

SCRUTINY FOR POLICIES, CHILDREN AND FAMILIES COMMITTEE

Monday 3 October 2022

1.00 pm Luttrell Room - County Hall,
Taunton



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

Cllr L Redman (Chair), Cllr O Patrick (Vice-Chair), Cllr S Aujla, Cllr J Baker, Cllr S Carswell,
Cllr A Hadley, Cllr S Hart, Cllr B Height, Cllr J Hunt, Cllr J Kenton, Cllr E Potts-Jones, Cllr M Lovell
and Cllr J Snell

R Hobbs, E Tipper and The Revd T Osmond – co-opted members

All Somerset County Council Members are invited to attend.

Issued By Scott Wooldridge, Strategic Manager - Governance and Democratic Services - 23
September 2022

For further information about the meeting, please contact Neil Milne on 01823 357628 or
neil.milne@somerset.gov.uk or Fiona Abbott on 01823 357628 or
fiona.abbott@somerset.gov.uk

Guidance about procedures at the meeting follows the printed agenda.

This meeting will be open to the public and press, subject to the passing of any resolution
under Regulation 4 of the Local Authorities (Executive Arrangements) (Meetings and Access to
Information) (England) Regulations 2012.

This agenda and the attached reports and background papers are available on request prior to
the meeting in large print, Braille, audio tape & disc and can be translated into different
languages. They can also be accessed via the council's website on
www.somerset.gov.uk/agendasandpapers

**Are you considering how your conversation today and the actions
you propose to take contribute towards making Somerset Carbon
Neutral by 2030?**



RNID typetalk

AGENDA

Item Scrutiny for Policies, Children and Families Committee - 1.00 pm Monday 3 October 2022

****Information on the Committee****

**** Public Guidance notes contained in agenda annexe ****

1 **Apologies for Absence**

to receive Members' apologies

2 **Declarations of Interest**

Details of all Members' interests in District, Town and Parish Councils can be viewed on the [Council Website](#)

The Statutory Register of Member's Interests can be inspected via request to the Democratic Service Team.

Any new or updated declarations of interest will be received.

3 **Minutes from the previous meeting held on 5 September 2022** (Pages 11 - 16)

The Committee is asked to confirm the minutes are accurate.

4 **Public Question Time**

The Chair will allow members of the public to ask a question or make a statement about any matter on the agenda for this meeting. **These questions may be taken during the meeting, when the relevant agenda item is considered, at the Chair's discretion.**

5 **Scrutiny for Policies, Children and Families Committee Work Programme** (Pages 17 - 24)

To receive an update from the Governance Manager. To assist the discussion, the following documents are attached:

- (a) The Committee's Work Programme
- (b) The Committee's Outcome Tracker

Please use the following link to view the latest Executive Forward Plan of planned key decisions that have been published on the Council's website

[Executive Forward Plan of Key Decisions](#)

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6 **Ofsted Inspection Result - Children's Social Care Services - update** (Pages 25 - 34)

To receive a verbal update from the Council's Deputy Director Children's Services on the Inspection of Somerset local authority children's services.

The Inspection of the Council's Children's Social Care services in July rated the services Good across the board - the inspection report was published on 21 September 2022 (the link to the report is available [here](#))

Note - There will be an opportunity to have a more detailed discussion at the next meeting of the Scrutiny Committee.

7 **Home to School Transport** (Pages 35 - 44)

To receive a presentation providing an overview of statutory duties, demand and developments.

The item will be led by the Council's Strategic Manager, Access & Additional Learning Needs Phil Curd and Service Manager Transporting Somerset John Perrett.

Note – the Chair will allow 35 minutes for this agenda item.

8 **Children's Services Budget Monitoring Report**

This item will focus on home to school cost management and will be led by the Council's Assistant Director Inclusion Dr Rob Hart, and Strategic Manager, Access & Additional Learning Needs Phil Curd and Service Manager Transporting Somerset John Perrett

For background see [2022/23 Revenue Budget Monitoring Report – Month 4 – End July 2022](#)

Note the Chair will allow 30 minutes for this agenda item.

9 **SEND Draft Strategy and Development** (Pages 45 - 50)

This item will be led by the Council's Assistant Director Inclusion Dr Rob Hart, and Strategic Manager, Commissioning, Vikki Hearn.

There are a number of background papers – for sight of these please contact the

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report author: -

1. Draft SEND JSNA
2. SEND Charter - see [2018 02 20 SEND Charter.pdf \(somerset.org.uk\)](#)
3. Somerset Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) Peer Challenge 23 May 2022 – 26 May 2022 Feedback Report
4. Impower Somerset SEND Transformation Discovery Report July 2022

Note – the Chair will allow 40 minutes for this agenda item

10 **Items for Information - Standing Item**

This is a standing agenda item and will provide details of information sent to Committee members in between meetings, that cover Children & Families Scrutiny policy areas.

11 **Any other urgent items of business**

The Chair may raise any items of urgent business.

Information about the Committee

This Scrutiny Committee covers the full range of functions covered by the Lead Member for Children and Families. The key focus of the Committee is to assist the Lead Member, the Executive, the Council and its partners to improve the life chances of all children in Somerset through effective and joined up approaches to the delivery of services.

The membership of the Committee includes 2 co-opted church representatives, 2 co-opted parent governor representatives, 2 school governor representatives and 1 representative from the Schools Forum. These co-opted members have voting rights on education matters.

The Committee has a useful 'glossary of terms' document, and this can be found on the website on the following link – [Glossary of Terms](#)

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Guidance notes for the meeting

1. **Council Public Meetings**

The former regulations that enabled virtual committee meetings ended on 7 May 2021. Since then, all committee meetings need to return to face-to-face meetings. The requirement is for members of the committee and key supporting officers to attend in person, along with some provision for any public speakers. Provision will be made wherever possible for those who do not need to attend in person including the public and press who wish to view the meeting to be able to do so virtually.

2. **Inspection of Papers**

Any person wishing to inspect minutes, reports, or the background papers for any item on the agenda should contact Democratic Services at democraticserviceteam@somerset.gov.uk or telephone 01823 357628.

They can also be accessed via the council's website on www.somerset.gov.uk/agendasandpapers.

Printed agendas can also be viewed in reception at the Council offices at County Hall, Taunton TA1 4DY.

3. **Members' Code of Conduct requirements**

When considering the declaration of interests and their actions as a councillor, Members are reminded of the requirements of the Members' Code of Conduct and the underpinning Principles of Public Life: Honesty; Integrity; Selflessness; Objectivity; Accountability; Openness; Leadership. The Code of Conduct can be viewed at: [Code of Conduct](#)

4. **Minutes of the Meeting**

Details of the issues discussed, and recommendations made at the meeting will be set out in the minutes, which the Committee will be asked to approve as a correct record at its next meeting.

5. **Public Question Time**

If you wish to speak, please contact Democratic Services by 5pm 3 clear working days before the meeting. Email democraticserviceteam@somerset.gov.uk or telephone 01823 357628.

Members of public wishing to speak or ask a question will need to attend in person or if unable can submit their question or statement in writing for an officer to read out.

After entering the Council building you may be taken to a waiting room before being taken to the meeting for the relevant agenda item to ask your question. After the agenda item has finished you will be asked to leave the meeting for other members of the public to attend to speak on other items.

A slot for Public Question Time is set aside near the beginning of the meeting, after the minutes of the previous meeting have been agreed. However, questions or statements about any matter on the agenda for this meeting may be taken at the time when each matter is considered.

At the Chair's invitation you may ask questions and/or make statements or comments about any matter on the Committee's agenda – providing you have given the required notice. You may also present a petition on any matter within the Committee's remit. The length of public question time will be no more than 30 minutes in total (20 minutes for meetings other than County Council meetings).

You must direct your questions and comments through the Chair. You may not take a direct part in the debate. The Chair will decide when public participation is to finish.

If an item on the agenda is contentious, with many people wishing to attend the meeting, a representative should be nominated to present the views of a group.

An issue will not be deferred just because you cannot be present for the meeting. Remember that the amount of time you speak will be restricted, to three minutes only.

In line with the council's procedural rules, if any member of the public interrupts a meeting the Chair will warn them accordingly.

If that person continues to interrupt or disrupt proceedings the Chair can ask the Democratic Services Officer to remove them as a participant from the meeting.

Provision will be made for anybody who wishes to listen in on the meeting only to follow the meeting online.

6. **Meeting Etiquette for participants**

- Only speak when invited to do so by the Chair.
- Mute your microphone when you are not talking.
- Switch off video if you are not speaking.
- Speak clearly (if you are not using video then please state your name)

- If you're referring to a specific page, mention the page number.
- Switch off your video and microphone after you have spoken.
- There is a facility in Microsoft Teams under the ellipsis button called turn on live captions which provides subtitles on the screen.

7. **Exclusion of Press & Public**

If when considering an item on the agenda, the Committee may consider it appropriate to pass a resolution under Section 100A (4) Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 that the press and public be excluded from the meeting on the basis that if they were present during the business to be transacted there would be a likelihood of disclosure of exempt information, as defined under the terms of the Act.

If there are members of the public and press listening to the open part of the meeting, then the Democratic Services Officer will, at the appropriate time, ask Participants to leave the meeting when any exempt or confidential information is about to be discussed.

8. **Recording of meetings**

The Council supports the principles of openness and transparency. It allows filming, recording, and taking photographs at its meetings that are open to the public - providing this is done in a non-disruptive manner. Members of the public may use Facebook and Twitter or other forms of social media to report on proceedings. No filming or recording may take place when the press and public are excluded for that part of the meeting.

Please contact the Committee Administrator or Democratic Services on 01823 357628 or email democraticservicesteam@somerset.gov.uk if you have any questions or concerns.

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SCRUTINY FOR POLICIES, CHILDREN AND FAMILIES COMMITTEE

Minutes of a Meeting of the Scrutiny for Policies, Children and Families Committee held in the Luttrell Room - County Hall, Taunton, on Monday 5 September 2022 at 1.00 pm

Present: Cllr L Redman (Chair), Cllr O Patrick (Vice-Chair), Cllr S Aujla, Cllr J Baker, Cllr S Carswell, Cllr A Hadley, Cllr S Hart, Cllr B Height, Cllr J Hunt, Cllr J Kenton, Cllr E Potts-Jones and Cllr M Lovell,
R Hobbs and E Tipper – co-opted members

Other Members present: Cllr T Munt and Cllr C Ellis

Other members attending virtually; Cllr A Kendall, Cllr F Nicholson, Cllr A Dingwall and Cllr L Trimnell

Apologies for absence: Cllr J Snell and The Revd T Osmond (co-opted member)

1 Declarations of Interest - Agenda Item 2

The following declaration of interest was made at the meeting: -

(a) Ruth Hobbs – co-opted member – Governor at Herne View Church of England Primary School.

2 Minutes from the previous meeting held on 25 July 2022 - Agenda Item 3

The minutes of the meeting held on Monday 25 July 2022 were approved and signed as a correct record.

3 Public Question Time - Agenda Item 4

There were no questions asked, statements made or petitions presented.

4 Scrutiny for Policies, Children and Families Committee Work Programme - Agenda Item 5

The Committee considered and noted the Committee's current work programme and outcome tracker and the Executive Forward Plan of planned key decisions in coming months, including Executive meetings.

The Chair apologised that the papers for the meeting had been circulated late and that for future meetings they will be submitted in a more timely manner.

The Chair stressed the need for clarity on which items are considered by which Scrutiny Committee and has also asked the Scrutiny Manager to arrange a meeting of the 4 Scrutiny Committee Chairs.

The Governance Manager mentioned that a '[glossary of terms](#)' has recently been published on the Council's website.

It was agreed that: -

- The Home to School Transport Policy item, which is being considered at the Place Scrutiny Committee on 6 September, be brought to the next meeting of this Committee.
- Budget monitoring of Children's Services will be reported on an ongoing basis for the Committee.
- Members were invited to contact the Chair and Vice Chair, or support Officers if they have any further items they would like the Committee to focus on.
- The work plan and outcome tracker be noted.

5 **2022 Key Stage assessment results for Somerset** - Agenda Item 6

The Committee received a PowerPoint presentation from the Council's Assistant Director, Education Partnerships and Skills, Amelia Walker who provided a data and standards update, including the early indications from the 2022 Key Stage assessment results for Somerset and the areas of focus.

Testing generates vast quantities of data and therefore accurate and reliable results to pupil level will not be in the public domain until January 2023. The national data is released in October and the Committee would like to see that when can (possibly November mtg). Ms Walker said that she would circulate the presentation given to the informal meeting last year which provided an introduction to education data and performance.

The Committee discussed the presentation, and the following questions and issues were raised and responded to, as follows: -

- Referred to the early indications / KS2 assessment data and whether the gap has widened and areas of focus – explained that comparisons are difficult and that all standards have moved
- Early years results and younger children and whether there is a plan of action – are priorities and strategies for early years; impact of pandemic has been particularly difficult for the younger children
- Impact of the restructure and early years – this is currently being consulted on and trying to create dedicated capacity
- Referred to slide 5 indicating difference between estimated and actual grade in GCSE English 2017-21 independent and state funded selective

schools – highlighted this is taken from research by a national Think Tank and had included the slide due recent press about it

- Discussion about KS3, which has no formal national assessment (and has been referred to in the past as ‘the wasted years’) and can confuse ‘assessment’ with ‘testing’
- Referred to slide 7 which provided some early indicative information on the position in Somerset relative to the national position compared to 2019 – writing at Key Stage 2 analysis suggests that a sharp downturn in writing outcomes has mitigated the encouraging improvement in reading; are putting programme in place for schools; explained that fuller details (pupil level data) will come through later
- Brief discussion about the National Tutoring Programme and take up

On behalf of the Committee the Chair thanked Ms Walker for the informative presentation.

6 **Academisation - moving towards 2030** - Agenda Item 7

The Committee received a PowerPoint presentation from the Council’s Assistant Director, Education Partnerships and Skills, Amelia Walker which provided an update on academisation in Somerset, following the publication of the Government Schools White Paper ‘Opportunity for All’ in March 2022. This set out the intention to: -

- See all schools in ‘strong trusts’ by 2030
- Achieve greater clarity about the respective roles for the Department for Education, Local Authorities, Ofsted, Multi-academy trusts (MAT) and the Schools Adjudicator
- Create ‘Education Investment Areas’ where standards are lower (following the end of Opportunity Areas)
- Replace Regional Schools Commissioner offices with Regional Teams
- Raise standards in existing trusts

Ms Walker highlighted the implications and work being undertaken in Somerset – this includes discussions with schools about the traded offer (‘the Patchwork’). A group of secondary schools has put together a partnership with feeder primary schools to collaborate on school improvement (‘Somerset Partnership’) - neither is a replacement for academisation. The traded offer is a new traded offer, and it is intended to mirror how trusts support schools more closely, but an LA cannot be a trust. The Partnership is similar to existing groups in the county known as ‘Community Learning Partnerships’.

The Committee discussed the presentation, and the following questions and issues were raised and responded to, as follows: -

- Question about why ‘we’ are not planning a ‘Local Authority MAT’ – explained that officers have not put forward a proposal for this at this time and also the government has said that it is not minded to permit

the establishment of more than a tiny number of LA MATs initially and it is extremely unlikely that Somerset would be one of them at the current time; does not mean that there will be no new MATs for LA schools to join over course of next 8 years

- Discussion about the proposed Education Investment Areas and that West Somerset will now be the only south West's only priority education investment area, what this may mean in practice and whether its areas of focus are in fact the right ones – highlighted this is a government initiative and are awaiting further details on what is likely to be in that plan
- Discussion on the timescale and work involved in all schools becoming academies by 2030
- Discussion on the condition of LA school estate – recognised that this is a national concern and are focussing on this and working very closely with Corporate Property and making a number of strategic decisions; there is also a need to expand the Traded Offer, as explained above
- Discussion on the 'democratic deficit' and performance of schools in the reformed system and monitoring – explained that are at an early stage working on proposals in relation to accountability, the 'democratic deficit' and monitoring of trusts and are engaging with national organisations and will come back with proposals when they have been formulated.

It was agreed that a progress update be given to the Committee in 6 months.

7 **Update on budgetary pressures in Children's Services** - Agenda Item 8

The Committee received a PowerPoint presentation from the Council's Deputy Director of Children's Services, Claire Winter who provided an update on the budgetary pressures in Children's Services.

As a background to the item, the link to the revenue budget monitoring report had been shared with the Committee. This report had been considered at the Executive meeting on 17 August 2022 and concerns the 2022/23 revenue budget monitoring report – month 3 – end June 2022, and in particular the information relating to Children's Services.

The key areas of pressure are external placements for children in care and secondly education transport – home to school and SEND transport and Ms Winter outlined the key performance cost drivers and actions / activity to address pressures. It was confirmed that an overview of home to school transport will be considered at the Place Scrutiny Committee on 6 September 2022 and will be brought to this Committee in October 2022.

It was agreed that the following will be circulated (a) 'Staying Put' policy; (b) numbers in residential care data for 21/22 and how we sit with statistical neighbours.

The Committee also congratulated the department for winning the 2022 LGC award for the fostering campaign.

It was agreed that Children's Services budget monitoring will be discussed at the next meeting. The Chair also highlighted that at some point the Committee may consider setting up a task and finish group looking at external care placements, in conjunction with Corporate Parenting Board.

8 Homes for children in Somerset - progress update
- Agenda Item 9

The Committee received a PowerPoint presentation from the Council's Strategic Manager, Daniel Moncrieff who provided a detailed update on the strategic partnership between the Council and 'The Shaw Trust' to deliver homes for complex children and young people including homes for children, high needs fostering and therapeutic education.

Mr Moncrieff outline the progress to date, the purchase of homes, staffing, recruitment, the proposed joint engagement strategy, timelines and next steps. The plan is to open the first homes in early 2023.

The Committee had a broad discussion covering - the work undertaken and that this is an exciting project; engagement with the community, including member engagement; location of the properties; corporate parenting role; need to get message across that they will be 'family' homes and asked to see the 'FAQ' document.

The Chair thanked Mr Moncrieff for the detailed update.

9 Items for Information - Standing Item - Agenda Item 10

The Committee noted the following items for information: -

- (a) Task and Finish Group review of School Exclusions (23 September 2020): -
[Covering report](#)
[Task and Finish Group Report](#)
[Cabinet members response](#)
[Cabinet Digest](#)
- (b) [Task Group review of Elective Home Education](#) (June 2015) and [Report to Committee 3 March 2021](#)

10 Any other urgent items of business - Agenda Item 11

Cllr O Patrick raised the following item at the meeting: -

What is in place to address the impact of COVID on pupil / staff absences and school closures – it was agreed that this will be followed up by a written response.

(The meeting ended at 3.56 pm)

CHAIR

Scrutiny for Policies Children and Families Committee Work Plan 2022 - 2023

Overarching themes	Committee meeting dates / proposed agenda items	Lead Officer/Item Lead
5 September 2022 @ 1 pm		
Training / briefing item	2022 Key Stage assessment results for Somerset (with recap of 2019 assessment results for Somerset)	Assistant Director Education Partnerships and Skills Amelia Walker
Universal Education	Academisation - moving towards 2030	Assistant Director Education Partnerships and Skills Amelia Walker
Cross cutting	Update on budgetary pressures in Children's Services – discussion deferred from July meeting For background, see 2022/23 Revenue Budget Monitoring – Month 3 – End of June 2022	Deputy Director Children's Services Claire Winter
	Homes for children in Somerset – progress update	Daniel Moncrieff Strategic Manager (Project Team)
Items for Information – Standing Item	Items for Information: (a) Task & Finish Group Report on School Exclusions – report to Cabinet 23 September 2020 (b) Elective home education – report to Committee 3 March 2021	
3 October 2022 @ 1 pm		
Training item	Ofsted Inspection of Children's Services – update (published 21 September 2022)	Deputy Director Children's Services Claire Winter
Briefing / overview	Home to School Transport – overview of statutory duties, demand and developments	Strategic Manager, Access & Additional Learning Needs Phil Curd and Service Manager Transporting Somerset John Perrett
Cross-cutting	Children's Services budget monitoring report focussing on home to school cost management For background see 2022/23 Revenue Budget Monitoring Report – Month 4 – End July 2022	Assistant Director Inclusion Dr Rob Hart, Strategic Manager, Access & Additional Learning Needs Phil Curd and Service Manager Transporting Somerset John Perrett

The focus for the Committee is – what impact does this have on the children in Somerset?

Scrutiny for Policies Children and Families Committee Work Plan 2022 - 2023

SEND & Inclusion	SEND Draft Strategy / development, including outcomes from SEND survey (comparator to previous years)	Assistant Director Inclusion Dr Rob Hart, Strategic Manager, Commissioning, Vikki Hearn
Items for Information – Standing Item		
7 November @ 1 pm		
Training item	Progress on Ofsted Action Plan	Deputy Director Children’s Services Claire Winter
Universal Education	Education and Inclusion Services redesign / restructure - follow up (including LA maintained schools traded offer (pre Executive scrutiny)	Assistant Director Education Partnerships and Skills Amelia Walker, Assistant Director, Inclusion Dr R Hart
<i>provisional items:-</i>		
Universal Education	2022 Key Stage assessment results – national data	Assistant Director Education Partnerships and Skills Amelia Walker
Social Care and commissioning	Impact - Family Connections and LCN’s (governance) including an update from Frome LCN Pilot	Assistant Director Commissioning Richard Selwyn Public Health LGR Programme Director Alyn Jones
12 December @ 1 pm		
Universal Education	Education Strategy for Somerset – progress update	Assistant Director Education Partnerships and Skills Amelia Walker
	Member site visits information: - Trusts and maintained schools workshop day (follow on individual visits by members to schools in their Division) Key note – ambitions for children in Somerset system leadership day (Christine Lenehan – Michael Wilshaw)	

The focus for the Committee is – what impact does this have on the children in Somerset?

Scrutiny for Policies Children and Families Committee Work Plan 2022 - 2023

16 January 2023 @ 1 pm		
Cross cutting	Budget items	
	Scrutiny update on Ofsted Action Plan	Deputy Director Children's Services Claire Winter
Workshops - to be scheduled		
	Member site visits ahead of the workshop (reference at November meeting) Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE's) - Trauma Informed Somerset practice model	Workshop - multi agency practitioners, schools (vision and direction) To be scheduled
Universal Education	Member site visits ahead of the workshop (reference at December meeting) The disadvantage gap - what we know and options to address, to include health impact of inequalities in education	Workshop – Public Health, SEND, social workers, case studies, wider health organisations, FSM and pupil premium data To be scheduled
Provisional date - 6 March 2023 @ 1 pm		
SEND & Inclusion	Response to SEND Green Paper – and policy proposals	
	Children missing out on education (numbers, who, reasons)	
Universal Education	Provisional – Academisation – progress update	Assistant Director Education Partnerships and Skills Amelia Walker

Items to be scheduled / recommendations for Scrutiny Forward Plan

Peninsula Fostering Framework Agreement - Decision due: 16 Nov 2022 – needs to be added to work programme

SEND and Inclusion

- Attendance
- Written Statement of Action

The focus for the Committee is – what impact does this have on the children in Somerset?

Scrutiny for Policies Children and Families Committee Work Plan 2022 - 2023

Social Care and Commissioning

- Early Help
- Placement sufficiency
- Strategic partnership
- The Care Review

Cross-cutting items:

- Long-term financial planning that improves outcomes for children (MTP)
- Involving young people and the community in scrutiny
- Mental health and emotional wellbeing (with health partners)
- Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) – Children & Families Budgets

Note: Members of the Scrutiny Committee and all other Members of Somerset County Council are invited to contribute items for inclusion in the work programme. Please contact Fiona Abbott, Democratic Services (01823) 357628 & democraticservicesteam@somerset.gov.uk who will assist you in submitting your item.

The focus for the Committee is – what impact does this have on the children in Somerset?

Scrutiny for Policies Children & Families Committee Outcome Tracker 2022 - 23

Agenda items	Lead / Owner	Agreed Outcome	RAG Status
Meeting held - 20 June 2022			
Family Safeguarding Review	Louise Palmer	<p>PowerPoint presentation from the Council's Strategic Commissioner, in Children's Services Louise Palmer and the Council's Head of Service for Assessment and Safeguarding in Children's Social Care, Paul Shawcross who provided an implementation update on Family Safeguarding in Somerset.</p> <p>Noted the successes and evaluation undertaken by York Consulting which is due in the next month, the positive interim report headlines and issues for consideration - impact of the pandemic on the implementation; the 'workbook'; increasing complexity of cases. It was agreed that the Evaluation Report be circulated to the Committee.</p>	Pending
School Place planning	Amelia Walker	<p>PowerPoint presentation from the Council's Assistant Director, Education Partnerships and Skills, Amelia Walker, the Assistant Director Inclusion, Dr Rob Hart and the Strategic Manager, Phil Curd was provided and offered an overview of school and early years places.</p> <p>The Committee would receive an overview of the new Education White Paper at a future meeting.</p>	Pending
Meeting held – 25 July 2022			
Work plan		<p>Considered and noted the Committee's current work programme and the Executive Forward Plan of planned key decisions in coming months, including Executive meetings. It was agreed to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Request a 'briefing on a page' about the current situation regarding school exclusions • Request the former Committee's Task and Finish Group report on School Exclusions be circulated • That job titles as well as names, be included on the work plan • Members were invited to email the Chair and Vice Chair if they have any further items they would like the Committee to focus on 	<p>AD Inclusion</p> <p>Clerk - completed</p> <p>Clerk - completed</p>

Scrutiny for Policies Children & Families Committee Outcome Tracker 2022 - 23

Education and Inclusion Services Redesign	Amelia Walker / Dr Rob Hart	PowerPoint presentation from the Council's Assistant Director, Inclusion Dr Rob Hart, who presented the proposals for the Education and Inclusion Services redesign. It was agreed that the Chair and Vice Chair, relevant officers and the lead Member for Children and Families will discuss best route for the Scrutiny Committee to consider the proposals	Pending 7 November 2022
Update on budgetary pressures in Children's Services	Claire Winter	Item DEFERRED	5 September 2022
Information Item		Children & Young Peoples Plan – public facing document	
5 September 2022			
Work Plan		A ' glossary of terms ' has recently been published on the Council's website. Agreed that Home to School Transport presentation would come to next meeting	Oct 22 mtg
2022 Key Stage assessment results for Somerset	Amelia Walker	PowerPoint presentation from the Council's Assistant Director, Education Partnerships and Skills, Amelia Walker, who provided a data and standards update, including the early indications from the 2022 Key Stage assessment results for Somerset and the areas of focus. Testing generates vast quantities of data and therefore accurate and reliable results to pupil level will not be in the public domain until January 2023. The national data is released in October and the Committee would like to see that when can (possibly November mtg). Ms Walker said that she would circulate the presentation given to the informal meeting last year which provided an introduction to education data and performance. The Committee had a broad discussion on the issues raised in the presentation. On behalf of the Committee the Chair thanked Ms Walker for the informative presentation.	Prov – Nov 22 mtg Clerk - completed

Scrutiny for Policies Children & Families Committee Outcome Tracker 2022 - 23

Academisation - moving towards 2030	Amelia Walker	PowerPoint presentation on issues from the Council's Assistant Director, Education Partnerships and Skills, Amelia Walker.	Progress update in Feb / March 2023
Update on budgetary pressures in Children's Services	Claire Winter	<p>PowerPoint presentation from the Council's Deputy Director of Children's Services, Claire Winter, who provided an update on the budgetary pressures in Children's Services.</p> <p>The key areas of pressure are external placements for children in care and secondly education transport – home to school and SEND transport and Ms Winter outlined the key performance cost drivers and actions / activity to address pressures. It was confirmed that the education transport strategy will be considered at the Place Scrutiny Committee on 6 September 2022 and will be brought to this Committee in October 2022.</p> <p>It was agreed that the following will be circulated (a) 'Staying Put' policy; (b) numbers in residential care data for 21/22 and how we sit with statistical neighbours.</p> <p>The Committee also congratulated the department for winning the 2022 LGC award for the fostering campaign. It was agreed that Children's Services budget monitoring will be discussed at the next meeting. The Chair also highlighted that at some point the Committee may consider setting up a task and finish group looking at external care placements, in conjunction with Corporate Parenting Board.</p>	On going work by Committee
Homes for children in Somerset – progress update	Daniel Moncrieff	PowerPoint presentation from the Council's Strategic Manager, Daniel Moncrieff who provided a detailed update on the strategic partnership between SCC and 'The Shaw Trust' to deliver homes for complex children and young people including homes for children, high needs fostering and therapeutic education.	Completed

Scrutiny for Policies Children & Families Committee Outcome Tracker 2022 - 23

Information Items	Noted the following: (a) Task & Finish Group Report on School Exclusions – report to Cabinet 23 September 2020 (b) Elective home education – report to Committee 3 March 2021	Completed
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Issues brought forward from last tracker 2017-2022 term of office

- Update from Joint informal workshop with A&H Committee to include Transition arrangements – preparing for adulthood
- Roll out of pantry project etc and support to children & families

The CYPP 2022 - 2025 had been produced following a multi-agency process. The CYPP had three priorities: keeping children and young people safe (priority 1); supporting physical and emotional health and resilience (priority 2); enabling young people to learn and thrive (priority 3)

[Somerset Children & Young People's Plan – SSCP \(safeguardingsomerset.org.uk\)](http://safeguardingsomerset.org.uk)

Version as at 13.09.22

Completed	Action complete and will be removed from tracker for next meeting and retained on Master Tracker document.
Pending	Action on-going or plans in place to address.
Incomplete	No action currently in place with a minimum of 3 months since action agreed.

The focus for the Committee is – ‘what impact does this have on the children in Somerset?’

Inspection of Somerset local authority children's services

Inspection dates: 18 to 29 July 2022

Lead inspector: Kendra Bell, Her Majesty's Inspector

Judgement	Grade
The impact of leaders on social work practice with children and families	Good
The experiences and progress of children who need help and protection	Good
The experiences and progress of children in care and care leavers	Good
Overall effectiveness	Good

Children and families receive good-quality services in Somerset. The director of children's services and senior leaders across the council work together effectively to improve services for children and have responded well to the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic. The council is committed to driving up standards for Somerset's children and is rightly proud of the significant progress it has made since the last inspection in 2017. Investment in management capacity has resulted in greater consistency of practice and preventative services are making a real difference for children. Children's identities are particularly well understood by professionals, and children are central to their plans. Independent reviewing officers (IROs) and child protection chairs progress plans effectively for children. Care leavers receive a high level of support that really benefits them. Senior leaders have responded effectively to the challenges faced in recruiting and retaining staff.

Senior leaders also know well those areas of practice that need to be strengthened. A small number of children are living in unregistered children's homes and there is a lack of appropriate emergency care. Although the local authority offers all children who go missing a return home interview, only a quarter of children are successfully engaged in these discussions. Some children have less formal but meaningful conversations with their social worker or trusted adult at a later stage.

What needs to improve?

- Placement sufficiency, including for emergency admissions, for older children with complex needs.
- The take-up of return home interviews and use of data to inform individual and service planning.

The experiences and progress of children who need help and protection: good

1. When children need early support, they receive a timely and proportionate response from early help hub workers. Workers gather relevant information swiftly, to ensure that children's needs are identified and well understood. They consistently gain appropriate parental or carer consent and signpost children to the right services to meet their needs.
2. The quality of early help services provided to children by the Family Intervention Service (FIS) is strong. The service delivers a highly effective rapid response to children on the edge of care, which is successful in repairing relationships and preventing family breakdown, so helping many children to remain with their families. A team around the family approach provides effective multi-agency assessments, plans and targeted support. This helps parents and children to make positive changes. A clear transition between early help and statutory services, with a planned transfer process, helps children and families understand what is happening. For a small number of children, there is a short waiting list for early help intervention and support, although most of these cases are reviewed regularly by managers while waiting.
3. Children who need help and protection are referred to the first response team, which identifies risk and concern quickly. The triage system gathers key information swiftly from a wide range of partner agencies. Social workers are diligent in their enquiries. They routinely gain the views of fathers and non-resident parents. Parental consent is routinely sought and only dispensed with when absolutely necessary. Domestic abuse is identified well and responded to effectively in most children's cases. Strong management oversight at every stage ensures that children almost always receive timely support. The local authority has secured good engagement with partner agencies, who contribute well to information-sharing when children are first referred. For example, the new health role is contributing positively to triage processes and signposting children and families to health services that can best help them.
4. Child protection strategy meetings are timely and well attended by relevant agencies. Effective information-sharing leads to a proportionate response and relevant actions that help to protect children. However, for a very small proportion of children who are suffering or likely to suffer significant harm, strategy meetings are not held. For most of these children, while further assessment and support is progressed and this helps to mitigate risk, a strategy

discussion could have resulted in earlier information-sharing and a shared understanding of risk and need, to help better target intervention and track progress.

5. When children need immediate help outside office hours, the emergency duty team responds effectively. The team takes protective and supportive action, drawing on the 24-hour edge of care and support service delivered by FIS to best support children within their family and prevent family breakdown.
6. The assessment of children's needs, including pre-birth assessment, is timely, comprehensive and informed well by children and their families. Partnership working is strong, with timely information-sharing to support good decision-making, and the creation of effective plans. Professionals understand children's changing needs by regularly reviewing plans. Many children experience improvements and positive changes in their lives because of the support they receive. Social workers are skilled in working with children and motivating parents to recognise concerns and build on strengths. They make good use of the specialist knowledge and skills provided by adult services' practitioners across the service.
7. Child protection conferences take place within timescales and clearly evaluate risks to children. Plans set measurable actions and are succinct, and parents can understand what they need to do to improve their children's lives. Children are the focus of conferences, and they are well supported to share their views and have good access to an advocacy service. Conference chairs engage skillfully with family members, helping them to focus on making the changes needed, as well as being part of the decision-making process. The information shared with children and parents is sensitively written without minimising risk. Well-attended reviews and core groups regularly check to ensure that plans are reducing harm to children. Child protection chairs are diligent in their oversight of the effectiveness of children's child protection plans.
8. Family group conferencing is used widely to help to support children and families. It is very effective in bringing family members together to create sustainable solutions for children and their families.
9. Social workers build relationships of trust with children. Children's views are sought by social workers in purposeful visits and individualised direct work. The identity of children is well understood by their social workers, and they help children to understand themselves. Disabled children's needs are understood well and reviewed frequently. They are supported by workers who visit them regularly and understand how to communicate with them to gather their wishes. Assessments are comprehensive and lead to succinct plans that bring together a range of effective support, including short-break services, to meet disabled children's needs and to encourage social activities and new experiences.

10. There is robust management oversight of work with children subject to the pre-proceedings stage of the Public Law Outline. Many families are supported to make positive changes that avoid the need for court proceedings. For those children who do need the protection of a court order, this work is used to help ensure that this is achieved swiftly for the majority of children. Letters to parents are clear about what needs to change and support their understanding and engagement.
11. When children return to home or care after a period of being missing, the local authority is only managing to engage about a quarter of them in a return home interview, despite such interviews being offered to all children. When children have not taken part in a formal discussion, workers discuss incidents when children go missing with parents and carers to help understand risk, what children are running from, running to, and where they go. This information is often shared with schools. For some children, their social workers also hold conversations at a later stage that help to inform a 'trigger plan' that contains helpful information about children's vulnerabilities and actions to be taken if they go missing again. However, it is not clear how many children benefit from such conversations, especially those who do not have a social worker.
12. Children at risk of extra-familial harm are supported well by a range of services that help to protect them by diverting them away from risk and into positive activities. Decisive legal action is taken to help protect children when needed. A dedicated lead role for this area of work helps bring consistency to practice and informs the wider intelligence work being undertaken. Children are appropriately referred to the national referral mechanism, and those vulnerable to extremism are identified and appropriate steps taken to help protect them.
13. The small number of children who are privately fostered receive an effective response. They are visited and supported regularly by a private fostering social worker.
14. Children aged 16 and 17 who present as homeless receive a timely response. Those who are unable to return home are made aware of their rights and entitlements, including the option of coming into care, and they are provided with accommodation that meets their needs. A clear joint housing protocol is used effectively to support children into the most suitable accommodation. When children need to come into care, this is recognised and appropriate action taken.
15. Robust systems are in place to identify a small number of children who are not in education, and they are helped successfully to return. The local authority has good oversight of children who are home educated, supporting them back into education when this is in their best interests, and providing educational and safeguarding support when necessary.
16. The local authority designated officers provide a timely and robust response when there are allegations against professionals. They are capable and

experienced, and recent additional capacity has helped to strengthen the service further.

The experiences and progress of children in care and care leavers: good

17. Decisions for children to come into care are timely and appropriate. An increasing number of children are settled in care, live in stable homes, and are making positive progress in their lives. They enjoy many hobbies and activity trips that develop their skills and widen their experiences.
18. Social workers visit children regularly and many build caring and nurturing relationships. They are creative in gathering the views of children through direct work. A small number of children have experienced several changes of worker, but many have had the same worker over a long period of time and have developed meaningful relationships with them. An increasing number of workers write their records to the child, which are personalised and child-focused. Children are also supported well by advocates and independent visitors who help to extend their support networks and to share their views.
19. Children's health needs, including their emotional health and dental needs, are speedily understood when they come into care. These health needs are reviewed regularly as part of their plans. Children access a wide range of health services, including emotional well-being support, to meet their needs.
20. Children regularly attend their care reviews. IROs visit children and spend time with them to get to know them well. IROs have regular oversight of children's care plans and care reviews, which are written in such a way that they are meaningful to the individual child and focus on the child's progress and achievements. IROs ensure that progress is made in achieving the aims for children as set out in their plans and set high standards. Consequently, they have a strong and positive impact on the quality of care for children.
21. Permanence is considered for many children at an early stage. Many benefit from permanent homes being identified for them in a timely manner through adoption and special guardianship. Careful thought is also given to family time for children and to support for birth parents. An increasing number of children live with their long-term carers, and this is recognised and celebrated. Diligent work is undertaken by social workers to find suitable permanent care options for children within their extended family whenever possible. Disabled children live in a range of care arrangements, including with wider family and with specialist carers who are committed to them and understand their complex health needs. However, for a small number of children, formally recognising and celebrating their care as permanent is taking too long. Senior leaders recognise this and are working progressively to ensure all children's permanence plans are agreed at the earliest opportunity.

22. Children are supported to return home to parents in a planned, measured way when this is in their best interests, and with appropriate supervision and support around the child.
23. Social workers and IROs help children to enjoy family time with parents, brothers and sisters, and wider family and friends, to support their identity and emotional well-being. Plans are flexible, respond to children's changing needs and are adjusted if family situations change.
24. The virtual school is aspirational for children and places their needs at the centre of the school. Personal education plans are detailed and regularly review the progress children make in all aspects of their learning and development. For a small number of children, targets could be more specific, to better help children to understand and focus on their goals. Pupil premium funding is used well to help source the extra help children need and provides targeted and specialist support.
25. Life-story work for children who achieve permanence through adoption and long-term care helps them to make sense of their lives. It is sensitively undertaken, using the best format for the child, and can include photos. However, for some children who are remaining in care, life-story work has not yet started. Most of these children do get some help to understand their situations, but do not routinely benefit from the fullest account of their care and childhood experiences that life-story work would provide as quickly as they could.
26. A small number of older children with particularly complex needs are living in unregistered children's homes. Their needs are understood and the local authority takes action to mitigate the potential negative impact of living in an unregistered children's home. However, many of these arrangements are not best matched to these children's needs and levels of risk and are not in their best interests. Senior leaders are taking action to identify suitable registered homes as soon as possible.
27. Children in care aged 16 or 17 who are living in semi-independent accommodation enjoy positive relationships with staff. The quality of accommodation and support is monitored well by senior managers, and regular communication takes place between staff and social workers about the progress children are making or if their needs have changed. The day-to-day plans for some children do not always fully reflect what will be provided by the supported accommodation. This means that, for some children, they are not always clear about the help they will or can receive.
28. Assessments and reviews of foster carers are timely and of a good quality. Foster carers access a range of training to help develop their skills and care. They receive regular supervision and have safe care plans that are detailed, personalised and child-centred. Foster carers speak highly of the consistent support they receive and have positive relationships with workers.

29. Somerset is part of the regional adoption agency (Adopt SouthWest). Through its work with the agency, the local authority is providing a good range of services that achieve good outcomes for children who need adoptive families.
30. Care leavers receive a consistently high standard of support from leaving care workers, who are strong and effective advocates for them. Workers visit care leavers regularly and build enduring and trusted relationships with them. Workers provide ongoing support which routinely continues when care leavers are past 21 years of age, including for care leavers who are neither disabled nor in education.
31. Pathway plans are written with care leavers and are reviewed regularly. Plans often contain an exceptionally strong understanding and insight into care leavers' identity, including their identity as a care leaver. Care leavers are supported well with their emotional and physical health and have good access to their health histories. Care leavers are supported by a wide range of agencies that come together to create effective support networks.
32. An increasing number of care leavers are in employment, education or training. Care leavers are encouraged into higher education and are well supported when studying at this level. Leaving care workers actively support and encourage care leavers back into employment, training or education by drawing on a good range of support and positive activities to help them.
33. Care leavers are supported with grants and flexible financial help when things get difficult for them. Leaving care workers step in and help as a good parent would. Care leavers are helped to develop their day-to-day living skills and how to manage money and live successfully as young adults.
34. Almost all care leavers live in a range of suitable accommodation, including privately rented homes, council-owned housing and living with their former foster carers. A very small number who are facing homelessness are helped to find temporary solutions until suitable longer-term housing is secured. There are a broad range of accommodation options available for care leavers. This is supported using 'gold banding' in housing allocation to help care leavers secure their own accommodation.
35. Care leavers who have sought, or are seeking, asylum are provided with a high level of support, with suitable care and accommodation that meets their requirements well, including their cultural and religious needs. Workers are conscientious and understand care leavers' needs and the impact of their experiences.

The impact of leaders on social work practice with children and families: good

36. The director of children's services is committed to delivering the best services for children and is highly ambitious for children in Somerset. This ambition is

shared by staff across children's services and supported by the local authority's senior leaders. Political and corporate leaders are well informed about all aspects of children's services. As a result, there is a shared ownership across the council of the delivery of the services that support children and families to improve their lives, and considerable investment is supporting sustainable long-term improvement. Consequently, although not all of the local authority's plans are yet in place, and so for a few children there is more to do, a large majority of children are benefiting from consistently good-quality services.

37. Leaders have ensured that children are extensively engaged to help shape the future of children's services. They also consult widely and receive regular feedback, not only from children, but also from families and partner agencies. They use this to understand effectively the impact of services and to inform future service development. For example, 'The Unstoppables' is a group of children championing the views of disabled children, who are very successfully making their voices heard about how things can be improved for children.
38. Somerset County Council is an active and caring corporate parent with a well-structured corporate parenting board that is committed and effective. The board is reflective, holding itself and senior leaders accountable for the quality of care provided to children. Its work is enhanced by the openness and energy of the input from the children in care and care leaver councils. The annual achievement event is organised by the children in care and care leaver councils and is a really positive celebration of children's and young people's achievements. Care leavers take an important role in the commissioning of new services by using their insight and experiences to help create the best provision for children. The local authority is proactive in employing care leavers and in securing apprenticeships for them.
39. The local authority's scrutiny arrangements are used effectively to regularly review the progress being made for children, and are supported by strong engagement from senior corporate and political leaders. Well-established partnerships and strong strategic relationships ensure that arrangements for safeguarding are effective for children across Somerset. Work with health partners is effective in monitoring the impact of health services for children, including emotional well-being and mental health services. Appropriate action is taken to review services when the need for improvement is identified.
40. The director and his senior leadership team have a clear line of sight of the impact of services and the extent to which they are meeting the needs of children in Somerset. Strategic plans within the council and with partners are aligned to provide a clear pathway and programme to improve services. They welcome external advisers and peer challenge to develop learning and evaluate service developments and new practice models. The new 'Family Solutions Somerset' approach is a unique model for supporting children and families and brings together the practice framework with commissioned services. It is embedded and provides the foundation for children's services principles,

approach and practice. This has led to greater consistency of practice and is making a very positive difference to children and their families.

41. The inspection in 2017 highlighted that further improvement was needed to increase the range and number of care placements for children. Senior leaders have taken determined action to secure and increase capacity, but there remains a lack of sufficient appropriate registered care options for a few children, particularly older children with the most complex needs and those who come into care in an emergency. The long-term strategic plan to substantially increase local provision through a strategic partnership is well underway, but is not yet having an impact for all children.
42. A robust performance and quality management system is used well to understand and analyse the impact of services for children and to identify where improvement is needed or possible. However, for return home interviews, the data is not providing an accurate overview of performance and timeliness and is not capturing emerging trends to inform strategic planning.
43. An extensive cycle of quality management activity, including multi-agency evaluations, helps to support the swift identification of emerging themes and provides senior leaders with a good insight into practice. Although learning is taken back into the organisation to review impact, managers are not always using supervision following practice evaluations to explore learning with individual workers and to improve practice with children.
44. The stability of the workforce and recruitment of workers has been strengthened by leaders. Creative ways of supporting workers, innovative partnerships to grow the local workforce, and the use of national programmes and overseas recruitment are yielding positive results. Recently recruited overseas workers and newly qualified workers say that they feel supported and have a clear induction programme. Senior leaders are building an increasingly skilled and stable permanent workforce, who are growing in their professional experience to deliver skilled social work services to children and families.
45. There is a workforce culture of openness, support and respectful challenge in Somerset which helps workers to feel confident in their practice. Most workers enjoy working in Somerset. They value this positive culture and the high level of support provided by their managers and the local authority. They have access to a regular training programme that develops their knowledge and skills. Although a few teams are very busy at times, most staff have manageable workloads and feel well supported in their practice and in holding complex casework. They mostly benefit from regular individual supervision, frequent management guidance and reflective conversations that develop their practice and help drive progress and improvement for children.

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School Transport

Phil Curd – Inclusion

John Perrett – Transporting Somerset



Purpose



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The provide members of the committee with an overview of the Council's school transport duties, the challenges this duty presents and the activities that have been undertaken, are in process or are planned to address them.

General Duties

The Council has a duty to transport or provide travel assistance to those children who live beyond statutory walking distance from their nearest suitable school. In Somerset we extend that 'nearest suitable school' entitlement to include Designated Transport Areas, which were mapped to school catchments in 2012.

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Statutory walking distance is set at:

- 2 miles for children aged 7 or under and children aged 10 and under from low income families
- 3 miles for children aged 8 or over

For children aged 11 or over from low income families, there's an additional entitlement which would see the Council provide transport to one the three nearest qualifying schools where the home address is more than 2 miles but no more than 6 miles from that school.

There are also exceptions for children whose disabilities or medical condition mean they cannot reasonable be expected to walk to their nearest suitable school, even if they live under statutory walking distance.



Demand

On a typical school day, the Council transports or provides travel assistance to around 8800 children and young people.

Of those, 7700 attend mainstream schools, the majority of which will be children travelling to secondary schools.

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The average cost of transporting these pupils is around £1300 a year.

The remaining 1100 will be travelling to specialist settings, with a significantly higher annual average cost of £8000.

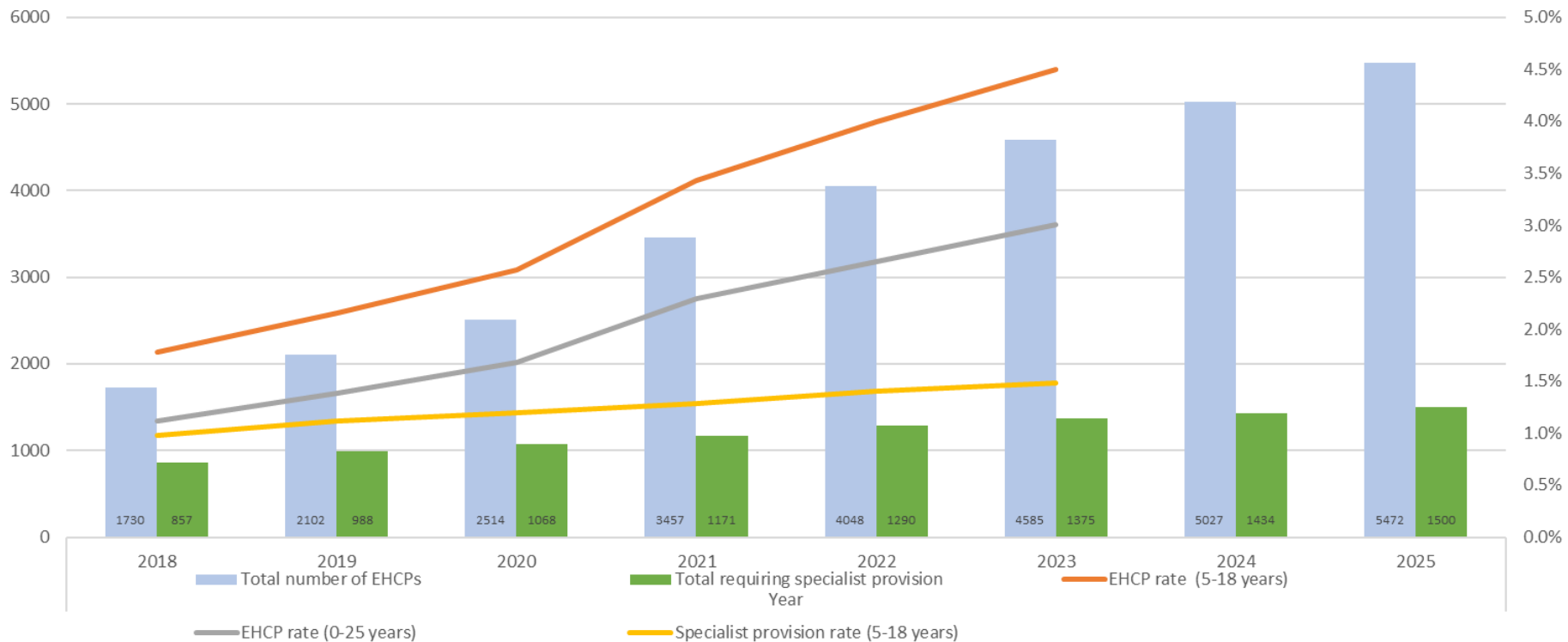
While the numbers of children attending mainstream schools is set to plateau and then gently decline over the next 5-10 years, the number of children requiring specialist placements is projected to continue increasing.



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.

Numbers and rates of EHC plans and specialist provision



Transport Organisation

Once a child has been assessed as having an entitlement to travel assistance or transport, they are notified and their details are passed to the School Transport Team within Transporting Somerset to find the optimum solution.

This may include:

- Offering a Petrol Allowance or Personal Travel Payment
- Issuing tickets for a public transport route
- Adding the child to an existing contracted vehicle / pick-up point
- Amending an existing contracted vehicle route and adding an additional pick-up point
- Contracting a new vehicle / route

Parents are then informed of these arrangements by letter.



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



Transport Challenges

We are currently facing significant challenges in the provision of Home to School Transport across Somerset, including:

- Driver shortages – both taxi and PSV drivers
- Fuel costs
- General inflation
- Lack of supply – especially in the taxi market
- Lack of investment in vehicles by operators
- Public Service Vehicle Accessibility Regulations



Cost Management Strategy

In addition to those measures described on the previous slide, a new School Travel Cost Management Strategy is being developed around 4 key priority areas:

- Reduce the cost of the school travel journeys operated by the Internal Fleet to a price point which is lower than the average rate secured through the commercial market
- Ensure budget requirements are set as accurately as possible and minimise the challenges associated with managing in-year pressures
- Identify and exploit opportunities within policy, transport organisation and market engagement to reduce the costs of delivering school transport
- Improve the inter-connectivity between various services / teams to improve communication, problem solving, cost modelling and accountability for expenditure



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Somerset County Council

Scrutiny Committee

– Children, Young People and Families – 3 October 2022

SEND Strategy development

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1. Summary

- 1.1.** Somerset Local Area partners are in the process of developing the Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) Strategy 2023-26
- 1.2.** The strategy will set the priorities for SEND improvement following on from the Written Statement of Action (WSOA) period, due to be completed by the end of December 2022.
- 1.3.** The Priorities are evidence based and have been developed through extensive engagement, from the findings of the SEND JSNA, and taking into consideration the vast amount of research commissioned to better understand the needs of the SEND system.

2. Issues for consideration

- 2.1.** Scrutiny Committee are asked to note the following emerging SEND Strategy Themes which will be underpinned by a number of mission statements, outlining how these will be delivered, for consultation.
 1. **Listen, Hear and Respond** - Children and young people with SEND and their families will be heard and feel they have choice and control about their lives. Not for me, with me.
 2. **Working Together** and Coordinated - We are working together as a co-ordinated system and at the case level, around the family.
 3. **Getting Help as Early as Possible** - Children, young people and their families are able to access the right support at the right time.
 4. **Access to the right information, support and provision** - Children, young people and their families telling us: "I understand the support and provision that is available to me, and I can access it, if I need it."
 5. **Preparing for the future** - Children and young people have the right skills and options, according to their individual needs, to take control of their future and achieve the ambitions important to them.

3. Background

- 3.1.** Following an OFSTED and CQC joint inspection of the local area in March 2020 Somerset was subjected to a WSoA. Partners have worked successfully together to deliver a programme of work to meet the actions and outcomes contained within the statement and commissioned a peer review earlier this

year to consider progress against some key areas of concern raised. The Peer Review made the following key recommendations:

- Partnership leaders should develop and communicate a clear vision and strategy with children and young people's outcomes at the heart.
- Be ambitious and aspirational for children with additional needs from the start.
- Use the wider organisational changes across local government and the NHS to put children and young people centre stage.
- Build an environment of trust and collaboration by improving the quality and regularity of the dialogue with children, families and professionals.
- Strengthen the local area data set to identify local need, inform performance, address early identification and measure outcomes.
- Develop a system wide/ integrated universal early help offer for social, emotional and mental health (SEMH) and autism.
- Develop a clear understanding of the resources available and how they are accessed by both professionals and parents, building on the lived experiences of parents.
- Improve the level of understanding within the wider workforce of the partnership regarding neurodevelopment.
- Embed (and resource) the Graduated Response approach.
- Continue to strengthen the voice of CYP to raise aspirations and evaluate success.
- Develop a comprehensive SEND partnership workforce strategy.

The Peer Review together with the following key documents, and engagement with children, young people and families provide the evidence and rationale for the emerging themes

3.2. The SEND Charter was developed in 2020 and provides the key principles for delivery across the SEND system. These can be summarised as:

- Ensuring that provision is child and family centred and that they are at the heart of everything we do and involved in processes
- All practitioners will be treated respectfully and professionally by one another in a blame-free, supportive environment offering positive challenge where appropriate
- Help will be provided early reducing the need for statutory or specialist intervention, empowering families to promote their independence
- Communication will be clear and open, ensuring information is shared effectively, helpful signposting is in place and clarity given over roles and responsibilities

3.3. The latest WSoA position statement has highlighted the following areas which will need continued focus past the date of closure:

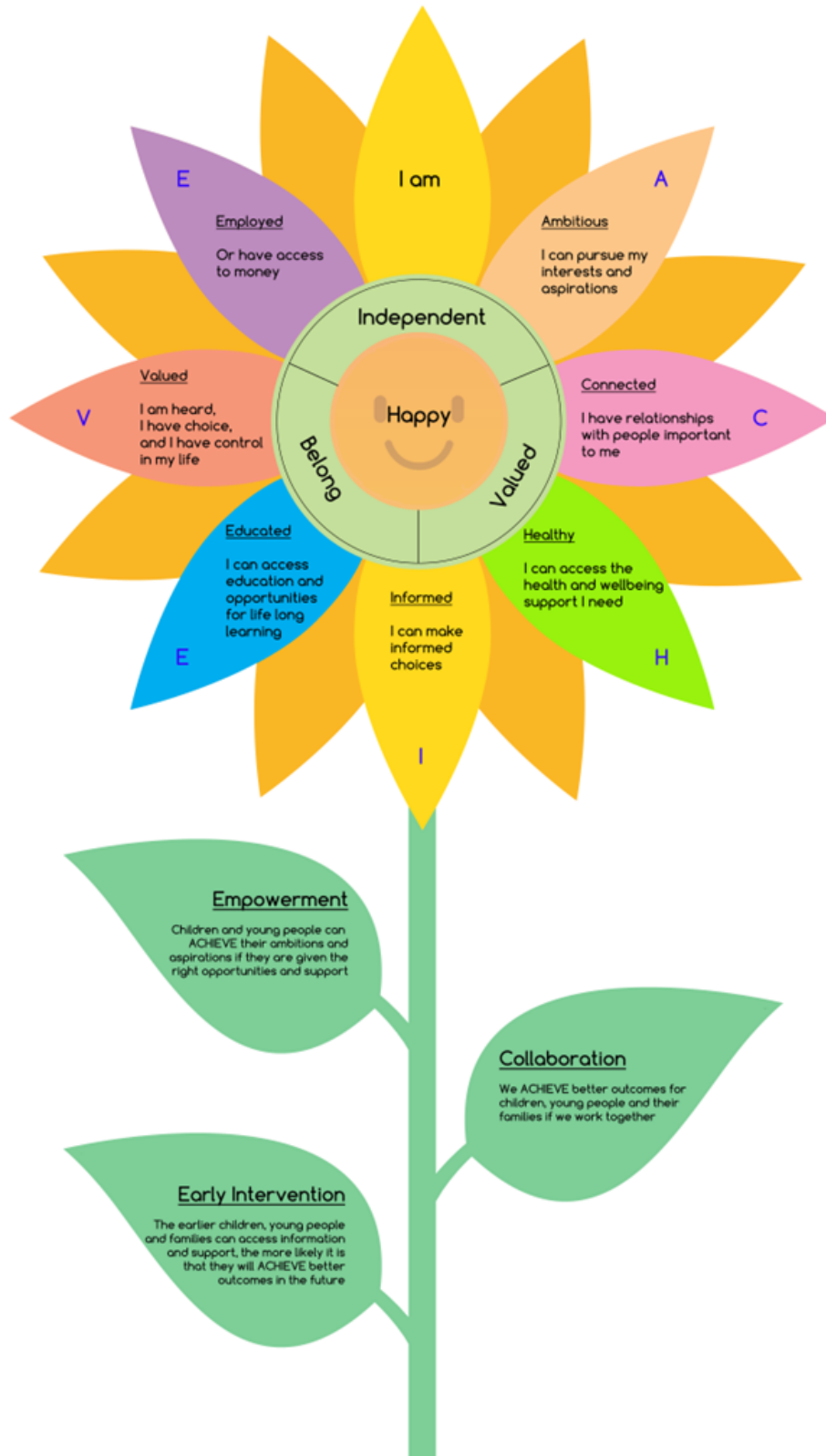
- Continue to engage and involve children, young people and their families

- All change to be based on / evidenced by family experience
- Further work is required to continue to join up available data
- Further develop and strengthen the neurodevelopmental pathway
- Continue the focus to improve the inclusiveness of schools
- Embed and ensure consistency of the graduated response

3.4. As part of the delivery of the WSoA a school-led education Inclusion Inquiry was undertaken. This concluded with recommending the following key areas of focus:

- **Better signposting of support services:** A clearer signposting to support services across Somerset for all to access
- **Earlier Intervention:** There needs to be better local early intervention strategies in place for identification and support for children and young people
- **Behaviour planning and support structure:** There needs to be better behaviour planning and support structures within Somerset.
- **Inclusion data shared with schools:** Inclusion data should be shared, routinely with education settings to ensure that evidence based inclusive practice becomes standard.
- **Trust Building:** Trust and transparency were central to children, young adults, parents and Somerset staff when seeking advice or support for SEND or inclusion.

3.5. The local area worked with children and young people to agree a SEND outcomes framework. These should underpin the strategy and form the basis of how success is measured.



3.6. The SEND Joint Strategic Needs Assessment was completed during May/June 2022 and is being explored at a Health and Wellbeing Board workshop later this month. The findings can be summarised as follows and the workshop will help to further refine the SEND Strategy Themes.

- The local area should maintain a focus on Social Emotional Mental Health

- Continued improvements should be made in the field of Joint Commissioning and commissioners should see to take a place-based approach
- Service development, particularly across the neurodevelopmental pathway, should explore the current gender imbalance
- More research is required into the need of children in special circumstances and those who are preparing for adulthood

3.7. IMPOWER were commissioned to review the progress and impact of transformation activity and support the Somerset SEND system to explore further opportunities to ensure that children and their families receive the right support at the right time. Discovery work was carried out between April and July 2022 which recommended the following priority areas to be underpinned by a strong grip of future need and support:

- Improving access to timely support & advice to enable early intervention
- Embedding child centred, strengths-based practice
- Improving transitions and phase transfers enabled by building inclusive practice in schools
- Identifying and meeting Social, Emotional & Mental Health need early

4. Consultations undertaken

4.1. The local area has conducted listening events, coffee morning and conversations with staff teams to gather their views on what the future priorities of the SEND strategy should be. In addition, all engagement which has taken place throughout the life of the WSoA has been analysed and has contributed to the development of the emerging themes. Further engagement is planned over the next few weeks to refine the draft priorities followed by an 8 week consultation period.

4.2. Some of the messages from families can be summarised as follows:

- Children and carers are the experts in their lives, experience should be used to plan future services
- All delivery should focus on the strengths of children, young people and their families and should promote Independence
- Silo working should be removed allowing a tell us once approach and a focus on the whole family
- Support for carers is important
- Access to services can feel slow – a week can feel like a year, continuous communication is needed
- From listening needs to come action.
- Learn from the mistakes that have been made – a process of learning from every mistake / complaint / tribunal is important
- Put the child at the centre of every decision. Team around the child / family is very important and should include families
- Transparency and accountability – be realistic with parents – who will I

get a response from and when.

- 4.3.** The recently closed local area 360 degree survey findings will help to further develop the emerging strategy priorities and mission statements.

5. Implications

- 5.1.** Through the development of the strategy a number of risks and issues have been identified. These will need to be considered as part of strategy refinement and implementation.

- The risk that partners are unable to develop a sense of shared responsibility for joint funding gaps between services.
- The issue that joined up working at all levels is hampered by key barriers in the current system. These include a lack of shared governance and ensuring data and lived experiences really inform plans and decisions
- The issue that partners are all using different Information Technology / recording systems
- The issue that there are currently too many front doors to services (families can become confused on where to go and services have too many options to signpost)
- The risk the resources are too stretched, with the development of key change programmes across the system, to maintain a focus on delivering the SEND Strategy
- The risk that families do not feel heard resulting in them feeling there is no point in giving feedback

6. Background papers

- 6.1.** Draft SEND JSNA
- 6.2.** SEND Charter
- 6.3.** Somerset Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) Peer Challenge 23rd May 2022 – 26th May 2022 Feedback Report
- 6.4.** Impower Somerset SEND Transformation Discovery Report July 2022

Note For sight of individual background papers please contact the report author