

Agenda

Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee

Date: **Tuesday 10 March 2026**

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 Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee

Membership

Chairperson **Councillor Toni Fagan**
Vice-chairperson **Councillor Ben Proctor**

Councillor Frank Cornthwaite
Councillor Clare Davies
Councillor Dave Davies
Councillor Robert Highfield
Councillor David Hitchiner

David Willis

Diocese of Hereford

Agenda

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1.	<p>APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE</p> <p>To receive apologies for absence.</p>	
2.	<p>NAMED SUBSTITUTES</p> <p>To receive details of members 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 interests from members of the committee in respect of items on the agenda.</p>	
4.	<p>MINUTES</p> <p>To receive the minutes of the meeting held on 11 November 2025..</p>	9 - 14
<p>HOW TO SUBMIT QUESTIONS</p> <p>The deadline for the submission of questions for this meeting is 5pm on Wednesday 4 March 2026.</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>		
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>ILAC INSPECTION AND ACTION PLAN</p> <p>To provide a progress update on the outcome of the ILACS inspection and next steps</p>	15 - 44
8.	<p>WORK PROGRAMME</p> <p>To consider the draft work programme for Herefordshire Council's scrutiny committees for the municipal years 2025/6 and 2026/7.</p>	45 - 106
9.	<p>DATE OF THE NEXT MEETING</p> <p>Tuesday 12 May 2026, 2pm</p>	

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www.herefordshire.gov.uk/downloads/file/1597/hereford-city-bus-map-local-services-

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.

Minutes of the meeting of Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee held at Conference Room 1 - Herefordshire Council, Plough Lane Offices, Hereford, HR4 0LE on Tuesday 11 November 2025 at 2.00 pm

Present: Councillor Toni Fagan (chairperson)
Councillor Ben Proctor (vice-chairperson)

Councillors: Frank Cornthwaite, Pauline Crockett (substitute), Dave Davies and Robert Highfield

In attendance: Leanne Lowe (Detective Superintendent West Mercia Police/HSCP Board Partner), Councillor Ivan Powell (Cabinet Member Children and Young People), Natalie Solomon (NHS Associate Director for Nursing, Quality and Safeguarding/HSCP Board Partner).

Officers: Simon Cann (Democratic Services Officer/Committee Clerk), Kevin Crompton (Independent Scrutineer), Victoria Leader (Service Manager Early Help and Prevention), Holly Powell (Team Manager Safe Team), Tina Russell (Corporate Director Children and Young People), Kayte Thomas-Dixon (Head of Resilient Communities), Danial Webb (Statutory Scrutiny Officer), Angela Wilson (Safeguarding Partnership Business Manager).

24. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies had been received from Cllr David Hitchiner, Cllr Clare Davies and Mr David Willis (Diocese of Hereford).

25. NAMED SUBSTITUTES

Cllr Pauline Crockett was the named substitute for Cllr David Hitchiner.

26. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest

27. MINUTES

The minutes of the previous meeting were received.

Resolved: That the minutes of the meeting held on 26 September 2025 be confirmed as a correct record and be signed by the Chairperson.

28. QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

One questions had been received from a member of the public, which had been published, along with a response, as a supplement to the meeting agenda on the Herefordshire Council website.

29. QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL

There had been no questions received from members of the council.

30. **HEREFORDSHIRE SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN PARTNERSHIP YEARLY REPORT 2024-25**

The Independent Scrutineer provided a brief overview of the report. Lead HSCP board partners from Herefordshire Council, West Mercia Police and the NHS/ICB were present to respond to questions from the committee.

- 1. Question:** What was the Independent Scrutineer's overall assessment of the safeguarding partnership for 2024/25?
Response: The partnership was now unequivocally effective, with strong leadership, compliant with *Working Together 2023*, effective audits, and children reporting improved safety.
- 2. Question:** How did the PEEL inspection concern affect Herefordshire?
Response: The issue was West Mercia-wide; Herefordshire had no referral backlog. An action plan was in place and being monitored, with an inspection due December 2025.
- 3. Question:** Why did the GP registers show more people than local population figures?
Response: This was due to temporary registrations, slow removals, and special patient schemes; the figures were expected to balance by the next cycle.
- 4. Question:** What were the next priorities?
Response: The focus would be on maintaining improvement pace, data quality, embedding "Think Family" and strengthening local partnership working.
- 5. Question:** Had the police missing persons coordinator post been filled?
Response: The post was part of a broader restructuring due in January 2026 and was currently being covered by other officers to ensure continuity of service.
- 6. Question:** How was accountability maintained during partner restructures?
Response: There was strong engagement at strategic and operational levels, and partners had been proactive in sharing updates on restructures. The Executive Safeguarding group had been established at the local authority's request to resolve cross-partner issues, and a culture of healthy challenge and support had been cultivated.
- 7. Question:** Had independent scrutiny identified any areas of concern or best practice?
Response: There were no current concerns. Best practice had been identified in 'Get Safe' child exploitation work, multi-agency audits, and transition practice between children and adult services. There was ongoing focus on capturing the lived experience of children and families and partnership response to PEEL/Ofsted findings had been robust.
- 8. Question:** Had NHS safeguarding risks been resolved?
Response: Risks had been resolved following internal audits. Governance had been revised and strengthened. KPIs were continuously monitored.
- 9. Question:** How was the localities model improving frontline work?
Response: Practitioners were now co-located, which enabled faster, more coordinated responses and strong integration with 'Families First' programme.

- 10. Question:** How was 'Think Family' implemented across the partnership?
Response: Think Family was embedded in the single assessment framework and families could contribute through self-assessment. Examples of cross-partner collaboration to avoid unnecessary escalation of cases and expedite support were necessary were evident. Its performance was measured through audits, reduction in escalations, and family feedback.
- 11. Question:** Was mediation being prioritised for parental acrimony?
Response: Yes; a new mediation service delivered by Venture had been launched in November 2025 using £30k of Reducing Parental Conflict grant.
- 12. Question:** How was the voice of the child captured and used to influence decisions?
Response: Through participation strategies and engagement with schools and the youth council. A youth shadow cabinet was to be created and a 'you said, we did' mechanism was being formalised.
- 13. Question:** How did police and health capture children's voices?
Response: The police recorded observations and health partners gathered feedback through engagement teams and forums.
- 14. Question:** How had the "Safeguarding, Race and Racism" report influenced practice?
Response: Audits now included cultural awareness checks, case review panels were receiving capacity building training, and a joint self-assessment was underway with Worcestershire.
- 15. Question:** How was the partnership addressing funding reductions i.e. through joint funding?
Response: The 2025/26 budget had been agreed jointly. Savings had been achieved collaboratively without reducing effectiveness. Joint commissioning between the council, PCC, and Public Health had been expanded.
- 16. Question:** How was Catch22's limited family engagement addressed?
Response: Catch22's work focuses on the child, but family support was being provided through early help and child in need plans.
- 17. Question:** How was representation ensured for diverse children?
Response: Multi-agency inclusion groups addressed these children and the collation of diverse feedback from all service areas ensured inclusive representation. Feedback from these children was shared via 'You said, we did' and parent co-production groups.
- 18. Question:** How do elected members engage with the partnership?
Response: There was scope for improved alignment between scrutiny and the partnership. Best practice had been shared across regions and there were opportunities for members to engage directly with care leavers, youth events, and schools to gather insight.

At the conclusion of the debate the committee discussed and agreed the following recommendations. That:

1. **Partnership to consider explicitly reporting what partners learned from children and families and how it influenced policy and practice (you said, we did) in its annual report.**

31. PURSUE PREVENT PROTECT PREPARE

The report was taken as read. The Service Manager Early Help and Prevention, Head of Resilient Communities and Team Manager of the Safe Team were present to respond to questions from the committee.

1. **Question:** Were there any unmet criteria in the Home Office Prevent assurance letter and was there an action plan to address any unmet criteria?
Response: All criteria had been met, with one area rated “exceeding.” The Prevent Board, risk assessment, referral process, and training programme were all active and regularly updated.
2. **Question:** Why was Prevent moved from Children’s Services to Community Wellbeing?
Response: The change aligned Prevent with community safety and emergency planning, ensuring stronger cross-directorate collaboration while maintaining close ties with Children’s Services.
3. **Question:** What happened to the 90% of Prevent referrals nationally that had been rejected?
Response: Many involved violence-fixated individuals without ideology. Locally, alternative pathways such as Early Help, Get Safe, and safeguarding supported these individuals. The Anderson Review recommended expanding the Channel remit.
4. **Question:** Were Prevent referrals processed within the required time frames?
Response: Timelines were managed by the police, and all indicators showed targets had been being met. The council meets its own information-sharing deadlines.
5. **Question:** What were the main radicalisation trends in Herefordshire?
Response: Local patterns mirrored national ones, particularly right-wing and mixed-ideology extremism; no unique local trends were identified.
6. **Question:** How were online risks (such as gaming, social media) being addressed?
Response: Through school training, parent sessions, and Prevent awareness campaigns. Year 5–6 pupils received workshops; staff, parents, and carers got regular updates. All councillors would receive materials to promote school participation.
7. **Question:** How were Gypsy, Roma, Traveller (GRT) or non-school children reached?
Response: These children were reached through health visitors, family practitioners, and youth services. Plans were in place to extend tailored Prevent materials and support.
8. **Question:** What was the difference between Get Safe and Catch22?
Response: Get Safe managed early help to high-risk safeguarding cases. Catch22 provided lower-level early interventions and school-based education. Both coordinated through joint screening meetings.
9. **Question:** How were schools and community venues ensuring safety?
Response: Under Martyn’s Law, venues with 200+ attendees must assess and plan for risks. The Council promoted awareness but did not conduct risk assessments. Guidance would be shared more widely through parish councils and web pages.

10. **Question:** How did Prevent avoid stigmatizing communities?
Response: Prevent was voluntary and confidential. If consent was refused, risk was managed through police-led partnerships without public identification.
11. **Question:** How were children and families supported to build resilience?
Response: Through school curriculum work, family engagement, and child-friendly Prevent materials co-designed by pupils. Ongoing workshops supported parents and carers.
12. **Question:** Were national counterterrorism lessons applied locally?
Response: Yes. counter terrorism police lead Pursue; Herefordshire received Counter Terrorism Local Profile (CTLP) updates to inform the local action plan.
13. **Question:** Were children's perspectives included in emergency or civil contingency planning?
Response: The Local Resilience Forum and Protect & Prepare Board considered this. Future exercises would test safety and recovery, including child-specific guidance like 'Run, Hide, Tell'.

At the conclusion of the debate the committee discussed and agreed the following recommendations.

Recommendations:

1. **The Director of Children's Services, through the all-member briefing, to brief elected members on Pursue, Prevent, Protect, Prepare, and on elected members' duties as corporate parents with regard to Prevent.**
2. **The Protect and Prepare Board to consider how the specific perspectives and experiences of children and young people can be built into the design and delivery of emergency/civil contingencies exercises.**

32. WORK PROGRAMME

1. The committee reviewed its work programme and the early help task and finish group progress, considering new topics for inclusion and confirming next steps for ongoing scrutiny work.
2. The Statutory Scrutiny Officer provided an overview of the early help marketplace event held in Ross-on-Wye on 13 October 2025 and encouraged committee members to attend the next marketplace event in Hereford on 17 November 2025.
3. The committee agreed to add domestic abuse to its long list of potential agenda items for 2026.

Resolved that:

1. **The committee agree the draft work programme for the Children and Young People 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.**

33. DATE OF THE NEXT MEETING

Tuesday 3 February 2026, 2pm

The meeting ended at 4.58pm

Chairperson



Title of report: Ofsted ILAC inspection and action plan

Meeting: Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee

Meeting date: 10th March 2026

Report by: Statutory Scrutiny Officer

Classification

Open

Decision type

This is not an executive decision

Wards affected

All

Purpose

To provide a progress update on the outcome of the ILACS inspection and next steps

Recommendation(s)

- a) **Scrutiny note the outcome of the Inspection of Local Authority Children's Services (ILACS) and Ofsted action plan and make any additional recommendations for inclusion in the action plan to be considered**
- b) **Scrutiny note the decision of the Improvement Board to step down and Cabinet authorisation for the Corporate Director for Children and Young People in consultation with the council's Corporate Leadership Team and Partnership to lead the completion of the Phase 3 improvement plan and Ofsted outcome action plan, bringing this work together into a Children's Services business plan with future governance and monitoring in line with other council directorates.**

Background

1. Children's Services was inspected by Ofsted in July 2022 under the Inspecting Local Authority Children's Services (ILACS) framework.
2. The inspection report found Herefordshire Children's Services to be Inadequate in all areas. The report was published on 21 September 2022.

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

3. The Secretary of State issued a [Statutory Direction](#) to Herefordshire Council on 21 September 2022, and appointed a Commissioner for Children’s Services.
4. An interim Corporate Director for Children’s Services (DCS) was appointed who started post on 1 July 2024 who was subsequently appointed on a permanent basis in July 25. Lead by the DCS, Cabinet endorsed Phase 2 of the improvement plan September 2024 and Phase 3 in July 2025

Current Situation

5. Good progress with renewed pace was noted in the Ofsted monitoring visits in November 2024, February 2025 and June 2025, leading up to the full ILACS in November 2025.
6. The full ILACS inspection report found Herefordshire Children’s Services to have **good overall effectiveness with outstanding impact of leaders on practice.**
7. The report was published on 12 January 2026 is available at Appendix 1.

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

8. The ILACS report found:
 - Leaders have firmly established a culture within the organisation to ensure that children are at the centre of service delivery and that the views of children and their families inform the development of services.
 - Leaders have worked diligently, using effective and mature partnerships to influence and improve the quality and consistency of practice.
 - Recruitment and retention initiatives have successfully stabilised the workforce and leaders have nurtured and coached their teams to deliver improvements and good practice, leading by example.
 - A comprehensive quality assurance framework has enabled leaders to have an accurate understanding of the quality and impact of services delivered to children and families.

- As corporate parents, leaders were described as “effective and who understand what children in care and care leavers need” and that “Their ambitious and child-focused approach has ensured that children’s voices are sought and heard”
 - Leaders had a clear plan in place to manage the changes needed as a result of the social care reforms.
 - Families benefiting from effective early help and family support delivered by a multi-agency network of professionals.
 - Across the services Ofsted found “well considered, comprehensive assessments by social workers, that are informed by the views of children, families and other professionals, and that demonstrate an understanding of the strengths in families, balancing this against presenting risks and needs” with additional recognition that assessments for children with disabilities and complex needs show workers understand needs that are responded to well.
 - Appropriate thresholds for Care and Protection being applied effectively with strong management oversight at all tiers demonstrating evidence-based rationale for further action.
 - A workforce of staff who are committed to building relationships with children and young people through creative and individualised direct work.
 - Effective support in place delivered by “skilled practitioners” to keep children living with their families, or return to their care, where it is in their best interests.
 - For those children and young people at risk or experiencing exploitation Ofsted found an established and impactful multi agency service that reduces risk to children.
 - Thorough assessments and tailored support for foster carers, including kinship carers, who are well supported and have improved training opportunities.
 - A strong service to care leavers with a clear and comprehensive ‘Local Offer’ delivered by persistent and creative personal advisors who are committed to understanding the young people’s lives and helping them achieve their aspirations.
9. The latest report completed by the DfE commissioner, Ms McMillan, was presented to an internal senior executive group July 2025. This was not a published report. The next review report is planned for Feb/March 2026. This report, alongside the outcome of the ILACS inspection, will inform the Secretary of State decision regarding the existing statutory direction and next steps for Herefordshire.
10. The Children’s Improvement Board, independently chaired by the Department of Education Commissioner Deborah McMillan, met on 12 January 2026. Given the outcome of the ILACS report the board has promoted a transition enabling monitoring of Children Services, including the Children’s and Young People’s plan and the Children’s Safeguarding Partnership Annual business plan, to be monitored by the safeguarding partnership governed and monitored through the usual channels in line with other non-inadequate councils. This would include the council’s corporate leadership team, the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee, and Cabinet as required.

Areas for focused development.

11. The report noted two areas where development is needed: Management oversight of the local authority designated officer (LADO) function and identification and assessment for children living in private fostering arrangements. Inspectors acknowledged that leaders were aware of the strengths in their services and areas for development and noted arrangements are already in place to address issues they identified for development.
12. These two areas for improvement are required to form a post Ofsted Inspection action plan that is submitted to Ofsted
13. The service has reviewed the detail of the ILACS report and considered feedback given through the inspection. We have identified a further eight areas of focus for development. All ten areas, listed below, have been developed into our Ofsted Action plan. The full plan can be found at Appendix 2.
 - While allegations against professionals who work with children are managed in a timely way with appropriate outcomes, there are inconsistencies in the quality of written records, which do not consistently reflect the discussions that take place or the support available and provided. Data is also limited and reliant on manual tracking. This means the service has been unable to complete a comprehensive overview of patterns, trends and outcomes of this work. (Ofsted)
 - Special guardianship orders (SGOs) are made when it is in children's best interests, and carers and families are well supported and included in planning for these. However, there has been some confusion in the SGO financial offer and how long this support is provided for, which has dissuaded some carers from pursuing this.
 - Family Group Conferences (FGCs) are held when required to strengthen children and families' support networks. Those family members providing support are not always involved in key meetings, which limits the contribution they could make.
 - For a small number of children who have experienced neglect, the written plans do not always address the impact of cumulative harm and do not start from the lived experience of the child, resulting in plans that are adult focused.
 - Children who take on a caring role are not always clearly recognised by statutory services, and this can mean that their needs are not sufficiently understood.
 - There are very few children identified as living in a private fostering arrangement. Current arrangements to identify, assess and support children living in such arrangements are not effective
 - The virtual school has robust systems and procedures in place to provide effective oversight of the education of children in care. This work is having a positive impact on the educational experiences and the progress of most children, with them making good progress from their starting points. A minority of children do not attend school regularly enough, which limits their achievement.
 - Foster carers, including kinship carers, are supported well with improved training opportunities. However, the unique needs of kinship carers are not accommodated in this generalised training.
 - The limited English for speakers of other languages provision in Herefordshire is a challenge, which means that those care leavers who choose to return to the area, must travel to access these courses. Leaders are encouraging growth in college-based classes, and new courses are planned for January 2026.

- Care leavers who are disabled receive support from workers from the 'Young Adults' team, who work with care leavers' PAs. For a few of these care leavers, the decision and plan for where they will live are not always in place well before their 18th birthday. This does not provide the certainty care leavers need to be assured about where they will be living. Leaders are aware of this and are working with colleagues to address this

14. In line with process, this plan will be formally shared with Ofsted though there is no ongoing reporting requirement. Instead, the action plan and progress against it will form part of future Ofsted reviews and inspections with the service through Annual Conversation, Joint Area Targeted Inspections (JTAI) and focused visits leading up to our next full inspection timetabled for completion in three years.

Herefordshire Childrens Services Statutory Direction

15. The multi-agency improvement board made a decision in January 2026 that based on the inspection findings, the board have no further role and agreed to step down.
16. The Commissioner remains in place and will complete a further review report in March 2026. The Commissioner continues their work to meet with stakeholders and observe forums and activity. The Commissioner also receives regular quality assurance reports regarding progress of the service.
17. Once Herefordshire Council has appointed its new Chief Executive, a review meeting will be held with the Department for Education / Commissioner / Chief Executive / Leader / Lead Member and Director of Children's Services to confirm the request and timeline for secretary of state to make a decision on removal of the direction.

Community impact

18. The ILACS report provides assurance to the children and families of Herefordshire that Herefordshire Children's Services are offering them a good quality service to support and protect children and young people.
19. The Council Plan 2024–2028 includes the ambition to support all children to have the best start in life. Sometimes children and families need our help. We are committed to improving children's services and providing support to families who need it.

Environmental Impact

20. There are no specific environmental impacts arising from this report.

Equality duty

21. Under section 149 of the Equality Act 2010, the 'general duty' on public authorities is set out as follows:

A public authority must, in the exercise of its functions, have due regard to the need to –

- a) eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under this Act;
- b) advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it;

- c) foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.
22. 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. Whilst this is an update to the scrutiny committees and will in itself have minimal equalities impacts, consideration has been made in the consideration of executive decisions and the executive responses provided by the Cabinet.

Resource implications

23. There are no direct resource implications arising from this report which is for information and discussion.

Legal implications

24. There are no direct resource implications arising from this report which is for information and discussion.

Risk management

25. There are no specific risks directly associated with activity referred to in this report. The Herefordshire Safeguarding Children Partnership and Children's Services each maintain their own risk registers.

Consultees

26. None

Appendices

- Appendix 1 Ofsted Inspection of Local Authority Children's Services report
Appendix 2 Ofsted Action Plan

Background papers

None

Inspection of Herefordshire local authority children's services

Inspection dates: 10 to 21 November 2025

Lead inspector: Rebecca Dubbins, His Majesty's Inspector

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

Services for children in Herefordshire have significantly improved since the last inspection in 2022, when overall effectiveness was inadequate. Leaders have worked diligently, using effective partnerships to influence and improve the quality and consistency of practice. Recruitment and retention initiatives have successfully stabilised the workforce and reduced high caseloads. As a result, leaders have ensured that children and their families benefit from effective services that make a difference to their lives.

A comprehensive quality assurance framework, used effectively to measure the progress and impact of change, has enabled leaders to have an accurate understanding of the quality and impact of services delivered to children and families. An integral component of this framework is the feedback from children and families, which is responded to well. Leaders have firmly established a culture within the organisation to ensure that children are at the centre of service delivery and that the views of children and their families inform the further development of services.

What needs to improve?¹

- The management oversight of the local authority designated officer (LADO). (outcome 3, national framework)
- The identification and assessment of children living in private fostering arrangements. (outcome 3, national framework)

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

1. Children and families benefit from effective early help services. Well-written assessments provide an accurate picture of families' needs, with their views integral and considered well. Workers empower parents to understand their options and to access services that make a difference. Families benefit from a multi-agency network of professionals with whom they meet regularly to ensure that the support continues to be of value. When concerns increase for children, appropriate action is taken to step up to statutory services.
2. When professionals are concerned about children, they appropriately refer into the multi-agency safeguarding hub (MASH). Workers and managers in the MASH apply thresholds effectively. They consult with their partners in a timely way to ensure that appropriate information is shared, which is used well to consider next steps. Workers demonstrate an appropriate understanding of risk. As a result, children and families receive a timely and proportionate response to concerns.
3. The response to children in emergency situations out of hours is effective. Children are visited when required, and workers take their time to explain concerns and understand the views of children and their families. There is good connectivity with daytime staff to ensure a joined-up response, which allows for children and families' needs to be met whatever the time of day.
4. When children are considered to be at risk, child protection strategy discussions take place swiftly and are effective. These discussions are well attended by professionals who share relevant information about their involvement with the family. As a result, risks posed to children are identified, with an appropriate and proportionate plan made as to how the risk can be mitigated, including the decision to undertake child protection enquiries. Social workers visit children promptly after the strategy discussion, and child protection enquiries are informed by a thorough understanding of children's circumstances, which determine next steps.

¹ The areas for improvement have been cross-referenced with the outcomes, enablers or principles in the [Children's Social Care: National Framework](#). This statutory guidance sets out the purpose, principles for practice and expected outcomes of children's social care.

5. Children and family assessments are timely, comprehensive and consider relevant historical information. Assessments are informed by the views of children and their families and include information from professionals. Social workers are inquisitive and demonstrate an understanding of the strengths in families, balancing this against children's presenting risks and needs. For children who are disabled, their complex needs and additional vulnerabilities are understood and responded to well. Social workers analyse this information effectively and provide a plan for intervention that is aimed at reducing risks and making a positive difference to children and families. This includes the provision of short breaks for families with disabled children when this is required.
6. When children are considered to be at risk of significant harm, child protection conferences are convened promptly and are effective. Child protection conference chairs manage these meetings well and enable a purposeful discussion, with children via advocates, parents and multi-agency professionals contributing their views. These meetings result in a clear plan aimed at reducing risks posed to children.
7. Core groups, review child protection conferences and child-in-need planning meetings are held regularly and are well attended. This provides an opportunity for up-to-date information-sharing about children and their families across relevant agencies and enables the progress of children's plans. Family Group Conferences (FGCs) are held when required to strengthen children and families' support networks. Those family members providing support are not always involved in key meetings, which limits the contribution they could make. Leaders acknowledged this and have plans to strengthen this area.
8. Most child protection and child-in-need plans identify clear actions and the support needed for children and their families. For a small number of children who have experienced neglect, the written plans do not always address the impact of cumulative harm and do not start from the lived experience of the child, resulting in plans that are adult focused. There is a renewed practice focus on children living in neglectful households, with recent interventions evidencing a positive impact on children's lives. However, for a small number of children, changes of social worker and the lack of timebound actions with explicit contingency plans mean that children and families are not always aware of what will happen and by when, in the event that children's circumstances do not improve.
9. When children's circumstances do not change and risks escalate, the pre-proceedings stage of the Public Law Outline process is strong. This provides effective oversight to ensure that families get the support they need to divert from family court proceedings and for children to remain living with their families. When it is necessary to initiate care proceedings, matters proceed swiftly to enable the necessary legal interventions required to improve children's lives.

10. Children are seen regularly by their social workers and family support workers, who are creative in how they obtain their thoughts and feelings. Children's views and wishes are evidenced throughout their written records, and workers respond to these views with care and sensitivity. As a result of this approach, children and their families are able to develop positive relationships with their workers.
11. When children aged 16 to 17 present as homeless, they receive an appropriate response, with a joint assessment undertaken with colleagues from housing services. Children are made aware of their rights, including their rights to be accommodated. They are offered an advocate and receive support to maximise their chances of remaining within their families.
12. While allegations against professionals who work with children are managed in a timely way with appropriate outcomes, there are inconsistencies in the quality of written records, which do not consistently reflect the discussions that take place or the support available and provided. Data is also limited and reliant on manual tracking. This means the service has been unable to complete a comprehensive overview of patterns, trends and outcomes of this work. Leaders have recognised this and have taken action to address this shortfall.
13. Children who take on a caring role are not always clearly recognised by statutory services, and this can mean that their needs are not sufficiently understood. Leaders were aware of this and already had arrangements in place to address this. There is a better response from early help professionals where children are supported to access services that make a difference to their lives.
14. There are very few children identified as living in a private fostering arrangement. Current arrangements to identify, assess and support children living in such arrangements are not effective. Leaders have undertaken some work to raise awareness among their own staff and with their partners. However, it is too early to see the impact of this.
15. Children who frequently go missing from home and who are at risk of exploitation receive an established and impactful response from the GETSAFE team. There are strong relationships with voluntary, statutory partners and community networks, who share intelligence and an understanding of risk and plan a joint response effectively. Risks to children reduce as a result of this work.
16. The oversight of children who are electively home educated is well organised and effective. Officers understand their roles and are proactive in engaging with families before the decision is made to educate children at home. Children's circumstances are understood well, and partners collaborate to ensure that children's safety and general welfare are considered and prioritised.

17. When children are missing education, they are monitored and supported using effective systems. This work means that children of statutory school age typically access or return to education within a short period of time.
18. The edge of care service, known as ECHO, prevents many children from entering care effectively. Skilled practitioners provide tailored interventions to support children to remain within their family networks when it is safe to do so, reducing a reliance on statutory interventions and the need for ongoing social work involvement.

The experiences and progress of children in care: good

19. Children enter care at the right time and when it is in their best interests. Children's families and wider networks are considered using FGCs. Children's voices are at the heart of these decision-making forums, conveyed through high-quality, tailored and individualised direct work. Appropriate consideration is given to the bespoke circumstances and needs of family members who look after children under a kinship care arrangement. Assessments are thorough and suitably adaptable to address the children's needs. This ensures that children can remain within their family if this is in their best interests.
20. If it is not possible for children to remain living with their families, children live in homes that meet their needs. Most children are placed locally with foster carers. If children are placed outside of Herefordshire, for example in an emergency, they continue to receive the same service from their workers who will identify a local placement that will better meet the children's needs.
21. Careful consideration is given to understanding the relationships between brothers and sisters. Family time is fully considered, balancing risks and potential benefits for each child. Social workers undertake well-considered assessments to ensure the decisions are in children's best interests.
22. Children who return to the care of their parents do so as a result of thorough assessment and planning processes, which have strong management oversight to ensure that potential risks are managed and children get the care they need.
23. Children in care benefit from positive relationships with their social workers, who visit them regularly. Children told inspectors they are well supported by their current workers. However, some have experienced too many changes in social worker, which has impacted on their ability to trust and talk openly. There has been more consistency recently, and changes have been managed well. Social workers ensure that children understand why they are in care, and they take the time to understand children's individual and diverse experiences and needs. Advocates are routinely offered to children to promote their views and wishes, and many children take up this offer. As a result, children's views were clearly evidenced and their workers responded to these well.

24. Children-in-care reviews are held regularly and are strengthened further by thorough mid-way reviews where the independent reviewing officers (IROs) oversee the progression of the care plan effectively. Children are offered the choice of whether they want to attend and/or chair their meetings. Their views are respected about who they want to attend, and IROs manage this well, meeting with parents, separately if needed, to obtain their views. The outcomes of reviews are consistently well written, directly to children, providing them with an understanding about their care plan.
25. The virtual school has robust systems and procedures in place to provide effective oversight of the education of children in care. This work is having a positive impact on the educational experiences and the progress of most children, with them making good progress from their starting points. A minority of children do not attend school regularly enough, which limits their achievement. Leaders are addressing these barriers, but there is more to do to ensure that all children engage with learning opportunities. Children in care are well supported to enjoy an array of hobbies and activities outside of school, which provides an opportunity for them to develop their skills and talents.
26. Children's health needs are regularly assessed and met. Children benefit from a wide range of services to meet their emotional well-being and physical needs. Children's complex health needs are well understood, and individualised support is provided to meet the children's changing needs. An in-house psychologist provides additional support to social workers to assist care planning. As a result, children benefit from well-considered healthcare plans.
27. Children, including those in residential care, live in appropriate homes that meet their assessed needs. Every effort is made to place children in a registered setting and, as a result, the use of unregistered children's homes is rare. On the very small number of occasions where it has not been possible to place children in a registered provision, senior managers and staff understand the processes needed to ensure that actions are taken to mitigate the risks to the child. Alternative placements are identified without avoidable delay, which has meant children have moved into registered provision swiftly.
28. Children in care who are at risk of exploitation or who go missing receive a swift and positive response from workers in the GETSAFE team, who take the time to understand possible contributing factors. These workers join the multi-agency team around the child to manage and reduce risks to children effectively.
29. Unaccompanied asylum-seeking children are supported by their workers to make good progress. Children's individual needs are considered well, and they are placed in homes with these needs in mind.

30. Leaders set expectations that children should achieve permanence in a timely way and have systems in place to ensure this. Special guardianship orders (SGOs) are made when it is in children's best interests, and carers and families are well supported and included in planning for these. However, there has been some confusion in the SGO financial offer and how long this support is provided for, which has dissuaded some carers from pursuing this. This has impacted on potential permanence for children. Leaders are aware of this and are taking action to ensure that carers are informed and that workers can explain the full extent of the offer to carers.
31. Foster carers, including kinship carers, are supported well with improved training opportunities. However, the unique needs of kinship carers are not accommodated in this generalised training.
32. Adoption practice is strong. As a result of collaborative working practices with the regional adoption agency (Adoption Central England), children, families and prospective adopters are prepared well and receive appropriate support both before and after the making of an adoption order. Children are placed for adoption in a timely way, with direct contact with their birth family in place for a small number of children, enabling them to achieve permanence but retain connections to their birth family.
33. Support is in place for older children as they reach adulthood and transition to the leaving care team. Children are well supported to understand their entitlements and make plans for their future.

The experiences and progress of care leavers: good

34. Care leavers in Herefordshire receive a strong service from their personal advisers (PAs), who are allocated in a timely way for children. This enables children to develop relationships with their PAs, who help them understand their options and entitlements before they leave care.
35. PAs demonstrate curiosity and commitment to understanding young people's experiences, concerns and aspirations. They are sensitive to the complexities of family relationships and provide proactive support while appropriately promoting independence. Care leavers benefit from regular communication and visits from their workers, which are purposeful and tailored to their individual needs. PAs take pride in the achievements of care leavers and consistently convey warmth and compassion in their work. Many care leavers view their PAs as dependable and responsive, particularly during times of stress. While some care leavers have experienced changes in workers, they speak highly of their current PAs.
36. Care leavers participate in their pathway reviews, and pathway plans reflect care leavers' wishes and aspirations. Written plans are clear, with achievable actions, and include meaningful support to help young people reach their

goals. PAs use creative engagement strategies for those young people who are reluctant to participate, ensuring support is offered when needed.

37. The health needs of care leavers are understood by their PAs, who support care leavers to be healthy and work effectively with professionals to secure timely support, including mental health interventions when this is required.
38. The local authority's offer for care leavers is clear and comprehensive and is equitable for those living out of area, with a specific focus on care leavers with additional needs. Care leavers who spoke to inspectors were aware of their entitlements, and this is evidenced throughout their written records.
39. Former unaccompanied asylum-seeking children continue to receive tailored support into adulthood that recognises their unique needs. Their immigration status is addressed early to help to reduce stress and uncertainty about the future. Many care leavers from abroad are placed out of area, which offers benefits such as access to diverse communities but also creates some challenges regarding housing availability and living a distance from their PA. The limited English for speakers of other languages provision in Herefordshire is a challenge, which means that those care leavers who choose to return to the area, must travel to access these courses. Leaders are encouraging growth in college-based classes, and new courses are planned for January 2026.
40. The number of care leavers in custody is positively low. These care leavers benefit from regular visits from their PAs. They build trusted relationships, which enables them to discuss their experiences, future and the support they need. Support for prison discharge is considered early, even when the planned date for discharge is beyond the age of 25.
41. Care leavers who are parents receive support to access universal services. Their PAs help them to understand safeguarding concerns so that there are no unwanted surprises, and the PAs work collaboratively with their child's social worker when there are concerns. As a result, care leavers receive a network of support to be the best parents they can be.
42. Vulnerable care leavers at risk of exploitation are supported by their PA and benefit from the involvement of a worker from the GETSAFE team, who use their expertise and work well with the care leavers' network to reduce risks.
43. Care leavers who are disabled receive support from workers from the 'Young Adults' team, who work with care leavers' PAs. For a few of these care leavers, the decision and plan for where they will live are not always in place well before their 18th birthday. This does not provide the certainty care leavers need to be assured about where they will be living. Leaders are aware of this and are working with colleagues to address this.
44. Care leavers are supported by persistent and creative PAs to access training and employment opportunities in line with their needs. Written records reflect

the attempts made by PAs to encourage and consistently guide care leavers in their chosen field of study or work. This is regularly revisited, and support is offered through various means, including work coaches. As a result, there are more care leavers accessing education, employment and training. However, leaders are committed to further increasing these numbers.

45. Care leavers live in accommodation that is of a suitable standard in areas where they feel safe. This is reflected in written records and expressed by care leavers themselves. 'Staying put' and 'staying close' arrangements enable increasing numbers of care leavers to remain with their foster carers and move at a time more suitable for them. There is effective oversight by leaders to ensure that care leavers' accommodation needs are met to prevent delays for young people moving into new accommodation. Start-up grants and support with independent living skills help care leavers set up and maintain safe, good-quality homes.
46. The support available to care leavers after the age of 21 remains in place unless they opt out, with their needs and wishes determining their ongoing support. As a result, many young people continue to be supported by their PA. For those who do not need or desire this, a named PA maintains a level of contact to ensure that care leavers know how to request support when they need help or advice. When care leavers do contact the service, they get a friendly and caring response.
47. Care leavers have opportunities to contribute to service development. Those who spoke to inspectors told us that they feel their voices and contributions are heard and they have influenced action taken.

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

48. A visible and effective leadership team, supported by corporate and political leaders, has enabled vast improvements in the services delivered to children and their families. Since the appointment of the Corporate Director of Children's Services in July 2024, who is aspirational for children and committed to enhancing their lives, improvements have been made at pace.
49. A permanent and stable management team has driven the changes needed, cultivating a positive environment. Senior leaders have nurtured and coached their teams to deliver improvements and good practice, leading by example. A concise and coherent improvement plan has been embraced by leaders at all levels and owned by frontline staff, who understand their role in the changes needed. The expectations of senior leaders are communicated well, driving practice improvements. The improvement board is well attended, demonstrating the commitment of senior leaders and partners to improve services.

50. The chief executive, leader of the council and lead member are fully engaged in the improvement plan, providing necessary support and challenge when needed. Children's services are rightly considered to be a high priority for the council. Leaders have ensured that the voice of children across Herefordshire informs all the council's strategies, so they appreciate the impact for children of local developments. As a result, leaders understand the needs of children in Herefordshire and have an accurate assessment of how well services are meeting their needs.
51. Leaders are effective corporate parents and understand what children in care and care leavers need. Their ambitious and child-focused approach has ensured that children's voices are sought and heard. There are numerous examples of how children have shared their experiences, via the youth voice group or from surveys undertaken, and children are included in service redesign. As a result, leaders, partners and frontline staff understand what it is like to be a child in care. Surveys are very well responded to with mostly positive feedback. Leaders respond to ensure that issues raised by children are addressed swiftly, evidencing the leadership team's oversight and commitment to get it right for children. Children's achievements are celebrated by their corporate parents.
52. Leaders have improved the offer for care leavers, which provides a wide range of support, such as council tax exemptions, driving lessons, gym membership and funding to set up their first home. This ensures that children who leave care are not disadvantaged, whether they live in Herefordshire or are out of area.
53. Strategic partnerships are now mature, with a shared vision to improve children's outcomes. A jointly owned quality assurance process enables partners to work together to address key themes with positive impact. The effectiveness of strategic partnerships has been reflected operationally in the multi-agency teams in the MASH and in how partners work together to meet children's needs. Governance arrangements have improved. As a result, the partnership has an accurate understanding of the needs of children in Herefordshire, with joint commissioning arrangements established to meet these needs.
54. Leaders have a clear plan in place to manage changes needed as a result of the social care reforms. The plan has been well considered, with the foundations in place as a result of the move to a locality model, and governance arrangements established to oversee ongoing developments. The strength of partnerships provides confidence that these changes can be delivered effectively.
55. Senior leaders understand their sufficiency issues well, and the strategy is informed by the needs of Herefordshire children. Leaders have secured financial investment to create more accommodation options for children in care and care leavers, which includes ongoing commissioning to increase the

range of children's homes available. More foster carers have been recruited and retained, which, comparable to national trends, is impressive. This has meant that most children are placed locally and with foster carers.

56. Planning includes the input of children, young people and their families to ensure that services are co-produced. Parents in Herefordshire have previously been vocal in challenging poor practice. Leaders have taken the time to understand this by commissioning an external review and have acknowledged when services were not good enough. Learning from this, leaders have taken proactive steps by establishing a group of parent representatives, 'Families Making a Difference'. The parents in this group have worked alongside children's services to provide their views and experiences and have engaged in co-production, informing service changes going forwards. Systems have been established to gain feedback at the point of closure, and an impressive number of families have provided positive feedback about services. This shows the commitment leaders have to understanding how their services are making a difference. This is used effectively to learn and improve services, delivering tangible and positive impact for children.
57. The local authority quality assurance framework is comprehensive, robust and allows leaders to have a line of sight into the quality of practice and children's experiences. This is informed by feedback from children and their families from a variety of sources and performance information. An improved use of data and performance information has increased senior leaders' understanding. Leaders use data to continually test and probe services, giving an accurate picture and providing assurance.
58. As a result of this effective quality assurance programme, leaders are aware of the strengths in their services and the areas for further development. While the effectiveness of the LADO role and the oversight of children living in private fostering arrangements needs to improve, leaders had already put arrangements in place to address this.
59. Management oversight from managers at all tiers is reflected in children's records, demonstrating an evidence-based rationale for further action. Supervision records show explorative and reflective discussions and a thorough understanding of children's circumstances, which positively impact on care planning. There is an admirable consistency of high-quality supervision across all service areas, which reflects the training and development leaders continue to provide to managers.
60. Having a stable workforce has and continues to be a priority for senior leaders. At the time of the last inspection, high numbers of agency staff were needed to fill social work vacancies. These numbers have reduced significantly as leaders have invested in 'grow your own' routes into social work and successfully used media campaigns to recruit social workers to Herefordshire. Positive changes in culture and inclusive practice have also enabled staff retention, resulting in more permanent social workers and a reduction in the

turnover of staff. While inspectors saw the negative impact for some children who had experienced changes of workers, this was largely being mitigated well through sensitive engagement by their new workers. In recent months, increased consistency has made a positive difference for children.

61. Leaders have managed change exceptionally well, which has included a move to locality services. Changes are communicated effectively to frontline staff via staff conferences and team and service meetings. The workforce has responded positively to this, with many practitioners able to talk about improvements and the difference these have made for them as workers. They recognise these improvements in their reduced caseloads and the resources now available for the children and families they work with, providing additionality to their work.
62. Frontline staff benefit from regular training, and managers have benefited from a tailored leadership programme. Newly qualified workers benefit from a very structured programme, supported by the academy, to ensure that they can develop at a pace that is right for them. Workers spoken to stated they enjoyed working for Herefordshire. They reported that they felt supported, equipped and safe to do their work, with their managers creating a positive environment for them. The workforce understands and shares the aspirations of leaders to hear the voice of children and their families and to do the very best for children. Inspectors saw this consistently reflected in children's records across all service areas.

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Herefordshire ILAC action plan 2026			
Area of Improvement / development	Activity to improve or develop the service	QA Measure of progress – Service User Feedback / KPI / Audit	Lead Officer
<p>1) Family Group Conferences (FGCs) are held when required to strengthen children and families' support networks. Those family members providing support are not always involved in key meetings, which limits the contribution they could make</p>	<p>Revise and strengthen our approach to Family Led Decision making through a combination of service expansion and a redesigned delivery model.</p> <p>Recruitment of x0.5fte additional FGC/FLDM Co-ordinators increasing capacity to deliver high-quality family-led decision-making across the service</p> <p>Practice development : Once an FGC is initiated:</p> <p>FGC will be offered for all families receiving a Family Help Assessment. MASH will make the referral when the threshold decision for FH Assessment is made</p> <p>The practice standard in Herefordshire is that an FGC will be held within 15 working days of referral.</p> <p>The genogram becomes a live document and those identified through the genogram become core contributors to the family plan.</p>	<p>Structured feedback after:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Initial Family Network Meetings • Family Group Conferences • Reviews of the family plan <p>KPI Measures of success</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number and % of Family Help Cases with an FGC plan. • Timescale met from referral to allocation • Number and % of Case in PLO with a FGC plan. • Number of children received into care that moved to Kinship placement and had an FGC plan which identified the kinship carer. • Number of children residing short term under family arrangements including Private Fostering arrangements (care prevention) where the carer was identified in the FGC plan. 	<p>Ruby Card</p>

	<p>The responsible worker will complete the genogram and with the family identify three primary support contacts and any additional relevant to each case. This aligns with best practice in family network approaches, where at least three naturally-occurring support figures are identified to broaden safety planning, provide relational continuity, and increase resilience around the child this allows earlier mobilisation of family networks ahead of statutory processes.</p> <p>Coordinators will actively ensure that plans remain co-produced and centred around family-led solutions with input to reviews ensuring support / contingency plans with extended family remain engaged.</p>	<p>Audit – Targeted Audit on quality of Family Plans initial and review plans</p> <p>These QA measures will be collated and analysed on monthly basis by TM and reported quarterly by SM.</p>	
	<p>Regional Peer Review on FGC practice – March 26</p>	<p>Learning outcome to inform practice development</p>	
<p>Progress Update *Q1/2/3/4</p>			

<p>2)For a small number of children who have experienced neglect, the written plans do not always address the impact of cumulative harm and do not start from the lived experience of the child, resulting in plans that are adult focused.</p>	<p>Workshop to Family Help and MACPTs – Neglect cases: evidencing cumulative harm</p> <p>Peer Review with Birmingham Children Trust based on Neglect. Multi agency forum presenting data, approaches, tools and outcomes to provide reflection and learning.</p>	<p>Measure of Success</p> <p>Workforce feedback Feedback from practitioners who have attended the workshop – helpful/will impact on practice?</p> <p>Service User feedback from targeted audit - Targeted service user feedback</p>	<p>Tutsi Selvey / Suzie Simms</p>
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	Safeguarding Partnership to complete GCP2 survey with staff to understand value and accessibility to staff on the front line across the multi-agency partnership.	<p>on Family Help and Child Protection cases (neglect) to ascertain parental views on what has been helpful / could have been more helpful – including their experience of the GCP2</p> <p>KPI's Number of Graded Care Profile 2 completed and completed by agency</p> <p>Reduced number of children subject to referral with Neglect as primary indicator of concern *</p> <p>Reduced number of children on Child Protection Plan under category of Neglect *</p> <p>Reduced number and % of children subject to repeat Family Help Assessment and Child Protection plan under category of neglect *</p> <p>* Base line data as of EoY 25/26</p>	
Safeguarding Partnership to re-visit neglect toolkit to ensure this is current and accessible as a useful tool to staff.	Roll out further training and set expectations of when GCP2 is completed by workforce.		
Multi agency audit of cases open under category of Neglect to ascertain if GCP2 had been completed and identify any area of learning.	Audit of CP cases subject to repeat CP under category of Neglect to ascertain the use and impact of GCP2		
Development of Mosaic and PBi to provide regular reporting on risk categories for contacts, referrals and assessments			
Progress Update *Q1/2/3/4			

3)While allegations against professionals who work with children are managed in a timely way with appropriate outcomes, there are inconsistencies in the quality of written records, which do not	LADO advice line relaunched with Business Support Co-Ordinators taking calls for the LADO to review and action. Advice and guidance provided by LADO will be consistently recorded on Mosaic.	Number of referrals and outcomes / and by agency providing pattern and trends overview to inform further work	Andrea Busk
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consistently reflect the discussions that take place or the support available and provided. Data is also limited and reliant on manual tracking. This means the service has been unable to complete a comprehensive overview of patterns, trends and outcomes of this work.	Manual tracker revised to collect the data required.		
	Guidance to be written for good quality POT meeting minutes and shared with Business Support Co-Ordinators		
	Development of combined LADO/CP Chair x2fte to provide resilience in service		
	Mosaic development undertaken to provide PBI reports		
	Quarterly and annual LADO reports to be completed through 26/27		
	Targeted audit of POT meeting Q1 and Q3		
Progress *Q1/2/3/4			

4)Children who take on a caring role are not always clearly recognised by statutory services, and this can mean that their needs are not sufficiently understood	Implementation and launch of No Wrong Door for Young Carer's within Herefordshire which will include a screening tool for all professionals to use when they identify a YC.	KPI- Increased reporting of number of screening tools completed internally Service user feedback – collected after every Young Carer intervention from Family Help.	Vicky Leader / Sophie Roberts
	Screening tool to be built into mosaic for Children's and Adult's services and will be a mandatory requirement to be completed if identified during assessment. Clear outcome from screening tool which will include referral for Young Carer's Assessment if care provided is moderate – very high		
	Media and Council launch of Young Carers Offer to Children and Young People in Herefordshire to raised awareness		

	<p>Refreshed Young Carer’s Assessment built into mosaic, with identified outcomes to be linked into family plans to ensure YC needs are included in social work plans.</p>		
	<p>Evidence based YC tools (PANOC and MACA) to be introduced into Family Help service as a way of evidencing decreasing the amount of caring activity and impact of caring task throughout intervention.</p>		
	<p>Targeted audit within Team Meetings and Supervisions to ensure YC are being considered fully within Family Help assessments</p>		
<p>Progress Update *Q1/2/3/4</p>			

<p>5)There are very few children identified as living in a private fostering arrangement. Current arrangements to identify, assess and support children living in such arrangements are not effective</p>	<p>Strengthen Identification</p> <p>Deliver targeted training and refresher sessions for all children’s social care staff and education colleagues. Training should focus on what constitutes a private fostering arrangement, early indicators, statutory duties, and referral expectations.</p>	<p>Monthly targeted audit to monitor compliance and quality of assessments.</p> <p>Feedback from children in privately fostered arrangements.</p> <p>Feedback from carers of Privately fostered children through feedback form or telephone call.</p>	<p>Natasha Newton / Sophie Roberts</p>
	<p>Clear and Consistent Pathway for Notifications and Assessment</p> <p>Update the private fostering workflow that clearly outlines what staff must do from point of notification through to assessment and ongoing support.</p>		

	<p>Ensure this workflow is embedded into induction for new staff and is accessible on the service's internal guidance hub.</p>		
	<p>Strengthen Multi-Agency Engagement</p> <p>Continue with communication strategy targeted at schools, health visitors, GPs, youth services, housing, and community organisations to increase awareness of private fostering duties building on the work that took place in 2025/2026.</p>		
	<p>Privately Fostered Children</p> <p>Continue to have a named private fostering lead responsible for oversight, data reporting, and ensuring statutory timescales are met.</p> <p>Develop a standardised support offer for privately fostered children and their carers, including visits, signposting, and access to appropriate services.</p>		
<p>Progress Update *Q1/2/3/4</p>			

<p>6) The virtual school has robust systems and procedures in place to provide effective oversight of the education of children in care. This work is having a positive impact on the educational experiences and the progress of most children, with</p>	<p>Faster Identification of Non-attendance</p> <p>Use of the Wonde extraction system for register marks means that unauthorised absence figures are available sooner on Welfare Call.</p> <p>Sessions planned with social workers support access to attendance data to</p>	<p>Overall attendance rates to be better than national rates for looked after children (24/25 rate 90.1% against 91% for national CLA)</p> <p>Targeted audits to be completed for persistent absence to identify compliance</p>	<p>Jo Chick</p>
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<p>them making good progress from their starting points. A minority of children do not attend school regularly enough, which limits their achievement</p>	<p>monitor attendance and proactively identify issues earlier.</p>	<p>with joint working and outcomes for learning</p> <p>Feedback from young people re barriers for them to get involved with their education, what they feel would help increase their attendance</p>	
	<p>For those young people identified as being persistently or severely persistently absent:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social worker/VSEO consultation with VS Educational Psychologist • Referrals for STEPS workers • Network meetings arranged <p>Consider local support that may be available for out of county placements where STEPS is not available.</p>		
<p>Progress *Q1/2/3/4</p>			

<p>7)Special guardianship orders (SGOs) are made when it is in children’s best interests, and carers and families are well supported and included in planning for these. However, there has been some confusion in the SGO financial offer and how long this support is provided for, which has dissuaded some carers from pursuing this</p>	<p>New finance policy launched which details financial support SGO carers will receive and our commitment to children aged 18yrs.</p>	<p>KPI – increase in SGO placements leading to a reduction of children in care</p>	<p>Natasha Newton / Deb Morgan</p>
<p>Progress Update *Q1/2/3/4</p>			

<p>8)Foster carers, including kinship carers, are supported well with improved training opportunities. However, the unique needs of kinship carers are not accommodated in this generalised training.</p>	<p>Development of Kinship specific training:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kinship specific course being run by Safe Connections over 4 sessions 7th May 2026 – 27th May 2026. This will be on a rolling programme. • Online platform Pink Pearl Parenting academy Kinship specific courses. • Working with Pink Pearl Parenting to develop more courses specific to our Kinship carers 	<p>Training Officer uptake of courses and feedback data each quarter.</p> <p>Feedback from kinship carers on the quality of training, level of support offered.</p> <p>Increase of Kinship Carers</p>	<p>Natasha Newton</p>
	<p>Further develop a Local Kinship Offer to include: Additional financial assistance from the point of Reg 24 authorisation for Kinship carers</p> <p>Specific training for Kinship carers on</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • managing birth family contacts • Life story work with children in their care 		
<p>Progress Update *Q1/2/3/4</p>			

<p>9)The limited English for speakers of other languages provision in Herefordshire is a challenge, which means that those care leavers who choose to return to the area, must travel</p>	<p>UASC Migration Steering group meet to identify opportunities for ESOL Language Courses to be delivered to care experienced young people within the Herefordshire based college and community based settings.</p>	<p>KPI Measure Number of separated young people locally who are EET with attendance at specific courses/venues</p> <p>Service User Feedback</p>	<p>Stacie Edwards</p>
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<p>to access these courses. Leaders are encouraging growth in college-based classes, and new courses are planned for January 2026.</p>	<p>ESOL at Herefordshire and Ludlow College Course has mobilised and referrals been taken for students to begin studying.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Direct Feedback from young people via visit's • Structured Feedback from Survey developed by TM's and completed by end of April <p>Audit</p> <p>Pathway Plan review and weekly recordings from supported accommodation providers will assist us to measure impact of improved language skills.</p> <p>Increase in young people accessing community activities and self-reporting feeling more integrated into the local community.</p>	
	<p>Review of ESOL at the Kindle Centre takes place to ensure that young people can continue to attend for those young people whose language skills are not yet ready for the College Course.</p>		
	<p>UASC Migration Co-ordinator to start employment to assist in identifying opportunities with the Post 16 Education Officer to deliver additional ESOL courses and language-based activities of separated young people</p>		
<p>Progress Update *Q1/2/3/4</p>			

<p>10)Care leavers who are disabled receive support from workers from the 'Young Adults' team, who work with care leavers' PAs. For a few of these care leavers, the decision and plan for where they will live are not always in place well before their 18th birthday. This does not provide the certainty care leavers need to be assured</p>	<p>Strategic meeting with CWD and YAT to review internal process of referral, allocation and joint working to ensure this is streamlined and as timely as possible.</p>	<p>Service User feedback</p> <p>Young People aged 16-19 feel informed and secure in their placement provision</p> <p>Young people are able to share understanding of their plan. Where young people are not able to directly share their understanding of their plan, there is evidence of clear effort to communicate to young people and creative methods to support their understanding.</p>	<p>Stacie Edwards</p>
	<p>Strategic Leader within Children's and ICB to review process for ICB decision making on funding / joint funding care placements to ensure security of placement is achieved in a timely way.</p>		

<p>about where they will be living. Leaders are aware of this and are working with colleagues to address this.</p>	<p>Formal escalation to ICB of cases where funding decision is delaying permanency / care planning for child / young adult in transition.</p>	<p>Readiness for adulthood scaled feedback tool to be developed for young people</p> <p>Audit Monthly review at Children’s Continuing Care panel between CSC leadership and ICB.</p> <p>Quarterly audit of panel decisions focusing on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • timeliness • quality of assessments • whether decisions provided certainty on forward planning <p>KPI’s Accommodation needs will be understood for children moving up to adulthood.</p> <p>- % of young people with agreed accommodation type by age 17 - % with agreed plan for accommodation by age 17.5</p> <p>Timeliness of referral from CSC to YAT</p>	
	<p>Children’s and Adult safeguarding partnership to complete work to review the process and pathway for vulnerable young people leaving the care of Children Social Care but where risks of self-harm, exploitation continue to identify an appropriate source of support.</p>		
	<p>Escalation log to be held with focus on preparation for adulthood, with both adult social care and the ICB, to ensure any delay is being recognised and acted upon.</p>		
	<p>Strategic meeting with leaders in CSC/ASC/Public Health to develop partnership approach to enable data on number of vulnerable YP referred to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CARM • YAT • Adult safeguarding • SAFE post 18 		
<p>Progress Update *Q1/2/3/4</p>			



Title of report: Work programme 2025-26 and 2026-27

Meeting: Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee

Meeting date: 10 March 2026

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 years 2025-26 and 2026-27.

Recommendation(s)

That:

- a) **The committee agree the draft work programme for Connected Communities 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. The most recent work programme was published on 02 March 2026 and is attached as Appendix 1.
6. Attached as Appendix 2 to this report is the council's most recently published forward plan of key decisions.
7. Appendix 3 is a list of all recommendations made by Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee in 2025.

Community impact

8. 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

9. 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

10. 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

11. 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

12. 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.
13. The Local Government Act 2000 requires the council to deliver the scrutiny function.

Risk management

14. 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

15. 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.
16. This work programme is subject to ongoing review, which may involve additional consultees.

Appendices

Appendix 1 – Herefordshire Council scrutiny work programme 2026

Appendix 2 – Herefordshire Council Forward Plan

Appendix 3 – recommendations made by Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee in 2025

Background papers

None



APPENDIX 1

SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME

March 2026

Below are the work programmes of Herefordshire Council’s five scrutiny committees and their six task and finish groups.

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

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Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee

Committee work programme

Committee Briefing

3 March 2026

Topic and Objectives	Evidence required	Attendees*
School Capital Programme <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Overview of the programme 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Briefing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Liz Farr, Director of Education Quentin Mee

Committee Meeting

10 March 2026 **report deadline 2 March 2026** pre meeting lines of enquiry planning 4 March 2026

Topic and Objectives	Evidence required	Attendees*
ILAC inspection and action plan <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review findings of the Ofsted inspection report and any associated action plan. Scrutinise arrangements to drive improvement following the inspection. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ofsted inspection report and action plan 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tina Russell, Director of Children's Services Tori Lynch, Service Director, Corporate Parenting Rachel Gillot, Service Director, Early Help, Children in Need, and Safeguarding
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 Briefing
24 March 2026

Topic and Objectives	Evidence required	Attendees*
Home to school transport <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Update on work to develop a new home to school transport service. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Briefing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Gemma Dando, Chief Operating Officer Liz Farr Hilary Jones, Head of Additional Needs Dr David Land, Head of Transport and Parking Craig Lewis, Transportation Services Manager

Committee Briefing
14 April 2026

Topic and Objectives	Evidence required	Attendees*
Fostering <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Overview of fostering panel. Overview of key performance indicators Update on recommendations made July 2024. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Member briefing Feedback from foster families 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Natasha Newton, Service Manager Fostering, Adoption and Home Finding Teams Tori Lynch, Service Director, Corporate Parenting

Committee Meeting12 May 2026 **report deadline 1 May 2026** pre meeting lines of enquiry planning 7 May 2026

Topic and Objectives	Evidence required	Attendees*
Neglect Strategy <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Understand the definition of intention and unintentional neglect. Feedback on regional peer review 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Officer report 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Rachel Gillott Natalie Solomon, NHS Herefordshire and Worcestershire Integrated Care Board Leanne Lowe, West Mercia Police
West Mercia Police: Police Effectiveness, Efficiency and Legitimacy (PEEL) inspection findings <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Committee briefing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> PEEL inspection report and findings 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Leanne Lowe Ruby Card, Service Manager MASH, ECHO & SAFE Rachel Gillott
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 Meeting22 July 2026 **report deadline 14 July 2026** pre meeting lines of enquiry planning 17 July 2026

Topic and Objectives	Evidence required	Attendees*
Families First Programme	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Peer review findings 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Dawn Knight, Service Manager Early Help Lindsay MacHardy, Public Health Principal <i>Core members of the steering group</i>
Early Help Task and Finish Group <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review group findings and recommendations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Final group report 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Chair, Children and Young People 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

6 October 2026 **report deadline 28 September 2026** pre meeting lines of enquiry planning 2 October 2026

Topic and Objectives	Evidence required	Attendees*
Alternative provision	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Officer report 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Liz Farr Louise Tanner, Head of Learning and Achievement Hilary Jones, Head of Additional Needs
All Age access to play and open space <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Agree terms of reference for a review of access to play and other open space. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Terms of reference 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lindsay MacHardy Emily Garner
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

Topics for possible future scrutiny

- Youth provision
- Participation strategy
- Housing

Early help task and finish group

Terms of reference

Background

Herefordshire's Early Help offer includes both universal and targeted services aimed at supporting children, young people, and families before statutory intervention is required. The offer includes:

- **Universal services:** Provided largely through Talk Community, voluntary and community organisations, schools, health, and public health-funded initiatives.
- **Targeted early help:** Led by the Early Help team within Children's Services, working directly with families who require structured support.

Key developments in this area in recent years include:

- Integration of Early Help into wider Children's Services through locality models.
- Introduction of Families First and Lead Practitioner roles.
- Recruitment of two new children's-focused community development workers within Talk Community.
- Partnership commissioning (such as with the PCC) to support local early intervention initiatives.

To build on these developments, work is underway to identify and address weaknesses in current practice, including:

- Persistent confusion around distinctions between universal and targeted Early Help.
- Limited public visibility of the Early Help offer and recent developments.
- Variability in provision and access across different localities.
- Pressure on schools to deliver Early Help without sufficient funding or infrastructure.
- Need for improved coordination between statutory and non-statutory partners.

Purpose

The group therefore aims to provide a constructive and collaborative space to:

- Recognise strengths in current Early Help provision.
- Identify good practice across different communities.
- Highlight gaps or inconsistencies in provision and the work in place to address them.

Scope of Inquiry:

In recognition of the broad and varied nature of early help available in Herefordshire, the group intends to carry out two distinct but closely interdependent streams of work:

- **Targeted Early Help and Families First**
 - Understanding the Families First implementation.
 - Exploring the role of lead practitioners.
 - Clarifying the role of schools and multi-agency collaboration.
- **Community and Universal Offer**
 - Mapping and showcasing local Early Help initiatives.
 - Exploring partnerships with Talk Community hubs, voluntary groups, parish and town councils.
 - Engagement around youth activities, access barriers (transport), and local innovation.

Work Programme

The group will determine its programme of work to meet the above objectives. This programme is likely to include:

- Local Appreciative Inquiry events in Hereford City and each of the five key market towns (Ross, Ledbury, Kington, Leominster, Bromyard), Supported by Talk Community and Children's Services.
- Case studies
- Meeting with families and professionals, individually and in focus groups

Proposed Timeline

- Summer 2025: Agree task and finish group, establish membership, agree programme of work
- Autumn 2025 to Spring 2026: Community engagement events, interviews, focus groups.
- Spring/Summer 2026: Reflection and analysis.
- Summer 2026: Presentation of findings and recommendations to Children and Young People Scrutiny.

Work programme

Targeted early help and Families First

- Recognise strengths in current Early Help provision.
- Identify good practice across different communities.
- Highlight gaps or inconsistencies in provision and the work in place to address them.

Objective	Evidence required	Responsible officer	Date
Understand targeted early help - rationale and performance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Overview of programme briefing note <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Thresholds of need ○ Current performance management ○ Current programme of activity 	Simon Cann	November 2026
Overview of current Families First programme and targeted early help	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meeting with service managers <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Victoria Leader ○ Dawn Knight 	Simon Cann	15 Dec 2026, 3pm
Update on implementation of Families First programme and targeted early help	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meeting with service managers <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Dawn Knight 	Simon Cann	TBC
Support for young carers, no wrong door	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meeting with young carers <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Jane Marshall – South – Ross and VL, John Burgess, Susan Brace, Niall Crawford 	Simon Cann	2 Mar 2026, 3pm
Appraise locality-based targeted early help	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meeting with a locality team <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Victoria Roe – North ○ Jane Marshall – South – Ross ○ Chantelle Bennett – Central ○ Tracey Spencer – Central 	Simon Cann	16 Jan 2025, 3pm
Working with schools	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meeting with schools <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Neil Crawford 	Simon Cann	21 Jan 2026, 3pm

Commissioned targeted early help services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Meeting with Venture – commissioned service <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Hilary Thomas hilary.thomas@venture.org 	Simon Cann	27 Feb 2026, 1pm
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Community and Universal Offer

- Mapping and showcasing local Early Help initiatives.
- Exploring partnerships with Talk Community hubs, voluntary groups, parish and town councils.
- Engagement around youth activities, access barriers (transport), and local innovation.

Topic	Evidence required	Responsible officer	Date
Overview of local early help initiatives	Early help marketplace – Ross-on-Wye	Danial Webb	13 Oct 2025
Overview of local early help initiatives	Early help marketplace - Hereford	Danial Webb	17 Nov 2025
Overview of local early help initiatives	Early help marketplace - Leominster	Danial Webb	3 Dec 2025
Evaluate the role of school community support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Meeting with service manager, Quentin Mee Meeting with school counsellor/school support service 	Simon Cann	23 Mar 2026
Understand how midwives support young parents to be.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Meeting with midwives Emily Strange (named safeguarding midwife) Sian Jenkins (community Midwife manager) 	Simon Cann	20 Mar 2026
The role of school nurses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Meeting with school nurses <ul style="list-style-type: none"> emma.dewar@wvt.nhs.uk Wendy.Long@wvt.nhs.uk Nikki.Lawley@wvt.nhs.uk 	Simon Cann	Mar 2026
The role of health visitors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Meeting with health visitors <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lyndsay McHardy, Julia Stephens -0-19 Strat. Hannah Bannister-White “Best Start in Life” strategy 	Simon Cann	17 Mar 2026
Youth clubs overview	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Overview of youth and sports clubs in Herefordshire 	Simon Cann	9 April 2026

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Visit to youth club • Meeting with youth club attendees • hvoss Will Lindesay 		
Talk Community and co-ordination of support for universal community services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Overview community support carried out by Talk Community. • Nikki Stroud, Emily Lowe, Michelle Trussler, Abigail Allcock 	Simon Cann	21 April 2026

Report to Cabinet

Topic	Evidence required	Responsible officer	Date
Draft final report	Learning from above meetings		May 26
Agree final report	Draft report	Task and Finish Group	June 26
Present to Cabinet	Final report	Toni Fagan	July 26

Connected Communities Scrutiny Committee

Committee work programme

Committee Meeting

15 April 2026 **report deadline 7 April 2026** pre meeting lines of enquiry planning 9 April 2026

Topic and Objectives	Evidence required	Attendees*
Broadband Connectivity <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review of coverage gaps and speeds, and work to address them 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consultation with businesses, schools, parish councils Public call for evidence Supplier business plans Ofcom policy Other evidence to be determined 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To be determined
Parking Strategy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none">
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

7 July 2026 **report deadline 29 June 2026** pre meeting lines of enquiry planning 2 July 2026

Topic and Objectives	Evidence required	Attendees*

Year of delivery – capital projects <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mid-year review of capital projects taking place in 2026 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Council capital programme • Individual programme progress reports 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To be determined
Public participation in planning task and finish group <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agree the task and finish final report 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Task and finish group report 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • None
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

January 2027 **report deadline TBC** **pre meeting lines of enquiry planning TBC**

Topic and Objectives	Evidence required	Attendees*
Year of delivery – capital projects <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • End of year review of capital projects taking place in 2026. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Council capital programme • Individual programme progress reports 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To be determined

*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.

Additional Topics Proposed for Future Consideration

- Hereford City Masterplan
- UK Shared Prosperity Fund

Placemaking and Public Participation task and finish group

Terms of reference

Background

Herefordshire is entering a significant period of growth and change. Delivering new housing, infrastructure, and services must strengthen local communities and reflect the county's distinctive rural character.

Research shows that while public involvement in planning is vital, engagement often remains procedural rather than meaningful. Many residents feel disconnected from decision-making, uncertain about how to participate, or unconvinced that their input makes a difference.

The Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires every local planning authority such as Herefordshire to publish a Statement of Community Involvement. The Levelling-up and Regeneration Act 2023 and resultant secondary legislation is likely to place greater emphasis on this statement with a proposed requirement for a local planning authority Community Involvement Scheme. This provides a timely opportunity to modernise Herefordshire's existing Statement of Community Involvement (January 2022), ensuring it reflects Herefordshire Council's 2024–2028 priorities for economic growth and community development.

This task and finish group will explore how Herefordshire can plan with its communities, ensuring that growth, infrastructure and environment evolve together in a fair, transparent, and creative way. It will then make recommendations to underpin the Council's new statutory engagement framework.

The aim is to move beyond statutory minimum consultation and create a culture in which residents look forward to new development as something they have helped to shape. Growth with, not to, communities.

Purpose

To identify and recommend practical, evidence-based measures for making community engagement in planning and placemaking more inclusive, accessible, and effective across Herefordshire. The group will:

- Examine best practice and innovative approaches to public participation.
- Advise on the update and replacement of the Statement of Community Involvement (2022) with a new Community Involvement Scheme (2026).
- Ensure that community voice and cultural engagement sit at the heart of the county's future planning system.

Objectives

- To understand current legislation and good practice in community involvement and evaluate how residents currently engage with planning in Herefordshire and identify barriers to participation.
- Review and learn from good practice in community engagement in other local authorities and with housing providers.
- Inform and help draft the replacement of the Statement of Community Involvement (2022) with a new Community Involvement Scheme (2026)
- Make recommendations to the Connected Communities Scrutiny Committee and Cabinet to deliver the above.

Scope

The task and finish group will focus on how communities are involved in shaping growth, not on what is built or where sites are allocated. It will not duplicate the work of the Housing Development Working Group or the technical drafting of the Local Plan.

Membership and Governance

- 5–7 elected members of Herefordshire Council (no Cabinet members).
- Up to two co-opted members with relevant expertise or community experience.
- Supported by officers from Democratic Services, Economy and Environment, and Communications.
- Reports through the Connected Communities Scrutiny Committee, which will submit recommendations to Cabinet for formal response.

Expected Outputs

- A final report setting out
 - practical recommendations for improving public participation in planning and placemaking.
 - A proposed structure and content outline for Herefordshire’s new Community Involvement Scheme (2026), replacing the 2022 Statement.
 - Case studies and prototypes demonstrating innovative engagement methods suitable for rural and market-town contexts.

Success Measures

- At least five examples of national or local best practice reviewed.
- Two or more new engagement methods agreed or trialled.
- Clear, costed recommendations adopted within the 2026 Community Involvement Scheme.
- Cabinet adoption of group recommendations into council policy.

WORK PROGRAMME

Objective To understand current legislation and good practice in community involvement and evaluate how residents currently engage with planning in Herefordshire and identify barriers to participation.

Objectives	Evidence required	Responsible officer	Date
Understand current legislation and good practice in community involvement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Overview of The Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 • Overview of The Levelling-up and Regeneration Act 2023 • Good practice guidance 		November 2025
Evaluate how residents currently engage with planning in Herefordshire.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Herefordshire Council Statement of Community Involvement. • Interviews with housing associations and council planning officers. 		November 2025
Identify current barriers to participation.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interviews with housing association, community groups and council planning officers. 		November 2025
GROUP MEETING		Henry Merricks Murgatroyd	November 2025

Objective Review and learn from good practice in community engagement in other local authorities and with housing providers.

Objectives	Evidence required	Responsible officer	Date
Examine requirements for new Community Involvement Scheme	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Draft regulation and statutory guidance 		December 2025
Identify good practice in other local authorities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Literature review • Site visit (if useful) 		January 2026
Identify creative engagement methods.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Desktop search ideas such as including digital tools, easy-read and visual materials, short videos, and cultural or media partnerships. 		January 2026

GROUP MEETING		February 2025
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Objective Inform and help draft the replacement of the Statement of Community Involvement (2022) with a new Community Involvement Scheme.

Objectives	Evidence required	Responsible officer	Date
Work with officers to set new parameters and scope for the Community Involvement Scheme	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Draft Community Involvement Scheme 	TBA	March 2026
Ensure inclusivity by improving reach to rural residents, younger people, working families, and under-represented communities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Draft Community Involvement Scheme 	TBA	April 2026
Recommend resourcing and governance arrangements to support sustained, meaningful participation.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Meeting with planning officers in a 'good' local planning authority Draft recommendations 		May 2026
GROUP MEETING			May 2026

Objective Make recommendations to the Connected Communities Scrutiny Committee and Cabinet

Objectives	Evidence required	Responsible officer	Date
Draft report to committee	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Draft report 		June 2026
Draft report and recommendations to Cabinet (if required)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Final report 		July 2026

Environment and Sustainability Scrutiny Committee

Committee work programme

Committee Meeting

2 March 2026 **report deadline 20 February 2026** pre meeting lines of enquiry planning 26 February 2026

Topic and Objectives	Evidence required	Attendees*
Waste Recovery Contracting <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Update on establishment of new waste recovery contract. Update on roll-out of garden waste collection. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To be determined 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> John Hobbs, Corporate Director Economy and Environment Nicola Percival, Waste Services Manager
Active Travel <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review the relevant recommendations from the previous Scrutiny on Active Travel against the latest draft of the Local Cycling, Walking and Wheeling Infrastructure Plan (LCWWIP). Examine the structure of LCWWIP for clarity and understanding by members and residents. Review the proposals for the prioritisation of Active Travel projects under the LCWWIP. Contribute to mechanisms to attract funding for and deliverability of the LCWWIP. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Draft LCWWIP 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ffion Horton, Transport Planning Services Manager Gemma Dando David Land, Head of Transport and Access Services
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 Meeting17 June 2026 **report deadline 9 June 2026** pre meeting lines of enquiry planning 11 June 2026

Topic and Objectives	Evidence required	Attendees*
Land Use Management <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To review the operation of current council policy on enabling and enforcing appropriate land management and use (including riparian responsibilities) across the county; <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ to protect carriageways, ditches and verges. ○ To look at related enforcement issues – including planning breaches. ○ The impact on public rights of way. • To explore how the local authority can support adoption of sustainable farming methods. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enforcement analysis • Current council planning regulation concerning land use management • MP office briefing on the withdrawal of the Sustainable Farming Incentive • Catchment Sensitive farming data (including regenerative farming) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Richard Vaughan, Sustainability and Climate Change Manager • Kelly Gibbons, Development Management Service Manager • Environment Agency representative • NFU • Mark Tansley, Development Manager - Enforcement
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.

Committee Meeting21 September 2026 **report deadline 11 September 2026** pre meeting lines of enquiry planning 17 September 2026

Topic and Objectives	Evidence required	Attendees*
Transformation of the economy and environment directorate <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understand the transformed leadership structure and how it is performing currently, in particular where responsibility for delivering on the Council's environmental priorities and targets, including net zero. • Has embedding a commercial mindset impacted on the delivery of these environmental priorities and targets. • Has transformation impacted on the overall resource dedicated to the environmental side of the directorate. • Explore the case for a more distinct operational area for environmental matters under the Corporate Director. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Officer report 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • John Hobbs, Corporate Director Environment and Economy

<p>Buses and passenger services task and finish group</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> To receive the final report from the group and consider their recommendations, including testing the evidence on which they are based. To agree a set of recommendations to go forward from the committee to the executive. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Final report 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Chair, buses task and finish group
<p>Flooding task and finish group – terms of reference</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> To agree the terms of reference for a proposed task and finish group to scrutinise flood risk management and flood emergency responses. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Task and finish terms of reference 	<p>Statutory Scrutiny Officer</p>

Committee Meeting

2 December 2026 **report deadline 24 November 2026** pre meeting lines of enquiry planning 27 November 2026

Topic and Objectives	Evidence required	Attendees*
<p>Rail Strategy</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Objectives to be agreed. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Evidence to be agreed 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> John Hobbs Ffion Horton Roger Allonby David Land

Bus and passenger services task and finish group

Work programme

Objective	Activity or information needed	Carried out by	Timeline
Initial review meeting		Task and Finish Group	July 2025
Create a central information repository	Setup Teams library and chat space	Simon Cann, Danial Webb	September 2025
Review Herefordshire Council's current powers and responsibilities.	Compile and provide overview of <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Existing legislation in England and Wales <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Local Transport Act 2008 ○ Transport Act 2000 ○ Bus Service Act 2017 ○ Bus Services (No. 2) Bill ○ Public Service Vehicle Regulations. • Overview of who is responsible for local transport in England (Commons library) • Any allied statutory guidance • Bus operator legislation and guidance. • How these apply in Herefordshire. 	Simon Cann, David Land, Craig Lewis, Natalie Amos, task and finish group	Sep-Oct 2025
Review current passenger transport operations in Herefordshire and how they meet current and future need.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Previous council bus service reviews (c. 2019) • For both commercial and community operators <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Routes and frequency ○ Passenger numbers ○ Subsidy • Home to school transport <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Current services provided ○ Current providers • SEND transport • Adult Social Care Passenger transport 	Simon Cann, David Land, Craig Lewis, Natalie Amos	Sep-Oct 2025

Current local authority and regional funding	2025-2026 and medium-term funding <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • subsidised routes • community transport • other transport funding provided by the local authority 	Simon Cann, David Land, Craig Lewis, Natalie Amos	Sep-Oct 2025
Review Meeting		Task and Finish Group	October 2025
Overview of current BSIP funding	Summary of <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • National Bus Strategy • Herefordshire Bus Service Improvement Plan 2024 Briefing on <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Allocation of the £3.2m BSIP grant (2025–26) (£1.3m capital, £1.9m revenue) e.g., shelters, passenger experience, supported services • Progress in delivering funded projects and services • Their contribution to improved services Site visit to any BSIP-related capital project	Simon Cann, David Land, Craig Lewis, Natalie Amos	Nov-Dec 2025
Assess Enhanced Partnership performance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understand how the current enhanced partnership timetabling meets the objectives of the partnership. • Identify ways to apply learning from the group to new ways of meeting the objectives of the enhanced partnership. 	Simon Cann, David Land, Craig Lewis, Natalie Amos, task and finish group	Nov-Dec 2025
Combining bus services with other transport services	Desktop research <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Current rail services and how they align with bus services Group meeting <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Network Rail or other responsible authority 	Simon Cann, David Land, Craig Lewis, Natalie Amos	Nov-Dec 2025
Explore cross-border and cross-county transport	Map and list of current cross-border services to include <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Frequency • Operator • Funding (if applicable) Examples from other local authorities	Simon Cann, David Land, Craig Lewis, Natalie Amos	Nov-Dec 2025

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • See previous work looking at other local authorities • Identify opportunities for any cross-border service support 		
Review Meeting		Task and Finish Group	December 2025
Community Transport	<p>Site visit to a community transport provider</p> <p>Overview brief of Services in Herefordshire, to include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Current services, routes and frequencies • Cost • Funding 	Simon Cann, David Land, Craig Lewis, Natalie Amos	Jan-Feb 2026
Home to school and other resident transport	<p>Overview brief of home to school services in Herefordshire, to include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Current services, routes and frequencies • Cost and funding <p>Meeting with Home to school co-ordinator</p> <p>Meeting with Transformation team</p>	Simon Cann, David Land, Craig Lewis, Natalie Amos	Jan-Feb 2026
Review Meeting		Task and Finish Group	February 2026
Examine how other rural local authorities provide sustainable services.	<p>Internet research – what do they do in other rural local authorities?</p> <p>Suggested workstreams:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demand Responsive transport <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ YorBus, CallConnect ○ Worcestershire on Demand Worcestershire County Council ○ The Robin (your bookable bus) Gloucestershire County Council • Use of powers of funding <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Use of enhanced partnerships – Oxfordshire, Cornwall ○ Branding • Integrating transport and social care <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Community transport ○ The role of third sector organisations 	Simon Cann, David Land, Craig Lewis, Natalie Amos	Mar-Apr 2026

	<p>Site Visit</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shropshire DRT – Shrewsbury • Social care focused visit 		
Bus franchising	<p>Overview of Bus Services Bill</p> <p>Overview of approach taken by other local authorities</p> <p>Meeting with consultants or another local authority</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What are the barriers to franchising in rural areas? • Is this an opportunity for Herefordshire to pursue? • Are there partnership opportunities with other local authorities? 	Simon Cann, David Land, Craig Lewis, Natalie Amos	Mar-Apr 2026
Review Meeting		Task and Finish Group	May 2026
Draft report and recommendations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Draft final report • Draft recommendations 	Simon Cann, David Land, Craig Lewis, Natalie Amos	May-June 2026
Present report to Environment and Sustainability Scrutiny Committee		Task and Finish Group	June 2026

Health Care and Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee

Committee work programme

Committee Meeting

27 April 2026 **report deadline 17 April 2026** pre meeting lines of enquiry planning 23 April 2026

Topic and Objectives	Evidence required	Attendees*
Shaping neighbourhood health <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Analyse how the health partnership identifies health needs in communities. Scrutinise provision of current and future neighbourhood health services. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Neighbourhood health bid Taurus Out of Hours GP service Worcestershire Council papers 	Attendees to be agreed
CQC Inspection of adult social care services <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Examine findings of the recent CQC inspection of adult social care services. Scrutinise any action plan arising from the inspection findings. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> CQC inspection findings Post-inspection action plan 	Hilary Hall, Corporate Director, Community Wellbeing
Adult Social Care budget outturn <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Scrutinise financial outturn against budget Scrutinise performance against performance management framework 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Quarterly budget outturn and performance monitoring 	Hilary Hall, Corporate Director, Community Wellbeing
Work programme <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review work programme 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Draft work programme 	Statutory Scrutiny Officer

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

**Committee Briefing
April 2026 (TBC)**

Topic and Objectives	Evidence required	Attendees*
Herefordshire Safeguarding Adults Board Annual Report <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review the work of the Herefordshire Safeguarding Adults Partnership. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Safeguarding Adults Board Annual Report 	Kevin Crompton, Independent Chair of the Safeguarding Adults Board

Committee Meeting

27 July 2026 report deadline 17 July 2026 pre meeting lines of enquiry planning 23 July 2026

Topic and Objectives	Evidence required	Attendees*
Joint Strategic Needs Assessment <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review work to develop a new joint strategic needs assessment for Herefordshire. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Joint Strategic Needs Assessment 	Zoe Clifford, Director of Public Health
Adult Social Care budget outturn <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Scrutinise financial outturn against budget Scrutinise performance against performance management framework 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Quarterly budget outturn and performance monitoring 	Hilary Hall, Corporate Director, Community Wellbeing
Health and Wellbeing Strategy <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Objectives to be agreed 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Draft Health and Wellbeing Strategy 	Zoe Clifford

Committee Meeting

14 September 2026 **report deadline 4 September 2026** pre meeting lines of enquiry planning 10 September 2026

Topic and Objectives	Evidence required	Attendees*
Right Care Right Place <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Update on work to deliver acute community mental health support in Herefordshire. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Evidence to be agreed 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Attendees to be agreed
Adult Social Care budget outturn <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Scrutinise financial outturn against budget Scrutinise performance against performance management framework 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Quarterly budget outturn and performance monitoring 	Hilary Hall, Corporate Director, Community Wellbeing
Q2 Better Care Fund outcomes <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Objectives to be agreed 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Evidence to be agreed 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Attendees to be agreed
Meeting the demand for adult social care task and finish group <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Agree draft report and recommendations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Final task and finish group report 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Chair, task and finish group

Meeting the demand for adult social care task and finish group

Work programme

Objective To understand the extent of demand for adult social care services provided or commissioned in Herefordshire, and the likely change over time.

Objectives	Evidence required	Responsible officer	Date
Understand Herefordshire's demographics and future demographic change	Demographic information <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Understanding Herefordshire</i> demographic data • <i>Future population of Herefordshire</i> report • Joint Strategic Needs Assessment report 	Charlotte Worthy/Herefordshire Research team	Dec 25-Jan 26
Understand the demand for adult social care in Herefordshire	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Market Position Statement</i> • <i>Market Sustainability Plan</i> • Current rates of demand for adult social care <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Type of demand (domiciliary, residential, nursing) ○ Duration ○ Change over time 	Zakia Loughead	Dec 25-Jan 26
Compare demographic change and demand for adult social care compared to other local authorities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Desktop research comparison with 'statistical neighbours' 	Danial Webb/Henry Merricks-Murgatroyd	Dec 25-Jan 26
GROUP MEETING		Henry Merricks-Murgatroyd	February 2026

Objective To explore the drivers of increased demand for adult social care, and the capacity of the local authority and other care providers to meet it.

Objectives	Evidence required	People to speak with	Date
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Increased complexity of demand from an ageing population	Site visit – supported housing provider Site visit – third sector organisation working with older adults		Feb-Mar 26
The nature of funding for social care	Briefing on social care funding	Zakia Loughead ASC finance team	Feb-Mar 26
The size and structure of the social care market in Herefordshire	Overview of social care market Meeting with care providers	Zakia Loughead	Feb-Mar 26
Lack of housing growth, and flatlining tax base	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Interview with Cabinet portfolio holders 		Feb-Mar 26
GROUP MEETING		Henry Merricks-Murgatroyd	April 2026

Objective To identify strategies and work carried out by Herefordshire Council and partners such as housing associations and other organisations reduce demand for social care services, or to increase revenue to pay for services.

Objectives	Evidence required	People to speak with	Date
Assistive technology	Visit to Technology Enabled Care Services (TECS) Team	TBC	May-Jun 26
Community based universal and targeted services	Meeting with Talk Community Meeting with third sector organisation Meeting with other community team in another local authority	Emily Lowe – Talk Community	May-Jun 26
Market shaping and support	Meeting – service director Meeting – care providers’ network	Commissioning	May-Jun 26
Supported living	Meeting – director for housing support Visit to supported housing	Hayley Crane	May-Jun 26

		A supported housing provider	
In-house services and the role of Hoople	Case study – Essex Meeting with Hoople		May-Jun 26
GROUP MEETING		Henry Merricks-Murgatroyd	July 2026

Objective To make recommendations to the executive on steps that should be taken to reduce service demand and to increase revenue.

Objectives	Evidence required	People to speak with	Date
Write draft report and recommendations	Draft report and recommendations	Task and finish group	August 2026
Agree draft report and recommendations with committee	Draft report and recommendations	Task and finish group	October 2026

Scrutiny Management Board

Committee work programme

Committee Meeting

13 April 2026 **report deadline 1 April 2026** **member briefing 25 March 2026** **pre meeting lines of enquiry planning 9 April 2026**

Topic and objective	Evidence required	Attendees
Dedicated Schools Grant High Needs Block Management Plan <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review the draft management plan 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Management Plan 	Rachael Sanders, Director of Finance
Q3 Budget scrutiny Q3 Performance monitoring	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Budget report Supplementary information as requested by the committee 	Cabinet members Rachael Sanders Jessica Karia, Head of Corporate Performance and Intelligence
Work programme <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review work programme 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Draft work programme 	Statutory Scrutiny Officer

Committee Meeting

3 July 2026 report deadline **25 June 2026** member briefing **22 June 2026** pre meeting lines of enquiry planning **30 June 2026**

Topic and objective	Evidence required	Attendees
<p>Inequality and Social Mobility Task and Finish Group</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> To receive the report of the task and finish group. To agree any recommendations the committee as a result. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Task and Finish Group Report 	Task and Finish Group members
<p>Q4 Budget scrutiny</p> <p>Q4 Performance monitoring</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Budget report Supplementary information as requested by the committee 	<p>Cabinet members</p> <p>Rachael Sanders</p> <p>Jessica Karia, Head of Corporate Performance and Intelligence</p>

Committee Meeting

1 December 2026 report deadline **23 November 2026** member briefing **24 November 2026** pre meeting lines of enquiry planning **27 November 2026**

Topic and objective	Evidence required	Attendees
<p>Q2 Budget scrutiny</p> <p>Q2 Performance monitoring</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Budget report Supplementary information as requested by the committee 	<p>Cabinet members</p> <p>Rachael Sanders</p> <p>Jessica Karia, Head of Corporate Performance and Intelligence</p>

Long list of potential topics

- Social Value in procurement
- Working with the voluntary sector and others to help deliver services
- Review of the workforce strategy
- Supplier risk management
- Emergency Planning
- Annual review of effectiveness

Inequality and social mobility task and finish group

Work programme

Objective To define and understand the different dimensions of inequality (including but not limited to protected characteristics, rurality, socio-economic background and care experience) and social mobility in Herefordshire and the United Kingdom, including Herefordshire Council's understanding of inequality and social mobility.

Objectives	Evidence required	Responsible officer	Date
To define and understand the different dimensions of inequality.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Briefing on different types of inequality, to include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Wealth/income ○ Health ○ Rurality • Briefing on groups affected by inequality <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Protected characteristics ○ Military families • Overview of inequality as defined by other local authority scrutiny 	Danial Webb	Sep-Oct 25
To understand those dimensions that are particularly relevant to Herefordshire.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sub-ward indices of deprivation • Joint Strategic Needs Assessment • Economic data 	Danial Webb and Charlotte Worthy	Sep-Oct 25
To test Herefordshire Council's understanding of inequality, how it prioritises different elements of inequality, and its priorities to tackle and reduce inequality.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Herefordshire Council Plan • Meeting with leader and deputy • <i>(should this be merged with the above?)</i> 	Danial Webb and Charlotte Worthy	Sep-Oct 25
GROUP MEETING		Danial Webb	November 2025

Objective To measure inequality and social mobility across the county and the different dimensions that impact on inequality and social mobility within the county and between Herefordshire and other parts of the UK.

Objectives	Evidence required	People to speak with	Date
Collect and analyse relevant datasets pertaining to Herefordshire	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sub-ward indices of deprivation • Joint Strategic Needs Assessment • Economic data TBC 		Nov-Dec 25
Comparisons with statistical neighbours			Nov-Dec 25
Housing inequality	Meeting with housing providers		Nov-Dec 25
Rurality	•		
GROUP MEETING		Danial Webb	January 2026

Objective To gather examples of local authorities and wider local partnerships meaningfully reducing inequality and/or meaningfully improving social mobility from across the UK and other countries.

Objectives	Evidence required	People to speak with	Date
Examples from other scrutiny reviews	Other scrutiny reviews <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Scope • Learning 		
Examples of other inequality and social mobility strategies	Other scrutiny reviews <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Scope • Learning 		
Examples of evaluations of strategies and action plans			
Gather learning from those examples			

GROUP MEETING	Danial Webb	March 2026
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Objective To identify the plans, strategies and actions deployed by the council to reduce inequality and improve social mobility, and the degree to which they are likely to or are actually reducing inequality and improving social mobility, and the degree to which they are not.

Objectives	Evidence required	People to speak with	Date
GROUP MEETING	Simon Cann	April 2026	

Objective To make recommendations to the executive on steps that should be taken to meaningfully reduce inequality and improve social mobility across the county.

Objectives	Evidence required	People to speak with	Date
Write draft report and recommendations	Draft report and recommendations	Task and finish group	May 2026
Agree draft report and recommendations with committee	Draft report and recommendations	Task and finish group	July 2026

Commercialisation working group

Terms of reference

Background

Herefordshire Council faces a potential funding gap of £27.3 million for the 2026-27 financial year, and further funding gaps in future years. The executive has already identified commercialisation as key to its transformation programme. The executive has also indicated that commercialisation and income generation will form part of the strategy to address the funding gap.

Commercialisation within local government represents both a financial opportunity and a cultural challenge. Commercialisation could deliver significant cost savings and income-generating opportunities but only as a result of cultural change. For example [guidance](#) from the Association For Public Service Excellence emphasises that commercialisation cannot simply be a reaction to budget deficits – it requires an embedded strategy, a commercial mindset within the local authority, clear governance, and a well-developed understanding of risk.

To assist the Cabinet in developing a budget to propose to council Scrutiny Management Board will undertake a working group of members investigating how the council could increase income in the short and medium term alongside greater commercialisation.

Initial recommendations will be provided informally to the Cabinet by the end of November,

Short- and Long-Term Opportunities

Short term: The working group will examine the opportunities of:

- reviewing and adjusting fees and charges,
- maximising income from council assets (such as property leases and car parks), or exploring asset repurposing or disposals.
- benchmarking against neighbouring authorities could identify under-priced services as well as gaining an understanding of work that has already been undertaken in this area and
- other opportunities for income generation

The working group will seek to understand the impact and the risks associated with any short term operations

Longer term: The working group will identify opportunities to increase income and to drive efficiency in future years across the life of the medium-term financial strategy including, but not limited to those opportunities presented by commercialisation.

Given the timescale the working group's recommendations, especially for future years may be quite high level. The working group will deliver the best-founded recommendations it can within the fixed (and tight) timescale.

Overall approach

We propose a three-stage approach

- Herefordshire council is already working on commercialisation and income generation. The working group will consider current plans and arrangements, challenge these and work with officers to identify areas that they may not have considered.
- The working group will also have regard to the impact of their proposals on local people and the risks that may be associated with them.
- If there is time the working group will also investigate the strategic issues relating to commercialization and make recommendations for the cabinet to consider.

The Working Group will also have regard to guidance and experience across the sector in regards to areas such as (not an exhaustive list):

- The purposes of commercial activity, namely the balance between maximising income (for example, through fees, charges, or property ventures), supporting broader social value and strengthening community resilience.
- How the council might operate in markets without distorting competition and maintaining fairness to local businesses-governance and risk management
- The cultural dimension, which cannot be overstated. Officers and members must share a mindset that sees prudent risk-taking as legitimate. Without organisational readiness – training, leadership commitment, and internal capability – commercial ambitions will fail.

The scrutiny process must therefore explore how Herefordshire can build this culture safely, balancing entrepreneurial ambition with its statutory duty to protect public assets. It must also concern itself both with the immediate opportunities to increase income and the longer-term changes required to inculcate greater commercialisation.

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
Councillor Dan Hurcomb	Local Engagement & Community Resilience

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.

Report title and purpose	Decision Maker and Due date	Lead officer and lead cabinet member	Directorate	Notice of decision first published / ID	Issue Type and exemptions
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FORWARD PLAN FOR 27 February 2026 ONWARDS

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.

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 and Non-Key decisions.

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>Crisis and Resilience Fund 2026-29 To seek cabinet approval for Herefordshire Council to take receipt of the Crisis and Resilience Fund (CRF) grant as a programme funded by the Department of Work and Pensions (DWP) between 2026-2029. The CRF replaces the Household Support Fund (HSF) and the Discretionary Housing Payments (DHP) and will enable Herefordshire to work collaboratively with partners and communities at county and local levels to build long-term resilience, cohesion, and reduce the need for crisis support.</p>	<p>Cabinet 26 March 2026</p>	<p>Cabinet member finance and corporate services Nikki Stroud, Talk Community Children and Families Lead <small>nikki.stroud@herefordshire.gov.uk</small></p>	<p>Community Wellbeing</p>	<p>20 February 2026</p>	<p>Non Key Open</p>
<p>Delivery Plan 2026/27 To approve the council's Delivery Plan 2026-27. Cabinet is required to produce a delivery plan each year of the administration which sets out how the strategic priorities within the Herefordshire Council Plan 2024-28 will be delivered and monitored.</p>	<p>Cabinet 26 March 2026</p>	<p>Cabinet member corporate strategy and budget Jessica Karia, Head of Corporate Performance and Intelligence <small>jessica.karia@herefordshire.gov.uk</small> Tel: 01432 260976</p>	<p>Corporate Support Centre</p>	<p>NEW ITEM</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>Local Cycling, Walking and Wheeling Infrastructure Plan (formerly known as Local Walking Cycling Plan adoption) To seek Cabinet approval for the adoption of the Local Walking and Cycling Plan</p>	<p>Cabinet 26 March 2026</p>	<p>Cabinet member transport and infrastructure Ffion Horton, Transport Planning Services Manager ffion.horton@herefordshire.gov.uk</p>	<p>Economy and Environment</p>	<p>20 February 2026</p>	<p>KEY Open</p>
<p>Q3 Performance Report To report to Cabinet the quarterly outturn of key KPIs and progress against the Delivery Plan 2025/26.</p>	<p>Cabinet 26 March 2026</p>	<p>Cabinet member corporate strategy and budget Jessica Karia, Head of Corporate Performance and Intelligence jessica.karia@herefordshire.gov.uk Tel: 01432 260976</p>	<p>Corporate Support Centre</p>	<p>20 February 2026</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>Carbon Management Plan 2026/27-2030/31 To adopt the new carbon management plan for the period 2026/27 to 2030/31</p>	<p>Cabinet 23 April 2026</p>	<p>Cabinet member environment</p> <p>Gareth Ellis, Sustainability and Climate Change Officer, Daniel Lenain, Principal Sustainability and Climate Change Officer</p> <p>Gareth.Ellis@herefordshire.gov.uk, daniel.lenain@herefordshire.gov.uk Tel: 01432 383646</p>	<p>Economy and Environment</p>	<p>20 February 2026</p>	<p>KEY Open</p>
<p>Update on the Phase 2 Phosphate Mitigation Schemes To provide Cabinet with an update regarding the Phosphate Mitigation Wetland schemes</p>	<p>Cabinet 23 April 2026</p>	<p>Cabinet member environment</p> <p>Roger Allonby, Service Director Economy and Growth, Gemma Dando, Chief Operating Officer, Scott Tompkins, Delivery Director - Infrastructure, Susan White, Programme Manager</p> <p>Roger.Allonby@herefordshire.gov.uk, gemma.dando@herefordshire.gov.uk, scott.tompkins@herefordshire.gov.uk, Susan.White2@herefordshire.gov.uk Tel: 01432 260330, , Tel: 01432 260070</p>	<p>Economy and Environment</p>	<p>20 February 2026</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
Cabinet Member Decisions (Key and Non Key decisions)					
Portfolio: adults, health and wellbeing					
<p>Herefordshire Homeless Prevention and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2026 - 2031</p> <p>This is a five year statutory strategy to replace the 2020-2025 strategy. It sets out our approach to the prevention of homelessness and rough sleeping in the county.</p>	<p>Cabinet member adults, health and wellbeing</p> <p>26 March 2026</p>	<p>Cabinet member adults, health and wellbeing</p> <p>Robert Barnett, Housing Strategy Officer</p> <p><small>robert.barnett@herefordshire.gov.uk</small></p>	<p>Community Wellbeing</p>	<p>20 February 2026</p>	<p>KEY</p> <p>Open</p>
<p>To extend the council's current commissioned home care framework</p> <p>To approve an extension to the council's current commissioned home care framework for up to six months from 31 October 2026 to 30 April 2027.</p>	<p>Cabinet member adults, health and wellbeing</p> <p>Before 27 April 2026</p>	<p>Cabinet member adults, health and wellbeing</p> <p>Helen Davies, Commissioning Manager</p> <p><small>helen.davies3@herefordshire.gov.uk</small></p>	<p>Community Wellbeing</p>	<p>20 February 2026</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>Herefordshire Adult Social Care Prevention Strategy The purpose of the report is to approve the 2026-2036 Herefordshire Adult Social Care Prevention Strategy</p>	<p>Cabinet member adults, health and wellbeing April 2026</p>	<p>Cabinet member adults, health and wellbeing David Collyer, Acting Consultant in Public Health: General Practitioner <small>david.collyer2@herefordshire.gov.uk</small></p>	<p>Community Wellbeing</p>	<p>20 February 2026</p>	<p>KEY Open</p>
<p>Portfolio: children and young people</p>					
<p>Portfolio: community services and assets</p>					
<p>Portfolio: economy and growth</p>					
<p>Strategic Housing: Three-year Capital Programme 2026/27 To approve the capital budget allocated to Strategic Housing through the Council's capital programme to meet the immediate housing need of vulnerable groups and provide grant assistance to property owners to bring empty properties back into use.</p>	<p>Cabinet member economy and growth Before 31 March 2026</p>	<p>Cabinet member economy and growth Hannah McSherry, Housing Strategy Officer <small>Hannah.McSherry2@herefordshire.gov.uk Tel: 01432 383061</small></p>	<p>Community Wellbeing</p>	<p>NEW ITEM</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
Portfolio: environment					
<p>Solar Car Ports at Plough Lane To approve the scoping and construction of solar car ports at Plough Lane</p>	<p>Cabinet member environment 20 March 2026</p>	<p>Cabinet member environment Katie Ainsworth, Senior Project Manager, Richard Vaughan, Sustainability and Climate Change Manager, Rosanna Willmott, Sustainability and Climate Change Officer <small>katie.ainsworth2@herefordshire.gov.uk, Richard.Vaughan@herefordshire.gov.uk, rosanna.willmott@herefordshire.gov.uk Tel: 01432 260192, Tel: 01432 261749</small></p>	<p>Economy and Environment</p>	<p>20 February 2026</p>	<p>KEY Open</p>
<p>Allocating the Climate and Nature Reserve Phase 2 To Allocate the balance of the Climate and Nature Reserve for the delivery of projects which will positively impact the climate and natural environment of Herefordshire to the benefit of all who reside in the county.</p>	<p>Cabinet member environment 30 April 2026</p>	<p>Cabinet member environment Richard Vaughan, Sustainability and Climate Change Manager <small>Richard.Vaughan@herefordshire.gov.uk Tel: 01432 260192</small></p>	<p>Economy and Environment</p>	<p>20 February 2026</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>Adoption of Herefordshire Local Nature Recovery Strategy To formally adopt the Herefordshire Local Nature Recovery Strategy and accept associated government grant for delivery.</p>	<p>Cabinet member environment 10 June 2026</p>	<p>Cabinet member environment Mandy Neill, Senior Landscape Officer, Richard Vaughan, Sustainability and Climate Change Manager mandy.neill@herefordshire.gov.uk, Richard.Vaughan@herefordshire.gov.uk Tel: 01432 260192</p>	<p>Economy and Environment</p>	<p>20 February 2026</p>	<p>KEY Open</p>
<p>Portfolio: finance and corporate services</p>					
<p>Portfolio: local engagement and community resilience</p>					
<p>The New Public Realm Service – Depot Facilities This report seeks approval to procure and undertake any necessary works to depot and other facilities as required to deliver the New Public Realm Service from 1 June 2026.</p>	<p>Cabinet member local engagement and community resilience 19 March 2026</p>	<p>Cabinet member local engagement and community resilience Ed Bradford, Head of Highways and Traffic Edward.Bradford@herefordshire.gov.uk Tel: 01432 260786</p>	<p>Economy and Environment</p>	<p>20 February 2026</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
Portfolio: roads and regulatory services					
<p>Public Realm Services Annual Plan –2026/27 To confirm the annual plan of public realm works that will be delivered in line with capital and revenue budgets and in accordance with the Council’s Highway Asset Management Plan and Highway Maintenance Plan.</p>	<p>Cabinet member roads and regulatory services 13 March 2026</p>	<p>Cabinet member local engagement and community resilience, Cabinet member roads and regulatory services Ed Bradford, Head of Highways and Traffic <small>Edward.Bradford@herefordshire.gov.uk Tel: 01432 260786</small></p>	<p>Economy and Environment</p>	<p>20 February 2026</p>	<p>KEY Open</p>
<p>Highway Maintenance Plan To update the Highway Maintenance Plan, which sets out the reasonable system of inspection and repair that will be deployed by the Council to ensure that it meets its duty to maintain all publicly maintainable highways.</p>	<p>Cabinet member roads and regulatory services 13 March 2026</p>	<p>Cabinet member roads and regulatory services Ed Bradford, Head of Highways and Traffic <small>Edward.Bradford@herefordshire.gov.uk Tel: 01432 260786</small></p>	<p>Economy and Environment</p>	<p>20 February 2026</p>	<p>KEY Open</p>
Portfolio: transport and infrastructure					

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>Capability and Ambition Fund 2025/26 allocation</p> <p>The purpose of the report is to confirm what Herefordshire Council will deliver with the Capability and Ambition Fund grant</p>	<p>Cabinet member transport and infrastructure 16 March 2026</p>	<p>Cabinet member transport and infrastructure</p> <p>Ffion Horton, Transport Planning Services Manager, Scott Tompkins, Delivery Director - Infrastructure, Richard Vaughan, Sustainability and Climate Change Manager</p> <p><small>ffion.horton@herefordshire.gov.uk, scott.tompkins@herefordshire.gov.uk, Richard.Vaughan@herefordshire.gov.uk Tel: 01432 260192</small></p>	<p>Economy and Environment</p>	<p>20 February 2026</p>	<p>Non Key Open</p>
<p>Pilot Programme for School Transport Operating Model</p> <p>To agree to commence a pilot programme for a School Transport Operating Model that will provide evidence to inform the delivery of a clear, consistent, and efficient framework for delivering the council's statutory home-to-school transport service.</p>	<p>Cabinet member transport and infrastructure 31 March 2026</p>	<p>Cabinet member transport and infrastructure</p> <p>Gemma Dando, Chief Operating Officer, Danielle Pyemont, Senior Project Manager</p> <p><small>gemma.dando@herefordshire.gov.uk, danielle.pyemont@herefordshire.gov.uk</small></p>	<p>Economy and Environment</p>	<p>20 February 2026</p>	<p>KEY Open</p>



Appendix 3 Recommendations made by Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee, January – December 2025

Tuesday 21 January 2025		
Herefordshire Safeguarding Children Partnership - Yearly Review of Effectiveness Report 2023-24		
Rec. No.	Recommendation	Response
1	The partnership ensures that recommendations from the 2024-25 annual review of effectiveness onwards have an identified partnership lead and an indicative timeframe for completion;	Noted and will be incorporated into business plan 25/26
2	The partnership appends an implementation plan for the recommendations in its 2024-25 annual review of effectiveness; and	Noted and will be created for the business plan agreed for 25/26
3	Herefordshire Council's director of children's services and director of governance and law provide guidance to elected members on their corporate parent responsibilities in the event of a significant incident, or death, concerning a care leaver under the age of 25.	<p>The role of members as corporate parents: The Children and Social Work Act 2017 says that when a child or young person comes into the care of the council, or is a "qualifying care leaver" (someone who between 16 and 25 and was looked-after by the authority for at least 13 weeks after their fourteenth birthday), the council becomes their corporate parent. This means that they should:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • act in the best interests, and promote the physical and mental health and wellbeing, of those children and young people • encourage them to express their views, wishes and feelings, and take them into account, • make sure they have access to services • make sure children and young people are safe, with stable home lives, relationships and education or work • promote high aspirations and try to secure the best outcomes for them • prepare them for adulthood and independent living. <p>All councillors and officers are corporate parents. It is therefore every councillor's responsibility to make sure that the council is meeting these duties towards children in care and care leavers. Children can be in care in a range of different settings, with the authority acting as corporate parent to all of them. This includes foster care, children's homes, secure children's homes, young</p>

offender institutions, secure training centres and some types of kinship care. Every councillor and officer within a council has a responsibility to act for those children and young people as a parent would for their own child. Lead members, those on corporate parenting panels, and overview and scrutiny committees will have particular responsibilities, but for all councillors, there is a role of being the “eyes and ears of the community”.

The role of the council in child deaths

The death of a child is a tragedy, and subsequent enquiries / investigations should keep an appropriate balance between forensic and medical requirements and the family’s need for support. There is a strict statutory framework to be adhered to following the death of a child, this is led in Herefordshire by the Herefordshire Safeguarding Children Partnership (HSCP) under strict legislative guidance, and the Council does not have a role independently in such matters. Statutory guidance Working Together to Safeguard Children 2023 defines child death review partners as “local authorities and any Integrated Care Boards (ICBs) for the local area as set out in the Children Act 2004, as amended by the Children and Social Work Act 2017”. The HSCP therefore has a legal duty to undertake reviews of serious cases (Rapid Reviews and Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews) where a child has died or suffered serious harm, and abuse or neglect is known or suspected. When a child dies, in any circumstances, it is important for parents and families to understand what has happened and whether there are any lessons to be learned. HSCP must make arrangements to review all deaths of children normally resident in the local area and, if they consider it appropriate, for any non-resident child who has died in their area.

Key scrutiny responsibilities in children’s services

Through legislation, scrutiny committees have several critical roles:

- **Examining Children's Services Performance:** They assess whether local authorities and partners are effectively delivering services such as social care, education, and youth support.
- **Scrutinising Safeguarding Practices:** Ensuring that child protection measures, multi-agency safeguarding arrangements, and social work interventions are effective.
- **Monitoring SEND Services:** Reviewing how well councils and health partners implement the SEND reforms and improve outcomes for children with disabilities.
- **Assessing Children’s Health and Well-being Services:** Overseeing the effectiveness of child and adolescent mental health services (CAMHS), public health initiatives, and early intervention programmes.
- **Reviewing Education and Skills Provision:** Evaluating school performance, alternative provision, post-16 education, and how councils support vulnerable learners.

		<p>Limitations</p> <p>Despite their statutory powers, scrutiny committees have limitations in scrutinising children's services, particularly where other statutory processes are already in place. The Local Government Act 2000 and subsequent legislation outline that scrutiny committees cannot duplicate or interfere with statutory decision-making processes. This restriction affects their ability to intervene in certain cases, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Individual Casework and Complaints: Committees do not have the power to scrutinise individual cases of child protection, SEND disputes, or social care interventions, as these matters are subject to separate statutory complaints and appeals mechanisms, such as the First-tier Tribunal (Special Educational Needs and Disability) or the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman. • Regulated Inspection Processes: Under the Education and Inspections Act 2006, Ofsted has a statutory role in inspecting children's services, including safeguarding and SEND provision. Scrutiny committees cannot override or replace the findings of Ofsted or direct the regulatory body's work. • Judicial and Tribunal Matters: Matters that are subject to legal proceedings, such as care proceedings in the Family Court under the Children Act 1989, are beyond the remit of scrutiny committees. They cannot influence court decisions or interfere in ongoing legal cases. <p>Statutory Safeguarding Boards: The Children and Social Work Act 2017 established Local Safeguarding Partnerships, replacing Local Safeguarding Children Boards. Scrutiny committees cannot take over or interfere with the statutory duties of these multi-agency safeguarding arrangements, including serious case reviews, which have legal responsibility for protecting children at risk. They can, however scrutinise the safeguarding partnership itself.</p>
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Tuesday 22 July 2025		
Herefordshire Children's Services and Partnership Improvement Plan		
Rec. No.	Recommendation	Response
1	For the executive to ensure that the council's digital, data and technology teams are sufficiently staffed, and properly resourced in the next budget, to ensure that all of the data needs of the children and young people directorate are met.	A review of the council's ICT and Corporate Performance & Intelligence resources to support all Directorate teams will be undertaken as part of development of the council's revenue budget for 2026/27. This review will ensure that resource requirements are prioritised within the context of the funding available and the council's overall financial position.
2	For full Council to debate and commit to the principle of working for a child friendly Herefordshire.	Cllr Fagan proposed her motion at the Full Council meeting on 10 October 2025 which was carried unanimously.

Tuesday 16 September 2025		
Children And Young People's Quality Assurance		
Rec. No.	Recommendation	Response
1	Herefordshire Council ensures that in quarterly performance monitoring and its annual report of complaints it includes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • learning from compliments • complaints that are declined and the reasons for this and • evidence in case file audits of informal resolutions. 	Recommendations are agreed and will be incorporated into annual report 25/26 and quarterly case audit reports and reflected in summary in the annual report 25/26
Youth Justice		
Rec. No.	Recommendation	Response
1	Herefordshire Council engage with colleges regarding education and training for those in the youth justice system.	
Tuesday 11 November 2025		
Herefordshire Safeguarding Children Partnership Yearly Report 2024-25		
Rec. No.	Recommendation	Response
1	Partnership to consider explicitly reporting what partners learned from children and families and how it influenced policy and practice (you said, we did) in its annual report.	Recommendations are agreed and will be incorporated into annual report 25/26 and quarterly case audit reports and reflected in summary in the annual report 25/26
Pursue Prevent Protect Prepare		
Rec. No.	Recommendation	Response
1	The Director of Children's Services, through the all-member briefing, to brief elected members on Pursue, Prevent, Protect, Prepare, and on	

	elected members' duties as corporate parents with regard to Prevent.	
2	The Protect and Prepare Board to consider how the specific perspectives and experiences of children and young people can be built into the design and delivery of emergency/civil contingencies exercises	

