



Notice of Meeting of

SCRUTINY COMMITTEE - CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

Tuesday, 12 December 2023 at 10.00 am

**Council Chamber, Council Offices, Brympton
Way, Yeovil BA20 2HT**

To: The members of the Scrutiny Committee - Children and Families

Chair: Councillor Leigh Redman
Vice-chair: Councillor Evie Potts-Jones

Councillor Suria Aujla	Councillor Jason Baker
Councillor Simon Carswell	Councillor Peter Clayton
Councillor Caroline Ellis	Councillor Andy Hadley
Councillor John Hunt	Councillor Jenny Kenton
Councillor Martin Lovell	Councillor Frances Nicholson
Councillor Jeny Snell	Ruth Hobbs – co-opted
The Revd Tobie Osmond – co-opted	Eileen Tipper – co-opted
Joanne Simons – co-opted	

For further information about the meeting, including how to join the meeting virtually, please contact Democratic Services on (01823) 357628 or email: democraticservicesteam@somerset.gov.uk.

All members of the public are welcome to attend our meetings and ask questions or make a statement **by giving advance notice** in writing or by e-mail to the Monitoring

Officer at email: democraticserviceteam@somerset.gov.uk by **5pm on Wednesday, 6 December 2023.**

This meeting will be open to the public and press, subject to the passing of any resolution under the Local Government Act 1972, Schedule 12A: Access to Information.

The meeting will be webcast and an audio recording made.

Issued by (the Proper Officer) on Monday, 4 December 2023

AGENDA

Scrutiny Committee - Children and Families

10.00 am Tuesday, 12 December 2023

Public Guidance Notes contained in Agenda Annexe (Pages 7 - 8)

Information about the Committee (Pages 9 - 10)

Click here to join the meeting online; Location Map (Pages 11 - 14)

1 Apologies for Absence

To receive any apologies for absence.

2 Declarations of Interest

To receive and note any declarations of interests in respect of any matters included on the agenda for consideration at this meeting.

(The other registrable interests of Councillors of Somerset Council, arising from membership of City, Town or Parish Councils and other Local Authorities will automatically be recorded in the minutes: [City, Town & Parish Twin Hatters - Somerset Councillors 2023](#))

3 Minutes of the Meeting held on 15 November 2023 (Pages 15 - 22)

To approve the Minutes from the meeting held on Wednesday 15 November 2023.

4 Public Question Time

The Chair to advise the Committee of any items on which members of the public have requested to speak and advise those members of the public present of the details of the Council's public participation scheme.

For those members of the public who have submitted any questions or statements, please note, a three-minute time limit applies to each speaker and you will be asked to speak before Councillors debate the issue.

We are now live webcasting most of our committee meetings and you are welcome to view and listen to the discussion. The link to each webcast will be available on the meeting webpage, please see details under 'click here to join online meeting'.

5 Scrutiny Committee - Children and Families Work Programme (Pages 23 - 36)

To receive an update from the Service Manager, Governance Scrutiny. 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 links to view the latest Somerset Council Forward Plans and Executive Forward Plan of planned key decisions that have been published on the Council's website:

[Somerset Council Forward Plans](#)

[Somerset Council Executive Forward Plan](#)

6 2023/24 Children's Services - Budget Monitoring (Pages 37 - 58)

To consider PowerPoint presentation.

As background to this agenda item, the Committee may find it helpful to refer back to the member briefing on the Dedicated Schools Grant, given in September. The link to the recording can be found in the Member Resources Site on SharePoint.

Note – the Chair will allow 45 minutes for this agenda item.

7 Education, Health and Care Assessment and Plan 2022-2023 - Progress update (Pages 59 - 68)

To consider Report and PowerPoint presentation.

Note – The Chair will allow 45 minutes for this agenda item.

8 Connect Somerset (Pages 69 - 82)

To consider presentation.

A copy of the Blueprint for Connect Somerset is also attached.

Note – The Chair will allow 40 minutes for this agenda item.

9 Children's Services Transformation Priorities 2023 - 2026 (Pages 83 - 84)

The Children's Services Transformation Priorities 2023 – 2026 are attached.

The Chair to seek volunteers for the areas to allow individual meetings with officers to gain a better understanding of a topic of interest.

Note – the Chair will allow 15 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 the Committee's policy areas.

No items have been circulated since the last meeting.

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Guidance notes for the meeting

Council Public Meetings

The legislation that governs Council meetings requires that committee meetings are held face-to-face. The requirement is for members of the committee and key supporting officers (report authors and statutory 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.

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 [Committee structure - Modern Council \(somerset.gov.uk\)](#)

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](#)

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.

Public Question Time

If you wish to speak or ask a question about any matter on the Committee's agenda please contact Democratic Services by 5pm providing 3 clear working days before the meeting. (for example, for a meeting being held on a Wednesday, the deadline will be 5pm on the Thursday prior to 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, or alternatively can attend the meeting online.

A 20-minute time slot for Public Question Time is set aside near the beginning of the meeting, after the minutes of the previous meeting have been agreed. Each speaker will have 3 minutes to address the committee.

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.

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.

There is a facility in Microsoft Teams under the ellipsis button called turn on live captions which provides subtitles on the screen.

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.

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.

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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Scrutiny Committee - Children and Families 12 December 2023 @ 10 am

**The Council Chamber, Council Offices,
Brympton Way, Yeovil, BA20 2HT**

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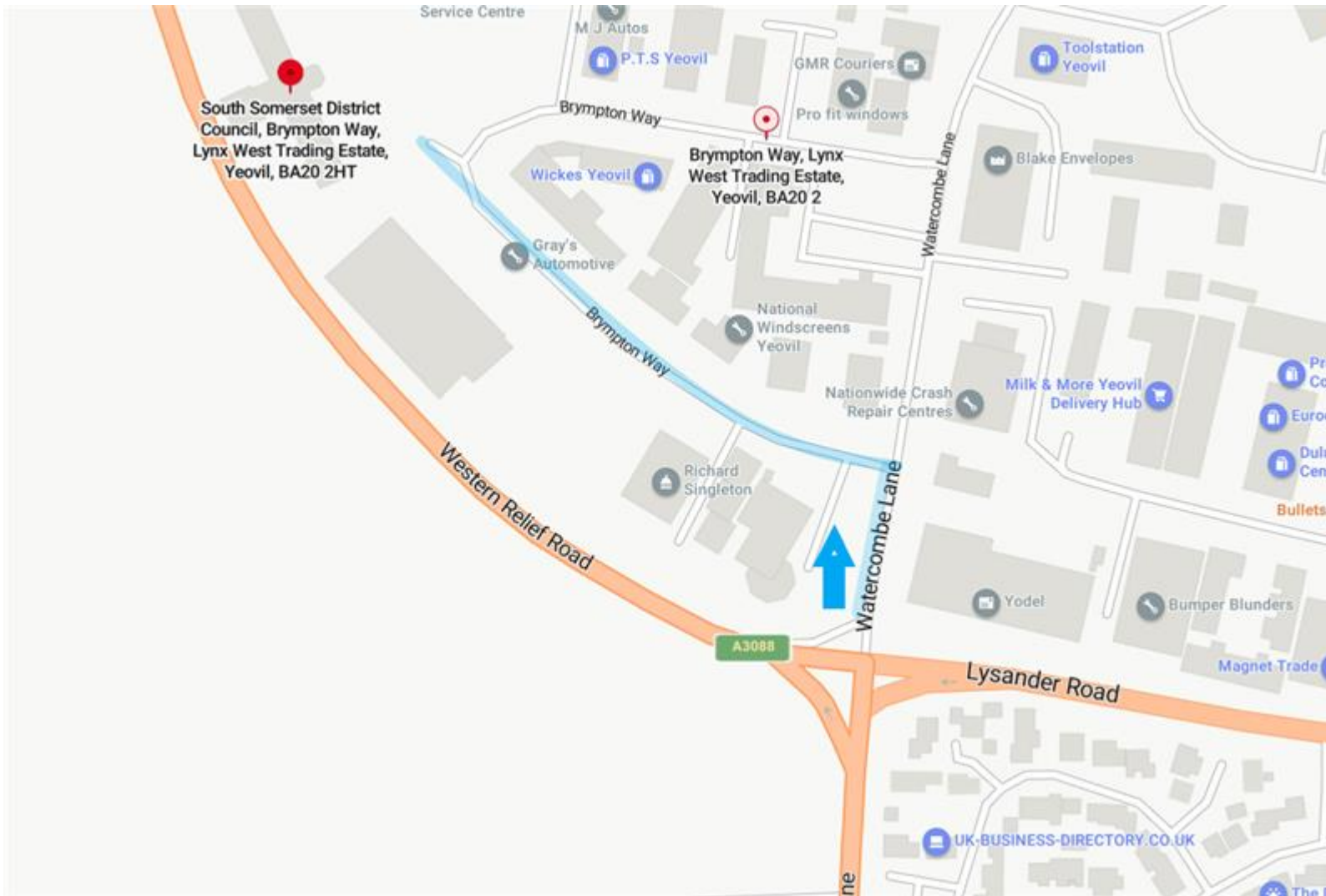
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Council Offices, Brympton Way – BA20 2HT



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Minutes of a Meeting of the Scrutiny Committee - Children and Families held in the Sedgemoor Room, Bridgwater House, King Square, Bridgwater, TA6 3AR, on Wednesday, 15 November 2023 at 10.00 am

Present:

Cllr Leigh Redman (Chair)
Cllr Evie Potts-Jones (Vice-Chair)

Cllr Suria Aujla
Cllr Andy Hadley
Cllr Martin Lovell
Cllr Jeny Snell
Ruth Hobbs - co-opted

Cllr Simon Carswell
Cllr John Hunt - attended remotely
Cllr Frances Nicholson
The Revd Tobie Osmond - co-opted
Joanne Simons - co-opted

In attendance:

Cllr Tessa Munt
Cllr Heather Shearer

Cllr Jo Roundell Greene

Other Members present remotely:

Cllr Helen Kay
Cllr Rosemary Woods

Cllr Andy Kendall

1 Apologies for Absence - Agenda Item 1

Apologies were received from Councillor Peter Clayton (no substitute) and Mrs Eileen Tipper (co-opted member).

2 Declarations of Interest - Agenda Item 2

There were no new declarations of interest made at the meeting.

3 Minutes of the Meeting held on 13 September 2023 - Agenda Item 3

Resolved that the minutes of the Scrutiny Committee - Childrens and Families held

on Wednesday 13 September 2023 be confirmed as a correct record.

4 Minutes of the Joint Meeting held on 25 October 2023 - Agenda Item 4

Resolved that the minutes of the Joint Meeting of the Scrutiny Committee – Children & Families and the Scrutiny Committee – Adults & Health held on Wednesday 25 October 2023 be confirmed as a correct record.

The minutes will also need to be confirmed by the Scrutiny Committee – Adults & Health.

5 Public Question Time - Agenda Item 5

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

6 Scrutiny Committee - Children and Families Work Programme - Agenda Item 6

The Committee received and noted the current work plan and outcome tracker and Executive Forward Plan.

The Chair highlighted the following:

- There is an additional meeting scheduled for Tuesday 12 December at 10 am at Brympton Way, Yeovil.
- To note that Committee Members will be invited to attend the Adults and Health Committee on 7 December for the following agenda item – Overview of Crime & Disorder.
- The outcome tracker on the vaping item, considered at the joint meeting on 25 October, should be ‘orange’ (rather than ‘green’) as there are still actions outstanding.
- To add ‘Connect Somerset’ as an item on the work plan.

7a 2023/24 Children's Services - Budget Monitoring

The Committee received a [presentation](#) from the Council’s Strategic manager, Finance Business Partnering, Sian Kenny on the 2023/24 Children’s Services budget as at month 5 and additionally provided a verbal update on the month 6 position.

Ms Kenny outlined that the 2023/24 Children’s Services (General Fund) has a net budget of £123.1m and has forecast overspend of £11.8m at the end of month 5 (9.6% of budget). The month 6 position is showing a slight increase, at £12.4m.

Ms Kenny highlighted the key pressures and key cost drivers, in relation to:

(a) external placements pressures (£10.1m overspend) (slides 3 – 4):

- unregistered placements £4.2m – although numbers are reducing, almost three quarters of the annual 2,190 budgeted placement days have been provided in the first 5 months of the financial year.
- residential placements £4.2m – increase in placements due to complexity of children, moves from unregistered placements and lack of sufficiency within fostering both internally and in the external market.

(b) Home to school SEND Transport (£1.7m) (slide 5):

- demand for SEND Transport has doubled since 2018 - significant factor is the rise in number of children with Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs) attending a school other than their local mainstream setting.
- passenger costs increasing by 10%.
- increasing cost of contracted supply.

The Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) which has £15.6m forecast in year deficit; cumulative £37.5m deficit (slide 6) and Ms Kenny highlighted the key cost drivers – High Needs Block and the Schools Block (slide 7).

The Committee asked a number of questions and made a number of comments which were responded to at the meeting, as follows:

- *how and where is the DSG reported* – this is reported in the Schools Forum and to the Executive in the regular budget monitoring reports – there are 3 sections to this report. The DSG is a ring-fenced grant which is allocated in four blocks (Schools, Early Years, High Needs, central Schools Services). The key risks in the High Needs Block are increased demand for EHCP's, sufficiency of provision of social, emotional and mental health support.
- *Position regarding LA maintained schools revenue budgets / reserves* – these reserves are regarded as being under the control of the individual schools and not the local authority and are therefore not included in the calculation of the overall DSG reserves.
- *Detail on slide 2* – confirmed information is correct, including areas reporting '0.0' variances. The committee still needs to see the budget information across all lines (e.g. fostering & permanence; leaving care) to show the full position.
- *Explanation of difference between 'mainstream home to school transport' and 'SEND transport' (statutory / non statutory elements).*

Claire Winter, the Council's Executive Director, Children, Families and Education explained that 'mainstream' is essentially children being transported to / from school, as the closest school with an available place is further away than the

statutory walking distance for their age or it's deemed as an unsafe walking route to school or to pupils from low-income families (in certain circumstances). This budget is easier to predict and is relatively stable as not many children move school during a school year.

With regard to SEND transport, if a child is of statutory age and has an EHCP the local authority has a statutory duty to in law to provide travel assistance if they attend the nearest, appropriate school for their age and needs and live beyond the statutory walking distance for their age (there are certain exceptions). The budget costs vary more as there is greater movement / fluctuation with this cohort as pupils move from mainstream provision to special provision, new assessments come in and so on and some pupils will require single person transport provision.

The Committee discussed what information will be provided to the December meeting, and when this will be provided, so the Committee can use its time in best way. The Chair advised that he has written to the Executive for clarity on expectations.

A key area of deficit is the DSG, High Needs Block and the next update will include more detail on this and the 2 areas overspending.

The Chair thanked officers for their work and the Committee noted the update.

7b Update on Children's Transformation Programme / Business Plan

The Committee received a presentation from Caroline Barnes, the Council's Children's Services Transformation Project Manager and Claire Winter, the Council's Executive Director, Children, Families and Education on the [Children's Transformation Programme / Business Plan](#).

Ms Barnes outlined the Children's Services transformation priorities, which are:

- Sufficiency – ensuring that have enough resources to predict demand and to manage the needs of our most vulnerable children within the available budget.
- Efficiency – making the best use of the resources we have, ensuring focus on agreed priorities and providing value for money.
- Managing risks – taking decisive and timely action to prevent crisis for children and/or deterioration in the services children need.

The four strategies / strands underpinning the Children's Services transformation priorities 2023 – 2026 (slide 9) are – Education for Life, CLA Transformation, SEND Strategy, and Connect Somerset. Ms Barnes provided information and some

examples of what sufficiency, efficiency and managing risk will look like (slides 10 – 12).

The Committee asked a number of questions and made a number of comments which were responded to at the meeting, as follows:

- *Key theme is prevention how keep people with high needs in mainstream school* - noted this is an item on the agenda for next meeting of the Committee; also around how support schools better to support children with EHCPs or special educational needs in the mainstream and referenced the Education Finance consultation (agenda item 8 below).
- *Role of housing, housing allocation and the schools children attend not being a consideration* – agreed that housing is critical and officers have asked ‘Research in Practice’, a national organisation, to deliver training in the new year to adults, children’s and housing teams to help working together / better understanding of each other’s roles – and develop a toolkit around housing / adults / children’s services.
- Now that are ‘one Council’ should be easier to connect things.
- *Not sure there is a lot of awareness in schools about Connect Somerset and needs to be some work done about awareness raising* – noted – the Committee would also benefit from further information on it and has been added to the work plan.

The Chair asked that committee members think further on the four areas / strategies underpinning the Children’s Services transformation priorities namely – Education for Life; CLA Transformation; SEND Strategy; Connect Somerset – and that at the next meeting on 12 December, will seek volunteers for the areas to allow individual meetings with officers to gain a better understanding of a topic of interest. The Chair clarified that he is not looking for a topic expert but is hoping that members would volunteer to learn more about one of the areas and from that knowledge, feedback to committee and it will hopefully support a better scrutiny.

The Chair thanked officers for the presentation and the Committee noted the update.

8 Education Finance - consultation - Agenda Item 8

The Committee received a [presentation](#) from Claire Winter, the Council’s Executive Director, Children, Families and Education on the Education Finance consultation on how can meet education funding challenges in Somerset,.

The consultation concluded on 10 November 2023 and there had been 346 responses to the consultation survey. The Committee discussed the areas which it is

proposed will be developed further into detailed, costed options for consultation.

The areas were:

1. Funding for Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) – upfront funding, equalising banding, pupil budgets.
2. Early Help funding proposal.
3. Options for Early Years.
4. Minimum Funding Guarantee (MFG) – this question was aimed at schools and the outcome will be discussed further by the Schools Forum.

The Committee asked a number of questions and made a number of comments which were responded to at the meeting, as follows:

- *Parents / carers / public had responded to the question aimed at schools (MFG) and the outcome to the option had been close - this was noted and will be reflected on.*
- *Early Help, funding and impact on workforce - will be whole system perspective and referenced the Early Help 5-year funding proposal (slide 13).*
- *ECHP and upfront funding and whether this is feasible - it is not LA funding and is around using the grant differently and how assess the amount each school will get – business intelligence / modelling work needs to be undertaken, and then understand how should allocate that funding up front for each school - will be a strong QA approach.*
- *Percentage of responses from early years settings – this information can be broken down.*
- *Seems to be some element of ‘unclarity’ in the responses to the survey – are officers comfortable with what have – this is in 2 areas – (a) personal budget question / pupil funding) – are fairly confident that was misunderstood and have reflected on the use of language used and will rework this along with the Parent Carer Forum to talk to parents in a different way and have a more direct conversation about it and what it means; (b) MFG questions – this was a very technical question and was well described and schools understood it and the public were able to respond to it as well. Officers are confident the responses received are adequate.*

Officers stressed that this consultation is only about finding out which of these options are a good idea to look at further and that nothing will change for schools or families without a further consultation that gives a lot more detail about how an option would work.

The Chair reminded the Committee that the next meeting has an item on SEND / EHCP and it would be helpful to have clarification in that item on ‘banding’ which had been referenced in the presentation (slide 7).

The Committee thanked officers for the presentation and the Committee noted the update.

9 Standing Panel for Education Standards - update from Panel Chair - Agenda Item 9

The Committee received an update from the Chair of the [Education Standards Panel](#), Cllr Evie Potts-Jones. The first, introductory meeting had been held on 26 October 2023. Going forward the Panel will recommend items or certain data for the Scrutiny Committee to discuss.

The Committee welcomed and noted the update.

10 Items for Information - Standing Item - Agenda Item 10

The Committee noted the following items for information:

- (a) SSCP Learning Bulletin - September 2023 – circulated on 20 September 2023
- (b) Children & Young People LGA bulletin – September 2023 – circulated in 28 September 2023
- (c) Link to the consultation on ‘creating a smoke free generation and tackling youth vaping’, which runs to 6 December - [Creating a smokefree generation and tackling youth vaping: your views - Department of Health and Social Care \(dhsc.gov.uk\)](#) – circulated on 30 October 2023
- (d) Link to [NHS dental statistics for England 2022-23, Annual Report](#) - circulated on 30 October 2023
- (e) Information on the Education Finance consultation – circulated on 1 November 2023
- (f) LA maintained schools core offer – update – circulated on 6 November 2023

(The meeting ended at 12.07 pm)

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CHAIR

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Scrutiny Committee - Children and Families Work Plan 2023 - 2024

Overarching themes	Committee meeting dates / proposed agenda items	Lead Officer/Item Lead
Outstanding items from 2022/ 2023		
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • School Transport policy / Post-16 Travel Policy and the ‘Somerset Ticket’ • Children missing out on education (numbers, who, reasons) • Evaluation of the West Somerset Opportunity Area (September ‘23) • Workshop The disadvantage gap - what we know and options to address, to include health impact of inequalities in education - Public Health, SEND, social workers, case studies, wider health organisations, FSM and pupil premium data • Possible workshop with Adults & Health Scrutiny Self-harm / mental health issues – 10 January 24 meeting • Possible workshop with Adults & Health Scrutiny Transition arrangements – preparing for adulthood – 25 October mtg 	
	<p>Items to be scheduled 2023/24</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Household Support Fund / schools (added 15/05/23) (is a Key Decision 23/05/23) • Possible workshop with Adults & Health Scrutiny Children & Young People’s access to Dentistry / child oral health improvement (added 04/05/23) – 25 October mtg • Oral health survey of 5 year old children 2022 published March ‘23 • EHCP process (added 27/06/23) – December mtg • Complaints to ombudsman (added 14.08.23) – be part of above item going to Dec mtg • School place sufficiency – EY, Nursery places, primary, secondary and special schools (added 27/06/23) – December mtg – now Jan mtg • Elective home education numbers (added 27/06/23) • Pupil referral unit (added 27/06/23) • Councillor DBS checks (added 13/07/23) • Provisional – joint with Adults and Health Scrutiny - Asylum Resettlement Programme following issues raised by groups working with asylum seekers in the community in Somerset (added 01.08.23) • Connect Somerset (added 15.11.23) – December mtg • What are the implications of the current financial situation on Somerset children services? (added 20.11.23) – to be item early in new year 	
Thursday 4 May 2023 @ 10am		
Education Partnerships & Skills	LA Maintained Schools Core Offer – update / response from last meeting and 2023/24 budgets	Amelia Walker

Scrutiny Committee - Children and Families Work Plan 2023 - 2024

	Overarching themes	Committee meeting dates / proposed agenda items	Lead Officer/Item Lead
	Education Partnerships & Skills	Terms of reference of the proposed Task Group on education standards	Amelia Walker
	Inclusion	SEND Strategy and the Accelerated Progress Plan (APP)	Dr Rob Hart and Andrew Keefe, Deputy Director for Commissioning, NHS Somerset
	Social Care	Reforms in children's social care – draft consultation response	Paul Shallcross, AD Community & Strategy
	Children & Families	Task and Finish Group – sufficiency of external placements – initial response from Executive	Cllr Munt / Claire Winter
	Inclusion	Task and Finish Group – home to school transport – verbal update	Dr Rob Hart
	Cross-cutting	Items for Information – Standing Item (a) Information on Children and Families Board (b) Feedback on the ' Education for Life ' launch event	
Wednesday 12 July 2023 @ 10am			
	Cross-cutting	Budget outturn position 22/23 and issues 23/24 - overview	Claire Winter, Executive Director of Children, Families and Education Sian Kenny, Strategic Manager, Finance
	Education Partnerships & Skills	Academisation / Education Finance	Amelia Walker, Service Director Education Partnerships and Skills
	Commissioning	Update on Homes & Horizons Partnership	Daniel Moncrieff, Strategic Manager
	Inclusion	Children's Mental Health and Wellbeing in Somerset	Dr Tim Cockerill, Patsy Temple, Mark Conway, Patrick Worthington, Nik Harwood and Lisa Walker
	Inclusion	Home to School Transport Task and Finish Group – interim update	Executive member / Service Director – Inclusion, Dr Rob Hart
	Children & Families	Somerset Youth Justice Partnership Board Annual Plan	Jayne Shelbourne-Barrow, Helen MacDonald, Operations Manager
	Cross-cutting	Items for Information – Standing Item	

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

Scrutiny Committee - Children and Families Work Plan 2023 - 2024

Overarching themes	Committee meeting dates / proposed agenda items	Lead Officer/Item Lead
	(a) Centre for Governance and Scrutiny (CfGS) publication – Scrutiny of Children’s Services – a short guide (b) Homes and Horizons partnership (c) Progress update on Ofsted Action Plan; Life Story work’ (d) Children’s Services – current structure chart	Cathy Jones, Strategic Manager
Commissioning	<b style="color: red;">Communities Scrutiny Committee – 9 August 23 @ 10am Members of the Children & Families Scrutiny Committee invited to attend the meeting for this item:- <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recommissioning of 16+ housing / supported accommodation (initially added to work plan on 17/05/23) 	Richard Selwyn, Service Director Commissioning
Wednesday 13 September 2023 @ 10 am The Luttrell Room, County Hall, Taunton		
Cross-cutting	2023/24 Children’s Services – Budget Monitoring	Sian Kenny, Strategic Manager, Finance
Education Partnerships & Skills	Education Modelling - Frome – next steps	Amelia Walker, Service Director Education Partnerships and Skills Phil Curd, Strategic Manager presenting
	Regional Adoption Agency Report	Claire Winter, Executive Director of Children, Families and Education
	External Placements Task and Finish Group – response from Executive on recommendations made by the Task and Finish Group	Executive member / Claire Winter, Executive Director of Children, Families and Education
Education Partnerships & Skills	Learning from the West Somerset Opportunity Area	Julia Ridge, Strategic Manager

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

Scrutiny Committee - Children and Families Work Plan 2023 - 2024

Overarching themes	Committee meeting dates / proposed agenda items	Lead Officer/Item Lead
Cross cutting	Items for Information (a) Education Data	Amelia Walker, Service Director Education Partnerships and Skills – to be circulated
Additional mtg - 25 October 2023 @ 10am – Joint with Adults & Health Committee JMR, Deane House, Belvedere Road, Taunton, TA1 1HE		
Cross cutting	NHS Dentistry and Children & Young people's access to Dentistry / child oral health improvement	Sukeina Kassam, Deputy Director Primary Care and Matthew Mills, Head of Pharmacy, Optometry and Dentistry Rachel Handley, Consultant in Public Health
Cross cutting	Approach to reducing youth vaping	Kate Anderson, Service Manager, Public Health Rachel Handley, Consultant in Public Health
Cross cutting	Transitions arrangements – preparing for adulthood	Emily Fulbrook, Acting Deputy Director, Adults & Health Operations and Jayne Shelbourn-Barrow, Service Director for Children and Families
15 November 2023 @ 10 am Sedgemoor Room, Bridgwater House, King Square, Bridgwater, TA6 3AR		
Cross cutting	2023/24 Children's Services – Budget Monitoring	Sian Kenny, Strategic Manager, Finance
Commissioning	Update on Children's Transformation Programme / Business Plan	Claire Winter, Executive Director of Children, Families and Education Caroline Barnes, Service Manager

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

Scrutiny Committee - Children and Families Work Plan 2023 - 2024

Overarching themes	Committee meeting dates / proposed agenda items	Lead Officer/Item Lead
Education Partnerships & Skills	Education finance – consultation	Amelia Walker, Service Director Education Partnerships and Skills
Education Partnerships & Skills	Standing Panel for Education Standards – update from Chair of Panel	Cllr Evie Potts-Jones
	Items for information – Standing Item: (a) SSCP Learning Bulletin - September 2023 – circulated on 20 September 2023 (b) Children & Young People LGA bulletin – September 2023 – circulated in 28 September 2023 (c) Link to the consultation on ‘creating a smoke free generation and tackling youth vaping’, which runs to 6 December - Creating a smokefree generation and tackling youth vaping: your views - Department of Health and Social Care (dhsc.gov.uk) – circulated on 30 October 2023 (d) Link to NHS dental statistics for England 2022-23, Annual Report - circulated on 30 October 2023 (e) Information on the Education Finance consultation – circulated on 1 November 2023 (f) LA maintained schools core offer – update – circulated on 6 November 2023	
Scrutiny Committee – Adults and Health – 7 December @ 10 am		
	Members of the Children & Families Scrutiny Committee invited to attend the meeting for this item:- <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Overview of Crime & Disorder (added 22.08.23) 	
Additional meeting – Tuesday 12 December 2023 @ 10am Venue – Council Chamber, Brympton Way, Yeovil		
Cross cutting	2023/24 Children’s Services – Budget Monitoring	Sian Kenny, Strategic Manager, Finance

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

Scrutiny Committee - Children and Families Work Plan 2023 - 2024

Overarching themes	Committee meeting dates / proposed agenda items	Lead Officer/Item Lead
Inclusion	Progress update on SEND Strategy / APP To include 'SEND system' update and an update on EHCP process and timeliness and information on 'bandings'	Dr Rob Hart ,Service Director - Inclusion
	Connect Somerset	Richard Selwyn Service Director Children's Commissioning
Wednesday 10 January 2024 @ 10am		
Venue Sedgemoor Room, Bridgwater House, King Square, Bridgwater, TA6 3AR		
	Budget outturn	
	MTFP	
Inclusion	Children's Mental Health and Wellbeing in Somerset Focus possibly self-harm - members of the Adults & Health Committee be invited to attend meeting	Dr Tim Cockerill and colleagues
	Challenges of CLA Commissioning	Richard Selwyn Service Director Children's Commissioning
	Update on short break provision (respite)	Jayne Shelbourn-Barrow, Service Director Children & Families Louise Palmer, Strategic Commissioner, Jo Manning
	School place sufficiency – EY, Nursery places, primary, secondary and special schools	Phil Curd, Head of Education Places
	Information Items: (a) Housing related support and accommodation for 16 – 25 year olds – update – Key Decision The new service will go live in April 2024.	Richard Selwyn, Service Director Commissioning

Scrutiny Committee - Children and Families Work Plan 2023 - 2024

	Overarching themes	Committee meeting dates / proposed agenda items		Lead Officer/Item Lead
		Wednesday 13 March 2024 @ 10am JMR, Deane House, Belvedere Road, Taunton, TA1 1HE		

Future meeting dates

- Wednesday 15 May 2024 @ 10am

Scrutiny Committee - Children and Families Work Plan 2023 - 2024

Universal Education

- Pupil place planning
- Disadvantage gap
- Academisation
- LA maintained capacity and support

SEND and Inclusion

- Attendance
- Accelerated Progress Plan (Joint Local Area SEND Inspection)
- SEND & Alternative Provision
- SEND Strategy

Social Care and Commissioning

- Family safeguarding
- 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 Democratic Services (01823) 357628 & democraticservicesteam@somerset.gov.uk who will assist you in submitting your item.

Scrutiny Committee - Children & Families Outcome Tracker 2023 - 24

Agenda items	Lead / Owner	Agreed Outcome	RAG Status
4 May 2023			
SEND Strategy	Rob Hart, Andrew Keefe	<p>Received presentation on the Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) Strategy and update on Accelerated Progress Plan (APP) - developed as a response to the 2 remaining areas of weakness after the 2022 Ofsted and Care Quality Commission (CQC) inspection. These are partnership plans, jointly owned by the Council and the Integrated Care Board (ICB) and developed in partnership with education providers and parent carers and other partners.</p> <p>The new SEND Strategy has been approved by the ICB and the SEND Partnership Board – a 3-year programme for improving SEND services and outcomes. The APP is a 12-month action plan and was submitted to the Department for Education on 21 March 2023 and has now been approved.</p> <p>Noted the Autism Strategy is in development.</p> <p>The Committee noted the update. Will provide 6 monthly progress updates (progress on the 29 ‘missions’)</p>	<p>Completed</p> <p>progress update in 6 months’ time (now Dec ‘23 mtg)</p>
12 July 2023			
Children’s Mental Health and Wellbeing in Somerset	Dr Tim Cockerill and colleagues	<p>Detailed Presentation received, which included an update on the Trauma Informed Somerset practice model and implementation.</p> <p>Details on Regional Summit in autumn to be shared with Committee. Noted position re recruitment of coordinator and the system wide trauma informed training offer.</p>	<p>progress update in 6 months’ time</p> <p>January ‘24</p>
13 September 2023			

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

Scrutiny Committee - Children & Families Outcome Tracker 2023 - 24

2023/24 Children's Services - Budget Monitoring	Sian Kenny	<p>The Committee received a presentation on the 23/24 Children's Services budget as at the end of July 2023 (Month 4).</p> <p>Actions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (a) Home to School Transport review be circulated asap. (b) EHCP's – paper be circulated explain how they come about, process, numbers (c) Next budget report needs to include table showing current budget position and also more detail on 'risks' to help the Committee delve deeper. (d) IMPOWER early intervention and support / diagnostic review – paper be circulated providing more detail / information 	<p>On going</p> <p>Done - FA</p> <p>Rob Hart (Dec mtg)</p> <p>Sian Kenny</p> <p>Richard Selwyn – will share Sufficiency Strategy at future meeting - item on CLA commissioning (outline challenges and programme to improve outcomes and sufficiency) – Jan mtg</p>
Education Modelling – Frome – next steps	Ameila Walker, Phil Curd	<p>The Committee received a presentation which provided an update on the on-going work and discussions about education structures in the Frome area.</p> <p>The Committee welcomed and noted the update. Invited to update & come back if need to.</p>	

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

Scrutiny Committee - Children & Families Outcome Tracker 2023 - 24

Regional Adoption Agency	Jayne Shelbourne-Barrow	<p>The Committee considered a report regarding the proposed changes to the Regional Adoption Agency (Adopt South West)</p> <p>This sought the Committees' views on the request from Cornwall Council to join the regional adoption agency (Adopt South West) link to the report. The Committee was generally supportive of the proposal for Cornwall to join and asked that the position regarding the recent Ofsted judgement for the Isles of Scilly be included in the decision report (Executive – mtg on 6 October '23).</p> <p>The Committee also asked to be provided with further details on the percentage / figures detailed in the paper, for clarification.</p>	<p>Completed.</p> <p>Adopt South West</p>
Information Items		<p>Noted that the briefing on Education Data will now be circulated after the meeting. There will be a presentation on this at the November meeting.</p>	
Joint meeting with Adults and Health Scrutiny on 25 October 2023			
Dentistry and children and young people's access to dentistry and child oral health improvement	NHS Somerset / ICB and Public Health	<p>The Committee received a presentation from NHS Somerset on the provision of NHS Dental Services in Somerset, and a position statement on child oral health improvement, provided by Public Health.</p> <p>The Chair requested (a) a briefing be provided to cover the questions raised during discussions, around early years, sign-posting, primary care recovery plan, route for queries to be funneled; noted that service is creating a webinar (across the SW region); (b) an update to the Committee on issues raised in 4 – 6 months.</p> <p>Link to NHS dental statistical data information</p> <p>The Committee welcomed and noted the update.</p>	<p>Update to a Joint mtg or Adults & Health cttee</p>

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

Scrutiny Committee - Children & Families Outcome Tracker 2023 - 24

Somerset approach to reducing smoking and youth vaping	Kate Anderson Rachel Handley	<p>The Committee received a presentation from Public Health Team and engaged in discussions and debate of the points raised. The presentation raised several important and informative points.</p> <p>The Committee agreed a recommendation that they wished to present to The Executive and unanimously agreed would write to the Executive in relation to electronic cigarettes, as follows:-</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The Committee asked that the current government consultation (link to the consultation Creating a smokefree generation and tackling youth vaping: your views - Department of Health and Social Care (dhsc.gov.uk) be shared with all members who are encouraged to complete and promote locally in their divisions. The consultation runs to 6 December. 2. The Committee asked that Licensing committee be asked to review and action stronger enforcement of the sale of these devices in line with the current legal position. 3. The Committee asked that the 'Quit tool not cool tool' slogan, as highlighted by the presentation be supported and promoted in the council. 4. The Committee requested that Council take a position with regard to seeking government to work at increasing legislation around electronic cigarettes, that included but not conclusive:- a ban of the use of single use devices with exception of use to support stopping smoking, a ban on child targeting (advertising and packaging), an introduction of plain packaging that would include a health warning, an introduction of an increasing age ban on sales of these devices in line with the change made to cigarette sales. 	On going
15 November 2023			
2023/24 Children's Services - Budget Monitoring	Sian Kenny	<p>The Committee received a presentation on the 23/24 Children's Services budget and a verbal update on the month 6 position, which is showing a slight increase in forecast overspend (£11.8m to £12.4m).</p> <p>A key area of deficit is the DSG, High Needs Block and will include more detail on this and the 2 areas overspending in the next update to the Committee.</p>	On going

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

Scrutiny Committee - Children & Families Outcome Tracker 2023 - 24

Update on Children's Transformation Programme / Business Plan	Claire Winter / Caroline Barnes	<p>The Committee received a presentation on Children's Transformation Programme / Business Plan. The transformation priorities are – sufficiency, efficiency, managing risks (slide 8). The 4 strategies underpinning the priorities 2023 - 2026 (slide 9) are –</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Education for Life • CLA Transformation • SEND Strategy • Connect Somerset <p>The Chair asked that the committee think further on these areas and at the next meeting will ask for volunteers, to act as champions for each area.</p>	<p>Completed</p> <p>Discuss at Dec mtg</p>
Education finance consultation	Amelia Walker	<p>The Committee received a presentation on the Education Finance consultation on how can meet education funding challenges in Somerset, and which concluded on 10 November 2023. There were 346 responses to the consultation survey. The committee discussed the areas which it is proposed will be developed further into detailed, costed options for consultation.</p> <p>The Chair asked for clarification around 'banding' at next meeting, referenced on slide 7.</p>	<p>Completed</p> <p>Dec mtg – part of SEND update agenda item.</p>
Standing Panel for Education Standards	Cllr Evie Potts-Jones	<p>The Committee received an update from the Chair of the Education Standards Panel, Cllr Evie Potts-Jones. The first, introductory meeting had been held on 26 October. Going forward the Panel will recommend items or certain data for the Scrutiny Committee to discuss.</p> <p>The Committee welcomed and noted the update.</p>	<p>Completed</p>

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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 \(safeguardingsomerset.org.uk\)](https://safeguardingsomerset.org.uk)

Completed	Action complete and will be removed from tracker for next meeting
Pending	Action on-going or plans in place to address.

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

**Scrutiny Committee - Children & Families Outcome Tracker
2023 - 24**

Incomplete

No action currently in place with a minimum of 3 months since action agreed.

2023/24 Children's Budget Monitoring

Children & Families Scrutiny Committee
12 December 2023

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Agenda Item 6

Finance Team

Update on changes to the team and introductions

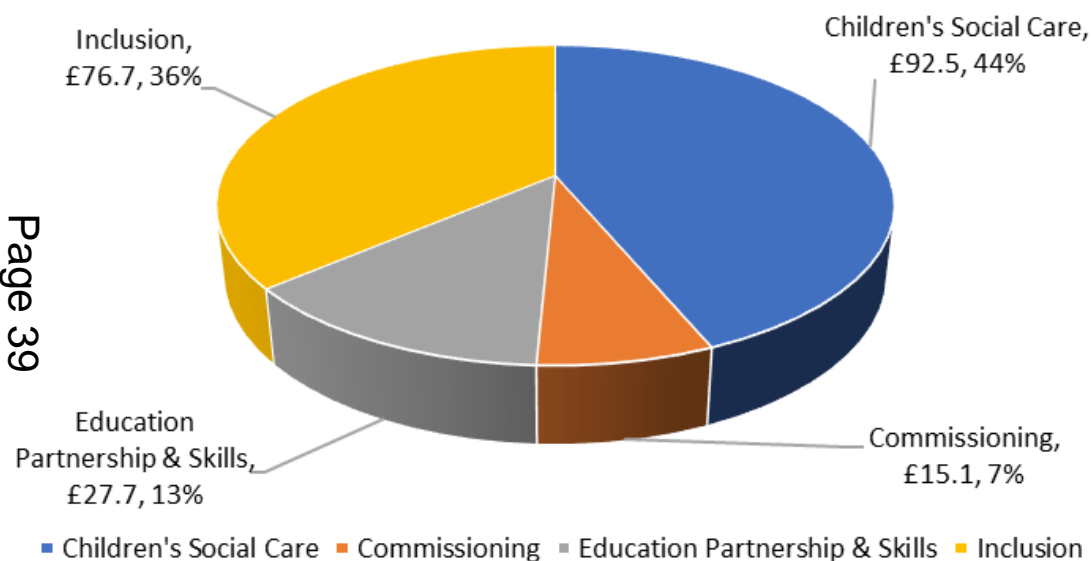
Sian Kenny – Strategic Finance Business Partner is stepping out of FBP role and into an interim Financial Governance role

Future contacts:

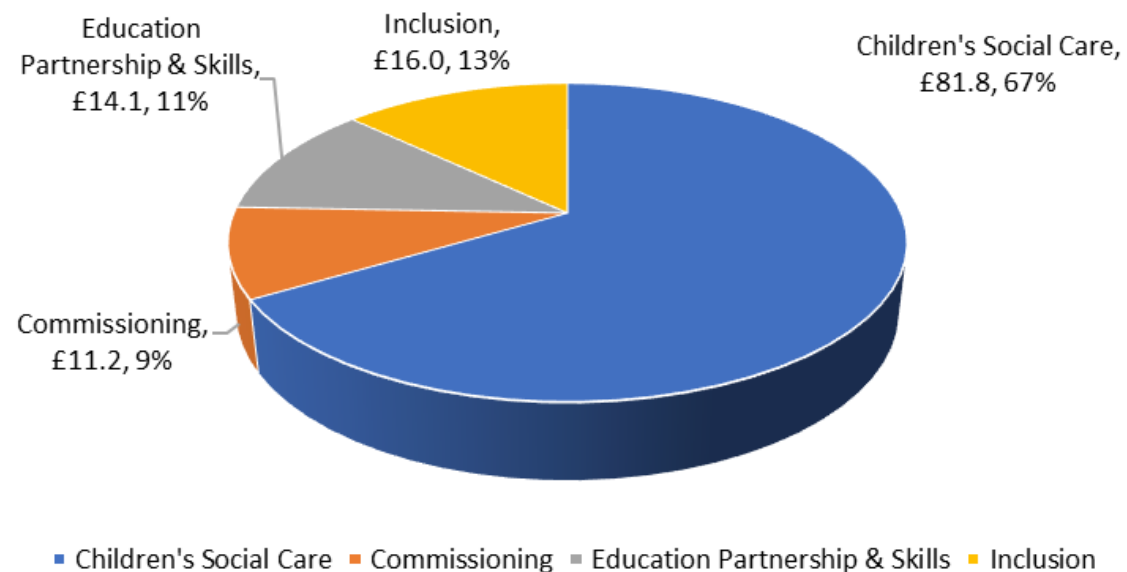
- Chris Evans – Head of Finance Business Partnering
- Siobhan Cleverly – Finance Service Manager for Children & Families and Children's Commissioning
- Jo Currie – Finance Service Manager for Education, Partnership & Skills and Inclusion

2023/24 Children, Families & Education

Gross Budget £212.1m



Net Budget £123.1m



The service **gross expenditure budget** is **£212.1m**
The service has an **income budget** of **£ 89.0m**
The Council funds the **net budget** of **£123.1m**

23/24 Budget Monitoring Report

Forecast outturn as at the end of September (Month 6)

General Fund

Page 40
£123.1m net budget

£ 12.4m forecast overspend (10.1%)

Note – verbal update on latest position will be provided at the Scrutiny Meeting

Service Area	Current Budget	Full Year Projection	Month 6 Variance	A/(F)	RAG Status	Movement From Month 5
	£m	£m	£m			£m
Children & Families						
Prevention Services	5.7	5.8	0.1	A	Red	0.1
Fostering & Permanence	13.3	12.6	(0.7)	(F)	Green	(0.7)
External Placements	38.4	48.8	10.4	A	Red	0.3
Fieldwork	9.1	10.0	0.9	A	Red	0.9
Disabilities	6.8	6.3	(0.5)	(F)	Green	(0.5)
Partnership, Audit & Quality	2.7	2.7	0.0	-	Green	0.0
Children Looked After	4.7	4.9	0.2	A	Red	0.2
Leaving Care	2.2	2.5	0.3	A	Red	0.3
CSC Management	(0.9)	(0.9)	0.0	-	Green	0.0
C&F Apportionments	0.0	0.0	0.0	-	Green	0.0
sub total	82.0	92.7	10.7	A	Red	0.6
Commissioning and Performance						
C&P Commissioning	2.0	2.0	0.0	-	Green	0.0
Performance and Transformation	4.4	4.3	(0.1)	(F)	Green	(0.1)
Business Support	4.1	4.1	0.0	-	Green	0.0
Children, Families & Education Team	0.7	0.5	(0.2)	(F)	Green	(0.2)
sub total	11.2	10.9	(0.3)	(F)	Green	(0.3)
Inclusion						
Special Educational Needs and Disabilities	3.1	3.1	0.0	-	Green	0.0
Vulnerable Learners	0.2	0.2	0.0	-	Green	0.0
Educational Psychology	2.1	2.1	0.0	-	Green	0.0
Inclusion Transformation and Partnerships	0.1	0.1	0.0	-	Green	0.0
SEND Transport	10.1	11.8	1.7	A	Red	0.0
Inclusion Strategic Management	0.2	0.2	0.0	-	Green	0.0
sub total	15.8	17.5	1.7	A	Red	0.0
Education, Partnerships and Skills						
Education Leadership	0.1	(0.1)	(0.2)	(F)	Green	(0.2)
Education Operations	(0.1)	(0.3)	(0.2)	(F)	Green	(0.2)
Curriculum and Literacy	(0.1)	0.4	0.5	A	Red	0.5
Education Places	0.6	0.7	0.1	A	Red	0.1
Home to School Transport	12.9	12.9	0.0	-	Green	0.0
EPS Management	0.7	0.8	0.1	A	Red	0.1
sub total	14.1	14.4	0.3	A	Red	0.3
Children, Families & Education Services Total	123.1	135.5	12.4	A	Red	0.6

Children Looked After (CLA)

CLA Net Budgets

£38.4m External Placements – placements provided by external organisations

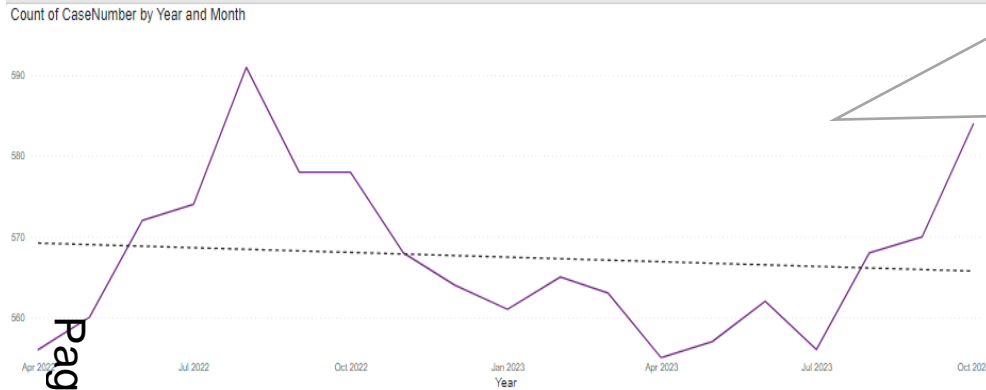
£13.3m Fostering & Permanence – in house fostering and adoption

£4.7m Children Looked After – support packages at home and transport

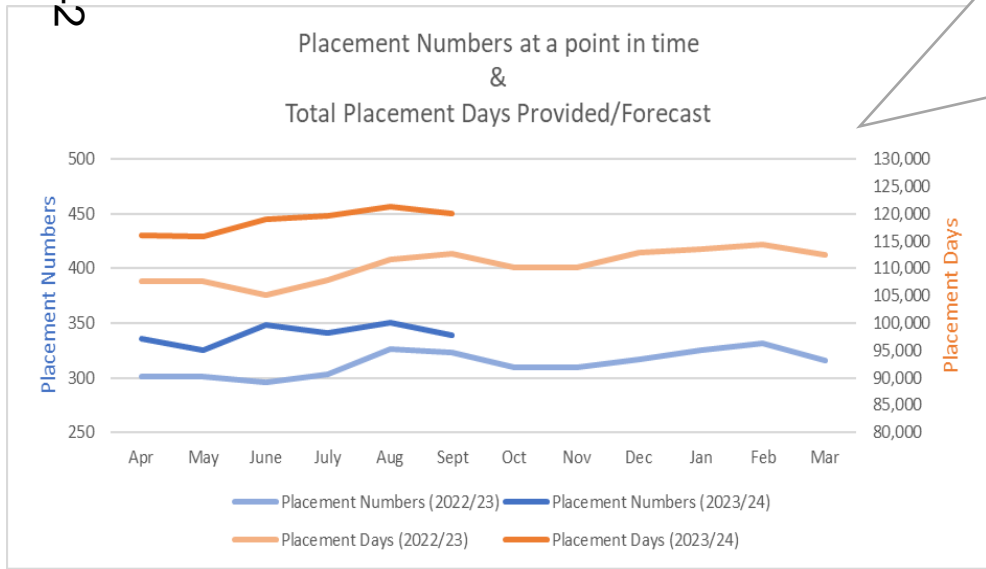
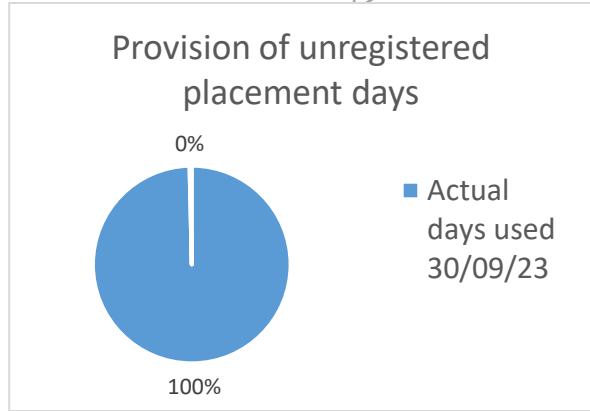
£2.2m Leaving Care – support for care leavers

CLA Key Cost Drivers

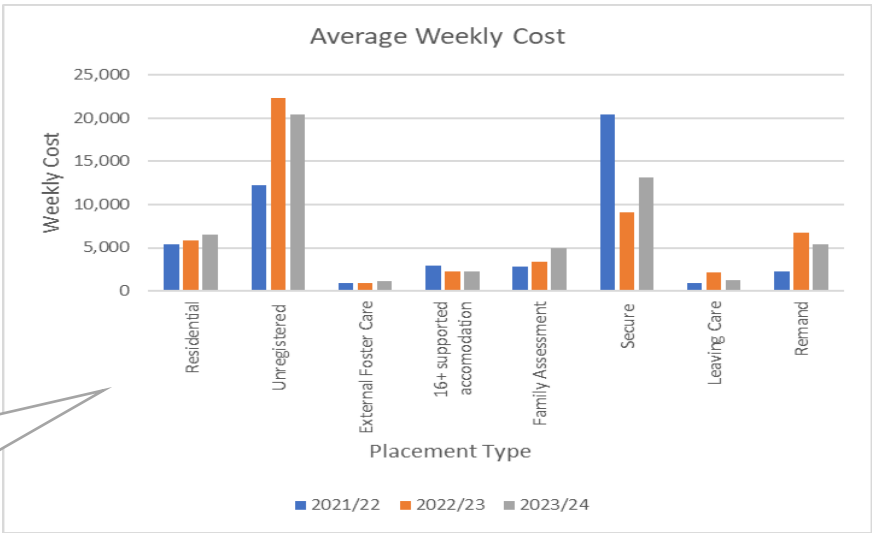
100% of budgeted unregistered placements days have been provided in first 6 months



- Relatively stable no. of CLA since Jan 2022
- Unexpected spike in summer 2022 – CYP with complex needs
- Recent increase – sibling groups/non-accidental injury
- Impact on no. of external placements and high cost of placement



- Increases in placements numbers and placement days...
- UASC – National Transfer Scheme
 - Residential placements – complexity of need and lack of sufficiency in fostering sector
 - Bespoke 16+ supported accomodation – complexity of need
- Reduction in external fostering placements



- Average weekly cost of unregistered placements is now £20.4k (9% reduction on 22/23)
- Increase of 13% on average cost of residential placements

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External Placements Monitoring & Forecasting

The table opposite provides a breakdown of the external placements budget by placement type.

The main areas of overspend are residential and unregistered placements, which are looked at in more detail on the next slide.

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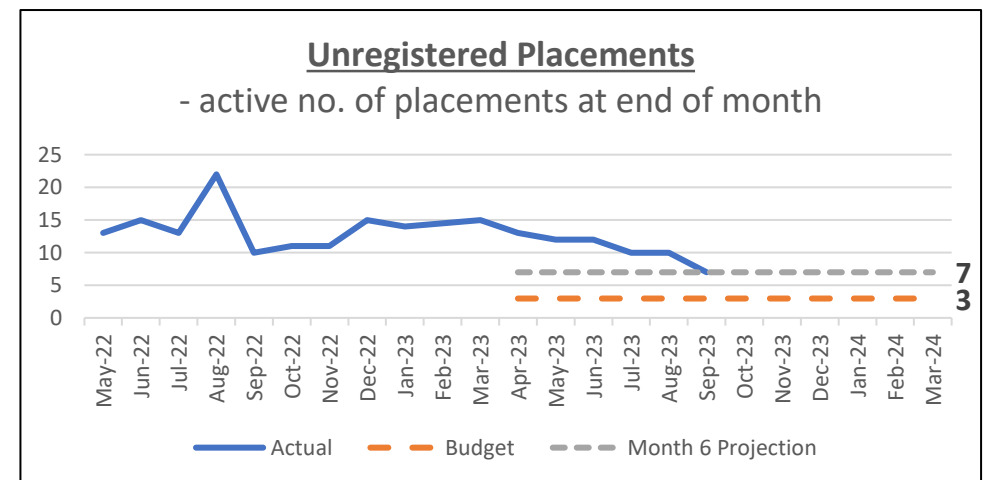
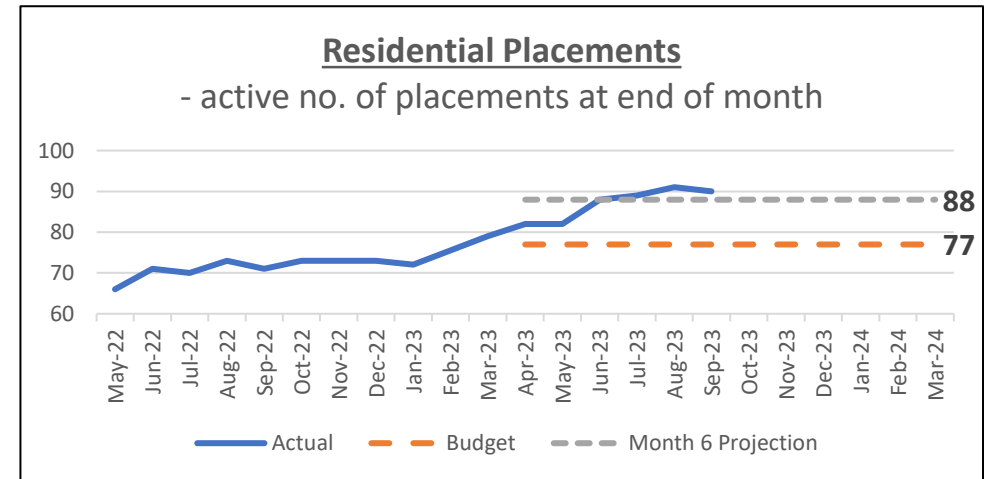
External Placements	23/24 Budget £m	Full Year Projection £m	Month 6 Variance £m
Residential Placements	24.4	30.0	5.6
Independent Fostering Agencies	8.2	7.5	(0.7)
16+ Supported Accommodation	5.7	7.2	1.5
Homes & Horizons	4.1	4.1	0.0
Unregistered Placements	3.7	7.2	3.4
UASC Placements	1.9	2.7	0.8
Residential Parent & Child	1.1	0.7	(0.4)
Secure	0.9	1.2	0.4
Other	1.3	2.4	1.0
Total Expenditure	51.3	63.0	11.7
DSG Grant	(5.0)	(6.1)	(1.1)
UASC Grant	(2.4)	(2.6)	(0.1)
NHS Funding	(5.3)	(5.3)	(0.0)
Other	(0.2)	(0.2)	(0.0)
Total Income	(12.9)	(14.2)	(1.2)
Net Expenditure	38.4	48.8	10.4

External Placements Monitoring & Forecasting

The graphs opposite show the trend in the numbers of residential and unregistered placements over the past 18 months.

Residential placement numbers have been increasing over this period, particularly in the current calendar year. The reported number of active placements at the end of September was 90. 77 residential placements were budgeted for as part of the 23/24 budget setting process, at an average weekly cost of £6,113. Month 6 projections for the full year assume an average of 88 FTE residential placements (11 more than budget), at an average weekly cost of £6,566 (£453 more than budget).

Unregistered placement numbers have been decreasing in the current financial year, driven largely by the Homes & Horizons initiative. The reported number of active placements at the end of September was 7. 3 unregistered placements were budgeted for, at an average weekly cost of £23,979. Month 6 projections assume an average of 7 FTE unregistered placements (4 more than budget), at an average weekly cost of £20,357 (£3,622 less than budget).



Fostering & Permanence Monitoring & Forecasting

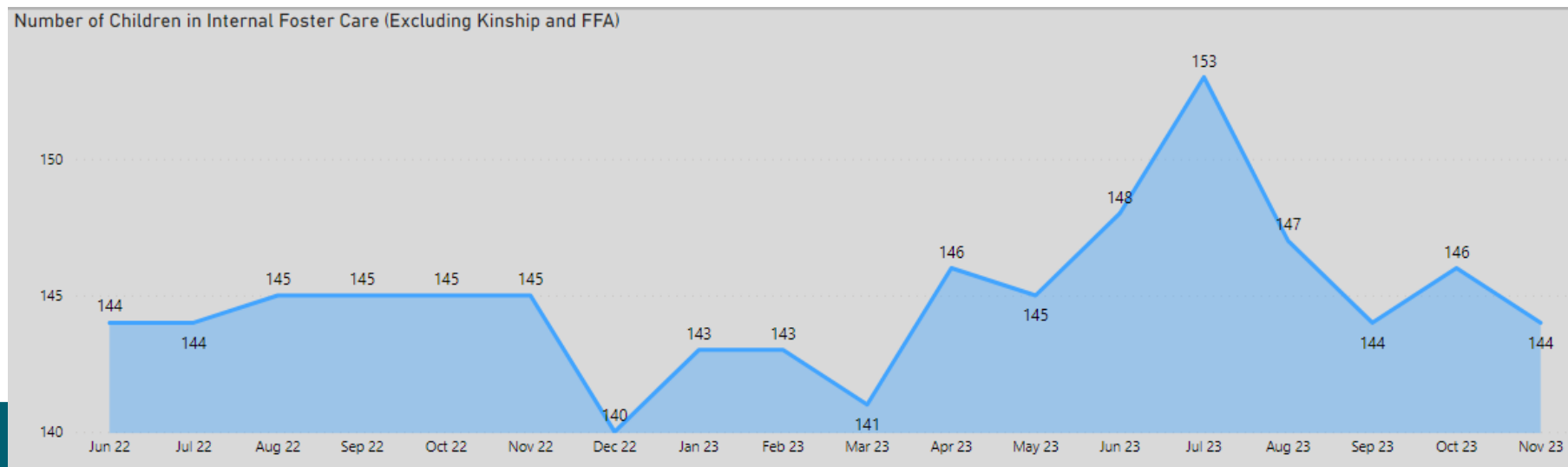
The table opposite provides a breakdown of the Fostering and Permanence budgets.

The main area of underspend is fostering fees and allowances.

The graph below shows the number of in-house foster placements over the previous 18 months (excluding kinship and foster for adoption placements), which have remained largely stable during this period.

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Fostering & Permanence	23/24 Budget	Full Year Projection	Month 6 Variance
	£m	£m	£m
Fostering fees & allowances	4.7	3.7	(1.0)
Special Guardianship	2.9	2.9	0.0
Adoption Allowances	1.0	1.0	0.0
Connected Persons	0.4	0.8	0.4
Staffing costs	4.1	4.0	(0.1)
Other costs	0.2	0.2	0.0
Total Expenditure	13.3	12.6	(0.7)



Home to School Transport

Mainstream and SEN Transport Net Budgets

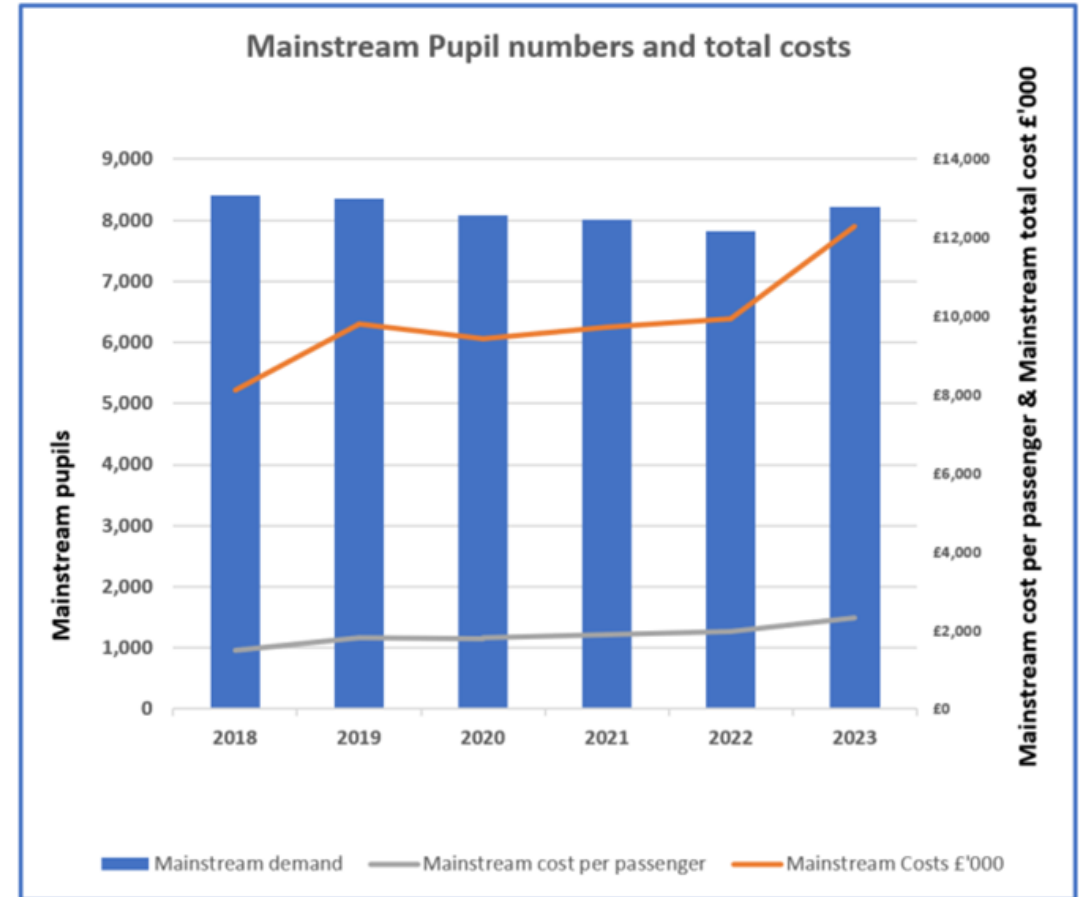
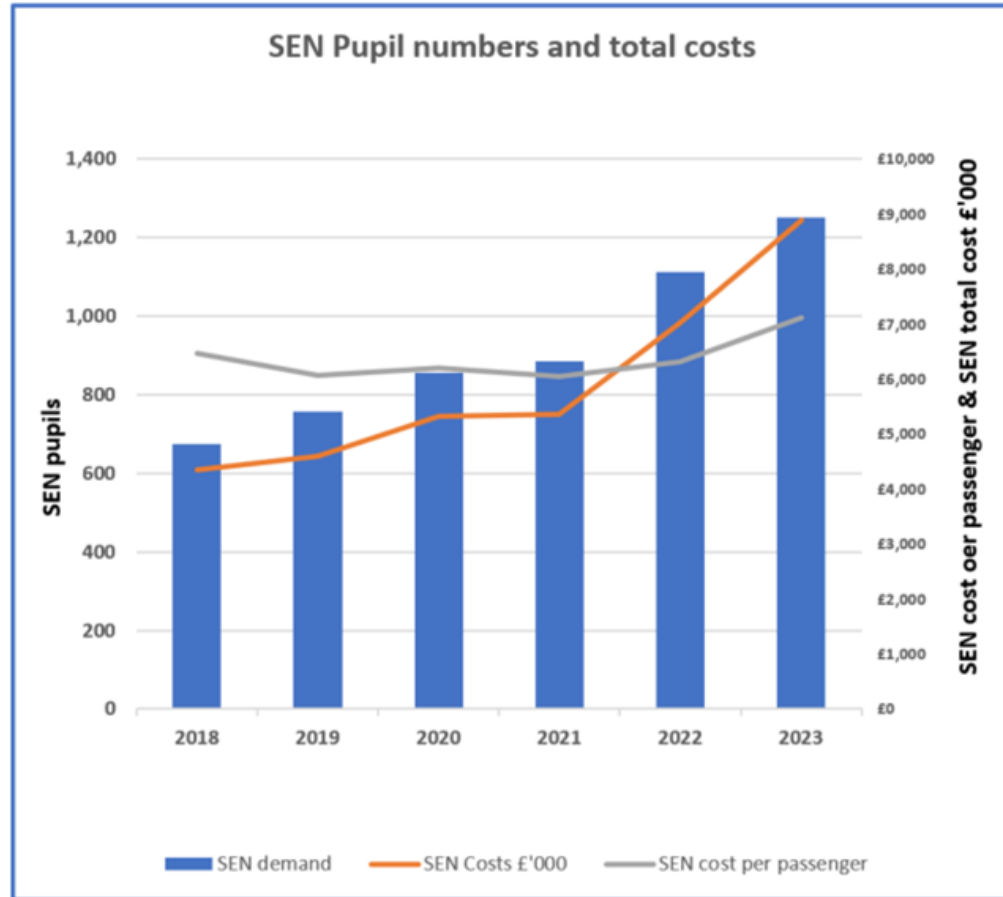
£12.9m Home to School Transport – transport from home to mainstream schools

- Spend is more predictable as children travel to local school and start/end at regular points in year.
- Key driver for increased costs in inflation.

£10.1m SEND Transport – transport to school setting for children with SEND

- Spend is less predictable as children need transport to nearest appropriate school and this will depend on where places are available.
- Key driver for increased costs is demand.

Impact of inflation and SEND demand



SEN Transport Monitoring & Forecasting

- Budget monitoring meetings are held monthly between finance, the Inclusion team, transport teams and commissioning.
- Currently forecasting is based on basic data available i.e. using estimated growth data on EHCPs and CPI forecasts.
- Financial data is held in Capita however this is a difficult system to work with and it is not routinely reconciled with Dynamics.
- Further modelling work is being worked on between finance and the service to improve forecasts and budget models.
- Currently working on extracting data and a KPI dashboard e.g. numbers travelling, average costs by type of transport, income assumptions.

Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG)

DSG Blocks

The DSG is a ring-fenced grant which is allocated in four blocks:

- **Schools** funds the Individual Schools' Budgets of Academies and Local Authority Maintained schools.
- **Early Years** funds the provision of education for children from age three up to age five and for qualifying two-year olds.
- **High Needs** funds the place budgets at special schools, Enhanced Resource schools and Pupil Referral Units within the local authority's geographical boundary and other expenditure required to support children and young people with additional educational needs.
- **Central Schools Services** funds limited central expenditure on behalf of all schools and academies plus historic commitments that have been agreed by the Schools' Forum

23/24 Budget Monitoring Report

Forecast outturn as at the end of September (Month 6)

Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG)

£15.5m forecast in year deficit; cumulative £37.5m deficit

Note – verbal update on latest position will be provided at the Scrutiny Meeting

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DSG Block £m	Total funding available for services 2023/24	2023/24 Forecast Month 6	Forecast in-year variance surplus/ (deficit)	DSG Block £m	Balance b/f at 1 Apr 2023 Surplus/ (Deficit)	NFF drawn from Growth Fund	Forecast in-year variance surplus/ (deficit)	Forecast carry forward 31 Mar 2024
Schools	2.5	2.9	(0.4)	Schools	2.6	(1.2)	(0.4)	1.0
Central Schools	5.0	5.0	-	Central Schools	5.6	-	-	5.6
Early Years	31.1	31.1	-	Early Years	0.9	-	-	0.9
High Needs	73.5	88.6	(15.1)	High Needs	(29.8)	-	(15.1)	(44.9)
Total	112.1	127.6	(15.5)	Total	(20.7)	(1.2)	(15.5)	(37.5)

Statutory override

At the end of 2022/23, the DSG was overspent by £20.7million.

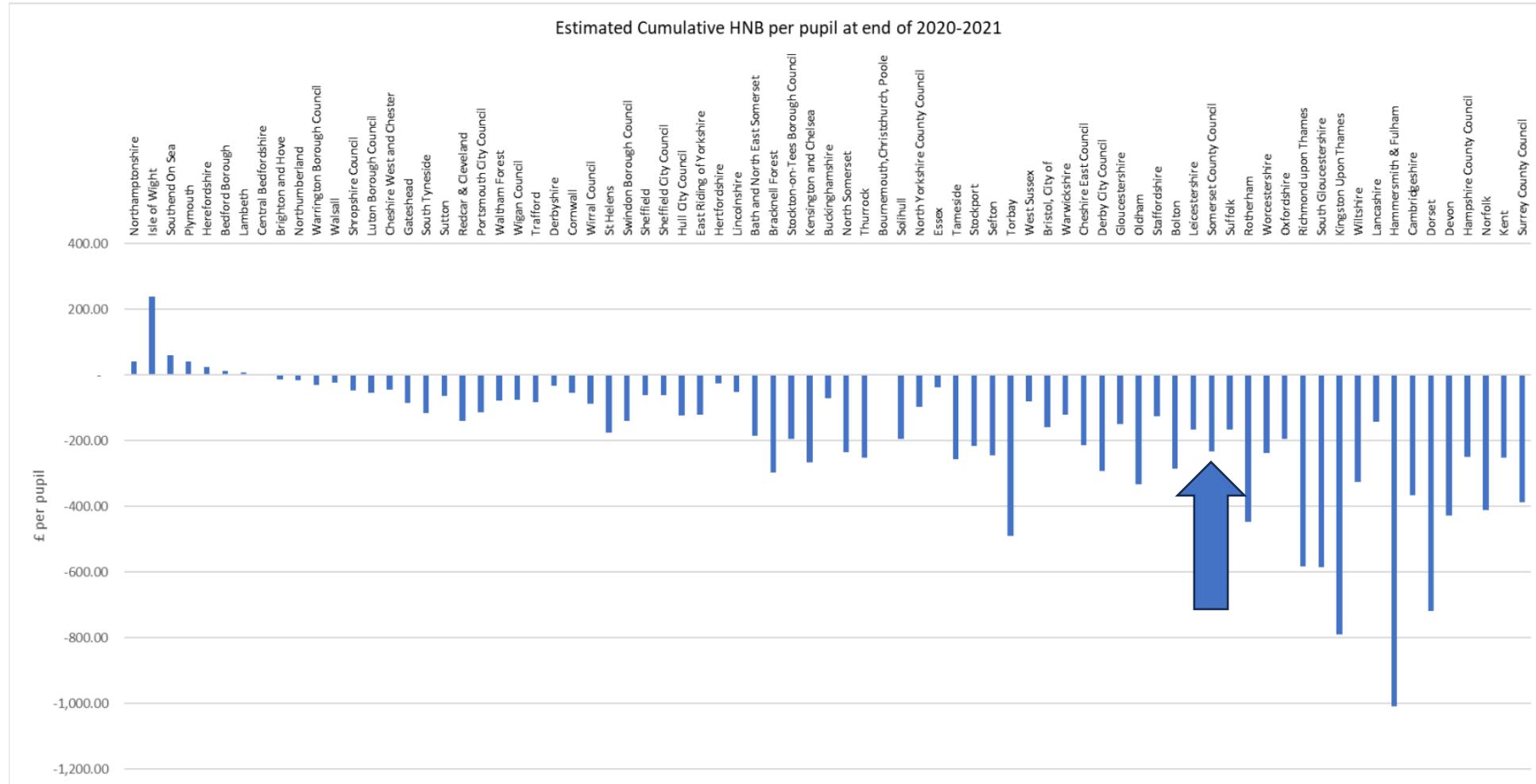
This would normally be recognised within the Council's financial statements as a negative (overspent) reserve, but it is currently subject to a 'statutory override' which allows it to be ringfenced and accounted for separately to the Council's overall reserves.

The combined value of all DSG overspends nationally is forecast to be £2.5billion by March 2025.

Were the statutory override to end, as is planned in April 2026, it is likely that three quarters of all councils would immediately need to issue notices under Section 114 of the Local Government Finance Act 1988.

The Council is refreshing its DSG Deficit Management Plan (DMP). Proposal to present the DMP to C&F Scrutiny Committee in February.

DSG overspend – deficit per pupil

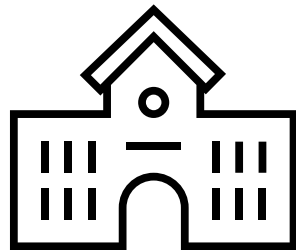


High Needs Block

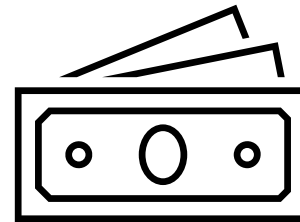
The purpose of the high needs block (final allocation of £83.7m, current budget £73.5m after allocations to academies, LA Special Schools and PRUs) is to fund the additional costs incurred by education providers and councils in providing for children and young people with significantly higher needs than most.



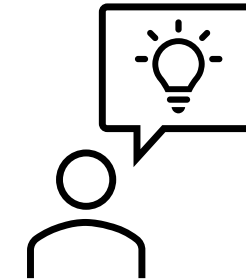
High needs funding pays for:



Special schools and
pupil referral units



Extra money to
mainstream schools,
colleges and early years
settings

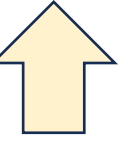


Council staff with
specialist expertise

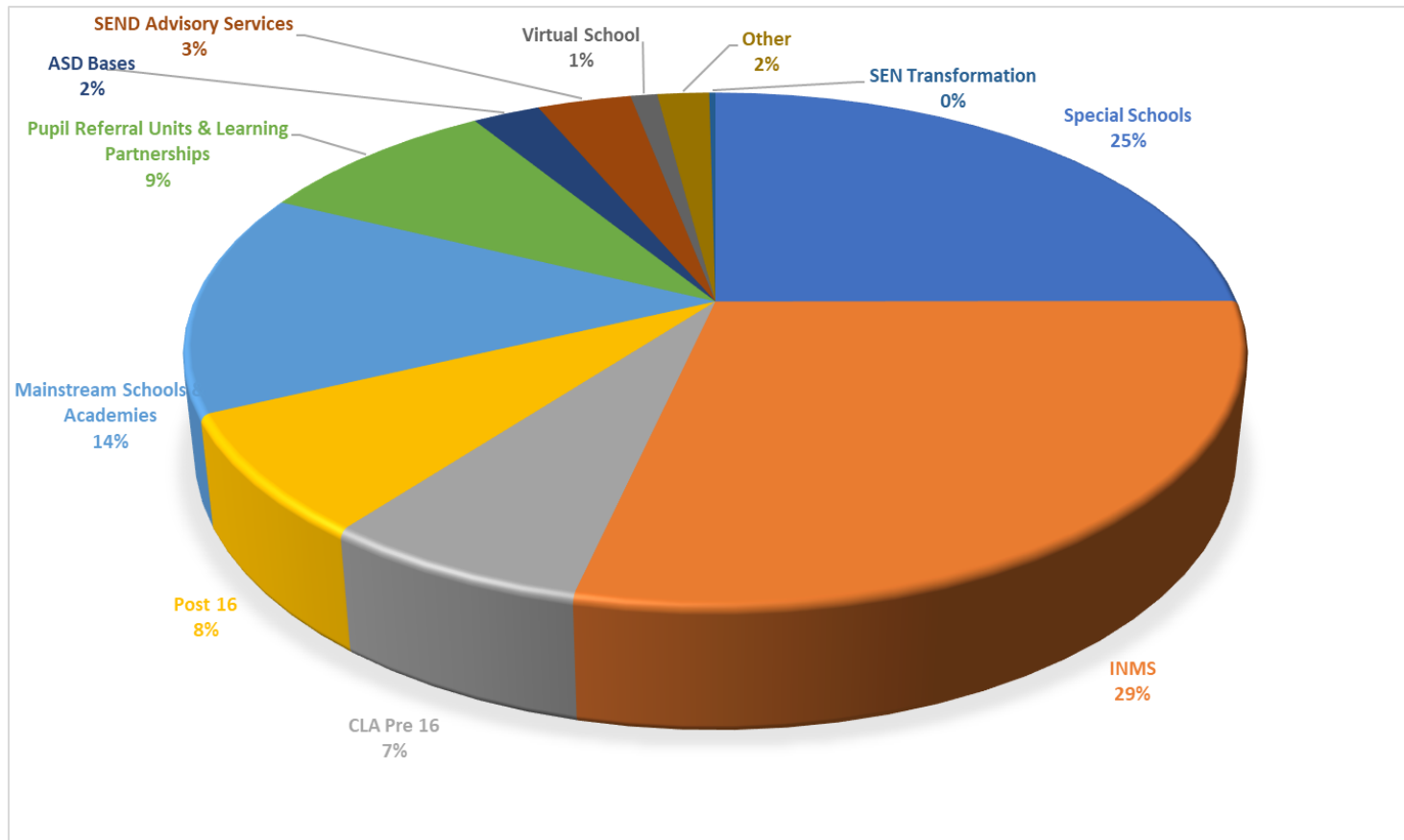
Why is the High Needs block stretched?

There are pressures nationally on High Needs funding because:

- 1) There is increased identification of children with more complex needs.
- 2) There are more pupils in special schools, and where there are not enough state-maintained special school places, councils need to use independent special schools which cost 3-4 times more per pupil.
- 3) The funding system (focused on Education, Health and Care Plans) was well intentioned but poorly designed
- 4) Once a need has been identified it is incredibly rare for the support or placement for that child to subsequently be withdrawn
- 5) The length of time children have entitlements has been extended to age 25 without this being properly funded

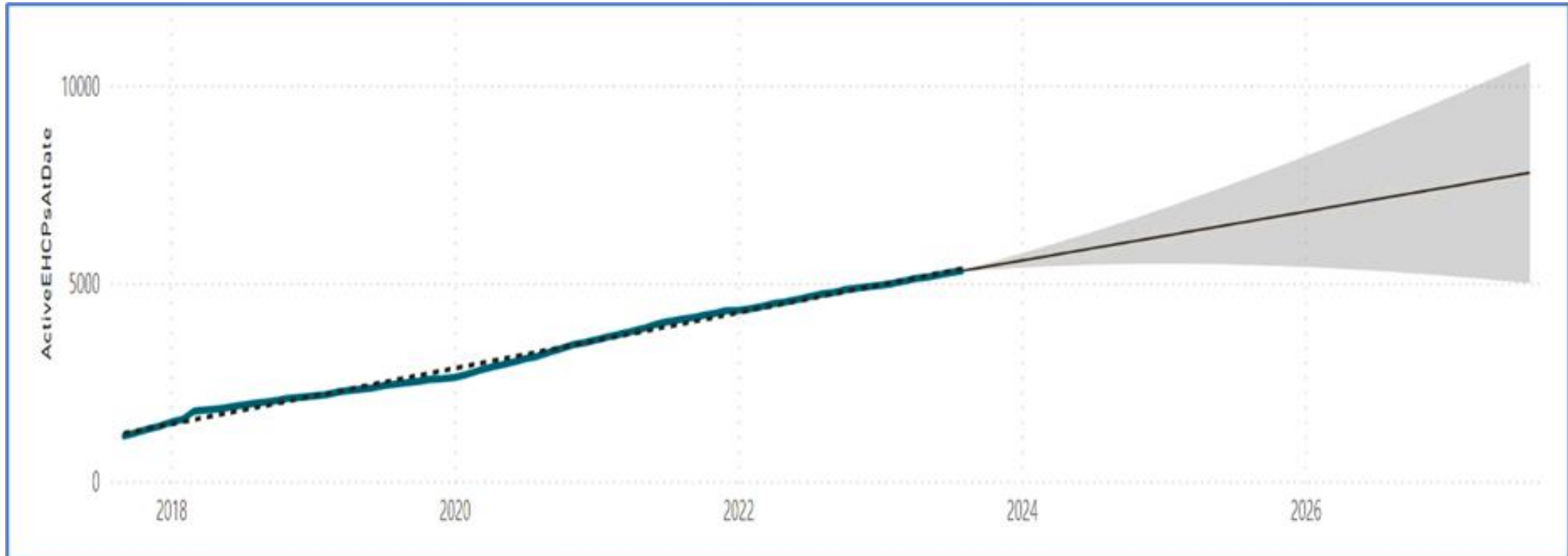


High Needs Block Forecast – Month 6



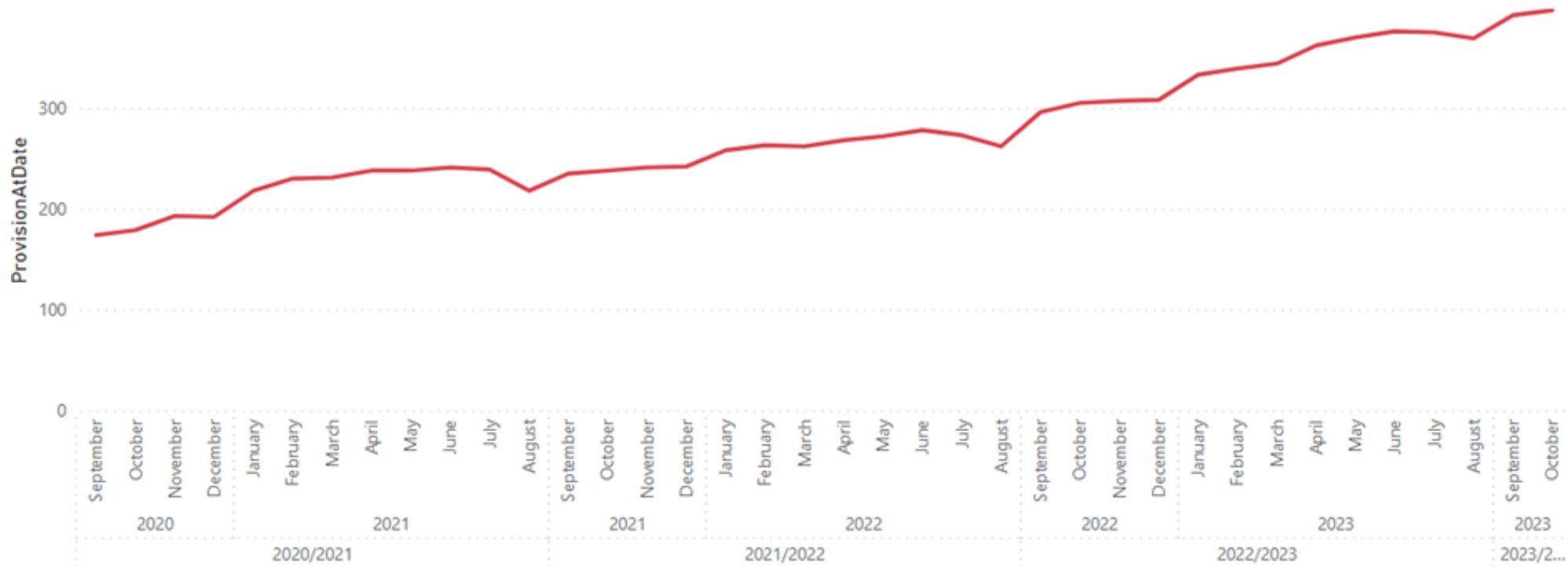
- Approx 60% of the budget (£42.7m) was set aside for INMS & Special Schools. INMS budgets are forecast to be overspent by £4.7m at month 6.
- A £5.5m projected overspend was built into the budget, along with a £1.5m transfer from the Growth Fund. These are not forecast to be received.
- Mainstream schools & academies & Children Looked After (pre-16 education contribution) are forecasting an overspend of £3.4m.

High Needs Block Key Cost Drivers



Somerset has experienced a steady growth in the number of children with Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs). From 2018 to 2023 increase nationally in the proportion of school pupils from 2.9% to 4.3%. Somerset is not slightly above the national level at 4.6% of pupils with EHCP. Trajectories show the numbers are expected to continue to increase in future years

High Needs Block Key Cost Drivers



Increasing numbers of children accessing independent non-maintained specialist (INMS) schools is a result of not having sufficient maintained provision in Somerset to meet the range of needs.

Time for Questions



Somerset Council
Scrutiny Committee – Children & Families
– 12 December 2023



Education, Health and Care Assessment and Plan 2022-2023

Lead Officer: Rob Hart

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Executive Lead Member: Cllr Tessa Munt

Division / Local Member:

1. Summary

- 1.1.** This report provides a summary of the data, improvements, impact, and ongoing challenges in relation to how the local area has continued to respond to delivering Education, Health, and Care plans (EHC plans) across Somerset since the reinspection of SEND Services in November 2022.

Through the inspection it was recognised that the timeliness and quality of EHC plans had improved considerably, and it was noted that all partners work together to support the statutory assessment and planning processes with equal contributions across agencies including the quality assurance processes in place supporting them.

- 1.2.** This report gives a summary of improvement, impact, and ongoing challenges for teams across Somerset Council and wider partners and underpins the necessity of continued focus on improving the experience for children, young people, and their families.

2. Issues for consideration / Recommendations

- 2.1.** To receive updates regarding Education, Health and Care Assessment and Plans
- 2.2.** To note the LGCSO decision regarding Annual Reviews and to agree the recommended actions to meet the statutory review timescales.

3. Background

- 3.1.** Most children and young people who have Special Educational Needs or disabilities (SEND) will have their needs met within local mainstream early years settings, schools, or college. Some children and young people may need an Education, Health, and Care needs assessment (EHCNA) following this

assessment Somerset Council must decide whether an Education, Health and Care plan (EHC Plan) is needed.

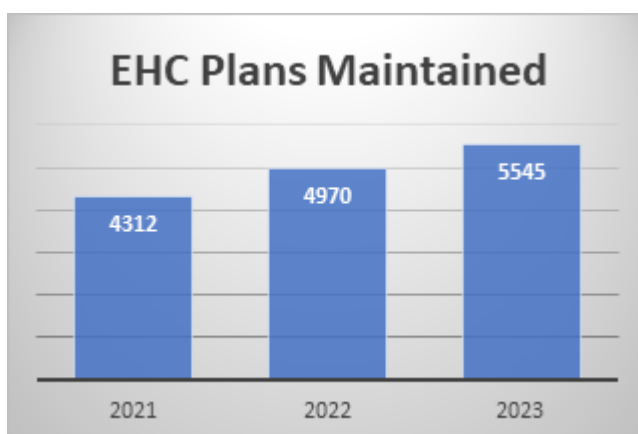
- 3.2.** The purpose of an EHC plan is to make special educational provision to meet the special educational needs of the child or young person. The EHC plan should also identify long term outcomes for them across education, health and social care and prepare children and young people for adult life from the earliest point possible.
- 3.3.** To achieve this, Somerset Council works with partners across the local area to gather the advice and information needed to undertake the assessment. The views, interests and aspirations of the parents and child or young person must be included, and the assessment must provide a full description of the child or young person’s special educational needs and any health and social care needs and establish outcomes across education, health and social care based on the child or young person’s needs and aspirations.
- 3.4.** An EHC needs assessment and plan should not normally be the first step in the process, rather it should follow on from planning already undertaken with parents and young people with the education setting they attend. The whole process should take no more than 20-weeks.

3.5. Number of EHC Plans Maintained

On November 1st, 2023, the number of EHC plans maintained for children and young people living in Somerset was **5,545** representing an increase from **4,970** as of October 2022, representing a 11% increase over one year.

At the current rate, there is forecast to be **6,046** EHC plans by November 2024.

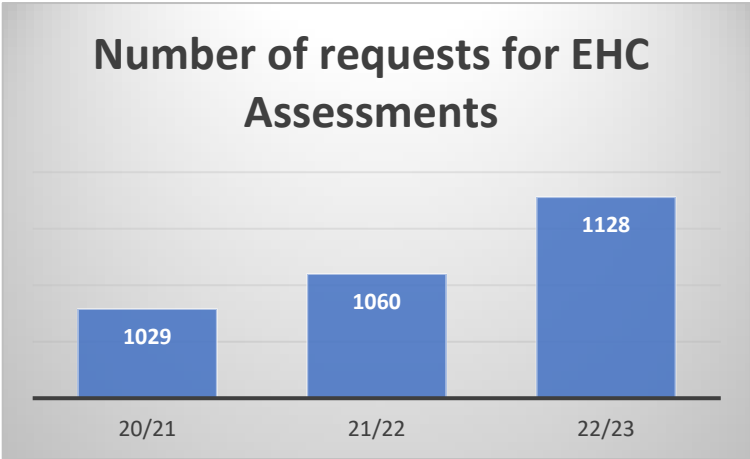
Table 1- EHC Plans maintained



3.6. EHC Needs Assessments

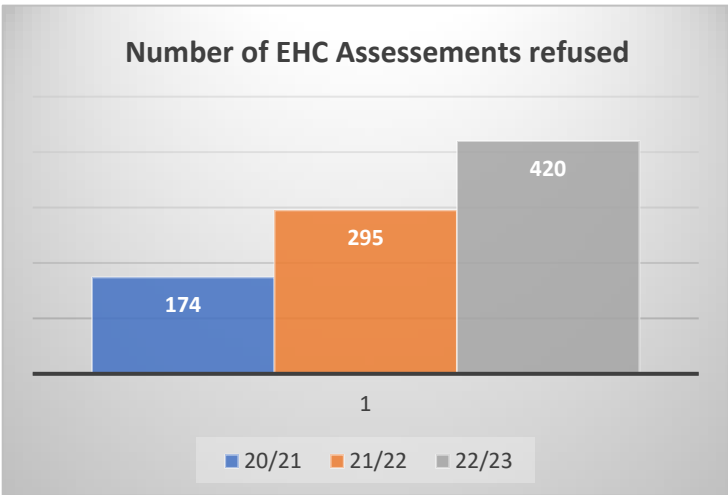
The number of requests for Education, Health and Care needs assessments has increased this year from 1060 requests for assessments in 2021/22 to 1128 in 22/23. This represents a 6% increase on the previous year.

Table 2. EHC Needs Assessment requests



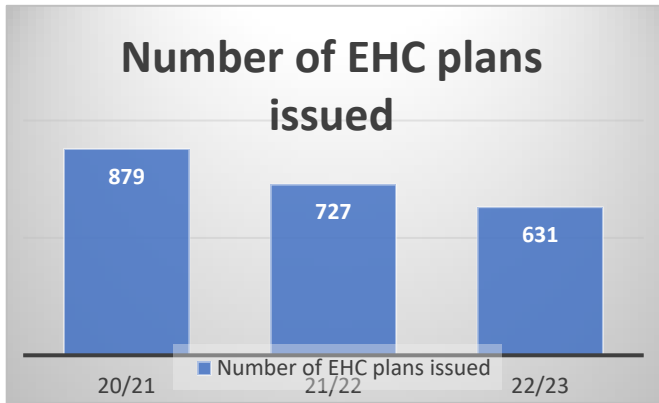
Through a multi-agency decision making panel, the number of assessment requests refused in 2022/23 has increased to 420 (295 in 21/22).

Table 3- EHC Assessments refused



This means that the number of EHC assessments undertaken, and plans issued has decreased.

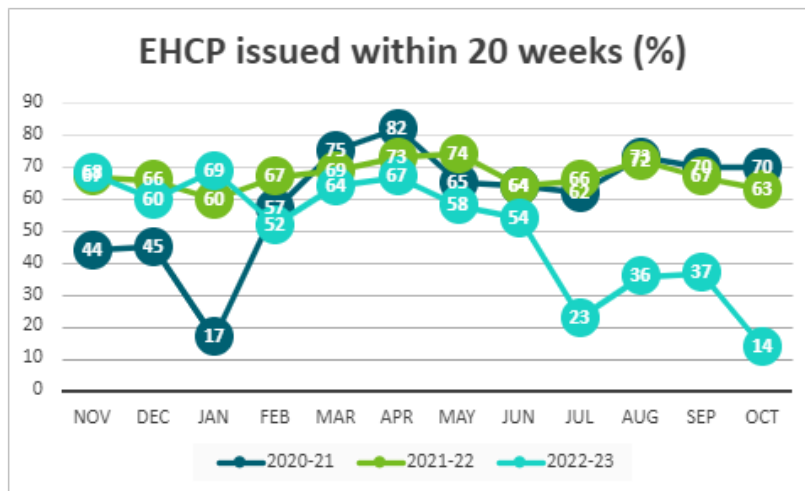
3.7. Table 4- Number of EHC Plans issued



Within Somerset, 20-week performance been strong since March 2021, and has been sustained until July 2023 where there is evidence of month on month decline in performance.

Nationally, the 20-week rate as of January 2023 was reported to be at 49% which represented an overall decline from 59%. Between November 1st 2022 and October 31st 2023 the annual performance was **48%** compared to **68%** for the previous year.

Table 5- Number of EHC plans issued within 20-weeks



The Statutory SEND team has consistently been operating at 60% capacity over the past 6 months. The continued pressure and continued increase in the number of assessment requests has increased pressure on staff and those pressures in turn have led to problems with retention and recruitment.

Further work has been undertaken to review the recruitment, induction training and focus on well-being within the team to deliver improved levels of staff satisfaction and increased retention. The team will have recruited to full capacity by January 2024 following recent recruitment which will ensure the team are able to refocus their efforts on improving the 20-week performance.

A focused effort and investment in increased staffing capacity has enable the issuing of 140 EHC plans in October and November, this is a 40% increase compared to first 9 months of this year. This has had a significant impact on reducing the number of children waiting for an EHC plan.

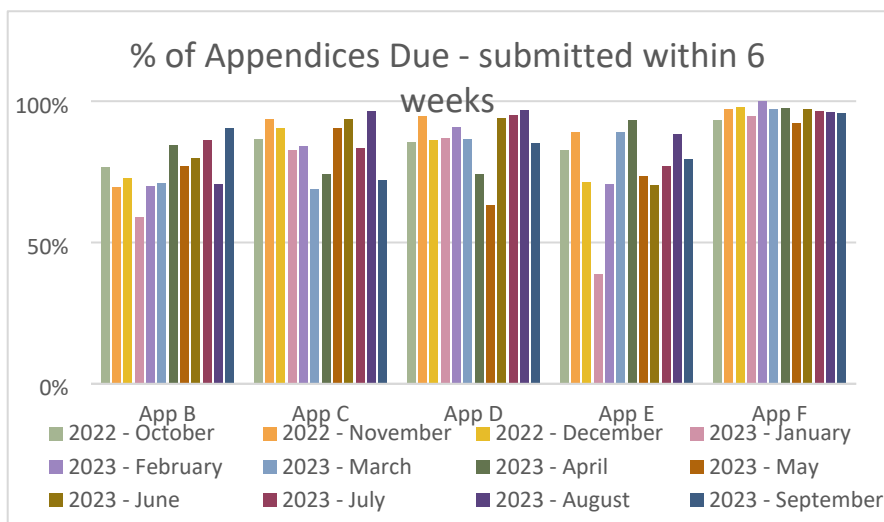
3.8. Agencies contributions to EHC assessments

Throughout the EHC assessment process, several pieces of advice must be submitted within a 6-week timeframe.

The timeliness of advice is monitored with key stakeholders monthly. Where advice is received late, after the 6- week date, the reasons for the delay are discussed and action taken. Late advice usually occurs due to staffing/operational pressures within the service. Operational pressures and demands are considered for the forthcoming month to identify any new risks to timeliness.

Owing to the multi-agency scrutiny, issues are resolved far quicker than in previous times.

Table 6- Appendices due for EHC assessment



App B- Education setting
 App C- Health
 App D- Educational Psychology
 App E- Social Care

3.9. Annual Reviews

Once the Local Authority issues an Education, Health, and Care plan there is a responsibility to review these plans through the Annual Review process. This

includes a necessity for the setting that children or young person attends to hold a meeting as part of this process.

There are statutory timescales that must be met in relation to Annual Reviews. Annual reviews should be processed within 4 weeks of the meeting taking place and where amendments have been agreed, they should be resolved within a further 8 weeks. The whole process of amending an EHC plan should take no longer than 12-weeks.

Throughout the past academic year there were **3931 Annual Reviews** submitted and this an increase of **11%** compared to previous year (**3529 2021/22**).

It should not be necessary to make changes to EHC plans following an Annual Review meeting each year and the SEND Code of Practice suggests that EHC plans are not expected to be amended frequently.

During the academic year 2022/23, over **60%** (2378) of Annual Reviews reports submitted requested a change to the plan. This has led to the Local Authority agreeing to amend **1098** plans with only **600** of these being because of children were in a transfer year group.

One expectation of education settings is that they submit updated advice or assessments if they are requesting amendments to EHC plans and it is noted that over the past few years this has not been as robust as it could have been meaning that the LA has agreed to undertake amendments without the advice available to make these changes.

In October 2023, the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO) completed an investigation to understand if there were systemic faults in the Council's administration of annual reviews for pupils with Education, Health and Care plans. Through the investigation, the LGSCO recognised the exceptional pressure experienced by the service and the difficulty in keeping up with the government expectations.

The LGSCO upheld the complaint owing to the number of repeated delays in relation to completing the Annual Review process within the statutory timescales and have issued a set of actions that the LA will need to complete.

Whilst the performance against annual review timeliness will continue to challenge the LA as the number of EHC plans it needs to maintain continues to grow, there are activities underway to support improvements in this area. These are:

- Annual Planning Meetings offered to every school across Somerset to identify children requiring support from specialist LA teams prior to requesting amendments to EHC plans.
- Clarifying expectations with schools to ensure that appropriate advice and support is secured prior to submitting an Annual Review report requesting changes.
- Additional staff in place to process Annual Review reports in a timely way.

3.10. Dispute – Complaints, Mediations and Tribunals

The number of complaints received in relation to EHC plans is too high and relates to the level of demand on the service, low staffing levels and complexities across the system relating to mainstream schools feeling unable to meet the needs of children with EHC plans coupled with an insufficient number of specialist placements available. Delays in making placement decisions and providing the provision as described in EHC plans creates significant pressure on the team and this means that the team are unable to deliver a good service to families and wider stakeholders.

Table 8- Complaints Received

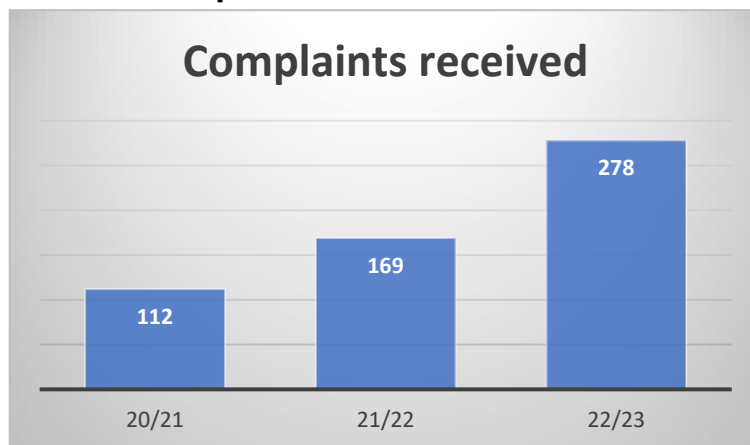
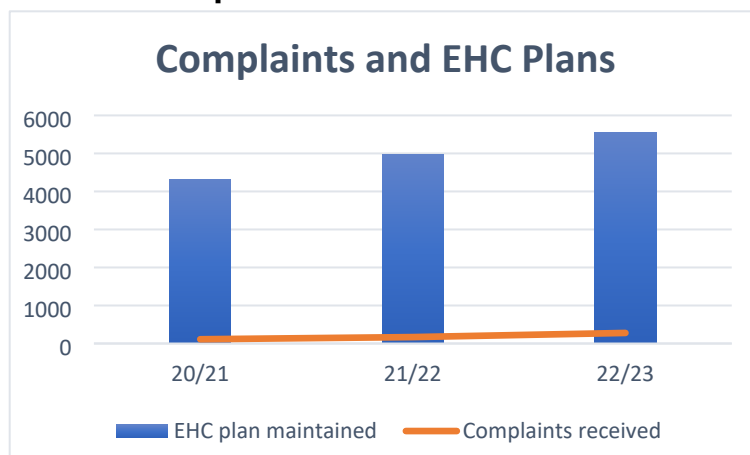
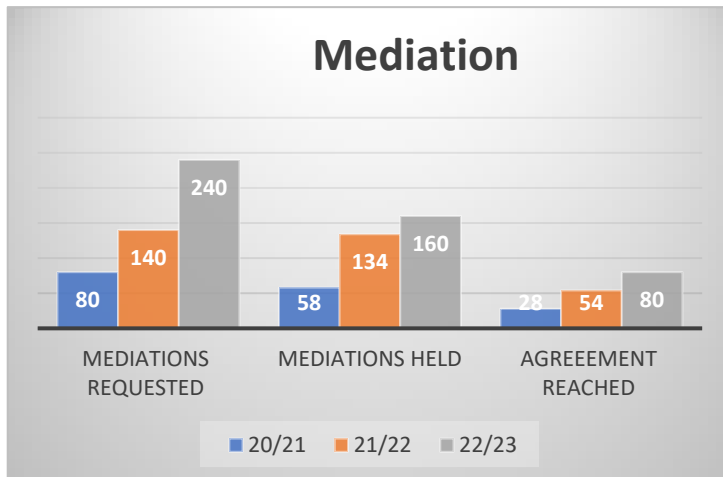


Table 9- Complaints Received/EHCP maintained



The number of mediations requested has continued to increase and this enables families and the Local Authority to meet earlier to look to resolve the dispute. Most mediations and tribunals relate to the Local Authority's decision not to undertake an EHC assessment and is connected to the growth in the number of EHC needs assessments that have been turned down by the local authority through the multi-agency statutory panel due to insufficient evidence provided.

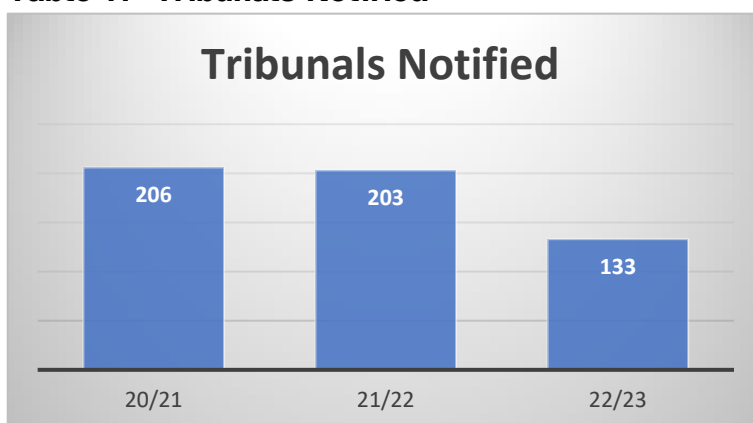
Table 10 – Mediations Requested



Throughout the mediation and tribunal process, families and education settings can provide further evidence to support a change of decision in relation to all decisions that have been made and therefore there are mediations and tribunals where initial decisions are able to be changed. This is evidenced by the number of mediations where an agreement is reached and through the number of tribunals where the Local Authority concedes the original decision made.

The number of tribunals notified has continued to reduce and most of these tribunals relate to refusing to undertake an EHC assessment.

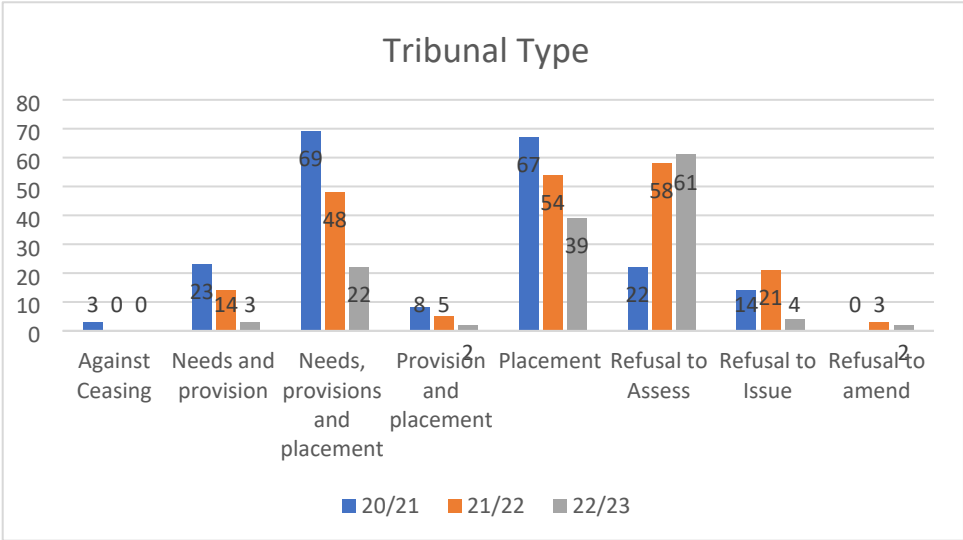
Table 11- Tribunals Notified



The number of appeals relating to education placement has decreased significantly which could be viewed as positive but also relates to the LA agreeing to placements within independent settings earlier owing to mainstream and special schools being unable to meet the needs of children and young people.

Tribunal and mediation panel has been underway for over 12 months and the impact of this is evident in the ability to make evidence-based decisions, avoiding hearings where new information or evidence has been made available and supporting officer and wider colleagues when they attend hearings.

Table 12- Tribunal Type



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**Connect
Somerset**



Blueprint for **Connect Somerset**

2023 to 2030



We're trying to do something quite different, and need your help.

This blueprint shows how we want to evolve public sector early help for Somerset families and residents. Improving the early help system in the right way will significantly reduce costs to acute services across care, health, education and justice sectors. As well as having a big impact on the lives of Somerset residents.

Because the system of services is so complex, this is not a target operating model, but a paper describing our direction of travel.

Early help is the total support that improves a family or resident's resilience and outcomes or reduces the chance of a problem getting worse.

So early help is an approach that can include informal support and a range of services that help families and residents to thrive.

We are all responsible for delivering early help.



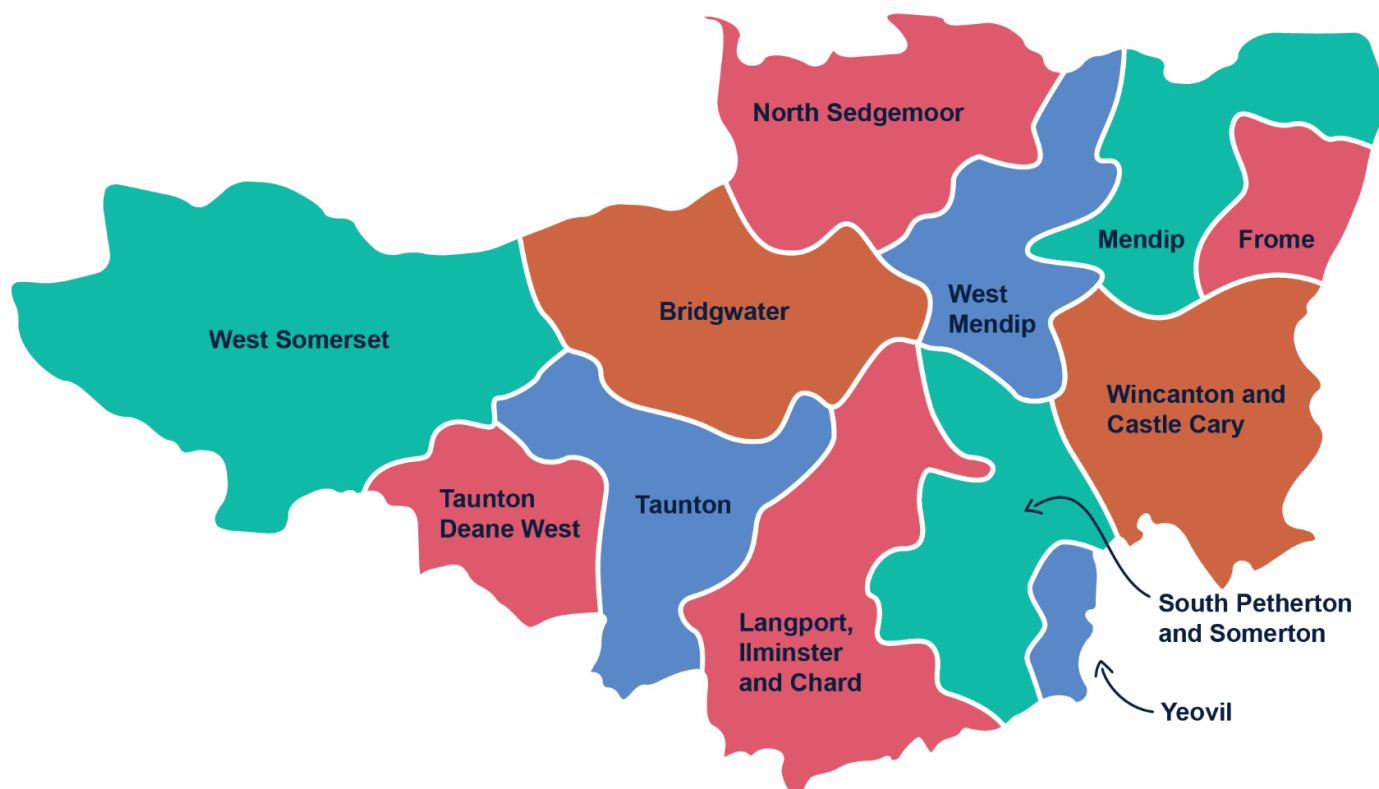
Connect Somerset

Connect Somerset is about everyone working together to increase early help in the community.

We know families and residents are going through challenging times. Across state funded and community sectors, Somerset services are finding it difficult to meet demand and help those who need support. So Connect Somerset is a big partnership that includes Somerset Council, Somerset NHS, Voluntary, Community, Faith and Social Enterprises, and Schools, Colleges and Early Years settings. So we can together develop an early help system that works well across all communities that need it.

We are increasing the help available and how quickly families and residents can access that help, plus changing lots of small things that will add up to a new way of working across all Somerset public services. For example:

1. Twelve new **Champions** to lead changes to the public sector. The Champions are well known leaders in their community who are able to lead changes in how services operate, help improve local knowledge about the community and what works, change processes and cultures.
2. **Hubs!** We have a community hub in each neighbourhood, and there are 100 more hubs such as village halls where we want to deliver statutory and community services. The aim is to get services closer to home, and in places that the public are already at and feel welcomed. For example, the new SEND strategy includes a commitment to more local drop-ins through the 100 hubs.





3. Building **neighbourhood teams** so professionals work better together, and families and residents can access support in a more integrated way. Starting with Champions, Village and Community Agents, Parent and Family Support Advisors, Family Intervention Service and growing from there. Many Council and Health services could be in the neighbourhood teams in the future — delivering support closer to home, more efficiently and better integrated. Neighbourhood teams are aligned to primary care networks, adult and children’s services, although boundaries will always be fuzzy.
4. **Team around the school** – setting up a new virtual team bespoke to each school that is there to support staff and help for pupils and their families. The team around the school is designed to promote relational practice – so professionals get to know each other working in a patch, draw on community resources and wrap support around families. We want to reduce exclusions, improve attendance and attainment.
5. New **#Help4All** offer that all frontline staff use to support vulnerable families to navigate and draw on help. Over time this builds resilience and reduces demand. This is not about sign-posting, but *hand-holding* so families access more early help. Includes the new #LearnForLove parenting resources.
6. Supporting Schools, GP Surgeries, etc to be **anchors in their community** – drawing on community resources through the Champions, Team Around the School and Social Prescribing. And giving back by building local community capacity. We will also develop more funding for community services – growing capacity over time.
7. Better **information sharing** such as through the Transform app for understanding who is working with a family. And a new shared case management system available for all early help partners including schools and voluntary organisations. Too often the IT gets in the way of us working together, so we’re getting rid of this blocker. We will also get better at understanding who needs help, and offering that help earlier.
8. Bring together the 50 databases describing Somerset **local community resources** – aggregating existing datasets and meaning that we can more easily promote local solutions and connect residents and families to what works in their neighbourhood.
9. Develop our **understanding of families’ and residents’ needs**. By combining partner data, we can proactively offer early help before issues escalate — this will feel more compassionate than the rationing that residents often experience. When we understand both needs and local community resources, we will be able to automatically connect residents to local support, sometimes without the need for a service. This is a step-change in the efficiency of early help.

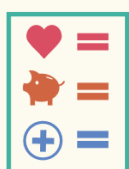


10. **Workforce development** – developing the #SomersetWay that combines trauma informed practice, whole family working, key working, relational practice and knowing the community resources in each neighbourhood. We will move away from a referral culture to a more human and compassionate way of helping local families and residents. Tools such as the *Graduated Response*, *Three Conversations*, *Safeguarding process* and *#Help4All* will support the culture change.

11. **Joining up** health and care, children and adults, and people and place. No community cuts neatly into different sectors, so Connect Somerset must be an integrated approach.

And lots more. Everything in Connect Somerset is designed to promote a culture of working together, ensuring families and residents get more help, personalising care and enabling a new and more efficient way to manage the increased demand and complexity of needs. We are all in the same team.

Early help in the community



Help 4 All



Shared data
Case management
Community resources
Transform



Relational practice
Trauma informed
Whole family working
Safeguarding



12 Champions



Investment in communities



Identify who needs help



GPs

Social prescribing



100 Hubs

Drop-ins in rural areas e.g. SEND



Schools

Team around the School

Hubs

One Team

Warm Welcome

Community Café

Local Community Network

Key



Anchors in the community



Universal early help offer



Professionals & Community in same Connect Somerset team





Design principles

Because Connect Somerset is about everyone working together, we all need to chip in when we're redesigning services or take the opportunity to change our daily interaction with families and residents. The following principles are to help shape our work and services:

1. We focus on **relationships** and bring even more **compassion** to our processes and service delivery.
2. We **listen** to families and residents — to **personalise** care to what matters for them, to maximise their capabilities and control, and to design services. Service design always starts from the individual in their community.
3. We do less diagnosis, assessments and referrals — and **more help** when people need it, stepping outside of our comfort zone.
4. Delivery is increasingly through integrated **neighbourhood teams** and **community hubs** — we work together across professional boundaries and with the community.
5. All professionals use **Help4All, relational practice, whole family working, trauma informed** practice and can be **key workers** for families and residents.
6. We **share data and intelligence** so we can offer more help to those most in need, and children don't slip through the net.
7. As a system we are rebalancing **investment** from acute services to early help and the community. And reducing **inequalities** across Somerset.

Outcomes are the impact on an individual's life — the tangible difference we can make. The Supporting Families programme describes ten outcomes that we measure across the partnership:

- | | |
|---|--|
| 1. Getting a good education | 6. Safe from abuse and exploitation |
| 2. Good early years development | 7. Crime prevention and tackling crime |
| 3. Improved mental and physical health | 8. Safe from domestic abuse |
| 4. Promoting recovery and reducing harm from substance misuse | 9. Secure housing |
| 5. Improved family relationships | 10. Financial stability |



Early help system

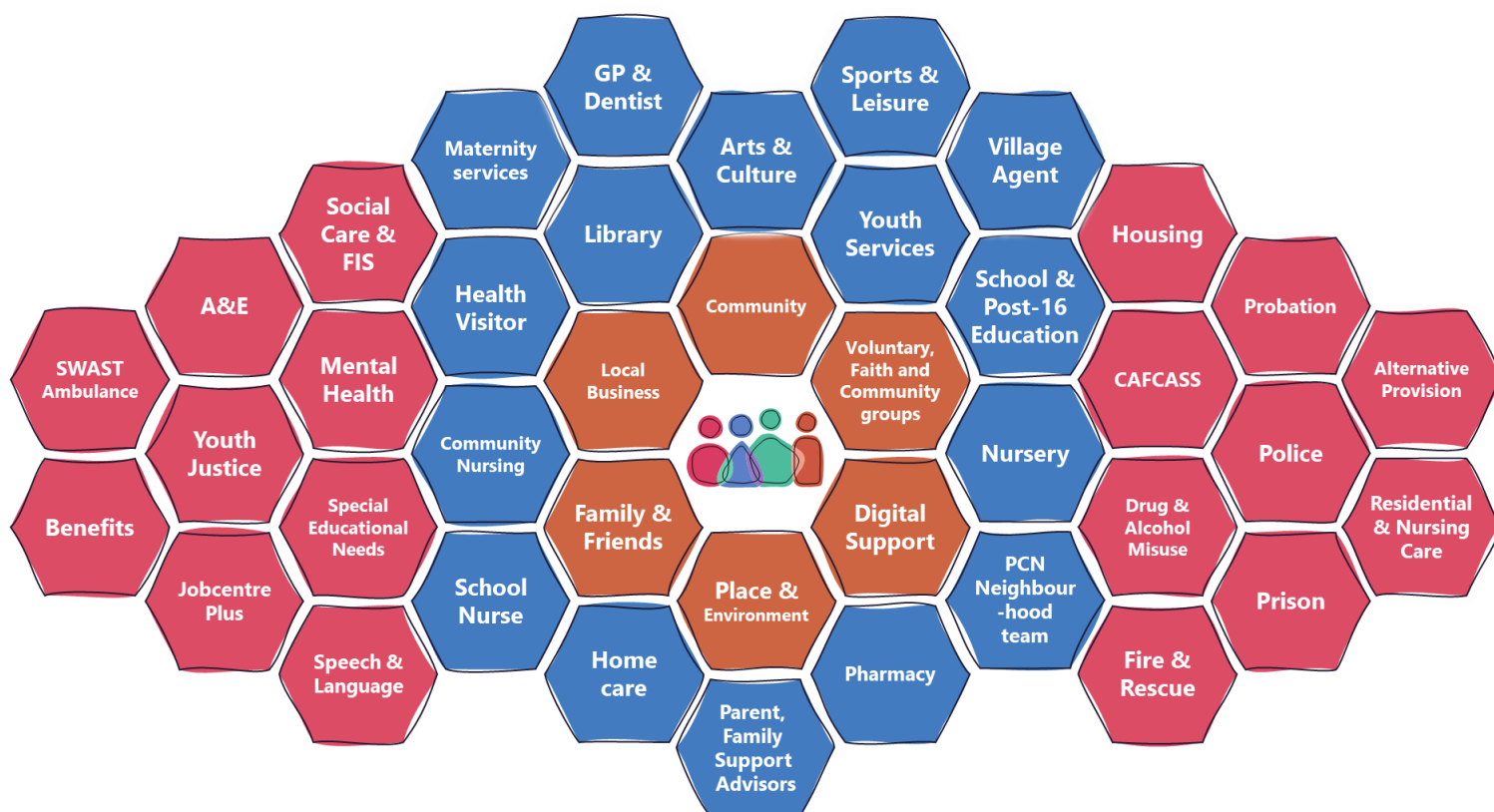
As we've said before, this is a complex system of services and community support.

Starting with the family or resident in the middle and their community (in orange), we have lots of things around us that keep us all resilient in our lives, such as friends and family and community groups.

In blue we have the universal services that we all know and love.

And acute and targeted services are shown in pink hexagons. These all dip into early help at times and are an important part of the system.

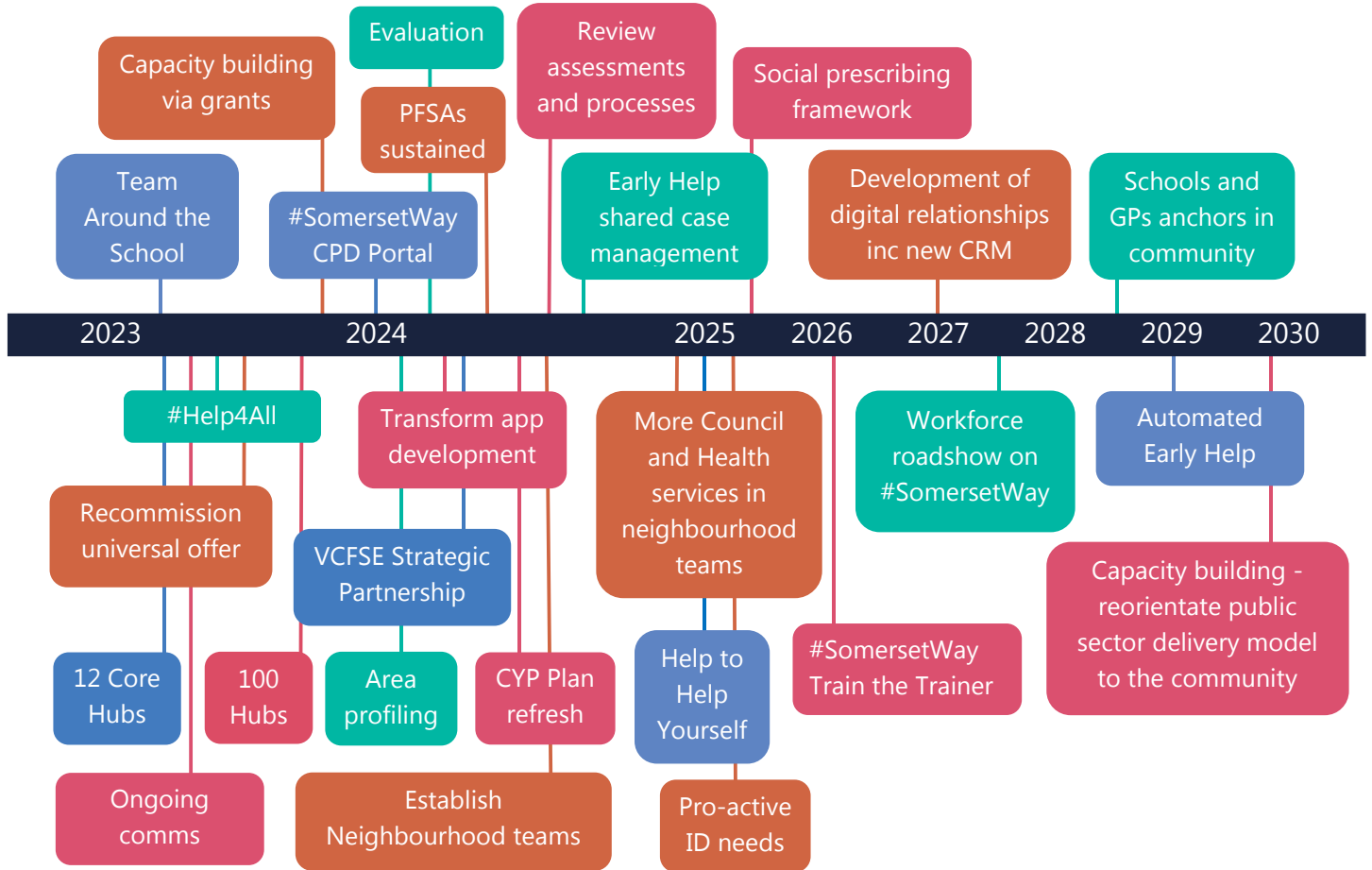
There are between 20,000 and 30,000 working in the Somerset early help system. We'll have missed some hexagons, let us know what should be added.





What when?

As a blueprint, we can just show the direction of travel, activities will move around as we learn more about the system and different services come on board. The following timeline is therefore indicative.



If we are successful, then in time the whole of the public sector in Somerset will change to a more local, neighbourhood-based model of delivery. We will increase early help, invest more in community resources, and design our services to start with the individual and their community.





Impact and benefits

Connect Somerset will support more families and residents to achieve better outcomes, sooner. By doing so lives are well-led, avoiding the need for more costly resources to manage the impact of crisis.

There have been many evaluations of early help, for example the national Supporting Families evaluation demonstrated a clear and attributable impact of early help, with a return of £2.27 for every £1 spent. And the austerity experiment of 2010 to 2020 was compelling that cuts to early help services leads to more expensive delivery (and much worse outcomes). An evaluation partner will show the impact of early help in Somerset through data and logic models, qualitative case studies and quantified impact and benefits.

Connect Somerset Programme

Direction of travel

- **Change the culture** of public sector services so they start with the individual, their resilience, family and community
- **Help residents to get more help, and to get it earlier** so the capacity of the early help market increases, needs are met at the earliest opportunity, and we improve our targeting of those who need help
- **Enhance relational practice** on the ground, so professionals work in defined neighbourhoods and are able to wrap around families and residents more efficiently

Benefits for residents, Council and partners

- **Families and residence are independent** — and are able to step down from services — people have better lives
- **Less reliance on crisis and emergency services** — reducing demand on social care, HV, A&E, GPs, Police etc
- **Integration of local services in neighbourhood teams** — reducing the cost of estate and key functions such as management, triage, delivery
- **More efficient delivery models** — digital, universal services and community services and using data to identify who needs help and offering low cost interventions earlier

Does it make a difference?

Changed **values** and **behaviours**:

- More early help
- Proactive and compassionate support
- Community centric design
- Increase investment in communities
- Relational practice
- Outcome-based whole family working
- Acting as a lead professional (reducing referrals)
- Integration across partner agencies

What is it doing?

- **Champions** to lead changes to the public sector
- **Hubs!** A community hub in each neighbourhood, and there are 100 more hubs
- **Team around the school** — setting up a new virtual team bespoke to each school
- **#Help4All** offer — universal early help
- Supporting Schools, GP Surgeries, etc to be **anchors in their community**
- Better **information sharing**
- Bring together the 50 databases describing Somerset **local community resources**
- Develop our understanding of **families' and residents' needs**
- **Workforce development** — the #SomersetWay
- **Joining up** health and care, children and adults, and people and place
- Building **neighbourhood** teams



Afterword

You may have noticed that much of the Connect Somerset programme is focused on communities. There's a good reason for that.

There are three transactional efficiencies we get from designing the early help system better:

1. **Universal services** — we can improve how public services work together, support and coach each other. That enables us all to positively support needs we may not have been comfortable supporting in the past, and is more efficient than a referral model. In Kent, just the team around the school model led to a 22% reduction in utilisation of acute care services. So if we scale this up across GPs, Schools, Nurseries, Pharmacies, etc we can improve lives and reduce demand at the same time.
2. **Digital** — we can increase the help that's delivered online, but must be careful this is not *digital by default*. Not everyone will find an online offer helpful, but many prefer anonymous and always available digital services, such as simple directories, support services like Kooth or training such as the Solihull parenting support. We can also develop the digital relationship between professionals and residents, using text based follow-ups, small pieces of advice and guidance and Client Relationship Management software to blend face-to-face and digital. Because digital delivery is scalable at low cost, this is a good way to build resilience.
3. **Community** — research such as *Bowling Alone* shows how high social capital / community resources leads to improvements in health, education, social-cohesion and safety. Even heart-attacks and cancer rates can reduce. Support in the community is more accessible for residents who do not trust or engage with public services — possibly the best way to reduce inequalities. And community buildings are often viewed as more welcoming and less threatening / judgmental. There are around 2700 charities in Somerset, not counting unconstituted community groups. There are nearly 10,000 volunteers, not counting faith-based volunteers. And often the support that residents receive from their community is life-changing — such as building life-long friendships that can be drawn on when things are tough, or peers modelling behaviour in a way that really affects your norms, and community groups that offer help at a very low price.



So, given these efficiencies, why does Connect Somerset focus on communities so much?

In the public sector, we've been heavily influenced by management models that describe more transactionally efficient delivery. The way we structure our services and governance reflects reductionist thinking. What we can measure heavily influences service design. And legal frameworks, short-term politics, government departments and inspection have all refocused practice in narrow terms.

These all miss the point of good system design.

Our public service design almost always starts from when needs present themselves at our *front door*. Those coming into A&E, referrals in safeguarding, someone calling the Police. And that's reflect-ed in our funding — 95%+ of spend in health is on illness not prevention, early help in the Council has reduced due to austerity, there is less money for communities, etc.

Actually, the need started with the individual's resilience, the environment they are in, their connections to friends and family who could help, the social capital that supports them. Designing good public sector services therefore has to start with the individual and community, not from the point that need knocks on our front door. And to be efficient in Somerset, we will have to turn-around the prevailing ideas of good service design, and embrace systems thinking and a community-first approach. It's a cultural change that takes time, so that's why we focus on communities (alongside lots of good system design).

Perfect storm

We face huge pressures across the system in Somerset. Many families and residents have little resilience to the challenges of the cost-of-living crisis that is hitting harder than previous periods of high inflation. Poverty drives demand to acute services. The national economy cannot sustain previous levels of investment in public services, as demonstrated by significant funding gaps in the Council and NHS.

This perfect storm of demand and cuts means the biggest risk is to stand still. We need a new and more efficient model of public sector delivery. We need to change.



Tyler – issues with attendance at school. There is a team of named professionals around the school. So the teacher phones the Village Agent who offers to provide support for parents **Mandy** and **Matt's** alcohol abuse and low-level mental health needs. This gives Tyler a more stable home-life and helps his attendance and attainment at school.

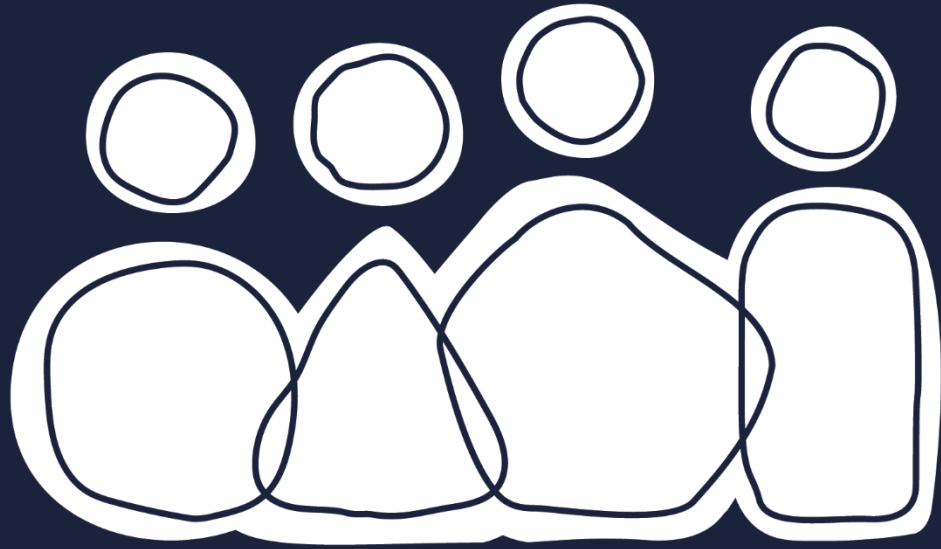


Rose – has been visiting her GP on a monthly basis. The GP refers Rose to a health coach through social prescribing. The health coach recommends a Talking Café at the hub down the road where she volunteers. At the Talking Café, Rose is able to socialise and develop a friendship with a local community group – feeling less lonely and developing her resilience.



Mandy and **Mason** – drop in to a local hub for support with speech and language needs. These drop-ins are available across the County in rural areas. Whilst at the hub Mandy finds out about a local database of community resources and uses it to connect to a group of Mums with children with similar needs. Because Mandy is getting peer support she is better able to cope with stresses in her life.





Connect Somerset



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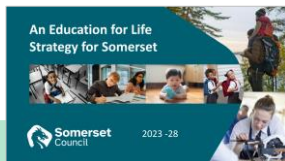
Children's Services Transformation Priorities 2023-2026

Sufficiency

Efficiency

Manage risk

Page 83



Education for Life

1. **Best Start in Life** – quality pre-school places for 0-5 years
2. **Whole school focus** – raise attainment for all pupils
3. **Increase attendance & reduce exclusions** – identify children at risk and build effective Team around the School model
4. **School places** – reduce pressures in Bridgwater and Taunton
5. **School transport** – support children to attend their local school and improve value for money

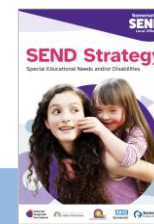
- Improved early years access & engagement
- Improved school attendance
- Improved take up of post 16 education and training
- Reduced exclusions
- Improved attainment
- Improved staff recruitment & retention
- Improved school transport value for money



CLA Transformation

1. **Homes & Horizons** – 8 to 10 homes, pods and annexes
2. **Fostering improvement** – recruitment, retention and support for Foster Carers
3. **Re-commissioning 16+** – support for independence for young people at risk of homelessness
4. **Edge of care support**
5. **Intelligence and control** – better data to plan & manage
6. **Shape and manage the market** – increase sufficiency
7. **Regional commissioning**

- More local foster carers for Somerset children looked after (CLA)
- More children in residential care live in Somerset
- Better value for money through good quality local provision
- Fewer children coming into care



SEND Strategy

1. **Working together** to help children achieve what matters to them
2. **Getting help as early as possible** so that families can access the right support at the right time
3. **Access the right information, support and provision**
4. **Preparing for the future** – gaining the right skills to achieve ambitions and prepare for adulthood

- Enhanced learning provisions enable mainstream schools to offer more inclusive provision
- Providing more specialist places for children with SEMH needs
- Fewer children with SEND excluded from school
- Family feedback evidences a more positive experience
- More young people supported into training and employment



Connect Somerset

1. **Champions, hubs and neighbourhood teams** so services are close to home
2. **#Help4All** offer including targeting early help based on needs
3. **Investment in communities** and redesign delivery to start with the community
4. **Team around the school** wrapping resources around schools to improve attendance
5. **Early Help system workforce development** shared vision, shared case management and communications

- Less demand for statutory services because families are more resilient
- Integrated neighbourhood teams – more efficient shared estate, process, management
- More efficient delivery and increased take up of early help
- Increase delivery of digital and hybrid support
- Target help to those most in need – proactive offer

Agenda Item 9

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