

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

DATE: 9 June 2025

REPORTING OFFICER: Executive Director of Children's Services

PORTFOLIO: Children, Young People and Families

SUBJECT: DfE Commissioner Recommendations
progress report

WARD(S) Borough Wide

1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

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

2.0 RECOMMENDATION: That the Board note the information provided.

3.0 SUPPORTING INFORMATION

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

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

4.0 POLICY IMPLICATIONS

4.1 None

5.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

5.1 None

6.0 IMPLICATIONS FOR THE COUNCIL'S PRIORITIES

6.1 Improving Health, Promoting Wellbeing and Supporting Greater Independence

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

6.2 Building a Strong, Sustainable Local Economy

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

6.3 Supporting Children, Young People and Families

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

6.4 Tackling Inequality and Helping Those Who Are Most In Need

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

6.5 Working Towards a Greener Future

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

6.6 Valuing and Appreciating Halton and Our Community

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

7.0 Risk Analysis

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

8.0 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES

- 8.1 None identified.

9.0 CLIMATE CHANGE IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 None identified.

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

'None under the meaning of the Act.'