

Public Document Pack

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Date: Wednesday, 12 October 2022

Dear Sir or Madam

The Children and Young People's Services Policy and Scrutiny Panel – Thursday, 20 October 2022, 10.00 am – New Council Chamber

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

The agenda is set out overleaf.

Yours faithfully

Assistant Director Legal & Governance and Monitoring Officer

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

Councillors:

Wendy Griggs (Chairman), Mark Aplin, Caroline Cherry, Ciaran Cronnelly, Mark Crosby, Donald Davies, 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, Vacancy: North Somerset Youth Parliament

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

Agenda

1. Addresses by Members of the Public (Standing Order SS09)

To receive and hear any person who wishes to address the Panel on matters which affect the District and fall within the remit of the Panel. The Chairman will select the order of matters heard.

Members of the Panel may ask questions of the member of the public and a dialogue between the parties can be undertaken.

Requests to speak must be submitted in writing to the Assistant Director Legal & Governance and Monitoring Officer, or 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. Election of the Vice Chairman

Endorsement of the Panel's nomination of the Vice-Chairman at the informal meeting of the Children and Young People's Policy and Scrutiny Panel held on 10 June 2022.

3. Apologies for Absence and Notifications for Substitutes

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

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

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

5. Minutes (Pages 7 - 18)

Minutes of the Panel meeting held on 10 March 2022 – to approve as a correct record.

Notes of the informal panel meeting held on 16 June 2022 – for noting.

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

7. Children's Improvement Progress (Pages 19 - 58)

Report of the Director of Children's Services.

8. **CYPS task-and-finish groups update** (Pages 59 - 62)
Report of the Chairman, Children and Young Peoples' Policy and Scrutiny Panel.
9. **Schools Capital Programme** (Pages 63 - 82)
Report of the Head of Strategic Planning and Governance.
10. **Adoption West Annual Report** (Pages 83 - 118)
Report of the Assistant Director, Family Support and Safeguarding.
11. **Month 5 Children's Services Budget Monitor** (Pages 119 - 130)
Report of the Principal Accountant (Children's Services).
12. **North Somerset Annual Children's Social Care Complaints and Compliments report for the 2021-22 financial year** (Pages 131 - 142)
Report of the Interim Directorate Governance and Complaints Manager.
13. **Future Governance of the Music Service** (Pages 143 - 152)
Report of the Head of North Somerset Music & South Glos Music.
14. **CYPS Panel Work Plan** (Pages 153 - 162)
Report of the Policy and Scrutiny Senior Officer.

Exempt Items

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

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

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

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

Mobile phones and other mobile devices

All persons attending the meeting are requested to ensure that these devices are

switched to silent mode. The chairman may approve an exception to this request in special circumstances.

Filming and recording of meetings

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

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

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

Emergency Evacuation Procedure

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

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

Last person out to close the door.

Do not stop to collect personal belongings.

Do not use the lifts.

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

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

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

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Minutes

of the Meeting of

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

Thursday, 10 March 2022

New Council Chamber - Town Hall

Meeting Commenced: 10.00 am

Meeting Concluded: 11.35 am

Councillors:

P Wendy Griggs (Chairman)

P Steve Hogg (Vice Chairman)

P Marc Aplin

P Ciarán Cronnelly

Hugh Gregor

A Nicola Holland

A Huw James

P Lisa Pilgrim

Tim Snaden

P Caroline Cherry

A Mark Crosby

A Ann Harley

A Ruth Jacobs

A Richard Westwood

Vacancy

Vacancy

P: Present

A: Apologies for absence submitted

Other Councillors in attendance: None

Officers in attendance: Nicholas Brain, (Head of Legal & Governance and Monitoring Officer) Michèle Chesterman (Democratic & Electoral Services Officer), Sindy Dube (Principal Accountant, Children's Services), Becky Hopkins, (Assistant Director, Children's Support & Safeguarding)

Other persons in attendance: None

CAY Chairman's Welcome

1

The Chairman welcomed everyone. On behalf of the panel, she expressed best wishes and thoughts for Cllr Mark Crosby's speedy recovery.

CAY Election of Vice-Chairman for the 2021/2022 Municipal Year (Agenda item 1)

2

Resolved: that the recommendation at the informal panel meeting on 30 June 2021 that Councillor Steve Hogg be elected Vice Chairman of the Children and Young People Services Policy & Scrutiny Panel for the 2021/22 Municipal Year be

endorsed.

CAY 3 Declaration of disclosable pecuniary interest (Standing Order 37) (Agenda item 4)

None

CAY 4 Minutes and Notes (Agenda item 5)

5.1 Formal Panel Meeting Minutes – 11 March 2021 recommended for approval as a correct record at Informal Panel meeting dated 30 June 2021 (for ratification)

5.2 Informal Panel Meeting Notes – 30 June 2021 (attached), for information.

5.3 Informal Panel Meeting Notes – 21 October 2021 (attached), for information.

Resolved: that the minutes of the meeting on 11 March 2021 be approved as a correct record.

CAY 5 Family Support and Safeguarding Update (Agenda item 7)

The Assistant Director, Family Support and Safeguarding presented the report. An up-to-date overview of the strengths, challenges and identified areas for development within the Family Support & Safeguarding Service was given. Members were provided with highlights of what was being done well and areas which were being focussed on to continue to strengthen and improve the service offered to children and their families.

The Assistant Director, Family Support and Safeguarding highlighted strengths which included a strong member support for the children's services improvement journey with the establishment of the Corporate Parenting Panel chaired by the Executive Member, the establishment of a permanent senior leadership team, advice and challenge from the sector-led improvement partner, North Tyneside and redesign of the Front Door.

Members were informed that over the previous 12-18 months a realignment of the Senior Management Teams had taken place which had resulted in closer working relationships across the sector. In addition, Bethany Swan had been appointed to the post of Young Director. Members received reassurance that the performance information evidenced proportionate intervention with the right intervention at the right time to support children to remain in the care of their families and communities wherever possible.

With regards challenges, Members were made aware that although there had been considerable progress a strong and consistent model of practice had not yet been well embedded or consistently applied. Alongside this There was also a need to support team managers to ensure that supervision and management oversight evidenced reflection, clear direction of travel and responsive planning. Finally, developing and adopting a new QA system was highlighted as being one of the more urgent tasks.

In terms of an overview of the current position and a number of key issues were

discussed including performance information, repeat child protection plans, placement sufficiency, limited residential capacity to meet the needs North Somerset young people, unaccompanied asylum seeking children, the development of 16+ supported and independent living schemes, the percentage of 19-21 year old care leavers in education, employment and/or training and the percentage of 19-21 year old care leavers who were in suitable accommodation.

Concluded: that the report be received and comments be forwarded to officers in the form of minutes.

CAY 6 Children's Improvement Focus Group - Front Door - Forward Plan (Agenda item 8)

The Chairman provided an update on the CYPS Working Group addressing the Front Door and directed Member's attention to the Forward Plan and encouraged Panel attendance at the meetings which were scheduled to take place on a six-weekly basis until the end of the Municipal Year 2022/23.

The working group would focus on the child and family living experience and other agencies' experience of using the Front Door. In terms of location the meetings of the Working Group would take place virtually but also in person in the community or otherwise, as appropriate.

Concluded that:

- (1) the report be received;
- (2) panel members be encouraged to attend meetings of the CYPS Panel Working Group - Front Door

CAY 7 CYPS Working Group - Accelerated Progress Plan (APP) - Terms of Reference and Forward Plan (Agenda item 9)

The Chairman provided an update on the CYPS Working Group addressing the Accelerated Progress Plan (APP) and directed Members' attention to the Terms of Reference and the Forward Plan for the working group.

Members were informed that the purpose of the working group was to identify and recommend further effective delivery of the Council SEND Improvement Plan in relation to the experiences of Parents and Carers. In terms of outcomes the aim was to ensure that parents and carers had timely, appropriate and successful experiences working with North Somerset Council and its partners. The group to make recommendations on the use of resources, to expedite the progress on removing barriers for parents and carers and to monitor progress. Meetings to take place bi-monthly, in person in the community or virtually, as appropriate.

Members were encouraged to attend the meetings of the working group.

Concluded that:

- (1) the report be received;
- (2) Panel members be encouraged to attend meetings of the CYPS

CAY 8 Q3 Performance Monitoring Report (Agenda item 10)

The Assistant Director, Family Support & Safeguarding, presented the report.

The Children and Young People's Services Policy and Scrutiny Panel received regular performance management reports to help members evaluate the extent to which the council and its partners were achieving key plans and objectives for children and young people's services, and to provide appropriate challenge and suggestions to improve performance. The report presented the standard items: any recent Ofsted inspections of council services; an analysis of the performance of the relevant Key Corporate Performance Indicators (KCPIs) for Quarter 3 2021/22, that fell under the remit of the Panel and an overview of the performance of various Key Service Measures for Support and Safeguarding services within the council.

Members asked for further information regarding the low levels of referrals to which the Assistant Director, Family Support & Safeguarding responded that the Family Wellbeing Service had been expanded and there was no evidence of children being re-referred into the service. There was confidence that the application threshold at the Front Door was consistent and there was confidence that support was in the right place and was being monitored.

A discussion took place on missing children and missing episodes and the fact that there was no real national picture of children who never attended school. The question was asked as to the quality of data available. It was noted that Education colleagues were included in the weekly Front Door meetings. The Assistant Director, Family, Support & Safeguarding to refer the query to the Assistant Director, Education Partnerships to respond.

Members also queried the fact that the abuse or neglected percentage (page 11) was usually around 40-43% and whether the figure could be improved. It was noted that the service was aiming to reduce neglect by early help support. In terms of the threshold this percentage would be expected even if numbers reduced.

Concluded: that the performance information in the report be noted and comments on both areas for improvement and areas of good performance be sent to officers in the form of minutes.

CAY 9 CYPS Working Group - Care Leavers (NEET) - Terms of Reference and Forward Plan (Agenda item 11)

The Chairman provided an update on the CYPS Working Group addressing Care Leavers not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET) which aimed to identify barriers for care leavers in accessing education employment and training. Members' attention was drawn to the Forward Plan and their attendance was encouraged at the meetings scheduled to take place on a six-weekly basis until the end 2023 (virtually or in person, as appropriate).

The Working Group's purpose was to identify and recommend sustainable and effective delivery and creation of opportunities for all care leavers in North Somerset who were not in education, employment or training (NEET).

Concluded that:

- (1) the report be received;
- (2) panel members be encouraged to attend meetings of the CYPS Panel Working Group – Care Leavers NEET

CAY 10 Joint CAMHS (CYPS & HOSP) Working Group - Overview of Findings (Agenda item 12)

It was agreed that this item be deferred until the CYPS Panel meeting On 16 June 2022 to enable Health colleagues and other interested Councillors to attend and participate in the discussion.

Concluded: that the item be deferred until the next Panel meeting on 16 June 2022.

CAY 11 Month 10 Children's Services Budget Monitor (Agenda item 13)

The Principal Accountant, Children's Services, presented the report which summarised and discussed the 2021/22 forecast spend against budget for children's services, highlighting key variances, movements and contextual information as at Month 10.

Referring to the one-page summary sheet provided, Members were informed that Children's Services currently had a projected £798k underspend (2.9% of the net budget); this was a £284k favourable change when compared with the period 9 position.

The forecast underspend was mainly due to the spend on placements for children looked after being significantly less than the budget. This was representative of the fact that the budget was set when children looked after numbers were significantly higher than they were now, and, in addition, an allowance was made in the expectation that numbers would begin to rise once lockdown measures were eased; this had not yet materialised. Furthermore, work on reducing costs by "stepping down" young people to more appropriate and cost-effective placements was proving extremely productive. As a result of all these factors, the forecast spend was c. £1.5m less than the budget.

Members were made aware that there were further mitigations from reduced staffing costs through staff turnover / vacancy management and contributions to staffing and overheads from a number of grants from central government.

The main offsetting cost pressure was on support to families with disabled children. The growth applied in this area in the 2021/22 budget had not been sufficient to close the gap between the budget and demand in the current year, although this was being addressed as part of the MTFP and budget for 2022/23. Other cost pressures were on section 17 support (placement prevention), systems

improvement, and the SEND element of the education support services contract.

The deficit on the Dedicated Schools Grant was estimated to have grown from £7.150m at the beginning of the year of £12.591m by the end of the financial year – the main overspend relating to out of area placements, top-up funding and bespoke education packages for children missing education.

Concluded: that the report be received and comments on the 2021/22 forecast spend against budget for children's services and on the risks and opportunities associated with the medium-term position be forwarded to officers.

**CAY
12 Panel's Work Plan (Agenda item 14)**

Members discussed the Work Plan.

Concluded: that the work plan be received and updated as required.

Chairman

Notes

of the informal Meeting of the

Children & Young People Services Policy & Scrutiny Panel

Thursday 16 June 2022

held at the Town Hall, Weston-super-Mare, Somerset.

Meeting Commenced: 10.05 am Meeting Concluded: 12.18 pm

Councillors:

P Wendy Griggs (Chairman)

Marc Aplin
P Ciarán Cronnelly
P Don Davies
Ann Harley
Ruth Jacobs
A Lisa Pilgrim
A Richard Westwood
Vacancy

P Caroline Cherry
A Mark Crosby
Hugh Gregor
P Nicola Holland
Huw James
Tim Snaden
Vacancy

P: Present

A: Apologies for absence submitted

Other Councillors in attendance: None

Officers in attendance: Nicholas Brain, Sheila Smith, Pip Hesketh, Becky Hopkins, Sally Varley, Steve Devine, Brent Cross.

Right to Speak: Kenton Mee, North Somerset Parent Carers Working Together (The Parent Carer Forum in North Somerset)

CAY 01 Election of Vice-Chairman for the 2021/22 Municipal Year (Agenda Item 1)

Recommended: that Councillor Donald Davies be elected as Vice-Chairman for the 2022/23 municipal year - to be ratified at the formal Panel meeting on 20 October 2022.

CAY 03 Declarations of Disclosable Pecuniary Interest (Agenda item 4)
None

CAY 03 Minutes and Notes (Agenda item 5)

Minutes of the meeting of 10 March 2022, to approve as a correct record.

Recommended: that the minutes of the meeting on 10 March 2022 be approved as a correct record at the next formal Panel meeting on 20 October 2022.

CAY 04 Annual Directorate Statement, Children's Services (Agenda item 7)

The Director of Children's Services presented the report which recommended that the Panel note the directorate plans for 2022/23, and take the statement into account when setting the work plan. The statement provided directorate-wide commitments, as well as commitments for the specific areas of Children's Support and Safeguarding and Education Partnerships.

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

CAY 05 Overview of Findings from CAMHS Working Group (Agenda item 9)

The co-Chairman of the joint CYPS/HOSP working group presented the report of the working group which was investigating parity of funding for CAMHS across the BNSSG CCG (Bristol, North Somerset, South Gloucestershire Clinical Commissioning Group) area.

This was followed by the report of the Senior Contract Manager at the BNSSG CCG, which provided an NHS response to the findings of the working group, and outlined additional funding and support that had been provided to children's mental health services since 2020.

Members raised the following concerns (officer replies in italics):

- Why were there no primary infant mental health service in North Somerset? *There was support in place (i.e. health visitors), but not specifically in a mental health role. There were differences in provision across the BNSSG CCG area, and the budget constrained the ability to respond to this need.*
- Lack of continuity of treatment for mental health with the cut-off at 18 years for CAMHS. *Issues such as post-Covid anxiety were wellbeing issues, not necessarily mental health. There were issues with transition, but the cut-off age for children's treatment at 18 was universal to services provided by the NHS.*
- The non-recurrent nature of the funding for the Autism Intensive Service and the funding for additional mental health support in schools. *The £250 000 schools funding was introduced while the Mental Health Support Teams were implemented, and the Autism service was a pilot scheme which received the non-recurrent funding to test viability.*

- The level of investment required to drive recruitment, and what would change the trajectory of improvement for CAMHS? *A transformation programme was needed for CAMHS, with multidisciplinary teams becoming the norm to cope with the increase in demand. The teams within schools would be easier to recruit for, and would also boost early intervention as well as building a resilient practitioner community.*

Recommended that:

- (1) the report be received;
- (2) **That** the findings and recommendations set out in the report be endorsed, with the following amendments: a progress report **compiled by the respective commissioners (CCG[ICB] and Public Health)** showing the trajectory of progress be provided to CYPS **Panel** by no later than March 2023 outlining the steps that have been taken to improve parity from a funding and service delivery model perspective, and where gaps remain, what steps will be taken to improve these; and an update on the basic needs assessment come to the CYPS Panel meeting on 20 October 2022.

CAY 06 Resetting the Education Agenda for North Somerset (Agenda item 10)

The Assistant Director for Education Partnerships introduced the presentation which provided context, an overview of the SEND data dashboard, and the principles behind the Education Strategy for North Somerset. Members were also updated on the SEND Improvement Plan.

In discussion, the following questions and comments were made by Members:

- The recent launch of the EHCP (Educational Health Care Plan) consultation by government. *This was a standard 20-week consultation on picking up on needs.*
- Why had the special school for children with SEMH (Social, Emotional and Mental Health) issues almost closed? *The **original** provider had concerns about the safety of the site, community response to the school, and the level of funding being received. The new provider had successfully taken on the school, and there were plans to expand it to up to 65 pupils aged 6-15.*

Recommended: that

- (1) the report be received, and comments be forwarded to officers in the form of minutes; and that
- (2) an updated SEND dashboard be provided at future CYPS meetings.

CAY 07 Executive Member / Assistant Director Education Partnerships Report – Community of Practice SEND (Agenda item 11)

The Assistant Director for Education Partnerships presented the report **which explained Community of Practice for SEND in North Somerset**. The presentation included an explanation of Community of Practice, how it worked in North Somerset, and some examples of the work carried out.

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

CAY 08 North Somerset's Annual Children's Social Care Complaints and Compliments Report for 2020/21 Financial Year (Agenda item 12)

The Complaints & Directorate Governance Manager presented the report which covered the Council's actions and responses to complaints and compliments about Children's Social Care for the 2020/21 financial year.

This had not been reported to the Panel previously, and the report for 2021/22 would be considered at the 20 October 2022 CYPS Panel meeting.

Members sought clarification on the following:

- Why was there still one outstanding stage 2 complaint? *This had since been resolved, with some aspects upheld and some not.*
- What were the 'miscellaneous' complaints listed in section 5.5 of the Appendix? *These were issues that may have resolved themselves, or could be classified as complaints that were redirected elsewhere.*

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

CAY 09 Ofsted's Inspection of Adoption West (Agenda item 13)

The report was presented by the Director of Children's Services, and summarised the outcome of the recent Ofsted inspection of Adoption West, in which it was found that Adoption West provided effective services that met the requirements for 'good'.

The Director updated the Panel on the background to the sub-judgement on the effectiveness of leaders and managers being 'requires improvement to be good'.

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

CAY 10 Performance Monitoring (Agenda item 14)

The Assistant Director, Family Support and Safeguarding, presented the performance monitoring update to the Panel.

Members requested clarification on: what the key things to look out for in the report were (*referrals to social care; comparisons to statistical neighbours statistics in neighbouring authorities; children subject to a child protection plan for the second time or more; children with three or more placement moves*); whether the Care Leavers NEET (Not in Employment, Education or Training) working group could receive information on what how the Care Leavers EET

had achieved their successes; what the Ofsted reports were for out-of-area schools.

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

CAY 11 Month 12 Children's Services Budget Monitor (Agenda item 15)

The Principal Accountant, Children's Services was unable to attend the meeting, but it was requested that where possible future reports provided information on home-to-school transport.

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

CAY 12 The Panel's Work Plan (Agenda item 16)

Members discussed the Work Plan.

Recommended: that the work plan be received and updated as required.

Chairman

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North Somerset Council

Report to the Children & Young People Policy and scrutiny Panel

Date of Meeting: October 20th 2022

Subject of Report: Children's Improvement Progress

Town or Parish: All

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

Key Decision: No

Reason: This report provides information on aspects of the Improvement Journey and no decisions are required.

Recommendations

That Members note the progress made in relation to two different service areas: the Front Door and our Care Leavers' Service.

Summary of Report

This report provides updates on two separate service areas.

Firstly, there is information that was provided to Ofsted Inspectors at the start of their Focused Visit, looking at our Front Door which is the service that receives contacts and referrals (single- or multi-agency), where decisions are made about:

- child protection enquiries – such as strategy discussions or section 47 enquiries
- emergency action – liaison with police to use powers of protection or applications for an emergency protection order
- child in need assessments
- decisions to accommodate
- step-up from and step-down to early help
- no further action/signposting

The second update is on our Care Leavers' Service, and it was prepared for the recent visit of Mark Riddell, the DfE's national adviser on care leavers following his previous visit in Summer 2021.

1. Policy

A council which empowers and cares about people

2. Details

Please see the attached presentations which provide specific information for Members to scrutinise in relation to our progress in two specific areas, both of which have recently been examined by external bodies.

3. Consultation

A wide range of staff were consulted on their contributions to the work outlined. Parents and carers as well as care experienced young people also contributed to messages given to both the Ofsted Inspectors and the DfE adviser.

4. Financial Implications

We await the final report from Ofsted before determining if additional resources are required. The DfE adviser's visit has not identified any financial shortfalls in our Care Leavers' Service.

Costs

None identified at present.

Funding

See above.

5. Legal Powers and Implications

N/A

6. Climate Change and Environmental Implications

The Front Door and Early Help services are provided from a range of venues which do consider the impact on the environment – there is a balance between providing opportunities locally to reduce families' travel distances but equally workers have to undertake home visits which are done on foot or by electric car when possible. The Care Leavers' Service provides a drop in so that young people can access it via public transport.

7. Risk Management

N/A

8. Equality Implications

N/A

9. Corporate Implications

N/A

10. Options Considered

N/A

Author:

Sheila Smith
Director of Children's Services

Appendices:



(B)Presentation to
Ofsted - Sept 2022 (1'

1. Presentation to Ofsted September 2022:



Mark Riddell Visit - 6
September 2022 (003'

2. Mark Riddell Visit September 2022:

Background Papers:

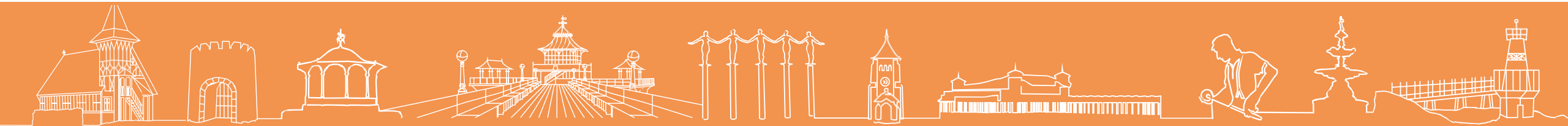
None

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Welcome to North Somerset

Focused Visit – Front Door

Wednesday 21st September – Thursday 22nd September



What we aim to cover:

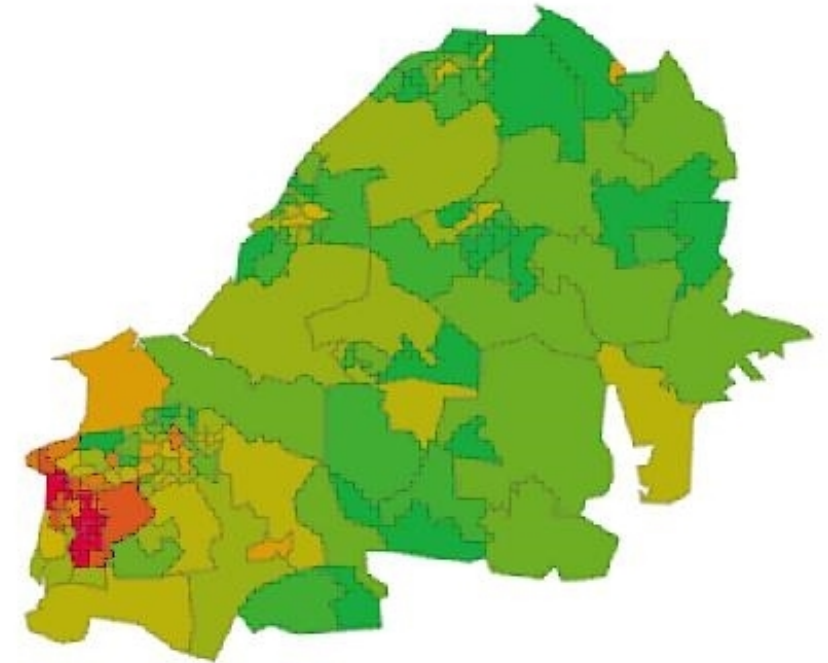
- Setting the context
- Our ambitions and vision
- Our Front Door journey
- Our Early Help offer
- Responding to risk outside the family
- Progress so far
- Our next steps...



About North Somerset

Page 25

- Total population: 215,574
- 0-18 population: 46,010
- 87% of schools are Good or Outstanding
- 6% of children and young people are from black and minority ethnic groups
- Mix of coast, urban, and rural towns and villages
- Low levels of unemployment and crime
- North Somerset has an average rank of 221 out of 317 local authorities for overall deprivation (based on the IMD), however, there are significant differences between the parliamentary constituencies of Weston-super-Mare and North Somerset - with Weston-super-Mare relatively more deprived



Red – Most deprived areas
Dark Green – Least deprived areas

Support to children and families

On the 31st August 2022, children's services in North Somerset were supporting:

- **261 families in the Family Wellbeing service**, ensuring that the needs of the individual children and whole family are met
- **905 Children in Need** by DfE definition at the end of August

Rate of Children in Need 206.5 per 10,000, comparing to a rate of 202.4/10,000 at the end of August 2021

Of the 905 Children in Need:

- 642 children had a Child in Need (CiN) plan
- 98 children were subject to a Child Protection Plan
- 203 children were Children in Care
- 216 Care Leavers



Key Performance Indicators



Referral rate below statistical neighbour and national comparators



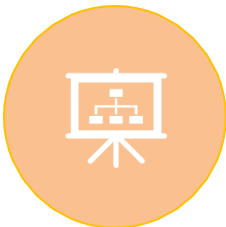
Re-referral rate below statistical neighbour and national comparators



Child in Need rate below statistical neighbour and national comparators



Child Protection rate below statistical neighbour and national comparators



CIC rate below statistical neighbour and national comparators



Assessments within 45 days above statistical neighbour and national comparators



Reduction in repeat Child Protection Plans within 2 years



High % of CIC in foster placements



Passion



Outcomes



Pledges



Principles



Practice

Our Passion

To make North Somerset a truly great place for children and young people to thrive; where all have the best possible life and opportunities, including those who are vulnerable, disadvantaged, and/or have special educational or additional needs



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Our Purpose

Happy

Healthy

A Voice

Opportunities

Our Pledges

1. We will intervene early with evidence-based, family-focused services

2. We will work in partnership to keep children in school

3. We will keep children and young people safe at home, healthy and connected to their local communities

Our Practice Framework

- Focus on strength and relationship based practice in assessment, planning and recording
- Ongoing implementation of Signs of Safety
- Curiosity and openness
- Ambitious outcomes for children
- Whole system approach and commitment to continuous improvement
- Development of a high support, high challenge environment
- Development of defined lead roles for our Senior Social Workers

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Our Practice Standards

Standard 1 – We will provide the Right Service at the Right Time through Early Identification, Assessment, Outcomes and Provision of support.

Standard 2 – Our Assessments will be Child Centred, Proportionate, Holistic and Strengths Based.

Standard 3 – Our children will be seen within the set timescales. Visits will be well planned and meaningful, ensuring the voice of the child and their lived experience is understood.

Standard 4 – Our Plans for Children will evidence their current Needs, the Outcomes being sought and the Provision in place to achieve the outcomes and will be realistic and achievable.

Standard 5 – We will ensure that Children's Plans are Reviewed within the set timescales and evidence Practice Standard 4.

Standard 6 – We will ensure children, parents and the wider family network are actively involved in the Assessment, Planning and Support and, wherever possible, the family network is part of the solution with a focus on achieving the best outcomes for all children.

Standard 7 – Our managers will ensure that assessment, planning and support for children is effective and timely. This will be achieved through a High Support, High Challenge culture, and purposeful supervision.

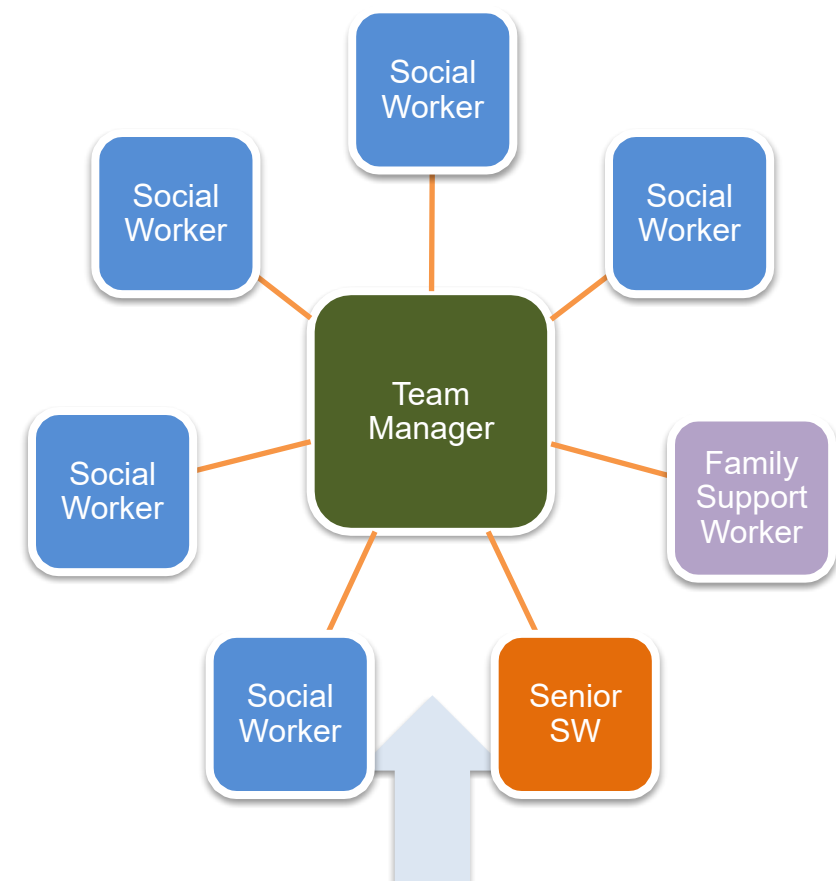
Standard 8 – The information we record about a child, or their family will be accurate, up to date, accessible and meaningful.

Standard 9 – Through resilience and clarity, our Leadership will set the direction, drive improved outcomes for children, build trusting relationships across the organisation and empower staff to be experts in their respective field.

Standard 10 – Quality Assurance will be the bedrock of our Learning / No Blame culture to improve Outcomes for Children.



Staffing Model, Support, and Development



Small teams to support management grip,
reflective supervision, positive learning and
team working



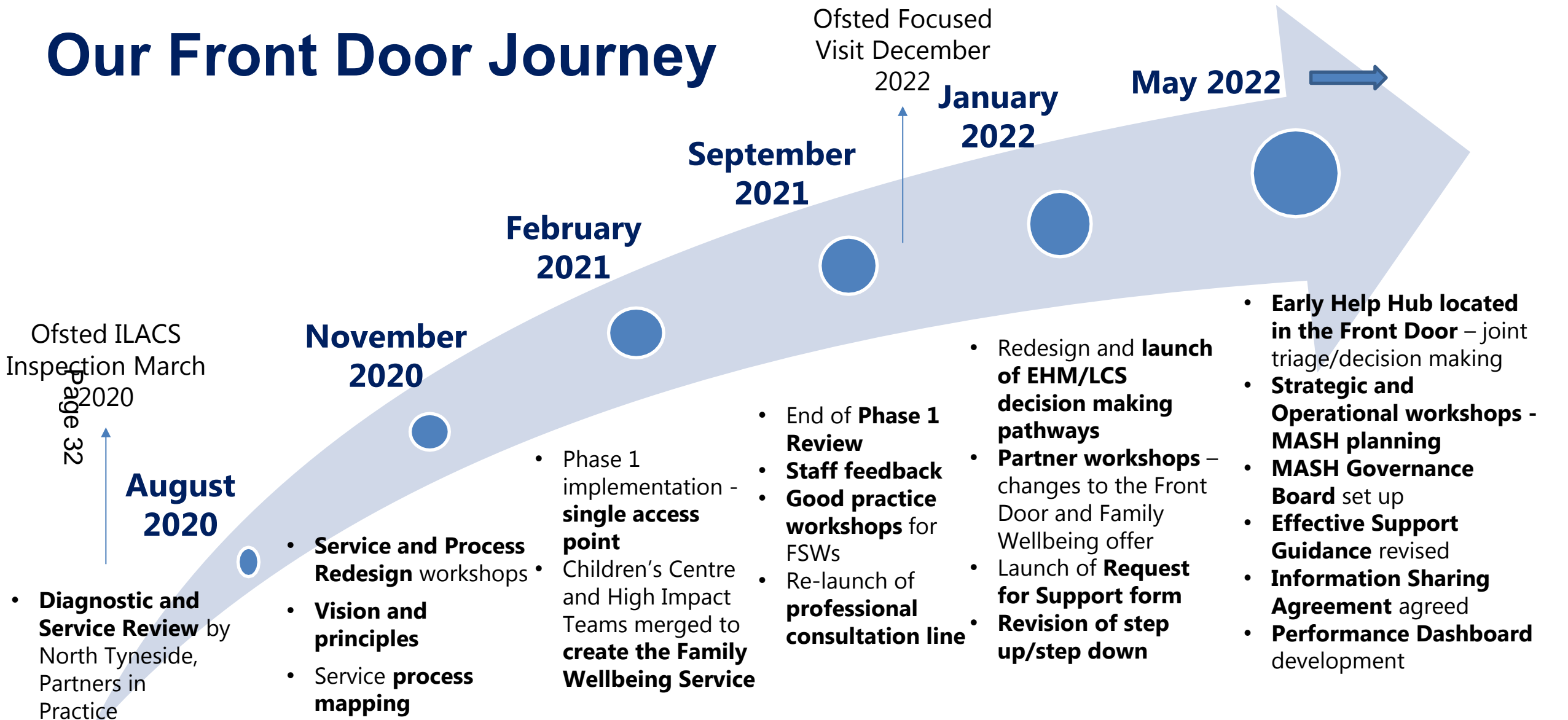
Our Front Door Journey...

Our aims:

- To develop an integrated, multi-disciplinary service which supports timely decision making by a range of professionals, ensuring the Right Service at the Right Time and that children's needs are identified early
- To have shared clarity of model, pathways, systems and processes for all
- To quickly provide the right kind of help where and when it's most needed providing early access to professionals and experts meaning more children stay safe at home, healthy and connected to their local communities
- To support confident conversations, focused on needs not thresholds

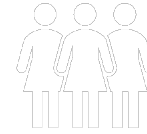


Our Front Door Journey



Our Early Help Offer

- **High-quality, flexible, responsive support** empowering positive parenting, building on **family strengths**
- **Age range for the Family Wellbeing Service extended** from 0-5 to 0-19 (25 for SEND) from 2021
- **Working with over 384 children** in family wellbeing which shows a steady increase, matched by a consistently low rate of referrals to CSC
- Flexible use of Turning the Tide to **support families at risk of breakdown**
- Family Support Workers located in the UK Resettlement Teams **offering a pro-active response**
- Family Support Workers completing **Missing Return Home Interviews** and offering **early intervention to prevent escalation**
- Alignment of the **referral pathway** for Children with Disabilities, Early Support & the Family Wellbeing Service.
- **Co-location** of health services and midwifery in all localities
- Plan in place to **develop Family Hubs**



Responding to risk outside the family

Child Exploitation

- **Exploitation Needs Assessment** completed
- North Somerset Safeguarding Children's Partnership (NSSCP) is in the process of **developing the Child Exploitation Strategy**
- Developing **more confident practice** when managing **extra-familial risk**, viewing parents as **partners in safeguarding**, and not using Child Protection processes inappropriately
- **Closer working relationships** with partner agencies to encourage a proportionate response, including a partnership learning event in June 2022
- **Successful Topaz CSE project** - in the process of expanding to include CCE
- VRU lead partnership working **addressing knife crime and County Lines** activity across the area
- Partnership **Day of Action** in June 2022 to raise awareness about exploitation in the community
- Partnership **training event** arranged for November 2022
- NSSCP **Contextual Safeguarding sub-group** established

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Responding to risk outside the family

Missing Children

- **Missing Return Home Interviews** for children not in care located within the Family Wellbeing Service from January 2022 **supporting a timely and consistent response**
- Improving response to children missing Return Home Interviews – interviews accepted and completed
- Weekly Missing Children Meeting (multi agency) **enabling professional discussion** about the intervention, support, and actions required for children identified as high risk due to relationships and Child Exploitation
- **Early help** for children not currently supported by other services **to reduce the number of repeat missing episodes**
- Clear **case recording to evidence contact**, discussions and next steps on child's LCS/EHM record



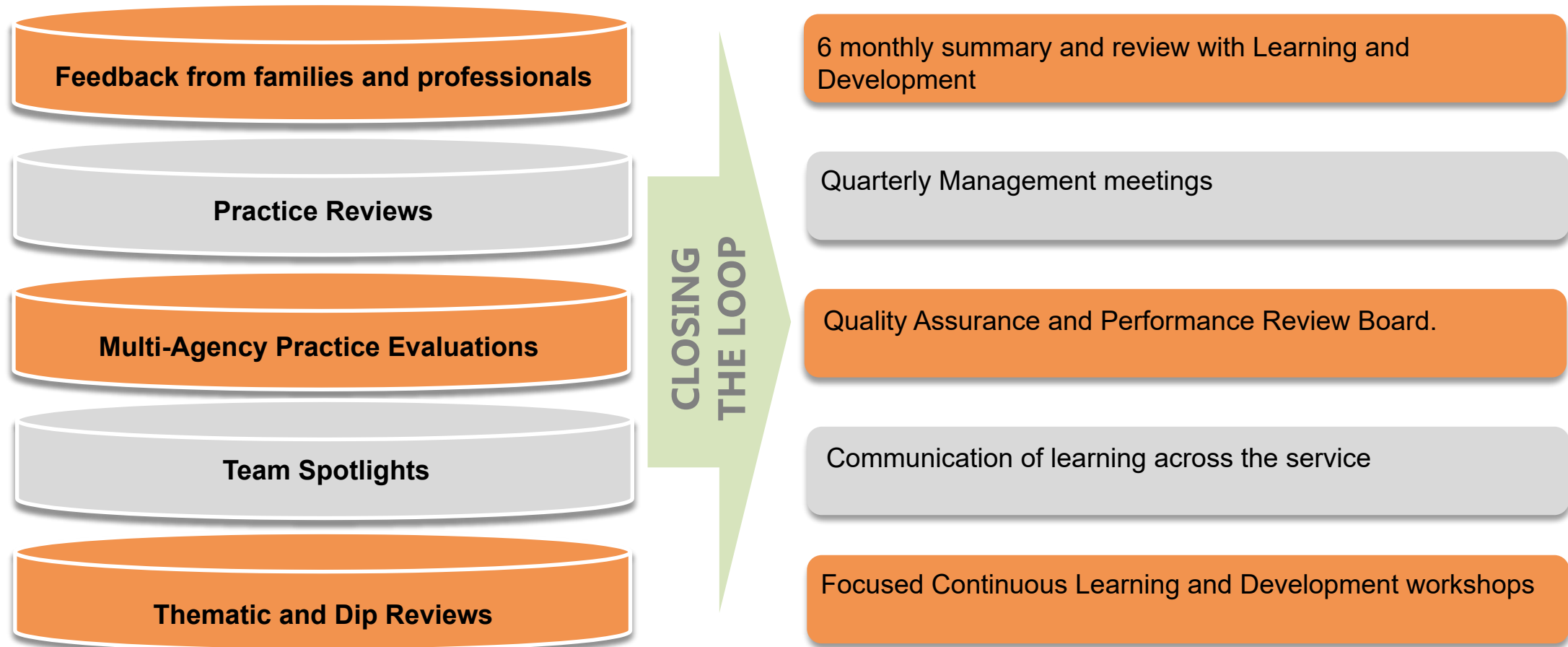
Ensuring our foundations are in place...

- Launch of a **Practice Framework** – developed in consultation with the service
- Launch of a **Quality Assurance Framework** with a strengthened focus on quality of practice and impact. Workshops in progress to develop reviewer confidence and system consistency
- Refresh of the **Quality Assurance and Performance Board** – whole system approach
- Refreshed **Workforce Development Strategy** to support recruitment and retention
- Refreshed **Practice Standards**
- Refreshed **Supervision Policy and revised Supervision Record** for the child
- **Regular communication** – staff briefings, launch of monthly newsletter,
- **Re-launch of Care and Resource Panel** to ensure tighter senior management oversight of decision making
- Appointment of a **Young Director and Children's Participation Officer** to ensure the views of our children and young people are sought, understood, and inform service development



Quality Assurance Framework

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What's working well?

- ✓ **Extensive Intensive Early Help Offer** – Family Wellbeing and the Youth Offending Service
- ✓ The Early Help Hub allows for **proportionate responses** to make sure children, young people and their families get the right help at the right time
- ✓ **Strong foundations in place and commitment** from the Front Door team and all involved partners to **'go live' with the MASH**
- ✓ Overall, staff report feeling **committed and well supported** and that there is a **strong sense of team**
- ✓ **Permanent recruitment** to vacant Head of Service and Team Manager posts and new ASYEs starting during September 2022
- ✓ Quality assurance has a **strengthened focus on practice and feedback**
- ✓ Need for **additional capacity/support identified and coming into place** – Service Improvement Lead, SLIP support from Wiltshire for QA, internal QA officer post and consultant to support permanence work
- ✓ **Improved Performance Information Systems** – Power BI Dashboards



And finally, our next steps...

- ✓ Maintain a **relentless focus on continuous improvement** – launch of 'our fundamentals' at the Staff Conference September 2022
- ✓ Embed our **Practice Framework** including the **consistent use of Signs of Safety** with a common use of language
- ✓ Continue to **develop a strong and confident leadership team**
- ✓ **Embed Quality Assurance Framework** and processes including routine arrangements at the Front Door
- ✓ Strengthen our **focus on family and friends' networks**
- ✓ Further focus on **capturing the voice and views of children and families** on the quality and impact of the help they receive, using this to support our next steps
- ✓ **'Go live' with the MASH** during September/October 2022
- ✓ Continue to strengthen partnership working including **embedding Signs of Safety** with a common use of language across partners and **shared performance metrics**
- ✓ Move the responsibility for **managing strategy meetings** into the Front Door
- ✓ **Strengthen the strategic and operational partnership response** to children being exploited and missing



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Mark Riddell Visit

6 September 2022

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Agenda

9.15am – 10.30am

- Recommendations from last visit – Summer 21
- Further changes and Improvement

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What our data tells us

Timetable for today

Recommendation's from Last Visit

1. To strengthen the Champion Model Approach by developing themed boards

- Themed meetings have been introduced with a timetable of themes in place

2. To strengthen the membership of the Board

- The Board is chaired by the Executive Member for Children's Services and Lifelong Learning
- The Director for Children Services is a Member of the Board
- Job Centre Plus and CAMHS invited to become Board members
- Young Director is a member

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To develop a whole council offer by organising an event to co-ordinate a whole offer approach with each department in the Local Authority being asked to make an offer to Care Leavers

- Regular reports to Corporate Leadership Team on Corporate Parenting – good communication channels in place supporting an improved offer for Care Leavers
- Corporate Parenting Champions Group set up with representatives from each Directorate
- Commitment from CLT for Senior Leaders to become mentors for Care Leavers
- Commitment from CLT to include Care Leavers in the Apprenticeship Strategy including priority for Care Leavers
- Commitment to ring-fencing a number of apprenticeship internships within the council - to be progressed in the Autumn

Recommendation's from Last Visit

4. To set a target for ringfenced opportunities in the Council

- Good track record re Care leaver Apprentices at the Council - All Care leavers who request an Apprenticeship are actively supported to secure one in the Council
- Plans in place to grow Traineeships and Apprenticeship Opportunities with Economic Development Team

5. To review the existing Housing Protocol and DWP Protocol

- Both of these Protocols have been reviewed and updated
- ICB considering request for free prescriptions up to 25 for those ineligible for them – we've asked for it to be across the other 2 LAs as well

6. To develop a health offer 18yrs to 25yrs which could include an offer of free prescriptions, dental protheses and or glasses etc

- Regional partnership are working on this
- Funding in place from Benefactor to pay for £150 towards glasses, dentists, prescriptions

Recommendation's from Last Visit

7. **To conduct an aspiration audit to be completed with your virtual headteacher to match to opportunities being offered through a business event/whole council offer**

- Higher Education Policy has been updated and includes bursary for care leavers studying at Masters level
- Education, Employment and Training survey completed with over 200 care experienced young people by participation team
- Elected members are willing to be matched with young people in HE

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To consider the Rees Foundation health membership offer to all Care Leavers

- Agreement to fund 10 places as a trial – seeking interest from Care Leavers and will be signed up by end September

9. **To review the duty system and to develop a 21yrs to 25yrs offer**

- Additional capacity secured in the care leaving team
- Care experienced graduate beginning work in the team to work with over 21's
- Given additional capacity, review of duty system to happen in Autumn 2022
- From October, Leaving Care PA's will be co-working with young people from age 17

Recommendation's from Last Visit

10. **A digital offer to be developed as part of the local offer to Care Leavers**

- NSC continue to pay 50% of care leavers Wi-Fi costs
- Care leavers are provided with mobile phones and three-months data (from Tesco's)
- All care leavers have received a laptop, either from DfE or a private funder
- Young person's room has been refurbished with new computers, printer and a landline

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11. **To consider specialist workers in the team, ie EET, Senior Practitioner to support and develop the team further**

- A Part time EET worker has been appointed to work in the team
- Reboot worker is in the Team
- Housing worker is in the team
- Senior practitioner in post from August 2022

Recommendation's from Last Visit

12. To consider what does above statutory entitlements mean, ie can ISRO's consider reviewing Pathway Plans up to 25 using a RAG approach

- Plan agreed for ISROS to review a proportion of Pathway plans (there are examples where this has taken place already)

13. An audit/review of paperwork around payments to Care Leavers

- This has been discussed with the Chief Executive Officer and is work in progress
- Care leavers are prioritised vouchers from the Home Support fund

Further Changes and Developments since last Summer

Within the last year we have:

- Relaunched our Corporate Parenting Board
- Relaunched our Care Leaver Forum following COVID-19
- Created and appointed to a Young Director post to help us strengthen engagement with our care leavers.
- Appointed a new Participation Worker who is working closely with our Young Director
- Started to identify Young Ambassadors and peer mentors to provide additional support to our care leavers

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We have set an ambitious target to have 70% of our care leavers in education, employment, or training (EET) within the next twelve months. To do this we have:

- Reviewed and enhanced our offer to care leavers entering Higher Education, introducing new financial support for those continuing their studies into a Master's degree
- Introduced the Next Steps Scheme to provide additional, one-off financial grants to support care leavers into EET
- Been actively involved in the Southwest region Local Offer proposals for care leavers; presenting at the Regional Conference 'No One Left Behind' in June 2022, highlighting good practice regarding EET
- Employed an EET worker who is working with our Economic Development team

Further Changes and Developments since last Summer

Housing:

- Renewed our Joint Housing Protocol for care leavers
- Introduced a new Rent Guarantor Scheme for care leavers
- Developed three housing projects for unaccompanied asylum seeking children
- A hub for asylum seekers is in development which will be supported by housing and CAMHS and a range of other supporting activities such as, for example, conversational English

Allowances:

- We have reviewed and updated our Care Leavers Allowances Policy

NEET Panel:

- In the Autumn we are launching a monthly NEET Panel and developing strategies to increase the number of our care leavers moving on to University.
- We have increased the scope of our ASDAN programme worker to focus on our Children in Care aged 14 years+ to develop independence and life skills from an earlier age.
- We are in the early stages of extending the role of the Independent Safeguarding and Reviewing Officers to review a selection of Pathway Plans up to 25 years using a RAG approach.

Further Changes and Developments since last Summer

Investment in additional capacity

- Young Director appointed – Bethany Swann
- Participation Officer appointed – Ella Bunting
- Additional capacity in Care Leaving Team (EET Worker, Senior Practitioner, 1fte Leaving Care Personal Adviser)
- Consultant Service Improvement Lead

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Increased Offer to Care leavers

- Rent Guarantor scheme in place
- Bursary for students studying at Masters level
- Care leavers offered £500 as they begin work to help support them until they are paid (Benefactor)
- Sailing Holiday (Tall Ships) offered and taken up by 10 Care leavers
- Weekly EET Drop In
- Weekly Housing Drop in
- Proposal to increase full Council Tax exemption for care leavers up to the age of 25 from April 2023 as part of our budget proposals to Full Council in February 2023.

Further Changes and Developments since last Summer

External Influence and Guidance

- Selected to trial training from LIFT Research Study with Bristol University (Life in Transition)
- Participant in care leaver Research Study with York and Oxford University 'Care leavers Transition into the Labour Market'
- Regional care leaver working group established in the South West, with aim of increasing offer for care leavers
- National Benchmarking Forum
- New Belongings Board

Corporate Parenting

All Councillors have signed Pledge regarding their Corporate Parenting responsibilities
All Full Council meetings begin with a Corporate Parenting Report

Practice Improvement

- Principal Social Worker, standalone role at Head of Service level
- Permanency Tracker in place – strategy is in development
- Care and Resource Panel reviewed and refreshed with a strong focus on stability and staying put – chaired by AD
- Transfer policy agreed
- Next Steps Panel established. This provides funding on a individual basis support care leavers to maintain education, employment and training
- Spotlight on the quality of service provided to take place 1 November 2022
- Health Passport form developed – to be given to children in care/care leavers when they turn 18

Further Changes and Developments since last Summer

Increased Care leaver participation

- Beth and Ella run monthly Care Leaver Forum and attend drop-ins
- Young people's room re-opened with refurbished computers
- Care leavers panels continue to support the recruitment process of a range of posts across the Directorate
- Young Director meets regularly with both Assistant Director and Director
- Awards Day for all care leavers held in May 2022

Virtual School

- Annual Report of Headteacher – February 22

Corporate Parenting Panel

- Themed Panel meetings taking place:
 - EET – July 22
 - Health and Housing - September 22
 - Housing Support and Living Independently - November 22
 - Voice of Young People – January 23
- Virtual School Headteacher Report – May 22
- Young people Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET) Report – July 22
- Regional Care Leaver Conference – Education, Employment, Training Presentation by Young Director



Further Changes and Developments since last Summer

Policies updated

- Finance Guide 'Money Matters'
- Rent Guarantor Scheme
- Joint Housing Protocol

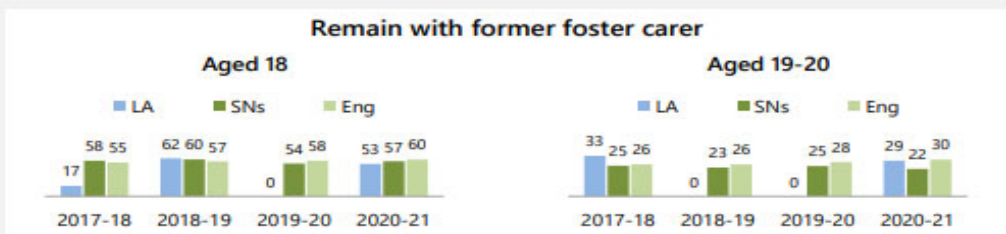
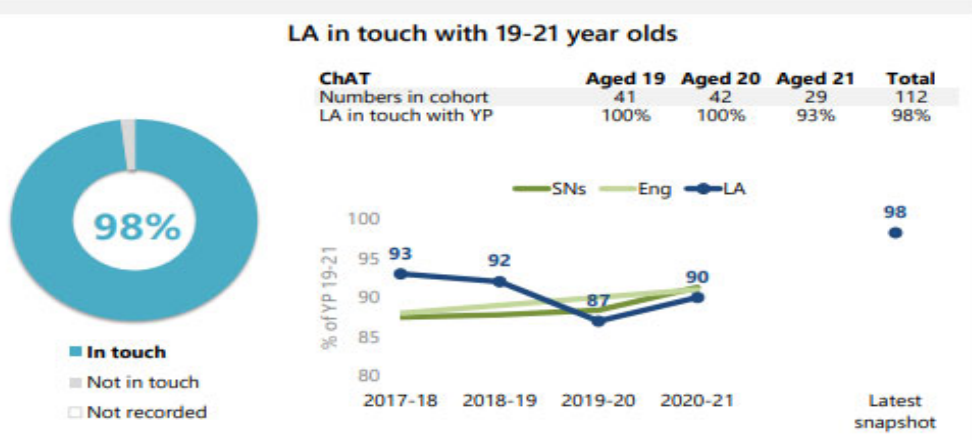
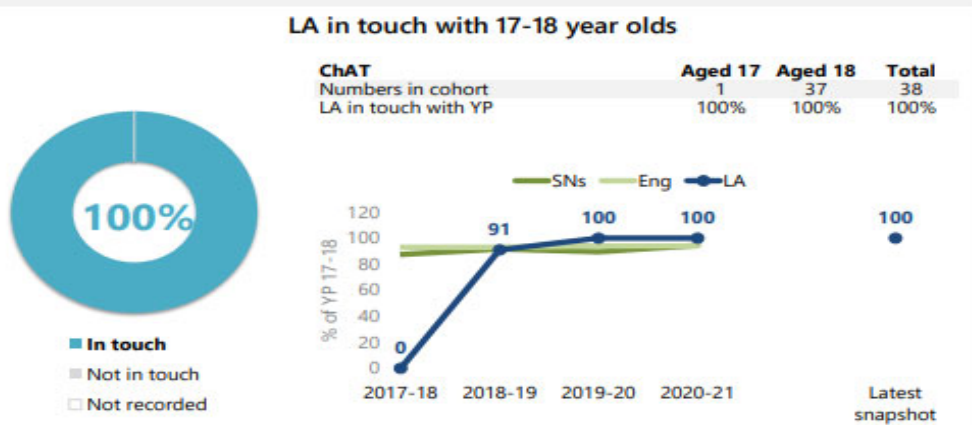
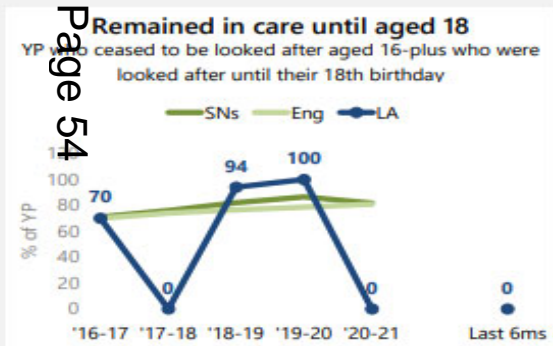
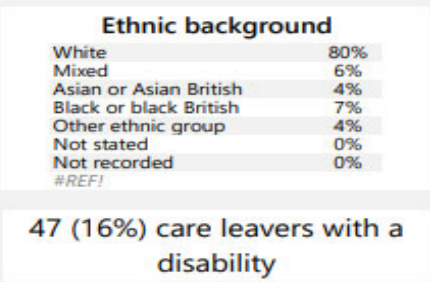
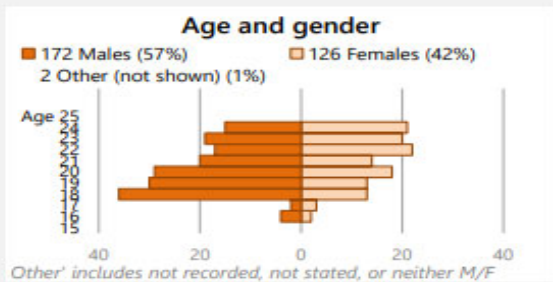
Pilot with 10 care leavers to include:

- Mental Health and Counselling
- Debt management

What the Data shows us – In Touch:

Care leavers currently in receipt of leaving care services Snapshot 25/08/2022

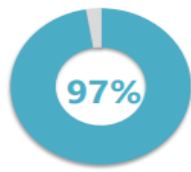
300 care leavers



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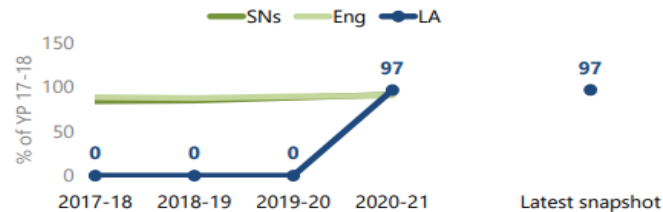
What the Data shows us – Accommodation Suitability:

Accommodation suitability of 17-18 year olds



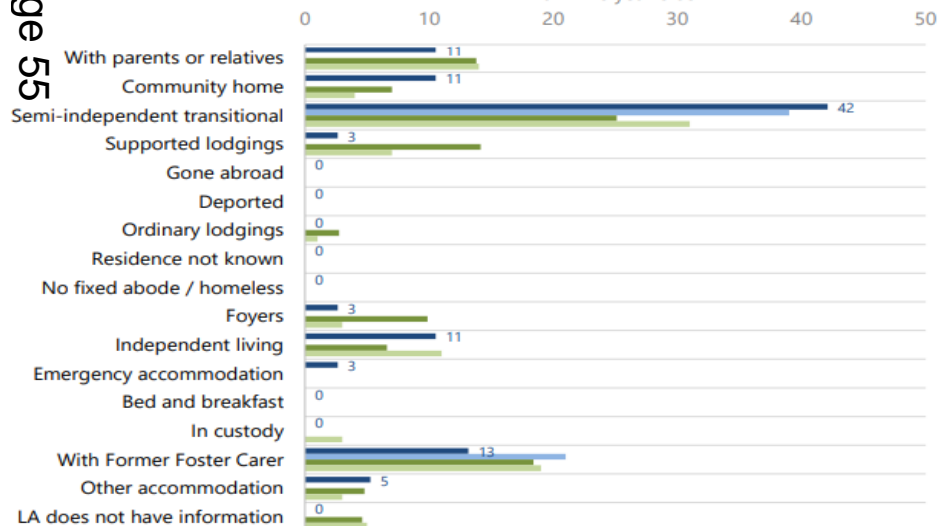
■ Suitable accom
■ Not suitable
□ No information

ChAT	Aged 17	Aged 18	Total
Numbers in cohort	1	37	38
In suitable accommodation	100%	97%	97%

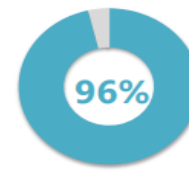


Accommodation types of 17-18 year olds

■ Latest snapshot ■ LA 20-21 ■ SNs 20-21 ■ Eng 20-21
% 17-18 year olds

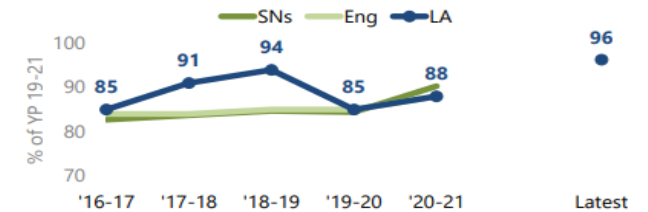


Accommodation suitability of 19-21 year olds



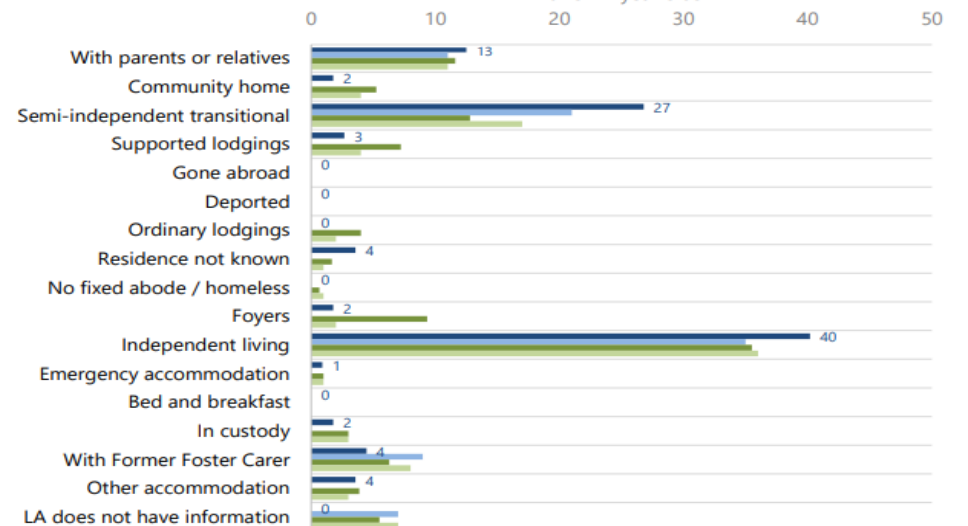
■ Suitable accom
■ Not suitable
□ No information

ChAT	Aged 19	Aged 20	Aged 21	Total
Numbers in cohort	40	41	27	108
In suitable accommodation	95%	98%	96%	96%

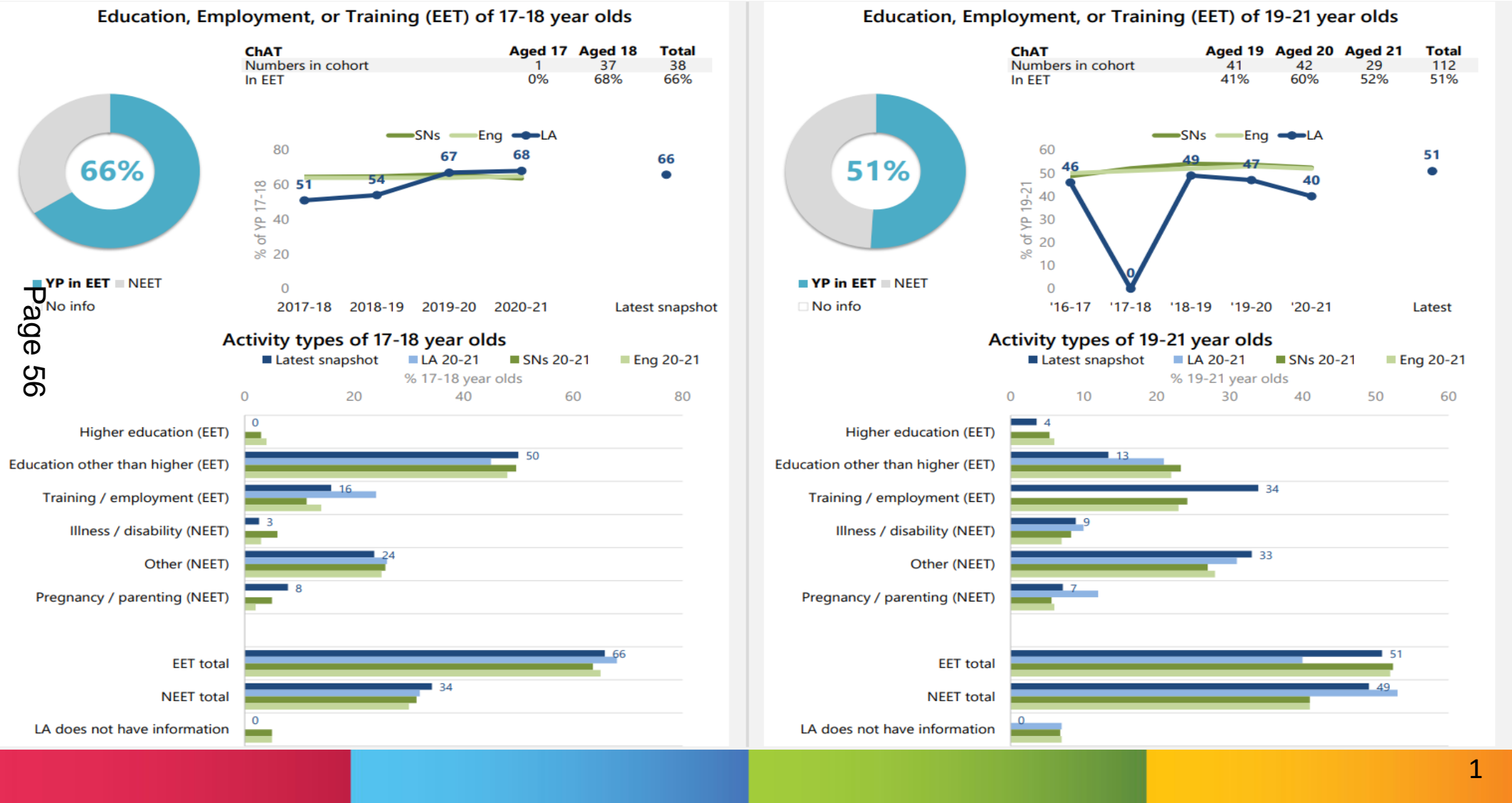


Accommodation types of 19-21 year olds

■ Latest snapshot ■ LA 20-21 ■ SNs 20-21 ■ Eng 20-21
% 19-21 year olds



What the Data shows us – Activity (Education, Employment or Training)



Timetable for Today's Visit:

10.30am – 11.30am

Heads of Services and Team Managers for children in care and care leavers

Discuss the operational model for our care leavers

11.30pm – 12.30pm

Team Manager and Personal Advisers

Discuss how the leaving care service is delivered operationally with a focus on strengths and challenges and the new statutory duties

(Lunch) 12.30pm – 1.30pm

1.30pm – 2.30pm

Regional Presentation by Ella Bunting, Participation Worker and Bethany Swann, Young Director - EET

2.30pm – 4.00pm

Meeting with Young Director, Participation Officer, and a group of care leavers. Discuss the existing Corporate Parenting offer, new care leavers strategy and how it feels to be a care leaver in North Somerset.

4.00pm – 5pm

Feedback session

5pm – Close



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North Somerset Council

Report to the Children & Young People Policy & Scrutiny Panel

Date of Meeting: 20 October 2022

Subject of Report: CYPS task-and-finish groups update

Town or Parish:

Officer/Member Presenting: Councillor Wendy Griggs

Key Decision: NO

Reason:

The report does not meet the key criteria for a key decision.

Recommendations

- i) That the Panel considers the activities of the CYPS working groups; and
- ii) That Members take this into account when setting the Panel's Work Plan.

1. Summary of Report

There are four working groups set up by the Children and Young Peoples Policy and Scrutiny Panel. They are:

- i) The Care Leavers Not in Employment, Education or Training working group. This was set up to identify and recommend sustainable and effective delivery and creation of opportunities for all care leavers in NSC who are NEET.
- ii) The Front Door working group. This was set up to focus at a strategic level on scrutinising the delivery of the Children's Improvement Plan.
- iii) The SEND Improvement Plan working group (formerly known as the Accelerated Progress Plan working group). This was set up to identify and recommend further effective delivery of the Council SEND Improvement plan in relation to the experiences of Parents and Carers.
- iv) The School Organisation working group, which looks at school operational changes, the school's capital programme and school place planning.

This report will update the Panel on the activities of these working groups so far this municipal year.

2. Policy

The Corporate Plan sets out the Council's vision for: an open, fairer, greener North Somerset. Policy and Scrutiny Panels have an integral role in the delivery of the Council's aims and priorities by engaging with the development of policy, monitoring performance and holding decision makers to account.

3. Details

3.1 CYPS Care Leavers NEET working group

- The Working Group has been organised to identify and recommend sustainable and effective delivery and creation of opportunities for all care leavers in NSC who are NEET for the next 6-8 months and beyond.
- The meeting of 17 March 2022 looked at qualitative and benchmarking data for review by Members.
- The meeting of 28 April 2022 looked at further data.
- The meeting of 9 June 2022 looked at the barriers to mentoring by care leavers and some initiatives supporting NEET Care Leavers in North Somerset.
- The meeting of 8 September 2022 gathered information from Junction 21, specifically on their mentoring support for care leavers, and the results of the survey of care leavers using the Young People's Room at the Town Hall.
- The final meeting, to be held on 14 October 2022 will review evidence gathered to date in order to develop and propose an action plan to improve NEET outcomes with clear timescales over the coming 12 months.

3.2 CYPS Front Door Working Group

- Focussing at a strategic level on scrutinising the delivery of the Children's Improvement Plan.
- A meeting of the Focus Group took place on 7 April 2022, which looked at information received from the many partner agencies that use the Front Door. Presentation on a number of case studies showing the different pathways into the Front Door and beyond.
- A further meeting on 24 November 2022 will gather feedback from service users.

3.3 CYPS SEND Improvement Plan Working Group

- The working group has been set up to identify and recommend further effective delivery of the Council SEND Improvement plan in relation to the experiences of Parents and Carers.
- Meetings on 24 March 2022 and 1 June 2022 focussed on: a review of data on waiting times for ECHP'S, referrals to health specialists, and responses from North Somerset and other partners, as well as results of any available parents / carers surveys. There was also feedback from parents and children during a working group visit to Bourneville Primary School.
- A further meeting on 6 September 2022 gave feedback on the working group visit to Nailsea School, and update Members on the reorganisation plans for the SEND team.
- The next meeting of the working group will be on 1 November 2022, and will look at feedback gathered from the working group visit to Baytree School.

3.4 CYPS School Organisation Working Group

- This Working Group looks at school operational changes, the school's capital programme and school place planning. The Steering Group met on three occasions in the 2021/22 school year, and once so far in the 2022/23 school year.

- At the meeting on 10 September 2021 the Panel was provided with updates and asked questions about the Baytree School Expansion project, the recently completed delivery of Chestnut Park Primary and considered a draft paper about the proposed second school in the Haywood Village area
- The 15 December 2021 meeting concentrated on an Overview of the SEND Improvement Plan and outline plans for Nurture Groups/Hubs, it reviewed the responses to the updated Baytree Consultation Review in relation to this school's expansion and received, as part of its regular updates, progress on actions within the Education Provision in North Somerset ~ A Commissioning Strategy 2021 – 2024
- The Working Group received an update on 18 January 2022 on the progress being made in the delivery of the Winterstoke Hundred Academy and Baytree Expansions, it reviewed and made recommendations in relation to the Term Date Consultation for the 2023/24 School Year and North Somerset's maintained schools School Admission Policies. The latter included considering the draft Community and Voluntary Controlled School Admission Arrangements 2023-24 and the North Somerset Coordinated Schemes 2023 - 24.
- At the meeting of 20 September 2022, Members were updated on the Education Commissioning Strategy; were given an update on the Winterstoke Hundred Academy and Baytree Expansions, the opening of Lime Hills Academy and five Nurture Groups and the Capital Projects at Banwell and Kewstoke Primary Schools; projections for 2022-27 (including thoughts on the Local Plan); the projections for a need for a new primary school in Weston; and the SEND High Needs Capital Consultation. A visit to Lime Hills Academy in Nailsea is being planned for 19 October.

4. Consultation

None.

5. Financial Implications

None specific.

Costs

None.

Funding

None.

6. Legal Powers and Implications

Policy and Scrutiny Panels operate within legislation and the Council's Constitution.

7. Climate Change and Environmental Implications

Not applicable.

8. Risk Management

Not applicable.

9. Equality Implications

Not applicable.

10. Corporate Implications

None.

11. Options Considered

Not applicable.

Author:

Brent Cross, Policy and Scrutiny Senior Officer.

Email: brent.cross@n-somerset.gov.uk Telephone: 01275 888078

Appendices:

None.

Background Papers:

None.

North Somerset Council

Report to the Children & Young People's Services Policy and Scrutiny Panel

Date of Meeting: 20 October 2022

Subject of Report: Children & Young People's Services – School's Capital Programme

Town or Parish: All

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

Key Decision: Yes

Reason: It affects more than one ward and the schemes, in total, exceed £500,000.

Recommendations

That the Panel notes the progress made on schemes to date and comments, if required, on future plans.

1. Summary of Report

- 1.1 The DfE announced the Basic Need allocations for the 2023/24 and 2024/25 financial years; the Special Provisions High Needs grant payments for the 2022/23 and 2023/24 financial years and the School Condition Allocation for the 2022/23 final year on 28 March 2022. Details of these grants are listed below:

Allocations				
	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25	Totals
Basic Need	£ -	£ 6,694,758.00	£ -	£6,694,758.00
School Condition Allocation	£ 355,250.00	TBA	TBA	£ -
Special Provisions High Needs	£ 1,696,470.00	£ 2,713,824.00	TBA	£4,410,294.00
Totals	£ 2,051,720.00	£ 9,408,582.00	£ -	£11,083,946.00

- 1.2 Members are asked to note the allocations and past and future spend opportunities.

2. Policy

- 2.1 Basic Need allocations are paid to local authorities (LAs) to support the capital requirement for providing new mainstream pupil places. This can include expanding

existing maintained schools or academies or creating new schools via competitions. Whilst the funding is un-ringfenced capital and it is not time-bound, LAs are required to make the best decisions for their local area and meet their legal duty to secure sufficient places for their residents. Local authorities have a statutory responsibility to ensure there are enough school places available in their area for every child aged 5 to 16 needing one, as set out under section 14 of the 1996 Education Act.

- 2.2 School Condition Allocations (SCA) are paid to Local Authorities to support the maintenance of community and voluntary controlled schools. The DfE updates allocations annually to reflect new or closing schools, and where a school has moved to a new SCA responsible body. Allocations to local authorities also include a small amount of funding for Sure Start centres.
- 2.3 This Council has an agreed policy not to fund schools who have an Academy Order in place stating their intention to convert to academy status. Until they have converted, the LA still receives funding within its SCA for the school.
- 2.4 The Education Act 1996 sets out a statutory duty on local authorities (LAs) to secure sufficient school places, which they must do about securing special educational provision for children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) as well as those requiring alternative provision (AP). The Children and Families Act 2014 also places important statutory responsibilities on LAs for supporting children and young people with SEND, including keeping the sufficiency of educational provision for them under review.
- 2.5 The High Needs Special Provisions Fund should be used primarily to meet the capital costs associated with providing new places and improving existing provision, for:
 - Children and young people with complex needs, who have Education, Health and Care plans (EHCPs), and where appropriate other children and young people with SEND who do not have an EHCP; and
 - Pupils who require alternative provision (including children in AP settings without an EHCP).

3. Details

Basic Need

- 3.1 The Basic Need allocations for the 2023-24 financial year are based upon the projected need for new places by September 2024 (the start of academic year 2024/25). The allocations for the 2024-25 financial year are based upon the projected need for new places by September 2025 (the start of academic year 2025/26).
- 3.2 North Somerset's allocations have been based on data provided by North Somerset in our 2021 School Capacity (SCAP) survey submission. The DfE have provided funding to create additional places as below:

	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25
Primary Places	0	7	0

Secondary Places	0	291	0
Total Places	0	298	0

3.3 The 298 places listed above are from the following areas:

Primary			
School Cluster	Places Funded	Actions required	Recommendations
Backwell A group (Long Ashton/Flax Bourton)	4	None – these pupils can be accommodated within existing provisions	To keep places in these clusters under review
Backwell C group (Backwell)	2		
Gordano/Pill	1		

Secondary			
Planning Area	Places Funded	Actions required	Recommendations
Clevedon	127	Create extra provision	See 3.5 below
Portishead	94	Provision already provided	See 3.5 below
Backwell	44	Use resources towards new provision in the areas of new growth	See 3.5 below
Churchill	24		
Pill	2	None – these pupils can be accommodated within the existing provision	See 3.5 below

3.4 Funding was calculated by the DfE, rounded up, as:

	Per place	Places Funded	DfE Calculation
Primary	£17,552.89	7	£130,048.76
Secondary	£22,553.42	291	£6,564,709.27
Total			£6,694,758.03

3.5 Based on the above data, the cluster allocations are as below. It is recommended that the 2023/24 funding is allocated across both the 2023/24 and 2024/25 financial years as follows:

	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25
Primary			
		£130,048.76	

Rationale	Retained for the possible allocation to breach classes in 2023/24 and 2024/25 as required as excess demand should be accommodated within current strategies in place.		
Secondary			
Clevedon		£2,865,010.78	
Portishead – to be held			£2,120,559.16
Backwell – to be held			£992,602.16
Churchill – to be held			£541,419.36
St Katherine’s – to be held			£45,118.28
Total		£2,865,010.78	3,699.698.96
Rationale	<p>2023/24 spend</p> <p>We have been working with Clevedon School to resolve their capacity shortfall and had submitted a case with the SCAP return for capital support. This money should support an expansion of Clevedon School’s buildings to work towards their physical capacity matching their Funding Agreement capacity. *</p> <p>2024/25 spend</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• We have already worked with Gordano School to provide the capacity needed to meet demand during this period via a permanent (£4.230m) expansion scheme and breach expansions (£150k) in 2016; 2021 and 2022. This funding should be retained as unallocated for review in 2023/24 or used as a contingency for a scheme at Clevedon if required• Backwell/Churchill - This combined funding of c £1.53m should be allocated to the Local Plan solution for new provision in or around Yatton• St Katherine – as a net importer of pupils, we have sufficient places for North Somerset residents provided they name the school as one of their preferences <p>Secondary Breach classes - For the secondary phase, the Backwell and Portishead clusters allocate some places to pupils from outside the district so there should be sufficient places. St Katherine’s is a net importer of pupils from Bristol. The changes recommended for Clevedon should enable them to accommodate all local pupils and prevent an admissions consultation to decrease their Planned Admission Number (PAN) from 240 to 210 due to accommodation capacity and timetabling concerns.</p>		

*In the past Clevedon School has operated with a Number on Roll lower than the PAN and overall site capacity. Numbers are now increasing so that the lower years are at the limit of the PAN in these cohorts. The school is finding it increasingly difficult to accommodate the growing numbers of pupils and had commissioned an independent Capacity Analysis, which has calculated a capacity of 1245 places. The Funding Agreement states 1,200 years 7 – 11 places plus 6th form of c 200.

School Condition Allocations

- 3.6 Basic Need allocations are not directly intended to address other capital needs, such as maintenance/condition work, high needs provision, or new nursery/post-16 provision. In planning capital projects, the DfE expects LAs to think strategically and consider economies of scale or efficiencies that may be achieved such as by combining condition works and expansion schemes.

- 3.7 Schools and those responsible for school buildings are eligible for either a School Condition Allocation (SCA) or Condition Improvement Fund (CIF) grant.

North Somerset is, as at 1 April 2022, responsible for 9 maintained schools across 10 buildings. To assist with the maintenance of these sites we had been allocated, based on a formula, £376,356 of SCA. With the transfer of St Andrew's C of E Primary to the Lighthouse Schools Partnership on 12 April 2022, this funding has now been reduced to £355,250. As each school converts to academy status, the SCA allocation is reduced. The current allocation includes a transitional protection funding element. We have received the same protected allocation for the last 3 financial years.

The DfE intends to further reduce the level of protection offered by 25% points per annum until 2025-26, when no protection will remain. The exact methodology for calculating SCA in future years is yet to be confirmed.

- 3.8 Details of the conditions of grant can be found at [Condition funding methodology 2022 to 2023 \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://publishing.service.gov.uk/2022-03-23/condition-funding-methodology)
- 3.9 Academies are allocated funding via the CIF. Allocations to local authorities also include a small amount of funding for Sure Start centres, although this is not specified.
- 3.10 This Council has an agreed policy not to fund schools who have an Academy Order (AO) in place stating their intention to convert to academy status. Until they have converted, the LA still receives funding within its SCA for the school. Many of our remaining schools are in a poor state of repair.
- 3.11 The DfE expects LAs to 'treat schools considering conversion fairly, including by investing in high-priority condition issues and honouring any commitments of capital funding that they have made. On conversion, at a minimum, schools should be in a safe condition with no health and safety or regulatory compliance issues.'
- 3.12 Some Multi-Academy Trusts (MATs) have been reluctant to receive maintained LA schools into their MAT without their buildings being upgraded beforehand. New schools open with academy status and schools that had been recently upgraded often transfer to a MAT once building delivery or upgrades are complete. Nationally and locally schools many schools within Council control have a disproportionate maintenance need requirement when compared to other local schools. This is the case for a few remaining maintained schools in North Somerset. Irrespective of the status of a school, the children attending schools are predominately North Somerset residents.
- 3.13 At the time of writing this report the Council is responsible for Banwell Primary School. This school is moving towards academy status but requires significant

maintenance upgrades. To date we will have received SCA funding for the school and we responsible for its condition and major repairs. Parts of Banwell Primary School, that has an AO in place, have been condemned. Whilst the school remains as a maintained school, the Council has a duty to ensure its buildings are safe. For this reason, Executive approval is being sought to deliver a replacement project at this site at an indicative cost of £1.1m. This is to be funded from council reserves/borrowing as the SCA is insufficient to cover these costs.

In the past the Council contributed to capital upgrades at Blagdon Primary and Uphill Primary Schools as part of the transfer negotiations due to urgent health and safety requirements at these sites for which the Council, prior to transfer, was responsible.

- 3.14 Kewstoke Primary Schools also has considerable maintenance issues but currently does not have an AO in place. The DfE is keen for all schools to join a Multi-Academy Trust (MAT) by 2030 at the latest and undertaking work at this school may be required to facilitate an academy transfer in the future.
- 3.15 Our capital maintenance priorities in 2022/23 and 2023/24 are being assessed by colleagues in the Place Directorate and a programme of assessment is now underway but not yet fully in place. Condition surveys were last completed in the summer of 2020, and these are informing the 5-year condition upgrade programme. Until this is complete it is not possible to report fully on the future needs and priorities for the remaining LA schools. Indicative figures are given below that will need to inform a directorate bid for council borrowing as part of the Council's budget setting processes for the 2023/24 financial years and thereafter.

		£ p						
		Emergency	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5	Total
		22/23	23/24	24/25	25/26	26/27	27/28	
School Inspection repair costs (all sites)		£1,071,846.98	£1,011,766.03	£125,007.68	£305,797.23	£685,719.45	£102,108.42	£3,302,245.78
Inflation		£125,909.74	£188,944.26	£28,239.69	£81,975.76	£204,476.58	£33,831.10	£663,377.13
Contractor Prelims allowance	7.50%	£89,831.75	£90,053.27	£11,493.55	£29,082.97	£66,764.70	£10,195.46	£297,421.72
Contractor OHP	7.40%	£95,281.55	£95,516.50	£12,190.83	£30,847.34	£70,815.09	£10,813.99	£315,465.30
R&D Surveys/Removals		£100,000.00	£50,000.00	£50,000.00	£50,000.00	£50,000.00	£50,000.00	£350,000.00
Contingency/Risk	10.00%	£148,287.00	£143,628.01	£22,693.17	£49,770.33	£107,777.58	£20,694.90	£492,850.99
P&AM Fee	12.50%	£185,358.75	£179,535.01	£28,366.47	£62,212.91	£134,721.98	£25,868.62	£616,063.74
CYPS Fee	1.75%	£25,950.23	£25,134.90	£3,971.31	£8,709.81	£18,861.08	£3,621.61	£86,248.92

		£1,842,465.99	£1,784,577.97	£281,962.70	£618,396.36	£1,339,136.46	£257,134.10	£6,123,673.59
Total								
Running total			£1,842,465.99	£3,627,043.97	£3,909,006.66	£4,527,403.02	£5,866,539.48	£6,123,673.59

- 3.16 The SCA allocation of £376,356 and reducing each year cannot cover the cost of condition works that total £6.1m over 5 years. Capital Borrowing commitments were secured at Council on 2 February 2021 as part of a £3.445m commitment to upgrade the corporate estate. (See [Committee Report NSC \(modern.gov.co.uk\)](#) Appendix 2, table 2.1). Children's Services had indicated at that time that at least £1.5m should be allocated to schools and it is this resource that is being identified to pay for the scheme at Banwell Primary School (£1.1m) and that paid for a site safety scheme at the Voyage Learning Campus (VLC) in 2021 to ensure this school's buildings were Covid compliant. The latter cost in the region of £300,000.

The School Rebuilding Programme

- 3.17 The School Rebuilding Programme is a DfE programme to provide 500 major rebuilding and refurbishment projects at the worst buildings in the school and sixth form college estate across England over the next decade. LAs were offered the opportunity to bid for funds based on DfE centrally held data and our updated reports of poor condition in March 2022.
- 3.18 The Council submitted bids for four of our schools where the building condition need is considered so severe that there is an imminent risk of closure. All bids were based on the condition of demountable buildings at, in priority order:
- Banwell Primary
 - Wrington Primary
 - Ravenswood School
 - Kewstoke Primary

The DfE have visited three of the above four sites and outcomes are expected in the autumn/winter 2022.

- 3.19 If the bids made under the School Rebuilding Programme are successful, the Council would have to pay £65,000 per site for the removal and disposal of the existing demountable buildings, including site preparation which would fall outside the qualifications for the bids.

School Devolved Formula Allocations

- 3.20 All schools receive a small, devolved capital (DC) allocation to assist with ongoing repairs and maintenance. The individual school DC allocations in 2022/23, paid directly to the maintained schools we are responsible for, are as below:

	£
Banwell Primary	5,834
Churchill C of E Primary	6,228
Golden Valley Primary	8,635

Kewstoke Primary	4,983
Wrington C of E Primary	6,273
Baytree Special	7,620
Ravenswood Special	10,429
VLC – Milton and Oldmixon sites	7,594
Westhaven Special	13,315

- 3.21 Every eligible school gets a fixed sum, and a variable amount based on pupil numbers. Pupil numbers from the 2021 spring school census inform the next years allocation.

Special Provisions High Needs

- 3.22 In March 2022, the Department for Education announced High Needs Provision Capital Allocations (HNPCA) for the 2022/23 and 2023/24 financial years. HNPCA is paid to LAs to support the provision of places for children and young people (CYP) with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) and those pupils requiring alternative provision (AP).
- 3.23 Unlike Basic Need allocations for mainstream places, where allocations are based on data provided by the LA, the DfE does not centrally hold comprehensive data on local demand for SEND provision. Grant allocations have been based on:
- 75% based on estimated growth in demand for High Needs (HN) provision
 - 25% the LA's estimated population of Children and Young People who need High Needs provision

The estimated growth in demand for High Needs (HN) provision is obtained from a comparison of projections for Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) and Alternative Provision (AP) pupils for the 2022/23, 2023/24 and 2024/25 academic years, derived from actual pupil numbers and historic Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCP) and AP rates. These same pupil projections are also used to allocate the size component of the allocation. Estimates of future pupil growth account for additional High Needs capacity provided through centrally delivered free schools.

- 3.24 Guidance on the allocation of the HNPCA is available at [High Needs Provision Capital Allocations Guidance \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://publishing.service.gov.uk/guidance/high-needs-provision-capital-allocations)
- 3.25 Until the 2019/20 financial year LAs had not received capital allocations for SEND places. This continuation in funding is intended to provide a transformational investment in new High Needs provision and there is an expectation that Council's will collectively deliver tens of thousands of new places, supporting learning in both mainstream and special schools/hubs.

Funding beyond 2025 is contingent on the outcomes of future Spending Reviews and additional capital funding beyond this period cannot be guaranteed. It is therefore critical that prudent decisions are taken now to ensure the sustainability of the system for the longer term.

- 3.25 The HNPCA can be used to:
- improve the suitability and accessibility of existing buildings

- creating new special and AP free schools

The overall aim is to help drive up standards in special education and to assist with delivering new places needed for September 2023 and September 2024 respectively. The funding is un-ringfenced (subject to certain conditions, as set out in the published Grant Determination document) and it is ultimately for LAs to determine how to best use the funding to meet local priorities.

- 3.26 Funding should be used primarily to meet the capital costs associated with providing new places and improving existing provision, for:
- Children and young people with complex needs, who have Education, Health and Care plans (EHCPs), and where appropriate other children and young people with SEND who do not have an EHCP; and
 - Pupils who require alternative provision (including children in AP settings without an EHCP).
- 3.27 Whilst the funding is predominantly intended for school aged children, LAs can spend it across the 0-25 age range, including in special post-16 institutions or other further education (FE) settings. The funding is intended to address the need for places in academic years 2023/24 and 2024/25, but it is not time-bound.
- 3.28 Funding can also be used to meet suitability needs to adapt, re-model or improve existing provision to make it appropriate or suitable for a different or wider set of children and young people's needs. Accordingly, HNPCA in 2022-24 includes an element specifically intended to support LAs to invest in suitability and/or accessibility projects where this may be appropriate.
- 3.29 LAs are encouraged to prioritise projects that will help them to manage pressures on their high needs budgets; and should ensure they are considering any resulting savings when developing their local Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) management plans. In particular, the DfE recommends that LAs should consider prioritising projects that increase available placements for children and young people with EHCPs in mainstream settings (i.e., new SEN units or resourced provisions) or promote effective upstream support from specialist teams and settings within the mainstream environment, where this can be made suitable for children and young people with SEND.

The funding can be used to provide new places or improve existing provision in a range of provision types, where this benefits children and young people with High Needs aged between 0 and 25. This includes mainstream schools or colleges (including academies); FE colleges or 6th Form colleges; Special Schools and Units; Alternative Provision; Nursery or early years providers; and any other education provision for children and young people with SEND who are aged between 0 and 25 or who require alternative provision which is not otherwise covered.

- 3.30 In areas where children and young people travel regularly across LA borders, LAs are encouraged to work with neighbouring authorities to consider solutions that may benefit the broader region.

4. Consultation

- 4.1 The strategic plans for creating extra school places were shared in the Education Provision in North Somerset - A Commissioning Strategy 2021 – 2024 consultation undertaken in the spring of 2021 . Details of the responses were reported to the Executive in June 2021 – see <https://n-somerset.moderngov.co.uk/documents/s1094/11 Draft Education Provision in North Somerset - A Commissioning Strategy 2021 2024.pdf>
- 4.2 The Place Directorate oversee the maintenance of the school estate on behalf of Children's Services. Details of School Condition Surveys as at summer 2020 were shared with all maintained schools. The Place Directorate are currently reviewing the surveys and further dialogue with schools will take place as required.
- 4.3 The DfE sought bids in March 2022 for funds from all Local Authorities and Multi-Academy Trusts that were based on DfE centrally held data and updated reports of poor condition from responsible bodies. Outcomes of their consultations and resulting site visits are expected shortly.
- 4.4 School Devolved Formula Allocations are paid directly to schools. Schools discuss the requirement for their sites with their governing body. Any physical changes to their sites are shared with the council to ensure compliance with all statutory obligations.
- 4.5 In accordance with the conditions of grant, a consultation with schools, the SEND community and other relevant stakeholders was undertaken between 6 September and 23 October 2022 to ascertain support for the Council's proposals on how to use the High Needs Capital Grant - see [High Needs Provision Capital Allocations \(HNPCA\) for the 2022/23 and 2023/24 financial years - North Somerset Council Consultations \(inconsult.uk\)](#)as

The DfE tell us that funding should be used primarily to meet the capital costs associated with providing new places and improving existing provision, for:

- Children and young people with complex needs, who have Education, Health and Care plans (EHCPs), and where appropriate other children and young people with SEND who do not have an EHCP; and
- Pupils who require Alternative Provision (AP) (including children in AP settings without an EHCP).

Within North Somerset we have identified a need for extra placements for :

- Those with a Social, Emotional and Mental Health (SEMH) diagnosis where children and young people who are suffering from anxiety and struggling to access a normal school environment. This has increased in part due to the recent pandemic and the impact this has had on people's mental health.
- Children and young people progressing through the autism assessment pathway where their needs are now more clearly identified.
- Pupils in schools where their setting needs room alterations or small-scale adaptations to allow them to continue to attend.
- Children and young people who require access to Alternative Provision (AP) and we need to consider how/if we enhance or replace the VLCs existing sites.

In total 18 responses to our e.consult consultation, three further emailed replies and an email asking for school site adjustments were received by the closing date. There was 100% support to our proposals to create more specialist places for pupils locally within or attached to mainstream schools as identified above. Comments included the need to enhance our current provision with a balance of specialist placements, earlier, or different intervention through Nurture Groups and Alternative Provision; a need to support students in their own schools; and a recognition that the needs identified for anxiety and autism were recognised. Areas of concern were around places being fully revenue funded and that the on-going costs should not be at the detriment to schools or Trusts and that Multi-Agency support should be readily available to support pupils and schools. Places should also be available to all qualifying pupils across North Somerset, not exclusive to those pupils attending the home school (or Trust) if true need is to be met.

In addition to the written responses, two public meetings were held on 12 and 13 September 2022 and attended by 8 and 11 external consultees from across the schools and Cllr community respectively. There was again 100% support to the recommendations for this capital grant with the comments made echoing those shared in the written responses above.

Officers are working through the responses to the consultation and further updates on potential schemes will be shared as soon as possible.

5. Financial Implications

- 5.1 LAs are required to verify Basic Need grant funding has been spent on capital projects through the section 151 officer's return, as well as providing data through the annual SCAP survey and discretionary Capital Spend Survey returns. Whilst the Basic Need grant remains un-ringfenced, providing flexibility in the management of council-led capital programmes to meet our sufficiency duties, the new conditions are designed to drive efficient spending. There is a risk that a failure to provide efficiency, especially where the methods of delivery were not the DfE's Construction Framework and its Modern Methods of Construction (MMC) Framework, could lead to the DfE reclaiming allocations.
- 5.2 If an authority fails to comply with any of the conditions and requirements of the Basic Need grant, the Minister of State may:
- reduce, suspend or withhold grant; or
 - by notification in writing to the authority, require the repayment of the whole or any part of the grant.
- Any sum notified by the Minister of State shall immediately become repayable.
- 5.3 High Needs Funding should not be used to maintain and improve the condition of the school estate, which should continue to be covered by Devolved Formula Capital funding (DFC), the Condition Improvement Fund (CIF) or School Condition Allocations (SCA).
- 5.4 As with other capital allocations, capital allocations are provided for capital purposes only and cannot be used for revenue expenditure of any kind, such as training or staff costs.

- 5.5 The national and regional benchmarking costs in 2021 of providing an expansion or a new school place are as below:

	England	South West
Permanent Expansion	£18,007	£18,367
Temporary Expansion	£8,572	£8,743
New School	£21,559	£21,990

Costs

Basic Need

- 5.6 The DfE's allocation of Basic Need from 2017/18 to 2022/23 has amounted to £25.2m of which £5.12m is still unspent as at July 2022 – see appendix 1. Schemes recently part-funded from Basic Need have included:

- Chestnut Park Primary
- Parklands Education Together (temporary and permanent sites)
- Gordano School expansion
- VLC Milton extra accommodation
- Banwell Primary School kitchen improvements
- Westhaven Special School Expansion
- Ravenswood Special School Expansion
- Resource Bases at Mendip Green and Nailsea Schools
- Winterstoke Hundred Academy

There were nil Basic Need allocations in the 2021/22 and 2022/23 financial years.

- 5.7 The remaining allocations have been provisionally set aside to develop extra places, as required, as below:

- To support primary place expansions in Sandford, Churchill and Winscombe
- To support the purchase of a secondary site in the centre of the district
- To support the reprovision of the leased Voyage Learning Campus site

The above schemes are dependent on place need and further scoping work to determine costs before any approvals are sought.

- 5.8 Early scoping work is progressing to develop a scheme to create extra capacity at Clevedon School in response to demand within the town that cannot easily be met within the current footprint of this academy to a value of c £2.86m. This would be met from the 2023/24 basic need allocation. Officers continue to consider where demand for the 2024/25 school year cannot be met and how this will inform future basic need spend recommendations.

Condition Allocations

- 5.9 The backlog of maintenance needs across the school estate is estimated to be in the region of £6.1m over the next 5 years. Condition surveys on the school portfolio will form the basis for prioritising school maintenance plans for future years. This work is ongoing and will inform a programme of planned works for next financial year and beyond. In the immediate term, from an analysis of the data included within the

surveys, Banwell and Kewstoke Primary schools stand out as buildings requiring immediate investment.

- 5.10 Of the nine schools still in the LA's control, five are due to convert to academy status in the 2022/23 school year. This will further reduce the obligations of the Council to maintain these buildings year on year, although the DfE's expectation that schools on conversion should be in a safe condition with no health and safety or regulatory compliance issues must be noted. Of the remaining four schools (excluding Kewstoke and Banwell) across 5 sites, one site is leased and plans to create a new freehold relocated site is in development (subject to funding) and the remaining four have c £1.72m of outstanding maintenance needs when last assessed. This need could change over time.

High Needs

- 5.11 The agreed priorities for extra SEND Provision, as detailed in the Education Provision in North Somerset ~ A Commissioning Strategy 2021 – 2024 are as detailed below:

- Creating new places for pupils with Severe Learning Difficulties and/or Profound and Multiple Learning Difficulties – the delivery of the Baytree Expansion scheme is adding 65 – 85 new physical places from the 2023/24 school year at the cost of £18,297,020 – see . [https://n-somerset.moderngov.co.uk/documents/s3314/10/Expansion and Creation of Second Site for Baytree School.pdf](https://n-somerset.moderngov.co.uk/documents/s3314/10/Expansion%20and%20Creation%20of%20Second%20Site%20for%20Baytree%20School.pdf)
- The creation of extra places at Westhaven and Ravenswood Schools for pupils with Severe Learning Difficulties in areas such as communication and interaction, cognitive and learning, emotional and social development, autism and sensory and physical needs – these schemes have already added 63 – 68 places at a cost of £125,000 at Ravenswood (see CS09 - [Decision \(n-somerset.gov.uk\)](https://n-somerset.moderngov.co.uk/documents/s3314/10/Decision%20on%20Ravenswood%20Scheme.pdf) and £247,500 at Westhaven (see PC97 (2019/20 scheme)
- The delivery of two new Resource Bases at Mendip Green Primary and Nailsea School for pupils with autism - added 20 places at the cost of £183,500 at Mendip Green and £150,000 at Nailsea School - see [Decision \(n-somerset.gov.uk\)](https://n-somerset.moderngov.co.uk/documents/s3314/10/Decision%20on%20Mendip%20Green%20and%20Nailsea%20Schools.pdf) and PC20/2019
- Opening Lime Hills Academy on its temporary site in Nailsea on 1 September 2022. This new Free School is supporting up to 25 pupils with Social, Emotional and Mental Health (SEMH) needs at the cost of c£140,000. The places will increase to 65 by September 2024 when the DfE delivers their permanent site in Churchill.

- 5.12 Additional plans for SEND provision for 2022/23 have included:

- The re-purposing existing buildings to create Nurture Groups at Backwell School, Bournville Primary, Priory Community School Academy, Yatton Infant and Junior and Yeo Moor Primary Schools to create 10-place groups per site at the cost of c £360,000 of Council borrowing - see table below
- Investing in accessibility and site suitability changes at Golden Valley School to ensure that the school can meet the needs of all their pupils on site – CY56 for £223,610 from the High Needs Grant 2021/22.

	£
Allocation as per Council 2021 – ASD Hubs (Borrowing)	300,000
Allocation as per Council 2021 – SEMH Hubs (Borrowing)	360,000

Total Funding	660,000
Previous decisions	
CY24 – Yatton Nurture Hub	22,200
CY25 – Priory Nurture Hub	55,000
CY43 – Bournville Nurture Hub	145,000
CY64 – Backwell School	21,000
CYxx – Yeo Moor School	TBA
Balance of funding for future decision	416,800

- 5.13 To assist with the further SEND provision using the High Needs allocations within the 2022/23 and 2023/24 financial years we are seeking support for our indicative plans and initial expressions of interest from schools, MATs and Early Years Providers to deliver years 2 and 3 of our 5-year SEND capital programme (with the final 2 years of schemes as yet unfunded). Indicative allocations are shown below:

Indicative Allocations				
High Needs Capital Funding Allocation	2022/23 Financial Year £	2023/24 Financial Year £	Totals £	Purpose
Resources Bases	500,000	500,000	1,000,000	To provide 2 further resources bases on existing sites by developing or providing new accommodation at existing locations
Nurture Groups	150,000	150,000	300,000	To provide 5 further Nurture Groups on existing sites by reconfiguring existing accommodation
Reasonable Adjustments	596,470	1,613,824,	2,210,294	To make adaptations to c 6 - 10 sites to ensure that the needs of pupils can be met
PRU enhancements	300,000	300,000	600,000	To develop or reconfigure the existing or new accommodation

Early Years/Post-16	150,000	150,000	300,000	To provide 2+ new or expanded early years/post-16 facilities on existing sites to support the integration of placements for SEND early years children into mainstream provision or the expansion of the local post-16 offer by reconfiguring existing accommodation
Totals	1,696,470	2,713,824	4,410,294	

5.14 Resource bases and Nurture Groups will be revenue funded in line with the revenue allocations agreed by the Strategic Schools Forum and will be subject to agreements outlined in Service Level Agreements (available on request).

5.15 Whilst the funding above is un-ringfenced (subject to certain conditions), the LA ultimately is to determine how to best use the funding to meet local priorities.

Funding

5.16 Details of the grants to support the above schemes are listed below:

Allocations				
	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25	Totals
Basic Need	£ -	£ 6,694,758.00	£ -	£6,694,758.00
School Condition Allocation	£ 355,250.00	TBA	TBA	£ -
Special Provisions High Needs	£ 1,696,470.00	£ 2,713,824.00	TBA	£4,410,294.00
Totals	£ 2,051,720.00	£ 9,408,582.00	£ -	£11,083,946.00

6. Legal Powers and Implications

6.1 Basic Need is allocated to LAs by the DfE under section 31 of the Local Government Act 2003. Allocations, that can only be used for capital purposes, are made based on a formula allocation that compares school capacity (not pupil admission numbers) against forecast mainstream pupil numbers from reception to year 11. There is also an uplifted to provide a 2 per cent operating margin. Where capacity is lower than forecasts, the DfE will fund the gap.

6.2 When expanding existing schools, there is an expectation that LAs will create new places at schools (including academies/free schools) with an overall Ofsted rating of 'good' or 'outstanding'. The local strategies for securing sufficing school places are

- 6.3 There is an expectation that school leaders and Academy Trusts will collaborate with LAs, expanding where feasible when requested to do so by a local authority, or increasing their admission numbers where they have capacity to do so, to meet a local need for places.
- 6.4 As stated in 3.10 above, this Council has an agreed policy not to fund schools who have an Academy Order (AO) in place stating their intention to convert to academy status. Whilst the school remains as a maintained school, the Council has a duty to ensure its buildings are safe.
- 6.5 As indicated in 3.11 above, the DfE expects LAs to 'treat schools considering conversion fairly, including by investing in high-priority condition issues and honouring any commitments of capital funding that they have made. On conversion, at a minimum, schools should be in a safe condition with no health and safety or regulatory compliance issues.'
- 6.6 The Education Act 1996 sets out a statutory duty on local authorities (LAs) to secure sufficient school places, which they must do about securing special educational provision for children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) as well as those requiring alternative provision (AP). The Children and Families Act 2014 also places important statutory responsibilities on LAs for supporting children and young people with SEND, including keeping the sufficiency of educational provision for them under review.

7. Climate Change and Environmental Implications

- 7.1 The Government's targets on climate change, including committed to supporting achieving net zero carbon emissions by the 2050 target, is set out in the Climate Change Act 2008. There has been an uplift to Basic Need grant funding rates to support costs associated with achieving the sort of sustainability and design standards set out in its updated School Output Specification 2021. LAs are 'strongly encouraged' when developing their local capital plans, to refer to the DfE's output specification. Regardless of local authorities' chosen delivery route, LAs should consider environmental sustainability, carbon reduction and energy efficiency to develop solutions for projects that are in line with Government targets and objectives.

8. Risk Management

- 8.1 As stated in 5.1 and 5.2 above, LAs are required to verify Basic Need grant funding has been spent on capital projects through the section 151 officer's return, as well as providing data through the annual SCAP survey and discretionary Capital Spend Survey returns. Whilst the Basic Need grant remains un-ringfenced, a failure to provide efficient school schemes, especially where the methods of delivery were not

the DfE's Construction Framework and its Modern Methods of Construction (MMC) Framework, could lead to the DfE reclaiming allocations.

If an authority fails to comply with any of the conditions and requirements of the Basic Need grant, the Minister of State may

- reduce, suspend or withhold grant; or
- by notification in writing to the authority, require the repayment of the whole or any part of the grant.

Any sum notified by the Minister of State shall immediately become repayable.

To mitigate this risk Project Managers and Procurement colleagues have been advised of this requirement so that all schemes can comply with government requirements.

- 8.2 The Council could decide to postpone any upgrades to school buildings, waiting for academy trusts to take over these responsibilities on school conversions. The DfE have recently stated that Council's must 'treat schools considering conversion fairly, including by investing in high-priority condition issues and honouring any commitments of capital funding that they have made. On conversion, at a minimum, schools should be in a safe condition with no health and safety or regulatory compliance issues.' In some cases, both in North Somerset and nationally, the condition of school buildings has been a barrier to a school being accepted into a Multi-Academy Trust (MAT).

Only work that is of a significant maintenance or health and safety or regulatory compliance issue could be undertaken. Much of the condition works required at maintained schools satisfies this condition.

- 8.3 The school condition upgrade programme is over-due.

A new officer has been recently employed to take forward this programme and work in underway to ensure that a robust assessment is available in time for the next capital bidding round.

- 8.4 There are a significant number of projects to progress and only limited numbers of staff resources to deliver these.

To mitigate these risks officers will look to capitalise costs where they can, to create extra staffing capacity.

- 8.5 Schools and other stakeholders have expressed concern that there may not be the revenue available to support the delivery of new provisions. The schools High Needs budget has overspent by c £13m. Whilst the budget is used in schools, the Council is responsible for managing the deficit and agreeing strategies to reduce the ongoing overspend as well as bringing the deficit down. The DfE have included North Somerset in their Safety Value Programme where we will be expected to show progress in taking steps to reduce excess SEND demand and therefore excess spend.

Early intervention is one way to ensure that the needs of pupils with potential SEND needs are supported so that the requirement to allocate an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) or to move a child into an expensive specialist high-cost placement is reduced or removed. The SEND programme of work is intended to

support pupils in mainstream settings and reduce the reliance on specialist placements both within and outside of the district that can be more costly.

9. Equality Implications

- 9.1 Equality Impact Assessments are undertaken for new and school expansion scheme as required. A specific EIA has not been undertaken for this information report.

10. Corporate Implications

- 10.1 The council has a statutory duty to secure sufficient school places for its residents. Basic need funding is allocated as a contribution towards this duty, although there is an expectation that Council's will use its own and developer funds to contribute towards the full costs of supplying enough places. If the council decides not to support basic need schemes, it risks failing in its statutory duty to meet the school-place needs of its residents.
- 10.2 The statutory duty to secure sufficient places applies to both mainstream and SEND provision. We have been told by the DfE we must reduce our High Needs overspend to have a balanced year-on-year budget position by 2026/27. This is a non-negotiable requirement. The Special Provisions High Needs capital allocation must be used to help facilitate this.
- 10.3 The council is the employer of staff at maintained schools and the buildings are a corporate resource. The council therefore has a duty to ensure they are fit for purpose for public use.
- 10.4 The council could determine that it will only undertake the works at maintained schools. 85% of North Somerset schools are academies and this percentage will rise to 91% by April 2023. We rely on working with academy schools to satisfy the council's statutory duty to secure sufficient places. The basic need payments are allocated to the council for schemes across the district regardless of the status of the school.
- 10.5 This Council has an agreed policy not to fund schools who have an Academy Order in place stating their intention to convert to academy status. Until they have converted, the LA still receives funding within its SCA for the school. Noting there have been a number of schools that have required capital support to aid academy conversion, this policy may need to be reviewed.
- 10.6 Whilst capital funds can be used to pay for capital schemes, the council does need to provide sufficient revenue funds to pay for the development of schemes, their scoping and the oversight of its capital programmes. These officer costs needs to be funded from the council's revenue budgets.

11. Options Considered

- 11.1 This is an information report. The council could decide not to support a school's capital programme, although it would risk failing in its statutory duty to secure sufficient school places, maintain safe buildings and accept that it will need to meet any shortfall in High Needs funding in the future.

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North Somerset Council

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Appendices:

Basic Need Allocation Summary – Appendix 1

Background Papers:

See those listed within the report.

Appendix 1

TGC101	Basic Need 17/18 £	Basic Need 18/19 £	Basic Need 19/20 £	Basic Need 20/21 £	Basic Need 21/22	Basic Need 22/23	TOTAL FUNDING POT £
Basic Need 17/18	0.00						0.00
Basic Need 18/19		(2,827,689.52)					(2,827,689.52)
Basic Need 19/20			(21,262,149.00)				(21,262,149.00)
Basic Need 20/21				0	0	0	0.00
Basic Need - release of Topslice	(1,153,758.00)						(1,153,758.00)
	(1,153,758.00)	(2,827,689.52)	(21,262,149.00)	0.00	0.00	0.00	(25,243,596.52)
Allocated spend in the capital programme - as detailed below							17,280,387.52
Decisions Pending							0.00
Schemes at Feasibility stage							2,840,927.00
Subtotal of Capital schemes with earmarked funding from Basic Need Grant							20,121,314.52
BALANCE OF GRANT TO BE ALLOCATED TO PROJECTS (Positive still budget to allocate / Negative overallocated BNG)							5,122,282.00
PLEASE NOTE THAT THE FUNDING FOR BREACH CLASSES FOR FUTURE YEARS HAS NOT BEEN FINALISED							
WITHOUT THE FUTURE FUNDING FOR BREACH CLASSES THE BALANCE IS							6,747,282.00

North Somerset Council

Report to the Children and Young People Policy and Scrutiny Panel

Date of Meeting: October 20th 2022

Subject of Report: Annual Report of Adoption West 2021/22

Town or Parish: All

Officer/Member Presenting: Becky Hopkins, Assistant Director

Key Decision: No

Reason: The Council has entered into a contract with Adoption West and this is a report outlining their activity during 2021/22.

Recommendations

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

1. Summary of Report

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

2. Policy

A council which empowers and cares about people

3. Details

The report comes at the end of Adoption West's third year of operating as a Regional Adoption Agency. Adoption West is now an established agency with a clear identity across the region. Again, this year the service has responded to challenges including the continuing changes and uncertainty of the Covid 19 pandemic and more recently the issues related to the Somerset Judgement. Throughout they have remained focused on the key priorities of improving the timeliness for children by recruiting sufficient adopters who are prepared and understand the needs of the children. There remain challenges in relation to improving and providing a more consistent adoption support offer. However, the agency is committed to improving the support available to children, adopters and birth families.

As an adoption agency that is funded by public finances to provide statutory adoption services it is crucial that there is effective scrutiny of Adoption West. The Joint Scrutiny Panel has been established to provide this function. The panel meets quarterly and each meeting includes a briefing about adoption issues. In this period adopters have met with

councillors and shared their experience of support via the Adoption Support Fund and being an Early Permanence carer. Joint Scrutiny Panel comprises elected Members from each of the local authorities: North Somerset's representative is Cllr Griggs.

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

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

4. Consultation

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

5. Financial Implications

None

Costs

None

Funding

None

6. Legal Powers and Implications

N/A

7. Climate Change and Environmental Implications

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

8. Risk Management

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

9. Equality Implications

Not as part of producing this annual report.

10. Corporate Implications

None.

11. Options Considered

N/A

Author:

Becky Hopkins, Assistant Director

Appendices:

Annual Report from Adoption West 2021/22

Background Papers:

None.

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Annual Report 2021-22

Prepared by Alison Lewis, Service Director

Contents

1. Introduction
2. Overview of the Year
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9. Adoption Disruptions
10. Adoption Panels
11. Non-Agency Partner Adoption (Step-Parent Adoption)
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13. Birth Links/Adopted Adult/Birth Parent Support
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Appendix 1 – Governance, Commissioning and Scrutiny Arrangements

1.0 Introduction

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

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

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

It is also a requirement of the Social Care Common Inspection Framework (SCCIF): voluntary adoption agencies, that the six-monthly reports are shared with Ofsted on an annual basis. A six-monthly report will be produced at the end of Q2 and Q4.

This report provides performance data for children's family finding service, adopter recruitment, adoption panels, adoption support, a staffing overview and financial arrangements linking this to the relevant National Minimum Standard (NMS). It also highlights what we have achieved and the key challenges in the last six months.

An appendix is provided which details the governance, commissioning, scrutiny and adopter participation arrangements for the agency.

2.0 Overview:

Adoption West has continued to deliver excellent support to children and families in the last year as we emerged from the Covid 19 pandemic, with increasing contacts with service users being face to face. Alongside this the learning with regards to the use of digital technology for meetings has been embedded, meaning that many staff have been able to have the flexibility and efficiency of hybrid working from home, whilst more recently including some time in office bases.

The period October to March has been particularly dominated by two key issues, a High Court ruling relating to the medical information required for children with plans for adoption that is now referred to as the Somerset Ruling and Adoption West's first Ofsted inspection.

Somerset County Council v NHS Somerset Clinical Commissioning Group & Anor [2021] EWHC 3004(Fam) highlighted issues of non-compliance with Adoption Agencies Regulations 15 and 17. Consequently, the courts requested that adoption agencies to review their processes to confirm that they were compliant with the adoption regulation. Unfortunately, one of the constituent local authorities of Adoption West identified non-compliance regarding the appointment of the Agency Medical Advisors (AMA), specifically the status of the person undertaking that role. When Adoption West was established, the appointment of the AMA was the responsibility of each local authority and Adoption West has accessed this role via the existing arrangements in place with the local authorities. The non-compliance of the specific Agency Medical Advisor therefore, had a direct consequence for Adoption West with some of the agency's adopter's medical reports not being compliant.

Having sought legal advice Adoption West took immediate action to address and remedy the medical reports that were non-compliant. We worked with the specific local authority to ensure an appropriate medical practitioner was appointed to the AMA role and via the adoption panels to ensure that all prospective adopter reports affected were rigorously reviewed by both the adoption panel and the Agency Decision Maker. All adopters affected had the issue addressed and amended by 14th April 2022.

The Ofsted inspection is discussed in more detail in part 4 of this report.

3.0 Governance and Scrutiny

As a local authority trading company, it has been essential that Adoption West established a rigorous and transparent mechanism of both governance and scrutiny. This is achieved via the Joint Committee of the local authority owners who discharge the strategic management of the agency to the Adoption West Board which meets quarterly. The Board comprises senior managers from the Local authorities along with a representative of the voluntary sector and the Adoption West Advisory Board. The work of Adoption West is presented to Scrutiny Panel which comprises an elected member representative of each local authority also meets quarterly following the Board meetings.

Adoption West operational managers meet bimonthly with the Adoption Lead Managers of the local authorities and focus on practice development for adoption and permanence practice across the region. Over the last year the group has developed a shared approach to managing adoption disruptions, a process for foster carers who wish to adopt a child in their care and has continued to embed the Moving to Adoption framework for enabling children to transition from foster carers to adoption.



4.0 Ofsted

As a registered voluntary adoption agency Adoption West is required to be inspected under the Social Care Common Inspection Framework [Social care common inspection framework \(SCCIF\): voluntary adoption agencies until 31 March 2022 - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/social-care-common-inspection-framework).

The first inspection of Adoption West had been delayed due to the Covid 19 pandemic and eventually took place between 24th and 28th January 2022.

Outcome of the inspection
Overall experiences and progress of service users - Good
How well children, young people and adults are helped and protected - Good
The effectiveness of leaders and managers - Requires improvement to be Good
The voluntary adoption agency (Adoption West) provides effective services that meet the requirements for Good. Good

The inspection took place during a critical time when issues of compliancy with Adoption Regulations were emerging. As a key factor in this inspection is the focus on the adherence to National Minimum Standards and the Adoption Regulations. The noncompliance relating to Adoption Regulations 26(a)(b) and specifically regarding the appointment of a suitably qualified Agency Medical Advisor in one of the local authorities was a significant factor as evidenced by the inclusion of a Requirement in the report on this matter. This issue has now been resolved with Gloucestershire appointing an appropriately qualified Agency Medical Advisor. All the remedial work to ensure that adopters medical summary reports are compliant with the adoption regulations has been completed.

The inspection report highlights how far Adoption West as an agency has developed in the last three years. The overall Good judgment is welcomed by Adoption West and recognises the passion and commitment of all Adoption West staff to deliver good outcomes for children. In the report there is recognition of the “momentous” task of bringing six separate adoption teams together to form a single Regional Adoption Agency and Voluntary Adoption Agency that is delivering good quality adoption services for children and families across the region.

The agency is considered to be recruiting and supporting adoptive families that provide safe loving permanent homes for children and is focused on the needs of children as reflected in the recruitment strategy and the training and development of its work force. The preparation and training of adopters was highlighted and within verbal feedback, the Lead Inspector commented that it was some of the best training she had observed.

The adoption support provided to children and families by social workers in the agency is a strength, alongside enabling families to access services via the Adoption Support Fund. Even though only operating for a year at the time, the agency has progressed during the pandemic and ensured that its services remained effective. The agency is realistic about its achievements and areas for further development. The five recommendations provided in the report are all issues the agency had previously highlighted and is addressing within its 2022-23 Development Plan.

In the same period Ofsted inspected adoption services as part of their ILAC inspections in:

Gloucestershire County Council

“Planning for children with a plan of adoption is a strength. Working through the regional adoption agency, the numbers of children leaving care to join adoptive families have increased. There is a greater consideration for early permanence placements, as well as targeted recruitment resulting in more brothers and sisters being placed together for adoption.”

Bath and North East Somerset

“When adoption is in children’s best interests, the local authority ensures that the regional adoption agency delivers a good service for children. Children are matched quickly and prepared sensitively, and their adoptive parents are supported well. Adoption breakdown is rare.”

5.0 Children’s Adoption Activity

5.1 Agency decision maker Activity

Adoption West provides advice to all six local authorities on making Should be Placed for Adoption decisions for children. This includes advice and support in relation to the quality assurance of the paperwork for the Agency Decision maker. The Agency Advisors work closely with the social work teams providing guidance and working to the court timetables.

The Agency Advisors have now established training for social workers and managers across the region, who are writing Child permanence reports. This year we have provided 2 days for managers

Children 2021-2022	BANES	Bristol	GCC	North Somerset	South Glos	Wiltshire	Total YTD	Total for 2020/21
ADM (Should be Placed for Adoption) decisions	7↑	16↓	50↓	4↓	9↓	21=	107↓	132
Matches of children with Families	2↓	25↑	29↓	14=	11↑	16=	97↑	93

The number of children with a plan for adoption has decreased by 19% this year. The most recent data from Coram i indicates a decrease in the number of 'best interest decisions' across England and the current 'year to date' figure would indicate that this trend is reflected in the Adoption West data.

5.2 Children matched and placed for adoption

	Children Matched YE 21/22	Children Matched YE 20/21	Children Placed YE 21/22	Children Placed YE 20/21
BANES	2↓	7	2↓	7
Bristol	25↑	17	24↑	18
Gloucestershire	29↓	31	33↑	30
N Somerset	14=	14	12↓	16
S Glos	11↑	7	11↑	6
Wiltshire	16=	16	17↑	16
	97↑	92	96↑	93

The number of children matched and placed for adoption has increased this year and is reflected in lower numbers of children waiting for an adoptive family.

One of our aims has been to increase the number of children who are placed with Adoption West adopters. During 1 April 2021 to 31 March 2022 74% of children were placed with Adoption West adopters and increase from 66% the previous year:

Children placed	YE 21/22	YE 20/21
Outside Adoption West	25 26%	24 34%
Within Adoption West	72 74%	46 66%

Children placed outside Adoption West are with adopters approved by either a Voluntary Adoption Agency or another Regional Adoption Agency. Placing children with Adoption West adopters enables children to remain local which facilitates transitions and support in early placement and longer term

5.3 Timeliness for Children

One of our key performance indicators is the time it takes us to find the right family for a child. The data in the table below sets out the amount of time between the placement order being made and the child being matched with their adoptive family (Coram I data Q3 2021-22). The timeliness is improving with Placement order to Match being shorter than the England average for 4 of the local authorities and the average across Adoption West as a whole is less than the England average for Placement to Adoption Order.

	Placement Order to Match	Placement to Adoption Order
Target figure (days)	121	274
England Average	192	283
Adoption West Average	198	277
BANES	62	274
Bristol	174	235
Gloucestershire	201	310
North Somerset	283	231
Sth Gloucestershire	183	286
Wiltshire	152	293

There were 44 children with Placement Orders at 31/03/22, whom Adoption West were actively family finding for. This is significantly lower than the 69 children at the same period last year. It is positive to report that there are only 7 children waiting longer than 6 months compared with 23 children at 31/03/21. Of the 44 children with placement orders, yet to be matched at the end of Q4, 23 were linked for adoptive placements.

5.4 Early Permanence

A total of 22 children were placed in EP placements during 2021-22. This is 8 less than the previous year. Recruitment for adopters who will consider providing Early Permanence has remained, however there are some challenges to finding suitable EP placements which include;

- uncertainty about whether a child will need an EP placement, for example if the child is living with a parent in a residential assessment centre.
- there may be limited information about children still living with birth parents or relatives, particularly if this is within their own home, these children tend to be older rather than newborn babies. Whilst some EP carers may consider older children, many EP carers will be motivated by the desire to care for a child as young as possible.

Working collaboratively with other Regional Adoption Agencies and Voluntary Adoption Agencies across the south west of England, Adoption West has been successful in a bid for National Adoption Strategy monies. This will enable the appointment of a project worker for 12 months to work across the South West to promote Early Permanence champions in each local authority and work nationally to develop webinar based training materials. The aim is to ensure that early permanence is promoted as an option for children to include older children and groups of brothers and sisters.

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

6.0 Marketing and Recruitment

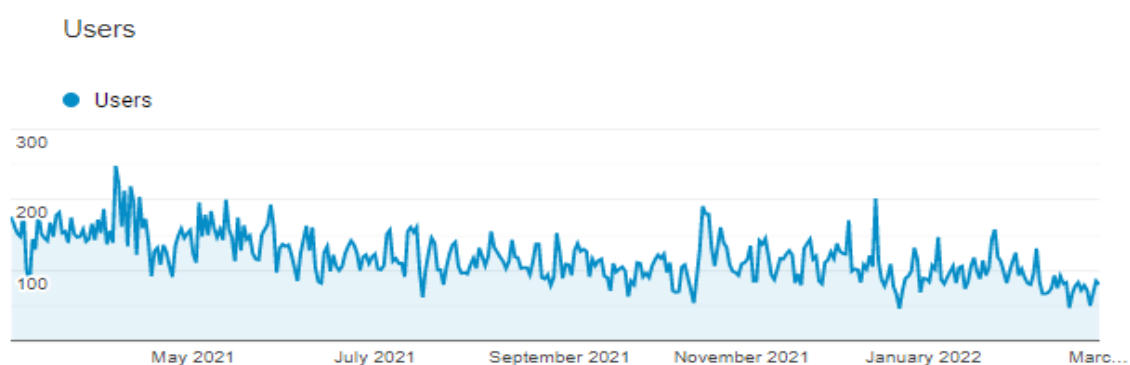
Our main three objectives of the recruitment strategy have been:

1. To recruit enough adopters willing to consider children from the harder to place cohort (specifically groups of brothers and sisters and those children with complex needs)
2. To make potential adopters' early on, of the need for adopters for brothers and sisters and what this might look like.
3. To provide and promote support to enable people to adopt brothers and sisters and children with complex needs

We are continuing to understand and analyse our social media and webpage activity to learn from this information to inform future recruitment plans. The activity focussed on and built upon the efforts made in the earlier part of 2021 (discussed in detail in the previous report)

Acquisition of website visitors

Comparing this period (September 2021 > March 2022) with the previous six months, there has been a decline in the number of visitors to the website, however we have seen a reduction in Bounce Rate and an increase in Session Duration and Pages looked at, this may indicate that the visitors that are coming to the site are seeing the content they are interested in and that is relevant to them.



We can see that the highest number of searches are organic enquiries as opposed to directed from other sites.

1st September 2021 – 28th February 2022

	Acquisition			Behavior		
	Users	New Users	Sessions	Bounce Rate	Pages / Session	Avg. Session Duration
	15,602	15,386	21,641	58.74%	2.15	00:01:52
1 Organic Search	7,693			60.37%		
2 Paid Search	3,069			67.17%		
3 Direct	3,034			66.53%		
4 Referral	1,925			29.68%		
5 Social	437			64.18%		
6 Display	185			81.90%		

These Organic searches continue to show that awareness of Adoption West is increasing, this is reflected in the number of people reaching Adoption West's website directly and the decline in

number of people reaching us through Referral (i.e. local authority sites). It should be noted the Bounce Rate for Paid Search is significantly higher than that of Referral, attention will be paid over the coming year on the content of referring sites, to ensure this is relevant, current and capitalises on the potential audience interest. While we will continue with GoogleAds, the decision has been taken not to continue with display advertising.

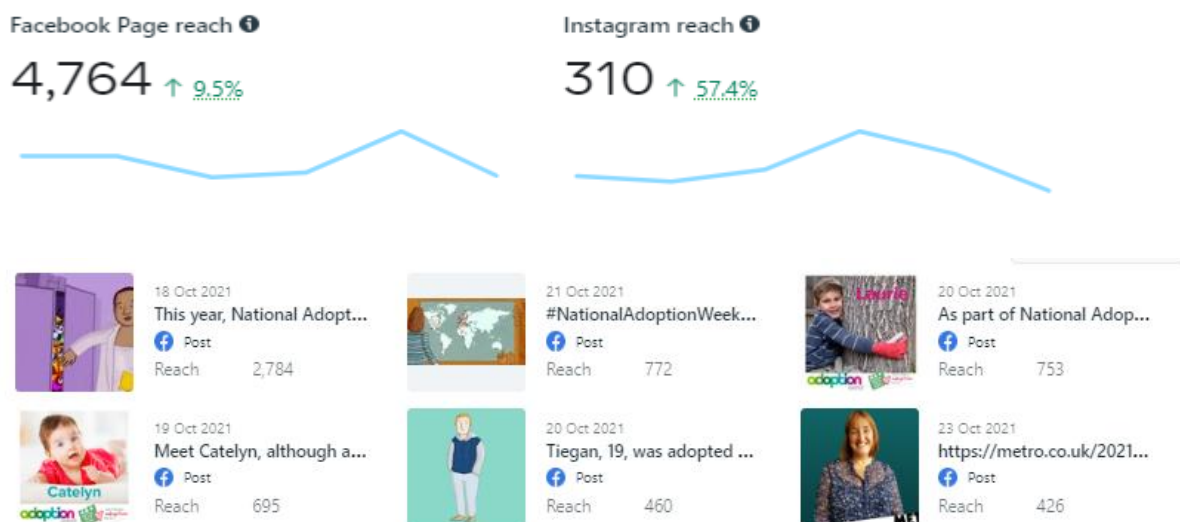
Focus for the coming two quarters will be to have a reviewed focus on web content, bringing some areas up to date and produce more real-life stories, with the aim to increase average session duration, and reduce bounce rate.

Social Media Posts for the last year focussed on the type of children waiting (with a particular focus on brothers and sisters) what we look for in adopters, sharing the real-life stories of adopters and what we offer in terms of support.

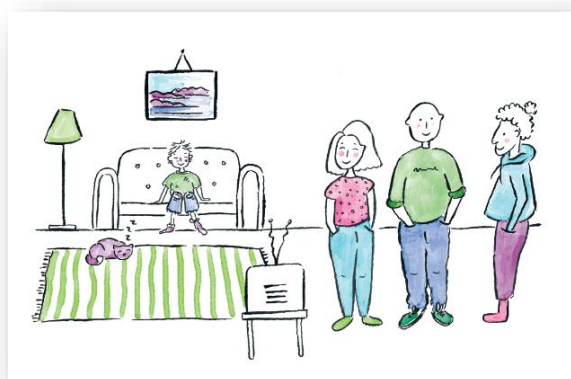
National Adoption Week 18th – 22nd October 2021

The National Adoption Recruitment Campaign focus was given to “The Voices of Adoption”, allowing us to revisit ‘Tia’s Story’ as part of our campaigns for the period.

The reach from two main recruitment social channels for the w/c 18th October 2021



The main areas of focus for the coming year will be looking at our Instagram and LinkedIn presence as these have seen an increase in activity over the previous year and look set to continue.



‘Tia’s Story’ was used extensively across marketing material over the last year, with excellent results (close to 900 YouTube views and a reach of nearly 500 on one post in National Adoption Week). This was also seen in the sharing of stories as part of National Adoption Week (NAW).

There is a growing trend of increased engagement from short form video. When we shared 'The Voices' video as part of NAW we reached 2800 people.

We aim to create further animations over the coming year, to share the voices of adoption.

Social Media plan over the three platforms

Key Messages

- Modern Adoption, this is what adoption looks like in 2022
- Shift from #YouCanAdopt to #CanYouAdopt?
- Who are the children we represent?
- What are the stories of the people in their lives?

Putting the balance back into adoption and shifting the focus to the children

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

7.0 Adopter Recruitment Activity

7.1 Enquiries

There has been a 26% increase in enquiries against the same period last year. However, there was variation between quarter 1 and 2 with a decrease in enquiries Q2. While the number of ROI's has reduced from the high numbers received in Q1, these were still 42% above the same period the previous year. The conversion rate from 'Enquiries' to 'Registrations of Interest' reduced on the peak of last quarter but was equivalent to the same period last year.

Enquiries have reduced significantly in the second half of 21/22 as was anticipated due to the change in the front door process. The process change requires applicants to attend an information session prior to making an enquiry. Based on this change in process, enquiry rates remain at a reasonable level, especially when the conversion rate to 'Registration of Interest' is considered. Importantly, the number attending information sessions is higher than for the same quarter last year and for the year overall is 31% higher than in 2020/21.

	2021-22	2020-21
Enquiries from people considering adoption	251	398
Prospective Adopters attending info sessions	331	253
ROIs received	82	106
Conversion rate: Enquiry to ROI	33%	37%
Average Time - ROI to Allocation (Days)	18.5	8.9
Average Time - Stage 1 to Approval (Days)	299	318
Started Stage 2		

7.2 Adopter Approvals

Adopters continue to be recruited from across the Adoption West region

Adopters Approved	2021/22	2020/21
BANES	2↓	5
Bristol	15↓	16
Gloucestershire	22↓	28
North Somerset	14↑	7
South Glos	10↑	8
Wiltshire	18↓	33
Other	2↓	3
Total	87↓	100

Adoption West approved 87 adopters in 2021-22, this is a reduction of 13 from the previous year. The number of approvals was slower in the last quarter due to issues relating to the medical regulatory compliance matter. Also there continues to be a high number of approved adopters and consequently we have been prioritising the Registration of Interest for potential adopter for children who wait longest.

Last year only 15 % of adopters approved were for sibling placements, compared with approximately 50% of the children requiring these placements. We set ourselves a target of increasing this figure to between 25-35% target. This has been achieved with 32% of adopters identifying as being available for brothers and sisters.

Feedback about the adoption process:

I thought you may like to know that X had plenty of good things to say about their social workers and the trainers. They referred to them as being exceptional and talked about how all the training and support transformed their views of adoption. They were also very complimentary about the what's app group you helped them to form and the social interactions they have already had with other adopters.

We are so grateful for your support in what we have actually found to be quite a cathartic and enjoyable process.

D has been such a wise, thoroughly supportive influence in our journey and I felt that all through the process she asked the right questions, she was intuitive and encouraging.

7.3 Sufficiency of Adopters to Children in Adoption West

Coram 1 provisional data Q3 2021

	Approvals 01/01/21 – 31/12/21	Families available 30/12/22	Families needed 31/12/21	Adopter gap
Adoption West	101=	80↓	46 ↓	75% =
England	3044↑	2474↑	1449 ↑	71%↑

The Adopter Gap tells us the difference between the number of children waiting for an adoptive family and the number of approved adopters in a given area. In the Adoption West region there has been fewer children waiting for adoptive homes than the number of families available. This has remained the position since the mid-2020. Whilst this is a positive situation, we need to continue our recruitment efforts for the children who wait longest for an adoptive family who are older children, those with additional needs, from Black Asian and Minority Ethnic communities, as well as brothers and sisters who need to grow up together.

The adoption agency approves prospective adopters who can meet most of the needs of looked after children who are to be placed for adoption and who can provide them with a home where the child will be able to recover from the impact of their early life experience of loss and trauma, feel loved, safe and secure (NMS 10)

8.0 Adopter Preparation Training

Plans had been in place to go back to face to face training for prospective adopters from January 2022 but had to be put on hold due to the continuing covid restrictions. However, as these were eased in late January, we were able to quickly respond to the request of the adopters who were in the middle of their stage 2 training and wished to have the opportunity to meet one another. Since then, all stage 1, 2 and EP full day training has been in person. EP information and Friends and Family training will remain as virtual courses.

The trainers have been working on several developments and have now provided the first workshop for adopters who are planning to adopt brothers and sisters. The Birth Links support workers are currently liaising with the trainers to produce film and/or audio recordings of birth relatives' and adopted adults' lived experiences, particularly regarding contact and life story. The hope is that these can be used in preparation of prospective adopters and perhaps in student social work training/induction of staff. In addition, Birth Links are also in discussion with the trainers and Recruitment and Assessment teams about developing 'Twilight' sessions which will be sessions outside of the preparation course where adopters can meet birth parents and adopted adults to hear about their lived experience and ask questions directly.

Training courses provided 2021- 2022

	Stage1	Stage 2	EP info session	Early Permanence	Friends and Family
Number of courses	12	9	11	6	12
Number of participations	212	174	189	121	312

The training provided continues to receive very good feedback from adopters many commenting at adoption panel about their learning and the average evaluation being 9/10.

The following comments reflect prospective adopters learning from the training programme:

“I have loved these training sessions, and left the last one wishing we could do more, because I enjoyed them so much. I really appreciate the honesty of the trainers, and how open they were about their own experiences, so thank you. I feel like we learnt so much in a short space of time. It was brilliant.”

“We would like to say thank you to Catherine and Raychel for their knowledge, experiences and willingly for sharing their stories with us to enhance our understanding. This really helped us to gain an insight into what parenting children with past trauma could be like, and the taking time to explain each section of the training in a deep and educated way. we left each session fully informed with no unanswered questions.”

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

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

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

9.0 Adoption Disruptions

There was one disruption involving an Adoption West child during Q4 who was placed at the age of 6 and left her adoptive placement approximately three months later. The learning will be shared across the Adoption West and Local Authority workforce.

10.0 Adoption Panels

Adoption Panels have continued to be provided via digital platform. In this period there have been no relinquished children considered by the panel. 37 adopter assessments were considered and 32 matches for 43 children. Panel business was covered by the following hub panels during this period:

Panel	Bristol hub panel	Gloucester hub panel	Trowbridge hub panel
Relinquished children	0	0	0
Matches	14 matches (17 children)	11 matches (16 children)	7 matches (10 children)
Approvals	17 approvals	9 approvals	11 approvals
TOTAL	31 items	20 items	18 items

During this six month period a total of 29 panels were originally scheduled and 26 panels were held. One panel was cancelled in December (Gloucester) and three panels were cancelled in February (two Trowbridge and one Gloucester). One reserve panel was used in March (Trowbridge) to accommodate the additional medical reviews required to ensure medical reports were compliant.

Panel training was provided on 3rd November and focused on, Learning from Disruptions, Feedback from Panel attendees, Adoption outcomes and Relinquished children

Panel Membership

The most significant change to panel membership in this six-month period was the retirement of Sarah Achieson who had chaired the Trowbridge panel since 2017 and made a significant contribution to the development of panels during the transition to a regional adoption agency.

We are very pleased that Matthew Turner has been appointed as the new chair. Matthew is an experienced social work manager and has been a vice chair of the adoption panel since 2021

The adoption panel and decision-maker make timely, quality and appropriate recommendations/decisions in line with the overriding objective to promote the welfare of children throughout their lives. (NMS 17)

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

Assessments for non-agency partner adoptions are undertaken by the recruitment and assessments teams in each hub. This year there has been 104 enquires, with 60 assessments being completed and 34 Adoption Orders granted by the courts.

12.0 Adoption Support

12.1 Provision of Adoption Support Services

The table below provides comparative data for the last three years, showing that the need for adoption support services across the region continues to grow, this is also reported by Regional Adoption Agencies across England and evidenced in the national use of the Adoption Support Fund (ASF). Social workers are managing high caseloads which are rag rated to reflect the level of need with some families needing a review of their therapy, regular keeping in touch calls or visits and others more intensive social work involvement to support with education issues, family relationships, challenging behaviours such as child to parent violence and the impact of early life trauma, identity and life story issues.

Annual Adoption Support Data	2021- 2022	2020- 2021	2019- 2020
Adoption Support Enquiry	783↑	703	694
Appointments for Assessment of need	132↑	126	142
Av time from enquiry to Appointment(weeks)	4.5↓	5.4	4.6
No Assessments of need completed	144↑	126	272
No allocated families	640↑	483	377
Average caseload	56(FTE) ↑	46 (FTE)	
Waiting allocation	4.3↓	11	16

Even though there is high demand for service the time from enquiry to appointment of assessment of need has decreased and on average remains below the 6 week target. We do have to acknowledge that there have been periods in the year that the time has exceeded 6 weeks as this has been the experience for a small number of families. Throughout the year only the Gloucester hub have had families waiting for allocation following enquiry or assessment and the average for this is 4.3 families waiting at any time, with a period when no families have been waiting. This demonstrates a service that is responsive and timely to the needs of families whilst supporting high numbers of children and families.

The service capacity is vulnerable to changes in personnel such as vacancies and absence. As previously reported, the opportunities to focus on service development and an offer that provides early intervention support which can divert families need for therapeutic intervention, are limited due to the current level of demand. The need to improve the consistency of the adoption support offer across the region was a recommendation of the Ofsted inspection and we are currently working with the local authorities via the Adoption West Board to develop the adoption support offer.

Groups provided by Adoption West via contract with CCS Adoption Bristol

The contract with CCS Adoption has been reviewed for 2022/23 with the inclusion of

- **The A-Team** – six week focused activity group for adopted teens to be provided in different locations across the region meets regularly to have fun together trying out new skills and initiatives
- **Prime Team Programmes** - two pilot groups for primary aged children based in the Bristol area.
- **Family Fundays**

Services that have been continued

- **The Tots** – three weekly groups for parents and their adopted pre-school children
- **Mums group** – meets monthly facilitated by a member of CCS therapy team
- **Dads Group** – every other month facilitated by a member of CCS therapy team
- **STEP Group** – group for early permanence carers facilitated by an experienced EP carer
- **LGBT Coffee Morning** – meets monthly on a Saturday also opportunity for children to join a planned activity
- **Single Adopters Catch up** – Virtual – every other Thursday
- **Training and Workshops**

TESSA –Adoption UK

Adoption UK TESSA service has been available to families in the Adoption West region since October 2020. This has been a lottery funded service until March 2022. The core elements of the service for families are:

- Consultations with psychologists from their clinical partner organisation, The Family Place
- Peer support through parent partners (employed, trained and supervised by Adoption UK)
- Reflective therapeutic parenting groups facilitated by one of their psychologists and a parent partner

In 2021-22 83 families have been referred to the service with 61 families taking up the offer.

Hub	Families Referred	Families taken up the service	Families on hold or withdrawn
Bristol	31	22	9
Gloucester	18	14	4
Trowbridge	34	25	9
Total	83	61	22

Therapeutic Parenting Courses

Adoption West has provided 3 therapeutic parenting courses during the year with 22 adopters attending. These are facilitated by experienced adoption support social workers.

Feedback from participants:

- *It was good timing for me (parent of 3 year old)*
- *Think this training should be offered after the first year of child being placed and a year later as a refresher*
- *Understanding brain development and that our son is not just being naughty and that this happens so young. We got our son very young and expected everything to be plain sailing and it hasn't been*
- *The weekly reset and reminder of what we're doing and why*
- *The community and hearing other's feedback which is exactly the same as our experiences*

The role of adoption support social workers and support workers is central to the support provided to families even when the therapeutic support is commissioned from other services. They are the point of contact in a crisis, assess the level of need and co-ordinate all the services that are necessary to support a family. Here are some comments from families:

I just want to thank you for all your help and support since we approached you in a time of crisis. I would like you to know that you've made a real difference to our lives ..You've allowed us to feel understood, without judgment but with a deep understanding and empathy for us, for our boys and all our needs around coping with the impact of our boys' early life experiences. Even though we know there will be a lifetime of challenges ahead of our family, I feel sure the help we will need along the way will be out there

Gratitude to K in an adoption support review. K was calm, accepting, curious, and really kind and supportive throughout. This made a potentially very difficult situation, so much easier.

10.3 Adoption Support Fund

The table below shows that the number of applications and level of grant funding received from the ASF to support children and families continues to increase each year. Adoption West continues to rely heavily on the ASF to provide adoption support services. Managing the associated tasks and functions when completing applications draws heavily on the capacity of adoption support social workers and business support. There is currently a business case before the board seeking additional resources to increase the support worker capacity and develop the core offer of peer to peer support.

2021-22 Total Applications Approved by ASF in the quarter	Count of ASF Application Reference	Sum of Number of Funded Recipients (new)	Sum of Total Service Costs
BANES	105	120	£334,803.21
BCC	179	199	£602,253.37
GCC	333	36	£1,222,458.76
N Somerset	108	125	£3699,538.53
South Glos	51	61	£196,543.15
Wiltshire	183	201	£569,087.39
AW Total	959↑	1082↑	£3,294,688.41↑
Year total 2020-21	891	980	£3,109,024.27

Adoption National Minimum Standard 15

Adoption support

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

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

12.4 Keeping in Touch with Families

Letterbox arrangements

A key aspect of our universal support to families is via the letterbox service. This enables adopted children and young people to keep in contact with birth family via letters exchanged between the adopters and agreed significant members of the birth family. Letterbox plays a significant part in helping children and young people understand their identity and life story. For some, when the time is right it can be a platform for face to face contact. There are now over a thousand letterbox

agreements in place and each will have a minimum of two exchanges of letters a year, many have much more than this.

As at 31/03/2022	Total letterbox arrangements
BANES	113
Bristol	312
Gloucestershire	272
North Somerset	93
South Gloucestershire	88
Wiltshire	260
AW Total	1,138↑

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

Direct contact

The number children with plans for direct contact with members of their birth family has steadily increased each month for the last two years. This reflects the importance that is now being given to providing opportunities to adopted children to keep in touch with significant people in their lives. These arrangements are nearly all supervised initially and may progress to be facilitated in time. This is now becoming an increasingly significant part of the adoption support service.

As at 31/03/2022	BANES	Bristol	GCC	N Som	S Glos	Wiltshire	Total	2020/21
No. agreements	5	19	22	3	4	46	99↑	86

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

13.0 Birth Links/Adopted Adult/Birth Parent Support



Support to adopted Adults and birth parents is provided by our Birth Links team which now works across the whole region.

The number of birth parents accessing support has significantly increased by 44% however this does still not reflect the level of children who have a plan for adoption. Therefore, continues to be an area of development in 2022/23 and we will be work with the local authorities to promote referrals of birth family to the service at an earlier stage in the process. Adopted Adult work remains consistent with the length of time between enquiry to allocation reducing.

Birth Links has been running a group for birth parents in Bristol once a month since the middle of September 2021. It has been a very successful group with a core membership of 5 birth mothers who have come to every single session. The support workers are in the process of encouraging a further 4 identified birth mothers to attend. Various activities have been provided to enable the group members to talk about their feelings, share common experiences and support each other.

There is a plan to run a similar service in Gloucester as a 'pop up group' that will run for 6 sessions over 6 months which will then be reviewed. Birth mothers have already been identified who are keen to participate.

Birth Links is developing policy, procedure and practice in regard to Post-Commencement accessing of files, which is governed by different law and regulations.

Total for 2021/22	Adopted Adult (Schedule 2)	Adopted Adult/Support (Access to Records)	Intermediary Advice	Birth Family	Adopted Adult/Support Post Commencement
BANES	1	7	3	1	0
BCC	10	12	12	31	0
GCC	17	27	7	21	0
N Somerset	2	5	8	9	0
South Glos	6	7	3	7	1
Wiltshire	10	17	8	13	0
AW Total	46	75	41	82	1
Total 2020-21	44	55	47	89	0

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

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

14. Quality Assurance

To support the improvement of our services Adoption West has developed a quality Assurance Framework and which will help us to reflect on our practice. Audits have been completed of the support to Early Permanence carers and of the caseloads that social workers are managing in adoption support.

We have also introduced an evaluation at different stages of the adoption process to provide service users the opportunity to give regular feedback. We intend to introduce a similar process for adoption support. We have worked with the Adopters Advisory Board to seek views of adopters to identify a process that adopters will find meaningful and easy to engage with.

15. Complaints & Data Breaches

As in the previous six month report we have had 2 stage 1 complaints and no stage 2 complaints. One complaint was complex and related to an adopter assessment and transition of a child. It was partially upheld and there is learning for the agency about the quality of records ensuring they provide accounts of contacts with service user and also an acknowledgement that as the agency transitioned to the "Moving to Adoption" model for transitions some adopters, who had already been approved, hadn't covered this as part of their preparation.

The second complaint was in relation to the delay in processing and deciding upon an adoption allowance which is the responsibility of the local authority and was passed to them.

There have been 2 data breaches in this period which is a significant improvement from the previous 6 month period. One related to information shared with an approved adopter as part of an EP referral the information was quickly contained and deleted. The other incident was more significant and was referred to the ICO, it related to confidential information that was shared via a letterbox exchange. The decision of the ICO was there would be no further action. The agency had taken action to prevent a recurrence by reviewing our control measures.

16.0 People

16.1 Senior Management Team

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

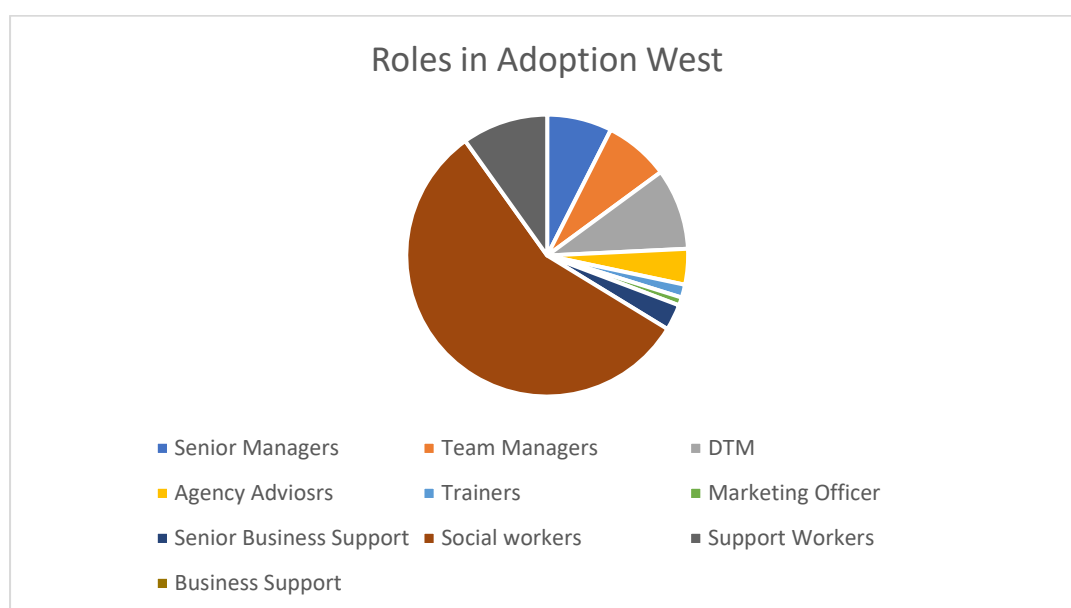
16.2 Establishment at 31st March 2022

The number of staff employed is 84 with 63.23 fte
Permanent staff – 82, Temporary Staff - 2 (1 Team Manager, 1 social worker)

Four members of staff who were on fixed term contracts were confirmed as Permanent following the Adoption West Board meeting in March 2022. This then enabled another two further members of staff to be offered permanent posts. Currently, Adoption West has 1 social worker in adoption support on a temporary contract and a Team Manager working 3 days a week on a temporary basis. Both posts are in the Gloucester hub

8 Independent Workers have been employed over the year to complete Prospective Adopter assessments.

Currently we have vacancies for 4 fte social workers and two part time support worker posts all the post are in the process of being recruited to, with two social work appointments being progressed. We have had a long term vacancy for a team manager in the Gloucester hub. Despite efforts by HR recruitment and offering a significant additional package including welcome offer, retention and relocation there have been no suitable applicants to interview. The decision has now been made to halt recruitment and trial a temporary structure with the Recruitment and Assessments teams in Gloucester and Trowbridge being managed by one Team Manager. This means that the Deputy Team Managers for adoption support in Gloucester and Trowbridge are being supervised by the Service Director and Service Manager respectively, on a temporary basis.



16.3 Workforce Development

It is the aim of Adoption West to provide development opportunities for staff that will enhance the service and meet the needs of adopters, children and birth families. We currently have 20 social workers who are qualified in Dyadic Developmental Psychotherapy level 1, and 2 social workers qualified at level 2. In February 2022 41 staff attended introduction to the BUSS model (Building Underdeveloped Sensorimotor Systems in children who have experienced developmental trauma). 3

social workers are completing the Level One Training in this model. Plans are in place for 20 staff to complete their level 1 in Theraplay in spring 2022. In addition to these courses;

South West Adoption Consortium (SWAC)

SWAC includes all Regional Adoption Agencies and Voluntary Adoption Agencies in the South West of England. The consortium is funded by contributions from all agencies and has a focus on practice development and training. There are established meetings for Adoption Panel Chairs, Agency Medical Advisors, Service managers and Operational Managers. The training provided by SWAC has included:

- Best Practice - Recruitment, Training and Preparation of adopters
- CoramBAAF – Safeguarding – Learning from Serious Case Reviews
- Education for Adoptees
- Harnessing the energy of sibling bonds – a renewable energy source
- CoramBAAF – Legal Update
- How can NVR be helpful in supporting adoptive families?

16.4 Adoption West staff Values statement

During the year the staff have developed a statement which they feel represents the values they hold and bring to their practice



17.0 Financial Arrangements

Adoption West received commissioned contract income of £3.401m in 2021/22 from its 6 local authority partners to deliver adoption services. The breakdown of budget allocation is shown below:

Category	Budget (£'000)
Employee Salary, NI & Pensions	2,856
Other employee related spend	117
Commissioned Services, subs & adopter recruitment activity	144
Post Adoption Support activity	61
ICT & Office Costs	142
Other Support Services	81
Total	3,401

Adoption West has also received £3.218m Adoption Support Fund grant income and manages the related expenditure on behalf of the 6 local authority partners. As a Voluntary Adoption Agency, Adoption West operates on a not-for-profit basis and any surpluses are returned to the local authority partners that control the organisation. Account balances cover in-excess of 3 months operating expenses and there is therefore no perceived risk regarding organisational cashflow.

Adoption West has managed its finances effectively during 2021/22 to deliver services within budget under the added pressures of responding to the Covid-19 pandemic and various other organisational challenges. The financial processes and systems in place have proved effective and are being continuously improved to meet requirements, increase efficiency and enable Adoption West to realise new opportunities.

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

18. How have we done – Service Priorities for 2021-22

Adoption West said it would	Adoption West has...
To take forward lessons learnt regarding what has worked well in delivering the service during the pandemic and incorporate this into new ways of working.	Continued with Virtual panels Has a hybrid approach with some virtual training and core training face to face Continued a Virtual Information session to ensure accessibility
To establish ways of working in accordance with the Adoption West Quality Assurance framework.	Completed a Quality Assurance framework along with Supervision and recording Policies that are bespoke for the agency (To ensure AW is managed ethically, effectively and efficiently and delivering good quality services, which meet the needs of children and service users (NMS 25) Managers to regularly monitor all records kept by the Agency (NMS25.2)
To continue to review and develop the adopter recruitment strategy to meet the needs of children waiting for adoption.	Increased the number of adopters for brothers and sisters from 15%-32% To implement an effective recruitment strategy, meeting the needs of children with a plan for adoption in the AW region (NMS 10.1)
To improve experiences for adopters by routinely seeking user feedback and reviewing the information sessions.	We have developed a process for user feedback which is now embedded into the process from enquiry to adoption order. We are seeking to develop this for adoption support services and have sought the involvement of the adopter advisory board to seek feedback for the process. To ensure that people who are interested in becoming adopters are treated fairly without prejudice, openly and with respect (NMS 10.2) Service users confirm that the adoption support service provided met or are meeting their assessed needs (NMS 15)
To further develop the use of the “Moving to Adoption” model in children’s Transitions. Guidance and training have been completed and shared.	All transitions are planned in accordance with this model. The local authorities are providing training to foster carers to prepare them for transitions The adoption agency has procedures for introducing a child to the prospective adopters and others living in the household that can be adapted to the individual needs of the child and prospective adopters. (NMS13.8)
To develop robust tracking and management processes for children pre-adoption order, placed in ‘out of region’ placements.	This has been achieved by the introduction of the central Family Finding who are now monitoring all such placements. To ensure best outcomes for children when moving to adoption placements (NMS 13.8)
To complete an audit of Early Permanence placements to ensure that appropriate levels of support are in place that meet fostering standards. To action outcomes from this audit	The audit has been completed which has resulted in guidance for Adoption West social workers when supporting EP placements and has clarified roles and responsibilities between Adoption West and the Local authorities

To work in partnership with the local authorities to deliver Child Permanence Report Writing Training to social workers across the region.	This is now scheduled on a regular basis with social work managers and agency advisors are working with local authorities to deliver training to social workers Birth parents are given the opportunity to comment on what is written about them or their circumstances before the information is passed to the adoption panel or to the child's proposed adoptive parents. (NMS 12.7)
A 3yr strategic plan for an adoption support core offer to be developed using outcomes from Adoption Support Audit.	We are continuing to work with the Adoption West Board and local authorities to develop the adoption support offer
The transition of the current management of Letterbox system to be undertaken on CHARMS across each three hubs.	This is completed in the Trowbridge hub. It has been delayed in the other hubs and an action plan is in place to address this
Establish protocols across AW for management of direct contact post adoption.	The Local Authority Lead Managers have agreed that this is a key action for the group for 2022/23 Promoting children's positive identity, so that they have a positive self-view, emotional resilience and understanding of their background (NMS 2) and contact is arranged and maintained when it is beneficial to the child (NMS 8)
Establish clear and efficient protocols with the Local Authorities for accessing records held in adoption archives.	There had been some initial progress ,but this is not consistent across the region. It is now a key priority for the LA lead Managers Adopted adults and birth relatives are assisted to obtain information in relation to adoption (NMS 16)

19. Adoption West Board Vision Statement

Adoption West believes that every child deserves the right to grow up in a caring and loving family, who will nurture them and prepare them for adult life.

Our vision is for Adoption West to increase the number and diversity of adoptive families available to children in the Adoption West sub region, who are unable to live with their birth families. We also intend to increase the number of early permanence placements available in order to minimise placement moves for children and the number of adoptive families able to consider sibling placements.

We aim to bring a consistent approach towards permanence planning and adoption support across the participating local authorities and, over time, broaden our approach to encompass other forms of permanence, including special guardianship.

20. Service Priorities 2022/23

The priorities for the year are set within the context of our vision statement and each priority is subject to a number of specific actions to ensure the priority is delivered:

- To improve timeliness of Stage 1 and Stage 2 assessments

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

21. Conclusion

This report comes at the end of our third year of operating as a Regional Adoption Agency. Adoption West is now an established agency with a clear identity across the region. Again, this year the service has responded to challenges including the continuing changes and uncertainty of the Covid 19 pandemic and more recently the issues related to the Somerset Judgement.

Throughout we have remained focused on the key priorities of improving the timeliness for children by recruiting sufficient adopters who are prepared and understand the needs of the children. There remain challenges in relation to improving and providing a more consistent adoption support offer. However, the agency is committed to improving the support available to children, adopters and birth families.



Alison Lewis
Service Director

Contributors:

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

Appendix 1

Governance Arrangements:

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

Adoption West Board of Directors:

Voting members:

- Andy Dempsey – Director of Partnerships and Strategy, Gloucestershire County Council (Chair)
- Martin Davis – Assistant Director Children and Families, Wiltshire Council
- Fiona Tudge – Director of Children, Families and Safer Communities, Bristol City Council
- Jo Cross – Head of Integrated Children Services, South Gloucestershire Council
- Becky Hopkins – Assistant Director, North Somerset Council
- Mary Kearney-Knowles – Director Children and Young Peoples Service, Bath and North East Somerset Council

Non-Voting members:

- Mustafa Salih – Head of Financial Management and Business Support, South Gloucestershire Council
- Vicky Reynolds – Chair of Adoption West Adopter Advisory Board, Adoption UK (to join from December 2021)
- Maggie Pitts – CEO, CCS Adoption

Commissioning Arrangements:

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

Local Authority Adoption Lead Managers Group:

- Rachael Ward – Head of Service: Care Outcomes, Bath & North East Somerset Council
- Tara Parsons – Service Manager, Placements Team, Permanency and Specialist Services, Bristol City Council
- Tammy Wheatley – Head of Service, Permanence, Gloucestershire County Council

- Shelley Caldwell – Service Leader Service Leader Resource Service, North Somerset Council
- Aimee Williams– Service Manager, South Gloucestershire Council
- Pier Pritchard – Service Manager, Children in Care and Placement Service, Wiltshire Council

Scrutiny Arrangements:

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

Joint Scrutiny Panel:

Elected Voting Members:

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

Adopter Participation:

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

The current Chair of the Advisory Board June 2021 is Vicky Reynolds.

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North Somerset Council

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

DATE OF MEETING: 20TH OCTOBER 2022

SUBJECT OF REPORT: MONTH 5 CHILDREN'S SERVICES BUDGET MONITOR

TOWN OR PARISH: ALL

OFFICER/MEMBER PRESENTING: PRINCIPAL ACCOUNTANT (CHILDREN'S SERVICES)

KEY DECISION: NO

RECOMMENDATIONS

- i. That the Panel notes the 2022/23 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 2022/23 forecast spend against budget for children's services, highlighting key variances, movements and contextual information. It provides further details on the month 5 report which will be presented to the Executive on 19th October 2022.
- 1.2. The report also makes reference to the principles and outcomes associated with the setting of the 2023/24 budget and on-going financial risks.

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 (Summary)

- 3.1. The overall position is one of a £1,473k overspend (5.5% of the net budget).
- 3.2. The overspend is mainly due to the spend on placements for children looked after being significantly more than the budget. Part of the overspend is due to an unbudgeted increase in higher cost residential placements, primarily due to lack of supply of more cost-effective foster care provision. The other main cause is due to forecasts costs of c.£750k for one young person with extremely complex needs, who came into the council's care during the latter part of 2021/22 and after the 2022/23 budget setting process was completed.
- 3.3. Furthermore, the budget for placements was also reviewed and subsequently rebased and reduced by £960k in 2022/23 to reflect the underspend resulting from a reduction in the number of children looked after. As a result of all these factors, the spend on placements is c. £1.2m more than the budget and an increase of 19% compared with the previous year.
- 3.4. The other main cost pressure is on support to families with disabled children. The further growth applied in this area in the 2022/23 budget has not been sufficient to close the gap between the budget and demand in the current year. There are also cost pressures on support to care leavers and unaccompanied asylum seeking children, due to an increase in activity and spend compared with the previous year.
- 3.5. There are mitigations from reduced staffing costs through staff turnover and reduced costs on support provided for placements for children looked after.
- 3.6. The main areas of variance are shown in the table below and the key items are discussed in more detail in the following paragraphs:

Budget Area	P5 Variance £000
Placements for Children Looked After	1,219
Placements for Children Looked After Support	(177)
Support Services for Families with Children with Disabilities	344
Support for Care Leavers	143
Support for Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children	54
Maintained Nurseries (including salaries)	7
Staffing (excl. Nurseries included above)	(311)
Other	193
TOTAL	1,473

- 3.1. The deficit on the Dedicated Schools Grant is estimated to grow from £13.447m at the beginning of the year to £17.734m by the end of the financial year. The main overspend relates to out of area placements and top-up funding.
- 3.2. The fundamental shift in the national economic environment is having an impact on all areas of the council, and the exceptionally challenging financial outlook for the 2022/23 financial year is likely to continue into the medium-term, which means that the council will

need to make some very difficult decisions in order to deliver both a balanced budget in this year and then to be able set a balanced budget for next year. Specifically in Children's, whilst we continue to have a low number of children in care compared to previous years, there is a growing pressure in relation to the increasing costs of placements.

Placements - £1,219k Adverse Variance to Budget

- 3.3. Children's placements underspent by c. £1,578k in 2021/22 and the adjustments made to the budget for 2022/23 were as follows:

Item	£000s
Growth to reflect unit cost inflation	67
Rebase budget to reflect previous and future demand position	(960)
Savings plans (increase in-house foster carers)	(214)
Savings plans (income from CCG)	(100)
TOTAL net reduction	(1,207)

- 3.9 The spend for 2022/23 is an increase of £1,520k (19%) when compared with the previous year. The 2022/23 spend also represents an overall overspend against budget of £1,219k (15%) as illustrated in the table below.

	2021/22 Spend	2022/23 Budget	2022/23 Spend	2022/23 Numbers	Year on Year Change	Variance from Budget
	£000	£000	£000	FYE	£000	£000
In-house Foster Care	1,221	1,316	1,207	76	(14)	(109)
Independent Foster Care	1,841	1,900	1,926	42	85	25
Residential	2,592	2,056	3,196	13	605	1,140
Supported Living	526	647	524	6	(2)	(122)
Housing With Support	415	371	1,036	9	620	665
Other	1,509	2,115	1,735	166	225	(380)
TOTAL	8,104	8,405	9,624	314	1,520	1,219
					18.8%	14.5%

- 3.10. The biggest increase in spend is in residential placements, largely due to a small number of short term 'emergency' but very high cost placements (these placements average £8k per week whereas the current average cost of a residential placement is c. £4.5k per week). The forecast position factors in proposed step down of these placements, and others identified as appropriate.
- 3.11. The other big increase in spend is in housing with support resulting from costs for one young person with extremely complex needs whose costs were not until after the 2022/23 budget setting process was completed. Their needs have increased such that their forecast cost in 2022/23 is £750k.
- 3.12. A more detailed analysis of the activity and unit costs in relation to children's placements is shown at Appendix 2.

- 3.13. The reduction in total number of children looked after continues to be sustained, as illustrated in Appendix 3 numbers averaged 200 in 2021/22 and are currently averaging 198 in the current year. There remains some uncertainty and inherent risk on the numbers increasing, and the reductions may not be sustained.
- 3.14. The forecast spend on placements includes an uplift to the Special Guardianship, Adoption and Child Arrangement Orders Allowances from 1 April 2022 to ensure that they match those of foster carers. In 2022/23. This is being funded by a contribution from the salary underspend in the SEND team as a result of the delay in implementing the new structure.

Disabled Children's Support Packages - £344k Adverse Variance to Budget

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

Budget Area	Budget	Forecast	Variance	2021/22 Outturn	Year on Year Change
	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000
Complex Care Packages	774	1,066	292	896	170
Direct Payments	576	628	52	580	48
Disabled Children Support (Respite)	226	226	0	132	94
Total	1,575	1,920	344	1,607	312

- 3.16. The budget over spent by c. £405k in 2021/22 and the adjustments made to the budget for 2022/23 were as follows:

Item	£000s
Growth to reflect previous increases in demand	460
Growth to reflect direct payments inflation	33
Savings plans (income from the Integrated Care Board (ICB))	(100)
Savings plans (reduced costs on community care agency costs)	(20)
TOTAL net growth	373

- 3.17. The net budget growth has not been sufficient to meet the increased in-year demand, and overall, the forecast overspend against budget is £344k. Spend under this budget relates primarily to payments made to care agencies to support children with very complex needs and often requiring 1:1 support, and in some cases 2:1 support, from registered nurses and healthcare assistants. In this area, numbers are low, but unit costs are high, and demand is needs-led.
- 3.18. As noted above, the 2022/23 budget includes further savings to increase contributions from the ICB and there are further cost reduction opportunities from reviewing and commissioning more cost-effective care agency rates. Both of these saving plans are still under-developed and not anticipated to be delivered fully during this year in this budget area.

Support for Care Leavers - £143k Adverse Variance to Budget

- 3.19. Expenditure under these budgets mainly relates to accommodation and living support costs for care leavers. The main areas of overspend are payments for rent and transport related costs. Further analysis is being undertaken to understand the trends and cause of the increase, and more details will be provided in future reports.

Support for Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (UASC) - £54k Adverse

- 3.20. The council receives a Home Office grant to support UASC and current rates are £114 per day per young person, and an additional £29 per day for those part of the National Transfer Scheme from the South Coast. For over 18 UASC leaving care, the rate is £270 per week.
- 3.21. In prior years the grant received has been sufficient to meet all spend on support provided for UASC, however the current forecast position is as £54k overspend. The main reasons for the increased costs are as follows:
- The number of UASC has increased since the start of 2022/23, numbers are averaging 21 to date compared with an average of 14 during 2021/22.
 - Higher placement costs due to an increased level of need and support being provided.
 - A delay in the Home Office processing asylum claims, which means a higher number of over 18 UASC leaving care remain with no recourse to public funds, and in the interim are being fully supported by the council.
 - Increased staffing resource in the social work teams to support the increase in UASC.

Maintained Nurseries - £7k Adverse Variance to Budget

- 3.22. Early Birds is the main council maintained nursery generating income from private nursery fees. Ashcombe and Little Waves nurseries are predominantly funded by the Dedicated Schools Grant in relation to free places, and both nurseries also have an element of budgeted private fee income mainly for contributions from parents towards meals.
- 3.23. The council has continued to experience significant difficulties in recruiting staff to deliver services at its maintained nurseries, such that the extent to which the services can be maintained in the future has recently been considered and a decision made to reduce the operating capacity at Early Birds nursery.
- 3.24. This is adversely affecting the level of income being generated and overall the income losses across the nurseries are c.£200k, however this is being more than offset by a favourable variance on salaries and other expenditure.

MITIGATION

Staffing - £311k Favourable Variance to Budget (excl. Nurseries included above)

- 3.25. The main area under spending is the SEND team due to delayed implementation of the SEND growth provided in the 2022/23 MTFP (as noted earlier in the report, an additional £154k of this is being used to mitigate the increase in spend in relation to Special Guardianship Allowances). There are also underspends in social work teams due to vacancies.
- 3.26. The table below provides an overview of agency spend since 2018/19, and shows that whilst there was an initial reduction in the successive years, the forecast 2022/23 spend is at similar levels to 2018/19:

2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23
£846,913	£377,532	£704,287	£739,356	£805,082

Placements Support - £177k Favourable Variance to Budget

- 3.27. The main spend relates to additional community related support provided to existing placements, and mainly in foster care. The type of support provided includes therapy and mentoring, enabling activities, transport, clothing and equipment. This additional support ensures placement stability.

SAVINGS

- 3.28. Targeted savings in 2022/23 are largely centred around reductions in children's placements costs through increased in house foster carer capacity, generating additional contributions from the ICB in relation to children with complex needs as well as commissioning more cost effective care and support agency rates. Whilst the S10 Complex Care joint arrangement has already provided some contributions from the ICB (c.130k to date), at this stage further work is required to quantify the ongoing savings overall and there is a high likelihood the savings will not be fully delivered in the current year
- 3.29. Analysis in relation to the Edge of Care Social Impact Bond (SIB) shows a significant reduction in the number of over 10s entering care under section 20. The reduction seen in 2020/21 was sustained in 2021/22 with 27 children in the cohort entering care in 2021/22, compared with 46 in 2016/17 prior to the Edge of Care Service starting. The SIB contract has now been extended until May 2023.

MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL PLANNING

- 3.30. The Council has begun its medium term financial planning (MTFP) for 2023/24. One of the principles that has continued to be followed is to close the gap between the budget and the spend, particularly in those areas where demand is most difficult to manage. Work will continue to try and predict, in particular, the budget requirement in relation to children's

placements. In overall terms, as has been reported to the Executive, a large budget gap is currently predicted and the process for identifying savings and / or additional income has begun in earnest. Separate all member budget scrutiny sessions will cover the MTFP process.

EDUCATION – DEDICATED SCHOOLS GRANT (£17.734m deficit)

- 3.31. 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.
- 3.32. 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.

	2022/23
	£
Schools Block	145,657,000
High Needs Block	28,818,000
Early Years Block	11,640,000
Central Services Block	1,670,000
TOTAL DSG	187,785,000

- 3.33. At the end of the 2021/22 financial year there was a deficit of £13.447m and during 2022/23 the deficit is projected to increase to £17.734m. The deficit balance is transferred to an unusable reserve rather than impact on the council's general fund balance. The DfE has made it clear that councils are not expected to use general funding to support the DSG, but there is an expectation that councils have deficit management plans
- 3.34. The deficit relates 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 108% increase in the number of children with the EHCPs from 2016 to 2021.
- 3.35. The main area of 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 has increased by £1,014k (14%) this year, compared to last. This is driven by a combination of an increase in the average unit cost from £53,205 to £57,009 (7%) and an increase in numbers of 8 FYE (6%). In addition, the 2021/22 overspend was £2,446k but due to other pressures in the High Needs Block and the requirement to set a balanced budget, the 2022/23 budget has only increased by £141k. Overall this has resulted in a projected £3,320k overspend.

	2021/22	2022/23	Change
FYE	141	149	8
Budget (£)	5,061,649	5,202,555	140,906
Spend (£)	7,508,123	8,522,845	1,014,722

Variance (£)	2,446,474	3,320,290	873,816
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- 3.36. Top-up funding is projected to overspend by £932k. The main overspend of £1,397k is in mainstream schools due to an increase in the level of support provided to young people to meet their needs. It is worth noting that placements in local authority provision are largely more cost effective than placements in independent non-maintained special schools, and mitigates higher increases if placements were made out of area.
- 3.37. 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, since 2021/22 this has been reduced to just 0.5% of the DSG (c.£724k in 2022/23).
- 3.38. 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 in the short term, although it is possible that the in-year deficit could reduce by 2025/26.
- 3.39. Officers discussed our DSG Management Plan with officials from the Department for Education (DfE) at the end of July 2020 and again in September 2021. They raised no concerns about our approach, although they are keen to monitor progress against the five key themes of our SEND Improvement plan, which are as follows, and for us to quantify the likely positive impact on the DSG deficit:
- Identifying SEND earlier
 - Supporting increased inclusion in mainstream schools
 - Early Help - right support, right time, right place
 - Developing local provision
 - Evaluating outcomes and improving the value of high-cost placements
- 3.40. On 17 February, the council received notification that we are invited to take part in the "safety valve" intervention programme with the DfE in 2022/23. The aim of the programme is to agree a package of reform to the high needs system in order to address the DSG deficit. The programme requires local authorities to develop substantial plans for reforms with support and challenge from the DfE to place the DSG and the high needs system as a whole on a sustainable footing. Our initial meeting with the DfE has been scheduled for early October.

AUTHORS

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Appendix 1 - Children's Services Forecast Year End position as of 31st August 2022

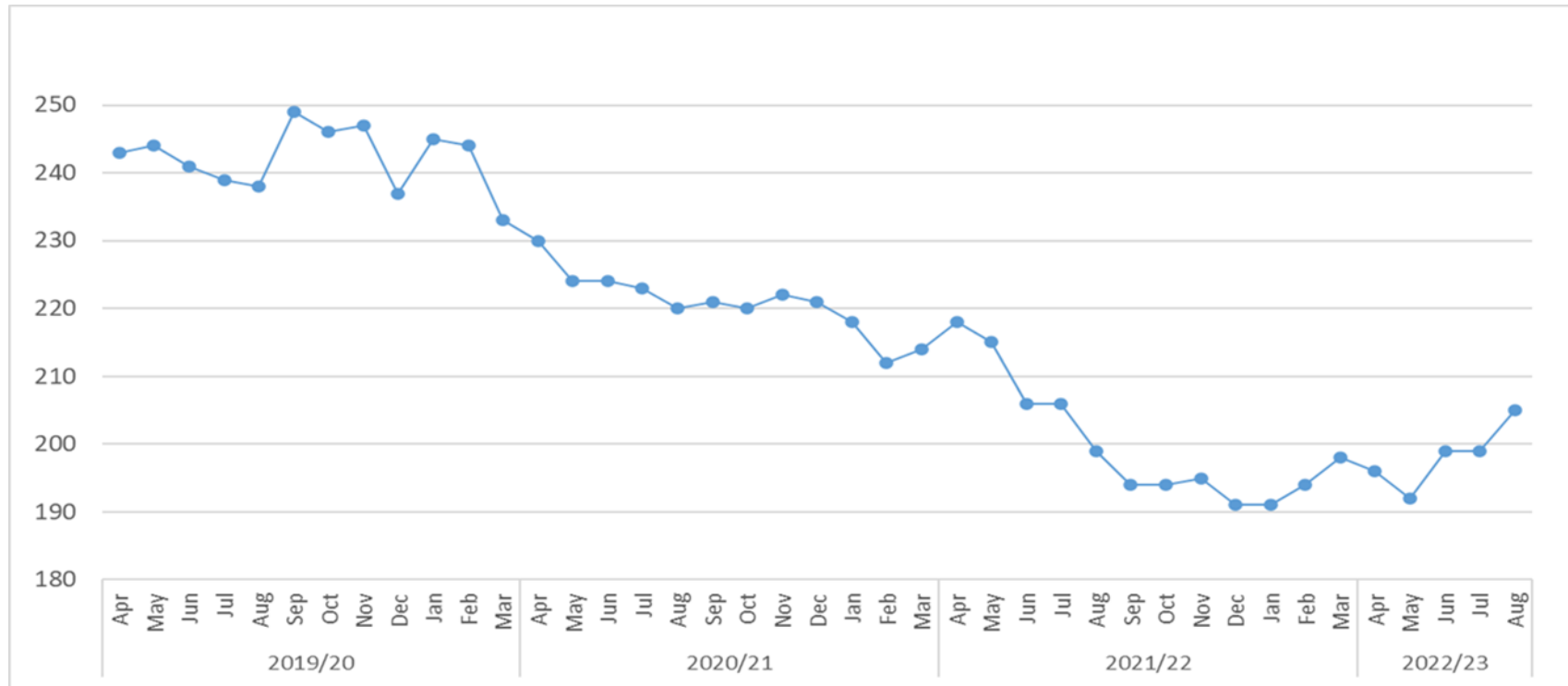
CHILDRENS - CHILDREN & YOUNG PEOPLE	REVISED BUDGET				FORECAST				FORECAST VARIANCE			
	Expenditure £	Income £	Reserves £	Net £	Expenditure £	Income £	Reserves £	Net £	Expenditure £	Income £	Reserves £	Net £
Coporate Parenting	12,512,366	(988,072)	(36,669)	11,487,625	15,147,562	(2,309,139)	(90,991)	12,747,432	2,635,196	(1,321,067)	(54,322)	1,259,807
Front Door	615,281	(20,800)	0	594,481	658,768	(20,800)	0	637,968	43,487	0	0	43,487
Family Wellbeing	10,535,665	(7,751,267)	(273,605)	2,510,793	12,092,778	(9,290,506)	(323,325)	2,478,947	1,557,113	(1,539,239)	(49,720)	(31,846)
Children With Disabilities	2,348,815	(604,680)	0	1,744,135	2,552,017	(429,694)	0	2,122,323	203,202	174,986	0	378,188
Children With Disabilities Occupational Therapy	221,246	0	0	221,246	225,361	0	0	225,361	4,115	0	0	4,115
Family Support and Safeguarding	3,642,416	(86,110)	(215,000)	3,341,306	3,527,236	(98,100)	(209,156)	3,219,980	(115,179)	(11,990)	5,844	(121,325)
Quality Assurance and Safeguarding	496,318	(56,286)	0	440,032	510,667	(66,286)	8,250	452,631	14,348	(10,000)	8,250	12,598
Adoption	578,268	(27,000)	0	551,268	550,524	(27,000)	0	523,524	(27,744)	0	0	(27,744)
Social Work Development	239,667	(119,944)	0	119,723	259,499	(141,696)	0	117,803	19,832	(21,752)	0	(1,920)
Contracts and Commissioning	611,910	0	0	611,910	562,580	0	0	562,580	(49,330)	0	0	(49,330)
Youth Justice Service	2,042,354	(1,630,826)	(92,015)	319,513	1,995,572	(1,723,985)	44,469	316,056	(46,782)	(93,159)	136,484	(3,457)
Children's Support and Safeguarding Assistant Director Sub total	33,844,306	(11,284,985)	(617,289)	21,942,032	38,082,564	(14,107,206)	(570,753)	23,404,605	4,238,258	(2,822,221)	46,536	1,462,573
Education Inclusion Service and Virtual School	2,537,345	(615,205)	0	1,922,140	2,811,707	(805,991)	(86,501)	1,919,215	274,362	(190,786)	(86,501)	(2,925)
Music Service and Education Hub	923,777	(923,777)	0	0	971,896	(950,671)	(21,225)	0	48,119	(26,894)	(21,225)	0
Early Years	539,650	(146,037)	0	393,613	543,554	(147,089)	0	396,466	3,904	(1,052)	0	2,852
Strategic Planning and Governance	1,416,470	(1,004,584)	0	411,886	1,443,245	(1,040,889)	(15,000)	387,357	26,775	(36,305)	(15,000)	(24,530)
Education Support Services	1,730,339	(425,530)	0	1,304,809	1,767,438	(481,788)	0	1,285,650	37,099	(56,258)	0	(19,159)
Education Partnerships Assistant Director Sub total	7,147,581	(3,115,133)	0	4,032,448	7,537,841	(3,426,427)	(122,726)	3,988,688	390,260	(311,294)	(122,726)	(43,761)
Children's Services Directorate	1,052,937	0	0	1,052,937	1,136,282	0	(65,597)	1,070,685	83,346	0	(65,597)	17,749
YPS Support Services	128,858	(179,685)	0	(50,827)	160,345	(174,700)	0	(14,355)	31,488	4,985	0	36,473
Children's Services Directorate Sub total	1,181,795	(179,685)	0	1,002,110	1,296,628	(174,700)	(65,597)	1,056,331	114,833	4,985	(65,597)	54,221
CHILDRENS - CHILDREN & YOUNG PEOPLE TOTAL	42,173,681	(14,579,803)	(617,289)	26,976,590	46,917,032	(17,708,333)	(759,076)	28,449,623	4,743,351	(3,128,530)	(141,787)	1,473,034

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

	2021/22 Budget	2021/22 Actuals	2021/22 Variance From Budget	2022/23 Budget	Budget Change 2021/22 to 2022/23	2022/23 Forecast This Period	Change On 2021/22	Variance To Budget
In-house								
- FYEs	87.00	80.17	(6.83)	87.00	0.00	76.36	(3.81)	(10.64)
- Average Unit Cost	18,363	15,229	(3,134)	15,127	(3,236)	15,803	574	676
- TOTAL COST	1,597,607	1,220,926	(376,681)	1,316,044	(281,563)	1,206,741	(14,185)	(109,303)
IFA								
- FYEs	58.00	43.08	(14.92)	42.00	(16.00)	42.48	(0.60)	0.48
- Average Unit Cost	42,907	42,726	(181)	45,249	2,342	45,336	2,610	87
- TOTAL COST	2,488,604	1,840,632	(647,972)	1,900,473	(588,131)	1,925,916	85,284	25,443
Residential								
- FYEs	12.00	12.81	0.81	10.00	(2.00)	12.87	0.06	2.87
- Average Unit Cost	207,309	200,457	(6,852)	205,636	(1,673)	248,272	47,815	42,636
- TOTAL COST	2,487,706	2,591,685	103,979	2,056,355	(431,351)	3,196,248	604,563	1,139,893
Supported Living								
- FYEs	2.27	3.12	0.85	3.50	1.23	6.15	3.03	2.65
- Average Unit Cost	205,000	168,658	(36,342)	184,718	(20,282)	85,288	(83,370)	(99,430)
- TOTAL COST	465,564	526,213	60,649	646,513	180,949	524,349	(1,864)	(122,164)
Housing with Support								
- FYEs	20.49	14.25	(6.24)	12.92	(7.57)	9.42	(4.83)	(3.50)
- Average Unit Cost	28,679	28,931	252	28,679	0	109,933	81,002	81,254
- TOTAL COST	587,600	415,445	(172,155)	370,535	(217,065)	1,035,900	620,455	665,365
Other Areas								
- FYEs	153.98	122.51	(31.47)	171.92	17.94	166.28	43.77	(5.64)
- Average Unit Cost	13,350	12,321	(1,030)	12,300	(1,050)	10,433	(1,888)	(1,867)
- TOTAL COST	2,055,642	1,509,422	(546,220)	2,114,600	58,958	1,734,766	225,345	(379,833)
TOTAL								
- FYEs	333.74	275.94	(57.80)	327.34	(6.40)	313.57	37.63	(13.77)
- Average Unit Cost	29,013	29,370	357	25,676	(3,338)	30,692	1,322	5,016
- TOTAL COST	9,682,723	8,104,323	(1,578,400)	8,404,519	(1,278,204)	9,623,919	1,519,596	1,219,400

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 205 at the end of August 2022). The main difference is that we include in the cost and volume analysis those children who are subject to Special Guardianship, Child Arrangement and Adoption orders; these children are not “looked after”, but the guardians are in receipt of an allowance. On average, these children number around 134.

Appendix 3 – Number of Children Looked After



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North Somerset Council

Report to the Children & Young People Policy & Scrutiny Panel

Date of Meeting: 20 October 2022

Subject of Report: North Somerset's Annual Children's Social Care Complaints and Compliments Report for the 2021/22 financial year

Town or Parish: All

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

Key Decision: No

Reason: This report is for information only

Recommendations

It is recommended the members review the content of the Annual Report on Children's Services Complaints and Compliments (attached), referred to this panel for consideration and any further actions.

1. Summary of Report

- 1.1 The annual report for 2021/22 covers the Council's actions and responses to complaints and compliments about Children's Social Care.

2. Policy

- 2.1 'Getting the Best from Complaints' recommends that an Annual Report on the operation of the Complaints Procedure be presented to the Executive Member for Children's Services. This information, as contained in this report, is referred to this Panel for review and comment before its submission to the Executive Member for Children's Services and Lifelong Learning.

3. Details

- 3.1 In the twelve months 1 April 2021 to 31 March 2022, forty-three Children's Services Social Care complaints were administered by the directorate. Whilst twenty-seven were resolved at the pre-complaints stage, sixteen proceeded to Stage 1, and of those three moved to stage 2 and one to Stage 3 of the statutory complaint's procedure. One case was referred to the Local Government Ombudsman. Further analysis is contained in the attached Annual Report – appendix 1.

A report covering the period 1 April 2022 – 31 March 2023 will be submitted next year.

4. Consultation

- 4.1 Not applicable.

5. Financial Implications

- 5.1 The statutory guidelines require the Council to employ an independent Investigation Officer to investigate for all Stage 2 and 3 complaints and to submit their report on recommendations. The Council used one provider in 2021/22 – South West Region Board – and external costs of £10,680.23 were incurred in the 2021 - 22 financial year.

Costs

See above - £10,680.23 in the 2021- 22 financial year.

Funding

Costs are funded from Council resources.

6. Legal Powers and Implications

- 6.1 As set out in 'Getting the Best from Complaints' - <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/childrens-social-care-getting-the-best-from-complaints>

7. Climate Change and Environmental Implications

- 7.1 There are no direct outcomes in terms of climate change to the complaints process.

8. Risk Management

- 8.1 A failure to present annual report is contrary to the guidelines as set out in 'Getting the Best from Complaints (2006)'.

9. Equality Implications

[Have you undertaken an Equality Impact Assessment? Yes/No **No**

- 9.1 The evaluation and analysis of complaints is an important means of monitoring and improving service standards including service access for groups within local communities.

Monitoring complaints ensures that those with protected characteristics are dealt with fairly.

10. Corporate Implications

- 10.1 Legislation and guidance requires that an Annual Complaints Report is produced and reported to the relevant organisation.

11. Options Considered

- 11.1 None – Getting the Best from Complaints recommends that an Annual Report on the operation of the Complaints Procedure be presented to the Executive Member for Children's Services.

Author:

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Appendices:

Appendix 1 attached

Background Papers:

None



Children's Services

Annual Report

Representations and Complaints

1 April 2021– 31 March 2022

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1. Introduction

- 1.1 This report provides service users, their families and other stakeholders with information about complaints and representations received about children's social care. It aims to measure the effectiveness of the Complaints, Compliments and Suggestions. The report provides an analysis of outcomes and trends from the information received during 2021-2022 as well as the impact on service delivery and learning from complaints.
- 1.2 The report also captures compliments and areas of good practice.

2. The Statutory Context

- 2.1 This annual report is a statutory requirement for Children's Social Care Representations, including Complaints and Compliments. It reflects the data recorded on the Council's Complaints database, Casetracker, during the period from 1 April 2021 to 31 March 2022 based on the following legal guidance:

'The statutory procedure for Children's Social Care is "The Children Act 1989 Representations Procedure (England) Regulations 2006" and accompanying Statutory Guidance "Getting the Best from Complaints".'

3. Overview of dealing with initial complaints

- 3.1 The Directorate Governance and Complaints team monitor all incoming complaints, however received. North Somerset Council has an online portal directly into a Case Tracker system whereby service users can register their concerns or provide compliments about Children's Services. The Complaints Manager's email address is published on our website and complaints and compliments can also be registered by emailing the Complaints Manager. Complaints are also received via colleagues who will pass the information to the team for action. On occasions complaints and compliments can be received in writing and the post room staff scan and email the team accordingly.
- 3.2 All complaints, however received, are logged onto the Case Tracker system, and each is assigned to the Team Manager of the appropriate team to investigate and respond within a specified time frame, usually 10 working days although this can be extended should the need arise.
- 3.3 The Complainant is advised of the actions taken by the Directorate Governance and Complaints team with an expected response time, confirmation of who is investigating the complaint and invited to contact the Complaints team should they have any queries.
- 3.4 The system itself sends regular status messages to the individual assigned to the complaint to ensure the complaint doesn't drift. In addition, the Directorate Governance and Complaints team monitor the progress of all complaints and regularly interact with colleagues in the Social Care teams to assist in concluding the complaint.

- 3.5 There have been significant numbers of complaints dealt with at pre-complaint stage which is reflective of the work undertaken by the Social Care teams to resolve issues at the earliest opportunity. In 2021- 22, 64% of complaints were dealt with at pre-complaint stage.
- 3.6 The processes overseen by the Directorate Governance and Complaints Team to support clients and social care colleagues and to provide a greater robustness of internal reporting and lessons learned are under review. A new Directorate Governance and Complaints Manager is due to take up her post on 1 November 2022. It is the intention of the Directorate Governance and Complaints team to further review and introduce new processes once the new manager is in post. Regrettably these updates have been delayed whilst the team has been operating under capacity due staff sickness and vacancy management.

4. Advocacy

- 4.1 Section 26A **Children Act 1989** requires the authority 'to make arrangements for the provision of advocacy services to children and young people making a complaint under the Act'.

Any child making a complaint under the Act is offered the use a free advocacy service, through all the stages of the complaint's procedure up to the Local Government Ombudsman. This is an enormously beneficial resource.

- 4.2 Young people in North Somerset can access the services of the Junction 21 Mentoring & Advocacy Coordinator. This post is part of North Somerset's Youth Offending Service. No young people made use of the advocacy service in 2021-22. Only one young person submitted a complaint on their own behalf during 2021-22 and support was provided by a Social Worker.

5. The Complaints Procedure

- 5.1 North Somerset does not only act on complaints made in writing. Where responses are not in in written form, it is imperative a clear and accessible record is maintained.

Social Care Representations

Representations, (which are potential complaints if not dealt with appropriately) are usually dealt with at point of contact. Representations are recordable when there is a more detailed or involved response, involving, for example, swift decision making and/or response by Team Management, in order to resolve a concern.

We have a portal available to aide convenience for complainants and transparency. This is being embedded and predicted to assist the swift completion of complaints.

- 5.2 Stage 1- Local Resolution (Informal Stage)

Most stage 1 representations are actioned by local managers, (normally Team Leaders), or those appointed by the Head of Service or appropriate Assistant Director. The Council's procedure requires that Complainants receive a response within ten working days. This may involve meetings or discussions with the Complainant or other parties in order to clarify issues. The manager will seek to find

a practical resolution to the issue and will conclude this with a written response.

All letters to Complainants from the Complaints Officer give a date by which a response should be received. Fuller responses from Service Leaders or their designated responder should contain advice to contact the Complaints Officer if dissatisfied with the response received.

Stage 1 Complaints Summary	
Name of Service	
Referral and Assessment team	
Early Years	1
CFT South	1
CFT North	2
CFT East	3
Disabled Children	4
Looked after Children	3
Care Leavers	
Fostering	1
SPA	1
Total	16

5.3 Stage 2 - Investigation Stage

When a complainant is not satisfied by the Council's response at Stage 1, they may request that their concerns are escalated. Stage 2 complaints are overseen in line with the Children Act 1989 Representations Procedure (England) Regulations (2006) and associated guidance.

The Stage 2 complaint is investigated by an external Investigating Officer (IO), not associated with the case, and further reviewed by another Independent Person (IP). North Somerset engages external IOs and IPs that are appointed from the South West Regional Complaints Register. Reports are shared with the Council and the complainant and their findings are reviewed locally by the Assistant Director for Children Support and Safeguarding, who responds to this stage of the complaint.

The guidance recommends that reports and adjudication should be completed within 25 working days. This can sometimes be complex, noting that external interviews, data gatherings and reviews all need to be undertaken within this timetable. If the review cannot be completed in 25 working days, then 65 working days (approximately 13 weeks) can be given to complete the report and adjudication. There is no specific time for the adjudication letter to be completed by the Council's Assistant Director after the reports have been received but they recommend a response should be done between 5 and 10 days after they have received both reports. The written response to the complainant will detail the decisions on the complaint and will set out any actions to be undertaken by the service or department, including relevant timescales.

In 2021-22, 3 cases advanced to Stage 2. It is felt the effective resolution of complaints by Teams and Service Leaders within the Stage 1 process has contributed significantly to this low figure.

Stage 2 Complaints Summary	
Name of Service	
Referral and Assessment team	
Early Years	
CFT South	
CFT North	
CFT East	1
Disabled Children	1
Looked after Children	
Care Leavers	
Fostering	
SPA	1
Total	3

5.4 Stage 3 - Review Stage

Where the complaint has not been resolved at Stage 2, the complainant has the right to request that any outstanding complaints are reviewed by a panel at Stage 3.

The North Somerset Review Panel has three members. For complaints considered under legislation, all three members must be independent of the Council. The Review Panel does not re-investigate the complaints but acts as an arbitrator and makes recommendations for consideration by the Assistant Director, Support and Safeguarding. The Assistant Director will respond in writing to any findings and recommendations of the Panel.

Currently there is one stage three complaint during 2021-2022. The Panel Review is scheduled to take place 19 October 2022. The reason for the complaint is based on a perceived failure to act on accusations made by a parent regarding the safety of their child. The complaint has been progressed to this stage as the complainant is dissatisfied with the Adjudicating Officer's findings

Summary of complaints 2021 -22

- 5.5 In the twelve months 1 April 2021 to 31 March 2022 the 16 stage 1 complaints outcomes were as below:

Year	2021-22	2020-21	2019-20	2018-19	2017-18	2016-17
Upheld	1	8	7	15	9	6
Not Upheld	3	9	12	6	17	15
Partially Upheld	7	4	14	9	10	7
Miscellaneous**	5	6	0	2	0	2
Total	16	27	33	32	36	30
Stage 2	3	2	2	2	2	3
LGO	1	4	2	3	2	2
Stage 3	1	0	0	1	1	1

** Miscellaneous includes: resolved, inconclusive and withdrawn cases

- 5.6 Three complaints proceeded to Stage Two. The first centered on the alleged failure of the LA to meet the needs of a disabled child (partially upheld). The

second related to NSC's handling of a safeguarding issue within an extended family (partially upheld), and the final has now progressed to stage 3 (due to be heard 19 October).

Outstanding	1
Closed	2
Total	3

5.7 One complaint has advanced to a Stage Three Review of the Children's Complaints Procedure. The grievance is in relation to a perceived failure by the Council to act on accusations made by a parent regarding the safety of their child. The outcome is outstanding at the time of writing this report.

5.8 A summary of those groups who have complained in 2021-22 is as below:

Who Complained	Numbers
Carer	1
Child/Young person	1
Parent	12
Relative	2
Total	16

Most complaints were from parents who are unhappy with the decision of a social worker or about actions taken in relation to the care of their child.

5.9 The reasons why a statutory complaint in 2021-22 was made is shown below:

Statutory reason for complaint categories	Numbers
An unwelcome or disputed decision	4
Poor communication	5
Attitude or behaviour of Staff	3
Delivery - non delivery of service	1
The quality or appropriateness of the service	3
Totals	16

6. Local Government Ombudsman

6.1 A complainant may approach the Local Government Ombudsman at any time with their concerns. Any complaint needs to have been fully investigated within the Council's procedures before the Ombudsman will undertake an investigation.

6.2 One complaint was made to the Ombudsman in 2021/22. The Ombudsman declined to investigate the grievance as it was outside their jurisdiction.

7. Monitoring

7.1 This monitoring information is provided for inclusion in the Corporate Feedback, Complaints & Ombudsman Annual Report. It is submitted to Councillors and the Directorate's Directorate Leadership Team for review. The relevant teams and Heads of Service are informed about individual complaints when received. Team Leaders

provide feedback on action taken to resolve the complaints they have dealt with. The report, once agreed, is available on the Council's web site.

- 7.2 A review of monitoring will be undertaken by the new Directorate Governance & Complaints Manager once in post from 1 November 2022. Reviewing the way in which we monitor complaints will be an early first tasks.

8. Compliments

- 8.1 In addition to receiving complaints, the Council also receives compliments for good service. This feedback is shared with the staff concerned and used to demonstrate where things are going well.
- 8.2 In the period 2021 -22 there was 19 recorded instances of complimentary feedback about the hard work and care taken by officers working in Children's Social Care. This is a decrease on last years' figure of 36 and is, we believe reflective of the difficulties of working through the pandemic and having very little face to face contact with clients.
- 8.3 We look to provide an easier way to capture positive feedback, acknowledging that the interactions with families within Children's Social Care are often very complex and the interventions more significant than counterparts in other Service areas.
- 8.4 Compliments received from service users, professionals and co-workers are recorded as part of a staff member's appraisal

Name of Service	Number
CFT South	6
CFT North	4
CFT East	3
Disabled Children	1
Looked after Children	1
Fostering	3
Safeguarding	1
Total	19

- 8.4 Examples of compliments received in this period:

1. I have been really impressed with the speed and diligence given to the work undertaken by Kate and Rose. They have worked really hard to include the views of all those involved, and this has resulted in the children feeling listened to. All three sisters desperately wanted to spend Christmas with their family. Kate and Rose worked hard and within tight timescales and difficult negotiation with foster carers to make this happen. They have also completed an assessment of mum to explore whether the child could return to mum's care. I am so pleased that this opportunity is being given to her and her mum. I realise that the outcome isn't yet finalised, and difficulties are likely to still arise, but as ISRO I am so grateful to Kate and Rose's hard work to make this a possibility. The wide grin on the child's face at her Child in Care Review is testament to her mutual support and appreciation of her Social Work team.

2. I am just in awe of all the help we have had to get us where we are . To see the progress we have made and how differently we all tackle things. I'm very proud of my family we are going to make it . I will miss everyone especially Emily who has been my rock

3. I'm the DSL / Deputy at Silver Bridge School in Taunton and have been working closely with Ashlee for the last 6 months or so, with a young person from N Somerset. We have a new DSL starting, so I will be stepping away from this role, however I really wanted to contact you to feedback on working with Ashlee.

Obviously being a SW is a challenging job, however Ashlee manages this exceptionally well. She is extremely diligent and conscientious and always goes the extra mile to support our student. I don't think people necessarily get enough positive feedback, but I really think she deserves it!

9. Adoption

9.1 The Adoption Services are provided by Adoption West.

10. Lessons Learned

10.1 Staffing complexities in 2021/22 has led to a recognition that this has not been an area of strength in terms of capturing the lessons learned in a meaningful way. This, in itself, is a lesson learned. A new Directorate Governance & Complaints Manager begins in post on 1 November 2022 and this postholder will be looking at ways to improve this aspect of our responsibilities.

10.2 The complications of Covid have, in part, had an effect on our ability to capture learnings, as has resource issues within the Directorate Governance & Complaints Team due to a long term staff absence and subsequent resignation from post. In the interim we have put in place a bi-monthly reporting function and this provides Quality Assurance & Performance Monitoring that is reported at team meetings.

10.3 In order to develop a consistent approach to responding to compliments and complaints we will ensure Team Managers are confident in their use of case tracker and use this consistently going forward. Training and development will need to be considered.

10.4 Lessons learned will be extrapolated from every complaint irrespective of the stage it concludes. This will be the responsibility of the respective Team Manager alongside the Directorate Governance & Complaints Manager, a separate recording mechanism will need to be devised as case tracker currently doesn't record quantitative information.

10.5 Bi-monthly reports will be produced by the Directorate Governance & Complaints Manager for the Quality Assurance and Performance Monitoring Meeting. This will report on the previous two months of activity and will reflect the thematic nature of the lessons learned.

10.6 The voice of children and families will be reported within this bi-monthly report in a separate sub-section so it is obvious and easy to review.

- 10.7 Lessons learned from stage 2 and 3 will be forwarded immediately upon conclusion, to the respective Head of Service so any changes of practice can be considered and implemented.
- 10.8 Communication works best when it is regular, accessible and we are clear. Sometimes our professional language, professional position and tone can make people feel judged and criticised. We need to ensure that we learn from the complaints we have had and ensure we consistently use language that cares when people are in a place of struggle.
- 10.9 Reliability, we know that when we do not do what we have been asked, have agreed or have been tasked with when we should, this causes frustrations, disappointment and delay in decisions. Compliments consistency tell us that when we are reliable this is relay helpful, allows people to trust us and supports us to demonstrate the value of our support.
- 10.10 Transparency and explanation as to why we are required to do what we do - complaints often raise frustrations seeking a change to the plan of support or the conclusion of the support/assessment of need. It's crucial we are clear on our policies and procedures so people understand our role and duties.

11. Report Summary and Suggestions

- 11.1 In conclusion, most complaints were resolved at the pre and Stage 1 points. Stage 1 responses often utilise a number of resources putting additional demands on staff time. A concerted effort is needed to recognise the importance of an early resolution. By listening to complainants and their experiences, managers and Team Leaders can help to prevent or resolve mistakes earlier and learn new ways to improve and prevent problems from happening in the future. This in turn will lead to an improvement in services.

Recommendation: when complaints are made, the local manager should arrange a face-to-face meeting or a telephone conversation with the complainant as soon as practically possible to, where possible, resolve the concerns and prevent escalation.

- 11.2 The Case Tracker database is not designed to deal with social care complaints. In conjunction with Customer Services and ROL (the suppliers), we are looking into whether the functionality of the system can be improved to help improve the reports/information which can be obtained from Case Tracker. In this way the database can be used by Team managers and Heads of Service regularly to review complaints and compliments and to better understand the frequency and nature of concerns to inform service improvements.
- 11.3 The Complaints Officers can provide support and assistance to Heads of Service, Team Leaders as well as Business Support Staff. Increased interactions between the Social Care teams and the Directorate Governance & Complaints team can only serve to improve service and provision both for staff and for the service users

North Somerset Council

Report to the Children & Young People Policy & Scrutiny Panel

Date of Meeting: 20th October 2022

Subject of Report: Future Governance of the Music Service

Town or Parish: All

Officer/Member Presenting: Simon Lock

Key Decision: No

Reason:

It does not meet any criteria for a key decision.

Recommendations

- i. To recommend approval to the Executive of the proposal that the Music Service form a tri-LA shared service with B&NES and South Gloucestershire.
- ii. To recommend approval to the Executive of the shared service being established as an independent organisation outside the 3 Councils, taking forward and expanding a broader, universal youth music education offer on behalf of the 3 Councils.

1. Summary of Report

- 1.1. The future of Music Education, as required by the Department for Education (DfE) will change radically in 2023. This paper proposes actions which seek to protect the existing music offer for young people and build a vibrant and robust music education future for young people in North Somerset.
- 1.2. Over the last 2 years, North Somerset and South Glos, and latterly B&NES Music Services have been working in partnership to deliver a more robust, more universal offer for young people in our region. We now need to transform our governance model so that we can release this potential to deliver for the future.
- 1.3. In July 2022, the DfE released its refreshed vision for the governance and delivery of music education in England. This new vision is significantly different to the current model. The governance and funding of music services (through their role as Lead Organisation of Music Education Hubs) is required to radically transform.
- 1.4. Over the last 18 months, the 3 Music Services have engaged a consultant to look at how the 3 services can work better together. The report recommendations align with the DfE vision for the future governance of music education

- 1.5. This report to Scrutiny Committee lays out the background to the recommendations in the report and the transformation required by DfE in the next 3 months. It proposes a new model which seeks to protect the future of the music service as a tri-LA shared service, sitting outside the LA, delivering music education on behalf of the three Councils with senior LA officer influence at a Board level.
- 1.6. We believe this is the only viable option to retain the government funding on which the service relies.
- 1.7. This will enable us to retain existing services and build a robust model which will attract future funding, enabling the Music Service to deliver a bigger, better, more universal offer for young people in North Somerset.

2. Policy

(See appendices)

- 2.1. The National Plan for Music Education (2011) is the Government's plan for music education in England.
- 2.2. A refreshed Plan was released in July 2022.
- 2.3. The Government devolves the management and monitoring of Music Education Hubs to Arts Council England. The Council, as fund holder for North Somerset's Music Hub, is bound by a contractual 'relationship framework' with ACE over the delivery of the Plan and the use of public funds.

3. Details

Background and Context

- 3.1. The Music Service is a non-statutory service, providing music education to students, families, and schools. The Service is funded by a Department for Education (DfE) grant to deliver its role as Lead Organisation of the local Music Education Hub (see 3.c). This grant totals approx 35% of income, with the balance of income from traded services (schools and families). The Service has a staff of 2 managers and 39 casually employed teaching staff. The 2 business support officers are provided by Agilisys.
- 3.2. The Service delivers the National Plan for Music Education (2011) – the government's vision for music education in England.
- 3.3. The DfE's model for music education is to fund Music Education Hubs to deliver the National Plan for Music Education (NPME). Hubs are informal partnerships of local music and education organisations operating as a network of providers. They are broadly aligned to LA areas. Hubs have a Lead Organisation, which receives the DfE grant, and is held to account by Arts Council England (ACE) for the delivery of the NPME. Locally, B&NES, North Somerset and South Glos Council Music Services are all Lead Organisations of the local Hub.

- 3.4. Since 2020, North Somerset and South Glos music services have been working in partnership, with a shared management team and increasingly homogenised strategy, development and operations, alongside greater sharing of resources. In March 2021, B&NES Music Service joined this alliance.
- 3.5. The result of this partnership working is that a broader, more universal offer is being achieved because of the efficiencies gained by working together. Through partnership, the services are beginning to realise their potential to deliver a bigger and better offer for all young people from the most vulnerable to those who are gifted and talented. Through greater partnership, the 3 Music Services have the potential to achieve an even wider offer and this proposal seeks to enable this potential to be realised.
- 3.6. A consultant has been working with the 3 Music Services over the last 18 months to evaluate how the music services can improve their collaboration, ensuring that they are robust and viable for the future, making sure current services are protected and the growth potential can be realised. The report includes a recommendation that the 3 services should join together, with options for this shared service to operate a) within one of the Councils and b) as an independent organisation, delivering on behalf of the 3 Councils.
- 3.7. Since this report, the music education landscape has changed radically. There is now an urgency to transform if we are to viable in the near future.
- 3.8. In July 2022 the DfE launched the refreshed National Plan for Music Education (2022). Alongside this, it announced that all Services in England would need to re-bid to retain the government funding which delivers the plan.
- 3.9. The bidding process will be different to the past in that:
- 3.9.1. the grant application process will be open and highly competitive. ACE are proactively encouraging and enabling a wide range of education and arts organisations to bid against us. This is the first time in the 50+ year history of Music Services that there has been a competitive process.
- 3.9.2. It is very unlikely small LA music services will be eligible to apply. DfE/ACE are expecting mergers/partnerships and that organisations will apply for a larger grant representing a wider geographic area. If North Somerset were to apply alone, it is very likely to be unsuccessful and we expect DfE/ACE would force us to join with a partner prescribed by ACE.
- 3.10. The future delivery model and therefore fund-holding organisation will also be very different to the present model. DfE/ACE expect to see:
- 3.10.1. the grant being allocated to non-LA strategic organisations, largely volunteer led, whose role is to decide strategy. This strategic body will then commission other organisations to deliver services.
- 3.10.2. they do not wish to see funding being used to support the employment of a teaching workforce

- 3.11. This means that most English Music Services will need to prepare a radical transformation of their business model by Spring 2023 if they are to have a strong bid for future funding.

Preparing for the future in North Somerset

- 3.12. In recent months, the Music Hubs for B&NES, North Somerset and South Glos have merged into the West of England Music Alliance, representing the 3 LA areas. The 3 Music Services remain as joint Lead Organisations (see para 3c).
- 3.13. The three Music Services now work closely together; as one management team, aligned strategy and operational processes, collaborate on all projects, and share staff, music resources, projects and training.
- 3.14. The Music Service leader, supported by senior officers in the three LAs and an external consultant, have been preparing for the new DfE/ACE vision for the last 18 months. The consultant, funded by Arts Council England, engaged with key stakeholders in- and outside the Councils, including senior Council officers and service users, to review aspirations for music in the region and propose options for the future governance of the music services.
- 3.15. The 2 options presented were proposals to merge the 3 Services, with models operating within and outside the LA.
- 3.16. One option was to create a single LA shared service. However, none of the 3 LAs in the partnership are in a position to host the shared service. The host LA would be expanding the Service headcount from approx 50 to approx 150, and taking on the associated employment, redundancy and pension risks. As we do not have a guarantee of funding beyond April 2023, the risk to any one of the Councils is too high.
- 3.17. The new vision from DfE/ACE also means an LA shared service is unlikely to be sufficient transformation on which to create a strong bid for future funding.
- 3.18. The second option proposed was the merged services sitting outside the LAs, delivering on behalf of the 3 Councils as an independent trust. On the basis of the need for the radical transformation described above, this option becomes the only route we believe is viable to ensure a future youth music provision in North Somerset which can take forward existing services, deliver an aspirational growth plan and ensure a Service which is influenced by, and dedicated to, North Somerset's needs and aspirations.

The Proposal

- 3.19. To implement the option outlined in para 3.18:
- 3.20. For North Somerset Music Service to merge with B&NES and South Glos Music Services and spin out of the Local Authority into an independent company; a company limited by guarantee, registered as a charity, with a trading arm.
- 3.21. The charity will operate as the strategic Hub and will apply for the DfE funding to deliver the new National Plan for Music.

- 3.22. The trading arm will offer a teaching service, which can be commissioned by the Hub to take forward delivery of existing services.
- 3.23. The traded (teaching) arm will be a self-sufficient trading arm, operating viably as a stand-alone business without funding.
- 3.24. There will be a small management and business team restructure which is needed to create a viable structure for the new single entity. There are no anticipated redundancies.
- 3.25. Staff will TUPE to the new organisation.
- 3.26. We believe this is the only viable proposal, and will:
 - 3.26.1. Retain a music education provision and funding for North Somerset, with influence from Council Officers at a strategic level
 - 3.26.2. Enable existing services to continue with no- to minimal disruption for existing users (students, families and schools).
 - 3.26.3. Enable the expansion of a universal offer for children and young people
 - 3.26.4. Create an organisation which meets the aspirations of DfE/ACE, presenting a strong case to retain future funding without which the Service cannot continue
 - 3.26.5. Remove the risk to the Council of the closure of the Music Service and related redundancies
 - 3.26.6. Protect the future employment of approx 150 music teaching staff
 - 3.26.7. Enable the Music Service to attract new funding, establish a regional footprint and be a significant influencer in music for young people in the region

Delivering the proposal

- 3.27. In September 2022, North Somerset Council, on behalf of the 3 LAs, commissioned consultants to deliver the spin-out project as follows:
 - 3.27.1. Oct-Nov22: Consultants create business case and financial model
 - 3.27.2. Oct-Dec 22: Agreement is sought from the 3 LAs
 - 3.27.3. Dec 22-March 23: Consultants complete the implementation of the new organisation
 - 3.27.4. Jan-Feb 23: The new organisation bids for future funding on behalf of the 3 LAs
 - 3.27.5. March-April 23: Funding awards are announced
 - 3.27.6. April-Aug 23: If successful, the new organisation becomes operational and transfer process completes*
 - 3.27.7. Sept 23: The new organisation takes on the work of the 3 LA music services with DfE funding. A new Board of Trustees, which includes LA representation, oversees the work of the new organisation.
- 3.28. *if unsuccessful in securing funding the implementation process will stop. A viable alternative operating model for the Music Service will be sought. If no viable alternative is available, the Service will need to close.

4. Consultation

- 4.1. The initial consultation project sought views on the aspirations of music education from the North Somerset Director or Children's Services and the Executive Member for Children's Services and Lifelong Learning. Similar consultation was conducted in B&NES and South Glos. Schools and families in B&NES were also consulted.
- 4.2. The proposal to merge the three services (with the future governance model to be advised) was approved by B&NES Policy and Development Scrutiny Committee in Jan 2022 and by the appropriate Executive Member in South Glos in June 2022.
- 4.3. Key stakeholders in the delivery of music (eg the Music Hubs' steering groups) have also been consulted and universally approve the proposal.
- 4.4. The upcoming consultancy project will further engage with a wider range of users and stakeholders.
- 4.5. The full report (see appendix D) on this proposal has been reviewed by Children's Services DLT in February 2022.
- 4.6. This proposal is an agenda item for decision by the Executive in December 2022.

5. Financial Implications

- 5.1. The upcoming consultancy project will build a full business and financial model.
- 5.2. The proposal seeks to remove financial risk from the Council by creating a model which will be successful in attracting continued funding. The TUPE of staff is expected to result in no redundancy costs for NSC staff (note para 12.2)
- 5.3. The risk of not proceeding with the proposal is that the Service will not be viable for future funding which will likely lead to the closure of the service with 43 redundancies and possible pension strain costs.

6. Costs

- 6.1. North Somerset's contribution to the transformation project is £15,000 which can be met from Music Service reserves.

7. Funding

- 7.1. Costs can be met from Music Service reserves.

8. Legal Powers and Implications

- 8.1. The music service is a non-statutory service and is not funded by the Council
- 8.2. It is proposed that all staff will TUPE into the new organisation

9. Climate Change and Environmental Implications

- 9.1. A more cohesive governance structure will enable more efficient deployment of peripatetic teaching staff, reducing carbon footprint and congestion
- 9.2. A shared operating model will eliminate duplication of resources and facilities which will reducing energy use and waste.

10. Risk Management

Risk	Mitigation
Failure to implement the proposal puts the music service at risk because DfE funding cannot be secured	<p>Head of Service to ensure proposals are signed off by all 3 LAs by December 2022.</p> <p>Transition governance board set up in July 2022 with representation from all 3 LAs to ensure project timeline remains on track</p>
Reduction / loss of services to one or more LAs	<p>The Music Service delivers services directly to, and receives all income from, trading with Schools & Parents and through the DfE grant. As there are no services provided directly to the Councils, there is no risk of a reduction in services to the Councils.</p> <p>All 3 Councils are essential stakeholders in the Music Services' delivery plans. It is in the best interests of the shared service/future organisation to have all 3 LAs at the centre of its governance.</p> <p>The governance board with representatives from the 3 LAs will oversee all aspects of the new organisation, approve the business plan and hold the shared service to account for progress against KPIs. Of the three LA representatives, one LA would be host, one LA rep would chair the shared services board and the third LA rep would sit on the Music Education Hub board. This will ensure fair and equitable representation and voice for each LA.</p> <p>DfE/Arts Council monitoring with require the shared service to report on activity at school-level with a requirement to meet national average levels of participation. Arts Council mechanisms will ensure services are provided for all 3 LAs.</p>

Staff will be unwilling to transfer to a new host LA employer	<p>Terms and conditions are broadly the same, so there is minimal impact on staff. The differences in pay rates can be equalised over time (3-5 years) through incremental change.</p> <p>Many staff already work across more than one of the 3 LAs.</p>
New organisation does not meet the aspirations of DfE/Arts Council	Head of Service has ensured ACE has been alongside the consultancy throughout and to date the outcomes are supported by ACE. Continue to work with ACE throughout the transition phase.
Insufficient capacity to deliver the proposals	Build in additional resource to release leadership time to the project.
Insufficient expertise to deliver a comprehensive agreement	<p>Engage early with LA legal teams and existing external advisors/consultants.</p> <p>Ensure transition governance (Music Service and Hub) are appropriate to the long-term needs.</p>
Financial risk	<p>TUPE will protect staff, but LAs will need to look at the detail of TUPE, pension arrangements and different contracts.</p> <p>Increase in management team and 1/3 of teaching staff on minimum guaranteed hours contracts increases financial risk. Music Education Grant is currently assured only until March 2023 to meet these costs.</p> <p>Increased back-office costs (business support and systems) costs will increase, though these costs are currently met by each LA separately and do not run at a deficit.</p>

11. Equality Implications

- 11.1. An Equality Impact Assessment has not yet been conducted as the implications for staff and users will be evaluated during the upcoming consultancy project.
- 11.2. However, please note:
 - 11.2.1. There are no planned redundancies resulting from this process.
 - 11.2.2. No service users will be negatively impacted as there are no planned reductions in the Service offer
- 11.3. Furthermore, the proposal seeks to:
 - 11.3.1. Ensure all staff would TUPE to the new organisation, therefore retain their existing terms of employment
 - 11.3.2. Ensure the retention of services for all users in the future
 - 11.3.3. Create an enhanced offer for vulnerable people and those in challenging circumstances

12. Corporate Implications

- 12.1. A reduction in headcount for the Council, with associated reduction in strain on back-office costs.
- 12.2. The consultancy project will determine the TUPE rights of the Service's Agilisys staff

13. Options Considered

- 13.1. Apply for the new round of DfE funding as a single LA Music Service
 - 13.1.1. Very unlikely to be eligible, and if eligible, very unlikely to be successful. Does not benefit from the existing partnership work which improves the universal music offer in North Somerset. Service will most likely need to close.
 - 13.1.2. Redundancy and possible pension strain costs are likely to be in excess of £150k
- 13.2. Proceed with a merged Tri-LA music service, but remain within the LA
 - 13.2.1. Does not meet DfE/ACE vision so weakens our bid to retain funding
 - 13.2.2. Increased risk that a competitor's bid would be successful
 - 13.2.3. Redundancy costs (as a single Service, or merged) plus likelihood of early-retirement pension strain are high
 - 13.2.4. None of the 3 LAs are willing to host the shared service as too high risk. Therefore not a viable option

14. Author:

Simon Lock
Head of North Somerset and South Glos Music Services
Strategic Consultant: B&NES Music Service

15. List of Appendices:

- 1. The National Plan for Music Education (Department for Education, 2011)
- 2. The Power of Music to Change Lives: A National Plan for Music Education (Department for Education, 2022)
- 3. Arts Council England Music Hub Investment Programme (Arts Council England 2022)
- 4. Consultation into the future governance of the Music Services for B&NES, North Somerset and South Gloucestershire (Lock, Thareja, 2022)

16. Background Papers:

Included as appendices

17. Appendices:

1. The National Plan for Music Education (Department for Education, 2011)
https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/180973/DFE-00086-2011.pdf
2. The Power of Music to Change Lives: A National Plan for Music Education (Department for Education, 2022)
[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1086619/The Power of Music to Change Lives.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1086619/The_Power_of_Music_to_Change_Lives.pdf)
3. Arts Council England Music Hub Investment Programme (2022)
<https://www.artscouncil.org.uk/our-open-funds/music-hub-investment-programme>
4. Consultation into the future governance of the Music Services for B&NES, North Somerset and South Gloucestershire (Lock, Thareja, 2022)
www.wema.org.uk/download/wema_report1.pdf

Children and Young People's Services Policy and Scrutiny Panel

Work Programme October 2022

(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.

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 since Last Panel meeting	Contact
CYPS Working Group – Careleavers Not in Education, Employment or Training	This group involves building on the work with partners around North Somerset Care Leavers who are not in education, employment or training	The Working Group focusses on understanding the barriers along with the opportunities . The Group to construct an appreciative enquiry sort of approach, bringing in the learning from across council services as well as partner agencies and the Corporate Parenting Panel	Final meeting 14 October 2022	<p><u>9 June 2022</u> Discussed were: Future Careers Education Support; the RESET programme; mentoring.</p> <p><u>8 September 2022</u> Discussed were: Junction 21's mentoring support for care leavers; Young People's Voice survey; capturing the needs of young people using Young People's Room at the TH.</p>	
CYPS Working Group – SEND Improvement	The working group to identify and recommend further effective delivery of the Council SEND Improvement plan in relation to the	Scrutinise parents and carers experiences with SEND services in North Somerset and their partners.	Next meeting 1 November 2022	<p><u>6 September 2022</u> Updates on previously identified actions; feedback on the visit to Nailsea School.</p>	Pip Hesketh

Plan (Formerly the Accelerated Progress Plan working group)	experiences of Parents and Carers.				
CYPS Working Group – Front Door	To hear from partner agency representatives			<u>Date of Next meeting</u> <u>TBA</u> Gain the voice of service users eg schools children centres, social workers, police Families	Becky Hopkins
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 Note: 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 Ongoing - to meet as required. Regular reporting to Panel	<u>20 September 2022</u> Discussed were: updates on the Education Commissioning Strategy Actions; Projections for 2022-27; a new primary school for Weston-super-Mare; the SEND High Needs Capital Consultation	Cllr Wendy Griggs/ Sally Varley

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
Home to School Transport				

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

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 Meeting 1 (16 June 2022) – informal meeting

Report Title	Purpose of Report	Outcomes (Actions)	Progress	Contact
Annual Directorate Statement – Children’s Services	To outline the key commitments of each directorate for the year ahead to show how we will contribute to the Corporate Plan. Annual Directorate Statements are then used to inform Service Strategies, Team Plans and appraisals.	i) That the Panel notes the plans for 2022/23. ii) That the Panel consider the ADS when setting their Work Plan.		Sheila Smith, Director of Children’s Services

Overview of Findings from CAMHS Working Group	To update Scrutiny Panels on Findings from CAMHS Working Group	<p>i) HOSP/CYPS calls on the council, CCG and system partners to work together to begin to close the estimated £700k funding gap and to specifically improve services for eating disorders, learning disabilities, and primary & infant mental health services</p> <p>ii) A progress report be provided to CYPS by no later than October 2022 outlining the steps that have been taken to improve parity from a funding and service delivery model perspective, and where gaps remain, what steps will be taken to improve these.</p>		Councillor Ciarán Cronnelly, Chairman, HOSP, Member CYPS Panel
Resetting the Education Agenda for North Somerset	To update the Panel on work to re-set the education agenda for North Somerset	Members to receive an update on resetting the education agenda in North Somerset.		Pip Hesketh, Assistant Director, Education Partnerships
Community of Practice SEND	To update the Panel on Community of Practice in North Somerset	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue with work programme • Ensure the Community is credited with its work • Build habits and new ways of working • Consider transferability to other areas of work 		<p>Councillor Catherine Gibbons Executive Member, Children's Services & Lifelong Learning</p> <p>Pip Hesketh, Assistant Director, Education Partnerships</p>

North Somerset's Annual Children's Social Care Complaints and Complements Report for 2020/21 Financial Year	The annual report for 2020/21 covers the Council's actions and responses to complaints and complements about Children's Social Care.	That the panel review and consider the content of the Annual Report on Children's Services Complaints and Complements and any further actions		Steve Devine Complaints & Directorate Governance Manager Sally Varley Head of Strategic Planning & Governance
Adoption West Update Report	To update the Panel on Ofsted's inspection of Adoption West.	i) That the Panel notes the outcome of Ofsted's inspection of Adoption West. ii) That the Panel highlights any risks or areas for further scrutiny. iii) That the Panel considers feedback it would wish to give to Adoption West via the current joint scrutiny arrangements.		Sheila Smith, Director of Children's Services Becky Hopkins, Assistant Director, Family Support and Safeguarding
Performance Monitoring 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.	To note the performance information presented in this report and to give comment on both areas for improvement and good performance		Becky Hopkins, Assistant Director, Family Support and Safeguarding

Month 12 Children's Services Budget Monitor	<p>This report summarises and discusses the 2021/22 spend against budget for children's services, highlighting key variances, movements and contextual information.</p> <p>The report also makes reference to the principles and outcomes associated with the setting of the 2022/23 budget and on-going financial risks.</p>	That the Panel notes the 2021/22 final spend against budget for children's services and the risks and opportunities associated with the medium-term position.	<p>Sindy Dube, Principal Accountant (Children's Services)</p> <p>Katherine Sokol (Finance Business Partner, Adults and Childrens Services)</p>
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Panel Meeting 2 (20 October 2022)

Report Title	Purpose of Report	Outcomes (Actions)	Progress	Contact
Children's Improvement Progress		That Members note the progress made in relation to two different service areas: the Front Door and our Care Leavers' Service.		Sheila Smith, Director of Children's Services
Update on CYPS task-and-finish groups		i) That the Panel considers the activities of the CYPS working groups; and ii) That Members take this into account when setting the Panel's Work Plan.		Cllr Wendy Griggs, Chairman CYPS
Schools Capital Programme		That the Panel notes the progress made on schemes to date and comments, if required, on future plans.		Sally Varley, Head of Strategic Planning and Governance

Adoption West Annual Report		That Members note the report and advise officers of any areas about which they would like further information.		Becky Hopkins, Assistant Director, Family Support and Safeguarding
Month 5 Budget Monitor		That the Panel notes the 2022/23 forecast spend against budget for children's services and the risks and opportunities associated with the medium-term position.		Sindy Dube, Principal Accountant (Children's Services)
Annual Complaints and Compliments report 2021-22		That Members review the content of the Annual Report on Children's Services Complaints and Compliments referred to this panel for consideration and any further actions.		Katherine Webb, Interim Directorate Governance and Complaints Manager
Future Governance of the Music Service		i) To recommend approval to the Executive of the proposal that the Music Service form a tri-LA shared service with B&NES and South Gloucestershire. ii) To recommend approval to the Executive of the shared service being established as an independent organisation outside the 3 Councils, taking forward and expanding a broader, universal youth music education offer on behalf of the 3 Councils.		Simon Lock, Head of North Somerset Music & South Glos Music

Panel Meeting 3 (24 February 2023)

Report Title	Purpose of Report	Outcomes (Actions)	Progress	Contact
Annual Safeguarding Report				
Response to CAMHS Working Group	A progress report be provided to CYPS outlining the steps that have been taken to improve parity from a funding and service delivery model perspective, and where gaps remain, what steps will be taken to improve these.			

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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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