

# Public Document Pack

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**Date:** 16 February 2023

Dear Sir or Madam

**The Children and Young People's Services Policy and Scrutiny Panel – Friday, 24 February 2023, 10.00 am –**

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 SSO9)**

To receive and hear any person who wishes to address the Panel on matters which affect the District and fall within the remit of the Panel. The Chairman will select the order of 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. **Apologies for Absence and Notifications for Substitutes**

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

A Member must declare any disclosable pecuniary interest where it relates to any matter being considered at the meeting. A declaration of a disclosable pecuniary interest should indicate the interest and the agenda item to which it relates. A Member is not permitted to participate in this agenda item by law and should immediately leave the meeting before the start of any debate. If the Member leaves the Chamber in respect of a declaration, he or she should ensure that the Chairman is aware of this before he or she leaves to enable their exit from the meeting to be recorded in the minutes in accordance with Standing Order 37.

### 4. **Minutes** (Pages 7 - 10)

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

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

### 6. **Month 9 Report to CYPS Scrutiny February 2023** (Pages 11 - 24)

Report of the Senior/Principal Accountant (Childrens).

### 7. **Improvement in Children's Services 2020 – to date** (Pages 25 - 74)

Report of the Director, Children's Services.

### 8. **Family Hubs and Children's Centres** (Pages 75 - 96)

Report of the Family Wellbeing Locality Team Manager and the Head of Front Door and Family Wellbeing (Early Help).

### 9. **Corporate Parenting** (Pages 97 - 102)

Report of the Director, Children's Services.

## **10. Panel's Work Plan (Pages 103 - 110)**

Report of the Policy and Scrutiny Senior Officer.

### **Exempt Items**

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

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

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

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

### **Mobile phones and other mobile devices**

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

### **Filming and recording of meetings**

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

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

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

### **Emergency Evacuation Procedure**

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

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

Last person out to close the door.

**Do not** stop to collect personal belongings.

**Do not** use the lifts.

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

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

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

## Minutes

of the Meeting of

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

Thursday, 20 October 2022

New Council Chamber - Town Hall

Meeting Commenced: 10.05 am

Meeting Concluded: 12.10 pm

### Councillors:

Wendy Griggs (Chairman)  
Don Davies (Vice-chairman)

Marc Aplin  
Caroline Cherry  
Hugh Gregor  
Ann Harley  
Timothy Snaden

Karin Haverson (substitute)  
Ian Parker (substitute)  
Richard Tucker (substitute)

**Apologies:** Councillors: Ciaran Cronnelly, Mark Crosby, Nicola Holland, Ruth Jacobs, Huw James, Lisa Pilgrim and Richard Westwood.

**Officers in attendance:** Sheila Smith, Becky Hopkins, Sally Varley, Katherine Webb, Simon Lock (Children's Services); Sindy Dube, Brent Cross (Corporate Services).

### CAY Public Discussion (Standing Order SSO 9)

1

None.

### CAY Election of the Vice-Chairman for the 2022-23 municipal year

2

**Resolved:** that the election of Councillor Donald Davies as Vice-chairman at the informal meeting of 10 June 2022 be endorsed.

### CAY Declaration of Disclosable Pecuniary Interest (Standing Order 37)

3

None.

## CAY Minutes

4

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.

**Resolved:** that

i) the minutes of the meeting of 10 March 2022 be approved as a correct record; and that

ii) the notes of the informal meeting of 16 June 2022 be noted.

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

5

None.

## CAY Children's Improvement Progress

6

The Director of Children's Services presented the report, which updated the Panel on the Ofsted visit to the Front Door service, and the follow-up visit by Mark Riddell (the DfE's national advisor on care leavers) to the Care Leavers' Service.

Attention was drawn to the key performance indicators, which compared with statistical neighbours and national comparators. Ofsted had suggested that the practice framework of 'curiosity and openness' was not yet consistent, although the Front Door Service had been on a positive journey since the Ofsted ILACS inspection in March 2020.

Mark Riddell's visit focused on the 13 recommendations for improvement after his last visit, and the report reflected that these had been worked on.

In discussion, the following points were raised (officer responses in italics):

- How many positions were open in the service, and how many agency staff were being employed to fill in the gaps? *There was an increase in the number of vacancies which were being filled in by locum staff. The workforce strategy had been refreshed and a rolling employment campaign had been implemented. Early intervention had been focused on to prevent the need for statutory intervention later on, which ameliorated the staffing need.*
- Was there an update on home-educated children? *The numbers of these were slowly reducing, although there was a concern that these children showed an increase in anxiety post-Covid.*

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

## CAY CYPS task-and-finish groups update

7

The Chairman of the Children and Young People's Policy and Scrutiny Panel presented the report, which updated the Panel on the activities of the three task-and-finish groups set up by the Panel, as well as the activity of the School

Organisation Standing Group. The work of the Care Leavers NEET working group was now complete, and a report would be sent to Members in due course.

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

**CAY Schools Capital Programme**

**8**

The Head of Strategic Planning & Governance updated the Panel on the details of the Basic Need allocations, the Special Provision High Needs grant, and the School Condition allocation announced by the Department for Education in March.

In discussion, Members raised the following: the works required at Banwell School; discussion with the young people on the SEND Council about what they needed from Nurture Groups; that traffic enforcement of the pedestrian crossing outside Banwell School was needed; whether the funding would meet the need for future SEN provision; and projections of demographics for SEND.

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

**CAY Adoption West Annual Report**

**9**

The Assistant Director of Children's Services presented the 2021/22 Annual Report from Adoption West, the Regional Adoption Agency commissioned by six local authorities including North Somerset.

Members then discussed disruptions to adoptions caused by the needs of children and the refresh of the Adoption Protocol that was due later in the year.

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

**CAY Month 5 Children's Services Budget Monitor**

**10**

The report was presented by the Principal Accountant (Children's Services), and focused on the forecast spend against budget, and the risks and opportunities associated with the medium-term position.

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

**CAY North Somerset Annual Children's Social Care Complaints and Compliments report for the 2021-22 financial year**

**11**

The Interim Directorate Governance and Complaints Manager presented the report, which covered the Council's actions and responses to complaints and compliments about Children's Social Care. There had been 43 complaints and 19 compliments in the 2021/22 financial year.

The new Directorate Governance & Complaints Manager would begin in post on 1 November 2022 and would start investigating ways to capture and implement lessons learned as a result of complaints.

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

**CAY 12**     **Future Governance of the Music Service**

The Head of North Somerset and South Gloucestershire Music Services, and Strategic Consultant: B&NES Music Service presented the report which proposed actions to protect the music offer for young people and build a robust music education future for young people in North Somerset. The proposal was for North Somerset Music Service to merge with Bath and North East Somerset and South Gloucestershire Music Services and spin out of the local authority into an independent company.

Discussion by Members focused on the overall funding of Music Services by the government, the new funding model brought in by the Department for Education, and whether the Music Service would continue to be able to reach all those who would benefit from it.

**Concluded:** that

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

**CAY 13**     **The Panel's Work Plan**

The Scrutiny Officer discussed the Panel's work plan and invited discussion with Members for additional items to add to it, as well as picking up any actions from the meeting. Members were reminded that as invitations to the working group meetings were sent to all Panel Members, they could attend these even if they had not previously been involved with a specific working group.

**Concluded:** that the work plan be updated.

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Chairman

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## **North Somerset Council**

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

**DATE OF MEETING: 24<sup>TH</sup> FEBRUARY 2023**

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

**TOWN OR PARISH: ALL**

**OFFICER/MEMBER PRESENTING: FINANCE BUSINESS PARTNER (ADULTS & 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.
- 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 £1,789k overspend (6.3% 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.£700k 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. £1.5m more than the budget and an increase of 19% compared with the previous year.
- 3.4. Despite the increase in spend in 2022/23 when compared with last year, it is worthy of note that when looking at the more medium term history, the forecast spend on placements for 2022/23 is, in fact, still around £930k (9%) less than it was in 2019/20. The MTFP growth for 2023/24 has been revised to be more reflective of the current estimated spend.
- 3.5. 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 SEND tribunal expert legal fees, support for care leavers, childcare legal costs and maintained nurseries.
- 3.6. There are mitigations from reduced staffing costs through staff turnover.
- 3.7. It is also worth noting the budget supporting Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children as an emerging issue. Whilst this is currently not adversely impacting the budget position, there has been a significant increase in the request for age assessments which in turn has heightened service pressure and more young people coming into our care. Plans being developed to ensure there is sufficient and efficient resource to meet this demand.
- 3.8. The main areas of variance are shown in the table below and the key items are discussed in more detail in the following paragraphs.

<b>Budget Area</b>	<b>P9 Variance</b>
	<b>£000</b>
Placements for Children Looked After	1,220
Support Services for Families with Children with Disabilities	695
SEND Tribunal Legal Fees	120
Support for Care Leavers	97
Legal Costs (children looked after)	88
Maintained Nurseries (including salaries)	80
Staffing (excl. Nurseries included above)	(512)
Other	29
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>1,789</b>

- 3.9. The deficit on the Dedicated Schools Grant is estimated to grow from £11.830m at the beginning of the year to £18.224m by the end of the financial year. The main overspend relates to out of area placements and top-up funding. As members will be aware, we are currently in discussion with the Department for Education, as part of the Safety Valve Programme, to ensure that the spend on the DSG is brought back into balance, and this is discussed further in paragraphs 3.46 to 3.47
- 3.10. The fundamental shift in the national economic environment continues to have 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. This means that the council is having 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 Services, 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 - £1,220k Adverse Variance to Budget**

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

<b>Item</b>	<b>£000s</b>
Growth to reflect unit cost inflation	67
Rebase budget to reflect estimated future demand position	(960)
Savings plans	(314)
<b>TOTAL net reduction</b>	<b>(1,207)</b>

- 3.12. Despite the forecast increase in spend in 2022/23 when compared with last year, when looking at the more medium term history, the forecast spend on placements for 2022/23 is still around £930k (9%) less than it was in 2019/20, as illustrated in the table below:

	<b>2019/20</b>	<b>2020/21</b>	<b>2021/22</b>	<b>2022/23 est.</b>	<b>Change from 2019/20</b>	<b>Change from 2019/20</b>
	<b>£000</b>	<b>£000</b>	<b>£000</b>	<b>£000</b>	<b>£000</b>	
In-house	1,310	1,204	1,221	1,128	(181)	-13.8%
IFA	2,782	2,198	1,841	1,847	(936)	-33.6%
Residential	3,672	2,489	2,568	2,965	(707)	-19.3%
Supported Living	1,260	2,116	526	969	(291)	-23.1%
Housing with Support	0	0	412	1,034	1,034	
Other	1,533	1,670	1,512	1,682	149	9.8%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>10,557</b>	<b>9,677</b>	<b>8,080</b>	<b>9,625</b>	<b>(932)</b>	<b>-8.8%</b>
FTE	271.1	271.3	275.9	273.9	2.8	1.0%
Average cost per place	39	36	29	35	(4)	-9.8%

- 3.13. The biggest increase in spend in the current year is in relation to 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.
- 3.14. The other material 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 c. £700k. The forecast factors in a confirmed 25% contribution from the Integrated Care Board (ICB) from the S10 Complex Care pooled budget until middle of August, and a 66% contribution from the Continuing Care panel for the rest of the year.
- 3.15. A more detailed analysis of the activity and unit costs in relation to children's placements is shown at Appendix 2.
- 3.16. The reduction in total number of children looked after continues to be largely sustained. As illustrated in Appendix 3, numbers are averaging 200 in the current year, which is similar to the average in 2021/22. However, there are some signs of increases in recent months and there remains some uncertainty and inherent risk on the numbers increasing further.
- 3.17. 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, and by the MTFP in 2023/24.

### **Disabled Children's Support Packages - £695k Adverse Variance to Budget**

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

<b>Budget Area</b>	<b>Budget</b>	<b>Forecast</b>	<b>Variance</b>	<b>2021/22 Outturn</b>	<b>Year on Year Change</b>
	<b>£000</b>	<b>£000</b>	<b>£000</b>	<b>£000</b>	<b>£000</b>
Complex Care Packages	774	1,396	623	896	500
Direct Payments	576	668	92	580	88
Disabled Children Support (Respite)	226	206	(20)	132	73
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,575</b>	<b>2,269</b>	<b>695</b>	<b>1,607</b>	<b>662</b>

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

<b>Item</b>	<b>£000s</b>
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)
<b>TOTAL net growth</b>	<b>373</b>

- 3.20. The net budget growth has not been sufficient to meet the increased in-year demand, and overall, the forecast overspend against budget is £695k (44%). 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. The setting up of a new contract for this type of care should lead to lower unit costs in the future.
- 3.21. 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 not anticipated to be delivered fully during this year in this budget area, although the work on commissioning more cost-effective care agency rates for community support is progressing.
- 3.22. Further growth has been provided in the 2023/24 MTFP to close the budget gap for the ongoing increased demand.

### **SEND Tribunal Legal Fees - £120k Adverse Variance to Budget**

- 3.23. Expenditure relates to external specialist legal advice provided at tribunal appeals, in relation to Education Health and Care Plans and special school placement decisions. Success at the tribunals usually results in young person being placed in a more cost effective special school placement, and in theory this should generate savings in the Dedicated Schools Grant high needs block, however this is difficult to quantify.

### **Support for Care Leavers - £97k Adverse Variance to Budget**

- 3.24. 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, and expenditure fluctuates in line with demand.

### **Legal Costs (children looked after) - £88k Adverse Variance to Budget**

- 3.25. This relates to unavoidable prevention and support legal costs for looked after children (such as court fees, police disclosure fees, medical reports and parenting assessments).
- 3.26. The overspend is mainly due to the following factors:
- There has been an increase in the number of court cases during the third quarter and the forecast assumes the same levels for the rest of the year.
  - Reduced staffing resource in the team, more cases are being outsourced to external barristers at a higher cost.
  - Children's Social Care are outsourcing the majority of parenting and kinship assessments to agency social workers, due to lack of internal expertise.

### **Maintained Nurseries - £80k Adverse Variance to Budget**

- 3.27. 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.
- 3.28. 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.
- 3.29. This is adversely affecting the level of income being generated and overall the income losses across the nurseries are c.£265k, however this is partly offset by a favourable variance on salaries and other expenditure.

### **MITIGATION**

#### **Staffing - £512k Favourable Variance to Budget (excl. Nurseries included above)**

- 3.30. 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.
- 3.31. The table below provides an overview of agency spend since 2018/19 and shows that whilst there was an initial reduction in the subsequent years, the forecast 2022/23 spend shows a 63% increase (£400k of the spend relates to vacancy cover in Education Partnerships linked to the delayed implementation of the SEND growth, noted in the previous paragraph).

<b>2018/19</b>	<b>2019/20</b>	<b>2020/21</b>	<b>2021/22</b>	<b>2022/23</b>
£846,913	£377,532	£704,287	£739,356	£1,378,401

### **SAVINGS**

- 3.32. 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.
- 3.33. Whilst the S10 Complex Care joint arrangement has already provided some contributions from the ICB (c.125k) and a further £225k is expected from the Continuing Care Panel, both of these contributions relate to one placement and, at this stage further work is required to quantify the ongoing savings overall.

- 3.34. Analysis in relation to the Edge of Care Social Impact Bond (SIB) shows a significant 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

- 3.35. Work on the medium term financial planning for 2023/24 is now in the concluding stages. One of the principles that has continued to be followed is to close the gap between the budget and the projected spend, with the focus on growth being Placements and Disabled Children where demand is most difficult to manage. The planned growth in the budget for placements has recently been reviewed based on revised estimated of future spend.
- 3.36. Savings amounting to £764k are also included in the plan and are largely centred around targeted efficiencies, cost reductions in staffing, and redevelopment of children’s centres into family hubs.

## EDUCATION – DEDICATED SCHOOLS GRANT (£18.224m deficit)

- 3.37. 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.
- 3.38. The DSG is split into four blocks as follows and local authorities may only transfer limited amounts of funding from the schools’ block to other blocks (usually the High Needs Block) with approval from the SSF and the Secretary of State.

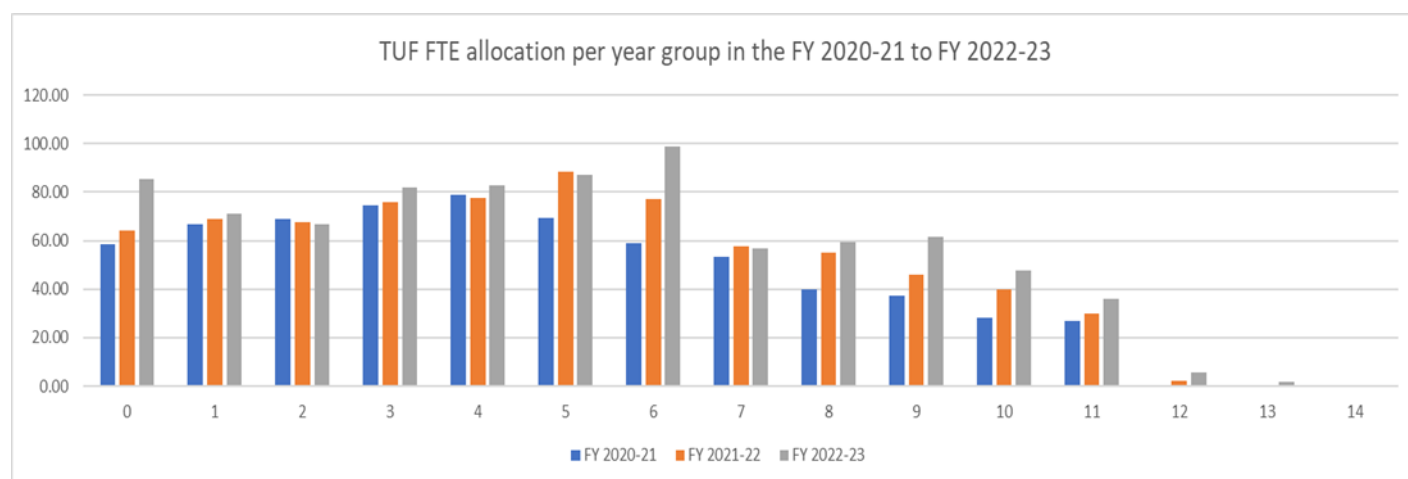
	<b>2022/23</b>
	<b>£</b>
Schools Block	145,657,000
High Needs Block	28,818,000
Early Years Block	11,640,000
Central Services Block	1,670,000
<b>TOTAL DSG</b>	<b>187,785,000</b>

- 3.39. At the end of the 2021/22 financial year there was a deficit of £11.830m and during 2022/23 the deficit is projected to increase to £18.224m. 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
- 3.40. 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.
- 3.41. 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 £0.977m (13%) this year, compared to last. This is largely driven by an increase in the average unit cost from £53,205 to £58,608 (9.3%). In addition, the 2021/22 overspend was £2.446m 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 £0.129m. Overall this has resulted in a projected £3.295m overspend.

	2021/22	2022/23	Change
FTE	141.31	144.72	3.42
Budget (£)	5,061,649	5,190,555	128,906
Spend (£)	7,508,123	8,485,397	977,273
Variance (£)	2,446,474	3,294,842	848,367

3.42. Top-up funding is projected to overspend by £2.996m. The main overspend is mainly in mainstream schools; as illustrated in the chart below this is due to an increase of early years children with TUF moving into reception and there is also an increase in the number of year 6 pupils having TUF.



3.43. 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).

3.44. 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.

3.46 On 17 February 2022, the Council received notification that we are invited to take part in the “safety valve” intervention programme with the DfE in 2022/23. The programme requires local authorities to develop substantial plans for reform to their high needs systems and associated spending, with support and challenge from the DfE, to rapidly place them on a sustainable footing (i.e. in a position to deliver an in-year balanced budget within a “reasonable” period of time).



3.47 The council will be held to account for the reforms it implements and the associated deficit reduction targets via regular reporting to the DfE. In turn, the DfE will support the council with additional funding over a period of time, which will contribute towards “paying off” the historic DSG deficit balance, although this will be contingent on delivery of the reforms. It is envisaged that an agreement will be reached before the end of the financial year. The key elements of the plan are likely to be confirmed as follows:

- i. Restrict Top Up Funding to those with EHCPs
- ii. Increase capacity in mainstream schools
- iii. Reduce use of bespoke packages of support
- iv. Increase capacity in local specialist provision
- v. Review Top Up Funding arrangements for post 16 placements
- vi. Manage increasing demand

## **AUTHORS**

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**Appendix 1 - Children's Services Forecast Year End position  
as of 31<sup>st</sup> December 2022**

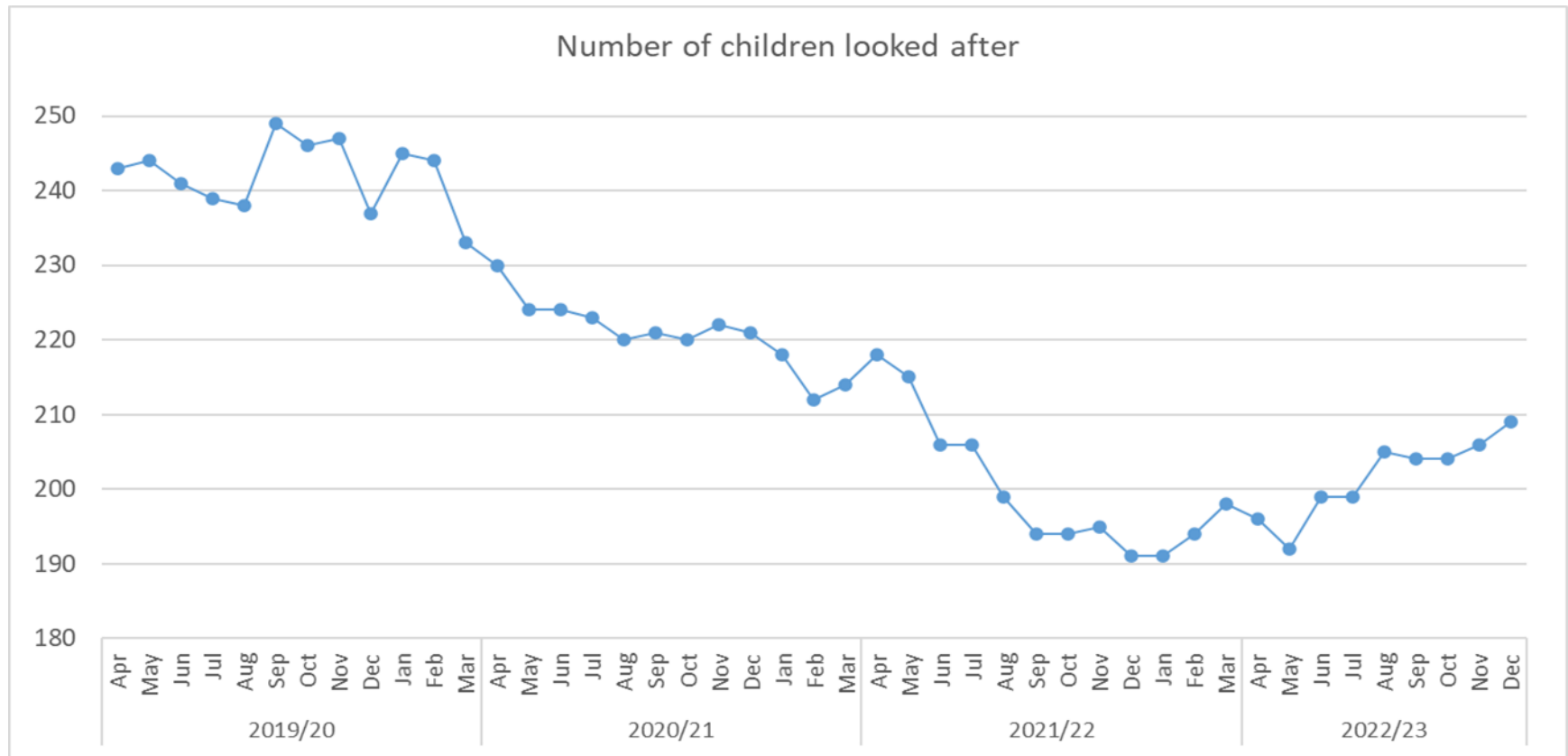
CHILDRENS - CHILDREN & YOUNG PEOPLE	REVISED BUDGET				FORECAST				FORECAST VARIANCE			
	Expenditure £	Income £	Reserves £	Net £	Expenditure £	Income £	Reserves £	Net £	Expenditure £	Income £	Reserves £	Net £
Coporate Parenting	12,674,797	(988,072)	(79,169)	11,607,556	15,541,547	(2,599,990)	(97,503)	12,844,053	2,866,750	(1,611,918)	(18,334)	<b>1,236,497</b>
Front Door	581,977	(20,800)	0	561,177	625,741	(75,800)	0	549,941	43,764	(55,000)	0	<b>(11,236)</b>
Family Wellbeing	11,972,590	(8,998,301)	(299,001)	2,675,288	12,682,190	(9,793,232)	(187,006)	2,701,952	709,600	(794,931)	111,995	<b>26,664</b>
Children With Disabilities	2,368,695	(604,680)	0	1,764,015	2,950,151	(429,694)	(15,933)	2,504,524	581,456	174,986	(15,933)	<b>740,509</b>
Children With Disabilities Occupational Therapy	224,037	0	0	224,037	218,976	0	0	218,976	(5,061)	0	0	<b>(5,061)</b>
Family Support and Safeguarding	3,648,316	(86,110)	(215,000)	3,347,206	3,522,732	(103,725)	(209,156)	3,209,851	(125,584)	(17,615)	5,844	<b>(137,355)</b>
Quality Assurance and Safeguarding	506,633	(56,286)	0	450,347	503,620	(66,286)	8,250	445,584	(3,013)	(10,000)	8,250	<b>(4,763)</b>
Adoption	578,268	(27,000)	0	551,268	508,275	(27,000)	0	481,275	(69,993)	0	0	<b>(69,993)</b>
Social Work Development	313,801	(119,944)	0	193,857	336,138	(148,757)	0	187,381	22,337	(28,813)	0	<b>(6,476)</b>
Contracts and Commissioning	618,880	0	0	618,880	590,100	0	0	590,100	(28,780)	0	0	<b>(28,780)</b>
Youth Justice Service	2,022,944	(1,630,826)	(67,941)	324,177	1,861,892	(1,702,495)	162,172	321,569	(161,052)	(71,669)	230,113	<b>(2,608)</b>
<b>Children's Support and Safeguarding Assistant Director</b>	<b>35,510,938</b>	<b>(12,532,019)</b>	<b>(661,111)</b>	<b>22,317,808</b>	<b>39,341,362</b>	<b>(14,946,979)</b>	<b>(339,176)</b>	<b>24,055,207</b>	<b>3,830,424</b>	<b>(2,414,960)</b>	<b>321,935</b>	<b>1,737,399</b>
Education Inclusion Service and Virtual School	2,455,716	(608,877)	0	1,846,839	2,939,616	(804,072)	(87,242)	2,048,302	483,900	(195,195)	(87,242)	<b>201,463</b>
Music Service and Education Hub	941,476	(941,206)	0	270	1,109,412	(1,147,236)	38,094	270	167,936	(206,030)	38,094	<b>0</b>
Early Years	624,998	(146,037)	0	478,961	553,884	(147,089)	0	406,796	(71,114)	(1,052)	0	<b>(72,165)</b>
Strategic Planning and Governance	1,612,532	(1,004,584)	0	607,949	1,598,964	(1,088,979)	(15,000)	494,986	(13,568)	(84,395)	(15,000)	<b>(112,963)</b>
Education Support Services	1,730,339	(425,530)	0	1,304,809	1,790,438	(481,788)	(10,000)	1,298,650	60,099	(56,258)	(10,000)	<b>(6,159)</b>
<b>Education Partnerships Assistant Director</b>	<b>7,365,061</b>	<b>(3,126,234)</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>4,238,828</b>	<b>7,992,314</b>	<b>(3,669,163)</b>	<b>(74,148)</b>	<b>4,249,004</b>	<b>627,253</b>	<b>(542,929)</b>	<b>(74,148)</b>	<b>10,177</b>
Children's Services Directorate	1,055,939	0	0	1,055,939	1,150,839	0	(57,543)	1,093,296	94,900	0	(57,543)	<b>37,357</b>
CYPs Support Services	838,698	(179,685)	0	659,013	837,937	(174,700)	0	663,237	(761)	4,985	0	<b>4,224</b>
<b>Children's Services Directorate</b>	<b>1,894,637</b>	<b>(179,685)</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1,714,952</b>	<b>1,988,776</b>	<b>(174,700)</b>	<b>(57,543)</b>	<b>1,756,532</b>	<b>94,139</b>	<b>4,985</b>	<b>(57,543)</b>	<b>41,581</b>
<b>CHILDRENS - CHILDREN &amp; YOUNG PEOPLE TOTAL</b>	<b>44,770,636</b>	<b>(15,837,938)</b>	<b>(661,111)</b>	<b>28,271,588</b>	<b>49,322,452</b>	<b>(18,790,842)</b>	<b>(470,867)</b>	<b>30,060,743</b>	<b>4,551,816</b>	<b>(2,952,904)</b>	<b>190,244</b>	<b>1,789,156</b>

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

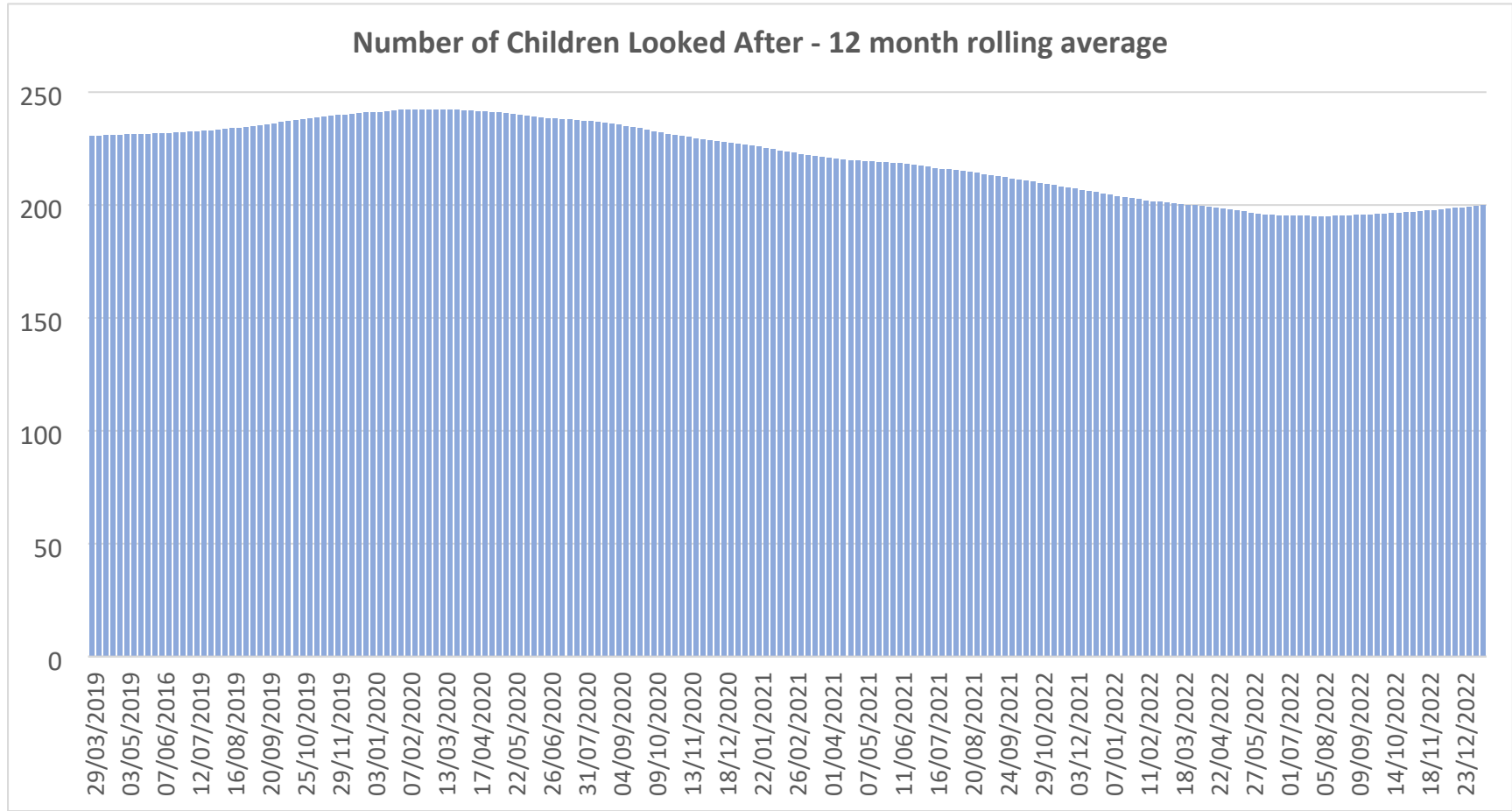
	2021/22 Budget	2021/22 Actuals	2021/22 Variance From Budget	2022/23 Budget	Budget Change 2021/22 to 2022/23	2022/23 Forecast This Period	Change On 2021/22	Variance To Budget
<b>In-house</b>								
- FYEs	87.00	80.17	(6.83)	87.00	0.00	71.16	(9.01)	(15.84)
- Average Unit Cost	18,363	15,229	(3,134)	15,127	(3,236)	15,856	627	729
- <b>TOTAL COST</b>	<b>1,597,607</b>	<b>1,220,926</b>	<b>(376,681)</b>	<b>1,316,044</b>	<b>(281,563)</b>	<b>1,128,301</b>	<b>(92,625)</b>	<b>(187,743)</b>
<b>IFA</b>								
- FYEs	58.00	43.08	(14.92)	42.00	(16.00)	41.47	(1.61)	(0.53)
- Average Unit Cost	42,907	42,726	(181)	45,249	2,342	44,529	1,803	(721)
- <b>TOTAL COST</b>	<b>2,488,604</b>	<b>1,840,632</b>	<b>(647,972)</b>	<b>1,900,473</b>	<b>(588,131)</b>	<b>1,846,608</b>	<b>5,976</b>	<b>(53,865)</b>
<b>Residential</b>								
- FYEs	12.00	12.81	0.81	10.00	(2.00)	11.81	(1.00)	1.81
- Average Unit Cost	207,309	200,457	(6,852)	205,636	(1,673)	251,032	50,575	45,397
- <b>TOTAL COST</b>	<b>2,487,706</b>	<b>2,567,853</b>	<b>80,147</b>	<b>2,056,355</b>	<b>(431,351)</b>	<b>2,964,688</b>	<b>396,835</b>	<b>908,333</b>
<b>Supported Living</b>								
- FYEs	2.27	3.12	0.85	3.50	1.23	5.85	2.73	2.35
- Average Unit Cost	205,000	168,658	(36,342)	184,718	(20,282)	165,675	(2,983)	(19,043)
- <b>TOTAL COST</b>	<b>465,564</b>	<b>526,213</b>	<b>60,649</b>	<b>646,513</b>	<b>180,949</b>	<b>969,198</b>	<b>442,985</b>	<b>322,685</b>
<b>Housing with Support</b>								
- FYEs	20.49	14.25	(6.24)	12.92	(7.57)	9.05	(5.20)	(3.87)
- Average Unit Cost	28,679	28,931	252	28,679	0	114,243	85,312	85,565
- <b>TOTAL COST</b>	<b>587,600</b>	<b>412,263</b>	<b>(175,337)</b>	<b>370,535</b>	<b>(217,065)</b>	<b>1,033,901</b>	<b>621,638</b>	<b>663,366</b>
<b>Other Areas</b>								
- FYEs	153.98	161.00	7.02	171.92	17.94	171.77	10.77	(0.15)
- Average Unit Cost	13,350	9,394	(3,956)	12,300	(1,050)	9,794	400	(2,506)
- <b>TOTAL COST</b>	<b>2,055,642</b>	<b>1,512,470</b>	<b>(543,172)</b>	<b>2,114,600</b>	<b>58,958</b>	<b>1,682,320</b>	<b>169,850</b>	<b>(432,280)</b>
<b>TOTAL</b>								
- FYEs	<b>333.74</b>	<b>314.43</b>	<b>(19.31)</b>	<b>327.34</b>	<b>(6.40)</b>	<b>311.11</b>	<b>(3.32)</b>	<b>(16.23)</b>
- Average Unit Cost	<b>29,013</b>	<b>25,698</b>	<b>(3,315)</b>	<b>25,676</b>	<b>(3,338)</b>	<b>30,938</b>	<b>5,239</b>	<b>5,262</b>
- <b>TOTAL COST</b>	<b>9,682,723</b>	<b>8,080,357</b>	<b>(1,602,366)</b>	<b>8,404,519</b>	<b>(1,278,204)</b>	<b>9,625,016</b>	<b>1,544,659</b>	<b>1,220,497</b>

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 209 at the end December 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 137. In addition the Cost and Volume is based on FYE numbers rather than count

### Appendix 3 – Number of Children Looked After



**Appendix 3a – Number of Looked After Children (12 month rolling average)**



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## North Somerset Council

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

**Date of Meeting:** Friday 24<sup>th</sup> February 2023

**Subject of Report:** Improvement in Children's Services 2020 – to date.

**Town or Parish:** N/A

**Officer/Member Presenting:** Becky Hopkins, Assistant Director, Children's Support and Safeguarding, and Jacqui Scott, Head of Learning and Achievement

**Key Decision:** No

**Reason:** To update the Panel on the directorate's progress since the Inspection of Local Authority Children's Services (ILACS) in 2020 and the Ofsted/CQC SEND Revisit in 2021.

### Recommendations

That Members note:

- the progress to date
- the role of this Panel in scrutinising performance and progress
- areas to consider for this Panel's work plan going forward

### 1. Summary of Report

- 1.1 This comprehensive report provides an overview overview of the strengths, challenges and identified areas for development within the directorate. It highlights what is going well and areas of focused work to continue to strengthen and improve the services offered to children and their families.
- 1.2 It comprises two parts, the first providing information from a Children's Support and Safeguarding perspective and the second focusing on the developments within Education Partnerships.

### 2. Policy

The work of the directorate is informed by the Council's Corporate Plan and government policies, primarily from the Department for Education. The policies are accompanied by legislation and guidance.

### 3. Details

#### 3.1 CHILDREN'S SUPPORT AND SAFEGUARDING

Children's Services data 2022/23 to date

- 4% of our children's population were open to Children's Services at some point in 2022/23 to date.
- In 2022/23 to date there were 7624 contacts from either the public or professionals to Children's Services. This is lower than in 2021/22.
- Of these 7624 contacts 465 (6%) converted to referrals to Children's Social Care. This conversion rate is the same as in 2021/22.
- At the end of December 2021:
  - 463 children had an Early Help offer
  - 303 children were subject to a Child in Need plan
  - 107 children were subject to a Child Protection plan
  - 214 children were in care and of these 28 were unaccompanied asylum seeking children
  - 0 children were adopted between April 2022 and January 2023. There were 22 children with a decision to be placed for adoption and out of these 17 were in adoptive placements. The delay in children being legally adopted is due to the impact of the Somerset judgment. This has now been resolved and adoption planning is being progressed through the courts.
  - 214 young people were care leavers.

### 3.1.1 Summary of Key Achievements

- Parenting programmes in Family Wellbeing are being very attended and receive great feedback.
- 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 (February 2022)
- Launch of Quality Assurance Framework in April 2023
- Launch of a Practice Framework (May 2022) – developed in consultation with the service
- Refreshed Workforce Development Strategy to support recruitment and retention (June 2022)
- Regular communication – staff briefings (ongoing), launch of monthly newsletter (August 2022)
- Positive Feedback from Mark Riddell (National Implementation Advisor for care leavers) on our care leavers offer (September 2022)
- Launch of our Practice Fundamentals (September 2022)
- Launch of the Child Protection Advocacy Service (September 2022)
- Successful Staff Conference focused on 'Relationships Matter' (September 2022)
- Introduction of, and appointment to, a Quality Assurance Officer role (October 2022)
- Permanent leadership team at Assistant Director, Head of Service and Team Manager level (October 2022)
- Increased management capacity in the Corporate Parenting Service – 1 x Fostering Team Manager and 1 x Children in Care Team Manager (agreed November 2022)
- Effective Support Guidance reviewed, refreshed and launched via multi-agency workshops in January/February 2023
- 'Go Live' with the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) at the Front Door (January 2023)
- Lead Senior Practitioner for Child Exploitation and Missing resourced and recruited to in January 2023



- Cost of Living payment to all Foster Carers in December 2022 and proposal to increase in foster carers fees and allowances proposed for 2023.
- Mock Joint Area Targeted Review on exploitation- completed February 2023
- UK Resettlement team strengthened with increase in staff, now having Family Support Working and increase of £500 payment to each host to try and prevent breakdown.
- Youth Offending Service and Prevention Service Partnership (YOS) awarded SEND quality lead status and recognised for providing a quality service to children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND), their families and carers.

### **3.1.2 Areas of Focus and Development**

#### Member and corporate support

- 3.1.3 There has been strong member support for the children's support and safeguarding improvement journey with the leader and the lead member attending the partnership board, the strengthening of the corporate parenting board, which continues to be chaired by the lead member, as a formal committee of the Council and through the scrutiny sub-subgroups.
- 3.1.4 There have been Children and Young People's Scrutiny (CYPS) sub-groups in relation to the re-design and development of the Front Door, including the MASH and children and young people not in education, employment and training (NEET).
- 3.1.5 The Front Door working group met at regular intervals from March 2022, maintaining oversight of progress at the Front Door and this included a visit to the Front Door. Staff found members' interest and scrutiny helpful and it was a positive experience for them to understand the scrutiny role of members and the impact of the Front Door work on members' ward work.
- 3.1.6 The CYPS Care Leavers NEET working group met at six-weekly intervals from March 2022 and looked at understanding the barriers along with the opportunities open to care leavers who are NEET accessing Education, Employment or Training. Actions are in progress via the care leavers forum to understand what types of work experience / apprenticeship / training the YP would like. A themed Corporate Parenting panel was held with young people focusing on NEET. The Next Steps fund has supported a number of care experienced young people to access training and fund equipment needed to support employment.
- 3.1.7 The Corporate Parenting Board has seen the introduction of themed sessions. The focus of the sessions has been agreed with our Young Director in consultation with young people. The first session in July focused on education, training and employment, the session in September focused on accommodation for care leavers and the session in January focused on the physical and emotional and mental health of children in care and care leavers. Following these sessions action plans have been developed and feedback will be provided to our young people at future boards.

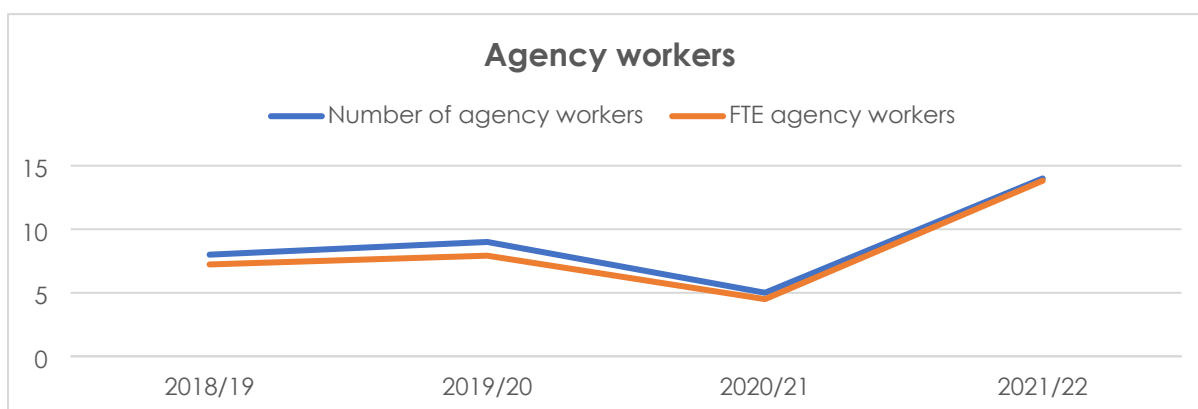
### 3.1.8 Workforce

3.1.9 A permanent senior leadership team has been sustained; an assistant director, 7 heads of service, and a permanent team manager group, giving stable capacity and a shared sense of collective purpose.

3.1.10 The information below is taken from the Department for Education statutory social care workforce return which is an annual snapshot from the 1st of September to the 31st of August. It only looks at those staff who are qualified social workers working in our authority in that time period.

3.1.11 Challenges regarding recruitment and retention of social workers are ongoing and this is a national picture. This does have an impact on workforce morale and ability to maintain practice standards. Current average caseloads are 18/19 which is higher than has previously been the case in North Somerset. A Workforce Development Strategy is in place which includes continued, pro-active recruitment activity to key management, social work and social care practitioner posts

	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22
Number of social workers	92	91	92	78
FTE social workers	82.6	81.40	85.08	74.52
Number of agency workers	8	9	5	14
% Of agency workers (FTE)	9.07%	9.00%	5.02%	15.64%
Turnover rate (FTE)	9.01%	9.82%	11.17%	37.18%

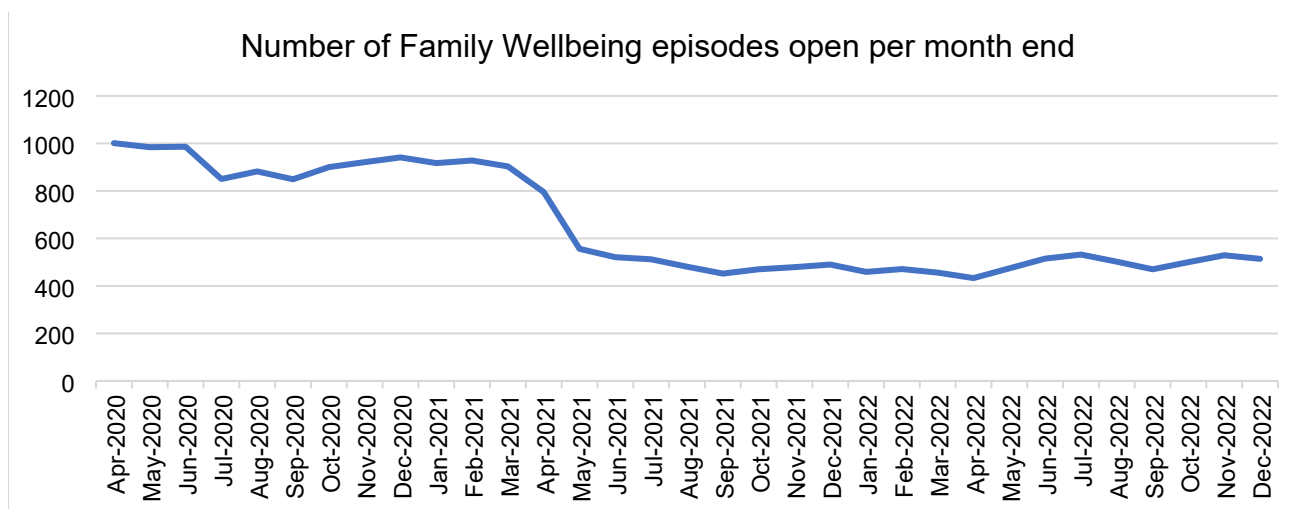


### 3.1.12 Performance

3.1.13 Performance remains relatively stable; demand at the Front Door for social work intervention continues to be low in comparison, in part because of relatively low overall deprivation (despite some pockets of very high deprivation) but also because of a well-developed range of early help services. Re-referrals, open cases and Child Protection plans per 10K children are also low by national comparators and stable over the last two years. The number of children in care is now steadily increasing and the main reason for this is the increasing number of unaccompanied asylum-seeking children.

- 3.1.14 Over the last 6 months the number of contacts made to Front Door has remained stable over in the last 6 months there has been a slight increase in the number of referrals made for Family Wellbeing and social work services. This has also led to an increase in the number of Children in Need and children subject to a Child Protection Plan – see below for details.
- 3.1.15 Our focus on strength and relational-based practice and proportionate intervention has continued during 2022. Work is ongoing to ensure we clearly evidence our understanding of the child’s lived experience, their needs and identified risk in our assessments and clearer analysis of the impact of parental problems on their ability to meet their children’s needs. There remains work to do to ensure that visits to children and their families are focused and purposeful, assessments and plans are sufficiently focussed on the needs and experiences of children and that focus on parent’s/carer’s needs is about what needs to change to enable them to meet the needs of their children.
- 3.1.16 Family Wellbeing (North Somerset Council’s Intensive Early Help Offer)
- 3.1.17 The Family Wellbeing Service offers high-quality, flexible, responsive support empowering positive parenting, building on family strengths. The age range remit for the Family Wellbeing Service extended from 0-5 to 0-19 (25 for SEND) from 2021. The service is working with over 514 children which shows a steady increase, matched by a consistently low rate of referrals to the Family Support and Safeguarding Service.
- 3.1.18 Family support workers are delivering parenting groups such as Mellow, Time to Shine, Non-violent reduction, Parent Plus Programmes for adolescents and children with SEN, working things out direct work with adolescents, Incredible Years, Caring Dads and Domestic Abuse groups.
- 3.1.19 Family support workers are also in the Resettlement Teams, supporting refugees into North Somerset, working within our start to finish programmes helping integrate re-offenders back into society and also offer a drop-in group for advice and support with a multiagency approach. Since January 2022 family support workers have been on a rota to complete the missing children Return Home Interviews for children who are not in care and they will also provide a duty worker on the front door to work with multi-agency colleagues.
- 3.1.20 Children’s Centres offer a variety of groups for parents and children to attend for example muddy boots, construction fun and young parents. Health services and midwifery are co located in all localities along with local libraries Request for rooms and space from multiagency partners and voluntary sector are increasing to deliver services alongside us within our communities. Outreach work continues in partnership with community learning and local community projects to deliver services in hard-to-reach areas.
- 3.1.21 Plans remain underway to develop Family Hubs to coordinate multi-agency early help activity for children, young people and their families; our satellite and linked Family Hubs have been identified.

3.1.22 Demand for the Family Wellbeing Service continues to increase steadily. The higher numbers in the graph below up to May 2021 are due to changes in reporting rather than actual numbers of children.



3.1.23 During November 11% of contacts converted to a new Family Wellbeing episode and we are seeing a month on month increase in referrals to the Family Wellbeing Service.

3.1.24 The Front Door

3.1.25 The Front Door is the first point of contact for the community and professionals to seek advice, support or raise their worries and concerns in respect of a child.

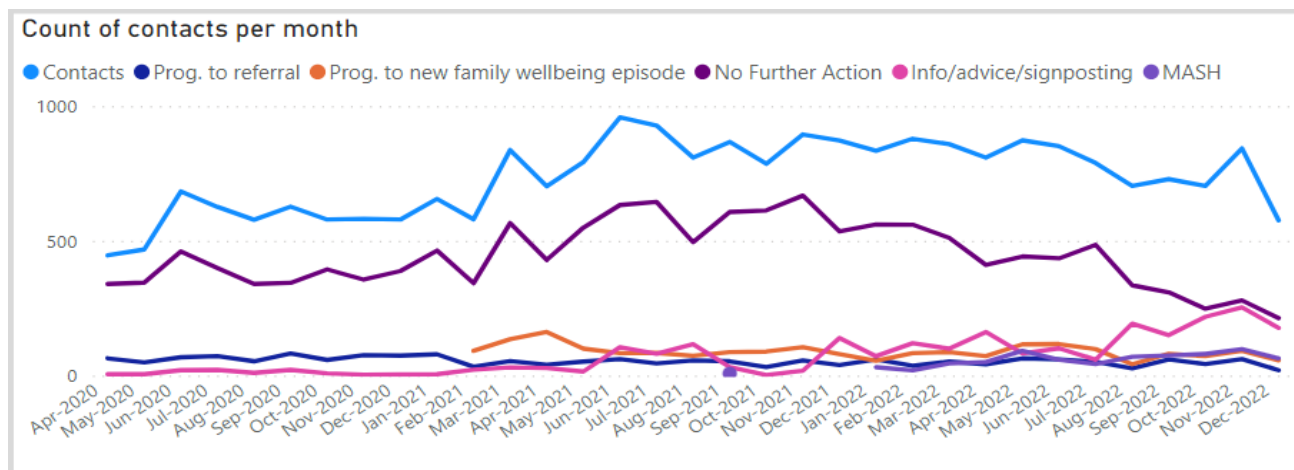
3.1.26 Our aim is to have an integrated, multi-disciplinary service which supports early identification of children’s needs and timely decision making by a range of professionals, ensuring the Right Service and the Right Time and that, wherever possible they stay safe at home, healthy and connected to their local communities.

3.1.27 From August 2020 – July 2022 support was in place from North Tyneside, our sector led improvement partner, to support the redesign of the Front Door. One Front Door was implemented February 2021 following the closure of 21 different access points. Since this time the following has been progressed:

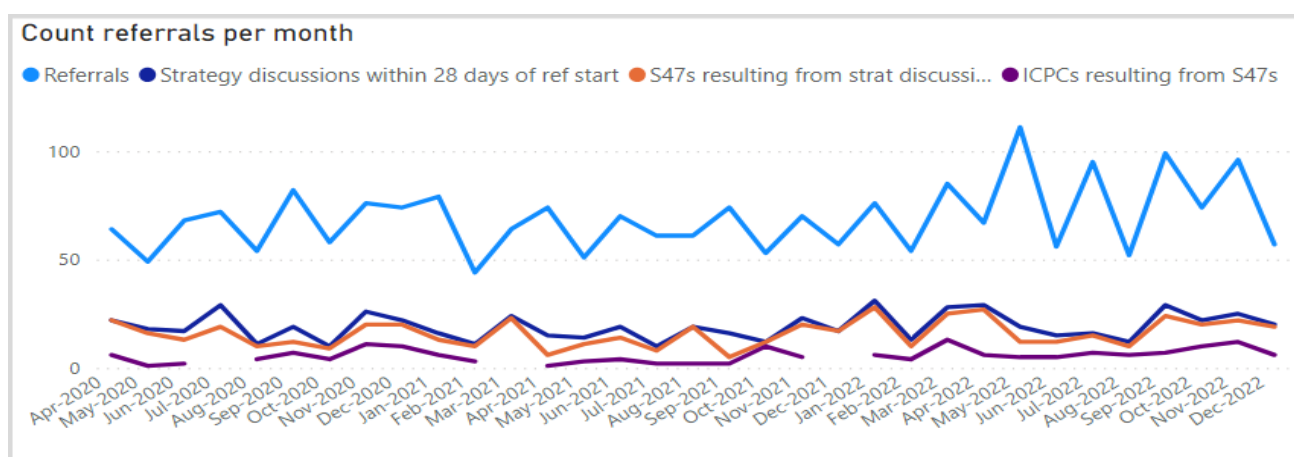
- Relaunch of the professional consultation line
- Request for Support Form designed and launched
- Refresh of the Effective Support for Children, Young People and Families
- Early Help Hub located in the Front Door
- Commitment to confident conversations focused on needs not thresholds
- Improved timeliness from point of contact
- Chairing of strategy meetings on new referrals moved back to the Front Door
- Fortnightly dip reviewing

3.1.28 The Front Door was subject to a Focused Visit from Ofsted in September 2022. This visit was discussed at the Children and Young People’s Scrutiny meeting in November 2022 and recommendations made by Ofsted are included in the attached Service Plan for 2023.

3.1.29 As noted above, the MASH went 'live' in January 2023. This was delayed due to the challenge of ensuring an information sharing agreement was in place which met the requirements of all partners, the need for clear processes and our vision that partners would be physically co-located to support strong working relationships and confident and effective decisions making.



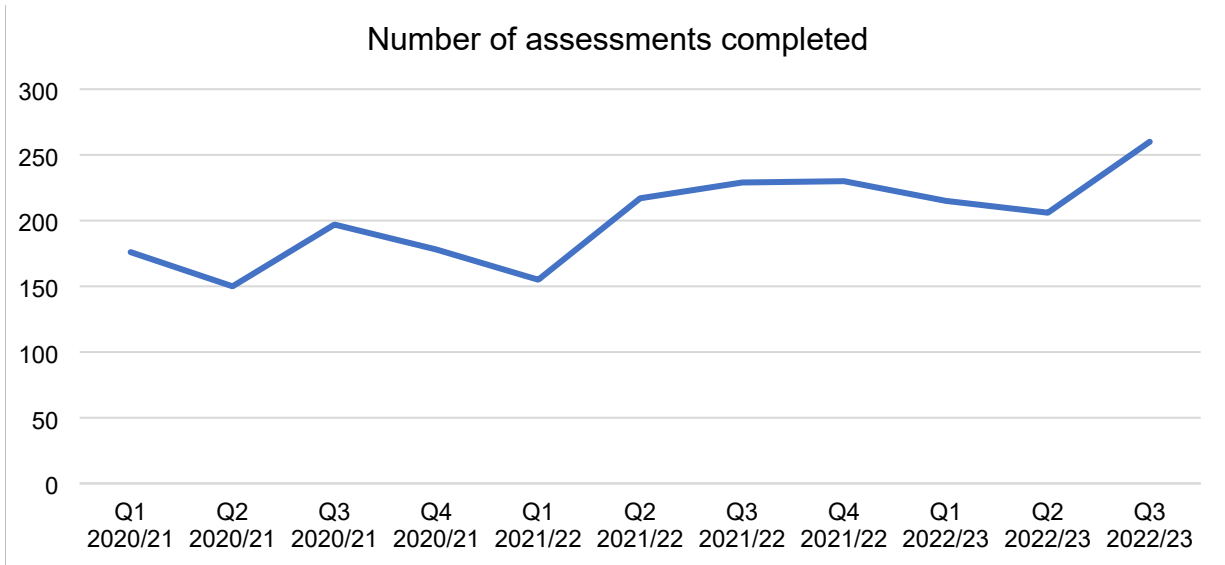
3.1.30 The number of contacts overtime is indicating an overall slight decline. The number of contacts with an outcome of No Further Action is a decreasing trend over the past 6 months and is considered positive and a result of ongoing work at the front door in relation to decision making and how decisions are defined, the use of the consultation line by partners and also due to developments in our performance reporting.



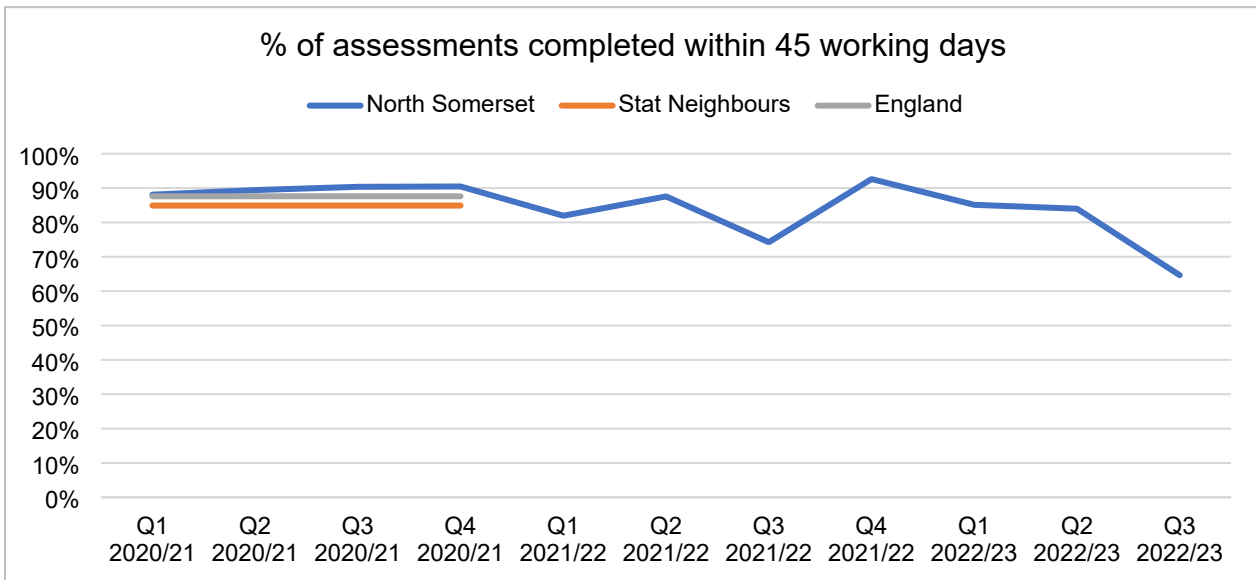
3.1.31 The rate of referrals remains low at 21.9 in comparison to the England average of 41.9 and statutory neighbours average of 35.1. However, in recent months there has been an overall increase in referral starts. Work is underway with partners to ensure we have a shared understanding of levels of need and that contacts are being made at the right time and that our response at the Front Door is right the one, taking into account finding from our quality assurance activity which identifies the need for us to ensure our response is professionally curious and that information is triangulated.

3.1.32 Family Support and Safeguarding

3.1.33 The number of social work assessments completed over the last 6 months has risen. The reason for this increase is due to an increase in the number of Referrals progressing from the Front Door following more robust triangulation of information.

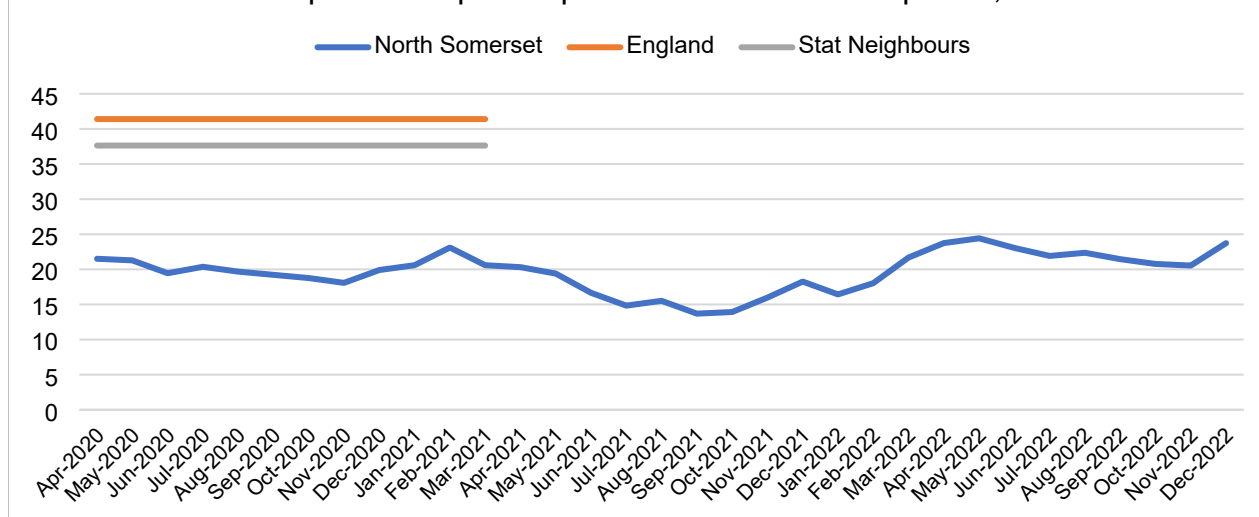


3.1.34 Assessment timeliness dipped in Quarter 3 of 2022. The higher than average caseloads and social work capacity has had an impact on assessment timeliness however, actions are in place to address this, including ensuring that assessments are proportionate to need, and timeliness in January was back up to 80%.



3.1.35 The number of children currently subject to a Child Protection Plan is 105. Overall, we have seen an increase in the number of children on Child Protection Plans since January 2022, when the cohort size was 70. This is likely to be due to practice changes which are referenced above.

### Child protection plans open at month end - rate per 10,000



3.1.36 The number of children subject to repeat Child Protection Plans where they have already been subject to a plan within the last 2 years has reduced to 10% bring North Somerset in line with the national average and below the South West average of 11%. The number of children in North Somerset subject to a second or subsequent Child Protection Plan ever remains high at 45%. This is due to a steep increase in November where there were some large sibling groups. Audit work is being completed in relation to this cohort and will be shared with the service and partners. The main reason for children being made subject to a Child Protection Plan is neglect.

3.1.37 Responding to risk outside the family

3.1.38 We are developing more confident practice when managing extra-familial risk. A key focus and part of our Fundamentals is to view parents as active partners in safeguarding. An Exploitation Needs Assessment was completed in August 2022 to inform the next steps in this area of practice and the following is now in progress via the North Somerset Safeguarding Children Partnership (NSSCP):

- Child Exploitation Strategy and plan
- Mock Joint Targeted Area Inspection
- Refresh of the Multi Agency Child Exploitation Screening Tool
- Development of a Child Exploitation pathway
- Development of contextual safeguarding conference to support inclusive planning and an alternative to disproportionate use of child protection conferencing

3.1.39 Our focus since November 2022 has centred on 4 domains of action:

1. Target the context
2. Deliver a response through the lens of contextual safeguarding
3. Utilise our partnerships
4. Measure success

3.1.40 Funding has been sourced to create a senior practitioner post with a lead for exploitation and recruitment has been successful with an expected start date of

March 2023. This post will be supported by 2 x specialist family support workers and our current missing and exploitation co-ordinator.

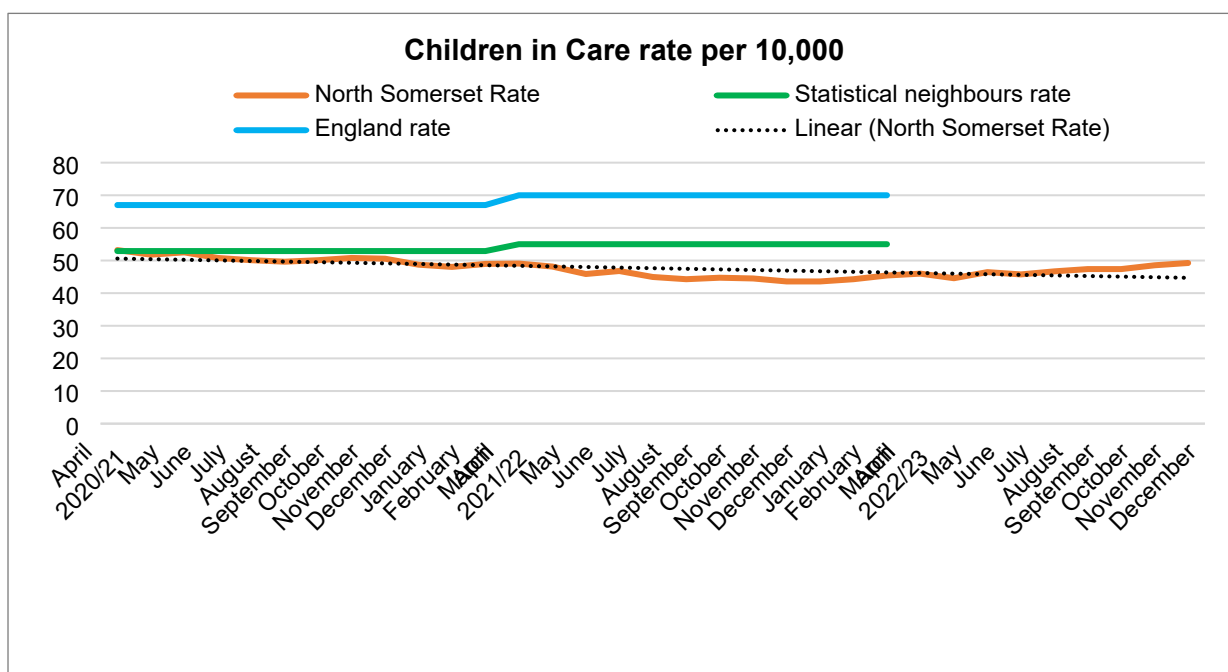
- 3.1.41 The weekly missing meeting form and function has been reviewed with partners to emphasise the focus on the child at the centre, early identification of potential harm, triangulation of information and assurance of outcomes to bring it in line with our Fundamentals and recent feedback from Ofsted during the Focused Visit in September 2022.
- 3.1.42 Since October 2022 return home interview thematic audits have been completed and the findings analysed to influence practice. The findings identified the following areas of practice for further focus:
- Our collective response to children in care who go missing / absent from placement
  - Application of 'language that cares' in the return home interview document
  - All children to be offered a Return Home Interview
  - Emphasis on authorising managers to quality assure before finalising / authorising
  - Collaborative practice review of all children with Child Exploitation hazards – summary report of findings and actions due February 2023
- 3.1.43 Return Home interview practice guidance has been provided and return home interview training via a workshop and feedback from quality assurance activity has been delivered.
- 3.1.44 Alongside working with our workforce we have also been working with partners to encourage a joined-up response via the following:
- Successful Topaz CSE project – in the process of expanding to include Child Criminal Exploitation
  - Partnership day of action June 2022 to raise awareness about exploitation in the community
  - Child Exploitation conference November 2022
  - Research in practice 'Relationship-based family support and child protection', Jan 2023
  - Appreciative Inquiry training Jan 2023
  - Multi agency exploitation training scheduled through 2023
- 3.1.45 Children with Disabilities
- 3.1.46 It was identified that the Children with Disabilities Service (CWD) required further development, in tandem with the SEND improvements and in response to this additional resource via an improvement lead was identified in July 2022. Improvement work is ongoing and to date the following has been achieved:
- Refresh of the Children with Disabilities Resource Panel to support clear and timely decision making
  - Introduction of the use of Widget to communicate with children and families
  - Work started to reshape the CWD service – which will be built around a spectrum of support
  - Time spent with parent carers to strengthen our understanding of what is needed to improve our offer.



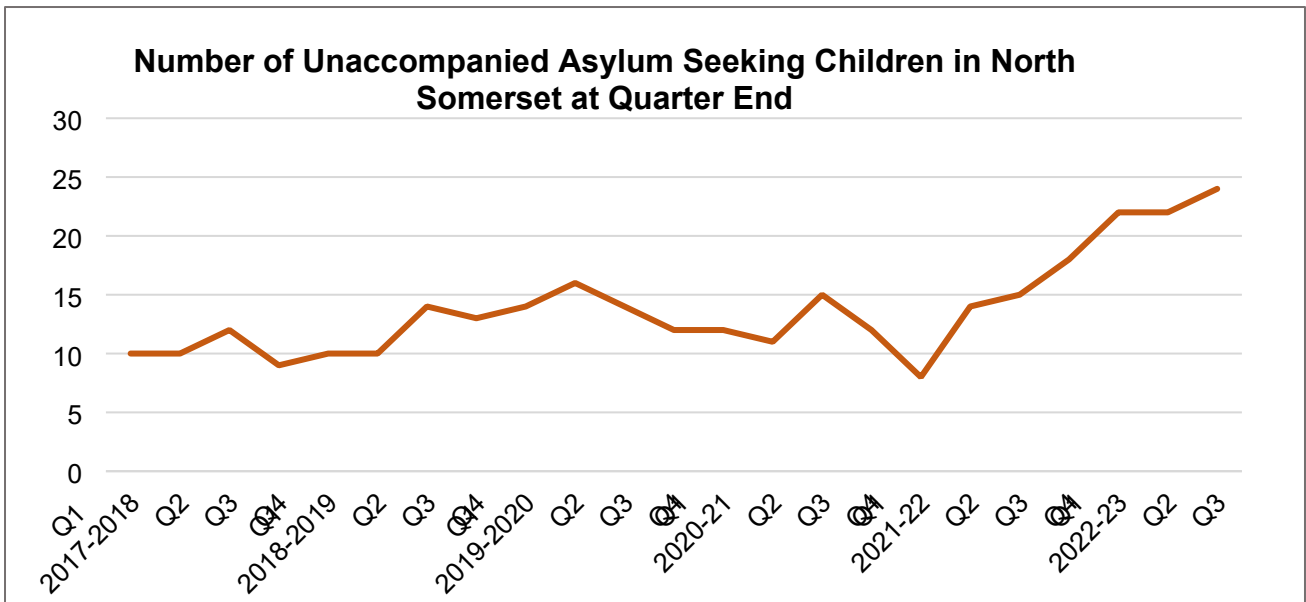
- Key areas of commissioning work started – Short Breaks and Community Support Project to strengthen the offer to Parent Carers
- Quality assurance work in respect of social care contributions to EHC Needs assessments
- A better understanding of 'Preparing for Adulthood' and strengthened the Governance Board
- A better understanding of Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards and joined with adult colleagues in preparation for Liberty Protection Safeguards

### 3.1.47 Corporate Parenting

3.1.48 As above, the number of children in care is 214 with 24 of these being unaccompanied asylum seeking children. Overall our rate for children in care remains low but is steadily increasing.



3.1.49 We have seen a sharper than expected increase in the number of unaccompanied asylum-seeking children (UASC) that we will need to provide care for, either through the agreed National Transfer Scheme and spontaneous arrivals through such routes as Bristol Airport and the four hotels in North Somerset supporting asylum seeking individuals and families. We currently have 28 unaccompanied asylum seeking children in care and 32 care leavers. This is 12% out of the total Children in Care cohort which is higher than the England average of 7% and our statistical neighbours 8%. These young people require placements and an allocated social worker support (under 18 years) and personal assistant and leaving care services (post 18 years) and support to ensure their holistic needs are met.



- 3.1.50 The increasing numbers of asylum-seeking children has increased pressure on both the Children in Care Team and Care Leaver Team. There is insufficient capacity in either team to meet the additional demand, including the need to complete age assessments and there will be an impact on the ability of the Corporate Parenting Service to fulfil their statutory duties towards children and young people in our care and leaving care. Additional resource has been identified to meet immediate pressures and work is underway, including linking with neighbouring authorities, to consider what resources are needed in the medium to long term.
- 3.1.51 The percentage of black and ethnic minority children in care is 20% which is higher to what would be expected as a comparison against the population (School Census January 2022 – 6.6%). If we exclude unaccompanied asylum-seeking children from the cohort, the figure is 12%.
- 3.1.52 Placement sufficiency, as per the national picture, remains a challenge. We are experiencing a significant pressure on placement capacity at both a local and national level. This current paucity of available placements can limit our ability to appropriately match children to carers and can result in children being placed away from the local area and their family and social networks, schools and community support however, our performance in relation to children placed in foster placements (69%) is in line with the national average and children placed with our own foster carers (51%) remains higher than the national average. We are planning a significant recruitment drive in 2023 to increase our numbers of in-house mainstream and specialist foster carers. North Somerset does not currently have any children under the age of 16 placed in unregulated arrangements.
- 3.1.53 At the end of Q3 2022/23, 67% of all Children in Care were placed inside North Somerset (compared to 71% same time last year) and 25% were placed outside local boundary (compared to 26% same time last year). This performance is better than the England averages of 56% placed inside LA boundary and 41% placed outside. This excludes children placed for adoption.
- 3.1.54 At the end of January 2023, 19% of our children in care experienced 3 or more placement moves during the last 12 months. This is an increase on previous years

and of the 41 children in this cohort, 8 are unaccompanied asylum-seeking children and it can often be more difficult to identify suitable placements for this group. Further work is required to understand this increase.

- 3.1.55 We continue to perform reasonably well in terms of long-term stability of placements. At the end of January 2023, our long-term stability indicator was 70%. This is a decrease from 70% in 2022 although remains in line with the national average.
- 3.1.56 The end of 2022 saw the launch of the 4th Mockingbird constellation. This foster care model is a real strength in our fostering offer in North Somerset.
- 3.1.57 The development of 16+ Supported and Independent Living schemes within the area remains successful in meeting demand and providing best value.
- 3.1.58 The percentage of 19-21 year-old care leavers who were in education, employment and/or training (EET) in North Somerset at the end of Q3 2022/23 was 50%. The figure has improved compared to Q2, however it is currently lower than the same time last year at 59% and also lower than our statistical neighbours at 55% and England average at 55%. Of the care leavers who are NEET, the main reasons are illness and pregnancy.
- 3.1.59 The percentage of 19-21 year-old care leavers who were in suitable accommodation at the end of Q3 2022/23 in North Somerset was 97% which is better than when compared to the same time last year at 90% and above the England average of 88% and statistical neighbours at 89%.
- 3.1.60 Quality Assurance
- 3.1.61 A new Quality Assurance Framework was launched in April 2022. This included:
- the introduction of a range of new and revised QA activity
  - increasing our pool of reviewers
  - offering training and support to build reviewer confidence and support consistency
  - improving our reporting mechanisms via Power-Bi
  - building the majority of our review tools into the child's electronic record
  - being relentless in our determination to develop our QA system to inform and support practice improvements for our children and young people
- 3.1.62 To support quality assurance development sector led improvement support is being provided by Wiltshire.
- 3.1.63 Please refer to attached Quality Assurance report dated January 2023.
- 3.1.64 Youth Justice Service
- 3.1.65 Our Youth Justice Service (YJS) is an integral part of Children's Services. Since the Probation Inspectorate Inspection in September 2020 the Management Board has been revitalised in terms of membership and ownership following a period of turnover in agencies' representatives and the challenges posed to each agency through the impact of the pandemic.

- 3.1.66 The YJS has a range of services and teams: Court and Community Supervision team, Avon & Somerset Enhanced Case Management Project, Substance Advice Service, Junction 21 Mentoring and Advocacy Service; Youth Inclusion Support Project, and the Education Diversion Project (September 2021 – March 22 pilot). The latter is already evidencing significant traction and engagement with academies. The YJS, since November 2021, has had the benefit of a CCG commissioned service from Sirona Care and Health of a Speech and Language Therapist for two days a week which is in response to the significant needs of many children and young people known to the YJS.
- 3.1.67 Challenges
- 3.1.68 Workforce capacity needs to improve to ensure the capacity required to practice in a relational based way and to provide the interventions which families need to make lasting changes.
- 3.1.69 While there has been considerable progress made, ongoing work is still needed to ensure our Practice Framework is well embedded and consistently applied. We know that children's plans need to be achievable and outcome-focused and taken forward more authoritatively by social workers in a high support and high challenge environment. Assessments and plans need to consistently reflect and be informed by the child's lived experience and their voice.
- 3.1.70 We need to continue to support team managers to ensure that their supervision and management oversight evidences reflection, clear direction of travel and responsive planning. Further work has been undertaken on the supervision form to ensure that this supports managers to reflect the conversations they have with their practitioners.
- 3.1.71 Progress has been made in relation to Quality Assurance, with a new framework launched in April 2022 and significant Quality Assurance activity underway. Further work is needed to ensure that learning from quality assurance is taken back into the service and practice changes as a result to ensure a positive impact for children and their families. Please see attached Quality Assurance report.
- 3.1.72 Ongoing work is required in relation to placement sufficiency to ensure, where possible, placement choice and suitable provision for children who need to come into our care.
- 3.1.73 Next Steps**
- 3.1.74 In summary our priorities for 2023 are:
- Continue to develop a strong and confident leadership team and workforce
  - Maintain a relentless focus on continuous practice improvement – embed our Practice Fundamentals – Relationships Matter, Seeing the child, Hearing the child, Responding to the child, Outcomes and Impact and Language that Cares
  - Embed our Practice Framework including the consistent use of Signs of Safety as part of this with a common use of language
  - Progress our plans for a Family Hub model and a strengthened Early Help Strategy
  - Continue to develop our multi-agency Front Door

- Develop an intensive family support team to provide intensive short-term support, supporting children to remain within their families. The expected start date is May 2023
- Embed the Quality Assurance Framework and processes including routine arrangements at the Front Door and 'closing the loop' activity.
- Strengthen our focus on family and friends' networks as part of our permanence planning for children
- 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 inform and support our next steps
- Strengthen the strategic and operational partnership response to risk outside the home and children being exploited including the development of contextual conferences
- Think permanence - ensure pro-active, concurrent permanence planning for children at the earliest opportunity
- Ensure we have sufficient placement and accommodation options for our children in care and care leavers.
- Continue to work with education and health colleagues on the SEND and school inclusion agenda.

## **3.2. EDUCATION PARTNERSHIPS**

### **3.2.1 SEND Improvement Task and Finish Group**

3.2.2 A Scrutiny Task and Finish Group was established to monitor the progress of the Council's work to provide for children's special educational needs and disabilities (SEND). The group adopted a broad remit of support and challenge following the issue of a Written Statement of Action following inspection of the Local Area SEND Partnership by Ofsted and CQC in March 2018 and a subsequent SEND Improvement Notice issued in November 2022 following a revisit by inspectors in May 2021.

3.2.3 The Task and Finish Group has actively monitored the service improvement and progress against the original action plan 'Accelerated Action Plan' which was superseded by the SEND Improvement Plan following the issue of the Improvement Notice.

3.2.4 During the term of the Task and Finish Group, members have been keen to understand the lived experience of children, young people and their families and have visited schools to engage in direct conversation with them. Findings from the visits have been fed back to officers to help improve performance and parents, carers and schools were very reassured that Members had taken such interest in their experiences.

3.2.5 During the period of enhanced scrutiny, there have been some significant improvements in performance. These include:

- Where a previous administration had stripped out £2.6m of resources from Local Authority Education and Early Years services, £1m was re-invested into the team to increase leadership and team capacity, particularly in the SEND team

- Two areas of ‘serious weakness’ within the SEND Improvement Plan have been ‘stepped down’ from the Improvement Notice by DfE following evidence of significant improvement. These areas are the strategic leadership and management of SEND and the active use of a shared comprehensive data set.
- The DfE also noted that there was meaningful improvement in the other areas of the SEND Improvement Plan.
- The number of children with EHCPs attending mainstream school has risen from 28% to 36%.
- The number of permanent exclusions from school of children with EHCPs has reduced to 1 child in 2020/21 and 2021/22, where there had been 10 and 11 in the previous two years
- 5 Nurture Groups have been created in schools to support children with unmet social, emotional and mental health needs
- All schools have received Council funded training in Quality First Teaching – Every Teacher a Teacher of SEND
- All school Governors have received Council funded training in their responsibilities for SEND
- All schools have received an analysis of their own performance in SEND to allow them to set improvement targets
- The progress and attainment of children with SEND has improved for the first time in several years in a number of areas and North Somerset children on SEND Support are now performing ore highly than their peers nationally and regionally
- New measures of Quality Assurance have been introduced and the quality of Education Health and Care Plans has increased significantly.
- A SEND Children and Young People’s Council was established with membership drawn from across North Somerset Schools

### **3.2.6 A forward look**

3.2.7 Following the agreement in 2022 to re-invest some of the capacity in Education and Early Years that was previously removed, much of the work until now has created the foundations on which strong confident and expert SEND services can be built.

3.2.8 Like most other Councils, North Somerset has experienced significant increases in demand in special educational needs and budgets have suffered significant and increasing over expenditure as a result. The Council was invited to take part in a DfE programme called Safety Valve in 2022 through which large High Needs Block deficits can be written off by the Department to recalibrate expenditure where they are confident that the Council has robust deliverable plan in place to maintain a balanced book within the High Needs Block. Senior Leaders from the Council have conducted a successful negotiation with the DfE over several months and our proposals are now with Government Ministers. If approved, the DfE will contribute over £21m to the Councils deficit in the High Needs Block and £2.9m in capital funding to support our expanded SEND provision.

3.2.9 From September 2023, the Council will commence a 3-year programme of increasing capacity in mainstream schools, creating 8 additional Nurture Groups and 5 specialist Resource Bases. In February 2024, the Baytree 2 site will open in Clevedon, creating the capacity for a further 65 local school places for children and young people with Profound and Multiple Learning Difficulties. In September 2024, the Lime Hills SEMH school is due t open its doors in new accommodation

to 65 local children who might otherwise need to be placed out of area. We are currently working with the VLC to expand its offer to support more children with social emotional and mental health needs and those who have medical needs which prevent them attending school full time.

- 3.2.10 The SEND Improvement Notice will remain with North Somerset for an 18-month period from the date of issue. In parallel, the Council is taking the lead role in the Local Area Partnership to prepare for inspection under the new SEND Inspection Framework.

#### **4. Consultation**

This is a report of the directorate's progress, there are no decisions requested.

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

None.

#### **Costs**

None.

#### **Funding**

N/A.

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

All the work outlined above is undertaken in the context of a range of legislation, regulations and guidance from the Department for Education, and research.

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

There are no specific actions proposed in this report which could impact the environment over and above those which are known. The directorate's accommodation needs are being considered as part of the Accommodation Strategy and the other significant area is travel where there is ongoing work to reduce car travel unless in electric vehicles and to use public transport, including trains for longer distances.

#### **8. Risk Management**

Risk is considered at all levels of the directorate, mitigations identified and logged, and shared with the Corporate Leadership Team and elected members.

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

None.

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

None.

#### **11. Options Considered**

N/A.

#### **Authors:**

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**Appendices:**

North Somerset Children's Family Support and Safeguarding Strategic Plan.

Quality Assurance Report January 2023.

Letter from DfE re progress on Improvement Notice.

**Background Papers:**



## Children’s Support and Safeguarding Service Plan – Jan 2023 to December 2023

<b>Focus:</b> Family Support and Safeguarding	
<b>Fundamental 1 – Seeing and Hearing</b>	
<b>Actions needed to address this priority:</b>	<b>Who is leading on these actions, and by when?</b>
<p>1. Introduce a guidance document clarifying the different routes feedback is sought from children and their families and a plan to support the delivery</p> <p>2. Ensure that feedback from children, their families and involved professionals informs our practice development</p> <p>3. Launch revised Practice Standards which incorporate our Practice Fundamentals</p> <p>4. Strengthen our practice, ensuring that we triangulate information and are professionally curious in our interactions with children, their families and professionals (<a href="#">Focused Visit September 2022</a>).</p> <p>5. Strengthen all council and partnership understanding of Corporate Parenting responsibilities and their role as ‘corporate parents’ to offer practical support and identifiable actions that enable sustainable improved outcomes and life chances for</p>	<p>1. Head of QA (March 2023)</p> <p>2. All of CSLT (March 2023)</p> <p>3. Service Improvement Lead and PSW (February 2023)</p> <p>4. All of CSLT (December 2023)</p> <p>5. Assistant Director, Young Director and Head of Corporate Parenting (June 2023)</p>

<p>children and young people including employment, education, training and volunteering opportunities (ILACS March 2020)</p> <p>6. Produce a clear whole service Commissioning Plan outlining our commissioning intentions and commissioned services including contract review arrangements.</p> <p>7. Set out a clear Commissioning Plan which strengthens a spectrum of support through Short Breaks and Community Support</p> <p>8. Increase connection and networking with children, young people, parents and carers – building a co-productive relationship</p>	<p>6. Head of Commissioning (January 2023)</p> <p>7. Head of Commissioning (January 2023)</p> <p>8. All of CSLT (December 2023)</p>
<p>Progress update (date):</p>	<p>Any further/additional actions needed for next period:</p>
<p>How will we know when our activity has had an impact?</p>	

Children and young people benefit from timely and robust assessment of their needs and any identified risks. This results in the right intervention/support being provided at the right time and by the right services.

Children and their families are not subjected to unnecessary assessments and processes.

Children and their families know where to seek support.

Children and young people experience that their voices are heard and their experiences are understood.

Children and young people are involved in the co-production of practice developments and this has a positive impact on their lives.

**Focus: Family Support and Safeguarding**

**Fundamental 2 – Understanding**

Actions needed to address this priority:

Who is leading on this action, and by when?

1. Go Live with a Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub at the Front Door ([ILACS March 20202](#) and [Focused Visit September 2022](#))

1. Head of Service Front Door and Head of Service Improvement Lead (January 2023)

2. Develop the quality and depth of social work practice at the Front Door when children are in complex or chronic need ([Focused Visit September 2022](#))

2. Head of Service Front Door (April 2023)

3. Develop family led practice with a focus on robustly exploring and reviewing family network options to support or as an alternative to care

3. PSW and all Heads of Service (April 2023)

<p>4. Develop a strategy in relation to Preparing for Adulthood to ensure plans are in place at the right time and young people are well supported through this transition</p> <p>5. Ensure every child open to our services has an up-to-date assessment of need in line with practice standards</p> <p>6. Establish a clear offer for Parent Carers</p>	<p>4. Head of Service Improvement Lead (April 2023)</p> <p>5. All of CSLT</p> <p>6. Head of Service Improvement Lead</p>
<p>Progress update (date):</p>	<p>Any further/additional actions needed for next period:</p>
<p>Front Door Action Plan in place – refer to plan for details</p>	
<p>How will we know when our activity has had an impact?</p>	
<p>The lived experiences of children and their wishes and feelings are well understood and inform assessment and planning.</p> <p>Children and young people benefit from timely and robust assessment of their needs and any identified risks. This results in the right intervention/support being provided at the right time and by the right services.</p> <p>Children and their families will not be subjected to unnecessary assessments and processes.</p> <p>Children and their families know where to seek support.</p> <p>Young people experience seamless transitions and have transition plans in place which clearly identify what needs to happen based on assessed need.</p>	

**Focus:** Family Support and Safeguarding

**Fundamental 3 – Responding**

Actions needed to address this priority:

Who is leading on this action, and by when?

1. Continue to develop family hubs to coordinate multi-agency Early Help activity for children and their families and to ensure the most effective use of resources in the community

1. Head of Service Front Door (December 2023)

2. Strengthen our understanding of, and response to, children at risk of exploitation across the partnership to include introduction of a Lead Social Worker for exploitation ([ILACS March 2020 and Focused Visit September 2022](#))

2. PSW (June 2023)

3. Exploitation Strategy, informed by the Needs Assessment, to be written and launched across the partnership

3. PSW with the Exploitation Working Group (February 2023)

4. Strengthen engagement with our Children in Care and Care Leaver’s Council to inform service developments

4. Young Director, Assistant Director and Head of Corporate Parenting (March 2023)

5. Strengthen and publish our offer to care experienced young people. To include recommendations from ‘Sky’s the Limit’ report

5. Head of Corporate Parenting and Young Director (March 2023)

6. Refresh our Permanence Strategy; to include the introduction of permanence planning meetings to ensure every child who needs one has a clear permanence plan and that consideration of all permanence options is clearly evidenced

6. Heads of Family Support and Safeguarding and Corporate Parenting (April 2023)

7. Review Sufficiency Strategy to include family link scheme, professional foster carers, parent and child foster carers and crisis/assessment response for children with complex needs

7. Heads of Service Commissioning and Corporate Parenting

<p>8. Complete proposal for an in-house flexible and agile service to support children to remain within their families and implement</p> <p>9. Deliver on the Youth Justice Plan</p> <p>10. Continue to improve the quality of plans across the service to ensure they address: the child’s needs and the identified worries; they are clear, strength based and achievable; outcome focused; reflect the views and wishes of the child; and, back up plans are in place. Systems work to support (<a href="#">ILACS March 2020 point 8 and Focused Visit Dec 2021</a>)</p> <p>11. Work with the ICB and health providers to ensure children in care have timely access to health assessments, dental appointments and emotional and mental health support</p> <p>12. Prepare for the introduction of Liberty Protection Safeguards by ensuring a firm understanding of Mental Capacity Act and Deprivation of Liberty</p>	<p>8. Head of Service Front Door (March 2023)</p> <p>9. Head of Service Youth Offending (December 2023)</p> <p>10. All of CSLT (July 2023)</p> <p>11. Assistant Director and Head of Corporate Parenting</p> <p>12. Head of Service Improvement Lead</p>
<p>Progress update (date):</p>	<p>Any further/additional actions needed for next period:</p>
<p>Plan to improve practice in relation to exploitation and missing in place in development – see plan</p> <p>Permanence Action Plan in place – see plan</p> <p>Permanence planning workshops held with teams</p> <p>Permanence tracking meetings are being reviewed</p>	

Youth Justice Plan in place and approved by the Youth Justice Board and the Children and Young People's Partnership Board

How will we know when our activity has had an impact?

Children and young people experience a responsive service.

Children and young people benefit from timely and robust assessment of their needs and any identified risks. This results in the right intervention/support being provided at the right time and by the right services.

Children and their families are not subjected to unnecessary assessments and processes.

Children and their families know where to seek support.

Children and young people are supported, the risks to them reduced and they feel safer in their communities as a result of proactive disruption activity and the development of trusted relationships to enable positive engagement.

Children and young people benefit from purposeful planning, informed by creative direct work, which supports more children and young people to remain safely within their families, or secures permanence for them in a timely manner where this is not possible (e.g. through special guardianship or adoption).

Children in care, care leavers and our vulnerable children all benefit from a North Somerset wide focus on 'corporate parenting' to improve their outcomes (e.g. health, education and housing).

Fundamental 4 – Outcomes	
Actions needed to address this priority:	Who is leading on this action, and by when?
1. Review and update the Learning and Development offer for 2023/24 to align with our Practice Framework, including a programme of Continuous Practice Development sessions	1. PSW (January 2023)
2. Embed the Quality Assurance Framework ensuring that the learning loop is closed and impact/improvement can be evidenced ( <a href="#">ILACS March 2020</a> , <a href="#">Focused Visit Dec 2021</a> and <a href="#">Focused Visit September 2022</a> )	2. Head of Service Quality Assurance (December 2023)
3. Respond consistently to QA practice themes with focus and purpose i.e. staff bulletins, CPD and broader Learning and Development.	3. PSW and Head of Service Quality Assurance (monthly)
4. Introduce and sustain responsive dip review activity in teams ( <a href="#">Focused Visit 2022</a> )	4. All of CSLT (monthly)
5. Review the Quality Assurance and Performance Meeting functions and impact	5. Assistant Director, Head of Quality Assurance and PSW (February 2023)
6. Provide consistently high-quality supervision which is focussed on the child's lived experience and their needs, the impact of interventions and identifying outcome focused actions and plans ( <a href="#">ILACS March 2020 recommendation 3</a> and <a href="#">Focused Visit Dec 2021</a> )	6. All of CSLT (monthly)



<p>7. Continue to develop high quality performance management information and use to inform practice developments (ILACS March 2020)</p> <p>8. System improvement work to continue via the Practice Decisions meeting and Systems Governance Board</p> <p>9. Increase the quality and improve the timeliness of Social Care contributions to Education, Health and Care needs assessments</p>	<p>7. All Heads of Service and Business Intelligence (December 2023)</p> <p>8. PSW</p> <p>9. Head of Service Improvement Lead</p>
<p>Progress update (date):</p>	<p>Any further/additional actions needed for next period:</p>
<p>How will we know when our activity has had an impact?</p>	
<p>Children and their families receive effective, impactful interventions and support which are focussed on assessed needs and improve outcomes.</p> <p>Children and young people benefit from timely, inclusive, transparent decision making and achieve improved sustainable outcomes which is supported and enabled by practitioners who receive regular high-quality reflective supervision and management support.</p>	
<p><b>Focus:</b> Family Support and Safeguarding</p>	
<p><b>Fundamental 5 – Relationships</b></p>	
<p>Actions needed to address this priority:</p>	<p>Who is leading on this action, and by when?</p>

<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Strengthen a skilled and stable workforce via a robust Workforce Development Strategy</li> <li>2. Deliver a bespoke development programme for the leadership team</li> <li>3. Monthly leadership team meetings with Team Managers to support ongoing implementation of the vision and service improvement</li> <li>4. Embed our Practice Framework (launched May 2022) <a href="#">(informed by Focused Visit Dec 2021)</a></li> <li>5. Continue to seek feedback via the corporate staff survey and the SWORD survey and use to inform service development</li> <li>6. Service wide Practice Week focused on 'Relationships Matter'</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. PSW and HR (December 2023)</li> <li>2. Assistant Director (June 2023)</li> <li>3. All of CSLT (monthly)</li> <li>4. All of CSLT (December 2023)</li> <li>5. PSW (6 monthly)</li> <li>6. PSW and Head of Quality Assurance</li> </ol>
<p>Progress update (date):</p>	<p>Any further/additional actions needed for next period:</p>
<p>Workforce Development Strategy and plan in place – see plan. Leadership programme has being commissioned and was delivered in October and November 2022 – further sessions and coaching to continue into 2023</p>	<p>Follow-up leadership session to be arranged for January 2023.</p>
<p>How will we know when our activity has had an impact?</p>	

The senior leadership team will be visible and joined up in its vision, purpose and activity.

A stable workforce will provide consistency for children and families and allow practitioners to build relationships of trust and confidence and to intervene to achieve positive change together with children and their families.

A stable management team will support practitioners to provide effective interventions focussed on needs and outcomes and support continuous learning and development.

Children and their families experience a collaborative approach which gives them the confidence to engage with interventions and the motivation to make the changes identified to meet the needs of their children.

The lived experiences of children and their wishes and feelings are well understood and inform assessment and planning.

**Focus:** Family Support and Safeguarding

**Fundamental 6 – Language that Cares**

Actions needed to address this priority:

Who is leading on this action, and by when?

1. Maintain momentum with monthly service newsletters to support regular communication with the service

1. PSW (monthly)

2. Embed the use of MOMO

2. Head of Service Quality Assurance and Young Director (June 2023)

3. Roll out of the 'Language that Cares' presentation across the council and the partnership.

3. Young Director

Progress update (date):

Any further/additional actions needed for next period:

<p>4. Be compassionate in how we talk about and record meaningful information about children, young people, and their families including panel and meeting minutes, return home interviews, placement requests etc.</p> <p>5. Continue to empower our colleagues to use language that is non-stigmatising and can be understood by all.</p> <p>6. Ensure language that cares is at the forefront of all planning and development work.</p> <p>7. Roll out language that cares to contractors and ensure placement requests are written using a strengths-based approach.</p>	<p>4. HOS ongoing</p> <p>5. HOS ongoing</p> <p>6. HOS ongoing</p> <p>7. Head of Commissioning August 2023</p>
<p>How will we know when our activity has had an impact?</p>	
<p>Our plans and records are written in language which is meaningful and respectful to our children and young people.</p> <p>Children and their families experience a collaborative approach which gives them the confidence to engage with interventions and the motivation to make the changes identified to meet the needs of their children.</p> <p>Children and their families experience communication which is meaningful and tailored to meet their needs.</p> <p>Children and young people are able to actively contribute to the development of supports, services and improved practice across Children's Services.</p>	

## Children's Partnership Board Quality Assurance and Safeguarding – Children' Services January 2023

### Introduction

The previous report to the Partnership Board was in July 2022 following the introduction of a new Quality Assurance (QA) Framework in April 2022. Since this time, a variety of activity has continued to build momentum. The launch of the Quality Assurance Framework included:

- introducing a range of new and revised QA activity
- increasing our pool of reviewers  
offering training and support to build reviewer confidence and support consistency
- improving our reporting mechanisms via Power-Bi
- building the majority of our review tools into the child's electronic record
- being relentless in our determination to develop our QA system to inform and support practice improvements for our children and young people

We recognised the importance of ensuring we bring colleagues with us on the journey and that we develop the understanding that QA is 'everybody's business'. There is a noticeable shift in understanding of and attitude towards QA although challenges regarding capacity are ongoing.

Capacity within the Quality Assurance and Safeguarding Team was also an issue and investment in this team was identified as a priority. A permanent QA Officer started with us in October 2022 and the Team Manager capacity was increased from a part-time to a full-time role.

This report will summarise the activity undertaken since the last report to the Partnership Board.

## Summary of Activity, Findings and Actions since July 2022

### Collaborative Practice Review (CPR) Care Leaver’s Service – SEP 22

15 reviews were allocated and 14 were successfully returned on time and moderated. (Fig.1)

#### Final Reviewer overall grading

● Good ● Outstanding ● Requires improvement

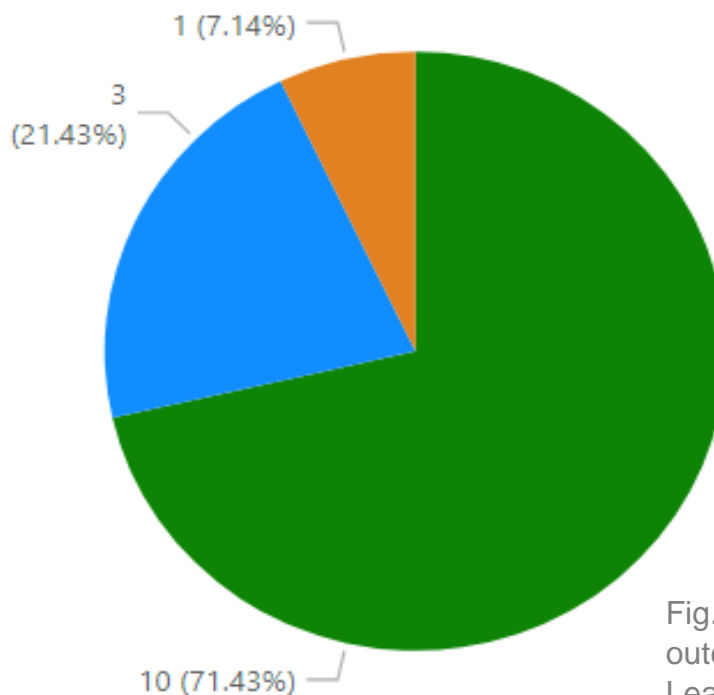


Fig.1 a chart of outcomes from Care Leavers CPR

#### 92.86% were graded Good or Outstanding

##### Findings:

- Planning – Consistent and clearly written pathway plans, assessing the needs of the young people
- Relationships – Excellent evidence of caring, integrity and support shown by Personal Advisors to young people/care leavers
- Contact – Good evidence relating to different and regular types of contact - in person, phone, email
- Trust – Referred to across several reviews, good levels of trust between young people and staff
- Recording – Good evidence captured through quality of recordings on case notes, for example, “the voice of the young person was brought to life through good recording”

### 7.14% were graded Requires Improvement

- Some chronologies not up to date
- Limited support network not recorded appropriately
- Recordings not as clear as they could be

Recommendations made from this QA activity were as follows:

1. Signs of Safety practice approach to be more robustly embedded across the Corporate Parenting Service, including the family seeing aspect. Aspire to create and maintain stronger networks for children in care and ultimately care leavers that will support them well into adulthood.
2. A further opportunity to review the implementation of recommendations from the Team Spotlight completed in October 2022 and the above CPR to be organised in May 2023 via a repeat CPR, followed by the annual Team Spotlight, November 2023.

These recommendations were accepted by the QAPM meeting and therefore are being led by Head of Corporate Parenting.

### Themed Practice Review Child Protection Plans – OCT 22

In October 2022 we undertook a themed practice review focused on Child Protection Plans. We received 16 returns, from 22 reviews allocated. (Fig.2)

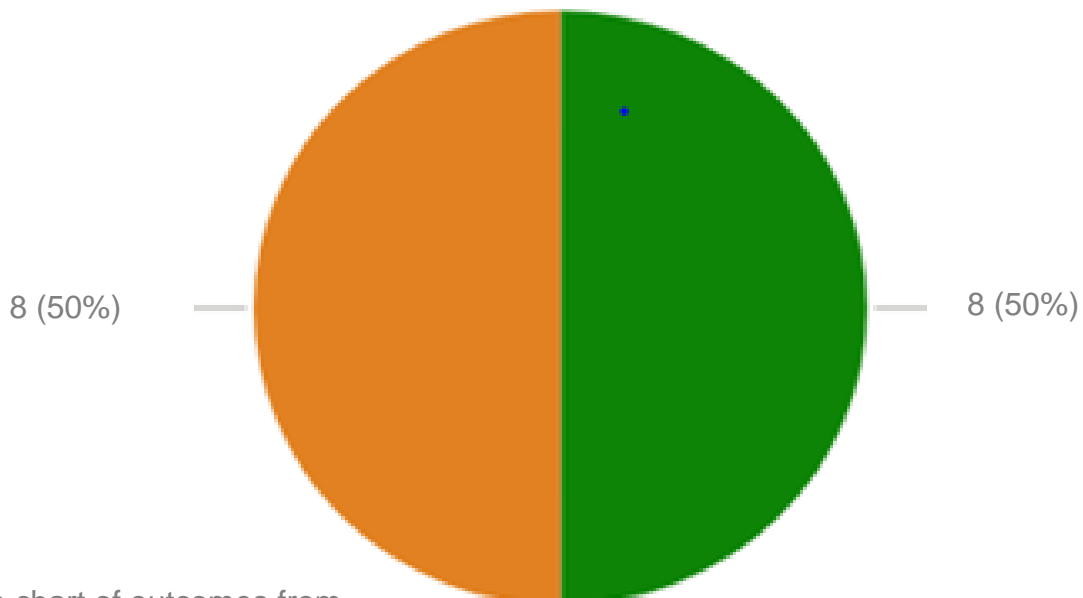


Fig.2 a chart of outcomes from themed practice review

Improvement

### **50% were graded Good**

- Family – Good examples of family engagement
- Plans – Good evidence of plans and clear rationale
- Children – Good examples of child engagement, understanding and appropriate language

### **50% were graded Requires Improvement**

- Plans - Reported as sometimes not being clear or robust
- Extended family network – Referred to in case notes but not reflected in the plan
- Children – Children appear to not have been informed of plan, or not recorded as informed of the plan and more straightforward language needed to help the children understand

Recommendations made from this QA activity were as follows:

1. Develop family centric practice to ensure the impact of the associated processes enable participation as fully as possible, such as:

- Continue to develop our use of 'language that cares' and evidence in documentation
- Prepare families and children for upcoming meetings about them
- Family led safety planning to become integral to our practice with all families
- Increase children's understanding of their plans
- Exploring wider family/friends networks

2. Quality of minutes to be developed to reflect relevant information and rationale for decision-making.

These recommendations were accepted by the QAPM meeting and therefore are being led by relevant HOS for their service areas.



## Collaborative Practice Review Children in Need – NOV 22

We received 11 returns from 18 reviews allocated. This was a lower return rate compared to previous reviews. (Fig.3)

### Final Reviewer overall grading

● Good ● Inadequate ● Requires improvement

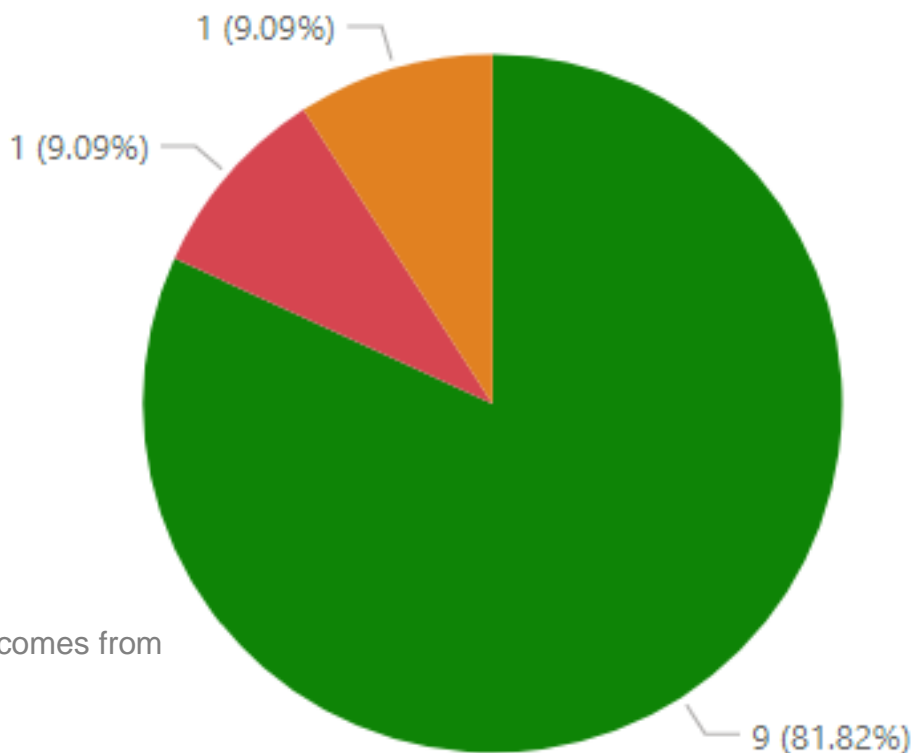


Fig.3 a chart of outcomes from CiN CPR

#### 82% were graded Good

- Demographic – Good recording of information
- Language – Reviewers found records had been written using ‘language that cares’ and in a way that young people will understand
- Recording – Clear recording of information
- Recording - Danger statements and safety goals were clearly written

#### 18% were graded as Requires Improvement or Inadequate

- Recordings – Not as clear as they could be
- Chronology – Some recording lacked depth, and some was not up to date
- Visits – Reviewers found some records not updated and therefore it was not evident whether children had been seen
- Visits – Reviewers found some records where visits surpassed 28 days for one child

Recommendations made from this QA activity were as follows:

1. All children and young people must be seen, and visits recorded within the timescales defined in our practice standards. This will strengthen our relationships and understanding of their lived experience and supports effective intervention and planning
2. Heads of Service and Team Managers to maintain rigorous oversight of visiting frequency via performance reports
3. Chronology's should not just be a list of negative events, they need to reflect the best and worst events for children and young people and the impact analysed and understood, therefore producing chronologies focussed on impact and not just events
4. Case Summaries to be updated every 3 months (or sooner if needs be) to ensure an up-to-date picture is available for quick reference and to support decision making and action
4. Scaling questions to be used alongside danger statements and safety goals to measure the impact of intervention and changes made and support a judgement as to the level of safety there is in place for the child or young person

These recommendations are being presented to the QAPM meeting on the 16<sup>th</sup> January and therefore remain as recommendations currently.

### **Collaborative Practice Review Children at Risk of Exploitation – DEC 22**

23 reviews were allocated and 12 were successfully returned on time and moderation is now taking place. Follow up is underway on the 11 reviews outstanding to increase the return rate. An initial picture suggests out of the 12 returned, 6 were judged as Good and 6 were judged as Requires Improvement. Analysis of the findings from these CPRs will commence over the next few weeks.

### **Team Spotlights**

Annual Team Spotlights were introduced in July 2022 and, so far, we have undertaken Team Spotlights for the Fostering Service, the Leaving Care Service and the Independent Safeguarding and Reviewing Officer Service. The outcome judgment for each of the Team Spotlights was Requires Improvement and clear recommendations were made to support practice improvement and the journey to Good. The recommendations will translate to the annual service plans which have been written for January - December 2023 by the responsible Heads of Service.

By July 2023 every service area will have participated in their first Team Spotlight. Wherever possible, these will align with a Collaborative Practice Review which will take place 6 months later to seek assurance that recommendations made in the Team Spotlight are being put into place and having an impact.

## Closing the Loop Activity

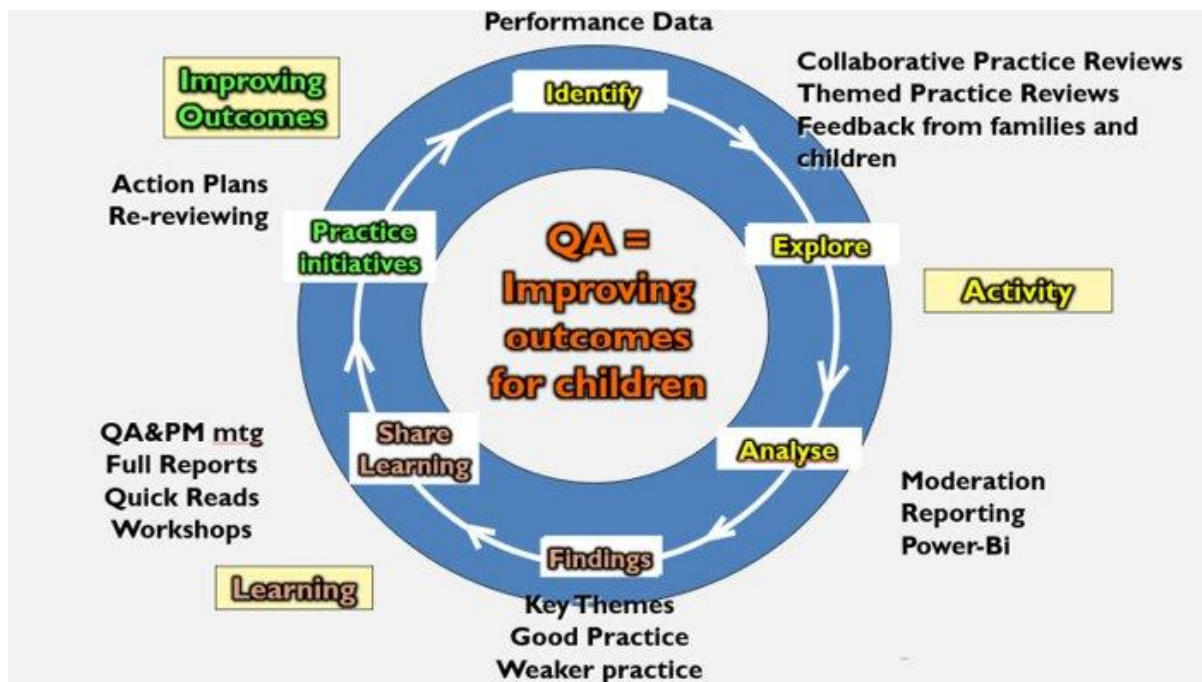


Fig.4 Closing the Loop flowchart

A fundamental aim of QA is to ensure we know ourselves well and can adjust our position and practice to emerging trends with agility, so children and their families receive the best possible service. Effective QA informs changes to practice and the infrastructure that supports practice such as policy, process, templates etc and then revisits and tests the impact of changes made following QA activity. It is important to allow sufficient time to develop and embed change. This is a key focus area in North Somerset.

### Decision Making at the Front Door

QA undertaken at the Front Door in August/September evidenced a lack of curiosity and triangulation of information in our decision making. An action to address this practice issue was developed and work has been ongoing. Performance data is now indicating the positive impact of this work which is, as reported to the December Partnership Board, a reduction in the number of No Further Action Outcomes (NFA) and a reduction in the number repeat Contacts where the outcome is NFA. The performance information also indicates a slight increase over time in numbers of referrals, children in need and children supported by Child Protection Plans whilst Children in Care numbers remain stable. This is considered an early indicator that we are aligning more closely to our statistical neighbours and national averages and that decision making is focused on children receiving the right support at the right time and by the right service.

## Strategy Discussions

**In January 2022**, a themed practice review exploring the quality of our Strategy Discussions was undertaken. These are multi-agency meetings convened when there is reasonable cause to believe a child is suffering or likely to suffer significant harm as defined in The Children Act 1989. An action plan was developed following this work. The actions included a multi-agency review of the practice guidance for strategy meetings and that strategy meetings for all new referrals should be re-located at the Front Door. These actions have been achieved. The findings of the review were also shared and discussed with Team Managers across the service to ensure the right information is shared and the rationale for decision making and actions are clearly evidenced and recorded.

**In October 2022** we reviewed this practice and undertook a dip audit exploring those areas identified as Requires Improvement in January. We reviewed every strategy discussion for Children in Need that had taken place in the preceding fortnight. There were 16 children, who made up a combined total of 5 families. It is recognised this is a small cohort.

### Headline Findings

- In January 2022, 44% of invited appropriate people/agencies attended strategy meetings. In October 2022 we can report 100% compliance in this area
- In January 2022 - 70% evidenced either good examples or good throughout in plans focused on the child. In October 2022 – 93.75% evidenced child focused plans
- In January 2022 - 56% of those invited to Strategy didn't attend, of those 66% provided no information into the process. In October 2022 – 100% of those invited to strategy attended. Furthermore, multiple professionals from partner agencies were present at some meetings
- In January 2022 – 56% of minutes were shared within 2 days. The longest being returned after 40 days. In October 2022 – 68.75% completed within timeframe. All minutes in the October Dip Audit were recorded in the correct subject heading on LCS, a further improvement from January's themed review

Overall, this exercise evidenced a positive improvement, notwithstanding some of these improvements needed to go further and be more consistent across the management group who chair strategy meetings and will remain a priority focus for the Heads of Service for Front Door, Family Support and Safeguarding and Corporate Parenting.

## Repeat Child Protection Plans

In July 2022, a Dip audit was undertaken on children on repeat Child Protection Plans (CPP). At the time of the audit, 14 children supported by CPPs had previously been on a CPP within a 2-year window.

The Dip audit identified that we were being overly optimistic, and that we lacked rigour in our exploration of evidence of safety. It was evident we were taking compliance as an indicator of safety. For example, a parent going to the doctors or meeting with the social worker was seen as offering safety. Safety is what successful strategies the family network is employing to keep the child safe from harm as part of a Safety Plan.

Currently, there are 9 children who are on a plan for the second time within the last 2 years - a reduction of 5 since July 2022. Every child returning to an Initial Child Protection Conference for a second or subsequent time is reviewed and learning shared.

In response to the Dip audit, development sessions have been held with the chairs of Child Protection Conferences to increase their confidence in our practice framework and their need to be more requiring of evidence from colleagues regarding the safety in place for children. Observations of Child Protection Conferences by the Team Manager and Head of Service have also begun. The chairs report an increase in confidence and more robust conversations in conference, particularly around stepping children down from CP plans and this rationale is now more obvious in written records.

## Permanence Planning

A review of children subject to Care and Placement Orders was undertaken in May 2022. The review provides an overview about the permanence planning and outcomes for this cohort of children in their adoption journey and identifies areas for development to improve permanence practice.

For the children in this cohort the review found that there was some well written and detailed information on their LCS records; there is evidence that social workers know their children well and see them regularly. The child in care (CIC) reviews always contain information written to the child to help them understand their story. Permanence options are considered however required actions to achieve permanence do not always follow in a timely way.

The review found that:

- Case supervision and the role of the Independent Reviewing Officers could provide more constructive challenge to support the progress of children's permanence plans
- Care planning does not always appear to consider an early permanence placement (EPP) when a care plan of adoption is being considered or

progressed. Some children are waiting a long time to move to a permanent family

- Adoption West (AW), alongside children's social workers, have a key role in identifying and providing the right adoption placement for children at the earliest opportunity

In response to the above, a Permanence Action Plan has been developed and includes the following key actions:

- Revision of Permanence Planning Practice Guidance to include the introduction of permanence planning meetings
- Delivery of Permanence Planning Workshops
- Refresh of Permanence Tracking
- Strengthening of the Independent Reviewing Office role in driving forward and maintaining oversight of permanence planning

A positive impact from this work has been an increase in the number of young children placed in early permanence placements in the last 12 months.

## **Fundamentals**

In September at the all-staff conference, our practice Fundamentals were launched. These arose from our QA activity and understanding of the areas of practice we need to strengthen, and they link to our Practice Framework. They are based on:

1. Relationships Matter
2. Seeing and Hearing
3. Understanding
4. Responding
5. Outcome Focussed Practice
6. Language that Cares

## **Action Plans**

In order to ensure recommendations from reviews and subsequent action plans are progressing and having the desired impact, we have reviewed the role of the Quality Assurance and Performance Monitoring process. Going forwards the recommendation is that this accountability will sit within the new Quality Assurance and Performance Board chaired by the DCS, therefore creating an opportunity for wider discussion and strengthened scrutiny and accountability.



### **Voice of Children and their Families**

The best arbiters of how good our practice is, are the people who receive our service. Hearing from our children, young people, and families is key. We know this is an area of improvement for us.

### **Collaborative Practice Reviews**

Seeking feedback from children and their families is an expectation built into our CPR process. Age, understanding, consent, and accessibility are some of the reasons which prevent this. Nevertheless, we are clear that, where possible and appropriate, every effort should be made.

In the themed review referred to above, the voice of the child was explored. Encouragingly, we saw some good practice in relation to this area. 7 reviews were returned with clear evidence throughout the child's records, 7 showed some evidence, and 2 had limited or no evidence which, according to the reviewer, was due to the young age of the child.

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The voice of the child/young person was clear throughout:

● Some evidence of good practice ● Limited or No evidence ● Clear evidence through...

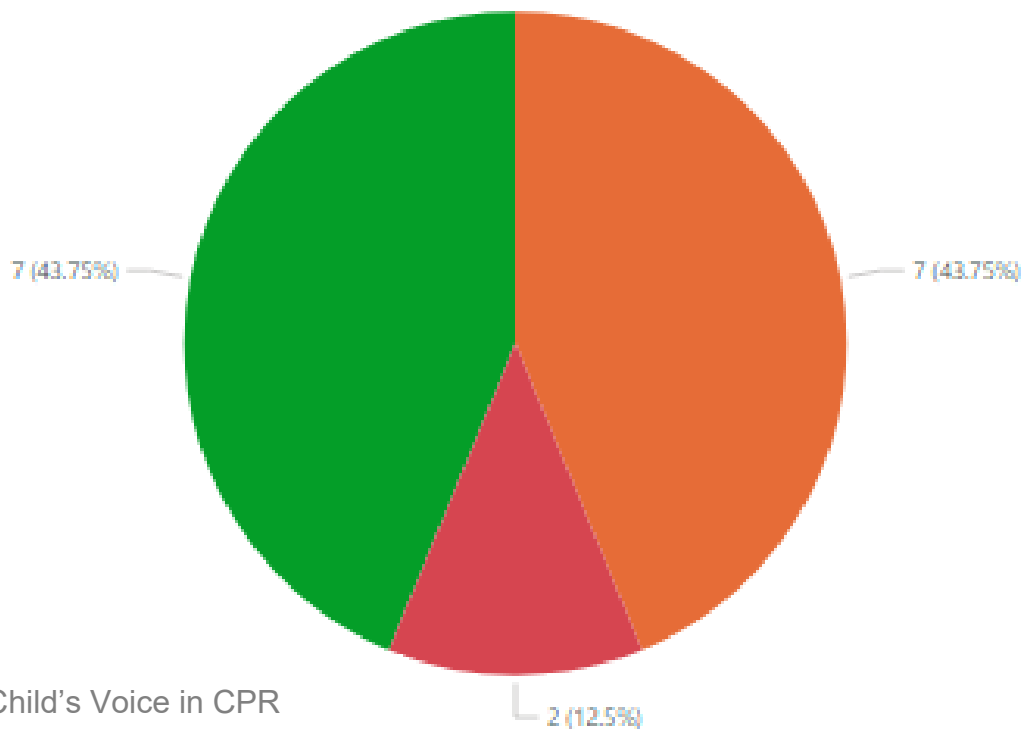


Fig.5 Child's Voice in CPR

**Good practice**

- The child's voice has been heard and evidenced within the reports
- Supporting case notes, evidencing the voice of the child

**Weaker practice**

- A safety house mentioned in case notes as being completed, but does not appear to have been uploaded
- The voice of the child was not very present in the report



In the Care Leavers CPR In September 2022, we were able to speak to 8 out of the 14 young people contacted. Here are some direct quotes:

- *“Staff go above and beyond in their support, they feel listened to and they really like that staff will always update them with any progress they have made on tasks”*
- *One young person described their PA as, “knowledgeable, understanding and amazing”*
- *“Staff have supported me to access education”*

In November’s Child in Need CPR we were able to speak to 4 out of 13 children. Age of child and lack of parent consent were given as reasons for not being able to speak with children. The children we did speak to told us:

- *“They are nice, they help with things”*
- *“They helped nanny with Tesco vouchers”*
- *“I know I can talk to my social worker if I need help”*
- *“Too many workers involved”*

In the same CPR we spoke with 9 parents:

- *One parent felt the safety plan was negatively impacting his child's life*
- *Language could be used to help the child understand better*
- *Nothing could be done better*
- *Parents reported feeling supported*

### **Corporate Parenting Board**

The Corporate Parenting Board has seen the introduction of themed sessions. The focus of the sessions has been agreed with our Young Director in consultation with young people. The first session in July focused on education, training and employment and the session in September focused on accommodation for care leavers. Following these sessions action plans have been developed and feedback will be provided to our young people at future boards.

Our Young Director is currently undertaking various pieces of work linked to the voice of our children and young people and it is proposed that a separate report on this work is brought to the partnership board.

### **Compliments and Complaints**

All Compliments and Complaints now routinely get sent to the Complaints and Directorate Governance Manager, so they are responded to in a timely way and centrally stored. Bi-monthly reports are prepared by the manager for the Quality Assurance and Performance Review Board, collating the previous two months activity. The voice of children and their family needs to be more evident in these reports going forward, enabling us to learn from their experiences and ensure

learning is shared more widely amongst our colleagues. To do this, direct quotes from children, young people, and their families will be used wherever possible and the Team Managers and Complaints and Directorate Governance Manager will work closer together during complaints so this information can be ascertained and reported.

### **Feedback Working Group**

The Quality Assurance Officer is in the early stages of co-ordinating a group of colleagues exploring how we can more routinely hear from the parents and carers we work with. We know there is some very good practice in our Family Wellbeing Service (FWB) where the views of families have been very powerful and influential in service changes. To date we haven't replicated this success with the parents and carers supported by social care and whilst there are reasons why this is more difficult to achieve, our aim is to hear from the FWB service in the hope we can emulate some of their strategies and utilise some of their skills in this area so we can more routinely ascertain information from parents and carers supported by social care.

### **Mind of My Own**

To strengthen our work in this area in September 2022 we purchased Mind of My Own (MOMO) - a consultation tool for children and young people. We are currently rolling out the training programme and to date have trained ~70 practitioners and have 6 more sessions booked for 90 people. Alongside the consultation tool element, we also purchased the survey option, providing us with 3 annual surveys across Children's Services. For children supported by Child Protection and Child in Need plans our first survey is scheduled for February 2023, a cohort of child often difficult to hear from collectively.

### **Next Steps**

In addition to the QA activity identified in the QA timetable (Appendix 1), the following is planned:

- Repeat themed review into Supervision and Management Oversight in February 2023
- Recommendation Log following each round of core QA to be introduced in February 2023 to support Team Managers and Heads of Service to ensure all actions are undertaken and that this can be evidenced. This will be monitored via the Quality Assurance and Performance Review Meeting and Board
- Introduce a family survey – date to be confirmed following review of tool developed by Professor Eileen Munro
- Practice week – scheduled for week of 23<sup>rd</sup> January 2023
- Review of the bi-monthly Quality Assurance and Performance Monitoring Meeting to include a reporting requirement for Heads of Service

- Strengthen the clarity about the quality of practice in QA findings and recommendations to ensure clear understanding by the service
- Ensure a more robust and reactive response to learning and development needs identified via QA activity
- Introduce Team Manager audits in February 2023
- Complete further work to ensure confidence that reviewers are not over-optimistic and are consistent in their reviewing activity. This will include pairing reviewers for the February themed review
- Ensure that the impact of QA activity and subsequent learning and development can be evidenced in practice via feedback and further QA work.

Jo Ratcliffe

Head of Quality Assurance and Safeguarding





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Jo Walker, Chief Executive, North Somerset Council  
Shane Devlin, Chief Executive, BNSSG Integrated Care Board  
Cllr Gibbons, Executive Member for Children, Young People, Lifelong learning, and Skills

20 December 2022

## **SIX MONTH PROGRESS REVIEW AGAINST YOUR SEND IMPROVEMENT PLAN**

Dear Jo, Shane and Cllr Gibbons,

Firstly, I would like to thank you and all those, from across the local area, who attended the meeting with DfE and NHS England officials on 7 December 2022, to review the progress that has been made against your Improvement Plan over the last six months. With particular thanks to Ed Bowen-Roberts and Jacqui Scott for representing the voice of local schools and to Kenton Mee, for representing the voice of parents and carers through the Parent Carer Forum. The increasing strength of the local area partnership which has developed over time was notable.

At the meeting we heard about your shared purpose and ambition for children and young people with SEND and were encouraged to see an increase in traction when putting the plan into action. We noted the strengthening governance arrangements with increased accountability evident. The recent increase in capacity in both the LA and ICB is leading to early signs of improvement in quality assurance processes for Education Health & Care Plans (EHCPs).

We found the presentation and updated plan, with clearly defined progress against the associated key performance indicators (KPIs), helpful in showing improvements, and this, combined with feedback from partners, demonstrated:

- That improvements made in Area One have led to stronger governance arrangements and increased awareness of the Local Area SEND Strategy, resulting in the growing sense that “SEND is everybody’s business”. We are sufficiently assured that actions and KPIs have been met and that this area can be stepped down from formal monitoring. However, the Local Area’s success in improving the other areas of significant weakness will depend on these improvements being maintained. Therefore, the Local Area should regularly assure itself of this.

- That the improvement to tackle Area Six has resulted in a better understanding of data and an increase in the use of SEND data in education settings and in holding leaders to account across the Local Area. We are sufficiently assured that actions and KPIs have been met and that this area can be stepped down from formal monitoring.

The progress seen over the last six months is reassuring. At the next six-month review meeting in June 2023, DfE and NHSE will be looking for assurances that the work has continued at pace, that improvement is maintained in areas which have made progress, as well as in areas where there is more work to do. In particular, we will be interested in the following:

- How the increase in capacity across the Local Area is having an impact on outcomes for children and young people, and how the focus on moving to a needs-led service is feeding into this. We would like to hear directly from School Leaders who are implementing the four Nurture Hubs.
- How the improved outcomes for children with SEN Support in KS1 and the consistent progress 8 scores for KS4 (against a decline for SEN support nationally and regionally) are being maintained.
- How the decline in KS2 combined Reading, Writing, Maths for children with SEN Support is being tackled.
- How outcomes for pupils with EHCPs are being prioritised for rapid improvement in Key Stages 1, 2 and 4.
- If the improvement to reduce permanent exclusions for children with EHCPs is being maintained and the actions being taken to improve the permanent exclusion data for children with SEN Support.
- If the increased capacity in Area Four is having an impact on the consistency, quality and timeliness of EHC plans and on the annual review process.
- The development of joint commissioning arrangements, including how the new models meet demand in relation to children and young people with social emotional & mental health needs and those with Autistic Spectrum Disorder.
- What the SEND Board's plans are for overcoming any barriers to the recommissioning of Occupational Therapy and Speech and Language Therapy, including how escalation routes are utilised through the improved partnership governance arrangements.
- How data and the views of parents and carers are used to make decisions.
- Whether the points in the Ofsted/CQC revisit report have been addressed with clear evidence of impact for children and young people with SEND and their families.

In the meantime, the SEND and NHS England Advisers, Keith Thompson and Mark Tucker, and Emma Brown as your DfE Case Lead, will continue to provide you with support and challenge. If you have any questions or need any further support, please contact them in the first instance.

We are copying this letter to Cllr Steve Bridger, Leader of the Council; Lorraine Mulrone, National Specialist Advisor, SEND NHS England; Andre Imich, SEND professional adviser, DfE; Keith Thompson and Mark Tucker, SEND and NHSE advisers and to Emma Brown, DfE Case Lead.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'K Knott', with a large, stylized flourish at the end.

Kellie Knott  
Head of Vulnerable Children's Unit - South West  
Department for Education

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## North Somerset Council

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

**Date of Meeting:** Friday 24<sup>th</sup> February 2023

**Subject of Report:** Family Hubs and Children's Centres

**Town or Parish:** All

**Officer/Member Presenting:** Dawn Newton (Head of Service) and Tracey Wells (Team Manager)

**Key Decision:** No

**Reason:** To update Scrutiny.

**Reason:**

This provides the Panel with the vision for the system wide Family Hub model within North Somerset.

### Recommendations

Members note the update on the current position in relation to progress on the development of the Family Hub model in North Somerset.

#### 1. Summary of Report

Set out below is a summary of the plans to develop the Family Hub model in North Somerset.

#### 2. Policy

The recommendation by the Department for Education and the Department for Health and Social Care is for local authorities to build on their early help provision and create a system wide Family Hub model for 0-19 (25 for children and young people with SEND (Special Educational Needs and Disabilities)) within their communities. The aim of the model is to provide access to the right support in the right place at the right time for our children and families.

North Somerset Council is adopting this recommendation.

### **3. Details**

#### **3.1 What are Family Hubs?**

3.2 A Family Hub is a system-wide model of providing high-quality, joined up, whole-family support services for families with children aged 0-19 (25 years of age for young people with SEND). They provide families with somewhere they know they can go if they need information, advice or guidance about parenting, concerns about family breakdown, and other worries. The hub is a central access point for services and support and will provide a universal front door to families, offering a one-stop shop of family support services across their social care, education, mental health, and physical health needs.

3.3 Through community and support services, we hope to ensure families with children and young people aged 0-19, (or 25 for young people with SEND) receive strengthened early help and support.

3.4 Effective early help can improve:

- Children's wellbeing
- Education achievement
- Life chances, i.e., opportunities to improve quality of life
- Reduce family poverty
- Improve mental health; and,
- Lead to lower crime, unemployment other negative outcomes.

3.5 Each Family Hub is bespoke to its local community, while incorporating three key delivery principles. These are:

- Access
- Connection
- Relationships.

3.6 A Family Hub will work in partnership a range of other services and the community, for example, midwives, health visitors, children centres, SEND, parenting, housing, debt advice and welfare and voluntary organisation.

3.7 The Family Hub model is not only offered via a building. We know it is important to provide a variety of ways for families to access support and this includes outreach i.e. in another community building, children centre, park / play space, online and virtually. Children's Centres are key in supporting the success of Family Hubs as they will support a hub and spoke model.

3.8 Family Hubs offer information, advice and provide a range of activities that all children and families can access. This is called our universal offer and can include:

- Midwifery appointments
- Services offered by health visitors
- Activities for children aged 0-5 years
- Youth services

- 3.9 We recognise being a parent / carer is rewarding but also brings its challenges as every child is unique. To help parents and carers understand their child and their needs, Family Hubs offer a range of parenting programmes and services to cover all ages and stages, including online courses.
- 3.10 Family Hubs aim to provide parenting support which will:
- Strengthen families by providing help with the challenges parents and carers face; especially those which will impact on children's development and their educational attainment.
  - Help prevent family breakdown by supporting families where parenting is particularly difficult and ensuring access to early help to address problems which might otherwise escalate.
  - Provide relationship support for couples at life's key pressure points and when parents find it hard to resolve conflict.
  - Support separating families to reduce parental conflict and achieve workable parenting arrangements in the best interests of the children, thereby preventing, where possible, the need to access the family courts.

### **North Somerset's identified Family Hubs**

- 3.11 The following Children Centre buildings have been identified as sites to be developed into Family Hubs. These are:
- The Carlton Centre – located within South locality
  - Castle Batch Children's Centre – located within East locality
  - Clevedon Children's Centre – located North locality
- 3.12 The rationale for this decision is based on knowledge of where our children and young people socialise and what buildings we have within our portfolio that can provide the flexibility for further development, to meet the Department for Education's Family Hub Model Framework.
- 3.13 The Department for Education has commissioned the Anna Freud National Centre for Children and Families to provide guidance to local authorities who are progressing with the development of the system wide Family Hub model.

## **4. Consultation**

Meaningful co-production will be prioritised to ensure inclusion of children, young people, and families to ensure their views and ideas are heard. This will include those whose experiences of working with professionals haven't always been positive; or those for whom services are not easily accessible. We know that without the inclusion of families whose needs haven't been met, there is a risk of repeatedly designing services that do not meet the needs of some of families that may be marginalised.

## **5. Financial Implications**

- 5.1 The Family Wellbeing Service, which includes Children's Centres and Family Hubs, has been tasked with making £300,000 savings over the next 2 financial years.

## **Costs**

- 5.2 The Carlton Centre renovations have been agreed and capital funding has been awarded at a cost of £270,000. The refurbishment work has already started and is well underway.
- 5.3 Castle Batch is a children's centre, however it is not currently within the Family Wellbeing service portfolio. There are increased costs to transfer this building which equate to £11,000 per year. This budget has been identified from the Supporting Families budget and building compliance is being completed before we the building can be transferred to Family Wellbeing. The transfer of the management of this building will enable more flexible working hours, including weekends at a more cost effective rate.
- 5.4 Our third Family Hub is at Clevedon Children's Centre at The Barn. There are no planned increased costs currently.
- 5.5 A request for funding for feasibility studies on all Family Hubs has been made. If successful, in line with consultation, this will enable us to have improved flexible space to support the right services in the right place, at the right time for our children, young people and their families.

## **Funding**

- 5.6 No increases funding are requested at this time.

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

Providing Family Hubs is not a directive from Government but a recommendation on which North Somerset Council is committed.

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

At every stage in the development of our Family Hubs, we are mindful in respect of climate change and environmental implications in terms of staff plans but also using the opportunity to educate and positively influence families about changes they could make to their lifestyles.

## **8. Risk Management**

The risk of not providing a system wide, Family Hub model is that children and young people will not be able to access the right services at the right time, which can impact on their achievement of their full potential. Without this level of early help, there may be a risk that without early intervention, families find themselves in crisis and ultimately demand higher level services which may also lead to an increase in cost of service provision as needs become more complex.

## **9. Equality Implications**

There are no equality implications in North Somerset Council adopting this model. The system wide, Family Hub model will offer an opportunity to improve access and promote

inclusion by removing some of the barriers experienced by families when receiving support, moving between services or during transitional periods.

## **10. Corporate Implications**

None

## **11. Options Considered**

None

### **Author:**

Dawn Newton, Head of Front Door and Family Wellbeing and Tracey Wells, Family Wellbeing Manager responsible for Family Hub and Children Centres.

### **Appendices:**

North Somerset's Family Hubs slides.

### **Background Papers:**

Further information on Family Hub can be located on the government website:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/family-hubs-and-start-for-life-programme-local-authority-guide>

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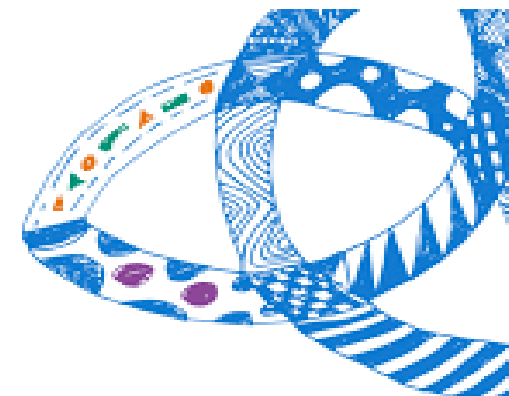
# North Somerset's Family Hubs

Dawn Newton – Head  
of Front Door and  
Family Wellbeing  
Tracey Wells – Family  
Wellbeing Locality  
Team Manager

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# North Somerset Council



**NATIONAL  
CENTRE FOR  
FAMILY HUBS**



**Anna Freud**  
National Centre for  
Children and Families



# Family Wellbeing Team 0-19

Family Support

UK Resettlement

Supporting Families

Advanced Parenting

Local Authority Nurseries

Family Hubs and Children Centres

Missing Duty

SEND





# The importance of early intervention

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- The 1,001 days are a time of unique opportunity and challenge – our experiences during this time lay the foundations for long-life emotional and physical health.
- We are developing 3 of our children centres to become family hubs, 0-19 years. We are using the hub and spoke model as a place - based way of joining up locally in the planning and delivery of family services . They bring services together to improve access, improve connections between families, professionals, and providers and put relationships at the heart of family support .
- Family Hubs offer support to families from conception-19 years and up to 25 for young people with SEND.



# Why Family Hubs

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## An overview

- A family hub is a system-wide model of providing high-quality, whole-family, joined up, family support services. Family hubs deliver these family support services from pregnancy, through the child's early years and later childhood, and into early adulthood until they reach the age of 19 (or up to 25 for young people with special educational needs and disabilities).
- Family hubs aim to make a positive difference to parents, carers and their children, through providing a mix of physical and virtual spaces, as well as home visits for families to easily access non-judgemental support for the challenges they may be facing. Family hubs will provide a universal front door to families, offering a one-stop shop of family support services across their social care, education, mental health and physical health needs.

Key Council Strategies this programme will feed into and assist with outcomes are:

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Health & Wellbeing Strategy

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Early Years Strategy

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Education Strategy

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Mental Health Strategy

The National Centre for Family Hubs website is [www.nationalcentreforfamilyhubs.org.uk/](http://www.nationalcentreforfamilyhubs.org.uk/)

We are working closely with the National Centre for Family Hubs (NCFH). This is a new national initiative, led by Anna Freud and funded by the Department for Education, to help ensure all babies, children and families have the support they need through a network of Family Hubs across England. In collaboration with the Early Intervention Foundation, the work of the NCFH is practice led, evidenced – based, and most importantly is informed by families’ lived experience. We will have a Family Hub in each locality, with children centres supporting as spokes, i.e. a hub and spoke model.

Family Hub and Local Authority Guide provides a framework to support the development of Family Hubs

[Family Hubs and Start for Life Programme Guide \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](http://publishing.service.gov.uk)

We are working in partnership with our ICB colleagues to ensure an equitable offer.

We are working with neighboring authorities to provide peer support and share good practice.

# What support is available?

# Introduction to North Somerset's Family Hubs

## Our three Family Hubs

- The Carlton Centre - South
- Castle Batch Family Hub – East
- Clevedon Family Hub - North



# Family Hub- 3 main principles

Each family hub is unique and bespoke to the local community it serves, but there are three key delivery principles that run through all family hubs, which are:

## **Access**

Family hubs are a clear, simple point of access for help and support.

## **Connection**

Key services will work together for the benefit of families offering a universal “front door,” there will be shared outcomes and effective governance. Professionals working together, through co-location data sharing and a common approach to their work. Families only having to tell their story once, the service is more efficient, the families will receive more effective timely support.

Statutory services, the community, charities and faith sector partners working together to get families the help they require.

## **Relationships**

The family hub prioritises strengthening relationships and builds on family strengths. This being the heart of everything that is delivered in the system wide family hub model.





# Building on Co-production – “Nothing about us, without us.”

Ultimately, co-production is about redistributing power to families and enabling them to make informed choices about their own lives.

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The family hub model, like children’s centres, is an integrated service. The model is expected to involve families and communities to build social capital and cohesion.

Nationally there has been a limited involvement of parents and carers in the planning and delivery of children’s centres and hubs;

There has been little service co-design work with parents and carers; and

There has been a decrease in the use of advisory boards or parent forums.

Co-production can help address these limitations.



# The core family hubs services

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A one stop shop

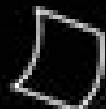




BUILDING A  
NETWORK OF  
SUPPORT

## Our vision - North Somerset Family Hubs will be:

- Vibrant, inclusive, providing services after school, during the evenings and weekends.
- A place to build friendships / networks and increase the sense of community. Services run by the community for their community.
- Where children, young people and adults will gain learning
- A fun place where memories can be made
- A safe place for CYP, away from drugs, alcohol and those who might try to exploit them.
- A one stop shop for all.



# **Our vision will also include the following at The Carlton Centre:**

- Advanced Parenting dedicated room which will support training and parenting groups.
- Midwifery dedicated room
- SEND specialism for clubs, activities, support for under 5's
- An inclusive, Community cafe provided in co-production with vulnerable adults, e.g. Experienced Care Leavers, UK Resettlement families. A place where we can be inclusive, not only work together but learn and celebrate each other.
- Youth provision

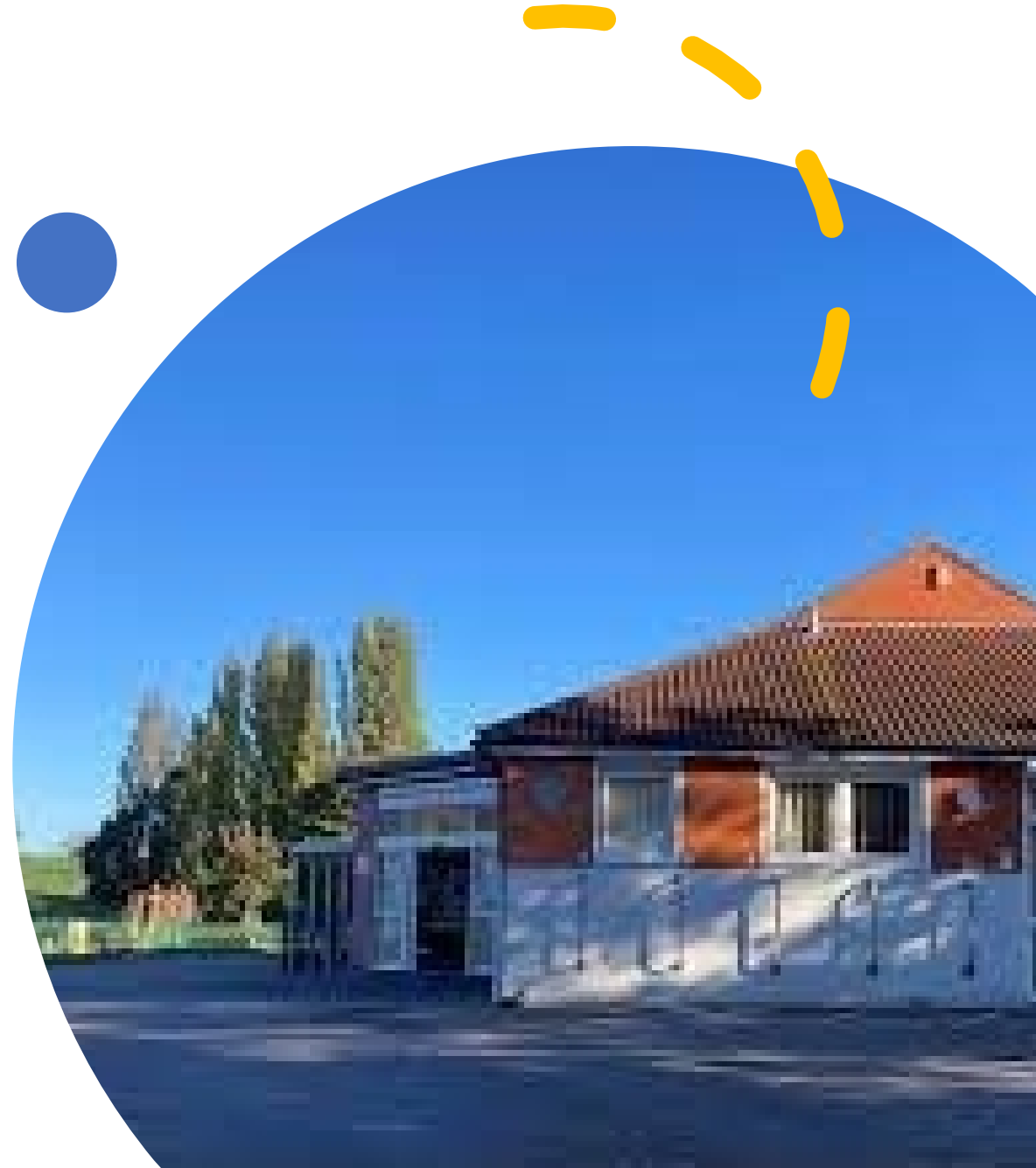


## **The vision will also include the following at the Castle Batch Family Hub**

An inclusive, community cafe provided in co-production with vulnerable adults, e.g. Experienced Care Leavers, UK Resettlement families. A place where we can be inclusive, not only work together but learn and celebrate each other.

An inclusive, community play park

Youth provision



# Clevedon Family Hub

An already established building with the following services:

- CAMHS
- Youth provision
- Health Visiting
- Family Support and Safeguarding

We continue to build on this offer.





“Start with what is necessary, then what is possible and suddenly you are doing the impossible.”

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## North Somerset Council

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

**Date of Meeting: 24 February 2023**

**Subject of Report: Corporate Parenting**

**Town or Parish: All**

**Officer/Member Presenting: Carrie Yeates, Head of Corporate Parenting & Beth Swann, Young Director**

**Key Decision: No**

#### **Reason:**

This report provides an update on the development of the Council's Corporate Parenting responsibilities.

#### **Recommendations**

For Members to note the progress since 2019 and take the opportunity to consider what more this Panel could contribute in its role as a Corporate Parent.

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

The report outlines some of the progress that has been made since the last Ofsted inspection.

#### **2. Policy**

While the concept of members viewing themselves as the parents of all children who are looked after came from the Quality Protects initiative launched in 1998 by Frank Dobson, the then Secretary of State for Health, the Children and Social Work Act 2017 defined for the first time in law the responsibility of corporate parents to ensure, as far as possible, secure, nurturing and positive experiences for 'our' children. This means that they should:

- act in their best interests, and promote their physical and mental health and wellbeing;
- encourage them to express their views, wishes and feelings, and take them into account, while promoting high aspirations and trying to secure the best outcomes for them;
- make sure they have access to services;
- make sure that they are safe, with stable home lives, relationships and education or work;
- prepare them for adulthood and independent living.



### **3. Details**

- 3.1 Following the Inspection of Local Authority Children's Services in March 2020 work was undertaken to refresh the Corporate Parenting Board in terms of membership and focus. Importantly the chairing role was taken on by the Lead Member for Children's Services and agendas were reshaped. The Board has become a Panel, recognised constitutionally, and it has benefited from two visits from the DfE's national implementation adviser who gave advice which North Somerset has implemented.
- 3.2 The Lead Member has encouraged all members to learn more about their unique role as corporate parents for our children and young people in care and our care experienced young people through a regular report to Full Council. On occasion this has been enhanced by the work of our Young Director who attended two Council meetings to talk about the work underway – this was very well received by members, some of whom went on to attend the Corporate Parenting Panels.
- 3.3 Every other Panel has a focus on business, actions and reports and includes our Young Director, leaders from Children's Services (including the director) colleagues from Health, CAMHS and Education, importantly the Virtual School Head Teacher. In between those meetings there are topic-based meetings which are facilitated by the Lead Member and the Young Director, with the topics chosen by our young people. Recent meetings have been very well attended by care experienced young people:
- One focused on housing and accommodation which a number of housing providers attended alongside our young people and members, including the Leader. This has resulted in an Action Plan being developed to address some of the issues raised, particularly the need for move on from supported accommodation in a timely manner.
  - The most recent one heard from our young people about their views on services that improve their physical and emotional health and wellbeing. It was attended by ten young people, four members and colleagues from Children's Services, CAMHS, Adult Mental Health and the Integrated Care Board. This has resulted in plans to update our Offer for care experienced young people and a greater awareness of some services that weren't hugely visible to young people.
- 3.4 The DfE adviser's revisit happened in September 2022 and his letter is an appendix to this report: he was very positive about the progress that had been made alongside the continued commitment to our care experienced young people.
- 3.5 Within Children's Support and Safeguarding the Fundamentals have been launched in the last year, supported by our Young Director, with a focus on 'language that cares.' There is more information about this in the appendices of the Improvement report at this Panel meeting.
- 3.6 During the meeting members will have the opportunity to hear from the Head of Corporate Parenting and our Young Director in relation to what has been achieved to date and their plans for the future.



#### **4. Consultation**

There is significant consultation with children and young people both individually and collectively. In addition we undertake the Bright Spots and Your Life, Your Care surveys, the findings of which influence our continuing improvement of services.

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

N/A.

#### **Costs**

N/A.

#### **Funding**

N/A.

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

N/A.

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

None.

#### **8. Risk Management**

N/A.

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

No.

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

N/A.

#### **11. Options Considered**

None.

#### **Author:**

Sheila Smith, Director of Children's Services

#### **Appendices:**

Letter from DfE Adviser.

#### **Background Papers:**

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6<sup>th</sup> September 2022

To Ms Jo Walker  
CEO  
North Somerset Council

**Follow up visit by National Implementation Adviser for Care Leavers.**

Dear Jo

Thank you for hosting my follow up visit on 6 September. During the follow up visit I heard about the rapid progress you have made to your offer to care leavers since my two day visit. As stated in the feedback meeting I was very impressed by the leadership and management approach to have a better offer for care leavers across the whole service area. What I also saw and heard was many examples where I felt the service was 'pitching' above good and that the whole approach and in particular the team approach stood out with workers who were highly responsive to the needs of care leavers. The local authority are in a good position to get to being great for care leavers. I have therefore made a number of further recommendations that will go some way in strengthening your offer to care leavers. These are my comments on progress and further recommendations:

1. The local authority accepted all of my recommendations and have made huge progress in implementing them.
2. There is a really strong buy-in from elected members and senior officers within the Corporate Parenting Board and the impact is being seen by them acting as Corporate Parenting Champions.
3. The Board has a real focus on the issues faced by both children in care and care leavers.
4. Partnership arrangements are strong in some areas whereas other areas need further development for example:
  - Housing – I would like the LA to consider a quota system for care leavers and a standardised housing starter pack which should include carpets and white goods for care leavers (possible use of VOID's monies).
  - Health – this came across as a developing partnership. I would like to see the ICB as part of their offer giving free prescriptions up to 25 for those ineligible for them.
  - Transitions – again this came across as a developing partnership. A stronger buy-in is needed from Adult Services around earlier planning for care leavers and a favoured approach for care leavers below thresholds.

5. The LA has worked very hard to get 'A Whole Council Approach'. Some opportunities in the 'family business' are been offered. It would be good to see the following things being considered to further strengthen your approach and your EET figure and to compliment your exceptional approach and joint working with Eclipse and ReBoot:
  - An offer from each department in the LA and for salary, etc to be made explicit and a commitment to ring-fencing a number of apprenticeship/ internships within the council
  - To consider the use of vacancies as an offer to care leavers.
  - Care Leavers to be given priority in the Apprenticeship Strategy – currently being developed.
6. The local offer is good but to further enhance the offer I would like the LA to pull out your guarantees to care leavers so that these can be accessed easily and for PA's to fully understand whats on offer. Within this it would be good to see a discreet offer to care leavers 21yrs to 25yrs, UASC, care leavers entering and leaving custody and for young parents.
7. Additional capacity has made a huge difference in your offer coming in sooner at 17yrs old for care leavers but it would be good to see if this could be reviewed and come in at 16yrs old when the first pathway plan is being developed.

And finally in the meeting with your care leavers they stated that things had certainly changed but there is still more to do. In particular they stated:

1. More mental health support.
2. Better communication about whats on offer.
3. Cost of living is tough.
4. Post 21yrs offer would be good.

Overall what I heard and saw is a good offer to care leavers and I look forward to seeing you again in the future

*M. Riddell MBE*

Mark Riddell MBE

National Implementation Adviser for Care Leavers

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

(to be updated following each Panel meeting)

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

## 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 <b>understanding the barriers along with the opportunities</b> . The Group to construct an appreciative enquiry sort of approach, bringing in the <b>learning from across council services as well as partner agencies and the Corporate Parenting Panel</b>	Final meeting 14 October 2022	<b><u>14 October 2022</u></b>  Discussed was: actioning mentoring help for care leavers.	Lisa Zakheim / Bethany Swann
CYPS Working Group – SEND Improvement Plan (Formerly the Accelerated Progress Plan working group)	The working group to identify and recommend further effective delivery of the Council SEND Improvement plan in relation to the experiences of Parents and Carers.	Scrutinise parents and carers experiences with SEND services in North Somerset and their partners.	Final meeting 17 January 2023	<b><u>1 November 2022; 17 January 2023</u></b> Updates on previously identified actions; feedback on the visit to Baytree School, Home to School Transport, direct payments; update on SEND review; SEND update from new Head of SEND.	Pip Hesketh

CYPS Working Group – Front Door	To hear from partner agency representatives		Final meeting to be 27 February 2023	<b>28 November 2022</b> Discussed were: the Ofsted review; Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub	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 <b>Note:</b> The School Organisation Group is a standing sub-group of the CYPS Policy and Scrutiny Panel and not a task and finish scrutiny working group.	Steering Group  Corporate Aim: Promoting lifelong learning opportunities  Key issues for the public  New National Code  To include Education Transformation (see below)	Varied, depending on work strand  <b>Ongoing</b> - to meet as required.  Regular reporting to Panel	<b>1 February 2023</b> Discussed were: Term dates and admission arrangements 2024-25	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

**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
Joint CYPS/ASH: Recommissioning of Pizey	To brief Members on the recommissioning of the Pizey Road respite centre	28/11/22	Members briefed.	Members support recommissioning	Alison Stone, Kate Williams, Teresa Stanley
Joint CYPS/HOSP: Mental Health Needs Assessment update briefing	To brief Members on the findings from the Mental Health Needs Assessment	07/02/23	Members briefed.		Matt Lenny, Georgie MacArthur

**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**

<b>Report Title</b>	<b>Purpose of Report</b>	<b>Outcomes (Actions)</b>	<b>Progress</b>	<b>Contact</b>
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
Overview of Findings from CAMHS Working Group	To update Scrutiny Panels on Findings from CAMHS Working Group	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 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.		Councillor Ciarán Cronnelly
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
Community of Practice SEND	To update the Panel on Community of Practice in North Somerset	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continue with work programme</li> <li>• Ensure the Community is credited with its work</li> </ul>		Councillor Catherine Gibbons,



		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Build habits and new ways of working</li> <li>• Consider transferability to other areas of work</li> </ul>		Pip Hesketh
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, Sally Varley
Adoption West Update Report	To update the Panel on Ofsted's inspection of Adoption West.	<p>i) That the Panel notes the outcome of Ofsted's inspection of Adoption West.</p> <p>ii) That the Panel highlights any risks or areas for further scrutiny.</p> <p>iii) That the Panel considers feedback it would wish to give to Adoption West via the current joint scrutiny arrangements.</p>		Sheila Smith, Becky Hopkins
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

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.	Sindy Dube,  Katherine Sokol
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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.	Progress noted.		Sheila Smith
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.	Panel updated.		Cllr Wendy Griggs
Schools Capital Programme	That the Panel notes the progress made on schemes to date and comments, if required, on future plans.	Progress noted.		Sally Varley
Adoption West Annual Report	That Members note the report and advise officers of any areas about which they would like further information.	Report noted.		Becky Hopkins
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.	Budget forecast noted.		Sindy Dube

Annual Complaints and Compliments report 2021-22	That Members review the content of the Annual Report on Children's Services Complaints and Complements referred to this panel for consideration and any further actions.	Contents of report reviewed.		Katherine Webb
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.	Approvals to Executive Member noted.		Simon Lock

### Panel Meeting 3 (24 February 2023)

Report Title	Purpose of Report	Outcomes (Actions)	Progress	Contact
Month 9 Budget Monitor	Budget monitoring			Sindy Dube
Improvement in Children's Services	To update the Panel on the directorate's progress since the Inspection of Local Authority Children's Services (ILACS) in 2020 and the Ofsted/CQC SEND Revisit in 2021.			Sheila Smith
Development of Family Hubs	To provide the Panel with the vision for the system wide Family Hub model within North Somerset.			Tracey Lewis / Dawn Newton
Corporate Parenting	To note the progress since 2019 and take the opportunity to consider what more this Panel could contribute in its role as a Corporate Parent.			Sheila Smith

**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

**Appendix**

**Chair’s recommendations for Panel priorities (in the new administration following local elections in May 2023)**

**For Panel discussion/endorsement**

Members to continue to contribute to the implementation of strategies to continue the improvement of children's services so to ensure a GOOD in the next Ofsted Inspection.

Members to continue to engage with our service users - families, schools, young people etc - to ensure the officers are further informed of the perceived successes and weaknesses of the services they receive.