

Agenda

Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee

Date: **Wednesday 22 July 2026**

Time: **10.00 am**

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

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

For any further information please contact:

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If you would like help to understand this document, or would like it in another format, please call Simon Cann, Democratic Services Officer on 01432 260667 or e-mail simon.cann@herefordshire.gov.uk in advance of the meeting.

Agenda for the meeting of the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee

Membership

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

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

Sarah Beard

Diocese of Hereford

Agenda

	Pages
1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE To receive apologies for absence.	
2. NAMED SUBSTITUTES To receive details of members nominated to attend the meeting in place of a member of the committee.	
3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST To receive declarations of interests from members of the committee in respect of items on the agenda.	
4. MINUTES To receive the minutes of the meeting held on 12 May 2026.	9 - 14
HOW TO SUBMIT QUESTIONS	
The deadline for the submission of questions for this meeting is 5pm on Thursday 16 July 2026.	
Questions can be submitted via the Online questions portal Further information and guidance is available at Get involved - Herefordshire Council	
Accepted questions and the response to them will be published as a supplement to the agenda papers prior to the meeting.	
Full details about asking questions and the deadlines at public meetings can be found here: constitution of the council .	
Guidance for questions being submitted for scrutiny can be found here	
5. QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC To receive any written questions from members of the public.	
6. QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL To receive any written questions from members of the council.	
7. FAMILIES FIRST PROGRAMME To provides an overview of what has been undertaken in Herefordshire to develop and implement the Families First programme over the last 15 months.	15 - 28
8. EARLY HELP TASK AND FINISH GROUP To provide the committee with the draft final report of its task and finish group looking at the provision of early help.	29 - 64
9. WORK PROGRAMME	65 - 120

To consider the work programme for the committee.

10. DATE OF THE NEXT MEETING

Tuesday 6 October 2026, 2pm.



The public's rights to information and attendance at meetings

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Please take time to read the latest guidance on the council website by following the link at www.herefordshire.gov.uk/meetings and support us in promoting a safe environment for everyone. If you have any queries please contact the governance support team on 01432 261699 or at governancesupportteam@herefordshire.gov.uk

We will review and update this guidance in line with Government advice and restrictions.

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- Inspect agenda and public reports at least five clear days before the date of the meeting. Agenda and reports (relating to items to be considered in public) are available at www.herefordshire.gov.uk/meetings
- Inspect minutes of the council and all committees and sub-committees and written statements of decisions taken by the cabinet or individual cabinet members for up to six years following a meeting.
- Inspect background papers used in the preparation of public reports for a period of up to four years from the date of the meeting (a list of the background papers to a report is given at the end of each report). A background paper is a document on which the officer has relied in writing the report and which otherwise is not available to the public.
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- Have access to a list specifying those powers on which the council have delegated decision making to their officers identifying the officers concerned by title. The council's constitution is available at www.herefordshire.gov.uk/constitution
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The location of the office and details of city bus services can be viewed at:
www.herefordshire.gov.uk/downloads/file/1597/hereford-city-bus-map-local-services-

The seven principles of public life

(Nolan Principles)

1. Selflessness

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

2. Integrity

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

3. Objectivity

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

4. Accountability

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

5. Openness

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

6. Honesty

Holders of public office should be truthful.

7. Leadership

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

Minutes of the meeting of Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee held at Conference Room 1 - Herefordshire Council, Plough Lane Offices, Hereford, HR4 0LE on Tuesday 12 May 2026 at 2.00 pm

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

Councillors: Frank Cornthwaite, Dave Davies, Robert Highfield and David Hitchiner

In attendance: Leanne Lowe (Detective Superintendent West Mercia Police), Natalie Solomon (Associate Director for Nursing, Quality and Safeguarding NHS)

Officers: Simon Cann (Democratic Services Officer), Rachel Gillott (Service Director, Early Help, CIN and Safeguarding), Donna Thornton (Democratic Services Support Officer), Danial Webb (Statutory Scrutiny Officer)

10. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies had been received from Cllr Ivan Powell (Cabinet Member Children and Young People), Tina Russell (Corporate Director Children and Young People).

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11. NAMED SUBSTITUTES

There had been no named substitutes.

12. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

13. MINUTES

The minutes of the previous meeting were received.

Resolved: That the minutes of the meeting held on 10 March 2026 be confirmed as a correct record and be signed by the Chairperson.

14. QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

No questions had been received from members of the public.

15. QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL

No questions had been received from members of the council.

16. NEGLECT STRATEGY

The Service Director, Early Help, CIN and Safeguarding, Detective Superintendent West Mercia Police and Associate Director for Nursing, Quality and Safeguarding provided an overview of the report and answered questions from the committee:

1. Regarding data sharing and GDPR constraints, officers advised that national guidance made clear there should be no barriers to sharing information where a child was at risk, and highlighted that Herefordshire operated strong multi-agency data sharing arrangements through quality assurance groups and benchmarking with neighbouring authorities. A comprehensive dataset, incorporating inputs from health, police, and other partners, was reviewed on a quarterly basis to identify trends and support informed decision-making.
2. In relation to communications around child neglect, partners explained that substantial work had been undertaken to promote early help and improve access to support services, including awareness forums and partnership initiatives. It was noted that a national focus on neglect in 2026 would further strengthen messaging, and that the service adopted a restorative approach in the first instance, moving to more directive intervention where improvement was not achieved.
3. A question was raised regarding whether limitations on confidentiality within schools prevented children from disclosing concerns when compared to school nursing services. Officers outlined that confidentiality could not be guaranteed in safeguarding situations, as professionals were required to escalate concerns where necessary. They added that differences in disclosure often reflected the nature of relationships, with school nurses typically engaging children in more holistic conversations.
4. The committee heard that private nurseries were subject to the same inspection regimes and statutory safeguarding requirements as maintained settings and received appropriate support from the local authority. However, they acknowledged that detailed data on training uptake across all settings was not yet fully available and was being developed.
5. It was explained to members that the Graded Care Profile 2 provided a structured framework centred on the child's lived experience, but it was noted that, while effective, the tool was time-intensive and subject to ongoing review and adaptation.
6. The committee asked if the Integrated Care Board might consider an adaption of the Graded Care Profile 2 antenatal toolkit and training to make it more easily accessible to midwives. Partners explained that feedback from midwives had indicated they felt the toolkit was more aligned to community roles, such as health visiting and school nursing. However, the partnership was aware that accessibility of training presented a challenge and was prioritising how it could address this moving forward.
7. Partners highlighted a sufficient volume of practitioners trained in the Graded Care Profile, but acknowledged that there was currently limited ability to measure how training translated into practice. Further work was planned to align training data with usage and outcomes.
8. A member asked how families who avoided engagement with services could be identified. Officers reported that most such cases were detected through contact with hospitals, community reporting, or multi-agency intelligence, including the

use of a public helpline. It was recognised that families entirely outside services could be harder to identify, although forthcoming legislative changes were expected to improve this area.

9. The distinction between intentional and unintentional neglect was raised for clarification. Officers advised that no definitive distinction was applied at the outset, with assessments focused instead on the child's lived experience and outcomes. They noted that this remained a complex and evolving issue nationally, but confirmed that persistent unmet need would constitute neglect regardless of intent.
10. Questions were raised as to whether poverty itself constituted harm to children. Officers outlined that poverty was a significant risk factor but did not automatically equate to neglect, as many families in poverty provided appropriate care. However, where circumstances resulted in sustained unmet needs, this would meet the threshold for neglect.
11. Consideration was given to whether the council's wider inequality strategies adequately addressed the link between deprivation and neglect. Officers advised that this formed part of a broader strategic discussion supported by data analysis, including geographic mapping, and noted that targeted interventions in specific areas had demonstrated positive outcomes, particularly where early support was implemented.
12. The committee enquired about the primary sources of safeguarding referrals. Officers reported that referrals were most commonly received from the police, health services, and schools, with patterns varying throughout the year. They explained that all referrals originated as contacts, which were assessed and converted as appropriate for further intervention.
13. Members sought to understand the nature of typical police referrals for neglect. Officers explained that such referrals often arose incidentally when officers attended unrelated incidents and observed unsafe or unsuitable living conditions. In such circumstances, officers were required to assess immediate risk and make appropriate referrals through safeguarding channels.
14. Concerns were raised regarding adolescent neglect and emotional wellbeing. Officers acknowledged increasing demand linked to mental health pressures and service thresholds, and outlined the development of early help and school-based interventions to provide more accessible and preventative support.
15. Members considered whether neglect should be approached as a public health issue. Officers responded that while elements such as prevention, parenting support, and mental health aligned with a public health approach, responsibility for addressing neglect remained shared across a range of services.
16. Clarification was sought as to whether increases in referrals reflected a rise in neglect or improved awareness. Officers advised that both factors were likely contributory, but highlighted that increases in early help and child-in-need cases indicated a more proactive system, supporting improved outcomes for children.
17. A member enquired as to how the "Think Family" approach was being embedded across services. Officers explained that national changes to safeguarding training requirements ensured that staff working with both adults and children were equipped to take a broader, more holistic view of family circumstances.

18. The current position regarding fabricated or induced illness was queried. Officers reported that revised procedures, including independent paediatric review and improved coordination between professionals, had been implemented, and that no recent cases had been identified.
19. Concerns were raised as to whether financial pressures were creating challenges within partnership working. Officers acknowledged that pressures existed but stated that relationships between partners had strengthened, enabling open and constructive discussions. It was emphasised that the shared focus remained on achieving the best outcomes for children, with early intervention seen as key to both improving outcomes and delivering value for money.

At the conclusion of the debate the committee discussed and agreed the following recommendation:

- **For the Integrated Care Board to consider an adaption of the Graded Care Profile 2 antenatal toolkit by midwives.**

17. UPDATE ON RESPONSE TO POLICE EFFECTIVENESS, EFFICIENCY AND LEGITIMACY (PEEL) INSPECTION FINDINGS

The Detective Superintendent West Mercia Police provided an overview and update on the force's response to the inspection findings, and, along with partners, answered questions from the committee:

1. The Detective Superintendent explained that HMICFRS was due to return in May 2026 to reassess progress against the accelerated cause of concern, following submission of evidence indicating that some recommendations had been met. It was further noted that a national child protection inspection was scheduled for 13 July 2026, with the force currently engaged in the data-gathering phase.
2. Regarding system assurance, the committee asked how partners could evidence a transition from crisis recovery to consistent safeguarding practice. Partners explained that there was currently no backlog in Herefordshire, and that assurance was provided through multi-agency audits, quality assurance processes, and regular dip sampling of cases. This included reviews of decisions not to refer cases onward, monthly sampling of approximately 25-26 cases, and strengthened partnership communication enabling swift verification of concerns.
3. A member queried what circumstances led frontline officers to undertake child risk assessments, whether this represented a recent development, and how such work fitted within broader policing priorities. The Detective Superintendent clarified that staff were expected to consider the presence and safety of children at every incident, applying professional curiosity where necessary. Safeguarding was confirmed as a high organisational priority supported by significant resourcing.
4. The committee asked what tangible benefits improved practice would deliver for children and young people in the county. It was explained that, while most children would hopefully not require police contact, those who did would experience a timely and appropriate response, with effective partnership intervention and improved identification of vulnerability by trained officers.
5. The committee enquired about risks associated with the revised system, alongside mitigation measures. The Detective Superintendent identified potential risks such as the re-emergence of backlogs and system pressures, but highlighted safeguards including: real-time performance monitoring, weekly

senior oversight, strengthened governance structures, and ongoing collaboration with partners to mitigate these risks.

6. Members questioned whether feedback from families and children was actively gathered regarding their experience. It was acknowledged by the partners that this had not yet been implemented, but it was recognised as important and would be considered once current system improvements were fully embedded.
7. In relation to quality assurance, the committee asked whether the impact of changes and the voice of the child were captured through existing processes. It was confirmed that triangulated quality assurance arrangements include feedback from families on multi-agency working. To date, no concerns had been identified regarding police involvement.
8. The committee proposed that a follow-up report be provided to review progress. This Statutory Scrutiny Officer suggested an update and, where available, findings from the national child protection inspection be added to the committee's work programme longlist for consideration.
9. The committee discussed operational arrangements within the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH), the position across partner authorities, and risks of regression. Partners confirmed that the police retained a presence in MASH through daily "floor walkers," ensuring visibility and responsiveness. All four local authority areas were described as performing well, with one rated outstanding, and ongoing collaboration enabled shared learning. Risks of regression were mitigated through regular performance monitoring and governance oversight.
10. Regarding safeguarding around technology and automation, the Detective Superintendent clarified that systems in use were based on robotic process automation rather than artificial intelligence. Human oversight remained integral, with officers reviewing all information and exercising professional judgement to ensure relevance and accuracy.

At the conclusion of the debate the committee discussed and agreed the following recommendation:

- **West Mercia Police should pilot mechanisms to hear from children and families in Herefordshire with whom they have worked, to understand and improve their practice.**

18. WORK PROGRAMME

The committee reviewed its work programme and suggested several additions:

- An update from West Mercia Police following its next safeguarding/PEEL inspection.
- An update on pupil referral units (PRUs), particularly around plans to relocate provision to a single site (a Cabinet decision was expected around 4 June 2026).
- To explore issues from a public health perspective.

The committee noted the early help task and finish group's engagement with the Vennture service; members were assured that leadership changes and staff wellbeing concerns were being managed, with no adverse impact on service delivery.

Resolved that:

The committee approve the work programme as set out at Appendix 1, with agreed additions and actions.

19. DATE OF THE NEXT MEETING

Wednesday 22 July 2026, 10am.

The meeting ended at 16:44

Chairperson



Title: Families First Partnership in Herefordshire

Meeting: Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee

Meeting date: 22nd July 2026

Report by: Dawn Knight, Families First Lead

Classification

Open

Report purpose

This report provides an overview of what has been undertaken in Herefordshire to develop the programme over the last 15 months. It details how we have progressed from transformation and co-design (year 1) and our journey, to date, around our local implementation of the reforms (year 2).

Background

The Families First Partnership Programme report is being submitted to the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee as part of their Early Help Task and Finish Programme.

Meeting objectives

The report aims to update the committee about progress and the next steps in Herefordshire to achieve the national reforms as detailed in [FFP Programme guide: delivery expectations for statutory safeguarding partners in England: year 2 \(2026 to 2027\)](#). The introduction and first chapter of this guidance, which outline the programme, are attached as Appendix 1 to this report.

The national expectation for all local authorities is that the FFP reforms will be fully implemented by March 2027

Report information

In Herefordshire our aim is for families to receive high quality support at the earliest opportunity, so that they can overcome challenges, stay together and thrive. Our strategic vision for children and young people in Herefordshire to:

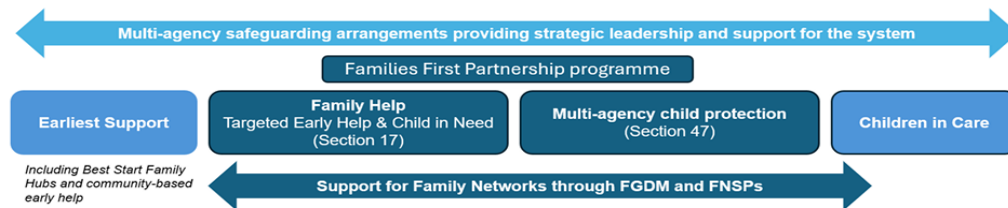
- feel Included, valued, happy, healthy and safe in their homes and in their community as they grow up,
- have access to good quality education, housing, sport, leisure and play facilities that enable them to thrive in their physical, emotional, intellectual and social development as they grow up to be young adults;
- live in a county of towns and villages that value them as Children and Young People and be the next generation to help keep Herefordshire the place people want to live and work

Further information on the subject of this report is available from
Dawn Knight, Families First Lead, email: dawn.knight@herefordshire.go.uk

Our local vision and strategy align with the The Families First Partnership Programme (FFP), which is a national initiative supporting the transformation of children's social care in England. It promotes a more integrated, family-focused approach to early help and child protection by encouraging multi-agency collaboration.

The programme outlines expectations for delivery around three main pillars:

- a. Family Help
- b. Establishing Multi-Agency Child Protection Teams (MACPTs)
- c. Embedding Family Group Decision Making



Underpinned by [Working together to safeguard children 2026](#) FFP aims to ensure children and families receive timely, coordinated, and effective support tailored to their needs. The overall aim of the reforms is to support children to remain in their family network and reduce the number of children that come into care.

Year 1 Transformation (April 2025 to March 2026)

Families First Partnership Multiagency Steering Group established with representation from Police, Health, Education and Voluntary/Community sector colleagues. The group meets bi-monthly and reports directly into the Children and Young People Partnership.

Community roadshows and Families First information session delivered in each locality. Bringing children's services local services together, so they can understand each other roles and services enables improved signpost and support for families at the earliest opportunity.

Family Help Assessment co-designed with families, the wider partnership, via the steering group and practitioners from children's services. Feedback from our *families making a difference* group indicated the need for the one assessment to strengthen the family voice. Key changes were made and the final version has the family's story and voice front and centre of the assessment. Exploration of the wider family network is also embedded into the assessment.

By working together with partner agencies, we have gained a clear understanding of the strengths and training needs around the role Family Help Lead Practitioner (FHLP) role. This has informed a multi-agency training offer. To date **170** colleagues have attended a Families First training session. Feedback includes:

"It was great to understand the context of how family help can be applied in community settings"

"Engaging in discussions with other professionals in the breakout room was really beneficial"

"I now have a greater understanding of how to offer family help".

Locality teams established in Central, North and South bringing early help and social care teams together. This enabled closer working together across teams and with partner agencies in the local area.

Family Group Conferencing is offered at the earliest opportunity and take up from families receiving targeted early help is increasing. In year one **77** Family Group Conference were facilitated in Family Help and we would expect that number to increase significantly over the next year.

Year 2 Implementation (April 2026 to March 2027)

Management of Change (MOC) process and consultation of staff is now complete. This had facilitated transformational change enabling us to establish.

- a. Families First Team that will support partner agencies to deliver Family Help on the Universal and Community space
- b. Multi-disciplinary family help teams in each locality. These teams consist of qualified social workers, alternatively qualified and multidisciplinary practitioners and will ensure that the allocated FHLP is suitably qualified and experienced to meet family need.
- c. Multiagency Child Protection Teams (MACPT) consisting of 2 teams' manager and 9 Lead Child Protection Practitioners (LCPP)
- d. A strengthened Family Group Conferencing Service

The MOC has put Herefordshire in a strong position to deliver on the Families First reforms.

MACPT protocol and operating principles have been jointly designed with Police, Health and Education leads. Our MACPT process will be live from August 2026

The Family Help Assessment has been piloted. Feedback from practitioners is that the form flows well and that it is good to have the family network included. Family feedback includes:

"I like that my own words are being used to tell our story"

"It was good to be able to fill out the family section for myself"

Workflow on Mosaic has been aligned to the new Family Help Assessment and will be live from 1st August 2026

A digital self-assessment is in design, which will enable families to self-help and receive appropriate signposting and support. Early feedback on design includes:

"[it is a] great way for people to help themselves and to navigate through the many web sites and information"

"It will help families at an early point which is positive".

A Families First quality assurance framework is now complete, which will ensure our work is outcome based, meets key performance indicators (KPI), is of a high standard and meets the needs of children and families.

An ongoing training programme for staff and partner agencies is established

Consultees

None specifically for this report, although the reforms span across the partnership

Appendices

Appendix 1 - The Families First Partnership (FFP) Programme Guide, introduction and chapter 1

Background papers and resources

None



Department
for Education

The Families First Partnership (FFP) Programme Guide

**Delivery expectations for statutory
safeguarding partners in England:
Year 2 (2026 to 2027)**

March 2026

Introduction

The 2026-27 Families First Partnership (FFP) programme guide has been produced to support statutory safeguarding partners¹ to implement **Family Help and multi-agency child protection reforms and increase support for family networks**. The rollout of these reforms represents a significant step forward in delivering the government's mission to provide children with the best start in life and break down barriers to opportunity.

About this guide

This programme guide is not statutory guidance and does not replace existing statutory guidance, including:

- [Working Together to Safeguard Children 2026: statutory guidance](#) (referred to in this document as 'Working Together') is the multi-agency statutory guidance for every organisation, individual and agency who is involved in helping and supporting families and protecting children; or the
- [Children's social care: national framework - GOV.UK](#) (referred to in the document as the 'National Framework') which sets out the purpose, principles and enablers of good practice of children's social care and the outcomes that should be achieved.

This guide describes the programme vision and objectives, and sets out the practice change we expect to see to improve the support provided to children and their families. It should be used by local areas to support implementation of policy expectations set out in Chapter 2 and be read in conjunction with [Families First Partnership Programme: Quarterly Monitoring Financial Year 2026-27](#) and support documents hosted on the Knowledge Hub, which provide a range of best practice and case study examples.

Who is this guide for?

This guide is for everyone who works with children and their parents or carers, including strategic leaders, senior and middle managers, and those in direct practice.

Successful outcomes for children depend on strong partnership working. Statutory safeguarding partners and relevant agencies, through their local multi-agency safeguarding arrangements, are critical to the programme's success in improving outcomes for children, young people and families.

¹ A statutory safeguarding partner in relation to a local authority area in England is defined in section 16E of the Children Act 2004 as: (a) the local authority, (b) an integrated care board for an area any part of which falls within the local authority area, and (c) the chief officer of police for an area any part of which falls within the local authority area.

Multi-agency and multi-disciplinary working will be fundamental to the implementation of reforms:

- by multi-agency working we mean: working across organisations to meet children, young people and families' needs through effective information sharing, joint decision-making and co-ordinated interventions, to facilitate effective help, support and protection. This includes in child protection, where experts from different agencies form multi-agency child protection teams to lead child protection decision making, whilst remaining connected to their parent agency;
- by multi-disciplinary working we mean: a range of practitioners and professionals from different backgrounds working together, to enable the best outcomes for children, young people and families.

Funding and grant conditions

In November 2025 we announced that we will provide over £2.4 billion for FFP over the next three years, of which over £800 million is new investment, made up as follows:

- Continuing the £523 million investment available in 2025-26 for each year of the multi-year settlement;
- £319 million from the Transformation Fund over 2026-27 and 2027-28 announced at Spending Review 2025;
- New funding of £547 million over the next three years.

This investment supports the government's continued commitment to reform local government funding and will ensure local authorities, with their partners, are able to fund preventative support and services including targeted early help, child in need and child protection activity. This will enable local authorities, with their partners, to rebalance spending away from accommodating children in care and increase spend on prevention.

FFP funding is ringfenced for spend on prevention. It will be allocated to local authorities through the new Children, Families and Youth Grant and distributed via the new [Children and Young Person's Services \(CYPS\) formula](#). This new formula will better reflect the current level of need for services for children and families in each local area and will ensure money goes to where it is needed most.

Draft [grant conditions for FFP](#) funding were published alongside the Local Government Finance Settlement for 2026-27. The grant conditions set out in more detail how local safeguarding partners should work together to agree priorities and how this funding should be used. The Department for Education, alongside the Home Office and the Department of Health and Social Care, will continue to work closely with local partnerships on the delivery of the FFP programme. An [explanatory note](#) includes further information on the distribution methodology and data considerations.

The grant conditions clearly state that funding for FFP is not designed to displace existing prevention spend but intended as additional investment into services. It is essential that local authorities maintain existing levels of preventative spend and use additional

investment to boost spending in this area so that we can rebalance the children's social care system. This will be monitored by asking grant recipients to provide additional spend data. This also sets out the expectation that local areas will use the funding to build on local planning undertaken in year one of the programme (2025-26) and complete any remaining transformation activity. The majority of the grant is expected to be used to fund new and updated services with full operational delivery of reformed services by March 2027.

Statutory safeguarding partners already have a joint and equal duty to safeguard and promote the welfare of all children in their area. Local safeguarding partners and relevant agencies should come together to consider how they deliver their current services, where existing resources will be re-organised and used to deliver the reformed system and where there are gaps.

Local authorities can use this grant funding to support other local partners and specialist services to deliver transformation and/or implementation activity for these reforms. Mechanisms for distributing funding can also be agreed locally, for instance via a section 75 agreement with health partners. However, this money should not be used to plug gaps in funding that statutory safeguarding partners should reasonably be filling. DfE expects local authorities and their safeguarding partners to demonstrate how they are delivering all aspects of the reforms via their Families First Partnership quarterly programme data collection. This must be multi-agency in approach as it requires multi-agency delivery.

DfE will monitor completion of transformation activities, implementation of the policy expectations in this guide and use of FFP funding through quarterly programme data collections and structured engagement. Chapter 2: Delivery expectations provides an overview of how we will monitor delivery and the progress expected during year 2. Full reporting requirements are set out in [Families First Partnership Programme: Quarterly Monitoring Financial Year 2026-27](#) on the Knowledge Hub.

Where areas do not demonstrate expected progress, the department will provide an enhanced level of support and challenge to enable effective implementation of reformed services and improved outcomes for children and families. Where local authorities are found not to be adhering to grant conditions, government will engage with local authorities to obtain assurance. Dependent on the outcome of this, MHCLG will consider whether there has been a failure to meet the Best Value duty. Local authorities may also receive support via DfE's CSC Improvement and Intervention programme, including CSC Improvements Teams and Expert Advisers. More information on the national FFP delivery support offer can be found in chapter 4.

Adherence to the FFP grant conditions and prioritising prevention is crucial to local government financial sustainability. The emphasis and investment on prevention across the whole of the FFP programme is expected to lead to a significant reduction in the numbers of looked after children and to keep more families together where it is safe to do so. We expect local authorities to use the savings realised through implementing the

reforms to increase spend on Family Help, thereby creating a virtuous circle and moving funding to a more sustainable footing.

Accountability

As part of their statutory responsibilities to safeguard and promote the welfare of all children in their local area, the Department for Education, the Department for Health and Social Care and the Home Office expect local authorities, police and health to work together to implement the FFP reforms.

Robust multi-agency safeguarding arrangements will help to ensure that information about a child and their family is shared effectively, that risk of harm is correctly identified and understood, and that children and families receive targeted services that meet their needs in a co-ordinated way. Strong, collaborative leadership and timely decision-making are crucial to the effectiveness of multi-agency working and to identify and address system issues. The three safeguarding partners are responsible and accountable for this in their local areas.

Ofsted will continue to evaluate the experiences and progress of children through its inspecting local authority children's services (ILACS) framework. They have a crucial role reporting on what is working well and what needs to improve in children's social care. In March 2026, Ofsted updated its framework to better align with children's social care reforms, taking into account the recent updates to Working Together to Safeguard Children and the Children's Social Care: National Framework. These updates to ILACS aim to support local authorities on their journey to implement the reforms set out in this guide. Their evaluation criteria now better reflect the move towards a seamless system of Family Help, the importance of engaging family networks in the help and care of children, and the multi-agency context in which help, support and protection is delivered. In the same update, Ofsted has carried out the commitment to remove the overall effectiveness judgement from ILACS. These changes apply for inspections carried out from 1 April 2026. As reforms to children's social care are embedded, Ofsted will continue to rebalance inspection, ensuring it continues to act as a lever for improvement. In 2026, Ofsted will consult on wider reforms to ILACS and its social care common inspection framework (SCCIF), to wholly align with the government's reform programme for implementation in 2027.

Safeguarding partners are inspected by their respective inspectorate bodies (Ofsted, the Care Quality Commission and HM Inspectorate of Constabulary, Fire and Rescue Services) and jointly through Joint Targeted Area Inspections (JTAs). The inspectorates will continue to work together to ensure that their inspections reflect the new ways of working that local areas are embedding in their practice.

Chapter 1: Rebalancing the system of help, support and protection

The Families First Partnership (FFP) programme shifts focus towards intensive earlier help for families, more expert, focused multi-agency child protection practice and greater use of family networks. This ambition is in line with Working Together, which sets out how agencies, organisations, and individuals work together to provide help, support and protection - covering universal services and community based early help, through Family Help (including targeted early help and statutory services under section 17 of the Children Act 1989), and including action taken under section 47 of the Children Act 1989 to protect children from significant harm.

Funding will support the continued implementation of 1) Family Help, 2) multi-agency child protection teams and 3) support for family networks, through Family Group Decision Making and Family Network Support Packages. These three features are the core of FFP, which implemented together will reset the children's social care system to earlier and more effective help for families.

Figure 1: Our vision for a reformed system of help, support and protection



Children and families should not be left waiting for help; the system should respond flexibly and wrap support around them at the earliest point of need. Within this system, multi-agency child protection teams will advise on and take swift, decisive action to protect children from actual or likely significant harm. Through these reforms, children and families will feel tangible benefits, with improved access to support and more consistent relationships – underpinned by a culture of being worked with, rather than done to. In providing support, it is crucial that local areas understand and take account of the diverse backgrounds of families. Practice should be anti-discriminatory and address barriers to accessing services.

This chapter sets out how the different parts of the system interact to provide a child-centered focus within whole-family support across help, support and protection.

Universal services and community based early help

Universal services and community based early help play a crucial role in identifying emerging problems and providing support at an early stage. This includes support delivered through [Best Start Family Hubs](#) (BSFHs), youth services, breakfast clubs, after

school clubs and routine health and housing provision. Local areas should build on the strengths of their universal and community based early help delivery models and workforce when designing their approach to Family Help. Voluntary and community services are also a vital part of the end-to-end system, and their contribution should be recognised and valued. This is particularly important for families and communities that may be wary of, or unaware of, the services available to them, or have difficulty accessing services, e.g. those living in rural communities.

BSFHs can act as a non-stigmatising gateway to targeted whole-family support delivered through Family Help, with a shared ambition to strengthen the end-to-end system of support for and around families. Some of the Families First for Children pathfinders have integrated family hubs and Family Help to support delivery, for example using family hubs as the primary co-location space for multi-disciplinary Family Help teams. Integrating BSFHs with Family Help can help support earlier engagement, build sustained relationships, co-locate multi-disciplinary teams and ensure continuity of support as family needs change.

As a community-based model for providing early help to families, BSFHs play an important role in delivering intensive evidence-based interventions for parenting, and identifying families who may need more intensive support from Family Help and multi-agency child protection teams, for example, those families where domestic abuse is a factor. For families who no longer require the support of targeted and specialist services, BSFHs, BSFH network sites and other forms of community-based setting can offer an ongoing, local support network, by providing early help, and playing an important role in early identification of family need, making appropriate referrals into targeted support.

Education and childcare settings and attendance

Education and childcare settings will often have the strongest relationships with children, young people and their families and be the first to identify when help or protection is needed. These settings should have a clearly defined and integrated role within multiagency safeguarding arrangements (MASAs) giving them a stronger voice in Safeguarding Partnerships and ensuring that they are strategic partners in local decision making and safeguarding responses.

For the most vulnerable children, regular attendance is also an important protective factor and the best opportunity for needs to be identified and support provided. Education and childcare settings therefore may be able to offer support directly to families, connect them with other local services that provide more targeted support, have continued contact with a family to monitor progress or change, and know when to escalate to seek further input, intervention or oversight.

They are also vital in recognising underlying causes of severe absence and children missing education which can act as vital warning signs to a range of safeguarding issues including domestic abuse, neglect, sexual abuse and child sexual and criminal exploitation. Improving attendance is everyone's business and the barriers to accessing

education are wide and complex, both within and beyond the school gates, and are often specific to individual pupils and families. Live attendance data is therefore one of the best early-warning indicators of need, particularly where pupils are absent more often than they attend. Alongside expectations in statutory [attendance guidance](#), partnerships should consider how:

- families with severely absent pupils are factored into local eligibility decisions: if pupils face out-of-school barriers and the family do not have a social worker, they should routinely be assessed for Family Help;
- Family Help contributes to the expectation that schools and local authorities agree a joint approach for all severely absent pupils;
- practitioners understand the importance of absence as an indicator of wider need, the benefits of improving attendance to improve outcomes for the whole family, and the [role of the Virtual School Head for children with a social worker](#).

Areas should also liaise with education teams to ensure they are aware of issues relating to the needs of children who are not on a school roll, for example children missing from education or electively home educated children.

Family Help and multi-agency child protection

Family Help and multi-agency child protection reforms are wholly interdependent. It is critical that safeguarding partners implement them together as an integrated system. Together, they will drive a fundamental rebalancing of the whole system: enabling earlier, wraparound support for families and those who work with them; preventing escalation into crisis; enabling a clear, expert focus on children who need protection from significant harm; and reducing costly and unnecessary statutory intervention in family life where child protection is not needed.

To keep children safe and support families, child protection knowledge and skills will continue to be needed across the whole system of help, support and protection. Highly experienced multi-agency child protection teams (MACPTs) with embedded, Lead Child Protection Practitioner (LCPP) social workers will bring an expert focus to child protection decision making. They will lead all child protection decision-making – from convening and chairing strategy discussions to overseeing the development, delivery, review and closure of child protection plans and informing decisions about moving into pre-proceedings and the Public Law Outline (PLO) process. These teams will enable a consistent and robust application of the significant harm threshold, acting as a local centre of excellence on child protection issues.

Multi-agency child protection teams will come alongside and support Family Help Lead Practitioners (FHLs) throughout child protection activity. FHLs will retain the primary relationship with and overall responsibility for supporting the child and their family. The MACPT will focus on identifying and responding to significant harm, ensuring a clear emphasis on the child's daily life, voice and safety and drawing on input from the wider MACPT and Family Help service. Through accessible consultation, MACPTs will be

available to Family Help practitioners, and others, who need a fresh, expert pair of eyes to consider concerns about actual or likely significant harm.

This new system design is intended to improve the experience for families that want help and where child protection action is not needed, whilst also allowing the system to swiftly identify and act decisively in response to concerns about significant harm.

Achieving these two goals within children's social care was the intention of the 1989 Children Act. Family Help and MACPT changes are a direct attempt to achieve this across England.

Engaging family networks throughout the system

Meaningful engagement of family networks is the golden thread that should run through the system of help, support and protection – from universal services through to interaction with care. Key to this will be engaging family networks through Family Group Decision Making and Family Network Support Packages (policy expectations at Chapter 2) from the earliest stage, to allow families to harness their strengths and prioritise their own solutions.

Preventive support is not limited to the earliest parts of the system. Local areas should also consider using the FFP programme as a way to provide whole-family support where a child becomes looked after by the local authority. This includes supporting birth parents whose children are at risk of removal and supporting children to return safely to their parents or wider family network from care. Continuing the Family Help model of lead practitioner led support can have a significant impact on supporting birth parents overcome challenges that are impacting on their ability to provide a stable, loving home. Similarly, Family Help and supporting family networks can play a crucial role in supporting reunification by enabling families to develop sustainable plans that facilitate a child's safe return home.

Foster care is also a key component of a whole-family approach within the system of help, support and protection system for children who are unable to be with their birth families. Foster carers play an important role by providing stability, maintaining family relationships and helping to ensure that children remain connected to their parents and wider networks where this is safe to do so. Local authorities should ensure that fostering services are closely aligned with Family Help, Family Group Decision Making and wider multi-agency support. This includes enabling foster carers to contribute to assessment and planning and involving them in early whole-family discussions where appropriate. Strengthening collaboration between fostering teams, Family Help practitioners and wider support services can improve placement stability and support smoother transitions for children returning to their families or moving into long-term foster care.

Local partnerships should understand their data on reunification and consider how Family Help supports robust preparation, planning and support for all children. The Care

Planning, Placement and Case Review regulations and guidance² already provides clear direction for local authorities regarding their duty to return a looked after child to their family unless this is not consistent with safeguarding and promoting the child's welfare. The rollout of Family Help provides an opportunity to strengthen practice and improve outcomes for these children and their families. It is important that local support services are accessible for all children and young people, including looked after children who may be accessing the same services as families in Family Help.

² [Children Act 1989: care planning, placement and case review - GOV.UK](#)



Title: Early Help in Herefordshire - Early Help Task and Finish Group Final Report

Meeting: Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee

Meeting date: Wednesday 22 July 2026

Report by: Statutory Scrutiny Officer

Classification

Open

Report purpose

To provide the committee with the draft final report of its task and finish group looking at the provision of early help.

Background

1. On 22 July 2025, the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee agreed a [terms of reference](#) for a task and finish group to:
 - a. Recognise strengths in current Early Help provision.
 - b. Identify good practice across different communities.
 - c. Highlight gaps or inconsistencies in provision and the work in place to address them.
2. The task and finish group concluded its work earlier this year. Its report summarising its work, alongside recommendations to support the council and wider partnership's early help for children, young people and families, is appended to this report.

Meeting objectives

3. To agree the draft final report of the committee's early help task and finish group.
4. To recommend submission of the agreed report to Cabinet for consideration.

Report information

5. The final report is attached as Appendix 1.
6. The terms of reference that the committee based its work on is attached as Appendix 2.

Consultees

7. None

Appendices

Appendix 1 – Early Help Task and Finish Group draft final report

Appendix 2 – Early Help Task and Finish Group terms of reference

Background papers and resources

None identified.

EARLY HELP IN HEREFORDSHIRE

**HEREFORDSHIRE COUNCIL
CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
EARLY HELP TASK AND FINISH GROUP**

FINAL REPORT

Table of Contents

Chair’s Foreword	2
Task and Finish Group Members	4
Acknowledgements	6
Introduction	7
<i>Early Help in Herefordshire</i>	8
<i>Implementing Families First</i>	8
<i>Locality-Based Early Help</i>	9
<i>Schools</i>	10
<i>Commissioned Targeted Early Help Services (Vennture)</i> ...	11
<i>Midwifery Services</i>	11
<i>Health Visiting Services</i>	12
<i>School Nursing Services</i>	13
<i>Support for Young Carers</i>	14
<i>Youth Provision and HVOSS</i>	14
<i>Community Development</i>	15
Conclusions	18
Recommendations	19
Glossary	20
Appendix 1 – Early Help Roadshow Participants	21

Chair's Foreword



For Herefordshire to thrive, its children, young people and their families must thrive too. Herefordshire Council makes this belief clear in its council plan, which states the priority to *support children and young people to thrive, be safe, and for families to be supported*. Our children are the future, and their future is best safeguarded in their families and communities.

The council has reinforced this belief in its commitment to a Child-Friendly Herefordshire, a major long-term partnership commitment to making the county a place where every child feels included, valued, happy, healthy and safe in their homes and communities.

Children are most likely to thrive when they are supported by strong family networks, attend high-quality schools, and live in vibrant, connected communities. That is why it is so important for the council to support not only children and young people, but also the families and communities around them. This support is delivered through effective council services, strong partnerships with schools, and our ongoing commitment to strengthening communities across Herefordshire.

Providing the right help at the right time enables families to build on their strengths, overcome difficulties, and flourish. Supporting families from the earliest days and through the often-challenging journey of parenting is likely to strengthen them, develop resilience, and help prevent difficulties from escalating into issues that require more intensive and intrusive intervention. By working together to offer timely and compassionate support, we can help children, young people, and their families achieve the best possible outcomes.

The Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee has long recognised the value of early help for children, young people and their families, and the need to provide this in partnership with our schools and communities. This has been an incredible opportunity to explore the depth and complexity of early help available in Herefordshire. The committee has met with many of the council services and community organisations that provide this support and has been impressed by their hard work, creativity and commitment to a shared vision of flourishing children, young people, families and communities. Herefordshire is lucky to have so many people dedicated to improving the lives of its residents.

Providing this support is not without its complexities and challenges, as we recognise an increased need to support vulnerable children and those with additional needs. The committee heard about new ways of supporting all children and families earlier, and helping family life to thrive, through initiatives such as Families First, Family Hubs and changes to youth services. We welcome these positive developments, while recognising that bringing them into practice can be challenging. It requires organisations to adapt and work together in new ways, and it is important that the dedicated professionals supporting families have the right guidance, resources and support to help them manage both opportunities and risks within families and their communities.

The committee recognises these realities and has made its recommendations with the aim of helping these services to build on their achievements and to continue to grow, develop, and succeed.

We hope this review highlights the outstanding work taking place across Herefordshire every day and acknowledges the dedication of the people, communities, and organisations who make it possible. By recognising these achievements and sharing opportunities for improvement, we aim to support partners in building on their successes and continuing to make a positive difference to the lives of children, young people, and their families.

I am grateful to everyone who took part in this review. We thank you for taking the time to share your work, your challenges and your ambitions for the children and families of Herefordshire.

Toni Fagan
Chair, Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee

Task and Finish Group Members



Cllr Toni Fagan – Chair

Cllr Toni Fagan is a Green Party councillor representing Birch ward on Herefordshire Council. As ward member for a rural ward, she is familiar with the challenges that rural isolation poses for children and families. She serves as chairperson of the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee, helping oversee services affecting children, young people and families across the county. Cllr Fagan previously sat on the Children's Services Improvement Board through the improvement journey and is also a member of the Scrutiny Management Board.



Cllr Frank Cornthwaite

Cllr Frank Cornthwaite is the Conservative councillor for Holmer ward. He serves as vice-chairperson of the Connected Communities Scrutiny Committee, contributing to scrutiny of community services, local engagement and council performance.



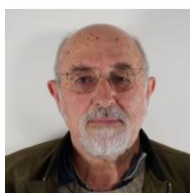
Cllr Clare Davies

Cllr Clare Davies represents Bromyard West ward and is leader of the True Independents Group on Herefordshire Council. She also serves as vice-chairperson of the Planning and Regulatory Committee, helping oversee major planning applications and regulatory matters.



Cllr David Davies

Cllr David Davies is the Conservative councillor representing Dinedor Hill ward. He serves local residents through his role on Herefordshire Council and contributes to council decision-making on services, budgets and policy. He is the chair of governors for Little Dewchurch CofE Primary School. He is also a member of the Hereford and Worcester Fire and Rescue Authority, as well as being a member of the Children and Young Peoples Scrutiny Committee, Scrutiny Management Board, Planning and Regulatory Committee, and Healthcare and Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee.



Cllr Robert Highfield

Cllr Robert Highfield is the Conservative councillor for Castle ward. As a member of Herefordshire Council, He is also a member of the council's Adoption Panel.



Cllr David Hitchiner

Cllr David Hitchiner is an Independents for Herefordshire councillor representing Stoney Street ward. He serves as chairperson of the Audit and Governance Committee, overseeing governance arrangements, risk management and financial accountability within the council.



Cllr Ben Proctor

Cllr Ben Proctor is the Liberal Democrat councillor for College ward. He serves as chairperson of the Scrutiny Management Board and Vice-Chairperson of the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee. Beyond Herefordshire Council, he is a representative on the Hereford City Youth Council and Stronger Hereford, supporting community engagement and youth participation initiatives.

Acknowledgements

The Early Help Task and Finish Group wishes to formally express its sincere appreciation to all those who generously contributed their time, insight, and expertise throughout this review.

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Hilary Thomas	Families Team Programme Lead (formerly)	Vennture (formerly)
Michelle Trussler	Children's Community Development Officer	Herefordshire Council

Introduction

The Early Help Task and Finish Group was established to take a holistic, evidence-based look at how Herefordshire supports children, young people and families at the earliest stage of need.

The early help system in Herefordshire operates across several levels of need, beginning with universal services that are accessible to all families, such as schools, health visiting and community provision. These services play a critical role in early identification and prevention.

Where needs become more complex, families may receive targeted early help, typically aligned with Level 3 of the [Right Help Right Time Levels of Need Framework](#). This involves structured multi-agency support, coordinated through an Early help Assessment and led by a designated practitioner and at the highest level, the involvement of statutory services.

Across the review, partners consistently demonstrated commitment, creativity and a shared ambition to strengthen early intervention. The evidence gathered from Herefordshire Council, the Families First team, schools, health services, voluntary organisations and community partners, shows a system that is evolving with purpose and optimism. The Families First reforms underway nationally and locally present a genuine opportunity to reshape early help into a more integrated, accessible and family-centred offer.

At the same time, the group recognised that transformation brings challenges. Partners described pressures relating to workforce capacity, clarity of roles, rural access, mental health demand and the complexity of navigating multiple reforms simultaneously. These concerns were raised constructively and with a shared desire to improve the system rather than criticise it. The group's role has been to listen carefully, identify themes, and translate them into practical recommendations that support sustainable improvement.

The report that follows presents twelve thematic sections, each offering an overview of progress, a balanced reflection on challenges, and a forward-looking account of how these challenges can be overcome. Together, they provide a comprehensive picture of early help in Herefordshire and a clear pathway for strengthening support for families.

Early Help in Herefordshire

Implementing Families First

The group heard that Herefordshire's implementation of the [national Families First reforms](#) is progressing well, with a clear sense of purpose from officers delivering the reforms. The county is already well aligned with the Department for Education's expectations, meaning partners have been able to refine existing practice rather than undertake wholesale redesign. The introduction of Family Help, Multi-Agency Child Protection Teams (MACPTs) and Family Group Decision Making has been met with strong professional engagement, and early signs suggest these reforms are helping to streamline processes, reduce duplication and improve the experience for families. The development of the Family Help Assessment, co-produced with practitioners and families, reflects a genuine commitment to designing services around the lived experience of families. The expansion of community development officers, the creation of a Families First Team to support those acting as family help lead practitioners in universal and community settings and strengthening the community-based early help offer, all demonstrate a positive shift towards earlier, more accessible support.

Despite this strong progress, partners raised potential areas of concern. Schools expressed concerns about workload, particularly around the family help lead practitioner role, and some uncertainty remains about the distinction between Early Help and Family Help. There were also concerns about administrative burden, the pace of change and the need for clearer communication across agencies. The removal of traditional early help assessment and referrals and introduction of a single assessment model, represents a significant cultural shift, and some practitioners described the transition period as challenging. Additionally, while MACPTs are welcomed, partners emphasised the importance of ensuring they are fully resourced and supported to deliver consistent, high-quality safeguarding decisions.

The group heard that these concerns are being addressed with collaboration and practical action. Training programmes have already been expanded, including sessions on risk, thresholds and restorative conversations. Schools are receiving targeted support, including case studies, In-service Education and Training (INSET) engagement and clearer messaging that the reforms are designed to simplify – not increase – workloads.

The Families First Team is providing hands-on assistance to partners in supporting the administrative burden, it continues to offer direct work with children as part of a Family Help plan alongside parenting programmes and the new assessment is being piloted gradually to allow feedback from families and practitioners to shape improvements. Communication is being strengthened through glossaries, visual process maps and regular briefings.

MACPT operating principles have been co-designed with police, health and education, ensuring shared ownership. Overall, the task and finish group is confident that Herefordshire's positive culture, strong partnerships and commitment to continuous improvement will ensure Families First becomes a well-embedded, effective and valued model of early support.

Family Hubs

The development of [Family Hubs](#) in Herefordshire represents one of the most exciting opportunities within the early help system. The programme is ambitious, well-funded in its development and implementation years and strongly aligned with national priorities to improve early childhood outcomes, reduce inequalities and strengthen integrated support.

The first Family Hub at Widemarsh has already launched, and plans to convert five existing children's centres into Family Hubs demonstrate a clear commitment to accessibility and continuity across the county. The group noted that the hub-and-spoke model, including library-based provision and community venues, is particularly well suited to Herefordshire's rural geography. It concluded that the service the hubs offer is rich and varied, including parenting programmes, infant feeding support, speech and language interventions, SEND services, universal portage, inclusion practitioners and expanded outreach. The programme's strong focus on improving [Good Level of Development](#) (GLD) outcomes shows a clear strategic link between the [Healthy Babies Programme](#) and long-term educational success.

Funding for family hubs is time-limited to 2029, creating understandable concern about the long-term future of services. Rural communities face challenges relating to transport, digital access and outreach, and some families may struggle to engage with hub-based provision. National workforce shortages in health visiting, midwifery and early years services also present potential risks to delivery. Additionally, partners highlighted the need for stronger co-production with families and clearer communication about the role of hubs within the wider Families First system.

The group learned that officers are already engaged in sustainability planning with partners, exploring how successful interventions can be embedded within core provision should funding not be renewed after 2029. They are strengthening outreach models, including library Stay-and-Plays, community spokes and targeted rural engagement. Workforce development is being supported through skill-mix approaches, local recruitment and strong professional supervision. The council is also expanding co-production through family engagement activities, feedback loops and community events. The alignment between Family Hubs, Families First, the [Holiday Activities and Food](#) (HAF) programme and the Youth Strategy ensures a coherent system rather than isolated initiatives. With continued partnership working, continuity planning and strategic oversight, Family Hubs are well positioned to become a lasting foundation of early help in Herefordshire.

Locality-Based Early Help

Recent developments in locality-based working have delivered clear and meaningful benefits across Herefordshire. Co-location of multi-agency partners in the north and south of the county has strengthened partnership relationships, improved communication and enabled more responsive support. Families experience smoother transitions, practitioners benefit from shared intelligence, and rural travel pressures have been reduced. Feedback from Team Around the Family processes shows that families value the timeliness and coordination of support. The model reflects the strengths of Herefordshire's communities, recognising the importance of local knowledge, trusted relationships and place-based delivery. The group found strong evidence that locality working is helping to embed early help more deeply within communities and improve outcomes for families.

Co-location in the central locality is not yet complete, limiting the full benefits of the model. While qualitative feedback is strong, partners noted the need for clearer performance measures to demonstrate impact on outcomes, referral times and family satisfaction. Some practitioners described variation in multi-agency practice across localities, and there were concerns about capacity pressures as Families First reforms increase demand for locality-based support. Additionally, partners highlighted the need for clearer communication about locality roles within the wider early help system.

The group learned that these issues are being addressed. Plans to complete co-location in the central locality are progressing, and partners are working collaboratively to ensure the model is fully embedded countywide. Development of a quality assurance programme for Families First is underway to ensure the partnership can understand impact and experiences of families under the reforms. Similarly, multi-agency practice is being strengthened through shared training, locality meetings and cross-locality learning. Capacity concerns are being mitigated through the Families First team, community development officers and strengthened partnership working. Overall, migration to locality-based early help across the county is a clear success story, and continued investment will ensure it remains a strong foundation for future service development.

Schools

Schools play a central and highly valued role within Herefordshire's early help system. They are often the first to identify emerging concerns, hold trusted relationships with families and provide consistent daily contact with children. The group found strong evidence of commitment, professionalism and compassion across the education sector. Many schools already undertake substantial early help activity, and recent improvements in publishing early help offers have increased transparency and awareness. The locality model has strengthened connections between schools and early help practitioners, and designated safeguarding leads have welcomed training on thresholds, risk and restorative practice. Schools' contribution to safeguarding, early intervention and multi-agency working is both significant and deeply appreciated.

Schools described pressures relating to workload, particularly around early help assessments and the family help lead practitioner role. Some schools remain uncertain about thresholds, referral pathways and the distinction between universal support, early help and statutory intervention. The consent-based nature of early help can create challenges when families are reluctant to engage. Schools also face an increasingly complex safeguarding landscape, including mental health pressures, online harms, misogyny, AI-generated abuse, harmful sexual behaviour and substance misuse. These issues are undermining the wellbeing of our children and placing enormous additional demands on schools and highlight the need for strong multi-agency support.

In response to challenges, threshold training is being expanded, and revised level of need guidance is being developed to support consistent application and decision-making supporting the "right services at the right time". Schools are receiving targeted support through locality teams, Families First practitioners and specialist services. Communication with parents is being strengthened to reduce stigma and encourage engagement. Emerging risks are being addressed through updated safeguarding training, multi-agency pathways and stronger links with mental health services. As a result, the group is confident that schools will continue to play a vital role in

early help, supported by clearer guidance, stronger partnerships and a shared commitment to improving outcomes for children and families.

Commissioned Targeted Early Help Services (Vennture)

Commissioned by the local authority's children's services, targeted early help services play a vital role in Herefordshire's early help system, and the contribution of [Vennture](#) stood out to the group as a clear strength. The organisation brings a deeply relational, family-centred approach that complements statutory provision and offers families a trusted route into support. The group noted that Vennture's practitioners work with compassion, persistence and skill, often supporting families with complex needs who require sustained engagement. Their ability to build trust, navigate systems and provide tailored interventions has also been widely praised by partners. It found strong evidence that Vennture's work helps prevent escalation, improves family resilience and supports children's wellbeing. The organisation's flexibility, community presence and commitment to relationship-based practice make it a valued partner within the wider early help system.

Vennture reported that the nature of need among families has changed significantly, with increasing levels of mental health difficulties, neurodiversity-related challenges, emotional-based school avoidance and behavioural concerns. These issues often require specialist knowledge and longer periods of support, stretching capacity and increasing pressure on staff. The organisation also highlighted challenges relating to diagnosis-led thresholds within education and SEND systems, which can leave families waiting for assessments before receiving appropriate support. Sustainability was a major concern: the current contract does not fully cover delivery costs, requiring Vennture to subsidise provision through charitable income. This creates financial vulnerability and risks undermining long-term stability. Additionally, the group noted that early help terminology can be confusing, with families and professionals sometimes unclear about the distinction between universal, targeted and statutory support.

To meet these challenges, Herefordshire Council Children's Services is reviewing commissioning arrangements as the current contract comes to an end and will ensure they reflect the complexity of modern early help work and support long-term sustainability. Partners are working together to strengthen integration between early help, education and SEND, promoting needs-led approaches rather than diagnosis-dependent thresholds. Vennture's relational model is being recognised within performance frameworks, ensuring that quality of engagement is valued alongside quantitative measures. The Families First reforms, including the Family Help Assessment and Family Help Lead Practitioner role, will help reduce duplication and streamline pathways, making it easier for families to access support.

Midwifery Services

Midwifery and [antenatal care](#) services provide one of the earliest and most trusted points of contact for families, and their contribution to early help is both significant and deeply valued. The group found strong evidence that midwives play a crucial role in identifying emerging needs, supporting parents during pregnancy and helping families access appropriate support. The named safeguarding midwife provides strategic oversight, training and professional advice, ensuring that safeguarding practice remains robust. Midwives' ability to build relationships,

observe family dynamics and offer compassionate support place them in a unique position to identify concerns early and act upon them. Improvements in joint working with health visiting services, including near-100% compliance with handover standards, demonstrate a positive commitment to integrated early help. The [Baby Steps](#) programme for care-experienced young parents was highlighted as an example of excellent practice, reducing unnecessary safeguarding involvement and supporting vulnerable families effectively.

Midwifery services nationally and locally face significant staffing challenges, with increasing demands limiting capacity for preventative work. The named safeguarding midwife role carries substantial responsibility, and the group heard concerns that strategic oversight can be constrained by operational pressures. Short appointment times, high caseloads and complexity of referral forms can limit opportunities for professional curiosity, reducing the ability to explore wider family circumstances. Referral processes were identified as a key barrier: early help referrals were described as lengthy, complex and prone to technical issues, while safeguarding referrals through MASH were seen as quicker and more straightforward. This creates an unintended incentive to escalate concerns unnecessarily. The discontinuation of the First Steps programme for young parents also created uncertainty, with practitioners unclear about replacement support.

To address these challenges, Herefordshire Council Public Health is reviewing safeguarding capacity within maternity services, exploring options for additional roles or team-based models to strengthen oversight. The group was reassured to learn that early help referral processes are being redesigned to be simpler, digital-friendly and co-produced with frontline practitioners. Training and reflective supervision are also being prioritised, with protected learning time recognised as essential for staff wellbeing and effective early intervention. The Families First reforms will help clarify thresholds, reduce unnecessary escalation and support midwives to make confident decisions about early help. Work is underway to assess the impact of withdrawing First Steps and identify alternative support for young parents. As a result of this work, the group is confident that with strengthened pathways, improved referral processes and continued partnership working, midwifery services will remain a strong and valued component of early help in Herefordshire.

Health Visiting Services

The [health visiting service](#) is one of the strongest pillars of early help in Herefordshire. As a universal public health offer for children aged 0–5, health visitors provide consistent, trusted and relationship-based support that reaches families at the earliest stage. The group found clear evidence that health visitors are highly skilled at identifying developmental concerns, parenting challenges, health inequalities and emerging risks. Enhanced reviews at 4–6 months and age three demonstrate a proactive, data-led approach to early identification, particularly around speech and language, oral health and school readiness. Health visitors' ability to work flexibly, through home visits, clinics, group sessions and digital communication, helps ensure families receive support in ways that suit their circumstances. Their role is especially important in rural communities, where isolation, transport barriers and limited access to services can make early help harder to reach. The service's commitment to prevention, relationship-based practice and multi-agency working is a clear strength to the group.

The group noted that the historical reduction of children's centre services and informal drop-in support has created gaps in early preventative provision, leaving health visitors as one of the few remaining universal contacts for families. This increases pressure on the service and risks over-reliance. Workforce shortages, particularly in qualified health visitors and school nurses, present challenges to sustainability. Some families, particularly migrant communities, transient populations and those not registered with a GP, remain harder to reach. Parents often seek advice from informal networks before engaging with professionals, and the system can feel difficult to navigate when concerns do not meet statutory thresholds. These issues highlight the need for stronger universal provision, clearer pathways and targeted outreach.

The Family Hubs programme will help rebuild universal early help provision, offering accessible community-based support that complements health visiting. Targeted outreach strategies are being developed to improve engagement with underrepresented communities, supported by interpreters and specialist organisations. The council is strengthening workforce sustainability with skill-mix models, local recruitment and strong professional supervision. The additional health reviews are being evaluated to demonstrate impact and inform future practice. The group believes that the Families First reforms will help simplify pathways, reduce duplication and ensure families can access support earlier.

School Nursing Services

The School Nursing Service provides essential preventative and early intervention support for children and young people aged 5–19, and its contribution to early help is evident to the group. School nurses are trusted, approachable, and skilled at identifying emerging health, wellbeing and safeguarding concerns. Their open referral routes, school drop-ins, one-to-one interventions and health education programmes reach thousands of young people each year. It was clear to the group that school nurses act as a vital bridge between universal services and more formal early help or social care pathways. For example, their ability to engage young people who may be reluctant to access statutory services is a clear strength. The service plays an important role in addressing public health concerns, including vaping, healthy relationships, sexual health and school readiness. School nurses' commitment to prevention, early identification and multi-agency working is appreciated across the system.

Mental health concerns now account for 80–85% of the service's caseload, with anxiety, self-harm and eating disorders increasingly common. Many referrals do not meet [Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services](#) (CAMHS) thresholds, creating a "missing middle" where young people have needs too complex for school nursing but not severe enough for specialist intervention. This places significant pressure on school nurses, who often support complex cases without access to appropriate escalation pathways. Workforce capacity is stretched, with around ten specialist nurses covering a large rural county - a lack of safe youth spaces also makes it harder to deliver services, especially outside of central Hereford. Preventative work has been reduced as staff respond to immediate need. Demonstrating impact is challenging, with evidence often based on activity data rather than long-term outcomes. Sustainability is a concern, as commissioning arrangements can create uncertainty and inhibit long-term planning.

The group learned that partners are exploring additional mid-tier mental health provision - such as that provided by [Wellbeing and Emotional Support Teams in Schools](#) (WEST) - to bridge the gap

between school nursing and high-tier CAMHS, ensuring young people receive timely support. Workforce capacity is being reviewed, with consideration of targeted investment and skill-mix approaches. The council's public health team is developing outcome measurement frameworks to capture improvements in health appointment attendance, wellbeing and prevention of escalation. Public health programmes are being strengthened, with increased focus on vaping, emotional wellbeing and healthy relationships. Communication strategies are being refined to reduce stigma and encourage earlier engagement with early help. The group was pleased to learn of this development work, and looks forward to seeing improved pathways, stronger commissioning and continued good partnership working.

Support for Young Carers

Support for young carers in Herefordshire is an area of service the group felt was notable for compassion, commitment and a growing recognition of the unique challenges these children and young people face. The group found strong evidence that practitioners work with sensitivity and care, offering whole-family support that helps young carers feel seen, understood and valued. The early help team provides assessments, home visits, advocacy, emotional support and liaison with schools, ensuring that young carers receive tailored assistance that reflects their age, circumstances and caring responsibilities. The voluntary sector, particularly bodies such as [Herefordshire Young and Young Adult Carers CIC](#) (HYYAC CIC), plays a vital role in reducing isolation, building resilience and creating safe spaces where young carers can connect with peers. The proposed [No Wrong Doors for Young Carers](#) model represents a positive step towards a more coordinated, consistent and accessible system of support.

The group noted that only 39 young carers were recorded in the 2024 School Census, far below comparable authorities, suggesting that many young carers remain hidden. Some do not recognise themselves as carers, while others fear stigma or intervention. Caring roles linked to parental mental ill-health or substance misuse are particularly difficult to detect. Support pathways can vary depending on which service first encounters the child, creating potential inconsistency and delays. Limited funding for practical assistance and reliance on grant-funded voluntary provision add further pressure. These challenges highlight the need for clearer identification processes, stronger multi-agency coordination and more sustainable support arrangements.

The No Wrong Door model will introduce a shared screening tool, clearer pathways, improved information sharing and dedicated young carer assessments. Awareness programmes for schools, health professionals and frontline staff will help ensure young carers are identified earlier and supported without stigma. Whole-family approaches are being strengthened across children's and adult services, ensuring that adult needs are considered in relation to their impact on children. Rural access barriers are being tackled through outreach, satellite provision and digital support. With these improvements already underway, the group believes Herefordshire is well positioned to create a more visible, consistent and supportive system for young carers.

Youth Provision and HVOSS

Youth provision in Herefordshire is characterised by passion, creativity and a strong voluntary and community sector that steps up to support young people across the county. The group found clear evidence that youth organisations provide safe spaces, trusted relationships and positive

activities that help young people build confidence, resilience and social networks. [Herefordshire Voluntary Organisations Support Service](#) (hvoss) plays a vital enabling role, supporting around 2,000 voluntary organisations and facilitating collaboration across the sector. The [Herefordshire Youth Provision Roadmap](#), developed with input from around 80 youth practitioners, provides a clear strategic vision for strengthening youth work, rebuilding workforce capacity and improving access to training. Youth provision aligns closely with early help principles, offering preventative support that helps young people thrive before difficulties escalate.

Youth services exist in areas such as Ledbury, Leominster and parts of Hereford, while some rural communities face significant gaps. The national decline of youth work as a viable career has reduced access to training and made recruitment difficult. Short-term funding creates instability, limiting continuity of relationships and inhibiting long-term planning. Smaller voluntary organisations can struggle with complex commissioning processes, despite delivering highly valued local services. Transport barriers make it difficult for young people, in both rural and urban areas, to access provision, even when services exist. Safeguarding requirements, while essential, can feel daunting for volunteer-led groups.

The group learned that the local authority children's services-led reforming of a core Youth Forum partnership, which has engaged each of the town councils and key partners, is developing a Youth Strategy, which will align the Youth Provision Roadmap, agreed partnership priorities and national policy within a shared framework. A mixed funding model – combining commissioning, small grants and support for anchor organisations – will create a more accessible and sustainable funding environment. Hvoss and the council are exploring practical safeguarding support, including training and advisory services, to reduce barriers for community groups. Mapping of provision and unmet need will help target resources more effectively. Engagement with town and parish councils is being strengthened to increase local ownership and investment. Transport considerations are being integrated into service planning, with outreach models and community transport explored as potential solutions. These developments should ensure that identified gaps within the youth provision network are filled and that youth provision continues to become a stronger and better coordinated contributor to early help.

Community Development

The work of children's community development officers (CCDOs) is rooted in building relationships, connecting services, and nurturing the strengths already present within neighbourhoods. CCDOs spend time in schools, community centres, voluntary groups and local networks, helping partners identify emerging needs early and shaping support that feels accessible and human. They champion prevention, encourage collaboration, and act as a bridge between families and the wider system. Their involvement in early help roadshows has broadened professional networks, improved awareness of local services and clarified referral pathways. In many communities, CCDOs have become trusted figures who understand local contexts deeply and help create the kind of joined-up, place-based support that families say makes the biggest difference.



Image 1: Early Help Roadshow – Kindle Centre, Hereford

To support the work of the Task and Finish Group, the CCDO team organised a series of roadshow events in Leominster, Hereford and Ross-on-Wye. These events brought together councillors, community organisations, council teams and local families to showcase the wide range of community-based early help services available across Herefordshire.

The roadshows provided Task and Finish Group members with an early opportunity to engage directly with local providers and gain a deeper understanding of the support available to families throughout the county. A list of the organisations that generously contributed their time and expertise to the roadshow events can be found in **Appendix 1** at the end of this report.

The breadth of the role can make expectations wide and sometimes unclear, particularly where partners are still learning how CCDOs fit within existing early help pathways. Some officers have faced pressures linked to rural geography, where travel time and dispersed communities make relationship-building slower. In a few areas, schools and voluntary groups have needed more clarity about how CCDOs complement – rather than duplicate – other roles such as family help practitioners or community coordinators. As the role has grown, CCDOs have also encountered capacity pressures, with demand for their support sometimes outpacing the time available to build the deep, sustained relationships that community development requires.

These challenges are being steadily resolved through clearer role definitions, stronger partnership communication, and more structured locality working. The introduction of Families First and Family Hubs has helped anchor CCDOs within a wider, coherent model of prevention, giving partners a shared understanding of how community development supports early intervention. Locality teams are now meeting more regularly, reducing duplication and strengthening joint planning. Rural pressures are being eased through smarter scheduling, shared outreach with partners, and better use of community venues.

Data-led early intervention, supported by the [Crisis and Resilience Fund](#) (CRF) and the [Low Income Family Tracker](#) (LIFT) platform, enables CCDOs to focus effort where it will have greatest impact, identifying households and areas of heightened need and supporting targeted outreach such as Healthy Start vouchers, free school meals and, from September 2026, the [Holiday](#)

[activities and food](#) (HAF) programme. Improved communication through schools, hubs, parish councils and community venues ensures families who are less digitally confident receive clear information - ensuring CCDOs can continue to build strong, connected communities where children and families feel supported early and well.

Conclusions

The Early Help Task and Finish Group found a system with considerable strengths, clear commitment across the services, a significant appetite for self-reflection and a willingness to constantly develop alongside a deep appreciation of the value of relational practice. Across all evidence sessions, partners demonstrated a shared ambition to improve early help, strengthen multi-agency working and deliver better outcomes for children, young people and families. The Families First reforms, Family Hubs programme, Youth Service development and locality model, alongside school partnerships, health services, voluntary sector and community networks should all contribute to a rich and evolving early help landscape. The group was impressed by the compassion, professionalism and creativity shown by practitioners across the system.

Critical reflections were raised constructively and with a shared desire for improvement, concerns included workforce pressures, rural access, mental health demand, sustainability, clarity of roles, data sharing, and the complexity of navigating multiple reforms. These challenges are real but not insurmountable. They reflect the pressures facing early help nationally and the need for continued investment, coordination and strategic oversight.

It is clear to the group that Herefordshire is well placed to overcome these challenges. The reforms underway provide a clear framework for improvement, and partners are already taking steps to strengthen pathways, simplify processes, improve communication and build sustainable models of support. It hopes that the recommendations developed through this review offer practical and evidence-based actions that will help ensure early help becomes more accessible, consistent and effective for the children and families of Herefordshire.

Herefordshire's early help system is building on its strengths by encouraging earlier intervention, building stronger partnerships, clearer pathways and more family-centred support. With continued collaboration, investment and shared commitment, the county can deliver an early help offer that gives every child, young person and their family the best possible start.

Recommendations

The committee makes four recommendations.

Develop a Long-Term Sustainability Plan for Family Hubs Beyond 2029

Family Hubs represent a major opportunity to rebuild universal early years support, improve Good Level of Development outcomes and strengthen integrated pathways from conception to age 19 (or 25 for SEND). However, funding is time-limited. Herefordshire should develop a sustainability plan that embeds successful interventions into core budgets, strengthens rural outreach models, expands coproduction with families and aligns Family Hubs with Families First, Talk Community and the Youth Strategy. This recommendation mitigates the most significant strategic risk identified in the report: the long-term viability of universal early help infrastructure.

Increase the availability of safe youth spaces

As part of the Youth Strategy work the partnership should ensure there is a workable plan to increase the availability and range of spaces young people can access which are safe, free to access and welcome young people. These may include youth clubs but should go wider to public open spaces, libraries, and informal hang out spaces. This is to emphasise within the Youth Strategy work the need for this very specific type of youth provision.

Request the council's Scrutiny Management Board reviews the council's support for the voluntary and community sector

This review highlighted the key role played by the voluntary and community sector in a range of aspects of early help and the significant pressures on the sector and individual organisations. We are not in a position to make recommendations to the executive about ways in which the sector might be strengthened. We recommend that SMB consider this issue in the overall scrutiny work programme as it has consequences across the organisation.

Share the good practice

The task and finish group identified a range of long-established good practices in early help that deliver good outcomes to families. The principles of good practice here should be shared across the authority and across the system (beyond Children's Services) for other services to consider when addressing their challenges.

Herefordshire Council and its partners should identify, share and embed the wide range of good practice demonstrated across the early help system. This includes using the service user feedback framework, coproduced assessments, relational practice, locality working and other community development models. Partners should share these strengths through simple tools such as a good practice pack, short case studies and locality learning sessions. Sharing the full Early Help Task and Finish Group report widely will also help services see what is working well in early help.

Glossary

CAMHS	Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services
CCDO	Children's Community Development Officer
CIN	Child in Need
CYPS	Children and Young People's Services
DfE	Department for Education
EHA	Early Help Assessment
FGDM	Family Group Decision Making
FHLP	Family Help Lead Practitioner
FHA	Family Help Assessment
FFP	Families First Partnership
FSM	Free School Meals
FNSP	Family Network Support Package
GLD	Good Level of Development
HV	Health Visitor
HYYAC CIC	Herefordshire Young and Young Adult Carers
ILACS	Inspecting Local Authority Children's Services
INSET	In-Service Education and Training
LCPP	Lead Child Protection Practitioner
LIFT	Low Income Family Tracker
MACPT	Multi-Agency Child Protection Team
MASA	Multi-Agency Safeguarding Arrangements
MASH	Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub
PLO	Public Law Outline
SEND	Special Educational Needs and Disabilities
SCCIF	Social Care Common Inspection Framework
TAF	Team Around the Family
WT	Working Together to Safeguard Children (2026)

Appendix 1

Early Help Roadshow Participants

To support the task and finish group, Herefordshire Council's Children's Services arranged a series of roadshow events in Leominster, Hereford and Ross-on-Wye. These roadshows brought together councillors, community organisations, council teams and local families to share the wide variety of community-based early help available to families in Herefordshire. The events enabled everyone to gain a better understanding of the available support throughout the county.

The committee would like to offer its thanks to the following organisations who gave their time to participate in the roadshow events.

	<u>Citizens Advice Herefordshire</u> We aim to provide the advice people need for the problems they face and improve the policies and practices that affect people's lives. We provide free, independent, confidential and impartial advice to everyone on their rights and responsibilities. We value diversity, promote equality and challenge discrimination.
	<u>NHS Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services WEST</u> The Wellbeing and Emotional Support Teams (WEST) in schools service is designed to help children and young people ages 5-18 years access mental health and wellbeing support early on in educational settings.
	<u>Home Start Herefordshire</u> Home Start Herefordshire is an independent, local charity run by Trustees. It has provided invaluable support and friendship to families since 1982 and achieved positive outcomes for hundreds of families across Herefordshire.
	<u>Hope Support Services</u> Hope is the UK's leading registered charity helping young people aged 5-25 when a loved one has a serious illness.
	<u>SENDIASS</u> Free, confidential and impartial SEND advice for parents and young people. Get clear SEND information and support to understand your options.

	<u>Tu Vida</u> At TuVida we support thousands of carers and people they care for. It's our aim to provide individualised support that helps carers live life with independence, choice and peace of mind.
	<u>The Cart Shed</u> Based in north Herefordshire, we use enriching and engaging woodland activities such as woodcraft and coppice craft as well as horticulture to empower people to self-manage their mental and physical health in a sustainable way.
	<u>Catch 22</u> Catch22 is a social business: a not-for-profit business with a social mission. For over 200 years we have designed and delivered services that build resilience and aspiration in people and communities.
	<u>Children's Help and Advice Team (CHAT)</u> This confidential service is open to all families living in Herefordshire, with a child or children aged 0 to 18 years, or up to 25 years old for those with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND). Our friendly and professional team will listen to your concerns and offer advice and support to help you and your family.
	<u>Early Help</u> Our Early Help Team work with children, young people and their parents and carers, to support families to deal with problems as soon as they start to emerge and to help prevent situations from escalating.
	<u>Health Visitors</u> Our health visiting teams work with families, early years, health colleagues and other agencies to support the health and wellbeing of pre-school children across Herefordshire. Health visitors are qualified nurses or midwives who have additional training in specialist community and public health nursing. They have specialist training in children's development and health promotion.

	<u>Healthy Lifestyles</u> Talk Community Directory is a website for all residents in Herefordshire. You can use the website to find helpful information and advice, discover hundreds of local groups and activities and find out what events are happening across the county. It's a way to enable people to stay happy, healthy and independent, by providing clear, up-to-date information, when people need it. It's a great way to connect people to what's on in their local area, to the variety of voluntary and community groups in Herefordshire.
	<u>Mentor Link</u> Mentor Link has been in operation for over 23 years and provides a one-to-one mentoring service to children facing social or emotional difficulties in school. We provide dedicated long-term listening and therapeutic support from a safely recruited and professionally trained mentor.
	<u>School Nursing Team</u> School Nurses are public health nurses working in the community, they are registered nurses with an additional public health nursing qualification. School Nurses have specialist knowledge and skills to enable them to work with children and young people aged from 5-19.
	<u>Hereford Food Bank</u> Committed to the relief of poverty in Hereford and the surrounding area through the provision of seven-day emergency food parcels.
	<u>Megan Baker House</u> Megan Baker House (MBH) provides conductive education sessions for children and adults with motor disorders such as Cerebral Palsy, Developmental Coordination Disorder (DCD), Parkinson's, Stroke and Acquired Brain Injury, and other movement disorders.
	<u>Stonewater Domestic Abuse Services</u> We can support you if you're experiencing domestic abuse. Stonewater is Domestic Abuse Housing Alliance accredited.

	<u>Herefordshire Wildlife Trust</u> Herefordshire Wildlife Trust's mission is to lead local action for nature's recovery. With the support of our 8,000 members and over 300 volunteers, we care for a network of nature reserves, collaborate with others to restore nature to our rural and urban landscapes and inspire people of all ages to discover and take action to restore Herefordshire's wildlife.
	<u>Marches Energy Agency</u> Marches Energy Agency is an independent charity offering impartial, truly person-centred expert energy advice, promoting wellbeing and supporting households to save energy.
	<u>The Real Birth Studio CiC</u> Supporting pregnant women, people and birth partners with, midwifery & clinician-led antenatal education, postnatal preparation and specialist workshops. Supporting you to feel confident, informed and ready for the journey ahead.
	<u>Hereford & Worcester Fire and Rescue Service</u> Responsible for providing day-to-day fire and rescue services across the two counties of Herefordshire and Worcestershire.
	<u>Leominster Food Bank</u> Working to relieve and prevent food poverty. Supporting people in Leominster and the surrounding area.
	<u>Get Safe Team</u> The GET SAFE partnership is committed to tackling child exploitation and supporting victims and their families who experience this. Our Herefordshire partnership includes: West Mercia Police, a range of NHS health services, Education, Youth Justice, Early Help services and our voluntary sector all working together with district councils and other support agencies

	<u>West Mercia Police</u> West Mercia Police provides a policing service to the people and businesses of Herefordshire, Shropshire (inc. Telford & Wrekin) and Worcestershire 24-hours a day, 365-days of the year
	<u>Vennture</u> Our mission is simple: to support those in need and ignite positive change. From lending a helping hand on the streets of Hereford and nurturing families in their homes, to supporting individuals through life's challenges.
	<u>WMRASAC</u> WMRSASC offers specialist support to anyone across Herefordshire & Worcestershire who is experiencing, or who has experienced, any form of sexual violence or abuse at any times of their lives.
	<u>NCLP Parenting Programmes</u> NCLP is a not for profit organisation with charitable aims which provides educational and welfare-based courses with embedded life skills for young people, parents, and parents to be. We promote partnership working with professionals from government, statutory, community and voluntary organisations.
	<u>Kindle Centre</u> We work with the community & for the community to provide resources such as hall space, meeting rooms, internet access & activities for all.
	<u>Herefordshire Council Libraries</u> Herefordshire Council libraries provide welcoming community spaces, free book lending, digital resources, learning opportunities, local history collections, public computers, and events promoting literacy, inclusion, creativity, and lifelong learning for residents.
	<u>Challenge Community Church</u> Challenge Community Church is a place where Sunday worship is central to everything we do. Our gatherings are relaxed but reverent, with teaching that's practical and easy to understand, helping you apply biblical lessons to everyday life.

	<u>Halo Leisure</u> Supporters of active lifestyles providing eight sport and leisure centres across Herefordshire. Dedicated to providing the best, inclusive sport and leisure facilities for everyone
	<u>Portage</u> Portage is a home-visiting educational service for preschool children (between 0 and 4 years old) and their families who may have special educational needs or disabilities. Portage can be offered to children who are not in an educational setting or who attend an educational setting for less than 15 hours.

Appendix 2

Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee Early help task and finish group Terms of reference

Background

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

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

Key developments in this area in recent years include:

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

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

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

Purpose

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

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

Scope of Inquiry:

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

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

- **Targeted Early Help and Families First**
 - Understanding the Families First implementation.
 - Exploring the role of lead practitioners.
 - Clarifying the role of schools and multi-agency collaboration.

Work Programme

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

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

Proposed Timeline

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

6. Next Steps

- Democratic Services to arrange internal briefing on Early Help progress and Families First from officers in the Children and Young people directorate
- The Children and Young People Scrutiny committee to agree the terms of reference and build a work programme to deliver its objectives.
- Democratic Services to advertise the task and group and collect expressions of interest from councillors.
- Democratic Services to coordinate with Talk Community to develop logistics and stakeholder engagement.



Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee

Early Help Task and Finish Group

Scope of work and work programme

Targeted early help and Families First

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

Objective	Evidence required	Responsible officer	Date
Understand targeted early help - rationale and performance	• Overview of programme briefing note ○ Thresholds of need ○ Current performance management ○ Current programme of activity	Simon Cann	November 2026
Overview of current Families First programme and targeted early help	• Meeting with service managers ○ Victoria Leader ○ Dawn Knight	Simon Cann	December 2026
Appraise current Families First programme and targeted early help	• Meeting with team leaders ○ Victoria Roe – North ○ Jane Marshall – South – Ross ○ Chantelle Bennett – Central ○ Tracey Spencer – Central	Simon Cann	January 2026
Support for young carers	• Meeting with young carers ○ Jane Marshall – South – Ross	Simon Cann	January 2026
Appraise locality-based targeted early help	• Meeting with a locality team ○ Combine with a locality event	Simon Cann	January 2026
Working with schools	• Meeting with schools ○ Neil Crawford	Simon Cann	January 2026

Commissioned early help services	- Meeting with Venture – commissioned service - Hilary Thomas	Simon Cann	January 2026
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Community and Universal Offer

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

Topic	Evidence required	Responsible officer	Date
Overview of local early help initiatives	Early help marketplace – Ross-on-Wye	Danial Webb	13 Oct 25
Overview of local early help initiatives	Early help marketplace - Hereford	Danial Webb	17 Nov 25
Overview of local early help initiatives	Early help marketplace - Leominster	Danial Webb	3 Dec 25
Evaluate the role of school community support	- Meeting with service manager, Quentin Mee - Meeting with school counsellor/school support service	Simon Cann	Feb 26
Understand how midwives support young parents to be.	Meeting with midwives	Simon Cann	Feb 26
The role of school nurses	- Meeting with school nurses - emma.dewar@wvt.nhs.uk - Wendy.Long@wvt.nhs.uk - Nikki.Lawley@wvt.nhs.uk	Simon Cann	Mar 26
The role of health visitors	- Meeting with health visitors - Lyndsey McHardy “Best Start in Life” strategy	Simon Cann	Mar 26
Youth clubs overview	- Overview of youth and sports clubs in Herefordshire - Visit to youth club - Meeting with youth club attendees	Simon Cann	April 26
Talk Community and co-ordination of support for universal community services	- Overview community support carried out by Talk Community. - Nicky Turvey	Simon Cann	April 26

Report to Cabinet

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



Title: Work Programme 2026-27

Meeting: Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee

Meeting date: Wednesday 22 July 2026

Report by: Statutory Scrutiny Officer

Classification

Open

Report purpose

The report:

- Provides the committee with a draft work programme for the committee, for approval.
- Provides the committee with a copy of the council's forward plan of key decisions to assist the committee in deciding its programme of work.
- Lists the recommendations made by the committee since January 2025, and any responses to these recommendations.

Background

1. A fundamental part of good scrutiny is planning and agreeing a programme of work for the committee to undertake. A well-considered work programme:
 - a. identifies priorities for the committee's work that align with corporate and partnership priorities, as well as reflecting community concern;
 - b. ensures that each identified topic has clear objectives that focus the committee's work;
 - c. creates a timetable for the committee's programme of work so that the committee carry out its work at the optimal time; and
 - d. provides officers and partners with requirements for evidence that will support the committee in providing evidence-based scrutiny.

Meeting objectives

2. To agree the committee's work programme.
3. To note the work programmes of Herefordshire Council's other scrutiny committees.

Report information

4. The most recent work programme was published July 2026 and is attached as Appendix 1.
5. Attached as Appendix 2 to this report is the council's most recently published forward plan of key decisions.

6. Appendix 3 is a list of all recommendations made by the committee in 2025 and 2026.

Consultees

7. To prepare this work programme, the committee chairs have met with officers of the council to identify potential priority areas of work for the committee. These priority areas have been scheduled within the work programme to ensure the committee considers topics when it is most useful to do so. A draft of this work programme has then been circulated to the council's corporate leadership team and other key senior directors, alongside committee chairs, for further comment and refinement.

Appendices

Appendix 1 – Scrutiny Work Programme July 2026

Appendix 2 – Herefordshire Council Forward Plan 10 July 2026

Appendix 3 – Recommendations made by Connected Communities Scrutiny Committee in 2025 and 2026.

Background papers and resources

None



APPENDIX 1

SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME

July 2026 – March 2027

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

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

Please note that no meetings will be scheduled after March 2027 until after the 2027 Council elections have concluded.

Table of Contents

Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee	3
Committee work programme.....	3
Early help task and finish group.....	6
Tems of reference	6
Work programme.....	8
Connected Communities Scrutiny Committee.....	11
Committee work programme.....	11
Placemaking and public participation task and finish group	14
Tems of reference	14
Work programme.....	16
Environment and Sustainability Scrutiny Committee.....	19

Committee work programme.....	19
Bus and passenger services task and finish group	22
Work programme.....	22
Health, Care and Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee	27
Committee work programme.....	27
Meeting the demand for adult social care task and finish group.....	30
Work programme.....	30
Scrutiny Management Board	33
Committee work programme.....	33
Inequality and social mobility task and finish group.....	36
Work Programme	36
Commercialisation task and finish group.....	39
Terms of reference	39

Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee

Committee work programme

Committee Meeting

22 July 2026 **report deadline 14 July 2026** **pre meeting lines of enquiry planning 17 July 2026**

Topic and Objectives	Evidence required	Attendees*
Families First Programme - Scrutinise changes to services and the support offer for families as part of the Families First reforms. - Scrutinise early outcomes from the implementation of service changes.	Officer report	Dawn Knight, Service Manager Early Help - Lindsay MacHardy, Public Health Principal <i>Core members of the steering group</i>
Early Help Task and Finish Group Review group findings and recommendations	Final group report	Chair, Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee
Work programme Review work programme	Draft work programme	Statutory Scrutiny Officer

Committee Meeting

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

Topic and Objectives	Evidence required	Attendees*
Alternative provision - Review of capital programme relating to alternative provision - Overview of existing provision	Officer report	Liz Farr - Louise Tanner, Head of Learning and Achievement - Hilary Jones, Head of Additional Needs - Jane Morse - Commissioning

Topic and Objectives	Evidence required	Attendees*
Youth Strategy	Draft strategy	- Tina Russell - Hereford Rural Media - Will Lindsey HVOSS - Lindsay McHardy
Work programme Review work programme	Draft work programme	Statutory Scrutiny Officer

Topics for possible future scrutiny

- Included in the programme
- Participation strategy
- Housing
- School place planning
- Fostering (generally)
- Welfare and Education Bill (ref to SEND reforms)

Early help task and finish group

Terms of reference

Background

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

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

Key developments in this area in recent years include:

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

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

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

Purpose

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

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

Scope of Inquiry:

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

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

Work Programme

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

- Local Appreciative Inquiry events in Hereford City Ross, and Leominster, supported by Talk Community and Children's Services.
- Case studies
- Meeting with families and professionals, individually and in focus groups

Work programme

Targeted early help and Families First

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

Guide:

Not completed and overdue	Partially completed and overdue	On track	Completed
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Objective	Evidence required	Responsible officer	Date
Understand targeted early help - rationale and performance	• Overview of programme briefing note ○ Thresholds of need ○ Current performance management ○ Current programme of activity	Simon Cann	November 2025
Overview of current Families First programme and targeted early help	• Meeting with service managers ○ Victoria Leader ○ Dawn Knight	Simon Cann	15 Dec 2026, 3pm
Update on implementation of Families First programme and targeted early help	• Meeting with service managers ○ Dawn Knight	Simon Cann	14 or 19 May 2026
Support for young carers, no wrong door	• Meeting with young carers ○ Jane Marshall – South – Ross and VL, John Burgess, Susan Brace, Niall Crawford	Simon Cann	2 Mar 2026, 3pm
Appraise locality-based targeted early help	• Meeting with a locality team ○ Victoria Roe – North ○ Jane Marshall – South – Ross ○ Chantelle Bennett – Central	Simon Cann	16 Jan 2025, 3pm

Objective	Evidence required	Responsible officer	Date
	Tracey Spencer – Central		
Working with schools	- Meeting with schools - Neil Crawford	Simon Cann	21 Jan 2026, 3pm
Commissioned targeted early help services	- Meeting with Venture – commissioned service - Hilary Thomas hilary.thomas@vennture.org	Simon Cann	27 Feb 2026, 1pm

Community and Universal Offer

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

Topic	Evidence required	Responsible officer	Date
Overview of local early help initiatives	Early help marketplace – Ross-on-Wye	Danial Webb	13 Oct 2025
Overview of local early help initiatives	Early help marketplace - Hereford	Danial Webb	17 Nov 2025
Overview of local early help initiatives	Early help marketplace - Leominster	Danial Webb	3 Dec 2025
Understand how midwives support young parents to be.	- Meeting with midwives - Emily Strange (named safeguarding midwife) - Sian Jenkins (community Midwife manager)	Simon Cann	20 Mar 2026
The role of school nurses	- Meeting with school nurses - emma.dewar@wvt.nhs.uk - Wendy.Long@wvt.nhs.uk - Nikki.Lawley@wvt.nhs.uk	Simon Cann	8 May 2026
The role of health visitors	- Meeting with health visitors - Lyndsay McHardy, Julia Stephens -0-19 Strat.	Simon Cann	17 Mar 2026

Topic	Evidence required	Responsible officer	Date
	○ Hannah Bannister-White ● “Best Start in Life” strategy		
Youth clubs overview	● Overview of youth and sports clubs in Herefordshire ● Visit to youth club ● Meeting with youth club attendees ● HVOSS Will Lindesay	Simon Cann	9 April 2026
Talk Community and co-ordination of support for universal community services	● Overview community support carried out by Talk Community. ● Nikki Stroud, Emily Lowe, Michelle Trussler, Abigail Allcock	Simon Cann	21 April 2026

Report to Cabinet

Topic	Evidence required	Responsible officer	Date
Draft final report	Learning from above meetings		July 26
Agree final report	Draft report	Task and Finish Group	22 July 26
Present to Cabinet	Final report	Toni Fagan	July 26

Connected Communities Scrutiny Committee

Committee work programme

Committee Meeting

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

Topic and Objectives	Evidence required	Attendees*
Year of delivery – capital projects - Mid-year review of capital projects taking place in 2026. - Scrutinise project budgets.	- Council capital programme - Individual programme progress reports - Capital delivery programme	Service Director, Economy and Growth - Director of Resources
Work programme Review work programme	Draft work programme	Statutory Scrutiny Officer

Committee Meeting

20 July 2026 **report deadline 10 July 2026** pre meeting lines of enquiry planning 16 July 2026

Topic and Objectives	Evidence required	Attendees*
Hereford Bypass Phase One – full business case Scrutinise the full business case to ensure it provides Cabinet with sufficient information to make an informed decision on Hereford Bypass Phase One, having regard to the assessment criteria.	- Hereford Bypass Phase One full business case. - Assessment criteria for the full business case.	Delivery Director, Infrastructure Representative AECOM Expert Witness Bypass Phase One Project Manager
Public participation in planning task and finish group Verbal update from the group chair	Verbal update	None

Topic and Objectives	Evidence required	Attendees*
Work programme Review work programme	Draft work programme	Statutory Scrutiny Officer

Committee Meeting

22 September 2026 **report deadline 14 September 2026** pre meeting lines of enquiry planning TBC 2026

Topic and Objectives	Evidence required	Attendees*
UK Shared Prosperity Fund - Review of projects funded - Examine future funding opportunities	TBC	Service Director, Economy and Growth
Public participation in planning task and finish group - Review final report - Agree report recommendations	Final report	Statutory Scrutiny Officer
Work programme Review work programme	Draft work programme	Statutory Scrutiny Officer

Committee Meeting

27 January 2027 **report deadline 19 January 2027** pre meeting lines of enquiry planning TBC

Topic and Objectives	Evidence required	Attendees*
Year of delivery – capital projects End of year review of capital projects taking place in 2026.	- Council capital programme - Individual programme progress reports	To be determined

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

Placemaking and Public Participation task and finish group

Terms of reference

Background

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

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

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

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

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

Purpose

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

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

Objectives

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

Scope

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

Membership and Governance

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

Expected Outputs

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

Success Measures

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

WORK PROGRAMME

Guide:

Not completed and overdue	Partially completed and overdue	On track	Completed
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Objective To understand current legislation and good practice in community involvement and evaluate how residents currently engage with planning in Herefordshire and identify barriers to participation.

Objectives	Evidence required	Responsible officer	Date
Understand current legislation and good practice in community involvement	- Overview of The Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 - Overview of The Levelling-up and Regeneration Act 2023 - Good practice guidance		November 2025
Evaluate how residents currently engage with planning in Herefordshire.	- Herefordshire Council Statement of Community Involvement. - Interviews with housing associations and council planning officers.		November 2025
Identify current barriers to participation.	Interviews with housing association, community groups and council planning officers.		November 2025
GROUP MEETING		Henry Merricks Murgatroyd	November 2025

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

Objectives	Evidence required	Responsible officer	Date
Examine requirements for new Community Involvement Scheme	Draft regulation and statutory guidance		December 2025

Objectives	Evidence required	Responsible officer	Date
Identify good practice in other local authorities	- Literature review - Site visit (if useful)		January 2026
Identify creative engagement methods.	Desktop search ideas such as including digital tools, easy-read and visual materials, short videos, and cultural or media partnerships.		January 2026
GROUP MEETING			February 2025

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

This section of the work of the task and finish group is paused due to legislative changes that will replace the Community Involvement Scheme.

Objectives	Evidence required	Responsible officer	Date
Work with officers to set new parameters and scope for the Community Involvement Scheme	Draft Community Involvement Scheme	TBA	March 2026
Ensure inclusivity by improving reach to rural residents, younger people, working families, and under-represented communities.	Draft Community Involvement Scheme	TBA	April 2026
Recommend resourcing and governance arrangements to support sustained, meaningful participation.	- Meeting with planning officers in a 'good' local planning authority - Draft recommendations		May 2026
GROUP MEETING			May 2026

Objective Make recommendations to the Connected Communities Scrutiny Committee and Cabinet

Objectives	Evidence required	Responsible officer	Date
Draft report to committee	Draft report		September 2026
Draft report and recommendations to Cabinet (if required)	Final report		October 2026

Environment and Sustainability Scrutiny Committee

Committee work programme

Committee Meeting

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

Topic and Objectives	Evidence required	Attendees*
Transformation of the economy and environment directorate - Understand the transformed leadership structure and how it is performing currently, in particular where responsibility for delivering on the council's environmental priorities and targets, including net zero. - Has embedding a commercial mindset impacted on the delivery of these environmental priorities and targets. - Has transformation impacted on the overall resource dedicated to the environmental side of the directorate. - Explore the case for a more distinct operational area for environmental matters under the Corporate Director.	- Officer report - List of environmental projects currently undertaken by Herefordshire Council.	John Hobbs, Corporate Director Environment and Economy
Buses and passenger services task and finish group - To receive the final report from the group and consider their recommendations, including testing the evidence on which they are based. - To agree a set of recommendations to go forward from the committee to the executive.	Final report	Cllr Justine Peberdy, Chair - buses and passenger services task and finish group
Flooding spotlight review – terms of reference To agree the terms of reference for a proposed spotlight review to scrutinise flood risk management and flood emergency responses.	Spotlight review terms of reference	Statutory Scrutiny Officer

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

Committee Meeting2 December 2026 **report deadline 24 November 2026** pre meeting lines of enquiry planning 27 November 2026

Topic and Objectives	Evidence required	Attendees*
Rail Strategy Objectives to be agreed.	Evidence to be agreed	- John Hobbs - Ffion Horton - Roger Allonby - David Land
Herefordshire Council Carbon Management Plan - Objectives to be agreed. - Council-installed solar panels	- Carbon Management Plan - Cabinet paper (if available)	- Richard Vaughan - Daniel Lenain

Prospective spotlight review

March 2027

Topic and Objectives	Evidence required	Attendees*
Flooding and flood risk management Terms of reference to be agreed.	Evidence to be agreed	- John Hobbs - Other TBC

Bus and passenger services task and finish group

Work programme

Guide:

Not completed and overdue	Partially completed and overdue	On track	Completed
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Objective	Activity or information needed	Carried out by	Timeline
Initial review meeting		Task and Finish Group	July 2025
Create a central information repository	Setup Teams library and chat space	Simon Cann, Danial Webb	September 2025
Review Herefordshire Council's current powers and responsibilities.	Compile and provide overview of - Existing legislation in England and Wales - Local Transport Act 2008 - Transport Act 2000 - Bus Service Act 2017 - Bus Services (No. 2) Bill - Public Service Vehicle Regulations. Overview of who is responsible for local transport in England (Commons library) - Any allied statutory guidance - Bus operator legislation and guidance. - How these apply in Herefordshire.	Simon Cann, David Land, Craig Lewis, Natalie Amos, task and finish group	Sep-Oct 2025

Objective	Activity or information needed	Carried out by	Timeline
Review current passenger transport operations in Herefordshire and how they meet current and future need.	• Previous council bus service reviews (c. 2019) • For both commercial and community operators ○ Routes and frequency ○ Passenger numbers ○ Subsidy • Home to school transport ○ Current services provided ○ Current providers • SEND transport • Adult Social Care Passenger transport	Simon Cann, David Land, Craig Lewis, Natalie Amos	Sep-Oct 2025
Current local authority and regional funding	2025-2026 and medium-term funding • subsidised routes • community transport • other transport funding provided by the local authority	Simon Cann, David Land, Craig Lewis, Natalie Amos	Sep-Oct 2025
Review Meeting		Task and Finish Group	21 October 2025
Overview of current BSIP funding	Summary of • National Bus Strategy • Herefordshire Bus Service Improvement Plan 2024 Briefing on • Allocation of the £3.2m BSIP grant (2025–26) (£1.3m capital, £1.9m revenue) e.g., shelters, passenger experience, supported services • Progress in delivering funded projects and services • Their contribution to improved services Site visit to any BSIP-related capital project	Simon Cann, David Land, Craig Lewis, Natalie Amos	Nov-Dec 2025
Assess Enhanced Partnership performance	• Understand how the current enhanced partnership timetabling meets the objectives of the partnership.	Simon Cann, David Land, Craig Lewis,	Nov-Dec 2025

Objective	Activity or information needed	Carried out by	Timeline
	Identify ways to apply learning from the group to new ways of meeting the objectives of the enhanced partnership.	Natalie Amos, task and finish group	
Combining bus services with other transport services	Desktop research - Current rail services and how they align with bus services Group meeting - Network Rail or other responsible authority	Simon Cann, David Land, Craig Lewis, Natalie Amos	Nov-Dec 2025
Explore cross-border and cross-county transport	Map and list of current cross-border services to include - Frequency - Operator - Funding (if applicable) Examples from other local authorities - See previous work looking at other local authorities - Identify opportunities for any cross-border service support	Simon Cann, David Land, Craig Lewis, Natalie Amos	Nov-Dec 2025
Review Meeting		Task and Finish Group	11 December 2025
Community Transport	Site visits to community transport providers. Attendance at bus service forum. Overview brief of Services in Herefordshire, to include: - Current services, routes and frequencies - Cost - Funding	Simon Cann, David Land, Craig Lewis, Natalie Amos	Jan-Mar 2026
Home to school and other resident transport	Overview brief of home to school services in Herefordshire, to include: - Current services, routes and frequencies - Cost and funding	Simon Cann, David Land, Craig Lewis, Natalie Amos	March 2026

Objective	Activity or information needed	Carried out by	Timeline
	Meeting with Home to school co-ordinator Meeting with Transformation team		
Review Meeting		Task and Finish Group	26 March 2026
Examine how other rural local authorities provide sustainable services.	Internet research – what do they do in other rural local authorities? Suggested workstreams: • Demand Responsive transport ○ YorBus, CallConnect ○ Worcestershire on Demand Worcestershire County Council ○ The Robin (your bookable bus) Gloucestershire County Council • Use of powers of funding ○ Use of enhanced partnerships – Oxfordshire, Cornwall ○ Branding • Integrating transport and social care ○ Community transport ○ The role of third sector organisations Site Visit • Shropshire DRT – Shrewsbury • Social care focused visit	Simon Cann, David Land, Craig Lewis, Natalie Amos	June 2026
Bus franchising	Overview of Bus Services Bill Overview of approach taken by other local authorities Meeting with consultants or another local authority • What are the barriers to franchising in rural areas? • Is this an opportunity for Herefordshire to pursue? • Are there partnership opportunities with other local authorities?	Simon Cann, David Land, Craig Lewis, Natalie Amos	June 2026
Review Meeting		Task and Finish Group	June/July 2026

Objective	Activity or information needed	Carried out by	Timeline
Draft report and recommendations	• Draft final report • Draft recommendations	Simon Cann, David Land, Craig Lewis, Natalie Amos	September 2026
Present report to Environment and Sustainability Scrutiny Committee		Task and Finish Group	September 2026

Health Care and Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee

Committee work programme

Committee Meeting

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

Topic and Objectives	Evidence required	Attendees*
Joint Strategic Needs Assessment Review work to develop a new joint strategic needs assessment for Herefordshire.	Joint Strategic Needs Assessment	Zoe Clifford, Director of Public Health Charlotte Worthy, Lead Public Health Intelligence Analyst
Adult Mental Health Acute Inpatient and Rehabilitation Services an update on the progress of the Adult Mental Health Rehabilitation Redesign and Acute Inpatient Improvement Programme	Update report	Herefordshire And Worcestershire Health and Care NHS Trust
Adult Social Care budget outturn - Scrutinise financial outturn against budget - Scrutinise performance against the performance management framework	Quarterly budget outturn and performance monitoring	Hilary Hall, Corporate Director, Community Wellbeing
Work programme Review work programme	Draft work programme	Statutory Scrutiny Officer

Committee Meeting

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

Topic and Objectives	Evidence required	Attendees*
Right Care Right Place Update on work to deliver acute community mental health support in Herefordshire.	Evidence to be agreed	Gareth Morris, West Mercia Police Zoe Clifford, Director of Public Health
Meeting the demand for adult social care task and finish group Agree draft report and recommendations	Final task and finish group report	Chair, task and finish group
Adult Social Care budget outturn Scrutinise financial outturn against budget savings plans	Quarterly budget outturn and performance monitoring	Hilary Hall, Corporate Director, Community Wellbeing
Work programme Review work programme	Draft work programme	Statutory Scrutiny Officer

Committee Meeting

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

Topic and Objectives	Evidence required	Attendees*
Shaping neighbourhood health - Analyse how the health partnership identifies health needs in communities. - Scrutinise provision of current and future neighbourhood health services.	2Neighbourhood health bid - Taurus Out of Hours GP service - Worcestershire Council papers	Zoe Clifford, Director of Public Health
Adult Social Care budget outturn Scrutinise financial outturn against budget savings plans	Quarterly budget outturn and performance monitoring	Hilary Hall, Corporate Director, Community Wellbeing
Work programme Review work programme	Draft work programme	Statutory Scrutiny Officer

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

Meeting the demand for adult social care task and finish group

Work programme

Guide:

Not completed and overdue	Partially completed and overdue	On track	Completed
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Objective To understand the extent of demand for adult social care services provided or commissioned in Herefordshire, and the likely change over time.

Objectives	Evidence required	Responsible officer	Date
Understand Herefordshire's demographics and future demographic change	Demographic information • <i>Understanding Herefordshire</i> demographic data • <i>Future population of Herefordshire</i> report • Joint Strategic Needs Assessment report	Charlotte Worthy/Herefordshire Research team	Dec 25-Jan 26
Understand the demand for adult social care in Herefordshire	• <i>Market Position Statement</i> • <i>Market Sustainability Plan</i> • Current rates of demand for adult social care ○ Type of demand (domiciliary, residential, nursing) ○ Duration ○ Change over time	Zakia Loughhead	Dec 25-Jan 26
Compare demographic change and demand for adult social care compared to other local authorities	• Desktop research comparison with 'statistical neighbours'	Danial Webb/Henry Merricks-Murgatroyd	Dec 25-Jan 26
GROUP MEETING		Henry Merricks-Murgatroyd	26 February 2026

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

Objectives	Evidence required	People to speak with	Date
Increased complexity of demand from an ageing population	Site visit – supported housing provider Site visit – third sector organisation working with older adults		Feb-Mar 26
The nature of funding for social care	Briefing on social care funding	Zakia Loughead ASC finance team	Feb-Mar 26
The size and structure of the social care market in Herefordshire	Overview of social care market Meeting with care providers	Zakia Loughead	Feb-Mar 26
Lack of housing growth, and flatlining tax base	Interview with Cabinet portfolio holders		Feb-Mar 26
GROUP MEETING		Henry Merricks-Murgatroyd	22 April 2026

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

Objectives	Evidence required	People to speak with	Date
Assistive technology	Visit to Technology Enabled Care Services (TECS) Team	TBC	May-Jun 26
Community based universal and targeted services	Meeting with Talk Community Meeting with third sector organisation Meeting with other community team in another local authority	Emily Lowe – Talk Community	May-Jun 26

Objectives	Evidence required	People to speak with	Date
Market shaping and support	Meeting – service director Meeting – care providers' network	Commissioning	May-Jun 26
Supported living	Meeting – director for housing support Visit to supported housing	Hayley Crane A supported housing provider	May-Jun 26
In-house services and the role of Hoople	Case study – Essex Meeting with Hoople		May-Jun 26
GROUP MEETING		Henry Merricks-Murgatroyd	July 2026

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

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

Scrutiny Management Board

Committee work programme

Committee Meeting

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

Topic and objective	Evidence required	Attendees
Adult Social Care - Scrutinise the recent CQC inspection report on adult social care. - Further scrutinise the council's budget and its plan for service transformation in light of budget pressures and the inspection findings.	- Herefordshire Council CQC local authority assessment - Herefordshire Council CQC improvement plan 2026-27 - Adult Social Care Demand Task and Finish Group interim report - Community Wellbeing 2026-27 budget position statement 2025-26 revenue outturn 2025-26 savings outturn 2025-26 capital outturn	Hilary Hall, Corporate Director Community Wellbeing Rachael Sanders, Director of Finance
Dedicated Schools Grant High Needs Block Management Plan Review the draft management plan	Management Plan	Rachael Sanders, Director of Finance Liz Farr, Service Director, Education
Work programme Review work programme	Draft work programme	Statutory Scrutiny Officer

Committee Meeting

September 2026 **report deadline TBC 2026** **member briefing TBC** **pre meeting lines of enquiry planning TBC**

Topic and objective	Evidence required	Attendees
Inequalities task and finish group final report Agree final report	Final report	Statutory Scrutiny Officer
Commercialisation task and finish group final report Agree final report	Final report	Statutory Scrutiny Officer
Annual review of effectiveness Agree final report	Scrutiny annual review	Statutory Scrutiny Officer
Hoople spotlight review terms of reference	Terms of reference	Statutory Scrutiny Officer
Work programme Review work programme	Draft work programme	Statutory Scrutiny Officer

Committee Meeting

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

Topic and objective	Evidence required	Attendees
Work programme Review work programme	Draft work programme	Statutory Scrutiny Officer

Long list of potential topics

- Social Value in procurement
- Working with the voluntary sector and others to help deliver services
- Review of the workforce strategy
- Supplier risk management
- Emergency Planning
- Medium-Term Financial Strategy

HEREFORDSHIRE COUNCIL FORWARD PLAN



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

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

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

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

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

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

Report title and purpose	Decision Maker and Due date	Lead officer and lead cabinet member	Directorate	Notice of decision first published / ID	Issue Type and exemptions
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FORWARD PLAN FOR 10 July 2026 ONWARDS

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

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

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

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

Big Economic Plan Delivery Plan (previously known as the Big Economic Plan) To consider and approve the Big Economic Delivery Plan	Cabinet 30 July 2026	Cabinet member economy and growth Nadine Kinsey, Economic Development Manager nkinsey@herefordshire.gov.uk	Economy and Environment	3 July 2026	KEY Open
Children's Services Statutory Direction The Secretary of State issued Herefordshire Council with a statutory direction and appointed a Commissioner for Children's Services following the inadequate judgement of its children's services in July 22. Following the inspection of children's services in November 25 which saw a judgement of Good in all areas with Outstanding in leadership the commissioner has now completed their final report. That report makes a recommendation to the Secretary of State that the statutory direction is lifted.	Cabinet 30 July 2026	Cabinet member children and young people Diane Kennett, Executive Assistant To Management Board Diane.Kennett@herefordshire.gov.uk Tel: 01432 383744	Children and Young People	3 July 2026	Non Key Open

Report title and purpose	Decision Maker and Due date	Lead cabinet member and officer contact(s)	Directorate	Date uploaded onto plan	Decision Type, exemptions and urgency
Corporate Peer Challenge Progress Review To receive the report on the outcome of the Local Government Association Corporate Peer Challenge Progress Review, held on 28 May 2026, and to endorse the continued delivery of the council's action plan in response to the original recommendations.	Cabinet 30 July 2026	Cabinet member corporate strategy and budget Hilary Hall, Corporate Director Community Wellbeing, Caroline Marshall, Executive Support Officer Hilary.Hall@herefordshire.gov.uk, caroline.marshall3@herefordshire.gov.uk Tel: 01432 260249	Corporate Support Centre	3 July 2026	Non Key Open
CQC Assessment report and Improvement plan The purpose of this report is to present Cabinet with the outcome of the Care Quality Commission (CQC) Assessment and to approve Herefordshire's CQC Assurance improvement plan 2026-27	Cabinet 30 July 2026	Cabinet member adults, health and wellbeing Emma Evans, Head of Service Transformation & Improvement, Hilary Hall, Corporate Director Community Wellbeing Emma.Evans@herefordshire.gov.uk, Hilary.Hall@herefordshire.gov.uk Tel: 01432 260460,	Community Wellbeing	3 July 2026	KEY Open

Report title and purpose	Decision Maker and Due date	Lead cabinet member and officer contact(s)	Directorate	Date uploaded onto plan	Decision Type, exemptions and urgency
Food Waste Collection Implementation To approve the implementation of the food waste collection scheme	Cabinet 30 July 2026	Cabinet member culture and Environment Sabrina Entwistle, Project Manager- Waster Services, Nicola Percival, Waste Services Manager sabrina.entwistle@herefordshire.gov.uk, npercival@herefordshire.gov.uk Tel: 01432 260991	Economy and Environment	3 July 2026	KEY Part exempt
Herefordshire County Business Improvement District (HCBID) - Second Term Ballot To agree to vote in favour of the Herefordshire County Business Improvement District (HCBID) for the second, five year term (2026 – 2031).	Cabinet 30 July 2026	Cabinet member economy and growth Nadine Kinsey, Economic Development Manager nkinsey@herefordshire.gov.uk	Economy and Environment	3 July 2026	KEY Open

Report title and purpose	Decision Maker and Due date	Lead cabinet member and officer contact(s)	Directorate	Date uploaded onto plan	Decision Type, exemptions and urgency
Herefordshire Parking Strategy 2026 - 2041 (formerly non key) The purpose of this report is to seek Cabinet approval for the adoption of a new Parking Strategy for Herefordshire. This report presents the new Parking Strategy, which sets out the Council's long-term vision, principles and priorities for parking across Herefordshire. The strategy is intended to guide decision-making, investment, and operational practice for both on-street and off-street parking, ensuring that parking plays a supportive role within the wider transport network rather than operating in isolation. The strategy has been developed to align with the Local Transport Plan, the Council Plan and other relevant corporate and place-based priorities. It recognises the role parking plays in supporting town centres, tourism, freight and servicing, enabling access for disabled users and residents, and creating safe and attractive public spaces. It also reflects the increasing importance of integrating parking with sustainable travel choices, technological innovation, and efficient asset management.	Cabinet 30 July 2026	Cabinet member roads and regulatory services Ffion Horton, Transport Planning Services Manager ffion.horton@herefordshire.gov.uk	Economy and Environment	3 July 2026	KEY Open

Report title and purpose	Decision Maker and Due date	Lead cabinet member and officer contact(s)	Directorate	Date uploaded onto plan	Decision Type, exemptions and urgency
Hereford Bypass Phase One – Assessment Report To seek approval from Cabinet to award the construction contract to the preferred bidder and authorise spending against the capital budget to construct Phase One of the Hereford Bypass.	Cabinet 10 September 2026	Cabinet member transport and infrastructure Scott Tompkins, Delivery Director - Infrastructure scott.tompkins@herefordshire.gov.uk	Economy and Environment	3 July 2026	KEY Open
Q1 Performance Report To review performance for Quarter 1 (Q1) 2026/27 and to report the performance position across the council for this period.	Cabinet 24 September 2026	Cabinet member finance and corporate services Jessica Karia, Head of Corporate Performance and Intelligence jessica.karia@herefordshire.gov.uk Tel: 01432 260976	Corporate Support Centre	3 July 2026	Non Key Open
To re-commission the home care framework in Herefordshire To approve the re-commissioning of the council's home care framework, called Services In Your Home (SIYH), in Herefordshire. The new SIYH framework needs to be operational by 1 May 2027.	Cabinet 24 September 2026	Cabinet member adults, health and wellbeing Sharon Amery, Senior Commissioning Officer sharon.amery2@herefordshire.gov.uk Tel: 01432 383734	Community Wellbeing	3 July 2026	KEY Open

Report title and purpose	Decision Maker and Due date	Lead cabinet member and officer contact(s)	Directorate	Date uploaded onto plan	Decision Type, exemptions and urgency
Travel Plan Strategy The purpose of this report is to seek Cabinet approval for an updated Travel Plan process for Herefordshire. The updated approach sets out a clearer, more consistent and outcome-focused process for the development, implementation and monitoring of travel plans across new developments, existing organisations and key trip-generating sites.	Cabinet 24 September 2026	Cabinet member transport and infrastructure Ffion Horton, Transport Planning Services Manager ffion.horton@herefordshire.gov.uk	Economy and Environment	3 July 2026	KEY Open
Update on the Phase 2 Phosphate Mitigation Schemes To provide Cabinet with an update regarding the Phosphate Mitigation Wetland schemes	Cabinet 24 September 2026	Cabinet member culture and Environment Roger Allonby, Service Director Economy and Growth, Gemma Dando, Chief Operating Officer, Scott Tompkins, Delivery Director - Infrastructure, Susan White, Programme Manager Roger.Allonby@herefordshire.gov.uk, gemma.dando@herefordshire.gov.uk, scott.tompkins@herefordshire.gov.uk, Susan.White2@herefordshire.gov.uk Tel: 01432 260330, , Tel: 01432 260070	Economy and Environment	3 July 2026	Non Key Open

Report title and purpose	Decision Maker and Due date	Lead cabinet member and officer contact(s)	Directorate	Date uploaded onto plan	Decision Type, exemptions and urgency
Recommissioning of Drugs & Alcohol Recovery Services To obtain approval to recommission drug and alcohol recovery services in Herefordshire for an initial five-year period (2028–2033), with the option to extend the contract by a further two years. (2033–2035).	Cabinet 17 December 2026	Cabinet member adults, health and wellbeing Natalie Johnson-Stanley, Public Health Lead - Substance Misuse / Tobacco Natalie.Johnson-Stanley@herefordshire.gov.uk Tel: 01432 383230	Community Wellbeing	3 July 2026	KEY Open
Cabinet Member Decisions (Key and Non Key decisions)					
Portfolio: adults, health and wellbeing					
To extend the council's current commissioned home care framework To approve an extension to the council's current commissioned home care framework for up to six months from 31 October 2026 to 30 April 2027.	Cabinet member adults, health and wellbeing 28 July 2026	Cabinet member adults, health and wellbeing Helen Davies, Commissioning Manager helen.davies3@herefordshire.gov.uk	Community Wellbeing	3 July 2026	KEY Open

Report title and purpose	Decision Maker and Due date	Lead cabinet member and officer contact(s)	Directorate	Date uploaded onto plan	Decision Type, exemptions and urgency
Domestic Abuse Commissioning - 2026 To approve the recommissioning of domestic abuse services, via a competitive tendering process, commencing.	Cabinet member adults, health and wellbeing 31 July 2026	Cabinet member adults, health and wellbeing Wendy Dyer, Commissioning Officer Communities Wendy.Dyer@herefordshire.gov.uk Tel: 01432 261673	Community Wellbeing	3 July 2026	KEY Open
Herefordshire Care Home Partnerships Framework To approve the procurement of a new multi provider partnership framework for the provision of care home placements and related services. The Council is looking to formalise partnership arrangements for a minimum of 500-550 placements across all providers. Estimated value of up to £320m across the framework term (maximum of 8 years).	Cabinet member adults, health and wellbeing Before 31 July 2026	Cabinet member adults, health and wellbeing Ros Murphy, Commissioning Manager, Community Wellbeing ros.murphy@herefordshire.gov.uk	Community Wellbeing	3 July 2026	KEY Open

Report title and purpose	Decision Maker and Due date	Lead cabinet member and officer contact(s)	Directorate	Date uploaded onto plan	Decision Type, exemptions and urgency
Procurement of Sensory Impairment Service To approve the re-procurement of the Sensory Impairment Service for Herefordshire	Cabinet member adults, health and wellbeing 14 August 2026	Cabinet member adults, health and wellbeing John Burgess, Senior Commissioning Officer John.Burgess3@herefordshire.gov.uk	Community Wellbeing	3 July 2026	KEY Open
Herefordshire Adult Social Care Prevention Strategy The purpose of the report is to approve the 2026-2036 Herefordshire Adult Social Care Prevention Strategy	Cabinet member adults, health and wellbeing 30 November 2026	Cabinet member adults, health and wellbeing David Collyer, Acting Consultant in Public Health: General Practitioner david.collyer2@herefordshire.gov.uk	Community Wellbeing	3 July 2026	KEY Open
Portfolio: children and young people					

Report title and purpose	Decision Maker and Due date	Lead cabinet member and officer contact(s)	Directorate	Date uploaded onto plan	Decision Type, exemptions and urgency
Recommissioning of Children's Rights & Advocacy and Independent Visitors Services To approve the decision to recommissioning of Children's Rights & Advocacy and Independent Visitors Services	Cabinet member children and young people Before 31 July 2026	Cabinet member children and young people Ellie Jenkins, Commissioning Officer, All Age Mental Health / Wellbeing, Karen Stanton, Corporate Grant Lead - Corporate Support ellie.jenkins@herefordshire.gov.uk, kstanton@herefordshire.gov.uk Tel: 01432 260463	Children and Young People	3 July 2026	KEY Open
Portfolio: community services and assets					
Establish a new Alternative Provision Centre capital spend To approve the spend of the capital allocation to establish a new Alternative Provision Centre	Cabinet member community services and assets 30 July 2026	Cabinet member community services and assets Quentin Mee, Head of Educational Development Quentin.Mee@herefordshire.gov.uk	Children and Young People	3 July 2026	KEY Open

Report title and purpose	Decision Maker and Due date	Lead cabinet member and officer contact(s)	Directorate	Date uploaded onto plan	Decision Type, exemptions and urgency
Relocation of Herefordshire Pupil Referral Units Capital Spend To approve the spend of the capital allocation to relocate Herefordshire Pupil Referral Units onto a single site.	Cabinet member community services and assets 30 July 2026	Cabinet member community services and assets Quentin Mee, Head of Educational Development Quentin.Mee@herefordshire.gov.uk	Children and Young People	3 July 2026	KEY Open
High Needs Provision Capital Grant spend To approve the spend of the High Needs Provision Capital Grant to extend our inclusion offer in mainstream schools and increase places for children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND)	Cabinet member community services and assets 31 July 2026	Cabinet member community services and assets Quentin Mee, Head of Educational Development Quentin.Mee@herefordshire.gov.uk	Children and Young People	3 July 2026	KEY Open
Portfolio: economy and growth					
Portfolio: environment					

Report title and purpose	Decision Maker and Due date	Lead cabinet member and officer contact(s)	Directorate	Date uploaded onto plan	Decision Type, exemptions and urgency
Adoption of Herefordshire Local Nature Recovery Strategy To formally adopt the Herefordshire Local Nature Recovery Strategy and accept associated government grant for delivery.	Cabinet member culture and Environment 14 August 2026	Cabinet member culture and Environment Mandy Neill, Senior Landscape Officer, Richard Vaughan, Sustainability and Climate Change Manager mandy.neill@herefordshire.gov.uk, Richard.Vaughan@herefordshire.gov.uk Tel: 01432 260192	Economy and Environment	3 July 2026	KEY Open
Portfolio: finance and corporate services					
Public Notices To approve a contract via a direct award process for the placing of public notices in newspapers circulating within Herefordshire.	Cabinet member finance and corporate services 29 July 2026	Cabinet member finance and corporate services Ed Bradford, Major Contracts Programme Director Edward.Bradford@herefordshire.gov.uk Tel: 01432 260786	Economy and Environment	3 July 2026	KEY Open
Portfolio: local engagement and community resilience					

Report title and purpose	Decision Maker and Due date	Lead cabinet member and officer contact(s)	Directorate	Date uploaded onto plan	Decision Type, exemptions and urgency
Portfolio: roads and regulatory services					
National Parking Platform (NPP) To agree to join the NPP to provide multiple options of cashless parking providers for all council pay and display car parks and on-street.	Cabinet member roads and regulatory services Before 27 July 2026	Cabinet member roads and regulatory services Michael Barnes, Parking Services Manager michael.barnes@herefordshire.gov.uk	Economy and Environment	3 July 2026	KEY Open
Portfolio: transport and infrastructure					
Active Travel Capital Fund 2026/27 This report is to confirm the work that will be delivered with the Active Travel Capital Fund that Herefordshire Council have received for 2026/27 financial year	Cabinet member transport and infrastructure 17 July 2026	Cabinet member transport and infrastructure Ffion Horton, Transport Planning Services Manager ffion.horton@herefordshire.gov.uk	Economy and Environment	3 July 2026	Non Key Open



Appendix 3 Recommendations made by Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee, January 2025 – May 2026

Tuesday 21 January 2025		
Herefordshire Safeguarding Children Partnership - Yearly Review of Effectiveness Report 2023-24		
Rec. No.	Recommendation	Response
1	The partnership ensures that recommendations from the 2024-25 annual review of effectiveness onwards have an identified partnership lead and an indicative timeframe for completion;	Noted and will be incorporated into business plan 25/26
2	The partnership appends an implementation plan for the recommendations in its 2024-25 annual review of effectiveness; and	Noted and will be created for the business plan agreed for 25/26
3	Herefordshire Council's director of children's services and director of governance and law provide guidance to elected members on their corporate parent responsibilities in the event of a significant incident, or death, concerning a care leaver under the age of 25.	The role of members as corporate parents: The Children and Social Work Act 2017 says that when a child or young person comes into the care of the council, or is a "qualifying care leaver" (someone who between 16 and 25 and was looked-after by the authority for at least 13 weeks after their fourteenth birthday), the council becomes their corporate parent. This means that they should: • act in the best interests, and promote the physical and mental health and wellbeing, of those children and young people • encourage them to express their views, wishes and feelings, and take them into account, • make sure they have access to services • make sure children and young people are safe, with stable home lives, relationships and education or work • promote high aspirations and try to secure the best outcomes for them • prepare them for adulthood and independent living. All councillors and officers are corporate parents. It is therefore every councillor's responsibility to make sure that the council is meeting these duties towards children in care and care leavers. Children can be in care in a range of different settings, with the authority

		acting as corporate parent to all of them. This includes foster care, children's homes, secure children's homes, young offender institutions, secure training centres and some types of kinship care. Every councillor and officer within a council has a responsibility to act for those children and young people as a parent would for their own child. Lead members, those on corporate parenting panels, and overview and scrutiny committees will have particular responsibilities, but for all councillors, there is a role of being the "eyes and ears of the community". The role of the council in child deaths The death of a child is a tragedy, and subsequent enquiries / investigations should keep an appropriate balance between forensic and medical requirements and the family's need for support. There is a strict statutory framework to be adhered to following the death of a child, this is led in Herefordshire by the Herefordshire Safeguarding Children Partnership (HSCP) under strict legislative guidance, and the Council does not have a role independently in such matters. Statutory guidance Working Together to Safeguard Children 2023 defines child death review partners as "local authorities and any Integrated Care Boards (ICBs) for the local area as set out in the Children Act 2004, as amended by the Children and Social Work Act 2017". The HSCP therefore has a legal duty to undertake reviews of serious cases (Rapid Reviews and Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews) where a child has died or suffered serious harm, and abuse or neglect is known or suspected. When a child dies, in any circumstances, it is important for parents and families to understand what has happened and whether there are any lessons to be learned. HSCP must make arrangements to review all deaths of children normally resident in the local area and, if they consider it appropriate, for any non-resident child who has died in their area. Key scrutiny responsibilities in children's services Through legislation, scrutiny committees have several critical roles: • Examining Children's Services Performance: They assess whether local authorities and partners are effectively delivering services such as social care, education, and youth support. • Scrutinising Safeguarding Practices: Ensuring that child protection measures, multi-agency safeguarding arrangements, and social work interventions are effective. • Monitoring SEND Services: Reviewing how well councils and health partners implement the SEND reforms and improve outcomes for children with disabilities. • Assessing Children's Health and Well-being Services: Overseeing the effectiveness of child and adolescent mental health services (CAMHS), public health initiatives, and early intervention programmes.
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		• Reviewing Education and Skills Provision: Evaluating school performance, alternative provision, post-16 education, and how councils support vulnerable learners. Limitations Despite their statutory powers, scrutiny committees have limitations in scrutinising children's services, particularly where other statutory processes are already in place. The Local Government Act 2000 and subsequent legislation outline that scrutiny committees cannot duplicate or interfere with statutory decision-making processes. This restriction affects their ability to intervene in certain cases, including: • Individual Casework and Complaints: Committees do not have the power to scrutinise individual cases of child protection, SEND disputes, or social care interventions, as these matters are subject to separate statutory complaints and appeals mechanisms, such as the First-tier Tribunal (Special Educational Needs and Disability) or the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman. • Regulated Inspection Processes: Under the Education and Inspections Act 2006, Ofsted has a statutory role in inspecting children's services, including safeguarding and SEND provision. Scrutiny committees cannot override or replace the findings of Ofsted or direct the regulatory body's work. • Judicial and Tribunal Matters: Matters that are subject to legal proceedings, such as care proceedings in the Family Court under the Children Act 1989, are beyond the remit of scrutiny committees. They cannot influence court decisions or interfere in ongoing legal cases. Statutory Safeguarding Boards: The Children and Social Work Act 2017 established Local Safeguarding Partnerships, replacing Local Safeguarding Children Boards. Scrutiny committees cannot take over or interfere with the statutory duties of these multi-agency safeguarding arrangements, including serious case reviews, which have legal responsibility for protecting children at risk. They can, however scrutinise the safeguarding partnership itself.
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Tuesday 22 July 2025		
Herefordshire Children's Services and Partnership Improvement Plan		
Rec. No.	Recommendation	Response
1	For the executive to ensure that the council's digital, data and technology teams are sufficiently staffed, and properly resourced in the next budget, to ensure that all of the data	A review of the council's ICT and Corporate Performance & Intelligence resources to support all Directorate teams will be undertaken as part of development of the council's revenue budget for 2026/27. This review will ensure that resource requirements are prioritised within the context of the funding available and the council's overall financial position.

	needs of the children and young people directorate are met.	
2	For full Council to debate and commit to the principle of working for a child friendly Herefordshire.	Cllr Fagan proposed her motion at the Full Council meeting on 10 October 2025 which was carried unanimously.

Tuesday 16 September 2025**Children And Young People's Quality Assurance**

Rec. No.	Recommendation	Response
1	Herefordshire Council ensures that in quarterly performance monitoring and its annual report of complaints it includes: • learning from compliments • complaints that are declined and the reasons for this and • evidence in case file audits of informal resolutions.	Recommendations are agreed and will be incorporated into annual report 25/26 and quarterly case audit reports and reflected in summary in the annual report 25/26

Youth Justice

Rec. No.	Recommendation	Response
1	Herefordshire Council engage with colleges regarding education and training for those in the youth justice system.	

Tuesday 11 November 2025**Herefordshire Safeguarding Children Partnership Yearly Report 2024-25**

Rec. No.	Recommendation	Response
1	Partnership to consider explicitly reporting what partners learned from children and families and how it influenced policy and practice (you said, we did) in its annual report.	Recommendations are agreed and will be incorporated into annual report 25/26 and quarterly case audit reports and reflected in summary in the annual report 25/26

Pursue Prevent Protect Prepare

Rec. No.	Recommendation	Response
1	The Director of Children's Services, through the all-member briefing, to	Briefings took place March and April 2026.

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

Tuesday 10 March 2026

ILAC inspection and action plan

No recommendations

Monday 12 May 2026

Neglect Strategy

Rec. No.	Recommendation	Response
1	For the Integrated Care Board to consider an adaptation of the Graded Care Profile 2 antenatal toolkit for use by midwives.	No response yet

Update on response to Police Effectiveness, Efficiency and Legitimacy (PEEL) inspection findings

Rec. No.	Recommendation	Response
1	West Mercia Police should pilot mechanisms to hear from children and families in Herefordshire with whom they have worked, to understand and improve their practice.	No response yet

