

# Scrutiny for Policies, Children and Families Committee

Monday 20 June 2022

2.00 pm Luttrell Room - County Hall,  
Taunton



## SUPPLEMENT TO THE AGENDA

To: The Members of the Scrutiny for Policies, Children and Families  
Committee

We are now able to enclose the following information which was unavailable when the agenda was published:

Item 6	Family Safeguarding - overview (Pages 3 - 24)
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Item 7	School Place Planning (Pages 25 - 42)
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Democratic Service Team, County Hall, Taunton, TA1 4DY

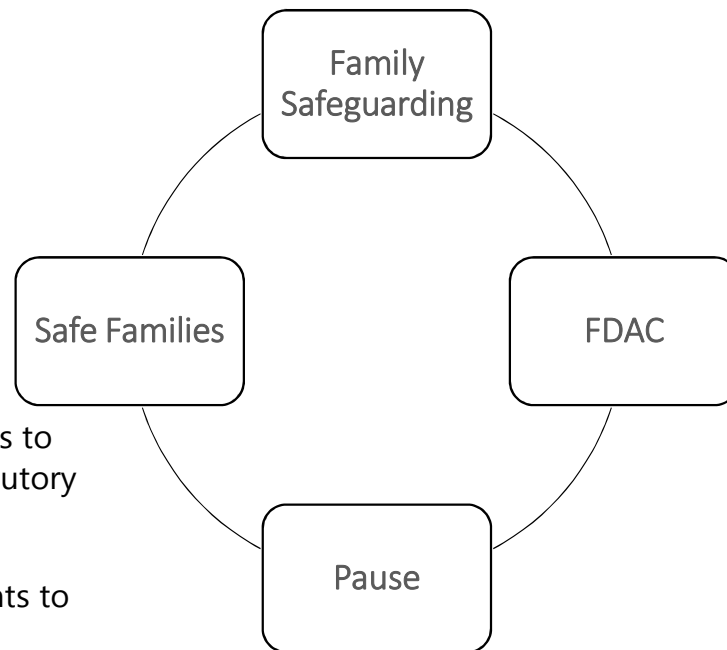
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# FAMILY SAFEGUARDING IN SOMERSET – Implementation update

**SCRUTINY  
JUNE 2022**



# FAMILY SOLUTIONS



**Safe Families** - aims to reduce demand on statutory children's services by providing community-based support to parents to enable them to help themselves and become more resilient in a sustainable way.

**Family Drug and Alcohol Court (FDAC)** – an alternative problem-solving court for care proceedings for families where drugs and alcohol are a significant factor. FDAC focusses on motivating parents to take responsibility for making changes to their own lives and working towards achieving abstinence from substance misuse to improve their children's lives.

**Pause** - a voluntary programme for women who have experienced repeat removals of children from their care. It aims to reduce the number of children being removed into care by working with women who have had children removed to improve their wellbeing, resilience, and stability before they become parents again.



# WHAT IS FAMILY SAFEGUARDING?

Bringing adult workers into integrated teams within children's social care to strengthen the whole family so that children can remain with birth families and not come into care.

- Nationally recognised model to enable families to stay together and reduce the number of children in care
- Delivers support to families when they need it, reducing system escalation, dependence and long-term trauma using motivational interviewing techniques
- Presents an opportunity for a culture shift – innovation, empowerment and staff feeling more valued
- Wider system impact. Reduced demand on emergency services (NHS & the Police), prevention savings to Adult Services (Mental Health & Drug services)
- Addresses Ofsted's criticisms of 'less than good' multi-agency working between services for vulnerable families - improving lives faster

# WHY IS FAMILY SAFEGUARDING RIGHT FOR SOMERSET?

‘Improving the conditions for vulnerable children across Somerset is best achieved by improving the life chances of the most vulnerable fastest.’ (2016/16 Somerset JSNA – children and young people)

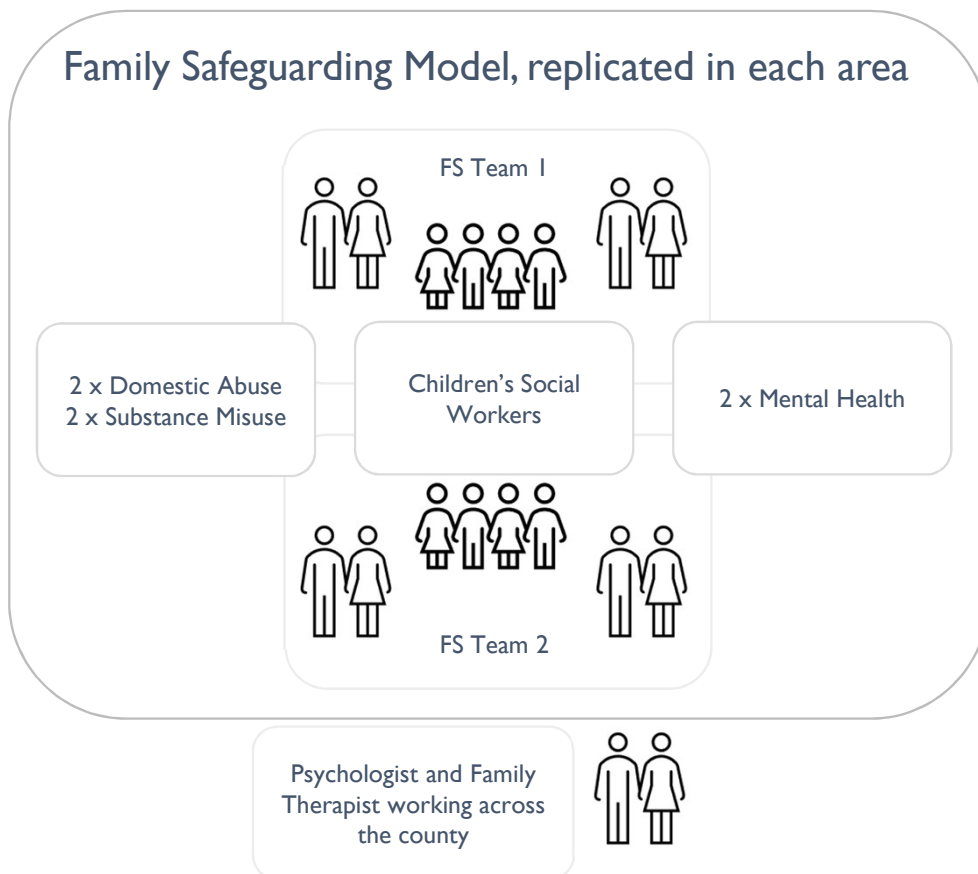
<http://www.somersetintelligence.org.uk/cyp/>





# WHAT DOES THE MODEL LOOK LIKE IN SOMERSET?

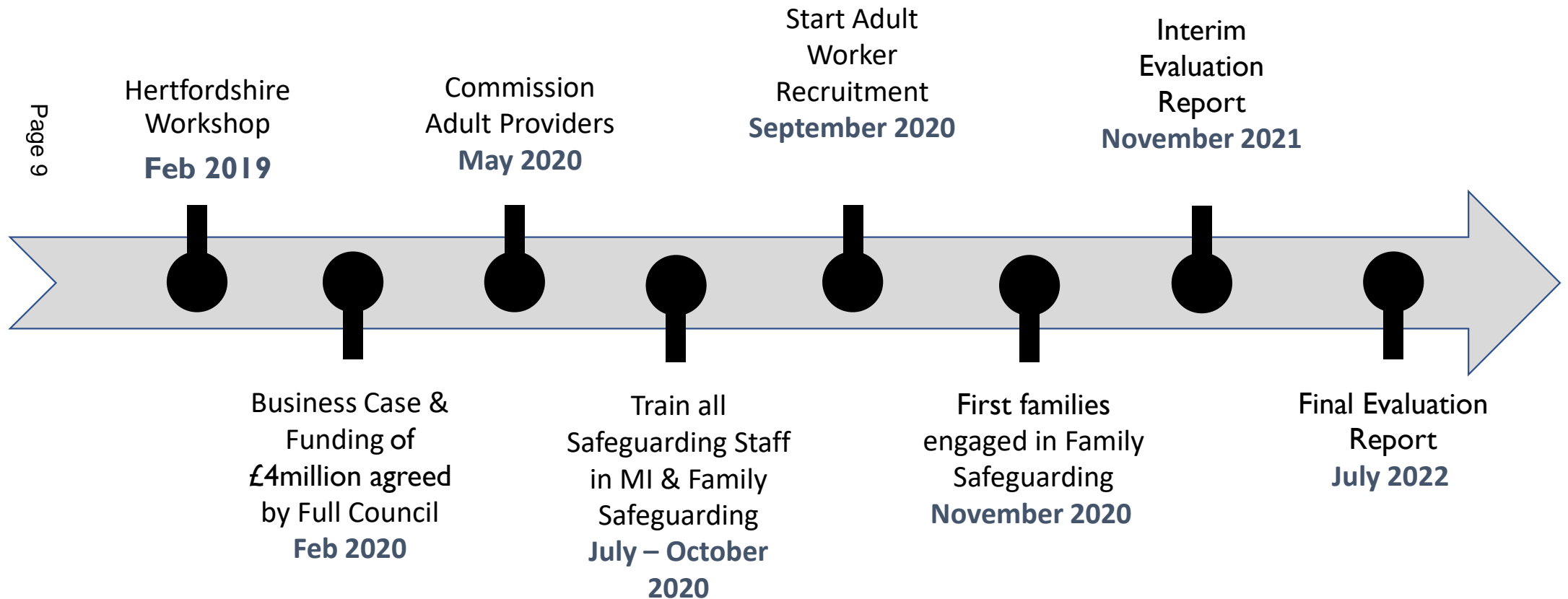
Family Safeguarding Model, replicated in each area





# TIMELINE

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# WHAT HAVE WE LEARNT SO FAR?

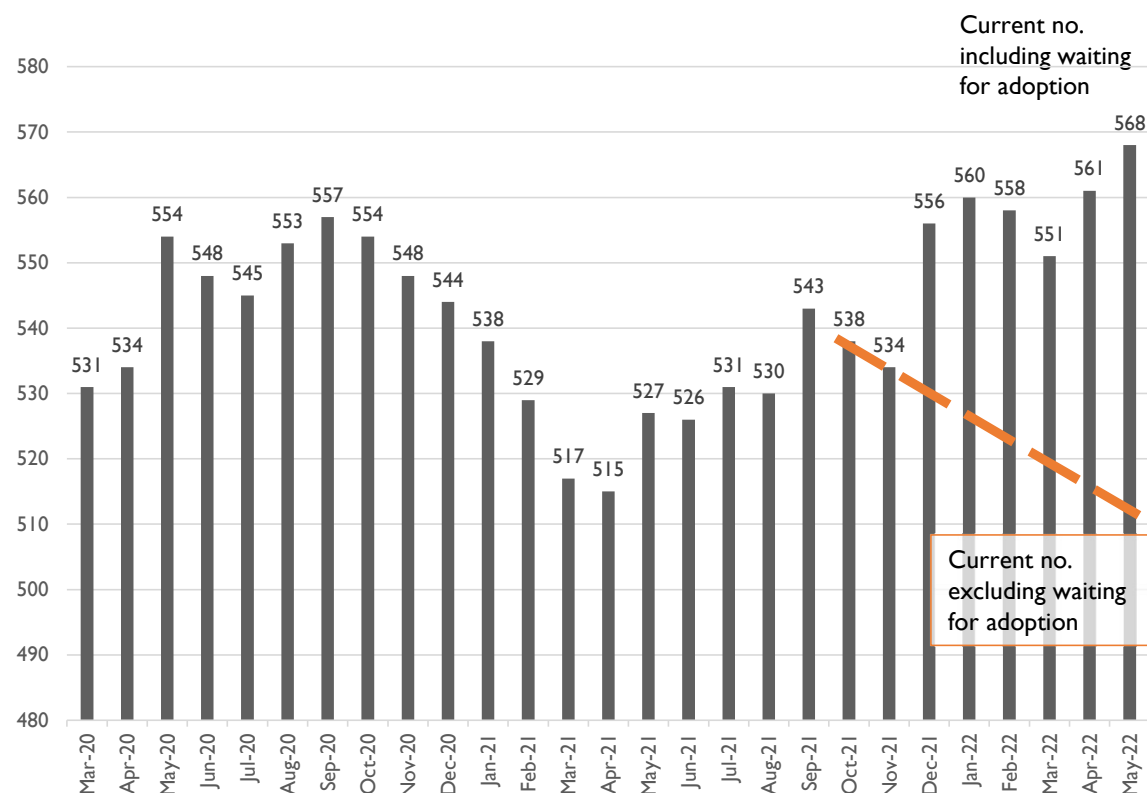
## STRENGTHENING PARTNERSHIPS

- Collaboration with providers on project development and launch
  - Turning Point (Substance Misuse)
  - The You Trust (Domestic Abuse)
  - Rethink, Open Mental Health (Mental Health)
    - mind
    - The Balsam Centre
    - Second Step
- Collaboration with NHS Foundation Trust and Open Mental Health
- Collaboration with Adult Services
- Joint provider recruitment



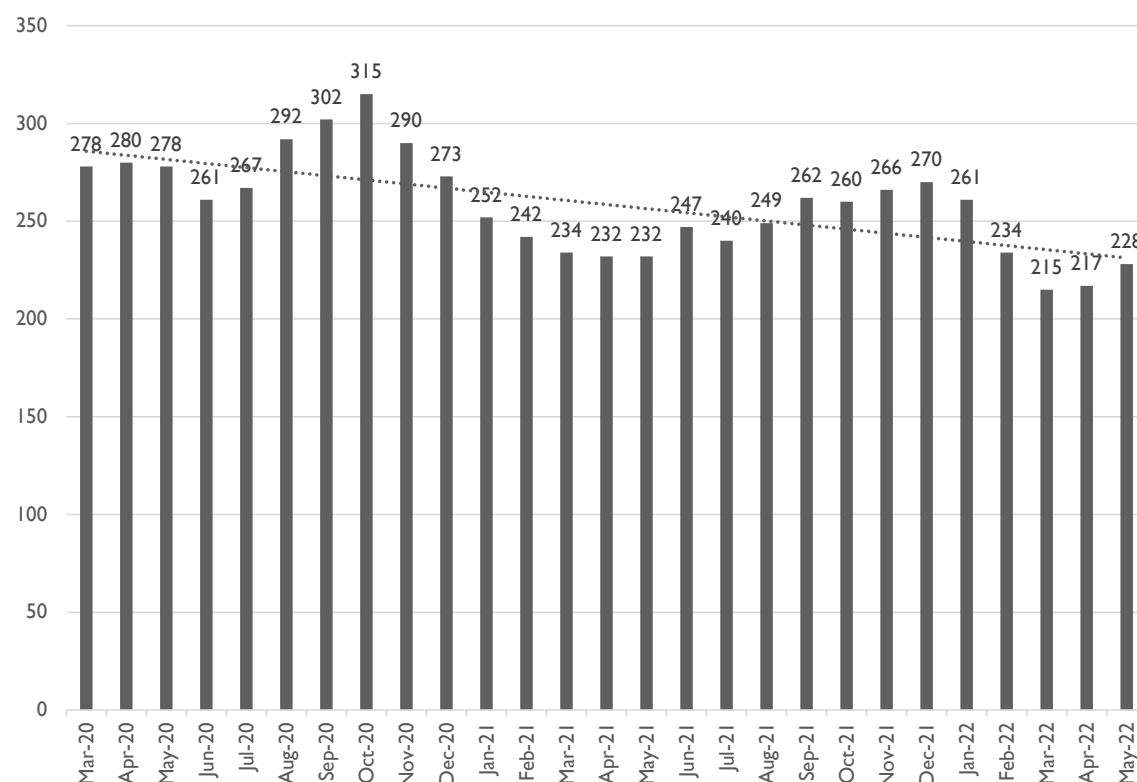
# NUMBER OF CHILDREN LOOKED AFTER

- The rate per 10,000 has increased slightly to 51 in May '22 from 49.9 in November 2020. Somerset's statistical neighbours have a higher rate of 59.5, while England has a much higher rate of 65.4
- The latest figures are higher due to delays in local adoption processes caused by technical issues. Once these children move out of care, the downward trend will continue, as shown by the dotted orange line.
- This would represent a rate similar to April 2021 of 46.2




# NUMBER OF CHILD PROTECTION PLANS

- The average number of child protection plans has reduced from 285 (March – Nov 2020) to 251 (Oct – Mar 2022). The rate per 10,000 has reduced from 26.4 in Nov 2020 to 20.4 in May 2022. Somerset's statistical neighbors have a rate of 42 and England's rate is 43.7.
- Somerset's percentage of children becoming subject to a 2nd or subsequent CP plan within 2 years of the first is 19.9% over the last 12 months, compared to 23.8% with our statistical neighbours – this shows that most of our interventions are successful first-time round.



# POSITIVE IMPACT



## Shining a light on excellence

The positive support that families have experienced continues to shine through, and it is clear they feel listened to by their workers who are there for them when needed. Where we recognise what families do well and are clear about what needs to change, this provides the platform for a trusting relationship. Perseverance has paid off where relationships can be more challenging to build. These are some comments that have been made in recent months:

- "My worker was extremely helpful and I know that I can contact her if I have any further questions"
- "Every time I needed someone to talk to, she's there"
- "She was really understanding of me and my keeping all the children safe"
- "She has been brilliant and has helped us so much"
- "In a way it was good having a social worker as they helped you when things are wrong"

# CASE STUDY

- Jasmine has had 4 previous children removed due to the impact of her clinical depression, use of alcohol and domestically abusive relationships on her ability to safely parent her children.
- She is now pregnant and has a new partner, Steven. A pre-birth assessment identified continued concerns about mental health issues for her and her partner and an apparent lack of motivation to work with professionals who could help them make changes. This led to a pre-birth child protection plan and consideration of care proceedings at birth.
- Family safeguarding team became involved. Drug and alcohol worker quickly established that Jasmine had stopped taking her mental health medication early in pregnancy as she was worried it may affect the baby. He was able to reassure Jasmine, with the midwife, that she could use this medication in pregnancy and to support her to think about what needed to change so she could look after her baby.
- As the couple's confidence built in their relationship with the social worker and drug and alcohol worker, they were able to talk about their use of alcohol and cannabis to manage their feelings and worries. With support, Jasmine and Steven have been able to identify that Steven needs some mental health support too and he is now linked to an Open Mental Health worker.
- Jasmine also undertook work on her self-esteem which has helped her to reflect on her previous relationships and how she and Steven can support each other as parents.
- As a couple Jasmine and Steven have been supported to reduce their alcohol and cannabis use and are now proud that they do not feel they need to drink at all anymore.
- The child protection plan has ended and there is no longer a need to consider care proceedings.
- The family safeguarding team will remain involved post birth to support with healthy relationships work and relapse prevention to support the couple to be able to care for their baby independently.





# FAMILY FEEDBACK

I like that I am not restricted to a strict programme and the **adult workers listen to what I need** and they see me face to face (not just over the phone). **I feel with the other services if I don't fit into their programme, they can't help me or I have to wait so long to get anything, its pointless.**

Why didn't you lot do this before? It really helps

**My mum trusts you, so I want to tell you what I think.**

I thought I'd blown it but I was told that relapse is part of recovery and while I know what I did is not ok, **I'm grateful to be given another chance and show them (CSC) that I can be a good dad to my baby. That's all I want.**



# SOCIAL WORKER FEEDBACK

***We had a parent alleging domestic abuse and we were able to immediately call in the domestic abuse worker first for advice, and then to contact the parent directly and arrange a safe place for the parent to go to. This immediate assistance is so different from our previous experience as external services are often not easily accessible or responsive.***

Having the adult workers has enabled me to get the support services for parents much more quickly. **The feedback from parents has been really positive – they feel that they are getting the support in a much quicker, more timely way.** The ability to form the relationships on a one to one basis is so much more helpful.

***Both parents being supported by Adult workers (and now through FDAC) have shared that, despite there being a long way to go, they are finding the support and intervention in place really supportive and encouraging.*** Although the level of involvement can feel a lot to manage at time, they truly feel involved in the planning, that has helped them find their voices and that they now feel optimistic that things can and will change.

Having access to a substance misuse worker and a mental health worker has enabled me to support a parent to access the support she needs in a timely fashion, ensuring that there is a solid plan in place to help her overcome the difficulties she is facing.

Having support from adult workers has reduced the risks to the child and prevented the need to escalate to care proceedings.

*When we worked with external services, it could often take a long time and we would lose the momentum and the parents would often lose faith and disengage. The adult workers are flexible and if something doesn't work, they try something different. **We think together as a team and we work out together with the parents what would be the most helpful intervention.***

# ADULT WORKER FEEDBACK

I am new to the role. I love working in the team and am really excited about how it will progress. I can already see the benefits of this way of working and how helpful it is to be able to get with families quickly to start addressing their need around drugs and alcohol before it escalates to crisis. **This is going to really help us support parents to reduce their substance misuse while keeping their children safe and in their care. Very positive experience so far.**

I love the way that I can just be with a parent. I can listen to them, giving them the time and space they need to tell me what they want. **We put together a programme of intervention to suit them but if this changes, I can adapt it as we go along.** I like the way I don't have to stick to a specific plan; if the need changes, I change with it. It can be so flexible. We adapt to the client; they don't need to adapt to us.

I am new to the team and everyone has been so helpful and welcoming; **I feel like I am really part of the team, but I have maintained my identity as a mental health professional and am learning so much about working with a family as a whole.**



# EVALUATION

- SCC have commissioned York Consulting to do the following:
  - Evaluation to understand the effectiveness of the Family Safeguarding Model in Somerset, with particular focus on workforce and family experience.
  - Cost – benefit analysis of the model.
  - To allow an assessment of the sustainability of the model and inform planning for future service development.
- York Consulting evaluated Family Safeguarding in Hertfordshire, Bracknell Forest, Luton, Peterborough and West Berkshire and are currently evaluating in Surrey
- Primary research with practitioners started in March 2021
- Primary research with families started in April 2021
- Regular data capture from SCC for quantitative analysis
- Interim Report November 2021 identified staff enthusiasm and commitment to model and families changing.
- Final report expected June 2022



# INTERIM REPORT HEADLINES

- The introduction of greater **multi-disciplinary working** has been extremely well received and is regarded as a central tenet of the model. Practitioners are confident that it will lead to positive outcomes for families and is the right way of working.
- The changes to working practices imposed by **the pandemic** have not all been disadvantageous. On the contrary, practitioners said that attendance at case-related meetings had improved, that they had become more productive because they were travelling less and that some families were more likely to willingly engage via remote communication.
- Practitioners were very positive about **Motivational Interviewing**, with a large majority of survey respondents (88%) viewing it as an effective tool for working with families.
- Almost all practitioners (98%) said that **communication** within their team was effective, while 93% said they felt confident about raising concerns with their manager.
- **Group Case Supervision** is also held in high regard: 90% of practitioners agreed that it results in a better shared understanding of risk, while 84% said it allows better decisions to be made for families.
- Levels of **job satisfaction** among the Family Safeguarding workforce are high: 93% said they are satisfied with the job they do. The number of **staff vacancies** among the Family Safeguarding teams has reduced significantly since mid-2020.

## ISSUES FOR CONSIDERATION – 1.THE PANDEMIC

- The pandemic sped up the planned implementation of the Family Safeguarding in Somerset, which was originally a 2 stage process starting in half the county, and became a whole county implementation.
- However, it took longer to fill some posts. Recruitment to Domestic Abuse and Drug and Alcohol posts was faster, but a lack of specialist staff in mental health led to a delay. This was resolved by linking with the innovative partnership Open Mental Health.
- Remote working has meant we have needed to be more creative to share Family Safeguarding related learning and means that working relationships – both between practitioners and with families – took longer to establish.
- However, working relationships are reported to be very positive, and the access to specialist workers has been particularly welcomed and supported.

*“The social work team are an absolute pleasure to work with. I feel extremely supported by them and valued. They have welcomed me, and we work extremely well together.” (Practitioner)*



## ISSUES FOR CONSIDERATION – 2. THE WORKBOOK

- More than three quarters (77%) of survey respondents were using the Workbook, but less than one third (28%) said it was improving their practice.
- People also regularly highlighted (what they perceive to be) the time-consuming nature of the Workbook. Practitioners are questioning the balance between the administrative requirements of the Workbook and the value or benefits it derives.
- The Workbook is an integral part of the Hertfordshire model, and it is expected that it will be used by all authorities implementing Family Safeguarding.
- We are aware the workbook has been identified as an issue in the other authorities (all evaluated by York) – we are working with Hertfordshire to improve the system.
- Individual-level data has taken some time to be extracted from the workbook and is now being used to understand performance. Somerset's work on this has been identified by York Consulting as a model of good practice to be used nationally.

*“Doing the work is the easy part – recording is the issue.” (Practitioner)*

## ISSUES FOR CONSIDERATION – 3. COMPLEXITY

- Practitioners were in general agreement that their caseloads were, on average, becoming more complex.
- This was attributed to the impacts of Covid-19 and the emerging multiple and entrenched issues within some families.
- Complexity has been identified as a national issue, seen across casework, in different teams, in all local authorities.

Any  
Questions?

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# Scrutiny update: overview of school and EY places

Amelia Walker

Assistant Director, Education Partnerships and Skills



# Pupil Numbers (mainstream)

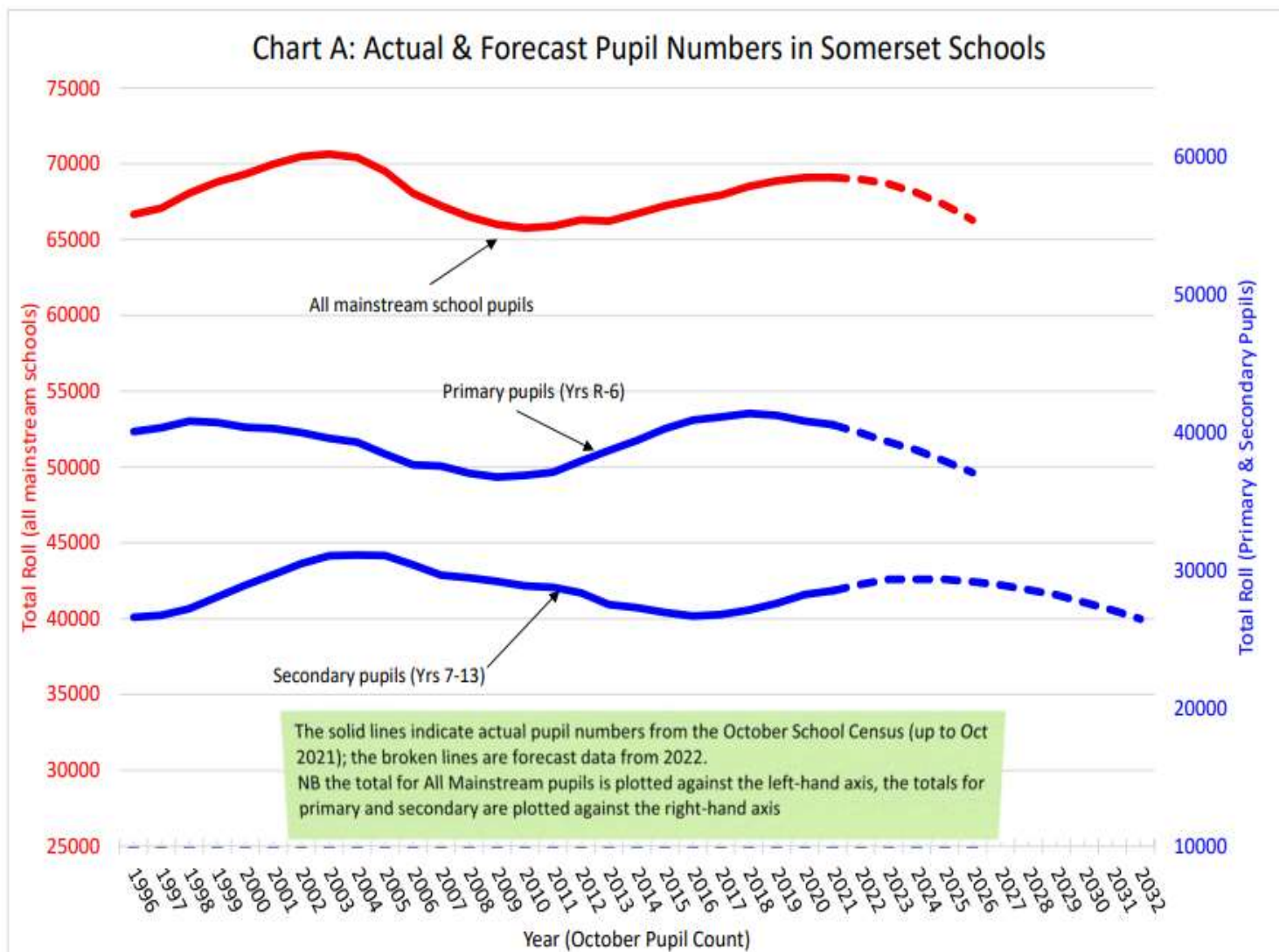
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Liz Smith



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# Key Trends

- 3476 fewer primary aged pupils forecast by 2026 compared to 2021 – a decline of 8.6%. In monetary terms this equates to 16.2m drop in pupil funding
- A forecast decrease in primary school rolls in 21 (out of 22) planning areas by 2026 when compared to 2021.
- 75.8% of primary schools are forecast to see a drop in pupil numbers from 2021 to 2026.
- Secondary aged pupil numbers which started to increase in 2017 are forecast to continue increasing until 2023 and plateau in 2024 and 2025 but then fall again until 2032
- A forecast decline in secondary school rolls in the medium to long term. The summary of change between 2021 and 2032 is 2173 fewer secondary aged pupils. In monetary terms this equates to 12.5 drop in funding?
- Bridgwater and Taunton secondary aged pupils are forecast to see further growth although the end of that period of increase is now in sight.
- Somerset's special schools have seen further growth in the number of pupils.
- Uncertainty regarding the long-term impacts of Covid-19 on pupil numbers.



# Challenges

- Planning school places within an academised system.
- Covid-19 came at time when there was already a decline in the number of births. The recovery in pupil migration in 2021 could be a new normal or a catchup from 2020
- Many schools will have to cut the number of classes they operate leading to staff redundancies. There could be viability issues for some of our smaller schools.
- Pockets of growth linked to large housing developments will still need to be managed and funded. Increased construction costs are of concern
- DfE require published forecasts to only include housing developments with a degree of certainty (eg full planning permission). Assessing likely impact of outline permissions has been made harder due to COVID and developers needing mitigation for Phosphates. All applications are taking longer to process.



# Response

- Maintain good working relationships with Academy Trusts and DfE Regional Directors.
- If admission limits remain at current levels within the context of a falling roll then there is potential for volatility in the system. Consider reducing admission limits in line with pupil forecasts and mothball vacant classrooms. However we can only do this for Community and Voluntary controlled schools
- With a 50m condition backlog removal of poor condition buildings is now possible with a falling roll.
- Ensure those small schools not yet working in a formal partnership with another school are supported to secure that quickly. This could be within an LA initiated Multi Academy Trust
- Where there is growth work with developers to secure contributions and land where appropriate.



# Pupil Numbers (SEND)

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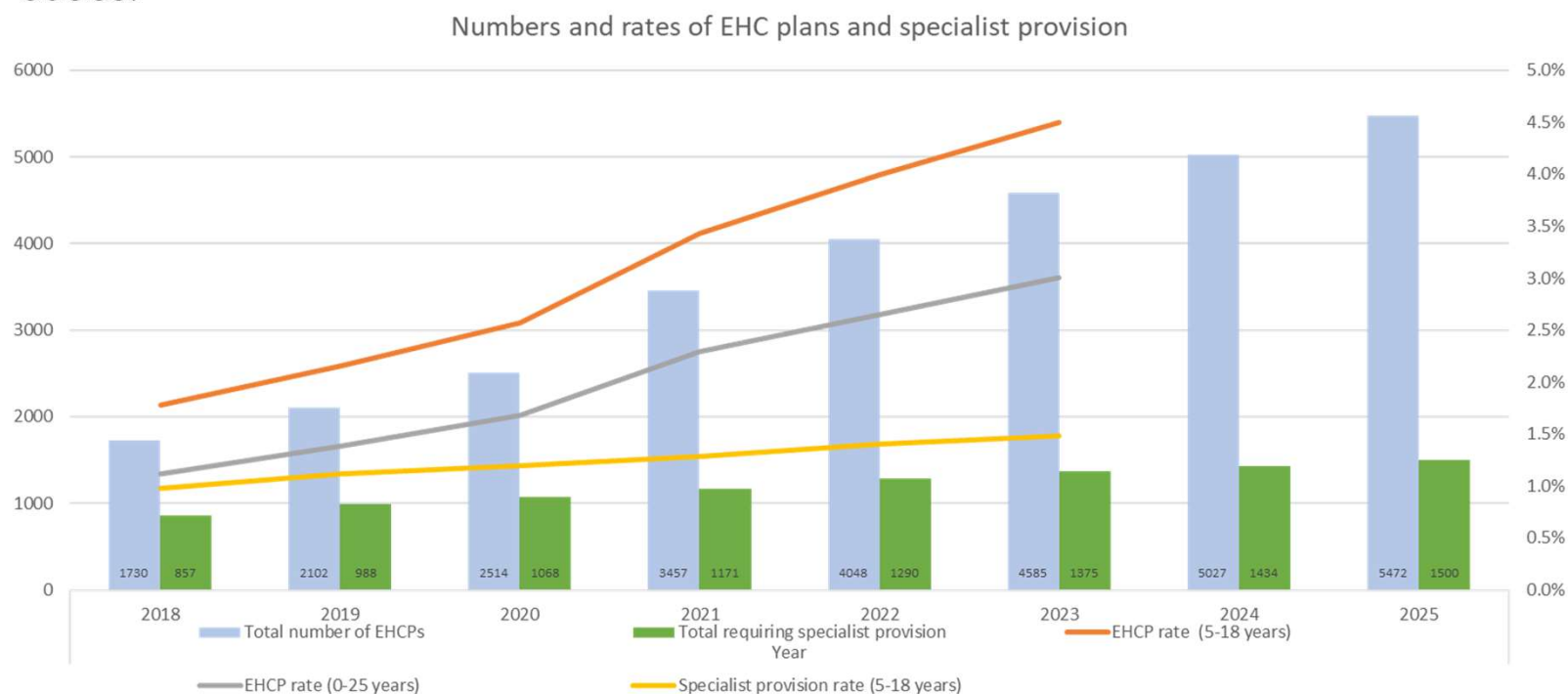
Phil Curd



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# Growth of Specialist Places

Since 2017, Somerset has seen a significant rise in the number of children with EHCPs. A trend that has been mirrored across the country, but amplified in Somerset as a result of the Council's historic 'low-statementing' approach. This has stimulated demand for additional places in special schools and resources bases.





# Challenges

The demand for special school places is resulting in an ongoing over-reliance on places in Independent Non Maintained Special Schools (INMSS).

The cost of these places is comparatively high when viewed against the costs of places in state-maintained special schools.

At present, Somerset has around 300 children and young people placed in INMSS settings at an annual cost of £18m. This level of annual spend in the INMSS sector results in an ongoing pressure on the High Needs Block.

While there are many children that require places in specialist provision in order to have their needs met, there are children in special schools who, with the right support, could have their needs met in mainstream schools, freeing up places for those that need them.



# Response

The ongoing demand for places has been partially offset by a £56m capital programme. Since 2018 we have delivered 10 significant special school and resource base projects providing 306 additional places at a cost of £49.25m. A £4.75m expansion project is underway at Sky Academy, providing another 40 places in time for September 2022.

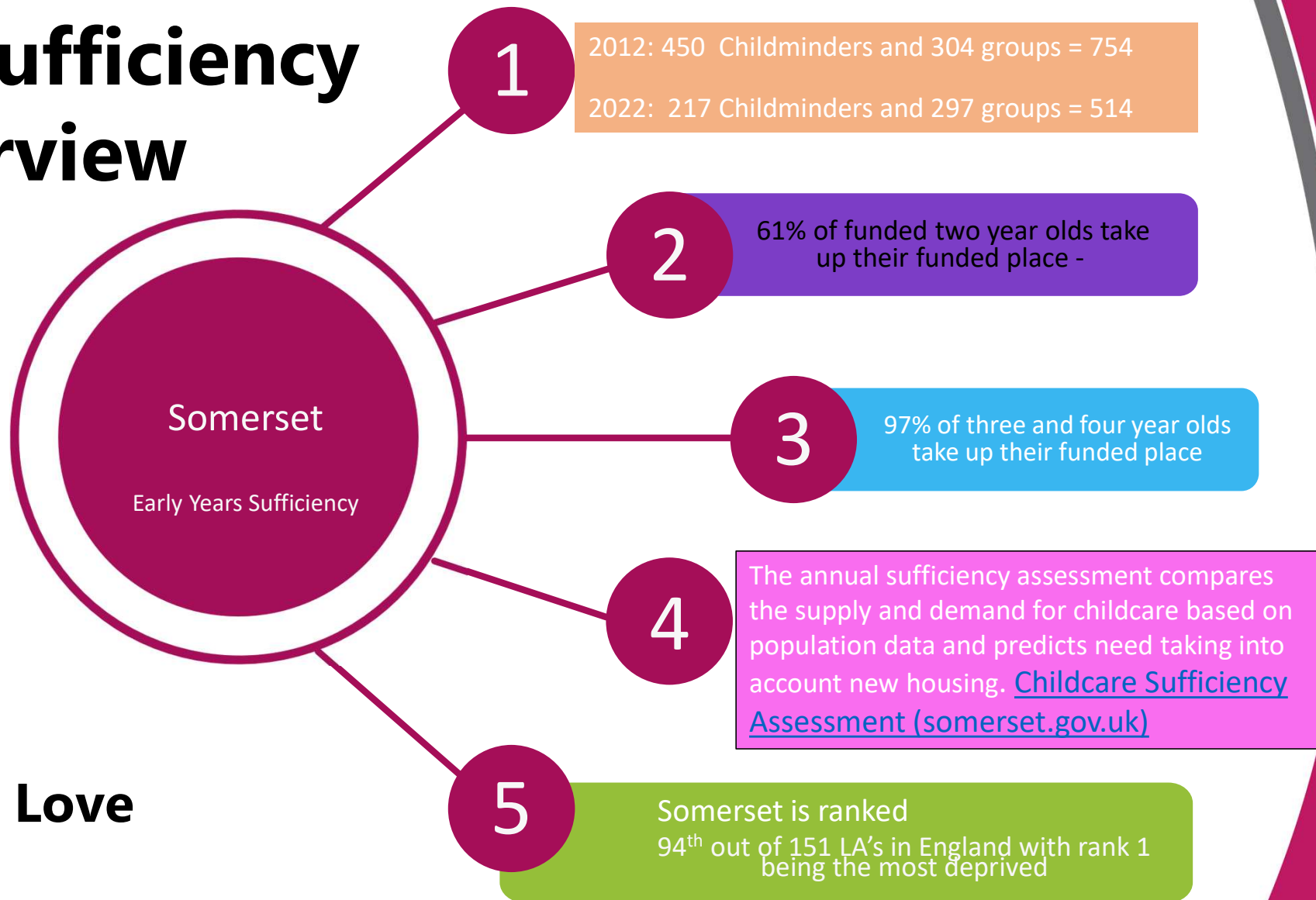
There is also a £2m capital approval available to deliver a specialist hub for up to 40 children in West Somerset and officers are working with the DfE to deliver a new special free school in South Somerset for 120 children.

In addition, officers are working with mainstream secondary schools to deliver a number of 'Enhanced Learning Provisions' which will those schools to support children's needs and reduce demand for places in special schools. Another project will deliver a Therapeutic Education provision for a small number of children. The Council's High Needs Capital Allocation will underpin this.



# EY Sufficiency Overview

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Sarah Love



# Potential shortfall/surplus in places

EYC	Age 0-1	Age 2 year olds	Age 3 and 4 year olds (Summer)
Ansford and Wincanton (23)	-109	141	-51
Bridgwater (58)	-108	490	41
B.O.S and Cheddar (38)	8	363	251
Chard, Crewkerne, Ilminster (48)	1	296	28
Frome and Shepton Mallet (73)	-71	343	-98
Huish Episcopi (20)	-15	73	2
Street, Glastonbury and Wells (53)	32	371	225
Taunton (70)	91	630	48
Wellington and Wiveliscombe (31)	-31	180	40
West Somerset (17)	-22	132	-38
Yeovil and Stoke-sub-Hamdon (83)	-28	473	96

# Key trends over the past ten years

- Significant reduction in Childminders over 50% decline
- Slight decrease in group provision (mainly rural)
- Decreasing birth rate
- Pandemic has changed parental demand
- Funding rates have not kept up with the increasing costs of the living wage and pensions

## Challenges & Risks

- Reduction in the number of Childminders resulting in less parental choice
- Uncertainty/changes in parental demand/economic downturn
- Financial sustainability concerns, particularly in voluntary run groups
- Rising costs - inflation rate highest in 30 years
- Reduction of private fees income
- Lack of places in some rural areas and nurseries at full capacity in some urban areas
- Gap in knowledge of un-registered wrap around and holiday provision



# Immediate pressures

**Workforce crisis** – difficulty recruiting qualified staff and retaining them means

- Reduced operational delivery /capping numbers. Closure of baby rooms leading to insufficient baby places across the county
- Insufficient wrap around and holiday provision for statutory aged children
- 5 nursery provisions will need to go out to tender due to change of ownership
- Not enough qualified staff to meet statutory staffing requirements

## **Sustainability and viability**

- Cost of living % rising above the government funding increase %
- Rising business, inflation, fuel, utility and food costs plus National Living Wage increased by 6.8% (April 2022)
- Low funding rates result in low pay and poor benefits for staff
- Jobs in other sectors pay more for fewer responsibilities and shorter hours



# Tackling the issues

- Somerset early years recruitment and retention campaign, also lobbying for a National campaign and working with SW LA's
- Working with DWP Work coaches to promote vacancies
- Funding job adverts through Dillington Advertising Services
- Promoting early years careers with partners in Colleges and at careers fairs
- Trying to find childcare solutions for parents through our Childcare Finder Service
- Raising the profile of working in early years
- Linking providers via EY Communities to share staff resources where possible





# Transport Costs and Projections

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# Transport Costs

School transport is a significant cost pressure for the Council, with mainstream and specialist transport costing around £17m annually.

The cost of specialist transport has seen the most significant growth (£4.6m in 2018/19 to £6.8m in 2021/22) as the number of children travelling to specialist settings has increased.

In parallel, the cost of providing transport has increased significantly as a result of sector specific inflation, contractual increases (20%-30%) and rising fuel prices. These pressures are set to continue.

To offset these cost increases a number of interventions have been implemented:

- Introduction of an in-house big bus fleet
- A new Dynamic Purchasing System
- Expansion of Personal Travel Payment scheme
- Statutory-only approach to policy
- The purchase of route optimising software



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