



## Children, Young People & Education Committee

<b>Date:</b>	<b>Thursday, 10 March 2022</b>
<b>Time:</b>	<b>6.00 p.m.</b>
<b>Venue:</b>	Floral Pavillion, Marine Promenade, New Brighton

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Members of the public are encouraged to view the meeting via the webcast (see below), but for anyone who would like to attend in person, seating is limited therefore please contact us in advance of the meeting if you would like to reserve a seat. All those attending will be asked to wear a face covering (unless exempt) and are encouraged to take a Lateral Flow Test before attending. You should not attend if you have tested positive for Coronavirus or if you have any symptoms of Coronavirus.

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## AGENDA

1. WELCOME AND INTRODUCTION
2. APOLOGIES
3. MEMBERS CODE OF CONDUCT - DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS

Members are asked to consider whether they have any disclosable pecuniary interests and/or any other relevant interest in connection with any item(s) on this agenda and, if so, to declare them and state the nature of the interest.

**4. MINUTES (Pages 1 - 6)**

To approve the accuracy of the minutes of the meeting held 31 January 2022.

**5. PUBLIC AND MEMBERS QUESTIONS**

**Public Questions**

Notice of question to be given in writing or by email by 12 noon, Monday 7<sup>th</sup> March to the Council's Monitoring Officer ([committeeservices@wirral.gov.uk](mailto:committeeservices@wirral.gov.uk)) and to be dealt with in accordance with Standing Order 10.

**Statements and Petitions**

**Statements**

Notice of representations to be given in writing or by email by 12 noon, Monday 7<sup>th</sup> March 2021 to the Council's Monitoring Officer ([committeeservices@wirral.gov.uk](mailto:committeeservices@wirral.gov.uk)) and to be dealt with in accordance with Standing Order 11.

**Petitions**

Petitions may be presented to the Committee. The person presenting the petition will be allowed to address the meeting briefly (not exceeding one minute) to outline the aims of the petition. The Chair will refer the matter to another appropriate body of the Council within whose terms of reference it falls without discussion, unless a relevant item appears elsewhere on the Agenda. Please give notice of petitions to [committeeservices@wirral.gov.uk](mailto:committeeservices@wirral.gov.uk) in advance of the meeting.

**Questions by Members**

Questions by Members to be dealt with in accordance with Standing Orders 12.3 to 12.8.

- 6. CHILDREN LOOKED AFTER AND CARE LEAVERS STRATEGY 2022-2025 (Pages 7 - 30)**
- 7. PHASE 1 PUPIL PLACE PLANNING (Pages 31 - 64)**
- 8. KINGSWAY SCHOOL PFI UPDATE (Pages 65 - 70)**
- 9. WIRRAL CHILD EXPLOITATION AND MISSING OVERVIEW (Pages 71 - 80)**
- 10. CHILDREN'S RESIDENTIAL TRANSFORMATION PROGRAMME UPDATE REPORT (Pages 81 - 90)**

11. **APPOINTMENT OF MEMBERS TO THE INDEPENDENT SCHOOL APPEAL PANEL (Pages 91 - 94)**
12. **CHILDRENS SERVICES PERFORMANCE REPORT (Pages 95 - 106)**
13. **2021-22 BUDGET MONITORING FOR QUARTER 3 (Pages 107 - 118)**
14. **CHILDREN YOUNG PEOPLE AND EDUCATION WORK PROGRAMME (Pages 119 - 126)**
15. **EXEMPT INFORMATION - EXCLUSION OF MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC**

The following items contain exempt information.

RECOMMENDATION: That, under section 100 (A) (4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the public be excluded from the meeting during consideration of the following items of business on the grounds that they involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined by the relevant paragraphs of Part I of Schedule 12A (as amended) to that Act. The Public Interest test has been applied and favours exclusion.

16. **APPOINTMENT OF MEMBERS TO THE INDEPENDENT SCHOOL APPEAL PANEL - EXEMPT APPENDIX (Pages 127 - 128)**

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## CHILDREN, YOUNG PEOPLE & EDUCATION COMMITTEE

Monday, 31 January 2022

Present: Councillor W Clements (Chair)

Councillors	K Cannon	H Collinson
	C Cooke	C Povall
	C Carubia	P Stuart
	M Booth	A Wright
	D Brennan	

### 62 WELCOME AND INTRODUCTION

The Chair opened the meeting and reminded everyone that the meeting was being webcast and a copy is retained on the Council's website.

### 63 APOLOGIES

Councillor Samantha Frost had given her apologies for absence.

### 64 MEMBERS CODE OF CONDUCT - DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS

Members of the Committee were asked whether they have any personal or prejudicial interests in connection with any application on the agenda. There were no declarations of interest.

### 65 MINUTES

**Resolved: That the accuracy of the minutes of the meeting held on 23 November 2021 be agreed.**

### 66 PUBLIC AND MEMBERS QUESTIONS

**Three questions had been received.**

#### **Question 1 from Paul Cook**

Regarding cuts to services, what impact (short and long term) will there be to children and young people if youth services (the Hive etc.) are cut with loss of provision, resources and staff?

#### **Answer**

The reduction of £100k from the Council budget to The Hive Youth Zone is being offset by a £100k donation from local business regeneration. In the short-term this will mitigate against potential reduction of services for young people. In the long-term The Hive Youth Zone is increasing it's own capacity

for fundraising and will work in partnership with the Local Authority to increase external grant income.

In the 2021-22 budget setting process, the Council invested additional funding into its own Youth Services. Over £100k of this funding was allocated for weekend activity which was surplus to the core youth offer. The proposal is to cease the additional activity and protect the core neighbourhood offer, which will continue to deliver with the existing resource of highly experienced and skilled staff.

**Question from Dr Rhona O'Brien**

According to every reliable data source published, violence against women and children is a regional, national and international epidemic with lethal and longitudinal consequences. How will Wirral Borough Council offer preventative, early intervention and healthy relationship education to help reduce the number of children placed on Child Protection Plans, whilst simultaneously cutting funding to children and young people's services?

**Answer**

Thanks to Dr Rhona O'Brien for raising this very important question. Preventing violence against women and children is a priority for Wirral Council and its partners. We are very aware of the impact domestic abuse has short term and long term on children and young people. In October 2021, this committee recommended to Council adopting a Prevention Policy and Prevention Framework. The recommendation was agreed and a commitment to prevention implemented. Since 2019 this committee has consistently supported investment in early help and prevention services, with the overall service budget increasing and funding for domestic abuse services also increasing. It is this investment in prevention, and implementation of key strategies such as the partnership Domestic Abuse-No Excuse Strategy and Breaking the Cycle programme, that are contributing to a reduction in demand for children's social care.

Preventing violence is a whole-system responsibility, requiring strong and purposeful partnerships. In Wirral, we benefit from proactive partnerships such as the Domestic Abuse Alliance, Community Safety Partnership, and Multi-Agency Safeguarding Arrangements for both adults and children. Senior Leaders work together with the Violence Reduction Unit and Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner to ensure we are intervening early and providing high quality healthy relationship education. One of the priorities of the domestic abuse strategy is to achieve *Brighter, kinder futures for the next generation*, and we are working with our vibrant third sector to achieve this. In the last 12 months this has included the launch of a Healthy Relationships app by the Paul Lavelle Foundation, delivery of healthy relationships programmes in schools, further education colleges, and in youth clubs. In addition to this, external funding in excess of £400k has been invested in community organisations to tackle domestic violence and abuse. We are in the process of co-producing a local Violence Against Women and Girls Strategy and intend to publish this later in the spring. None of the saving

suggested by children's services will impact reduce our current investment in this important work.

**Question 3 (name and address supplied)**

Following a parental complaint in 2019 about a child with SEND left without education, which was subsequently upheld by the Local Government Ombudsman, the Chief Executive agreed to hold a review. The Liberal Democrats presented a notice of motion to Council asking the review to look at the behaviours of LA SEND team and lack of support for children with SEND. At the time, the then Children's Director acknowledged to the parent that the biggest issue was culture change.

In September 2021 Ofsted carried out an inspection which highlighted a number of areas for improvement. Many parents believe vulnerable children have suffered irreparable damage with many children's needs escalating resulting in significantly higher costs to support. The "Wirral Way" culture of parent blame and hostility towards parents and children with SEN needs to be changed to a culture of working together in the best interest of the child. Concerns have been raised for a number of years to numerous councillors about Wirral LA SEND team, with many parents and carers of children with SEND often feeling unheard when they have turned to their local councillors for support, and many are left questioning whether committee members could have done more to challenge the LA SEND team. What are the top three things Wirral councillors are going to do differently to ensure the necessary improvements will be made?

**Answer**

Members of the Children, Families and Education committee want all children with SEND to be able to achieve successful outcomes. The committee will have the following priorities in making sure the improvements required will be made.

The committee will take note of the actions that are needed as detailed in the Local Area SEND inspection that took place last term and will respond positively to the changes needed by all local area partners involved. A clear action plan will be developed that gives milestones, success criteria and evidence of impact in the areas raised as serious weakness by the inspection. As part of this action plan will be focused on improving communication with parents.

Secondly, the committee will continue to review and monitor the progress being made in the areas that need to be addressed most urgently. The committee will receive quarterly updates of the action plan to ensure progress is made.

Finally, members are keen to work with parents/carers in co-production to assure the councils involvement in addressing the concerns that have been raised during the inspection. Members will want to consider their role in co-production alongside parents/carers and partner agencies in making sure the

actions taking place are the right ones and progress that is made in the future, has an impact on young people with SEND.

Members are pleased to hear that several parent/carers have been involved this month, with LA officers and partners in attending workshops to make sure the voice of parents/carers are at the centre of the action plan that is being produced.

The committee looks forward to making sure the improvements that are made, lead to positive outcomes for young people with SEND.

## 67 **SOCIAL CARE WORKFORCE STRATEGY 2022-2025**

The Assistant Director of Children and Families presented the report of the Director of Children, Families and Education which detailed the strategy difficulties in recruitment of social workers. The Strategy set out how the Council would attract, retain and support a stable and committed workforce. Governance arrangements and performance were also detailed.

Members queried details in the report which confirmed

- Agency workers did not just cover vacancies but also covered maternity and sick leave
- Agency workers accounted for around 16% of the workforce
- There was an intention to continue an apprenticeship programme to grow our own social workers.

**Resolved – That:**

- (1) the Social Care Workforce Strategy 2022-2025 attached at appendix A to the report be endorsed; and,**
- (2) an update be received in 12 months on the progress towards implementation of the Strategy.**

## 68 **LOCAL AREA SEND INSPECTION UPDATE**

The Assistant Director of Education presented the report of the Director of Children, Families and Education which provided an overview of the Wirral local area response to the findings from the joint local area inspection into the effectiveness of the local area in implementing the special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) reforms as set out in the Children and Families Act 2014. The overview was a joint statement of actions of the Council and Clinical Commissioning Group, to make Members aware of the actions and the governance arrangements. The report provided a summary of the key areas of development identified by the inspection and the local area response in addressing them, which will form the written statement of action required.

Members questioned different aspects of the report, including recruitment of specialist officers such as educational psychologists and teams that can go out to a school and create bespoke care packages. They indicated that they

would appreciate a 'dashboard' of information around Special Educational Needs statistics.

**Resolved: That -**

- (1) the information contained within the report be noted;**
- (2) the actions carried out to date and the proposed actions to be included in the development of the Written Statement of Action to be submitted to Ofsted be endorsed; and,**
- (3) the Director of Children's, Families and Education be requested to submit a progress report in quarter 2 of the calendar year.**

69 **ADMISSION ARRANGEMENTS FOR COMMUNITY AND VOLUNTARY CONTROLLED PRIMARY AND SECONDARY SCHOOLS AND THE CO-ORDINATED ADMISSION SCHEMES FOR 2023-24**

The Assistant Director of Education presented the report of the Director of Children, Families and Education which invited the Committee to determine the Authority's admission arrangements for community and voluntary controlled primary and secondary schools and the co-ordinated schemes for 2023-2024, including a proposed change at Woodfield School. This was a statutory requirement.

**Resolved: That -**

- (1) the proposed admission arrangements for community and voluntary controlled schools and the Wirral co-ordinated schemes for 2023-2024 as set out in the appendices to the report be agreed.**
- (2) the proposed change in the Published Admission Number (PAN) for Woodchurch Road Primary School to 30 be agreed.**

70 **POLLING PLACE REVIEW: SCHOOLS**

The Electoral Services Manager presented the report of the Director of Law and Governance which set out the findings following a review undertaken in respect to the use of the 41 Schools which had been used as polling places within Wirral for the purposes of Local Authority, Parliamentary and other elections. It was noted that following investigation of alternative venues, the number of such schools had been reduced to 34.

**Resolved:**

**That the report be noted.**

74 **POLLING PLACE REVIEW: SCHOOLS - EXEMPT APPENDIX 2**

**Resolved:**

**That the appendix which was exempt from publication be noted.**

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## CHILDREN, YOUNG PEOPLE & EDUCATION COMMITTEE

Thursday, 10 March 2022

REPORT TITLE:	CHILDREN LOOKED AFTER AND CARE LEAVERS STRATEGY 2022-2025
REPORT OF:	DIRECTOR OF CHILDREN, FAMILIES AND EDUCATION

### REPORT SUMMARY

The purpose of the report is to present members of the Children, Young People and Education Committee with the Children Looked After (CLA) and Care Leavers Strategy 2022-2025.

The Strategy sets out the local authority and partners' plans as 'corporate parents' to "ensure children looked after and care leavers are valued, listened to and supported to be aspirational, to build positive relationships and achieve their full potential". It identifies several key priorities for focus over the next three years. These are:

1. **Emotional and physical health and wellbeing** – making sure you are happy and healthy all the way through your childhood and into adulthood. Enabling you to build positive relationships, strengthen your sense of identity and understand your life experiences.
2. **Independence and transition to adulthood** – Focussing on helping you learn 'life skills' from an early age and getting everything in place so you can be supported if you need it after you turn 18
3. **Positive Lived Experiences** – Making sure there are enough of the right people to look after you in suitable homes whether this is a short or long stay/time.
4. **Education and Employment** – Ensuring that you do well, have the right support in school and have the right opportunities to access employment

Underpinning each priority will be the fundamental principle to listen to the '**voice and of the child and young people**'. Attached at appendix A is a copy of the draft Strategy. A child-friendly version is attached at appendix B.

The Strategy replaces the previous Corporate Parenting Strategy which expired in 2021.

The Children Looked After and Care Leavers Strategy 2022-25 supports the Wirral Plan 2021-26 theme Brighter Futures. This is a key decision as it impacts on all wards.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

The Children, Young People and Education Committee is recommended to:

- (1) Endorse the Children Looked After and Care Leavers Strategy 2022-2025; and,
- (2) Agree to receive an update on the progress of the Strategy in 12 months.

## **SUPPORTING INFORMATION**

### **1.0 REASON/S FOR RECOMMENDATION/S**

- 1.1 The local authority has a responsibility as 'corporate parents' to provide the best possible care and safeguards for children looked after. This is not just to keep children safe, but also to promote recovery, resilience and wellbeing.
- 1.2 The Strategy provides an opportunity to agree the strategic direction for the council as corporate parents and to provide guidance and direction for colleagues and operational managers who work across the Service who directly support young people.

### **2.0 OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED**

- 2.1 Refresh the Corporate Parenting Strategy: One option could be to refresh the Corporate Parenting Strategy. However, during development discussions it was considered important to reflect priorities about both children looked after and care leavers which would be better approached through a broader strategy.
- 2.2 Do nothing: The Ofsted inspection framework reviews the leadership of the Council and its approach and support for children looked after. The framework also looks at how young people are supported with emotional, education and care from an operational perspective. This Strategy provides an opportunity both to demonstrate how the council proactively prioritises the needs of children looked after whilst at the same time identifying operational change and improvement practice that will ensure that young people are looked after well.

### **3.0 BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

- 3.1 The Children and Families Act 2014 and supporting statutory guidance; "*Applying corporate parenting principles to looked-after children and care leavers*" introduces the seven principles that local authorities and partners must have regard to when considering support for children looked after and care leavers. The principles are:

- to act in the best interests, and promote the physical and mental health and wellbeing, of children and young people
- to encourage children and young people to express their views, wishes and feelings
- to consider the views, wishes and feelings of those children and young people
- to help children and young people gain access to, and make the best use of, services provided by the local authority and its relevant partners
- to promote high aspirations, and seek to secure the best outcomes, for children and young people
- for children and young people to be safe, and for stability in their home lives, relationships and education or work; and
- to prepare those children and young people for adulthood and independent living.

3.2 The Children Looked After and Care Leavers Strategy 2022-2025 sets out the local authority's plans for adhering to the corporate parenting principles and ensuring it can be the best parent it can be to children looked after.

### 3.3 Developing the Strategy

3.4 **Priority setting – Corporate Parenting Board:** On 2<sup>nd</sup> November 2021, members of the Corporate Parenting Board held a dedicated session to discuss and explore the priorities for children looked after and care leavers. They considered a range of information which included:

- data and insight through the ChAT report
- feedback from young people delivered via representatives of the Children Looked After and Care Leaver's Councils about what was important to them
- insight and information from operational leads about service priorities and issues

This session resulted in the agreement of a set of draft priorities to be circulated wider for consultation and review by young people and the workforce.

3.5 **Workforce consultation:** Between 1<sup>st</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> December, the draft plan on a page was shared with colleagues from across Children's Services to survey practitioners, managers and senior leaders as to their thoughts on the vision and priorities identified. The survey provided opportunity for employees to free text any specific actions or considerations which they felt were important. In total, 43 Children's Services employees completed the survey.

3.6 **Consultation with young people:** The care councils carried out a consultation on the vision and priorities with children looked after and care leavers. The consultation was designed by young people themselves and was promoted by the care council members. These were shared with the Corporate Parenting Board at its meeting on 11<sup>th</sup> January and have resulted in changes to the priorities to make sure they are child-friendly and understandable.

3.7 **Corporate Parenting Operational Group meeting:** A workshop with operational leads from Children's Services was held on 15<sup>th</sup> December to discuss and refine the priorities and discuss objectives and actions which will lead to tangible outcomes and impact. The findings and discussion from this group were incorporated into the Strategy.

### 3.8 Strategy vision and priorities

3.9 Following the consultation work outlined, the strategic vision and priorities have been outlined in the full strategy attached at appendix A. Our vision is: *"to ensure that children looked after and care leavers are valued, listened to and supported to be aspirational and achieve their full potential"*. A summary of the priorities and key objectives are provided below.

3.10 Priority 1 – **Emotional and physical health and wellbeing** – making sure you are happy and healthy all the way through your childhood and into adulthood. Good progress has been made over the past three years with the commission of OOMOO, the bespoke emotional health and wellbeing support offer, a new mental health crisis

team has been put in place across CLA and other frontline services and the provision of gym and swim passes for care leavers has supported improvements in emotional and physical wellbeing.

- 3.11 **Priority 2 - Independence and transition to adulthood** – Focussing on helping you learn ‘life skills’ from an early age and getting everything in place so you can be supported if you need it after you turn 18. Enabling you to build positive relationships, strengthen your sense of identity and understand your life experiences.

There has been positive progress on enhancing ‘life skills’ for children looked after through the Care Leavers Hub, which is providing one stop shop support for learning new skills and promoting independence. Further work is required on ensuring that transition arrangements (whether they include staying put, transition to adult services for some or to independent living) are seamless and young people feel confident and empowered when they turn 18.

- 3.12 **Priority 3 – Positive Lived Experiences** – Making sure there are enough of the right people to look after you in suitable homes whether this is a short or long stay/time.

The Partnership Accommodation Programme, which encompasses four key projects around residential and respite accommodation, has paved the way as an innovation change programme which will radically reshape the residential care sector.

Improvements across the Fostering Service are well documented and were recognised by Ofsted in the recent focused visit. Moving forward, we want to review the current model of offer for fostering ensuring there is dedicated training and recruitment support, develop a support offer for Special Guardians which is robust and tailored to need. We want to continue to explore new models of accommodation particularly for Care Leavers where challenges around homelessness are becoming more apparent.

- 3.13 **Priority 4 - Education and Employment** – Ensuring that you do well, have the right support in school and have the right opportunities to access employment. The Virtual School has driven significant change in the education planning for children looked after. The outcomes-based approach to the use of funding has also ensured support is targeted around the needs of individual children. Further work around inclusion, aligned to the Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) transformation programme will form the basis of planning and priorities moving forward.

- 3.14 Underpinning the strategy will be the voice of the child which will be the bedrock of planning, reviewing, and considering the outcomes for young people. This will transcend all the priorities within the strategy.

### **3.15 Governance and monitoring**

- 3.16 A series of key Performance Indicators have been designed to connect to the priorities identified. These are outlined within the strategy document in the appendix. These will provide the basis for monitoring and oversight of the progress of the strategy.

- 3.17 The Corporate Parenting Board will be the lead governance arrangement for the ownership and accountability of the strategy. It will hold officers and partners to account for their delivery and the outcomes achieved. The Corporate Parenting Operational Group will be the vehicle through which the activity and priority actions will be delivered. It is intended that each Corporate Parenting Board meeting will be themed around the priorities in the strategy to ensure focus, robust monitoring and to maintain momentum about the scale of improvement required.
- 3.18 The Care Councils will also directly be engaged in providing and sourcing feedback from young people on whether things have improved. This will also form part of the evaluation and understanding the impact of the work carried out. Their involvement will form part of both delivery and oversight, continuing to share their voice and have their say. A child-friendly version of the strategy will be shared to all young people. A copy of this is attached at appendix B.

#### **4.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 4.1 There are no significant implications from the report. Resources to deliver the strategy are funded. However, delivery of the strategy may result in the development of business cases or requests for additional resource/support through which specific financial implications will be outlined and addressed. This may form an additional report to the Committee, where appropriate.

#### **5.0 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 5.1 The strategy will assist the Local Authority to comply with its legal responsibilities arising from primary statute, including the Children Act 1989, the Children and Families Act 2014; also, compliance with the wide range of regulations and statutory guidance that exists to safeguard and promote the welfare of children who are looked after and care leavers.

#### **6.0 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS: STAFFING, ICT AND ASSETS**

- 6.1 There are no significant resource implications arising from the report. The Corporate Parenting Board will be responsible for the oversight and monitoring of the strategy priorities and deliverables. The Corporate Parenting Operational Group consisting of officers from the council and partners will be the vehicle for delivery. The performance indicators identified will form part of a POWER BI dashboard, development by the Children's Data and Insight Team.

#### **7.0 RELEVANT RISKS**

- 7.1 As corporate parents, the Council and partners have a duty to safeguard and to promote recovery, resilience and wellbeing. Failure to set out a clear plan and framework for doing this presents the risk that some key actions and priorities are not considered and/or action not taken to make improvements to support young people. This carries a very real risk that young people may not be effectively safeguarded when they are in our care.

- 7.2 As a highly regulated sector, Ofsted scrutinise the role of the local authority in putting the right support and services in place for children looked after and care leavers. This is considered at various levels around leadership and management as well as support for children looked after. It is important that we continue to evidence our commitment and approach to our young people. Failure to do so may result in heightened scrutiny by Ofsted and potential reputational damage should the findings of inspection find significant weaknesses in our approach.

## **8.0 ENGAGEMENT/CONSULTATION**

- 8.1 Section 3.3 of the report provides a detailed overview of the consultation and engagement which has taken place to develop the strategy. In summary this includes engagement with the following key stakeholders:
- Corporate Parenting Board (consisting of elected members, foster carers, care councils, Council senior officers, partners from health and the police)
  - Members of the care councils (consisting of children looked after and care leavers)
  - Children’s Services staff (consisting of frontline practitioners, social workers, senior managers, other staff)
  - Operational Managers (Placement commissioning, Permanence, fostering, Care Leavers, Participation and Engagement)
- 8.2 These stakeholders will continue to form part of the evaluation and monitoring of the strategy as it progresses.

## **9.0 EQUALITY IMPLICATIONS**

- 9.1 Wirral Council has a legal requirement to make sure its policies, and the way it carries out its work, do not discriminate against anyone. An Equality Impact Assessment has been completed as is available here:  
<https://www.wirral.gov.uk/communities-and-neighbourhoods/equality-impact-assessments>

## **10.0 ENVIRONMENT AND CLIMATE IMPLICATIONS**

- 10.1 As corporate parents we must treat children looked after as if they were our own. Like any parent, it is important that we play a role in teaching our young people about the climate emergency and how to proactively support the environment. One of our objectives will be to consider how we can promote positive approaches to the environment through education and life skills for care leavers.
- 10.2 Many Wirral schools attended by our children looked after are proactive in positive education about protecting the environment and through our education priority we would hope that improved learning and education outcomes will relate to this.

## **11.0 COMMUNITY WEALTH IMPLICATIONS**

- 11.1 Priority 4 of the Strategy focuses on employment and education. There have already been positive developments around supporting Wirral care leavers into local

employment. A successful apprenticeship programme has resulted in many care leavers finding local, long-term employment including in the Council itself.

- 11.2 It is hoped that moving forward, this priority will help shape further opportunities, particularly through the Care Leaver Covenant, to ensure that our care leavers continue to access employment locally, live in local homes and support the local economy.

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## **APPENDICES**

Appendix 1 - Children Looked After and Care Leavers Strategy 2022-2025  
Appendix 2 – Child-friendly version – Children Looked After and Care Leavers Strategy

## **BACKGROUND PAPERS**

Corporate Parenting Strategy 2019 -2021  
Care Leavers Covenant  
Statutory Guidance - “Applying corporate parenting principles to looked-after children and care leavers”

## **SUBJECT HISTORY (last 3 years)**

<b>Council Meeting</b>	<b>Date</b>



# Children Looked After and Care Leavers Strategy 2022-25

# Foreword



As a corporate parent, I am committed to ensuring that we provide the best care and support to protect our children looked after and to help them grow into happy and healthy independent adults.

I am pleased to present this Children Looked After and Care Leavers Strategy as both Chair of the Children, Young People and Education Committee and the Corporate Parenting Board.

Selected leaders, myself and my colleagues champion the needs of children looked after at all levels. We are proud that we have helped shape the vision and priorities of this Strategy so that they are fully owned at all levels, and we can play a proactive role in monitoring the progress and seeing the achievements and successes that are to come.

We know that young people's emotional health and wellbeing has been impacted by the COVID pandemic and therefore it must be prioritised. Children Looked After and Care leavers are no different and addressing and supporting them is crucially important.

**Councillor Wendy Clements, Chair of Children, Young People and Education Committee**



The local authority and partners have a responsibility to treat all the children that come into our care as if they are our own. Guidance provides us with seven principles which we must consider when thinking about what we must do to support our young people.

We also want to build a positive culture where everyone from the Chief Executive to front line staff, as well as elected members, are concerned about children as if they were their own.

This Strategy provides the opportunity to demonstrate our commitment to our children looked after and care leavers and identify our vision and priorities for their care and support over the next three years.

These may reflect our previous strategic direction, but I know this is because we will not stop until we provide the best opportunities and support, we can. We will continue our improvement journey until we provide outstanding services for young people in Wirral. This is a commitment I want to make as Director for Children, Families and Education.

**Simone White, Director for Children, Families and Education**

**The Right Side of Care**

A dedicated website for Looked After Children in Wirral

# Corporate Parenting Principles



Councillor Kate Cannon, Member of Corporate Parenting Board



Councillor Wendy Clements, Chair of Corporate Parenting Board



Helen Heeley, Designated Nurse for Children Looked After



Councillor Chris Carubia, Member of Corporate Parenting Board



Councillor Chris Cooke, Member of Corporate Parenting Board



Kerry Mehta, Assistant Director – Children and Families



Simone White, Director for Children, Families and Education



Fiona O'Shaughnessy, Participation and Engagement Manager



## The Wirral Promise for young people

We want:

- To be treated the same as everyone else and not be judged
- A safe and stable home
- Our care plan to be clear and explained to us
- To be supported to achieve our best
- Information about what we are entitled to
- Our voices and opinions heard not just listened to
- Our meetings to be held outside of school
- To know how to get health information and who to contact
- More support in applying for jobs and preparing for interviews
- To be taught basic life skills by our foster carers
- To know and understand who can make decisions for us so we can get on with our everyday lives and enjoy growing up just like other young people.

# Developing the Strategy

Feedback from consultations

"It's extremely important to listen and promote wishes and feelings etc."

"Ensure that CLA have access to emotional support as soon as there is a plan for them to become looked after i.e. provision for counselling or other therapeutic services."

"Continuity of care givers and professionals - not having to move placements"

"Participation in positive activities (sports, arts, education, training, etc); access to advocates and mentors;"

"Regular planning and review and direct work"

"Ensure all workers/carers are fully trained in trauma and how it can rear its head at any time."

"More accommodation options for care leavers"

"More support needed for young people to stay with long term foster carers. Placements are needed which offer more support than semi-independent but with a clear pathway to independence."

**Priority setting – Corporate Parenting Board:** On 2<sup>nd</sup> November 2021, members of the Corporate Parenting Board held a dedicated session to discuss and explore the priorities for children looked after and care leavers. This resulted in a draft vision and priorities outlined and drawn up into a plan on a page.

**Workforce consultation:** Between 1<sup>st</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> December, the draft Plan on a page was shared with colleagues from across Children's Services to survey practitioners, managers and senior leaders as to their thoughts on the vision and priorities identified. The survey provided opportunity for employees to free text any specific actions or considerations which they felt were important. In total, 43 Children's Services employees completed the survey.

**Consultation with young people:** The Care Council's carried out a consultation on the vision and priorities with children looked after and care leavers. The consultation was designed by young people themselves and was promoted by the care council members. These were shared with the Corporate Parenting Board at its meeting on 11<sup>th</sup> January and have informed priorities to make sure they are child-friendly and understandable.

**Corporate Parenting Operational Group meeting:** A workshop with operational leads from Children's Services was held on 15<sup>th</sup> December to discuss and refine the priorities and discuss objectives and actions which will lead to tangible outcomes and impact. This group identified that a further workshop with partners would be beneficial in recognition that many tangible improvements required involvement and support from partners across departments and organisations who support children looked after and care leavers.

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# Feedback from Young People



to date

1. Please put the four priorities in order of importance to you (the most important at the top)

[More Details](#)

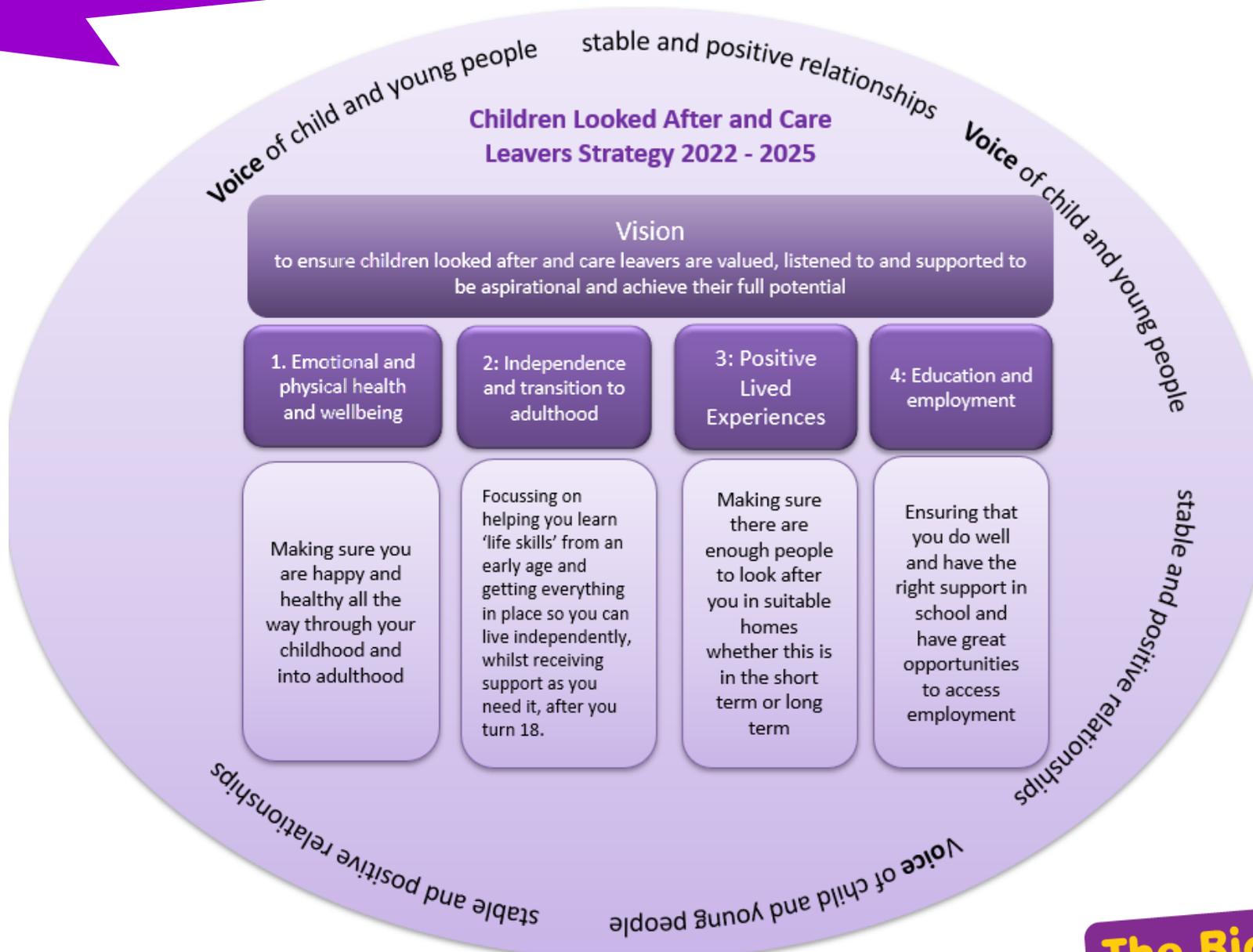
**Rank** **Options**

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| 1 | Emotional and physical heal...          |
| 2 | Independence and transitio...           |
| 2 | Education and employment:...            |
| 3 | <b>Sufficiency:</b> Making sure ther... |

First choice ■ ■ ■ Last choice



# Plan on a Page



# Vision and priorities

The Corporate Parenting Board has set out its own vision for Children Looked After and Care Leavers. This vision supports the wider strategic framework and the overarching priorities for all children to make Wirral great for children, young people and families.

**Vision: to ensure children looked after and care leavers are valued, listened to and supported to be aspirational and achieve their full potential.**

In response to what young people told us, underpinning the Strategy will be the voice of the child which will be the bedrock of planning, reviewing, and considering the outcomes for young people. This will transcend all the priorities within the Strategy.

## Priority 1.

**Emotional and physical health and wellbeing - Making sure you are happy and healthy all the way through your childhood and into adulthood. Enabling you to build positive relationships, strengthen your sense of identity and understand your life experiences.**

Good progress has been made over the past three years with the commission of OOMOO, the bespoke emotional health and wellbeing support offer, a new mental health crisis team has been put in place across CLA and other frontline services and the provision of gym and swim passes for care leavers has supported improvements in emotional and physical wellbeing.

To build on this, we want to strengthen the voice of children looked after in the new mental health and wellbeing transformation programme, ensuring that it is designed to consider their needs as paramount.

We also want to understand the specific issues around why young people are telling us that they do not feel safe and how this is impacting on their wellbeing and emotional health. Further work is required to identify the specific issues around this (contextual/family/home/school etc), and what strategies can we jointly develop to support young people.

We have improved process and practice around recording Strengths and Difficulties questionnaires and about improving the timeliness of health assessments and review health assessments. We need to continue to ensure all information about children and young people is communicated and that the use of surveys and health assessments are used to inform the wider needs of young people in a holistic outcome-focussed way.

## Priority 2.

### **Independence and transition to adulthood - Focussing on helping you learn 'life skills' from an early age and getting everything in place so you can live independently, whilst receiving support as you need it, after you turn 18.**

There has been some positive progress on enhancing 'life skills' for children looked after through the Care Leavers Hub, which is providing one stop shop support for learning new skills and promoting independence. We want to improve the systematic marketing and promotion of the SKILLZ programme to increase engagement of practitioners to facilitate more referrals to the programme. This focus is to also include foster carers.

The development of transition protocols and pathways have helped to define practices and identify clear pathways for support. Further work is required on ensuring that transition arrangements (whether they include staying put, transition to adult services for some or to independent living) are seamless and young people feel confident and empowered when they turn 18.

We need to review and improve referral processes between Childrens and Adult Social Care, to ensure timeliness and successful transition arrangements for young people at age 18. We also need to look at this in the context of the recent inspection looking at Special Education Needs and Disabilities and how transition improvements can be made for our young people with SEND.

For transition to be effective, improved communication with frontline practitioners will be essential. We need to build a communication pathway with permanence and assessment teams through, for example, surgeries for social workers to consult with her team around support and pathways

### Priority 3.

#### **Positive Lived Experiences - Making sure there are enough of the right people to look after you in suitable homes whether this is a short or long stay/time.**

The Partnership Accommodation Programme which encompasses four key projects around residential and short break accommodation has paved the way as an innovation change programme which will radically reshape the residential care sector.

Equally, improvements across the Fostering Service are well documented and were recognised by Ofsted in the recent focused visit. Moving forward, we want to review the current model of offer for fostering ensuring there is dedicated training and recruitment support, develop a support offer for Special Guardians which is robust and tailored to need. We want to continue to explore new models of accommodation particularly for Care Leavers where challenges around homelessness are becoming more apparent.

### Priority 4.

#### **Education and employment - Ensuring that you do well and have the right support in school and have great opportunities to access employment**

The Virtual School has driven significant change in the education planning for children looked after. The outcomes-based approach to the use of funding has also ensured support is targeted around the needs of individual children. Further work around inclusion, aligned to the SEND transformation programme will form the basis of planning and priorities moving forward.

We want to identify employment and work experience opportunities for care leavers within both new and existing Council contracts. Formal engagement of Corporate Procurement Team officers regarding commissioning of service providers with a focus on social value.

We also have an opportunity through the Care Leaver Covenant to build a culture of opportunity for care leavers. Our approach will be to engage members and officers on the Care Leaver Covenant and explore opportunities for implementation of different themes through different areas and departments.

# Measuring Success

To assess our progress and make sure that the work we do positively improves the lives of children looked after and care leavers, our strategy and action plans will be reviewed during Corporate Parenting Board meetings, and we will use the following key indications to measure progress against our priorities:

## Vision

- ✓ Number/rate of CLA
- ✓ Number of CLA starters
- ✓ % of CLA who have an EHCP
- ✓ % of care leavers with an EHCP
- ✓ % of CLA adopted in year
- ✓ % of CLA placed with foster carers
- ✓ CLA placements OOB
- ✓ Number of care leavers

## Priority 1. Emotional and physical health and wellbeing - Making sure you are happy and healthy all the way through your childhood and into adulthood

- ✓ % of CLA who are open to CAMHs service
- ✓ % of CLA for 12 months or more who have had an SDQ completed
- ✓ % of CLA for 12 months or more who have had a Health check
- ✓ % of CLA for 12 months or more who have had a Dental check
- ✓ CAMHs waiting times
- ✓ Oomoo - Open Door & Polaris feedback
- ✓ Polaris & Open Door - distanced travelled (over 6-month period has the service had the desired impact)
- ✓ Open Door - CBT
- ✓ CLA KOOTH (early intervention, Public Health)

**Priority 2. Independence and transition to adulthood - Focussing on helping you learn 'life skills' from an early age and getting everything in place so you can live independently, whilst receiving support as you need it, after you turn 18.**

- ✓ % Percentage of Care Leavers in Touch Every 8 Weeks
- ✓ % Pathway plans completed
- ✓ % Pathway plan reviews completed
- ✓ % of referrals made to adults social care that are refused
- ✓ % of care leavers with passport
- ✓ % of plans not matching permanence plans
- ✓ Foster carer training

**Priority 3. Positive Lived Experiences - Making sure there are enough of the right people to look after you in suitable homes whether this is a short or long stay/time.**

- ✓ % CLA with 2+ social worker changes in the previous two years
- ✓ % CLA with 2+ placement moves in the previous 2 years
- ✓ % CLA with 2+ school moves in the previous 2 years
- ✓ Adoption - average number of days between placement order and match for children adopted (A2)
- ✓ Adoption - average number of days between child entering care and moving in with adoptive family (A10)
- ✓ Adoption - average number of days between child entering care and placement order being granted (A20)
- ✓ CYP permanent placement with foster carer
- ✓ Number of Reg 44 judgements - inadequate
- ✓ % Care Leavers in Suitable Accommodation (17–18-year-olds)
- ✓ % Care Leavers in Suitable Accommodation (19–21-year-olds)
- ✓ Lack of planning for care leavers 18+
- ✓ Care leavers referred to homeless team
- ✓ % Reduction in out of borough placements for CLA/CL

#### Priority 4. Education and employment - Ensuring that you do well and have the right support in school and have great opportunities to access employment

- ✓ % CLA achieving expected standard in reading, writing and maths at Key Stage 2
- ✓ % of CLA achieving GCSE Progress 8 Score for Children Looked After in Wirral
- ✓ Attainment 8
- ✓ % Of PEPs completed
- ✓ % PEPs quality good/better
- ✓ CLA attendance rates in schools
- ✓ CLA fixed term exclusions
- ✓ CLA permanent exclusions
- ✓ CLA persistent absenteeism
- ✓ % Care Leavers in EET 17–18-year-olds
- ✓ % Care Leavers in EET 19–21-year-olds
- ✓ % Care Leavers with an EHCP in EET 19–21-year-olds
- ✓ % Care Leavers in higher education
- ✓ Care Leavers in apprenticeship

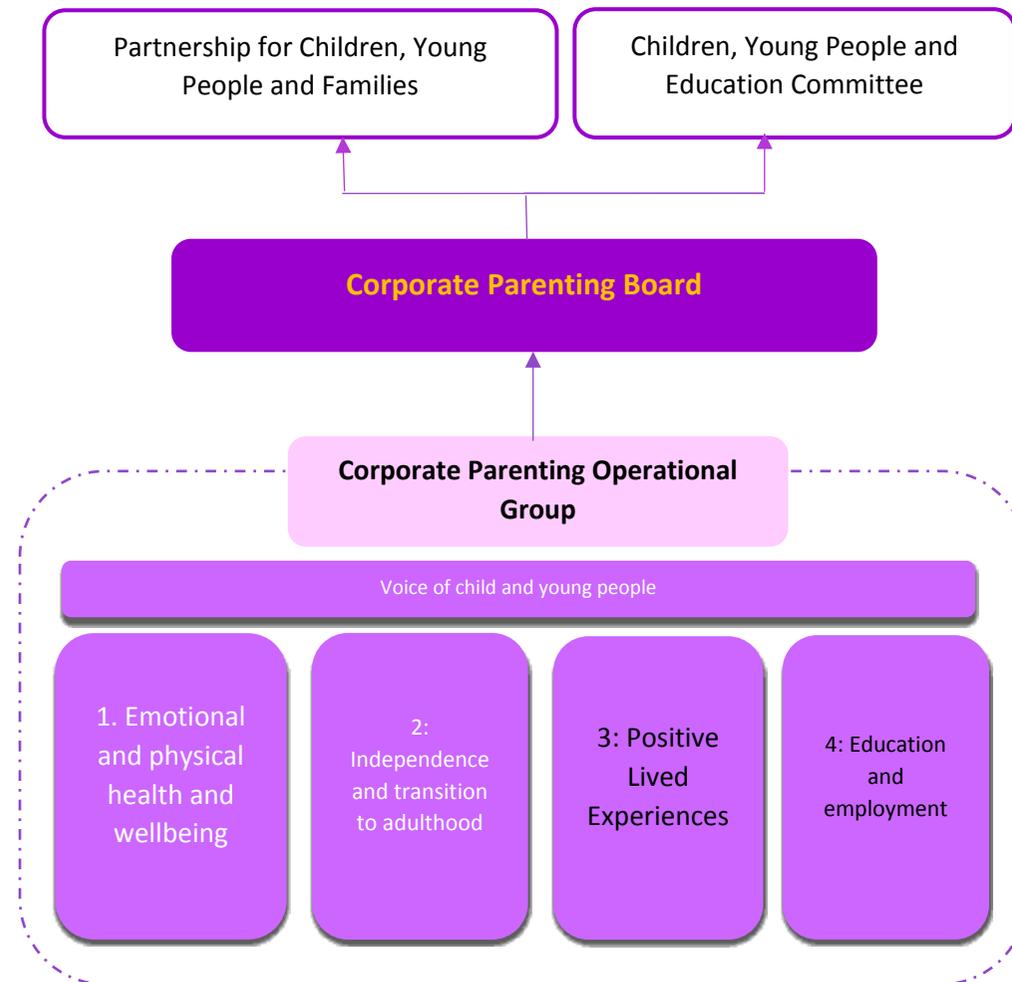
# Governance

The governance of this strategy rests with the Corporate Parenting Board. The Corporate Parenting Board is comprised of senior managers and officers from across the council and partners representing education, health, social care and elected members. The Board is chaired by the Lead Member for Children's Services, ensuring a high level of scrutiny for delivery of our priorities.

Working with partners under the Children Act 2004, local authorities have a duty to promote cooperation between 'relevant partners', including the police, the NHS and education providers, while those partners have a duty to cooperate with the local authority in turn. Guidance on the Act highlights that corporate parenting is a 'task [that] must be shared by the whole local authority and partner agencies. The Corporate Parenting Board requires partner agencies to be accountable for the delivery of the priorities alongside the council. Councils should consider how their partners can help them to deliver their corporate parenting role, especially in relation to the provision of services.

Delivery of the strategy will sit with the Corporate Parenting Operational Group. The lead, the Head of Permanence, will report back regularly to the Corporate Parenting Board. The impact of the work will be measured by key indicators presented as part of the board's performance report.

The Children Looked After and Care Leaver's Councils form part of the core membership of the Board and drive the agenda, ensuring that children and young people receive feedback from partners and officers of the council.



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# Report summary

## 4 Key Priorities for Corporate Parents to focus on in the next 3 years

### 1. Emotional and physical health and wellbeing - making sure you are happy and healthy

Progress has been made. OOMOO offers young people emotional health and wellbeing support, a new mental health crisis team is now in place and gym and swim passes for care leavers have been made available.

### 2. Independence and transition to adulthood - helping you learn life skills

Skilz sessions available at the Care Leavers Hub help towards this.

### 3. Positive lived experiences - making sure there are enough people looking after you in suitable homes

A Partnership Accommodation programme will help reshape the residential care sector. Improvements across fostering have also been made and more changes will be made in the training and recruitment of foster carers. New types of accommodation will also be considered.

### 4. Education and employment - making sure you have the right support to help you in school and finding work

More work is going to be done around inclusion. The voice of the child will lead and influence all decisions made.

## After this survey they came up with a vision

To make sure children looked after and care leavers are valued, listened to, and supported to be aspirational and achieve their full potential

## How these priorities were decided

There was a dedicated session held by the Corporate Parenting Board to decide these priorities after a staff survey was shared with employees, and the care councils shared a survey with Wirral's children looked after and care leavers.



## How the priorities will be monitored

The Corporate Parenting Board meetings will be themed around the priorities to make sure that they have a leading and influential position in all the decisions made. The Corporate Parenting Operational Group will carry out the actions decided.

As well as this, the care councils will be feeding back on whether decisions that are being made are helpful and/or working well. The care councils will continue to share the voice of children looked after and care leavers to corporate parents to make sure they have their say.

## Safeguarding risk

The council will continue to ensure young people are safeguarded.

Evidence of commitment to the young people will continue to be provided for Ofsted and accountability.

## Who is involved in these discussions

- Corporate Parenting Board (elected members, foster carers, care council, council officers, partners from health and the police)
- Members of the care council's
- Children's Services staff (frontline practitioners, social workers, senior managers and other staff)
- Operational Managers (placement commissioning, permanence, fostering, care leavers, participation and engagement)
- Department and organisational partners (housing, chamber of commerce, organisational development, health, police)

## Equality and Environment

Wirral Council must make sure no one is discriminated against, and all policies are helping towards equality for all.

Corporate parents must teach children about the climate emergency, and how to protect the environment.

## Employment

The successful apprenticeship programme that helps care leavers get jobs in the council will continue. This will hopefully give care leavers more chances to have long lasting careers in the council.



## CHILDREN, YOUNG PEOPLE & EDUCATION COMMITTEE

Thursday, 10 March 2022

<b>REPORT TITLE:</b>	<b>OUTCOME OF PHASE 1 PUPIL PLACE PLANNING - SMALL PLANNING AREAS: BEECHWOOD; CENTRAL BIRKENHEAD; NORTH BIRKENHEAD; SOUTH BIRKENHEAD; NOCTORUM; PRENTON.</b>
<b>REPORT OF:</b>	<b>DIRECTOR OF CHILDREN, FAMILIES AND EDUCATION</b>

### REPORT SUMMARY

The purpose of the report is to outline the recommendations arising out of phase 1 of the pupil place planning review.

In March 2021, the Children Young People and Education Committee endorsed the Pupil Place Planning Strategy 2021 -2026. This Strategy set out a planned framework for the review of school places in both primary and secondary mainstream schools over the next 5 years.

Phase 1 of the primary phase of the review commenced in March 2021 looking at small planning areas in and around Birkenhead, specifically: Beechwood; Central Birkenhead; North Birkenhead; South Birkenhead; Noctorum; Prenton. A detailed review framework and process has been undertaken and has included information gathering, stakeholder discussion and parent/carers engagement. This has culminated in a series of findings and recommendations as set out in Findings Report at Appendix 1.

Recommendations relating to both the Diocese of Shrewsbury (Catholic) and the Diocese of Chester (Church of England) have been presented, discussed and supported as well as proposals relating to Academy Trusts. This has demonstrated the strength in partnership working and collaboration across the education sector which will be harnessed as we move forward as a local education partnership.

Fundamental to the work has been adherence to the principles outlined. These are the drivers for change and are intrinsically aligned to the 'Brighter Futures' priority in the Wirral Plan 2021-2026. The work has already been captured as a strategic driver within the Plan and this report and recommendations form part of its delivery.

This is a key decision as it affects residents from two or more wards.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

The Children, Young People and Education Committee is recommended to:

1. Note the outcome of phase 1 of the Pupil Place Planning review regarding small planning areas: Beechwood, Central Birkenhead, North Birkenhead, South Birkenhead, Noctorum and Prenton as outlined in the Findings report attached at appendix 1:
2. Approve recommendation 1 that the Diocese of Shrewsbury decommission existing teaching space in St Anne's Primary School and repurpose for alternative use to reduce the overall capacity of the school.
3. Approve recommendation 2 that in principle agreement is given for the establishment of a new school in the small planning area of North Birkenhead to meet the demand for new school places over the next 15 years. This will be subject of future reports for members consideration as more details are developed.
4. Approve recommendation 3 to reduce Pupil Admission Numbers at St Joseph's Catholic Primary School as agreed by the Diocese of Shrewsbury and Holy Family Multi-Academy Trust (MAT):
5. Approve recommendation 4 to reduce Pupil Admission Numbers at Christchurch Church of England (CE) Birkenhead as agreed by the Diocese of Chester.
6. Note recommendation 5 relating to Woodchurch Road Primary as outlined in the report 'Admission arrangements for community and voluntary controlled primary and secondary schools and the co-ordinated admission schemes for 2023-24' as considered and approved by the Children, Young People and Education Committee at its meeting 31 January 2022.
7. Agree to undertake a formal consultation on recommendation 6 regarding the amalgamation of St Peter's Catholic Primary School and St Paul's Catholic Primary School. This would involve closure of both schools and opening of a new combined school on one site. Pupils from both schools would be guaranteed a place at the single school.
8. Agree to undertake a formal consultation on recommendation 7 regarding the amalgamation of Manor Primary and Hillside Primary commencing 9<sup>th</sup> May 2022. This would involve closure of both schools and opening of a new combined school on one site. Pupils from both schools would be guaranteed a place at the single school. In line with statutory guidance, this recommendation requires a formal consultation.

## SUPPORTING INFORMATION

### 1.0 REASON/S FOR RECOMMENDATION/S

- 1.1 As the responsible authority for maintained schools, it is important that the Council is managing both surplus and demand for pupil places in line with its statutory responsibilities and to ensure that schools can provide high quality education, are efficiency and viable and provide the best possible education support to meet children and young people's needs.
- 1.2 It is important that the Council demonstrates its support for the work and proposals considered and agreed by the Dioceses who are important partners in supporting education outcomes for Wirral children.
- 1.3 The recommendations outlined have been identified following a rigorous, transparent and equitable review programme which has sought to engage stakeholders throughout. Schools have had opportunity to consider and comment on the information gathered. The principles have been adhered to and remain fundamental in guiding the development of the proposals.

### 2.0 OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 2.1 **Do nothing:** There is a strong case for change. Population changes and local projections are evidencing that surplus is growing in schools. This can have a detrimental impact on school viability as well as how pupils are supported in their education. Failure to understand the implications of this and set out a planned and managed programme of change may result in more significant, unanticipated financial and reputational consequences for Wirral.
- 2.2 **Alternative review framework:** The current review framework for pupil place planning in primary schools is structured around small planning areas. They have been established for many years and have formed the basis of previous reviews of this nature. They are also used by the Department for Education for monitoring and reporting purposes. The review framework is based on looking at pupil projections for the small area which enables a more strategic view of places across the area (rather than primarily looking at specific schools). An alternative framework, such as reviewing pupil places for the whole borough at the same time would be unfeasible given the scale and number of primary schools in Wirral.
- 2.3 In relation to the specific proposals:

**North Birkenhead small planning area** – one other potential option which was explored and discounted was to increase capacity in the existing schools in the small planning area. However, given the projected level of demand within the area, due to the major housing developments outlined in the Local Plan, this would not be feasible.

**Central Birkenhead small planning area** – one option for this area was to look at more significant changes such as amalgamation/school closure to address the surplus. However, given that the area has several larger schools with capacity over 210 and Pupil Admission Numbers (PAN) over 30, it was considered that a reduction

of PAN at the three schools identified would help to reduce surplus without the need for more significant action.

**Noctorum and Beechwood small planning areas** – Unlike Central Birkenhead, the schools in these small planning areas are already at minimum capacity and Pupil Admission Numbers of 30 or below. One option suggested was to reduce capacity and PAN further in these schools. However, considering statutory guidance and Department for Education good practice, it is suggested this would not be an effective course of action to take given that it would have the potential to significantly impact on the viability of the schools.

### **3.0 BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

3.1 The Pupil Place Planning Strategy 2021-2026 was approved in March 2021 by the Children, Young People and Education Committee. This Strategy set out the vision and principles “to ensure that Wirral’s children attend local schools that provide high quality education, are efficient, viable and provide the best possible educational standards to meet their needs”.

3.2 The principles outlined are intended to guide much of the work and approach to a series of pupil place planning reviews as outlined in the Strategy. These are:

1. We will be fair, thorough, and respectful in our approach to Pupil Place planning reviews
2. We will follow and adhere to all legal requirements, seeking relevant advice and guidance where this is applicable
3. We will work with partners, and involve key stakeholders in pupil place planning where this is relevant and necessary
4. We will consult with schools, parents, and local communities as part of the pupil place planning process
5. We will utilise robust insight, intelligence, and data to underpin a robust methodology and analysis
6. We will always consider how our efforts will improve educational outcomes for children and young people
7. We will consider the efficiency and effectiveness of education provisions as part of pupil place planning
8. We will prioritise and focus on inclusion, ensuring that children with special educational needs and disabilities are at the forefront of considerations throughout

3.3 Phase 1 of the review cycle has considered schools in and around the area of Birkenhead. For primary schools, the review is organised around several small planning areas. These are: Beechwood; Central Birkenhead; North Birkenhead; South Birkenhead; Noctorum; Prenton.

#### **3.4 Review programme overview**

3.5 **March 2021 – August 2021:** Between March 2021 and August 2021 extensive evidence and information was gathered about the small planning areas and schools within those areas. A school profile presentation was compiled, and meetings arranged with school headteachers, governors and the Dioceses to discuss the

information and listen to the views of stakeholder. A summary of the information gathered is attached within the Findings Report at appendix 1.

**3.6 September 2021 – December 2021:** Between September 2021 and December 2021 a series of options were shaped to manage demand and address surplus where priority areas had been identified. Proposals relating to Diocese schools were shared with them in the first instance followed by meetings with the schools themselves. A report was presented to the Diocese of Shrewsbury outlining options for review. During this time, some schools acted on the recommendations outlined and submitted consultation for reduction in PAN.

**3.7 January 2022 – March 2022:** The Children Young People and Education Committee considered proposals regarding the reduction in PAN aligned to the review and approved the reduction in PAN for Woodchurch Road as the maintained school. Further engagement has taken place with schools and stakeholders. The Findings report and recommendations will be presented to the Children Young People and Education Committee.

### **3.8 SUMMARY OF FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

#### **3.9 Context – statutory framework**

3.10 The local authority has a duty to secure sufficiency of school places for children and young people. This includes addressing any excess or insufficiency. Each year, the Council submits annual school capacity survey to DfE which provide pupil forecasts, and these inform capital programmes and funding.

#### **3.11 Context - population change**

3.12 The population of children aged 0-9 is expected to decline over the next five years. Based on the actual and expected resident population for Wirral for children aged 0-9, between 2021 and 2026 (the time frame of the Strategy) there will be a decline in the number of children living on Wirral from approximately 36.5 thousand children aged 0-9 in 2021 to 33.6 thousand.

#### **3.13 Calculating pupil projections**

3.14 The pupil projections outlined are based on a robust forecast methodology which considers a range of factors including:

- Population change
- Planned/actual housing developments
- Historical changes and pupil patterns
- Movement of families/children in/out of areas

3.15 Pupil projections are completed each year as mandatory and provided to the Department for Education to inform local authority funding. Historical projections have been accurate to date, giving confidence in the projections outlined as part of this review.

#### **3.16 Phase 1 Small planning area: Prenton**

3.17 Prenton small planning area consists of a maintained primary school: Prenton Primary. The pupil forecasts for the planning area are the same as for the school. There are no recommendations for this area arising out of the review.

### **3.18 Phase 1 Small planning area: South Birkenhead**

3.19 There are five schools within the South Birkenhead Planning area: Bedford Drive Primary; Mersey Park Primary; Rock Ferry Primary; St. Anne's Catholic Primary; and Well Lane Primary. Overall, the small planning area currently (May 21) has an occupancy of 91% and 9% surplus places. It is projected that the surplus will increase to 13% over the next few years. There is one school, St. Anne's Catholic Primary which is projected to have over 25% surplus places in five years. Local plan developments are not expected to have a significant impact on school place planning.

### **3.20 Small planning area: North Birkenhead**

3.21 North Birkenhead small planning area consists of seven primary schools: Bidston Avenue Primary; Birkenhead High School Academy; Cathcart Street Primary; Co-op Academy Portland; Holy Cross Catholic Primary; Our Lady and St. Edwards Catholic Primary; The Priory Parish CE Primary. In May 21, the percentage occupancy for the area was 89%. It is anticipated that there will be significant housing developments within North Birkenhead over the next 5 to 15 years, as identified within the Local Plan.

### **3.22 Small planning area: Central Birkenhead**

3.23 There are six schools in the Central Birkenhead small planning area: Christchurch CE Birkenhead; Devonshire Park Primary; St Joseph's Catholic Primary; St Werburgh's Catholic Primary; Woodchurch Road Primary; Woodlands Primary. The occupancy for the area (May 21) is 80%. Projections indicate that occupancy will be 66% in five years with 34% surplus. Local Plan developments are not expected to impact on pupil place planning projections in this area. There are currently two schools with over 25% surplus places. It is expected that there will be three schools with over 25% surplus in the next five years.

### **3.24 Small Planning area: Noctorum**

3.25 Noctorum has four schools within the small planning area: Hillside Primary; Oxton St Saviours CE Primary; St Peter's Catholic Primary; Townfield Primary. Overall projections for the area indicate a change in occupancy over the next five years from 84% to 77%, meaning there will be a 23% surplus overall. Local plan developments are not expected to have any significant impact on the projected demand for pupil places in five years. There are two schools within the area with over 25% surplus places who are expected to remain with high levels of surplus over five years.

### **3.26 Small planning area: Beechwood**

3.27 There are three schools in the small planning area: Bidston Village CE Primary; Manor Primary; St Paul's Catholic Primary. As of May 21, the area had an overall occupancy of 82%. This is expected to decrease to 70% over the next five years, in

line with population change resulting in a 30% surplus for the area. Local Plan developments are not expected to result in increased demand for places. Two schools currently have a surplus of over 25% and this is expected to remain for the next five (and 15 years) unless action is taken.

### **3.28 Summary of Recommendations**

**Recommendation 1:** It is recommended that the Diocese of Shrewsbury decommission existing teaching space in St Anne's and repurpose for alternative use to reduce the overall capacity of the school. It should be noted that this recommendation has been supported by the Diocese.

**Recommendation 2:** It is recommended that, in principle, agreement is given for the establishment of a new school in the small planning area of North Birkenhead to meet the demand for new school places over the next 15 years. This will be subject of future reports for members consideration as more details are developed.

**Recommendation 3:** It is recommended that Diocese of Shrewsbury and the Holy Family Multi-Academy Trust reduce the PAN of St Joseph's Catholic Primary school to 30 and decommission teaching space to reduce overall capacity. This recommendation has been supported and actioned by the Diocese and Holy Family MAT.

**Recommendation 4:** It is recommended that the Diocese of Chester agree to reduce the PAN of Christchurch CE Birkenhead to 30 and decommission teaching space to reduce overall capacity. This recommendation has been supported by the Diocese of Chester.

**Recommendation 5:** It is recommended that Woodchurch Road Primary reduce their PAN to 30 and decommission teaching space to reduce overall capacity.

This recommendation has been acted upon by the school. Consultation has been undertaken and the proposal was agreed by the Children, Young People and Education Committee on 31<sup>st</sup> January 2022 in the report 'Admission arrangements for community and voluntary controlled primary and secondary schools and the co-ordinated admission schemes for 2023-24'.

**Recommendation 6:** It is recommended that St Peter's Catholic Primary School and St Paul's Catholic Primary School amalgamate. This would involve closure of both schools and opening of a new combined school on one site. Pupils from both schools would be guaranteed a place at the single school.

This recommendation has been agreed by the Diocese of Shrewsbury to proceed to a formal consultation in line with the statutory guidance on the amalgamation/closure of schools. The view of the Diocese is that the two schools should amalgamate onto the site currently occupied by St Peter's Catholic Primary School. Formal consultation with the local authority and the Diocese would commence in line with the statutory guidance on the 9<sup>th</sup> of May.

**Recommendation 7:** It is recommended to amalgamate Hillside Primary and Manor Primary schools. This would involve closure of both schools and opening of a new

combined school on one site. Pupils from both schools would be guaranteed a place at the single school. In line with statutory guidance, this recommendation requires a formal consultation.

- 3.29 In relation to both recommendation 6 and recommendation 7, consultation is open to all stakeholders and other options that may emerge will be carefully considered. Any alternative solution arising from consultation would need to achieve a sustainable educational outcome within the local area.
- 3.30 If approved, a formal consultation on recommendations 6 and 7 would commence 9<sup>th</sup> May 2022. Between 10<sup>th</sup> March 2022 and 9<sup>th</sup> May 2022, a detailed consultation scheme will be designed in partnership with the schools, diocese (where relevant) and the local authority. The findings of this consultation will be considered at a future meeting of the Committee.

#### **4.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 4.1 Any revenue costs because of these changes would have a positive impact on the overall school budget and individual school budgets, not on the council's revenue budget.
- 4.2 There may be other associated financial implications, for example, building reconfigurations.
- 4.3 National requirements entail that any monies acquired because of capital receipts should be re-invested into the school's capital programme. This is intended to support the implementation of pupil place planning projects or wider school infrastructure developments and as such are ring-fenced for school projects.

#### **5.0 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 5.1 The local authority has a legal duty to ensure sufficiency of school places for children. Statutory guidance sets out formal process for consultation and approval of significant decisions such as to make prescribed changes to maintained schools or to close/open schools. These will guide the activity and approval of the proposals.

#### **6.0 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS: STAFFING, ICT AND ASSETS**

- 6.1 Recommendations relating to Diocesan or Academy Trusts will be implemented within their own resources. However, the local authority will continue to offer support and guidance in relation to delivery of agreed recommendations.
- 6.2 The implementation of recommendation 5 relating to the reduction of teaching space at Woodchurch Road Primary will require Strategic Assets support to ensure that the building can be reconfigured appropriately to reduce capacity and allow space to be repurposed for alternative use if possible.
- 6.3 The implementation of recommendation 7 relating to the amalgamation of Hillside Primary and Manor Primary will require additional resource from the Council's

Human Resources Schools Team, Finance and Legal as well as Programme Management Office support.

## **7.0 RELEVANT RISKS**

- 7.1 There is a risk that the proposals will concern local parents and carers who will be impacted by the changes. This may result in public challenge to school staff, Members, Council officers and Diocesan Bodies. Robust and relevant engagement and information with parents/carers will seek to reassure them that a detailed consultation framework will be developed, and findings reported back to the Committee before any decision is made.
- 7.2 There is a risk that the projections may not be accurate and that pupil numbers could increase in schools where proposals have been made. This could risk impacting on the implementation of the proposals (should they be agreed) and the validation of the forecasts. As outlined in section 3.15 of this report, this risk is mitigated because the forecasts are generated each year and tested giving confidence in the forecasts outlined.

## **8.0 ENGAGEMENT/CONSULTATION**

- 8.1 As outlined in the Strategy, stakeholder engagement has been intrinsic at every stage of the review process. In summary, the following activity has been carried out
- early consultation with Headteachers, officers and elected members on the scope and purpose of the overarching Pupil Place Planning Strategy
  - clear scope and terms of reference for the School Sufficiency working group and agreement
  - School profile presentations shared with individual school Headteachers and Governors, approximately 40 carried out in total
  - Summary school profile information shared with Unison
  - Summary school profile information shared with members of the Children, Young People and Families Committee
  - Summary school profile information shared with Diocese of Chester and Diocese of Shrewsbury
  - Options development shared with
    - officers and senior managers
    - wider corporate colleagues e.g. HR
    - individual schools and governors
    - Diocesan
    - Unions
- 8.2 Engagement with parents and carers at schools has been important and is currently being undertaken. It is imperative that they feel supported and reassured as the changes are discussed and implemented. The Council has worked with schools to devise information which seeks to inform and reassure parents/carers.

## **9.0 EQUALITY IMPLICATIONS**

- 9.1 An Equality Impact Assessment has been completed for the Pupil Place Planning Strategy 2021-2026

## **10.0 ENVIRONMENT AND CLIMATE IMPLICATIONS**

10.1 There are no significant environment and climate implications arising out of the report.

## **11.0 COMMUNITY WEALTH IMPLICATIONS**

11.1 There are no significant community wealth implications arising out of this report.

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## **APPENDICES**

Appendix 1 Pupil Place Planning Findings Report

## **BACKGROUND PAPERS**

Pupil Place Planning Strategy 2021-2026

## **SUBJECT HISTORY (last 3 years)**

<b>Council Meeting</b>	<b>Date</b>
<b>Children, Young People and Education Committee</b>	<b>31<sup>st</sup> January 2022</b>
<b>Children, Young People and Education Committee</b>	<b>11<sup>th</sup> March 2021</b>

# Phase 1 Pupil Place Planning

## Findings Report

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March 2022

## Introduction

In March 2021, the Children Young People and Education Committee endorsed the Pupil Place Planning Strategy 2021 - 2026. This Strategy set out a planned framework for the review of school places in both primary and secondary mainstream schools over the next 5 years.

The purpose of the Strategy was to set out a framework for the review of school planning areas which will enable the council to meet its statutory duty and ensure the provision of suitable and sufficiency places for school aged pupils. The Strategy also out how we would work with key partners to shape education provision through a transparent and equitable approach which will lead to supported decision making.

Phase 1 of the primary phase of the review commenced in March 2021 looking at small planning areas in and around Birkenhead, specifically: Beechwood; Central Birkenhead; North Birkenhead; South Birkenhead; Noctorum; Prenton. A detailed review framework and process has been undertaken and has included information gathering, stakeholder discussion and parent/carer engagement. This has culminated in the recommendations presented within the report.

## Vision and Principles

The Strategy set out a vision *“to ensure that Wirral’s children attend local schools that provide high quality education, are efficient, viable and provide the best possible educational standards to meet their needs”*. Fundamental to the delivery of the Strategy has been the principles. These have guided the work undertaken

1. We will be fair, thorough, and respectful in our approach to Pupil Place planning reviews
2. We will follow and adhere to all legal requirements, seeking relevant advice and guidance where this is applicable
3. We will work with partners, and involve key stakeholders in pupil place planning where this is relevant and necessary
4. We will consult with schools, parents, and local communities as part of the pupil place planning process
5. We will utilise robust insight, intelligence, and data to underpin a robust methodology and analysis
6. We will always consider how our efforts will improve educational outcomes for children and young people
7. We will consider the efficiency and effectiveness of education provisions as part of pupil place planning
8. We will prioritise and focus on inclusion, ensuring that children with special educational needs and disabilities are at the forefront of considerations throughout

The Pupil Place Planning Strategy seeks to support the vision and pledges of the council and partners, particularly ensuring that we can provide brighter futures for our young people and families. Equally this strategy supports the creation of safe and vibrant communities in which education provision creates environments for parents to want to live and bring up their children.

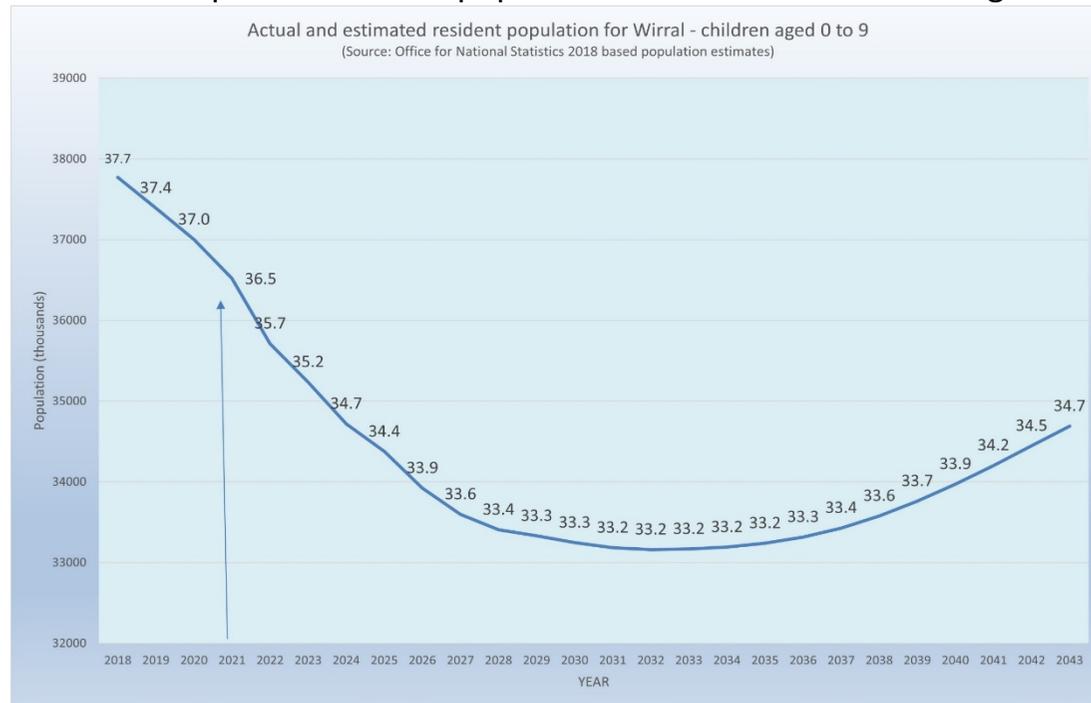
# Key Findings

## Overview of legal duty

By law, the Local authority has a duty to secure sufficiency of school places for children and young people – this includes addressing any excess or insufficiency. The Council submits annual school capacity survey to DfE which provide pupil forecasts, and these inform capital programmes and funding.

## Population change

The population of children aged 0-9 is expected to decline over the next five years. The graph below demonstrates the actual and expected resident population for Wirral for children aged 0-9.



It shows that between 2021 and 2026 (the time frame of the Strategy) there will be a decline in the number of children living on Wirral from approximately 36.5 thousand children aged 0-9 in 2021 to 33.6 thousand.

Understanding population change has been an important factor in carrying out the review phase 1, given its influence in the pupil forecasts over the next five years.

## Key Findings by Small Planning area

### Small planning area: Prenton

Prenton small planning area consists of one maintained primary school: Prenton Primary.

School Name	Type	PAN (Sept 20)	Net Capacity
Prenton Primary	Community	60	420
<b>Prenton Total</b>			<b>420</b>

The review captured type of school for each area, Pupil Admission Number and overall capacity. The pupil forecasts for the planning area are the same as for the school.

	May 2021			Projections 2022 - 2026					Projections 2026		Projections based on high yield	
	May 2021 actual	May 2021 unfilled places	Percentage occupancy	Jan 2022	Jan 2023	Jan 2024	Jan 2025	Jan 2026	Jan 2026 unfilled places	Percentage occupancy 2026	0-5-year Local Plan yield	0-15-year Local Plan yield
Total	397	23	<b>94.5%</b>	400	398	404	394	388	32	<b>92.4%</b>	94.3%	94.3%
Primary aged pupils Prenton Planning area. 2022 to 2026 are estimates based on current numbers on roll, birth rates and average parental preference.												

As Table 1 indicates the number of surplus places in this planning area (and in Prenton School) will not be significant and remain at 92%.

**There are no recommendations for this area arising out of the review.**

### Small planning area: South Birkenhead

There are five schools within the South Birkenhead Planning area.

School Name		PAN (Sept 20)	Net Capacity
Bedford Drive Primary	Community	60	420
Mersey Park Primary	Community	60	420
Rock Ferry Primary	Community	47	351
St Anne's Catholic Primary	Voluntary Aided	30	243
Well Lane Primary	Community	30	205
<b>South Birkenhead Total</b>			<b>1639</b>

Overall, the small planning area currently (May 21) has an occupancy of 91% and 9% surplus places. It is projected that the surplus will increase to 13% over the next few years. There is one school, St. Anne's Catholic Primary which is projected to have over 25% surplus places in five years. Local plan developments are not expected to have a significant impact on school place planning.

May 2021	Projections 2022 - 2026	Projections 2026	Projections based on high yield
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	May 2021 actual	May 2021 unfilled places	%Occupancy	Jan 2022	Jan 2023	Jan 2024	Jan 2025	Jan 2026	Jan 2026 unfilled places	%Occupancy	0-5 Years Local Plan yield	0-15 years Local Plan yield
Total	1509	155	<b>90.7%</b>	1496	1495	1468	1466	1450	214	<b>87.2%</b>	89.0%	89.3%
Primary aged pupils in South Birkenhead Planning area. 2022 to 2026 are estimates based on current numbers on roll, birth rates and average parental preference.												

**St Anne's Catholic Primary:** St Anne's currently has capacity of 243 with a Pupil Admission Number (PAN) of 30 (Sept 20). In May 21 it had a percentage occupancy of 84% with 204 pupils on roll and 39 unfilled places. Pupil projections estimate that in 2026, there will be 167 children on roll and the school have a percentage occupancy of 69% with 31% surplus.

### Recommendations for South Birkenhead Small Planning area

**Recommendation 1:** It is recommended that the Diocese of Shrewsbury decommission existing teaching space in St Anne's and repurpose for alternative use to reduce the overall capacity of the school.

This recommendation has been supported by the Diocese.

### Small planning area: North Birkenhead

North Birkenhead small planning area consists of 7 primary schools.

School	Type	PAN (Sept 20)	Net Capacity
Bidston Avenue	Community	60	420
Birkenhead High School Academy	Academy	56	392
Cathcart Street	Community	30	210
Co-op Academy Portland	Academy	30	241
Holy Cross Catholic	Voluntary Aided	30	210
Our Lady & St. Edwards Catholic	Voluntary Aided	60	420
The Priory Parish CE	Voluntary Aided	30	203
<b>North Birkenhead Total</b>			<b>2096</b>

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In May 21, the percentage occupancy for the area was 89%. It is anticipated that there will be significant housing developments within North Birkenhead over the next 5 to 15 years, as identified within the Local Plan.

Projections over five years indicate that occupancy will stay the same at 89% with a surplus of 11%. Projections over the next 15 years, aligned to expected housing tenure, indicate that there will be a significant increase in demand for school places and a percentage occupancy of -118%. This means that, currently, there will not be enough provision to meet the need.

	May 2021	Projections 2022 - 2026	Projections 2026	Projections based
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											on high yield	
	May 2021 actual	May 2021 unfilled places	%Occupancy	Jan 2022	Jan 2023	Jan 2024	Jan 2025	Jan 2026	Jan 2026 unfilled places	%Occupancy	0-5 years Local Plan yield	0-15 years Local Plan yield
Total	1875	221	89.5%	1904	1906	1881	1876	1878	218	89.6%	92.5	-118.4
Primary aged pupils in North Birkenhead Planning area. 2022 to 2026 are estimates based on current numbers on roll, birth rates and average parental preference.												

### Recommendations for North Birkenhead

**Recommendation 2: It is recommended that, in principle, agreement is given for the establishment of a new school in the small planning area of North Birkenhead to meet the demand for new school places over the next 15 years.**

Agreement for this recommendation is requested as in principle given that it is intended to meet demand over 15 years and outside of the scope of the review timeframe. However, given the timescales required to establish a new school, between 5 and 7 years, it is pertinent for authority to be granted through the pupil place planning process to allow for enough time for implementation to meet the expected demand.

It should be noted that in line with the legal stipulations, any new school established within an area will be through a 'free school presumption' and therefore an academy or voluntary aided school.

## Small planning area: Central Birkenhead

There are six schools in the central Birkenhead small planning area.

		PAN (Sept 20)	Net Capacity
Christchurch CE Birkenhead	Voluntary Aided	37	266
Devonshire Park	Community	60	481
St Joseph's Catholic	Academy	60	420
St Werburgh's Catholic	Voluntary Aided	30	210
Woodchurch Road	Community	71	524
Woodlands	Community	44	315
<b>Central Birkenhead Total</b>			<b>2216</b>

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The occupancy for the area (May 21) is 80%. Projections indicate that occupancy will be 66% in five years with 34% surplus. Local Plan developments are not expected to impact on pupil place planning projections in this area. There are currently two schools with over 25% surplus places. It is expected that there will be 3 schools with over 25% surplus in the next five years.

	May 2021	Projections 2022 - 2026	Projections 2026	Projections based on high yield
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	May 2021 actual	May 2021 unfilled places	%Occupancy	Jan 2022	Jan 2023	Jan 2024	Jan 2025	Jan 2026	Jan 2026 unfilled places	%Occupancy	0-5 years Local Plan yield %	0-15 years Local Plan yield
Total	1759	431 unfilled	<b>80.3%</b>	1697	1643	1544	1493	1441	749	<b>65.8%</b>	66.1%	70.2%
Primary aged pupils in Central Birkenhead Planning area. 2022 to 2026 are estimates based on current numbers on roll, birth rates and average parental preference.												

**St Joseph's Catholic Primary:** St Joseph's Catholic Primary is an academy school. St Joseph' currently has a capacity of 420 and a PAN of 60 (Sept 2). In May 21, it had 333 children on roll and 87 unfilled places with an overall percentage occupancy of 79%. Pupil projections estimate that in 2026, there will be 237 pupils on roll and the school will have a percentage occupancy of 57%. A detailed profile of the school is included within appendix B.

**Christchurch CE Birkenhead:** Christchurch is a voluntary aided Church of England school. Currently it has capacity of 266 with a Pupil Admission number of 37. In May 21, it had a percentage occupancy of 67.9%. Pupil projections estimate that in 2026, there will be 139 children on roll and the school have a percentage occupancy of approximately 58%. A detailed profile of the school is included within appendix B.

**Woodchurch Road Primary:** Woodchurch Road is a community-maintained school. It has a capacity of 524 with a Pupil Admission Number (PAN) of 71 (Sept 20). In May 21 it had a percentage occupancy of 59.2%. Pupil projections estimate that in 2026, there will be 224 children on roll and the school have a percentage occupancy of approximately 43%.

Catchment analysis shows that of the children living in the catchment area (excluding those attending Catholic schools), 24% attend Woodchurch Road. A detailed profile of the school is included within appendix B.

### **Recommendations for Central Birkenhead**

**Recommendation 3: It is recommended that Diocese of Shrewsbury and the Holy Family Multi-Academy Trust reduce the PAN of St Joseph’s Catholic Primary school to 30 and decommission teaching space to reduce overall capacity.**

This recommendation has been agreed by the Diocese and Holy Family MAT.

**Recommendation 4: It is recommended that the Diocese of Chester agree to reduce the PAN of Christchurch CE Birkenhead to 30 and decommission teaching space to reduce overall capacity.**

This recommendation has been agreed by the Diocese of Chester.

**Recommendation 5: It is recommended that Woodchurch Road primary reduce their PAN to 30 and decommission teaching space to reduce overall capacity.**

This recommendation has been acted upon by the school. Consultation has been undertaken and the proposal was agreed by the Children, Young People and Education Committee on 31<sup>st</sup> January 2022.

### **Small Planning area: Noctorum**

Noctorum has four schools within the small planning area.

School Name		PAN (Sept 20)	Net Capacity
Hillside Primary	Community	30	210
Oxton St Saviours CE Primary	Voluntary Aided	30	210
St Peter's Catholic Primary	Voluntary Aided	30	210
Townfield Primary	Academy	60*	420
<b>Noctorum Total</b>			<b>1050</b>

Overall projections for the area indicate a change in occupancy over the next five years from 84% to 77%, meaning there will be a 23% surplus overall. Local plan developments are not expected to have any significant impact on the projected demand for pupil places in five years. There are two schools within the area with over 25% surplus places who are expected to remain with high levels of surplus over five years.

	May 2021			Projections 2022 - 2026					Projections 2026		Projections based on high yield	
	May 2021 actual	May 2021 unfilled places	% Occupancy	Jan 2022	Jan 2023	Jan 2024	Jan 2025	Jan 2026	Jan 2026 unfilled places	% Occupancy 2026	0-5 years Local Plan yield	0-15 years Local Plan yield

Total	974	184	<b>84.1%</b>	978	965	933	907	894	264	<b>77.2%</b>	77.5	77.5
Primary aged pupils in Noctorum Planning area. 2022 to 2026 are estimates based on current numbers on roll, birth rates and average parental preference.												

**St Peter’s Catholic Primary School:** St Peter’s Catholic Primary is a voluntary aided Catholic school. The school has a current capacity of 210 and Pupil Admission Number of 30 (Sept 20). In May 21 it had a percentage occupancy of 57% with 91 unfilled places and surplus of 43%.

Five-year projections indicate that the school’s surplus will increase to 52% meaning with a percentage occupancy of 48%. This means that there will be more unfilled places in the whole school than actual filled places.

The projected occupancy of St Peter’s Catholic Primary requires significant consideration and review and has been classed, for the review purposes, as a priority. Whilst the school has been able to balance its budget over the past five years, the viability of small schools remains an area of risk given the projections, and close financial monitoring would be required to ensure long-term viability. Compared to other schools within the small planning area, St Peter’s spends higher than average per pupil, £1,200 (approx.) more per pupil.

The last inspection of the school was 2015 and it was rated as good. Standards results from 2019 show that the school has performed significantly lower than the national average (65%) in Key Stage 2 (Reading, Writing and Mathematics combined) with 33% of pupils reaching the expected level. Phonics and Key Stage 1 results are also lower than national averages.

The school has appointed a new headteacher and new teaching and learning strategies implemented. The school has 51% of children in receipt of free school meals and 25% of children with SEND.

The school is situated in the St Peter's Noctorum parish. For the parish, 128 children choose a Catholic school. Of the children living in this parish, 23% attend a Catholic school. Out of the 23% living in the parish with a Catholic preference, 59% attend St Peter's school. The remaining 41% attend other Catholic schools, including St Joseph's Upton (10%); Our Lady & St Edwards (8%); St Joseph's Birkenhead (7%); St Michael and All Angels (6%) and Our Lady of Pity (6%).

**Hillside Primary School:** Hillside is a community-maintained school. It has a current capacity of 210. It has capacity of 210 with a Pupil Admission Number (PAN) of 30 (Sept 20). In May 21 it had a percentage occupancy of 78%. Pupil projections estimate that in 2026, there will be 129 children on roll and the school have a percentage occupancy of 61%. Catchment analysis shows that of the children living in the catchment area (excluding Catholic choice pupils), 28% attended Hillside school.

It has 32% children on Free School Meals and 15% children with SEND. It has early years provision. The school, previously an Infant and Junior School, was built in 1968 with an extension added in 2006. The school's last full inspection was in 2017 with an outcome of Good.

The most recent standard results (2019) evidence that the school performs lower than the national average for Key Stage 2 Reading, Writing and Mathematics combined with 26% of pupils meeting the standard compared with 65% nationally. Performance in Early Years Foundation Stage and Phonics are also below the national average. The school's budget has been in deficit for the past three years but credit prior to that. Average expenditure per pupil £6,495 (2019/20) compared with £5,119 average for the Noctorum area.

The school has a new headteacher who started in September 2021 and implemented new approaches and standards in the school. Further information relating to the profile of the school is attached at appendix A.

**Recommendation:** The recommendations for schools in this small planning area are outlined as combined recommendations for the small planning area of Beechwood.

### Small planning area: Beechwood

There are three schools in the small planning area.

School Name		PAN (Sept 20)	Net Capacity
Bidston Village CE Primary	Voluntary Controlled	50	367
Manor Primary	Community	30	210
St Paul's Catholic Primary	Voluntary Aided	23	150
<b>Beechwood Total</b>			<b>727</b>

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As of May 21, the area had an overall occupancy of 82%. This is expected to decrease to 70% over the next five years, in line with population change. Local Plan developments are not expected to impact on the area. Two schools currently have a surplus of over 25% and this is expected to remain for the next five (and 15 years) unless action is taken.

	May 2021	Projections 2022 - 2026	Projections 2026	Projections based on high yield
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	May 2021 actual	May 2021 unfilled places	% Occupancy	Jan 2022	Jan 2023	Jan 2024	Jan 2025	Jan 2026	Jan 2026 unfilled places	%Occupancy	0-5 years Local Plan yield	0-15 years Local Plan yield
Total	595	102	<b>85.4%</b>	591	583	555	522	491	206	<b>70.4%</b>	71.6%	71.6%
Primary aged pupils in Noctorum Planning area. 2022 to 2026 are estimates based on current numbers on roll, birth rates and average parental preference.												

**St Paul's Catholic Primary:** St Paul's had a capacity of 150 with a Pupil Admission Number (PAN) of 23 (Sept 20). In May 21 it had a percentage occupancy of 52%. Pupil projections estimate that in 2026, there will be 100 children on roll and the school will have a percentage occupancy of approximately 48% with a surplus of 52%.

As part of the information sharing phase of the Review, the governing body of St Paul's have advised that two classrooms have been given over to 2-year-old provision, leaving four classrooms for school age children. This reduces the Net Capacity from 150 to 120 from 2022 onwards, with an indicated admission number of 17, subject to consultation (bottom of range capacity 105 with indicated admission number 15). This has reduced surplus capacity in the planning area from 132 places (81.8% occupancy) to 102 places (85.4% occupancy)– however in five years' time the overall occupancy is expected to remain low at 70.4%.

In relation to St Paul's, surplus capacity remains high – occupancy in May 2021 using the revised capacity figure is 65% and projected to fall to 46% in five years.

St Paul's has 46% children on Free School Meals and 29% children with SEND. It has an early year's provision. The school's last full inspection was in 2013 with an outcome of Good. Standards results from 2019 indicate that the school performed below the national average for Key 2 Reading, Writing Mathematics (RWM) combined and that progress at Key Stage 2 declined in all areas. Results in Key Stage 1 (RWM), Phonics and Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) were also lower than national averages. Whilst the school's budget has been in credit at year end for the past five years, it has an average expenditure per pupil £8,242 (2019/20) compared with £6,858 as the average for the Beechwood area.

There are issues associated with maintaining small and very small schools within an urban area. Maintaining small schools when it is not essential to do so comes at the expense of all Wirral's children and it is right to consider whether it is appropriate to do so. In Wirral terms, a small school is one with fewer than 180 pupils – once schools have fewer than 120 pupils this would be considered a very small school.

The school is situated within the combined parish of Holy Cross and St Paul's. 24% of all children who live in the St Paul's part of the parish area attend a Catholic school. **This equates to a total of 135 children.** Of these, 52% attend St Paul's Catholic Primary. The remaining 48% attend other Catholic schools in and around the area including St Joseph's (Upton) (13%); St Peter's (8%), Our Lady and St Edwards (8%), Our Lady of Pity (4%), and St Michael's and All Angels (4%).

**Manor Primary:** Manor Primary is a community-maintained school. It has capacity of 210 with a Pupil Admission Number (PAN) of 30 (Sept 20). In May 21 it had a percentage occupancy of 70%. Pupil projections estimate that in 2026, there will be 119 children on roll and the school have a percentage occupancy of around 57%. Catchment analysis shows that of the children living in the catchment area (excluding Catholic choice pupils), 41% attend Manor primary.

It had 51% children on Free School Meals and 26% children with SEND. It does not have early years provision or a SEND Unit/Base. The school has one large main building that was built in 1967. An extension was added to the school in 2007. The school last full inspection was in 2017 with an outcome of Requires Improvement.

The most recent standards information evidences that Manor has performed below the national average for standards in Key Stage 2 Reading, Writing and Mathematics with 28.6% of children meeting the expected standard compared to 65% nationally. The school performs lower than the national standards in Key Stage 1 Reading Writing Mathematic combined, Phonics and Early Years Foundation Stage.

### **Recommendations (for small planning areas Beechwood and Noctorum):**

**Recommendation 6: It is recommended that the Diocese of Shrewsbury amalgamate St Peter’s Catholic Primary School and St Paul’s Catholic Primary School. This would involve closure of both schools and opening of a new combined school on one site. Pupils from both schools would be guaranteed a place at the single school.**

This recommendation has been agreed by the Diocese of Shrewsbury who will commence formal consultation in line with the statutory guidance on the amalgamation/closure of schools.

### **Reasons for recommendation 6**

- The current surplus at both schools remains critical with projections to 2026 indicating ~50% surplus for both schools.
- The Local Authority and Department for Education would not recommend a further reduction in capacity or PAN, particularly for these schools in urban areas where there are alternative local options available.
- Whilst both schools have put new measures in place to address declining standards and both have high numbers of disadvantaged pupils, results have indicated that pupils’ education progress remains significantly lower than national averages.

- Both schools can manage their budgets for year-end but their viability considering declining pupil numbers remains a significant risk. It is considered that the potential limited provision of resources within schools this small, would not support a rich and diverse curriculum offer.
- The distance for pupils travelling to school would not be significantly hampered and would remain within the walking distance guidelines identified in DfE guidance (2 miles aged under 8, 3 miles aged 8 and over). Average travel distances for those attending either school would be 1.4 miles. A breakdown of this is provided below.
- In relation to both schools there are some pupils already travelling more than 2 miles to attend either school who could be expected to continue to use their existing travel method to attend alternative schools.
- In either option, all pupils from the site which ceased to operate as a school, would be guaranteed a place at the other site so that pupils can move together, if they want to take this up. 90% of pupils on roll at St Peter's also live less than 2 miles from the St Paul's site; 59% of pupils on roll at St Paul's live less than 2 miles from the St Peter's site.
- There would also continue to be other options for of alternative Catholic schools nearby. For pupils currently on roll at St Paul's, for example, 64% live less than 2 miles from Holy Cross; 53% live less than 2 miles from St Josephs (Upton) and 47% live less than 2 miles from Sacred Heart Catholic Primary Schools For pupils currently on roll at St Peters, 86% live less than 2 miles from St Josephs (Upton); and 66% from St Michael and All Angels; 38% from Holy Cross Catholic Primary Schools.
- The implementation of any of these options would be aligned to improved configuration of access routes between the two schools (crossing/bridge etc.) to ensure safe travel of families and children.
- The amalgamation or closure of St Paul's would retain a Catholic primary school in every parish due to the existing combined parish of Holy Cross and St Paul's.
- Decisions about the future of any site no longer required for educational purposes would be made by the Diocese.

**Recommendation 7: It is recommended to amalgamate Hillside Primary and Manor Primary schools. This would involve closure of both schools and opening of a new combined school on one site. Pupils from both schools would be guaranteed a place at the single school.**

### **Reasons for recommendation 7**

- The current surplus at both schools remains critical with projections to 2026 indicating ~50% surplus for both schools.
- The Local Authority and Department for Education would not recommend a further reduction in capacity or PAN, particularly for these schools in urban areas where there are alternative local options available.
- Whilst both schools have put new measures in place to address declining standards and both have high numbers of disadvantaged pupils, results have indicated that pupils' education progress remains significantly lower than national averages.
- Both schools can manage their budgets for year-end but their viability considering declining pupil numbers remains a significant risk. It is considered that the potential limited provision of resources within schools this small, would not support a rich and diverse curriculum offer.
- The distance for pupils travelling to school would not be significantly hampered and would remain within the walking distance guidelines identified in DfE guidance (2 miles aged under 8, 3 miles aged 8 and over). Average travel distances for those attending either school is less than 1.5 miles. A breakdown of this is provided below.
- In relation to both schools there are some pupils already travelling more than 2 miles to attend either school who could be expected to continue to use their existing travel method to attend alternative schools.

- In either option, all pupils from the site which ceased to operate as a school, would be guaranteed a place at the other site so that pupils can move together, if they want to take this up. 91% of pupils on roll at Hillside Primary School also live less than 2 miles from the Manor site; 88% of pupils on roll at Manor Primary School live less than 2 miles from the Hillside site.
- There would also continue to be other options for of alternative schools nearby. In each case there are more than 10 alternative schools with an average travel distance below 3 miles. For pupils currently on roll at Manor Primary School, for example, 92% live less than 2 miles from Bidston Village CE Primary School. For pupils currently on roll at Hillside Primary School, 89% live less than 2 miles from Townfield Primary School.
- The implementation of any of these options would include redrawing catchment zones to better align the pupil populations with the local schools and ensure children have a local school within a reasonable travel distance.
- The implementation of any of these options would be aligned to improved configuration of access routes between the two schools (crossing/bridge etc.) to ensure safe travel of families and children.

### **Formal consultation on the decision**

In line with statutory guidance, this recommendation requires a formal consultation. At its meeting of 10<sup>th</sup> March, members of the Children, Young People and Education Committee are requested to agree to undertake a consultation on this proposal commencing 9<sup>th</sup> May 2022.

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## CHILDREN, YOUNG PEOPLE AND EDUCATION COMMITTEE

Tuesday, 23 November 2021

<b>REPORT TITLE:</b>	<b>KINGSWAY SCHOOL – PFI UPDATE</b>
<b>REPORT OF:</b>	<b>DIRECTOR OF CHILDREN, FAMILIES AND EDUCATION</b>

### REPORT SUMMARY

This report provides the Children, Young People and Education Committee with an overview of the feasibility study that has taken place in relation to Clare Mount Specialist Sports College relocating to the former Kingsway Academy, Wallasey.

A report was brought to committee in November to explore whether this would be a viable option and if Clare Mount Specialist Sports College would like to explore this option.

The former Kingsway Academy is part of the Wirral Private Finance Initiative (PFI) schools' contract that was signed in 2007. The PFI scheme allowed for the significant refurbishment and new build of nine schools across the local authority. This included eight secondary schools and one primary school.

The former Kingsway Academy school building has remained empty since the closure of the school. The site is being maintained by the current PFI contractor until a use for the building has been formalised.

Options in relation to the school building use had been explored at the end of 2019, of which one of these was the possibility of Clare Mount Specialist Sports College moving to the former Kingsway Academy building. Options outlined have not been developed further due to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The proposed relocation of Clare Mount Specialist Sports College to the former Kingsway Academy site supports the Brighter Futures theme of the Wirral Plan 2021 - 26 and specifically the delivery of the school asset and sufficiency and SEND strategies.

This matter affects residents across the borough.

This is a key decision.

### RECOMMENDATION/S

The Children, Young People and Education Committee is requested to:

1. Agree to commence formal consultation for Clare Mount Specialist Sports College to move to the former Kingsway Academy from September 2022.
2. Committee requests the Director of Children, Families and Education explore future options for the remaining part of the building that will be un-occupied.

## **SUPPORTING INFORMATION**

### **1.0 REASON/S FOR RECOMMENDATION/S**

- 1.1 The Children, Young People and Education Committee has a role in making sure that council assets are utilised in the most appropriate way and have a positive impact on the lives of Wirral's young people.
- 1.2 The current cost to the council of the former Kingsway Academy is £867.5k per annum; this cost will continue and increase by indexation (RPI) annually if the site remains within the PFI contract, until July 2031 or until another use of the building is found.
- 1.3 Clare Mount Specialist Sports College have been consulted regarding the relocation to the former Kingsway Academy, they are supportive of the move and see the significant benefits it has to offer.
- 1.4 Clare Mount Specialist Sports College are currently using the CLC on the former Kingsway Academy for their sixth form provision. This proposal would allow the sixth form provision to be within the same building as the school provision.
- 1.5 Through site visits and consultation with the school leadership team, the building adaptations that are required to allow Clare Mount Specialist Sports College to move are realistic in the timescales given.

### **2.0 OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED**

- 2.1 In the previous report brought to committee in November 2021 several options were outlined for consideration. The option to move Clare Mount Specialist Sports College to the former Kingsway Academy is seen as the preferred option
- 2.2 We could do nothing and the current liability of the PFI costs associated with the former Kingsway Academy will remain with the local authority for the next 10 years.

### **3.0 BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

- 3.1 The option for Clare Mount Specialist Sports College to move into the former Kingsway Academy is seen as the preferable option based on the locality of the two sites and the current condition of the Clare Mount Specialist Sports College building and the facilities available at the former Kingsway Academy that are currently not available at their current location.

- 3.2 Clare Mount Specialist Sports College is a secondary school supporting pupils aged 11 – 19 with Moderate Learning Disabilities (MLD) and Autistic Spectrum Condition (ASC). The school is currently rated as outstanding by OFSTED, the inspection took place in autumn 2021. The school has 249 pupils on roll.
- 3.3 The current Clare Mount Specialist Sports College has significant building issues; Flat roofs are prone to leaks and this would be an ongoing issue if the school remained at this site; Windows are not double glazed, and many sections need replacement; The construction has led to poor insulation and flooding has been an issue historically due to the low water table in the area.
- 3.4 Investment has been made with an extension to their sports facilities, but this was over 15 years ago. Major investment is needed to improve the condition of the building if the school is to remain on this site. The level of investment needed would be significantly more than the adaptations required at the former Kingsway Academy
- 3.5 Through site visits with both Clare Mount Specialist Sports College leaders, LA officers, and architects, a collective decision has been developed to decide which part of the school would be required. This would allow all pupils currently on roll to be able to access the curriculum offer that is currently delivered. The site has been deemed as suitable by all involved, in addition extra capacity is available if required.
- 3.6 An advantage of Clare Mount Specialist Sports College moving to the former Kingsway Academy is the access to specialist facilities in relation to cookery/technology/science and sports facilities they currently do not have available.
- 3.7 An added benefit of the site coming back into use by a school provision is the facilities can be explored for community use when the school is not open. This would allow additional access to sports facilities that are currently unavailable
- 3.8 Clare Mount Specialist Sports College will not be using all the former Kingsway Academy. A section of the building has been retained to explore other uses by a different provider or other provision. This will be explored further in the future. Clare Mount Specialist Sports College will be consulted on any future proposals.
- 3.9 To support the timeline for Clare Mount Specialist Sports College moving to the former Kingsway Academy, the PFI provider, Wirral School Services Limited (WSSL) are exploring the use of a Deed of Indemnity (DOI) with Wirral Council. This will allow the Council to carry out the adaptive works to facilitate Clare Mount Specialist Sports College moving in a timely manner.

#### **4.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 4.1 The Current financial cost to the local authority is £867.5K per annum, this cost will remain until the end of the PFI scheme in 2032, unless an alternative use of the building can be found.
- 4.2 The feasibility study has been undertaken by LA officers, focusing on building alterations; revenue contributions; capital contributions and mothballing considerations of the current Clare Mount Specialist Sports College.

- 4.2 As part of the feasibility study as to whether Clare Mount Specialist Sports College could move to The Kingsway Academy site, an assessment of the costs associated with Clare Mount Specialist Sports College moving to the site will be undertaken. This will cover both capital and revenue costs.
- 4.3 The re-purposing of the former Kingsway Academy will reduce the financial revenue costs currently covered by the council.
- 4.4 Council officers have worked with Clare Mount Specialist Sports College colleagues to ascertain a reasonable figure in relation to revenue budget contribution from the school. A final figure has not been confirmed, but a reduction in the council costs will be achieved through Clare Mount Specialist Sports College moving to the former Kingsway Academy.
- 4.5 It is intended that the current Clare Mount Specialist Sports College site will be declared surplus to requirements and will be recommended for disposal. National procedures will be followed which in principle make provision for capital receipts from the sale of surplus school buildings to be re-invested in other school buildings.
- 4.6 In this case it is intended to propose the investment of the capital receipt from the Clare Mount Specialist Sports College site into the current Kingsway Academy building for the required modifications, within the existing building to accommodate the adaptations for Clare Mount Specialist Sports College.
- 4.7 The costs of mothballing the current Clare Mount Specialist College when they exit the site until the sale of site will need to be factored into the capital costs.

## **LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 5.1 If the recommendations are approved by committee, a formal consultation would need to take place in relation to Clare Mount Specialist Sports College moving to a new site. The guidance for this process can found in the DFE document, *Making significant changes ('prescribed alterations') to maintained schools*.
- 5.2 A formal consultation will involve all relevant stakeholder including parents/carers, community members and other local schools.
- 5.3 The DFE will also be notified of the intention to relocate the school during the formal consultation.

## **5.0 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS: STAFFING, ICT AND ASSETS**

- 6.1 To oversee the transfer of Clare Mount Specialist Sports College to the former Kingsway Academy, a Project board will commence. This will include relevant LA officers and colleagues for Clare Mount Specialist Sports College. The progress board will oversee all relevant areas that cover staffing, ICT, and assets.
- 6.1 During discussions with colleague's from Clare Mount Specialist Sports College, it has been identified which equipment and furniture they would require to be moved from the Clare Mount Specialist Sports College site to the former Kingsway Academy.

Where additional furniture, equipment and ICT will be required, this will be part of the capital monies ringfenced for the project.

6.2 A full review of mechanical, electrical and IT services will need to be conducted. This is to ascertain what capital works in these areas will need to take place to make sure the building is compliant with the relevant Health and Safety regulations.

6.3 A project plan will be developed to ascertain what staffing resources will be required to oversee the transfer to the former Kingsway Academy.

## **6.0 RELEVANT RISKS**

7.1 The clear risk is the timeframe to move Clare Mount Specialist Sports College to the former Kingsway Academy for the 1<sup>st</sup> September 2022. The Clare Mount Specialist Sports College site will be made available for the autumn term 2022 if needed to aid the transition process.

7.2 Capital works maybe delayed during the autumn term in relation modifications that have been requested. The scope of works will be RAG rated in relation to what is essential for the school to open on site in September 2022.

7.3 The sale of the current Clare Mount Specialist Sports College site could be delayed or not realised.

7.3 If no alternative use can be found for the former Kingsway Academy site the annual costs of 867.5K per annum until 2032.

## **7.0 ENGAGEMENT/CONSULTATION**

8.1 Several meetings have taken place between LA officers and Clare Mount Specialist Sports College staff and the Local Governing Body. This has allowed a clear understanding of what is required to facilitate the move to the former Kingsway Academy.

8.2 Clare Mount Specialist Sports College have communicated with all parents/carers of pupils currently attending the school, to highlight the discussion taking place regarding the school moving to the former Kingsway Academy. Initial feedback has been positive

8.3 A formal consultation with parents/carers and the local community will take place if the proposal is approved by committee.

## **8.0 EQUALITY IMPLICATIONS**

9.1 Wirral Council has a legal requirement to make sure its policies, and the way it carries out its work, do not discriminate against anyone. An Equality Impact

Assessment is a tool to help council services identify steps they can take to ensure equality for anyone who might be affected by a particular policy, decision, or activity.

- 9.2 A full EIA will take place as part of the formal consultation for Clare Mount Specialist Sports College to relocate.
- 9.3 As part of the asset review of the former Kingsway Academy, consideration will be taken to make sure the building meets any recommendations that follow the completed EIA.

## 10.0 ENVIRONMENT AND CLIMATE IMPLICATIONS

- 10.1 Consideration has been given to the climate emergency in exploration of re-using the former Kingsway Academy. The former Kingsway Academy site is a newer building, with improved energy efficiency in comparison to the existing site being used by Clare Mount Specialist Sports College. In addition, as part of the feasibility study, how the former Kingsway Academy site could maximise the efficient use of technology to reduce carbon.

## 11.0 Community Wealth

- 11.1 The proposal outlined will bring back into use a council asset that is currently unoccupied, this could lead to future employment within the local area. In addition, the re-utilisation could allow the site to be used outside of school hours for community use. This opportunity could lead to local employment opportunities.

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## APPENDICES

### BACKGROUND PAPERS

[Making significant changes \('prescribed alterations'\) to maintained schools \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://publishing.service.gov.uk)

### SUBJECT HISTORY (last 3 years)

Council Meeting	Date
Children, Young People & Education Committee	23 <sup>rd</sup> November 2021
Audit and Risk Management Committee	10 <sup>th</sup> March 2020



## CHILDREN, YOUNG PEOPLE & EDUCATION COMMITTEE

Thursday, 10 March 2022

<b>REPORT TITLE:</b>	<b>WIRRAL CHILD EXPLOITATION AND MISSING OVERVIEW</b>
<b>REPORT OF:</b>	<b>DIRECTOR FOR CHILDREN, FAMILIES AND EDUCATION</b>

### REPORT SUMMARY

This report provides members of the Children, Young People and Education Committee with an overview of the response to Child Exploitation and Missing Children in Wirral.

The report sets out the working arrangements across partners, in Wirral and regionally; and includes a brief overview of themes, trends and impact. The working arrangements and governance are described with the intention of reassuring members that exploitation and missing remain priorities for the directorate and partners, with resources and time directed to identifying and managing the risk of harm.

Tackling Child Exploitation links to the Wirral 2021-2026 Plan against delivery of the following:

- Brighter futures for all regardless of their background.
- Safe and pleasant communities that our residents are proud of.

This matter affects residents across the borough.

### RECOMMENDATION/S

The Children, Young People and Education Committee is recommended to Note the approach and ongoing work relating to child exploitation and missing children.

## SUPPORTING INFORMATION

### 1.0 REASON/S FOR RECOMMENDATION/S

- 1.1 Wirral Council and partners have a statutory duty under section 10 of The Children Act 2004 to safeguard and improve the well-being of children in the Borough so far as relating to:
- (a) physical and mental health and emotional well-being.
  - (b) protection from harm and neglect.
  - (c) education, training, and recreation.
  - (d) the contribution made by them to society.
  - (e) social and economic well-being.
- 1.2 Section 11 of the 2004 Act states that partners must make arrangements for ensuring that:
- a) their functions are discharged having regard to the need to safeguard and promote the welfare of children; and
  - (b) any services provided by another person pursuant to arrangements made by the person or body in the discharge of their functions are provided having regard to that need.
- 1.3 The Police Crime Sentencing and Courts Act 2021, to be enacted in 2022, places 'responsible authorities' under a 'serious violence duty'. Such authorities are defined by the act as Police, Justice (including Youth Justice), Fire and Rescue, Health and Local Authorities. The duty requires authorities to work together to reduce and prevent serious violence. This includes *areas of criminality where serious violence or its threat is inherent, such as in county lines drug dealing*. The definition of serious violence in this context can be informed by local partnerships. As such sexual exploitation and abuse may feature within our local strategic needs assessment.
- 1.4 In view of the statutory responsibilities and duties set out in the Children Act 2004 and the forthcoming Police Crime Sentencing and Courts Act 2021, the Local Authority has a key role to play in tackling Child Exploitation and supporting young people who may go missing.

### 2.0 OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 2.1 Other options would be not to report to committee, however it was felt that keeping the committee appraised was beneficial in view of the points referenced in Section 1, above.

### 3.0 BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- 3.1 Tackling Child Exploitation is a complex and ever evolving area of safeguarding. The National Crime Agency (NCA) Strategic Assessment of Serious Organised Crime 2021 highlight 'Exploitation of the Vulnerable' as a risk area for the UK – citing Sexual Abuse/Exploitation, Modern Slavery and Trafficking as areas of concern.
- 3.2 There are several national organisations that provide guidance and resources to help inform exploitation strategy, policy, and practice. These include; Barnardo's, The Children's Society, The National Working Group for Child Exploitation (NWG),

National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (NSPCC) St Giles' Trust and Catch 22.

- 3.3 There are numerous sources of material relevant to this topic, some produced by those organisations listed in 3.2, above. The Local Government Association (LGA): Tackling Child Exploitation Resources Pack (Aug 2021) provides links to further reading, highlighting key national reports and guidance relevant to Child Exploitation.
- 3.4 Working Together to Safeguard Children (DfE, 2018) is the primary guide for inter-agency safeguarding work. Exploitation as a specific harm theme has featured within several versions of this document in recent years. Of note, however, is the broadening concept of 'risk outside the home' or 'extra familial harm'. This may also be referred to as 'Contextual' safeguarding. Working Together 2018 (Page 25, Section 40) recognises that children can be vulnerable to multiple threats, in several different contexts.

*As well as threats to the welfare of children from within their families, children may be vulnerable to abuse or exploitation from outside their families. These extra-familial threats might arise at school and other educational establishments, from within peer groups, or more widely from within the wider community and/or online. These threats can take a variety of different forms and children can be vulnerable to multiple threats, including: exploitation by criminal gangs and organised crime groups such as county lines; trafficking; online abuse; teenage relationship abuse; sexual exploitation and the influences of extremism leading to radicalisation.*

- 3.5 The Universities of Bedfordshire and Durham are supporting several local authorities in developing wider contextual safeguarding practice. In view of the above, future inspectorate activity in this area may move away from specific harm themes; and consider partnership approaches to tackling wider risk outside the home. Wirral's Safer Adolescent Strategy 2021-23 has been developed with this in mind.
- 3.6 Across Merseyside, the predominant visible model of child exploitation is criminal. This is often linked to county lines trafficking in support of serious organised crime drug dealing activity. The role of females in county lines is not fully understood. What is clear is that organised crime and those that abuse children adapt to safeguarding, disruption and law enforcement tactics.
- 3.7 Safeguarding partners remain vigilant to Child Sexual Exploitation, this remains a clear priority for us in Wirral. Whilst the significant work to tackle CSE undertaken across partners over the last ten years has no doubt had impact, the partnership is not complacent in focusing only on criminal exploitation. The WSCP and Merseyside Police violence against women and girls (VAWG) agenda assists in retaining focus on sexual harm, including within a child exploitation context. The recent publication of the Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse (IICSA) 'Organised Networks' report February 2022 is a reminder as to why we have developed our local approach in Wirral. The IICSA report and its recommendations will be considered by the Pan Merseyside Governance arrangements (See 3.8, below) and Wirral's safeguarding partners (3.15).
- 3.8 Regional approaches to Child Exploitation and Missing Children have been developed through the Pan Merseyside Multi Agency Child Exploitation (MACE)

governance. This forum has overseen task and finish work to agree Multi Agency protocols for Exploitation and Missing Children. These protocols have been developed with the support of Catch 22 and The University of Bedfordshire; and are endorsed through local safeguarding partnerships.

- 3.9 Pan Merseyside meetings take place quarterly to review performance, delivery, and development activity. This forum is chaired by the Police Detective Superintendent lead for Child Exploitation.
- 3.10 Wirral, in partnership with the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner and other Merseyside authorities, commission Catch 22. Catch 22 are a national social business providing services across several sectors and safeguarding themes. In the context of Merseyside, Catch 22 undertake direct work with young people who may be at risk of being, or have been, exploited. They also undertaken independent return home interviews with young people who have been missing from home or care.
- 3.11 Merseyside also benefits from the support of Barnardo's Independent Child Trafficking Guardian (ICTG) service, commissioned by the Home Office to offer support to several areas in England and Wales. Barnardo's ICTGs can provide direct support to victims of Modern Slavery; and offer practice advice to professionals and local partnerships.
- 3.12 In 2020, the Home Office commissioned St Giles Trust to work with victims of county lines in Merseyside. St Giles Trust have recently added a 'Rescue and Response' service aimed at building relationships with young people when returning them from missing episodes or custody outside of Merseyside.
- 3.13 As Merseyside is second only to London in terms of the number of 'lines' running out of the region, Merseyside Police have received additional funding to tackle county lines as a specific threat. Project Medusa has been set up as a result. This operation has several arms – Investigation, Disruption and Prevention. Colleagues from Project Medusa link to the Pan Merseyside MACE governance.
- 3.14 The Wirral partnership response to exploitation and missing is set out in the Wirral Safeguarding Children Partnership's (WSCP) Safer Adolescence Strategy 2021-23. Exploitation and serious violence are also priorities within the Wirral Youth Justice Strategic Plan 2021-22, whilst the Wirral Community Safety Strategy 2021-26 highlights serious violence and modern slavery as areas of focus. Tackling drugs and the impact this has on county lines is also referenced.
- 3.15 The WSCP Contextual Safeguarding Committee has oversight of the response to exploitation and missing. This forum meets quarterly and whilst the remit is broader contextual safeguarding, exploitation and missing remain priority themes for the group.
- 3.16 WSCP undertook a Child Exploitation Audit in December 2020. This was done using the Joint Targeted Area Inspection (JTAI) methodology, to replicate a multi-agency inspection. This audit highlighted areas of good practice and some recommendations for further improvement. The findings from this audit were fed back to partners and

formed the basis of an action plan, whilst this action plan has been completed, the JTAI is to be revisited in 2022 to support continuous improvement.

- 3.17 Operationally, Compass is Wirral's multi-agency response to exploitation and missing. Catch 22, Police Missing Person Coordinators (MPCs), Police CE Investigations and the Police CE coordinator are co-located at Solar Campus in Wallasey. Whilst Covid has resulted in this moving to a hybrid working approach, the team retain daily coordination through a daily morning meeting.
- 3.18 The daily morning meeting (DMM) is attended by police, probation, youth work, youth justice, health, Catch 22 and Compass Child Exploitation (CE) workers. The agenda reviews all youth related intelligence, stop checks, arrests, missing young people (including those returned) and coordinates key activity for the day. This may, for example, be attendance at CE linked strategy meetings, reviews for missing young people or care planning where exploitation or missing are factors. The Integrated Front Door (IFD) will attend Compass daily meetings where the threshold is not clear and specialist advice is required. In addition to the morning meeting, Compass staff review all CE events daily.
- 3.19 The above governance processes ensure the Compass team have oversight on key events and information where exploitation or missing may be a concern or relevant.
- 3.20 The Ofsted inspection of June 2019 acknowledged this as effective practice, commenting on a strong multi-agency approach which was making a positive difference for children.
- 3.21 The Wirral MACE Panel meets every two weeks, operating under the Pan Mersey CE Protocol. The panel is made up of representatives across statutory partners; and Catch 22. The panel reviews social work led Child Exploitation Assessments to determine if the threshold for a MACE plan is met. Should a child or young person be presented with 'signs or evidence' of exploitation the threshold is met, and the panel retains that young person for further oversight and review. Additional actions may be generated across the Four Ps (Prepare, Prevent, Protect, Pursue). The aim is to reduce the risk from exploitation. Young people may be reviewed between one month and three months depending on the level of risk. Those not meeting threshold have the benefit of MACE panel case discussion and preventative activity is identified wherever possible. Exit strategies will be considered for those young people turning 18 or those being removed from MACE due to reduced risk.
- 3.22 In the calendar year 2021, Wirral MACE identified 88 children and young people with signs or evidence of CE. 25% of these related to sexual exploitation. This appears in line with other LA areas across Merseyside.
- 3.23 Within this period, 77 young people were removed from MACE due to a reduction in risk. 5 were subsequently referred back in. Information presented at the last WSCP Committee reviewed 6 months of MACE data, this showed that 38% of the young people on MACE plans were female and 39% were children looked after.
- 3.24 In terms of contacts into Children's Services, Police and Secondary Schools remain the highest referrers. Prominent wards for CE contacts are Birkenhead and Tranmere, Bidston St James, Seacombe and Rock Ferry.

- 3.25 19 young people were referred to the National Referral Mechanism in 2021. The NRM is the process by which a young person may be identified as a victim of Modern Slavery. This is generally trafficking (county Lines) or forced criminality. The NRM has two stages, Reasonable Grounds or Conclusive Grounds. Conclusive grounds can take some time to be determined due to the volume of referrals into the NRM system. The NRM is important for those young people who may have been arrested in relation to drug supply, being recognised as a victim of modern slavery through the NRM process prevents young people being ‘exploited and criminalised’, a term recently coined by Barnardo’s in their 2021 County Lines report.
- 3.26 The Compass team, Wirral Youth Justice, Police and Barnardo’s work closely to track NRMs and prioritise escalation and challenge where a young person is subject to a criminal justice process and has an NRM. There are several examples of successful support to prevent the criminalisation of Wirral young people in other parts of the UK. Wirral is leading on work through the Pan Merseyside MACE to develop guidance for multi-agency working linked to the NRM.
- 3.27 Through arrests and missing episodes in 2021, Wirral young people have been linked to suspected county lines in Scotland, North Wales, Cumbria, Cheshire, and Lancashire. Compass and MACE partners establish links in these areas to develop joined up safeguarding responses. This includes providing leadership, coordination and where necessary, challenge for those vulnerable young children placed in Wirral from other areas.
- 3.28 The Wirral MACE Panel is well established and has continued to develop. The Pan Merseyside MACE protocol was reviewed and updated in January 2021, including revised exploitation assessments developed in partnership with the University of Bedfordshire. 2020 and 2021 have seen the MACE Panel undertake development sessions, sharing new reports and resources; and drawing on external speakers from Barnardo’s and Catch 22.
- 3.29 The Multi Agency Risk Threat and Harm (MARTHUR) is the local partnership disruption meeting, supporting Wirral’s MACE. Individuals, locations, and premises associated with exploitation risk will be highlighted for partnership disruption activity. An example might be the use of Detached Youth Workers in identified parks and Community Safety patrols around bus stations. Disruption can also be through police enforcement, licensing, or probation amongst others. The MARTHUR reviews activity monthly and flags individuals who may present as a risk, to ensure information intelligence is captured and reviewed in support of disruption and prevention activity. The terms of reference for MARTHUR are set out in Wirral’s version of the Pan Merseyside CE Protocol.
- 3.30 Work is currently being undertaken Pan Merseyside to review the MARTHUR terms of reference and broaden local MARTHUR memberships to coordinate more closely with central policing resources.
- 3.31 Investigation and disruption activity, working alongside safeguarding partners and other police forces, has seen Wirral CE police lead the way in securing charges and civil orders for modern slavery offences. This has disrupted and supported the closure of county lines in South-West England, Cumbria, and Scotland.

- 3.32 Missing events are reviewed daily through the Compass meeting. The partnership working arrangements are set out in the Pan Merseyside Missing Children Protocol (2021). This is a newly updated protocol, however, builds on practice to locate and recover missing children; and review those who have been missing frequently.
- 3.33 A Pan Merseyside Missing meeting takes place quarterly to review themes and trends, identifying frequent locations and good practice. A review of Police missing data for Wirral shows a 23% decrease in missing episodes for the calendar year 2021, compared to 2018.
- 3.34 Wirral's Compass team also hold a monthly Missing Operational Meeting, attended by Police and Catch 22. This provides performance management for Return Home Interviews, identifies frequent missing young people, reviews episodes for youngest missing children and keeps track of those placed at distance who may have been missing.
- 3.35 Comparison of missing data pre covid (Jan-March 2020) with post lockdown performance (Oct – Dec 2021) shows:
- 14% reduction in missing episodes.
  - 12% reduction in young people with a missing episode.
  - Increased % of Return Home Interviews offered (Approx. 95% Oct-Dec 2021).
  - Young people are missing for less time.
  - The % of episodes relating to Wirral children placed out of borough reduced from 17% to 14% of overall episodes.
- 3.36 Children looked after account for around 60% of the missing episodes for Wirral children, however Children Looked After account for around 40% of the missing cohort. This means our children looked after have more episodes of missing than those not looked after. This is a theme nationally and the % of children looked after with a missing episode is in line with Statistical Neighbours and England.
- 3.37 Compass, Youth Justice, Local Policing and Community Safety have developed projects such as 'Pathfinders', Mini Pathfinders' and 'In the Zone' to deliver prevention sessions in local primary and secondary schools across Wirral. WSCP and The Merseyside Violence Reduction Partnership have also developed resources and media campaigns to increase awareness and understanding of exploitation and linked vulnerability. The work undertaken around Child Exploitation Awareness Day in March each year is an example.
- 3.38 Catch 22 and The University of Bedfordshire have delivered contextual safeguarding training and continue to undertake CE training bi-monthly for safeguarding partners.
- 3.39 In the WSCP JTAI Audit December 2020, 100% of agencies said their workforce were suitably trained to combat exploitation. This was an increase of 30% compared to the previous audit (2019).
- 3.40 In terms of Covid 19 impact. The prevalence of incidents of young people missing from home or care reduced by 27% in the period April to September 2020 compared to the same period the previous year. There was also a 38% reduction in the number of individual children having a missing episode. Contacts to the Integrated Front

Door linked to CE reduced by around 19%. The cohort managed through the MACE process remained steady in this period. Compass and multi-agency partners maintained services to children and young people, operating within the Red Amber Green (RAG) rating system and Covid 19 Risk Assessments.

- 3.41 The use of RAG ratings within Children's Services for vulnerable children, the creation of a vulnerable children's panel and close monitoring of those vulnerable children attending school or on a reduced timetable mitigated the risks during lockdown. Information provided to the Home Office, Department for Education and Ministry for Housing Communities and Local Government in March 2021 showed that overall attendance and attendance for our vulnerable cohorts was higher than the North-West and Nationally for the Covid 19 lockdown period.

#### **4.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 4.1 This report and the recommendation for members to note the council and partnership approach in this area has no financial implication beyond sustaining the existing committed resources.

#### **5.0 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 5.1 The legal framework underpinning the council and partnership approach to these issues is set out in Section 1.

#### **6.0 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS: STAFFING, ICT AND ASSETS**

- 6.1 This report and the associated recommendation is not seeking the commitment of additional resources, equipment, or assets.

#### **7.0 RELEVANT RISKS**

- 7.1 Internally, the Compass Team and wider Contextual Safeguarding service area have a completed Risk Register in line with council practice.
- 7.2 In a partnership context, a register of risk is a standing agenda item within the Wirral Safeguarding Children Partnership governance arrangements.

#### **8.0 ENGAGEMENT/CONSULTATION**

- 8.1 The response to Exploitation and Missing sits within the Safer Adolescence Strategy 2021-23 and supports the wider Wirral Plan as per the report summary. Supporting young people who may be vulnerable to exploitation is also referenced with the Youth Justice Strategic Plan 2021-22. The strategies have been supported with engagement and consultation across young people and stakeholders; and have benefited from prior presentation and support of members through the committee.

#### **9.0 EQUALITY IMPLICATIONS**

- 9.1 Wirral Council has a legal requirement to make sure its policies, and the way it carries out its work, do not discriminate against anyone. An Equality Impact

Assessment is a tool to help council services identify steps they can take to ensure equality for anyone who might be affected by a particular policy, decision, or activity.

- 9.2 The Safer Adolescence Strategy 2021-23 as referenced in paragraphs 8.1 above, was endorsed by members in March 2021, supported by an Equality Impact Assessment. This EIA (below) has been reviewed in the context of this report and remains valid.

<https://www.wirral.gov.uk/communities-and-neighbourhoods/equality-impact-assessments>

## 10.0 ENVIRONMENT AND CLIMATE IMPLICATIONS

- 10.1 In the context of this report, the recommendation for members to note the approach to exploitation and missing in Wirral does not impact on the environment or climate.

## 11.0 COMMUNITY WEALTH IMPLICATIONS

- 11.1 The work being done to tackle perpetrators and reduce vulnerability to exploitation supports the development of resilient local communities. Our support for vulnerable children helps them reach their potential, enabling them to thrive within our local economy and wider society

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## APPENDICES

None

## BACKGROUND PAPERS

The National Crime Agency: National Strategic Assessment of Serious Organised Crime 2021

The Local Government Association: Tackling Child Exploitation Resources Pack 2021

The Department for Education: Working Together to Safeguard Children 2018

The recent publication of the Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse (IICSA)

'Organised Networks' report February 2022

WSCP JTAI CE Deep Dive December 2020

Exploited and Criminalised: Barnardo's 2021

Pan Merseyside Multi Agency Child Exploitation Protocol 2021

Pan Merseyside Missing from Home or Care Protocol (Revised) 2021

WSCP Safer Adolescence Strategy 2021-23

Wirral Youth Justice Strategic Plan 2021-22

## SUBJECT HISTORY (last 3 years)

Council Meeting	Date





## CHILDREN, YOUNG PEOPLE & EDUCATION COMMITTEE

Thursday, 10 March 2022

<b>REPORT TITLE:</b>	<b>CHILDREN'S RESIDENTIAL TRANSFORMATION PROGRAMME UPDATE REPORT</b>
<b>REPORT OF:</b>	<b>DIRECTOR OF CHILDREN, FAMILIES AND EDUCATION</b>

### REPORT SUMMARY

The Children, Young People and Education Committee held on the 4<sup>th</sup> October 2021 requested an update on progress in relation to the Children's Residential Transformation Programme as part of the forward plan. The report below offers this update.

The report impacts all wards but is not a key decision.

### RECOMMENDATION/S

The Children, Young People and Education Committee is recommended to the report and request that the Director of Children's Services bring-an update report to the Committee on the progress of the Programme in 12 months.

## **SUPPORTING INFORMATION**

### **1.0 REASON/S FOR RECOMMENDATION/S**

- 1.1 The Children, Young People and Education Committee held on the 4<sup>th</sup> October 2021 requested an update on progress in relation to the Children's Residential Transformation Programme as part of the forward plan.

### **2.0 OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED**

- 2.1 A range of options were considered in relation to the Children's Residential Transformation Programme in the report considered by the Children, Young People and Education Committee on the 4<sup>th</sup> October 2021. There is no reason to consider other options within this report as it is an update on progress in relation to the options agreed in October 2021.

### **3.0 BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

- 3.1 The case for change leading to the establishment of a Partnership Accommodation Board for Children Looked After and Care Experienced Young People remains compelling and clear.
1. The council needs to ensure there are sufficient local, high quality placements for local children. Currently 74 residential placements for children looked after are commissioned and only 40% of those placements are in-borough
  2. The increase in costs for children's residential care nationally shows no sign of slowing and the projects below aim to help address some of the financial pressures on the council
  3. We need to support the provision of high-quality provision for the borough's most vulnerable children
  4. We need to increase sufficiency of local placements in line with our statutory sufficiency duty
  5. By investing in different models of delivery we reduce the risk and begin to bring balance to a market dominated by private providers who use growth acquisition models to increase market share, funded by private equity, resulting in increasing risk and volatility in the care system. Children who have all experienced trauma and neglect need and deserve stability
- 3.2 Overseeing the four current projects is a Partnership Accommodation Programme Board with the Director of Children's Services as Senior Responsible Officer.
- 3.3 These projects aim to encourage resilience in the supply of placements locally. Officers across the council from social care, commissioning, legal, procurement, finance, housing, assets, regeneration have explored various options over the past 12 –18 months leading to a mixed model of enhancing provision locally.
- ### **4.0 PROJECT UPDATES**
- #### **In-House Provision**
- 4.1 Pursuing an in-house model with the expansion of Willowtree (currently a short break provision for children with disabilities soon to be registered as a children's home for 6

children). All building works on the extension have now been completed. The building was officially handed over to the Local Authority on 28<sup>th</sup> October 2021. There remain some outstanding snagging issues which have been identified and are being remedied in conjunction with the architect and building firm. We are still looking at the possibility of the inclusion of additional work being carried out to existing parts of Willowtree to bring the entire building up to the standard of the new extension. This work will not have any detrimental impact on the running of the service and will not prevent the service from opening.

- 4.2 All additional equipment and furniture required to complete the refurbishment has been ordered and either received or will be delivered to the building shortly. Staffing and recruitment is still ongoing. There has been an influx of new starters, however recruiting residential care staff for the required positions is currently an issue nationally across the sector. The majority of day staff vacancies are filled and there are still some night vacancies, but interviews are ongoing and there is confidence that we will be able to fill these posts. Recruitment for a Registered Manager is ongoing; there has been very little response both to the permanent post advert and via the recruitment agency. Again, this is currently an issue across this sector nationally. Work continues to encourage applicants as the lack of a registered manager could be viewed as a risk by Ofsted when they consider the variation in registration. We will be able to evidence that work is continually ongoing to recruit to the post and we will be able to evidence how there is currently good management oversight of the service via the Responsible Individual.
- 4.3 All the paperwork required to be in place in preparation for applying to Ofsted for the variation has now been completed. The application for the variation will be submitted to Ofsted week commencing 31<sup>st</sup> January 2022. This will prompt an Ofsted inspection of Willowtree, to judge whether the variation can be granted.
- 4.4 Work has begun to identify children and young people who would be appropriately matched to move to Willowtree. Matching discussions will begin with families and young people week commencing 31<sup>st</sup> January 2022.
- 4.5 **Transforming Care Project;** Following a successful capital grant process with NHSE the Council was initially awarded £866,000 (reported to Children, Young People and Education Committee on the 11<sup>th</sup> March 2021 and Policy and Resource Committee on the 17<sup>th</sup> March 2021) Wirral is purchasing and opening a 3-bedded community provision to prevent admissions to Tier 4 mental health hospital beds and to prevent out of borough placements for children and young people with learning disabilities and autism. We are in the conveyancing stage of purchase with relevant structural reports and specialist reports having been completed. The legal and procurement teams are progressing the terms with a registered provider to appoint an employer's agent to take forward the coordination of the refurbishment works. The planning application for change of use has been granted. Current NHSE timescales present a challenge to the project as purchase needs to be completed prior to the 31<sup>st</sup> March 2022. The refurbishment costs can be carried over into the new financial year. Regular internal reporting on this project is via the capital programme. Lead members, spokespersons and ward members will be regularly updated and when purchase is finalised service provider engagement with neighbours will be undertaken.

- 4.6 **Care Leaver Accommodation:** The award of a three-year contract, following a full tendering process was completed with a start date of January 1<sup>st</sup> 2022, to a local registered provider to provide eleven units of high-quality accommodation for Care Experienced Young People 16-18. This is a three-tiered project over three houses with varying levels of support to meet needs flexibly. Tier 1 and Tier 2 both provide 24/7 on-site support with waking nights 365 days a year. The service comprises of two homes offering group living accommodation to four young people in each setting. Young people are supported from the ages of 16 - 17 to promote their independent living skills, assist with education, training and employment, budgeting, daily living skills as well as signposting to appropriate mental health services. Young people are also supported with work around healthy relationships and staying safe along with other areas of support specific to the individual. A flexible approach is taken to how support is offered as well as engaging young people with activities such as basic life stories boards, where appropriate, and more interactive styles of support. The re-settlement passport is used when the young person is ready as a tool for assessing their ability to manage independently.
- 4.7 Tier 3 offers three self-contained flats giving young people a taster of living independently. There is an office on site, however this is staffed to provide waking nights 365 days a year and floating support, as required, during the week. Support staff are not based on site all the time during the day and will attend when needed. Furniture is provided to young people including a double bed, white goods and wardrobes. Young people from Tier 1 and Tier 2, when they are ready, move through to Tier 3. The Registered Provider will support young people to secure their own accommodation, either via Property Pool Plus or via general needs accommodation with the Registered Provider.
- 4.8 The scheme prioritises young people, who are currently placed in residential care, and as part of their care plan, are ready to make the transition from residential care into supported accommodation. The Commissioning team have an identified cohort of young people who meet the criteria for the scheme and consultation takes places with the social worker, personal advisor and independent reviewing officer with final matching decisions endorsed by Childrens Services 16-18 Panel.
- 4.9 **Community Interest Company:** The We Are Juno residential Childrens Homes proposal considered at Committees throughout 2021 forms another part of the ongoing solution-finding to a very complex problem. The full reports gave members background information to Wirral's approach to the residential children's home market development. The agreed investment will provide Wirral Children Looked After with the opportunity to be matched across 4 different homes with capacity to offer a home to 16 children. The homes will bring a social pedagogy model to the Wirral, a workforce development partnership with a local University partner, an evaluation of impact and a child psychologist to the homes to support the emotional health and wellbeing of the children. It brings a cost model fixed for 3 years, a rich network of services rooted in the community and inward investment into the borough. By way of an update to Committee as at the 31<sup>st</sup> January 2022 the loan agreement and memorandum of understanding have been finalised and signed copies sent to the company for signature. The Head of Homes and first Registered Manager have been appointed and a recruitment strategy and plan is in place for the remainder of the staff team. The first home will have building work commence during February 2022 with a 26 week completion period. The regulatory registration process will

follow with an Autumn 2022 opening timescale. Sites for the second home are being scoped and lead members, spokespersons and ward members will be briefed at each stage with the company undertaking immediate neighbourhood engagement as each home is progressed.

## **5.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

5.1 As the above projects directly link to the Council's medium to long term financial savings plan a finance sub-committee of the Partnership Programme Board outlined above has been established to provide scrutiny and challenge to the projects. Clear savings targets totalling £1m have been submitted for approval to the Policy and Resources Committee meeting of 15 February 2022, as part of the 2022/23 budget and are attributed to each scheme and will be monitored closely to ensure they are achieved. The social value aspects of each project add value to the Council's local offer for children looked after and quality outcomes will be reported on against each scheme.

## **6.0 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

6.1 The following Legislation is relevant to the provision of care homes for children:-  
The Care Act 2014 and supporting guidance;  
The Children's Homes (England) Regulations 2015; and  
The Care Standards Act 2000

6.2 Local Authorities await the publication of Government national standards for supported accommodation providers who will be required to be registered with OFSTED by April 2023. The full registration schedule will be announced in the summer of 2022, with pilot inspections from April 2023 and full implementation by April 2024. We have already started to engage the local market in the preparatory process for this change and have scheduled a full engagement event with local providers for March 2022. We would expect all good quality local providers to already meet the standards however a check against national standards and a culture of continuous improvement will enhance the local offer

6.3 Commissioning of any placements in any residential care facility will need to comply with the requirements of all relevant procurement obligations including the Public Contracts Regulations 2015 and Part 4 Section 6 of the Council's Constitution – Contract Procedure Rules.

## **7.0 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS: STAFFING, ICT AND ASSETS**

7.1 There are no significant Information Technology issues arising out of the report.

7.2 There are no significant staffing issues arising out of the report. However, officers from across several departments across the Council have been involved in the collaboration with and work with We are Juno and will continue to be involved either indirectly through overseeing various elements of the project from a Council perspective or through representation within the formal governance arrangements of the social enterprise backbone organisation.

7.3 Work will need to continue with the Council's Asset teams to explore the feasibility of acquiring property or land to support the development.

## 8.0 RELEVANT RISKS

8.1 In relation to the development of **four CIC Children's Homes** the risks to the Council include:

- a) Failure to provide financial savings to the Council: This risk must be weighed up against the improved offer of homes for vulnerable children and young people and the potential quality of support to improve outcomes for young people. The escalating placement costs which are continuing to rise means that alternative options need to be explored even if they do not achieve the full financial return expected. The expected savings from this programme, once fully operational, are estimated to be £166,400 per year;
- b) Failing to deliver the programme outlined and the children's homes on Wirral: The loan agreement includes conditions for repayment of the loan if the project is not completed. The impact of this risk is mitigated by the market equivalent rate of interest to be charged on any loan made and the provision for non-repayment of debt;
- c) Reputational damage should the homes fail to obtain registration or do not deliver on the quality of provision promised: This risk will be mitigated by the Council having oversight of the progress of the project throughout its establishment and will be able to guide and support the backbone social enterprise organisation. The Council will have influence over the strategic direction of the backbone organisation and be regularly sighted on performance monitoring and quality assurance activity/analysis.

8.2 The risk with the in-house Willowtree Residential Children's Home is the home not being fully registered and operational in order to reach the savings targets for 2022-2023. This risk is mitigated by matching discussions and future planning with all key stakeholders, parents, carers, social care teams, independent reviewing officers to ensure occupancy levels are high and children suitably matched. There is a highly experienced Responsible Individual overseeing this process. A further risk with this project is the difficulty in recruiting a Registered Manager which may impact on the OFSTED registration process. Every possible recruitment route is being followed to mitigate this risk

8.3 The risk to the **Transforming Care** project is timescales and multi-faceted project milestones hitting their target completion dates in order to meet the NHSE capital grant requirements, specifically the purchase of the property before the end of this financial year. The project team is mitigating this risk by updating the NHSE Regional Lead weekly and keeping a tight rein on all strands of delivery targets.

8.4 Sustaining high occupancy levels remains the main risk for the Care Leavers project. The impact of COVID meant the full scheme was slow to start with each tier of the provision opening in a staggered fashion. Matching considerations are key to the overall outcomes for the young people and this has at times impacted on the occupancy levels. During the pandemic we have matched young people coming out

of disrupted foster placements, where the financial risk begins to impact. The business modelling for this project is based on young people stepping across from residential care. This risk is mitigated by rigorous oversight of referrals to the project by the Care Leavers Team, Commissioning, the 16-18 Panel and the Provider, ensuring there are no delays in our own systems and processes which might prevent young people entering the provisions. The outcomes we are seeing for the young people who have accessed the project over the past year are outstanding, high levels of engagement with employment, education and/or training and high levels of engagement with relevant support services such as mental health services.

- 8.5 The total recurrent savings for 2022/23 totalling £1m must be fully achieved in year. If any of the risks above materialise, this may put the full achievement of these savings at risk. As part of the 2022/23 budget monitoring, a new Council wide Star Chamber type process will be proposed to ensure savings are on target to be achieved. This is vital to the medium and long term financial sustainability of the Council. If at any time, risks materialise that may mean the savings may not be achieved, immediate mitigation will be implemented to offset this.

## **9.0 ENGAGEMENT/CONSULTATION**

- 9.1 Fundamental to the development of new residential models has been understanding what young people want and need. Their views and aspirations have been integral to shaping and designing the models outlined. They have said:

*“Good quality homes and accommodation for us are what we want **you** to make **your** priority”*

*“We want to be supported by people who care”*

*“We want to be near our family, school and friends”*

- 9.2 Care experienced children continue to have the loudest voice throughout the implementation and delivery of the above projects.
- 9.3 The Chair and Spokespersons of the Children, Young People and Education Committee have been briefed on the projects and regular progress updates have been presented to Corporate Parenting Board. Further regular detailed briefings will be provided to the Chair and Spokespersons and relevant ward members going forward.
- 9.4 Children and young people have played an integral part in designing and influencing the development of the projects. Their voice will be maintained throughout.

## **10.0 EQUALITY IMPLICATIONS**

- 10.1 The projects reported on above will bring more choice locally for children, young people looked after, with a vastly increased likelihood of being able to offer them provisions to meet their needs on the Wirral.
- 10.2 Consistency of education, peers and contact with family and the team of local professionals around Children Looked After is likely to lead to much greater emotional and placement stability.

- 10.3 Looking to provide excellent accommodation standards in good areas, near good schools raises aspirations for Children Looked After.
- 10.4 Environmental considerations will consider the sensory needs and triggers for children with adverse childhood experiences and who have suffered trauma and neglect including noise, physical structure, colours and patterns, labelling, lighting, window coverings, smells and temperature.
- 10.5 An Equality Impact Assessment will be required for each project with a view to assessing and mitigating any equality impacts.

## **11.0 ENVIRONMENT AND CLIMATE IMPLICATIONS**

- 11.1 There is the opportunity during any purchase, lease or refurbishment of property to ensure that a low carbon footprint design is undertaken.
- 11.2 The recommendations contained in this report are expected to have a neutral effect on emissions and greenhouse gases.

## **12.0 COMMUNITY WEALTH IMPLICATIONS**

- 12.1 The projects outlined within this report have the potential to bring significant additional investment to the borough of Wirral. In summary, this includes:
- We are Juno have confirmed £250,000 from the National Lottery Community Fund for a 2-year development grant to support youth participation, social pedagogy learning and evaluation.
  - Segelman Trust: investment of £150,000 of development grant to support core costs for We Are Juno
  - Steve Morgan Foundation have committed to invest £600,000 plus building of high specification children's homes on land identified and work is progressing with social landlords to progress this;
  - We Are Juno have secured £600,000 from Green Pastures for the purchase and refurbishment of one of the homes.
- 12.2 As the investment catalyst, Wirral Council's investment has enabled We Are Juno CIC to secure this additional funding which will create employment opportunities in multiple sectors including construction, care and training and development bringing new opportunities and funding to the borough. As a social enterprise, the organisation is committing to providing opportunities within the borough that will help generate growth across many areas.

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**APPENDICES**  
None

## **BACKGROUND PAPERS**

[literaturereview.pdf \(scie.org.uk\)](#)

[Social pedagogy - Lighthouse Children's Homes \(lighthousechildrenshomes.org.uk\)](#)

[Home - ThemPra Social Pedagogy](#)

[Wirral Borough Council's Accommodation Programme](#)

## **SUBJECT HISTORY (last 3 years)**

<b>Council Meeting</b>	<b>Date</b>
<b>Children, Young People &amp; Education Committee</b>	<b>15<sup>th</sup> June 2021 4<sup>th</sup> October 2021</b>
<b>Policy and Resources Committee</b>	<b>17<sup>th</sup> March 2021 7<sup>th</sup> October 2021</b>

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**CHILDREN, YOUNG PEOPLE AND EDUCATION COMMITTEE  
10 MARCH 2022**

<b>REPORT TITLE:</b>	<b>APPOINTMENT OF MEMBERS TO THE INDEPENDENT SCHOOL APPEAL PANEL</b>
<b>REPORT OF:</b>	<b>DIRECTOR OF LAW AND GOVERNANCE</b>

## **REPORT SUMMARY**

The report outlines the statutory requirement to appoint members to sit on both the Independent Appeal Panel and Independent Review Panel. In anticipation of upcoming Admission Appeals for entry to Wirral schools in September 2022, a recruitment process has taken place to increase the pool of available Panel Members. Therefore the report seeks the Children, Young People and Education Committee's approval of the appointment of additional members to the Independent Appeal Panel and Independent Review Panel (where eligible).

The names of the proposed Panel Members to be appointed to the Independent Appeal Panel and Independent Review Panel are as follows:

Jane Gordon  
Rebecca Burke-Sharples

## **RECOMMENDATION**

The Children, Young People and Education Committee is recommended to agree the appointment of the following members to the Independent Appeal Panel and Independent Review Panel:

- Jane Gordon
- Rebecca Burke-Sharples

## **SUPPORTING INFORMATION**

### **1.0 REASON/S FOR RECOMMENDATION/S**

- 1.1 As the relevant admission authority, the Council has a requirement to appoint an Independent Appeal Panel and Independent Review Panels as specified under the School Admission Appeals Code.
- 1.2 In order to consider the significant number of anticipated admission appeals within the statutory timeframe as set out in the School Admission Appeals Code 2012, a wide pool of Independent Appeals Panel Members is required.

### **2.0 OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED**

- 2.1 An option considered was to not recruit additional panel Members at this time, however, there is a need for the pool of Members to be expanded to meet demands of the service and to limit deficiencies.

### **3.0 BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

- 3.1 Making arrangements for appeals against the refusal of a school place rests with the admission authority of the school. For Community schools in Wirral, the Local Education Authority is the admission authority and the majority of Academy Schools are their own admission authority.
- 3.2 The admission authority and appeal panel **must** act in accordance with the School Admission Appeals Code, the School Admissions (Appeal Arrangements) (England) Regulations 2012, the School Admissions Code, other law relating to admissions, and relevant human rights and equalities legislation, for example, the Equality Act 2010. Appeal panels perform a judicial function and **must** be transparent, accessible, independent and impartial, and operate according to principles of natural justice.
- 3.3 Paragraph 1.5 of the School Admissions (Appeal Arrangements) (England) Regulations 2012, states that the admission authority, or the clerk acting on behalf of the admission authority, must appoint an Independent Appeal Panel that is comprised of a chair and at least two other panel members. A panel must consist of the following persons with at least one from each category: a) lay people (someone without personal experience in the management of any school or provision of education in any school (except as a school governor or in another voluntary capacity); b) people who have experience in education, who are acquainted with educational conditions in the local authority area, or who are parents of registered pupils at school.
- 3.4 Successful applicants have undertaken training that is essential to their role and will be continually supported by officers within Democratic Services.

#### **4.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 4.1 Panel Members are not remunerated but are entitled to claim reasonable expenses. When appeal hearings were held virtually, a reasonable expense was provided to Members to cover refreshments, stationery and printing costs. When appeals are held in person, reasonable expenses can be covered for travel and refreshments are provided. Democratic Services charge Academy Schools to deliver the service and revenue income covers the expense related to this.. Revenue has increased in recent years as some Academy schools in Liverpool have opted to use Wirral's service.

#### **5.0 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 5.1 It is a legal requirement for the admission authority to appoint a Panel of Independent Members to consider school appeals.
- 5.2 Decisions made by an Independent School Appeal Panel are subject to review by the Education Funding Agency (for Academies) or the Local Government Ombudsman (for Community Schools).

#### **6.0 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS: STAFFING, ICT AND ASSETS**

- 6.1 There is sufficient staffing resources at present within Democratic Services to cover the demand, however, this is often reviewed in line with any increased demand. In respect of the virtual appeals that have been held, Panel Members were required to use their own ICT equipment to participate in appeals via Microsoft Teams.

#### **7.0 RELEVANT RISKS**

- 7.1 To not appoint regularly to the Independent School Appeal Panel could create deficiencies within the pool of Members and prevent the admission authority from being able to consider all appeals within the mandatory timeframe.

#### **8.0 ENGAGEMENT/CONSULTATION**

- 8.1 No direct engagement/consultation has been undertaken.

#### **9.0 EQUALITY IMPLICATIONS**

- 9.1 We will consider our obligations to provide reasonable adjustments to any Panel member upon request and we recognise that this is an ongoing duty under the Equality Act 2010 and Public Sector Equality Duty

#### **10.0 ENVIRONMENT AND CLIMATE IMPLICATIONS**

- 10.1 Where possible members are recruited on a local basis to reduce unnecessary travel in the future when appeals resume in person.

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**Appendices**

**Appendix 1 – Summary of experience of applicants (EXEMPT)**

**BACKGROUND PAPERS –**

- Application forms (exempt)
- School Admission Appeals Code 2012
- Exclusion from maintained schools, academies and pupil referral units in England  
Statutory guidance for those with legal responsibilities in relation to exclusion,  
September 2017.

**SUBJECT HISTORY (last 3 years)**

<b>Council Meeting</b>	<b>Date</b>



## **CHILDREN, YOUNG PEOPLE & EDUCATION COMMITTEE**

**Tuesday 10 March 2022**

<b>REPORT TITLE:</b>	<b>CHILDREN'S SERVICES PERFORMANCE REPORT</b>
<b>REPORT OF:</b>	<b>DIRECTOR FOR CHILDREN, FAMILIES AND EDUCATION</b>

### **REPORT SUMMARY**

This report provides the latest performance information for Children's Services. The design and content of the report was developed following discussions with the Chair of the Children, Young People & Education Committee and party spokes at a Performance Monitoring Workshop in March 2021.

This matter affects all Wards within the Borough and supports the Wirral Plan priority of Brighter Futures for all. This is not a key decision.

### **RECOMMENDATION/S**

The Children, Young People and Education Committee is recommended to note the content of the Performance Report attached in Appendix A and highlight any areas requiring further clarification or action.

## **SUPPORTING INFORMATION**

### **1.0 REASON/S FOR RECOMMENDATION/S**

- 1.1 To ensure Members of the Children, Young People & Education Committee have the opportunity to monitor, review and challenge performance of the Council's Children's Services Directorate.

### **2.0 OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED**

- 2.1 This report has been developed in conjunction with the Chair of the Children, Young People & Education Committee and party spokes. Various options were considered before agreeing on a quarterly Performance Report, supported by automated Children's Services data reports.

### **3.0 BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

- 3.1 The Performance Report (Appendix A) has been structured around eight indicator groups. The data contained in the report relates to Quarter 3 2021/22 (period ending Dec-21). Where Quarter 3 data was not available, the most recent information has been provided.
- 3.2 Where available, national, regional and statistical neighbour benchmarking data has been included in the report so comparisons can be made.
- 3.3 The supporting narrative in the report has also been strengthened with Assistant Directors and Heads of Service from Children's Services providing a narrative to explain trends or changes in performance.
- 3.4 In addition to the Performance Report, an interactive dashboard has been created in Power BI, the Council's business intelligence system. The dashboard is structured around the same eight indicator groups as detailed in the Performance Report. The Power BI reports can be accessed via the Councillors PBI App.
- 3.5 Most recent Power BI developments include new reports for 'Looking After Children Well' and 'Schools'. Work is also underway on the 'Workforce' reports which will be live by the end of March 2022.

### **4.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 4.1 There are no direct financial implications arising from this report.

### **5.0 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 5.1 There are no direct legal implications arising from this report.

### **6.0 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS: STAFFING, ICT AND ASSETS**

- 6.1 There are none arising from this report.

## **7.0 RELEVANT RISKS**

- 7.1 The Council's Corporate and Directorate Risks Registers are currently under review to reflect the thematic priorities of the Council's new Corporate Plan including the impact and recovery from Covid-19. Information on the key risks faced by the organisation and the associated mitigations and planned actions will be report to Committee once refreshed.

## **8.0 ENGAGEMENT/CONSULTATION**

- 8.1 A Performance Monitoring session was held with the chair of the Children, Young People & Education Committee, and party spokes on 4<sup>th</sup> March 2021 to review current performance monitoring arrangements and to define a new, improved approach.

## **9.0 EQUALITY IMPLICATIONS**

- 9.1 Wirral Council has a legal requirement to make sure its policies, and the way it carries out its work, do not discriminate against anyone. An Equality Impact Assessment is a tool to help council services identify steps they can take to ensure equality for anyone who might be affected by a particular policy, decision, or activity. There are no equality issues arising from this report.

## **10.0 ENVIRONMENT AND CLIMATE IMPLICATIONS**

- 10.1 There are no environmental or climate implications generated by the recommendations in this report.

## **11.0 COMMUNITY WEALTH IMPLICATIONS**

- 11.1 Children's Services generally impacts positively on community wealth through commissioning arrangements of local providers to support and improve the lives of some our most vulnerable residents.

Parents benefit from early years funding for their children from the age of two. Parents and schools can also benefit from additional funding for those pupils who are eligible for free school meals.

We monitor the number of young people in employment, education or training. Those young people in employment will receive a paid salary whilst some of those in training, such apprenticeships, will receive a reduced salary whilst they are studying.

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## **APPENDICES**

Appendix A: Children's Service Performance Report

## BACKGROUND PAPERS

Data and performance information held in Children's Services Management Information Systems and accessed via the Council's business intelligence system Power BI.

### SUBJECT HISTORY (last 3 years)

<b>Council Meeting</b>	<b>Date</b>
Children, Young People & Education Committee Children's Services Q2 Performance Report	23/11/2021
Children, Young People & Education Committee Children's Services Q1 Performance Report	13/09/2021
Children, Young People & Education Committee Children's Services Performance Management	15/06/2021
Children & Families Overview and Scrutiny Committee 2019/20 Q3 Wirral Plan Performance	17/03/2020
Children & Families Overview and Scrutiny Committee 2019/20 Q2 Wirral Plan Performance	11/11/2019
Children & Families Overview and Scrutiny Committee 2019/20 Q1 Wirral Plan Performance	25/09/2019
Children & Families Overview and Scrutiny Committee 1) 2019/19 Q4 and year-end Wirral Plan Performance 2) Wirral Improvement Board Databook	03/07/2019
Children & Families Overview and Scrutiny Committee 2018/19 Q3 Wirral Plan Performance	27/02/2019
Children & Families Overview and Scrutiny Committee 2018/19 Q2 Wirral Plan Performance	13/11/2018
Children & Families Overview and Scrutiny Committee 2018/19 Q1 Wirral Plan Performance	25/09/2018
Children & Families Overview and Scrutiny Committee 2017/18 Q4 and year-end Wirral Plan Performance	03/07/2018



**CHILDREN, YOUNG PEOPLE & EDUCATION COMMITTEE**

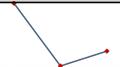
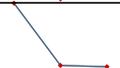
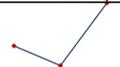
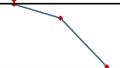
**Thursday 10th March 2022**

<b>REPORT TITLE:</b>	CHILDREN'S SERVICES PERFORMANCE REPORT
<b>REPORT OF:</b>	DIRECTOR FOR CHILDREN, FAMILIES AND EDUCATION

**Children, Young People & Education Committee - indicator sets**

<b>Demand</b>	<b>Keeping children safe</b>	<b>Looking after children well</b>	<b>Schools</b>
<b>Education</b>	<b>SEND</b>	<b>Workforce</b>	<b>Budget</b> (under development)

**Demand**

	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22 Q1	2021/22 Q2	2021/22 Q3	National (20/21)	North West (20/21)	Stat Neighbours (20/21)	Trend
Social care contacts	15086	10149	2787	2502	2570	-	-	-	
Early Help contacts	9973	12199	3294	2631	2618	-	-	-	
Referrals to social care	3997	3030	814	801	842	-	-	-	
% of domestic abuse referrals to children's social care	23.2%	23.5%	23.1%	29.3%	29.5%	-	-	-	
Child In Need rate per 10,000 population	369.0	379.9	376.8	393.3	398.8	321.2	367.0	403.5	
Child Protection rate per 10,000 population	41.9	47.0	49.7	53.1	58.1	41.4	47.0	51.8	
Children Looked After rate per 10,000 population	120.0	123.0	121.5	120.7	117.9	67.0	97.0	101.8	

**Supporting narrative**

Early Help Contacts to Children's Services have reduced in 2021-22 against the previous year. This is an expected decrease for which there are a number of contributory factors, including more community-based provision fully remobilised following the pandemic and an increase in the number of families accessing early help directly from providers rather than via a Children's Services referral. Early Help activity remains consistently high with an approximately 2,200-2,400 open episodes during the year, which is consistent with the previous year.

In 2021-22 we have seen an increase in the number of domestic abuse referrals to Children's Social Care. This was anticipated following the implementation of the Domestic Abuse Act in May 2021, which clearly identifies children in households affected by domestic abuse as victims, and places new responsibilities on Local Authorities to respond to these circumstances. The multi-agency Domestic Abuse Alliance continues to deliver the local strategy, ensuring appropriate support and access to services for children, young people and families affected by domestic abuse.

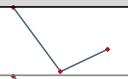
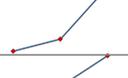
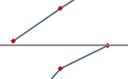
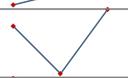
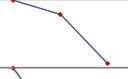
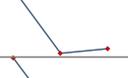
The number of children on a Child Protection (CP) plan are the highest they've been since 2018. We are seeing children having a CP conference without always having had a robust Child in Need (CIN) period of planning. Some of the challenges relate to developing a more confident workforce and partnership to manage CIN. The Manager of the Safeguarding Partnership will be arranging training for partners and professionals, particularly around thresholds of need.

Additional oversight has been introduced to ensure CP plans are progressed in a timely manner and case discussions are being held with Social Workers and Independent Reviewing Officers (IRO's). IRO's have increased scrutiny on these cases and escalations are progressed to prevent any drift and delay. Work is also underway with Family Matters targeted services to support and deliver bespoke interventions to children on a plan.

Where a child is subject to a repeat CP plan under the category of emotional abuse and subject to repeat plans for the same issues as previously recorded, a new process has been introduced. Prior to a consultation for an Initial Child Protection Conference (ICPC) is held, the Social Worker/Team Manager has a reflective discussion and oversight provided by the Operations lead to consider any further support that can be offered to prevent the child returning to a CP plan.

Children Looked After (CLA) number are the lowest we've seen since 2018. Robust processes are in place to ensure the right children are coming into care. The reduction is attributable to a number of children reaching the age of 18 and a sharper focus on progressing permanency plans.

**Keeping children safe**

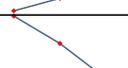
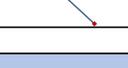
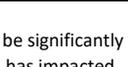
	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22 Q1	2021/22 Q2	2021/22 Q3	National (20/21)	North West (20/21)	Stat Neighbours (20/21)	Trend
% of Early Help cases closed with outcomes met	80.3	91.6	85.0	82.4	83.3	-	-	-	
% Repeat referrals within 12 months period	27.6	23.5	20.5	19.7	19.5	22.7	22.2	22.6	
% Assessments completed within timescale	82.6	78.8	77.1	78.7	85.5	88.0	86.0	87.0	
Children who were subject to a section 47 enquiry Rate per 10,000 YTD	182.2	179.7	47.9	100.5	149.5	164.4	172.1	199.3	
% of children who were subject to a section 47 enquiry that led to an Initial Child Protection Conference (ICPC)	33.3	33.1	39.0	39.7	40.0	-	-	-	
% Initial Child Protection Conference (ICPC) taking place in the month and within timescales	76.4	57.6	73.1	56.7	88.5	83.0	82.0	84.0	
Child Protection Plans ceased Rate per 10,000 YTD	75.8	51.3	16.3	30.8	46.4	53.9	62.1	72.1	
% of children on second or subsequent Child Protection Plan	19.4	28.7	24.6	22.4	24.4	22.1	22.6	22.6	
% of visits completed within statutory timescale - Child in Need (CIN)	-	-	69.7	80.4	75.5	-	-	-	
% of visits completed within statutory timescale - Child Protection (CP)	-	-	79.0	81.8	94.1	-	-	-	
% of visits completed within statutory timescale - Children Looked After (CLA)	-	-	94.9	90.3	96.5	-	-	-	
Reduce first time entrants into the criminal justice system	254	219	99	Delay in data being published		-	-	-	
Reduce young people re-offending (%)	50	40	40.7	Delay in data being published		-	-	-	
Reduce the use of Custody (rate per 100,000)	0.30	0.07	0.1	Delay in data being published		-	-	-	

**Supporting narrative**

Assessment timeliness continues on an upward trajectory and almost inline with that of our statistical neighbours and NW neighbouring Authorities.

Whilst we have seen a slight increase in the rate of referrals, Quarter 3 has seen a continued reduction in repeat referrals which is below statistical neighbours and the NW average. We have implemented a more robust step down procedure between Childrens Social Care and Early Help services to strengthen the support offered to families when statutory involvement ceases. This will be an area of focus over the coming months to measure the impact these arrangements in reducing repeat referrals.

**Looking after children well**

	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22 Q1	2021/22 Q2	2021/22 Q3	National (20/21)	North West (20/21)	Stat Neighbours (20/21)	Trend
% CLA with 2+ social worker changes in the previous two years	49.3	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	
% CLA visits completed within timescale	-	-	94.9	90.3	96.5	-	-	-	
% Completed health assessment reviews YTD	87.0	87.0	20.4	75.5	83.6	91.0	94.0	92.6	
% Completed dental checks YTD	88.0	31.0	17.6	47.1	63.9	40.0	40.0	38.2	
% Completed Strengths & Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ) YTD	97.0	98.0	37.0	65.3	95.4	80.0	85.0	83.0	
% of CLA adopted in year	17.0	15.0	10.6	11.9	7.8	10.0	11.0	10.8	
% of CLA placed with Foster carers	70.5	70.8	69.7	69.9	70.7	71.0	67.0	68.0	
Timeliness of Adoption process A10 (426 days national target) Average days	486	356	1128	998	832	Not Published yet			
% Care leavers in suitable accomodation (Age 19-21)	95.0	92.0	95.0	96.0	97.0	88.0	91.0	93.0	
% Care leavers in Education , Employment or Training (EET) (Age 19-21)	48.0	56.0	59.8	58.6	59.8	52.0	50.0	50.7	
Missing Episodes	1477	918	403	308	294	-	-	-	
CAMHS referrals seen within 6 weeks	43.7%	67.6%	59.4%	55.6%	-	-	-	-	
CAMHS referrals seen within 18 weeks	64.9%	96.4%	98%	97%	-	-	-	-	

**Supporting narrative**

Child looked after statutory visits remain meeting high standards of compliance in terms of timescales. Changes of social worker are likely to be significantly reduced due to a stable staffing level within the permanence service, however this data is not pulled through to evidence on the form. Covid has impacted on the numbers of children accessing dental checks, and there is work to do to push up the numbers, and this is being performance managed within the service.

Work is ongoing to ensure that datasets providing up-to-date analysis of children subject to long-term matches with carers is accessed by managers and across fostering services, frontline social work teams, and commissioning services so that when placement finding is required, there is the minimal amount of drift and delay for those children whose permanence plans may not match their current placement.

Strengths and difficulties questionnaires are completed as routine for most children, which provides good benchmarks for evaluating their mental and emotional well-being needs, and pinpointing services to support them further. Oomoo continues to respond to the needs of children who are looked after, or care experienced and target services to support them. There is ongoing collaboration with CAMHS around pathways for these young people. We are working to alleviate a waiting list for access to some specific services via the Polaris component of the commissioned contracts.

**Schools**

	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22 Q1	2021/22 Q2	2021/22 Q3	Current National	Trend
% of under 5's who are engaged with the Early Years Service	68	76	45	51	53.7	56.6	-	
% of under 5's who have sustained engagement the Early Years Service (3 of more)	60	62	58	60	59	60.5	-	
% of 2 year olds benefitting from funded early education	78	78	76	75	80.81	86.25	62	
% of 3 & 4 year olds benefitting from funded early education	98	96	93	92	89	86.52	88	
% School capacity - places available vs pupil numbers (school)	89.4	89.8	89.6	-	-	-	-	
% Exclusions - suspensions	5.013	3.262	3.861	1.378	0.546	1.507	3.76	
% Exclusions - permanent	0.111	0.048	0.039	0.024	0.006	0.008	0.06	
Number of children known to be electively home educated	145	171	275	17	24	26	-	
Number of Pupils who are not in receipt of full-time education and subject of an agreed part time timetable (Indicator once named - Pupils who are missing more than 25hrs of education a week (CME25)	-	-	171	44	42	72	-	

	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	Term 2020/21 Spring Term	Term 2020/21 Summer Term	Term 2021/22 Autumn Term	Current National	Trend
% of school age pupils eligible for (FSM) Free school meal	19.5	21.5	24	25.8	26.6	26.57	20.8	
Overall School Attendance %	94.9	94.3	94.9	87.8	93.8	93.4	90	
Overall Unauthorised Absence %	1.3	1.4	1.5	1.4	1.8	1.6	-	
Overall Persistent Absence %	12.6	15.9	14.0	-	15.5	20.6	-	

**Supporting narrative**

Since September 2021, we have had strengthened capacity to undertake casework with our EHE families. Using covid funding, we have recruited 3 additional EHE Advisory Teachers on a casual basis who are able to contact new and existing EHE families at an early stage to offer advice and guidance, and to promote a return to school where EHE arrangements are unsuitable. There is close liaison between the Lead Officer for EHE and individual EHCP Co-ordinators in respect of EHE children with EHCPs (12-4 are primary and 8 secondary) as the LA continues to be responsible to monitor the educational arrangements as part of the Annual Review. Since 1/9/21, 21 primary aged children and 24 secondary aged children have returned to school from EHE.

Wirral Authority attendance rates are broadly comparable with national average so far this year.

**Education**

	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	Current National	Trend
% achieving expected standard in reading, writing and maths at Key Stage 2	57	60	60	-	-	65	
Progress 8 Score for Wirral	0.01	0.03	0.01	-	-	-0.21	
% of schools rated 'good' or 'outstanding' by Ofsted	85	84	85	83	83	86	
% of children in good or better schools as rated by Ofsted	87	84	86	84	84	86	
% Achievement gap between pupils eligible for free school meals and their peers achieving a Good Level of Development in the Early Years Foundation Stage Profile	22	18	23	-	-	17	
% Achievement gap between pupils eligible for free school meals and their peers achieving the 'expected standard' in English, reading, English writing and mathematics at the end of key stage 2	22	23	22	-	-	21	
The gap in progress between disadvantaged pupils and their peers at Key Stage 4	0.6	0.73	0.84	-	-	0.7	
Foundation Stage - % achieving a good level of development	69.4	70.5	69.3	-	-	71.8	
Foundation Stage - % of children who are looked after achieving a good level of development	-	70.5	69.3	-	-	48	
% of young people aged 16 and 17 who are Not in Employment, Education or Training (NEET) or categorised as 'not known'	1.7	1.6	1.5	-	-	2.8	
% of early years settings good or better	90	94	96	98	98	97	
The gap in progress between disadvantaged pupils and their peers achieving good level of development in early years foundation stage profile	-	17.7	23.5	-	-	18	

**Supporting narrative**

2016/17 and 2017/18 attainment data has been included for the purpose of demonstrating trend. There was no published data relating to 2019/20 and 2020/21 due to the pandemic.

The NEET performance reported as at December 2021 was 3% (225 young people). This performance illustrates a 0.6% reduction in NEET compared to the same period in 2020. The accompanying young people with a not known status is also low at 1.1%. Post 16 education attendance rates, learner behaviour, mental health and young peoples engagement continue to be ongoing significant challenges.

**Special Educational Needs & Disabilities (SEND)**

	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22 Q1	2021/22 Q2	2021/22 Q3	Current National	Current North West	Current Stat neighbours	Trend
% Education and Health Care Plans (EHCP) issued within 20 week timescale (Excluding Exceptions)	59.4	32.5	52.4	30	23	24	58	62.5	80.44	
% of requests that went to tribunal	5.14	7.63	9.47	10.76	14.67	10.26	-	-	-	
% of mediations that were followed by appeals to tribunal	60.9	32.4	21.3	-	-	-	-	-	-	
% of Children Looked After with (EHCP) Education and Health Care Plan	7.93	6.93	8.68	9.06	9.25	9.18	-	-	-	
% of Children In Need with (EHCP) Education and Health Care Plan	15.75	14.12	17.59	16.01	15.97	14.68	-	-	-	
% of Child Protection with (EHCP) Education and Health Care Plan	4.48	5.93	5.93	8.4	8.67	8.68	-	-	-	
% of Early Help Episodes with (SEND) Special Educational needs and disabilities	27.3	25.77	25.82	27.61	27.21	27.13	-	-	-	
% of Children Looked After with (SEN) Special Educational Need support	19.59	18.29	18.22	17.87	19.61	19.87	-	-	-	
% of Children In Need with (SEN) Special Educational Need support	14.73	11.66	15.83	16.01	17.14	17.82	-	-	-	
% of Child Protection with (SEN) Special Educational Need support	23.11	23.32	19.88	19.89	20.81	21.84	-	-	-	

	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	Term 2020/21 Spring	Term 2020/21 Summer	Term 2021/22 Autumn	Current National	Current North West	Current Stat neighbours	Trend
(EHCP) Education and Health Care Plan- Overall School Attendance %	90.9	88.9	90.6	81.6	89.7	87.4	85.1	84.7	83.3	
(EHCP) Education and Health Care Plan Overall Persistent absence %	26.1	31.2	25.6	-	29	37.5	42.2	44.3	30.9	
Number of pupils with (EHCP) Education and Health Care Plan who are electively home educated	9	10	18	4	32	42	-	-	-	
(SEN) Special Educational Need support - Overall School Attendance %	92.9	92.3	93.4	86.7	87.5	91.1	93.4	94.2	94.1	
(SEN) Special Educational Need support - Overall Persistent absence %	20.8	23.8	19.3	-	27.3	28.2	16.2	16.2	24.2	
Number of pupils with (SEN) Special Educational Need support who are electively home educated	0	2	39	5	36	12	-	-	-	

	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	Current National	Current North West	Current Stat neighbours	Trend
Key Stage 2 (RWM) Reading, Writing, Maths EHCP - % at Expected Level	2.9	6	2	-	-	9	9	9.5	
Key Stage 4 Overall Progress 8 Score - (EHCP) Education and Health Care Plan	-1.08	-0.85	-1.12	-	-	-1.17	-1.31	-1.29	
Key Stage 2 Reading, Writing, Maths (SEN) Special Educational Need support - % at Expected Level	18	21	23	-	-	25	24	25.7	
Key Stage 4 Overall Progress 8 Score - (SEN) Special Educational Need support	-0.36	-0.29	-0.42	-	-	-0.43	-0.59	-0.5	

**Supporting narrative**

Additional capacity has been extended within the SEND assessment team and Educational Psychology team to support the work in addressing existing cases. This continues to be a challenge due to continued high demand of assessments. The reduction in tribunals is a reflection in the different approach taken to work more collaboratively with parents and carers.

**Workforce**

	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22 Q1	2021/22 Q2	2021/22 Q3	National	North West	Statistical Neighbours	Trend
Vacancy rate – number of posts currently vacant / total no of posts <b>Social Workers</b>	24%	31%	31%	24%	28%	29%	-	-	-	
Agency rate – positions filled by agency staff <b>Social Workers</b>	19%	15%	11%	15%	23%	19%	-	-	-	
New starters - <b>Social Workers</b>	-	-	-	13	23	22	-	-	-	
Retention of staff – number of leavers - <b>Social Workers</b>	-	-	-	15	29	40	-	-	-	
Average FTE days lost to sickness absence - <b>Social Workers</b>	15.89	16.75	10.88	14.25	16.17	18.65	-	-	-	
Average caseload for social worker	15.2	14.6	14.2	15.1	14.9	16.7	16.3	17.9	17	
Vacancy rate – number of posts currently vacant / total no of posts <b>Children's Services Directorate</b>	26%	25%	17%	21%	21%	18%	-	-	-	
Agency rate – positions filled by agency staff <b>Children's Services Directorate</b>	10.60%	6.80%	5.30%	4.20%	6.90%	7%	-	-	-	
New starters - <b>Children's Services Directorate</b>	124	112	88	23	29	14	-	-	-	
Retention of staff – number of leavers - <b>Children's Services Directorate</b>	85.5	95	57.5	11	6	5	-	-	-	
Average FTE days lost to sickness absence <b>Children's Services Directorate</b>	14.25	14.54	10.92	2.91	3.04	2.98	-	-	-	

**Supporting narrative**

The vacancy rate in social care has slightly increased in the last quarter and the agency rate decreased as we struggled to bring in agency workers and we also let the innovate team go. Similar to the last quarter these two figures are bound to have an impact on the increased FTE sick days lost which has jumped to 18.65 in social care. We may see an increase of agency workers in the next and final quarter as we are seeing the number rise again this month. This has also impacted the the average caseload for social workers which has increased to 16.7, exceeding the national average.

Analysis of the social work workforce census is currently underway. Once complete, we will look to include benchmarking data for comparison.

**Budget**
**Supporting narrative**

Under development - further work required to align performance and financial reporting.



## CHILDREN, YOUNG PEOPLE & EDUCATION COMMITTEE

Wednesday, 10 March 2022

<b>REPORT TITLE:</b>	<b>2021-22 BUDGET MONITORING FOR QUARTER THREE (1 OCT – 31 DEC)</b>
<b>REPORT OF:</b>	<b>DIRECTOR OF CHILDREN, FAMILIES AND EDUCATION</b>

### REPORT SUMMARY

This report sets out the financial monitoring information for Children, Families and Education as at quarter 3 (Oct-Dec) of 2021-22. The report provides Members with an overview of budget performance to enable the Committee to take ownership of the budgets and provide robust challenge and scrutiny to Officers on the performance of those budgets.

The Committee is accountable for ensuring that the budgets remain within the relevant funding envelope and will take collective responsibility via the Policy and Resources Committee to ensure that the whole Council budget remains in balance at all times and should a deficit be forecast, agreeing mitigating actions to bring the budget back into balance.

The projected year-end revenue outturn, recorded as part of Quarter 3 financial monitoring activity, represents a favourable variance of £0.890m against revenue budget of £86.679m.

### RECOMMENDATION/S

The Children, Young People & Education Committee is recommended to:

- (1) Note the forecast year-end revenue position of 0.890m favourable as reported at quarter 3 (Apr – Dec) of 2021/22.
- (2) Note the progress on the achievement of approved savings and the year-end forecast position at quarter 3 (Apr – Dec) of 2021/22)
- (3) Note the reserves allocated to the Committee for future commitments.
- (4) Note the forecast year-end capital position of as reported at quarter 3 (Apr – Dec) of 2021/22.

## **SUPPORTING INFORMATION**

### **1.0 REASON/S FOR RECOMMENDATION/S**

- 1.1 It is vitally important that the Council has robust processes in place to manage and monitor the in-year financial position, to ensure it delivers a forecast balanced position at the end of the year
- 1.2 Regular monitoring and reporting of the revenue and capital budgets, reserves, savings, and achievement of the Medium-Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) position enables decisions to be taken faster, which may produce revenue benefits and will improve financial control of Wirral Council.

### **2.0 OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED**

- 2.1 The Committee can decide to establish their own process for monitoring the 2021/22 in-year budget. This would need to be agreed at the next Policy and Resources Committee which reduces the time available to implement mitigating actions, where an adverse 2021/22 forecast maybe found.

### **3.0 BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

#### **Revenue Forecast Position**

- 3.1 This section provides a summary of the projected year-end revenue position as at the end of Quarter 3 (Apr - Dec) of financial year 2021/22.
- 3.2 The projected year-end revenue outturn, recorded as part of Quarter 3 financial monitoring activity for Children, Families and Education, represents a favourable variance of £0.890m on a revenue budget of £86.679m.
- 3.3 The service continues to manage demand with financial pressures being mitigated by in-year cost savings and use of specific related reserves. In-year favourable variances arising on employee related spend across the service and efficient use of grant funding have contributed to the reported position. The forecast position reflects delivery of most of the 2021/22 saving proposals.

**TABLE 1: 2021/22 Children, Families and Education – Service Budget & Forecast**

	Budget £000	Forecast Outturn £000	Variance (+ Fav / - Adv)		Adverse/ Favourable
			£000	%	
Children and Families	50,569	50,707	-138	0%	Adverse
Early Help and Prevention	10,949	10,054	895	8%	Favourable
Modernisation and Support	5,055	4,788	267	5%	Favourable
Schools - Core	12,668	12,802	-134	-1%	Adverse
<b>Directorate Surplus / (Deficit)</b>	<b>79,241</b>	<b>78,351</b>	<b>890</b>	<b>1%</b>	<b>Favourable</b>
Support / Admin Building Overhead	7,438	7,438	0	0%	
<b>Total Surplus / (Deficit)</b>	<b>86,679</b>	<b>85,789</b>	<b>890</b>	<b>1%</b>	<b>Favourable</b>

## Divisional Summaries

### 3.4 Children and Families

3.4.1 An adverse forecast variance of £0.138m is reported for 2021/22. External funding of £0.338m has been secured by officers to support the delivery of specific initiatives that are expected to deliver both financial and service delivery benefits in future years and contribute to managing service pressures.

3.4.2 The budget for this service includes £24.779m of care costs. Care costs reflect the demand led elements of the service which are expected to be managed within the 2021/22 budget. An increase in the number of children in residential settings has led to a slight increase in the forecast since Quarter 2. Overall, performance data indicates that the CLA rate has been stable in recent months and has now started to fall slightly. This is as expected and feeds into forward planning for the next year (see tables below). However, it should be noted that the nature of CLA costs can be unpredictable and future demand requirements could lead to further budgetary pressures. This service also includes expenditure to support unaccompanied asylum seekers with grant income forecast to cover the associated costs.

	Dec-19	Mar-20	Jun-20	Sep-20	Dec-20	Mar-21	Jun-21	Sep-21	Dec-21
Number of Children in Care	824	822	825	823	825	821	819	814	795

	19/20	20/21	Jun-21	Sep-21	Dec-21	National (19/20)	North West (19/20)	Statistical Neighbourhoods (19/20)
Children Looked After rate per 10,000 population	120	121.6	121.3	120.6	117.8	67	97	101

### 3.5 Early Help & Prevention

3.5.1 A favourable forecast variance of £0.895m is reported for 2021/22. The favourable variance is mainly due to efficient use of grant funding and staff vacancies arising during the year, as well as the youth offer review being implemented later than planned. The circumstances that drive these variations are subject to change and the staff costs savings are non-recurring.

### 3.6 Modernisation and Support

3.6.1 A favourable forecast variance of £0.267m is reported for 2021/22. The favourable variance is mainly due to staff vacancies that have arisen during the year. The circumstances that drive these variations are subject to change and the staff costs savings are non-recurring.

### 3.7 Schools – core

3.7.1 An adverse forecast variance of £0.134m is reported for 2021/22. The main variances are detailed below.

3.7.2 Schools PFI £0.520m adverse forecast variance which is due to the on-going annual costs that are being incurred in relation to the non-operational status of the Kingsway School building. Use of the site for educational purposes is currently in development with a view to it being operational by September 2022.

3.7.3 The adverse forecast variances have been partially mitigated by £0.273m of savings against Teachers historic pensions costs where the actual reduction in on-going commitments is greater than expected. Further general cost savings across the service of £0.133m have resulted in a total operational adverse variance of £0.134m.

### 3.8 Budget Virements

3.8.1 There have been no budget variations requiring committee approval in this Directorate in Quarter 3.

**TABLE 2: 2021/22 Children, Families and Education – Subjective Budget & Forecast**

	Budget	Forecast Outturn	Variance		Adverse/ Favourable
			( + Fav / - Adv)		
	£000	£000	£000	%	
Income	-19,299	-23,618	4,319	-22%	Favourable
<b>Expenditure:</b>					
Employee	40,564	39,281	1,283	3%	Favourable
Non Pay	33,197	36,853	-3,656	-11%	Adverse
Cost of Care	24,779	25,835	-1,056	0%	Adverse
<b>Total Expenditure</b>	<b>98,540</b>	<b>101,969</b>	<b>-3,429</b>	<b>-3%</b>	Adverse
<b>Directorate Surplus / (Deficit)</b>	<b>79,241</b>	<b>78,351</b>	<b>890</b>	<b>1%</b>	Favourable
Support/Admin Building Overhead	7,438	7,438	0	0%	
<b>Total Surplus/ (Deficit)</b>	<b>86,679</b>	<b>85,789</b>	<b>890</b>	<b>1%</b>	Favourable

**TABLE 3: 2021/22 Children, Families and Education–Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG)**

	Budget	Outturn	Variance		Adverse/ Favourable
			( + Fav, - Adv)		
	£000	£000	£000	%	
<b>DSG Expenditure:</b>					
Schools Block	117,102	117,102	0	0%	
Schools Block De-delegated	1,560	1,540	20	1%	Favourable
Central School Services Block	2,153	2,098	55	3%	Favourable
High Needs	43,874	46,180	-2,306	-5%	Adverse
Early Years	21,644	22,295	-651	-3%	Adverse
<b>Total Gross Surplus / (Deficit)</b>	<b>186,333</b>	<b>189,215</b>	<b>-2,882</b>	<b>-2%</b>	<b>Adverse</b>
<b>DSG Income:</b>	-189,016	-188,896	-120	0%	Adverse
<b>Movement in DSG Reserve</b>	2,683	-319	3,002	112%	
<b>Total Net Surplus / (Deficit)</b>	0	0	0	0%	

**3.9 Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG)**

- 3.8.1 **Schools Block:** A balanced position is forecast for 2021/22. Schools Block expenditure is in line with budget as year-end variances against schools' DSG allocations are offset with the schools' ring-fenced balances.
- 3.8.2 **Schools Block De-delegated:** A favourable forecast variance of £0.020m is reported mainly due to vacancies. De-delegated funds are a deduction from a school's budget share and are held centrally to fund relevant services.
- 3.8.3 **Central Schools Costs:** A favourable forecast variance of £0.055m is reported mainly due to vacancies. Central Schools Costs relate to central functions carried out on behalf of maintained schools and academies e.g., School Admissions.
- 3.8.4 **High Needs Block:** An adverse forecast variance of £2.306m is reported for 2021/22. The adverse variance is mainly due to an increase in demand and complexity. In particular, SEN additional resources are expected to overspend by £1.480m in line with the increase in requests for EHCP.
- 3.8.5 **Early Years:** An adverse forecast variance of £0.651m is reported for 2021/22. The adverse variance is due to an increase in high needs support from the Inclusive Practice fund (£0.463m) and additional expenditure to help providers to make reasonable adjustments in their settings for children with disabilities (£0.188m). The £0.188m overspend for children with disabilities have been offset by use of unspent Disability Access Funding from prior years and which has been set-aside in the DSG reserve for this purpose.
- 3.8.6 **DSG income:** An adverse forecast variance of £0.120m is reported for 2021/22. The adverse variance relates mainly to a change in funding to reflect updated pupil information.
- 3.8.7 **DSG reserve:** The 2021-22 budget includes a planned surplus of £2.683m in the High Needs Block that is to be carried forward into the reserve at the end of the financial year. Due to the forecast adverse variance of £3.002m, a use of reserve of £0.319m will be required. The DSG reserve balance reflects a deficit position of £1.679m and this is forecast to increase to £1.998 by the end of 2021/22.

### 3.10 Budget Saving Achievement Progress

- 3.10.1 Within each Committee's revenue budget there are a number of savings proposals, that were based on either actual known figures or best estimates available at the time. At any point during the year, these estimated figures could change and need to be monitored closely so that, should an adverse position be identified, mitigating actions can be taken immediately to ensure a balanced budget position can be reported to the end of the year.

**TABLE 4: 2021/22 Children, Families and Education – Budget Savings**

Savings Title	Agreed value	Forecast value	RAG Rating	Comments
Semi-independent living	£0.500m	£0.500m	Green	On target to be achieved
Pause Programme	£0.567m	£0.567m	Amber, (Green with mitigations applied)	The benefits of the pause programme are not expected to be fully realised in 2021/22. These have been offset by additional grant income, staff vacancies and pay scale variations.
Modernisation & Social Care efficiencies	£0.102m	£0.102m	Green	On target to be achieved
Childrens containing demand pressure mitigation	£1.000m	£1.000m	Green	On target to be achieved
Explore reduction in Youth Provision	£0.100m	£0.100m	Green	On target to be achieved
YOS	£0.025m	£0.025m	Green	On target to be achieved
<b>Total Savings</b>	<b>£2.294m</b>	<b>£2.294m</b>		

3.10.2 £2.294m of savings have been identified for the budget to break-even in 2021/22. The forecast position at Quarter 2 assumes that £2.294m savings will be achieved. The vast majority of the savings (£2.067m) relate to projects reducing the demand impact on the Social Care system. £0.127m relates to departmental efficiencies. A further £0.100m is to achieve sponsorship within the Youth Service.

### 3.11 Earmarked Reserves

3.11.1 Earmarked reserves are amounts set aside for specific purposes or projects.

**TABLE 5: 2021/22 Children, Families and Education – Reserves**

Service	Opening Balance 2021-22 £000	Movement in reserves			Closing Balance £000
		Reserves Increase £000	Reserves Call Out £000	Total Movement £000	
Children, Families & Education	-2,347	0	46	46	-2,301
Schools – DSG	1,679	0	319	319	1,998
<b>Total</b>	<b>668</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>365</b>	<b>365</b>	<b>303</b>

3.11.2 Children, Families and Education reserves reflect funds that have been set aside for specific projects and activities. Calls on these reserves for 2021/22 of £0.046m have been identified in relation to a project reducing violence (£0.035m) and (£0.012m) SEND Improvement / action plan following the recent OFSTED inspection.

3.11.3 Schools DSG reserve reflects a deficit balance which is mainly due to the cumulative effect of cost pressures from previous years. It is expected that balance will now increase by £.0319m and increasing the overall deficit to £1.998m.

### 3.12 Capital Forecast Position

3.12.1 Capital budgets are the monies allocated for spend on providing or improving non-current assets, which includes land, buildings, and equipment and which will be of use or benefitting in providing services for more than one financial year.

Capital Programme	2021/22			2022/23	2023/24	2024/25
	Q2 Forecast £000	Q3 Forecast £000	Variance £000	Budget £000	Budget £000	Budget £000
<b>School Capital Grants:</b>						
Condition/modernisation (SCA)	2,564	2,564	0	7,520	2,500	2,500
Basic Needs	600	900	300	388	0	0
SEN and disabilities	500	0	-500	829	0	0
<b>Others:</b>						
School remodelling and additional classrooms (School Place Planning)	500	500	0	437	0	0
Healthy Pupils Capital Fund	18	18	0	0	0	0
Children's System Development	423	423	0	403	0	0
Family Support	0	0	0	157	0	0
High Needs Provision	500	927	427	120	0	0
Capital PFI	0	33	33	52	0	0
Transforming Care - Short Breaks	600	600		266		
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>5,705</b>	<b>5,965</b>	<b>260</b>	<b>10,172</b>	<b>2,500</b>	<b>2,500</b>

#### 3.12.2 School Capital Grants:

- **School Condition Allocation (SCA)** - the purpose of this funding is to maintain and improve the condition of school buildings, so that children can learn in a safe and effective environment. The current funding includes:
  - £1.055 million worth of Roofing works are scheduled for this year for a number of school sites.
  - £0.350 million of works on school sites including boiler installation, sites include Mount Primary, St George's, Bidston Village C of E Juniors, Heswall Primary, St Bridget's Primary.
  - A significant contribution towards a proposed total cost of £1.600 million is to be allocated from this funding towards the redevelopment of Riverside Primary School (Phase 1).

- Regarding fire alarm enhancement, schemes totalling £0.200 million have been identified.
- £5.020 million of reprofiling has been applied due to factors including the availability of contractors and problems with the building supply chain, therefore school Capital projects have been on hold/subject to delay, with budget deferred into 2022/23. Scheme costs may increase as a consequence of supply chain issues and budgets will be monitored and aligned accordingly.
- Basic Needs – the purpose of the basic need funding is to support the capital requirement for providing new pupil places by expanding existing maintained schools. This is un-ringfenced capital funding that is not time-bound, so that local authorities can make the best decisions for their local area. £0.300m Budget originally reprofiled into 22/23 has been brought back into the current year to finance higher than originally forecast activity within 21/22.
- High Needs Provision Capital - Investment plan to provide 137 high needs places in special schools. Works scheduled include those at Pensby Park Resource Centre to provide 66 SEN places and the Home Education Service relocation. A further 71 places are to be delivered across other sites. The budget has been reprofiled to account for this.
- Special Educational Needs and Disabilities – Grant funded scheme to invest in providing new places or to improve existing provision for pupils and students with high needs across a range of different education settings. The investment in the provision of places for pupils. The need for additional classroom requirements by Foxfield are currently being assessed as pupil numbers increase but works are not anticipated to start until 22/23. The £0.829m grant awarded to fund this scheme has therefore now been reprofiled into 2022/23 for delivery..

### 3.12.3 Children's Schemes:

- **Children's System Development** – this project relates to the replacement of the CAPITA system.
- **Family Support** – the final schedule of works for this project has been re-scheduled and the budget reprofiled into 2022/23.
- **PFI** – this funding is allocated for potential works at PFI schools.
- **Transforming Care Short Breaks** - The aim for Wirral Children and Young People's short breaks therapeutic facility is to provide a specialist service to deliver support to up to three young people, male or female aged 11-18 years who demonstrate complex and challenging behaviour. A suitable property has been identified and an offer has been made, which was accepted in November 2021. The purchase is still progressing; however, it is not certain that the purchase will be completed by 31 March 2022. Estimated refurbishment costs of £0.266 million have been reprofiled into 2022/23.

## 4.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 This is the Quarter 3 budget monitoring report that provides information on the forecast outturn for the Children, Families and Education Directorate for 2021/22. The Council has robust methods for reporting and forecasting budgets in place and alongside formal quarterly reporting to Policy & Resources Committee, the financial position is routinely reported at Directorate Management Team meetings and corporately at the Strategic Leadership Team (SLT). In the event of any early warning highlighting pressures and potential overspends, the SLT take collective responsibility to identify solutions to resolve these to ensure a balanced budget can be reported at the end of the year.

## **5.0 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 5.1 The Council must set the budget in accordance with the provisions of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 and approval of a balanced budget each year is a statutory responsibility of the Council. Sections 25 to 29 of the Local Government Act 2003 impose duties on the Council in relation to how it sets and monitors its budget. These provisions require the Council to make prudent allowance for the risk and uncertainties in its budget and regularly monitor its finances during the year. The legislation leaves discretion to the Council about the allowances to be made and action to be taken.
- 5.2 The provisions of section 25, Local Government Act 2003 require that, when the Council is making the calculation of its budget requirement, it must have regard to the report of the chief finance (s.151) officer as to the robustness of the estimates made for the purposes of the calculations and the adequacy of the proposed financial reserves.
- 5.3 It is essential, as a matter of prudence that the financial position continues to be closely monitored. In particular, Members must satisfy themselves that sufficient mechanisms are in place to ensure both that savings are delivered and that new expenditure is contained within the available resources. Accordingly, any proposals put forward must identify the realistic measures and mechanisms to produce those savings.

## **6.0 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS: STAFFING, ICT AND ASSETS**

- 6.1 At this time, there are no additional resource implications as these have already been identified for the proposals agreed and submitted. However, where the budget is unbalanced and further proposals are required, then there will be resource implications, and these will be addressed within the relevant business cases presented to the Committee.

## **7.0 RELEVANT RISKS**

- 7.1 The Council's ability to maintain a balanced budget for 2021/22 is dependent on a static financial position. This is an impossible scenario due to estimated figures being provided in the calculation for the 2021/22 budget, albeit the best estimates that were available at the time, plus any amount of internal and external factors that could impact on the budget position in year. Examples of which are new legislation,

increased demand, loss of income, increased funding, decreased funding, inability to recruit to posts, ongoing impact of the pandemic etc

- 7.2 A robust monitoring and management process for the 2021/22 budget is in place. If at any time during the year an adverse position is forecast, remedial action must be agreed and implemented immediately to ensure the budget can be brought back to balanced position.
- 7.3 The risk of this not being able to be achieved could mean that the Council does not have enough funding to offset its expenditure commitments for the year and therefore not be able report a balanced budget at the end of the year. This could result in the Section 151 Officer issuing a Section 114 notice.

## **8.0 ENGAGEMENT/CONSULTATION**

- 8.1 Consultation has been carried out with the Senior Leadership Team (SLT) in arriving at the governance process for the 2021/22 budget monitoring process and the 2022/23 budget setting process.
- 8.2 Since the budget was agreed at Full Council on 1 March, some proposals may have been the subject of further consultation with Members, Customer and Residents. The details of these are included within the individual business cases or are the subject of separate reports to the Committee

## **9.0 EQUALITY IMPLICATIONS**

- 9.1 Wirral Council has a legal requirement to make sure its policies, and the way it carries out its work, do not discriminate against anyone. An Equality Impact Assessment is a tool to help council services identify steps they can take to ensure equality for anyone who might be affected by a particular policy, decision or activity.
- 9.2 At this time, there are no further equality implications as these have already been identified for the proposals agreed and submitted. However, where the budget is unbalanced and further proposals are required, then there may be equality implications associated with these, and these will be addressed within the relevant business cases presented to the Committee.

## **10.0 ENVIRONMENT AND CLIMATE IMPLICATIONS**

- 10.1 At this time, there are no additional environmental and climate implications as these have already been identified for the proposals agreed and submitted. However, where the budget is unbalanced and further proposals are required, then there may be environment and climate implications associated with these that will be addressed within the relevant business cases presented to the Committee.

**REPORT AUTHOR:** **Nicholas Ajaegbu**  
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## APPENDICES

### BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 2020/21 Revenue Budget Monitor for Quarter Four (Apr - Mar)
- Revenue Budget 2021/22 and Medium-Term Financial Plan (2021/22 to 2024/25)

### SUBJECT HISTORY (last 3 years)

<b>Council Meeting</b>	<b>Date</b>
Children's, Young People & Education Committee	13 Nov 2021
	15 June 2021
	11 Mar 2021
	15 Jan 2021



## **CHILDREN, YOUNG PEOPLE AND EDUCATION COMMITTEE THURSDAY 10 MARCH 2022**

<b>REPORT TITLE:</b>	<b>CHILDREN, YOUNG PEOPLE AND EDUCATION COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME</b>
<b>REPORT OF:</b>	<b>DIRECTOR OF CHILDREN, FAMILY AND EDUCATION</b>

### **REPORT SUMMARY**

The Children, Young People and Education Committee, in co-operation with the other Policy and Service Committees, is responsible for proposing and delivering an annual committee work programme. This work programme should align with the corporate priorities of the Council, in particular the delivery of the key decisions which are within the remit of the Committee.

It is envisaged that the work programme will be formed from a combination of key decisions, standing items and requested officer reports. This report provides the Committee with an opportunity to plan and regularly review its work across the municipal year. The work programme for the Children, Young People and Education Committee is attached as Appendix 1 to this report.

### **RECOMMENDATION**

Members are invited to note and comment on the proposed Children, Young People and Education Committee work programme for the of the 2021/22 municipal year.

## **SUPPORTING INFORMATION**

### **1.0 REASON/S FOR RECOMMENDATION/S**

- 1.1 To ensure Members of the Children, Young People and Education Committee have the opportunity to contribute to the delivery of the annual work programme.

### **2.0 OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED**

- 2.1 A number of workplan formats were explored, with the current framework open to amendment to match the requirements of the Committee.

### **3.0 BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

- 3.1 3.1 The work programme should align with the priorities of the Council and its partners. The programme will be informed by:

- The Council Plan
- The Council's transformation programme
- The Council's Forward Plan
- Service performance information
- Risk management information
- Public or service user feedback
- Referrals from Council

#### **Terms of Reference**

The Children, Young People and Education Committee is responsible for services which help keep children and young people safe and fulfil their potential. It incorporates schools and attainment, and social care for children and families. It has a particular focus on those children who are in care, and for whom the Council has corporate parenting responsibility. The Committee is charged by full Council to undertake responsibility for: -

(a) exercising management, oversight and delivery of services to children and young people in relation to their care, wellbeing, education or health, with the exception of any powers reserved to full Council;

(b) the functions and powers conferred on or exercisable by the Council as Local Authority in relation to the provision of education;

(c) working with all schools (including academies) in relation to raising standards of attainment and developing opportunities;

(d) leading for the Council and its partners in the discharge the Council's functions as Corporate Parent for its children in care and care leavers;

(e) any other functions comprised in partnership arrangements with other bodies connected with the delivery of services for children, young people and families;

(f) providing a view of performance, budget monitoring and risk management in relation to the Committee's functions;

(g) undertaking the development and implementation of policy in relation to the Committee's functions, incorporating the assessment of outcomes, review of effectiveness and formulation of recommendations to the Council, partners and other bodies, which shall include any decision relating to:

- child protection;
- children's centres;
- education, schools and settings;

#### **4.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

4.1 This report is for information and planning purposes only, therefore there are no direct financial implication arising. However, there may be financial implications arising as a result of work programme items.

#### **5.0 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

5.1 There are no direct legal implications arising from this report. However, there may be legal implications arising as a result of work programme items.

#### **6.0 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS: STAFFING, ICT AND ASSETS**

6.1 There are no direct implications to Staffing, ICT or Assets.

#### **7.0 RELEVANT RISKS**

7.1 The Committee's ability to undertake its responsibility to provide strategic direction to the operation of the Council, make decisions on policies, co-ordinate spend, and maintain a strategic overview of outcomes, performance, risk management and budgets may be compromised if it does not have the opportunity to plan and regularly review its work across the municipal year.

#### **8.0 ENGAGEMENT/CONSULTATION**

8.1 Not applicable.

#### **9.0 EQUALITY IMPLICATIONS**

9.1 Wirral Council has a legal requirement to make sure its policies, and the way it carries out its work, do not discriminate against anyone. An Equality Impact Assessment is a tool to help council services identify steps they can take to ensure equality for anyone who might be affected by a particular policy, decision or activity.

This report is for information to Members and there are no direct equality implications.

**10.0 ENVIRONMENT AND CLIMATE IMPLICATIONS**

10.1 This report is for information to Members and there are no direct environment and climate implications.

**11.0 COMMUNITY WEALTH IMPLICATIONS**

11.1 There are no direct implications arising from this report.

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**APPENDICES**

Appendix 1: Children, Young People and Education Committee Work Plan

**BACKGROUND PAPERS**

Wirral Council Constitution  
Forward Plan  
The Council's transformation programme

**SUBJECT HISTORY (last 3 years)**

Council Meeting	Date

**CHILDREN, YOUNG PEOPLE AND EDUCATION COMMITTEE  
WORK PROGRAMME 2021/22**

**KEY DECISION ITEMS**

<b>Item</b>	<b>Approximate timescale</b>	<b>Lead Departmental Officer</b>

**ADDITIONAL AGENDA ITEMS – WAITING TO BE SCHEDULED**

<b>Item</b>	<b>Approximate timescale</b>	<b>Lead Departmental Officer</b>
Covid-19 Education Catch Up Plan / Learning from Covid and targeting resources with regards to social inequalities	September 2022	James Backhouse / Simone White
Summary of Standards and School Improvement Strategy Update	From September 22	James Backhouse
Social Work Workforce Absence	TBC	Simone White / Kerry Mehta
Capital Programme	TBC	
Lifelong Learning Update	TBC	Paul Smith

**STANDING ITEMS AND MONITORING REPORTS**

<b>Item</b>	<b>Reporting Frequency</b>	<b>Lead Departmental Officer</b>
Performance and Financial Monitoring Report	Quarterly	Tricia Thomas
Budget Update	Quarterly	Nicholas Ajaegbu
Reappointment of School Appeals Panel Members	Annually	
Children's Committee Work Programme Update	Each Meeting	Committee Team
Summary of Standards	September 22	James Backhouse

Corporate Parenting Panel Update	November/ June	Hannah Myers
Safeguarding Partnership Annual Report	Every Jan	David Robbins
Safeguarding Fostering and Adoption	Annually (first meeting of the municipal year)	
Lifelong Learning Annual Performance report	Every Sept	Paul Smith
Admission Arrangements	Every Jan	Sally Gibbs

### WORK PROGRAMME ACTIVITIES OUTSIDE COMMITTEE

Item	Format	Timescale	Lead Officer	Progress
<b>Working Groups/ Sub Committees</b>				
Corporate Parenting Panel	committee	Ongoing	Hannah Myers	
Working Group: Food and Activities during school holidays	Working group	Due to commence Sept 2021	Mark Camborne	
Workshop – Statutory Duties (School Budget)	Workshop	29 March	Simone White	
Child Poverty Strategy	Workshop	TBC	Simone White	
Youth Justice Review Outcomes	Workshop	November 21	Elizabeth Hartley	
Integrated front door/ Police visits etc	Visit	TBC	Simone White	
School Budget Update – inc traded services	Workshop	TBC	Simone White	
PFI Options ( Kingsway) – Chair and Spokes	Presentation	TBC	Hannah Myers	
Capital Programme – to be integrated within budget workshop				
<b>Task and Finish Reviews</b>				
-	-	--		-
<b>Spotlight Sessions and Workshops</b>				
County Lines Action Update	Workshop	2021/22	Simone White/Tony Kirk	



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