

# Public Document Pack

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**Date:** Wednesday, 3 March 2021

## **\*\*Virtual Meeting**

Dear Sir or Madam

### **The Children and Young People's Services Policy and Scrutiny Panel – Thursday, 11 March 2021, 10.00 am – Virtual Meeting via Microsoft Teams**

A meeting of the Children and Young People's Services Policy and Scrutiny Panel will take place as indicated above. Councillors will be sent a Teams Meeting invitation to place the meeting in their Calendar and can then access the meeting from the link in that calendar item.

**Please Note** that any member of the press and public may listen in to proceedings at this 'virtual' meeting via the weblink below –

<https://youtu.be/v-i6G4sTWEQ>

The agenda is set out overleaf.

Yours faithfully

Assistant Director Governance and Monitoring Officer

To: Members of the Panel

#### **Councillors:**

Wendy Griggs (Chairman), Steve Hogg (Vice-Chairman), Mark Aplin, Steve Bridger, Caroline Cherry, Ciaran Cronnelly, Mark Crosby, Hugh Gregor, Ann Harley, Nicola Holland, Ruth Jacobs, Huw James, Lisa Pilgrim, Timothy Snaden and Richard Westwood.

**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 - The Parent Carer Forum in North Somerset)  
Vacancies: North Somerset Youth Parliament

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

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## **Agenda**

### **1. Addresses by Members of the Public (ESO 6 as amended by SO 5A)**

To receive written submissions from any person who wishes to address the Committee. The Chairman will select the order of the matters to be received.

Please ensure that any submissions meet the required time limits and would take no longer than five minutes to read out.

Requests and full statements must be submitted to the Assistant Director Governance and Monitoring Officer, or to the officer mentioned at the top of this agenda letter, by noon on the day before the meeting and the request must detail the subject matter of the address.

### **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 meeting in respect of a declaration, he or she should ensure that the Chairman 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 5 - 18)**

Panel Meeting – 29 October 2020, to approve as a correct record (attached)

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

### **6. SEND Action Plan Update Report (Pages 19 - 58)**

### **7. SEND Presentation & Q&A Session (Pages 59 - 64)**

### **8. Children's Improvement Focus Group Feedback**

### **9. Corporate Parenting Report (Pages 65 - 74)**

### **10. Executive Member Report - The 2021-2022 Budget - What does it Mean for our Children?**

### **11. Month 9 Children's Services Budget Monitor (Pages 75 - 86)**

### **12. Performance Monitoring Report (Pages 87 - 104)**

### **13. Panel's Work Plan (Pages 105 - 118)**

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## **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.

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



## Minutes

of the Virtual Meeting of the

## Children & Young People Services Policy & Scrutiny Panel

**Thursday 29 October 2020**

held via Microsoft Teams

Meeting Commenced: 10.00 am Meeting Concluded: 11:20 am

### Councillors:

P Wendy Griggs (Chairman)  
A Steve Hogg (Vice Chairman)

Marc Aplin  
P Ciarán Cronnelly  
Hugh Gregor  
P Nicola Holland  
P Huw James  
A Lisa Pilgrim  
Tim Snaden

P Caroline Cherry  
A Mark Crosby  
Ann Harley  
Ruth Jacobs  
A Stuart McQuillan  
P Geoff Richardson  
A Richard Westwood

P: Present

A: Apologies for absence submitted

**Other Councillors in attendance:** Catherine Gibbons

**Officers in attendance:** Carolann James, Dawn Newton, Sheila Smith, Sally Varley (People and Communities) Michèle Chesterman, Mike Riggall, Katherine Sokol (Corporate Services)

**Other persons in attendance:** None

### CAY Chairman's Welcome 09

The Chairman welcomed everyone to this virtual Children and Young People's Policy and Scrutiny Panel meeting.

She explained the procedures to be followed at the meeting and confirmed that proceedings would have the same standing and validity as if they had taken place at a physical meeting of the Community and Corporate Organisation Policy and Scrutiny Panel meeting in the Town Hall.

The Chairman reminded everyone that the meeting was being livestreamed on the internet and that a recorded version would be available to view within 48 hours on the North Somerset Council website.

The Chairman thanked everybody who had been working with children and young people over these terrible times - officers and councillors and everyone in the community. It was noted that there had been a huge step up to support everyone in the community including North Somerset's children and young people.

At the invitation of the Chairman a roll call was taken of the Panel members by Democratic Services for the benefit of those in attendance and members of the public watching the meeting online.

**CAY 10      Declarations of Disclosable Pecuniary Interest (Agenda item 3)**

None.

**CAY 11      Minutes of the Meeting held on 18 June 2020 (Agenda item 4)**

**Resolved:** that the minutes of the last meeting held on 18 June 2020 be approved as a correct record.

**CAY 12 Children's Improvement Plan: Scrutiny of the Children's Improvement Plan (Agenda Item 6 (1))**

The Chairman presented the report. Following the publication of the Ofsted report in June 2020 and its presentation to the Children and Young People Services Policy and Scrutiny Panel on 18 June 2020, it was agreed that a sub group would be set up to scrutinise the Action Plan that the Authority was required to submit to Ofsted by 17 September 2020. The task and finish group had sight of the report and met to provide their comments/views to officers. There was a subsequent discussion between the Chairman and the Director in which it was agreed that the sub group should continue beyond the submission of the Action Plan because the Department for Education (DfE) had advised that it was concerned as to why North Somerset continued to 'require improvement to be good.'

It was reported that following the discussion with representatives from the Department for Education (DfE) it was agreed that the current Quality and Performance Board (chaired by the Chief Executive and attended by the Leader, the Lead Member for Children's Services and officers) should be broadened to include representatives from partner agencies, DfE colleagues, North Tyneside (North Somerset's Partner in Practice) and the Authority's newly appointed DfE adviser.

Members were informed that officers worked on the necessary governance arrangements and also held discussions with the Chair of CYPS Scrutiny and colleagues from the Local Government Association (LGA). Two key points had emerged: firstly that the sub group needed to progress from being a Task and Finish group to becoming a longer-term group focused at a strategic level on scrutinising the delivery of the Children's Improvement Plan and as such it was suggested that the group be renamed the Children's Improvement Focus Group. The second point was a recognition that in order to fulfil such a role Members needed some peer support, via the LGA, from colleagues who had been on a similar journey.

The Chairman thanked officers for the work being undertaken on the Improvement Plan which included liaising with the Local Government Authority (LGA) and the Department of Education (DfE). Members were informed that the task and finish group had looked at the past improvement plan and the current one and it was hoped that an LGA advisor would be joining the task and finish group and also attend the CYPS Panel in the near future to assist with scrutiny.

**Concluded:**

(1) that the Panel receive and comment on the report in relation to the Scrutiny of the Children's Improvement Plan;

(2) that the Panel agree that the sub group progressed from being task and finish to become a longer-term group focused at a strategic level on scrutinising the delivery of the Children's Improvement Plan and renamed the Children's Improvement Group;

(3) that the Panel agree the input of the Local Government Association in supporting the work of the Children's Improvement Focus Group.

**CAY 13 Children's Improvement Plan: Key Priorities in our Children's Improvement Plan (Agenda Item 6 (2))**

The Interim Assistant Director Children's Services and Safeguarding presented the report. The key priorities within the Children's Improvement Plan were highlighted to Members. They were listed as the Front Door to Children's Services; Early Help; Performance and Quality Assurance; Corporate Parenting Panel. The Plan had been developed and agreed through the Partnership Children's Improvement Board and subsequently submitted to Ofsted in September 2020 following the required improvement grading from Ofsted in March 2020.

Members were informed that the Front Door to Children's Services referred to anyone who had a worry or concern about a child, in whatever level of need, presenting to one front door. It included designing and implementing the effective front door to Children's Services, working alongside police and education partners and Partner in Practice, North Tyneside; ensuring clear pathways to effective support for children, young people and their families; ensuring clear understanding across all partners of the Continuum of Needs/Thresholds; ensuring improved quality of referrals from partner agencies into the front door; ensuring that children and their families received the right help at the right time and that help to children and their families was provided at the earliest opportunity. It was anticipated that a 'first version' of an effective front door would be designed and implemented by the end of January 2021.

Early help referred to how children and young people were supported and helped as problems emerged and escalated. Engagement took place with partners across the statutory and voluntary sectors with the aim of helping those families and children of families where there were needs, at the earliest opportunity, and to stop any escalation where it was safe to do so. Members were informed that work was being undertaken to further develop and implement the North Somerset Partnership Early Help Offer which was currently stronger in the 0-5 age range. Efforts were in place to ensure that the focus was on the needs of those in North Somerset (which would be in line with the national picture in some areas and more specific to North Somerset in other areas). It was anticipated that by the end of January 2021 a stronger early help offer would be identified. The report described some of the tasks to achieve that.

Members noted that the performance and quality assurance framework within Children's Services would be refreshed and an effective quality assurance system would be updated and introduced by December 2020. The report compared North Somerset to the national picture and statistical neighbours in terms of size and population. As part of this process there would be regular reporting to the Panel on the performance and quality assurance framework.



Members were informed that as corporate parents for children in care and care leavers it was vital to ensure that a strong and vibrant Corporate Parenting Panel (CPP) was in place to meet the needs of those children and young people. Therefore, a priority in the Improvement Plan was to refresh and review the membership, structure and format of North Somerset's CPP to enable the Authority's children and young people to be active members of the Panel and ensure that the Panel held the Children's agenda as a priority within the Council and its partners. The process had already started with a commitment for the CPP to meet more frequently and to ensure children and young people were actively involved by making the children's agenda was forefront. More changes would be introduced prior to the next meeting of the CPP in December 2020.

Members' attention was drawn to the fact that the Health and Overview Scrutiny Panel (HOSP) would be hosting a meeting on 17 November 2020 at 9.00 am with Avon and Wiltshire Mental Health Trust in relation to children's mental health. All CYPS Panel members were invited to attend.

The Interim Assistant Director, Children's Services and Safeguarding responded to a question in relation to the Needs Assessment and children's mental health. Members noted that the emotional wellbeing of children and families was of concern nationally in addition to locally in North Somerset and that these concerns had increased. North Somerset was working closely with health partners to identify the concerns and via the needs analysis identify the steps necessary to address them. As part of the Early Help Offer and in conjunction with voluntary and other partners a directory was being published which would contain contact information and details of services currently available. It would cover areas such as emotional wellbeing, mental health, substance misuse, parenting support etc.

Members were informed that services were available nationally and locally for children and families in North Somerset to access but knowledge of these services was not widely held or easily accessible. Work of the work being carried out with colleagues in health was around making sure the pathways were accessible, effective and well understood. In Early Help and in the Children's Social Care area work was being carried out with children and families to ensure wrap around support was available. The Interim Director, Children's Services and Safeguarding offer to provide any other information as required by the Panel.

Efforts were being made to build emotional wellbeing support into schools as an Early Help offer through working with health services. Strength and difficulty (emotional wellbeing) questionnaires were undertaken with children in care and care leavers. This work took place with children and young people on a regular basis and was an element of the needs analysis.

**Concluded:** that the Panel receive the report and note the priorities outlined

**CAY 14      Expansion of Ravenswood Special, Nailsea (Agenda Item 7)**

The Service Leader, Strategic Planning and Governance, presented the report on the Expansion of Ravenswood Special School Nailsea. The report sought the Panel's support to a consultation with the public and key stakeholders to expand Ravenswood Special School. Formal approval to progress a consultation would be sought from the Executive Member of Children's Services and Lifelong Learning with a final decision made by the Executive in April 2021.

Members were informed there was a projected increase in demand for all special school places across North Somerset and this included pupils with Moderate Learning Difficulties. This was due to demographic growth and an increase in the numbers of pupils with these learning characteristics.

Ravenswood Special School supported girls and boys aged 3 – 19 from across North Somerset with Autistic Spectrum Disorder; Speech, Language and Communication; Moderate Learning Difficulties, Severe Learning Difficulties, Visual Impairment needs and Social, Emotional and Mental Health.

Members were aware there were a range of consultations and changes in place to meet the needs of children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND). There was a live consultation with Baytree School but there had also been some good successes, for example an ASD hub opened at Nailsea School in September 2020 for 10 children with high functioning with autism. A consultation was also currently live in connection with Mendip Green Primary School for a hub for high functioning children with autism. In addition, infant and sixth form provision had now opened at Westhaven Special School.

It was reported that this was a continuation of the need to provide more special educational needs places. An opportunity had arisen because some facilities had become available in Nailsea, adjacent to the Ravenswood School Site, to enable the school to have some extra accommodation to increase capacity. It was hoped to extend the school's capacity from between 112 and 119 places, depending on the needs of the children in the school, to 140 or 150 places.

It was enquired as to how many more spaces were needed to meet the needs of children with SEND. The overall demand was considerable. This was a small part of the journey to a much wider programme to meet the needs of children with SEND in North Somerset. One of the issues was that the Authority was not supplied with any capital funding for SEND which had been raised with the DfE. The concern was that there were over 200 children accessing education outside North Somerset and the numbers were increasing. The aim was to try to bring those children back into North Somerset and provide provision locally of a high standard that meets the needs of the district's children and young people.

The Service Leader, Strategic Planning and Governance responded to a question from a member in relation to a public footpath in the area and whether it would be remaining or if it was possible to divert it. It had not been possible to date but if there were further wider reviews of the site this would be investigated.

Whilst discussing the report a Member referred to Section 8.2 on page 9:

*In expanding current schools, the Council must be mindful not to compromise the educational opportunities available to pupils prior to the expansion. The school will need to manage increases in pupils and staff numbers. Having new staff can bring benefits of wider experience and expertise that can be available to all the pupils.*

The member was aware that the library had closed at closed Ravenswood to accommodate more pupils and asked how this had affected the experience of the young people at the school.

The Service Leader Strategic Planning and Governance informed Members that prior to the pandemic surveys had been undertaken at Westhaven and Ravenswood to ascertain the number of children that could be satisfactorily educated in those schools without compromising the education of other children. The Authority did not want to allocate places if it resulted in the existing children at the school not having the experience and education they needed. The reason why the report gave a range of pupils (140–150) was that the Authority was working with the Headteacher and consultant to ascertain how many children could be satisfactorily educated at Ravenswood Special School. It was hoped that this work could be carried out during the consultation period prior to the Executive meeting in April 2021.

The Authority was using a basis known as BB104 (a building bulletin provided by the government) that gave the range of physical capacity that should be available to enable children to be able to reach their potential within the school buildings that they were in. Work was also being undertaken to ensure the actual capacity and the facilities at Ravenswood were fit for purpose for the numbers of children. That was the reason why there was a request for a small amount of money to be able to undertake some internal modifications to ensure the right facilities were in place for all the children that would be there for part of the increase in capacity.

The Chairman thanked the Service Leader, Strategic Planning and Governance for the report and Members agreed it was excellent that the Authority was expanding its capacity to take on special school places and confirmed their support.

**Concluded:** that the Panel supported the expansion consultation for Ravenswood Special School.

## Month 5 Children's Services Budget Monitor (Agenda Item 8)

The Finance Business Partner presented the report outlining the spend against budget for children's services. The report summarised and discussed the 2020/21 forecast spend against budget for children's services, highlighting key variances, movements and contextual information. It provided further details on the month 5 report presented to the Executive on 21 October 2020. The report also made reference to the principles and outcomes associated with the setting of the 2021/22 budget. It was acknowledged that the pandemic had had a very significant impact across all directorates of the Council but particularly Children's Services. Overall projected overspend was just over £1.5 m. Nearly 80% of that was related to the COVID-19 pandemic. Much of that related to income losses and some additional social care costs and some MTFP savings that might not be delivered partly because of capacity.

Members' attention was drawn to the table on page 2 of the report which highlighted the main areas where a forecast overspend was being reported. With regards Placements for Looked after Children despite showing an overspend the forecast spend was only around £117k more which was not a bad position in light of placement numbers, inflation and cost pressures.

With regards disabled children's placements around 55% of the £597k overspend was estimated to be COVID related, mainly driven by young people requiring more significant social care support during the pandemic, especially those not attending school. There were two areas that related to losses of income. Members noted the Early Birds nursery relied on income from private fee-paying parents which had not been forthcoming during the early part of 2020 and to an extent for the remainder of the financial year. This also applied to the music service where the income from schools for music tuition had been foregone for much of the early part of 2020. Although the Authority had been able to recoup part of that due to the Coronavirus job retention furlough scheme.

Members were made aware of a large deficit carried forward from the last financial year in the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) and an increase was forecasted largely due to placements of children out of area. The commissioning strategy in relation to SEND was vital in relation to managing the deficit in the DSG.

The Chairman thanked the Business Finance Officer for the report.

**Concluded:** that the Panel receive and discuss the 2020/21 forecast spend against budget for children's services and the risks and opportunities associated with the medium-term position.

**CAY 16 Performance Monitoring (Agenda Item 9)**

The Interim Assistant Director, Children's Services and Safeguarding presented the report. The CYPs Panel received regular performance management reports to help Members evaluate the extent to which the Council and its partners achieved key plans and objectives for children and young people's services and provided appropriate challenge and suggestions to improve performance.

This report presented the following standard items: any recent Ofsted inspections of council services; an analysis of the performance of the relevant Key Corporate Performance Indicators (KCPIs) for Quarter 1 2020/21, that fell under the remit of the Panel; an overview of the performance of various Key Service Measures for Support and Safeguarding services within the council.

A more interactive format would be available for the next report to the Panel meeting on 11 March 2021 to assist Members to understand the direction of travel, whether positive or negative, and actions being instigated.

Members were informed that there had been four inspections related to North Somerset Council services and / or North Somerset schools that were carried out since the last report to the panel and published on the Ofsted website. Services and / or schools were graded either 'Outstanding', 'Good', 'Requires Improvement' or 'Inadequate'.

Members were advised that at the end of Quarter 1 there were 227 looked after children, this equated to a rate of 52.5 children per 10,000 which was lower than the national rate but a little above the district's statistical neighbours. It was noted that of the 227 children 12 were unaccompanied asylum-seeking children.

Care Leavers in suitable accommodation had ranged between 80% and 95% over the last three years seeing a sustained rate of 94% and above over the past 12 months. This compared favourably against the most recent statistical neighbour and national averages of 84% and 85%. Members were encouraged to hear that work had been undertaken and was ongoing to ensure that young people were in regulated high-quality placements which met their needs.

The council had a responsibility to continue to help and support a number of young people that were previously in their care. Key areas of support were in housing and accommodation and employment and education. At the end of Quarter 1 2020/21, 42% of the care leavers aged 17-21 years (56 out of 132) were in employment, education or training (EET). This was a noticeable decrease as the rate had been around 50% for the past three years, which was in line with statistical neighbours and national figures.

An update was provided in Members in relation to care leavers who were not in education, employment or training (NEET). A needs analysis had been carried out in conjunction with colleagues in the Virtual School, the School Inclusion Service, 16 plus support plus within Children's Services. The aim

being to examine what was being done currently and what could be done differently to improve the situation utilising best practice from other LAs.

Members noted that Child Protection numbers were low. All the children open to Children's Services had been reviewed to ensure that the right children were being worked with and that they were in the right place. North Somerset had 85 children in need who were at the level of need that required the level of statutory intervention.

Members welcomed the fact that the numbers of foster carers in the district was increasing and plans were in place to increase them further still in 2021. Members agreed that it was much better for North Somerset's children and young people to be placed closer to home. In addition, efforts were being made to enhance the skills and experience of foster carers to enable them to foster more complex children which would mean they would not have to be placed outside the area.

Members were informed that nearly two thirds (62% at the end of Quarter 1 2020/21) of North Somerset's looked after children lived in foster care. Other placement types included children's homes, supportive hostels and adoption placements. As at Quarter 1 2020/21 33.9% of looked after children were placed with North Somerset foster carers. At the end of Quarter 1 2020/21, 37% of children were placed outside of North Somerset. The Authority was working hard to ensure that there were more in-house foster carers. Unfortunately, a high proportion (63.5%) of children looked after by agency foster carers were outside North Somerset but as many are on the borders and accessible to the Authority. Wherever the child was placed they were visited, reviewed and managed by the Children's Services.

Members were provided with an update on work being carried out in relation to missing children and were advised that future reporting would be slightly different. During Quarter 1 2020/21, there had been 116 episodes of children going missing which related to 48 children. Of these, 18 were children looked after. The number of children looked after going missing had remained at 18 for the second consecutive quarter. The work involved looking at children missing from home, care and school working with partner colleagues in health and the police. There would be robust monitoring of children from outside North Somerset who were placed in the district either in family situations or care situations. Efforts were in place to ensure the Authority knew who these children were. Future reports to Panel would include information relating to the cohort and what action the Authority was taking. The Panel would be supplied with more in-depth information about each episode breaking them down into how many nights, length of time etc.

Members were provided with information on work being undertaken in relation to contextualised safeguarding covering county lines, PREVENT (radicalisation), child sexual exploitation, child at risk of criminal exploitation and missing children. Research in Practice was being funded by the DfE to support authorities with developing contextualised safeguarding. This would involve a trainer working with Council staff and North Somerset schools to help them work directly with young people through St Giles Trust to understand and identify risks.

Whilst discussing care leavers not in education, employment or training (NEET) a member asked if the Authority had considered the Kickstart Scheme to see if there was any support that might be available for care leavers. The Interim Director, Children's Services and Safeguarding noted that this was one of the areas that was currently being considered. A further update would be available to the Panel meeting on 11 March 2021. It was noted that a preliminary meeting with the Council's youth champions and the team who dealt with skills. The Council would be actively working to make sure that North Somerset's care leavers were provided with opportunities within the Council possibly as internships or work experience. With the wider community a consultation would be carried out and hopefully a question and answer session on Facebook where young people would be able to talk to the Youth Champions and anybody else who felt they could provide input.

In terms of mentoring for care leavers whilst there was not a mentoring scheme for care leavers per se 'Junction 21' was available and accessible for young people. There was also a mentoring/coaching scheme through the High Impact Families but that was broader and more focussed on families. The Authority was considering mentoring along with other initiatives in developing some new aspects to its services and there were discussions taking place with schools.

In response to a question in relation to older students such as sixth formers acting as peer mentors it was reported that many schools had such schemes. St Giles Trust worked with younger people who had lived experience. The Executive Member for Children's Services and Lifelong learning noted that previously via the Children's Champion Panel a number of councillors had been involved in the mentoring scheme. She added that perhaps it was a matter of raising its profile and getting more people involved. In terms of peer mentoring that was something that had been discussed at one of the meetings held with school leaders. In terms of care leavers some of the local university students could be involved as mentors.

Members were concerned that with lockdown there had been an increase in domestic violence and its impact on children and asked what steps would be taken to monitor domestic abuse, its impact on children and their education including any work with schools. There had been ongoing conversations with the police about screening domestic abuse. The needs analysis for the Children's Improvement Plan included domestic abuse as it was a key feature that affected the cohort open to social services along with mental health and substance misuse. Linked to this was the Domestic Abuse Strategy and the work that needed to be undertaken with children and young people and schools. Work was being undertaken to develop some of the perpetrators groups and to reduce parental conflict.

Members expressed thanks to the Interim Assistant Director of Children's Services and Safeguarding and were pleased with the progress made.

**Concluded:** that the Panel receive the performance information presented in the report and comment on both areas for improvement and areas of good improvement.

## **CAY     The Panel's Work Plan (Agenda item 10)**

**17**

The Democratic and Electoral Services Officer provided an update on the Panel's work plan.

It was reported that a briefing session on 0-19 Public Health Nursing Procurement was scheduled to take place on 17 November 2020 at 1.00 pm via Teams to provide an update to the CYPS and HOSP Panels on the process of procurement. The session would provide an opportunity for both panels to contribute their views regarding the design of the service.

Members were also informed that a revised format for the work plan had been developed with the idea that it should be used by all Panels to provide a uniform approach. Health Overview and Scrutiny Panel was the only panel currently using the new format. It would provide for forward planning of agendas for the coming year and would be a useful record of panel activity.

With regards Home to School Transport (HTST) a steering group had been established including the leader and chief executive of the Council. An improvement plan was being considered to re-build confidence in HTST. An investigation was being set up to look at systems, decisions, resources, safeguarding, data management and leadership of the service. The working group was to meet regularly and provide a briefing for all members in January 2021. Members noted that currently 2600 pupils were transported across 170 routes. Parenting groups were part of the working group and there had been attempts to involve everyone who had an interest in HTST.

The Director of People and Communities drew Members' attention to the Bright Spot Survey presentation. Carried out during lockdown, the survey with all the district's young people in care recorded their experiences on what was working well and what needed to be improved. It would take place via Zoom on 10 November 2020 at 1.00 pm. Designated teachers and foster carers had been invited to attend to consider what the Authority needed to do to improve the situation for children in their care. It would be sent out to all members in their role as corporate parents.

### **Concluded:**

- (1) that the work plan be received and updated as agreed.
- (2) that the Panel establish a Youth Services and Youth Engagement Working group including the Youth Champions and any other interested CYPS Panel members.

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Chairman

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## North Somerset Council

### Report to the Children & Young People Policy & Scrutiny Panel

**Date of Meeting: 11 March 2021**

**Subject of Report: SEND Action Plan Update**

**Town or Parish: All**

**Officer/Member Presenting: Sheila Smith, Director of Children's Services**

**Key Decision: No**

### Recommendations

Members of the panel are recommended to:

- i. Note the update on the SEND Action Plan and the initial response to the LGA recommendations
- ii. Consider the highlights and risks identified
- iii. Identify any responses necessary via the Chair of the Panel, who sits on the SEND Programme Board

### 1. Summary of Report

The attached paper provides the panel with an update of progress on the SEND action plan, which was provided at the June 2020 meeting. This paper notes specific actions and risks, and grades each area of work as green, amber or red based on the risk. Finally, the recommendations of the recent LGA Peer Review and feedback from the Department for Education and NHS England are considered in terms of our current plans.

### 2. Policy

In devising a strategy for the delivery and improvement of services it is important to note that the Department for Education and Ofsted expect coordination and strategic oversight of services at a 'local area' level, including collaboration between statutory and non-statutory partners to ensure that services are delivered coherently and effectively across the education, health and care landscape. While the Local Authority is the commissioner and in some cases the provider of many of these services, it also assumes the primary role in terms of maintaining the strategic oversight and coordination of the local partnership.

The Strategy & Action Plan, along with other partnership activity is monitored by the [SEND Programme Board](#). This is chaired by the Director of Children's Services, and includes in its membership both Cllr Gibbons, Executive Member for Children and Young People's Services, and Cllr Griggs, Chair of this Scrutiny Panel. A proposed review of the Board's Terms of Reference in March 2021 will ensure that its work aligns with the Children's Improvement Plan.

### 3. Details

The SEND Action Plan was agreed by partners across the local area in January 2020 alongside our first joint SEND Strategy and Co-production charter. The aim of the plan was to provide an overall strategic view of the programme of work required to:

- Bring together all remaining actions required to meet the issues raised in the Ofsted/CQC Local Joint Area Review (LJAR)
- Detail further actions required to ensure that outcomes are sustainable, and that the impact of our work on the lives of children and young people can be demonstrated

The plan had a horizon of two years, with a review to be undertaken by the SEND Programme Board in early 2021 as per the attached document. It should be noted that each area of work was expected to be subject to more detailed delivery planning, including development of timescales, by partners.

Highlights of the work undertaken since the update in June 2020 include:

- The reduction in the rate of 'refused assessments' (which are often the result of inappropriate referrals by partners) from 50% to 6%
- The agreement to jointly fund the Supportive Parents SENDIAS service and North Somerset Parent Carers Working Together forum with BNSSG CCG on a three-year agreement, providing some certainty and sustainability for these key services.
- The use of accurate projections and analysis to ensure that capacity in key services was improved and capital projects supported
- A range of capital projects are now at various stages of positive progress: a second site for Baytree School's expansion, a new Free School supporting children with Social, Emotional and Mental Health Needs (SEMH) and hubs at mainstream schools to support children with Autistic Spectrum Conditions.
- Additional investment in CAMHS and forthcoming expansion of Off The Record pre-CAMHS services into North Somerset
- Relationships with parents and carers are improving, with considerable progress made in delivering new guidance documents
- Our Inclusion Summit took place in November 2020 and renewed a commitment to inclusion and mutual support across mainstream and special schools

Risks noted include:

- There is continued pressure in terms of increased assessment requests, EHC plans and requests for places in specialist provision – projections show this increase is set to continue
- The rate of EHC assessments delivered within the 20-week statutory timescale is recovering, but still low (16%) following issues with Educational Psychology capacity
- A significant number of the 'refused assessments' which we receive result from partners being unable to access CAMHS mental health services for children with anxiety and EHCPs being seen as a 'last resort' by schools.
- While the equity of health provision across the BNSSG footprint is improving and clearer leadership around SEND health services is in place, there are further actions needed to agree how complex care packages are jointly commissioned.
- Waiting lists for Autism assessment are still too long despite improvement, with parents reporting little support whilst on the journey to diagnosis
- Parents' confidence in home to school transport arrangements remains low following challenges in September 2020

- There is still some way to go in ensuring that parents are engaged in all decisions about services, and in particular to engage children and young people in co-production. Plans for this work have been heavily impacted by Covid-19
- Further improvements in the use of technology to support the EHC system need to be progressed, including funding the online EHCP portal.

#### **4. Consultation**

No specific consultation has taken place regarding this update, however a comprehensive co-production charter underpins this work. It is the aim of all partners to ensure that Children and Young People also have a voice in decisions about SEND services – and this work will progress when Covid-19 restrictions are eased.

#### **5. Financial Implications**

There are no specific implications arising from the adoption of this strategy and action plan. However, individual projects within the plan may result in specific financial changes which will be detailed as required.

#### **6. Legal powers and implications**

SEND services are delivered primarily by Local Authorities and Clinical Commissioning Groups via powers arising from the Children & Families Act 2014, further detailed in the SEND Code of Practice which was most recently revised in May 2020.

#### **7. Climate change and environmental implications**

None

#### **8. Risk management**

None

#### **9. Equality Implications**

Services for children with SEND, their parents and carers support specific vulnerable groups within the community. The strategy and action plan includes actions to ensure equitable, needs-led access to support services across education, health and care.

#### **10. Corporate Implications**

The majority of the activity included within the action plan requires action by Children's Services, or by our partners in schools and NHS bodies. Some cross-directorate and corporate activity may be required to support individual actions such as those requiring capital programme management or impacting on the work of the Integrated Transport Unit.

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**Appendices:**

SEND Action Plan Review (attached)

**Background Papers:**

- [Children & Families Act, 2014](#)
- [SEND Code of Practice 2015 \[revised May 2020\]](#)
- [North Somerset Local Area Written Statement of Action \[October 2018\]](#)

## North Somerset Local Area – SEND Programme Board Action Plan – Version 2

### Progress Review – February 2021

### Part 1 – Review of SEND Action Plan (Originally adopted in January 2020)

Area 1 - Identifying Needs				
What we will do?	How we will do it?	Who will lead delivery?	How will we monitor success?	Highlights & Issues
<p>1.1 We will ensure that sufficient SEND Officer and Education Psychology resource is made available to provide advice and support to schools and to enable timely EHCP assessments, enabling improved identification of children with SEND and assuring consistent access to high quality professional reports</p> <p><i>[Ref: Identification and EHCP assessments, MI report Autumn 2019 p3, para 1-6]</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>We will use SEND MI and projections to identify future requirements and build a case for investment</li> <li>We will explore opportunities for investment in technology and process efficiencies (<i>such as those in 4.1 below</i>) to release SEND team resource for operational tasks.</li> <li>We will investigate options for resourcing and commissioning EP services to meet in-year shortfall</li> <li>We will renegotiate the position with SSE to secure sufficient resource in future years</li> <li>We will monitor local rates of identification and assessment against national and regional benchmarks in order to inform our strategic approach</li> </ul>	<p>Wendy Packer, NSC</p> <p>-</p> <p>Head of Education Partnerships – TBA</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Sustained compliance with 20-week EHCP timescales despite capacity challenges</li> <li>Monitoring of waiting times, rate of assessment requests and assessment outcomes in regular SEND MI reporting</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>ECHP projection model has proved accurate and informed demand and expected service needs</li> <li>EP requirements analysed and provision increased for 2020/21.</li> <li>20-week performance beginning to recover post-EP shortage and associated Covid delays – but remains low at 16% (was 100% in 2019/20)</li> <li>LGA noted improved quality of more recently completed EHC assessments and plans</li> <li>Longer waiting times encourage parents to</li> </ul>

					seek private medical and education reports – these are costly, and can result in disputes later in the process and potentially tribunals. Monitoring of this will need to be undertaken jointly by NSC and BNSSG.
1.2	<p>We will reduce the time spent awaiting diagnosis on the autism pathway and will ensure that parents receive appropriate jointly commissioned support before and after diagnosis</p> <p><i>[Ref: ASD/SLCN need and SCAMP, MI report Autumn 2019 p5, para 10-11 &amp; Written Statement of Action, ASW2]]</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• We will ensure that the commissioned pathway provides a responsive service where possible, recognising that more complex diagnoses require a longer period of assessment</li> <li>• We will provide clear, accessible guidance to be published on the Local Offer website to enable parents to better understand the process and timescales involved in autism diagnosis.</li> <li>• We will investigate the possibility for joint commissioning of support services before and after diagnosis for young people and parents/carers eg. ASCEND</li> </ul>	Rachel Anthwal, BNSSG – Mike Newman, NSC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Monitoring of waiting times, referral rates and outcomes in regular SEND MI reporting</li> <li>• Evidence of delivery of practical advice and guidance to parents who are on the autism diagnosis pathway</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• SCAMP pathway waiting list reduced significantly, but process is still taking longer than expected.</li> <li>• Resources/programmes to support parents while on the pathway not currently in place – likely to require joint commissioning activity between CCG and NSC.</li> <li>• Significant parent feedback that they assumed a diagnosis was required to access short breaks and some early help support – comms and policies altered to make it clear this is not the case, and reinforced by elected members at 'meet the councillors' events.</li> </ul>
1.3	We will ensure that our Designated Clinical Officer (DCO) role has the capacity to be the key health point of contact and fully integrated into the	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• We will use SEND MI and projections to anticipate demand and plan DCO provision accordingly</li> </ul>	Jo Kapp, BNSSG	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sustained compliance with 20-week EHCP timescales despite capacity challenges</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Shared DCO in place and providing high quality of advice for EHCPs</li> </ul>



	<p>Education, Health and Care assessment, planning and support process bearing in mind the expected growth in demand for assessments and associated, advice and guidance</p> <p><i>[Ref: Identification and EHCP assessments, MI report Autumn 2019 p3, para 1-6 &amp; Written Statement of Action, ASW4.1]</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>We will regularly evaluate the quality of advice provided, including the accessibility of language to non-professionals, clarity of support proposed and use of SMART outcomes.</li> <li>We will reduce the impact of incomplete or inadequate advice on 'refusal to assess' figures</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Monitoring of 'refusal to assess' figures and analysis of reasons via regular SEND MI reporting</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>ADCO roles to begin operating shortly to further add capacity.</li> <li>LGA note improvement in quality of recent EHC assessments and Plans.</li> <li>Refusal to assess figure reduced very considerably (94% of requests led to assessment in 2020/21, vs c. 50% at time of LJAR). Analysis has indicated that 40% of remaining refusals resulted from inappropriate referrals where CAMHS services weren't available.</li> </ul>
1.4	<p>We will address the issues around joint therapy provision in North Somerset including the responsibility and funding for the increasing rates of assessments required for EHCP purposes e.g. Speech &amp; Language and Occupational Therapy</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>We will use the opportunity presented by the change in provider of Specialist Children's Health Services to clarify the scope of services currently commissioned.</li> <li>We will review the level of resource currently deployed by North Somerset Council in purchasing individual specialist assessments, and where appropriate and cost-effective, divert this to jointly commission the Specialist Children's Health Services provider to deliver these services where appropriate.</li> </ul>	<p>Rachel Anthwal, BNSSG - Wendy Packer, NSC</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Sustained compliance with 20-week EHCP timescales despite capacity challenges</li> <li>Evidence of clear processes and responsibilities for specialist assessments</li> <li>Reduction in cost of provision of specialist assessments via improved aligned and joint planning and commissioning</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>While transfer of contract has seen improvement in service and increased parents' satisfaction, the scope of services is still not fully clear, with some issues needing case-by-case resolution.</li> <li>We have reviewed the cost of outsourced assessments used to expedite assessments but not yet been able to determine how these relate to the CCG's commissioned service</li> </ul>

	[Ref: Written Statement of Action, ASW2 & 6]				<p>due to the scope issue above.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Review of commissioned SALT &amp; OT services ongoing – following Covid-related delays and transfer to new community health provider.</li> </ul>
1.5	We will support all schools to use their resources to the best effect in supporting children with additional needs, maintaining access to mainstream school wherever appropriate, and ensuring that schools use our Graduated Response effectively.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>We will promote the Graduated Response and offer training to all schools on their responsibilities</li> <li>We will review the top-up funding policy and process to ensure it remains equitable, supportive and adequate to meet needs in mainstream schools.</li> <li>We will engage with the Strategic Schools Forum to ensure a collective approach to supporting children with SEND is aligned with funding priorities</li> <li>We will support parents to understand, engage with and challenge schools to ensure that needs are identified and met appropriately</li> <li>We will reduce the impact of poor quality or premature referrals, and of incomplete or inadequate advice, on 'refusal to assess' figures</li> </ul>	Anthony Webster, NSC - Head of Education Partnerships – TBA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Monitoring of the use and impact of top-up funding on outcomes, attendance and attainment</li> <li>Monitoring of refusal to assess figures and reasons via regular SEND MI reporting</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Inclusion summit held in November 2020 – clear commitment to shared way forward, and impacts in terms of joint work on exclusions becoming apparent.</li> <li>Inappropriate EHCP requests from schools reducing as evidenced by reduced refusal to assess (see 1.3 above) though lack of CAMHS support remains a key issue.</li> <li>Guidance issued to schools on graduated response. Co-produced guidance also designed for parents and young people and regarded as excellent practice by DfE advisor.</li> <li>SENDIAS service using CDC funding to trial a post supporting parents of children with SEND in mainstream schools</li> </ul>

					<p>to ensure their needs are met without escalating to EHC plan. Opportunity for NSC and BNSSG to joint fund this in 2022 if trial proves effective.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Recruitment of key posts (Head of Education Partnerships, SEN High Needs Officer) critical to progress – both now underway</li> </ul>
Area2 - Meeting Needs					
	<b>What we will do?</b>	<b>How we will do it?</b>	<b>Who will lead?</b>	<b>How will we monitor success?</b>	<b>Highlights &amp; Issues</b>
2.1	<p>We will improve access and reduce waiting times for treatment in Specialist CAMHS</p> <p>[Ref: SEMH needs and CAMHS, MI report Autumn 2019 p5, para 8-9 &amp; Written Statement of Action, ASW4.2]</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>We will introduce an electronic patient record system to provide accurate patient and service metrics e.g. referral volumes and waiting times, and to improve the sharing of reports and information between professionals</li> <li>We will ensure commissioned mental health services provide a quality and timely service by embedding best practice across BNSSG area, prioritising staffing challenges, and improving communication with young people and their families</li> <li>We will further develop and maintain clear links between our Specialist CAMHS service, and other local services and voluntary sector partners</li> </ul>	<p>Jackie Shortman – Rachel Anthwal, BNSSG</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Monitoring of waiting times, referral volumes and proportion of cases accepted via regular SEND MI reporting</li> <li>Monitoring of performance of Urgent Care team</li> <li>Evidence of development of local multi-agency offer of support via Future in Mind group</li> <li>Evidence of clear, appropriately differentiated materials to support parents, carers and young people at point of transition</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>CAMHS quality of service and waiting times remain a key concern – anxiety and unmet MH needs account for 40% of inappropriate EHC requests.</li> <li>Concern that post-Covid demand will overwhelm services.</li> <li>Urgent care team in place and active.</li> <li>Off the Record 'pre-CAMHS' early intervention service to begin operating in NSC</li> </ul>

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>We will improve urgent access to care via a dedicated team, providing rapid responses to CYP at high risk of harm</li> <li>We will develop pathways and resources to support parents, carers and young people who are facing a transition from children's to adults' mental health services</li> </ul>			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>CAMHS electronic patient record system in place enabling improved understanding of waiting times and pressures.</li> <li>Bid for MHSTs in schools submitted by BNSSG with NSC support.</li> </ul>
2.2	<p>We will ensure equitable and timely access to high quality specialist therapies, providing a clear pathway and service offer and meeting NICE guidelines in terms of delivery time.</p> <p><i>[Ref: Written Statement of Action, ASW2.12]</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>We will ensure that the transition to a new provider of specialist children's health services runs smoothly, and that parents and carers are fully informed and reassured regarding change.</li> <li>We will continue to monitor demand and waiting times to ensure that the service is meeting local needs.</li> <li>We will ensure that the Local Offer reflects changes in provision, access and clear pathways of support for all therapies</li> </ul>	Rachel Anthwal, BNSSG	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Monitoring of referral rates, waiting times and service performance in regular SEND MI reporting</li> <li>Evidence of engagement of parents, carers and children in managing change to new provider</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Waiting times for therapies generally improved.</li> <li>Transfer to new provider has been relatively smooth and welcomed by most parents. Use of online appointments has been very successful during Covid-19</li> <li>Sirona Care &amp; Health have agreed to sign the Co-production Charter, committing them to working with parents.</li> <li>Local Offer updated, with commitment from Sirona to maintain information.</li> <li>Positive parent response at NSPCWT 'meet the health commissioner' event</li> </ul>

2.3	<p>We will deliver a comprehensive, coordinated short-breaks offer, working across sectors and neighbouring areas to ensure a rich, varied and valued range of support is available to families.</p> <p><i>[Ref: Written Statement of Action, ASW6.7, Local Offer – You Said We Did Issues 1-3]</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• We will meet regularly as a group of providers and commissioners across the statutory and voluntary sectors to plan and coordinate the short breaks offer</li> <li>• We will agree a strategy for promoting activities to parents to ensure choice and transparency in bookings</li> <li>• We will work with neighbouring Local Areas to ensure that parents living near boundaries can access appropriate local opportunities</li> <li>• We will use the new electronic Disabled Children's Register to target information to those most likely to benefit from short break opportunities</li> </ul>	Gail Smith, NSC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Number of short break activities advertised via Local Offer calendar function</li> <li>• Parent/carer and CYP feedback on range of short breaks available and activities attended</li> <li>• Reciprocal arrangements in place with Bristol, B&amp;NES and Somerset local areas for cross-boundary access</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Considerable Covid-related impacts on this work as many facilities have closed, however cross-LA work continues.</li> <li>• Increased participation of parents/carers in short breaks offer</li> <li>• Trial of alternative plans, eg. DCT hiring soft-play centre for exclusive use.</li> <li>• Electronic DCR in place and in use.</li> <li>• Emerging need for a secure play area in WSM noted and supported by elected members.</li> </ul>
2.4	<p>We will develop robust plans for the expected increase in need for SEND support including new school places, specialist resource bases and support for mainstream schools on the principle that local schools are the best place for the majority of children with SEND to be educated.</p> <p><i>[Ref: Sufficiency of school places, MI report Autumn 2019 p4, para 7 &amp;</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• We will challenge and support mainstream schools to identify students with additional needs and to deliver appropriate support to them</li> <li>• We will provide a post responsible for monitoring and reporting on the use of top-up funding, collecting best practice and ensuring equality of access to support</li> <li>• We will use improved projections and financial models to support the business case for additional schools, extensions to current schools and new resource bases</li> </ul>	Sally Varley, NSC - Wendy Packer, NSC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• SEN places will be part of the regularly reviewed Education Commissioning Strategy</li> <li>• Top-up funding usage and sufficiency will be reported to the SEND Programme Board</li> <li>• Plans and bids for additional provision will be robust, evidence-based and compelling</li> <li>• Evidence that all partners engage in capital projects to</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• New Education Commissioning Strategy includes detailed projections and plans for SEND need.</li> <li>• Top Up Funding benchmarking role now advertised.</li> <li>• Key capital projects progressing (SEMH free school, Baytree second site, ASD hubs)</li> <li>• Effective work with schools to share</li> </ul>

	<i>Alternative Provision p6 para 16, Written Statement of Action ASW2.6 &amp; 8.5]</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>We will work across the partnership to design and deliver solutions which co-locate and co-deliver services, providing easier access for parents, carers and children, and providing opportunities to develop links between schools and communities.</li> </ul>		deliver genuinely shared facilities which support children and their families.	<p>expertise in place via Inclusion Panels.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Health engagement in capital projects has been poor – but improvements seen in recent engagement.</li> </ul>
<b>Area 3 – Ensuring Outcomes</b>					
	<b><i>What we will do?</i></b>	<b><i>How we will do it?</i></b>	<b><i>Who will lead?</i></b>	<b><i>How will we monitor success?</i></b>	<b><i>Highlights &amp; Issues</i></b>
3.1	<p>We will complete testing of the Joint Outcomes in North Somerset (JOINS) framework and ensure that it is embedded in service delivery across the whole Local Area partnership.</p> <p><i>[Ref: Written Statement of Action, ASW 6.4]</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>We will complete the soft-launch and testing of JOINS framework through the Education, Health and care assessment and Planning process and Annual Reviews</li> <li>We will expect contributors and advice providers to the EHCP process eg. Specialist Children's Health Services to use the JOINS framework from April 2020</li> <li>We will develop outcome monitoring tools to provide intelligence which will inform service planning and commissioning</li> </ul>	<p>Anthony Webster, NSC</p> <p>- Rachel Anthwal, BNSSG</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Reporting to SEND Programme Board on progress of soft-launch and testing</li> <li>Parents/Carers and CYP comments on their outcomes in Annual Reviews and EHCP feedback</li> <li>Evidence of SMART outcomes in EHCPs and Annual Review documents</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>JOINS Framework published and testing planned. Covid delays impacted wider tests.</li> <li>Early small-scale tests proved effective.</li> <li>NSC designed outcome model largely adopted across BNSSG footprint.</li> <li>Online Training designed for wider children's workforce. Delivery to commence shortly.</li> </ul>
3.2	<p>We will use the EHCP Quality Assurance process to ensure that plans are consistently of a high quality, enabling parents, carers and children to hold a clear picture of how, when and where</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>We will bring our multi-agency QA process fully into use, regularly sampling EHC plans and reviewing the quality of advice given, provision of</li> </ul>	<p>Anthony Webster, NSC</p> <p>- Liz Jarvis, DCO</p> <p>-</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Evidence of QA activity routinely recorded, including lessons learned</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>QA Framework approved in January 2020</li> </ul>

	<p>support will be delivered, what outcomes it is planned to contribute to and how they can influence its delivery.</p> <p><i>[Ref: Written Statement of Action, ASW5.12, 5.16 &amp; 6.4]</i></p>	<p>SMART outcomes and clarity of specified provision.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>We will develop guidance and deliver training across the Local Area to improve the quality of plans, sharing best practice and setting local standards.</li> <li>We will use the JOINS outcomes framework to provide clear expectations for how support should be specified and how outcomes should be evaluated.</li> <li>We will ensure that all EHC plans and Annual Reviews reflect parents, carers and children's voices and that these are central to the process of determining how support is provided.</li> </ul>	Su Schofield, NSC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Evidence of parent, carer and child's voice clearly recorded in all EHCPs and Annual Reviews</li> <li>Evidence that support detailed in plans is measurable and clear, expressed in language which is accessible to all.</li> <li>Overview of QA activity, key areas for improvement and development regularly delivered to the SEND Programme Board.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Training offer designed, awaiting delivery to wider workforce.</li> <li>Delays to roll-out of outcomes framework (see 3.1)</li> </ul>
3.3	<p>We will improve our oversight of educational outcomes for children and young people with SEND, enabling us to identify where improvement is needed and to provide targeted support and challenge.</p> <p><i>[Ref: Written Statement of Action, ASW8.1]</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>We will appoint an Education Lead to provide oversight and accountability, and to further develop relationships with mainstream and special schools to enable mutual challenge and support across settings</li> <li>We will embed the JOINS work to include SMART education outcomes by training SENCOs</li> <li>We will offer support and challenge to early years providers, schools and other settings via Education Lead</li> </ul>	Head of Education Partnerships – TBA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Monitoring of education outcomes in regular SEND MI reporting</li> <li>Evidence that children and young people are achieving education-focused SMART outcomes.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Considerable Covid impact – MI resource diverted to Vulnerable Student tracking, and delays to the joint outcomes framework roll-out.</li> <li>Recruitment of Head of Education Partnerships role remains critical to influencing and building relationships with schools</li> </ul>
3.4	<p>We will ensure that students with SEND who are educated at home, in residential placements, alternative provision or who are excluded from school are monitored, reviewed and offered timely support to return to suitable local education wherever possible.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>We will reduce the number of children with SEND who are temporarily or permanently excluded from school via continued development of our joint inclusion panels.</li> </ul>	Wendy Packer, NSC - Head of Education Partnerships – TBA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Monitoring of exclusions, home education and alternative provision in regular SEND MI reporting</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Impacts of Inclusion Summit beginning to show in school approach to exclusions.</li> <li>Significant work undertaken during</li> </ul>



	<p>[Ref: Written Statement of Action, ASW8 &amp; MI report Autumn 2019 p6-7, para 18, 20, 21]</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>We will share the expertise in our new specialist hubs and SEMH school to support children and young people in remaining in their current school placement, rather than moving to alternative provision.</li> <li>We will monitor and review mainstream schools' performance in supporting children with additional needs, providing support and challenge to maintain their mainstream school place wherever possible.</li> <li>We will monitor the small population of children educated at home in North Somerset to understand the reasons parents elect to do so, and to respond to areas of concern around sufficiency of local school places.</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Monitoring of progress, attainment and attendance for the identified cohort of students</li> <li>Evidence of reduced exclusions, successful panel processes and reduced incidence of Elective Home Education</li> </ul>	<p>Covid to track Vulnerable Pupils attendance – recognised by DfE as robust.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>EHE increasing – in part driven by Covid. Being monitored carefully in light of national spotlight on 'off-rolling' of SEND pupils by mainstream schools.</li> <li>Recruitment of Head of Education Partnerships role remains critical to influencing and building relationships with schools</li> </ul>
3.5	<p>We will provide an updated Transitions protocol and pathway, clearly explaining what support is available for 'preparation for adulthood', what specialist support can be provided for young people with more complex needs and the thresholds for these services. This will be developed in co-production with parents, carers and young people</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>We will complete the implementation of the specialist transitions team in Adult Social Care, which will support SEND and DCT in planning for the most complex children who are likely to need adult social care services post-18 and will deliver statutory Care Act assessments when these children reach adulthood.</li> <li>We will develop information, advice and guidance resources for parents and young people who do not meet Care Act thresholds to ensure they are aware of sources of support and guidance on transition</li> </ul>	<p>Christian Sweeney, NSC - Martin Hawketts, NSC - Jo Kapp, BNSSG</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Evidence of a process of early identification of young people likely to need adult social care services at age 18</li> <li>Monitoring of Adult Social Care Transitions Team caseloads and waiting times via regular SEND MI reporting</li> <li>Publication of an updated Transitions protocol developed in co-production.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Early ID process co-designed by parents, carers, adults and children's services.</li> <li>New Adult Transitions Team in place from Sep 2020, staffed and functioning – but largely moved to manage massive Covid-related demand in Adult Services.</li> <li>Caseload monitoring in place – but paused due to Covid impact</li> </ul>



	[Ref: Written Statement of Action, ASW3.4-3.6]	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>We will provide a comprehensive guide to Preparing for Adulthood, including information covering the breadth of services including education, social care, physical and mental health.</li> </ul>			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Resources on preparing for adulthood reviewed and expanded in Local Offer. Joint work with college, health and young people to improve this underway.</li> <li>Resumption of work on early ID of needs and new protocol</li> </ul>
<b>Area 4 - Enabling Actions</b>					
<b>What we will do?</b>		<b>How we will do it?</b>	<b>Who will lead?</b>	<b>How will we monitor success?</b>	<b>Highlights &amp; Issues</b>
4.1	<p>We will improve processes, modernise communications and utilise technology to reduce the burdens on parents of children with SEND and to ensure they can focus on their child's needs as a priority.</p> <p>[Ref: Written Statement of Action, ASW1.8-1.13]</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>We will build the business case for an electronic ECHP and Annual Review management system which increases transparency and supports parents' involvement</li> <li>We will embed the 'tell it once' approach around transition points, reducing the need for parents to repeat basic information and background when moving between services</li> <li>We will deliver accessible versions of our guidance, policies and procedures, targeted at a variety of audiences and developed via co-production and engagement.</li> <li>We will make our Local Offer a 'one stop shop' for advice, guidance, documentation, policies and plans.</li> </ul>	Mike Newman, NSC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Successful case made for investment in EHCP system, with agreement to begin procurement</li> <li>Parents reporting reduced barriers to finding information, advice and services from all partners in the Local Area</li> <li>Availability of child friendly 'easy read' and parent-focused 'two-side-guide' versions of all key policies and procedures</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Analysis of EHCP Portal needs and current market undertaken Jan 2020 – agreed funding for this is critical to progress</li> <li>Parent and young person focused guidance on main SEND policy and practice co-produced and published.</li> <li>SENDIAS service report a reduction in calls relating to parents struggling to get access to our services/advice and guidance.</li> </ul>
4.2	We will improve and develop our Local Offer, ensuring that it reflects the range and scope of services available in the area, provides effective and accurate advice and guidance, and informs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>We will engage further with parents, carers and particularly young people as we progress with a review of the design,</li> </ul>	Mike Newman, NSC - Gill Hinton, NSC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Monitoring of trends in access to LO website in regular SEND MI reporting</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Joint user experience review of Local Offer undertaken in partnership with</li> </ul>

	<p>commissioners of potential area where service development is needed.</p> <p><i>[Ref: Written Statement of Action, ASW1.8, 1.9]</i></p>	<p>appearance and function of the Local Offer website</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• We will work closely with CCG and Health Provider partners to ensure that locally relevant Health related content is developed to replace generic NHSE syndicated information.</li> <li>• We will ensure that the database of services is updated regularly, particularly focusing on development of a reliable 'what's on' calendar of support and activities.</li> <li>• We will consider the potential for commissioning day-to-day updating and quality assurance of the Local Offer to be provided by a voluntary sector partner.</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Evidence of improved and co-produced parent- and child-facing design which is appealing, engaging and reflects local needs and views</li> <li>• Evidence of increased Health input into Local Offer content</li> </ul>	<p>BNSSG and Mace &amp; Menter Ltd in Summer 2020, with recommendations for improvement/business case.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increased CCG input into content underway – noted by LGA that BNSSG do not wholly own their information, but this is clearly changing</li> <li>• Work scheduled to take place with BNSSG to integrate their social prescribing information system with Local Offer.</li> <li>• Monitoring of usage regularly undertaken and reported on. Notably, Local Offer used to provide key, time-critical information on closures of provision and accessibility of services during Covid.</li> </ul>
4.3	<p>We will ensure access to safe and secure transport for all students with SEND, particularly assuring equity for students continuing their education after the age of 16</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• We will monitor the quality of transport provision, particularly focusing on reducing incidents and journey times.</li> <li>• We will deliver a new Post-16 Transport Policy via open, transparent co-production with parents, carers and young people</li> </ul>	<p>Carl Nicholson, NSC</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Policy agreed, published and in operation</li> <li>• Review of user experiences during September admission round</li> <li>• Monitoring of incident frequency and journey</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Extremely poor parent/carers feedback from September 2020 admission round.</li> <li>• Improved communications critical – issue recognised by CLT and Executive. Recovery plan in place</li> </ul>

	<i>[Ref: Written Statement of Action, ASW3.8]</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>We will work closely with Weston College to ensure transport arrangements are fit for purpose, promote inclusion and support learning outcomes</li> </ul>		times in regular SEND MI reporting	<p>to improve service and restore links to SEND team.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Mission system not yet able to provide reporting on journey times for MI reports</li> </ul>
4.4	<p>We will develop and improve local approaches to Joint Commissioning, delivering identified actions in our plan and considering key areas where further joint activity would enhance or strengthen the local offer.</p> <p><i>[Ref: Written Statement of Action, ASW6.1-6.2]</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>We will seek an equitable and fair process for apportioning costs and agreeing complex individual packages of care via our local CHC process.</li> <li>We will use the opportunity arising from the transfer of Specialist Children's Health Services to a new provider, to review the link between services where the Local Authority and CCG commission similar services (eg. Occupational Therapy, Speech and Language)</li> <li>We will consider opportunities to jointly fund our local Parent Carer Forum in recognition of their growing involvement in strategic planning and the increasing demand for their support from parents and carers</li> </ul>	<p>Helena Fuller, BNSSG</p> <p>- Alison Stone, NSC</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Regular reporting to SEND Programme Board of progress in delivering Joint Commissioning Plan</li> <li>Evidence of equitable joint approaches where individual and complex packages are commissioned</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>SEND Joint Commissioning and Service Alignment plan published January 2020</li> <li>Joint commissioning of parent carer forum and SENDIAS service in place</li> <li>Panel processes for complex packages under review – CHC process remains unresolved and is a critical issue.</li> <li>SEND needs to be incorporated into Children's Sufficiency Strategy in Feb 2021</li> <li>Review of commissioned SALT &amp; OT services ongoing – following Covid-related delays and transfer to new community health provider.</li> </ul>
4.5	<p>We will continue to develop and embed co-production in all service developments, reviews and commissioning projects via</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>All plans developed to further actions in this document will include a clear statement on how the activity will be co-</li> </ul>	Mike Newman, NSC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Evidence of co-production in commissioning, recruitment, service</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Co-production charter signed by all key partners and published in January 2020</li> </ul>

	<p>the work of the Engagement and Participation officer.</p> <p>[Ref: Written Statement of Action, ASW7]</p>	<p>produced with parents, carers, children and young people, in order to embed the aims and values agreed in our Co-Production Charter.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• We will ensure that parents, carers, children and young people are engaged and involved throughout plans, projects and reviews - from the outset, through planning and delivery to review and reflection.</li> <li>• We will seek to move the temporary arrangements for the Engagement &amp; Participation post to a permanent footing, on the basis this involves no additional funding outside current budgets and has shown very positive impact.</li> <li>• We will develop opportunities for young people to be directly involved in meetings which make decisions about services they use, including the SEND Programme Board</li> <li>• We will continue to ensure that our SENDIAS service is jointly funded to provide independent advice and guidance, and to represent parents interests in planning and oversight of the Local Area's performance</li> <li>• We will consider opportunities to jointly fund our local Parent Carer Forum in recognition of their growing involvement in strategic planning and the increasing demand for their support from parents and carers</li> </ul>		<p>review and strategic planning across the Local Area.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Children and Young people's voices present in all plans, strategies and reports</li> <li>• Evidence of direct involvement of young people in key boards, project groups and meetings</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Covid impact has delayed plans for direct engagement with CYP, though some work has been undertaken (eg. co-production of young person centred guidance in 4.1)</li> <li>• Strategic and project groups currently meeting virtually and on reduced frequencies – work to integrate child/young person voices paused during Covid.</li> <li>• Joint commissioning of SENDIAS service agreed with BNSSG on three-year basis</li> <li>• Joint grant funding of NSPCWT agreed with BNSSG on three-year basis, securing sustainability of the forum</li> </ul>
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## Part 2 – Commentary on LGA Recommendations (from Draft report – December 2020)

Governance and leadership	
a)	<p>Refocus and streamline governance structures to drive improvement at pace and provide clear leadership of the SEND agenda by partners across the local area</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Link between SEND governance and Children's Improvement Board agreed in principle, and to be established</li> <li>• Partnership working – especially with schools, health providers and parent/carers – is strong as evidenced by commitment to the board.</li> <li>• CCG commitment to partnership governance can be variable and disparate. Assurances given to LGA that new structures/appointments in CCG would resolve this.</li> <li>• Changes in Children's Services leadership team from Feb 2021 will further strengthen this area of work.</li> </ul>
b)	<p>Review the membership of the SEND Programme Board and refocus as an improvement board, including consideration of a smaller group of decision makers to drive change, and clarify the relationship with the Children's Improvement Board</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Decision taken to ensure that the current SEND Programme Board reports to the new Children's Improvement Board from March 2021</li> <li>• Proposal to retitle the SEND 'Improvement' or 'Partnership' board to be considered at next meeting.</li> <li>• Board membership remains effective at bringing together collaborative partnership, and is the only strategic forum where Education, Health and Care representatives regularly meet – change would be considered retrograde step by members if not managed carefully.</li> <li>• Consideration of potential smaller 'Executive' group to be put to board at next meeting to drive activity between bi-monthly meetings</li> </ul>
c)	<p>All partners should make better use of performance information and comparative data to acquire insight and understanding to drive improvement actions. The self-evaluation should be reworked to reflect this insight, progress against objectives and inform a review of the SEND Strategy and action plan</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• SEND Performance and MI reports and analysis were being provided to the Board on an agreed cycle from Autumn 2019. DfE and LGA both commented that they were of high quality and provided valuable analysis</li> <li>• Impact of improved SEND MI evident in planning for increased demand, supporting successful capital bids and responding to Education Psychology shortages, etc.</li> <li>• SEND MI Cycle was paused as resources were required for Vulnerable Pupil Tracking and DfE REACT data during Covid – to resume from March 2021</li> <li>• However, health data remains incomplete, sporadic and delayed – long sign-off process means it reaches the board very late. CAMHS data should become available now from new patient record system. Information on therapies not of high quality, and significantly poorer than that provided to Bristol and South Gloucestershire <i>[this also noted regularly by NHSEI advisor during monitoring visits]</i></li> <li>• SEND Strategy published in January 2020 – Next Annual Self Evaluation (Summer 2021) will be based on review of Strategy &amp; Action plan as recommended,</li> </ul>

Capacity	
d)	<p>The CCG should ensure that the appropriate level of funding for services in North Somerset is provided, reflecting that in other local authority areas covered by the CCG</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• LGA note that this was acknowledged by all partners, but that the CCG dispute believe this refers to an historic situation.</li> <li>• The LGA report stresses the importance of an equitable service model across the CCG footprint – and this is something NSC officers continue to challenge when disparities arise.</li> <li>• Additional funding has been provided from NHSEI via CCG for CAMHS improvement, work to reduce waiting lists etc.</li> <li>• Processes for determining contribution to complex packages remain inconsistent – BNSSG wide model proposed for future use.</li> <li>• Lack of coherent Health MI (See C above) makes judgement of funding equity challenging</li> <li>• Dispute between CCG and three LAs regarding CHC funding continues despite external intervention</li> </ul>
e)	<p>All partners should ensure they have sufficient capacity in place to drive the SEND agenda, with the appropriate skills, experience, focus and seniority and consider how to address this when reviewing structures and responsibilities</p>
f)	<p>The Council should recruit to the post of Head of Education Partnerships as a priority</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Head of Education Partnerships recruitment is critical to develop and maintain relationships, and to provide support and challenge to mainstream schools – formal consultation commenced 17<sup>th</sup> February 2021 – recruitment process expected to begin in March 2021.</li> <li>• Additional funding for SEND Team has supported capacity improvements, including specific officers to support timely annual reviews.</li> <li>• Concern that cultural and skills disparity in teams are creating a sense that capacity is insufficient. Plans being developed to review processes to make better use of placement resources, improve use of ICT systems, provide parents/carers with online EHC applications etc. are likely to have greater effect than additional recruitment</li> <li>• Further planning around structure to follow recruitment of Head of Education Partnerships, which will be informed by LGA view regarding appropriate spans of control and remits.</li> </ul>
g)	<p>The Council and CCG should consider the potential benefits of a specialist school nursing leadership role with the remit for school age children with complex and additional health needs, regardless of their setting, and identify if this can be resourced</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• National funding guidance from NHS and PHE is at variance on the funding of such posts. Further work between NSC Public Health and BNSSG will need to be undertaken to identify resources</li> <li>• If funding is available, this would be an area where joint commissioning would be very appropriate</li> <li>• Any solution needs to take into account the situation at Baytree School, where the school budget currently funds specialist nursing staff due to the high number of children with complex health needs attending.</li> </ul>

Partnership working and engagement	
h)	Health partners and the Council should work together to meet their shared responsibility for the Local Offer and ensure that comprehensive and timely information about services is readily available to children, young people and families
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Joint user experience review work with BNSSG undertaken (see 4.2 above) – this will provide actions and a business case for development of young person focused content and front-end, and structural changes to improve usability</li> <li>Improved content from Health Providers now in place, with regular refresh/review underway with Sirona and AWP. Joint work to align information across Mental Health directory, and with the new Family Wellbeing (Early Help) offer.</li> <li>Project being scoped to link our Local Offer with the CCGs social prescribing platform</li> </ul>
i)	Health partners and the Council should establish a participative approach with children, young people, parents and carers in both service development and delivery, whereby their early involvement is the default position as the basis for genuine co-production
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Co-production charter was agreed and signed by all partners in January 2020 – opportunities to put this into practice have been limited by Covid</li> <li>Parent/Carer Forum and SENDIAS have been involved in both recruitment and commissioning activity in LA.</li> <li>CCG engagement improving – including ‘meet the commissioners’ session which was welcomed and appreciated</li> <li>Direct work with children and young people challenging in current school/college context – however co-production of child/YP focused resources was very well received by DfE and used as regional exemplar</li> <li>SENDIAS and PCF are now both joint commissioned by both the LA and the CCG, making the situation equitable with that in neighbouring LAs. This is on a three-year basis offering stability and sustainability to both organisations.</li> </ul>
j)	Relationships with and between schools need to be further strengthened and they should be challenged to build confidence and capacity in mainstream provision to meet the needs of children and young people with SEND
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Inclusion Summit was delivered during the LGA review ‘visit’</li> <li>Impacts now being seen across the system – positive feedback at Children’s Improvement Board and EEPB</li> <li>Secondary Inclusion Panel working very effectively: tools such as dual placements for Y11s preventing exclusions at critical points in children’s school life. Primary Panel growing in confidence and effectiveness with support.</li> <li>Head of Education Partnerships recruitment is now critical to further develop and maintain relationships, and to provide support and challenge to mainstream schools in meeting SEND needs.</li> </ul>
k)	The council should monitor the implementation and impact of the plans to reduce out of area placements to ensure these realise the projected budget savings
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Children’s Sufficiency Strategy, including Market Position Statement in draft currently, likely delivered early March 2021 – will inform further planning in this area including commissioning of SEND placements</li> <li>Review of commissioning functions will follow other realignments – this will bring more structure to commissioning processes for children’s services, and will enable a greater focus on placement quality, stability and value for money.</li> <li>Audit West engaged to deliver review of the effectiveness of processes for commissioning high-cost placements for both SEND and children in care. Scope to be agreed in Feb 2021 for April 2021 audit activity.</li> </ul>



Effectiveness of EHCPs	
l)	Establish and meet clear expectations around the nature and timescales for responses to enquiries and the EHCP process and encourage parents to liaise with officers for progress updates
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Timescales for EHCP process improving follow very poor performance due to Educational Psychology shortage and Covid impacts</li> <li>• DCO and new ADCO roles providing consistent, high quality health responses to requests for response</li> <li>• Parent and Young Person focused guidance on EHCPs, support in schools, annual reviews and tribunals has been co-produced</li> <li>• Increased staffing in SEND team has resulted in parents having more access to advice – however parents are keen to have access via an online EHCP solution which allows them to contribute and enquire at times when they are free to do so rather than during working hours.</li> <li>• Market testing and scoping for this solution has taken place – funding decision awaited.</li> <li>• Joint Outcomes Framework (JOINS) is ready for wider testing and will further improve the quality and clarity of EHCPs for parents. Challenge in embedding is cultural and organisational – may require variation to contacts with Health providers</li> </ul>
m)	Ensure that councillors have access to appropriate advice and support when meeting parents and carers
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Members have disputed the wording of this finding – they consider the support they receive from officers to be appropriate and constructive.</li> <li>• They wished to note that their engagement with parent/carers is at the request of the independent forum and they welcome this opportunity.</li> <li>• Members work hard to avoid child-specific individual issues being raised in public fora to protect privacy and will endeavour to ensure these queries are directed appropriately.</li> </ul>
n)	Embed the recently established quality assurance procedures around EHCPs across the partnership and use this to achieve further improvement in the quality and impact of those plans
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• QA process designed and agreed by partners as noted by LGA</li> <li>• Process in operation in SEND team, using addendum to weekly SEND panels as an opportunity for multi-agency ‘deep dive’ into themes identified in EHCPs.</li> <li>• Challenge in embedding is cultural and organisational – a more rigorous approach to QA may require changes to practice and variation to contacts with Health providers</li> <li>• Plan is to regularly report back to SEND Programme Board with QA findings for support/challenge/direction.</li> </ul>



# **Remote peer challenge – SEND services**

## **North Somerset area**

December 2020

## **Feedback Report**

## 1. Executive Summary

Services across the SEND<sup>1</sup> system in the North Somerset area are regarded by partner organisations and parents alike as having responded actively to the needs of children, young people and families in the face of the challenges presented by the Covid-19 pandemic. Responding to the crisis has strengthened aspects of partnership working and prompted some innovation.

The Council's relatively new political leadership, supported by the Chief Executive, have recognised the importance of Children's Services and are making it a priority and ensuring that it is appropriately resourced. The recent separation of the post of Director of Children's Services from that for Adult Services should ensure that the Director has the capacity to drive the SEND agenda. It is important that this additional capacity is enhanced by an early appointment to the post of Head of Education and Partnerships.

The senior leaders of the NHS Bristol, North Somerset and South Gloucestershire Clinical Commissioning Group (BNSSG CCG) are working towards an equitable service model providing quality and consistency across BNSSG CCG. The commissioning of new providers for community and mental health and wellbeing services from April 2020 is also regarded as a positive development. Taken together, these changes in arrangements in the Council and key health partners provide a real opportunity to step up the pace in improving SEND services. Other strengths to build on include an active parent / carer forum that is connected to the key statutory stakeholders; examples of good partnership and multi-disciplinary working at the front line and in new quality assurance procedures and a focus on developing better outcomes for Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs).

The SEND system across the area faces some significant challenges. The DfE acknowledged in February 2020 that there had been progress in some areas against the issues identified in the Written Statement of Action following the 2018 SEND inspection. However, in the view of the peer team, progress is not as advanced as it should be and more improvement should have been secured before the Covid-19 pandemic took hold. There is a need to refocus and streamline governance structures across the partnership to drive improvement at pace and provide clear leadership of the SEND agenda, including clarifying the relationship between the newly established Children's Improvement Board and the current SEND Programme Board. This would help leaders across the partnership to take greater ownership of SEND improvement work. There should be a much clearer communication of vision, intention and impact across the partnership at all levels, including a shared ownership of and responsibility for the information that comprises the Local Offer. Partners should ensure that there is sufficient capacity, with the right skills mix and focus, in key roles across the SEND system and that people feel empowered and have the authority to act, or the confidence to approach senior managers to resolve obstacles that may arise.

Further work is required across the partnership to establish a genuinely participative approach with children, young people, parents and carers in both service development and delivery. A culture shift is required to one in which early involvement of these key stakeholders in service design and delivery is the default position as the basis for genuine co-production.

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<sup>1</sup> Special Educational Needs and Disability

Relationships with and between schools need to be further strengthened, enabling greater challenge to build confidence and capacity in mainstream provision to meet the needs of children and young people with SEND. The partnership between mainstream and special schools should be further developed to provide a continuum of provision to enable each child's needs to be met in the most appropriate setting and reduce the pressure on special school places. This should be an early priority for the new Head of Education and Partnerships along with the Education Excellence Partnership Board which brings together schools and the Council.

## 2. Key recommendations

The following are the main recommendations of the peer challenge. There are further suggestions for improvement contained in the body of the report.

### ***Governance and leadership***

- a) Refocus and streamline governance structures to drive improvement at pace and provide clear leadership of the SEND agenda by partners across the local area
- b) Review the membership of the SEND Programme Board and refocus as an improvement board, including consideration of a smaller group of decision makers to drive change, and clarify the relationship with the Children's Improvement Board
- c) All partners should make better use of performance information and comparative data to acquire insight and understanding to drive improvement actions. The self-evaluation should be reworked to reflect this insight, progress against objectives and inform a review of the SEND Strategy and action plan

### ***Capacity***

- d) The CCG should ensure that the appropriate level of funding for services in North Somerset is provided, reflecting that in other local authority areas covered by the CCG
- e) All partners should ensure they have sufficient capacity in place to drive the SEND agenda, with the appropriate skills, experience, focus and seniority and consider how to address this when reviewing structures and responsibilities
- f) The Council should recruit to the post of Head of Education and Partnerships as a priority
- g) The Council and CCG should consider the potential benefits of a specialist school nursing leadership role with the remit for school age children with complex and additional health needs, regardless of their setting, and identify if this can be resourced

### ***Partnership working and engagement***

- h) Health partners and the Council should work together to meet their shared responsibility for the Local Offer and ensure that comprehensive and timely information about services is readily available to children, young people and families
- i) Health partners and the Council should further strengthen and extend a participative approach with children, young people, parents and carers in both service development and delivery, whereby their early involvement is the default position as the basis for genuine co-production
- j) Relationships with and between schools need to be further strengthened and they should be challenged to build confidence and capacity in mainstream provision to meet the needs of children and young people with SEND
- k) The council should monitor the implementation and impact of the plans to reduce out of area placements to ensure these realise the projected budget savings

### ***Effectiveness of EHCPs***

- l) Establish and meet clear expectations around the nature and timescales for responses to enquiries and the EHCP process and encourage parents to liaise with officers for progress updates
- m) Ensure that councillors have access to further improved advice and support when meeting parents and carers
- n) Embed the recently established quality assurance procedures around EHCPs across the multi-agency partnership and use this to achieve further improvement in the quality and impact of those plans

### 3. Summary of the remote peer challenge approach

As a result of the Covid-19 pandemic, and the social distancing restrictions this has given rise to, this peer challenge, like other LGA challenges at this time, was undertaken remotely with both interviews and the case records review taking place off-site with meetings conducted virtually via MS Teams.

#### 3.1 The peer team

Peer challenges are delivered by experienced peers. The make-up of the peer team reflected your requirements and the focus of the peer challenge. Peers were selected on the basis of their relevant experience and expertise and agreed with you. The peers who delivered the peer challenge for North Somerset were:

- Jane Humphreys, LGA Children's Improvement Advisor (London), formerly DCS / DASS at Stockton on Tees BC.
- Richard Holland, independent consultant and formerly Head of Disability, Children's Social Care, Cambridgeshire CC
- George Gilmore, independent consultant and former special school Headteacher and Ofsted inspector
- Sara Barr-Frost, independent consultant and former Deputy Clinical Director, Lancashire Care NHS Trust and previous Designated Nurse roles
- David Armin, LGA challenge manager.

In addition to the above, two LGA associate peers – Helen Kendall and Tracey Newcomb – undertook a review of a sample of EHCPs in advance of remote peer challenge, to help explore the key lines of enquiry and inform the work of the peer team.

#### 3.2 Scope and focus

The following key lines of enquiry were agreed with North Somerset Council on behalf of the SEND Programme Board. The key areas of focus for the challenge are as follows:

##### ***The impact of Covid-19***

- Impact of Covid on 'business as usual' activity
- Impact of Covid on improvement work
- Effectiveness of the SEND Programme Board

##### ***Parent / carer perspectives***

- Parents' expectations and experiences
- Quality of collaboration
- Evidence of co-production

##### ***Relationships with health partners***

- Support for Education, Health and Care plans (EHCPs)
- Health provision

- Joint commissioning

### ***Education, Health and Care plans***

- The quality and effectiveness of EHCPs
- Partnership roles and responsibilities around EHCPs
- Assessment approach

### **3.3 The peer challenge process**

The fundamental aim of each peer challenge is to help councils and their partners reflect on and improve the impact of services to children and young people. It is important to remember that a peer challenge is not an inspection, rather it provides a critical friend to challenge the council and their partners in assessing their strengths and identifying their own areas for improvement. The main elements of the peer challenge were:

- ***A review of data and key documentation*** – to develop the peer team’s understanding of the local context, the performance and organisation of SEND services and to identify areas to explore further during the peer challenge.
- ***A review of EHCPs*** – two LGA associate peers reviewed 16 EHCPs in detail, these cases were selected by the Lead peer and LGA challenge manager to reflect a range of children and young people with different needs across a number of educational settings. The cases were reviewed remotely during w/c 23<sup>rd</sup> November, on the basis of a copy of the EHCP and supporting documentation made available on a secure online portal. The reviewers also had access to the council’s social care, Early Help and education systems. As part of the EHCP review, the peers also had virtual interviews with six staff from the SEND team and social care who were working with some of the children and young people whose plans were reviewed. They also met with the Head of Service and Manager for the SEND team and staff leading on the SEND agenda for the CCG. The findings of the EHCP review have been reported separately to North Somerset, given the potentially confidential information this contains, but the main messages from the EHCP review are reflected in this report.
- ***Virtual interviews and focus groups*** during w/c 30<sup>th</sup> November. During this week, the peer team met with some 60 people including Executive members, senior officers and staff from North Somerset Council, senior officers and managers / clinical leads from the BNSSG CCG, managers and practitioners from health providers and members of the Parent / Carer forum (12 in total).

By its nature, the peer challenge is a snapshot in time. We appreciate that some of the feedback may be about things you are already addressing and progressing. The peer team would like to thank colleagues in North Somerset for their assistance in planning and delivering the peer challenge, and for their engagement and openness during the process.

## 4. Feedback

### 4.1 The impact of Covid-19

The general impression among partner organisations and parents / carers is that services across the SEND system have responded actively to the needs of children and families during the Covid-19 pandemic. Responding to the crisis has strengthened partnerships in some respects, which can provide a platform to both address the longer term challenges presented by the impact of the pandemic and the associated restrictions and in further strengthening the SEND system.

The pandemic has driven some innovative practice, and is seen to have both enabled and permitted change as organisations have recognised that the normal ways of doing things are not applicable at the current time. Examples of such innovation include a helpline for the Educational Psychology service; a rapid response team offered by the Lifetime Service which has been praised by families and blending virtual with face to face delivery across many services. IT solutions have been used as enablers, but have also presented some challenges, such as the implementation of a new Transport IT system during the summer of 2020 when home to school travel arrangements for children and young people with SEND planned for the new school year were being affected by social distancing requirements.

Some families did report a lack of provision during Covid-19, this was most likely to affect those with less severe needs. However, it should be recognised that this mixed experience is no different to the national position. In December 2020 Ofsted published a [briefing](#) of the impact of Covid-19 on SEND provision, which highlights similar issues to those experienced in North Somerset. There have been challenges in getting children with very complex needs back to school, for example those requiring aerosol generating procedures (AGPs) which could put other students and staff at risk. Some 25 students with SEND had not yet returned to school, but partners across North Somerset have plans for this to occur early in the next term, from January 2021. For example, protocols for AGPs in schools have been recently developed by health partners.

During the pandemic, assessments have been undertaken remotely, perhaps not in the child's normal setting or context. Arrangements should be made to assess how accurate these remote assessments have been and to validate these with a further assessment where necessary. Educational psychology assessments were one area where it was felt that such validation may be required. There will be a need by partners to consider the impact on children, young people and families in the long term, such as on emotional wellbeing and for those on the autism spectrum.

North Somerset, like other areas, has had to reprioritise and reallocate resources to meet the pressures and new challenges presented in responding to the pandemic. Some core activities have been compromised. For example, the collation and reporting of performance information has been much reduced to enable resources to be focused on maintaining contact with vulnerable children and families following the



closure of schools in the early stages of the pandemic. Comprehensive and timely performance reporting to the SEND Programme Board should be resumed as soon as possible, so that leaders and managers can better understand the impact that SEND services are having and a clear picture of what is happening on the ground.

## **4.2 Leadership, capacity and improvement plans**

The Chief Executive and new political partnership which has formed North Somerset Council's administration since the May 2019 elections have recognised the importance of Children's Services and it being appropriately resourced. The Council's elected members will need support to understand the agenda fully so that they can give effect to their commitment to it. The Council is already accessing a range of support from the LGA to support the Executive member, the Chair and members of the Children and Young People's Policy and Scrutiny Panel and the Corporate Parenting Committee. In this respect, and others, it is clear to the peer team that the council is open to external support and training.

The BNSSG CCG recognise that there had been underinvestment in North Somerset in the past and the CCG is working towards an equitable service model providing quality and consistency across the CCG. The transfer of delivery of health services to new providers (Sirona Heath and Care for the majority of community services and Avon and Wiltshire NHS Trust for mental health) is welcomed across the system. This transfer occurred in April 2020 at a time of significant challenge arising from Covid-19 and there should be opportunity to further strengthen these partnerships and enhance services when it becomes possible to reduce the focus on the response to Covid-19.

The recent separation of the Director of Children's (DCS) and Director of Adult Services (DASS) roles should ensure the Council, as one of the key partners, has the capacity to drive the SEND agenda, along with a new post of Head of Education and Partnerships. The council should make an appointment to this key role as a matter of priority. The ongoing realignment of the whole of Children Services should improve the connectivity across different service areas, including those for children and young people with SEND.

An increase in local school places for students with SEND is underway, which it is hoped will help increase the proportion educated in mainstream settings, and a new special school for those with social, emotional and mental health needs is due to open by 2023. These developments should enable the local authority to realise its plans to support more children in local schools, rather than in out of area placements.

Although a follow-up visit by the DfE in February 2020 did acknowledge progress in some areas identified in the Written Statement of Action following the May 2018 joint local area SEND inspection, the pace of change to date remains a concern to the peer team. Although responding to the Covid-19 pandemic may have slowed down progress, North Somerset and the partnership were not as advanced as they should

have been with fully implementing the reforms following the 2014 Children and Families Act and wider improvements to SEND services at the time Covid-19 first took hold. The local area produced its first SEND strategy and action plan in January 2020 and many of the areas for attention identified by the inspection are now being addressed, but action in some areas has only begun recently – for example in quality assurance arrangements to address the inconsistency in quality and in contributions from different services to Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs).

To engage people at all levels across the partnership, the strategic intent and the impact this is having on the ground needs to be better communicated at all levels, so people including schools and SENCOs are clear what needs to be changed and why. Leaders across the partnership need to be clear about the vision for children and young people with SEND and share it effectively. Delivery of this vision needs to be underpinned by an implementation plan with clear timescales and success measures. In turn, this needs to be monitored and progress reported so that the current position is understood by all partners. A culture shift is needed to bring about improvement at pace.

The governance of improvement work across Children's Services and SEND needs greater clarity and is unlikely to provide the necessary accountability for delivering improvement without this. The position has become more complex recently following the establishment of the Children's Improvement Board in response to the Department for Education's (DfE) concerns that insufficient progress has been made in improving children's social care services. This increased focus on children's services may give greater leverage to the SEND agenda, where the partnership also needs to demonstrate clear progress.

Currently, the governance arrangements for Children's Services include a plethora of Boards such as Health and Wellbeing Board (HWB); the Children's Improvement Board; the SEND Programme Board; the Council's scrutiny arrangements and the CCG Children and Families Board and SEND Excellence Board. There is a need to simplify and streamline these arrangements for clearer accountability and leadership to drive forward the SEND agenda. In particular, the relationship between the Improvement and SEND Boards needs to be clarified, this could include an explicit reporting relationship from the SEND Programme Board to the Children's Improvement Board which includes key decision makers from across the Partnership. If the SEND Programme Board is to be retained it could be restyled as an Improvement Board with a smaller membership, empowered by their organisations to act and direct relevant resources to make things happen. The current SEND Programme Board has an extensive membership – attendance at virtual meetings can number up to 35 people. Most members are said to contribute to discussion, but the peer team are sceptical that such a large group can effectively drive change. A much smaller Board is likely to be more effective in this regard, perhaps supplemented by periodic workshops to explore a topic in depth and suggest a way forward as a mechanism for maintaining wider engagement.

Partners need to ensure that they have sufficient capacity in place to deliver on the SEND agenda. This was an area of concern identified in the 2018 SEND inspection.

They should satisfy themselves that they have got the right people at the right level driving SEND improvements, with the necessary seniority, capacity and skill mix. This peer challenge did not consider the overall resourcing of children's services, but the Council and partners should continue to satisfy themselves that they are making the best use of available resources, aligned to priorities such as SEND. As part of the peer challenge, we spoke with a number of middle managers who appeared to be carrying significant responsibility for several aspects of both delivering and improving SEND services. These people are being stretched too far across different roles to be effective or lack the authority to unblock obstacles which may be impeding progress. They may need more support and guidance in doing so and prioritising their activity. Leaders and managers also need to change the culture and cut through organisational silos so it becomes the norm to raise issues for support and guidance, demonstrating a constructive response in such circumstances. Leaders need to be confident that they have the 'line of sight' to potential issues at the front line and to demonstrate consistent grip in addressing these.

The Council and CCG should ensure that they have appropriate financial forecasts that reflect the increasing complexity and life course of this cohort of children and young people into adulthood. With the benefits of increasing life expectancy, the costs of support over a longer period will put additional pressure on budgets if appropriate allowance is not made for this. Clearly this is a challenging time for all aspects of council's budgets. In this context, the council should satisfy itself that its plans to make savings within SEND services are achievable. In particular, that the planned increases in school places are sufficient to reduce demand for costly out of area specialist placements; cater for children returning back to the area and respond to general population growth through new housing developments.

The council needs to work with school leaders, parents and carers and other partners to support and challenge schools to become more inclusive. The peer team acknowledge that a large proportion of schools in North Somerset are academies or part of multi-academy trusts (MATs) which can make such relationships more complex. However, schools need to be challenged to make a more graduated response, that may enable more children with SEND to be educated in mainstream settings and, in some cases, to shift their focus from just being on academic attainment. The new role of Head of Education and Partnerships will have a key role to play here. The deletion of the previous Learning and Attainment role due to grant reductions, as the Council's school improvement service was much reduced in response to widespread 'Academisation' in the area, may have led to a perception among schools that the council was less committed to working with them.

The 2020 self-evaluation prepared for the SEND Programme Board is more of a narrative than an evaluation and greater challenge is needed to drive action to address the underlying issues. For example, the 2020 self-evaluation identifies that the proportion of pupils in North Somerset with an EHCP (or a statement of SEN) has historically been lower than the regional or national averages, but does not provide an assessment as to why this may be the case. Performance management and challenge, including the use of comparative data to promote insight, should be better embedded in the business of the SEND Board and all services. The DfE has

worked with the LGA's Inform Team to make available a [database](#) of SEND statistics which local areas can use to make comparisons. The comparative data in this report has been obtained from this source. Partners need to understand and be able to explain significant differences from the national or 'nearest neighbour' performance and consider if these need to be addressed or not. This should be captured in a revised and sharper improvement plan. Continuing self-evaluation and challenge needs to be supported by regular performance reporting, which should be reinstated as soon as the resources can be released from the Covid-19 response or otherwise identified. This performance reporting should be used to better understand and evidence impact as part of the wider approach to quality assurance across the partnership to give a systematic framework to foster its development as a learning organisation.

### 4.3 Parent / carer perspectives

There is an active parent /carer forum (PCF) – North Somerset Parents Carers Working Together - that is connected to all the key statutory stakeholders and is articulate, willing and engaged with the SEND Information, Advice and Support Services (SENDIASS) and wanting to move forward. The Council and CCG have agreed to fund the PCF, giving an opportunity to use the associated funding agreement to develop mutual understanding on how to work together more effectively. This additional funding (£25,000 per annum from 2021 to 2024, plus a one-off grant of £10,000 in 2020-21 subject to agreement to the accompanying memorandum of understanding) will provide a significant increase in resourcing beyond the core DfE grant of £15,000 per annum.

The parents we spoke to would want mainstream education if they were confident it was an inclusive, welcoming environment that can meet their child's needs. The apparent assumption that parents generally prefer a special school should be questioned and existing systems across the partnership improved to seek the views and experiences of parents / carers, children and young people in a more systematic way. The Council should challenge and be prepared to work with schools and health partners to put the appropriate support in place through a graded response to keep children in mainstream settings, when this is best for them and their needs can be met in this way. Some mainstream schools appear to be using statutory assessment to move pupils out to specialist provision. In 2018-19, 37% of pupils with an EHCP or statement of SEN were placed in maintained special schools in North Somerset, compared to 21% in its statistical neighbours. We heard that special schools are offering an outreach service on an 'ad hoc' basis, but would like support from the Council to develop this into an offer to mainstream schools which can be accessed on a routine basis. The Inclusion Summit held in North Somerset on 30<sup>th</sup> November is regarded as a good start, but participants acknowledged that there is still much work to do.

Although parents did express some frustration in accessing information and support from the Council, they did report experiencing positive outcomes once they identified

staff who could make a difference enabling them to get the right support. But this must be balanced against the difficulties of the journey to getting that support.

There is a perception among a number of professionals that parents can have unreasonable expectations in North Somerset and indeed that those who are most demanding receive the services they want. The peer team are unable to assess if parents in general have higher expectations than any parent would want for their child. However, those the peer team did meet appeared to have reasonable expectations of the service and support their child should receive. 'Shouting the loudest' by parents may be a function of how the system has worked. With longstanding low rates of EHCPs, in 2019 1.9% of pupils in North Somerset had an EHCP or statement of SEN compared to 3.6% in its statistical near neighbour areas, parents may assume that being heard may 'require noise'. Moreover, 9.7% of assessments did not result in an EHCP compared to 4.8% for North Somerset's near neighbours. The story behind these differences in the rate of issue of EHCPs should be investigated and understood. The area needs to ensure that it has a mechanism for hearing those who do not make noise and to change parental expectations of how the system works, so that it is based on clear understanding of need, the criteria for grading responses and dialogue around this, so that those that whisper can also be heard.

A consistent approach needs to be underpinned by developing a better understanding among parents and carers of the respective roles and responsibilities of officers and members, underpinned by clear service standards and reasonable expectations of timescales for responding to enquiries and requests. For example, [Cambridgeshire's Preparing for Adulthood Protocol](#) (July 2020) is clear about what young people and their families can expect and by when. The LB of Haringey provides another example of a preparing for adulthood [Pathway Guide](#) with a clear indication of different stages and timescales. A further example of such a guide is that produced by the [Parents and Carers Alliance Milton Keynes](#) (MK) in association with MK Council and MKSENDIAS, prepared in a style intended to be accessible to parents and carers.

The PCF and the previous Council administration agreed that councillors, including the lead member for Children's Services, would attend the PCF without officers. Councillors continue to meet with parent/carers by invitation of the independent forum, and value the opportunity to learn more about SEND matters. The commitment of the current lead member and Deputy Leader to be accessible to parents and hear their concerns is clearly positive, but there are some risks to this approach. Whilst councillors feel fully supported by officers, they cannot be expected to know all the details around the criteria for assessing need for SEND and the appropriate support. Parents who are assertive and confidently understand how the system works, and know who to contact, can have an unfair advantage in accessing services. If councillors are supported by officers when attending the PCF, they would have timely access to clear advice and this should enable consistent support to be provided.



The current PCF represents a limited cross section of parents and carers of children with SEND. Nearly 600 people are connected via Facebook but there is only a small core of active forum members. This is in the context of some 1,127 children and young people in North Somerset having an EHCP in the first quarter of 2020. Notwithstanding this relatively small membership, the views of the PCF, as heard by the peer team, should still be seen as authentic. The system should respond positively to the challenge from PCF members and support it to reach out and channel the views of more parents and other representative groups. The increase in local funding and the associated memorandum of understanding provides an opportunity to widen the reach of the PCF. In addition to increased engagement with the PCF, both the Council and CCG should consider how they can more systematically gather and use the views and experience of children and families to gain greater insight and improve services.

The peer team question if there is a genuine and common understanding of 'co-production'. A willingness to consult with parents and carers and act on their views was noted across the partnership. But this was often at a fairly late stage in developing a service or the vision for children's services, rather than engagement in the early stages of developing a new approach. There is no evident alliance with parents, children and young people across the whole system whereby involving them early and on-going joint working is the norm. There does not seem to be a clear process for young people's participation. Evidence of joint work was noted, including references to some engagement with the early 'JOINS' outcome work, but appeared to be piecemeal and with no direct feed into the SEND Board. Partners should continue to build on these initiatives to develop a more systematic approach.

#### **4.4 Relationships with health partners**

The re-commissioning of community health services as a single all age service, seeing these move into Sirona Care and Health, has been largely received as a positive development across the area, bringing with it opportunities to level up services and provision. Relationships between the CCG and health provider are reported to be strong. Similarly, the re-provision of mental and emotional wellbeing services from the Avon and Wiltshire NHS Trust is also seen as a positive development. However, considerable work still needs to be done to raise confidence in the mental health services provided to children and young people. The previous provider of both community and mental health services in North Somerset had apparently not seen this as a good strategic fit with their other operations. These new arrangements came into effect from April 2020 and are seen to be bedding in well, notwithstanding the additional challenges of implementation during the Covid-19 pandemic.

North Somerset was previously a separate CCG, it is now part of the larger BNSSG CCG. There are ambitious plans for improvement across the CCG and providers. There are opportunities for North Somerset to benefit as the CCG and provider footprints are better aligned, giving potential economies of scale and to tap into

learning and innovation across a wider area to achieve greater consistency across the three local authority areas within the CCG footprint.

The partnership now needs to consider how it is going to ensure that it has appropriate resource commissioned and in place to address emotional health and wellbeing needs as part of the offer for early help, prevention and step down from crisis. Children and adolescent mental health services (CAMHS) will be part of this provision, but other services will need to be wrapped around this to provide a comprehensive graduated response that connects universal, early help and specialist provision in a continuum of support. The Thrive model, nationally recognised as a framework for systems change as an integrated person centred and needs led approach, was regarded by health staff as a way forward. A co-ordinated drive and investment across the partnership in provision aligned to all elements of the model, with particularly further investment in the 'Getting advice' and 'Getting help' elements, would be of considerable benefit to children and young people with SEND.

There are examples of health partners working together consistently and effectively across organisations such as attendance at Multi-Agency Information and Support in the Early Years (MAISEY) meetings and contributions to The Lifetime Service for those whose conditions are life limiting. But such consistent working across health is not yet universal.

The appointment of three Associate Designated Clinical Officers (A/DCOs), with effect from January 2021, will ensure that children and young people not known to community services or not seen over the preceding 12 months will have health advice provided as part of the needs assessment process. Previously a 'not know to the service' response would have been issued. These improvements will be crucial to delivering the CCG's statutory responsibilities in implementing the SEND reforms and supporting joined up working between health and local authorities. These new roles are intended to realise their impact initially in the co-ordination of health advice, strengthening the quality of EHCPs. Much of the responsibility of the existing DCO role was to both influence strategy as well as delivery of the SEND agenda for the BNSSG CCG across the three council areas covered by it. There was a reported lack of capacity to provide that DCO role consistently across those three areas within the CCG. Following reorganisation, the DCO is the CCG operational SEND lead and the Head of Children's Transformation (SEND) is the CCG strategic SEND lead. The peer team's understanding is that the focus of the new A/DCO roles will be to provide health advice to each local authority within six weeks rather than strategy development. The peer team noted that clinical leadership and development of strategy for children and young people with SEND could be stronger across commissioning and providers of health and the responsibilities for this are wider than just that of the DCO role.

Whilst there are good individual relationships across the partnership at all levels, there is still a considerable amount of work to do in understanding the health offer and when they will and will not be involved and for this offer to be applied consistently. One example of this is that the peer team noted that whereas health partners reported they were strong in terms contribution the EHCPs, the perception

of council staff was that there were considerable gaps in information and services offered and families also reported a lack of support in some areas from health. The CCG should be to address this source of confusion, which is leading to inconsistency in the level and nature of health support offered to children and young people across the area.

In the experience of the peer team, a specialist school nursing leadership role with the remit for school age children with complex and additional health needs, regardless of their setting, could offer some valuable capacity to champion the cohort of children with SEND. The Council should work with the CCG to establishing if such a school age nursing leadership role would be beneficial in North Somerset and identify if this can be resourced.

The voices of children and young people are not part of co-production with health services and the involvement with the PCF needs to be stronger and robust. As noted above, co-production is not well established across the partnership in North Somerset more generally and needs to be addressed.

Health partners fully acknowledge their joint responsibility for the Local Offer, along with the Council. This needs to be demonstrated through the completeness, clarity and timeliness of the service information provided. This should be joined-up with the information provided by the Council. Examples of where health information is well integrated into the Local Offer include [Peterborough](#) and the London Boroughs of [Kingston and Richmond upon Thames](#).

#### **4.5 The effectiveness of Education, Health and Care plans (EHCPs)**

A week in advance of the peer challenge, two LGA associate peers reviewed a sample of 16 EHCPs. The key findings of that review were as follows:

- The sample of EHCPs demonstrate a journey of improvement, with more recent plans being of a higher quality than those prepared some time ago. There are examples of good work with individual children, young people and their families.
- While some plans gave a clear impression of the child's needs and aspirations, others did not. More should be done to bring the child 'to life' through the EHCP
- Objectives and timescales need to be more specific to better enable monitoring of impact of the EHCP
- Although a number of plans reflected parents' views, the voice of the child could be stronger
- From this small sample, the engagement of health partners in the EHCP process was evident, but that of social care less so (although with some indication that this was greater in the more recent plans)
- Several of the plans showed how services and families are meeting the challenges arising from Covid-19. Ensuring sufficient engagement with children



and families will be an area for development and attention so long as social distancing and other restrictions remain in place.

The interviews and discussions conducted during the peer challenge confirmed these initial impressions and enabled the team to explore how partners work together to develop EHCPs. Recent changes in, and the strong ambition evident from, the SEND team have resulted in improving quality assurance processes for EHCPs and Annual Review reports. As noted above, our review of a sample of EHCPs shows signs of improving quality, however, processes need to be embedded to see consistent impact. These quality assurance processes have enabled an understanding that the collection of evidence, including importantly capturing the voice of the child or young person; engagement with parents and carers, and the development of outcomes all need to improve. The Council for Disabled Children has produced [guidance and good practice examples](#) in writing effective EHCPs.

There are valued contributions from many partners at the SEN Panel, which considers applications for needs assessment, approves EHCPs and the resources needed to deliver these etc. Among the services highlighted in this respect were Educational Psychology, Early Years and the DCO. However, limited engagement from elements of health and social care was reported with both SEN Panel processes and evidence collection in support of these.

The Council and CCG need to address and improve their current arrangements for commissioning specialist assessments for EHCPs. As a result, on occasions parents commission independent assessments which may recommend support beyond that which a statutory assessment would identify. In these circumstances, health services may find it difficult to provide support at the assessed level resulting in appeals to Tribunals.

Although the additional capacity commissioned to address a backlog of EHCPs over summer 2020 resulted in a high completion rate within statutory timescale, as a result of poor quality controls there were complaints from parents and schools about the quality of EHCPs. The peer team understand that there are no plans to repeat this approach in future. In 2019, 100% of EHCPs within North Somerset were issued within the statutory timescale of 20 weeks, for its statistical neighbours 67% were completed within that timescale. Whilst this is a positive achievement in terms of timeliness, such a large difference should prompt enquiries to satisfy partners across the area that quality and effectiveness are not being compromised to achieve process and timeliness targets.

EHCPs are not always revised following annual reviews. The peer team heard that there is no clear understanding from parents and schools when changes will and will not be made. Some suggested that due to recent resource constraints in the SEND team, plans would only be changed at times of significant transition, e.g. from primary to secondary education. Some parents stated that significant changes in their child's circumstances had not been acted upon.

The new Transitions Team that has been developed over the past year should help children and young people move into adulthood effectively, so long as there are robust procedures in place to identify children in good time for transition arrangements to be put in place. The single all-age approach to community health services should also be helpful to the transition to adulthood

Some plans appear to only see the child through their parent's eyes and aspirations. You cannot consistently see the child and hear their voice through EHCPs. There is no evidence of the systematic practice of a child centred plan co-ordination meeting at the end of the assessment process, which could help bring about both more consistent and outcome led EHCPs. A final copy of each EHCP is sent to all partners, however, some health services reported not receiving them or when one was received it did not fully reflect their report. The intended role of the new A/DCOs to provide health advice to local authorities to strengthen EHCPs may help to address these concerns.

Work is underway by the SEND team to develop a consistent approach to developing EHCP outcomes. However, the peer team heard of similar work by the CCG and as part of the professional development programme from the Education Psychology service. This appears to risk a fractured implementation of the agreed outcomes framework. This work needs to be better integrated to ensure a consistent approach to developing outcomes.

## 5. Next steps

We appreciate you will want to reflect on these findings and suggestions with your senior managerial and political leadership and across the wider partnership, including the SEND Programme Board in order to determine how the partnership wishes to take things forward.

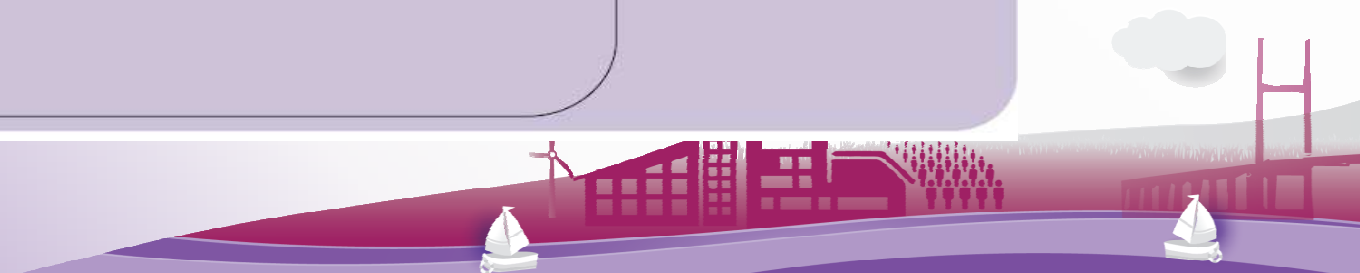
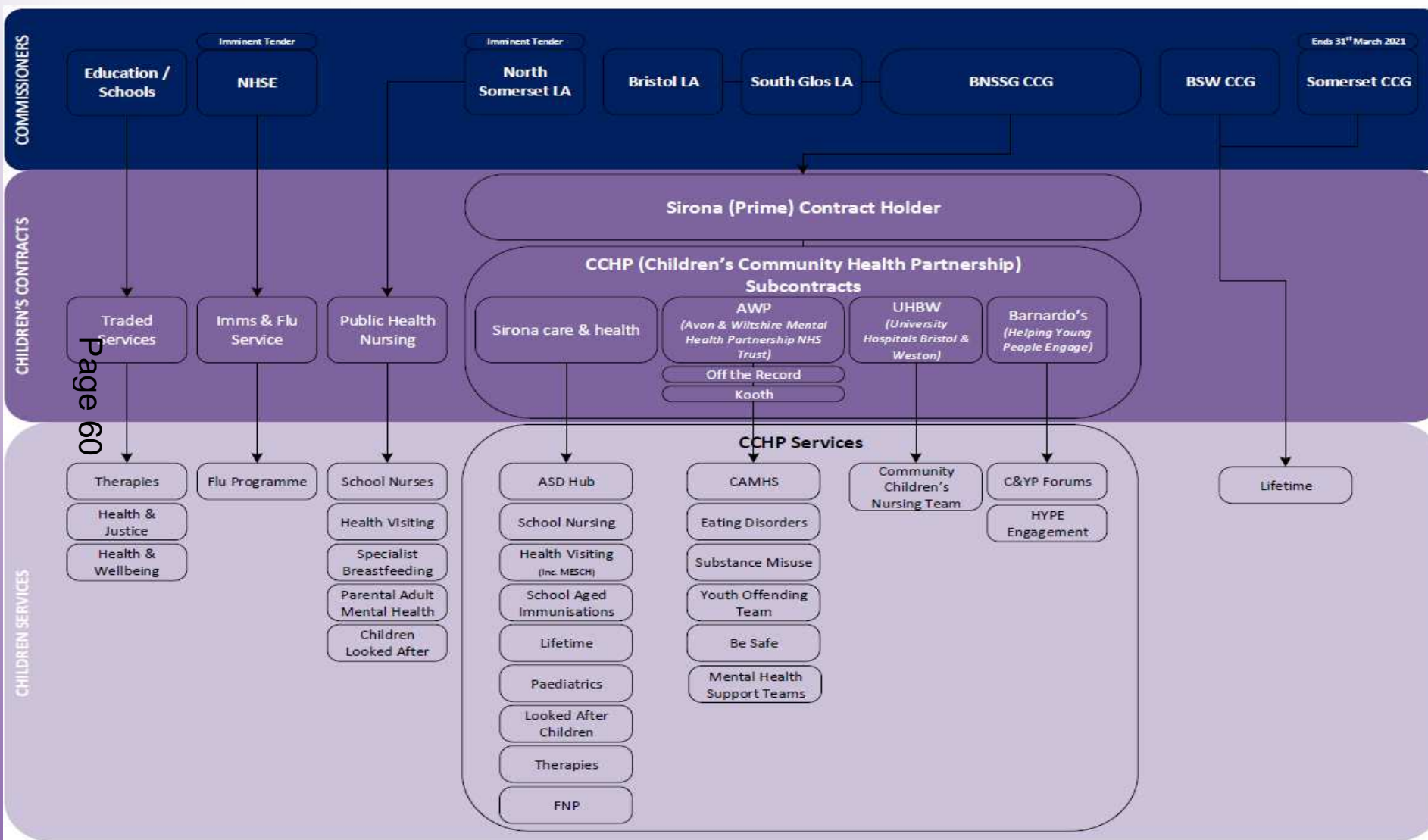
As part of the peer challenge, there is an offer of further activity to support this. We would be happy to discuss how best to do this. The regional Principal Adviser, Paul Clarke, and Children's Improvement Adviser, Claire Burgess, are the main contacts between your authority and the LGA. Their contact details are: [paul.clarke@local.gov.uk](mailto:paul.clarke@local.gov.uk) or tel. 07899 965730 and [claire.burgess23@gmail.com](mailto:claire.burgess23@gmail.com) or tel. 07854 407337.

In the meantime, we are keen to continue the relationship we have formed with you and colleagues through the peer challenge. We will endeavour to provide additional information and signposting about the issues we have raised in this report to help inform your ongoing consideration.

# Introduction to Children's Community Health Partnership (CCHP)

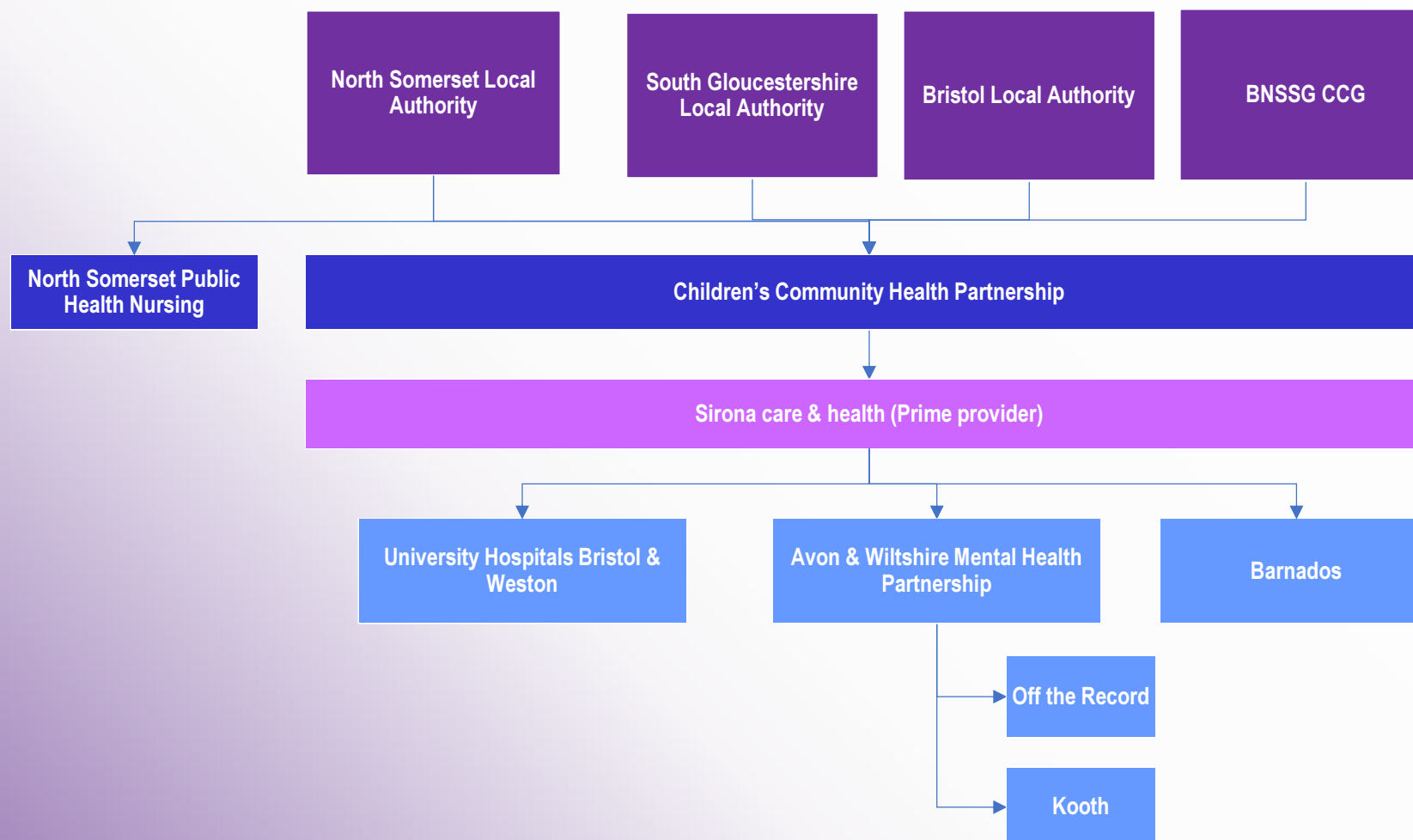


# How are services commissioned?



# How are services commissioned?

Sirona  
care & health



# Who's who in Sirona?

Associate Director of  
Children's Services  
Lorraine McMullen

Business Manager  
Russell Lee

Head of Public Health Nursing  
Nikki Lawrence

Head of Children's Services Therapies,  
Autism and SEND  
Gerry Bates

Head of Specialist Services for  
Children  
Karen Evans

Clinical Director of Paediatrics  
Lindsey MacKintosh

## Responsibilities

Administrative services  
Contracting &  
Performance  
Commissioning  
Relationships

## Responsibilities

- Bristol, North Somerset and South Glos Health Visiting Service
- Bristol, North Somerset and South Glos School Health Nursing Service
- Bristol Family Nurse Partnership Service

## Responsibilities

- Therapies
  - Speech & Language Therapy
  - Occupational Therapy
  - Physio therapy
- Early Years Practitioner Service
- Autism Hub Service
- Associate Designated Clinical Officer Service
- Children's Traded service

## Responsibilities

- Children in Care
- Lifetime
- Neurodevelopmental services
- Continence services
- Transition

## Responsibilities

- Paediatrics (BN)
- Delivery of services
- Paediatricians
- Safeguarding

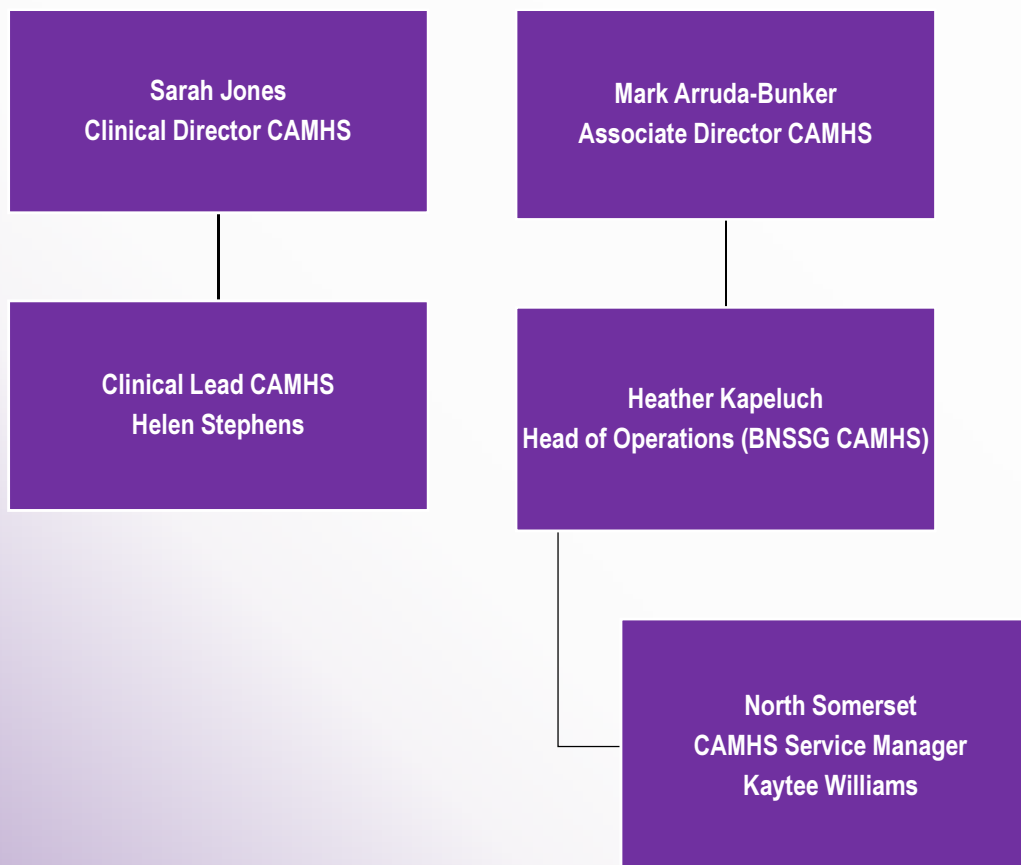


# Who's who in CAMHS



## Services

Children's and Adolescents  
Mental Health Services  
(CAMHS)  
Eating Disorders  
Substance Misuse  
Youth Offending Teams  
Urgent Care Assessment Team



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## **North Somerset Council**

### **Report to the Children & Young People Policy & Scrutiny Panel**

**Date of Meeting: 11 March 2021**

**Subject of Report: Scrutiny of Corporate Parenting**

**Town or Parish: All**

**Officer/Member Presenting: Carolann James – Assistant Director,  
Children's Services**

**Key Decision: No**

### **Recommendations**

The Panel is recommended to:

- i. Note the updated information presented in this report
- ii. To offer comment on both areas for improvement and areas of good performance
- iii. To raise the profile of corporate parenting responsibilities among their colleague elected members

### **1. Summary of Report**

This report is intended to inform the Children and Young People's Services Policy and Scrutiny Panel of the key current issues pertaining to children who are looked after, young people leaving our care and the fostering service. This will enable the panel to evaluate how effectively the whole council is discharging our Corporate Parenting Responsibilities and Duties, particularly in determining how effectively the council and its partners are achieving key plans and objectives for children and young people's services, and to provide appropriate challenge and suggestions to improve performance.

The report outlines key updates and describes how we continue to deliver our services despite the global pandemic and a third National Lockdown. Despite the challenges posed by Covid-19, Children's Services have continued to deliver face-to-face support wherever safe to do so, and when necessary undertaken more creative practice to support our children looked after, our young people leaving our care and our foster/kinship carers. Such creativity has seen a greater use of digital technology to support our visits and interactions with children, young people and their carers. As well as presenting significant challenge it has also opened opportunities to consider new ways of working with children and families that had not been tried or tested previously. We have found a great deal of resilience within our young people, foster carers and staff members during this time. This has been positive to see.

## 2. Policy

The Corporate Parenting principles are outlined in the Children and Social Work Act 2017:

- To act in the best interests, and promote the physical and mental health and well-being, of those children and young people;
- To encourage those children and young people to express their views, wishes and feelings;
- To consider the views, wishes and feelings of those children and young people;
- To help those children and young people gain access to, and make the best use of, services provided by the local authority and its relevant partners;
- To promote high aspirations, and seek to secure the best outcomes, for those children and young people;
- For those children and young people to be safe, and for stability in their home lives, relationships and education or work;
- To prepare those children and young people for adulthood and independent living.

## 3. Details

### 3.1 About the children in our care

We have 221 children in care at the end of Q3 which equates to a rate of 51 per 10,000. This is **lower** than our statistical neighbours (53) and England (67).

The reasons for fluctuations in numbers of looked after children are complex. Scrutiny of the potential causation of entry into care is undertaken by our Independent Reviewing Officers, with strategic oversight from the senior leadership team and the Children's Improvement Board.

At the end of Q3 of 2021:

- 15 Children in our care were unaccompanied asylum-seeking children.
- The main primary need (reason for a child becoming looked after) in the first three quarters of 2020/21 was Abuse or Neglect.
- Three quarters (74% at the end of Q3 2020/21) of North Somerset's children in care live with foster carers. This is slightly higher than the latest figure nationally (72%).
- The percentage of children in care that live in North Somerset is up by 8% when compared to this period last year (65% up from 58% in this period last year)
- As at the end of Q3 2020/21, 59% of looked after children had a completed Health Assessment. Children accessing Dental checks was also low at only 27% compared to 83% same time last year. To reassure the scrutiny panel, we are confident the actual number is significantly higher and having identified some delay in the recording system we would assure that once resolved, these figures will significantly increase. The impact and ability to access appointments during the pandemic may have implications for our performance, particularly in accessing dental services.

- Since the start of the current reporting year in North Somerset a total of 10 children were adopted from care.
- In 2020, 16 children secured permanence through Special Guardianship orders. This is a significant increase from 2019 and 2018. Will we continue in our robust drive to keep children with their families wherever possible and explore and seek out all family options when care planning for children's futures as a priority.
- The percentage of 19-21 year-old care leavers who were in education, employment and/or training (EET) in North Somerset at the end of Q3 2020/21 was 44%. This is lower than the same time last year at 53 and this continue to be a clear focused area for improvement.
- 89% of care leavers are in suitable accommodation which is better than the same time last year at 86% and above both the England average of 85% and statistical neighbours 85%.

## **3.2 Highlight report for Children in our Care**

### **3.2.1 Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children**

A number of our Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking children have reached 18 and have therefore transferred to our Leaving Care team. We have not had any missing episodes from care for this cohort of young people, which is really good news. With regard to education, College attendance is currently over 90% This is exceptional, especially during the pandemic when we know young people generally have struggled emotionally.

All of our Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children have passed Maths and English exams. Three of our Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children have taken up offers of counselling at college and the outcomes for their emotional wellbeing are good. Those who have not taken this offer are doing well and did not feel that they required additional support at this time. All of our unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children have accessed the extra Maths and English support offered by the colleges which is outstanding. In regards to moving forward we are looking at introducing English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) courses at different times of the year to the usual September start. This will mean that our Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children will be able to join the course throughout the academic year and not just in September.

### **3.2.2 Permanency and Long Term Matching**

We are making steady progress with regard to this targeted area of improvement, ensuring that all our children in care who are in our care are robustly matched to their carers. It is vital that all of our children feel a sense of psychological permanence, belonging and have legal permanence until adulthood. For this reason we know we need to do more to secure the right carers for children, in particular sibling groups and older children with complex medical, psychological or emotional needs that may arise from their early trauma.

### **3.2.3 Missing Episodes for Children in Our Care**

The cumulative percentage of Children in our Care who had a missing episode during the first three quarters of 2020/21 is 9% which compares to 12% of our statistical neighbours and 11% national average.

During Quarter 3 2020/21, there were 103 episodes of children going missing relating to 56 children. Of these, 18 were children in care. This compares to 20 children in care who went missing during the same time last year.

#### **3.2.4 Children's Emotional Wellbeing**

As part of our continued drive to improve our children's well-being, in addition to our CONSULT service, partnership with CAMHS and therapeutic training for foster carers so they can respond appropriately to the impact of trauma, we are pleased to report that we have been contacted by The Painted Horse, a Somerset based company who provide equine therapy for children and young people. The charity has received a grant to provide equine therapy for 30 children who are looked after. A total of 10 sessions will be provided to each child. North Somerset have been offered a minimum of the 20 of the 30 places with the possibility that this may increase if the need is there. This is a wonderful opportunity and will be offered to all children who are looked after across North Somerset aged 5-17. We hope to seek an improvement in our children's wellbeing and stability through their Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire scores and results of our Bright's Spots Survey's in 2021.

#### **3.2.5 Our Awards Ceremony for Children who are Looked After**

This wonderful event successfully took place on 31st January, due to the Covid 19 pandemic the award ceremony was virtual this year with most of our children and young people participating and contributing to the events by sending in their video productions. We are excited to acknowledge collaboration with a local theatre company, Theatre Orchard, and note that despite the challenge of a virtual celebration, the event was a great success

### **3.3 Highlight Report for Fostering**

#### **3.3.1 Quality and Sufficiency of Foster Care**

- A key focus within our Children's Improvement Plan is to ensure we develop our Sufficiency Strategy. This is key to enabling us to meet our objectives for our children, support our carers and met our targets for financial efficiencies.
- As we continue with our focused drive to increase the number of our children with North Somerset foster carers, we now report a reduction from 80 children and young people placed with Independent Fostering Agencies to 55 children (Feb 20).
- By 31/3/21, we will have a growth of 18 new foster families compared with 6 between 2019/2020, 7 from 2018/2019. This growth is critical to ensuring we have placement choice and scope for matching children and sibling groups with carers who are best placed to meet their needs.

### 3.3.2 Mockingbird

We successfully launched our second Mockingbird Constellation in October 2020, with the third Constellation planned for end of March 2021. The Mockingbird Family Model project has a huge impact in recruiting new foster carers to foster with us, and a major factor in retention of our existing foster carers.

The Mockingbird programme works to meet the need for continuity and support for children and young people in care and for additional support for foster carers. The fostering families within a Mockingbird group or 'constellation' support each other in line with an extended family. This model was evaluated by the Department of Education and a [report regarding this was published in September 2020](#).

We have been able to evaluate the support offered by the Mockingbird Programme within North Somerset from launch in December 2019 to December 2020.

- The number of foster families benefitting, 7 totalling 38 children and 3 care leavers.
- We have analysed 23.5% of the foster families within the programme would have resigned or left if Mockingbird was not there to support them, with the Fostering Network average of 12%.
- Our figures suggest that 12 incidents of home breakdowns for 6 different children have been prevented. This equate to 16% of the placements within the programme, with the Fostering National Network average of 20%.

### 3.3.3 Supported Independent Provision

We have strengthened our offer to young people aged 16+ whose care plan or wish would indicate that they may need alternative accommodation to a foster family. We have partnered with the YMCA to quality assure and increase our provision of high quality supported accommodation which has resulted in an improved offer to meet the needs of those young people where supported independence is appropriate to their needs and wishes. However, in line with our vision for children we will ensure that most of our children will live a family, the Fostering Service will maintain it's recruitment momentum to be with a clear focus and drive to broaden the scope of placement options and range of skills such as specialist foster carers and carers for older children.

## 3.4 **Highlight Report for Care Leavers**

- 3.4.1 The delivery model for working with our care leaving young people has changed significantly under Covid 19. Greater use of virtual contact has been used in combination with face to face visiting where safe and appropriate. A significant theme has emerged from the last 6 months with several care leavers struggling with anxiety and low mood as they come to terms with the uncertainty of the pandemic. We have put several measures in place to support our care leaving young people have access to virtual services and we have increased our level of contact. We have

worked creatively to find new ways of alleviating social isolation such as creating a care leaver face book page. Through the support of our charitable partners Quartet we were able to provide our most socially isolated care leavers a laptop to enable them to access digital services and support and laterally accessed funding from the Department of Education to provide laptops for our care leavers. This ensured all our Care Leavers could keep in contact with our young people and they could contact us too when we were unable to connect with them face to face.

- 3.4.2 Our main concern for our young people leaving care currently is the proportion of our young people who are not in education, training or employment. Our current performance in this area is much lower than we would aspire for our young people. This is a key focus within the Children's Improvement Plan. We continue to access additional focus by engaging with Reboot Social Impact Bond project which provides an additional resource to support our young people into education employment and training. This project is funded by the Department for Education, and is delivered in partnership with Bristol, South Gloucestershire and Bath & North East Somerset. One of the key messages from our Care Leaver's Forum was the importance to young people of us setting a mentoring service for both our children who are looked after and our care leaving young people. This is a project we are currently working on with our Head of Inclusion and the Virtual School, Wendy Packer. We look forward to reporting on the progress of this project in future.
- 3.4.3 Our Public Health colleagues have been providing free sports equipment for Children in care and have just extended this to Care Leavers, promoting the benefits of exercise to support physical and emotional wellbeing. We are also developing an Early Help Offer for Care Leavers and hope to have this up and running for Care Leaver Parents and those to be parents by the end of October.
- 3.4.4 As the Council are looking to re-launch our Care Leavers Apprenticeship Scheme and have created a new Care Leavers Participation post with colleagues in the Economic Development Team. This is to support our work in better understanding the voice of our care leavers with the aim of co-producing our service delivery in the long term with our care leaving young people. We are part of the Employee of Choice Programme and hope to extend this to work experience and traineeships for Care Leavers within the Council. Under the lockdown period young people leaving care were supported to complete their studies in creative ways as college teaching went online. We ensured Care Leavers were supported in accessing their teaching virtually.
- 3.4.5 Care Leavers graduated this summer with a First in Applied Computer Studies and Geology with Geological Engineering respectively and a 2.1 in Drama and Theatre Studies. Two of these Graduates are applying for the Civil Service Internship for Care Leavers and one is now studying to be a Dental Nurse. Care Leavers have returned to their Universities to study Sports Physiotherapy, Business Management, Theatrical Make Up and Theatre Design, Electronics, Psychology and Theatrical Make Up and Drama with Prosthetics

## **4. Consultation**

### **4.1 Participation**

We fulfil our duty to support a Children in Care Council which our young people have named 'Ambitious Voice'. In addition, we have a Care Leavers Forum which the young people have named 'UNITE'. The purpose of these forums is to provide children in care and care leavers with a platform where they can raise and review issues of relevance to them regarding the services they receive from North Somerset Council. Ensuring their voices are heard and acted upon to improve the practice and services they receive. It also provides an opportunity for young people leaving care to meet socially for peer support.

We are making changes to improve our participation work with children and Young People. We have started this by planning a re-launch with children and young people aspiration and goals at the heart. We want our children and young people to re-name our participation service as well as bringing in a recognisable logo and branded incentives. We will be focusing on developing more opportunities and events for our children and young people and re-modelling our newsletter and website.

### **4.2 What are children's key issues?**

The main three key issues that children and young people have told us are important to them over the past 12 months are:

- Mental health and emotional support (How we are helped with how we feel inside)
- Bullying in school and college
- Transitions (being helped to make big life changes, such as moving from being a child in care to a young person leaving care)

Alongside the focused areas above the current projects the group have been working on were:

- Developing a policy for North Somerset foster carers regarding mobile phone use.
- Liaison with the virtual school to educate local schools regarding the importance of highlighting differences in the makeup of the modern family within their curriculum. Particularly noting that not all children lived with their birth family.
- Reviewing a letter, the group had designed and sent to social workers within North Somerset. This was to help social workers understand from their point of view how they could better communicate and support children and young people in care. The review was to understand if the letter had resulted in a positive impact in the services the young people received.

### **4.3 Young People's Representation**

We are delighted to confirm that a member of UNITE attended and took part in the National Young People Benchmarking forum. This is a national event organised by the charity Catch 22 to share good practice for children leaving care nationally, amongst local authorities.

UNITE hosted a tea and cake event for our Elected Members and a Christmas Party for young people leaving care

The recent realignment of the structure of Children's Services workforce and teams will ensure we have a stronger focus on participation across Children's Services and will be recruiting a Young Director.

### **4.4 Your Life, Your Care Survey and Our Life, Beyond Care Survey**

North Somerset has had the amazing opportunity of continuing to participate in the Bright Spots Survey's for 2020 as we have in previous years. The survey is conducted by Coram Voice in partnership with the Rees Centre at Oxford University. The survey provides an in-depth understanding to the collective experience of children who are looked after within North Somerset. It also allows us to compare the experience of our children who are looked after to those in other local authorities who participate in the survey, which has grown in membership every year since its beginning.

We have just concluded the Our Life, Beyond Care survey with a really successful return rate of 52% which is incredible given that this was undertaken during the third National Lockdown. We await the survey conclusions and report and will share these as soon as possible.

We have slightly delayed our Your Life, Your Care Survey due to the pandemic and plan to start the 2021 survey in May.

## **5. Financial Implications**

There are no specific implications relating to this report.

## **6. Legal Powers and Implications**

The council provides services to children in need of help and protection as outlined in The Children Act 1989 and related legislation. This includes the provision of accommodation such as foster care, kinship care or residential placements.

The Children and Social Work Act 2017 outlines the duties of local authorities and our partners in terms of Corporate Parenting.



## **7. Climate Change and Environmental Implications**

None

## **8. Risk Management**

No specific risks arise from the content of this report.

## **9. Equality Implications**

No specific equality implications arise from the content of this report.

## **10. Corporate Implications**

As detailed above, corporate parenting has broad impacts across the work of the council. This includes collaboration with the Economic Development Team, Public Health and the Revenues and Benefits Team among others in order to provide a wide range of support

### **Author:**

Carolann James  
Assistant Director – Children's Services

### **Background Papers:**

- Children Act 1989 (<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1989/41/introduction>)
- Children and Social Work Act 2017, Part 1 (<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2017/16/part/1/chapter/1/crossheading/corporate-parenting-principles-for-english-local-authorities/enacted>)
- Mockingbird Family Evaluation Model, Department for Education, September 2020 ([https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/560625/DFE-RR528-Mockingbird\\_family\\_model\\_evaluation.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/560625/DFE-RR528-Mockingbird_family_model_evaluation.pdf))
- North Somerset's Offer for Care Leavers, March 2020 (<https://www.n-somerset.gov.uk/sites/default/files/2020-03/North%20Somerset%27s%20offer%20for%20our%20care%20leavers.pdf>)

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## **North Somerset Council**

### **REPORT TO THE CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S SERVICES POLICY AND SCRUTINY PANEL**

**DATE OF MEETING: 11<sup>TH</sup> MARCH 2021**

**SUBJECT OF REPORT: MONTH 9 CHILDREN'S SERVICES BUDGET MONITOR**

**TOWN OR PARISH: ALL**

**OFFICER/MEMBER PRESENTING: FINANCE BUSINESS PARTNER (ADULTS AND CHILDREN'S SERVICES)**

**KEY DECISION: NO**

### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

- i. That the Panel notes the 2020/21 forecast spend against budget for children's services and the risks and opportunities associated with the medium-term position.

### **1. SUMMARY OF REPORT**

- 1.1 This report summarises and discusses the 2021/21 forecast spend against budget for children's services, highlighting key variances, movements and contextual information. It provides further details on the month 9 report that was presented to the Executive on 11 February 2021.
- 1.2 The report also makes reference to the principles and outcomes associated with the setting of the 2021/22 budget.

### **2. POLICY**

- 2.1 The Council's budget monitoring is an integral feature of its overall financial processes, ensuring that resources are planned, aligned and managed effectively to achieve successful delivery of its aims and objectives. Revenue and capital budgets are set within the context of the council's medium term financial planning process, which supports the Corporate Plan.

### 3. DETAILS

#### Overall position

- 3.1 The growth applied to the Children's Services budgets in 2020/21 has not been sufficient to close the gap between the budget and the demand for placements for looked after children. Historic cost pressures are also continuing in other areas such as support to families with disabled children and legal costs.
- 3.2 In addition, Covid-19 continues to impact areas such as social care, early years nursery provision and the music service. Of the overall £1,179k variance, £909k (77%) is Covid-related, much of which relates to income losses, social care costs and MTFP savings that may not be able to be delivered.
- 3.3 The main areas of overspend are as follows and the key items are discussed in more detail in the following paragraphs. It is worth noting that much of the overspend relates to pressures that are either unavoidable or very difficult to control. Some mitigation has been achieved by claims from specific Covid related Government grants, controlling expenditure on staffing and deferring 2020/21 budget growth to the next financial year.

	<b>P9 Variance £k</b>	<b><i>Covid- related £k</i></b>
Placements for looked after children	854	<b>239</b>
Disabled Children's Services	623	<b>343</b>
Nurseries Private Fee Income	220	<b>220</b>
Legal Costs (children looked after)	113	<b>0</b>
Adoption Inter Agency Fees	65	<b>0</b>
Music Service (Traded Deficit)	41	<b>41</b>
Somerset Education Services Contract	(53)	<b>0</b>
Deferral of 2020/21 Early Intervention Growth	(105)	<b>0</b>
Staffing	(479)	<b>0</b>
Other	(100)	<b>67</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,179</b>	<b>909</b>

A detailed review in Month 10 and beyond, of monitoring in relation to placements for children looked after in, is likely to lead to a reduction in estimated spend as additional forecast placements are reduced; this is likely to reduce the overall forecast overspend.

## **Placements - £854k Adverse**

- 3.4 Children's placements overspent by c. £1.4m in 2019/20, although around £300,000 related to one-off spend. The adjustments made to the budget for 2020/21 were as follows:

<b>Item</b>	<b>£000s</b>
<b>Growth to reflect previous increases in demand</b>	<b>500</b>
Growth to reflect unit cost inflation	150
Savings plans (residential step down)	(200)
Savings plans (income from CCG)	(125)
<b>TOTAL net growth</b>	<b>325</b>

- 3.5 In addition, as part of the MTFP the way in which housing with support is commissioned has been reconfigured, with the majority of services now being funded from housing benefit. Overall this has resulted in savings of £720k in Adult Social Care budgets; £360k of the budget has been retained in Adult Social Care to offset overspends in other areas, and the other £360k of the budget has been transferred to Children's Services to cover the costs of these new arrangements for housing with support, and this is factored into the position reported here.
- 3.6 As can be seen from the table below, the growth in the budget was insufficient to offset the 2019/20 overspend (£1.4m). We have experienced an increase in numbers of high cost placements in supported living, although this is largely offset by a reduction in spend on residential placements, and savings are being made by changed commissioning arrangements, particularly for children aged 16+ approaching leaving care. The forecast spend for 2020/21 is an increase in spend of just £280k (2.7%) when compared with last year and represents an overall projected overspend against budget of £854k as illustrated below.

<b>All</b>	<b>2019/20 £000s</b>	<b>2020/21 P9 £000s</b>	<b>Change £000s</b>	<b>2020/21 P8 £000s</b>
Budget	8,834	9,649	815	9,649
Spend	10,222	10,502	280	10,515
Variance	1,388	<b>854</b>	(535)	<b>866</b>

- 3.7 It is also useful to split the forecast overspend as it relates to either expenditure or income and whether any is estimated to be a result of the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic. This is shown on the table below. Covid-related pressures relate mainly to the likelihood that some MTFP savings may not be achieved in relation to residential step down (£100k) and additional contributions from the CCG in relation to complex cases (£125k).

<b>Overspend Analysis</b>	<b>Covid-related £000s</b>	<b>BAU £000s</b>	<b>TOTAL £000s</b>
Expenditure	114	615	729
Income	125	0	125
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>239</b>	<b>615</b>	<b>854</b>

- 3.8 An analysis of the activity and unit costs in relation to children's placements is shown at Appendix 2
- 3.9 Spending, in part, reflects the total number of children looked after, which, as illustrated in Appendix 3, plateaued at a high of around 235 - 245 during the most part of 2019/20. More recent reductions are unlikely to be sustained as an increase in referrals is expected as lockdown eases and young people return to school. This has been factored in to the 2021/22 budget setting process.

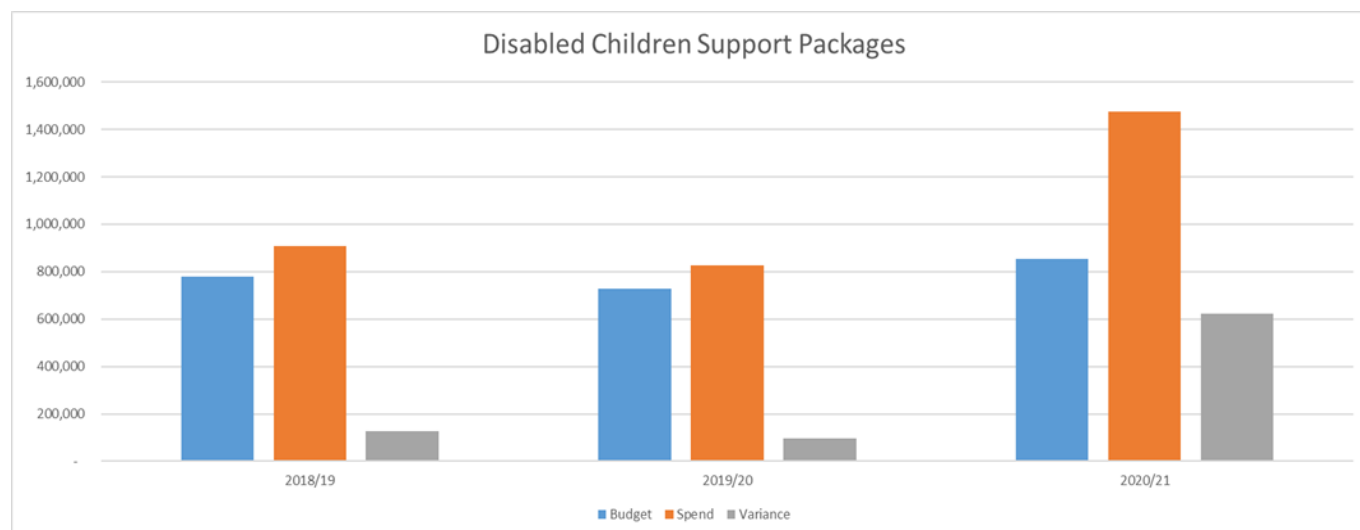
### **Disabled Children's Support Packages - £623k Adverse**

- 3.10 A breakdown of the financial position highlighting the key budgets is detailed below:

Service Area	Budget £000s	Forecast £000s	Variance £000s	<i>Covid- related £000s</i>	19/20 Outturn £000s	Change in Spend £000s
Direct Payments	331,368	725,692	394,324	142,408	406,014	319,677
Complex Packages	279,912	571,825	291,913	200,369	232,259	339,566
Respite	225,796	161,171	(64,624)		164,670	(3,499)
Playschemes & Day Care	15,533	17,168	1,635		22,944	(5,776)
<b>Total</b>	<b>852,609</b>	<b>1,475,856</b>	<b>623,248</b>	<b>342,777</b>	<b>825,887</b>	<b>649,969</b>

- 3.11 Overall net budget growth of £125k was provided in 2020/21, however forecast spend has increased significantly by £650k compared to 2019/20, and this represents an overall projected overspend against budget of £623k. Worthy of note is that included in the 2019/20 outturn is a £127k one-off benefit resulting from accruals for 2018/19 spend (£66k complex packages and £61k Respite).

The chart below shows the financial position over the last few years.



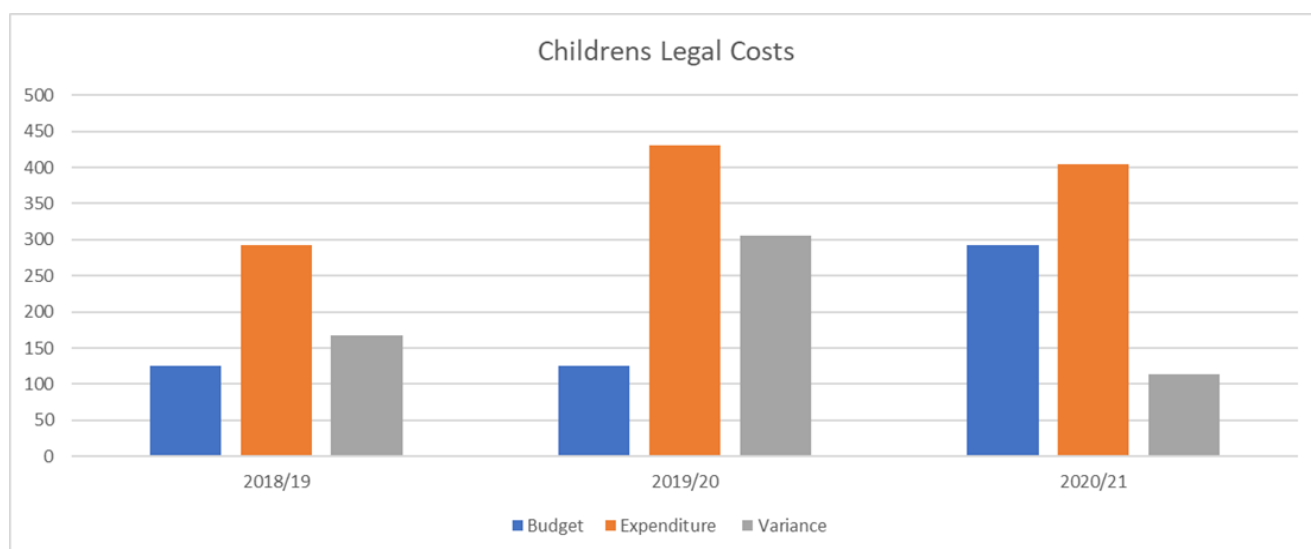
- 3.12 Around 55% of the £623k overspend is estimated to be Covid-related, mainly driven by young people requiring more significant social care support during the pandemic, especially those not attending school. Additional spend relates to increased Direct Payments and increased complex support packages. There is also one joint-funded case with the CCG, where the Council's contribution has increased following a review.

### **Nurseries Private Fee Income - £220k Adverse**

- 3.13 Early Birds is the main Council maintained nursery generating income from private nursery fees. The lockdown measures have had a significant impact on the service, with no uptake of fee-paying places during the initial phase and only a limited number of places from June-20.
- 3.14 Ashcombe and Little Waves are predominantly funded by the Dedicated Schools Grant in relation to free places. Both nurseries also have an element of budgeted private fee income of £71k, which mainly includes contributions from parents towards meals. Similar to Early Birds, this income is being impacted by reduced capacity and shorter sessions being booked
- 3.15 Whilst bookings since September show an increase in the number of fee-paying places, hours being requested are less than before and since September there have been instances whereby parents have subsequently withdrawn their children.
- 3.16 It is also worthy of note that the nursery is mitigating some of these losses by reporting a forecast underspend of £114k on salaries due to non usage of agency and vacant posts; as well as additional government funding of £118k for Covid related losses from fees and charges.

### **Legal Costs - £113k Adverse**

- 3.17 This relates to unavoidable prevention and support legal costs for looked after children (such as court fees, police disclosure fees, medical reports and parenting assessments). The chart below shows the position over the last 3 years.



3.18 Whilst £167k budget growth was given in 20/21, this has not been sufficient to cover the historic cost pressure. As shown in the chart, there was a sharp increase in expenditure in 19/20 and this is forecast to continue in 20/21:

- Similar level of court cases are expected to be issued this year, based on quarter one actual activity numbers and those in the pipeline.
- Due to reduced staffing resources in the team, more cases are being outsourced to external barristers at a higher cost.
- Lack of internal resources and expertise means Children's Social Care are outsourcing the majority of parenting and kinship assessments to agency social workers

## **MITIGATION**

### **Deferral of 2020/21 Early Intervention Growth - £105k Favourable**

3.19 A total of £105k growth in relation to Early Intervention services was applied to the Early Years budgets in 20/21. Due to Covid, spending plans have been delayed until 21/22, and the deferral of the growth formally agreed at the meeting of the Executive at the end of July.

### **Staffing - £479k Favourable (excl. Music Service and Early Intervention included above)**

3.20 The main areas under spending are nurseries and SEND team as discussed above, as well as Locality teams due to vacancies. Despite the current forecast on agency spend showing an increase compared to last year, it is worthy of note that spend has reduced overall over the last few years with the estimated spend in 2020/21 representing a 59% reduction when compared with 2016/17:

<b>2016/17</b>	<b>2017/18</b>	<b>2018/19</b>	<b>2019/20</b>	<b>2020/21</b>
£1,700,734	£1,158,238	£846,913	£377,532	£697,860

## **SAVINGS**

- 3.21 Targeted savings in 2020/21 are largely centred around reductions in children's placements (Step Down Programme) and generating additional contributions from the CCG in relation to children with complex needs. As already described above, there is a likelihood that these savings will not be fully achieved, although the new housing with support arrangements to provide more cost effective and local support to children looked after is providing significant savings in excess of that target.
- 3.22 Initial analysis in relation to the SIB shows a significant reduction in the number of over 10s entering care under section 20. There was a spike during 19/20 in the overall number of looked after children, however the reduction seen in the last quarter in 19/20 has so far been sustained, but it is anticipated that "lockdown" measures may have suppressed demand and an increase is expected later in the year. The trend of numbers of looked after children is shown in Appendix 3.



## MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL PLANNING

- 3.23 The Council has completed its medium term financial planning for 2021/22 and beyond. One of the principles that it will continue to follow will be to close the gap between the budget and the projected spend, particularly in those areas where demand is most difficult to manage. The key areas of overspend detailed in this report feature in terms of budget growth.

### **EDUCATION – DEDICATED SCHOOLS GRANT (£7.568m projected cumulative deficit)**

- 3.24 The Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) is a ring-fenced grant, which must be used in support of the schools' budget. The majority of the funding is for academies and is paid direct to them by the DfE, using the formula agreed by the Strategic Schools Forum (SSF) for funding all schools in North Somerset, whether they be maintained or not.
- 3.25 The DSG is split into four blocks as follows and local authorities may only transfer limited amounts of funding from the schools block to other blocks (usually the High Needs Block) with approval from the SSF and the Secretary of State.

	<b>2020/21</b>
	<b>£</b>
Schools Block	129,968,128
High Needs Block	26,047,648
Early Years Block	11,656,425
Central Services Block	1,888,682
<b>TOTAL DSG</b>	<b>169,560,883</b>

- 3.26 At the end of the 2019/20 financial year there was a deficit of £3.847m, which was transferred into an earmarked reserve rather than impact on the council's general fund balance. The deficit relates entirely to spending on the "high needs block", which funds education for children and young people with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) and reflects the 80% increase in the number of children with the Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs) from 2015 to 2019.

3.27 The table below shows the projected deficit balance to carry forward at year end.

**Dedicated Schools Grant Balance**

Area	£000s	£000s
<b>Brought Forward deficit</b>		<b>3,847</b>
<b>In-year variances:</b>		
- Out of Authority Placements	2,022	
- Top-up Funding	964	
- Other Intensive Support for Vulnerable Learners (mainly Children Missing Education Alternative Provision)	380	
- Special School Place Funding	305	
- Schools Block over spend (overspend on contingencies)	50	
<b>Sum of in-year variances</b>		<b>3,721</b>
<b>Deficit to carry forward</b>		<b>7,568</b>

3.28 The main area of forecast overspend is out of area placements arising from an increase in demand for special schools' placements and a lack of local supply. As shown in the table below, spend is forecast to increase by £1,086k (20%) this year, compared to last, and this is primarily driven by an increase in the average unit cost from £46,898 to £53,110. In addition, the 19/20 overspend was £521k but due to other pressures in the High Needs Block and the requirement to set a balanced budget, the budget has actually decreased in 20/21 by £415k. Overall this has resulted in an estimated £2,022k overspend.

	2019/20	2020/21	Change
FTE	117	124	7
Budget	5,000,000	4,585,234	(414,766)
Spend	5,521,473	6,607,564	1,086,091
Variance	521,473	2,022,330	1,500,857

3.29 Top-up Funding is estimated to be overspent by £964k, mainly in special maintained schools due to an unbudgeted increase in the number of children. It is worth noting that placements in maintained special schools are largely more cost effective than placements in independent non-maintained special schools, so increasing place numbers here mitigates higher increases if placements were made out of area.

3.30 Reducing the increase in spending the high needs block is an issue for local authorities across the country and have been recognised by the Department for Education. In previous years, the overspend was partially mitigated by a significant transfer of funding from the schools block to the high needs block. However, for 2020/21, this has been reduced to just 0.5% of the DSG (c. £650k).

3.31 Medium term measures to mitigate spending increases include the implementation the Specialist and Alternative Provision Review, which includes the following key projects: -

- The submission and progression of a bid to the DfE as part of the Wave 13 SEND and AP Provision Free School Bid, for a 65-place Emotional and Mental Health (SEMH) Special School within North Somerset
- The commencement of the programme and statutory process to deliver an expansion to Baytree Special School to a new site with facilities for 65 new places for pupils with severe and profound learning disabilities.
- The commencement of the programme and statutory process to deliver expansions to Westhaven and Ravenswood Special Schools
- The commencement of the programme and statutory process to deliver two new Specialist Units (for up to 20 pupils) to meet the needs of high functioning pupils with autism on mainstream school sites

3.32 Recent modelling, which takes into account forecasts for the increasing number of young people requiring specialist provision, indicates that, in the absence of a further exceptional funding injection from the government, there is little prospect of reducing the overall deficit, although it is possible that the in-year deficit could be eliminated by 2023/24.

3.32 Officers discussed our deficit management plan with officials from the Department for Education at the end of July. They raised no concerns about our approach and, in particular, were supportive of our intention to lead and organise an Inclusion Summit, to include various partners, in order to develop a strategy and plans to ensure that more children and young people with SEND can remain in mainstream schools with appropriate levels of support.

## **AUTHORS**

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## Appendix 1 - Children's Services Forecast Year End position

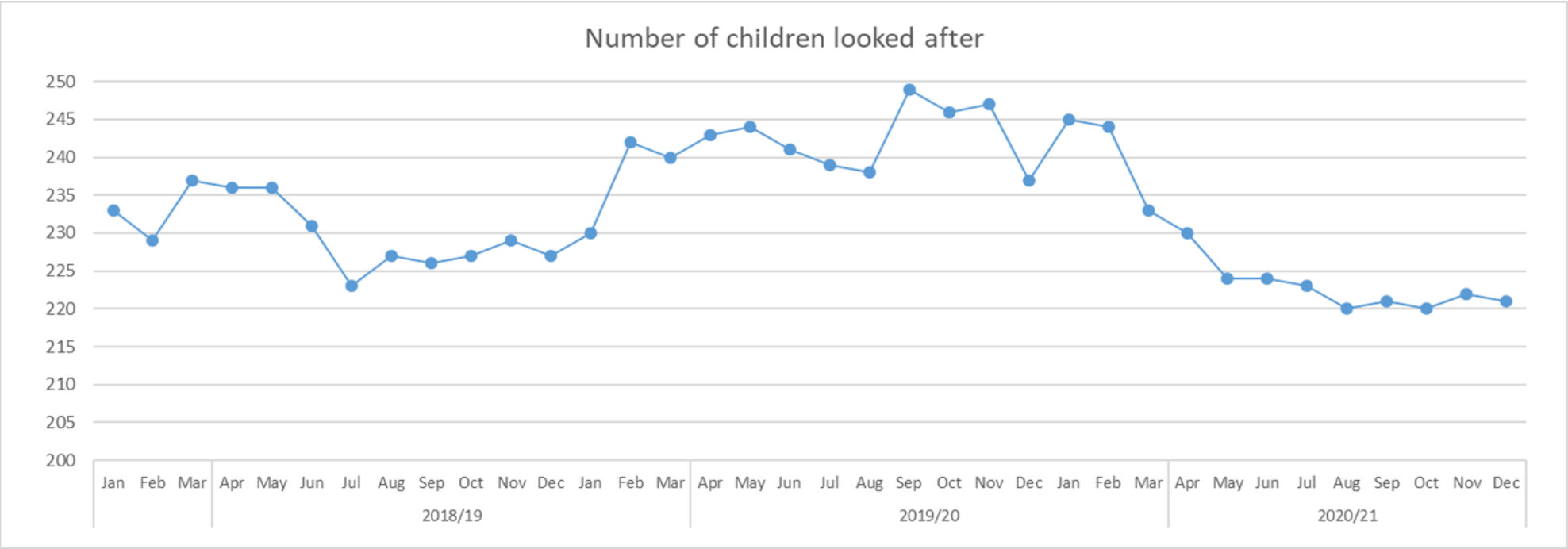
PEOPLE & COMMUNITIES - CHILDREN & YOUNG PEOPLE	REVISED BUDGET				FORECAST				VARIANCE			
	Expenditure £	Income £	Reserves £	Net £	Expenditure £	Income £	Reserves £	Net £	Expenditure £	Income £	Reserves £	Net £
Adoption and Other Allowances	1,862,762	(27,000)	0	1,835,762	2,053,959	(37,000)	0	2,016,959	191,198	(10,000)	0	181,198
Care Leavers and Refugees	434,026	(248,792)	0	185,234	460,537	(404,186)	0	56,350	26,511	(155,394)	0	(128,883)
Children Looked After	10,655,546	(290,586)	0	10,364,960	11,513,919	(453,253)	0	11,060,667	858,373	(162,667)	0	695,707
Disabled Children	971,953	(394,680)	0	577,273	1,646,200	(405,295)	0	1,240,905	674,247	(10,615)	0	663,632
Locality Teams	4,026,968	(35,000)	0	3,991,968	3,908,978	(58,931)	0	3,850,047	(117,990)	(23,931)	0	(141,921)
Safeguarding and Social Work	2,697,838	(112,767)	0	2,585,071	2,833,726	(204,330)	(82,555)	2,546,841	135,888	(91,563)	(82,555)	(38,230)
Youth Justice	1,533,505	(990,296)	(271,165)	272,044	1,532,058	(1,088,572)	(173,090)	270,397	(1,447)	(98,276)	98,075	(1,647)
<b>Support and Safeguarding</b>	<b>22,182,597</b>	<b>(2,099,121)</b>	<b>(271,165)</b>	<b>19,812,311</b>	<b>23,949,377</b>	<b>(2,651,567)</b>	<b>(255,645)</b>	<b>21,042,166</b>	<b>1,766,780</b>	<b>(552,446)</b>	<b>15,520</b>	<b>1,229,854</b>
Childrens Centres	2,347,429	(524,405)	0	1,823,024	2,228,700	(557,073)	(3,635)	1,667,992	(118,729)	(32,668)	(3,635)	(155,032)
CYPS Early Years	2,838,541	(1,935,118)	(58,239)	845,184	2,545,886	(1,721,855)	109,617	933,648	(292,655)	213,263	167,856	88,464
CYPS Special Education	2,068,509	(550,876)	(148,950)	1,368,683	1,933,248	(524,749)	(173,796)	1,234,703	(135,261)	26,127	(24,846)	(133,980)
Music Service	990,209	(990,209)	0	0	892,546	(851,494)	0	41,053	(97,663)	138,715	0	41,053
Strategic Planning and Governance	1,235,847	(780,353)	0	455,494	937,313	(485,587)	(34,928)	416,798	(298,534)	294,766	(34,928)	(38,696)
<b>Learning and Achievement</b>	<b>9,480,535</b>	<b>(4,780,961)</b>	<b>(207,189)</b>	<b>4,492,385</b>	<b>8,537,693</b>	<b>(4,140,758)</b>	<b>(102,742)</b>	<b>4,294,194</b>	<b>(942,842)</b>	<b>640,203</b>	<b>104,447</b>	<b>(198,192)</b>
CYPS Strategy	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
CYPS Support Services	8,072,434	(592,928)	0	7,479,506	8,236,015	(581,998)	(27,294)	7,626,723	163,581	10,930	(27,294)	147,217
<b>Strategy and Directorate</b>	<b>8,072,434</b>	<b>(592,928)</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>7,479,506</b>	<b>8,236,015</b>	<b>(581,998)</b>	<b>(27,294)</b>	<b>7,626,723</b>	<b>163,581</b>	<b>10,930</b>	<b>(27,294)</b>	<b>147,217</b>
<b>P&amp;C - CHILDREN &amp; YOUNG PEOPLE TOTAL</b>	<b>39,735,566</b>	<b>(7,473,010)</b>	<b>(478,354)</b>	<b>31,784,203</b>	<b>40,723,085</b>	<b>(7,374,323)</b>	<b>(385,680)</b>	<b>32,963,082</b>	<b>987,519</b>	<b>98,687</b>	<b>92,674</b>	<b>1,178,880</b>

## Appendix 2 – Children’s Placements Activity and Unit Cost Data

	2019/20 budget	2019/20 actuals	2019/20 variance from budget	2020/21 budget	budget change 2019/20 to 2020/21	2020/21 forecast this period	Change on 2019/20	Variance to budget
<b>In-house</b>								
- FYEs	107.72	74.14	-33.58	83.00	-24.72	76.39	2.25	-6.61
- Average Unit Cost	21,450	17,663	-3,787	17,859	-3,591	16,097	-1,566	-1,761
- TOTAL COST	1,478,456	1,309,555	-168,901	1,482,263	3,807	1,229,659	-79,896	-252,604
<b>IFA</b>								
- FYEs	66.00	64.35	-1.65	63.00	-3.00	58.76	-5.59	-4.24
- Average Unit Cost	41,004	43,239	2,236	44,117	3,114	42,602	-637	-1,515
- TOTAL COST	2,706,231	2,782,445	76,214	2,779,394	73,163	2,503,311	-279,134	-276,083
<b>Residential</b>								
- FYEs	14.99	15.97	0.98	11.00	-3.99	14.55	-1.42	3.55
- Average Unit Cost	170,944	229,935	58,991	240,227	69,283	210,121	-19,814	-30,106
- TOTAL COST	2,561,851	3,672,054	1,110,203	2,642,492	80,641	3,057,261	-614,793	414,769
<b>Supported Living</b>								
- FYEs	5.42	7.45	2.03	5.00	-0.42	12.99	5.54	7.99
- Average Unit Cost	105,794	169,182	63,388	241,932	136,138	176,248	7,066	-65,684
- TOTAL COST	573,826	1,260,406	686,580	1,209,659	635,833	2,289,465	1,029,059	1,079,806
<b>Other Areas</b>								
- FYEs	108.83	109.16	0.33	109.25	0.42	117.89	8.73	8.64
- Average Unit Cost	13,908	10,971	-2,937	14,051	144	12,069	1,098	-1,982
- TOTAL COST	1,513,517	1,197,611	-315,906	1,535,099	21,582	1,422,798	225,187	-112,301
<b>TOTAL</b>								
- FYEs	302.96	271.07	-31.89	271.25	-31.71	280.58	9.51	9.33
- Average Unit Cost	29,159	37,710	8,551	35,572	6,413	37,431	-279	1,859
- TOTAL COST	8,833,881	10,222,071	1,388,190	9,648,907	815,026	10,502,494	280,424	853,588

NB - The cohort of children that are included in the Cost and Volume data are not exactly the same cohort as those children who are “looked after” (the number of these amounting to 221 at the end of December 2020). The main difference is that we include in the cost and volume analysis those children who are subject to a Special Guardianship Order; these children are not “looked after”, but the guardians are in receipt of an allowance. On average, these children number around 73.

Appendix 3 – Number of Children Looked After



## **North Somerset Council**

### **REPORT TO THE CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S SERVICES POLICY AND SCRUTINY PANEL**

**DATE OF MEETING: 11 MARCH 2021**

**SUBJECT OF REPORT: PERFORMANCE MONITORING**

**TOWN OR PARISH: ALL**

**OFFICER/MEMBER PRESENTING: CAROLANN JAMES – ASSISTANT  
DIRECTOR, CHILDREN'S SUPPORT & SAFEGUARDING**

**KEY DECISION: NO**

### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

The Panel is asked to note the performance information presented in this report and to give comment on both areas for improvement and areas of good performance.

### **1. SUMMARY OF REPORT**

The Children and Young People's Services Policy and Scrutiny Panel receive regular performance management reports to help members evaluate the extent to which the council and its partners are achieving key plans and objectives for children and young people's services, and to provide appropriate challenge and suggestions to improve performance.

This report presents the following standard items:

- any recent Ofsted inspections of council services
- an analysis of the performance of the relevant Key Corporate Performance Indicators (KCPIs) for Quarter 1 2020/21, that fall under the remit of the Panel.
- an overview of the performance of various Key Service Measures for Support and Safeguarding services within the council.

### **2. POLICY**

The council's Performance Management Framework includes a requirement for quarterly reporting of our performance position so that members and officers can monitor progress against our key plans and objectives and take appropriate action where progress is below target or needs additional focus.

### 3. DETAILS

#### INSPECTION AND IMPROVEMENT

There has been no Children's Services Ofsted inspection since March 2020.

##### North Somerset Youth Offending Service

- Inspection date: 14 September 2020
- Report published: 15 December 2020
- Overall grade is 'Good':

<https://www.justiceinspectorates.gov.uk/hmiprobation/inspections/nsomersetsmallyot>

For all North Somerset schools (as of February 2021):

##### Primary schools

- 16% Outstanding (10)
- 71% Good (45)
- 8% Requires Improvement (5)
- 3% Inadequate (2)
- 2% not yet inspected (1)

##### Secondary schools

- 37% Outstanding (4)
- 18% Good (2)
- 37% Requires Improvement (4)
- 0% Inadequate (0)
- 8% not yet inspected (1)

##### Special schools and PRUs

- 100% Good (4)

#### KEY CORPORATE PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

Each year the Directorates within North Somerset Council produce an Annual Directorate Statement (ADS). This in effect translates the commitments in the North Somerset Corporate Plan into a series of Directorate level commitments. These commitments are then measured by a combination of Key Projects and Key Corporate Performance Indicators (KCPIs). North Somerset Council Scrutiny Panels are then updated quarterly with all KCPIs related to their area of work (fig 1.1 and table 1.1).

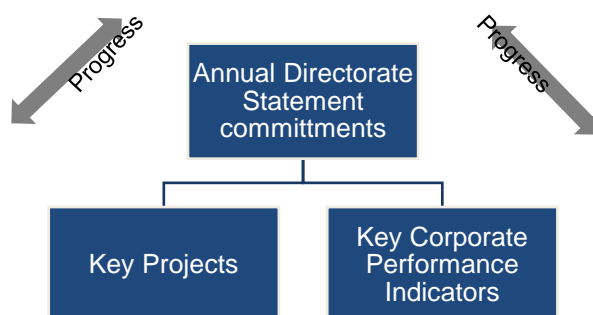


Fig 1.1 measuring corporate performance

Table 1.1 shows the Quarter 3 position of all KCPIs related to the Children and Young People's Scrutiny Panel.



EO: Equality Objective Table 1.1	Year-End 2019/20	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Predicted Year-End Status	Comments	National benchmarking
The percentage of children's case audits graded good or outstanding	38.9%	DNA	DNA	87.0%		GREEN	<i>Performance is better than target</i>	Local measure
The number of early help interventions	1,050 families	1,035 families	911 families	1,028 families		GREEN	<i>Exceeding the annual target of 1,000 families.</i>	Local measure
The percentage of care leavers who are EET (in education, employment or training) (aged 19 - 21 years) <b>EO</b>	46.5%	37.0%	43.0%	44.0%		RED	Targeted work is being undertaken through our children's improvement plan to address this. This includes auditing of those who are NEET, working within North Somerset and partner agencies through kickstart and support through the SIB RREBBOT west as well as targeted work in the leaving care team.	England, 53% South West, 53%
The percentage of care leavers who are EET (in education, employment or training) who are education / work ready (aged 19 - 21 years) <b>EO</b>	63.9%	51.5%	55.0%	56.0%		RED		
The percentage of care leavers who are in suitable accommodation <b>EO</b>	tbc	88.0%	88.0%	89.0%		GREEN	We continue to drive performance forward in this area, as we are aware, we can always improve and develop further, and we work with our commissioning colleagues closely on this.	England, 85% South West, 85%
The rate of children looked after entering care (overall) <b>EO</b>	53.7 per 10,000	52 per 10,000	50 per 10,000	51 per 10,000		AMBER	No significant change since last quarter. Further analysis is in train.	England, 67 South West, 57
The number of North Somerset foster carers	62	65	63	62		GREEN	Our recruitment this year is on target to deliver 18 new foster households, which is a significant improvement in previous years.	Local measure
The number of new SEND school places to be commissioned in the next five years based on agreed capital schemes <b>EO</b>	18	18	18	18		GREEN	All agreed schemes for September 2020 have been delivered.	Local measure

EO: Equality Objective

Table 1.1

	Year-End 2019/20	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Predicted Year-End Status	Comments	National benchmarking
KS4: the gap between FSM and Non-FSM Attainment 8 score <b>EO</b>	15.8			15.4		GREEN		England, 13.7 South West, 15.4
Child Poverty Indicator: The percentage of children in child poverty <b>EO</b>	22.3%			22.0%		not targeted	Data relates to the 2018/19 financial year.	England, 31.0% South West, 25.0%
The number of children and families open to Early Help and CSC where domestic abuse is the predominant factor <b>EO</b> (note: figures currently do not include Early Help)	n/a	341	303	276		not targeted	Figure relates to CSC DA identified, not EH.	Local measure

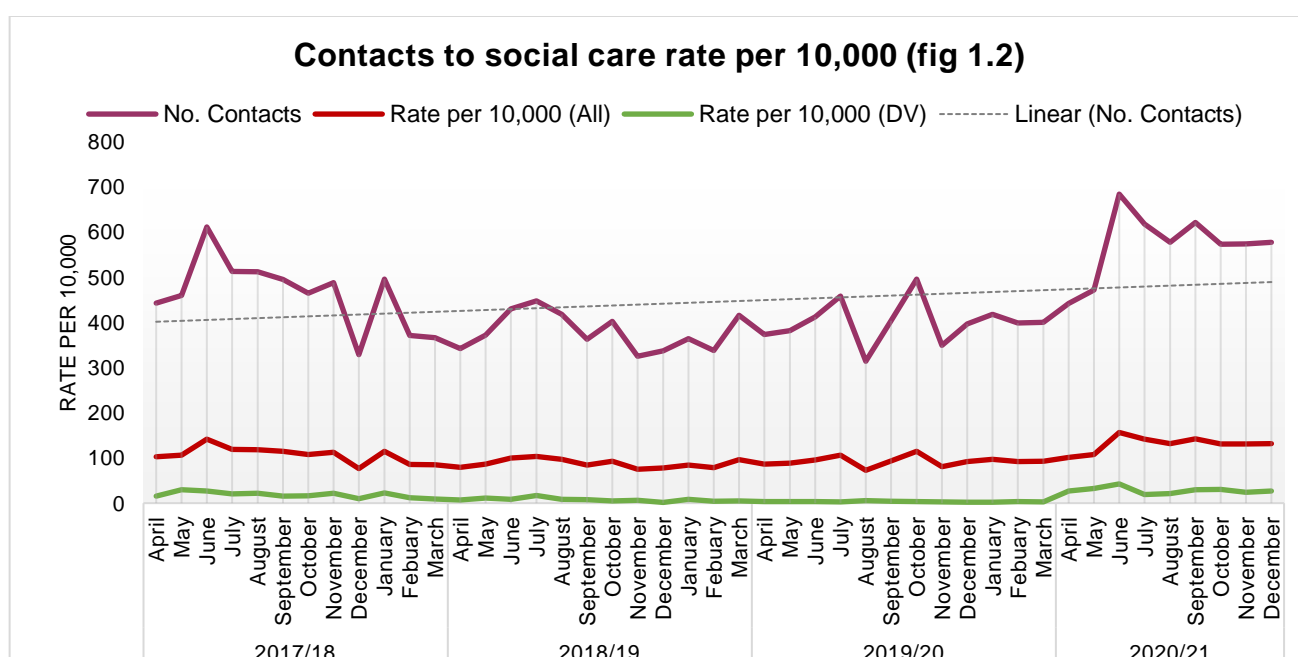
## KEY SERVICE MEASURES FOR SUPPORT AND SAFEGUARDING

### Contacts

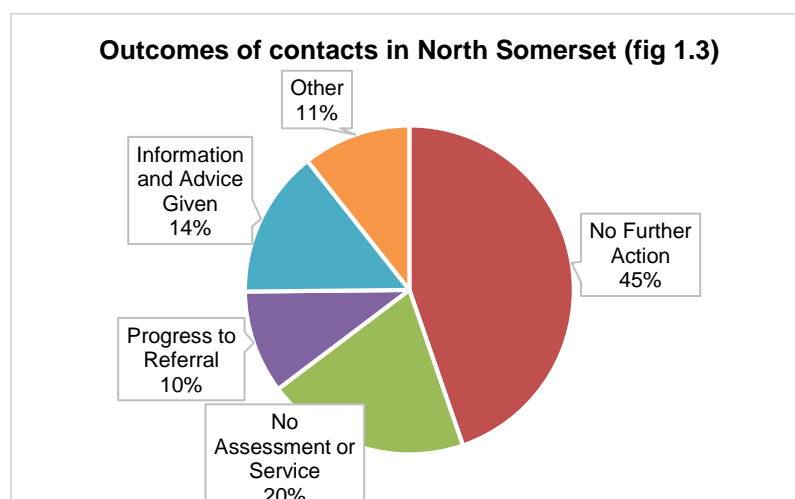
Where there is a need for advice and / or information or support from Children's Services a contact is made. From February 1<sup>st</sup>, 2021 we have operated a single 'Front Door' for all new contacts ensuring children receive the Right Help, Right Time. For the past three years North Somerset's has reported a declining trend on contact numbers.

However, since Quarter 1 of 2020/21 there has been an increase in the number of contacts. During Q3 2020/21, the average rate of contacts per 10,000 children was 131 compared to a rate of 96 contacts during the same time last year.

The number and rate of domestic abuse (DA) contacts has also experienced a significant increase since Quarter 1 2020/21. After a peak of 445 DA contacts during Q1 2020/21, we have seen a slight reduction in numbers during Q2 and Q3 2020/21 with 308 and 355 DA contacts respectively. This remains much higher than the previous year 2019/20 when on average we had 43 DA contacts per quarter.



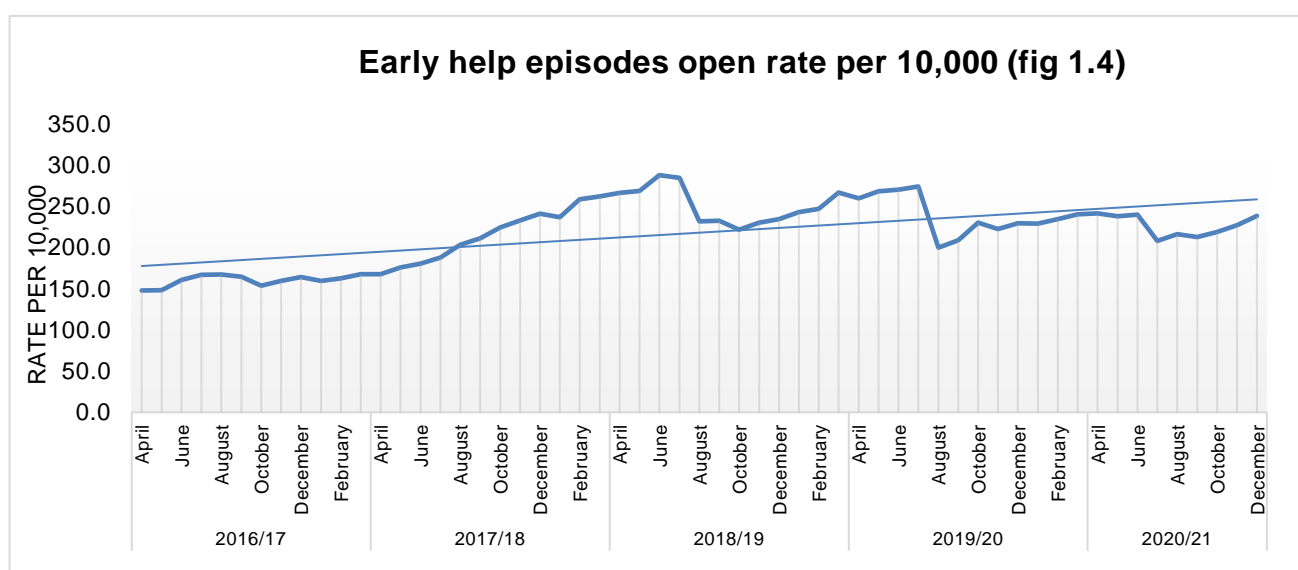
Outcomes for contacts to Family Support and Safeguarding vary (fig 1.3), but as at the end of Quarter 3 the main outcomes were: No Further Action (45%), No Assessment or Service (20%), Progress to referral (10%), Information and Advice Given (14%).



## Family Wellbeing (Early Help)

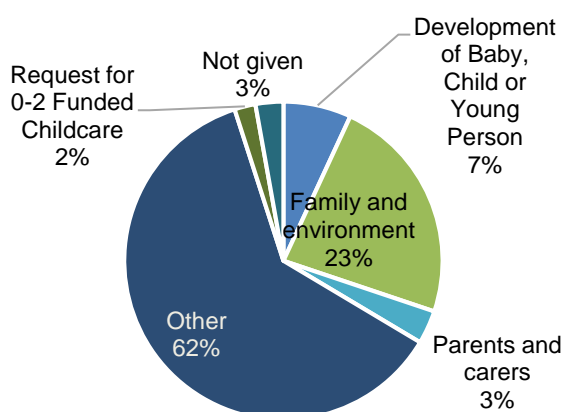
Across the partnership of both statutory and voluntary sectors we can all work together, share information, and put the child and their family at the centre, providing effective support to help them solve problems and find solutions at an early stage to prevent problems escalating. There may be times when the needs of the family are such that intensive early help or specialist statutory intervention is required. All children and young people will receive Universal Services, such as maternity services at birth; health visiting, school nursing and family support delivered from our Children and Family Hubs; school and youth services for older children. Universal Services seek, together with parents and families, to meet all the needs of children and young people so that they are happy, healthy and able to learn and develop securely. Universal services are provided as of right to all children, including those with additional and intensive needs.

However, some children, either because of their own additional needs or because of less advantageous circumstances, will need extra help to be healthy, safe and to achieve their potential. In North Somerset, we want to offer help and support to these children and their families at an early point, in a voluntary way that does not leave them feeling singled out as different. Early help may occur at any point in a child or young person's life and includes both support and interventions early in life as well as support and interventions early in the development of a problem. We seek to offer support early to help families solve problems or to reduce the impact of problems that have already emerged. To do this we need to work together in an open way with the child and their family to identify strengths and needs, to find practical and achievable solutions, and to provide the right amount of information, advice and support providing Right Help, Right Time, Right Place. We have following realignment of Children's Services renamed North Somerset's Council early help provision to Family Wellbeing and our Family Wellbeing (Early Help) service will support children and their families at an intensive level of need (just below the level of need for statutory intervention) as well as providing supports across both the universal level of need such as children's centres and nurseries.



At the end of Quarter 3 there were 1,028 open Early Help episodes. This is a rate of 237 per 10,000 children and is an increase on the previous quarter where there were 917 open episodes.

**Reasons for Early Help requests (fig 1.5)**



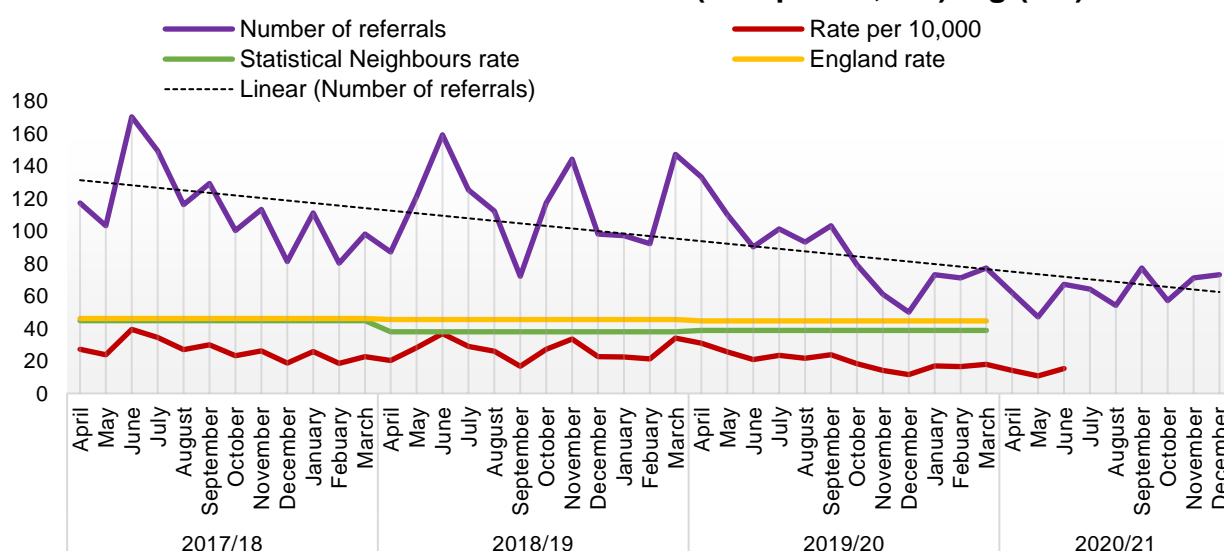
In Quarter 3, 61% of all open episodes were categorized as 'other', following a similar trend to the previous two quarters. Work is underway to better capture the 'need' that is currently described as 'other'. 23% of episodes were for Family and Environment and 7% were for Development of baby, child or young person. 3% of episodes had no given reason.

## Referrals

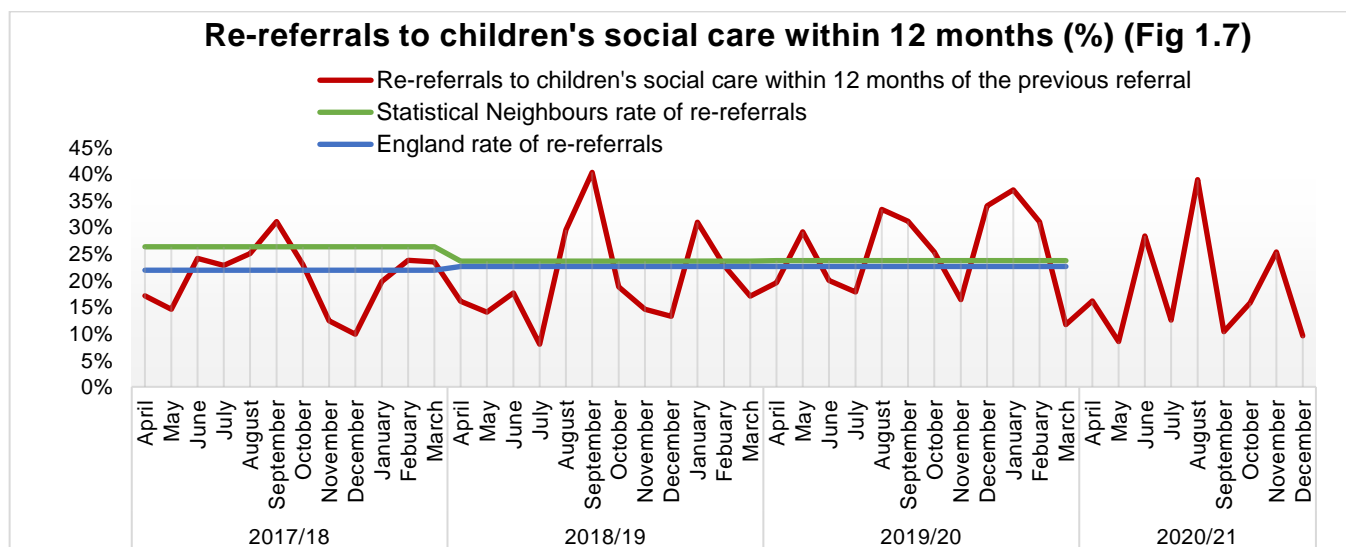
If a contact is made which requires further support beyond advice and / or information and requires statutory intervention, then it will progress to a referral to one of our Family Support and Safeguarding teams. The number and rate of referrals varies by month. Whilst the annual averages for 2017/18 and 2018/19 remained similar at 114, the 2019/20 annual average reported 87 referrals (a 24% reduction), and the trend line in fig 1.6 indicates a steady downward direction.

The North Somerset referral rates continue to remain lower than both our statistical neighbours and the national rate (fig 1.6). During Quarter 3 2020/21, the average rate of referrals was 15.3 per 10,000 children which is slightly above the average referral rate of 14.7 during Quarter 3 2019/20. Referral outcomes vary but during Quarter 3, 99% went on to receive some further service and 1% closed with no further action.

**Referrals to children's social care (rate per 10,000) Fig.(1.6)**



Re-referrals is a measure of where children with a previous referral in the last 12 months are re-referred into Family Support and Safeguarding. During Quarter 3 2020/21, the average rate of re-referrals was 17% which compares to 25% for the same period in 2019/20 (fig 1.7). The year to date average rate for 2020/21 is 18% which is significantly lower than the average rate of re-referrals for 2019/20 at 26%, and also lower than the statistical neighbours and national average.

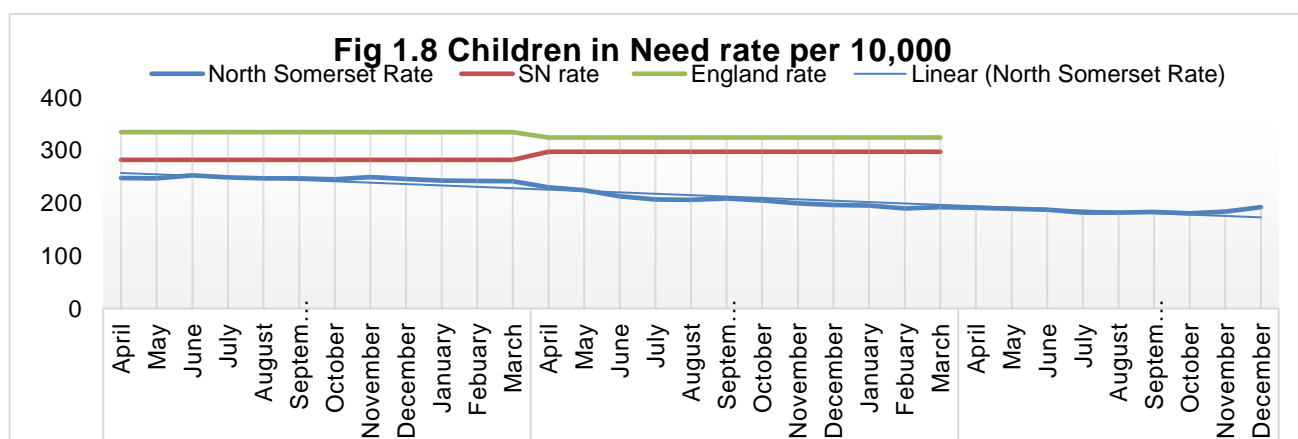


## Children in Need

A child can be considered in need if:

- there is a need for statutory services to achieve or maintain a reasonable standard of health or development
- there is a need for statutory services to prevent significant or further harm to health or development
- they are registered disabled.

At the end of Quarter 3 2020/21, the rate was 192 Children in Need per 10,000 children. The numbers and rates have remained relatively stable and continues to be significantly lower than our statistical neighbours and England rate (fig 1.8).

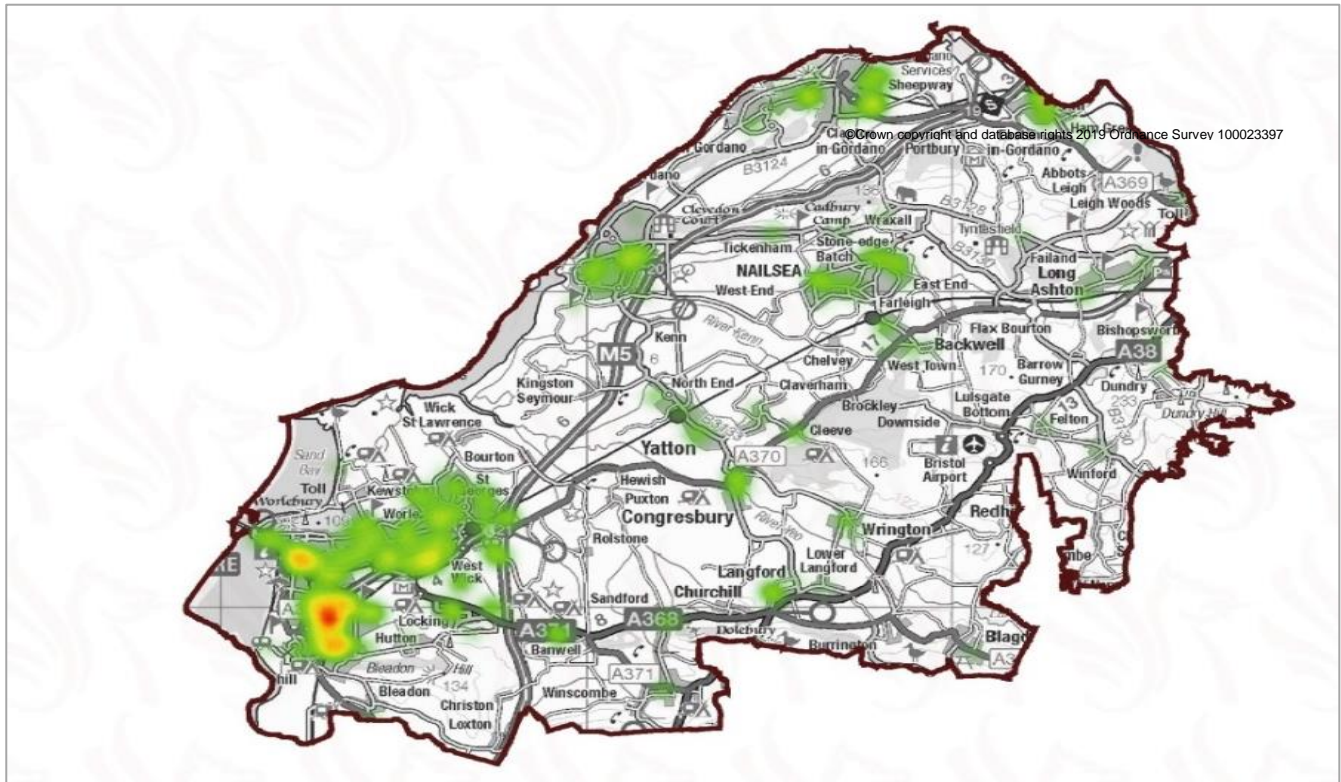


A hotspot analysis of Children in Need was undertaken at the end of the 2019/20 financial year.

Fig 1.9

Fig 1.9 shows several significant hotspots within Weston-super-Mare but also smaller hotspots across other areas of the district.

#### Children in Need Q4 2019/20

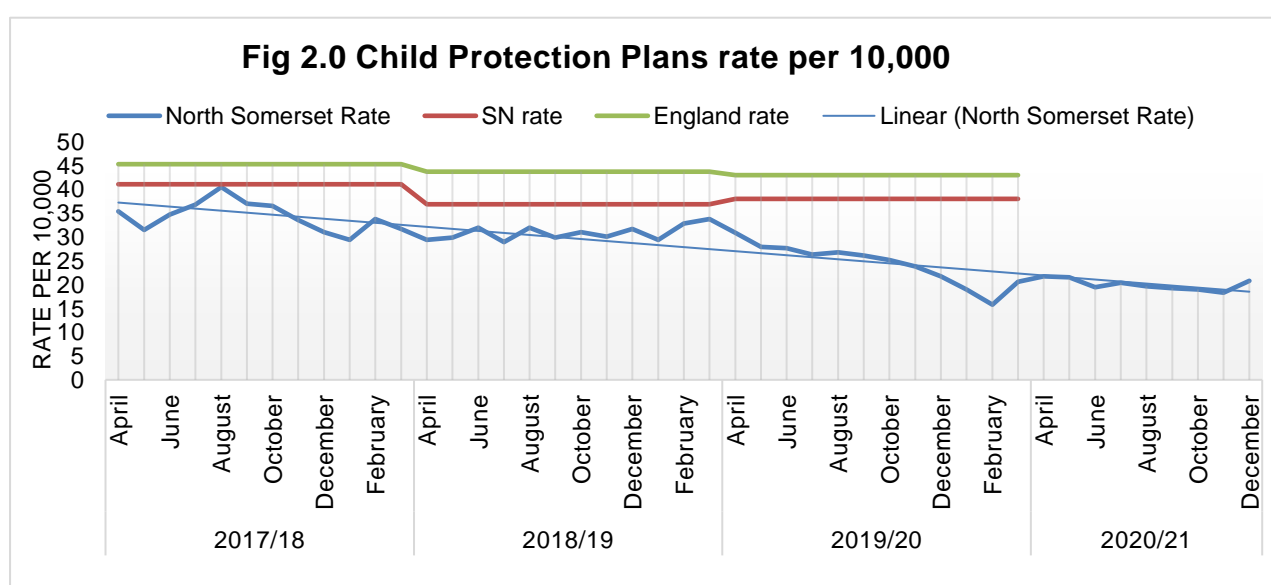




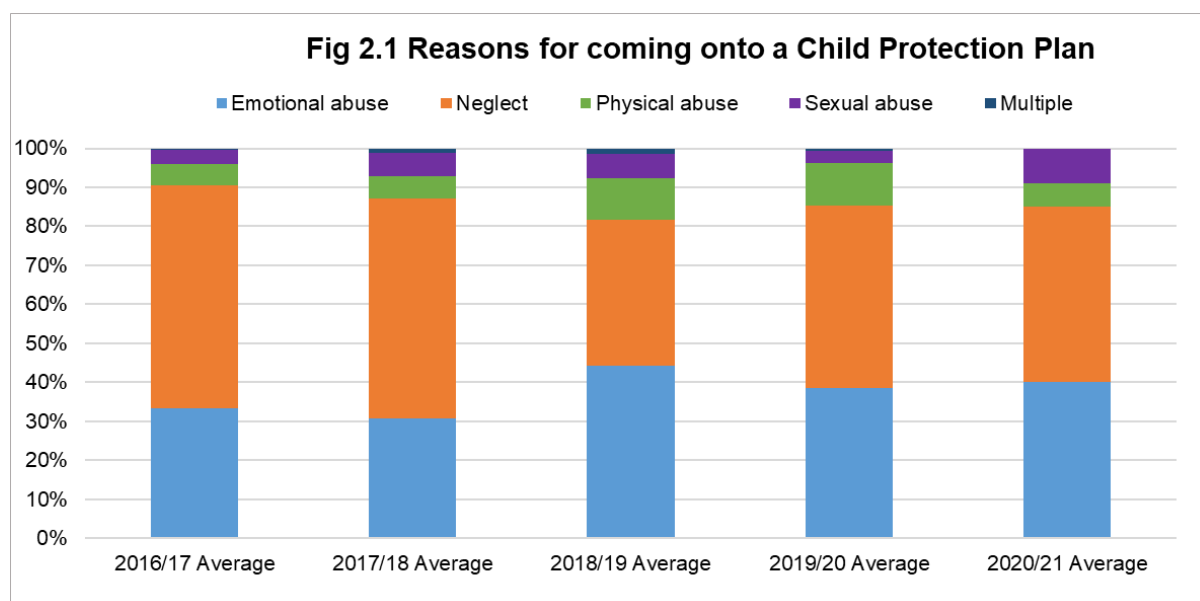
## Child Protection Plans

Some children are in need of statutory intervention because they are suffering or are likely to suffer significant harm. In this case a Child Protection Conference is held. If the Child Protection Conference decides that the child is suffering, or is likely to suffer significant harm, the local authority and partner agencies working with the child and their family will develop a Child Protection Plan and the child will be subject of this child protection plan. The child protection plan sets out how the child can be kept safe, the strengths, the concerns and what needs to change and in what timescales.

At the end of Quarter 3 2020/21, there were 91 children subject to a Child Protection Plan. Over the past three years there has been a continual downward trend (linear) in the rate of children subject to Child Protection Plan and the rate is significantly below the national rate and the rate of our statistical neighbours, (fig 2.0).



The principal reasons for children being subject of Child Protection Plans continue to be emotional abuse and neglect, followed by physical abuse and then sexual abuse.

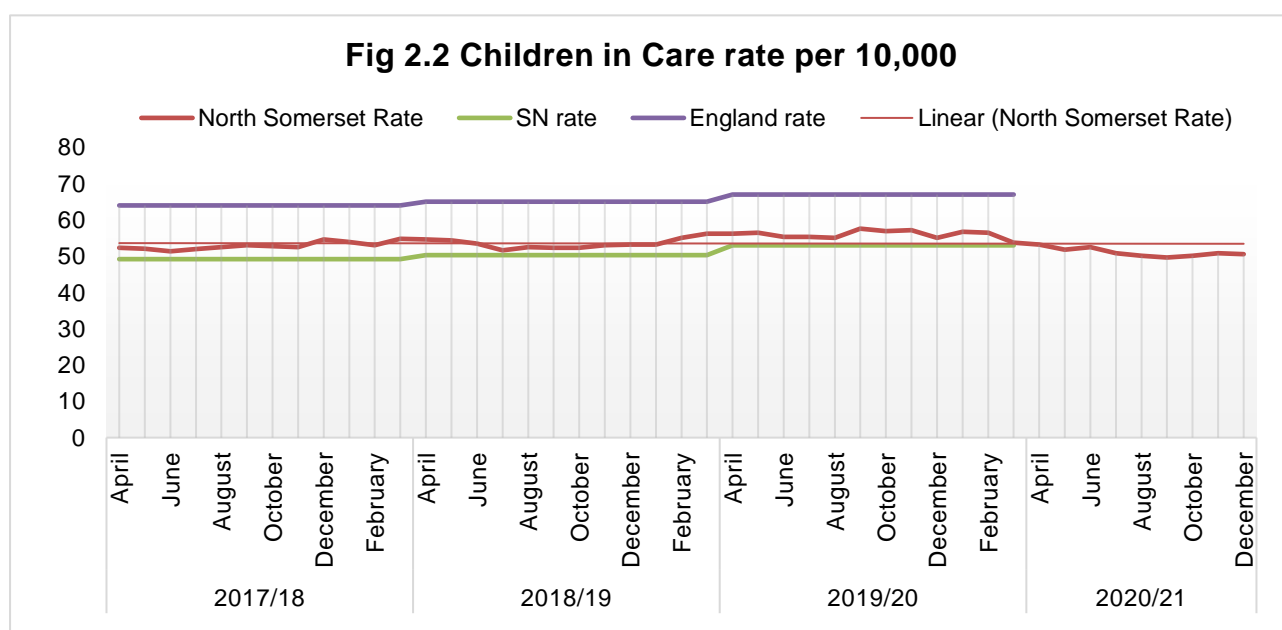




## Children in Care

In some cases, it is necessary for some children for their own safety and wellbeing to enter our care. This will be either through a voluntary arrangement with the parents under section 20 of the Children Act where parental responsibility remains fully with the parent or through a court order, which gives the local authority a share of parental responsibility. In statutory terms these children are referred to as 'looked after' but we prefer to refer to them as children in our care. Young people cease to be looked after on reaching their eighteenth birthday, if they have not ceased previously. Senior managers oversee all requests for a child to become looked after. Every such child's care plan is reviewed to ensure that their care plan meets their needs and wishes, and plans are being progressed and permanency for that child is secured at the earliest opportunity.

At the end of Quarter 3 there were 221 children in care, this equates to a rate of 50.6 children per 10,000 which is lower than both the national and statistical neighbours' rates. It is noted that of the of the 221 children 15 were unaccompanied asylum-seeking children.



The reasons for a child entering our care has remained fairly steady over the past few year (table 1.2), with 'abuse or neglect' being the main reasons followed by 'family in acute stress', 'family dysfunction' and 'absent parenting (and other)'.

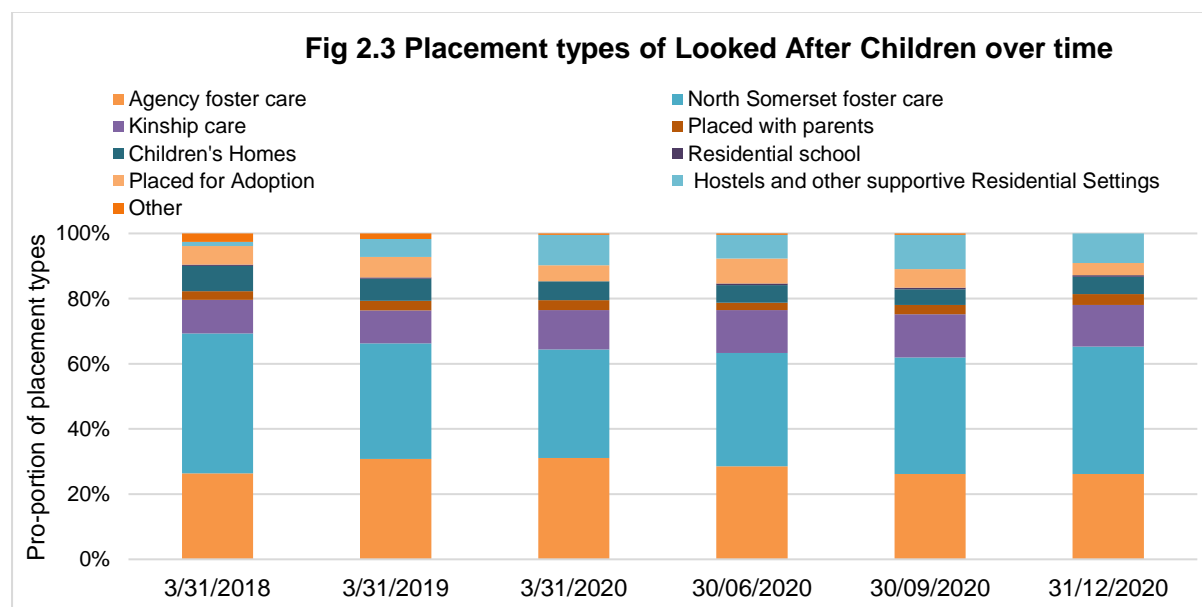
(table 1.2)	Abuse or Neglect	Disability	Parent Illness or Disability	Family in Acute Stress	Family Dysfunction	Absent Parenting and other
<b>2016/17</b>	43.0%	3.8%	2.7%	25.8%	19.1%	5.5%
<b>2017/18</b>	40.8%	3.4%	2.2%	26.9%	20.6%	6.0%
<b>2018/19</b>	40.4%	3.6%	3.1%	29.3%	17.5%	6.0%
<b>2019/20</b>	39.6%	3.5%	3.7%	29.7%	16.3%	7.2%
<b>2020/21</b>	37.5%	2.6%	3.4%	30.3%	16.1%	10.1%

## Placement types of Children in Care

There are various arrangements for the living arrangements for children in care, known collectively as 'placements'. Nearly two thirds (62% at the end of Quarter 1 2020/21) of North Somerset's children in care live in foster care. Other placement types include children's homes, supported independence and adoption placements.

Fig 2.3 provides snapshot figures of where our children in care have been placed at the end of Quarter 3 in 2020/21, compared to the previous two quarters in 2020/21 and the year-endings for 2017/18, 2018/19 and 2019/20.

The percentage of independent foster carers (IFA's) has remained relatively stable during the last four years, fluctuating between 30% and 25%. As at Quarter 3 2020/21 37.1% of looked after children were placed with North Somerset foster carers, this is an increase of a 2.6% point compared to the previous reporting period in fig.2.3.



At the end of Quarter 3 2020/21, (where specified i.e. excluding adoptive placements), 32% of children were placed outside of North Somerset which is similar to the previous quarter. A high proportion (65%), almost two thirds, of children looked after by agency foster carers are outside of North Somerset, again similar to the previous quarter.

## Foster Carers

North Somerset Council has within its own resource 105 registered foster carers.

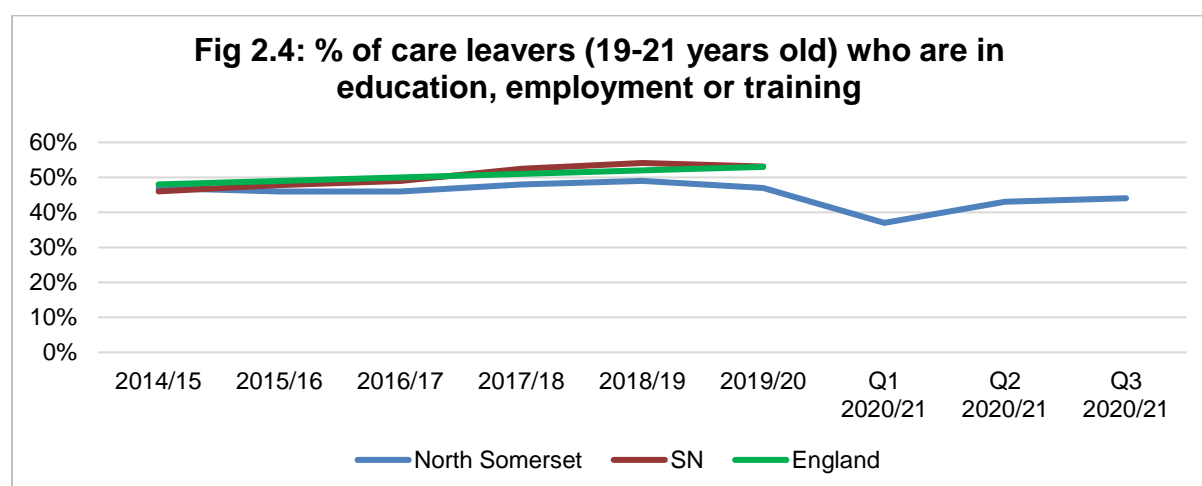
As of the end of Quarter 3 there were:

- 63 registered households that are known as mainstream foster carers that are 'sourced' by the council
- 32 kinship carers that are friends or family of the looked after child
- 6 Supported Lodgings households that provide support for a small number of older young people.
- 4 short term respite carers (Family link scheme) providing short term respite care for a number of children in need

## Care Leavers

The council has responsibility to continue to help and support a number of young people that that were previously in their care. Key areas of support are in housing and accommodation and employment and education.

At the end of Quarter 3 2020/21, 44% of the care leavers aged 17-21 years (41 out of 93) were in employment, education or training (EET). The rate for the past three quarters of 2020/21 have been noticeably lower than those of the previous three years (fig 2.4).

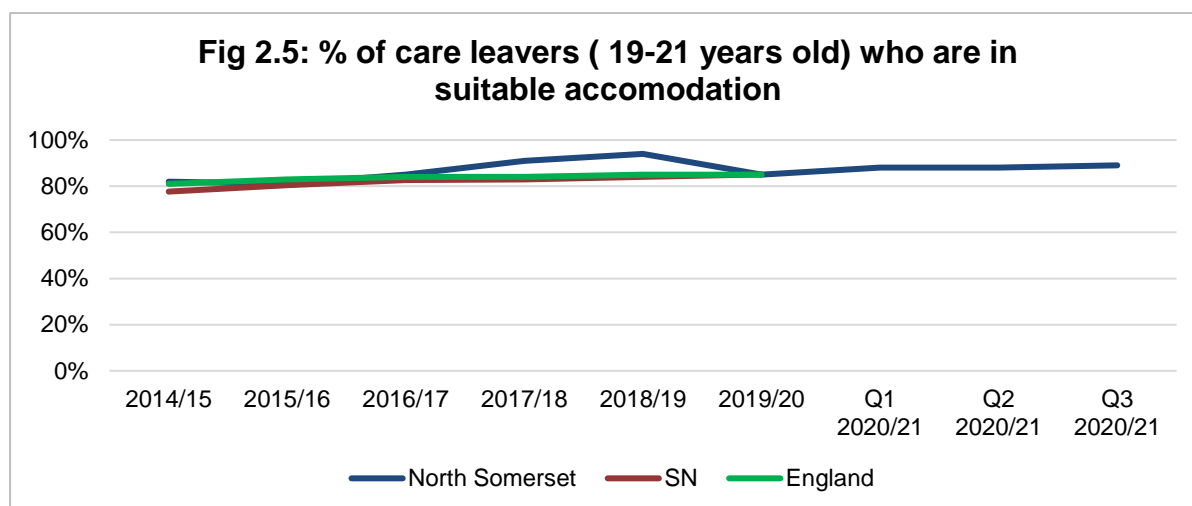


There are varying reasons for young people being not in education training or employment (NEET) including emotional and mental health needs, young parents caring for children, in custody, previously unaccompanied asylum-seeking children who have not been given leave to remain in the UK post 18.

There is targeted work being undertaken through our children's improvement plan to address this. This includes working across the partnership to consider what further

steps we can take to both prepare our young people for employment and support them into education, employment or training (EET). Additionally, through support services such as of Kickstart and support through the Social Impact Bond (SIB) RREBBOT west as well as targeted work in the leaving care team.

Care Leavers in suitable accommodation has ranged between 85% and 94% over the last three years seeing a sustained rate of 85% and above over the past 12 months. This compares favourably against the most recent statistical neighbour and national averages of 85% (fig 2.5).



## Contextual safeguarding

Contextual Safeguarding is an approach to understanding, and responding to, young people's experiences of significant harm beyond their families. It recognises that the different relationships that young people form in their neighbourhoods, schools and online can feature violence and abuse. Parents and carers can at times have little influence over these contexts, and young people's experiences of extra-familial abuse can undermine parent-child relationships.

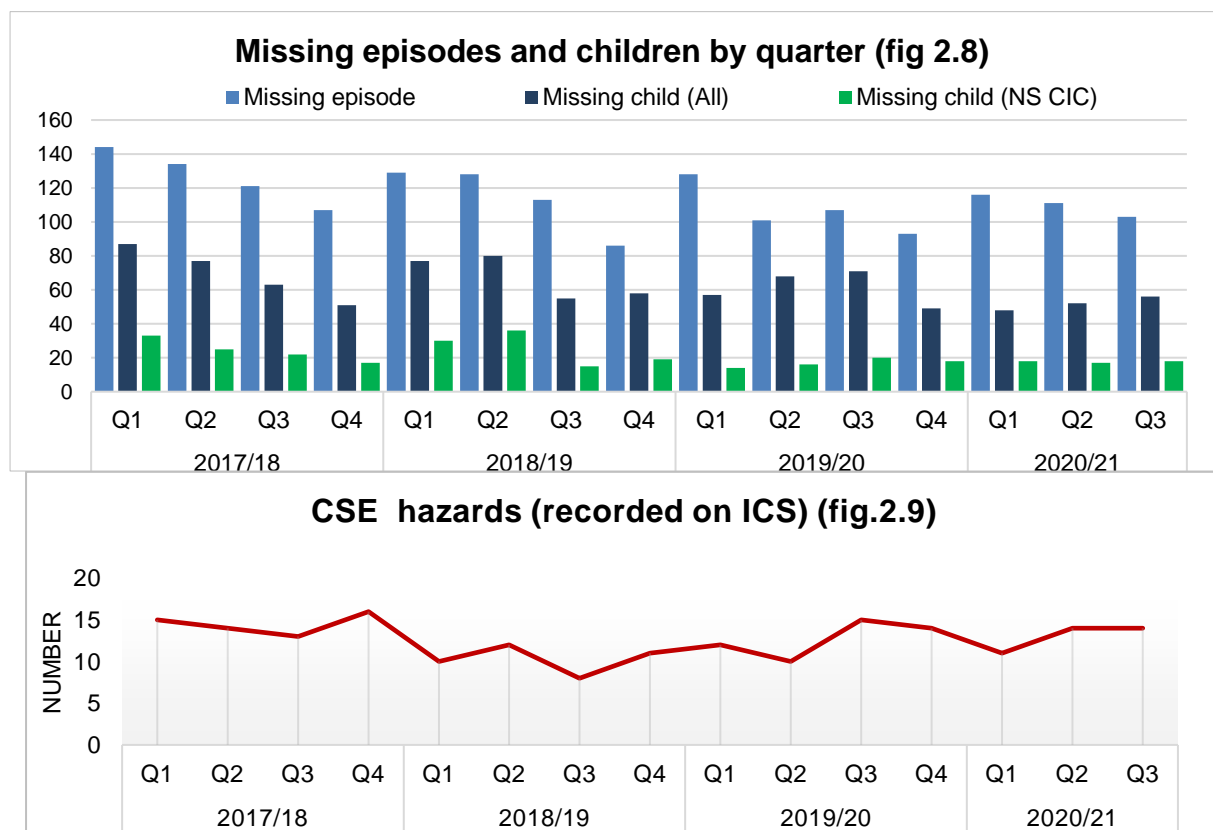
Therefore, children's social care practitioners, child protection systems and wider safeguarding partnerships need to engage with individuals and sectors who do have influence over/within extra-familial contexts, and recognise that assessment of, and intervention with, these spaces are a critical part of safeguarding practices. Contextual Safeguarding, therefore, expands the objectives of child protection systems in recognition that young people are vulnerable to abuse beyond their front doors. Work on this area is another key area of our children's improvement plan working across the partnership.

## Missing Children

During Quarter 3 2020/21, there were 103 episodes of children going missing relating to 56 children. Of these 56 children 18 (32%) were children in care. This compares to 20 children in care who went missing during the same time last year.

## Child Sexual Exploitation

Fig. 2.9 shows the number of open hazards on the children's recording system (LCS) at the end of each quarter. At the end of Quarter 3 2020/21 there were 14 open child sexual exploitation hazards. This compares to 15 open hazards same time last year.



**To note:**

**List of statistical neighbours (from LAIT, updated March 2019)**

- Worcestershire
- South Gloucestershire
- West Sussex
- Hampshire
- East Sussex
- Gloucestershire
- Essex
- Dorset
- Leicestershire
- Warwickshire

**Useful links**

- [North Somerset Children's Safeguarding Board](#)
- [North Somerset's threshold guidance](#)
- [Children's Act 1989](#)
- [Census 2011](#)
- [Business Intelligence](#)

**4. CONSULTATION**

Directors have been fully consulted over the content of this report.

**5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

There are no additional financial implications as a consequence of this report.

**6. LEGAL POWERS AND IMPLICATIONS**

N/A

**7. CLIMATE CHANGE AND ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS**

N/A

**8. RISK MANAGEMENT**

N/A

**9. EQUALITY IMPLICATIONS**

The equality objectives (part of the Corporate Performance Management Framework) are regularly monitored and are reported to the Corporate Management Team and the Council's Equality Scheme Implementation Group.

**10. CORPORATE IMPLICATIONS**

It is important that we are aware of the areas in which we are performing well and where further action is needed to address any concerns.

**11. OPTIONS CONSIDERED**

N/A

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## **BACKGROUND PAPERS**

- Support and Safeguarding Team quarterly reports (2016/17 to 2020/21)
- P&C Annual Directorate Statement
- North Somerset Council Corporate Plan

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

## Work programme March 2021

(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 – Panel Projects identified in the overarching Strategic Work Plan - following discussion at Chairs & Vice-Chairs

#### 1(A) ACTIVE PROJECTS (i.e. within the current Municipal Year) – limited ideally to two items at any one time

Topic	Reason for scrutiny	Method of scrutiny and reporting process	Timeline	Progress	Contact
School Organisation Scrutiny 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  <b>Note:</b> The School Organisation Group is a standing sub-group of the CYPS Policy and Scrutiny Panel and not a task and finish scrutiny working group.	Steering Group  Corporate Aim: Promoting lifelong learning opportunities  Key issues for the public  New National Code  To include Education Transformation (see below)	Varied, depending on work strand  <b>Ongoing</b> - to meet as required.  Regular reporting to Panel	Meetings since last Panel:  <b>26 November 2021:</b> Education Commissioning Strategy; Updates on School Expansions and New Schools; School Admissions Arrangements & the Co-ordinated Admissions Schemes and the Relevant Area Consultation  <b>19 January 2021:</b>	

				Term time Consultation; Updates School Expansions and New Schools; School Place Allocations 2021/22	
Children's Improvement Focus Group	<p>At the Children and Young People Services Policy and Scrutiny Panel (CYPS) on 29 October 2020 a report was presented by the Chairman on Scrutiny of the Children's Improvement Plan. It was agreed that the sub-group needed to progress from being a Task and Finish group to becoming a longer-term group focused at a strategic level on scrutinising the delivery of the Children's Improvement Plan and that the group be renamed the Children's Improvement Focus Group.</p> <p>There was also a recognition that in order to fulfil such a role Members needed some peer support, via the Local Government Association, from colleagues who had been on a similar journey. As</p>	<p>Focus Group members: Councillors Wendy Griggs, Steve Hogg, Lisa Pilgrim, Huw James, Nicola Holland</p> <p>to discuss and scrutinise a number of performance datasets in relation to the Children's Improvement Plan-</p> <p>Children's Improvement Performance Summary Key Performance Indicators – How are we Doing?</p> <p>Children's Improvement Board Dataset – Highlights and Exceptions Report</p>	Varied, depending on work strand	<p>Meetings of the Focus Group since the last Panel meeting have taken place on</p> <p><b>21 January 2021</b></p> <p><b>4 February 2021</b></p> <p><b>18 February 2021</b></p>	

	such Cllr Ann Hartley, Shropshire Council, agreed to meet with Focus Group members to provide support and share her scrutiny knowledge and experience.				
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**1(B) SCHEDULED PROJECTS** (i.e. projects identified in the Strategic Work Plan that: may continue after the completion of the above or may be phased for commencement beyond the current Municipal Year). There is also the potential for these to be re-prioritised and escalated to 1(A) above for immediate action.

Topic	Reason for scrutiny	Method of scrutiny and reporting process	Timeline	Contact
SEND	As agreed at Panel meeting 18 June 2020.  During May 2018, Ofsted undertook a Local Joint Area Review (LJAR) of SEND services in North Somerset. In common with around 50% of Local Areas who have experienced such reviews to date, a written statement of action (WSA) was required to address areas identified for improvement. North Somerset's WSA was approved by Ofsted and DfE in October 2018.	All Member Briefing SEND	Due to take place Autumn 2020 but delayed	
Home to School Transport		All Member Briefing	Delayed due to COVID	

Draft Childcare Sufficiency Assessment	The Childcare Act 2006 (Sections 6, 8-11 & 13) require local authorities to assess the local childcare market and to secure sufficient childcare for working parents. Childcare will only be deemed sufficient if it meets the needs of the community in general and in particular those families on lower incomes and those with disabled children. The term childcare includes provision for under 5's and for out of school care for 5 to 11-year olds.	Reports to Panel		Jenie Eastman
Adoption West – Implemented April 2019		Panel receives reports on progress of implantation		Carolann James
Education Commissioning Strategy	Section 14 of the Education Act 1996 provides Local Authorities (LAs) with a statutory duty to ensure that there are sufficient schools for primary and secondary education in their areas.	Regular updates to Panel and School Organisation Scrutiny Steering Group		Sally Varley
North Somerset Fostering Strategy		Panel receives updates on progress		
Independent Safeguarding and Reviewing Officers'		Panel receives annual reports		

(ISROS') Annual Report				
Safeguarding Children Partnership Arrangements		Panel receives updates		Carolann James
Turning the Tide Edge of Care Service		Panel receives updates on progress		Carolann James
Children's Services Budget Monitor	Forecast spend against budget for Children's Services highlighting key variances, movement and contextual information making reference to principles and outcomes associated with the setting of the Budget	Regular Reports to Panel		Katherine Sokol
Performance Monitoring	<p>The Children and Young People's Services Policy and Scrutiny Panel receive regular performance management reports to help members evaluate the extent to which the council and its partners are achieving key plans and objectives for children and young people's services, and to provide appropriate challenge and suggestions to improve performance.</p> <p>This report presents the following standard items:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• any recent Ofsted inspections of council services</li> </ul>	Regular Reports to Panel		Carolann James

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• an analysis of the performance of the relevant Key Corporate Performance Indicators (KCPIs) for Quarter 1 2020/21, that fall under the remit of the Panel.</li> <li>• an overview of the performance of various Key Service Measures for Support and Safeguarding services within the council.</li> </ul>			
Annual Directorate Statements (ADS)	<p>Each year the Directorates within North Somerset produce an Annual Directorate Statement translating the commitments in North Somerset's Corporate Plan into a series of Directorate level commitments.</p> <p>On an annual basis, the Panel to decide which, if any, of the People and Communities commitments for Children's Services should be subject of further detailed reports at future meetings</p>	Annually		

**SECTION TWO – proposed projects (listed in priority order). These must be agreed at Panel and will be referred for discussion at Chairs and Vice Chairs – for inclusion to the Strategic Work Plan:**

Topic	Reason for scrutiny	Proposed method of scrutiny and reporting process	Timeline	Contact
Youth Services and Youth Engagement Working group including the Youth Champions and any other interested CYPS Panel members.	To encourage the engagement of young people in the work of the CYPS Panel.	Working Group	Membership of working group and scope to be confirmed.	Cllr Huw James

**SECTION THREE – planned Briefings and Workshops. Outcomes may, with Chairman’s agreement, generate Panel agenda items (for inclusion in S4 below) or, with Panel agreement, be escalated to S2 above:**

Topic	Reason for scrutiny	Date	Outcome	Progress	Contact
0-19 Public Health Nursing Procurement Workshop	Joint Briefing Session with CYPS and Health Overview and Scrutiny Panel (HOSP) – November 2020 to provide the Panels with an opportunity to inform the service specification.	17 November 2020 1.00 pm – 2.30 pm			

	<p>To provide an update to the Children and Young People's Services Policy and Scrutiny (CYPS) Panel and the Health Overview and Scrutiny Panel (HOSP) on the process of procurement of the 0-19 public health nursing service, and an opportunity for both panels to contribute views regarding the design of the service.</p>				
Children's Improvement Plan Update	<p>At the Panel meeting on 29 October the key priorities Within the Children's Improvement Plan were Highlighted to Members as being Front Door to Children's Services, Early Help; Performance and Quality Assurance; Corporate Parenting Panel.</p> <p>The Plan had been developed and agreed through the Partnership Children's Improvement Board and subsequently Submitted to Ofsted in October 2020 following the required improvement grading from Ofsted in</p>	17 March 2021 @ 4.00 pm			Carolann James



	<p>March 2020.</p> <p>The briefing update on the Children's Improvement Plan would provide Members with an opportunity to clarify the detail through Q&amp;A.</p>				
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**SECTION FOUR - agenda reports to the Panel meetings as agreed by the Chairman.** This section primarily provides for the forward planning of agendas for the coming year and a useful record of panel meeting activity. When considering reports at meetings, outcomes may include proposing a workstream, escalating it to S2 above for potential inclusion on the STRATEGIC WORK PLAN.

#### Panel 1 (18 June 2020)

Report Title	Purpose of Report	Outcome (actions)	Progress	Contact
Ofsted Report	<p>North Somerset Children's Services was inspected by Ofsted under the <i>Inspection of Local Authority Children's Services (ILACS) Framework</i>, between 24 February and 12 March 2020.</p> <p>As well as an overall judgement, the Inspection report would make judgements on our services to</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Children in Need of Help and Protection</li> </ul>	that the Panel form an Ofsted Task and Finish Group to scrutinise and monitor the Improvement Plan following the Ofsted Report	Ongoing – Group renamed Children's Improvement Focus Group and has met to scrutinise various performance data sets.	Carolann James

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Children Looked After and Care leavers</li> <li>• Leadership and Management</li> </ul>			
Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) Strategy and Action Plan	<p>During May 2018, Ofsted undertook a Local Joint Area Review (LJAR) of SEND services in North Somerset. In common with around 50% of Local Areas who have experienced such reviews to date, a written statement of action (WSA) was required to address areas identified for improvement. North Somerset's WSA was approved by Ofsted and DfE in October 2018.</p>	<p>(1) that the Panel receive the report and acknowledge the successful delivery of a joint Local Area Action Plan setting out clear goals for service improvement in the coming years;</p> <p>(2) that the Panel consider how it wishes to engage with the ongoing monitoring, review and development of the strategy;</p> <p>(3) that the Panel host an all member briefing on the SEND Action Plan in autumn 2020.</p>	All Member Briefing on SEND to be arranged	Mike Newman

### Panel 2 (29 October 2020)

Report Title	Purpose of Report	Outcome (actions)	Progress	Contact
Children's Improvement Plan: Scrutiny of the Children's Improvement Plan	<p>Following the publication of the Ofsted report in June 2020 and its presentation to the Children and Young People Services Policy and Scrutiny Panel on 18 June 2020, it was agreed that a sub group would be set up to scrutinise the Action Plan that the Authority was required to submit to Ofsted by 17 September 2020. The task and</p>	<p>(1) that the Panel receive and comment on the report in relation to the Scrutiny of the Children's Improvement Plan;</p> <p>(2) that the Panel agree that the sub group progressed from being task and finish to become a longer-term group focused at a strategic level on scrutinising the delivery of the Children's</p>	Ongoing	Cllr Wendy Griggs

	<p>finish group had sight of the report and met to provide their comments/views to officers. There was a subsequent discussion between the Chairman and the Director in which it was agreed that the sub group should continue beyond the submission of the Action Plan because the Department for Education (DfE) had advised that it was concerned as to why North Somerset continued to 'require improvement to be good.'</p>	<p>Improvement Plan and renamed the Children's Improvement Group;</p> <p>(3) that the Panel agree the input of the Local Government Association in supporting the work of the Children's Improvement Focus Group.</p>		
Children's Improvement Plan: Key Priorities in our Children's Improvement Plan	<p>The report identified the key priorities within the Children's Improvement Plan. The Plan was developed and agreed through the Partnership Children's Improvement Board and subsequently submitted to Ofsted in September 2020 following our required improvement grading from Ofsted in March 2020.</p>	<p>That the Panel receive the report and note the priorities outlined.</p>	Ongoing	Carolann James
Expansion of Ravenswood Special School, Nailsea	<p>The report sought the Panel's support to a consultation with the public and key stakeholders to expand Ravenswood Special School. Formal approval to progress a consultation would be sought from the Executive Member of Children's Services and</p>	<p>The Panel supported the expansion consultation for Ravenswood Special School</p>	<p>Final decision to be made by the Executive in April 2021</p>	Sally Varley

	Lifelong Learning with a final decision made by the Executive in April 2021.			
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### Panel 3 (11 March 2021)

Report Title	Purpose of Report	Outcome (actions)	Progress	Contact
SEND Action Plan Update	To provide Panel Members with an update of progress on the SEND action plan, which was provided at the June 2020 meeting. This paper notes specific actions and risks, and grades each area of work as green, amber or red based on the risk. Finally, the recommendations of the recent LGA Peer Review and feedback from the Department for Education and NHS England are considered in terms of our current plans.	(1) Note the update on the SEND Action Plan and the initial response to the LGA recommendations (2). Consider the highlights and risks identified (3) Identify any responses necessary via the Chair of the Panel, who sits on the SEND Programme Board		Mike Newman
SEND Presentation & Q&A	Presentation by NHS representatives on SEND and an opportunity for Q&A session			
Children's Improvement Focus Group Feedback	Update from Cllr Griggs on progress from Children's Improvement Focus Group	To update Panel members on the progress from the Children's Improvement Focus Group		Cllr Wendy Griggs
Corporate Parenting Report	To inform Panel members of the current issues pertaining to children who are looked after, young people leaving the Authority's care and the fostering service. This will enable the panel to evaluate how effectively the whole council is discharging the Council's Corporate	(1) Note the updated information presented in this report (2) To offer comment on both areas for improvement and areas of good performance (3) To raise the profile of corporate parenting responsibilities among their colleague elected members		Carolann James

	Parenting Responsibilities and Duties, particularly in determining how effectively the council and its partners are achieving key plans and objectives for children and young people's services, and to provide appropriate challenge and suggestions to improve performance.			
Executive Member Report – The 2021-2022 Budget – What Does it Mean for our Children?	To update members on the 2021-2022 Budget implications and provide an opportunity for Q&A			Cllr Catherine Gibbons

## SECTION 5 - 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 6 - Progress and follow-up on implementing Panel recommendations

Panel Recommendation	Date of Response	Actions – implementation progress

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