



St. Helens Council

Town Hall, St. Helens, Merseyside, WA10 1HP

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Agenda

CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S SERVICES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL

PUBLIC MEETINGS ARE WEBCAST (LIVE STREAMED)

Date: Monday, 23 March 2020 Time: 10.00 am Venue: Room 10

Membership

Lab 6 Councillors	Bowden, Gill, T Long (Chairman), Maloney, McDonnell and C Preston															
LD 1 Councillor	Sims															
Ind 1 Councillor	Greaves															
Co-opted (Voting)	<table border="0"> <tr> <td>Mr D Thorpe</td> <td>-</td> <td>- (Church of England)</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Mr C Williams</td> <td></td> <td>- (Roman Catholic Church)</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Vacancy</td> <td></td> <td>- Parent Governor (Primary)</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Mrs P Lawson</td> <td></td> <td>- Parent Governor (Secondary)</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Ms J Leybourne</td> <td></td> <td>- Parent Governor (Special)</td> </tr> </table>	Mr D Thorpe	-	- (Church of England)	Mr C Williams		- (Roman Catholic Church)	Vacancy		- Parent Governor (Primary)	Mrs P Lawson		- Parent Governor (Secondary)	Ms J Leybourne		- Parent Governor (Special)
Mr D Thorpe	-	- (Church of England)														
Mr C Williams		- (Roman Catholic Church)														
Vacancy		- Parent Governor (Primary)														
Mrs P Lawson		- Parent Governor (Secondary)														
Ms J Leybourne		- Parent Governor (Special)														

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sarah O'Brien, Executive Director People's Services & Accountable Officer CCG and Linda Clegg, Chair of the St Helens Children's Improvement Board have been invited to attend the meeting. 	
5.	<u>Special Educational Needs and Disability: Ofsted/CQC Improvement Plan</u>	47
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sharon Fryer, Assistant Director - Integrated Children's Health have been invited to attend the meeting. 	

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6.	<u>SEND Home to School Transport</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Jo Davies, Assistant Director Education & Early Help has been invited to attend the meeting.	53
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CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S SERVICES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL

At a meeting of this Panel held on
Monday, 20 January 2020

(Present) Councillor T Long (Chairman)
Councillors Bowden, Gill, Greaves, Maloney, McDonnell, C Preston and Sims

Ms P Lawson - Parent Governor (Secondary)
Mr C Williams - Roman Catholic Church

(Also Present) Councillor Charlton, Cabinet Member Protecting Young People

(Not Present) Mr Thorpe and Ms Leybourne

16 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Mr Thorpe and Ms Leybourne.

17 MINUTES

* Resolved that the minutes of the meeting held on 24 September 2019, be approved and signed.

18 DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS FROM MEMBERS

Item	Title	Members	Declaration
6	Home to School Transport	Councillor C Preston Mrs Lawson, Co-opted Member	Declared a Personal Non-Pecuniary Interest

19 OFSTED INSPECTION OF LOCAL AUTHORITY CHILDREN'S SERVICES

A report was provided to formally share with the Panel the outcome of the Inspection of Local Authority Children's Services (ILACS inspection) with the purpose of affording the Panel the opportunity to comment on, and make suggestions regarding the next steps for the Local Authority.

The Panel was informed that in July 2018, the Local Authority received a focused inspection by Ofsted which found serious concerns, particularly in the areas of Children in Need on a Child Protection Plan, and they were issued with three priority actions.

Since July 2018 significant changes had been made to Children's Services and significant investment also undertaken.

A second focused inspection in November 2018 found improvements and there were no priority actions.

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In September 2019 Ofsted undertook a full Inspection of Local Authority Services (ILACS), and whilst the inspection report as received by Scrutiny at this meeting recognized some of the changes that had been made since July 2018 and progress, it found that the experience and progress of children in care and care leavers “inadequate” and that this resulted in Overall Effectiveness of the Local Authority to be “inadequate”.

This inadequate judgement by Ofsted had resulted in the Local Authority receiving a Ministerial letter and a Formal Improvement Notice, and the Local Authority was now in formal intervention with the Department for Education (DfE).

The Panel was informed that in response to this report, the Children’s Improvement Board would continue with an independent chair, meeting on a monthly basis. In addition, the DfE had reappointed an Improvement Advisor.

The DfE would be closely monitoring the Local Authority until improvements were made.

In addition, it was reported that Ofsted would inspect the Local Authority up to six times per year and Partners in Practice support had once again been allocated.

Ofsted would also be carrying out a two-day inspection of Children’s Services in May 2020 to focus on permanence arrangements.

The Executive Director People’s & Accountable Officer, CCG outlined what the next steps for the Local Authority would be with regards to the improvement required by Ofsted.

The Panel raised a number of questions following the update from the Executive Director and discussed the role that Members could undertake in the support, challenge and monitoring function of the improvement process.

Detail was requested upon the impact of improvement actions and strategies that had been undertaken thus far.

In response, the Executive Director indicated that the latest inspection visit had acknowledged that improvements had been made since 2018. Significantly, no children were deemed to be unsafe and no escalations had been made to appropriate authorities.

This outcome had resulted from the key strategies and actions introduced and implemented since the July 2018 Ofsted visit, with systems and processes being tightened so that children deemed to be at risk were safeguarded.

The Executive Director drew attention to the numerous challenges faced within Children’s Services, particularly the level of demand on the services at present.

However, it was acknowledged that the pace of change needed to be maintained.

It was also indicated that further financial investment may be needed to address shortfalls such as additional staffing within the People’s Services Department and partner organisations. It was confirmed that some work had commenced to address this issue.

The Panel asked whether social work staff recruitment and retention activities were being undertaken and were any already embedded. In response, it was confirmed that a number of activities such as open events had taken place or were planned, particularly following the appointment to a key social work post. Recruitment and retention activities and

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support programmes were in place for social work staff, foster carers and the permanency service.

The Panel acknowledged that there had been historical legacy issues associated with the Ofsted ratings since 2014, and noted the work undertaken thus far to address them.

Some Panel Members enquired whether there would be an opportunity to reflect on the way the Council had dealt with children's social services since 2014 when Ofsted judged that services required improvement.

It was considered that previous Scrutiny work could be revisited and further work carried out accordingly.

The Executive Director indicated how Panel Members could support the improvement process through visits to observe the work of Children's Services and to support, monitor and challenge where appropriate.

The Panel held a comprehensive discussion in respect of key documentation and information that could be provided for consideration, as part of its role in the improvement process/journey. This included:

- monitoring reports following DfE six-monthly visits;
- the findings of the two-day inspection taking place in May 2020;
- progress reports issued by the DfE monitoring adviser;
- information from Children's Improvement Board meetings; and
- the Council's Ofsted Action Plan.

It was agreed that the Independent Chair of the Children's Improvement Board would be invited to the next meeting, and that the Ofsted Inspection of Children's Services would remain an item of business at each meeting of this Panel until further notice.

The Panel was reminded that a Task and Finish Group would be held on Friday, 24 January 2020 to review the Council's Ofsted Action Plan. Councillors Gill, McDonnell and Maloney agreed to attend the Task and Finish Group to provide an input.

The Panel also welcomed the offer that was extended to visit and observe/monitor the work of Children's Services. Councillors Gill, Greaves, McDonnell and Maloney expressed an interest in attending those visits as and when they were arranged.

The key theme of The Voice of the Child (VOC) being captured and embedded in Young People's working practices was raised by the Panel. Assurance was given that VOC was embedded and captured through various frameworks, forums and policies, and was evidenced in recording systems. It was indicated that outputs from VOC themes could be shared with the Panel.

A discussion also took place upon reporting systems for services in respect of SEND pupils, and some issues that had been identified.

The Panel applauded the improvements that had been made thus far and acknowledged there was still some way to go on the improvement journey.

* **Resolved that:**

- (1) **the report be noted;**

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- (2) the following information and documentation be provided/shared as part of this Panel's role in the improvement journey:
 - (i) monitoring reports following DfE six-monthly visits;
 - (ii) the findings of the two-day inspection taking place in May 2020;
 - (iii) progress reports issued by the DfE monitoring adviser;
 - (iv) information from Children's Improvement Board meetings; and
 - (iv) the Council's Ofsted Action Plan.
- (3) 'Ofsted Inspection of Children's Services' would remain an item of business at each meeting of this Panel until further notice;
- (4) the Independent Chair of the Children's Improvement Board would be invited to the next meeting to provide a progress update; and
- (5) a visit be undertaken by Panel Members to observe/monitor the work of Children's Services and a Task and Finish Group be held to review the Council's Ofsted Action Plan.

20 ST HELENS THRIVE FRAMEWORK – A WHOLE SYSTEM APPROACH TO MENTAL HEALTH

A report was provided to update the Panel on the developments in Children and Young Peoples Mental Health Services in respect of the Thrive conceptual framework for system change.

Representatives from North West Boroughs Health Care NHS were in attendance at the previous meeting of this Panel and provided an update to the developments in Children and Young People Mental Health Services.

Following on from this discussion, the Panel requested that a further presentation be provided to update on the Thirve operating model, and how this would help to reduce the waiting times for children and young people accessing mental health services across St Helens.

North West Boroughs NHS Foundation Trust currently provided Children and Young People's Mental Health Services (CAMHS) which had traditionally provided more complex mental health care.

The Trust had a multi-disciplinary approach to delivery and the team consisted of nurses, therapists, psychiatrists and psychologists.

Since January 2014, collaborative work had been undertaken with Barnado's as part of a sub-contract arrangement. By bringing these services together, jointly the Trust had been able to move away from what was traditionally a tiered approach to providing children and young people's mental health services side by side to implement the Thrive framework.

Representatives from North West Boroughs NHS Foundation Trust were in attendance to present a summary of the St Helens Thrive Framework, communicated in the day of a life of a CAMHS practitioner.

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Representatives from St Helens CCG were also into attendance to outline their involvement in the delivery of particular elements of the Thrive Framework through partnership working.

It was explained that the Thrive implementation plan provided was produced by NW Boroughs NHS Foundation Trust.

The presentation outlined the growing demand for CAMHS services, with a prediction to exceed the national target for access to treatment by the end of March 2020.

It was added that to date during 2019/2020 there had been 506 appointments not attended and should this rate continue, there will have been 675 appointments not utilised this year. Following a question raised expressing a concern around those numbers, it was reported there were no key themes in regard to the reasons for non-attendance at appointments.

However, work was ongoing to address those issues. A texting system had been introduced to send appointment reminders which had been effective, and more community-based working was being established to offer outreach programmes to reduce any travel difficulties encountered by families.

Attention was drawn to the aspect of Safety and Risk being of paramount importance to the St Helens Thrive Framework approach.

The presentation then detailed the operation and structure of the St Helens Thrive Framework via four quadrants, and the deployment of resources.

The Panel considered that schools and colleges in the Borough were key partners in early help strategies and enquired about the level of engagement in the Framework.

It was explained that schools and colleges were very accessible, and this had been demonstrated in the work of the Learning Partnership Forum and was evident in their individual Emotional, Health and Wellbeing programmes and curriculum developments.

It was agreed that an update of progress in respect of referrals into the CAMHS Service and waiting times would be reported to this Panel in six months' time.

* **Resolved that:**

- (1) the report be noted;**
- (2) the progress being made in respect of the implementation of the Thrive conceptual framework for system change as provided by North West Boroughs Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust and Barnado's, and the impact of this on supporting children and young people to gain timely access to support and treatment be noted; and**
- (3) the position of the Thrive conceptual framework for system change across the St Helens Children and Young People's mental health system be noted; and**
- (4) a progress update be provided to the Panel in six months' time detailing referrals into the CAMHS Service and waiting times.**

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Councillor C Preston here left the meeting.

21 HOME TO SCHOOL TRANSPORT

A report was presented to provide the Panel with an overview of Home to School Transport and detailed a number of proposals, that were for consideration, to maintain a sustainable home to transport budget for the Borough.

The legal and financial requirements placed upon Local Authorities for the provision of Home to School transport were detailed in the report.

The Panel was informed that following the introduction of the Children and Families Act 2014 which increased the statutory responsibility to provide education and training for students with SEND up to the age of 25 years, there had been a significant increase in expenditure on Home to School Transport. This increased expenditure was being replicated nationally, as highlighted in the Local Government Association report 'Understanding the drivers for rising demand and associated costs for home-to-school transport' published in November 2019, which indicated that between 2014 and 2018 the total national spend on home to school transport increased from £1.02 billion to £1.08 billion.

The report identified the main driver for this surge in expenditure as the increase provision of SEND transport, rising numbers of children with EHCP's with complex needs that required more costly forms of transport including those presenting extremely challenging behaviour which necessitated individual transport. In addition, children and young people for whom the nearest suitable school was out of borough.

The Panel was informed that the same trend was happening in the Borough with rising numbers of children and young people in receipt of EHCP's who were attending out of borough special schools, many of whom required individual transport, alongside increased numbers of 19 to 25 learners with complex needs attending out of borough specialist provision. This has resulted in significant pressure on the home to school transport budget.

Four proposals were outlined in the report to maintain a sustainable home to school transport budget, at the same time meeting the needs families utilising the service.

The Panel raised some questions following the overview that had been provided.

Clarification was sought upon the timeline involved in respect of the consultation process being undertaken with key stakeholders and parents upon the proposals. It was explained that the review process would commence imminently and would proceed during the financial year with outcomes being reported in four to six months' time.

The Panel stressed that part of the consultation must include an understanding of the particular need of young people and needed to take into account the challenges faced by families. For example, those challenges included families who had children and young people attending both local mainstream schools and out of borough provision.

Some background information was requested on how the home to school transport system operated, particularly to include the entitlements for children, young people and their families and the provision of transport for pupils with disabilities to special schools.

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It was subsequently agreed that a briefing would be held to consider more background information on the home to school transport system with data to indicate service usage/take up, pupil profiles and needs, trends and cost implications.

A revised set of proposals was also requested to include more detail, timelines and potential impact.

* **Resolved that:**

- (1) **the report be noted;**
- (2) **a briefing would be held to consider more background information on the home to school transport system; and**
- (3) **a revised set of proposals be submitted in respect of maintaining a sustainable home to school transport budget to include more detail, timelines and potential impact on the service.**

Councillor C Preston here returned to the meeting.

14 SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME 2019/2020

A report was provided to outline the new Work Programme to the Panel for review and to prioritise items for future consideration.

It was agreed that the following items on the Work Programme would be considered at the next meeting:

- Outcomes for Secondary School Children/School Effectiveness Strategy;
- SEND Improvement Plan; and
- Ofsted Inspection of Children's Services (this would be a standing item at future meetings of this Panel until further notice).

Some Panel Members requested that a progress update be provided in respect of the recommendations made for a previous scrutiny review of the Young Carers provision.

It was agreed that the best approach would be to undertake a Spotlight Review to look at the updated position following the Young Carers review, and all previous documentation be circulated to inform the Panel of the review's findings and recommendations.

The Spotlight Review would then determine the next steps.

Panel Members were encouraged to review the Work Programme to prioritise items for future consideration and to email their comments to the Scrutiny Manager.

* **Resolved that:**

- (1) **the report be noted;**
- (2) **a Spotlight Review be undertaken to revisit the recommendations made at a previous Young Carers Scrutiny Review to determine the current position. All previous documentation to be circulated to inform the Spotlight Review of the Scrutiny Review's recommendations and findings; and**

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- (3) **the Work Programme be reviewed to prioritise items for future consideration and any comments be emailed to the Scrutiny Manager.**

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Children and Young People Services Overview and Scrutiny Panel
Monday 23rd March 2020

CHILDREN SERVICES IMPROVEMENT

Exempt/Confidential Item

No

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 This report sets out the framework for the discussion during this item on the Children's Services Improvement process which is currently ongoing.

2.0 Recommendations

- 2.1 That the Panel:

- a) Note this report, including the summary of the work of the Ofsted Action Plan Task Group, and Site Visit to Atlas House;
- b) Note the ILACS Action Plan;
- c) Note the discussion with the Independent Chair of the Children's Improvement Board
- d) Request a report at the next meeting regarding the outcome of the two day inspection of Children Services by Ofsted expected to take place in May 2020.

3.0 Background

- 3.1 At its meeting on 20th January 2020 the Panel received a report regarding Ofsted's Inspection of Local Authority Children Services (ILACS) at St Helens Council which commenced in September 2019 and the Council's response to the Overall Effectiveness Rating of 'Inadequate' which was given due on the experience and progress of children in care and care leavers portion of the inspection being "inadequate".
- 3.2 The Panel was informed that, in response to the outcome of the ILACS, the Council would continue with the work of the Children's Improvement Board, chaired by an Independent Person (Linda Clegg), which had commenced following an Ofsted Focused Visit in 2018 and was due to submit an action plan (the ILACS Action Plan – attached) regarding the required improvements to Children Services. The plan was currently being drafted and due to be submitted to Ofsted at the end of January 2020.
- 3.3 At the 20th January 2020 meeting the Panel agreed that the Improvement of Children Services should be an item of business at each meeting until further notice to enable the Panel to continue monitoring the process. As part of this work, the Panel requested that the Executive Director for People's Services attend this meeting to provide an update since the previous meeting and requested that the Independent Chair of the Children's Improvement Board be invited to attend and provide an overview of the work of the Board and her thoughts on the improvement process.
- 3.4 A task group was also established to review the draft ILACS action plan to enable members of scrutiny to contribute to the development of the plan before it was submitted to Ofsted. The Task Group held a meeting on 24th January 2020 and met with Sarah O'Brien,

Executive Director of People's Services, to discuss the content of the Action Plan and make suggestions for amendments and additions to the action plan for consideration. Members of the Task Group were: Cllr Trisha Long (chair), Cllr Carol Ann Gill, Cllr Dennis McDonnell and Cllr Teresa Sims.

- 3.5 The Panel also agreed to conduct a site visit to meet officers from Children's Services and observe the work various teams were doing. This resulted in Councillors visiting Atlas House on 28th February, guided by the Senior Assistant Directors for Social Work and Community (Linda Evans), Education and Children's Health (Jo Davies), and Children's Safeguarding (Ann Dunne) who introduced their teams to the councillors enabling officers to explain the work they did and for members to ask questions. Members of the Panel who attended the site visit were: Cllr Carol Ann Gill, Cllr Donna Greaves and Cllr Trisha Long.

4.0 Conclusions

- 4.1 To enable the Panel to continue monitoring the Children's Services Improvement process the Panel is requested to discuss the role and work of the Children's Improvement Board and the progress being made with the Independent Chair of the Board and Executive Director of People's Services, review the ILACS Action Plan and note key actions and dates that the Panel will monitor at future meetings, and note the outcome of the Ofsted Action Plan Task Group and Site Visit to Atlas House.

James Morley, Scrutiny Officer

The Contact Officer for this report is James Morley, Scrutiny, Corporate Services, St Helens, WA10 1HP

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BACKGROUND PAPERS

The following list of documents was used to complete this report and they are available for public inspection for four years from the date of the meeting, from the Contact Officer named above:

ILACS Action Plan – St Helens Council January 2020

“History will judge us by the difference we make in the everyday lives of children.”

Nelson Mandela

Since July 2018 following an Ofsted focussed inspection in St Helens which found significant shortfalls in practice, the Authority has been on an improvement journey across Children’s Services. Much progress has been made to move forwards in social work practice, systems and processes, and the culture within the Department.

In September 2019 Ofsted undertook a full ILACS inspection and, unfortunately, whilst the Inspectors acknowledged the improvements that had been made over the preceding 12 months and the progress within the Department, the overall judgement was that it was ‘inadequate’.

Consequently, Senior Officers and Members recognised the need to continue to move at pace and address the shortfalls within Children’s Services. Senior Leaders in St Helens are determined and ambitious, and continue to strive for Children’s Services to move to ‘good’ and then ‘outstanding’.

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The priority focus following the ILACS inspection will be on social work practice, management oversight, reducing drift and delay particularly in permanence planning, and ensuring the Department establishes and maintains high standards and drives better outcomes for children.

A culture of high support and high challenge will continue to be established and underpinned by effective leadership, ongoing learning and reflection, and robust governance and decision making. This ILACS action plan will be overseen by the Improvement Board, and staff will be empowered to drive improvements with Senior Leaders, children and young people.

The impact of this plan will be measured by 4 key factors:

1. The Improvement Board performance dashboard and the KPIs within this action plan
2. Children and young people feedback
3. Staff and partnership feedback
4. Ofsted rating

Sarah O’Brien

Executive Director People’s Services / Accountable Officer, St Helens CCG

SECTION 1:

What Needs to Improve: The quality of social work assessments and plans, to ensure that intervention is purposeful, and progress with children and families can be measured.

Improvement Aim: The quality of social work assessments and plans will be consistently of a 'Good' standard across all areas of practice and as a result intervention will be timely and appropriate and will drive measurable improvements for children and their families without drift & delay.

	Ofsted Finding	Action to be taken	Outcome / Impact for Children	Lead Officer	Timescale Black - work starts Blue - outcomes improving by	Comment on Progress	R A G
1.1	Early help assessments and plans vary in quality	Early Help Service Manager will undertake a piece of work to improve the consistent quality of assessments and plans in early help. Examples of "good assessment's" will be provided for all staff to support staff. Regular audits will continue to be undertaken to track improvements and the aspiration is to improve the % of good assessments to 100%.	Early help and Social work practice will improve and be consistently good. This will ensure children and families get help and support at the earliest opportunity and are safe from actual harm. Early Help work will prevent escalation of concerns and the need for statutory intervention in family life.	Assistant Director Education & Children's Health	March 2020 Feb 2021		
	Decisions are sometimes made to reduce the level of support prematurely, resulting in the need for repeat statutory interventions in a short period of time.	The Heads of Service for Front Door and Duty, Social Work Assessment, and the Assistant Director Community and Schools Support Services will work together and agree steps to be taken to ensure more effective joint working between Early Help and Social Work teams, so that the level of support is not reduced prematurely and children are not moving in short periods of time between Early Help and statutory Social Work. A clear protocol will be agreed by Heads of Service on step up/step down cases. Such cases will be regularly reviewed by Heads of Service and ADs.	Children will flourish, feel secure, listened to and have a say in the plans professionals put in place for them. The voice of children will be clearly evident across case files. The thread between what children have said and actions / outcomes in their plans will be highlighted.	Assistant Director Children's Social Care	April 2020 Feb 2021		

		There will be routine audits of step up/step down arrangements. System development will be undertaken to ensure Early Help work more visible.	KPIs:				
1.2	The quality of assessments is not consistently good enough and they are not always updated after significant events. Analysis is weak and the voice of the child is not always clear.	Training Sessions regarding Social Work Assessments will be undertaken across all teams to improve the quality and consistency of assessments. In addition, specific development sessions will be undertaken with first line managers to drive more effective management oversight. Training sessions will also include the need for better engagement with children (and the recording of this in assessments) and consideration of historical information, networks and previous work. Thematic audits will be undertaken on a rolling basis to continuously assess the quality of assessments and to also drive their improvement. Examples of what “good” assessments look like will also be produced and shared with staff. The assessment pro-forma will be reviewed as part of Signs of Safety roll out. Co-production and staff engagement is key.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 0% audits judged to be inadequate - The rate of improvement in the % of early help audits judged to be good - % of cases re-referred to CSC from Early Help - The rate of improvement in the % of assessments that are judged to be good (target 100%) - Number of children offered an advocate (target 100%) and number of children engaged with an advocate - A decline in rate of statutory intervention - Number of training sessions offered and number taken up 	Principal Social Worker (Training Actions) Senior Assistant Director Children’s Safeguarding (Audit Actions)	Feb 2020 Feb 2021		
		Ongoing action from improvement plan (IP5.9) - The ‘Day in The Life’ tool will be routinely used which helps us to recognise and understand the lived experience of children and this will underpin all decision making and practice. This message will also be driven through the practice standards and through the Signs of Safety model. This will be made a mandatory field in core documents.		Assistant Director Children’s Social Care	Work started Feb 2021		

1.3	The quality of plans is inconsistent. Plans are generic and lack clarity regarding what actions need to be completed, by whom and by when. Plans need to be realistic, timebound and purposeful. Updated Plans do not always reflect progress made.	Training Sessions regarding Social Work Plans will be undertaken across all teams to improve the quality and consistency of plans and to ensure they are SMART. These training sessions will also include the need for better engagement with children and the recording of this in plans. Thematic Audits will be undertaken on a rolling basis to continuously assess the quality of plans and along with driving their improvement. Examples of what “good” plans look like will also be produced and shared with staff.		Principal Social Worker (Training Actions) Senior Assistant Director Children’s Safeguarding (Audit Actions)	March 2020 Feb 2021		
1.4	Need to improve access to advocacy, especially for younger children.	A review of current offer available to children in terms of advocacy and independent visits will be undertaken and any gaps identified. Following this review, the gaps will be addressed and an exercise will be undertaken to raise awareness across all social work teams of the availability of advocacy and the importance of promoting this to children. In addition, an awareness raising campaign will be undertaken with all children under social care services to raise their awareness of the availability of advocacy. The number of children accessing advocacy will be monitored.		Assistant Director Children’s Social Care	June 2020 Feb 2021		
1.5	Quality of plans in respect of permanency planning is inconsistent and unclear.	Dedicated training sessions will be undertaken in terms of improving the quality of permanency planning. This section will be led by the Principal Social Worker and examples of good practice will be produced.		Principal Social Worker	Feb 2020 Feb 2021		
		Senior leaders and managers across		Director of	January 2020		

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		<p>children's services will continue to promote and track timely permanence planning and move the culture to a new way of thinking. Permanence Panel will robustly track permanence planning and provide regular reports to the Improvement Board. IRO's will offer consistent scrutiny and oversight of care plans for children.</p> <p>PIP support will focus on Permanency Planning.</p>		Children's Services	Feb 2021		
1.6	<p>Where plans identify the need for special guardianship, timescales for the plan to be completed are absent and this leads to drift and delay.</p>	<p>Dedicated training sessions on special guardianship and the importance of having defined timescales included within a plan. Thematic audits will be undertaken regarding the use of special guardianship to monitor improvement on this area over time.</p> <p>IRO's will offer consistent scrutiny and oversight of care plans for children. Permanence Panel will confirm and review planning for SGO and provide regular feedback for the Improvement Board, legal services and the wider team to ensure service planning is in place.</p> <p>SGO plans will be tracked.</p>		Senior Assistant Director Children's Safeguarding	Feb 2020 Feb 2021		

SECTION 2:

What Needs To Improve: Management Oversight and monitoring of services, including in pre-proceedings, to ensure that there is sufficient grip on the quality of practice and to avoid drift & delay for children.

Improvement Aim: Management oversight of cases by team managers, HOS and senior directors will improve to be consistently effective across all areas of children's services. It will drive continual improvements in the quality and impact of social work practice on children and families and will ensure drift and delay are a rare occurrence in St Helens.

	Ofsted Finding	Action to be taken	Outcome / Impact for Children	Lead Officer	Timescale Black - work starts Blue - outcomes improving by	Comment on Progress	R A G
2.1 10	There is drift and delay in progressing plans within the duty and assessment teams, which impacts on the quality of work provided to vulnerable families in need of support.	An urgent review will be undertaken of the current case transfer system between Duty, Assessment, Permanence and Early Help teams. The opinions of staff of what is currently going well with this system and what is not working will be taken into account, and any required amendments to the process will be put in place to ensure there is smooth and timely transfer of cases, particularly between Duty to Assessment Teams. Assistant Director and relevant Heads of Service will ensure Team Managers understand their role in terms of management oversight and the importance of understanding which cases are not progressing as they should. The case transfer tracker will be subject to a monthly review by the Assistant Director and thematic audits will be undertaken regularly to monitor any drift and delay between teams. Furthermore, the Assistant Director	Children at risk of harm will be identified quickly and appropriately and they will be safe. Children's needs, wishes and feelings will be central to any action taken. They will experience the right action at the right time and will feel respected by professionals. Children and young people will experience a service that responds quickly to their needs with little drift and delay. KPIs: - Number / % of cases where transfer has been delayed – per	Assistant Director Children's Social Care	May 2020 Feb 2021		

		and Heads of Service will monitor staffing and caseloads.					
2.2	Some agreed actions in Child protection work are subject to delay due to a lack of management oversight regarding the completion of timely risk assessments. This leaves a small number of children in situations of unassessed risk.	Head of Service for the Safeguarding Unit will work with Head of Service for Assessment to put in place a system for capturing actions and child protection work and ensuring these are not subject to delay. The work to ensure team managers understand their responsibilities in terms of oversight when it comes to tracking actions on children's cases, and effective scrutiny by the child protection conference chair, should further ensure that delays in child protection work are minimised.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - month (target 95%) Number / % of audited cases with an outcome of Inadequate or RI for MO / Supervision (target 0% inadequate) - Staff turnover in Duty and Assessment Teams per month (aim for turnover of less than 3%) - No. of cases where a child has three or more allocated SW per month (target of zero) 	Senior Assistant Director Children's Safeguarding	March 2020 Feb 2021		
2.3	Management oversight work is not consistently good across the service once work is progressed to duty and assessment teams. Supervision records are not clear enough about what actions social workers need to take. This is compounded by changes in social workers, resulting in significant drift and delay for some children.	<p>Some specific training sessions regarding management oversight, what this is and what needs to happen for it to be effective, will be put in place and offered to all Team Managers and Heads of Service. (This action is a continuum of action IP5.3 on previous improvement plan.)</p> <p>Examples of good supervision records will be produced, and training will be undertaken so staff understand what needs recording in supervision.</p> <p>Actions will be taken to minimise the change in social workers, but also the Assistant Director for Social Work will put in place effective systems so that changes of social worker and the impact this has on</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The rate of improvement in the % of audits finding VoC and direct work with children to be rated as good (target 0% inadequate) 	Principal Social Worker Assistant Director Children's Social Care	March 2020 Feb 2021 March 2020 Feb 2021		

		individual teams will be monitored and escalated.				
2.4	Delayed transfer between teams following an assessment results in some families remaining in duty teams for too long without a coherent, continuous programme of intervention. So, some children do not receive support they need in a timely way.	Action 2.1 will cover this		Principal Social Worker	Feb 2021	
2.5	<p>Monthly performance clinics provide a forum for scrutiny and challenge, but all new developments have not yet had desired impact on the quality of management oversight in teams.</p> <p>More is needed to ensure frontline managers monitor performance more effectively and are robustly held to account to drive up the quality of practice.</p> <p>Senior managers must ensure they have effective mechanisms to have an accurate overview of practice.</p>	<p>Monthly performance clinics will continue, and a service Performance Management Framework will be put in place. Team Managers will be actively engaged in Performance Clinics to support understanding, effective monitoring of performance and the transfer of learning into practice.</p> <p>Systems will be put in place to ensure front line managers understand how to monitor performance and are doing this more effectively. Progress on this will be reported to the Children's Improvement Board.</p> <p>Partners in Practice will support us in establishing better mechanisms to ensure senior managers understand practice gaps.</p>		Assistant Director Children's Social Care	<p>June 2020</p> <p>Feb 2021</p>	
2.6	The quality assurance	Work that has started in the last 12		Senior	Ongoing	

22	<p>framework is not fully implemented. Work must continue to embed Quality Assurance framework to ensure audit enables effective management oversight and drives practice improvement.</p>	<p>months on implementing the Quality Assurance Framework will continue, aspects will be implemented. (This action is similar to the ongoing action in the previous Improvement Plan IP2.3.)</p> <p>Audits will continue to occur as planned but new forums for reporting the outcomes of audit to team managers and Advanced Practitioners will be put in place to ensure that the learning from audit is driving practice improvement.</p> <p>We will ensure from now that all activity undertaken in Children's Services (early years through to permanence) is co-ordinated through Head of Safeguarding and Quality Assurance Framework.</p>		<p>Assistant Director Children's Safeguarding</p>	<p>Feb 2021</p>	
2.7	<p>Considerable cultural barriers to practice improvement remain, particularly in relation to embedding effective management oversight at all levels to challenge the too variable standards of social work practice.</p>	<p>Action 2.3 addresses how we will improve management oversight.</p> <p>Performance clinics, high risk case meetings, DCS assurance clinics, Improvement Board and Scrutiny will all be mechanisms to challenge and drive improvements in practice.</p> <p>The DCS and Executive Director will challenge existing custom, beliefs, values and practice to establish a new approach (culture) that is:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Focused on children's outcomes • Open 	<p>Children and young people will be cared for and supported by staff who are well developed and high performing. Practice will be better and therefore children and young people will experience high standards of care, timely intervention and outcomes will improve.</p> <p>A workforce who are listened to and engaged with will perform better and this will impact positively on the</p>	<p>DCS</p>	<p>Work started and ongoing</p> <p>Feb 2021</p>	

23		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reflective • Challenging • Dynamic • Supportive of staff • Underpinned by high standards and expectations <p>Communication and engagement with staff will improve through:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Weekly news round-ups • Monthly 'Meet Director' sessions – staff selected from across teams • AD meet service managers • Monthly summary ELT key messages • Visible Executive Director – on site 2x weekly • Assistant Director visible • Chief Exec on site regularly 	<p>experience of children and longer-term outcomes. Children and young people's views, learning from them and resulting improvements in practice will be incorporated into communications to staff.</p>			
2.8	<p>Frequent changes of social worker due to organisational restructure, staff changes and sickness mean that children sometimes have to repeat their stories too often.</p>	<p>The Department will continue to recruit to vacant social work posts. HR and wider Corporate support will be provided to ensure the Council has robust strategies to recruit and retain staff and minimise the turnover. Staff vacancies and sickness will be tracked and monitored at the Workforce Planning Board and will be reviewed at the Improvement Board.</p> <p>In addition, a Workforce Planning Board with HR will be established to ensure that, through the work on management oversight, mechanisms are put in place within</p>		<p>Assistant Director Children's Social Care</p>	<p>Feb 2020 Feb 2021</p>	

		Children's Social Care to ensure that the Assistant Director is aware of pockets where change in social worker is particularly high.					
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SECTION 3:

What Needs To Improve: Permanence planning from the front door through to adoption, to ensure that the full range of permanence options are achieved in a timely way for all children in care.

Improvement Aim: There will be a shift in ‘culture’ and approach in St Helens to ensure a ‘think permanence’ ethos is embedded right across the service. More children will achieve early permanence and the rates of Looked After Children will reduce and be comparable to similar regional and national neighbours.

	Ofsted Finding	Action to be taken	Outcome / Impact for Children	Lead Officer	Timescale Black - work starts Blue - outcomes improving by	Comment on Progress	R A G
3.1	Pre-proceedings work is underdeveloped. There has been delay in securing the correct legal status for some children. New arrangements for legal gateway need to continue and embed.	A further review of pre-proceedings and legal gateway arrangements will be undertaken and any areas that still require improvement will be identified and action taken. The good work already underway will continue and start to embed.	Permanency planning for children in St Helens, from the minute they are referred into the service, will improve and be consistently good. Social Workers from the Front Door all the way through to the Permanency Service will understand the need for permanency planning, and will understand how to recognise those children and young people who are at high risk of coming into care to ensure that action is taken in a timely, consistent and responsive manner. Impact on children will be that children are not left in situations for too long that are not the most appropriate arrangement for their needs. Ultimately, this improvement in permanency planning will reduce the number of children in our care in St Helens.	Assistant Director Children's Social Care	June 2020		
25							
3.2	Private fostering services are underdeveloped. More needs to be done to ensure all professionals are effectively identifying children living in these arrangements so that their needs can be assessed, and they can be effectively safeguarded.	Dedicated Social Workers identified by the Head of Service will hold private fostering cases. Audits will be scheduled to review the impact of this work. An awareness campaign will be undertaken across the multi-agency partnership to ensure all agencies understand private fostering so that those children living in private fostering arrangements will be identified and managed appropriately and effectively. Progress to be reported in to CSP.		Senior Assistant Director Children's Safeguarding	May 2020 Feb 2021		

3.3	<p>The lack of recognition of the need for permanence and the very poor quality of permanence planning by managers is widespread. Significant drift and delay is experienced by children who are left too long in situations where their legal security is unclear or unmet.</p>	<p>A whole department wide training programme regarding permanency planning will be put in place and implemented. The work on management oversight will introduce better skills but also mechanisms to identify those children where drift and delay is becoming a problem. Audits will be undertaken to assess the improvements in permanency planning. The training around permanency planning will also include information to ensure that staff understand the full range of permanency options.</p> <p>Partners in Practice will be asked to help us improve permanency planning.</p>	<p>KPIs:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Rate of improvement in % of private fostering applications meeting compliance (audit every 6 months) - Average times for PP cases - Number of children discharged from care via each route (SGO, etc) per month (target of greater number discharged than entering care) - No. of children with or without long term permanence approved - Placement with Parents compliance rate (tested via audit) 	<p>Assistant Director Children's Social Care</p>	<p>Feb 2020 Feb 2021</p>		
3.3	<p>The full range of permanence options, including special guardianship (SGO) & adoption, is not routinely considered in a timely way, or at all, so children are subject to unnecessary involvement in long-term fostering arrangements for too long.</p> <p>SGO has not been explored proactively with families when it is in the best interests of children to do so.</p>	<p>A whole department wide training programme regarding permanency planning via SGO will be put in place and implemented. The work on management oversight will introduce better skills but also mechanisms to identify those children where drift and delay is becoming a problem. Audits will be undertaken to assess the improvements in SGO work.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The number of children exiting care with an adoption plan - A1, A2, A3 adoption score card measures 	<p>Assistant Director Children's Social Care</p>	<p>Feb 2020 Feb 2021</p>		

3.5	For a small number of children who live with friends or family members, viability assessments are not completed to assess any potential risks, and these connected carers are not always offered appropriate support by the fostering service.	<p>The Fostering Service will undertake a review of children who are currently living with friends or family to review the quality of viability assessments and address any gaps.</p> <p>Policies and systems will be put in place to make sure that these connected carers are, going forward, routinely offered the support they need. Audits will be undertaken to assess the improvements in this area and the impact on children.</p>		Assistant Director Children's Social Care	June 2020 Feb 2021		
3.6	Plans to return home are not supported by a full risk assessment or progressed in a planned way.	A new practice standard guidance will be put in place in relation to plans to return children home, and examples of what a good plan to return home looks like will be provided. The service will work with NSPCC to implement a Reunification Programme. Ongoing audit will assess the impact of this.		Principal Social Worker	April 2020 Feb 2021		
3.7	There is no evidence of specific family support consistently being provided to address the complex family issues which resulted in the child entering care.	A review of the current offer of support from Family Intervention Workers in relation to children on the Edge of Care will be undertaken. Clear advice in relation to the offer will be developed with any gaps identified and actions put in place to ensure there is consistent family support being provided going forwards. Audits will be undertaken to assess the impact of this.		Assistant Director Children's Social Care	March 2020 Feb 2021		

27

3.8	Placement with parent regulations are poorly understood.	Specific training in relation to placement with parent regulations will be offered as part of training on permanency planning. Improved tracking of this work and oversight along with ongoing audits will assess improvements in this area.		Assistant Director Children's Social Care	Feb 2021		
3.9	When children do return home and make progress there is further delay progressing revocation of care orders, or securing legal permanence through Special guardianship arrangements.	There will be increased oversight of the current status of revocation of care orders via the joint meeting with Legal. A report on this area will be taken to Children's Improvement Board and they will monitor progress.		Assistant Director Children's Social Care	April 2020 Feb 2021		
3.10 28	Children who need to be adopted are not always identified early enough, and there is not yet a robust system in place to ensure that family finding starts at the earliest opportunity.	The training on permanency planning will cover this area and ongoing audits will assess the impact. Ongoing audits will assess the impact raising the profile of the adoption advice meetings.		Principal Social Worker	Audit ongoing Feb 2021		
3.11	There has been insufficient rigour in progressing permanence once children are placed with carers. There needs to be clear mechanisms and tools in place for senior managers to understand extent of drift or delay and poor practice in permanence planning. A tracker and permanence panels need embedding to monitor progress of plans for	A permanency tracker will be implemented and monitored via the Permanency Panel which will be put in place and embedded. A report will be taken to the Children's Improvement Board to explain these mechanisms and any other mechanisms that are put in place to ensure senior managers have good oversight of children currently subject to permanency planning.		Assistant Director Children's Social Care	Dec 2019 Feb 2021 Feb 2020		

	children who are yet to secure legal permanence and ensure formal matches take place.	<p>IRO's will ensure there is a Permanence Plan agreed at the 2nd LAC review and, if not, use the escalation protocol to secure a permanence plan. Permanence planning to be considered at every review.</p> <p>Audits will be undertaken in this area monthly for at least 12 months to ensure that this crucial area of development is addressed. Chair of the Panel will submit a 6 monthly report to Improvement Board.</p>			Feb 2020		
3.12 29	The fostering service needs to improve through more training and the fostering panel needs a review to ensure compliance with regulations.	<p>A review of the Fostering Panel has already been undertaken to address this particular Ofsted finding. A report on findings and action taken will be taken to the Children's Improvement Board. Legal advisor to the Foster Panel will ensure the panel meets its regulatory requirements and a planned internal audit will be undertaken to assess this.</p> <p>In addition, a review of the fostering service will be undertaken by an external reviewer – a proposal for this will be developed by Heads of Service and brought to the Improvement Board.</p>		Assistant Director Children's Social Care	Feb 2021	August 2020	
3.13	<p>Corporate parenting is more of a priority than it was 12 months ago.</p> <p>Need to further embed 'corporate parenting' and ensure forum is effective.</p>	A review of the current Corporate Parenting Forum will be undertaken and, in consultation with the current members and some young people, changes made to ensure the good work started continues, but to make sure it is more effective in terms of		Portfolio Lead Protecting Young People	June 2020 Feb 2021		

		<p>scrutiny and oversight than it has been previously.</p> <p>Work undertaken over the last 12 months to make sure that children are a top priority and central to the Council will continue, with the support of the Chief Exec and Leader. Children's Services will remain a priority and key initiatives, such as the Children in Care Celebration Event, Care Leaver's hampers etc, will continue.</p>					
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SECTION 4:

What Needs To Improve: Support for children and families on the edge of care which is timely, responsive and effective.

Improvement Aim: We will establish an 'outstanding' Edge of Care service which facilitates better outcomes for children and young people at high risk of coming into care and facilitates a reduction in the number of Children in Care in St Helens.

	Ofsted Finding	Action to be taken	Outcome / Impact for Children	Lead Officer	Timescale Black - work starts Blue - outcomes improving by	Comment on Progress	R A G
4.1	<p>Services for children on the edge of care are not yet offered to families in a consistent way.</p> <p>With no edge of care service in place, the local authority is constrained in its efforts to prevent children coming into care and to adequately support them to safely return home without delay.</p>	<p>During 2019 Cabinet approved additional funding to establish a robust edge of care service. The aim is to identify appropriate property and open up elements of this service from January 2020. The strategy approved by Cabinet will be implemented urgently and implementation and progress monitored through the Children's Improvement Board every 3 months with the first update in February 2020.</p>	<p>Children at risk of going into care will be identified promptly and appropriate steps taken to provide them urgent support. Where possible they will be prevented from becoming children we care for.</p> <p>KPIs:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - No. of cases supported by Edge of Care Service – initially 40% of children who are on the edge of care would be prevented from coming into care in the first year but that this target would increase in the years after. In terms of numbers this will phase up as the service comes on line. - No. of FGCs held per month (numbers should increase as the service becomes 	<p>Assistant Director Children's Social Care</p>	<p>Feb 2020</p> <p>Feb 2021</p>		
4.2	<p>A sufficiency strategy and action plan are in place, but this lacks analysis to inform future capacity needs.</p>	<p>The current sufficiency strategy and action plan will be reviewed to ensure it is more robust and more analytical, and that it helps the service to plan for future capacity needs.</p>	<p>KPIs:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - No. of FGCs held per month (numbers should increase as the service becomes 	<p>Assistant Director Education & Children's Health</p>	<p>June 2020</p>		

			becoming looked after (aim for a decline in rate so come in-line with statistical neighbours)				
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SECTION 5:

What Needs To Improve: The quality and usefulness of pathway plans, to ensure that they help care leavers address a range of issues, depending on individual needs.

Improvement Aim: Pathway plans for care leavers will be of a consistently good standard and will ensure care leavers receive the right level of support to meet their needs.

	Ofsted Finding	Action to be taken	Outcome / Impact for Children	Lead Officer	Timescale Black - work starts Blue - outcomes improving by	Comment on Progress	R A G
33	5.1 Care leavers are not always provided with their health histories to enable them to understand their health needs.	Work ongoing with Health partners to ensure that the health histories for children we look after are robust, and we will implement a system to ensure that care leavers are provided with their health histories as a matter of routine. Dip sample audits will be undertaken to ensure that this is occurring consistently.	Care leavers will receive information about their health history and will be supported to access health services to ensure their health needs are met. We will ensure that pathway planning is improved and provides a clear plan for young people.	Senior Assistant Director Children's Safeguarding	June 2020 Feb 2021		
	5.2 Some young people do not receive a PA as soon as they need it, the aim to extend allocation of PAs to 16 year olds needs to be achieved.	Review the current level of PAs in the service with a plan to make sure that, within 6 months of this action plan, the allocation of PAs has been extended to those young people who are 16 years old.	KPIs: - % of young people with health passport (target 100%) - % of 16 year olds with allocated PA (target 100%) - % of audited Pathway Plans that are judged to be good (target	Assistant Director Children's Social Care	June 2020		
	5.3 The quality of pathway plans is inconsistent and not all are up to date or provide enough detail to reflect the young person's current needs.	Continue the work already started in the last 12 months to produce overarching leaving care assessments and pathway planning guidance. Ensure that staff within the leaving care service understand what a good quality pathway		Assistant Director Children's Social Care	Ongoing Feb 2021		

		plan looks like. Undertake dip sample audits to ensure that this area is improving.	- greater than 80%) No. of out of borough care leavers in receipt of our accommodation standard (target 100%)					
5.4	There is limited evidence that pathway plans are being utilised as a way of effectively promoting young people for independence.	Work will be undertaken with PA's to ensure Pathway Plans are being used as the key driver for work with our young people. Feedback will be sought from care leavers twice yearly to understand their experiences of pathway plans.		Assistant Director Children's Social Care	March 2020 Feb 2021			
5.5	The accommodation options and offer for care leavers placed out of borough are not clear.	The Head of Service, overseen by the Care Leavers Board, will appraise the current accommodation options and offers for those care leavers placed out of borough, and produce a report for the Children's Improvement Board. Following this review, the Children's Improvement Board will determine whether any further actions or areas of improvement need to be taken.		Assistant Director Children's Social Care	April 2020 Feb 2021			
5.6	There is more work to do to engage care leavers, 19-21 year olds, where the numbers not in education, employment or training is high.	A new drop-in service for care leavers will be established and a newly appointed NEET worker will start to target this group of care leavers with the aim of improving the numbers in education, employment or training.		Assistant Director Children's Social Care	July 2020			
5.7	Care leavers are not always clear about the details of the	Write to all care leavers and explain the local offer and where		Assistant Director	March 2020			

	local offer.	they can find details of the local offer and promote drop in services.		Children's Social Care	Feb 2021		
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NOTE: In addition to the actions in Section 5 there is a stand-alone care leavers action plan (this was Section 7 of the previous Improvement Plan). Delivery of this action plan is monitored by the Care Leaver's Board and reports into the Corporate Parenting Forum. Twice a year progress on this will be reported to the Improvement Board.

SECTION 6:

What Needs To Improve: Independent Reviewing Officers (IROs') challenge in relation to the quality of permanence planning, to ensure that more robust oversight drives practice effectiveness

Improvement Aim: We will establish a SCU (Safeguarding Unit) with IROs and Conference Chairs that are highly trained and skilled and bring an effective level of challenge and independent scrutiny to the quality of social work practice and permanency planning. The IRO's will drive better outcomes and improved experiences for the children in our care.

	Ofsted Finding	Action to be taken	Outcome / Impact for Children	Lead Officer	Timescale Black - work starts Blue - outcomes improving by	Comment on Progress	R A G
6.1 36	There is limited evidence of IROs systematically raising concerns in relation to drift and delay in permanence planning.	<p>A new training programme to update IROs will be undertaken, with the aim being that all IROs in the Safeguarding Unit will understand their roles and responsibilities, and the standard expected within the IRO handbook.</p> <p>A formal system of escalation will be put in place for both conference chairs and the IROs. The primary purpose of this will be for IROs and Conference Chairs to raise issues in relation to the quality and timeliness of planning, and any aspects of practice to avoid drift and delay and improve social work practice. There will be regular audits to check this and the DCS will review the escalation process and tracker on a monthly basis.</p>	<p>We will embed systems to ensure the quality of support provided is good, and that scrutiny and oversight from the Safeguarding Unit (IROs and Conference Chairs) is robust.</p> <p>KPIs:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Volume and Timescales for escalation resolution - % of escalations relating to drift and delay on cases (target: reducing number quarterly) - No. of cases escalated to DCS per annum (target of reducing numbers) - Number of 	Senior Assistant Director Children's Safeguarding	<p>March 2020</p> <p>Feb 2021</p> <p>March 2020</p>		

			children with a permanence plan at the second LAC review (target of greater than 80%)				
6.2	Allegations against professionals have not always been responded to robustly in recent months. New LADO arrangements need embedding.	A new LADO arrangement is being embedded. A report on the new arrangements and what it entails will be taken to the Children's Improvement Board. Agreed actions and timescales will be approved here and monitored by the Children's Improvement Board.	<p>Children in all settings will be protected from risk of harm posed by any staff caring for them.</p> <p>KPIs:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Times to resolve LADO referrals (Target of reduction in delays) - Number of agencies referring (target – widespread agencies) 	Senior Assistant Director Children's Safeguarding	May 2020 Feb 2021		

SECTION 7:


What Needs To Improve: The quality of support to new social workers and close monitoring of caseloads for all staff, to ensure that more robust oversight drives practice effectiveness.

Improvement Aim: We will establish an effective system of support for new (and all social workers) and review current systems for caseload monitoring that don't over rely on average caseload reporting to ensure senior staff understand how demand is affecting individual social workers.

	Ofsted Finding	Action to be taken	Outcome / Impact for Children	Lead Officer	Timescale Black - work starts Blue - outcomes improving by	Comment on Progress	R A G
7.1 38	High caseloads in some teams and workflow issues that have contributed to further drift and delay	<p>Over the last 12 months new systems have been put in place to monitor caseloads, and standards have been established in terms of the reasonable number of cases for both ASYEs and experienced social workers. However, whilst a lot of the time average caseloads have been reasonable, there have been pockets, as found by Ofsted, where some social workers and teams are holding too many cases, and this is impacting on work. An urgent review of current staffing levels will be undertaken following the Ofsted inspection, and where there are staffing challenges resulting in highest caseloads, this will be addressed from within existing resources where possible. Where there are gaps a case of need will be produced and taken through the appropriate decision making forums within the Council.</p> <p>A review of the current system for monitoring caseloads will be undertaken and extra steps introduced so that average numbers are not relied on. The DCS will receive a monthly update on caseloads</p>	<p>A well developed and supported workforce, with manageable caseloads, will deliver a high standard of social work practice which will impact positively on children as it will ensure children receive the right level of care, at the right time, for the correct duration.</p> <p>The voice of the children will be incorporated within policies, procedures, performance management, supervision etc</p> <p>KPIs:</p>	Assistant Director Children's Social Care	Feb 2021		

		across all teams.				
7.2	Social workers in their first post qualifying year of practice, however, do not yet have an established, protected learning environment in which they can develop in their role fully supported. Their caseloads are too high, the support they receive is fragmented and the LA needs to do more to ensure that less experienced staff receive an effective package of support.	<p>Compliance with the agreed Teaching Partnership Assessed and Supported Year in Employment will be monitored to ensure there is protected learning time for newly qualified social workers - this will become standard practice within the Department. The Assistant Director will review this on a monthly basis and make sure that all newly qualified social workers are receiving their protected time and their mentoring.</p> <p>The Assistant Director will develop a proposal for addressing current gaps in mentoring and support for new social workers and present this to the DCS by 01.02.2020</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Caseloads per team including RANGE and average. (Target for experienced social worker is 20 or less) - ASYE caseload including % of CP cases held. (Target - caseload of 18 or less) - % or number of Social Workers with caseload above 22 (experienced social work) or 18 (ASYE) - % of agency workers in each service area (Target of zero agency workers) - % of assessments completed in 15 days (Target of 100%) 	Assistant Director Children's Social Care	Feb 2020 Feb 2021	
7.3 39	There is considerable reliance on agency staff, this has led to instability and hampered the pace of change and quality of improvement required.	The Assistant Director will continue to work closely with HR in terms of recruitment and retention of staff. Following the Ofsted inspection, a new action plan will be put in place to further reduce the reliance on agency staff.		Assistant Director Children's Social Care	June 2020	
7.4	Senior leaders have acknowledged the need for the workforce to develop new skills, including front line management, particularly in key areas related to planning & permanence, but this work has been too slow to progress.	<p>The department will continue implementing signs of safety across Children's Social Work. This will give teams a clear social work model to underpin their practice and, as part of the training for signs of safety, will help them to develop new skills.</p> <p>A training package will be put in place specifically for Team Managers to ensure they understand their roles and responsibilities. This will be led by the Principal Social Worker and, where appropriate, will be done in conjunction with the social work department at Edge Hill</p>		Senior Assistant Director Children's Safeguarding Principal Social Worker	Feb 2021 Ongoing Feb 2021	

		<p>University.</p> <p>The Principal Social Worker will devise a programme of training and updates for all staff and again, following a meeting with Edge Hill, will use the social work department at Edge Hill to support this enhanced training.</p> <p>In consultation with HR and the One Council programme, a programme of organisational development and leadership training will be put in across Children's Services.</p>		<p>Principal Social Worker</p> <p>Executive Director People's Services</p>	<p>Feb 2021</p> <p>April 2020</p>		
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		quality of practice will be recorded on People's Services Risk Register and, when necessary, the Corporate Risk Register.		Children's Social Care			
8.3	Children's views, and the views of care leavers, are beginning to influence service development and raise the profile of children's experiences.	<p>Continue the work on engagement of children and young people, and fully implement the Voice of Children Framework.</p>  <p>Voice of Children and Young People Framev</p>		Senior Assistant Director Children's Safeguarding			

SECTION 9:

What Needs To Improve: There is still much to be done in St Helens to embed the new 'Descriptions of Need' document, and to tackle the underlying problems of neglect and domestic abuse and the impact of these challenges on the experiences and outcomes for children and their families. Ofsted make reference to all three of these areas in the inspection report.

Improvement Aim: The Description of Need guidance will be embedded across the multi-agency partnership in St Helens and result in consistent application of thresholds for appropriate intervention and support for children and families. The big challenges of Neglect and Domestic Abuse will be tackled by all partners and the negative impact on children understood and addressed to ensure children are safeguarded appropriately and that Adverse Childhood Experiences are minimised. **The Multi Agency Safeguarding Board will lead on this section of the action plan.**

	Ofsted Finding	Action to be taken	Outcome / Impact for Children	Lead Officer	Timescale Black - work starts Blue - outcomes improving by	Comment on Progress	R A G
9.1 44	Some families receive an effective service from early help which leads to positive outcomes. However, decisions are sometimes made to reduce the level of support prematurely, resulting in the need for repeat statutory interventions in a short period of time.	Work that has commenced in the last 12 months to roll out and embed the thresholds of need document will continue across all partners in St Helens. The Safeguarding Partnership Board will maintain oversight of this work and undertake audits and other assessments to determine how effective the thresholds of needs document is, and the impact that it is having on children. CSP will provide bi-monthly newsletters for all partners highlighting progress, barriers and importance of role of all partners to ensure improvement is sustainable. Thresholds will continue to	Children & young people will experience a consistent & timely response to their needs from all key partners (school, health, police, social care etc). KPIs: - % of cases held at early help that escalate to CSC – including repeat cases - Number of Early Help episodes started - Number of Early Help episodes open - % of all Early Help episodes closed that are stepped	Chief Nurse	Work ongoing Feb 2021		

		<p>be reinforced in the new one day WTSC 18 New MARF asks partners to cross check and refer to threshold criteria when referring.</p> <p>MASH Board will monitor the Thresholds as cases are referred. .In addition, multi-agency audits will take place to ensure consistency of threshold application. Both reports will be provided for CSP.</p>	<p>down to universal services (short term measure)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - % of early help episodes closed which result in step down to level 1/universal and are maintained at this level for a 12 month period (longer term measure) 				
9.2	<p>The response to domestic abuse and neglect is improving. Both are a significant feature of children's lives in St Helens. There is more to do to respond to chronic neglect in a timely way to ensure that families receive the right help at the right time.</p>	<p>A new Domestic Abuse Strategy is being developed and will be launched in January. The Children's Safeguarding Partnership Board will oversee the implementation of this strategy in terms of children's services. It will identify any gaps in service for children in need as a result of DA and will track the numbers of children receiving a service.</p>	<p>Children subject to domestic abuse or neglect or lived experience of domestic abuse will be identified and protected appropriately.</p> <p>Timely action will be taken to protect them from cumulative harm. Children in St Helens will be safe and flourish.</p> <p>KPIs:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - % of referrals due to DA - % of referrals due to concerns re: neglect - % of assessments due to DA / Neglect - % of children on CP plans or CLA 	Director of Public Health	Ongoing Feb 2021		
45		<p>A new Neglect Strategy was launched in September 2019. There is a further workshop planned for December 2019. The Safeguarding Children's Partnership Board will maintain responsibility for implementation of this strategy and ensuring that</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - % of referrals due to DA - % of referrals due to concerns re: neglect - % of assessments due to DA / Neglect - % of children on CP plans or CLA 	Executive Director People's Services	Ongoing Feb 2021		

		chronic neglect is recognised and responded to in an effective way in St Helens.	<p>due to Neglect or DA</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - % of referrals that convert due to DV - Number of agencies completing graded care profiles 					
9.3	There is an increasing focus on using the graded care profile to understand the impact of neglect on children	The use of the graded care profile will continue to be promoted and embedded in St Helens.		Senior Assistant Director Children's Safeguarding	Ongoing			
9.4	Multi-agency partners in St Helens will continue to work together to improve and maintain the quality of Voice of the Child across the whole partnership.	<p>Each statutory partner and relevant agencies will ensure that the voice and lived experience of children is paramount in all the work that it undertakes in relation to children. Each key agency will be asked to report its work on Voice of the Child, and its evidence, through audits of an improving picture regarding Voice of the Child through the Safeguarding Partnership Board.</p> <p>Safeguarding Partnership Board Independent Scrutineer and members of the Board will continue to undertake front line visits and focus on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Neglect - Domestic abuse - Threshold document - CE & CSE 		DCI Merseyside Police	Jan 2020 Feb 2021			

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Children and Young People's Services
Overview and Scrutiny Panel

24 March 2020

Special Educational Needs and Disability: Ofsted/CQC Improvement Plan

1. Purpose

- 1.1 To present an update to the Children and Young People's Services Overview and Scrutiny Panel on actions taken to address areas for development highlighted in the SEND Ofsted/CQC Inspection.

2. Background

- 2.1 Ofsted and the Care Quality Commission, undertook an inspection of the local area's arrangements for children and young people with special educational needs and/or disability between the 29th January 2018 and the 2nd February 2018.
- 2.2 The inspection identified 8 key areas for development. These include;
- Ensuring that the needs of Children & Young People who have SEN and/or disabilities have a high priority in all the boroughs strategic and transformational plans.
 - Parents, Young People and professionals are all concerned about the limited pathways to employment including supported internships, limited choice for education, and lack of suitable leisure opportunities.
 - Parents, carers, children and young people felt that the short breaks offer was ineffective.
 - The quality of multi-agency assessment and planning needs to improve so that Education, Health and Care Plans reflect a complete picture of the child's needs and provision to meet them.
 - Recent capacity issues in the school nursing services and CAMHs service have had a negative impact on the timeliness and quality of the mandatory health reviews for children looked after
 - Communication with parents needs to improve.
 - The appointment of a substantive Designated Clinical Officer (DCO).
 - Historical census data identifies some inconsistencies in the identification of need.

3 Progress Update

- 3.1 A copy of the SEND Ofsted/CQC improvement plan is attached in Appendix One. The governance of the council's actions in this plan was audited by the Council's audit service and presented to Audit & Financial Monitoring Overview & Scrutiny Panel, on 10 March 2020. The audit judgement was high assurance with no recommendations.

- 3.1.1 Whilst the letter contained 8 areas for improvement the regulators acknowledged that the local area had already identified and acted to address issues. As a consequence, there were 4 remaining areas to address, with a cross cutting theme of improved communication.

- ❖ *To ensure that the aspirations and ambitions for children with SEND are clearly articulated within the vision for St Helens*
- ❖ *EHCPs reflect an accurate picture of need, particularly health and social care, through quality assessments and reports, regular reviews by all professionals*
- ❖ *To improve the quality of short breaks provision to meet assessed need.*
- ❖ *the provision for young people aged 18-25 with SEND meets their potential as they move into adulthood*

3.2 **Priority One: To ensure that the aspirations and ambitions for children with SEND are clearly articulated within the vision for St Helens**

3.2.1 Following inspection, work has been undertaken to ensure that children with SEND are more visible and a range of plans now reflect this, including the newly developing Council Plan for 2020-2023. Alongside this, the ambition to narrow the gap for our children with SEND is outlined in the Borough's School Effectiveness Strategy.

3.2.2 In September 2019, the Council commissioned an independent consultancy to undertake a review of SEND and a stakeholder workshop was held in January 2020 with 6 priority areas of focus agreed which will now form the development of a new SEND Strategy. It was also agreed to establish a SEND Partnership Board and the first meeting for this is scheduled for 27th March 2020.

3.3 **Priority Two: EHCPs reflect an accurate picture of need, particularly health and social care, through quality assessments and reports, regular reviews by all professionals**

3.3.1 An EHCP Development Group was established in May 2018 and have agreed the EHCP Development Plan. Key improvements are:

- Decision making is increasingly multi agency with regular attendance by officers from education, health and social care.
- As reported to Scrutiny in September 2019, the timeliness of EHCPs has improved. To date, in 2019/20 performance stands at 66.5%, but for the final 2 quarters is 98%, 2 out of 84 plans were not issued within 20 weeks.
- Additional investment into the Service was agreed at Cabinet in July 2019 and we have recently completed recruitment into the assessment team.
- Having initially used the Council for Disabled Children audit tool, the Local Area has been working to develop a set of standards which give a better-quality assessment of the EHCP and aligned processes. A revised Multi-Agency QA Framework is in place and the audit team, includes representation from education, health and social care as well as parental representation.
- As a result of feedback, all correspondence from the Council have been reviewed and co-produced with parent, carers to ensure these better reflect the spirit of the Code as well as compliance with legislation. Responses from parent carers on their experience of the EHCP process remains positive, with a 91% satisfaction rating. There is more work to do with young people to ensure that they are an equal partner in the EHCP process.
- Significant work has been undertaken by the CCG's Designated Clinical Officer (DCO) for SEND with health services to ensure they fully understand expectations, and their professional advice for the assessment aligns to the requirements of the Code of Practice. The DCO quality assures health input to EHCPs and signs these off on behalf of the CCG. This is reported to the CCG Quality Committee. Work to embed advice from universal health services remains an area for improvement.
- Audits of EHCPs have confirmed increased input from health services
- Alongside the requirement to undertake new assessments, the Service is also responsible for ensuring that all children with EHCPs have an annual review to ensure that the Plan remains appropriate and to ensure that there is increased oversight of planning at key transition points (Y-14~~8~~, Y9, Y11). This year the service finalised all

transition reviews for -1 and year 6 pupils ahead of the statutory deadline of 15th February 2020.

3.3.2 Key areas for further improvement include:

- There is a need to ensure that there is a consistent approach to Annual Reviews.
- Audits of EHCPs shows that input from social care remains an area for further improvement. Further work has been undertaken to review the processes for assessment within social care and training has been provided to social care and early help teams to support improvement in quality. The Principal Social Worker has joined the EHCP QA work to ensure consistency of approach to improvement.
- With the additional support to the SEND Service, the approach to assessment is increasingly person centred and new good practice guidance has been developed to improve family experience.
- There is a need to further develop children and young people's understanding and involvement in their EHCP.
- To more effectively align early help, support for families with SEND support for children, to ensure as wider wrap around offer.

3.4 **Priority Three: To improve the quality of short breaks provision to meet assessed need.**

3.4.1 Since the inspection in 2018 there has been considerable progress made to develop a comprehensive short break offer for families in St Helens. Key improvements are:

- There is now a full year calendar on the Local Offer site and work is ongoing to make it easier for people to find activities (<https://www.sthelens.gov.uk/send/activities/>). The holiday activity calendars are being developed and promoted earlier so parents can plan better. The offer is advertised to families via range of channels including Listne4Change, Friends, Services, Schools black bag, SENCO portal and our own mailing list and a facebook site has been created to keep families informed of developments.

3.4.2 Some of these developments include:

- Parkball – all-inclusive free football activities at Victoria Park.
- Junior parkrun – Have support to coach young people to be guide runners and information on whole schools taking over parkrun
- SEND Games – Be an Olympian for the day! - This is a collaboration between Council, Pilks FC, Smarties and is being opened up to other groups. This event will be held Saturday in June (awaiting confirmation for Ruskin 20th June) and will have activities planned by our young people. Different groups (Friends, Youth Service, Momo's Smarties) have been invited to design / sponsor a section with an activity.
- Football sessions – SEND friendly sessions delivered by Pilks, these have proven very popular and a second session for older young people has just started at Carmel College.
- Town Centre – working with Church Square management to develop a SEND friendly town including a SEND friendly activities, film and sensory room within Church Square and Autism Hour.
- Sibling Saturday – Library Service are developing Sibling Saturday which will launch when the library moves to the World of Glass in April. Plans to expand with Arts and Youth Service.

- Youth Service: Have delivered a SEND holiday programme of outdoor education at Taylor Park and partner in the Mencap charity #RoundTheWorldChallenge which will help around 200 local people with disabilities & additional needs access physical activities.
- Swimming – new online booking system to be implemented at Parr for families with children with SEND.
- Family Sessions for Easter are in hand.
- Dance – working with Friends to set up a dance group
- PA's network development –working with Carers Centre to develop coffee mornings and network events to help link people – existing PA's who may be interested in more hours or new people looking for a family / PA.

3.4.3 Key areas for further improvement include:

- The Commissioning team are exploring whether commissioning activities may be more suitable to families rather than being given hours to try and source themselves
- Liverpool City Region local authorities are considering joint working opportunities and a wider short break offer for all families.
- Locally, a provider event is planned for 1st April, to explore what providers can offer and what support they would need to expand their current offer or create a new one. This will inform proposals for further development, developing our in-house offer and supporting local groups to develop their own provision and match fund opportunities. The vision is also to develop a programme that develops each year so young people have the chance to grow, have fun and push themselves further if that is what they would like.
- To align short breaks opportunities for personal and social development with children's EHCPs.

3.4.4 Feedback from the Parent Carer Forum and families has been extremely positive to date.

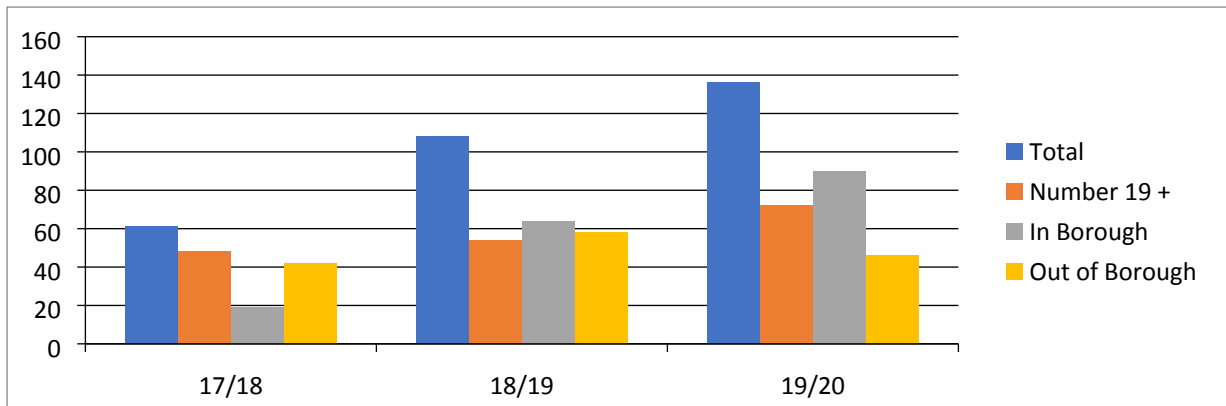
3.5 **The provision for young people aged 18-25 with SEND meets their potential as they move into adulthood**

3.5.1 To assist the development of the programme and establish a baseline, partners including parent/carers undertook a self-assessment using the Council for Disabled Children Transitions audit tool. Alongside the self-assessment, St Helens made a successful application to the DfE to be part of the Preparing for Adulthood post 19 improvement programme. This resulted in 10 days of consultancy from the National Development Team for Inclusion (NDTI). A multi-agency, parent/carer PFA Steering Group was established in November 2018.

3.5.2 By way of context, since the reforms in 2015, the number of young people aged 16-25 with an EHCP has increased from 70 to 339 and consequently there are increasing numbers remaining in education post 16.

3.5.3 The graph below illustrates learners with Education, Health and Care Plans supported by high needs funding (this does not include learners at Mill Green).

3.5.4 The cost to the high needs budget for post 16 education placements have tripled from £442,434 to £1,233,045 This rise in demand places considerable pressure on the school transport budget.



3.5.5 The Steering Group have agreed a PFA Action Plan with 4 key objectives:

- *Young People aged 16-25 will have opportunities for employment*
- *Young People are enabled or supported to have the best possible health and wellbeing*
- *Young People are enabled to be confident to live an ordinary life, be active, included, valued and involved, have a purpose and make a positive contribution*
- *Develop education offer in St Helens for post 19 learners with complex needs*

3.5.6 The Action Plan sits alongside the Transforming Care plan which aims to develop local provision to enable people with LA or Autism to live as independently as possible.

3.5.7 **Key Developments include:**

- A SEND Transitions Partnership was established in 2019 to work pro-actively with schools to identify and support young people at risk of becoming NEET. A NEET prevention worker was appointed in January 2020 and we have recently re commissioning our participation and tracking service, with an increase in investment. As a result, there will be more capacity for targeted work with vulnerable groups including those with SEND.
- SEND Supported Internship Programme was established in September 2018 with 7 young people supported in 2018/19. Of these all have had a positive EET outcome. Our second cohort of 10 have all remained engaged with a varied offer of placements. We are currently recruiting to our 3rd cohort to start in September 2020.
- Good collaboration between Adult Social Care, schools and colleges to develop a varied post 16 offer including accredited programmes, vocational, independent living and community experiences to prepare young people for adult life. As a result, our supported employment pathways have expanded from 3 to 8 pathways with increased choice, flexibility and diversity.
- Following a workshop, facilitated by NDTI and the Designated Clinical Officer (DCO) for SEND in March 2019, the DCO has been working with health care professionals from across three NHS providers and Public Health on embedding a focus on PFA outcomes into clinical practice.
- There has been recent improvement in the uptake of LD health checks by GP practices.
- New approach to ensure young people with SEND have their voices heard, successfully piloted in Lansbury Bridge and Rainford High facilitated by NDTi, "What Matters Island" well attended by school, parents, agencies and services. Feedback has been positive, young people engaged well with the events and where able to identify goals and aspirations for the future.
- Independent travel: young people with SEND consistently tell us that to be able to live an ordinary life, developing lifelong skills and accessing social networks, employment, or education, it is critical that they have the skills to travel safely and independently. A task and finish group was established in April 2019. Progress to date includes training for social care and education on Independent Travel Training, package of useful resources developed for the Local Office, working with schools on the direct links between

independence skills and the PSHCE national curriculum, useful 'I can' target setting tool designed to support small steps towards independence.

- “Big Chat” group of young people with SEND was formed in February 2019. These young people want to ensure that young people in St Helens with SEND have a voice. Big Chat have inputted to the St Helens SEND Conference, engaged on recruitment panels and working an ideas for a transition guide.
- PFA Toolkit has been co-produced and printed will be launched at the SEND Conference
- A range of progression to adulthood education options are being developed to ensure that as far as possible young people can access learning within St Helens – examples include the development of a KS 5 base to be run by Mill Green School in September 2020, an expanded offer by St Helens and Knowsley College and a package of on-line learning designed in collaboration with a post-16 training provider to enable those young people who are unable due to anxiety levels to engage with provision to continue their education at home, with a view to full time engagement at a pace suitable for the young person. As a result, the proportion of high needs students post 19 accessing education within St Helens has increased from 20% to 61% in 4 years.

3.5.8 Key areas for further improvement include:

- We need to continue to improve the post 19 offer and there have preliminary discussions with a local provider to explore the possibility of a secure facility and site in St Helens to deliver post-19 education.
- St Helens SEND Friendly Borough – project established in 2018 to ensure that community facilities are safe, welcoming and accessible for young people with SEND and their families. Phase one focussed on St Helens Libraries, phase two in leisure centres. Aim to develop a SEND Friendly “Charter”.
- Working to produce a Guide to Transition and working with Big Chat to develop a young person’s guide. Currently in draft format.
- The Liverpool Combined Authorities have established a programme to extend opportunities for supported internships. A fund of £2.5m over 3 years has been established and the Local Authorities within LCR have submitted a combined bid which if successful will complement our local programme.
- Training for schools on “Making RSHE SEND Friendly” in April 2020.

3.6 Communication

- 3.6.1 Alongside the key areas for improvement, feedback from parent, carers suggested the need for consistently good communication, which we recognise is an on-going challenge. To improve the flow of communication, senior managers from SEND, Education, Health and Social Care meet with the Parent, Carer Forum on a bi-monthly basis. This provides a flow of communication and an opportunity to provide regular updates on key developments, to highlight problems or issues early to enable a swift response, to co-design solutions and agree actions, and to identify opportunities for engagement.

4 Recommendation

Scrutiny is asked to note progress made in meeting areas for improvement as identified in the Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) Local Area Inspection.

The contact officer for this report is Sharon Fryer, Assistant Director SEND People’s Services.

Telephone 01744 671037.

SEND Home to School Transport



St. Helens Council

Statutory duties

Children under 5: children under compulsory school age are not automatically entitled to transport to an early years setting or school. (Compulsory school age begins on the first day of the term following the child's fifth birthday.)

Statutory Responsibility:

For children in early years settings, section 509A of the Education Act (EA) 1996 gives local authorities discretion to make travel arrangements for children receiving early years education other than in a school. Local authorities are not permitted to 'fetter their discretion'. This means they cannot refuse to make a transport arrangement simply because they have no strict duty to make it.

For children at school but under compulsory school age, section 508C EA 1996 also gives LAs a discretionary power to make such school travel arrangements as they consider necessary for the purpose of facilitating the child's attendance at school.

The Local Authority is *allowed to make charges* in providing transport services for children under 5.



Compulsory school aged 5-16 children: compulsory school age begins with the start of term following a child's fifth birthday and ends on the last Friday in June in the academic year in which s/he turns 16.

Statutory Responsibility:

Section 508B of the EA 1996 places a **statutory duty** on all local authorities **to provide free of charge** suitable home to school travel arrangements to secure attendance at school or other educational establishments for eligible children of compulsory school age between 5 and 16. Eligible children fall within four categories, set out in Schedule 35 EA 1996 and include children with SEN, a disability or a mobility difficulty.

The Local Authority *cannot charge* for providing transport services for children of compulsory school age children.



Young people aged 16 to 19: sixth form age means they are over compulsory school age (which ends on the last Friday in June in the academic year in which s/he turns 16) but under 19. If a young person began the course they are studying at school or college before their 19th birthday, they remain of sixth form age until they complete that course.

Statutory Responsibility:

Under Section 508C of the EA 1996 local authorities have the discretion to determine what transport and financial support are necessary to facilitate young people's attendance. The LA must exercise its power to provide transport or financial support reasonably, taking into account all relevant matters. Although **there is no automatic entitlement to transport for those of sixth form age** in the same way there is for 'eligible' children of compulsory school age, LAs have a discretion to assist with transport arrangements and are expected to target support towards students in particular circumstances (such as those with SEN).

The Local Authority is *allowed to make charges* in providing transport for 16-19.



Young people aged 19 – 25: ‘Adult learners’ are young people over sixth form age – those who are 19 and up (if they started a course of further education before their 19th birthday, they remain of sixth form age until they complete that course).

Statutory Responsibility:

the LA’s duty in respect of ‘adult learners’ is covered by section 508F of the EA 1996. When considering adult learners, the LA must make “*such arrangements for the provision of transport, as they consider necessary*” .

Any transport arrangements provided under *this duty must be free of charge.*



Rising Demand

In January 2018 St Helens had 680 children and young people with Statements of SEND there are now 1074 children and young people in St Helens with Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs) an increase of 36.39% in under two years. In 2018, the Council arranged home to school transport for 514 children and young people, and it now arranges home to school transport for 563.

The significant rise in numbers of pupils with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) who require transport and increases in the distances that they need to travel and this is leading to rising costs. We have a greater number of:

- children with complex medical needs or profound or multiple disabilities which has created demand for more costly forms of transport e.g. specially equipped buses and more passenger assistants;
- children presenting with extremely challenging behaviour leading to greater use of individual taxi services i.e. unable to share vehicles even though they are attending the same provision and;
- children and young people with EHCPs being educated out of area due to local special school/college provision being at capacity. The current average transport cost for a SEND child or young person attending in borough provision is £3,272.23. The average cost per child or young person with SEND attending out of borough provision is £6505.55



Budget Pressures

There is currently a pressure on the Home to School Transport budget of over £600k, based on the number of learners travelling to both in borough and out of borough education provisions, the projected cost for SEND home to school transport for 2019-2020 financial year will be £2,429,873 which is 34% more than the current budget of £1,805,500.

Action we have taken so far:

- we continue to do all we can to deliver the home to school transport service as efficiently and effectively as possible. Over the past few years, this has included:
- utilising the Council's adults service vehicles, instead of other more expensive forms of contracted transport;
- renegotiating contracts with transport providers to achieve better value for money;
- encouraging greater take up of Independent Travel Training.



St. Helens Council

Possible future actions

Consideration to be given on a consultation on discretionary (non-statutory) areas of SEND home to school transport – approval would need to be sought via a Delegated Executive Decision and any consultation would include the following stakeholders:

- Parents, carers and young people;
- Listen 4 Change Parent, Carer Forum
- Schools and Further Education Colleges;
- Neighbouring local authorities;
- Transport providers and operators;
- Elected Members and MPs.

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Timescale for any consultation

We would consult for a minimum of 8 weeks during the 2020 summer term. Once the consultation has closed, we would review the responses and prepare a report for elected members on the results who would consider any proposals to change our home to school transport policy by the end of the 2020 summer term. If there are any changes to our policy, these will be implemented from September 2021.



How we would consult

We would ask a number of questions, in a survey, about any proposals and for any other ideas and suggestions. The survey would be available online, via the Council's Consultation and SEND Local Offer web pages, we would also provide paper copies upon request. There would be drop-in events both day and evening during the consultation period and these will be publicised via the Council's website, Children's Centres, schools, further education colleges and Listen 4 Change, Parent, Carer Forum.



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Children and Young People's Services Overview and Scrutiny Panel
Monday 23rd March 2020

APPRENTICESHIPS FOR CHILDREN WE LOOK AFTER – TASK AND FINISH GROUP INTERIM REPORT

Exempt/Confidential Item

No

1.0 Introduction

1.1 This is a cover report to present the Interim Report of the Task and Finish Group which conducted a review of Apprenticeships for Children We Look After in February 2020.

2.0 Recommendations

2.1 That the Panel:

- a) Approve the report for submission to the Overview and Scrutiny Commission at its meeting on 30th March 2020; and
- b) Recommends to the Overview and Scrutiny Commission that the report be submitted to Cabinet for consideration at its meeting on 22nd April 2020.

3.0 Background

3.1 The Children and Young Peoples Overview and Scrutiny Panel commissioned a task and finish group to review the apprenticeship support for children we look after and care leavers as part of its work programme for 2019/20. The Task and Finish Group carried out research and held a meeting with officers from the Council to develop its conclusions and recommendations as set out in the interim report attached to this item.

3.2 The Panel is required to approve the report and recommendations so that they can be presented to the Overview and Scrutiny Commission for final approval to be submitted to Cabinet and any other responsible bodies. Cabinet will be required to consider the Task Group report and provide a response to the recommendations of the report at a subsequent meeting. The Panel will be required to review the Cabinet's response and continue to monitor the implementation of any recommendations agreed to by Cabinet.

The Contact Officer for this report is James Morley, Scrutiny Manager, Town Hall, St Helens, WA10 1HP. Telephone: 01744 676277. Email: jamesmorley@sthelens.gov.uk

BACKGROUND PAPERS

The following list of documents was used to complete this report and they are available for public inspection for four years from the date of the meeting, from the Contact Officer named above:

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St. Helens Council

Children and Young Peoples Services Overview and Scrutiny Panel

Apprenticeships for Children We Look After – Interim Report

March 2020

Task Group

Councillors –

Trisha Long (Chair)

Derek Long

Linda Mussell

Lisa Preston

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Chair's Foreword and Acknowledgements

Apprenticeships are a key part of the offer for local children. The Children and Young People Services Scrutiny Panel therefore decided to focus on looking at ways of improving access to these crucial opportunities, especially for the children we look after as a Council.

Like many other authorities, St Helens has seen its number of looked after children rise considerably. Over 500 of our children and young people are under the care of the Council. Councillors have a duty as corporate parents to do everything in our power to ensure that children we look after are both safe and have the opportunity to reach their potential.

This includes looking at ways of supporting care leavers into either education, employment or training opportunities as they transition into adulthood. The Task Group welcomes the fact that different Council departments are working together to ensure care leavers are supported in this regard. We were encouraged to see the progress being made through the Ambassadors Programme and the good links being made with local businesses.

After children have left our care, it is vital that the Council, employers and other agencies work together even more effectively to ensure opportunities for our young people to have the best possible chance of success.

However more still has to be done. A vital next step will be the production and implementation of a strategy that provides consistent support for care leavers moving into education, employment and training.

This interim report is therefore just a first step. There is much more ground to cover and we anticipate that the CYPS Scrutiny Panel will continue to cover this topic in 2020/21.

On behalf of my colleagues, Councillors Linda Mussell, Derek Long and Lisa Preston, I would like to thank officers from across the Council who contributed to this report. Their support and dedication to children we look after should always be recognised and commended.



Councillor Trisha Long
Chair of the Scrutiny Task Group

1.0 Introduction and Terms of Reference

- 1.1 During the process of agreeing the Children and Young Peoples Services (CYPS) Scrutiny Panel Work Programme for 2019/20, Panel Members agreed to review previous scrutiny work on apprenticeships generally and consider in more detail how the Council could support children we look after to gain, maintain and complete apprenticeships.
- 1.2 The aims and objectives of the review were to:
 - 1.2.1 Review previous scrutiny work on apprenticeships;
 - 1.2.2 Consider the Council's current offer for children we look after and the support offered to them;
 - 1.2.3 Consider the support provided by schools and colleges; and
 - 1.2.4 Investigate how employers within the borough can offer support for children we look after.

2.0 Method of Investigation

- 2.1 The Task Group commenced its review in February 2020. To develop this report, the task group met with various Council officers and considered the previous scrutiny work on apprenticeships; the support offered to children we look after by the Council, schools and college at present; and how employers within the borough could also support children we look after into employability.

3.0 Background

Apprenticeships

- 3.1 Apprenticeships are full-time, paid jobs which incorporate on and off the job training. There are over 200 different types of apprenticeship currently available in England, through existing apprenticeship frameworks available in 13 broad sector subjects. A successful apprentice will receive a nationally recognised qualification on completion of their contract.
- 3.2 For many years, St Helens Council has been supportive of apprenticeship (and graduate) positions within the authority. The current business administrator apprenticeship is a 12-month learning contract for 16-19 year olds. Apprentices are subject to standard HR procedures – such as the 37-hour working week – and are paid the national apprentice wage of £3.90 per hour. However, due to the Apprenticeship Levy that was introduced in 2017, the length of some learning contracts have been extended to 18 months.

- 3.3 Although apprentices can be recruited throughout the year, opportunities will only arise if there is a suitable role available that will develop a young person, and when a department/section has the budget available, given that there is no designated budget in each department for apprenticeships. Including salary, on-costs and other associated costs, an apprenticeship costs around £9,000 per year.

Children We Look After

- 3.4 The term 'looked after' has a specific, legal meaning, based on the Children Act 1989. Under this Act, a child (anyone under the age of 18) is looked after by a local authority if he or she falls into one of the following:
- 3.4.1 Is provided with accommodation, for a continuous period of more than 24 hours (Children Act 1989, Section 20 and 21);
- 3.4.2 Is subject to a Care Order (Children At 1989, Part IV);
- 3.4.3 Is subject to a Placement Order.
- 3.5 Over recent years, the rate of children we look after per 10,000 under-18 population in St Helens has risen significantly. The rate given below is for the number of children we look after at the end of the financial year and is reported to the Department for Education in the Spring by all local authorities:
- 2014/15 – 113.0
 - 2015/16 – 112.6
 - 2016/17 – 117.3
 - 2017/18 – 120.6
 - 2018/19 – 126.7
- 3.6 At the end of February 2020, a total of 511 children and young people were in the care of St Helens Council. This equated to a rate of 138.9 children per 10,000 of the under 18 population within the borough. This is substantially higher than the most recently published national average of 65 children per 10,000 population. The number of children we look after rate data is reported to Cabinet on a quarterly basis as the performance indicator CYP-02.
- 3.7 In the 2019/20 Quarter 2 Performance Report presented to Cabinet in November 2019, in the 'Performance in Focus' section of the Protecting Young People portfolio, it was reported that:

"In St Helens the rate of children becoming looked after is impacted by a legacy of poorer practice and planning and we know services have either not been in place or have not effectively responded too escalating concerns. What this means is we have in the last year as practice has started to improve we have seen children who should have become looked after at an earlier point in their life coming into care."

Care Leavers

- 3.8 When a child we look after is 15 years and nine months old, they begin to become a Care Leaver, and the local authority (as the Corporate Parent) starts to help them plan the pathway to their future. They do this by completing a Pathway Plan. There are two parts to the Pathway Plan; Part 1 is about what the child needs (leaving care assessment of need), and part 2 is about goals and plans.
- 3.9 The Care Leavers Act states that there are different categories of Care Leavers, each entitled to receive specific support. An overview of the support available is provided on the Council's Care Leavers website <https://www.sthelens.gov.uk/careleavers/support-for-you/what-is-my-care-leaver-status/> .
- 3.10 Many young people who have been looked after by the Local Authority can experience a compressed transition from childhood to adulthood. Nationally, young people who are looked after often have poorer outcomes than those who haven't experienced the care system. Children may experience several disruptions throughout their lives which have an impact upon parts of their life such as academic progress. Care Leavers may have barriers that they have to overcome, including setting up their first home, potential exposure to substances, risks around becoming homeless and falling into debt on top of mental health difficulties linked to their childhood trauma.

Gov.uk Guidance

- 3.11 The latest Government published *Apprenticeships funding in England* document sets out the policy from April 2019 onwards. Within the document, support is outlined for care leavers and those who have a Local Authority Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP). The document recognises that those who have previously been in care may need extra support and the associated cost this can represent to employers.
- 3.12 Employers who train an apprentice who is aged 19-24 and has previously been in care (or who has a EHCP) will receive £1,000 to help with these additional costs in the same way as the payment for 16-18 year olds.
- 3.13 Employers with fewer than 50 people working for them are able to train at no cost those aged 19-24 who have previously been in care or who have a Local Authority EHCP. These employers are not required to contribute the 5% co-investment; instead, the government will pay 100% of the training costs for these individuals.
- 3.14 N.B. this document was produced under the previous Conservative government. The current administration may amend the funding post-April 2020.

4.0 Findings

- 4.1 On 7th February 2020 the Task Group invited officers from various Council services to a meeting to discuss how they currently supported children we look after to access apprenticeships and the successes and challenges they face in achieving positive outcomes. Officers who attended the meeting were:
- Dominic Tumelty – Head of Service for Permanence, Care Leavers and CWD
 - Carly Quinn – Futures Team Manager
 - Paul Ross (on behalf of Sarah Platt) – St Helens Virtual School
 - Julie O'Neill – Workbased Learning Coordinator
 - Jenny Pritchard – Principal Organisational Development and Workforce Officer
 - Cathryn White – Place Delivery Officer
- 4.2 Officers who were unable to attend the meeting but contributed to this report include Helen Sharratt (CYP Consultations and Review Officer) and Monica Powell (Education, Employment and Training Coordinator).
- 4.3 During the meeting, officers provided an overview of their role with regards to both children we look after and apprenticeships, with Members asking questions.

2016 Scrutiny Review of Apprenticeships

- 4.4 In 2016, a Task Group of the Environment, Regeneration, Housing, Culture and Leisure (ERHCL) Scrutiny Panel produced a report on Apprenticeships. This was presented to Cabinet in October 2016. The report set out seven recommendations which were accepted by Cabinet, with actions attached to each. As a part of this Task Group, a review was undertaken to consider how each of the seven recommendations had progressed. A summary is provided below:
- 4.5 Recommendation 1 concerned the Council fully preparing for the implications of the Apprenticeship Forms to be introduced from May 2017 (including the Levy). A report was submitted to Cabinet in March 2017 which set out the Council's preparedness. The then Head of HR subsequently attended a meeting of the ERHCL Scrutiny Panel in April 2018 to provide a further updated on the number of apprenticeship starts and the impact of the Levy.
- 4.6 Recommendation 2 requested that an apprenticeships strategy was compiled and implemented. However, it is understood that no formal strategy was ever formally approved.
- 4.7 Recommendation 3 was to ensure that apprenticeships were within the remit of the then developing St Helens Economy Board. The Board provides a strategic steer to the Invest St Helens Ambassadors Programme, and

therefore the Future Generations programme that is currently providing work experience opportunities for care leavers.

- 4.8 Recommendation 4 covered developing a Support Employment Pathway for young people with SEND. Improved pathways are in place and have been further developed. The Assistant Director for SEND leads on this area.
- 4.9 Recommendation 5 looked at a review of existing careers education/information, advice and guidance resources. This review was completed in April 2017 and was taken to the appropriate forums.
- 4.10 Recommendation 6 requested that the Council collaborate with training providers to ensure the apprenticeship offer meets the needs of the local economy. This was completed in 2017, with training providers determined to continue offering apprenticeships in response to employer and student demand.
- 4.11 Recommendation 7 aimed to promote apprenticeships with existing and new employers. Apprenticeships continue to be promoted through the Invest St Helens Ambassadors Programme and the subsequent Future Generations programme, all of which promote apprenticeships to the private sector.

Identification of and Support for Care Leavers

- 4.12 Members were informed that as of February 2020, there were two care leavers who were employed by the Council as apprentices. Within the wider borough, there are no care leavers on apprenticeships outside of the authority.
- 4.13 The Council employs an Education, Employment and Training (EET) Coordinator, who as a part of their role assess whether job roles put forward by key workers are suitable for care leavers. Currently, the EET Coordinator was tracking young people at 16, but the Group was informed that there was plans to work more with the virtual school to include 15-year olds. This would allow for a better understanding of what areas young people wanted to work in and would facilitate a more strategic approach to apprenticeships and post-16 employment.
- 4.14 The Task Group was informed that the Care Leavers Team have an employability programme that focuses on a care leavers progression to ensure that their education, employment and training (EET) journey was sustainable and meaningful. Children we look after commence learning employability skills within school, and young people aged 16-25 have their plan personalised by the EET Coordinator. An employability programme had been developed as the first progression step for young people not in education, employment or training (NEET) who require intensive support to move onto their next EET stage.

- 4.15 The pathway then includes a further employability programme for those young people who are not ready to progress onto formal training; those who are ready to commence further training will progress onto a traineeship. The final progression for this programme would include employment or further training, which includes apprenticeships. The EET Coordinator has developed networks with the Invest St Helens Ambassador Programme who will be offering traineeship work placements for our young people.
- 4.16 The Task Group was informed that there had been a recognition that some children leaving care do not have basic Maths and English qualifications and were not able to access these qualifications post-19 due to funding. There had been a collaboration with St Helens Adult Learning who will be offering Maths and English qualifications as part of the employability programme.
- 4.17 The Task Group was informed that starting an apprenticeship could often be a difficult period of transition for all young people, given that they move from a school/college environment into a workplace where they were subject to the standard HR procedures. This period of transition can often be exacerbated for care leavers due to their personal circumstances often being more complicated than other young people.
- 4.18 To support care leavers through this transition period, the Council's Workbased Learning Coordinator worked closely with the Leaving Care Team to identify care leavers who were looking for an apprenticeship to ensure that they were supported throughout the interview process. Care leavers were supported to continue and complete their apprenticeship, with the Workbased Learning Coordinator focussing on 'in-work' support, and the Care Leavers concentrating on external factors (such as place of residence). This support was provided throughout the period of the care leavers employment with the Council.

Potential Barriers & Appropriateness of Apprenticeships

- 4.19 One barrier faced by all young people, but effects care leavers especially, was the national apprentice wage of £3.90 per hour (compared to £4.25 for under 18's; £6.15 for 18-20; and £7.70 for 21-24-year olds). The Task Group was informed that, occasionally, those care leavers who were 18-19 years old would opt for short-term, minimum wage jobs which paid more as opposed to apprenticeships. This was further complicated by the increasing roll-out of Universal Credit, as the amount of benefit received depended on the number of hours worked in a given period. The Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) have a responsibility to implement a Care Leavers protocol, which is currently being developed and will consider the current barriers young people face relating to Universal Credit and their education, employment and training (EET) aspirations.
- 4.20 It was suggested that Level 2 apprenticeships were sometimes not appropriate for some care leavers for various reasons. This could be due to

care leavers progressing on to further/higher education, or because a care leaver was not yet ready to being full-time employment. Previously, the Council ran a Children we look after's Employment Programme, which received £100,000 of funding to allow 5 care leavers to undertake a 12-week period of employment in the Council in which they would work for 16-hours per week. This allowed staff to work around any issues the individual was facing and build them up to a full 12-month apprenticeship if it was decided this was the most appropriate next step. However, this funding had ceased in recent years.

Care Leavers Board / Group

- 4.21 The Care Leavers Board is attended by various agencies who have corporate parenting responsibilities for care leavers. The Board has looked at a range of documents and strategies to formalise their approach to care leavers. The 'Stay Put' policy adopted by the Council was given as an example of the authority implementing a policy that gives young people who are in a stable, supportive foster placement the opportunity to pursue education, training and employment, without the disruption of having to move to independence during this critical period of their lives.
- 4.22 The Task Group agreed that a strategy should be produced that covered how care leavers could be supported to engage with education, employment and training opportunities once they leave secondary school education, with statistics provided where possible that recorded destinations for care leavers.
- 4.23 The Task Group was informed that care leavers in St Helens meet as a group on a monthly basis to engage in various projects to co-produce the service they receive. They have engaged in different topics linked to the Care Leavers Local Offer, and their views have been captured with regards to employment, education and training (EET).
- 4.24 Every local authority has a statutory responsibility to publish their local offer to care leavers. This outlines the support/offer to care leavers. This offer in St Helens is available on <https://www.sthelens.gov.uk/careleavers/> and in paper form available through the Care Leavers Team. The Task Group noted that it was important that the language used on all Council webpages which provide information to care leavers be reviewed to ensure that it was user-friendly and that it fully covered the range of support available (i.e. apprenticeships and other employability options available to them).
- 4.25 The Children and Young People's Consultation and Review Officer suggested that it was important to ensure that Council apprentices, included those who were care leavers, had the opportunity to give their views before/during/after their time in the Council, so that the authority could learn from and build upon their experience. With their permission, care leavers words could confidentially be used to promote the next recruitment phase in promotional material.

Reporting and Future Planning

- 4.26 The Task Group discussed the rising numbers of children we look after and how it was important that the Council fully understood the reasons for the rise in demand, and how the age profile of children effected not just potential outcomes for children looked after, but the financial implications on the Council's budget as well.
- 4.27 As an example, it was suggested that, based on the current cohort of 15-year olds, the Council would be supporting a higher number of young people into adulthood than in previous years based on the usual rate with which young people remained in services. It was agreed that it was important that targeted support for individuals most likely to remain looked after be a priority. The Task Group was informed that the post of Education, Employment and Training Coordinator only had temporary funding; this was a concern to the Task Group given the post's importance.
- 4.28 The Task Group was informed that as a part of statistical reporting arrangements to Cabinet, the Council had a target set for the percentage of former care leavers aged 19-21 years old in employment, education or training (EET) (Tier 2 performance indicator CYP-28a), as well as a target for care leavers in settled accommodation (Tier 2 performance indicator CYP-27a). The Task Group commented that further statistical information on destinations and outcomes for Care Leavers would provide Members with a greater oversight of this area.

The Virtual School

- 4.29 When a young person becomes looked after, they become a pupil of the Virtual School. The aim of the Virtual School was to ensure that children we look after had the opportunity to fulfil their educational potential. Although not a 'physical' school with buildings and classrooms, the Virtual School brought together information about all children who were looked after by the Council - as if they were in a single school. It allowed the Virtual School Headteacher and the local authority to closely track each child's progress and ensure the Council could identify the specific support the child may need at an early stage, so the virtual school could work with individual schools to implement any actions.
- 4.30 The Group was informed that staff in schools often had well-established relationships with looked after children and can provide a level of stability in their lives. This stability was often disrupted when leaving secondary school and it could be hard for care leavers to establish new relationships, for example with Council Officers.
- 4.31 It was suggested that there could often be a lack of understanding from both secondary school children and teachers/staff on the apprenticeship and traineeship routes that were available. This issue could be exacerbated by some schools not having a Careers Support staff member. The Task Group

discussed whether there was an assessment tool that could be used with children we look after to capture the ‘voice of the child’ and provide an indication of whether an apprenticeship would be suitable for them. Officers proposed that this assessment tool could be included within a looked after child’s Personal Education Plan (PEP). The PEP included three meetings with a young person per year, with the Headteacher of the Virtual School having oversight of this process.

- 4.32 It was stated that not all children we look after attended the Virtual School as some children we look after were educated in alternative education establishments (such as the KS3 PRU base). It was suggested that being away from their usual full-time education could increase a child’s vulnerability to exploitation, such as criminal and sexual; this was a typical scenario of those young people caught up in County Lines cases. It was agreed that consideration needed to be given as to how best to engage children we look after in these alternative education settings.
- 4.33 The Group was informed following meetings between the Virtual School Headteacher, secondary schools, and the University of Liverpool, a pilot programme of academic mentoring was commenced at the start of February. Two schools had so far engaged with the project, with 18 children we look after receiving support. This mentoring support involved undergraduates from the University going into schools to provide one-to-one support within core subjects. The mentors focus on developing confidence within the subject and enhancing the skills and knowledge the young person learns within the classroom. Each mentor works with each child for one hour per week.

St Helens Ambassadors Programme

- 4.34 The Task Group was informed about the Ambassadors Programme which formed an important part of the ‘Invest St Helens’ brand. According to the Invest St Helens website, the Ambassadors scheme *“brings together the knowledge, networks and determination of businesses, organisations and individuals to help the borough to compete by attracting investment, business and visitors to create a more successful economy for the benefit of everyone”*.
- 4.35 Over 130 businesses, schools, and organisations have signed up as Ambassadors since the programme’s launch in 2017. Despite a large majority of schools being members of the Ambassadors Programme, there was still a minority who were not engaging. The Task Group agreed that Councillors who were governors at schools not engaging with the Ambassadors programme should encourage their schools to sign up.
- 4.36 The Task Group was informed about the Future Generations Programme. This was an innovative and unique offer developed to utilise the Invest St Helens platform, in particular Ambassadors, to improve the lives of young people. The Programme had developed a series of objectives in respect of work with young people:

- To raise aspiration and ambition for young people
- To link schools and businesses together
- To link young people to the future economy
- To create a positive perception of St Helens

4.37 Ambassadors were extremely supportive of the Future Generation Programme and many had pledged their support to use their role as an Ambassador to improve outcomes for young people in St Helens. The Invest Team aimed to work with Ambassadors to encourage the commitment to support young people leaving care, in hope that the support given will help support Care Leavers to make a positive transition to independence by providing practical support with the following:

- Traineeship Programme – together with Council Social Work Teams
- Careers advice – from local business leaders
- Work experience opportunities – with Ambassadors
- Interview Preparation – with recruitment consultants
- Increased access to local offer – accessing facilities in their local area such as bowling, cinema, Saints games, and sports facilities.

4.38 The programme was reported to have been a success to date and had delivered many positive outcomes. Ambassadors and Economy Board Members had pledged their support, enabling officers to deliver a number of projects including:

- 12-week confidence building programme for all ages (aimed at LAC & Care Leavers)
- 'Believe & Achieve' careers event delivered to Year 11 Children we look after
- 'Rewrite the Stars' Celebration event delivered for LAC/Care Leavers in St Helens
- Commissioned Education Consultants to rewrite the Curriculum in St Helens to bridge the gaps identified with local place based knowledge and heritage information
- Commissioned publication of 'The Canary Sings' project with Primary School Ambassadors
- Design and development of a Traineeship Programme for Care Leavers

4.39 The Task Group was informed that links had been established between the Ambassadors Programme and the Education, Employment and Training Coordinator to explore how local employers could offer work experience opportunities for children we look after. Although an apprenticeship or job offer was the ideal scenario, it was recognised that there was a higher chance of ensuring cooperation and buy-in from businesses if work experience opportunities if work experience was offered initially, with apprenticeship opportunities to be explored moving forward as relationships developed further.

- 4.40 The Task Group was assured that for any apprenticeships offered by external employers in the borough, employers were held to account by training providers who accredit the apprenticeship. If the apprentice was not being given tasks to complete that met the criteria of the qualification, then this would be highlighted in the apprentice's progress reports and escalated appropriately.
- 4.41 It was agreed by the Task Group that it would be beneficial to hear an external employers' perspective of the Ambassadors Programme and their perceptions of how more opportunities for children we look after could be provided, and what the potential barriers are from a local businesses point of view / standpoint.

Other Local Authorities

- 4.42 The topic of support for children we look after with regards to apprenticeships has been considered by numerous other local authority scrutiny functions. A short summary is provided below.

Dorset County Council

- 4.43 Dorset County Council's Safeguarding Overview and Scrutiny Committee reviewed apprenticeships in respect of children we look after and care leavers in 2017 following an Ofsted inspection report. The report recommended that the County Council develop a full range of opportunities for work experience, traineeships and apprenticeships for care leavers so as to increase the number in employment, education or training.
- 4.44 Following a pilot project that offered four 16-year old children we look after work experience, the scheme was expanded to 16 Year 11 Virtual School pupils who were approached by the County Council with an offer of work experience. Year 10 pupils were also approached with an offer of work familiarisation in preparation for their Year 11 work experience.
- 4.45 The County Council also identified 16-21 year olds who were previously children we look after and not in employment, education or training (NEET) to assess those who would benefit from work experience or a traineeship.

Wirral Council

- 4.46 Wirral Council's Families and Wellbeing Policy & Performance Committee undertook a review into the *Outcomes for Children we look after* in August 2013. Despite the years that have past, the recommendations still hold weight in 2020.
- 4.47 The importance of building self-confidence in Children we look after was heard repeatedly throughout the Scrutiny Review in Wirral. Members were informed that, for some children in care, there was a need to improve self-esteem and confidence levels, for example, to help with interview skills. This

could be a significant problem at the age of transition (16–17 years old) when the young person was moving to semi-independence; a period which could be particularly difficult when there was no parental input. One way of achieving increased confidence levels was to identify and promote opportunities for internships and work experience for children we look after and care leavers within the Council.

- 4.48 Further recommendations set out within the 2013 report included increasing the capacity of the Employment Team with a peer mentor and apprentice.

Nottinghamshire County Council

- 4.49 Although the review by Nottinghamshire County Council's Health And Wellbeing Standing Committee, *From Care to Independence*, was published 10 years ago, it's recommendations still are relevant today. The report recommended that children we look after and care leavers should have access to a range of employability opportunities including:

- Work inspiration and taster events;
- Priority for work experience opportunities;
- Priority for any places on future Council apprenticeship schemes;
- A guaranteed interview for any job for which they have the appropriate qualification.

- 4.50 In addition, the report recommended that contractors for County Council services be encouraged to offer employability opportunities to children we look after. It was also recommended that a system to monitor the key outcomes for care leavers at the point of case closure be implemented and used to inform future policies for children we look after.

5.0 Conclusions

- 5.1 Given the increasing number of children becoming looked after in recent years, the Task Group believes that securing good outcomes for care leavers is more important than ever. Although it is right that the Council works to reduce the numbers of children becoming looked after, tracking young care leavers and their destinations/outcomes should remain a priority for the authority. Further statistical information on destinations/outcomes would provide Members with a greater oversight of this area.
- 5.2 The Task Group was encouraged to hear that both the Council and members of the Ambassadors Programme were working cooperatively to support care leavers into employment by providing work experience and apprenticeship opportunities.
- 5.3 The Task Group was pleased that the majority of schools in the Borough were signed up to the Ambassadors Programme. However, the Group noted that it would wish for all schools engaged in the programme and hoped Councillors

who were governors at schools that were not a part of the St Helens Ambassadors Programme encourage their schools to engage further.

- 5.4 The Task Group recognises that for some care leavers, an apprenticeship may not always be the most appropriate step following leaving secondary education, and that work experience opportunities and traineeships may be required. The Task Group was reassured to hear that work was being done by officers, through the Future Generations programme, to pursue opportunities to increase the number of work experience opportunities for care leavers and children we look after.
- 5.5 The Task Group was pleased to hear from officers about the experience some young people and employers had had engaging with our services. However, the Task Group would welcome the opportunity to meet with both care leavers and members of the Ambassadors programme to understand from their perspectives what any current barriers were and what further support could be provided that would make a difference.
- 5.6 The Task Group was reassured that the Virtual School was tracking the progress of children we look after, and that schools had well-established relationships with their pupils. However, the Task Group would welcome further consideration as to how the Council can support those children we look after in alternative education establishments to ensure that they are fully supported to understand the options available to them post-16.
- 5.7 The Task Group was pleased to be told that the plans were in development for the Education, Employment and Training Coordinator to work more with the Virtual School to engage 15-year olds who are looked after. A better understanding of the areas young people would want to work in will help to facilitate a more strategic approach to apprenticeships and post-16 employment generally. The Task Group believed it would be beneficial for an assessment tool to be implemented in a young person's Personal Education Plan, to ascertain whether they understand the apprenticeship routes available to them, and whether this route was the most appropriate.
- 5.8 The Task Group was concerned to hear that some young people were more encouraged to look for short term financial gain through employments, rather than long-term security through apprenticeships due to the disparity in wages between the national minimum wage and the apprenticeship wage. The Task Group would welcome further reassurance that care leavers undertaking apprenticeships who were eligible for Universal Credit, were not losing money due to the way the benefit is paid. The Task Group wished to speak with local representatives from DWP for clarification on this issue.
- 5.9 Although it was good to see that there was a dedicated children we look after and care leavers website, the Task Group believed that it was important that the language used on Council webpages be reviewed to ensure that the target audience of care leavers were not discouraged and able to fully understand the range of support available to them in the borough.

- 5.10 The Task Group believed that it was important the knowledge and processes employed by Officers and recounted to them in the Task Group meeting, were documented so that the policies and procedures could be clearly understood and passed on to others. This should be covered in a strategy that covers how children we look after can be supported both in school and when they become care leavers to fully access education, employment and training opportunities.

6.0 Recommendations

- 6.1 The Task Group recommends that further statistical information on destinations and outcomes for care leavers be collected and monitored moving forward.
- 6.2 The Task Group recommends that Councillors who are governors on schools not signed up to the Ambassadors Programme encourage them to do so.
- 6.3 The Task Group recommends that an opportunity be provided for it to meet with both care leavers and members of the Ambassadors Programme to understand what current barriers were and what further support could be provided in respect of apprenticeships and work experience opportunities for care leavers.
- 6.4 The Task Group would welcome further consideration as to how the Council can support those children we look after in alternative education establishments to ensure that they are fully supported to understand the options available to them post-16.
- 6.5 The Task Group believes it would be beneficial for an assessment tool to be implemented in a young person's Personal Education Plan, to ascertain whether they understand the apprenticeship routes available to them, and whether this route was the most appropriate.
- 6.6 The Task Group wishes to speak with local representatives from DWP for clarification on the implications of Universal Credit on the wages and benefits received by care leavers.
- 6.7 The Task Group recommends that the language used on Council webpages which provide information to care leavers be reviewed so that the target audience were not discouraged and able to fully understand the range of support available to them in the borough.
- 6.8 The Task Group recommends that a strategy be produced which covers how children we look after can be supported both in school and when they become care leavers to fully access education, employment and training opportunities.

Sources

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<https://democracy.wirral.gov.uk/documents/s50031324/Appendix%202.pdf>

- Nottinghamshire County Council Health And Wellbeing Standing Committee – *From Care to Independence*

<https://www.nottinghamshire.gov.uk/DMS/Document.ashx?czJKcaeAi5tUFL1DTL2UE4zNRBcoShgo=%2BHj%2FSit8d0ZKIXbkIjvVFmYdMB9mWkHI1GtwV7J6RO0uCXBGZiD2uw%3D%3D&mCTIbCubSFfXsDGW9IXnlq%3D%3D=hFfIUdN3100%3D&kCx1AnS9%2FpWZQ40DXFvdEw%3D%3D=hFfIUdN3100%3D&uJovDxwdjMPoYv%2BAJvYtyA%3D%3D=ctNJFf55vVA%3D&FgPIIEJYlotS%2BYGoBi5oIA%3D%3D=NHdURQburHA%3D&d9Qjj0ag1Pd993jsyOJqFvmyB7X0CSQK=ctNJFf55vVA%3D&WGewmoAfeNR9xqBux0r1Q8Za60lavYmz=ctNJFf55vVA%3D&WGewmoAfeNQ16B2MHuCpMRKZMwaG1PaO=ctNJFf55vVA%3D>

Apprenticeships for Children We Looked After

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Rec No	Recommendation	Responsible Officer	Agreed Action and Date of Implementation
1	The Task Group recommends that further statistical information on destinations and outcomes for care leavers be collected and monitored moving forward.		
2	The Task Group recommends that Councillors who are governors on schools not signed up to the Ambassadors Programme encourage them to do so.		
3	The Task Group recommends that an opportunity be provided for it to meet with both care leavers and members of the Ambassadors Programme to understand what current barriers were and what further support could be provided in respect of apprenticeships and work experience opportunities for care leavers.		
4	The Task Group would welcome further consideration as to how the Council can support those children we look after in alternative education establishments to ensure that they are fully supported to understand the options available to them post-16.		
5	The Task Group believes it would be beneficial for an assessment tool to be implemented in a young person's Personal Education Plan, to		

Apprenticeships for Children We Looked After

	ascertain whether they understand the apprenticeship routes available to them, and whether this route was the most appropriate.		
6	The Task Group wishes to speak with local representatives from DWP for clarification on the implications of Universal Credit on the wages and benefits received by care leavers.		
7	The Task Group recommends that the language used on Council webpages which provide information to care leavers be reviewed so that the target audience were not discouraged and able to fully understand the range of support available to them in the borough.		
8	The Task Group recommends that a strategy be produced which covers how children we look after can be supported both in school and when they become care leavers to fully access education, employment and training opportunities.		

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Children and Young People Services Overview and Scrutiny Panel

23 March 2020

Scrutiny Work Programme 2019/2020

1. **Purpose**

- 1.1 To present the Panel with the Work Programme document for review to prioritise items for future consideration.

2. **Recommendation**

- 2.1 That the Panel review the items listed within the work programme document and agree prioritises and timescales.

3. **Background**

- 3.1 A comprehensive work programme is fundamental to the effectiveness of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel as it enables the Panel to plan and manage its workload to make best use of the available time and resources, to add the most value to the performance of the Council and outcomes for residents.
- 3.2 The attached work programme document is designed to record and monitor the activity and plans for the Panel to effectively manage the Panel's workload and plan for future meetings. The document lists each of the items that fall within the remit of the Panel currently under consideration. Each column of the work programme table provides key information about each item including a description of the issue and purpose of bringing it to the Panel.

4. **Reviewing the Work Programme**

- 4.1 The Panel is encouraged to review its work programme on a regular basis to ensure it remains relevant and achieves its outcomes. When reviewing the work programme, new items can be added and items that no longer require scrutiny or are not considered to be a priority for action or monitoring can be removed.

- 4.2 When considering whether to add, remove and prioritise items for consideration members should be mindful of the following:

- Would the Panel be able to add value through its work on the issue?
- Is the issue a Corporate Priority for the Council?
- Is the issue a priority/concern for partners, stakeholders and the public?
- Is the issue related to poor performing services?
- Is there a pattern of budgetary overspends?
- Are there significant levels of public/service user dissatisfaction with the service?
- Has there been media coverage of the issue?
- Is the issue related to new Government guidance?
- Would consideration of the issue be timely?
- Are there sufficient resources to effectively consider the issue at this time?
- Would the Panel be duplicating work being undertaken elsewhere?
- Is the matter subject to judicial review (sub judice)?

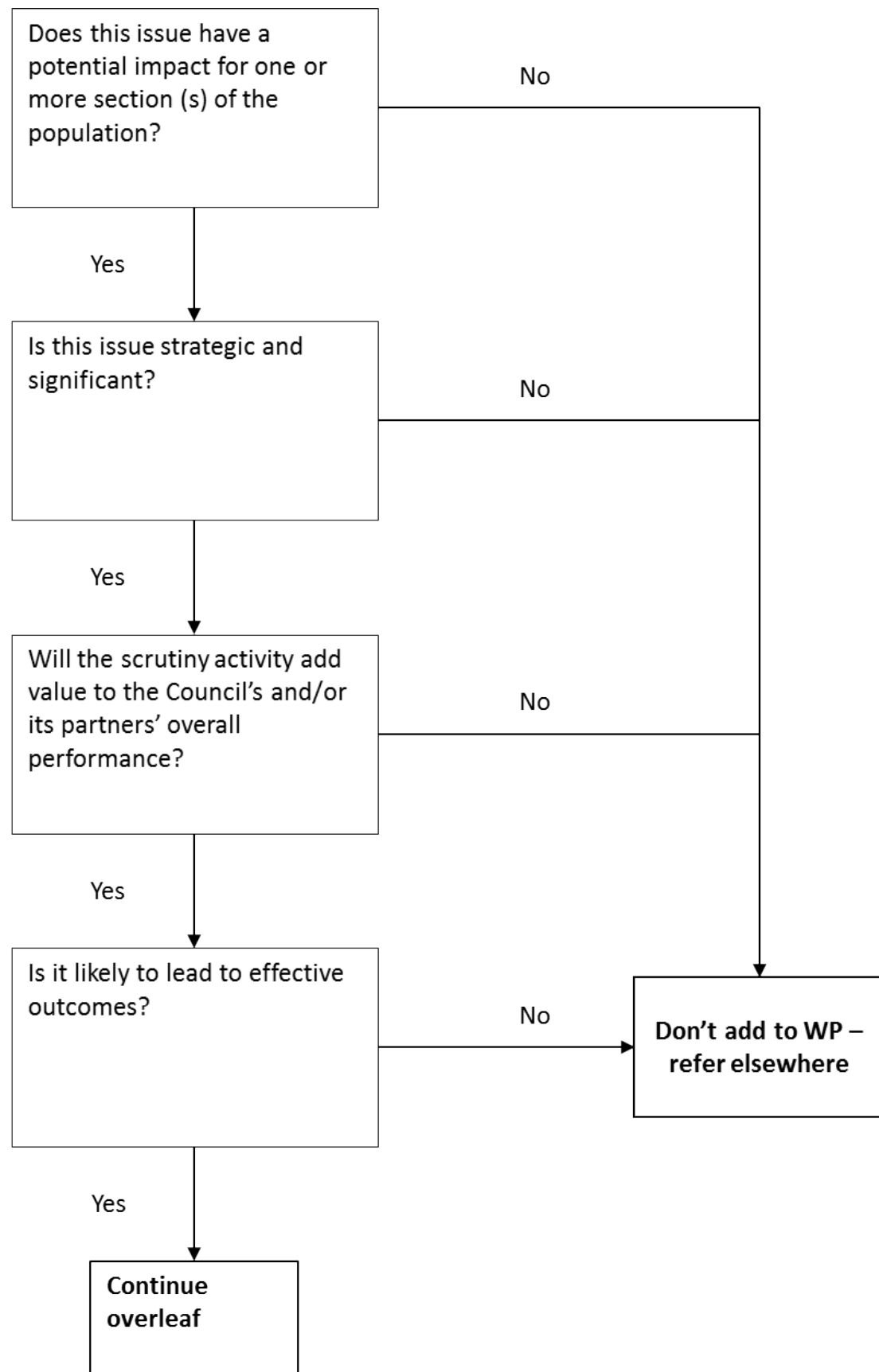
- 4.6 The Work Programme Prioritisation Aid attached to the report is designed to assist members in considering whether a suggested addition to the work programme is suitable and meets the necessary criteria. If members, consider that a suggestion would not be a suitable for scrutiny the Panel could choose to refer the matter elsewhere. If an item is considered to be an important issue but not a priority at this time an item may be added to the end of the work programme to be monitored for further consideration in the future.

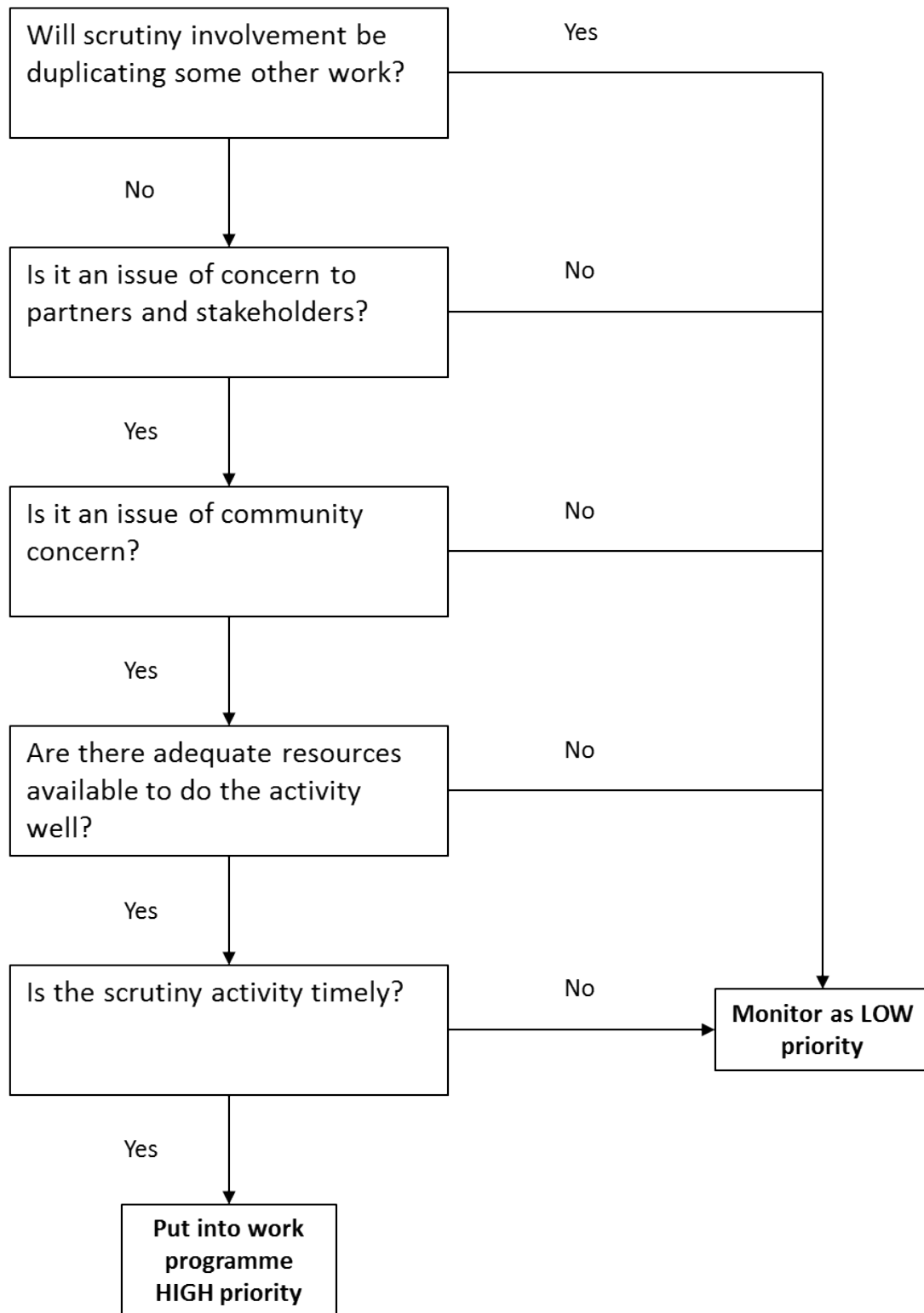
5 Conclusion

- 5.6 The Panel is requested to discuss its work programme and set priorities for future Panel meetings and agree any review work (i.e. task and finish) to be commenced in the near future or scheduled for a later date.

The contact officer for this report is James Morley, Scrutiny Manager, Town Hall, Victoria Square, St Helens, WA10 1HP. Telephone 01744 676277.

Overview and Scrutiny Work Programme Prioritisation Aid





Children and Young People’s Overview and Scrutiny Panel Work Programme

Date: 23rd March 2020 Time: 10am Venue: Room 10, Town Hall	Date: 13 th July 2020 Time: 10am Venue: Room 10, Town Hall	Date: 21 st Sept 2020 Time: 10am Venue: Room 10, Town Hall
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<u>Title</u>	<u>Description</u>	<u>Aims/Purpose</u>	<u>Portfolio</u>	<u>Lead Officer</u>	<u>Corporate Priority</u>	<u>Method</u>	<u>Date</u>
Apprenticeships for Looked After Children 91	A Scrutiny task group published a report on apprenticeships in July 2016. One of the recommendation was that an Apprenticeships Strategy “Includes tailored pathways for young people from vulnerable groups, such as Looked After Children, that are matched to their career aspirations”	To review previous scrutiny work on apprenticeships generally and consider in more detail how the Council can support looked after children more to gain, maintain and complete apprenticeships	Protecting Young People/ Developing Young People	Linda Evans	Improving the effectiveness of schools and education services.	Task and Finish	Interim Report to Panel 23 rd March 2020 Agenda deadline 12 th March
Ofsted Action Plan Task Group	Panel considered Council’s response to Ofsted Inspection at Jan 2020 meeting. Set up a task group to review draft action plan prior to being submitted to Ofsted.	To enable members of the Panel to contribute to the proposed action plan prior to submission to Ofsted. To increase understanding of the the action plan to inform subsequent scrutiny of progress against the plan.	Protecting Young People/ Developing Young People	Sarah O’Brien	Ensuring the best possible outcomes for children, families and vulnerable adults.	Task and Finish Group	Meeting held on 24 th Jan 2020 No further meetings planned

Outcomes for Secondary School Children/School Effectiveness Strategy	Panel previously reviewed 2017/18 performance of secondary schools in march 2019. School Effectiveness Strategy was adopted by Cabinet in July 2019	To review the performance of Secondary Schools based on outcomes for children at Key Stage 4. To assess the impact of the School Effectiveness Strategy.	Developing Young People	Jo Davies	Improving the effectiveness of schools and education services.	Briefing Session – all Non Cabinet Members invited	9 th March 2020 5:15pm Room 8 TH
Young Carers	In 2013 the Panel reviewed the support available to young carers. The issue has been raised again due to concerns about the number of young carers in St Helens	To revisit the report to assess whether recommendations were implemented and are still relevant today.	Protecting Young People	Gill Whittle	Ensuring the best possible outcomes for children, families and vulnerable adults.	Spotlight Review	Meeting 19 th March 2020 Report to Commission 30 th March
Children's Services Improvement Plan 92	Ofsted ILACS Inspection took place 23 rd Sept -4 th Oct 2019. Ofsted gave Inadequate rating requiring Council to produce Action Plan for improvement. Panel will monitor improvement process on ongoing basis.	To continue monitoring the Council's progress with improvements to Children's Services. To speak with Lynda Clegg, chair of Children's Improvement Board	Protecting Young People	Sarah O'Brien	Ensuring the best possible outcomes for children, families and vulnerable adults.	Standing Item on Panel Agenda	Next meeting 23 rd March 2020 Agenda deadline: 11 th March
SEND Improvement Plan	Panel received response to the Ofsted/CQC Inspection at Sept 2018 meeting. Members requested update report on progress.	To continue monitoring the Council's progress with improvements to SEND services in the local area as recommended by Ofsted/CQC.	Developing Young People	Sharon Fryer	Ensuring the best possible outcomes for children, families and vulnerable adults.	Report to Panel	23 rd March 2020 Agenda deadline: 11 th March
SEND Transport provision	In August 2018 Cabinet postponed a decision to charge for SEND Transport to 16-19 yr olds. A number of	To understand the current status of any decision on the service.	Developing Young People	Clare Sutcliffe	Ensuring the best possible outcomes for children,	Report to Panel	23 rd March 2020

	developments and challenges since then have led to delay in further consultation on future approach to the service.				families and vulnerable adults.		Agenda deadline: 11 th March
CAMHS	Panel received reports from the Commissioner and Provider of CAMHS in Sept 2019 and followed up on ITHRIVE model in Jan 2020. Requested a further report in July 2020 regarding waiting times for CAMHS services.	To review the Action Plan in place for implementing the ITHRIVE operating model at North West Boroughs and Barnados. To continue to investigate the waiting times young people undertake to access CAMHS and to ensure that services on offer can meet the demands of the borough.	Protecting Young People	Suzanne Rimmer CCG Kerstin Roberts NWB	Ensuring the best possible outcomes for children, families and vulnerable adults.	Report to Panel	13 th July 2020 Agenda deadline: 1 st July
Youth Council 93		To review the current status of the Youth Council and understand how young people are engaged and encouraged to take part. To hear from representatives of the YC about their experience	Developing Young People	Sharon Fryer	Improving the effectiveness of schools and education services.	Report to Panel	
SEND funding in schools and Post 16/19 provision	Schools receive additional funding for each child that is identified as having a special education need. Children's Services commissioning a review of high needs planning in Autumn 2019.	To understand the process of school receiving SEND support funding and investigate how this is being used to support the relevant pupil with their needs	Protecting Young People	Jo Davies	Improving the effectiveness of schools and education services.	Report to Panel Or Task and Finish	Service currently under review by Officers.
Alternative Education provision	It has been suggested to the Panel that there is a lack of facilities for AE for pupils with complex needs.	To investigate the quality and scope of provision (via site visits) and consider how	Developing Young People	Jo Davies	Improving the effectiveness of schools and	Task and Finish	Service currently under

		improvements can be made if required.			education services.		review by Officers.
Teenage pregnancy rates	It has recently been reported that teenage pregnancy rates within St Helens have increased.	To investigate the causes of the recent increase in teenage pregnancy rates after rates being below average for the past few years.	Public Health, Leisure and Libraries	Sue Forster	Improving health and wellbeing outcomes for people.	Report to Panel	
Health assessments for Looked After Children	As corporate parent the Council is responsible for ensuring the health and wellbeing of all LAC (both in and out of borough)	To examine the ways the CCG is monitoring and maintaining the health of our looked after children	Protecting Young People	Jo Davies	Improving health and wellbeing outcomes for people.	Report to Panel	
Care Leavers	Corporate Parenting Forum currently looking at action plan Scrutiny may want to focus on a particular element e.g. accommodation for care leavers	To examine how services manage the process of looked after children transitioning to care leavers, the issues services face and what might be done to address them to ensure there is a smooth transition and care leavers have good outcomes	Protecting Young People	Linda Evans	Ensuring the best possible outcomes for children, families and vulnerable adults.	Spotlight Review	
Dental Health of Children	National report suggested high levels of poor dental health among children. Merseyside figures are understood to be poor also. Whilst Dental Care is commissioned by NHS England, not locally, the Council has a statutory responsibility for promoting oral health in the Borough.	To investigate whether there are particular issues with poor dental health among children in St Helens and what services are or could be put in place to improve dental health	Public Health, Leisure and Libraries	Sue Forster	Improving health and wellbeing outcomes for people.	Spotlight Review	

Self-Harm	Reviews are underway at officer/Cabinet level. Scrutiny to monitor situation and request an item be brought forward in future. Self-harm rates are currently high in STH	To receive an update on the 2015 Scrutiny review to help understand the current levels of young people who Self Harm and the services available to them.	Public Health, Leisure and Libraries	Sue Forster	Improving health and wellbeing outcomes for people.		Possible July
Multi Agency Safeguarding Arrangements	New Statutory Guidance since June 2019. Changes to LSCB. New Board has identified three priorities	To support members' understanding of safeguarding arrangements. To receive presentation from the independent scrutineer on the Children's Safeguarding Board. To ensure arrangements are effectively safeguarding children	Protecting Young People	Sarah O'Brien	Supporting people and communities to feel safe and resilient, particularly children and vulnerable adults.	Briefing Session for Members	
Good Childhood Enquiry	Good Childhood Enquiry will be taking place over spring/summer 2020 to collect the views of children in St Helens issues they are concerned about.	To understand what children in the borough are most concerned about to inform the Panel's work programme.	Protecting Young People/ Developing Young People	Julie Dunning	Ensuring the best possible outcomes for children, families and vulnerable adults.	Report to Panel	Possible Sept 2020

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