

Education, Children and Families Policy Committee

**Wednesday 9 November 2022 at 10.00
am**

**To be held in the Town Hall,
Pinstone Street, Sheffield, S1 2HH**

The Press and Public are Welcome to Attend

Membership

Councillor Dawn Dale
Councillor Mick Rooney
Councillor Brian Holmshaw
Councillor Colin Ross
Councillor Peter Garbutt
Councillor Mary Lea
Councillor Anne Murphy
Councillor Gail Smith
Councillor Ann Whitaker

PUBLIC ACCESS TO THE MEETING

The Education, Children and Families Policy Committee discusses and takes decisions on:

Education and Skills

- Schools
- Mainstream and specialist education (early years, children and young people)
- Learning and Skills policy, programmes and interventions (children and young people)

Children and Families

- Children and family support and social work
- Fostering and adoption
- Children in care, care leavers and corporate parenting
- Residential services
- Youth justice
- Child safeguarding

Meetings are chaired by the Committees Co-Chairs, Councillors Dale and Rooney.

A copy of the agenda and reports is available on the Council's website at www.sheffield.gov.uk. You may not be allowed to see some reports because they contain confidential information. These items are usually marked * on the agenda. Members of the public have the right to ask questions or submit petitions to Policy Committee meetings and recording is allowed under the direction of the Chair. Please see the [Council's webpages](#) or contact Democratic Services for further information regarding public questions and petitions and details of the Council's protocol on audio/visual recording and photography at council meetings.

Policy Committee meetings are normally open to the public but sometimes the Committee may have to discuss an item in private. If this happens, you will be asked to leave. Any private items are normally left until last on the agenda.

Meetings of the Policy Committee have to be held as physical meetings. If you would like to attend the meeting, please report to an Attendant in the Foyer at the Town Hall where you will be directed to the meeting room. However, it would be appreciated if you could register to attend, in advance of the meeting, by emailing committee@sheffield.gov.uk, as this will assist with the management of attendance at the meeting. The meeting rooms in the Town Hall have a limited capacity. We are unable to guarantee entrance to the meeting room for observers, as priority will be given to registered speakers and those that have registered to attend.

Alternatively, you can observe the meeting remotely by clicking on the 'view the webcast' link provided on the meeting page of the [website](#).

If you wish to attend a meeting and ask a question or present a petition, you must submit the question/petition in writing by 9.00 a.m. at least 2 clear working days in

advance of the date of the meeting, by email to the following address:
committee@sheffield.gov.uk.

In order to ensure safe access and to protect all attendees, you will be recommended to wear a face covering (unless you have an exemption) at all times within the venue. Please do not attend the meeting if you have COVID-19 symptoms. It is also recommended that you undertake a Covid-19 Rapid Lateral Flow Test within two days of the meeting.

If you require any further information please email committee@sheffield.gov.uk.

FACILITIES

There are public toilets available, with wheelchair access, on the ground floor of the Town Hall. Induction loop facilities are available in meeting rooms. Access for people with mobility difficulties can be obtained through the ramp on the side to the main Town Hall entrance.

**EDUCATION, CHILDREN AND FAMILIES POLICY COMMITTEE AGENDA
9 NOVEMBER 2022**

Order of Business

- 1. Welcome and Housekeeping**
The Chair to welcome attendees to the meeting and outline basic housekeeping and fire safety arrangements.
- 2. Apologies for Absence**
- 3. Exclusion of Press and Public**
To identify items where resolutions may be moved to exclude the press and public
- 4. Declarations of Interest** (Pages 7 - 10)
Members to declare any interests they have in the business to be considered at the meeting
- 5. Minutes of Previous Meeting** (Pages 11 - 16)
To approve the minutes of the last meeting of the Committee held on 27th September 2022.
- 6. Public Questions and Petitions**
To receive any questions or petitions from members of the public
- 7. Work Programme** (Pages 17 - 32)

Formal Decisions

- 8. Secondary Places Planning - Area 5** (Pages 33 - 42)
- 9. Supported Accommodation Provision** (To Follow)
- 10. Budget Position for Year 2023/24** (To Follow)
- 11. Revenue Budget Monitoring Report - Month 6** (Pages 43 - 52)
Report of Executive Director, Resources

For Information

- 12. Early Years School Readiness Review** (Pages 53 - 128)
- 13. Elective Home Education** (Pages 129 - 136)
- 14. Independent Review Officers Annual Report** (Pages 137 - 148)

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| 15. | Independent Review of Children's Social Care and the Competition and Market Authority (CMA) Children's Social Care Market Study Final Report
For the Committee to note | (Pages 149 -
174) |
| 16. | Minutes of the Education, Children and Families Urgency Sub-Committee held on 29 June and 21 July 2022 | (Pages 175 -
180) |

NOTE: The next meeting of Education, Children and Families Policy Committee will be held on Tuesday 13 December 2022 at 2.00 pm

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ADVICE TO MEMBERS ON DECLARING INTERESTS AT MEETINGS

If you are present at a meeting of the Council, of its Policy Committees, or of any committee, sub-committee, joint committee, or joint sub-committee of the authority, and you have a **Disclosable Pecuniary Interest** (DPI) relating to any business that will be considered at the meeting, you must not:

- participate in any discussion of the business at the meeting, or if you become aware of your Disclosable Pecuniary Interest during the meeting, participate further in any discussion of the business, or
- participate in any vote or further vote taken on the matter at the meeting.

These prohibitions apply to any form of participation, including speaking as a member of the public.

You **must**:

- leave the room (in accordance with the Members' Code of Conduct)
- make a verbal declaration of the existence and nature of any DPI at any meeting at which you are present at which an item of business which affects or relates to the subject matter of that interest is under consideration, at or before the consideration of the item of business or as soon as the interest becomes apparent.
- declare it to the meeting and notify the Council's Monitoring Officer within 28 days, if the DPI is not already registered.

If you have any of the following pecuniary interests, they are your **disclosable pecuniary interests** under the new national rules. You have a pecuniary interest if you, or your spouse or civil partner, have a pecuniary interest.

- Any employment, office, trade, profession or vocation carried on for profit or gain, which you, or your spouse or civil partner undertakes.
- Any payment or provision of any other financial benefit (other than from your council or authority) made or provided within the relevant period* in respect of any expenses incurred by you in carrying out duties as a member, or towards your election expenses. This includes any payment or financial benefit from a trade union within the meaning of the Trade Union and Labour Relations (Consolidation) Act 1992.

*The relevant period is the 12 months ending on the day when you tell the Monitoring Officer about your disclosable pecuniary interests.

- Any contract which is made between you, or your spouse or your civil partner (or a body in which you, or your spouse or your civil partner, has a beneficial interest) and your council or authority –
 - under which goods or services are to be provided or works are to be executed; and
 - which has not been fully discharged.

- Any beneficial interest in land which you, or your spouse or your civil partner, have and which is within the area of your council or authority.
- Any licence (alone or jointly with others) which you, or your spouse or your civil partner, holds to occupy land in the area of your council or authority for a month or longer.
- Any tenancy where (to your knowledge) –
 - the landlord is your council or authority; and
 - the tenant is a body in which you, or your spouse or your civil partner, has a beneficial interest.
- Any beneficial interest which you, or your spouse or your civil partner has in securities of a body where -
 - (a) that body (to your knowledge) has a place of business or land in the area of your council or authority; and
 - (b) either -
 - the total nominal value of the securities exceeds £25,000 or one hundredth of the total issued share capital of that body; or
 - if the share capital of that body is of more than one class, the total nominal value of the shares of any one class in which you, or your spouse or your civil partner, has a beneficial interest exceeds one hundredth of the total issued share capital of that class.

If you attend a meeting at which any item of business is to be considered and you are aware that you have a **personal interest** in the matter which does not amount to a DPI, you must make verbal declaration of the existence and nature of that interest at or before the consideration of the item of business or as soon as the interest becomes apparent. You should leave the room if your continued presence is incompatible with the 7 Principles of Public Life (selflessness; integrity; objectivity; accountability; openness; honesty; and leadership).

You have a personal interest where –

- a decision in relation to that business might reasonably be regarded as affecting the well-being or financial standing (including interests in land and easements over land) of you or a member of your family or a person or an organisation with whom you have a close association to a greater extent than it would affect the majority of the Council Tax payers, ratepayers or inhabitants of the ward or electoral area for which you have been elected or otherwise of the Authority's administrative area, or
- it relates to or is likely to affect any of the interests that are defined as DPIs but are in respect of a member of your family (other than a partner) or a person with whom you have a close association.

Guidance on declarations of interest, incorporating regulations published by the Government in relation to Disclosable Pecuniary Interests, has been circulated to you previously.

You should identify any potential interest you may have relating to business to be considered at the meeting. This will help you and anyone that you ask for advice to fully consider all the circumstances before deciding what action you should take.

In certain circumstances the Council may grant a **dispensation** to permit a Member to take part in the business of the Authority even if the member has a Disclosable Pecuniary Interest relating to that business.

To obtain a dispensation, you must write to the Monitoring Officer at least 48 hours before the meeting in question, explaining why a dispensation is sought and desirable, and specifying the period of time for which it is sought. The Monitoring Officer may consult with the Independent Person or the Council's Standards Committee in relation to a request for dispensation.

Further advice can be obtained from Gillian Duckworth, Director of Legal and Governance on 0114 2734018 or email gillian.duckworth@sheffield.gov.uk.

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Education, Children and Families Policy Committee

Meeting held 27th September 2022

PRESENT: Councillors Dawn Dale (Chair), Mick Rooney (Co-Chair) Brian Holmshaw (Deputy Chair), Mary Lea, Peter Garbutt, Anne Murphy, Colin Ross, Ann Whitaker.

1. WELCOME AND HOUSEKEEPING

2. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

2.1 Apologies were received from Councillor Gail Smith.

3. EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

3.1 The Chair stated that item 8, Budget Proposals 2023/24 would be moved to item 14 as it was a restricted item, and therefore this section of the meeting would be closed to the press and public.

3.2 It was agreed that the public, press and attendees be excluded from the meeting before further discussion takes place on Item 8, Appendix 1 on the grounds that, in view of the nature of the business to be transacted, if those persons were present, there would be a disclosure to them of exempt information as described in paragraph 5 of Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972, as amended

4. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

4.1 Councillor Ann Murphy stated that she was a consultant Social Worker and a rest-bite Foster Carer.

4.2 Councillor Colin Ross stated he was a member of the Education Advisory Board.

5. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

5.1 The minutes of the Education, Children and Families Policy Committee meeting held on the 8th of June 2022 were approved as an accurate record.

6. PUBLIC QUESTIONS AND PETITIONS

6.1 No public questions or petitions were received.

7. WORK PROGRAMME

7.1 Sarah Bennett outlined the purpose of the Work Programme and highlighted changes to the work programme, detailed at the beginning of the document. She asked that the Committee consider whether any further items should be added.

- 7.2 **RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY:** That the Committee's work programme, as set out in Appendix 1, be agreed, including the additions and amendments identified in Part 1 of the report.

8. BUDGET 2023/24

- 8.1 The Committee considered a report of the Director of Children's Services. It set out the budget pressures and risks facing the services which fell under the Education, Children and Families committee area, and began to develop a budget action plan to mitigate these as far as possible. It provided recommendations for approval which would allow the service to contribute to Sheffield City Council's budget pressure. The introduction to the report was provided in open session. When Appendix 1 was discussed the Policy Committee the meeting was closed to the public, press and attendees, as outlined in item 3 – Exclusion of Press and Public.

- 8.2 **RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY:** That the Education, Children and Families Policy Committee: -

- Note the financial pressures 2023/24 detailed within this report.
- Acknowledge the recommendation approved at the Strategy and Resources Committee on 5 July 2022 that "Policy Committees will be asked to develop savings / additional income options that cover their own pressures – in effect cash standstill" and to "require Policy Committees to report at their meetings in September on how they can balance their budgets."
- Note, as this Committee's initial response to the Strategy and Resources Committee's request, the set of budget proposals set out in this report and in appendix 1.
- Note that Officers will now work with Members to consult with relevant stakeholders (including with partners, trades unions and in respect of equalities and climate change) on the proposals in this report so as to inform final budget proposals.
- Note that Officers will work to develop any necessary detailed implementation plans for the proposals in this report so that the proposals, if ultimately approved, can be implemented as planned before or during the 2023/24 financial year.
- Ask to receive a further report in November that will set out the final budget for this Committee following consultation and any adjustments requested by the Strategy and Resources Committee.

8.3 Reasons for Decision

The recommendations put forward in this paper and appendix 1 are recommended for approval on the basis that they : -

- Are consistent with our agreed approach to demand management, sufficiency, and meeting our obligations to provide quality statutory services which meet the needs of the child or young person

- Are consistent with our vision/strategy to provide services and opportunities which support each child and young person within Sheffield to meet their potential.
- Support the ongoing improvement of Education, Children and Family services in Sheffield
- Are guided by an evidence base, benchmarking and/ or trend data which identifies areas of spend where disinvestment, subject to individual review, can most likely be made without detriment

Enable the Council to continue to meet its legal duties.

8.4 Alternatives Considered and Rejected

- 8.4.1 Do nothing - By undertaking none of the proposed actions, we would be unable to contribute to delivering a balanced budget.

9. REVENUE BUDGET MONITORING REPORT, MONTH 4

- 9.1 Ryan Keyworth, Director of Finance and Commercial Services gave an overview of this report. He stated the 2022/23 pay award was a contributing factor in the overspend.
- 9.2 Councillor Dale stated that there would be a future agenda item on Social Work recruitment. She suggested that a working group around this could be formed. She asked that a report on the rate of sickness be included in this.

10. SPECIAL FREE SCHOOL BID TO SUPPORT SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS AND DISABILITY SUFFICIENCY

- 10.1 The Committee considered a report of the Strategic Commissioning Manager seeking approval to submit a joint bid with Barnsley Metropolitan Borough Council, for a new special free school in Sheffield, ahead of the deadline on 21st October 2022.

This school would provide additional special school places for children and young people with needs relating to autism spectrum condition and communication/interaction.

To highlight the wider special educational needs and disability sufficiency position, ahead of a further report at a following committee date on this topic.

- 10.2 **RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY:** That the Education, Children and Families Policy Committee: -

(a) Approval of joint bid with Barnsley Metropolitan Borough Council for new 200 place (100 places for Sheffield) primary-secondary special free school in Sheffield

(b) If a joint bid falls through ahead of the deadline on the 21st October 2022, a Sheffield only bid is submitted instead

(c) The committee endorses the principle of funding any abnormal site costs as a result of a successful bid from the High Needs Capital Allocation

(d) Further report on Special Educational Needs and Disabilities sufficiency to be presented at later committee

10.3 Reasons for Decision

The recommended option will deliver the following outcomes:-

- It is proposed that the joint bid is submitted as a new school will help meet forecast demand. A joint bid maximises chances of success. Through the special free school opportunity, the school can be delivered at a lower capital cost than it would be if reliant on Sheffield funds only
- Intended outcomes include increased availability of special school places, reduced inequalities and reduced reliance on high-cost independent placements.
- It is also proposed that a further special educational needs and disability sufficiency report is presented at a following committee meeting.

10.4 Alternatives Considered and Rejected

10.4.1 Option One: No Bid

Not submitting a bid was considered, however this was discounted due to the level of need that is forecast, the limited existing space that is available, and the opportunity to secure additional capital funding.

10.4.2 Option Two: Sheffield Only Bid

A Sheffield only bid was considered, this would have the benefit of a higher number of places. However, this would also increase costs for the Local Authority. The chances of success of a Sheffield only bid would also appear to be significantly lower than a joint bid with Barnsley.

Therefore, whilst submitting a joint bid is a risk itself, as this has not been done before, it would appear to be a risk worth taking to increase chances of success.

If a joint bid falls through ahead of the deadline on the 21st October, it is proposed that Sheffield only bid is submitted instead.

10.4.3 Option Three: Post-16 Bid

A bid for a special free school to provide post 16 places was considered. However, this bid was not developed as concerns were identified in relation to whether it would be successful.

Concerns included whether the Education Skills Funding Agency would support the bid, as they typically support use and development of relationships with existing post 16 providers, rather than development of new providers.

It is also less clear where the school would fit into Sheffield's post 16 landscape, and more work is needed locally to improve this position. This links to the Accelerator Progress Plan following the local area re-inspection for special educational needs and disabilities in February 2022.

Further development of post 16 will be part of the wider sufficiency plan, presented to committee at a later date.

11. MEDICAL NEEDS POLICY

- 11.1 The Committee considered a report of the Director of Children's Services which presented a policy statement to ensure a good education for children who cannot attend school because of health needs.

- 11.2 **RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY:** That the Education, Children and Families Committee:-

(a) approves the proposed policy statement

11.3 Reasons for Decision

It is a requirement for the local authority to have a policy statement in place. By approving the statement, the local authority will meet this statutory duty.

11.4 Alternatives Considered and Rejected

The Local Authority is required to have a policy statement that is compliant with statutory guidance. The policy articulates practice in place for the local authority to meet its statutory duties.

12. ADOPTION SERVICE ANNUAL REPORTS

- 12.1 Sally Williams was in attendance to provide an overview of the
- 12.2 Councillor Rooney stated that there was a mechanism in place for adopters to raise any issues they might be having. Councillor Dale suggested a small working group could be created to gain feedback from adoptive families on how they felt the experience was going.

13. FOSTERING SERVICE ANNUAL REPORTS

- 13.1 Sally Williams outlined the report.

14. SEND ACCELERATION PLAN

- 14.1 Kevin Straughn was in attendance to outline the SEND Accelerated Progress Plan briefing report.
- 14.2 Councillor Dale stated that she would hope that young people are moved into independent living only when appropriate. Kevin Straughn stated there was a briefing taking place the following day to discuss independent living.
- 14.3 Councillor Lea stated



Report to Education, Children and Families Policy Committee

17th October 2022

Report of: Gillian Duckworth, Director of Legal and Governance

Subject: Committee Work Programme

Author of Report: Fiona Martinez, Principal Democratic Services Officer

Fiona.martinez@sheffield.gov.uk

Summary:

The Committee's Work Programme is attached at Appendix 1 for the Committee's consideration and discussion. This aims to show all known, substantive agenda items for forthcoming meetings of the Committee, to enable this committee, other committees, officers, partners and the public to plan their work with and for the Committee.

Any changes since the Committee's last meeting, including any new items, have been made in consultation with the Co-Chairs, and the document is always considered at the regular pre-meetings to which all Group Spokespersons are invited.

The following potential sources of new items are included in this report, where applicable:

- Questions and petitions from the public, including those referred from Council
- References from Council or other committees (statements formally sent for this committee's attention)
- A list of issues, each with a short summary, which have been identified by the Committee or officers as potential items but which have not yet been scheduled (See Appendix 1)

The Work Programme will remain a live document and will be brought to each Committee meeting.

Recommendations:

1. That the Committee's work programme, as set out in Appendix 1 be agreed, including any additions and amendments identified in Part 1;
2. That consideration be given to the further additions or adjustments to the work programme presented at Part 2 of Appendix 1;
3. That Members give consideration to any further issues to be explored by officers for inclusion in Part 2 of Appendix 1 of the next work programme report, for potential addition to the work programme; and
4. *(Add specific recommended actions for issues requiring a steer from the Committee eg in respect of items identified in Section 2 - referrals from other committees and petitions/questions etc)*

Background Papers: None

Category of Report: Open

COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME

1.0 Prioritisation

1.1 For practical reasons this committee has a limited amount of time each year in which to conduct its formal business. The Committee will need to prioritise firmly in order that formal meetings are used primarily for business requiring formal decisions, or which for other reasons it is felt must be conducted in a formal setting.

1.2 In order to ensure that prioritisation is effectively done, on the basis of evidence and informed advice, Members should usually avoid adding items to the work programme which do not already appear:

- In the draft work programme in Appendix 1 due to the discretion of the chair; or
- within the body of this report accompanied by a suitable amount of information.

2.0 References from Council or other Committees

2.1 Any references sent to this Committee by Council, including any public questions, petitions and motions, or other committees since the last meeting are listed here, with commentary and a proposed course of action, as appropriate:

Issue	<i>Details to be added by PDSO</i>
Referred from	
<i>Details</i>	
<i>Commentary/ Action Proposed</i>	

3.0 Member engagement, learning and policy development outside of Committee

3.1 Subject to the capacity and availability of councillors and officers, there are a range of ways in which Members can explore subjects, monitor information and develop their ideas about forthcoming decisions outside of formal meetings. Appendix 2 is an example 'menu' of some of the ways this could be done. It is entirely appropriate that member development, exploration and policy development should in many cases take place in a private setting, to allow members to learn and formulate a position in a neutral space before bringing the issue into the public domain at a formal meeting.

2.2 Training & Skills Development - Induction programme for this committee.

Title	Description & Format	Date

Appendix 1 – Work Programme

Part 1: Proposed additions and amendments to the work programme since the last meeting:

New Items	Proposed Date	Note
Rescheduled Item	Proposed Date	Note

Part 2: List of other potential items not yet included in the work programme

Issues that have recently been identified by the Committee, its Chair or officers as potential items but have not yet been added to the proposed work programme. If a Councillor raises an idea in a meeting and the committee agrees under recommendation 3 that this should be explored, it will appear either in the work programme or in this section of the report at the committee's next meeting, at the discretion of the Chair.

Topic	Emotional, mental health and wellbeing support for young people.
Description	During a discussion on the Medical Needs Contract, members were keen to have a broader look at the emotional and wellbeing and support available for young people to reduce demand on more 'acute' services – a 'whole system approach' with health, social care and education perspectives.
Lead Officer/s	Director of Integrated Commissioning/Director of Education and Skills/Director of Children and Families
Item suggested by	Education Children and Families Urgency Sub-Committee (21 st July Meeting)
Type of item	Service Performance Monitoring/Briefing/Policy Development
Prior member engagement/development required <i>(with reference to options in Appendix 2)</i>	To be determined
Public Participation/ Engagement approach <i>(with reference to toolkit in Appendix 3)</i>	Sub-Committee members were keen to hear the voice of Looked After Children as part of this.

Lead Officer Commentary/Proposed Action(s)	To be determined
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Part 3: Agenda Items for Forthcoming Meetings

Meeting 3	9 th November	Time				
Topic	Description	Lead Officer/s	Type of item <i>Decision/Referral to decision-maker/Pre-decision (policy development)/Post-decision (service performance/monitoring)</i>	Prior member engagement/development required <i>(with reference to options in Appendix 1)</i>	Public Participation/Engagement approach <i>(with reference to toolkit in Appendix 2)</i>	Final decision-maker (& date) <i>This Cttee/Another Cttee (eg S&R)/Full Council/Officer</i>
Secondary Places Planning – Area 5	Decision required to progress proposal for the area 5 – Manor, Arbourthorne, Darnall.	Cathie Tandy	Decision	Portfolio Briefing – 5 th October		Education, Children and Families
Supported Accommodation provision for children in care and care leavers age 16+	Approval is being sought to extend the current framework to allow for a full commissioning exercise to be undertaken.	Victoria Gibbs/Sally Willoughby	Decision	Portfolio Briefing – 5 th October	Engagement and co-production will be undertaken in the re-commissioning exercise.	
Budget Position for Year 2023/24	To seek the Policy Committee's final agreement to any changes to the proposals presented to the Policy Committee's September meeting;	Ryan Keyworth/Mark Sheikh/Liz Gough	Decision	Portfolio Briefing – 5 th October		Education, Children and Families

Early Years School Readiness Review	Sharing key messages from the review and seek endorsement of the recommendations	Victoria Gibbs/Marie McGreavey	Briefing and Policy Development	Portfolio Briefing – 5 th October	Consultation has taken place with professionals (VCF early years groups, Health Visitors, Midwifery, Early Years staff and providers including childminders) and the public (parents of young children, children with SEND and expectant parents) including targeted focus groups and online survey.	Education, Children and Families
Elective Home Education	Increase during the pandemic of home education. monitor the numbers in the city that are home educated, how home educators are supported, and how we monitor and manage safeguarding for those educated at home.	Tim Armstrong	Briefing	Portfolio Briefing – 5 th October		
Care Review and CME			For noting			
Independent Review Officers Annual Report		Sally Williams				
Standing items	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Public Questions/ Petitions 					

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Budget Monitoring Work Programme 					
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Meeting 4	13th December 2022	Time				
Topic	Description	Lead Officer/s	Type of item <i>Decision/Referral to decision-maker/Pre-decision (policy development)/Post-decision (service performance/monitoring)</i>	Prior member engagement/development required <i>(with reference to options in Appendix 1)</i>	Public Participation/Engagement approach <i>(with reference to toolkit in Appendix 2)</i>	Final decision-maker (& date) <i>This Cttee/Another Cttee (eg S&R)/Full Council/Officer</i>
Children's Sufficiency Strategy	To seek a decision on the approval of the Children's Sufficiency Strategy and duty in relation to Looked After Children.	Victoria Gibbs	Decision		Engagement and co-production will be undertaken with Looked After Children and Care Leavers.	This Committee
Special Sufficiency	Overview of sufficiency plan for special educational needs and disabilities, seeking decision to approve strategic commissioning intentions linked to sufficiency plan.	Matthew Peers	Policy Development / Decision	Portfolio Briefing – 5 th October	Working with VCF Working with stakeholders	Education, Children and Families
Q3 Budget Report	To consider the Children & Families Q3 budget update	Sally Williams	Performance Monitoring			This Committee
Refresher for Great Start in Life Strategy	To inform the Committee of the planned review of the Great Start in Life Strategy in line with the	Victoria Gibbs/Marie McGreavey	Briefing		Engagement and co-production will be undertaken as part of the Strategy	This Committee

	development of Family Hubs.					
UASC	Briefing about the impact of new guidance					
Corporate Parenting Strategy update						
Threshold Document Development						
Review of Learn Sheffield	To consider options and recommendations for the future relationship and any commissioning arrangement with Learn Sheffield, a school company currently commissioned by SCC to deliver statutory school improvement duties, beyond the current contract end in August 2023.	Candi Lawson	Decision	Portfolio Briefing – 5 th October		Education, Children and Families
Mainstream Sufficiency	Overview of 3 yr strategy to ensure sufficient provision across Early years and childcare, Primary, Secondary & Post 16 provision	Cathie Tandy	Policy Development	Portfolio Briefing – 5 th October	Working with stakeholders	Education, Children and Families
Standing items	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Public Questions/ Petitions</i> • <i>Budget Monitoring</i> • <i>Work Programme</i> 					

Meeting 5	31st January 2023	Time				
Topic	Description	Lead Officer/s	Type of item <i>Decision/Referral to decision-maker/Pre-decision (policy development)/Post-decision (service performance/ monitoring)</i>	Prior member engagement/ development required <i>(with reference to options in Appendix 1)</i>	Public Participation/ Engagement approach <i>(with reference to toolkit in Appendix 2)</i>	Final decision-maker (& date) This Cttee/Another Cttee (eg S&R)/Full Council/Officer
Childcare Sufficiency Assessment	To present the findings of the Childcare Sufficiency Strategy and seek approval to publish	Cathie Tandy	Decision		Parents and Childcare providers consulted and information used to inform the report	This Committee
Alternative Provision Free School Bids	Approval of proposed bids for alternative provision free school, deadline 17/2/23	Joe Horobin, Candi Lawson	Decision	Portfolio Briefing	VCF networks Stakeholder groups	This Committee
Youth Justice Annual Plan		Sally Williams/Mark Storf				This Committee
Children's Commissioning Intentions	Approval of commissioning intentions and priorities for Children's Services	Joe Horobin/Victoria Gibbs		Engagement and Co-Production will be planned in relation to the development of the Children's Commissioning Strategy	Education, Children and Families	

Regulation and Ofsted inspection of supported accommodation for 16- and 17-year-olds in care	Briefing on forthcoming legislation.	Joe Horobin/Victoria Gibbs	Briefing Only			This Committee
Contextual Safeguarding Strategy						
School Admission Arrangements for the 2024/25 Academic Year	The Local Authority is responsible for setting admission arrangements for all Community and Voluntary Controlled Schools. It must “Determine” and publish its admission arrangements every year, including the Co-ordinated Admission schemes. There is a requirement to consult on the arrangements once every seven years unless there are significant changes proposed.	John Bigley	Decision	None	It is not proposed to consult on the proposed arrangements publicly as consultation was undertaken for 2023/24 and there are no proposed changes. This is in line with the legal requirement.	Education, Children and Families
Alternative Provision	Policy Committee has requested a detailed look at alternative provision in the City – to include the views of young people.	Andrew Jones	Performance/Policy Development	Initial briefing planned for members in September	tbd	Education, Children and Families
Standing items	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Public Questions/ Petitions</i> 					

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Budget Monitoring</i> • <i>Work Programme</i> 					
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Meeting 6	8 th March 2023	Time				
Topic	Description	Lead Officer/s	Type of item <i>Decision/Referral to decision-maker/Pre-decision (policy development)/Post-decision (service performance/ monitoring)</i>	Prior member engagement/ development required <i>(with reference to options in Appendix 1)</i>	Public Participation/ Engagement approach <i>(with reference to toolkit in Appendix 2)</i>	Final decision-maker (& date) This Cttee/Another Cttee (eg S&R)/Full Council/Officer
Children & Families Q4 Budget Report		Sally Williams				
School Calendar 2024/25	The Local Authority is required to consult annually and determine the school term dates for Community, Voluntary Controlled and Community Special Schools under Section 32 of the Education Act 2022.	John Bigley	Decision	None	Consultation will take place with schools, parents and other parties during the Spring Term 2024.	Education, Children and Families
Standing items	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Public Questions/ Petitions</i> • <i>Budget Monitoring</i> • <i>Work Programme</i> 					

Items which the Committee has agreed to add to an agenda, but for which no date is set.

Topic	Description	Lead Officer/s	Type of item <i>Decision/Referral to decision-maker/Pre-decision (policy development)/Post-decision (service performance/ monitoring)</i>	Prior member engagement/ development required <i>(with reference to options in Appendix 1)</i>	Public Participation/ Engagement approach <i>(with reference to toolkit in Appendix 2)</i>	Final decision-maker (& date) <i>This Cttee/Another Cttee (eg S&R)/Full Council/Officer</i>
Engagement with young people	The Policy Committee is keen to hear from to include a wide range of perspectives eg Youth Cabinet, Young Carers, Children in Care Council – as requested by Policy Committee at June 22 meeting. Officer are working up proposals for a separate session to be held outside the formal schedule of Policy Committee meetings September/October 2022	Chelsea Renehan, Head of Youth Services.	Engagement		Engagement session.	N/A
Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services	To consider how well CAMH services are performing and how well prepared we are for any increase in demand – as requested by Policy Committee at June meeting.	Joe Horobin/Victoria Gibbs	Performance Monitoring	Initial discussion via Portfolio briefing		
Safeguarding Partnership		Sally Williams				

Board Annual Report						
Traditions Safeguarding Developments		Sally Williams				
Harmony Works	As the Harmony Works project develops, the new body that will lead on the project will emerge. SCC/Music Hub will need to work to decide how we are best represented in this structure.	Kim Wilson				Education, Children and Families.

Appendix 2 – Menu of options for member engagement, learning and development prior to formal Committee consideration

Members should give early consideration to the degree of pre-work needed before an item appears on a formal agenda.

All agenda items will anyway be supported by the following:

- Discussion well in advance as part of the work programme item at Pre-agenda meetings. These take place in advance of each formal meeting, before the agenda is published and they consider the full work programme, not just the immediate forthcoming meeting. They include the Chair, Vice Chair and all Group Spokespersons from the committee, with officers
- Discussion and, where required, briefing by officers at pre-committee meetings in advance of each formal meeting, after the agenda is published. These include the Chair, Vice Chair and all Group Spokespersons from the committee, with officers.
- Work Programming items on each formal agenda, as part of an annual and ongoing work programming exercise
- Full officer report on a public agenda, with time for a public discussion in committee
- Officer meetings with Chair & VC as representatives of the committee, to consider addition to the draft work programme, and later to inform the overall development of the issue and report, for the committee's consideration.

The following are examples of some of the optional ways in which the committee may wish to ensure that they are sufficiently engaged and informed prior to taking a public decision on a matter. In all cases the presumption is that these will take place in private, however some meetings could happen in public or eg be reported to the public committee at a later date.

These options are presented in approximately ascending order of the amount of resources needed to deliver them. Members must prioritise carefully, in consultation with officers, which items require what degree of involvement and information in advance of committee meetings, in order that this can be delivered within the officer capacity available.

The majority of items cannot be subject to the more involved options on this list, for reasons of officer capacity.

- Written briefing for the committee or all members (email)
- All-member newsletter (email)
- Requests for information from specific outside bodies etc.
- All-committee briefings (private or, in exceptional cases, in-committee)
- All-member briefing (virtual meeting)
- Facilitated policy development workshop (potential to invite external experts / public, see appendix 2)
- Site visits (including to services of the council)
- Task and Finish group (one at a time, one per cttee)

Furthermore, a range of public participation and engagement options are available to inform Councillors, see appendix 3.

Appendix 3 – Public engagement and participation toolkit

Public Engagement Toolkit

On 23 March 2022 Full Council agreed the following:

A toolkit to be developed for each committee to use when considering its ‘menu of options’ for ensuring the voice of the public has been central to their policy development work. Building on the developing advice from communities and Involve, committees should make sure they have a clear purpose for engagement; actively support diverse communities to engage; match methods to the audience and use a range of methods; build on what’s worked and existing intelligence (SCC and elsewhere); and be very clear to participants on the impact that engagement will have.

The list below builds on the experiences of Scrutiny Committees and latterly the Transitional Committees and will continue to develop. The toolkit includes (but is not be limited to):

- a. Public calls for evidence
- b. Issue-focused workshops with attendees from multiple backgrounds (sometimes known as ‘hackathons’) led by committees
- c. Creative use of online engagement channels
- d. Working with VCF networks (eg including the Sheffield Equality Partnership) to seek views of communities
- e. Co-design events on specific challenges or to support policy development
- f. Citizens assembly style activities
- g. Stakeholder reference groups (standing or one-off)
- h. Committee / small group visits to services
- i. Formal and informal discussion groups
- j. Facilitated communities of interest around each committee (eg a mailing list of self-identified stakeholders and interested parties with regular information about forthcoming decisions and requests for contributions or volunteers for temporary co-option)
- k. Facility for medium-term or issue-by-issue co-option from outside the Council onto Committees or Task and Finish Groups. Co-optees of this sort at Policy Committees would be non-voting.

This public engagement toolkit is intended to be a quick ‘how-to’ guide for Members and officers to use when undertaking participatory activity through committees.

It will provide an overview of the options available, including the above list, and cover:

- How to focus on purpose and who we are trying to reach
- When to use and when not to use different methods
- How to plan well and be clear to citizens what impact their voice will have
- How to manage costs, timescales, scale.

There is an expectation that Members and Officers will be giving strong consideration to the public participation and engagement options for each item on a committee’s work programme, with reference to the above list a-k.

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Report to Policy Committee

Author/Lead Officer of Report: Joe Horobin
Director of Integrated Commissioning

Tel: 2735891

Report of: Andrew Jones

Report to: Education, Children & Families Committee

Date of Decision: 9/11/2022

Subject: Secondary Sufficiency in Planning Area 5: expansion proposal

Has an Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) been undertaken? Yes ☒ No ☐

If YES, what EIA reference number has it been given? (1263)

Has appropriate consultation taken place? Yes ☒ No ☐

Has a Climate Impact Assessment (CIA) been undertaken? Yes ☒ No ☐

Does the report contain confidential or exempt information? Yes ☐ No ☒

If YES, give details as to whether the exemption applies to the full report / part of the report and/or appendices and complete below:-

*"The (**report/appendix**) is not for publication because it contains exempt information under Paragraph (**insert relevant paragraph number**) of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended)."*

Purpose of Report:

In order to fulfil our statutory duty we are seeking Committee agreement to proceed with secondary school expansion plans in Planning Area 5 to address the forecast deficit of places in 2023/24.

Recommendations:

We recommend that the Committee:

- 1) Agrees the proposed secondary school expansion plans in Planning Area 5.
This will enable the Local Authority to fulfil its statutory duty and ensure sufficient secondary places are available to meet the forecast demand in 2023/24.
- 2) Agrees for up to £5.5m of the remaining balance of Basic Need funding to be utilised to fund the proposed expansions.

Background Papers:

Annex 1: detailed options appraisal for addressing the secondary deficits from 2023/24 onwards

Lead Officer to complete:-		
1	I have consulted the relevant departments in respect of any relevant implications indicated on the Statutory and Council Policy Checklist, and comments have been incorporated / additional forms completed / EIA completed, where required.	Finance: Damian Watkinson
		Legal: Nadine Wynter
		Equalities & Consultation: Bashir Khan
		Climate: Jessica Rick
	<i>Legal, financial/commercial and equalities implications must be included within the report and the name of the officer consulted must be included above.</i>	
2	SLB member who approved submission:	Andrew Jones
3	Committee Chair consulted:	Councillor Mick Rooney, Councillor Dawn Dale, Councillor Brian Holmshaw
4	I confirm that all necessary approval has been obtained in respect of the implications indicated on the Statutory and Council Policy Checklist and that the report has been approved for submission to the Committee by the SLB member indicated at 2. In addition, any additional forms have been completed and signed off as required at 1.	
	Lead Officer Name: Sam Martin	Job Title: Head of Commissioning
	Date: 1/11/2022	

1. PROPOSAL

- 1.1 Under section 14 of the Education Act 1996, the local authority has a statutory duty to provide sufficient school places for all pupils within its area. There are 7 planning areas in the city. Planning area 5 in the east of the city is forecast to see a deficit in secondary places in 2023/24 due to new housing and population growth.
- 1.2 Following the national picture, births in Sheffield rose by 25% between 2002 and 2012. This larger birth cohort has moved its way through the early years & primary sector and is now in the secondary sector. Throughout this period of growth, places have been added through the primary and secondary sector to manage the larger birth cohort.
- 1.3 The current city-wide picture for secondary school places forecasts a potential deficit of places across the city from 2020-2024, reaching a high point in 2023/24 after which a surplus is forecast to develop. Through the Local Authority's work with the school sector, a subgroup of the Secondary Heads Partnership was set up to create a Working Group to explore options moving forward. There was an agreement that a 'hybrid model' be implemented to address the citywide peak and demand in specific areas which was a combination of permanent and temporary expansions.

Planning to meet Demand

- 1.4 Current data forecasts a deficit of between 75-90 secondary places or 2.5 to 3.0 Forms of Entry specifically within Planning Area 5. Pressure in the area will remain high and above capacity for several years until another peak year in 2027/28. The deficits in Planning Area 5 must be addressed to ensure we meet city-wide demand.
- 1.5 Capital Delivery Service undertook desktop surveys of 3 schools in Planning Area 5 to assess potential capacity to expand to meet the demand. A fourth school, which is also in Planning Area 5, was excluded from the capacity appraisals because it is a faith school and has a city-wide intake rather than a local catchment.
- 1.6 Meetings with the three remaining schools were held in July 2022 and all schools agreed in principle to work with the Local Authority to help address the deficit places. As a result, site-based capacity assessments of internal and external space have been undertaken. Findings of site based capacity assessments of the 3 schools established that:
 1. For Oasis Academy Don Valley, there is insufficient internal and limited external capacity to expand.
 2. Both Sheffield Park and Sheffield Springs academies do have external capacity to expand and could accommodate up to 3 Forms of Entry (90 pupils) expansion between them. Potential options include:

- i) Three Forms of Entry (90 pupils) mobile expansion on one site for 2023/24.
 - ii) Two Forms of Entry (60 pupils) mobile expansion on Sheffield Springs and One Form of Entry (30 pupils) mobile expansion on Sheffield Park for 2023/24.
 - iii) Two Forms of Entry (60 pupils) mobile expansion on Sheffield Park and One Form of Entry (30 pupils) permanent expansion (created via refurbishment of existing premises) at Sheffield Springs for 2023/24.
- 1.7 Any expansions as outlined above are subject to an approvals process by the schools. In addition, we need to await the results of site based feasibility studies before proceeding with one of the above options.
- 1.8 Officers have been developing contingency plans which might be brought into play should expansions at Sheffield Park and Sheffield Springs not be agreed. These include working with schools outside of Planning Area 5 to seek agreement for expansions.
- 1.9 Agreement from Committee for the expansions to proceed at this point in the planning cycle (within the outlined financial envelope) will expedite the procurement process. We are facing extremely tight deadlines given the need to ensure the mobiles are on site by August 2023.

Planning Area 5 Expansion Proposal

- 1.10 In order to realise the necessary expansion plans for Planning Area 5 the Local Authority's proposal, subject to Committee approval, is for the following 10 key stages to be implemented:
- Stage 1: Negotiations with Sheffield Park & Sheffield Springs to reach agreement on which site is best placed to expand or whether both sites should expand.
 - Stage 2: Site feasibilities conducted by Capital Delivery Service
 - Stage 3: Statutory Consultation undertaken on proposed expansions.
 - Stage 4: Tendering Process for mobiles and/or refurbishment. Contract will not be awarded until Committee approval is secured.
 - Stage 5: Planning Permission commences.
 - Stage 6: Significant Change Business Case. Schools/Trust to submit.
 - Stage 7: Regional Schools Commissioner approval to expand
 - Stage 8: Planning Permission decision
 - Stage 9: If Planning Permission is granted, Procurement of mobiles. Contract award for mobiles.
 - Stage 10: Installation

2. HOW DOES THIS DECISION CONTRIBUTE ?

- 2.1 As part of laying the foundations for our future, we want pupils in Sheffield to have access to a wide range of educational opportunities to achieve their full potential as set out in the 'Our Sheffield: One Year Plan.' Working alongside city partners such as schools and Trusts, with ambition, openness and purpose, towards a bright future for our city and its pupils.
- 2.2 The proposals will ensure that the Local Authority meets its statutory duties under the Education Act to provide sufficient school places, promote parental choice, diversity and fair access. Ensuring that there are enough school places for every school-age child is a fundamental responsibility of local government and is essential to the Sheffield City Council's focus on enabling children to have a great start in life, achieve their full potential, and contribute to the success of the city. At the heart of the vision for increasing school places in Sheffield is the Council's role in guaranteeing excellent education outcomes and equitable access for all.
- 2.3 The vision is for all Sheffield families to have access to great, inclusive schools in every area of the city. This means schools ensuring each child reaches their potential, equal access for the most vulnerable children, schools at the heart of their communities, and getting the best value from all funding opportunities. By expanding the two schools, the plan proposed would provide sufficient secondary places for the North East of Sheffield without creating over capacity within the school system.

3. HAS THERE BEEN ANY CONSULTATION?

- 3.1 The Local Authority has engaged in an informal consultation with both schools. Should a decision be taken by Members that the schools within Planning Area 5 should be expanded, a formal statutory consultation will take place where one is needed as part of any statutory process. Pupils, parents, local community and other parties potentially impacted by expansion proposals, (including other schools in the area) will be consulted. This is subject to the Department for Education's significant change expansion threshold being met. Should the proposal proceed, then all required steps will be taken to ensure that all relevant stakeholders are consulted and any equality related needs to fully access the consultation are met.

4. RISK ANALYSIS AND IMPLICATIONS OF THE DECISION

4.1 Equality Implications

4.1.1 Equality of Opportunity Implications

- 4.1.2 Decisions need to take into account the requirements of the Public Sector Equality Duty contained in Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010. This is the duty to have due regard to the need to:

- eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under the Act

- advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it
- foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it

4.1.3 The Equality Act 2010 identifies the following groups as a protected characteristic: age; disability; gender reassignment; marriage and civil partnership; pregnancy and maternity; race; religion or belief; sex and sexual orientation.

4.1.4 An Equality Impact Assessment has been carried out and highlights that typically schools within Planning Area 5 are characterised by deprivation and a higher proportion of Black and Minority Ethnic population. Both schools serve an area of disadvantage which is above the national average. The proportion of pupils who are believed to speak English as an additional language is well above the national average for secondary schools. The proportion of students known to be eligible for the pupil premium is also well above average. If additional places were created to address the rising demand expansion could further increase the diversity of pupils and help reduce socio-economic divide.

4.1.5 Sheffield Park and Sheffield Springs are in Locality C which has 63 secondary pupils with an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) which is 1.4% of the total secondary student population in that locality, and 501 secondary pupils with Special Education Needs (SEN) support which is 11.3% of the total secondary student population in that locality (source: SCC 2022).

4.2 Finance Implications

4.2.1 The council has now received details of its Basic Need Funding Allocation (Central Government Funds for the creation of School Places) up to 2024/25, these total £9.8m. Existing commitments from this and balance brought forward from previous years leaves £5.5m available for investment.

4.2.2 The costs associated with the proposed expansions in Planning Area 5 will be met from this remaining balance. Full costs of the schemes will only be able to be calculated when a decision on the preferred solution is reached. However, further expansions will be required in this planning area in future years to meet another expected bulge in 2027/28. Indications from discussions with DfE are that additional Basic Need funding may be available from 2025/26 to meet the cost of this. Should development of these places need to commence before funding announcements from the DfE, corporate funds may be required for cash flow at initial stages. However, if required this will be subject of a separate decision.

4.2.3 Schools will be allocated any funding for growth in line with the relevant financial year's Growth Funding Policy, subject to any changes in national guidance and legislation surrounding The Schools and Early Years Funding Regulations.

4.3 Legal Implications

- 4.3.1 The proposal outlined in this report will assist the Council in meeting its statutory duty to secure sufficient secondary school places under section 14 of the Education Act 1996. Also, the Department for Education has a strong expectation that academy trusts will support LAs to meet their sufficiency duty by providing additional places where they are needed. All proposals outlined in this report would be subject to consultation and would follow the relevant statutory process and approval route. This will include the publication of statutory proposals relating to the changes as part of the consultation process. Any legal implications will be considered at that time.

4.4 Climate Implications

- 4.4.1 An initial Climate Impact Assessment has been undertaken. Following site feasibilities, a full Climate Impact Assessment will be undertaken once a final agreement on any mobile or building refurbishment has been received.

4.5 Other Implications

- 4.5.1 No further implications have been identified.

5. **ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED**

- 5.1 A detailed Options Appraisal was undertaken to consider alternative options to help address the secondary deficits from 2023/24 onwards. Please see **Annex 1**.

6. **REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 6.1 The proposed expansions in Planning Area 5 will contribute to:
- Need for places: without additional places in the area, the impact on families of not getting a local place will be significant as well as the impact on neighbouring schools.
 - Children's outcomes: the standard of education that are provided at the two schools is of a good quality – both schools are rated by Ofsted as "Good."
 - Equality: the catchment area is characterised by deprivation and a higher proportion of Black and Minority Ethnic population. By increasing places at these two schools the needs of all children are met, in particular the needs of more vulnerable children and families located in the city.

Annex 1 – detailed options appraisal for addressing the secondary deficits from 2023/24 (options identified may be used in isolation/in conjunction with one another to provide an overall solution)

Option 1: Utilise existing space within school estate.

Assumptions: Schools with additional internal capacity agree for this to be utilised.

Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Low cost solution – utilise existing space within school estate. Could provide some additional places that meet some of the Year 7 demand in the short term Limited capital required compared to a permanent solution/mobiles Utilisation of existing space within existing buildings – less disruption for pupils & staff 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Risk that the Local Authority will still be unable to fulfil its statutory duties This solution alone will not provide the required number of places in the longer term (2024/25 onwards)
Opportunities	Threats
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> May provide a flexible solution that meets some of the need of Year 7 in the short term 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Due to the significant number of new homes built or to be built in the area, a permanent solution may be required within Planning Area 5 to accommodate the potential number of pupils which may arise due to new housing Unattractive option for schools and may be rejected as an option by the schools themselves – schools may not welcome an external body reviewing their curriculum and timetabling

Option 2: Refurbishment of spaces within schools to create additional classroom space.

Assumptions: Local Authority agrees capital costs, schools agree to remodelling of school spaces

Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Low cost solution – cost of refurbishment only Could provide additional places that meet some of the Year 7 demand in the short term, particularly if multiple schools involved Non-teaching space can be converted to classroom space within a short period of time Smaller amount of capital required compared to a permanent solution 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Risk that the Local Authority will still be unable to fulfil its statutory duties – remodelling of spaces is not likely to provide the required places to meet demand. This solution alone may not provide the required number of places
Opportunities	Threats
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> May provide a flexible solution that meets some of the Year 7 demand in the short term Remodelled spaces can be used flexibly to meet demand in future 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Due to the significant number of new homes built or to be built in the area, a permanent solution may end up being required within Planning Area 5 to accommodate the potential number of pupils which may arise due to the new housing Capital approval may prove challenging due to pressure on Basic Need funding

Option 3: Mobile classrooms

Assumptions: Local Authority agrees capital costs involved, schools agree to have mobiles. Mobiles accommodate minimum of 2 Forms of Entry (60 pupils) and potentially 3 Forms of Entry (90 pupils).

Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lower cost solution than a permanent expansion. • Meets a temporary need for 2023/24 • Provides a solution in the short term and reduces the threat of overcapacity in later years. • Smaller amount of capital required initially compared to a permanent solution • Mobiles can be erected within a short period of time 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • While initial cost is smaller than a permanent expansion, keeping the mobiles on site while the year groups move through the school can become costly (e.g. initial cost approx. £330k and 2-year rent of £200k) • Risk that the Local Authority will still be unable to fulfil its statutory duties – if only proceed with mobiles which accommodate 2 Forms of Entry it will not meet the required places, negotiations will still be required with Planning Area 5 schools to go above Pupil Admission Number to address the remaining 1 Form of Entry deficit • Any temporary structure creates some problems on a school site and can become a fixture for many years • Health & Safety concerns around overall building capacity even with mobiles – limited ancillary spaces (Hall, dining, corridors etc) • Managing expectations and reducing capacity in the future may become difficult if demand keeps increasing
Opportunities	Threats
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provides a flexible solution that, providing approval is given for a triple mobile (90 pupils), would meet the Year 7 demand in the short term. • Potential for school(s) to support additional (proportionate) Post 16 pupils including SEND pupils. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Due to the significant number of new homes built or to be built in the area, a permanent solution may end up being required within Planning Area 5 to accommodate the potential number of pupils which may arise due to the new housing • Unattractive option for schools and may be rejected as an option by the schools themselves – discussions and negotiations with selected schools to erect mobiles on school site is key • Resistance from local community to erect mobiles • Capital approval may prove challenging due to pressure on Basic Need funding

Option 4: Altering of catchment areas to give Planning Area 4 schools joint catchment status for pupils living in Planning Area 5. *Assumptions: Schools are their own Admissions authority and will have to agree and initiate consultations.*

Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Could provide additional places that meets some of the Year 7 demand in the long term • Does not require any capital investment • Surpluses in Planning Area 4 after the 2023/24 peak partly managed by having joint catchment status of Planning Area 5 pupils 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does not create the additional places required in the short-term • This would require Local Authority resources to support, where resource is not available • Requires full engagement of all schools/ Academies. Requires a coordinated approach to Statutory Consultation & the legal process
Opportunities	Threats

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • May provide a flexible solution that meets some of the need of Year 7 Planning Area 5 pupils in the long term • If the provision was offered, this could meet the needs from the city centre and surrounding area without the need to change catchments significantly 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A desire to preserve existing catchments due to maintaining very close working relationships which have been built up over time with feeder schools • This would also take too long for the peak in 2023/24 • A change in catchment could destabilise current schools if not carefully planned
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Option 5: Permanent Expansion

Assumptions: Capital funding available, chosen school(s) agrees to expand.

Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Additional places created to meet demand from local pupils but only in the longer term (2025/26 onwards) • Meets parental choice • Allows investment over time to ensure quality • Allocating additional space to high needs provision in the future when numbers begin to fall • If housing demand materialises then capacity is available at a local school 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Budget pressures & unknown elements such as PFI, ground conditions, planning approval etc means that a permanent expansion cannot be completed in time for the first bulge year in 2023/24 • Market pressures – rising inflation, labour shortages & impact from Brexit has made lead times for construction longer • Future focus e.g. SEND / integrated provision, might not be located in the areas where it is needed most • Creates over capacity in the system when numbers start to fall again post 2032
Opportunities	Threats
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Opportunity for alternative use once numbers begin to fall e.g. some form of specialist SEND/integrated provision, alternative provision etc. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There could be damage to other schools in other parts of the city after the peak demand. It will lead to failing schools and schools that struggle financially in other parts of the city (i.e. Planning Area 4) • Could destabilise existing school numbers. • Capital pressures

Option 6: Holding Year 6 pupils back within their primary school for 1 year (utilisation of spaces from primary surpluses). Pupils to be taught Year 7 curriculum but within their primary school. *Assumptions: Schools are their own Admissions authority and therefore have to agree to the arrangements, some capital investment may be required.*

Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Could provide additional places that meets some of the Year 7 demand in the short term as primary sector is showing surpluses 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • May not work practically or financially • Parental complaints • Pupils do not gain the 'secondary' experience/environment until a year after some of their peers • This would require Local Authority resources to support, where resource is not available • Would require full engagement of all primary schools and secondary schools in Planning Area 5 to take forward a coordinated approach.
Opportunities	Threats
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • May provide a flexible solution that meets some of the need of Year 7 Planning Area 5 pupils in the short term 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parental complaints and media exposure • This could destabilise current schools planning, operation and curriculum if not carefully planned



Report to Policy Committee

Author/Lead Officer of Report: Ryan Keyworth,
Director of Finance and Commercial Services

Tel: +44 114 474 1438

Report of: Ryan Keyworth
Report to: Education, Children & Families Committee
Date of Decision: 9th November 2022
Subject: Month 6 Monitoring

Has an Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) been undertaken?	Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>	No	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
If YES, what EIA reference number has it been given? <i>(Insert reference number)</i>				
Has appropriate consultation taken place?	Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>	No	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Has a Climate Impact Assessment (CIA) been undertaken?	Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>	No	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Does the report contain confidential or exempt information?	Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>	No	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
If YES, give details as to whether the exemption applies to the full report / part of the report and/or appendices and complete below:- <i>"The (report/appendix) is not for publication because it contains exempt information under Paragraph (insert relevant paragraph number) of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended)."</i>				

Purpose of Report:

This report brings the Committee up to date with the Council's financial position as at Month 6 2022/23

Recommendations:

The Committee is recommended to:

1. Note the Council's financial position as at the end of September 2022 (month 6).

Background Papers:

[2022/23 Revenue Budget](#)

Lead Officer to complete: -		
1	I have consulted the relevant departments in respect of any relevant implications indicated on the Statutory and Council Policy Checklist, and comments have been incorporated / additional forms completed / EIA completed, where required.	<div>Finance: <i>Ryan Keyworth, Director of Finance and Commercial Services</i></div> <div>Legal: <i>Sarah Bennett, Assistant Director, Legal and Governance</i></div> <div>Equalities & Consultation: <i>James Henderson, Director of Policy, Performance and Communications</i></div> <div>Climate: <i>n/a</i></div>
	<i>Legal, financial/commercial and equalities implications must be included within the report and the name of the officer consulted must be included above.</i>	
2	EMT member who approved submission:	<i>Eugene Walker</i>
3	Committee Chair consulted:	<i>Cllr Bryan Lodge</i>
4	I confirm that all necessary approval has been obtained in respect of the implications indicated on the Statutory and Council Policy Checklist and that the report has been approved for submission to the Committee by the EMT member indicated at 2. In addition, any additional forms have been completed and signed off as required at 1.	
	Lead Officer Name: <i>Ryan Keyworth</i> <i>Jane Wilby</i>	Job Title: <i>Director of Finance and Commercial Services</i> <i>Head of Accounting</i>
	Date: 31 st October 2022	

1. PROPOSAL

- 1.1 This report sets out the 2022/23 Month 6 financial monitoring position for the Council overall (1.2); by committee (1.3); and for the Education, Children & Families Committee (1.4).

1.2 Council Portfolio Month 6 2022/23

- 1.2.1 The Council is forecasting a £18.6m overspend against the 2022/23 budget as at month 6.


Full Year £m	Outturn	Budget	Variance
Corporate	(464.6)	(463.2)	(1.4)
City Futures	46.7	46.8	(0.1)
Operational Services	113.3	113.4	(0.1)
People	313.5	295.9	17.6
Policy, Performance Comms	3.2	2.9	0.4
Resources	6.4	4.2	2.2
Total	18.6	(0.0)	18.6

- 1.2.2 This overspend is due to a combination of agreed Budget Implementation Plans ("BIPs") not being fully implemented and ongoing cost / demand pressures that are partially offset by one-off savings.

Full Year Variance £m	One-off	BIPs	Trend	Total Variance
Corporate	0.0	0.0	(1.4)	(1.4)
City Futures	(0.1)	0.0	(0.0)	(0.1)
Operational Services	(5.8)	3.2	2.6	(0.1)
People	(0.4)	14.2	3.8	17.6
Policy, Performance Comms	(0.1)	0.3	0.2	0.4
Resources	(0.7)	1.7	1.3	2.2
Total	(7.1)	19.3	6.3	18.6

- 1.2.3 In 2021/22, the Council set aside £70m of reserves to manage the financial risks associated with delivering a balanced budget position. In 21/22, the council overspent by £19.8m which was drawn from this pool, a further £15m was used to balance the 22/23 budget and current forecast overspend at M6 is set to be £18.6m leaving a remaining risk allocation of £16.7m

	£m	
Allocated reserves	70.0	
21/22 Budget overspend	19.8	
22/23 Base budget committed	15.0	
22/23 BIP shortfall	19.3	
22/23 pressures	6.3	
22/23 in year mitigations	(7.1)	
Reserves used @ M6	53.3	
Remaining reserves	16.7	



1.3 Committee Financial Position

1.3.1 Overall Position - £18.6m overspend at Month 6

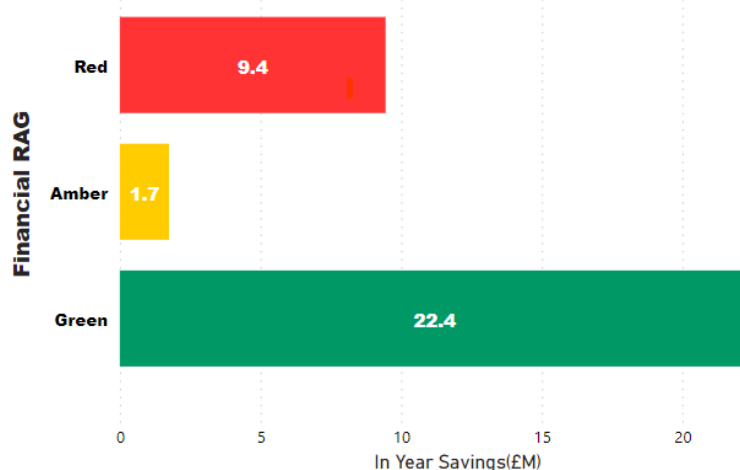
There is a £11.8m overspend in the Adult Health and Social Care Committee and a £6.5m overspend in the Education, Children and Families Committee	Full Year Forecast £m @ Month 6	Outturn	Budget	Variance
	Adult Health & Social Care	164.4	152.5	11.8
	Education, Children & Families	135.2	128.6	6.5
	Housing	8.6	8.8	(0.1)
	Transport, Regeneration & Climate	41.3	41.9	(0.6)
	Economic Development & Skills	11.0	11.0	(0.0)
	Waste & Street Scene	54.4	54.7	(0.3)
	Communities Parks and Leisure	44.9	45.4	(0.5)
	Strategy & Resources	(441.2)	(442.9)	1.7
	Total	18.6	(0.0)	18.6

Most of the full year forecast overspend is attributable to shortfalls in Budget Implementation Plans (BIPs) delivery	Variance Analysis £m @ Month 6	One-off	BIPs	Trend	Total Variance
	Adult Health & Social Care	(0.5)	8.1	4.2	11.8
	Education, Children & Families	0.6	6.0	(0.1)	6.5
	Housing	0.0	0.0	(0.1)	(0.1)
	Transport, Regen & Climate	(2.1)	2.1	(0.6)	(0.6)
	Economic Dev't & Skills	(0.1)	0.0	0.1	(0.0)
	Waste & Street Scene	(3.2)	0.4	2.6	(0.3)
	Communities Parks & Leisure	(0.8)	0.5	(0.2)	(0.5)
	Strategy & Resources	(1.0)	2.2	0.6	1.7
	Total	(7.1)	19.3	6.3	18.6

£6.3m of one-off savings are mitigating part of the ongoing overspend	Contributions from provisions for energy and waste inflation mitigate the in-year impact of rising baseline costs. These are one-off contributions that will not help our position in 23/24 as the trend continues. The government's recent announcement on the energy price cap only gives us protection on current rates until the end of the financial year. Currently, the best open market prices we are able to achieve for 1 April 2023 onwards results in a doubling in the unit price of energy that we will face.
--	--

Balancing the 22/23 budget was only possible with £53m of BIPs, £33m are reported as deliverable in year	Budget Savings Delivery Forecast @M6 £m	Total Savings 22/23	Deliverable in year	FY Variance
	People	37.7	23.5	14.2
	Operational Services	7.1	4.0	3.1
	PPC	1.2	1.0	0.2
	Resources	6.7	5.0	1.7
	Total	52.7	33.4	19.3

Focus must be on delivering BIPs in 22/23 and preventing the budget gap from widening	Of the £33m BIPs forecast as being deliverable, £9.4m are rated red, which indicates considerable risk that these will not be delivered in full which would increase the existing forecast overspend.
--	---



Of the £19.3m savings that are forecast to be undelivered this year, some can be delivered next financial year. It is estimated that £12m of this year's undelivered savings will still be unachievable in 23/24 and form part of the baseline pressures captured in the draft medium term financial analysis presented to the Strategy and Resources Committee on 5th July 2022.

Adult Health and Social Care are forecast to overspend by £11.8m

The high cost of packages of care put in place during covid has increased our baseline costs into 22/23. Work is underway as part of an investment plan with additional resource to tackle the underlying issues although recruitment issues are impacting our ability to deliver.

Education, Children and Families are forecast to overspend by £6.5m

Forecast under-delivery of budget implementation plans in the service are the main cause of overspends; plans to reduce staffing and increase income from Health are looking unlikely and the residential children's home strategy looks unlikely to deliver financial benefits.

The committee position improved in M6 by £0.8m due to an additional grant contribution of £0.5m for Household Support mitigating an overspend in this area alongside reductions to staffing forecasts.

1.4 **Education, Children & Families Committee - £6.5m overspend at Month 6**

The Education, Children & Families General Fund is overspending by £6.5m, made up of a shortfall of savings delivery offset by staffing vacancies.	Full Year Forecast £m @ Month 6	Outturn	Budget	Variance
	Children & Families Education & Skills (Access and Inclusion; Business Support; Operational and Portfolio Wide Budgets; School Budgets; Schools and Learning; SEN, EMTAS)	115.2	109.1	6.1
	Integrated Commissioning (Commissioning; Children's Public Health; Early Help and Prevention)	7.5	6.9	0.6
	Total	135.2	128.6	6.5
The main cause of the overspend is under delivery of Budget Implementation Plans (BIPs)	Variance Analysis £m @ Month 6	One-off	BIPs	Trend
	Children & Families Education & Skills (Access and Inclusion; Business Support; Operational and Portfolio Wide Budgets; School Budgets; Schools and Learning; SEN, EMTAS)	0.6	5.4	0.2
	Integrated Commissioning	0.0	0.7	(0.1)
	Total	0.6	6.0	(0.1)
The impact of the proposed pay offer creates an additional £1m pressure to the committee	The proposed pay award of £1,925 flat rate per employee has been factored into forecasts in M4. The proposal leaves an additional pressure of £1m for the EC&F Committee.			
	It should be noted that the pay offer cost is an initial indicative estimate which will require further work to fully understand the actual impact on each service and is pending agreement with Unions. A decision is expected to be made by the end of October 2022.			
The position in Children's & Families improved from M5 to M6 by £0.9m	The forecast outturn at M6 is £0.9m better in Children's & Families, there have been improvements to the outturn for:			
	1) Household support grant (£0.5m) one off contribution towards S17 payments ¹			
	2) Reductions to forecast growth in staffing/other revisions to staffing forecasts of (£0.6m)			

¹ Section 17 of the Children Act 1989 imposes a general duty on local authorities to safeguard and promote the welfare of "children in need" in their area. To fulfil this duty section 17 gives local authorities the power to provide support, including accommodation and financial subsistence to families with "children in need", even if they have no recourse to public funds. The power under section 17 can be used to support the family as a whole and to promote the upbringing of the child within the family unit.

- 3) (£0.1m) reduced costs for Unaccompanied Asylum Seeker Children which now has a shortfall of less than £0.1m.

These improvements are partly offset by continuation of income reductions at Aldine House secure residential unit due to staffing capacity of £0.5m with income assumed back to usual levels from January 23.

	£m
M5 Committee Overspend	7.4
Household support grant	(0.5)
Reduction to staff forecast	(0.6)
Unaccompanied Asylum seeker Children	(0.1)
Other improvements	(0.2)
Aldine House Income	0.5
M6 Committee Overspend	6.5

Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) is overspending by £2.3m	DSG Full Year Forecast £m @ Month 6	Outturn	Budget	Variance
	Children & Families	6.1	6.3	(0.1)
	Community Services	0.6	0.6	0.0
	Education & Skills	214.0	211.6	2.4
	Integrated Commissioning	9.5	9.4	0.0
	Total	230.2	227.9	2.3

Rising cost of placements in Special Educational Needs (SEN) and associated costs are the cause of the overspend in this area.

Plans to reduce business support staffing have been delayed with costs offset by difficulties in recruiting social workers	<p>£0.7m of the BIP shortfall relates to reduction in business support staffing linked to the investment in support workers in Fieldwork not happening as planned.</p> <p>Difficulties in recruiting Fieldwork staff is resulting in a £1.5m underspend which is currently helping to offset the BIP shortfalls.</p> <p>There are £0.6m other staff related savings forecast not to be delivered where it is assumed that it will not be possible to replace agency with permanent staffing.</p>
The residential strategy (c£2.7m savings) requires completion of a business case and will not be delivered this year	<p>The £2m saving relating to a new secure unit is a longer term saving requiring capital and planning approvals to be in place before building/renovations would be able to commence.</p> <p>The work done to date indicates that this is no longer a viable proposal due to the lack of available external funding and the high costs of developing a secure facility which is not supported by a sound business case.</p> <p>The existing secure unit is now forecasting an income shortfall of £1m due to capacity restrictions caused by staffing shortages. There are risks around when this may be resolved but this is a one-off issue with the forecast assuming normal income levels from January 2023 in line with staffing assumptions.</p>

£1.4m savings from contributions from Health is not deliverable this year	Discussions have begun with Health partners, but no firm agreement is in place therefore this saving will not be delivered this year. This is reflected in the outturn position and is likely to continue as an underlying pressure in the budget until an agreement is formalised.
Direct Payments, Family Time, Non-staffing Fieldwork (NRTPF/S17) have a combined overspend of £1.4m partly offset by one-off income.	<p>The direct payments and short breaks budgets are forecast to overspend by £0.5m (consistent with growth observed in 21/22).</p> <p>The Family Time budget is £0.2m overspent with the current staffing forecast being higher than planned.</p> <p>Non-staffing Fieldwork/NRTPF budget is £0.7m overspent. The forecast has continued to rise this year and is broadly based on M1-4 trends. A (£0.5m) one off contribution from Household Support Grant has been made towards S17 payments.</p> <p>These areas need to be closely reviewed to confirm forecast accuracy, understand reasons behind the overspends and explore any mitigating action available.</p>

2. HOW DOES THIS DECISION CONTRIBUTE?

- 2.1 The recommendations in this report are that each Policy Committee undertakes any work required to both balance their 2022/23 budget and prepare for the 2023/24 budget.

3. HAS THERE BEEN ANY CONSULTATION?

- 3.1 There has been no consultation on this report, however, it is anticipated that the budget process itself will involve significant consultation as the Policy Committees develop their budget proposals

4. RISK ANALYSIS AND IMPLICATIONS OF THE DECISION

4.1 Equality Implications

- 4.1.1 There are no direct equality implications arising from this report. It is expected that individual Committees will use equality impact analyses as a basis for the development of their budget proposals in due course.

4.2 Financial and Commercial Implications

- 4.2.1 There are no direct financial implications from this report.

4.3 Legal Implications

- 4.3.1 Under section 25 of the Local Government Act 2003, the Chief Finance Officer of an authority is required to report on the following matters:

- the robustness of the estimates made for the purposes of determining its budget requirement for the forthcoming year; and
- the adequacy of the proposed financial reserves.

- 4.3.2 There is also a requirement for the authority to have regard to the report of the Chief Finance Officer when making decisions on its budget requirement and level of financial reserves.

- 4.3.3 By the law, the Council must set and deliver a balanced budget, which is a financial plan based on sound assumptions which shows how income will equal spend over the short- and medium-term. This can take into account deliverable cost savings and/or local income growth strategies as well as useable reserves. However, a budget will not be balanced where it reduces reserves to unacceptably low levels and regard must be had to any report of the Chief Finance Officer on the required level of reserves under section 25 of the Local Government Act 2003, which sets obligations of adequacy on controlled reserves.

4.4 Climate Implications

- 4.4.1 There are no direct climate implications arising from this report. It is expected that individual Committees will consider climate implications as they develop their budget proposals in due course.

4.4 Other Implications

4.4.1 No direct implication

5. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED

5.1 The Council is required to both set a balance budget and to ensure that in-year income and expenditure are balanced. No other alternatives were considered.

6. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 This paper is to bring the committee up to date with the Council's current financial position as at Month 6 2022/23.



Officer Decision Report

Author/Lead Officer of Report: Marie McGreavy,
Strategic Commissioning Manager

Tel: 0114 2735471

Report to: Education, Children and Families Committee

Date of Decision: 9th November 2022

Subject: Final Report of the Early Years School Readiness Review.

Has an Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) been undertaken?	Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	No	<input type="checkbox"/>
If YES, what EIA reference number has it been given? 1262				
Has appropriate consultation taken place?	Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	No	<input type="checkbox"/>
Has a Climate Impact Assessment (CIA) been undertaken?	Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>	No	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Not applicable				
Does the report contain confidential or exempt information?	Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>	No	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

Purpose of Report:

This report is to update the Education, Children and Families Committee on the findings of the Early Years School Readiness review and the actions taken to address the issues to date.

In addition, there are a number of key areas where the committee is asked to endorse the progression of strategic level activity to support the Council and partnership ambitions in terms of Ready Children, Ready Families and Ready Schools in raising the numbers of children who arrive in school ready for learning and life.

Recommendations:

The Education, Children and Families Committee to consider the findings of the report and the importance of Early Years in the long-term life chances of Sheffield Citizens within the wider context of planning and commissioning for Education Children and Families.

The Education, Children and Families Committee is recommended to endorse the recommendations within the Early Years Readiness report;

- the development of a leadership role for Sheffield Early Years.
- consideration and exploration of increased investment in Portage workers
- consideration and exploration of increased investment into Early Years Prevention services and Early Years SEND support
- Early years SEND support integration into the wider early years system
- further development of parental voice and influence in terms of service development using the opportunities presented by the development of Family Hubs

Background Papers:

*Early Years School Readiness Report
Summary Presentation*

Lead Officer to complete:-		
1	I have consulted the relevant departments in respect of any relevant implications indicated on the Statutory and Council Policy Checklist, and comments have been incorporated / additional forms completed / EIA completed, where required.	Finance: Not applicable as there are no specific financial implications arising out of the report Legal: Karen Gould Equalities & Consultation: <i>Bashir Khan</i> Climate: Not applicable as there are no climate implications arising out of the report
	<i>Legal, financial/commercial and equalities implications must be included within the report and the name of the officer consulted must be included above.</i>	
2	SLB member who approved submission:	<i>Andrew Jones, Director for Children</i>
3	Relevant Policy Committee	<i>Education Children and Families</i>

4	I confirm that all necessary approval has been obtained in respect of the implications indicated on the Statutory and Council Policy Checklist and that the report has been approved for submission to the Decision Maker by the SLB member indicated at 2. In addition, any additional forms have been completed and signed off as required at 1.	
	Lead Officer Name:	Job Title:
	Marie McGreavy	Strategic Commissioning Manager
Date: 29-9-2022		

1. PROPOSAL

- 1.1. There is a strong evidence base that children's experiences during their early years are likely to shape the rest of their lives, whether it is their attainment at school and in turn their future job prospects, through to their long-term health outcomes. The Early Years School Readiness review and its resulting activity aims to support parents and professionals to provide Sheffield children with the best possible start to their school life to support better outcomes for Sheffield's future adult population.
- 1.2. The review was initiated following feedback from schools that, in line with national trends, increasing numbers of Sheffield children were starting school at a position of disadvantage. The review heard that children were arriving with unidentified and unmet needs ranging from significant SEND issues to a lack of the basic self-care skills expected of the age group. The review began in February 2021 and was completed in April 22.
- 1.3. Getting a good start in life and throughout childhood, building resilience and getting maximum benefit from education are important markers for good health and wellbeing throughout life. (From evidence into action: opportunities to protect and improve the nation's health and NHS Five Year Forward View).
- 1.4. Ensuring that every child has the Best Start in Life: "ready to learn at two and ready for school at five" is a national priority for Public Health England. Delivering this vision is reliant upon a wide range of organisations and key stakeholders working together and embracing change to:
 - ensure high quality services for children, young people and families; actions to improve women's health before, during and after pregnancy (Maternity Transformation Programme)
 - give every child the best start in life,
 - support school readiness and improve resilience for school-aged children;
 - support young people's transition to adult services.

Good health, wellbeing and resilience are vital for all our children now and for the future of society.

1.5. The review sought to act upon the strengths of the partnerships in the city to identify those areas where we could collectively improve outcomes to;

- clarify the required outcomes to improve school readiness in the city.
- agree what needs to change in supporting good school readiness ambitions for the city
- develop and describe transformational, innovative practice and models which support improvements in school readiness in the city
- identify short and long-term benefits of achieving our identified outcomes
- identify the infrastructure requirements for change in terms of systems and support
- develop outcome measures and monitoring requirements.
- ensure that developments are aligned with the direction and ambitions of the current Early Help Review

1.6. The review was led by Early Years and Early Help Commissioning and included parents and partners. Following consultation, stakeholder involvement remained a priority in terms of development of the workstream action plans, progression of the activities and oversight of the review in the form of a Multi-agency Leaders Group.

1.7. Many of the issues raised in the review have been addressed through workstream activity including;

- development of a new Perinatal Mental Health pathway
- SENCO training at level 3 and 4 accessible to all Early Years Settings funded by Sheffield City Council and DFE
- a Speech and Language Review led by the Integrated Care Board and a DLD review led by Sheffield City Council Children's Commissioning Team are both in progress.
- Save the Children Locality B work to support the Home Learning Environment project is established and further roll out possibilities are under consideration. The project aims are to work with parents to encourage simple ways to support their child's learning through play in the home.
- Two ongoing DFE funded Family Hub bid research projects are underway.
- South Yorkshire Futures Partnership work in conjunction with The University of Sheffield has produced resources for speech and language
- Family Centres "Start for Life" offer is developed and planning for DFE Family Hubs Funding is in progress.

- training for school and providers for brain architecture and trauma informed practice
- review of Early Years SEND Funding
- a clear focus on transitions from early years settings to school especially for children with SEND

1.8 There are system, infrastructure and investment recommendations which require consideration and exploration.

- development of a leadership role for Sheffield Early Years
- increased investment in Portage workers.
- increased investment into Early Years Prevention services and Early Years SEND support.
- early years SEND support integration into the wider early years system.
- further development of parental voice and influence in terms of service development using the opportunities presented by the development of Family Hubs.

There are also local and national factors requiring Sheffield leadership voice and influence:

- the retention and recruitment of Early Years settings staff
- the national issue of setting closures and viability
- the national 2-year-old Funded Early Learning criteria is excluding children who would benefit, and yet take up is low in the city
- toddler groups and support groups in the city are slow to recover following the pandemic and need support to do so
- focused exploration of the issue of early identification of SEND needs amongst children from minority ethnic communities and the links to high exclusion rates.
- support to improve educational outcomes for Roma children should build on the good practice in place

2. HOW DOES THIS DECISION CONTRIBUTE ?

2.1. With a long-term view, there is a significant incentive to invest in Early Years, ensuring resources are appropriately targeted to support the health and learning of young children is a critical economic and educational development strategy.

2.2. The UK economy depends on having a pipeline of talented, educated employees with the skills needed in today's work environment including;

- problem-solving

- communication
- decision-making
- critical thinking
- motivation
- collaboration

2.3. By taking forward the recommendations in this review there is the potential for long term savings in health and education. For example, targeted parenting programmes to prevent conduct disorders pay back £8 over six years for every £1 invested with savings to the NHS, education, and criminal justice system.

2.4. The activities and recommendations within this paper will contribute to the ambitions and priorities related to Good Physical and Mental Health, Education and Economic Wellbeing within the Corporate Plan, Sheffield's Inclusion Strategy, the Sheffield Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy and Sheffield's Great Start in Life Strategy.

2.5. The Early Years Readiness Review is an ambition and priority within the 2021 *Our Sheffield One Year Plan*, specifically Education, Health and Care;

- our ambition is for every person in Sheffield to be able to achieve their full potential. We want to address educational inequalities and support people to stay fit and healthy, so fewer people reach crisis point and families can thrive and also contributes to the following ambitions;
- Communities and Neighbourhoods: focusing on our ambition for all communities to love and be proud of where they live, to have great facilities, to feel safe, live without discrimination and be healthier and happier
- Our Council: we want to lead boldly with purpose and decisiveness, putting the communities and people of Sheffield at the heart of everything and working hard to deliver excellence always

3. HAS THERE BEEN ANY CONSULTATION?

3.1. Focus groups including Health Visitors, Nursery Nurses, Early Years providers, Early Years Teams, Early Help and Children's Social Care staff, Sheffield Parent Carer Forum and parenting groups have taken place.

3.2. In addition, surveys of parent and professional views have been undertaken. This local evidence gathering has provided a wealth of views, information, and ideas to support progress in this area.

3.3 Key findings of professional views on areas of development include:

- communication and collaboration at key points of transition and assessment can be much improved
- SEND related issues have formed the vast majority of the concerns raised and areas for development
- Speech Language and Communication needs to be recognised as an indicator and a focus for early activity
- there is variation amongst professional's understanding of their own contribution to school readiness
- a need to raise awareness in the city of the social and economic impact of inequality in terms of the child's whole life course, particularly in terms of vulnerable and seldom heard groups and the impact
- there is good quality activity in the city, but we meet to be more connected in terms of making the most of resources to avoid overlap and support more families
- information sharing is a concern for many and is impacting negatively on good quality communication. This is an issue which contributors feel could be resolved
- across the system, we need to consider activity and input far much earlier in the child's journey and use key early contact points to the best advantage

3.4 Key findings of parental views on areas of development include;

- parents tell us that they have difficulty getting professionals to listen to their concerns about their very young children and getting referral and diagnosis is a battle
- we have heard from parents that children are being refused nursery places because of their Special Educational Needs: that settings feel unable to accommodate their child's needs
- we have low take up of Disability Access Fund (DAF) funding and need to explore if this is related only to take up or whether children with SEND needs are not accessing places
- pathways to support remain unclear to both providers and parents
- parents tell us that the offer for non – breastfeeding mums is limited within our Family Hubs
- there are limited opportunities for parents in co-production to address a broad range of issues to which parents would bring subject expertise

3.5 National and local data has been central to our research in order to establish the current position for Sheffield compared with available comparators.

3.6 The research and consultations have supported the development of the findings in the report and has brought stakeholders together to crystalise the collective vision of what good school readiness will look like in Sheffield and the changes we need to put in place to realise our ambitions.

4. RISK ANALYSIS AND IMPLICATIONS OF THE DECISION

4.1. Equality of Opportunity Implications

4.1.1. Decisions need to take into account the requirements of the Public Sector Equality Duty contained in Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010. This is the duty to have due regard to the need to:

- eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under the Act
- advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it
- foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it

The Equality Act 2010 identifies the following groups as a protected characteristic: age; disability; gender reassignment; marriage and civil partnership; pregnancy and maternity; race; religion or belief; sex and sexual orientation.

4.1.2. An Equality Impact Assessment has been undertaken. The review has highlighted the evidenced impact of inequality in early years and has set out the recommendations which will support parents / carers and Early Years practitioners to reduce inequalities in the city in terms of good physical and mental health, economic wellbeing, and whole life outcomes.

4.1.3. In Sheffield, the two key contributors to a child's ability to reach their Early Learning Goals are significantly influenced by their SEND needs and by where they live in the city. In terms of ethnicity, Sheffield, Roma children, especially boys, fare less well in terms of Good Levels of Development than all other ethnic groups and the review seeks to highlight the good practice in this area which should be further developed in order to make a positive difference to this cohort of children. In addition, the report recommends focused exploration of the issue of early identification of SEND needs amongst children from Black, Asian and Minoritised Ethnic communities and the links to high exclusion rates.

4.2. Financial and Commercial Implications

4.2.1. No specific financial implications are identified at this point, however, in the progression of the high-level recommendations listed in the report there may be a need to revisit financial implications if approaches and activity are developed which need additional resource.

4.3. Legal Implications

- 4.3.1. This review helps the Council to meet its duties under the Childcare Act 2006, which requires local authorities to improve the outcomes for all young children, reduce inequalities and ensure that there is high quality early years provision locally.

4.4. Climate Implications

- 4.4.1. There are no climate implications arising out of this report.

4.5. Other Implications

- 4.5.1. There are no other identified implications.

5. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 5.1 The Education, Children and Families Committee is recommended to consider and endorse the Early Years Readiness Review and the associated recommendations.

6. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 6.1. The Education, Children and Families Committee's endorsement of the recommendations is vital to the progression of the city's ambitions to give all of Sheffield's children the best start and the best outcomes in adult life. The Education, Children and Families Committee is therefore recommended to;

- **consider the findings of the report and the importance of Early Years in the long-term life chances of Sheffield citizens within the wider context of planning and commissioning for Education Children and Families.**
- **endorse the recommendations within the Early Years School Readiness report**



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SHEFFIELD EARLY YEARS SCHOOL READINESS REVIEW 2022



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Introduction



We have reviewed school readiness in Sheffield to support parents and professionals to provide the best possible start to their school lives and impact positively on their life chances.

"The foundations for virtually every aspect of human development – physical, intellectual and emotional – are laid in early childhood. What happens during these early years (starting in the womb) has lifelong effects on many aspects of health and well-being - from obesity, heart disease and mental health, to educational achievement and economic status."

Michael Marmot, Fair Society, Healthy Lives, 2010

In terms of health inequalities, the latest Sheffield Joint Needs Assessment reports that:

- Over a quarter of children and young people are in, or at risk of, poverty or social exclusion, higher than for the overall population, with five wards where over half of children live in poverty;
- Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs: stressful experiences such as neglect or abuse), are also common, as they are elsewhere, and lead to long term health and other challenges. Almost half of adults are estimated to have had at least one adverse experience during their childhood;
- Childhood obesity rates are increasing, particularly in the most disadvantaged areas. Economic deprivation is a predictor of obesity and overweight prevalence in 4 to 5 year olds;
- 1 in 10 5-15 year olds have a clinically recognisable mental health disorder, and a similar proportion of 0-3 year olds are thought to have a mental health problem. It is estimated that 15,000 Sheffield children and young people live with a parent with a mental health disorder;
- 2 out of 5 children experience insecure attachment, a risk factor for mental health.

Within this context of where we are in Sheffield, we need to take on board the social and economic impact of inequality when starting school in terms of the child's whole life course. This is essentially the reason for our review; To support parents and professionals to provide the best possible start to their school life and impact positively on their life chances.



What is School Readiness?



In Sheffield, we believe all children should have a happy, safe and healthy early childhood which prepares them for achieving their potential in education and beyond. We recognise that children learn and develop in different ways and at different rates, and our approaches need to take account of this.

Sheffield adopts UNICEF's and South Yorkshire Futures' definitions of school readiness.

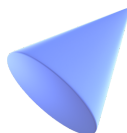
UNICEF's description of the three aspects of school readiness:

- Ready Children - focusing on Children's learning and development
- Families and communities' readiness for school - focusing on parents' and carers' attitudes and involvement in early learning and development and transition to school
- Ready schools - focusing on the school environment and practices that encourage and support a smooth transition for children into primary school and advance and promote the learning of all children.

South Yorkshire Futures describes school ready children as:

To be school ready, children need a nurturing and safe environment that enables them to be healthy, independent, emotionally secure and able to separate from their parent/carer, socially competent and able to learn. To achieve this, we need:

- Ready Children
- Ready Families
- Ready Schools



What School-Ready Children Look Like



Unicef School Readiness; a conceptual framework Apr 2012
Milestones of normal child development aged about four years (based on the work of Mary Sheridan, From Birth to Five Years)

School readiness as a concept has developed during recent years and there are many views on the topic. Our consultations have shown that Sheffield is no exception in terms of the difficulties in reaching agreement on a definition. As such we decided to use the UNICEF and South Yorkshire Futures definitions of school readiness.

UNICEF describes two characteristic features on three dimensions. The characteristic features are 'transition' and 'gaining competencies', and the dimensions are "children's readiness for school, schools' readiness for children, and families' and communities' readiness for school". All three dimensions are important and must work together, as school readiness is a time of transition that requires co-operation between individuals, families and systems.

Sheffield Early Years Practitioners are part of South Yorkshire Futures' Early Years Partnership. South Yorkshire Futures (SYF) is a social mobility partnership committed to improving education and raising aspirations for young people in South Yorkshire, particularly those from disadvantaged backgrounds. SYF has developed a South Yorkshire definition of school readiness.



The Importance of School Readiness

School readiness starts at birth with the support of parents and caregivers, when young children acquire the social and emotional skills, knowledge and attitudes necessary for success in school and life. School readiness at age five has a strong impact on future educational attainment and life chances.

Children who do not achieve a good level of development by age 5 are more likely to struggle with:



Social Skills



Reading



Maths



Physical Skills

which impacts on outcomes in childhood and later life such as:



Educational Outcomes



Crime



Health



Life Expectancy

Educational attainment is one of the main markers for wellbeing through the life course, therefore it is imperative that no child is left behind at the beginning of their school life.





Early Years School Readiness Review

We aimed to:

- Clarify the required outcomes to improve school readiness in the city
- Agree what needs to change in supporting good school readiness ambitions for the city
- Develop and describe transformational, innovative practice and models which support improvements in school readiness in the city
- Demonstrate where and if any investment is needed or needs to move.
- Identify short and long-term benefits of achieving our identified outcomes
- Identify the infrastructure requirements for change in terms of systems and support
- Develop outcome measures and monitoring requirements
- Ensure that developments are aligned with the direction and ambitions of the current Early Help Review

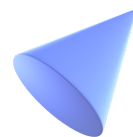


School readiness involves more than just children. School readiness, in the broadest sense, is about children, families, early environments, schools, and communities.

“Children are not innately “ready” or “not ready” for school. Their skills and development are strongly influenced by their families and through their interactions with other people and environments before coming to school.” (Maxwell & Clifford, 2004)

With this in mind, our review and resulting actions have addressed a broad spectrum of those factors influencing school readiness outcomes. We have gathered research materials, a variety of data sets, the views of parents and professionals in the city, and have also considered the local and national drivers for Early Years focussed work, including the priorities of:

- Sheffield’s Accountable Care Partnership “Future Shape Children’s Health” programme
- Sheffield Children’s Health and Wellbeing Board “Starting Well”
- Sheffield’s Great start in Life Strategy 2019- 2023
- Sheffield’s Inclusion Strategy
- 1001 days
- The Education Policy Institute’s (EPI) annual State of Education report, 2019,
- SCC Corporate plan
- Family Hubs



And the findings of:

- UK Government Rapid response Paper COVID-19 and the Disadvantage Gap (September, 2020)
- Sheffield’s Joint Strategic Needs Assessment
- The current Speech and Language (CCG) and Developmental Language Delay (SCC) reviews
- The completed SCC Early Help Review Phase 1
- The 2019 SCC consultation with Early Years providers regarding support for SEND

School readiness starts at pre-birth with the support of parents and caregivers, when young children acquire the social and emotional skills, knowledge and attitudes necessary for success in school and life. School readiness at age five has a strong impact on future educational attainment and whole life chances.



Key Sheffield Strategies and Plans

The activities and recommendations within this paper will contribute to the ambitions and Priorities related to Good Physical and Mental Health, Education and Economic Wellbeing within the Corporate Plan, the Inclusion Strategy, the Sheffield Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy and Sheffield's Great Start in Life Strategy. Specifically:

Corporate Plan

- *Communities and Neighbourhoods: focusing on our ambition for all communities to love and be proud of where they live, to have great facilities, to feel safe, live without discrimination and be healthier and happier*
- *Education, Health, and Care: our ambition is for every person in Sheffield to be able to achieve their full potential. We want to address educational inequalities and support people to stay fit and healthy, so fewer people reach crisis point and families can thrive*
- *Our Council: we want to lead boldly with purpose and decisiveness, putting the communities and people of Sheffield at the heart of everything and working hard to deliver excellence always*

Inclusion strategy

Commitment 1 - Effective early identification of needs with appropriate assessments across Education, Health, and Care.

Commitment 2 - A wide range of Education, Health and Care services that meets the needs of our young people.

Commitment 3 - Smooth transition across Education, Health, and Care at every stage of a young person's life and particularly to adult life.

Commitment 4 - Excellent communication and engagement between young people, families, Education, Health, and Care services including schools.

Sheffield Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy (2019 – 2024) Starting Well

- *Every child achieves a level of development in their early years for the best start in life.*
- *Every child is included in their education and can access their local school.*
- *Every child and young person has a successful transition to adulthood.*



Great Start in Life Strategy

Outcome 1: Babies and young children are safe and have good health.

Outcome 2: Parents are resilient and any mental health issues are addressed at the earliest opportunity.

Outcome 3: Brain development in the early years is optimised by secure attachment and quality relationships.

Outcome 4: Children are ready for school and life.



School Readiness in Sheffield



To date we have...

- Defined the current situation in Sheffield and described the barriers to good readiness for life and learning, through consultation and research
- Clarified current projects and improvement activity in the city
- Defined the benefits of change and improvement in integrated activity
- Agreed what needs to change or improve in supporting good school readiness ambitions for the city through conversations in the Multi-Agency Workstreams and based on the findings of the consultation
- Developed action plans and activity for each workstream to identify and action innovative practice and models which support improvements in school readiness in the city



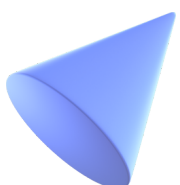
Evidence Sources

- Joint Strategic Needs Assessment, 2019
- National research into Covid19 and the impact on children's development
- Current academic research into Early Years and school readiness
- Good practice from other Local Authorities brought together via South Yorkshire Futures
- Focus groups and online survey for Sheffield parents
- Focus groups and online Survey for Sheffield Early Years professionals
- EYFS Data, 2019
- Local data e.g. Funded Early Learning (FEL) and Early Help referrals

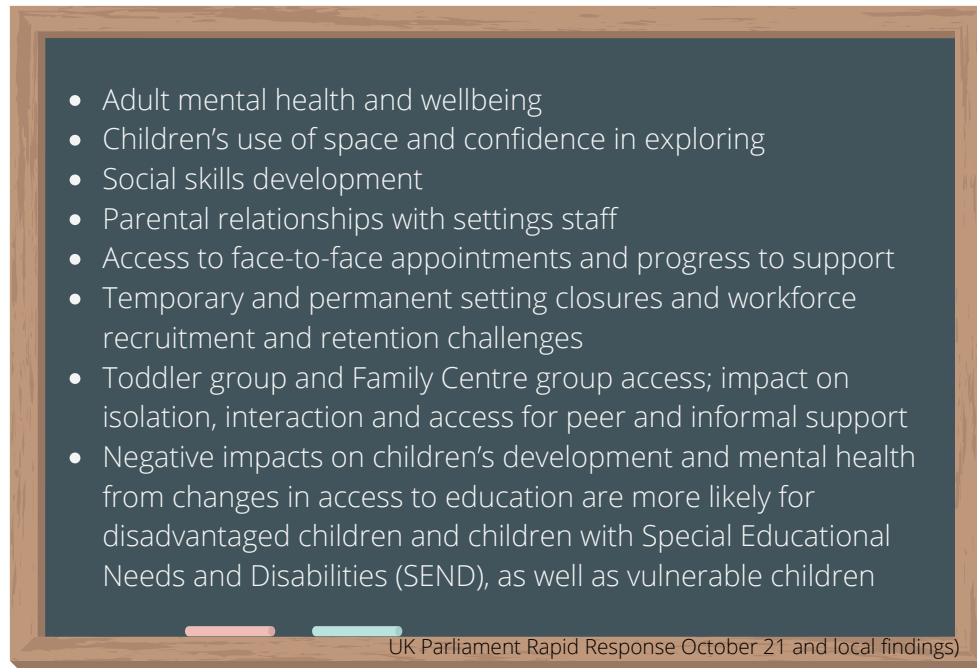


Online surveys took place during Autumn 2021. Professionals and parents were surveyed which resulted in over 100 responses.

Consultations throughout 2021 included focus groups with Sheffield Parent Carer Forum, School Readiness Pathway Team, Family Centre Teams, Parent groups and Parenting Group Leaders. Sessions were also held for Health Visitors, Nursery Nurses, EY providers, the Early Years Quality Team, Early Help and Children's Social Care staff.



COVID-19 Impact on Early Years



A study by Maggie Surgenor-Cooke BA (Hons) Early Childhood Studies, University of Hull (January 2021), concluded that the pandemic had an adverse impact on the emotional well-being of adults due to fear of the unknown, job insecurity and loss of childcare. However, 80% of families required no childcare during the first lockdown. Parents needed support, yet recognised government-imposed restrictions on furloughed keyworkers prevented this being made available during full lockdown. Evidence also suggests that children and families have experienced the pandemic in very different ways, which has shaped impact on development, both positive and negative, and young children quickly regained their social and emotional relationships with early years practitioners once settings re-opened.

UNICEF report that both the immediate and long-term negative effects of the pandemic on children's health and development are likely to disproportionately affect families in communities with high concentrations of poverty, lack of access to quality healthcare and affordable childcare, food and housing insecurity, and limited services for family support. Similarly, the ongoing economic crisis is likely only to exacerbate the situation of children living in home environments characterised by a lack of access to developmentally appropriate resources, such as toys and books, low levels of stimulation and responsive care, or inadequate supervision. Also, it may have been unrealistic to expect caregivers, particularly those with low levels of education or limited caregiving skills to begin with, to be able to offset the resulting gaps from children's lack of attendance to education and other care opportunities, all of which have the potential to store up difficulties during transitions to school.

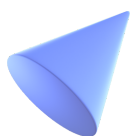
Mitigating the negative impact of COVID-19 on young children requires strategic multi-sectoral approaches and the synergy of interventions in health, nutrition, security, protection, participation and early education. Both local and national drivers, for example the development of Family Hubs and The Start for Life Offer support us to address these challenges together, and this review aims to ensure that we are using our available resources to mitigate the negative impacts of COVID19.

The 2022 YouGov report, School readiness: qualitative and quantitative research with teaching professionals highlighted that for the 2021 intake of children, many teachers feel that they have seen an increase in the number of children arriving unprepared for school in comparison to previous years with anecdotal evidence suggesting that this could be due to reduced support for parents, impact of nursery attendance and a lack of child experiences.





Some Sheffield families face vulnerabilities relating to issues such as ACEs, Foetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD), complex health, poverty, poor housing and parental substance misuse.



Disadvantaged children arrive at school months behind their non-disadvantaged peers and this gap widens with secondary school leavers 2 years behind.



A stark social mobility postcode lottery exists within Britain, where successful life chances for those from disadvantaged backgrounds are dependant on where you live.

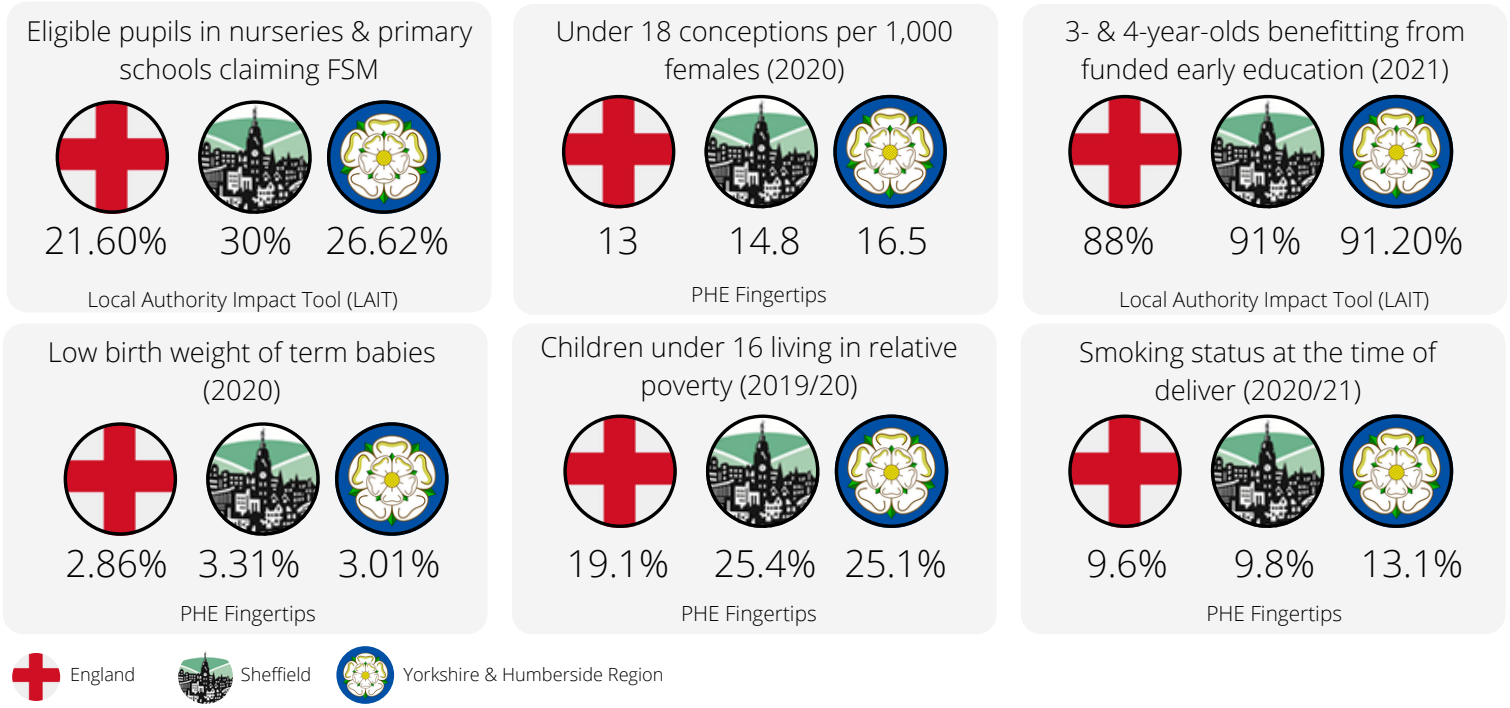
(Social Mobility Commission, State of the Nation, 2017)

Evidence has highlighted stark realities in terms of life chances for children with poor starts to their school life. Those experiencing disadvantage or vulnerability are likely to fair less well:

‘Those seeking to reduce deficits and strengthen the economy should make significant investments in early childhood from conception with disadvantaged families. Starting at age three or four is too little too late.’ James Heckman, 2012, Nobel Laureate in Economics



Indicators of School Readiness in Sheffield



Sheffield has a high proportion of nursery and primary children claiming Free School Meals. Whilst rates of eligible children have increased regionally, nationally and for our statistical neighbours, Sheffield has consistently had the highest percentage of primary aged children, eligible and claiming for Free School Meals, since 2013.

Teenage births can result in health consequences; children are more likely to be born pre-term, have lower birth weight, and higher neonatal risk, while mothers can experience greater rates of post-partum depression and are less likely to initiate breastfeeding (Chen X.K et al. teenage pregnancy and adverse birth outcomes: a large population based retrospective cohort study. Int J Epidemiol. 2007) Kingston D, et al. Comparison of adolescent, young adult, and adult women’s maternity experiences and practices. Paediatrics. 2012) Teenage mothers are more likely to live in poverty and have children who frequently experience health and developmental problems. (Hoffman SD, Maynard R. Kids Having Kids: Economic Costs & Social Consequences of Teen Pregnancy. 2008)

There are evidenced connections between low birth weight and school readiness. Although there is a broad range of growth, health, and developmental outcomes across the cohort, as a group they generally have higher rates of growth concerns, illnesses, and neurodevelopmental problems. These problems increase as the child's birth weight decreases. With the exception of a small minority of low-birth-weight children with significant disability, the developmental outcomes for most low-birth-weight infants include mild problems in cognition, attention, and neuromotor functioning. Long-term follow-up studies conducted on children born in the 1960s indicated that the adverse consequences of being born low birth weight were still apparent in adolescence and adulthood. Adverse sociodemographic factors negatively affect developmental outcomes across the continuum of low birth weight and appear to have far greater effects on long-term cognitive outcomes than most of the biological risk factors. (Hack, M, Klein, NK & Taylor HG, 1995, Long-term developmental outcomes of low-birth-weight infants).

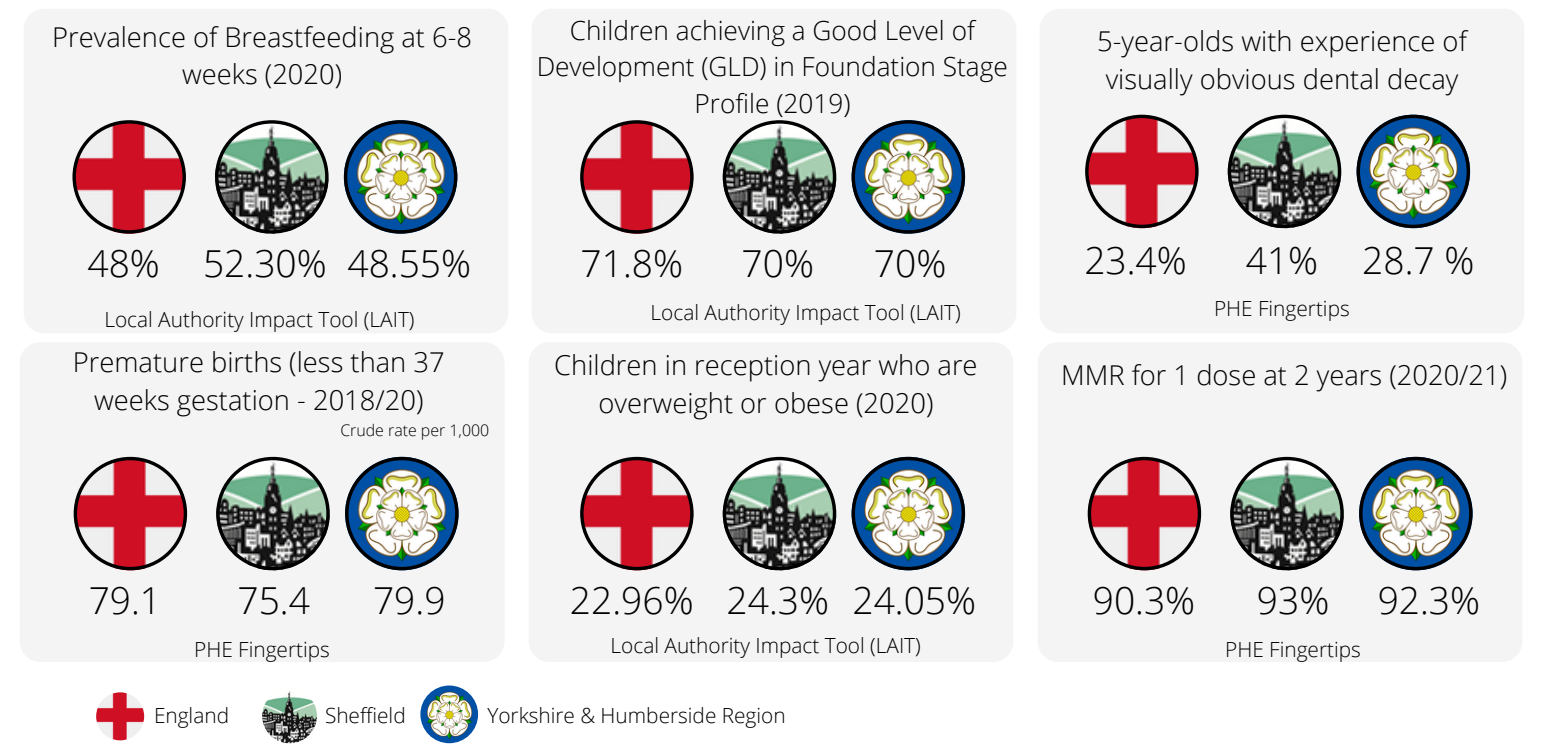
Sheffield has a higher proportion child under 16 living in relative poverty than national and regional comparators. Relative poverty is **when households receive 50% less than average household Incomes** and so they do have some money but still not enough money to afford anything above the basics



We know poverty is a major cause of inequalities across many aspects of our lives, and this will have a direct impact on outcomes for children. The COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated inequalities across the country. The Child of the North report says, “Poverty is the lead driver of inequalities... leading to worse physical and mental health outcomes, educational attainment, and lower lifelong economic productivity. The COVID-19 pandemic has made this situation worse.”

<https://www.thenhsa.co.uk/app/uploads/2022/01/Child-of-the-North-Report-FINAL-1.pdf>

Smoking in pregnancy has been linked to low birth weight and any reduction in smoking in pregnancy supports better outcomes across a range of health factors for both mum and baby.



Breastfeeding supports a child’s long-term health benefits. The NHS England website articulates that breastfeeding can offer babies protection from infections, diarrhoea and vomiting, sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS) and cardiovascular disease in adulthood.

The Local Authority Interactive Tool (LAIT) identifies that child achieving a GLD are those achieving a minimum expected level within their communication and language, literacy, mathematics, physical development, and personal, social and emotional development. More information on GLD can be found in the following pages of this report.

From the survey of five-year-old children in 2019, the proportion of children with tooth decay was 41%, with an average number of decayed, missing and filled teeth of five-year-old children of 1.6 (95% Confidence Interval 1.26-1.99). This prevalence and severity of tooth decay is higher than the regional and national averages. The health of a child’s mouth can affect all aspects of a child’s life. Children with poor oral health may:

- Have a hard time concentrating and learning because they are in pain
- Miss more school days
- Develop other serious health conditions, such as infections
- Stop smiling, cover their mouth with their hands when they speak, or withdraw from family, friends, and teachers if others comment on the appearance of their teeth (Early Childhood Learning and Knowledge Centre November 2021)



Compared with full-term born peers, children born preterm in their chronological age year were found to be:

- 10% more likely (approx.) to have a low-Key Stage 1 test scores
- 12% more likely to have special educational needs support (Odd, D., Evans, D. and Emond, A. (2013) 'Preterm birth, age at school entry and educational performance', PLoS ONE, 8 (10), e76615.)

Due to the pandemic, the National Child Measurement programme screening has been interrupted, however a national sample study has shown that obesity prevalence has increased in both receptions aged and Y6 children and those living in the most deprived areas were more than twice as likely to be obese, than those living in the least deprived areas. The provisional 2021/22 NCMP data show decreases in child obesity prevalence in 2021/22 compared to 2020/21. However, prevalence remains higher than any year prior to the pandemic (2006/07 to 2019/20). This provisional data indicates that following the dramatic increase in childhood obesity and severe obesity prevalence in 2020/21 rates have decreased compared to last year but remain higher than pre-pandemic levels in 2019/20. NHS Digital are confident that the provisional national estimates of prevalence for each weight category are robust making them comparable to previous years. Some caution should still be exercised as the provisional 2021/22 data only covers data collected and submitted between September 2021 and May 2022, however the final figures for the full data collection are expected to be very similar to these provisional estimates.

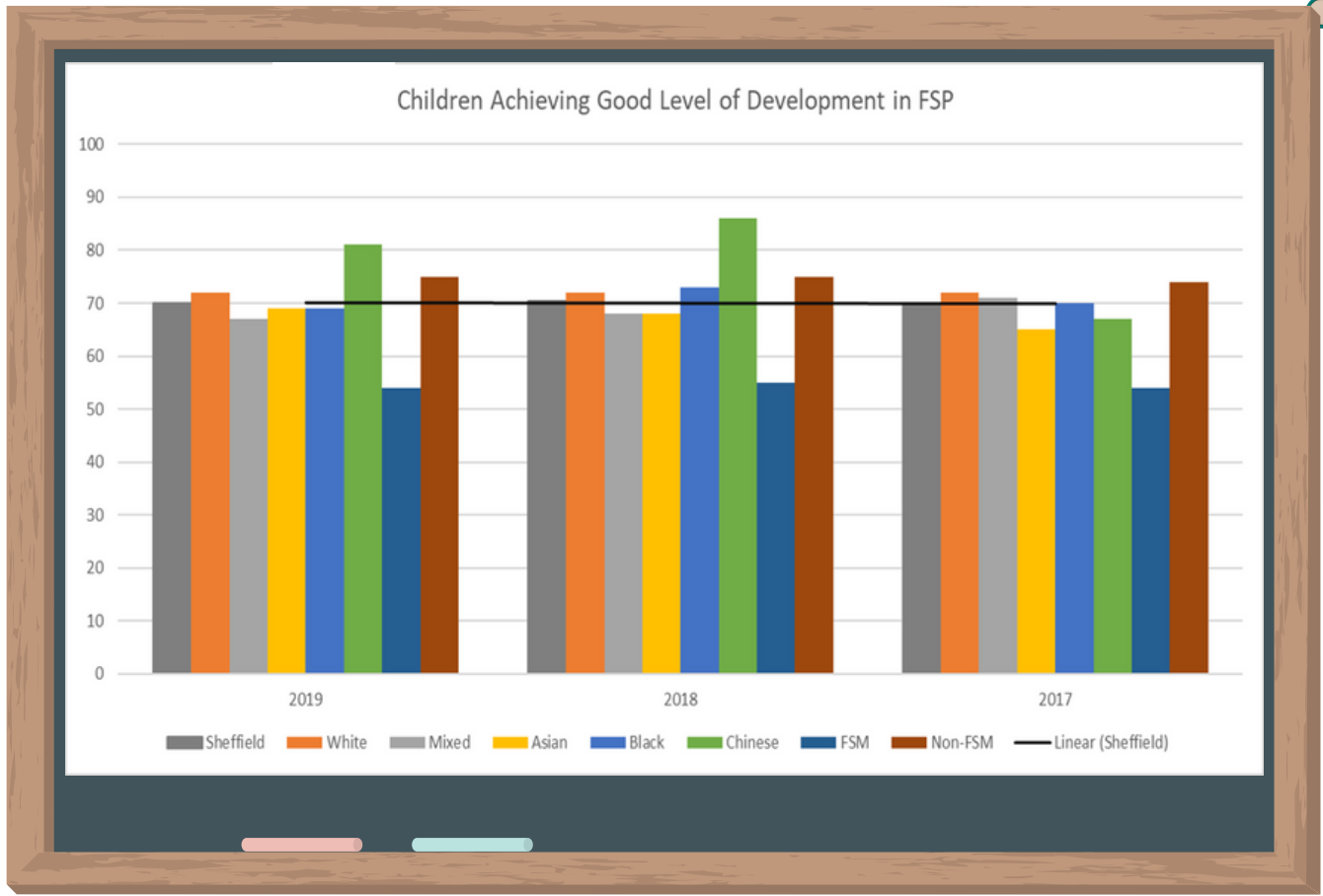
The first dose of the MMR (Measles, Mumps and Rubella) vaccine should be given to babies at the age of one with a second dose being administered at around 3 years and 4 months. Each of the three infections are highly infectious and can spread quickly among unvaccinated people. These infections can also lead to other health problems such as meningitis (NHS, 2020).

Although indicators for school readiness can include perinatal mental health and Foetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD), there is not sufficient data to support the comparison of these conditions at a local, regional and national level. Perinatal mental health issues are those that occur during pregnancy or within the first year of the birth of a child. NHS England website estimate that up to 20% of new and expectant mothers can experience poor mental health during this period and if left untreated can have significant and long-lasting effects on the woman and the child.

FASD is a lifelong neurological condition caused by prenatal alcohol exposure. Evidence suggests that without the correct diagnosis and support, an individual is at increased risk of issues including poor mental health, substance misuse problems, involvement with the criminal justice system, homelessness, social difficulties, education, and/or employment. Nationally, a 2017 study identified that 41% of women in the UK consumed alcohol during pregnancy and although there are no Sheffield specific prevalence rates, a recent study in Salford gave a crude rate of 3.6% (DHSC, 2021, Foetal alcohol spectrum disorder: health needs assessment). This potentially equates to 300 babies per year being born in Sheffield, the equivalent of 3,000 10-year-olds and 6,000 20-year-olds living with FASD.

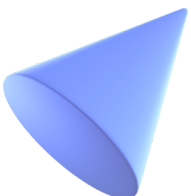


Good Levels of Development in Sheffield

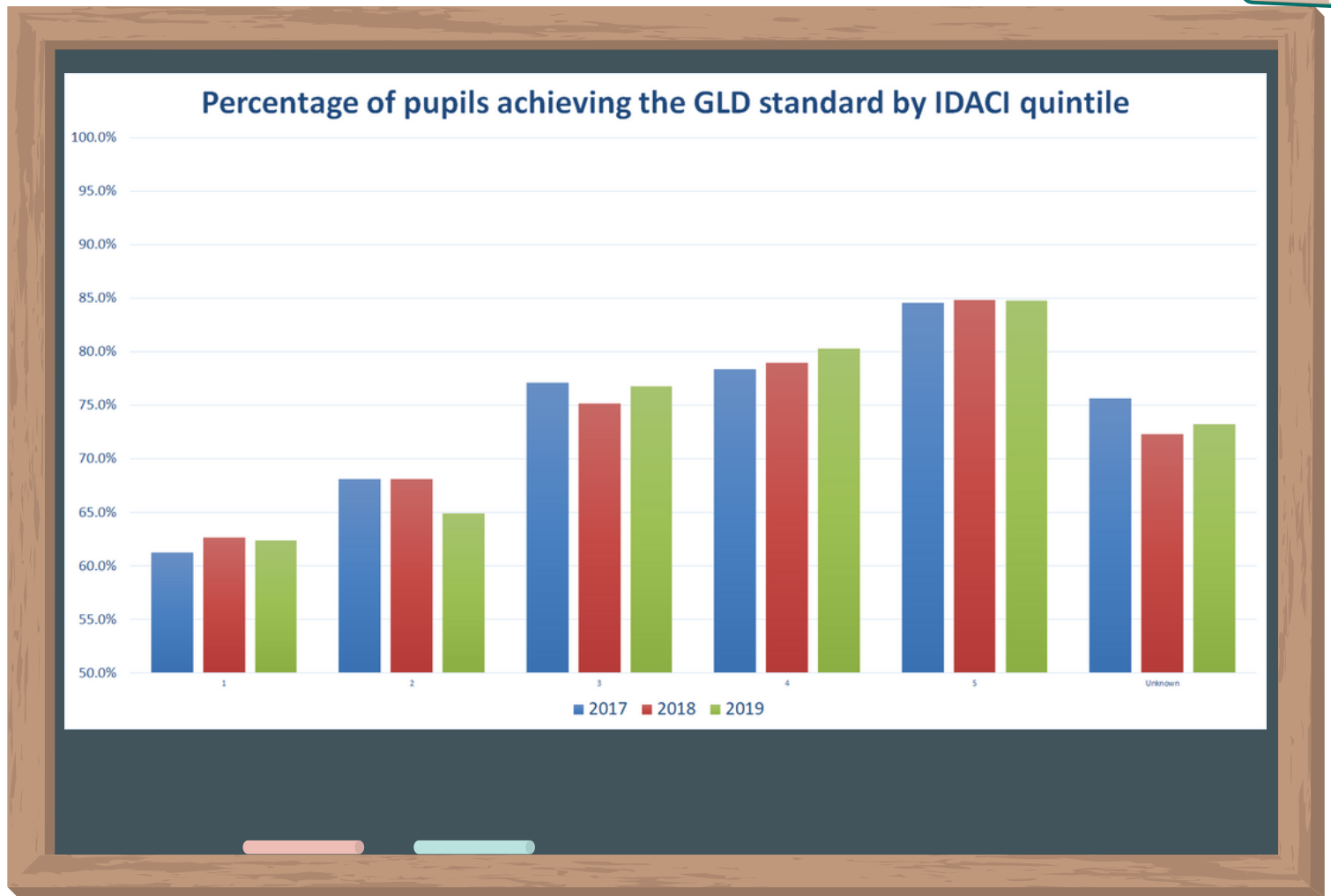


Sheffield continues to fare well in terms of GLD according to the latest available data from 2019. We can see that whilst there are some differences in outcomes when ethnic groups are compared, the most significant gap is in relation to children in receipt of Free School Meals vs non-Free School Meals. Children in receipt of Free School Meals generally do not do so well. It should be noted that criticisms of the reliability of FSM as a measure of socio-economic deprivation have emerged and some consider that the measure excludes a significant cohort of “working poor” families whose socio-economic situation mirrors that of the families in receipt of FSM (Hobbs and Vignoles, 2009). You will recall that in Sheffield, over a quarter of children and young people are in or at risk of poverty or social exclusion, higher than for the overall population, with 5 wards where over half of children live in poverty.

The Early learning goals have changed significantly last year, the DfE no longer mandates moderation of reporting on GLD and we are waiting for the official confirmed statistics. From the rough data we have we can see that the biggest impact is as the review has found, that SEND and IDACI Quartile/FSM are the biggest factors effecting Sheffield children. Further analysis of the outcomes will be explored when the official data becomes available. Roma Children in the city, especially Roma boys do not fare well in terms of GLD which is in line with the National picture.

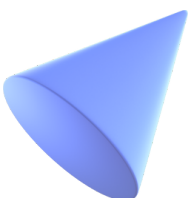


Good Levels of Development in Sheffield

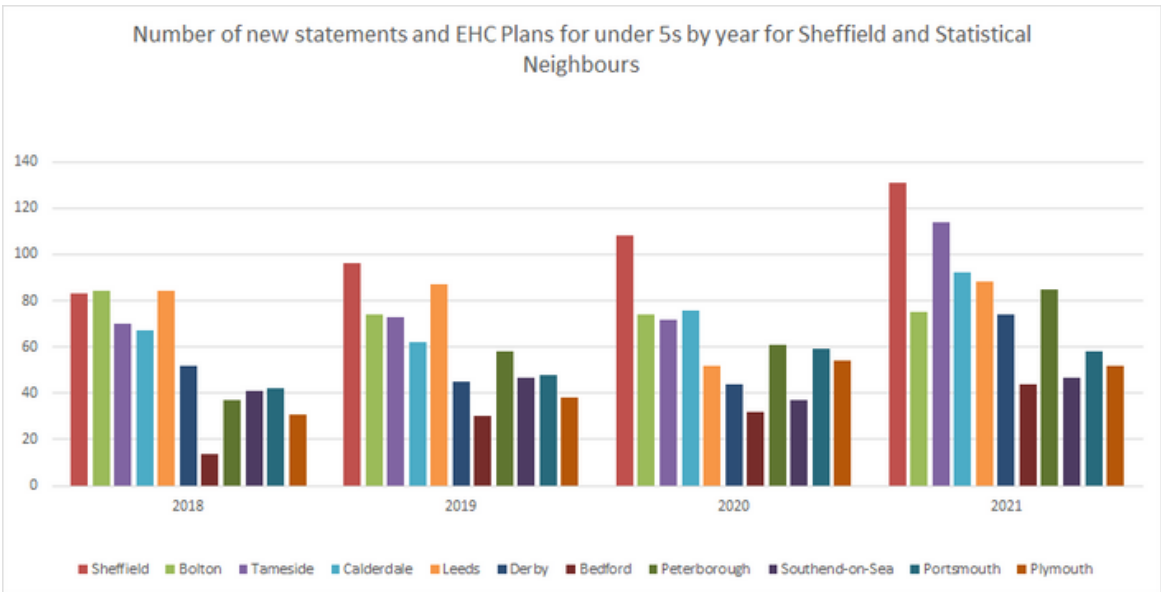
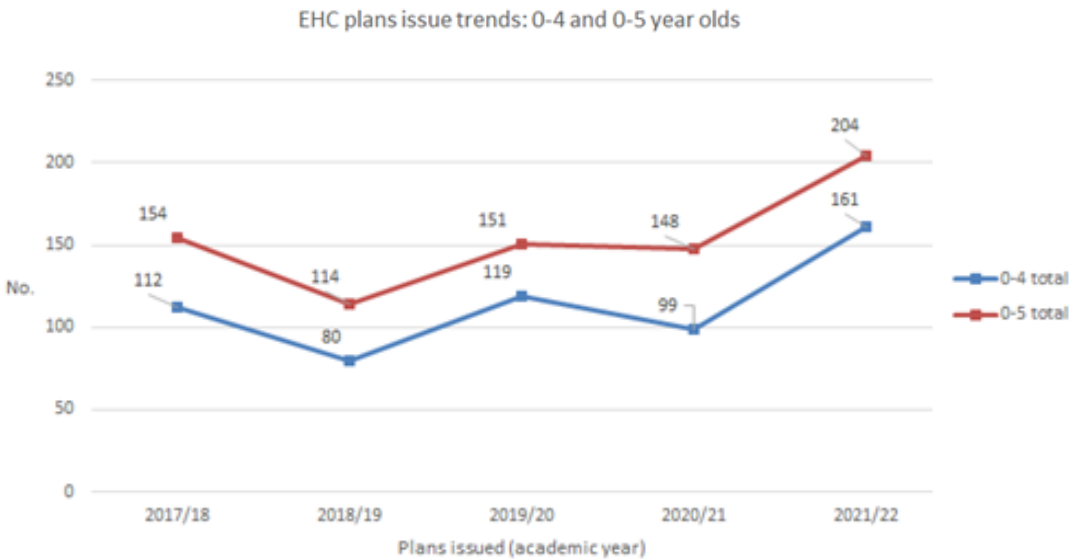
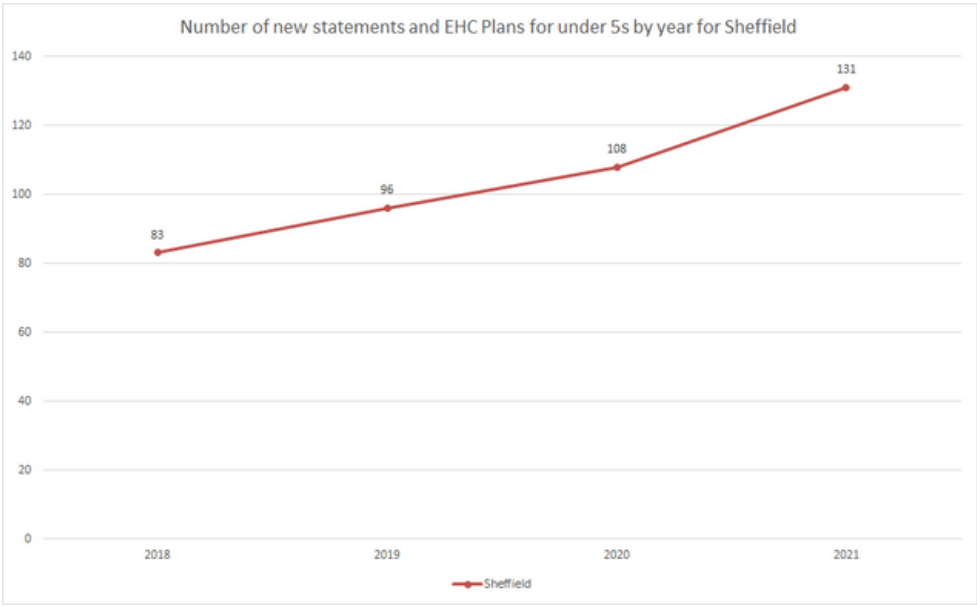


This chart demonstrates the impact of deprivation on Good Levels of Development in the City using the Income Deprivation Affecting Children Index (IDACI) Indices of multiple deprivation (IMD). This is a **measure of relative deprivation for small, fixed geographic areas of the UK**. IMD classifies these areas into five quintiles based on relative disadvantage, with quintile 1 being the most deprived and quintile 5 being the least deprived. We can see that there is a geographical impact on Good Levels of Development in Sheffield with children from the most disadvantaged areas consistently fairing worse than more affluent areas.

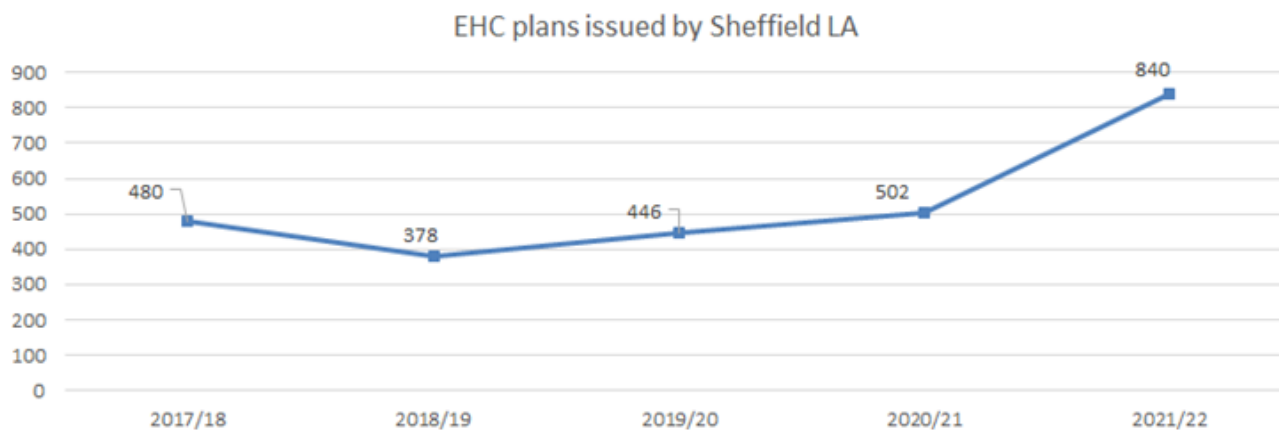
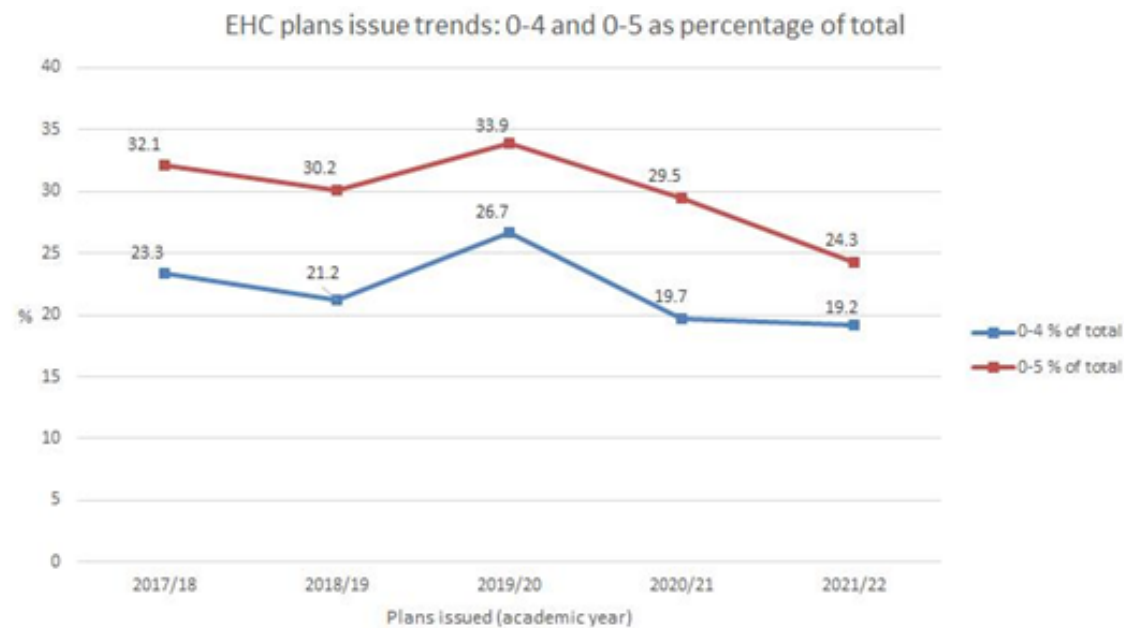
Characteristics that are positively related to children's development can be thought of as protective factors and those that are negatively related can be considered to be risk factors. A 2021 National Foundation for Educational Research study into Young Children's development and deprivation found that although deprivation was a risk factor for development, it did not have the largest effect. This indicates that children's learning outcomes are influenced by a wide range of factors, of which deprivation is just one.



Statements & EHCs for under 5s



Statements & EHCPs for under 5s



Having an identified SEN at the age of 5 was a risk factor for children’s development, even when other factors (including deprivation) are considered. It was the only risk factor which was consistently identified across all included learning outcomes and the size of these effects were greater than those associated with deprivation. Our consultation feedback showed that the greatest concerns across Sheffield Parents and Professionals was related to identification and support for children with SEN and the need to make significant improvements in these areas. When compared with statistical neighbours Sheffield issues a greater number of EHCPs to under 5s than all other comparator areas.

In Sheffield, based on a five-year trend, the age group which the highest number of ECHPs issued is age Four (within all age groups 0–25). In terms of the numbers of EHCPs issued to 0–4 and 0–5-year-olds, we can see that those numbers increase over a five-year trend. However, as a percentage of the numbers EHCPs issued to all age groups, we see a decrease.

Whilst early years numbers have risen, they now make up a smaller percentage of the whole which suggests more children are being identified as needing an EHCP at a later stage. The Impact of COVID19 and the periods of lockdown could account for some of this change. For example, when we consider

21/22 academic year figures, the number of ten-year-old and the number of eleven-year-olds is slightly higher than the numbers of four-year-olds, in general, four-year-old trends closely follow the trends at age nine and age ten. Suggesting correlation in terms of preparation for transition.



Children in Foundation Stage 1 (NCY -1) and below with Sheffield LA-maintained EHC plans - ethnicity profile (2021-22)



Ethnicity	No.	%	Ethnicity	No.	%
White British	83	51.2	Pakistani	14	
Irish	1		Bangladeshi	3	
White Eastern European	1		Any Other Asian Background	4	
Traveller of Irish Heritage	0		Caribbean	2	
Gypsy / Roma	0		Somali	1	
White Other	1		Other Black African	4	
White and Black Caribbean	3		Any Other Black Background	2	
White and Black African	2		Chinese	1	
White and Pakistani	0		Yemeni	3	
White and Any Other Asian Background	3		Any Other Ethnic Group	6	
Any Other Mixed Background	4		Information not yet obtained	22	13.6
Indian	2				

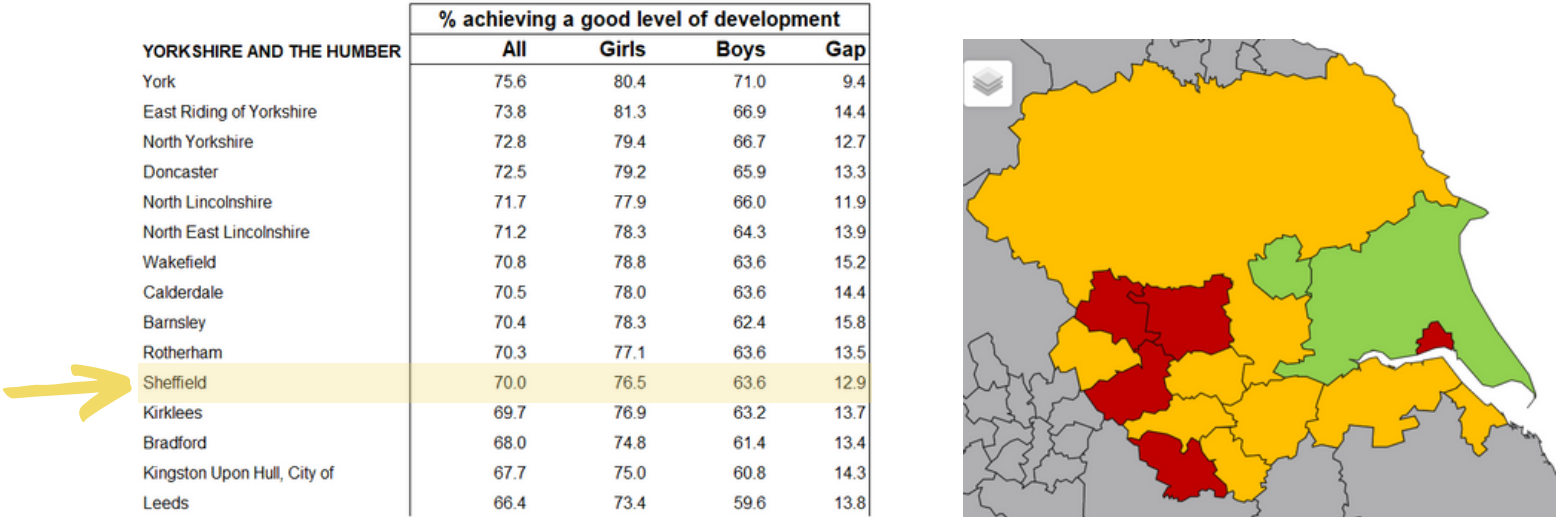
BAME total	57	35.2
Total	162	100

Capita ONE - end of July 2022

Findings and recommendations regarding children and families within Sheffield's Race Equality Commissions report into racial disparity and racism in Sheffield describes disproportionate numbers of boys from Black and Roma background's being subject to school exclusion. 52% of those within the Pupil Referral Unit at the time of publication were from Black and Minority Ethnic backgrounds with only 5% of those children returning to mainstream. There can be many reasons for school exclusion, however we know that it is often post exclusion that underlying SEND, and Health needs are identified. When this is considered alongside the commissions findings regarding inequalities in access and quality in healthcare means that we need to ensure that the work we do to improve Early Years SEND support and earlier identification in the city is considered within the context of the findings of the report.

Trends in School Readiness in Sheffield

Sheffield compared to regional neighbours

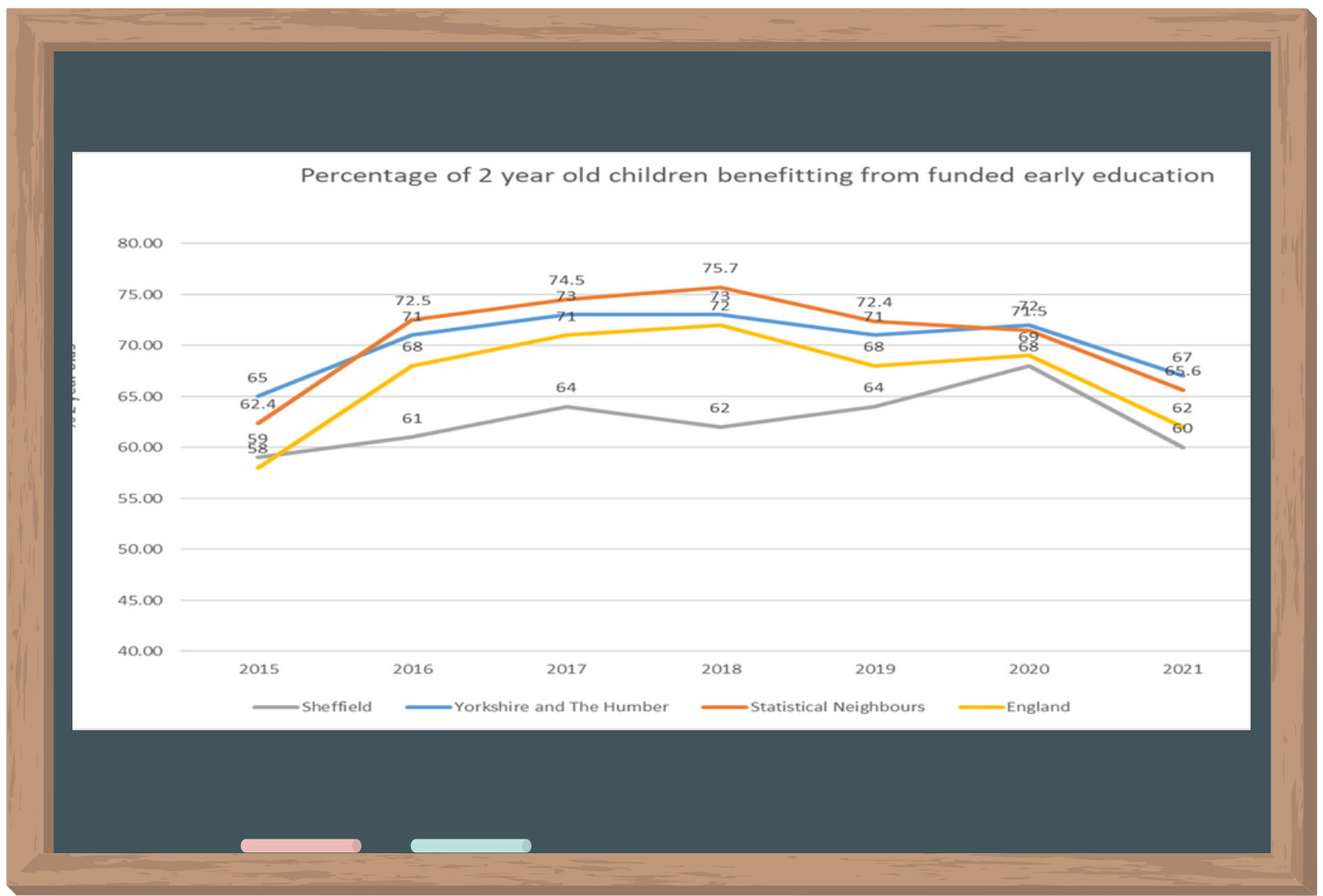


We achieve well against comparators in terms of GLD in the city, but this has not diminished the message from schools that far too many children are arriving into their reception year with unmet and often unrecognised needs.

The percentage of pupils achieving a good level of development at foundation stage in Sheffield improved rapidly from 51% in 2013 to 68.6% in 2016. In the following three years it remained steady, peaking at 70.3% in 2018, before showing a slight decrease at 70% in 2019 (LAIT, 2021). Sheffield’s data was mirrored across our statistical, regional, and national cohorts however on closer analysis of the 2018 data at ward level, there is a variance of almost 30% between the best and worst-performing wards.

In terms of Narrowing the Gap 2019 data, Sheffield ranks highly against the subsets of authorities. Ranked at one for Statistical Neighbours, two for Metropolitan Authorities and one for Core Cities. However, according to the Education Policy Institute’s (EPI) annual State of Education report, 2019, the disadvantage gap has continued to narrow in primary school but has now stopped closing in the early years. The EPI’s analysis covers the period from 2011 to 2018. For the early years, it starts in 2013 to coincide with the introduction of the current Early Years Foundation Stage Profile results. Over this period, it finds the disadvantage gap has closed across the early years, primary and secondary school but between 2017 and 2018, only primary schools continued to narrow the gap.





Access to childcare providing good quality early education is seen as one factor which can contribute to better school readiness. The percentage of 2-year-old children benefitting from Funded Early Education in Sheffield has remained low compared with the Yorkshire and Humber region, statistical neighbours and England. We can see that prior to the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, Sheffield's take up of 2-year-old FEL was steadily increasing, from 62% in 2018 to 64% in 2019, when other areas decreased, and then to 68% the following year. This was achieved through strong partnership work with Early Help services across the city such as Family Centres, Health and MAST services. However, since the pandemic we can see that nationally rates have declined, and Sheffield remains lower than all comparators. In comparison, funded early education for 3- and 4-year-olds in Sheffield, although slightly lower than statistical neighbours and the region, had been consistently above the national average in the years prior to the pandemic with sustained rates of 95% from 2017- 2020. All comparators have declined following the early days of the Pandemic.



Key Findings: Professionals views on areas for development activity



- Communication and collaboration at key points of transition and assessment can be much improved
- SEND related issues have formed the vast majority of the concerns raised and areas for development
- Speech Language and Communication needs to be recognised as an indicator and a focus for early activity
- There is variation amongst professional's understanding of their own contribution to school readiness
- A need to raise awareness in the city of the social and economic impact of inequality in terms of the child's whole life course, particularly in terms of vulnerable and seldom heard groups and the impact we can have by reducing inequalities across the Early Years and Early Help system
- There is good quality activity in the city, but we meet to be more connected in terms of making the most of resources to avoid overlap and support more families
- Information sharing is a concern for many and is impacting negatively on good quality communication. This is an issue which contributors feel could be resolved
- Across the system, we need to consider activity and input far much earlier in the child's journey and use key early contact points to the best advantage

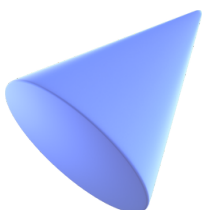
This has been a wide-ranging review and the findings and resulting activity are numerous and we will look further into development work to address the findings later in the report.



Key Findings: Parental views on areas for development

- Parents tell us that they have difficulty getting professionals to listen to their concerns about their very young children and getting referral and diagnosis is a battle
- We have heard from parents that children are being refused nursery places because of their Special Educational Needs: that settings feel unable to accommodate their child's needs
- We have low take up of Disability Access Fund (DAF) funding and need to explore if this is related only to take up or if SEND Children are not accessing places
- Pathways to support remain unclear to both providers and parents
- Parents tell us that the offer for non – breastfeeding mums is limited within our Family Hubs
- There are limited opportunities for parents in coproduction to address a broad range of issues to which parents would bring subject expertise

Parents tell us that it is often hard to be heard when they have concerns about their child's development and that professionals will sometimes suggest that their children will catch up and to wait and see. This will lead to late referral and later access to support. When settings feel unable to accommodate a child's needs within the setting accessing DAF funding and access to 0 – 5 send support and SEND funding should be considered, however we have low take up of DAF funding in the city. The low take up of DAF funding is being explored by the Early Years Subgroup of the School Forum and this may be a factor in terms of parents feeling that settings are unwilling or unable to accommodate their child's needs.



What's going well?

Activity is underway to support good school readiness in Sheffield.

- Perinatal Mental Health and Infant Mental Health Pathways
- SENCO training
- Speech and Language Review / DLD review
- Save the Children Locality B work to support the Home Learning Environment project
- Successful DFE Family Hub bid resulting in 2 research projects
- South Yorkshire Futures Partnership
- Family Centres "Start for Life"
- School Readiness Pathways
- MAST School Readiness Project
- Training for school and providers for brain architecture and trauma informed practice
- Review of Early Years SEND Funding
- A clear focus on transitions, highlighted more so by the recent Accelerated Progress Plan



Activity to support good school readiness and to develop Sheffield's Early Years offer has not begun with this review. Activity across the system is ongoing with developments in Health, Family Support and Education. The findings of the review have told us that we need to be more "joined up" in our activities and one result of this work is improved communications within the Local Authority Early Years Practitioners and management including regular joint management meetings and joint development and delivery of training. More broadly, a Health Education England (HEE) funded Early Years ASD training programme has been developed alongside Health colleagues and Sheffield Parent Carer Forum (SPCF). The model of design and delivery of this programme provides a solid blueprint for further co – designed and co -delivered training.

The review has sparked the development of a citywide Early Years event in the Autumn to share good practice across the Early Years system and use the opportunity to begin consultation on the new 2023 Early Years Strategy for Sheffield.

Through the SEND Revisit which took place in February 2022, we know we need a greater focus on transitions, this has been highlighted through the Accelerated Progress Plan which covers multi-agency transitions, which includes school readiness and links the Preparation for Adulthood conversation to all ages and stages.



What Works to Improve School Readiness



- Good maternal mental health
- Learning activities, including speaking to your baby and reading with your child
- Enhancing physical activity
- Parenting support programmes
- High-quality early education



Department of Education, Department of Health (2011) Families in the foundation years evidence pack

The Department for Education and the Department of Health's "Families in the Foundation Years: evidence pack" (2011) describes the factors which support good school readiness.

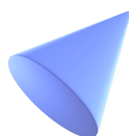
Using the findings and research, we have developed areas of focus for the workstreams using the Early Years Foundation Stage priorities and have incorporated the "what works" factors in to the relevant workstreams.

Physical, Social and Emotional Development and Physical Development focusses have emerged from discussions regarding the impact of deprivation and vulnerability on these areas of development, and include good maternal mental health, learning activity, enhancing physical activity, parenting support programmes and high-quality education.

The SEND Workstream is the largest workstream which is a reflection of the concerns raised within the consultations and feedback regarding unidentified and unmet needs on school entry.

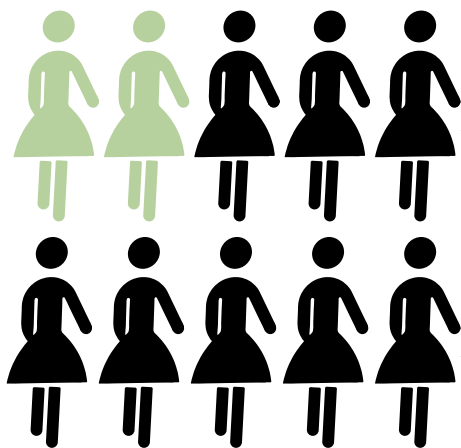
There are overarching themes which we will ensure are considered within the workstreams including the impact of disadvantage and supporting seldom heard/underrepresented communities.

No workstream has been developed for Speech Language and Communication as the findings from this review have fed into the Speech, Language and Communication review led by Sheffield Children's Hospital Foundation Trust and actions have been incorporated in to the related workstreams of that review.



Maternal Mental Health & School Readiness

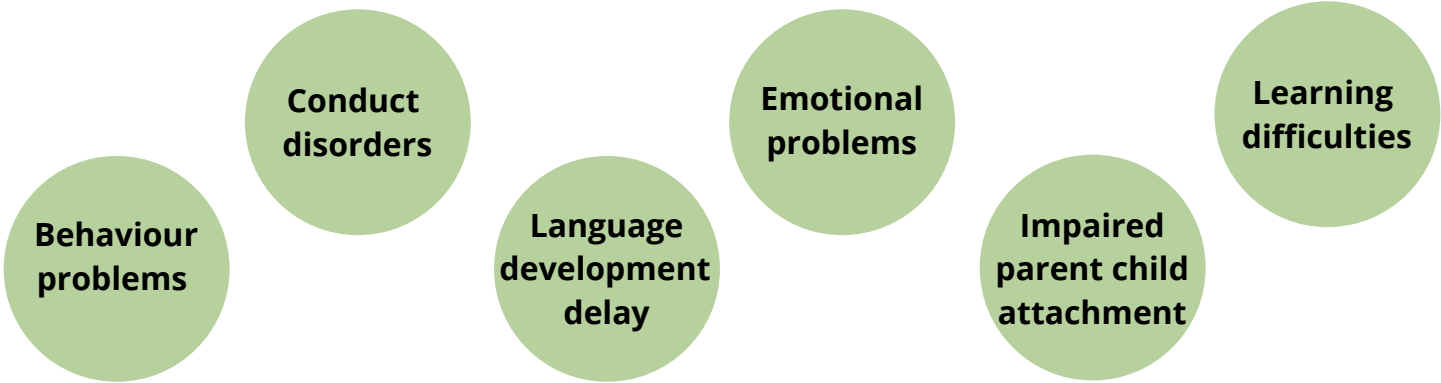
One of the strongest predictors of wellbeing in early years, is the mental health and wellbeing of the mother or caregiver.



2 in 10 women will suffer from a perinatal mental illness

Children of mothers with mental ill-health are five times more likely to have mental health problems themselves

Impact of Maternal Depression on School Readiness



Department of Health (2011) Families in the foundation years evidence pack Children's Defense Fund Minnesota (2011) Maternal depression and early childhood

The ability to recognise and respond rapidly to early signs of mental health problems during the perinatal period is critical for both the wellbeing of parents and infants.

Sheffield is updating its perinatal mental health care pathway to ensure clear information is available for both professionals and families about the wide range of community based and specialist support on offer (including infant mental health provision) to help meet mild, moderate and severe mental health needs and how this can be accessed. The work includes a particular focus on ensuring equity of access for disadvantaged/underserved populations and communities. Peer support is an important element of Sheffield's PNMH offer with links back into community-based early years' activities and support. The newly established South Yorkshire Mental Health Service is also a significant new development providing specialist therapeutic help for women who have experienced birth trauma. We also have PNMH support within our Family Centres delivered via Light. **Light** is a peer support charity working to support the emotional & mental wellbeing of families.



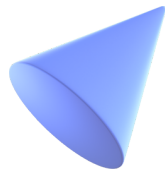
Specialist Infant Mental Health Service

CAMHS - Initial Offer



Specialist assessment

- Evidence based therapeutic interventions for individual dyads (e.g., Video Interaction Guidance (VIG), dyadic psychotherapy, formulation-based psychological therapy) with a plan to expand the range of interventions offered
- Consultations to support differential diagnosis of whether emerging developmental difficulties are relational or suggestive of an underlying neurodevelopmental difficulty



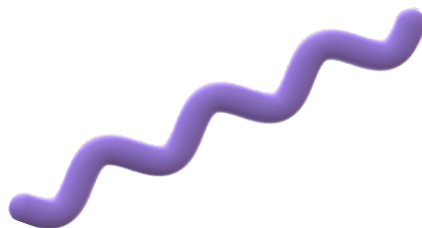
Within the constraints of the current capacity, we aim to:

- Develop a training offer
- Develop consultation and reflective practice offer
- Offer of joint work where appropriate
- Provide specialist model-specific supervision where appropriate



The new specialist Infant Mental Health service within CAMHS (Children and Adolescent Mental Health Service) is now active with a provisional name of PAIRS (Parent Infant Relationship Service), however, there is ongoing consultation with stakeholders to discuss this further:

- Currently two staff (as of July 2022); a Consultant Clinical Psychologist and a Senior Clinical Specialist Art Psychotherapist (both 4 days a week) based at Beighton CAMHS.
- Referrals are accepted from conception to 3 years, but capacity may be limited.
- Initial telephone referral with a follow-up form is requested to allow staff in supporting referrers and manage resource.
- Joint triage meetings are established with the Health Visiting Team with input from the Specialist Perinatal Team, enabling transfer of referrals to most appropriate service.



Development Activity to Support Good Parental and Infant Mental Health

- Maximising key points of contact to share attachment and brain development messages for parents
- New Mental Health Service specialist post-natal therapeutic help for women who have experienced birth trauma
- Perinatal Mental Health and Infant Mental Health Pathways development
- Development of a Father's Post Natal Depression offer
- Increased Family Hub activity for non-Breastfeeding mums
- Development of a hybrid Preparation Birth and Beyond Programme



Development work is taking place to identify key contact points and key messages for professionals to share with parents. The key messages will also be developed into other resources such as posters, leaflets and social media posts with the aim of embedding the messages across all partners.

The PSED workstream group has engagement with Maternity Transformation Midwife LMNS and South Yorkshire and Bassetlaw's Integrated Care System to ensure alignment with the Great Start in Life Action Plan which mirrors the activity within this workstream.

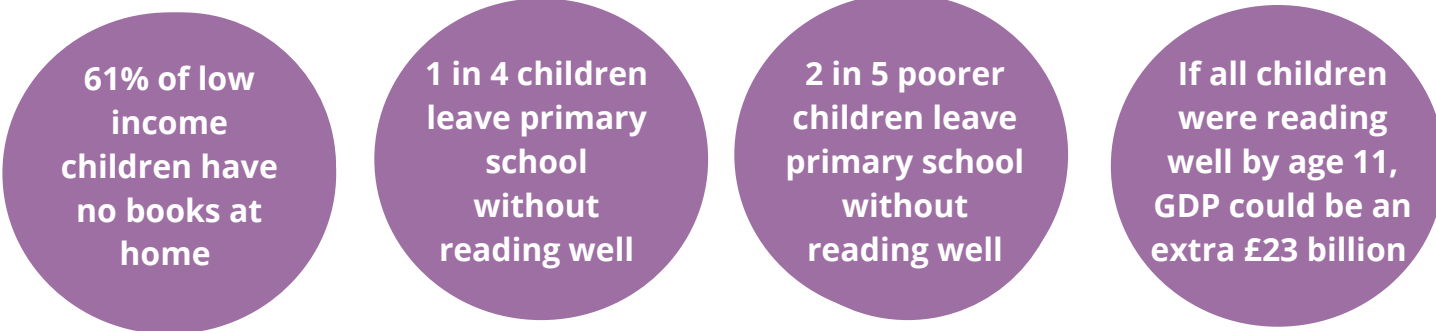
All activity in the workstream is focused on developing activity and approaches to support good attachment, and relationships and develop brain building opportunities.





A child's communication environment is a more dominant predictor of early language than their social background.

Language Proficiency is a Key Predictor of School Success



High Income



1116 Words

- By the age of 3 children from low-income families have:
- heard on average 30 million fewer words than children in high income families
 - half the vocabulary of children in high income families

Low Income



525 Words

Betty Hart and Todd Risley Meaningful differences in the every day experiences of young American children (Baltimore MD: Paul; H.Brookes, 1995), Leffel K, Suskin D Seminars in Speech and Language 2013;34:4 Parent-directed approaches to enrich the early language environments of children living in poverty. Hammer C (2012) NCT Research overview: Parent-child communication is important from birth, Save the Children (2014) Read on get on: How reading can help children escape poverty, OECD (2012) Lets read them a story! The parent factor in education, State Government of Victoria (2014) Parenting support strategy

Over the past 10 years, evidence concerning the strong link between early language development and later-life outcomes has resulted in several calls to prioritise early language skills as a primary child wellbeing indicator (EIF, 2017). In Sheffield we have heard from practitioners who regard Speech, Language and Communication support at Early Help level as a missing link in the chain and too many referrals are heading straight to Speech and Language Therapy services without consideration of earlier help and support.



Development Activity to Support Learning and School Readiness

A review is taking place of all Speech & Language services. Early identification has been prioritised as part of this review and as a workstream they are:

- Further rolling out of explore play & learn, an early referral pathway for children aged 1-2 with potential Speech and Language delay - partnership working with health's 0-19 team and Family Centres
- Timeline mapping against localities, with a focus on gaps of services for those; from seldom heard communities, accessing FEL, on the clinical SaLT pathway
- Considering further actions to be taken regarding 2-year FEL places where children have additional needs
- Creating a clear pathway/process to reduce the number of children who were not brought to their SaLT appointments

A review is taking place of all Speech & Language services. Early identification has been prioritised as part of this review and the following work developed:

- Further rolling out of explore play & learn, an early referral pathway for children aged 1-2 with potential Speech and Language delay - partnership working with health's 0-19 team and Family Centres
- Timeline mapping against localities, with a focus on gaps of services for those; from seldom heard communities, accessing FEL, on the clinical SaLT pathway
- Development of further activity regarding 2-year FEL places take up from children with additional needs.
- Creating a clear pathway/process to reduce the number of children who were not brought to their SaLT appointment.

As a Local Authority, we have written, developed and delivered 'Speak Up for Sheffield' with Speech therapists. 'Speak Up for Sheffield' is focused on supporting the development of children's speech, language and communication. It is part of a South Yorkshire wide project (South Yorkshire Futures) where we are aiming to improve children's outcomes across the whole region. Within the South Yorkshire Futures strategy, we identified five levels of expertise in understanding children's speech, language and communication development according to the kinds of roles they have. This course is aimed at people working at the 'Universal Level': everyone who works with young children. The training takes into consideration the findings from the 30million word gap report and the gap in communication skills between disadvantaged children and their peers when they start school, what can be done to support language development in the early years to give children the best possible start.

The Accelerated Progress Plan is looking at the 4 areas of PfA – Health, Education, Community / Friendships and Independence. These are applicable at all ages and stages. With the use of the PFA at all ages tool produced by The Council for Disabled Children we will be able to ensure good quality, consistent conversations with families from the early years, that will cover the defined areas of School Readiness from UNICEF and South Yorkshire Futures.



HCP Brain Building Project



1) Who we are

A focus group of local health visitors, school and nursery SENCOs, parents, Early Years & parenting support staff.

2) What we do

We work to support children and their families to get the best start in life.

3) Where we work

We work in schools, nurseries, family centres or visit families in their homes.

8) What do I do next?

Telephone us on the number given – leave a message if required, and we will ring you back with further information.

7) What information will be shared?

You will be asked to sign a single consent form for all the services taking part to access your information. None of your information will be available publicly or in the findings of the study.



4) What is the pilot for?

We want to explore the best way to give families with children who are born prematurely early access to neurodevelopmental support, and resources to develop skills and give them the best start in life. This is being offered in your local area. If successful we want to provide this service across the city.

5) What is this pilot offering?

We are offering personalised support from your local services, access to a parent support group and online resources in order to help you and your child develop early learning skills.

6) How will you know it has been successful?

At the beginning of the pilot, your keyworker will help you carry out the ASQ (Ages & Stages Questionnaire). These are the standard questionnaires that are carried out for all children at 10-12 months and 2-2.5 years. After offering the support and activities we will undertake the questionnaire again to see what progress has been made. You will also be invited to feedback on the project.

This project has developed as an action from the Health and Care Partnership (HCP) Neurodevelopment Programme. The project will provide early access to “brain building” activities, to children who may need additional support to develop skills and give them the best start in life. This will help children develop early learning skills. Brain building activities are activities which will help children to improve e.g., working memory, co-ordination, attention, word identification, mathematical calculation, etc.

This project is working with families with children who were born pre-term. Prematurity is one of a number of developmental vulnerabilities which may make it harder for children to reach their full potential and to have a chance at a good future. Lessons learned from the project will be taken forward to seek funding and develop support across the city.

Sheffield Early Learning Community



Sheffield ELC believes that services working together with parents, will help give every child the best start in life.

Sheffield is part of the Early Learning Community (ELC) programme, an area-based partnership with Save the Children and local partners across the UK. The Sheffield ELC links to locality B. ELCs recognise that when services and programmes work together, they have a greater impact on children's outcomes. We work with everyone who is central to children's early development, starting with the family. The programme's aim is to make a long-term difference to the lives of children facing challenges in communities across the UK. In partnership, we use evidence and family experience to change service delivery. We are now exploring the roll-out of the Home Learning Environment Pilot into more communities.



Enhancing Physical Activity & School Readiness



Physical activity for young children is an important component of early brain development and learning, movement skills such as eye skills and manipulative skills help children access curricular activities with enjoyment and success. Communication skills depend on well developed physical skills. 1 in 10 children aged 2–4 meet the Chief Medical Officer's guidelines of being physically active for at least 180 minutes (3 hours), spread throughout the day.



Helps develop coordination & movement skills



Promotes healthy weight



Strengthens developing muscles & bones



Helps children develop social skills

Department of Health (2011) Start Active, Stay Active A report on physical activity for health from the four home countries' Chief Medical Officers Cabinet Office
(2014) Physical activity Olympic and Paralympic legacy for the Nation
British Heart Foundation National Centre (BHFNC) for Physical Activity and Health, Loughborough University (2015) Early years: Practical strategies for promoting physical activity

Development Activity to Support Physical Development

- Weaning, Dump the Dummy, toileting accessible offer
- Training review of Early Years and maternal healthy lifestyle/health literacy offers
- Exploration of Holiday Activities and Food (HAF) programmes in the Early Years
- Completion of the Childhood Obesity Pathway
- Vaccination and immunisation take up promotion
- Oral Health promotion activity



The Physical Health Workstream is established and along with multi-agency members from across Early Years the workstream has engagement from Public Health, Move More and the Health and Leisure Team.

The workstream is developing activity to increase the compliment of YouTube resources, drop-in sessions and groups for weaning, Dump the Dummy and toilet training. Based on data and local intelligence, targeted Start Well sessions will be delivered within identified communities. The group is working to expand the outdoor play offer within Family Hub outreach activity. The Holiday Activities and Food (HAF) Programme is currently only open to School age Children. The Group are exploring ways to make a similar offer to Early Years Families as HAF is not available to Early Years Children.

Immunisation levels post covid are low, Family Hubs are working with Public Health to promote Vaccination and Immunisation in Early Years. A pathway for addressing missing immunisations is under development. (July 2022)

To support professionals, the workstream is undertaking a review of available training in Early Years and Maternal Health Literacy and Healthy Lifestyle offers and will undertake a gap analysis to inform future planning. In addition, the Childhood Obesity Pathway is reaching completion.

Parenting Support Programmes & School Readiness for Under 5s

Parenting has a bigger influence on a child's life chances in the early years than education, wealth or class.



4 in 10 Children miss out on 'good' parenting

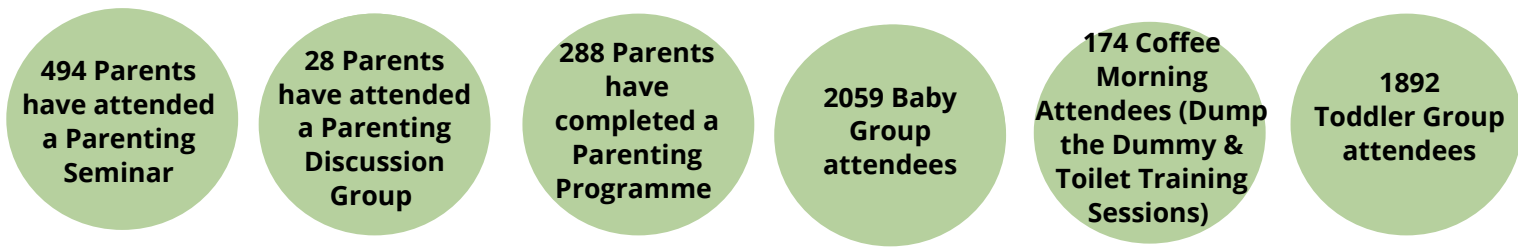
Sheffield Family Centres deliver online seminars on specific topics along with face to face activity groups to support parents and children under 5.

- Seminars & Activity Groups include:
- Dump the Dummy
 - Toilet Training
 - Explore, Play and Learn
 - New You, New Me
 - Baby Groups
 - Toddler Sessions
 - Story Explorers
 - Shake, Rattle and Sing

Supporting parents with parenting programmes has a positive impact on both parents' and children's wellbeing and mental health and is an important part of prevention and early intervention. Sheffield Parent Hub deliver a range of parenting programmes, discussion groups and seminars for parents of children aged 0-19.

- | | | |
|---|---|---|
| <p>Seminars include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• 0-12 Raising Resilient Children• 0-12 Positive Parenting• 0-12 Raising Confident & Competent Children• 0-12 SEND - Helping your child reach their potential• 0-12 SEND - Changing negative behaviour into positive behaviour• Time to Sleep | <p>Discussion Groups include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• 0-12 Hassle Free Outings with Children• 0-12 Dealing with Disobedience• 0-12 Developing good bedtime routines• 0-12 Managing fighting & aggression | <p>Programmes include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Incredible Baby• Incredible Toddler• Incredible Years• 0-12 Triple P• ASD Programmes• Being a Parent Programmes |
|---|---|---|

This is an overview of engagement we have had in programmes for primary aged children in the last year



(Teen, Domestic abuse and Parental Conflict Programmes not included)

Social Mobility and Child Poverty Commission (2014) State of the Nation 2014: Social mobility and child poverty in Great Britain, Department of Education, Department of Health (2011) Families in the foundation years evidence pack, Department of Education and Skills (2004) What works in parenting support? A review of the international evidence, Health Equity Evidence Review 1 (2014) Good quality parenting programmes and the home to school transition

Development Activity to Support Early Years Parenting


- Increasing engagement of Doula supported families in Family Hub activity
- Exploration of new ways to engage Early Years Families with MAST following Step down from Social Care
- Targeting of Start Well courses to specific communities
- Mapping of post COVID 19 Toddler group recovery and support to reopen
- Introduction of Mellow parenting to targeted groups
- Expansion of Incredible Baby and Incredible Toddler offer




High Quality Early Education & School Readiness




By the age of five the brain forms as many as 700 neural connections per second. High-quality early years education significantly improves child health and educational outcomes, particularly for disadvantaged children. The average economic benefit of early education programmes for low income 3- and 4-year-olds is nearly 2.5 times the investment. If all children from low-income families receive high-quality early education the gap in achievement could be closed by as much as 20-50%.




High-quality early education improves school readiness




High-quality early education improves future academic attainment



High-quality early education can lead to higher levels of employment



High-quality early education improves future productivity



High-quality early education can lead to less involvement in crime

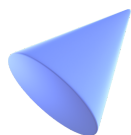
Centre for Research in Early Childhood (2014) Early years literature review, Centre for Research in Early Childhood (2013) The impact of early education as a strategy in countering socio-economic disadvantage http://developingchild.harvard.edu/resources/multimedia/interactive_features/five-numbers/ Aos S, Lieb R et al Benefits and costs of early prevention and early intervention programmes for youth. Olympia , Washington State Institute for Public Policy 2004 Department for Education (2007) Effective pre-school and primary education 3-11 project (EPPE 3-11): Influences on children's development and progress in Key Stage 2: Social / behavioural outcomes in Year 5 Gorey M School Psychology Quarterly 2001;16(1):9-30 Early childhood education: A meta-analytic affirmation of the short and long-term benefits of educational opportunity

Early child development sets the foundation for lifelong learning, behaviour, and health. The experiences children have in early years settings and early childhood shape the brain and the child's capacity to learn, to get along with others, and to respond to daily stresses and challenges.

Early brain development establishes a child's social competence, cognitive skills, emotional well-being, language, literacy skills, physical abilities and is a marker for well-being in school and life resiliency (Blair, 2002; Posner & Rothbart, 2006; Shanker & Greenspan, 2009).

Children's early experiences – the bonds they form with their parents, carers and their first learning experiences – deeply affect their future physical, cognitive, emotional and social development. Optimizing the early years of children's lives is the best investment we can make as a local authority in ensuring their future success.

The first 1000 days of life, from conception to age 2, is a critical phase during which the foundations of a child's development are laid. The report, published 2019, [First 1000 days of life \(parliament.uk\)](https://www.parliament.uk/publications/190001/1/first-1000-days-of-life) in summary – the report states that 'Improving support for children, parents and families during this vulnerable period requires a long-term and coordinated response nationally and locally. The Government should lead by developing a long-term, cross-Government strategy for the first 1000 days of life, setting demanding goals to reduce adverse childhood experiences, improve school readiness and reduce infant mortality and child poverty.'



Achievements in Early Years Quality

- The Early Years training programme has been delivered virtually over 2021-22
- Free sessions have been delivered to support transition into school as well as work with the sector (nurseries, schools, 0-5 SEND and Inclusion, school readiness team and childminders) to develop a Sheffield transition record. Launch events and training have then been delivered for all to attend
- The free improving outcomes sessions have been developed by teachers from schools in conjunction with Quality & Access Team and Quality Improvement Team to work alongside early years practitioners and childminders looking at speech, language, and communication needs, Physical Social and Emotion Development (PSED), Wellbeing and Self-Regulation and Supporting SEND transition – each session taking into account the impact of Covid and the effect it will have on school readiness
- Recruitment Fair delivered in conjunction with Sheffield College to support Setting recruitment of childcare practitioners

- Over the last two years Early Years Quality Team have continued to deliver a full service to the early years sector – Childminders, Group care settings and Schools. Despite the challenges the sector has faced, they have continued to engage with the team and support each other through network meetings, sharing good practice and ideas as well as us sharing key messages from Local Authority leads and Public Health.
- Training has included spotlight sessions and introduction sessions on areas of Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS -early identification, inclusive environments, cultural capital, maths, sustained shared thinking for example, Early Learning Goals), Speak up for Sheffield (introduction and Champions modules), Quality First Teaching, Building Best Practice and Trauma Informed Practice to name a few of the courses that have been on offer.
- Bespoke setting support has been delivered for those settings who are newly registered with Ofsted or are within an Ofsted category (Inadequate or Requires Improvement) as well as those preparing for their inspection.
- Plans moving forward - following consultation with the sector, training areas have been provided, linked with areas of need, and will now be project-based, allowing time to implement skills learnt and have a time of reflection before coming back together as a group and building upon them.



Development Activity to Support Early Years SEND



Completed activity

- Early Years transitions principles and templates are agreed and shared, and there is a plan in place for implementation
- A pilot for Early Years provider engagement in Stage 1 SEND Panel meetings is under development.
- A visual has been developed to inform providers of pathways to SEND support
- An Early Years version of the Sheffield Support Grid has been produced. Training is due to be rolled out in the autumn term
- Work has taken place through existing forums to support and advise practitioners in having conversations with parents regarding their child's SEND needs, these are to be based around the 4 cornerstones of PfA
- 2-year-old integrated review process is finalised and is active

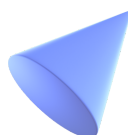
Planned activity

- Early Years funding mechanisms for children with high needs will be reviewed in Autumn 2022
- The Portage service will be reviewed along with opportunities for development of this service
- Early Years support and resources will be developed.
- The Accelerated Progress Plan will begin to see impact, particularly around consistency of practice and conversation

A set of principles for transitions has been agreed by the inclusion board. Templates for sharing information with the receiving school have been developed to ensure consistency of information sharing. Stage 1 School SEND panels have not to date involved Early Years Providers. Involvement in the Stage 1 Panels will allow providers access to peer support and advice.

The Pathway visual will be published on the Learn Sheffield website and links will be provided on additional sites such as the Local Offer and SCC SEND pages.

The Early Years Sheffield Support Grid development has been completed and is currently being tested. Phase 1 is complete. Phase 2 activity will consider Early Years SEND funding and will take on board the findings of consultations over the last three years. Phase 2 will also progress activity around the development of the Portage team activity and will consider support and resources linked across Early Years SEND.



System, Infrastructure and Investment Recommendations

- Development of a leadership role for Sheffield Early Years
- Increased investment in Portage workers
- Increased investment into Early Years Prevention services and Early Years SEND support
- Early Years SEND Support integration into the wider Early Years System
- Information sharing and "Single view" development
- Further development of parental voice and influence in terms of service development using the opportunities presented by the developing Family Hubs

Professionals from all areas of the Early Years system tell us that we need to have a clear “lead” for Early Years. It is apparent throughout the review that SCC services are appropriately placed within Communities, Children and Families and Education and Skills teams, however this means that there is no director with overall responsibility for Early Years in the city, and no champion to represent this important stage in the lives of Sheffield children and their families at City, Regional and National level. Early Years is essentially everyone's business within the Local Authority, but it is no one's priority despite Starting Well-being a key priority within the Health and Wellbeing board.

Portage is highly regarded by parents and practitioners and further investment in this area to increase the numbers of practitioners trained should be explored. In addition, further alignment of Portage and Early Years 0 – 5 SEND with Family Hubs should be explored as this has been found to be successful in other Local Authorities in terms of then linking families into further support, activity and support networks. Whilst there is established good quality partnership working across Midwifery, the 0 – 19 service, Family Centres (Hubs), Early Years Quality Teams, MAST and Early Years Pathway Teams, the Early Years SEND team are less engaged and opportunities are missed with regard to the many benefits for children and families in receiving integrated services. Work in this area is a focus for the SEND workstream, however all agencies should work towards an understanding of the team and their role.

Investment into the areas of Early Years Prevention and Early Years SEND support is needed to ensure children are in the best possible position when beginning school. Evidence tells us that this early investment will reap rewards for children and families, for schools and settings and for the rebalancing of support across the system.

Parental voice and influence is underdeveloped and requires commitment. We need to develop a system wide approach to parental voice and ensure that once heard that we truly listen. Our Family Centres (Hubs) are beginning this work by ensuring parent representation on Family Hub Governance however we have further to go and need to consider parental voice within all our work in the Early Years.



Development Activity to Support System Level Challenges



- A new Early Years Strategy for 2023
- Family Hubs parent involvement in governance
- Partnership working within localities supported by the development of Local Area Committees
- Early Help Partnership Training Offer development
- Information Sharing Agreements
- School Readiness predictive tool
- Development of a social prescribing model for Early Years families and maternity
- Early Years element of an All-Phase Education Strategy to be consulted on this September

Work will begin in Autumn 2022 to consult on a new Early Years Strategy for the City building on the developments of the Start for Life Offer in Family Centres and their transformation into Family Hubs. We were unsuccessful as a city in our Family Hubs Transformation bid. Transformation and the development of the system wide Early Years offer will require support, commitment and investment to make the changes needed to level up life chances for the future adults of Sheffield. Transformation in terms of Family Hubs includes advanced information sharing, workforce development, intelligent use of data, integration of teams and better use of resources. Transformation funding for Family Hubs should not be confused with funding being provided for Family Hubs delivery.

Family Hubs delivery funding is assured for the next 3 years and at this stage the actual amounts and the detail of the delivery expectations are unknown. This funding will support our Family Hubs to go the extra mile in terms of delivery to our most vulnerable families and enhance our universal preventative offer within the scope of the programme. However, additional investment should be considered to support preventative community and voluntary activity for families as we recognise the value that community activity and localism bring in terms of supporting families, identifying need, providing advice and supporting and reducing isolation. All of which support the ambitions to enable all Sheffield children to be school and life ready.

In terms of SEND support in the early years, there are more opportunities to further upskill settings, SCC and VCF staff in child development, identification of need and low-level advice and support. Through the Early Help Training Partnership, the current 0 – 5 SEND Team and our 0 – 19 teams have ideal skill sets to share their knowledge and experience and ensure that those in contact with young families have enough understanding to provide the lowest level advice and ensure referrals are made in a timely way.

Information sharing remains problematic. It is a vital component in true integration and earliest help and support, but progress is slow. Investment into this area would be of benefit beyond Early Years and into wider Early Help and Targeted support.

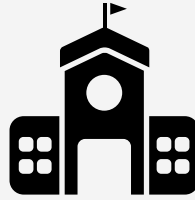
Our planned predictive modelling test was put on hold in Winter 2021 due to the additional pressures on schools in relation to Covid19. We plan to revisit this work in Autumn 2022. Social Prescribing is developing in Sheffield in terms of support to adults. There are initial conversations in place to explore possibilities within the children's world and we will see developments in this area over the coming year.

Why Invest in School Readiness?

Failing to invest sufficiently in quality early care and education short-changes taxpayers because the return on investment is greater than many other economic development options.



Every £1 invested in quality early care and education saves taxpayers up to £13 in future costs



For every £1 spent on early years education, £7 has to be spent to have the same impact in adolescence



Targeted parenting programmes to prevent conduct disorders pay back £8 over six years for every £1 invested with savings to the NHS, education and criminal justice system

Centre for Research in Early Childhood (2013) The impact of early education as a strategy in countering socioeconomic disadvantage. DCSF (2008) The impact of parental involvement on children's education. Public Health England (2013) The health and wellbeing of children and young people in London

With a long-term view, there is a significant incentive to invest in the Early Years. Whilst we cannot ignore the current financial pressures both locally and nationally, allocating resources to support the health and learning of young children is a critical economic and educational development strategy. The UK economy depends on having a pipeline of talented, educated employees with the skills needed in today's work environment:

- Problem-solving
- Communication
- Decision-making
- Critical thinking
- Motivation
- Collaboration

The potential for long term savings in health and education is significant. For example, targeted parenting programmes to prevent conduct disorders pay back £8 over six years for every £1 invested with savings to the NHS, education and criminal justice system.



Local and National Factors Requiring Sheffield Leadership Voice and Influence



- Retention and recruitment of Early Years settings staff
- The national issue of setting closures and viability
- 2-year-old Funded Early Learning criteria is excluding children who would benefit, and yet take up is low in the city
- Toddler groups and support groups in the city are slow to recover and need support to do so
- Focused exploration of the issue of early identification of SEND needs amongst children from BAME communities and the links to High Exclusion rates
- Support to improve educational outcomes for Roma children should build on the good practice in place

These issues cannot be addressed via the current workstreams and workstream membership however they are factors which do remain a challenge to our ambitions for the children of Sheffield.

Sheffield Providers are reporting staffing shortages of qualified staff which will impact on the number of children that can be taken. This is a national issue, historically there is a high turnover of staff in the sector but the numbers of people entering the sector is outstripped by the numbers leaving to find better paid roles. To support Sheffield's ambitions for Children in the Early Years, Health and Wellbeing Board has written to the government to highlight the concerns we have regarding recruitment to the sector, investment in Early Years and 2-year-old Funded Early Learning (FEL) criteria (July 2022).

Parents tell us of the inequality of access to 2-year-old FEL, the narrowness of the criteria and cost of childcare to low-income families is excluding some families in terms of access to childcare and education. Opportunities should be taken in all areas where the message can be shared regarding the issues faced in the sector and the impact of limited access to 2-year-old FEL.

Providers have been under pressure during the pandemic as across the country closures are beginning to happen. We need to be mindful of the impact on sufficiency in the city and the impact of closures on employment and family income.

Toddler groups in the city have been severely impacted by COVID. As an example, within the east of Sheffield just 7 out of 40 remain operational post Covid 19 (March 2022). Local forums are working with the Locality Family Hub to restart activity with a plan to take a project proposal to Southeast LAC to secure funding to kickstart and support across the Locality is available. Is there a way to support this activity across targeted areas of the city via our Local Area Committees?

The reported issues surrounding later referral to assessment for children from BAME communities should be explored further. The links between high exclusion rates and SEND needs for children from Black and Minority Ethnic backgrounds requires focussed consideration.

There is good practice in place within schools and services who support Roma Communities, further investment is required to expand on the evaluated good practice in place to reach more families. For example, the Owler Brook project which sees School, 0 – 19 services, Family Centres and Ryegate Paediatricians working together to engage families and build trust in services has worked well in terms of Roma families access to support and assessment. The model has worked well but is limited by short term funding.



The latest Flip the Focus: From School Ready to Child Ready Report Calls for Government Intervention and Adds to Our Voice

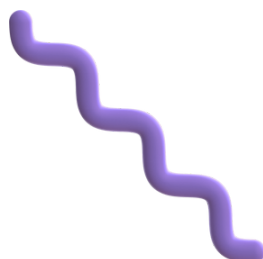
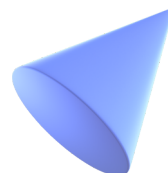


Found here



In an online survey of nearly 1,000 primary school teachers carried out during November & December 2021 by YouGov & Kindred Squared, it was reported that half of reception children were not ready for school. The report also asked: What can be done to improve this picture?

- Increasing overall awareness of what school readiness means and providing additional support to parents and schools were the most called for government interventions from school staff, advocating for a national initiative of what school readiness means so both families & schools work towards the same goal
- Providing additional funding solely for school readiness
- Increased access to nursery/child centre provision & additional targeted support to those who need it the most
- A renewed dedication to develop a multi-agency approach to school readiness was stressed as crucial to improved outcomes



Sheffield's Early Years School Readiness Ambitions

How Will We Know If We Have Been Successful?

Short Term

- Increased referrals to Early Help and Family Hub activity
- Increased referrals into Early Years Parenting support
- Increases in children in receipt of 2 year old integrated reviews and clear supportive outcomes

Longer Term

- To see positive movement in terms of narrowing the gap between Free School Meals (FSM) and non-FSM outcomes
- Positive feedback from Parents, Early Years Providers and Schools regarding their experiences on transition and with preparedness for learning
- Healthy weight at 5
- Improved oral health in the Early Years
- Increases in vaccination and immunisation accept
- Reduced referrals to Speech and Language Therapy
- We will see more children arriving at school with their needs identified and plans in place to support them to learn from their very first days
- Rebalancing and reduction of the proportion of children from BAME communities excluded from school

If we are successful, in the short term we will see:

We expect to see an increase in the numbers of children in receipt of an integrated 2-year review and to see clear outcomes from those reviews which support families to access support and services.

We will see improvement in terms of closing the attainment gap between those who are in receipt of Free School Meals (FSM) and those not in receipt of FSM. The gap has stopped closing in the Early Years nationally, we would like to see movement restart in this area, particularly in relation to localities/wards with high levels of deprivation.

We will see positive feedback and anecdotal evidence from practitioners and families regarding their preparation for school and schools' readiness for the child.

We will see reductions in the 0 – 5 obesity levels with families having easy access to information activity and support to develop and maintain healthy lifestyles.

Vaccination and immunisation rates for the city would be improved beyond pre-Covid19 levels and oral health data will tell a positive story in terms of proactive targeting of resources, advice and support.

Ultimately, we will see a rebalancing of resources and need towards Early Help and away from direct referral to specialist support. For example, in areas such as Speech, Language and Communication and Infant Mental Health, as well as higher satisfaction rates in terms of SEND support in the Early Years and Schools and the number of Children and Families ready for school with a skilled and knowledgeable

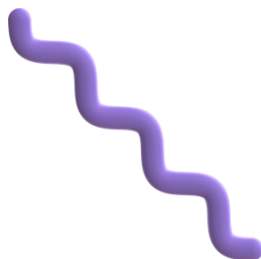
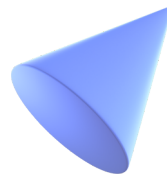
workforce Early Years workforce who are able to identify needs at the earliest point and respond to those needs with timely support and referral.



Performance Measures

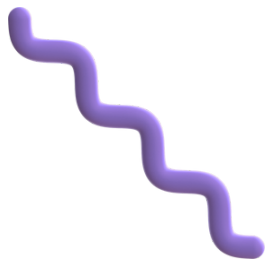
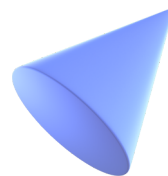
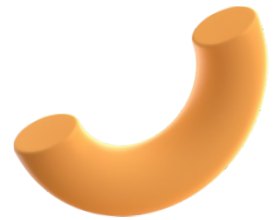


- Narrowing the gap data
- Good Levels of Development (GLD) at school and child level. Ethnicity, Free School Meals (FSM) and deprivation (IDACI)
- Feedback from Parents, Early Years Providers and Schools regarding their experiences on transition
- Monitoring of two year old integrated review outcomes.
- Healthy weight at 5
- Vaccination and immunisation data
- Under 5s oral health data
- Referrals to Speech and Language Therapy
- Referrals and access to Early Help and Family Hub activity
- Referrals into Early Years Parenting support



Acknowledgements

- Improving school readiness - Creating a better start for London (Published August 2015)
- South Yorkshire Futures
- Sheffield Public Health Team
- Sheffield Parent Carer Forum
- SCC Performance and Analysis Team
- Thank you to all of the Sheffield Parents, Early Years Practitioners and Health Practitioners who have contributed views and information in the development of this review.



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SHEFFIELD EARLY YEARS SCHOOL READINESS REVIEW

Summary and recommendations

2022

Sheffield City Council

Sheffield
City Council



What is School Readiness?

In Sheffield, we believe all children should have a happy, safe and healthy early childhood which prepares them for achieving their potential in education and beyond. We recognise that children learn and develop in different ways and at different rates, and our approaches need to take account of this.



Sheffield adopts UNICEF's and South Yorkshire Futures' definitions of school readiness.

UNICEF's description of the three aspects of school readiness:

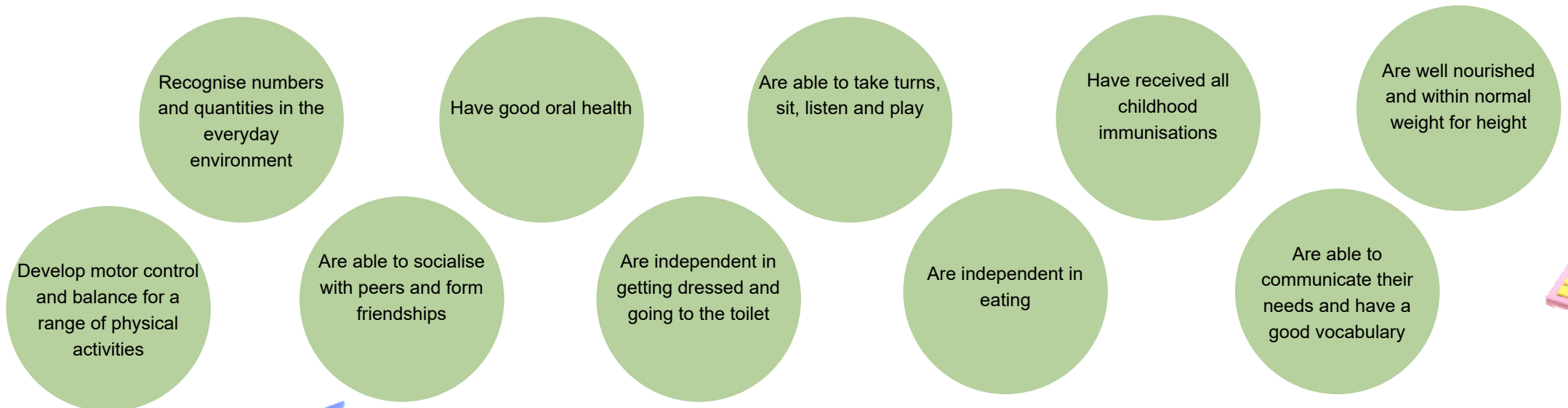
- Ready Children - focusing on Children's learning and development
- Families and communities' readiness for school - focusing on parents' and carers' attitudes and involvement in early learning and development and transition to school
- Ready schools - focusing on the school environment and practices that encourage and support a smooth transition for children into primary school and advance and promote the learning of all children.

South Yorkshire Futures describes school ready children as

To be school ready, children need a nurturing and safe environment that enables them to be healthy, independent, emotionally secure and able to separate from their parent/carer, socially competent and able to learn. To achieve this, we need:

- Ready Children
- Ready Families
- Ready Schools

What School-Ready Children Look Like



Unicef School Readiness; a conceptual framework Apr 2012

Milestones of normal child development aged about four years (based on the work of Mary Sheridan, From Birth to Five Years)

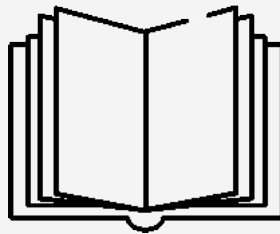
The Importance of School Readiness

School readiness starts at birth with the support of parents and caregivers, when young children acquire the social and emotional skills, knowledge and attitudes necessary for success in school and life. School readiness at age five has a strong impact on future educational attainment and life chances.

Children who do not achieve a good level of development by age 5 are more likely to struggle with:



Social
Skills



Reading



Maths



Physical
Skills

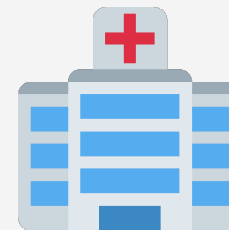
which impacts on outcomes in childhood and later life such as:



Educational
Outcomes



Crime



Health

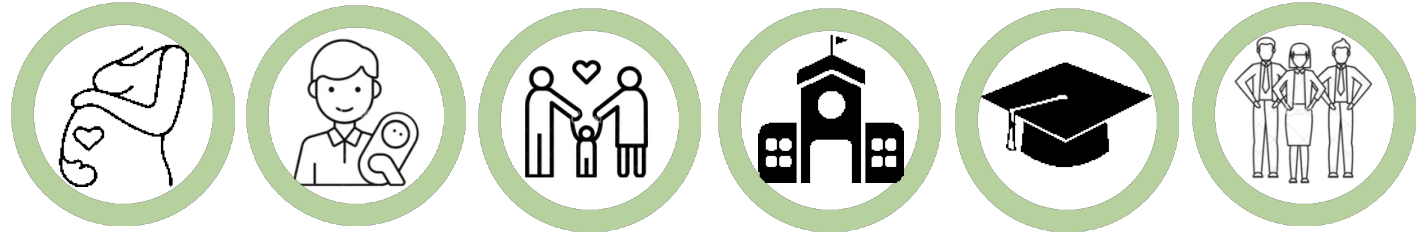


Life
Expectancy



Review Aims

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Early Years School Readiness Review

We aimed to:

- Clarify the required outcomes to improve school readiness in the city.
- Agree what needs to change in supporting good school readiness ambitions for the city.
- Develop and describe transformational, innovative practice and models which support improvements in school readiness in the city.
- Identify short and long-term benefits of achieving our identified outcomes.
- Identify the infrastructure requirements for change in terms of systems and support.
- Develop outcome measures and monitoring requirements.
- Ensure that developments are aligned with the direction and ambitions of the current Early Help Review.

Key Sheffield Strategies and Plans.

The activities and recommendations within this paper will contribute to the ambitions and Priorities related to Good Physical and Mental Health, Education and Economic Wellbeing within the Corporate Plan, the Inclusion Strategy, the Sheffield Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy and Sheffield's Great Start in Life Strategy. Specifically :

Corporate Plan

- *Communities and Neighbourhoods: focusing on our ambition for all communities to love and be proud of where they live, to have great facilities, to feel safe, live without discrimination and be healthier and happier*
- *Education, Health, and Care: our ambition is for every person in Sheffield to be able to achieve their full potential. We want to address educational inequalities and support people to stay fit and healthy, so fewer people reach crisis point and families can thrive*
- *Our Council: we want to lead boldly with purpose and decisiveness, putting the communities and people of Sheffield at the heart of everything and working hard to deliver excellence always*

Inclusion strategy

Commitment 1 - Effective early identification of needs with appropriate assessments across Education, Health, and Care.

Commitment 2 - A wide range of Education, Health and Care services that meets the needs of our young people.

Commitment 3 - Smooth transition across Education, Health, and Care at every stage of a young person's life and particularly to adult life.

Commitment 4 - Excellent communication and engagement between young people, families, Education, Health, and Care services including schools.

Sheffield Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy (2019 – 2024) Starting Well

- *Every child achieves a level of development in their early years for the best start in life.*
- *Every child is included in their education and can access their local school.*
- *Every child and young person has a successful transition to adulthood.*

Great Start in Life Strategy

Outcome 1 : *Babies and young children are safe and have good health.*

Outcome 2 : *Parents are resilient and any mental health issues are addressed at the earliest opportunity.*

Outcome 3 : *Brain development in the early years is optimised by secure attachment and quality relationships.*

Outcome 4: *Children are ready for school and life.*



Consultation.



- Focus Groups have taken place with Sheffield's Early Years Practitioners including Heath Visitors, Nursery Nurses, Early Years providers, SCC Early Years Teams, Early Help and Children's Social Care staff, and parenting group leaders.
- Surveys were undertaken for parents and professionals using online platforms and through face to face activity in Family Centres.
- Parent's focus groups were held within Family Centres, in parenting groups and also via sessions hosted by Parent Carer Forum.



School Readiness in Sheffield



To date we have...

- Defined the current situation in Sheffield and described the barriers to good readiness for life and learning, through consultation and research.
- Clarified current projects and improvement activity in the city.
- Defined the benefits of change and improvement in integrated activity.
- Agreed what needs to change or improve in supporting good school readiness ambitions for the city through conversations in the Multi-Agency Workstreams and based on the findings of the consultation.
- Developed action plans and activity for each workstream to identify and action innovative practice and models which support improvements in school readiness in the city.
- Completed a significant number of actions from the plan which we will see beginning to have impact in the coming months.



Vulnerability



Some Sheffield families face vulnerabilities relating to issues such as ACEs, Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD), complex health, poverty, poor housing and parental substance misuse.

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Disadvantaged children arrive at school months behind their non-disadvantaged peers and this gap widens with secondary school leavers 2 years behind.



A stark social mobility postcode lottery exists within Britain, where successful life chances for those from disadvantaged backgrounds are dependent on where you live.



Indicators of School Readiness in Sheffield

Eligible pupils in primary schools claiming FSM



21.60

%



30

%



26.62

%

Local Authority Impact Tool (LAIT)

Under 18 conceptions per 1,000 females (2020)



13



14.8



16.5

PHE Fingertips

3- & 4-year-olds benefitting from funded early education (2021)



88

%



91

%



91.20

%

Local Authority Impact Tool (LAIT)

Low birth weight of term babies (2020)



2.86

%



3.31

%



3.01

%

PHE Fingertips

Children under 16 living in relative poverty (2019/20)



19.1

%



25.4

%



25.1

%

PHE Fingertips

Smoking status at the time of delivery (2020/21)



9.6

%



9.8

%



13.1

%

PHE Fingertips



Indicators of School Readiness in Sheffield

Prevalence of Breastfeeding at 6-8 weeks (2020)



48

%



52.30

%
Local Authority Impact Tool (LAIT)



48.55

%

Children achieving a Good Level of Development (GLD) in Foundation Stage Profile (2019)



71.8

%



70

%
Local Authority Impact Tool (LAIT)



70

%

5-year-olds with experience of visually obvious dental decay



23.4

%



41

%
PHE Fingertips



28.7

%

Premature births (less than 37 weeks gestation - 2018/20)

Crude rate per 1,000



79.1



75.4



79.9

PHE Fingertips

Children in reception year who are overweight or obese (2020)



22.96

%



24.3

%
Local Authority Impact Tool (LAIT)



24.05

%

MMR for 1 dose at 2 years (2020/21)



90.3

%



93

%
PHE Fingertips



92.3

%



South Yorkshire Futures



To be school ready children need a nurturing and safe environment that enables them to be healthy, independent, emotionally secure and able to separate from their parent / carer, socially competent and able to learn. To achieve this we need:

Ready Children
Ready Families
Ready Schools

Together, these pillars maximise each child's likelihood of success as they progress through their time in school. Where these elements are not fully developed or do not work together they can become barriers.

Further information can be found at [School Readiness \(windows.net\)](https://www.schoolreadinesswindows.net)



Key Findings: Professionals views on areas for development activity



- Communication and collaboration at key points of transition and assessment can be much improved.
- SEND related issues have formed most of the concerns raised and areas for development.
- Speech Language and Communication needs to be recognised as an indicator and a focus for early activity.
- There is variation amongst professional's understanding of their own contribution to school readiness.
- A need to raise awareness in the city of the social and economic impact of inequality in terms of the child's whole life course, particularly in terms of vulnerable and seldom heard groups and the impact we can have by reducing inequalities across the Early Years and Early Help system.



Key Findings: Professionals views continued..



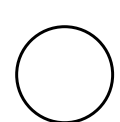
- There is good quality activity in the city, but we meet to be more connected in terms of making the most of resources to avoid overlap and support more families.
- Information sharing is a concern for many and is impacting negatively on good quality communication. This is an issue which contributors feel could be resolved.
- Across the system, we need to consider activity and input far much earlier in the child's journey and use key early contact points to the best advantage.



Key Findings: Parental views on areas for development



- Parents tell us that they have difficulty getting professionals to listen to their concerns about their very young children and getting referral and diagnosis is a battle.
- We have heard from parents that children are being refused nursery places because of their Special Educational Needs: that settings feel unable to accommodate their child's needs.
- We have low take up of Disability Access Fund (DAF) funding and need to explore if this is related only to take up or if SEND Children are not accessing places
- Pathways to support remain unclear to both providers and parents.
- Parents tell us that the offer for non – breastfeeding mums is limited within our Family Hubs.
- There are limited opportunities for parents in coproduction to address a broad range of issues to which parents would bring subject expertise.



What Works to Improve School Readiness

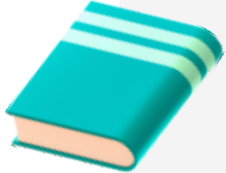
- Good maternal mental health.
- Learning activities, including speaking to your baby and reading with your child.
- Enhancing physical activity.
- Parenting support programmes.
- High-quality early education.

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What's going well? Activity is underway to Support Good School Readiness in Sheffield

- Perinatal Mental Health pathway development
- SENCO training
- Speech and Language Review / DLD review
- Save the Children Locality B work to support the Home Learning Environment project
- Successful DFE Family Hub bid resulting in 2 research projects.
- South Yorkshire Futures Partnership
- Family Centres “Start for Life”
- School Readiness Pathways
- MAST School Readiness Project
- Training for school and providers for brain architecture and trauma informed practice
- Review of Early Years SEND Funding
- A clear focus on transitions, highlighted more so by the recent Accelerated Progress Plan



System, infrastructure and investment recommendations


- Development of a leadership role for Sheffield Early Years.
- Increased investment in Portage workers.
- Increased investment into Early Years Prevention services and Early Years SEND support.
- Early Years SEND Support integration into the wider Early Years System.
- Further development of parental voice and influence in terms of service development using the opportunities presented by the developing Family Hubs.

Development activity to support system level challenges.


- A new Early Years Strategy for 2023
- Family Hubs parent involvement in governance
- Partnership working within localities supported by the development of Local Area Committees
- Early Help Partnership Training Offer development.
- Information Sharing Agreements
- School Readiness predictive tool.
- Development of a social prescribing model for Early Years families and maternity
- Early Years element of an All-Phase Education Strategy to be consulted on this September.



Local and national factors requiring Sheffield leadership voice and influence



Retention and recruitment of Early Years settings staff

- The national issue of setting closures and viability
 - 2-year-old Funded Early Learning criteria is excluding children who would benefit, and yet take up is low in the city
 - Toddler groups and support groups in the city are slow to recover and need support to do so.
 - Focused exploration of the issue of early identification of SEND needs amongst children from BAME communities and the links to High Exclusion rates.
 - Support to improve educational outcomes for Roma children should build the good practice in place.
- 

Sheffield's Early Years School Readiness Ambitions – How Will We Know If We Have Been Successful?



Short Term

- Increased referrals to Early Help and Family Hub activity
- Increased referrals into Early Years Parenting support
- Increases in children in receipt of 2 year old integrated reviews and clear supportive outcomes

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Longer Term

- To see positive movement in terms of Narrowing the Gap between Free School Meals (FSM) and non FSM outcomes
- Positive Feedback from Parents, Early Years Providers and Schools regarding their experiences on transition and with preparedness for learning
- Healthy weight at 5
- Improved oral health in the Early Years
- Increases in vaccination and immunisation take up
- Reduced referrals to Speech and Language Therapy
- We will see more children arriving at school with their needs identified and plans in place to support them to learn from their very first days
- Rebalancing and reduction of the proportion of children from BAME communities excluded from school.



The Education, Children and Families Committee are asked to:



- Endorse the recommendations within the report.
- Consider the findings of the report and the importance of Early Years in the long-term life chances of Sheffield Citizens within the wider context of planning and commissioning for Education Children and Families.





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Elective Home Education Annual Report

July 2021 – September 2022

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Introduction

Elective Home Education (EHE) is the term used to describe education provision where parents decide to provide an education otherwise than at school. For these families, the legal duty to ensure an efficient, full-time education suitable to age, aptitude and ability is fulfilled at home. Whilst education is compulsory, school is not and the overall responsibility for a child's education rests with parents. Parallel to this parental duty, local authorities have a statutory duty under s.436A of the Education Act 1996 to make arrangements to establish, so far as it is possible to do so, the identities of children in its area who are not receiving a suitable education. "The caveat in s.436A 'so far as it is possible to do so' should not be interpreted as meaning 'so far as the authority finds it convenient or practical to do so'. It means what it says, and the authority should do whatever is actually possible." (DFE Guidance for Local Authorities, p12, 4.3) This requirement informs the practice of the EHE Service within Sheffield which is tasked with establishing whether parents are fulfilling their educational duties, confirming the suitability of parental provision, and providing information and support.

This annual report provides an overview of the characteristics of children educated at home between September 2021 - July 2022. The data provided refers to the end of year cohort unless reference is made to 'all children'. 'All children' is data relating to all the children that were known to the EHE Service at any point in the academic year. It should be noted that currently there is no legal requirement for parents to register with the local authority.

Headlines 2021-2022 academic year

	Autumn term 2021	Spring term 2022	Summer term 2022
Cohort	493	526	480
New starters	139	100	69
Leavers	140	64	118
Number of students receiving a suitable education	108	129	154
Number of students with unsuitable education	195	192	216
Curriculums awaiting assessment	64	85	39
Number of active school attendance order requests	33	55	89
Students with an EHCP	21	26	26
Students on a CP plan	1	3	2
Students recorded as Child in Need	13	7	9

Cohort characteristics

Starters and leavers

At the start of September 2021 there were 539 children registered with the EHE Service; at the end of July 2022, 480 children were known to be educated at home. Numbers at the end

of the academic year are typically lower due to the removal of Yr. 11 students on the last Friday in June. In total, 802 children were known to the EHE Service at some point in the academic year – around 1% of the school aged population in Sheffield.

Academic year	End of year total	Number of children open to the service during the academic year	Leavers
2018-19	496	730	234
2019-20	449	681	232
2020-21	539	911	372
2021-22	480	802	322

Table 1: End of year totals and overall number of children known to the EHE Service

The disparity between the number of students entering home education and the end of year total reflects the transient nature of this cohort. Nearly 50% of the 322 leavers were registered as home educated for less than an academic year. (Chart 1) Of those students that left within a year, the majority were in receipt of parental provision for less than 3 months. (Chart 2)

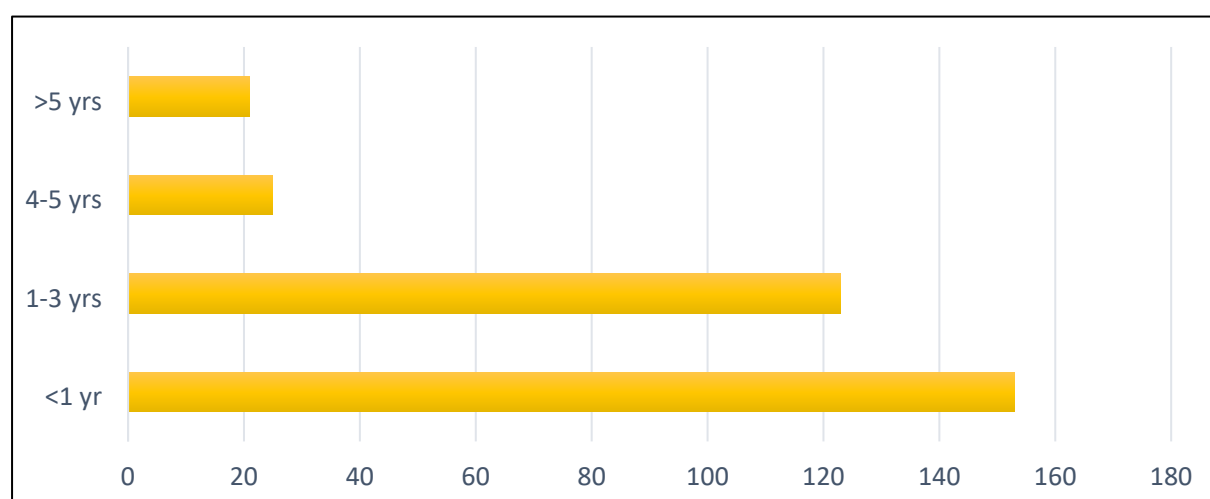


Chart 1: 2021-22 leavers duration of EHE

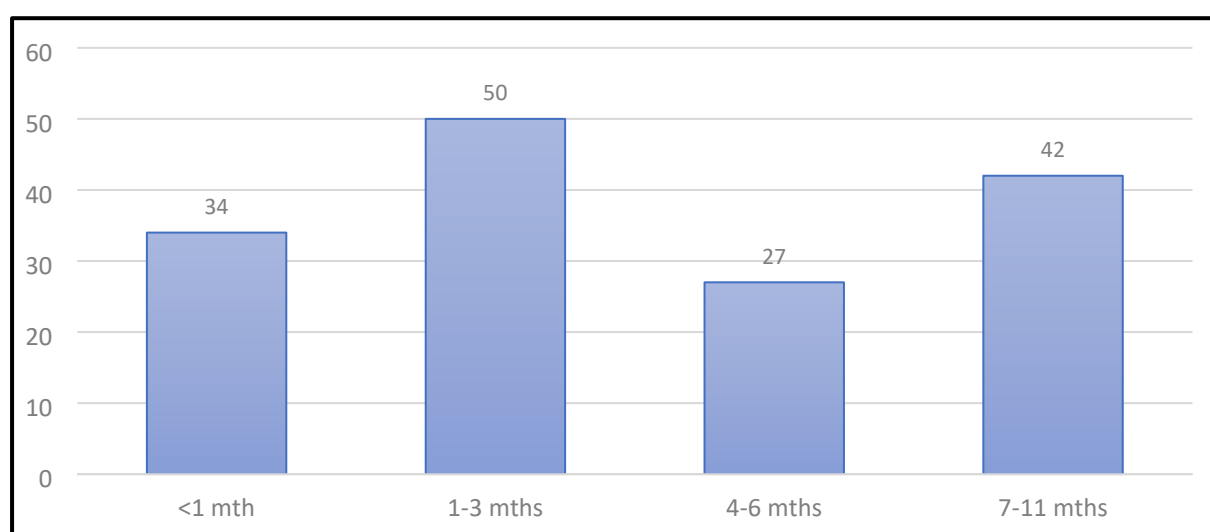


Chart 2: 2021-22 leavers duration of EHE (<1yr breakdown)

The majority of EHE leavers returned to a different school. Sheffield schools have agreed that children who choose to return to school within 12 weeks can return to the same school. As a result of this, 28 students were able to return to their exit school. The EHE Service would like to increase this number to minimise the disruption to learning. However, parental reasons for EHE (Chart 7) reveal a high number of families opt to educate at home whilst waiting for a preferred school. A growing number of children are referred to Children Missing Education (CME). This transfer could take place following an assessment of unsuitable education or a change in parental circumstances. As the child is no longer in receipt of an education, they become pupils not on roll (PNOR) and are supported back into school by the CME team. Parents that would like to return to school and are able to provide a suitable education in the meantime apply direct to admissions and remain registered with the EHE Service until a school place is secured.

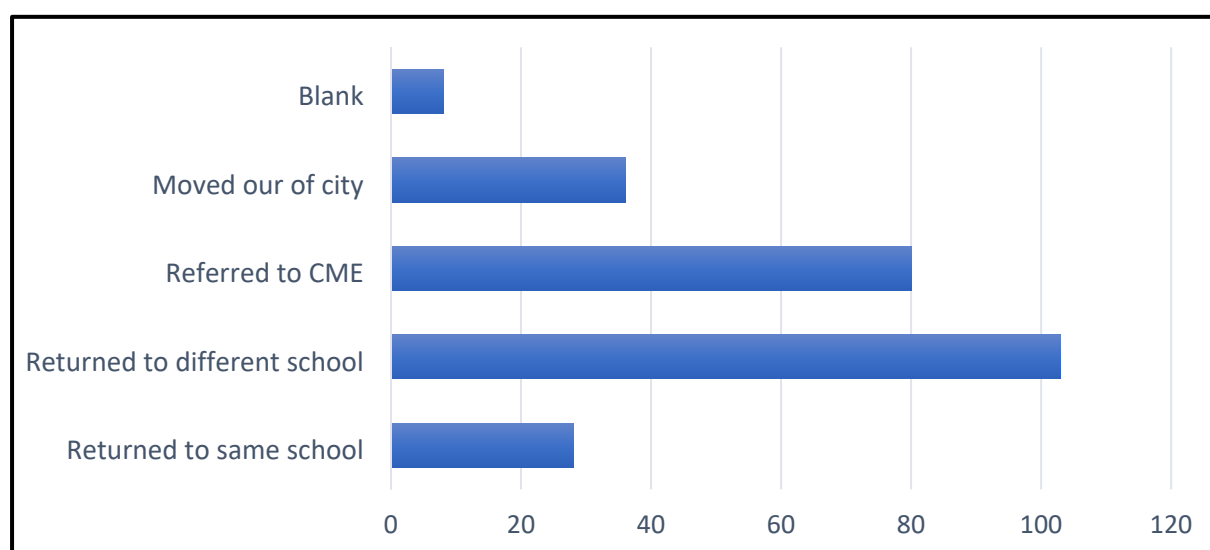


Chart 3: EHE leavers destinations

Whilst most new starters commence EHE in the autumn term, we are starting to see an increase in the number children entering home education at the end of the academic year.

Sep 2021	Oct 2021	Nov 2021	Dec 2021	Jan 2022	Feb 2022	Mar 2022	Apr 2022	May 2022	Jun 2022	Jul 2022
48	33	46	12	26	30	28	16	24	32	13

Table 2: Monthly breakdown, EHE new starters

New starters were mainly based within Locality C, closely followed by locality B.

Locality A	Locality B	Locality C	Locality D	Locality E	Locality F	Locality G
29	67	69	40	27	43	33

Table 3: Locality breakdown of new starters

Gender and ethnicity

The EHE cohort is predominantly White British. Whereas the gender division is fairly even in the cohort as a whole (females, 245/males, 235), there are now slightly more girls in the total number of children known to the service – 415 females vs 387 males.

SEN status

The vulnerability of the cohort and the complexity of their educational needs is increasing. During the 2021-22 academic year the EHE Service recorded vulnerability solely through child protection plans and child in need status - 2 and 9 respectively by the end of the academic year. However, we recognise that this does not adequately reflect the challenges faced by a growing number of our families and will be using additional tools in 2022-23.

70 of the 308 new starters have special education needs. 5% - slightly higher than the 4% national average - had an education health care plan. 18% of new starters (12.6% national average) received SEN support. 6% (30) of the cohort had an EHCP and 19% (89) received additional support. Chart 4 indicates where these students are distributed within the city.

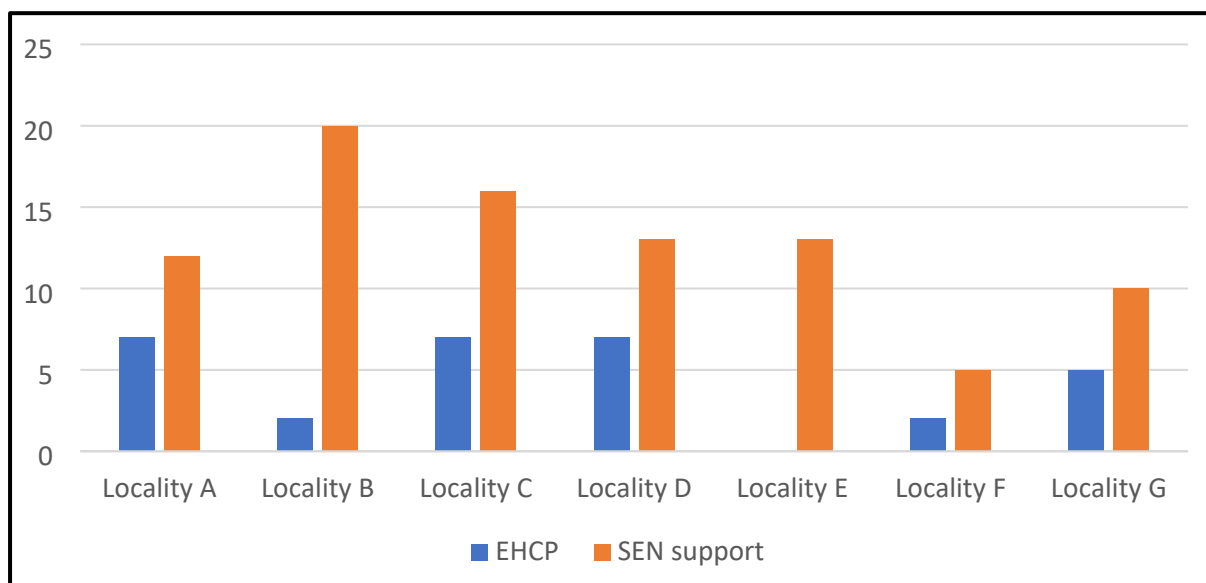


Chart 4: Location of EHE students with SEN

Year groups

The largest proportion of the EHE cohort sits within key stage 3. Yr 7's feature highly in new starter numbers. However, by the end of the academic year students in Yrs. 8, 10 and 11 represent the key national curriculum year groups.

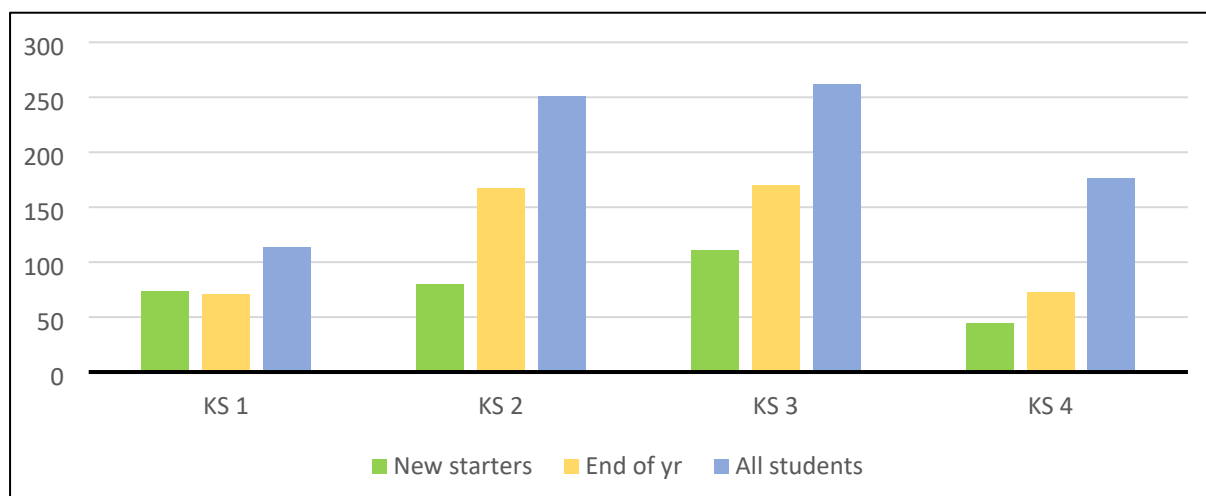


Chart 5: EHE students' key stage breakdown

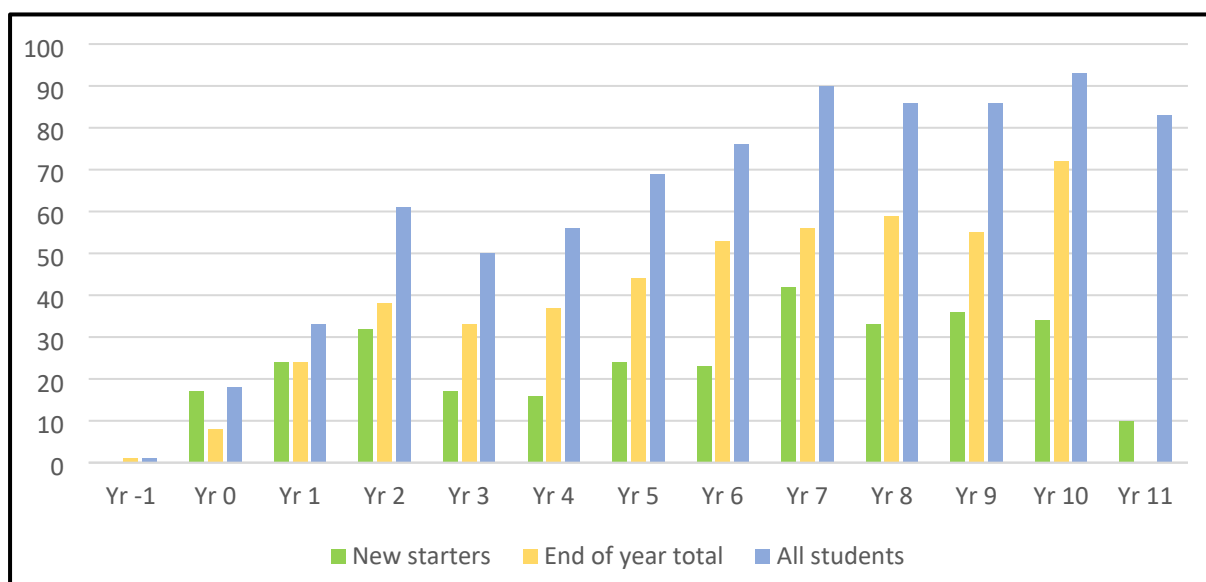


Chart 6: Yr. groups of EHE new starters, end of year cohort and all students

Status of provision

The number of children assessed as receiving a suitable education declined throughout the year. The increase in unsuitable provision appears to be a corollary of the increase in non-elective EHE; this in turn, has increased the number of applications made for school attendance orders (SAO). 80 applications were made for SAO's last year with 9 children attending school as a result. A number of families self-referred to CME or applied direct to admissions. Challenges associated with securing actual school attendance through the SAO process remain. The EHE Service is currently working with partners to improve the outcomes for students in this area and is reviewing the service offer in order to ensure a higher percentage of suitability.

	Sept 2021	July 2022
Suitable	187	154
Unsuitable	186	216
Awaiting assessment	49	39
Awaiting initial curriculum	77	50
Awaiting annual update	17	21

Table 4: Status of provision

Reasons for EHE

The percentage of parents making a positive decision to educate at home continues to decline. Instead, 78% of children registered with the EHE Service at some point in the academic year did so for non-elective reasons. Of those children that were still home educated at the end of the academic year, 93% cited non-elective reasons such as bullying, unmet needs and special educational needs. Stress/anxiety/phobia appeared to be the main reason parents removed their children from school, closely followed by dissatisfaction with school. The inability to secure a place at a preferred school was also a deciding factor.

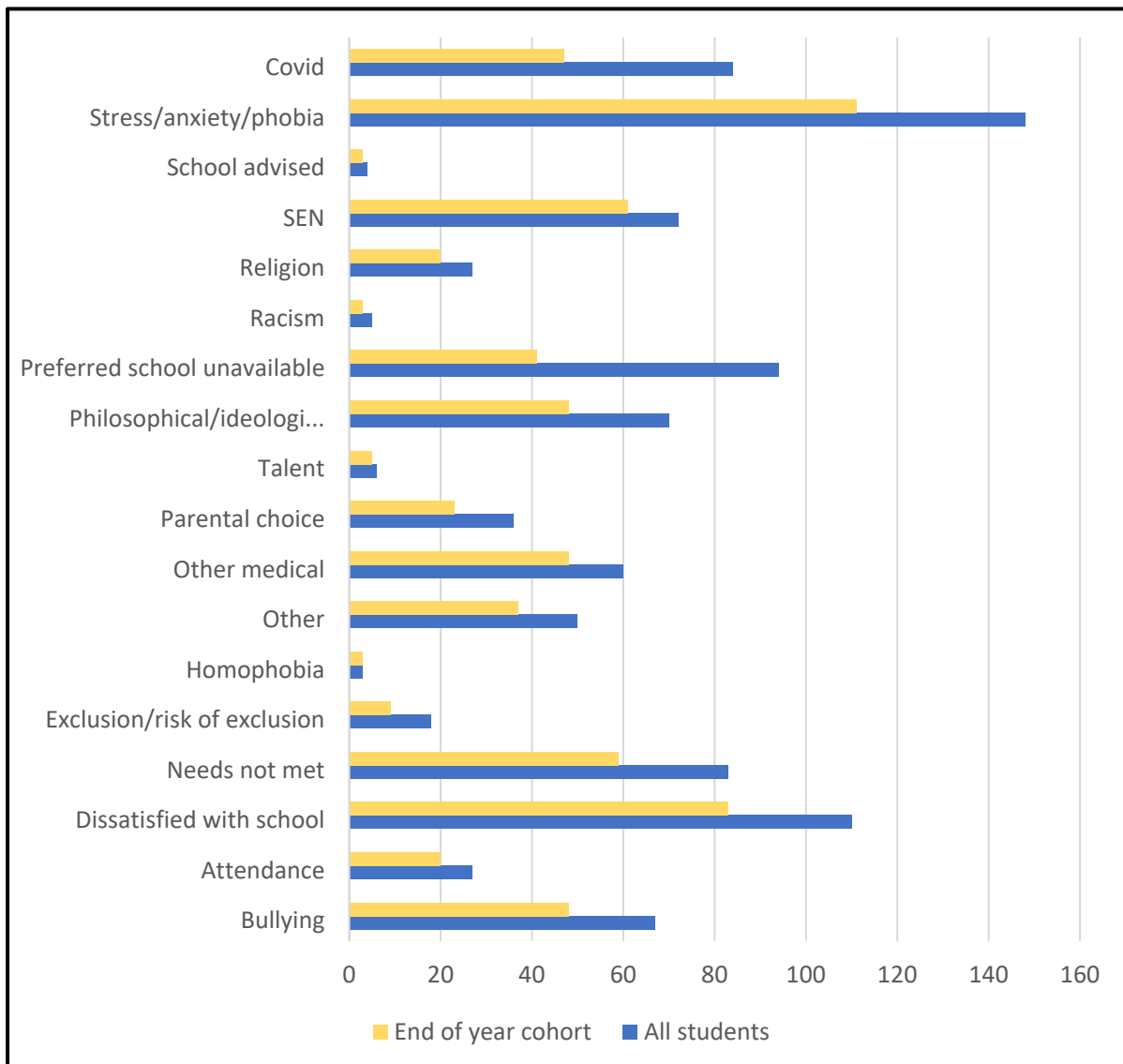


Chart 7: Parental reasons for EHE

Plans for 2022-23

- The proposed Schools Bill will have a significant impact upon the work of the EHE Service and the number of families we may start to engage. Plans are already underway with colleagues in CME and admissions to prepare for possible changes stemming from the requirement to maintain a register of children not in school. This may also lead to changes in how children are recorded which will impact future data returns.
- Reduction in the number of unelected EHE. Plans are being made to develop relations with schools to minimise the incidents of EHE being selected by parents who feel they have 'no other option'. A KPI of reducing the number of unelected EHE has been set.
- Developing data regarding reasons for EHE to include school/provider perceptions.
- Developing tools to record and target vulnerability.
- Review of support offer to address the amount of unsuitable provision. Audit of cases is being completed and consideration given to how the service is best able to support parents to deliver a suitable education.

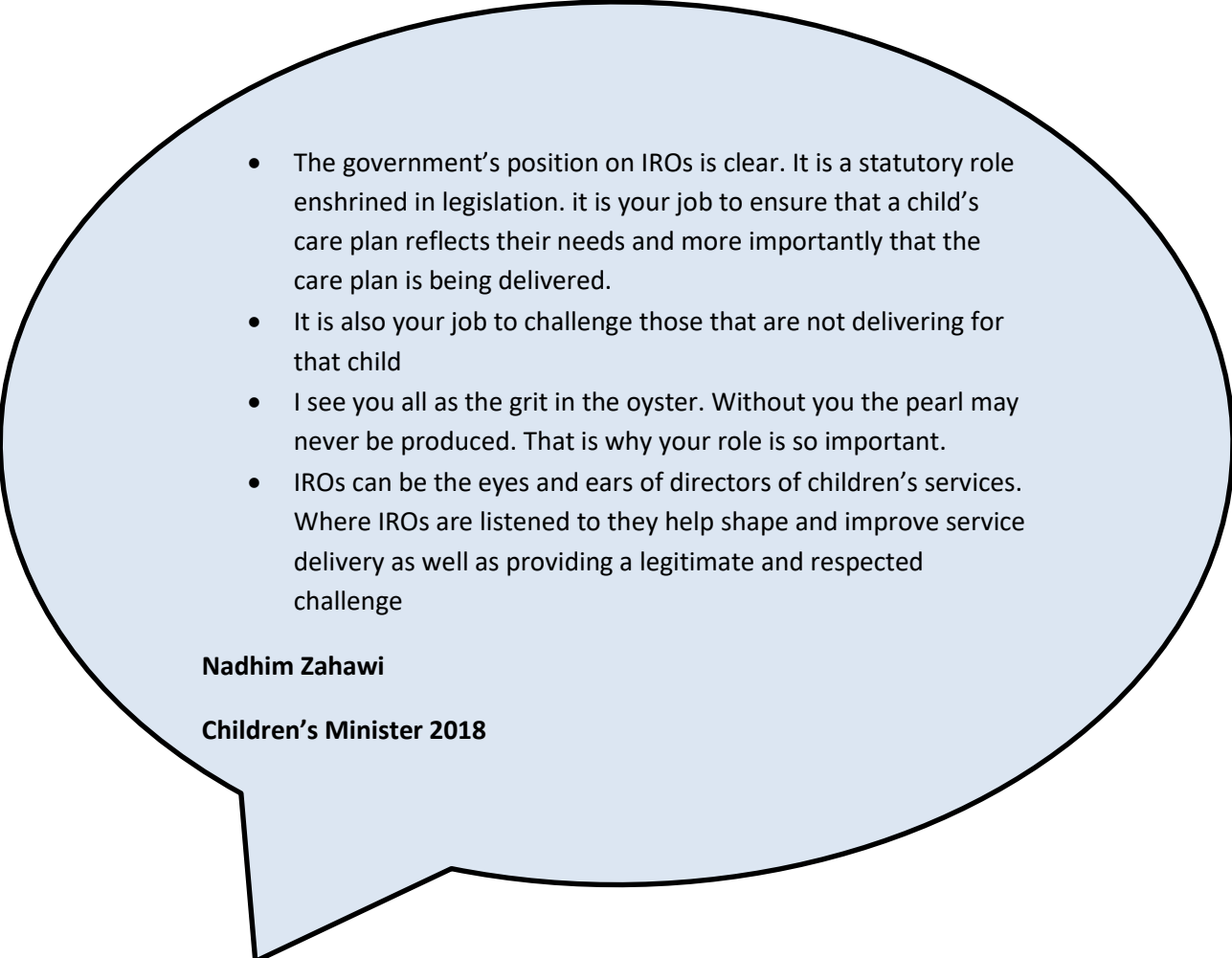
INDEPENDENT REVIEWING OFFICER

ANNUAL REPORT 2021 – 2022



At the end of this reporting period Sheffield had a Looked after population of 666 children, a slight reduction of 8 children over 2020/21.

During the reporting period a total of 978 children were looked after with 309 children becoming looked after and 312 ceasing to be looked after.

- 
- The government's position on IROs is clear. It is a statutory role enshrined in legislation. It is your job to ensure that a child's care plan reflects their needs and more importantly that the care plan is being delivered.
 - It is also your job to challenge those that are not delivering for that child
 - I see you all as the grit in the oyster. Without you the pearl may never be produced. That is why your role is so important.
 - IROs can be the eyes and ears of directors of children's services. Where IROs are listened to they help shape and improve service delivery as well as providing a legitimate and respected challenge

Nadhim Zahawi

Children's Minister 2018

In order for the aspirations and expectations for children in our care to be realised, it is important that the Corporate Parenting Board responsible for achieving them receive regular reports that set out progress. This Annual Report is part of that process.

An annual report of the IRO Service for LAC is required in accordance with the Children and Young Persons Act 2008 and subsequent statutory guidance in 2010 as set out in the IRO Handbook

In addition to the Corporate Parenting Board this report will be presented to the DCS, Lead Member for Children, Young People and Families, CPP and CiCC & the Sheffield Children Safeguarding Partnership.

The Sheffield Context: Improvement Programme and Corporate Parenting Strategy

Improvement Programme

Since June 2017, as a result of findings from a review of Children's Social Care and in response to our most recent OFSTED inspection in 2019, Sheffield City Council has been running an ambitious improvement programme. The Improvement Programme has had a direct impact upon the IRO service and some of the changes that have occurred have been part of a total service change. As a result of the improvement programme we have:

- Created a strong performance culture and there is now monthly reporting from the Service into Directors Performance Clinic, providing clear line of sight into practice and appropriate challenge.
- Building on and improving our performance framework (Contextual Safeguarding, Adoption, Aspire, Permanence, placement sufficiency)
- Strengthening the arrangements for children who go missing from care
- Strengthening the arrangements to manage allegations against professionals
- Developed a Quality Assurance framework
- Developed a Workforce Strategy and invested in our workforce
- Monitored Caseloads, Performance and Sickness
- Continued to embed Signs of Safety across the service
- Developed Practice Standards for IROs
- Organisational Health Check is fed into Improvement data

Corporate Parenting Strategy

Sheffield City Council is committed to ensuring that the life chances of every child and young person in its care are improved in line with their peers. This is documented in our Corporate Parenting Strategy. The strategic priorities in our Strategy have been determined by local and national priorities, and in continued consultation with children and young people. They are:

1. Keeping children and young people in care and care leavers involved in services.
2. Supporting success in Education, Training and Employment.
3. Ensuring Children and Young People in Care and Care Leavers are Happy, Healthy and Resilient.
4. Identifying permanent homes and families for Children and Young People in Care.
5. Ensuring there are enough high quality and stable arrangements for all our children and young people in care and care leavers.
6. Keeping our Children and Young People in Care and Care Leavers Safe.
7. Supporting our care leavers' journey to independence.

The work of the IRO service must therefore be seen within both the context of the improvement programme and furthermore in its direct alignment with the above priorities.

Purpose of service and legal context

A House of Lords judgement in 2002 concluded that a local authority that failed in its duties to a looked after child could be challenged under the Human Rights Act 1998, most likely under article 8 of the European Convention on Human Rights relating to family life. The judgement recognised that some children with no adult to act on their behalf may not have any effective means to initiate such a challenge.

In response, the Government made it a legal requirement for an Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO) to be appointed to participate in case reviews, monitor the local authority's performance in respect of reviews, and to consider whether it would be appropriate to refer cases to the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass). This is set out in section 26 of the 1989 Act, as amended by the 2002 Act.

Later, the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Reviewed Case Referral) Regulations 2004:5 made under section 26 of the 1989 Act, extended the functions of Cafcass so that on a referral from an IRO they could consider bringing proceedings for breaches of the child's human rights, judicial review and other proceedings.

The 2008 Act extends the IRO's responsibilities from monitoring the performance by the local authority of their functions in relation to a child's review to monitoring the performance by the local authority of their functions in relation to a child's case, as set out in sections 25A-25C of the 1989 Act (inserted by section 10 of the 2008 Act). The intention is that these changes will enable the IRO to have an effective independent oversight of the child's case and ensure that the child's interests are protected throughout the care planning process.

Together, the amended 1989 Act and the Regulations specify:

- the duties of the local authority to appoint an IRO.
- the circumstances in which the local authority must consult with the IRO.
- the functions of the IRO both in relation to the reviewing and monitoring of each child's case; and
- the actions that the IRO must take if the local authority is failing to comply with the Regulations or is in breach of its duties to the child in any material way, including making a referral to Cafcass.

Learning and Improvement

When inspected in 2019 OFSTED had this to say about Sheffield's IRO Service;

- Independent Reviewing officers (IROs) know children well and regularly see them outside of their reviews to help children participate and express their views. They provide valued insight into children's lives and challenge professionals effectively on behalf of children to ensure that they receive the right support and that their plans are progressed. Reviews of children are timely and involve relevant partners and agencies

Sheffield City Council was judged to be "good" in 2019.

Profile of the IRO Service

The Independent Reviewing Service sits within the Quality Assurance and Involvement Service (QAIS) under the leadership of Assistant Director for Safeguarding & Quality Assurance, Donna Taylor. The management structure is independent of Children's Social Care in compliance with the minimum standards for independence set by central government for IROs.

The team is currently made up of 12.6 permanent FTE (full time equivalent) (total 15 staff) qualified Social Workers all with a minimum of 5 years post qualifying experience. The team provide a specific and specialist social work service and operate under the minimum standards for independence set by government in the IRO Handbook.

The team includes 0.2(FTE) (1 staff) who is working with the audit team and 1.6 (FTE) (2 staff) Fostering Reviewing Officers (FRO) who are responsible for undertaking all Annual Foster Carer Reviews (FRO Annual Report is issued separately).

In QAIS, three Service Managers work together across Child Protection, LADO, Foster Care Reviews and CLA reviews. Within this team Janice Lightowler is the lead for the Independent Reviewing Service and therefore the author of this report.

In the service we have a wealth of knowledge and experience in all aspects of front line and Social Work management including fostering, safeguarding, residential, CAFCASS, youth justice and children looked after. The IRS strives to continuously develop good practice which is informed through case law, research and training, learning from Serious Case Reviews, other Local Authority Ofsted judgements and Joint Targeted Area Inspections (JTAI), statutory guidance and regulations which provides the legislative framework for good practice with Looked after Children. To promote continuous professional development members of the service can access regular training and conferences, including those provided by the National Independent Reviewing Officer Managers Partnership (NIROMP) and National Association of Independent Reviewing Officers (NAIRO) to promote continuous professional development.

We have

- 2 male IROs, 13 female.
- 1 IRO of European heritage, 14 from a White British background
- 10 full time and 5 part time IROs
- 1 IRO with a registered disability
- 1 IRO who is a registered carer

This team of IROs does not currently reflect the demographics of the looked after population and being acutely conscious of this we are aware of the need to address any potential cultural bias, influences or impact of diversity on planning. Our interview panels for new staff have been culturally diverse, staff have completed the EDI training modules required by SCC and have been participating in training with Migration Yorkshire to keep up to date with issues and the care planning needs of our diverse CLA population including UASC.

One IRO has been on maternity leave for the majority of this reporting year and we have been fortunate to have agency cover throughout this period minimising the impact of this absence on children and other staff members

Recruitment both temporary and permanent has been very successful with no gaps between starters and leavers anticipated. The Local Authority have been supportive with keeping this crucial team fully staffed and for that we are grateful.

IRS has a dedicated Business Support (BS) team who are responsible for the administrative process for reviews. This includes booking rooms, issuing invitations, consultations and post review reports as well as collating for the IRO any responses and reports made available for reviews and ensuring that contact details are current to prevent data breach. They are a team of 5.1 FTE staff, managed by a full time Business Manager who in addition gathers data and provides information and support to the Service Manager.

2021/22 has been a busy year and it continued to be dominated by the Covid 19 pandemic and the changes to working practices that this imposed. The team rose to the challenge of consulting and reviewing, using the technology available to ensure that children and young people still had a voice in the reviewing process albeit virtually and that reviews of the care plan continued. At year's end we are in recovery, and beginning to move away from the virtual world of reviewing, albeit retaining where appropriate when this works for the young people.

Quantitative Information

A total of 978 children and young people have been looked after and therefore reviewed in this reporting period. This is a gain of 30 children over the last reporting year so whilst the year end figures show a slight decrease, total numbers of children looked after over the year and numbers of reviews chaired have risen.

1734 reviews were chaired by an IRO with an average over the year per FTE of 161.

The IRO Handbook recommends that caseloads for IROs should be between 50 and 70. During this reporting period the caseload for each established FTE IRO varied between 56-76 with variation outside these figures only occurring when working hours changed, and with starters and leavers as caseloads were built up or reduced. Caseloads of 70 and above were recorded in supervision on 12 occasions.

At the end of this reporting period Sheffield had a looked after population of 666 children, a slight reduction of 8 children over 2020/21, but there were 30 more children looked after during the year over 2020/21 figures.

The Children Looked After Service who deliver a social work service to all children with a confirmed permanence plan for care currently have the highest number of young people looked after accounting for 58% of the overall population, a 10% increase on last year.

The proportion of looked after children per 10,000 population aged under 18 years is 56.3 in 2022, this is a slight reduction over last year. The last figures produced in 2021 that we can compare show Sheffield was at 57.2, still significantly lower than Yorkshire and Humber at 78, England at 67 and statistical neighbours at 92.3.

473 (71%) of looked after children are placed with foster carers, 18% of whom are connected persons. 19% of young people looked after are placed in residential care.

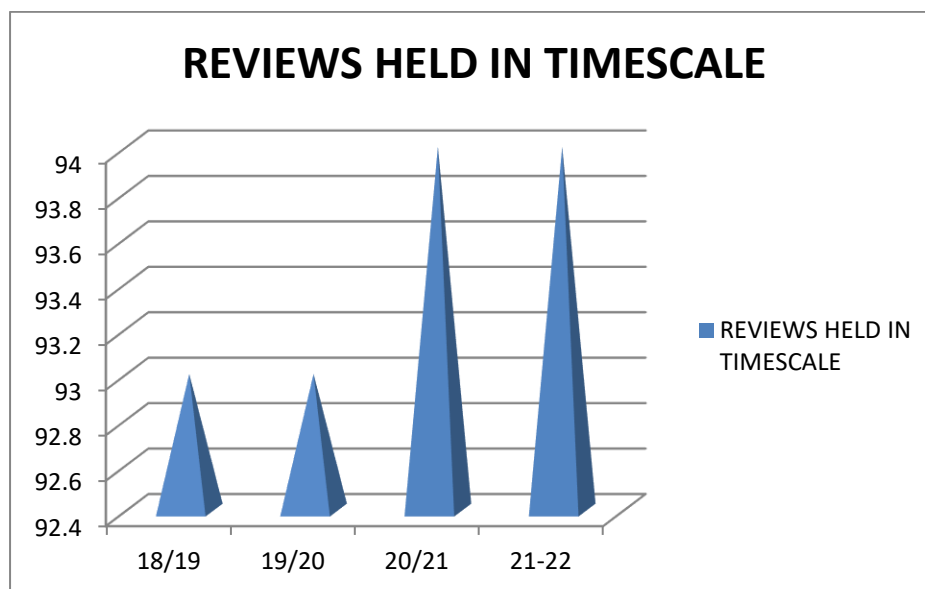
Performance for Placement stability is currently at 70%, a reduction of 2% on last year. This is the percentage of looked after children who have been in the same placement for at least 2 years.

Those children, during this reporting period, that have been or are placed more than 20 miles from their home, has remained relatively stable at 11% of the LAC population. This has been the case for the past 3 reporting years.

Qualitative Information

This section of the report will include information on timeliness, workflow and challenge.

Timeliness



This graph shows the percentage of children who had a timely review as this is how central government asks us to report. So, in 2021/22, 94% of children had a review in timescales. Children and young people over 4 years of age participate in their reviews in a range of ways. Our report to central government states that the percentage of children participating in their CLA reviews during the year 2020/21 was 97%.

Issue based advocacy was provided to 58 children and young people throughout the year. Advocacy referrals were made on 3 occasions by the IRO.

During the pandemic which continued to dominate this reporting year IROs have tried to be creative and have continued to consult with children. Visiting them outdoors when permitted and when not, using the technology available including Zoom and What's app to ensure their views are heard

Workflow

LAC Stats	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Total
Reviews	434	450	436	414	1734
Recommendations on in 5 days	391 (90%)	371 (82%)	355 (81%)	356 (86%)	1473 (85%)
Report authorised in 15 days	280 (65%)	255 (57%)	207 (47%)	219 (53%)	961 (55%)
Report authorised in 20 days	357 (82%)	327 (73%)	270 (62%)	308 (74%)	1262 (73%)
Report issued in 20 days	334 (77%)	259 (58%)	232 (53%)	253 (61%)	1078 (62%)

The number of reviews held is similar to last year. Recommendations recorded on Liquid Logic within 5 working days has improved from 82% in 20/21 to 85% with only small variations throughout the year. Despite higher caseloads and some sickness in the team, achieving reports written in 15 and 20 working days has remained stable but reports being issued in 20 working days by our BS team has been impacted by the pandemic and the government requirement to work from home as well as staffing challenges.

Achievements

Clear oversight of frontline practice and assurance of quality is fundamental to how the Local Authority knows itself. IRS is part of this oversight and assurance, and these are the areas of achievement we have been focussing on this year

- The team is fully and permanently staffed with appropriately experienced and qualified IROs and 1.6 FTE Fostering Reviewing Officers
- Supervisions have been undertaken regularly with 100% compliance. We have used data to compare individual against team performance and this has been motivational.
- All PDRs were completed and each IRO has completed training which ensures their compliance with the CPD requirements for Social Work registration
- When required, consultations and reviews have been held virtually but as the impact of the pandemic has reduced we have begun to return to face to face visits and meetings
- We have however sought to retain the positive elements of virtual working and when appropriate we continue to use virtual consultation and reviews.
- We have prioritised meeting children and young people away from their reviews and in particular before their first review using this opportunity to explain the role of the IRO and function of a CLA review
- We have reviewed and updated our children and young person's consultation forms
- We have introduced a new "residential" report for CLA review
- We have completed a compliance outcome for CLA reviews held and in this way have been able to reflect back, via Directors Performance Clinic, Social Work compliance with practice standards

- We have maintained a focus on our workflow whilst recognising the impact of the pandemic on working practices. As much as we have been able to, we have shifted to virtual means of communication and therefore reducing our reliance on paper
- We have SoS practice champions in the service.
- We have worked hard to keep caseloads manageable and when they have risen, we have responded by increasing team capacity
- IROs chair fewer reviews and instead make use of the local dispute resolution process to challenge drift and delay and this is evidenced in statistics. We have worked hard to achieve greater consistency in this area of work and this has included forging stronger links with Fieldwork colleagues at both peer and management levels
- IRO footprint on the case records is visible with them taking individual responsibility to monitor the delivery of time critical actions
- Service Manager is a member of the Public Law Subgroup of the Sheffield Family Justice Board where we have a role in developing local good practice with the courts
- Two IROs represent Sheffield CC on the Yorkshire & Humber IRO Forum giving us the opportunity to learn from each other.
- Service Manager represents Sheffield CC on the NIROMP (National IRO Managers Partnership) regional group, learning from peers and contributing as a group to the development of national practice
- IROs have continued to be a stable professional in the lives of children looked after and unnecessary changes are not made.

Quality Assurance

Quality assurance has two sides to it. Ensuring and assuring the Local Authority that IRS are providing a good quality, consistent service and secondly quality assuring the practice experience of children and their families and reporting back to the Local Authority any areas where practice falls short and could be improved.

In order to ensure good quality consistent practice from IRS we have done a number of things. Monthly supervision and annual PDRs have been completed. Training has been sourced to meet identified team and individual training needs. Workshops have been used to reinforce expectations of the IRO role and to ensure we complete our core requirements.

In order to quality assure the practice experience of children looked after and their families the IRO has a statutory duty to monitor the performance by the Local Authority of their functions in relation to the child's case and to resolve problems arising out of the care planning process. Challenge and resolution are an integral part of the IRO role. Informal and formal resolution form part of the same continuum of resolution, which needs to celebrate the achievements of resolution as well as highlighting the problems that require resolution.

Challenge is divided into groups

Informal, and Formal with levels 1,2,3 & 4 taking the challenge up through the management structure.

IRS can also compliment good practice and in this reporting period have issued 52 compliments across the teams, an increase of 49% over the previous reporting year.

Teams	East	West	North	CWD	CLA	LCS	Adoption	Placements	Amber	REED	Edge of Care
Compliments	4	1	12	2	31	0	0	1	0	0	1

CLA service recorded the highest proportion of compliments at 60% followed by North area Fieldwork at 23% of the total.

Teams	Informal Challenge	Formal Challenge	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4
East	7	15	8	7	0	0
West	32	11	8	2	1	0
North	22	10	9	1	0	0
CWD	8	9	3	4	2	0
CLA	53	55	32	13	4	6
LCS	1	1	1	0	0	0
Adoption	0	0	0	0	0	0
Placements	0	0	0	0	0	0
Amber	2	1	0	1	0	0
Edge of Care	0	1	0	0	1	0
REED	1	0	0	0	0	0
NRPF	1	0	0	0	0	0
TOTALS	127	103	61	28	8	6

There have been 127 informal challenges and 103 formal challenges raised throughout the year, which is a 10% increase across the board.

Although challenge numbers for the CLA Service look high the percentage of challenges in relation to the percentage of CLA held by the service has dropped but not significantly. They case hold 58% of the CLA population so as one would expect they had a higher proportion at 42% and 53% of informal and formal challenges raised with them. Informal challenges to West area Fieldwork rose in this reporting year to 25% and this is more significant as they hold fewer CLA cases

There are 4 main categories for challenge. These are:

1. Lack of preparation
2. Drift and delay
3. IRO challenge of the care plan
4. Practice Issues

In challenge both informal and formal the most significant category was “drift and delay” at 53% with practice issues at 18%, Challenge of the care plan at 14% and lack of preparation at 11%.

For formal challenge “drift and delay” accounts for 60% of challenge and this would be as expected as the IRO role was set up to ensure that care plans for children are delivered in a timely way.

The purpose of challenge is to resolve at the lowest level and in a timely way and we record this on Liquid Logic where the progress of the challenge and it's timely resolution can be monitored and measured. The following two tables demonstrate the progress of and time to resolution for challenges raised in this reporting period and the third the teams where challenge escalates through the levels

Challenge Level	Challenge Issued	Response Received (%)	Response not received (%)	Response in 5 working days (%)
1	61	61 (100%)	0	40 (66%)
2	28	28 (100%)	0	20 (71%)
3	8	8 (100%)	0	3 (38%)
4	6	6 (100%)	0	0 (0%)
Totals	103	103	0	63 (61%)

Challenge Level	Challenge Issued	Escalated	New
1	61	9 (15%)	52
2	28	18 (64%)	10
3	8	5 (63%)	3
4	6	6 (100%)	0
Totals	103	38 (37%)	65

Challenge Level	Challenge Issued	Escalated	East	West	North	CWD	CLA
1	61	9	0	2	1	1	5
2	28	18	6	2	1	4	5
3	8	5	0	0	0	1	4
4	6	6	0	0	0	0	6
Totals	103	38	6	4	2	6	20

Of the 103 formal challenges 65 were new and 38 were challenges that escalated through the levels above. Looking at escalation we can see that the higher up the level of challenge the more likely it is to have been escalated and by the time the Director is involved 100% have been escalated. This is to be expected.

Comments made about individual IROs

"I just wanted to share with you that A said the CLA Review today was really good. She felt listened to and was happy that all the things she had raised with you when you met were talked about. I wanted to say from my perspective I thought the meeting was so child focused. It was clear that you have A's best interests at heart, and you had such a clear understanding of her wishes and feelings which were then fed into the meeting. I also thought it was clear that you have A's back (can't think of a better way to say it really). You challenged the placement about drug use and the impact this is having on her and I think she really appreciated it as in the past this has been dismissed by other professionals."

Young Person & Children's Involvement Officer

“IRO writes her reports/ decisions in a completely child centred way and I really like this style. The reports read in a very personalised way and also in a way that makes sense to the child should they read the report in the future.” **Senior Fieldwork Manager**

“I wanted to put this into an email for you as I really respect your input, you have been our reviewing officer since the beginning and have always taken not only the thoughts and feelings of our children into consideration but have always listened and taken our thoughts and feelings into consideration too.” **Foster Carer**

1. Developments planned for 2022/23

- We will continue to review the care planning for children looked after and where possible this will be face to face
- For those children, young people and families who have preferred virtual consultation and reviews we will work with them to ensure that we build the positive elements of this into the way we work in the future
- We will continue to work with children, their social workers, carers and other involved parties to support their participation in reviews
- We will continue to prioritise meeting children and young people away from their reviews and in particular before their first review, using this opportunity to discuss with them how they would wish to be involved in the review process.
- We will change the way we write our decisions and reports so that they are directly written to the child/young person using language that is easily understood
- We will work with the senior management team to introduce lighter process reviews for those children and young people who are in long term matched and settled foster placements
- When children who have a child protection plan become looked after we will work to one plan overseen by an IRO
- We will continue to inform the Local Authority when the service that looked after children receive does not meet established practice standards
- We will continue to use data, audit and supervision to improve and maintain quality and consistency of practice
- Particular focus will be made on developing greater consistency of practice and approach in the area of challenge
- Senior leadership to continue to promote to frontline managers that the IRO role is welcomed, endorsed and supported and that when issues are raised these will be responded to in a timely way as per the protocol.

Author - Janice Lightowler

Service Manager

Independent Reviewing Service

Executive Summary

This moment is a once in a generation opportunity to reset children's social care. What we need is a system that provides intensive help to families in crisis, acts decisively in response to abuse, unlocks the potential of wider family networks to raise children, puts lifelong loving relationships at the heart of the care system and lays the foundations for a good life for those who have been in care. What we have currently is a system increasingly skewed to crisis intervention, with outcomes for children that continue to be unacceptably poor and costs that continue to rise. For these reasons, a radical reset is now unavoidable.

Achieving this reset starts with recognising that it is loving relationships that hold the solutions for children and families overcoming adversity. While relationships are rich and organic, children's social care can be rigid and linear. Rather than drawing on and supporting family and community, the system too often tries to replace organic bonds and relationships with professionals and services.

Without a dramatic whole system reset, outcomes for children and families will remain stubbornly poor and by this time next decade there will be approaching 100,000 children in care (up from 80,000 today) and a flawed system will cost over £15 billion per year (up from £10 billion now).¹ Together, the changes we recommend will shift these trends and would mean 30,000 more children living safely and thriving with their families by 2032 compared to the current trajectory.²

A revolution in Family Help

For families who need help, there must be a fundamental shift in the children's social care response, so that they receive more responsive, respectful, and effective support. To reduce the number of handovers between services, we recommend introducing one category of "Family Help" to replace "targeted early help" and "child in need" work, providing families with much higher levels of meaningful support. This new service would be delivered by multidisciplinary teams made up of professionals such as family support workers, domestic abuse workers and mental health practitioners - who, alongside social workers, would provide support and cut down on referring families onto other services. These Family Help Teams would be based in community settings, like schools and family hubs, that children and families know and trust, and the service they offer will be tailored to meet neighbourhood needs based on a robust needs assessment and feedback from the families.

To achieve this vision, a temporary injection of roughly £2 billion is needed over the next five years, targeting about half a million children who require extra support.³ By 2030, this will have

1 These costs approximate children's social care spend by local authorities. There is no agreed definition of children's social care spend, but the aggregate presented here includes all those children and young people's services lines from the Section 251 return except: 3.4.5 Universal family support, 3.5.1 Universal services for young people, 3.0.1 Spend on individual Sure Start Children's Centres, 3.0.2 Spend for services delivered through Sure Start Children's Centres, 3.0.3 Spend on management costs relating to Sure Start Children's Centres, 3.0.4 Other spend on children under 5, and 3.6.1 Youth justice.

2 See Chapter Nine Figure 3 for more details of our cost benefit analysis of our recommendations.

3 Throughout the report, we refer to the 'next 5 years'. This means the 5 years ending at the end of financial year 2026-27.



achieved a complete rebalancing of spending within the system so that over £1 billion more every year is spent on Family Help.⁴ After the five year reform programme, there should be a dedicated ring-fenced grant to ensure this extra spending continues to be prioritised in the long term. To increase the quality and consistency of help, funding should be accompanied by a clear national definition of eligibility for support and the outcomes Family Help should achieve, alongside a focus on the use of the best evidenced interventions to realise these outcomes.

A just and decisive child protection system

Whilst the risk of harm to children cannot be eliminated, the system of child protection can and must do better for children. The wider system improvements we recommend will all help to do this - including a more generous multidisciplinary help offer, improved workforce knowledge and skills, more decisive intervention for inadequate and drifting authorities, and strengthened multi-agency arrangements.

Where concerns about significant harm of a child emerge, an 'Expert Child Protection Practitioner', who is an experienced social worker, should co-work alongside the Family Help Team with responsibility for making key decisions. This co-working will provide an expert second perspective and remove the need for break points and handovers. Expert Practitioners will have demonstrated their knowledge and skills through time in practice, and in the future by completing a five year Early Career Framework. There will be clearer expectations on multi-agency capabilities for child protection so that different professionals, including child protection paediatricians and specialist police officers, inform decisions. Information sharing should be strengthened through a five year challenge to address cultural barriers, clarify legislation and guidance, and use technology to achieve frictionless sharing of information.

A more tailored and coherent response is needed to harms outside of the home, like county lines, criminal or sexual exploitation or abuse between peers. We recommend a bespoke child protection pathway – through a Child Community Safety Plan – so that the police, social care and others can provide a robust child protection response.

To boost parental engagement where there are serious concerns, parents should have representation and support to help navigate the child protection process. To enable learning, there should be more transparency about decisions made and outcomes of children in the family courts.

Unlocking the potential of family networks

There are already thousands of grandparents, aunts, uncles, brothers and sisters who care for their family members. However, this group of carers are a silent and unheard majority in the children's social care system and they need far greater recognition, and support.

Before decisions are made which place children into the care system, more must be done to bring wider family members and friends into decision making. This should start with a high quality family group decision making process that invites families to come up with a family led plan to care for the child or children. In some cases, this should lead to a "Family Network Plan", where a local authority can fund and support family members to care for the child.

4 See the 'A revolution in Family Help' recommendation annex

The dysfunction of the current system means that many relatives are forced to become foster carers in order for them to receive financial support to look after their kin. Special guardians and kinship carers with a Child Arrangement Order should receive a new statutory financial allowance, legal aid and statutory kinship leave. A wider set of informal kinship carers should get a comprehensive support package.

Fixing the broken care market and giving children a voice

When finding a home for a child in care, our obsession must be putting relationships around them that are loving and lasting. Providing care for children should not be based on profit. The current system is a very long way from these principles and ambitions being realised.

Local authorities need help to take back control of this system through establishing new Regional Care Cooperatives (RCCs). They will take on responsibility for the creation and running of all new public sector fostering, residential and secure care in a region, as well as commissioning all not-for-profit and private sector provided care for children as necessary. The scale and specialist capabilities of RCCs will address the current weaknesses in the system and establish organisations able to transform the care system for the future. Local authorities will have direct involvement in the running of RCCs but to work they must be mandated rather than voluntary arrangements. Children will continue to be in the care of local authorities.

There are many children living in children's homes today who would be better suited to living in a family environment with a foster carer if we had enough foster carers in the right places, with the right parenting skills to meet the varying and complex needs of children. This will require a "new deal" with foster carers. We must give foster carers the support networks and training needed to provide the best care for children, and then have greater trust in foster carers making the day to day decisions which affect children's lives. In parallel, we are calling upon government to immediately launch a new national foster carer recruitment programme, to approve 9,000 new foster carers over three years so that children in care can live in family environments.⁵ The overwhelming public response to the Homes for Ukraine programme is a signal of how willing people are to open their hearts and homes to others.

It is paramount that children have a powerful voice in the decisions that affect them. Children in care currently have a plethora of different professionals in their lives, but too few adults who are unequivocally on their side and able to amplify their voice. This system should be simplified by replacing a number of existing roles with truly independent advocacy for children that is opt-out, rather than opt-in.

Five 'missions' for care experienced people

The disadvantage faced by the care experienced community should be the civil rights issue of our time. Children in care are powerless, are often invisible and they face some of the greatest inequalities that exist in England today. In spite of these injustices so many care experienced people go on to run businesses, start families, earn doctorates, produce drama, write poetry, become government ministers and contribute to the world in countless ways.

⁵ See the 'New Deal on Fostering' recommendation annex for more details on our cost benefit analysis of this recommendation.



Five ambitious missions are needed so that care experienced people secure: loving relationships; quality education; a decent home; fulfilling work and good health as the foundations for a good life. Central government and local authorities, employers, the NHS, schools, colleges and universities must step up to secure these foundations for all care experienced people. This will require a wider range of organisations to act as corporate parents for looked after children, and the UK should be the first country in the world to recognise the care experience as a protected characteristic.

Realising the potential of the workforce

The package of recommendations in this report create a radically new offer for social workers. As first priority, the professional development we offer social workers should be vastly improved with training and development which provides progression through a five year Early Career Framework linked to national pay scales. This new framework will provide a desirable career pathway to remain in practice, specialise and be rewarded through higher pay that reflects expertise.

Second, we must identify and remove the barriers which needlessly divert social workers from spending time with children and families. This needs to include action on improving case management systems, reducing repetitive administrative tasks which do not add value and embedding multidisciplinary teams at the heart of local communities who can deliver, not just commission, the help that is needed. Just as senior doctors and nurses work directly with patients, social work managers, leaders and academics should be required to continue working directly with children and families so that the whole system is rooted in the realities of practice. Finally, we need to reduce the use of agency social work, which is costly and works against providing stable professional relationships for children and families, by developing new rules and regional staff banks. Taken together, this will mean social workers work with a smaller number of children and families, with more knowledge and skill, and with more available time and resources to do intensive life changing work for children families.

Finally, we should not forget the importance of a wider workforce that supports children and families and includes, but is not limited to, family support workers and children's home staff. Action is needed to improve the knowledge and skill of these crucial workforces so that they can provide better help and care for children and families - and as a first step this should include a Knowledge and Skills Statement for family support workers, a leadership programme and professional registration for children's home managers.

A system that is relentlessly focused on children and families

There is currently a lack of national direction about the purpose of children's social care and national government involvement is uneven. A National Children's Social Care Framework is needed to set the direction and purpose for the system, supported by meaningful indicators that bring transparency and learning. The government should appoint a National Practice Group, to build practice guides that would set out the best known ways of achieving the objectives set by the National Framework.

Multi-agency safeguarding arrangements should be clarified to put beyond doubt their strategic role, supported by improved accountability, learning and transparency. In too many

places the contribution and voice of education is missing from partnership arrangements, and so schools should be included as a statutory safeguarding partner.

The government should update the funding formula for children's social care to better direct resources to where they are most needed. Inspection should be aligned to take a more rounded understanding of "being child focused" and to better reflect what matters most to children and families, alongside greater transparency about how judgements are made. Government should intervene more decisively in inadequate and drifting authorities, with permanent Regional Improvement Commissioners to oversee progress across regions. Green shoots of good work on data and technology should be mainstreamed through a National Data and Technology Taskforce, which would support three priority actions - drastically reducing social worker time spent recording cases; enabling frictionless sharing of information; and improving data collection and its use in informing decisions.

Implementation

All of this should be delivered at pace and with determination through a single five year reform programme. A Reform Board should be established to drive this programme, includes people with lived experience of children's social care. It should report openly on progress quarterly and the government senior official leading the programme must be given the explicit delegation and backing to accelerate through processes and controls that would jeopardise delivery. The Secretary of State for Education should be responsible for holding other government departments to account and should report annually to parliament on progress.

There is a great deal of implementation that can be initiated by the government now, ahead of new investment.⁶ However, achieving this whole system reform programme will require £2.6 billion of new spending over four years, comprising £46 million in year one, £987 million in year two, £1.257 billion in year three and £233 million in year four.⁷ Government may well provide details of different or better ways to achieve the same ambitions and aims in their response to this review, but the costs of inaction are too high. The time for a reset is now, and there is not a moment to lose.

6 An implementation plan has been included at Chapter Nine, which sets out a phased approach to delivering the package of reform in this report.

7 Our costings have been modelled on the basis that year one corresponds to financial year 2023/24.



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Children's social care market study final report

England summary

10 March 2022

1. The CMA launched a market study into children's social care in England, Scotland and Wales on 12 March 2021, in response to two major concerns that had been raised with us about how the placements market was operating. First, that local authorities were too often unable to access appropriate placements to meet the needs of children in their care. Second, that the prices paid by local authorities were high and this, combined with growing numbers of looked-after children, was placing significant strain on local authority budgets, limiting their scope to fund other important activities in children's services and beyond.
2. We considered that the case for a market study in this area was particularly strong due to the profound impact that any problems would have on the lives of children in care. While we have approached this study as a competition authority, assessing how the interactions of providers and local authority purchasers shape outcomes, we have been acutely aware of the unique characteristics of this market, and in particular the deep impact that outcomes in this market can have on the lives of children.
3. Our market study is also timely. Each of the three nations in scope has significant policy processes underway which are aiming to fundamentally reform children's social care. For one vital element of this – the operation of the placements market – our study provides a factual and analytical background, as well as recommendations for reform. We intend that these will prove useful for governments as they develop their wider policy programmes for children's social care.
4. Overall, our view is that there are significant problems in how the placements market is functioning, particularly in England and Wales. We found that:
 - a lack of placements of the right kind, in the right places, means that children are not consistently getting access to care and accommodation that meets their needs;
 - the largest private providers of placements are making materially higher profits, and charging materially higher prices, than we would expect if this market were functioning effectively; and

- some of the largest private providers are carrying very high levels of debt, creating a risk that disorderly failure of highly-leveraged firms could disrupt the placements of children in care.
5. It is clear to us that this market is not working well and that it will not improve without focused policy reform. Governments in all three nations have recognised the need to review the sector and have launched large-scale policy programmes. A key part of these programmes should be to improve the functioning of the placements market, via a robust, well-evidenced reform programme which will deliver better outcomes in the future. This will require careful policymaking and a determination to see this process through over several years.
 6. We are therefore making recommendations to all three national governments to address these problems. Our recommendations set out the broad types of reform that are necessary to make the market work effectively. The detail of how to implement these will be for individual governments to determine, taking into account their broader aspirations for the care system and building on positive approaches that are already in evidence.
 7. Our recommendations fall into three categories:
 - recommendations to improve commissioning, by having some functions performed via collaborative bodies, providing additional national support and supporting local authority initiatives to provide more in-house foster care;
 - recommendations to reduce barriers to providers creating and maintaining provision, by reviewing regulatory and planning requirements, and supporting the recruitment and retention of care staff and foster carers; and
 - recommendations to reduce the risk of children experiencing negative effects from children's home providers exiting the market in a disorderly way, by creating an effective regime of market oversight and contingency planning.
 8. In recognition of the different contexts in each of England, Scotland and Wales, we differentiate between these in the text of the main report where appropriate. We have also drawn together the main conclusions and recommendations for each nation in its own dedicated summary. This summary sets out our main conclusions and recommendations for England, and where appropriate compares our findings for England with those for Scotland and Wales.

Background: the placements market

9. There are 80,850 looked-after children in England, out of a total of just over 100,000 looked-after children in England, Scotland and Wales. Over two-thirds of looked-after children in England live in foster care, which is similar to the proportion of children living in foster care in Wales, and 16% live in residential settings, compared to 10% in Scotland and 7% in Wales. 13% of children in England live in other settings for example living with parents, placed for adoption or in community settings.
10. The current annual cost for children's social care services is around £5.7 billion in England.
11. Children's social care is a devolved policy responsibility, with key policy decisions in England being made by the UK Government. There are significant policy processes underway in the children's social care sector in England with the ongoing independent review of children's social care expected to report later this year.
12. The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) is the independent regulator of services that care for children. Unlike the Care Inspectorates in Scotland and Wales, Ofsted does not regulate adult social care. Ofsted is responsible for inspecting children's social care provision to ensure it is of the appropriate standard. Both fostering services and children's homes fall within Ofsted's remit.
13. Local authorities in England have statutory duties in relation to the children taken into their care. They are obliged to safeguard and promote children's welfare, including through the provision of accommodation and care. In discharging their duties, local authorities provide some care and accommodation themselves, and they purchase the remainder from independent providers, some of which are profit-making.
14. In England, local authorities use a significant amount of private provision for children's homes, with around 78% of places being provided by the private sector, which is similar to the position in Wales. In contrast local authorities in Scotland rely more heavily on local authority provision of children's homes places. Over the last five years, the private sector's share of children's homes in England has risen by 26%; while the number of local authority homes has declined by 5%. The voluntary sector is very small and in decline.
15. As well as shifting from local authority or voluntary sector to private provision in general across England, Scotland and Wales the average size of children's

homes has fallen. Most children's homes in England now provide four or fewer places.

16. In fostering, local authorities maintain their own in-house fostering agencies, but also use independent provision in the form of Independent Fostering Agencies ('IFAs'). However, the majority of fostering placements are provided by local authority foster carers in each of England, Scotland and Wales. In England, local authorities provide 64% of foster placements. In Scotland and Wales, around 69% and 74% of foster placements, respectively, come from local authorities.
17. In recent years, the number of looked-after children in England has increased steadily, both in absolute terms and as a proportion of the population. Between 2016 and 2020 the number of looked-after children rose by 14% in England. Needs were also shifting, with placements needed for a greater number of older children and unaccompanied asylum-seeking children, as well as those with more complex needs. These shifts have also increased demand for residential care and specialist fostering placements. We have seen an increasing gap between the number of children requiring placements and the number of local authority and third-sector placements available.

Problems in the placements market

18. The placements market – the arrangements by which local authorities source and purchase placements for children – plays an important role in the provision of residential and fostering placements for children. As noted above, a significant proportion of placements are provided by private providers, particularly in children's homes. Regulators assess most residential placements and fostering services as being of good quality, and there is no clear difference, on average, between their assessments of the quality of private provision, as compared with local authority provision. In England at 31 March 2021, just over 80% of children's homes and 93% of fostering agencies were rated as good or outstanding.
19. Our study found problems in the way the placements market is operating. Children are not consistently gaining access to placements that appropriately meet their needs and are in the appropriate locations. Local authorities are sometimes paying too much for placements.
20. First, and most importantly, it is clear that the placements market in England is failing to provide sufficient supply of the right type so that looked-after children can consistently access placements that properly meet their needs, when and where they require them. This means that some children are being

placed in settings that are not appropriate for their own circumstances, for instance where they are:

- far from where they would call 'home' without a clear child protection reason for this, thereby separated from positive friend and family networks: 37% of children in England in residential placements are placed at least 20 miles from their home base;
- separated from siblings, where their care plan calls for them to be placed together: 13% of all siblings in care in England were placed separately, contrary to their care plan;
- unable to access care, therapies or facilities that they need: we were told consistently by local authorities in England, Scotland and Wales that it is especially difficult to find placements for children with more complex needs and for older children. We were also told that some children are placed in an unregulated setting due to the lack of an appropriate children's home place, and so cannot legally be given the care they need. We also understand that in some cases children are being placed in unregistered settings, notwithstanding the fact that this is illegal.

21. While the amount of provision has been increasing in England, primarily driven by private providers, this has not been effective in reducing difficulties local authorities face in finding appropriate placements, in the right locations, for children as they need them. That means, in tangible terms, children being placed far from their established communities, siblings being separated or placements failing to meet the needs of children, to a greater extent than should be the case.
22. Given the vital importance of good placement matches for successful outcomes for children, and particularly the negative impact of repeated placement breakdown, these outcomes should not be accepted. It is a fundamental failure in the way the market is currently performing.
23. Second, the prices and profits of the largest providers in the sector are materially higher than we would expect them to be if this market were working well. The evidence from our core data set, covering fifteen large providers, shows that these providers have been earning significant profits over a sustained period. For the children's homes providers in our cross-GB data set we have seen steady operating profit margins averaging 22.6% from 2016-20, with average prices increasing from £2,977 to £3,830 per week over the period, an average annual increase of 3.5%, after accounting for inflation. In fostering, prices have been steady at an average of £820 per week, and

indeed have therefore declined in real terms, but profit margins of the largest IFAs appear consistently high at an average of 19.4%.

24. If this market were functioning well, we would expect to see existing profitable providers investing and expanding in the market and new providers entering. This would drive down prices as local authorities would have more choice of placements, meaning that less efficient providers would have to become more efficient or exit the market, and the profits of the largest providers would be reduced. Eventually, profits and prices should remain at a lower level as providers would know that if they raised their prices they would be unable to attract placements in the face of competition. The high profits of the largest providers therefore shows that competition is not working as well as it should be.
25. Third, we have concerns around the resilience of the market. Our concerns are not about businesses failing *per se*, but about the impact that failure can have on the children in their care. Were a private provider to exit this market in a disorderly manner – for instance by getting into financial trouble and closing its facilities – children in that provider’s care could suffer harm from the disruption, especially if local authorities were unable to find alternative appropriate placements for them. Given the impact of these potential negative effects on children’s lives, the current level of risk needs to be actively managed. This is less of a concern in the case of fostering, as foster carers should be able to transfer to a new agency with minimal impact on children. It is a greater concern in the case of children’s homes, where placements may be lost altogether.
26. We have seen very high levels of debt being carried by some of the largest private providers, with private equity-owned providers of children’s homes in our dataset having particularly high levels. This level of indebtedness, all else being equal, is likely to increase the risk of disorderly exit of firms from the market.
27. In addition to the above concerns about the market, some respondents have argued that the presence of for-profit operators is inappropriate in itself. We regard the issue of the legitimacy of having private provision in the social care system as one on which it is primarily for elected governments to take a view. Nonetheless we are well placed to consider the outcomes that private providers produce, as compared to local authority provision. While there are instances of high and low quality provision from all types of providers, the evidence from regulatory inspections gives us no reason to believe that private provision is of lower quality, on average, than local authority provision.

28. Turning to price, our evidence suggests that the cost to local authorities of providing their own children's home placements is no lower than the cost of procuring placements from private providers, despite their profit levels. By contrast, in fostering, there is indicative evidence that local authorities could provide some placements more cheaply than by purchasing them from IFAs. We have, therefore, made recommendations to the Government to run pilots in certain local authorities to test the potential to make savings by bringing more fostering placements in-house.
29. Finally, as noted above, we have seen that some private providers, particularly those owned by private equity investors, are carrying very high levels of debt. As local authorities need the capacity from private providers, but these providers can exit the market at any time, these debt levels raise concerns about the resilience of the market. We have, therefore, made recommendations to enable these risks to be actively monitored so that there is minimal disruption to children in care.
30. Given the importance of the functioning of the placements market for looked-after children, the problems we have found must be addressed. In the following three sections, we set out our findings on the main drivers of these problems, and the recommendations we are making to address them.

Commissioning

31. A key factor in determining how well any market functions is the ability of the behaviour of purchasers to drive the provision of sufficient supply at an acceptable price. The current shortfall in capacity in the placements' market therefore represents a fundamental failing in market functioning. In particular, we have found that there are severe limitations on the ability of the 206 local authorities in England, Scotland and Wales, who purchase placements, to engage effectively with the market to achieve the right outcomes.
32. In order to engage effectively with the market, local authorities, directly or indirectly, need to be able to:
 - forecast their likely future needs effectively, gaining a fine-grained understanding of both the overall numbers of children that will be in their care, and the types of need those children will have;
 - shape the market by providing accurate and credible signals of the likely future needs of children to existing and potential providers, and incentivising providers to expand capacity to meet these needs; and

- procure placements efficiently, purchasing those places that most closely match the needs of children, in the most appropriate locations, at prices that most closely reflect the cost of care.
33. However, we have found that local authorities, including those in England, face serious challenges when trying to do each of the above.
 34. Individual local authorities face an inherently difficult task when trying to develop accurate forecasting. They each buy relatively few placements, and they experience significant variation in both the number of children requiring care and their specific needs. The absence of reliable forecasts means that there is greater uncertainty in the market than there needs to be. This acts as a barrier to investment in new capacity needed to meet future demand.
 35. The majority of local authorities and large providers we spoke to in England highlighted that accurate forecasting of future demand is challenging. The most common reasons given were: that demand is inherently uncertain (for example, the needs of individual children change over time as well as the trends in need of children in care overall) and external pressures (such as local events, budget/service cuts, changes in staff, change in practices) which are hard to account for let alone predict. Other reasons included: a lack of forecasting tools and resources for local authorities to use and the accuracy of data recorded with regards to unplanned/emergency placements.
 36. Local authorities and large providers in England told us that their forecasts of future demand are usually based on previous trends and current care needs rather than substantial predictions of likely future needs. Many large providers explained that they do not consider local authority forecasts of their future needs to be accurate and so would not use these to inform their capacity expansion decisions.
 37. Even where future needs can be anticipated, local authorities struggle to convert this understanding into signals that providers will act on. Local authorities must often take whatever placement is available, even when it is not fully appropriate for the needs of the child. This blunts the ability of local authority purchasing decisions to shape the market to provide for their true needs. In England, most local authorities told us that they do not attempt to actively shape the market by encouraging providers to invest in new provision. Local authorities acting alone face particular challenges in attempting to shape the market. For example, often the demand of an individual local authority for certain types of specialist provision is too low to justify contracting a whole service to meet these needs.

38. Sufficiency statements provided by local authorities in England demonstrated that many local authorities focus their future sufficiency plans on further developing their in-house offering of children's homes and foster carers, rather than seeking to influence the expansion plans of providers. Nevertheless, opening a new children's home is a major financial commitment and especially so for local authorities with reduced budgets and multiple competing demands for resources. Many local authorities told us this was one of the major challenges when considering whether to open a new children's home.
39. We have seen considerable evidence that working together can make local authorities more effective. Collaborative procurement strategies can strengthen the bargaining position of local authorities, and groups of local authorities can more effectively engage with private providers to support the case for investment in new capacity, which provides the right type of care in the right locations.
40. Currently in England, there is a variety of commissioning cultures and approaches, with some local authorities procuring individually while many form regional procurement groups with neighbouring local authorities. These groups vary in their design and purpose. All local authorities that responded to our request for information in England explained that regional procurement groups are beneficial as they allow for sharing of information and best practice between local authorities, the pooling of demand, and for local authorities to negotiate better terms with providers. However, many local authorities also highlighted that the design of procurement groups is important. Local authorities told us that for placements catering to complex care needs, collaborating with a large number of local authorities can be very effective due to the smaller number of cases requiring these kinds of placements.
41. While we have seen varying degrees of cooperative activity between different groups of local authorities in England, this has not gone far enough or fast enough. Despite regional collaboration being widely seen as beneficial, local authorities can struggle to collaborate successfully due to risk aversion, budgetary constraints, differences in governance, and difficulties aligning priorities and sharing costs. It is not clear how local authorities can sufficiently overcome these barriers even if given further incentive to do so. As such, without action by national governments to ensure the appropriate level of collaboration, local authorities are unlikely to be able to collaborate sufficiently to deliver the outcomes that are needed.

Recommendation 1.1: Larger scale market engagement

42. We recommend that the UK Government requires a more collective approach to engagement with the placements market. This should include:
- setting out what minimum level of activity must be carried out collectively. This should include an appropriate degree of activity in each of the key areas of forecasting, market shaping and procurement;
 - ensuring there is a set of bodies to carry out these collective market shaping and procurement activities, with each local authority required to participate in one of them; and
 - providing an oversight structure to ensure that each body is carrying out its functions to the appropriate level. This should involve an assessment of the extent to which sufficiency of placements is being achieved within each area.
43. The UK Government should determine how best to implement this recommendation taking into account key issues that lie beyond the scope of our study. In examining the relative advantages and disadvantages of different options, the UK Government should consider:
- the number of bodies: for any body or set of bodies created there will be a trade-off between gaining buyer power and efficiencies through larger size, versus difficulties of coordination and management that come with that. The UK Government should consider these factors in determining the appropriate approach;
 - what precise collective market shaping and procurement activities are assigned to the bodies: there is a range of options, from mandating only a small amount of supportive activity to be carried out collectively eg forecasting, market shaping and procurement only for children with particular types of complex needs, through to mandating all of this activity to be carried out by the collective bodies;
 - the relationship between the new bodies and local authorities: the regional bodies will decide on how the mandated level of collective activity is carried out. This could be with local authorities collectively reaching agreement or the regional bodies could be given the power to decide;
 - the governance of the body or bodies: on the presumption that corporate parenting responsibilities (and therefore the ultimate decision of whether to place a particular child in a particular placement) will remain with local

authorities, there may be a tension between the roles of the local authorities and the collective bodies that will need to be resolved via the governance structure; and

- how to best take advantage of what is already in place. There are benefits of building on existing initiatives in terms of avoiding transition costs and benefiting from organic learning about what works well in different contexts. For example, consideration should be given to using existing agreements, organisations and staff as the basis for future mandated collective action.
44. Wherever responsibility for ensuring there is sufficient provision for looked-after children sits, it is essential that this body or bodies are appropriately held to account. As such, we are also recommending that local authority duties should be enhanced to allow more transparent understanding of the extent to which sufficiency of placements is being achieved within each area. In order to do this, better information is required to understand how often children are being placed in placements that do not fit their needs, due to a lack of appropriate placements in the right locations. This will also help ensure that moving to a wider geographical focus helps support the aim of placing more children closer to home, unless there is a good reason not to do so.

Recommendation 1.2: National support for purchaser engagement with the market

45. We recommend that the UK Government provides additional support to local authorities and collective bodies for forecasting, market shaping and procurement.
46. With regards to forecasting, the UK Government should establish functions at a national level supporting the forecasting of demand for, and supply of, children's social care placements. These functions should include carrying out and publishing national and regional analysis and providing local authorities and collective body or bodies with guidance and support for more local forecasting, including the creation of template sufficiency reports.
47. For market shaping and procurement, the UK Government should support the increase in wider-than-local activity by funding collective bodies to trial different market shaping and procurement techniques and improving understanding of what market shaping and procurement models work well.
48. In England, the Department for Education should support the reintroduction of national procurement contracts covering those terms and conditions that do not need to reflect local conditions.

Recommendation 1.3: Support for increasing local authority foster care provision

49. We recommend that the UK Government supports innovative projects by individual local authorities, or groups of local authorities, targeted at recruiting and retaining more foster carers to reduce their reliance on IFAs.
50. While precise like-for-like comparisons are difficult to make, our analysis suggests that there are likely to be some cases where local authorities could provide foster placements more cost-effectively in-house rather than via IFAs, if they are able to recruit and retain the necessary carers. We also have heard from local authorities who have successfully expanded their in-house foster care offering and have seen positive results.
51. The UK Government should offer targeted funding support for innovative projects by individual local authorities, or groups of local authorities, targeted at recruiting and retaining more foster carers to reduce their reliance on IFAs. Any such projects should then be evaluated carefully to provide an evidence base to help shape future policy.

Recommendations we are not taking forward: banning for profit care; capping prices or profits

52. Some respondents have argued that we should directly address the problem of high profits and prices in the placements market by recommending that local authorities stop using private provision altogether, or that caps should be imposed on their prices or profits.
53. Turning first to children's homes, as discussed above, the central problem facing the market is the lack of sufficient capacity. At the moment, England relies on private providers for the majority of its placements. Similarly, most investment in new capacity is currently coming from private providers. Banning private provision, or taking measures that directly limit prices and profits would further reduce the incentives of private providers to invest in creating new capacity (or even in maintaining some current capacity) and therefore risk increasing the capacity shortfall. While this shortfall could be made up by increased local authority or not-for-profit provision, it would take significant political intervention to ensure that this was achieved at the speed and scale necessary to replace private provision, requiring very significant capital investment.
54. In the case of foster care, by contrast, we do see indicative evidence that using IFA carers may be more expensive for local authorities than using their own in-house carers in some cases. Compared to children's homes, the

capital expenditure required to in-source significant numbers of foster placements would also be lower. While we are recommending that the UK Government supports local authorities to explore this option, we do not recommend that the Government takes direct action to limit or ban profit-making in foster care. From the evidence we have seen is not clear that local authorities would be able to recruit the required number of foster carers themselves, nor that they would be able to provide the same quality of care at a similar price, across the full range of care needs and in every area.

Overall recommended approach on commissioning

55. In our view, the best way to address the high levels of profit in the sector together with the capacity shortfall is to address the common causes of both problems, in particular the weak position of local authority commissioners when purchasing placements and removing unnecessary barriers to the creation of new provision (as discussed in the next section). Improving the approach to purchasing, will provide local authorities with greater purchasing power and put them in a better position to forecast future demand and manage capacity requirements accordingly. Removing barriers to investment in new provision will help providers respond more effectively to the needs of children.
56. Over time, we believe that these measures would be successful in drawing more appropriate supply to the market and driving down prices for local authorities, without acting as a drag on required ongoing and new investment in provision. In doing so they would move the market to a position where providers are forced to be more responsive to the actual needs of children, by providing places which fully meet their needs, in locations which are in the best interests of those children. Such placements ought also to offer better value to commissioners who are purchasing them, by being priced more in line with the underlying cost of provision.
57. We are aware that there have been calls in the past for greater aggregation in commissioning. In England, reviews for the Department for Education in 2016 and 2018 recommended that local authorities be required to come together in large consortia to purchase children's homes and fostering placements, and that larger local authorities or consortia attempt to become self-sufficient using in-house foster carers.
58. The UK Government will rightly wish to consider our recommendations, and the appropriate way to implement them in the round, taking into account broader issues that are beyond our remit. Nonetheless, we are clear that excessive fragmentation in the processes of forecasting, market shaping and

procurement are key drivers of poor outcomes in this market, and must therefore be addressed if we are to see significant improvement in the outcomes.

Creating capacity in the market

59. We have also identified barriers that are reducing the ability of suppliers to bring new supply to the market to meet emerging needs. These barriers are in the areas of:

- Regulation;
- property and planning; and,
- recruitment and retention.

By creating additional costs and time delays for providers, these factors may act as a deterrent to new investment, leading to provision being added more slowly, or even deterred completely. Unless addressed, over time, these will contribute to the ongoing undersupply of appropriate placements in the market.

Recommendation 2.1: Review of regulation

60. We recommend that the UK Government carries out or commissions a review of regulation impacting on the placements market in England.

61. Regulation is a vital tool to protect safety and high standards, and where it is well-designed to protect the interests, safety and wellbeing of children, it must not be eroded. We have seen evidence that in England there are areas where regulation is a poor fit for the reality of the placements market as we see it today. Despite the huge changes in the nature of the care system over the past twenty years, the regulatory system in England has remained broadly the same over this period.

62. For example, in England it is a legal requirement for a children's home to have a manager. It is also a legal requirement for a manager to be registered and failure to do so is an offence. On that basis, Ofsted policy is that an application to register a home will be accompanied by an application to register a manager. This means that the manager usually has to be in place for some time before children will be cared for. Similarly, in England a manager's registration is not transferable, so each time a manager wishes to move home they must re-register with Ofsted. We have heard from providers

that these processes are costly, time-consuming and hinder the rapid redeployment of staff to a location where they are needed.

63. These are examples of the sort of areas where regulation as currently drafted may be preventing the market from working as well as it should, without providing meaningful protections for children. As a result, the net effect of these areas of regulation on children's wellbeing may be negative. We have seen less evidence of these sort of problems in Wales and Scotland, where regulation appears to be more flexible, while still providing strong protections for children in care.
64. The UK Government should carry out, or commission, a thorough review of regulation relating to the provision of placements, during which protecting the wellbeing of children must be the overriding aim, but also considering whether regulations are unnecessarily restricting the effective provision of placements.

Recommendation 2.2: Review planning requirements

65. We recommend that the UK Government reviews the impact of the planning system on the ability of providers to open new children's homes.
66. Access to suitable property is another barrier to the creation of new children's homes. While this is partly down to competition for scarce housing stock, one particular area of concern is in negotiating the planning system. We have repeatedly heard concerns that in England obtaining planning permission is a significant barrier to provision because of local opposition, much of which appears to be based on outmoded or inaccurate assumptions about children's homes and looked-after children. Similarly, we have heard that the planning rules are applied inconsistently in relation to potential new children's homes.
67. The average new children's home in England provides placements for only three children. As a result, the type of properties that are suitable to serve as children's homes will also tend to be attractive to families in general. Where providers face delays imposed by the planning process, even where they are successful in getting planning permission, this can lead to them losing the property to a rival bidder for whom planning is not a consideration. It is therefore clear to us that market functioning would be improved by a more streamlined and consistent approach to planning issues.
68. In England, the UK Government should review the planning requirements in relation to children's homes to assess whether they are content that the correct balance is currently being struck. In particular, in order to make the planning process more efficient for children's homes, we recommend that the UK Government considers whether any distinction, for the purposes of the

planning regime, between small children's homes and domestic dwelling houses should be removed. This could include, for example, steps to make clear that small children's homes which can accommodate less than a specified number of residents at any one time are removed from the requirement to go through the planning system notwithstanding that the carers there work on a shift pattern. Doing this will increase the prospect of enough children's homes being opened and operated in locations where they are needed to provide the level of care that children need.

69. We also recommend that where children's homes remain in the planning system (for example because they are larger) national guidance is introduced for local planning authorities and providers. The guidance should clarify the circumstances in which permission is likely to be granted or refused.

Recommendation 2.3: Regular state of the sector review

70. We recommend that the UK Government commissions an annual state of the sector review, which would consider the extent and causes of any shortfalls in children's home staff or foster carers.
71. Recruiting and retaining staff for children's homes is a significant barrier to the creation of new capacity. This is a fundamental problem across all the care sectors. Given the high levels of profit among the large providers it is perhaps surprising that wages have not risen to ease recruitment pressure and that greater investment is not made in recruiting, training and supporting staff. We note, however, that there are many other factors aside from wages that impact on the attractiveness of roles within children's social care, some of which are outside the control of providers. While there is no easy route to addressing this, more attention needs to be paid to this question at a national level. This should be an ongoing process building on existing work.
72. In England, there should be an annual assessment of the state of the sector, including workforce issues, to provide a clear overview of staffing pressures and concerns, and to recommend measures to address bottlenecks. This would be similar in scope to the CQC's annual State of Care review. The UK Government should also give attention to whether national measures, such as recruitment campaigns, measures to support professionalisation (such as investment in training and qualifications) and clearer career pathways are required.
73. Recruitment and retention of foster carers is a barrier to creating more foster places. While many local authorities and IFAs are adopting positive approaches to addressing this, again more can be done at the national level.

There should be an assessment of the likely future need for foster carers and the UK Government should take the lead in implementing an effective strategy to improve recruitment and retention of foster carers.

Resilience of the market

74. We have found that some providers in the market, particularly those owned by private equity firms, are carrying very high levels of debt. These high debt levels increase the risk of disorderly firm failure, with children's homes shutting their doors abruptly. Were this to occur, this would harm children who may have to leave their current homes. Local authorities may then have problems finding appropriate alternative provision to transfer them into.
75. In principle, a successful children's home should be expected to be attractive to a new proprietor. There is, however, no guarantee that it will be sold as a going concern in every case. In particular, the expected move away from the ultra-low interest rate environment of recent times would place new pressure on highly-leveraged companies to meet their debt servicing obligations, increasing the risk of disorderly failure. Our assessment is that the current level of risk of disruption to children's accommodation and care as a result of a provider's financial failure is unacceptable, and measures must be taken to mitigate this.
76. In considering our recommendations in this area, we have taken into account the ongoing need for investment in the creation of appropriate placements, and the current level of reliance on private providers to make this investment. We have sought to balance the need to take urgent steps to reduce the level of risk to children against the need to avoid a sudden worsening of the investment environment faced by providers, which may exacerbate the problem of lack of appropriate supply in this market.
77. We are therefore recommending that the UK Government takes steps to actively increase the level of resilience in this market, in order to reduce the risk of negative outcomes for children. In particular, we recommend that it:
 - introduces a market oversight function so that the risk of failure among the most difficult to replace providers is actively monitored; and
 - requires all providers to have measures in place that will ensure that children in their care will not have their care disrupted in the event of business failure.

Recommendation 3.1: Monitor and warn of risks of provider failure

78. We recommend that the UK Government creates an appropriate oversight regime that is capable of assessing the financial health of the most difficult to replace providers of children's homes and of warning placing authorities if a failure is likely.
79. This regime could operate along similar lines to the Care Quality Commission's current market oversight role in relation to adult social care providers in England – a system that already exists for a similar purpose. Adopting this recommendation would provide policymakers and placing authorities with early warning of a potential provider failure.
80. Creating this function on a statutory basis would provide benefits such as giving the oversight body formal information-gathering powers, and a firmer footing on which to share information with local authorities. We recommend that in England, where the CQC already operates a statutory regime for adult social care, the statutory approach should be adopted. Given the cross-border nature of many of the most significant providers, oversight bodies in the three nations need to be able to share relevant information in a timely and effective way.

Recommendation 3.2: Contingency planning

81. We recommend that the UK Government takes steps to ensure that children's interests are adequately protected if a provider gets into financial distress.
82. The UK Government, via its appointed oversight body, should require the most difficult to replace providers to maintain a "contingency plan" setting out how they are organising their affairs to mitigate the risk of their provision having to close in a sudden and disorderly way in the event that they get into financial difficulties or insolvency. One important element will be to ensure that appropriate arrangements are in place to ensure that providers have the necessary time and financial resources to enable an orderly transition where the provision can be operated on a sustainable basis, either by its existing owners or any alternative owners. Contingency plans should seek to address these risks, for instance through ensuring that:
 - appropriate standstill provisions are in place with lenders;
 - companies are structured appropriately to remove unnecessary barriers to selling the provision to another operator as a going concern; and

- providers maintain sufficient levels of reserves to continue to operate for an appropriate length of time in a stressed situation.
83. These contingency plans should be subjected to stress testing by the Government's oversight body, to ensure that they are sufficiently robust to reduce the risk of negative impacts on children in potential stress scenarios. Where the oversight body considers that plans are not sufficiently robust, it should have the power to require providers to amend and improve them.
84. Taken together, we believe that these measures strike the right balance between minimising the risks of negative impacts on children and maintaining an environment that supports needed investment in the future, based on the current state of the market. As the measures that we are recommending take effect and capacity grows in the market, the Government will want to reflect on the appropriate balance between public and private provision. In particular, as well as the resilience risks associated with the high levels of debt inherent in the business models of some providers, there is a risk that excessive reliance on highly leveraged providers will leave local authorities more susceptible to having to pay higher prices for services if the costs of financing debt increase.
85. In addition, as reforms to the care system are made in England (possibly resulting in fewer children being placed in children's homes – the terms of reference for the independent review of children's social care in England notes it should consider "the capacity and capability of the system to support and strengthen families in order to prevent children being taken into care unnecessarily") the basis of this calculation may shift, meaning that imposing tougher measures, such as a special administration regime or steps to directly limit or reduce the levels of debt held by individual operators, may at that point be appropriate.

Next steps

86. If implemented, we expect that our recommendations should improve or mitigate the poor outcomes that we see in the placement market.
- Our recommendations in relation to commissioning placements in the market will put purchasers in a stronger position to understand their future needs, to ensure that provision is available to meet them and to purchase that provision in an effective way.

- Our recommendations to address barriers to creating capacity in the market will reduce the time and cost of creating new provision to meet identified needs.
 - Our recommendations around resilience will reduce the risk of children experiencing negative effects from children's home providers exiting the market in a disorderly way.
87. Taken together, we expect these measures to lead to a children's social care placements market where:
- the availability of placements better matches the needs of children and is in appropriate locations;
 - the cost to local authorities of these placements is reduced; and
 - the risk of disruption to children from disorderly exit of children's homes provision is reduced.
88. Major policy processes in relation to children's social care are currently ongoing in England, through the independent care review, and we hope that our recommendations will be considered as part of this. We will engage with the UK Government, Ofsted and others to explain our recommendations, strongly encourage them to implement them and, support them in doing so.

SHEFFIELD CITY COUNCIL

Education, Children and Families Urgency Sub-Committee

Meeting held 29th June 2022

PRESENT: Councillors Dawn Dale (Chair) , Brian Holmshaw (Deputy Chair), Mick Rooney, Colin Ross, Ann Whitaker.

1. WELCOME AND HOUSEKEEPING

- 1.1 The Chair welcomed attendees to the meeting and outlined housekeeping arrangements.

2. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

- 2.1 No apologies for absence were received.

3. EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

- 3.1 No items were identified where resolutions may be moved to exclude the public and press.

4. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

- 4.1 There were no declarations of interest.

5. SCHOOL TO POOL TRANSPORT

- 5.1 The Director of Education and Skills, Assistant Director School Effectiveness and PESOL Service Manager attended the meeting to present a report seeking approval to commission a new School to Pool framework contract, from September 2022 to August 2026, at an estimated value of £230k per annum; to provide a transport service to the council for the carriage of children to and from their school to a swimming pool for swimming lessons.

- 5.2 The Assistant Director, Legal & Governance explained that the Urgency Sub-Committee had been convened as this decision needed to be made before the next scheduled meeting of the Education, Children and Families Policy Committee, in order to meet the procurement timetable.

- 5.3 The PESOL Service Manager confirmed that climate considerations had been an important factor in developing the proposal, and were included in the contract tender, through a 15% weighting for social value and local economic impact.

- 5.4 **RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY:** That the Education, Children and Families Urgency Sub-Committee:-

(i) agrees to continue to commission school to pool services and does so by procuring a new school-to-pool framework contract for a period of four years

- 5.5 **Reasons for Decision**

- 5.5.1 The current arrangements are due to expire, and if the Council is to continue to make this service available to schools, new arrangements will be required from September 2022.
- 5.5.2 There is no legal requirement for the Council to provide this service. It is a fully traded service that the service chooses to offer to schools to support their legal obligations under part 6 of the Education Act 2002, Education (National Curriculum) (Attainment Targets and Programmes of Study) (England) Order 2013/2232 and the National Curriculum in England, Framework Document, to deliver swimming to pupils by the end of Key Stage 2. School swimming also contributes to the Council's One Year Plan ambitions, to support young people in Sheffield to enable them to develop and flourish; to provide access to a wide range of educational opportunities for young people to achieve their full potential; to support Covid recovery for young people.
- 5.5.3 It was recommended that the council procures a new school-to pool contract framework contract for a period of four years because:
1. The market for the contract is limited so it is hoped that a four-year term will attract multiple external suppliers.
 2. It will provide the service with opportunities to run multiple competitions throughout the life of the contract i.e if the service uses a new pool, the timetable changes.
 3. It will provide the service with the right to withdraw from the contract i.e. no longer require transport for a certain pool.
 4. The price for transport would be cheaper per run than a school sourcing their own private hire, meaning schools can prioritise buying swimming to meet the needs of their pupils.

5.6 Alternatives Considered and Rejected

- 5.6.1 In house delivery with the Council's Transport Service was considered. This was rejected because the service does not have the required high passenger capacity coaches and is not able to provide coaches during their peak times at the beginning and end of the school day.
- 5.6.2 Schools could source their own transport as private hire. However this would be at a higher cost per run and therefore have a direct impact on the number of swimming lessons schools can purchase. There would also be Climate implications, with a risk of multiple vehicles from multiple companies travelling into and around the Clean Air Zone.

SHEFFIELD CITY COUNCIL

Education, Children and Families Urgency Sub-Committee

Meeting held 21st July 2022

PRESENT: Councillors Dawn Dale (Chair) , Anne Murphy, Paul Turpin, Ann Whitaker.

1. WELCOME AND HOUSEKEEPING

- 1.1 The Chair welcomed attendees to the meeting and outlined housekeeping arrangements.

2. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

- 2.1 Apologies were received from Councillor Mick Rooney, with Councillor Anne Murphy substituting; Councillor Brian Holmshaw with Councillor Paul Turpin substituting; and Councillor Colin Ross.

3. EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

- 3.1 No items were identified where resolutions may be moved to exclude the public and press.

4. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

- 4.1 Councillor Anne Murphy declared a personal interest as a respite foster carer.

5. RENEWAL OF CONTRACT WITH NEXUS MULTI-ACADEMY TRUST TO DELIVER THE MEDICAL NEEDS EDUCATION SERVICE

- 5.1 The Director of Commissioning, Strategic Commissioning Manager and Commissioning Officer presented a report setting out a proposal to commission the Medical Needs Education Service by way of a service contract with a 2-year term and a value of £2,608,860.
- 5.2 The report set out the intention of the Council to issue a direct award of a service contract to Nexus Multi-Academy Trust, the current service provider, and officers provided additional information about current performance, including finance, impact and pupil voice.
- 5.3 Officers confirmed that as part of the commissioning cycle, termly monitoring takes place to ensure that there are sufficient places to meet demand, and that work is going on across the system to support the health and wellbeing of young people, ensure that they are supported in the most appropriate way and reduce the need for services such as this.
- 5.4 Sub-Committee members welcomed the suggestion of a future discussion on the 'whole system' approach to health and wellbeing support, including health and social care colleagues, and hearing from young people including Looked After

Children.

5.5 RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY: That the Education, Children and Families Urgency Sub-Committee:-

- (i) approves the commissioning of a service contract with a term of 2 years and a value of £2,608,860, for the provision of the Medical Needs Education Service.
- (ii) notes the intention of the Council to issue a direct award of a service contract to Nexus Multi-Academy Trust subject to Officer approval by way of a separate decision report.

5.6 Reasons for Decision

5.6.1 The Council has a duty under S19 Education Act 1996 to make arrangements for the provision of suitable education for those children of compulsory school age who, by reason of illness, exclusion from school or otherwise, may not for any period receive suitable education unless such arrangements are made for them. Renewal of this contract will allow the Council to meet these statutory duties.

5.6.2 The proposed contract is not advised to be subject to the competition requirements under the Public Contracts Regulations 2015. The funding for the service will derive from the High Needs element of the Dedicated Schools Grant. As such the proposed contract is in accordance with Department for Education guidance on contracts which are not “public contracts” for the purposes of the PCR 2015. The current arrangements are due to expire, and if the Council is to continue to make this service available to schools, new arrangements will be required from September 2022.

5.7 Alternatives Considered and Rejected

5.7.1 The option to not renew this contract was rejected because it would leave the Local Authority unable to meet statutory duties relating to pupils with medical needs that make them unable to attend school.

6. GREEN PAPER CONSULTATION ‘SEND REVIEW; RIGHT SUPPORT: RIGHT PLACE: RIGHT TIME’

6.1 The Director of Education & Skills, and Head of Access and Inclusion presented a report providing details of Sheffield City Council’s response to the Department for Education green paper ‘SEND review: right support, right place, right time’.

6.2 Officers reported that the co-chairs, deputy chair and group spokesperson had been briefed as the response had been developed, and that in the new Committee System of governance, this green paper consultation response required Committee approval.

6.3 Sub-Committee members welcomed the inclusion of a report on Alternative Provision on the November agenda of the Policy Committee.

6.4 **RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY:** That the Education, Children and Families

Urgency Sub-Committee:-

- (i) approves the response to the Department for Education green paper 'SEND review; right support, right place, right time'

6.5 Reasons for Decision

- 6.5.1 Contributing to the consultation will provide Sheffield City Council's feedback to a national consultation on provision for children with SEND and how it should be managed in the future.

6.6 Alternatives Considered

- 6.6.1 None – all local authorities have been asked to provide a response to the consultation by the Department of Education.

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