



**Children Young People and Families
Policy and Performance Board**

**Monday, 14 June 2021 at 6.30 p.m.
The Bridge Suite, Halton Stadium,,
Widnes**

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'David Walsh'.

Chief Executive

BOARD MEMBERSHIP

| | |
|---|-------------------|
| Councillor Geoffrey Logan (Chair) | Labour |
| Councillor Carol Plumpton Walsh (Vice-Chair) | Labour |
| Councillor John Abbott | Labour |
| Councillor Irene Bramwell | Labour |
| Councillor Chris Carlin | Labour |
| Councillor Louise Goodall | Labour |
| Councillor Valerie Hill | Labour |
| Councillor Eddie Jones | Labour |
| Councillor Kath Loftus | Labour |
| Councillor Margaret Ratcliffe | Liberal Democrats |
| Councillor Aimee Teeling | Labour |

*Please contact Ann Jones on 0151 511 8276 or e-mail
ann.jones@halton.gov.uk for further information.
The next meeting of the Board is on Monday, 13 September 2021*

**ITEMS TO BE DEALT WITH
IN THE PRESENCE OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC**

Part I

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| 2. DECLARATION OF INTEREST (INCLUDING PARTY WHIP DECLARATIONS) | | |
| | Members are reminded of their responsibility to declare any Disclosable Pecuniary Interest or Other Disclosable Interest which they have in any item of business on the agenda, no later than when that item is reached or as soon as the interest becomes apparent and, with Disclosable Pecuniary interests, to leave the meeting during any discussion or voting on the item. | |
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In accordance with the Health and Safety at Work Act the Council is required to notify those attending meetings of the fire evacuation procedures. A copy has previously been circulated to Members and instructions are located in all rooms within the Civic block.

CHILDREN YOUNG PEOPLE AND FAMILIES POLICY AND PERFORMANCE BOARD

At a meeting of the Children Young People and Families Policy and Performance Board on Monday, 25 January 2021 held remotely

Present: Councillors Dennett (Chair), Logan (Vice-Chair), M. Bradshaw, Carlin, P. Hignett, P. Lloyd Jones, J. Stockton and Teeling

Apologies for Absence: Councillors Leck and Whitley

Absence declared on Council business: None

Officers present: M. Vasic, A. McIntyre, A. Jones, S. Williams and A. Leach

Also in attendance: One member of the press

**ITEMS DEALT WITH
UNDER DUTIES
EXERCISABLE BY THE BOARD**

| | <i>Action</i> |
|--|---------------|
| CYP18 MINUTES | |
| <p>The Minutes of the meeting held on 23 November 2020 were taken as read and signed as a correct record.</p> | |
| CYP19 PUBLIC QUESTION TIME | |
| <p>The Board was advised that no public questions had been received.</p> | |
| CYP20 EXECUTIVE BOARD MINUTES | |
| <p>The minutes relating to the Children, Education and Social Care Portfolio, that had been considered by the Executive Board since the last meeting of this Board, were attached at Appendix 1 for information.</p> <p>Further to an enquiry regarding ‘the Venus Project’ information on this would be circulated to the Board – in the meantime Members were advised of their website address https://www.venuscharity.org/</p> <p>RESOLVED: That the minutes be noted.</p> | |

CYP21 SSP MINUTES

The draft minutes relating to the Halton Children's Trust meeting held on 3 December 2020 were presented to the Board for information.

One member queried the support in place / being planned for teachers with regards to pupil behaviour for when the children return to school after the current lockdown. Members were advised that schools had already amended their behaviour policies, which was a statutory requirement before schools returned in September 2021. Officers received feedback from headteachers saying that most children responded well to going back to school following the last lockdown. Their behaviour was better than expected and they were happy to work in 'bubbles'. It was noted that schools would be contacted again to plan and offer support for the return of pupils following this lockdown. There would also be training offered to school staff around behaviour support.

RESOLVED: That the minutes be noted.

CYP22 HALTON LOCAL AREA SEND STRATEGY 2021-25

The Board received a report and accompanying presentation on the consultation and scope of the proposed local area SEND Strategy for 2021-24.

The Board was advised that *The Children and Families Act 2014* and *SEND Code of Practice 2015* set out the statutory requirements and practice required from local areas to meet the needs of children and young people (0-25 years) with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). The code stated that statutory bodies in these local areas must work together to meet these requirements, so the SEND Strategy for 2021-25 would be a joint strategy under the governance of the Halton Health and Wellbeing Board; the Children's Trust and Halton Borough Council and be delivered by all three.

It was noted that the draft strategy had also been produced in partnership with other statutory bodies from education and health, including schools, the CCG, and parent carer and young people's representatives.

The presentation outlined the vision of the Strategy, its principles, its four priorities and Governance. The one page Strategy document was also presented which would be a single page living document. It was noted that the next

steps would be to start the consultation – to which Members would be invited to contribute; this would lead to the development of actions plans for each of the priority areas and agreement of KPI's and milestones.

Members queried:

Considering there were so many priorities how would the KPI's be assessed – it was important to measure each outcome to know whether they were successful or not, so the significant priorities would be measured. It was important to note that 17.5% of Halton's children were SEND and some of those were Children in Care; some outcomes would incorporate feedback from these children on a regular basis so that we could ensure they were heard.

Considering the cuts made to Youth Services how will this Strategy be funded – the Youth Service provision would not be reduced but it was proposed that it be delivered in a different way, allowing more local and community involvement. The Strategy was proposing better support and services to be able to identify SEND early so that support and education could be provided in the community, thus reducing the reliance on specialist out of borough provision. This in turn would alleviate pressures on the high needs budget.

Have you taken into consideration who the audience will be and the need for it to be understood by all – yes this had been raised and discussed and the language used would be taken into consideration, so that it was user friendly for professionals, parents and young people.

The Chair requested that an update be brought to the Board following the consultation, with progress of the action plans.

RESOLVED: That the Board

- 1) considered the presentation and notes comments and questions made in relation the draft SEND Strategy; and
- 2) requests annual progress updates on the delivery of the SEND Strategy to ensure that leaders remain informed and able to enquire and intervene as deemed necessary.

Operational
Director -
Education,
Inclusion and
Provision

CYP23 HEADTEACHER OF THE VIRTUAL SCHOOL'S ANNUAL REPORT FOR HALTON CHILDREN IN CARE

The Board considered a report from the Strategic Director – People, which presented the Virtual School Headteacher's Annual Report for Halton Children in Care (CIC).

It was reported that due to the impact of the Covid-19 Pandemic and the subsequent restrictions, the formal education of children in care was ceased on 23 March 2020. This resulted in the suspension of all Primary tests and a change to teacher assessment for the allocation of GCSE results. Further, the requirement to attend school from 23 March 2020 onwards was altered and was determined by individual risk assessment. As a result of all of the above, Members were advised that there could be no meaningful comparison between previous years and this year's educational outcomes for Children in Care.

Despite the above however, the work of the Virtual School had continued throughout the academic year and the Annual Report provided details of how Halton Children in Care were supported to mitigate against the impacts of the Covid Restrictions. The report also provided detailed data, analysis; a summary of the work of the School during the academic year 2019-20; and a summary of the School's progress towards its identified key priorities and those priorities identified for 2020-21.

Members queried:

Following the ILACS inspection in March 2020, what was the strategy for apprenticeships – it was recognised that improvement was needed in the Post 16 area, one staff member left during the first lockdown and the young people that had apprenticeships were forced to suspend these due to the Pandemic. The Strategic Director now chaired a group that was addressing this via the apprenticeship hub and funding had since been identified to recruit a replacement member of staff, who would focus on Post 16 NEET 16-19 year old young people in care and care leavers obtaining apprenticeships.

The rise in nursery aged children going into care was a concern – this could be attributed to the Covid outbreak resulting in some young families struggling without the support of health visitors / children's centres due to lockdowns. It was likely that children of this age would be adopted, nevertheless, once this spike was identified it was

agreed to appoint an early years staff member who would work on identifying the needs, support and funding required going forward.

The Chair suggested a more focussed report on the nursery aged increases be submitted to the Board at the next meeting.

RESOLVED: That the report and information be noted.

Director of
Children's
Services

Meeting ended at 8.10 p.m.

REPORT TO: Children, Young People and Families Policy & Performance Board

DATE: 14 June 2021

REPORTING OFFICER: Strategic Director, Enterprise, Community and Resources

SUBJECT: Public Question Time

WARD(s): Borough-wide

1.0 PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To consider any questions submitted by the Public in accordance with Standing Order 34(9).
- 1.2 Details of any questions received will be circulated at the meeting.

2.0 RECOMMENDED: That any questions received be dealt with.

3.0 SUPPORTING INFORMATION

3.1 Standing Order 34(9) states that Public Questions shall be dealt with as follows:-

- (i) A total of 30 minutes will be allocated for dealing with questions from members of the public who are residents of the Borough, to ask questions at meetings of the Policy and Performance Boards.
- (ii) Members of the public can ask questions on any matter relating to the agenda.
- (iii) Members of the public can ask questions. Written notice of questions must be given by 4.00 pm on the working day prior to the date of the meeting to the Committee Services Manager. At any one meeting no person/organisation may submit more than one question.
- (iv) One supplementary question (relating to the original question) may be asked by the questioner, which may or may not be answered at the meeting.
- (v) The Chair or proper officer may reject a question if it:-
 - Is not about a matter for which the local authority has a responsibility or which affects the Borough;
 - Is defamatory, frivolous, offensive, abusive or racist;

- Is substantially the same as a question which has been put at a meeting of the Council in the past six months; or
 - Requires the disclosure of confidential or exempt information.
- (vi) In the interests of natural justice, public questions cannot relate to a planning or licensing application or to any matter which is not dealt with in the public part of a meeting.
- (vii) The Chair will ask for people to indicate that they wish to ask a question.
- (viii) **PLEASE NOTE** that the maximum amount of time each questioner will be allowed is 3 minutes.
- (ix) If you do not receive a response at the meeting, a Council Officer will ask for your name and address and make sure that you receive a written response.

Please bear in mind that public question time lasts for a maximum of 30 minutes. To help in making the most of this opportunity to speak:-

- Please keep your questions as concise as possible.
- Please do not repeat or make statements on earlier questions as this reduces the time available for other issues to be raised.
- Please note public question time is not intended for debate – issues raised will be responded to either at the meeting or in writing at a later date.

4.0 POLICY IMPLICATIONS

None.

5.0 OTHER IMPLICATIONS

None.

6.0 IMPLICATIONS FOR THE COUNCIL'S PRIORITIES

6.1 **Children and Young People in Halton** - none.

6.2 **Employment, Learning and Skills in Halton** - none.

6.3 **A Healthy Halton** – none.

6.4 **A Safer Halton** – none.

6.5 **Halton's Urban Renewal** – none.

7.0 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES

7.1 None.

8.0 LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS UNDER SECTION 100D OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972

8.1 There are no background papers under the meaning of the Act.

REPORT TO: Children, Young People and Families Policy and Performance Board

DATE: 14 June 2021

REPORTING OFFICER: Chief Executive

SUBJECT: Executive Board Minutes

WARD(s): Boroughwide

1.0 PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 The Minutes relating to the Children and Young People Portfolio which have been considered by the Executive Board are attached at Appendix 1 for information.
- 1.2 The Minutes are submitted to inform the Policy and Performance Board of decisions taken in their area.

2.0 RECOMMENDATION: That the Minutes be noted.

3.0 POLICY IMPLICATIONS

- 3.1 None.

4.0 OTHER IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 None.

5.0 IMPLICATIONS FOR THE COUNCIL'S PRIORITIES

5.1 Children and Young People in Halton

None

5.2 Employment, Learning and Skills in Halton

None

5.3 A Healthy Halton

None

5.4 A Safer Halton

None

5.5 Halton's Urban Renewal

None

6.0 RISK ANALYSIS

6.1 None.

7.0 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES

7.1 None.

8.0 LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS UNDER SECTION 100D OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972

8.1 There are no background papers under the meaning of the Act.

Extract of Executive Board Minutes relevant to the Children, Young People and Families Policy and Performance Board

EXECUTIVE BOARD MEETING HELD ON 21 JANUARY 2021**EXB 58 | SCHOOL ADMISSION ARRANGEMENT 2022 – KEY DECISION**

The Board considered a report of the Strategic Director, People, on School Admission Arrangements for 2022.

The Board was advised that in October 2020, Halton Local Authority issued a statutorily required consultation on the proposed admission arrangements and co-ordinated admission schemes for the September 2022 intake for Primary and Secondary Schools (attached as appendices 1 and 2 respectively). The Primary Scheme also included the proposed oversubscription criteria for community and voluntary controlled schools for whom the Local Authority was the admission authority.

Since the publication of the Executive Board agenda, the Board was advised of a proposed amendment to the Primary Co-ordinated Scheme, this was presented on screen. It was proposed that Paragraph 9.1, under *Oversubscription Criteria* be amended to four criteria instead of three, so criterion 1 would be split into criteria 1 and 2. The reasons for this were provided to the Board and the proposal was agreed.

The report provided details of the consultation, which ran from 1 October 2020 to 13 November 2020. No changes were proposed to the current oversubscription criteria for admission to Local Authority maintained community and voluntary controlled primary schools.

It noted that all Halton secondary schools were either academies, free schools or voluntary aided and were therefore their own admission authorities, with responsibility for consulting and determining their own admissions criteria and their own Published Admission Number (PAN).

Reason(s) for Decision

The decision was statutorily required.

Alternative Options Considered and Rejected

Other options considered and rejected included the allocation of places to community and voluntary controlled schools through random allocation (lottery), as this method could be seen as arbitrary and random.

Implementation Date

The Policy and co-ordinated schemes would apply for the September 2022 academic intake.

RESOLVED: That the Board approves the School Admissions Policy, Admission Arrangements and Coordinated Schemes for admission to Primary and Secondary schools for the 2022/23 academic year.

| | |
|---------------|---|
| EXB 59 | CAPITAL PROGRAMME 2021/22 – KEY DECISION |
|---------------|---|

The Board considered a report of the Strategic Director, People, which provided a summary of the capital funding received by the Council from central Government to support Schools Capital Programmes for 2021/22.

The Board was advised that the Department for Education (DfE) had not announced the Capital Grant Allocation for 2021/22 at the time of writing the report. However, given the timescales for some of the capital projects, there was a requirement to present this report, so it was compiled using the 2020/21 allocation, which was £903,847.

The report set out details of the indicative funding available to support capital projects across the schools estate and also explained how the School Condition Allocation would be utilised.

Reason(s) for Decision

To deliver and implement the Capital Programmes.

Alternative Options Considered and Rejected

Not applicable.

Implementation Date

Capital Programmes for 2020/21 would be implemented with effect from 1 April 2021.

RESOLVED: That the Executive Board

- 1) notes the position regarding capital funding from the DfE for 2021/22;
- 2) approves the proposals to be funded from the School Condition Capital Allocation; and
- 3) agrees that the capital allocations are put forward for inclusion in the budget report to full Council.

EXECUTIVE BOARD MEETING HELD ON 25 FEBRUARY 2021**EXB 65****HOME TO SCHOOL TRAVEL AND TRANSPORT POLICY – KEY DECISION**

The Board received the *Home to School Travel and Transport Policy*, as required under the Department for Education (DfE) Home to School Travel and Transport Guidance (statutory guidance) 2014; the Education Act 1996; and the Education and Inspections Act 2006.

It was noted that the Council's current Policy was regularly reviewed to ensure it met statutory requirements. Further to an investigation made by the Local Government Ombudsman, the Council was asked to consider some recommendations that would further enhance the Policy and assist parents and carers in their understanding of school admissions and eligibility to assistance with transport.

The revised Policy incorporated the Ombudsman's recommendations and there were no changes to the eligibility criteria, which were statutorily set. It was noted that in addition to the minor Policy amendments, a revision of the guidance notes and application forms was in progress. These would provide enhanced information for parents and carers and support them with their application for assistance with transport.

Reason(s) for Decision

The decision is required to fulfil the Council's statutory duty to promote the use of sustainable travel and transport and provide assistance with transport to eligible children and young people.

Alternative Options Considered and Rejected

None.

Implementation Date

With immediate effect following approval.

RESOLVED: That the Executive Board approve the Home to School Travel and Transport Policy 2020-21 (Statutory School Age) for implementation, with immediate effect.

EXB 66**YOUTH PROVISION – KEY DECISION**

The Board considered a report from the Strategic Director – People, which provided an update on the Integrated Youth Support Service consultation and proposed future model.

The report provided details of feedback from the recent Halton Youth Provision consultation and set out the Council's proposed response. It was noted

that the consultation evidenced that there was support for the proposed model and areas of agreement included: the need to work in partnership across all sectors, the importance of valuing volunteers and existing local voluntary and community provision providers, and the need for qualified workers to support those children and young people in most need. Further, the proposal put forward had taken account of the feedback whilst also recognising the financial challenges faced, the changing service needs and the current and future landscape due to Covid-19.

Reason(s) for Decision

To agree the future shape of youth services in Halton

Alternative Options Considered and Rejected

To put the service out to the market as one commission. This was rejected, as it did not allow local organisations with good local networks the opportunity to provide a service.

Implementation Date

1 April 2021.

RESOLVED: That the Executive Board approves the implementation of a new model of grant funded and commissioned Youth Provision across Halton.

| | |
|---------------------------|---|
| REPORT TO: | Children, Young People & Families Policy & Performance Board |
| DATE: | 14 th June 2021 |
| REPORTING OFFICER: | Strategic Director, People |
| PORTFOLIO: | Children & Young People |
| SUBJECT: | Annual Report 2020/2021 |
| WARD(S) | All |

1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

1.1 To receive the Children, Young People and Families Policy and Performance Boards' Annual Report for 2020/2021

2.0 RECOMMENDATION: That:

i) **That the 2017/18 Annual Report be received and noted.**

3.0 SUPPORTING INFORMATION

3.1 Article 6 of the Constitution requires each Policy and Performance Board to submit an Annual Report to Council outlining their work.

3.2 The Annual Report (Appendix 1) is submitted to the Children and Young People Policy and Performance Board for consideration.

4.0 POLICY IMPLICATIONS

4.1 None identified.

5.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

5.1 None identified.

6.0 IMPLICATIONS FOR THE COUNCIL'S PRIORITIES

6.1 Children & Young People in Halton

None identified.

6.2 Employment, Learning & Skills in Halton

None identified.

6.3 **A Healthy Halton**

None identified.

6.4 **A Safer Halton**

None identified.

6.5 **Halton's Urban Renewal**

None identified.

7.0 **RISK ANALYSIS**

7.1 None identified.

8.0 **EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES**

8.1 None identified.

9.0 **LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS UNDER SECTION 100D OF
THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972**

None identified.



Cllr. Mark Dennett
Chairman
Children &
Young People
PPB

**ANNUAL REPORT
CHILDREN, YOUNG PEOPLE AND FAMILIES
POLICY & PERFORMANCE BOARD
APRIL 2020 – MARCH 2021**

“My final year as Chair of Children, Young People, and Families PPB has been unlike any other, as COVID-19 has presented huge challenges for all aspects of Children’s Services. The breadth of services that the pandemic has affected is astounding and yet our staff have risen to the challenge and provided second to none service across the board, whether it be in social care or in educational services.

This year has also presented our parents, and children in schools and colleges with unforeseen challenges as they have had to adapt to virtual school life, and have sacrificed many of the ordinary highs of school life, like the school prom and school trips. The uncertainty that the government gave our children last Summer around exams and exam results only added to the burden of the pandemic. Fortunately, our schools supported by the education staff rose to the challenge and our children are back in school and getting supported for any gaps in their education.

I would like to thank all of our staff for their dedication, hard work, and selflessness in dealing with the challenges that have arisen in supporting our children in care, our foster carers, our care leavers, and our children in schools during the still ongoing pandemic.

Finally, I would like to thank the board (past and present) for supporting me over the past fifteen years, and I’m sure they will support the new Chair, Cllr Logan, equally as well as they have me.”

***Councillor Mark Dennett
Chair – Children, Young People & Families Policy and
Performance Board***

MEMBERSHIP AND RESPONSIBILITIES

During 2020/21 the Board comprised Eleven Councillors –
Councillors M. Dennett
(Chair) Cllr G. Logan (Vice Chair), M. Bradshaw, C. Carlin, L. Cassidy, P. Hignett, R. Leck, P. Lloyd Jones, J. Stockton, A. Teeling and L. Whitley.

The Board is responsible for scrutinising performance and formulating policy in relation to the work of the Council (and its partner agencies within Children's Trust Arrangements) in seeking: to ensure that children and young people in Halton have the best possible start in life and opportunities to fulfil their potential and succeed; and to scrutinise progress against the Corporate Plan and the Children and Young People's Plan.

REVIEW OF THE YEAR

The full Board met four times during the Municipal Year, however, due to Covid each of the meetings took place virtually. Detailed below are some of the main areas of scrutiny the Board has considered at these meetings.

Inspection of Authority Children Services

The Board received the findings of the recent Inspection of Local Authority Childrens Services (ILACS) which took place just prior to lockdown on 2nd to 13th March 2020.

Members were advised that the judgement across four main areas was that Halton was deemed to 'require improvement to be good". A full explanation of the findings with each area was provided to members, along with their recommendation. The LA Action Plan detailing its response to the Ofsted recommendations was shared and discussed by the Board.

Members have continued to scrutinise the Action plan and there has been discussion on the progress made and challenges faced.

Support for Children and Families during Covid 19

The Strategic Director for People has reported to the Board on the support provided to children and families during Covid 19.

The reports have provided summaries for each service and included updates on each of the following service areas:

- Early Help Services;
- Disabled Children's Services (DCS);
- Daycare at Warrington Road and Ditton;
- Safeguarding and children in care;
- Children in care and care leavers;
- Fostering Service;
- Inglefield;
- Placements Team;
- Educational outcomes and effective practice for

- children in care and care leavers;
- Personal Education Plans; and
- Safeguarding Unit.

Education, Inclusion and Provision

The Operational Director for Education, Inclusion and Provision has provided the Board with summaries of the support provided by the Department during Covid 19.

Members have received updates on the infection rates in education settings and an outline of the advice, guidance and support early years, schools and the college were being provided with.

Service summaries were provided on the following key service areas;

- Early Years and School Improvement;
- School Improvement and Governance;
- Behaviour Support Service;
- Halton Virtual Schools;
- Placements;
- Policy, Provision and Performance;
- Inclusion (0-25); and
- Broader Council support.

Educational Performance, Attainment Summary 2020

The Board received its annual report on educational performance, along with a summary of some of the challenges within the borough.

Members were reminded that many of the statutory assessments had been cancelled nationally and no individual schools data would be comparable to previous year's data.

Discussion during the meeting covered Statutory Assessment and exam results, educational challenges for September 2020 onwards, key changes in 2020/2021, The National Tutoring Programme (NTP) and The Catch Up Premium.

Childcare Sufficiency Assessment Review Autumn 2020-2021 (CSA)

Members received an update on Childcare Sufficiency Assessment (CSA). An update was provided as to how the Local Authority were meeting their duty to secure sufficient childcare. The achievements made since the review last year was outlined and discussed along with Halton's current position. Gaps in provision were highlighted and it was explained how these were being addressed. An update to the

response to Covid 19 in the early year's sector and the impact it was having on the sector was explored.

Annual Report – Comments, Complaints and Compliments Relating to Children's Social Care Services from 1st April 2019 to 31st March 2020.

This annual report is presented and discussed by members with a focus on the learning from any complaints. An opportunity is also taken to celebrate the compliments many individuals and services receive.

Halton Local Area SEND Strategy 2021-2025

The Board were presented with a detailed presentation on the SEND Strategy consultation for 2021-2024. Members were advised that the draft strategy had been produced in partnership with other statutory bodies across education and health, including schools, the CCG, parents and carers representatives and children and young people representatives. The vision, principles, priorities and governance were shared as well as the draft of the single page summary.

Headteacher of the Virtual School's Annual Report for Halton Children in Care

Finally, the Board considered the annual report from the Virtual School Headteacher for Halton Children in Care (CIC). This report covered the impact of Covid and change in provision following the lockdown and the support provided. Members were advised that despite pandemic the work of the Virtual School has continued and an outline was provided on the measures taken to mitigate the impacts of the Covid.

As part of its overview, the Policy and Performance Board also considers the Council's Executive Board minutes and Children's Trust minutes as well as the Quarterly Performance Monitoring Reports.

| | |
|---------------------------|---|
| REPORT TO: | Children, Young People & Families Policy & Performance Board |
| DATE: | 14 th June 2021 |
| REPORTING OFFICER: | Strategic Director, People |
| PORTFOLIO: | Children & Young People |
| SUBJECT: | New Members Briefing |
| WARD(S) | All |

1.0 **PURPOSE OF THE REPORT**

1.1 A presentation will be delivered to members outlining the structure of the People Directorate and summarising the key areas of responsibility for the Children and Families and the Education, Inclusion and Provision Departments.

2.0 **RECOMMENDATION: That:**

i) **Members are asked to consider the presentation and raise any questions they may have.**

3.0 **SUPPORTING INFORMATION**

3.1 The Children and Families Department and the Education, Inclusion and Provision Departments provide support to Halton Children and Families and a range of education settings.

3.2 Members will be provided with an overview of the work of both Departments.

4.0 **POLICY IMPLICATIONS**

4.1 None identified.

5.0 **OTHER/FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

5.1 None identified.

6.0 **IMPLICATIONS FOR THE COUNCIL'S PRIORITIES**

6.1 **Children & Young People in Halton**

None identified.

6.2 **Employment, Learning & Skills in Halton**

None identified.

6.3 **A Healthy Halton**

None identified.

6.4 **A Safer Halton**

None identified.

6.5 **Halton's Urban Renewal**

None identified.

7.0 **RISK ANALYSIS**

7.1 This briefing should ensure that members are fully informed of the services provided by the Children and Families and Education Inclusion Departments, so that they are able to effectively undertake their scrutiny role.

8.0 **EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES**

8.1 There are no specific issues relating to equality and diversity.

9.0 **LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS UNDER SECTION 100D OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972**

None.

REPORT TO: Children, Young People, and Families Policy and Performance Board

DATE: 14th June 2021

REPORTING OFFICER: Strategic Director, People

SUBJECT: People Directorate Business Plan 2021-22

PORTFOLIO: Children & Young People

WARDS(S): Borough Wide

1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 To provide Policy and Performance Board Members with an overview of the People Directorate's element of the Council's Business Plan for 2021-22, and to ensure members are aware of the requirement of them to review the Directorate's plan at future meetings on a quarterly basis.

2.0 RECOMMENDATION: That

- 2.1 The report be received and members of the board note the requirement to receive quarterly updates on progress against the action plan.

3.0 SUPPORTING INFORMATION

- 3.1 Following a review by the Council's Management Team, they endorsed the continuation of the approach to the development of a single Business Plan for the 2021 – 22 financial year. Attached as Appendix 1 is the People Directorate's element of that Business Plan for this Board's information.
- 3.2 The Business Plan is structured in the following sectional format

Introduction – This section provides details of the primary work of the Directorate and the purpose of business planning.

Key Developments - This section provides a concise summary of the departments / service areas progress and key success that have occurred during 2020 - 21, what strategic challenges remain and what will be the focus of attention in 2021 – 22.

Emerging Issues - This section provides information concerning any local and national factors that will, or may, arise during 2021 – 22 that will need to be taken into account and what impact these may have in terms of resource requirements and the delivery of services.

Service Objectives and Milestones – This section provide details of the objectives and milestones that are intended to be delivered during 2021 – 22.

Objectives are supported by individual milestones i.e. specific time-bound activities that will lead to the achievement of the objective.

Key Organisational Measures – This section details those measures which will be used to indicate the extent of progress and level of performance being achieved in relation to the strategic priority.

- 3.3 The amount of information that Departments are required to provide has been determined taking into account continuing resource constraints and the need for the Business Plan to remain a meaningful and informative document which supports the effective governance and scrutiny of the Council.
- 3.4 The intention remains that the Business Plan will focus upon those matters which are considered to be the most significant in progressing each of the priorities as opposed to providing a detailed and extensive narrative concerning every aspect of the Councils operations.
- 3.5 As such it is anticipated that the Plan will provide the reader with an overview and understanding of what we have achieved and where we are going (*key developments / emerging issues*) and how we intend to get there (*service objectives / milestones and performance indicators*).
- 3.6 The Business Plan will continue to form the foundation of Quarterly Monitoring Reports that are provided to the Council's Management Team, Executive Board and each of the Policy and Performance Boards.

4.0 POLICY IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 The Business Plan forms a key part of the Council's policy framework and reflects known and any anticipated legislative changes.

5.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

None identified.

6.0 IMPLICATIONS FOR COUNCIL PRIORITIES

- 6.1 The business planning process is the means by which we ensure that the six corporate priorities are considered and translated into operational activity. In accordance with the Councils performance management framework arrangements for the provision of Quarterly Performance Monitoring Reports will continue for 2021-22. Individual Priority Based Reports will be provided to relevant Policy and Performance Boards with Executive Board receiving quarterly Directorate Overview Reports.

7.0 RISK ANALYSIS

- 7.1 The development of the Business Plan, will allow the authority to both align its activities to the delivery of organisation and partnership priorities and to provide

information to stakeholders as to the work of the Directorate over the coming year.

8.0 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES

8.1 There are no specific issues related to equality and diversity.

9.0 LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS UNDER SECTION 100D OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972

9.1 There are no relevant background documents to this report.

Children and Young People – Performance Measures 2019-20

This Business Plan extract contains information in relation to the delivery of the Council's following strategic priority.

Children and Young People

Our overall aim is to support the development and learning of children and young people so they grow up feeling safe, secure, happy and healthy, and are ready to be Halton's present and Halton's future.

Key Developments

COVID-19

There is not a single area of local government that is not affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. The need for updated information and support on how to tackle the 'new normal' was and still is understandably great. The Coronavirus Act 2020 was introduced to Parliament on Thursday 19th March 2020 and became law on Wednesday 25th March 2020. The Act has throughout the last year been a work in progress reacting to and changing at differing points of the pandemic with some points of legislation changing daily following the receipt of intelligence. It did as suspected at the onset have profound implications for social work practice, education provision, health provision and every other possible provision for service users.

COVID-19 has affected all aspects of the education sector and children's social care system and there are both short term impacts, such as the effects of school closures and exam cancellations, as well as longer-term implications particularly for the most vulnerable children. We have worked tirelessly with schools to keep them open and children and their families' safe and well through online and virtual contact and resources, as well as high priority home visits.

The period since 23 March 2020 has been one of great innovation. In remote education a wide range of approaches were developed, tested and refined. A number of different approaches were used by schools to continue their education and they learnt from experience and innovated, they took on board pupil and parent feedback and improved their provision as the weeks passed. Despite the challenges that came with remote learning such as keeping pupils motivated and engaged, organising structured remote teaching suitable for very young pupils or the more individualised planning for those children with Special Educational Need (SEND). Remote education has made a significant contribution to enabling students to continue to learn and progress, and to mitigating any widening of the attainment gap for the disadvantaged. Access to appropriate devices and connectivity is essential for technology-led approaches to remote education, securing access for all pupils was also a significant challenge in many contexts.

Nationally, there were reports of inadequate food parcels being received by some families of children on free school meals during the national lockdown. In partnership with schools, ensuring vulnerable pupils were provided with food parcels that were of

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a high standard, met nutritional needs and were enough for individuals and families was a top priority for Halton. It was challenging to switch from providing meals in school to delivering them remotely to families but, we did it.

Pupils up and down the country worked hard to prepare for their exams. Pupils will carry these qualifications with them for their entire lives and we understood their immense disappointment when the news broke that exams would be cancelled.

This has been a difficult time for children, young people and families. Developmental and behavioural issues can arise due to isolation or social distancing at key developmental milestones. Some children may react immediately, while others may show signs of difficulty later on. Increased stress, boredom, isolation from friends and changes in routine can lead to a change in their behaviours and their mental health needs. This will in turn cause added stress for parents and carers who are already dealing with the impact of isolation, home schooling and working from home or not working at all. The financial worries or perhaps the fear of domestic violence and their inability to escape from this as well as, the fear of becoming ill or losing loved ones, all of this will understandably reduce their resilience and ability to cope. Effective responses to mental health and wellbeing will be essential in order to sustain the measures necessary to contain the virus and aid recovery. Supporting the mental health and wellbeing of children and their families will continue to be a priority but this is a whole-system approach – no single agency can be left to address this by themselves; it needs input from all sectors. We have worked hard with the NHS, schools, and other agencies to support the mental health and wellbeing of children, young people and families and will continue to do so as we enter different phases of the pandemic and recovery.

Children's safety amid these extra pressures on families with acts of abuse being more likely to go unseen "behind closed doors" during lockdown are a cause for concern. Reduced access to children being seen by other professionals meant a reduced surveillance system. The pandemic led to an increasing number of families facing exceptionally difficult circumstances, this can fuel harmful acts of abuse or neglect on children. We continue to do all we can to keep all children safe, and to support families with challenges exacerbated by the pandemic such as mental health issues, alcohol and substance misuse. As the impact of the pandemic becomes clearer, we expected to see a rise in referrals to children's social care and demand for wider children's support services from the new and unmet demand that built up during the pandemic.

The past year has shown us how much can change in a short space of time and there have been so many challenges in responding to the pandemic and our workforce have been absolutely brilliant in their response. They made their homes into their office and continued to deliver services and adapted to the 'new norm' finding new and innovative ways of getting the job done. Some of our workforce are required to work on the front line and their dedication in keeping children safe has been immeasurable.

Locally we applied our learning from the first wave and built our intelligence about the families who needed extra support for the lockdowns that followed. Each service made

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their own adaptations some of which may be detailed in this Business Plan. The pandemic's impact will undoubtedly form the basis of numerous studies requested by Central Government and worldwide and, as more intelligence is gathered and published, the true impact of COVID-19 on children, young people and their families may not be known for a number of years.

Improving outcomes for children and young people through effective multi-agency early intervention

Children, Young People and Families Plan 2018-21

This is now into its final year. It is the main plan for all the Partners within the Halton Children's Trust, it is our collective ambition to put children and young people at the heart of what we do to ensure that their needs are understood and met, and that they have clear ways to hold us to account for our decisions aimed at improving the outcomes for every child and young person in Halton.

Just prior to the COVID-19 pandemic Trust members agreed that the format and membership needed to be reviewed. The children and young people that drove the changes in December 2015 had moved on and the format wasn't working for the current group of young people, parents and carers and so their attendance had dropped off. Professionals also felt there was a lack of formal reporting and that the business elements were not being addressed. Overall it was felt that the Trust had lost its purpose, it had become an information sharing forum and it was felt that a review of arrangements would provide a clearer focus to drive developments.

Due to COVID-19 our plans to implement the new Trust structure were temporarily put on-hold, understandably Senior Leaders across partner agencies needed to focus on the consequences of COVID-19. In December 2020 the Trust came together and updates shared during the meeting evidenced that as Trust partners, we have strengthened our support of each other during the pandemic and have continued to work together very well.

It was agreed by members that the previous proposal was still viable and should progress. Whilst timescales were agreed we then entered a new national lockdown in 2021 and whilst we have got used to the new way of electronic working, it still poses issues for some of our children, young people, parents and carers, we will have to work at their pace and for those with additional needs, virtual working can still be problematic.

It is probable that the Children, Young People and Families Plan which is due for renewal from next year (2022) will be delayed. Whilst this is not ideal it may prove to be beneficial, the delay will allow for information and intelligence to be gathered about the true impact of COVID-19 which may only become more apparent as the nation starts to open up and a 'new normal' is defined. Our new Children, Young People and Families Plan can perhaps focus on the new phase of recovery as vaccines roll out and we learn to live with COVID-19 for the longer term without it dominating our lives.

Troubled Families – Supporting Families

The Troubled Families Programme was due to end in March 2020, however the ongoing evaluation evidenced the benefits of the programme so it continued into 2020-21. The Troubled Family Outcomes Plan provided a partnership-wide framework that stated the significant and sustainable outcome measures applicable to families identified for support. The plan covered 6 core areas of family factors and when there were at least 2 factors present suggested that an integrated approach would be beneficial and would be monitored by the programme. Families were prioritised on the basis that if there were multiple problems, they were most likely to benefit from an integrated, whole family approach, these are also families that are a high cost to the public purse.

The MHCLG (Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government) announced that for 2021-22 they want to take the Troubled Families Programme into a new phase, with a refreshed vision, strengthened objectives and an even stronger momentum to tackle barriers and create lasting change. Launching the next phase of the programme – Supporting Families – which will focus on building the resilience of vulnerable families, and on enabling system change locally and nationally. This means ensuring that every area has joined up, efficient local services, able to identify families in need and provide the right support at the right time.

The programme, previously named the 'Troubled Families programme,' will now be known as 'Supporting Families', to better reflect the role that keyworkers play.

For the next phase, MHCLG committed £165 million funding for Local Authorities to help families with multiple complex problems to overcome difficulties as early as possible. It has acknowledged that local authorities are still responding to the additional needs created by the COVID- 19 pandemic, so to assist with stability, the MHCLG are using 2021-22 as a transition year to co-design, test, and iterate future improvements to the programme. The funding model will still be payment by results which will look for individual and family led outcomes.

For Halton the commitment is still the same supporting vulnerable families via whole family support from a lead professional where families are experiencing multiple complex problems. The partnership will continue to identify families in need of extra help, target services more effectively and track family level outcomes over the long term.

Halton will be taking steps forward to ensure we integrate and transform local public services to embed whole family working using the Early Help System Guide to inform the development, refinement and implementation of a new Early Help strategy. Work around the strategy will start in summer 2021. This will enable Halton to fully embed preventative approaches into our support systems for families, creating more resilient communities for the long term.

Ofsted Inspection Local Authority Children Services (ILACS)

In January 2018, a new universal inspection framework came into force. Driving improvement and catching LAs before they fall are the underpinning principles of the new framework, it is described as a system rather than a programme of inspection. The 'Inspection of Local Authority Children's Services' (ILACS) attempts to take a proportionate, whole system approach that is less intensive than the single inspection framework (SIF).

In addition to on-site inspection activity, this new way of working is supported and informed by an annual self-evaluation, the annual conversation as well as Ofsted's LA intelligence system. Due to COVID-19 our annual conversation was delayed and took place on 1st April 2021.

Ofsted announced an ILACS inspection of Halton Children Services on Monday 24th February 2020, this covered a three week period with the inspectors arriving on site in week two, with the final day of the inspection being Friday 13th March 2020. The final judgement was published on Ofsted's website on the 13th May 2020. The judgement can be one of three; Outstanding, Requires improvement to be good or Inadequate, Halton's judgement was:

| Judgement | Grade |
|--|---------------------------------|
| The impact of leaders on social work practice with children and families | Requires improvement to be good |
| The experiences and progress of children who need help and protection | Requires improvement to be good |
| The experiences and progress of children in care and care leavers | Requires improvement to be good |
| Overall effectiveness | Requires improvement to be good |

As with every inspection we get an oversight into our strengths and areas for development but the main message from Ofsted was that they found that no children or young people were left at significant harm. They wanted to thank staff for being open, engaging and willing to talk about the work they were doing. They recognised that this helped them understand the experiences of children and young people accessing our services. They remarked that staff know the children, young people that they work with well and that they are enthusiastic in wanting to improve their life chances.

Immediately upon Ofsted leaving us, the impact of COVID-19 was becoming apparent and understandably this became our focus with immeasurable stress placed on our service however, once the final judgement was known we drafted an action plan which formed the basis of our work going forward in 2020-21.

Local safeguarding arrangements - Halton Children and Young People's Partnership

In June 2018, the government announced that all local authorities would need to make arrangements to replace their Local Safeguarding Children Boards by September 2019. Instead of each locality having access to a Local Safeguarding Children Board, the government wanted each locality to have access to a team of Safeguarding Partners, who will work collaboratively to strengthen the child protection and safeguarding system. Halton Children and Young People's Partnership (HCYPSP) was launched in July 2019.

The Safeguarding Partners are a team of key professionals from three sectors: the local authority; the clinical commissioning group for any area that falls under the local authority; and the chief officer of police for any area that falls under the local authority.

Together, these Safeguarding Partners are in charge of agreeing on and implementing new safeguarding strategies that will strengthen their multi-agency working and, in turn, improve the provision of safeguarding and child protection arrangements in the local area. In order to achieve this, the Safeguarding Partners set out how they will work together with all relevant agencies and make clear their arrangements for conducting local reviews.

The arrangements were developed as a result of wide ranging consultations with partners and community representatives. There are two main groups, the Safeguarding Practice Group and the Contextual Safeguarding Strategic Group.

During COVID-19 Safeguarding partners initially met weekly and then monthly to review the impact of the partnership approach and share service information and priorities and areas of concern. The sub groups and the Executive were re-established by August 2020 to work in the priorities set by the Executive. Rapid Reviews were also held as required.

Safeguarding Multi-Agency Practice Group have revised the threshold document and devised an easy to use guide to assist professionals and internal staff, this will be rolled out across the partnership. This Group is also working on embedding tools across the Partnership in 2021-22.

A structured multi-agency audit cycle is in place by the Safeguarding Partnership. Practice issues and themes identified in practice audits are tracked in the learning and improvement log by the Safeguarding Practice Group and have informed the re-launched Working Together training.

We are currently scrutinising the effectiveness of local arrangements. In order to provide the required degree of independent scrutiny, the Safeguarding Partnership have commissioned an independent consultant to review the effectiveness of the partnership and to complete the Annual Report.

iCART

Halton's multi-agency Integrated Contact and Referral Team (iCART) has been operational since 2016 and is the single point of entry for contacts and referrals in respect of children and families in need of early help and safeguarding concerns regarding children, young people and their families. Members of the public and practitioners can request early intervention support and raise concerns about the welfare of children through this team.

The team includes a wide range of multi-agency partners who are co-located, including Social Care, Early Intervention, Family Work, Education, Police, Health and support staff. CAMHS provide and have a point of contact for case discussions and the Education representative offers case consultation with schools, providing advice, support and guidance and signposting to appropriate services.

A robust performance framework is in place and a range of performance reports are available to the team and managers to inform the direction and planning of the service. Weekly performance reports provided senior management oversight to identify trends to ensure effective responses where necessary. Since the pandemic and subsequent lockdown in March 2020, there has been fluctuation within the rates of contact and referrals screened in iCART. Between March 2020 and January 2021 in comparison for the same period last year:

- 7644 contacts were received, a decrease of 295 = 3.9%
- 1252 referrals were received, a decrease of 229 = 15%.

When the schools returned in September 2020 children became more visible in the community and so the number of contacts increased. During September to November 2020 there was a 25% increase in contacts compared to the same period in the last reporting year.

November 2020 saw the highest number of referrals peaking at 160, the highest monthly figure for 12 months and again, 25% higher than same period last year. Early indications in the first week of return in March 2021 is of a similar pattern of increase in contacts and referrals. Police were highest referral source (344) with a peak in June, August and September 2020. There were 349 Domestic Abuse referrals March 2020 to January 2021 with March, June and November showing the highest figures.

An Assessment Toolkit was created for use across the Partnership, to support Professionals to work through concerns and provide rationale and evidence to subsequent decision making, with particular focus on the impact on the child. The Toolkit was developed during COVID-19 to support surge planning and resolve some confusion between existing tools. Training and consultations were provided for all School and Health providers virtually. This has improved the quality of information, timeliness and effectiveness, particularly from schools, less so health but further work is planned to embed this.

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Ofsted undertook a focused visit of the front door in July 2018 that was a positive assessment of the effectiveness of the service. 3 recommendations were made all were actioned. A Joint Targeted Area Inspection (JTAI) visit in June 2019, examining the multi-agency response to children experiencing or at risk of exploitation, including sexual and criminal exploitation, this highlighted a number of strengths across the partnership as well as a number of areas for development.

In March 2020 Ofsted Inspection of Local Authorities children's Services (ILACS) found; **"The application of thresholds in the integrated contact and referral team (iCART) is not always consistent, and the need to seek or dispense with parental consent is not fully understood or recorded"**.

Processes have been reviewed, to ensure contacts/referrals have Social Care Management oversight and there is a rationale recorded as to the 'level of need'. We are assured this is happening through Contact Challenge Meetings and weekly Principal Management case reviews.

As part of the Ofsted action plan the Quality Assurance Framework was reviewed and the Audit Framework was revised to include regular Audit of the front door activity. ICART Case Audits are now undertaken on a monthly basis – the findings are recorded to inform future developments of the service and to review threshold.

We have addressed the issue of consent identified by Ofsted, referrals for Early Intervention are returned if information is shared without consent and these decisions are now recorded more consistently.

Duty and Assessment Team (DAT)

A pilot Duty and Assessment Team (DAT) was created temporarily from 10th August 2020 in response to Halton's Ofsted inspection, to respond to increasing demand in the Child in Need (CIN) teams and, to respond to the demand modelling which predicted an increase in referrals as a result of the impact of COVID-19. It was also considered that this would support the restructuring of the CIN teams. This enabled us to effectively manage the predicted surge of referrals received in September and October and has enabled us to improve the quality and timeliness of assessments and planning for children. The Duty and Assessment Team consists of a 1 Principal Manager, 1 Practice Lead and 6 Social Workers.

Once iCART have screened the referral it is passed to DAT. Over a 6 month period this team commenced 728 Assessments, at the time of writing 592 had been completed with 136 ongoing. Of those assessments completed 90% were in timescale – that is, 10% higher than our statistical neighbours and 10% higher than England. The average duration of a completed assessment is 30 working days.

The team have been responsible for undertaking Multi-agency Strategy Meetings, Section 47 investigations and the Single Assessment under the Framework for Assessment on new cases being referred into the Local Authority, assessing children who are in need and in need of protection.

The creation albeit temporarily has been successful in reducing the pressure within the Child in Need Teams, enabling the progression of existing plans and interventions. This capacity also enabled an increase in management support and oversight with Principal Managers reporting that the DAT has had a positive impact on staff welfare and staff development and we are achieving better outcomes for children and families. It is evident there has been an improvement in practice, both in terms of the timeliness and quality of assessments, this is evidenced through the quality of cases presenting to initial Child Protection Conference and Legal Advice Meetings, being heard at the appropriate time with clearer focused plans derived from improved assessments. Feedback from partner agencies has been positive, they feel the team has more time to focus on the period of assessment; and the process is more inclusive, allowing partners to collaborate and contribute; they also feel communication overall has improved. The temporary Duty and Assessment has proven to be a positive addition, it is proposed, in the draft restructure that this function and structure will become permanent.

New cases following the Single Assessment are transferred from DAT to the CIN team or stepped down to Early Help Services to provide support and statutory services to children and families in need or in need of protection.

Children in Need

CIN/Child Protection Service works with families to provide ongoing support/intervention to children in need, child protection, public law outline cases and care proceedings. There are 2 teams serving Runcorn and Widnes separately and they were based on the side of the bridge they served but the service have moved onto one site in Runcorn with a view to integrating into a borough wide service in 2021. A business case has been submitted in order to progress restructuring the CIN Teams to ensure we embed systemic practice and to include the Duty and Assessment function as part of the permanent structure. Consultation with staff will begin in May 2021 with the expectation that the new CIN service structure will be implemented from September 2021.

In March 2020 Ofsted Inspection of Local Authorities children's Services (ILACS) found;
“Some plans are overly focused on adults. This means that actions to address risk and improve children's circumstances are not always as effective as they could be or completed in a timely way”.

There were plans that were too parent focused that did not always identify clearly what needed to be done, they lacked analysis and did not evidence the child's lived experience which impacts on the quality of subsequent plans. We have issued reviewed assessment guidance and introduced a new template for Child in Need and Child Protection Plans accompanied with improved management support and oversight at all levels. There is improvement in managers challenging the quality of assessments and plans, this is evident on children's files. Dip samples of plans produced in child protection conference during October 2020 identified an improvement in quality. They

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are more child focused, include outcomes for the child, and contingency plans are included, there are examples of the latter beginning to become more specific to the individual child/family.

In Halton, the current rate of children in need per 10,000, circa 93 is approximately the same as it was at the start of “lockdown”. During the period between June 20 and October 20, there was a reduction in numbers, this corresponded with a reduction in referrals during this time, and there was also targeted activity addressing drift and delay in Child in Need cases. The increase correlates with the increase in referrals when the majority of key universal services resumed, consequently a different trend to previous years.

Neglect remains prevalent in Halton, as the ILACS Inspection identified in March 2020:-
“Some children remain living in situations of chronic neglect for too long before decisive action is taken”.

Although there has been some improvement in this area, audit data shows there still remains drift in the planning for some children, and that managers and Independent Reviewing Managers (IRM’s) have not always robustly challenged or escalated. The dispute resolution process for the IRM’s has been reviewed and rolled out to ensure every manager understands their role within this. This has resulted in increased escalation and challenge and positive change for some children, however, there remains some inconsistency within the IRM team and this is a current focus for improvement.

As part of our reviewed quality assurance framework and performance management meetings, managers are scrutinising re-referrals to CIN/CP Teams, the purpose of this is to identify themes and issues, such as, over-optimism when the case had previously stepped down. They are also quality assuring cases identified for closure to ensure the case is not being closed too early, before evidencing sustained change. Quality Assurance and Audit will evidence families are offered appropriate services at the correct level and will evidence improvements in reflecting and recording the needs and views of children and young people in assessment and planning.

Activity between April 2020 to February 2021 evidences we are addressing drift and delay of cases in pre-proceedings and those subject to lengthy CP Plans. We are identifying cases at an earlier stage, for example, the number of pre-birth that have entered pre-proceedings and the number presented due to neglect. The Halton Children and Young People’s Partnership are also developing a 3 year Neglect Strategy to be rolled out in 2021. The strategy is being informed by Halton young people, and they are co-producing all of the awareness raising material.

Private fostering, the ILACS Inspection identified in March 2020:-
“Private fostering is not well understood. Children living in these arrangements are not promptly identified in order to ensure that their needs are assessed and they are effectively safeguarded in a timely way”.

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Children are assessed and supported under Private Fostering Arrangements through Child in Need Plans which are overseen by an Independent Review Manager based in the Safeguarding Unit however, the number of young people identified as living in these arrangements remains low, this may be due to lack of understanding or awareness and so may not be a true reflection of this cohort. A Principal Manager within the CIN Teams now has lead responsibility for Private Fostering with public information having been reviewed and updated, there will be further activity to promote and raise awareness with partners and schools.

The March 2020 ILACS inspection reported:-

“There is not a consistently robust response to 16- 17-year-olds presenting as homeless. Assessments of need are not sufficiently comprehensive”.

A Principal Manager within the CIN Teams has been appointed to take lead responsibility for Homeless 16/17 year olds to ensure the workforce correctly identify when a joint assessment with Housing is required and that they consider vulnerability as part of their assessments. This role has improved effectiveness of multi-agency working and the duty to prevent homelessness is being adhered to with resources available to be accessed at the earliest opportunity. Meetings have been held to review the current joint protocol, which is on track for completion by May 2021. We are currently developing and increasing our provision with regards to supportive lodgings. A number of supportive lodgings providers have been recruited.

Halton is committed to embedding a Systemic Model of Practice. Systemic practice promotes the belief that families and people have the capacity to change in the majority of cases, it ensures that problems are seen to exist within relationships, rather than with an individual, and are sat within a wider family context. This practice aims to look at not only the person, but also what surrounds them, their family, community and wider society. This allows a better understanding of what makes someone who they are, and what makes them unique to their own situation looking at all of the components which make up a person’s identity, for example age, class, race and education level. All of these characteristics allow us to gain a better understanding of that person and how we can best support them.

Children in Care

Children in Care and Care Leavers including fostering is a borough wide team. This service area has had a secure and strong leadership for over 18 months and has undergone a comprehensive review of its structures, staffing, performance management and engagement with children and young people. The significant statutory obligations placed on Local Authorities under the Children and Social Work Act 2017 placed additional stress on resources with Local Authorities to provide support to any care leaver (up until the age of 25) who requests it, including the provision of a personal adviser, assessment of needs, preparation of a pathway plan, and the provision of any support identified in that plan to be appropriate. The numbers

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of care leavers had increased which led to a restructure and an increased number of Personal Advisors.

We want to develop the newly created and fully staffed Leaving Care Service, through a revision of the service development plan and provide more focused training specific for the Personal Assistants in respect of quality of practice, recording and compliance in completing pathway plans in the young person's timeline of review.

Children in care and care leavers have been supported in respect of their emotional health and wellbeing through a commissioned service. The emotional well-being panel ensures the provision of a high- quality, multi-agency approach for a range of mental health support and interventions including face to face and virtual sessions monitored through monthly allocation and tracker meetings. This has been a critical resource given the impact of the pandemic on our most vulnerable, particularly for some of our older children in care and care leavers, whose mental health has deteriorated. 168 children in care and care leavers have been referred for a serve since the commencement of the pandemic in March 2020.

Our Children in Care Council remains very active, they attended a question and challenge session with the Children in Care Partnership Board, designed a survey on service delivery which incorporated dealing with COVID-19, seeking views on services delivered, what we could do differently to improve their experiences and communications around statutory visits, reviews and contact. 75% of the respondents were living in foster care, while the remainder lived with family or in semi-independent living. We aim to develop joint owned service development plan, whilst delivering training to grow our current cohort of young inspectors to double its current number.

The ILACS Inspection identified in March 2020:

“Some children have to wait too long to be matched with foster carers. As a result, a few of these children are experiencing ongoing insecurity and anxiety about their future care”.

“Placement choice remains limited, and, as a result, a small number of children have been placed in unregistered settings”.

“The commissioning arrangements for these placements have not been sufficiently robust to ensure quality in all cases”.

The Permanency Planning Framework is operational in respect of reviewing placements for children and young people, through the Residential to Foster Care project. There are two areas of focus 1) those children in residential care with a plan to return to a fostering family placement; and 2) those young people aged 16 and over who require pathway and transition planning through to full independence. These children and young people are discussed in the operational group chaired by the Divisional Manager on a monthly basis with actions and plans being progressed.

Monthly tracking meetings continue to be embedded into practice to ensure that delays are addressed and permanence decisions for children in long-term foster care

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are made within children's timescales. Children are presented to Fostering Panel with a view to their placement being long term with the progress of matching also being tracked.

Children and young people, where a plan for a Special Guardianship Order (SGO) is being considered or pursued are subject to monthly review and their cases tracked to avoid drift and delay. Legal advice meetings are completed in respect of those children whose foster carers have expressed a wish to apply for an SGO for the child to be placed with them. Our longer term strategy is to continue to review to those children who are matched long term to identify if a plan of SGO would be achievable.

We identified that achieving a plan of adoption for some children was pursued for too long, and alternative plans for permanency at an earlier review point needed to be considered. To address this, revised practice standards were introduced, including explicit timescales to actively explore alternative plans. Permanency through adoption is done with Together for Adoption at monthly meeting and reviews of cases take place.

Halton commissioned training delivered across the Liverpool City Region (LCR) in November 2020 to focus on the content and quality of placement referrals for children. Improved quality of referrals to the placements team is evident and there are a number of follow up sessions arranged. The LCR collaboration on the commissioning of good quality placements, the specification sets out the requirements of both Residential Children's Homes and Fostering placements commissioned through the now established LCR Partner Provider Agreement (PPA).

We have strengthened the care leavers accommodation group (CLAG) with private and registered landlords joining the meeting as active members. This group provides scrutiny and oversight to all referrals, timeliness of accommodation and robust tracking of all cases. Through CLAG, we have successfully moved young people into suitable accommodation. The CLAG received an invite from the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, Homelessness and Rough Sleeping directorate to share evidence of our effective practice. We will review the Joint Housing protocol and amend the CLAG Terms of reference to further support the scrutiny of sufficiency in relation to suitable accommodation and agencies roles and responsibilities as members of the group.

The revised and re-launched Supported Accommodation policy and procedure has been successful, resulting in a number of applicants in assessment to increase sufficiency and choice for Care leavers.

We continue with being innovative implementing a new 'supported lodging' scheme is aimed at providing a higher quality of support for young care leavers. The 'Take on 21' programme, which differs from fostering, as it allows people to work full-time and there is no age limit on who can take part increases the supply of quality of care for young people at a quarter of the cost' and a rigorous recruitment process ensures placements are safe and training is provided.

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We aim to review and develop our Transition to adult services policy and pathway to enhance smoother and coordinated continuation of services for those care leavers identified as requiring a service from adult's services.

Halton has taken part in a project run by What Works for Children's Social Care to promote higher and further education to our young people in Year 12 and Year 13. This involves sending each identified young person a letter written by a care leaver who is in further or higher education to encourage them to think about applying. There were two phases for the letters sent out – first set in December 2020 and the second set of follow up letters in March 2021. A web site with videos of students who are care experienced talking about their experience of further or higher education and the support available. The purpose of this was to show young people in care that there are people from similar backgrounds who have gone on to successfully apply and enter into higher or further education. In this way, the students in the videos act as role models and can be a source of inspiration.

Virtual School

The relationship with the Virtual School continues to be strong and adds additional scrutiny, they have ensured 'business as usual' for our children in care and care leavers throughout the COVID-19 pandemic adapting to the current situation and guidance and being proactive in encouraging all our children and young people to access school. The service played an active role in the multi-agency risk assessments, including doing daily attendance checks and keeping in touch calls as well as responding to individual issues often resulting in supporting the transition of the child or young person back into education. The Virtual School worked towards ensuring that our children and young people were accessing all appropriate support to mitigate against the impact of this disruption and lost learning.

In Lockdown 1, in response to the suspension of the national curriculum and formal teaching, the Virtual School devised a new PEP (Personal Education Plan). The PEPs successfully moved to a virtual format and provided a clear mechanism to address any concerns foster carers had in supporting children and young people with their education at home and in reducing anxieties around returning to school. Whilst the quality of PEPs has remained a focus, the adaptation of the spring and summer PEP made it impossible to do a year on year comparison.

Pre-COVID, attendance was 92% autumn term 2019 and 91% spring term 2020 pre-lockdown 1. In line with guidance and risk assessments the overall attendance of children in care was 73.5% during Lockdown 1 and was 70.8% during the period of wider opening in the summer term 2020. The main reasons for non-attendance were due to COVID-19 anxiety related issues and feedback from children and carers that due to the reduced offer some schools had to provide there was a higher level of engagement in learning at home. When children were not attending school, the Virtual School ensured that schools were providing work and supported carers with additional resources and access to on line learning ensuring that as many children and young

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people in care as possible were provided with a Department of Education (DfE) laptop and router as required.

The Virtual School successfully launched Anspear, a training platform providing education resources for our foster carers to improve educational outcomes for children in care and care leavers. They also provided educational and fun activity packs to all our children in care throughout the summer and over the Easter break. The co working and targeted support by social workers and the virtual school was intrinsic in supporting children back to school in the September 2020 term. In October 2020 the Progress Improvement Clinics recommenced chaired by the DCS. The initial cohort of children were chosen from primary and secondary education They were chosen due to an identified need to improve the outcomes and address additional influencing factors that are impacting on their progress. These clinics will continue.

Whilst no individual judgement is given for the Virtual School, feedback from the ILACS inspection stated that the overall work of the Virtual School was good, there was a strong and positive team with good communication links to multi-agencies, and it is held in high regard by schools both within Halton and also out of borough. The inspectors also stated that the Virtual School had an accurate picture of its strengths and areas of improvement and outlined the same areas of focus as had already been identified by the Virtual School itself – improving outcomes for Key Stage 4 young people, improving Maths in line with the borough wide priority, and improving apprenticeship opportunities. The inspection also highlighted the need for more consistency in the quality of Personal Education Plans (PEPs) beyond the Primary phase, which the Virtual School had already recognised and has plans in place to drive forward.

In response to the inspection feedback, the Virtual School has increased its capacity with the appointment of 2 post 16 workers, one focusing on improving the completion and quality of Post 16 PEPs and support for our post 16 learners, and one focusing on employability including driving forward increased opportunities for traineeships and apprenticeships. An Early Years worker has also been appointed to drive improvements in Early Years PEP completion and quality and support for our Early Years learners to improve our GLD (Good level of development) outcomes. The inspection also made reference to new initiatives that had been implemented to improve the educational outcomes and these have continued, albeit adapted to reflect the current situation. New programmes have been provided through What Works for Children's Social Care such as Third Space Learning to improve Maths outcomes, the Family Skills Programme targeting learning at home for Reception children, and the raising aspiration programme for Care Leavers, Springboard.

Early Intervention / Team Around the Family

The Team around the Family service provides an integrated response across children centres, day care, and early intervention supporting multi-agency Level 2 work (including disabled children). It also takes the lead in coordinating and delivering parenting support and has recently taken responsibility for targeted youth support. The

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recent Ofsted report noted Early Help and the range of services was good nevertheless, despite LA budget pressures, to date, we have maintained a coherent early help offer, we continue to invest in early intervention, we recognise that by intervening early this can improve life chances and prevent problems emerging at a later date which can prove to be costly.

Although small due to our geography and in part because of custom and practice we have maintained two locality teams in Runcorn and Widnes. Our early help workforce is stable and we have good retention rates. This has helped develop robust management and oversight and this leadership is helping implement new initiatives and maintain value for money.

There has been a focus on ensuring that the Voice of the Child is a particular feature of our work. This includes the development and collation what children and young people tell us and impact statements, and consistently evidenced voice of the child in case recording and documentation and how they have influenced their own plans. We are also developing peer and management observations.

We have seen an increase in all aspects of early help from universal plus through to high complex level 2 cases since the schools returned in September, this is monitored by Principal Managers and seniors and discussed in Team Around the Family (TAF) manager meetings for the Divisional Manager to discuss in Divisional Manager Team meetings and pick up on any key themes and trends.

There are, at the time of writing, 566 open CAFs in the borough. This is the highest figure recorded previously numbers were circa 420, and indicative of increasing demand. Service demand and team caseloads are monitored and any emerging themes, patterns of behaviour, problem practice areas, partnership issues etc. can then be explored with view to improve practice, improve capacity, identify gaps and form part of the reports to the Senior Management team and influence strategic decision making.

Similar to many areas we are developing support for parenting and reducing parental conflict. Senior staff and Early Help Family Workers (EHFW's) have completed train the trainer event and explored other tools e.g. How to argue better to use with parents. This is particularly useful in cases where separated parents relationship conflicts has a significant impact upon the emotional wellbeing of their children caught between parents. Parental Conflict will be incorporated as part of all Parenting delivery groups.

From August 2020 a significant development is that Drug and Alcohol 1:1 Youth Support Service have joined the locality service (2x Runcorn and 2x Widnes). This was a contract formerly held by commissioned services. The role of Early Help Family Worker with focus on drug and alcohol 1:1 support alongside holistic family support is an area that is being developed. The aim is to remove the categorisation of support and ensure sustainable change in the person's life. The workers are currently collating and developing specialist tools relating to drugs and alcohol support for young people and this is also recorded on the national database of drug monitoring (NDTMS). The new

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workers will hold cases at both level 2 and level 3 and work in partnership with colleagues in the borough including health education and social care.

Using our drug and alcohol workers, who have other tools for use with teenagers, we are developing better the group sessions for teenagers and working with other health and voluntary groups to respond to an expected increase of emotional wellbeing issues for young people.

A key development following a comprehensive review of CAF (Common Assessment Framework) is the move towards a Multi-Agency Plan (MAP) which has been co-produced with partners and is an easier family-based approach based on the outcome star model for children, teenagers and parents. The limited roll-out so far has been well received by families and was acknowledged in our last Ofsted inspection. It is a more person-centred assessment and plan that shows measurable outcomes for families and identifies progress made and supports our move to systemic strength based working models. 2021 will see the full implementation.

There are established performance dash boards which help children centres understand their local community and what is required. Across Halton registration starts pre-birth by registering pregnant mothers at ante-natal or registrations come through Health visiting, housing and other partner agencies as well as targeted early help work. Registration rates are a steady 74% with participation rates at 85%. The children centres have continued to support families in creative and adaptive ways including online platforms.

Halton's good level of development is a high priority for all working in Halton and our approach is co-ordinated through the multi-agency One Halton Group, Chaired by the Operational Director – Education Inclusion and Provision. The children's centres contribute in many ways to improve this through universal and targeted provision incorporating the early year's foundation stage, child development priorities and partnership with parents. There has been a strong focus on communication and language. Talk Halton programme is the main service delivery model and we have extensive WellComm screening.

Numbers of under 1s registered continues to be lower than expected at 50%, Runcorn is lower than Widnes. Widnes continue to benefit from the Health visiting teams delivering family health clinics in the centres supported by children's centre staff. In Runcorn two health clinics have now started in the Runcorn centres with a view to identify families in need of support through their clinic visit. We want to review the registration pathway with partners to find alternative routes to increase the number of under 1s registered with children's centres.

Halton is part of Liverpool city region and in partnership with Knowsley will be implementing PAUSE programme across the boroughs in April 2021, recruitment has taken place and all staff will be in post by the end of March 21. PAUSE is a very intensive level of support programme for women who have had two or more children removed into care. The aim is to encourage the women to take a PAUSE from pregnancy and

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gain help support and guidance about future choices with regards to pregnancy and motherhood.

Disabled children and young people in this group were significantly disadvantaged as they were less likely to attend schools during COVID-19 owing to health needs, our short-break centre closed as a result of the number of staff shielding, the usual support activities ceased and some parents ceased support at home because of concerns of about transmission from care staff. Working with providers, all families had as a minimum a weekly virtual contact plan. Activity packs and resources were provided regularly, and we worked with commissioned services to prepare and deliver a range of virtual online activities with some individual face to face activities for families under significant stress and at risk of family breakdown. Flexibility was used with direct payments and personal budgets to increase use of family members to provide care and support and to purchase bespoke resources. A contingency plan with the CCG was developed to re-purpose a setting for residential use in the event of family breakdown for children with complex health needs but this has not been needed to date. Providers moved to increasing their amount of direct face to face activity and group work during the summer 2020, and the short break centre re-opened, with a re-introduction programme for children who had not been at the setting for many months. The impact of COVID-19 and continued restrictions/changes in accessing schools and support services will remain an issue for the foreseeable future until the situation is stabilised. Person centred support plans will continue to inform the response to individual needs and high levels of contact will be maintained.

Keeping Children and Young People safe by improving practice

The COVID-19 pandemic and the response to the national lockdown presented complex challenges with immediate action required to ensure the level of risk to each child open to social care was robustly assessed and reviewed. The ongoing pandemic and variations in the “Tier” system for example, meant that we continued to change and the service needed to remain flexible and responsive.

At the beginning of lockdown we put in place a strict Duty Rota consisting of 1 Principal Manager; 2 Practice Leads and 4 Social Workers being present in the office to respond to Duty calls, whilst the rest of the workforce work from home. These “bubbles” ensured resilience across the service and reduce the impact if a member of staff contracts the virus. This has proved to be very successful and we have not had any gaps in service, and we have very few COVID-19 positive cases in the workforce even during the most recent lockdown when our transmission rates were very high, we maintained good staffing levels through ready access to agency and planning for school return.

Recruitment and retention are a significant challenge for the social work service. On a positive note, all senior and middle manager positions are filled by permanent staff (apart from one agency for the duty and assessment team) as are the majority of practice lead posts, however, we are more reliant on agency social workers than previously experienced. At the time of writing there are currently 15 agency social

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workers in the CIN service against 17 vacancies. Excluding the Duty and Assessment Team we have a 15-17% vacancy rate.

Recruitment has also been poor in attracting new and experienced social workers. A workforce review of staff exit interviews implies that poorer pay compared to other local authorities and the impact on pay of paying the cost of bridge tolls have been significant “push” factors in staff leaving. There were some positives such as the quality of training, support at AYSE level, the communication and some of the benefits of free parking. Numbers of applicants for social worker posts has reduced significantly, which can be for a number of reasons: delay in students qualifying because of COVID-19, people not wanting to make major changes and move to another LA because of remote working, pay and possibly the impact of the inspection.

A Workforce Development Group has been established including corporate support. All job descriptions will be revised in line with the AYSE and Knowledge and Skills Statements for the roles, and work will be completed with HR to re-evaluate the associated pay grades if required. This will also inform a redesign of the career progression pathway. A new workforce strategy will be completed by the end of May. A recruitment strategy and promotion of Halton as a good and innovative place to practice social work in development.

We have implemented a Quality Assurance Group with terms of reference detailing the oversight and tracking of actions and learning from audits. Embedding this new Audit and QA framework and reviewing emerging themes in practice, quality and management oversight will enable us to specifically target training and support in those areas and improve outcomes for children, young people and families. The Quality Assurance and Audit Framework is helping in achieving and evidencing effective management oversight.

Revision of the Supervision process to include a template to support and evidence reflective discussion. A programme of direct observations of workers at all levels will also be included, along with:

- Continuation of weekly performance meetings.
- Workforce development programme informed by Audit.
- Focus on recruitment and retention of staff.
- Focus on CIN and CP visits and reviews to improve the impact of our work with children and families.
- Implementing and embedding the revised Supervision policy/process.
- Developing the skills of managers in undertaking reflective discussions, observed practice, and annual development reviews.
- Embedding a systemic approach within our day to day practice.
- We will develop a process to include service user feedback. This will not only help to develop our service offer but also will support future workforce development.

We have issued reviewed assessment guidance accompanied with the improved management support and oversight at all levels.

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Halton is committed to embedding a Systemic Model of Practice. A number of the original cohort of workers trained in Systemic have left the authority, this has impacted on the full implementation of systemic practice in Halton. The implementation has been reenergised through the commencement of additional training and a steering group will be established in April 2021 to drive this. Last year the Local Authority invested in systemic training for workers at all levels. Further training commenced autumn 2020. Halton is now progressing with the vision of systemic practice being embedded across the service, as we train more staff in systemic work we will support the move by establishing a systemic team to work across the Levels of Need to support families at a much earlier level. The expectation is that the new CIN service structure will be implemented from September 2021.

An Assessment Toolkit was created for use across the Partnership, to support Professionals to work through concerns and provide rationale and evidence to subsequent decision making, with particular focus on the impact on the child. The Toolkit was developed during COVID-19 to support surge planning and resolve some confusion between existing tools. Training and consultations were provided for all School and Health providers virtually. This has improved the quality of information, timeliness and effectiveness, particularly from schools, less so health. Further work is planned to embed tools across the Partnership, this work will be led by the Safeguarding Practice Group in Quarter 1 - 2021/2022. The Assessment Toolkit is being embedded across all service areas.

Social Work England

In its January 2016 paper 'A vision for change', the Department for Education announced it would set up a new regulatory body for social work in England. The new regulatory body would have a 'wider remit' to look at post-qualification, accreditation and CPD (Continuous Professional Development). From Monday 2 December 2019, regulation of social workers was transferred to Social Work England from the Health & Care Professions Council (HCPC). Social Work England's purpose is to regulate social workers in England so that people receive the best possible support whenever they might need it in life and are committed to raising standards through collaboration with everyone involved in social work.

School Support - COVID-19

In Halton there are c19, 500 school aged children educated in 61 mainstream schools, the school provision consists of:

- 3 nurseries schools – two of which are now federated 1 infant and 1 junior school
- 47 primary schools
- 7 Secondary schools
- 4 special schools, (1 All Through School, 1 Pupil Referral Unit)

For a period Halton's transmission rates of COVID-19 were particularly high, peaking at 1300, this was amongst the highest rate in the country and remained above 300 for several weeks. The impact of this was high numbers of pupils out of school, college and

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early year settings and along with a number of bereavements in schools, this impacted on staff and community anxiety. We have worked well as a borough with Public Health delivering briefings, webinars and always on hand to support and answer specific questions and clarify guidance. We provided daily briefings from March 2020 to July 2020 changing to weekly in September 2020, we provided a coordinated and consistent approach across the borough. We have deployed Council resources to schools and the College when required, recently we diverted community pop-up testing to the College to support their Lateral Flow Testing.

Return to School Toolkit - An extensive toolkit was collated and shared with Early Years providers, schools and the College. This provided advice on a range of key issues including: supporting children and staff mental health well-being, trauma and bereavement; behaviour management; identification of curriculum coverage, learning and development up until lockdown. It also covered learning opportunities provided during lockdown and identifying any gaps in curricular areas; planning a recovery curriculum; learning from the New Zealand approach and logistics of bubble planning. Risk assessment and travel logistic details were included as was advice on; cleaning and health and safety matters; transition support for those moving provisions and sectors; signposting to key services and school staff recruitment support using a range of remote and virtual models maintaining rigour, fairness and equality for all.

Risk Assessment - The risk assessments were prepared by the Health and Safety team of the Local Authority and distributed to all schools, settings and the trade unions. Each school received a COVID-19 health and safety audit from the Health and Safety team. A number of schools received HSE (Health Safety Executive) telephone calls and one school received a HSE visit. HSE were reassured with the systems and processes in place.

An unintended consequence of COVID-19 was the building of positive relationships with all our schools and academies and we want to build on that. Feedback from schools, the college and early years settings on the local system was that they have valued the level of communication and support they have received during COVID-19. The launch of the Halton Learning Alliance chaired by Derek Twigg MP and driven by schools and not wholly by the Local Authority provides the framework to coordinate the disparate national and regional approaches to school improvement.

Safeguarding in Education

Following the departure of our SCIE Officer (Safeguarding Children in Education) in spring term 2020 we took the opportunity to review how we supported our schools to ensure their compliance with Keeping Children Safe in Education and also as a key multi-agency partner in safeguarding all children in Halton. We consulted with schools on the role and responsibilities and in agreement with them increased the post from part time to full time. As a result of the consultation with our schools and our review of practice, the decision was taken to re-position the role within the Education, Inclusion and Provision part of the Directorate and the post was successfully recruited to in September 2020. Since then the training offer provided to schools has been

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comprehensively re-developed with over 360 delegates taking part in training to date. The course evaluations have been overwhelming positive and the impact clearly visible in more rigorous procedures, clearer understanding of roles and responsibilities, improved referrals through to iCART, and greater appropriate challenge within and from the education sector in keeping children safe. School safeguarding policies have been reviewed and a model policy, with appropriate addenda including in relation to COVID practices, have been provided and a very significant proportion of our schools in Halton have adopted it.

In advance of the revised Keeping Children Safe in Education guidance we are already in the process of establishing a model of supervision for DSLs (Designated Safeguarding Leads) in Halton. This will be piloted in the summer term 2021 either remotely or preferably face to face COVID restrictions dependent, with a view to launching it in autumn 2021. This has been very positively welcomed by DSLs.

The SCIE Officer, Police and representatives from the Early Years sector are currently in the process of launching a pilot of Operation Encompass to cover children aged from 2 to school age with a view to formally launch this from autumn 2021. This has been welcomed by Early Years providers.

An Education Subgroup of the HCYPSP has been developed with a clear focus on driving improvement in safeguarding practice both from a multi-agency perspective but also within the whole education sector in Halton. This group has already provided input to the Partnership on a number of matters and has also escalated areas of concern from the education sector for further discussion at the Partnership Board. This is ensuring that safeguarding in education is a dynamic process here in Halton.

Improving the offer for children and young people with SEND

On the 1st September 2014 the Children and Families Act introduced the reforms and statutory duties on Local Authorities for how services and support are delivered for children and young people with Special Educational Needs and/or Disabilities (SEND). Improving outcomes for children and young people by ensuring the assessment and provision we offer meets their needs and is sustainable has been a key focus in Halton.

As previously stated, disabled children and young people were significantly disadvantaged as they were less likely to attend schools during COVID-19 owing to health needs, with some parents ceasing support at home because of concerns of about transmission from care staff. During the different phases of lockdown we used information provided on a daily basis and each school was assigned a link member of the Specialist Teaching Team/Assessment Coordinator. This team ensured there was a robust risk assessment for each child and young person with an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP). Jointly undertaking this work not just with the parents and school staff but also with colleagues from health and social care. Contact was made with parents and carers to check if they were happy with the support they were receiving and whether they needed any advice or help for their child to access education either at school or at home and if there was any additional support they required.

When children returned to school in September a daily list of the children and young people with an EHCP who were self-isolating prompted contact being made with schools to check the offer available and also with parents to explore whether they need any additional advice and support.

During the pandemic we have worked in partnership with the CCG. Through our regular meetings we have been able to agree clear and consistent messages for parents and carers and schools and settings. We also undertook joint risk assessments for children and young people with EHCPs and have together explored different ways to meet the challenge of delivering the support outlined within each EHCP.

Halton continues to build on the recommendations from the 2017 Joint Area Inspection and its independent strategic review of provision and services throughout 2020. This work has been delayed due to the initial lack of strategic capacity and the COVID-19 pandemic. In May 2020, a new Strategic Lead for Inclusion was appointed, eighteen months after the previous post holder retired and in the midst of the pandemic.

Led by the new Strategic Lead, in July 2020 a strategy development group was set up under the SEND Strategic Partnership to develop a new SEND Strategy for Halton for 2021-25. The group had representation from parent and young people groups as well as from across education, health and social care services and providers and has been informed by parent carer and child and young person feedback, recommendations from the independent review and desktop data analysis. The Strategy development group presented co-produced, joint strategy for Halton to the SEND Strategic Partnership in December 2020 and went out for consultation which at time of writing was still open, once finalised this document will set the direction of work going forward.

For a number of years we have recognised the need to promote more inclusive practice in the borough as the majority of our children and young people with EHCPs are educated in our special schools and not in mainstream schools. Halton only has half the national rate of children and young people with EHCPs educated in a mainstream setting compared to the England Average. This will be a strategic priority in the new SEND Strategy for 2021-25. This approach will pull together the existing work that is being done to improve inclusion into a single partnership governance structure to ensure clear accountability to improve progress and achievement for pupils with SEN Support and with EHCPs in KS2 and KS4 as well as the proportion of pupils with an EHCP accessing mainstream education.

As part of the work being done to improve inclusion the Local Authority has been working with NASEN on a project around improving outcomes at SEN Support to deliver a more inclusive education system. This is focussed on school understanding of needs, early identification and intervention in particular for SEMH (Social, Emotional, and Mental Health). The project will improve mainstream school understanding of and confidence in working with pupils with SEND. NASEN have agreed to work with us to promote the cultural change required to promote more inclusive practice.

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All schools and settings are expected to use the Graduated Approach and over the last few months the Graduated Approach has been the focus of significant development and was simplified, improved, providing more accessible support and guidance to schools and settings. The new approach was launched in January 2021. The roll out is being supported by training and advice to schools through tailored virtual training sessions.

Throughout the pandemic we have been committed to continue to support the EHCP process however, we did advise parents and carers that not all advice would be immediately available, particularly advice related to Health. We also advised that EHCPs may look different and the process would be different as assessments were not being undertaken faced to face. This work was moved to telephone or video calls where possible. The decision-making panels still took place but the work was undertaken remotely.

Since January 2021 the SEN team has a full complement of Assessment Co-ordinators making caseloads more manageable and improving quality. A feedback process has been established and is now in place to improve our understanding of the lived experience of families who an EHC needs assessment process to support continuous improvement in the EHCP development process. A new Designated Clinical Officer has been in place since the start of February 2021 with a clear training programme for health services to improve the quality and timeliness of health advice.

Halton has continued to face significant demand pressures and growth in its cohort of children and young people identified with SEND. The January 2020 SEND2 report showed that 3.5% of Halton children and young people have an EHCP compared to 3.3% in England and 14.6% are on SEN Support in Halton by comparison to 12.1% in England. As at December 2020 Halton saw an increase to 1,030 or 11% in EHCPs with current data showing an increasing number of children in the Early Years with EHCP's.

Speech, Language and Communication is a key priority for Halton. The latest published school census information (Education Workbook) shows a rate of 20.7% for those children and young people with EHCPs. This is one of most prevalent primary needs and is a much higher level than our statistical neighbours at 12.8% and the England average of 15.5%. It is therefore vital that our provision is a highly effective, flexible to changing needs and responsive. From the outset of the pandemic, the provider service 'Chatterbug' restructured its provision across its hubs in Halton, Leeds, North Yorkshire, Liverpool, Leicester and the Nottingham region to a one-caseload approach so that, as and when pressure points arise there was an increased level of support and number of therapy sessions provided in Halton. Additional funding has been sourced by Halton CCG to provide a speech and language therapist to work with young people entering Youth Offending Services, in response to the high level of communication and language difficulties impacting upon this cohort.

With the rise in the number of children with complex needs we have striven to develop and increase our local capacity to meet need, however, we have been short of physical space on each site. We have managed to increase the capacity of 3 of the schools and

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are developing plans to increase capacity at the 4th. Agreement has also been reached with The Grange Academy, who provide secondary resource provision to adapt its existing provision so that it can increase the number of secondary autistic spectrum condition (ASC) places it offers and cease to provide its Speech and Language provision for which there is no demand.

The shortage of SEMH provision both within Halton and within the region remains a concern. The joint bid with St Helens for a secondary SEMH Free School has been approved and the Sponsor agreed. The new provision will offer up to 64 places between the two LAs, however, due to COVID-19 the provision will not be available until after autumn 2022, we are therefore working with St Helen's and the DfE to try and secure interim provision for September 2022.

We have used the Local Offer to post key messages and updates on services to parents and carers and schools and settings during COVID-19 and those who have accessed this information have feedback positively, however, it still remains a challenge to ensure it is more widely used by parents and carers as a key source of information and is more widely used by professional.

Improve progress and attainment across all key stages and diminish the difference between vulnerable groups and their peers.

The key priorities for 2020-2021 for Early Years and the School Improvement Team were to improve pupil outcomes and diminish the difference to national between disadvantaged groups and their peers. Work was also targeted to hold schools to account when the quality of provision, pupil performance or strategic leadership were causing concern, whilst supporting them to address these areas of development. The long term ambition for all Halton children and young people is to raise aspiration, achievement and the quality of provision across all educational phases. This was and is being developed as a Strategic borough wide strategy, entitled Halton Learning Alliance.

In terms of wider key priorities, the strategic plans were to improve speech, language and communication skills for Early Years children so that they can make relationships; develop independence; develop self-regulatory skills and build their vocabulary to learn about the world around them. These key skills would also help children to develop their love of reading, reading skills; understanding of mathematical thinking and problem solving too. With regard to schools, developing the enjoyment of reading; accessibility of reading materials and developing reading skills so that all curriculum areas could be developed has been key. Maths understanding, mathematical fluency and utilising and applying mathematical skills and thinking is also key to driving improved outcomes at all phases. The other main planned priority area was building capacity of leadership in schools to drive improvement at all levels from middle leaders; assistant and deputy heads; new headteachers and governance strategic leadership.

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Whilst detailed plans were in place to address and develop these key areas of work, as we now all know, unfortunately the pandemic as a result of COVID-19 did impact in a range of areas. The details below will share the developments across each key phase of education.

Raise Achievement in Early Years.

Early Years development and improving the proportion of children reaching a “Good Level of Development” (GLD) continues to be a priority. Whilst schools would typically assess and report outcomes against this measurement and nursery provision would use a local non statutory tracker “Ready for Reception” tracker, unfortunately none of this information has now been available for summer 2020, nor summer 2021. This is as a consequence of the COVID-19 pandemic leading to the Department for Education pausing statutory assessments nationally, and also aiming to ease workload and teacher assessment accountability pressures due to the effects of COVID-19 and lockdown. However Early Years provisions and schools have been encouraged to continue supporting children’s development in the key areas and continue to deliver the Early Years Foundation Stage Curriculum.

As COVID-19 led to Early Years and Schools having to close during the first lockdown (apart from provision for children of key workers and vulnerable children), the shift in emphasis moved to ensuring all children were keeping safe and well and were adequately safeguarded with provisions keeping close contact with children and their families. Children were provided with some home learning activities and support for their development. The key focus for the Local Authority was to ensure that there was sufficient provision available for children who needed to access Early Years settings/childminders and ensure that the sector were supported to be financially sustainable and viable post COVID-19. The Early Years sector were signposted to using national government schemes such as accessing furlough; business rates relief and accessing any grants they were eligible for. As a local authority in order to further support, in some cases we double funded children to ensure they could access provision if their own provision was closed due to illness; staffing; self-isolation pressures. We were able to offer childcare places throughout the lockdown periods and beyond for any parent who wished or needed to access childcare.

It was essential we established weekly communication groups with the sector to share updates regarding the Public Health situation; to share DFE updates and information regarding provision and to ensure the sector had opportunities to raise any emerging issues or concerns with us which we could share with DFE. We have continued these group meetings and have welcomed the improved communication across the sector.

During later lockdowns, the emphasis moved to ensuring all children who were at home gained access to remote learning and home learning activities and as ever all children were kept safe and well. Vulnerable children (those with an Education and Health care plan-EHCP; those classed as “Looked After Children” –LAC and those with a Child Protection Plan –CP) were tracked by Early Years teams linking with Social Care and SEND teams.

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Whilst we do not have data sets to show progress or impact of COVID-19 we do know that the Early Years sector are reporting that there are delays evident in children's communication and language skills; personal, social and emotional development; behaviour; independence and confidence; building of relationships; whilst fine motor skills, holding pens, crayons and other tools is also showing less control and manipulative skills.

Communication and language skills were an area of concern for many young children across Halton historically prior to COVID-19. We had previously bid for an Early Years Outcomes Fund and were successful in gaining a year's funding to launch TALK Halton. Whilst COVID-19 did impact upon the delivery of this, many positive gains were made with the team comprising of Speech and Language Therapists; Health Visitors; Early Years professionals providing training and support for Early Years practitioners, multi-agency professionals, parents and carers. Children have been screened using the Wellcom toolkit which found that Early Years children assessed showed that 50% of children in Halton were already demonstrating a delay in their language skills prior to COVID-19. However, using "The Big Book of ideas" and other resources, children have been able to receive intervention speedily in Early Years Provision and at home. The principles and learning from this project will sustain, whilst we are currently trying to source funding to continue this project beyond July 2021. We do know that nationally young children's speech, language and communication skills are delayed due to COVID-19 and we are also experiencing this in addition to the delays already experienced pre COVID-19, so communication skills will continue to be a priority for our region.

It is also evident that across our region we are also experiencing an increasing level of young children presenting with a range of complex health, medical and special educational need. The Early Years sector is reporting this in their provision and whilst many are inclusive and support children well, the pressures requiring specialist training, equipment, and on occasions staffing is leading to capacity concerns across the sector. As a Local Authority we have detailed tracking of the type and levels of need and the range of provision available but are seeing an increased demand for support, training and young children requiring some bespoke packages of support and/ or Education Health and Care plans. Further SEND support and training for provisions and for multi-agency colleagues linking closely with health visitors is an increasing priority for us to address.

Our Early years sector have been resilient and creative, with Early Years providers further developing their partnership working with parents and carers; they have carried out home support visits to aid with resources for learning and development and food packages. Moving forwards the focus will be on addressing children's gaps or delays in development.

Primary Phase:

Similarly to Early Years, all statutory assessment processes have been paused nationally due to COVID-19 and therefore we do not have any data available regarding attainment and progress. However, we established weekly communication meetings with Primary

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Headteacher representatives sharing key Public Health information; COVID-19 guidance; supporting with outbreaks and control management. In addition we tracked the attendance of children, particularly our vulnerable children groups to ensure that they were either in school, or kept safe and supported. Planning for a sequenced curriculum and continuing to develop reading, maths and a broad and balanced curriculum has been parts of the key messages shared with the sector.

In order to ensure that pupils were able to access remote education in the event of needing to self-isolate or experience a positive COVID-19 case within a bubble or due to national lockdown, pupils who were classed as vulnerable were provided with a laptop and a dongle for access to the internet to enable them to access remote education. All pupils were provided with a range of remote learning offers including live streaming; linking to The Oak National Academy; BBC Bitesize; virtual learning platforms; class drop in's and welfare calls; story times; outdoor and sports challenges; creative projects. Each school devised their own curriculum offer and contact and teaching arrangements for a remote offer, whilst also providing bespoke support and interventions to meet individual pupil's needs.

Since the return of all pupils on 8th March 2021 it has been reported that most pupils' were keen to return to school, although some pupils are struggling with anxiety and attachment difficulties. It has also been shared that learning has needed to be "chunked" as extended periods of concentration are proving more difficult to sustain for many pupils. Early Years and Key Stage One children seem to be exhibiting the greater delays due to impact of limited social interaction during lockdown and limited communication skills development. Conversely Year Six pupils in some cases appeared disengaged due to feeling they had missed out on leadership opportunities; the highlights and patterns of a Year Six experience missing out on residential breaks and wider enrichment experiences. Transition arrangements to their next phase of education, also requires amended experiences.

In order to provide challenge and support to schools, the School Improvement Team consists of a small core officer team, supplemented by Associate School Improvement Advisors (ASIA's). ASIA's currently provide the link officer role to schools to ensure schools are challenged and supported to provide a high quality education; are developing capacity of leadership across the school; provide a well-planned and sequenced curriculum meeting all children's needs. During the first lockdown phase, Ofsted inspections were paused until the autumn term where they resumed carrying out amended assurance visits. One of our primary schools and one of our secondary schools received such assurance visits to discover how schools and pupils were being impacted and how schools had adapted learning to address any identified gaps in learning. Findings were positive, although these assurance visits do not receive grading's. From January 2021, further monitoring visits were carried out with schools subject to monitoring and Ofsted found that "leaders were taking effective action to provide education in the current circumstances." Ofsted reports, 2021. From May 4th 2021, Ofsted inspections have resumed and we anticipate that several of our schools may well receive inspection visits due to the time since last inspection.

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With regarding to Reading, we launched a Halton wide Reading Strategy in March 2020, just prior to the first COVID-19 lockdown. Whilst plans were in place for a range of reading developments and borough wide activities to raise enjoyment and the profile of reading, sadly much of this had to be cancelled due to the pandemic. We do now have an ASIA colleague solely on driving the strategy forwards and has re-engaged with stakeholders to develop reading initiatives across Halton moving forwards. Reading audits have been developed to support schools with ensuring reading is a well-planned and structured priority across all curriculum areas, developing phonological skills; vocabulary knowledge and wider comprehension and enjoyment.

Maths priorities are similarly being developed with an ASIA focusing solely on Maths subject specialist knowledge; networking and sharing of information; identifying strengths across the region with Specialist Leaders in Education (SLE) and linking to Maths Hubs partners. This colleague has developed maths tool kits, maths audits and has shared a wealth of maths resources to encourage maths leads to further develop the profile, confidence and maths skill level of children and young people across Halton. Whilst some of this activity was affected due to the pandemic, this work is being reignited. Prior to the pandemic we had linked with the Education Endowment Fund (EEF) to develop a maths programme focusing upon pitch and progression at KS2/3 transition; the use of manipulatives and representations to support the teaching of mathematical ideas at all attainment levels. It will also look into approaches of how to provide opportunities for students to develop metacognition applying these approaches to teaching pupils how to approach and solve mathematical problems. Both Key Stage Two and Key Stage Three teachers have been finding it valuable to work together cross phases to share expertise, subject knowledge and differentiation and this is work that plan to continue developing over the forthcoming year.

As a small authority, we are aware that small changes in school leadership can impact capacity across schools and across the borough quite significantly. For the last two years we have experienced 10% of our Headteachers from the primary sector moving on each year, predominantly to retirement but also in some cases for promotion. This has required a significant amount of educational advice and support regarding Headteacher recruitment processes and working closely to advise and support governors in their strategic role. As colleagues are promoted across the sector, we have then seen a shift in leadership at Deputy and Assistant Headteacher level too. So that as a region we continue to proactively succession plan, build capacity and sustain a quality educational leadership sector, we have introduced local leadership training for new and aspiring Headteacher and deputy heads. In addition, we have been working with schools to develop subject specific knowledge but also subject leadership planning, behaviours and sequenced curriculums to support school leaders at all levels. These areas of leadership development will continue building networks and connections, encouraging peer scrutiny and linking schools with each other and wider stakeholders such as Literacy and Maths Hubs. Building strong and sustainable leadership will help to support schools to provide high quality teaching and learning experiences that will ultimately impact positively on outcomes and achievements or our children and young people.

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Governance strategic leadership is equally an area we are working to develop expertise and knowledge. Whilst as a region we have commissioned Entrust governor services to provide governors support, training and clerking, some schools purchase their Service level Agreements through other companies. Whilst this is school and open market choice, it does lead to a fragmented offer. Nevertheless as a region we had been building strong governance briefing and training events, but are aware that during the pandemic training opportunities have been affected and virtual training whilst offered has received little take up. As a region we will continue recruitment, training and induction of new governors and aim to further develop governor capacity and expertise across the sector.

In order to raise the ambition and aspiration of the Halton Region, we had planned to launch Halton Learning Alliance (HLA) in March 2020. Unfortunately the pandemic delayed this, but we have since launched HLA agreeing the principles of the Learning Alliance and the shared vision for Halton with school partners. A shadow board will meet until the HLA strategic and operational structures are in place to continue driving the vision forwards for Halton.

Secondary Phase:

Priorities for our secondary phase involve improving outcomes for all pupils, particularly with regard to English and Maths. The Cross phase EEF maths work is supporting mathematical development across the transition phase so that learning time is not lost when pupils transfer from primary to secondary phases. We have linked with Cheshire and Wirral Maths Hub to share training and updates regarding mathematical teaching and pedagogy; challenging more able pupils with their mathematical skills and knowledge, whilst also providing training for non-specialist maths teachers. Reading will continue to be supported through sector training; academy schools sourcing CPD from their Trusts; linking with Literacy Hubs and sharing of effective practice across partners.

In Halton, six of the eight secondary schools are academy schools, with a seventh school holding a directive academy order to convert. Local authority capacity to support the schools is therefore limited due to our funding streams for improvement only being linked to maintained schools. However we do have weekly communications with our secondary phase Headteacher's and leads and have developed closer working partnerships during the COVID-19 outbreak. We do work as partners to facilitate information sharing and networks and communicate frequently with the Regional Schools Commissioners (RSC) Office.

Attendance and Elective Home Education

The Education Welfare Service (EWS) is a traded service with clear and effective Service Level agreements in place to support pupils with a particular focus on persistent absence. The EWS regularly monitors school attendance and uses this intelligence to target support and interventions. EWS works closely with schools to ensure that interventions are put in place in a timely way and are targeted and appropriate to the case. The EWS works closely with schools and parents around attendance expectations

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including holidays in term time, so parents are aware of possible consequence and penalties.

Persistent Absence undoubtedly impacts on outcomes. In 20/21 academic year autumn term attendance for secondary schools for the autumn term is 93.5% compared to the Halton data for autumn term 2019 of 93.65% and so attendance has reduced slightly as a result of COVID-19. Primary attendance is a concern with Halton's overall absence rate in 2018/2019 recorded as 4.43% as compared to 4.03% for England. Prior to COVID-19 all Halton primary schools agreed to jointly fund with the Local Authority an independent review of both the Local Authority's and schools approaches to attendance. Halton attendance for the autumn term 20/21 is 96.4% compared to data for the autumn term 2019 of 94.89% so attendance has increased following COVID-19. For special schools Halton attendance for the autumn term 20/21 is 89.1% compared to the DfE Halton data for the full autumn term 2019 of 90.41% so attendance has decreased following COVID-19.

During the March COVID-19 lockdown the EWS supported Children Social Care in monitoring daily school attendance of vulnerable pupils and worked with schools to encourage parents to send vulnerable pupils into school. They contacted families to offer ongoing support and advice to enable vulnerable children to go to school/access school work at home, access free school meals and referred pupils to other services such as NEET, bereavement support and referrals for counselling and mental health support.

From September to October half term 2020 the (EWS) made a decision in conjunction with legal advice not to use any statutory responses to attendance concerns in terms of fines or prosecution. This decision was made as it was felt a supportive approach would be more appropriate, working with parents and schools, providing reassurance, support and advice. As expected some parents were very anxious about their children returning to school and they decided to keep children at home. With this continued support and reassurance and visits from EWOs and schools the majority of these children have returned to school so the approach was successful.

The EWS has worked closely with public health to get advice and support since March 20 but also to access additional mental health training for staff. The EWS also works with CAMHS and Education Psychologists (EPs) for advice and support for pupils with mental health concerns. EPs and CAMHS will work closely for such pupils and work together to inform when a pupil is medically unfit to attend school. We have also established group consultation meetings with EPs and CAMHS to discuss pupils with SEMH and mental health concerns. This has been particularly driven by increasing mental health concerns of pupils, some of which follows COVID-19.

The tuition centre has remained open since schools returned in June 20 to support pupils medically unfit to attend school. We have also expanded the tuition offer to include live one to one lessons with tutors delivered through Microsoft Teams as well as using large screens in the tuition centre so tutors and pupils can be socially

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distanced. This has ensured pupils have been able to receive an education that is best suited to them and their mental health needs.

EWS has robust procedures around CME (Children Missing Education) and have ensured that throughout COVID-19 any pupils moving into Halton have been supported in applying for a school place and go on roll of a new school. For any moving out of Halton the CME Officer has worked with other Local Authorities to ensure the new Local Authority is aware of the child and can support them to access to a school place.

Electively Home Educated (EHE), at the end of the autumn Term 2020 the number of EHE children was 130 and parental anxiety around COVID-19 remained the most significant reason given by parents. At the time of writing (March 2021) the number of children EHE stands at 133, so the increase at the start of the academic year is now flattening off. As schools fully reopen, it is anticipated that there will be further returns from EHE pupils back into schools, bringing numbers back in line with previous years (although no two years can, in real terms, be compared as cohorts/issues/family situations are ever changing). Comparing Halton's EHE figures with North West local authorities, EHE figures vary between authorities from 0.44% of the school population to 2.02% of the school population, with Halton's figures at 0.71%, and below the known regional average of 0.79%. Officers working with EHE families are now also seeing requests from families to help them return to school.

Halton Behaviour Support Service

Halton Behaviour Support Service (HBSS) have continued to provide support to schools throughout this period, albeit with an amended offer during the COVID-19 pandemic. The focus of this work has continued to be to develop a shared understanding of good behaviour management in our schools, and to develop consistent practice across the borough so reducing the use of exclusions and more appropriately meeting the needs of our pupils.

There has been a regular review of all schools' behaviour policies to ensure that they are fully compliant, including reflecting the current DfE practice and COVID-19 addenda. A model behaviour policy and an Individual Behaviour Plans for have been provided and there has been an increase in the number of schools adopting these. This has ensured that school's policies are consistent with statutory guidance and that there has been an increase in the number of Halton schools working within the inclusive ethos supported and promoted by the Local Authority. Further support has been provided to Head Teachers and Behaviour Leads to ensure that the policy is reflected in practice. From summer term 2021 monitoring and scrutiny of this will be enhanced by the introduction of proactive behaviour audits which will be offered on a rolling programme covering 15 schools per year. The purpose of this will be to ensure that policies are not only compliant but are truly reflected in effective and observed practice.

Termly Behaviour and Pastoral Leads events have continued to be held to cascade information and share good practice. The focus of these meetings changes to address

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the emerging trends of behaviour being reflected in exclusions and in the reasons behind requests for support. In addition to these termly meetings and other existing training provided, HBSS have developed 'bite size' workshops that will be delivered from the summer term 2021, with the option for schools to book further in depth training. These 'bite size' workshops are aimed at improving and developing consistent behaviour management across the borough and to target emerging themes.

Since it was established 2 years ago, HBSS have delivered a comprehensive Team Teach training programme, with a clear and proactive focus on the importance of utilising de-escalation techniques but also including appropriate use of positive handling. This has ensured that there is increasing consistency of practice across the borough resulting in schools having a common understanding of how to effectively de-escalate and safely undertake physical incidents.

Mental Health First Aid has also been a major element of the HBSS training programme and whilst unfortunately no face to face training has been delivered, resources and remote sessions were provided to support schools in their preparation for re-opening. During the wider opening at the end of Lockdown 1 and the full opening in the autumn term 2020, HBSS supported schools in managing the behaviour of individual pupils who were identified as being overwhelmed by the return back to school. HBSS also provided increased support to parents through resources, signposting to other services and also direct contact with families as required. This has continued following the full opening on 8th March 2021.

The Education Workbook provides details of exclusions up to and including 2019 and shows an increasing trend upwards. However, comparison of exclusion data between autumn term 2019 and autumn 2020 has shown that there has been a 50% reduction in fixed term exclusions with a 40% decrease in the number of children receiving the exclusions. There has been an increase within the special school/PRU sectors and analysis has linked this to the fact that these pupils have not coped as well with the impact of the disruption to their education and routines. Analysis has also shown that there has been a decrease in incidents of persistent disruptive behaviour in the same period, with only 25.9% exclusions being accounted for this reason in autumn 2020 compared to 39.6% in autumn 2019. There has been a 70% reduction in permanent exclusions between the 2 terms. Analysis and discussion with school leaders has shown that the reduction in exclusions overall and in a number of schools in particular can be partly attributed to the challenge and support provided by HBSS in increasing understanding of the challenging circumstances that pupils face and the need for greater work to support them in self-regulation. Changes in practice that have resulted from being required to be COVID secure have also played a contributory factor. HBSS will continue to work with sector leaders to build on the positive impact that has been seen.

To meet the needs of children and young people with SEMH difficulties, in autumn 2020 the Local Authority launched a Secondary SEMH Re-integration and Outreach Service. The Bridge School have been commissioned to provide this service with the purpose of reducing the number of young people who are at risk of exclusion by providing direct

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support to both the young person and school, ensuring the young person has the skills to self-regulate and the support to successfully re-integrate into their home school with no further exclusions. This service is working in collaboration with the Education Psychology Service and HBSS to ensure a fully integrated approach in driving inclusion forward.

The Local Authority have also worked with sector leaders to re-launch the Graduated Approach, and HBSS have developed an integrated SEMH strand to support the work of SENCOs and Behaviour Leads as part of our drive for improved inclusion. As part of this work schools and the LA have also streamlined our CARE Schedule and ensured that it is aligned with the Graduated Approach and school behaviour management policies. This is to ensure improved early identification and support of children and young people's SEMH needs and also to reduce the risk of exclusions occurring as a result of unmet needs. This approach is currently being piloted across a number of schools before the planned launch in September 2021.

Improving participation and skills for young people to drive Halton's future

Young people who are not in education employment or training (NEET) or whose activity is not known to the Local Authority

The 14-19 Team support young people in transition from compulsory schooling into Post 16 so they can continue to gain qualifications and training that will allow them to be economically active and be part of a workforce in the future.

Performance has further improved in supporting young people into Education and Training and the combined NEET/Not Known outcome is 4.3% for 2019/2020, (this has improved from 5.1% in 2018/19). The overall percentage for 16 and 17 year olds compares to 5.5% nationally, 5.4% regionally, 5.8% across the LCR and 5.7% across our statistical neighbours.

From the start of national lockdown in March 2020 the Halton 14-19 Team and their commissioned services maintained contact with young people who were NEET through phone calls, text messages and social media. Young people who were in education, employment or training but who had previously worked with the team and were considered to be at risk of increased anxiety or social isolation were also contacted and given the opportunity to maintain contact with the team for support. Every young person studying an Apprenticeship was also contacted to ascertain the position of their apprenticeship and whether they needed any support or guidance. Individuals were offered support including challenging lack of furlough payments, being able to take on temporary work while furloughed and support to contact training provider for online work. Those in employment without training were also contacted and support offered including where to access support for a self-employed young person.

Despite our work with schools, Post 16 providers and young people we saw a reduction in the number of young people with an offer of learning or training for September 2020,

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down from 97.4% in 2019 to 96.8% in 2020. The reduction is a result of our ability to make contact with young people, in 2020 there were 37 young people who we were unable to contact to discuss their September Guarantee compared to 7 young people in 2019. Our reduction is in line with what's been experienced nationally with September Guarantee figures for England down from 95% in 2019 to 94.3% in 2020.

The lack of 'cold calling' due to COVID-19 resulted in the number of young people whose activity was not known to the local authority increasing significantly to 2.5% by August 2020 compared to 0.3% in August 2019. Previously letters haven't been used because they result in a very low return rate but given the circumstances the 14-19 Team wrote to every young person whose activity was not known. The results were better than expected perhaps due to people working from home, for our November 2020 return to DfE our Not Known figure is 1.1% compared to 0.8% in November 2019, whilst increased this is something we have achieved despite COVID-19 and remote working.

Through the work with Post 16 providers and alongside other services we have been pleased to see so many young people progressing into education, employment and training and sustaining their placements this term. In our November 2020 return to DfE we had 2.7% of young people NEET compared to 4.1% in November 2019.

The September Guarantee helps Local Authorities to fulfil their duty to provide education and training to young people by ensuring they have a suitable offer of post-16 learning by the time they leave secondary school. The offer should be appropriate to the young person's needs and can include full time education in school sixth form or colleges, an apprenticeship or traineeship, or employment combined with part-time education or training. Despite lockdown work with schools to secure September Guarantee offers for the Year 11 cohort continued. Work with Riverside College, OBA 6th form and other providers in the borough took place to understand their policy for late applications and to liaise between providers, commissioned services and young people.

Emerging Issues

Independent review of children's social care

On the 15th January 2021, a 'wholesale' independent review of children's social care in England was launched. A Department for Education spokesperson said: "*The independent review of children's social care will set out to radically reform the system, and we will shortly be setting out timings for this ambitious work*".

The review will take a fundamental look at the needs, experiences and outcomes of the children it supports, and what is needed to make a real difference. In doing so, the review will contribute to ambitious and deliverable reforms, taking into account the sustainability of local services and effective use of resources. The review will also consider how the children's social care system responds to all children who are referred

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to the system. It will address major challenges, including the sharp increase in recent years in the number of looked after children, high and rising unit costs, the inconsistencies in children's social care practice and outcomes across the country, and the failure of the system to provide sufficient stable loving homes for children. The review should consider the capacity and capability of the system to support and strengthen families in order to prevent children being taken into care unnecessarily.

Wood Review of multi-agency safeguarding arrangements

In December 2019, Sir Alan Wood CBE was appointed to review the implementation of new arrangements. His review report is due to be published in May 2021, it is expected that the review will set out recommendations for making new multi-agency safeguarding arrangements for local areas more effective.

The Coronavirus Act 2020

The Coronavirus Bill was introduced to Parliament on Thursday 19th March and became law on Wednesday 25th March 2020. The Act has had profound implications for social work practice, education provision, health provision and every other possible provision for service users. COVID-19 is an unprecedented global and rapidly changing situation resulting in unparalleled changes to how we provide services and keep children and families' healthy and safe. Going into 2021-22 we will continue to monitor changes to legislation in this Act.

Ofsted Social Care Inspections

Halton have been inspected by Ofsted in
July 2018 - Focused visit of the front door (iCART)

- July 2019 - Joint Targeted Area Inspection (JTAI) examining the multi-agency response to children experiencing or at risk of exploitation, including sexual and criminal exploitation,
- February 2020 - Inspection of Local Authority Children's Services' (ILACS)

During COVID -19 lockdown Ofsted visited local authorities and children's social care providers from September 2020. The visits were to provide 'assurance that vulnerable children were getting the help, care and protection that they needed', amid concerns that some have fallen out of sight during the COVID-19 pandemic. Halton did not receive an Assurance Visit but will be due a focused visit in 2021. Ofsted will concentrate on an area of anticipated good practice or possible concern. The self-evaluation and annual conversation feed into the process of identifying areas of focus.

The Domestic Abuse Act 2021

In April 2021 The Domestic Abuse Act 2021, will become law, it marks a significant step forwards and should transform our response to domestic abuse, which affected 2.3m people in England and Wales in 2019-20. The Domestic Abuse Act will provide further protections to the millions of people who experience domestic abuse and strengthen measures to tackle perpetrators and sets out the first definition in law of what constitutes domestic abuse. The definition goes well beyond physical violence. It

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recognises that domestic abuse can be emotional, coercive or controlling or economic. The measures include important new protections and support for victims and include the Police and Courts being given new powers.

Unaccompanied Asylum Seekers

On the 24th March 2021, the Home Secretary made a statement to Parliament setting out [The New Plan for Immigration](#). The Plan aims to introduce a robust approach to age assessment to ensure we safeguard against adults claiming to be children. There are very serious safeguarding risks if people over 18 are treated as children and placed in settings, including schools, with children. As well as the obvious safeguarding risks, it also reduces the resources available to help other children. In 2019, the UK received more asylum claims from unaccompanied children than any other European country. Since 2015, the UK has received, on average, more than 3,000 unaccompanied asylum-seeking children per year. Where age was disputed and resolved from 2016-2020, 54% were found to be adults. On average, the Home Office provides £46,000 each year to Local Authorities to look after each unaccompanied asylum-seeking child. The UK is one of the only countries in Europe not to use scientific age assessment methods to help determine a person's age when they arrive into the country. Various scientific methods are used to assess age in, among others, Sweden, Norway, France, Germany and the Netherlands. The New Plan will therefore strengthen and clarify the framework for determining the age of people seeking asylum.

Review into support for Children with SEND

The review was announced in September 2019, five years on from reforms introduced to better support children and young people with SEND and will look at the how the system has evolved since then, it will evaluate how well the legislative framework and arrangements served children and young people who had special educational needs and/or disabilities. I will consider the early years, compulsory education, education from 16 to 19, and the contribution of social care and health services. The review stalled because of COVID-19, it is expected that the report will be published summer 2021 and may have implications for practice.

High needs national funding formula

High needs funding allocations to Local Authorities are one aspect of the distribution of funding to schools, colleges and other organisations that make provision for children and young people with SEND and those who require alternative provision (AP) because their needs cannot be met in the school they would normally attend. The DFE ran a consultation between 10th February 2021 and 24th March 2021 seeking views on possible changes to the high needs national funding formula. The consultation is seeking responses to specific proposals for a small number of changes to the national funding formula used to allocate the high needs funding to local authorities in the 2022-23 financial year and for views on some of the longer term changes to the formula that could be considered in future.

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|-------------------------------------|--|---------------------------|---------------------|
| Service Objective: PED01 | Improve outcomes for children and young people through effective multi-agency early intervention | | |
| Key Milestone(s) (21/22) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Work with schools to improve the level of attendance at Primary and Secondary schools (March 2022 Martin West/Debbie Houghton) ▪ Implement Pause project and support women to make positive choices, improving their relationships with their children and preventing further children being taken into care. (Val Armor March 2022) ▪ Revise Halton’s parental offer that will include further developmental of reducing parental conflict training (Val Armor March 2022) ▪ Work with key partners to develop a stronger multi agency approach to both targeted and universal families in Halton during the 1001 critical days in particular to increase the number of 0-1 registered and accessing children centre provision (Val Armor March 2022) | | |
| Responsible Officer: | Operational Director Children & Families Service | Linked Indicators: | PED01 01 – PED01 02 |
| Service Objective: PED02 | Keeping Children and Young People safe by improving practice | | |
| Key Milestone(s) (21/22) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Embed a systemic model of social work practice across the whole service; social workers, managers and senior leaders (March 2022 Tracey Coffey) ▪ Review and update Workforce Strategy in line with the Knowledge and Skills framework and the Professional Capabilities Framework. Developing the competencies, skills and knowledge of the workforce making them motivated, stable and ambitious will improve the outcomes for families and keep them at the heart of everything we do. (Liz Davenport/ Samantha Madden March 2022) ▪ Implement redevise structure for children and need service to ensure better resilience and management accountability to provide a safe and structured environment for social workers. (March 2022 Angela Povey) ▪ Implement redevise quality and assurance framework to monitor improvements in practise (Tracey Coffey 2022) | | |
| Responsible Officer: | Operational Director Children & Families Service | Linked Indicators: | PED02 01 – PED02 11 |

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|-------------------------------------|--|---------------------------|--|
| Service Objective: PED03 | Improve outcomes for Children in Care and Care Leavers | | |
| Key Milestone(s) (21/22) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Ensuring all children in care achieve permanency in a timely way. (Liz Davenport/ Angela Povey March 2022) ▪ Ensure that Safeguarding Unit escalate any delays or concerns using escalate policy (Susanne Leece 2022) ▪ Review and quality assure the commissioning of services for Children in Care and Care Leavers to ensure that they meet the needs of Halton’s population and inform future commissioning decisions (March 2022 Sam Murtagh) ▪ Through the quality assurance of Personal Education Plans, identify areas of need and support to improve outcomes for individual Children in Care (March 2022 Sharon Williams) | | |
| Responsible Officer: | Operational Director Children & Families Service | Linked Indicators: | PED03 01 – PED03 07 Additionally Attainment Information for Children in Care and use of Pupil Premium Plus will be reported through annual reports. |

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| Service Objective: PED04 | Improve the offer for children and young people with disabilities and those with Special Educational Needs | | |
| Key Milestone(s) (21/22) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Develop and Implement the SEND strategy 201-2025 with focus on priority 4 inclusive education. Impact will be monitored through the SEND Strategic Partnership. (Adrian Leach March 2021) ▪ Review the current framework of support for children and young people with disabilities, including short breaks provision (Sam Murtagh March 2022) ▪ Review direct payments with all recommissions co-produced with parents and young people. (March 2022 Val Armor) ▪ Improve quality and timeliness of Education Health and Care Plans. (March 2022 Adrian Leach) ▪ Quality assure all provision currently being utilised to ensure that provision meets the needs of our children and young people (March 2022 Sam Murtagh) ▪ Review in borough specialist provision and revise to meet the needs of Halton’s children and young people (March 2022 Ann McIntyre) | | |
| Responsible Officer: | Operational Director, Education, Inclusion and Provision | Linked Indicators: | PED04 01 – PED04 09 |

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|-------------------------------------|--|---------------------------|--|
| Service Objective: PED05 | Raise achievement across Early Years and all Key Stages, and diminish the difference between vulnerable groups and their peers | | |
| Key Milestone(s) (21/22) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Monitor and evaluate educational outcomes of all pupils, vulnerable pupils (CIC: EHCP etc), disadvantaged pupils and the impact of funding streams (including Free EY Entitlement, Catch Up funding, Pupil Premium, Sports Premium etc) to raise achievement for all and diminish the difference between vulnerable groups and their peers (March 2022 Jill Farrell) ▪ Monitor and evaluate the impact of Covid lockdown and remote learning offer on all pupils and vulnerable pupils learning (March 2022, Jill Farrell) ▪ Review the process of risk assessment for schools and settings to target support and drive improvement (March 2022 Jill Farrell) ▪ Build engagement, capacity and governors understanding of the strategic roles and responsibilities (March 2022 Jill Farrell) ▪ In partnership with schools, review and design an effective educational vision for the region that meets pupils needs whilst raising ambitions (March 2022 Jill Farrell) ▪ Launch Halton Learning Alliance Strategic Partnership to develop an inclusive, ambitious approach developing contributing, successful citizens locally, nationally and globally. All educational stakeholders and community members acting with morale purpose for Halton children, young people and community members (March 2022, Jill Farrell) | | |
| Responsible Officer: | Operational Director, Education, Inclusion and Provision | Linked Indicators: | PED05 01 – PED05 05 Additionally attainment information will be reported through annual reports. Childcare sufficiency assessment will be reported annually to members through Performance and Policy Board |

| | | | |
|-------------------------------------|--|---------------------------|---------------------|
| Service Objective: PED06 | Improve participation and skills for young people to drive Halton's future | | |
| Key Milestone(s) (21/22) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Closely monitor the cohort of young people not in education, employment or training and identify any common patterns/issues to inform actions, guide the effective use of resources and to identify any future commissioning needs. (March 2022 Háf Bell) ▪ Work with schools, the College and training providers to review the post 16 offers of learning made to young people and increase the amount of offers made before the end of an academic year. (July 2022) (Háf Bell) ▪ Work with schools, the College and training providers to report where young people progress to Post 16 as quickly as possible so those who haven't progressed can be identified and contacted to offer support (October 2021) (Háf Bell) ▪ Work with Post 16 education and training providers in the borough to support the development of provision that does have clear progression opportunities (March 2022) (Háf Bell) | | |
| Responsible Officer: | Operational Director, Education, Inclusion and Provision | Linked Indicators: | PED06 01 – PED06 04 |

| Ref | Description | 19/20 Actual | 19/ 20 Target | 20/21 Actual | 21/22 Target |
|-------------|--|--|------------------|-----------------|-----------------|
| PED01 01 | Increase the number of early help assessments (MAP/PRE MAP) health/education and other partners are leading on (financial year cumulative to end of quarter Val Armor) | 421 open CAF 1473 CAF activity 302 pre CAF | N/A | | N/A |
| PED01 02 | Improve overall attendance at school (Debbie Houghton) | 94.93% | N/A | | 95% |
| PED02 01 | Monitor the rate of referrals to Children's Social Care per 10,000 0-18 year olds (forecast rate at end of financial year) (Angela Povey) | 422 | 524 | 465(prov) | 500 |
| PED02 02 | Monitor the rate of children in need per 10,000 0-18 year olds (snapshot at end of quarter) (Angela Povey) | 362 | 380 | 221(prov) | 380 |

| Ref | Description | 19/20 Actual | 19/ 20 Target | 20/21 Actual | 21/22 Target |
|-------------|---|-----------------|------------------|-----------------|-----------------|
| PED02 03 | Monitor the rate of children subject to a child protection plan per 10,000 0-18 year olds (snapshot at end of quarter) (Angela Povey) | 54 | 45 | 50(prov) | 45 |
| PED02 04 | Monitor the rate of children in care per 10,000 0-18 year olds (snapshot at end of quarter) (Liz Davenport) | 99 | 90 | 103(prov) | 90 |
| PED02 05 | Reduce the number of children and young people who enter the care system (financial year cumulative to end of quarter) (Angela Povey) | 95 | 68 | 75(prov) | 68 |
| PED02 06 | Reduce the average caseload in Child in Need teams (snapshot at end of quarter) (Angela Povey) | 21 | N/A | | 18 |
| PED02 07 | Increase the proportion of missing incidents where a return interview completed (financial year, cumulative to end of quarter) (Angela Povey/Liz Davenport/Val Armor) | 72% | 85% | | 85% |
| PED02 08 | Reduce the number of young people who repeatedly run away in Halton (financial year, cumulative to end of quarter) (Angela Povey/Liz Davenport/Val Armor) | 114 | N/A | | N/A |
| PED02 09 | Record the number of young people going missing in the year (financial year, cumulative to end of quarter) (Angela Povey/Liz Davenport/Val Armor) | 265 | N/A | | N/A |
| PED02 10 | Record the number of young people flagged as at risk of child sexual exploitation (snapshot at end of the quarter) (Angela Povey) | 26 | 20 | 19(prov) | 20 |
| PED02 11 | Record the number of young people flagged as at risk of child criminal exploitation (snapshot at end of the quarter) (Angela Povey) | N/A | 12 | 35(prov) | 12 |
| PED03 01 | Reduce the number of children who are placed in residential care (snapshot at end of quarter) (Liz Davenport/Sam Murtagh) | 31 | 20 | 34(prov) | 20 |
| PED03 02 | Reduce the number of children who are placed in independent fostering agency placements (snapshot at end of quarter) (Liz Davenport/Sam Murtagh) | 61 | 35 | | 35 |

| Ref | Description | 19/20 Actual | 19/ 20 Target | 20/21 Actual | 21/22 Target |
|----------|---|--------------|------------------------|--------------|--------------|
| PED03 03 | Maintain the percentage of Care Leavers in suitable accommodation (snapshot at end of quarter) (Liz Davenport/Sam Murtagh) | 92% | 95% | 93.7%(prov) | 95% |
| PED03 04 | Increase the percentage of Care Leavers in EET (Liz Davenport) (snapshot at the end of quarter) | 68% | 65% | 39% (prov) | 65% |
| PED03 05 | Benchmarking year – Percentage of CIC Residential and Leaving Care placements that have received a Quality Assurance Visit from the Placements Team within the previous 12 months (cumulative from April to end of quarter) (Sam Murtagh) | N/A | N/A | | 75% |
| PED03 06 | Report on the budget spent on independent and out of borough placements for Children in Care (Forecast end of year) (Liz Davenport/Sam Murtagh) | 9,672, 589 | Projected 9,583,822 | | |
| PED03 07 | Report on the number of children placed within 20 miles of Halton (Sam Murtagh) | | | | |
| PED04 01 | Increase the percentage of Education Health and Care plans completed within 20 weeks (academic year cumulative to end of quarter) (Adrian Leach) | 49% | 75% | | 75% |
| PED04 02 | Reduce the number of incidents of fixed term exclusion (academic year cumulative to end of quarter) (Vanessa Nice/Sharon Williams) | 707 | 500 | | 500 |
| PED04 03 | Reduce the number of children subject to fixed term exclusions (academic year cumulative to end of quarter) (Vanessa Nice/Sharon Williams) | 349 | 350 | | 350 |
| PED04 04 | Reduce the number of children subject to permanent exclusion (academic year cumulative to end of quarter) (Vanessa Nice/Sharon Williams.) | 21 | 30 | | 30 |
| PED04 05 | Report on the proportion of children and young people that to an EHCP placed out of borough at independent non maintained special schools. (Snapshot at end of quarter) (Claire Gurney) Long term target will be to reduce. | N/A | N/A | | 94% |

| Ref | Description | 19/20 Actual | 19/ 20 Target | 20/21 Actual | 21/22 Target |
|----------|--|----------------|--------------------|--------------|--------------------|
| PED04 06 | Report on the budget spent on independent and out of borough provision for SEND (Forecast end of year) (Sam Murtagh) – long term target will be to reduce | N/A | £250,000 reduction | | £250,000 reduction |
| PED04 07 | Increase the percentage of children and young people with new EHCP placed in mainstream provision (Snapshot at end of quarter) (Adrian Leach) | 43% | 30% | 50% | 65% |
| PED04 08 | Monitor the percentage of Special schools with overall effectiveness of Good or Outstanding (snapshot at end of quarter) (Jill Farrell) | 100% | 100% | 100% | 100% |
| PED04 09 | Increase the percentage of Education Health and Care plans for Child Protection and Children in Care completed in 16 weeks (academic year cumulative to end of quarter) (Adrian Leach) | | | | 75% |
| PED05 01 | Ensure all eligible children for the vulnerable 2 year old funding, access quality EY provision (internally collected termly information – may not match to published data from January census) (Jill Farrell) | 90% | 100% | | 100% |
| PED05 02 | Increase the take up of Early Years Entitlement for 3 to 4 year olds (internally collected termly information – may not match to published data from January census) (Jill Farrell) | 93% | 96% | | 96% |
| PED05 03 | Monitor the percentage of Childminders and out of school clubs with overall effectiveness Good or outstanding, or met if inspected in terms of compliance (snapshot at end of quarter) (Jill Farrell) | 95% | N/A | | N/A |
| PED05 04 | Monitor the percentage of Primary schools with overall effectiveness of Good or Outstanding. N.B. 6 out of the 8 schools are academies. (snapshot at end of quarter) (Jill Farrell) | 87.8% | N/A | | N/A |
| PED05 05 | Monitor the percentage of Secondary schools with overall effectiveness of Good or Outstanding (snapshot at end of quarter) (Jill Farrell) | 50% (Aug 2018) | N/A | | N/A |

| Ref | Description | 19/20 Actual | 19/ 20 Target | 20/21 Actual | 21/22 Target |
|-------------|---|-----------------|------------------|---|-----------------|
| PED06 01 | Maintain the percentage of 16-17 year olds not in education, employment or training (snapshot at end of quarter – published end of year information February) (Háf Bell) | 4.0% | 4.4% | 3.4% | 3.7% |
| PED06 02 | Maintain the percentage of 16-17 year olds whose activity is not known (snapshot at end of quarter – published end of year information February) (Háf Bell) | 0.3% | 0.8% | 0.6% | 0.3% |
| PED06 03 | Increase the percentage of 16-17 year olds with an offer of learning (September Guarantee) (Háf Bell) | 97.4% | 98% | 96.8% | 97.4% |
| PED06 04 | Increase the percentage of 16-17 year olds participating in education or training that meets the Governments definition of full participation (known as Raising the Participation Age) (Háf Bell) | 91.8% | 93% | Won't be available till later in April 21 | 92% |

| | |
|---------------------------|---|
| REPORT TO: | Children, Young People & Families Policy & Performance Board |
| DATE: | 14 th June 2021 |
| REPORTING OFFICER: | Strategic Director, People |
| PORTFOLIO: | Children & Young People |
| SUBJECT: | Halton Local Area SEND Strategy 2021-25 |
| WARD(S) | All |

1.0 **PURPOSE OF THE REPORT**

- 1.1 To advise the board on the outcomes of the consultation on the proposed local area SEND Strategy for 2021-2024 and how it will be implemented.

2.0 **RECOMMENDATION: That:**

- i) **Members consider and comment on the report and appendices.**

3.0 **SUPPORTING INFORMATION**

- 3.1 Following the SEND Partnership Board's approval of the draft SEND Strategy for 2021-25, consultation took place during March and April 2021. The consultation was hosted on the Halton Local Offer and was widely publicised both prior to and during the consultation phase (see appendix 1).
- 3.2 In addition to making stakeholders aware through social media and email, a number of presentations and consultation events were held with a range of stakeholders (see appendix 1). The ability to consult more broadly and effectively was impacted significantly by lockdown restrictions in place during the majority of the consultation phase due to the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic.
- 3.3 PPB should note that in addition to the consultation on the strategy, feedback has been given and gathered on how we can more effectively reach out to a broader range of stakeholders when consulting. Feedback included the need to:
- reach out to a wider network of parent groups;
 - provide more and better differentiated consultation with children young people;
 - hold events over a wider variety of times including more

- evening consultations;
 - provide more notice of consultation events and use the disabled children's register and synergy to inform families who are registered or have live EHCPs.
- 3.4 Moving forward Officers will look to respond positively to all the above. One of the ways identified that consultation could be swiftly improved is by establishing a new parent/carer database or register accompanying the statutory Disabled Children's Register. This would require parent/carer permission to comply with GDPR. Following approval from the SEND Strategic Partnership this is being further explored by the CYP Policy and Performance Team.
- 3.5 The consultation period for the SEND Strategy closed at midnight on Friday 23rd April after been open for eight weeks, including the school Easter holiday. A total of 86 people responded to the consultation of which 49% were parents of children and young people with SEND. Live, zoom based consultation events included representation from parents and a number of young people. The information in the consultation summary is anonymous and these may be included in the summary total. Appendix 2 contains the full consultation summary.
- 3.6 Overall the draft strategy was well received in its intention with 99% of respondents either agreeing or strongly agreeing with the proposed vision and 90% agreeing or strongly agreeing with the principles. However, the detail contained in the comments presented a more balanced picture with comments including:
- *I think they are strong statements based on good values, and are aspirational*
 - *This what a caring society would want.*
 - *I agree but don't feel Halton follow this*
 - *I wish this was an actual vision. But no one is heard and nothing is actioned.*
 - *It would be good but again it's all spoke about and never delivered.*
- 3.7 In terms of overall priorities and outcome measures again there was a consistently high level of agreement with 82% agreeing or strongly agreeing with the key outcome themes and 92% responding that the delivering on the priorities would improve the lives of children, young people and families.
- 3.8 Again, however, the tone of consultation events and the comments gathered suggest a significant scepticism on the local area's ability to deliver its priorities. Addressing this scepticism must be at the

forefront of the partnership's considerations when agreeing implementation and monitoring and accountability if it is to succeed. With this in mind an extraordinary meeting of the SEND partnership is convened in June 2021 to focus solely on ensuring that appropriate governance and accountability processes are in place to make sure the objectives are delivered.

3.9 Some telling examples from the comments from the consultation feedback include:

- *agree be bold, take a stance, make it simple De- complicate it all This will Inspire and innovate the whole process. Over[h]all the system in Halton and lead the way.*
- *Those appointed to implement the scheme(s) should be required to PROACTIVELY search for potential beneficiariesSpecial consideration should be given to related groups of beneficiaries, e.g. siblings. The benefits provided by the scheme(s) must be INTEGRATED into a background of other provisions (financial, housing, clothing, books and equipment, computers, travel, accommodation, food sufficiency, ability to do homework etc.etc.) without which it will all be in vain. Very special help and consideration should be given to potential beneficiaries in particular situations (excluded from normal schooling, whether temporarily or permanently, young offenders, those on probation or other restrictions imposed by authorities).*
- *Not all schools are inclusive, but this would be nice*
- *Only if they are matched by sufficient levels of funding.*
- *Priority 4 will only be possible if waiting times for funding are cut. New pupils arrive at school and clearly need additional support however without appropriate funding schools cannot make this happen*
- *Parents need to understand the parameters in which Halton are able to work so that they have realistic expectations and are willing to discuss options to find the most effective and appropriate one for the young person at each stage of their development.*
- *Will waiting times for support be reduced?*

3.10 Appendix 3 shows the work carried out to date in incorporating the feedback and the potential impact on the draft strategy that the comments suggest. While there was clearly overall agreement on the direction of travel contained in the draft strategy the partnership board agreed to reconvene the strategy development task and finish group to fully consider the feedback given and ensure that it was

appropriately captured in the final strategy.

3.11 Next Steps

- June:
- Extraordinary meeting of SEND Partnership to approve strategy and governance.
 - Priority sub-groups to develop action plans to deliver objectives and agree performance indicators and milestones.
- July:
- Scheduled SEND Partnership meeting to de-conflict and approve action plans including completion dates/phasing, objective milestones and KPI/ outcome measures.

4.0 POLICY IMPLICATIONS

4.1 Although the local area SEND Strategy does not have a direct impact on policy the vision and principles in the SEND Strategy will need to be reflected in council policy changes as they happen.

4.2 Some of the objectives from the strategy will require reviews or amendments to policies to facilitate achieving the strategic outcomes. However such amendments or changes to any Council policy remains subject to the council's policy review processes including EIA and executive approval.

5.0 OTHER/FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

5.1 The SEND Strategy has been developed to be delivered within existing revenue budgets and no implementation fund has been identified.

5.2 The overall impact of the strategy is to increase joint working and service efficiency, including appropriate provision and sufficiency in the education sector. This will ease pressure on budgets and contribute significantly to eliminating the overspend in Halton Dedicated Schools Grant High Needs Block.

6.0 IMPLICATIONS FOR THE COUNCIL'S PRIORITIES

6.1 Children & Young People in Halton

The purpose of the 2021-2025 Halton SEND Strategy is to improve outcomes for, and the lived experience of, children and young people with SEND and their families. Currently children recognised as having a special educational needs and/or disability make up over 17% of the areas school age population therefore the strategy will make a significant contribution towards ensuring that Halton's

children and young people have the best possible start in life.

6.2 Employment, Learning & Skills in Halton

Young people with SEND and Learning difficulties are disproportionately likely to be NEET or unemployed. Elements of the strategy are aimed at improving employability and skills for these young people leading to meaningful employment.

6.3 A Healthy Halton

Children and young people with SEND are disproportionately likely to be overweight, lack opportunities to access healthy lifestyles and leisure activities and die young. Improving health outcomes for these children and young people is a core objective of SEND Strategic Priority 3: Preparation for Adulthood.

6.4 A Safer Halton

Contextual safeguarding considerations are a significant element with respect to ensuring that we build inclusive communities for children and young people with both visible and invisible disabilities.

6.5 Halton's Urban Renewal

None identified.

7.0 RISK ANALYSIS

7.1 Without a coherent and joined up strategic approach to meeting the needs and improving the life outcomes and lived experience of children and young people and their families it will be considerably more challenging for the local area to meet its statutory and morale duties.

7.2 Individual objectives within the strategy will, in some cases, contain projects that may require separate risk analysis. Where this is the case these will be overseen by the SEND Strategic Partnership.

8.0 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES

8.1 Individual objectives within the strategy will, in some cases, contain projects that require separate and individual equality impact analysis and assessment as part of good practice. Where this is the case these will be overseen by the SEND Strategic Partnership.

9.0 LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS UNDER SECTION 100D OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972

None.



SEND Strategy 2021-2025

Introduction

Halton is committed to ensuring inclusive education, health and social activities of children and young people aged 0-25 years.

We expect that all services will work to enable all children and young people to develop, learn, participate and achieve their best possible outcomes.

Children's human rights are written down in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) to protect children and young people's rights around Participation in society/their local community; Protection from discrimination, exploitation etc and Provision covering their welfare e.g. education, healthcare etc. The UNCRC also says that **all adults** must do what is best for children and young people – this means that **we all** have a role to play to ensure that these rights are honoured.

The UNCRC says that all children and young people have rights and should be supported to:

- Live, develop, be well informed, included and can make their own choices;
- Enabled to flourish and thrive for who they are as people as they grow up;
- Be heard, have their views respected and participate in society as anybody else;
- Have equal access, opportunities, be safe and not be discriminated against.

Vision

In Halton, the rights within the UNCRC will be at the heart of our practice.

Halton Children's Trust believes that **every** child and young person has a right to thrive, flourish and lead an ordinary life. This should be without being labelled or restricted, no matter what their disability or ability.

We want every child and young person to:

- feel safe; valued; included and connected;
- be given opportunities to be active and for physical and mental health;
- be empowered to make choices that shape their lives with appropriate supportive relationships.

Principles

This Strategy sets out the plans we will put in place over the next five years, so that we can drive forwards our vision, priorities, outcomes and performance indicators to improve our practice.

To do this, we will need to:

- have improved our culture, ethos and practice with better processes and communication for working better together;
- ensure that children, young people and families have access to the right support, at the right time and at the right level to meet their needs;
- pave the way for children and young people as they grow up to thrive and flourish in their future life;
- offer **inclusive** education or learning opportunities in an appropriate setting serving their needs.

What do we mean by inclusive?

Inclusion is like the golden thread that has a direct influence on all aspects of children, young people and families' lives.

Attending

- ✚ Able to learn/train within environments which best meet their needs;
- ✚ Engaged in the life of their local community with groups/organisations/services that have inclusive culture and values.

Included

- ✚ Voices are heard and they are involved in decisions about things in their life;
- ✚ Opportunity to participate and engage as fully as possible in all aspects of their life;
- ✚ Enabled and supported to participate in learning/training.

Achieving

- ✚ Able to achieve their full potential;
- ✚ Have access to a developmentally appropriate curriculum or training/learning that is tailored to meet their needs.

Supported

- ✚ Their life is benefitted by the ethos, culture, teaching practices and relationships provided through groups, organisations, services and education settings;
- ✚ They are supported to overcome set-backs and barriers in their life.

Our Priorities

We believe the following priorities will help us to drive the work of Halton Children's Trust to meet the needs of children and young people with SEND.

Working Better Together

By working better together needs are identified early and met at the right time, by services that are fully inclusive in practice and processes.

Preparing for Adulthood

We will maximise young people's ability to thrive, be independent and reach their goals for adult life.

Empowerment (Communication and Co-production)

Professionals will work positively with children, young people and families to provide them with access to the information they need to build provision and services together.

Educational Inclusion

Children and young people can fulfil their potential supported by educational settings.

Our Key Outcomes

| | |
|--|---|
| <p style="text-align: center;">Priority: Working Better Together</p> <p>How will we know we have achieved it?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Families will have to repeat themselves less often “tell it once”. • Support will have been identified earlier for children and young people to have the “right support, at the right time and at the right level” which changes to meet their needed as they grow up. | <p style="text-align: center;">Priority: Preparing for Adulthood</p> <p>How will we know we have achieved it?</p> <p>Young people will tell us they:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Feel healthy and feel safe • Have job and control of their money • Feel valued, included, active and involved • Have a choice of housing • Have friends and a social life • Have intimate relationships |
| <p style="text-align: center;">Priority: Empowerment (Communication and Co-production)</p> <p>How will we know we have achieved it?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children, young people and families tell us they feel in control, well supported and able to influence the system of support for their child/young person. • Children, young people and families tell us that they feel respected and that their voice is heard by services. • Feedback from children, young people and families regularly sought and acted upon. • Children, young people and families tell us that we have provide them with easily accessible, jargon-free information that we have developed and produced together. | <p style="text-align: center;">Priority: Educational Inclusion</p> <p>How will we know we have achieved it?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pupils progress and achievement will be in line with their peers compared to other local authorities nationally). • More pupils with EHCPs educated within mainstream schools, with fewer pupils educated outside the Borough. |

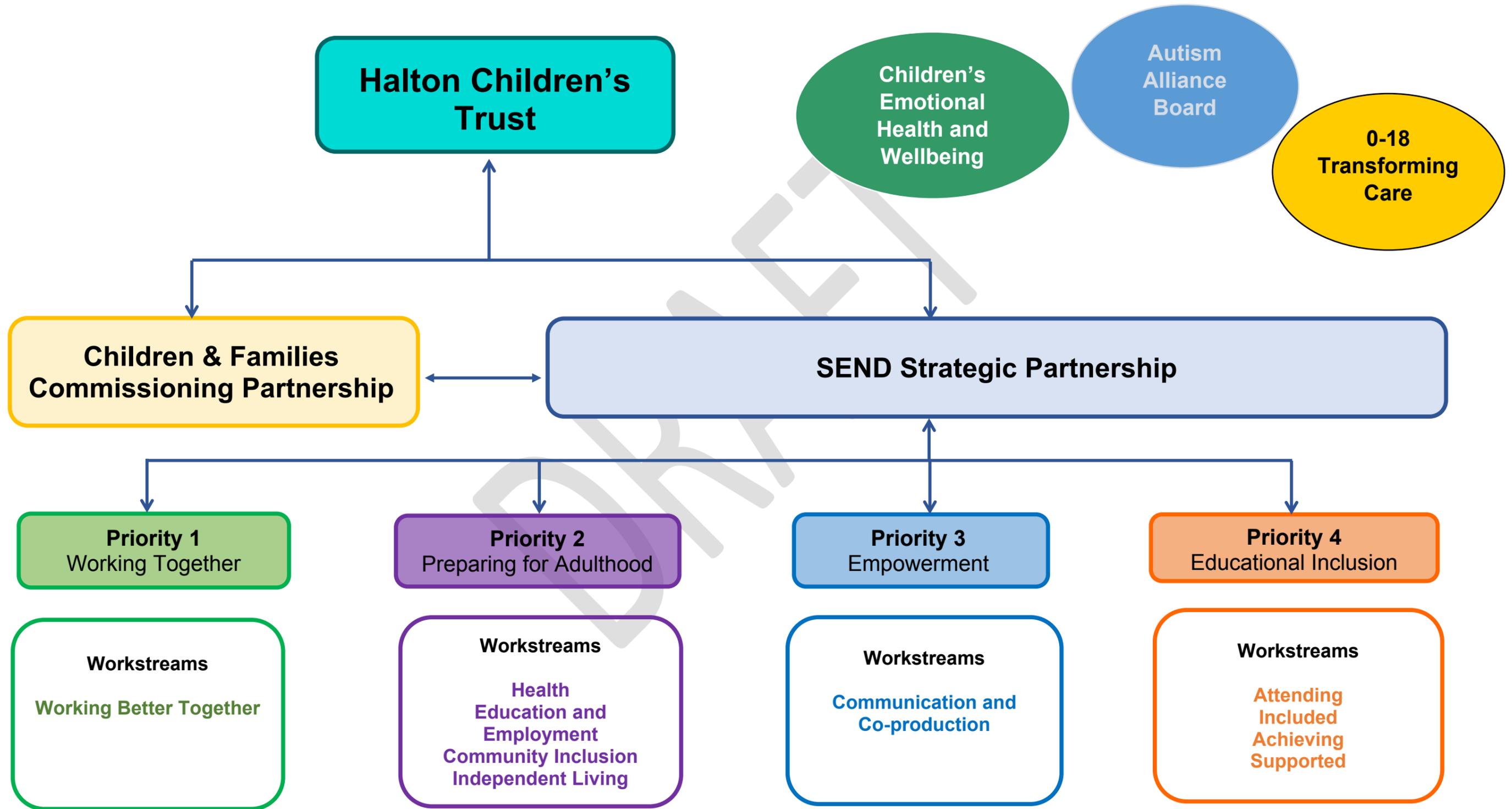
Who will be accountable for delivering this Strategy?

The SEND Strategic Partnership is responsible for leading this Strategy and accountable to Halton Children’s Trust Board for delivery and achievement of the priorities and outcomes over the next five years.

Priority Groups will sit underneath the Partnership and will develop action plans to drive forwards the work within each priority which will outline the objectives, actions, timescales and a clear set of performance indicators that will be used to review and monitor progress.

The need to establish improved feedback mechanisms from children, young people and families is a key element in being able to accurately measure the success of this Strategy.

SEND Strategy Governance 2021-2025



Priority: Working Better Together

By working better together needs are identified early and met at the right time, by services that are fully inclusive in practice and processes.

Working together, we will:

- Develop and monitor a set of creative and challenging outcomes measures to improve collective understanding about where we currently are in Halton delivering SEND services
- Review and improve the health pathways to reduce delays in diagnosis and ensure appropriate post-diagnostic support is available
- Improve awareness and use of learning disability annual health checks at 14 years+ and hospital passports with GPs and families to better support and meet the needs of young people.
- Review, revise and further embed the SEND Joint Commissioning Framework ensure services provided are good quality, accessible, inclusive and support children and young peoples' right to lead a diverse and flourishing life-
- Improve person centred practices including better information sharing systems between education, health and social care services/partners to deliver a Halton "tell it once" approach so that families can avoid having to repeatedly provide the same information.
- Support children and young people's access to education/learning by implementing integrated arrangements for specialist equipment (through Halton's Specialist Equipment Policy).
- Identify earlier the support needed by children and young people, so the "right support, at the right time and at the right level" is available and reviewed/monitored to address any changes needed as they grow up.
- Ensure timely and appropriate access to additional support funding for early years settings and that the referral routes and processes are well understood.

Priority: Preparing for Adulthood (PfA)

We will maximise young people's ability to thrive, be independent and reach their goals for adult life.

Note: These objectives provide a headline summary of work required or in development and they flow from actions already taken through the PfA 'vision'.

| Health | Education and Employment | Community Inclusion | Independent Living |
|---|---|--|--|
| <p>Working together we will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> To further develop multi-agency pathways including the transition from Children's to Adults' services, for universal health assessments and health action plans to be implemented for all assessments. These will improve earlier identification, intervention, the support required by children and young people and improve strategic planning for provision. Equip young people to be empowered, confident and able to make decisions about their life and manage their own health. Review and improve the health pathways and early identification causing diagnosis delays for families seeking support for their child/young person, including transition pathways from Children's to Adults' health services. Ensure that health provision and support to meet the needs of children and young people to access schools/settings is effectively sourced and delivered e.g. post-diagnosis support, Speech and Language Therapy, Occupational Therapy etc. | <p>Working together we will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improve the range and choice of educational provision across all key stages but particularly at Key Stage 4 and post 16. Have in a place a clear pathway to employment that provides a wide range of opportunities through education. Including making clear the pathways to supported employment and the further development of supported internships that lead to paid work and a career. Recognise the importance of transition in children's lives to embed the idea of the future and planning for it through effective support for children and young people to transition seamlessly to their next phase of education and employment. Raise awareness about positive inclusion to support increased opportunities for young people with SEND for employment with local employers. Improve support within schools/settings for children and young people to access specialist careers support, advice and guidance. | <p>Working together we will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promote a SEND friendly Borough with inclusive communities by working together with the business and voluntary sector communities to improve social inclusion for young people with SEND. Strengthen the support provided to children and young people to develop the skills they need as they grow up e.g. increase their independence, involvement in their local community, employability and future aspirations. Ensure that children and young people have access to robust information, advice, support and guidance that meets their needs which enables seamless transitions e.g. between schools/settings, services and children to adults. | <p>Working together we will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increase the use of assistive technology and equipment to support independence. Ensure that vulnerable young people including those with SEND have access to universal and targeted youth services, support that recognises their vulnerability to exploitation and improves their education of areas such as, illegal substances, social media, healthy relationships etc Ensure Halton Housing Strategy reflects the needs of young people with SEND and that there is sufficient provision of appropriate accommodation and care to support independent living. |

Priority: Empowerment (Communication and Co-production)

Professionals will work positively with families and provide them with access to the information they need to build provision and services together.

Working together, we will:

- Develop a Co-production Charter with children, young people and parents/carers to set out our commitments and the value of parent/carer, child and young person's voice. The charter will have **accountability** at its heart and be supported by a programme of workforce development across the system.
- Ensure that children, young people and their parents/carers are made aware of their right to access easy-read, jargon free, impartial information, advice and support.
- Ensure high quality, accessible communication and support is available to children, young people and their parents/carers through regular updates and information sharing via the Local Offer, Halton SENDIASS, Halton SEND Carer Forum (HSCF), SEND Strategic Group etc.
- Further develop and maintain a co-produced accessible, accurate and comprehensive Local Offer.
- Develop regular feedback processes for parents/carers, children and young people to understand how well we are doing and to inform improvements as needed.
- Maximise transparency and accessibility of all our processes.
- Celebrate the achievements of our children and young people.
- Strengthen and widen our engagement in working better together with children, young people and their parents/carers.-
- Increase the wider shared understanding of what we mean by 'independence' to enable young people to take measured risks e.g. increase the use of Independent Travel Training.
- Co-produce a workforce development toolkit that supports an inclusive culture, high standards and the fulfilment of everyone's potential.

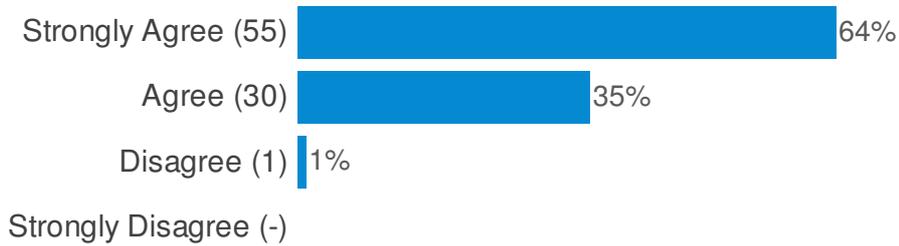
Priority: Educational Inclusion

Children and young people can fulfil their potential supported by inclusive schools/settings.

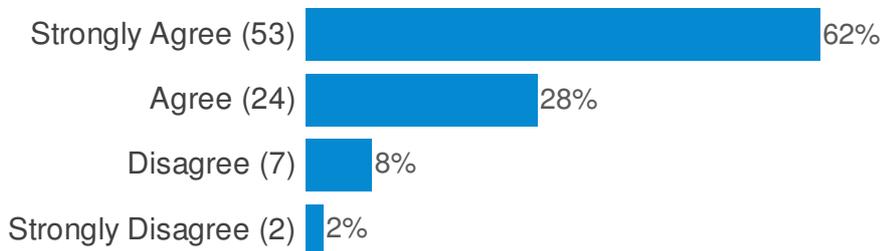
| Attending | Included | Achieving | Supported |
|---|---|--|--|
| <p>Working together we will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve access to inclusive mainstream provision for children and young people with SEND by better enabling schools to provide support. • Develop a SEND Sufficiency Strategy to ensure that Halton has sufficient, appropriate education provision to meet the needs of children and young people in the Borough. • Improve attendance rates for children and young people in schools, by developing a clear understanding of non-attendance and ensuring that a full time offer is available to all. • Improve schools' confidence and understanding to deliver provision to children and young people with SEND, in order to increase access to mainstream education of children and young people with EHCPs. | <p>Working together we will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Foster and support schools and settings to have nurturing and enabling environments to ensure that the individual needs of children and young people are well met and that they are fully included. • Ensure that inclusion funding for early years settings is accessible, timely and supports inclusion. • Have clear, easily understood processes and improved access to the required support for example, equipment, personal budgets etc. • Develop and maintain a range of outreach services to support children and young people to remain in mainstream education. | <p>Working together we will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve the progress and attainment rates for children and young people at SEN Support and with EHCPs across all key stages. • Ensure the Graduated Approach is used more effectively by schools/settings to improve inclusive practices, earlier identification and intervention for children and young people at SEN Support level. • Ensure that an alternative provision offer that meets the needs of Halton's children and young people is developed. (Sufficiency Strategy). • Ensure that every child has access to a developmentally appropriate and varied curriculum tailored to meet their needs. • Improve support within schools/settings for children and young people to access specialist careers support, advice and guidance. | <p>Working together we will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide high quality individual support plans and EHCPs with clear and appropriate outcomes. • Improve the multi-agency engagement by all partners within the EHCP assessment and review process to ensure that assessed needs are based on a multi-agency approach/advice for education, health and social care support required by the child/young person to achieve positive outcomes. • Maintain a range of training and support for parents and siblings that is accessible, well communicated. • Ensure health and care needs assessments are undertaken as part of the EHC process to make plans more holistic. • Ensure that the EHCP assessment and review process is clear, transparent, used, monitored and well understood across all agencies, partners and in particular with young people and families. • Increase the access and availability of personal budgets. • Provide better details of pathways to emotional health and well-being support for children and young people, which considers the specific needs of children and young people with SEND. • Provide good wraparound pre, post and no support by appropriately trained staff for children, young people and their families. Ensuring that young people are supported to understand their own diagnosis. |

**Send Strategy Consultation
86 Responses**

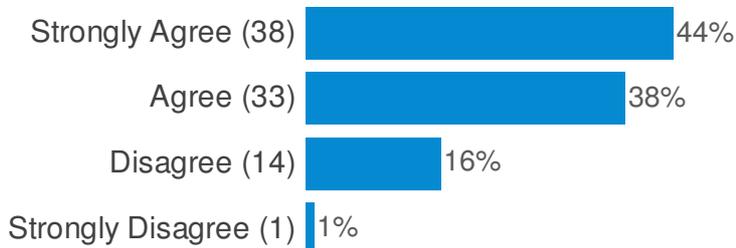
Do you agree or disagree with our proposed vision? Please X one box only



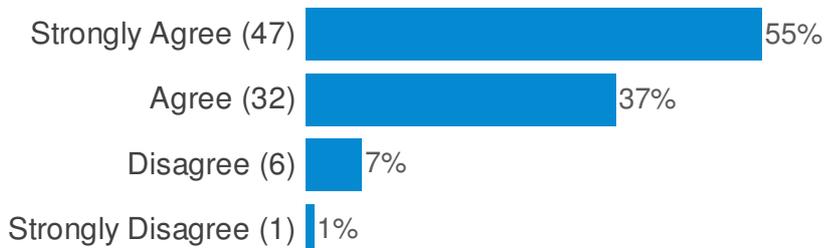
Do you agree or disagree with our proposed principals? Please X one box only



Are these the right eight big things we need to focus on? Please X one box only

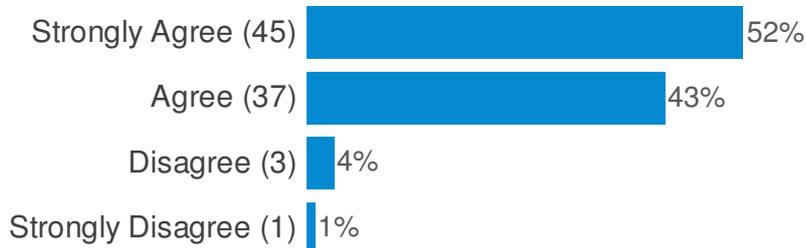


Do you think delivering these priorities will improve the lives of children, young people and their families? Please X one box only

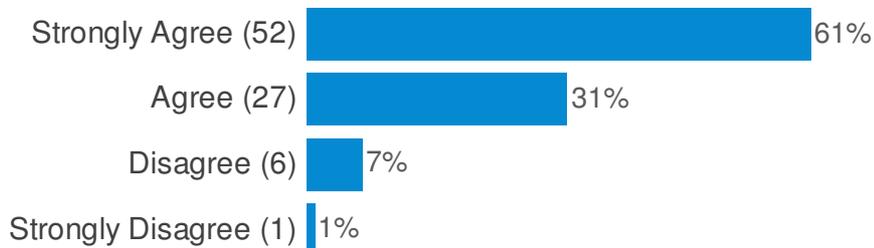


**Send Strategy Consultation
86 Responses**

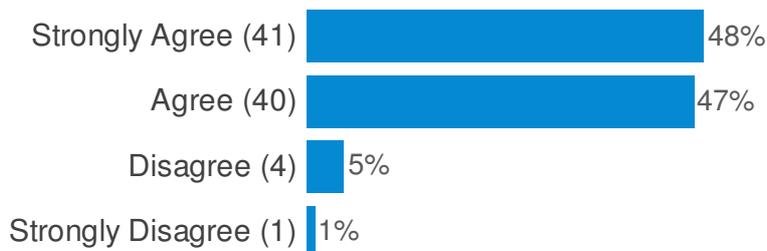
In working better together, are these the right objectives we need to focus on? Please X one box only



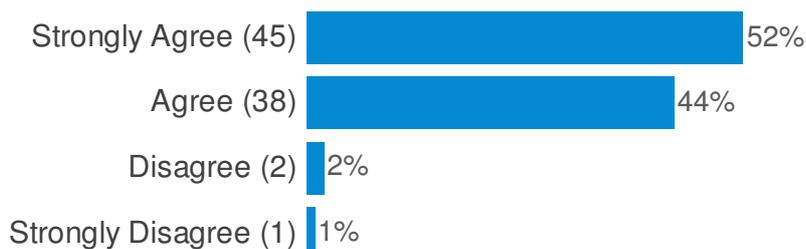
In preparing for adulthood, are these the right objectives we need to focus on? Please X one box only



For empowerment (communication and co-production), are these the right objectives we need to focus on? Please X one box only

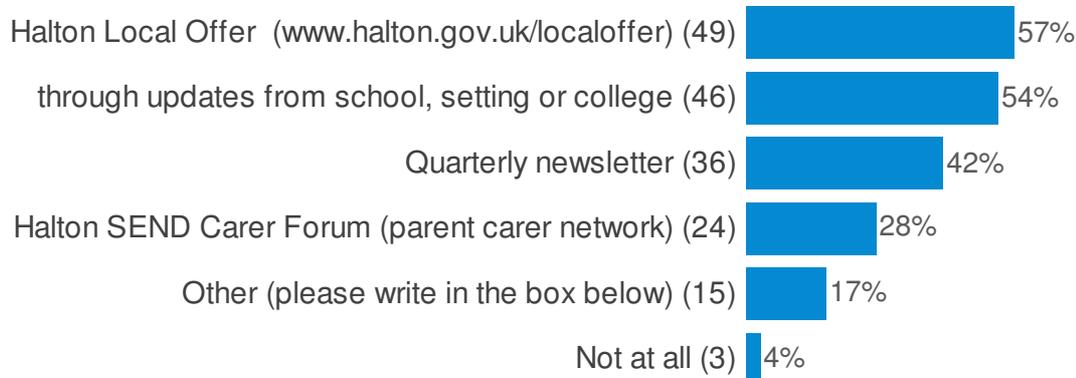


Are these the right objectives we need to focus on for educational inclusion? Please X one box only

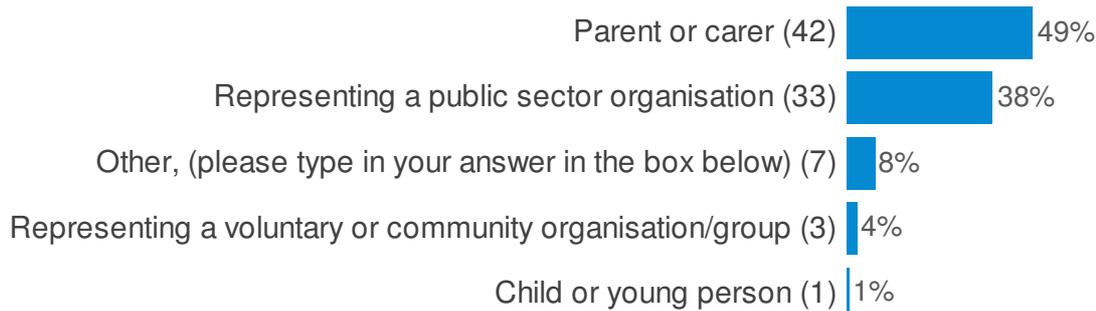


**Send Strategy Consultation
86 Responses**

How would you like to be kept informed of the progress we are making in delivering this SEND Strategy? Please X all that apply



To help us to understand your responses to this consultation, can you let us know if you are responding as a: Please X one box only



| | |
|---------------------------|---|
| REPORT TO: | Children, Young People and Families Policy and Performance Board |
| DATE: | 14 th June 2021 |
| REPORTING OFFICER: | Strategic Director, Enterprise, Community & Resources |
| PORTFOLIO: | Children, Young People and Families |
| SUBJECT: | Performance Management Report for Quarter 4 2020/21 |
| WARD(S) | Borough wide |

1.0 PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To consider, and to raise any questions or points of clarification, in respect of performance management for the fourth quarter period 01 January 2021 to 31 March 2021.
- 1.2 Key priorities for development or improvement in 2020/21 were agreed by Members and included in the Business Plan, for the various functional areas reporting to the Board as detailed below:
 - Education, Inclusion, Provision Services
 - Children and Families Services

The report details progress made against objectives and milestones and performance targets and provides information relating to key developments and emerging issues that have arisen during the period.

2.0 RECOMMENDED: That the Policy and Performance Board

- 1) Receive the first quarter's performance management report;**
- 2) Consider the progress and performance information and raise any questions or points for clarification; and**
- 3) Highlight any areas of interest and/or concern where further information is to be reported at a future meeting of the Board.**

3.0 SUPPORTING INFORMATION

- 3.1 Departmental objectives provide a clear statement on what services are planning to achieve and to show how they contribute to the Council's strategic priorities. Such information is central to the Council's performance management arrangements and the Policy and

Performance Board has a key role in monitoring performance and strengthening accountability.

4.0 POLICY IMPLICATIONS

4.1 There are no policy implications associated with this report.

5.0 OTHER IMPLICATIONS

5.1 There are no other implications associated with this report.

6.0 IMPLICATIONS FOR THE COUNCIL'S PRIORITIES

6.1 Departmental service objectives and performance measures, both local and national are linked to the delivery of the Council's priorities. The introduction of a Thematic Priority Based Report and the identification of business critical objectives/ milestones and performance indicators will further support organisational improvement.

6.2 Although some objectives link specifically to one priority area, the nature of the cross - cutting activities being reported, means that to a greater or lesser extent a contribution is made to one or more of the Council priorities.

7.0 RISK ANALYSIS

7.1 Not applicable.

8.0 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES

8.1 Not applicable.

9.0 LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS UNDER SECTIONS 100D OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972

Not applicable

Children and Young People Priority Based PPB Report

Reporting Period: Quarter 4 2020/21

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 This report provides an overview of issues and progress that have occurred during the period of the report towards the priority of Children and Young People (CYP). The way in which traffic light symbols have been used to reflect progress is explained within Appendix 1 (section 8).
- 1.2 Please note initials have been provided to indicate which officer is responsible for the commentary to aid Members, as requested by the Children and Young People Policy and Performance Board. A key is provided in Appendix 1 (section 8).

2.0 Key Developments

2.1 **Troubled Families New Phase**

The Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) in March 2021 announced ‘In 2021-22, we want to take the Troubled Families Programme into a new phase, with a refreshed vision, strengthened objectives and an even stronger momentum to tackle barriers and create lasting change. We are launching the next phase of the programme – Supporting Families – which will focus on building the resilience of vulnerable families, and on enabling system change locally and nationally. This means ensuring that every area has joined up, efficient local services, able to identify families in need and provide the right support at the right time.’ For Halton the commitment is still the same supporting vulnerable families via whole family support from a lead professional where families are experiencing multiple complex problems. The partnership will continue to identify families in need of extra help, target services more effectively and track family level outcomes over the long term. For Halton during 2021/22 we can claim successful outcomes for 236 families.

2.2 **OFSTED report regarding how remote learning is working for children with special Educational Needs and Disabilities**

During the response to Covid, as governors will be aware remote learning was the offer for many children during lockdown. For children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND), this did create some additional difficulties. However many schools, settings and colleges found wonderful ways to meet the needs of pupils with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND).

During autumn term 2020 and Spring Term 2021, Ofsted inspectors carried out a range of interim visits and have shared some of the findings with regard to how well children and young people’s needs were met.

Main messages

- “Careful selection and sequencing of curriculum content is the essential starting point for providing remote education. This means really focusing on the most important things for children and young people with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) to learn.
- Structure, routine and consistent support continue to be important for many children and young people with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND). However, the flexibility of asynchronous approaches to remote education is really helping some children and young people with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) to learn and make progress.
- Effective communication with families and carers is crucial. Strengthening relationships with parents and carers and giving them the knowledge and practical help, they need to support their child’s learning has had a positive impact and may have longer-term benefits

- We know that the disruption to essential education, health and care services has had a huge impact on children and young people with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND). Not all children and young people with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) will return to their education setting on 8 March. Some are clinically vulnerable. Some may need to wait longer to return to training sites, and others may be sent home to self-isolate. For the further education sector, learners returning to training sites may take slightly longer.”

Ofsted have shared some slides and video to share some effective practice which can be seen using the link.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/remote-education-and-send/how-remote-education-is-working-for-children-and-young-people-with-send>

Sexual Abuse in Schools - Special Edition

You will no doubt have heard on the news and online, a website called ‘Everyone’s Invited’ has gained publicity due to the huge volume of victims of peer on peer sexual abuse who have disclosed their own personal testimonies. Not all of the disclosures are about schools, however over 100 schools have so far been named on the website – some multiple times – and there are instances where reports were made to individuals in positions of trust by pupils, which have then been suppressed, dismissed or ignored.

Following this, the Department for Education (DfE) have tasked Ofsted with completing a review into sexual abuse in schools. The terms of reference for this review have now been published and full details can be found here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/ofsted-review-of-sexual-abuse/ofsted-review-into-sexual-abuse-in-schools-terms-of-reference>

What is the purpose of ‘Everyone’s Invited’?

Everyone’s Invited is a website, set up in 2020, where young people can submit testimonies of sexual violence and abuse. The aim of the website is to eradicate rape culture by revealing the abuse that happens in schools in the hope that it leads to change. At the time of writing, over 12,000 have been submitted with many schools being named.

Given the current focus, it would be prudent and advisory that all schools reflect upon their current practice and ensure that reporting procedures are an enabler, not a blocker, to young people feeling able to disclose. Advice and guidance has been circulated to all schools by the Safeguarding Children in Education Officer.

Not in Education Employment or Training (NEET) and Not Known

Despite the significant change to the experience of education for young people since March 2020 Halton’s young people have achieved exceptionally positive outcomes in continuing their engagement with education and training. Once again in 2021 we have seen a reduction in the number of 16 and 17 year old young people who are Not in Education Employment or Training (NEET) or whose activity was not known to the authority (Not Known). The Department of Education measure Not in Education Employment or Training (NEET) and Not Known figures annually as a 3 month average of performance from December to February.

The number of young people in Halton who are Not in Education Employment or Training (NEET) Or Not Known from the 16-18 year old cohort for 2020/21 is 4.0% compared to 4.3% in 2019/20 and 5.1% in 2018/19. The National figure for 2020/2021 is 5.5%.

This is a really positive result demonstrating how well the partnerships across schools, the College, Post 16 providers, support services and the Local Authority (LA) is in making a real difference to the progression opportunities for young people.

2.3 Careers Guidance in school and September Guarantee

The offer should be appropriate to the young person's needs and can include:

- full-time education in school sixth-forms or colleges
- an apprenticeship or traineeship
- employment combined with part-time education or training

As part of a Stable Careers Programme (Gatsby Benchmark 1) and following on from Personal Guidance (Gatsby Benchmark 8) the Local Authority asks schools and the College to provide information about the intended destination for all Year 11 and Year 12 pupils in April, with further updates being sent throughout the summer term.

Previous year's performance: Percentage of Year 11 and Year 12 pupils with an offer of education or training for September 2020

| Offer Made | 2020 |
|------------------------|-------|
| Halton | 96.8% |
| LCR Average | 96.2% |
| Statistical Neighbours | 96.1% |
| North West | 96.0% |
| England | 94.3% |

3.0 Emerging Issues

3.1 Assessment Procedures for summer 2021 Teacher Assessed Grades

On 25th February 2021 the Department for Education (DfE) published a press release regarding arrangements for the assessment and grading of pupils who were due to sit General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSEs), Advanced Subsidiary (AS) - and Advanced (A) -levels this summer.

Pupils will receive grades awarded and determined by teachers and will only be assessed on what they have been taught.

Teachers will be able to draw on a range of evidence when determining grades, including the optional use of questions provided by exam boards, as well as mock exams, coursework, or other work completed as part of a pupil's course, such as essays or in-class tests.

No algorithm will be used.

Teachers will submit grades to exam boards by 18 June and results days for General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSEs), Advanced (A) -levels and some vocational qualifications will take place in the week **of 9 August 2021**. These earlier dates provide additional time for appeals to be completed, so students reliant on those outcomes to achieve their college or university offer have the best chance of accessing a place.

Further guidance will be published by exam boards before the end of the spring term, to support teachers in making their judgements.

3.2 **Statutory Framework for the Early Years and Foundation Stage (EYFS)**

In September 2021 the revised 2021 version of the Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) will come into effect and will be mandatory for all early years' providers in England.

The Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) sets the standards that all early years' providers must meet to ensure that children learn and develop well and are kept healthy and safe. It promotes teaching and learning to ensure children's 'school readiness' and gives children the broad range of knowledge and skills that provide the right foundation for good future progress through school and life.

3.3 **Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS)**

The completion of the Early Years and Foundation Stage (EYFS) profile is non-statutory in 2021. The DfE released a statement as follows:

*The Early Years and Foundation Stage (EYFS) Profile is a valued assessment by teachers and early years' professionals and is a **crucial tool in supporting children's development and the transition from reception to year 1**. It is for that reason we are requiring teachers and early years practitioners to use their best endeavor's to still complete the Early Years and Foundation Stage (EYFS) Profile for children in the summer term, if at all possible, and to provide this important information to parents and to Year 1 teachers, should the situation at the time allow.*

The Early Years and Foundation Stage (EYFS) framework has been revised and the new framework is to be implemented across all schools from September 2021. This includes changes to the Early Years and Foundation Stage (EYFS) profile for 2022. Schools are encouraged to attend LA led briefings on the new Early Years and Foundation Stage (EYFS) framework if they have not already done so.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/changes-to-the-early-years-foundation-stage-eyfs-framework/changes-to-the-early-years-foundation-stage-eyfs-framework>

The national **reception baseline assessment (RBA)** is to be implemented across all schools from September 2021 and will be completed in the first 6 weeks of the reception year. Some schools have opted to be 'early adopters' of the reception baseline assessment (RBA) this year.

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/reception-baseline-assessment>

3.4 **Key Stage 1 (KS1) and Key Stage 2 (KS2) Standard Assessment Tests (SATs) and Teacher Assessment**

On the 6th January, Gavin Williamson, Secretary of State for Education announced that: *Statutory key stage 1 and key stage 2 tests and teacher assessments planned for summer 2021, including the key stage 2 tests in reading and mathematics, will not take place.*

We know that schools will continue to use assessment during the summer term to inform teaching, to enable them to give information to parents on their child's attainment in their annual report and to support transition to secondary school. We strongly encourage schools to do this, using past test papers if they wish. Primary assessments have a crucial role in supporting pupils to grasp the basics of reading, writing and mathematics and to prepare them for secondary school.

3.5 Phonics Screening Check

There is no statutory requirement to complete the year 1 and year 2 phonics screening checks in 2021. Schools may however choose to complete a screening check for year 1 pupils, and also for year 2 pupils who did not achieve the threshold in autumn 2020, using phonics checks from previous years.

The results of the Year 2 phonics check completed in the autumn term 2020 should be reported to parents in the annual report.

3.6 Year 4 Multiplication Tables Check (MTC)

This is an online assessment designed to determine whether pupils are able to fluently recall their multiplication tables up to 12 through a set of 25 timed questions. The June 2021 [multiplication tables check \(MTC\)](#) is optional for schools who choose to administer the check to some or all of their year 4 pupils. Schools can now access MTC service through [DfE Sign-in](#).

Schools will be able to view pupil results, however there is no requirement to report these results to parents or carers as the assessment is not statutory for this year. No performance data will be published.

3.7 Holiday Activity Fund

Building on the success of last year's Halton Activity Fund (HAF) there is now funding available for 2021. This has been expanded to cover 6 weeks during Easter, summer and Christmas school holidays.

Funding is targeted at those children eligible for means tested free school meals. There will be flexibility in how provision is delivered but should include a lunch time meal, activity and enrichment per session. Schools that want to apply for funding or schools that want to open premise will be supported to do so. Sessions can be face to face, online or offline (activity packs and hampers)

4.0 Progress against high priority equality actions

5.2 Equality issues continue to form a routine element of the Council's business planning and operational decision-making processes. Additionally the Council must have evidence to demonstrate compliance with the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED), which came into force April 2011.

The council's latest annual progress report in relation to achievement of its equality objectives is published on the Council's website

<http://www4.halton.gov.uk/Pages/councildemocracy/Equality-and-Diversity.aspx>

5.0 Performance Overview

The following information provides a synopsis of progress for both milestones and performance indicators across the key business areas that have been identified by the Directorate. It should be noted that given the significant and unrelenting downward financial pressures faced by the Council there is a requirement for Departments to make continuous in-year adjustments to the allocation of resources in order to ensure that the Council maintains a balanced budget. Whilst every effort continues to be made to minimise any negative impact of such arrangements upon service delivery they may inevitably result in a delay in the delivery of some of the objectives and targets contained within this report.

Objective: Improve outcomes for children and young people through effective multi-agency early intervention (PED01)

| Ref | Measure | 19/20 Actual | 20/21 Target | Current | Direction of Travel | Quarterly Progress |
|----------|---|--|--------------|---|---|--------------------|
| PED01 01 | Increase the number of children with an early help assessment (measured as those subject to CAF, pre-CAF or specific target interventions in Children's Centres at any point in the year) (financial year cumulative to end of quarter) | 421 open 1047 activity 290 pre CAF | N/A | 716 EH Intervention 170 MAP (prov) |  | N/A |

Supporting Commentary: Val Armor

Data is provisional at this time. When QA processes are completed after the Eclipse migration and Eclipse procedures are in place this figure will be refreshed for Q2 2020/21.

Early help assessments have seen a steady increase year on year.

The assessments which have transitioned from CAF (Common Assessment Framework) to MAP (Multi Agency Plan) for internal staff only are now on the eclipse system, there is continued work at the MAP working group with regards to the roll out of the MAP for external partners. This means that the reporting system for MAPs held in the borough is currently in two systems so manual adding is needed at present. However once training is completed it will all be on one system. All school have now been trained by a team of super users in early help. This has been very successful and started on early years in May 2021

Early help provision in locality and children centres has continued throughout the lockdown and creative ways have successfully been explored and implemented to support families from a virtual platform. The children centres are now in a position to offer some small group work in doors and are concentrating on the 02 agenda for families with young babies in lockdown.

| | | | | | | |
|----------|--|--|-----|--|--|--|
| PED01 02 | Maintain overall attendance at schools: Primary –Pri PRU – PRU Secondary – Sec Special – Spec Total | Autumn Term 2020 (Halton data) Primary 96.08% Secondary 92.80% Special 80.99% PRU 62.27% | 95% | Spring Term 2021 (Halton data) Primary 94.15% Secondary 83.35% Special 52.22% PRU 46.07% |  |  |
|----------|--|--|-----|--|--|--|

Supporting Commentary: Debbie Houghton

Schools were only open to vulnerable children from January to 8th March 21, which has had a significant impact on the spring term attendance data. Since 8th March 2021, all pupils are now back in school. From January to 8th March 2021 vulnerable children not attending school were required by Department for Education (DfE) to be given an authorised absence code, whereas children who were not vulnerable received an X code which did not impact upon their attendance. The definition of vulnerable children was also widened from previous lockdowns, so applied to significantly more children. This has meant that this period of time has significantly impacted on the attendance of vulnerable children not attending school. This is shown in the amount of authorised absence 5.2% at primary, 14.9% at secondary, 46.74% at special schools and 34.18% at the PRU. Unauthorised levels of absence are very low in primary at 0.66%, 1.75% at secondary and 1.04% at special and higher at the PRU 19.76%. The spring term data above therefore cannot be compared directly to the autumn term data when all pupils (except those extremely clinically vulnerable) were expected to attend. It is important to note that although vulnerable children were encouraged and supported to attend school, attendance was not statutory and many of these children did access their education at home as did children not classed as vulnerable.

| Ref: | Milestones | Quarterly Progress |
|--------|---|---|
| PED01a | Work with schools to maintain the level of attendance at Primary and Secondary Schools. Martin West / Debbie Houghton (March 2021) |  |

Supporting commentary: Martin West / Debbie Houghton

From January to 7th March 2021 attendance was not statutory and therefore statutory processes such as legal action for non-attendance could not be used. Following lockdown restrictions in January 2021, the Education Welfare Service (EWS) again supported schools with vulnerable pupils and their families, encouraging attendance and providing advice and support to parents and schools. The EWS made contact with parents of vulnerable children who were not attending through phone calls, home visits to speak to families and children, made appropriate referrals to other services were needed. EWS also supported

were pupils were struggling to work from home or were parents were not contacting schools to establish any issues and then working with schools to help resolve them including taking out work and laptops for children who met the criteria. We continued to work in partnership with other professionals including SEN and Social Care, attending Multi Agency Plan (MAP), Child in Need (CIN) and Child Protection (CP) meeting for pupils open to EWS. EWS also provided regular updates to schools on Government Guidance around managing and recording attendance and use of attendance codes.

From 8th March 2021 the EWS monitored school attendance together with schools. This identified pupils who didn't return or attendance is poor. EWOs completed home visits to families where children didn't return to establish why and offer support if needed including reassurance and setting out attendance expectations. EWS worked with schools through telephone conversations and sending letters to parents setting out expectations for attendance. If new issues were raised for example mental health then referrals will be made to appropriate agencies for support.

Throughout regular bulletins were provided to schools with up to date information around a range of issues including attendance, although EWS were also on hand to deal with day to day queries from schools and parents.

The EWS again supported the Children in Care Team in monitoring daily school attendance of vulnerable pupils within Halton.

| | | |
|--------|--|---|
| PED01b | As a result of the review of Early Help Services, plan and implement transformation model. Val Armor (March 2021) |  |
|--------|--|---|

Supporting commentary: Val Armor

The transformation model of early help assessments has been completed and the borough has fully transitioned to MAP – multi agency plans. All schools have been trained and now early years settings will be trained by end of May. Health colleagues will then be trained.

The next transformation model is the development of the parenting offer in Halton. There is an operational sub group mapping out the needs of the borough and funding is being sought for a parenting coordinator role which is very much needed in the borough to really unpick some of the deep rooted parental issues our families are facing.

| | | |
|--------|---|---|
| PED01c | Workforce development, including targeted training, to be further developed and implemented Val Armor (March 2021) |  |
|--------|---|---|

Supporting commentary: Val Armor

Training has been delivered less this year due to the restrictions but early help and intervention staff are embedding all training into their work including Solihull, systemic and nurturing approaches. The parenting Halton steering group are also embedding parental conflict agenda and looking to broaden the staffing across parenting.

Level 4 training for practitioners used through the apprenticeship levy is continuing and will be completed by July 21st 2021.

Some staff are currently studying play therapy. More online training has been accessed during the lockdown which has been a huge positive and a matrix of all staff training is currently being worked on.

Objective: Keeping Children and Young People safe by improving practice (PED02)

| Ref: | Measure | 19/20 Actual | 20/21 Target | Current | Direction of Travel | Quarterly Progress |
|--|--|--------------|-----------------|------------|---|---|
| PED02 01 | Monitor the rate of referrals to Children's Social Care per 10000 0-18 year olds (Forecast annualised rate at end of financial year) | 422 | 500 (full year) | 465 (prov) |  |  |
| <u>Supporting commentary:</u> Angela Povey | | | | | | |
| The rate of referrals to social care has continued to increase, whilst it is difficult to directly link the increase to the impact of COVID-19, we have seen trends in data that would support this hypothesis, i.e. when there was a reduction in provision of universal services there was a reduction in referrals, when services reopened, we experienced an increase. We continue to use the assessment toolkit in order to improve the quality of referrals, ensuring we have all relevant information at the earliest opportunity for children to receive the appropriate level of support as soon as possible. The Multi-Agency Contact challenge meetings continue to review and monitor the responses and decision making. | | | | | | |
| PED02 02 | Monitor the rate of children in need per 10000 0-18 year olds (snapshot at end of quarter) | 362 | 380 | 221 (prov) | N/A | N/A |
| <u>Supporting commentary:</u> Angela Povey | | | | | | |
| The number of children in need has remained the same during the last quarter, figures have fluctuated, however, 636 for March 21 is same as March 20. We have continued to experience an increase in complex of cases. The number of contacts has also fluctuated throughout the year, however, March 2021 saw the highest number of contacts i.e. 903 with the lowest in August of 518; March 2020 was 670. The number of contacts have increased, with the conversion to referral/allocation also increasing. This demonstrates CIN cases are being effectively managed, seeing the throughput of cases. Whilst we are unable to evidence the increase is a direct link between children returning to school and COVID-19 restrictions easing, the data throughout the year would support this hypothesis. The temporary Duty and Assessment Team has continued to support the progression of cases and plans and alleviate the additional pressures due to capacity within the CIN Teams. | | | | | | |

| Ref: | Measure | 19/20 Actual | 20/21 Target | Current | Direction of Travel | Quarterly Progress |
|--|--|--------------|--------------|------------|---|---|
| PED02 03 | Monitor the rate of children subject to a child protection plan per 10000 0-18 year olds (snapshot at end of quarter) | 54 | 45 | 50 (prov) |  | N/A |
| <p><u>Supporting commentary:</u> Angela Povey Open cases are fluctuating but for January to March 2021 appear in line with North West averages. We have continued to see an increase of complex cases particularly in children under 5 years old. We have seen an increase in allocations/referrals, this correlates with the increase of contacts received. The temporary Duty and Assessment Team has continued to support the progression of cases and plans. It is believed, the increase is linked to surge of new cases coming in as a result of COVID-19 and easing of restrictions.</p> | | | | | | |
| PED02 04 | Monitor the rate of children in care per 10000 0-18 year olds (snapshot at end of quarter) | 99 | 90 | 103 (prov) |  | N/A |
| <p><u>Supporting commentary:</u> Liz Davenport We track and monitor all Children In Care (CIC) on a monthly basis and plan for discharge of care when safe and appropriate to do so. We are heading in a good direction and thus far we have discharged 8 children from care, 2 children have been made subject to Special Guardianship Order's (SGO) in favour of their foster carers and 2 children have been formally adopted.</p> | | | | | | |
| PED02 05 | Reduce the number of children and young people who enter the care system (financial year, cumulative to end of quarter) | 95 | 68 | 75 (prov) |  | N/A |
| <p><u>Supporting commentary:</u> Liz Davenport Children enter care either through an emergency due a crisis or to S47 or on a planned basis. All entries to care are subject to approval of the Divisional Manager (DM) and therefore deemed appropriate for safeguarding reasons, all CIC are monitored and tracked accordingly.</p> | | | | | | |
| PED02 06 | Reduce the average caseload in CIN Teams (snapshot end of quarter) | 21 | 18 | 22 | | |
| <p><u>Supporting commentary:</u> Angela Povey The introduction of the temporary Duty and Assessment Team has enabled the CIN Teams to focus on CIN cases in order to progress plans and appropriately reduce the level of need and progress cases to Early Help where appropriate.</p> | | | | | | |
| PED02 07 | Increase the proportion of missing incidents where a return interview is completed (financial year, cumulative to end of quarter) | 72% | 85% | 88% |  |  |
| <p><u>Supporting commentary:</u> Clare Hunt For this time period, there have been 164 return interviews completed with 44 young people by the commissioned service. 88% of young people completed a return interview and 90% were completed within 72 hours. Declines for return interviews have decreased with 19 incidents</p> | | | | | | |
| PED02 08 | Reduce the number of children who repeatedly run away in Halton (in last 12 months, snapshot end of quarter) | 114 | N/A | 10 (Q4) | N/A | N/A |
| <p><u>Supporting commentary:</u> Angela Povey; Liz Davenport; Clare Hunt For this reporting period, there has been a total of 165 notifications, a decrease from the previous quarter, there have been ten CYP with repeat missing incidents. 7 of the 10 repeat CYP are in care, 3 CYP are home accommodated. The 10 CYP that made 5 or more incidents during the quarter, accounted for 60% of all missing incidents in the quarter. 18% of all CYP for the quarter are within the repeat cohort. All of the CYP that fit in this cohort received at least one return home interview during the quarter, there were 2 declined interviews. The commissioned service has supported the repeat cohort to reduce missing episodes this quarter through direct work, taking a different approach both with face to face and virtual contacts.</p> | | | | | | |
| PED02 09 | Reduce the number of children who go missing in the year (number of children recorded as missing in last 12 months, snapshot end of quarter) | 265 | N/A | 55 (Q4) | N/A | N/A |
| <p><u>Supporting commentary:</u> Angela Povey; Liz Davenport; Clare Hunt There has been a decrease since last quarter of 59 missing incidents. There was also a decrease in the number of CYP making these incidents, 56 compared to 67 in the previous quarter. 82% of the CYP making incidents in this quarter are aged 10 – 15years, the remaining 18% were aged 16-18years. The reasons for missing incidents remain consistent with the previous quarter, boundary issues, older peers and own substance misuse. Additionally, 'other' was selected, a high proportion of these were relating to CYP wanting to spend time with friends.</p> | | | | | | |
| PED02 10 | Record the number of young people flagged as at risk of Child Sexual Exploitation (snapshot end of quarter) | 26 | 20 | 19 |  |  |

| Ref: | Measure | 19/20 Actual | 20/21 Target | Current | Direction of Travel | Quarterly Progress |
|---|---|--------------|--------------|---------|---|--------------------|
| <p><i>Supporting commentary: Angela Povey</i> Young people are now being appropriately recorded as at risk of Child Sexual Exploitation within our new case management system.</p> | | | | | | |
| PED02 11 | Record the number of young people flagged as at risk of Child Criminal Exploitation (snapshot end of quarter) | N/A | 12 | 35 |  | N/A |
| <p><i>Supporting commentary: Angela Povey As above.</i></p> | | | | | | |

| Ref: | Milestones | Quarterly Progress |
|--|--|--------------------|
| PED02a | Embed a systemic model of social work practice across the whole service; social workers, managers and senior leaders. Tracey Coffey (March 2021) | |
| <p><i>Supporting commentary: Tracey Coffey</i> This is underway</p> | | |
| PED02b | Review and update Workforce Strategy in line with the Knowledge and Skills framework and the Professional Capabilities Framework. Developing the competencies, skills and knowledge of the workforce making them motivated, stable and ambitious will improve the outcomes for families and keep them at the heart of everything we do. (Tracey Coffey) March 2021 | |
| <p><i>Supporting commentary: Tracey Coffey</i> This is underway</p> | | |
| PED02c | With a focus on multi-agency risk assessment, reduce caseloads to a sustainable and manageable level to give workers capacity to deliver quality and focussed interventions to improve outcomes for vulnerable children. Angela Povey (March 2021) | |
| <p><i>Supporting commentary: Angela Povey</i> The Temporary Duty and Assessment Team has continued and has been operational since 10.08.2020. This has enabled the CIN Teams to focus on multi-agency risk assessments. This continues to address drift and delay of cases and ensure plans progress, ultimately reducing caseloads to a sustainable and management level to give workers capacity to deliver quality and focused interventions to improve outcomes for vulnerable children. However, as anticipated we have experienced a further surge of referrals as a result of the impact of COVID-19 and a consequence of restrictions and lockdown.</p> | | |
| PED02d | Monitor demand for statutory services for children and young people Angela Povey (March 2021) | |
| <p><i>Supporting commentary: Angela Povey</i> The demand for statutory services will continue to be monitored and consideration given to capacity due to the impact of COVID-19. As predicted we have again experienced a surge of referrals of complex cases as a consequence and result of restrictions of lockdown and an increase in contacts and referrals when universal services resumed and children returned to school.</p> | | |

Objective: Improve outcomes for Children in Care and Care Leavers (PED03)

| Ref: | Measure | 19/20 Actual | 20/21 Target | Current | Direction of Travel | Quarterly Progress |
|--|---|--------------|--------------|-----------|---|---|
| PED03 01 | Reduce the number of children who are placed in residential care (snapshot at end of quarter) | 31 | 20 | 34 (prov) |  |  |
| <p><i>Supporting Commentary: Liz Davenport</i> This continues to be reported on and monitored through Permanency Leadership board and children identified and targeted to plan for step down from residential, we also engage in regional events to promote the identification of children requiring foster care. Due to the complexity of some CIC needs and local and regional sufficiency this remains a challenge for us-in addition to that of the global pandemic.</p> | | | | | | |
| PED03 02 | Reduce the number of children who are placed in independent fostering agencies (snapshot at end of quarter) | 61 | 35 | 49 |  |  |
| <p><i>Supporting Commentary: Liz Davenport/Sam Murtagh</i> We currently have more of our CIC placed in our mainstream fostering households than previous years so progress is improving. There is a lack of sufficiency locally and nationally which increases the need for Independent Fostering Agency (IFA) as a placement choice for children rather than a more expensive residential placement. However due to the targeted success of the fostering team a number of mainstream carers have been presented to panel recently and are awaiting an ADM, which will improve resources available in house. A more localised IFA framework has been implemented across The Liverpool City Region from December 2020, initial results appear too positive with more children placed more locally either within or close to Halton.</p> | | | | | | |
| PED03 03 | Increase the percentage of children in care making progress against their expected outcomes (based on termly Personal Education Plan (PEP) outcomes of children making the expected rate of progress in line with their peers with the same prior attainment across reading, writing and maths) | N/A | N/A | | N/A | N/A |
| <p><i>Supporting Commentary: Sharon Williams</i> Early Years 89% have made progress in more than one area (11% - 2 children, have remained at Autumn stages)</p> <p>Primary 56% have made progress in one or more area since the Autumn term, however some schools reported that Spring term assessments were yet to take place. It also needs to be taken into consideration that PEPs take place throughout the term, therefore PEPs in January may have made more progress by the end of the term. This is compared to 45% in Spring 2020.</p> <p>Secondary 66.1% are making expected progress from starting points in two or more areas. These assessments have been conducted by teacher assessments and formal assessments haven't been completed due to the lockdown during the Spring Term.</p> | | | | | | |
| PED03 04 | Increase the percentage of children in care with 95% or above attendance (attendance is cumulative across an academic year – data is based on the term that the QMR falls within) | N/A | N/A | | N/A | N/A |
| <p><i>Supporting Commentary: Sharon Williams</i> Primary data</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 65% had 100% attendance and/or engagement of at least 90% in their remote learning offer A further 13% had 95 – 99% attendance and/or engagement An additional 4 % had 90 – 94% attendance and/or engagement. <p>Giving a total Of 82% who had above 90% attendance and/or engagement</p> <p>Secondary data</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 53.4% had 100% attendance and/or engagement of at least 90% in their remote learning offer A further 14% had 95 – 99% attendance and/or engagement <p>Giving a total of 67.4% who had above 90% attendance and/or engagement</p> <p>Engagement with the agreed plan was monitored on a daily basis by the school and the Virtual School. If engagement dropped below 90% then a multi-agency risk discussion was carried out to resolve the issues. If a return to school was agreed, this was then brokered by the Virtual School to ensure all support was put in place. The remote learning offer and the quality of the provision were monitored by Halton's School Improvement Service through their termly visits and by the Virtual School through their discussions with the Designated Teachers including during PEP meetings.</p> | | | | | | |

Unfortunately we have some secondary age young people who have complex issues which meant they had poor attendance prior to the lockdown. All steps were put in place to mitigate against this but for a small group of young people this did not improve their attendance. However, on the converse we did have some secondary age young people who were struggling with attendance prior to the lockdown whose engagement did substantially improve.

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|----------|--|-----|-----|--------------|---|---|
| PED03 05 | Maintain the percentage of Care Leavers in suitable accommodation (snapshot at end of quarter) | 92% | 95% | 93.7% (prov) |  |  |
|----------|--|-----|-----|--------------|---|---|

Supporting Commentary: Sam Murtagh/Liz Davenport

The Care Leavers Accommodation Group (CLAG) continues to meet monthly to track and place all Care Leavers requiring suitable accommodation, with an increasing number of successful outcomes.

Due to Covid-19 and lack of movement in the transfer or properties and evictions the availability of accommodation has limited however this appears to be improving from January 2021.

Recently a trainer flat has been secured from the largest local Registered Social Landlord for 16/17 year old Care Leavers to offer an opportunity of trialling independent living whilst remaining in their current placement – this will be developed in the coming quarter and is a positive addition to the support available for Care Leavers.

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|----------|---|-----|-----|------------|---|---|
| PED03 06 | Increase the percentage of Care Leavers in Education, Employment or Training (snapshot at end of quarter) | 68% | 65% | 39% (prov) |  |  |
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Supporting Commentary: Liz Davenport

Post 16 worker now in post with clear targets and expectations. Working closely with CIC&CL team to target this cohort of young people. Post 16 PEPs will have clear SMART targets that focus on raising achievement and include both short and long term educational planning.

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|----------|---|-----|-----|--|-----|-----|
| PED03 07 | Benchmarking year – Percentage of CIC Residential and Leaving Care placements that have received a Quality Assurance Visit from the Placements Team within the previous 12 months (cumulative from April to end of quarter) | N/A | N/A | Residential 50% Leaving Care 84.2% | N/A | N/A |
|----------|---|-----|-----|--|-----|-----|

Supporting Commentary: Sam Murtagh

The delivery of on-site quality assurance visits has continued to be significantly impacted by Covid-19 lockdowns and localised restrictions, however throughout this period urgent visits have continued to take place. More recently following appropriate risk assessments a virtual pre visit has been implemented following providers submitting self-assessment documents, this has then been followed up by a virtual visit prior to a time-limited on site visit – adhering to all the required Covid-19 guidance and law.

This % figure has slightly decreased this quarter for Leaving Care this relates to 2 different providers being used and the time to complete the planned visits – this is expected to increase again next quarter back to 100%. The Residential figure has remained stable this quarter, this has been much slower than expected due to the substantial increase in Residential placements being required this quarter (8 new placements in total). Overall there has been a 25% rise in Residential placements from the outset of Covid-19. Quality Assurance visits continue to be risk based taking account of current OFSTED rating, distance, cost and any issues raised. It is expected that the Residential figure will increase to 60% next quarter.

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| PED03 08 | Report on the budget spent on independent and out of borough placements for Children in Care (Forecast end of year) (Liz Davenport/Sam Murtagh) | 9,672,589 | N/A | Year end Residential £9,695,579 IFA £2,201,092 Total £11,896,671 (*these figures include all Covid-19 related costs) |  | N/A |
|----------|---|-----------|-----|---|---|-----|

Supporting Commentary: Liz Davenport/Sam Murtagh

There has been a 25% increase in the number of Residential placements currently commissioning since the onset of Covid-19. All associated Covid-19 costs relating to inability for young people to move into other types of placements due to lockdown directives have been apportioned elsewhere however are included in the figures above. There is now a Children's Continuing Care panel in place chaired by Health colleagues to enhance timely joint funding agreements. Its planned that the information about the Continuing Health Care assessment process will be outlined / reminded to the Social Work teams

The rising costs of individual placement packages (seen Regionally and Nationally) and the growing number of young people placed within residential provision has significantly increased the spend in this area.

| Ref: | Milestones | Quarterly Progress |
|--|---|---|
| PED03a | Review the process for children entering and exiting care to ensure there is a sufficient range and choice of provision to meet their needs. Tracey Coffey (March 2021) | |
| <i>Supporting Commentary</i> Tracey Coffey <i>This has been completed and is informing the revised sufficiency strategy</i> | | |
| PED03b | Review and quality assure the commissioning of services for Children in Care and Care Leavers to ensure that they meet the needs of Halton's population and inform future commissioning decisions. Sam Murtagh (March 2021) |  |
| <i>Supporting Commentary: Sam Murtagh</i> <i>Quality assurance of currently accessed placements is ongoing as highlighted in PED03 07. A procurement timeline has now been developed to commission a Leaving Care support service to deliver into an existing council owned site in Runcorn which will operate as a four bed Leaving Care group living, the same provider will also deliver some floating support to young people in their own accommodation – either Registered Social Landlords property or sourced from the private sector. The timescale for this tender has been significantly impacted by Covid-19 due to provider's capacity to engage with a pre tendering engagement exercise and the practicalities of hosting on site visits. It is planned this will be in place in 2021 with the service in place for late summer.</i> | | |
| PED03c | Through the quality assurance of Personal Education Plans (PEP), identify areas of need and support to improve outcomes for individual Children in Care. Sharon Williams (March 2021) |  |
| <i>Supporting Commentary: Sharon Williams</i> Two areas identified by Ofsted in the ILACS March 2020 have been strengthened. Post 16 and Early Years workers have been appointed with clear targets and expectations. PEPS are being tracked, monitored and scrutinised as per usual process in the VS. The VS now has additional capacity through Early Years and Post 16 to drive improvements. | | |

Objective: Improve the offer for children and young people with disabilities and those with Special Educational Needs (PED04)

| Ref: | Measure | 19/20 Actual | 20/21 Target | Current | Direction of Travel | Quarterly Progress |
|--|--|--------------|--------------|-----------------|---|---|
| PED04 01 | Increase the percentage of EHCP assessments completed within 20 weeks (academic year cumulative to end of quarter) | 49% | 75% | 2021 YTD= 80.9% |  |  |
| <i>Supporting Commentary: Adrian Leach/ Eileen Picton</i> <i>During the last reporting period the number of Education Health Care (EHC) needs assessment requests has increased as schools have welcomed back a higher proportion of their pupils following the 8th March restriction easing. This increase in requests to assess has moved Halton back in line with the number of requests to assess being seen prior to the Covid-19 pandemic. Since the start of 2021 the SEN Assessment Team have been at the establishment number of assessment co-ordinators. Since April the team has also had a new interim manager in place. Currently fully staffed the tem is better able to meet demand in terms of the number of new requests for EHC needs assessments. Improvement in the timeliness or advice being received by educational psychologists and health services has had a significant impact on the assessment team's ability to consistently finalise plans within the 20 week timescale. Where plans go over 20 weeks this is due to pressure to find suitable provision or where there are ongoing discussions with parents regarding the contents of a draft plan.</i> | | | | | | |
| PED04 02 | Reduce the number of incidents of fixed term exclusion (academic year cumulative to end of quarter) | 707 | 500 | 240 |  |  |
| <i>Supporting Commentary: Vanessa Nice / Scott Middlehurst</i> <i>Schools have reported an increase in dis-regulated children post-lockdown and are reporting that some pupils have found the transition back to fulltime schooling a challenge in terms of self-regulation and maintaining good behaviour. This could have led to an increase in behaviour incidents, Fixed term exclusions. However, during the last 15 months the LA has provided schools with robust advice and support in order to meet the needs of their cohorts. There has been a decline in fixed term exclusions owing to school's recognition of the importance of behaviour as a communication of need and supporting it as they would support any other area of SEN.</i> | | | | | | |

The Secondary Behaviour Teacher now works with all 8 secondary schools and has provided training to Initial Teacher Training (ITT), Newly Qualified Teachers (NQTs) and Recently Qualified Teachers (RQTs) in these schools. The secondary lead is also providing bespoke, in-class packages of support to a number of school staff.

The Primary Behaviour Teacher is working in a large number of schools across the borough and has provided one-off support and longer packages of support to schools. The primary lead is also providing bespoke mental health and behaviour management training to schools.

There has been a reduction numbers of FTEs during the first part of Spring Term. Persistent disruptive behaviour was highest reason at 26%, followed by Verbal abuse/Threatening behaviour against an adult 22%.

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|----------|---|-----|-----|-----|---|---|
| PED04 03 | Reduce the number of children subject to fixed term exclusions (academic year cumulative to end of quarter) | 349 | 350 | 169 |  |  |
|----------|---|-----|-----|-----|---|---|

Supporting Commentary: Vanessa Nice / Scott Middlehurst

Because of the national lockdown and school closures, there were reduced numbers of FTEs during the first part of Spring Term. 81.3% of FTEs were given to boys and 18.8% given to girls. This is a decrease in FTEs for girls from 22.3% at the same point in 2019-2020 (and obviously an increase for boys from 77.7%).

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|----------|---|----|----|----|---|---|
| PED04 04 | Reduce the number of children subject to a permanent exclusion (academic year cumulative to end of quarter) | 21 | 30 | 11 |  |  |
|----------|---|----|----|----|---|---|

Supporting Commentary: Vanessa Nice / Scott Middlehurst

.4 of the 11 PEx were in Autumn and 7 occurred between March 8th (end of school closures) and Easter break on 1st April.
KS1 – 1 KS2 – 1 KS3 – 2 KS4 – 7

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|----------|--|-----|-----|---------------|-----|-----|
| PED04 05 | Report on the proportion of children subject to EHCP placed in independent and out of borough provisions (snapshot end of quarter) – long term target is to reduce | N/A | N/A | Refer comment | N/A | N/A |
|----------|--|-----|-----|---------------|-----|-----|

Supporting Commentary: Adrian Leach / Eileen Picton

Currently Halton places a number of children with Education Health Care Plan's (EHCP) in independent non-maintained special schools outside of the borough the current proportion of pupils with EHCPs in independent special schools is 7.2%. This is almost double the national average (4.1%). The reliance on out of borough independent provision is primarily a result of a mix and balance of specialist provision in borough that does not meet the needs of the cohort. This places significant strain on the council core grant through increased costs for home to school transport as well as the schools' grant high needs block (£1.1m overspent in 2020/21)

A number of work streams are in place to address this issue and these form the core of Halton SEND Strategy's Inclusive Education priority. This includes the development of a sufficiency strategy to more closely align provision to need, and a range of interventions to support more inclusive mainstream provision (to free up space in Halton specialist provision: see PED04 07) Specific developments already in train to address Halton's reliance on OOB INMSS are:

- Development of an SEMH free school in partnership with St Helens Metropolitan Borough Council and The Star Academy Trust
- Development of more flexible resource base provision
- Supporting Ashley school to be able to take a wider level of need for pupils with speech and communication and autistic spectrum conditions

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|----------|--|-----|-------------------|---|-----|---|
| PED04 06 | Report on the budget spent on independent and out of borough (OOB) provision for SEND (Forecast end of year) | N/A | £250000 reduction | ISS/NMSS OOB Schools end of year £4,280,879 Overspend of £1,108,429 | N/A |  |
|----------|--|-----|-------------------|---|-----|---|

Supporting Commentary: Sam Murtagh

There were 3 starters in Quarter 4 compared to 10 starters in Quarter 4 of 2019/20. The projected overspend has reduced by £152,983 in Q4

Work has continued reviewing all current available placements in borough including Mainstream, Resource bases and Special Schools whilst at the same time being clear about likely future needs both in terms of number of pupils and types of needs. This work will result in a SEND Sufficiency Strategy statement

The Social Emotional Mental Health (SEMH) Re-integration service level agreement continues with The Bridge School in Halton, this enables pupils to return to their home mainstream school. The performance continues to be positive both with regard to embedding the change to practice in terms of the home school remaining involved through-out the re-integration placement at The Bridge School, no exclusions to date and also in terms of actual reintegration plans and timescales. Children are able to remain on the reintegration pathway for a maximum of 12 weeks. The next group of pupils are planned to reintegrate in late June 2021.

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|----------|--|-----|-----|--|--|--|
| PED04 07 | Increase the percentage of children subject to EHCP placed in mainstream provision (snapshot end of quarter) | 44% | 30% | | | |
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Supporting Commentary: Adrian Leach

Despite progress being made over the last year with regards to the proportion of new plans naming mainstream provision Halton still lags some way behind the national average in terms of all pupils with EHCPs. 26.3% compared to 34.3% nationally. It is one of Halton's four strategic priorities for SEND to improve education inclusion, including mainstream schools confidence and ability to meet the needs of pupils with special educational needs. Work streams within the priority include:

- Embedding nurture based approaches to meet the needs of pupils to ensure they are ready to learn.
- Revising and relaunching the local area's graduated response to provide a toolkit of strategies for schools, settings and providers.
- Working with key schools on a Whole School SEND project supported by the national association for special needs (NASEN)
- Embedding the local areas inclusion charter for schools

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|----------|---|------|------|------|---|---|
| PED04 08 | Monitor the percentage of Special Schools with overall effectiveness of Good or Outstanding | 100% | 100% | 100% |  |  |
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Supporting Commentary: Jill Farrell

100% of Special schools are rated good or outstanding by OFSTED.

| Ref: | Milestones | Quarterly Progress |
|--------|--|---|
| PED04a | Develop and Implement the Social Emotional and Mental Health Strategy (SEMH) by March 2021. Impact to be monitored through the action plan. (Adrian Leach) |  |

Supporting Commentary: Adrian Leach

The proposed SEMH Strategy is embedded within the broader revision of Halton's SEND Strategy. Monitoring and progress and delivery of the SEND strategy is undertaken by the SEND strategic partnership.

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| PED04b | Review the current framework of support for children and young people with disabilities, including short breaks provision and direct payments (March 2021) with all recommissions co-produced with parents and young people. (Sam Murtagh/ Val Armor) |  |
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Supporting Commentary: Sam Murtagh/ Val Armor

The direct payments component has been delayed due to Covid-19 as the priority has been to maintaining commissioned service support to the most vulnerable young people, particularly during the national lockdown. The current commissioned providers have continued to work extremely hard to offer innovative ways of supporting young people with disabilities and their families throughout, zoom calls, online design activities, social activities, shopping delivery etc. – some service have continued to offer face to face services to our most vulnerable young people. All short breaks services have been commissioned in a co-produced manner involving parents and young people, an example of this has been the setting up of swimming lessons for young people with disabilities – this came from a conversation with a number of parents when we were evaluating the most recent tenders for short breaks – unfortunately due to the national lockdowns and government restrictions the lessons were only able to be delivered for three weeks however the funds remain in place for when they are able to be delivered in a safe manner. With the planned National roadmap published plans are ongoing to start the lessons as soon as possible and over deliver if possible

All commissioned short breaks now in place with regular performance reports being submitted and interrogated. A grant application with NHS England for additional funding (£10k) for the delivery of different types of short breaks for young people who have had services disrupt due to Covid-19 was successful with delivery taking place in the Easter holidays. The feedback about the collaborative bid (Commissioning, CCG, Disabled children services) from the evaluators was extremely positive. Work has also started linking in with the Holiday Activity Fund which is focussed on young people who access Free School Meals for support delivery during summer school holidays based on nutrition, enrichment, a healthy lunch and physical activity.

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| PED04c | Improve the quality of assessment criteria for Education Health and Care Plans. (Adrian Leach) |  |
| <p><i>Supporting Commentary: Adrian Leach</i> A multi-agency task and finish group has been reviewing and revising the local areas graduated response. The graduated response sets out clearly for schools families and professionals the expectations about how children and young people with SEND should be supported prior to needing and EHCP. The expectations around levels of need requiring an EHCP.</p> | | |
| PED04d | Quality assure all provision currently being utilised to ensure that provision meets the needs of our children and young people (Sam Murtagh) |  |
| <p><i>Supporting Commentary: Sam Murtagh</i> The quality monitoring visits that restarted in the autumn term in line with National lockdown requirements – as at year end with 17% of NMISS schools having now received a monitoring visit which covers 37% of pupils placed within independent and non-maintained settings. The monitoring framework used has been reviewed and updated and also shared with the Designated Clinical Officer at Warrington and Halton CCG (Clinical Commissioning Group), who have agreed to accompany the Council to schools that have a clinical offer. Further work will take place with the Parent/Carer forum in relation to completion and promotion of the Parental feedback information to be utilised in the visits.</p> | | |
| PED04e | Review in borough specialist provision and revise to meet the needs of Halton's children and young people (Ann McIntyre) |  |
| <p><i>Supporting Commentary: Ann McIntyre</i> A Sufficiency Strategy is now been developed to set out the key areas of need and how this need will be addressed in Halton</p> | | |

Objective: Raise achievement across Early Years and all Key Stages, and diminish the difference between vulnerable groups and their peers (PED05)

| Ref: | Measure | 19/20 Actual | 20/21 Target | Current | Direction of Travel | Quarterly Progress |
|--|--|--------------|------------------|---------------|---|---|
| PED05 01 | Ensure all eligible children for the vulnerable 2 year old funding access quality EY provision (internally collected termly information – may not match to published data from Jan census) | 90% | 100% of eligible | 85% | Refer comment | Refer comment |
| <p><i>Supporting Commentary: Jill Farrell / Belinda Yen/Gail Hodgkinson-Vaughan</i> The DfE provided a target of 583 children to be placed. We have placed 495 (includes 12 Out of Borough (OOB) settings) which equates to 85%. This number is slightly lower than usual; process of placement continues as normal, however some places were declined until parents felt more comfortable for their children to return/commence due to the effects of the pandemic. 100% of day care and pre -school settings are good or outstanding; funded two year olds are only placed in good/outstanding provision</p> | | | | | | |
| PED05 02 | Increase the take up of Early Years Entitlement for 3 to 4 year olds. | 93% | 96% | 97% |  |  |
| <p><i>Supporting Commentary: Jill Farrell / Belinda Yen/Gail Hodgkinson-Vaughan</i> Halton funded 1868 3 & 4 year olds out of a population of 1932 ONS statistics.</p> | | | | | | |
| PED05 03 | Monitor the percentage of Early Years settings (pre-schools, day care, out of school clubs, childminders) with overall effectiveness of Good or Outstanding (snapshot end of quarter) | 95% | N/A | 95% | 95% | N/A |
| <p><i>Supporting Commentary: Jill Farrell /Belinda Yen/Gail Hodgkinson-Vaughan</i> 100% of pre-schools and day care provisions are graded as good/outstanding; 2 new day cares have not yet been inspected; 76 childminders are registered in Halton (8 have not yet been inspected; 8 received a “met” outcome as children were not present at point of inspection; 6 childminders are graded as Requires Improvement; all others are good/outstanding) There is no change since the last QMR and no inspections have taken place, due to the pandemic. Inspection activity for OFSTED re-commenced on 4th May 2021, although to date no Early Years provision has been inspected since then.</p> | | | | | | |
| PED05 04 | Monitor the percentage of Primary schools with overall effectiveness of Good or Outstanding N.B. 6 out of the 8 schools are academies. (snapshot end of quarter) | 87.8% | N/A | Refer comment | Refer comment | N/A |
| <p><i>Supporting Commentary: Jill Farrell</i></p> | | | | | | |

Due to the pandemic, only monitoring visits have taken place and therefore inspection gradings have not changed. Inspection activity re-commenced on 4th May 2021.

| | | | | | | |
|----------|---|-----|-----|---------------|---------------|-----|
| PED05 05 | Monitor the percentage of Secondary schools with overall effectiveness of Good or Outstanding (snapshot end of quarter) | 50% | N/A | Refer comment | Refer comment | N/A |
|----------|---|-----|-----|---------------|---------------|-----|

Supporting Commentary: Jill Farrell

Due to the pandemic, only monitoring visits have taken place and therefore inspection gradings have not changed. Inspection activity re-commenced on 4th May 2021. 6 of the 8 secondary schools are academy schools. We are working closely with our maintained schools providing challenge and support to improve outcomes and achievement for all.

| Ref: | Milestones | Quarterly Progress |
|---|---|---|
| PED05a | Monitor and evaluate educational outcomes and the impact of funding streams (including Free EY Entitlement, Pupil Premium) to raise achievement for all and diminish the difference between vulnerable groups and their peers (March 2021). (Jill Farrell) | Refer comment |
| <i>Supporting Commentary: Jill Farrell</i> | | |
| <i>Due to the pandemic, statutory assessments in primary schools have been paused and in secondary schools, teacher assessed grades will be submitted. Therefore there is no public data published. Schools have been asked to share effective practice and also any barriers to learning so that support and training can be developed as appropriate. Wider work with schools focusing on meeting all pupils' needs and achievement for all vulnerable groups is continuing as a key focus.</i> | | |
| PED05b | Review the process of risk assessment for schools and settings to target support and drive improvement. Jill Farrell (March 2021) | Refer comment |
| <i>Supporting Commentary: Jill Farrell</i> | | |
| <i>Schools are risk assessed based on information shared. Whilst public performance data is not available; wider information is known regarding changes in senior leadership and school performance prior to Covid-19 and during the pandemic including attendance; behaviour; inclusion; governance; leadership capacity etc. The categorisation and risk assessment process will be amended due to the impact of Covid-19, however support will be targeted based on levels of need.</i> | | |
| PED05c | Build engagement, capacity and understanding of the strategic role of governors (Jill Farrell) (March 2021) | Refer comment |
| <i>Supporting Commentary: Jill Farrell</i> | | |
| <i>Governor recruitment, training and access to CPD is ongoing. Unfortunately during the pandemic uptake has been limited, although training has been provided virtually throughout. This remains a key area to continue developing.</i> | | |
| PED05d | In partnership with schools, review and design an effective curriculum model for the region that meets pupils needs whilst raising ambitions (Jill Farrell) (March 2021) | Refer comment |
| <i>Supporting Commentary: Jill Farrell</i> | | |
| <i>This work was interrupted due to the pandemic as schools have responded to their own curriculum needs. Partnership working with schools has been strengthened throughout the pandemic, although focusing upon wider aspects than a regional curriculum model.</i> | | |
| PED05e | Launch Halton Learning Alliance (HLA) Strategic Partnership to develop an inclusive, ambitious approach developing contributing, successful citizens locally, nationally and globally. All educational stakeholders and community members acting with morale purpose for Halton children, young people and community members (March 2021, Jill Farrell) |  |
| <i>Supporting Commentary: Jill Farrell</i> | | |
| <i>Halton Learning Alliance was successfully launched in March 2021 and was well attended by the school and college sector. Colleagues agreed to the key principles and vision. The shadow board is now progressing to develop operational work following this launch.</i> | | |

Objective: Improve participation and skills for young people to drive Halton's future (PED06)

| Ref: | Measure | 19/20 Actual | 20/21 Target | Current | Direction of Travel | Quarterly Progress |
|---|--|--------------|--------------|---------|---|---|
| PED06 01 | Maintain the percentage of 16-17 year olds not in education, employment or training (NEET) (snapshot end of quarter, end of year information February) | 4.0% | 4.0% | 3.4% |  |  |
| <i>Supporting Commentary: Háf Bell</i> | | | | | | |
| <i>The annual figure reported above as current is an average of December 2020 – February 2021 results. The direction of travel is very positive, particularly given the effect the pandemic has had on the experience of education and employment opportunities. The rise of the Not Known figure below will have impacted the NEET figure, there is the potential within those whose activity is Not Known that some are NEET.</i> | | | | | | |

| | | | | | | |
|---|--|-------|------|-------|---|---|
| PED06 02 | Maintain the percentage of 16-17 year olds whose activity is not known (snapshot end of quarter, end of year information February) | 0.3% | 0.3% | 0.6% |  |  |
| <i>Supporting Commentary: Háf Bell</i> The annual figure reported above as current is an average of December 2020 – February 2021 results. Our ability to track the activity of young people has been hindered by the limitations on contact with young people. In previous years we would visit people in their homes if we were unable to contact them via phone, email or social media, this we have chosen not to do during the pandemic to limit the amount of staff travel around the borough. | | | | | | |
| PED06 03 | Increase the percentage of 16-17 year olds with an offer of learning (September guarantee) | 97.4% | 98% | 96.8% |  |  |
| <i>Supporting Commentary: Háf Bell</i> There was a reduced number of young people with confirmed offers of learning or training for September 2020, reported as the current figure above. Some young people waited to see how the national picture in relation to Covid-19 developed before making a decision about what they would do next. September 2021 figures are not yet available. | | | | | | |
| PED06 04 | Increase the percentage of 16-17 year olds participating in education or training that meets the Government definition of full participation (known as Raising the Participation Age) | 91.8% | 92% | 92.2% |  |  |
| <i>Supporting Commentary: Háf Bell</i> The annual measure is taken in March each year; March 2021 figures are reported as current above. We have observed more young people, particularly 17 year olds, continuing in education instead of leaving to take up employment without training, meaning we are making positive progress in this measure. | | | | | | |
| Ref: | Milestones | | | | | Quarterly Progress |
| PED06a | Closely monitor the cohort of young people not in education, employment or training and identify common patterns/issues to inform actions, guide the effective use of resources and to identify any future commissioning needs (Háf Bell) (March 2021) | | | | |  |
| <i>Supporting Commentary: Háf Bell</i> The focus for 2020/21 has been on ensuring young people are aware of how to access our support and to prioritise young people who have previously suffered from anxiety, or who approached us asking for additional support. Changes were made to our way of working because of lockdowns and restrictions and the impact on young people. This means we have used information to guide the effective use of our resources, although the environment we were responding to was very different to what we expected when planning for 2020/21. As we continue to review whether the country is able to move away from all social distancing restrictions permanently in the future we will continue to consider the impact on young people and how we can support them through our commissioned services. | | | | | | |
| PED06c | Work with schools, the College and training providers to report where young people progress to Post 16 as quickly as possible, so those who haven't been progressed can be identified and contacted to offer support (Háf Bell) (October 2020) | | | | |  |
| <i>Supporting Commentary: Háf Bell</i> Whilst we continued to have excellent communication with and from schools and the College the process of supporting young people into the next phase of education or training post 16 became more difficult being done at a distance. All schools continued to maintain contact with young people and support where they could, but some young people were not sure what they wanted to do in September 2020 because of the Covid-19 situation. | | | | | | |
| PED06d | Work with Post 16 education and training providers in the borough to support the development of provision that does have clear progression opportunities (Háf Bell) (March 2021) | | | | |  |
| <i>Supporting Commentary: Háf Bell</i> Covid-19 has meant the focus has been on developing a blended offer. | | | | | | |

6.0 Financial Summary

Attached to e mail

7.0 Appendix I

7.1 Symbols are used in the following manner:

| Progress | | Milestone | Measure |
|----------|---|--|---|
| Green |  | Indicates that the milestone is on course to be achieved within the appropriate timeframe. | Indicates that the annual target is on course to be achieved. |
| Amber |  | Indicates that it is uncertain, or too early to say at this stage whether the milestone will be achieved within the appropriate timeframe. | Indicates that it is uncertain or too early to say at this stage whether the annual target is on course to be achieved. |
| Red |  | Indicates that it is unlikely or certain that the objective will not be achieved within the appropriate timeframe. | Indicates that the target will not be achieved unless there is an intervention or remedial action taken. |

7.2 Direction of Travel indicator

Where possible measures will also identify a direction of travel using the following convention:

| | | |
|-------|---|--|
| Green |  | Indicates that performance is better compared to the same period last year. |
| Amber |  | Indicates that performance is the same as compared to the same period last year. |
| Red |  | Indicates that performance is worse compared to the same period last year. |
| N/A | | Indicates that the measure cannot be compared to the same period last year. |

7.3 Key for responsible officers:

AMc Ann McIntyre, Operational Director, Education, Inclusion and Provision Service

TC Tracey Coffey, Operational Director, Children and Families Service

EDUCATION, INCLUSION & PROVISION DEPARTMENT**Revenue Budget as at 31st March 2021**

| | Annual Budget £'000 | Actual £'000 | Variance (Overspend) £'000 |
|-------------------------------------|------------------------------------|-------------------------|---|
| Expenditure | | | |
| Employees | 5,395 | 5,666 | (271) |
| Premises | 97 | 90 | 7 |
| Supplies & Services | 2,109 | 2,083 | 26 |
| Transport | 6 | 1 | 5 |
| School Transport | 737 | 1,070 | (333) |
| Commissioned Services | 2,612 | 1,905 | 707 |
| Agency Related Expenditure | 1,584 | 1,576 | 8 |
| Independent School Fees | 4,281 | 4,283 | (2) |
| Inter Authority Recoupment | 560 | 560 | 0 |
| Nurse Education Payments | 6,268 | 6,268 | 0 |
| Pupil Premium Grant | 83 | 83 | 0 |
| Capital Finance | 2,929 | 2,929 | 0 |
| Total Expenditure | 26,661 | 26,514 | 147 |
| Income | | | |
| Fees & Charges | -189 | -204 | 15 |
| Transfer from Reserves | -631 | -631 | 0 |
| Dedicated Schools Grant | -16,109 | -16,109 | 0 |
| Government Grant Income | -4,543 | -4,543 | 0 |
| Reimbursements & Other Income | -1,413 | -1,442 | 29 |
| Inter Authority Income | -55 | 0 | (55) |
| Schools SLA Income | -408 | -446 | 38 |
| Total Income | -23,348 | -23,375 | 27 |
| Net Operational Expenditure | 3,313 | 3,139 | 174 |
| Covid Costs | | | |
| Attendance & Exclusion | 32 | 32 | 0 |
| Education Welfare | 321 | 321 | 0 |
| Childcare | 3 | 3 | 0 |
| School Transport | 50 | 50 | 0 |
| Government Grant Income | | | |
| General Covid Funding | -406 | -406 | 0 |
| Net Covid Expenditure | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Recharges | | | |
| Premises Support | 131 | 131 | 0 |
| Transport Support | 418 | 418 | 0 |
| Central Support | 1,875 | 1,876 | (1) |
| Asset Rental Support | 2,980 | 2,980 | 0 |
| Recharge Income | -437 | -437 | 0 |
| Net Total Recharges | 4,967 | 4,968 | (1) |
| Net Departmental Expenditure | 8,280 | 8,107 | 173 |

Comments on the above figures

The net departmental expenditure for EIP is £0.173m under the approved budget as at 31 March 2021.

Employee expenditure is over the approved budget mainly due to unachieved saving targets. It includes a £0.199m unallocated savings target for 2020/21 that has not been met and a £0.125m saving that was offered up against Troubled Families in 2019/20 which has not been achievable in the current year.

Supplies and services costs are under budget at year-end. This is due to budget holders across the Department closely monitoring all spend in this area and as a result of less demand.

Schools Transport is over budget by £0.333m. This has continued a trend of the past few years. The Council has a statutory responsibility to provide special educational needs pupils with transport and there is a large demand for this service. However, the overspend for the year of £0.333m is an improvement from the 2019/20 final position of £0.774m over budget. This reduction is mainly due to the current Covid-19 situation and schools being temporarily shut in the summer term. It is very likely there will be an increase in these costs for 2021/22 as schools operate to a full academic calendar.

Commissioned Services is under budget by £0.707m, this is as a result of a number of services meeting the conditions of specific covid funded grants and the Council fully utilising these grants ahead of base funding. This is very strictly a one-off for 2020/21 and costs will revert to being funded from base budget in future years.

Inter Authority income is £0.055m less than the budgeted income target. The Council has limited capacity to accept pupils from other authorities due to its own special schools and units being full

Schools SLA income has overachieved the budgeted target by £0.038m. This is due to an increase in demand for services such as the Council's Educational Psychologist and Welfare services.

Specific covid costs for the year of £0.406m have been fully funded from the general covid grant.

Capital Projects as at 31 March 2021

| Capital Expenditure | 2020/21 Capital Allocation £'000 | Actual Spend £'000 | Total Allocation Remaining £'000 |
|----------------------------|---|-----------------------------------|---|
| Asset Management Data | 28 | 22 | 6 |
| Capital Repairs | 1,305 | 825 | 480 |
| Asbestos Management | 40 | 7 | 33 |
| Schools Access Initiative | 63 | 8 | 55 |
| Basic Need Projects | 315 | 0 | 315 |
| Ashley School | 263 | 246 | 17 |
| Fairfield Primary School | 17 | 10 | 7 |
| Kitchen Gas Safety | 42 | 13 | 29 |
| Small Capital Works | 114 | 65 | 49 |
| SEND allocation | 50 | 29 | 21 |
| Healthy Pupil Capital Fund | 2 | 2 | 0 |
| Brookfields @ The Grange | 9 | 9 | 0 |
| Woodside Primary | 130 | 129 | 1 |
| Chestnut Lodge | 174 | 174 | 0 |
| Net Expenditure | 2,552 | 1,539 | 1,013 |

Comments on the above figures.

The Capital repairs underspend is all committed. It is due to roofing and window works not being completed before year-end. The Council has committed funding to schemes including air conditioning works and drainage works, which have not yet commenced but will be progressed in due course. The Council has also committed funding to The Bridge School for condition works and are currently being reviewed.

The Basic Need balance is currently uncommitted and will be allocated to works as and when we have a Basic Need issue within Halton schools.

Work has been completed for Ashley School (at The Heath School Bungalow), Brookfields @ The Grange, Woodside Primary and Chesnut Lodge and retention fees are due in 2021/22.

Fairfield Primary construction work is all complete. The remaining balance will be used by Fairfield Primary for minor capital works.

SEND Capital will be used to fund a retention for the Social, Emotional and Mental Health Needs resource base at Halton Lodge, and the remaining balance has been committed for the SEMH Free School, which is being procured, and project managed by the DfE.

Requests have also be made to carry forward unspent capital allocations on all other projects to 2021/22.

CHILDREN & FAMILIES DEPARTMENT**Revenue Budget as at 31st March 2021**

| | Annual Budget £'000 | Actual £'000 | Variance (Overspend) £'000 |
|---------------------------------------|------------------------------------|-------------------------|---|
| Expenditure | | | |
| Employees | 9,257 | 9,266 | (9) |
| Premises | 284 | 201 | 83 |
| Supplies & Services | 938 | 1,136 | (198) |
| Transport | 113 | 103 | 10 |
| Direct Payments/Individual Budgets | 896 | 732 | 164 |
| Commissioned Services | 224 | 83 | 141 |
| Out of Borough Residential Placements | 7,213 | 8,542 | (1,329) |
| Out of Borough Adoption | 95 | 9 | 86 |
| Out of Borough Fostering | 2,475 | 2,199 | 276 |
| In House Adoption | 297 | 332 | (35) |
| Special Guardianship | 1,722 | 1,722 | 0 |
| In House Foster Carer Placements | 2,221 | 2,402 | (181) |
| Care Leavers | 287 | 263 | 24 |
| Family Support | 57 | 78 | (21) |
| Contracted Services | 4 | 3 | 1 |
| Early Years | 131 | 219 | (88) |
| Transfer to Reserves | 156 | 156 | 0 |
| Emergency Duty Team | 104 | 125 | (21) |
| Total Expenditure | 26,474 | 27,571 | (1,097) |
| Income | | | |
| Fees & Charges | -34 | -22 | (12) |
| Sales Income | -4 | -2 | (2) |
| Rents | -46 | -48 | 2 |
| Reimbursements & Grant Income | -795 | -723 | (72) |
| Transfer from Reserves | -61 | -61 | 0 |
| Dedicated School Grant | -51 | -51 | (0) |
| Government Grant Income | -4,365 | -4,365 | 0 |
| Total Income | -5,356 | -5,272 | (84) |
| Net Operational Expenditure | 21,118 | 22,299 | (1,181) |

CHILDREN & FAMILIES DEPARTMENT**Revenue Budget as at 31st March 2021 Continued**

| | Annual Budget | Actual | Variance (Overspend) |
|-------------------------------------|----------------------|---------------|-----------------------------|
| | £'000 | £'000 | £'000 |
| Covid Costs | | | |
| Employees | 0 | 157 | (157) |
| Supplies & Services | 0 | 57 | (57) |
| Transport | 0 | 25 | (25) |
| Commissioned services to Vol Orgs | 0 | 103 | (103) |
| Residential Care | 0 | 1,154 | (1,154) |
| Direct Payments | 0 | 33 | (33) |
| Out of Borough Fostering | 0 | 2 | (2) |
| In House Foster Carer Placements | 0 | 23 | (23) |
| Care Leavers | 0 | 10 | (10) |
| Family Support | 0 | 2 | (2) |
| Covid Loss of Income | | | |
| Rents | -4 | 0 | (4) |
| Parental Fees | -258 | 0 | (258) |
| Income | | | |
| Reimbursements & Grant Income | 0 | -34 | 34 |
| COVID Winter Grant Income | 0 | -29 | 29 |
| COVID General Grant Income | 0 | -1,765 | 1,765 |
| Net Covid Expenditure | -262 | -262 | 0 |
| Recharges | | | |
| Premises Support | 193 | 193 | 0 |
| Transport Support | 19 | 17 | 2 |
| Central Support | 2,655 | 2,655 | 0 |
| Recharge Income | -210 | -210 | 0 |
| Net Total Recharges | 2,657 | 2,655 | 2 |
| Net Departmental Expenditure | 23,775 | 24,954 | (1,179) |

Comments on the above figures

The final outturn position is £1.179m above budget at the end of the financial year, with the majority of this directly relating to Social Care Services. Additional growth budget was provided at the start of this budget year of £3.174m and savings were offered up of £62k, resulting in net growth of £3.112m.

Employee costs are £9k above budget as there are a number of vacant posts currently in the recruitment process. These have proved difficult to fill throughout the year and so the use of long-term agency staff has contributed to the small overspend against budget. Total spend for the year for agency staff is £1.512m or 16% of employees budget, including spend for the agency Duty and Assessment team working within the Children in Need Division. This team is funded 40% from the contingency budget and 60% from COVID funding.

Supplies and Services expenditure is £0.199m above budget, largely due to high levels of expenditure against the children in care budget, court costs and consultancy.

The Children in Care budget accounts for 22% of the supplies and services spend and is used across both the Children in Need and Children in Care & Care Leavers Division. The main recurring high costs in this area relate to children's respite, children's therapy, nursery fees and translation services.

Consultancy costs account for 23% of the supplies and services spend with the majority of these costs relating to consultancy work currently undertaken in relation to in-house fostering. Whilst these costs are high, as previously reported consideration should be given to the significant financial benefits from this work, which are discussed in detail later in this report.

Court costs also account for 23% of the supplies and services spend, which include fees for assessments and forensic testing required by the court.

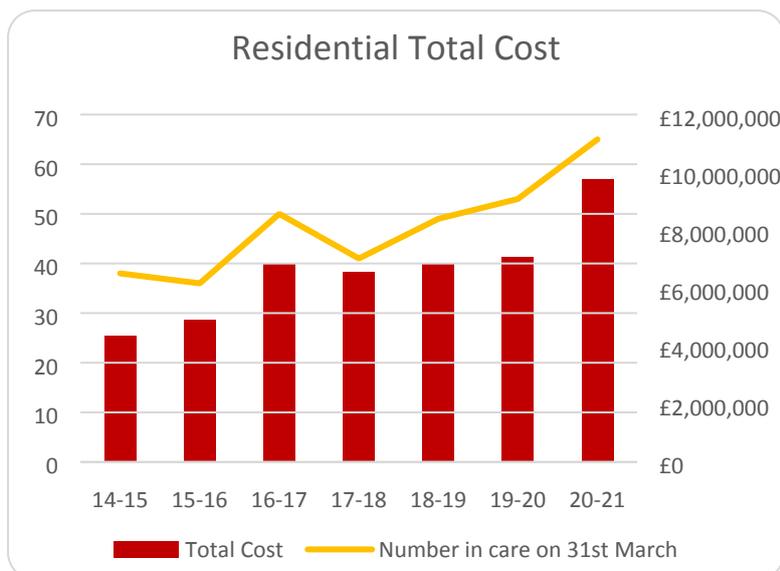
Expenditure in relation to Direct Payments was £0.164m under budget for this financial year. 2020/21 budgetary growth of £0.356m was included due to ongoing annual increases in spend over the last five years. However, the global pandemic made it difficult to undertake full assessments and many clients needed to shield. One-off payments were predominantly used throughout the year to support families, rather than a full Direct Payments package. An audit on pre-paid cards was also carried out, resulting in a high number of reimbursements further reducing spend. Moving forwards into 2021/22 it is expected that the uptake in packages will increase as service delivery resumes and the budget will be fully utilised.

Out of Borough Residential Care continues to be the main budget pressure for the Children and Families Department as the costs of residential care have continued to increase year on year. Additional budgetary growth was provided of £1.85m for this financial year to alleviate the pressure, yet spend for the year was £1.329m over budget; not including packages that were funded from the COVID budget which were an additional £1.154m. Initial forecasts for 2021-22 indicate higher levels of spend than this financial year based on current packages. Although placements and costs are changeable throughout the year there is a general trend of costs increasing. There may also be further financial strain depending on the longevity of COVID funding, should this funding cease then this will add further pressure to the budget.

The table below breaks down the current residential placements based on costs and placement type. These are the full package costs including the COVID funded element in order to give the accurate costs of residential care at present.

| Provision | Weekly Costs | No. Placed | Total cost for the year |
|----------------|-----------------|------------|-------------------------|
| Residential | £2000 - £3000 | 4 | 358,048 |
| Residential | £3001 - £4000 | 15 | 2,784,509 |
| Residential | £4001 - £5000 | 10 | 1,831,251 |
| Residential | £5001 - £6000 | 4 | 657,261 |
| Residential | £6001 - £10,500 | 4 | 1,224,234 |
| Secure | £6713 - £10,500 | 3 | 971,407 |
| Leaving Care | £300 - £3487 | 23 | 1,809,338 |
| Parent & Child | £581 - £,2053 | 2 | 127,589 |

The graph below illustrates the rising costs of Residential Care:



Processes are in place to identify those children who may be able to step down from residential care into foster care. This is an ongoing and lengthy process due to the complexities of the cases and there is no certainty that there will be any suitable young people identified.

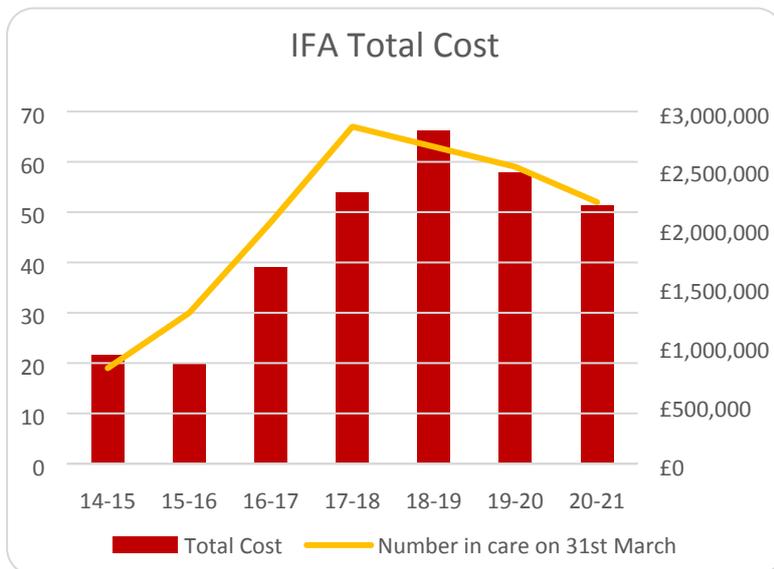
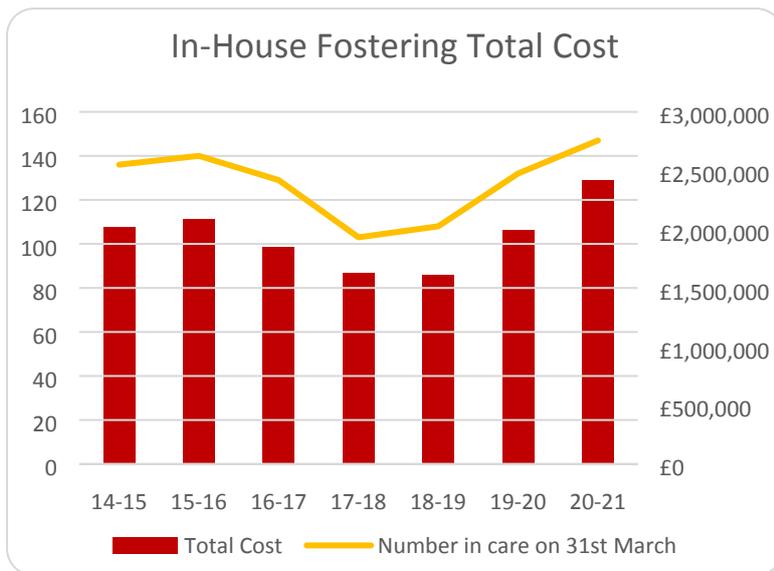
In order to address the rising costs of semi-independent (leaving care) provision, a new Supported Lodgings service has been created. This in-house provision will support those young people who are leaving care and taking the first steps towards independence. This service is new to Halton and the successful recruitment of providers is ongoing. The costs of this service will be far less than the costs of current leaving care provision, and as well as the financial benefits, the service will provide a much more home-like and supportive environment for young people.

Another initiative currently being introduced is a training flat for care leavers. This is rental accommodation where a care leaver can live for a period of 6-12 months. The young person can receive support and develop the necessary skills required to live independently. They will then be assessed as to their ability to move on to gain their own tenancy. Accommodating care leavers in this way not only ensures that they are fully prepared for managing their own tenancies, but is also a much less expensive option than regular care leaver accommodation.

Independent Fostering Agency (IFA) expenditure is under the budgeted spend by £0.276m. This is a direct result of the work carried out by the consultants working with the fostering team as stated earlier in the report. The number of young people in an IFA placement is continuing to reduce with a direct correlation to the successful recruitment and retention of in-house fostering provision. Over the last year there has been a significant growth of children placed in-house; in April 19 there were 110 and in December 20 it was 153. The children placed in IFA provision has reduced from 73 in April 19 to 52 in March 21.

This has understandably impacted on the costs of in-house fostering provision which is £0.181m above budget at the end of the financial year. However, IFA provision is approximately £505 per week (£26k per year) more expensive than in-house provision.

The graphs below illustrate the numbers in placement and the associated costs:



Expenditure relating to In House Adoption is £0.035m above budget and mainly relates to the quarterly costs of the Regional Adoption Agency – Together for Adoption. Halton contributes 15% of the costs each year to this shared service, which amounted to £0.143m for this in 2020/21. A number of unfilled staffing vacancies within the adoption service reduced the overspend for this financial year, but these costs will continue to be a budget pressure for the council as there is no funding to support it.

The Early Years net divisional expenditure is £0.088m over budget at the end of the year. This amount would have been greater, but COVID funding of £0.259m to offset losses of parental fees income due to the inability of children to attend nursery has improved the final outturn figure. The underachievement of parental income will continue to be a budget pressure due to income targets based upon the Early Years provision having full occupancy levels. Fees increased by £1 per day in the last financial year in an attempt to alleviate budget pressures, but currently there is no possibility that they will become self-sustaining and will therefore

continue to be a significant budget pressure going forwards. It is probable that the effects of the global pandemic will be long lasting and have a significantly detrimental effect on the already strained financial position of the Early Years provision for the foreseeable future.

Total income was £0.084m under budget, primarily due to a £0.053m income generation target for the new Leaving Care provision on the Inglefield site. This is a four bedroom accommodation with the potential to rent one bedroom to other Local Authorities. However, this was not able to open as planned within the last financial year so no income was received.

COVID costs for the Children and Families Department were £1.566m, with income losses calculated at £0.262m.

Employee costs relate to agency social work staff who have been employed to assist with the added pressures of COVID as current Social Work teams already have a large number of vacancies. This includes costs for the Duty and Assessment team previously mentioned in the report who are dealing with the significant increase in referrals as a result of the pandemic.

The majority of COVID costs relate to Out of Borough Residential care. These costs include:

- Additional support provided to young people in residential settings to enable them to cope with the current crisis and the lockdown conditions
- The additional costs of accommodating young people in higher cost placements due to the restrictions brought on by the lockdown period and the limited number of placements available.
- The additional costs incurred due to the inability to transition children from residential care into leaving care placements due to the lockdown restrictions.
- The costs of post-18 residential provision for those young people who are unable to transfer to independent living due to the reduced availability of accommodation resulting from the pandemic.