

Children and Families Committee

Response to Members' Questions

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Children and Families Committee: 10 November 2025

Response to Member Queries

Questions

1. *Item 6 – Youth Justice Plan – Councillor Gardiner asked whether the four young people sentenced to custody were previously known to services.*

Response: Owing to the sensitivity of the information, a response has been provided to the members of the committee directly.

2. *Item 8 - Second Financial Review - Councillor Saunders referred to the recruitment of international staff and referenced new visa rules and the potential risk of losing staff. Councillor Saunders gave an example of the prison service and staff potentially being lost due to the changes.*

Response: The Executive Director, Children's Services, has flagged this matter with the Council's HR and Legal departments.

3. *Item 8 - Second Financial Review – Councillor Beanland asked about the authorisation of additional expenditure, over agreed budgets, and placement procurement.*

Response:

Placement Procurement

Individual packages are approved in line with the services financial scheme of delegation. This document provides arrangements for local decision making and approval in accordance with the CEC Constitution – Finance Procedure Rules ([Cheshire East Council Constitution](#) pg. 143).

The LiquidLogic and Controcc system used for Placement procurement and the approval limits are extracted from the scheme of delegation.

7. Feeder Systems

System	Type of payments	Approver	Approval limit
LiquidLogic and Controcc	Placements for children and/or support for children and young people (for example interpretation services, direct payments, support at home).	Approved by managers Contracts loaded and authorised in Controcc in line with manager approval by Jacqui Hall, Debbie Winstanley and Shane Yoxall	Team managers – up to £50 Service managers – up to £250 Heads of Service – over £250 and up to £100,000 (projected annual forecast) Director – over £100,000 and up to £250,000

Budget Approval

Budget Approvals as per the Constitution pg. 135 states:-

- Corporate Policy Committee and Finance Sub-Committee have responsibility for proposing to Council a budget.
- Council is responsible for the adoption of its budget.
- Committees have responsibility for making decision within that budget.

The ultimate budget responsibility is with the Executive Director of Children's Services who is supported by managers who have budget management responsibilities.

4. *Item 9 - MTFS - Councillor Wardlaw asked the following questions in respect of agency staff:*

- *What is the current overall number of agency staff?*

Response: 65.7 agency social workers in place which is a rate of 31%. This figure includes 39 frontline social workers with caseloads; the remaining agency staff comprises all managers/Independent Reviewing Officers (IROs) and other non-case holding social workers.

- *How many social workers do we need to deliver optimum service?*

Response: The senior leadership teams are reviewing the current establishment in light of the Department for Education (DfE) reform changes required by the Families First Programme and this extends to a full review of optimum staffing requirements. Current average caseloads do not indicate any overstaffing in relation to the base establishment.

- *Requested more information on exit interview - were there any themes emerging?*

Response: We are not currently receiving enough completed exit interviews to identify any trends, this is also affected by the fact that we have low turnover in Children's Social Care.

5. *Item 10 - HAF report - Councillor Gardiner asked whether an analysis regarding the uptake of HAF and Food Programme in less urbanised areas had been carried out.*

Response: This is a breakdown of the location of attendees this year to date (01.04.25 - 18.11.25); note that this is based on the service users' home postcode and not the location that they attended an event. Postcodes may therefore appear to be Crewe, but may be more rural in reality:

Area	Count
Crewe	1385
Macclesfield	453
Nantwich	178
Alsager	165
Wilmslow	153
Knutsford	145
Holmes Chapel	85
Poynton	37
Sandbach	110
Congleton	70
Middlewich	50
Other	114
Total	2945

6. *Item 11 - Cheshire East Safeguarding Children's Partnership Annual report 2024/2025 - Councillor Beanland referred to page 194 (Section 175 audits) and commented that part of the information was missing.*

Response: The annual report has been updated to reflect the point raised. The following sentence within the 'Section 175 audits' section of the report has been revised as follows:

"When SCiES conduct a schools review they review the s175 submission, in 2024 11% of the submissions"

Now reads:

"When SCIES conduct a schools review they review the S175 submission."

7. *Item 13 - Work Programme - Councillor Bailey asked if Caroline O'Neill, DfE Children's Improvement Advisor and Chair of Improvement and Impact Board could provide an update/assurance on the Improvement Board.*

Response: It was agreed that this would be included in the next Improvement Plan Progress report scheduled for January 2026 Committee.

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