

Agenda

Children and young people scrutiny committee

Date: **Tuesday 26 April 2022**

Time: **2.30 pm**

Place: **Herefordshire Council Offices, Plough Lane, 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 Phillip Howells
Vice-chairperson Councillor Jennie Hewitt

Councillor Graham Andrews
Councillor Toni Fagan
Councillor Helen l'Anson
Councillor Mike Jones
Councillor David Summers

Non-Voting Member Councillor Jim Kenyon

Co-optee **Wiktor Daron** Archdiocese of Cardiff
Andy James Parent Governor Representative for Special Schools
Sam Pratley Hereford Diocese

Agenda

		Pages
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 interest in respect of Schedule 1, Schedule 2 or Other Interests from members of the committee in respect of items on the agenda.</p>	
4.	<p>MINUTES AND ACTION LOG</p> <p>To approve and sign the minutes of the meeting on Tuesday 22 March 2022.</p> <p>To review and approve the action log</p>	9 - 16
5.	<p>CO-OPTEE CONFIRMATION</p> <p>To consider and approve the family representative co-optee candidate as nominated by the committee:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Families Representative – Fiona Reid 	17 - 18
6.	<p>QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC</p> <p>To receive any written questions from members of the public. <i>Deadline for receipt of questions is 5:00pm on Wednesday 20 April</i></p> <p><i>Accepted questions and answers will be published as a supplement prior to the meeting. Please submit questions to:</i> councillorservices@herefordshire.gov.uk. <i>Further information and guidance is available at</i> www.herefordshire.gov.uk/getinvolved</p>	
7.	<p>QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL</p> <p>To receive any written questions from members of the council. <i>Deadline for receipt of questions is 5:00pm on Wednesday 20 April</i></p> <p><i>Accepted questions and answers will be published as a supplement prior to the meeting. Please submit questions to:</i> councillorservices@herefordshire.gov.uk.</p>	
8.	<p>INCREASED BUDGET FOR CHILDREN'S SERVICES: INVESTING IN CHILDREN'S SERVICES TRANSFORMATION</p> <p>To review the increased budget for children's services for investing in children's services transformation.</p>	19 - 50
9.	<p>CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE' IMPROVEMENT PLAN - PROGRESS</p>	51 - 58

UPDATE

To review the Children and Families Strategic Improvement Plan – progress update.

10. WORK PROGRAMME REVIEW

To review the attached work programme for 2022/23

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11. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The next meeting will be 17 May 2022 at 2:30pm

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<http://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. They should actively promote and robustly support the principles and be willing to challenge poor behaviour wherever it occurs.

Minutes of the meeting of Children and young people scrutiny committee held at Herefordshire Council Offices, Plough Lane, Hereford, HR4 0LE on Tuesday 22 March 2022 at 2.30 pm

Present: Councillor Phillip Howells (Chairperson)
Councillor Jennie Hewitt (Vice-chairperson)

Councillors: Graham Andrews, Helen l'Anson, James, Mike Jones, Jim Kenyon and David Summers

In attendance Councillor Diana Toynbee, Cabinet Member for Children and Families
Councillor Kath Hey
Ruth Whittingham - Head of Law and Legal Business Partner Children and Families
James Kempton (LGA scrutiny mentor)

Officers: Democratic services manager, Service Director - Education, Skills and Learning, Interim Service Director Safeguarding, QA & Improvement and Head of Law and Legal Business Partner, Children and Families, Director of Public Health Community Democratic Service Officers, Democratic Service Manager

72. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Mr Sam Pratley, Education Co-optee, Mr Darryl Freeman, Corporate Director, Children's and Young People, Jane Ellis Healthwatch.

Councillors Toni Fagan and Helen l'Anson, attended the meeting remotely and did not vote on the resolutions of the Committee.

73. NAMED SUBSTITUTES

Andrew Teale – Standing in for Sam Pratley

74. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

75. MINUTES

Resolved: It was resolved that the minutes of the meeting held on 22 February 2022 be approved as an accurate record and signed by the Chairperson.

At this point it was put forward that the actions and minute tracker be brought forward to just after the minutes, but after discussion and committee members not being advised in advance, it was agreed to review these at the end of the meeting, but that in future meetings the action tracker would be reviewed after the minutes were approved.

The Chair was pleased to report to the Committee that the Archdiocese of Cardiff co-optee had been nominated and this would now begin the induction process, with the view of being a full member by the April meeting. Recommendations have been made to the legal team in regards to the parent's co-optee position. The process still needs completing and induction needs to take place, with hopes that the committee will be able to agree the co-opted member at the next meeting in April.

76. QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

There were no questions from Members of the Public

77. QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL

There were no questions from Councillors.

78. IMPACT OF THE PANDEMIC ON THE MENTAL HEALTH AND WELL-BEING OF PUPILS IN SCHOOLS

The Assistant Director for Education, Development and Skills introduced the report the purpose of which was for the Committee to consider the impact of the pandemic on the mental health and well-being of children in our education system

During discussion the following principal points were noted:

- Schools are still experiencing the pandemic and its effects, therefore they are not yet in the post-pandemic stage. It is still a very active issue and the impact being felt is not yet fully understood. Work continues with schools to assess the full effects that COVID has had on both children's and teacher's mental health.
- Concerns were noted that early years was ill prepared for the issues of the pandemic. But it is hoped, as a result of continuing review, that we will see future improvements.
- Early years issues have been played down due to resources being stretched when the pandemic arrived. Half of nurseries closed in the first week or so of the pandemic.
- Recovery is one of the priorities in improving advisory support and how nurseries can manage their business model to be more resilient.
- It was recognised that perinatal assistance was introduced to support with the 0+ years. Communication with perinatal services is up and running, and partnership meetings are taking place. Information is being shared between different organisations, but it was acknowledged that further communication is needed to ensure all perinatal services can contribute and benefit from this assistance
- Schools have been offered additional training with pastoral care. However, it is felt that this has not been enough and not systematically applied.
- Funds from central government exist, but they tend to come with conditions attached, with the money only able to be spent on specific things. We are seeing that most funding is now community facing instead of school facing.
- Further, conditions for some grants require schools to use their reserves before being eligible to apply for recovery grant funding.
- Following further questioning it was explained that the number of extra pupils being affected by mental health because of the pandemic is unclear outside of the normal numbers the services would expect to see.
- It was noted that special schools should receive particular recognition in their management of the pandemic, as they have had extra hurdles to surmount.
- It was explained that elective home education officers have been visiting families in their homes. There has not been as high a spike in the number who elected for home education as maybe expected.

- Mental health referrals in the schools only went live in the autumn 2021 and currently there has been no high influx of referrals. Where referrals are made all young people are seen within 26 weeks, and the majority of young people are seen quicker than that.
- Noted that schools such as Blackmarstons, and Barrs Court school being excellent schools in regards to Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) and support groups that are in place.
- Riverside school sends out its teaching assistants to fetch some children into school and once they arrive at school they then feed them. While other schools do adopt this practice it is at the schools' discretion as to whether they do offer this service.
- Getting children active to help with their mental health is seen as a positive, but getting into swimming pools, as an example. It was commented that this has proved to be challenging and could be improved upon.
- The example of Hereford City Council sponsoring the junior park run was mentioned as a good example of helping children to get active and had shown real benefits in aiding children to improve their mental health. This can be socially prescribed to children, as a healthy body can give a healthy mind.
- A lot of schools have had support for educational catch-up as a result of children falling behind with their educational attainment. As a result Personal Social Health and Economic (PHSE) was described as falling to the side-lines because of academic catch up.
- Senior officers agreed that despite Covid grants the funding for schools had in real terms been less than in previous years
- It was noted that the council should be lobbying MP's about the crisis that is facing children in schools, in an attempt to obtain higher levels of funding.
- Mental health support teams in schools now referred to as Wellbeing and Emotional Support Teams (WEST), and mirrors the graduated response. It is a national programme and by 2024 the NHS want over half of schools in the country to have support in schools
- Nominated person from WEST working in each of the schools in Herefordshire as a mental health lead.
- Identified 20 primary schools of most in need after looking at health inequality data. These schools are yet to confirm they want to take part.
- The graduated pathway is what schools are expected to follow to make provisions for children with a range of special educational needs. Ranging for all children to those with complex needs. This covers all elements of special educational needs. The pathway dictates what levels of support should be available at each stage of education from early years all the way up to Key stage 4.
- All stages of the graduated pathway include teacher and pastoral support. Key stage 1 and 2 see the use of Nurture groups. Key stages 2, 3 and 4 use the pupil referral units.
- Nurture groups exist in 6 of the primary schools across the county. This allows the child to have a year of assessment and specialist input to help with their special educational needs. At the end of the year the child may be ready to reintegrate back into mainstream schools, or it may be deemed that they have further educational needs which could result in them needing to be placed at Brookfield's School for a short/long term.
- The nurture group is overseen by a principal education psychologist. There are currently too many people wanting to attend these groups, but not enough to set up a nurture group in each school. As such this has resulted in gaps in the graduated pathways. There is a growing need which we are observing, but lack of resources to support this.
- After making progress in a nurture group the child may be settled and not wish to move back to their original school. As such they are allowed to remain in the

school and transport will be funded for a child living over three miles away as it is seen as the closest school that can meet the child's needs.

- In the event a child is excluded from the school, it was explained to the committee that it was right that the money should follow the child in a swift manner. This is something that was noted as not to be happening at present. If the child is excluded from a Local Authority run school it is easier to achieve this than if it was from an Academy.
- Private schools are not eligible for the mental health lead training funding, but can access the course with their own funds.
- It was explained that children can be more vulnerable when at home, and if the child has mental health spending time at home can make them more vulnerable. Excluded children can go to a Pupil Referral Unit (PRU), but this is during school time and very little in the way of extracurricular or community activities are given.
- Turning to particular mental health conditions, it was explained that, for example, diagnosing autism is difficult and uses a multi-disciplinary process since 2018. Using this approach, however, it has been possible to evidence that more people have been diagnosed in the last 12 months than previous 12 months. This is widely felt to be caused by Covid catch-up. The number of children with autism is not increasing, in actual terms.
- Diagnosis could happen at 0+ years, but tends to lend itself more towards 2-3 years. Nurseries can make these referrals or paediatricians have the ability too.
- It was stated that not every school will have a mental health resource - some Multi Academy Trusts, for example, share this resource.
- The committee presented a shared view that every school should have involvement and mental health support should be the culture in schools. Emotional resilience needs to be built in all children, and should be focused upon
- Graduated pathway is a good scheme, and looks promising. If a school tries to exclude a child the inclusion officer will try to ensure this process is taken up and look to ensure the school takes the plan forward. If a school applies for funding they have to prove they have used the graduated pathway.
- There has been surge in schools wanting to be accommodating to all their children's social, educational, and health needs at the beginning of term time, but often as the term and year progresses frustrations and mental exhaustion of the teachers leads to a higher rate of exclusion and absenteeism. Concerns that due to rising mental health concerns in teachers it could correlate downwards as some children may not feel safe.
- In regards to funding from the Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG), historically, Herefordshire has been less well funded than its Worcester counterpart. Over the past two years the proportionality of the funding has been more heavily weighted towards Herefordshire to help level up the services provided. As such Herefordshire is getting more funding for mental health, but issues were raised around how the funding is being used and where it is going.
- The time in which a child in crisis wait to be seen after referral was discussed to be up to 26 weeks. The committee saw this as not being good enough. 1 day of a child in crisis is too long, but half a year is too much. More funding is coming to help with crisis response, but it was stressed that all children will be seen within 26 weeks although most are seen much sooner.
- Noted that there is a need to explore what is happening with mental health within GP practises. Currently there are three GP practices in Herefordshire that may have mental health services. This could be an item referred onto All Ages Commission.
- All pandemic babies have access to speech and language enrichment activities. Currently children are seen at 9 months and 2 years to measure their development. If anything is picked up, then this will be referred and support provided where possible to help.

The following recommendations were read out to the committee. They were proposed by the chair and seconded by Cllr Andrews. The recommendations were carried unanimously

RECOMMENDATIONS:

Having reviewed the impact of the pandemic on mental health and wellbeing of pupils in schools, the committee recommended that:

- a) If/when a child is excluded from a school, the money follows the child within a month so that their special /mental health needs are addressed quickly. To include lobbying the CCG for funding
- b) A report and methodological approach is prepared to review the progress at the CYPSC meeting, including national comparator data to report to the committee about what action planning Herefordshire is considering to address the problems within our county.
- c) A review be undertaken and a report be prepared on the impact of COVID 'enrichment' initiatives, including the WEST programme, is reviewed and the analysis provided as to which schools have been involved in this initiative, including how many schools knew about it.
- d) Consideration be given to a T+F group or spotlight review with schools to encourage and support parents to ask for and take up the various mental health initiatives in their school setting. To be added to the work programme.
- e) More resource to be allocated for Brookfield's and the other special schools – with particular emphasis on investment in early years, and Yr 1 and 2 to prevent problems being exacerbated in relation to the impact of COVID
- f) CYPSC to lobby local MPs to lobby DfE to prioritise funding, supported by a funding bid and business case, to fund two attendance officers.

79. CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S MENTAL HEALTH AND WELLBEING: DATA AND PREVENTION

Before this presentation and discussion the chair proposed extending the meeting for 15 minutes until 5.45pm and this was accepted by all attending.

The Consultant in Public Health introduced the report on the overview of work that has been undertaken to inform our understanding of children and young people's (CYP's) mental health in Herefordshire, and the universal and preventative programmes that support good mental health and wellbeing.

During discussion the following principal points were noted:

- During the pandemic a lot of children are now using social media, the pressures and bullying online are causing issues. The police are leading on the worst examples of this.
- It could be something for local government to look into, and for the schools to monitor some of the children.
- The pressures that children are under was raised and suggested that it could lead to grooming and sexual exploitation. Local government should be getting a handle on this and liaising with the police.
- Need to get a grip of bullying on platforms online. The committee would like to see local government take a closer look into this, as it leads onto mental health and abuse issues.

- Engagement with the faith communities is supported by Talk Communities, which aims to reach all different forms of communities. Cross directorate initiative needed to support this.

The following recommendations were proposed and seconded and carried unanimously.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

The Committee recommended that:

- a) The children's commissioners' newsletter be circulated to all councillors.
- b) Local government level social media platforms are explored in their relation to their impact on the wellbeing of young people and the risks presented to young people into being drawn into sexual exploitation and bullying using these platforms be investigated

80. WORK PROGRAMME REVIEW

The Committee agreed to defer this item until the next meeting.

ACTIONS:

- Send out a report with an update of the proposed work programme and a list of dates for suggested next meetings.

81. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The date of the next meeting was noted as Tuesday 26 April at 2.30pm.

The meeting ended at 5.42 pm

Chairperson

COMPLETED ACTIONS WILL BE MOVED TO THE 'REPORTED COMPLETE' TAB ONCE

BLUE TEXT INDICATES NEW ACTIONS ADDED

Action Number	Meeting Date	Action	Owner	Directorate	Progress Update	Due date	Reported complete
1	07/09/21	check and confirm if the Human Rights Act is highlighted as a workshop requirement for social workers	Claire Ward	Corporate Centre	Legal services checking	02/11/21	OVERDUE
2	07/09/21	provide an example of an induction pack for new starters	Claire Ward	Corporate Centre	Legal services checking	02/11/21	OVERDUE
3	07/09/21	seek an update on the schools update briefing promised on 28 July 2020.	Clerk to the committee	Corporate Centre	Updates added to recommendation tracker	02/11/21	COMPLETED
4	05/08/21	Advertise and recruit to the Co-optee positions	Clerk to the committee	Corporate Centre	Completed	01/09/21	COMPLETED
5	12/10/21	Circulate to the Committee the Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) of the Children's Centre Service contracts, with comparisons of the different providers used within the County.	Richard Watson		To be completed	07/12/21	OVERDUE
6	12/10/21	The Deputy Monitoring Officer to provide the Committee with the current procurement rules, including the guidance on current exemptions to these rules.	Kate Charlton	Corporate Centre	Legal services checking	07/12/21	OVERDUE
7	12/10/21	Information on the Friends of Ledbury to be forwarded to the Committee.	Richard Watson		To be completed	07/12/21	OVERDUE
8	23/11/21	The IRO to be shared with the Safeguarding Partnership	Matthew Sampson	Children's Services	Completed. Sent to the Quality and Executive sub-group of the Safeguarding Partnership	01/01/22	COMPLETED
9	23/11/21	That the IRO handbook be circulated to all members of the Committee for information	Matthew Sampson	Children's Services	Noted	01/03/22	IN PROGRESS
10	23/11/21	That the Committee receive an update on the next IRO report			Target of getting the IRO report 2021-22 to Scrutiny much earlier, hopefully June /July before then being sent to the Safeguarding Partnership	01/04/22	IN PROGRESS
11	23/11/21	That the rag rating system used for the Strategic Improvement Plan be implemented for Scrutiny reports	Darryl Freeman	Children's Services	Noted	14/02/22	COMPLETED
12	23/11/21	That Members be sent the link to the advertisements that have gone out for the co-optee positions	Joanna Morley	Corporate Centre	Completed	23/11/21	COMPLETED
13	12/02/22	That quantitative data for the report presented be sent to Committee Members	Matthew Sampson	Children's Services	To be completed		
14	12/02/22	The Director for Children's Services would provide the Committee with the data on how long it took to get a statement of education need.	Darryl Freeman	Children's Services	To be completed		
15	22/03/22	Send out a report and update of the work programme and statement of next meetings.	Clerk to the committee	Corporate Centre	Noted		



Title of report: Families Co-optee Representative

Meeting: Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee

Meeting date: Tuesday 26 April 2022

Report by: Democratic Services Officer

Classification

Open

Decision type

This is not an executive decision

Wards affected

(All Wards);

Purpose

To approve the nomination made by the Chair/Vice-Chair of the Children and Young People Scrutiny committee for the position of the Families Co-Optee Representative

Recommendation(s)

That the Committee:

- a) Approves the co-option of Ms Fiona Reid as the Families Co-optee



Title of report: Investment in Children's Transformation -

Meeting: Children and young people scrutiny committee

Meeting date: Tuesday 26 April 2022

Report by: Corporate Director - Children & Young People

Classification

Open

Decision type

This is not an executive decision

Wards affected

(All Wards);

Purpose

Children's Services Transformation spend oversight

Recommendation(s)

That the committee:

- a) **Considers the detail of the additional investment in Children's Services Transformation, £11.49m funding for which was approved at Cabinet on 31 March 2022 and determines the focus of scrutiny by the committee in the year ahead.**

Alternative options

1. The Committee could choose not to review the approved investment in Children's Services but this is not recommended as the Scrutiny Committee has an important role in ensuring this funding is spent in accordance with the Cabinet decision, and in exploring pressures and dependencies relating this, and in identifying and reviewing mitigation for any risk and issues in connection with this.

Key considerations

2. The [18 May 2021 DfE non-statutory notice to improve](#).
3. The [31 March 2022 Cabinet decision to approve £11.49m](#) to support transformation of Children's Services. See also Appendixes 1, 2, 3.
4. That spend of these additional £11.49m funds will be fully project managed as per the decision of Cabinet on 31 March 2022 with the governance for the Transformation Programme as follows:
 - a) The Corporate Director for Children and Young People will be the Senior Responsible Owner (SRO) of the Transformation Programme; and will chair the Operational Improvement Board which will provide regular oversight, decision and recommendation making of the development, delivery and progress of the Transformation Programme, along with the Children and Families Improvement Plan programmes for work;
 - b) the DfE Chaired Improvement Board continues to ensure compliance with the non-statutory notice issued by the DfE;
 - c) the Corporate Leadership Team will act as "Critical Friend" and provide scrutiny and challenge; and
 - d) Resources Board continues to be in place to monitor spend and value for money, along with change request approval for changes extending beyond the approved scope and value of the programme.
5. Progress of the transformation programme will be reported to the Children and Young People's Scrutiny Committee at its bi-monthly meetings focused on the Improvement Plan.
6. Cabinet members will be briefed informally as part of the normal cycle of Portfolio and Cabinet Briefings.
7. Cabinet are responsible for ensuring that progress is made as set out in the Improvement Notice. Progress of both Improvement Plan and transformation funding will come to Cabinet on 26 May 2022 and, thereafter, quarterly for ongoing review.
8. All Members Briefings have been held regularly, with the last being on Wednesday 23 March 2022 and Thursday 24 March 2022 to update on the forthcoming Transformation paper due for Cabinet decision on 31 March 2022. Members will continue to be kept informed via this communication forum.

Community impact

9. The notice requiring improvement will have a direct and indirect effect on the lives of both current and future children and families in Herefordshire.
10. Keeping children safe is one of the most important things this council does and the details in this report support whatever action is required to ensure children and families receive the services they deserve.

11. The County Plan 2020-24 includes the ambition to '*strengthen communities to ensure everyone lives well and safely together*', specifically the Council aims to:
- Ensure all children are healthy, safe and inspired to achieve;
 - Ensure that children in care, and moving on from care, are well supported and make good life choices; and
 - Protect and improve the lives of vulnerable people.

Environmental Impact

12. There are no specific environmental impacts arising from this report.
13. The work of the committee will be undertaken with consideration to minimise waste and resource use in line with the Council's Environmental Policy.

Equality duty

14. 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.
15. The Equality Act 2010 established a positive obligation on local authorities to promote equality and to reduce discrimination in relation to any of the nine protected characteristics: Age; disability; gender reassignment; pregnancy and maternity; marriage and civil partnership; race; religion or belief; sex; and sexual orientation. In particular, the council must have due regard to the public sector equality duty when taking any decisions on service changes.

Resource Implications

16. Since April 2021, considerable additional resources have been deployed to support the Children's Services transformation plan and improvement activity.
17. The additional £11.49m approved funding is to meet a legacy of unmet resource needs and additional resourcing to support Ofsted priority actions and the Directorate Improvement Plan.
18. Transformation funding will temporarily increase the budgeted establishment by 122.75 FTE in 2022/23, then reducing to an anticipated ongoing increase in posts of 82 FTE from 2023/24.

19. The tables below set out the Transformation Costs between 2021/22 and 2023/4 and the funding streams

Transformation costs	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24*	Total
	£000	£000	£000	£000
Review and transformation of service in response to High Court judgement	5,833	11,487	4,544	21,864
TOTAL	5,833	11,487	4,544	21,864

*current forecast subject to Mid-Term Financial request to change base budget for 2023/24

Funding streams	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	Total
	£000	£000	£000	£000
Previously approved funding	2,542			2,542
Department for Education (DfE) grant funding	1,700			1,700
Financial resilience reserve	1,591	11,487		13,078
Increased base budget			4,544	4,544
TOTAL	5,833	11,487	4,544	21,864

Legal Implications

20. The Council was issued with a non-statutory improvement notice by the Department for Education on 18 May 2021. To comply with this notice, the Council must adhere to a number of measures, which include:
- a) Secretary of State appointment of an Improvement Advisor. The Council will work with the adviser for a minimum of 12 months, and until such time that the Secretary of State is satisfied this is no longer required.
 - b) Implementation of an Improvement Plan.
 - c) Establishment of an Improvement Board with an independent Chair (to be set up and chaired by the DfE Improvement Adviser).
 - d) Officials or advisers from the DfE will undertake reviews of progress against the Improvement Plan at least every 6 months and more regularly where appropriate.
 - e) The DfE will offer dedicated improvement support through its Partners in Practice arrangements and may consider additional requests for support as part of the review process.
 - f) The Improvement Adviser will provide, to the DfE, 6 weekly reports of progress or concern against the areas set out in this notice; and progress against the improvement plan; and any other such information relevant to the improvement journey.
21. The notice sets out that the council should aim for actions included in the Improvement Plan to be delivered by the end of April 2022 or sooner, where appropriate. If there is a failure to comply with this notice, ministers may choose to invoke their statutory powers of intervention (s497A Education Act 1996) to direct the council to enter into an appropriate arrangement to secure the improvements required in children's services, potentially resulting in the establishment of a Trust.

Risk management

22. The improvement notice is clear that, should the council be unwilling or unable to comply with this improvement notice, or should ministers not be satisfied with the Council's progress at any stage, ministers may choose to invoke their statutory powers of intervention (s497A Education Act 1996) to direct the council to enter into an appropriate arrangement to secure the improvements required in children's services.
23. Statutory improvement notices could be issued and more critical or enduring underperformance may necessitate the use of Statutory Directions compelling the Council to take certain actions. In extreme cases the DfE can direct partial or complete outsourcing of Children Services to a third party or the establishment of a Children's Trust.
24. In extreme cases the DfE can direct partial or complete outsourcing of Children Services to a third party or the establishment of a Children's Trust.
25. The following are the primary and most significant risks for the transformation of Children's Services:

Risk:	Mitigation:
There is a risk that in the current highly competitive recruitment market costs may be higher than currently forecast.	Systems are in place to monitor demand and to manage workloads, workflow and recruitment costs.
There is a risk that we would not be able to recruit permanently to posts as anticipated and thus are reliant for a longer period on agency staff (with potential instability and increased cost).	A recruitment campaign commences in Spring 2022 and will continue throughout the year. Progress and impact will be monitored by the Resources Board, the Improvement Board, and reported to Cabinet through regular updates.
There is a risk that a significantly adverse report from Ofsted following an inspection in the future might place additional demands on the transformation activity.	The service, through the activity and impact of the Improvement Plan and in collaboration with the Improvement Advisor and Sector-led Improvement Partners continues to work to demonstrate impact and evidence of improvement and to prepare our best evidence for a future inspection.
There is a risk that we do not do enough to bring about the change needed, or that the pace of change is not quick enough.	We are regularly communicating with the DfE, Ofsted and key safeguarding partners. We will invite regular external review of our progress through sector-led improvement activity and peer review.

Consultees

26. The arrangements for governance of the improvement process, including the various individuals and bodies that will be briefed, are set out in the key considerations section above.

Appendices

Appendix 1 – 2021/22 £5.22m allocation breakdown

Appendix 2 – Additional resources required rationale

Appendix 3 – 20220331 Cabinet Paper – Herefordshire Children’s Services Transformation

Background papers

As in appendix A and B above

Glossary

DfE Department for Education
DCS Director Children’s Services
CEO Chief Executive Officer
KPIs Key Performance Indicators

Report Reviewers Used for appraising this report:

Please note this section must be completed before the report can be published

Governance	James Vickery	Date 08/04/2022
Finance	Louise Devlin	Date 08/04/2022
Legal	Ruth Whittingham	Date 08/04/2022
Communications	Luenne Featherstone	Date 08/04/2022
Equality Duty	Carol Trachonitis	Date 06/04/2022
Procurement	Lee Robertson	Date 07/04/2022
Risk	Darryl Freeman	Date 11/04/2022

Approved by Darryl Freeman Date 11/04/2022

Appendix A

£5.222 million allocation breakdown

In response to the high court judgement, in April 2021 an extraordinary council meeting on 27th April 2021 allocated £5.222m from ear marked reserves to support the improvement of children's services over a two year period, across seven key areas, as shown in Table 1 below:

Table 1: Additional resources approved by Council on 27 April 2021 (by area)

Transformation cost	2021/22 £000	2022/23 £000	Total £000
Improvement Board	130	130	260
Support for families	100	100	200
Legal	551	551	1,102
External legal fees	525	325	850
Human resources' support	364	289	653
Assurance and transformation	292	85	377
Interim Staffing	890	890	1,780
Total	2,852	2,370	5,222

The total sum of £5,222m approved by Council relates to staffing costs only, not non-staffing costs such as IT/laptops. Of that sum, £2,542m was allocated to Children's Services and the remainder was allocated to Legal Services, Human Resources and Communications to provide increased levels of support into the Children's Directorate, as shown in Table 2 below:

Table 2: Allocation of £5.22m across all council services supporting the 2 year improvement journey

Service area	Total funding £000
Children's services	2,542
Legal services	1,952
Human resources	653
Communications	75
Total	5,222

How the £5.222m has been allocated by service area

Children's services

Table 3: Children's services expenditure of £2,542k allocation over the two years

Additional resources	Expenditure £000
Assurance and transformation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Independent assurance team • Forensic audit • Work with safeguarding business unit • Project audit team 	694
Social work project teams <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fostering • Assessment • Child protection and court • Children in care including 16+ 	885
Interim and additional posts <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leadership team and additional managers • Social care academy service • Safeguarding and review • Set up costs for additional staff 	963
Total	2,542

The allocation funded the project and assurance teams for three months, interim posts to the end of the financial year.

Legal Services

Legal Services allocation was for both internal and external legal resources as follows:

Table 4: Legal Services budget allocation for internal and external legal resources

	Year 1 2021/22 £000	Year 2 2022/23 £000	2 Year Total £000
Internal legal	551	551	1,102
External legal	525	325	850
Total legal	1,076	876	1,952

Legal Services expenditure of their allocation is shown below:

Table 5: Legal Services expenditure of 1,952k allocation over the 2 years

Additional resources	Year 1 Expenditure £000	Year 2 Expenditure £000	Total Expenditure £000
Internal legal	551	551	1,102
External legal	565	285	850

Total	1,116	836	1,952
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Legal costs for 2021/22 (year 1) are expected to be £40k above the £1,076k planned, all relating to external legal costs. This external support is required to meet what is assessed as being a short-term bulge in workload, and will be reduced in year 2 to return legal costs to their previous budget allocation.

It is noted that that Herefordshire Council also hold a Litigation Reserve which is drawn upon, when necessary, for court claims and settlements.

Human Resources

Human Resources expenditure of their allocation is shown below:

Table 6: Human Resources expenditure of £653k allocation over the 2 years

Additional resources	Expenditure £000
Year One (2021/22) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • HR business partner team • OD support • Recruitment partner • Trade union facility time 	364
Year Two (2022/23) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • HR business partner team • OD support • Trade union facility time 	289
Total	653

Communications

Communications expenditure of their allocation is shown below:

Table 7: Communications expenditure of £ 75k allocation over the 2 years

Additional resources	Expenditure £000
Media agency for initial response to judgement	30
Additional communications support	45
Total	75

Appendix B.

Additional resources required.

Date: March 2022

1 Overview

1.1 Core transformation of the service is expected to take three years and is intended to:

- Improve outcomes for children, young people and their families
- Make working in Herefordshire an attractive and rewarding career choice
- Embed systemic partnership approaches and exploring alternative models of delivery.
- Address legacy resource needs and make the service financially viable for the future across a range of services the Council delivers

All underpinned and driven by improvement across the system of practice, management, and leadership. Improvement activity, and the expected improved outcomes for children and young people will continue beyond the three years.

1.2 Further and ongoing resources are required to support transformation and the improvement plan to ensure:

- The retention and recruitment of the workforce
- That there are adequate staffing levels to ensure statutory guidance and legislation is complied with
- That there is sufficient capacity of suitably skilled and experienced professionals to work effectively with children and families, whilst maintaining a manageable workload
- That there is sufficient capacity for effective management oversight and supervision
- That Newly Qualified Social Workers (NQSWs) are supported appropriately during their Assessed and Supported Year in Employment (ASYE)
- That there is sufficient capacity to deliver high-quality and ongoing quality assurance activity, providing assurance of continuous improvement and impact
- That there is sufficient resources to deliver necessary changes to the development of our practice standards, and associated IT and systems support
- That support for our Foster Carers is further developed and maintained

2 Additional resources required and rationale.

Retention and recruitment

2.1 Following the High Court judgement, Herefordshire has experienced significant challenges in the retention of existing permanent colleagues for a period and the recruitment of experienced Social Workers and Managers who are central to workforce stability and improved practice.

2.2 A sustainable staffing structure needs to be developed whilst improvement is ongoing and is characterised by sufficiency of capacity; manageable caseloads; stable and effective leadership and management; good learning and development opportunities; competitive pay and conditions; and a realistic but ambitious plan to 'grow our own' for the future.

Sufficiency of capacity

2.3 High caseloads were noted in the most recent Ofsted Inspection and in the two most recent Ofsted focused visits. Ofsted noted that high caseloads impact adversely on the ability to respond effectively to children in need and protection. In addition to this in the two most recent Ofsted focused visits (December 2019 and June 2021) Newly Qualified Social Workers were seen to have a caseloads which were too high.

- 2.4 In addition to the capacity added to the service since April 2021, the sufficiency of our workforce is further promoted by the activity of our Improvement Plan and a forthcoming recruitment campaign (with Community Care, a leading Social Care platform). “Our Ambitions for Our People” a key workforce framework document sets out how we aim to move to a permanent workforce which enables us to comply with statutory services and supports us to continue on our improvement journey.

Social Work Teams: Assessment / CP & Court/ Fostering

- 2.6 The Local Authority has seen a significant increase in demand over the past year and most significantly in the past six months (see section 3 of this Appendix). To effectively respond to and manage caseloads, workflow and currently high demands on the service a number of additional Social Work (Project) Teams have been deployed and are currently in place:
- Assessment Team (x1)
 - Child in Need Teams (x2)
 - Child Protection & Court Team (x1)
 - Corporate Parenting / Permanence Team (x1)

- 2.7 It is proposed that the additional capacity currently in place remains in place for the duration of the next financial year 2022/23 and a review is conducted in October 2022 to determine whether further deployment would be warranted.

- 2.8 A withdrawal of the teams prior to this has the potential to reverse the improvements made thus far, and will slow the pace of improvement, increase caseloads and have a detrimental impact on the outcomes for children and families. Not continuing with teams at present would pose a significant risk to the Local Authority in terms of meeting its statutory duties.

Sufficiency of management oversight and supervision

- 2.9 The frequency and effectiveness of case supervision is currently one of the Priority Actions set by Ofsted during the most recent Focussed Visit (June 2021); indeed a critique of management oversight and supervision has been a consistent feature at every Ofsted Inspection and visit since 2012 (Inspection July 2012, Inspection May 2014, Inspection June 2018, Visit January 2019, Visit December 2019, Visit June 2021).

Service Managers

- 2.10 The re-introduction of a layer of Service Managers has been identified as being key to service and practice improvement, freeing up Heads of Service to be able to focus on strategic management, service development, quality assurance, and partner engagement. The Service Managers provide vital day-to-day support and supervision to Team Managers and are better placed to drive performance and practice improvement.
- 2.11 Service Managers are required to create the optimal conditions for enabling good social work practice to flourish and will contribute to key decision-making processes in case work, such as threshold decisions for legal proceedings, and whether or not to bring children into our care.
- 2.12 Service Managers will be available to discuss complex cases and provide supervision to Managers but in general they should be less involved on a day to day basis in case work

and much more involved in creating a culture which supports and develops the social work teams and other staff in the organisation. Service Managers will support Managers by dealing with matters that would otherwise reduce the availability of frontline managers to focus on the quality of practice within their team.

- 2.13 It is proposed that Service Manager posts will be retained beyond the 2022/23 financial year and added to the base budget in due course.

Managing Practitioners.

- 2.14 These are posts that sit between the Team Manager and Advanced Practitioners. The primary purpose of the Managing Practitioner is to add supervisory capacity and to assist with decision-making and the timely progress of interventions.
- 2.15 There are already a small number of Managing Practitioner posts in various teams across the service, where there are high volumes of work, or higher than normal case decisions to be made, including one in the MASH.
- 2.16 Increasing the number of Managing Practitioners will enable better quality and more timely decision making and to provide additional management support in area of high throughput such as the MASH and the Assessment Teams. The speed and quality of decision and the quality of assessments making in these areas was considered to be inadequate by the Service-wide Case Audit (completed in 2021).
- 2.17 Managing Practitioners provide professional support oversight and guidance to children's social work/social care staff on a day-to-day basis. This will enable better quality decision making and ensure that children's voices and lived experiences are evident within social work assessments and plans. Managing Practitioners help to ensure that there is a good throughput of work and that cases are progressed without any drift and delay.
- 2.18 The additional Managing Practitioner posts are required throughout 2022/23 and their impact and any future need will be considered as a part of the capacity review to be conducted in October 2022.

Support for Newly Qualified Social Workers (NQSWs)

- 2.19 Newly Qualified Social Workers (NQSWs) are an important segment of the Social Care workforce and the strategy for 'growing our own'. NQSWs are required to complete an Assessed and Supported Year in Employment (ASYE) where they should benefit from a "protected" caseload (i.e. considerably less of a caseload than a fully qualified Social Worker initially, building throughout the year); additional learning and development opportunities; and an increased frequency of supervision. They also complete a portfolio of evidence throughout the year.
- 2.20 NQSWs are currently part of the establishment and this has made it impossible for Team Managers to ensure that their caseload has been protected; this is exacerbated at times of high demand such as at present. In the most recent visit Ofsted noted that caseloads for NQSWs were too high.
- 2.21 To ensure that NQSWs are well supported and have an appropriate and protected caseload it is proposed that 15 NQSWs become supernumerary to the core establishment (calculated as being the most that we are able to support within the current organisational structure in 2022/2023).

- 2.22 This will ensure that NQSW's have a protected caseload (whilst at the same time adding capacity that increases over the year of their ASYE) and are able to receive, through the activity of the Social Work Academy the higher levels of support and supervision.
- 2.23 Under this proposal, once a NQSW successfully completes their ASYE, they then become a part of the core establishment, joining a team and either replacing a locum social worker, or filling a vacant post.

Quality Assurance and quality of practice

- 2.24 The most recent Ofsted visit marked the inconsistency of Social Work practice as a key priority action for the Local Authority to address. Additionally, the service-wide Audit project which audited in excess of 1,100 cases in 2021 graded 43% of cases as being Inadequate.

Signs of Safety Leads and IT Support

- 2.25 Signs of Safety is our Social Work Practice Model and this was implemented approximately one year ago (2020/21). However, the initial implementation was not sufficiently considered and was disrupted by the timing and impact of the High Court Judgement. At present Signs of Safety is not the enabler of best practice that it was intended to be.
- 2.26 Staff feedback and the service-wide Audit Project have noted that a number of the current Signs of Safety templates in use are not easily understood by parents and are cumbersome to complete. On occasions a number of different versions of the same document are completed resulting in duplication of effort.
- 2.27 The Signs of Safety Leads and dedicated IT Support will review, revise and relaunch the Signs of Safety documentation in use to promote better practice and a closer alignment to the Signs of Safety practice model. This will make the forms more easily used and completed by practitioners (reducing the burden of recording on them) and able to be more easily understood by families.
- 2.28 Increased training will be provided to our workforce on how to use the revised templates and partner agencies will be invited to training to ensure that the approach across our partnership is consistent and that the same language in respect of risk is used.

Quality Assurance Manager and Audit Team

- 2.29 As we progress through our improvement journey it is imperative that there is a strong quality assurance function to allow for thematic and deep-dive audits to measure progress and make ongoing judgements on the quality of Social Work practice.
- 2.30 From June 2021 onwards, all audits within children's Social Care were undertaken by the service-wide Audit Project which was staffed by Independent (interim) Auditors. This function needs to be transferred back to the Local Authority in order that we build and sustain robust programmes of quality assurance activity which in turn help to drive performance and practice improvement. This proposal creates a small Quality Assurance team which will be required beyond 2022/23. The QA Team will assist in the training and development of audit and quality assurance capacity within our managers; they will moderate audits completed by managers; and will provide an important role in ensuring that actions recommended within audits are completed

Quality of data and system

- 2.31 The drive to improve, the additional management oversight, and a better understanding of our services have led to an increased need for accurate performance data to enable a more pro-active style of management using data and information intelligently. The recent introduction of PowerBI has started to allow managers to undertake more self-serve analysis and get better insight into the cohort of children that we support and safeguard. This work needs to continue at pace to ensure that PowerBI captures all areas of Children's Services and in the short term there is insufficient specialist capacity.
- 2.32 In addition to the above, there has been a recognition that some of the forms and templates in Mosaic (Social Care recording system) do not promote best practice. Changes have been made and new templates, aligned to the Signs of Safety practice model, have been created. Workflow issues within Mosaic have also been improved. It is vital that this work continues to ensure that Social Workers and Managers have the tools which best support them in their job; at present there is a backlog in Mosaic changes needed.
- 2.33 An additional Data Analyst and an additional Systems Analyst both a period of 12 months will build capacity for system changes and reporting and will assist with the full roll-out of PowerBI.

Support for Foster Carers

- 2.34 Foster Carers can be faced with young people in their care who display challenging behaviours. Whilst support can be available, for instance from the Children and Adolescent Mental Health, to better support Foster Carers we want to develop a therapeutic service staffed by a Clinical Psychologist to provide advice, guidance and support to Foster Carers and Supervising Social Workers.
- 2.35 A Clinical Psychologist will ensure that there is a more consistent approach in responding to such challenging behaviours. This will strengthen the foster placement, preventing the placement from breaking down and will be a better outcome for the young person, potentially reduce costs (subsequent placements of young people with challenging behaviours are often more expensive) and will assist in the retention of Local Authority Foster Carers.

Business Support

- 2.36 This proposal includes the addition of 15 Business Support posts. As indicated there have been significant changes in demand which have placed pressures on Business Support and indirectly on Social Work Practitioners. These increased pressures have resulted in practitioners having to increasingly undertake administrative tasks. To re-align the business support capacity following the increase in demand will allow Social Workers and their Managers to concentrate on carrying out statutory duties achieving better outcomes for children.

3 Changes in Demand

- 3.1 Children's social care and early help services are demand-led services. Changes in the population, changes in legislation, societal factors and many other influences can each dramatically affect demand (and pressures on services) both in the short and longer-term.

3.2 Herefordshire children's services have experienced a significant rise in contacts and referrals leading to increased numbers of assessments required, and in the number of open cases. The increased demand has far out-stripped the established capacity in the service and necessitated additional capacity being added in 2021/22 which this proposal seeks to continue during 2022/23.

3.3 In September 2021, the service strengthened the management oversight and decision making in the MASH. This resulted in more consistent and appropriate application of threshold and increased the confidence of referrers in the MASH. As a consequence the number of referrals rose significantly, exacerbated by the emergence of legacy unmet need in a significant number of cases. It is likely that the impact of Covid-19 on families and communities, and society's response to high-profile cases such as those concerning the deaths of Arthur Labinjo-Hughes and Star Hobson will have also contributed to the rise in referrals

Referrals

3.4 Historically, the rate of Referrals (number per 10,000 children) in Herefordshire has been lower than both England and our statistical neighbours and England. Due to changes in the application of threshold and national events (such as the news of the conviction of murder of the parents of Arthur Labinjo-Hughes and Star Hobson) there has been a significant increase in Referrals.

3.5 The increase of referrals leads to an increased need for rapid management decisions which will be alleviated by the proposed additional Managing Practitioners and Service Manager.

3.6 The chart below (figure 1) shows how the rate of referrals per 10,000 children had more than tripled from 300 referrals per 10,000 children (2020/21) to 1192 per 10,000 at the peak in November 2021 and a 986 (annualised rate as at the end of December 2021).

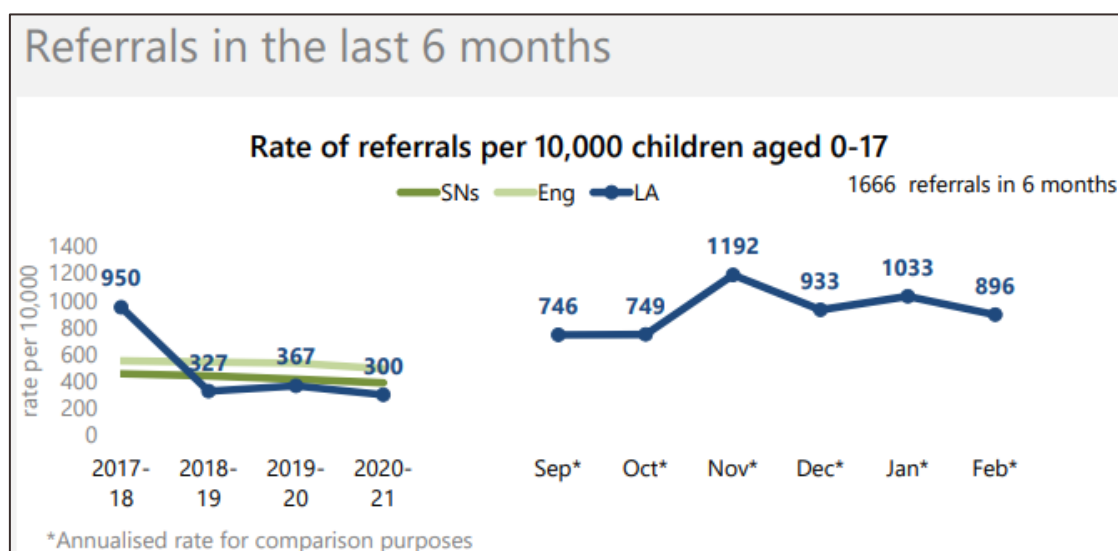


Figure 1 Rate of referrals per 10,000 children aged 0-17yrs. Source: ChAT report 20220228

3.7 Whilst the rate has reduced slightly at the start of 2022 it remains at a rate significantly higher than the service had capacity for at the start of the year 2021/22 and will be closely monitored and responded to by service leaders.

Assessments

- 3.8 Historically, the rate of completed Assessments per 10,000 children aged 0-17yrs in Herefordshire has been below statistical neighbours and England. Following an Audit report noting the application of threshold was inconsistently applied and was at times too high changes have been implemented which has contributed to an increase of Referrals and subsequently Assessments.
- 3.9 The chart below (figure 2) shows that the rate of completed assessments has doubled from 374 assessments per 10,000 children (2020/21) to 973 at the recent peak in December 2021 and 949 (annualised rate as at the end of December).

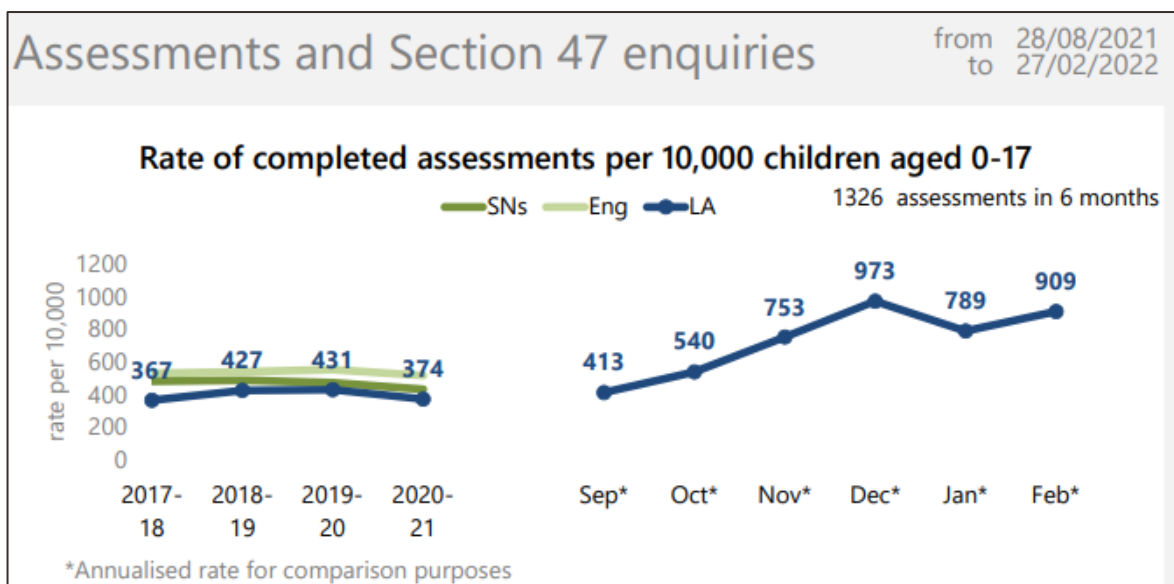


Figure 2 Rate of completed assessments per 10,000 children aged 0-17yrs. Source: ChAT report 20220228

Child in Need Plans

- 3.10 The rate (per 10,000) of children subject to a Child in Need Plan has risen year on year since 2018/19. Whilst the rise in 2021/22 has not risen as sharply in the previous year it has risen and combined with the rises in referrals and assessments adds to a picture of increased pressure and limited capacity.
- 3.11 The chart below (figure 3) shows that the rate of children with an open episode of need per 10,000 children aged 0-17yrs has increased by 14% from 402 children per 10,000 children (2020/21) to 454 in December and 457 (annualised rate as at the end of December).

Rate of children with an open episode of need per 10,000 children aged 0-17

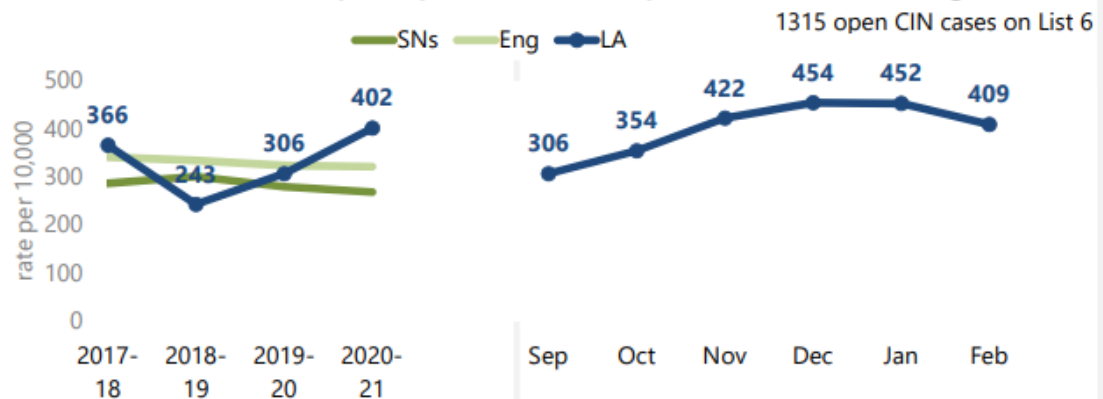


Figure 3 Rate of children with an open episode of need per 10,000 children aged 0-17yrs. Source: ChAT report 20220228

Child Protection Plans

- 3.12 With the exception of 2017/18, historically the rate (number per 10,000 children) of children subject to a Child Protection Plan (CP Plan) in Herefordshire has been below statistical neighbours and England. Corrections have been made in the application of threshold which has resulted in an increased number of children being made subject to a Child Protection Plan
- 3.13 With the exception of 2017/18, historically the rate (number per 10,000 children) of children subject
- 3.14 The chart below shows that the rate of children subject to a Child Protection Plan has increased by 250% from 30 children being subject to a CP Plan per 10,000 children (2020/21) to 76 as at the end of February 2022. The increased numbers of children subject of a child protection plan place additional pressures on case holding workers in the relevant teams and on the team of child protection conference chairs.

Rate of open Child Protection plans (per 10k aged 0-17)

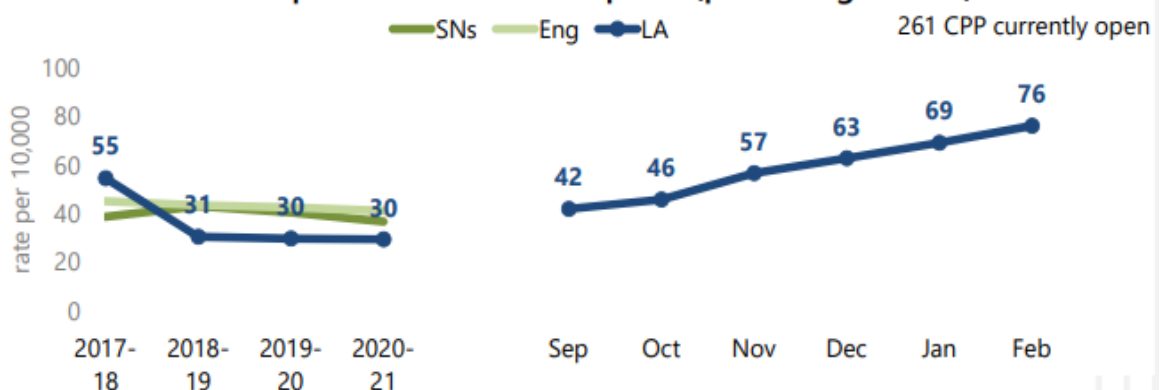


Figure 4 Rate of open Child Protection plans per 10,000 children aged 0-17yrs. Source: ChAT report 20220228

Average caseloads for social workers

- 3.15 Average caseloads vary across the service. Indicative caseloads as at the end of February 2022 are outlined in the table below:

Team name*	Average caseload
Assessment Team 1	25
Assessment Team 2	28
Assessment Team 3	35
Assessment Team 4	31
Assessment Team 5	23
Average across the Assessment Teams	28
Child in Need Team 1	22
Child in Need Team 2	22
Average across the Child in Need Teams	22
Child Protection and Court Team 1	17
Child Protection and Court Team 2	25
Child Protection and Court Team 3	19
Child Protection and Court Team 4	18
Average across the CP and Court Teams	20
Children Looked After Team 1	18
Children Looked After Team 2	17
Children Looked After Team 3	18
Average across the CLA Teams	18
*The 16+ and Children with Disability teams are not included in this chart as case allocation is managed differently.	

- 3.16 It is our intent that all case holding social workers have a manageable caseload which when comparing to services in other areas of the country that are rated as good or outstanding is typically a caseload of between 15-18 children or young people. Our caseloads are reducing, as a consequence of improved management oversight and better workflow and despite the increased demand outlined elsewhere in this report but remain higher than we aspire to. These caseloads reflect the increased capacity added in 2021/22 and that we propose to retain during 2022/23.

Title of report: Investment in Children's Transformation

Meeting: Cabinet

Meeting date: 31st March 2022

Report by: Cabinet Member for Children and Families

Classification

Open

Decision type

Key

Wards affected

All Wards

Purpose

To request the drawdown from the Financial Resilience Reserve, a total of £11.49m to support the ongoing delivery of the Children's Services Improvement Plan.

This further investment will build on and maintain the pace of improvements already delivered in 2021/22 and provide the foundations for a more secure and resilient service for the future. This funding is recommended to be allocated in two tranches, with £5m in tranche one from April 2022 and a further £6.49m from July 2022 when detailed progress against plans will also be reported.

The staffing resource asked for equates to an additional 122.75 FTE (2022/23) reducing then to 82 (2023/24) followed by further monitoring and review, against a currently approved base budget of 429 FTE (2021/2022).

Recommendation(s)

That:

- a) **The drawdown of up to £11.49m from the Financial Resilience Reserve, in two tranches as laid out above, is approved to support resourcing the transformation stage of children's services; and**
- b) **Cabinet note the increased base budget requirement for 2023/24 onwards.**

Alternative options

1. Cabinet could decide not approve the drawdown from the Financial Resilience Reserve. This option is not recommended as the increased capacity put in place during 2021/22 and improvement made in this period could not be sustained and the ability to deliver services would be seriously compromised.

Key considerations

2. Mr Justice Keehan delivered a Judgement (26 March 2021) with leave for the same to be published that identified serious failings in Herefordshire council's children's services.
3. Full council unanimously supported on 27 April 2021 the establishment of an improvement board as part of the assurance and improvement strategy following the High Court judgement.
4. Council agreed a £5.2m investment to address in the short-term some of the issues raised in the High Court Judgement and a breakdown of spend in 2021-22 is set out in Appendix A.
5. On 18 May 2021 the Department for Education issued the Council with a [non-statutory improvement notice](#).
6. A Focused Visit by Ofsted in July 2021 identified shortfalls in the capacity of Social Workers; an inconsistency of social work practice, and insufficient management oversight and supervision. The previous inspection by Ofsted in 2018 and each Focused Visit since has raised similar concerns and criticism of the lack of pace of improvement was identified in the July 2021 focus visit
7. The [28 October 2021 Cabinet](#) decision to endorse the [Children and Families Strategic Improvement Plan v1.0](#)
8. An independent audit project, commissioned by the Chief Executive, concluded on 21 December 2021 having audited in excess of 1,000 cases open to Early Help and Children's Social Care. Whilst none of the audits raised serious safeguarding concerns requiring immediate action, the majority of cases audited were deemed as being Inadequate or Requiring Improvement (to be Good).
9. Herefordshire Council maintains a strong commitment to improving performance in its children's social care services and outcomes for children and young people in Herefordshire more generally.
10. Core transformation of the service is expected to take three years before a level of sustained and sustainable improvement is achieved and is aimed at:
 - a. Improving outcomes for children, young people and their families.
 - b. Making working in Herefordshire an attractive and rewarding career choice.
 - c. Embedding systemic partnership approaches and exploring alternative models of delivery.

- d. Making the service financially viable for the future across a range of services the Council delivers.

All underpinned and driven by improvement across the system of practice, management, and leadership.

11. The additional Children's Services resource, resulting from this investment ask, will achieve improvements in Ofsted priority action areas:
 - a) manageable caseloads for Social Workers;
 - b) frequent and better quality supervision and management decision making;
 - c) consistently improved social work practice.

As mentioned in paragraph 10 above, it should be noted that this is part of a three year improvement plan. Whilst this additional resource will allow us to make better decisions for children, it will take time for significant impact to be evidenced in terms of outcomes for children and in improved service assessments. Outcomes for children will be regularly monitored by benchmarking and reporting against a set of measures that matter. Quarterly reporting will be presented to Improvement Board, Children's Scrutiny Committee and Cabinet.

12. During the financial year 2021/22 five additional social work teams have been added to increase capacity. These comprise one assessment team, two child in need teams, one child protection and court team, and a further team added to the corporate parenting service. Additional Management and supervisory capacity has been achieved through the re-introduction of Service Managers and Managing Practitioners to teams with higher volumes of workflow and decision-making (such as in the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) and the Assessment Teams).
13. The investment in 2021-2022 has already led to increased stability of workforce, reduced caseloads (particularly in the Assessment teams), increased levels of personal and case supervisions, and increased frequency of visits to children and young people and their families.
14. Children's services have experienced and continue to see considerably higher volumes of contacts and referrals. This is in part due to significant amounts of legacy unmet need emerging, as well as improved communication and, in line with the experience of other local authorities, some impact of Covid-19 on children and families. Recent high profile national cases have also had the effect of increasing referrals across the country. More detail is provided in Appendix B. This has led to more assessments being opened and completed and an overall increase in the numbers of open cases across the service.
15. Over time, a sustainable staffing structure needs to be achieved in order that improved practice and performance can be embedded and changing demands are able to be responded to. This will require sufficient case holding professionals (social workers, family support workers, and personal advisers) and supervisory/management capacity to create organisational resilience whilst allowing for a normal level of staff turnover.
16. Further and ongoing additional resources are required to support service transformation and the delivery of the improvement plan to achieve:

- a. The retention and stabilisation of a permanent workforce and a continued level of ongoing recruitment.
- b. That there is sufficient capacity of suitably skilled and experienced professionals to work with children and families, whilst maintaining a manageable workload.
- c. That there is sufficient capacity for effective continuing management oversight and supervision.
- d. That Newly Qualified Social Workers (NQSWS) are supported appropriately during their Assessed and Supported Year in Employment (ASYE)
- e. That there is sufficient capacity to deliver high-quality and ongoing internal Quality Assurance activity, providing assurance of continuous improvement and impact.
- f. That there is sufficient resource to deliver necessary changes to the development of our practice standards, and associated IT and systems support.
- g. That support for our Foster Carers is further developed and maintained.

The detail and rationale for ongoing additional resources is provided in Appendix B.

- 17. This proposal has been a number of months in development. It would have been preferable to have aligned the request to the budget proposals agreed by Council in February 2022 but timescales did not allow for this. Initial work and demand modelling was undertaken by service leaders in September 2021. Significant increases in contacts and referrals were experienced during the autumn. These increased referrals created further pressures across the service but were most acutely experienced from October onwards in the assessment teams. These, coupled with a range of ongoing analysis activities (including the whole-service audit of open cases that did not conclude until late December), meant that the modelling had to be significantly revised, with detailed financial modelling only able to be commenced in January 2022.
- 18. It is important to acknowledge at this stage that the funds sought for 2022-23 and forecast for 2023-24 may not be the full investment required to deliver the necessary transformation and improvement programme. Children's Services may need to come back to the council with further propositions, pressures and bids but these will be introduced through the normal budget process.
- 19. An independent evaluation of these proposals and the focus of the ongoing investment will be undertaken during Quarter 1 of the financial year (2022-23) and the findings presented within the request to Cabinet to release tranche 2 of the investment.
- 20. Following this transformation programme the Children and Young People Directorate will re-establish a base budget for 2023/2024 and subsequent years alongside further targets for improved outcomes for children and for the performance of the service.
- 21. In order to establish the operating model and work plan for the future, it is planned to build on high level diagnostics undertaken in 2020/21 and produce a commissioning plan for all ages, sharing the approach, learning, good governance, compliance and commercial approach that is embedded within the Adults' services commissioning function.

Community impact

22. The notice requiring improvement has a direct and indirect effect on the lives of both current and future children and families in Herefordshire.
23. The County Plan 2020–2024 includes the ambition to ‘strengthen communities to ensure everyone lives well and safely together’. Specifically, the council aims to:
 - a. Ensure all children are healthy, safe, and inspired to achieve;
 - b. Ensure that children in care, and moving on from care, are well supported and make good life choices; and
 - c. Protect and improve the lives of vulnerable people. Set out any considerations relating to community impact including contribution made to corporate plan / health and wellbeing strategy or other local or national strategies or policies.

Environmental Impact

24. There are no specific environmental impacts arising from this report.
25. The transformation activity will be undertaken with consideration to minimise waste and resource in line with the Council’s Environmental Policy.

Equality duty

26. 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.
27. The Equality Act 2010 established a positive obligation on local authorities to promote equality and to reduce discrimination in relation to any of the nine protected characteristics:
 - a. Age;
 - b. disability;
 - c. gender reassignment;
 - d. pregnancy and maternity;

- e. marriage and civil partnership;
- f. race;
- g. religion or belief; sex; and
- h. sexual orientation.

28. In particular, the council must have due regard to the public sector equality duty when taking any decisions on service changes.
29. As our projects and service delivery progresses, and changes are designed, equality impact assessment will be undertaken where necessary.

Resource implications

30. Since April 2021, considerable additional resources have been deployed to support the Children's Services transformation plan and improvement activity.
31. This financial request is to meet a legacy of unmet resource needs and additional resourcing to support Ofsted priority actions and the Directorate Improvement Plan.
32. **Increase in establishment**

Transformation will temporarily increase the budgeted establishment by 122.75 FTE in 2022/23 reducing to an ongoing increase in posts of 82 FTE from 2023/24

Resource	Additional FTE	
	22/23	23/24
Continuation of project teams for 12 months	24	
Auditors	6	4
Child in need teams	16	16
Service managers	9	9
Permanence team	5	5
Business support	15	15
Newly qualified social workers	15	15
Social care academy/ signs of safety	6.25	1
Advanced practitioners	12	8
Improvement lead	1	
Independent reviewing officers/child protection chairs	4	2
Managing practitioners	4.5	4
Clinical psychologist	1	1
Fostering panel adviser	1	1
Social Worker (SEND)	1	1
Data analyst	1	
Systems analyst	1	
Total increase in FTE from current budget	122.75	82

33. Cost of transformation

Transformation costs	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	Total
	£000	£000	£000	£000
Review and transformation of services in response to high court judgement	5,833	11,487	4,544	21,864
TOTAL	5,833	11,487	4,544	21,864

Funding streams (indicate whether base budget / external / grant / capital borrowing)	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	Total
Previously approved funding	2,542			2,542
Department for Education funding	1,700			1,700
Financial resilience reserve	1,591	11,487		13,078
Increased base budget			4,544	4,544
TOTAL	5,833	11,487	4,544	21,864

Legal implications

34. The Council was issued with a non-statutory improvement notice by the Department for Education on 18 May 2021. To comply with this notice, the Council must adhere to a number of measures, which includes

- Secretary of State appointment of an Improvement Advisor. The Council will work with the adviser for a minimum of 12 months, and until such time that the Secretary of State is satisfied this is no longer required.
- Implementation of an Improvement Plan.
- Establishment of an Improvement Board with an independent Chair (to be set up and chaired by the Department for Education (DfE) Improvement Adviser) to oversee the implementation of the improvement plan against a timescale agreed with the DfE.
- Officials or advisers from the DfE will undertake reviews of progress against the Improvement Plan at least every 6 months and more regularly where appropriate.
- The DfE will offer dedicated improvement support through its Partners in Practice arrangements and may consider additional requests for support as part of the review process.
- The Improvement Adviser will provide, to the DfE, 6 weekly reports of progress or concern against the areas set out in this notice; and progress against the improvement plan; and any other such information relevant to the improvement journey.

35. The notice sets out that the council should aim for actions included in the Improvement Plan to be delivered by the end of April 2022 or sooner, where appropriate. If there is a failure to comply with this notice or should ministers not be satisfied with the Council’s progress at any stage, ministers may choose to invoke their statutory powers of intervention (s497A Education Act 1996) to direct the council to enter into an appropriate arrangement to secure the improvements required in children’s services, potentially resulting in the establishment of a Trust.

Risk management

36. The improvement notice is clear that, should the council be unwilling or unable to comply with this improvement notice, or should ministers not be satisfied with the Council’s progress at any stage, ministers may choose to invoke their statutory powers of intervention (s497A Education Act 1996) to direct the council to enter into an appropriate arrangement to secure the improvements required in children’s services.
37. Statutory improvement notices could be issued and more critical or enduring under-performance may necessitate the use of Statutory Directions compelling the Council to take certain actions.
38. In extreme cases the DfE can direct partial or complete outsourcing of Children Services to a third party or the establishment of a Children’s Trust.
39. The following are the primary and most significant risks in delivering this decision:

Risk	Mitigation
There is a risk that in the current highly competitive recruitment market costs may be higher than currently forecast.	Systems are in place to monitor demand and to manage work loads, work flow and recruitment costs.
There is a risk that we would not be able to recruit permanently to posts as anticipated and thus are reliant for a longer period on agency staff (with potential instability and increased cost).	A recruitment campaign commences in March 2022 and will continue throughout the year. Progress and impact will be monitored by the Resources Board, the Improvement Board, and reported to Cabinet through regular updates.
There is a risk that a significantly adverse report from Ofsted following an inspection in the future might place additional demands on the transformation activity.	The service, through the activity and impact of the Improvement Plan and in collaboration with the Improvement Advisor and Sector-led Improvement Partners continues to work to demonstrate impact and evidence of improvement and to prepare our best evidence for a future inspection.
There is a risk that we do not do enough to bring about the change needed, or that the pace of change is not quick enough.	We are regularly communicating with the DfE, Ofsted and key safeguarding partners. We will invite regular external review of our progress through sector-led improvement activity and peer review.

40. These and other risks associated with the delivery of Children’s Services improvement are recorded on the relevant service risk register and escalated in accordance with the council’s

Performance Management Framework and Risk Management Plan. The highest risks, i.e. those scoring greater than 16 after controls, are escalated to the council's Corporate Risk Register.

Consultees

41. There has been no public consultation on this proposal.
42. The Cabinet Member and Cabinet, the Management Board, the Independent Improvement Advisor, and representatives of the Department for Education (DfE) have contributed to the development of this proposal.

Appendices

Appendix A: Previous investment - £5.2m

Appendix B: Rationale for addition resources required.

Background papers

None identified

Report Reviewers Used for appraising this report:

Governance	John Coleman	Date 23/03/2022
Finance	Louise Devlin	Date 22/03/2022
Legal	Kate Charlton	Date 02/03/2022
Communications	Luenne Featherstone	Date 01/03/2022
Equality Duty	Carol Trachonitis	Date 01/03/2022
Procurement	Lee Robertson	Date 02/03/2022
Risk	Chris Jones	Date 01/03/2022
Human Resources	Tracey Sampson	Date 02/03/2022
Approved by	Darryl Freeman	Date 23/03/2022



Title of report: Children and Young People' Improvement Plan - Progress Update

Meeting: Children and young people scrutiny committee

Meeting date: Tuesday 26 April 2022

Report by: Corporate Director, Children and Young People

Classification

Open

Decision type

This is not an executive decision

Wards affected

(All Wards);

Purpose

Children and Families Strategic Improvement Plan – progress update.

Recommendation(s)

That the committee:

- a) Reflect on progress of the Children's Improvement Plan following receipt of the non-statutory Improvement Notice in May 2021; and
- b) note the development of version two of the Improvement Plan.

Alternative options

1. The Committee could choose not to review the progress of the Children's and Families Improvement Plan delivery but this is not recommended as the Scrutiny Committee has an important role in exploring pressures and dependencies relating to priority actions, and in identifying and reviewing mitigation for any risk and issues which might work against the council delivering improvements.

Key considerations

2. The [18 May 2021 DfE non-statutory notice to improve](#)
3. The [28 October 2021 Cabinet decision](#) to endorse the Children and Families Strategic Improvement Plan v1.0
4. [Cabinet decision on 31 March 2022](#) to approve £11.49m Resilience Reserve funding for transformation of Children's Services.

Improvement Board summary update

5. The Improvement Board is now meeting on a six weekly basis, the most recent meeting being on Monday 7 March, and the next being on Monday 25 April, to which the Chair and Vice Chair of the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee are invited as observers.
6. At the meeting on 7 March the Corporate Director for Children and Young People updated on:
 - a. progress against the Improvement Plan, including the progress of the recruitment campaign for the two vacant Service Director posts, the activity to refresh the Improvement Plan, the introduction of a monthly Quality Assurance and Performance Improvement Board, chaired by the Director to add more pace and oversight to the performance improvement activity; and
 - b. outline proposals for additional investment in Children's Services Transformation being developed.
7. The Service Director (Early Help and Safeguarding) presented a performance update and in summary reported the following:
 - Significant and ongoing improvement in the timeliness of the response to contacts in the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) in recent months.
 - An analysis of the source of recent contacts and the outcomes of these. This data and analysis will be used with referring agencies over the coming months to further improve the quality of referrals.
 - There has been a significant rise in the number of new assessments opened, most acutely observed from October 2021 (in response to which additional capacity has been added to the assessment teams).
 - A small reduction in the numbers of children subject of a Child Protection Plan.
 - Following a significant decline in the timeliness of convening Initial Child Protection Conferences from October 2021 through January 2022, an improved timeliness of 74% was achieved in February with increased management oversight evident.
 - The rate at which children and young people coming into our care has increased over the past year but appears to be slowing and is closely monitored by senior managers.
 - Placement stability for children in our care remains very good.

- Since the introduction of two new Child in Need teams, the frequency of visits to children and of supervision for case holding workers has been improving.
 - Whilst caseloads in the Child in Need and Child Protection/Court teams remained steady and for most manageable the average caseloads in the assessment teams remained high.
8. Sector-led Improvement Partner (SLIP) support, funded by the Department for Education (DfE) is initially focussing on developing our Quality Assurance activity and on using our data and information to present our evidence of improved performance and outcomes going forward.

Improvement Plan Version 2

9. The initial Improvement Plan saw two distinct plans (the Strategic and the Operational) which whilst intertwined were created in isolation of each other. The draft revised version of the Improvement Plan (Version 2) provides a more holistic plan with no need for separate versions.
10. Where the original plans were focused on activity and transactions and also included elements which were 'Business as Usual' activities rather than improvement activities, the revised plan starts with clear statements of what needs to be improved, and the outcomes to be achieved.
11. Following implementation of the first iteration of the Improvement Plan, the service has developed its understanding of how to better manage the improvement programme with focus needing to be on the impact of improvement for children and young people. The first iteration of our Improvement Plan was very much transactional, focussing on actions rather than impact. Version two of the Improvement Plan has been written with outcome focus first and foremost
12. Although delivering valuable improvement work, the first version of the Improvement Plan did not have defined outcome measures (measures that matter) and thus impact was difficult monitor. Version two of the Improvement Plan has clearly defined measures that matter (KPIs) to ensure impact can be clearly demonstrated going forward.

Revised Governance arrangements

13. The revised Improvement Plan will have a simpler reporting and governance structure. This is to be presented to the current Strategic Board, chaired by Paul Walker, Chief Executive Herefordshire Council, on Monday 25 April as follows:
- a. The Corporate Director for Children and Young People (Director of Children's Services) becomes the Improvement Plan Senior Responsible Owner (SRO) once the plan moves to version two, and will chair the Operational Improvement Board;
 - b. formal closure of version one of the Improvement Plan and its associated programmes was agreed at Strategic Board on Friday 18 February and will be actioned on 25 April when version two of the Improvement Plan will be implemented;
 - c. the Improvement Board will continue to ensure compliance with the non-statutory notice issued by the DfE;
 - d. The Corporate Leadership Team (formerly referred to as the Management Board) will act as "Critical Friend" and provide scrutiny and challenge; and
 - e. The Resources Board continues to be in place to monitor spend and value for money.

14. Progress against the Improvement Plan will continue to be reported to the Children and Young People's Scrutiny Committee every two months.
15. Cabinet are responsible for overseeing the plan and ensuring the progress is made as set out in the improvement notice. Progress of both Improvement Plan and Transformation funding will come to Cabinet on 26 May 2022 for ongoing quarterly review. .
16. All Members Briefings have been held regularly, with the last being on Wednesday 23 March and Thursday 24 March to update on the forthcoming Transformation paper due for Cabinet decision on 31 March 2022. Members will continue to be kept informed via this forum.

Community impact

17. The notice requiring improvement will have a direct and indirect effect on the lives of both current and future children and families in Herefordshire.
18. Keeping children safe is one of the most important things this council does and the details in this report support whatever action is required to ensure children and families receive the services they deserve.
19. The County Plan 2020-24 includes the ambition to '*strengthen communities to ensure everyone lives well and safely together*', specifically the Council aims to:
 - Ensure all children are healthy, safe and inspired to achieve;
 - Ensure that children in care, and moving on from care, are well supported and make good life choices; and
 - Protect and improve the lives of vulnerable people.

Environmental Impact

20. There are no specific environmental impacts arising from this report.
21. The work of the committee will be undertaken with consideration to minimise waste and resource use in line with the Council's Environmental Policy.

Equality duty

22. 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.
23. The Equality Act 2010 established a positive obligation on local authorities to promote equality and to reduce discrimination in relation to any of the nine protected characteristics: Age; disability; gender reassignment; pregnancy and maternity; marriage and civil partnership; race; religion or belief; sex; and sexual orientation. In particular, the council must have due regard to the public sector equality duty when taking any decisions on service changes. As this report is for information only, and not a decision report, we do not consider that it will impact on our Equality duty.

Resource implications

24. Since April 2021, considerable additional resources have been deployed to support the Children's Services transformation plan and improvement activity.
25. The additional £11.49m approved funding is to meet a legacy of unmet resource needs and additional resourcing to support Ofsted priority actions and the Directorate Improvement Plan.
26. Transformation funding will temporarily increase the budgeted establishment by 122.75 FTE in 2022/23, then reducing to an ongoing increase in posts of 82 FTE from 2023/24.

Legal Implications

27. The Council was issued with a non-statutory improvement notice by the Department for Education on 18 May 2021. To comply with this notice, the Council must adhere to a number of measures, which include
- Secretary of State appointment of an Improvement Advisor. The Council will work with the adviser for a minimum of 12 months, and until such time that the Secretary of State is satisfied this is no longer required.
 - Implementation of an Improvement Plan.
 - Establishment of an Improvement Board with an independent Chair (to be set up and chaired by the DfE Improvement Adviser).
 - Officials or advisers from the DfE will undertake reviews of progress against the Improvement Plan at least every 6 months and more regularly where appropriate.
 - The DfE will offer dedicated improvement support through its Partners in Practice arrangements and may consider additional requests for support as part of the review process.
 - The Improvement Adviser will provide, to the DfE, 6 weekly reports of progress or concern against the areas set out in this notice; and progress against the improvement plan; and any other such information relevant to the improvement journey:

28. The notice sets out that the council should aim for actions included in the Improvement Plan to be delivered by the end of April 2022 or sooner, where appropriate. If there is a failure to comply with this notice, ministers may choose to invoke their statutory powers of intervention (s497A Education Act 1996) to direct the council to enter into an appropriate arrangement to secure the improvements required in children’s services, potentially resulting in the establishment of a Trust.

Risk management

29. The improvement notice is clear that, should the council be unwilling or unable to comply with this improvement notice, or should ministers not be satisfied with the Council’s progress at any stage, ministers may choose to invoke their statutory powers of intervention (s497A Education Act 1996) to direct the council to enter into an appropriate arrangement to secure the improvements required in children’s services.
30. Statutory improvement notices could be issued and more critical or enduring underperformance may necessitate the use of Statutory Directions compelling the Council to take certain actions. In extreme cases the DfE can direct partial or complete outsourcing of Children Services to a third party or the establishment of a Children’s Trust.
31. The Directorate and the Improvement Board will maintain and monitor Risk Registers to ensure that risk is identified and mitigations put in place.

Consultees

32. The arrangements for governance of the improvement process, including the various individuals and bodies that will be briefed, are set out in the key considerations section above.

Appendices

Background papers

Glossary

DfE	Department for Education
DCS	Director Children’s Services
CEO	Chief Executive Officer
KPIs	Key Performance Indicators

Report Reviewers Used for appraising this report:

Please note this section must be completed before the report can be published

Governance	Sarah Buffrey, Democratic Services Officer	Date 09/04/2022
Finance	Louise Devlin	Date 08/04/2022
Legal	Ruth Whittingham	Date 08/04/2022
Communications	Luenne Featherstone	Date 08/04/2022
Equality Duty	Carol Trachonitis	Date 06/04/2022
Procurement	Lee Robertson	Date 07/04/2022
Risk	Darryl Freeman	Date 11/04/2022

Approved by Darryl Freeman Date 11/04/2022



Title of report: **Work Programme Review and Tracking of Recommendations**

Meeting: Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee

Meeting date: Tuesday 26 April 2022

Report by: Democratic Services Officer

Classification

Open

Decision type

This is not an executive decision

Wards affected

(All Wards);

Purpose

To review progress against previous recommendations, review the work programme for 2022/23 and agree any necessary updates.

Recommendation(s)

That the Committee:

- a) Notes the updated recommendation tracker in appendix 1;
- b) Reviews and agrees the work programme at appendix 2 and discusses any additional items of business or topics for inclusion in the work programme.

Alternative options

1. It is for the Committee to determine its work programme to reflect the priorities facing Herefordshire. The Committee needs to be selective and ensure that the work programme is focused, realistic and deliverable within existing resources. The Committee needs to develop a manageable work programme to ensure that scrutiny is focused, effective and produces clear outcomes. Topics selected on the work programme should reflect issues of current importance facing children's services at Herefordshire Council.

Key considerations

Tracking of resolutions made by the Committee which require a response or action

2. A schedule of recommendations previously made by the committee which require a response or action is appended to this report as appendix 1.

3. Key changes since the last meeting include:
 - Addition of recommendations arising from meeting on 22 March.
 - An action tracker has been appended alongside the minutes of the previous meeting. Actions arising from meetings will be recorded and reported on this document with the recommendation tracker focused on recommendations to the Executive.

Forward Plan

4. The Constitution states that scrutiny committees should consider the Forward Plan as the chief source of information regarding forthcoming key decisions. Forthcoming decisions of the children and families directorate will be highlighted by the clerk to the committee as part of the work programming item at each committee meeting.
5. Suggestion for scrutiny from members of the public
6. Suggestions for scrutiny are invited from members of the public through the council's website, accessible through the link below. There have been no suggestions for scrutiny received from members of the public since the previous meeting of the committee.
https://www.herefordshire.gov.uk/info/200148/your_council/61/get_involved/4

Work Programme

7. The work programme needs to focus on the key issues of concern and be manageable allowing for urgent items or matters that have been called-in. The work programme will be reviewed at each meeting of the committee and may be amended as required.
8. The latest version of the work programme for 2022-2023 is attached at appendix 2 – key changes since the previous meeting are set out below following a meeting of the Chair and Vice Chair at a business work plan meeting. The upcoming work plan for the first quarter of 2022/23 municipal year was discussed which included the addition and setting of the following:
 - Change to the date of the August meeting.
 - The addition of the Children's Transformation Project Funding phase 1 and 2
 - The temporary removal of Quality Assurance and Practice Development item from 26 April committee meeting. This will be rescheduled.
9. Should committee members become aware of any issue they think should be considered by the committee they are invited to discuss the matter with the chairperson, vice chairperson and the statutory scrutiny officer.

Constitutional Matters

Task and Finish Groups

10. A scrutiny committee may appoint a task and finish group for any scrutiny activity within the Committee's agreed work programme. A committee may determine to undertake a task and finish activity itself as a spotlight review where such an activity may be undertaken in a single session; the procedure rules relating to task and finish groups will apply in these circumstances but the review is likely to be attended by all members of the committee and chaired by the chairperson.
11. The scrutiny committee will approve the scope of the activity to be undertaken by a task and finish group, the membership, chairperson, timeframe, desired outcomes and what will not be included in the work. A task and finish group will be composed of a least 2 members of the Committee, other councillors and may include, as appropriate, co-opted people with specialist knowledge or expertise to support the task. The Committee will appoint the chairperson of a task and finish group.

12. The Committee is asked to determine matters relating to the convening of a task and finish group including the scope of the review to be undertaken, the chairperson, membership, timeframe, desired outcomes, what will not be included in the review and whether to co-opt any non-voting members to the group. Such co-optees could consist of individuals with valuable skills and experience that would assist a task and finish group to undertake a review (see co-option below).

Co-option

13. A scrutiny committee may co-opt a maximum of two non-voting people as and when required, for example for a particular meeting or to join a task and finish group. Any such co-optees will be agreed by the Committee having reference to the agreed work programme and/or task and finish group membership.
14. The Committee is asked to consider whether it wishes to exercise this power in respect of any matters in the work programme.
15. Since the last meeting of the Committee Fiona Reid, has been nominated as the Families Co-optee

Community impact

16. In accordance with the adopted code of corporate governance, Herefordshire Council is committed to promoting a positive working culture that accepts, and encourages constructive challenge, and recognises that a culture and structure for scrutiny are key elements for accountable decision making, policy development and review. Topics selected for scrutiny should have regard to what matters to residents.
17. The term 'corporate parent' means the collective responsibility of the council, elected members, employees, and partner agencies, for providing the best possible care and safeguarding for children who are looked after by the council. Being a good corporate parent means we should; accept responsibility for children in the council's care; make their needs a priority; and seek for them the same outcomes any good parent would want for their own children. The committee should be mindful of these responsibilities when undertaking scrutiny work.

Environmental Impact

18. Whilst this is an update on the work programme and will have minimal environmental impacts, consideration has been made to minimise waste and resource use in line with the council's Environmental Policy.

Equality duty

19. 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.

20. 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. As this report concerns the administrative function of the children and young people scrutiny committee, it is unlikely that it will have an impact on our equality duty.

Resource implications

21. The costs of the work of the Committee will have to be met within existing resources. It should be noted the costs of running scrutiny can be subject to an assessment to support appropriate processes.

22. The councillors' allowance scheme contains provision for co-opted and other non-elected members to claim travel, subsistence and dependant carer's allowances on the same basis as members of the council. If the committee agrees that co-optees should be included in an inquiry they will be entitled to claim allowances.

Legal implications

23. The Council is required to deliver a scrutiny function. The development of a work programme which is focused and reflects those priorities facing Herefordshire will assist the committee and the council to deliver a scrutiny function.

24. The Scrutiny Rules in Part 4 Section 5 of the Council's constitution provide for the setting of a work programme, the reporting of recommendations to the executive and the establishment of task and finish groups, as below.

25. Paragraph 4.5.28 of the constitution explains that the scrutiny committee is responsible for setting its own work programme. In setting its work programme a scrutiny committee shall have regard to the resources (including officer time) available.

26. Under section 4.5.10 of the constitution a scrutiny committee may appoint a task and finish group for any scrutiny activity within the committee's agreed work programme. A committee may determine to undertake a task and finish activity itself as a spotlight review where such an activity may be undertaken in a single session; the procedure rules relating to task and finish groups will apply in these circumstances. The relevant scrutiny committee will approve the scope of the activity to be undertaken, the membership, chairperson, timeframe, desired outcomes and what will not be included in the work. It will be a matter for the task and finish group to determine lines of questioning, witnesses (from the council or wider community) and evidence requirements.

27. Under section 4.5.19 of the constitution task and finish groups will report their findings/outcomes/recommendations to the relevant scrutiny committee who will decide if the findings/outcomes/recommendations should be reported to the cabinet or elsewhere.

Risk management

Risk / opportunity	Mitigation
There is a reputational risk to the council if the scrutiny function does not operate effectively.	The arrangements for the development of the work programme should help mitigate this risk.

Consultees

28. The work programme is reviewed at each committee meeting. Additional formal or informal work programming sessions may be arranged as necessary during the year. The work programme may also be reviewed during business planning meetings between the chairperson, vice-chairperson and statutory scrutiny officer.

Appendices

- Appendix 1 – Recommendation tracker
Appendix 2 – Work Programme 2022/23

Background papers

None identified

**Children and Young People
Scrutiny Committee
Work programme
2022**

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Annual reports

The following reports are recommended to be considered by the Committee on an annual basis either as a meeting agenda item or circulated for information outside of the meeting schedule:

1. Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO) and Child Protection (CP) – Matthew Sampson
2. Adoption Service
3. Fostering Service
4. Principal Social Worker
5. Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) – Matthew Sampson
6. Health & Wellbeing – needs to be reviewed over remit due to Re-Thinking Governance
7. Herefordshire Children’s Safeguarding Partnership – Matthew Sampson (workshop wanted)
8. Corporate Parenting
9. Youth Justice Plan
10. Complaints/Compliments and Comments

Meeting dates

Tuesday 17 May 2022– mainstream agenda

June 2022 (date tbc) - If additional meetings still required for this municipal year

If these meetings are still required then further dates will be required and submit a guide for next review of this. Like a quarterly review

Tuesday 26 July 2022 – mainstream agenda

Tuesday 6th September – mainstream agenda

Tuesday 22 November 2022 (date tbc) – mainstream agenda

Tuesday 10th January 2023 (date tbc) - mainstream agenda

Budgetary Meeting

Tuesday 21st March 2023 (date tbc) – mainstream agenda

To be scheduled and prioritised or removed (1/4)

Annual agenda items			
Item [type of scrutiny]:	Origin:	Lead officer(s):	Current position:
Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO) and Child Protection (CP) report [Performance review]	Performance Review – annual report		Assigned to meeting
Adoption Service and Fostering Service annual reports [Performance review – Annual Report]	Standard annual item.		Assigned to meeting.
Principal Social Worker [Performance review – annual report]	Standard annual item		Assigned to improvement meeting
Herefordshire Safeguarding Children Partnership (HSCP) annual report [Performance review]	Performance Review – annual report		Assigned to meeting
Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) annual report [Performance review]	Performance Review – annual report		Assigned to meeting

To be scheduled and prioritised or removed (2/4)

Annual agenda items			
Item [type of scrutiny]:	Origin:	Lead officer(s):	Current position:
Corporate Parenting Strategy [Performance review – Annual Report]	Standard annual item. Also focus on leaving care and preparing for adulthood		Assigned to meeting
Youth Justice Plan	Annual Item Any comments the committee would wish to make that would inform the production of the Plan for 2022/23.		Assigned to meeting
Complaints, compliments and comments report. [Performance review – annual report]	Standard annual item		

To be scheduled and prioritised or removed (3/4)

Potential agenda items			
Item [type of scrutiny]:	Origin:	Lead officer(s):	Current position:
Funding routes to schools and governance around schools funding			Requested at committee meeting 30 April 2021
Early years intervention and prevention			Requested at committee meeting 30 April 2021
Progress report on savings proposals relating to foster carers and sufficiency strategy			Requested at committee meeting 30 April 2021
A report on the outcomes of the external peer review of SEND provision			Requested at committee meeting 22/02/2022
Response to Covid and review			
Peer on peer abuse recommendations	To receive an update report on progress with the recommendations from the peer on peer abuse review and those made by the scrutiny committee.		

To be scheduled and prioritised or removed (4/4)

Potential agenda items			
Item [type of scrutiny]:	Origin:	Lead officer(s):	Current position:
Paediatric therapies T&F Report [Task and Finish Group]			Scoping document approved at committee meeting 30 April 2021. Timescales for reporting back to be agreed.
Autism provision and nurture hubs 71	The committee received a report on 23 March 2021 on the Capital Investment Strategy 2021-2030 For Specialist Settings Educating Children And Young People With Special Educational Needs And Disabilities SEND. It was requested that further detail be presented to a future meeting of increasing provision offered for children with autism.		It was agreed at the committee meeting 30 April 2021 that this be listed as an item to be allocated. Item assigned to meeting

Agenda items – Improvement Focus

Tuesday 26 April 2022

Publication deadline: Thursday 14 April
Questions deadline: Weds 20 April

Item [type of scrutiny]:	Origin:	Lead officer(s):	Current position:
1. Improvement Plan Update – V2 and progress so far	Committee request/ Standard item.	Darryl Freeman	
2. Transformation money project plan phase 1	Following Cabinet Decision		
72 Work programme 2022/23	Standard annual item - to agree the work programme and meeting dates for the 2022/23 administrative year	Clerk to the committee	

Workshop item	Further info
Transformation money project	workshop on understanding the transformation money project plan phase 1

Agenda items – Mainstream Meeting

Tuesday 17 May 2022, 2:30 pm

Publication deadline:
Questions deadline:

Item [type of scrutiny]:	Origin:	Lead officer(s):	Current position:
1. Special Educational Needs and Disabilities - Autism provision and nurture hubs	The committee received a report on 23 March 2021 on the Capital Investment Strategy 2021 -2030 For Specialist Settings Educating Children And Young People With Special Educational Needs And Disabilities SEND. It was requested that further detail be presented to a future meeting of increasing provision offered for children with autism.		
2. Corporate Parenting	Update on corporate parenting	Ruth Madembo	
Work programme 2022/23	Standard annual item - to agree the work programme and meeting dates for the 2022/23 administrative year	Clerk to the committee	Work programme 2022/23

Workshop item	Further info – Tuesday 17 May 2022 11am – 1pm
Corporate Parenting	
Developing a Trauma informed practice/ service	

Agenda items – Improvement Focus

Tuesday 21 st June 2022 - 2:30pm			Publication deadline:
			Questions deadline:
Item [type of scrutiny]:	Origin:	Lead officer(s):	Current position:
1. Improvement Plan Update – refreshed Plan and progress so far	Committee request	Darryl Freeman	
2. Children Service Transformation update phase 2			
2. Retention and Recruitment	As discussed as a recommendation at the 22 nd Feb meeting		
Work programme 2022/23	Standard annual item - to agree the work programme and meeting dates for the	Clerk to the committee	
Workshop item		Further info	

Agenda items – Mainstream Meeting

Tuesday 26 July 2022, 2:30 pm

Publication deadline:
Questions deadline:

Item [type of scrutiny]:	Origin:	Lead officer(s):	Current position:
1. IRO and Child Protection (CPC) report	Performance Review – annual report	Matthew Sampson	
2. Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO)	Performance Review – Annual	Matthew Sampson	
3. Adoption Service and Fostering Service	Annual Reports	Matthew Sampson	
4. Work programme 2022/23	Standard annual item - to agree the work programme and meeting dates for the 2022/23 administrative year	Clerk to the committee	Work programme 2022/23

Workshop item	Further info – Tuesday 26 July 2022, 11am – 1pm
Social Workers Attendance	To speak and discuss practise and get an insight into the work of the social worker

Agenda items – Improvement Focus

Tuesday 23rd August 2022 - 2:30pm

Publication deadline:
Questions deadline:

Item [type of scrutiny]:	Origin:	Lead officer(s):	Current position:
1. Improvement Plan Update – refreshed Plan and progress so far	Committee request	Darryl Freeman	
2. Principal Social Worker	[Performance review – annual report]		
76 Work programme 2022/23	Standard annual item - to agree the work programme and meeting dates for the 2022/23 administrative year	Clerk to the committee	

Workshop item	Further info

Agenda items

Tuesday 6 September 2022, 2:30 pm

**Publication deadline:
Questions deadline:**

Item [type of scrutiny]:	Origin:	Lead officer(s):	Current position:
1. Herefordshire Children's Safeguarding Partnership	Standard Annual Item		
2. Youth Justice Plan 22/23	Standard Annual Item		
Work programme 2022/23	Standard annual item - to agree the work programme and meeting dates for the 2022/23 administrative year	Clerk to the committee	Work programme 2022/23

Workshop item	Further info

Agenda items – Improvement Focus

Tuesday 18th October 2022 - 2:30pm

Publication deadline:
Questions deadline:

Item [type of scrutiny]:	Origin:	Lead officer(s):	Current position:
1. Improvement Plan Update – refreshed Plan and progress so far	Committee request	Darryl Freeman	
Work programme 2022/23	Standard annual item - to agree the work programme and meeting dates for the 2022/23 administrative year	Clerk to the committee	

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Workshop item	Further info

Agenda items

Tuesday 22nd November 2022, 2:30 pm			Publication deadline: Questions deadline:
Item [type of scrutiny]:	Origin:	Lead officer(s):	Current position:
Work programme 2022/23	Standard annual item - to agree the work programme and meeting dates for the 2022/23 administrative year	Clerk to the committee	Work programme 2022/23

Workshop item	Further info

Agenda items

Tuesday 10 th January 2023, 2:30 pm			Publication deadline: Questions deadline:
Item [type of scrutiny]:	Origin:	Lead officer(s):	Current position:
1. Budget 23/24	Standard annual item		
Work programme 2022/23	Standard annual item - to agree the work programme and meeting dates for the 2022/23 administrative year	Clerk to the committee	Work programme 2022/23

08 Workshop item	Further info

Agenda items – Improvement Focus

Tuesday 21 st February 2023 - 2:30pm			Publication deadline: Questions deadline:
Item [type of scrutiny]:	Origin:	Lead officer(s):	Current position:
1. Improvement Plan Update – refreshed Plan and progress so far	Committee request	Darryl Freeman	
Work programme 2022/23	Standard annual item - to agree the work programme and meeting dates for the 2022/23 administrative year	Clerk to the committee	

Workshop item	Further info

Agenda items

Tuesday 21 st March 2023, 2:30 pm			Publication deadline: Questions deadline:
Item [type of scrutiny]:	Origin:	Lead officer(s):	Current position:
Work programme 2022/23	Standard annual item - to agree the work programme and meeting dates for the 2022/23 administrative year	Clerk to the committee	Work programme 2022/23

Workshop item	Further info

Agenda items

Tuesday 16 th May 2023, 2:30 pm			Publication deadline: Questions deadline:
Item [type of scrutiny]:	Origin:	Lead officer(s):	Current position:
Work programme 2022/23	Standard annual item - to agree the work programme and meeting dates for the 2022/23 administrative year	Clerk to the committee	Work programme 2022/23

Workshop item	Further info

Workshops / seminars

Topic:	Origin:	Lead officer(s):	Current position:
Corporate Parenting			
Developing a trauma aware practise/service			
Social workers attendance			

Task and finish groups

Topic:	Origin:	Lead officer(s):	Current position:
84 Paediatric therapies			Scoping document approved at committee meeting 30 April 2021
Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEETs)			
Review with schools to encourage and support parents to ask for and take up the various mental health initiatives in their school setting.	Committee 22 March Meeting recommendation		To be sent to officers.

Briefing notes (1/1)

Topic:	Target date:	Lead officer(s):	Current position:
NEETs project	September 2021		
Elective Home Education and current trends	November 2021		

