

Agenda

Health, Care and Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee

Date: **Thursday 3 October 2024**

Time: **2.00 pm**

Place: **Conference Room 1 - Herefordshire Council, Plough Lane Offices, Hereford, HR4 0LE**

Notes: Please note the time, date and venue of the meeting.

For any further information please contact:

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Agenda for the Meeting of the Health, Care and Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee

Membership

Chairperson **Councillor Pauline Crockett**
Vice-Chairperson **Councillor Polly Andrews**

Councillor Jenny Bartlett
Councillor Simeon Cole
Councillor Dave Davies
Councillor Mark Dykes
Councillor Richard Thomas

Agenda

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1.	<p>APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE</p> <p>To receive apologies for absence.</p>	5 - 10
2.	<p>NAMED SUBSTITUTES</p> <p>To receive details of any councillor nominated to attend the meeting in place of a member of the committee.</p>	
3.	<p>DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST</p> <p>To receive declarations of interest in respect of items on the agenda.</p>	
4.	<p>MINUTES</p> <p>To receive the minutes of the meeting held on Monday 29 July 2024.</p> <p>HOW TO SUBMIT QUESTIONS</p> <p>The deadline for the submission of questions for this meeting is 5.00 pm on Friday 27 September 2024.</p> <p>Questions must be submitted to councillorservices@herefordshire.gov.uk. Questions sent to any other address may not be accepted.</p> <p>Accepted questions and the responses will be published as a supplement to the agenda papers prior to the meeting. Further information and guidance is available at www.herefordshire.gov.uk/getinvolved</p>	11 - 18
5.	<p>QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC</p> <p>To receive any written questions from members of the public.</p>	
6.	<p>QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL</p> <p>To receive any written questions from members of the council.</p>	
7.	<p>SUPPORTING OUR CARE LEAVERS</p> <p>This report and its appendices provide information to support the Health Care and Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee's scrutiny of the council's services to support its looked after children who are leaving or have left care.</p>	19 - 78
8.	<p>BUILDING STRONG CONNECTED COMMUNITIES, TALK COMMUNITY STRATEGY, 2024 - 2027</p> <p>To provide the opportunity for the scrutiny committee to consider the newly refreshed strategy for Talk Community.</p>	To Follow
9.	<p>WORK PROGRAMME</p> <p>To consider the draft work programme for Herefordshire Council's scrutiny committees for the municipal year 2024/25.</p>	79 - 114
10.	<p>DATE OF THE NEXT MEETING</p> <p>Date of the next scheduled meeting: Monday 25 November 2024, 2.00 pm</p>	

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- Inspect agenda and public reports at least five clear days before the date of the meeting. Agenda and reports (relating to items to be considered in public) are available at www.herefordshire.gov.uk/meetings
- Inspect minutes of the council and all committees and sub-committees and written statements of decisions taken by the cabinet or individual cabinet members for up to six years following a meeting.
- Inspect background papers used in the preparation of public reports for a period of up to four years from the date of the meeting (a list of the background papers to a report is given at the end of each report). A background paper is a document on which the officer has relied in writing the report and which otherwise is not available to the public.
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- Have access to a list specifying those powers on which the council have delegated decision making to their officers identifying the officers concerned by title. The council's constitution is available at www.herefordshire.gov.uk/constitution
- Access to this summary of your rights as members of the public to attend meetings of the council, cabinet, committees and sub-committees and to inspect documents.

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The seven principles of public life

(Nolan Principles)

1. Selflessness

Holders of public office should act solely in terms of the public interest.

2. Integrity

Holders of public office must avoid placing themselves under any obligation to people or organisations that might try inappropriately to influence them in their work. They should not act or take decisions in order to gain financial or other material benefits for themselves, their family, or their friends. They must declare and resolve any interests and relationships.

3. Objectivity

Holders of public office must act and take decisions impartially, fairly and on merit, using the best evidence and without discrimination or bias.

4. Accountability

Holders of public office are accountable to the public for their decisions and actions and must submit themselves to the scrutiny necessary to ensure this.

5. Openness

Holders of public office should act and take decisions in an open and transparent manner. Information should not be withheld from the public unless there are clear and lawful reasons for so doing.

6. Honesty

Holders of public office should be truthful.

7. Leadership

Holders of public office should exhibit these principles in their own behaviour and treat others with respect. They should actively promote and robustly support the principles and challenge poor behaviour wherever it occurs.

Guide to Health, Care and Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee

Committee membership

Scrutiny is a statutory role fulfilled by councillors who are not members of the cabinet.

The role of the scrutiny committees is to help develop policy, to carry out reviews of council and other local services, and to hold decision makers to account for their actions and decisions.

Council has decided that there will be five scrutiny committees. The committees reflect the balance of political groups on the council.

The Health, Care and Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee consists of 7 councillors.

Councillor	Party
Polly Andrews (Vice-Chairperson)	Liberal Democrats
Jenny Bartlett	The Green Party
Pauline Crockett (Chairperson)	Independents for Herefordshire
Simeon Cole	Conservative Party
Dave Davies	Conservative Party
Mark Dykes	Liberal Democrats
Richard Thomas	Conservative Party

Scrutiny functions

The committees have the power:

- (a) to review, influence policy or scrutinise decisions made, or other action taken, in connection with the discharge of any functions which are the responsibility of the executive,
- (b) to make reports or recommendations to the authority or the executive with respect to the discharge of any functions which are the responsibility of the executive,
- (c) to review or scrutinise decisions made, or other action taken, in connection with the discharge of any functions which are not the responsibility of the executive,
- (d) to make reports or recommendations to council or the cabinet with respect to the discharge of any functions which are not the responsibility of the executive,
- (e) to make reports or recommendations to council or the cabinet on matters which affect the authority's area or the inhabitants of that area,
- (f) to review or scrutinise decisions made, or other action taken, in connection with the discharge by the responsible authorities of their crime and disorder functions and to make reports or recommendations to the council with respect to the discharge of those functions. In this regard crime and disorder functions means:
 - (i) a strategy for the reduction of crime and disorder in the area (including anti-social and other behaviour adversely affecting the local environment); and
 - (ii) a strategy for combatting the misuse of drugs, alcohol and other substances in the area; and
 - (iii) a strategy for the reduction of re-offending in the area

- (g) to review and scrutinise any matter relating to the planning, provision and operation of the health service in its area and make reports and recommendations to a responsible person on any matter it has reviewed or scrutinised or to be consulted by a relevant NHS body or health service provider in accordance with the Regulations (2013/218) as amended. In this regard *health service* includes services designed to secure improvement
 - (i) in the physical and mental health of the people of England, and
 - (ii) in the prevention, diagnosis and treatment of physical and mental illness, and
 - (iii) any services provided in pursuance of arrangements under section 75 in relation to the exercise of health-related functions of a local authority.
- (h) to review and scrutinise the exercise by risk management authorities of flood risk management functions or coastal erosion risk management functions which may affect the local authority's area.
- (i) To track actions and undertake an annual effectiveness review

The remit of Health, Care and Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee

- Adult social care (including adult safeguarding)
- Health and wellbeing board
- Housing
- Adults mental and physical health and wellbeing
- Safe Herefordshire campaign
- Outbreak control plan
- New models of care accommodation
- Talk Communities
- Homelessness
- All ages whole system commissioning strategy
- Independent living services and assistive technology plan
- Adults and communities budget and policy framework
- Statutory health scrutiny powers including the review and scrutiny of any matter relating to the planning provision and operation of health services affecting the area and to make reports and recommendations on these matters

Who attends scrutiny committee meetings?

- Members of the committee, including the chairperson and vice-chairperson.
- Cabinet members, they are not members of the committee but attend principally to answer any questions the committee may have and inform the debate.
- Officers of the council to present reports and give technical advice to the committee.
- People external to the council invited to provide information to the committee.
- Other councillors can attend but can only speak at the discretion of the chairperson.

Minutes of the meeting of the Health, Care and Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee held in Conference Room 1 - Herefordshire Council, Plough Lane Offices, Hereford, HR4 0LE on Monday 29 July 2024 at 2.00 pm

Committee members present in person and voting: **Councillors: Polly Andrews (Vice-Chairperson), Jenny Bartlett, Simeon Cole, Pauline Crockett (Chairperson), Dave Davies, Louis Stark and Richard Thomas**

Others in attendance:

J Barnes	Chief Transformation and Delivery Officer	Wye Valley NHS Trust
B Baugh	Democratic Services Officer	Herefordshire Council
C Carmichael	Director of Public Health	Herefordshire Council
H Doyle	Service Director - All Age Commissioning	Herefordshire Council
L Flanagan	Chief Nursing Officer	Wye Valley NHS Trust
Councillor C Gandy	Cabinet Member Adults, Health and Wellbeing	Herefordshire Council
H Hall	Corporate Director Community Wellbeing	Herefordshire Council
J Haycock	Head of Adult Social Care Operations	Herefordshire Council
Dr Mike Hearne	Managing Director	Herefordshire General Practice
J Ives	Managing Director	Wye Valley NHS Trust
H Merricks-Murgatroyd	Democratic Services Officer	Herefordshire Council
A Rees-Glinos	Governance Support Assistant	Herefordshire Council
D Vickers	Director of Planning and Delivery	Taurus Healthcare
D Webb	Statutory Scrutiny Officer	Herefordshire Council

[Link to the meeting page, including the video for each agenda item](#)

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Mark Dykes.

Apologies were also noted from Christine Price, Healthwatch Herefordshire.

2. NAMED SUBSTITUTES

Councillor Louis Stark was present as the named substitute for Councillor Mark Dykes.

3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of interest were made.

4. MINUTES

The minutes of the previous meeting were received.

Resolved: That the minutes of the meeting held on 25 March 2024 be confirmed as a correct record and be signed by the Chairperson.

5. QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

A document containing a question received from a member of the public and the response given, plus a supplementary question and the response given, is attached at Appendix 1 to the minutes: [Link to Appendix 1](#).

6. QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL

No questions had been received from councillors.

7. CARE QUALITY COMMISSION INSPECTION OF THE COUNTY HOSPITAL

The committee considered a report on the background and findings of the Care Quality Commission's (CQC) inspection of Wye Valley NHS Trust (WVT), The County Hospital: [Link to the inspection report](#).

The slide pack was published as part of agenda: [Link to the presentation 'Care Quality Commission Inspection: Emergency Department'](#). The slides presented by WVT representatives are outlined below (in italics), with summaries of the responses provided to the key lines of questioning by the committee.

A The Managing Director (WVT) introduced the presentation and welcomed the opportunity to update the committee on progress since the publication of the inspection report. The committee was advised that: emergency demand had increased nationally since the Covid pandemic; the principal issue for the County Hospital was congestion in the Emergency Department (ED), this being the result of increased demand, discharge delay, and prioritisation given to offloading ambulances; and recent data (29 July 2024) showed the ED as being in the top quartile of performance nationally on 'time to treatment', and mortality indices were below the national average.

B The Chief Transformation and Delivery Officer (WVT) presented:

Emergency Department: Overview

b.1 Clarifications were provided about attendance types and conveyances.

Emergency Department: Care Groups

b.2 Questions were asked about the inconsistent use of colours in the graphs.

b.3 It was noted that the slide pack had been updated following the postponement of the 28 May 2024 meeting, [Link to the original presentation](#).

Minors by Herefordshire PCN (Primary Care Network)

b.4 It was considered unlikely that the ambulance service would dispatch a crew to attend a minor injury or illness; a 'hear and treat' approach triaged and directed callers to self-care, pharmacy or other services. Examples were provided of scenarios where crews would respond but which might not result in conveyances to hospital, by providing care on-scene or through the deployment of different health resources.

- b.5 The committee was advised that people with complex needs were driving the pressures in the ED, rather than those with minor injuries and illnesses; over 90% of minors were treated and discharged within four hours.

Emergency Department: Acuity

Emergency Department: Performance

Discharge Delays

- b.6 It was reported that: a dashboard was being developed to combine health and social care data; there were significant discharge problems relating to Powys; and the Community Wellbeing Directorate was working jointly with WVT to reduce pressures in Herefordshire.

Acute Bed Occupancy

- C Chief Nursing Officer (WVT) presented:

Care Quality Commission

- c.1 An overview was provided of the roles and background of the inspection team and their advisors.

CQC findings requiring urgent attention

- c.2 The Chairperson outlined a personal experience involving triage at reception. The Chief Nursing Officer explained that, given congestion and the findings of the inspection, the ED had returned to nurse led triage and risk assessment.

CQC safety summit – Friday 8th December

ED Dashboard

- c.3 It was reported that the dashboard provided the nurse in charge with a 'helicopter view' of the whole department to help manage risks and safety; the information system behind it contained additional details about patients.
- c.4 The Chairperson suggested that visual indicators to highlight tests undertaken or pending could help to speed up patient flow in the 'pitstop' area.

CQC ratings – Emergency Department

- c.5 The Managing Director explained that WVT had known that the ED was in difficulty and had been working hard to address congestion, but the situation had deteriorated between October and December 2023. The committee was advised that the CQC findings were considered fair.
- c.6 It was reported that: recruitment of nursing staff into the ED was generally good but it was acknowledged that the skill mix was more junior than it used to be; and a business case was being developed to increase the number of accident and emergency consultants from five to ten.

CQC report – what we did well

CQC report – what we need to improve

- c.7 It was considered notable that only four actions ‘the service must take to improve’ had been identified in the final report, reflecting the progress that had been made between the initial dates of inspection (5 December to 7 December 2023) and the re-visit (20 December 2023).

Where are we now

- c.8 The Managing Director said that the inspection report had added value to the organisation, as it provided the opportunity to pause and reflect on the redesign work being undertaken. It was emphasised that WVT had a programme of review and audit of all its services.

D The Chief Transformation and Delivery Officer presented:

Wider Strategy

- d.1 Further details were provided about the Community Integrated Response Hub, including referral pathways and how local health and care services were working collaboratively to coordinate urgent and longer-term support for people at home.
- d.2 It was confirmed that community nursing continued to play a significant role in a range of treatments to avoid unnecessary admissions to hospital.
- d.3 The Managing Director commented on resourcing issues, particularly given the challenges of rural sparsity, and how this reinforced the need to work in partnership to achieve best value. It was noted that further investment was needed in preventative and community care in order to reduce demand on emergency departments but this would require new funding and it would take time.
- d.4 With reference made to the Herefordshire Joint Local Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2023 – 2033, including the two core priorities ‘best start in life for children’ and ‘good mental wellbeing throughout life’, it was noted that an underpinning objective was to provide people with the right care, at the right place, at the right time: [Link to the Herefordshire Joint Local Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2023 - 2033](#). It was also noted that national policies and priorities would also drive how resources were received and allocated.

The principal points of the subsequent discussion included:

- i. Comments were made about the potential of partnership working on prevention programmes to reduce pressures in the ED.
- ii. In response to a comment about challenges in primary care, it was reported that Herefordshire general practice was in the top quartile nationally in terms of patient experience and access to appointments.
- iii. Committee members expressed opinions about the need to consider the reinstatement of minor injury units (MIUs) in the county. The Managing Director advised that a review of minor injury units was underway across the NHS

Herefordshire and Worcestershire Integrated Care System footprint but there had been no change in minors' activity at the hospital following the closure of the MIUs.

- iv. A committee member noted that the original presentation for the May meeting showed minors' activity over a longer time frame (April 2015 to April 2024) than the updated presentation (April 2019 to June 2024), and this showed higher levels of activity prior to the Covid pandemic, particularly during the summer months. It was commented that the MIUs were missed by local people, and some travelled to MIUs in neighbouring counties. It was suggested that the reinstatement of MIUs should be revisited, especially in view of the congestion issues in the ED.
- v. In response to a question about a hypothetical further inspection, the Chief Nursing Officer said that audits provided assurance that significant improvements had been made and were being sustained; it was reported that a 'deep dive' would be undertaken at a Quality Committee in August 2024.
- vi. The Chairperson noted that the government was reviewing the effectiveness of health and social care regulation, with a report expected in autumn 2024.
- vii. The Vice-Chairperson welcomed the fact that, despite the apparent problems, the ED had never closed.
- viii. With attention drawn to Appendix 3 'Overview of integrated working between Adult Social Care and Wye Valley NHS Trust', comments were made about the strength of partnership working within the Herefordshire system by the Corporate Director Community Wellbeing and by the Cabinet Member Adults, Health and Wellbeing.
- ix. The Corporate Director Community Wellbeing said that work was ongoing with Powys in terms of discharge issues, but consideration could be given to raising matters through the Marches Forward Partnership.
- x. In response to questions, the Chief Nursing Officer: clarified the arrangements for nurses to undertake mandatory training; confirmed that a revised way of monitoring the cleanliness within departments had been introduced; commented on the need to communicate outcomes to staff members who reported incidents; provided an overview of internal governance processes to review risks; and outlined the enhancements being made to the food and drink offer.

There was a short adjournment to enable committee members to consider potential recommendations. The meeting recommenced, the draft recommendations were read out by the Statutory Scrutiny Officer, and the following resolution was agreed by the committee.

Resolved:

- 1. That the Wye Valley NHS Trust report back to the Health, Care and Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee on the outcomes of its work to review service performance to ensure patient safety and outcomes;**
- 2. That the Wye Valley NHS Trust consider the reintroduction of the Minor Injury Units to the market town community hospitals to alleviate the workload that is currently being experienced in the only emergency department in Herefordshire; and**
- 3. That the committee receive a briefing on the Integrated Care Board work to review Minor Injuries Units within the board and to report their findings to a future meeting of the Health, Care and Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee.**

8. PROPOSED RELOCATION OF THE GENERAL PRACTICE OUT OF HOURS SERVICE IN HEREFORD

The committee considered a report on the proposed relocation of the general practice (GP) out of hours service for Herefordshire.

The slide pack was published as part of Supplement 1 to the agenda: [Link to the presentation 'Consideration of the proposed move of GP Out of Hours Service'](#). The Director of Planning and Delivery (Taurus Healthcare) identified the following principal points:

- i. Feedback was invited from the committee on the proposed relocation of the service from the Station Medical Centre, Station Approach, Hereford to the Nelson Building, Whitecross Road, Hereford.
- ii. The service operated 6.30 pm to 8.00 am on weekdays and 24 hours at weekends, and it was accessed through the NHS non-emergency line on 111.
- iii. The Nelson Building was considered a good, central location and dedicated patient parking would be provided.
- iv. The proposal would consolidate the estate and provided the opportunity to co-locate the Community Integrated Response Hub to support the urgent care system.
- v. The facility would also provide additional clinical space during the day.
- vi. A public consultation had been undertaken by Healthwatch Herefordshire, with the majority of respondents indicating that the proposal would make 'no difference' to accessibility and convenience, and the recommendations from the consultation would inform design considerations.

The Chairperson noted that the public consultation report was comprehensive and many of the concerns that had been raised had been mitigated: [Link to Healthwatch Herefordshire's report 'Public Consultation on Urgent Out of Hours GP Service'](#).

In response to a question, the Managing Director (Taurus Healthcare) outlined the challenges at Station Medical Centre and, whilst acknowledging the need to control, considered that the proposed move would deliver operational and financial efficiency, especially given the limited space available to health services currently.

The following resolution was agreed by the committee.

Resolved:

- a. **That the presentation be noted; and**
- b. **That the proposals be endorsed.**

9. WORK PROGRAMME

The Statutory Scrutiny Officer presented the draft work programme for the remainder of the municipal year 2024/25, with attention drawn to the following matters:

- Cabinet had invited engagement from the scrutiny committees on the action plan for the Herefordshire All Age Carers Strategy 2024-2029; [Link to Cabinet minutes](#),

18 July 2024. It was recommended that terms of reference for a working group be developed, in consultation with the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee and the Scrutiny Management Board, to enable the Health, Care and Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee to lead on this piece of work.

- Informal briefings would be arranged to enhance understanding of topics within the remit of the committee, including on the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment, community transport, and technology enabled living.
- Work was ongoing with officers in the Community Wellbeing Directorate to facilitate informal discussions between committee members and care providers.

The committee discussed potential additions to the work programme, including:

- The intention of the Scrutiny Management Board to examine options for budget scrutiny on elements which fell within the remit of each scrutiny committee.
- A future item on West Midlands Ambulance Service.
- The timing for the further report by the Wye Valley NHS Trust on the outcomes of its work to review service performance to ensure patient safety and outcomes.
- The timing for a report on the results of the review of Talk Community.

Resolved:

That the work programme, as amended and subject to periodical reviews, be agreed as the basis of the primary focus for the committee for the remainder of the municipal year 2024/25.

10. DATE OF THE NEXT MEETING

The date of the next scheduled meeting was noted, [Thursday 3 October 2024, 2.00 pm](#).

The meeting ended at 4.44 pm

Chairperson

Title of report: **Supporting our Care Leavers**

Meeting: Health, Care and Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee

Meeting date: Thursday 3 October 2024

Report by: Statutory Scrutiny Officer

Classification

Open

Decision type

This is not an executive decision

Wards affected

(All Wards);

Purpose

This report and its appendices provide information to support the Health Care and Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee's scrutiny of the council's services to support its looked after children who are leaving or have left care.

Recommendation(s)

That:

- a) **The committee read this report and its appendices and**
- b) **Prepare any questions it may have for the members of the executive and officers attending the meeting.**

Alternative options

1. As this report is for information only, it presents no alternative options.

Key considerations

2. The Health Care and Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee has a remit to scrutinise the supported housing provided by Herefordshire Council and its partners for people in Herefordshire. Committee members identified support offered to looked-after children and young people

leaving the council's care as a priority for its work programme, as part of a focus on supported housing for different vulnerable groups.

3. In preparing this work, the committee recognised that to look at the matter of supported accommodation for children and young people leaving care would not provide a full account of the work that takes place to support looked after children as they prepare to leave care. The committee therefore asked officers to provide an account of all services provided to care leavers, to include:
 - a. The personal advisor support offered
 - b. Pathway planning
 - c. Housing and accommodation
 - d. Financial assistance
 - e. Education, employment and training support
 - f. Health and wellbeing support
 - g. Social and emotional support
 - h. Advocacy and rights
 - i. Ongoing support up to 25 years old
 - j. The council's corporate parenting responsibilities to care leavers
4. The information requested in paragraph 3 above is attached to this report as Appendix 4. A selection of the slides in this appendix will be presented to the committee in the meeting.
5. At a further planning meeting, members of the committee asked for further information about the local authority's duties to its looked after children and young people, and how other local authorities support their care leavers. Appendix 1 of this report is an outline of these duties, prepared by the Local Government Association (LGA). Appendix 2 includes case studies from the LGA detailing how other local authorities have fulfilled these duties. Finally, appendix 3 to this report provides findings of research from Ofsted that asked children about their experience of services to support their transition to independent living.

Community impact

6. As this report is for information only, it contains no assessment of community impact. However any recommendation made by the committee, if agreed by Cabinet or a portfolio holder, may have an impact on the support offered to children and young people leaving the care of the council. In this case, Cabinet or a portfolio holder will have to consider these potential impacts when deciding whether to accept the recommendation.

Environmental Impact

7. Operating services to support children leaving care creates minimal environmental impacts. The service considers how to minimise waste and resource use in line with the Council's Environmental Policy.

Equality duty

8. In producing this report, officers have been mindful of their duties under the Equality Act 2010 and Disability Discrimination Act 1995. The report and appendices are written in plain English and laid out clearly to maximise readability.
9. Although the reports themselves only provide information, they may result in recommendations to Cabinet or a portfolio holder for action. In agreeing those recommendations, Cabinet or the portfolio holder will need to consider the impact of those recommendations on the council's equalities' duties.

Resource implications

9. As this report provides information only, it has no resource implications. However any recommendation made by the committee, if agreed by Cabinet or a portfolio holder, may create a resource implication. In this case, Cabinet or a portfolio holder will have to consider that resource implication when deciding whether to accept the recommendation.

Risk management

10. As this report is for information only, it contains no risk assessment. However any recommendation made by the committee, if agreed by Cabinet or a portfolio holder, may create a resource implication. In this case, Cabinet or a portfolio holder will have to consider that resource implication when deciding whether to accept the recommendation.

Consultees

11. No consultations were carried out in the process of producing this report.

Appendices

1. Extract from Local Government Association Support for care leavers resource pack – an introduction
2. Extract from Local Government Association Support for care leavers resource pack – case studies
3. Extract from Ready or not': care leavers' views of preparing to leave care, Ofsted 2022
4. Supporting our care leavers in Herefordshire

Background papers

1. [Local Government Association Support for care leavers resource pack – an introduction](#)
2. [Ready or not': care leavers' views of preparing to leave care, Ofsted 2022](#)

Report reviewers used for appraising this report:

Please note this section must be completed before the report can be published		
Governance	Click or tap here to enter text.	Date Click or tap to enter a date.
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Communications	Click or tap here to enter text.	Date Click or tap to enter a date.
Equality Duty	Click or tap here to enter text.	Date Click or tap to enter a date.
Procurement	Click or tap here to enter text.	Date Click or tap to enter a date.
Risk	Click or tap here to enter text.	Date Click or tap to enter a date.
Approved by	Click or tap here to enter text.	Date Click or tap to enter a date.

Support for care leavers

An introduction

Introduction

In November 2019, the Local Government Association produced a resource pack to support councillors with an oversight role of children's services in their area, for example a corporate parenting panel or scrutiny committee.

Below is an introduction from the guide to a local authorities' duties to support its looked after children when they leave care. It covers the early support given to learn how to plan for the future, to learn and work and to live independently, as well the ongoing support a council provides until the young person reaches the ages of 25.

What is a 'care leaver'?

A care leaver is a young person aged 16- 25 who has been looked-after for at least 13 weeks in total since the age of 14.

Those who are aged 16 or 17 are 'eligible' (still looked-after) or 'relevant' (no longer looked-after) children. Those aged 18-25 are 'former relevant children'. The Government has outlined five key outcomes that it wants to achieve for care leavers¹:

- better preparation and support to live independently
- improved access to education, employment and training
- stability, and to feel safe and secure
- improved access to health support and
- financial stability.

Some young people will return home rather than remaining with foster carers or moving on to independent living, but the council still has responsibilities towards them as care leavers.

Statutory responsibilities

The statutory responsibilities of councils are set out in the Children Act 1989, including through amendments made by the Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000 and the Children and Families Act 2014.

The Children and Social Work Act 2017 made additional provisions for care leavers, and outlined in law for the first time what it means for a local authority to be a good corporate parent. Councils have responsibilities towards care leavers until they are 25.

¹ HM Government, 'Keep On Caring: Supporting Young People from Care to Independence' July 2016

The seven corporate parenting principles introduced by the 2017 Act are aimed at complementing existing practices, embedding a positive culture and ensuring that all the different service areas and leadership are doing what they can to support this group of young people. The principles are to:

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

Personal advisers and pathway plans

The local authority must complete an 'Assessment of Need' for the young person leaving care, and make sure that a pathway plan is in place by their 16th birthday. Discussions with other partners may also need to take place to make sure the needs assessment shapes a pathway plan that is both meaningful and purposeful.

The pathway plan should look at how best to meet the young person's needs to help them effectively make the transition from care to living independently, looking at areas including

- accommodation
- education and training
- financial support
- support to develop relationships
- life skills and employability
- access to support for health needs, including mental health
- contingency plans for support if independent living breaks down.

The plan also needs to take into account current and previous events in the young person's life so that potential risks can be identified and addressed.

It is important that the plan contains specific actions and deadlines, spelling out exactly who will take what action, and when. The plan should be reviewed at least every six months by a social worker or personal adviser (PA). It is not unusual for a young person to leave care at 16 years of age, whether to move on to independent living or to return to family or friends. Around 14 per cent leave care at this age, and it is therefore essential that pathway plans be developed in a timely manner.

This will make sure that if a young person is considering leaving care at 16, they know what support is available to them, know what their future options are, and have a plan to help them move on to independence successfully.

A PA should be appointed to support the young person and implement and monitor the pathway plan. Under the Children and Social Work Act 2017, this PA should be available to work with the young person until the age of 25.

The PA acts as a focal point for the young person and can help with practical and emotional support, needed to make a successful transition to adulthood. Local authorities should ensure that all care leavers know who their PA is and how to contact them. Where possible, care leavers should have the same PA from when they leave care until they no longer require support.

Financial support

Care leavers aged 16-18 are entitled to financial support to meet their education, training and employment needs, as well as help to pay for things such as accommodation, food and clothing.

Those aged 18-21 are entitled to living expenses associated with living near their place of work or where they plan to work, along with help with education and training.

Care leavers are entitled to a £1,200 bursary if they stay in full-time education, or £2,000 if they go to university.

From August 2018, care leavers have also been entitled to a £1,000 bursary if they choose to do an apprenticeship.

Care leavers can also ask the local authority for £2,000 towards setting up home, making sure that they have the equipment and household items they need to set up safe, secure and stable accommodation.

Accommodation

Care leavers must be provided with appropriate accommodation for their needs. This should be discussed as part of the pathway plan well before the young person is due to leave care.

Councils should avoid moving and disrupting young people who are settled, offer a choice of accommodation (where practicable) and provide a support package to go with the accommodation. There should also be a contingency plan in case accommodation arrangements break down.

Any care leaver under 21 who spent at least one night in care when they were 16 or 17 is automatically considered to be in 'priority need', if they become homeless or are at risk of homelessness². From the age of 21, they may also be in priority need if they are vulnerable because they were previously looked-after – for example, if they have not had a stable home since leaving care. The Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 also stipulated that a young homeless care leaver should be treated as having a connection to the area that they were looked-after. This will make it easier for them to get support in the area in which they feel most at home.

In April 2018, councils were given new and strengthened powers to offer advice and assistance to homeless people, including care leavers, in their area³. Despite these initiatives, homelessness amongst care leavers continues to be a concern.

Staying in touch

Councils should attempt to stay in touch with all of their care leavers to monitor progress on their pathway plans, and plans should outline how frequently that contact should take place.

When a care leaver moves to new accommodation, their PA must see them at that accommodation within seven days of the move. After the first subsequent review of the pathway plan, they must visit the care leaver at no less than two-monthly intervals.

² The Homelessness (Priority Need for Accommodation) (England) Order 2002

³ Housing Act 1996, Section 179(2)

In some cases, care leavers may decline the support of the council. This should be respected, however periodic attempts should continue to be made to remain in contact. If a young person's situation changes, they need to know that support is still available, and refusing support once doesn't mean that it won't be available in the future.

Staying put

'Staying put' is an arrangement that allows a looked-after child to continue to live with their foster carer – whether a local authority carer or an independent fostering agency (IFA) carer – after their 18th birthday, when they cease to be 'looked-after' by the local authority. This can take place where the council considers it appropriate, and both the young person and the carer want to enter a staying put arrangement.

The council has a responsibility to monitor the arrangement and provide advice and support (including financial) to the foster parent, and the young person to facilitate the arrangement until the young person reaches 21⁴.

Staying close

A number of councils are trialling approaches to 'staying close' – a variant of staying put for young people leaving residential care – using funding from the Department for Education's (DfE) Innovation Programme.

The scheme sees care leavers living independently in accommodation close to their children's home. This would see them continuing to have the support of a key worker from their previous home, and they could visit the home frequently. A full evaluation is expected in 2020.

Local offer

The Children and Social Work Act 2017 requires local authorities to publish a local offer for care leavers, with guidance⁵ recommending this be reviewed every two to three years. This should include all services offered by the council that can support care leavers in, or in preparing for, adulthood and independent living. This includes both those that the authority is legally obligated to provide, such as 'staying put' and housing support, and universal services such as careers advice or public health services. The offer can also include relevant services provided by other organisations, where appropriate. Care leavers should be consulted before the offer is published.

Care Leaver Covenant

The Government has introduced the Care Leaver Covenant. This aims to encourage public, private and voluntary sectors to pledge support, and make specific offers to support care leavers aged 16-25 in living independently.

The covenant links care leavers to offers which can include:

- discounts
- financial support
- exemptions
- personal development
- workshops
- training

⁴ Children Act 1989, Section 23CZA

⁵ www.gov.uk/government/publications/local-offer-guidance

- work experience, apprenticeships and internships.

The covenant can be used by councils to support and extend their local offer, and trials are underway with six councils to identify how it can best be used to support care leavers. A toolkit is being developed for councils and will be available in early 2020.

Access to Information

Under the Data Protection Act 1998, care leavers have a right to access their care records, to better understand their care history and decisions made during their time in care. Councils must facilitate any request made and have a transparent policy in place to support this. They should also work with partners who may hold relevant information. Councils should keep these records for a minimum of 75 years from the date of birth of the adult care leaver and consider suitable retention and storage processes⁶.

⁶ Children Act 1989 guidance and regulations volume three: planning transition to adulthood for care leavers.

Case studies

Introduction

In November 2019, the Local Government Association produced a resource pack to support councillors with an oversight role of children's services in their area, for example a corporate parenting panel or scrutiny committee.

Below are case studies taken from the resource pack, from seven local authorities that together demonstrate the impact in the lives of children from good practice as outlined in Appendix 1 of this report.

City of York Council

City of York Council has a strong track record of supporting young people leaving care; a strength highlighted by Ofsted in its report published in February 2017. The inspectors acknowledged that, by listening to care leavers' views and shaping services around them, York now sees the vast majority of care leavers living in accommodation that suits their needs, with low numbers not in education, employment and training, and most making a successful transition to adult life.

This transition starts with developing a pathway plan at the care review nearest the young person's 16th birthday. This gives two years to put the right plan in place – whether that involves staying with a foster family beyond the 18th birthday ('staying put') or moving into independent living, and education, training or employment. Each case is referred to a personal adviser (PA) when the young person is 17. PAs generally manage caseloads of around 21, helping them know each young person well and make sure they get the best possible support to experience a smooth transition into the leaving care service.

The pathway team is well connected with information, advice and guidance services and the virtual school. This has resulted in the proportion of care leavers in education, employment or training being well above the national average. Two new programmes are being introduced to increase this proportion further, improve career information and support care leavers with learning opportunities.

Teaching life skills is a key element of preparing care leavers to live independently. A pathway life-skills toolkit supports carers and key workers to make sure young people get the right level of help to develop those skills; which include saving money, budgeting and cooking for themselves. Young people are encouraged to remain with their foster carers after their 18th birthdays to continue learning life skills with them as part of the staying put programme, while those in

supported housing benefit from personalised support to build their life skills and confidence at a pace that suits them.

Staying put is an option for all care leavers. Those in residential placements outside York are increasingly moved back to the city before their 18th birthdays so that they can take up this option which is part of a strategic initiative to 'Make York Home' for all young people in care. Staying put also includes young people fostered by connected persons or kinship carers, and those placed with independent fostering agencies. Acting on feedback from young people, those who stay put are encouraged to start work, or to get a Saturday job if they are in education, to make life as 'normal' and as like any other family as possible. As one young person commented, "I'm learning to handle money better as I pay board and pay my own phone bills", while another said they enjoyed "feeling part of a family". Those who go to university can return to their foster carer each holiday.

The option of a four-week stay in a 'taster flat' gives care leavers the chance to experience independent living. They know that they have support throughout their stay there as they develop their life skills before returning to their placement to work on any areas of development and consider what to do next. Accommodation options are varied to suit different needs. Some care leavers might choose to go into a trainer flat with support from the pathway accommodation officer and pathway worker. While others who need more support might opt for supported lodgings with charity SASH or permanently-staffed hostel accommodation, where they have a named key worker and access to daily education sessions and independence skills training. This variety of options allows for gradually increasing independence.

The focus on life skills and a careful transition into accommodation is paying off – the vast majority of care leavers are successfully living independently in suitable accommodation, with none in houses of multiple occupancy. Where there are difficulties, regular risk assessments mean that they are caught early, with creative support packages put in place to help the young person to get back on their feet and move forward. Where care leavers aren't keen to engage and things go wrong, emergency accommodation is also provided – there is always another chance available.

Building a programme of support that genuinely works for care leavers has been helped by social workers and support staff who listen to the views of young people. Care leavers told Ofsted that the council listened carefully, recorded their views well and – importantly – acted upon them. As a result, most were positive about the care and support that they received.

David Purcell, Pathway Team Practice Manager at City of York Council, said: "We've made a real effort to learn from our care leavers to make sure that we can give them the best possible transition into adulthood. It's important that each young person in care can work with us to achieve their ambitions, and can do that at their own pace.

"Every child in York deserves a place they can call home, and to enjoy family life wherever possible. As the corporate parents to care leavers, that's what we do our best to give them."

Royal Borough of Greenwich

The Royal Borough of Greenwich has been working with charity MyBnk to make sure care leavers get good quality financial education to help them when they move into independent accommodation. Care leavers moving on to supported housing all attend the week-long accredited 'Money House' programme as part of their pathway, spending a week with other young people in a real flat learning about everything from tenancy agreements and safe borrowing to budgeting and choosing utility providers.

Referrals are all considered individually to make sure needs are understood and catered for on the course, and the young people are all contacted to sort out logistics to make sure they can attend. The results of its first year are impressive:

- 97 per cent felt more confident about their financial situation
- attendees are three times less likely to have rent arrear issues than their peers
- no one who has completed the training has been evicted
- 90 per cent of those who felt their ability to pay rent and keep their tenancy was below average or poor felt that this improved as a result of the course, with 80 per cent going on to rate their ability as good or excellent.

Anneta Corbin, Family and Young People Service Manager at the Royal Borough of Greenwich said: "Money management is a vital skill for young people when they move into their own accommodation. We know from our care leavers that the better the support they receive to build these skills, the more confident they feel about making that move. Feedback from our care leavers on the programme has been really positive, and we've found that those who have been on the course are much more likely to maintain their tenancies when they move on to independent accommodation."

Leeds City Council

A not uncommon challenge faced by young people leaving care and moving on into independent living and setting up their homes for the first time is getting practical support with things like decorating, plumbing in and setting up white goods, putting shelves up, and so on. These are things that many other young people moving on into independence might get support from their families to do. We work closely with our housing services within Leeds to provide suitable accommodation for young people making this first step, though often these tenancies require some degree of decoration and homemaking. Our experience has been that for some young people the condition of their new home can be variable and the desire to settle our young people into a personalised home can mean that we need to identify support to do this.

As a champion authority of the national Care Leavers Covenant, Leeds Care Leavers Services established a partnership with Engie Regen (Places and Communities Division). Engie Regen is the first private company to sign up as a signatory partner to the covenant, to provide a range of practical supports and offers directly to benefit care leavers. They are also long-standing ambassadors of 'Child Friendly Leeds', and have undertaken some fantastic work to support care leavers in Leeds. Such support includes redecoration, donation of paint, garden clearing, plumbing in washing machines, joinery and other practical home making support and DIY projects. ENGIE Regen are on target to complete 12 projects by December 2019.

This project has provided invaluable support to care leavers, allowing some to have their homes decorated to a high-quality professional standard and in many cases has enabled young people to move quicker, feel settled and to feel a real pride in their new homes.

Hampshire County Council

It isn't unusual for a young person to have goals that might seem unachievable. However, as corporate parents, it's important that councils put the views and wishes of care leavers at the heart of their plans, and work with them to progress towards their goals while keeping alternatives in mind.

At the age of 16, Rob was in the care of Hampshire Children's Services. He didn't engage in education, was using alcohol and was working with the Youth Offending Team following an assault charge. He did, however, show a flair for boxing, continuing to attend training even as he failed to show up for education or work. His hobby was supported by his foster carers, social worker and personal adviser. A pathway plan was developed that allowed him to follow his ambition to become a professional boxer, while encouraging him to take up opportunities with local colleges as alternative options.

As Rob started to win more local and UK title fights, his drive and commitment so impressed the children's services team that they sought out ways to acknowledge and reward his progress and encourage him further, as any good parent would do. This included helping with travel costs to fights, allowing him to travel abroad to a training school for a month, and then supporting him when he took the decision to move abroad to embark on a professional boxing career. A weekly allowance was also allowed, and goods were sent to help him set up home.

When Rob showed a desire to further his own education by learning the language of the country he competed in most frequently, Hampshire helped him to pay for a language course; his dedication to learning means he is now fluent in that second language.

Thanks to the flexibility, support and encouragement offered by Hampshire Children's Services and everyone else working with Rob, he is now a professional boxer who no longer drinks or smokes, and is living a successful, independent life.

Trafford Metropolitan Borough Council

Listening to your care leavers is the perfect way to find out what can really make a difference to them – and it isn't always complicated. In Trafford, the care leavers' forum highlighted that their £57.10 per week benefit had one key problem – it left £7.10 each week that couldn't be withdrawn from the cash point. The point was raised with councillors, who agreed that raising the benefit to £60, which could be withdrawn in £10 denominations, made far more sense. It was also noted that the extra £2.90 could pay for two day's gas in a young person's flat, or cover a chip supper treat. Care leavers were delighted with the response, which showed that they were genuinely listened to and that their corporate parents cared about their lived experiences.

On another occasion, a care leaver raised with Trafford Council that it didn't feel fair for him to search for work or training while his fellow care leavers could still get their benefits without making the same effort. The council therefore decided that the importance of getting care leavers into education, employment or training made it worth providing an incentive. The Corporate Parenting

Board agreed an incentive of up to £30 a week for care leavers who were actively engaged – which could cover anything from work experience, to visiting a job centre, to working with their personal adviser. They could also get a free weekly bus pass to help them carry out these activities. The overall package was worth more than £100 to care leavers who actively worked towards improving their own outcomes, and has proven extremely popular. Seventy per cent of Trafford care leavers are now in education, employment and training – higher than

London Borough of Islington

Islington's leaving care service, Independent Futures, works with care leavers and 16 to 17-year-olds in care to provide a holistic service that prepares and supports them as they move towards independent living. The service has sought innovative ways to help care leavers to make sure they're in a strong position when they leave care. Support includes establishing support networks, providing mental health support, and helping with finding further education and employment.

A key concern of young people when they leave care is around the support networks they will have when they are no longer 'looked-after'. The Grand Mentoring Scheme pairs care leavers with a 'grandparent' who mentors the young person, and provides support and guidance as they move into adult life. This gives them someone independent from the council that they can rely on for help, and who they can build a stable relationship with as they take on greater independence.

Independent Futures has also teamed up with a wide range of local partners from the public, private and charity sectors to give care leavers access to employment and training opportunities. We have an enhanced offer that enables those who wish to attend university to be able to do so with the support of services and additional financial allowances. The variety of partners reflects the range of young people looked-after by the council, providing a broad spectrum of possibilities to show them how much is possible.

The council also works closely with partners in the arts and performance sector to give young people a way to develop their sense of identity and personal achievement, promoting the confidence and resilience that they'll need as they move into work, as well as raising aspirations.

Supporting the physical and mental health, and wellbeing of care leavers is paramount. Well-used weekly drop in health sessions make sure care leavers can get advice when they need it, while free counselling and advice commissioned from a local mental health charity allows them to get support quickly if they find themselves struggling with mental health difficulties. We have also recently embedded clinicians within the service and introduced a specialist mental health social worker within the service in recognition of the level of need some of our young people present with. Regular liaison between CAMHS and adult mental health services ensures continuity of provision for those care leavers who have specific emotional health needs. Where young people need to visit specialists, young people's advisers offer to attend with them for moral support and to make sure they can attend the appointment. We are keen to offer early intervention and encourage young people to make use of personal health budgets (Choice and Control) to improve their mental wellbeing.

Councillor Kaya Comer Schwartz, Executive Member for Children, Young People and Families, said: "Young people when discussing their care experience, have told us that forming and maintaining relationships is important to them and we are committed to being their lifelong champions. We work hard to ensure that we reduce any barriers to them being involved and

achieving their full potential. Our revised offer to care leavers reflects this as well as the passion and commitment we as a council have for our care leavers.”

East Riding of Yorkshire Council

When Ofsted rated support for care leavers at East Riding of Yorkshire Council as ‘outstanding’, it confirmed one of the pathway team’s core beliefs – that getting the basics right, and really understanding what works, are key to making sure that care leavers have a positive experience and make good progress.

Staff working with care leavers know the importance of stability and relationships to children in care, so the pathway team starts working with them in Year 11 to carefully manage the transition from looked-after child to care leaver. Care leavers also work with several members of the team to make sure there is always someone who they can talk to, and who knows them well enough to provide the right kind of support.

Each member of the pathway team has an average caseload of 15, giving them the time to dedicate to each care leaver, while managers work hard to make sure staff have all they need to do the best possible job. This includes an excellent range of training to cover the types of issues young people may face, including the dangers of radicalisation and self-harm.

East Riding has also set up a post-16 subgroup of the virtual school to make sure care leavers’ needs are being met and to raise aspirations among both the young people and the service providers. The group is chaired by the pathway team manager, and includes further education colleges, training providers and Jobcentre Plus. Care leavers are given highly supportive mentoring and specialist advice about their potential options as they progress into further or higher education, training or employment. This strong partnership working at all levels has led to the authority having 69 per cent of care leavers engaged in education, employment or training, higher than similar authorities and the national average.

Pathway Team Manager Sue Smyth said: “One of the most important things that we do is to gain care leavers’ trust, and show them that we’ll support them, no matter what. We’re always keen to try new ideas, but we make sure those basic relationships and core support are never compromised, because they’re the foundations for a strong service. Our care leavers tell us that they feel safe, and that they wouldn’t be where they are now without our support – and that’s the most important thing for all of us.”

“Ready or not”

Care leavers' views of preparing to leave care

Ofsted 2022

Introduction

As an inspectorate of local authority children's services, including services for care leavers, Ofsted wanted to hear directly from care leavers and children currently preparing to leave care. In particular, they were keen to hear how the professionals around care leavers (for example, carers, social workers, personal advisors and others) helped them plan and prepare for the transition to adulthood. They also wanted to find out how involved care leavers were in their plans for life after care – for example, did they have a choice in where they would live and did they have the opportunity to discuss any additional help they needed?

Ofsted wanted to find out whether this support was what those leaving care needed, so that their inspectors could use this information to focus on the things that are important to children when we inspect local authority services, children's homes and others involved in preparing them for leaving care.

Finally, they wanted to find out what impact planning (or lack of planning) has on care leavers' lives after they leave care and approach adulthood. For that reason, they included people who left care longer ago in our survey and interviews. This highlighted the importance of getting it right at an early stage, and ensuring that the correct planning and preparation are available, including when and how these are needed.

The report below is an extract from their research report, that outlines the research they undertook and what young people told them about their experience of leaving care.

The research project

Ofsted wanted to answer the following research questions:

- What help do children get to prepare them for leaving care?
- How are children involved in decision-making and planning in preparation for leaving care?
- Does the help care leavers receive prepare them for leaving care?
- What are care leavers' experiences of receiving and accessing the planned support since leaving care?

- How does care leavers' identity affect their transition into adulthood?

They did this by running an online survey for children in care (aged 16 and over) and care leavers. The survey was run online because of the ongoing pandemic, but also so that we could reach more care leavers. Because completion of the survey was optional, findings may not be representative of all care leavers' experiences.

There 255 responses to their survey and most (89%) were from those aged 25 and under, so were either still in care or had left care fairly recently. Of the respondents:

- 57 (22%) were from children in care aged 16 or 17
- 181 (71%) were from care leavers aged 16 to 34 (3 who left care aged 16 or 17, and 178 care leavers aged 18 to 34)
- 17 (7%) were from care leavers aged 35 and over

Ofsted also held in-depth follow-up interviews with 6 care-experienced people aged 26 and over.

What care leavers told Ofsted was important about preparing to leave care

Feeling ready

Ofsted asked care leavers whether they felt they left care at the right time. More than a third of care leavers felt they left too early.

Local authorities have a duty to support and prepare children in care for independence before they leave. This includes allocating children to a PA, who will continue to work with them when they leave care. They also have to provide a range of financial and practical help (such as grants for setting up a new home, exemption from paying council tax, support with getting a driving licence, and help with job applications). This does vary by local area and, even with support, care leavers can feel like they are expected to become an adult overnight. As one respondent to our survey said, 'You are treated like a child until you are 18 and suddenly you have a whole lot of responsibilities, yet your support is gone'.

Some young people told Ofsted about the lack of choice involved in the decision to leave care, for example saying they had to leave 'whether we are ready or not'. This echoes previous research. In some cases, options were limited by some practical considerations. As one care leaver told us: 'For me, it was too early, but I had no other choice. It was either stay with my carers up [name of city] but was way too far from my college that was in [name of another city] so I ended up moving into a supported accommodation when I was 18.'

As well as a lack of choice, care leavers often felt that they were rushed into leaving care. For some, this made them feel that the local authority was 'trying to get rid of' them quickly. We heard some accounts from care leavers who, in the past, had to move with very little warning: 'It was right up to me being 18 before I knew what was happening and I was really scared that I might lose my home'. This still seems to be the case for some children preparing to leave care now. As one child (aged 16 to 17) told us, 'The local authority want to leave everything to the last 3 weeks and do it then, which surely will cause huge delays, especially when looking for housing'.

Research has highlighted that leaving care later and extending placements are protective factors for care leavers. Although this is not always desirable or possible, both children in care and care leavers thought that more time was needed to help young people get used to leaving the care system.

For some people, leaving care was an exciting time. In these cases, it was usually their own choice to leave care, or they felt ready for the next stage, for example they were starting university. However, for some who chose to leave care, it was because they thought that leaving would be better than their current situation. One care leaver told Ofsted that '[...A] foster home would have been preferable, but trying to create a new family at that age did not really work. I was happy to be independent and away from that home.'

Some care leavers felt well supported in their decision to leave and were able to talk it through with the professionals helping them.

Learning essential skills

Even when care leavers felt they left care at the right time, not all of them felt that they had the skills they needed. This could be because the transition had been rushed, or because the focus was on some skills and not others, for example they had been taught how to cook and clean, but not how to manage money: 'We do not have a choice whether we are ready or not... all I knew how to do was cook and clean did not know how to pay a single bill or the simplest of things.'

Financial preparation

Money was mentioned time and time again by the survey respondents, in relation to all aspects of leaving care (such as how ready they felt, where they lived and their safety). Although care leavers were often helped to access benefits or get money to set up their new homes, only two fifths of care leavers reported getting help to work out what bills and payments they needed to pay and when.

One care leaver told Ofsted they found themselves in financial difficulties a few months after leaving care and had to go and ask a nearby shopkeeper for help: '... I showed her this letter I got and it was a water bill, because I did not know what it was. She said "That's a bill" and I said "What do I do with it?" and she said "Well, you have to pay them". And then it dawned on me: what other things have I not paid?'

Several people attributed money-related problems in later life to this lack of financial preparation: 'I had little help in learning the financial side of things; I am in years of debt with council tax and water rates due to this'. Another told us, 'I was taught to survive not thrive and I did not always survive; I lived on benefits for a long time and sometimes I had to steal or do illegal things to eat or put electricity on my meter'. Almost half of care leavers (47%) did not know how the money they received would change as they got older.

The picture was slightly more positive for 16- and 17-year-olds. The majority of those still in care mentioned that they were getting help with money skills. Although this included 'talking about finances', 'being helped to understand the value of money' and 'budgeting', not all care leavers felt confident that they knew how to manage money themselves. As one care leaver said, 'I know about my care leaver benefits but not about how to spend it and I'm not very good with money so I would like more support in how to budget and things like that, so I don't just waste it all'. However, we did hear several examples of the support care leavers were receiving to help with this.

The 2019 report by the All-Party Parliamentary Group on financial education for children in care highlighted the need to ensure that children in care are prepared to leave the care system confident about personal finance matters. Recommendations included improving financial education in schools, providing more support for foster carers and improving local authority provision and government support (for example, by reducing PAs' caseloads). Previous research has also indicated that care leavers want this support.

Cooking, shopping and managing a household

As well as managing money, many care leavers told Ofsted they did not know how to cook, how to shop on a budget or how to access foodbanks when they needed it. One care experienced adult told us: 'We did some basic bits and pieces in the kitchen at the home – fry an egg, make a cup of tea, you know. When I think about it, would I know how to put a meal together? No. It just was not taught.'

This was not the case for all care leavers though. Some told Ofsted about how they learned from their carers or other people where they lived. For one, the most useful preparation they had for leaving care was '... to watch others in my previous household do things that may become useful to me when I leave care and move to my own place'. For another, it was 'practising essential independent living skills while living with foster carers – such as budgeting, making our own meals, tasks to complete around the house'.

Some of the care leavers we spoke to told Ofsted how living in care left them unprepared for the task of shopping, and even the shops themselves. A few care leavers said that they had not been to a supermarket before. One care leaver said: 'When I lived in the kids' home, I never went to the supermarket... you just opened the fridge, and it was there'. Another care leaver found the experience overwhelming: 'When I first left care, I could not do it. I was stunned at the size and the amount of people and just ran out.'

These are experiences that could be easily incorporated in children's daily lives while in care, and especially when preparing to leave care. Children still in care gave Ofsted examples of how they had been prepared. One said that the support they were getting included 'independent living skills, shopping, cooking, cleaning, learning to use the washing machine', and another said: 'I have been cooking/shopping for nearly two years at the home'.

Providing the right kind of preparation could have a huge impact on young people as they left care and beyond: 'My final residential home had a life skills booklet that made learning fun with photographic evidence that I still look back on today'.

Meeting a personal adviser

The Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000 states that children in care should be introduced to their PA from the age of 16, and the PA will then work alongside the social worker while they are in care, and take over as the child reaches 18. However, only 30% of care leavers met their PAs at age 16 (or earlier), and another 30% met them aged 17. Around a quarter were aged 18 to 21. As a fifth of care leavers told us, this was too late.

We heard from several people who had already experienced debt or homelessness or been evicted from their homes before they were allocated to someone to help them understand how to manage bills, or tell them what help they were entitled to. One respondent told Ofsted that they did not have a PA '... until I was 20 and homeless. I had financial support from this service that helped me. However, I needed more emotional support. I had no support before this from social services.'

When asked whether various professionals were helpful in preparing them for leaving care, the majority of care leavers aged 16 to 34 (62%) felt that their PAs were helpful. Of those 16- and 17-year-olds still in care, 39% still did not have a PA and 21% only got one when they were 17.

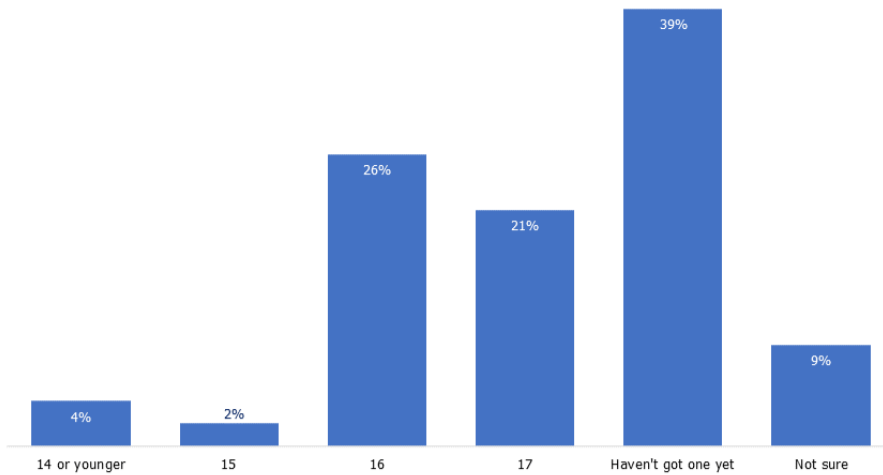


Figure 1: How old were children currently in care when they first met their PA
Based on responses from 57 children in care (aged 16 to 17).

Being involved in decisions and plans about their future

Almost a quarter (23%) of the care leavers responding to the survey told Ofsted that they did not feel at all involved in the plans and decisions that were made when they left care, and a third felt only 'a little involved'. This echoes previous research findings.

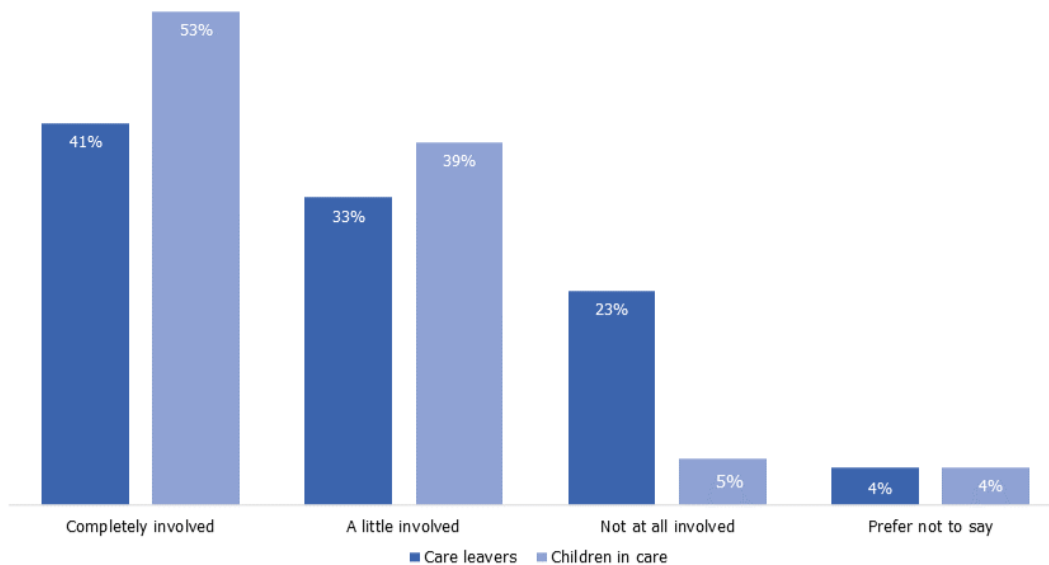


Figure 2: How involved children in care and care leavers felt in decisions and plans
Based on responses from 181 care leavers (aged 16 to 34) and 57 children in care (aged 16 to 17).

For children who were living in children's homes immediately before leaving care, this was even higher. Almost half (47%) felt they were not at all involved in decisions about them. While this is based on a small number of respondents from children's homes, there is indicative evidence of a relationship between living in a children's home at the time of leaving care and not feeling involved in decision-making. Care leavers' comments about this lack of involvement included not being able to have trusted adults or family members with them in meetings and reviews, and not having a say about where they wanted to live. Local authorities have a duty to ensure that all care leavers have a 'pathway plan'. Wherever possible, this should be jointly prepared and agreed by the child and the authority. It should 'set out a career path with milestones such as education, training, career plans, a planned date for leaving care and where and how [they] will live thereafter. It will set out the support which the local authority will provide at all stages of the plan, while [they are] being looked after and when [they] leave care and set up home independently'. Research highlights that being involved in decisions about their future has positive impacts across all areas of young people's lives.

Many respondents told Ofsted that they did not have a pathway plan until they turned 18, and sometimes even older. For children still in care, there was a slightly more positive picture. Around half (53%) of the 16- and 17-year-olds still in care felt completely involved in the plans about their future, and only 5% felt not at all involved.

Some of the children still in care mentioned the importance of having up-to-date plans, but said that these were not always prioritised. Several respondents said they were uncertain about what was going to happen to them in the very short-term future, for example: 'I only have 4 weeks left and I still do not know where I am going'. This had knock on effects for some in other areas of their life: 'I would like to know where I will be living. This will help me look for a job in that area.'

We heard several examples of young people being housed a long distance from work or training. This poor planning meant that one had to get 3 buses to get to work each day, and another could not afford the train fare to get to college so was asked to leave because of poor attendance.

In some cases, care leavers believed the reason they were not involved in decisions and plans was because they were not trusted to know about their own lives. For one respondent, one of the worst things about the professionals helping them to prepare to leave care was social workers '... assuming I would not be able to handle situations'. Sometimes, the reverse was true: professionals believed that care leavers could cope by themselves, and so they were left to get on with things and were not offered the help that they needed. As one young person said, '[I] feel that because I have been doing this [handling things], professionals, especially during pathway plans, have just left me to it. Meanwhile my own well-being/mental health is in tatters and I have never felt so alone in decisions that other young people wouldn't be alone in facing.'

Many care leavers talked about how professionals making decisions about their lives did not know them, or did not listen to their views. One care leaver summed it up: '... my views are never listened to and I feel I have to fight to be heard. And the people making decisions make it very clear, time and time again, that they do not even know me: they forget my name, my age, what my history is and my perspective, and they speak for me in front of me even though I disagree with them. So I just stopped bothering.'

This resonates with previous research that identified that children leaving care are more likely to participate and feel engaged in the planning process when they feel that their after-care worker knows and understands their personal needs. This is also more likely to result in greater levels of satisfaction with the planning and decision-making processes. Professionals taking the time to build a trusting relationship with a child from the moment that they enter care subsequently helps support care leavers' transition.

Of the children still in care who responded, around two thirds told Ofsted that they were asked what kind of accommodation they would like (63%) and in what area they'd like to live (69%). However, only around half (48%) were asked what facilities or support they would need. This echoed real life experiences for care leavers (aged 18 to 34), a fifth of whom reported living in a home that did not have the accessibility adaptations or facilities that they needed, such as cooking or washing facilities.

Three of the six care leavers we interviewed mentioned being given black bin bags to pack their clothes in. Although this occurred less frequently in the younger age group, there were a few who had experienced it. One care leaver said: 'I wasn't given support at all. I was given two bin bags, told to put my clothes in by the staff at the kids' home, and then they took me to a youth hostel. Left me at 17. The social worker put me on benefits, then never saw me again.'

Many care leavers appreciated the support of professionals helping them to physically move their belongings into their new home. However, for some there was no further support or communication after this basic support. They reported feeling on their own and isolated.

Feeling safe

We asked survey respondents whether they felt safe when they first left care. Only around half said they felt safe always or most of the time. Around a quarter rarely or never felt safe.

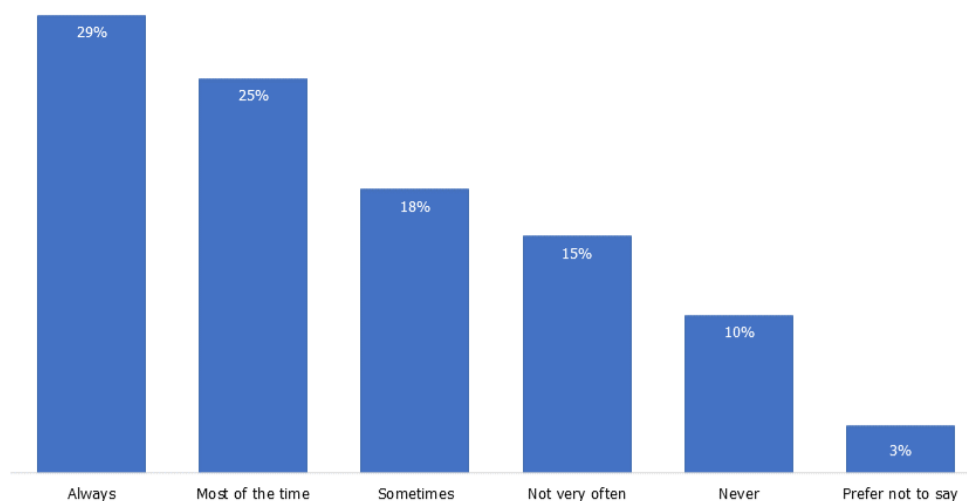


Figure 4: How often care leavers felt safe when they first left care
Based on responses from 146 care leavers (aged 16 to 34).

The 3 most common reasons for not feeling safe were:

- issues relating to money (49%)
- the area where they lived (43%)
- living on their own (35%)

One of the care leavers interviewed talked about their experience of leaving a children's home and moving into a flat, alone, at age 16: 'Walking home at night, you might have someone talk to

you. You don't know what they are trying to do. Going down a dark street to a flat made me nervous. I wasn't part of the community; I didn't know anyone, and I hadn't been there before.'

Sometimes, fears about living alone or in unfamiliar or unsafe areas led to young people feeling pressured to make decisions that they did not want to make. This included reconnecting with family members who may have been a risk to them, moving in with abusive partners or engaging in criminal activity to gain money.

Fewer than half (45%) of care leavers said that someone had talked to them about their safety before leaving care. For those who did have discussions about safety, the most common topics were emotional well-being and mental health, and healthy relationships.

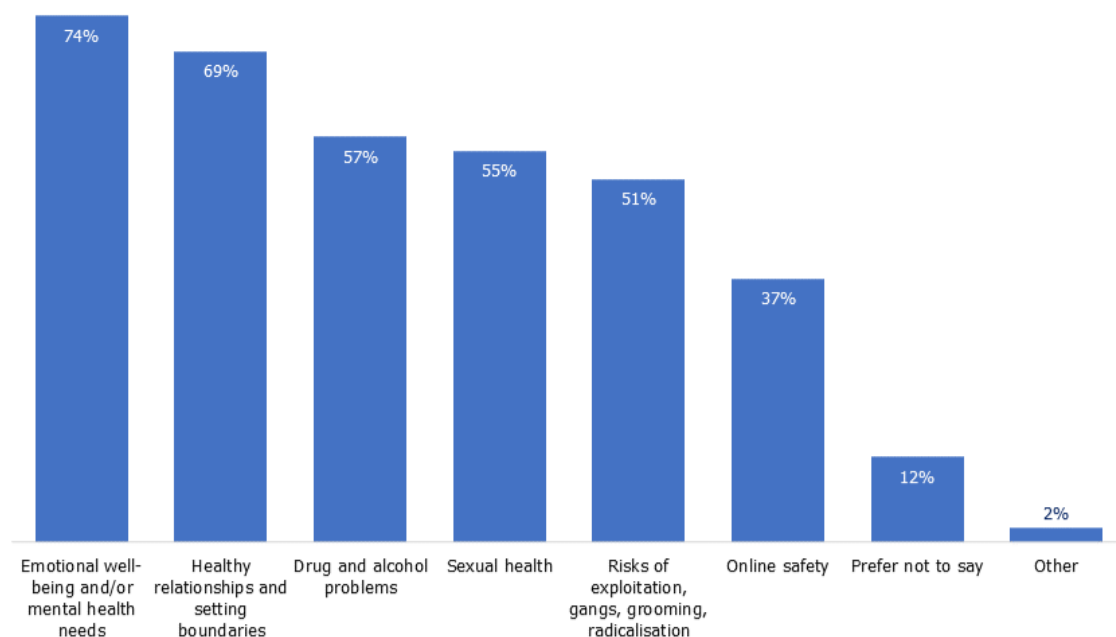


Figure 5: Topics of conversations about safety during care leavers' preparation to leave care
Based on responses from 65 care leavers (aged 16 to 34). Respondents were able to tick one or more options from a list.

Developing the local care leaver offer

Under the Children and Social Work Act (2017), local authorities have a duty to provide and publish a clear offer of support and financial assistance for care leavers once they leave the care of the local authority. This is known as the 'Local offer for care leavers' (or 'care leaver offer'). The Act specifies that the offer should be developed in consultation with relevant people (that is, care leavers and organisations that represent care leavers). Guidance states that local authorities are expected to co-produce 'a local offer that is meaningful and reflects the needs, views and wishes of the care leavers they are responsible for'.

Ofsted asked children in care and care leavers what involvement they had in developing their local care leaver offer. Some respondents left care before the support was formalised through the Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000, which placed a duty on local authorities to provide support to care leavers until age 25. Despite this, only a quarter of both care leavers and children still in care reported being involved in developing plans in their local area.

Of the care leavers who felt they were not involved, two thirds reported that they were never offered the option to get involved. Some care leavers had been involved through their children in care council, care leavers forum and other groups (such as the National Leaving Care Benchmarking Forum). However, others had not heard about this being possible. One respondent told us: 'I would love an opportunity to help shape the support care leavers receive in my area for the better. Social services have never made it known this is possible and again [this] shows how let down care leavers are by their local area as well as the government.' One young person still in care said 'I have asked to be involved and join my children in care council, but no one knows who runs it and this has caused huge delays'.

When young people had a chance to be involved in care leaver groups, they largely – though not consistently – found this helpful. We heard about some positive outcomes of involvement in these groups, including '... lots of opportunities to get involved in skill-building' and the ability to '... get other people's opinions, see what their point of view is, how they had gone through it'. Some specifically appreciated having a chance to help shape the care leaver offer. Care leaver involvement in developing the offer benefits the services in the area, as well as the care leavers themselves.

Care leavers had some good ideas about how more young people could be more involved in helping to develop plans for those leaving care. Often this was as simple as letting children in care and care leavers know that there was an opportunity there to be involved in such things: 'Notify them of opportunities and benefits of attending, cover all expenses, send out regular opportunities to them to reiterate the service is there'. They also suggested highlighting the benefits of taking part to care leavers, such as meeting others, discussing their experiences, using their voice to shape the plans and being empowered.

Crucially, care leavers told Ofsted that it is important that professionals genuinely listen to them when they seek out feedback or when care leavers share ideas based on their experiences, 'not just asking and not doing anything with it'.

Consideration of individuals' identity in decision-making

Ofsted asked all respondents whether they felt that their identity had been considered in their plans for leaving care, for example their gender identity, sexual orientation, religion or ethnic group. This is important because it could affect whether the young person feels that they 'fit in' in their community or that it has the services they need, such as a place of worship. Only a third (33%) of respondents said that their identity had been considered.

While some care leavers gave examples of how they felt that their identity and related needs had been considered and '... completely respected and taken into account by all parties', others identified areas in which they would have liked this to be included in plans. For example, one care leaver said that they would have liked 'support with cultural/ethnic needs that were too expensive or [I] couldn't access for some time'.

Not all survey respondents felt that their sexual orientation, gender identity, religion, ethnicity or disability or any needs related to their identity had been relevant to their leaving care experience. One said: 'What I was most concerned about was safe secure housing, not the above'. Others, on the contrary, felt that these parts of who they are were relevant to their leaving care experience, but some of them had not been asked. A respondent said 'this seemed to be a conversation they never wanted to have with me or didn't know how [to]'.

Being supported through the process

Perhaps unsurprisingly, children in care and care leavers told Ofsted that the professionals themselves can make a real difference to their experience. Half of care leavers felt that social workers, PAs, foster carers or support workers were helpful.

Ofsted asked what the best things were about the people helping them prepare to leave care. Young people frequently mentioned professionals being there when they needed them, and being able to rely on them. One respondent said: 'I've always contacted my PA in times of great struggle and desperation, and she was there for me every single time without fail'. Care leavers also spoke about the impact that sensitive support can have on their emotional well-being: 'Sometimes I feel stupid asking for help all the time, but she makes me feel comfortable and I can talk to her about anything'.

Care leavers also valued being listened to, people explaining things clearly to them and helping them to '... understand the steps that [were] going to be taken'. They also spoke about simply having 'someone to talk to' and being given advice that 'helped [them] get prepared for the future'. For one respondent, one of the best things was that their '... foster carer sat me down and helped me to plan things out and showed me how to prepare myself for different situations'.

People also mentioned professionals' personal attributes that made a difference to them. These included being 'kind', 'patient', 'encouraging', 'non-judgemental', 'understanding', 'open' and 'funny'. Professionals being 'relatable' was an important aspect for some young people. A few young people mentioned professionals 'loving' them. As discussed above, it was also important to young people that they felt 'involved' in decisions, with one positive attribute mentioned being that the professional 'let me take the lead'. Alongside this, young people mentioned 'trust' and the importance of professionals being 'honest'. One said that 'knowing people were reliable and that they would follow through with their word' was one of the best things about the people supporting them in their leaving care experience.

Some of the 'best' things that children in care and care leavers highlighted were basic things that anyone should be able to expect from professionals, such as being 'polite', 'on time', 'answering the phone' and talking to them 'with respect'. It is therefore interesting that when we asked respondents what was less helpful about the professionals who helped them prepare for leaving care, or what they would change, they said 'being late' and 'cancelling meetings' and that professionals were 'unreliable' or 'unresponsive'. This highlights that care leavers just want professionals to treat them with respect.

Sadly, some young people experienced professionals who they felt were 'rude', 'patronising', 'disinterested', or had 'no empathy'. One commented that 'they often tell you how busy they are [and] what they cannot do'. These attitudes sometimes left young people feeling like they were 'a burden' to professionals who do not know them, who 'made [them] feel insignificant' and who they did not trust.

When we asked care leavers (aged 16 to 34) whether they felt cared for by their PAs and social workers, there was a clear difference in the responses:

- two fifths of care leavers (43%) felt that they were always cared for by their PA and less than a tenth (7%) said that they never felt cared for
- in contrast, less than a fifth (16%) reported that they always felt cared for by social workers, and a fifth (21%) never felt cared for

This may reflect that a PA is the person that young people are most commonly in touch with after they leave care. But it is striking that care leavers felt this lack of care from social workers, who have a responsibility to help coordinate plans for their future.

Children still in care were more likely to feel cared for by their social worker. Almost two thirds (37%) said they always felt cared for and 7% never felt cared for.

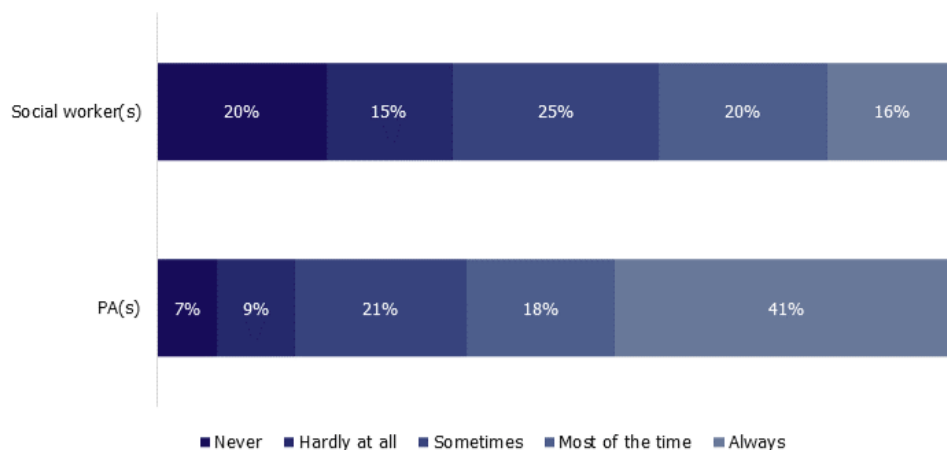


Figure 6: How often care leavers felt cared for by PAs and social workers

Based on responses from 179 care leavers (aged 16 to 34). 'Prefer not to say' responses are not displayed in this chart.

Relationships with a key person they can trust are important for care leavers, especially when they need help. However, some care leavers described how they felt that professionals involved in their lives were part of a bureaucratic system, referring to them as 'politicians', 'only interested in money', 'ticking boxes' and reducing them to 'just a number'.

Relationships with those important to young people

Ofsted asked all survey respondents whether they are, or were, helped to stay in touch with people important to them. These might be family members, friends, foster carers and so on. For children currently in care, two thirds (68%) said that their plans include staying in touch with people important to them and over half (52%) of care leavers aged 16 to 34 said that they were helped. The majority of care leavers aged 35 or over felt they were not helped to stay in touch with people important to them.

Data for the different age groups suggests that there might have been progress in this area in recent years. More 16- to 17-year-olds still in care reported that they have been helped to stay in touch compared with those who had left care. However, this could also suggest that plans when children are still in care do not materialise once they have left care.

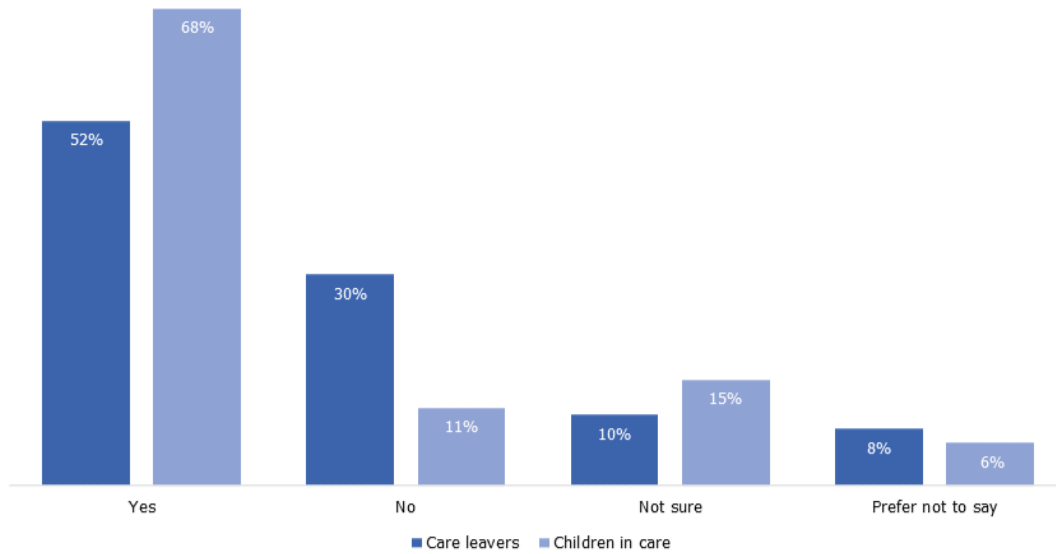


Figure 7: Whether young people felt they were supported to stay in touch with people important to them

A few care leavers commented positively, for example: ‘My carer helped a lot and was supportive, along with my PA’ and ‘[My] social worker was brilliant with this’. However, a number of respondents detailed how they received no support to stay in touch with people. Many care leavers also felt that this was left up to them, for example commenting that ‘I did this myself’ or ‘not [a] single thing was done to help with this’. One care leaver talked about the consequences of not being helped to see important people: ‘I was often moved far away from family and friends and ended up feeling secluded. This resulted in me running away a lot from school, just to see those important to me.’

An older care leaver we interviewed said that they reconnected with their brothers a little when leaving care, but this did not last:

I was the younger of three brothers... All three were fostered in separate foster placements and towns. We never grew up together. The only thing about care that affects me now in adult life is in relationships... Being torn apart from brothers was not a good start... I’ve not really had any contact ever. I saw them a bit when I was leaving care, but they had their own upbringing and problems... I would hope today that would be handled differently.

By contrast, there were situations when care leavers felt forced by circumstances or encouraged by professionals to look to their family for support, even though they had previously been seen as a risk to them or were a source of past trauma. These care leavers were understandably wary of reconnecting with their families: ‘... they just expect you to have a go on your own and go back to these family relationships. It’s like, you either have no one or you go back to those family relationships and I reckon it could be even more damaging.’ Another care-experienced adult had a similar experience: ‘... they just said “why don’t you visit your dad?” Well no; I was in care for a reason’.

Some care leavers, however, did have support from their family after leaving care. Many moved in with parents or brothers or sisters, or knew that they would be there if they needed help: ‘My family were around even if slightly emotionally distant; I knew I had them to fall back on if I needed them’. For other care leavers, the support came from their friends, including their friends’

families: 'My best friend's parents let me stay at their house when I felt unsafe in the semi-independent [accommodation]'.

Lasting relationships with professionals

Carers remained an important source of support for many care leavers. Some were able to continue to live with them in a 'staying put' arrangement, which gave them much welcomed security: 'I felt safe enough to stay here as we have such a good bond and a good family relationship'. Although for many care leavers this is not a possibility, carers were an important source of support even for young people that had moved on.

Care leavers also valued being able to stay in touch with social workers, children's home staff and other professionals after they left care. For example, they said that '... I absolutely adored [my social worker] and I am still in contact with [them] now' and 'My children's home helped me the most; they still stay very close'.

To some care leavers, ongoing relationships indicated genuine care and that the worker or carer was going beyond just doing their job. Knowing that they had a place to go to, where they would be welcomed, was highlighted as being particularly important on significant occasions like birthdays, Christmas or even for Sunday dinner, when respondents felt that having people around them was particularly important. Some care leavers reported being invited back for Christmas dinner, with professionals telling them: 'You can come back [to the children's home] and tell us how wonderful the world is... or tell us [if you] need some help'.

Having this 'security' of being able to go back to the home to visit friends and carers, and knowing they can talk to them, is important to care leavers and helps to ensure a smooth transition. However, we heard some examples of when promises that had been made to keep in contact did not materialise. For one care leaver, the home's response when they made contact made them feel unwelcome, which was distressing and they did not try again: 'They said if you need anything, give me a call. But it was non-existent. I went back a couple of times... I ended up within a hundred yards of the building and got a call saying "something has happened, you can't come". The next week: again. You could just feel the vibe...'

For some care leavers, relationships with social workers and children home's staff ended with no notice, abruptly or without even saying goodbye. One care leaver told Ofsted that 'there were so many social workers I lost track. They left without saying goodbye. I never saw the residential staff again after my last day at the children's home.'

Not honouring assurances to keep in contact or provide ongoing support could sometimes have been beyond the control of the staff. However, the care leavers experienced rejection and felt that staff were not sensitive to how they felt, which could have a long-term impact on their emotional well-being.

Knowing how to get help

Support in an emergency

We asked care leavers aged 16 to 34 whether they were aware of how to get support in an emergency if they needed it. Almost half of respondents (44%) said that they did 'in most situations' or 'always', but a third (32%) of respondents said that they did not, or did not usually. A quarter (24%) of respondents said they had to find out on their own.

It is crucial for people to be able to get support in an emergency, including when this happens out of hours. Some people were unable to contact professionals when needed. One said that 'PAs work office hours, not around evenings, nights and weekends when you most want them'. As one

young person commented, ‘Crisis is when professionals don’t work Friday evenings to Sunday’. Many care leavers felt that they had no support at all, let alone in an emergency. They had to rely on themselves and often felt isolated.

We also asked care leavers whether they knew where to go for help if they were short of money or getting into debt. Most (43%) did not. Only about a third (32%) said that they did, with another 17% saying that they sometimes did. Some people who had been in foster care said that they had access to financial support from their previous foster carers: ‘My ex foster carer supported me voluntarily’. Another care leaver who ‘stayed put’ said: ‘[I] was living with foster carers, so if I had money issues it wasn’t difficult to have help’.

Rights and advice

We asked children in care and care leavers aged 16 to 34 whether they knew about support that we would expect professionals to have made them aware of before leaving care, such as how to complain and access advocacy services.

Young people who were involved less in decisions about their future were also less likely to have been made aware of their rights and how to get help. Almost two thirds of children in care (63%) had been made aware of how to get advocacy support, but a quarter (24%) had not. Strikingly, almost half of care leavers (45%) were not made aware of how to get advocacy support. This raises concerns, especially because we heard from care leavers how helpful both formal and informal advocacy had been to them and their carers.

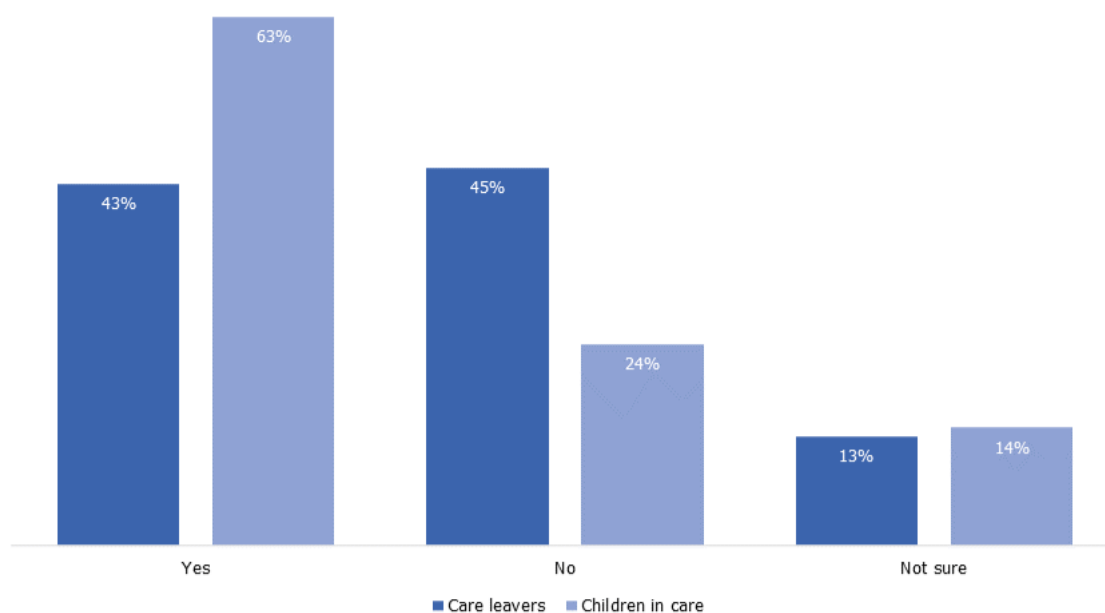


Figure 8: Proportion of children in care and care leavers who had been told how to access advocacy services

Based on responses from 144 care leavers (aged 16 to 34) and 51 children in care (aged 16 to 17).

A number of care leavers said that their foster carers advocated for them, or had organised for them to have a formal advocate. Others had received advocacy support from their independent visitor, or through charity organisations that support care leavers. Some received informal

advocacy from people outside of the care system, in one example from a CEO from the company they worked for:

She was incredible and I couldn't have got where I am now without her. I found myself homeless after joining university and she was the only person who [...] gave me support, helped with university applications, even appealed/got her legal team involved when I didn't receive a place.

Several care leavers spoke of the positive difference that advocacy had made, but some reported that they had had no access to an advocate and would have benefited from one: 'Would have loved an advocate to help keep people accountable and to ensure that continual review actions actually got actioned'.

Over three quarters of children in care (76%) had been told how to complain. Over half of care leavers (53%) knew how to complain, but well over a third (38%) did not – despite many survey respondents discussing experiences that they were not happy about.

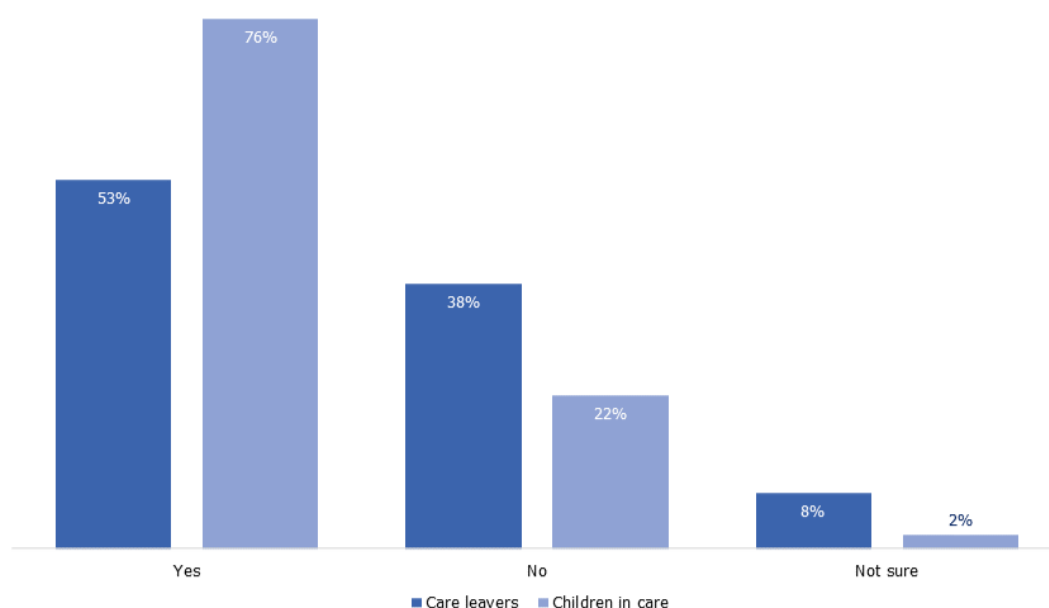


Figure 9: Proportion of respondents who were told how to complain

Based on responses from 144 care leavers (aged 16 to 34) and 51 children in care (aged 16 to 17).

Only slightly more care leavers had been told how to access their records than had not (47% compared with 44%). Access to records has been highlighted as being vital to help care leavers 'make sense of their past' and answer questions about the reasons why they were in care. However, even when care leavers were given access, not all were properly supported in the process. For example, one person we interviewed was left to go through their file alone as there was not a social worker available to support them, despite this being pre-arranged. Almost half of children in care (49%) had not been told how they could access their records when they turn 18 or in the future; only two fifths (41%) knew about this.

Only just over half (51%) of care leavers had been made aware of the support available for them in their local area (the care leaver offer). Almost two fifths (39%) had not, and another 10% were unsure. One care leaver told us: 'I was not made aware of any council tax exemptions or support with education costs'. Another said that 'there was no support. No numbers to contact. I was told I should have got a booklet and pack.'

Only a third (35%) of children in care had been made aware of the support available to them in their local area. Most children (43%) had not, and another quarter (22%) were unsure. A child who did not yet have a PA told us: 'I would like more help and support from more people; I rely on my foster carers and would like more help from either a PA or someone else who knows more about what I can get'.

Being aware of available support is one thing, but young people should be helped to access the support and this should be aligned with receiving practical preparation, as discussed above.

Care leavers' physical and emotional health

Corporate parents have a clear responsibility to provide support to help care leavers to have their health needs met. We asked care leavers whether they were told how to get help with their physical health, like registering with a GP and a dentist: 69% of care leavers (aged 16 to 34) said that they were, and 26% said they were not.

However, the responses also show that over a quarter of care leavers were not given help in this area. When care leavers talked about a lack of support, in many cases this was related to registering for and accessing healthcare. A young person said they 'still have no clue how to get into a dentist or opticians and have been out of care 10 months'. An older care leaver told us: 'They had not even told me that I needed to change doctors. I was registered with a GP that was on the same road as the children's home, but they moved me 10 miles out. So, when I rang the GP, they said "we can't see you because you don't live in our area. You need to re-register"'.

Some respondents noted that their options to remain healthy, for example by eating a balanced diet, were limited by not being taught the necessary skills or not having enough money: 'On £44.50, it's hard to eat. No one told me how to cook meals. It wasn't important in the children's home, so the habits weren't instilled in me.' An older care leaver said: 'The children's home aren't worried about if you eat your carrots and peas. It's just: don't smash the plates over your heads.'

As well as skills and resources for healthy eating, care leavers highlighted the free access to gyms as part of care leaver offers as important in maintaining their health.

Care leavers' mental health and emotional well-being

A third of care leavers were not told how to get help with their mental health or emotional well-being. One care leaver said, 'Many of us know we need help. Many of us get told to ask for help, yet every time we ask for help, we get ignored.'

Others also highlighted the challenges in accessing support and having the information they needed without the perceived embarrassment of asking. One care leaver noted: 'To get the right support is difficult. I have experienced trauma and need someone to help me to recognise when I need help because I don't know.'

Even when care leavers knew where to turn for help, many were not provided with specialist support that was tailored to their traumatic experiences or in a timeframe that met their needs:

[Mental health service] said "have a bath". I don't think that really helps the crippling depression when I want to drown myself.

A further challenge for care leavers was transferring from children's services to adult services, particularly the different support this means or the limited timescales available. A young adult told us:

I was referred to counselling after some months in crisis but this was not really suitable for young people who have experienced trauma... I needed time to build a relationship... I remember her

once saying we have 7 weeks left. I'm not sure how a childhood of abuse could be solved within 9 weeks... It made me feel even worse.

An older care leaver told us:

I think lots of therapy helped, I realised at the age of 27 that I could either live the life that I've got, or I need to go and see someone. So, I went to see a therapist, and I think I was with her for about 10 years.

Current emotional well-being

We asked questions about respondents' current levels of well-being in the survey using standardised questions on personal well-being developed by the Office for National Statistics. While the sample was not representative of the care leaver population, respondents' well-being scores were lower than the general population with more displaying low well-being. This is in line with what has been seen in previous research and suggests a long-term impact on well-being beyond leaving care.

Some care leavers told of support they got from their PA when they experienced problems with their mental health or emotional well-being, while others told of the important role played by social workers, residential staff and those outside of the care sector, such as schools or places of work:

I had been moved right across to the other side of the city, so I wasn't near anyone I knew. I was miles away from work, which was crazy. Work were good in that they then moved me to an office that was nearer to where I lived. And then I was really lucky – I had a really good manager, who came to me one day and said "I'm a bit concerned about you, you don't look happy". So, there were people but it was people outside of the system that were more readily noticing things.

There is indicative evidence of a link between care leavers being involved in decision-making and their current personal well-being. Those not at all involved have lower current well-being than those who were completely involved. One care leaver said: 'I had so many questions about what would happen... and yet nobody could answer. I felt fobbed off a lot of the time... I have never felt so alone in decisions that other young people wouldn't be alone in facing.' Eighty-five per cent of care leavers who felt completely involved in decision-making were told how to get help with their mental health or emotional well-being. They were also more likely to feel they left care at a time that felt right for them. Both of these factors may have impacted on their current well-being.

In our survey, more care leavers reported low well-being than children in care. A transition is a period of uncertainty and can lead to increased anxiety, especially for care leavers adjusting to new circumstances. We asked care leavers (aged 16 to 34) to describe in up to 3 words how they felt before they left care. The results show that a lot of care leavers felt scared, anxious, sad or worried. Others highlighted being isolated and alone, though several also felt happy or excited.

For care leavers, the reported feelings were often made worse by a lack of supportive relationships and poor planning: 'I felt so overwhelmed with the process of leaving care that it had a negative impact on my already poor mental health. I was poorly prepared for the transition...'

Care leavers also reported over-optimism from professionals when they appeared to be very independent. One said: 'I only... [saw my leaving care worker] once a year as he kept telling me how amazing I was doing. So [I] didn't feel I could say how much I was struggling.'

Oversights in practical plans or a lack of resources had the potential to exacerbate pre-existing conditions for care leavers. Someone who had previously suffered from an eating disorder found themselves in financial difficulty soon after leaving care, which aggravated the disorder:

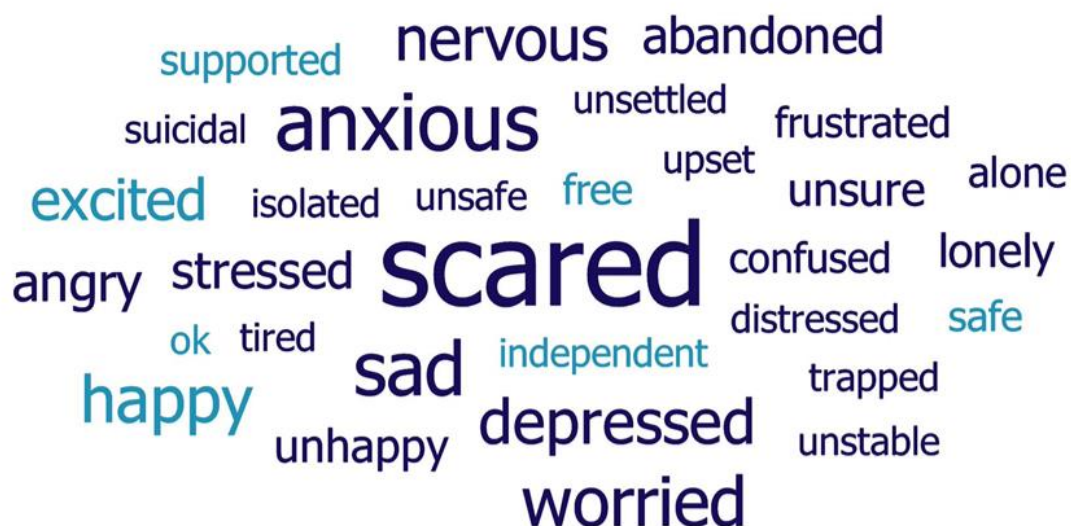


Figure 10: Care leavers' feelings before they left care

Based on responses from 74 care leavers (aged 16 to 34). Words only appear if used more than once.

I'd been diagnosed... as being... anorexic, as a young teenager. So, it was vital that when I left care that there was enough resource for me to feed myself, because what happened was, I quickly went back into that not eating.

Another care leaver reported that they received some support from professionals when they first moved out but this stopped before they felt ready: 'I remember them sleeping over a couple of times, because I was so scared to be alone at night. But I think that stopped when I still wasn't ready to be alone at night, I was still scared...'

A third (32%) of care leavers said that they did not have enough money for hobbies and leisure activities. Research shows that taking part in enjoyable activities can improve well-being.

Identity as a 'care leaver'

Many care leavers said that they were not comfortable telling people they had spent time in care. Some felt being labelled 'a care leaver' led to them being looked down on and treated differently: 'There is a stigma attached to it...'. This could have a large impact on their emotional well-being. One care leaver explained: '... I am ashamed of it. I want to be like everyone else.'

Some felt unable to answer questions about their past in personal relationships and so had to lie or leave out information. This affected their well-being as they felt they were 'constantly lying'. One care experienced adult told us: 'It has an impact as an adult as you have to put on a face and not be your authentic self'. One care leaver regretted not being more open about their situation: 'I lost friendships over not telling people the truth... I wish I had told [them] from the beginning, as I lost a good friendship there'.

Care leavers' expectations of how they are perceived sometimes prevented them asking for the help that they needed, or feeling that they were not listened to: '[A PA] basically discouraged me from going to university... I felt like if I said I'm struggling, they were going to be like "well maybe it's not for you", rather than "we'll help you".' Others described how the fact that they spent time in care still cropped up into their 30s and 40s, such as being noted on medical records. They felt that the label 'follows you around'.

Corporate Parenting Responsibilities

Local authorities are responsible for being good "corporate parents" by prioritizing the needs and voices of care leavers in all policy and service decisions. This includes involving care leavers in consultations and decision-making processes.

- ☞ *“I think it is important for the council to act as good corporate parents to the young people of Herefordshire as it enables us to have stability. The aide of council staff, versus the lack of, provides a sense of security and ensures that young people do not feel ignored”.*
- *“Find us opportunities like you would for your own children. When you see opportunities have us in mind”*

Pathway Planning

- A pathway plan contains targets and contingency plans for the care leaver covering:
 - Health and wellbeing
 - Employment and training
 - Accommodation
 - Independent living skills
- Completed with a social worker incorporating the wishes of the child
- Reviewed every six months (or when there is a change of home) with the personal advisor

Provision of a Personal Advisor (PA)

- Local authorities must appoint a PA for care leavers aged 18-25.
 - In Hereford we aim to co-allocate a personal advisor from the age of 16.
 - The personal advisor provides guidance, emotional support, and practical assistance, helping care leavers navigate challenges such as housing, education, employment, and life skills.
- ↳ Social and emotional support
- Advocacy

Financial Assistance:

This includes:

- **Setting Up Home Allowance:** Grants of £3,000 to help with the costs of setting up a new home.
- **Financial Guidance:** Care leavers may receive advice on budgeting, managing bills, and ^{or} accessing benefits or funds for education, employment, or training.
- **Council Tax Exemption:** Many local authorities offer council tax exemptions or reductions for care leavers up to the age of 25.

Current Data – Care Leavers:

- Herefordshire currently supports 377 care leavers of whom 36 (10%) have a disability.
- 212 (56%) are male, of which 27 (7%) are Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (UASC).
- 165 (44%) are female.
- Currently 27% of placements are out of county.

⁵⁶How do we identify need:

- Needs data is gathered from a variety of sources, including;
 - Demand data from Children Services including the Home Finding Team,
 - Home Point,
 - Various Strategies e.g. Sufficiency Strategy,
 - Information from commissioned contracts.

Prevention of homelessness and provision of accommodation for 16 and 17 year olds who may be homeless and/or require accommodation – Legislative Duties:

- Local Authorities have duties under Part 3 of the Children Act 1989 or Part 7 of the Housing Act 1996 to secure or provide accommodation for homeless 16 and 17-year-olds.
- Case law has clarified the relationship between the duty under section 20 of the Children Act 1989 and duties under Part 7 of the Housing Act 1996 in the case of 16 or 17-year-olds who require accommodation.
- 16 or 17-year-olds who are owed a duty under section 20 of the Children Act 1989, takes precedence over the duties in the 1996 Housing Act.
- However, whilst section 20 of Children Act 1989 takes precedence, housing services also have duties towards young people who are homeless or threatened with homelessness.
- Duties owed by each service will depend on a range of factors:
 - Which service the initially seek help from;
 - The outcomes of any assessments and enquiries;
 - The wishes and felling of the young person and their family.

Legislative Duties (continued):

- There are only two circumstances in which a local authority might find that a homeless young person should not be accommodated under Section 20 of the Children Act 1989 and may be instead be owed duties under Housing Act 1996. These are where a young person is:
 - Not a child in need;
 - 16 or 17-year-old child in need who, having been properly and fully advised of the implications and having the capacity to reach a decision, has decided that they do not want to be accommodated under section 20 of the Children Act 1989 .
- Children's services and housing services have worked together to develop two protocols to support care leavers and 16 and 17-year-olds respectively.

Supported Accommodation Regulations/Ofsted:

In April 2023, The Supported Accommodation regulations were laid before Parliament and brought the new national standards and Ofsted regime into law. From 28th October 2023, registration became mandatory. This means that any supported accommodation provider, accommodating a looked after child or care leaver aged 16 or 17, must be registered with Ofsted by this date, or they will be committing an offence. Ofsted released information on the inspection framework, which details the 3 outcomes model to be used. Formal inspections are currently expected to start in the autumn of 2024:

- **Outcome 1** - Consistently strong service delivery leads to typically positive experiences and progress for children. Where improvements are needed, leaders and managers take timely and effective action. The next inspection will be within approximately 3 years.
- **Outcome 2** - Inconsistent quality of service delivery adversely affects some children's experiences, and this may limit their progress. Leaders and managers must make improvements. The next inspection will be within approximately 18 months.
- **Outcome 3** - Serious or widespread weaknesses lead to significant concerns about the experiences and progress of children. Leaders and managers must take urgent action to address failings. The next inspection will be within approximately 6 months.

The Regulations include the Quality Standards

Quality Standards set out the outcomes that providers are required to achieve, and cover four key areas:

1. **Protection Standard** sets out the requirements to protect young people from harm and abuse. This includes having policies and procedures to safeguard young people, providing appropriate training for staff members, and ensuring that young people have access to advocacy services.
2. **Accommodation Standard** sets out the requirements to ensure young people can access safe and suitable accommodation. This includes providing a clean and comfortable living environment, ensuring that accommodation meets health and safety standards, and provides appropriate cooking, washing, and personal care facilities.
3. **Support Standard** sets out the requirements to ensure young people receive the necessary support to achieve positive outcomes. This includes providing access to education, training, and employment opportunities, as well as help with managing finances, developing life skills, and accessing healthcare services.
4. **Leadership and Management Standard** outlines the requirements for effectively managing supported accommodation. This includes having clear policies and procedures in place, providing appropriate training for staff members, involving young people in decision-making around their care and support, and regularly monitoring and evaluating the quality of support offered.

What housing options are available – Commissioned:

Supported Accommodation for young people aged 16-25 (including homeless young people aged 16 and 17 years old and care experienced young people aged 16-25 years old.) Two contracts are in place:

- **Service 1** delivers homes for 16 young people - 10 accommodation spaces reserved for use by children's services and 6 accommodation spaces reserved for referrals from the housing solutions team – this referral pathway can be flexed if there is need by arrangement with Commissioning. This service also includes 1 unit of emergency accommodation.
- **Service 2** delivers homes for 8 care experience young people and includes 1 accommodation space that can be used as assessment accommodation.

What housing options are available – Commissioned (continued):

Local Framework

- Developed to broaden the available options to accommodate care experienced young people aged 16-25 in Herefordshire. The framework provides the opportunity to source local accommodation, support or both from landlords and support providers. The framework focuses on providers who are able to offer services within Herefordshire and ideally within 10 miles of a care experienced young person's home. Four providers currently operating offering approx. 40 homes for young people in total. **note not exclusive to Herefordshire Care leavers*



County wide Housing related floating support services for people aged 16+

- The service has the capacity to support up to 110 people at any one time, plus their families and support networks. The service also delivers mediation to people aged 16-25, and is developing links with post-16 education settings to deliver education workshops to prevent youth homelessness.
- Herefordshire council are also part of a **regional framework** to deliver supported accommodation for care experienced young people aged 16-25. Staffordshire are the lead authority and placements are arranged via the councils Home Finding Team.

What housing options are available - Non Commissioned:

Herefordshire Council has developed a pathway of accommodation for people who are homeless or rough sleeping aged 18 and over. This can include care leavers. These units were provided using Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) funding under a range of programmes and are all based in Hereford City:

- Homelessness Hub 4 x 1 bed self contained units and 8 rooms with communal shared facilities. Staffing on site to include evenings and weekends;
- 11 x 1 bed en-suite units and 2 x 1 bed self contained pod's, with communal facilities (e.g. kitchen, laundry and lounge). Staffing on site to include support staff and 24 hours caretaker;
- 12 x 1 bed self contained units for transitional accommodation with light touch support provided by the council's rough sleeping outreach team.

Helping young people understand their support/accommodation options:

Herefordshire Council has a specialist **Housing Personal Advisor** who works with Care Leavers who are homeless or at risk of homelessness. Working jointly with Commissioning, Social Workers and Housing, the Housing Personal Advisor can assist with both short term and longer terms options and services intended to support young people make a planned transition into independent living.

Staying Put:

- Some young people may wish to remain living with their foster carer(s) when they reach the age of 18 and are no longer 'in care'. This is referred to as a 'staying put'.
- The intention of 'staying put' arrangements is to ensure that young people can remain with their former foster carers until they are prepared for adulthood, can experience a transition akin to their peers, avoid social exclusion and be more likely to avert a subsequent housing and tenancy breakdown.

How do we support move on - Housing in Herefordshire (1):

Home Point and Allocations Policy:

- The Housing Act 1996 requires local authorities to develop and publish allocation schemes for determining the priorities and detailing the procedures to be followed in allocating social housing. As Herefordshire Council does not own any housing stock, it works in partnership with Housing Providers to address housing need through the allocation of social housing via choice based letting scheme, Home Point. Whilst Home Point administers the housing register, it does not make offers of housing. These are made by the Housing Providers.
- It was recognised that more could be done to support care leavers, and as such, the scheme was reviewed and updated to include care leavers being given additional preference. This means young people can register earlier, from the age of 17 ½, (ordinarily applicants must be 18 to register), this added time “ages” the application and means care leavers move up the list quicker than an average young person.
- In addition, Herefordshire care leavers in a supported arrangement through Herefordshire Council can also move to band A (when ready for independent living), which is the highest available banding under the scheme.

How do we support move on - Housing in Herefordshire (2):

Commissioned Providers:

- Tailored, flexible support is provided in line with the persons pathway plan to encourage independence and help people to develop skills to successfully secure and sustain suitable permanent accommodation.
- Support provided can include but is not exhaustive to: managing finances, addressing debt and maximising income, developing domestic and social skills, understanding housing options available along with tenancy rights and the responsibilities of landlords.
- Commissioned providers use a range of tools to support this area of work including bespoke tenancy training courses for those with limited experience of independent living.
- Once jointly assessed as ready for move on providers support young people to register with Home Point providing evidence of work completed to demonstrate their ability to find and keep a future home.
- Once accommodated young people can access the floating support service to ensure additional support is provided to mitigate against tenancy failure.

How do we support move on - Housing in Herefordshire (3):

Private Sector

- Young people can access private rented sector accommodation and can be supported to access a Rent Guarantor Scheme and a cashless bond deposit through the Rent/Bond Loan Scheme.
- Support through these schemes will only be approved/authorised if the accommodation is both affordable and sustainable to the young person for the length of the tenancy.

Home Ownership

- Ownership options vary but where possible, young people will be supported to access affordable home ownership properties. In Herefordshire advice on low cost home ownership schemes is available on Herefordshire Council website.

Next steps:

- Redesign of Service 2 to widen scope including potential to add additional homes as step down accommodation and offering an end to end service.
- Additional in county shared accommodation options for Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (UASC) to be explored along with shared tenancy schemes
- ✦ Consideration of agreements with housing providers to provide direct lets for care leavers either as standalone procedures or as part of further enhancements to the local allocations scheme

What's in the accommodation pipeline:

- Single Homeless Accommodation Programme (SHAP).
- Funding received from Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) to purchase 15 x 1 bed units by March 2025.
- The units will be available for vulnerable young people aged between 18-25.
- 7 x 1 beds have already been purchased (Sept 24).
- The units will be used as step down accommodation for young people requiring light touch support.
- The units will be managed by Caring for Communities and People (CCP) on a 6 year lease.
- We work with housing providers to deliver housing through planning policy.
- Strategic Housing has secured £5 million capital for move on accommodation.
- 2 units in Hereford City Centre being converted for a minimum to 6 x 1 bed self contained units (subject to planning permission).

Education, Employment, and Training (EET) Support:

- **Education and Training Support:** Bursaries for higher education and help with travel, equipment, and tuition fees.
- **Employment Support:** They may offer career advice, mentoring, apprenticeships, internships, or work placement opportunities.
- **Guaranteed Apprenticeships:** Some authorities offer guaranteed apprenticeships within their organizations or with partner employers.
- **University support:** Education bursary of £2,000 and accommodation in the summer holidays.
- **Bespoke mentoring:** for children at risk of becoming 'not in training, education or employment (NEET)

Health and Wellbeing Support:

- **Mental and Physical Health Services:** Commissioned health services, and emotional well-being programs, through the Independent Care Board (ICB)
- **Consultant psychologist (through CAMHS):** To better understand and support trauma
- **Healthy Living Programs:** These can include guidance on nutrition, fitness, sexual health, and substance misuse.
- **Membership to HALO.**
- **Safer connections:** local authority-funded therapeutic support service for care experienced children.

Moving up to adulthood pathway:

Referrals from Teams in Children and Families Directorate (C&F) for children & young people 16 – 25 years old who are likely to have ASC needs and will need a managed transition:
 (with provision within workflow for early notification to ASC at 14, for ASC to begin attending EHCP reviews alongside Children's):

- Children with disabilities team
- SEND team
- Care experienced children and young adults teams
- Early Help

Referrals can be made regardless of whether the child has an EHCP

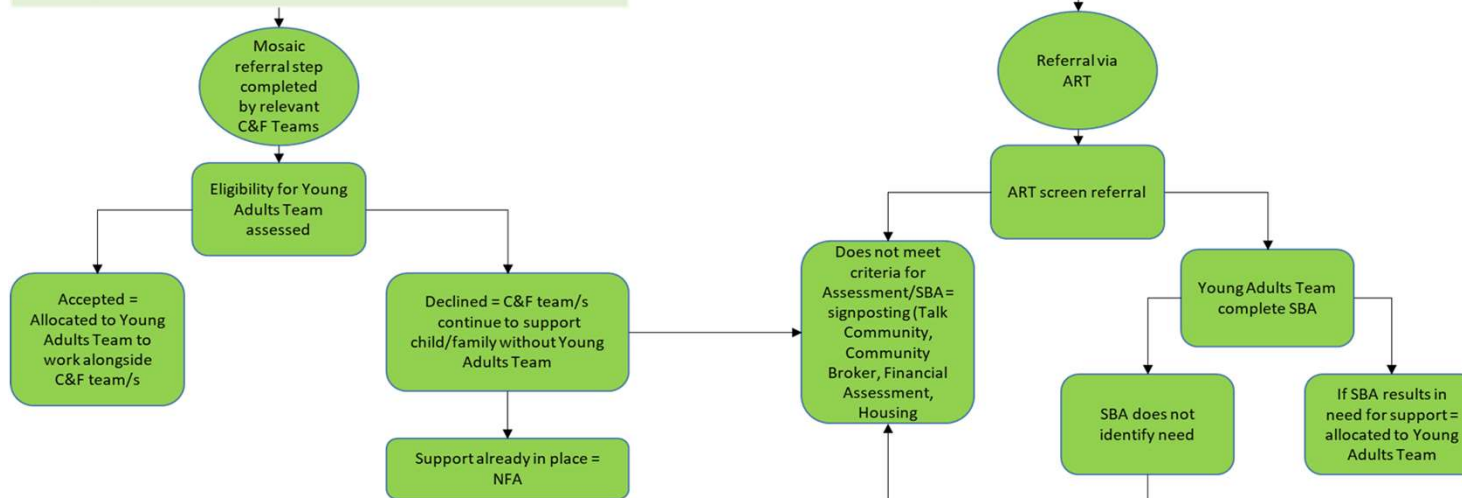
Non exclusive list

External referrals for young people aged 18-25 (who are not already known):

- Individuals directly
- Individuals' families/carers directly
- Health services
- Schools & colleges*

*For 18+ year olds only; younger children would be referred directly to Children's

Non exclusive list



75

How we ensure this is a seamless service:

- Monthly meetings between young adults team and Children with Disabilities (CWD) team.
- Shared 'tracker' for children moving up to adulthood.
- Early notification referrals are made for children with complex needs at 14 to enable proactive planning.
- Young Adults team attend annual reviews of a child's Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) from the age of 15.
- Continuing Healthcare (CHC) assessments are undertaken together at 17 alongside children and their parents.
- Mental Capacity Assessments (MCA) are undertaken together where needed.
- Young Adults team attends children's Complex Needs Panel on a monthly basis to inform future planning.
- Young Adults team and CWD service manager are together building a 'moving up' group, to support a multi-agency space to provide advice and support to practitioners supporting young people with complex needs.
- Young Adults team attend preparation for adulthood events at the local colleges.
- CWD staff are trained in undertaking MCA assessments.
- Named transitions lawyer who supports young people from 16 up to adulthood.
- Talk Community support as part of the Strengths Based Assessments prior to 18.
- Continuation of service arrangements for direct payments to prevent the stop/start and gap in services for children and young people.
- CWD continue to support care experienced young people up to the age of 25 where they have eligible needs from adult social care and/or health. Where this is relevant, staff work together in partnership inclusive of colleagues from the Special educational needs (SEN) team to support young people.
- Preparing for adulthood 'tracker' shared with the SEN team to co-produce plans for young people which considers their goals, care and education needs where young people have an EHCP.

Joint working story board:

- Liam was open to the CWD team as a child in care from 2012.
- The young adults team and Liam's children's social worker attended Liam's annual reviews from 2019 to start to get to know him.
- Prior to Liam turning 18, a joint assessment was undertaken with Liam, involving his family and both the young adults and children's teams. The plan was agreed that it was in Liam's best interests and wishes to remain with his foster carers under a 'staying put' arrangement. This was appropriate for Liam as he continued to access his education and wanted to remain at home.
- During this time Liam was supported to develop his independence skills, this included support from his carers such as to learn to cook, clean and maintain his home, Liam's travel training was also agreed through his EHCP.
- Liam spoke about wanting to move out, he was supported to visit placements by his Personal Advisor [CWD] and adults Social Worker.
- Liam changed his mind!
- Liam has been supported to remain with his foster carers under Shared Lives, following successful assessment.



- *Present day....*
- Liam continues to live with his carers, he has a LA appointed Deputy to support with his finances. This is reviewed regularly and Liam is having increasing opportunities to budget and develop these skills.
- Liam attends Houghton day opportunities which is a working farm in the community, Liam is developing his employability skills. This is supported via Liam's EHCP.
- Liam's goal is to work towards supported living, to support this goal Liam continues to be supported by his Personal Advisor and social worker to create a clear moving on plan, and ensure he has the support he needs to make his step into independence as successful and enjoyable as possible.
- Liam's team continue to work together to ensure he is reaching his goals, is safe, has opportunities in education and in readying for independence.
- Most importantly, Liam tells us he is happy, he is excited to work towards his goal of being independent and having supported living arrangements in place.



Title of report: Work programme 2024/5

Meeting: Health Care and Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee

Meeting date: 3 October 2024

Report by: Statutory Scrutiny Officer

Classification

Open

Decision type

This is not an executive decision

Wards affected

All Wards

Purpose

To consider the draft work programme for Herefordshire Council's scrutiny committees for the municipal year 2024/25.

Recommendation(s)

That:

- a) **The committee agree the draft work programme for Health Care and Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee contained in the work programme report attached as appendix 1, which will be subject to monthly review, as the basis of their primary focus for the remainder of the municipal year.**
- b) **The committee note the work programme for the other scrutiny committees, and identify any opportunities for collaboration or alignment of work.**

Alternative options

1. The committee could decline to agree a work programme for its future committee meetings. This would likely result in unstructured and purposeless meetings.
2. The committee could also decline to identify areas of potential collaboration or alignment of work with other committees. This could result in duplication or overlap of work.

Key considerations

3. A fundamental part of good scrutiny is planning and agreeing a programme of work for the committee to undertake. A well-considered work programme:

- a. identifies priorities for the committee's work that align with corporate and partnership priorities, as well as reflecting community concern;
 - b. ensures that each identified topic has clear objectives that focus the committee's work;
 - c. creates a timetable for the committee's programme of work so that the committee carry out its work at the optimal time; and
 - d. provides officers and partners with requirements for evidence that will support the committee in providing evidence-based scrutiny
4. To prepare this work programme, the committee chairs have met with officers of the council to identify potential priority areas of work for the committee. These priority areas have been scheduled within the work programme to ensure the committee considers topics when it is most useful to do so. A draft of this work programme has then been circulated to the council's corporate leadership team and other key senior directors, alongside committee chairs, for further comment and refinement.
 5. As agreed by Scrutiny Management Board, I have replaced individual work programme reports, updated in time for each committee meeting, with a single combined work programme, published at the beginning of each month. This makes it easier for committees to plan work on topics that straddle the remit of more than one committee. It also facilitates planning for specific items on the work programme from corporate directors. The most recent work programme was published on 2 September 2024 and is attached as Appendix 1.
 6. Attached as Appendix 2 to this report is the council's forward plan of key decisions.

Community impact

7. Effective scrutiny enables the committee to reflect community concern, one of the four purposes of scrutiny as outlined by the Centre for Governance and Scrutiny.

Environmental impact

8. This report contains no direct environmental impacts. However the work that the committee will undertake resulting from agreeing this work programme may have direct impacts. Reports arising from or supporting this work will outline their potential environmental impact.

Equality duty

9. The public sector equality duty (specific duty) requires us to consider how we can positively contribute to the advancement of equality and good relations, and demonstrate that we are paying 'due regard' in our decision making in the design of policies and in the delivery of services. This report contains no direct equality impacts. However the reports and issues that the committee will consider may have direct impacts. Reports arising from or supporting this work will outline the any associated equality impacts for committee consideration.

Resource implications

10. This report constitutes part of the typical function of this committee. Similarly, a programme of work undertaken by committee is an integral part of the council's 'business as usual'. There is no resource implication in setting or agreeing a work programme. However agreed topics in the work programme, in particular any requests for bespoke research or the involvement of outside experts or community groups, may incur resource costs. These will be contained in any reporting or planning of agreed topics within this work programme.

Legal implications

11. The remit of the scrutiny committee is set out in part 3 section 4 of the constitution and the role of the scrutiny committee is set out in part 2 article 6 of the constitution.
12. The Local Government Act 2000 requires the council to deliver the scrutiny function.

Risk management

13. There are no risks identified in the committee agreeing an effective and timely programme of work. However there is a risk to the council's reputation if committees fail to set a work programme, or set a programme of work that does not address local authority, partnership or community priorities.

Consultees

14. In drafting this work programme, consideration has been given to:
 - a. The previous work of scrutiny committees;
 - b. Priorities suggested by members of the committee; and
 - c. Work with Herefordshire Council officers to develop topics and agree optimum timings to bring items for consideration.
15. This work programme is subject to ongoing review, which may involve additional consultees.

Appendices

Appendix 1 – Scrutiny work programme 2024/25 September 2024

Appendix 2 – Herefordshire Council Forward Plan 20 September 2024 onwards

Background papers

None

SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME 2024-2025

Below are the work programmes of Herefordshire Council’s five scrutiny committees.

Work programmes are subject to change, with revised programmes agreed at the end of formal committee meetings.

Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee

Briefing

2 September 2024

Auditing and quality assurance

Committee Meeting

17 September 2024 report publication date **9 September 2024** pre meeting lines of enquiry planning **6 September 2024**

Topic and Objectives	Evidence required	Attendees*
Quality Assurance <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Scrutinise audit work to ensure that its practice is of the highest standard possible. • Understand the common weaknesses in practice and how staff are supporting to address them. • Analysis of common issues in other local authorities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Overview of case management activity • Briefing on quality assurance from Leeds City Council • Quality Assurance Framework • Quality Assurance Framework, Leeds 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Service Director Early Help, Quality Assurance, and Prevention • Chair, Safeguarding Children Partnership
Improvement Plan <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Scrutiny of Herefordshire Children’s Services and Partnership Improvement Plan Phase 2 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improvement Plan Phase 2 • Quality Assurance – Hearing the Voice of the Children Young People and Parent / Carers plan on a page 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Corporate Director, Children and Young People

Committee Meeting**26 November 2024** report publication date **18 November 2024** pre meeting lines of enquiry planning **15 November 2024**

Topic and Objectives	Evidence required	Attendees*
Including children’s voices in council policy <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understand the role of the council’s children’s advocacy team. • Scrutinise the council’s participation and engagement strategy • Scrutinise how the council seeks to understand the priorities of children and young people with regard to council areas of responsibility. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Area of focus – transport 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Focus group with children and young people, both within and outside the service • Children and Young People quality of life survey 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Complaints and Children’s Rights Manager • Tori Lynch, Head of Service for Corporate Parenting • Hereford City Youth Council

Committee Meeting**21 January 2025** report publication date **13 January 2025** pre meeting lines of enquiry planning **10 January 2025**

Topic and Objectives	Evidence required	Attendees*
Ensuring sufficiency for children and young people with a SEND <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evaluate the level of need for SEND provision in Herefordshire, and how Herefordshire Council and partners meet that need. • Understand how Herefordshire Council, the Department for Education and other bodies fund the development of capacity to support children with a SEND. • Scrutinise how the council, schools and health partners work together to support children, with or without a statement of need or education, health and care plan (EHCP). • Explore the role of short breaks and their commissioning. • Measure progress in meeting recommendations following the review by the Local Government Association. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To be confirmed 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Liz Farr Service Director, Education • Hilary Jones – Service Manager SEND • Jade Brooks – Integrated Care Board Children’s Lead • Wye Valley Trust

Briefing**February 2025**

Update on school attainment

Committee Meeting

18 March 2025 **report publication date 10 March 2025** pre meeting lines of enquiry planning 06 March 2025

Topic and Objectives	Evidence required	Attendees*
Child exploitation <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Understand different ways children are at risk of exploitation and the factors that contribute to that risk.• Scrutinise how the different agencies work together to tackle exploitation.• Scrutinise the role of the Herefordshire Safeguarding Children Partnership in tackling exploitation.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Member briefing on child exploitation• Criminal exploitation of children, young people and vulnerable adults - county lines• Childrens-society-Criminal-Exploitation-Stages-of-Recruitment• Exploitation Safety Plan Practice Guidance	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Service Director, Safeguarding• West Mercia Police• West Mercia Youth Justice Service• Wye Valley NHS Trust

*The Corporate Director, Children and Young People and Portfolio Holder, Children and Young People, both have a standing invitation to each committee meeting. It is assumed that the portfolio holder will attend each meeting.

Connected Communities Scrutiny Committee

Working Group Meeting

8 October 2024

Topic and Objectives	Evidence required	Attendees*
Public Realm Future Operating Model <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Scrutinise proposals for a new operating model for the council's contract for public realm works. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Overview of proposed operating model Draft contract 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Service Director Environment and Highways Programme Director – major contracts

Committee Meeting

15 October 2024 **report publication date 7 October 2024** pre meeting lines of enquiry planning 1 October 2024

Topic and Objectives	Evidence required	Attendees*
Local authority housing delivery models <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consider commissioned research into housing delivery models in other local authorities Make recommendations to Cabinet on potential operating models in Herefordshire. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Commissioned research 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Service Director, Economy and Growth Head of Service, Housing and Wellbeing Head of Housing Development
Public Realm Future Operating Model Task and Finish Group recommendations <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Agree recommendation from the committee's task and finish group scrutinising proposals for a new operating model for the council's contract for public realm works. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Task and finish group report 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Service Director Environment and Highways Programme Director – major contracts
Work programme <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review work programme 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Draft work programme 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Statutory Scrutiny Officer

Committee Meeting**13 November 2024** report publication date **5 November 2024** pre meeting lines of enquiry planning **31 October 2024**

Topic and Objectives	Evidence required	Attendees*
Enterprise Zones <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Scrutinise operation of Hereford Enterprise Zone and how learning from the project will be applied to future enterprise zones. Understand the economic and social benefits of enterprise zones. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Outline of the economic and social benefits of enterprise zones. SWOT of enterprise zone proposals 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Current and previous chairs of the Hereford Enterprise zone Representative from Ross Enterprise Zone
Work programme <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review work programme 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Draft work programme 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Statutory Scrutiny Officer

Committee Meeting**15 January 2025** report publication date **7 January 2025** pre meeting lines of enquiry planning **6 January 2025**

Topic and Objectives	Evidence required	Attendees*
Local Transport Plan <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Scrutinise findings of public consultation on Local Transport Plan proposals. Review draft plan before Council approval. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Draft Local Transport Plan Plan consultation findings 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Service Director Environment and Highways Head of Transport and Access Services Members of Connected Communities Scrutiny Committee
Work programme <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review work programme 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Draft work programme 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Statutory Scrutiny Officer

Committee Meeting

12 March 2025 report publication date **4 March 2025** pre meeting lines of enquiry planning **21 February 2025**

Topic and Objectives	Evidence required	Attendees*
Highways Winter Maintenance <ul style="list-style-type: none">Review of winter maintenance of highways following the 2024-25 winter period.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Overview of winter serviceMap of highways and footpaths gritted during the winter period	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Service Director Environment and HighwaysHead of Highways and Traffic
Work programme <ul style="list-style-type: none">Review work programme	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Draft work programme	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Statutory Scrutiny Officer

*The Corporate Director, Economy and Environment, Cabinet Member, Economy and Growth, Cabinet Member, Community Services and Assets, Cabinet Member, Roads and Regulatory Services, and Cabinet Member, Transport and Infrastructure, all have a standing invitation to the meeting.

Environment and Sustainability Scrutiny Committee

Committee Meeting

23 September 2024 **report publication date 13 September 2024** **pre meeting lines of enquiry planning 16 September 2024**

Topic and Objectives	Evidence required	Attendees*
<p>Active travel measures including road safety for all users</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Explore the county policy on implementing active travel measures where new road build is being proposed. Explore where the council is on implementation of active travel measures across the county. Explore the benefits and challenges of active travel measures around key buildings such as schools and hospitals and residential roads in Herefordshire. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Active Travel policy Appropriate case studies from within the county and other authorities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Herefordshire Council leads on active travel measures Groups representing relevant stakeholders including: pedestrians, walkers, cyclists and other vulnerable road users.
<p>Work programme</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review work programme 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Draft work programme 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Statutory Scrutiny Officer

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Committee Meeting

18 November 2024 **report publication date 8 November 2024** **pre meeting lines of enquiry planning 7 November 2024**

Topic and Objectives	Evidence required	Attendees*
<p>Bus service improvement plan</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Scrutinise plans to invest the indicative £1,064,000 allocated to Herefordshire Council by the Department for Transport to improve bus services. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Funding allocation and proposed improvements to bus services in Herefordshire. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Head of Transport and Access Services Bus services user groups
<p>Work programme</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review work programme 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Draft work programme 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Statutory Scrutiny Officer

Committee Meeting

20 January 2025 **report publication date 10 January 2025** pre meeting lines of enquiry planning 9 January 2025

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Topic and Objectives	Evidence required	Attendees*
<p>Tree and Hedgerow management</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understand the findings of the recent Defra consultation on hedgerow management. • Scrutinise council tree and hedgerow management policy and see whether it is fit for purpose for the county and climate change resistant. • To consider the county tree strategy as an enabler for Herefordshire to become a carbon offset trading partner with others. • Look at countywide action on ash dieback and replacement. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Council policy on tree and hedgerow management 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • National Farmers Union • CPRE (formerly Council for the Protection of Rural England) • Policy leads on tree and hedgerow management
<p>River Lugg water quality</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Investigate work to improve the water quality of the River Lugg and the prospect of getting some of the £35 million for the River Wye improvement diverted to the River Lugg. • Understand the implications of poor water quality on the ability to plan and build new housing. • Evaluate the progress on developing new wetland areas on river improvement and their impact on housing development. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 5 Years of analysis of water quality data (from Nutrient Management Board or Environment Agency) • Evidence from Merry Albright (Home Builders Federation) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Herefordshire Construction Industry Lobby Group • Natural England • Environment Agency • Natural Resources Wales • Defra River Wye champion
<p>Work programme</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review work programme 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Draft work programme 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Statutory Scrutiny Officer

Committee Meeting

24 March 2025 report publication date **14 March 2025** pre meeting lines of enquiry planning **13 March 2025**

Topic and Objectives	Evidence required	Attendees*
Energy Efficiency and Retrofitting <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Understand the outcomes of the Building Retrofit and supply chain development funded by Climate Reserve fund• Evaluate progress on Keep Herefordshire Warm initiatives• Consider whether new houses and self –build properties are ‘zero carbon ready’	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Climate Reserve fund financial reports• Stats of surveys undertaken, grants awarded, work completed• Future Homes Standard	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Gareth Ellis – Sustainability & Climate Change Officer• Andrew Cooper – LGA, previously Renewable Energy Assoc., Yorkshire Energy Services• Jackie Jones – Building Sense
Work programme <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Review work programme	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Draft work programme	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Statutory Scrutiny Officer

*The Corporate Director, Economy and Environment and Cabinet Member, Environment, both have a standing invitation to the meeting.

Health Care and Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee

Briefing

20 September 2024

Supporting care leavers

Committee Meeting

3 October 2024 **report publication date 25 September 2024** pre meeting lines of enquiry planning 23 September 2024

Topic and Objectives	Evidence required	Attendees*
Supporting care leavers <ul style="list-style-type: none"> How do we identify and meet the housing and support needs of care leavers? How do we ensure that the council’s looked-after children leave its care with good life skills? Where needed, how does the council ensure a smooth transition from children’s to adult services? 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Head of Service, Corporate Parenting Service Director – All Ages Commissioning Head of Service, Living Well Head of Service, Housing
Review of Talk Community <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pre-decision scrutiny of the review of Talk Community 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review final report 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Service Director, Communities
All-age carers’ strategy working group <ul style="list-style-type: none"> To agree a terms of reference for a working group to scrutinise the council’s draft all-age carers’ strategy action plan. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Working group terms of reference 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Statutory Scrutiny Officer
Work programme <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review work programme 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Draft work programme 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Statutory Scrutiny Officer

Working Group Meeting

Date to be confirmed

Topic and Objectives	Evidence required	Attendees*
All-age carers' strategy action plan <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Scrutiny of all-age carers' strategy action plan Recommendations to further develop the action plan 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Draft action plan 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Commissioning Manager, Community Wellbeing Chair, Carers' Partnership Group

Committee Meeting

25 November 2024 **report publication date 15 November 2024** pre meeting lines of enquiry planning 14 November 2024

Topic and Objectives	Evidence required	Attendees*
West Mercia Police "Most Appropriate Agency" policy <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Scrutinise the impact of the change in West Mercia policy regarding responses to welfare, mental health incidents and missing persons. Further scrutinise the delivery of the policy. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> West Mercia Police "Most Appropriate Agency" policy Herefordshire Council policy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> West Mercia Police Director of Public Health
Supported housing for working age adults with additional needs <ul style="list-style-type: none"> How do we forecast, commission and meet the housing needs of adults with a learning or with a severe and enduring mental health problem? How do we work with developers to provide the required housing? 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Service Director – All Ages Commissioning Head of Housing
All-age carers' strategy action plan – recommendations of the working group <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Discuss and agree recommendations of the proposed working group. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Working group report and draft recommendations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All-age carers' steering group chair Senior commissioning officer
Work programme <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review work programme 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Draft work programme 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Statutory Scrutiny Officer

Committee Meeting27 January 2025, **report publication date 17 January 2025** pre meeting lines of enquiry planning 16 January 2025

Topic and Objectives	Evidence required	Attendees*
Health and Wellbeing Strategy <ul style="list-style-type: none"> To examine the objectives of the strategy. To scrutinise delivery plans underpinning key objectives of the Health and Wellbeing Strategy. To measure progress in developing Herefordshire’s Joint Strategic Needs Assessment. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Health and Wellbeing strategy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Chair, Health and Wellbeing Board Director of Public Health
Work programme <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review work programme 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Draft work programme 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Statutory Scrutiny Officer

Committee Meeting31 March 2025 **report publication date 21 March 2025** pre meeting lines of enquiry planning 20 March 2025

Topic and Objectives	Evidence required	Attendees*
Topic to be confirmed		
Work programme <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review work programme 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Draft work programme 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Statutory Scrutiny Officer

*The Corporate Director, Community Wellbeing and Cabinet Member Adults, Health and Wellbeing, both have a standing invitation to the meeting.

Scrutiny Management Board

Committee Meeting

10 September 2024 **report publication date 2 September 2024** pre meeting lines of enquiry planning 29 October 2024

Topic and Objectives	Evidence required	Attendees*
Herefordshire Council financial position <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Scrutinise: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The 2023-24 budget outturn ○ Preparations for the 2025-26 budget 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2023-24 budget outturn 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Director of Finance (Section 151 officer)
Work programme <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review work programme 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Draft work programme 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Statutory Scrutiny Officer

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Committee Meeting

28 October 2024 **report publication date 18 October 2024** pre meeting lines of enquiry planning 16 October 2024

Topic and Objectives	Evidence required	Attendees*
The management and delivery of capital projects <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How does the council approach project manage • Understand the council's approach to project management overall • What have been the strengths and areas for improvement of the PMO approach? • How does the council ensure that it has the right capability and capacity to deliver projects at the right quality, within budget and to agreed timescales? • How does the council ensure value for money through the delivery of capital projects? • How does the council understand its performance with regards to the management and delivery of projects, how does it ensure it constantly improves its performance? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • TBC 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Corporate Director, Economy and Environment

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How does the council ensure that the interactions between capital projects and the revenue budget are effectively managed? • What impact has the council had through capital project and how can it have greater impact in the future? 		
<p>Devolution – options for Herefordshire</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To assess prospective options for a submission to Government for devolution powers to include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Options for partnership arrangements with other local authorities. ○ Understanding the path to a devolution settlement ○ The opportunities and benefits for Herefordshire Communities from devolution ○ The risks and Risks and challenges to Herefordshire from devolution 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Corporate Director, Economy and Environment
<p>Herefordshire Council Plan – Delivery Plan Working Group</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agree terms of reference for a Council Plan Delivery Plan Working Group, to contribute to the development of the delivery plan. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Draft working group terms of reference 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Statutory Scrutiny Officer
<p>Work programme</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review work programme 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Draft work programme 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Statutory Scrutiny Officer

Working Group Meeting

November 2024

Topic and Objectives	Evidence required	Attendees*
<p>Herefordshire Council Plan delivery plan</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understand what actions the Executive is prioritising in the Delivery Plan • How will the Executive ensure that they are sufficiently ambitious but also realistic? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Draft delivery plan 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To be confirmed

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How is the council performing in terms of this year’s delivery plan? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ How will that impact next year’s delivery plan? • What will be the impact of the delivery plan on Herefordshire communities? 		
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Committee Meeting

16 December 2024 report publication date **6 December 2024** pre meeting lines of enquiry planning **4 December 2024**

Topic and Objectives	Evidence required	Attendees*
<p>Financial Monitoring</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review of 2024-2025 Quarters 1 and 2 outturn • How effective has the executive been in managing the budget for the first 6 months of the year • Where has the executive failed to achieve planned savings and what mitigating actions have been taken? • Where has the executive seen unplanned growth in budgets and what mitigating actions have been taken? • What are the key risks to the delivery of the budget over the remainder of the year? • What has been the impact of the executive’s work on the communities of Herefordshire? • Scrutiny of management action to achieve planned budget outturn. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Budget 2024 Quarter 1 and 2 outturn 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Director of Finance
<p>Workforce planning and strategy</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How does the council determine its workforce requirements? • Where are the gaps in the current council staffing structures and skills, and what work is underway to fill those gaps? • What has been the impact of MERS on the council’s structure, and how will those impacts be addressed? • What programmes are planned and are underway to develop the council’s workforce? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Workforce strategy • Annual staff survey findings 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Director of Human Resources and Organisational Development

Herefordshire Council Plan – Delivery Plan Working Group <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agree findings of the delivery plan working group 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Final working group report 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Statutory Scrutiny Officer
Work programme <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review work programme 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Draft work programme 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Statutory Scrutiny Officer

Committee Meeting

14 and 24 January 2025 **report publication dates 6 and 16 January 2025** pre meeting lines of enquiry planning 3 or 6 January 2025 (date to be confirmed)

Topic and Objectives	Evidence required	Attendees*
Budget, Capital Programme and Medium-Term Financial Strategy <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Scrutinise the proposed 2025-26 budget for Herefordshire Council. • Evaluate the alignment between the medium term-financial strategy and the Herefordshire Council Plan and its delivery plan. • Ensure that the capital priorities in capital programme align with the priorities of the delivery plan. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Draft 2025-26 budget • Capital Programme • Medium-term financial strategy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Director of Finance • All corporate directors • Leader, Council
Work programme <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review work programme 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Draft work programme 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Statutory Scrutiny Officer

Committee Meeting

11 March 2025 report publication date **3 March 2025** pre meeting lines of enquiry planning **28 February 2025**

Topic and Objectives	Evidence required	Attendees*
Financial Monitoring <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review of 2024-2025 quarter 3 outturn. Scrutiny of management action to achieve planned budget outturn. Scrutiny of portfolio holder action to identify risks in delivery of agreed budget. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Quarter 3 outturn 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Director of Finance
Digital, Data and Technology <ul style="list-style-type: none"> What are the council's proposed investments in digital and data technology? How does the council achieve value for money in its investments? What are the gaps in the council's information technology, and how will address them? What staffing, training and corporate restructuring will be required to deliver the proposed investments? What opportunities exist to digitise council services? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> How will the council ensure that digitisation does not exclude vulnerable groups? 		
Work programme <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review work programme 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Draft work programme 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Statutory Scrutiny Officer

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Committee Meeting

May 2025 report publication date **May 2025** pre meeting lines of enquiry planning **May 2025**

Topic and Objectives	Evidence required	Attendees*
Hoople <ul style="list-style-type: none"> How does our relationship with Hoople deliver value for money for the council? How does our relationship with Hoople deliver value for money for the council? 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Director of Finance

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How does Hoople itself deliver value for money? • What are Hoople’s areas of competence and expertise? • How does the council balance the friction caused by having a client/supplier relationship with the benefits of having a Tekkal supplier and a specialist? • How does the council capture Hoople’s expertise in shaping relevant policies and plans? • What has been in the impact of Hoople on the communities of Herefordshire? • How does Hoople contribute to the priorities in the Council Plan and its annual delivery plan? 		
<p>Work programme</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review work programme 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Draft work programme 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Statutory Scrutiny Officer

*The Director of Finance and all Cabinet portfolio holders have a standing invitation to each committee meeting. Portfolio holder attendance is dependent on the topic being discussed.

HEREFORDSHIRE COUNCIL FORWARD PLAN



This document, known as the Forward Plan, sets out the decisions which are expected to be taken during the period covered by the Plan by either Cabinet as a whole, or by individual Cabinet Members. The Plan is updated regularly and is available on the Herefordshire Council website (www.herefordshire.gov.uk) and from Council Offices. This edition supersedes all previous editions.

The council must give at least 28 days' notice of key decisions to be taken. A key decision is one which results in the council incurring expenditure or making savings of £500,000 or more, and/or is likely to be significant in terms of the strategic nature of the decision or its impact, for better or worse, on the amenity of the community or quality of service provided by the council to a significant number of people living or working in the locality affected.

Current cabinet members are listed below. For more information and links papers for Cabinet meetings please visit <https://councillors.herefordshire.gov.uk/mgCommitteeDetails.aspx?ID=251>

Councillor Jonathan Lester	Corporate Strategy and Budget (Leader of the Council)
Councillor Elissa Swinglehurst	Environment (Deputy Leader of the Council)
Councillor Carole Gandy	Adults, Health and Wellbeing
Councillor Ivan Powell	Children and Young People
Councillor Harry Bramer	Community Services and Assets
Councillor Graham Biggs	Economy and Growth
Councillor Pete Stoddart	Finance and Corporate Services
Councillor Barry Durkin	Roads and Regulatory Services
Councillor Philip Price	Transport and Infrastructure

Documents submitted in relation to each decision will be a formal report, which may include one or more appendices. Reports will usually be made available on the council website at least 5 clear working days before the date of the decision. Occasionally it will be necessary to exempt part or all of a decision report from publication due to the nature of the decision, for example if it relates to the commercial or business affairs of the council. Other documents may be submitted in advance of the decision being taken and will also be published on the website unless exempt.

To request a copy of a decision report or related documents please contact governancesupportteam@herefordshire.gov.uk or telephone 01432 261699.

The following information is provided for each entry in the Forward Plan:

Heading	Contains
Report title and purpose	A summary of the proposal
Decision Maker and Due date	Who will take the decision and the date the decision is expected to be made
Lead cabinet member and officer contact(s)	The cabinet member with responsibility for this decision and the officers producing the decision report.
Directorate	The directorate of the council responsible for the decision.
Date uploaded onto plan	The date the decision was first uploaded and the notice period started for key decisions.
Decision type, exemptions and urgency	Whether the decision is a Key or Non-Key decision, if the report is expected to be fully open, partly exempt or fully exempt and if urgency procedures are being followed.

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Decisions to be taken by Cabinet at a formal meeting are listed first, ordered by date, and include both Key and Non-Key decisions. Decisions to be taken by individual Cabinet Members are then listed, grouped by portfolio area and sorted by date. These include Key decisions only.

Report title and purpose	Decision Maker and Due date	Lead cabinet member and officer contact(s)	Directorate	Date uploaded onto plan	Decision Type, exemptions and urgency
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Cabinet decisions by date (Key and Non-key listed)

<p>Children and Young persons' Improvement Plan – progress update To provide a progress update in respect of the Children and Young persons' Improvement Plan</p>	<p>Cabinet 26 September 2024</p>	<p>Cabinet member children and young people</p> <p>Victoria Gibbs, Service Director Early Help, Quality Assurance and Prevention, Rachel Gillott, Service Director, Safeguarding and Family Support, Bart Popelier, Project Lead</p> <p><small>victoria.gibbs@herefordshire.gov.uk, Rachel.Gillott@herefordshire.gov.uk, Bart.Popelier@herefordshire.gov.uk Tel: 01432 261772</small></p>	<p>Children and Young People</p>	<p>16 September 2024</p>	<p>Non Key Open</p>
<p>Q1 2024/25 Budget Report To report the forecast position for 2024/25, including explanation and analysis of the drivers for the material budget variances.</p>	<p>Cabinet 26 September 2024</p>	<p>Cabinet member finance and corporate services</p> <p>Rachael Sanders, Director of Finance</p> <p><small>Rachael.sanders@herefordshire.gov.uk Tel: 01432 383775</small></p>	<p>Corporate Support Centre</p>	<p>16 September 2024</p>	<p>Non Key Open</p>

Report title and purpose	Decision Maker and Due date	Lead cabinet member and officer contact(s)	Directorate	Date uploaded onto plan	Decision Type, exemptions and urgency
<p>Q1 Performance Report Note and approve the quarterly performance report</p>	<p>Cabinet 26 September 2024</p>	<p>Cabinet member finance and corporate services</p> <p>Jessica Karia, Head of Corporate Performance and Intelligence jessica.karia@herefordshire.gov.uk Tel: 01432 260976</p>	<p>Corporate Support Centre</p>	<p>16 September 2024</p>	<p>Non Key Open</p>
<p>To re-commission the Integrated Community Equipment Service (ICES) in Herefordshire To approve the re-commissioning of the county's Integrated Community Equipment Service (ICES), which supports residents to live safely and independently in their own homes and communities for longer</p>	<p>Cabinet 26 September 2024</p>	<p>Cabinet member adults, health and wellbeing</p> <p>Sharon Amery, Senior Commissioning Officer sharon.amery2@herefordshire.gov.uk Tel: 01432 383734</p>	<p>Community Wellbeing</p>	<p>16 September 2024</p>	<p>KEY Open</p>
<p>Corporate Parenting Strategy To approve the corporate parenting strategy</p>	<p>Cabinet 28 November 2024</p>	<p>Cabinet member children and young people</p> <p>Caroline Marshall, Project manager, Julie Mepham caroline.marshall3@herefordshire.gov.uk, Tel: 01432 260249,</p>	<p>Children and Young People</p>	<p>16 September 2024</p>	<p>KEY Open</p>

Report title and purpose	Decision Maker and Due date	Lead cabinet member and officer contact(s)	Directorate	Date uploaded onto plan	Decision Type, exemptions and urgency
<p>Student Accommodation Update and Recommendations To update Cabinet Member on the progress and budget for the project</p>	<p>Cabinet 28 November 2024</p>	<p>Cabinet member community services and assets</p> <p>Joni Hughes, Head of Chief Executive's Office, Susan White, Programme Manager</p> <p><small>Joni.Hughes@herefordshire.gov.uk, Susan.White2@herefordshire.gov.uk Tel: 01432 260598, Tel: 01432 260070</small></p>	<p>Economy and Environment</p>	<p>16 September 2024</p>	<p>KEY Open</p>
<p>To agree a long term lease with a city centre tenant To agree a long term lease with a city centre tenant</p>	<p>Cabinet 28 November 2024</p>	<p>Cabinet member community services and assets</p> <p>Helen Beale, Senior Estate Manager</p> <p><small>HBeale@herefordshire.gov.uk Tel: 01432 260688</small></p>	<p>Corporate Support Centre</p>	<p>16 September 2024</p>	<p>KEY Fully exempt</p>

Report title and purpose	Decision Maker and Due date	Lead cabinet member and officer contact(s)	Directorate	Date uploaded onto plan	Decision Type, exemptions and urgency
<p>Herefordshire and Worcestershire Group Training Association Ltd (HWGTA) Investment Partnership Model</p> <p>To develop a business case outlining options for a preferred investment model and;</p> <p>to approve the preferred investment model option for the HWGTA Ltd and Herefordshire Council partnership to enable the development of a vocational centre of excellence on Skylon Park.</p>	<p>Cabinet 23 January 2025</p>	<p>Cabinet member community services and assets</p> <p>Joni Hughes, Head of Chief Executive's Office, Gabriela Singh, Project Manager</p> <p>Joni.Hughes@herefordshire.gov.uk, Gabriella.Singh@herefordshire.gov.uk Tel: 01432 260598, Tel: 01432 260375</p>	<p>Corporate Support Centre</p>	<p>16 September 2024</p>	<p>KEY Open</p>
<p>New care facility</p> <p>To consider and agree the business case to invest in and develop the council's own care facility in Herefordshire to meet future demand</p>	<p>Cabinet 23 January 2025</p>	<p>Cabinet member adults, health and wellbeing</p> <p>Hilary Hall, Corporate Director Community Wellbeing, Hayley Doyle, Service Director - All Age Commissioning</p> <p>Hilary.Hall@herefordshire.gov.uk, Hayley.Doyle@herefordshire.gov.uk Tel: 01432 260832</p>	<p>Community Wellbeing</p>	<p>16 September 2024</p>	<p>KEY</p>
<p>Cabinet Member Decisions (Key decisions only)</p>					
<p>Portfolio: adults, health and wellbeing</p>					

Report title and purpose	Decision Maker and Due date	Lead cabinet member and officer contact(s)	Directorate	Date uploaded onto plan	Decision Type, exemptions and urgency
<p>To re-commission the technology enabled care and call monitoring service in Herefordshire To approve the proposed approach to re-commissioning a Technology Enabled Care Service (TECS) in Herefordshire. This is a joint service between Herefordshire Council and NHS Herefordshire and Worcestershire Integrated Care Board (ICB).</p> <p>The current contracts relating to technology related equipment and call monitoring end on 31 March 2025. This report details the intended approach to re-commission a new joint service from 1 April 2025, for up to five years. This is in line with both organisations statutory duty to provide community equipment, including telecare, as set out in the Care Act 2014.</p>	<p>Cabinet member adults, health and wellbeing 26 September 2024</p>	<p>Cabinet member adults, health and wellbeing</p> <p>Sharon Amery, Senior Commissioning Officer sharon.amery2@herefordshire.gov.uk Tel: 01432 383734</p>	<p>Community Wellbeing</p>	<p>16 September 2024</p>	<p>KEY Open</p>
<p>Community Spaces Capital Grant Scheme To approve the approach for the Community Spaces Capital Grant Scheme</p>	<p>Cabinet member adults, health and wellbeing 2 October 2024</p>	<p>Cabinet member adults, health and wellbeing</p> <p>Amy Pitt, Service Director Communities, Community Wellbeing Amy.Pitt@herefordshire.gov.uk Tel: 01432 383758</p>	<p>Community Wellbeing</p>	<p>16 September 2024</p>	<p>KEY Open</p>

Report title and purpose	Decision Maker and Due date	Lead cabinet member and officer contact(s)	Directorate	Date uploaded onto plan	Decision Type, exemptions and urgency
<p>Carer Support Service re-procurement To agree the proposal to re-procure Herefordshire Carer Support Service for a period of 2 years with an option to extend for a further 12 months</p>	<p>Cabinet member adults, health and wellbeing 10 October 2024</p>	<p>Cabinet member adults, health and wellbeing John Burgess, Senior Commissioning Officer <small>John.Burgess3@herefordshire.gov.uk</small></p>	<p>Community Wellbeing</p>	<p>16 September 2024</p>	<p>KEY Open</p>
<p>Portfolio: children and young people</p>					
<p>Children and Young People's Workforce Strategy To approve, for implementation in September 2024 the council's Children & Young People Workforce Strategy 2024-2028.</p>	<p>Cabinet member children and young people 20 September 2024</p>	<p>Cabinet member children and young people Caroline Marshall, Project manager, Debbie Thompson, HR Business Partner, Danielle Pyemont, Senior Project Manager <small>caroline.marshall3@herefordshire.gov.uk, debbie.thompson@herefordshire.gov.uk, danielle.pyemont@herefordshire.gov.uk Tel: 01432 260249, ,</small></p>	<p>Children and Young People</p>	<p>16 September 2024</p>	<p>Non Key Open</p>

Report title and purpose	Decision Maker and Due date	Lead cabinet member and officer contact(s)	Directorate	Date uploaded onto plan	Decision Type, exemptions and urgency
<p>Recommissioning of Early Help Family Befriending & Mentoring Services</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The purpose of this document is for the Cabinet Member to be made aware of and agree to the recommissioning recommendation proposed – to tender for new contract/s for the same or redesigned service/s. • To delegate future operational decisions to Service Director. 	<p>Cabinet member children and young people 13 December 2024</p>	<p>Cabinet member children and young people</p> <p>Richard Watson, Senior Commissioning Manager - All age disability, Sam Westwood, Commissioning Officer, All Age Disability, Community Wellbeing</p> <p><small>rwatson@herefordshire.gov.uk, Sam.Westwood@herefordshire.gov.uk Tel: 01432 383047, Tel: 01432 383097</small></p>	<p>Community Wellbeing</p>	<p>16 September 2024</p>	<p>KEY Open</p>
<p>Portfolio: community services and assets</p>					

Report title and purpose	Decision Maker and Due date	Lead cabinet member and officer contact(s)	Directorate	Date uploaded onto plan	Decision Type, exemptions and urgency
<p>High Needs Capital Grant: Purchase of a building for Herefordshire’s Pupil Referral Unit To approve the spend from the High Needs Grant to purchase a suitable building, to relocate on to one site, Herefordshire’s Pupil Referral Unit</p>	<p>Cabinet member community services and assets 11 October 2024</p>	<p>Cabinet member community services and assets Hilary Jones, Virtual headteacher, Caroline Marshall, Project manager, Quentin Mee, Head of Educational Development hjones@herefordshire.gov.uk, caroline.marshall3@herefordshire.gov.uk, Quentin.Mee@herefordshire.gov.uk Tel: 01432 260579, Tel: 01432 260249,</p>	<p>Children and Young People</p>	<p>16 September 2024</p>	<p>KEY Open</p>
Portfolio: economy and growth					
<p>Merton Meadow Flood Alleviation Scheme The purpose of this report is to seek approval for spend up to £800,000 of the Brownfield Land Release Fund (BLRF) grant fund previously awarded by government for the Merton Meadow sites in Hereford. The grant funding will be utilised to masterplan the area including the detailed flood alleviation design required to enable these key city centre sites to come forward for development</p>	<p>Cabinet member economy and growth 23 September 2024</p>	<p>Cabinet member economy and growth Roger Allonby, Service Director Economy and Growth, Stephen Holland, Interim Head of Housing Development Roger.Allonby@herefordshire.gov.uk, stephen.holland@herefordshire.gov.uk Tel: 01432 260330,</p>	<p>Economy and Environment</p>	<p>16 September 2024</p>	<p>KEY Open</p>

Report title and purpose	Decision Maker and Due date	Lead cabinet member and officer contact(s)	Directorate	Date uploaded onto plan	Decision Type, exemptions and urgency
<p>Acquisition Fund For Housing Development To seek approval to spend up to £5m of the Acquisition Fund For Housing Development allocation in the Capital Programme, to enable the council to respond to short term opportunities to acquire and develop key strategic sites to meet critical social and affordable housing need.</p>	<p>Cabinet member economy and growth 30 September 2024</p>	<p>Cabinet member economy and growth Roger Allonby, Service Director Economy and Growth, Hayley Crane, Head of Service Housing, Stephen Holland, Interim Head of Housing Development Roger.Allonby@herefordshire.gov.uk, Hayley.Crane@herefordshire.gov.uk, stephen.holland@herefordshire.gov.uk Tel: 01432 260330, Tel: 01432 261919,</p>	<p>Economy and Environment</p>	<p>16 September 2024</p>	<p>KEY Open</p>
<p>HBID Third Term Ballot Decision To agree to vote yes in the upcoming BID ballot (October 2024) ahead of the HBID's third term which is due to commence in April 2025</p>	<p>Cabinet member economy and growth 30 September 2024</p>	<p>Cabinet member economy and growth Nadine Kinsey, Economic Development Officer nkinsey@herefordshire.gov.uk</p>	<p>Economy and Environment</p>	<p>16 September 2024</p>	<p>KEY Open</p>
<p>Portfolio: environment</p>					
<p>Portfolio: finance and corporate services</p>					

Report title and purpose	Decision Maker and Due date	Lead cabinet member and officer contact(s)	Directorate	Date uploaded onto plan	Decision Type, exemptions and urgency
<p>To approve the Hoople Ltd Service Level Agreement for 2024/25</p> <p>The report will describe the services that Hoople Ltd are commissioned to deliver with an agreed budget and seek authority to enter into contract with Hoople including authorisation of the SLA for 2024/2025 financial year. It will also authorise a performance framework that will be monitored over the duration of the contract</p>	<p>Cabinet member finance and corporate services</p> <p>26 September 2024</p>	<p>Cabinet member finance and corporate services</p> <p>Joni Hughes, Head of Chief Executive's Office</p> <p>Joni.Hughes@herefordshire.gov.uk Tel: 01432 260598</p>	<p>Corporate Support Centre</p>	<p>16 September 2024</p>	<p>KEY</p> <p>Open</p>
<p>Portfolio: roads and regulatory services</p>					
<p>24/25 Winter Service</p> <p>To seek approval for the arrangements being made for the provision of winter service during the period of 2023 through to 2024 season, as set out in the Winter Service Plan.</p> <p>The Winter Service Plan continues to build on existing best practice and the findings of reviews that have taken place both locally and nationally. Herefordshire Council will continue to meet its duties towards the maintenance of the highway network in full and by working in partnership with Herefordshire's communities, wherever practicable, enhance the county's resilience to the impact of prolonged or severe winter weather.</p>	<p>Cabinet member roads and regulatory services</p> <p>1 October 2024</p>	<p>Cabinet member roads and regulatory services</p> <p>Bruce Evans, Engineering Manager</p> <p>bje@herefordshire.gov.uk Tel: 07792880548</p>	<p>Economy and Environment</p>	<p>16 September 2024</p>	<p>KEY</p> <p>Open</p>

Report title and purpose	Decision Maker and Due date	Lead cabinet member and officer contact(s)	Directorate	Date uploaded onto plan	Decision Type, exemptions and urgency
<p>2025/26 Capital Investment in Existing Highway Infrastructure</p> <p>To authorise the spend/investment in the public realm assets and infrastructure in 2025/26 following Council's resolution at the Council meeting 10 February 2023, to approve the proposed Capital Programme for 2023/24 through to 2026/27.</p>	<p>Cabinet member roads and regulatory services</p> <p>31 October 2024</p>	<p>Cabinet member roads and regulatory services</p> <p>Ed Bradford, Head of Highways and Traffic</p> <p>Edward.Bradford@herefordshire.gov.uk Tel: 01432 260786</p>	<p>Economy and Environment</p>	<p>NEW ITEM</p>	<p>KEY</p> <p>Open</p>
<p>Portfolio: transport and infrastructure</p>					

