

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.**

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

