

Public Document Pack

Contact: Brent Cross
Direct Dial: 01275 888 078
E-mail: brent.cross@n-somerset.gov.uk
Date: Wednesday, 11 October 2023

Dear Sir or Madam

The Children and Young People's Services Policy and Scrutiny Panel – Thursday, 19 October 2023, 10.00 am – New Council Chamber - Town Hall

A meeting of the Children and Young People's Services Policy and Scrutiny Panel will take place as indicated above.

The agenda is set out overleaf.

Yours faithfully

Assistant Director Legal & Governance and Monitoring Officer

To: Members of the Children and Young People's Services Policy and Scrutiny Panel

Councillors:

Joe Tristram (Chairperson), Wendy Griggs (Vice-Chairperson), Marc Aplin, Annabelle Chard, Stuart Davies, Nicola Holland, Clare Hunt, Sue Mason, Tom Nicholson, Michael Pryke and Martin Williams.

Added Members: Claire Hudson (Church of England Representative),
Vacancies: Primary and Secondary/Special School Parent Governor Representative

Right to Speak: Fiona Waters (Weston College), Kenton Mee, North Somerset Parent Carers Working Together, Vacancy: North Somerset Youth Parliament

This document and associated papers can be made available in a different format on request.

Agenda

1. **Public Discussion (Standing Order SSO9)**

To receive and hear any person who wishes to address the Panel on matters which affect the District and fall within the remit of the Panel. The Chairman will select the order of the matters to be heard. Members of the Panel may ask questions of the member of the public and a dialogue between the parties can be undertaken.

Requests to speak must be submitted in writing to the Head of Legal and Democratic Services, or the officer mentioned at the top of this agenda letter, by noon on the day before.

2. **Apologies for Absence and Notifications for Substitutes**

3. **Declaration of disclosable pecuniary interest (Standing Order 37)**

A Member must declare any disclosable pecuniary interest where it relates to any matter being considered at the meeting. A declaration of a disclosable pecuniary interest should indicate the interest and the agenda item to which it relates. A Member is not permitted to participate in this agenda item by law and should immediately leave the meeting before the start of any debate.

If the Member leaves the Chamber in respect of a declaration, he or she should ensure that the Chairman is aware of this before he or she leaves to enable their exit from the meeting to be recorded in the minutes in accordance with Standing Order 37.

4. **Minutes** (Pages 7 - 12)

Minutes of the Panel meeting held on 29 June 2023 – to approve as a correct record.

5. **Matters referred by Council, the Executive, other Committees and Panels (if any)**

6. **SEND Self Evaluation** (Pages 13 - 94)

Report of the Assistant Director, Education Partnerships.

7. **Annual Report of Adoption West 2022-23** (Pages 95 - 128)

Report of the Interim Director, Children's Services.

8. **Children's Safeguarding Partnership Annual Report** (Pages 129 - 162)

Report of the Interim Director, Children's Services.

9. **Panel's Work Plan** (Pages 163 - 166)

Report of the Policy and Scrutiny Senior Officer.

Exempt Items

Should the Children and Young People's Services Policy and Scrutiny Panel wish to consider a matter as an Exempt Item, the following resolution should be passed

-

“(1) That the press, public, and officers not required by the Members, the Chief Executive or the Director, to remain during the exempt session, be excluded from the meeting during consideration of the following item of business on the ground that its consideration will involve the disclosure of exempt information as defined in Section 100I of the Local Government Act 1972.”

Also, if appropriate, the following resolution should be passed –

“(2) That members of the Council who are not members of the Children and Young People's Services Policy and Scrutiny Panel be invited to remain.”

Mobile phones and other mobile devices

All persons attending the meeting are requested to ensure that these devices are switched to silent mode. The chairman may approve an exception to this request in special circumstances.

Filming and recording of meetings

The proceedings of this meeting may be recorded for broadcasting purposes.

Anyone wishing to film part or all of the proceedings may do so unless the press and public are excluded for that part of the meeting or there is good reason not to do so, as directed by the Chairman. Any filming must be done as unobtrusively as possible from a single fixed position without the use of any additional lighting, focusing only on those actively participating in the meeting and having regard to the wishes of any members of the public present who may not wish to be filmed. As a matter of courtesy, anyone wishing to film proceedings is asked to advise the Chairman or the Assistant Director Legal & Governance and Monitoring Officer's representative before the start of the meeting so that all those present may be made aware that it is happening.

Members of the public may also use Facebook and Twitter or other forms of social media to report on proceedings at this meeting.

Emergency Evacuation Procedure

On hearing the alarm – (a continuous two tone siren)

Leave the room by the nearest exit door. Ensure that windows are closed.

Last person out to close the door.

Do not stop to collect personal belongings.

Do not use the lifts.

Follow the green and white exit signs and make your way to the assembly point.

Do not re-enter the building until authorised to do so by the Fire Authority.

Go to Assembly Point C – Outside the offices formerly occupied by Stephen & Co

Minutes

of the Meeting of

The Children and Young People's Services Policy and Scrutiny Panel

Thursday, 29 June 2023

New Council Chamber - Town Hall

Meeting Commenced: 10.00 am

Meeting Concluded: 12.09 pm

Councillors:

Joe Tristram (Chairperson)

Wendy Griggs
Nicola Holland
Clare Hunt
Sue Mason
Richard Tucker
Martin Williams

Apologies: Councillor Michael Pryke.

Absent: Councillors Marc Aplin, Annabelle Chard and Tom Nicholson.

Also in attendance: Councillor Catherine Gibbons; Kenton Mee; Angie Griggs.

Officers in attendance: Sheila Smith (Director of Children's Services), Pip Hesketh (Assistant Director, Education Partnerships), Becky Hopkins (Assistant Director, Family Support & Safeguarding), Matt Greenhalgh (Head of Service - Improvement Lead for CWD and SEND), Mark Jarvis (Senior/Principal Accountant (Childrens)), Brent Cross (Policy and Scrutiny Senior Officer), Philippa Penney (Head of Democratic and Electoral Services), and Liz Godfrey-Day (Scrutiny Services Support Officer).

CAY Election of the Vice-Chairperson for the 2023/24 Municipal Year

1

The Chairperson welcomed Members and officers to the meeting, explained the role of the Panel, gave an overview of Children's Services from the scrutiny perspective, and gave his thoughts on the direction of travel of the Service.

The Panel then nominated for the position of Vice-Chairman.

Recommended: that Councillor Wendy Griggs be elected as Vice-Chairman for the 2023/24 municipal year.

CAY 2 Addresses by Members of the Public (SSO 9)

None.

CAY 3 Apologies for Absence and Notifications for Substitutes

Apologies received from Councillor Michael Pryke.

CAY 4 Declaration of disclosable pecuniary interest (Standing Order 37)

None.

CAY 5 Minutes

Minutes of the Panel meeting held on 20 October 2022 – to approve as a correct record.

Notes of the informal panel meeting held on 24 February 2023 – for noting.

Recommended: that

i) the minutes of the meeting of 20 October 2022 be approved as a correct record; and that

ii) the notes of the informal meeting of 24 February 2023 be noted.

CAY 6 Matters referred by Council, the Executive, other Committees and Panels (if any)

None.

CAY 7 Role, Remit and Work Plan of the CYPS Policy and Scrutiny Panel

The Senior Policy and Scrutiny Officer presented the report detailing the Panel's role and allowing the opportunity for Members to discuss the work plan. Members were referred to the appendices for guidance on how best to utilise the Panel's resources to obtain meaningful outcomes.

Members considered the working groups of the Panel under the previous administration and would discuss and form working groups before the next meeting following further discussion.

Recommended: that Members of the Panel develop the Work Plan before the next meeting.

CAY 8 Performance Monitoring

The Performance Monitoring report was presented by the Assistant Director, Children's Family Support and Safeguarding, and included an update on the Ofsted inspection of Children's Services on 13 March 2023, a performance analysis of relevant Key Corporate Performance Indicators for quarter 4 of 2022/23, and an overview of the performance of relevant key service measures for support and safeguarding services.

The challenges of recruiting and retaining social workers were highlighted along with the news that ten new social workers had been recruited and would be starting work in the weeks following the meeting.

Members requested clarification on the following (officer responses in italics):

- Who could refer a case to Children's Social Care? *These could be partner agencies, such as schools, the police, hospital / medical services, or even families, children wishing to refer themselves, and anonymous referrers.*
- The statistical neighbours mentioned in the report seemed to be both larger and more rural than North Somerset, and there was concern that the disparities between experiences in Weston and the rural areas were not reflected in these statistical neighbours. *The statistical neighbours had the same proportion of rural and town populations as North Somerset, and Children's Services had internal ward-level details on the differences between the rural and urban centres.*

Following these, Members engaged in more general discussion about whether some of the reported rises in Child Criminal Exploitation, Domestic Abuse and Child Sexual Exploitation were a result of an increase in reporting or an increase in incidence; how parents with poor mental health were supported through the Whole Family approach; the feedback from care leavers now in employment, education or training on what worked for them and how to support those not in employment, education or training; and the possible reasons for social workers not being retained.

Recommended: that the report be received, and that Members' comments be forwarded to officers in the form of minutes.

CAY 9 Ofsted Inspection Update

The Director, Children's Services, introduced the report which gave a summary of the findings of the Ofsted inspection of North Somerset Children's Services in March 2023. The overall outcome of the inspection was that the service was judged Requires Improvement to be Good.

The inspection found progress in several key areas, and judged the service provided to care leavers in North Somerset as Good, but it was noted that not all areas of improvement identified at the last inspection in March 2020 had been addressed and that progress had not been sufficient. The service received the Requires Improvement to be Good judgement in the following: the impact of leaders on social work practice with children and families, the experiences and progress of children who need help and protection, and the experience and progress of children in care.

The service was in the process of updating the Service Plan to ensure that all of the areas for improvement were fully addressed, and this would be submitted to Ofsted in August 2023.

In discussion, the following topics were addressed:

- That the service was aware of areas of weakness going into the inspection and that the fragility of the workforce a big factor in, and a key determinant of, the improvement journey.
- That there were Central Leadership Team discussions ongoing to provide stability to the workforce in the context of the financial pressure on North Somerset Council generally, and that the cost of failure was many times higher than the financial cost.
- That the Mockingbird Programme for fostering would be explained to new Members in a Children's Directorate briefing, and that there were only two authorities in the country with more Mockingbird hubs than North Somerset.

Recommended: that the report be received, and that Members' comments be forwarded to officers in the form of minutes.

CAY 10 SEND Improvement Plan and Safety Valve

The Assistant Director for Education Partnerships presented the report on the SEND Improvement Plan and Safety Valve projects and included details on the eight areas of significant weakness that had been identified in the 2017 inspection by the Department for Education which following revisits had now been reduced to four. Officers were waiting to hear back on the remaining four areas of weakness imminently, and were preparing for the next inspection.

The details of the Safety Valve funding were discussed, and it was shared that the directorate had received about £20m of funding to spend towards this over five years. Members were also informed of the new school for children with SEMH (Social, Emotional and Mental Health) needs that was to open in 2024, were reminded of the second site for Baytree School, that the very successful Nurture groups used profiles devised by Marjorie Boxall, and that North Somerset now had the only fully staffed Educational Psychology team in the South West.

In discussion, it was pointed out that the conditions for the Safety Valve funding had been negotiated, rather than imposed, in a very productive set of discussions with the Department for Education. The key to reducing the shortfall in the Special Needs Block was to improve quality of providers, so that North Somerset's offers could successfully compete with the independent sector. The comparative performance of the independent sector was also being scrutinised.

Recommended: that the report be received, and that Members' comments be forwarded to officers in the form of minutes.

CAY 11 Month 12 Children's Services Budget Monitor

The Principal Accountant (Children's) presented the year-end budget monitor for Children's Services. There had been an overspend of £2.256m, caused mainly by

the cost pressures of placements for Children Looked After and support for Children with Disabilities. Contrasting with this, there had also been a reduction in staffing costs, although this had been a result of unfilled vacancies which were now being addressed.

The additional growth (£3.023m) of the Children's Services budget in the Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) for 2023-24 was highlighted, along with projected cost savings of £764 000 that would need to be made.

In discussion it was clarified that the Direct Payments mentioned in paragraph 3.17 referred to payments made directly to parents following a social care assessment. Members noted that dissatisfaction with the way these were administered had been expressed by some parents in the past, and suggested that an officer could report to the Panel on this.

Recommended: that the report be received, and that Members' comments be forwarded to officers in the form of minutes.

Following a brief further discussion of the Work Plan, the Chairperson thanked the outgoing Director, Children's Services (Sheila Smith) and the Associate Director, Children's Family Support and Safeguarding (Becky Hopkins) on behalf of the Children and Young People's Policy and Scrutiny Panel for all the work that they had done for Children's Services and North Somerset Council and wished them well in their future endeavours.

Chairman

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North Somerset Council

Report to the Children & Young People Policy & Scrutiny Panel

Date of Meeting: October 19th 2023

Subject of Report: SEND Self Evaluation

Town or Parish:

Officer/Member Presenting: Pip Hesketh

Key Decision: NO

Reason:

This report updates members of the Scutiny Panel on the North Somerset Local Area on progress on SEND via the Self Evaluation which we complete as part of the Ofsted/CQC Inspection Framework.

Recommendations

The report is for information only and for Panel members to note.

1. Summary of Report

The most recent SEND Self Evaluation is attached to this report. It represents the combined input from across the wide and diverse SEND system and communities through workshops and focused meetings.

The Self Evaluation faithfully follows the structure set out within the Inspection Framework under 12 key areas of evaluation. Five of the areas focus on the leadership of the system and four areas are new areas of focus within this inspection framework, including the visibility of children and young people with SEND within their local communities and the extent to which children, young people and their families have a say in the decisions that are made for them.

In each of areas of the Self Evaluation, we have followed the same format and evaluated the extent to which we know about and can evidence our impact and our plans and priorities for the year ahead.

It is important to note that the Local Area for SEND includes all statutory agencies (health, children's social care and education) as well as schools, settings, voluntary and community partners and parents and carers organisations.

2. Policy

Local Area SEND Strategy

3. Details

Please see Self Evaluation attached.

4. Consultation

No formal consultation is required but the production of the SEF has been a highly consultative process over several months and represents the contributions of a large number of organisations.

5. Financial Implications

None

Costs

None

Funding

None

6. Legal Powers and Implications

N/A

7. Climate Change and Environmental Implications

N/A

8. Risk Management

North Somerset has recently had it's SEND Improvement Notice under the previous Inspection Framework lifted. The recovery of our position has been a very positive boost to the Local Authorities reputation. All Authorities will be inspected under the new Framework and this re-introduces the reputational risk to North Somerset.

9. Equality Implications

No

10. Corporate Implications

None

11. Options Considered

N/A

Author:

Pip Hesketh, Assistant Director for Education Partnerships

Appendices:

[Click here to enter Appendices]

Background Papers:

SEND Self Evaluation

Ofsted/CQC SEND Engagement

October 24 2023

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Councillor Catherine Gibbons - Executive Member, Children's Services, Lifelong Learning and Skills

Jo Walker - CEO, North Somerset Council

Shane Devlin - CEO, Integrated Care Board

Kenton Mee - CEO, North Somerset Parents and Carers Working Together (NSPCWT)

Carolyn Fair - Interim Director of Children's Services

Rosi Shepherd - Director of Nursing and Quality

Pip Hesketh - Assistant Director, Education Partnerships

Matthew Greenhalgh - Assistant Director, Children's Social Care

NORTH SOMERSET **PCWT**
PARENT CARERS WORKING TOGETHER

 **North Somerset**
Council

NHS
Bristol, North Somerset
and South Gloucestershire
Integrated Care Board

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Evaluation Criteria

- 1 Children and young people's needs are identified accurately and assessed in a timely way
- 2 Children, Young People, and their Families participate in decision-making about their individual plans and support
- 3 Children and young people receive the right help and support at the right time
- 4 Children and Young People are well prepared for their next steps and achieve strong outcomes
- 5 Children and Young People with SEND are valued, visible and included in their communities
- 6 Leaders are ambitious for children and young people with SEND
- 7 Leaders actively engage and work with children, young people, and families
- 8 Leaders have an accurate, shared understanding of the needs of children and young people in their local area
- 9 Leaders commission services and provision to meet the needs and aspirations of children and young people
- 10 Leaders evaluate services and make improvements
- 11 Leaders create an environment for effective practice and multi-agency working to flourish
- 12 Alternative provision

The development of our Self Evaluation

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Our SEF is developed with input from across our partnership and is owned by us all. It represents the work of our Local Area Partnership, which includes the six statutory partners of:

- Health
- Children's and Adult's Social Care
- Education
- Our Parent Carer Forum (NSPCWT)
- SAY: SEND and You (SENDIAS)
- Schools and settings

Our Local Area Partnership governance has supported this process through regular scrutiny, review, and support in addition to a range of activities including:

- Stakeholder and partner workshops
- Presentations
- Surveys
- Engagement of children, young people, and their families



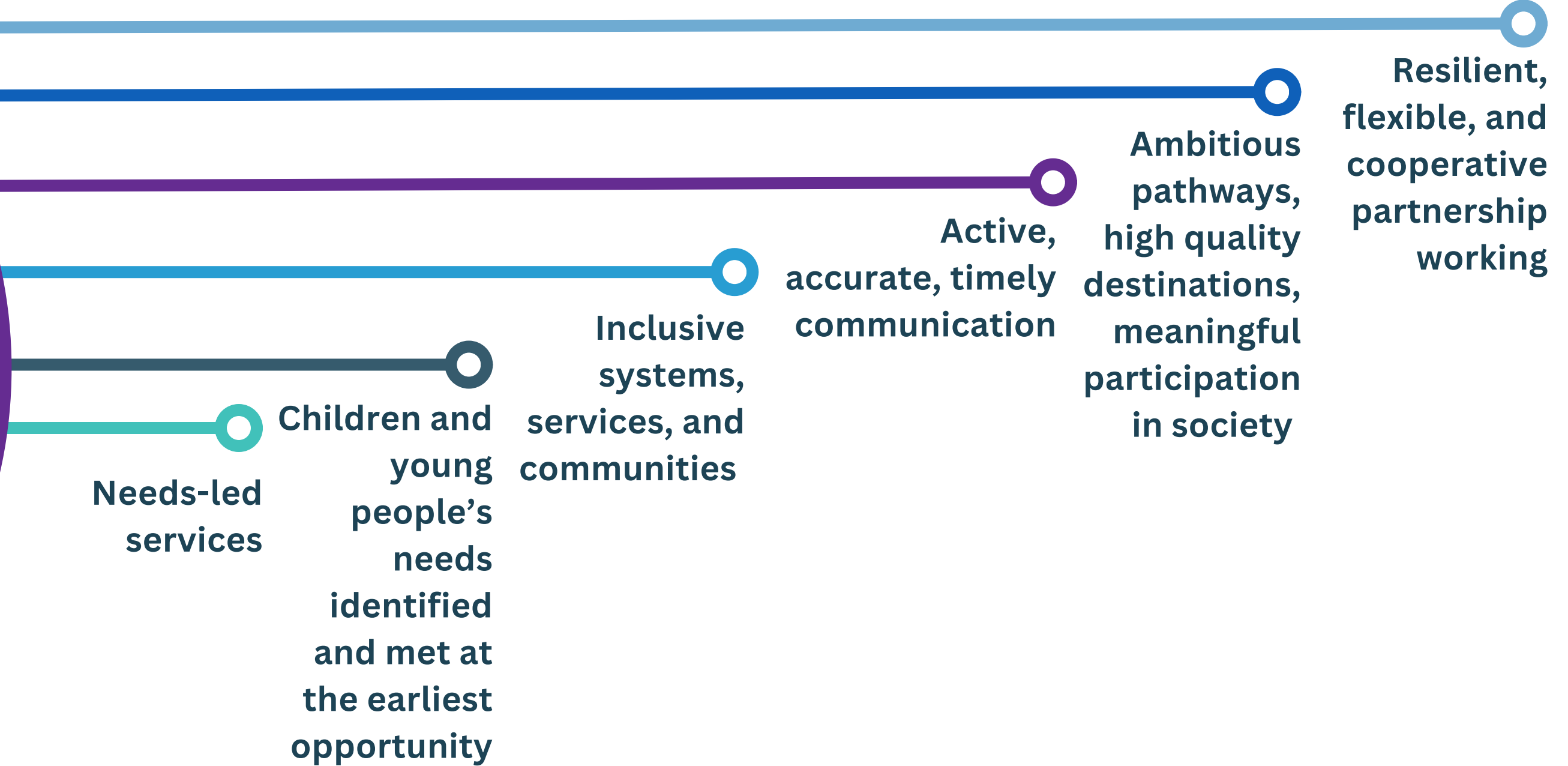
The background to our Self Evaluation

- North Somerset's work in SEND is a strategic priority for all partners in the local area. Our system is rapidly improving and is characterised by innovation, commitment, and partnerships
 - Between receiving a SEND Improvement Notice in November 2021 and having this lifted in full by the Minister in July 2023, there has been determination within North Somerset to shift the existing paradigm
 - Our ownership, leadership, partnership, and capacity in SEND services have changed significantly through an intensive programme of improvement work and close and regular internal scrutiny from system leaders
 - Our ambitions for our children and young are high and we are committed to achieving these by working alongside parents, carers, and children and young people
 - The new SEND Inspection Framework provides opportunities to review and evaluate our practices through a new lens
 - We have learnt a great deal through our engagement; going forward, we want to hear more about stakeholder experiences, from more stakeholders, more frequently
 - Our self-evaluation has highlighted areas of strength alongside the need for further improvement work underpinned by strong and visible leadership, robust and healthy partnerships, a deep understanding of our system, and a resolve to succeed

Our Vision

We want all children and young people with SEND to be safe and valued, ambitious for their futures, and to achieve their full potential. (Source: [North Somerset 2021 SEND Strategy](#))

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Our Vision

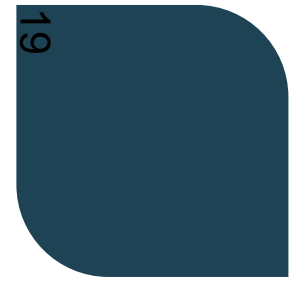
The outcomes we are committed to for our children and young people:



Strong and system-wide ownership of our SEND Strategy enables implementation of SEND reforms. These reforms are driven by committed leadership across the local area which is well coordinated and effective



All agencies contribute fully and in a timely way to Education Health & Care Plans which are high quality and aspirational, with processes in place for monitoring the quality of plans



There is enough capacity within the local area to recognise need, and provide support, implementing the SEND reforms effectively



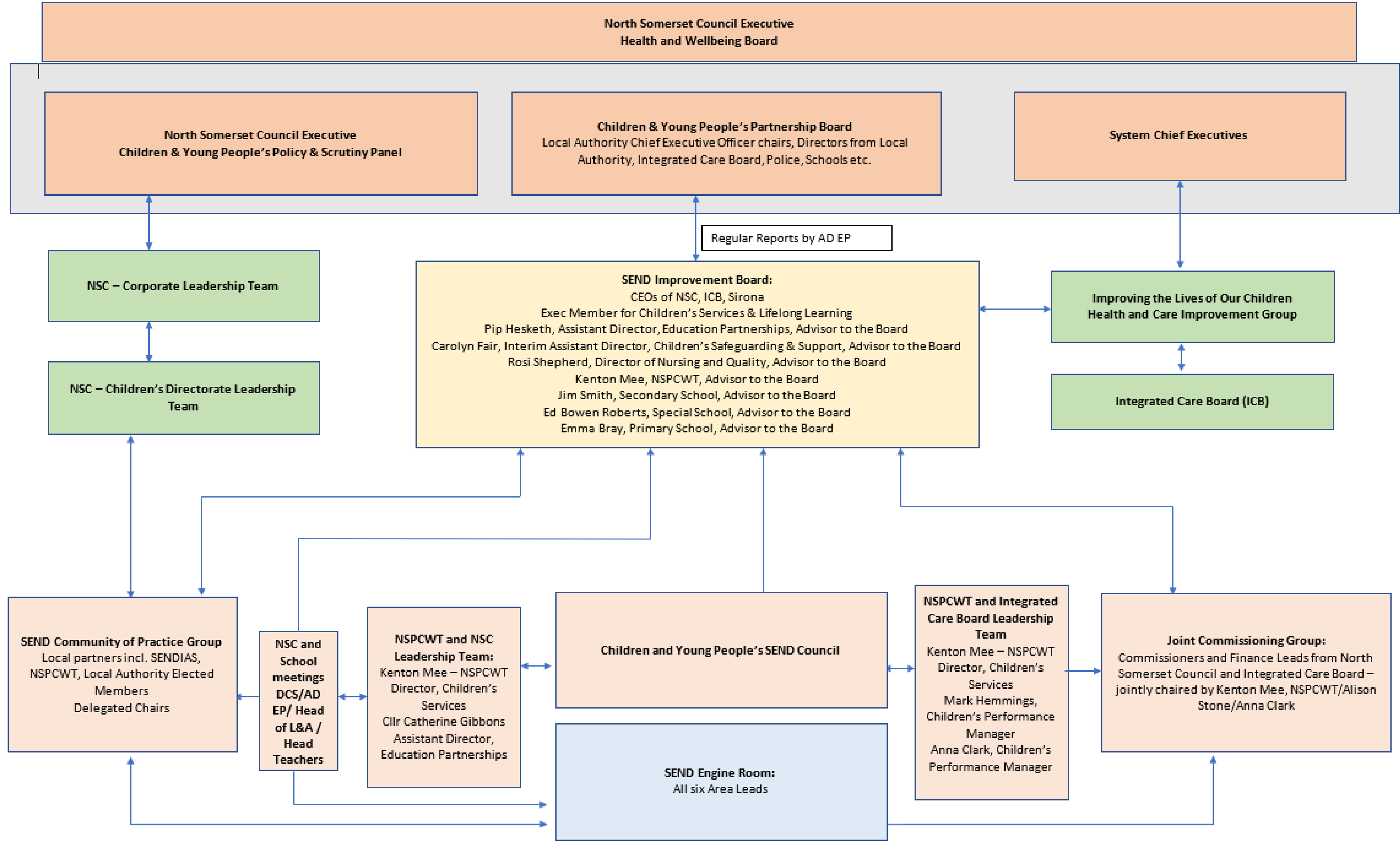
Arrangements for joint commissioning are well developed



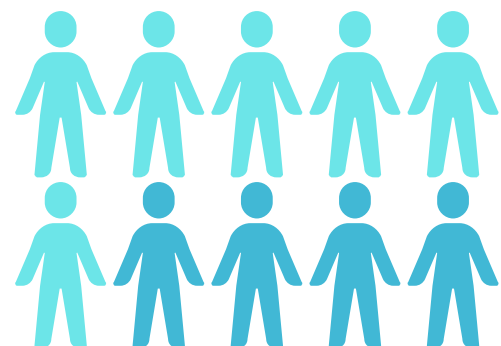
The standards achieved by Children and Young People with SEND are in line with statistical neighbours. Increased parental confidence of parents and carers that mainstream school will meet their child or young person's needs



There are robust systems to track outcomes for children and young people with SEND across the partnership. These outcomes and associated targets are regularly reviewed by senior leaders



Our context in North Somerset



42,846 children and young people in North Somerset



1,957 children with an EHCP
3,542 SEN Support



64 primary schools
11 secondary schools
4 Special Schools
1 PRU



12 libraries



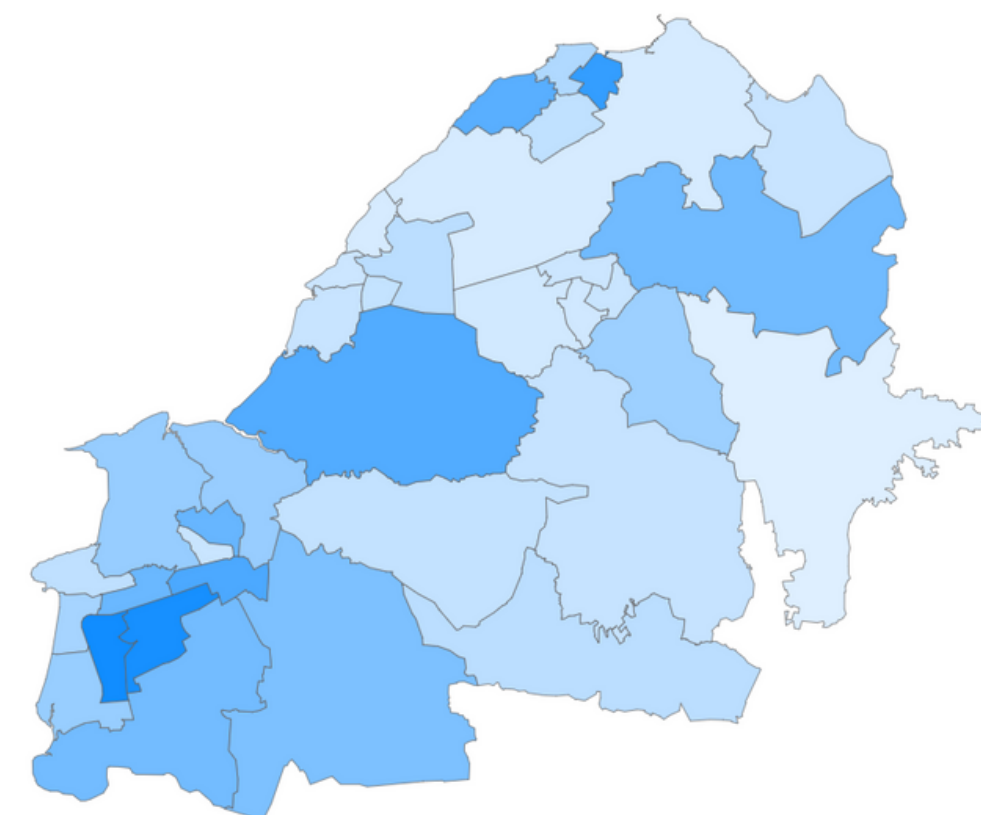
35 parks and open spaces
5 nature reserves
50 playgrounds



8% of children with English as an additional language



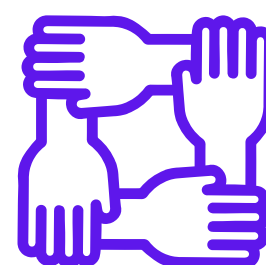
95 languages spoken



Distribution of children with SEND in North Somerset



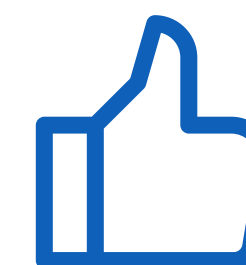
16% of children eligible for free school meals



7% of children from Black, Asian, and other ethnic communities



14 Children's Centres



85% of our schools graded Good or Outstanding

Increase in need and demand Special Educational Needs and Disabilities

Like other authorities, the incidence of special educational need has increased significantly in recent years. Our greatest increases are the incidence of Autism and Social, Emotional and Mental Health. SEMH accounts for about 29.3% of all EHC Plans. Demand for EHCPs has increased by 14.7%

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Snapshot in January	England	Southwest	North Somerset
2017	287,290	26,471	637
2018	319,819	29,196	856
2019	353,995	33,098	900
2020	390,109	37,597	1,022
2021	430,697	42,160	1,287
2022	473,255	46,937	1,556
2023 (January)	517,026	50,887	1,785
2023 (August)	Not available	Not available	1,918
% increase - 2017 to 2023	79.96% (Jan 23)	92.23% (Jan 23)	180.2% (Jan 23)

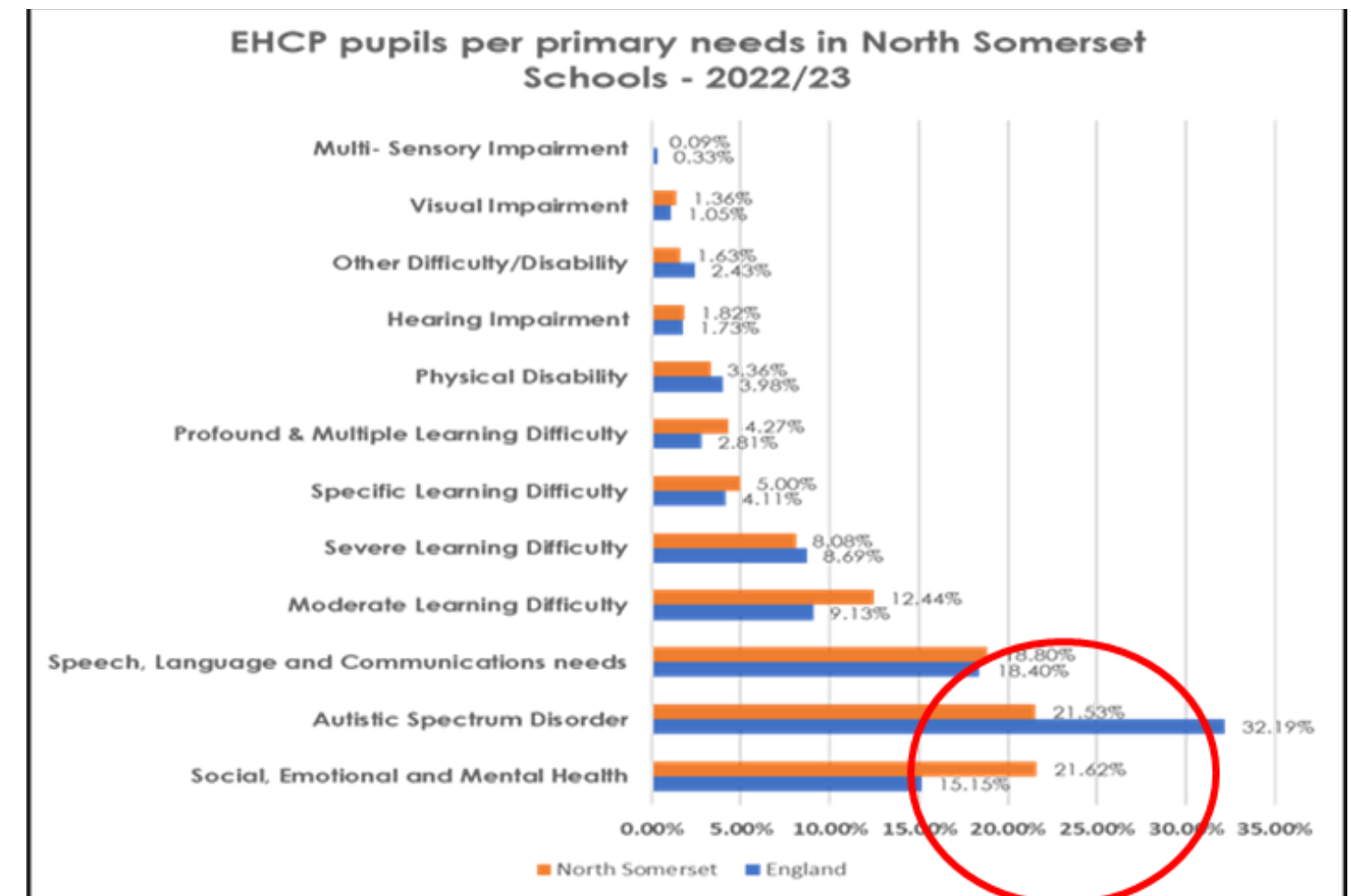
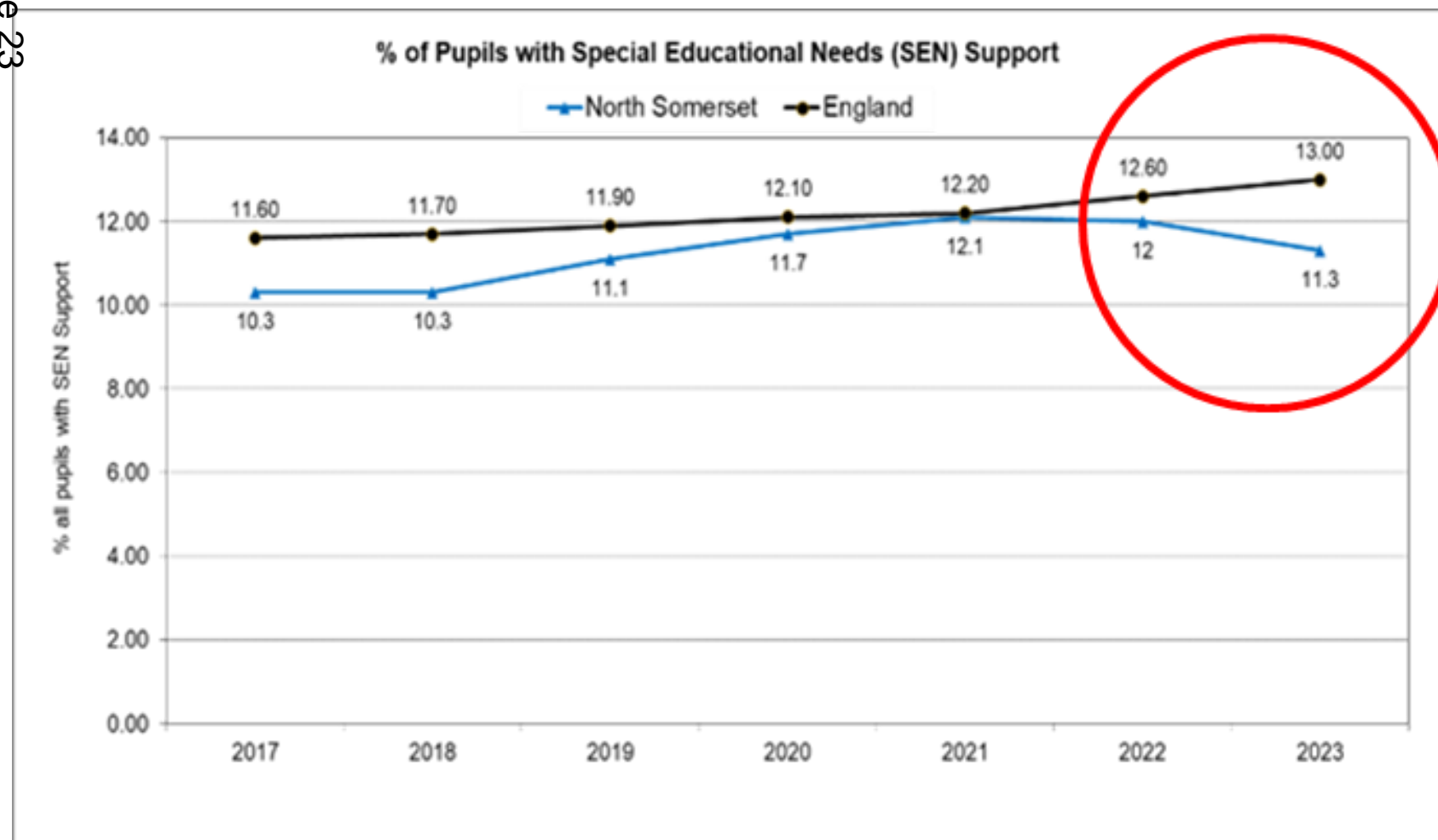
North Somerset's growth in demand in SEMH is over 4 times that of the national picture, as shown by the table below it has increased by 290%.

	ASD	HI	MLD	MSI	PD	PMLD	SEMH	SLCN	SLD	SpLD	VI	Unknown
Jan-18	167	20	106	2	31	30	134	96	71	19	5	27
Jan-19	188	18	116	2	34	34	173	124	69	16	9	1
Jan-20	213	23	114	2	33	33	195	118	106	16	10	2
Jan-21	278	27	149	3	34	35	296	140	104	16	12	1
Jan-22	302	27	190	3	39	41	415	171	94	17	14	1
Jan-23	421	33	270	4	49	51	523	264	116	32	15	7
% increase from 18-23	152%	65%	155%	100%	58%	70%	290%	175%	63%	68%	200%	

Increase in need and demand Special Educational Needs and Disabilities

The proportion of pupils with an EHC Plan has remained at around 3% of the total school-age population. Fewer pupils in North Somerset schools receive SEND support than their national counterparts and this gap has increased in 2023. This is inversely proportionate to the increase in EHCPs.

SEMH need has grown by 290% and is 29.3% of the overall need. (Data in graph below is January 2023 census)



Increase in need and demand



**Bristol, North Somerset
and South Gloucestershire**
Integrated Care Board

Health Services

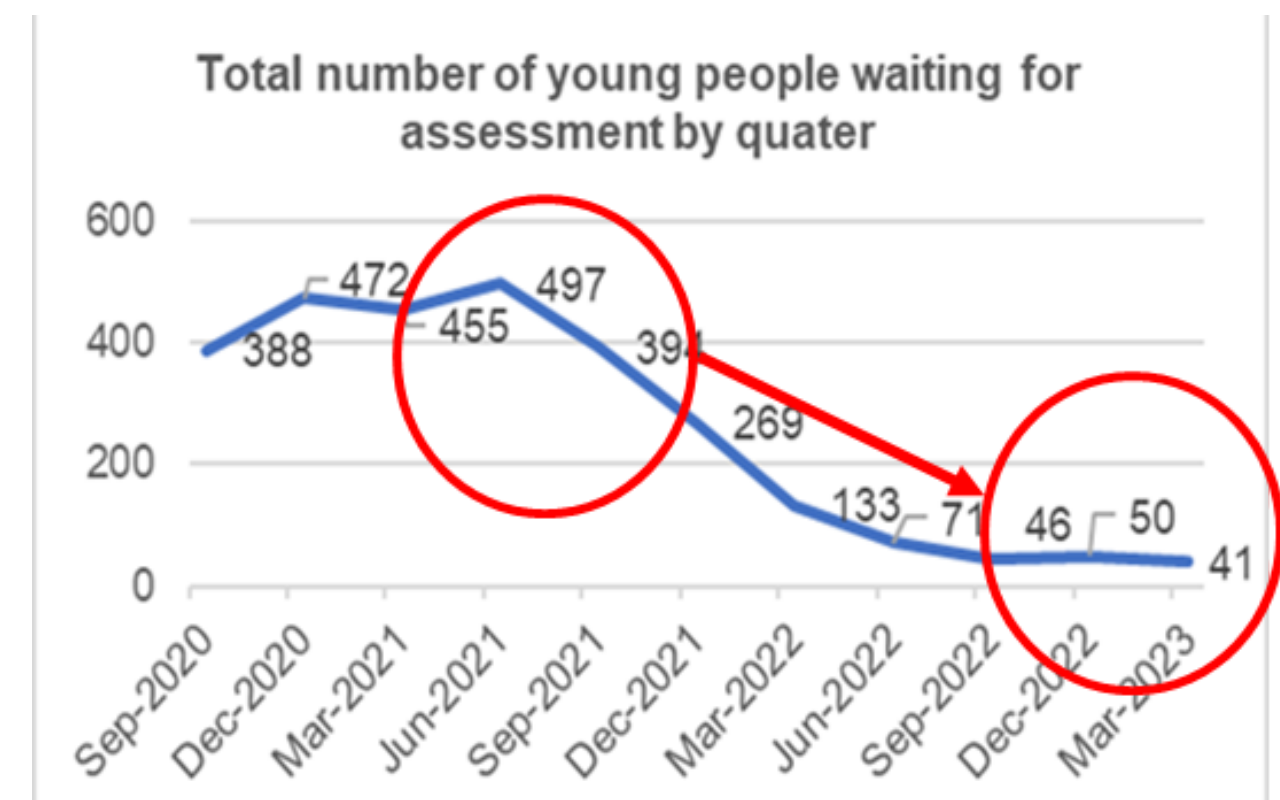
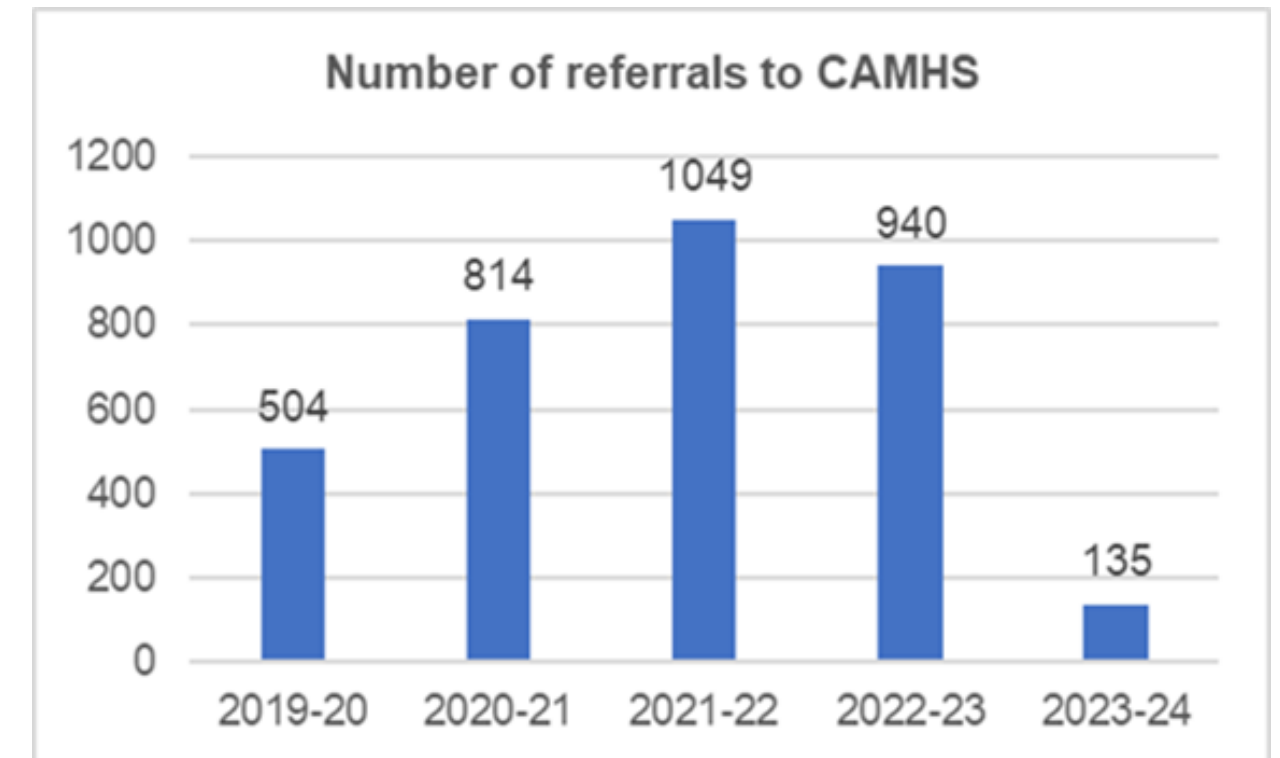
- Despite additional investment, services remain under pressure and demand is leading to longer waiting times for some services. We forecast that our waiting lists will continue to grow across BNSSG despite the mitigations
- The ICB Transformation Hub is reviewing Autism service delivery to develop a service that is able to meet the needs of the BNSSG population moving forward
- Further system discussion is required to review the provision of Community Paediatric services to ensure that this service is future proofed
- A number of projects are taking place to support the efficiency of the services and support the longest waiters in the system. In Health services, this includes: waiting list initiatives; demand and capacity reviews; waiting list and caseload analysis; harm reviews; and a review service skill mix alongside recruiting trainees

Increase in need and demand Mental Health Services

The increase in referrals to Children & Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) have been well managed by transferring CAMHS from Weston General Hospital to Avon and Wiltshire Partnership NHS Trust (AWP). We have reduced waiting lists from ~500 to ~40 young people.

There is a high demand for children's community mental health services. Over 38 schools have Mental Health Support Teams in place, working with a school population of 16,000.

Between April and July we received 130 referrals for therapeutic work with students and we delivered workshops titled 'Coping with Transition' to 500 year 6 students, plus many other whole school approach activities. Mental Health Support Teams work in partnership with Front Door services, Off the Record Bristol, School Nurses, and CAMHS.



Educational outcomes for children and young people

Children and young people with EHCPs

- **End of Early Years Foundation Stage:** North Somerset children performed worse than national averages from 2015 to 2022. In 2023, the percentage of children achieving the good level of development has increased from 0 to 3%
- **End of Key Stage 1:** children performed slightly better in 2023 than the previous year in writing, but worse in reading and mathematics. When comparing with the national figures in 2022, North Somerset children performed worse than their counterparts in all subjects
- **End of Key Stage 2:** the percentage of North Somerset children achieving the expected standard in reading, writing, and mathematics combined has increased between 2022-2023 from 2% to 6%. When comparing with previous years, North Somerset children tend to perform worse than their counterparts nationally from 2017 to 2022
- **End of Key Stage 4:** data is not yet available for 2023. In 2022, North Somerset children and young people achieved similar attainment 8 scores to the national figures (14.20 compared to 14.30 nationally)



North Somerset SEND data and performance dashboard



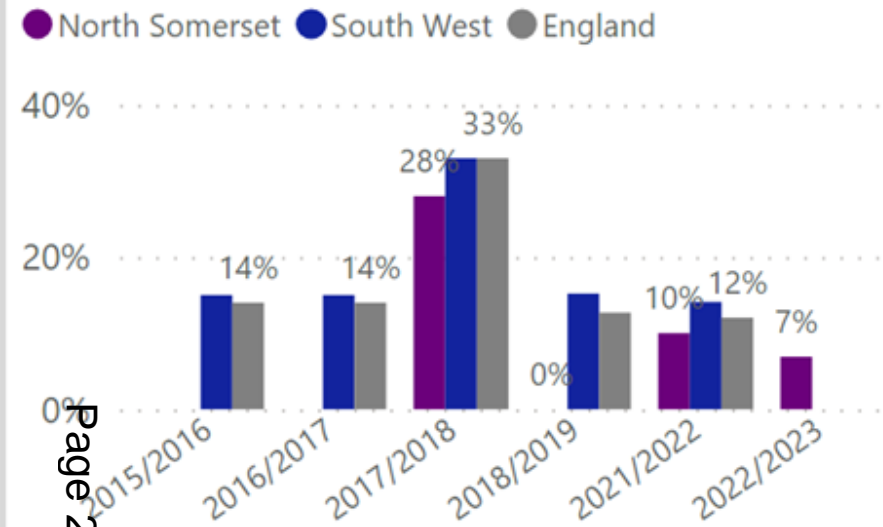
Attainment

Select SEND category

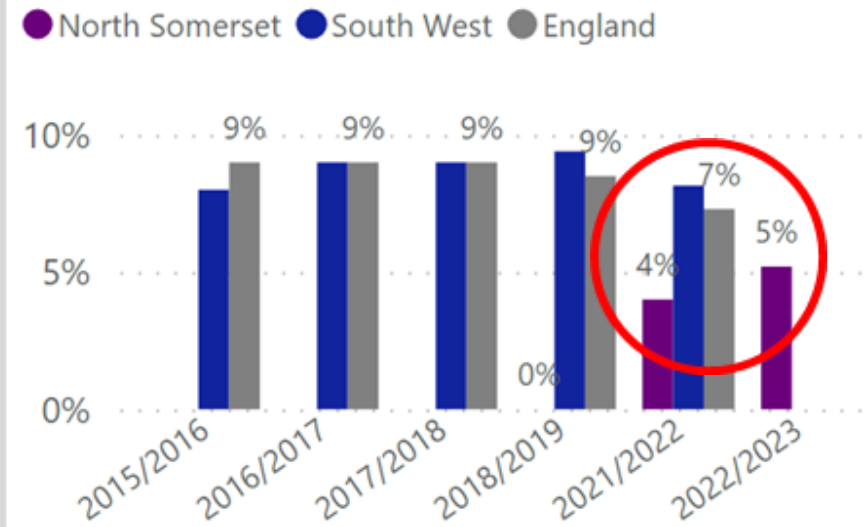
EHCP

This page gives information on attainment across key stages. Note that 2022/2023 data is provisional.

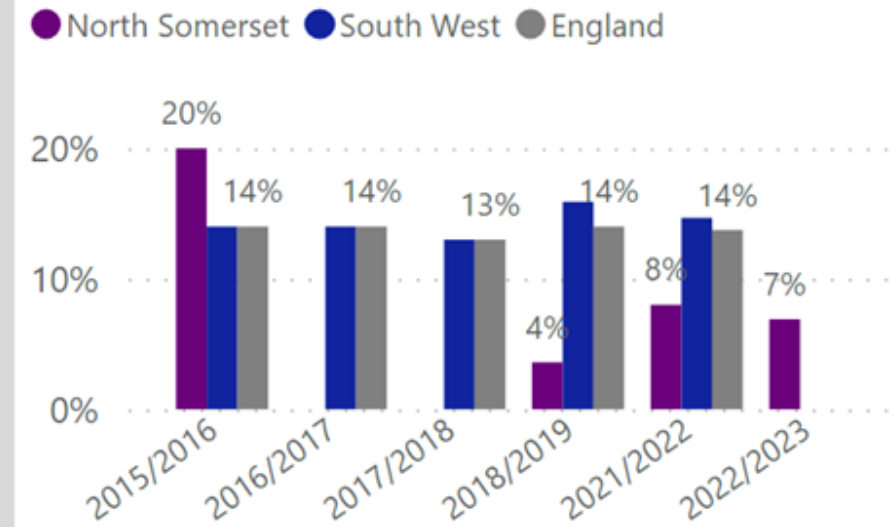
KS1 Percentage of pupils achieving reading expected standard - pupils with SEN statement/EHCP



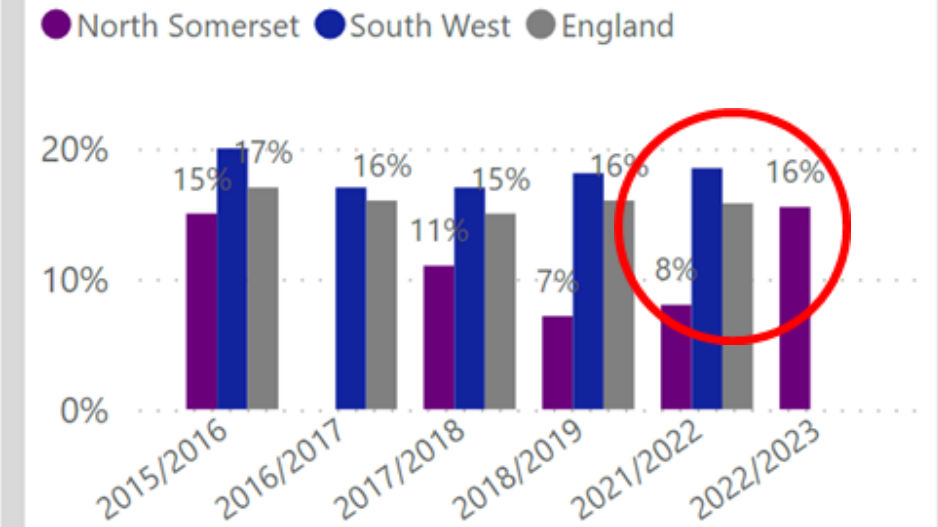
KS1 Percentage of pupils achieving writing expected standard - pupils with SEN statement/EHCP



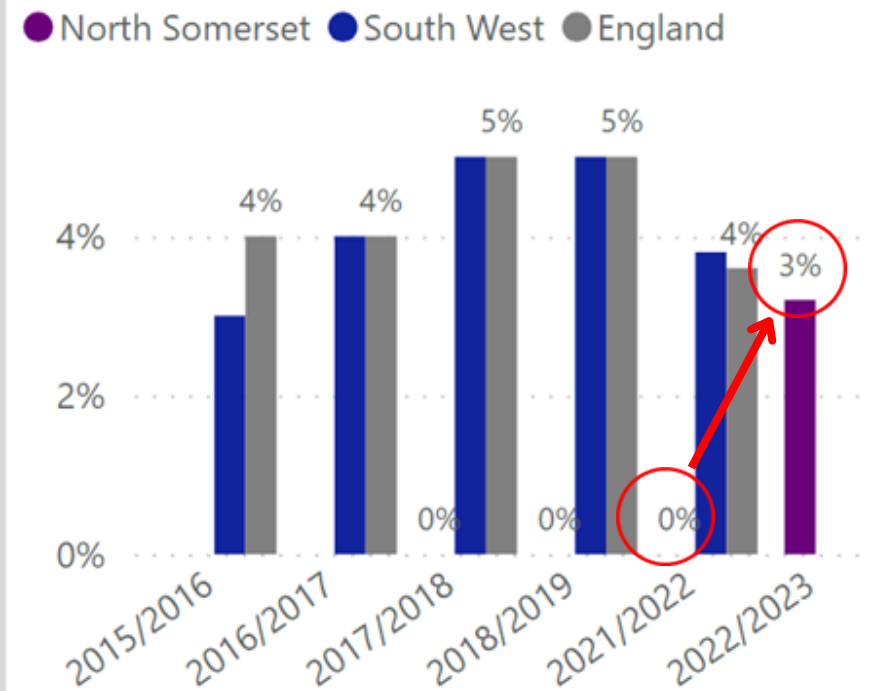
KS1 Percentage of pupils achieving Mathematics expected standard - pupils with SEN statement/EHCP



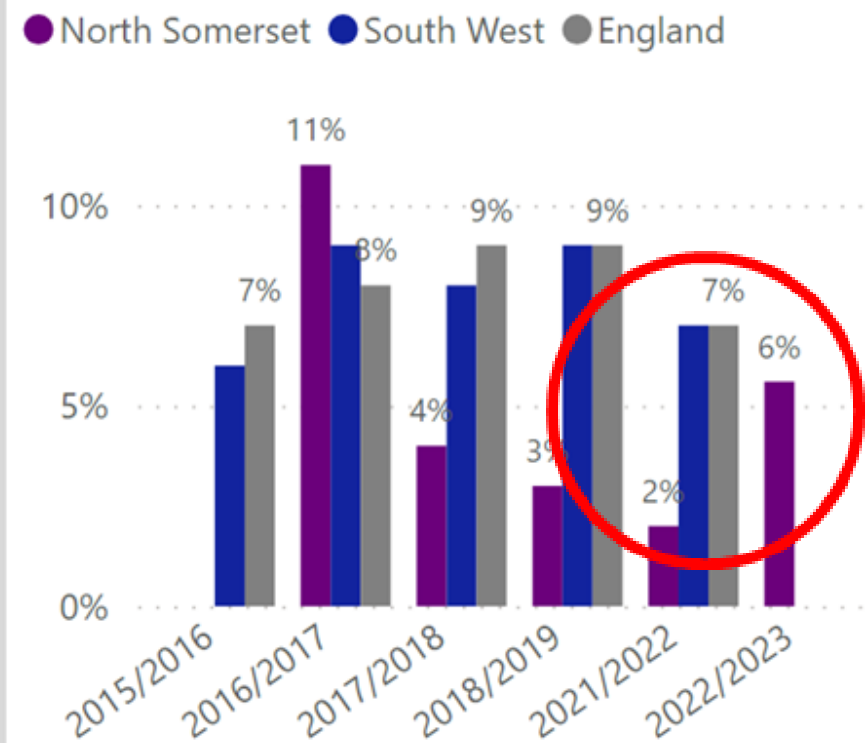
KS1 Percentage of pupils achieving Science expected standard - pupils with SEN statement/EHCP



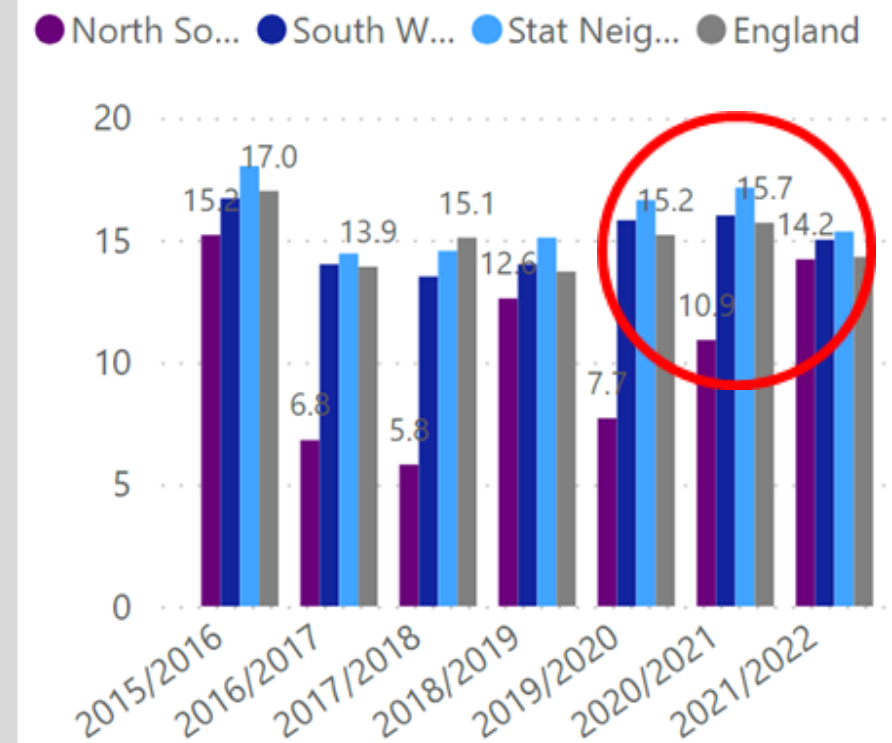
FS - Percentage of pupils achieving a good level of development - pupils with SEN statement/EHCP



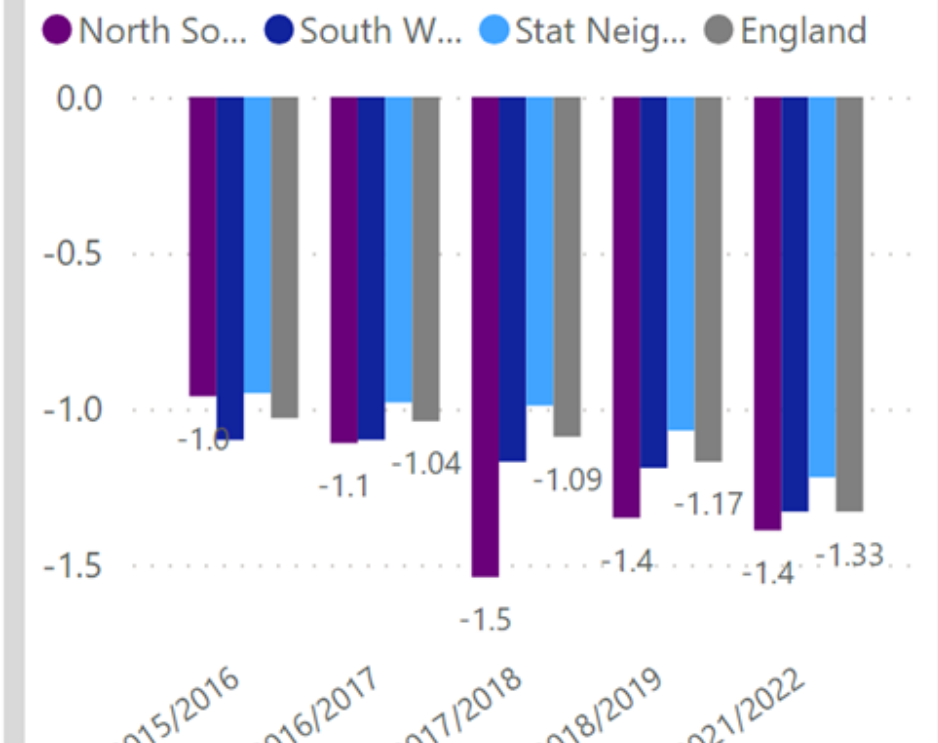
KS2 attainment of statemented/EHCP children RWM combined



Attainment 8 score - pupils with SEN statement/EHCP



Progress 8 score - pupils with SEN statement/EHCP



Educational outcomes for children and young people

Children and young people in receipt of SEND support

- **End of Early Years Foundation Stage:** North Somerset children performed worse than national averages from 2015 to 2022. In 2023, the percentage of children achieving the good level of development remained similar to 2022 (21% compared to 22%)
 - **End of Key Stage 1:** children performed slightly better in 2023 than the previous year in writing and mathematics, but slightly worse in reading. When comparing with the national figures in 2022, North Somerset children performed better than their counterparts in all subjects
 - **End of Key Stage 2:** the percentage of North Somerset children achieving the expected standard in reading, writing, and mathematics combined has remained the same between 2022-2023. When comparing with previous years, North Somerset children tend to perform worse than their counterparts nationally
- **End of Key Stage 4:** data is not yet available for 2023. In 2022, North Somerset children achieved higher attainment 8 scores than national figures (36.7 compared to 34.9 nationally)



North Somerset SEND data and performance dashboard



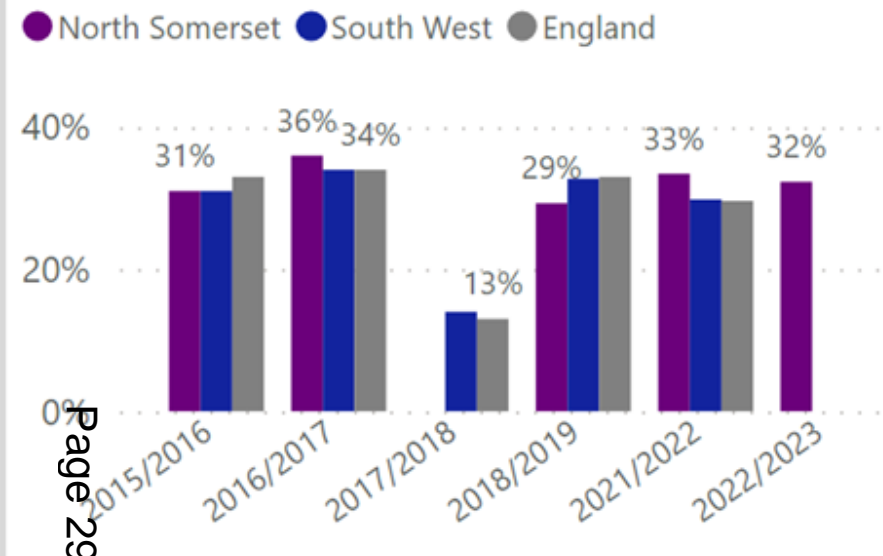
Attainment

Select SEND category

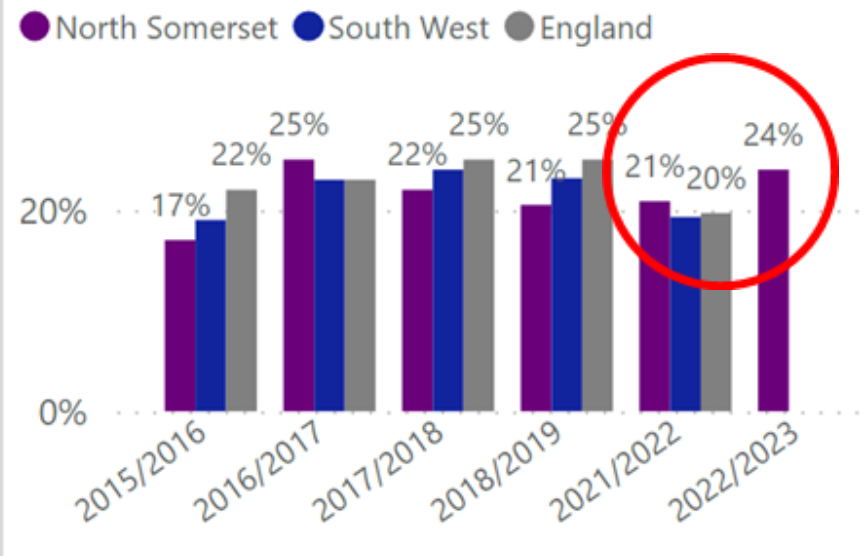
SEN school support

This page gives information on attainment across key stages. Note that 2022/2023 data is provisional.

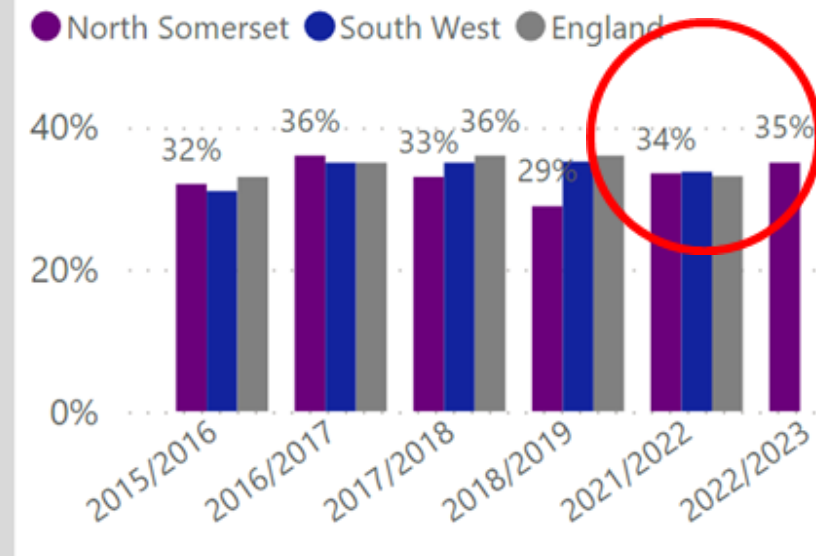
KS1 Percentage of pupils achieving reading expected standard - pupils with SEN support



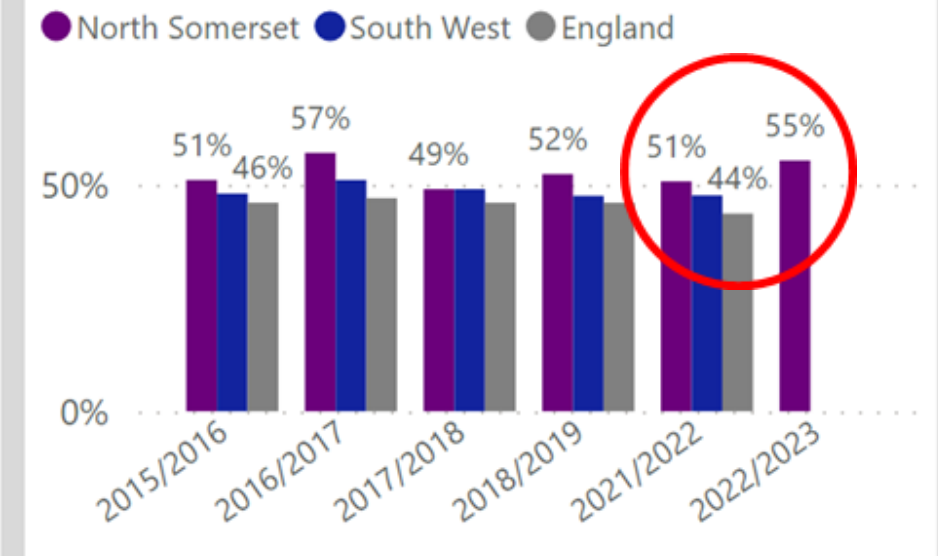
KS1 Percentage of pupils achieving writing expected standard - pupils with SEN support



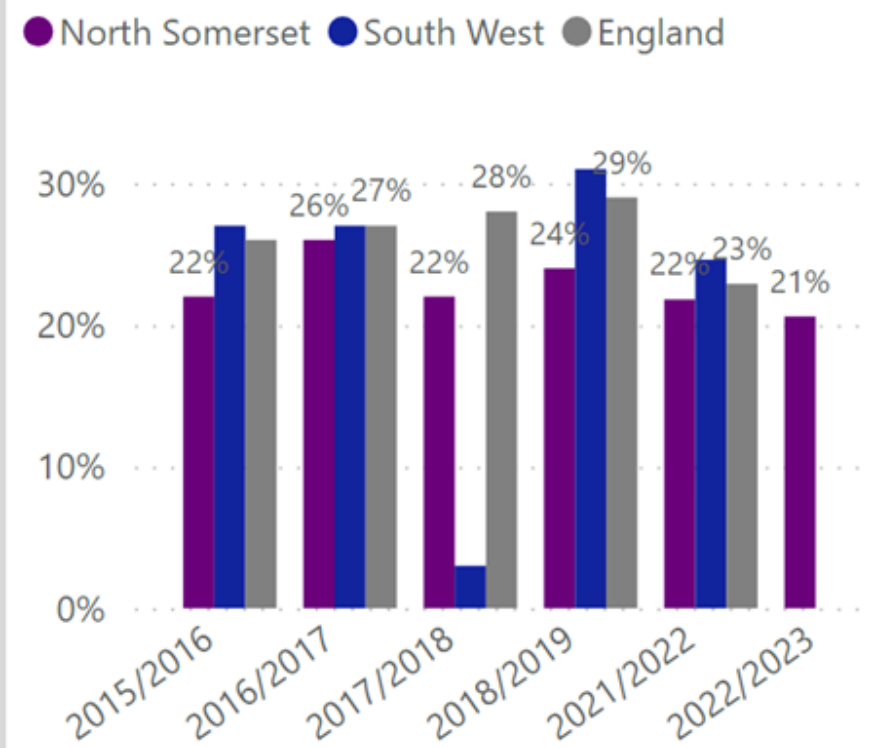
KS1 Percentage of pupils achieving Mathematics expected standard - pupils with SEN support



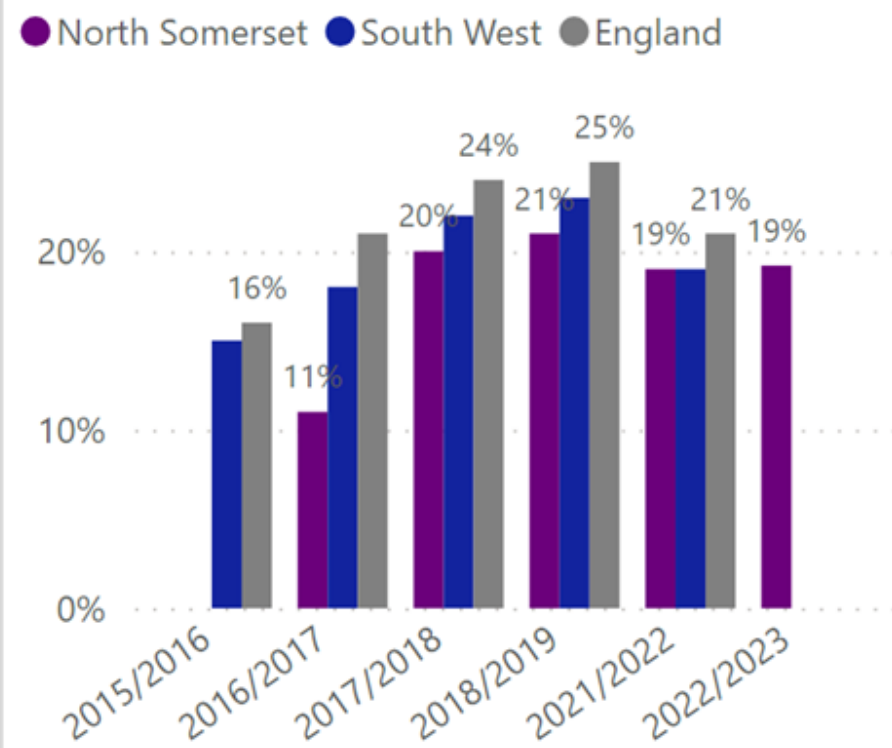
KS1 Percentage of pupils achieving Science expected standard - pupils with SEN support



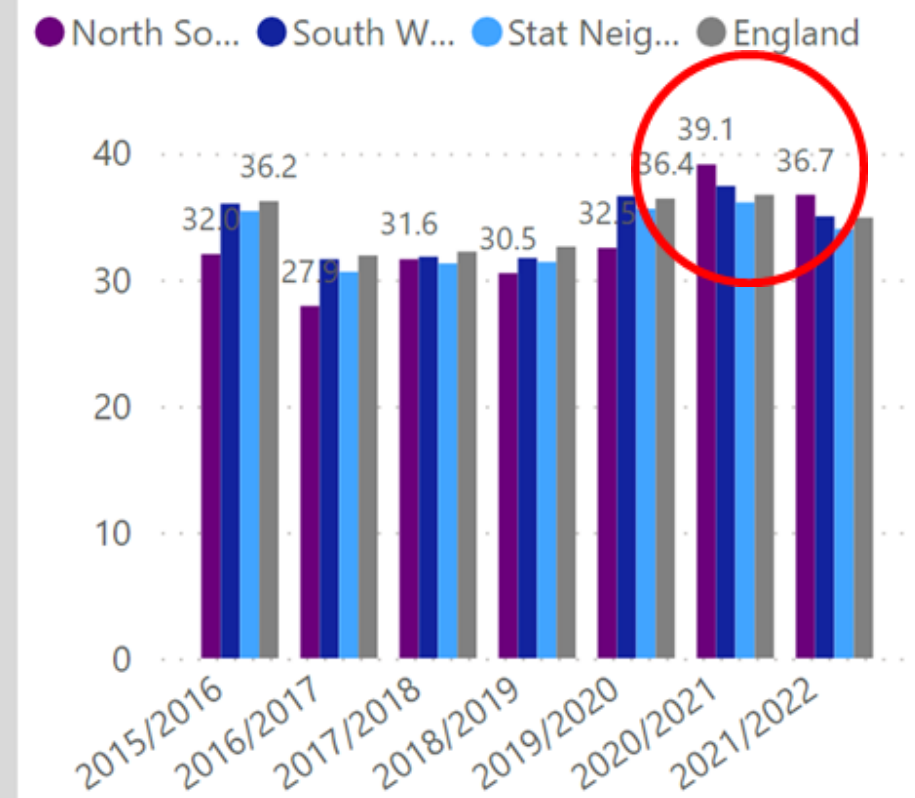
FS - Percentage of pupils achieving a good level of development - With SEN Support



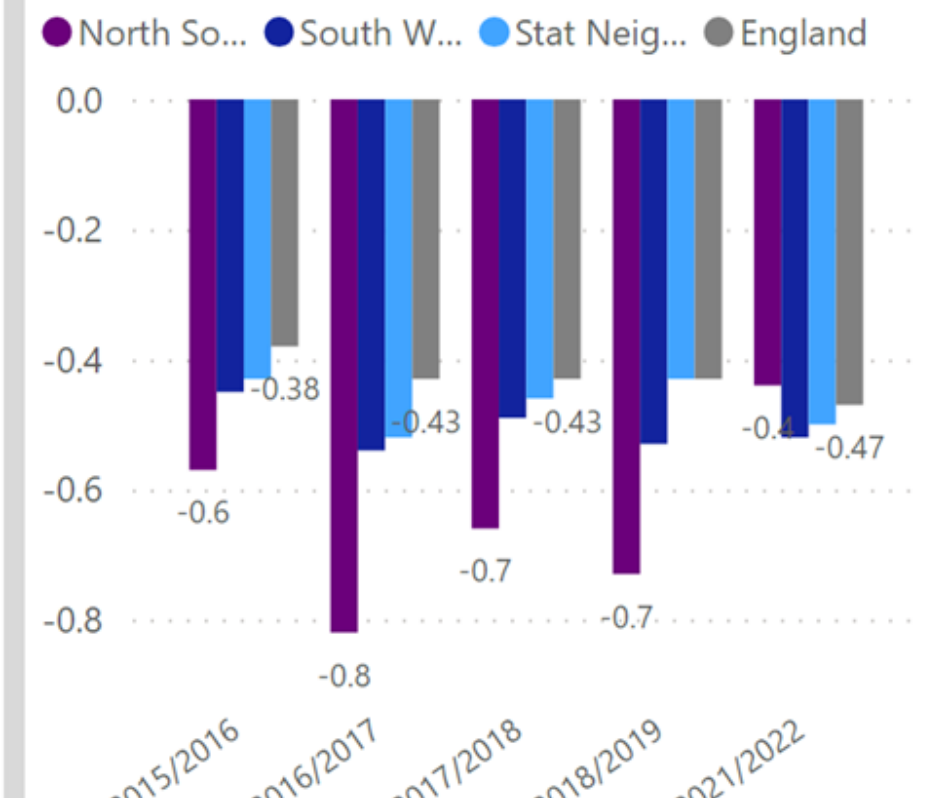
KS2 attainment of SEN non statemented/EHCP children RWM combined



Attainment 8 score - pupils with SEN support



Progress 8 score - pupils with SEN Support



Our overall strengths

There is strong, committed, and visible leadership of the system across the local area

We know where we are going. We have a clear vision and everyone understands their role in making this a reality

We have shifted the SEND culture together and secured meaningful change. **We have no intention of slowing down**

Our ambition for our children and young people is high. We are passionate, focused, and determined

There is a robust partnership between services and we increasingly work together with common purpose and shared goals at all levels of the system

We are hearing children and young people's voices more clearly and are committed to increasing our dialogue with them

There is a positive relationship with parents and carers. We regularly work with parents and carers as equal partners in non-hierarchical forums and NSPCWT is central to shaping future plans, practice review, and governance arrangements

There is a rigorous use of data and performance monitoring regimes. System leaders have a good grip on performance and hold practitioners to account

SEND has become a high priority for all parts of the system and is the focus for the collaborative and individual work undertaken by partners such as schools and settings

There are high levels of innovation in our practice. Practitioners are engaged, energised, and empowered to be solution focused

Areas of focus - emerging strengths



1

Our communication with parents and carers is improving but every parent and carer must have the same positive experience of communication with us - wherever and whenever they contact the SEND system

2

Our children and young people are influential in our strategic thinking; we will build a regular dialogue with a much larger and more diverse cohort of children and young people

3

We have felt the benefits of working across agencies through the system changes we have made; we are resolved to fully embed this culture in all aspects of our work

4

We have created additional resources to respond to the requests for statutory assessments, including 500 proactive assessments through our Safety Valve agreement

5

Improving timeliness is a priority - our Educational Psychologists have doubled the rate of assessments from 30 to 60 per month

6

We are committed to improving Children's Support and Safeguarding contributions to needs assessments and participation in decision making in SEND with a coordinated input into each Panel. We have created a dedicated resource to manage this

7

We are developing a place-based CPD programme for schools with the Multi Academy Trusts and the Teaching Schools Alliance to close the gaps for children with SEND

Areas of focus - emerging strengths

8

We want to engage parents, carers, children, and young people to understand whether our investment continues to be aligned with their own priorities in the £40m annual joint commissioning activity

9

We are addressing pressures in Community Mental Health Services by increasing resources available and developing further support for those children and young people in crisis

10

We are reshaping the Children with Disabilities service to ensure that they provide the right service at the right time in a continuum of support

11

Services which have recruitment challenges will continue to adapt and review their current delivery model and skill mixes to mitigate against and reduce the risk of harm where waiting lists for services are lengthy

12

A Transformation Programme for Autism Services is taking place to design services that will meet the needs of the local community

13

We are developing a new Pathways to Adulthood programme to include travel training, independence training, community participation, and career and further/higher education support and advice for all young people with SEND

14

Our Pupil Referral Unit and Special Schools are creating a new preventative approach to Alternative Provision which increases availability of support to a wider group of children and young people, including those with health needs

Summary of 12-month plan to improve the experiences and outcomes of children and young people with SEND

Communication

- Progress a comprehensive Engagement/Participation Plan to ensure we listen and respond to voices from the widest possible group of parents, carers, and children and young people
- Greatly improve day to day communication with parents and carers
- Build on the strengths of our communication with children and young people to understand the lived experiences of a bigger and more diverse group of children

Early Help and support

- Strengthen the offer through our Early Help services for children and young people
- Improve timeliness of SEND Needs Assessments and re-establish a performance of >70%
- Understand the delivery capacity within the community paediatrics service and review/re-design the health offer to support the neurodivergence transformation plan

Tackling resourcing challenges

- Use all means possible to secure and sustain the specialist resources we need in health and other disciplines such as EPs
- Where we cannot attract the resources, we will keep our delivery models under review and provide support for those on waiting lists

Pathways to Adulthood

- Build on existing work to develop a new plan for Preparing for Adulthood for all children with SEND in Year 9

Summary of 12-month plan to improve the experiences and outcomes of children and young people with SEND

Joint Commissioning

- Recalibrate our approach to joint commissioning, including governance arrangements
- Embed joint commissioning of Speech and Language and Occupational Therapy services through single provider

Improved Children's Support and Safeguarding Services

- Embed the lead role for coordinating Children's Support and Safeguarding contributions to EHC Needs Assessments
- Provide a more comprehensive Short Breaks offer

Inclusive Settings and Schools

- Launch the Early Years and Education strategies and build a culture of relational practice in schools
- Develop placed based CPD programmes to close the gaps for our most vulnerable children
- Consolidate the work of Nurture Groups and develop an Early Years Nurture Pilot to meet emerging needs
- Create a new alternative provision (AP) pathway via the Voyage Learning Campus
- Rescope the offer of our Pupil Referral Unit to make preventative and outreach services available earlier to a wider group of children and young people, and drive the commissioning and quality assurance of AP via this model

The impact of our arrangements for children and young people with SEND

1. Children and young people's needs are identified accurately and assessed in a timely way

Increased training in SEND delivered for practitioners in all disciplines across the system.

Within the last two years:

- 18 sessions of SEND-focused training in the last year accessed by 266 Early Years practitioners
- New Inclusion Co-ordinator (INCCO) training to 23 new SEND Coordinators (SENDSCO)
- 28 Child minders undertook specialist SEND training to enable earlier identification of need and appropriate support for children with SEND as part of our SEND Childminder Programme
- Health Visitors and Community Nursery Nurses (CNNs) have all received training in the last year including identification of risk factors that may mean families require additional support
- Health Visitors trained in delivering Maternal Early Childhood Sustained Home-visiting and CNNs trained on attachment and early brain development
- Health visitor staff trained in the use of Early Language Identification Measure (ELIM) assessment tool which is universally completed at the 2-year review
- All schools have had access to SEND training this year and our Teaching Schools Alliance has embedded SEND and Inclusion into mandatory training for all Early Career Teachers and for leaders. In 2022/2023, 75 out of 80 schools engaged with the training

The impact of our arrangements for children and young people with SEND

Tools to support the identification of need

- A new version of the Graduated Response was co-produced by the Community of Practice and launched in March 2023 with the Parent Carer Forum alongside training sessions for schools and settings
- We have introduced AANT (Analysis of Additional Needs Tool) within our Front Door to enable rapid assessment of need by the Education Psychology Service
- Over 40 schools are now using the Nurture UK model of assessing needs through the Boxall Profile. After 2 terms of Nurture Group attendance, children and young people can return to the classroom and learn independently
- We have published a Right Service, Right Time pathway document across our partnership to support professionals working with children and young people and signpost them to the most appropriate support
- We have created 6 training videos for Early Years Practitioners to support the identification and support for children with SEMH

Resumed regular services:

- Our Health Visiting Services have improved, and we are meeting targets for 2-year reviews to provide families with timely care - Health Visitors, who often first identify needs at 2-year-old checks, are achieving 90% timeliness post COVID
- Services in all therapy areas in North Somerset have been levelled up and aligned to the other areas in BNSSG to create a consistent and equitable regional service offer
- Families, education partners, and more children are now offered services in line with iThrive

1. Children and young people's needs are identified accurately and assessed in a timely way

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The impact of our arrangements for children and young people with SEND

1. Children and young people's needs are identified accurately and assessed in a timely way

Timeliness

- Timeliness has been greatly impacted by a rise in demand nationally and in North Somerset
- In addition to increases to regular system demand, we are assessing over 500 children who are in receipt of Top Up Funding but have no EHCP to regulate the system in line with other authorities
- There is a backlog of 134 unallocated Education, Health, and Care Needs Assessments (EHCNAs)
- Of the 500+ children, we have had new requests to assess 138 of them ahead of our schedule, thus increasing our total number of EHCNA requests for the year by 29% to 468 (01.08.23)
- This has put extra pressure on agencies who provide the assessments and advice
- Without these extra EHCNA requests, our timeliness would have been in the region of 60%
- Further resources for the EP and SEND services are due to take up posts later in 2023 to help improve this figure further

The impact of our arrangements for children and young people with SEND

1. Children and young people's needs are identified accurately and assessed in a timely way

Quality Assurance

- EHCPs are quality assured in a two-stage process. In September 2022 a Quality Assurance Officer joined the SEND Team to lead on the improvement of the quality of EHC Plans
- The number of plans rated good increased from 50% to 73% and parent/carer contributions increased from 53% to 82%
- There is improved evidence of the child's voice throughout their plan, but this is an area where we need to do better

Impact

- Springboard, our commissioned specialist Early Years provision, has received an increase in referrals for support and now supports 85 children with sessions and an additional 12 children in their mainstream settings. We have had a 65% increase in presentations of Autism at Springboard since the beginning of the academic year
- Area SENDCO Visits are all running to schedule – new visits have increased by 66%. These visits lead to applications for Top Up Funding to support children in Early Years
- Outcomes from children discussed at MAISEY included support from social care and appropriate preschool and school placements being secured
- Early identification of need by Health Visitors has led to 96 children referred into, and attending, the CNN led Tiny Talkers speech and language group since May 2022

Our plans for the next 12 months to improve the experience and outcomes of children and young people with SEND

1. Children and young people's needs are identified accurately and assessed in a timely way

We will:

- Increase Education Psychologist capacity and address the backlog of EHCPs
- Strengthen the offer through our Early Help services for children and young people with SEND
- Provide more consistent advice at SEND Decision Panels by Children's Support and Safeguarding - especially for children with SEMH needs
- Improve performance of our Community Paediatric and Autism services
- Continue to improve the children's community health service offer
- Build on the implementation of Mental Health Support Teams (MHSTs) in North Somerset to increase capacity of the teams in place
- Continue to strengthen and improve access to CAMHS services alongside reviewing the offer in North Somerset to ensure there is equitable access across the region
- Embed our joined-up approach to SaLT and OT commissioning
- Embed a consistent approach to Graduated Response support

Focus on practice - Nurture Group feedback

1. Children and young people's needs are identified accurately and assessed in a timely way

"I can't believe the change in him - we notice it in his comprehension and confidence."

"I would like to say how grateful I am that [my child] has had this opportunity to attend [Nurture Group]. This has helped him feel so confident and proud of himself, he comes home saying he has done independent learning and doing great with his phonics. Thank you again."

"If they had had something like this when I was at school, things could have turned out differently for me."

"The [Nurture Group] has provided a consistent, calm, and most importantly safe environment for my son. With the consistency of the two teachers in the nurture provision he has been able to establish attachments which has been essential to his feeling safe in school. The separation anxiety which was a massive struggle for us both at his previous school disappeared very early days as he knew exactly what his day looked like and formed relationships with the same teachers. This calming environment and the routine have been able to help him regulate but most importantly learn. I was previously told that he could not learn in a school environment and certainly not work unsupported, this has been proven to be untrue as I have never known him to talk and share so much about what he's learned but also is working unsupported in many areas. Where school had previously felt unsafe the nurture provision has been an essential part of him settling in and being happy in a new school environment."

The impact of our arrangements for children and young people with SEND

2. Children,
Young People,
and their
Families
participate in
decision-making
about their
individual plans
and support

- All requests for Inclusion Support in Early Years and for Early Years Top Up Funding offer young children and their families the opportunity to fully participate
- The "A Picture of Me" is a child-centred one page profile used consistently in applications for Early Years Top Up Funding and through the Inclusion Link Programme to capture the child's voice
- Our ICB and health care providers involve children and young people with co-production through several channels including Barnardos, who empower young people to use their voice and experience to create positive change in local health services
- The voice of the child is a key tenet and measure of the quality of practice across all 6 Fundamentals with Children's Support and Safeguarding and is especially evident in our work around Language that Cares
- Our Young Director (a Care Experienced Young Person) is supporting us to be more inclusive, have a better understanding of children and young people's needs, and ensuring we involve children and young people in how services are shaped
- Our Engagement & Participation Worker for SEND manages our SEND Council and is managing MAT-based SEND Councils to create a direct dialogue between leadership and children and young people with SEND

The impact of our arrangements for children and young people with SEND

2. Children,
Young People,
and their
Families
participate in
decision-making
about their
individual plans
and support

- We have not always been successful in engaging parents and carers in the statutory Needs Assessment process but have improved our performance over recent months with a 31% increase in participation
 - In October 2022, the percentage of parents fully contributing to their child/young person's EHC plan was 53% compared with 82% in April 2023
- The EHCP Portal (introduced in 2021) offers parents, carers, children, and young people the opportunity to comment on the assessments of needs and the plans as they are developed
 - A further workshop at the Day of SEND on October 18 2023 has been arranged
- Within the last year we have greatly improved our quality assurance process and one of the key measures has been the participation of children and young people in their own plans. A recent sample of 100 EHC plans showed that children's views were captured in each plan
- To improve engagement, we have recently introduced an expectation that SEND officers speak to every parent/carer immediately following a request for assessment of their child, and again when we agree to assess
 - This structured conversation centres on their aspirations for their child and what they hope to gain from the assessment
- We have created a Parent/Carer Liaison Officer post to help respond to parent and carer concerns, identify themes in the difficulties and challenges parents and carers have with the process and work with the team to address these

The impact of our arrangements for children and young people with SEND

2. Children, Young People, and their Families participate in decision-making about their individual plans and support

- Our SENDIAS Service is active and popular with parents and carers. 95% of respondents said they found the help received from *SAY: Send And You* helpful or very helpful
- Last year we commissioned SENDIAS to provide brokerage and support for parents and carers who felt their child wasn't getting what they needed from school
 - This service has supported 77 families receiving SEN Support
 - 43 of those families have received support with preparing for meetings with their school, including 3 children who were supported to prepare their own views for the meetings
 - 4 service users required a higher level of support and increased hours of support due to their own access needs
- We have a close working relationship with North Somerset Parents and Carers Working Together (NSPCWT), our Parent Carer Forum and routinely work collaboratively with them on the development of policy and important changes which affect outcomes for them and their children
 - They have supported the development of a number of useful face to face meetings with parents and carers to discuss important issues for them such as placement decisions and transitions
 - We regularly attend NSPCWT events to meet parents and carers including the Transitions event in November 2022 where we saw in excess of 100 parents and 10 young people. Our NS Lead delivered a joint presentation with the Jack Hazeldene Foundation (AP provider) on practical skills for parents/understanding processes during transition

The impact of our arrangements for children and young people with SEND

2. Children,
Young People,
and their
Families
participate in
decision-making
about their
individual plans
and support

- Our SEND Council of children and young people is now well established and new membership from September 2023 has increased the representation from a more diverse cohort
- The SEND Council regularly meets with system leaders and sets its own agenda, reflecting the priorities of children and young people. This years agenda includes:
 - How to reach other children and young people
 - The use of language and terminology that is neutral and respectful
 - Upskilling professionals to improve their ability to understand needs and the impact of their actions
 - The environment: making this more accessible to more children and young people, including low arousal spaces
 - Our ambitions for children and young people with SEND - are they high enough?
 - Help to understand your own additional needs, making judgements about what and how much to share
 - Social lives: creating ways to connect with others and taking up leisure opportunities
 - How to manage assessments and exams

Our plans for the next 12 months to improve the experience and outcomes of children and young people with SEND

We will:

- Improve clarity about what can be provided through the universal offer for children and young people with SEND
- Promote engagement and development of our re-launched Local Offer
- Improve our reach with parents and carers to include representatives of more diverse communities
- Introduce a plan for Preparing for Adulthood for every young person at year 9
- Improve awareness among parents and carers who elect to home educate their children
- Support parents and carers with direct payments information
- Increase our brokerage and support offer for parents and carers from SENDIAS
- Improve our careers opportunities and advice for children and young people with SEND
- Review our use of advocates to ensure everyone who needs one has one
- Achieve consistency in listening to the child/young person's voice from schools
- Develop a plan and narrative to address the backlog of EHC timeliness and the autism pathway

2. Children,
Young People,
and their
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Focus on practice - SEND Council

The SEND Council is a group of children and young people from primary, secondary, and Special Schools with a range of needs. They meet monthly to share their voice and experiences with senior leaders in the local authority and are provided with the opportunity to discuss what positive changes they would like to see for people with SEND in North Somerset.

They have spoken to councillors about:

- the use and impact of language
- mental health in schools
- health care
- post-16 opportunities

The SEND Council is instrumental in developing and challenging our services to continually improve and meet the needs of children and young people with SEND. Plans are in place to expand the cohort of students to include a wider range of additional needs in more schools and settings. They have met with the SEND Improvement Board, including DfE/NHSE representatives, and consulted on key strategies and policies – most recently, the Education Strategy, Local Offer changes, and Pathways to Adulthood. The Community of Practice has invited the SEND Council to talk to them about this during the Autumn Term.

The Council has created an awareness video of their lived experience and what matters to them. It discusses the hurdles and challenges they face having hidden needs, as well as their strengths and aspirations. This film is being used in training across the North Somerset Partnership.

2. Children,
Young People,
and their
Families
participate in
decision-making
about their
individual plans
and support

The impact of our arrangements for children and young people with SEND

3. Children and young people receive the right help and support at the right time

- Every Early Years setting has an Inclusion Officer who receives specialist SEND training to support children with SEND
- In Early Years, as soon as needs are identified which require a multi-agency approach children are supported by MAISEY until they have successfully transitioned to school. There are currently 143 children supported by MAISEY
- When SEND needs exceed the support that can be provided within their Early Years setting, they are supported through a specialist provider: Springboard. There are 97 children currently receiving services from Springboard
- There are 28 SEND childminders who had 19 children with SEND in their provision in 2022/23
- 59 children currently receive support from Portage services
- We have supported 164 Early Years children with Top Up Funding and 1,427 school age children
- Each school has a trained SENDCO and there are 64 Emotional Literacy Support Officers working across our schools
- 22 young people are receiving funded support through academy schools, 987 through academies, 43 through Resource Bases, 12 through Special Schools, 345 through post-16 providers and 49 through the Voyage Learning Campus (PRU)
- Block funding is also provided to Weston College and place funding is provided to all Special Schools, including independent and out of area schools

The impact of our arrangements for children and young people with SEND

3. Children and young people receive the right help and support at the right time

- This year, we have introduced 3 new Nurture Groups and 2 additional Resource Bases, each supporting 8-10 pupils at any one time
- We are mid delivery of 130 additional Special School places at Baytree School and Lime Hills School
- Significant improvements have been made in many areas which result in reduced waiting times, for instance, in our Children and Young People's Mental Health Services
- In other areas, we have worked with parents and carers to support families on waiting lists
- Continuous review of risk of harm guides the management of the waiting lists for those services where there are recruitment challenges such as Community Paediatrics
- We have re-shaped some of our support services – SENDCAS, Buddying, Sitting Service, and Portage and located them within the Children with Disabilities service. This will improve the offer and reduce the need for children to be passed between service areas
- We have increased the uptake in the use of Direct Payments, which is linked to an increase in the number of social care assessments for children with SEND

Performance in SaLT, and Physiotherapy services have both exceeded their targets for appointment times. CAMHS and Health Visitor Checks have both met their targets and Community Paediatrics and Occupational Therapy are below target. This situation is being monitored closely by the ICB and the SEND Improvement Board.

KPI Ref	Key Performance Indicators – How we will measure Progress	Baseline	February Key Performance Indicator (3 months)	Actual progress February	May Key Performance Indicator (6 months)	Actual progress May	12 months – November	Actual progress August 23
2.5	KPI: 92% within 18-week referral to treatment target for Paediatrics & Therapies	Nov 21			Monitored through monthly contract data		Monitored through monthly contract data	NOT MET
	KPI: Paediatric 92%	Paediatric 6%	Paediatric 15%	9.4%	Paediatric 25%	15%	Paediatric 30%	11.8% (May 23)
Page 49	KPI: Speech and Language 92%	Speech & Language 56%	Speech & Language 92%	60%	Speech & Language 92%	80%	Speech & Language 80%	98.1% (May 23) – exceeded predicted trajectory
	KPI: Physiotherapy 92%	Physiotherapy 88%	Physiotherapy 80%	46%	Physiotherapy 50%	60%	Physiotherapy 45%	100% (May 23) – exceeded predicted trajectory
	KPI: Occupational Therapy 92%	Occupational Therapy 8%	Occupational Therapy 50%	8.3%	Occupational Therapy 50%	15%	Occupational Therapy 35%	0% (March 23) – did not reach predicted trajectory
	KPI: Health Visitor checks 90% within 2.5 year	Health Visitor 2-2.5year checks 79%	Health Visitor 2-2.5year checks 90%	87%	Health Visitor 2-2.5year checks 90%	80%	Health Visitor 2-2.5year checks 90%	87.43% (Q 1 23/24) – met November predicted trajectory
	KPI: Child & Adult Mental Health Service emergency within 24 hours 100%	Specialised CAMHS Emergency Service 100%	Specialised CAMHS Emergency Service 100%	100%	Specialised CAMHS Emergency Service 100%	100%	Specialised CAMHS Emergency Service 100%	MET 100% met target

The impact of our arrangements for children and young people with SEND

Children's Centres offer activities for children under 5 (term time) and up to 8-10 (holiday) activities delivered by Senior Children Centre Workers and Children Centre Workers who are qualified to level 3 in early years child development

Planning and delivery of activities includes:

- Sensory
- Physical
- Tactile
- Social, emotional, mental health

These focus on ensuring that every child, including those with SEND, can access the activities. The team provides activities on the floor for non-mobile children and toddlers, and multi-level for those that are cruising, walking, or in wheelchairs. We offer summer activities for our older children aged 5+. Singing and stories are always delivered with Makaton (where possible) and this includes welcome and tidying up songs.

Activities delivered include:

- Sensory play
- Five To Thrive
- Boogie Beat
- Rhyme and Sign
- Let's Play
- Tiny Talkers

3. Children and young people receive the right help and support at the right time

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Our plans for the next 12 months to improve the experience and outcomes of children and young people with SEND

We will:

- Improve waiting list positions wherever possible and keep them under close scrutiny
- Continue to invest in specialist provision to meet needs earlier through the delivery of Nurture, Resource Bases, and Special School places
- Deliver Trauma-Informed Practice Training for all schools and create a sustainable network of lead practitioners
- Deliver needs-led training in schools and settings
- Launch the Education Strategy, Early Help Strategy, and Early Years Strategy and embed these over the course of the year
- Fully embed the Graduated Response and use mechanisms such as AANT and Nurture Groups to meet needs before a diagnosis is made
- Get better at taking a holistic view of the family through increased working together by multi-agency professionals
- Establish an Early Help network across health, education, and social care to improve communication between services and reduce the number of times parents need to tell their story
- Extend outreach from Special Schools and the Voyage Learning Campus (PRU) to support children and young people at an earlier stage and within their own schools

3. Children and young people receive the right help and support at the right time

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3. Children and young people receive the right help and support at the right time

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Focus on practice - Training for parent carers and professionals

Our Parent Carer Forum have filled 1000+ Training / Workshops places for parents, carers, and professionals alike. Many of our training sessions are co-facilitated by a Peer Trainer from the Parent Carer Community SENDIAS and NSPCWT have provided Peer Support in Schools & community settings (221 Parent Carers in 45 Schools / 568 Parent Carers at 105 coffee / engagement events)

Some examples of the courses for parent carers include:

- Incredible Years Autism and Speech Delay (14 weeks) for parents and carers with children 2-7 years
- Parent Plus Special Needs (PPSN) Group (8 weeks) for parents and carers of children 11-25 years
- Non-Violent Resistance (NVR) (12 weeks) for parents and carers of children 9-18 years

Other topics covered for parent carers and professionals include:

- Puberty in Girls
- Dyslexia, Dyscalculia, and Dyspraxia
- An introduction to FASD
- “How can I be a strong advocate for the child in my care”
- “How to become confident for YOU”
- Parent/Carers Financial Advice Toolkit
- How to support your child with SEN with sleep
- Attachment and Childhood Trauma
- De-escalation in Challenging

Early Help staff training (including Children’s Centre Staff) includes:

- Trauma in Children and Young People
- Five to Thrive
- Co-producing accessible and inclusive Family Hubs
- How Family Hubs can improve the lives of children and young people with SEND and those around them
- Early Years Trauma and Repair
- Behaviour
- Early Years Makaton

The impact of our arrangements for children and young people with SEND

4. Children and Young People are well prepared for their next steps and achieve strong outcomes

Supporting transitions in early years and education

- All children who are supported by MAISEY have transition plans which help them move from Early Years provision into Reception
- MAISEY support does not stop until the team is confident that they have settled into their new school
- EYFS staff are supported by SENDCO's and the council's Early Years Team to work quickly to understand children's needs and to put in place appropriate support and resources
- Children with SEND begin their transition to secondary school during Year 6 when transferring from a mainstream school to another mainstream school
- Children and their parents and carers visit their new school and meet key staff. Work between their existing school and their new school continues until the point of transfer. Courses for parents and carers are provided
- Some children requiring additional support have a Re-Integration Worker working alongside them throughout the transition process between schools and the support continues after transition and phases out over the first two terms of secondary school

The impact of our arrangements for children and young people with SEND

4. Children and Young People are well prepared for their next steps and achieve strong outcomes

Supporting transitions in education

- Our secondary schools already routinely offer Preparation for Adulthood training, information and advice to students with SEND, though the offer varies between schools. We know that there are examples of schools working hard with students so that they receive additional help and support from Year 9 onwards
- Students with SEND access a range of additional support so that they can partake fully in careers related trips and visits and work experience. When they move into post-16 they have been well advised and are well equipped for next steps
- Our audit systems developed to quality assure our EHCPs evaluate whether outcomes and aspirations that have been voiced by children and their families are embedded in plans and can be seen in the outcomes that have been agreed
- We are currently working across agencies to develop a package of transition entitlements for every young person with SEND beginning with the Year 9 Annual Review where an EHCP is in place and a planning meeting for young people with SEND Support

The impact of our arrangements for children and young people with SEND

4. Children and Young People are well prepared for their next steps and achieve strong outcomes

Transitions to adulthood

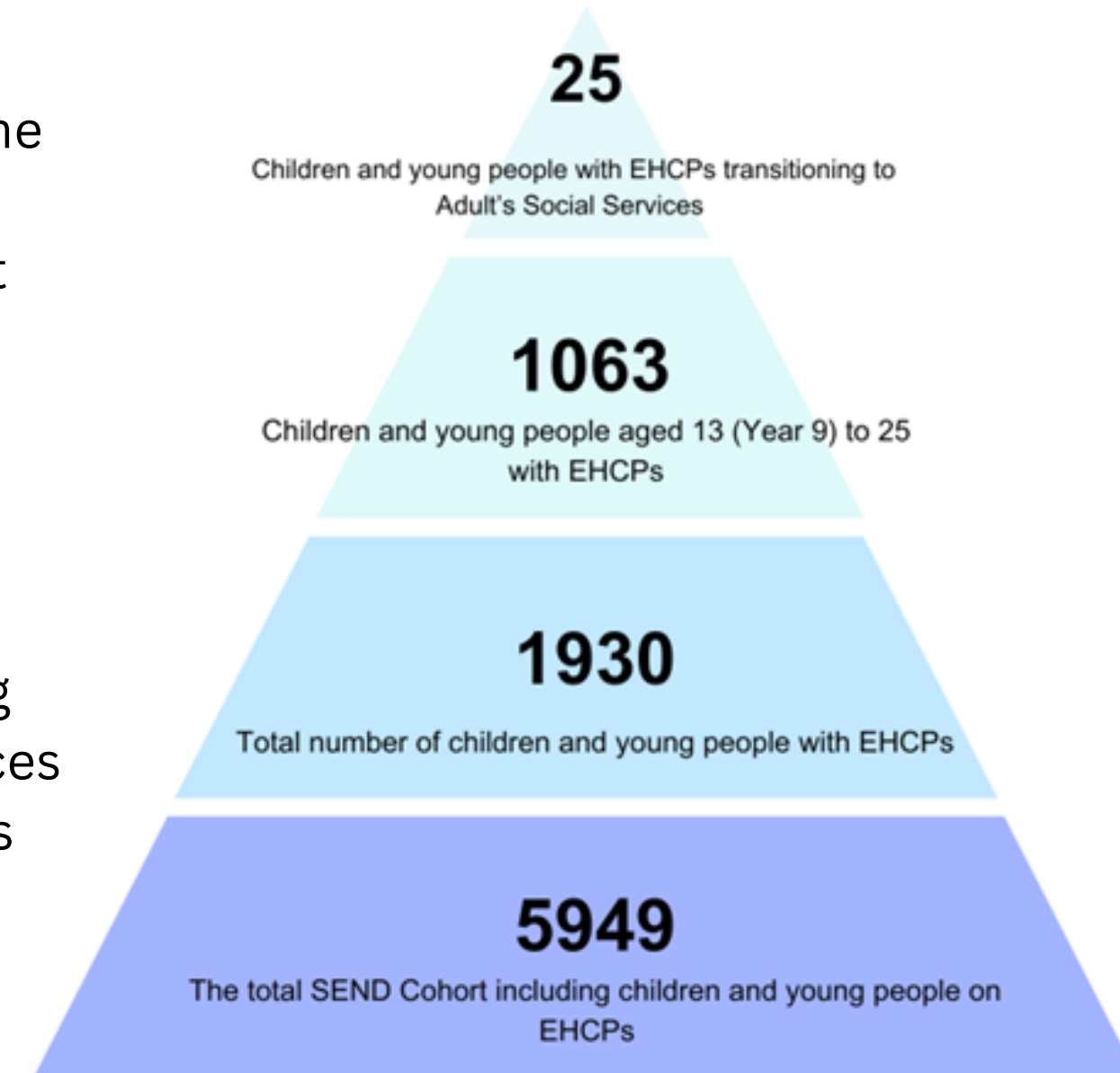
- Our SEND Hub (Local Offer) has been redesigned to offer guidance for young people and their parents and carers to access services to help them prepare for adulthood. This includes advice on health, relationships, transport, further education, employment, supported internships, housing, and community support
- Children's Support and Safeguarding has improved the identification of young people at 14 years old who may require services as adults
- The Short Breaks package of support in the 17th year is generally transferable to Adult Services post 18
- No young person open to the Children with Disabilities Team is left without support on their 18th birthday. Packages continue until a transition to Adult Social Care is achieved
- Independent Travel Training offered to 68 young people

The impact of our arrangements for children and young people with SEND

4. Children and Young People are well prepared for their next steps and achieve strong outcomes

The Transitions Team

- The Transitions Team works with adults who are transferring into Adults Social Care services up to the age of 25 or until a transition to a long-term adult service is achieved (which is often before the adult turns 25)
- There is a single point of contact for transitions to Adult Social Care and we have built good relationships across services with regular contact with schools / children's teams
- We develop creative solutions to supporting young people to find the right accommodation and services
- The Transitions Team attends transition workshops for parents and have built specific skills (for example: Talking Mats, use of Social Stories, PECS, Makaton, legislation, trauma-informed work)



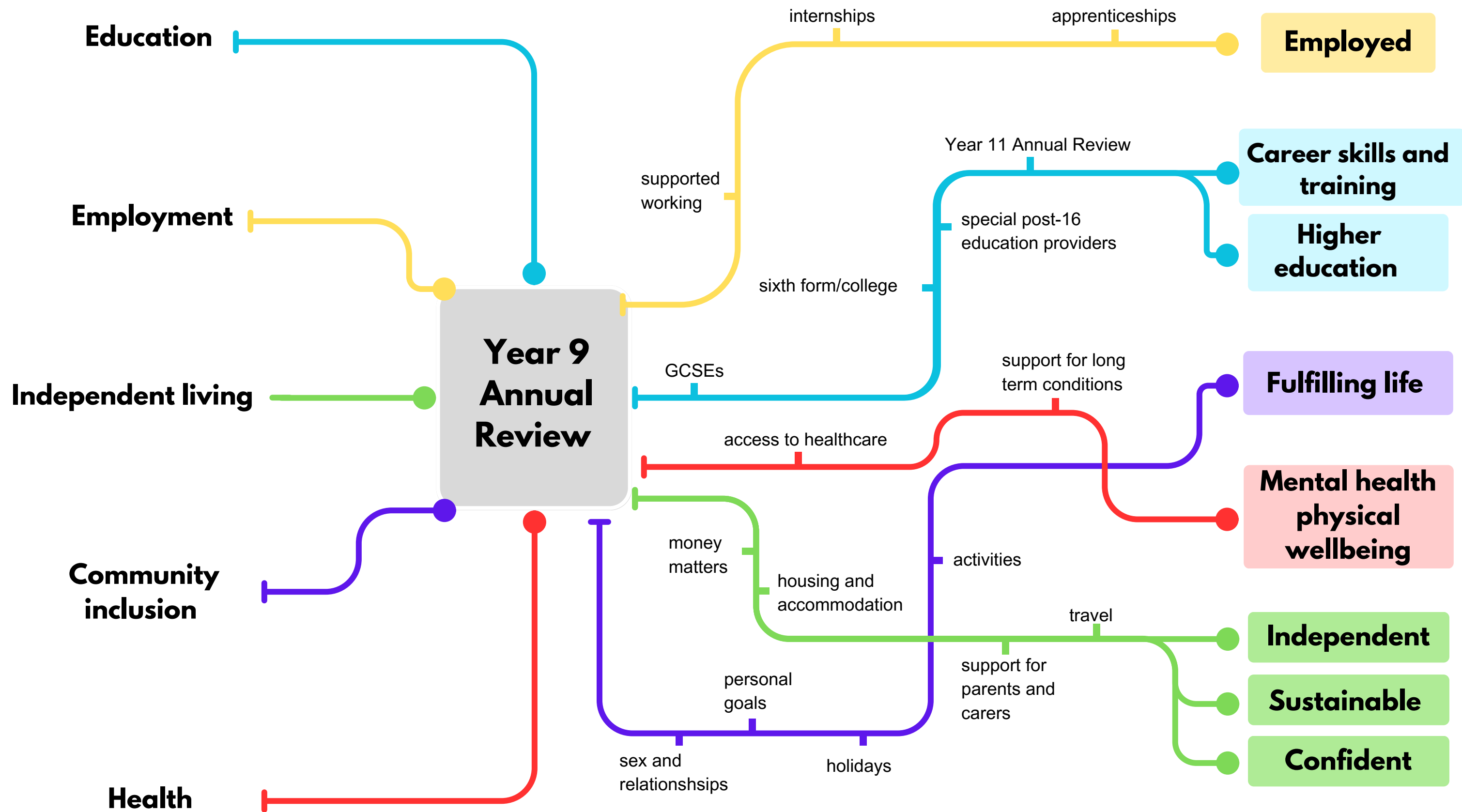
Our plans for the next 12 months to improve the experience and outcomes of children and young people with SEND

4. Children and Young People are well prepared for their next steps and achieve strong outcomes

We will:

- Review quality assurance systems for EHCPs to further improve the experiences of our children with a focus on impact, transitions, and outcomes
- Ensure children's wishes and aspirations are captured in their plans and children are supported to achieve these
- Submit annual reviews on the EHC Portal to closely monitor EHC outcome progression
- Develop the Post-16 Entitlement package to ensure every child with SEND has a comprehensive range of services, support, advice, and training to help them prepare for adulthood
- Start using the Mind of My Own App within Adult Social Care and the Transition Team
- All Pathway to Adulthood assessments will consistently begin when the young person is 16 with a long term goal of improving this to assess young people in year 9

Pathway to Adulthood: Post-16 pathways map



Focus on practice - Multi-Agency Information and Support in Early Years

MAISEY supports provision planning from early identification of need until school entry for children with SEND who need a multi-agency approach to meeting their needs.

MAISEY referrals can be made by any professional working with the child and family. Children can be referred at any age from birth to school age. Children can remain on MAISEY until the meeting is confident that children are placed in school following transition. Children who have agreed delayed school entry can also remain on MAISEY. MAISEY ensures where possible that transfers to pre-school and school are successful for every child.

Children are only removed from MAISEY following a meeting's agreement to remove, for example when a move out of the area is confirmed or when a child no longer needs a multi-agency approach to meeting their needs. MAISEY ensures that children's needs are looked at holistically and that appropriate support is offered to the child and family. It is the place where one profession can question and challenge the involvement of another. It is where services can problem solve together to ensure that children's individual needs are met.

The group meets monthly, excepting August, and all children on MAISEY are reviewed once a term. All Children in Care, Children in Need and Children on a Child Protection Plan are discussed monthly. Any children on Early Help can be looked at as "urgent cases" and can be brought monthly. Agencies highlight children for discussion that month a week in advance to the panel chair. Any "urgent cases" can also be discussed at panel.

The following agencies are regularly represented at MAISEY: Specialist community children's services (SaLT, OT Physio), Health Visiting, Sensory Support Services, NSC Portage, Springboard Opportunity Group, Baytree School Outreach, NSC SEND team, NSC Educational Psychology, NSC Early Years and Childcare Team. Other services who are represented more occasionally are NSC Disabled Children's Team, Community Paediatrics, Lifetime Service.

There are currently 114 children on MAISEY including 8 Children in Care or on a Child Protection Plan. The geographical split of children is 1/3 North and 2/3 South. This split is consistent.

4. Children and Young People are well prepared for their next steps and achieve strong outcomes

The impact of our arrangements for children and young people with SEND

5. Children and Young People with SEND are valued, visible and included in their communities

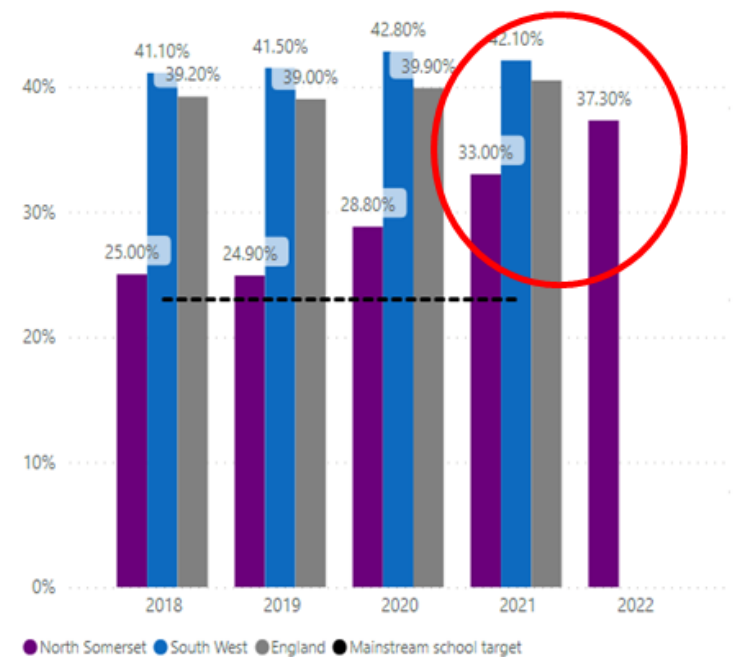
- Our increase in specialist provision enables over 300 children to attend local schools
- Our Education and SEND Strategies intentionally focus on children learning and living within their communities
- Head Teachers of North Somerset Schools are in direct dialogue with their own SEND pupils to understand their lived experience. This a new commitment as part of our headteacher forums, and we have asked both our primary and secondary heads to meet with groups of SEND children and young people to hear from them directly about their experience in schools
- A survey has been completed by 88 children and young people with SEND to ask about how safe they feel at school and the support they receive. Another survey is planned to ask them about the support they receive to progress educationally
- All our special schools and many mainstream schools work to provide social experiences which mirror those of other children
- There are closer links between Engagement and Participation Worker and School SENDCOs to gain greater input
- Visits will be on a termly basis and drop-in sessions will be held for children and young people with SEND to request information, ask questions so their voices and opinions can be recorded.
- Our SEND Council has prioritised a review and promotion of opportunities to participate in social activities

The impact of our arrangements for children and young people with SEND

5. Children and Young People with SEND are valued, visible and included in their communities

- Our Short Breaks Statement outlines the opportunities for children and young people with SEND to engage in community-based activities, including universal Short Breaks which require no assessment to access. Staff use a range of communication aids to ensure that children and young people are active in shaping their support plan
- There are currently 222 children and young people who receive support under Short Breaks
- Health settings and Children's Centres have been developed so they are welcoming spaces for families in local venues such as schools and health centres
- A number of local shops and leisure providers are developing accessible services to welcome children and their families
- We have recently opened an accessible Play Park in Weston-super-Mare
- The number of children with EHCPs placed in mainstream schools has increased by 12% since 2018

% in mainstream school - children and young peopl...



Our plans for the next 12 months to improve the experience and outcomes of children and young people with SEND

5. Children and Young People with SEND are valued, visible and included in their communities

We will:

- Continue to challenge schools and settings to meet needs in mainstream schools
- Identify suitable placements in local schools at transition points
- Develop our Engagement Plan which will have a strong focus on the engagement of children and young people
- Create safe social activities and spaces to help children and young people with SEND make friends and community connections
- Develop our Preparing for Adulthood Strategy to promote full inclusion and independence
- Promote the SEND Council's awareness-raising video among professionals
- Increase the number of children and young people who understand their rights and entitlements
- Meet with Town Councils to seek their support to make the local environment accessible

Focus on practice - Lucinda and her mum Nicky

At the start of the Covid-19 pandemic, Lucinda and her mum Nicky started a series of Makaton lessons online.

The videos which continue to this day were widely popular with thousands of viewers, including Jacqueline Wilson, the acclaimed children's author who discovered Lucinda while researching her latest book in the Sleepovers series. She was so inspired by Lucinda that she has dedicated the book to her. Lucinda will now help millions of readers understand that it is possible to thrive and help and inspire others (and have a sleep over like everyone else).

Nicky has been determined to have Lucinda attend a mainstream school, and Lucinda currently attends Uphill Primary.

Meet Lucinda and her mum Nicky by clicking this link:
https://youtu.be/MTu_6OrCHBw



The impact of our arrangements for children and young people with SEND

6. Leaders are ambitious for children and young people with SEND

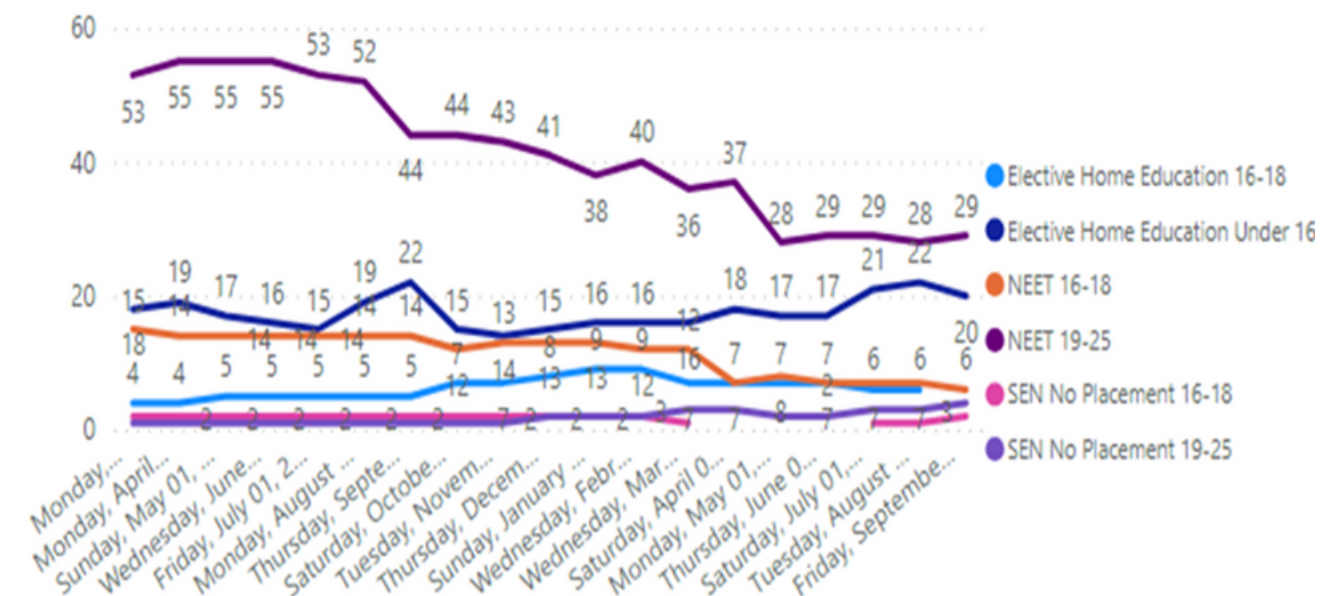
- We have a clear Vision for children, young people and their families and an ambitious SEND Strategy that is shared across the Local Area Partnership. Our SEND Strategy includes specific annual targets for this work
- There are effective multi-agency forums in which SEND is the main focus including the SEND Improvement Board which remains in place following the lifting of our improvement notice and other SEND workshops throughout the year
- In our respective agencies, strategic meetings of system leaders prioritise SEND as the main theme of the discussions and are fully engaged with our improvement journey
- We have increased the number of children attending local schools and settings by and 2% 278 attend Weston College which is an exemplar college for students with SEND
- Most of our schools now receive positive feedback for their work in SEND within their Ofsted Inspections. We need to ensure that all schools have the same high ambitions for children with SEND
- The ambition for children with SEND is a key characteristic of our Special Schools as evidenced in recent inspections. We have expanded our Special School provision to provide more children with the opportunity to attend them

The impact of our arrangements for children and young people with SEND

6. Leaders are ambitious for children and young people with SEND

- The attainment gap for our children and young people with SEND has improved. In some areas, our performance is higher than the regional and national scores but it is very much a concern for us at every educational stage
- We are working with school leaders and our Teaching Schools Alliance to identify and close gaps in development, progress, and attainment for our children and young people with SEND
- Children who have been supported by Nurture Groups are consistently acquiring the skills and confidence to successfully return to their classrooms and learn independently after two terms
- Similarly, the increase in Resource Bases allows children and young people to attend local schools and learn alongside their peers
- We have reduced the number of young people who are Not in Education, Employment, or Training (NEET) or have no placement post-16 by 25% within the last year and by half within an 18-month period

EHCP students EHE, NEET and no placement per snapshot



Our plans for the next 12 months to improve the experience and outcomes of children and young people with SEND

6. Leaders are ambitious for children and young people with SEND

We will:

- Work with education leaders to build ambition for children and young people with SEND consistently in every school and setting
- Work with parents and carers to ensure that they are receiving sufficient information about what is possible for their children to achieve
- Work with children and young people to understand more about their aspirations for the future and what success looks like for them
- Create a CPD programme to systematically close the progress and attainment gaps for our children and young people with SEND
- Develop new pathways for children and young people with SEND and equip them with the skills and confidence to live as full and independent a life as possible through a transition entitlement
- Place a greater focus on the destinations of our children and young people with SEND
- Conduct a deep dive via the SEND Improvement Board on our ambitions for children

Focus on practice - Extracts from recent Ofsted reports

Out of 13 Ofsted inspections of primary schools since the start of 2023, there were 12 positive references to the provision of SEND. These include the way that schools adapt learning so that students with SEND can access an ambitious curriculum in line with their peers. SEND provision is referred to as highly effective, students are well supported, and teachers have specialist knowledge because of the appropriate training. Overall, there is a strong sense that students with SEND have their needs considered, feel included, and thrive in their schools.

“ Leaders are ambitious for what pupils with SEND can achieve. Staff know pupils well. This is particularly the case for pupils with social and emotional needs. Individual pupil plans are precise. Staff work well with parents to ensure that pupils are well supported. As a result, most pupils with SEND learn the same curriculum as their peers ”

“ Leaders identify pupils’ needs effectively. Staff have the necessary training and support to ensure that they meet these needs. As a result, pupils with SEND learn the full curriculum successfully. There is a highly inclusive environment for pupils to thrive in ”

“ There is no ceiling on the aspirations that staff have for pupils. The education of pupils is highly ambitious and skilfully designed to meet pupils’ academic, social and emotional needs. This offer is for all pupils, whether they are in school or part of the highly effective outreach provision ”

“ Two Special School inspections showed strong SEND provision: Ravenswood was described as “an inclusive school that has high aspirations for all pupils”. At Baytree, “there is no ceiling on the aspirations that staff have for pupils ”

“ This is an inclusive school that has high aspirations for all pupils. Leaders have set about creating an ambitious curriculum. It precisely pinpoints the building blocks of learning, the order to be taught and when learning should be revisited. Quite rightly, leaders have focussed on getting the core areas of the curriculum where they want them to be. Detailed, yet manageable assessment systems reveal how successfully pupils learn the intended curriculum ”

“ Pupils with SEND are included fully in the school curriculum and their individual needs are effectively met. Where appropriate, children receive further tailored support to enable them to learn with success and confidence across the curriculum ”

6. Leaders are ambitious for children and young people with SEND

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The impact of our arrangements for children and young people with SEND

7. Leaders actively engage and work with children, young people, and families

- There is strong political buy in and our children with SEND are a high priority. Our politicians are visible and regularly visiting local schools, settings, and the Parent Carer Forum
- Our Executive Member meets regularly with children, young people with SEND, and their families. She makes herself available for any child, young person, parent, or carer who needs additional advice, support, or intervention and works closely with officers to find appropriate solutions
- Elected members regularly meet with parents and carers at events that the Parent/Carer Forum hold including workshops and the Day of SEND
- Our former Children's Scrutiny Panel Members visited parents and carers to understand their lived experience and a schedule is in place for the new panel to do the same
- The Chief Executives for North Somerset Council and ICB regularly meet with parents/carers via our Parent Carer Forum and have also met with children and young people
- Following the engagement with the ICB, a transformation plan has been co-produced with parents and carers to agree the pathway into health services including Autism and Neurodiversity pathways
- Our SEND Council of children and young people meet each month with senior leaders from Education and Social Care. The SEND Council have told us that participating in this makes them feel valued and by connecting with each other they are able to offer peer support

The impact of our arrangements for children and young people with SEND

7. Leaders actively engage and work with children, young people, and families

- Our children and our families contribute to and inform high-profile decision making on policy and practice. Our Parent Carer Forum co-chairs the Community of Practice and our Joint Commissioning Group. The Chair of the Forum also advises the SEND Improvement Board and meets regularly with Directors, Chief Executives, and our Executive Member
- Both children, young people, parents, and carers have a say in the selection of candidates for key SEND leadership appointments
- Key projects are created in partnership with the Parent Carer Forum and the SEND Council. Examples of this include SEND Hub (Local Offer), Graduated Response, Education Strategy, and the Early Help Workshop
- The local partnership is sustaining the participation of parents and carers by investing in both the forum and SAY (SENDIAS) with higher sums than in previous years and also by providing a permanent base for their office premises and meeting space
- There is strong evidence that parent and carers are driving change – this is evidenced in NSPCWT Impact Reports

Our plans for the next 12 months to improve the experience and outcomes of children and young people with SEND

We will:

- Improve the consistency and quality of communication with parents and carers over the next 12 months
- Develop an Engagement Plan to ensure that we are hearing and reaching parent and carers, children, and young people
- Measure the extent to which leaders and practitioners regularly meet with children and young people themselves and the adaptation to their practices and policies that follows
- Seek mechanisms for rapid and short feedback through buttons on the Local Offer and emails
- Continue to use the EHC Portal to harness the direct participation and feedback from parents, carers, children, and young people within their EHCPs
- Increase the number of annual reviews which are uploaded and updated on the Portal. This will give us greater oversight of changes that occur during the year for the individual
- Further the work of the new Parent/Carer Liaison Officer role

7. Leaders actively engage and work with children, young people, and families

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Focus on practice - Day of SEND

7. Leaders actively engage and work with children, young people, and families

The Day of SEND brings together parents, carers, children, young people, system leaders, specialist practitioners, and community members in a 10-hour packed programme of clinics, workshops, stalls, and drop-in clinics. Senior leaders and Council Members are joining to directly engage with the community about their priorities and concerns.

Details about the Day of SEND and other events via the parent carer forum can be found through the following link: <https://www.nspcwt.org/news>

Free event for parent carers and professionals across North Somerset!

 **A Day of SEND** 

18th October 2023. 9am-9pm. Priory Community School, BS22 6BP

- The largest SEND event we have ever arranged!
- First of its kind to ever be held in North Somerset!
- A fantastic opportunity to gain access to support!

What makes this day different from our other events?

- Keynote speakers all day for some amazing inspiration!
- Over 60 stall holders from organisations across North Somerset that offer SEND support.
- Over 50 training sessions, including: What is autism?, Anxiety & Additional Needs and ADHD.
- Drop in clinics with professionals to get specific 1-1 support.
- Practical workshops for you and your children including a chance to try out the sensory equipment from Gympanzees, and a chilli workshop hosted by Uncle Paul's Chilli Farm.

What can you expect to see at the event?

Drop in anytime, as many times as you want, so you don't have to miss a thing!

Book in advance for quicker entry on the day



Come and speak to Weston College about your young persons' transitions!

Have a question around education? Speak to the SEN team from North Somerset Council, or SEND & YOU!

<https://www.nspcwt.org/events-1/event-a-day-of-send>

Further details will be shared on our social media, @NSPCWT

The impact of our arrangements for children and young people with SEND

8. Leaders have an accurate, shared understanding of the needs of children and young people in their local area

- Our SEND Improvement Board meeting is integral to providing solution-focused responses and practically addressing identified pressures across the Local Area Partnership. Headteachers from primary, secondary, and special attend this board
- Strong quality assurance and governance arrangements are in place, including:
 - Monthly multi-agency audit and quality assurance sessions which enables us to share learning from individual children's experiences
 - Weekly multi-agency SEND Engine Room meeting for Heads of Service to stay in touch and ensure SEND improvement is fast paced
 - Regular meetings with SENCO network on data trends and demand
 - Meetings with the NSPCPF network chairs and senior leaders to ensure that the experience of families is fed into ensure that parents are involved in improvement planning
 - Quality assurance processes with regular multiagency QA panels to review EHCPs
 - Data Dashboards and an updated JSNA
 - Monthly multi-agency Community of Practice meetings to look at areas of improvement for SEND
 - Regular meetings and ongoing dialogue with schools and settings staff
 - The SEND newsletter which is disseminated bi-monthly across the SEND Partnership

The impact of our arrangements for children and young people with SEND

8. Leaders have an accurate, shared understanding of the needs of children and young people in their local area

Multi-disciplinary advice and guidance panels

- In 2022-23, 143 children were known to Multi Agency Information and Support (MAISEY)
 - 44 children were supported in depth throughout the year
 - An additional 7 children were discussed each month due to their social care status
 - Together, this is 35% of the children on MAISEY
 - All the children not previously discussed were raised for discussion during the year
- Inclusion Panel in schools have supported 384 referrals of children and young people. Underlying SEND need is always one of the first lines of enquiry by the Panels. Panels comprise:
 - CAMHS
 - Health Visitors
 - Children’s Social Care
 - Education professionals

Interventions	Reception	Yr 1	Yr2	Yr3	Yr4	Yr5	Yr6	Total
Total number of children raised	11	11	15	21	27	24	41	150
Advice and Guidance	11	11	16	19	26	26	20	129
Medical Tuition	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	2
VLC (Thrive & Outreach)	4	3	6	4	8	12	3	40
Permanent Exclusions	0	0	0	1	2	2	1	6
Permanent Exclusions Rescinded	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1
Re-integration Worker	0	0	3	1	3	0	3	10
SPS	6	5	10	6	12	5	7	51
Y6-7 Transition	0	0	0	0	0	0	31	31

Interventions	Yr7	Yr8	Yr9	Yr10	Yr11	Total
Total number of children raised	29	27	54	46	30	186
Advice and Guidance	20	19	17	23	15	94
Medical Tuition Requests	7	3	10	12	8	40
VLC Thrive Requests	0	0	3	0	0	3
Permanent Exclusions	3	5	8	9	6	31
Permanent Exclusions Rescinded	0	0	3	1	1	5
Off-site Direction/Managed Moved	3	6	13	6	1	29

Our plans for the next 12 months to improve the experience and outcomes of children and young people with SEND

We will:

- Continue and extend our commitment to seek the views of young people within the SEND Council and develop processes so that the young people have more input in setting the agenda for work for the year ahead and contribute to the refresh of the SEND Partnership Strategy
- Continue to expand the range of young people's voices we hear from through face-to-face meetings, and utilise digital-friendly methods of gathering their voice such as Mind of My Own, online surveys, and feedback buttons on our SEND Hub (Local Offer)
- Redevelop the scope and function of Disabled Children's Register so that we can further understand and respond to the specific needs of the local area
- Continue the use the SEND Data Dashboard to inform service developments and provided tailored support in our community by triangulating qualitative and quantitative data
- Work closely with SENDCOs to maintain effective communication with schools and settings
- Extend our reach to parents and carers from diverse communities and with children with different needs

8. Leaders have an accurate, shared understanding of the needs of children and young people in their local area

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Focus on practice - SEND Data Dashboard

8. Leaders have an accurate, shared understanding of the needs of children and young people in their local area

- Our data management was one of the first Areas of Serious Weakness to be signed off by DfE through their monitoring of the SEND Improvement Plan in July 2022. The SEND Data Dashboard has created an evidence-based and needs-led system that provides an accurate oversight and response to the specific needs of our authority
- Our SEND Data Dashboard provides a comprehensive summary of needs, experiences, and outcomes for our children with SEND
- The Data Dashboard is reviewed regularly by system leaders and staff including our CEOs, Executive Member, and all senior leaders who advise them at the SEND Improvement Board and the data itself is actively used by senior leaders in their service management meetings
- The data from the Dashboard is triangulated to inform practice-based decisions in all areas of Children's Services. For example, the Dashboard revealed that the increased referrals into the Front Door in Children's Support and Safeguarding were driven by the local area's extraordinary rise in SEMH – evidenced by the increase in support services requested for this area of need. This analysis has informed discussions with school leaders and identified a key target area for the local authority

The impact of our arrangements for children and young people with SEND

9. Leaders commission services and provision to meet the needs and aspirations of children and young people

- The Joint Commissioning Group contains representatives from the leadership teams of North Somerset Council, the ICB, and North Somerset Parent Carers Working Together. It is co-chaired in rotation by the three organisations
- There is a revised SEND Commissioning Strategy - We currently commission £42m of services for children and young people with SEND which includes a breadth of provision
- We have an agreement in place to commission SaLT and OT services through Sirona Health and Care
- We are creating 130 new specialist school places
- There are 8 new Nurture Groups and 5 Resource Bases, all of which will come on stream in September 2023
- A further 23 Nurture Groups are being commissioned by Multi-Academy Trusts
- The Dyslexia and Autism Education Partnership Board Sub-Group is co-produced with parents
- Our Co-production Charter has been consulted on with parents/carers, children, young people, and professionals
- Bournville Primary School has focus on creating low arousal classrooms in response to the rise in autism and other sensory needs. We will be rolling out a template for low arousal classrooms this year

Our plans for the next 12 months to improve the experience and outcomes of children and young people with SEND

9. Leaders commission services and provision to meet the needs and aspirations of children and young people

- Increase the number of children with SEND in mainstream schools through Resource Bases
- Increase Nurture groups in a further 6 local schools alongside Nurture training for a number of other schools across the area
- Habilitation and Sensory Support offer within North Somerset being re-commissioned to join up the offer across Children's and Adult's into one referral route
- Recommission Short Break services by March 2024
- Increase the Family link Service offer
- Increase personalisation, including the update of personal budgets and integrated personal commissioning
- Continue to inwardly commission provision from local providers to create a more resilient market
- Rectify the unregulated placements for children and young people and place them locally
- Review the current spend with parents and carers to ensure our plans align with their priorities and develop a new strategy from this
- Build an improved local market to meet the needs of young people with SEND as they move into adulthood focusing on: employment opportunities, building independence, and local peer-based activities through an extended Local Offer
- Alternative Learning Provision Framework operational and implemented across the local area
- Use MOMO to support the capturing of the child's and young person's voice across a range of children and young people

Focus on practice - Mental Health Support Teams (MHSTs)

This has been the first year of operational delivery of Mental Health Support Teams (MHSTs) in North Somerset. Our focus has been to build relationships with our key stakeholders and partners and embed our practitioners in their allocated schools. We have two teams working in the NS.

This year:

- 8 EMHP's have passed the IAPTUS Course
- 3 Supervisors have passed their IAPTUS course
- We are building smoother pathways between CAMHS and School Nurses
- 12 Young people in Winterstoke Academy were asked to joint chair the South West MHST Conference in Taunton
- We delivered (in partnership with CAMHS) training to Mental Health Leads in schools on the topic of making a good referral into mental health services
- 36 schools are actively referring into MHST
- We are developing our Whole School Approach (WSA) offer with Alternative Learning Providers (ALP)

In the coming year:

- There is a focus on increasing our offer of young people accessing therapeutic groups
- We will build our relationships with North Somerset GPs
- We will focus our work with parents/carers who face challenges in engaging with mental health services via our WSA and 1:1 interventions

“Thank you for everything you have done for me it means a lot. I will miss you [...] You were very annoying but that’s what was fun about you. You always made me smile. I’m gonna miss you a lot. Even if it doesn’t seem like it, it genuinely did help me a lot”
– a handwritten note from a young person to their MHST

9. Leaders commission services and provision to meet the needs and aspirations of children and young people

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The impact of our arrangements for children and young people with SEND

10. Leaders evaluate services and make improvements

- The North Somerset SEND Improvement Board has been in place since Autumn 2021. It is chaired by the Executive Member for Children’s Services, Families and Lifelong Learning and Chief Executives from the ICB and the LA who also sit on the board. The board is advised by the Parent Carer Forum, schools, and senior leaders from all areas of delivery
- The SEND Improvement Board meets monthly and reviews the area’s progress against our SEND Improvement Plan, using both objectives and KPI’s agreed with the DfE and NHSE and a comprehensive data dashboard
- The board meets each month and requests periodic deep-dive sessions in areas which give cause for concern
- The board offers support and challenge to enable officers to identify solutions to improve services
- Children and young people have attended the SEND Improvement Board and feedback from the SEND Council is offered to the board and its advisers on a regular basis

The impact of our arrangements for children and young people with SEND

10. Leaders evaluate services and make improvements

- The SEND Improvement Plan was agreed in February 2022 and has been monitored by the DfE/NHSE since then. In July 2023, the Minister lifted our SEND Improvement Notice and noted that sufficient progress had been made in all areas of serious weakness
- All staff involved in providing SEND services have objectives that relate to SEND improvement and are measured through formal performance reviews
- Live data dashboards are reviewed in senior management meetings in both the ICB and the Council on a regular basis
- The performance dashboards are supplemented by service specific performance monitoring and these support performance discussions with, for example, schools at strategic leadership meetings

Our plans for the next 12 months to improve the experience and outcomes of children and young people with SEND

10. Leaders evaluate services and make improvements

- Add targets to our performance dashboard so that it is easier for system leaders and our stakeholders to have visibility of our performance against our goals
- Work closely with Schools Standards Board and the Teaching Schools Alliance to analyse children's educational performance and develop area-based training programmes to close gaps
- Create a new model of preventative and outreach services delivered by our PRU to reach more children with health and behaviour needs and to help them remain in their existing school
- Work in multi-disciplinary leadership teams to share information about children who are high priority in more than one aspect and to work together to find solutions
- Audit children's records in forums of multi-agency professionals
- Publish outcomes from independent schools alongside those who are state funded to give parents and carers a true comparative picture
- Review service provision for Autism as there is recognition that wide scale transformation is required to ensure that services are delivering and can meet the demands of the local population
- Work with the SEND Council and our parents and carers to ensure they are seeing and feeling the impact of the changes being made
- Ensure that compliments and complaints are formally included in the QA framework to ensure learning, service development, and the identification of training needs across the Partnership

Focus on practice - investment in our services

- In 2021, North Somerset Council began making significant investments in its SEND capacity, beginning with the leadership of SEND Services and the SEND Improvement journey.
- Since then, the Council has invested almost £2m in SEND and other staff to improve the services that children, young people and their families receive.
- Over £20m has been invested in specialist school provision through the expansion of Baytree School, 8 Nurture Groups and 3 additional Resource Bases
- CAMHS crisis and outreach services have been developed and are now well established. The Outreach Team is now provided BNSSG wide and additional Off the Record workers have been appointed to provide support within North Somerset.
- 2 Mental Health Support Teams in schools are now operational with an additional 0.5 team in 2024 are supporting 20,000 children & young people. This represents 66% of all pupils covered which is the highest across BNSSG and reflects the drive to increase capacity in North Somerset
- Both SENDIAS and NPCWT have had their core funding increased to provide better support for parents and carers; additional non-recurrent funding has also been invested in project based work commissioned from them such as the SEN Support work by SENDIAS

10. Leaders
evaluate
services and
make
improvements

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The impact of our arrangements for children and young people with SEND

11. Leaders create an environment for effective practice and multi-agency working to flourish

- We have greatly strengthened multi agency working in North Somerset and our understanding of each other's pressures and strengths; this is now widely recognised by others
- Innovation, challenge, and joint problem solving are all actively encouraged within our SEND partnership
- SEND is regularly reviewed by the Children and Young People's Partnership Board, whose membership is made up of eight different agencies (Education Partnerships, Schools, Social Care, Public Health, Police, PRU, Weston College, Voluntary Action North Somerset) as well as Councillors, DfE, and an external adviser
- The multi-agency nature of our partnership working is exemplified by the SEND Improvement Board and the Community of Practice, which have high levels of participation and advice from lead practitioners from a diverse range of agencies
- Operationally, a team of leaders from health, social care, education, and business intelligence meet in a SEND 'Engine Room' to drive progress together against our objectives within the Improvement Plan and prepare performance reports. Engine Room manages the operational transition to the new SEND Inspection Framework

The impact of our arrangements for children and young people with SEND

11. Leaders create an environment for effective practice and multi-agency working to flourish

- MAISEY has been previously recognised by inspectors and the National Association for SEN for the strong, well-established, and effective approach to supporting our youngest children through agencies working in partnership
- Strategies such as the SEND Strategy, the Early Years Strategy, and the Education Strategy have all been developed with consistently strong multi-agency input and discussion as well as input from parents, carers and children and young people. This gives us the confidence that the strategies are widely owned across the local area
- Inclusion Panels are routinely supported by Children's Support and Safeguarding and CAMHS
- CAMHS, Children's Support and Safeguarding, and the Virtual School also form part of the multi-agency group who work together to increase children's hours of participation in education and intervene together via the most appropriate agency
- Heads of Service from Children's Services meet 3 times per week to problem solve when children's pathways become stuck. Through this work, 23 children and young people returned to full time education after a period of non-participation in September 2023

Our plans for the next 12 months to improve the experience and outcomes of children and young people with SEND

11. Leaders create an environment for effective practice and multi-agency working to flourish

During 2023, the Partnership will co-develop and launch:

- The Early Years Strategy
- The Education Strategy
- A new approach to Pathways to Adulthood
- A new approach to Joint Commissioning
- A new Early Help Strategy
- The Engagement Plan
- The Day of SEND

We are also revising and/or relaunching

- The Local Offer
- A new SaLT and OT offer for schools
- Multi Agency Audits and Quality Assurance

Focus on practice - Community of Practice

11. Leaders create an environment for effective practice and multi-agency working to flourish

- The Community of Practice was initiated by our Lead Member for Children's Services. It is a multi-agency group where system leaders push each other to improve practice. It is a space where challenge and new perspectives are positively encouraged and models of practice from across the world inspire discussions.
- It comprises leaders who are: politicians, health professionals, headteachers, children's support and safeguarding practitioners, SEND officers, parent and carer organisations, early years practitioners, education leaders
- A recent focus of the Community of Practice was 'Are we Ambitious Enough for Children and Young People with SEND?' Other sessions have included:
 - Diagnosis - is it needed and by whom?
 - Attracting and retaining the right staff
 - Language and it's importance to young people
- Membership is voluntary but the Community consistently attracts high levels of attendance (40 plus) at each meeting
- Our Community of Practice was commended by NASEN when they visited North Somerset practitioners and has since been adopted by them in their own practice.

The impact of our arrangements for children and young people with SEND

12. Alternative Provision

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- 120 children and young people with EHCPs are receiving Alternative Provision commissioned by North Somerset Council
- 23 young people with EHC plans started back in a school this September for the first time in a long time. A further 10 have plans in place to re-engage them with education via AP with the aim to return them back to a formal education setting
- All children known to be on part-time timetables or receiving fewer than 25 hours of education a week are monitored by a multi-agency group to improve their participation rates and enable them to re-engage with full-time education
- Each young person who is monitored has an individual intervention and support plan which details how they will return to full-time education.
- We have a monitoring process in place to quality assure all AP providers where children are placed which has an ongoing emphasis on capturing and responding to the voice of children, young people, and families
- Our mid to long-term plans for AP are to redevelop the scope for the Voyage Learning Campus (our PRU and medical tuition) to make support available for a wider cohort of children and young people and to route all AP provision through them. We are working with Islington Council on the development of this model
- Our Special Schools and PRU are working towards an area-wide offer of outreach services to support children to remain in their schools

The impact of our arrangements for children and young people with SEND

We are part of an Alternative Provision Framework in partnership with Bristol and South Gloucestershire which ensures providers are subject to a rigorous evaluation process before being permitted to join. We now only approve new AP placements for children with SEND with providers that are on the framework, and encourage our schools to share this approach.

The framework commissions three types of AP to meet the unique needs of children and young people:

1. Full-Time: aspirational and challenging curriculum delivered in long-term placements (up to 1-2 years) or short-term 'revolving door' interventions (up to 12 weeks)
2. Part-Time: additional and complimentary support that varies according to pupil needs, aspirations, and preferences
3. In-School: early intervention approach to enable schools to be more inclusive and help keep pupils in mainstream school wherever possible

Our regional joint commissioning arrangements allow us to pool our resources and enable closer monitoring of providers and greater expertise in evaluating their applications. We have refreshed our Guidance on Alternative Learning Provision in schools to ensure schools are supported in commissioning high quality, outcomes-focused provision with an emphasis on re-engaging pupils back into full-time education.

12. Alternative Provision

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Our plans for the next 12 months to improve the experience and outcomes of children and young people with SEND

12. Alternative Provision

We will:

- Embed the role of the new SEND Placement Commissioning Manager who will be responsible for ongoing monitoring and quality assurance of AP placements to ensure providers are consistently delivering good outcomes for children and young people
- Develop the offer from the VLC and our Special Schools; this is central to our long-term plans
- Deliver a schedule of monitoring visits to our AP providers which uses a risk-based matrix to prioritise visits
- Uphold stringent quality assurance processes so that providers know what to expect and become used to gathering and reporting feedback from children and families as a standard part of their practice
- Work closely with children and families to understand who might benefit from moving out of independent provision when spaces become available in our newly commissioning Resource Bases, our expanding Special School, and our re-defined PRU
- Increase the diversity of the AP offer to ensure it has currency with young people and leads to meaningful pathways

Focus on practice - Keeper's Gate

“At Keepers Gate Forest School we will encourage children to explore and be at one with nature, giving them a sense of freedom and belonging. They will spend uninterrupted time outdoors, immersed in our natural world. Playing, investigating, exploring, learning to take risks, making friends, showing curiosity and building resilience.

Children will learn to care for their environment, gain a great knowledge and understanding of our ecosystem and why the wildlife is so important to their future.

The outdoor environment is vitally important to a child's mental health and well-being. To live and breathe these experiences every day will be an amazing opportunity for any child.”



Glossary

- AANT - Analysis of Additional Needs Tool
- ADHD - Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder
- AP - Alternative Provision
- AWP - Avon and Wiltshire Partnership
- BNSSG - Bristol, North Somerset, South Gloucestershire
- CAMHS - Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services
- CNNs - Community Nursery Nurses
- EHCNA - Education, Health, and Care Needs Assessment
- EHCP - Education, Health, and Care Plan
- ELIM - Early Language Identification Measure
- EP - Educational Psychologist
- EYFS - Early Years Foundation Stage
- FASD - Foetal alcohol spectrum disorder
- ICB - Integrated Care Board
- INCCO - Inclusion Coordinator
- MAISEY - Multi-Agency Information and Support in Early Years
- MOMO - Mind of My Own
- NSC - North Somerset Council
- NSPCWT - North Somerset Parent Carers Working Together
- OT - Occupational Therapy/ist
- PRU - Pupil Referral Unit
- SaLT - Speech and Language Therapy
- SEMH - Social, Emotional, Mental Health
- SEND - Special Education Needs and Disability
- SENDCO - SEND Coordinator
- [SEND Hub - our Local Offer](#)
- SENDIAS - SEND Information and Advice Service
- VLC - Voyage Learning Campus

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North Somerset Council

Report to the Children and Young People Policy and Scrutiny Panel

Date of Meeting: 19th October 2023

Subject of Report: Annual Report of Adoption West 2022/23

Town or Parish: All

Officer/Member Presenting: Carolyn Fair, Interim Director Children's Services

Key Decision: No

Reason: The Council has entered into a contract with Adoption West and this is a report outlining their activity during 2022/23.

Recommendations

That Members note the report and advise officers of any areas about which they would like further information.

1. Summary of Report

Adoption West is a Regional Adoption Agency (RAA) commissioned by Bath and North East Somerset Council, Bristol City Council, Gloucestershire County Council, North Somerset Council, South Gloucestershire Council and Wiltshire Council. The agency is a local authority company wholly owned by the aforementioned local authorities. As a separate legal entity from the local authorities Adoption West is registered with Ofsted as a Voluntary Adoption Agency.

2. Policy

A council which empowers and cares about people

3. Details

The report comes at the end of Adoption West's fourth year of operating as a Regional Adoption Agency. Adoption West is now an established agency with a clear identity across the region. The service has continued to respond to growing support needs alongside a continued focus on the key priorities of improving the timeliness for children by recruiting sufficient adopters who are prepared and understand the needs of the children. There remain challenges in relation to improving and providing a more consistent adoption support offer. The focus on improving the Adoption Support offer has been boosted by increased investment and a new structure that enable the continued development of in-house therapeutic services. The agency remains committed to improving the support available to children, adopters and birth families. Over the course of 2022/23 there were two ILACS, and both inspections noted the strength of the work of Adoption West.

As an adoption agency that is funded by public finances to provide statutory adoption services it is crucial that there is effective scrutiny of Adoption West. The Joint Scrutiny Panel has been established to provide this function. The panel meets quarterly and each meeting includes a briefing about adoption issues. In this period adopters have met with councillors and shared their experience of support via the Adoption Support Fund and being an Early Permanence carer. Joint Scrutiny Panel comprises elected Members from each of the local authorities: North Somerset's representative is now Cllr Tristram.

Each of the priorities identified for the coming year is subject to a number of specific actions to ensure the priority is delivered:

- To improve timeliness of Stage 1 and Stage 2 assessments 29
- Ensure that placements are timely either through placing children as soon as they are subject to a Placement Order or through an early placement scheme, in order to promote positive attachment - improved children's performance data across the region
- To increase the number of children placed in Early Permanence placements
- To obtain the CORAM BAAF EP Quality Mark
- The long term needs of adopted children in the region to be understood and reflected in a regional adoption support offer
- Promoting children's positive identity, so that they have a positive self-view, emotional resilience and understanding of their background
- Adopted adults and birth relatives are assisted to obtain information in relation to adoption
- To improve the consistency of the adoption support offer.

4. Consultation

In compiling the report Adoption West have included feedback from staff and adopters.

5. Financial Implications

None

Costs

None

Funding

None

6. Legal Powers and Implications

N/A

7. Climate Change and Environmental Implications

Adoption West staff are based in three hubs, each within a local authority office building. They undertake significant amounts of mileage through the use of public transport or pool/lease cars wherever possible. They have moved to a hybrid way of working but face to face visits to adopters are critical to ensure they are supported and children are seen.

8. Risk Management

Adoption West maintain a Risk Register which is scrutinised by the Board of Directors.

9. Equality Implications

Not as part of producing this annual report.

10. Corporate Implications

None.

11. Options Considered

N/A

Author:

Carolyn Fair, Interim Director Childrens Services

Appendices:

Annual Report from Adoption West 2022/23

Background Papers:

None.

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adoption west



April 2022 to March 2023

Annual Report

Prepared by Alison Lewis, Service Director



Bath & North East
Somerset Council

North
Somerset
Council

Wiltshire Council

South Gloucestershire
Council

Gloucestershire
COUNTY COUNCIL

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Introduction

This is Adoption West's fourth Annual report and provides the agency's performance data across family finding, adopter recruitment, adoption panels and adoption support services. An important aspect of the report is the focus on the practice of the agency and experience of people who have been involved with Adoption West in the year.

Adoption West is a Regional Adoption Agency (RAA) commissioned by Bath and North East Somerset Council, Bristol City Council, Gloucestershire County Council, North Somerset Council, South Gloucestershire Council and Wiltshire Council. The agency is a local authority company wholly owned by the aforementioned local authorities. As a separate legal entity from the local authorities Adoption West is registered with Ofsted as a Voluntary Adoption Agency.

This report is produced in accordance with National Minimum Standard 25.6, which details that the Voluntary Adoption Agency Board Members should:

- Receive a written report on the management, outcomes and financial state of the agency, every six months.
- Monitor the management and outcomes of the services provided, in order to satisfy themselves that the service is effective and is achieving good outcomes for children and/or service users.
- Satisfy themselves that the agency is complying with the conditions of registration.

It is also a requirement of the Social Care Common Inspection Framework (SCCIF): voluntary adoption agencies, that the six-monthly reports are shared with Ofsted on an annual basis.

Appendix A provides details the governance, commissioning, and local government scrutiny arrangements.

Working with our Local Authority Partners

Adoption West works closely with our local authority partners. We have monthly tracking meetings with each, on order to support our local authority colleagues to progress plans for children who are unable to live with their birth parents and adoption is being considers as a permanence option for them. Lead managers for adoption in each area meets with senior managers in Adoption West every two months to develop policy and practice across the region for the six local authorities. Each quarter there is a liaison meeting with each individual local authority to review performance, practice development and working together arrangements. These meetings ensure that we are working together across the region to achieve positive outcomes for children who have a plan for adoption or are living with their adopted family.

Ofsted

Two of our partners have had an Inspection of Local Authority Children's Services this year. Adoption West supported the authorities in this process including staff, panel chairs and adopters all speaking with the inspectors. These are the comments in relation to the work with Adoption West and adoption services:

Bristol City Council 16 to 27 January 2023

"Prospective and approved adopters receive good support. They are positive about their experience of the adoption process."

North Somerset Council 13 to 24 March 2023 –

"The local authority approach to securing permanence for children who can benefit from adoption is strong. Adoption is secured for a relatively high number of children early on through foster to adopt carers. Effective working with the regional adoption agency (Adoption West RAA) helps to promptly secure the best outcomes for children. The RAA comments positively on joint working with North Somerset, as do adopters about the quality of the support they receive. Life-story work is consistently completed and appropriate."

The Children

This year, **125** children have had **plans for adoption**, noticeably higher than the year-end figure of 107 children in the previous year. The number of children with a 'best interest decision' had dropped in Q4 21/22 due to some children's plans being paused due to medical compliance issues, and the increase in the current year suggests that those children who were previously delayed are now progressing. However, the number of ADMs has remained largely consistent across all four quarters, which suggests that the increase may not be due entirely to medical compliance issues reducing the number of 'best interest decisions' made in the previous year and increasing it in this year. If this trend continues it could suggest that Adoption West may not be reflecting the national picture, which indicates a reduction in the number of 'best interest' decisions being made.

Placement orders were granted for **100** children and 78 children have been placed for adoption. **84** children were **adopted** in this period, which is 6 less than last. Some families have experienced delays in gaining adoption orders due to medical compliance issues with regards to seeking birth parent consent to access medical records being addressed when the court has considered the application for an adoption order. This does now seem to be improving with quarter 4 having a significantly higher number of orders made and the number of children placed for adoption haven fallen to **84** from 110 after quarter 2,

This year has seen a significant increase in **early permanence** activity with an increase in referrals from the local authorities and **36** children placed with adopters temporarily approved as foster carers. This is an increase of 64% from 2021-2022.



Adoption West Adopters 64



External Adopters 14

The number of **children placed with Adoption West adopters** has increased for the third year to **82%**. This means that more children are being placed with in the region and therefore their provision of adoption support services will remain with Adoption West.

Family Finding

Children with a Placement Order currently waiting for adoption at 31/03/23.

	0-3 Months	3-6 Months	6-12 Months	12 -18 Months	18+ Months	Total by LA	Q4 21/22 By LA
Number of Children	31	18	13	2	3	66↓	69
Q4 21/22 Number of Children	25	21	12	3	8	69	

There were **66 children with Placement Orders** without a match at 31/03/23. This is slightly lower than the 69 children at the same period last year. This figure does not include children with a placement order who had a ‘change of plan away from adoption’ which is being progressed by the local authority, with regards to a rescission of the plan and revocation of the placement order.

Of these **66 children with placement orders, 29 were linked with adoptive placements** and progressing to adoption panel for a match and another **9 had plans in place for adoption by their foster carers**. Of the 28 children with Placement Orders who were not linked at the end of the year, there are only 12 children with a Placement Order who do not yet have a potential link being pursued.

There are currently **18 children waiting longer than six months**. The five children waiting more than 12 months all have foster carers who are making direct applications to the court for an adoption order. On 31st March there were 3 children waiting longer than six months who did not have a link or match being progressed.

It is positive to report that there have only been **8 children for whom family finding has stopped as their plans have changed a way from adoption**. This is a decrease of 56% from the 18 children who had their plans changed last year.

The national CORAM I data 2022-23, shows that the average time in the Adoption West region between the six local authorities for the child's journey (A 10) continues to be quicker than the England average 412 days compared to 480. The time between placement order and match (period of family finding activity) is continuing to improve at **173** days, **24** days quicker than the England average of 197.

These improvements in numbers of children placed and timeliness can only be achieved by the commitment, tenacity and proactive approach of the family finding team in their joint work with children's social workers.

The team supported by the Recruitment and Marketing Officer have continued to hold virtual family finding events throughout the year. Each session profiles 5-6 children with their social workers in attendance to answer adopter's questions. Generally, 10 sets of adopters attend each session. We have also started to have the return of in person events, with the first South West Adoption Consortium Adoption Exchange held for over three years.

In addition, national children's activity days hosted by Coram are also utilised if the distance and logistics are appropriate for a child.



Adoption West held their first Activity Day since January 2020, on March 4th, 2023, this event was designed to allow prospective adopters, and children awaiting adoption to come together in a calm, relaxed way, with the support of social workers available. The main objective of this event was to find adopters for harder to place children; sibling groups and older children, by allowing them to meet in a controlled and safe environment.

The day was a great success with children and adults being entertained with lots of activities, including bubbles, play doh, cake decorating and soft play.

Eleven children attended this family finding event and at this time, 6 children in 3 sibling pairs are progressing links or interviews with adopters and there is a potential match for another child.

Feedback from prospective adopters

"We wanted to let you know what a magical day we had at the activity day today



We are so thankful that we were able to speak to both foster carers about the boys at length and spend time with them. We felt a strong connection with the boys. We had the space to play and chat over Lego and balloon making - so much fun! We think the boys are incredible. . . We wanted to pass on a huge thank you to foster carers for offering us time to discuss the boys. We are in awe of the amazing care they are giving them.

Finally, thanks to the family finder who facilitated an invaluable conversation with foster dad, allowing us to get a better picture of the boys' needs."

"It was a really helpful time. Great to have the chance to interact and see their personalities."

"Also helpful to chat with social workers and foster carers in a casual atmosphere."

"We have been to two previous activity days, and yours was a much more inclusive, positive experience".

The Family Finding Team have successfully placed a number of older, complex children. Transitions in those circumstances are often challenging and require thoughtful and collaborative practice, the team feel proud of the work achieved and the outcomes for those children.

"Whilst being pleased that we have been able to place so many children and many in EP placements the Children who have really stood out to us this year are:

Brothers 6yrs & 3yrs of age who had had multiple foster placements, therefore significant concerns about the impact of this instability.

Brothers 5yrs & 7yrs one of these children has a genetic condition, learning difficulty and global delay.

Brother and sister 5yrs & 4yrs with global developmental delay and concerns about emotional regulation and sibling relationship.

A 7yrs old boy who having lived with his carer for two years needed very carefully supported transitions.” - The Family Finding Team

Early Permanence

It is positive that there is an increased number of children being referred for EP placements which has resulted in **36** children being placed. This is the highest number achieved across the Adoption West region. With **78** children placed for adoption this year this means that nearly half of the children are being placed with their adoptive family at the earliest possible stage and we are ensuring the first placement is the only placement. Currently, over 50% of approved adopters are offering an EP placement. EP carers are currently being matched quite quickly after approval so having approved 45 adopters providing 36 placements this year, when the complexities of matching and location are considered, it is essential that Adoption West provides a constant flow of potential EP carers to have choice of placements for children.

The level of placement activity reflects the work and commitment of social workers in both the Family Finding and recruitment and assessment teams working together to match children and families and provide the support to the placement.

To increase the number of children placed in Early Permanence placements (NMS 13)

Recruitment and Marketing

This is detailed in the Adoption West Recruitment Strategy 2022-23

Recruitment activity during this period focussed on social media and updating the website content, centred around these objectives.

- To recruit enough adopters willing to consider children who wait the longest for adoptive parent/s (specifically siblings and those children with complex needs)
- To make potential adopters' aware early in their journey of the need for adopters for siblings and what this might look like
- To provide and promote support to enable people to adopt siblings and children with complex needs.

Adoption West Online Coffee Mornings



We run an online chat for anyone interested in adoption these are advertised on the Adoption West website and via social media. Each event is hosted by Becky Myers Recruitment and Marketing Officer and another member of staff.

National recruitment Campaigns

You Can Adopt launched a new campaign for National Adoption Week 2022, which focused on the theme of identity. You Can Adopt explored adopted people's memories and relationships from before, during, and after they were adopted, and how these make them who they are today. A toolkit of promotional material was shared with all Regional Adoption Agencies telling lived experiences of adoption. In Adoption West this material was shared on our social media pages and website



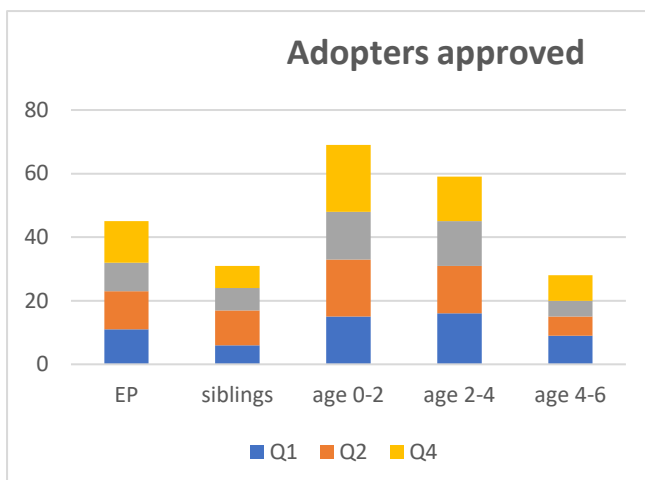
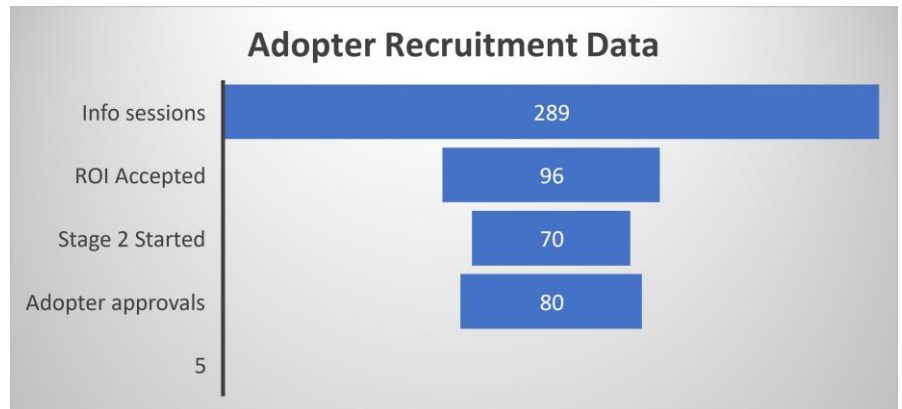
Adopters

Adopter recruitment has been slightly lower this year with the number of people attending Information Sessions being 12% down on last year. The conversion rate from info session to ROI accepted is the same as for last year at 33%. Due to the lower number of people enquiring about adoption the number of prospective adopters starting stage 1 is 30% down compared to last year.

User feedback of their experience of the Information Sessions has had a response rate of 11% with respondents giving an overall satisfaction of 8.45/10. The information from this first year of user evaluation will help us to review the processes as Adoption West restructures and operates with a regional Recruitment and Assessment Team from 1st April 2023.

The national data (Q4 2022-23) indicates a falling number of applicants in the adoption system across England.

80 adopter households have been approved in 2022-23, which is also slightly lower than the 87 approvals in 2021-22. The chart below shows that we continue to recruit adopters to meet the needs of children waiting for families and that Adoption West has sustained the improvements in the recruitment of adopters for siblings made last year, with 39% of applicants being open to providing adoption for siblings.



56% of adopters will consider early permanence with an increase in children placed for early permanence during this period.

There are currently **91** approved adopters, with 53 (**58%**) waiting more than six months to be matched. However, **25** of these households are currently providing an EP placement and we are finding that many children are placed more than 26 weeks prior to a placement order and then the placement

progressing to an adoption placement. We have seen a decrease in approved adopters on-hand so the number of adopters available at 31st March 2023 was **59**

Analysis of adopter sufficiency which considers the demographic information and numbers of children with a plan for adoption in 2022-23 highlights the following recruitment priorities.

- Maintain the number of adopters who will offer an early permanence placement at 50 – 60 %.
- 40% of adopters for siblings
- Increase the number of adopters from the Black community.
- Overall to recruit 80-90 adopters a year.

This will be a challenge for all adoption agencies in the current socio – economic climate. Whilst Adoption West has currently positive sufficiency levels, we are actively developing our recruitment strategy for the longer term and to address the priorities highlighted.

67 Adopters have been matched and **76** children have been placed with Adoption West adopters. The percentage of adopters providing homes for children within the Adoption West region is **87%**.

Adoption West aims to establish a process that captures feedback from Adopters at each stage of the process in a way that is straight forward and accessible for adopter. In addition to establishing feedback following an information session we have introduced an evaluation for prospective adopters to complete via a link provided to them in their Stage 1 Review Report.

This year we have had a response rate of 25%, respondents gave their experience of the stage 1 process an overall rating of **8.79/10**

Here are some comments that we are using to inform the service we provide:

"We enjoyed the new format of the workbooks and the variety of tasks and documents to complete e.g. the eco map of support and the useful family tree website".

"Everyone we have had contact with has been pleasant, helpful and supportive and has made us feel at ease with what could be a stressful process. Many thanks to all!"

"Only comment is the documents sent to complete and return don't seem to work well on a mobile device. The workbook in particular proved difficult for us as my laptop is a work device so cannot email confidential details such as addresses."

"Unfortunately, due to recruitment issues we had to wait a long time from registration of interest to allocation of a social worker, approx 8 weeks. Though this was through no fault of anyone, it was disheartening to initially have had a long wait. Since then the process has been efficient and really smooth."

"Really impressed with the knowledge, support and guidance that we have received from our Social Worker and the training staff."

"To make the admin/documents collection for stage 1 easier and more efficient, providing a written checklist of documents, including options of suitable documents, to the applicants would likely speed up the process."

The following compliments have been given to staff:

I am writing to highlight to you how well (social worker) supported us through the adoption. She put us at ease and explained everything very clearly. She was friendly, open and approachable. She was great with the children, they enjoyed talking with her. I felt i could talk openly with her without judgement. Her support was excellent and made the process so much easier to cope with. "Thank you so much, your eternal optimism and ability to find the humour in difficult situations has been a lifeline to us all".

We just wanted to say thank you again, we are ready for the next stage and will continue to do every bit of research we can.

Just wanted to say thank you so much for getting us this far. The support you have provided has been excellent and the quality of your par made yesterday so

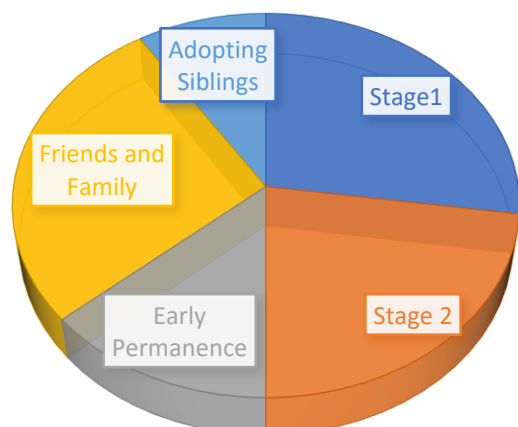
We just feel it is really important for us to share how absolutely fantastic (social worker) has been along the way. From the moment we met her we felt at complete ease with her, she has such a friendly, kind and caring manner which meant it was so easy to talk to her. She made every effort to really get to know us and allowed us to get to know her too whilst maintaining complete professionalism along the way. Thank you to the entire adoption west team who have been fantastic.

*The assessment process is clearly explained to prospective adopters (ibid) (NMS 10.3)
Agencies respond to requests for detailed information (following initial enquiries either to the National Gateway for Adoption or directly to an adoption agency) within ten working days, through an information session, a visit, pre-planned telephone call or similar arrangement with the prospective adopter. (NMS 10.4)*

To implement an effective recruitment strategy, meeting the needs of children with a plan for adoption in the AW region (NMS 10.1)

Adopter Preparation Training

All prospective adopters are offered and expected to attend the following training:



Stage 1	1 day
Stage 2	3 days
EP	1 day
Friends and Family	2 hours
Adopting Siblings	½ day

For those adopters who want to provide an Early Permanence placement, they are asked to attend an additional 1-day training course during Stage 2 of their assessment. Those adopters

wanting to be matched with siblings should complete the Adopting Siblings Workshop, prior to matching panel.

"We like very much that training was made by people who have been adopt children and have experience "

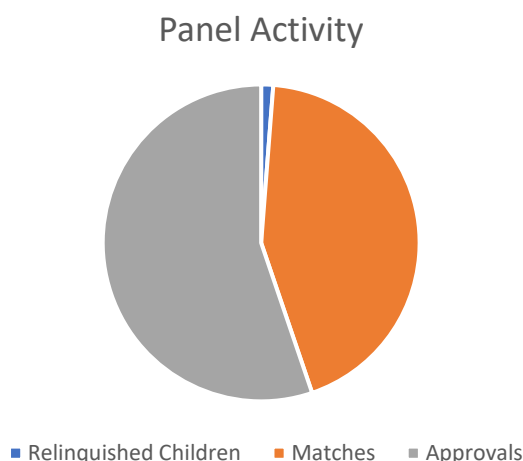
Applicants are given the opportunity to talk to approved adopters, adoptees and birth parents whose children were adopted. (NMS10.7)

Preparation courses are held and made available to all prospective adopters, including foster carers who wish to adopt the child (NMS10.8)

Prospective adopters are prepared to become adoptive parents in a sensitive way, which addresses and gives them skills knowledge and practical techniques to manage the issues they are likely to encounter (NMS10.9)

Adoption Panels

The Adoption West Panel Chairs Report has been completed for this period, meeting National Minimum Adoption Standards 17.2 and 25. This report includes full details of the panel's process, membership, appraisals, quality assurance, training and activity, with recommendations to the agency.



Panel business this year has included:

2 relinquished children,
71 matches
90 approvals considered.

Feedback is requested from all those attending panel. Returns are low and further consideration is required by the agency as to the most effective way to improve the level of feedback provided. It is important that the panels understand how they are experienced by those attending so that changes and improvements to practice can be made where required.

Adoption West panels have continued to meet virtually and it is interesting to note that a number of comments refer to this with mixed views but on balance most adopters and professionals preferring this way of running panels.

"It was a really positive experience for us. We attended approval panel in person and found the virtual panel a much better experience than the in-person panel. We felt

that facing the panel in person was much more intimidating than joining a Teams meeting. We were nervous before panel and the waiting is tough so the only suggestion, we would have is to reduce the waiting time for adopters where possible.”

“The pre-panel preparation with [our social worker and the panel administrator] was helpful and reassuring and the panel itself went very smoothly and we both found it to be a very positive experience. We were really impressed with [the chair]; his tone and manner were warmly professional and we both felt at ease and reassured immediately.”

“We feel that now Covid isn’t such a risk any more it would be good to do Panel in person. We understand it’s more convenient to do it online but you get a much better sense of who the Panel are, and what they are asking when you are in person”.

“All panel members showing a real interest in the child we were discussing and plans moving forwards”.

“Some technical issues for the Chair, but Vice Chair seamlessly stepped in and progressed the meeting without any disruption. Ideally panel would run on time but I understand why it doesn’t and why it’s difficult to predict how long panel will take. However, communication with panel advisors and admin is good so it helps to keep informed of delays.

Adoption Disruptions

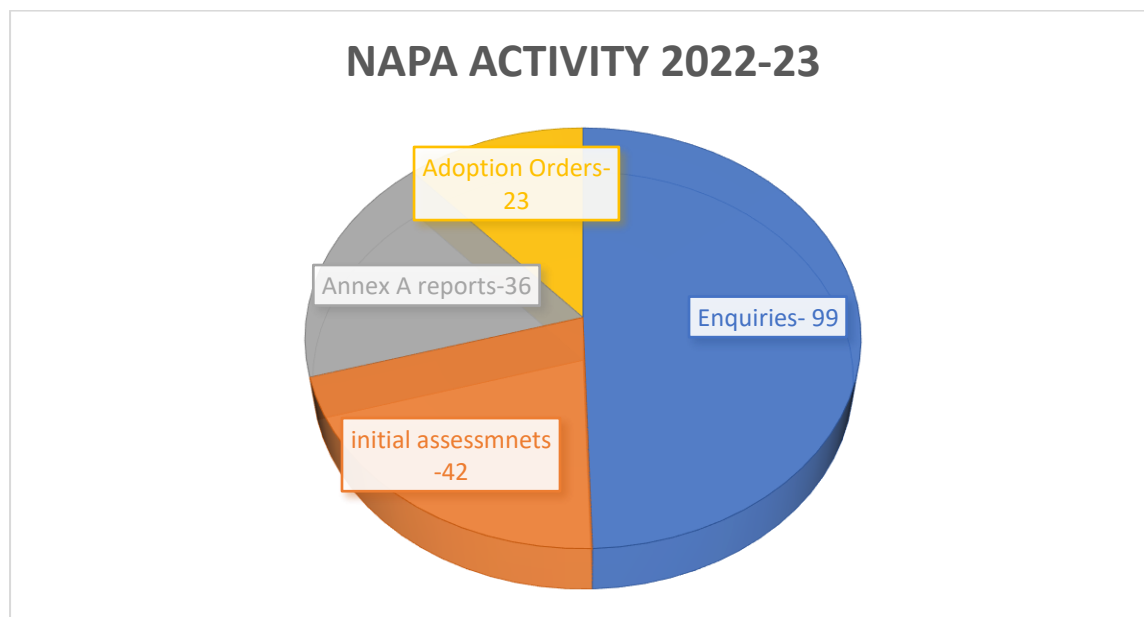
When a child is placed for adoption and returns to into local authority care before an adoption order this is considered a disruption and a Disruption meeting must be held do that any practice learning can be shared with the agencies and adoption panel. There have been two children whose placements disrupted during 2022-23. One disruption meeting has been held and the second is being planned as this occurred at the end of March 2023.

The adoption Lead managers have a learning review planned for July 2023.

Non-Agency Partner Adoption (referred to as Step-Parent Adoption)

Adoption West manages enquiries regarding partner adoptions via a triage process. Applicants are required to submit their notice of intention to adopt to the local authority and Adoption West then completes the checks, references and court report.

This work is completed by social workers in the Recruitment & Assessment Teams in each hub, enabling the flow of this work to be managed at a regular pace and appropriately balanced with the priorities of agency adoptions.

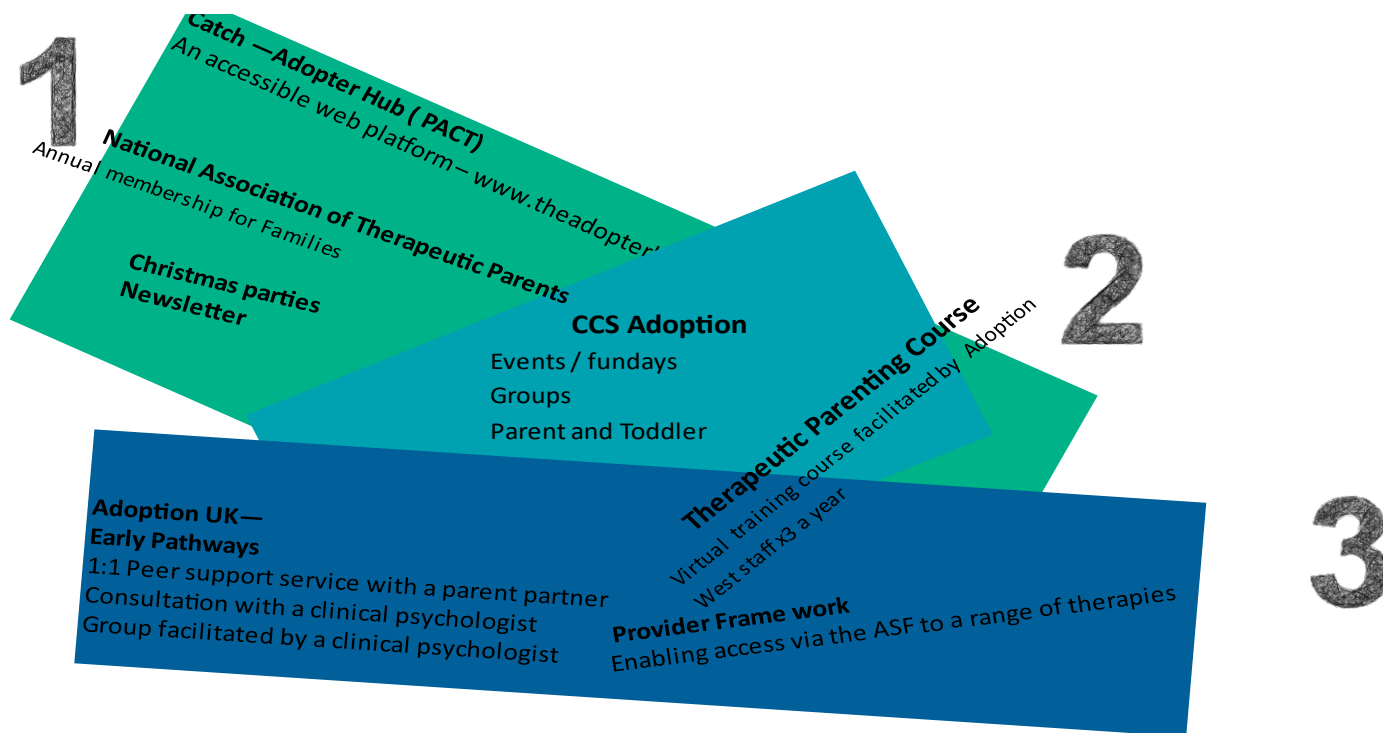


"Thanks for your help and support today, which made the hearing much less of a worry than it might have been. As we told the judge, we are extremely grateful to you and all your colleagues for the help, support and guidance we have received from you all from day one to this very happy conclusion. It's very clear that you are not just doing your jobs. You have gone far beyond that, and it has changed our family's lives beyond measure."

"We never tire of telling people how amazing you and your colleagues have been."

Adoption Support

We provide service to children and families to meet different levels of need, these are some of the services that have been available this year to either prospective adopters or adopted families.



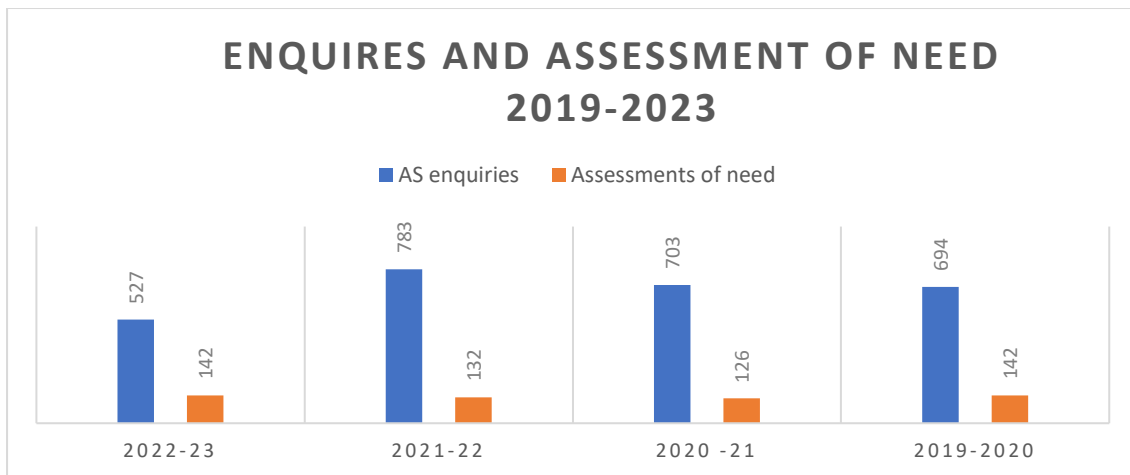
We have a commissioning arrangement with CCS Adoption that enables the provision of a range of groups and events for adopters from both agencies. We have also worked closely with Adoption UK as they have transitioned the TESSA service to the new Early Pathways offer, which can now be accessed via the Adoption Support Fund.

Adoption West have worked with Wiltshire Adopters Network for Development and Support (WANDS) to put a proposal to the Adoption West Board for to develop peer to peer support across all six local authorities and this was agreed in April 2023 and we have begun to progress these plans for the coming year. To find out more about WANDS and the support available from adopters to adopters please visit <https://wearewands.org.uk>

The core activities of the service include, daily duty service, assessments of need, management of applications to the Adoption Support Fund for individual children and/or families, direct support to families and children and Letterbox and Direct Contact arrangements. We also aim to run 3 therapeutic parenting courses each year facilitated by experienced adoption support social workers along with events for adopters and children where possible.

The level of need and demand for adoption support continues to grow. Even though enquiries have been lower in 2022/23 than over the last four years , the number of families that have required an assessment of need has increased and was 27% of all enquires compared with 17% in 21/22.

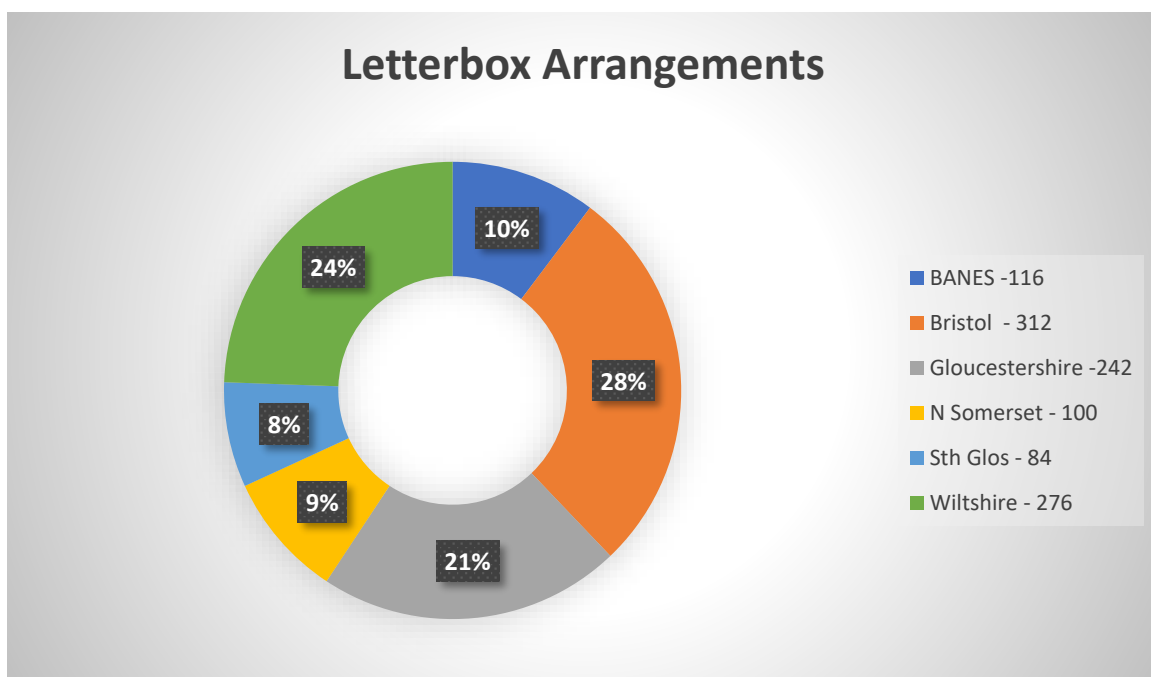
Consequently, in the latter part of the year it hasn't been possible to achieve the average timescale of 6 weeks from enquiry to assessment appointment. While families are waiting we provide 'keeping in touch' calls from duty or the adoption support team.



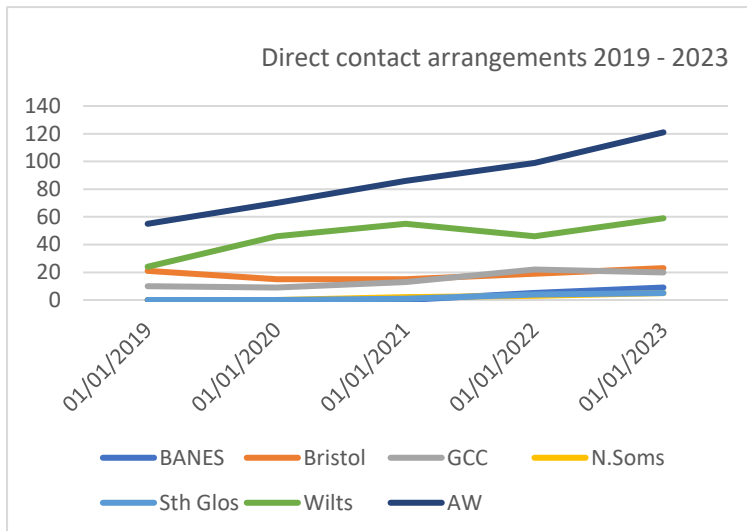
Currently, **798** families across the region have an allocated social worker providing regular support and or enabling them to access therapy via the ASF.

Maintaining Relationships

A significant amount of the support provided by the teams is in helping adopted children and young people maintain connections with birth family either via letter box arrangements or face to face contact. Adoption West manages 1,130 letterbox arrangements.



Across Adoption West we are seeing an increase in children and adopted families having some direct contact with birth family members.



It is likely that we will see more adoptions with face to face contact in the future.

The adoption support teams are working hard to embed Beth's *Neal Contact in Adoption Risk Assessment Tool* and have created a working Risk Assessment document for this purpose. The principles that underpin this work are:

- Every direct contact is unique and organised with the child's emotional wellbeing and best interests at the heart of it. It can be run independently, facilitated or arranged and supported by Adoption West depending on who the contact is between, especially if it is between siblings.
- Preparation and planning is key to a successful meet up. Factors to consider include are the time of year; weather; venue; photos; gifts; age appropriate activity for the child(ren); travel arrangements.
- Everyone is prepared prior to contact to ensure that expectations are managed and so that the meeting is as successful and enjoyable as possible.
- Review: After a contact feedback form is sent to all parties.

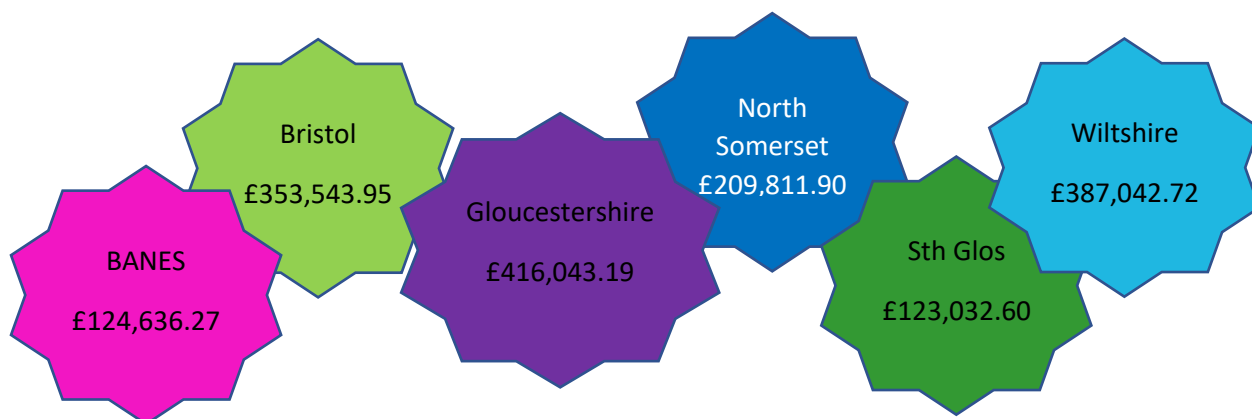
It is testament to the work of the adoption support teams in Adoption West that three members of staff and an adopter were asked to contribute to this national webinar. Well done and thank you to all those involved.

The Importance of Maintaining Relationships for Children and Families event

On **Tuesday 21st March**, the National Adoption Strategy Team are hosting a webinar on *The importance of Maintaining Relationships for Children and Families*. The conference will include members of the NAST, Julie Young from the UEA and speakers with lived experience from the adoption triad. This event is to continue to promote the importance of this area within the wider

Adoption Support Fund

The Adoption Support Fund provides funds to pay for therapeutic services for adopted children and young people. The Adoption support teams must complete an assessment of need with the child and family to identify the appropriate support and provider. **1059** applications were approved for families in the Adoption West Region with **1210** recipients accessing therapeutic support. This is a further year on year increase in the number of families accessing the fund. We accessed **£3,774,916.74** to provide therapeutic support to children and families.



Feedback and Compliments

Direct contact

You were both wonderful, i cant thank you enough. The day was perfect you both were so caring and good with us and the kids , im just so pleased it went that well

Letterbox

Thank you for your letter enclosing a letter from my daughter's birth father. I am so pleased that we have heard from him. It is going to be so important for my daughter to have these....I am so pleased to be hearing from the birth families. We are so lucky that they are at least starting to engage with the letterbox process. Anything extra would be a bonus. Thank you for all the thought and effort that has gone into helping us with communication.

Family Support

We're in an OK place at the moment- mostly thanks to your team!..Many thanks as ever for all the help and support. I honestly don't know how we would have survived the last few years without your team!

has always listened graciously and only ever offered support and for that we are so very grateful. I truly mean that.

*You are a *marvel*. I'm so pleased that you're our social worker. You make such a demonstrable difference to our lives and I can't thank you enough.*

Assessment of Need

Thank you so much for this. We are very grateful and impressed at how thorough and accurate your report is

Events

I just wanted to send a big thank you for the Christmas party. It was so well organised and my kids had an absolutely brilliant time.

Therapeutic Parenting Course

The course is run by social workers in Adoption West three times a year this is some of the feedback:

- I often wonder if I'm parenting in the right way. The course has confirmed I am, and I've picked up tips and hints
- Being part of an adopter community and knowing you're not on your own
- Hearing other's experiences and knowing you're not on your own and there is light at the end of the tunnel; can sometimes feel like you're on an island
- For the first time strategies that actually work. I've read books but none of it works

Was there anything we could have spent more time on/anything we didn't cover?

- More on sibling rivalry and sibling relationships
- More on compassion fatigue, how to recognise it and deal with it
- More on parent mental health, post adoption depression. Can make therapeutic parenting much harder

Online experience

- Our whole adopter experience started in Covid and we have never met anyone in person, everything has been online. I do miss the connection of being in a room with others and having a conversation.
- It would have been impossible for me to travel and commit for 10 weeks if it had been in person. Perhaps there could be one optional 'real' meeting at the end of the course, to meet everyone in person?

Adoption National Minimum Standard 15

Adoption support

Children and adults affected by adoption receive an assessment of their adoption support needs.

Children and adults affected by adoption receive an assessment of their adoption support needs. Service users confirm that the adoption support service provided met or are meeting their assessed needs. (NMS 15)

Contact with birth parents, siblings, other members of the birth family and significant others is arranged and maintained when it is beneficial to the child. (NMS 8)



Adopted Adult Service

Provides counselling and access to records for adopted adults this also includes advise about how to access intermediary services if people wish to trace birth family members.

User feedback rated the experience as **9.4/10**

	Adopted Adult (Schedule 2)	Adopted Adult/Support (Access to Records)	Intermediary Advice	Adopted Adult/Support Post Commencement
AW Total	39	75	35	1

Birth Family Support

Support provided to birth families has increased by 25% this year with 125 people accessing the service, we are currently providing 1-1 support and Group work. In addition, we have been collaborating across Adoption West and with Pause to raise the profile of birth parent voices

1-1 Support

Talking and listening

- Liaising with children’s social workers the regions
- Liaising with letterbox support workers regarding contact plans
- Supporting birth parents to write a later life letter for their child
- Creating Memory boxes for the birth parent
- Supporting birth parents to meet with adopters of their child

Groupwork

We have been running a regular monthly group in Bristol since September 2021 with five birth mum’s who attend. It has been enormous step for the women to join the group and their commitment to it demonstrates the import place it is for them. Development is in place to start another ‘pop-up’ group in Gloucester in April 2023 and Wiltshire Pause are interested in co-running in the future.

Twilight' sessions where prospective adopters can meet with birth parents in person was run for the first time this year with plans in place to run a further 3 in 2023-24

In the summer of 2023 Adoption West will be sharing "Brandon's story – Stuck in a Cycle" an animated story of a birth father who has worked with the service to produce it.

Adoption National Minimum Standards 12.3 Birth parents are given access to, and are actively encouraged to use, a support worker from the time adoption is identified as the plan for the child. The support worker is independent of the child's social worker. (NMS12.3)

Adoption National Minimum Standards 12.6 Birth parents are helped to work through their concerns through the counselling they receive and understand what is proposed for their child and how the child will benefit if they take an active part in their child's adoption. (NMS12.6)

Adoption National Minimum Standards 16 Intermediary services - Adopted adults and birth relatives are assisted to obtain information in relation to the adoption, where appropriate, and contact is facilitated between an adopted adult and their birth relative if that is what both parties want

Adoption National Minimum Standards 23.9 Birth records counselling and disclosure of adoption information

National and Regional Developments

The National Adoption Team is led by the Strategic Adoption Lead Sarah Johal, allows for RAA leaders to work collaboratively on developing and improving practice and delivering improved outcomes for children and families as part of the government's national adoption strategy- achieving excellence everywhere. The 3 year programme has 3 key priorities, recruitment of adopters, the child's journey and adoption support.

Working with RAA's across the South West, Adoption West has taken a lead role in submitting successful bids for national adoption strategy monies for developing practice in early permanence and matching.

South West Early Permanence Project

One of the 2021-22 aims of the Department for Education 2021 Adoption strategy: Achieving excellence everywhere is to increase the number of children put forward for Early Permanence placements. The specific aims of the project cover four of the six overall funding objectives, namely:

1. To increase the number of EP placements
2. To improve the quality of EP placement practice
3. To ensure that EP carers and placements receive the most appropriate support before, during and after placement.
4. To identify areas for potential innovation in EPP

The project lead has been reviewing practice across the region including the preparation and support of adopters/carers, what the data tells us about the children who are placed for EP, what are the challenges in maintaining the practice knowledge in the system a to ensure an EP placement is considered and available for children when needed. The project aims to identify EP Champions across the south west who will continue to work together to further develop and embed practice in the region across RAA's, VAA's and local authorities.

Early Permanence Conference

The South West conference took place in Taunton on 19 April 2023, with 60 delegates attending, including representatives from Cafcass, Local Authority Legal teams, IROs and EP practitioners from RAAs and all but one Local Authority. The event commenced with a keynote speech from Julie Selwyn, followed by a recording of an EP carer, taken at the national conference in Leeds and then Alexandra Conroy Harris presenting on legal issues in EP. Both speakers generated a lot of questions and discussions.

The afternoon workshops on the following subjects were very well received:

- Experiences of family time in Early Permanence placements
- Supporting Early Permanence Carers
- Planning for the best outcomes for children
- Early Permanence for older children
- Maintaining a fostering focus in early permanence placements



South West Matching project for children with disabilities –

The project is a partnership between the RAA's in the south west and Julie Selwyn from Oxford University Rees Centre. The challenges we will address:

- Are we aspirational enough for children with complex health needs, in terms of their plans for permanence or are we impacted by bias and belief that we won't place children.
- Working across 13 Local Authorities to understand the relationship between children's disabilities teams and front line teams in permanence practice for children
- Does mainstream recruitment identify adopters for children with complex health needs.
- What has worked in Bespoke family finding.
- Timely development and commitment to a robust support plan by the LA's
- Combining the support plan with the EHCP from the outset – is there a potential pilot?

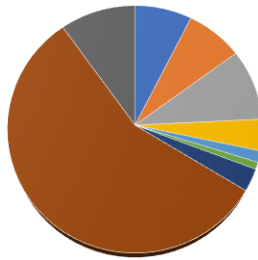
The project has recruited the staff who will come into post in June 2023. The Rees centre has completed a review of literature and practice model which will further inform the scope of the project.

People

The Senior Management Team, as detailed below, remains stable.

- Alison Lewis, Service Director- Agency Decision Maker (Adopter Approvals)
- Stuart Babbage, Business Manager
- Sue White, Service Manager – Recruitment, Assessment & Adoption Support
- Alison Hall, Service Manager (30 hours) – Family Finding and Panels

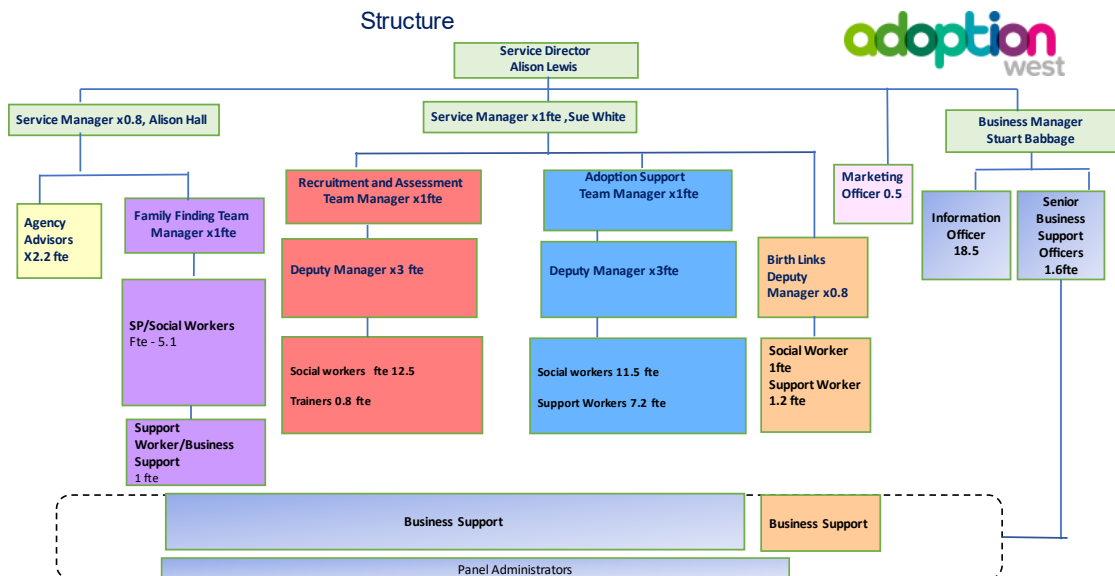
Roles in Adoption West



- Senior Managers
- Team Managers
- DTM
- Agency Advisors
- Trainers
- Marketing Officer
- Senior Business Support
- Social workers
- Support Workers
- Business Support

Our establishment is 83 staff, 61 FTE.

Adoption West moved to a temporary structure in June 2022, which created a single Recruitment and Assessment Team for four local authority areas, the aim was to provide more consistent management of these teams and review the impact it may have on performance. We will be reviewing the progress and impact in coming months. In December 2022 the Adoption West Board agreed to a new structure for the service:



Finance

Adoption West will receive commissioned contract income of £3.629m in 2022/23 from its 6 local authority partners to deliver adoption services. The breakdown of budget allocation is shown below:

Category	2022/23
Staff Salary, NI & Pensions	3,014
Other staff costs (Incl. Agency)	89
Travel, Accom, Training Subsistence	67
Commissioned Services, Subscriptions & other adopter recruitment activity	153
Post Adoption Support	62
ICT & Office	164
Support services	79
Total	3,629

Adoption West has also received £3.780 m Adoption Support Fund grant income and manages the related expenditure on behalf of the 6 local authority partners. As a Voluntary Adoption Agency, Adoption West operates on a not-for-profit basis and any surpluses are returned to the local authority partners that control the organisation.

Adoption West has managed its finances effectively to deliver services within budget under the added pressures of inflationary increases and various other organisational challenges. The financial processes and systems in place have proved effective and are being continuously improved to meet requirements, increase efficiency and enable Adoption West to realise new opportunities.

Financial viability and changes affecting business continuity. The Voluntary Adoption Agency/Adoption Support Agency is financially sound. (NMS20)

Complaints & Data Breaches

In addition to the six complaints detailed in the six month report for April to September 2022, there has been a further 2 complaints between October 2022 and March 2023. One complaint related to the delay in progressing a Non Agency Partner Adoption which was upheld and an apology given. The other to complaint related to approved adopters who had had a long wait to be matched with a child and their concern about the transparency of the matching process. All eight complaints have been dealt with within stage 1 of the complaints process.

There has been a total of three data breaches this year this is a significant reduction from the previous year of 10. All incidents were reported to the Data Protection Officer, and none were reportable to the ICO.

Moving Forward

With the new structure and investment from the local authorities, next year brings opportunities to focus on our adoption support service. Whilst the service makes very good use of the Adoption Support Fund, this cannot be relied on indefinitely and Adoption West needs to develop its own in house services. We have done this with the Therapeutic Parenting course and we have also invested in staff training and development with most social workers and support workers having completed Dyadic Development Psychotherapy (DDP) level 1 and or Theraplay level 1. We also have a small number of staff who are DDP level2 qualified and we would like to grow this number this year. This will enable our own practitioners to provide direct work to children and families.

Adoption West wants to be more visible to adopters across this large region and working with WANDS to develop peer to peer support we will be able to reach out to the communities of adopters. As part of this work, we plan to develop our own Adopter Reference group so that we can regularly communicate with adopters about how this service is developed. This will also create more opportunities for participation with children and young adults.

The growth in the number of children placed in Early Permanence placements means we are having a direct impact on the lives of children with their first placement being their only placement. The excellent work of the Family Finding, Recruitment assessment teams and the EP Project, should be part of Adoption West working to achieve the Coram Baaf kite mark for Early permanence this year.

The Birth Links team have been instrumental in growing the offer of support to birth families and next year we look forward to providing more groups across the region. Connecting birth parents and adopters via the twilight sessions will create an opportunity to grow understanding and break down barriers, which we hope will impact on connections being maintained when possible. This year we aim to work with our partner authorities to develop a more consistent understanding and practice when planning contact for children after the adoption order.

It is challenging times for recruiting both adopters and foster carers. We are actively working with the National Adopter Recruitment Campaigns and locally plan to promote adoption across the region. Our recruitment strategy highlights the needs to maintain the level of recruitment of Early Permanence carers and the progress in recruiting and supporting adopters to provide a family for siblings. Each year we have seen more children who are adopted, staying and growing up in the Adoption West region. This year we need to work with our local authorities to encourage more Black Asian Minority Ethnic people to consider adoption to meet the needs of children in the region.

As highlighted in the Ofsted ILCAS inspections Adoption West continues to work well with the local authorities and together are continually seeking to improve the experience for children and families.

Finally, I want to take this opportunity to thank everyone who works for Adoption West for their commitment and dedication often going above and beyond, to develop the practice of this agency, which strives to ensure positive experiences and outcomes for all those whose lives are impacted by adoption.



Alison Lewis
Service Director

Contributors:

Sue White: Service Manager
Alison Hall: Service Manager
Stuart Babbage: Business Manager
Anjali Gupta: Team Manager Bristol
Jane Priborsky: Team Manager Trowbridge
Jen Brennan: Interim Team Manager Family Finding
Kate Worthington: Team Manager Family Finding
Rebecca Myers: Marketing and Communications
Anita Huggins: DTM Adoption Support Bristol
Denise O'Connor, DTM Adoption Support Trowbridge
Rebecca Kay: DTM Adoption Support Gloucester
Claire Jarvis: DTM Birth Links
Hannah Walker: Support Worker Birth Links
Sallie Turnbull: Support Worker Birth Links

Appendix 1

Governance Arrangements:

As a local authority company, Adoption West is owned by the six partner local authorities through the Joint Committee of Directors of Children's Services. The management of Adoption West is delegated to the Adoption West Board of Directors and to the Service Director.

Adoption West Board of Directors:

Voting members:

- Andy Dempsey – Director of Partnerships and Strategy, Gloucestershire County Council (Chair until November 2022)
- Sheila Smith – Director of Children's Services, North Somerset Council (Chair from November 2022)
- Martin Davis – Director Children and Families, Wiltshire Council until August 2022 / Jen Salter - Interim Director Families and Children's Services, Wiltshire Council from September 2022
- Fiona Tudge – Director of Children, Families and Safer Communities, Bristol City Council
- Jo Cross – Head of Integrated Children Services, South Gloucestershire Council
- Becky Hopkins – Assistant Director, North Somerset Council
- Mary Kearney-Knowles – Director Children and Young Peoples Service, Bath and North East Somerset Council

Non-Voting members:

- Mustafa Salih – Head of Financial Management and Business Support, South Gloucestershire Council
- Emma Simpson – CEO, CCS Adoption from September 2022

Commissioning Arrangements:

Adoption West is commissioned by the six local authorities to provide adoption services. The Lead Managers group is responsible for oversight of the commissioning arrangement and developing shared practice between Adoption West and the Local authority children's social care teams.

Local Authority Adoption Lead Managers Group:

- Rachael Ward – Head of Service: Care Outcomes, Bath & North East Somerset Council

- Tara Parsons – Service Manager, Placements Team, Permanency and Specialist Services, Bristol City Council
- Tammy Wheatley – Head of Service, Permanence, Gloucestershire County Council
- Shelley Caldwell – Service Leader Service Leader Resource Service, North Somerset Council
- Aimee Williams – Service Manager, South Gloucestershire Council
- Pier Pritchard – Service Manager, Children in Care and Placement Service, Wiltshire Council

Scrutiny Arrangements:

As an adoption agency that is funded by public finances to provide statutory adoption services it is crucial that there is effective scrutiny of Adoption West. The Joint Scrutiny Panel has been established to provide this function. The panel meets quarterly, and each meeting includes a briefing about adoption issues. In this period adopters have met with councillors and shared their experience of support via the ASF and being an Early Permanence carer.

Joint Scrutiny Panel: 2022-23

Elected Voting Members:

- Cllr Michelle O’Doherty Bath and North East Somerset Council
- Cllr Christine Townsend Bristol City Council
- Cllr Dr Andrew Miller Gloucestershire County Council
- Cllr Wendy Griggs North Somerset Council
- Cllr Nic Labuschagne South Gloucestershire Council
- Cllr Jon Hubbard (Chairman) Wiltshire Council
- Cllr Carole King Wiltshire Council

Adopter Participation:

Adoption West has commissioned Adoption UK to provide Adopter Voice services across the region. An Adopter Advisory Board has been created which consists of a Chair and Adopter Champions across the region. The Chair also attends the Adoption West Board to ensure the voice of adopters is included in the governance and scrutiny of the work of Adoption West.

The current Chair of the Advisory Board Vicky Reynolds until November 2022

North Somerset Council

Report to the Children & Young People Policy & Scrutiny Panel

Date of Meeting: 19th October 2023

Subject of Report: Children's Safeguarding Partnership Annual Report

Town or Parish: North Somerset

Officer/Member Presenting: Carolyn Fair

Key Decision: No

Reason: It is not a key decision because it does not result in incurring expenditure or making savings of £500K+

It is not a key decision because of the effects of two or more wards within the local authority.

Recommendations

For the CYPs Panel to receive and comment on the Children's Safeguarding Board annual report.

1. Summary of Report

Key Strategic Business Priorities

Leadership - To provide strong governance to an effective strategic framework.

Learning – To ensure that practitioners have the knowledge and skills to be effective in their safeguarding children's roles.

Neglect - To identify and support the prevention of neglect by improving the safety and wellbeing of children and young people in North Somerset through the effective early identification and effective support.

Contextual Child Exploitation - To ensure child exploitation is recognised and responded to effectively, including when young people transition into adulthood.

Recent challenges include the ongoing task of recruiting to key roles of business manager and business support officers who provide such vital leadership and safeguarding direction. We've shown resilience and commitment to improve following recent Ofsted Inspection findings in March 2023 and reflect on national guidance including the Wood Review. During our development day in March 2023, we focused on making our work evidence-based and agreed the areas of focus for the coming year. We are also working to emphasise independent scrutiny and oversight now more than ever.

Statutory partners have worked together to embed our core principals and move closer to our Partnership's goals. All subgroups working groups are fully operational, with clear work objectives against the new three-year Safeguarding Business Plan, clear chairing arrangements, and robust membership. The Communications and Engagement subgroup is

currently being reviewed and consideration is now being given to join this subgroup with the Safeguarding Adults Board.

Safeguarding Activity has accelerated considerably with a greater emphasis on audit and embedding learning from local reviews into professional practice and cascading this learning at multi-agency training events.

Independent Scrutiny is undertaken by our Independent Chair. We have adopted several context-appropriate methods to achieve the scrutiny function. We also use multi-agency audit tools (for neglect cases and child sexual exploitation) as well as the development of action log trackers for recording safeguarding business activity.

Section 11 requirements as outlined in the children Act, 2004, were completed by the University Hospital Bristol and Western (UHBW) as well as the 2 Fostering Agencies Compass and Capstone.

The Child Exploitation Working Group conducted a preparatory JTAI in January 2023 examining multi-agency arrangements for dealing with criminal and sexual exploitation. We have begun considerations for the partnership to undertake a LGA peer review is planned for the coming financial year.

Following the national review of the murders of Arthur and Star, this partnership also held a learning event for practitioners from across all organisations which was supported by the Interim Designated Nurse for Safeguarding Children across the system.

Our Child Sexual Exploitation Strategy 2023- 2026 has been finalised, and as a result our multi-agency responses to children at risk of criminal & sexual exploitation has been strengthened.

2. Policy

There are no changes to policy as a result of this report.

3. Details

Our Vision

We want children and young people who reside in North Somerset grow up in a safe environment, free from abuse and neglect. Children, young people, and their families will receive the right level of support & intervention, at the right time, by skilled professionals to ensure that children and young people have the best start to life.

Our Values

- Transparency and Respect – we will foster a culture of openness, respect and transparency. NSSCP partners are required to work openly together, to learn from collective and individual experience, and to seek and receive assurance on the overall effectiveness of work to safeguard and protect children in North Somerset.
- Integrity and Honesty – we will be honest and open with each other on areas of challenge, transformation and system change to inform decisions on future initiatives and collaborative working.

Challenge and Innovation - we will respectfully and constructively challenge each other to drive continuous improvement and deliver the best outcomes for North Somerset's children.

- Collaboration and Partnership – The three safeguarding partners and all relevant agencies will work proactively, effectively, and collaboratively together. We will value differences to help drive improvements for children and young people.

- Care and Listening to the voice and lived experience of the child - Everything we do will benefit children and young people in North Somerset. We will ensure that our work is child-centred, and we continually seek to care for, engage and involve our children and young people and their families.

Achievements

1. We have completed our 3-year Business Plan and agreed our 4 strategic priorities. The voice of the child is a key thread throughout our business priorities.
 2. We continue to embed neglect as a key area of learning throughout respective partnership training requirements and develop learning briefings.
 3. We have promoted learning opportunities from national and locally driven developments, case reviews, and audits and assisted in the development of effective and appropriate multi-agency courses.
 4. Our Family Strengths and Needs Toolkit and documentation is now complete. We have commenced multiagency audits in Neglect, making sure plans cover the area identified as a concern – this will continue on a 3-monthly basis.
 5. We have Improved the sharing of data relating to all our vulnerable children including those vulnerable to exploitation across the Partnership and with other Local Authorities.
 6. Following local case reviews or serious incidents relating to children. We continue to quality assure NSSCP multi-agency training and professional development activities and evaluate of the impact of this training.
- Updates, achievements and future priorities are detailed from all subgroups and working groups, ICB, Avon and Somerset Police and Children and Families Services. Learning from CSPRs is outlined using case studies and the voice of the child is reported on.

Author:

Zoe Gartland, Business Manager for the Childrens' Partnership

Appendices:

North Somerset Safeguarding
Children Annual Report
January 2022 to March 2023

Background Papers:

None.

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North Somerset Safeguarding Children Annual Report January 2022 to March 2023



NHS
Bristol, North Somerset
and South Gloucestershire
Integrated Care Board



Avon and Somerset Police
SERVE. PROTECT. RESPECT.



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Introduction

Welcome to our third Safeguarding Children Annual Report from the North Somerset Safeguarding Children Partnership.

As with many multi-agency safeguarding partnerships, 2022 to 2023 has been a challenging year for us. The transition arrangements in North Somerset have taken longer than planned due to recruitment challenges resulting in drift of key business priorities. This report covers the period from January 2022 up until the end of March 2023. The Board has been chaired throughout this period by our Independent Chair, Ivan Powell.

This annual report will be shared with:

- The Chief Executive, North Somerset Council
- The Chief Executive of BNSSG Integrated Care Board
- The Outcomes, Quality and Performance Committee and System Quality Groups of the Bristol, North Somerset, South Gloucestershire Integrated Care Board (BNSSG ICB)
- The Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner
- The Safer and Stronger Communities Strategic Partnership
- Children and Young People's Policy & Scrutiny Panel (NSC)
- Children and Young People's Partnership Board
- The North Somerset Safeguarding Adults Board
- The National Safeguarding Practice Review Panel
- What Works for Early Intervention and Children's Social Care Centre
- This report is to be approved by the Executive of the North Somerset Safeguarding Partnership in September 2023

Should you require the report in any other format to support accessibility please contact the Safeguarding Children Business Manager NSSCP maggie.lilburn@n-somerset.gov.uk.

Foreword from the NSSCP Safeguarding Children Partnership

Executive

We have had a range of recent challenges. This includes the ongoing challenge of recruiting to the key roles of business manager and business support officers who provide such vital leadership and safeguarding direction. We've shown resilience and commitment to improve in light of its recent Ofsted Inspection findings in March 2023. The fundamental aim of each peer challenge is to help councils and their partners reflect on and improve the impact of practices and services for children, young people, and families. We also reflect on national guidance from a range of sources including the Wood Review. During our development day in March 2023, we focused on making our work evidence-based and agreed the areas of focus for the coming year. We are also working to emphasise independent scrutiny and oversight now more than ever.

We acknowledge the extraordinary efforts made by our local community as well as all voluntary and statutory partners. We feel very proud to live and work within North Somerset in light of such hard work.

This report reflects some of those challenges we have worked to overcome and the great results we have achieved. As this is the third year of the Partnership, we know that there are several key initiatives we have needed to develop in 2022 and 2023. Statutory partners have recognised there have been insufficient resources in the absence of sufficient chairing capacity and a permanent business manager and administration support for the partnership to flourish.

- Rosi Shepherd, Chief Nursing Officer, BNSSG ICB
- Adam O’Loughlin, Chief Inspector, Avon & Somerset Police
- Sheila Smith, Director of Children’s Services, North Somerset Council
- Ivan Powell, Independent Chair

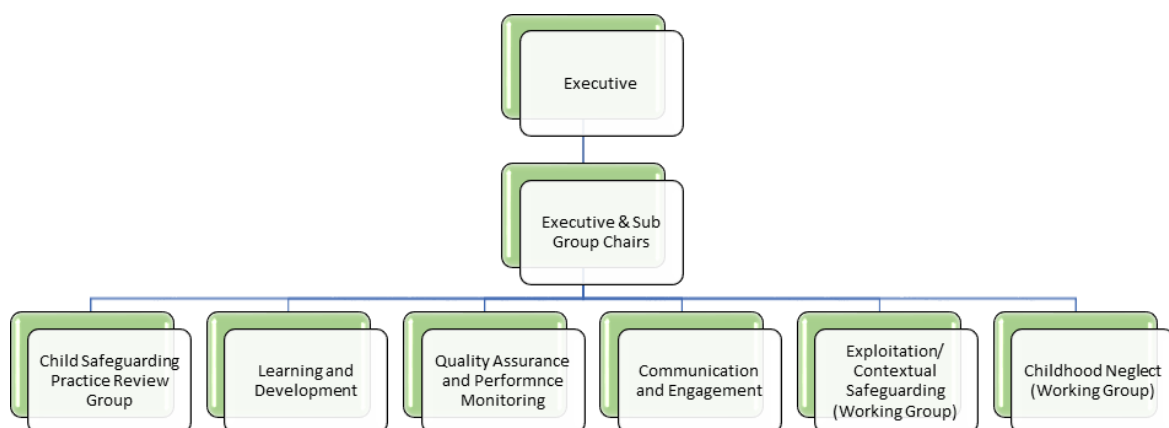
North Somerset Safeguarding Children Partnership Structure

Following the recruitment of an Interim Business Manager in 2022 and February 2023, we’ve worked together to embed our core principals and move closer to our Partnership’s goals. All Subgroups are in place with a clear focus, chairing arrangements, and robust membership. The Communications and Engagement Subgroup is currently being reviewed and consideration is now being given to join this subgroup with the Safeguarding Adults Board. This will add value to the current Partnership Arrangements.

All subgroups and working groups are fully operational, with clear work objectives against the new three-year Safeguarding Business Plan. Safeguarding Activity has accelerated considerably with a greater emphasis on audit and embedding learning from local reviews into professional practice and cascading this learning at multi-agency training events.

Below the Executive is the Executive and Sub Group Chairs. These chairs oversee the Child Safeguarding Practice Review Group, Learning and Development, Quality Assurance and Performance Monitoring, Communication and Engagement, Exploitation/Contextual Safeguarding (Working Group) and the Childhood Neglect (Working Group).

NB: The communications and Engagement group will now join with Safeguarding Adults subgroup to strengthen partnership working.



Independent Scrutiny

Independent Scrutiny which is one of the key changes in the new partnership arrangements. Currently this function is undertaken by our Independent Chair. There have been a number of context-appropriate methods to achieve the scrutiny function which we have been adopted. Challenges and responses raised between partners are noted in the partnership minutes. We also use multi-agency audit tools (for Neglect cases and Child Sexual exploitation) as well as the development of action log trackers for recording safeguarding business activity. Section 11 requirements as outlined in the children Act, 2004, were completed by the University Hospital Bristol and Western (UHBW) as well as the 2 Fostering Agencies Compass and Capstone.

The Child Exploitation Working Group conducted a preparatory JTAI in January 2023 examining multi-agency arrangements for dealing with criminal and sexual exploitation. We have begun considerations for the partnership to undertake a LGA peer review is planned for the coming financial year.



What is Safeguarding Children?

Working Together 2018* defines the safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children as:

- protecting children from maltreatment.
- preventing impairment of children's health or development.
- ensuring the children are growing up in circumstances consistent with the provision of safe and effective care.
- taking action to enable all children to have the best outcomes.

Child protection is a part of safeguarding activity that protects specific children who are suffering, or likely to suffer, significant harm.

North Somerset Safeguarding Partners, in accordance with Working Together 2018, have drafted their new Multiagency Safeguarding Arrangements for Children and Young People.

The North Somerset Safeguarding Children's Partnership is a multi-agency partnership, with responsibility for safeguarding children and young people throughout the North Somerset locality.

Leadership comes from three statutory partners:

- North Somerset City Council
- Avon & Somerset Police
- BNSSG ICB

The Safeguarding Children Business Manager and Independent Chair coordinate this work.

The NSSCP works closely with other relevant groups to ensure a coordinated, borough wide, approach to a range of issues which cross the boundaries of age, and are therefore, not the specific remit of any one group. These include:

- The Safer and Stronger Communities Strategic Partnership
- Children and Young People's Policy & Scrutiny Panel (NSC)
- Children and Young People's Partnership Board

Our Vision

We want children and young people who reside in North Somerset grow up in a safe environment, free from abuse and neglect. Children, young people, and their families will receive the right level of support & intervention, at the right time, by skilled professionals to ensure that children and young people have the best start to life.

Our Values

- Transparency and Respect – we will foster a culture of openness, respect and transparency. NSSCP partners are required to work openly together, to learn from collective and individual experience, and to seek and receive assurance on the overall effectiveness of work to safeguard and protect children in North Somerset.
- Integrity and Honesty – we will be honest and open with each other on areas of challenge, transformation and system change to inform decisions on future initiatives and collaborative working.
- Challenge and Innovation - we will respectfully and constructively challenge each other to drive continuous improvement and deliver the best outcomes for North Somerset's children.
- Collaboration and Partnership – The three Safeguarding Partners and all Relevant Agencies will work proactively, effectively, and collaboratively together. We will value differences to help drive improvements for children and young people.

Care and Listening to the voice and lived experience of the child - Everything we do will benefit children and young people in North Somerset. We will ensure that our work is child centred, and we continually seek to care and engage, and involve our children and young people and their families.

Key Strategic Business Priorities

The NSSCP Strategic Plan has been developed to focus on a set of agreed priorities that have been agreed at the NSSCP Development event on 10th March 2023 These are:

- Leadership- To provide strong governance to an effective strategic framework.
- Learning Ensure- that practitioners have the knowledge and skills to be effective in their safeguarding children's roles.
- Neglect- To identify and support the prevention of neglect by improving the safety and wellbeing of children and young people in North Somerset the effective early identification help and effective support.
- Contextual Child Exploitation- Ensure child exploitation is recognised and responded to effectively, including when young people transition into adulthood.

We've identified these priorities from themes arising from the Partnership's existing scrutiny, and quality assurance programs and key learning points arising from children's safeguarding practice reviews. The strategic objectives will remain the same for the three-year period of the plan but we will often review the activities that sit underneath them.

The structure of the strategic plan allows the Board to focus on key strategic areas of partnership activity but also remain flexible to respond to feedback. This will allow us to refine existing programs in response to the needs of children and young people..

To support the delivery of the Business Plan, we make more detailed individual plans aligned to the Board's strategic priorities with each Sub and Working Group. The NSSCP will take a leadership role in the delivery and quality assurance of partnership work in these areas. Progress against this plan will be reviewed and monitored by each individual subgroup / Task and Finish Group in the first instance. Where necessary and appropriate, the Execs Plus Group will highlight both areas of concern and areas of good practice and success to the full NSSCP Executive Board meetings for further action.

A Snapshot of what North Somerset Safeguarding Children Partnership has achieved

1. We have completed our 3-year Business Plan and agreed our 4 Strategic priorities. The voice of the child is a key thread throughout our business priorities.
2. We continue to embed neglect as a key area of learning throughout respective partnership training requirements and develop learning briefings.
3. We have promoted learning opportunities from national and locally driven developments, case reviews, and audits and assisted in the development of effective and appropriate multi-agency courses.
4. Our Family Strengths and Needs Toolkit and documentation is now complete. We have commenced multiagency audits in Neglect, making sure plans cover the area identified as a concern – this will continue on a 3 monthly basis.
5. We have Improved the sharing of data relating to all our vulnerable children including those vulnerable to exploitation across the Partnership and with other Local Authorities.

6. Following local case reviews or serious incidents relating to children. We continue to quality assure NSSCP multi-agency training and professional development activities and evaluate of the impact of this training.
7. Following the national review of the murders of Arthur and Star, this partnership also held a learning event for practitioners from across all organisations which was supported by the Interim Designated Nurse for Safeguarding Children across the system.
8. Our Child Sexual Exploitation Strategy 2023- 2026 has been finalised, and as a result our multi-agency responses to children at risk of criminal & sexual exploitation has been strengthened.

Spotlight On 2022/2023



This section of the Annual Report focusses on key areas of work undertaken during 2022/2023 However, these must be seen in the context of the very significant amount of day-to-day work undertaken by staff throughout the year. We cannot overestimate the amount of “routine” work that goes into keeping children and young people safe in North Somerset.

Multi-agency Training and Development: what we did well

- We have delivered 75 multi-agency courses to 1260 participants. (April 22 – March 23)
- Multi-agency training has returned to a similar frequency as pre-pandemic, with 85% of the training courses now being delivered face to face Within the safeguarding partnership, the key focus areas around childhood neglect and child exploitation has driven considerations about the training offer
- The current Child Sexual Exploitation course is now delivered by our Police colleagues
- The neglect agenda had been enhanced with two new courses: a full day course considering the Cumulative impact of Neglect.
- The new online Strengths and Needs (Neglect) Toolkit training has been promoted
- We have delivered training on the Effective Support course which is to explore the use of the revised document for front line practitioners
- A great deal of work has gone into the development of the above courses as well as the ongoing delivery of the core offer of safeguarding courses

Future objectives:

- Review the overarching management system for advertising/booking of courses will need to be considered
- The current system of North Somerset CPD Online, will be closed later this year with no clear pathway for replacement. Review of high-quality event evaluation to ensure the training offer is meeting its targets

- Ensure all partners can access the partnership multi-agency training offer. Ensuring the courses are advertised to staff as widely as possible, this is an essential action for the coming 12 months
- To continue to ensure that the voice of the child remains a golden thread running through all our multi-agency training courses
- Develop a multiagency training program that spans over 12–15-month period so partnership colleagues can time-table training courses well in advance

Child Safeguarding Practice Review Group Subgroup - what we did well



- During the reporting period the case review group has met monthly
- It also collates and creates an action plan for the Partnership resulting from key findings of these reviews.
- In the year March 2022-March 2023 one Rapid Review was held, two Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews were completed (which had been initiated before March 2022), and an appreciative enquiry undertaken following an earlier Rapid Review
- The Subgroup has revised its Terms of Reference, referral form and Rapid Review process, and has produced a standardised Terms of Reference for undertaking Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews

Future objectives:

- Consider and examine the findings from National and Regional Safeguarding Practice Reviews and identify learning themes and actions for dissemination
- Review and strengthen our local Policies and guidance in line with local practice eg non mobile baby policies and guidance.
- Continue to assess and manage new referrals for significant events, undertake rapid reviews, and where appropriate commission Child Safeguarding practice Reviews
- We have reflected on local Rapid Review Cases and their respective action plans relating to Neglect and will ensure that these are incorporated into multiagency safeguarding training events

Learning and Development Subgroup - what we did well



- We have promoted learning opportunities from national and locally driven developments, case reviews, audits and assisted in the development of effective and appropriate multi-agency courses
- We continue to Quality assure NSSCP multi-agency training and professional development activities and evaluate the impact of training

- We have reflected on local Rapid Review Cases and their respective action plans relating to Neglect and will ensure that these are incorporated into multiagency safeguarding training events

Future objectives:

- Continue to support multi-agency arrangements on the delivery of the multi-agency training program, which includes implementing any health specific actions relating to the National, regional and local Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews
- We will ensure that learning briefings are completed and cascaded across agencies so that learning from Rapid Review can be shared and implemented
- To support safeguarding partners to establish a learning assurance framework to ensure that all training is well evaluated and the changes in professional practice evidenced

Quality Assurance and Performance Management activities- what we did well



- This group from inception has developed maturely, keeping to an outcome focused agenda, ensuring that cross-working with the other sub-groups takes place
- We now have an effective group that reflects membership of colleagues from key parts of the system who are committed to the functions and aims of the sub-group
- A safeguarding children Dashboard has been developed that reflects practice performance against a RAG rating within the local authority and is reviewed at each meeting. This assists in identifying areas of multi-agency practice or risks that require further exploration
- The dashboard is now reviewed at every Q&A subgroup meeting to determine where future pieces of QA work require action or escalation to the partnership executive team
- Linked to the above, we have invited feedback from key leaders to share single agency audits undertaken for assurance purposes. The key partners in the subgroup take back the learning to their respective organisations for discussion and action

Future objectives:

- Establish a multi-agency auditing programme. This will ensure those multi agency responsibilities such as quality of referrals, CP decision making, are undertaken jointly and reflect multi agency accountability and perspective
- Further develop our Dashboard to reflect the work across the partnership e.g. incorporate health and police data

- Work closely with partners to identify key leads in each agency to co-produce the required detail ensuring we have meaningful information to inform the programme of work for the partnership
- Ensure recent Inspection reports from each agency are considered through a multi-agency lens and identify relevant QA activity that is required to drive up practice standards across the partnership
- To continue to evidence safeguarding strengths and good practice; identify gaps and areas for development; drive learning and service improvement

Child Exploitation Working Group -what we did well



- We have completed our 3-year Child Exploitation Strategy to include our risk assessment tool
- We have mapped children vulnerable to exploitation and geographical areas where exploitation may be taking place across North Somerset
- We have Improved the sharing of data relating to children vulnerable to exploitation across the Partnership and with other Local Authorities
- Preparatory activity in anticipation of a potential JTAI focusing on Child exploitation has been put in place
- Delivery of a Risk Outside the Home (ROTH) team within the Local Authority
- Improved understanding and awareness of Exploitation in its wider context including wider risks that lead to exploitation
- Development of a task and finish group to focus on data and partnership wider systems development

Future objectives:

- Risks Outside The Home (ROTH) Forum to be developed considering local council work streams
- To prepare for our forthcoming JTAI
- To continue to monitor the Number of Child Sexual Exploitation Crimes and strengthen the sharing of Data
- Ensure child exploitation is recognised and responded to effectively, including when young people transition into adulthood

Neglect Working Group – what we did well



- The working group has been meeting on a 6 weekly basis to drive forward the neglect multiagency audits and respective toolkits including the neglect strategy. We have worked closely with Somerset who have assisted us in our development
- Our The Family Strengths and Needs Toolkit and documentation is now complete

- We have commenced multiagency audits in Neglect making sure plans cover the area identified as a concern – this will continue on a 4 monthly basis

Future objectives:

- To encourage and support multi professional members in cases of neglect, to be confident and vocal enough to ensure the right levels of discussion, and decision making are completed and recorded
- To continue to monitor the referrals for physical/emotional/sexual abuse, given that neglect is the highest category (82%)
- To finalise our neglect strategy by January 2024 and agree a launch date for Feb/March 2024
- To support the delivery of the Business Plan’s more detailed work plans, aligned to the Board’s strategic priorities, will be developed for each Sub and Working Group

Dealing with risk & learning from Safeguarding Practice

This section explains how learning and improvements are embedded to make progress on achieving better outcomes for children and young people.

What have we learnt from Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews?

The NSSCP collates the findings from local safeguarding practice reviews (LCSPRs), repeat learning/findings are reviewed and further audit and scrutiny is undertaken to have a broader view of the findings. This was undertaken following the National Review into the murders of Arthur Labinjo-Hughes and Star Hobson. Work continues to be embedded into professional practice and findings shared with multi-agency training programmes.

In the year March 2022-March 2023 one Rapid Review was held, two Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews were completed. Both these cases involved chronic neglect of a child. Learning continues to be shared across agencies and the action plan is currently being monitored by the Learning and Development Subgroup.



Integrated Care Board – input into North Somerset Safeguarding Children Partnership

The ICB Safeguarding team has continued to contribute to our Partnership to deliver their statutory duties for safeguarding during this reporting period. Colleagues from across the health system have provided leadership to three of the five sub-groups of this partnership: Learning and Development, Quality Assurance and Performance, Child Neglect and the Child Safeguarding Practice Review subgroup.

There has been an investment in the Learning and Development of statutory safeguarding health roles within the Partnership, following receipt of funding from the Regional NHS England Safeguarding team. Two cohorts of Safeguarding Supervision training have been commissioned and delivered with 32 delegates from across health providers and the ICB now trained to deliver safeguarding supervision effectively to frontline health practitioners.

Bespoke Level 4 Safeguarding Children training has also been delivered to a cohort of 16 colleagues from across the health system which was extremely well received and is likely to be recommissioned in Quarter 3 2023/24. As part of the ICB's statutory duties, learning briefs have been shared across the system as a result of these system audits and through the One Care bulletin with Primary Care.

These key messages have also been reiterated and discussed at Safeguarding LINK GP meetings to ensure changes to practice are embedded.

We've refined the ICB Safeguarding Team's offer to Primary Care in terms of training, supervision and support. This includes signposting to Multi Agency Level 3 Safeguarding Children training, monthly Q&A drop ins, and quarterly Safeguarding LINK GP meeting. This has been underpinned by the introduction of a new post within the ICB Safeguarding Team. That is the Named Nurse for Primary Care (All Age) supported by two Named GPs for All-Age Safeguarding. During 2022/23, four Level 3 Safeguarding courses were delivered to Primary Care staff virtually.

The ICB Safeguarding Team has also been invested in during 2022/23 following a comprehensive workforce review against the delivery of statutory duties and comparison ICBs. A revised team structure was drafted and consulted upon and new posts have been created to be recruited into.

A new Designated Nurse for Safeguarding Children was appointed to and this role will be supported by three place-based Deputy Designated Professionals who will have an all-age remit, adopting a 'think family' approach.

Throughout this reporting period, system discussions have been had across the footprint on how the system could work more effectively at place

(6 x locality partnership), local authority (3) and system. The outcome of these discussions was to commission a review of the arrangements with the support of a full adopted scoping paper. The Local Government Association were commissioned by the system with Executive

Sponsors from the ICB, Police and Local Authorities to undertake this piece of work which began in March 2023.

The outcomes will be reported in next year annual report.



Avon and Somerset Police

The “Child Protection Crimes (excluding Domestic Abuse Crimes)” in the attached table are recorded crimes where there are child protection concerns (Child Abuse, Child Sexual Exploitation, Child Safeguarding), with this measure excluding Domestic Abuse Crimes where there are child protection concerns. The measure also includes peer-on-peer crimes where both the victim and suspect are children. The measure includes non-recent child abuse allegations, regardless of whether the victim was a child or adult at the time of reporting.

The data below shows that the volume of recorded “Child Protection” crimes in North Somerset fell by 4.3%, or by 19 crimes, in the last 12 months compared with the previous 12 months, falling to 422 crimes. This fall should be viewed in the context of sustained increases across the last decade. The rate of reduction is below the 7.3% fall recorded across the force area. These falls are not the result of changes in recording practices and represent an actual decline in identified offences.

Child Protection and Child Sexual Exploitation (12 month rolling)	Current	Previous	Chg	% Chg
Number of Child Protection Crime (excluding Domestic Abuse Crimes)	422	441	-19	-4.3%
Number of Child Protection Serious Sexual Offences	148	180	-32	-17.8%
Number of Non-Familial Sexual Crimes - Child Victim	199	226	-27	-11.9%
Number of Child Protection Crimes for Cruelty and Neglect of Children	106	108	-2	-1.9%
Number of Child Sexual Exploitation Crimes	227	292	-65	-22.3%

Missing Children

154 children were reported missing in North Somerset in the last 12 months, rising by 17 children or by 12.4% compared with the previous 12 months. 69 of these children were reported missing repeatedly, 6 fewer children than were reported missing repeatedly in the previous 12 months. The number of missing children reports fell to 370 in the last 12 months compared with 389 in the previous 12 months, a fall of 4.9%, contrasting with the 23.5% rise recorded across the force area.

There were falls in both the number of children missing from care, falling to 26 children in the last 12 months from 32 children in the previous 12 months, and the number of children going missing from care repeatedly, falling to 16 children from 18 children.

Missing Children (12 month rolling)	Current	Previous	Chg	% Chg
Number of Missing Children	154	137	+17	+12.4%
Number of Missing Children Reports	370	389	-19	-4.9%
Number of Repeat Missing Children	69	75	-6	-8.0%
Number of Children Missing from Care	26	32	-6	-18.8%
Number of Repeat Children Missing from Care	16	18	-2	-11.1%

Safety and Anti-Bullying

The overall number of child victims of all crime types in North Somerset rose by 67 victims to 1115 victims in the last 12 months, or by 6.4% compared with the previous 12 months. This increase is above the 3.5% increase recorded across the force area as a whole. The number of child suspects of all crime types in North Somerset in the last 12 months rose by 14.4% to 824 child suspects, an increase of 104 child suspects. This rise is significantly above the 2.7% increase recorded across the force area.

The number of Domestic Abuse Crimes with a victim aged 16 or 17 recorded in North Somerset fell by 37 crimes in the last 12 months compared with the previous 12 months. This represents a fall of just over one third (33.9%) to 72 crimes. This fall is well above the 7.7% fall recorded across the force area as whole.

The number of child victims of recorded Race Hate Crimes rose to 26 victims in the last 12 months from 21 victims in the previous 12 months. Given the relatively small numbers involved, care should be taken when comparing the percentage increase in North Somerset with the percentage change recorded force wide. All forms of Hate Crime are subject to a high degree of under-reporting, and it can reasonably be concluded that the actual levels are greater than the levels reported.

Safety and Anti-Bullying (12 month rolling)	Current	Previous	Chg	% Chg
Number of Child Suspects of Crimes	824	720	+104	+14.4%

Number of Domestic Abuse Incidents (Excluding Crimes)	1475	1521	-46	-3.0%
Number of Domestic Abuse Crimes	2669	2985	-316	-10.6%
Number of Domestic Abuse Crimes - Victim Age 16 - 17	72	109	-37	-33.9%
Number of Child Victims of Crimes	1115	1048	+67	+6.4%
Number of Child Victims of Race Hate Crimes	26	21	+5	+23.8%

Initial Child Protection Conferences - The police attendance rate at ICPCs in North Somerset in 2022/23 was 100% with all 78 ICPCs having been attended.



Children Services

Family Support & Safeguarding

Our service delivers the statutory social work assessments and support to all children who are referred to Children's Services, except those who are allocated to Children with Disability team.

Team Structure and remit

There are 6 Teams based across North Somerset, 1 in Portishead, 2 in Worle and three in Weston South.

Each team has a Team Manager, senior social workers, social workers and family support workers within its structure. The service is locality based and works closely with colleagues from Health, Education and Police, we also have close working relationships with commissioned services such as WeAreWithYou and NextLink.

Family Support & Safeguarding (FS&S) support children who receive support as Children in Need, Children supported by a Child Protection Plan and Children in our Care where the decision regarding their permanence is being made and overseen by the Family Court. Care Proceedings will determine if children can return home, remain in their family with alternative carers to their parents, be provided with foster care for their childhood or adoption outside of their family. If a child has a care plan for adoption, we work closely with our colleagues in Adoption West as our Regional Adoption Agency, who assist us to find families for our children. Social workers in FS&S remain allocated to the child until adoption orders are secured, therefore, our work with some children and their families can span several years. We work closely with colleagues in Corporate Parenting Service and children who are in our care will be allocated a social worker from this service only when the decision has been made that fostering is required for the duration of their childhood.

Ofsted ILACS Inspection 2023 – Practice that is working well.

- Our approach to securing permanence for children who can benefit from adoption and our progress and success for children who secure permanence early through Early Permanence. Our Adoption work and effective work with our Regional Adoption Agency was noted as a strength.
- Effective arrangements to track and monitor children's plans for permanence, specifically children supported through the Pre-Proceedings stage of the Public Law Outline, the impact of this assisting effective progression of those plans. Positive acknowledgement to the quality of the letters sent to parents before PLO commences.
- Private fostering, it was noted our assessments are robust and completed by social workers who understand children's needs which inform their support plans.
- Our assessments to support children ages 16 and 17 who are homeless or at risk of being homeless were noted as strong with good multi agency working to support them remaining at home or access appropriate housing, entry to care and or support.
- Our Assessments that lead to decisions to bring children into care are well matched to children's levels of need and risk. Assessments shared with the courts are generally strong and proceedings are increasingly timely.

We will drive improvement and monitor progress by ensuring that:

Our Quality Assurance & Performance Service meet monthly with all Team Managers chaired by the Head of Service to identify the impact of

improvement activity and explore areas for safeguarding development.

Our Initiatives

- Dip reviews of children's records against our focused plans for improvements.
- Monthly meetings to share our understanding of 'good' across all our work.
- Weekly Quality and Performance meetings to maintain team performance and review our goals.
- Seek out, record and hear our children's voices so we learn from these to improve our safeguarding and social work practice.
- Quarterly development sessions for the service so our teams can share what has worked well.

Future challenges and developments

It is clear we have much to do, however, Ofsted have confirmed that our strategic plan is robust. we have a good understanding of our improvement priorities.

We have reviewed and revised the annual FS&S plan against the Ofsted findings. A draft for 2023/24 is out for consultation. This will be finalised and launched in September before our Annual Conference, where key messages and further clarity will be offered on practice standards and revised processes.

Staffing capacity has been a major barrier to our improvement goals. Vacancy management is critical and focused activity to enable and support recruitment and retention will maximize all recruitment options and ensure our practitioners have the capacity to deliver consistently good effective support.

In line with many other Local Authorities, retention of social workers within statutory social work presents challenges. The current vacancy rate for FS&S is approx. 40%. By September there will be a planned induction of 6 permanent social workers, 2 additional locum social workers and recruitment of 3 permanent family support workers. Further recruitment activity is continuing.

Our 6 priority areas include:

- Effectiveness of management oversight and supervision
- Identification and response to significant and chronic risk
- Reviewing the frequency and quality of our visits
- Exploring our timeliness and quality of assessments
- Reviewing our effectiveness of safeguarding children's plans
- Evidencing progress and change for Children

Front Door

The Front Door is exactly what it says, a Front Door to ensuring the right outcomes for support / assessment are considered when children's needs moved beyond Universal (Tier 1) and Early Help (Tier 2). The Front Door is a multi-agency team and even though they do not undertake assessments or hold children they maintain curiosity and measure any potential for over optimism through judgement, professional supervision, management oversight and audits.

Over the last 3 years the Front Door has changed and developed, although Ofsted observed this was not fast enough in our Focused Visit in September 2022. The pace of change between September 2022 and March 2023 (Inspection) was significant which included the introduction of a Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH).

The Ofsted inspection in Marc 2023 found that:

'Improved information-sharing arrangements are supporting the right decision making for children. Most multi-agency checks are completed and returned in a timescale that is appropriate to the urgency of children's needs and the level of risk, typically within a maximum of 24 hours.

For non-professionals contacts we have Care Connect, who work alongside the Front Door to make sure contacts are past on swiftly without delay.

For professionals we have either Childrensfrontdoor@n-somerset.gov.uk or Dutyintake@n-somerset.gov.uk.

There is also a professionals' consultation line (01275 888690) for professionals who need guidance on next actions regarding a worry or concern they have and need Social Work support in deciding if a request for support document needs to be completed. The

consultation line was recognised in the March 2023 inspection: 'A refreshed consultation line has been successfully implemented to give professionals access to confidential support and guidance when there are concerns for children. This service has been well received by professionals and frequent manager oversight of the information is ensuring it is used effectively.'

Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub

The MASH has been in place since January 2023, and now it is embedded in our practice. We are reviewing the process to ensure that the partners are in the right place and implement what needs to happen next to make any improvements needed. We have seen a rise in contacts to Children Social care since MASH was in place which evidences the increased information sharing and quality taking place. Currently we have physical attendance from Education, Health, (Sirona Care and Health), Next Link (Domestic Abuse), Police join remotely but there is a plan for a physical present for at least one day per week from 1st July, however this may be limited.

A review of the MASH arrangements has commenced and fortnightly multi-professional meetings are being put in place to assist in this. Our gold standard is for all our multi professionals' colleagues to be seated together, in the Front Door to enable high quality discussion, ensuring curiosity and measure our balance for any over optimism. This is directly due to having the right people with the right information in the right place at the right time. Our update is that representation from the Youth Offending Service and Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services who are keen to also join us our MASH team.

Worries and weakness, professionals such as Police and Health work across a number of authorities around our area. From their perspective a standard process across those areas would be beneficial, but this is not how we see North Somerset MASH working and does not fit in with our vision jointly worked with North Tyneside who supported us in developing a MASH, We want that face to face, local communication and commitment and believe this is fundamental to our further development.

Family Wellbeing Hub

A recent change to the Family Wellbeing Hub is the Missing Return Home interviews are now allocated directly from of the Risk Other Than at Home (ROTH) Team, to an identified Family Wellbeing Support Worker, rather than going through the Family Wellbeing Hub.

Quality Assurance

Quality Assurance of decision making within the Front Door in September 2022 was identified as an area in need of improvement in respect of Social Work Practice. Changes have been implemented to the Quality Assurance Process within the Front Door, as follows:

- The Team Manager and Senior Social Worker complete nine-to-twelve audits in any one calendar month. This is divided into fortnightly sessions
- MASH Multi-Agency Audits are undertaken every fortnight, to a total of twelve per calendar month. This has been less well attended to date. The Police have not attended to date due to capacity

- The Head of Front Door undertakes three Dip audits monthly. Currently the dip audits are covering re-referral
- The Team Manger feeds back outcomes and learning from audits to the Front Door Team in staff meetings on a fortnightly basis and monthly in a specific audit feedback learning session
- We have worked with the Effective Support document role, supporting training for an agreed understanding of where concerns may sit on the continuum of need which has replaced the Threshold Document

Family Wellbeing service

We work closely with our Front Door social work and multi-agency colleagues to ensure that children and families are offered guidance, support and signposting to the services that can give them the right support at the right time. We provide:

Intensive early help for families: 1:1 support with a Family Support Worker.

This is a non – statutory service and aims to help families who have already received Early Help support within their community, whose needs have become more complex, and the child or young person is at significant risk of not achieving expected outcomes. It is a service that offers a holistic and coordinated approach with more intensive intervention and support.

Return to Home Interviews:

We work closely with the ROTH team and complete the Return to home interviews with children who have had a missing episode.

Children Centres and Family Hubs: We Provide and run 11 children centres and provide outreach services to 3 other community buildings.

Children Centres provide a range of holistic universal and targeted services for families with children primarily under five including:

- child and family health services, ranging from midwifery, health visitor services to breastfeeding support.
- parent and toddler groups
- information on childcare and early learning and local support groups and help to promote the Early Years Pupil Premium
- classes for parents, drop-in sessions, healthy eating advice
- help for you to find work or training opportunities.

Committed to develop 3 of our children centres to become Family Hubs, one in each of our localities. They provide families with somewhere they can go if they need information, advice or guidance about parenting, concerns about family breakdown, and other worries. A Family Hub is a central access point for services and support and will provide a universal front door to families, offering a one-stop shop of family support services across their social care, education, mental health, and physical health needs.

UK Re-Settlement programme:

We have three schemes in North Somerset which support families who have come to the UK to seek refuge.

- Vulnerable persons resettlement scheme (VPRS)/ UK Resettlement Scheme (UKRS) 2106 – a 5-year scheme and 5 years leave to remain. NS involved since 2016 and relates to the conflict in the Mina region. The pledge is to assist 20,000 individuals with NS resettling 14 families. We have 11 families settled through the VPRS and 1 through UKRS
- Afghan Relocation and Assistance Policy – 3-year scheme and 3 years leave to remain starting in July 2021. Scheme is to welcome Afghan Locally employed staff who have worked for the UK and risked their lives alongside British forces in Afghanistan to relocate to the UK with their families.
- Afghan Citizens Resettlement Scheme – 3 years scheme and 3 years to remain for those who have assisted the UK efforts in Afghanistan and stood up for values, women's rights freedom of speech and vulnerable groups. The government will resettle more than 5,000 people in the first year and up to 20,000 over the coming years. We have resettled 12 families in North Somerset.

Advanced parenting offer

The advanced parenting offer in North Somerset delivers evidenced based programmes for parents of children from birth to 19 and 25yrs SEND

We have 14 parenting programmes which covers behaviour, domestic abuse, parent conflict, parenting an adolescent, child on parent violence. Some of the facilitators are specialist CYPIAT trained parenting practitioners. Robust quality assurance and supervision is carried out to ensure fidelity to the programmes.

We also have a parenting village coffee morning once a month which provides drop in professional and peer support for the families in our community needing extra support.

Let's Cook group is delivered at Oldmixon Family Centre, which is situated in the South locality. This group is for the whole community, aimed at children 0-5 and their parents and carers.

Aim related outcomes for this group are as follows:

Attendees have been able to meet other parents with young babies and share parenting experiences and cooking experiences:

- have increased their level of engagement with other local Children Centre services during their attendance.
- an increase in their knowledge of understanding of what ingredients can be used to make low-cost meals.
- that they are using activities and techniques learned in the sessions within their own homes

- have increased levels of communication and increased the number of fresh meals they cook at home.

What we achieved

- 100% of parents/carers said they are more aware of the services children's centres offer because of attending Let's Cook
- 100% had attended or planned to attend other groups within the children's centres, most popular being 'Let's play'.
- 100% said that because of attending Let's Cook, their knowledge on healthy recipes/ cooking and supporting positive interactions
- 80% are more aware of what ingredients can be used to make low-cost meals.
- 90% report an increase in the number of fresh meals they cook at home
- All parents and carers felt the venue and time of the group was suitable.

Comments from parents and carers, related to aim related outcomes:

- We've absolutely loved it. Thank you.
- I would be happy to pay more for this and pay up front. It's been Fab. Would love there to be more kids doing the course as it's brilliant. Wish it was a longer course. Thanks so much for accommodating my / our food tolerances. I this has been amazing.
- No, I think everything was done great. We absolutely loved our time here and my toddler is more confident helping me in the kitchen.



Children in Care

To reflect statutory guidance, Children in Care should receive an initial health assessment to evaluate the child's physical health and any requirement for access to specialist behavioral, mental, and emotional health assessment within 20 working days of becoming a child in care. The performance against this metric has been challenging for some time owing to timeliness of notifications from the local authority, capacity and availability of community pediatricians within Sirona Care and Health to undertake the assessment and a proportion of appointments where children were not brought.

A systemwide Children in Care workshop took place on 9th November 2022 to discuss how as an Integrated Care System- all system partners have a statutory responsibility for this cohort of Children. It was the first meeting of its kind. There was representation from the ICB- Safeguarding and Contracting, Sirona Care and Health- Strategic, Business Operations and Delivery of service, and all three Local Authorities were represented. There was a consensus from all system partners represented that an exploration of different options to undertake IHAs and RHAs was now necessary owing to challenges and impact on this vulnerable cohort. For example, the use of GPs to support the undertaking of IHAs instead of Community Pediatrician's.

In addition to the above, a pilot is underway to quality assure additional packages of care commissioned by the ICB for Children who are in care and placed out of area. The purpose of this exercise is to ensure that as Corporate Parents, the ICB is providing the best possible care and protection for the child in the same way as a good parent/birth parent would, and to quality assure the services being provided. In the same way, the ICB is exploring what could be included in a Care Leavers Health Offer, for example pre-paid prescription exemptions for those eligible.



Listening to children and young people is crucial, at times the most vulnerable young people don't always feel that they are heard or their opinions taken seriously.

Children's Participation Group - what is it about? Let's find out more....

- The Participation group captures the voice of our young people and children in North Somerset. We have evolved our engagement over recent months, and this is now led by what the children and young people want.
- We hold a monthly Care Leavers Forum, for our young people. We meet in the Town Hall to listen to their thoughts, discuss upcoming events and sometimes review documents to ensure they use language that cares and can be understood by our young people. We also provide a hot meal, which ensure our young people have eaten well that day. This is a lovely setting, where we have grown great working relationships with our young people.
- A Children in Care Council is also held monthly. This takes the form of a quarterly in person event at local venues, allowing us to provide food and games. The

months in between are shared between events held at schools or in conjunction with our Family Wellbeing Team.

Our Children's Voices



Now let's hear the voice of one young person: my personal story.

I became a child in care with North Somerset Council before transitioning to the Leaving Care team. I was living in supported accommodation and talked regularly with my Leaving Care Personal Advisor (LCPA) for support and access to opportunities for develop skills for living. I was introduced to the Participation team by the LCPA, I was very passionate about wanting to be involved with the various opportunities available at the local authority and to "change things from the inside out".

I remembered my experiences as a child in care, the transition to adulthood and as a care experienced adult and spoke honestly, reflecting on what went well, what could have been better and what needed to change. I am now a permanent member of the Care Leavers (CL) Forum, attending monthly and am an active contributor to the many discussions. For example, I have helped to:

- Design literature
- Commented on our mental health and education strategy.
- Regional and local care offer for care leavers

Most of all I have been able to forge new relationships and make new friends with many other young people who attend the Forum. It's nice to be with people who have the same experiences as you, you know you're not alone." I even get the chance to be on the interview panel for new staff in Children Services!

Overtime, my confidence has grown. And I am engaging in professional discussions with candidates and considering the voice of children and young people in everything we do.

- "My confidence grew so much being on the panel, I knew what I wanted to hear as a person doing the interview, so it helped me to answer the questions when it was me doing it."
- I never even used to ask the questions, now I can ask all of them." I now have a job but continue to be an active participator within the group and continue to share my experiences with other young people.
- I know what it was like and what would have helped me."

I am now living independently which is great news and looking forward to making plans for the future. I will be developing my skills and further training to become an advocate/mentor for children in care.

Quotes from children and young people when asked the following questions:

How do you feel participation has changed and is your voice is being heard?

- We have a voice.

- You can see staff trying their hardest to change
- We feel listened to
- We're being heard.
- Feels like we're being more appreciated now than we used to

How do you feel about people at home?

- We get on well.
- They love me.
- We have fun together.
- I feel safe with them.
- They're always there for me.
- They understand me.



What is going well in your life?

- My friends.
- My family.
- My hobbies/activities.
- Where I live.
- My care plans.



What is the best way to help me?

- Don't embarrass me.
- Be respectful to me.
- Get to know me.
- Ask me what I need!
- Treat me as an individual.
- Help me understand what is expected.
- Listen to my views.

Public health – Our Substance Misuse Service

Case Study- Child B's experience: here is my personal journey.

Child B is aged 17 years old

He was initially referred to the substance advice service when he was 16 for a Youth Alcohol and Drugs Diversion (YADD) issued by Avon and Somerset Police. He had been found with a small amount of an illegal drug during a stop and search.

Child B was vulnerable, had a diagnosis of dyslexia and clearly needed further assessment around his learning needs. He also was a heavy cannabis user, smoking daily. His life was complex, he had a difficult relationship with his mother, witnessed domestic violence and was removed into Foster Care for one year. On his return home his mother withdrew him from Education at the age of 11, preferring home education as an option. During this time,

he continued to smoke cannabis. A full assessment was undertaken, and he completed his drugs and engagements work, but subsequently did not respond to follow up calls.

A year later Child B has engaged with the Substance Advice Service following an unsettled period when he was staying with inappropriate people and exposing himself to future risks. He had started to deal in drugs. He had also started using MDMA in addition to cannabis.

Positive outcomes

Recently Child B's mum agreed to attend a joint meeting with the service and agreed to a further social care referral around his housing needs and contextual safeguarding risks. Child B has now been assessed by children's social care and has a Child in Need plan. He has met with a housing officer who has previously housed his older siblings.

Education, Health, and Social Needs

Education, Health and Speech and Language difficulties are now being addressed.

Child B's relationship with his worker at SAS has strengthened significantly. He remains engaged with his SAS program, now attending appointments regularly and face to face. He has completed a psychosocial intervention related to his drug use and responds well to motivational interviewing. He has also worked on harm reduction techniques. He is making some very positive steps forward. His cannabis use has reduced, and he has stopped using MDMA.

He has now received support to apply for benefits and no longer needs to sell drugs for financial gain. He is on the waiting list for accommodation. Following intervention, Child B's mother is offering some more support now too.

Ongoing support will continue despite the challenges. He has made great progress from our SAS interventions and his engagement is impressive.

Our Mental health Service

We have wellbeing practitioners in secondary schools running therapeutic interventions online and in person, which improve resilience and mental health and contribute to their safety and wellbeing for example [Mind Aid, Shameless, Resilience Lab](#).

Our future developments for next year

- Our mental health training will be expanding this next year
- Promoting five-to-thrive training for early years professionals
- Including dedicated training about self-harm,
- Establishing workshops for parents and school staff to support young people's mental health.

Our Alcohol Team

A new alcohol liaison worker is now embedded in Weston General Hospital, providing early intervention and referral to treatment services. Adults and our young people are also included into this service and can access treatment, advice and support.

What does our Data tell us?

From April 2022 to March 2023 the following data was collected:

- North Somerset's children and young people (0-17) population was 42,848
- 9,293 contacts were received, of which 654 were domestic violence contacts and 549 progressed to referral
- There were 1,024 referrals to Children's Support and Safeguarding of which 122 were re-referrals (new referral started within 12 months of a previous referral starting)
- There were 268 Children in Need (plans open at year end)
- 108 children with Child Protection Plans (open at year end) of whom the majority were on a plan due to neglect
- There was 36% of children on a child protection plan for a 2nd or subsequent time (of CPPs open at year end)
- There were 226 children in care (open at year end) of which 87 children started to be in care (during the year)
- There were 35 children recorded as at risk of sexual exploitation or as having been sexually exploited during the year
- There were 27 children recorded as at risk of criminal exploitation or as having been criminally exploited during the year
- There were 164 children that went missing during the year across 495 missing episodes

Local area Designated Officer (LADO) - Annual Report

This sets out the key findings from North Somerset's Local Area Designated Officer for Allegations (LADO), and activity using both data analysis and commentary between April 2019 to March 2020. [Read the LADO Annual report April 2022-2023 here.](#)

Child Death Overview Panel (CDOP) – Annual Report

North Somerset Safeguarding Children's Partnership remains a member of the West of England CDOP as it did as an LSCB. [Read the CDOP annual report 2022-2023 to learn more.](#)

Section 11 Audit 2022-2023

Section 11 was issued under the Children Act (2004) and has been reinforced in Working Together to Safeguard Children 2018. Section 11 places duties on a range of organisations and individuals to ensure their functions, and any services that they contract out to others, are discharged having regard to the need to safeguard and promote the welfare of children.

The five children's Partnerships across the Avon & Somerset Region worked together to audit organisations working with children and families.

The audits took place via a series of peer review workshops and the findings and learning were merged into one report across the children's partnerships in Bristol, Somerset, North Somerset, Bath & North-East Somerset and South Gloucestershire. North Somerset undertook reviews with Sirona Care & YMCA.

Partnership Priorities

- Embed the learning from National and local Child Safeguarding Reviews across all agencies
- Strengthen the Partnership governance and accountability and resourcing arrangements
- Accelerate our work on updating our website
- Refresh and embed best practice on neglect across the Partnership
- Work in collaboration with our Safeguarding Adults Partner on joint key priorities such as communication and engagement and transitional safeguarding.



Children and Young People’s Services Policy and Scrutiny Panel Work Programme October 2023

(to be updated following each Panel meeting)

The Panel will consider issues of significant public concern, areas of poor performance and areas where Members think the Council could provide better value for money. This is a “live” document and is subject to change as priorities or circumstances change.

Section One – planned panel working groups.

Topic	Reason for scrutiny	Method of scrutiny and reporting process	Timeline	Progress	Contact
School Organisation Steering Group	1. In-depth investigations of proposed school changes 2. Pupil Projections – methodology as applied generally and in particular in respect of new builds, including affordable housing 3. Admission Arrangements	Steering Group Corporate Aim: Promoting lifelong learning opportunities Key issues for the public To include Education Transformation	Varied, depending on work strand Ongoing - to meet as required. Regular reporting to Panel	Last meeting: 8SEP23	Sally Varley
Social Worker Recruitment	For assurance on the current position of the recruitment of social workers for Children’s Services	Working group; Report to 22 February 2024 CYPS Panel.	4 meetings end Feb24	First meeting 25OCT23	Matt Greenhalgh
Home to School Transport	Examination of the issues involved with Home to School transport	Joint working with TCC Panel, to start November 2023	3-4 meetings, to start NOV23		Gemma Dando
Children’s Mental Health	To examine some of the issues involved in the increase of children’s poor mental health	Joint working with HOSP; details TBC	Details TBC		Georgie MacArthur

Section Two – briefings, workshops, and informal panel meetings. Outcomes may, with Chairman’s agreement, generate panel agenda items (for inclusion in S3 below) or, with panel agreement, be escalated to S1 above:

Topic	Reason for scrutiny	Date	Outcome	Contact

Section Three - agenda reports to the Panel meetings as agreed by the Chairman. This section provides for the forward planning of agendas and a record of panel meeting activity.

CYPS 29 June 2023

Report Title	Purpose of Report	Outcome (actions)	Contact
Role, Remit and Work Plan of the CYPS Policy and Scrutiny Panel	To consider and agree the Panel’s Work Plan.	Working groups to be set up.	
Performance Monitoring	To note the performance information presented in this report and to give comment on both areas for improvement and areas of good performance.	Members comments collected.	
Ofsted Inspection Update	To note the outcome of the Ofsted Inspection March 2023 and the identified areas for improvement and plan.	Discussions around the areas of improvement.	
SEND Improvement Plan and the Safety Valve	To note the Council’s progress and commitments.	Members noted progress and provided comment	

CYPS 19 October 2023

Report Title	Purpose of Report	Outcome (actions)	Contact

SEND Self-Assessment	The Panel to note and comment on the SEND self-assessment.		
Adoption West Annual Report	To advise officers of any areas for further information.		
Children's Safeguarding Report	For the CYPS Panel to receive and comment on the Children's Safeguarding Board annual report		

CYPS 22 February 2024

Report Title	Purpose of Report	Outcome (actions)	Contact
Children's Services Annual Complaints and Compliments Report			
Children's Services Performance Monitor			
Children's Services Budget Monitor			

Section Five - Recommendations - Response from Executive Member

Area for investigation/ Recommendations	When were the recommendations to the Executive agreed?	Expect answer by (first panel meeting after recommendations were submitted)

Section Six - Progress and follow-up on implementing Panel recommendations

Panel Recommendation	Date of response	Actions – implementation progress

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