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

Arising from the discussion:

- The number of permanent exclusions at each school in the Borough was requested. It was agreed that if the information was available it would be shared with Members;
- The Board queried if Children In Need were being home educated and how this would be monitored?

RESOLVED: That the quarter 3 and 4 2024-25 performance management reports be received.

### CYP5 AGENCY STAFFING AND COURT COSTS

The Board considered a report of the Executive Director - Children's Services that provided an update on the progress made in the reduction of agency staff and court costs within the Service. It was noted that:

- improvements in the quality of assessments, plans and planning was supporting a reduction in the number of applications being made to the courts;
- progress was being made in concluding the number of children already in court with a reduction from 130 in February 2024 to 70 in March 2025;
- Public Law Online (PLO) had been improved and more families were considered through the PLO process prior to application being made to court;
- the number of children in care had reduced; and
- agency staff numbers had also continued to reduce from 63% to 36% and the number of applicants had increased. Agency rates continued on a downward trajectory.



The Board discussed the 'Thrive' approach, the numbers of agency staff currently employed and the area of Children Services they were based.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

CYP6 CHILDREN, YOUNG PEOPLE AND FAMILIES POLICY AND PERFORMANCE BOARD ANNUAL REPORT 2024-25

The Chair presented the Children, Young People and Families Policy and Performance Board's Annual Report for 2024-25. The Board met four times during the year and the report set out the work carried out during the Municipal Year April 2024 to March 2025.

RESOLVED: That the 2024-25 Annual Report be received and noted.

CYP7 DFE COMMISSIONER RECOMMENDATIONS PROGRESS REPORT

The Board considered a report of the Executive Director - Children's Services, that provided an update on the progress against the Department for Education (DfE) Commissioner recommendations. The DfE Commissioner report was published in February 2025, and it was recommended that the Improvement Advisor would remain in place until the next full inspection of Children's Services was concluded and that regular progress reviews would be undertaken. The report included 24 recommendations in relation to the Council, the Halton Safeguarding Children's Partnership and the Improving Services for Children Board.

It was noted that in March 2025, the first quarterly progress review was undertaken, and the Board received a presentation that outlined the progress against each of the recommendations in the Commissioner report. The Board was advised that 21% of the recommendations had been completed and a further 71% of the recommendations were in progress and on track to be achieved in timescale. The two remaining actions were in progress but with some delays.

RESOLVED: That the information provided be noted.

CYP8 EARLY YEARS SUFFICIENCY DUTY REPORT 2025

The Board considered a report of the Executive Director – Children's Services, which provided a summary of the revised Sufficiency Duty Report (SDR) – this document

was appended to the report *Childcare Sufficiency Duty Report 2025 Review*.

It was reported that the SDR detailed information on Halton's childcare sector and outlined the current and projected supply and estimated demand for childcare places over the next 12 months. It also highlighted any gaps in provision and how these were being addressed.

The report also gave information on the expansion of the early years entitlements, launched in April 2024, together with estimates on how the demand for new places would impact upon the childcare market in Halton. Information was also shared on other factors affecting childcare both locally and nationally, the expansion of funded childcare for working parents of children aged 9 months to 2 years, the expansion of wraparound care, and the difficulties with the recruitment and retention of early years staff. The report detailed the sufficiency of childcare across sectors and strategies to address future challenges.

The Board discussed childminders operating from home and the possible impact on the wider community where they live. The Board was advised that Ofsted was the regulator for childminders, and there was a set number of children childminders were allowed to provide care for. If there were any concerns they could be shared with the early years team who would contact Ofsted.

The Chair agreed to write to the Chair of Development Management Committee to inform her on the planning concerns raised by Members regarding childminders operating from home.

RESOLVED: That the revised Sufficiency Duty Report be noted.

#### CYP9 HOME TO SCHOOL TRANSPORT FOR PUPILS WITH SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS & DISABILITIES

The Board considered a report of the Executive Director – Children's Services, that provided an update on the Home to School Transport consultation. Local Authorities were required to publish a Home to School Transport policy each year when parents are deciding which schools to apply for during the normal admissions round.

Following agreement by Executive Board at its meeting on 25 February 2025, 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 2 April 2025 and closed on 6 May 2025. Two separate consultations were launched, one for parent carer and young people, and one for stakeholders and residents of Halton. The consultation comprised two parts and details of each was set out in the report:

- Part A: Flexible travel arrangements and increasing independence; and
- Part B: Reviewing discretionary transport.

The next step was for responses to 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 would be shared with Children's Leadership Team, Council Management Team and Executive Board.

A Teams meeting would be arranged for the Board to be presented with the findings of the consultation.

RESOLVED: That

- 1) the contents of the report be noted;
- 2) the Board confirm they support the overall process; and
- 3) a Teams meeting would be arranged for the Board to be presented with the consultation findings.

Executive Director  
– Children's  
Services

*N.B. Councillor Baker declared an Other Disclosable Interest in the following item of business as she has a family member employed at Inglefield.*

#### CYP10 INGLEFIELD OFSTED REPORT

The Board received a report which provided an updated position around the Residential and Supported Accommodation Sufficiency programme of work which incorporates A7 within the Improvement Plan and a presentation from Mr Woods and Ms Morrow from the Disabled Children Short Breaks Team. The presentation provided information on the short breaks for children with complex disabilities at Inglefield, Runcorn. The presentation outlined the:

- number of referrals from Halton children;
- number of nights children had stayed at Inglefield;

- successful recruitment of the Inglefield team;
- recent Ofsted inspection of Inglefield which achieved an outcome of 'Good'; and
- steps being explored to provide improvements at the Centre such as communication passports and inclusive AAC devices to provide an individualist approach.

Members welcomed the presentation and were invited to contact Inglefield to book an appointment to view the service.

RESOLVED: That the presentation be noted.

#### CYP11 RESIDENTIAL AND SUPPORTED ACCOMMODATION SUFFICIENCY UPDATE

The Board considered a report which provided an updated position around the Residential and Supported Accommodation Sufficiency programme of work which also incorporated information within the Improvement Plan. Within the wider Children's Sufficiency Improvement Journey the following key elements were noted:

- a full restructure of the Commissioning Team had been completed;
- a refreshed Contracts Register was in place and was supported by a dedicated commissioning workplan, which was shared with Procurement colleagues;
- the Placement Team had received additional officers within the establishment and roles had been clarified within new and updated job profiles;
- Commissioning receive a weekly overview of planning applications in the borough and consult on those involving children's settings;
- the Supported Accommodation Block contract had been renewed for 12 months;
- Service Level Agreement with Juno had been approved within the wider Sufficiency Strategy for four children's homes;
- the Children and Young Peoples Quality Performance and Monitoring Framework had been completed;
- the Council was now part of the North West regional QA group and were taking a regional stance on uplifts;
- a high cost placement tracker had been implemented in April 2024 and as a result there had been an annual cost avoidance of just over £1,000, 000.

RESOLVED: That the report and presentation be

noted.

## CYP12 COUNCILWIDE SPENDING AS AT 31 JANUARY 2025

The Board received a report from the Director of Finance, which gave the Council's overall revenue and capital spending position as at 31 January 2025, together with the latest 2024-25 outturn forecast.

On 13 March 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.

The Board discussed the closure of Windmill Hill Children's Centre which was included in the report and expressed concern that it should be kept open. Officers advised that there were no current plans to close this Centre or Inglefield whilst there was a need for these services.

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

*Meeting ended at 9.10 p.m.*

**REPORT TO:** Children, Young People & Families PPB

**DATE:** 8 September 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:** 8 September 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 relevant 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 12 JUNE 2025**

<b>EXB8</b>	<b>NEW CO-OPTED MEMBER OF THE CHILDREN, YOUNG PEOPLE &amp; FAMILIES POLICY &amp; PERFORMANCE BOARD</b>
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The Board considered a report of the Executive Director - Children's Services, to Co-Opt a new independent member of the Children, Young People and Families Policy and Performance Board to provide assurance and challenge.

RESOLVED: That Council be recommended that Stuart Smith OBE, be Co-Opted to the Children, Young People and Families Policy and Performance Board for a period of 12 months, to be reviewed at the end of that period.

<b>EXB10</b>	<b>PART 2 ITEM: FUNDING FOR EXTENSION</b>
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The Board considered a report of the Executive Director - Children's Services, that outlined details of a loan to carers to build an extension on their property to accommodate four children in their care.

RESOLVED: That

- 1) the loan be agreed, subject to the legal and financial arrangements being finalised in detail and due diligence being undertaken; and
- 2) the Executive Director - Children's Services be asked to finalise the details of the arrangement in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Children, Young People and Families. Executive Director of Children's Services.

<b>REPORT TO:</b>	Children, Young People and Families Policy and Performance Board
<b>DATE:</b>	8 <sup>th</sup> September 2025
<b>REPORTING OFFICER:</b>	Executive Director of Children's Services
<b>PORTFOLIO:</b>	Children, Young People and Families
<b>SUBJECT:</b>	Children and Young People (CYP) Q1 2025-26 Monitoring Report
<b>WARD(S)</b>	Borough wide

### **1.0 PURPOSE OF REPORT**

- 1.1 To provide a summary and overview of the progress against Halton Children's Services and to raise any questions or points of clarification, in respect of performance management for Quarter 1 – 1<sup>st</sup> April to 30<sup>th</sup> June 2025 and Quarter 4 - 1<sup>st</sup> January 2025 – 31<sup>st</sup> 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
- 1.3 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.

3.2 Key Achievements

- Family Hub engagement remains strong, supporting early intervention.
- Permanent exclusions reduced by 18% year-on-year.
- EHCP annual reviews improved to 58.7%, above national average.
- £1.2M+ cost avoidance achieved in high-cost residential placements.
- 99% of Early Years settings rated Good or Outstanding.

3.3 Areas Requiring Continued Focus

- Children in Care (CIC) numbers increased slightly; discharge planning underway.
- Out-of-borough placements remain high (87.5% of residential placements).
- Elective Home Education (EHE) numbers rising, often linked to mental health.
- SEND placement costs and independent provision continue to exceed budget.
- Audit results show variability in practice quality across teams.

3.4 Strategic Priorities in Action

- Expansion of Family Hub data sharing to improve early access.
- Multi-agency training for MAPs and Thrive practitioners.
- SEND commissioning reviews and ICT integration underway.
- Social Work Academy trained 189 staff in Q1.
- Care Leaver hubs and forums growing in engagement.

**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 1 – 1<sup>st</sup> April 2025 – 30<sup>th</sup> June 2025

### 1.0 Introduction

This quarterly monitoring report covers the **Children's Services Directorate's** first quarter period up to 30 June 2025. It describes commentary and progress against 'key' milestones for the service in line with the Halton children and young people's plan.

### 2.0 Data Quality Statement

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

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

### 3.0 Appendices

Appendix 1: Progress Against Objectives / Milestones

Appendix 2: Explanation of Symbols

Appendix 3: Progress Against Performance Indicators


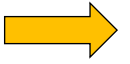
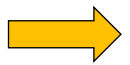
Appendix 4: Financial Statement


#### Appendix 1: Progress Against Objectives / Milestones










<b>Corporate Priority</b>	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
<b>CYP P1</b>	<b>Safely reduce the number of children needing to be looked after by the Local Authority and improve safeguarding.</b>


<b>Milestone</b>		<b>Progress Q1</b>	<b>Supporting Commentary</b>
P1.1	Increase in the number of families accessing support through the Family Hub on a quarterly basis (Source – Early Help)		Attendances 11895 and 3202 individuals. Attendance remains stable - this indicates that new people with infants are attending the hub, as older children move into nursery, creating a continuous cycle of usage. (Hub data Team) Data sharing agreements are in place with Warrington and recently Whiston maternity services for live birth data allowing for all new births to be registered, this will help us to further increase access to services and ensure that babies and young children along with their families are able to access their universal entitlements at the earliest age
P1.2	Increase the number of successful Public Law Outline/Pre-proceedings outcomes i.e. prevent Children entering care (Source – AlletChildren in Need)		During the period of Quarter 1 there were 53 children subject to Pre-Proceedings in total. Of those 31 children whose Pre-Proceedings ended, 64.52% (20) concluded with an outcome to issue for care proceedings whilst 35.48% (11) stepped down to continue support through CP planning. This indicated that during this period the ratio of children entering into care proceedings following a period of Pre-Proceedings was higher than the previous quarter – however this still equates to a significant number being diverted from court. At the end of the period (June) there remained 22 children with ongoing Pre-Proceedings.
P1.3	Decrease the number of Children in Care (CIC) on a quarterly basis (Source – Children in Care)		377 children in care at end of Q1 compared with 368 at end of Q4 shows an increase 2%. Monthly fluctuations are common with this data. Performance over the last six months shows that there has been a decrease in the rate of entrants per 10,000, however there was also a decrease in the rate of children in care ceasing which has led to an overall increase in the number of children in care. Fluctuations between the number of children entering and exiting care will occur during the year.




			During Q2 we will be progressing several cases to SGO. CIC service has discharged x2 children from care in July. A further x4 children have initial court hearings for discharge in August which will contribute to decreasing the number of children in care. This work will continue throughout the year with 15 discharges anticipated.
P1.4	Increase the number of partner led Multi Agency Plans (MAPS) (Source – Early Help)		41 - We relaunched the external MAP in April and since then we have completed four training sessions and we have trained 57 external staff. The feedback around the new map process is that partners feel more confident and now able to complete MAP meetings. We have held two MAP Working Group meetings. The aim of the meeting is to explore the key issues around MAP from a multi-agency perspective, explore some of the potential barriers that may prevent external users from completing assessments and problem solve. We have been working on developing our multi-agency membership. A key focus is to explore when a MAP is advised from ICART to an external setting, how we track these cases to ensure the MAPS are being implemented and ensuring that families are not being left without support.


<b>Corporate Priority</b>	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
<b>CYP P2</b>	<b>Improve the stability of care placements.</b>

Milestone		Progress Q1	Supporting Commentary
P2.1	Reduce the number of Children in Care (CIC) who moved between placements (Source – Children in Care)		There was a slight reduction in the number of placement moves (61 during Q1, 63 during Q4). Of the children in care at the end of June (377), 43 have experienced 3 or more placement moves in the past 12 months (11.4%) which is a slight increase from Q4. ere were 64 placement moves during Q1 2025/26 compared with 63 during Q4 2024/25 (previous quarter) Slightly higher but similar. (performance Team). During this quarter we


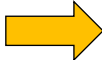
			have had some children move due to planned placement moves including moves to semi-independent accommodation.
P2.2	Reduce the number of Children in Care who are/were placed in out of Borough in residential care (Source – Children in Care)		At the end of June 56 children are placed in Children's Homes, and of these, seven are within Halton (87.5% placed out of borough). Work is progressing in relation to the future provision set out in our Sufficiency Strategy which will support improvement in this measure to bring some of our children into Halton in our own provision.
P2.3	Reduce the costs of out of borough residential placement placements (Source – Children in Care Placements)		Tracking and monitoring of High-Cost Residential Placements (above £7000 per week) has been in operation since January 2025, to assess progress of the young person and whether the providers are meeting the needs of children. Meetings take place monthly. There has been an annual cost avoidance of just over £1,000,000 due to activity within this group since inception. This has now been replicated across High-Cost Supported Accommodation Placements, generating an annual cost avoidance of £200,000 in May 2025 and June 2025 alone. These processes will be replicated and implemented again to consider Medium-High-Cost Residential Placements after Summer. We are exploring a subregional arrangement with our neighbours, St Helens and Knowsley, to investigate further opportunities around streamlining cost avoidance and quality assurance. (from Lee to Julie) Residential placements costs forecast for end of year is £28,044,321.73 at end of June 2025, which is reduced from the forecast at the end of April (£28,400,096) but remains above budget of £27,517,210.
P2.4	Reduce the number of Children in Care (CIC) who are placed in independent fostering agencies (Source – Placements)		122 children placed in foster placements with providers other than our fostering service. This is an increase from the position at the end of March (100 children). We continue to work with Foster 4 to increase our inhouse capacity and during Q1 the hub received nine enquiries.
P2.5	Reduce the costs of out of borough independent foster placements (Source – Placements)		IFA costs forecast for end of year is £6,640,275 which has increased from the forecast in April (£5,056,476) and is above the budget of £5,469,050. Resource Panel has scrutiny of externally commissioned placements and will closely monitor additional placement costs which may be agreed for individual children outside of the framework agreed rates.

P2.6	Increase the number of Halton Foster Carers and kinship carers (Source – children in Care)		At the end of June 55 of our children in care are placed with relatives or friends in kinship arrangements, and 68 children are placed with Halton foster carers. This is a very similar position to the end of March 2025 (54 kinship placements, 70 with Halton foster carers).
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Corporate Priority		Priority 1 – Improving Health, Promoting Wellbeing and Supporting Greater Independence. Priority 3 – Supporting Children, Young People and Families Priority 4 – Tackling inequality and helping those who are in most need	
CYP P3		Improve SEND provision	
Milestone		Progress Q1	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 77.9% at end of Q1 2025/26 SEN2 period which covers January to December, not academic year, a drop in performance when compared to Q4 2024/25 position of 91.3%. As highlighted in the last quarter's report, performance tends to drop off by the end of the collection period (Dec), so Q4 is likely to be the most positive data. However, the current position is better than Q1 2024/25 position of 63.1% and better than both Halton's formal rate in January 2025 of 58.2% and national average of 46.4%. Several reasons for the drop, including staff long absence, delay in securing appropriate placements, schools declining to accept children due to inability to meet needs, among others.
P3.2	Increase the % of Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCP) Annual reviews that are carried out within 12 months. (Source – SEND)		Rate at 58.7% by end of Q1 2025/26, a marked improvement on Q4 2024/25 position of 52.9% end. This is in line with Halton's formal rate in January 2025 of 58.4% and better than national of 53.5%. Agency staff employed recently to support the SEN team appear to be making an impact as the performance is now heading 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 – Commissioning)		Q1 2025/26, a total of 139 children and young people (CYP) were placed in 38 Independent Non-Maintained Special Schools (INMSS), up from 136 at the end of Q4 2024/25. Of these: 37 CYP attend three INMSS within the Borough, and 102 CYP are placed in out-of-Borough INMSS. Children

P3.4	Decrease the spending on independent and out of borough (OOB) provision for Special Educational Needs and Disability Children (SEND) (Source – SEND)		<p>placed in INMSS represent 7.8% of the total CYP with Education, Health, and Care Plans (EHCPs) — consistent with the Q4 2024/25 proportion. While the percentage has remained stable, the actual number of placements continues to rise. This apparent stability is likely due to</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• An increase in the overall number of EHCPs maintained by the Local Authorities.</li> <li>• A shortage of suitable placements for CYP awaiting INMSS provision as there were 22 CYPs waiting for INMSS place at the end of Q1 2025/26 up from 19 in Q4 2024/25.</li> </ul> <p>There is a short-term plan agreed to support the EHCP review of all OOB placements for children who have an EHC Plan. This will involve a designated post aimed at the review of all Out of Borough INMSS Placements. This will incorporate a cascading focus on priority criteria through the cohorts and focus sequentially on EOTAS, placements where risk is identified (non-attendance, low attendance and high cost placements), those who are approaching transition stages (either Primary to Secondary or Secondary to Post 16), and the remainder. This could then present some options for children whose parents are in agreement for a potential transition during the annual EHCP Review process.</p>
P3.5	Speech and Language Therapy (SaLT) – Increase the number of assessments done within four weeks of referral receipt (unless assessment to be undertaken within setting/school) (Source – Placements and Commissioning)		<p>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. The contract with the current provider is ending in October 2025 and we will be moving to a new model, therefore the current provider is working on a waiting list initiative to aid with the transition. The 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. These providers have been allocated over 500 young people, which is 36% of children on EHCP for speech and language. They are undertaking assessments and carrying out direct work were appropriate.</p>
P3.6	Speech and Language Therapy (SaLT) – Increase the number where treatment commenced within 12 weeks of referral receipt (Source – Placements and Commissioning)		


<b>Corporate Priority</b>	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
<b>CYP P4</b>	<b>Increase number of children attending schools graded good or outstanding and improve attainment outcomes at all Key Stages.</b>

<b>Milestone</b>		<b>Progress Q1</b>	<b>Supporting Commentary</b>
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% good or outstanding and 99% (an increase of 1% from the same time last year) of all Early Years settings (pre-schools, day care, out of school clubs, childminders) were good, outstanding or met. Currently one childminder has a requires improvement judgement.
P4.2	Increase the % of schools and settings with overall effectiveness of Good or Outstanding: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Primary Schools</li> <li>Secondary</li> </ul> (Source – Education)		All community and voluntary controlled primary schools remain good or outstanding. However, three schools are ungraded due to academy conversion. 88% (7/8) secondary schools remain good or outstanding with one school, Ormiston Bolingbroke Academy judged to be requires improvement, from their inspection May 2023. All special schools remain good or outstanding.




<b>Corporate Priority</b>	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
<b>CYP P5</b>	<b>Improve pastoral and behaviour support and reduce the need for children to be excluded.</b>

Milestone		Progress Q1	Supporting Commentary																														
P5.1	Reduce the number of incidents of School Suspensions (academic year cumulative to end of quarter) (Source – Education Welfare)		Number of incidents of school suspensions cumulative from September 2024 to end of June 2025 is 1494. Of the 1494 suspensions 533 (36%) of those were for children on SEN support and 186 (12%) for children with an EHCP. There has been a marginal increase from the figure at this point in 23/24 which was 1489.																														
P5.2	Reduce the number of children subject to School suspensions (academic year cumulative to end of quarter) (Source – Education Welfare)		<p>The number of children subject to a school suspension from Sept 2024 –June 2025 is 690 this is an increase from the figure of 635 in 2023/24. same period</p> <p>There has been a reduction from Q4 2024/25 when 336 children were subject to a school suspension compared to 236 children in Q1 2025/26.</p> <p>To support schools, children at risk of PEX can be referred to Team Around the school (TAS), a multi-agency group who offer further advice and support.</p>																														
P5.3	Reduce the number of permanent exclusions (academic year cumulative to end of quarter) (Source – Education Welfare)		<table><tr><td></td><td colspan="4">Sept 24 – end June 25</td></tr><tr><td>Overall</td><td colspan="4">46</td></tr><tr><td>D&amp;A</td><td colspan="4">17</td></tr><tr><td>By Key Stage</td><td>1</td><td>2</td><td>3</td><td>4</td></tr><tr><td>Overall</td><td>0 (2 in 23/24)</td><td>6 (5 in 23/24)</td><td>18 (30 in 23/24)</td><td>22 (19 in 23/24)</td></tr><tr><td>Of those D&amp;A</td><td>0</td><td>0</td><td>8</td><td>9</td></tr></table>		Sept 24 – end June 25				Overall	46				D&A	17				By Key Stage	1	2	3	4	Overall	0 (2 in 23/24)	6 (5 in 23/24)	18 (30 in 23/24)	22 (19 in 23/24)	Of those D&A	0	0	8	9
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			<p>The total permanent exclusions for Sept 24 to June 25 was 46. This is a reduction of 18% when compared to the total of 56 for the same period in the previous year.</p> <p>In Q1 2024/25 the number of PEX due to drug and alcohol incidents has particularly risen, from 3 in 2023/24 to 17. This is due to a specific ketamine incident which led to numerous simultaneous PEXs. A multi-agency approach occurred to respond to the incident.</p> <p>There has been a notable 50% decrease in persistent disruptive behaviour being the reason for PEX dropping to 11 in 2024/25 compared to 22 the year before.</p>
P5.4	<p>Increase the % of early Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCP) reviews for SEND Children subject to school exclusion</p> <p>(Source – SEND)</p>	Refer comment	<p>One child with an EHCP was permanently excluded in Q1 2025/26, compared to none in Q4 2024/25. Throughout the 2024/25 academic year, two children with an EHCP have been permanently excluded, cumulative to the end of Q1 2025/26.</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 P6		<p><b>Improve attendance at school, college and in Early Years settings including sufficiency of places.</b></p>	
Milestone		Progress Q1	Supporting Commentary
P6.1	<p>Child Care Expansion roll out - Increase the number of eligible working parents who access childcare support:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>From April 2024, eligible working parents of 2-year-olds who access 15 hours childcare support.</li> <li>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)</li> </ul>		<p><b>507</b> 2-Year-olds of working parents accessed funded hours. This compares to a figure of 503 at the same point last year.</p> <p><b>551</b> under 2-year-olds of working parents accessed funding hours, compared to 513 at the same point last year.</p> <p>There is little change in uptake from Q4, a reduction of one 2-year-old and increase of 10 under 2-year-olds. Figures reflect children accessing any funded hours for working parents, up to and including the maximum 15-hour entitlement.</p>







P6.2	Increase number of eligible children for the vulnerable 2- year-old funding accessing Early Years (EY) provision (internally collected termly information – may not match to published data from census) (Source – Early Years)		<b>303</b> children eligible for the disadvantaged 2-Year-old funding accessed their funded hours. 381 families were identified in April on the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) list as eligible for funding. There are a lower number of eligible 2-year-olds accessing provision compared to last quarter. However, there were also fewer families eligible for the 2-year-old entitlement (on the DWP list), this reflects the national trend of decreasing number of eligible 2-year-olds. As a result, the percentage of eligible 2-year-olds accessing a place is slightly higher at 80% compared to last quarter 77%.
P6.3	Increase the % taking up of Early Years Entitlement for 3- to 4-year-olds. (Source – Early Years)		<b>1913 children</b> accessed 3 & 4-year-old Funded Early Years Entitlement. 89% take up (on May 2025 headcount) out of 2170 (on Primary Care Trust GP registrations list May 2025) are accessing 3 & 4-Year-old Funded Early Years Entitlement in Halton. Whilst the number of children accessing entitlement has risen since last quarter so has the number of children eligible for the funding. Therefore, the percentage of children accessing entitlements remains similar to last quarter which was 88.1%.
P6.4	Increased attendance at schools: a) Primary b) Pupil Referral Unit (PRU) c) Secondary d) Special (Source – Education Welfare)		By the end of Q1 2025/26: a) Primary attendance has risen from 94.7 % Q4 to 94.76 Q1 b) PRU attendance has decreased from 48%Q4 to 43.03% Q1. The reason for the reduction in attendance is due to the Year 11 cohort (32 children out of 107 children on roll) who will have been on study leave whilst completing GCSE exams. Attendance to half term in May (prior to year 11 exams) was 47.15% slightly lower than Q4. c) Secondary attendance has decreased from 90.5% Q4 to 90.01% in Q1, this slight reduction will be partially due to the Year 11 cohort who will have been on study leave whilst completing GCSE exams. Attendance to May half term was 90.58% (prior to year 11 exams) so a slight increase from Q4 d) Special school attendance has decreased from 88.3% Q4 to 87.9% Q1. However, Halton's special school attendance is higher than national, northwest, LCR and our statistical neighbours' figures.

			<div><div>e) Halton’s special school attendance is higher than national, northwest, LCR and our statistical neighbours’ figures.</div><div>f) Halton’s primary exclusion rate has risen by 0.01% to now be equal to national figures.</div><div>g) Daily attendance for all school types is lower than before Easter, with unauthorised holidays having an increase of 0.61% and 0.46%, for primary and secondary respectively, when comparing the use of the code in Week 17 (first week after the Easter break) and in Week 26. When comparing the use of the codes for Week 17 and 26 for national, unauthorised holidays stayed the same for primary and increased by 0.06% for secondary schools.</div><div>h) Halton’s attendance gap to national in primary and secondary schools has continued to widen when compared to this time in 2023-24.</div><div>i) Halton’s PA gap to national for Primary schools has risen to 1.8% after reducing for the past 2 reports.</div></div>																																			
P6.5	<div><div>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)</div><div><div>a) Children in need (CIN)</div><div>b) Children subject to a child protection plan (CP)</div><div>c) Children with special educational needs or disability (SEND)</div></div><div>(Source – Education)</div></div>	<div><div><div></div></div></div>	<div><table><tr><th></th><th>Jan</th><th>Feb</th><th>Mar</th><th>Apr</th><th>May</th><th>Jun</th></tr><tr><td>EHE</td><td>265</td><td>269</td><td>283</td><td>286</td><td>291</td><td>313</td></tr><tr><td>a)</td><td>5</td><td>8</td><td>9</td><td>10</td><td>12</td><td>15</td></tr><tr><td>b)</td><td>2</td><td>2</td><td>2</td><td>2</td><td>2</td><td>2</td></tr><tr><td>c)</td><td>12</td><td>13</td><td>14</td><td>12</td><td>12</td><td>13</td></tr></table><div><div>Numbers continue to rise from Q4 to Q1 and are increasing year on year. In June 2024 there were 254 children electively home educated compared to 313 this year. This quarter we have seen an increase in the number of year 11 children becoming electively home education at 63 overall compared to 55 for 2024. The main reason for this increase in the year 11 cohort is mental health. Overall, the main reasons children are being removed for EHE in mental health.</div><div>The Education Welfare Service have been successful in securing a return to school from EHE of 20.31% children at the end of June 2025 which compares to 19.94% up to the end of June 2024.</div></div></div>		Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	EHE	265	269	283	286	291	313	a)	5	8	9	10	12	15	b)	2	2	2	2	2	2	c)	12	13	14	12	12	13
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c)	12	13	14	12	12	13																																




P6.6	<p>Reduce the number of children who are missing education.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) Children in need (CIN)</li> <li>b) Children subject to a child protection plan (CP)</li> <li>c) Children with special educational needs or disability (SEND)</li> </ul> <p>(Source – Education)</p>		<p>The number of children on the tracking list as of end Q1 is 54, an increase of 37% from the previous quarter of 34. In the same quarter last year there were 45 children missing education, so the current number is slightly higher than Q1 24/25 .</p> <p>Numbers of children missing education constantly change due to children moving in and out of borough, travellers, children home educated where education is unsuitable, children in care placed in Halton by other local authorities etc</p> <p>The Children Missing Education officer works closely with other services in Halton such as social care and SEN alongside other LAs and other agencies such as school health, social care, police, schools, Border Force etc to track and support children back into education.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) 4</li> <li>b) 2</li> <li>c) 14 (10 SEN Support and 4 with an EHCP)</li> </ul>
P6.7	<p>Reduce the number of children Not in Receipt of Full-time education (NIROFTI)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) Children in need (CIN)</li> <li>b) Children subject to a child protection plan (CP)</li> <li>c) Children with special educational needs or disability (SEND)</li> </ul> <p>(Source – Education)</p>		<p>Number of children accessing a part time timetable as of end of Q1 2025/26 is 61 this is a reduction from 74 in the last quarter data.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) 6</li> <li>b) 1</li> <li>c) 39</li> </ul> <p>A part time timetable (PTT) 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"> <li>a) Children in need (CIN)</li> <li>b) Children subject to a child protection plan (CP)</li> <li>c) Children with special educational needs or disability (SEND)</li> </ul> <p>(Source – Education)</p>		<p>In Q1 2025/26 there were 93 children on roll at the Bridge School and 38 children recorded as EOTAS.</p> <p>EOTAS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) 2</li> <li>b) 0</li> <li>c) 30</li> </ul> <p>The Bridge</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) 11</li> <li>b) 4</li> </ul>




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<b>Corporate Priority</b>	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
<b>CYP P07</b>	<b>Improve professional practice including the quality of children and families’ social work.</b>

Milestone		Progress Q1	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 – Audit)		During Q1 2025/26 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>86% Early help were graded ‘Good’</li> </ul> 33% of help and protect were graded ‘Good’								
P7.2	Increase the number of audits grades as good in the sub section ‘Providing Effective Help’ (Source – Audit)		During Q1 2025/26 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>71% Early help were graded ‘Good’ (Down)</li> <li>33% of help and protect were graded ‘Good’ (Up)</li> <li>29% Children in Care were graded ‘Good’ (Up)</li> <li>36% Care Leavers were graded ‘Good’ (static)</li> </ul>								
P7.3	Increase the number of children who benefit from management oversight and supervision graded ‘good’ through the audit sub section ‘Making Good Decisions & Management Oversight.’ (Source – Audit)		During Q1 2025/26 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>71% Early help were graded ‘Good’ (Down)</li> <li>18% of help and protect were graded ‘Good’ (Up)</li> <li>35% Children in Care were graded ‘Good’ (Up)</li> <li>20% Care Leavers were graded ‘Good’ (Down)</li> </ul>								
P7.4	Increase the number of children’s casefiles receiving an overall grade of ‘Good’ through the audit process (Source – Audit)		<table border="1"> <tr> <td>Grade</td><td colspan="2">Early Help</td><td></td></tr> <tr> <td></td><td><b>Q4</b></td><td><b>Q1</b></td><td></td></tr> </table>	Grade	Early Help				<b>Q4</b>	<b>Q1</b>	
Grade	Early Help										
	<b>Q4</b>	<b>Q1</b>									



Good	80%	71%	
RI	20%	29%	
IA	0%		

Grade	Help & protect		
	Q4	Q1	Trajectory
Good	14%	15%	
RI	48%	70%	
IA	38%	15%	




Grade	Children in Care		
	Q4	Q1	Trajectory
Good	0%	14%	
RI	93%	64%	
IA	7%	21%	

Grade	Care Leavers		
	Q4	Q1	Trajectory
Good	43%	27%	
RI	57%	63%	
IA	0%	9%	

			<p>Q1 practice has shown an upturn when compared with previous Q4, Good has improved by 7% to 28%. RI has decreased by 2% and IA has decreased by 5%.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>➤ 28% of audits were graded as <b>Good</b></li><li>➤ 58% were graded as <b>Requires Improvement</b></li><li>➤ 14% were graded as <b>Inadequate</b></li></ul> <table><tr><th>Category</th><th>Q4 %</th><th>Q1 %</th></tr><tr><td>GOOD</td><td>21</td><td>28</td></tr><tr><td>REQUIRES IMPROVEMENT</td><td>60</td><td>58</td></tr><tr><td>INADEQUATE</td><td>19</td><td>14</td></tr></table>	Category	Q4 %	Q1 %	GOOD	21	28	REQUIRES IMPROVEMENT	60	58	INADEQUATE	19	14
Category	Q4 %	Q1 %													
GOOD	21	28													
REQUIRES IMPROVEMENT	60	58													
INADEQUATE	19	14													
P7.5	<p>Increase the number of social workers accessing training through the Social Work Academy (Source – Social work Academy)</p>		<p>The Social Work academy have continued to offered training to support the improvement plan and improvements in the service. This continues to be well received.</p> <p>Managers and practitioners have been provided training in the following areas:</p> <p>Trauma informed practice - 4 Assessments, Plans and visits - 6 Motivational interviewing - 29</p>												

			<p>Strategy meeting and s.47 training – 20</p> <p>MALD specialist assessment training - 13</p> <p>Report writing training - 15</p> <p>ASYE training – 85</p> <p>Supervision and management oversight – 29</p> <p>In Q1 2025/26 a total of 189 staff accessed the above training</p>
P7.6	<p>Increasing the number of permanent staff</p> <p>(Source – Children’s Social Care)</p>		<p>Children’s Social Care continue to work hard to increase the number of permanent staff and have implemented a number of approaches one of which includes the Approach Team. The team consists of six training social workers in the service who fast track their social worker training. These workers will convert to permanent staff upon successful completion of their studies and will result in a further six agency workers stepping down. Recruitment has continued across the service and the agency rate has dropped to 36%. During the monitoring visit a number of agency workers advised they were converting to permanent posts.</p>
P7.7	<p>Reduce the number of agency workers and associated costs.</p> <p>(Source – Children’s Social Care)</p>		<p>Halton remain compliant with the agency rates and have not paid above the rate for social work staff since January 2024. In addition, requests for agency staff have been refused where there is short term illness which has been a significant cultural change. Agency costings continue to come down in line with progress but remains high compared to our target of 18%.</p>



<b>Corporate Priority</b>	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
<b>CYP P8</b>	<b>Reducing Child obesity</b>

Milestone		Progress Q1	Data and any supporting commentary
P8.1	Increase % breast feeding and initiation and maintenance at 6 – 8 weeks (Source –Health Engagement)		Target is an annual increase of 0.5% at 6-8 weeks. Published Q1 data is not yet available, but Q4 data indicates a continued steady increase of breastfeeding at 6-8 weeks (up by 1.1% from Q3). Breastfeeding initiation across the year has increased from 52% in 2023/24 to 56% in 2024/25, and continuation at 6-8 weeks has increased from 27.5% in 2023/24 to 35.4% in 2024/25, indicating that more women who initiate breastfeeding are continuing breastfeeding for 6-8 weeks and beyond, compared to the previous year.
P8.2	Maintain/increase the number of schools engaging in the Healthy Schools Programme which includes whole School approaches to tackling obesity. (Source – Health Engagement)		88% of all Halton schools engaged in the programme this academic year. Three schools have also launched their commitment to the Pledge for Healthy and Active Futures with Food Active from the Cheshire & Merseyside Health Equalities Group. This programme is based on evidence-based approaches to reducing obesity.
P8.3	Increase the number of parents of children age under 5 accessing the 'HENRY' Programme (Source – Health Engagement)		15 referrals received in Q4, which is an increase on Q3. 80% of referrals were from IMD 1&2. Six parents completed the programme, which included the first dads and male carers-only cohort online.




			100% of parents completing baseline and completion surveys achieved an increase in lifestyle score.
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<b>Corporate Priority</b>	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
<b>CYP P9</b>	<b>Improve access to positive opportunities.</b>



Milestone		Progress Q1	Supporting Commentary
P9.1	Increase the number of care leavers accessing the Care leavers group (Source – Care Leavers)		Care Leaver Hubs: Attendance at these hubs remains positive and care leavers are now having additional access to employment support, benefit support and sexual health support as part of regular sessions and targeted support. Attendance at the new Wavertree hub has really improved and lots of young people are starting to access this space in Liverpool. Activity based sessions are also supporting increased attendance at the Widnes hub which is supporting craft sessions and preventing isolation.  Care Leaver Forum: This is very well established now with core members now regularly attending the group. There are formal and informal meetings, and these are set with agenda items and specific issues that are now being reported into the corporate parenting board. This will hopefully support CL attendance at corporate parenting board and review of specific issues being identified for care leavers.
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 Emotional Health and Wellbeing Board. Form last quarter there is no waiting list. Referrals are coming from CIN and Care Leavers team. With 95% age 12 and above. Barnardo's is protectively meeting with managers across all social care

			teams to ensure that they know the remit and referral process for the service.
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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 P10		Improve Mental Health provision.	
Milestone		Progress Q1	Supporting Commentary
P10.1	Increase the numbers of Primary and Secondary school educators being trained as ‘Thrive’ Licensed Practitioners. (Source – Family Thrive)		Roll out of this training is now complete. 81% of schools took up the offer. Additional unallocated places have now been distributed to schools who wanted more practitioners. We have also been able to train a number of ‘Family Thrive’ practitioners with the surplus left.
P10.2	Increase the number of strengths and difficulties questionnaires (SDQ) completed for Children in Care <b>and Care Leavers</b> (Source – Children in Care / Health)	Refer comment	This annual indicator is for children in care 12 months at year end 31 <sup>st</sup> March 2025. SDQ score required for age 4-17 at point of assessment. 180/224 = 80%. Reasons for non-assessment is mostly out of borough not returning SDQ or not completed and returned by carers. <i>Performance Team.</i>
P10.3	Increase the number of health assessment (initial and review) for Children in Care (Source – Children in Care / Health)	Refer comment	This annual indicator is for children in care 12 months at year end 31 <sup>st</sup> March 2025. 281/284 = 95%. Two refused. Performance Team.
P10.4	Reduce the number of children who are accessing education under Section 19 (Source – Education Welfare)	Refer comment	At the end of Q1 24/25 the total of 43 children. This compared to 31 within the same period in 23/24. This reflects a significant uplift in Sec 19 referrals from schools particularly for children suffering with mental health and anxiety issues.

P10.5	Reduce the % waiting time for Children in Care (CIC) to access Mental Health provision (Source – Children in Care)	Refer comment	There is an identified escalation process in place for children in Care accessing CAMHS is required. Emotional wellbeing panel takes place monthly, and Halton CAMHS attend to review any referrals.
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<b>Corporate Priority</b>	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
<b>CYP P11</b>	<b>Strengthen the voice of children and young people.</b>

Milestone		Progress Q1	Supporting Commentary
P11.1	Increase the number of 'good' gradings within Children Social Care casefile audits for the child's voice and how it informs their plans (Source – Audit)		During Q1 2025/26 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>100% in Early Help were graded 'good' (static)</li> <li>21% Help &amp; Protect were graded 'good' (Down)</li> <li>33% Children in Care were graded 'good' (Up)</li> <li>54% Care Leavers were graded 'good' (Up)</li> </ul>
P11.2	Increase the number of children and young people involved with the Children in Care Council (CICC) (Source – Audit)		While the group has grown, we have, now reached a ceiling limit to the amount of young people I can engage with on a group basis due to ratios. We have SEND children attending the CICC which reduces the capacity. As we have informal meetings with just myself and the young people. We continue to grow on social media and during the CICC activity sessions which are well attended. Unless staff to child ratio changes, we will be limited to add more young people.

<b>Corporate Priority</b>	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
<b>CYP P12</b>	<b>Improve pathways into meaningful employment with training and both Further and Higher Education</b>

<b>Milestone</b>		<b>Progress Q1</b>	<b>Supporting Commentary</b>
P12.1	Reduce the percentage of 16–17-year-olds not in education, employment or training or whose activities are not known to the council (Source – Education and Employment)		Q1 2025/26 = 6.7% which is positive progress from Q1 2024/25 when the figure was 8%, although not quite back to 2023/24 figure of 6.5%. Continued progress from here into Q2 is threatened by the withdrawal of a Post 16 provider from Halton with effect from 31 <sup>st</sup> July 2025.
P12.2	Increase the number of good quality pathway plans as identified through the audit process for Care Leavers (Source – Audit)	Refer comment	Q1 2025/26 the sub-grade ‘support into adulthood’ which asks the auditor to consider and summarise the work that has taken place, how stability and permanence has been achieved leading to good outcomes for the child/YP and what this means for the child/YP currently sits at 36% graded as ‘Good’.

### Appendix 3: Progress Against Performance Indicators




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

	understanding current ICT platforms used for information storing and sharing and how they interlink.					
I	Halton Alternative Provision Strategy and Alternative Provision offer co-produced with all system partners.					
J	Review the Neglect Strategy.					
K	Develop a Section 19 Policy and establish an Education Inclusion Panel to determine when the LA Section 19 duty applies and education offer.					
L	Halton Priority education Action Area Plan, £1.8M allocated across 3 years to tackle attendance and attainment.	What has gone on in the quarter towards achieving that, what the update, i.e., meeting and outcome or decision making				
M	Deliver new statutory duties under the DfE 'Working Together to Improve School Attendance.'					
N	Submit a bid to the DfE for new post 16 provision in Halton					
O	Support the Right to succeed agenda - Halton Lea Cradle to Career 2024-26 for the design, delivery and reporting of a youth offer.					
P	Establish 'The Food Active Healthy and Active Futures Pledge', a whole school approach to tackling obesity.					
Q	National Child Measurement Programme (data provided annually)					

#### Appendix 4: Financial Statements

Please find attached financial reports.

**Progress Symbols are used in the following manner**

	<b>Performance indicator</b>
	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.

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

	Annual Budget	Budget to Date	Actual Spend	Variance (Overspend)	Forecast Outturn
	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
<b>Expenditure</b>					
Employees	19,364	2,808	3,029	(221)	(1,449)
Other Premises	392	92	97	(5)	(39)
Supplies & Services	1,592	0	94	(94)	(1,057)
Transport	367	49	19	30	180
Direct Payments	1,220	261	245	16	94
Commissioned services to Vol Orgs	224	168	168	0	0
Residential Care	27,517	2,130	2,238	(108)	38
Out of Borough Adoption	97	0	0	0	97
Out of Borough Fostering	5,469	248	399	(151)	(785)
In House Adoption	557	24	20	4	22
Special Guardianship Order	2,604	346	323	23	130
In House Foster Carer Placements	2,766	371	283	88	515
Lavender House Contract Costs	279	24	23	1	4
Home Support & Respite	494	67	63	4	25
Care Leavers	434	37	39	(2)	(10)
Family Support	81	10	7	3	15
Contracted services	3	1	1	0	(1)
Emergency Duty	184	0	0	0	0
Youth Offending Services	461	0	0	0	0
Transfer to Reserves	0	0	0	0	0
<b>Total Expenditure</b>	<b>64,105</b>	<b>6,636</b>	<b>7,048</b>	<b>(412)</b>	<b>(2,221)</b>
<b>Income</b>					
Fees & Charges	-33	-9	-7	(2)	(14)
Sales Income	0	0	0	0	0
Rents	-82	0	0	0	0
Reimbursement & other Grant Income	-486	-52	-27	(25)	(153)
Transfer from reserve	-15	0	0	0	1
Dedicated Schools Grant	-50	0	0	0	0
Government Grants	-13,477	-2,293	-2,293	0	0
<b>Total Income</b>	<b>-14,143</b>	<b>-2,354</b>	<b>-2,327</b>	<b>(27)</b>	<b>(166)</b>
<b>Net Operational Expenditure</b>	<b>49,962</b>	<b>4,282</b>	<b>4,721</b>	<b>(439)</b>	<b>(2,387)</b>
<b>Recharges</b>					
Premises Support	736	123	123	0	0
Transport	10	2	2	0	0
Central Support	3,331	555	555	0	0
Asset Rental Support	0	0	0	0	0
HBC Support Costs Income	-136	-23	-23	0	0
<b>Net Total Recharges</b>	<b>3,941</b>	<b>657</b>	<b>657</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>Net Departmental Expenditure</b>	<b>53,903</b>	<b>4,939</b>	<b>5,378</b>	<b>(439)</b>	<b>(2,387)</b>



## **Financial Position**

The net departmental expenditure is estimated to be over budget profile at the end of financial year 2025/26 by £2.387m with the majority relating to Social Care Services.

Growth budget of £12.1m and £3.9m of Children's Improvement Fund has been provided to the Children's and Families Department for financial year 2025/26. Unfortunately, this has not been sufficient to support the increasing costs across the service.

Although initial forecasts for financial year 2025/26 are showing a reduction in overspend of £6.047 compared to 2024/25 outturn, it's important to remember that this is due to the increase in budget not the level of expenditure reducing in the service.

The Children's and Families Department remains 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.

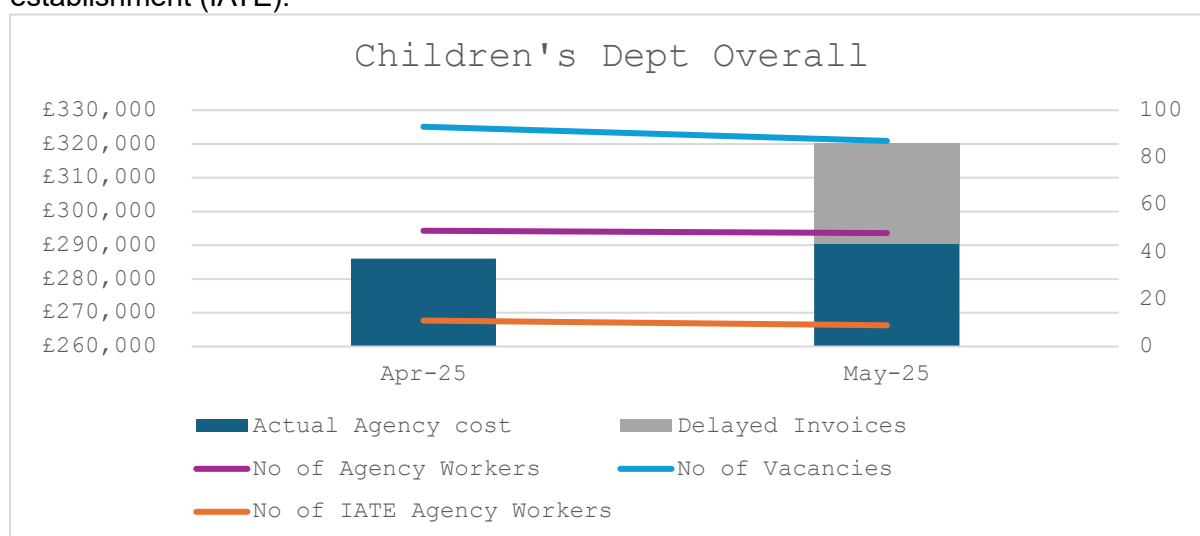
## **Employee Expenditure**

Employee costs are forecast to be over budget profile by the end of financial year 2025/26 by £1.449m this is a similar level compared to the outturn for financial year 2024/25.

The forecast overspend largely relates to the difficulty in recruitment across the service. A number of successful initiatives have helped support the recruitment including Social Work Academy and market supplements.

The level of agency has consistently reduced since October 2024 and is due to agency staff converting to Halton BC employees, external recruitment and the employment of newly qualified Social Workers. The expectation is that agency will continue to reduce throughout the remainder of the year. Forecasts will be updated as and when we are aware of these changes.

The chart below demonstrates agency costs that cover April and May 2025, the number of agency 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 remains high with spend totalling £0.574m.

One area of concern relates to the number of staff that remain in addition to the establishment (IATE). These are staff that are currently not allocated to an established role within their respective team. This figure currently stands at 9 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**

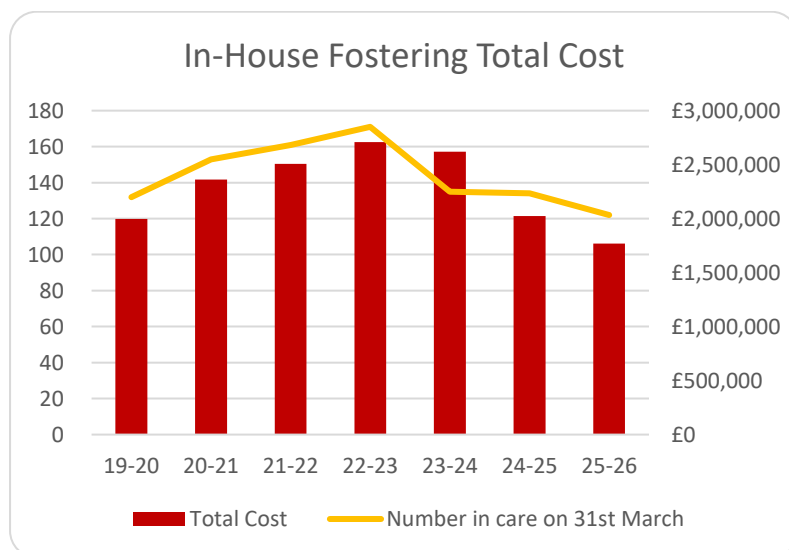
Supplies and services expenditure is forecast to be £1.057m over budget profile at the end of the financial year. Supplies and Services is diverse and covers a number of areas including nursery fees, consultancy, translation costs, equipment and support provided to young people.

A number of initiatives are being looked into to target specific areas of spend within supplies and services.

The creation of the Edge of Care and Family Time Teams should support the reduction of Supplies and Services expenditure. There is hope that particular tasks will no longer need to be outsourced which could result in the reduction in supplies and service.

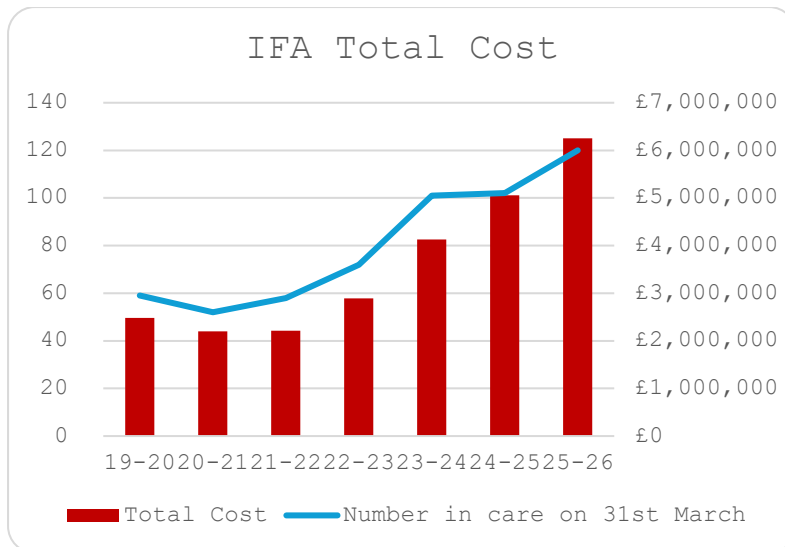
### **Fostering**

Inhouse fostering placements is estimated to be £0.515m under budget profile for financial year 2025/26.



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 Independent Fostering Agencies (IFA). Higher numbers of children placed within IFA provision and increased IFA rates has resulted in an estimated forecast overspend for the end of 2025/26 as £0.785m



### **Special Guardianship Order**

Special Guardianship Order (SGO) at the end of financial year 2025/26 is estimated to be under budget profile by £0.130m

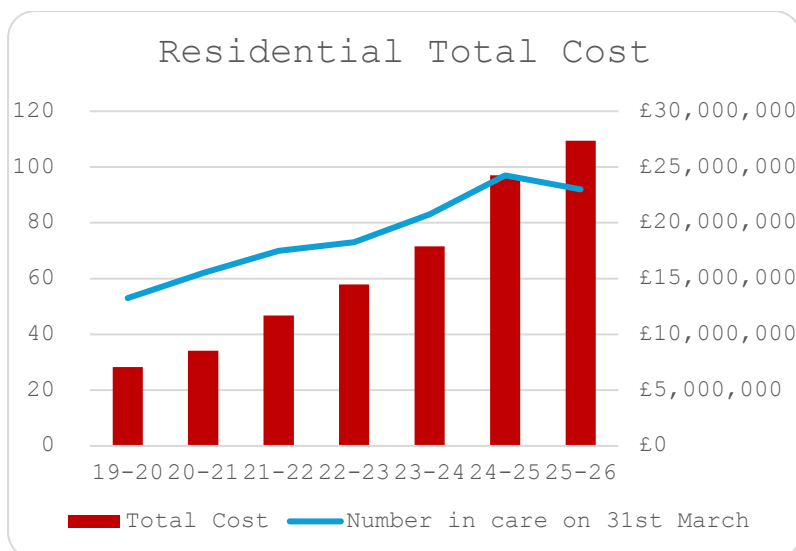
These are long term placements for young people, where the carers are granted parental responsibility for the young person in their care. This is a positive outcome for the young person as these are stable placements and the children are no longer classed as a 'child in care'. They are also less expensive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

### **Residential Care**

Out of Borough Residential Care continues to be a budget pressure for the Children and Families Department as the costs of residential care have continue 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.

Residential care costs are forecast to be under budget profile by £0.038m although this is a significant reduction of £5.994m overspend compared to financial 2024/25, it's important to note that residential care budgets have been increased by more than £10m. The level of forecast expenditure for residential care is £1.8m higher than the outturn spend for 2024/25.

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.



The table below demonstrates the number of children that we are forecasting to be in care at 31 March 26.

Provision	Weekly Costs	31-May-25	
		No. Placed	Estimated cost for the year
Residential	£1000 - £3000	2	257,700
Residential	£3001 - £5000	31	6,964,965
Residential	£5001 - £7000	15	4,890,911
Residential	£7001 - £15982	21	11,840,618
Secure	£6397 - £8137	1	353,687
Leaving Care	£443 - £7175	16	2,366,827
Parent & Child	£2000 - £5500	6	693,682
<b>Total:</b>		<b>92</b>	<b>27,368,390</b>

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.

### **UASC Residential Care**

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

Funding for 2025/26 for UASC and Leaving care is yet to be agreed but should hopefully be agreed in the next few months.

		31-May-25	
Provision	Weekly Costs	No. Placed	Estimated cost for the year
UASC	£300-£500	24	346,199
UASC	£500-£5000	21	858,810
Total:		45	1,205,009

### **Income**



Children and Families are forecast to underachieve on income for financial year 2025/26 by £0.165m. The underachievement relates to the reduction in joint funded packages care packages with NHS.

### **2025/26 Approved Savings**

£1.922m of approved savings have been included in the departmental budget for 2025/26, details of those savings are included at Appendix A.

## Approved 2024/25 Savings

## Appendix A

Service Area	Net Budget £'000	Description of Saving Proposal	Savings Value		Current Progress	Comments
			25/26 Agreed Council 01 February 2023 £'000	25/26 Agreed Council 05 March 2025 £'000		
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.	22	0		With the implementation of the family hubs the review of windmill hill will no longer be viable. The centre is located in an area of deprivation and the role of the centre as a family hub is a priority in the Children's social care review and supporting families at an earlier level, improving access to services for the most vulnerable and ensure a positive start for all children. These priorities fit with the council priorities
Children's Residential Care		Residential Placements – continuation of the work being undertaken to review residential placements, especially high cost placements, and identify opportunities to step-down placements or find alternatives, in order to reduce the current overspend and ongoing costs.	0	1,500		Residential placements were all reviewed in early 2024 with some reduction in costs established. As part of the longer term plan included in the sufficiency strategy, Halton has partnered with a not for profit organisation, Juno, who are awaiting registration from OFSTED - this approach is part of the LCR approach working with NFP organisations. In addition significant changes have been made to reduce the numbers of

						children coming into care. Mocking bird constellation is in place and evidenced support has resulted in appropriate transition so the need for residential is mitigated. A property has been identified for care leavers and further properties identified for additional semi-independent provisions. Juno will focus on their second home after July
Fostering		Independent Fostering Agencies and Out of Borough Fostering – continuation of the work being undertaken to review placements, to increase use of In-Borough foster carers wherever possible and thereby reduce costs, in order to reduce the current overspend and ongoing costs.	0	200	u	Recruitment campaign has been launched to attract in house foster carers so our reliance on IFA's is reduced. Unfortunately there is a national shortage of foster carers and as a result the reliance on IFA's continues
Legal Costs		Court Costs – implementation of measures in conjunction with Legal Services, to reduce the backlog and ongoing number of Children's cases going to court, thereby reducing the timescales involved and cost of court proceedings, in order to reduce the current overspend and ongoing costs.	0	200	u	Progress has been made on reducing the cost of court with success in reducing the number of applications, the reduction in timeliness of proceedings, further work is currently underway to reduce the number of C2 applications to court. PLO process is proving effective for some families in diverting away from legal proceedings and safely maintaining children with parents,

						further exploration is taking place on the use of in house psychologists to undertake assessments in the court arena to further reduce court costs
<b>Total Children &amp; Families Department</b>			<b>22</b>	<b>1,900</b>		





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

	<b>Annual Budget</b>	<b>Budget to Date</b>	<b>Actual Spend</b>	<b>Variance (Overspend)</b>	<b>Forecast Outturn</b>
	<b>£'000</b>	<b>£'000</b>	<b>£'000</b>	<b>£'000</b>	<b>£'000</b>
<b>Expenditure</b>					
Employees	8,792	1,305	1,314	(9)	248
Agency - covering vacancies	0	0	29	(29)	(204)
Agency - in addition to establishment	43	24	24	0	6
Premises	15	1	0	1	3
Supplies & Services	3,012	300	309	(9)	(54)
Independent School Fees	10,155	3,004	3,004	0	0
Schools Contingency	400	2	2	0	0
Transport	43	3	6	(3)	(20)
Schools Transport	2,771	158	259	(101)	(907)
Early Years Payments including Pupil Premium	15,615	1,954	1,954	0	0
Commissioned Services	2,249	196	194	2	9
Inter Authority Special Needs	1,419	166	166	0	0
Grants to Voluntary Organisations	115	0	1	(1)	(66)
Capital Finance	4,604	712	712	0	1
<b>Total Expenditure</b>	<b>49,233</b>	<b>7,825</b>	<b>7,974</b>	<b>(149)</b>	<b>(984)</b>
<b>Income</b>					
Fees & Charges Income	-337	-126	-129	3	20
Government Grant Income	-6,534	-1,549	-1,549	0	0
Dedicated Schools Grant	-30,161	-5,027	-5,027	0	0
Inter Authority Income	-446	-94	-59	(35)	(211)
Reimbursements & Other Grant Income	-1,773	-298	-298	0	0
Schools SLA Income	-538	-12	-2	(10)	(59)
Government Grant Income	-491	-142	-142	0	0
<b>Total Income</b>	<b>-40,280</b>	<b>-7,248</b>	<b>-7,206</b>	<b>(42)</b>	<b>(250)</b>
<b>Net Operational Expenditure</b>	<b>8,953</b>	<b>577</b>	<b>768</b>	<b>(191)</b>	<b>(1,234)</b>
<b>Recharges</b>					
Premises Support	405	68	68	0	0
Transport Support	773	146	147	(1)	(5)
Central Support	1,947	324	324	0	0
Asset Rental Support	17	0	0	0	0
Recharge Income	0	0	0	0	0
<b>Net Total Recharges</b>	<b>3,142</b>	<b>538</b>	<b>539</b>	<b>(1)</b>	<b>(5)</b>
<b>Net Departmental Expenditure</b>	<b>12,095</b>	<b>1,115</b>	<b>1,307</b>	<b>(192)</b>	<b>(1,239)</b>

**Financial Position**

Net departmental expenditure is £0.192m over budget at the end of May, based on available information. The forecast outturn for 2025/26 is currently an overspend against budget of £1.239m. The main variances are school transport and Inter Authority Income.

**Employee Expenditure**

Employee expenditure, including agency staff, is forecast to be £0.050m under budget at year end. There are a number of vacant positions across the department some of which are filled by agency staff, estimated to be £0.204m for the year.

The employee overspend is due to efficiency savings of £0.300m for

### **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.

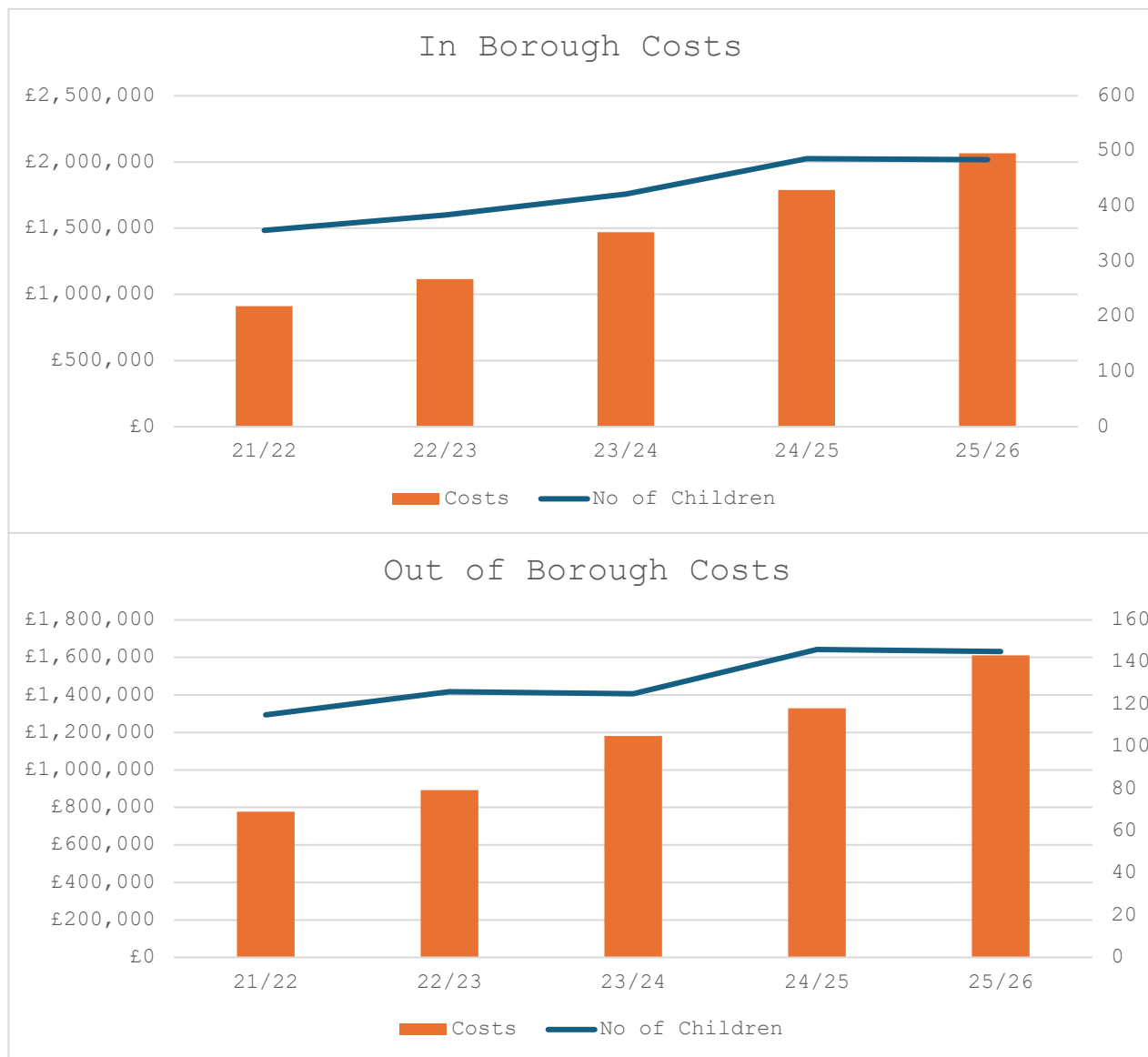
The table below illustrates the split between the two areas, and how each areas spend compares to the budget.

<b>2025-26 as at May-25</b>					
<b>Area</b>	<b>Number of Users</b>	<b>Budget £000</b>	<b>Projected Spend £000</b>	<b>Variance £000</b>	<b>Average Cost per User</b>
In Borough	484	1857	2066	(209)	£3,743.62
Out of Borough	145	1214	1612	(398)	£9,263.98
<b>Total</b>	<b>629</b>	<b>3071</b>	<b>3678</b>	<b>(607)</b>	

Note the above table excludes efficiency savings of £0.300m approved for the 2025/26 budget. A Home to School transport consultation has been undertaken 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. The consultation has been completed and the results have been analysed and recommendations put to Executive Board for possible policy changes from the beginning of the new academic year. However, it is too early to say if the savings can be achieved.

The current records show 629 service users, the majority of which attend schools within the Borough. The Out of Borough overspend has decreased compared to the previous year's overspend of £0.799m due to £0.712m added to the budget in 2025/26 for growth. The demand for the School Transport service is increasing in line with the increasing number of pupils with SEN within the Borough. The graphs below show the number of SEN children using this service, 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.

### **Grants to Voluntary Organisations**

Grants to Voluntary Organisations is forecast to be over budget by £0.066m at year end. This is due to the Positive Behaviour Service. The department pays a contribution to this service each year, however, the cost is significantly higher than the budget.

### **Income**

Inter Authority income is projected to underachieve its target by £0.211m. This is due to an underachievement of income within the Integrated Youth Support Services & Commissioning Division for a shared service. The income target has remained the same despite the number of participating authorities reducing since quarter 1 last year. The income target exceeds the budget for missing from home and care.

### **Approved 2025/26 Savings**

Please see Appendix A for full details.

**Capital Projects as at 31 May 2025**

Scheme Detail	2025/26 Original Allocation £000	2025/26 Revised Allocation £000	31 May Actual Spend £000	31 July Forecast Spend £000	30 Sept Forecast Spend £000	30 Nov Forecast Spend £000	31 Jan Forecast Spend £000	Cumulative Forecast Spend to 31 March 2026 £000
Capital Repairs	550.0	882.1	6	30	675	688	700	754.0
Asbestos Management	10.0	10.0	0	1	3	5	6	10.0
Schools Access Initiative	30.0	37.7	0	0	15	20	25	30.0
AMP Data	25.0	25.0	4	10	23	23	24	25.0
Small Capital Works	0.0	173.0	5	9	50	65	80	173.0
SCA unallocated	448.0	129.3	0	0	0	0	0	0
Basic Need Projects	600.8	600.8	0	0	0	0	0	100.0
SEND capital allocation	1,781.0	1,871.2	73	78	171	400	575	1,022.0
SEND capital unallocation	0.0	1,775.5	0	0	0	0	0	0.0
Childcare Expansion	314.8	314.8	18	18	18	18	18	314.8
<b>Total Education, Inclusion &amp; Provision</b>	<b>3,759.6</b>	<b>5,819.4</b>	<b>106.5</b>	<b>146.4</b>	<b>955.0</b>	<b>1,219.0</b>	<b>1,428.0</b>	<b>2,428.8</b>

**Comments on the above figures**

The majority of the Capital Repair work has been procured and will be completed over the summer holidays.

Property Services are updating asbestos management surveys throughout the year and carrying out remedial works where necessary.

The Schools Access Initiative 2025/26 application process has been completed with some of the works due to be carried out over the summer holidays.

CAD Plan updates are on an ad hoc basis following capital works and condition surveys are commissioned on a 5 year cycle.

Small Capital Works are ad hoc on emergency, health and safety issues.

Basic Needs Projects is currently unallocated and the balance of £0.501m is to be re-profiled to 2026/27.

SEND Capital Allocation, Ashley School expansion is in planning stage and work expected to start in the autumn and completed in summer 2026.

Childcare Expansion discussions are ongoing for allocating the funding to early years providers.

## EDUCATION, INCLUSION AND PROVISION DEPARTMENT

### Review of Agreed Savings

### APPENDIX A

Service Area	Net Budget £'000	Description of Saving Proposal	Savings Value		Current Progress	Comments
			25/26 Agreed Council 01 February 2023 £'000	25/26 Agreed Council 05 March 2025 £'000		
Home to School Transport		Home to School Transport – undertake 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.	0	300	u	The consultation with stakeholders and partners has taken place. The results have been analysed and recommendations put to Executive Board for possible policy changes from the beginning of the new academic year.
<b>Total EIP Department</b>			<b>0</b>	<b>300</b>		

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

	Annual Budget	Budget to Date	Actual Spend	Variance (Overspend)	Forecast Outturn
	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
<b>Expenditure</b>					
Employees	19,427	5,905	6,307	(402)	(1,204)
Other Premises	392	142	150	(8)	(23)
Supplies & Services	1,592	469	709	(240)	(721)
Transport	367	122	76	46	126
Direct Payments	1,220	477	447	30	86
Commissioned services to Vol Orgs	224	42	42	0	0
Residential Care	27,517	7,077	7,247	(170)	(61)
Out of Borough Adoption	97	24	0	24	92
Out of Borough Fostering	5,469	1,079	1,436	(357)	(1,070)
In House Adoption	557	50	36	14	41
Special Guardianship Order	2,604	725	701	24	73
In House Foster Carer Placements	2,766	791	626	165	493
Lavender House Contract Costs	279	70	69	1	4
Home Support & Respite	494	175	137	38	110
Care Leavers	434	107	106	1	3
Family Support	81	20	11	9	24
Contracted services	3	1	1	0	(1)
Emergency Duty	184	33	33	0	0
Youth Offending Services	461	0	0	0	0
<b>Total Expenditure</b>	<b>64,168</b>	<b>17,309</b>	<b>18,134</b>	<b>(825)</b>	<b>(2,028)</b>
<b>Income</b>					
Fees & Charges	-33	-12	-7	(5)	(14)
Rents	-82	-31	-31	0	0
Reimbursement & other Grant Income	-493	-217	-166	(51)	(153)
Transfer from reserve	-15	0	-1	1	5
Dedicated Schools Grant	-50	0	0	0	0
Government Grants	-13,477	-4,539	-4,539	0	0
<b>Total Income</b>	<b>-14,150</b>	<b>-4,799</b>	<b>-4,744</b>	<b>(55)</b>	<b>(162)</b>
<b>Net Operational Expenditure</b>	<b>50,018</b>	<b>12,510</b>	<b>13,390</b>	<b>(880)</b>	<b>(2,190)</b>
<b>Recharges</b>					
Premises Support	736	245	245	0	0
Transport	10	3	3	0	0
Central Support Recharges	3,331	1,110	1,110	0	0
Asset Rental Support	0	0	0	0	0
HBC Support Costs Income	-136	-45	-45	0	0
<b>Net Total Recharges</b>	<b>3,941</b>	<b>1,313</b>	<b>1,313</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>Net Departmental Expenditure</b>	<b>53,959</b>	<b>13,823</b>	<b>14,703</b>	<b>(880)</b>	<b>(2,190)</b>

**Financial Position**

The net departmental outturn position is estimated to be over budget profile at the end of financial year 2025/26 by £2.190m with the majority relating to Social Care Services.

Growth budget of £12.1m and £4m of Children's Improvement Fund has been provided to the Children's and Families Department for financial year 2025/26. Unfortunately, this has not been sufficient to support the increasing costs across the service.

Since last reported at 31 May 2025 there has been a reduction in overspend of £0.197m. It's important to remember that although there has been a slight reduction in forecast outturn the

Children's and Families Department has received significant budget increases for 2025/26. The level of spend remains high across the service.

The Children's and Families Department remains 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.

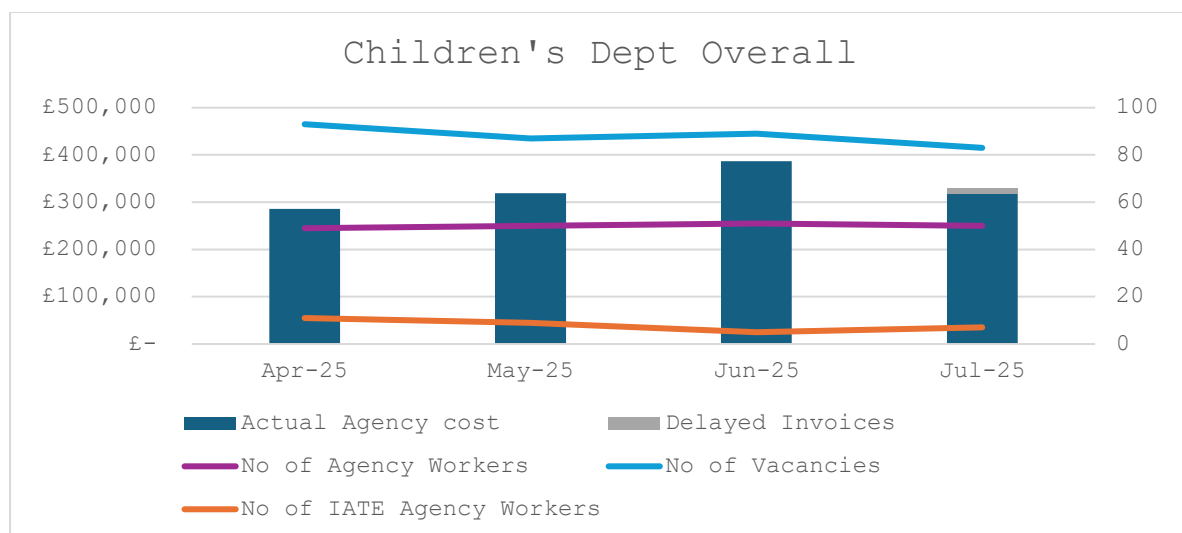
### **Employee Expenditure**

Employee costs are forecast to be over budget profile by the end of financial year 2025/26 by £1.204m this is a reduction of £0.245m since last reported on 31 May 2025. The reduction mainly relates to vacant posts that remain unfilled that are not being covered by agency and a slight increase in staffing budget.

The forecast overspend largely relates to the difficulty in recruitment across the service. A number of successful initiatives have helped support the recruitment including Social Work Academy and market supplements.

The level of agency has remained consistent since April across the service. There is an expectation that a number of agency staff are due to convert to Halton BC employees in the coming months and the recruitment of newly qualified social workers should reduce the level of agency reliance. Forecasts will be updated as and when to reflect the changes in staffing.

The chart below demonstrates agency costs that cover April to July 2025, the number of agency 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 remains high with spend totalling £1.313m.

One area of concern relates to the number of staff that remain in addition to the establishment (IATE). These are staff that are currently not allocated to an established role within their respective team. This figure currently stands at 7 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**

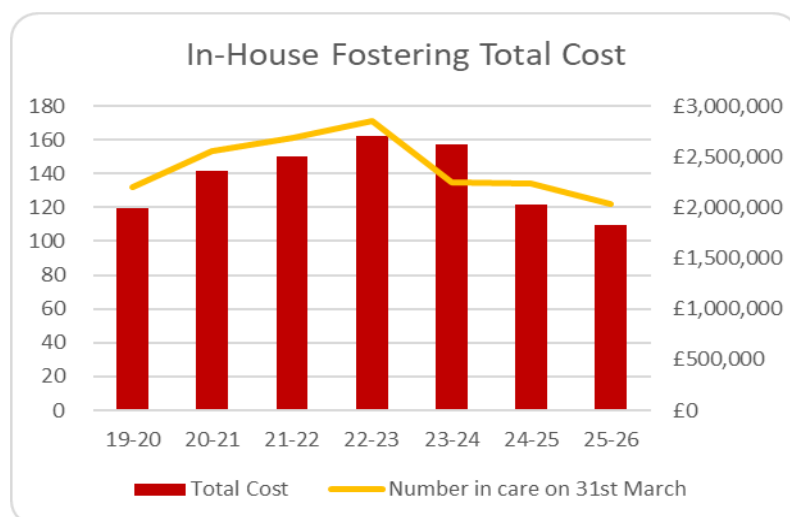
Supplies and services expenditure is forecast to be £0.721m over budget profile at the end of the financial year. Supplies and Services is diverse and covers a number of areas including nursery fees, consultancy, translation costs, equipment and support provided to young people.

A number of initiatives are being looked into to target specific areas of spend within supplies and services.

The creation of the Edge of Care and Family Time Teams should support the reduction of Supplies and Services expenditure. There is hope that particular tasks will no longer need to be outsourced which could result in the reduction in supplies and service.

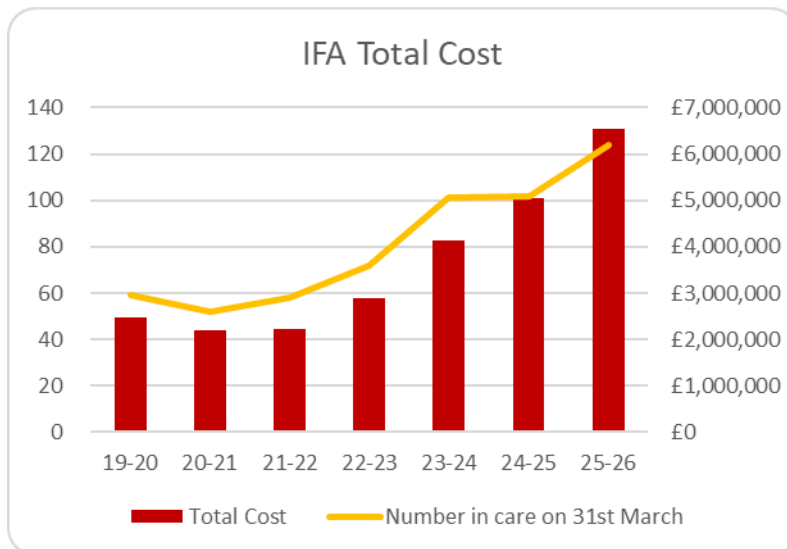
### **Fostering**

Inhouse fostering placements is estimated to be £0.493m under budget profile for financial year 2025/26.



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 Independent Fostering Agencies (IFA). Higher numbers of children placed within IFA provision and increased IFA rates has resulted in an estimated forecast overspend for the end of 2025/26 as £1.070m



### **Special Guardianship Order**

Special Guardianship Order (SGO) at the end of financial year 2025/26 is estimated to be under budget profile by £0.073m

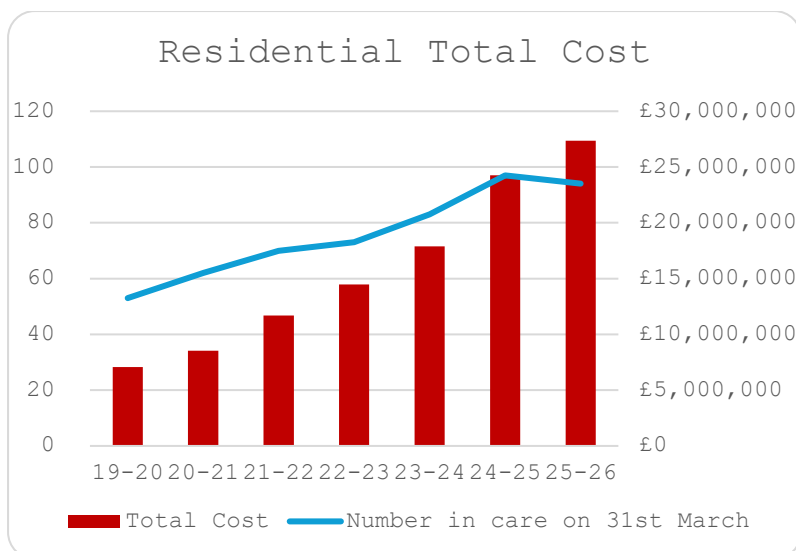
These are long term placements for young people, where the carers are granted parental responsibility for the young person in their care. This is a positive outcome for the young person as these are stable placements and the children are no longer classed as a 'child in care'. They are also less expensive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

### **Residential Care**

Out of Borough Residential Care continues to be a budget pressure for the Children and Families Department as the costs of residential care have continue 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.

Residential care costs are forecast to be over budget profile by £0.061m, this is an increase in forecast overspend since last reported of £0.099m. This is due to not receiving sufficient funding relating to accommodation costs for Unaccompanied Asylum Seeker Children (UASC) and Care Leavers as well as a number of young people that have been placed within remand provision.

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.



The table below demonstrates the number of children that the department are forecasting to be in Residential care at 31 March 26.

Provision	Weekly Costs	31-Jul-25	
		No. Placed	Estimated cost for the year
Residential	£1000 - £3000	4	369,378
Residential	£3001 - £5000	28	6,674,247
Residential	£5001 - £7000	20	6,451,576
Residential	£7001 - £15982	19	10,713,790
Secure	£6397 - £8137		
Leaving Care	£443 - £7175	17	2,465,705
Parent & Child	£2000 - £5500	6	694,683
<b>Total:</b>		<b>94</b>	<b>27,369,380</b>

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.

### **UASC Residential Care**

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

Funding for 2025/26 for UASC and Leaving Care is yet to be agreed but should hopefully be agreed in the next few months. Based on current forecasts there is expectation that there will not be sufficient income from the Home Office to cover the costs of UASC and UASC Care

leavers. This has resulted in the forecast overspend increasing in this area and is shown as part of the total forecast over spend for residential costs in the table above.

		31-Jul-25	
Provision	Weekly Costs	No. Placed	Estimated cost for the year
UASC	£300-£500	24	336,550
UASC	£500-£5000	23	940,241
Total:		47	1,276,792

### **Income**



Children and Families are forecast to underachieve on income for financial year 2025/26 by £0.162m. The underachievement relates to the reduction in joint funded packages care packages with the NHS.

### **2025/26 Approved Savings**

£1.922m of approved savings have been included in the departmental budget for 2025/26, details of those savings are included at Appendix A.

## Approved 2024/25 Savings

## Appendix A

Service Area	Net Budget £'000	Description of Saving Proposal	Savings Value		Current Progress	Comments
			25/26 Agreed Council 01 February 2023 £'000	25/26 Agreed Council 05 March 2025 £'000		
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.	22	0		With the implementation of the family hubs the review of windmill hill will no longer be viable. The centre is located in an area of deprivation and the role of the centre as a family hub is a priority in the children's social care review and supporting families at an earlier level, improving access to services for the most vulnerable and ensure a positive start for all children. These priorities fit with the council priorities
Children's Residential Care		Residential Placements – continuation of the work being undertaken to review residential placements, especially high cost placements, and identify opportunities to step-down placements or find alternatives, in order to reduce the current overspend and ongoing costs.	0	1,500		Residential placements were all reviewed in early 2024 with some reduction in costs established. As part of the longer term plan included in the sufficiency strategy, Halton has partnered with a not for profit organisation, Juno, who are awaiting registration from OFSTED - this approach is part of the LCR approach working with NFP organisations. In addition significant changes have been

						made to reduce the numbers of children coming into care. Mocking bird constellation is in place and evidenced support has resulted in appropriate transition so the need for residential is mitigated. A property has been identified for care leavers and further properties identified for additional semi-independent provisions. Juno will focus on their second home after July
Fostering		Independent Fostering Agencies and Out of Borough Fostering – continuation of the work being undertaken to review placements, to increase use of In-Borough foster carers wherever possible and thereby reduce costs, in order to reduce the current overspend and ongoing costs.	0	200	u	Recruitment campaign has been launched to attract in house foster carers so our reliance on IFA's is reduced. Unfortunately there is a national shortage of foster carers and as a result the reliance on IFA's continues
Legal Costs		Court Costs – implementation of measures in conjunction with Legal Services, to reduce the backlog and ongoing number of Children's cases going to court, thereby reducing the timescales involved and cost of court proceedings, in order to reduce	0	200	u	Progress has been made on reducing the cost of court with success in reducing the number of applications, the reduction in timeliness of proceedings, further work is currently underway to reduce the number of C2 applications to court. PLO process is proving effective for some families in diverting away from legal proceedings and safely

		the current overspend and ongoing costs.				maintaining children with parents, further exploration is taking place on the use of in house psychologists to undertake assessments in the court arena to further reduce court costs
<b>Total Children &amp; Families Department</b>			<b>22</b>	<b>1,900</b>		





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

	Annual Budget	Budget to Date	Actual Spend	Variance (Overspend)	Forecast Outturn
	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
<b>Expenditure</b>					
Employees	8,788	2,575	2,588	(13)	260
Agency - covering vacancies	0	0	73	(73)	(204)
Agency - in addition to establishment	43	45	49	(4)	7
Premises	15	0	1	(1)	2
Supplies & Services	3,010	950	976	(26)	(79)
Independent School Fees	10,155	3,916	3,916	0	0
Schools Contingency	400	117	117	0	0
Transport	43	12	19	(7)	(20)
Schools Transport	2,771	735	914	(179)	(837)
Early Years Payments including Pupil Premium	15,615	3,976	3,976	0	0
Commissioned Services	1,982	578	576	2	9
Inter Authority Special Needs	1,545	503	503	0	0
Grants to Voluntary Organisations	115	0	16	(16)	(67)
Capital Finance	4,604	1,423	1,423	0	1
<b>Total Expenditure</b>	<b>49,086</b>	<b>14,830</b>	<b>15,147</b>	<b>(317)</b>	<b>(928)</b>
<b>Income</b>					
Fees & Charges Income	-267	-161	-164	3	20
Government Grant Income	-6,541	-1,925	-1,925	0	0
Dedicated Schools Grant	-30,267	-10,089	-10,089	0	0
Inter Authority Income	-234	-94	-59	(35)	(211)
Reimbursements & Other Grant Income	-1,744	-594	-594	0	0
Schools SLA Income	-608	-11	-1	(10)	(59)
Government Grant Income	-500	-142	-142	0	(1)
<b>Total Income</b>	<b>-40,161</b>	<b>-13,016</b>	<b>-12,974</b>	<b>(42)</b>	<b>(251)</b>
<b>Net Operational Expenditure</b>	<b>8,925</b>	<b>1,814</b>	<b>2,173</b>	<b>(359)</b>	<b>(1,179)</b>
<b>Recharges</b>					
Premises Support	405	135	135	0	0
Transport Support	773	298	298	0	(5)
Central Support	1,947	649	649	0	0
Asset Rental Support	17	0	0	0	0
Recharge Income	0	0	0	0	0
<b>Net Total Recharges</b>	<b>3,142</b>	<b>1,082</b>	<b>1,082</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>(5)</b>
<b>Net Departmental Expenditure</b>	<b>12,067</b>	<b>2,896</b>	<b>3,255</b>	<b>(359)</b>	<b>(1,184)</b>

**Financial Position**

Net departmental expenditure is £0.359m over budget at the end of July, based on available information. The forecast outturn for 2025/26 is currently an overspend against budget of £1.184m. The main variances are school transport, commissioned services and schools SLA income.

**Employee Expenditure**

Employee expenditure, including agency staff, is forecast to be £0.063m under budget at year end. There are a number of vacant positions across the department some of which are filled by agency staff, estimated to be £0.204m for the year.

**Schools Transport**

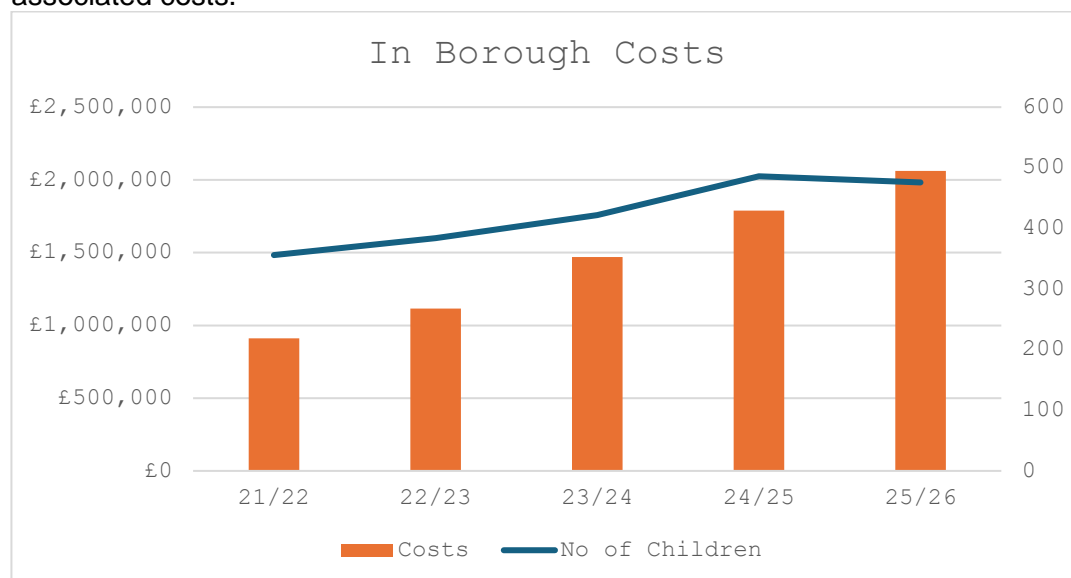
Schools Transport is the main budgetary demand pressure for Education, Inclusion and Provision. The Council has a statutory responsibility to provide Special Educational Needs (SEN) pupils with transport. This is split into two main areas of SEN pupils attending In Borough and out of Borough Schools.

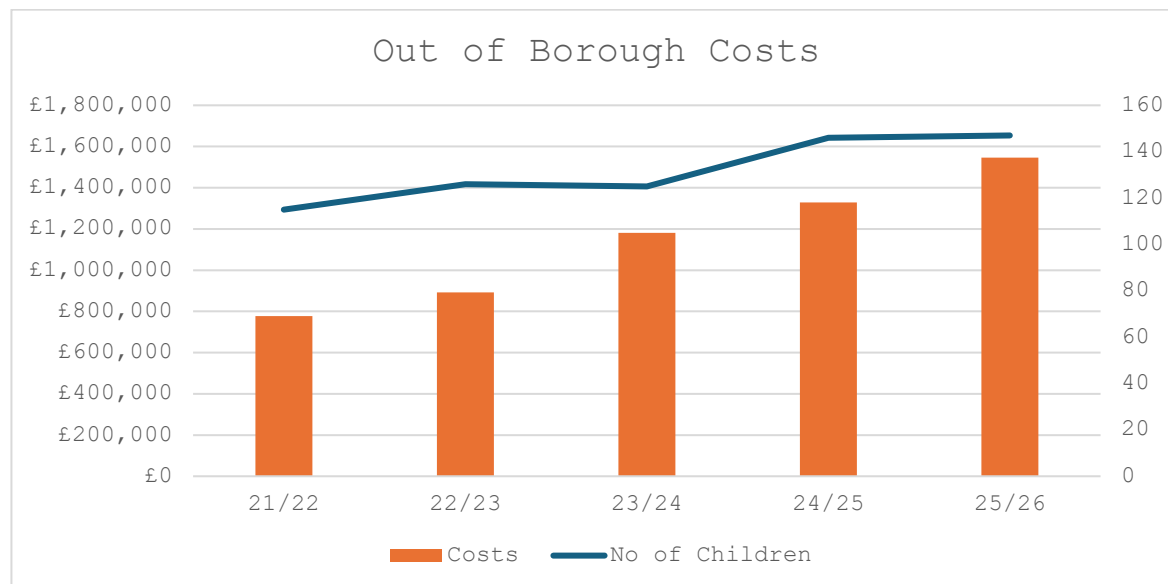
The table below illustrates the split between the two areas, and how each areas spend compares to the budget.

2025-26 as at July-25					
Area	Number of Users	Budget £000	Projected Spend £000	Variance £000	Average Cost per User
In Borough	476	1857	2062	(205)	£3,806.54
Out of Borough	147	1214	1546	(332)	£9,137.94
<b>Total</b>	<b>623</b>	<b>3071</b>	<b>3608</b>	<b>(537)</b>	

The current records show 623 service users, the majority of which attend schools within the Borough. The Out of Borough overspend has decreased compared to the previous year's overspend of £0.799m due to £0.712m added to the budget in 2025/26 for growth. The demand for the School Transport service is increasing in line with the increasing number of pupils with SEN within the Borough. The graphs below show the number of SEN children using this service, 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.

The overspend position is also due to efficiency savings of £0.300m for Home to School Transport to undertake 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. The consultation has been completed and the results have been analysed and recommendations will be put forward for review. However, it is too early to say if the savings can be achieved.

### **Grants to Voluntary Organisations**

Grants to Voluntary Organisations is forecast to be over budget by £0.067m at year end. This is due to the Positive Behaviour Service. The department pays a contribution to this service each year, however, the cost is significantly higher than the budget.

### **Income**

Inter Authority income is projected to underachieve its target by £0.211m. This is due to an underachievement of income within the Integrated Youth Support Services & Commissioning Division for a shared service. The income target has remained the same despite the number of participating authorities reducing since quarter 1 last year. The income target exceeds the budget for missing from home and care.

### **Approved 2025/26 Savings**

Please see Appendix A for full details.

## Capital Projects as at 31 July 2025

Scheme Detail	205/26 Original Allocation £000	2025/26 Revised Allocation £000	Cumulative Actual Spend to 31 July 2025 £000	Cumulative Forecast Spend to 30 Sept 2025 £000	Cumulative Forecast Spend to 30 Nov 2025 £000	Cumulative Forecast Spend to 31 Jan 2026 £000	Cumulative Forecast Spend to 31 March 2026 £000
<b>Childrens Directorate</b>							
Capital Repairs	882.1	882.1	189.0	675.0	688.0	700.0	754.0
Asbestos Management	10.0	10.0	0.4	3.0	5.0	6.0	10.0
Schools Access Initiative	37.7	37.7	11.0	15.0	20.0	25.0	30.0
Basic Need Projects	600.8	600.8	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	100.0
Small Capital Works	173.0	173.0	22.9	50.0	65.0	80.0	173.0
SEND capital allocation	1,871.2	1,871.2	142.2	171.0	400.0	575.0	1,022.0
SEND capital unallocated	1,775.5	1,775.5	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
SCA unallocated	129.3	129.3	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Family Hubs & Start for Life	63.0	63.0	2.3	15.0	35.0	48.0	63.0
Childcare Expansion	314.8	314.8	18.1	18.1	18.1	18.1	314.8
AMP Data	25.0	25.0	8.4	23.0	23.0	24.0	25.0
<b>Childrens Directorate Total</b>	<b>5,882.4</b>	<b>5,882.4</b>	<b>394.3</b>	<b>970.1</b>	<b>1,254.1</b>	<b>1,476.1</b>	<b>2,491.8</b>

### Comments on the above figures

The majority of the Capital Repair work has been procured and will be completed over the summer holidays.

Property Services are updating asbestos management surveys throughout the year and carrying out remedial works where necessary.

The Schools Access Initiative 2025/26 application process has been completed with some of the works due to be carried out over the summer holidays.

Basic Needs Projects is currently unallocated and the balance of £0.501m is to be re-profiled to 2026/27.

SEND Capital Allocation, Ashley School expansion is in planning stage and work expected to start in the autumn and completed in summer 2026.

Childcare Expansion discussions are ongoing for allocating the funding to early years providers.

CAD Plan updates are on an ad hoc basis following capital works and condition surveys are commissioned on a 5 year cycle.

Small Capital Works are ad hoc on emergency, health and safety issues.



## EDUCATION, INCLUSION AND PROVISION DEPARTMENT

### Review of Agreed Savings

### APPENDIX A

Service Area	Net Budget £'000	Description of Saving Proposal	Savings Value		Current Progress	Comments
			25/26 Agreed Council 01 February 2023 £'000	25/26 Agreed Council 05 March 2025 £'000		
Home to School Transport		Home to School Transport – undertake 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.	0	300	<div>u</div>	The consultation with stakeholders and partners has taken place. The results have been analysed and recommendations put to Executive Board for possible policy changes.
<b>Total EIP Department</b>			<b>0</b>	<b>300</b>		

<b>REPORT TO:</b>	Children, Young People and Families Policy and Performance Board
<b>DATE:</b>	8 <sup>th</sup> September 2025
<b>REPORTING OFFICER:</b>	Executive Director of Children's Services
<b>PORTFOLIO:</b>	Children, Young People and Families
<b>SUBJECT:</b>	Annual Report of the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO)
<b>WARD(S)</b>	Borough wide

## **1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT**

- 1.1 To present a summary of the work of the LADO service over the reporting year of 2024-2025 and an analysis of the same.
- 1.2 Additionally, the report details progress made against objectives set previously and provides information relating to key developments and emerging issues that have arisen during the reporting period.

## **2.0 RECOMMENDED: That the Policy and Performance Board**

- 1) receive the LADO Annual Report for 2024-2025;**
- 2) consider the progress, the performance information, and raise any questions or points for clarification; and**
- 3) highlight any areas of interest and/or concern where further information can be reported at a future meeting of the Board.**

## **3.0 SUPPORTING INFORMATION**

- 3.1 The national regulatory framework provides a clear outline of the function and scope of the LADO service. Departmental objectives provide a clear statement on how the service is delivered locally and what the service is planning to achieve. The report demonstrates how the service contributes to the Council's strategic priorities.
- 3.2 This information is part of the Council's performance management arrangements and the Policy & 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 financial implications associated with this report.

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

**6.1 Children & Young People in Halton**

There is a requirement to have a strong, robust and timely framework for action in identifying and responding to allegations against people in a position of trust across all agencies. This is key to supporting children and young people, and ensuring that all partners are clear about their responsibilities and role in working together to promote safe environments for children & young people.

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

The LADO service goes some way to promoting a strong and robust framework to ensure that children & young people are supported in their learning and future employment and skills development by contributing to a safe and aware culture within educational and learning settings within the Borough.

**6.3 A Healthy Halton**

Children and young people whose health needs and level of development is potentially compromised are identified, protected, and can continue to access services that help them in the knowledge that the LADO service promotes safer multi-agency working.

**6.5 Halton's Urban Renewal**

No are such implications associated with this report.

**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**

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



**LOCAL AUTHORITY DESIGNATED OFFICER  
(LADO)  
ANNUAL REPORT  
2024-2025**

## CONTENTS

The purpose of this report is to provide an overview of the management of allegations against staff and volunteers who work with children and young people in a position of trust within the Borough of Halton over the reporting period 1<sup>st</sup> April 2024 to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2025.

	<b>Section</b>	<b>Page</b>
1	Forward and Summary	3
2	LADO Role in Halton Council	5
3	Data Analysis	6
4	Updates on Priorities from 2023-2024	14
5	Focus for 2025-2026	18

## **Forward**

The role of the LADO (or Designated Officer) is set out in Working Together 2023 and is governed by the Local Authorities duties under section 11 of the Children Act 2004. It specifies that procedures must be in place to deal with an allegation that may relate to a person who works with children who has:

- behaved in a way that has harmed a child or may have harmed a child.
- possibly committed a criminal offence against or related to a child.
- behaved towards a child or children in a way that indicates that they pose a risk of harm to children.
- behaved or may have behaved in a way that indicates they may not be suitable to work with children.

In Halton there is a dedicated LADO who sits within the Children's Safeguarding & Quality Assurance Unit (CSQA) and reports directly to the Head of Service.

## **Summary of this report**

- Notifications to the LADO service in Halton have decreased in the past year. In the 2024/2025 reporting year, there were a total of 145 notifications of allegations and/or concerns about adults employed or volunteering in a position of trust with children in the Halton area. This is a 24% decrease on the previous reporting year.

Reporting Years	2021/2022	2022/2023	2023/2024	2024/2025
Lado Notifications	135	173	191	145

- During the periods 2022/2023 and 2023/2024 there was increased, targeted awareness raising sessions delivered across the partnership to ensure that the role of the LADO and the allegations management process was well understood. The decrease in notifications over 2024/2025 may represent an adjustment or levelling-off to a more representative number of notifications to reflect the demography and service provision across the borough of Halton.

Of the 145 contacts with the LADO this year:

- 29 required an initial Allegation Management Meeting (AMM) to be convened to consider the issues.
- Of these 29 cases, 4 required no further involvement of the LADO process beyond the initial meeting as it was determined that the threshold was not met.
- 25 cases continued into the LADO process, with 6 continuing into 2025-26.
- Accordingly, 19 cases of the 25 that were started in 2024-25, have been concluded with a finding agreed in the AMM.
- All the remaining 116 cases were closed to LADO following the initial consultation.

Of the 29 cases that were subject to further consideration in a meeting following the initial consultation:

- 6 [19] were substantiated	(20.7%)	[48%]
- 6 [6] were unfounded	(20.7%)	[15%]
- 6 [12] were unsubstantiated	(20.7%)	[30%]
- 1 [0] was false	(3.4%)	[ 0% ]
- 4 [0] no threshold for LADO	(13.8%)	[ 0% ]
- 6 [2] have not yet concluded	(20.7%)	[ 5% ]

The previous year percentage is given in square parenthesis.

### External Scrutiny

External scrutiny of the management of allegations process and threshold application has been provided through the Ofsted inspection process. Since the last LADO report for the reporting year 2023-24, the LADO has met with Ofsted on two occasions – during the 2024 ILACs inspection, and more recently with the Lead Inspector at a subsequent monitoring visit in January 2025.

The feedback from Ofsted at the May 2024 inspection evidences continued. positive progress in this area of service provision and that we are now in a position of strength.

*[The] Service responds promptly to referrals and [there is] a thorough response.*

*[There is] evidence of LADO supporting organisations.*

*Allegations made against professionals [are] managed swiftly and robustly.*

*Recording is prompt. Allegation management meetings used effectively.*

*Focus on safety and wellbeing of children. Keeping children safer.*

*Worked closely with Social Worker providing a cross over of information and supporting children to remain safe.*

In January 2025, the feedback about the LADO service was in a similar vein.

### **The Role of the Designated Officer (LADO) in Halton**

The role of the LADO is set out in Working Together 2023. [Working together to safeguard children 2023: statutory guidance \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://www.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/115271/working-together-to-safeguard-children-2023-statutory-guidance.pdf)

The relevant paragraphs start at 223 at page 108.

The key roles of the LADO are to:

- provide advice/guidance to employers or voluntary organisations within the local authority area;
- liaise with the local Police and other agencies, including Ofsted and professional bodies;
- monitor the progress of referrals to ensure that they are dealt with as quickly and consistently as possible ensuring a thorough and fair process;
- provide the oversight of the investigative process through to its conclusion;
- to chair LADO allegation management meetings and establish an agreed outcome of the LADO process;
- facilitate resolutions to any inter-agency issues;
- liaise with other local authority LADO's where there are cross-boundary issues;
- collect data and maintain a confidential database in relation to allegations;
- disseminate learning from LADO enquiries throughout the children's workforce;

Information regarding Halton's LADO process is available on the partnership website at: [Dealing with Allegations against People Working with Children - Halton Safeguarding Children Partnership](#) . This information is routinely sent to all those enquiring about the role, function, procedures, and process associated with the Local Authority Designated Officer.

### **Data Analysis**

Performance data for Allegations Management Procedure has been extracted from Eclipse by the Performance Team. This data refers to notifications made to the LADO in the reporting year 2024/2025.

Additionally, this year the LADO has continued to have oversight of nine cases that commenced in 2023-2024 and continued into 2024-25. All but one of these cases are now concluded.

There are two cases that remain open from 2022-23 and are still ongoing, although a conclusion is almost reached in both cases. The lengthy duration of these cases is due to their complexity and the timescales within the criminal justice system.

### **Contacts**

The vast proportion of contacts with the LADO do not result in an allegation meeting of any kind, but for every contact we provide a virtual (Teams or telephone) consultation with the LADO for analysis, consideration, advice, and support. The total number of contacts was 145 for the year 2024 - 2025 which, as already mentioned, represents a decrease on the previous year. See table below:

**Table 1**

<b>Reporting Period</b>	<b>Total number of LADO contacts/consultations</b>	<b>Increase / decrease on previous year</b>
2024/25	145	-24%
2023/24	191	+10%
2022/23	173	+28%
2021/22	135	N/A

Of the 145 contacts:

- 29 (20%) required LADO oversight and an Initial Allegation Management Meeting (AMM) was held. This is precisely the same percentage as the previous reporting year.
- The remaining 116 (80%) concluded and were closed following the consultation.

Of the 80% of contacts that did not progress to an AMM there were themes identified:

- Employers were seeking confirmation from the LADO that their proposed course of action was correct.
- Lack of employer confidence in identifying a course of action – so advice was sought.
- Regulatory bodies driving employers to contact the LADO service, even after the employer had made their own informed decision that this was not required.
- The latter happened most frequently with private organisations who provide residential care to children. This was noted in this reporting year and continues to be the case in 2024/2025.

To ensure consistent application of threshold, the LADO uses the Northwest Local Authority Designated Officers matrix to support in the consideration of contacts. This has been formally adopted by the HCSP and has been distributed to partner organisations for use within the Borough to aid decision making and to ensure

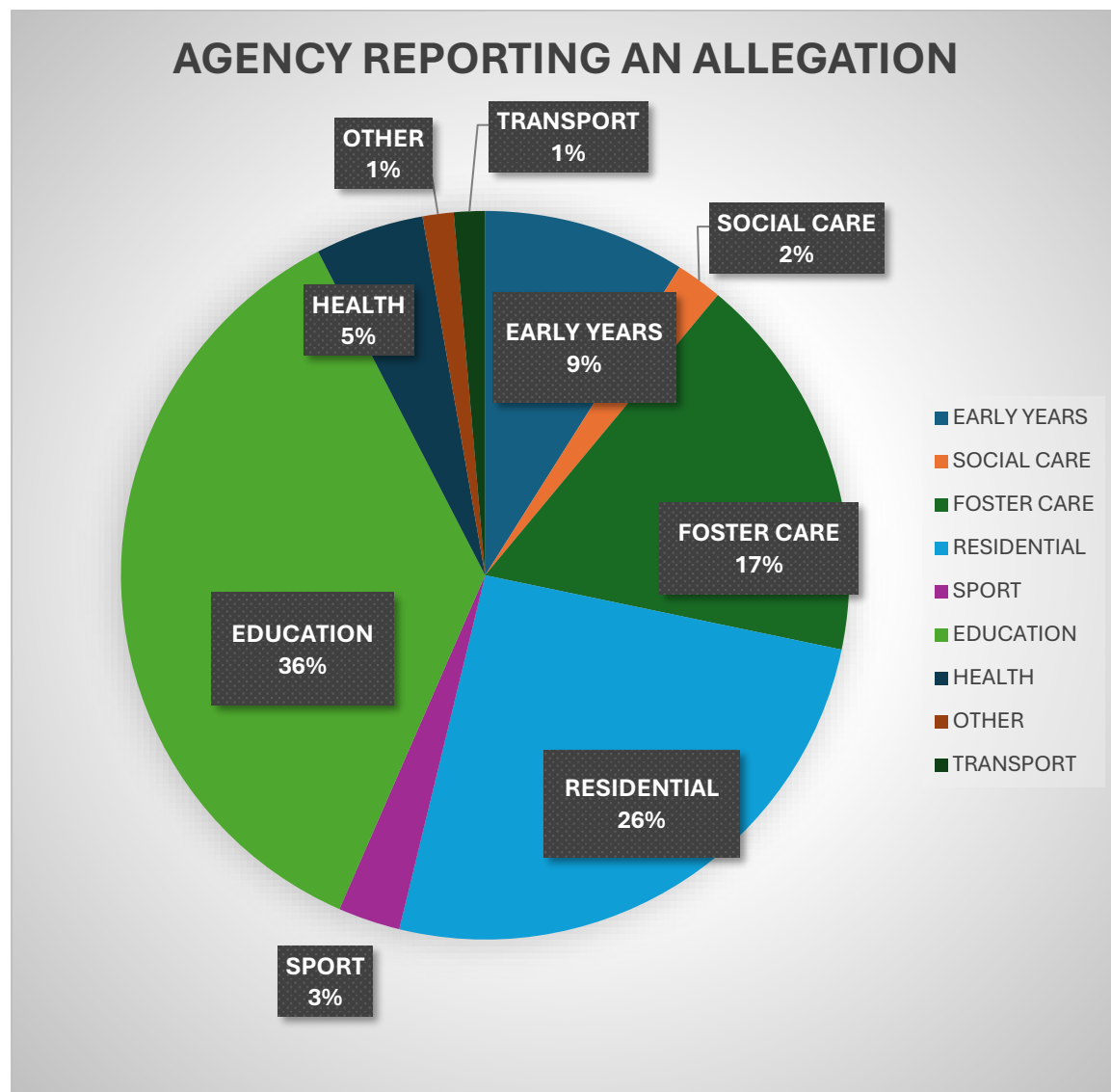


consistent thinking and consideration by professionals in this field of work. This guide is available in the LADO page on the Partnership website.

In Table 2 below, all the 145 LADO contacts are broken-down by the referring agency or sector.

As with the previous reporting year education and residential care settings for children make-up a significant majority of total contacts. These two sectors combined represent 62% of the contacts. In the previous reporting year this was 71% of all contacts.

**Table 2**



There are a lower number of contacts from health, Children's Social Care, transport, and the voluntary settings, including sport. Taken together these sectors represent 12% of contacts. The other significant referring sectors are foster care (collectively – independent foster carers and Halton Council registered carers) and the early years sector.

Comparing these percentage values between the reporting year analysis and the previous year we can see that – in percentage terms:

Contact from the education sector remains the same (+/- 1%)

Contact from the early years sector is the same (+/- 1%)

Contact from Children's Social Care is the same (+/- 1%)

Contact from the health sector has marginally increased (+ 3%)

Contact from the voluntary sector (sport) is the same (+/- 1%)

Contact from transport has decreased (- 2%)

Contact from the residential sector has decreased (- 9%)

Contact from the fostering sector has increased (+ 8%)

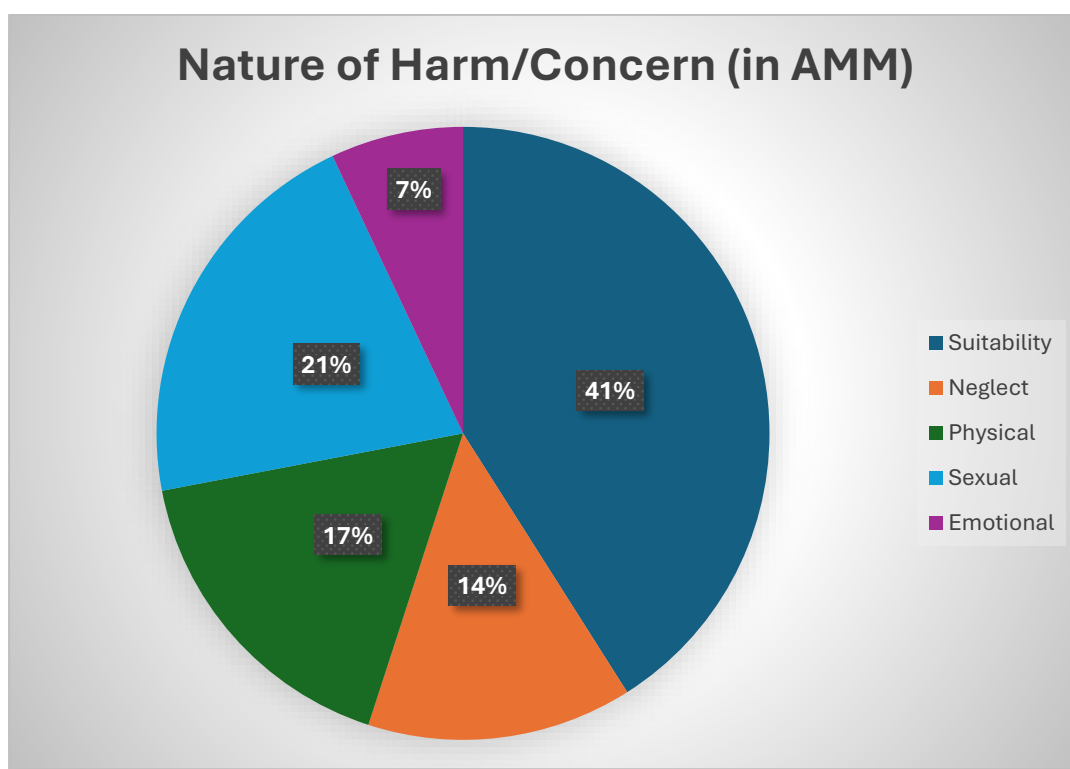
In absolute terms - whilst the overall contacts are reduced by one quarter - the statistics for the reporting year 2024-2025 illustrate that the number of contacts from the fostering sector have increased, whilst the contacts from the residential sector have decreased. By-and-large, all other sectors have had the same level of contact with the LADO in Halton.

The reason behind these changes is not fully understood. One of the reason behind the increase in the fostering referrals for a consultation might be the fact that senior staff managing and overseeing the fostering service in Halton Council have had significant experience of managing the LADO service in another local authority and accordingly the awareness of the importance of referring concerns to LADO may well be being given more publicity. Similarly, with respect to the residential sector and the decline in the number of referrals for a consultation, is this due to an absolute decline in the number of staff working in that sector in the borough, or, better training. It is not, in the opinion of the author, due to a reluctance on the part of

residential managers wishing to discuss situations since there are some consultation which fall significantly below a LADO threshold. Meeting with Residential Managers and Responsible Individuals is planned for 2025-2026 with the Council's own Head of Service for Commissioning and Placements. This will ensure that we are assured that RMs and RIs are familiar and fully conversant with their responsibilities in respect of making a referral for a consultation as in required if they consider the threshold to have been reached, or exceeded.

Of the 29 cases that were brought into a LADO Allegation Management Meeting, the nature of the concern is illustrated below:

**Table 3**



We can compare this information with the same from the previous reporting year. It remains the case that most (41%) of adults in a position of trust are involved in a LADO process due to an issue or concern about their suitability to work with children, although this is a lower value when compared with the last reporting year. For these individuals, some aspect of their behaviour indicates that they may not be suited to

working with children. This category includes adults who have been arrested and/or charged with arrestable offences (e.g. rape; public order, serious assault), are involved in drug and/or alcohol misuse at home where a child lives, or in work where a child resides. This is the area of work where identifying a clear and transferable risk is important since this is where the potential for future harm to a child or children is evidenced.

In respect of the other four areas of concern, these are all broadly the same between the two reporting years, except for sexual abuse concerns which, as a percentage of total reasons for an AMM, has doubled from 10% to 20% of cases. These cases involve direct allegation of abuse against the person in a position of trust by a family member, an allegation of an incident in the workplace, a non-recent allegation which has been investigated by the Police, or, an online sexual abuse/image enquiry by one or other of the regional Constabularies.

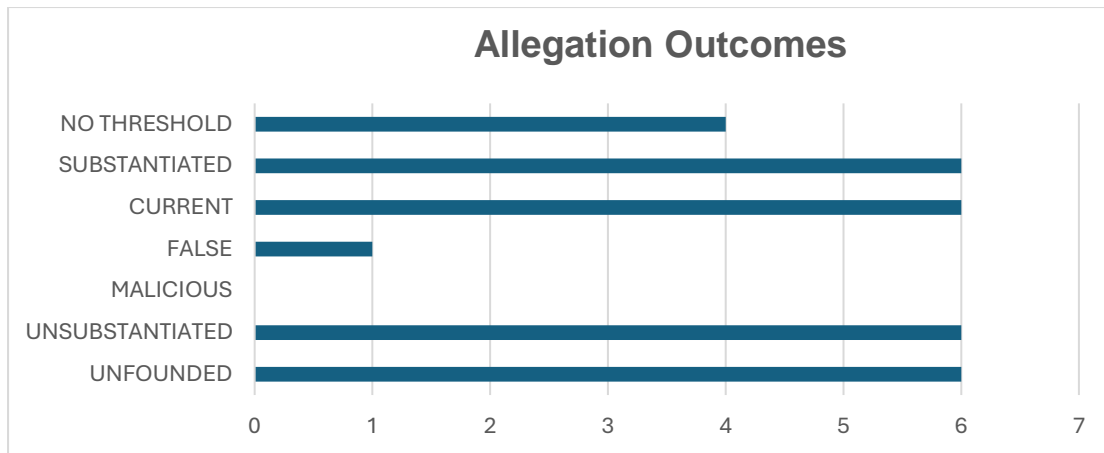
### **Allegation outcomes**

The allegation outcome were listed on page 5 in the Summary of the major findings.

Outcome	%age	2023/24
- 6 [19] were substantiated	(20.7%)	[48%]
- 6 [6] were unfounded	(20.7%)	[15%]
- 6 [12] were unsubstantiated	(20.7%)	[30%]
- 1 [0] was false	(3.4%)	[ 0%]
- 4 [0] no threshold for LADO	(13.8%)	[ 0%]
- 6 [2] have not yet concluded	(20.7%)	[ 5%]

These are illustrated graphically below.

### **Table 4**



As stated earlier there are a significant number of contacts (116 or 80% of the total of 145 contacts with LADO) that require no further LADO oversight and ended at the point of a consultation. Advice and support are always provided during consultation.

For those allegations that progress through the procedure and do require LADO oversight, the outcome will often be the employer reviewing the conduct of the employee, providing additional and/or more focussed supervision and oversight, mentoring, enhancing the employee or volunteer's safeguarding awareness, and further training – and in some instances it would be suitable to extend this to the staff group and wider workforce.

Disciplinary investigations and any subsequent proceedings in respect of the staff members where allegations are unsubstantiated may still result in an outcome as a management instruction as the employer investigation, whilst not finding evidence to support the allegation, may identify behaviour that is not compliant with organisational expectations.

Substantiated allegations this year have resulted in direct actions including dismissal; resignation before dismissal; final written warning; deregistration; and referrals to the Disclosure & Barring Service by the employer where dismissal has or would have occurred.

A note of explanation in respect of the four cases that were discussed at an Allegation Management Meeting, which were found not to meet threshold. These

were cases where it was considered prudent to undertake a broader, multi-agency meeting in order to ensure that the employer/agency, employer HR, Police, IDVA, and CSC (and in one case, the venue of employment since the person was *employed* by an agency) are able to come together and share all relevant information simply to determine whether there is a threshold for a further intervention. In these cases, there was found to be no case to answer as a LADO threshold was not met, but the employer could and did subsequently pursue the matter on issues of conduct.

### **Time spent dealing with allegations.**

The length of time that cases take to dealt with through the LADO process varies considerably within the data set (29 cases in a process over the reporting year) it is a challenge to obtain statistically relevant and descriptive conclusions. More so with six cases which remain not concluded.

The situation is compounded by the fact that the six cases that commenced in 2024-25 and remain open are proving to be quite intractable. This has the obvious consequence of skewing any mean values. In respect of the cases in the reporting year:

The mean time open to LADO *with the six cases that remain open* is 51 days.

The mean time open to LADO *of the concluded 23 cases* is 41 days.

What are the reasons behind this the fact that some cases remain open longer than others? An analysis of this has been undertaken by the LADO and drew out the following conclusions:

Of seven *concluded* cases that have remained open longer than the arithmetical mean (of 41 days) four are hallmarked by significant Police investigation. In another two cases the disciplinary process of the organisations concerned were thorough, but protracted (RFU; an IFA). In the other case, the staff member was off sick, so the case was significantly delayed on account of the subject being hospitalised during

the disciplinary investigation. The subject was medically unfit to face the disciplinary hearing. This was the longest running case of this sample.

In the cases that *are still open*, these are proving to be long running. One case involves the ongoing forensic examination of >10 electronic devices by the Police. In the three cases, the Police investigations are complex and taking time and in the other two, the fostering service involved (HBC) is undertaking a detailed analysis, which is not concluded.

So, the delays are not with the LADO's organisation or delivery of the service. Investigations and subsequent due process sometimes takes time, as these examples illustrate.

### **Updates on Priorities**

The previous incumbent outlined several priorities for the reporting year 2024-25 and these were as follows:

- Complete further review and update of the LADO recording forms which will link to performance reporting; this will ensure we are confident that the work that we have completed will yield accurate data. We will also be less reliant on manual data collection.

This has been done and the LADO form within Eclipse has been altered and amended. The whole LADO process is now on one form – from notification through to conclusion and outcome. Regardless of the number of meetings held, the *episode* can be captured in one place thus making the administration and oversight of various episodes far easier and simpler.

There remain some tweaks, but in all respects this form works well, and can be used by the Performance Team to produce useful and meaningful reports in the future. With the roll-out of Power Business Information a full suite of data will doubtless be of use to better understand who is, and more importantly, who is not referring to LADO.

- Develop our training offer so that we can increase the number of agencies and employers that we reach for awareness, whilst delivering more targeted training for safeguarding leads to support confident consideration and application of the Management of Allegations Procedures.

The training offer has not altered in terms of the frequency (four HSCP sessions per annum) or content. What needs to develop is a better understanding of which sectors attend and the relationship between that and the consultation rate with the LADO for different sectors.

Of the four HSCP training sessions that were completed in the reporting year 2024-25, 47 professionals attended. These people represented a variety of agencies and organisations. The table below provides a breakdown.

**Table 5**

<b>Type of setting</b>	<b>Candidates</b>
Primary schools	11
Secondary school/College	6
Early Years Safeguarding & Welfare (HBC)	2
Pre-school/Nursery setting	10
Positive Behaviour Support Service	2
Child & Adolescent Mental Health	2
HBC Virtual School	3
Community Health Trust	3
Team Around the Family	1
Children's Social Care	6
Arts promotion organisation	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>47</b>

The LADO Partnership training session have been supplemented by presentations to a range of different groups of staff. This includes all the team meetings of the mainstream Social Work teams in the Council, as well as the Independent Domestic Violence Advocate Team, and the Widnes Early Help Team. Additionally, the post-



holder delivered a session to the Fostering and Adoption Panels as part of a Development Day. Two sessions have been delivered to the Foster Carers which is their mandatory Allegations & Complaints Training. The Runcorn Early Help Team meeting is outstanding and will be prioritised.

The post holder has also delivered a presentation to a group of primary school Headteachers. This was a component of a longer day for this staff group.

These bespoke sessions are an invaluable part of the element of the LADO's role in awareness raising with staff from different agencies and developing networks across the Borough.

With respect to the members of the Senior Leadership Teams of all the high schools in the Borough, there is no Headteacher/Principal with whom the LADO has not had a consultation. It is reassuring to know that all Headteacher/Principals are aware and can consult with the LADO, and they are willing to do so.

Now that the LADO role and the management of allegations procedure is well known within most of the Children's Social Care workforce in Halton future training sessions and awareness raising will continue and will focus on continuing to raise awareness of the need to focus and consider the threshold for LADO oversight. This is particularly pertinent given to reduction in agency staff (who may be moving on) and the appointment of more permanent staff. Therefore, we recognise that staff turnover necessitates an ongoing need to awareness raising.

In respect of the faith sector, the LADO and the Chairperson of Halton Safe Forum are endeavouring to link with the safeguarding leads from various parts of the faith sector in the Halton area. This is with a view to providing awareness raising about the role of the LADO and allegations management training to representatives of the various faith communities in the Borough. Some interest has been generated - not a lot - but we will endeavour to galvanise more support to make a training event viable in terms of numbers.

Delivering training and awareness raising is only useful as far as it relates to actual consultation and referrals. We have been tracking those that refer for a consultation and those from whom no referral has been received since January 2023. There are 23 primary and special schools from whom no referral has been received – not even for a consultation - in the past eighteen months. Of these 23 schools, 6 have attended LADO Training in the past reporting year. The remaining 17 will be contacted by the LADO and invited to consider attending LADO training if the Headteacher has not undertaken training in the past three years.

In addition to the education sector, the other major referring sector are the residential care homes for children and young people. There are no major themes to the referrals but invariably issues that are raised include the behaviour of staff outside the workplace (thus raising issues of suitability) and allegations of assault against staff on account of either a restraint or physical contact. In order to ensure that all Registered Managers and Responsible Individuals of the registered children's residential aware of their duties and responsibilities, the Head of Service for Commissioning and Placements from the Department of Education Inclusion & Provision in Halton Council has agreed to co-host an training session for all of the RMs and Ris working in the Borough so that the LADO can deliver a training session to this group of personnel.

- Develop a process of feedback for those against whom an allegation was made. Develop a process of feedback for parents, carers, and children.

The LADO has developed a range of information sheets which may be used to inform and advise the subject of the allegation of the LADO process and what to expect from their employer. These will be used in this reporting year.

### **Voice of the child**

The written records of meetings evidence that the LADO process and the information gathered in the Allegation Management Meetings captures the voice of involved children. We achieve this through emphasising the importance of attending to the child's voice in our contact/consultation forms and as a standard agenda item in

meetings. Where involved – any Social Worker allocated to a child (and they can be from a wide variety of different local authorities) are invited to attend and contribute to the AMM. Thankfully, they do frequently attend. We also identify not only what the child has said but also who is going to feedback to them during the process and following the determination of the outcome.

### **Complaints**

The LADO has received no complaints in respect of the service provided in the reporting year. There is no appeal process with respect to LADO decision making since any person who is the subject of LADO consideration will appeal the disciplinary process of their own employer/organisation.

### **The priorities for the reporting year 2025-26 are:**

- (a) Continue with an initiative to provide the faith community with LADO awareness and allegations management training, and to link up with the Lead Safeguarding representatives in the Archdiocese of Liverpool and the Diocese of Liverpool to establish clear contacts with this sector of the community.
- (b) To this end, we have concluded that the most effect way to ensure that we offer suitable and accessible training to this sector is to embed a training video presentation within the LADO page of the HSCB website and ensure that agencies are signposted to this on a routine basis.
- (c) Deliver a LADO awareness presentation to the Runcorn Early Help Team and start to revisit those CSC Teams for further awareness raising if these teams are considered to have significantly changed in their personnel.
- (d) Adopt and issue information and guidance leaflets for the *Subject of an Allegation or Concern* on the one hand, and for *Child(ren) and Family*, on the other.
- (e) Use the analysis undertaken to speak with the Heads of schools who have not referred/consulted with LADO in the past 18 months to refresh, remind and revisit the issue of allegations management if their training is not up to date.

- (f) Meet with the residential sector (Registered Managers and Responsible Individuals) and provide the same with a bespoke training opportunity with the Head of Service for Commissioning and Placements.
  - (g) The Halton LADO will continue to participate in the Northwest Region LADO meetings.
- 

Author – Andrew Chisnall - Local Authority Designated Officer

Children's Safeguarding & Quality Assurance Team, Halton Council.

30<sup>th</sup> June 2025

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

**DATE:** 8<sup>th</sup> September 2025

**REPORTING OFFICER:** Executive Director of Children's Services

**PORTFOLIO:** Children, Young People & Families

**SUBJECT:** Quarterly Quality assurance Report

**WARD(S):** All

## **1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT**

- 1.1 To provide PPB with an update on the quality of practice in Childrens services through audit findings.

## **2.0 RECOMMENDED: That the report be noted.**

## **3.0 SUPPORTING INFORMATION**

- 3.1 65 Case file audits have been completed over quarter one. The findings in quarter 1 support the improvements being seen across services and evidence progress being seen due to stabilisation of the workforce and strengthened practice.
- 3.2 The number of audits graded as inadequate continues to fall both in overall effectiveness and through the audit sub headings. The service continue to utilise differing approaches to improve practice, this will continue.
- 3.3 The grading within the subgroups can be effected by recording issues. For example where a worker has completed a piece of work or a meeting but has not had opportunity to upload the work to the record, or where the quality of the recording does not reflect the quality of the work. In these instances the grade at audit will reflect the work on the child's record.
- 3.4 Lower audit returns in some areas across the services has resulted in skewed data that does not reflect the overarching practice and therefore the numbers of audits graded inadequate in Children in Care services for example looks high but this is because of a number of audits not being completed due to staff absence. There is evidence in feedback from children / carers and parents of good practice and positive relationship building.
- 3.5 ICART monthly audits consider the quality of partnership referrals

and the response to those referrals. Significant work is taking place to support improved quality of referrals and ensure strong management oversight of the screening process.

- 3.6 Overall audits confirm that practice is improving. There is variability in practice and this is attributed to changes in workforce and embedding changes that will strengthen service delivery.
- 3.7 The QMR quarter 1 report identifies a steadying of data and practice and this is supported within the audits. A focus needs to remain on the quality of management oversight and supervision as this area will drive practice quality. The Quality assurance work will continue to monitor the progress of initiatives such as the edge of care service, discharge service and family time.

#### **4.0 POLICY IMPLICATIONS**

- 4.1 None.

#### **5.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 5.1 Continued reduction of children coming into care will support the savings. The Audits and QMR data both align in respect of improved practice and reduction of numbers entering care of the LA.

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

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

QAF provides a measure of how we are working towards improving and promoting success and wellbeing for families and children.

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

n/a

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

Have a strong and robust audit 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.

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

n/a

##### **6.5 Working Towards a Greener Future**

n/a

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

n/a

**7.0 RISK ANALYSIS**

7.1 The Quality assurance activity will continue to support the LA in identifying strengths to build on and risks to address and track progress.

**8.0 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES**

8.1 None.

**9.0 CLIMATE CHANGE IMPLICATIONS**

9.1 None.

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

‘None under the meaning of the Act.’

**Quarterly Quality Assurance Report - Q1  
1 April 2025 – 30 June 2025**

**1. Summary**

Over the Q1 reporting period, Early Help and Childrens Social Care continued with their monthly deep dive case audit programme using the methodology and templates created in partnership with Audit to Excellence.

We encourage a collaborative approach in our monthly audits through the engagement of children and families as well as social workers and managers. Moderation also includes collaborative discussions with auditors.

Wider quality assurance activity is becoming embedded in managers daily practice and is becoming more consistently reported on. This audit and quality assurance activity allows us to evaluate the quality and impact of practice across all service areas, supporting us to improve the delivery of services to children, young people and families in Halton who need our help.

The following activity undertaken during Q1 (April 2025 to June 2025) is reported on within this document:

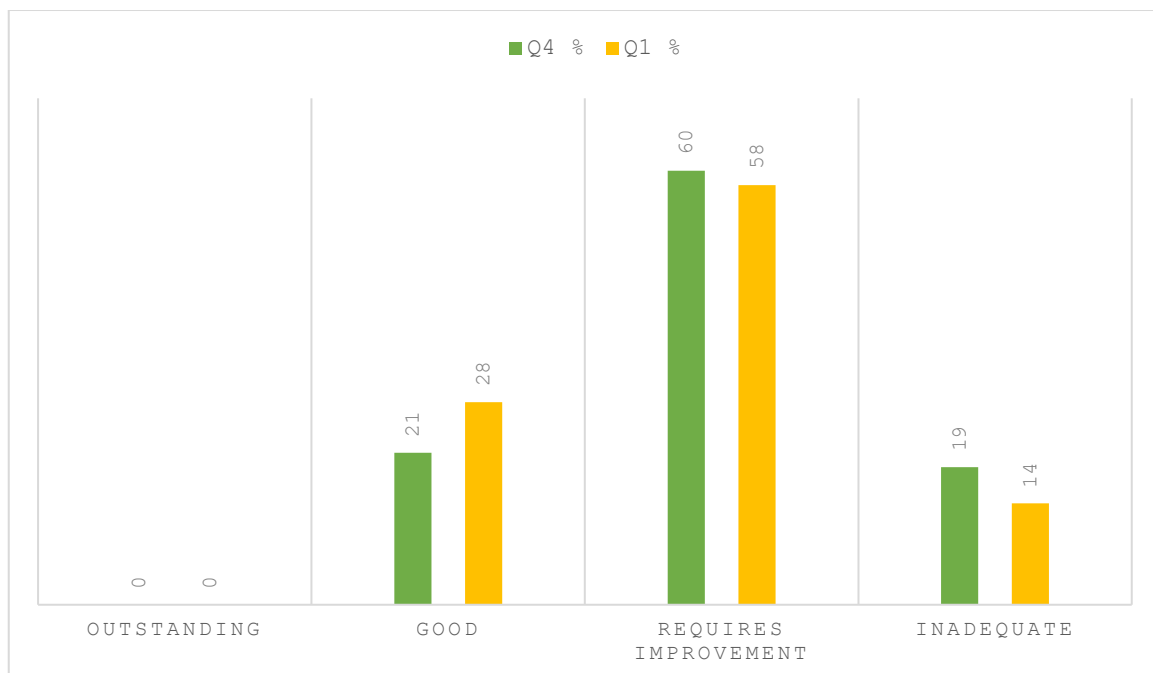
- Monthly deep dive case audit programme
- Monthly ICART multi-agency audits
- Thematic audits relating to:
  - Placement with Parents regulations
  - Prevention of Homelessness and Provision of Accommodation for 16 and 17 Year Olds who may be homeless and/or Require Accommodation; and Duty to Refer
  - Father inclusive practice
- Managers routine quality assurance activity – Please see relevant service area for this.



## 2. Monthly Audit Programme – deep dive case audits

During Q1, **65** collaborative audits have been completed. These relate to children supported through the whole spectrum of plans and service areas: Early Help, DAT, Children in Need, Child Protection, Children Looked After and Care Leavers.

### Monthly Collaborative Audits Completed - Overall

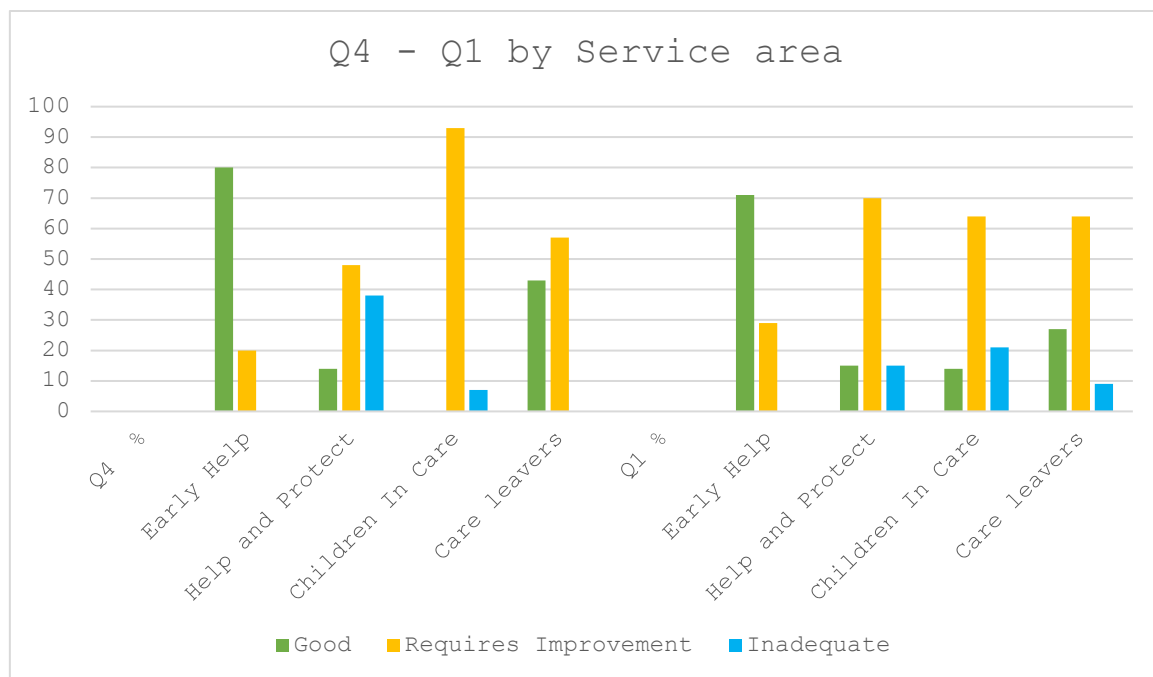


- We are increasingly confident with the accuracy of our audits gradings. We see evidence of the use of our grade descriptors to support audit gradings, resulting in fewer audits now being regraded through moderation.
- Q1 54% of all audits were moderated. Of those moderated 80% had the grading agreed.
- Changes in Social Worker is a common denominator in audits graded as inadequate, where our workforce is stabilising, we are beginning to see the impact of this in improved quality and consistency of practice.
- Scrutiny of supervision and management oversight through audit, provides evidence that managers are more robustly addressing quality of practice and reinforcing expectations in line with practice standards. This remains a targeted area to achieve sustained improvement.
- For the audits with an overall grade of RI, there are some pockets of good practice captured within the sub-gradings, consistency across the board is needed.

- Included within the 65 audits are 16 children (24.5%) whose files have been re-audited 6 months after a previous audit where the grading has been inadequate. There is improvement demonstrated in 14 (87.5%) of these audits.

Date	Number of children re-audited	Good	RI	IA
Q1	16	12.5 %	75%	12.5%

### **Breakdown per Service Area**



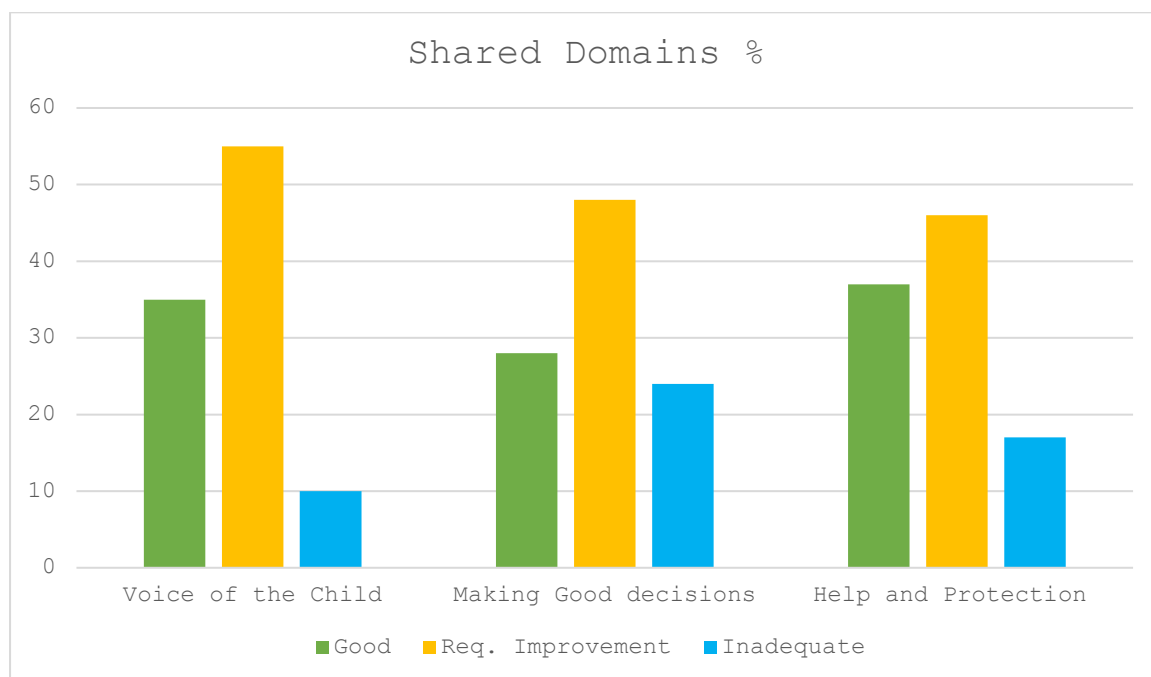
On average over the last 3 months of audit, Q1 overarching practice has shown an upturn when compared with previous Q4, Good has improved by 7% to 28%. RI has decreased by 2% and IA has decreased by 5%.

- 28% of audits were graded as **Good** ↑
- 58% were graded as **Requires Improvement** ↔
- 14% were graded as **Inadequate** ↓

To ensure consistency in comparison, and assurance that practice is improving, the rate of audit submission needs to remain high. Lower numbers of audit returns skew findings and we can't be confident on a smaller sample that we are capturing an accurate understanding of the quality of front line practice.

During this quarter the higher number of submitted audits in June 2025 balances the lower numbers for April and May.

There are 3 shared domains service wide within the audit format - Voice of the child, Making good decisions, Help & Protection. Service wide, this evidences where practice sits. It demonstrates where the improvement is needed.



### Early Help

Early help continues to have no audits graded as inadequate. However, there has been some reduction in the number graded as good. The service report that this is likely related to staff sickness impacting on service delivery for children and their families.

A 9% decrease in 'Good' audits has directly impacted an upturn in those graded requires improvement.

Grade	Early Help		
	Q4	Q1	
Good	80%	71%	↓
RI	20%	29%	↑
IA	0%		↔

Early help continues to evidence good practice in terms of direct work and engaging with children and their families. There is evidence of relationship-based practice having an impact and driving change in children's lives.

Management oversight drives plans and gives clear directions to workers to best support families in reflective supervision. MAP's are well written including family strength, needs and are SMART.

Learning and improvement is identified in a number of areas that are also reflected service wide such as father inclusive practice, updated chronologies needed and the impact of drift and delay for families when staff shortages impact work allocation.

When scrutinising sub-grades to support areas of practice improvement Early Help is consistently 'Good' in all areas with occasional RI (2/7) in the domains Making Good Decisions and Needs, Risk Threshold. Voice of the child is consistently graded good without exception so is Help & Protection.

### **Help & Protection**

A comparison of Q4 to Q1 identifies an upward trajectory in quality of practice. There has been a significant reduction in the number of audits graded as inadequate and an increase of requires improvement and of those graded Good. This shows positive progress in service delivery for children supported by our DAT, CIN/CP teams.

Grade	Help & protect		
	Q4	Q1	Trajectory
Good	14%	15%	↑
RI	48%	70%	↑
IA	38%	15%	↓

Across our CIN/CP cohort of families there is an improving picture of better practice. Themes that are showing in this quarter are improved supervision and management oversight. Management oversight that is timely and evidencing scrutiny of risk is evident alongside prompt response to those children needing immediate support and risk management via strategy meetings and s47.

There is evidence of well written assessments, voice of the child is increasingly stronger on file and now requires consistency across the service. Thematic dip sampling undertaken by the CIN service manager and social workers (utilising a peer review methodology) has supported improving service delivery in this area ensuring we capture the voice of the child and give this meaning.

Social workers are evidencing relationship-based practice that is having a positive impact, and this is supported by family feedback. Core groups and CIN meetings are demonstrating an improving multi-agency response for families. The audit established children's views need to impact their plans and analysis of this must be clear. This is an improving area of work, but evidence of change is provided in monthly file audits. For our CIN/CP cohort of children Voice of the child is a positive picture with those deemed Good at 21% and RI 64%, 15% graded inadequate, indicating room for improvement to push to Good.

Auditors continue to evidence themes for improvement where there is inconsistency in visiting to families, fathers are often not included and the rationale for non-inclusion is not clear, case summaries need to improve as do children's chronologies. While

supervision is an improving area this is not consistently in line with standards and can lack reflection. This was particularly evident for DAT when management capacity was stretched in the early part of Q1.

In accordance with our QA framework and 'closing the loop', audits graded as inadequate are re-audited after 6 months. During Q1, there were 5 children re-audited across our child in need teams. All 5 evidenced improved practice. 4 have been deemed requires improvement and 1 was graded good.

1 graded requires improvement was moderated and the grading agreed. 1 graded Good was reviewed at moderation panel and the grading was agreed at Good. Again, while practice is not consistent across the board, this offers some assurance of an improving picture of practice and service delivery for our children.




The domain Making Good decisions while evidencing 66% of all audits RI or Good, inadequate audits are higher at 33%. The improvement of management oversight, supervision and application of threshold would be the priority to drive timeliness of decision making and response. Improved recording on children's files would also support this area with improvement.

Help and protection sub-grade for Q1 sits at Good 30%, RI 48% and Inadequate 21%. Prioritising practice in the other domains (making good decisions) would continue to support improvement in this area also. The recurring themes are improving supervision and management oversight; timeliness of visits need to be a priority also.

Early in Q1 dip sampling was undertaken in respect of children's plans and threshold application. The audit found this was variable and lacked consistency across the teams. The learnings have been shared and actions to address consistency. Needs, risk and threshold domain would be influenced by this. Currently for Q1 this sits at Good 30%, RI 60% and Inadequate 10% suggesting some practice is showing improvement in this area.

### **Children in Care**

While an upturn in Good is evidence of improved practice the consequential downturn in Requires Improvement and increase in Inadequate is potential cause for concern. One hypothesis is due to a decrease in audit submissions in the area of children in our care this has potentially skewed the figures, as fewer audits make a larger percentage impact. Overall inadequate audits equate to 3 children.

Grade	CIC		
	Q4	Q1	Trajectory
Good	0%	14%	
RI	93%	64%	
IA	7%	21%	

Q1 period demonstrates improved practice in management oversight and supervision, particularly where new permanent staff have been recruited to positions. There is evidence of stronger voice of the child, timely PEP meetings, direct work with children, good relationship-based practice. Again, this is supported by children/young people and family's feedback.

Of note when some audits have been graded less than 'Good' the family feedback has been positive in respect of the worker. This is not confined to CIC but evidenced across the service (it should be noted this is based on small numbers). Next steps need to include more family feedback to evidence that improved practice is exploring quality as well as adherence to practice standards. Increase in family feedback would allow for better triangulation of findings and assurance when auditing.

An emerging theme is auditors' views that social workers are 'acting as a reasonable parent would' which of course is vital in our role as corporate parents. Going forward to ensure this is built on and establish consistent practice, regular, reflective supervision that drives plans for children must be a priority, Care planning meetings but be timely, chronologies improved alongside direct work being evident on children's records. Management oversight needs to be more consistent across the service.

In respect of Q1 re-audits for children who received an inadequate audit previously totalled 8. 6 of those re-audits are now deemed requires improvement. 5 of these have been moderated and audit grades agreed. Offering some assurance around our practice for children in our care and as corporate parents.

2 children's audits continued to be graded inadequate. This is the third inadequate audit in 12 months for both those children. HOS is following the process for inadequate audits and undertaking learning circles etc the outcome of which will be shared on completion. Both children have been escalated to relevant SLT to ensure oversight.

Continued grading of IA for an individual child suggests a lack of reflection around audit findings and a lack of management grip and oversight in improving outcomes. It also indicates that whilst audit is providing a clear line of sight to practice it is not consistently driving improvements in practice for individual children and/or the wider organisation as a corporate parent.

The Children in our Care subgrades tell us where the service delivery does well with stability and permanence being Good in 50% of Q1 audits, 36% RI and only 14% graded inadequate. Dip sample audits established this could be improved further by ensuring placement requests for our children in care are robust. A review of placement requests established consistency is needed in management oversight and clear language should be included. The support and care needs of the child need to be explicit. The sharing of the findings within the team for learning has since lead to improved requests being submitted.




Voice of the child sits at 21% Good and 71% RI again only 7% deemed inadequate demonstrating that this area is progressing positively. Taking on board audit findings must ensure this continues to drive upwards to Good.

Making good decisions - Good is 35%, RI is 43% while inadequate is 21% indicating this is an area for improvement again audit findings in relation to supervision and management oversight would support improving practice here.

Likewise, Help and Protection is not dissimilar to the above - Good 29%; RI 50% and inadequate 21%. Health, education, Employment mostly sits within RI at 79%. While Inadequate is lower at 7% support for practice in this area is needed to drive up Good for our children in care.

### **Care Leavers/ Post 18 Care Experienced**

Care leavers young people's audits have demonstrated an upturn in those deemed requires improvement. While this could be argued as improvement this must be measured against good and inadequate. Q1 has seen a decline in Good and an increase with inadequate (Inadequate audits for care leavers is 1 young person's audit). This arguably demonstrates that practice continues to be variable.

Grade	Care Leavers		
	Q4	Q1	Trajectory
<b>Good</b>	<b>43%</b>	<b>27%</b>	
<b>RI</b>	<b>57%</b>	<b>63%</b>	
<b>IA</b>	<b>0%</b>	<b>9%</b>	

Care leavers service demonstrates improving practice in terms of timely visits and these are often undertaken in line with the needs and complexity of the young person not only in line with practice standard minimum requirements. Conversely some children experiencing visits that are not timely. Q1 themes also include the team around the young person know them well, clearly showing responsibility as a corporate parent, feedback from young people supports this evidence also.

Voice of the child/young person is recorded on their files mostly, and the context of that young person's experience/journey is considered in assessments and planning. Improvement to evidence consistent practice would be much like other service areas – supervision needs to be timely, reflective and drive the planning.

For our Care Leaver young people, Voice of the child/YP 54% are graded good, RI is 37% and inadequate graded 9%. Care leavers service faces unique challenges as many of their young people are adults and choose not to engage however audit narrative demonstrates early relationship building, that is consistent, bodes well for engagement of our young people into adulthood.

This is also reflected in the domains of Support into adulthood – where Good sits at 36% while RI is 64% with no inadequate. Health, education, employment is a similar picture with Good graded 36%, RI 64%, again none graded inadequate.

The team restructure has impacted our young people some of whom have experienced several changes in worker. While relationship-based practice is evident with some powerful positive feedback from young people, there is also the voices of young people not able to build those strong relationships evident also.

Making Good decisions (Good 18%, RI 64%, Inadequate 18%) and Help and Protection (Good 36%, RI 55%, Inadequate 9%) is a little more variable and like other service areas management oversight, reflective supervision, timely visits would support improvement here.

### **Child Protection Chairs and IRM's**

Grade	IRM's		
	Q4	Q1	Trajectory
<b>Good</b>	Not collated previously for quarterly report	<b>25%</b>	
<b>RI</b>	Not collated previously for quarterly report	<b>63%</b>	
<b>IA</b>	Not collated previously for quarterly report	<b>5%</b>	

IRM's practice is mostly RI or Good. Monthly file audits have established that oversight by the IRM is improving for children, along with consistency of their escalation and challenge. However, escalation needs to evidence impact and change for the child.

IRM service has 5% deemed inadequate with all other audits sitting in good 25% and RI at 63%. IRO mid-point reviews are an action to improve practice and service for CIC also VOC and inclusion of children and young people in their plans.

Mid-point reviews are an improving picture and while some children do not receive these, an increasing number are. An audit was undertaken where mid-point reviews were established as an area for improvement. Service capacity can be argued to have impacted midpoint reviews during this quarter due to an extended staff absence in the early part of Q1.

A review audit evidenced a significant number of mid-point reviews are being undertaken which include challenge to drift/delay. 93% had evidence of Midpoint reviews (13 of 14 children). These are well written and inclusive of the relevant people.



A significantly high number included collaborative discussion with the social worker. The audit questioned how to improve the practice and established some triangulation is needed at this stage in the child's plan.

Scrutiny from monthly file audits is complimented by regular thematic dip sampling of the service undertaken by the service manager and HoS. Category of need for those children subject to child protections plans has raised some concerns. The category is not always reflective of the presenting needs of the child and their family. Audit learnings were shared, and review audit has been undertaken with improvement noted.

Dip sample audit was also undertaken of private fostering arrangements and the IRM footprint in respect of this. Issues of timely assessment and private fostering process being adhered to were found. The private fostering process is currently subject to review and learnings from the review are incorporated into the improvement plan.

Further auditing of IRO visits to our children in care has been undertaken. The audit found while several visits are undertaken there is inconsistent practice. Children's needs also must be considered when they are new into our care and have a lot of new faces to process. Consistency is needed that is child focused to ensure children are seen prior to their review. Separated migrant children often do not speak English as a first language and the process of their status can be overwhelming. There needs to be support to alleviate this as much as possible.

Children in our care require updated holistic assessment of their changing needs. Dip sampling found this was an area in need of improvement. 92 assessments were overdue for children aged 15 and under. Some related to large sibling groups and dated back over 2 years. 22 children had their last assessment completed in 2023. Some of these children have been in our care for several years. The identified children have been shared with IRO's to address at the next children's review meetings during June/July 2025. Alternatively, the midpoint review may be utilised to raise the matter. Findings have been shared at team meetings and a further updated dip sample will be undertaken to close the loop.

Again, a theme that continues across the service areas is the evidence of positive feedback from parents for the IRM service. Evidencing working together with families has positive impact, as opposed to 'doing to'.

#### **4. ICART multi-agency monthly audits**

For these audits a multi-agency group come together to scrutinise contact/referral information, and they consider how this marries up with information about the child/family held by each agency. April 2025 saw no audits completed due to attendee's availability. 8 Families were subject to audit for the Q1 time period in total. 2 (25%) were graded Good, 3 (37.5%) were deemed RI and again 3 (37.5%) graded inadequate.

Again, data and information can be distorted due to lower returns. To more accurately capture the picture of Q4 and Q1 accumulatively (Jan – June 2025) overall Good 11%, RI 39%, IA 50%.

ICART has evidenced the benefit of the PITSTOP meeting having a positive impact. Partner agencies often provide good information for ICART to direct families promptly to the right service. Conversely this is an area for improvement also and information can be lacking in detail which has potential to impact delay for families.

ICART have evidence of prompt and thorough screening for families also. This includes a prompt response for those children requiring a strategy meeting. Areas identified for significant improvement include that partners must ensure detailed and accurate information is provided, ICART should effectively challenge this when it is not readily available.

Some families experience delay with numerous contacts before progression for referral to assessment. Attention to detail needs to improve to ensure all children are screened effectively and included in progression to assessment. Again, father inclusive practice is an area that requires improvement. Ensuring all relevant relationships are linked at the outset of contacts is vital for those children requiring assessment and potentially family network meetings, care proceedings and early permanence.

The information is collated along with actions in the audit. The actions are tracked to ensure closing the loop. The findings are shared at the meetings for partnersto take back to their relevant service areas for sharing of good practice and improvements needed. ICART HOS and SM also ensure learnings are disseminated across the team.

## **5. Thematic Audits**

### **April 2025 Placement With parents (PWP)**

The audit considered 10 children across 7 families.

Key findings were:

- Evidence of some good practice and PWP regulations being adhered to mostly for those families
- The Eclipse System does not differentiate between ICO which would be PWP & s38.6 which is not PWP.
- There is a lot of confusion over the LA placing with parents versus the court directing placing with parents. Files are not reflecting this clearly and when circumstances changed or why they changed.
- Confusion regarding who is authorising paperwork versus who has agreed placement

- Auditors struggled to find information, assessments, visiting requirements
- Lack of IRM challenge around the issues highlighted above

We need to be mindful that across the workforce, working with a PWP matter may not be common practice for SW. Training will enhance skills but unless it is put in to practice it can be forgotten. Therefore, it is suggested consideration of rolling mandatory training for all SW's and TM's.

SW need to be able to access robust guidance when allocated a family where there is a PWP requirement to ensure effective service delivery for children. Identifying a strategic lead may support this.

A review of the local application of PWP regs may be beneficial to clarify for example who authorises these arrangements as this is not consistent. It would be helpful for the Eclipse System to differentiate between PWP Regs and court directed s38.6 as currently data is drawn from 'children living with their parent',

For children living with parents under the auspices of a s38.6, we need to consider how this is supported in practice. For example, should the same checks and assessments be completed as those where PWP was the plan. Whilst the outcome would not be PWP it would evidence the risks and concerns associated with the placement and will support the development of a robust care and safety plan for the child.

Findings of this audit and plan for improvement were discussed at July 2025 Aiming High meeting. Re-audit in December 2025 will explore the effectiveness of these responses.

### **Prevention of Homelessness and Provision of Accommodation for 16 and 17 Year Olds who may be homeless and/or Require Accommodation; and Duty to Refer**

Where young people were determined in need of an assessment service provision was more in line with procedural requirements. Evidence of some good practice was seen by the auditors.

Upon receiving contacts at ICART data is not collated from this point and housing provide the data to CSC. As it is the responsibility of CSC to undertake assessment and/or provision of s20 accommodation CSC should be able to determine who these young people are from their own data set. If CSC are not referring to housing some young people may not be in the housing data.

The audit while based on small numbers found inconsistency in practice application and a lack of understanding of the requirements for assessing a young person presenting as homeless. For best practice to be supported the policy is currently under review, there are 2 lead practitioners for this area, work alongside the DFE is being undertaken to scrutinise the policy and roll out learning and expectations of good practice in the near future.



16 17 homeless  
Thematic May 2025 v:

## **Under 2's - engagement and support of Fathers**

The audit found that practice is variable. When fathers are included, this is done in a positive way. However very few are included consistently and from the start of the child's journey at point of referral through to planning. Referrals to ICART varied whether father information was included from partners. When names are included the legal status in respect of Parental Responsibility is often not included.

There is already an action in place to roll out the *Developing Father Inclusive Practice Strategy*. This will support improvement activity across the partnership. In addition to the above, this audit will be shared at HCSP Quality and Impact subgroup to support multi agency improvement activity and raise awareness of the strategy.

ICART and DAT service improvement activity is required to ensure that consideration of PR is evident in all contact, referral and assessment activity as well contacting Fathers. Eclipse user group to consider if the system can support practitioners to identify and explore gaps in family information.



Thematic audit -  
father inclusive practi

## **Conclusion**

While practice remains variable and the narrative of findings is often contradictory it appears to be an improving picture. Key areas such as voice of the child, supervision, management oversight, consistency in plans, timely assessment need drive and grip to ensure the buds of good practice are developed and emulated consistently across all service areas.

Our CIN/CP teams have seen a significant downturn with inadequate audits this quarter and the narrative within those children's audits indicates foundations of improved practice. The drive of this needs to be cemented to ensure progression towards increased Good audits.

Re-audit activity, 'closing the loop', offers reassurance. While acknowledging 2 children's records demonstrate practice not in line with our standards (This is being addressed by the HOS) 87.5% were deemed no longer inadequate. This equates to 14 out of 16 children subject to re-audit.

Family/parent/child feedback through Q1 while limited has been generally positive. Key areas for improvement are communication and consistency of worker. What is

evident is the value of relationship-based practice that is kind, caring, respectful and honest.

Where some audit records have been graded less than expected practice, the family experience has been positive. While cautiously optimistic this is based on small numbers. For stronger evidence and assurance family feedback is an area for improvement to ensure robust triangulation.

The next challenge must be the application of consistently good practice across all service areas and to ensure children's records reflect our expected standards that should they ever read them, children can understand the how, what, when, where and why of their experience.

#### **Family/Parent/Carer/YP feedback.**

- ✓ **Mum – I like MAP. It means agencies are accountable.**
- ✓ **Mum- CIN meetings positive, helpful and supportive of her and the children. I loved the Gateway Programme and found it very informative and made me know that I am not alone and I am with survivors. Go in as a victim ... come out as a survivor - it was (Worker's) referral and the "Best thing ever"**
- ✓ **A rationale was explained even though I disagreed with it initially, it was delivered in an appropriate and empathic way. I felt safe and supported. SW was given 10/10 in all areas**
- ✓ **Child - A big difference. I don't know how to describe it. She's very nice and very helpful.**
- ✓ **Child – Is there anything your worker could do better - Visit more frequently. She's a social worker so she has to do everything the best she can.**
- ✓ **Mum - Even though our family being allocated a social worker has not been an expected experience, working with SW has been nothing but a positive experience for our family. SW has been explaining the entire process and what the next steps entail, including how it will benefit our family in the future. 10/10 in all areas.**
- ✓ **Mum - scored 10/10 in most areas which is really positive, and is sharing that the home conditions have improved and that she is keeping on top of these more. Support as made the biggest difference.**
- ✓ **Mum - I just want to say SW is a brilliant social worker she took time to help me and understand and work through the situation and was very truthful with what she was saying about the process**
- ✓ **Mum - I've learnt it is ok to reach out and ask for help. Being kept informed of everything that was going on. The worker's openness and honesty has allowed me to make decisions throughout our time together and for the**

future. Aswell as protecting and safeguarding around my child, I have felt fully supported both practically and emotionally. Scored 10/10 by mum

- ✓ Carer, the biggest difference - Support from the fostering team. Carer has rated their worker 10/10
- ✓ Carer - Plan some visits further in advance to allow Child to prepare please. When SW does visit, I feel that I can relate to her and I am confident to share any issues or concerns.
- ✓ Child - What can we do better? -- Arrange next visit during the current visit; Answer text messages in timely way; Shared holiday dates (when SW is on AL)
- ✓ YP was very positive about his relationship with PA.
- ✓ How helpful is your worker – 10/10 - They have made a huge amount of difference, I've been able to develop into the adult I am today and my worker has aided that journey quite considerably and I owe him a lot for that.
- ✓ YP - I find having a PA amazing! She is always there when I need her even now that I'm 23 if I call her, she tries her best to help me. She's always first to tell me if I'm in the wrong when I need it. PA has always pushed me to do well in life, when I was pregnant with my youngest, she attended every meeting and even my daughters care review meetings when she was invited, she attended to advocate for me. She's made me be very independent but also, she's made sure I've known if I need help to ask and how to do it. I'm pretty happy with all the help and support from the council too

## 8. Next Steps for audit and QA

We will standardise our thematic audit activity and reporting, exploring what we would want to see (best practice), what we think we are likely to see (self assessment by individual service areas) and what we actually see (audit findings). This will support managers to reflect on social work practice and the quality of service delivery and provide them with the tools to explore their hypotheses.

We will be exploring the use of Appreciative Inquiry. This offers practitioners time and space to reflect on a good piece of work, and explore what caused the work to have an impact. This allows us all to learn from what works well and helps us to build a continual learning culture where we celebrate good practice.

**Lynette Lofthouse Practice Improvement and Quality Assurance Officer**

**Susanne Leece Head of Service Children's Safeguarding & Quality Assurance**

<b>REPORT TO:</b>	Children, Young People & Families Policy and Performance Board
<b>DATE:</b>	8 <sup>th</sup> September 2025
<b>REPORTING OFFICER:</b>	Executive Director of Children's Services
<b>PORTFOLIO:</b>	Children, Young People & Families
<b>WARD(S)</b>	All

## **1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT**

- 1.1 To present the Halton's SEND Improvement Programme submitted to OFSTED following the Local Area Partnership SEND Inspection and to provide and update on progress and performance against the five priority areas.

## **2.0 RECOMMENDATION: That the Programme be accepted as the mechanism by which Elected Members can monitor and scrutinise progress going forward.**

## **3.0 SUPPORTING INFORMATION**

- 3.1 The CQC and Ofsted conducted an area SEND inspection of Halton's Local Area Partnership between 20<sup>th</sup> – 24<sup>th</sup> November 2023. The report published on 26<sup>th</sup> January 2024 found there to be 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), which the local area partnership must address urgently.
- 3.2 The report stated that a monitoring inspection will be conducted within approximately 18 months. Local area partnership SEND monitoring inspections paused due to a shift in inspection strategy, with a move towards full inspections for all schools and a focus on simplifying the inspection process. We are currently within the window for our monitoring inspection visit. The next full reinspection will be within approximately three years.
- 3.3 As a result of the inspection outcome, His Majesty's Chief Inspector required the local area partnership to prepare and submit a priority action plan (area SEND) to address the identified areas for priority action (SEND Improvement Plan).
- 3.4 Progress against the improvement plan is overseen by the Strategic SEND Improvement Board. The Board is independently chaired by Joanne Siddle, Joanne Siddle - Strategic Director Children and



Education (DCS) Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council and attended by the Department for Education and NHS England. The Board meets on a monthly basis.

- 3.5 An improved approach to progress and performance monitoring was presented to the Board on 6<sup>th</sup> August 2025 and endorsed. This is intended to present an overview of the five priority areas, give assurance regarding the management of risk and provide a detailed multi-agency response to escalation reporting as required.
- 3.6 The SEND Improvement Plan includes a 'BRAG' rating outlining the progress status of each of the areas for improvement as well as a 'BRAG' rating to measure impact. This will help evaluate and determine if the improvement activities are improving outcomes for children, young people and their families.
- 3.7 In addition to monitoring through Ofsted and CQQ monitoring visits, the Department for Education monitor the progress against the action plan through 6-monthly Stocktakes, the next Stocktake scheduled for 11<sup>th</sup> December 2025.
- 3.8 Progress against the improvement plan is overseen by the Strategic SEND Improvement Board and the Improvement Board for Services to Children and will continue to be reported upon to Children, Young People & Families Policy and Performance Board at regular intervals.

#### **4.0 POLICY IMPLICATIONS**

- 4.1 Areas for improvement will inform policy and service development within Education, Inclusion & Provision.

#### **5.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 5.1 Budgetary decisions throughout the improvement journey will be informed by the priorities identified within the SEND improvement plan. Internal financial tracking will track spend and the impact this is having on the outcomes for children, young people and families.

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

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

The improvement plan was co-produced with colleagues from education, health, social care and Halton SEND Parent Carer's Forum.

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

Keeping our children local to Halton and improving their educational outcomes will build stronger communities, create better employment opportunities that will support talent within Halton to remain in Halton.

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

The Ofsted CQC inspection findings ‘widespread and/or systemic failings’ has a direct and indirect effect on the lives of both current and future children and families in Halton.

As set out in our Children & Young People’s Partnership Plan our ambition is for Halton’s children, young people and families to be truly outstanding. The SEND improvement plan supports this ambition with commitment of the Board to ensure it contributes to positive opportunities and effective help being available at the right time – enabling children and their families to make the choices that mean they can thrive and achieve. Where children and families do need to access services, those services will be responsive, high quality and focus on self-reliance.

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

The SEND improvement plan considers the support, services and opportunities within the borough for vulnerable children and young people with SEND and their families.

### **6.5 Working Towards a Greener Future**

There are no specific implications for the environment arising from this report.

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

The improvement plan was co-produced with colleagues from education, health, social care and Halton SEND Parent Carer’s Forum.

The Ofsted CQC inspection findings ‘widespread and/or systemic failings’ has a direct and indirect effect on the lives of both current and future children and families in Halton.

As set out in our Children & Young People’s Partnership Plan our ambition is for Halton’s children, young people and families to be truly outstanding. The SEND improvement plan supports this ambition with commitment of the Board to ensure it contributes to positive opportunities and effective help being available at the right time – enabling children and their families to make the choices that mean they can thrive and achieve. Where children and families do need to access services, those services will be responsive, high

quality and focus on self-reliance.

**7.0 RISK ANALYSIS**

7.1 There are no new risk implications identified emerging from the recommendations in this report.

**8.0 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES**

8.1 There are no equality and diversity issues identified emerging from the recommendations in this report.

**9.0 CLIMATE CHANGE IMPLICATIONS**

9.1 There are no specific implications for the environment arising from this report.

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

10.1 None.

<b>REPORT TO:</b>	Children, Young People & Families Policy & Performance Board
<b>DATE:</b>	8 <sup>th</sup> September 2025
<b>REPORTING OFFICER:</b>	Executive Director of Children's Services
<b>PORTFOLIO:</b>	Children, Young People & Families
<b>SUBJECT:</b>	Care experienced as a 'protected characteristic'
<b>WARD(S)</b>	Borough Wide

## **1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT**

- 1.1 To provide background reasons and a recommendation to recognise children in care and care experienced young people as a locally protected characteristic under the Equalities Act to promote lifelong care and protection for this group of young people.
- 1.2 It is aimed to end the discrimination that young people face when presenting to other services and partnerships, as well as to ensure that all policies ensure consideration for this group of young people under a protected characteristic to prevent discrimination.

## **2.0 RECOMMENDATION: That the Board recommend for Council to recognise 'Care Experienced' as a protected characteristic.**

## **3.0 SUPPORTING INFORMATION**

- 3.1 As a Public Authority Halton Borough Council have a legal obligation under the Equality Act 2010 and the Human Rights Act 1998.
- 3.2 The Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) states that local authorities and those who deliver services on their behalf must, in the exercise of their functions, have due regard (or take proactive measures) to:
  - Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Act.
  - Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.
  - Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic
- 3.3 If the recommendation is adopted, all future decisions, services and policies by the council will be assessed through Equality Impact

Assessments to determine the impact on its children in care and care experienced young people.

3.4 Care experienced young people refers to young people living in Halton, who are no longer in care but were looked after by Halton Borough Council.

3.5 **Background:**

3.6 Protected Characteristics for Care Experience – (Care Review May 2022);

3.7 The Independent Review of Children’s Social Care published in May 2022 a final report and recommendations included the following:

- “Government should make care experience a protected characteristic” **and** “New legislation should be passed which broadens corporate parenting responsibilities across a wider set of public bodies and organisations.”
- “Many care experienced people face discrimination, stigma, and prejudice in their day to day lives. Public perceptions of care experience centre on the idea that children are irredeemably damaged and that can lead to discrimination and assumptions being made.
- One young person told the review that a teacher had told them “You’re smart - for a kid in care”, another young person said “I don’t want people to point out that I am in care if I don’t want that mentioned. It makes me so cross – that shouldn’t happen.”

3.8 This stigma and discrimination can be explicit and often comes with assumptions about the likely characteristics of children and adults that have care experience. They can also be implicit and are evidenced in the way care experience is discussed in schools, workplaces, and the media.

3.9 At its worst this can lead to care experienced people being refused employment, failing to succeed in education or facing unfair judgements about their ability to parent when they have children and families of their own.

3.10 It is clear that such discrimination can be similar in nature to other groups that have a legally protected characteristic under the Equality Act (2010). So, while there may be ways that society can help reduce stigma and discrimination, including creating greater public consciousness on these issues, just as with other areas of equality, there is a case to go further. Therefore, the government should make care experience a protected characteristic.

- 3.11 Making care experience a protected characteristic would provide greater authority to employers, businesses, public services, and policy makers to put in place policies and programmes which promote better outcomes for care experienced people.
- 3.12 Care experienced young people face significant barriers that impact them throughout their lives;
- Despite the resilience of many care experienced young people, society too often does not take their needs into account;
  - Care experienced young people often face discrimination and stigma across housing, health, education, relationships employment and in the criminal justice system;
  - Care experienced young people often face a postcode lottery of support.
  - As corporate parents, councillors have a collective responsibility for providing the best possible care and safeguarding for the children who are cared for by us as an authority;
  - All corporate parents should commit to acting as mentors, hearing the voices of children in care and care leavers and to consider their needs in any aspect of council work;
  - Councillors should be champions of our children in care and care leavers to challenge the negative attitudes and prejudice that exists in all aspects of society.
  - The Public Sector Equality Duty requires public bodies, such as councils, to eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment, and victimisation of people with protected characteristics

**Conclusion:**

- 3.13 Since July 2022, 32 local authorities in the UK have enshrined 'Care experienced' as a protected characteristic including Sefton, Wigan, Salford and Manchester to offer care experienced young people greater opportunities and protection that any good parent would promote.
- 3.14 As a local authority and as corporate parents we want to ensure that our young people are able to lead lives similar to their peers, and not be discriminated against because of their care experience. By doing so, we can build the foundations for them to thrive, feel safe,

achieve and have successful, happy lives; those feelings and desires we would adopt for our own children must be the same hopes we have and endorse for the children in our care.

- 3.15 As part of the protected characteristic, it is important that this means something to the young people and that as a local authority we ensure that this is at the forefront of policy and decision making moving forward. Our young people need to be included in policy processes and that we continue to ensure we listen to their experiences not only to pave better ways for services in the future, but so they know that they are cared for and valued.
- 3.16 By ensuring that 'care experience' is endorsed as a protected characteristic will enable us to start to end the discrimination young people may face, and support better policies and safeguards as cooperate parents to prevent their lives being affected by simply having been in care.

**What impact will this proposal have?**

- 3.17 By including care experience as a protected characteristic, the council demonstrates a commitment to addressing the inequalities and barriers faced by this marginalised group. It ensures that care experienced individuals are afforded the same rights, opportunities, and access to services as other protected groups.
- 3.18 This recognition not only promotes fairness and social justice but also encourages greater inclusivity within the council. It creates a platform for care experienced individuals to have their voices heard, their experiences valued, and to support their needs being met.
- 3.19 Adoption of care experience as a locally protected characteristic will augment the existing statutory Corporate Parenting principles followed by the Council and set out in section 1 of the Social Work Act 2017;
- to act in the best interests, and promote the physical and mental health and wellbeing, of children and young people
  - to encourage children and young people to express their views, wishes and feelings
  - to take into account the views, wishes and feelings of children and young people
  - to help children and young people gain access to, and make the best use of, services provided by the local authority and its relevant partners

- to promote high aspirations, and seek to secure the best outcomes, for children and young people
- for children and young people to be safe, and for stability in their home lives, relationships and education or work; and
- to prepare children and young people for adulthood and independent living.

3.20 The proposal will address the disparity and disproportionality faced by those with care experience in relation to health, education, housing, employment, and criminality amongst other indicators, by ensuring that the views and needs of care experienced people are taken into consideration by Council services when changes to services and policy are made, with the aim of improving the life chances, and thereby the health and wellbeing, of those individuals.

3.21 If agreed services and policies by the council can be assessed through Equality Impact Assessments to determine the impact on its children in care and care experienced young people.

3.22 Halton Borough Council will commit to the following as part of the proposal:

- To formally call upon all other bodies to treat care experience as a protected characteristic until such time as it may be introduced into legislation;
- To commit to continue to proactively seek out and listening to the voices and experiences of care experienced young people when developing policies, based on their views;
- Continue to recognise that care experienced young people are a group that are likely to face discrimination.

3.23 Approval of these recommendations will demonstrate our commitment to the young people who are, and have been, in our care, and our investment in supporting them to have prosperous, healthy, and happy futures.

#### **4.0 POLICY IMPLICATIONS**

4.1 If this approach is adopted policy review will be required to ensure consideration of this group of young people under a protected characteristic to prevent discrimination is embedded across the Council.

#### **5.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**



- 5.1 Additional funding may be required to provide enhanced support, training, and resources for care-experienced individuals. There could also be increased demand for services, requiring a review of budgets and potential external funding opportunities.

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

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

Care-experienced individuals are at higher risk of poor mental and physical health. Implementing this change would enable more proactive support, ensuring access to healthcare, mental health services, and community-based interventions.

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

Supporting care-experienced young people into education, training, and employment contributes to economic growth and reduces long-term dependency on public services.

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

Ensuring care-experienced individuals have lifelong support will improve their life outcomes, strengthen family stability, and create a fairer system for future generations.

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

This recognition would help address systemic barriers faced by care-experienced people, improving access to education, employment, and housing. It would also strengthen the council's commitment to social justice and inclusion.

### **6.5 Working Towards a Greener Future**

**N/A**

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

By formally recognizing care-experienced individuals, the council reinforces its commitment to inclusivity, fostering a sense of belonging and respect within the local community.

## **7.0 Risk Analysis**

- 7.1 The council must ensure compliance with equality legislation and avoid potential legal challenges if protections are not effectively implemented. Policies and procedures would need to be reviewed and updated to reflect this change.

**8.0 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES**

- 8.1 Care-experienced individuals often face lifelong disadvantages similar to those protected under existing equality laws. Recognizing them as a protected group ensures their unique challenges are formally addressed.
- 8.2 Intersectionality: Many care-experienced individuals belong to other marginalized groups (e.g., those with disabilities, from ethnic minorities, or the LGBTQ+ community). A targeted approach would help address multiple layers of inequality.
- 8.3 Embedding Inclusion in Council Services: From recruitment practices to social care policies, the council must ensure care-experienced people have equal access to opportunities and are not further disadvantaged by systemic barriers.
- 8.4 Implementing this protection would demonstrate the council's commitment to fairness, inclusion, and social responsibility, ensuring better outcomes for care-experienced individuals while strengthening the wider community.

**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.'**

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

**DATE:** 8 September 2025

**REPORTING OFFICER:** Finance Director

**PORTFOLIO:** Corporate Services

**SUBJECT:** Councilwide Spending as at 31 May 2025

**WARD(S):** Borough-wide

## **1.0 PURPOSE OF REPORT**

- 1.1 To report the Council's overall revenue spending position as at 31 May 2025, together with the latest 2025/26 year-end outturn forecast. In addition, details of the 2024/25 year-end outturn position are also provided for information.

## **2.0 RECOMMENDED: That;**

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

## **3.0 SUPPORTING INFORMATION**

- 3.1 On 10 July 2025 the Executive Board received the report shown in the Appendix. This presented details of Councilwide revenue spending by each Department as at 31 May 2025 along with forecasts to year-end, and outlines the reasons for key variances between spending and 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.
- 3.3 A Councilwide monitoring report is presented to Executive Board every two months and the attached report covers the period 1 April 2024 to 31 May 2025. Given it is early in the financial year, the report focused solely upon revenue spending by each Department, however, subsequent reports will also include spending against the 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. In addition to spending as at 31 May 2025, the latest year-end forecasts of variances between revenue spending and budget are provided.
- 3.5 The Executive Board also received on 12 June 2025 a report of the 2024/25 Councilwide outturn, which can be accessed via the following link;

<https://members.halton.gov.uk/documents/s79891/202425%20Spending%20as%20at%2031%20March%202025.pdf>

The final 2024/25 year-end outturn variances have been included in Appendix 1 below, by way of comparison to the current year's figures.

- 3.6 Appendix 3 indicates progress with implementation of previously approved budget savings for 2024/25 and 2025/26. Appendix 4 presents an update of the budget risk register.

#### **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 4 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:** 10 July 2025

**REPORTING OFFICER:** Director of Finance

**PORTFOLIO:** Corporate Services

**SUBJECT:** 2025/26 Spending as at 31 May 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 May 2025 together with a 2025/26 forecast outturn position.

### **3.0 RECOMMENDED: That;**

- (ii) **Executive Directors continue to implement the approved 2025/26 saving proposals as detailed in Appendix 3;**
- (iii) **Executive Directors continue to identify areas where they can further reduce their directorate's spending or generate income, in order to reduce the council wide forecast outturn overspend position;**
- (iv) **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 May 2025 and Appendix 2 provides detailed figures for each individual Department. In overall terms, net Council spending as at 31 May 2025 is £1.073m over budget. The outturn forecast for the year estimates that net spending will be over budget by £6.185m if no corrective action is taken.
- 3.2 The forecast position is of great concern and action to reduce net spend must be taken immediately. Without action being taken the Council will

not be in a position to provide a balanced budget by financial year-end and will further add to borrowings which will need to be taken through Exceptional Financial Support (EFS).

- 3.3 On 10 February 2025 Government issued a letter to the Council confirming it was minded to approve a capitalisation direction of a total not exceeding £52.8 million. The total is broken down by each financial year of the Council's request:
  - £20.8 million in 2024-25.
  - £32 million in 2025-26.
- 3.4 Consistent with those councils that have previously sought Exceptional Financial Support, in order for Government to provide a final capitalisation direction, the council is required to undergo an external assurance review which will include, but will not be limited to, an assessment of the council's financial position and governance arrangements. It is expected this review will be undertaken later in the summer although no date has been fixed as of yet.
- 3.5 Council approved the annual budget of £183.052m on 05 March 2025, in doing so they agreed to the use of EFS totalling £29.385m. If no action is taken to reduce the forecast outturn position of £6.185m it will increase the level of EFS required for the current year to £35.570m, above the provisionally approved limit.
- 3.6 The cost of EFS is significant over the long term for the Council, for every £1m borrowing undertaken it is estimated will cost the Council approximately £100k over each of the next 20 years. It is imperative that action is taken now to reduce the level of planned spend over the remainder of the year and that approved saving proposals are implemented with immediate effect
- 3.7 The figures reflect a prudent yet realistic view of spend and income levels through to the end of the year. Work will continue to progress on updating the financial position as more information is made available.
- 3.8 In setting the 2025/26 budget Council approved significant levels of growth to ensure the budget was more relevant to the planned level of spend. Budget growth of £33.555m (22%) was added to the 2025/26 budget to bring the approved net budget to £183.052m. That the Council is still forecasting an overspend against the 2025/26 budget is a huge concern.
- 3.9 There are continued demand pressures on the budget which are above growth levels provided in the 2025/26 budget, these are more notable against adults community care and home to school transport. Levels of demand covering children in care appear to be under control for the first two months of the year, although still too high for an authority the size of Halton. Further information is provided within the report on the main budgetary pressure areas.

3.10 In setting the 2025/26 budget, inflation of 2% was provided for the pay award. Based on the initial 3.2% pay offer to Trade Unions it is now clear that budgetary growth for the pay award is insufficient, it is currently forecast the additional cost of the 3.2% pay offer will add approximately £1m to the Council's running cost for the year. This additional cost is included within the reported forecast position for the year.

3.11 Another major factor in achieving a balanced budget position for the year is that all approved savings are fully achieved to the agreed levels. In total, savings of £7.225m were agreed for the current year, Appendix 3 provides detail on progress against the approved savings, it is clear significant work needs to be undertaken to ensure these are achieved. As per Appendix 3, savings have been RAG rated to inform on progress, high level summary of this is provided below.

Department	On-course to be achieved	Uncertain or too early to say	Highly likely or certain will not be achieved
	£'000	£'000	£'000
Adult Social Care	100	1,780	0
Finance	0	150	40
Legal	6	0	0
Children & Family Services	0	1,900	22
Education, Inclusion and Provision	0	300	0
Community and Greenspaces	282	0	0
Economy, Enterprise and Property	0	100	0
Planning & Transportation	0	0	100
Public Health	45	0	0
Corporate	0	2,400	0
<b>Totals</b>	<b>433</b>	<b>6,630</b>	<b>162</b>

3.12 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.

3.13 Analysis of agency spend for the year to date, together with comparative analysis of 2024/25 costs, is included in the table below.

	2025/26		2024/25
	As at 31 May 2025		As at 31 March 2025
	£'000		£'000
Adult Social Care	955		6,035
Chief Executives Delivery Unit	130		810
Children & Family Services	574		5,220
Community & Greenspace	71		447
Economy, Enterprise & Property	60		417
Education, Inclusion & Provision	54		295
Finance	3		114
Legal & Democratic Services	63		881
Planning & Transportation	2		210
Public Health & Public Protection	0		22
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,912</b>		<b>14,451</b>

### Revenue - Operational Spending

3.14 Operational net spending for the first two months of the year is higher than the budget to date by £0.833m Based on current forecasts it is estimated net spend will be over budget for the year by £6.185m if no further corrective action is taken.

3.15 Within the overall budget forecast position for the period, the key budget pressure areas are as follows;

#### (i) **Children and Families Department**

The net departmental expenditure is estimated to be over budget profile at the end of financial year by £2.387m with the majority relating to social care services.

Growth budget of £12.1m and £3.9m of Children's Improvement Fund has been provided to the Children's and Families Department for financial year 2025/26. Unfortunately, this has not been sufficient to support the increasing costs across the service.

Although initial forecasts for financial year 2025/26 are showing a reduction in overspend of £6.047 compared to 2024/25 outturn, it's important to note that this is due to the increase in budget not the level of expenditure reducing in the service.

#### Employee Expenditure

Employee costs are forecast to be over budget profile by the end of financial year 2025/26 by £1.449m this is a similar level compared to the outturn for financial year 2024/25.

The level of agency has consistently reduced since October 2024 and is due to agency staff converting to Halton BC employees,



external recruitment and the employment of newly qualified social workers. The expectation is that agency will continue to reduce throughout the remainder of the year. Forecasts will be updated as and when changes are known.

Agency spend across the department remains high with spend totalling £0.574m.

One area of concern relates to the number of staff that remain in addition to the establishment (IATE). These are staff that are currently not allocated to an established role within their respective team. This figure currently stands at 9 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

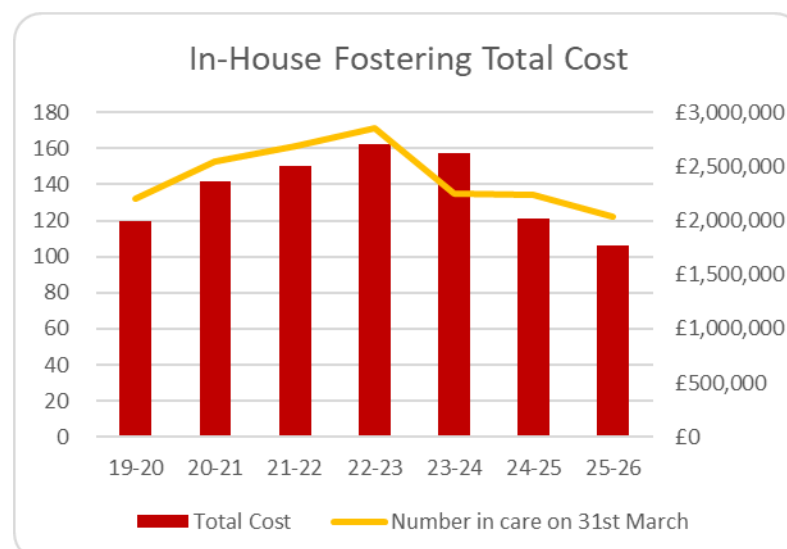
Supplies and services expenditure is forecast to be £1.057m over budget profile at the end of the financial year. Supplies and Services is diverse and covers a number of areas including nursery fees, consultancy, translation costs, equipment and support provided to young people.

A number of initiatives are being looked into to target specific areas of spend within supplies and services.

The creation of the Edge of Care and Family Time Teams should support the reduction of Supplies and Services expenditure. There is hope that particular tasks will no longer need to be outsourced which could result in the reduction in supplies and service.

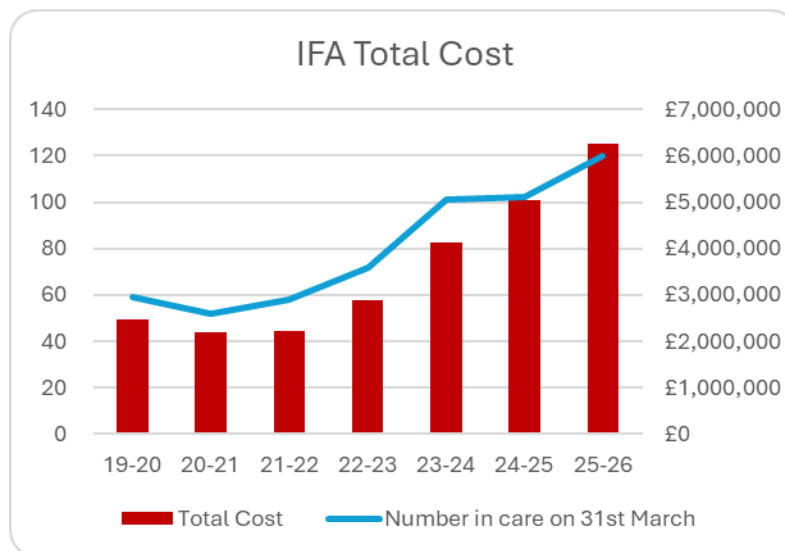
### Fostering

Inhouse fostering placements is estimated to be £0.515m under budget profile for financial year 2025/26.



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 Independent Fostering Agencies (IFA). Higher numbers of children placed within IFA provision and increased IFA rates has resulted in an estimated forecast overspend for the end of 2025/26 as £0.785m.



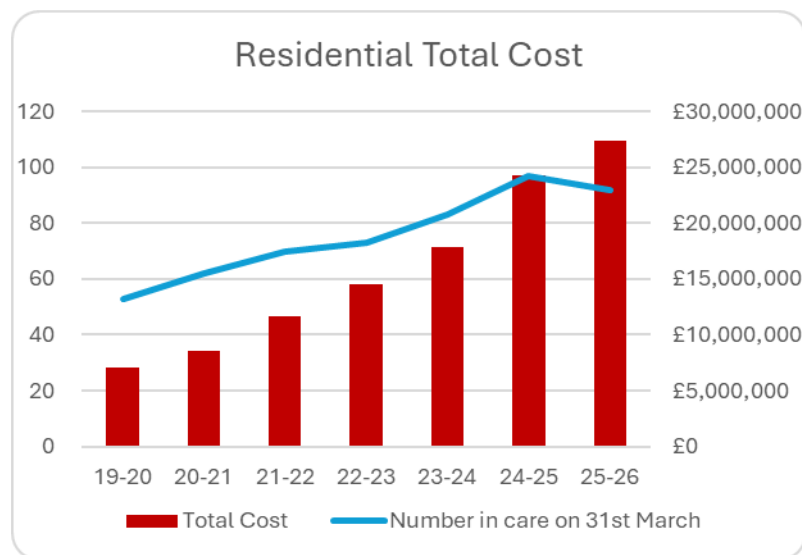
### Residential Care

Out of Borough Residential Care continues to be a budget pressure for the Children and Families Department as the costs of residential care have continue 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.

Residential care costs are forecast to be under budget profile by £0.038m, although this is a significant reduction of £5.994m overspend compared to financial 2024/25, it's important to note that residential care budgets have been increased by more than £10m.

The level of forecast expenditure for residential care is £1.8m higher than the outturn spend for 2024/25.

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

The net spend position for the community care budget at the end of May 2025 is currently £0.502m over the available budget and the year end forecast shows net spend to be £2.627m over the annual budget.

This forecast is as things stand at the moment assuming no material changes, apart from increased demand of 4.9% and the agreed fee increase of 8% with care providers. However there is a risk that the forecast could be significantly more as the ICB carry out a formal “turnaround” reviewing all NHS spend which may impact on the community care budget and could result in more challenges to social care funding requests.

To mitigate this financial risk a number of actions are being considered for implementation to reduce costs and help bring spend back in line with budget. These are detailed below:

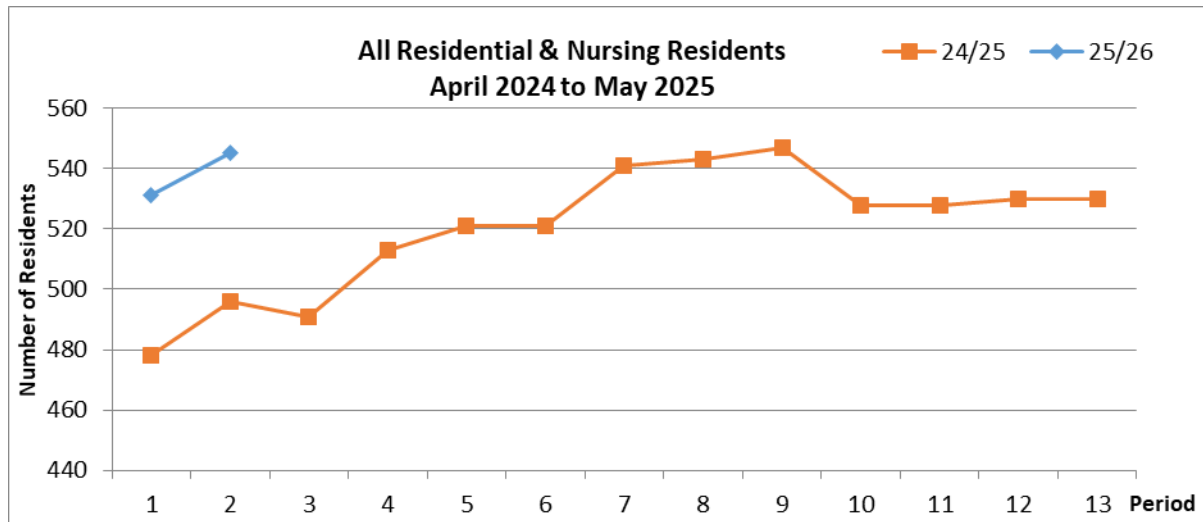
- Reduction of 1 to 1 packages of care if health’s responsibility
- Review 15 minutes packages of domiciliary care to identify medicine prompts which are health’s financial responsibility
- Ensure assessments carried out on discharge from hospital are complete and appropriate
- Maximise internal care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

### Residential & Nursing Care

There are currently 545 residents in external residential/nursing care as at the end of May 2025 compared to 530 at the end of 2024/25, an increase of 2.8%. Compared to the 2024/25 average of 520 this is an increase of 4.8%. The average cost of a package

of care is currently £940.85 compared to £850.24 at the end of 2024/25 an increase of 10.6%. Supplementary invoice payments so far amount to £86k.

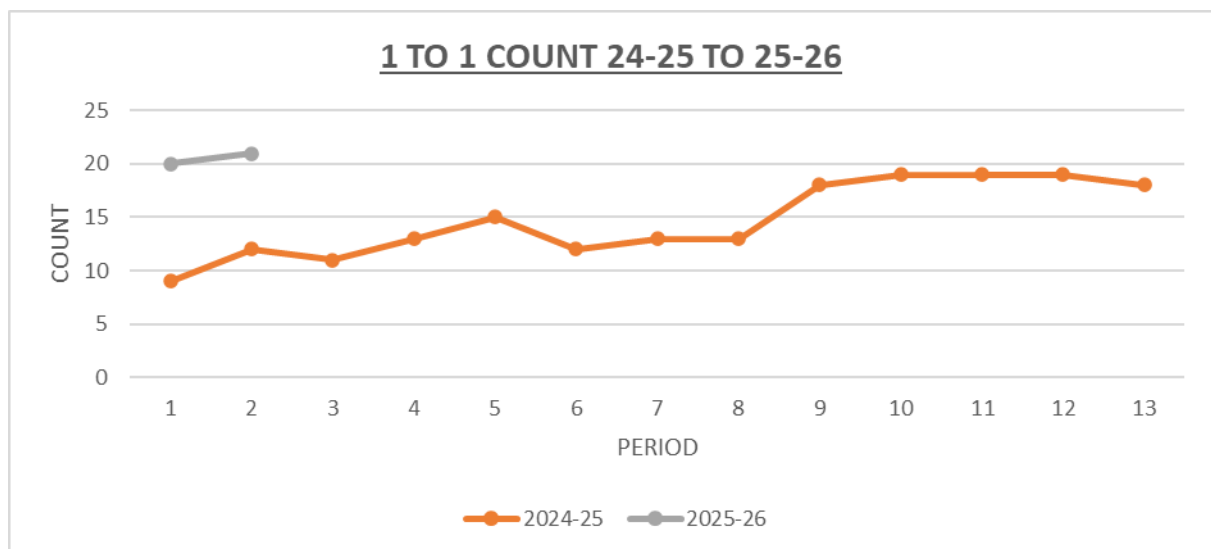
The graph below illustrates the demand for all residential and nursing placements.



### 1 to 1 Support In Care Homes

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

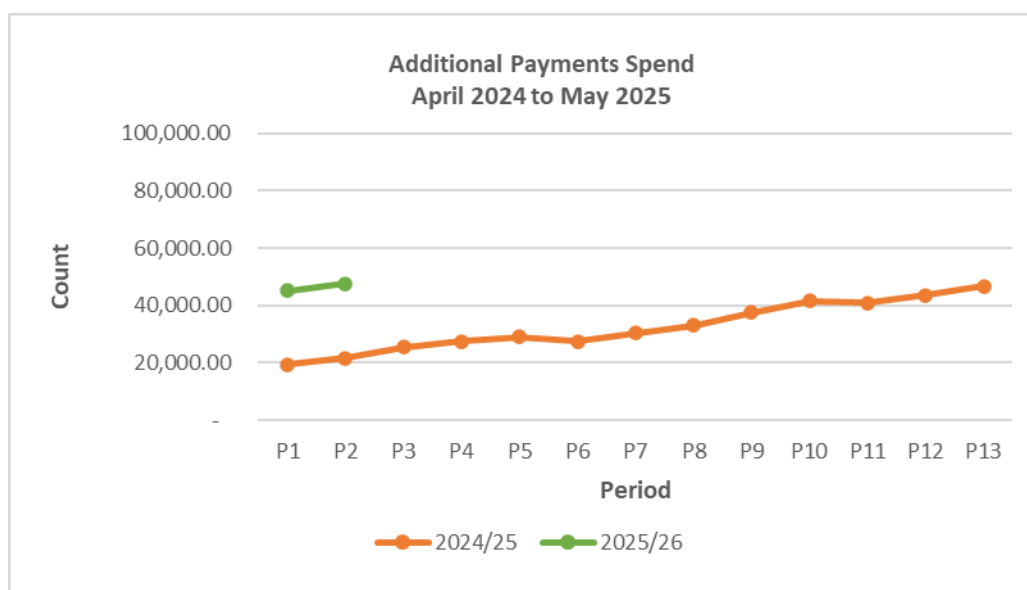
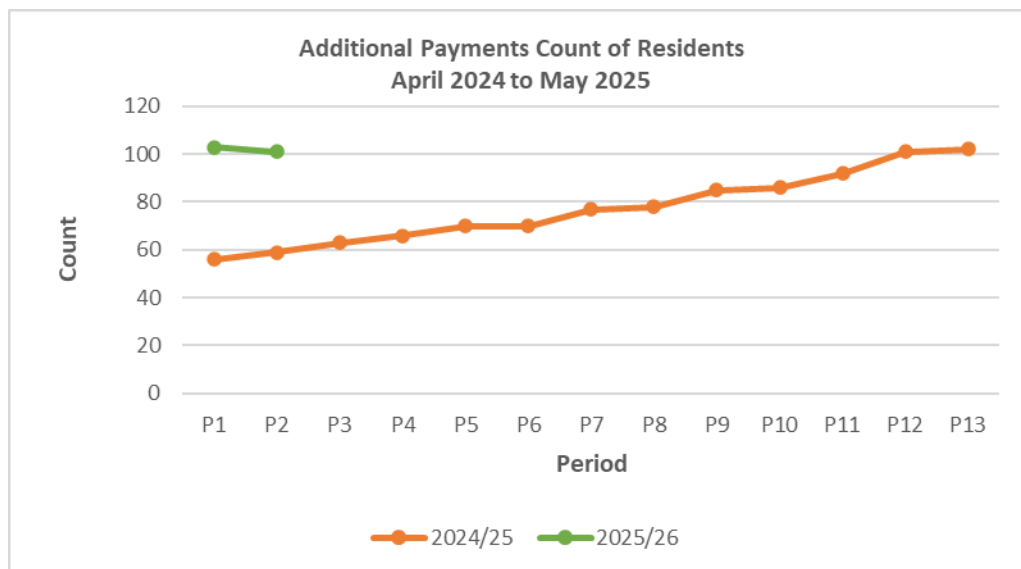
The graph below shows the count of service users receiving 1 to 1 care by period and clearly demonstrates an increase, particularly compared with the same period last year rising from 12 to 21. This is an increase of 75%.



### Additional Payments 2025/26

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

The graph below illustrates the count of service users with an additional payment by period. This clearly shows a steady increase in numbers and costs for 24/25. The spend up to Period 2 2025/26 is £92,526.32. If numbers and costs remain the same (101) the forecast spend for the year will be approximately £0.615m.

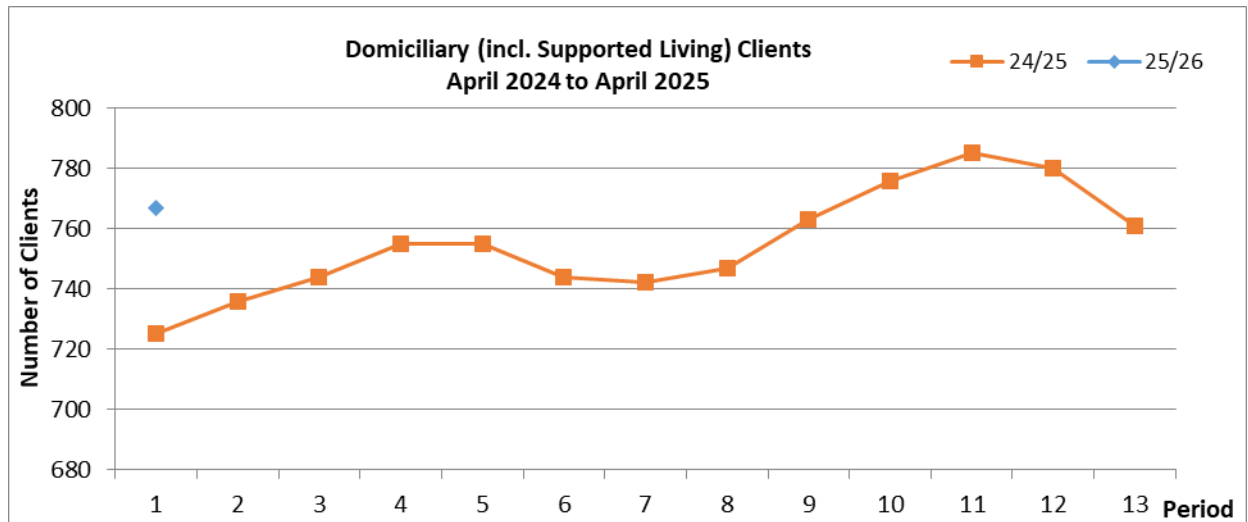


### Domiciliary Care & Supported Living

There are currently 767 service users receiving a package of care at home, compared to the average in 2024/25 of 754, an increase

of 1.7%. However, compared with April 2024 the increase is 5.8%. The average cost of a package of care is currently £452.39 compared with £450.64 in 2024/25.

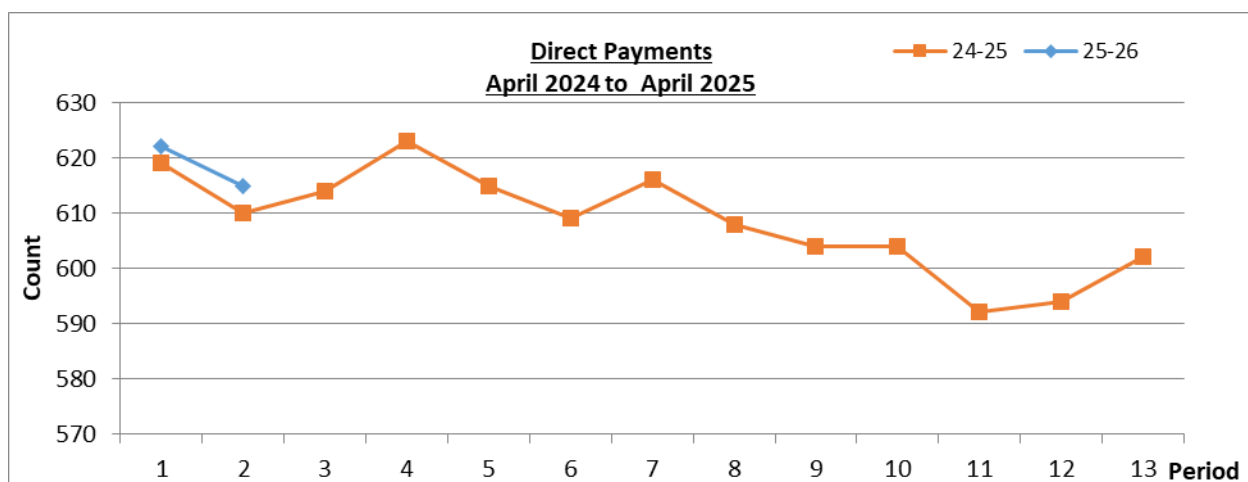
The graph below illustrates the demand for the service from April 2024 to April 2025.



### Direct Payments

The average number of clients who received a Direct Payment (DP) in Period 2 was 615 compared with 622 in Period 1, a decrease of 1.1%. The average cost of a package of care has also decreased from £571.26 to £511.50, a reduction of 10.46%.

The graph below shows movement throughout the year.



### Care Homes

Employee related expenditure is over budget profile at the end of May 2025 by £0.064M, with the expected outturn at the end of financial year being £0.517m over budget. Projections take into account agency spending patterns over the previous 3 financial

years, which consistently show increased spending patterns in the latter half of the financial year.

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

Due to pressures with recruitment and retention in the sector, heavy reliance is being placed on overtime and expensive agency staff to support the care homes. At the end of May 2025 total agency spend across the care homes reached £0.585M, the cost of this has partially been offset by staff vacancies.

### (iii) **Education, Inclusion and Provision**

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

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

2025-26 as at May-25					
Area	Number of Users	Budget £000	Projected Spend £000	Variance £000	Average Cost per User
In Borough	484	1857	2066	(209)	£3,743.62
Out of Borough	145	1214	1612	(398)	£9,263.98
<b>Total</b>	<b>629</b>	<b>3071</b>	<b>3678</b>	<b>(607)</b>	

Note the above table excludes efficiency savings of £0.300m approved for the 2025/26 budget.

A Home to School transport consultation has been undertaken 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. The consultation has been completed and the results have been analysed and recommendations put to Executive Board for possible policy changes from the beginning of the new academic year. However, it is too early to say if the savings can be achieved.

The current records show 629 service users, the majority of which attend schools within the Borough. The Out of Borough overspend has decreased compared to the previous year's overspend of £0.799m due to £0.712m added to the budget in 2025/26 for growth. The demand for the School Transport service is increasing in line with the increasing number of pupils with SEN within the Borough. The graphs below show the number of SEN children using this service, 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.

**(iv) Corporate and Democracy**

The Corporate & Democracy budget is currently forecasting an underspend against budget of £1.860m at the end of the financial year, there are a number of reasons for this.

Included within the budget are council wide saving proposals of £2.4m, it is currently estimated that only £0.5m of these savings will be achieved by 31 March 2026. Further details of the agreed savings are included at Appendix 3.

The additional cost of the pay award over the approved budget is estimated to cost the Council an additional £1m in the current financial year. This estimate has been included within Corporate and Democracy until the pay award is agreed and implemented.

Contingency of £4.251m is included and assumed will not be called upon (for new spend) through to 31 March 2026. The high level of contingency was included within the budget to allow for the gradual reduction in agency costs, demand and general cost pressures.

**Collection Fund**

- 3.16 The council tax collection rate through to the end of May 2025 is 18.53% which is 0.05% 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. £0.785m has so far been collected this year in relation to previous years' debt.

- 3.17 Business rate collection through to the end of May 2025 is 24.43% which is 1.22% lower than the collection rate at the same point last year.

£0.344m has so far been collected this year in relation to previous years' debt.



## Review of Reserves

- 3.18 As at 31 May 2025 the Council's General Reserve is unchanged from the previous period at £5.149m, which represents 2.81% of the Council's 2025/26 net budget. This level of General Reserve is considered to be insufficient and provides little to cover unforeseen costs. Within the Medium Term Financial Strategy, growth to reserves will be included at a rate of £2m per year.
- 3.19 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

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

<b>Summary of General and Earmarked Reserves</b>	
<b>Reserve</b>	<b>Reserve Value £m</b>
<b>Corporate:</b>	
General Fund	5.149
Capital Reserve	0.499
Insurance Reserve	0.849
<b>Specific Projects:</b>	
Adult Social Care	0.710
Fleet Replacement	0.454
Highways Feasibility Costs	0.102
Local Development Framework	0.544
Community & Environment	0.546
Mersey Valley Golf Club	0.480
Mersey Gateway	34.351
CCLA Property Fund	0.263
Various Other	0.562
<b>Grants:</b>	
Building Schools for the Future	6.529
Public Health	1.504
Supporting Families Performance Payments	0.204
Children's & Education	1.225
Domestic Abuse	0.915
Enterprise & Employment	0.787
Food Waste Collection	0.237
Various Other	0.156
<b>Total Earmarked Reserves</b>	<b>56.066</b>

- 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 £5.149m of the General Fund could now be used for these purposes, as all remaining reserves are committed for specific purposes.

#### **4.0 CONCLUSIONS**

- 4.1 As at 31 May 2025, net revenue spend is forecast to be £6.185m over the budget to date despite significant levels of growth being included within the budget.
- 4.2 Urgent corrective should be taken as soon as possible across all Council services to identify spend reductions and ensure that agreed savings are fully implemented in a timely manner.
- 4.3 Departments should ensure that all spending continues to be limited to what is absolutely essential throughout the remainder of the year, to ensure that the forecast outturn overspend is minimised as far as possible and future spending is brought in line with budget.

#### **5.0 POLICY AND OTHER 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 4.

**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 May 2025

## APPENDIX 1

Directorate / Department	2024/25 Outturn (overspend) £'000	2025/26 Annual Budget £'000	Budget To Date £'000	Actual To Date £'000	Variance (Overspend) £'000	May 2025 Forecast Outturn (overspend) £'000
Adult Social Care	(546)	24,522	3,896	3,841	55	0
Care Homes	(1,283)	7,932	1,486	1,768	(282)	(794)
Community Care	(2,651)	27,061	3,004	3,506	(502)	(2,627)
Complex Care Pool	0	13,189	1,227	1,225	2	0
<b>Adults Directorate</b>	<b>(4,480)</b>	<b>72,704</b>	<b>9,613</b>	<b>10,340</b>	<b>(727)</b>	<b>(3,421)</b>
Finance	(312)	5,430	1,413	1,404	9	(113)
Legal & Democratic Services	(1,144)	-170	-60	0	(60)	(482)
ICT & Support Services	282	197	1,285	1,253	32	70
Chief Executives Delivery Unit	(31)	1,110	342	347	(5)	(21)
<b>Chief Executives Directorate</b>	<b>(1,205)</b>	<b>6,567</b>	<b>2,980</b>	<b>3,004</b>	<b>(24)</b>	<b>(546)</b>
Children & Families	(8,434)	53,903	4,939	5,378	(439)	(2,387)
Education, Inclusion & Provision	(1,254)	12,095	1,115	1,307	(192)	(1,239)
<b>Children's Directorate</b>	<b>(9,688)</b>	<b>65,998</b>	<b>6,054</b>	<b>6,685</b>	<b>(631)</b>	<b>(3,626)</b>
Community & Greenspace	204	23,602	1,170	1,212	(42)	(134)
Economy, Enterprise & Property	175	2,602	236	268	(32)	55
Planning & Transportation	280	9,256	449	561	(112)	(672)
<b>Environment &amp; Regeneration Directorate</b>	<b>659</b>	<b>35,460</b>	<b>1,855</b>	<b>2,041</b>	<b>(186)</b>	<b>(751)</b>
Corporate & Democracy	(1,457)	443	574	129	445	1,860
Public Health Directorate	98	1,880	-1,759	-1,810	51	299
<b>Total Operational Net Spend</b>	<b>(16,073)</b>	<b>183,052</b>	<b>18,808</b>	<b>19,890</b>	<b>(1,073)</b>	<b>(6,185)</b>



## Adult Social Care

## APPENDIX 2

	Annual Budget £'000	Budget to Date £'000	Actual Spend £'000	Variance (Overspend) £'000	Forecast Outturn £'000
<b>Expenditure</b>					
Employees	18,077	3,038	2,778	260	1,302
Agency- Covering Vacancies	0	0	280	(280)	(1,567)
Premises	498	124	122	2	16
Supplies & Services	698	145	155	(10)	(52)
Aids & Adaptations	37	6	6	0	(4)
Transport	341	57	42	15	79
Food & Drink Provisions	228	38	24	14	78
Supported Accommodation and Services	1,408	235	184	51	269
Emergency Duty Team	157	0	0	0	(13)
Transfer To Reserves	295	0	0	0	0
Contracts & SLAs	1,050	189	189	0	0
					0
<u>Housing Solutions Grant Funded Schemes</u>					
Homelessness Prevention	548	196	193	3	0
Rough Sleepers Initiative	139	0	0	0	0
<b>Total Expenditure</b>	<b>23,476</b>	<b>4,028</b>	<b>3,973</b>	<b>55</b>	<b>108</b>
<b>Income</b>					
Fees & Charges	-1,044	-111	-62	(49)	(300)
Sales & Rents Income	-538	-175	-208	33	150
Reimbursements & Grant Income	-2,089	-96	-103	7	42
Capital Salaries	-117	0	0	0	0
Housing Schemes Income	-687	-687	-687	0	0
<b>Total Income</b>	<b>-4,475</b>	<b>-1,069</b>	<b>-1,060</b>	<b>(9)</b>	<b>(108)</b>
<b>Net Operational Expenditure</b>	<b>19,001</b>	<b>2,959</b>	<b>2,913</b>	<b>46</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>Recharges</b>					
Premises Support	789	132	132	0	0
Transport	792	132	142	-10	0
Central Support	4,039	673	673	0	0
Asset Rental Support	13	0	0	0	0
HBC Support Costs Income	-112	0	-19	19	0
<b>Net Total Recharges</b>	<b>5,521</b>	<b>937</b>	<b>928</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>Net Departmental Expenditure</b>	<b>24,522</b>	<b>3,896</b>	<b>3,841</b>	<b>55</b>	<b>0</b>

## Care Homes

	Annual Budget £'000	Budget to Date £'000	Actual Spend £'000	Variance (Overspend) £'000	Forecast Outturn £'000
<b>Expenditure</b>					
<b><u>Madeline Mckenna</u></b>					
Employees	770	122	116	6	52
Agency - covering vacancies	0	0	10	(10)	(77)
Other Premises	90	14	5	9	15
Supplies & Services	26	3	6	(3)	(12)
Food Provison	51	4	9	(5)	(5)
Private Client and Out Of Borough Income	-127	-7	-5	(2)	(24)
Reimbursements & other Grant Income	-23	-2	-3	1	10
<b>Total Madeline Mckenna Expenditure</b>	<b>787</b>	<b>134</b>	<b>138</b>	<b>(4)</b>	<b>(41)</b>
<b><u>Millbrow</u></b>					
Employees	2,280	350	199	151	1,088
Agency - covering vacancies	0	0	178	(178)	(1,308)
Other Premises	117	16	19	(3)	(13)
Supplies & Services	72	11	16	(5)	(30)
Food Provison	81	7	13	(6)	(10)
Private Client and Out Of Borough Income	-13	-2	-5	3	11
Reimbursements & other Grant Income	-742	-62	-67	5	10
<b>Total Millbrow Expenditure</b>	<b>1,795</b>	<b>320</b>	<b>353</b>	<b>(33)</b>	<b>(252)</b>
<b><u>St Luke's</u></b>					
Employees	3,595	614	392	222	1,603
Agency - covering vacancies	0	0	252	(252)	(1,777)
Other Premises	156	19	29	(10)	(55)
Supplies & Services	67	10	13	(3)	(10)
Food Provison	128	21	26	(5)	(30)
Private Client and Out Of Borough Income	-152	-19	-15	(4)	0
Reimbursements & other Grant Income	-1,080	-83	-82	(1)	0
<b>Total St Luke's Expenditure</b>	<b>2,714</b>	<b>562</b>	<b>615</b>	<b>(53)</b>	<b>(269)</b>
<b><u>St Patrick's</u></b>					
Employees	2,031	338	365	(27)	700
Agency - covering vacancies	0	0	145	(145)	(927)
Other Premises	144	17	24	(7)	(20)
Supplies & Services	67	9	12	(3)	(10)
Food Provison	127	21	17	4	0
Private Client and Out Of Borough Income	-99	-8	-5	(3)	(10)
Reimbursements & other Grant Income	-684	-83	-48	(35)	(94)
<b>Total St Patrick's Expenditure</b>	<b>1,586</b>	<b>294</b>	<b>510</b>	<b>(216)</b>	<b>(361)</b>
<b><u>Care Homes Divison Management</u></b>					
Employees	322	54	30	24	129
<b>Care Home Divison Management</b>	<b>322</b>	<b>54</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>129</b>
<b>Net Operational Expenditure</b>	<b>7,204</b>	<b>1,364</b>	<b>1,646</b>	<b>(282)</b>	<b>(794)</b>
<b>Recharges</b>					
Premises Support	65	11	11	0	0
Transport Support	0	0	0	0	0
Central Support	663	111	111	0	0
Asset Rental Support	0	0	0	0	0
Recharge Income	0	0	0	0	0
<b>Net Total Recharges</b>	<b>728</b>	<b>122</b>	<b>122</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>Net Departmental Expenditure</b>	<b>7,932</b>	<b>1,486</b>	<b>1,768</b>	<b>(282)</b>	<b>(794)</b>



**Community Care**

	<b>Annual Budget £'000</b>	<b>Budget to Date £'000</b>	<b>Actual Spend £'000</b>	<b>Variance (Overspend) £'000</b>	<b>Forecast Outturn £'000</b>
<b>Expenditure</b>					
Residential & Nursing	20,674	1,340	1,395	(55)	(333)
Domiciliary Care & Supported living	15,564	691	861	(170)	(1,343)
Direct Payments	15,513	3,430	3,644	(214)	(972)
Day Care	712	62	60	2	13
<b>Total Expenditure</b>	<b>52,463</b>	<b>5,523</b>	<b>5,960</b>	<b>(437)</b>	<b>(2,635)</b>
<b>Income</b>					
Residential & Nursing Income	-11,881	-729	-732	3	14
Community Care Income	-3,115	-230	-159	(71)	(210)
Direct Payments Income	-1,034	-77	-80	3	204
Income from other CCGs	-420	0	0	0	0
Market sustainability & Improvement Grant	-2,796	-466	-466	0	0
Adult Social Care Support Grant	-6,102	-1,017	-1,017	0	0
War Pension Disregard Grant	-54	0	0	0	0
<b>Total Income</b>	<b>-25,402</b>	<b>-2,519</b>	<b>-2,454</b>	<b>(65)</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>Net Operational Expenditure</b>	<b>27,061</b>	<b>3,004</b>	<b>3,506</b>	<b>(502)</b>	<b>(2,627)</b>



**Complex Care Pool**

	<b>Annual Budget £'000</b>	<b>Budget to Date £'000</b>	<b>Actual Spend £'000</b>	<b>Variance (Overspend) £'000</b>	<b>Forecast Outturn £'000</b>
<b>Expenditure</b>					
Intermediate Care Services	6,312	494	500	(6)	(31)
Oakmeadow	1,995	299	295	4	22
Community Home Care First	1,941	142	132	10	42
Joint Equipment Store	880	0	0	0	0
Contracts & SLA's	3,262	0	0	0	0
Inglenook	134	14	8	6	34
HICafs	3,720	98	121	(23)	(124)
Carers Breaks	445	27	20	7	47
Carers centre	365	0	0	0	0
Residential Care	7,236	906	906	0	0
Domiciliary Care & Supported Living	4,336	723	723	0	0
Pathway 3/Discharge Access	426	0	0	0	(2)
HBC Contracts	72	22	22	0	0
Healthy at Home	28	0	0	0	0
Capacity	30	0	-4	4	12
<b>Total Expenditure</b>	<b>31,182</b>	<b>2,725</b>	<b>2,723</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>Income</b>					
BCF	-15,032	-1,253	-1,253	0	0
CCG Contribution to Pool	-2,959	-246	-246	0	0
Oakmeadow Income	-2	0	0	0	0
<b>Total Income</b>	<b>-17,993</b>	<b>-1,499</b>	<b>-1,499</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>Net Operational Expenditure</b>	<b>13,189</b>	<b>1,227</b>	<b>1,225</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>0</b>

## Finance Department

	Annual Budget	Budget to Date	Actual Spend	Variance (Overspend)	Forecast Outturn
	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
<b>Expenditure</b>					
Employees	7,242	1,163	1,149	14	86
Insurances	1,042	546	521	25	169
Supplies & Services	1,103	58	71	(13)	(76)
Rent Allowances	31,500	4,275	4,275	0	0
Concessionary Travel	1,902	0	-45	45	91
LCR Levy	1,902	0	0	0	0
Bad Debt Provision	223	4	0	4	25
Non HRA Rent Rebates	70	12	3	9	57
Discretionary Social Fund	106	16	0	16	97
Discretionary Housing Payments	279	41	40	1	2
Household Support Fund Expenditure	420	420	420	0	0
<b>Total Expenditure</b>	<b>45,789</b>	<b>6,535</b>	<b>6,434</b>	<b>101</b>	<b>451</b>
<b>Income</b>					
Fees & Charges	-342	-123	-131	8	52
Burdens Grant	-58	-59	-63	4	24
Dedicated schools Grant	-150	0	0	0	0
Council Tax Liability Order	-670	-64	-55	(9)	(50)
Recovery of Legal Costs	-10	-2	0	(2)	(10)
Business Rates Admin Grant	-157	0	0	0	1
Schools SLAs	-319	-2	0	(2)	(10)
LCR Reimbursement	-1,902	0	0	0	0
HB Overpayment Debt Recovery	-300	-47	-35	(12)	(75)
Rent Allowances	-30,700	-4,262	-4,142	(120)	(684)
Non HRA Rent Rebate	-70	-14	-13	(1)	(5)
Discretionary Housing Payment Grant	-279	-93	-93	0	(2)
Housing Benefits Admin Grant	-453	-76	-76	0	0
Housing Benefits Award Accuracy	0	0	-22	22	22
Universal Credits	-5	-1	0	(1)	(5)
Household Support Fund Grant	-420	326	326	0	0
VEP Grant	0	0	0	0	5
CCG McMillan Reimbursement	-89	0	0	0	0
Reimbursements & Grant Income	-185	0	-21	21	173
Transfer from Reserves	-21	0	0	0	0
<b>Total Income</b>	<b>-36,130</b>	<b>-4,417</b>	<b>-4,325</b>	<b>(92)</b>	<b>(564)</b>
<b>Net Operational Expenditure</b>	<b>9,659</b>	<b>2,118</b>	<b>2,109</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>(113)</b>
<b>Recharges</b>					
Premises Support	493	82	82	0	0
Transport	0	0	0	0	0
Central Support	2,092	349	349	0	0
Asset Rental Support	0	0	0	0	0
HBC Support Costs Income	-6,814	-1,136	-1,136	0	0
<b>Net Total Recharges</b>	<b>-4,229</b>	<b>-705</b>	<b>-705</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>Net Departmental Expenditure</b>	<b>5,430</b>	<b>1,413</b>	<b>1,404</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>(113)</b>

## Legal Services

	Annual Budget £'000	Budget to Date £'000	Actual Spend £'000	Variance (Overspend) £'000	Forecast Outturn £'000
<b>Expenditure</b>					
Employees	1,836	244	261	(17)	(101)
Agency Related Expenditure	34	34	63	(29)	(174)
Supplies & Services	163	63	60	3	16
Civic Catering & Functions	21	1	1	0	5
Legal Expenses	422	2	5	(3)	(145)
Transport Related Expenditure	8	2	3	(1)	(1)
Other Expenditure	0	1	1	0	(1)
<b>Total Expenditure</b>	<b>2,484</b>	<b>347</b>	<b>394</b>	<b>-47</b>	<b>(401)</b>
<b>Income</b>					
Fees & Charges Income	-75	-10	-4	(6)	(40)
Reimbursement & Other Grants	0	0	0	0	2
School SLA's	-100	-4	0	(4)	(23)
Licence Income	-341	-37	-34	(3)	(20)
<b>Total Income</b>	<b>-516</b>	<b>-51</b>	<b>-38</b>	<b>(13)</b>	<b>(81)</b>
<b>Net Operational Expenditure</b>	<b>1,968</b>	<b>296</b>	<b>356</b>	<b>(60)</b>	<b>(482)</b>
<b>Recharges</b>					
Premises Support	62	10	10	0	0
Transport	0	0	0	0	0
Central Support	275	46	46	0	0
Asset Rental Support	0	0	0	0	0
HBC Support Costs Income	-2,475	-412	-412	0	0
<b>Net Total Recharges</b>	<b>-2,138</b>	<b>-356</b>	<b>-356</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>Net Departmental Expenditure</b>	<b>-170</b>	<b>-60</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>(60)</b>	<b>(482)</b>

## ICT &amp; Support Services Department

	Annual Budget £'000	Budget to Date £'000	Actual Spend £'000	Variance (Overspend) £'000	Forecast Outturn £'000
<b>Expenditure</b>					
Employees	5,827	958	901	57	223
Supplies & Services	1,169	262	295	(33)	(199)
Capital Finance	100	19	6	13	73
Computer Repairs & Software	2,019	1,724	1,697	27	160
Communication Costs	133	25	41	(16)	(92)
Premises	139	55	56	(1)	(6)
Transport	3	0	0	0	1
Other	4	3	4	(1)	(6)
<b>Total Expenditure</b>	<b>9,394</b>	<b>3,046</b>	<b>3,000</b>	<b>46</b>	<b>154</b>
<b>Income</b>					
Fees & Charges	-849	-217	-217	0	2
Schools SLA Income	-659	-14	0	(14)	(86)
<b>Total Income</b>	<b>-1,508</b>	<b>-231</b>	<b>-217</b>	<b>(14)</b>	<b>(84)</b>
<b>Net Operational Expenditure</b>	<b>7,886</b>	<b>2,815</b>	<b>2,783</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>70</b>
<b>Recharges</b>					
Premises Support	373	62	62	0	0
Transport	22	4	4	0	0
Central Support	1,391	232	232	0	0
Asset Rental Support	1,494	0	0	0	0
HBC Support Costs Income	-10,969	-1,828	-1,828	0	0
<b>Net Total Recharges</b>	<b>-7,689</b>	<b>-1,530</b>	<b>-1,530</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>Net Departmental Expenditure</b>	<b>197</b>	<b>1,285</b>	<b>1,253</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>70</b>

## Chief Executives Delivery Unit

	Annual Budget	Budget to Date	Actual Spend	Variance (Overspend)	Forecast Outturn
	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
<b>Expenditure</b>					
Employees	3,522	558	548	10	65
Employees Training	99	42	38	4	21
Apprenticeship Levy	330	54	61	(7)	(41)
Supplies & Services	397	132	130	2	12
<b>Total Expenditure</b>	<b>4,348</b>	<b>786</b>	<b>777</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>57</b>
<b>Income</b>					
Fees & Charges	-226	-26	-24	(2)	(9)
Schools SLA Income	-577	-12	0	(12)	(69)
<b>Total Income</b>	<b>-803</b>	<b>-38</b>	<b>-24</b>	<b>(14)</b>	<b>(78)</b>
<b>Net Operational Expenditure</b>	<b>3,545</b>	<b>748</b>	<b>753</b>	<b>(5)</b>	<b>(21)</b>
<b>Recharges</b>					
Premises Support	157	26	26	0	0
Transport	0	0	0	0	0
Central Support	1,008	168	168	0	0
Asset Rental Support	53	9	9	0	0
HBC Support Costs Income	-3,653	-609	-609	0	0
<b>Net Total Recharges</b>	<b>-2,435</b>	<b>-406</b>	<b>-406</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>Net Departmental Expenditure</b>	<b>1,110</b>	<b>342</b>	<b>347</b>	<b>(5)</b>	<b>(21)</b>

## Children &amp; Families

	Annual Budget	Budget to Date	Actual Spend	Variance (Overspend)	Forecast Outturn
	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
<b>Expenditure</b>					
Employees	19,364	2,808	3,029	(221)	(1,449)
Other Premises	392	92	97	(5)	(39)
Supplies & Services	1,592	0	94	(94)	(1,057)
Transport	367	49	19	30	180
Direct Payments	1,220	261	245	16	94
Commissioned services to Vol Orgs	224	168	168	0	0
Residential Care	27,517	2,130	2,238	(108)	38
Out of Borough Adoption	97	0	0	0	97
Out of Borough Fostering	5,469	248	399	(151)	(785)
In House Adoption	557	24	20	4	22
Special Guardianship Order	2,604	346	323	23	130
In House Foster Carer Placements	2,766	371	283	88	515
Lavender House Contract Costs	279	24	23	1	4
Home Support & Respite	494	67	63	4	25
Care Leavers	434	37	39	(2)	(10)
Family Support	81	10	7	3	15
Contracted services	3	1	1	0	(1)
Emergency Duty	184	0	0	0	0
Youth Offending Services	461	0	0	0	0
Transfer to Reserves	0	0	0	0	0
<b>Total Expenditure</b>	<b>64,105</b>	<b>6,636</b>	<b>7,048</b>	<b>(412)</b>	<b>(2,221)</b>
<b>Income</b>					
Fees & Charges	-33	-9	-7	(2)	(14)
Sales Income	0	0	0	0	0
Rents	-82	0	0	0	0
Reimbursement & other Grant Income	-486	-52	-27	(25)	(153)
Transfer from reserve	-15	0	0	0	1
Dedicated Schools Grant	-50	0	0	0	0
Government Grants	-13,477	-2,293	-2,293	0	0
<b>Total Income</b>	<b>-14,143</b>	<b>-2,354</b>	<b>-2,327</b>	<b>(27)</b>	<b>(166)</b>
<b>Net Operational Expenditure</b>	<b>49,962</b>	<b>4,282</b>	<b>4,721</b>	<b>(439)</b>	<b>(2,387)</b>
<b>Recharges</b>					
Premises Support	736	123	123	0	0
Transport	10	2	2	0	0
Central Support	3,331	555	555	0	0
Asset Rental Support	0	0	0	0	0
HBC Support Costs Income	-136	-23	-23	0	0
<b>Net Total Recharges</b>	<b>3,941</b>	<b>657</b>	<b>657</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>Net Departmental Expenditure</b>	<b>53,903</b>	<b>4,939</b>	<b>5,378</b>	<b>(439)</b>	<b>(2,387)</b>



## Education, Inclusion &amp; Provision

	Annual Budget £'000	Budget to Date £'000	Actual Spend £'000	Variance (Overspend) £'000	Forecast Outturn £'000
<b>Expenditure</b>					
Employees	8,792	1,305	1,314	(9)	248
Agency - covering vacancies	0	0	29	(29)	(204)
Agency - in addition to establishment	43	24	24	0	6
Premises	15	1	0	1	3
Supplies & Services	3,012	300	309	(9)	(54)
Independent School Fees	10,155	3,004	3,004	0	0
Schools Contingency	400	2	2	0	0
Transport	43	3	6	(3)	(20)
Schools Transport	2,771	158	259	(101)	(907)
Early Years Payments including Pupil Premium	15,615	1,954	1,954	0	0
Commissioned Services	2,249	196	194	2	9
Inter Authority Special Needs	1,419	166	166	0	0
Grants to Voluntary Organisations	115	0	1	(1)	(66)
Capital Finance	4,604	712	712	0	1
<b>Total Expenditure</b>	<b>49,233</b>	<b>7,825</b>	<b>7,974</b>	<b>(149)</b>	<b>(984)</b>
<b>Income</b>					
Fees & Charges Income	-337	-126	-129	3	20
Government Grant Income	-6,534	-1,549	-1,549	0	0
Dedicated Schools Grant	-30,161	-5,027	-5,027	0	0
Inter Authority Income	-446	-94	-59	(35)	(211)
Reimbursements & Other Grant Income	-1,773	-298	-298	0	0
Schools SLA Income	-538	-12	-2	(10)	(59)
Government Grant Income	-491	-142	-142	0	0
<b>Total Income</b>	<b>-40,280</b>	<b>-7,248</b>	<b>-7,206</b>	<b>(42)</b>	<b>(250)</b>
<b>Net Operational Expenditure</b>	<b>8,953</b>	<b>577</b>	<b>768</b>	<b>(191)</b>	<b>(1,234)</b>
<b>Recharges</b>					
Premises Support	405	68	68	0	0
Transport Support	773	146	147	(1)	(5)
Central Support	1,947	324	324	0	0
Asset Rental Support	17	0	0	0	0
Recharge Income	0	0	0	0	0
<b>Net Total Recharges</b>	<b>3,142</b>	<b>538</b>	<b>539</b>	<b>(1)</b>	<b>(5)</b>
<b>Net Departmental Expenditure</b>	<b>12,095</b>	<b>1,115</b>	<b>1,307</b>	<b>(192)</b>	<b>(1,239)</b>

## Community &amp; Greenspaces

	Annual Budget £'000	Budget to Date £'000	Actual Spend £'000	Variance (Overspend) £'000	Forecast Outturn £'000
<b>Expenditure</b>					
Employees	15,296	2,506	2,410	96	580
Agency - in addition to establishment	16	16	69	(53)	(237)
Premises	3,304	416	440	(24)	(139)
Supplies & Services	3,101	258	287	(29)	(176)
Transport	117	2	4	(2)	(10)
Other Agency Costs	240	63	81	(18)	(111)
Other Expenditure	172	0	0	0	6
Waste Disposal Contracts	7,121	0	0	0	(22)
Grants to Voluntary Organisations	41	9	7	2	16
Transfers to Reserves	97	0	0	0	0
<b>Total Expenditure</b>	<b>29,505</b>	<b>3,270</b>	<b>3,297</b>	<b>(27)</b>	<b>(93)</b>
<b>Income</b>					
Sales Income	-1,342	-268	-275	7	42
Fees & Charges Income	-6,019	-1,524	-1,510	(14)	(89)
Rental Income	-1,111	-174	-159	(15)	(85)
Government Grant Income	-3,861	-1,288	-1,288	0	0
Reimbursement & Other Grant Income	-801	-115	-115	0	0
SLA Income	-23	0	0	0	0
Internal Fees Income	-223	0	-18	18	155
Capital Salaries	-236	-6	0	(6)	(35)
Transfers From Reserves	-30	0	0	0	0
<b>Total Income</b>	<b>-13,646</b>	<b>-3,375</b>	<b>-3,365</b>	<b>(10)</b>	<b>(12)</b>
<b>Net Operational Expenditure</b>	<b>15,859</b>	<b>-105</b>	<b>-68</b>	<b>(37)</b>	<b>(105)</b>
<b>Recharges</b>					
Premises Support	1,657	276	276	0	0
Transport	2,433	424	429	(5)	(29)
Central Support	4,297	716	716	0	0
Asset Rental Support	199	0	0	0	0
HBC Support Costs Income	-843	-141	-141	0	0
<b>Net Total Recharges</b>	<b>7,743</b>	<b>1,275</b>	<b>1,280</b>	<b>(5)</b>	<b>(29)</b>
<b>Net Departmental Expenditure</b>	<b>23,602</b>	<b>1,170</b>	<b>1,212</b>	<b>(42)</b>	<b>(134)</b>

## Economy, Enterprise & Property

	Annual Budget	Budget to Date	Actual Spend	Variance (Overspend)	Forecast Outturn
	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
<b>Expenditure</b>					
Employees	4,124	773	710	63	376
Agency - covering vacancies	0	0	85	(85)	(270)
Repairs & Maintenance	1,690	133	150	(17)	(98)
Premises	173	136	136	0	(1)
Energy & Water Costs	1,080	93	87	6	37
NNDR	659	629	629	0	0
Rents	157	0	0	0	1
Economic Regeneration Activities	88	0	0	0	0
Security	603	4	3	1	3
Supplies & Services	383	63	62	1	8
Supplies & Services - Grant	576	97	97	0	0
Grants to Voluntary Organisations	72	11	12	(1)	(1)
<b>Total Expenditure</b>	<b>9,605</b>	<b>1,939</b>	<b>1,971</b>	<b>(32)</b>	<b>55</b>
<b>Income</b>					
Fees & Charges Income	-561	-103	-103	0	0
Rent - Commercial Properties	-883	-158	-158	0	0
Rent - Investment Properties	-38	-8	-8	0	0
Government Grant	-594	-55	-55	0	0
Reimbursements & Other Grant Income	-120	-241	-241	0	0
Schools SLA Income	-55	0	0	0	0
Recharges to Capital	-454	0	0	0	0
Transfer from Reserves	-602	-522	-522	0	0
<b>Total Income</b>	<b>-3,307</b>	<b>-1,087</b>	<b>-1,087</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>Net Operational Expenditure</b>	<b>6,298</b>	<b>852</b>	<b>884</b>	<b>(32)</b>	<b>55</b>
<b>Recharges</b>					
Premises Support	2,738	456	456	0	0
Transport	26	5	5	0	0
Central Support	2,878	480	480	0	0
Asset Rental Support	4	0	0	0	0
HBC Support Costs Income	-9,342	-1,557	-1,557	0	0
<b>Net Total Recharges</b>	<b>-3,696</b>	<b>-616</b>	<b>-616</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>Net Departmental Expenditure</b>	<b>2,602</b>	<b>236</b>	<b>268</b>	<b>(32)</b>	<b>55</b>

## Planning & Transportation Department

	Annual Budget £'000	Budget to Date £'000	Actual Spend £'000	Variance (Overspend) £'000	Forecast Outturn £'000
<b>Expenditure</b>					
Employees	5,975	967	947	20	125
Efficiency Savings	-100	-17	0	(17)	(100)
Premises	188	62	56	6	38
Hired & Contracted Services	380	3	15	(12)	(74)
Supplies & Services	117	41	65	(24)	(148)
Street Lighting	1,643	1	32	(31)	(191)
Highways Maintenance - Routine & Reactive	1,803	99	169	(70)	(425)
Highways Maintenance - Programmed Works	812	43	0	43	259
Fleet Transport	1,467	206	201	5	32
Bus Support - Halton Hopper Tickets	14	0	0	0	(3)
Bus Support	506	36	36	0	0
Agency Related Expenditure	8	1	1	0	3
Grants to Voluntary Organisations	31	31	31	0	0
NRA Levy	75	0	0	0	0
LCR Levy	1,553	0	0	0	0
Contribution to Reserves	359	0	0	0	0
<b>Total Expenditure</b>	<b>14,831</b>	<b>1,473</b>	<b>1,553</b>	<b>(80)</b>	<b>(484)</b>
<b>Income</b>					
Sales & Rents Income	-97	-16	-11	(5)	(27)
Planning Fees	-798	-198	-159	(39)	(232)
Building Control Fees	-251	-39	-33	(6)	(35)
Other Fees & Charges	-971	-193	-186	(7)	(40)
Reimbursements & Grant Income	-174	-36	-36	0	0
Government Grant Income	0	-4	-5	1	0
Halton Hopper Income	-15	-3	-2	(1)	(6)
Recharge to Capital	-210	0	0	0	0
LCR Levy Reimbursement	-1,553	0	0	0	0
Contribution from Reserves	-129	-129	-129	0	0
<b>Total Income</b>	<b>-4,198</b>	<b>-618</b>	<b>-561</b>	<b>(57)</b>	<b>(340)</b>
<b>Net Operational Expenditure</b>	<b>10,633</b>	<b>855</b>	<b>992</b>	<b>(137)</b>	<b>(824)</b>
<b>Recharges</b>					
Premises Support	739	123	123	0	0
Transport	808	118	120	(2)	(13)
Central Support	2,505	420	420	0	0
Asset Rental Support	918	0	0	0	0
HBC Support Costs Income	-6,347	-1,067	-1,094	27	165
<b>Net Total Recharges</b>	<b>-1,377</b>	<b>-406</b>	<b>-431</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>152</b>
<b>Net Departmental Expenditure</b>	<b>9,256</b>	<b>449</b>	<b>561</b>	<b>(112)</b>	<b>(672)</b>

## Corporate &amp; Democracy

	Annual Budget £'000	Budget to Date £'000	Actual Spend £'000	Variance (Overspend) £'000	Forecast Outturn £'000
<b>Expenditure</b>					
Employees	369	61	80	(19)	(16)
Contracted Services	12	0	0	0	0
Supplies & Services	102	38	16	22	0
Premises Expenditure	24	8	8	0	0
Transport Costs	1	0	0	0	0
Members Allowances	994	166	171	(5)	0
Interest Payable - Treasury Management	4,258	710	676	34	200
Interest Payable - Other	215	36	36	0	0
Bank Charges	0	0	0	0	0
Audit Fees	0	0	0	0	0
Contingency	5,158	709	0	709	4,251
Capital Financing	3,346	584	584	0	0
Contribution to Reserves	300	300	263	37	0
Debt Management Expenses	20	3	3	0	0
Precepts & Levies	244	244	244	0	0
Pay Award over 2%	0	0	0	0	(1,000)
<b>Efficiency Savings:</b>					
Purchase of Additional Leave	-100	-17	0	(17)	(50)
Voluntary Severance Scheme	-200	-33	0	(33)	(100)
Apprenticeship First Model	-200	-33	0	(33)	(50)
Agency Staff Reduction	-1,700	-283	0	(283)	(1,700)
Review Existing Contracts	-200	-33	0	(33)	(100)
<b>Total Expenditure</b>	<b>12,643</b>	<b>2,460</b>	<b>2,081</b>	<b>379</b>	<b>1,435</b>
<b>Income</b>					
Interest Receivable - Treasury Management	-3,045	-507	-578	71	425
Interest Receivable - Other	-19	-3	-3	0	0
Other Fees & Charges	-146	-18	-13	(5)	0
Grants & Reimbursements	-334	-56	-56	0	0
Government Grant Income	-6,272	-1,045	-1,045	0	0
Transfer from Reserves	0	0	0	0	0
<b>Total Income</b>	<b>-9,816</b>	<b>-1,629</b>	<b>-1,695</b>	<b>66</b>	<b>425</b>
<b>Net Operational Expenditure</b>	<b>2,827</b>	<b>831</b>	<b>386</b>	<b>445</b>	<b>1,860</b>
<b>Recharges</b>					
Premises Support	22	4	4	0	0
Transport	0	0	0	0	0
Central Support	898	158	158	0	0
Asset Rental Support	0	0	0	0	0
HBC Support Costs Income	-3,304	-419	-419	0	0
<b>Net Total Recharges</b>	<b>-2,384</b>	<b>-257</b>	<b>-257</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>Net Departmental Expenditure</b>	<b>443</b>	<b>574</b>	<b>129</b>	<b>445</b>	<b>1,860</b>

## Public Health

	Annual Budget £'000	Budget to Date £'000	Actual Spend £'000	Variance (Overspend) £'000	Forecast Outturn £'000
<b>Expenditure</b>					
Employees	5,627	802	772	30	177
Other Premises	6	1	0	1	6
Supplies & Services	322	87	100	(13)	(78)
Contracts & SLA's	7,206	253	219	34	200
Transport	4	0	0	0	1
Other Agency	24	24	24	0	0
<b>Total Expenditure</b>	<b>13,189</b>	<b>1,167</b>	<b>1,115</b>	<b>52</b>	<b>306</b>
<b>Income</b>					
Fees & Charges	-122	-12	-11	(1)	(4)
Reimbursements & Grant Income	-154	-59	-59	0	0
Transfer from Reserves	-59	0	0	0	0
Government Grant Income	-12,435	-3,098	-3,098	0	0
<b>Total Income</b>	<b>-12,770</b>	<b>-3,169</b>	<b>-3,168</b>	<b>(1)</b>	<b>(4)</b>
<b>Net Operational Expenditure</b>	<b>419</b>	<b>-2,002</b>	<b>-2,053</b>	<b>51</b>	<b>302</b>
<b>Recharges</b>					
Premises Support	209	35	35	0	0
Transport Support	24	4	4	0	(3)
Central Support	1,897	316	316	0	0
Asset Rental Support	0	0	0	0	0
Recharge Income	-669	-112	-112	0	0
<b>Net Total Recharges</b>	<b>1,461</b>	<b>243</b>	<b>243</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>(3)</b>
<b>Net Departmental Expenditure</b>	<b>1,880</b>	<b>-1,759</b>	<b>-1,810</b>	<b>51</b>	<b>299</b>










## Progress Against Agreed Savings




## Appendix 3

### Adult Social Care


Service Area	Net Budget £'000	Description of Saving Proposal	Savings Value		Current Progress	Comments
			25/26 Agreed Council 01 February 2023 £'000	25/26 Agreed Council 05 March 2025 £'000		
Housing Solutions	474	Remodel the current service based on good practice evidence from other areas.	125	0		Currently Under Review
Voluntary Sector Support	N/A	Review the support provided by Adult Social Care and all other Council Departments, to voluntary sector organisations. This would include assisting them to secure alternative funding in order to reduce their dependence upon Council funding. A target saving phased over two years has been estimated.	100	0		Achieved
Community Wardens/Telecare Service		Community Wardens/Telecare Service – a review will be undertaken of the various options available for the future delivery of these services, with	0	280		Currently Under Review

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



## Finance

Service Area	Net Budget £'000	Description of Saving Proposal	Savings Value		Current Progress	Comments
			25/26 Agreed Council 01 February 2023 £'000	25/26 Agreed Council 05 March 2025 £'000		
Internal Audit	300	Restructure in light of potential retirements over the next two years within the Internal Audit Team.	50	0		It appears unlikely that the proposed £50k budget saving will be fully realised this year, if at all
Council Tax	84	Increase the charges applied when a court summons is issued by 30% (£23), to achieve full cost recovery over the three year period.	40	0		Increase in costs to be applied from 2026/27.
Debt Management		Debt Management – undertake a review of debt management policies and procedures, in order to implement a more robust approach to debt management and debt recovery, considering options such as seeking payment in advance wherever possible, to improve cashflow and reduce the risk of non-recovery.	0	100		Currently part of workstream being undertaken by the Transformation Programme.
<b>Total Finance Department</b>			<b>90</b>	<b>100</b>		

## Legal and Democratic Services

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

## Children and Families Department

Service Area	Net Budget £'000	Description of Saving Proposal	Savings Value		Current Progress	Comments
			25/26 Agreed Council 01 February 2023 £'000	25/26 Agreed Council 05 March 2025 £'000		
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.	22	0		With the implementation of the family hubs the review of Windmill Hill will no longer be viable. The centre is located in an area of deprivation and the role of the centre as a family hub is a priority in the Children's social care review and supporting families at an earlier level, improving access to services for the most vulnerable and ensure a positive start for all children. These fit with the council priorities
Children's Residential Care		Residential Placements – continuation of the work being undertaken to review residential placements, especially high cost placements, and identify opportunities to step-down placements or find alternatives, in order to reduce the current overspend and ongoing costs.	0	1,500		Residential placements were all reviewed in early 2024 with some reduction in costs established. As part of the longer term plan included in the sufficiency strategy, Halton has partnered with a not for profit organisation, Juno, who are awaiting registration from OFSTED - this approach is part of the LCR approach working with NFP organisations. in

						<p>addition significant changes have been made to reduce the numbers of children coming into care. Mocking bird constellation is in place and evidenced support has resulted in appropriate transition so the need for residential is mitigated. A property has been identified for care leavers and further properties identified for additional semi-independent provisions. Juno will focus on their second home after July</p>
Fostering		<p>Independent Fostering Agencies and Out of Borough Fostering – continuation of the work being undertaken to review placements, to increase use of In-Borough foster carers wherever possible and thereby reduce costs, in order to reduce the current overspend and ongoing costs.</p>	0	200	U	<p>Recruitment campaign has been launched to attract in house foster carers so Council reliance on IFA's is reduced. Unfortunately there is a national shortage of foster carers and as a result the reliance on IFA's continues</p>
Legal Costs		<p>Court Costs – implementation of measures in conjunction with Legal Services, to reduce the backlog and ongoing number of Children's cases going to court, thereby reducing the timescales</p>	0	200	U	<p>Progress has been made on reducing the cost of court with success in reducing the number of applications, the reduction in timeliness of proceedings, further work is currently underway to reduce the number of C2 applications to court.</p>



		involved and cost of court proceedings, in order to reduce the current overspend and ongoing costs.				PLO process is proving effective for some families in diverting away from legal proceedings and safely maintaining children with parents, further exploration is taking place on the use of in house psychologists to undertake assessments in the court arena to further reduce court costs
<b>Total Children &amp; Families Department</b>			<b>22</b>	<b>1,900</b>		


## Education, Inclusion and Provision Department

Service Area	Net Budget £'000	Description of Saving Proposal	Savings Value		Current Progress	Comments
			25/26 Agreed Council 01 February 2023 £'000	25/26 Agreed Council 05 March 2025 £'000		
Home to School Transport		Home to School Transport – undertake 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.	0	300	U	The consultation with stakeholders and partners has taken place. The results have been analysed and recommendations put to Executive Board for possible policy changes from the beginning of the new academic year.
<b>Total EIP Department</b>			<b>0</b>	<b>300</b>		




## Community and Greenspace Department


Service Area	Net Budget £'000	Description of Saving Proposal	Savings Value		Current Progress	Comments
			25/26 Agreed Council 01 February 2023 £'000	25/26 Agreed Council 05 March 2025 £'000		
Stadium & Catering Services – 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.	12	0		School meals service has ceased and is reflected in the 25/26 budget.
Green Waste		Green Waste – increase green waste charges from £43 to £50 per annum, to bring Halton onto a comparable basis with charges levied by neighbouring councils.	0	100		Green waste charges have been increased to £50.

Service Area	Net Budget	Description of Saving Proposal	Savings Value		Current Progress	Comments
Area Forums		Area Forums – cease the funding for Area Forums.	0	170		Area forum budgets have been removed in 25-26
<b>Total Community &amp; Greenspace Dept</b>			<b>12</b>	<b>270</b>		


### Economy, Enterprise and Property Department

Service Area	Net Budget £'000	Description of Saving Proposal	Savings Value		Current Progress	Comments
			25/26 Agreed Council 01 February 2023 £'000	25/26 Agreed Council 05 March 2025 £'000		
Asset Management		Accelerate the lease or sale of surplus land, non-operational buildings, surplus space within building, etc. to either generate lease rentals or capital receipts to help fund capital schemes and thereby reduce future capital financing costs.	0	100		It is currently too early to establish if this can be achieved. Although all options will be explored.
<b>Total EEP Dept</b>			<b>0</b>	<b>100</b>		




## Policy, Planning and Transportation Department



Service Area	Net Budget £'000	Description of Saving Proposal	Savings Value		Current Progress	Comments
			24/25 £'000	25/26 £'000		
Highways		LED Advertising Screens – install LED advertising screens at appropriate locations within the Borough in order to generate advertising revenue. The estimated annual income is the Council's share of advertising revenue net of capital financing costs for the installations.	0	100		It is not anticipated that this income will be achieved this financial year as the LED screens are no closer to being installed.
<b>Total PPT Dept</b>			<b>0</b>	<b>100</b>		

## Public Health Directorate Department

Service Area	Net Budget £'000	Description of Saving Proposal	Savings Value		Current Progress	Comments
			24/25 £'000	25/26 £'000		
Environmental Health		Pest Control – increase charges for pest control on the basis of benchmarking data, to bring Halton onto a comparable basis with charges levied by neighbouring councils.	0	45		Charges Increased
<b>Total Public Health Directorate</b>			<b>0</b>	<b>45</b>		

## Corporate and Democracy

Service Area	Net Budget £'000	Description of Saving Proposal	Savings Value		Current Progress	Comments
			24/25 £'000	25/26 £'000		
Chief Executives Delivery Unit		Purchase of Additional Leave – development of a voluntary scheme to enable staff to purchase additional annual leave.	0	100		Scheme being considered by Executive Board, uncertainty to timing and sign-up to the scheme.
Chief Executives Delivery Unit		Voluntary Severance Scheme – development of a policy whereby staff may be offered voluntary severance in appropriate circumstances, but without creating a significant pension strain liability.	0	200		Scheme to be designed and approved. Uncertainty to timing and sign-up to the scheme.
Chief Executives		Apprenticeships - implement an “Apprentice First” policy, with all	0	200		Scheme being developed, uncertainty to take up of the

Delivery Unit		appropriate vacant posts assessed initially to determine whether they might be suitable as an apprenticeship. This will build longer term resilience into the organisation's workforce and provide short term cost savings by drawing down funding from the apprenticeship levy. The scheme will be co-ordinated by the newly appointed Apprenticeship Officer, funded and supported by the Transformation Delivery Unit.				scheme.
Council Wide		Agency Staff Reduction – continuation of the work being co-ordinated by the Transformation Delivery Unit to reduce the reliance upon agency workers across the Council, in particular within Adults and Children's Social Care. Target net savings of £1.7m for 2025/26, £1.3m for 2026/27 and £1.1m for 2027/28.	0	1,700		<p>There is evidence of reduced agency usage within the Children's directorate but targets have been built into directorate budget which duplicate what is included here.</p> <p>Uncertainty with regard to reductions across Adult Social Care.</p> <p>Highly unlikely the £1.7m saving will be achieved in the current financial year.</p>
Council Wide		Review all existing contracts across the Council to re-consider their requirements and	0	200		Currently part of workstream being undertaken by the Transformation Programme.

		performance on the basis of outputs achieved.				
<b>Total Corporate &amp; Democracy</b>			<b>0</b>	<b>2,400</b>		

### Symbol

### Objective



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



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



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

## 2025/26 Budget Risk Register as at 31 May 2025

## Appendix 4

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	<b>Pay costs</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Pay award</li> <li>Staff Turnover Saving Target</li> <li>Agency, casuals and overtime</li> <li>National Living Wage</li> </ul>	4	4	16	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Budget based upon individual staff members/vacancies</li> <li>Budget monitoring</li> <li>Contingency</li> <li>Balances</li> <li>Medium Term Forecast</li> </ul>	3	3	9	ED/SB/ Directors	Monthly	2025/26 budget includes pay growth at forecast 2% pay award. Initial pay offer to trade unions was set at 3.2%, this will cost approximately a further £1m to the budget	31/5/25



	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Pension Costs</li> </ul>				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Engage with Cheshire Pension Scheme and pension actuary</li> <li>Market supplement paid in multiple service areas</li> <li>Employer of Choice Initiative</li> <li>Connect to Halton – Review of Scheme</li> </ul>						<p>Agency costs and usage remain high although some evidence of reduction in numbers within Children Social Care.</p> <p>Market Supplements paid to a number of service areas.</p> <p>Connect to Halton scheme went live September 2024, agency and casual appointments to be covered by the scheme.</p>	
2	<b>Redundancy and Early Retirements</b>	3	3	9	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Benefits Tracking Process</li> <li>Future savings to take into account cost of redundancy and early retirements.</li> <li>Seek Government approval to use capital receipts to fund</li> </ul>	2	3	6	ED/SB	Quarterly	<p>Tracker created to monitor redundancy costs in current year.</p> <p>Look to capitalise redundancy costs where possible where evidence exists it creates a longer term saving.</p>	31/05/25

					transformation costs. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop policy for voluntary severance scheme</li> </ul>						£0.200m saving included in 25/26 budget for savings from voluntary severance scheme.	
3	<b>Savings not achieved</b>	4	3	12	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Budget monitoring</li> <li>Contingency</li> <li>Rigorous process in approving savings.</li> <li>Review of savings at departmental and directorate level</li> <li>Monthly budget monitoring</li> <li>Medium Term Financial Forecast</li> <li>RAG monitoring of savings included in bi-monthly monitoring reports.</li> <li>Transformation saving targets reported monthly through Transformation Programme Board.</li> </ul>	4	2	8	RR/ED/SB/Directors	Monthly	<p>Savings for 2025/26 have been written into Directorate budgets.</p> <p>Budget savings monitored closely and if necessary offsetting savings sought.</p> <p>Transformation Programme Board meeting on monthly basis to discuss progress against programme.</p>	31/05/25

4	<b>Price inflation</b>	3	3	9	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Prudent budget provision</li> <li>• Latest forecast information used eg. utilities</li> <li>• Budget monitoring</li> <li>• Contingency</li> <li>• Balances</li> <li>• CPI/RPI monitoring</li> <li>• MTFS</li> </ul>	3	3	9	ED/SB	Monthly	<p>CPI for May 2025 is 3.4% and RPI is 4.3%. Both running higher than inflation included in 2025.26 budget.</p> <p>Office of Budget Responsibility (OBR) forecast inflation to be 3.2% in 2025 and 2.1% through to 2027. Rates are higher than forecast that at 2025/26 budget setting and remain above Governments 2% target.</p>	31/05/25
5	<b>Review of LG Finance</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Business rates retention – 100% Pilot and Review</li> <li>• Fair Funding</li> </ul>	4	4	16	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• MPs</li> <li>• SIGOMA / LG Futures</li> <li>• Liverpool City Region &amp; Merseyside Treasurers</li> </ul>	3	3	9	ED/SB/NS/M W/MG	Weekly/ Monthly	<p>Business rate retention pilot continues through to March 2027.</p> <p>Government are</p>	31/05/25

	<div>Review<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>National Public Spending Plans</li><li>Social Care Green Paper</li></ul></div>				<div>Group<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Medium Term Financial Strategy</li><li>Member of business rate retention pilot region</li><li>Dialogue with DCLG</li><li>Responding to reviews and consultations</li></ul></div>						<div>committed to providing more certainty on LG Finances through multi year settlements.  Government issued the Fair Funding consultation on 20 June 2025, with a closing date of 15 August.  Resetting the Business Rates Retention consultation was issued by Government in April 2025 with Halton submitting a response prior to the 02 June deadline.</div>	
6	<div><b>Treasury Management</b><ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Borrowing</li><li>Investment</li></ul></div>	2	3	6	<div><ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Treasury Management Strategy</li><li>Link Asset Services advice</li><li>Treasury Management</li></ul></div>	1	3	3	ED/SB/MG	Daily / Quarterly	<div>BoE base rate reduced to 4.25%.  Impact of Exceptional Financial Support request to be</div>	31/05/25

					planning and monitoring <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Attendance at Networking and Benchmarking Groups</li> <li>Officer and Member Training</li> </ul>						assessed with regards to timing of future borrowing.	
7	<b>Demand led budgets</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Children in Care</li> <li>Out of borough fostering</li> <li>Community Care</li> <li>High Needs</li> </ul>	4	4	16	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Budget monitoring</li> <li>Contingency</li> <li>Balances</li> <li>Review service demand</li> <li>Directorate recovery groups</li> <li>Monthly budget monitoring</li> <li>Children Improvement Plan Investment Funding</li> </ul>	4	4	16	ED/SB/NS/MW	Monthly	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.  Investment in Children Services following OFSTED inspection to be monitored with regard to control and reduction of future costs.	31/05/25
8	<b>Mersey Gateway Costs</b>	4	2	8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Regular monitoring with Crossing Board</li> </ul>	2	1	2	ED/SB/MG	Quarterly	Arrangements in place to monitor spend and	31/05/25

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Costs</li> <li>Toll Income</li> <li>Funding</li> <li>Accounting treatment</li> </ul>				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Capital reserve</li> <li>Government Grant</li> <li>Liquidity Fund</li> </ul>						availability of liquidity fund.	
9	<b>Council Tax Collection</b>	3	3	9	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Council tax monitoring on monthly basis</li> <li>Review of Collection Rate</li> <li>Collection Fund Balance</li> <li>Provision for bad debts</li> <li>Review recovery procedures</li> <li>Benchmarking</li> </ul>	3	2	6	ED/PG/SB/PD/BH/MG	Monthly	<p>Collection rate to 31 May 2025 was 18.53% which is marginally lower than the rate of 18.58% at the same point last year.</p> <p>To 31 May 2025 £0.785m was collected in relation to old year debt.</p>	31/05/25
10	<b>Business Rates Retention Scheme</b>	3	3	9	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Review and monitoring of latest business rates income to baseline and estimate for year.</li> <li>Prudent allowance for losses in collection</li> <li>Prudent provision set</li> </ul>	3	1	3	ED/SB/LB/MG	Monthly	<p>Collection rate to 31 May 2025 was 22.81% which is 1.22% lower than the rate at the same point last year.</p> <p>To 31 May 2025 £0.344m was</p>	31/05/25

					<p>aside for losses from valuation appeals</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Regular monitoring of annual yield and baseline / budget position</li> <li>Benchmarking Groups</li> <li>Review recovery procedures</li> </ul>						collected in relation to old year debt.	
11	<b>Income recovery</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Uncertainty to economy following cost of living and high inflation</li> </ul>	3	3	9	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Corporate charging policy</li> <li>Budget monitoring</li> <li>Contingency</li> <li>Balances</li> <li>Income benchmarking</li> </ul>	3	2	6	ED/MM/SB	Monthly	<p>Income shortfalls identified and cause of increased concern in certain areas are being closely monitored.</p> <p>Additional posts created within Adult Social Care Directorate, responsible for improving the overall collection of social care debt.</p>	31/05/25
13	<b>Capital Programme</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Costs</li> <li>Funding</li> </ul>	4	3	12	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Project Management</li> <li>Regular monitoring</li> <li>Detailed financial</li> </ul>	3	2	6	Project Managers/ED /SB/LH	Quarterly	Capital receipts have been fully committed therefore new capital schemes need to bring	31/05/25

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Key Major Projects</li> <li>• Clawback of Grant</li> <li>• Availability and timing of capital receipts</li> <li>• Cashflow</li> <li>• Contractors</li> </ul>				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• analysis of new schemes to ensure they are affordable</li> <li>• Targets monitored to minimise clawback of grant.</li> <li>• Contractor due diligence</li> <li>• Dialogue with Government departments.</li> </ul>						own funding.	
14	<b>Academy Schools</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Impact of transfer upon Council budget</li> <li>• Loss of income to Council Services</li> </ul>	2	4	8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Early identification of school decisions</li> <li>• DfE Regulations</li> <li>• Prudent consideration of financial transactions to facilitate transfer</li> <li>• Services continue to be offered to academies</li> <li>• Transfer Protocol</li> </ul>	1	3	3	ED/SB/NS	Monthly	Consideration given in MTFS for loss of funding.	31/05/25
15	<b>Reserves</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Diminishing reserves, used to balance budget, fund overspend positions.</li> </ul>	3	4	12	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Monitored on a bi-monthly basis, reported to Management Team and Exec Board</li> <li>• Benchmarking</li> </ul>	3	3	9	ED/SB	Quarterly	Monitored and reported on a regular basis. Council reserves at historic low levels.	31/05/25



					<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Financial Forecast</li> <li>Programme to replenish reserves.</li> </ul>						Reserves will need to be replenished within future budgets	
16	<b>Budget Balancing</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Council has struggled to achieve a balanced budget position for a number of years.</li> <li>Forecast for current year is an overspend position of £19m.</li> <li>Reserves insufficient to balance current year budget.</li> <li>Council has been given approval in-principle for Exceptional Financial Support (day to day costs funded through capital borrowings) for 2024/25 and 2025/26.</li> </ul>	4	4	16	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Current year budgets monitored on a regular basis.</li> <li>Forward forecasting through to March 2029 reported on a prudent basis.</li> <li>Regular conversations with DHLUC re Council's financial position.</li> <li>LGA to undertake a financial assurance review.</li> <li>Transformation programme in place.</li> <li>Financial Recovery Plan required to better inform how the Council will achieve future sustainable budgets.</li> </ul>	4	4	16	ED/SB	Ongoing	<p>Council has received in-principle agreement to fund day to day costs through Exceptional Financial Support.</p> <p>EFS covers a total of £52.8m over two years, split: 24/25 - £20.8m 25/26 - £32.0m</p> <p>Council utilised £10m of EFS in 24/25, below the approved amount.</p> <p>Financial recovery plan to be put in place to limit Council exposure to EFS and repayment of borrowings to date.</p>	31/05/25