

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.