

Children and Families Committee

Agenda

Date:	Monday, 15th September, 2025
Time:	10.30 am
Venue:	The Capesthorne Room - Town Hall, Macclesfield, SK10 1EA

The agenda is divided into 2 parts. Part 1 is taken in the presence of the public and press. Part 2 items will be considered in the absence of the public and press for the reasons indicated on the agenda and at the foot of each report.

It should be noted that Part 1 items of Cheshire East Council decision making meetings are audio recorded, and the recordings will be uploaded to the Council's website.

PART 1 – MATTERS TO BE CONSIDERED WITH THE PUBLIC AND PRESS PRESENT

1. **Apologies for Absence**

To note any apologies for absence from Members.

2. **Declarations of Interest**

To provide an opportunity for Members and Officers to declare any disclosable pecuniary interests, other registerable interests, and non-registerable interests in any item on the agenda.

3. **Minutes of Previous Meeting (Pages 5 - 18)**

To approve as a correct record the minutes of the previous meeting held on 9 June 2025.

For requests for further information

Contact: Karen Shuker

Tel: 01270 686459

E-Mail: CheshireEastDemocraticServices@cheshireeast.gov.uk

4. **Public Speaking/Open Session**

In accordance with paragraph 2.24 of the Council's Committee Procedure Rules and Appendix on Public Speaking, set out in the [Constitution](#), a total period of 15 minutes is allocated for members of the public to put questions to the committee on any matter relating to this agenda. Each member of the public will be allowed up to two minutes each to speak, and the Chair will have discretion to vary this where they consider it appropriate.

Members of the public wishing to speak are required to provide notice of this at least three clear working days in advance of the meeting.

Petitions - To receive any petitions which have met the criteria - [Petitions Scheme Criteria](#), and falls within the remit of the Committee. Petition organisers will be allowed up to three minutes to speak.

5. **Cheshire East Domestic Abuse Service (Pages 19 - 134)**

To consider a report on the review, consultation and engagement by the council of the domestic abuse safe accommodation service, and the new Domestic Abuse and Sexual Abuse Strategy 2025/28.

6. **Supported Accommodation for 16–25-year-old Children in Care and Care Leavers (Pages 135 - 156)**

To consider a report which provides an update on the recommissioning activity approved at Committee in June, to provide oversight of the agreed service model and to seek authorisation to follow a competitive tender process and award the successful provider(s) the Supported Accommodation contract from 1st July 2026.

7. **First Financial Review of 2025/26 (Pages 157 - 228)**

To consider a report on the first financial review for year 2025/26.

8. **Families First Task and Finish Group Feedback (Pages 229 - 276)**

To receive feedback on the work of the Families First Elected Members Task and Finish Group.

9. **Improvement Plan Progress Report (Pages 277 - 348)**

To provide an update on progress against the children's services improvement plan to address the findings from the Ofsted inspection of local authority children's services (ILACS) conducted in February and March 2024. This also includes the findings from the second Ofsted monitoring visit in June 2025, and the findings from the councillor visits to frontline services which took place in July 2025.

10. **DSG management plan - reprofiled 2025/26-2031/32 (Pages 349 - 374)**

To receive an update of the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) management plan for the period 2025/26 to 2031/32 to reflect the financial outturn position and the reduced growth of Education, Health and Care plans (EHCP) numbers as at 31 March 2025.

11. **Work Programme (Pages 375 - 378)**

To consider the Work Programme and determine any required amendments.

12. **Minutes of Sub-Committees (Pages 379 - 386)**

To note the minutes of the Cared for Children and Care Leavers Committee meeting held on 4 March 2025 and 24 June 2025.

13. **Approval to progress with the proposal for the provision of a new Primary school at Basford East, Shavington (Pages 387 - 404)**

To consider a report on the proposal to progress with the free school presumption process to open a new primary school in Basford East, Shavington, including the process of attracting potential sponsors to run the new school.

14. **Exclusion of the Press and Public**

The reports relating to the remaining items on the agenda have been withheld from public circulation and deposit pursuant to Section 100(B)(2) of the Local Government Act 1972 on the grounds that the matters may be determined with the press and public excluded. The Committee may decide that the press and public be excluded from the meeting during consideration of the following items pursuant to Section 100(A)4 of the Local Government Act 1972 on the grounds that they involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972 and public interest would not be served in publishing the information.

PART 2 – MATTERS TO BE CONSIDERED WITHOUT THE PUBLIC AND PRESS PRESENT

15. **Approval to progress with the proposal for the provision of a new Primary school at Basford East, Shavington (Pages 405 - 408)**

To consider the confidential appendix to the report.

Membership: Councillors R Bailey, M Beanland, S Bennett-Wake, J Bird, L Crane (Chair), E Gilman (Vice-Chair), G Hayes, R Moreton, B Posnett, B Puddicombe, G Smith and B Wye

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CHESHIRE EAST COUNCIL

Minutes of a meeting of the **Children and Families Committee**
held on Monday, 9th June, 2025 in the The Capesthorne Room - Town Hall,
Macclesfield SK10 1EA

PRESENT

Councillor L Crane (Chair)
Councillor E Gilman (Vice-Chair)

Councillors M Beanland, S Bennett-Wake, R Moreton, B Posnett, J Saunders,
G Smith, L Wardlaw, C Bulman and J Place

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE

Karen Shuker, Democratic Services Officer
Richard Nash, Interim Director for Early Help and Children's Services
Tracy Stephen, Director of Family Help and Children's Social Care
Lisa Davies, Interim Improvement Director Children's Services
Claire Williamson, Director for Education, Strong Start and Integration
Martyn Baggaley, Head of Service, Integrated Commissioning
Jo Prophet, School Organisation and Capital Manager
Alex Cooper, Project Manager, SEND Transformation Team
Rhiannon Edwards, Domestic Abuse Development Advisor
Nikki Wood-Hill, Finance Manager
Diane Green, Finance Manager

The Chair varied the order of business. Notwithstanding this the minutes are in the order of the agenda.

1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors R Bailey, J Bird, G Hayes, B Puddicombe and B Wye.

Councillors C Bulman, J Place and L Wardlaw were present as substitutes.

2 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

In relation to item 12 – Proposal to formally increase the number of places at Park Lane School, Macclesfield Councillor S Bennett-Wake declared a non-pecuniary interest by virtue of the fact that she had friends and former pupils who worked in the school and other schools in Macclesfield.

3 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the meeting held on 7 April 2025 be agreed as a correct record.

4 PUBLIC SPEAKING/OPEN SESSION

There were no registered public speakers.

5 CHESHIRE EAST DOMESTIC ABUSE SERVICE

The Committee received a presentation and considered a report which outlined the council's approach to domestic abuse support within the borough including the current service offer and the initial stages taken to review the service. The report provided details on the planned review activity and co-production with the public and stakeholders to shape the future service offer for safe accommodation provision.

As this item also cut across the Adults and Health Committee, officers had provided those members with a briefing and shared the report with them to enable them to provide comments and feedback which had been incorporated into the final report.

Members provided feedback and asked questions in respect of

- The Current provision by MyCWA was 21 units, while only 16 were being commissioned (25% over provision), why was a reduction to 16 units proposed when data does not show a 25% drop in need?
- Concerns raised about lack of a line in the MTFS for commissioning.
- Members sought assurance that the new procurement process would be successful.
- Concerns were raised about the adverse effect on vulnerable individuals and staff morale due to the Cheshire East Domestic Abuse Hub currently not being able to meet its referral target.
- How was success measured and how did the 360 process support staff?
- Were contingency plans in place for future funding gaps?
- Concerns raised that the 2025/26 budget appeared to have been set before consultation had taken place.

In response officers stated that:

- The 16 units were based on an outdated needs assessment; a rapid review was underway for 2026/27. The service accessed safe accommodation on a nationwide basis, and this was in addition to the 16 units.

- The previous procurement had largely failed due to insufficient funding; an additional £100k had now been built in.
- The 2023/24 budget was £1.69m and £1.74m had been committed for the 2025/26 budget.
- Most of the funding was from the Domestic Abuse grant (central government), with some partnership funding (Police, ICB).
- Safe accommodation was funded via a DLUHC grant, but the duration of the funding was uncertain.
- Over the last 6-8 months, the DAFSU service had been developed which had eliminated capacity issues, removed waiting lists, and meant the service was meeting practice standard targets.
- Staff wellbeing was supported through clinical supervision and regular team meetings.
- Domestic Abuse navigators were IDVA-trained and provided education, safety planning, and risk assessments. They handled self-referrals and initial assessments via phone and home visits were conducted only after risk assessments had been completed.

The Committee thanked officers for their transparency regarding the reasons behind the failed procurement exercise.

RESOLVED: (By Majority)

That the Children and Families Committee

1. Approve the review of the provision for safe accommodation across Cheshire East for victims and survivors of domestic abuse.
2. Note the engagement and co-production outlined to develop service model for safe accommodation and a refreshed Domestic Abuse and Sexual Abuse Strategy.
3. Note that the outcome of the review will be reported back to Committee together with a proposed future service delivery model.

6 CHESHIRE EAST SEND AND AP 'ONE PLAN'

The Committee considered the final version of the Cheshire East Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) Partnership's SEND and Alternative Provision Strategy and Development Plan, referred to as the Cheshire East SEND and AP 'One Plan', including the high-level priorities identified within the document and the associated reporting mechanisms for tracking progress against the plan.

The three high level priorities of Right Support in the Right Place at the Right Time aligned with DSG Management Plan, the Council's Corporate Plan and the National Send Improvement Plan.

Members asked questions and provided comments in respect of

- whether the banding system was now fully implemented?
- Was there sufficient capacity to halt the upward trajectory of EHCPs?
- What were the Council's statutory duties involved with parent/carer discussions and decisions about individual support
- Concerns shared in respect of the impact of reduced funding on school provision and the DSG deficit.

In response officers stated that

- the system was being expanded to all age groups, with full implementation planned by September 2027
- Actions in the One Plan aimed to reduce EHCP demand through school training and early intervention.
- The Council must ensure appropriate provision and wraparound support for all children with EHCPs.
- The DSG deficit was not included in the MTFS; at the time of writing the report, the final outturn was not available. The current position was £112.1m deficit as of March 2025.

Concerns were raised about the lack of certainty around AP and SEND capital projects, including the £300k cost of maintaining Westfields. The Chair confirmed a meeting had been held with local MPs, and they were lobbying central government to get a speedy resolution. The Chair agreed to share the letter with members.

An options paper was also being developed in case government approval was not secured and the outcome of that would be shared with members.

RESOLVED (Unanimously)

That the Children and Families Committee

1. Approve the contents of the Cheshire East SEND and AP 'One Plan', including agreeing the high-level priorities of: Right Support in the Right Place at the Right Time.
2. Agree the proposed ongoing reporting mechanisms for the Cheshire East SEND and AP 'One Plan'.

7 FINAL OUTTURN 2024/25

The Committee received the report which provided an overview of the Cheshire East Council final outturn for the financial year 2024/25 and the financial performance of the Council relevant to the committee remit.

There had been an improvement of £1.9m since quarter 3 in Children and Families closing with an overspend position of £3.5m.

The contributing factors behind the overspend in Children and Families included children's social care placements, the use and cost of agency staff, home to school transport costs and school catering.

The overall DSG deficit was £112.1m at the end of the year which was an improvement on the budget gap as determined by the Council's DSG Management Plan that was reported to Children and Families Committee in April 2024.

During discussions concerns were raised in respect of the implications if the statutory override was not extended. Officers report that if that was the case and the council had to pay back the reserve the council would instantly be in S114 territory. Cheshire East Council was not alone in this, and officers agreed to share a list of other Local Authorities who were in a similar position.

It was noted that the DSG management plan spanned 7 years, with the plan that income would match expenditure, but that 5 years remained, and risks would persist.

Concerns were expressed in respect of the 59% capital spending figure and there was a request for a breakdown of this figure. Officers clarified that Children & Families capital items were primarily grant-funded and that the 59% figure was council-wide.

Members hoped that the upcoming spending review would provide some clarity which would support better decision-making and discussed the importance of having certainty in the direction of travel to inform future planning and budgeting.

RESOLVED (by Majority)

That the Children and Families Committee

1. Considered the overall financial performance of the Council in the 2024/25 financial year, as contained within the report, as follows: a) A Net Revenue Overspend of £17.6m against a revised budget of £365.8m (4.8% variance) funded by conditional Exceptional Financial Support (Capitalisation Direction) via borrowing. b) General Reserves closing balance of £6.3m. c) Capital Spending of £88.4m against an approved programme of £215.8m (59% variance).

2. Considered the contents of Annex 1.

3. Approve the new Reserves in the Reserves Section (Annex 1, Section 5, Table 1) which includes proposed movements to reserves.

4. Recommend to Council to approve the Supplementary Revenue Estimate (SRE) Request for Allocation of Additional Grant Funding over £1,000,000 as per Annex 1, Section 3, Table 1.

5. Approve the Children and Families Committee Supplementary Revenue Estimates (SRE) Request for Allocation of Additional Grant Funding (Specific Purpose) over £500,000 up to £1,000,000 as per Annex 1, Section 3, Table 2.

6. Approve the Supplementary Capital Estimates (SCE) and Capital Virements between £500,000 and £1,000,000 in accordance with Financial Procedure Rules for the following Committee's as detailed in Annex 1, Section 4, Table 4

7. Recommend to Council to approve the Supplementary Capital Estimates (SCE) over £1,000,000 in accordance with Budget and Policy Framework Rules as detailed in Annex 1, Section 4, Table 5.

8 CHILDREN AND FAMILIES CAPITAL PROGRAMME - SCHOOL CONDITION PROGRAMME 2025/26

Councillor B Posnett left during consideration of this item and did not return.

The Committee considered the report on the Children and Families Capital Programme – School Condition Programme 2025/26.

It was noted that there was a typo on page 348 paragraph 16, which should read 'Do nothing and not progress the school condition programme'.

Officers would bring updates to committee on schemes as required.

Members raised questions in respect of

- Had RAC had been identified in any buildings
- whether wider use of S106 money could be discussed with planning colleagues
- Was there any funding to put fire suppressors in as part of the projects which were having roofing work undertaken?

Officers reported that

- RAC had not been found in any of the Council's maintained schools.
- Discussions had taken place with planning colleagues in respect of the use of S106 monies, but there were restrictions in terms of policy and DfE recommendations.

- Colleagues in facilities management would go out and review schools if needed, but there was an overall programme to look at any fire related issues.

RESOLVED: (Unanimously)

That the Children and Families Committee

1. Approve the School Condition Programme of schemes as detailed in Appendix 1.
2. Delegate authority to the Executive Director of Children's Services to approve uplifts to Project Costs of schemes approved in the School Condition Programme (and the updates received during the financial year) to a maximum of 20% of the approved capital budget, this will ensure that schemes will be progressed in a timely way and to provide updates to committee as required. Where the decision process includes financials or contracts, this will be done in consultation with the Chief Finance Officer, Monitoring Officer and the Executive Director of Place.
3. Delegate authority to the Executive Director of Children's Services to determine the school sites and works to be instructed from the block funding allocations set out in Appendix 1 and take all steps to deliver these works. Where the decision process includes financials or contracts, this will be done in consultation with the Chief Finance Officer, Monitoring Officer and the Executive Director of Place.

9 COUNCILLOR FRONTLINE VISITS

The Committee considered a report which proposed new arrangements for councillor visits to frontline children's social care services which would help strengthen councillor oversight of the impact of services on children's outcomes.

The report also provided the themes raised through the previous councillor frontline visits undertaken between 1 April 2023 to 31 March 2024.

A report would come back to committee to share findings and how those would be implemented into the Improvement Plan.

In response to a request for information around the DSG funding and what it was spent on to be included as part of the programme the Chair noted that a specific in-depth session would be beneficial for some members to look at that as a separate area as outside of the scope of front-line visits. The Chair agreed to take this forward.

In response to a question raised in respect of ensuring councillors were able to attend visits officers reported that they would work with each councillor around availability and would circulate to all councillors to ensure cover for any cancelled sessions. Councillor Bennett Wake also

agreed to take on the additional visit to ensure the schedule could be delivered.

The Committee thanked officers for the comprehensive report.

RESOLVED: (Unanimously)

That the Children and Families Committee

1. Approve the arrangements for councillor frontline visits as outlined in the report.

10 SUPPORTED ACCOMMODATION FOR 16-25-YEAR-OLD CHILDREN IN CARE AND CARE LEAVERS

The Committee considered a report which provided an update on the Supported Accommodation project established in response to ILACS improvement plan recommendations. The report provided details of the planned recommissioning activity and co-production with the stakeholders to shape the future service offer. It also detailed the work completed to date, including the current service pressures and proposed future pathway.

As this item also cut across the Adults and Health Committee, officers had provided those members with a briefing and shared the report with them to enable them to provide comments and feedback.

There were currently only 29 commissioned beds for 16–17-year-olds in the borough:

- 21 beds with the YMCA in Crewe
- 8 beds with P3 in Macclesfield
- 81 of the 155 young people in care were migrant young people representing a significant increase
- In addition, following the ILACS inspection, 3 new contracted beds were sought, and the council was working with Apollo Buckingham based at the former MMU campus in Crewe to utilise one of their blocks of accommodation to house 6 young migrant people.
- Spot-purchased placements cost approximately £1,500 per week, compared to contracted rates of £400 (YMCA) and £800 (P3).

The proposal of work would see an increase in capacity of commissioned beds for each cohort, with the number of beds scaling up across the life of the contract as young people transitioned into them.

The Committee supported the proposals and raised questions and comments in respect of

- Why wasn't the block contract model adopted earlier?
- What was the timeline for securing additional beds?

- Were there plans to extend the project manager's contract?
- Could planning colleagues assist with accommodation for young people?

In response officers stated that

- Consideration was being given to review the former Children's Commissioning Team function, and it was acknowledged that the project manager role had been pivotal to driving the programme forward
- Timescales included: - April 2026 an increase to 66 block beds and 80 spot purchased, 92 block beds and 54 secured by spot purchase in 2026/27 and by 2028/29 to secure all 126 set out in proposal and 20 via spot purchase.
- There was a Strategic housing policy group which included the head of service for integrated commissioning and the programme lead.

RESOLVED (Unanimously)

That the Children and Families Committee

1. Review and approve in principle the new service model and pathway for supported accommodation.
2. Delegate authority to the Executive Director of Children's Service's in consultation with the Monitoring Officer and Section 151 Officer to procure and award the Supported Accommodation contracts for 16–25-year-old Children in Care and Care Leavers Service.

11 IMPROVEMENT PLAN PROGRESS

Councillors C Bulman and R Moreton left the meeting during this item and did not return.

The Committee received an update on the progress to date against the improvement plan and an update on the findings from the Ofsted monitoring visit on the front door. The update included the findings from a review by the council's sector led improvement partner (SLIP), North Tyneside, of improvements to services supporting care leavers, carried out during May 2025 and a summary of the LADO findings and actions being taken. It also included the findings from the DfE progress review in April 2025.

Members asked questions and provided comments in respect of

- Staffing – asked for an indication of what sick leave was like, what were exit interviews revealing

- Why was there no information in respect of the number of Special Guardianship Orders (SGO's) in place on the vital signs document
- Concerns were raised in respect of quality assurance not picking up the LADO situation.

In response officers stated that

- There was regular oversight of caseloads and any cases exceeding 23 children were reviewed for additional support.
- Regarding LADO it was explained that the QA service was independent of the social care service prior to a decision for a new Director post at the end of February 2024. Once the team was then moved and reorganised it was clear areas had not been provided with the focus and oversight it should have. Therefore, it was quickly identified we required SLIP work to get a robust plan of improvements in place which is now being addressed.
- Agency staff were used to maintain service quality above establishment to support and longer-term caseloads would be addressed in the Families First Re-design.
- Exit interviews were not electronically recorded so a gap had been identified in this area and the newly appointed S151 officer who has responsibility for the HR monitoring/recruitment had reported to the improvement board issues with 'clunky' systems and would be reviewing.
- There was an enhanced recruitment strategy in place with a strong pipeline of applicants and work would be done on the recruitment process to facilitate getting staff started. A business case was pending to facilitate this work.
- Measures were now being built into the Liquid Logic system with support from Business Intelligence to capture more information such as SGO's as it was something officers felt was important to report and so they were looking to make changes that would enable this reporting.

RESOLVED:

That the Children and Families Committee

1. Note the progress against the improvement plan.
2. Note the findings from the sector led improvement partner review of improvements to services for care leavers and the summary of the LADO and associated action plans.
3. Note the findings from the DfE progress review.

12 PROPOSAL TO FORMALLY INCREASE THE NUMBER OF PLACES AT PARK LANE SCHOOL, MACCLESFIELD

The Committee considered a report which outlined the outcomes of the public consultation as to whether Park Lane School, Macclesfield should formally increase the number of places being offered. The proposed increase would provide additional places for 34 pupils between the ages of 4 – 19 from September 2025., increasing the overall capacity to 156 places.

All those who had responded to the consultation agreed with the proposal.

The Committee welcomed the proposed scheme to increase capacity and agreed that it would help with meeting the Council's priority to increase opportunities for children, young adults, and adults with additional needs through the expansion of the local Special Educational Needs and or Disabilities (SEND) provision and would allow more children to attend a school within Cheshire East and their local community.

RESOLVED: (Unanimously)

That the Children and Families Committee

1. Approve the proposed formal expansion of Park Lane School, Macclesfield to provide additional 34 places for pupils aged 4-19 from September 2025 and to progress with works.

2. Delegate authority to the Executive Director of Children's Services to award a construction contract to facilitate the provision of additional places at Park Lane School, and to enter into any other agreements associated with or ancillary to the contract. Where the decision process includes financials or contracts, this will be done in consultation with the Chief Finance Officer, Monitoring Officer and the Executive Director of Place.

13 APPOINTMENTS TO SUB-COMMITTEES, WORKING GROUPS, PANELS, BOARDS AND JOINT COMMITTEES

The Committee received the report which sought to nominate members to the bodies outlined in the report.

The proposed membership of the Cared for Children and Care Leavers Committee, in line with the political proportionality, was noted as follows: Councillors M Beanland, S Bennett-Wake, D Clark, L Crane, R Fletcher, G Hayes, S Holland, E Gilman, R Moreton, B Posnett, B Puddicombe and J Saunders.

The Committee nominated Councillor L Crane as the representative to the Health and Wellbeing Board.

The proposed nominations of the Home to School Transport Task and Finish Group (Joint T & F Group with Highways & Transport Committee) were noted as follows: Councillors M Beanland, L Crane, E Gilman, and B Puddicombe.

The proposed nominations of the Families First Task and Finish Group (Children's Wellbeing and Schools Bill) were noted as follows: Councillors L Crane, S Bennett-Wake, E Gilman, G Hayes, G Smith, and J Saunders.

RESOLVED (Unanimously):

That the Children and Families Committee: -

1. Appoints the sub-committees, working groups, task and finish groups, panels, boards, and joint committees for 2025-26, and the member appointments to them, as set out above.
2. Where appropriate, agrees to submit member nominations to the bodies to the Head of Democratic Services.
3. Approve the draft Terms of Reference for the Home to School Transport Joint Committee Task and Finish Group.
4. Approve the draft Terms of Reference for the Families First Task and Finish Group (Children's Wellbeing and Schools Bill).

14 **WORK PROGRAMME**

The Committee considered the Work Programme. The following was noted:

- There was a request for the Dedicated Schools Grant item to be added to September Committee.
- The Chair reminded members that the September Committee would be the twilight meeting and would start at 5.30pm in Macclesfield,
- The Chair put forward a proposal for members to take away and discuss in respect of starting meetings at 10.30am in line with the other service Committees and alternating the venue once the new Committee Suites in Crewe were completed.

RESOLVED:

That the Work Programme be noted

15 **SEND SUFFICIENCY STATEMENT FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE WITH AN EDUCATION, HEALTH, CARE PLAN (EHCP)**

The Committee considered a report on the SEND Sufficiency Statement for children and young people with an education, health, care plan (EHCP).

During consideration of the item, the Committee resolved to move into part 2 to consider the confidential appendix to the report. The Committee moved back into part 1 for questions and debate.

During debate on the item, an amendment was proposed and seconded in respect of recommendation 3 which sought the inclusion of additional wording as follows:

'Delegate authority to the Executive Director of Children's Services in consultation with chair and vice chair of the Children and Families Committee to proceed with consultation on the proposals in Appendix 1 and undertake relevant actions in line with the school organisation process, with a report back to committee on the outcome in due course for consideration and decision'.

The amendment became part of the substantive motion.

RESOLVED (Unanimously)

That the Children and Families Committee

1. Review the information as presented within the SEND Sufficiency Statement academic year 2024/25 to 2030/31 (Appendix 1)
2. To note the proposals detailed in the SEND Sufficiency Statement at Appendix 1 of the report (not for publication)
3. Delegate authority to the Executive Director of Children's Services in consultation with chair and vice chair of the Children and Families Committee to proceed with consultation on the proposals in Appendix 1 and undertake relevant actions in line with the school organisation process, with a report back to committee on the outcome in due course for consideration and decision.

16 EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

RESOLVED:

That the press and public be excluded from the meeting during consideration of the following item pursuant to Section 100(A)4 of the Local Government Act 1972 as amended on the grounds that it involves the likely discussion of exempt information as defined in Paragraphs 2 and 3 of the Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 and the public interest would not be served in publishing the information.

17 SEND SUFFICIENCY STATEMENT FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE WITH AN EDUCATION, HEALTH, CARE PLAN (EHCP)

The Committee considered the information in the confidential appendix.

The meeting commenced at 2.00pm and concluded at 5.52pm

Councillor L Crane (Chair)

OPEN

Children and Families Committees

15 September 2025

Cheshire East Domestic Abuse Service & Domestic Abuse Strategy 2025-28

Report of: Dawn Godfrey, Executive Director of Children Services

Report Reference No: CF/27/25-26

Ward(s) Affected: All

For Decision

Purpose of Report

- 1 To update the committee following the review, consultation and engagement by the council of the domestic abuse safe accommodation service, and the new Domestic Abuse and Sexual Abuse Strategy 2025/28.
- 2 To provide the committee with oversight of the proposed service model and to seek authorisation to follow a competitive tender process and award the successful provider the joint service contract from April 1st, 2026.
- 3 This service falls under Commitment 2 of The Cheshire East Plan 2025-29 - Everyone feels safe and secure, difference is celebrated, and abuse and exploitation not tolerated.

Executive Summary

- 4 This paper follows on from the report on the 9th June 2025. [\(Public Pack\)Agenda Document for Children and Families Committee, 09/06/2025 14:00](#) The council have completed the review, consultation and engagement and service redesign, and the next steps are to conduct a full formal tender to seek best value service for its local citizens.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Children and Families Committee are recommended to:

1. Approve the new service model and authorise the procurement for a new service contract for a 3-year term with a 1 + 1 year extension period, noting the feedback from consultation activity over the summer, and Rapid Review analytics conducted by S2, which advise Cheshire East Council to:
 - a) Increase the number of safe accommodation bed spaces to a minimum of 27 specialist accommodation spaces for Cheshire East.
 - b) Increase the mix of communal/ dispersed refuges, in order to reduce/eliminate the use of temporary (and unsuitable) b & b accommodation for individuals fleeing domestic abuse.
 - c) Develop the support offered to children and young people in safe accommodation
 - d) Improve communication between Housing Options and the safe accommodation provider.
2. Delegate authority to the Executive Director of Children's Service and/or equivalent authorised officer to conduct a competitive procurement exercise and enter dialogue with the most competitive bidder if required, issue the notice of contract award once a preferred bidder is identified.
3. Delegate authority to the Executive Director of Children's Services to award the contract for the Safe Accommodation, in consultation with the S151 & Monitoring Officers, and with the agreement of the Chair and Vice-Chair of Children & Families Committee.
4. Delegate authority to the Executive Director of Children's Services for contract and performance management, including all commercial assessments to oversee any contract extensions under the terms including contract performance and efficiency requirements and key performance indicators.
5. Approve the Domestic and Sexual Abuse Strategy 2025-28 for endorsement and adoption by the Cheshire East Domestic and Sexual Abuse Partnership.

Background

- 5 The report to committee on the 9th June 2025 outlined the background and the legal responsibilities ([\(Public Pack\)Agenda Document for Children and Families Committee, 09/06/2025 14:00](#))

Consultation and Engagement – Safe Accommodation

- 6 The council have consulted and engaged with victims, survivors, professionals, and stakeholders to provide the details that shape the future service offer. There has also been a comprehensive needs assessment completed which has informed the service model, please see a copy of the executive summary in Appendix 1.
- 7 The consultation and engagement highlighted themes from victims/survivors, professionals, and providers in relation to Safe Accommodation. Further details on the consultation and engagement can be found in Appendix 2.
- 8 People told us that we need to:
 - (a) Provide a mixed offer of accommodation to better meet need
 - (b) Increase the support to children and young people within the offer, recognising them as victims in their own right
 - (c) Improve and develop the pathway and increase the number of beds to reduce the time victims/survivors spend in inappropriate temporary accommodation
 - (d) Single point of access and accessible guidance and information
- 9 The Provider Market Engagement questionnaire highlighted the below responses:
 - (a) Seven of the Eight providers told us they would be interested in bidding for the contract in Cheshire East, with one being unsure at this stage and this would be mainly dependent on suitable accommodation being readily available, and funding available with the contract.
 - (b) The types of accommodation should offer choice to victims and survivors including refuge style accommodation and dispersed units in the community. Stating this is how to best meet need. One provider advocated for dispersed units only.
 - (c) Provide victims and survivors person centered, trauma informed support to ensure that their needs are met and outcomes are achieved, working in partnership with local statutory and voluntary partners in a collaborative way.
 - (d) Work to create support plans that support families to move on and achieve independence is key to delivering outcomes. Taking a whole family approach.
 - (e) Work with children as victims in their own right to ensure their needs are met with dedicated support identified.

- (f) Clear referral pathways to ensure access to accommodation and support can be strengthened.
 - (g) Challenges that providers noted include demand and capacity issues and the availability of suitable properties, sustainable funding – longer term contracts would be beneficial for providers to build a sustainable offer, recruitment and retention of appropriately skilled staff with the right experience for this vulnerable group.
- 10 With reference to the **Domestic Abuse and Sexual Abuse Strategy** a public consultation has been held between 15th June and the 25th July 2025. The consultation and engagement highlighted a number of key themes from victims/survivors, professionals, and providers in relation to the strategy, which can be found in **Appendix 2**.

The Service Model Safe Accommodation

- 11 **Appendix 4** sets out a summary of the Accommodation Model.

Procurement Timelines

- 12 The proposed procurement activity timeline is outlined below:
- (a) Publish Tender Notice – 19 September 2025
 - (b) Tender Period – 19 September 2025 to 20 October 2025
 - (c) Evaluation and Moderation Period – 20 October 2025 to 20 November 2025
 - (d) Final Award – December 2025
 - (e) New Contract Go live – 1 April 2026

Domestic and Sexual Abuse Partnership Strategy

- 13 Following the public consultation and engagement with the Cheshire East Domestic and Sexual Abuse Partnership Board. The strategy is outlined below and can be found in Appendix 3, which is summarised in brief below:

14 Strategy Vision 2025 - 2028

“To work towards ending domestic abuse, sexual violence and violence against women and girls, and ensure that the people of Cheshire East can live safe, equal and harm-free lives, in homes and neighbourhoods without abuse”.

15 Strategic Priorities 2025 – 2028

- (a) **A focus on prevention:** Cheshire East has a culture that challenges misogyny, promotes healthy relationships, and prevents abuse before it starts.

- (b) **Trauma-informed service provision for victims, children and perpetrators:** All victims of abuse and those who harm in Cheshire East, have access to a range of safe, appropriate support options that support recovery and independence, including safe accommodation.
- (c) **Partnership and Collaboration:** Services seek to continuously improve, based on learning from those with lived experience, anyone affected by abuse and all serious incidents.
- (d) **Accountability and Learning:** Cheshire East has a coordinated, trauma-informed, and data-driven system that supports victims, holds perpetrators accountable, and prevents abuse.

Reasons for Recommendations

- 16 The model outlined for Safe Accommodation has been informed by a comprehensive needs assessment and engagement and consultation with victims / survivors, professionals and providers. The strategy for Domestic and Sexual Abuse has also been informed by a public consultation and engagement with professionals.

Other Options Considered

- 17 The best option is option two, further options have been considered; please see below.

Option	Impact	Risk
Do nothing, do not review and / or reprocure contracts for this area.	<p>The council will not provide safe accommodation.</p> <p>The council will be at significant risk of non-compliance with its legal obligations.</p>	<p>The council risks not meeting its responsibilities to provide safe accommodation.</p> <p>Victims of DA will not have their needs met.</p> <p>Significant reputation risk to the council.</p> <p>In-housing the accommodation with support offer would involve significant staffing and cost liabilities to the LA that could not be underwritten in the current financial environment</p>
<p>Procure the Safe Accommodation service in line with the model outlined.</p> <p>Publish the refreshed DA and SA Strategy.</p>	<p>The recommission of safe accommodation will ensure an open and transparent process for the service offer required which has been informed by an independent needs assessment and victims / survivors and partners.</p> <p>The housing benefit and LA funded model will provide value for money and additional bed spaces for victims and survivors.</p> <p>The strategy will enable a clear focus towards a co-designed set of outcomes for the partnership</p>	<p>There is a risk that providers are not or cannot partner with a registered provider and therefore will be unable to deliver the required model for the funding available.</p>

	to work to reduce and eradicated DA and SV in Cheshire East.	
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Implications and Comments

Monitoring Officer/Legal

- 18 As set out in the report Part 4 of the Domestic Abuse Act 2021 (the Act) details the duties on relevant local authorities in relation to support provided to victims of domestic abuse.
- 19 The Statutory Guidance published on 1 October 2021: Delivery of support to victims of domestic abuse in domestic abuse safe accommodation services, outlines that the Act Places duties on each relevant local authority in England to:
 - i. Appoint a multi-agency Domestic Abuse Local Partnership Board which it must consult as it performs certain specified functions (below).
 - ii. Assess, or make arrangements for the assessment of, the need for accommodation-based domestic abuse support in their area for all victims and their children who reside in relevant safe accommodation, including those who come from outside of their area.
 - iii. Prepare and publish a strategy for the provision of such support to cover their area having regard to the needs assessment.
 - iv. Give effect to the strategy (through commissioning / decommissioning decisions).
 - v. Monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of the strategy.
 - vi. Report back annually to central government.
- 20 S57(4) of the Act outlines the requirements for consultation in relation to a strategy under s57 of the Act.
- 21 In this instance consultation is statutory and the Domestic Abuse Support (Local Authority Strategies and Annual Reports) Regulations 2021 outlines the statutory deadlines for publication of the strategy under s57 of the Act. The Domestic Abuse: statutory guidance also outlines that the approach to the services and support commissioned should consider the particular needs of all victims in the area and authorities must consider their Public Sector Equality Duty under the Equality Act 2010.

Section 151 Officer/Finance

- 22 The annual budget for Domestic Abuse service for 2025.26 is £1.740m as detailed in the following table.

Domestic Abuse Budget		2025-26 Budget
My CWA Core Commission - Accommodation Element	£	150,000
Contingency linked to Accommodation Recommission	£	100,000
Domestic Abuse Co-ordination	£	86,043
Domestic Abuse Partnership	£	500,084
Domestic Abuse New Burdens	£	842,025
Expenditure Budget still to be allocated	£	61,627
Gross Expenditure Total	£	1,739,779

- 23 The annual budget for DA Commissioning for 2025/26 is £0.250m. This is the parameter for the new commissioned service for 2026/27 subject to grants being maintained at the same level.
- 24 The 2026/27 contract value would be funded from within existing revenue budgets.
- 25 The proposal in the paper does not impact the in-year budget as the contract start date is 1 April 2026.
- 26 On the basis of the above, there is no adverse impact on the Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS). The Committee is expected to ensure value for money is obtained through the tendering process and assure itself that officers are delivering the outcomes expected through robust contract management.
- 27 Any unexpected costs pressures are to be constrained within existing resources managed through this Committee. The Financial Procedure Rules do not grant any officer or Committee the power to overspend.

Policy

- 28 The Domestic Abuse Strategy will contribute towards the vision of the Corporate Plan to deliver services that safeguards, empowers and cares about people. The Strategy enables the Council to be open and transparent about our commissioning intentions based on capacity, demand, engagement and coproduction in partnership with key stakeholders, and importantly with local residents and people who use DA services and those who may use them in the future.

- 29 This service falls under Commitment 2 of The Cheshire East Plan 2025-29 - Everyone feels safe and secure, difference is celebrated, and abuse and exploitation not tolerated.

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

- 30 An Equality Impact Assessment will accompany and support the review of Domestic Abuse Services. Inequalities identified will be actioned and addressed through the recommissioning activity and included as performance measures for the service to adhere to via the contract.

Human Resources

- 31 As part of the development of our employment strategy and staff code of conduct we will be considering how we support the aims of our Domestic Abuse Strategy.
- 32 It is believed that TUPE will apply to employees delivering safe accommodation services. During the tender all applicants will be provided with a full list of eligible employees.

Risk Management

- 33 Appropriate risks logs have been established as part of project governance. The purpose of this report is to highlight the risk implications regarding the safe accommodation provision and the need to ensure the Council meets its statutory obligations. The council could breach the Domestic Abuse Act 2021, by non-compliance to provide suitable refuge provision which is due for re-procurement by April 2026.
- 34 If risks are required to be escalated these will be highlighted on agreed reporting framework and through the approved governance.

Rural Communities

- 35 There are no direct implications for rural communities and the service would be developed to improve access.

Children and Young People including Cared for Children, care leavers and Children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND)

- 36 There is a direct and significant impact on Children and Young People with the Domestic Abuse Act 2021 recognising CYP as victims in their own right. The strategy development and associated plans and commissioning activity will work towards addressing this and any identified needs and gaps to improve the experience of CYP.

Public Health

- 37 Victims and survivors of domestic abuse are more at risk of health inequalities than their peers. This strategy and the recommissioning activity are expected to improve the awareness and response in respect of these health needs, with support from a strong partnership vision and alliance.

Climate Change

- 38 The recommissioning of the service will include expectations around Social Value, this includes social, economic and environmental impacts. The service provider will need to demonstrate their impact on the environment throughout the life of the contract.

Consultation

Name of Consultee	Post held	Date sent	Date returned
<i>Statutory Officer (or deputy) :</i>			
Ashley Hughes	S151 Officer	22/08/25	26/08/25
Kevin O'Keefe	Director of Law and Governance (Monitoring Officer)	22/08/25	29/08/25
<i>Legal and Finance</i>			
Jennie Summers	Acting Head of Legal Services	24/07/25	28/07/25
Diane Green	Finance Manager; Children's services	24/07/25	28/07/25
<i>Other Consultees:</i>			
<i>Executive Directors/Directors</i>	Dawn Godfrey, Executive Director of Children's Services	06/08/25	1/09/25
	Tracy Stephen, Director of Children's Social Care	06/08/25	06/08/25

Access to Information	
Contact Officer:	Martyn Baggaley Martyn.baggaley@cheshireeast.gov.uk
Appendices:	Appendix 1 – Needs Assessment Appendix 2 – Consultation Summary Report Appendix 3 – Domestic and Sexual Abuse Strategy 2025-28 Appendix 4 – New Safe Accommodation Model summary Appendix 5 – Comments & feedback (with responses) from Adults & Health Committee Members following briefing on 19/08/25
Background Papers:	N/A



DOMESTIC ABUSE SAFE ACCOMMODATION RAPID REVIEW

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

v1.6

June 2025



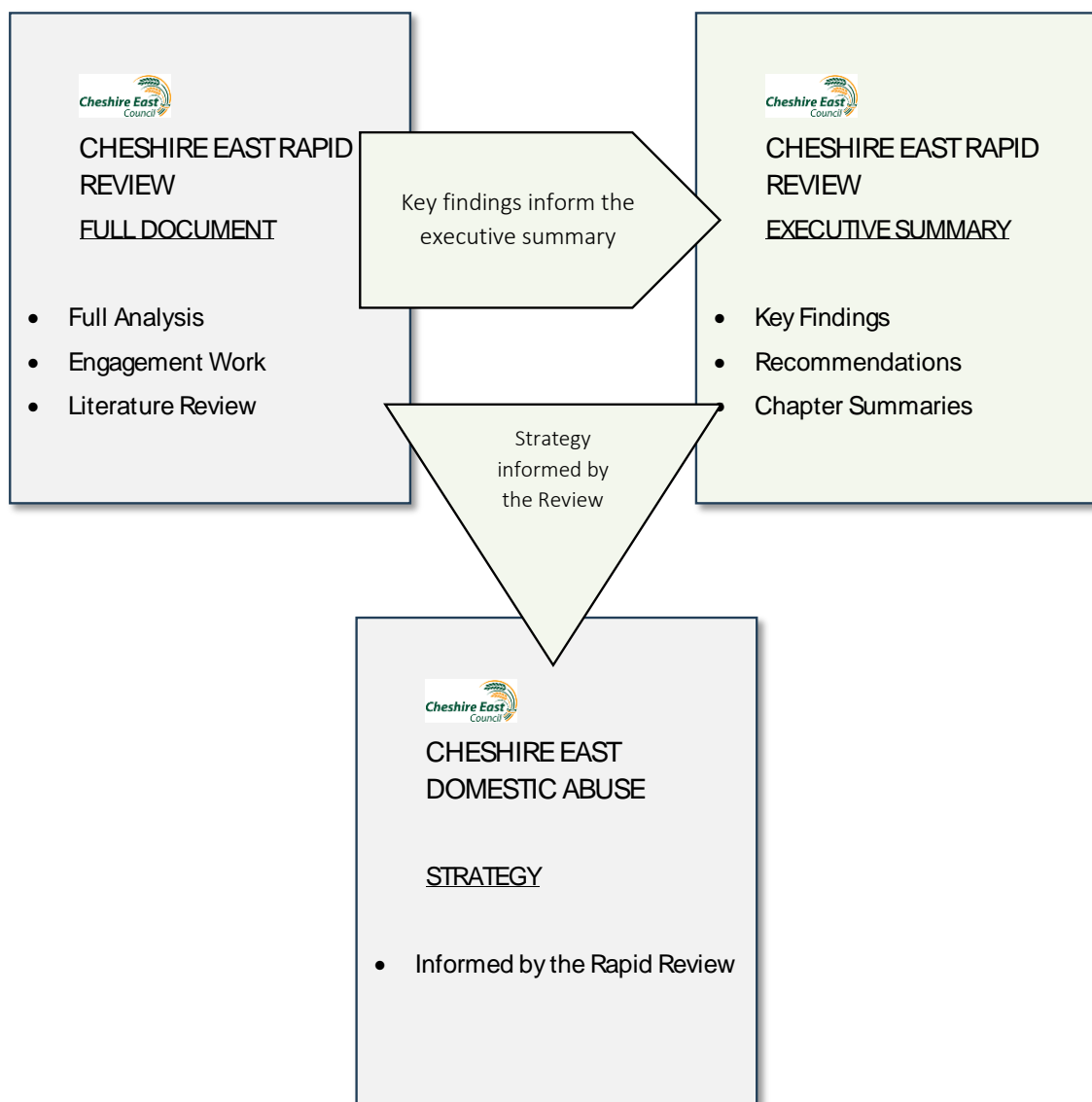
INTRODUCTION

This document provides an Executive Summary of the Rapid Review of Domestic Abuse Safe Accommodation in Cheshire East. The assessment meets Cheshire East's statutory duty under Part 4 of the Domestic Abuse Act 2021, which requires local authorities to assess the need for, and ensure the provision of, support within safe accommodation for victims of domestic abuse and their children.

As part of the Rapid Review, we took the opportunity to consider the wider approach to domestic abuse in Cheshire East. However, the recommendations presented here are specifically focused on safe accommodation.




This Executive Summary is a condensed version of the full Rapid Review and contains:

- **Recommendations:** This chapter provides the key evidence from the Rapid Review and suggested recommendations.
- **Key Findings:** This chapter provides additional key findings from the Rapid Review.



RECOMMENDATIONS

The recommendations arising from the Rapid Review Process are presented in the following format:

RECOMMENDATION NUMBER: <i>[The number of the recommendation]</i>	
TITLE: <i>[Summary of the recommendation]</i>	
	KEY FINDING(S)
<i>[Key finding(s) relating to the recommendation]</i>	
	RELEVANCE TO CHESHIRE EAST
<i>[The impact of the key finding on Cheshire East]</i>	
	RECOMMENDATION
<i>[A detailed description of the recommendation]</i>	

LIST OF RECOMMENDATIONS

REC	PG.	RECOMMENDATION TITLE
1	5	To increase the number of safe accommodation bed spaces.
2	8	To increase the mix of communal/ dispersed refuges.
3	10	To develop the support offered to children and young people in safe accommodation.
4	12	To improve the pathway between Housing Options and the safe accommodation provider.

RECOMMENDATION NUMBER: 1**TITLE: To increase the number of safe accommodation bed spaces****KEY FINDING****FINDING 1 – CHESHIRE EAST CURRENTLY HAS 16 DISPERSED SAFE ACCOMMODATION UNITS**

- Using the Council of Europe's minimum recommendation of one space per 10,000 population¹, 41 specialist accommodation spaces are recommended in Cheshire East.
- Currently, Cheshire East commissions 16 bed spaces. The provider recently opened a 6-bed multi-occupancy property specifically designed for 18 to 25-year-olds (not commissioned by Cheshire East), increasing the number of safe accommodation units to 22.
- With the expansion to 22 spaces, there is still a deficit of 19 spaces compared to the recommended 41. This does not account for properties that can be target-hardened.

DISPERSED SAFE ACCOMMODATION

16 dispersed properties for single people and families

**SANCTUARY SCHEME**

83 properties target hardened (2024/25)



COMMISSIONED SAFE ACCOMMODATION SPACES EXCLUDING THE SANCTUARY SCHEME
16 SPACES

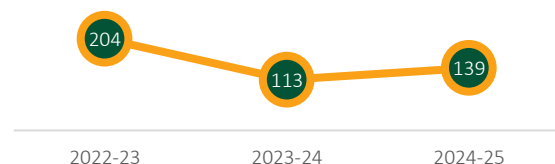
COMMISSIONED SAFE ACCOMMODATION SPACES INCLUDING THE SANCTUARY SCHEME
99 SPACES

RECOMMENDED 41 SPACES

FINDING 2 –139 HOUSEHOLDS WERE NOT ABLE TO BE SUPPORTED IN THE DISPERSED SAFE ACCOMMODATION PROPERTIES IN 2024-25.

- Provider referral data shows the number of households that were unable to be supported in 2022-23 was significantly higher than in 2023-24 and 2024-25.
- Capacity constraints account for the majority of the reasons why a household could not be supported.

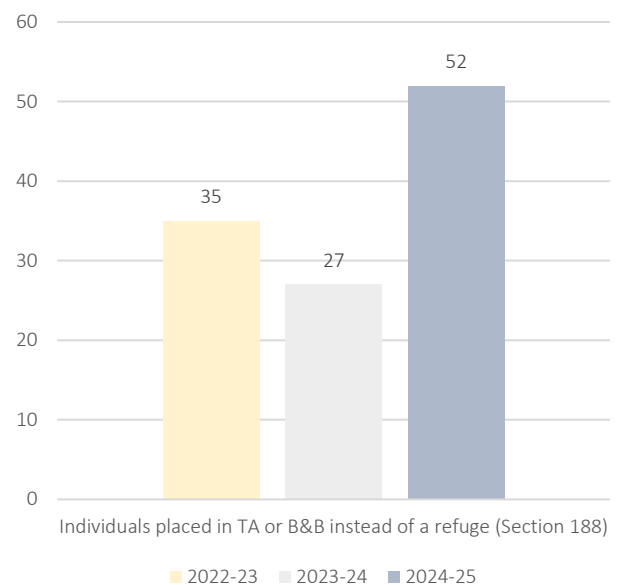
number of instances a household was unable to be supported



¹ Council of Europe, (2008), "...safe accommodation in specialised women's shelters, available in every region, with one family place per 10,000 head of population." (p. 51). Council of Europe (CoE). (2008) The Final Activity Report of the Council of Europe Task Force to Combat Violence against Women, including Domestic Violence (EG-TFV) Strasbourg: Gender Equality & AntiTrafficking Division Directorate General of Human Rights & Legal Affairs, Council of Europe.

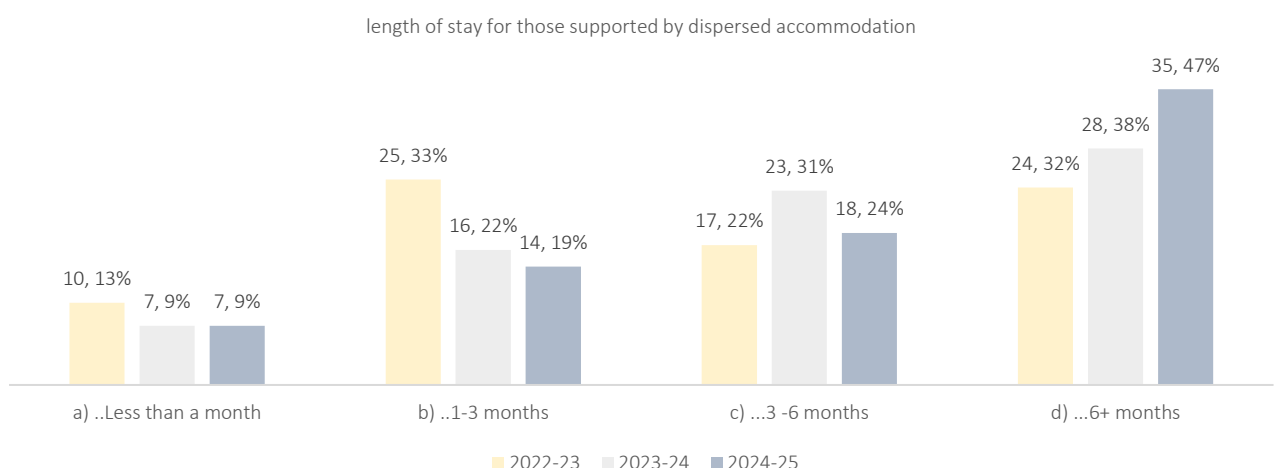
FINDING 3 – INDIVIDUALS FLEEING DOMESTIC ABUSE MAY INITIALLY BE PLACED IN BED & BREAKFAST ACCOMMODATION VIA THE HOUSING OPTIONS SERVICE

- Individuals who approach the Housing Options service as homeless, including those fleeing domestic abuse, are often initially placed in bed and breakfast accommodation, particularly when presenting in crisis.
- They are subsequently moved to more suitable accommodation when this becomes available.
- However, the ability to provide safe, appropriate accommodation for survivors of domestic abuse is constrained by the availability of suitable properties at the time of need.
- In 2025-25, 52 households (homeless due to domestic abuse) were placed in Temporary Accommodation², including Bed & Breakfast (which was not a refuge). This exceeds the 27 in 2023-24 and the 35 in 2022-23.





FINDING 4 – THE PERCENTAGE OF THOSE STAYING IN DISPERSED ACCOMMODATION FOR OVER 6 MONTHS IS INCREASING. THIS WILL IMPACT THE NUMBER OF AVAILABLE BEDSPACES.

- Of the 74 instances of individuals supported in dispersed services during the 2024-25 period, 47% remained for over 6 months. This is an increase from the previous years.
- Feedback from domestic abuse practitioners attributed the increase in lengths of stay to the increase in those with no recourse to public funds, complex needs, and a lack of move-on options.
- The increase in those staying for longer periods means that throughput is reduced, which affects the number of available bedspaces.



² Households were placed in TA under Section 188 of the Housing Act. Section 188 of the Housing Act 1996 places a legal duty on local authorities in England and Wales to provide interim accommodation to certain homeless applicants while their case is being assessed.

	RELEVANCE TO CHESHIRE EAST
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Domestic Abuse Act 2021³ and its accompanying statutory guidance are clear that survivors of domestic abuse should be placed in safe and suitable accommodation, and that bed and breakfast accommodation is not considered appropriate, except in very limited circumstances. • According to the Homelessness Code of Guidance for Local Authorities⁴, bed & breakfast accommodation is generally unsuitable for households with children or where domestic abuse is a factor, due to the lack of privacy, safety concerns, and the potential for retraumatisation. • The statutory guidance on Part 4 of the Domestic Abuse Act (Safe Accommodation Duty)⁵ emphasises that safe accommodation must be: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Self-contained or have adequate facilities for privacy ○ Specialist and trauma-informed ○ Secure, in terms of physical safety and emotional wellbeing • Not taking into account the Sanctuary Scheme, Cheshire East has a shortfall in the amount of safe accommodation available to those affected by domestic abuse. This may be contributing to the use of bed and breakfast accommodations. 	
	RECOMMENDATION
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cheshire East Council should consider commissioning additional safe accommodation units to address the shortfall in suitable units. 	

³ Legislation.gov.uk, (2021), Domestic Abuse Act 2021

⁴ Gov.Uk, (2018), Homelessness code of guidance for local authorities

⁵ Gov.UK, (2021), Statutory Guidance: Domestic Abuse Support

RECOMMENDATION NUMBER: 2

TITLE: To increase the mix of communal/ dispersed refuges

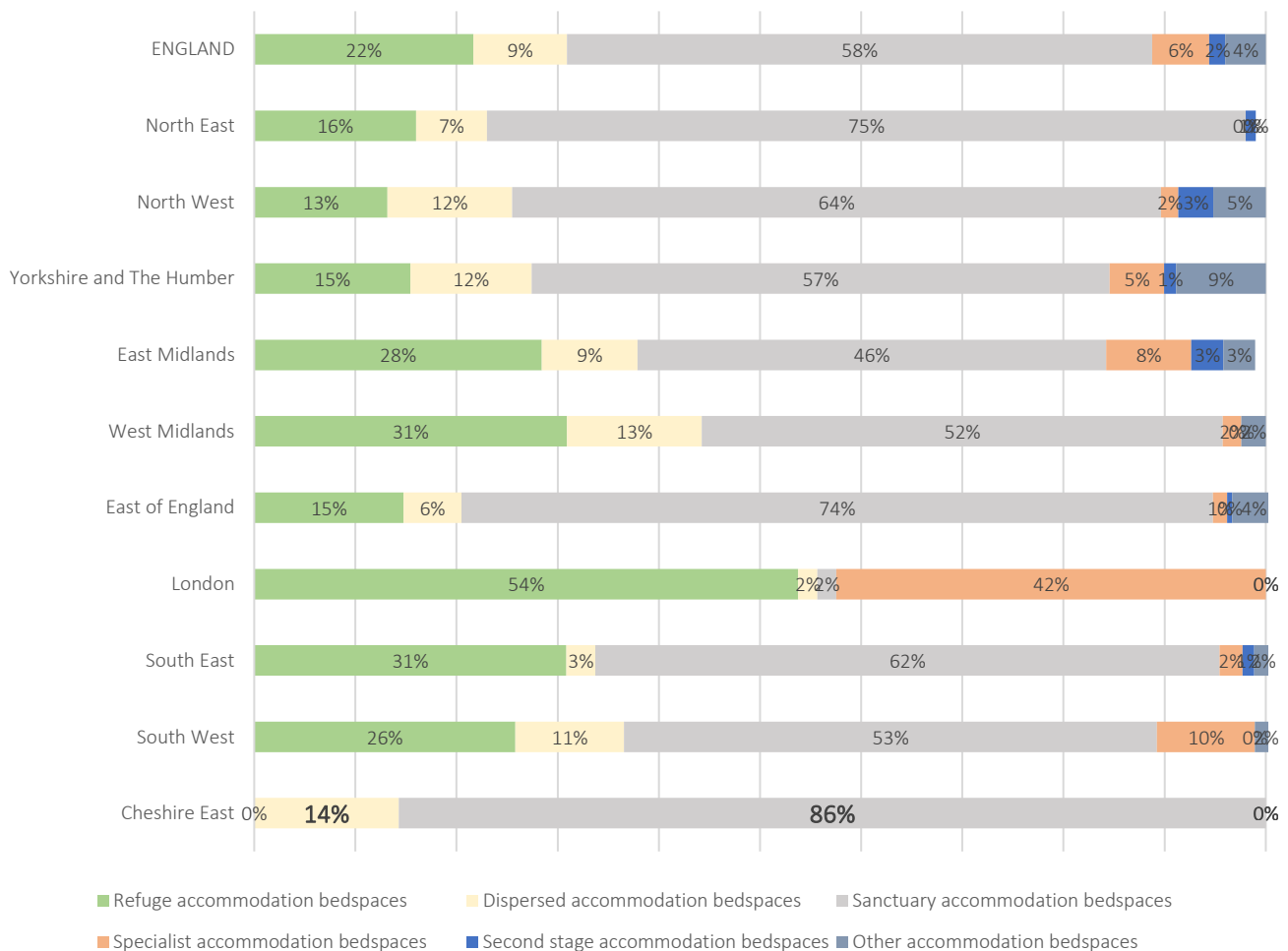


KEY FINDING

FINDING 1 – CHESHIRE EAST SAFE ACCOMMODATION MIX APPEARS AS AN OUTLIER WHEN COMPARED TO OTHER AREAS

- In Cheshire East, the current provider is commissioned to provide 16 dispersed safe accommodation units. Other safe accommodation spaces are made available via the Sanctuary Scheme.
- In Cheshire East, 0% of safe accommodation bedspaces are communal properties, 14% are dispersed bedspaces, and 86% are sanctuary bedspaces (2023-24 data).
- The England average is 22% communal refuge, 9% dispersed, 58% sanctuary bedspaces, with 11% other (2023-24 data).
- Of the 121 Tier 1 local authorities in England, only 8 have no communal refuge bedspaces (2023-24 data).
- The current provider recently opened a 6-bed multi-occupancy property specifically designed for 18 to 25-year-olds (not commissioned by Cheshire East), increasing the number of units to 22.

referrals and bedspaces in domestic abuse safe accommodations by accommodation type; 2023-24



FINDING 2 – THERE ARE NO SET GUIDELINES ON THE MIX OF DISPERSED AND COMMUNAL PROPERTIES

- There are no clear guidelines on the mix of safe accommodation that a local authority should provide. However, research and guidance do favour having a range of accommodation types to provide a flexible response to those who have experienced domestic abuse.
- For example, the London Mayor’s Safe Accommodation Strategy proposes a ‘greater range of safe crisis accommodation’.⁶
- Refuge, the Domestic Abuse charity, also highlights the benefit of having a range of provision: “When it comes to how a refuge should look, there is no ‘one-size-fits-all’ solution. Each survivor’s journey is unique and will come with different needs.”⁷
- ‘More than Bricks and Mortar’,⁸ a feasibility study by Refuge, argues that dispersed accommodation can offer the same benefits as communal refuge settings, provided that appropriate support structures are in place.
- The types of support suggested include out-of-hours support, support for children, and peer support.

FINDING 3 – FEEDBACK RECEIVED FROM THOSE WHO HAVE EXPERIENCED DOMESTIC ABUSE SHOWED THAT INDIVIDUALS HAD A RANGE OF VIEWS CONCERNING COMMUNAL REFUGES

- Residents in safe accommodation properties described themselves as happy to be accommodated in their own [dispersed] property.
- Cheshire East Council staff conducted focus groups with individuals who had experienced domestic abuse. Participants were generally positive about communal spaces and highlighted several benefits, including peer support and therapeutic play for children.

**RELEVANCE TO CHESHIRE EAST**

- The safe accommodation mix in Cheshire East appears atypical, particularly concerning the absence of communal refuge provision. There is no clear evidence on what the ideal mix of safe accommodation should be.
- Those who have experienced domestic abuse and were engaged with as part of this assessment highlighted the benefits of both communal and dispersed accommodation.

**RECOMMENDATION**

- To ensure that accommodation is available that meets the needs of as wide a range of people as possible, communal refuge facilities should be explored in Cheshire East.

⁶ Mayor of London, (2021), Domestic Abuse Safe Accommodation Strategy

⁷ Refuge, (2025), Dispersed accommodation: the inclusive approach to helping more survivors

⁸ Refuge, (2023), More Than Bricks and Mortar

RECOMMENDATION NUMBER: 3

TITLE: To develop the support offered to children and young people in safe accommodation

**KEY FINDING**

FINDING 1 – IN CHESHIRE EAST, SUPPORT FOR CHILDREN IN SAFE ACCOMMODATION IS PROVIDED BY THE EARLY HELP SERVICE

- Children placed in safe accommodation in Cheshire East are referred to the Early Help service for support.
- However, feedback from the provider suggests that there are low levels of engagement from children and young people in safe accommodation with the Early Help offer.
- Since April 2025, 4 out of 15 children have engaged with Early Help Support. Domestic abuse practitioners suggested that the lack of engagement could be related to the stigma attached to social care involvement for families.
- Domestic abuse practitioners believed that domestic abuse support workers are best placed to work with children affected by domestic abuse as they build trust and relationships with families through their frequent visits and meetings with those in safe accommodation.

FINDING 2 – CHILDREN CAN BE AFFECTED BY DOMESTIC ABUSE AND REQUIRE TARGETED HELP AND SUPPORT

- Children and young people can be directly or indirectly affected by domestic abuse, whether as victims in their own right, through exposure to abuse in the home, or through harmful behaviours in adolescent relationships.⁹
- Young people experience the highest rates of domestic abuse of any age group. They may be involved in abusive intimate relationships or may use harmful behaviours toward family members.¹⁰
- As such, they require tailored and age-appropriate support, including:
 - Domestic abuse awareness and education
 - Safety planning adapted to their developmental stage
 - Emotional and therapeutic support that addresses trauma and risk

FINDING 3 – IN 2024-25, 80 CHILDREN WERE SUPPORTED IN THE DISPERSED SAFE ACCOMMODATION PROPERTIES.

- In 2023-24, 118 children were supported. In 2022-23, the figure was 102. On average, around 100 children are supported in dispersed accommodation each year.

FINDING 4 – IN 2024-25, 26% OF MARAC CASES HAD CHILDREN IN THE HOUSEHOLD.

- During 2024-25, there were 1167¹¹ children in the households of the cases discussed.
- Of the 939 cases covering July 2024 to March 2025, 240 had children in the household. This equates to 26% of the total.

⁹ Home Office, (2022), Domestic Abuse Statutory Guidance

¹⁰ ONS, (2024), Domestic Abuse Victim Characteristics

¹¹ 11 months; June 2024 data missing.

FINDING 5 – ENGAGEMENT CONDUCTED BY CHESHIRE EAST COUNCIL STAFF SUGGESTED A NEED FOR SPECIALIST CHILDREN’S WORKERS WITHIN SAFE ACCOMMODATION.

- To meet the needs of children and young people in safe accommodation, children’s workers were suggested as a valuable resource.
- Participants also suggested a dedicated children’s space within a refuge.
- A respondent to the survey conducted as part of this needs assessment highlighted the benefits of communal refuges in providing social interactions for children housed in safe accommodation.



RELEVANCE TO CHESHIRE EAST

- The current delivery model for support for children and young people in safe accommodation has been in place since April 2025. There has been low engagement, which suggests a potential gap in support for children experiencing domestic abuse. However, the sample size is small.



RECOMMENDATION

- Updating how support to Children and Young people in safe accommodation is offered should be explored. To ensure vulnerable children are being supported, the following interventions could be explored:
 - Children and young people specialist support provided directly by the safe accommodation provider.
 - The Early Help service offering support to children and families on an opt-out basis.

RECOMMENDATION NUMBER: 4

TITLE: To improve the pathway between Housing Options and the safe accommodation provider

**KEY FINDING**

FINDING 1 – DOMESTIC ABUSE FAMILY SAFETY UNIT (DAFSU) PRACTITIONERS INDICATED THAT THE SAFE ACCOMMODATION PATHWAY SHOULD BE CLARIFIED

- Practitioners reported that although all referrals for safe accommodation should be sent via the Housing Single Point of Access (SPoA), some referrals are still directed to the Domestic Abuse Navigators (part of the DAFSU).

FINDING 2 – THERE WAS CONFUSION ABOUT HOW VACANCIES IN SAFE ACCOMMODATION PROPERTIES ARE COMMUNICATED TO THE HOUSING OPTIONS SERVICE.

- Housing Options practitioners noted occasional gaps in the information they received about safe accommodation vacancies.
- The Commissioners are working with the provider to ensure there are systems in place for the reporting of any vacant safe accommodation spaces.

FINDING 3 – IN 2024-25, THERE WERE 23 REFERRALS FROM CHESHIRE EAST HOUSING OPTIONS TO SAFE ACCOMMODATION.

- This indicator was introduced in April 2023 to address an information gap.
- In the 2023-24 period, there were 15 referrals.

**RELEVANCE TO CHESHIRE EAST**

- The lack of clarity in the referral process could result in delays for individuals seeking support.
- The lack of up-to-date information about available safe accommodation places could create barriers to access.

**RECOMMENDATION**

- There should be a clear system in place so that information on safe accommodation vacancies can be shared with Housing Options practitioners in a timely manner.
- The referral pathway for safe accommodation should be clearly articulated to all practitioners.

KEY FINDINGS

PROVISION

SPECIALIST SERVICES

DOMESTIC ABUSE FAMILY SAFETY UNIT (DAFSU)

- DAFSU provide various interventions aimed at helping those who have experienced domestic abuse.
- The service is made up of:

Those Who Have Experienced Domestic Abuse

DOMESTIC ABUSE NAVIGATORS
Front door and referrals

OUTREACH IDVA TEAM
STANDARD/ MEDIUM RISK

MARAC IDVA TEAM
HIGH RISK

HOSPITAL IDVA
ALL RISK LEVELS

Perpetrators of Domestic Abuse

INTERVENTION HUB
STANDARD/ MEDIUM RISK

HIGH HARM CASE MANAGERS
HIGH RISK

DOMESTIC ABUSE NAVIGATORS (DANs)

- The DANs service is the front door service for domestic abuse support.
- Three members of staff work alongside the Cheshire East Consultation Service (ChECS) and the Early Help front door.
- The service:
 - Offers advice and guidance on cases where domestic abuse is a feature
 - Accepts all self-referrals and referrals from the police, provided there are no children involved and the DASH score is 10-13
 - Provides domestic abuse support and advice to all professionals.
- The DANs have a role in offering support to ChECS practitioners regarding domestic abuse. Any ChECS cases that are categorised as parental abuse are followed up by a DAN.

“There is a potential lack of knowledge about domestic abuse [from practitioners in other partner areas].”

DAFSU Practitioner

“The DAN’s role is to provide independent advice to survivors of domestic abuse.”

DAFSU Practitioner

“Part of the DAN’s role is to make sure that domestic abuse is being considered when vulnerable people are identified.”

DAFSU Practitioner

“Survivors said that being contacted by multiple agencies following a police call out, encourages disengagement from services”

DAFSU Practitioner

OUTREACH IDVA TEAM

- The Outreach IDVA Team consists of six staff members, overseen by a Team Leader.
- The team is split between North and South (Crewe and Macclesfield).
- The Outreach IDVA Team receives referrals through two routes: the Domestic Abuse Navigators and as step-down cases from the MARAC IDVA team.
- Outreach IDVAs run the Gateway Recovery Programme that focuses on helping people understand domestic abuse.
- The Outreach IDVAs have been trained to deliver the therapeutic offer across Cheshire East and will work with clients on their assigned programme. The Outreach IDVA completes any follow-ups during the delivery of their programmes. Two team members specialise in working with those under 16.
- The Team run the NSPCC DART (Domestic Abuse Recovering Together) and the Healing Together Course.

HOSPITAL IDVA

- The Hospital IDVAs are based at Leighton and Macclesfield hospitals.
- The post works across all departments in the hospital. The majority of their work is within the A&E department. The IDVAs are part of the Safeguarding Team.
- IDVAs complete triage, signposting, and referral work.
- The Hospital IDVA continues to hold hospital cases and staff who are employed by the trust.
- The Hospital IDVA is responsible for providing the training offer across all NHS hospital sites, aligning with the NHS training package.

“Hospital IDVAs also casehold NHS staff members. It is a safe place to get support.”

DAFSU Practitioner

“The Hospital IDVAs are also a qualified older person IDVA and Sexual Violence IDVA. In the hospital the IDVAs may see needs that other IDVAs may not come across (e.g. rape victims).”

DAFSU Practitioner

INTERVENTION HUB

- The Intervention Hub consists of a range of online interventions (addressing issues such as domestic abuse, alcohol use, cannabis use, shoplifting, as well as positive change, such as well-being, anger management, and thinking skills).
- All interventions are based on CCBT (computer-based cognitive behavioural therapy) principles and are designed to address and change behaviours in standard- to medium-risk perpetrators. Any professional within Cheshire East Council can access them via the DANs.

MARAC IDVA TEAM

- Based on SafeLives' calculations, it is recommended that in Cheshire East, around 6.8 full-time equivalent (FTE) IDVAs are needed to cope with the number of cases heard at MARAC.
- The MARAC Team consists of six IDVAs, overseen by a Team Leader.
- The intervention period is typically six to eight weeks.
- Individuals/ families can be transitioned to the Outreach IDVA Team if required.
- The referral pathway for the MARAC IDVA team is via MARAC. Cheshire Police currently administer these referrals.
- The MARAC IDVA team is split between the North and South offices.

"MARAC cases are heard within 10 working days of a referral. Dealing with MARAC cases is very resource intensive."

DAFSU Practitioner

"The team have had to think about how to stop the High-Risk IDVAs holding cases for a long time."

DAFSU Practitioner

"Within the high-risk team, one of the challenges is how does the MARAC support children victims."

DAFSU Practitioner

HIGH HARM CASE MANAGERS (HIGH RISK/ HIGH HARM PERPETRATORS)

- The team consists of two staff members and operates according to the DRIVE principles, as outlined by DRIVE Central.
- Practitioners work with high-risk/ high-harm perpetrators of domestic abuse, working to disrupt further offending.
- High Harm Case Managers run the Respect Drive Programme.

"The team have recently completed a 12 month pilot with the Central Drive Office. The pilot tested a reduced Drive model."

DAFSU Practitioner

"Partners are supported by Children's Social Care or IDVAs."

DAFSU Practitioner

SAFE ACCOMMODATION

- Cheshire East commissions 16 units of dispersed safe accommodation.
- A Sanctuary Scheme is in place.

PERPETRATOR SERVICES

ENGAGE

- MyCWA run the Engage Perpetrator Programme in Cheshire East.
- The Engage Programme is a brief intervention designed to engage perpetrators.

CARA

- MyCWA run the Cautioning and Relationship Abuse (Project CARA) in Cheshire East.

CUSTODY INTERVENTIONS

- MyCWA run custody interventions with perpetrators of domestic abuse across Cheshire.

HIGH HARM CASE MANAGERS

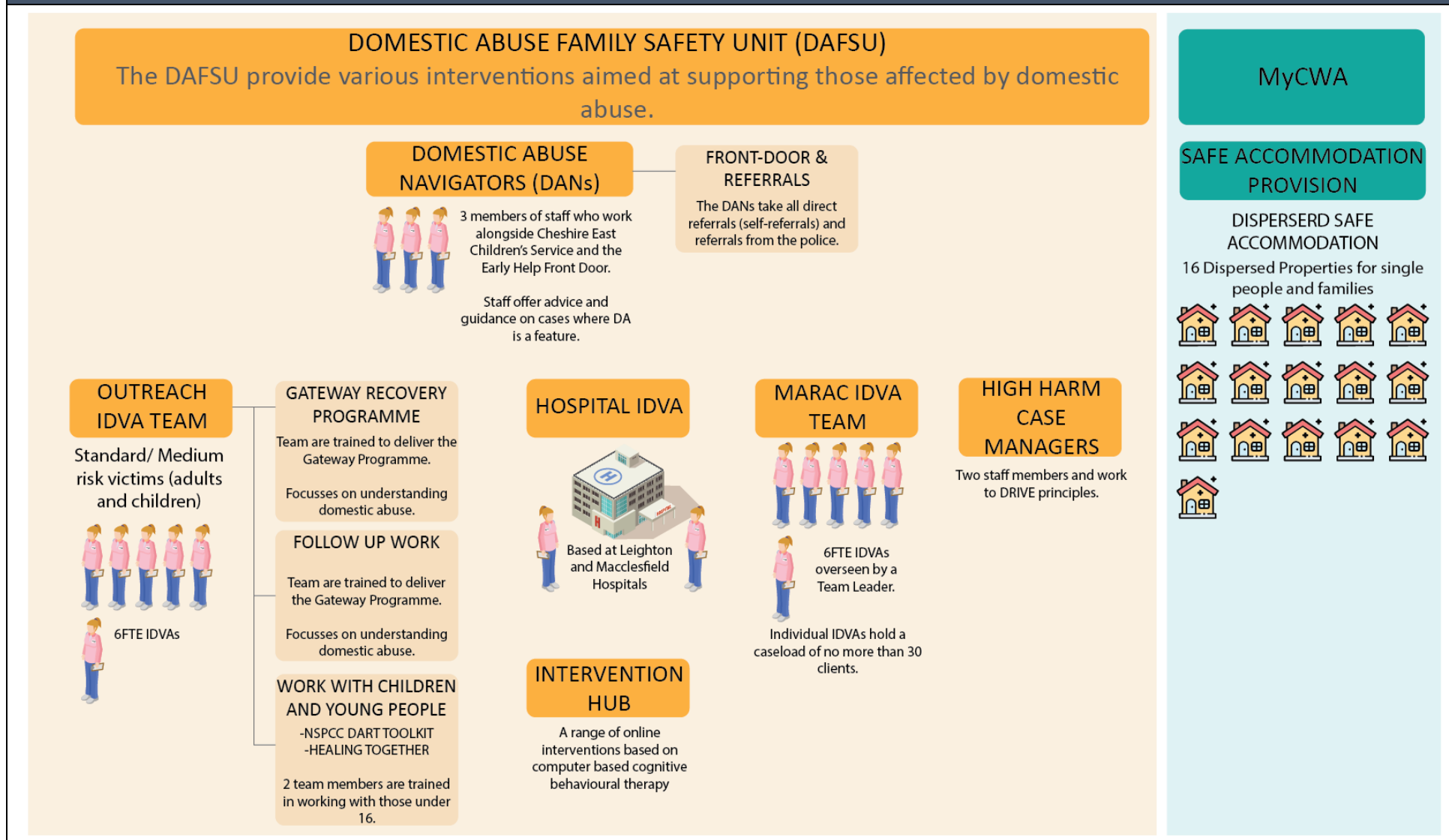
- See previous page (Part of DAFSU)

PROBATION – BUILDING CHOICES PROGRAMME

- Probation runs the Building Choices Programme for individuals released from prison on licence or serving a community sentence.
- The programme is run in Crewe and Chester (Cheshire West & Chester) and is for medium and high-risk offenders.
- Probation Practitioners report that the programme appears to be within agreed timeframes for those needing to access the course.

“There are not programme delays in Cheshire East.
Delivery is where it needs to be.”

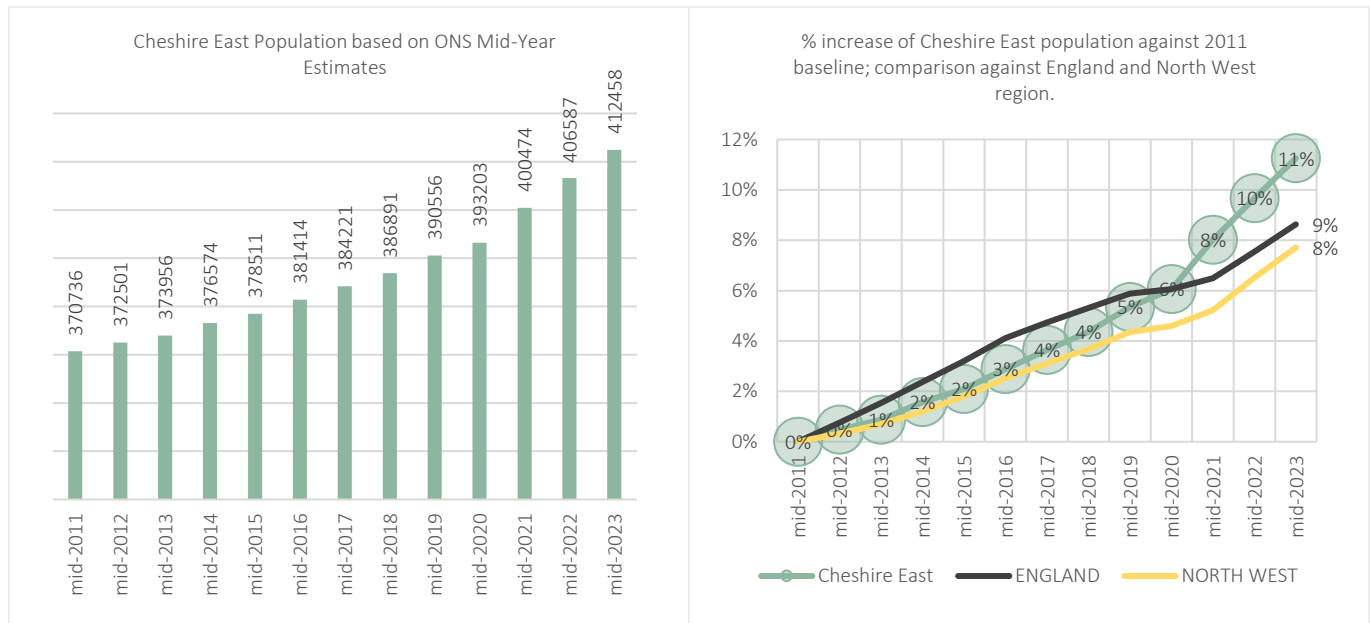
Probation Practitioner



POPULATION

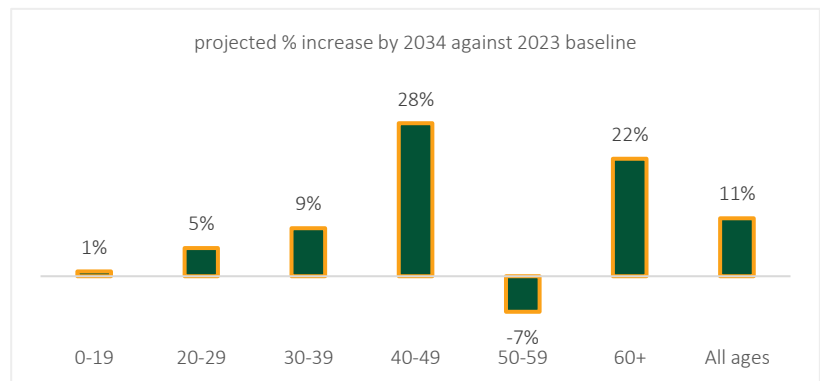
The population of Cheshire East has been increasing at a slightly higher rate than the regional and national rates; however, there has been a notable increase in recent years.

- The latest Mid-Year Estimates (2023) provide a population figure of 412,458. Between 2011 and 2020, the population grew at an average rate of approximately 2,500 per year; however, this rate increased to around 6,400 per year since then.



The population of Cheshire East is expected to increase by 11% by 2034.

- Based on the latest population projections¹², the population of Cheshire East is expected to increase by 11%¹³ to 456,452.
- The 40-49 and 60+ age groups are expected to see the highest % increase.



10.4% of the population in Cheshire East is from an ethnic minority group¹⁴.

- Looking specifically at those from a White Ethnic Group, this cohort accounted for 94.4% of the total population compared to 96.7% in the 2011 Census.
- This rate is significantly higher than in the North-West Region (86%) and England (81%).

¹² <https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/populationandmigration/populationprojections>

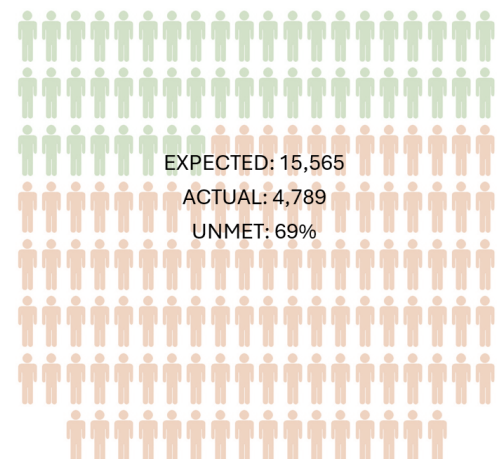
¹³ Using 2023 year of 411,917 population published in the population projections

¹⁴ Those who are non-white British are classified as an ethnic minority group. 2021 Census.

PREVALENCE

It is estimated that less than half of domestic abuse incidents are reported to the police.

- Based on the latest estimates¹⁵, it is estimated that the number of individuals in Cheshire East experiencing any form of domestic abuse and those reporting:
 - Expected = 15,565
 - Actual¹⁶ = 4,789
 - Underreporting = 69%

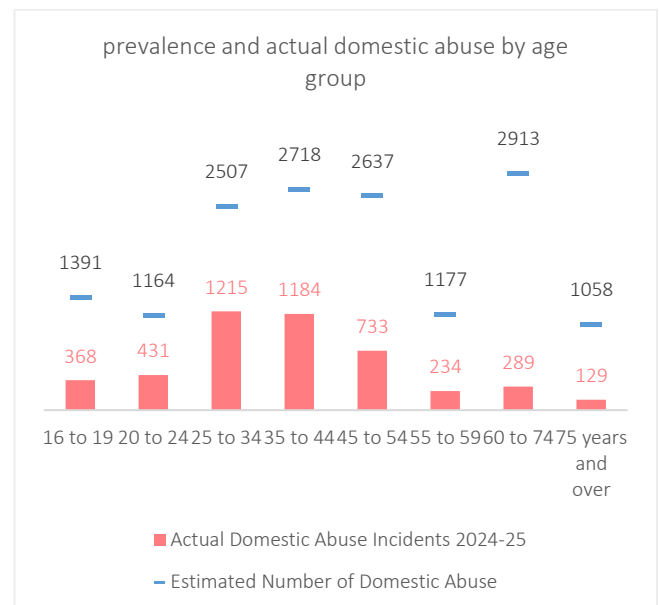


It is estimated that males have higher underreporting rates than females.

- For females:
 - Expected: 10,861
 - Actual: 3,244
 - Unmet: 70%
- For males:
 - Expected: 4,704
 - Actual: 1,224
 - Unmet: 74%

The older age group is expected to have the highest rates of underreporting.

- Comparing reported domestic abuse incidents to the police against expected prevalence by age group shows that the highest underreporting is for the older age groups.
- The younger age groups also exhibit high rates of underreporting.
- The high underreporting rate for younger individuals could be attributed to stigma.



¹⁵ Domestic abuse prevalence and victim characteristics, England and Wales: year ending March 2024.

¹⁶ Data from the "Domestic Abuse Performance Pack; 2024-25". The figures are from aggregated date, therefore it is possible than there is double counting.

SAFE ACCOMMODATION

SPACES

Cheshire East falls short of the recommended 41 specialist accommodation spaces.

- Using the Council of Europe's minimum recommendation of one space per 10,000 population, 41 specialist accommodation spaces are recommended in Cheshire East. This excludes properties that could be Target Hardened via the Sanctuary Scheme.
- In Cheshire East, there are:
 - Dispersed Properties: MyCWA runs 16 dispersed properties across Cheshire East.
 - Safe Accommodation Communal Living: MyCWA recently opened a 6-bed multi-occupancy property specifically designed for 18 to 25-year-olds.
 - Sanctuary Schemes: 83 properties target hardened in 2024-25.

Safe accommodation provision in Cheshire East

DISPERSED SAFE ACCOMMODATION

16 dispersed properties for single people and families



SANCTUARY SCHEME

83 properties target hardened (2024/25)



COMMISSIONED SAFE ACCOMMODATION SPACES
EXCLUDING THE SANCTUARY SCHEME

16 SPACES

COMMISSIONED SAFE ACCOMMODATION SPACES
INCLUDING THE SANCTUARY SCHEME

99 SPACES

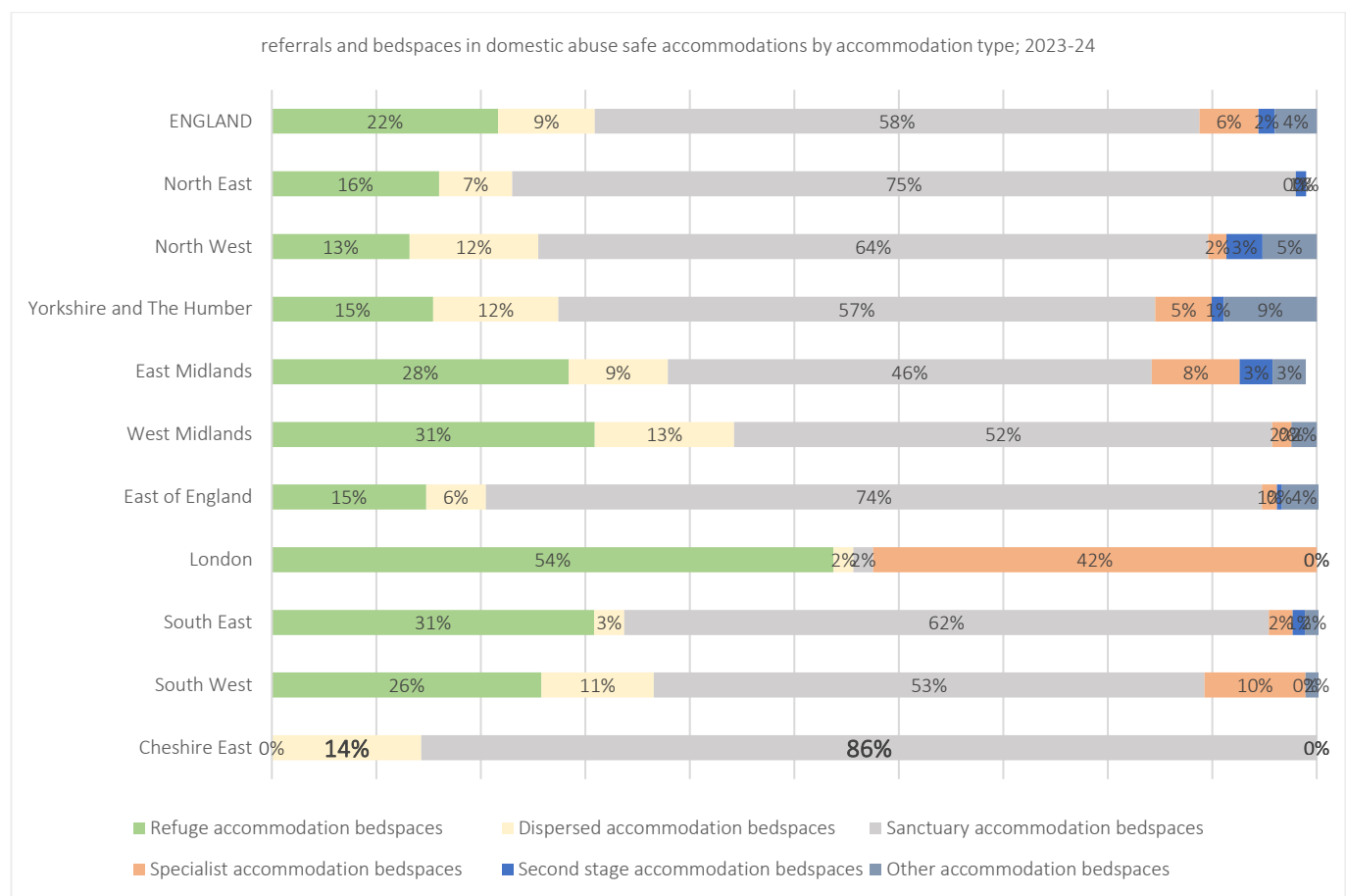
RECOMMENDED 41 SPACES

Of the 121 authorities in England¹⁷, only 8 have no communal refuge bedspaces.

- Cheshire East is one of only eight authorities that do not have any communal refuge bedspaces (2023-24 figures).
- The Routes to Support process allows individuals to access refuges outside the area.

A high percentage of the available bedspaces in Cheshire East are Sanctuary Schemes.

- 86% of referrals and bedspaces during 2023-24 were Sanctuary Schemes.
- Please note that this is based on the 143 figure for 2023-24. The figure in 2024-25 was 83¹⁸.



¹⁷ Greater London Authority (GLA) and 120 Tier 1 authorities that were in existence in 2023-24 in England.

¹⁸ Data provided locally. National data not yet published.

There are no clear guidelines on the mix of safe accommodation that a local authority should provide. However, research and guidance do favour having a range of accommodation types to provide a flexible response to those who have experienced domestic abuse.

- In 2024, the Domestic Abuse Commissioner stated that she was pleased to see local areas commissioning a variety of accommodation types.¹⁹
- ‘More than Bricks and Mortar’²⁰ is a feasibility study into dispersed accommodation published by Refuge. The report describes how “Refuge buildings are part of the ecosystem that ensures survivor safety and recovery. They offer a secure place to stay, with an environment that is well-maintained. The support that is available within that environment is much valued by residents and includes practical support, such as help to access benefits or legal advice; emotional support helping survivors to come to terms with their experiences of abuse and peer support, which helps to normalise the abuse and supports survivors to realise that their experiences were not their fault.”.
- The report also acknowledges that “We know there will always be a need for traditional refuges”.

¹⁹ DLUHC, (2024), Annual progress report from the Domestic Abuse Safe Accommodation National Expert Steering Group 2022 to 2023

²⁰ Refuge, (2023), More Than Bricks and Mortar

The diagram below compares safe accommodation in Cheshire East against good practice identified in the Refuge Feasibility Study into dispersed accommodation – More Than Bricks and Mortar.²¹

Safe accommodation characteristics

REFUGE FEASIBILITY STUDY

IN CHESHIRE EAST



LOCATION OF PROPERTIES



A cluster model consisting of several properties dispersed within a discrete geographical location, within easily travelling distance from each other.



Properties should be within walking distance of amenities.



There should be a central support hub for survivors to access support.

Dispersed properties are located within towns although they are not all grouped within close proximity.

All properties are located near amenities.

There is one MyCWA hub in Crewe.



TYPES OF PROPERTIES



There should be a variety of unit sizes.



There should be at least one property suitable for those with disabilities.



Some properties should accommodate pets.



Properties should be furnished.

3 x three bedroom houses

5 x two bedroom houses

8 x two bedroom flats

No dispersed properties in Cheshire East are fully accessible to those with a wheelchair.

Properties can accept pets.

MyCWA properties are furnished.



SUPPORT



Out of hours support should be available.



There should be support offered to children and young people in safe accommodation.



Peer support should be available.

MyCWA offer 24 hour support.

There is no dedicated support, instead children can be referred to the Early Help service.

Survivors can access peer support at the MyCWA hub in Crewe

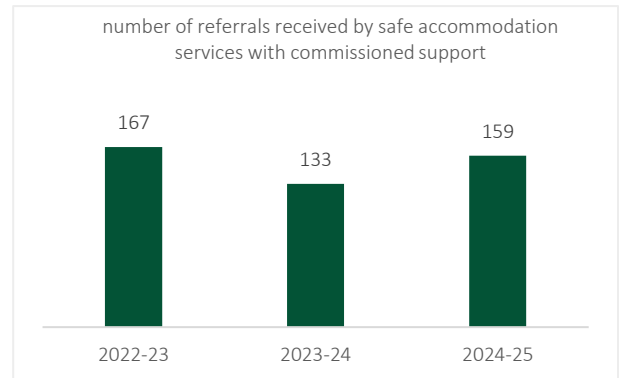
²¹ Refuge, (2023), More Than Bricks and Mortar

LOCAL ANALYSIS

DISPERSED ACCOMMODATION

On average, safe accommodation services with commissioned support receive 153 referrals per year.

- Between April 2022 and March 2025, on average, 153 referrals are received by safe accommodation services with commissioned support per year.
- This figure varied from 133 to 167 during this period.

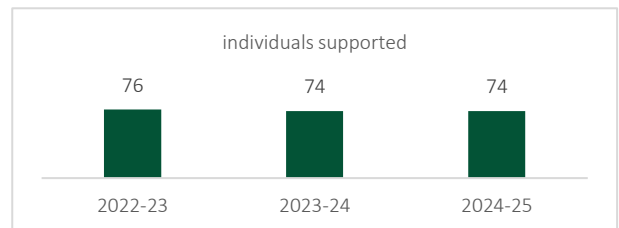


On average, there have been 19 yearly referrals from Housing Options services to safe accommodation services.

- This indicator was introduced in April 2023 to address an information gap.
- In the 2023-24 period, there were 15 referrals. This increased to 23 in 2024-25.

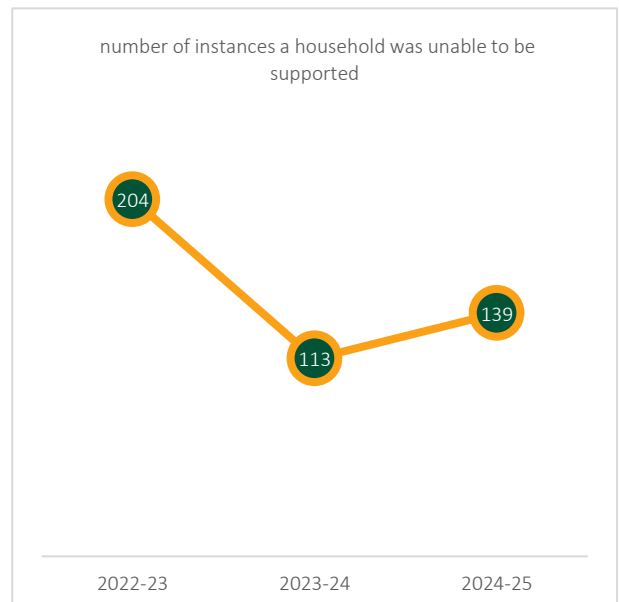
The number of individuals supported each year has remained stable.

- The number of individuals supported has remained stable over the 3-year analysis period.



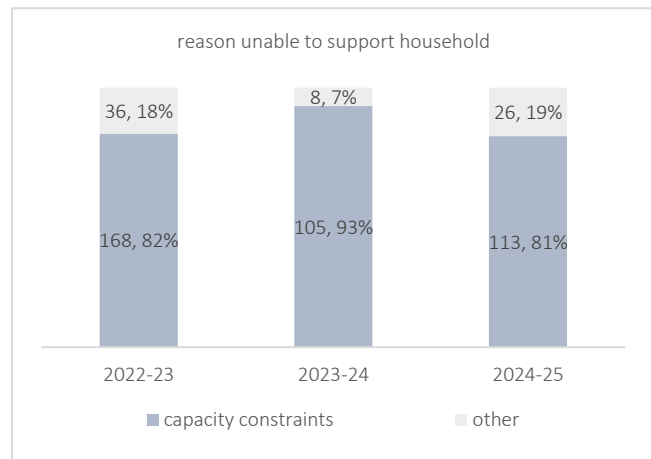
In 2024-25, there were 139 instances where a household was unable to be supported in the local authority area.

- There has been a slight increase in the number of households that could not be supported when comparing the 2024-25 period against the 2023-24 period.
- The number of households that were unable to be supported in 2022-23 was significantly higher than in 2023-24 and 2024-25.



Capacity constraints account for the majority of the reasons why a household was unable to be supported.

- In 2024-25, 81% of the reasons why a household was unable to be supported were due to a capacity constraint.
- This means that MyCWA had appropriate accommodations, but they were not available.
- 'Other' primarily consists of clients being offered space but declining to accept it.



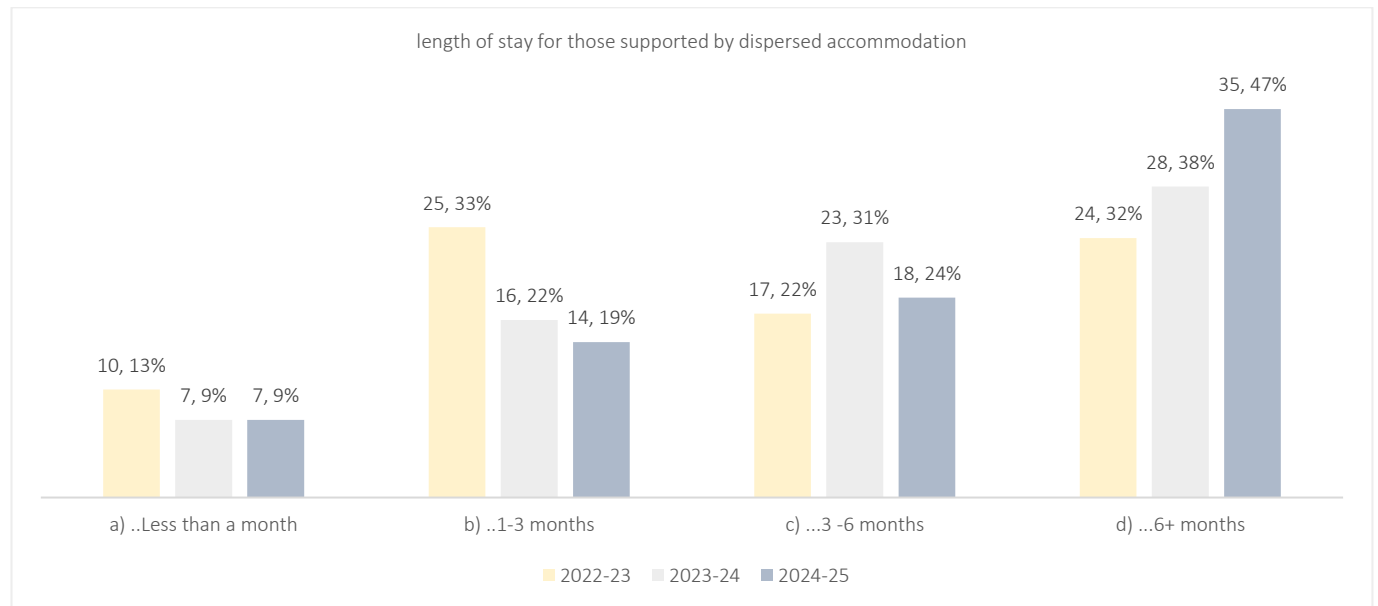
For the majority of households that could not be supported via safe accommodation, support was provided by an appropriate IDVA, Housing Agency, or MyCWA.

- Across the 3 years, 80% of the households that could not be supported via safe accommodation in Cheshire East were supported by an appropriate IDVA, Housing Agency, or MyCWA.
- Alternative refuges outside the Cheshire East area, as well as alternative housing within the Cheshire East area, were also prevalent.

Total number of instances a household was unable to be supported:	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25	Average
Alternative Refuge (OOA)	16	3	14	11
Alternative Housing within LA	15	14	15	15
Supported by an appropriate IDVA, Housing Agency, or MyCWA	170	93	104	122
Support to find Private Rent Options	1	0	0	0
Contact Local Homeless Team	2	2	0	1
Other	0	1	6	2
Total	204	113	139	152

The percentage of those staying in dispersed accommodation for over 6 months is increasing.

- Of the 74 instances of individuals supported in dispersed services during the 2024-25 period, 47% remained for over 6 months. This is an increase from the previous years.
- Feedback from MyCWA practitioners attributed the increase in lengths of stay to the increase in those with no recourse to public funds, complex needs, and a lack of move-on options.

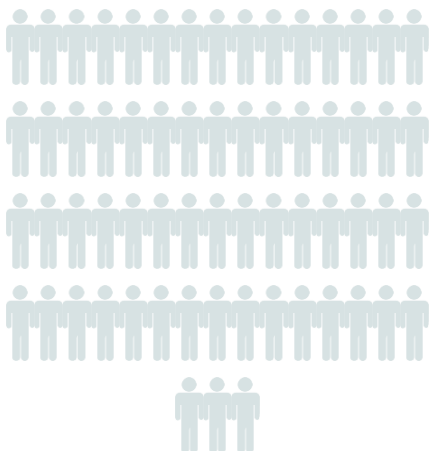




36% of those in dispersed accommodation during 2024-25 were from outside the Cheshire East area.

- Of the 74 instances of individuals supported in dispersed services during 2024-25, 27 (36%) were from outside the Cheshire East area.
- This is similar to previous years.

86% of those in dispersed accommodation during 2024-25 were female.

- The majority of individuals supported in dispersed services during 2024-25 were women.
- There has been no change in trends over the last few years, although there was no robust recording mechanism in 2022-23 for those who identify as trans or non-binary.

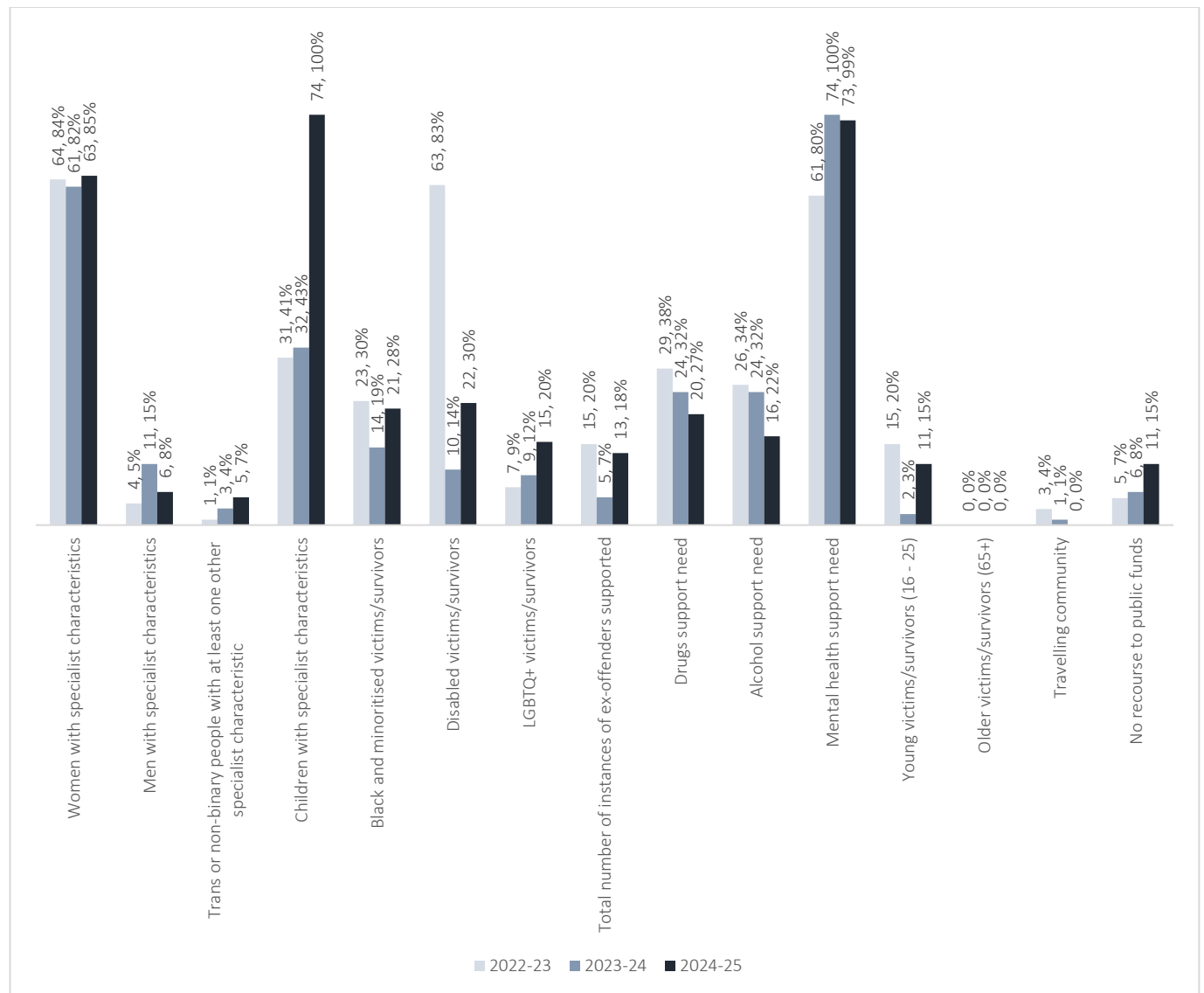
WOMEN		MEN		TRANS OR NON-BINARY	
63 (86%)		8 (10%)		3 (3%)	
					
		2022-23	2023-24	2024-25	
women		69	61	63	
men		4	10	8	
trans or non-binary		0	3	3	
children		102	118	80	

On average, around 100 children are supported in dispersed accommodation each year.

- During the analysed period, there were, on average, 100 children supported in dispersed accommodation each year.
- The 2024-25 year saw the lowest numbers.

A range of support needs and characteristics is recorded as part of the workbooks.

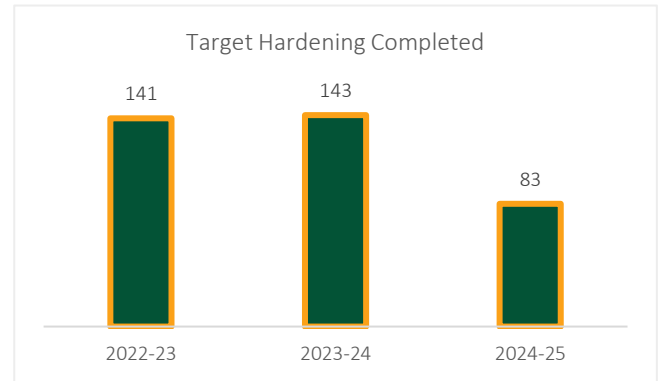
- Nearly all of those supported in dispersed accommodation received **mental health** support.
- **No recourse to public funds** increased from 8% (6) in 2023-24 to 15% (11) in 2024-25.
- **Black and minority** victims/survivors account for 28% of those supported in 2024-25.



SANCTUARY SCHEMES

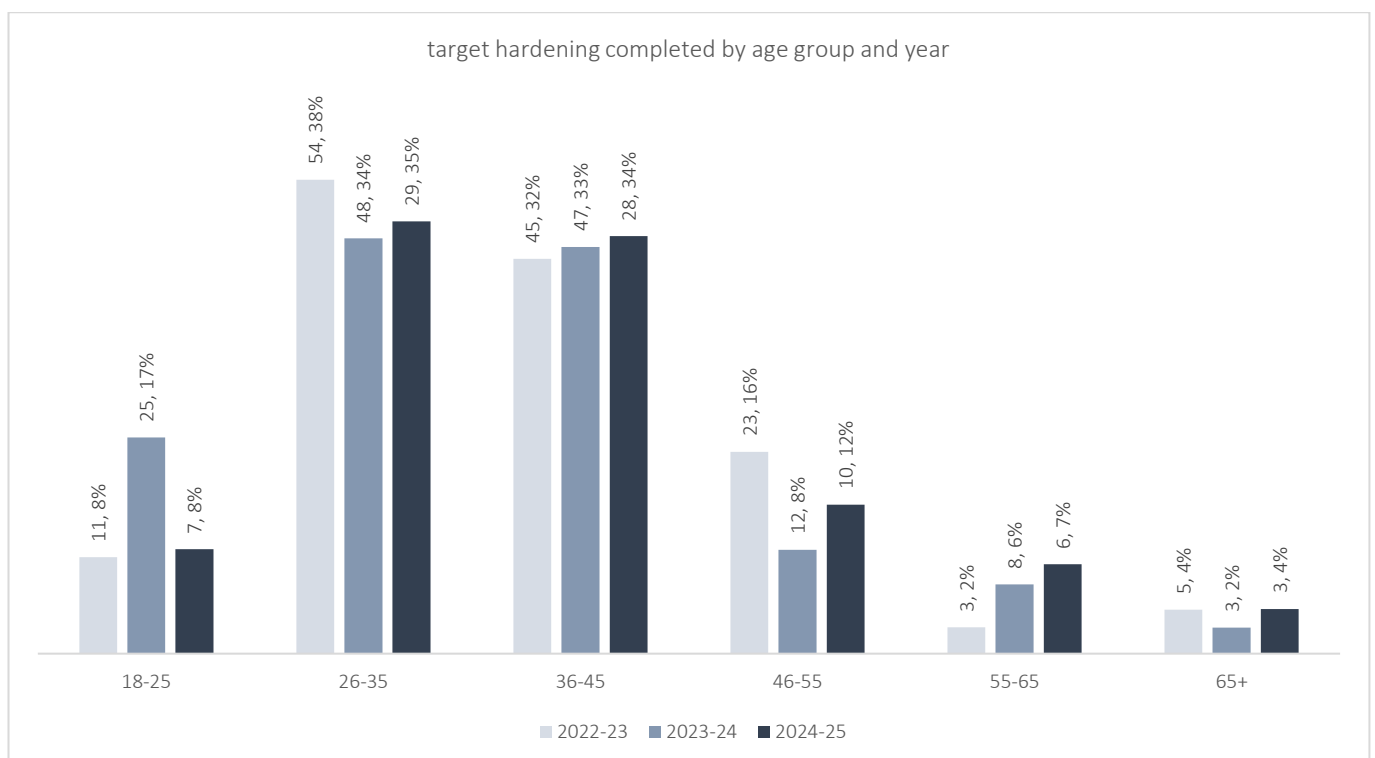
There has been a significant decrease in the number of target hardening completed.

- 83 properties were target hardened during 2024-25.
- This represents a 42% decrease from the previous two years.
- DAFSU practitioners reported that the scope of the scheme changed in October 2024. Since then, only privately rented and owner-occupied properties are supported in the scheme.
- Also, under previous target hardening measures (2022-23 and 2023-24 data), 'Ring' doorbells were included in the figures. This is no longer the case.



The majority of those receiving target hardening were in the 26-35 and the 36-45 age groups.

- The 23-35 (35%) and the 36-45 (34%) age groups accounted for 69% of the total in 2024-25.
- The 55+ age group accounted for 11% of the total in 2024-25. This age group accounts for 14% of the victims/survivors in the police data.
- There has been a notable decrease in the % of 18-25 year olds receiving target hardening when comparing 2024-25 against the previous year.
- The 55-65 age group has seen slight year-on-year increases.

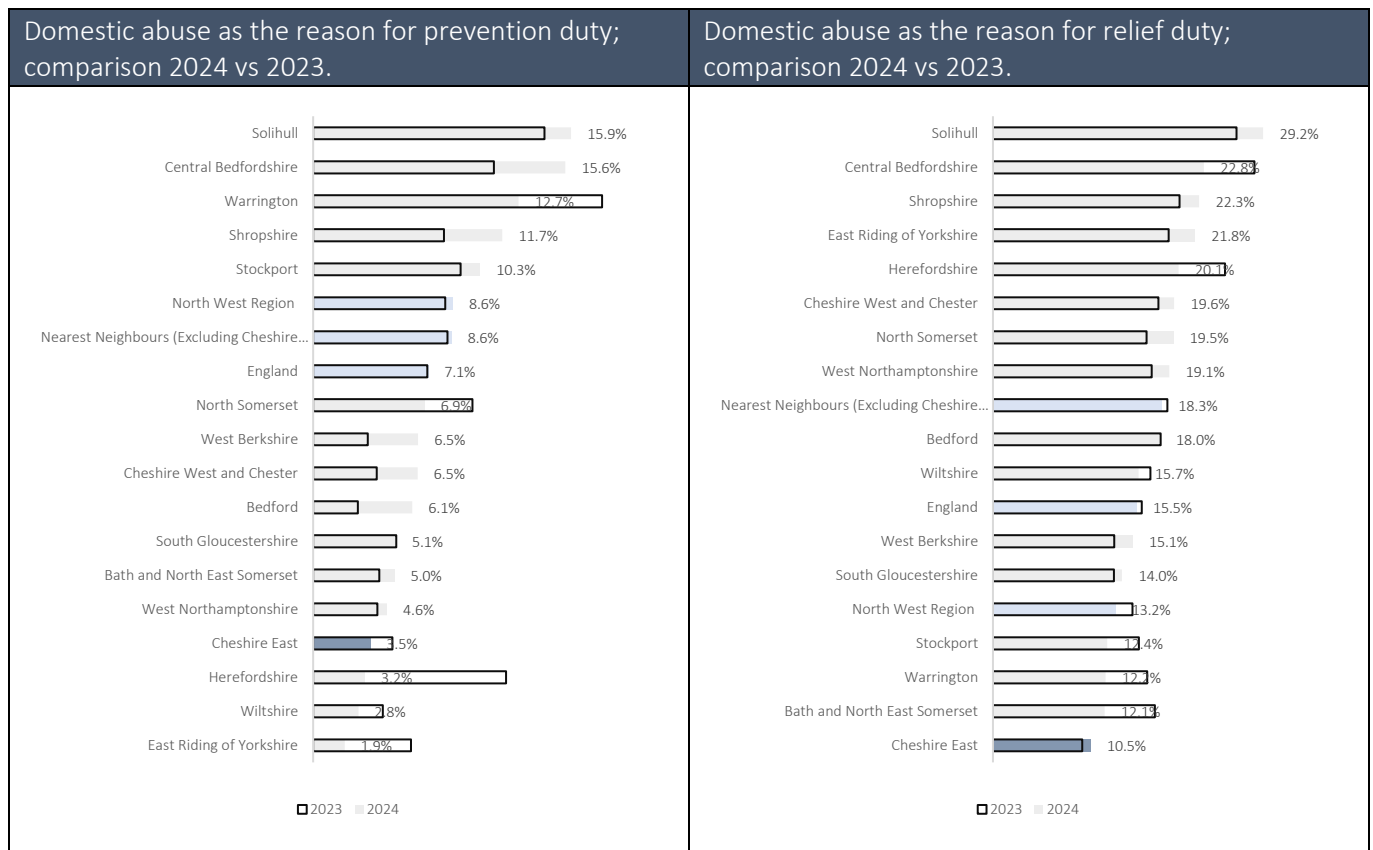


HOUSING

HOMELESSNESS APPROACHES

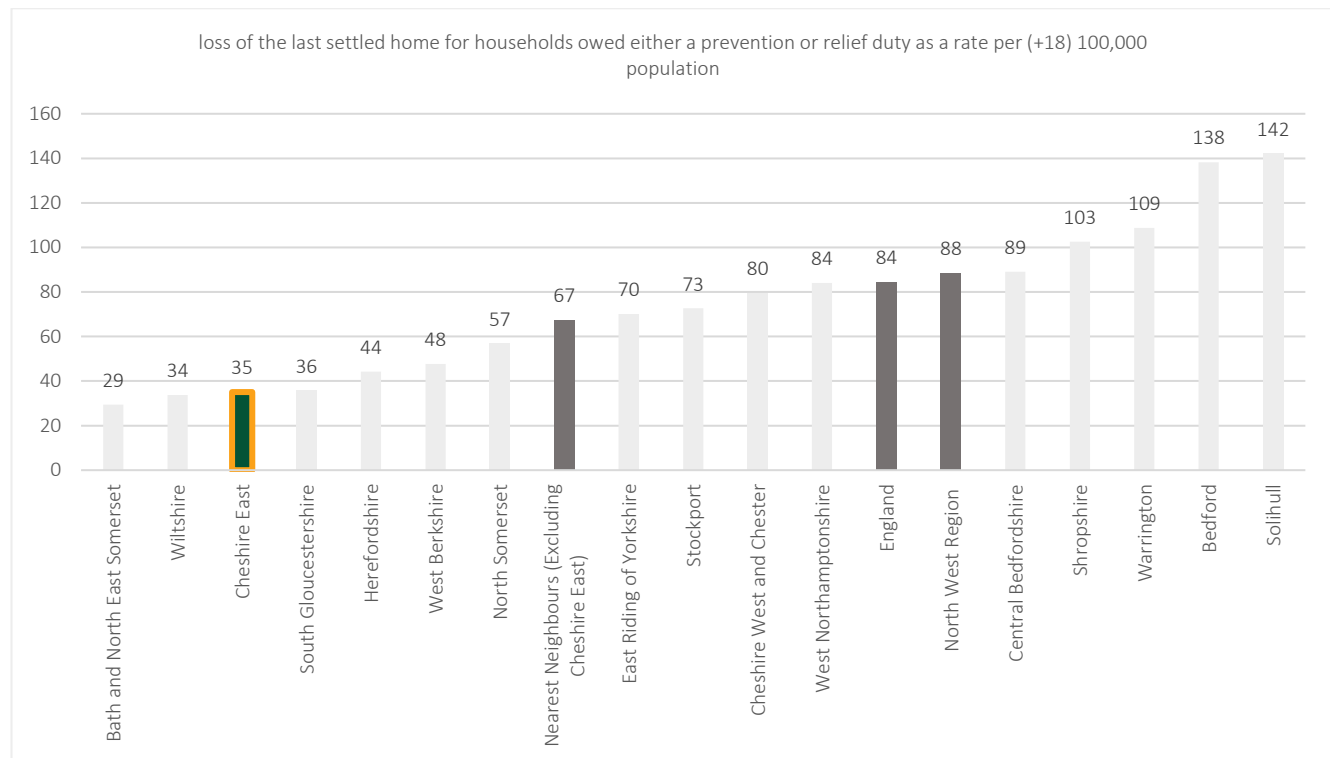
Domestic abuse as the reason for loss of the last settled home is low in comparison to the NSNs.

- Housing practitioners fed back that the lower numbers managed on the prevention duty pathway were related to how Housing Options manages individuals made homeless or at risk of homelessness due to domestic abuse in Cheshire East.
- Cheshire East's implementation of the Whole Housing Approach means that individuals are diverted away from the homelessness route at an early stage.
- Over the past three years, an average of 19 cases per year have moved into a property as a result of a MARAC priority move (Part 6 priority, rather than a homeless prevention application).
 - 2022-23 – 17 cases
 - 2023-24 -25 cases
 - 2024-25 – 15 cases



The rate for homelessness approaches where domestic abuse was the reason for loss of the last settled home was low in comparison to the NSNs.

- In Cheshire East, the reason for the loss of the last settled home for households owed either a prevention or relief duty as a rate per (+18) 100,000 population is low in comparison to the NSNs.
- This figure will be impacted by the number of people diverted away from the homelessness route due to the application of the Whole Housing Approach in Cheshire East, which reduces the bureaucratic burden on individuals affected by domestic abuse.



PERPETRATORS

As part of the Whole Housing Approach Evaluation, the housing response to perpetrators was reviewed. The evaluation found that more perpetrators lost their settled homes due to perpetrating DA, and more were rehoused under the pilot compared with the baseline year.²²

- The reasons for increased action on perpetrators are not entirely clear, as stakeholder interviews indicate that less action was taken under the perpetrator component compared with other components, so there is no clear driver of increased action on perpetrators.
- However, the provider did increasingly work with perpetrators as well as survivors over these years, including offering a (limited) number of bed spaces for those who were harming. This increased activity may explain some of the rehousing data. As well, increased action from housing on perpetrators may be linked to increased awareness and understanding of domestic abuse across the local authority.

²² UCL, (2025), Final Evaluation Report: WHOLE HOUSING APPROACH PILOT IN CHESHIRE EAST

Housing data where the reason for loss of last settled home was 'DA alleged perpetrator excluded from property' shows a large increase in perpetrators removed in the pilot years.²³

- 29 perpetrators in year 1, 24 in year 2 and 25 in year 3, compared with just 3 in the baseline year.
- As well, housing data shows that the outcome 'perpetrator causing harm moved out' rose substantially, from 40 in the baseline year, to 154 in pilot year 1, 201 in year 2, and 124 in year 3.

As with removals, more perpetrators were rehoused during the pilot year compared with the baseline year.²⁴

- Just three perpetrators secured new accommodation in the baseline year, which rose under the pilot to 16 in year 1, 11 in year 2, and 10 in year 3.
- Most commonly, these perpetrators were rehoused in supported housing/hostel, with smaller numbers achieving a Registered Provider tenancy, private rental or staying with family and friends.

²³ UCL, (2025), Final Evaluation Report: WHOLE HOUSING APPROACH PILOT IN CHESHIRE EAST

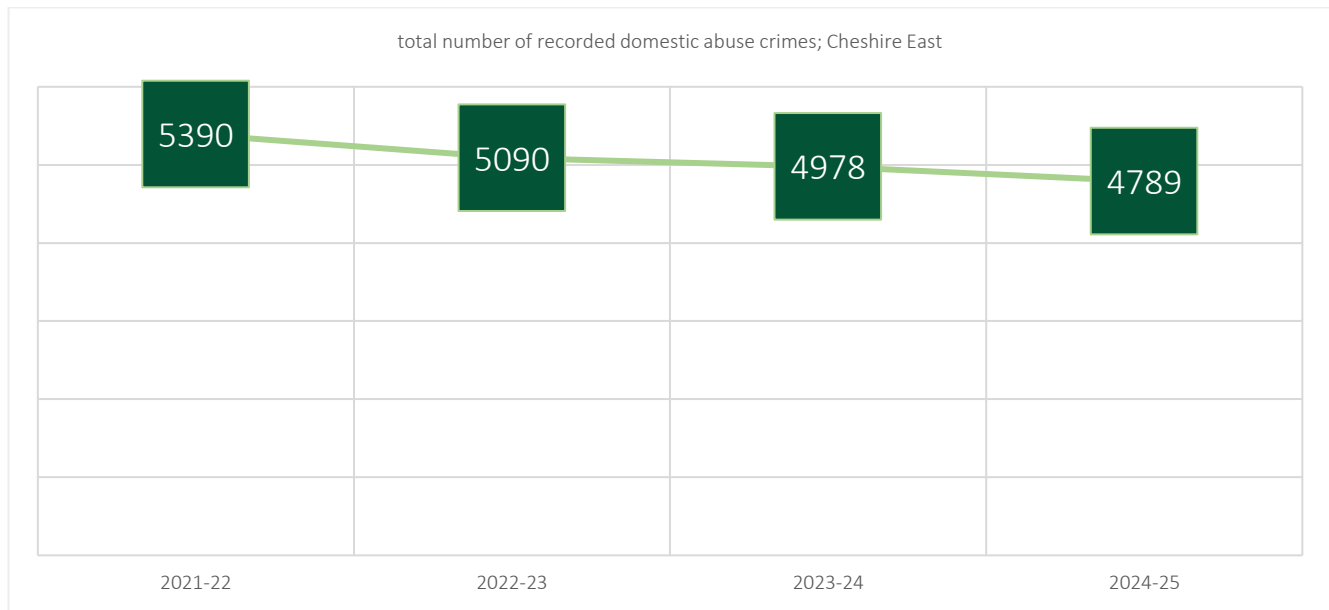
²⁴ UCL, (2025), Final Evaluation Report: WHOLE HOUSING APPROACH PILOT IN CHESHIRE EAST

POLICE

CRIME TRENDS

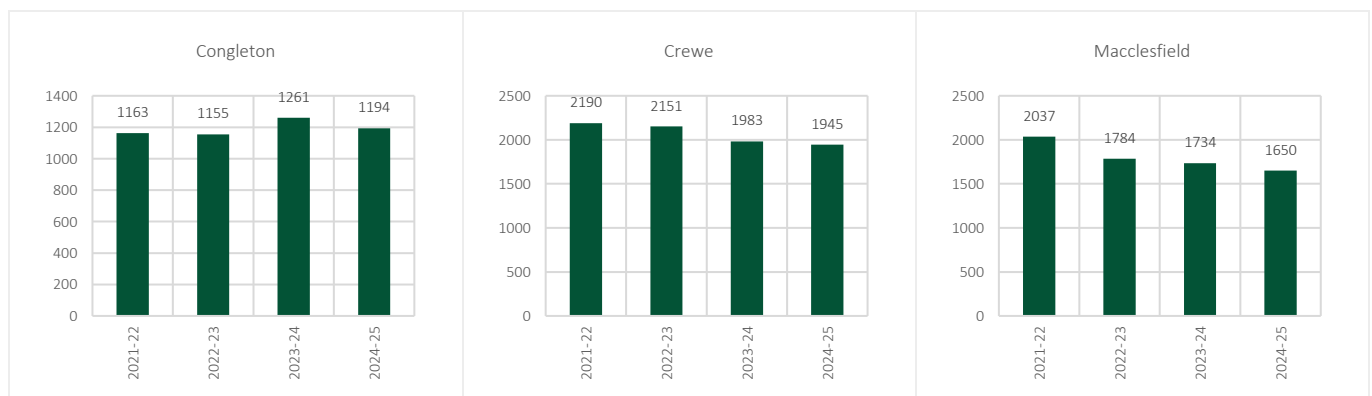
Recorded domestic abuse crimes are decreasing.

- There were 4,789 recorded domestic abuse crimes in Cheshire East during 2024-25. This represents a 3.8% decrease from the previous year.
- During the analysed period, which covers 2021-22 to 2024-25, there have been year-on-year decreases.



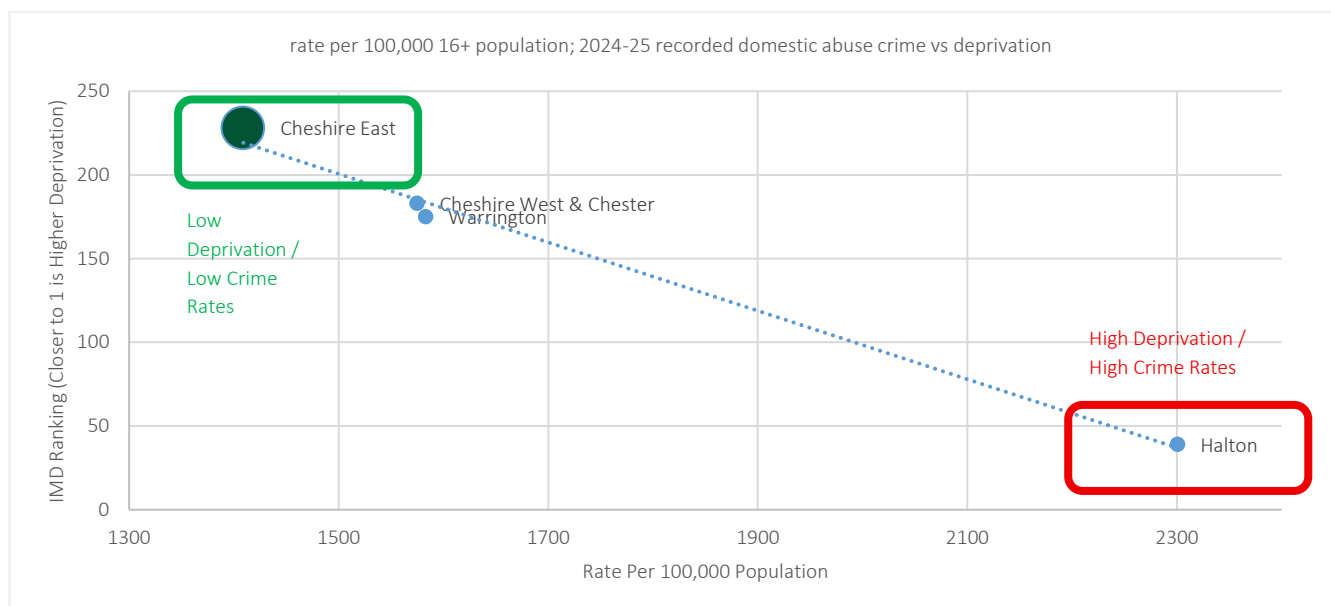
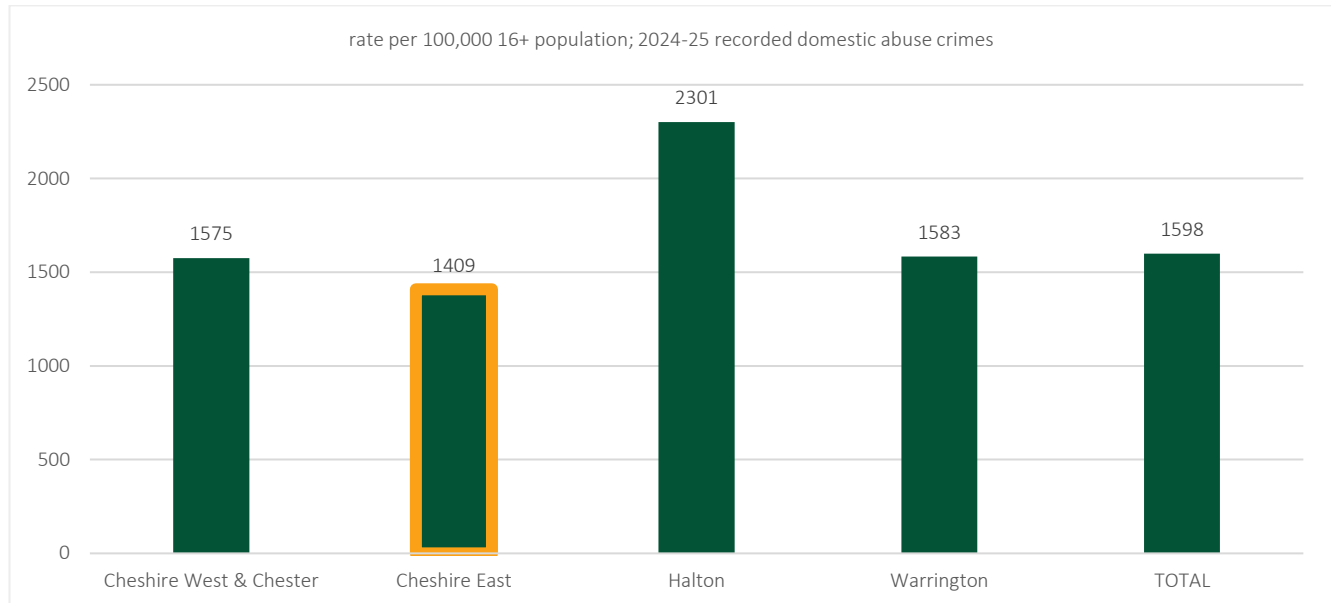
Macclesfield has seen the largest decrease.

- At -19%, Macclesfield has seen the largest decrease when comparing 2024-25 against the 2021-22 baseline.
- Crewe saw a decrease of 11% whilst Congleton saw an increase of 3% over the same period.



Cheshire East exhibit the lowest rates across the Cheshire region.

- As a rate per 100,000 population aged 16 and above, Cheshire East reports the lowest rates in 2024-25 among the Cheshire Police force area.
- There is a strong correlation between deprivation rates and domestic abuse rates across the Cheshire region.
- Analysis by locality is not possible due to how the geographical boundaries are defined.

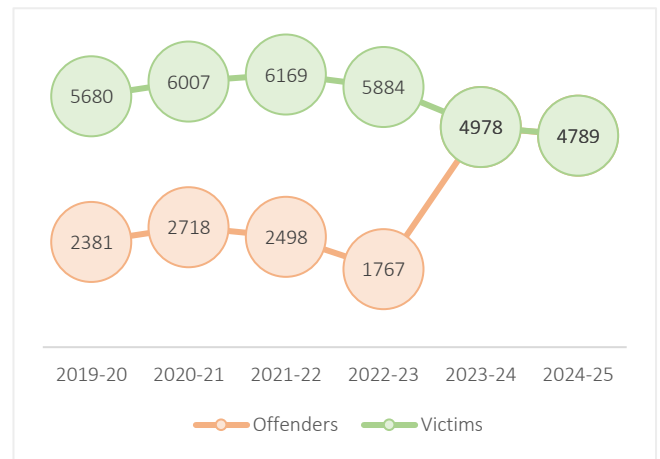


80% of offences flagged with domestic abuse were violence against the person related.

- Violence against the person accounts for the highest proportion of crimes where domestic abuse was flagged. This level has remained relatively stable over the past three years.
- Sexual offences have increased from 3% of the total in 2022-23 to 6% in 2024-25.
- Conversely, the rate of criminal damage has decreased from 5% to 3% during the same period.

The number of recorded offenders has increased over the past few years.

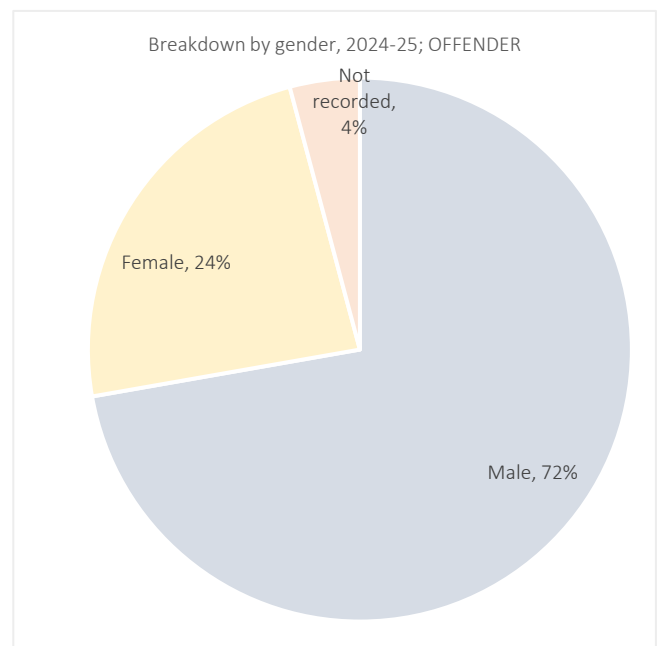
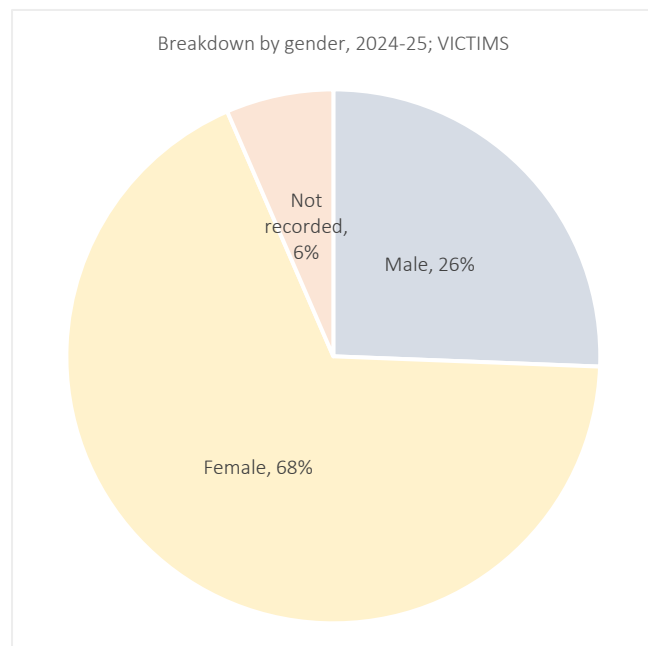
- The analysis is based on aggregated monthly counts over a year, which means there will be double-counting of individuals.
- Police practitioners highlighted that the increase in the number of recorded offenders could be attributed to improved recording and increased scrutiny by the police.



DEMOGRAPHICS

Females account for 68% of victim/survivors and 24% of offenders.

- The analysis looking at the victim/survivor and the offender data, shows that domestic abuse is a gendered crime.
- However, the underreporting of victims is expected to be higher for males.

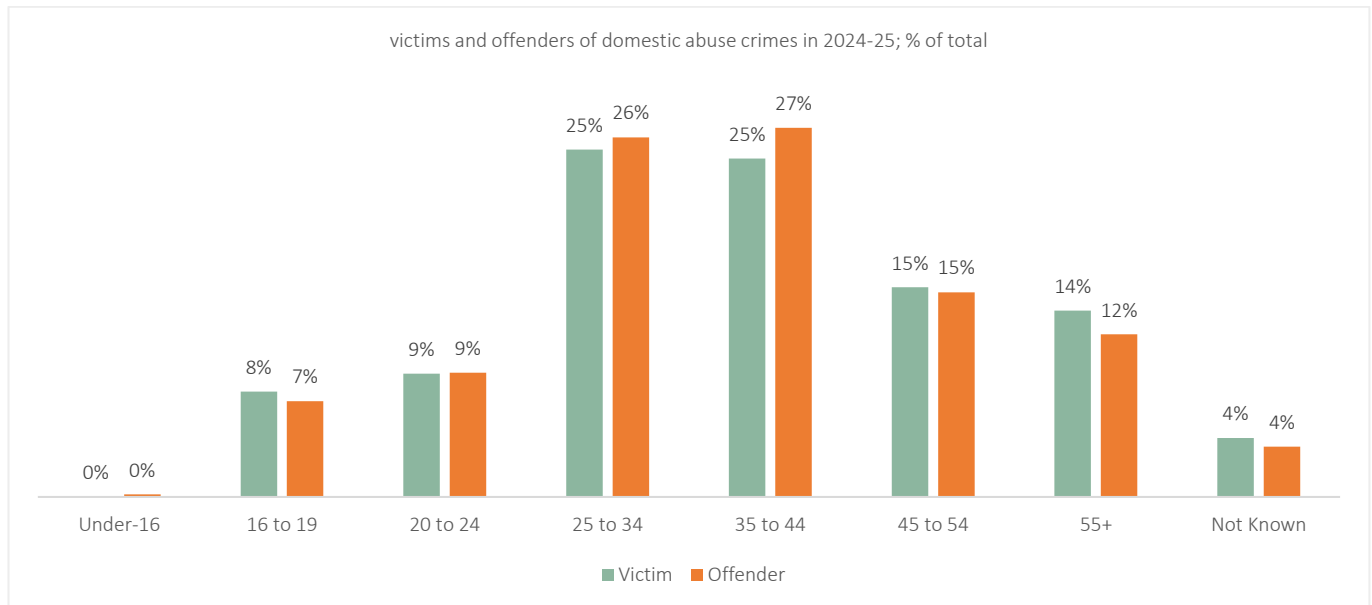


The recording of ethnicity is poor.

- Analysis around ethnicity is limited. In 2024-25:
 - 48% of victims had 'not stated' or 'not recorded'.
 - 32% of offenders had 'not stated' or 'not recorded'.

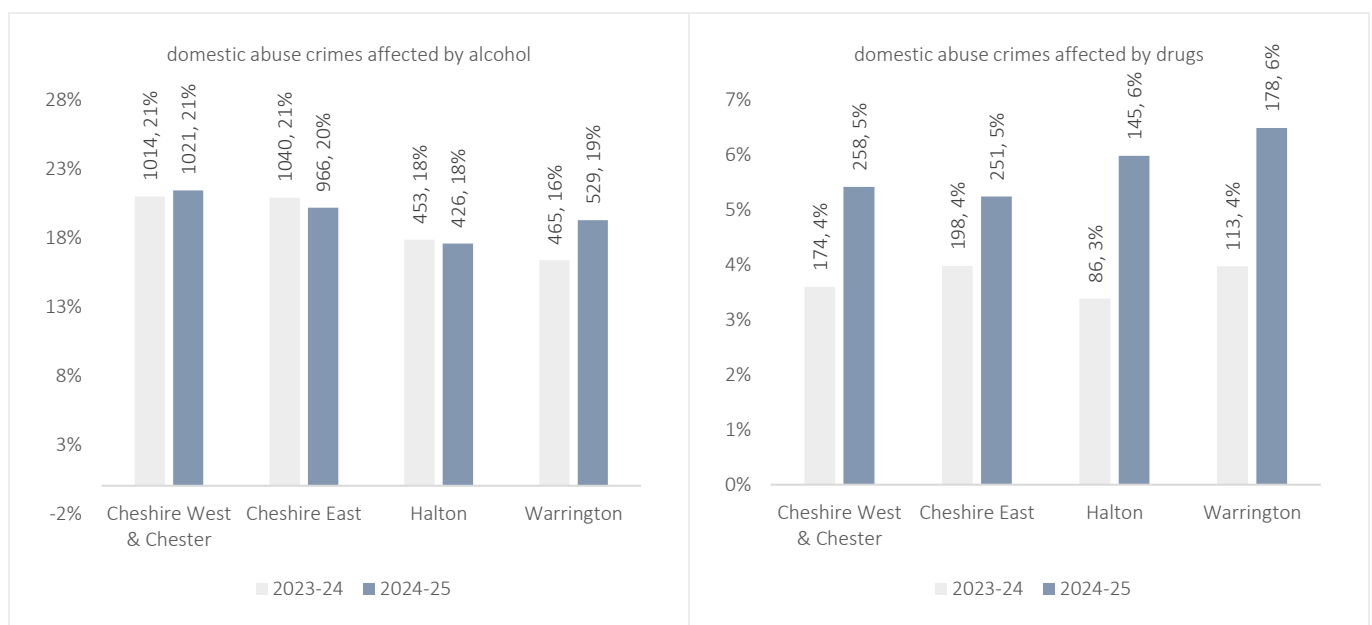
For both victims and offenders, the 25 to 34 and the 35 to 44 age groups account for a high proportion of the total.

- The long-term analysis shows that the 55+ age group has increased from 11% of the total in 2019-20 to 14% in 2024-25.
- The 25-34 age group has decreased from 31% to 25% over the same period.



20% of the domestic abuse crimes recorded in 2024-25 were affected by alcohol.

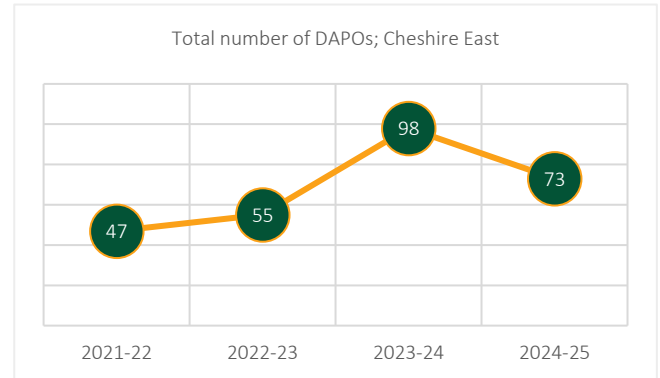
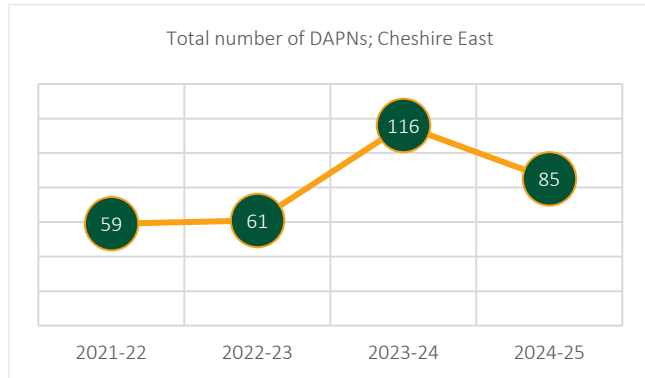
- In 2024-25, 20% of domestic abuse crimes recorded were affected by alcohol. This is similar to the previous year.
- In Cheshire East, 5% of domestic abuse crimes recorded were affected by drugs, which is slightly higher than the previous year.



DOMESTIC ABUSE PROTECTION NOTICES/ ORDERS

Following a peak in 2023-24, both DAPNs and DAPOs saw a decrease in 2024-25.

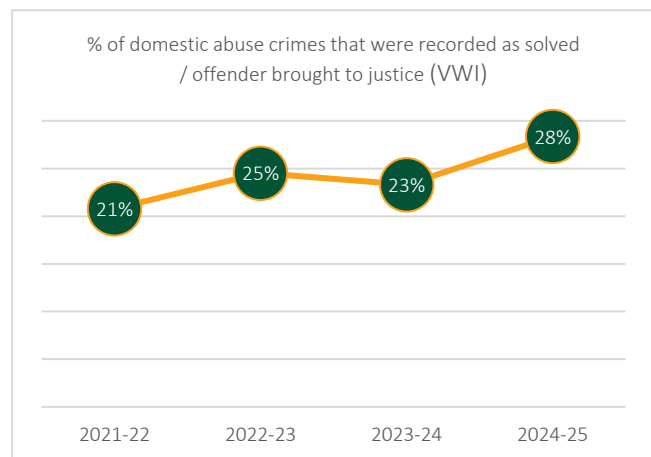
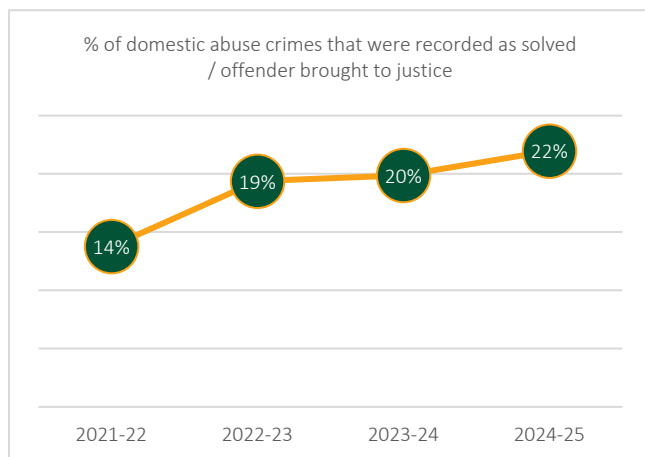
- Data is available at a locality level. Congleton has seen year-on-year increases, whereas Crewe and Macclesfield have both seen a decrease in 2024-25.



CRIMES SOLVED / OFFENDERS BROUGHT TO JUSTICE

There has been an increase in the % of domestic abuse crimes that were recorded as solved / offender brought to justice²⁵.

- 22% of domestic abuse crimes in 2024-25 were solved. This is an increase from the previous years.
- This rate increases to 28% when looking specifically at Violence with Injury crimes where domestic abuse was flagged.



²⁵ Count of domestic abuse crimes recorded as solved / count of domestic abuse crimes in the same period.

HEALTH

IRIS PROGRAMME

The IRIS Programme is not commissioned in Cheshire East.

- The IRIS Programme²⁶ is a collaboration between primary care and third-sector organisations specialising in domestic abuse. Core areas of the programme include:
 - Ongoing training
 - Education and consultancy for the clinical team and administrative staff
 - Care pathways for primary health care practitioners
 - An enhanced referral pathway to specialist domestic violence services for patients with experience of domestic abuse.

Healthcare representatives who covered Cheshire West & Chester, where an IRIS programme is in place, highlighted the positives of the programme.

- Practitioners highlighted a positive response to the IRIS programme in Cheshire West & Chester. GPs can see the benefit of having a pathway to direct an individual who discloses domestic abuse to.

“[Regarding the IRIS Programme] It is ideal to have domestic abuse support for GPs”.

ICB Representative

²⁶ IRIS Programme

HOSPITAL IDVA

Two hospital IDVA posts are operating in Cheshire East.

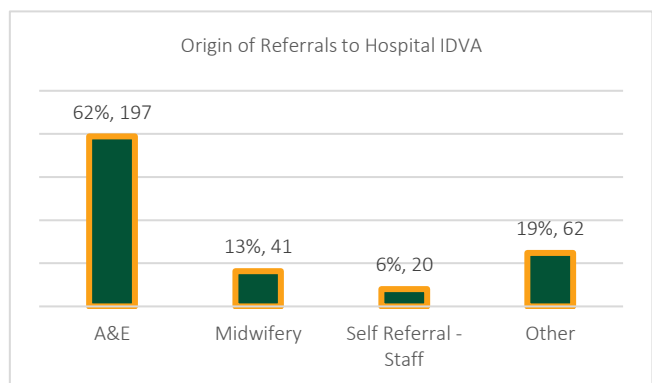
- The Hospital IDVA posts cover Leighton and Macclesfield Hospitals.

The hospital IDVA receives around 9-10 referrals a month.

- Data covering the 11th of August 2022 to the 25th of June 2025 was provided for use in this Needs Assessment.

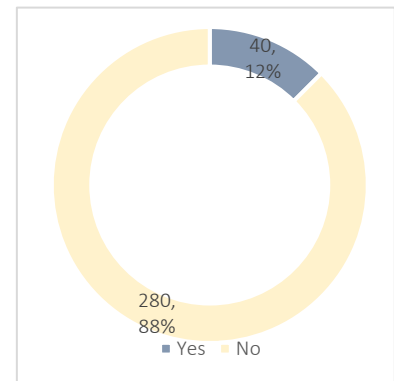
The majority of referrals originated from the Accident and Emergency department.

- 62% of referrals were from A&E.
- During this period, 41 of the referrals were from midwifery.
- The data shows that 32 of the individuals were pregnant.
- “Other” encompasses referrals from the 11 wards and other departments, such as physiotherapy.



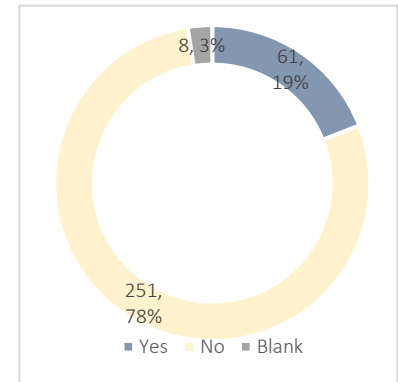
12% of referrals were further referred to Adult Social Care.

- Of those who were not referred to ASC, 44(16%) were “Already known, Social Worker has made aware of attendance”



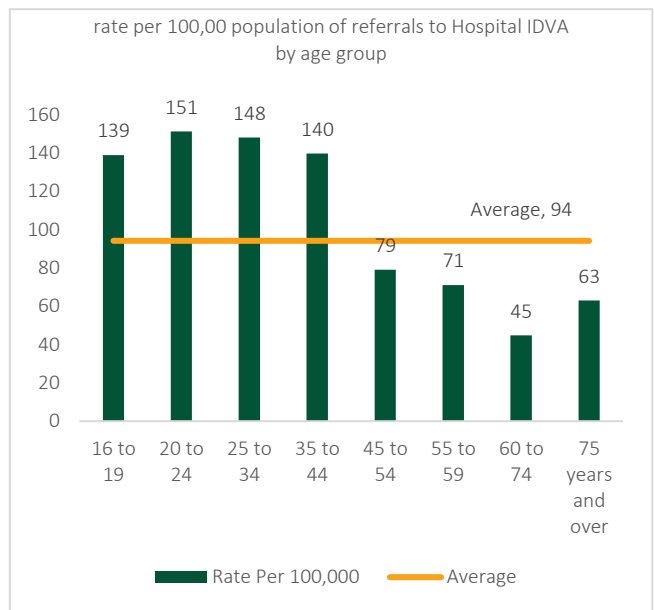
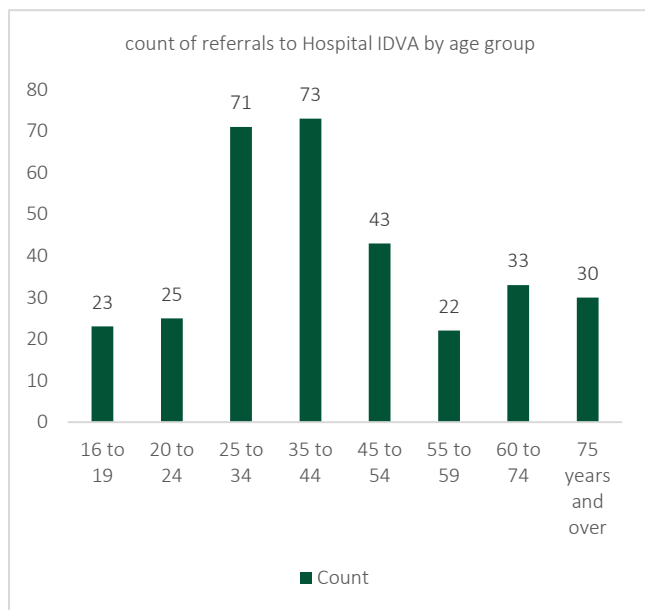
19% of referrals were further referred to CSC Social Care.

- Of those who were not referred to ASC, 16 (18%) were “Already known, Social Worker has made aware of attendance”, and 168 (67%) had no children.



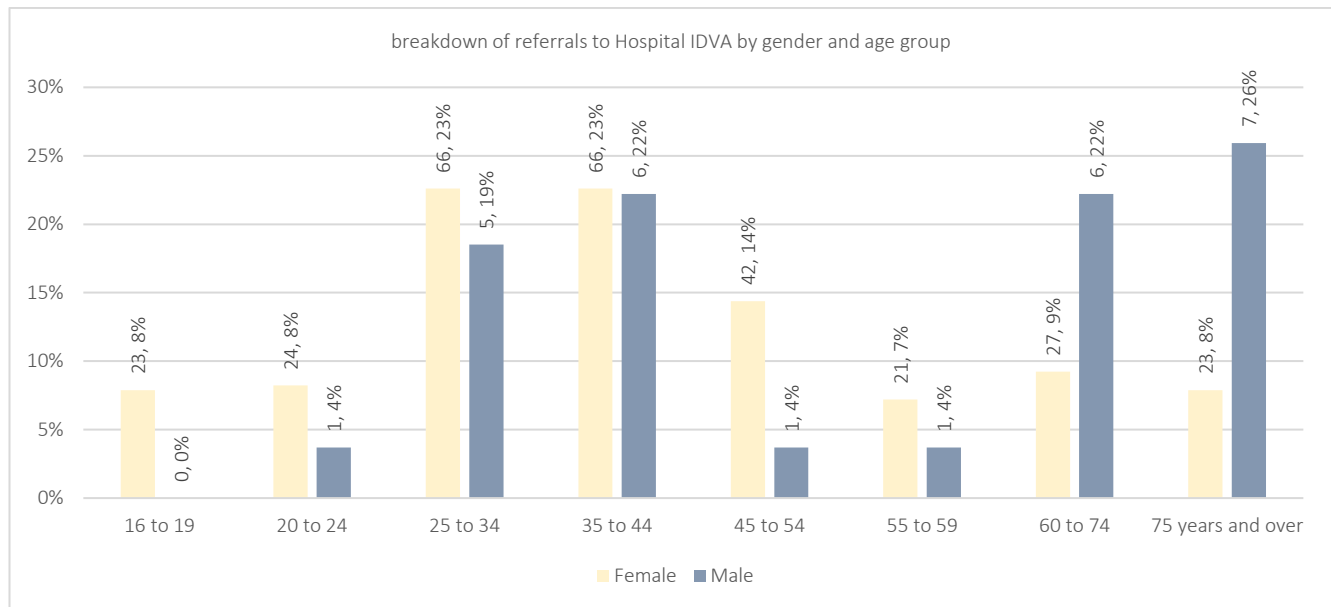
The 25-34 and the 35-44 age groups have the highest number of referrals.

- The 25-34 and the 35-44 age groups have the highest number of referrals across the analysed period.
- In terms of rates per 100,000 of the population, all age groups up to 44 exhibit similar rates.
- 27% of referrals were for individuals over the age of 55.



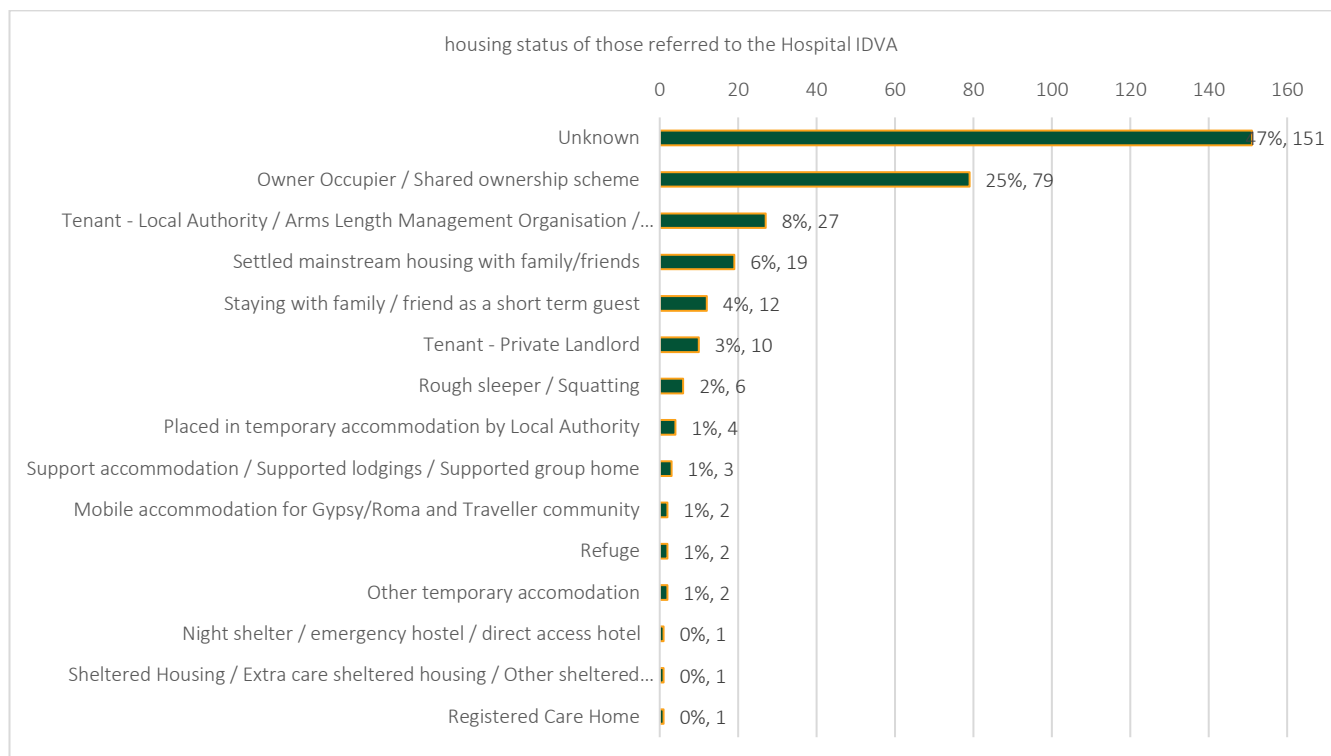
91% of the referrals were for females.

- A high rate of referrals was for females.
- A breakdown by age group and gender shows that a high percentage of referrals for males were for the 60+ age group.



Where the housing status was recorded, the majority were 'owner-occupied/shared ownership scheme'.

- Nearly half of those referred to the Hospital IDVA did not have their housing status recorded.
- Where the housing status was recorded, the majority were 'owner-occupied/shared ownership scheme'.

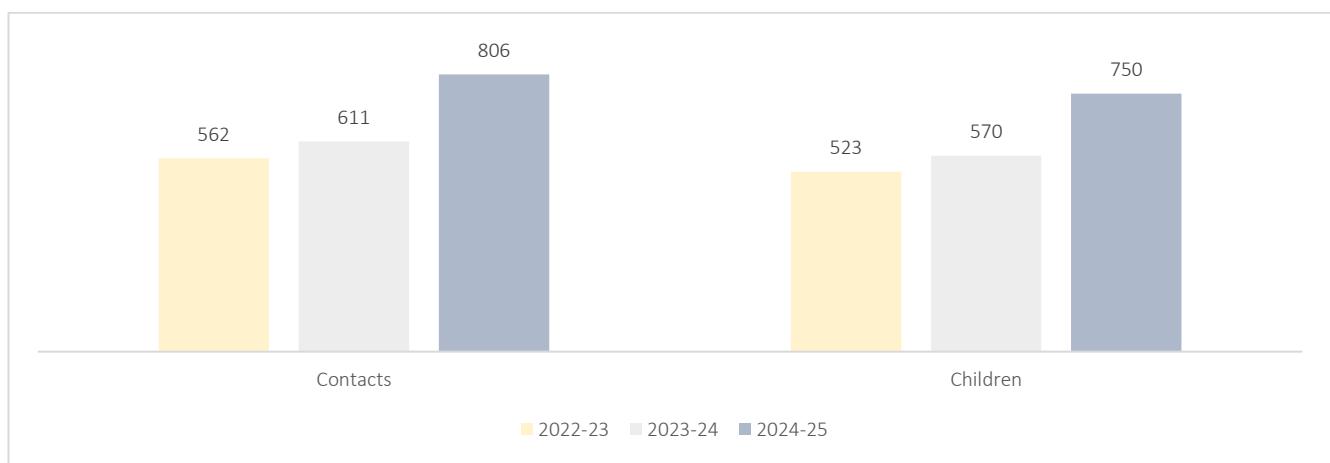


CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

CHESHIRE EAST CONSULTATION SERVICE

The Cheshire East Consultation Service (ChECS) is the ‘front door’ for access to services, support and advice for children and their families, from early help and support through to safeguarding and child protection.

- For this assessment, we were provided with high-level figures of the number of cases seen by ChECS where domestic abuse was identified as a need.
- The number of contacts and the number of children included in referrals have increased over the past three years.
- In 2024-25, there were 806 contacts with ChECS where domestic abuse was highlighted as a need.



CHILDREN IN NEED

- The following analysis is based on the data from “Characteristics of Children in Need: Statistics on children referred to and assessed by Children's Social Services for the year ending 31 March 2024.”²⁷ 2024-25 data is not expected until October 2025.
- Children in need are a legally defined group of children (as defined under the Children Act 1989) who are assessed as requiring help and protection due to developmental or health risks. This group includes those on child-in-need plans, those on child protection plans, children looked after by local authorities, care leavers and disabled children. Children in need also include young people aged 18 or over who continue to receive care, accommodation or support from children's services and unborn children.
- Children in need statistics provide information on:
 - children in need of social care services;
 - children referred to social care services;
 - assessments undertaken, primary need at assessment and factors identified at the end of assessment;
 - Section 47 enquiries (carried out by a local authority if they suspect a child is suffering or likely to suffer significant harm) and initial child protection conferences;

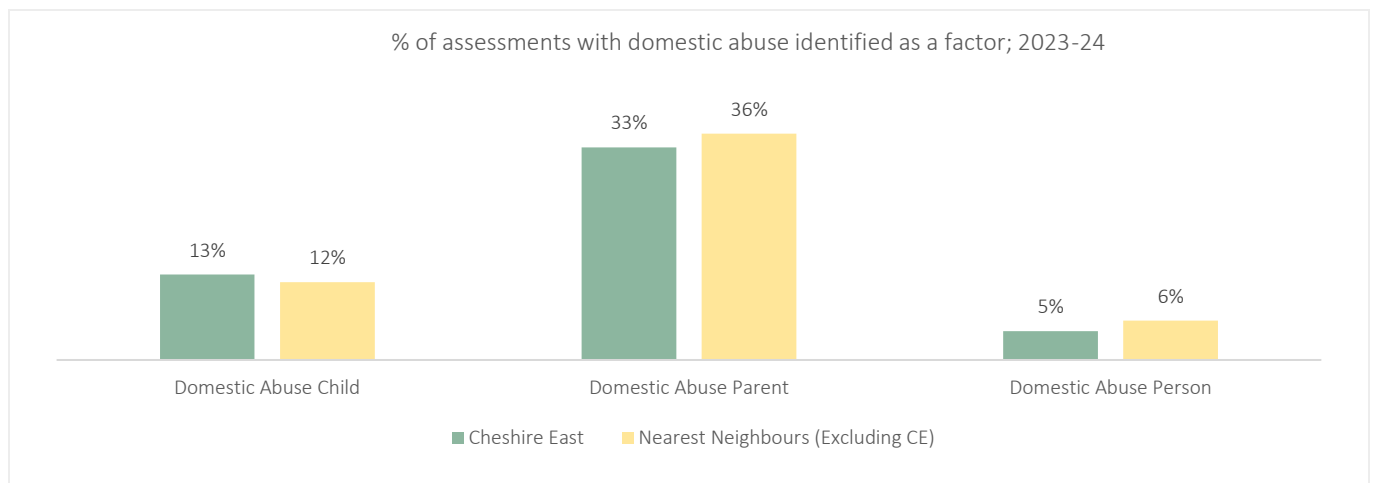
²⁷ <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/children-in-need>

The analysis looks at the “factors identified at the end of assessment by local authority”:

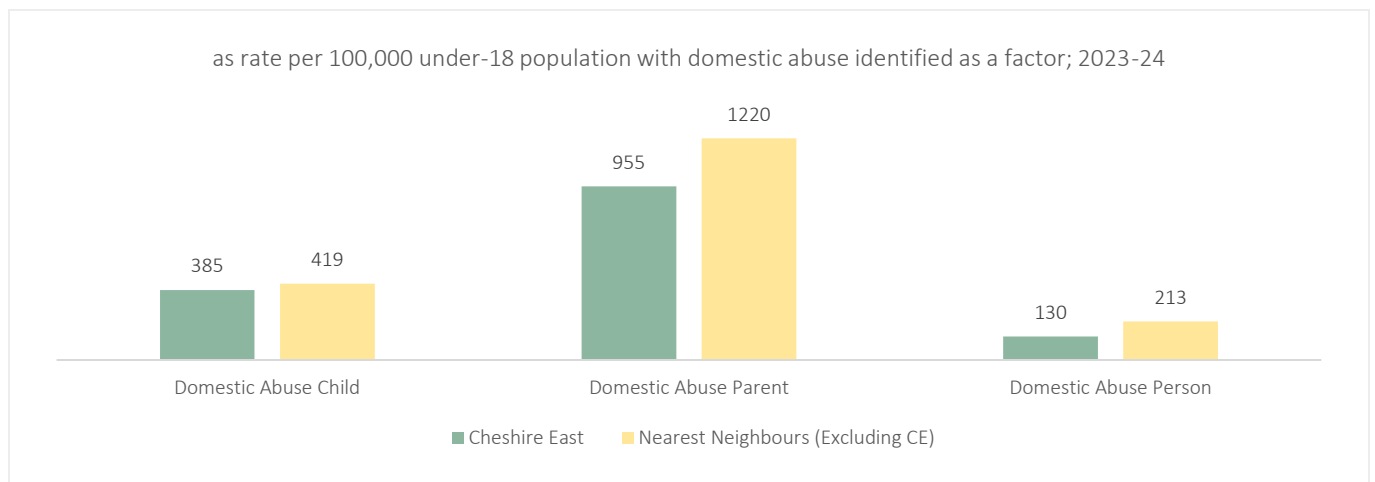
- “Domestic Abuse Child” - Domestic abuse: concerns child is a victim
- “Domestic Abuse Parent” - Domestic abuse: concerns parent is a victim
- “Domestic Abuse Person” - Domestic abuse: concerns another person is a victim

For “domestic abuse parent”, the rates in Cheshire East are lower than the Nearest Statistical Neighbours (NSNs).

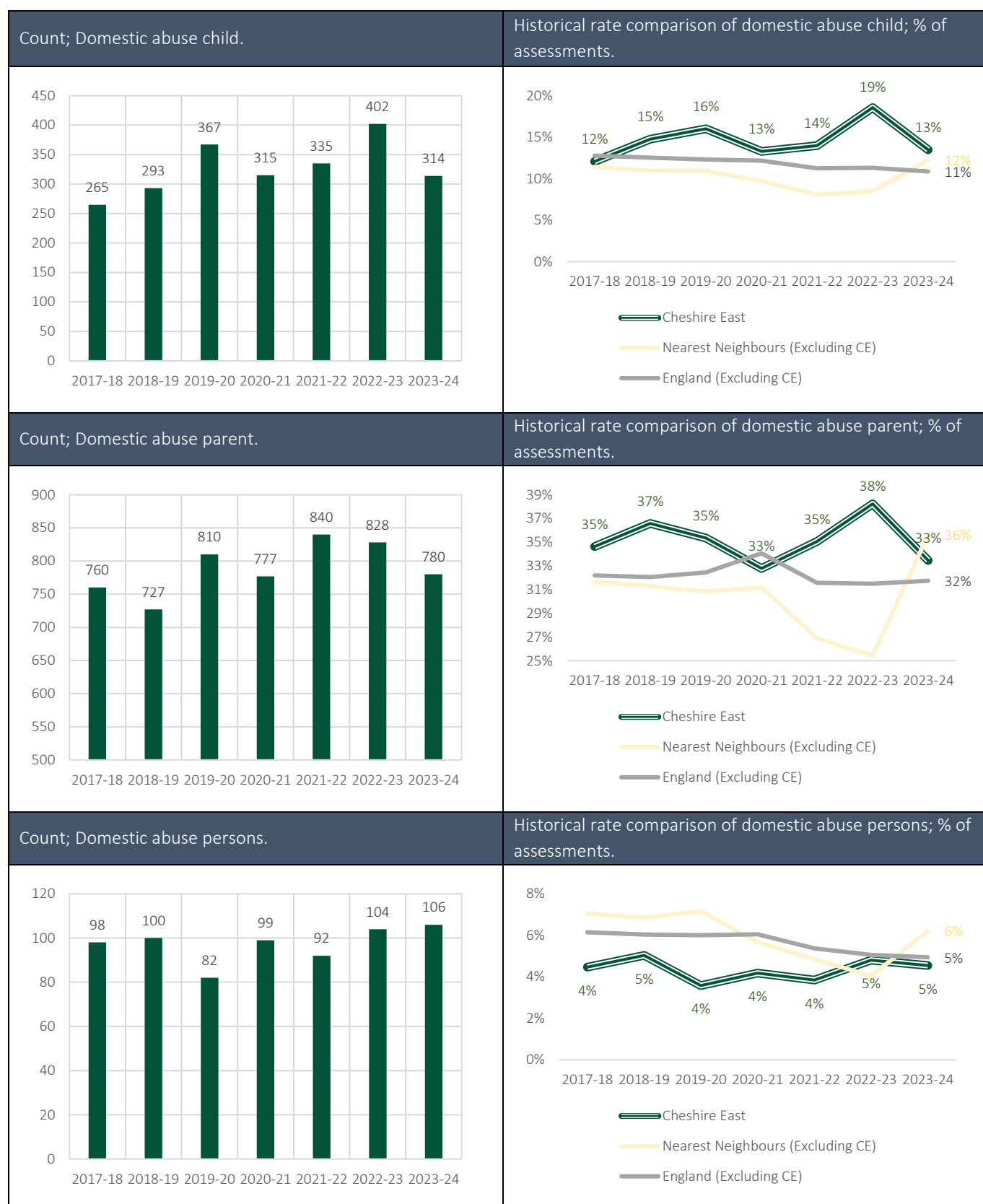
- Comparing the rates as a percentage of assessments, the 33% in Cheshire East is slightly lower than the 36% average for the NSN.



- As a rate per under-18 population instead of assessments, concerns around the parent are notably lower than the NSN average.



2022-23 saw a peak number of assessments for domestic abuse, where there were concerns around the child.



MARAC

There is a one-month gap in the MARAC data.

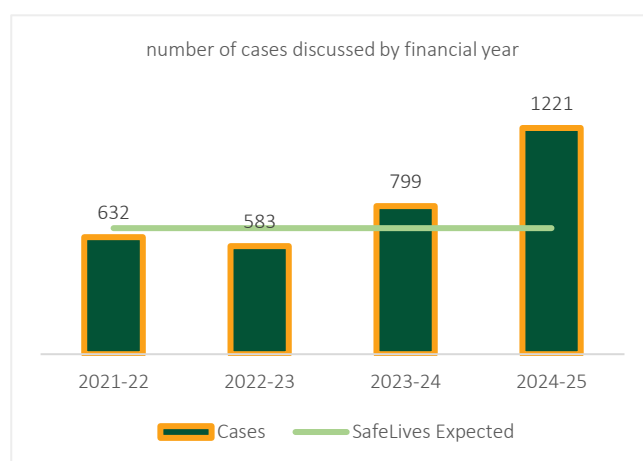
- Locally recorded data provided for this Rapid Review covers April 2021 to August 2025, however, due to a change in recording practices, there is a gap in data for June 2024.
- To address this, a monthly average was used to cover the financial years, or where the numbers are low, an estimate was used based on the monthly average during 2024-25.

Benchmarking and comparisons are provided by SafeLives guidance.

- For this Rapid Review, the local analysis is benchmarked and compared against the SafeLives guidance “Reviewing your Marac data”.
- This is the latest available guidance, however, new guidance is expected soon.

The number of cases discussed in Cheshire East far exceeds SafeLives estimates.

- SafeLives estimates an expected level of 40 cases per 10,000 of the adult female population per year. This equates to 680 cases in Cheshire East.
- During 2024-25, there were an average of 102 cases per month²⁸, which equates to 1,220 for the year.
- The historical analysis shows that there has been a significant increase in the number of cases discussed in 2024-25 compared to previous years.



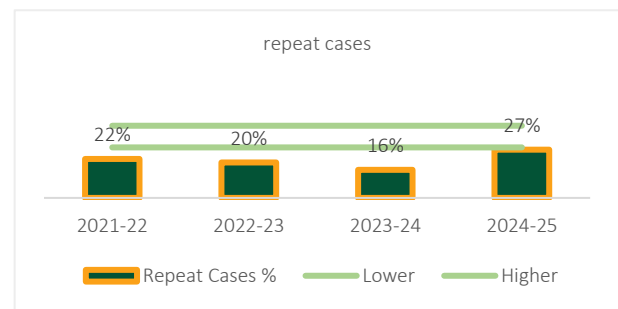
During 2024-25, 79% of referrals were from the Police.

- The 79% (81 cases) monthly average during 2024-25 exceeds the SafeLives figure of 60-75%.
- The percentage of referrals from the Police in previous years was lower (monthly average):
 - 2021-22: 56% (30 cases)
 - 2022-23: 60% (29 cases)
 - 2023-24: 59% (39 cases)

²⁸ June 2024 data missing.

The rate of repeat cases is lower than the SafeLives expected figure.

- SafeLives gives an expected figure of 28-40%.
- Historically, the rate of repeat cases in Cheshire East falls below this range.



The number and rate of referrals from the black minority community are low.

- 10.4% of the population in Cheshire East is from an ethnic minority group, however, less than 1% of the referrals to MARAC are from this cohort.

The number and rate of referrals from the LGBT community are lower than SafeLives estimates.

- Cases where the individual who experienced domestic abuse was from an LGBT group accounted for 0-1% of the total, with 2024-25 showing no cases discussed.
- SafeLives gives an expected range of 2.5-5.8%.

The number and rate of cases where the victim has a disability are lower than SafeLives estimates.

- SafeLives gives an expected figure of 23%. However, national figures indicate a 10% rate.
- The rates in Cheshire East are low, with 2024-25 showing no cases discussed.
- 2021-22 and 2023-24 saw the highest rates at 3-4%.

The number and rate of cases where the victim is male are lower than SafeLives estimates.

- The SafeLives expected rate is between the national average (6.5%) and 10%.
- Prior to 2024-25, the rates were between 5-7%, however, this dropped to 1% for 2024-25.

Young people causing harm account for less than 1% of all cases.

- This is the number of people causing harm aged 17 or below in relation to a victim discussed at MARAC.
- The Number harming others aged 17 or below saw a peak during 2023-24, where there were 10 recorded, accounting for 1% of the total cases.

Victims aged 16 – 17 years accounted for less than 1% of all cases in 2024-25.

- The number of victims aged 16-17 saw a peak during 2023-24, with 14 recorded cases, which accounted for 2% of the total cases.

The change in reporting practices has impacted the data.

- MARAC administration transferred from the local systems to Cheshire Police during 2024-25.
- The analysis indicates that this has impacted the data:
 - Referral numbers have increased.
 - Referrals from the police have increased.
 - LGBT cases are down.
 - Disability cases are down.
 - Male cases are down.
 - Victims aged 16 – 17 years are down.
 - Young people causing harm is down.

26% of cases in 2024-25 had children in the household.

- During 2024-25²⁹, there were 1167 children in the households of the cases discussed.
- Of the 939 cases covering July 2024 to March 2025, 240 had children in the household. This equates to 26% of the total.

²⁹ 11 months; June 2024 data missing.

ENGAGEMENT

INTERVIEWS

As part of the assessment, S2 researchers conducted interviews with residents of safe accommodation. Topics covered include how they accessed safe accommodation and the support they received.

In total, one-to-one interviews were completed with five residents, including a child of one of the residents.

Thematic summaries of interviews



PATHWAYS INTO SUPPORT

The referral routes into safe accommodation varied.

Interviewee 1 was referred by the police. Interviewees 2 and 4 were referred by social care and IDVAs. Interviewee 3 self-referred via the MyCWA community team.

The initial contact with MyCWA was prompt and supportive in most cases. Interviewees expressed initial anxiety about entering a refuge setting.



ACCESS TO SAFE ACCOMMODATION

Once accessed, safe accommodation was appreciated and described as a turning point. Survivors felt safe, supported, and more independent in dispersed housing or individual flats. Some interviewees had positive reactions to the accommodation after initial fears (Interview 1).

Long stays in refuges occurred due to visa or resettlement barriers (Interview 1).



IMMIGRATION STATUS AND NO RECOURSE TO PUBLIC FUNDS

Immigration status significantly affected interviewees ability to access safe accommodation and financial support (Interviews 1, 3 and 4). Spousal visas or temporary domestic abuse visas meant they could not work or access public funds.

Interviewees described the stress of dealing with the Home Office alongside the trauma of abuse.

Legal support and advocacy was limited.



EXPERIENCE OF HOUSING

Once accessed, safe accommodation was appreciated and described as a turning point. Survivors felt safe, supported, and more independent in dispersed housing or individual flats. Some interviewees had positive reactions to the accommodation after initial fears (Interview 1).

Long stays in refuges occurred due to visa or resettlement barriers (Interview 1).



PARENTING AND CHILDREN

Survivors spoke about the difficulty of parenting while recovering from trauma.

Regarding child support, educational support, emotional wellbeing check-ins, and keyworker mediation was frequently mentioned.



PSYCHOLOGICAL IMPACT AND RESILIENCE

Survivors described feelings of isolation, fear, and emotional abuse continuing post-separation.

The act of leaving was described as "jumping off a cliff" (Interview 1), showing the emotional toll and risk involved.

Group work (e.g. the Gateway Programme) helped survivors recognise abuse patterns and regain confidence.



SUPPORT SERVICES AND EMOTIONAL RECOVERY

MyCWA support was praised across all interviews. Emotional, legal, housing, and practical support were mentioned.

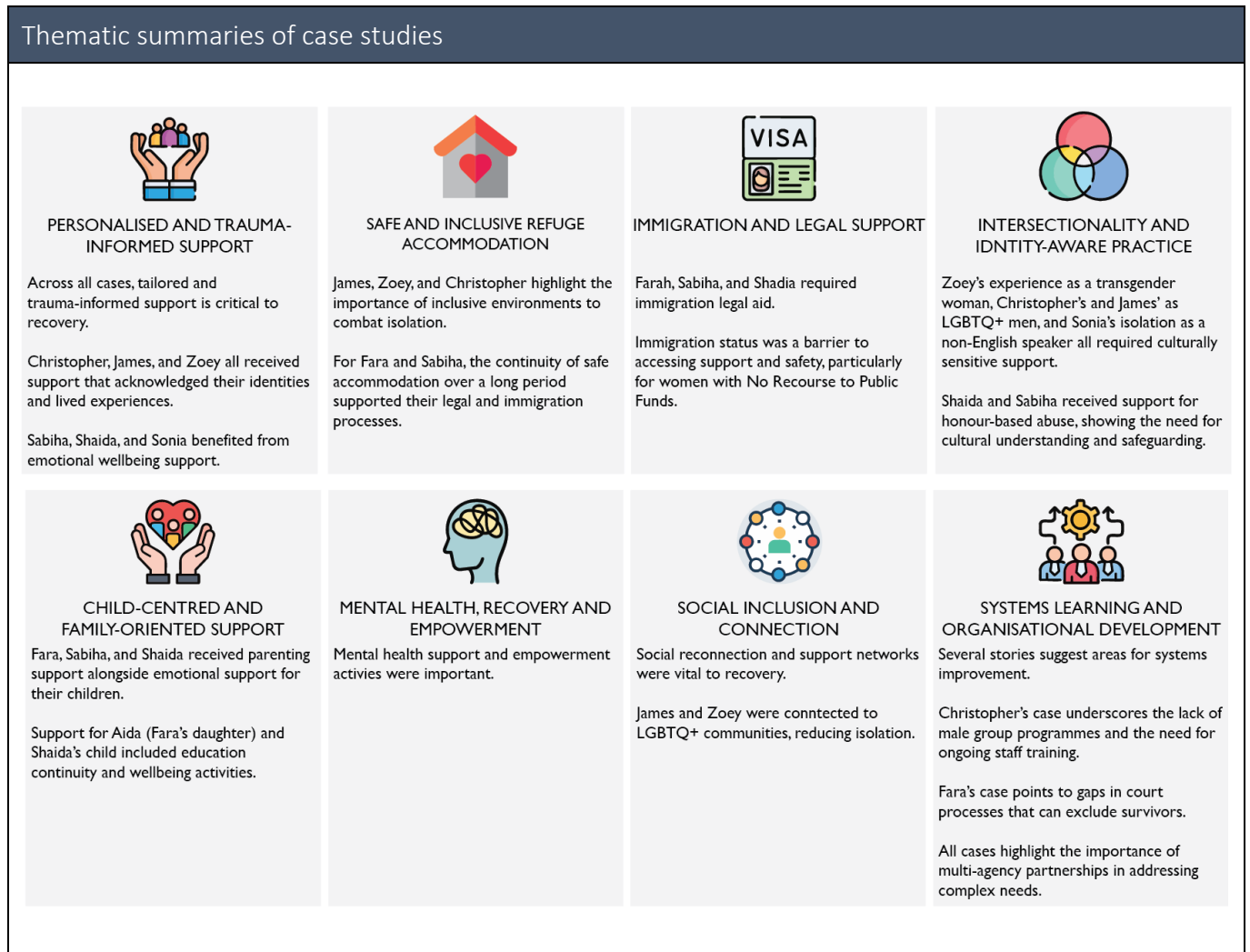
Regular check-ins, 1-2-1 support, safety planning, and group sessions contributed to recovery.

Mediation helped family relationships, particularly with teenage children (Interview 1).

CASE STUDIES

As part of the assessment, MyCWA provided the S2 researchers with 8 case studies of residents of their safe accommodation.

The diagram below provides a thematic analysis of the eight case studies.



SURVEY

As part of the assessment, the S2 researchers ran a survey with current and former MyCWA residents regarding their experiences of safe accommodation.

Four individuals responded to the survey.

SAFETY AND SECURITY

Respondents emphasised safety and security.

- “My CWA refuge is the first place that I have felt safe in a very long time.”
- “I felt safe. There was always support available...”

Respondents highlighted concerns about shared or insecure environments.

- “I wouldn't like a shared space because I want my own space so I can feel safe and secure.”
- “Not having my own bathroom/kitchen space would be a big barrier...”

TYPE AND PREFERENCES FOR ACCOMMODATION

There was a strong preference for self-contained or dispersed accommodation.

- “A self-contained flat or house in the community (dispersed accommodation)...”
- “Our own property where we could live independently...”
- “I wouldn't be comfortable with a hostel environment...”

There were mixed views on communal spaces. One respondent valued communal spaces for their children's social needs.

- “Definitely a communal place, so my child would be able to make friends and get to play.”

One found communal spaces made them anxious.

- “My anxiety prevents me from group work and living in a communal space.”

INDIVIDUAL NEEDS AND ACCESSIBILITY

Respondents highlighted their physical and emotional needs.

- “I have/had mobility issues and was offered a downstairs room...”
- “Nerves around ground floor accommodation and access over garden fence.”
- “I trust that my keyworker will support my emotional wellbeing...”

QUALITY AND NATURE OF SUPPORT

Respondents placed a high value on support staff and emotional support.

- “Support has been amazing!”
- “Staff were on site regularly, and I knew that I couldn’t be found.”
- “My support worker was amazing and really helped me...”
- “The support is open and allows me to build my confidence...”

IMPACT OF SUPPORT AND ACCOMMODATION

Facilitated recovery and independence.

- “Living in refuge has lessened my anxiety...”
- “I’ve gained more understanding of what’s happened to me...”
- “The process has been difficult, but the support... has been above and beyond.”

LOCATION

Respondents valued proximity to their family

- “Able to stay in my own safe space, nearby to family and friends.”
- “Previously, only offered options extremely far away from home...”

FOCUS GROUPS

Staff from Cheshire East Council completed focus groups with those affected by domestic abuse.

The groups covered the following topics:

- Pets
- Neurodiversity
- Trauma
- Space to regulate
- Boundaries and safe space

As part of the Whole Housing Approach evaluation, Disability Positive ran engagement with people with neurodisabilities who were impacted by domestic abuse.

The engagement led to several recommendations:

1. Ask about an individual's communication needs and requirements.
2. Implement reasonable adjustments from the start of the process.
3. Provide information in accessible formats tailored to suit the individual.
4. Enable one key contact/ person for individuals to communicate with.
5. Provide a written summary of information following meetings.
6. Provide a terminology glossary.
7. Encourage staff retention to ensure consistency of support.
8. Coordinate processes across the UK to ensure consistent processes.
9. Ensure access to advocates who understand individual needs.
10. Co-produce policies and services with people who have lived experience.
11. Provide awareness training across disability, domestic abuse and intersectionality.
12. Consider using cards and lanyards to show that an individual has lived experience.

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A summary of responses to Cheshire East Council's

Domestic and Sexual Violence Partnership Strategy Consultation

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FINAL

Executive summary and conclusions

Introduction

During June – July 2025 Cheshire East Council conducted a consultation to seek views on its refreshed Domestic and Sexual Violence Partnership Strategy for 2025 - 2028. In total, 104 responses were received. This report aims to summarise all the responses received during the consultation.

The Vision

60% of respondents rated the strategy's vision as good or very good, while 14% viewed it as poor or very poor. A key theme from the feedback was the need to improve inclusivity – e.g. by recognising male, non-binary, and child-to-parent victims of abuse within the statement.

Priority areas and outcomes

Four main priority areas and outcomes were identified within the draft strategy, a high majority of respondents agreed that each of these were the right areas to focus on:

- A focus on prevention: 86% agreement
- Partnership and collaboration: 85% agreement
- Accountability and learning: 84% agreement
- Trauma-informed services: 82% agreement

Ensuring that services reflect the diversity of abuse victims was a key priority highlighted by many respondents as well as the provision of long-term, trauma-informed, and accessible support that fosters trust between victims and services. Respondents also highlighted the value of collaboration with specialist services and key partners - including the police, schools, and social services - as well as the need for increased education and awareness to better support victims and prevent abuse.

Safe accommodation

45% of respondents felt that the current safe accommodation provision meets the needs of all those that need it while 33% disagreed. Respondents generally felt that there is a need for more safe accommodation, including both short-term emergency options and longer-term placements. They highlighted benefits to both communal properties and single-unit accommodations. For example, communal living can help reduce social isolation and may be more cost-effective, while single units offer greater privacy and personal space. Views were mixed regarding service delivery, with some respondents preferring a more independent model and others favouring a council-run, in-house approach.

Regardless of the model safe accommodation needs to suit a diverse range of needs (e.g. LGBTQ+ victims, those who are disabled, large families, those with pets) and offer appropriate contact and support.

Support services

51% of respondents rated the current support services for adults as good or very good, while 23% rated them as poor or very poor and 42% rated the support services for children as good or very good, whereas 31% rated them as poor (note: these figures exclude those that stated unsure / don't know).

Just over half of respondents (56%) considered raising awareness and providing training to be at least somewhat effective, while 43% viewed it as not so or not at all effective. Similarly, 53% rated efforts to meet the needs of marginalised communities and those with protected characteristics as at least somewhat effective, compared to 45% who did not. Views on pursuing perpetrators and addressing their attitudes and behaviours were slightly more critical, with 45% rating these actions as at least somewhat effective and 53% rating them as not so or not at all effective.

Respondents identified a need for increased in-person support, including more group meetings, follow-up contact, and access to specialist services - including support tailored for children. Collaboration with specialist services who have the dedicated resources as well as increased education programmes and awareness were also suggested.

Conclusions and recommendations

There seemed to be strong support for the overall direction of the strategy. However, respondents highlighted the importance of acknowledging that anyone can experience domestic abuse and emphasised the need for services to be inclusive and responsive to a broad range of needs. This perspective was also evident in feedback on safe accommodation; there was a mix of benefits provided for communal, single-unit, and emergency short-term options depending on individual preferences and circumstances. Respondents also noted the value of stronger collaboration with specialist services, key partners, and service users as well as education and awareness programmes. Enhanced support, including for children was also identified as an area requiring further development.

The details within this report should be thoroughly reviewed and considered alongside other key evidence when finalising the Domestic and Sexual Violence Partnership Strategy and whilst reviewing the safe accommodation service model.

Introduction

Purpose of the consultation

During June – July 2025 Cheshire East Council conducted a 6-week consultation to seek views on its refreshed Domestic and Sexual Violence Partnership Strategy for 2025 - 2028. Views were also sought on our current safe accommodation and support services.

The Domestic Abuse Act 2021 was introduced to address Local Authority response to the provision of support for victims of domestic abuse. Key elements include:

- Local authorities are required to ensure that victims of domestic abuse and their children have access to safe accommodation and support services
- Local authorities should prepare and publish a strategy for the provision of such support to cover their area having regard to the needs assessment
- Local authorities should give effect to the strategy (through commissioning / decommissioning decisions)
- Local authorities should monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of the strategy

The feedback provided as part of the consultation will inform our refreshed strategy as well as our review of the safe accommodation service model for 2026 and beyond. The current safe accommodation contract is due to expire in March 2026 and the council will need to ensure from this point it can meet the needs of victims and survivors effectively whilst providing value for money to ensure it complies with its duty under the Domestic Abuse Act (2021).

Consultation methodology and number of responses

A range of engagement activities were carried out as part of the consultation. A questionnaire was made available for anyone with an interest in the topic. While it was primarily hosted online, paper copies were also distributed through libraries across Cheshire East and could be requested directly. It was promoted to:

- Survivors of domestic abuse
- Professionals working with victims / survivors of domestic abuse
- Residents of Cheshire East and the general public
- The Cheshire East Digital Influence Panel
- Town and Parish Councils
- Elected Members

A total of 104 responses were received to the questionnaire. The main section of this report summarises the feedback provided. A breakdown of respondent demographics is available in Appendix 1.

During the consultation survivor engagement sessions also took place via HerPlace, Edge 360 and MyCWA. A summary of the feedback received can be viewed in Appendix 2.

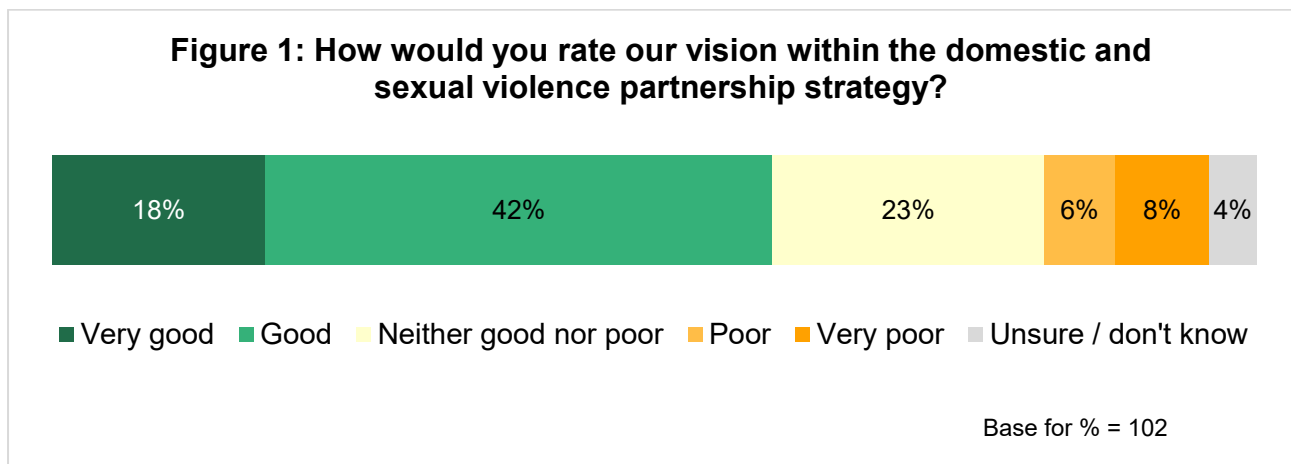
A market engagement questionnaire was made available for providers, 8 providers filled out the questionnaire. A summary of the responses provided can be seen in Appendix 3.

Section 1: The vision

The Cheshire East Domestic and Sexual Abuse Partnership have a long-term commitment:

To work towards ending domestic abuse, sexual violence and violence against women and girls, and ensure that the people of Cheshire East can live safe, equal and harm-free lives, in homes and neighbourhoods without abuse.

The majority of respondents, 60% rated the vision as good or very good whilst 14% rated it as poor or very poor as shown in Figure 1.



Respondents were asked if they had any suggestions on how the vision could be improved. In total 39 respondents chose to leave a comment.

A summary of the comments received by theme is presented in Table 1. Please note that some respondents will have referred to more than one theme therefore the total mentions will not add up to the total number of respondents who left a comment.

Table 1: Do you have any suggestions on how the vision could be improved?

Theme	Summary of comments received	Mentions
Inclusivity	Needs to be more inclusive. Men, boys and non-binary individuals can be victims too. More emphasis on abuse involving adults at risk and their carers. There is no reference to child to parent abuse.	16
Engagement, education and awareness	Stronger communications and engagement. More education in schools, universities, and communities to raise awareness and prevent abuse. Vision needs to be more recognised.	6
Access to help and support	Important that there is clear, accessible information, anonymous helplines, and support for those unsure if they are experiencing abuse. Need to have a continuity of care for those already engaging with the service.	5
Vision realism	Not sure it's a realistic aim to work towards ending domestic abuse. Only realistic approach is to protect and provide safe spaces for victims.	4
Specific wording suggestion	Would like the vision to be 'to end domestic abuse'. Use 'children' instead of 'girls' and include 'vulnerable adults'. Suggest rephrasing to acknowledge the disproportionate impact on women and girls while affirming zero tolerance for all domestic abuse and a commitment to support and prevention services.	4
Collaborate with existing partners	Collaborate with experienced partners who could add value more quickly. Liaise with police, health and education, to produce relevant protection orders and to support prosecutions.	3
Support for children / young people	Strengthen the voice and coproduction of services by and for our children and young people. Should also include children being impacted by domestic abuse and them receiving support.	2
Collaborate with existing services	Work with experienced services like MyCWA rather than replacing them. Lost the trust of the community with the way funding was cut to this well-established service.	2
Barriers to accessing services	Numerous survivors will not work with a service that is solely within the council and prefer an independent service in conjunction with the council. Note that PTSD, anxiety, and depression can hinder victims' ability to engage with services.	2

Section 2: Priority areas and outcomes

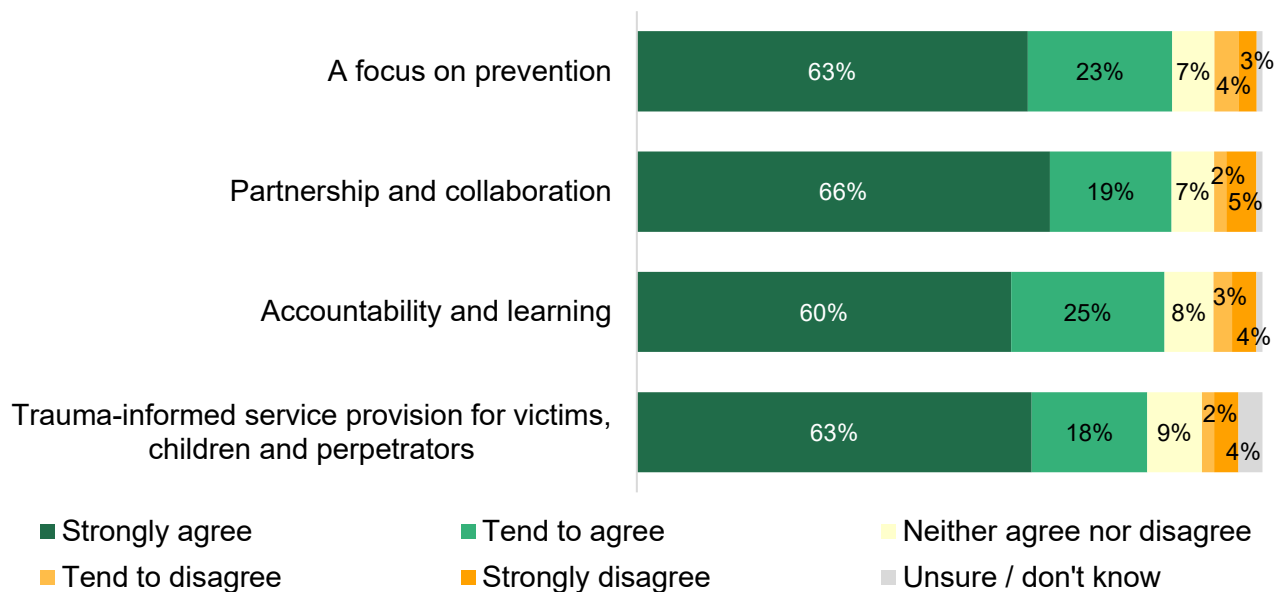
There were four main priority areas and outcomes outlined within the draft strategy:

- **A focus on prevention:** A culture that challenges misogyny (a dislike of women or girls), promotes healthy relationships, and prevents abuse before it starts
- **Trauma-informed service provision for victims, children and perpetrators:** A coordinated, trauma-informed, and data-driven system that supports victims, holds perpetrators accountable, and prevents abuse
- **Partnerships and collaboration:** All victims of abuse and those who harm in Cheshire East, have access to a range of safe, appropriate support options that support recovery and independence, including safe accommodation
- **Accountability and learning:** Services seek to continuously improve, based on learning from those with lived experience, anyone affected by abuse and all serious incidents

A high majority of respondents agreed that the priority areas and outcomes identified were the right areas to focus on, each received over 80% agreement (those selecting strongly agree or tend to agree). Figure 2 shows the full breakdown of results:

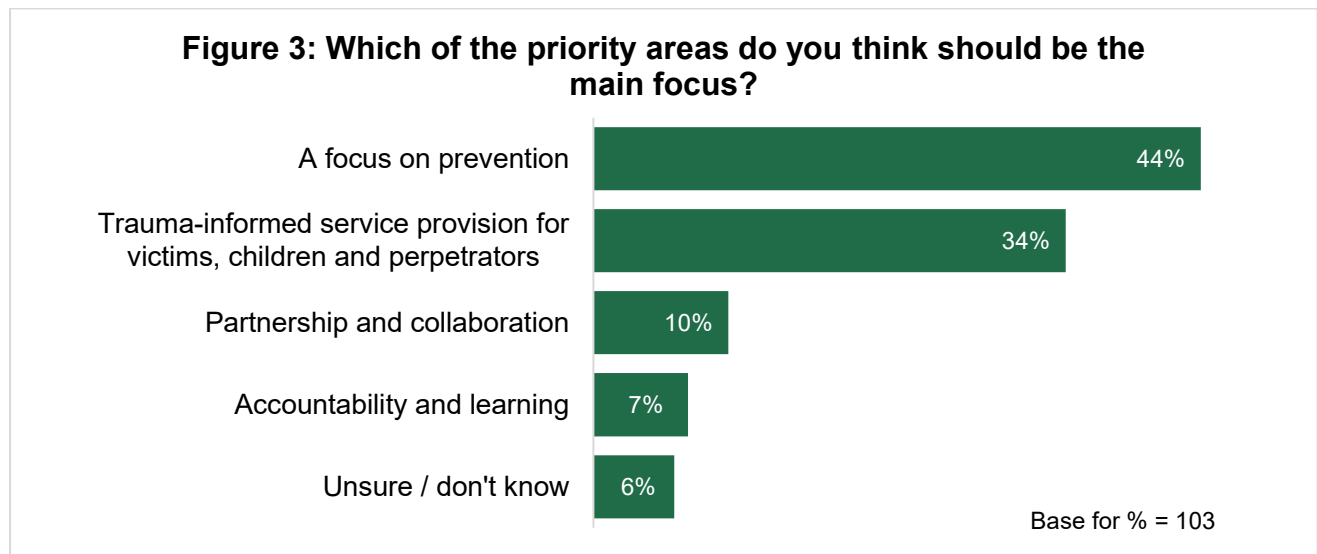
- A focus on prevention: 86% agreement
- Partnership and collaboration: 85% agreement
- Accountability and learning: 84% agreement
- Trauma-informed services: 82% agreement

Figure 2: How strongly do you agree or disagree that the priority areas and outcomes identified are the right areas to focus on?



Base for % = 102 - 104

Respondents were also asked which of the priority areas they thought should be the main focus. 'A focus on prevention' was identified as the top priority by 44% of respondents, trauma-informed service provision was the second most selected option, with 34%. Figure 3 shows the full breakdown of results.



Respondents were asked if there were any other priority areas they believed should be included within the strategy. In total 43 respondents chose to leave a comment.

A summary of the comments received by theme is presented in Table 2. Please note that some respondents will have referred to more than one theme therefore the total mentions will not add up to the total number of respondents who left a comment.

Table 2: Are there any other priority areas you believe should be included within the strategy?		
Theme	Summary of comments received	Mentions
Inclusivity and diversity	Services must reflect the diverse experiences of abuse victims, including men, LGBTQ+ individuals, and culturally diverse communities. Include child to parent violence and abuse. Recognise that Children are victims in their own right, not just secondary to adult victims.	11
Build trust, provide trauma-informed services and long term-support	Important to build trust, especially around fears of losing children. Needs to be survivor led. Provide trauma-informed services for victims and children. Provide long-term support, including counselling and therapy.	7
Access to support and information	Support services lack accessibility—more local groups are needed. Digital forms are challenging, and requests for phone contact go unanswered. Clearer communication, empathetic follow-up, and a safer, user-friendly website with an emergency exit feature are essential.	6

Education and awareness	Increase visibility through public campaigns, school education on healthy relationships, and media outreach. Provide resources on financial abuse, safe parenting in domestic abuse contexts, and address the influence of social media and AI tools.	6
Collaborate with existing services	Need closer collaboration with specialist abuse charities. Concerns that failure to work effectively in partnership with such charities puts victims at risk, e.g. MyCWA is trusted by many.	5
Collaborate with existing partners	Partnership approach - information sharing, assessments, training and awareness in a timely manner. Close co-operation between schools, police and social services / other agencies	4
Perpetrator Accountability and rehabilitation	Hold perpetrators accountable while also offering rehabilitation and behaviour change programs e.g. supervised access to children, therapy, and employment support for perpetrators. Perpetrators should be identified and handled as separate priorities.	4
Safe Spaces and housing	Need protected safe spaces for all victims. More units for people with care and support needs and pets. Concerned about housing delays.	4

Section 3: Safe accommodation and support services

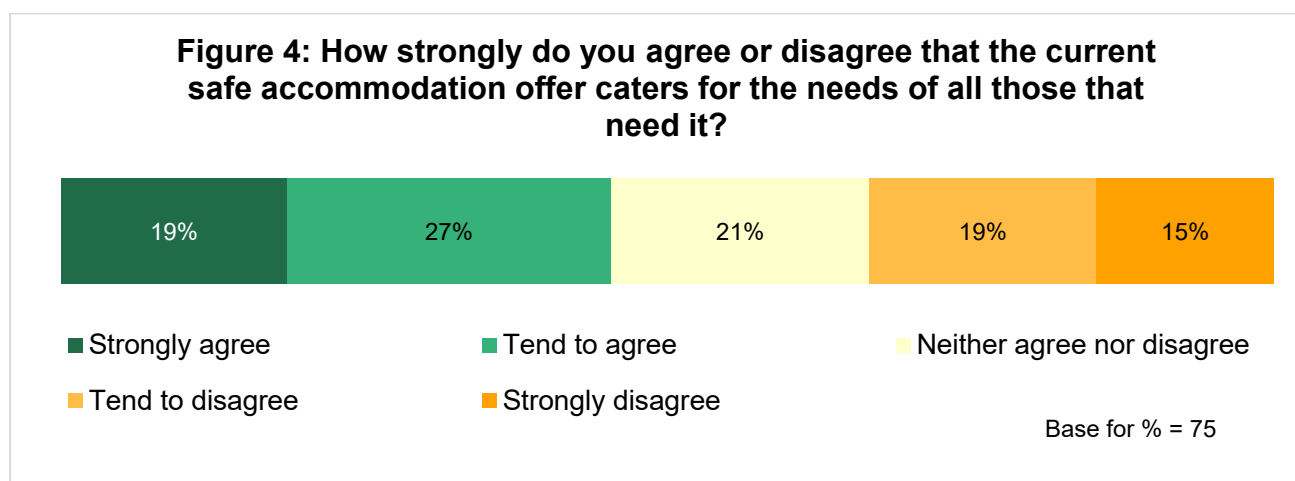
Safe accommodation is part of a broader domestic abuse support offer in Cheshire East, delivered both internally and by a commissioned provider, with funding from multiple sources. The Council currently commissions one provider My Cheshire Without Abuse (MyCWA) to meet the needs of those who require safe accommodation, in conjunction with a range of internal services that provide support within Housing and Domestic Abuse Family Safety Unit (DAFSU).

DAFSU offer advice and support with identification and awareness, safety planning and onward referrals to more intensive interventions where appropriate. Independent Domestic Abuse Advocates (IDVAs) work to mitigate the highest risks of harm and when ready, work with clients to provide appropriate interventions to aid their recovery.

Safe Accommodation

Respondents were provided with summary information of the current safe accommodation offer in Cheshire East. While 3% of respondents had accessed these services, 97% had not.

Overall, 45% felt the offer meets the needs of those requiring support, while 33% disagreed. Figure 4 shows the full breakdown of results. Please note that the figures exclude those that selected 'unsure/don't know'.



Respondents were asked if there were any other forms of accommodation that should be included in the offer. In total 30 respondents chose to leave a comment.

A summary of the comments received by theme is presented in Table 3. Please note that some respondents will have referred to more than one theme therefore the total mentions will not add up to the total number of respondents who left a comment.

Table 3: Are there any other forms of accommodation you think should be included in the offer?

Theme	Summary of comments received	Mentions
More communal / community properties	More communal properties needed - may be beneficial to prevent social isolation and might be more cost effective. Well-staffed women's refuges. Community properties for a diverse range of needs e.g. LGBTQ+ victims, those who are disabled, supported living.	8
Single unit accommodation requirements	Shared units could lead to arguments. Current offer reflects current best practice and the move towards dispersed accommodation – allows for personal space and privacy. Need to be accessible for those who are disabled, larger rooms for large families, local placements to maintain support networks, good solid composition and secure locks. Accommodation for males and their children. Should have regular volunteer visits to prevent isolation.	8
Need more safe accommodation in general	16 dwellings are not enough, more safe accommodation needed. Need to ensure as much individual accommodation as possible suited to the range of needs that require it.	5
Emergency accommodation	Emergency short term accommodation e.g. hotels and B&B's	3
Access to support	Experienced a lack of support and poor council responsiveness. Need appropriate support from partner agencies / offer group therapy sessions. Work closely with adult social care to develop services specific to those with care and support needs and their carers.	3
Accommodation for perpetrators	Supported housing for perpetrators to prevent them from returning to the family home due to homelessness, which risks restarting the cycle of abuse. Accommodation that supports rehabilitation and change for perpetrators.	2
Council owned accommodation	Consider council owned accommodation. Take over and utilise properties that have been empty / unpaid for a long time.	2

Respondents were also asked if they had any other suggestions on how the safe accommodation offer could be improved. In total 31 respondents chose to leave a comment.

A summary of the comments received by theme is presented in Table 4. Please note that some respondents will have referred to more than one theme therefore the total mentions will not add up to the total number of respondents who left a comment.

Table 4: Do you have any other suggestions on how the safe accommodation offer could be improved for residents in Cheshire East?

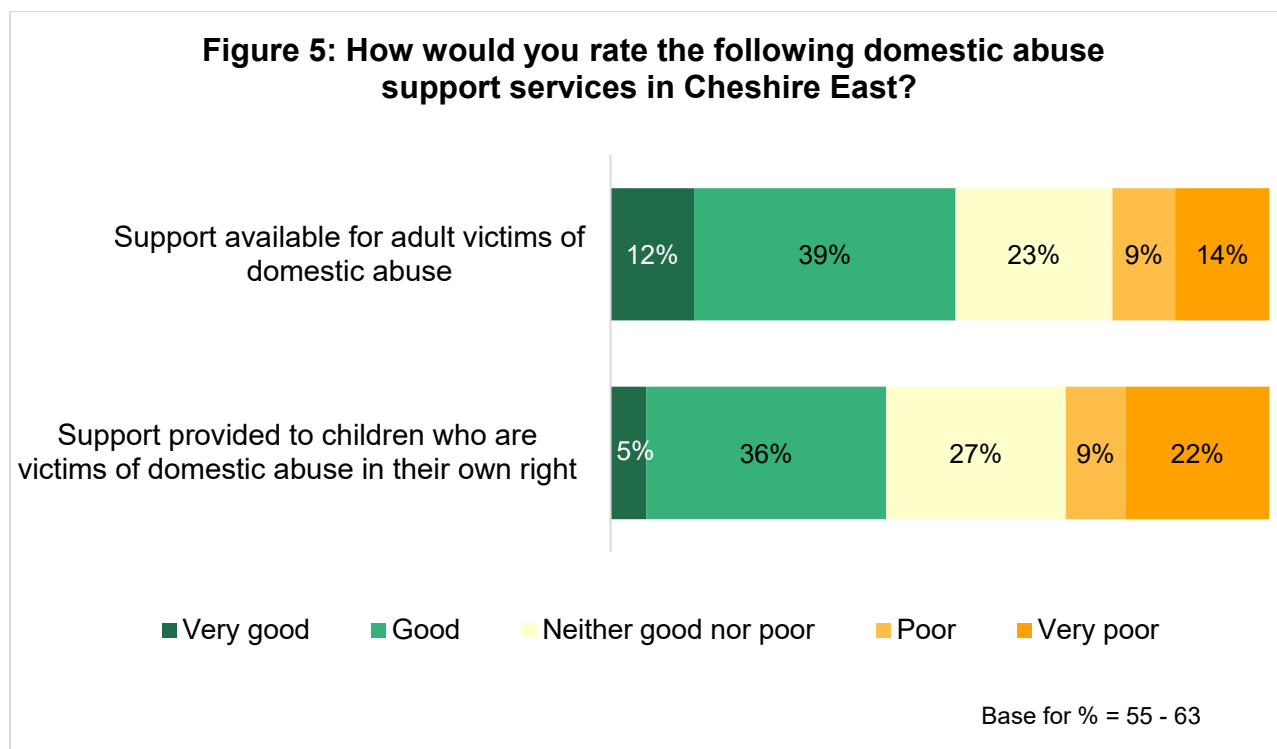
Theme	Summary of comments received	Mentions
More safe accommodation provision	There is not enough provision. More government funding. Invest in more safe accommodation, should always keep a surplus kept in good order available to all who need it. More needed for those with care and support needs and their carers.	8
Support and awareness requirements	Offer face to face appointments or phone calls not strictly online forms. Have enough trained staff to support. Must be accompanied by support services and professional advice. Children's support should be fully integrated not separate. Advertise more.	7
Range of accommodation requirements	Have single sex accommodation. Some victims may not want to be in larger safe houses. Include pets. Consider housing in council flats with a warden for emergency accommodation. Sympathetic adults could provide temporary accommodation if received the appropriate training. Must have a good alarm system and CTV.	6
Collaborate with existing partners	Work with other councils. Work with external agencies who are able to offer the accommodation and complex support required. Ask local companies for help furnishing the properties. Work with hospitals, housing associations the police.	5
Look into alternatives / bring in house	Explore alternative service to lead this offer of accommodation. Would love to see some of the new builds and potential redevelopment areas creating homes and parks and play areas for families to rebuild together. Should be run and managed using Cheshire East systems to ensure transparency and fairness. Bring "in house" in order to give long term security of provision.	5
Support for an independent service / previous commission	Support an offer separate from local authority children's services - families may not want to engage with council social care. A market rate should be paid to the provider to allow for adequate provision. Service should go back to the previous commission (from MYCWA) provided a broader offering. Had a positive experience with the service.	4

Support services

Respondents were presented with a summary of the current support services available in Cheshire East. While 16% reported that they had accessed or were currently accessing these services, the majority (84%) had not.

Overall, 51% rated the support available for adult victims as good or very good, whereas 32% rated it as poor or very poor. In relation to services for children, 42% rated the offer as good

or very good, while 31% considered it poor. A full breakdown of the results is provided in Figure 5. Please note that these figures exclude respondents who selected 'unsure/don't know'.



Respondents were asked if they had any suggestions on how domestic abuse support services could be improved. In total 32 respondents chose to leave a comment.

A summary of the comments received by theme is presented in Table 5. Please note that some respondents will have referred to more than one theme therefore the total mentions will not add up to the total number of respondents who left a comment.

Table 5: Do you have any suggestions on how domestic abuse support services could be improved?		
Theme	Summary of comments received	Mentions
Improved support service and provisions	Access and support need to be more open, face-to-face meetings, support groups - online is not sufficient. More funding, more trauma informed support and specialist / empowerment therapies. 12 week of freedom program is not enough.	8
Collaborate with / fund dedicated services	Use specialist charities with dedicated resources. More funding for services who are able to offer this complex support (e.g. MyCWA). Specialist services for children should be separate like they were before - families need fully independent services.	7

General negative comment on the current support services	The service currently being offered in house is not as strong as was previously offered. Workers need more experience / empathy to personal situations. Had a poor experience with the IDVA.	5
Improved contact and follow up	Reply to the victims asking for help. Follow up contact is needed. Regular assessments by senior staff of individual client experiences and feedback to the support team. A review consultation later down the line will be helpful.	4
Support for children	Support for children. Experienced a lack of communication and support for own child – needs to be improved. More provisions for children to help them with their feelings and emotions. More staff training in all areas especially those in contact with children. Children are not always listened to and sometimes actions aren't taken soon enough.	4
Education and awareness	Go into schools more. Education programmes for our children and young people. Better awareness of the support available. like that you focus on prevention and identification at an early stage not many people are aware until it escalates.	4
Council ran service	Should be run by Cheshire East to ensure quality standards and fairness	1

Respondents were also asked how effective they felt certain aspects of the service was. Just over half of respondents (56%) considered raising awareness and providing training to be at least somewhat effective, while 43% viewed it as not so or not at all effective. Similarly, 53% rated efforts to meet the needs of marginalised communities and those with protected characteristics as at least somewhat effective, compared to 45% who did not. Views on pursuing perpetrators and addressing their attitudes and behaviours were slightly more critical, with 45% rating these actions as at least somewhat effective and 53% rating them as not so or not at all effective. A detailed breakdown of the responses is shown in Figure 6. Please note that the figures exclude those that selected 'unsure/don't know'.

Figure 6 : How effective do you think the current service is with... ?

Base for % = 57-72

Respondents were asked if there were any additional approaches that they would recommend. In total 17 respondents chose to leave a comment.

A summary of the comments received by theme is presented in Table 6. Please note that some respondents will have referred to more than one theme therefore the total mentions will not add up to the total number of respondents who left a comment.

Table 6: Are there any additional approaches you would recommend?

Theme	Summary of comments received	Mentions
Awareness and communication	Awareness and communication, not just online – work in schools' collages, more collaboration with other agencies. Produce leaflets, flyers and campaigns. More awareness on protected characteristics.	6
Collaborate with specialist services independent from the council	Use specialist charities / 3rd parties to benefit from their expertise and capacity. More co-ordinated communication. There are more cost effective and better programmes available in the third sector / service more effective when independent of the council (e.g. MyCWA training was award winning).	4
Consequences for perpetrators	How are perpetrators 'pursued' apart from action by the police? More consequences for the perpetrators if they do not complete the courses / become more ruthless.	3
Training	Sensitivity training is an absolute must.	1
Use consistent wording	Wording used seems to change from women and children to victims – be consistent.	1

Section 4: Anything else

Finally, respondents were given the opportunity to add any other comments on the draft domestic abuse and sexual violence strategy or on the safe accommodation / support service offer. In total 29 respondents chose to leave a comment.

A summary of the comments received by theme is presented in Table 7. Please note that some respondents will have referred to more than one theme therefore the total mentions will not add up to the total number of respondents who left a comment.

Table 7: Do you have any other comments to make on the draft domestic abuse and sexual violence strategy or on the safe accommodation / support service offer?

Theme	Summary of comments received	Mentions
Collaboration and engagement	Services need to work better together to support victims e.g. schools, police, fire etc. Continue to work closely with the self-harm and suicide prevention partnership. Expert partners should be involved moving forward. Engage with survivors early on in the strategy planning process – make decisions with people not for them.	7
Awareness and education	Increase awareness - local businesses and public transport could display helpful info, social media posts that raise awareness of the signs to look out for, encourage acting early and reporting concerns. Make sure the victims know that there is no shame in asking for help. Need an obvious 'exit now' button on the Cheshire East website.	7
Adequate resources and training	Strategy will depend on adequate staffing, resourcing, housing, and leadership. Is communal accommodation adequately supported by trained staff. Need staff who understand and are empathetic of the situation. Need to assess lessons learnt and take action to improve service.	4
General comments on the strategy / service	Strategy is well written as well as realistic – it's a service that will always be needed. Need to support and help the people who need it, make it as hard as possible for the abuser to go anywhere near the abused.	4
Collaborate with existing services	Work with experienced services (e.g. MyCWA) rather than replacing them. Had a positive experience with the service. Lost the trust of the community with the way funding was cut to this well-established service.	4
Inclusivity	Should be a whole community strategy and not just women focussed – include men in the strategy. Certain protected characteristics may have specific needs.	3
Separate perpetrator and victim policies	Victim and perpetrator policies and aims should not be grouped together.	1

Appendix 1: Demographic breakdowns

A number of demographic questions were asked at the end of the survey to ensure there was a wide range of views from across different characteristics. All of the questions were optional and therefore won't add up to the total number of responses received.

Table 8: Number of survey respondents by representation. Respondents could select all that apply.

Category	Count	Percent
As a local resident	69	67%
As a domestic abuse survivor	21	20%
As a professional working with victims / survivors of domestic abuse	6	6%
An elected member of Cheshire East	< 5	2%
As a town/parish councillor	< 5	3%
Other interested party	< 5	2%
Grand Total	103	100%

Table 9: Number of survey respondents by gender

Category	Count	Percent
Female	59	63%
Male	29	31%
Prefer not to say	5	5%
Grand Total	93	100%

Table 10: Number of survey respondents by age group

Category	Count	Percent
16-24	-	-
25-34	5	5%
35-44	17	18%
45-54	15	16%
55-64	18	19%
65-74	25	26%
75-84	11	11%
85 and over	< 5	2%
Prefer not to say	< 5	3%
Grand Total	96	100%

Table 11: Number of survey respondents by ethnic origin

Category	Count	Percent
White British / English / Welsh / Scottish / Northern Irish / Irish	84	88%
Mixed or multiple ethnic groups	4	4%
Any other White background	2	2%
Asian/Asian British	1	1%
Prefer not to say	4	4%
Grand Total	95	100%

Table 12: Number of survey respondents by religious belief

Category	Count	Percent
Christian	51	54%
No Religion	30	32%
Other religious belief	6	6%
Prefer not to say	8	8%
Grand Total	95	100%

Table 13: Number of survey respondents by limited activity due to health problem / disability

Category	Count	Percent
Yes, a lot	13	14%
Yes, a little	30	31%
Not at all	46	48%
Prefer not to say	7	7%
Grand Total	96	100%

Appendix 2: Survivor engagement sessions

During the consultation survivor engagement sessions also took place through HerPlace, Edge 360 and MyCWA. A summary of the feedback received can be viewed in Table 14. Please note that MyCWA carried out their own engagement and therefore the format of the feedback provided differs from the others.

Table 14: Summary of comments received during survivor engagement sessions

Group engaged with	Comment summary
HerPlace (5 attendees)	<p>Key Focus Areas</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pets as therapy • Neurodiversity • Trauma-informed approaches • Regulation spaces (e.g., “Mood Room”) • Boundaries and safe environments <p>Challenges</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Presence of children, pets, and shared spaces • Limited inclusivity • Online - need for better community engagement <p>Support Ideas</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Peer Support: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Dedicated children’s workers ○ Therapeutic play ○ Blended support models ○ Promoting independence and social setting ○ Choice around: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Use of shared space ▪ Dedicated children’s space <p>Move On (Post-Refuge)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Person-centred and flexible provision • Safety planning and Clare’s Law awareness • Peer support • Support tailored to individual needs • Local resettlement options for women <p>Family Support</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reuniting families and supporting transitions • Involving the right professionals • Advocacy: • Maintaining individual voices • Considering young people affected by domestic abuse <p>Education</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promote visibility and continued education • Address trauma in school settings • Schools should: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Recognise and respond to trauma

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Share only essential information ○ Avoid re-traumatisation ○ Empower individuals to share their own stories <p>Conversations & Awareness</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Open dialogue on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Safe sex ○ Healthy relationships • Support parents in discussing topics with children • Always prioritise safety
Edge 360 (14 attendees)	<p>Key Focus Areas</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Safe accommodation - identifying what works best • Previous experience of accessing services • Conflicts between substance users and non-users in shared spaces • Housing banding issues and limited move-on options • High risk of sexual assault/harassment in mixed-gender settings – need for safe, women-only spaces <p>Key challenges</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Complex needs including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Substance use and mental health issues ○ Parenting responsibilities and barriers to accessing children ○ The importance of shared communal spaces for peer support and connection • Low housing banding as they have “secure housing” – only Band D because not a commissioned service <p>Support Ideas</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Daily peer check-ins and communal areas • Individualised support that recognises strengths and needs • Blended approaches • Promoting independence with flexible support • Choice in use of shared spaces <p>Move On (Post-Refuge)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Person-centred and flexible provision • Tailored support, including private sector options • Safety and locality prioritised • Ongoing peer support and safety planning • Safe space for family and friends to visit <p>Education</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Relationship education for all young people • Support to stay in education and avoid substance use • Address trauma • Schools as safe spaces, free from social media pressures <p>Conversations & Awareness</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Talk about: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The dangers of using substances ○ Healthy relationships ○ Life skills, budgeting etc.

<p>MyCWA (undertaken by the organisation to inform their consultation response - obtained through various methods)</p>	<p>Support Services</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Statutory services often overlook non-physical abuse. • Survivors generally prefer independent, trauma-informed services and want these to be sustainably funded, with clear options for support. <p>Awareness and Training</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Training gaps remain. • Survivors recommend mandatory, specialist-led training for all professionals, shaped by lived experience and focused on identifying all forms of abuse. <p>Support for Children</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children should be recognised as victims in their own right. • Survivors call for dedicated support, safe spaces, and investment in specialist staff beyond existing social work teams. <p>Perpetrator Accountability</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mainstream programmes are seen as ineffective. • Survivors want clearer consequences for ongoing abuse and support whole-family approaches to managing risk. <p>Governance and Delivery</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Survivors seek transparency in governance, independent oversight, and early involvement in service design. • Independent services should be represented on decision-making boards. <p>Strategic Priorities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All areas - prevention, support, accountability, and system improvement - are interconnected. • Survivors stress that prevention must be protected from budget cuts. <p>Marginalised Communities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Survivors from marginalised groups face additional barriers. • Planning must include specific actions to ensure accessible and culturally competent support. <p>Data and Commissioning</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Survivors want clarity on how progress will be measured and communicated. • Commissioning should reflect insights from both statutory and independent services.
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Appendix 3: Provider market engagement

A market engagement questionnaire was made available for providers - 8 providers filled out the questionnaire. A summary of the responses provided can be seen in Table 15.

Table 15: Summary of comments provided during the provider market engagement

Provider ID	Interest	Summary of model / support offer	Key challenges
Prov 1	Unsure	Flexible accommodation model tailored to local needs, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Refuge-style shared housing with on-site staff for high-risk individuals • Self-contained units for families, care leavers, or those needing independence • Crisis accommodation for urgent, out-of-hours support • Trauma-informed wraparound support from experienced staff • Flexible staffing: floating, visiting, or 24/7 on-site cover • Multi-agency approach 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Availability of suitable Properties • Recruitment and retention of skilled staff • Managing complex needs • Ensuring continuity of support • Sustainable funding
Prov 2	Yes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Trauma-informed, partnership-led model of temporary and emergency accommodation • Secure, self-contained out-of-area units (some wheelchair-accessible) • Option for dedicated women-only refuges for high-risk, complex needs • Staff trained in trauma-informed care, safeguarding, and domestic abuse • Personalised support and safety plans via floating support partners • Commitment to multi-agency collaboration 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Survivors may present with multiple vulnerabilities

Prov 3	Yes	<p>Propose separating the provision of accommodation with support:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dedicated Housing Team • Personalised Support • Extensive Network • Sustained Tenancies • Digital Tools • Addressing Affordability • Tenant Education • Trauma-Informed Approach • Partnership Working • Integrated Multi-Agency Hubs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Highly Competitive housing market & affordability • Meeting diverse and complex needs • Digital exclusion • Funding sustainability and flexibility • Staff recruitment and retention • Cultural and language barriers • Legal and administrative complexities • Maintaining safety and confidentiality • Lack of public understanding/stigma
Prov 4	Yes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Propose using a dispersed accommodation model made up of self-contained units across the borough • Partnerships with domestic abuse specialists, security, and local agencies • Direct access for support staff where needed • Focus on tenancy sustainment and coordinated wraparound care through multi-agency working 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensuring a consistent supply of suitable and secure properties • Coordinating multiagency support in a timely and survivor-centred way • Managing confidentiality while providing access to support workers • Supporting individuals with high or complex needs • Ensuring stable funding to sustain both accommodation and support services over the long term

Prov 5	Yes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meet current provision of safe, dispersed accommodation across Cheshire East. • Add 2 units for perpetrators and 6–8 shared units for single women • Hub-and-spoke model with survivor co-designed access points • Trauma-informed recovery and psychosocial support groups • Long-standing partnerships 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Navigating multiple systems during times of crisis • Addressing challenges in information sharing • Sustaining accommodation stock amid housing market pressures • Supporting individuals with complex needs • Maintaining workforce resilience in a constrained funding environment • Managing rising demand with limited resources • Promoting inclusion and accessibility for diverse communities • Enhancing coordination across systems
Prov 6	Yes	<p>Whole family approach which includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Whole Family needs assessment • Whole Family risk assessment • Trained Domestic Abuse support • Advocacy • Safety planning • Protection and support for children • Resettlement and moving on support that is future focused • Work in partnership 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Referral routes and skilled identification of the people who would need the service • Property procurement, ensuring it is in the right area and of the right quality • Knitting the service into the current pathways
Prov 7	Yes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A mixed provision of accommodation type, i.e. 24/7 staffed 'refuge' style accommodation and dispersed units of accommodation in the community, provides victims in need of safe accommodation with a suitable level of choice • Specialist 1:1 support for adults • Bespoke support for children and young people • Move on/resettlement support • Multi-agency approach 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Full cost recovery would be heavily reliant on housing benefit income.

Prov 8	Yes	<p>Trauma-informed homes, life-changing interventions and sector-leading training and research to help people to change their future.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Female approved premises • Multiple compound needs service • Dispersed accommodation • Work in alliance and partnership where possible • Multi-agency approach 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Securing the right units in the right geography • The multi-agency landscape
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Cheshire East Domestic and Sexual Abuse Partnership Strategy

2025-2028

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Introduction

It can be difficult to quantify the prevalence of domestic and sexual abuse, (due to people not disclosing or reporting abuse, not recognising coercive and controlling behaviour and re-victimisation), but the Crime Survey of England and Wales (CSEW) in November 2023 found that around 1 in 4 women and 1 in 7 men have experienced domestic abuse in their lifetime.

According to the Domestic Abuse Act 2021, the behaviour of a person personally connected¹ to another, is abusive, if it consists of the following:

- a) physical or sexual abuse
- b) violent or threatening behaviour
- c) controlling or coercive behaviour
- d) economic abuse
- e) psychological, emotional or other abuse

Domestic abuse is very common and can happen regardless of social group, class, age, race, disability or sexuality of the individuals involved. Domestic abuse can affect men, women and those who identify as non-binary. It can occur in any relationship – heterosexual, gay, lesbian, bisexual, at any age. However, it is important to acknowledge that domestic abuse is a gender related issue and whilst both men and women may experience incidents of inter-personal violence and abuse, there are important differences between male violence against women and female violence against men, namely the amount, severity and impact. Women experience higher rates of repeated victimisation and are much more likely to be seriously hurt (Walby and Towers, 2018; Walby and Allen, 2004) or killed than male victims of domestic abuse (ONS, 2023a).²

The World Health Organisation provides a broad definition of Sexual Violence as: “Actual or threatened physical intrusion of a sexual nature, whether by force or under unequal or coercive conditions.”

The definition of “coercion” is wide: apart from physical force, it may involve psychological intimidation, blackmail or other threats including the threat of physical harm, sexual control, financial restriction, controlling access to children, isolation, harm to pets, threat of self-harm, destroying property, threats to discredit, threat of being dismissed from a job or of not obtaining a job that is sought. It may also occur when the person is unable to give consent while drunk, drugged, asleep or mentally incapable of understanding the situation.

The Domestic Abuse Act 2021³ placed statutory requirements on all Local Authorities. The table below shows the main requirements, with a summary of Cheshire East Council’s current status:

² [Domestic abuse is a gendered crime - Women’s Aid](#)

³ <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2021/17/contents/enacted>

Cheshire East Council - Domestic and Sexual Abuse Strategy 2025-2028

DA Act 2021 Part 4 Statutory Requirements	Cheshire East Council Status
Appoint a multi-agency Domestic Abuse Local Partnership Board which it must consult as it performs certain specified functions.	The Cheshire East Domestic and Sexual Abuse Partnership Board meets this requirement.
Assess the need for domestic abuse support in their area for all survivors and their children who reside in relevant safe accommodation, including those who come from outside of their area.	A Needs Assessment was completed in 2021/22 as part of the Whole Housing Approach development work. The needs assessment in this review updates that for 2022/23.
Develop and publish a Safe Accommodation Strategy having regard to the needs assessment.	Completed through publication of the Whole Housing Approach Strategy 2021-23.
Implement the strategy through commissioning / de-commissioning decisions.	Commissioning decisions will follow the completion of this review.
Monitor and evaluate local delivery and effectiveness of the strategy.	The Cheshire East Domestic and Sexual Abuse Partnership board is responsible for this.
Report back to central government annually.	The Cheshire East Domestic and Sexual Abuse Partnership board is responsible for this.

The Government published its Domestic Abuse Action Plan⁴ in March 2022, with the following priorities, which can also be found in the Government's National Violence Against Women and Girls Strategy 2021-24⁵:

Prioritising prevention; Supporting victims; Pursuing perpetrators; A stronger system

The Cheshire East Domestic and Sexual Abuse Strategy 2025-2028 will seek to ensure that all partnership agencies work towards addressing these priorities, whilst focussing on the specific needs of Cheshire East residents.

In 2024, the Victims and Prisoners Bill was enacted into Law and became the Victims and Prisoners Act 2024. Part One of the Act places a duty on all public sector bodies to work together to provide relevant support services for victims of domestic abuse and sexual violence:

“Relevant victim support service” means a service, other than accommodation-based support, provided to support victims of criminal conduct which constitutes:

- a) domestic abuse,*
- b) conduct of a sexual nature, or*
- c) serious violence.⁶*

As well as the Domestic Abuse Act 2021, and the Victims and Prisoners Act 2024, it is important to understand the links between this strategy and several other national

⁴ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/tackling-domestic-abuse-plan>

⁵ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/tackling-violence-against-women-and-girls-strategy>

⁶ [Victims and Prisoners Act 2024](#)

Cheshire East Council - Domestic and Sexual Abuse Strategy 2025-2028

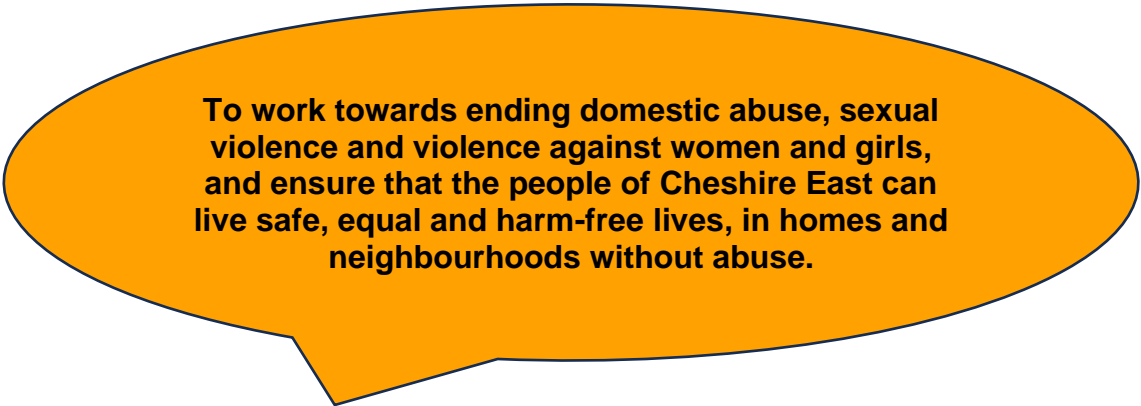
and local strategies and policies, as the effect of domestic and sexual abuse are cross cutting and wide ranging. The list below is not exhaustive:

- *Children Act 1989*
- *Housing Act 2004*
- *Sexual Offences Act 2003*
- *The Care Act 2014*
- *Serious Crime Act 2015*
- *Criminal Justice and Courts Act 20*
- *Working Together to Safeguard Children 2024*
- *Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Act 2022*
- *Keeping Children Safe in Education 2024*
- *Cheshire Serious Violence Strategy 2024-2029*
- *Cheshire East Substance Misuse Strategy*
- *Cheshire Police and Crime Plan*
- *Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy*
- *CE SEND Strategy*
- *CE Dementia Strategy*
- *CE Suicide and Self Harm Strategy*

The Cheshire East Domestic and Sexual Abuse Partnership Board is formally accountable to the Joint Health and Wellbeing Board. The Board also works closely together with Cheshire East Safeguarding Children's Partnership (CESCP), the Local Safeguarding Adults Board and the Safer Cheshire East Partnership. Any decisions relating to statutory duties under the Domestic abuse Act 2021 are the responsibility of Cheshire East Council.

Our vision

The Cheshire East Domestic and Sexual Abuse Partnership have a long-term commitment:



To work towards ending domestic abuse, sexual violence and violence against women and girls, and ensure that the people of Cheshire East can live safe, equal and harm-free lives, in homes and neighbourhoods without abuse.

The Cheshire East Domestic and Sexual Abuse Partnership is working together to support all residents of Cheshire East to live safe and violence-free lives, through

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identifying gaps in provision, and working together to provide a robust and meaningful response for victims, perpetrators and their families.

This strategy sets out the commitment of the partnership to challenge the values, attitudes and behaviours that enable all aspects of violence against women and girls.

The strategy will focus on building a stronger system to ensure:

- A focus on prevention
- Trauma-informed service provision for victims, children and perpetrators
- Partnership and collaboration
- Accountability and Learning

Outcomes and Principles

There are four main strategic outcomes that we are hoping to achieve:

- Cheshire East has a coordinated, trauma-informed, and data-driven system that supports victims, holds perpetrators accountable, and prevents abuse.
- Cheshire East has a culture that challenges misogyny, promotes healthy relationships, and prevents abuse before it starts.
- All victims of abuse and those who harm in Cheshire East, have access to a range of safe, appropriate support options that support recovery and independence, including safe accommodation.
- Services seek to continuously improve, based on learning from those with lived experience, anyone affected by abuse and all serious incidents.

The CEDSAP Strategy is underpinned by the following principles:

Trauma-informed practice: All services will be designed and delivered with an understanding of trauma and its impact.

Co-production: Services will be shaped with those who have lived experience.

Equality and inclusion: A commitment to addressing the needs of marginalised communities and those with protected characteristics.

Prevention-focused: Emphasis on early intervention and education to stop abuse before it starts.

Partnership and collaboration: Multi-agency working is central to delivering effective support and systemic change.

Accountability and learning: Continuous improvement through learning from reviews, data, and feedback.

Local Focus

As of the year ending March 2024, around 2.3 million people between the ages of 16 and 74 reported experiencing domestic abuse. This includes 1.6 million women and 757,000 men, highlighting that while anyone can be affected, women remain disproportionately impacted.

The police recorded 1,350,428 domestic abuse-related incidents and crimes in England and Wales in year end March 2024; 851,062 of these were recorded as domestic abuse-related crimes.



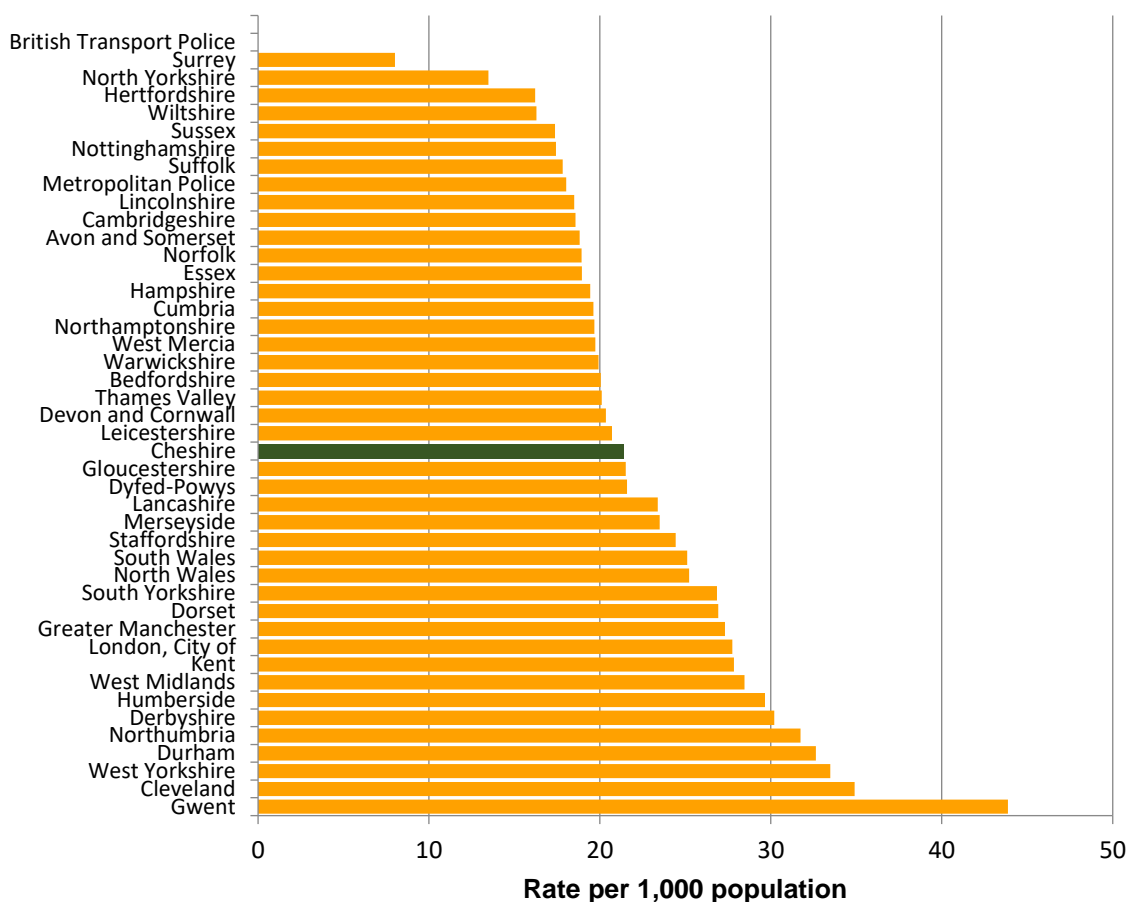
In Cheshire (which includes Cheshire West and Chester, Cheshire East, Halton and Warrington), 23,730 domestic abuse-related incidents and crimes were recorded in the year ending March 2024.

The average percentage of all domestic-abuse related incidents and crimes which were classified as domestic abuse-related crimes for the year ending March 2024 was 63% across England and Wales. This compares with the much higher, 73% for the North-West and slightly higher 65% for Cheshire as a whole.

The national percentage of all recorded crimes classified as domestic abuse-related was 16% during this period, but in Cheshire, this was 20%.

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Rate of domestic abuse-related combined incidents and crimes recorded by the police, by police force area



In Cheshire East, during 2024/25 there were 4540 domestic abuse incidents reported to Cheshire Constabulary and 1043 sexual offence incidents (450 of these were offences of rape).

This compares with 4584 in Cheshire West and Chester, 2626 in Warrington and 2334 in Halton.

The Domestic Abuse Act 2021 recognises children as victims of domestic abuse in their own right, not just as dependants of the victim/perpetrator and the Victims and Prisoner's Act 2024 allows the court to remove parental responsibility from a parent if they have killed the other parent.



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20% of children in the UK have lived with an adult perpetrating domestic abuse.⁷ Experiencing domestic abuse in childhood is a form of child abuse and many parents experiencing abuse at the hands of an intimate partner are concerned about their child's safety and wellbeing, describing children becoming withdrawn, sad, timid, emotional and in some cases displaying aggressive behaviour themselves.⁸

Children who witness domestic abuse are at risk of both short and long-term physical and mental health problems. Every child will be affected differently to the trauma of domestic abuse.⁹

Operation Encompass is a partnership between police and schools in the UK, which aims to reduce the long-term impacts of domestic abuse on children by early identification and providing early intervention and support. The roll out of the national pilot of Operation Encompass (now given statutory standing under the 2024 Act) means that schools have timely information about police attendance at incidents of domestic abuse involving children, ensuring schools are well placed to support the children with their experiences. In Cheshire East, during September 2024, there were 192 occurrences with 348 referrals (i.e. number of children) of which there were 9 occurrences relating to 21 children who were homeschooled.

This strategy is tailored to the specific needs of Cheshire East, with a focus on:

- Addressing high rates of domestic and sexual abuse in Cheshire East.
- Providing quality, trauma-informed support for all those experiencing abuse.
- Supporting children as victims in their own right.
- Focussing on prevention.
- Tackling workplace harassment and abuse.
- Ensuring safe accommodation and housing stability.
- Reaching marginalised communities through culturally competent services.
- Strengthening governance and joint commissioning across agencies.

The Cheshire East Domestic and Sexual Abuse Partnership Board is formally accountable to the Joint Health and Wellbeing Board, although the safe accommodation aspect remains a statutory duty for the Local Authority (Cheshire East Council). The Board also works closely together with Safer Cheshire East Partnership (Community Safety Partnership), Cheshire East Safeguarding Children's Partnership (CESCP) and Cheshire East Safeguarding Adults Board (CESAB).

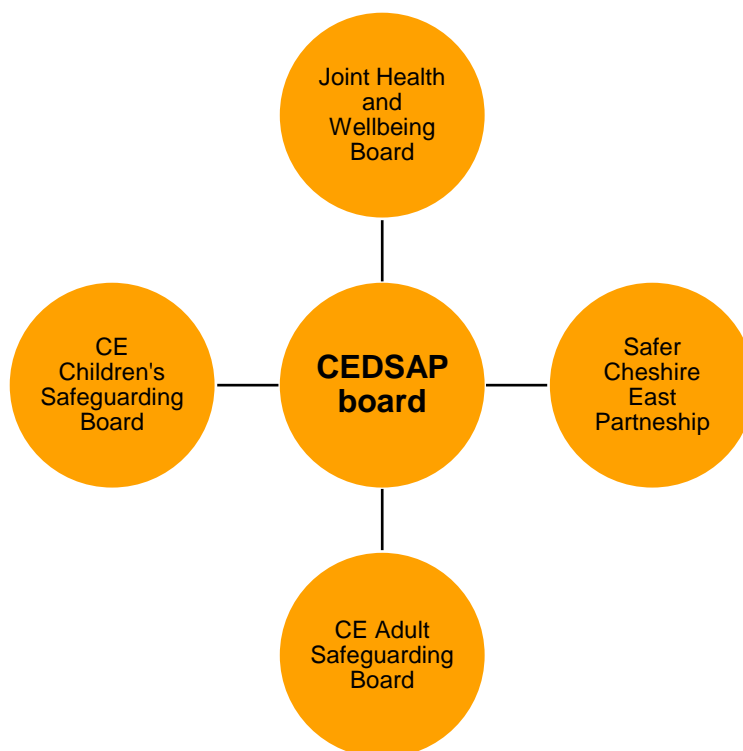
⁷ [Facts and Statistics - Refuge](#)

⁸ [Helplines briefing: The impact of domestic abuse on children and young people from the voices of parents and carers](#)

⁹ [Effects of domestic abuse on children | Barnardo's](#)

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The Board supports Cheshire East Council in reporting back to the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner, the Ministry of Housing and Communities and other funding partners.



Strategic Outcomes

1. Cheshire East has a culture that challenges misogyny, promotes healthy relationships, and prevents abuse before it starts.

What does this mean?

Section 3 of the Domestic Abuse Act 2021 ('the 2021 Act') recognises children as victims of domestic abuse for the purposes of the Act if the child sees, hears, or experiences the effects of the abuse, and is related to, or falls under "parental responsibility" of, the victim and/or perpetrator of the domestic abuse. A child might therefore be considered a victim of domestic abuse under the 2021 Act where one parent is abusing another parent, or where a parent is abusing, or being abused by, a partner or relative.¹⁰

¹⁰

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1089015/Domestic_Abuse_Act_2021_Statutory_Guidance.p

CEDSAP will ensure that local agencies understand the impact of domestic abuse on children and young people and that there are appropriate interventions in place to safeguard them, support them to understand and unpack their experiences, as well as recovery programmes to manage the longer-term effects of experiencing abuse. We will make sure that children and young people are given the opportunity to access services separately from their parents/carers/guardians, but also that there is support for children and families to work together to rebuild their relationships (where appropriate and safe to do so).

The National Education Union (NEU) has long argued for the need for high-quality Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) in every school. These subjects are critical for keeping children happy and healthy, and they provide a host of positive and protective outcomes for children and young people.¹¹ All schools in England now have a statutory duty to teach Relationships and Sexuality education, from primary age through to the end of secondary, with age-appropriate subject matter. However, schools have a significant amount of flexibility in the delivery and little resource has been given to support schools to embed the new curriculum. It is important that pupils and parents feel empowered to challenge unequal power dynamics, “banter” and misogynistic ideas and that teachers have the time and space to have these important discussions. An ethos of openness and support needs to run throughout the school, avoiding a reliance on individual sessions from outside agencies, but rather ensuring frank and open discussions during all appropriate lessons. The partnership will ensure that all teachers and staff are given the resources they need to feel able to provide positive challenge.

During 2022, a number of social media influencers became a focus for the concern of parents, the media and education leaders, as their misogynistic attitudes and values were promoted as ‘aspirational’ for boys and young men. They promote the idea that women are men’s property and bear the responsibility for rape and sexual assault. “Tate plays on boy’s fears about their economic futures and place in the structures of masculinity while styling himself as a maverick, but authentic figure.”¹² These tactics promote an inequality between the sexes and gendered misinformation, which can lead to young men questioning what it means to be a ‘man’ and a dangerous acceptance of male violence towards women. It is vital that the Partnership work with education and youth work colleagues to effectively challenge these values and attitudes and give young people the space to discuss these concerns and challenge each other.

¹¹ [How safe are our children? 2020: an overview of data on abuse of adolescents](#)

¹² [Mainstreaming the Manosphere’s Misogyny Through Affective Homosocial Currencies: Exploring How Teen Boys Navigate the Andrew Tate Effect - Craig Haslop, Jessica Ringrose, Idil Cambazoglu, Betsy Milne, 2024](#)

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A great deal of research has been done around the impact of preventative work, especially in schools and within education settings, with only 52% of young people believing that their current RSE classes gave them a good understanding of toxic and safe relationships. To build stronger, more resilient communities, we will focus on children and young people and giving them the tools they need to make positive choices when forming relationships, as well as feeling empowered to challenge behaviour they are not comfortable with.

The partnership will look at all aspects of preventative work, looking at any gaps in provision. Health-based partners will consider what information and training is available to primary-care services and ensure that the “routine enquiry” process is being adhered to within all relevant areas of provision.

The Cheshire East Partnership are committed to increasing visibility for all Domestic Abuse and Sexual Abuse services, through public campaigns and wider media outreach. There will be a coordinated approach to education with children and young people, around all aspects of healthy relationships, including coercive controlling behaviours, consent and use of technology. Availability of resources for residents and professionals working in the sector will be increased, and include wider aspects of DA, including child to parent abuse, financial abuse and post-separation abuse. We will work with all partners to support safe parenting in domestic abuse contexts.

2. All victims of abuse and those who harm in Cheshire East, have access to a range of safe, appropriate support options that support recovery and independence, including safe accommodation.

What does this mean?

Cheshire East has worked with ‘Standing Together Against Domestic Abuse’ to develop a Whole Housing Approach model, to support victims of domestic abuse and their families. This model has been evaluated by the University of Central Lancashire¹³ and in summer 2025, Cheshire East was awarded DAHA Platinum Accreditation for ensuring that survivors of domestic abuse in Cheshire East get the best possible response around their housing needs.

The model was based on meeting the Local Authority’s responsibilities to assess safe accommodation needs and develop a model to deliver on these needs.¹⁴ The model supports the early identification of housing needs and aims to reduce homelessness and support victims to remain in their own homes, where safe to do

¹³ [UCLan Interim Report WHA Evaluation December 2024.pdf](#)

¹⁴ [Domestic Abuse Act 2021](#)

so. This may be through additional target hardening and appropriate support with funding, safety planning and ongoing recovery.

Cheshire East absolutely recognise that some victims must be offered safe accommodation away from the perpetrator and according to Women's Aid England, "a refuge service includes a range of accommodation types - which can encompass shared houses, self-contained units and dispersed accommodation. Whilst most accommodation offered by refuge services is in shared accommodation where families live 'communally', the national network of refuges also includes self-contained units with communal areas, or dispersed accommodation within the community. This combination of accommodation types enables refuge services to provide support to those women with additional support needs such as drug/alcohol use, or a larger family size, which can mean communal living is unsuitable."¹⁵

The Cheshire East model will focus on models of good practice and offer the widest possible choice for all victims and their children.

Cheshire East Safe Accommodation will enable the widest possible access to support through a mixed model of provision, ensuring those with multiple and complex needs are able to access support. We will seek to address specific barriers to accessing safe accommodation, such as larger families, disabilities, pets etc and aim to ensure the model contains short and longer-term options, based on individual needs.

Cheshire East victims and survivors of domestic and sexual abuse require access to education and information, to support them to make informed decisions about their future. Information should be available in all public spaces and resources available to enable anyone fleeing abuse to know where they can access support. A victim-focussed, single point of access to services enables a smooth and timely transition into the correct support for an individual, depending on where they are on their journey.

For those at the point of recognising the abuse, but still in a place of safety, support will be available to unpick their experiences and work through their next steps, be it accommodation support, provision of early support or recovery programmes.

For those at a higher risk of harm, immediate support will be provided for safety planning and emergency accommodation, including a fully resourced IDVA provision. Emergency accommodation, supported by qualified and experienced staff is available, with immediate access for Cheshire East residents. If this is not available due to lack of space, the UK-wide Routes to Support process will be followed to access support outside of Cheshire East. Specialist IDVA provision, with expertise in

¹⁵ [4 -wha-refuge-services.pdf](#)

safety planning, risk mitigation and partnership working is vital to ensure high risk victims have access to the individualised support package they require.

The MARAC within Cheshire East is widely supported by the partners, but this will be strengthened to ensure they are providing all measures appropriate to keep the person safe and that action is taken in a timely manner to mitigate risk.

If there has been sexual abuse and the victim wishes to go through the criminal justice process, they will also have access to high level quality support from an Independent Sexual Violence Advisor (ISVA).

For those who have had the immediate risk managed, support will be provided to ensure long-term stability and recovery. This 'step-down' support from high risk to longer term management is vital in supporting a family to progress and grow together safely. The partnership will offer a strong and integrated approach to recovery work, utilising and expanding on current services, to ensure survivors and their children have a strengths-based programme of support to enable them to move forwards together.

Support for victims (including children) will be trauma-informed and survivor-led, based on individual needs. All services will reflect the individual needs of clients, and their diverse experiences of abuse. The Partnership will continue to work with all local and regional 'By and For' organisations to ensure those from culturally diverse communities are represented and supported. Services will be available to support victims of all aspects of domestic abuse, including coercive controlling behaviour, financial abuse and child to parent abuse.

Children are legally accepted as victims of domestic abuse in their own right and as such are entitled to support separate from that offered to their parents. Children in Cheshire East will have access to dedicated, age-appropriate support to understand their reactions to their experiences and have the opportunity to unpack these issues in a safe and inclusive environment.

To properly safeguard victims/survivors and their families, it is imperative that we pursue perpetrators and effectively challenge and seek to change (where appropriate) their behaviour. All statutory agencies – from policing, probation and the courts, to health services, children's social care and housing and many others too – have a responsibility to respond to perpetrators to prevent them causing further harm as part of a comprehensive multi-agency approach.¹⁶

In Cheshire East we will provide a full suite of interventions, aimed at targeting a perpetrator wherever they are on their individual journey. This will include support to

¹⁶ RESPECT Strategy *Stopping the Harm* 2023-28

change their behaviour, values and attitudes where appropriate, through appropriate relationship modelling, group work and one to one interventions. For those causing significant harm, agencies will work together to pursue and disrupt harmful behaviours.

The work with perpetrators will be truly trauma-informed and recognise the links with substance misuse, mental health and suicidality for victims and perpetrators. There will be clear accountability mechanisms if the perpetrators fail to engage with behaviour change interventions and/or continue to perpetrate abuse either with their current family or future partners.

3. Services seek to continuously improve, based on learning from those with lived experience, anyone affected by abuse and all serious incidents.

What does this mean?

Cheshire East has had 9 Domestic Homicide Reviews (changed to Domestic Abuse Related Death Reviews in the Victim and Prisoners Act 2024) since 2019, with a number of these still ongoing. They range in scope, from direct perpetrator to victim homicide, to suicide and substance overdose, but all have a number of themes running through them.

The victims have endured long periods of coercive controlling behaviour, which has had significant effects on their mental health. For some this has been coupled with misuse of substances, either due to the influence of the perpetrator directly, or in order to manage the effects of the abuse.

A study in 2022 showed that people with a lifetime history of IPV (intimate partner violence) were 3 times more likely to have made a suicide attempt in the past year than those without any experience of IPV.¹⁷

The risks of suicide of a victim of coercive control are now recognised by the National Police Chiefs' Council¹⁸ but the dissemination of this knowledge and understanding and cascading of appropriate training has been limited until recently.

The sharing of information and understanding of the risk posed to the victims appeared to have been understated or misunderstood by some agencies and this has led to missed opportunities to intervene. This includes the understanding of the 8

¹⁷ [Intimate partner violence, suicidality, and self-harm: a probability sample survey of the general population in England - The Lancet Psychiatry](#)

¹⁸ [Vulnerability Knowledge and Practice Programme \(VKPP\)](#)

stages of domestic homicide timeline¹⁹ as well as the increased danger of non-fatal strangulation.²⁰ The impact of domestic abuse on older people and the difficulties of dealing with those with caring responsibility and victims with dementia has been identified as well as working more closely with perpetrators and understanding how to manage counter allegations.

The Cheshire East Community Safety Partnership and Safeguarding Boards have done a huge amount of work to build a training programme for professionals, as well as specific toolkits to assist practice in these areas, but this needs to be an ongoing process and built into inductions for all professionals working with potentially vulnerable people.

The Partnership work closely with a group of Survivor consultants, to support the development of services to meet the needs of local people. They have spoken about the need for more preventative work and awareness raising with children and young people, as well as the problems of a coordinated approach and the lack of training that some agencies have in understanding domestic abuse, especially around coercive control:

“I didn’t know what coercive control was until is ended”

“things might have been different if someone planted the seed...”

“it should be so open, that everyone can talk about it”

“the young lads might not even have a clue that it is controlling behaviour”

“there can be no connection between services, one professional might think that his parenting is ok, and another can see it is domestic abuse”

Clients from a range of services across Cheshire East have engaged with the consultation process and development of the Strategy and the Partnership will continue to consult with survivors when developing the Delivery Plan. As part of the structure of the Cheshire East Domestic and Sexual Abuse Partnership Board, a Lived Experience subgroup will feed into all aspects of development and planning.

¹⁹ [What is the Homicide Timeline | Homicide Timeline](#)

²⁰ [Strangulation and suffocation - GOV.UK](#)

4. Cheshire East has a coordinated, trauma-informed, and data-driven system that supports victims, holds perpetrators accountable, and prevents abuse.

What does this mean?

Cheshire East recognises the need to move towards a public-health approach to ending domestic and sexual abuse. We need to understand our communities and the impact of their socio-economic environment, recognise their risk and protective factors, at the same time as developing and trialling new approaches to tackle violence and putting preventative measures in place.

The governance of the domestic abuse and sexual violence agenda will be strengthened in Cheshire East, through best practice quality improvement approaches, a better understanding of multiagency communication and practice and exploring the use of new technology and systems across the partnership.

In Cheshire East, we will bring partners and stakeholders together, look at needs, identify gaps, agree how we will address the needs effectively and then invest in appropriate services. These services will be continually monitored and evaluated to ensure impact and joined-up approach to services.

Intelligence-led commissioning relies on the regular review of combined and collated information from co-production and working with those with lived experience, data, best practice, evidence-based research and professional expertise and insight. The partnership will work with local organisations, as well as partners offering support with a wide range of complexities, including mental health, substance misuse, homelessness. Working directly with current and previous co-production and working with those with lived experience.

Cheshire East Domestic and Sexual Abuse Partnership will take a practical and robust partnership approach to commissioning, with a Joint Commissioning Subgroup under CEDSAP, made up of all stakeholders (including providers and those with lived experience), to provide continuous data and analysis of provision, demand and effectiveness. Linked to this will be a Partnership Decision-making group to review funding opportunities and make final funding decisions, made up of commissioning leads from all partners.

This joined-up approach to the commissioning process will help to ensure that not only are we confident that we are commissioning quality provision, and maximising our collective investment to achieve shared outcomes, but we can also ensure that interventions are implemented at the right time in a client's journey of support. The partnership will implement a shared Outcomes Framework to ensure that all

commissioned services have a shared focus and enable a greater degree of quality assurance.

The partnership will work towards more sustainable joint-commissioning, with the opportunity for longer term funding (with a focus on continuous monitoring and improvement). This will promote stability and enable innovation and development, alongside maintaining high quality provision of services.

What will we do?

1. Cheshire East has a culture that challenges misogyny, promotes healthy relationships, and prevents abuse before it starts.

Key deliverables:

- Deliver interventions tailored to children and young people.
- Support family recovery where safe and appropriate.
- Embed Operation Encompass in all schools.
- Provide separate and joint support options for children and families.
- Support schools to deliver high-quality RSE and challenge harmful gender norms.
- Work with youth services to counteract online misogyny and influencer culture.
- Expand preventative work in primary care and community settings.
- Empower young people to recognise and challenge abuse.
- Develop and roll out a domestic abuse awareness training package for all public sector agencies and frontline services.
- Promote bystander intervention and community responsibility.
- Ensure accessible information for all residents, including hidden and marginalised groups.
- Embed domestic abuse education in Family Hubs and health settings.
- Develop and implement workplace policies across sectors.
- Train employers to support victims and challenge perpetrators.
- Promote trauma-informed workplace cultures.

Indicators for success:

- % of schools implementing Operation Encompass.
- % of schools delivering Relationships and Sexuality Education that meets and/or exceeds national standards.
- Pre/post surveys on young people's understanding of healthy relationships.
- Number of professionals trained in domestic abuse awareness.

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- Number of professionals trained in specific areas of abuse, such as child to parent abuse, financial abuse and the effects of domestic abuse on children and young people.
- Number of employers adopting workplace domestic abuse policies.
- Reduction in reported incidents of misogynistic behaviour in schools and youth settings.

2. All victims of abuse and those who harm in Cheshire East, have access to a range of safe, appropriate support options that support recovery and independence, including safe accommodation.

Key deliverables:

- Implement the Whole Housing Approach model.
- Provide refuge and dispersed accommodation options.
- Support victims to remain safely in their homes where appropriate.
- Ensure housing services are accessible to all, including those with complex needs
- Maintain a single point of access for victims.
- Provide IDVA/ISVA support and emergency accommodation.
- Strengthen MARAC processes.
- Expand recovery and step-down support services.
- Deliver a full suite of perpetrator interventions.
- Embed trauma-informed approaches in perpetrator work.
- Disrupt harmful behaviours through multi-agency action.
- Address links with substance misuse and mental health.

Indicators for success:

- % of victims accessing safe accommodation within 24 hours.
- Number of households supported to remain safely at home.
- % of MARAC cases with safety plans implemented within target time.
- Number of perpetrators completing behaviour change programmes.
- Victim satisfaction with support services (via surveys).
- Reduction in repeat victimisation rates.

3. Services seek to continuously improve, based on learning from those with lived experience, anyone affected by abuse and all serious incidents.

Key deliverables:

- Work with 'By and For' organisations to reduce barriers.

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- Train professionals on intersectionality and cultural competence.
- Address specific needs of older people, LGBTQ+ individuals, and those with disabilities.
- Embed findings from reviews into training and practice.
- Raise awareness of coercive control and suicide risk.
- Improve multi-agency understanding of risk indicators.
- Establish regular forums for engagement with survivors.
- Use feedback to shape strategy, commissioning, and delivery.
- Promote survivor-led awareness and education initiatives.

Indicators for success:

- Number of professionals trained in cultural competence.
- % of service changes informed by survivor feedback.
- Number of survivor-led initiatives or campaigns.
- Reduction in service access disparities across demographic groups.
- Number of Domestic Homicide Review recommendations implemented.

4. Cheshire East has a coordinated, trauma-informed, and data-driven system that supports victims, holds perpetrators accountable, and prevents abuse.

Key deliverables:

- Strengthen governance through CEDSAP and its subgroups.
- Implement a shared Outcomes Framework for all commissioned services.
- Improve multi-agency communication and use of technology.
- Embed trauma-informed principles across all services.
- Monitor and evaluate service effectiveness through continuous quality improvement.

Indicators for success:

- % of commissioned services aligned with the Outcomes Framework.
- Frequency of data-sharing and joint decision-making meetings.
- Number of services rated as effective through evaluation.
- % of staff trained in trauma-informed practice.
- Increase in joint commissioning initiatives.

Conclusion

Domestic abuse (sometimes referred to as ‘domestic violence’ or ‘intimate partner violence’) can happen to anyone, anywhere, at any time in a relationship.

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Domestic abuse isn't always physical. Any type of threatening, controlling or coercive behaviour is abuse – whether it's physical, psychological, sexual, economic or emotional.

Domestic abuse can affect anyone, from any background and of any age. It occurs in a range of relationships, including with an intimate partner, a child, a sibling, an ex-partner, a casual partner or a family member. And it can happen at any point in a relationship, whether you live with the person or not.²¹

Domestic abuse is complex and wide-ranging. We cannot do this work alone. In Cheshire East we want to bring families, communities and services together to tackle this issue and work towards eradicating domestic abuse completely.

We will work together, and we will make a difference.

²¹ [What is domestic abuse? - SafeLives](#)

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Appendix 4: Domestic Abuse Safe Accommodation model summary

The Service Model Safe Accommodation - SUMMARY

- 1 To ensure the service is fit for the future, the offer will need to be a mixed offer of safe accommodation with support to ensure needs are best met, with an emphasis on crisis support/safety and independence planning, with a whole system approach to ensure outcomes are achieved. The main elements for the new model that will be included into a newly developed service specification include:
 - (a) **Accommodation Model:** A mixed model of beds offered across the borough to ensure needs are met. This will include traditional refuge style (women only) accommodation to meet the needs of those people who tell us that they require 24 hour on site access to support staff and communal spaces for therapies. Also, a mix of dispersed accommodation for those with larger families, male victims and those with more complexities as they prepare for independent living.
 - (b) **Support model:** A model that is trauma informed and person centred to provide safety planning, stability and resettlement and move on support. Ensuring that tailored support is offered to victims and survivors to account for their needs to enable them the best chances of achieving their outcomes.
 - (c) **Whole System Collaboration:** coordination of the offer with partners to provide a clear and visible service pathway.
 - (d) **Referral Pathway:** A clear pathway of referral into services through Cheshire East's Single Point of Access (SPA), ensuring that victims and survivors do not spend unnecessary time in temporary accommodation.
 - (e) **Children and Young People as Victims in their own right:** A dedicated offer for children and young people who through the Domestic Abuse Act 2021 are seen as victims in their own right. This offer is to consist of a dedicated children and young people worker who will work closely with the council's services to ensure children are well supported.
 - (f) **Transition to Independence:** An outcome focussed specification that ensures families are supported back into independence.
 - (g) **Reciprocity:** Continue to work collaboratively across boundaries to ensure victims and survivors can flee domestic abuse and move outside of Cheshire East if this is the best option for them and their families. Ensuring that the SPA is the referral route to ensure residents from Cheshire East waiting for appropriate accommodation are routed through first.
 - (h) **Funding Model:** A mixed funding model including commissioned funding for support costs and Housing Benefit for rent/property costs.

The provider will need to be or partner with a registered provider landlord to enable Enhanced Housing Benefit to cover rent and elements of the support costs in addition to the £250k commissioned funding. It is anticipated this could fund a minimum of 27 bed spaces.

Appendix 5: Comments received on Domestic Abuse Strategy 2025-2028 and Safe Accommodation commission following Adults Committee Member briefing on August 19th 2025.

Cllr Sue Adams asked how the accommodation was spread across the Borough, the main towns and how it was split between the north and south of the Borough.

Response: Current provision is split fairly equitably North and South across the Borough, with dispersed accommodation mainly in Crewe and Macclesfield. We will ensure that the procurement approach for the new service from April 1st 2026 reflects the need to ensure Safe Accommodation is available across the Borough, rather than centred in one or two locations.

Cllr Sam Corcoran asked how the procurement exercise differed from what was done last time.

Response: The key change for the forthcoming procurement is that the Council will be investing additional resources into the Safe Accommodation budget, which was a key reason for the failure of the procurement exercise run in Autumn 2024. This exercise will also be better informed as a result of the full and open consultation work done to develop the Domestic Abuse Strategy 2025-28, and the independent needs and data analysis conducted by S2 Analytics.

Cllr Sue Adams asked if unable to have provision in north of Borough could you talk to Stockport or High Peak to see if can have options there.

Response: This will definitely be considered with all neighbouring areas, whether to the North, South, East or West. In some cases, to protect the welfare and safety of victims fleeing domestic abuse, it is actually advantageous *not* to accommodate them close to the perpetrator or other risk factors, so working with near neighbours could offer potential benefits.

Cllr John Place commented that the wording for the objectives and desired outcomes in the slide was a bit 'managerial' and asked if could be explained what they meant and what hoped would do and give an example.

Response: We will work with our communications team to ensure the key messages in the Strategy and also how we communicate the Cheshire East support offer to those experiencing domestic and sexual abuse is worded in a way which can be readily understood by our residents.

Cllr Jill Rhodes commented that the vision refers to women and children but there are also men who suffer domestic abuse and asked if the this could be taken into consideration

Response: This is recognised by the Domestic Abuse Partnership and we can offer assurance that this will not be overlooked.

Cllr Janet Clowes asked where other known vulnerable group to domestic abuse – i.e. young people, adults with additional needs and elder abuse, sit within the strategy.

Response: The strategy does place an emphasis on meeting the needs of children & young people being victims in their own right, whether as witnesses, living in homes where abuse occurs or being targeted themselves for abuse. We will explore the issue raised with the Learning Disability Partnership Board and colleagues from both the Childrens & Adults Safeguarding Boards to ensure a coordinated approach is taken to ensure the needs of vulnerable adults in this area are visible and 'owned' with respect to actions that need to be undertaken.

Cllr John Place suggested there were outreach opportunity to visit youth clubs and schools as young people needed to know what the issue were, and this also allowed young people to talk to youth workers privately if they have an issue – e.g. being groomed and domestic abuse in their home environment.

Response: We will pick up this suggestion with our Early Help and Youthwork teams, as well as local community and voluntary groups to develop approaches which support this suggestion.

OPEN

Children and Families Committee

15 September 2025

**Supported Accommodation for 16–25-year-old
Children in Care, Care Leavers and Unaccompanied
Asylum-Seeking Children & Young People**

Report of: Dawn Godfrey, Executive Director of Children's Services

Report Reference No: CF/26/25-6

Ward(s) Affected: All

For decision

Purpose of Report

- 1 The report provides an update on the recommissioning activity approved at Committee in June and details the co-production with the stakeholders (including care experienced young people) to shape the future service offer.
- 2 To provide committee with oversight of the agreed service model and to seek authorisation to follow a competitive tender process and award the successful provider(s) the Supported Accommodation contract from 1st July 2026.

Executive Summary

- 3 This paper builds on the Supported Accommodation report reviewed by Committee on the 9th June 2025 and sets out how the Council has completed the review, consultation and engagement to inform service redesign, and the next steps to conduct a full formal tender to seek a best value service for Cared for Children and Care Leavers aged 16-25.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Children and Families Committee is recommended to:

1. Approve the new service model and authorise the procurement for a new service contract for a 5-year term with a 1 + 1 year extension period.
2. Delegate authority to the Executive Director of Children's Service and/or equivalent authorised officer to conduct a competitive procurement exercise and enter into dialogue with the most competitive bidder, if required, issue the notice of contract award once a preferred bidder is identified.
3. Delegate authority to the Executive Director of Children's Services to award the contract for the Supported Accommodation for 16–25-year-old Children in Care and Care Leavers, in consultation with the S151 & Monitoring Officers, and with the agreement of the Chair and Vice Chair of the Children & Families Committee.
4. Delegate authority to the Executive Director of Children's Services and/or equivalent authorised officer for contract and performance management, including all commercial assessments to oversee any contract extensions under the terms including contract performance and efficiency requirements and key performance indicators.

Background

4. The report to committee on the 9th June 2025, outlined the background, and the legal responsibilities: [\(Public Pack\)Agenda Document for Children and Families Committee, 09/06/2025 14:00](#)

Consultation and Engagement

- 5 The consultation and engagement approach, and summary of outcomes is included with this report as Appendix 1.

Service Model & Procurement approach

- 6 To ensure the service is fit for the future, the offer will be a mixed offer of supported accommodation with support to ensure needs are best met, with an emphasis on emergency support/safety and independence planning, with a whole system approach to ensure outcomes are achieved. The main elements for the new model that will be included into a newly developed service specification:

a) Accommodation: The service will be defined within LOTS. In terms of the required units of accommodation and support hours, accommodation will be commissioned on a block contract basis. LOTS are categorised below:

- **LOT 1 - Supported Accommodation for 16-17-year-olds – North Cheshire East – 16 beds including 1 emergency bed**

- **LOT 2 - Supported Accommodation for 16-17-year-olds – South Cheshire East – 27 beds including 2 emergency beds**
- **LOT 3 - Supported Accommodation for 18-25-year-olds – North Cheshire East – 21 beds including 1 emergency beds**
- **LOT 4 - Supported Accommodation for 18-25-year-olds – South Cheshire East – 42 beds including 2 emergency beds**
- **LOT 5 - Supported Accommodation for Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children 16–17-year-olds – ALL Cheshire East – 20 beds**

The LOTS within this commission aim to offer a mixture of emergency accommodation, shared supported living facilities with own spaces, self-contained shared accommodation with own facilities, self-contained taster flats, community semi-independent flats and a post 18 offer focussed on independence. Due to the support and community needs of service users, accommodation will be located within close proximity to services and good transport links to ensure service users are able to retain or access support from a range of agencies and encourage community links and employment and volunteering opportunities.

- b) Whole System Collaboration coordination of the offer between Cheshire East Children's Services and the provider(s) to ensure a clear and visible service pathway for 16-25 year olds.
- c) Supported Accommodation Pathway: A clear pathway of referral into services through Cheshire East's Placements Team working towards placements stabilisation, person centred support, a vision to independence.
- d) Transition to Independence: An outcome focussed specification that ensures young people are in stable accommodation whilst developing life skills including engagement in education, work placements with an overall aim of independence.

Commissioning arrangements & financial modelling

- 7 In light of feedback from Members at Committee on June 9th **Contract management** of 126 new beds will require continued investment within the Children's Commissioning Team from 1 April 2026, for the initial 3 years of the new contract(s). This will ensure beds are mobilised and occupancy levels achieve 95-100%. Currently, a Project Manager post is leading on the recommission funded from the ILACS Improvement budget, however this post ends on 31 March 2026.
- 8 **Risk:** The Project Manager currently allocated to this project will be leaving Cheshire East Council on the 31st August 2025. This project will require a new

Project Manager to oversee the procurement exercise, mobilisation and continued active management of the new contract(s).

- 9 The table below shows the cost of continued investment of a Project Manager role in Children's Commissioning to mobilise, develop and maximise service delivery in line with the purpose of the commission including value for money and improving outcomes for young people:

2026-27	2027-28	2028-29	Total Cost
£ 75,507	£ 77,394	£ 79,329	232,230
* Based on 3.2% uplift in 2025/26 and 2.5% uplift in future years			
* Penultimate SCP Grade 11 1.00 FTE			

- 10 The above table slightly affects the savings against the supported accommodation budget. By year three the block contract still proposes to save £1.1m against budget for 2028/29. Further information on the commissioning approach and financial modelling underpinning this proposal is attached as Appendix 2 to this report.

Procurement Timelines

- 11 A procurement process will need to be undertaken in accordance with the Procurement Regulations 2024 and the Council's own Contract Procedure Rules.
- 12 The proposed procurement activity timeline is outlined below
- (a) Publish Tender Notice – November 2025
 - (b) Tender Period – December 2025
 - (c) Evaluation and Moderation Period including provider presentations– January 2026
 - (d) Final Award – February 2026
 - (e) New Contract Go live – 1st July 2026

Reasons for Recommendations

- 13 The paper dated the 9th of June 2025 outlined the statutory obligations to provide Supported Accommodation services for 16–25-year-old Cared for Children and Care Leavers.
- 14 There are three options available to the council, this report recommends option 2, to gain the most effective and efficient service offer for children and young people. The outlined option appraisal is set out below.

Other Options Considered

- 15 The review has considered a number of options with the recommended option being option 2.

Option	Impact	Risk
Do nothing, do not reprocure contracts for this area.	<p>The council will be at significant risk of non-compliance with its legal obligations. Future service demand/needs for children may not be met.</p> <p>No change in the current pathway for 16-25 year old cared for and care leavers. Unsuitable, unregistered or poor quality accommodation may need to be used for this group.</p>	<p>Continued high costs against the children's social care budget. Reputational damage and higher spot purchase costs through Placements Northwest framework. No offer to post 18 year olds meaning they potentially remain in high cost Ofsted Regulated placements.</p>
<p>Commission a range of accommodation with support options for 16-18, 18 plus, UASC and Supported Lodgings.</p> <p>Continued investment in Project Manager post in Children's Commissioning for first 3 years of the contract.</p>	<p>The broad offer of accommodation with support for 16-25 year old will see the Council using block arrangements ensuring value for money and young people accommodated within borough.</p> <p>The likely impact will be that young people are supported in the right place and the right time.</p> <p>The likely impact will be that young people are better supported to independence with the overall outcome being their own independent tenancy.</p> <p>New beds mobilised and occupancy levels would be consistently high (95-100%) achieving best possible outcomes and savings.</p> <p>Legal compliance with statutory obligations</p>	<p>Young people will need to be carefully managed through the pathway to ensure that block arrangements are utilised.</p> <p>Future demand is unknown as far as numbers of children in care and care leavers requiring accommodation with support. The contract of 5 plus 1 plus 1 requires careful management and annual reviews to ensure that commissioned capacity is matched to demand.</p> <p>Without continued contract management, beds would not be mobilised and occupancy levels fall under 85% failing to deliver anticipated savings.</p>
Utilise the Placements Northwest framework only	<p>Limited number of providers to choose from with higher costs for spot purchased placements.</p> <p>A loss of opportunity with local providers who can provide efficiencies and savings. No change in the current pathway for 16-25 year old cared for and care leavers.</p>	<p>Would not realise the saving benefits.</p> <p>Would be more barriers for children accessing the service. Reduces the opportunities to ensure the service is fit for the future and can meet the growing demands of cared for and care leavers.</p>

Implications and Comments

Monitoring Officer/Legal

- 16 The committee is responsible for those services which help keep children and young people safe and enable them to achieve their full potential, including oversight of children who are cared for by the local authority and for whom the Council has corporate parenting responsibility, including care leavers, in accordance with the Children Act 1989 & all subsequent legislation. The report also deals appropriately with the Cheshire East Plan, the ILACs improvement plan and the impact on the Council's budget.
- 17 Whilst this report is before the Children and Families Committee, as the matters in the report currently also fall within the remit of Adults and Health Committee, it is noted that the Committee has been consulted in line with the Constitution, which provides that the Chair or any other member of Adults and Health committee may attend the meeting to speak on this item and the Chair of the Children and Families Committee will exercise their discretion in favour of allowing them to do so, subject to time constraints and the effective conduct of the meeting.
- 18 Legal and procurement advice and support will be with a view to ensuring that the procuring and award of the supported accommodation contracts is in line with the Councils contract procedure rules and relevant procurement legislative requirements.

Section 151 Officer/Finance

- 19 The financial implication of this report varies depending on the mix of purchased beds between block and split rates in the proposal. Year 2 begins to demonstrate a significant change in overspend to budget.
- 20 The risk of a timely transition to the new block beds may result in occupancy rates of block beds being lower and spot beds being higher for longer which are at a higher cost. A further consideration is the likelihood of delays in movement on from supported accommodation which will increase demand above capacity, creating insufficient accommodation for future demand.
- 21 The risk of an occupancy rate of 85% results in an overspend in all 3 years as included in the table below. This risk will be managed by the service area via contract monitoring meetings, expectation is occupancy would be running at 95%-100%.

Scenario Underoccupancy Block 15% - assuming still placed in spot			
	2026-27 £m	2027-28 £m	2028-29 £m
Block	1.9	2.9	3.9
Spot	6.6	4.7	2.6
Total Supported Accommodation	8.57	7.66	6.49
Block	66	92	126
Spot	89	65	33
Total Supported Accommodation	155	157	159
Budget (Subject to MTFS Item 26T - £1.1m Budget Saving in 2025-26 and a further £0.7m in 2026-27)	6.6	6.6	6.6
Comparison to Budget	1.97	1.06	-0.11

- 22 Assuming start date 1 July 2026 is achieved, Year 1 continues to show an overspend.
- 23 Inflation has been excluded from all years relating to current commitment and future costed contract arrangements.
- 24 The budgets stated are excluding any cross-directorate savings yet to be allocated.
- 25 This project supports MTFS 26T, to reduce costs in relation to accommodation with support offer for 16-25 young people, which is scheduled to generate a saving £1.1m 2025/26 and £0.7m in 2026/27. This financial saving is only achieved in year 3 with a cost of £5.0m against a budget of £6.6m.
- 26 The transformation project is combining this MTFS saving with 2 others and progress outturn will be managed together (26T 27T 28T total saving of £2.92m).
- 27 The paper proposal does not provide any savings for the current year, 2025/26, budget: an early forecast included in the FR1 position in July projected an overspend of £2.4m.

	2025-26 (As is) £m	2026-27 £m	2027-28 £m	2028-29 £m
Block	1.1	1.9	2.9	3.9
Spot	8.2	6.1	3.7	1.2
Total Supported Accommodation	9.28	8.03	6.64	5.09
Block	50	66	92	126
Spot	97	84	58	24
Total Supported Accommodation	147	150	150	150
Budget (Subject to MTFS Item 26T - £1.1m Budget Saving in 2025-26 and a further £0.7m in 2026-27)	7.3	6.6	6.6	6.6
Comparison to Budget	1.97	1.42	0.04	-1.51

- 28 This will be offset by the grant contribution for UASC and LC from the Home Office. The UASC increased rate of £143pn and LC £270 per week.
- 29 Contract values will be included in the future budgets which are targeting to reduce level of costs in future years until reach MTFS level in 2028/29.
- 30 This is an alternative accommodation provision and not an additional provision in order to achieve savings included in the MTFS and reduce current spending levels.
- 31 As this currently stands, a contract cannot be awarded until an appropriate budget for 2026/27 and onwards has been provided. This will need to be undertaken prior to the Recommendations being implemented.

Policy

- 32 The Cheshire East Plan 2025-29 has 3 main commitments under its vision enabling prosperity and wellbeing for all in Cheshire East:
- Commitment 1: Unlocking prosperity for all
 - Commitment 2: Improving health and wellbeing
 - Commitment 3: An effective and enabling council
- 33 Commitment 2 - Children and young people thrive and reach their potential with targeted support when and where they need it and highlights the need to deliver the priorities in the Cared for Children and Care Leavers Strategy 2022-26 [Cared for leavers strategy \(cheshireeast.gov.uk\)](https://www.cheshireeast.gov.uk/cared-for-leavers-strategy)
- 34 Our mission is to provide the right accommodation and support to our Children in Care and Care Experienced Young People, preventing homelessness and ensuring our young people have the best life chances. Our supported accommodation model will be specifically designed for care leavers aged 16-25, focusing on achieving key outcomes such as Education, Employment,

Training (EET), and Independence. This initiative is structured around a variety of property types and support levels to meet diverse needs across the borough. It will also provide stable housing and tailored support to help young adults transition smoothly into independent living.

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

- 35 All public sector authorities are bound by the Public Sector Equality Duty as set out in section 149 of the Equality Act 2010. A refreshed Equality Impact Assessment will be completed for the overarching review/recommission of the Supported Accommodation offer for 16–25-year-olds.

Human Resources

- 36 There is no direct impact on any Cheshire East Council employees.
- 37 Employees of the two current contracted providers are on terms and conditions relevant to their respective employer and may be eligible for TUPE. During the tender all applicants will have access to a full list of the eligible employees. There is an extended period of contract mobilisation to allow time for the TUPE transfer to take place.

Risk Management

- 38 Risk, Issues and Change Logs have already been established as part of the Stabilisation workstream and are maintained and managed by the Delivery Lead and Project Support Team. If risks are required to be escalated these will be highlighted on agreed reporting framework and through the approved governance.

Rural Communities

- 39 There are no direct implications for rural communities.

Children and Young People including Cared for Children, care leavers and Children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND)

- 40 There are direct, significant and lasting implications for children in care and care leavers when delivering supported accommodation and independent living. Supported accommodation and independent living is an essential service for our care leavers which supports effective pathways to independence, tenancy readiness and the ability to secure and sustain good quality accommodation that is local to their community and is safe.

Public Health

- 41 Cared for children and Care Leavers are more at risk of health inequalities than their peers. The proposals are expected to improve the awareness and

response in respect of these health needs, with support staff from Apollo and the YMCA working towards improved outcomes.

Climate Change

- 42 The recommendation will ensure that the maximum number of cared for children and care leavers will live in local areas ensuring the travel of young people themselves, their social worker and support team is reduced therefore having a positive impact on the Council's carbon footprint. The service provider will be expected to work with care leavers to improve their independent living skills, which should include reducing energy consumption.

Consultation

Name of Consultee	Post held	Date sent	Date returned
<i>Statutory Officer (or deputy) :</i>			
Ashley Hughes	S151 Officer	22/08/25	26/08/25
Kevin O'Keefe	Director of Law and Governance (Monitoring Officer)	22/08/25	29/08/25
<i>Legal and Finance</i>			
Jennie Summers	Acting Head of Legal Services	24/07/25	28/07/25
Diane Green	Finance Manager; Children's services	24/07/25	28/07/25
Kathy Oliver	Principle Accountant, Children's Services	29/08/25	29/08/25
<i>Other Consultees:</i>			
<i>Executive Directors/Directors</i>	Dawn Godfrey, Executive Director of Children's Services	06/08/25	01/09/25
	Tracy Stephen, Director of Children's Social Care	06/08/25	06/08/25

Access to Information	
Contact Officer:	Martyn Baggaley Martyn.baggaley@cheshireeast.gov.uk
Appendices:	<p>Appendix 1 – Consultation & Engagement Summary</p> <p>Appendix 2 - Commissioning Approach and Financial Modelling</p> <p>Appendix 3 – Comments & Feedback (with responses) from Adults & Health Committee Members following briefing on 19/08/25</p>

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Appendix 1 – Accommodation with Support for 16-25 year old Cared for Children, Care leavers, and Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children and Young People.

Consultation and Engagement summary

- 1 During the review of the supported accommodation offer the Council has consulted and engaged with care leavers, providers of supported accommodation, professionals and other local authorities to shape the future intentions of a commissioned offer. During the evaluation stage of the recommissioning, we are hopeful that our Care Leaver Ambassador will form part of an interview panel for prospective providers, where their scores will be included in the award of future contracts.
- 2 The consultation and engagement included the following activities:
 - a) The Council gathered care leaver feedback in collaboration with the Youth Support Participation Team, a Care Leaver Ambassador and Care Leaver Service via a Care Leaver Survey.
 - b) The Care Leaver Survey was shared with commissioned providers, the Care Leaver Service and Pure Insight who are the current contracted provider for Care Leaver Mentoring.
 - c) The Children's Commissioning Team have consulted and engaged with providers of supported accommodation via a Market Engagement questionnaire.
 - d) Since the last report was presented to Children and Families Committee on the 9th June 2025, Children's Commissioning have carried out further consultation with providers of supported accommodation using the original Market Engagement questionnaire.
- 3 Additional feedback has been gathered from the Local Offer review in 2024, where care leavers highlighted pathway plans, housing, preparing for adulthood and specific support areas i.e. financial, mental health, life skills as areas of need.
- 4 Results from both surveys were mixed, with 28 responses for the Care Leaver Survey and 41 responses for the Provider Market Engagement questionnaire.
- 5 The Care Leaver Survey highlighted the below themes in response to how the current service could be enhanced:
 - a) **Independence preparation should be gradual and start before the age of 16**, with support from foster carers, residential staff, and semi-independent housing providers. This could include skills-building around managing a household, cooking, and budgeting.
 - b) There should be **more housing options available to young people** and in the areas that they want to live. There needs to be better understanding and support with the Cheshire Homechoice process. A

dedicated housing officer within the team could act as a mediator between the Leaving Care Service and Housing.

- c) Young people told us they would like **‘trainer flats’ that are semi-independent. Shared living/accommodation with support are also highlighted, sharing with 1-3 people to learn new skills together.**
- d) Young people feel that they require **supported accommodation until they are mentally, physically and financially ready to move on.** This could take anywhere between 12 months to a few years.
- e) Young people would **like to be close to town centres** i.e. Crewe, Congleton, Macclesfield which include colleges/education settings.
- f) Young people told us that a good service offers support, with appropriate staffing levels and prepares them for independence. 24/7 access to support was also highlighted to help with feeling isolated. Mental health support in becoming ‘adult’ ready was highlighted within the responses.

6 The Provider Market Engagement questionnaire highlighted the below responses:

- a) All providers that completed the questionnaire told us that they would be interested in delivering across Cheshire East, but this would be mainly dependent on suitable accommodation being readily available, and funding available with the contract.
- b) The types of accommodation that could be achievable are Semi-independent living (16–18-year-olds) including 24/7 onsite support, Independent Living (18-21 years old) with lower less intensive support and Full Independence (21-25 years old) with mentoring and aftercare support. Emergency accommodation with specific move on plans would also be achievable within the right budget.
- c) By providing tailored accommodation, preventative support, person-centred planning through the correct pathways, and strong partnerships, providers can ensure that young people in Cheshire East are supported to avoid homelessness and achieve the best possible life chances.
- d) Every young person should receive an initial assessment, shaping their personalised support plan ensuring their participation, with regular weekly key working sessions to track progress. More formal reviews at intervals agreed with the young person would work towards positive transition to adulthood.
- e) Mental Health and Wellbeing Team, who support trauma-informed practice and good connection to specialist agencies.
- f) Challenges that providers will face include demand and capacity issues, with the rising numbers of care leavers and UASC putting

pressure on available placements, availability of suitable properties, sustainable funding – longer term contracts would be beneficial for providers to build a sustainable offer.

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Appendix 2 - Commissioning arrangements & Financial Modelling

- 1 The below proposal was agreed at Children and Families Committee on the 9th June 2025.

Table 1 – Split of block and spot purchased beds 2026/27 to 2028/29

	2025-26 (Current) £m	2026-27 £m	2027-28 £m	2028-29 £m
Block	0.9	2.2	2.9	3.9
Spot	7.8	5.8	3.9	1.5
Total Supported Accommodation	8.70	8.02	6.88	5.38
Block	40	66	92	126
Spot	103	80	54	20
Total Supported Accommodation	143	146	146	146
Budget (Subject to MTFS Item 26T - £1.1m Budget Saving in 2025-26 and a further £0.7m in 2026-27)	7.3	6.6	6.6	6.6
Comparison to Budget	1.39	1.42	0.28	-1.22

- 2 The table below outlines the projected spend across Supported Accommodation for years 1 to 3 of the new proposed block commission. The current spend for this cohort is £9.3m against a budget of £7.3m. Budget reduces to £6.6m with the MTFS adjustment for 2026/27.

	2025-26 (As is) £m	2026-27 £m	2027-28 £m	2028-29 £m
Block	1.1	1.9	2.9	3.9
Spot	8.2	6.1	3.7	1.2
Total Supported Accommodation	9.28	8.03	6.64	5.09
Block	50	66	92	126
Spot	97	84	58	24
Total Supported Accommodation	147	150	150	150
Budget (Subject to MTFS Item 26T - £1.1m Budget Saving in 2025-26 and a further £0.7m in 2026-27)	7.3	6.6	6.6	6.6
Comparison to Budget	1.97	1.42	0.04	-1.51

- 3 The above block purchase figures for 2026/27, 2027/28 and 2028/29 are based on feedback from provider market engagement and system stabilisation work that has taken place over the last 12-15 months with contracted providers.
- 4 The above shows a projected spend of £8m in 2026/27, £6.6m in 2027/28 and £5.1m in 2028/29 when the block contract is at capacity. By year three the block contract proposes to save £1.5m against budget for 2028/29.

- 5 The table below shows the anticipated spend for each part of the commission, this includes a deduction for Housing Benefit claims for eligible 18+ young people and accommodation voids:

Figure Two – Target Model for Supported Accommodation					
Spend Provider	Proposed			Housing Benefit	Notes
	Value	No. of Beds	Avg Cost per week		
Emergency beds for 16/17	£ 125,136	3	£ 800.00	0	
Emergency beds for post 18	£ 93,852	3	£ 600.00	50% of rent/support	£800 costs 50% EHB claim, account for voids
New offer for Care Leavers 18+ (50% migrant YP)	£ 1,251,360	60	£ 400.00	50% of rent/support	£800 costs 50% EHB claim
16/17 Supported Accommodation Beds	£ 1,668,480	40	£ 800.00	0	Average rate across borough
New UASC 16/17	£ 782,100	20	£ 750.00		Apollo Costs
NEW COMMISSION SPEND	£ 3,920,928				

- 6 Contract management of 126 new beds will require continued investment within the Children's Commissioning Team from 1 April 2026, for the initial 3 years of the new contract(s). This will ensure beds are mobilised and occupancy levels achieve 95-100%. Currently, a Project Manager post is leading on the recommission funded from the ILACS Improvement budget, however this post ends on 31 March 2026.
- 7 **Risk:** The Project Manager currently allocated to this project will be leaving Cheshire East Council on the 31st August 2025. This project will require a new Project Manager to oversee the procurement exercise, mobilisation and continued active management of the new contract(s).
- 8 The table below shows the cost of continued investment of a Project Manager role in Children's Commissioning to mobilise, develop and maximise service delivery:

2026-27	2027-28	2028-29	Total Cost
£ 75,507	£ 77,394	£ 79,329	232,230
* Based on 3.2% uplift in 2025/26 and 2.5% uplift in future years			
* Penultimate SCP Grade 11 1.00 FTE			

- 9 The above table slightly affects the savings against the supported accommodation budget. By year three the block contract still proposes to save £1.4m against budget for 2028/29.
- 10 The current funding rates (subject to confirmation for 2025/26) for the UASC cohort are £143 per night for eligible under 18's, and £270 per week for those aged 18 - 21 (or 25 if in education or training) for eligible care leavers, based on 2024–25 figures. It is important to note that this funding is intended not only to cover accommodation and support costs, but also to contribute towards direct staffing expenses and overheads incurred by the council in supporting these young people. However, in practice, the grant does not fully

cover all associated costs. To address this, a base budget of £1.6 million has been allocated to support this cohort.

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Appendix 3: Comments received on Accommodation with Support for 16-25 year olds commission following Adults Committee Member briefing on August 19th 2025.

Cllr John Place asked about the split of 126 beds proposed and what number had this increased from.

Response: The number of block commissioned beds will increase from the current level of 40 to 126 by 2028-29 of the 3 year programme, with the expectation we will have 66 block beds available by 2026-27, 92 by 2027-28, and the full 126 by 2028-29. The full breakdown of beds by 2028-29 would be expected to be as below:

LOT 1 - Supported Accommodation for 16-17-year-olds – North Cheshire East – 16 beds including 1 emergency

LOT 2 - Supported Accommodation for 16-17-year-olds – South Cheshire East – 27 beds including 2 emergency

LOT 3 - Supported Accommodation for 18-25-year-olds – North Cheshire East – 21 beds including 1 emergency

LOT 4 - Supported Accommodation for 18-25-year-olds – South Cheshire East – 42 beds including 2 emergency

LOT 5 - Supported Accommodation for Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children 16–17-year-olds – ALL Cheshire East – 20 beds

Cllr Janet Clowes referred to the age assessment for unaccompanied children asylum seekers to make sure that they were in fact 16/17-year-old and how it was working.

Response: This is undoubtedly an area of focus at present, and unaccompanied asylum seekers who claim to be under 18 but would appear to be rather older will be required to undertake Age Assessments. These must be undertaken by two qualified Social Workers, who have specific training in this discipline, and these are observed formally by an independent person (from a commissioned provider) who must attend to ensure a fair, objective and open approach is taken. Where reasonable doubt exists as to the presenting young person being under 18 they are then managed through the Adult pathway for asylum seekers.

Cllr Janet Clowes asked what happened if we did not get organisations taking up the tenders for providing the supported accommodation as was a specialist area and registered landlords not always interested and some of the accommodation needed to be Ofsted registered.

Response: We will ensure through the tender process we secure providers that have the appropriate legal registrations in place for each need group, as they do vary by age and status. Both our current providers have the necessary registrations in place and market development work through the autumn with the wider provider community will help make sure we fully engage with providers with those registrations confirmed, or in the advanced stages of approval. Only providers that are registered with Ofsted (for 16-17 year olds) or who are Registered Housing Providers (for over 18's) will be

contracted. We do know from Market Engagement work already conducted that a viable provider market exists for the accommodation with support we are seeking.

Cllr John Place asked if the provision of a set amount of money to a person to enable them to access B&B accommodation for a short period of time and also if would be possible for volunteers to provide a room in their house to provide temporary accommodation.

Response: Opportunity to discuss this further with Cllr Place at the Adults Members briefing was limited by the available time, but we would like to explore this further with him to identify potential approaches. These may sit outside of the provision being commissioned that is the subject of this paper, but undoubtedly have merit in looking at ways to prevent avoidable care admissions, and supporting young people into successful independent adulthood.

OPEN

Children and Families Committee

15 September 2025

First Financial Review of 2025/26

Report of: Executive Director of Resources, Section 151 Officer

Report Reference No: CF/02/25-26

Ward(s) Affected: Not applicable

For Decision or Scrutiny: Both

Purpose of Report

- 1 This report provides the current forecast outturn for the financial year 2025/26 based on our income, expenditure and known commitments as at the end of June 2025. It also identifies actions that are being taken to address adverse variances to urgently address our financial sustainability.
- 2 The report provides the forecast outturn for all services, to provide Members with contextual information on the position for the whole Council. Members are asked to focus their scrutiny on the forecasts and supporting information relating to services within the remit of the Committee whilst understanding the overall context.
- 3 The report highlights any changes and external pressures that are impacting the Council since setting the budget in February 2025.
- 4 As set out in previous Financial Reviews, the requirement to continue to identify further actions to bring the Council back to a position where we are living within our means remains, and it will be important that these actions are closely monitored, and appropriate action taken to manage our resources. This report includes information on the actions that are currently underway.
- 5 Reporting the financial forecast outturn at this stage, and in this format, supports the Council's vision of being an effective and enabling Council as set out in the Cheshire East Plan 2025-2029.
- 6 The report also requests member approval for amendments to the Council's budget in line with authorisation levels within the Constitution.

- 7 The full report to Finance Sub Committee on 10 September 2025 includes additional information on debt, Council Tax and Business Rates collection, Treasury Management and Prudential Indicators. The report can be found here: [Finance Sub Committee meeting 10/9/2025](#)

Executive Summary

- 8 This is the First Financial Review monitoring report (FR1), showing the forecast outturn position for the 2025/26 financial year.
- 9 The report provides the current forecast outturn position for the revenue budget, capital budget and Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) for the financial year 2025/26 based on our income, expenditure and known commitments as at the end of June 2025.
- 10 The First Financial Review (FR1) forecast revenue outturn is an **adverse variance of £3.1m** (after the application of planned use of conditional Exceptional Financial Support **£25.3m** as set out in the approved budget in February 2025). Further details are shown in **Table 1** in paragraph 23.
- 11 All Directorates continue to work on mitigation plans to improve the overall forecast overspend position and in doing so, are highlighting any risks associated with mitigations currently reflected in the reported £3.1m overspend.
- 12 The value of additional mitigation plans not yet reflected as delivered at FR1 are estimated at £2.8m, giving a potential improved overall forecast of £0.3m overspend. However, should the current mitigations included in the FR1 forecast not materialise, alongside further risks identified, then the forecast overspend position could increase to £18.7m adverse. Further updates will be provided at FR2.
- 13 Each Directorate have plans underway to deliver approved budget changes (growth and savings) identified as part of the 2025/26 approved budget per MTFS line – see paragraph 31 below and **Annex 1, Section 2** of the report.
- 14 The opening DSG deficit is £112.1m with an in-year projected movement of £33.5m to forecast a year end deficit of £145.6m – refer to paragraphs 40-42 for further details. Further reporting on the DSG Management Plan is being taken to the next Children's and Families Committee which outlines the plan to stabilise the DSG and start reducing the deficit.
- 15 The capital programme for the current year is forecasting expenditure of £205.5m in year, an underspend of £3m against a budget of £208.4m at Outturn. This is an increase against the approved MTFS budget of £173m due to increases in Supplementary Capital Estimates (SCEs) of £22.3m as well as some reprofiling of projects.

- 16 The overall forecast revenue overspend of £3.1m remains a significant financial challenge for the Council when considered in addition to the planned use of Exceptional Financial Support (EFS) of £25.3m. Reserves at out-turn were £29.4m, being £6.3m of General Fund Reserves and £23.1m of Earmarked Reserves. A planned net use of Earmarked Reserves and the General Fund Reserve is forecast at £3.3m leaving £26.1m total available reserves. The Council's level of reserves is therefore insufficient to cover the current forecast revenue outturn for the year without further action. Further details are also available in the following Annexes to the main report.

Annex 1: Detailed First Financial Review 2025/26

- **Section 1** 2025/26 Forecast Outturn
- **Section 2** 2025/26 Directorate Revenue Commentary and update on 2025/26 Approved Budget Change Items
- **Section 3** Revenue Grants for approval
- **Section 4** Capital
- **Section 5** Reserves

Annex 2: Detailed Capital Programme 2025/26

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Children and Families Committee to:

1. Review the factors leading to a forecast adverse Net Revenue financial pressure of £3.1m against a revised budget of £440.5m (0.7%). To scrutinise the contents of **Annex 1, Section 2** and review progress on the delivery of the MTFS approved budget policy change items, the RAG ratings and latest forecasts, and to understand the actions to be taken to address any adverse variances from the approved budget.
2. Review the in-year forecast capital spending of £205.5m against an increased capital budget of £208.5m. This was adjusted at outturn following an approved MTFS budget of £173m.
3. Approve the Supplementary Revenue Estimate Requests for Allocation of Additional Grant Funding over £500,000 and up to £1,000,000 as per **Annex 1, Section 3, Table 2**.
4. Note the available reserves position as per **Annex 1, Section 5**.

Background

- 17 The Council operates a financial cycle of planning, review, management and reporting. This report ensures that we review where we are and provide a forecast outturn position for the 2025/26 financial year, whilst also identifying the actions that need to be taken to manage our overall resources. The information in this report also supports planning for next year's budget by identifying issues that may have medium term impacts.
- 18 The Council set its 2025/26 annual budget in February 2025. The budget was balanced, as required by statute, with planned use of EFS, by way of a capitalisation direction, totalling £25.3m, plus £24.3m of transformation savings to achieve in year, and included important assumptions about spending in the year. The budget is part of the Medium-Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) 2025 to 2029.
- 19 This single view of the financial picture of the Council provides the overall financial context.
- 20 The management structure of the Council is organised into the following directorates:
 - Adults, Health and Integration
 - Children's Services
 - Place
 - Resources
 - Chief Executive's Office
 - Governance, Compliance and Monitoring
- 21 The Council's reporting structure provides forecasts of a potential year-end outturn within each directorate during the year, as well as highlighting activity carried out in support of each outcome contained within the Cheshire East Plan. Budget holders are responsible for ensuring they manage their resources in line with the objectives of the Council and within the approved budget.
- 22 For the purposes of each committee, these directorate budgets are aligned to a specific committee and the appendices to this report provide information at a level that should enable the committee to scrutinise the causes of any variations in budget and appropriate actions needed to bring the Council back into line in terms of managing its resources.

2025/26 Revenue Outturn – Financial Review 1 (FR1)

- 23 Overall, the First Financial Review (FR1) forecast revenue outturn is an **adverse variance of £3.1m** (after the application of planned use of conditional Exceptional Financial Support **£25.3m** as set out in the approved budget in February 2025). Further details are shown in **Table 1 below**.

Table 1 2025/26 FR1	Revised Budget £m	Forecast Outturn £m	Forecast Variance £m
Service Committee			
Adults and Health	167.257	166.962	(0.295)
Children and Families	97.352	106.350	8.998
Corporate Policy	43.671	43.734	0.062
Corporate Policy- Cross Transformation	(13.452)	(3.821)	9.631
Economy Growth	28.741	26.456	(2.285)
Environment and Communities	43.670	41.125	(2.545)
Highways and Transport	17.151	17.265	0.114
Total Service Budgets	384.390	398.071	13.681
Finance Sub:			
Central Budgets	56.068	45.535	(10.533)
Funding	(415.197)	(415.197)	-
Total Finance Sub	(359.129)	(369.662)	(10.533)
Exceptional Financial Support	(25.261)	(25.261)	-
TOTAL	0.0	3.147	3.147

- 24 All Directorates continue to work on mitigation plans to improve the overall forecast overspend position and in doing so, are highlighting any risks associated with mitigations currently reflected in the reported £3.1m overspend.
- 25 The value of additional mitigation plans not yet reflected as delivered at FR1 are estimated at £2.8m, giving a potential improved overall forecast of £0.3m overspend (see Optimistic forecast Table 2). However, should the current mitigations included in £3.1m FR1 forecast not materialise, then the pessimistic forecast position could increase to £18.7m (see Table 3). Further updates will be provided at FR2.

26 Table 2 Optimistic position

Table 2 – Optimistic position 2025/26 FR1	Revised Budget £m	Forecast Outturn £m	Forecast Variance £m
Service Committee			
Adults and Health	167.257	166.562	(0.695)
Children and Families	97.352	105.050	7.698
Corporate Policy	43.671	43.734	0.062
Corporate Policy- Cross Transformation	(13.452)	(3.821)	9.631
Economy Growth	28.741	26.456	(2.285)
Environment and Communities	43.670	40.125	(3.545)
Highways and Transport	17.151	17.265	0.114
Total Service Budgets	384.390	395.371	10.980
Finance Sub:			
Central Budgets	56.068	45.400	(10.668)
Funding	(415.197)	(415.197)	-
Total Finance Sub	(359.129)	(369.797)	(10.668)
Exceptional Financial Support	(25.261)	(25.261)	-
TOTAL	0.0	0.313	0.313

27 **Table 3 Pessimistic position**

Table 3 – Pessimistic position 2025/26 FR1	Revised Budget (NET) £m	Forecast Outturn £m	Forecast Variance £m
Service Committee			
Adults and Health	167.257	171.862	4.605
Children and Families	97.352	108.050	10.698
Corporate Policy	43.671	43.734	0.062
Corporate Policy- Cross Transformation	(13.452)	(0.821)	12.631
Economy Growth	28.741	26.456	(2.285)
Environment and Communities	43.670	41.525	(2.145)
Highways and Transport	17.151	17.265	0.114
Total Service Budgets	384.390	408.071	23.681
Finance Sub:			
Central Budgets	56.068	51.083	(4.985)
Funding	(415.197)	(415.197)	-
Total Finance Sub	(359.129)	(364.114)	(4.985)
Exceptional Financial Support	(25.261)	(25.261)	-
TOTAL	0.0	18.696	18.696

- 28 As indicated above in Table 1, the forecast overspend of £3.1m remains a significant financial challenge for the Council when considered in addition to the planned use of EFS of £25.3m. Reserves levels are insufficient to cover this level of overspending and should not be used as an alternative to undelivered savings or management actions to constrain and contain in-year pressures. Any drawdown in year to fund unmitigated pressures is not a sustainable approach and will take the Council further into financial distress.
- 29 The key areas causing an overspend at FR1 include a projected overspend of £9.0m within Children and Families, this is largely due to increased costs of placements (£6.4m adverse) and staffing (£2.2m). A shortfall of £9.7m is forecast against in-year cross-directorate Transformation savings, details of all Transformation related savings can be found in paragraphs 47-50 below.
- 30 Offsetting these pressures, there is a favourable variance of £4.7m within the Place Directorate due to vacancy management and various one-off income items expected in year. The contingency budget is contributing a

further £7.2m to the overspend position (including the use of £1.6m to cover the pay inflation pressure), whilst interest and Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP) are forecast to be £3.3m under budget due to lower than expected borrowing, increased levels of investment and slippage in the capital programme. More detailed narrative explanations of variances are included in Section 2 of Annex 1.

Overall mitigations planned to manage pressures

- 31 Work is underway across all Services to look at mitigating actions which can be taken to reduce the forecast position in-year, some of the actions below have contributed to date or are being considered:
- Line-by-line reviews of all budgets to further identify immediately any underspends and/or additional funding.
 - Actively manage vacancies, particularly agency usage and reduce any overspends on staffing as soon as possible.
 - Review the borrowing elements of the capital programme to minimise the minimum revenue provision and interest payable.
 - Review of capital receipts available and potential surplus assets that can be sold (for best consideration).
 - Children & Families – reviewing costs of placements, establishment reviews, Reunification of children, and Work on Edge of Care Service proposals to identify early intervention and cost reduction.
 - Place Services – mitigations in year through further vacancy management, reducing expenditure and maximising funding opportunities.
 - Corporate – Vacancy management.
 - Finance Sub – potential further bad debt reviews generating one-off in year contributions to assist in reducing the in year overspend and review/reset process moving forward.
 - Contingency Budget - the remaining balance of £5.7m (after general pay inflation pressure of £1.6m) has been released from Contingency to support the overall Council over commitment.

Capital Programme

- 32 The MTFS budget of £173m was set at Full Council in February 2025. Following that approval, and the completion of the outturn position of 2024/25, the MTFS position was increased to £208.4m. This was driven by increases in Supplementary Capital Estimates (SCEs) of £22.3m as well as some reprofiling of projects.

- 33 The FR1 forecast position for capital spending for 2025/26 indicates forecast capital expenditure of £205.5m against the revised MTFS budget of £208.4m, showing a small forecast underspend.
- 34 **Table 4 below** sets out the capital programme position for 2025/26 as at FR1:

Capital 2025/26	Actuals FR1	Forecast Spend	Funded by:					Total
			Government Grants	External Contributions	Revenue Contributions	Capital Receipts	Prudential Borrowing	
	£m	£m	£m	£m	£m	£m	£m	£m
Adults and Health	-	0.132	0.132	-	-	-	-	0.132
Children and Families	0.030	47.746	39.054	6.812	-	0.050	1.830	47.746
Corporate Policy	1.014	16.481	-	-	-	-	16.481	16.481
Economy & Growth	3.036	44.420	23.082	1.394	0.183	0.328	19.433	44.420
Environment & Communities	0.451	24.371	8.340	1.193	0.647	-	14.191	24.371
Highways & Transport	4.730	72.392	57.795	4.762	-	0.825	9.010	72.393
Total	9.261	206.541	128.403	14.161	0.830	1.203	60.945	205.543

- 35 Detailed Committee tables are set out in **Annex 2**.
- 36 A full update is being provided to the Capital Programme Board.
- 37 Changes to the capital programme will impact the capital financing budget in year through the costs of interest payable where borrowing is incurred. Minimum Revenue Provision (repayments for the capital borrowing) impacts in subsequent years once an asset has become operational. Therefore, reductions in borrowing achieved through capital programme budget changes, whether through delay, budget reduction or alternative sources of financing, will be reflected in the revenue position each year in the MTFS for 2025-29 and beyond.
- 38 The current Capital programme remains unaffordable and ongoing scrutiny of the capital programme will be undertaken by the Capital Programme Board.
- 39 The current forecast for achievable capital receipts in year is £1m at FR1 – in line with budget - however further receipts are in the pipeline and a further update will be provided at FR2. Any additional receipts above budget can be used to reduce revenue pressures from borrowing in year or could be used to assist with funding of transformation activity.

Dedicated School Grant

- 40 The key pressure on DSG relates to the high needs block where SEND service continues to see a significant increase in the number of pupils with an Educational Health Care Plans (EHCPs), and the associated school placement costs. The deficit in 2024/25 was an improvement on the budget gap, the in-year pressure being £33.5m increasing the cumulative deficit

balance to £112.1m with an additional £1.6m Early Years payback increasing the cumulative deficit to £113.7m.

- 41 The cumulative deficit is currently being managed by an accounting override, which has recently been extended until 2028, allowing it to be treated as an un-usable reserve. At this stage the position is not recoverable unless there are significant changes to funding, national policy and demand. The cumulative deficit position is adding to the pressures of the Council as borrowing is required to cover the cumulative deficit which results in annual interest costs of around £5.6m in 2024/25 with an estimated cost of £5.8m in 2025/26.
- 42 The updated DSG Management Plan in July 2025, which will be reported at Children and Families Committee in September 2025, reduces the growth rate of EHCP based on the lower in year deficit at the yearend outturn. The mitigated forecast for 2025/26 is £145.6m (in year position of a deficit of £32.1m) after including mitigations of £14.8m. This plan continues to reduce the previous planned mitigated deficit by 2031/32 from £236.7m to £205.4m.

Progress on delivery of the 2025/26 approved budget change items

- 43 Each Directorate have plans underway to deliver approved budget changes (growth and savings) identified as part of the 2025/26 approved budget per MTFS line – see **Annex 1, Section 2** of the report.
- 44 Table 5 presents a summary of the progress on the delivery of the 2025/26 approved budget change items. For items rated as Amber these are for items where there are risks and/or mitigating actions in place. For items rated as red these are for items where services are projecting an adverse variance and there is risk of in year non delivery/achievement. New mitigation items have also been included that have come forward since the approval of the MTFS to help the in-year position where identified.
- 45 The green and blue columns show budget change items that are either delivered or on track to be delivered or even exceed in some cases. However, there is also a pressure of £23.1m as shown in the red column that has a high risk of not being achieved within this financial year. There are new, in year mitigations of £8.9m, unrelated to the change item rows that have been identified to assist the outturn position. The table overleaf summarises the progress by Committee:

Table 5: Summary of the progress on the delivery of the 2025/26 approved budget change items:

Committee	Approved Change Budget £m	Forecast Outturn £m	Complete £m	Green £m	Amber £m	Red £m	EFS £m	Mitigate £m
Adults & Health	21.494	21.199	(0.737)	20.148	3.350	2.961		(4.523)
Children & Families	8.659	17.657	(0.487)	1.981	0.203	16.033		(0.073)
Corporate Policy	1.078	1.140	(0.726)	0.310	-	1.893		(0.337)
Corporate Policy Cross Transform	(13.452)	(3.821)	-	-	(1.446)	(2.375)		-
Economy & Growth	0.534	(1.751)	(1.009)	0.668	(0.148)	1.187		(2.449)
Env & Communities	(2.741)	(5.286)	(0.159)	(8.048)	0.401	3.324		(0.804)
Highways & Transport	1.061	1.175	0.161	1.667	(0.025)	0.124		(0.752)
Finance Sub - Central	35.294	24.761	16.681	8.080	-	-		-
Finance Sub - Funding	(26.666)	(26.666)	-	(26.666)	-	-		-
Exceptional Financial Support	(25.261)	(25.261)	-	-	-	-	(25.261)	-
TOTAL	-	3.147	13.724	(1.860)	2.335	23.147	(25.261)	(8.938)

46 A complete list of all approved budget change items, with progress noted against each item, can be found in **Annex 1, Section 2**.

Transformation Savings Update

- 47 The FR1 forecast outturn position against the approved Transformation budget changes for 2025/26 is outlined in Table 6 below:

Table 6 - Transformation Budget Saving	Saving included in Council's 2025/26 budget £m	Forecast Outturn position at FR1 £m	(Under)/Over £m
Access to Services & Corporate Core (Cross cutters including Digital/Workforce/3 rd Party Spend/Fees & Charges)	(13.452)	(3.821)	9.631
Service Delivery – Adults Social Care	(7.000)	(7.000)	-
Service Delivery – Children's	(3.788)	(1.368)	2.420
Service Delivery – Place	(0.175)	(0.175)	-
Total	(24.415)	(12.364)	12.051

- 48 The FR1 forecast outturn position against Access to services and Corporate Core projects is outlined below in Table 7:

Table 7 - Transformation Budget Saving	2025/26 Budget £m	2025/26 FR1 £m	2025/26 Variance £m
Digital Customer Enablement Invest	(0.750)	-	0.750
Digital Acceleration – Invest to Save	(0.600)	(0.200)	0.400
Digital Blueprint – Invest to Save	(4.000)	(1.000)	3.000
Fees and Charges	(0.750)	(0.821)	0.071
Third Party Spend	(3.000)	(0.625)	2.375
Target Operating Model (TOM)	(3.000)	(0.999)	2.001
Agency Staffing	(0.352)	(0.176)	0.176
Workforce Productivity	(1.000)	-	1.000
Total	(13.452)	(3.821)	9.631

- 49 Within the cross cutting Corporate Core Programme, the Fees and Charges project has reached agreement with relevant budget holders to deliver savings of £0.821m, which is £0.071m in excess of the £0.750m planned budget saving. Across the other cross cutting projects within the Corporate Core and Access to Services programmes, delays in agreeing

business cases and associated savings mean that the anticipated full year savings can now no longer be delivered in 2025/26. Savings across the Workforce, Digital and Third Party spend projects for the remainder of the financial year are forecast at £3.0m against the budget saving of £12.7m. This forecast is based on a projection of delivery for each project, which collectively results in the achievement of approximately 24% of the 2025/26 budgeted savings.

- 50 The Adults Social Care Transformation programme is forecasting a shortfall of £2.7m against the four Transformation projects but this has been completely offset by in year mitigating actions, with maximisation of client income and management of vacancies the main contributors. The Children's Service Delivery programme is forecasting total savings of £0.5m against savings of £3.8m included in the 2025/26 budget. One off mitigating actions of £0.9m have been identified to date, to reduce the net shortfall to £2.4m.

Revenue Grants for Approval

- 51 Approvals for Supplementary Revenue Estimates for allocation of additional grant funding are detailed in **Annex 1, Section 3**.

Reserves Position

- 52 On 1 April 2025, Earmarked Reserves totalled £23.1m and the General Fund Reserve Balance totalled £6.3m. Of the total earmarked reserves, £3.3m (11.2%) will be spent in 2025/26, on supporting the revenue budget for 2025/26.
- 53 Table 8 below shows the position on reserves forecast level of Earmarked and General reserves by the end of 2025/26.
- 54 As set out in the 2025/26 Budget/MTFS approved in February 2025, the overall level of reserves held by the Council remains insufficient.

Table 8: Total Reserves

Table 8 Earmarked Reserves	Balance at 1 April 2025	Drawdowns to Support Service Expenditure	Additional Contributions to Reserves	Balance Forecast at 31 March 2026
	£m	£m	£m	£m
Earmarked Reserves	(23.114)	14.888	(11.341)	(19.567)
General Fund Reserve	(6.299)	0	(0.186)	(6.485)
Total Usable Reserves	(29.413)	14.888	(11.527)	(26.052)

- 55 The Council is currently forecast to have £26.1m of earmarked reserves at the end of the financial year 2025/26. Of this £3.0m can be considered ringfenced, with specific conditions limiting their use.
- 56 A full list of all earmarked reserves per Committee can be found in **Annex 1, Section 5**.

Consultation and Engagement

- 57 As part of the budget setting process the Pre-Budget engagement process provided an opportunity for interested parties to review and comment on the Council's Budget principles.

Reasons for Recommendations

- 58 The overall process for managing the Council's resources focuses on value for money, good governance and stewardship. The budget and policy framework sets out rules for managing the Council's financial affairs and contains the financial limits that apply in various parts of the Constitution. As part of sound financial management and to comply with the constitution any changes to the budgets agreed by Council in the MTFS require approval in line with the financial limits within the Finance Procedure Rules.
- 59 This report provides strong links between the Council's statutory reporting requirements and the in-year monitoring and management processes for financial and non-financial management of resources.

Other Options Considered

- 60 None. This report is important to ensure Members of the Committee are sighted on the financial pressure the Council is facing and the activity to date to try and mitigate this issue and are given an opportunity to scrutinise this activity and identify any further actions that could be taken to learn to live within our means Do nothing. Impact – Members are not updated on the financial position of the Council. Risks – Not abiding by the Constitution to provide regular reports.

Implications and Comments

Monitoring Officer/Legal/Governance

- 61 The Council must set the budget in accordance with the provisions of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 and approval of a balanced budget each year is a statutory responsibility. Sections 25 to 29 of the Local Government Act 2003 impose duties on the Council in relation to how it

sets and monitors its budget and require the Council to make prudent allowance for the risk and uncertainties in its budget and regularly monitor its finances during the year. The legislation leaves discretion to the Council about the allowances to be made and action to be taken.

- 62 The provisions of section 25 of the Local Government Act 2003, require that, when the Council is making the calculation of its budget requirement, it must have regard to the report of the chief finance (s.151) officer as to the robustness of the estimates made for the purposes of the calculations and the adequacy of the proposed financial reserves.
- 63 The Council should therefore have robust processes in place so that it can meet statutory requirements and fulfil its fiduciary duty. It must ensure that all available resources are directed towards the delivery of statutory functions, savings and efficiency plans. Local authorities are creatures of statute and are regulated through the legislative regime and whilst they have in more recent times been given a general power of competence, this must operate within that regime. Within the statutory framework there are specific obligations placed upon a local authority to support communities. These duties encompass general and specific duties and there is often significant local discretion in respect of how those services or duties are discharged. These will need to be assessed and advised on as each circumstance is considered.
- 64 The financial position of the Council must therefore be closely monitored, and Members must satisfy themselves that sufficient mechanisms are in place to ensure both that savings are delivered and that new expenditure is contained within the available resources. Accordingly, any proposals put forward must identify the realistic measures and mechanisms to produce those savings or alternative mitigations.
- 65 This report provides an update on progress for 2025/26 for all services.
- 66 It also provides updates and comments regarding the Council's use of Exceptional Financial Support under The Levelling-up and Regeneration Act 2023 which inserted an amended Section 12A as a trigger event within the Local Government Act 2003, in relation to capital finance risk management. The legislation also provides for risk mitigation directions to be given to the Council which limit the ability to undertake certain financial action. The limitations are based on identified risk thresholds.

Section 151 Officer/Finance

- 67 The Council's financial resources are agreed by Council and aligned to the achievement of stated outcomes for local residents and communities. Monitoring and managing performance helps to ensure that resources are

used effectively, and that business planning and financial decision making are made in the right context.

- 68 Reserve levels are agreed, by Council, in February each year and are based on a risk assessment that considers the financial challenges facing the Council. If spending associated with in-year delivery of services is not contained within original forecasts for such activity it may be necessary to vire funds from reserves.
- 69 The unplanned use of financial reserves could require the Council to deliver a greater level of future savings to replenish reserve balances and / or revise the level of risks associated with the development of the Reserves Strategy in future.
- 70 As part of the process to produce this report, senior officers review expenditure and income across all services to support the development of mitigation plans that will return the outturn to a balanced position at year-end.
- 71 Forecasts contained within this review provide important information in the process of developing the Medium-Term Financial Strategy. Analysis of variances during the year will identify whether such performance is likely to continue, and this enables more robust estimates to be established.
- 72 The risk associated with the scale of these challenges is that the Council could act illegally, triggering the requirement for a s.114 report from the Chief Financial Officer. Illegal behaviour in this context could materialise from two distinct sources:
 1. Spending decisions could be made that exceed the available resources of the Council. This would unbalance the budget, which is unlawful.
 2. Spending decisions to restrict or hide pressures could be made that avoid an immediate deficit, but in fact are based on unlawful activity.
- 73 The consequences of the Council undermining a budget with illegal activity, or planned illegal activity, is the requirement to issue a s.114 report. Under these circumstances statutory services will continue and existing contracts and commitments must be honoured. But any spending that is not essential or which can be postponed must not take place.
- 74 Further consequences would be highly likely and could include the appointment of Commissioners from the MHCLG, and potential restrictions on the decision-making powers of local leaders.

Human Resources

- 75 This report is a backward look at Council activities at outturn and states the year end position. Any HR implications that arise from activities funded by the budgets that this report deals with will be dealt within the individual reports to Members or Officer Decision Records to which they relate.

Risk Management

- 76 Financial risks are assessed and reported on a regular basis, and remedial action taken if required. Risks associated with the achievement of the 2024/25 budget and the level of general reserves were factored into the 2025/26 financial scenario, budget, and reserves strategy.

Impact on other Committees

- 77 All Committees will receive this financial update report.

Policy

- 78 This report is a backward look at Council activities and predicts the year-end position. It supports the Council's vision of being an effective and enabling Council as set out in the Cheshire East Plan 2025-2029
- 79 The forecast outturn position, ongoing considerations for future years, and the impact on general reserves will be fed into the assumptions underpinning the 2026 to 2030 Medium-Term Financial Strategy.
- 80 The approval of supplementary estimates and virements are governed by the Finance Procedure Rules section of the Constitution.

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

- 81 Any equality implications that arise from activities funded by the budgets that this report deals with will be dealt within the individual reports to Members or Officer Decision Records to which they relate.

Consultation

Name of Consultee	Post held	Date sent	Date returned
Statutory Officer (or deputy):			
Ashley Hughes	S151 Officer	28/08/2025	02/09/2025
Kevin O'Keefe	Director of Law and Governance	28/08/2025	02/09/2025

	(Monitoring Officer)		
Legal and Finance			
Julie Gregory	Legal Manager	28/08/2025	01/09/2025
Other Consultees:			
Executive Directors/Directors:			
CLT			

Access to Information	
Contact Officer:	Chris Benham – Director of Finance Chris.benham@cheshireeast.gov.uk
Appendices:	Annex 1 - Detailed First Financial Review 2025/26: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Section 1 2025/26 Forecast Outturn • Section 2 2025/26 Directorate Revenue Commentary and update on 2025/26 Approved Budget Change Items • Section 3 Revenue Grants for approval • Section 4 Capital • Section 5 Reserves Annex 2 - Detailed Capital Programme 2025/26
Background Papers:	The following are links to key background documents: MTFS 2025-2029



First Financial Review 2025/26

Results to end of June 2025

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Section 1: 2025/26 Forecast Outturn

- 1.1. Table 1 provides a service summary of financial performance based on information available as at the end of June 2025. The current forecast is that services will be £13.7m over budget in the current year.
- 1.2. It also shows that central budgets are forecast to be £10.6m under budget resulting in an overall outturn of £3.1m overspend against a net revenue budget of £440.5m.
- 1.3. The forecast outturn position is based on a full financial management review across all service and reflects the following assumptions:
 - 1 Includes those savings that have been identified as non-achievable though the tracker on our High Level Business Cases (HLBC) with no/some alternative actions currently presented;
 - 2 A review of the on-going impacts of adverse variances identified in 2024/25;
 - 3 Any identified, emerging items of significance:
 - 4 Within Adult Social Care, significant growth is forecast for care costs, less mitigations linked to delivery of savings;
 - 5 Within Children's Services, the rising cost and number of placements is a continuing trend and the Directorate are reviewing governance in this area in order to mitigate the overspend.
 - 6 Forecast impact of the confirmed increased 2025/26 pay award £1.6m (assumed to be covered from the contingency budget);
 - 7 Detailed review of any vacancy underspends in all areas;
 - 8 One-off items that have been identified so far through line by line reviews and/or identification of additional funding that has been announced since the MTFS was set.
 - 9 Mitigation activities delivered or forecast to be delivered by 31 March as reflected in paragraph 28 of the main covering report.
- 1.4 Further items impacting on the level of the Council's balances are detailed in **Section 5**.

Committee	Service Area Tier 3	Revised Budget	Forecast Outturn	Variance
		£m	£m	£'m
Adults and Health	People	0.000	0.000	0.000
Adults and Health	Adults Health & Integration	-5.205	-5.205	0.000
Adults and Health	Communities and Integration Total	3.085	2.640	-0.445
Adults and Health	Integrated Commissioning - MH, LD & Families Total	0.798	0.798	0.000
Adults and Health	Integrated Commissioning - New Models of Care Total	0.000	0.000	0.000
Adults and Health	Integrated Commissioning - Thriving & Prevention Total	1.561	1.636	0.075
Adults and Health	Integrated Urgent Care Total	-8.453	-8.453	0.000
Adults and Health	Adult Safeguarding Total	1.844	1.844	0.000
Adults and Health	Care4CE Total	17.918	17.956	0.038
Adults and Health	Community Care – Short Term Intervention Total	3.254	3.254	0.000
Adults and Health	Community Care – Locality Teams Total	77.742	75.979	-1.763
Adults and Health	Mental Health and Learning Disability Total	75.409	77.209	1.800
Adults and Health	Operations Total	-1.251	-1.251	0.000
Adults and Health	Social Care Reform, Practice Assurance and Development Team Total	0.555	0.555	0.000
Adults and Health	Health Improvement Total	0.394	0.394	0.000
Adults and Health	Health Protection Total	0.000	0.000	0.000
Adults and Health	Infection Prevention & Control Total	0.354	0.354	0.000
Adults and Health	Joint Strategic Needs Assessment Total	0.246	0.246	0.000
Adults and Health	Public Health Total	-0.994	-0.994	0.000
Adults and Health		167.257	166.962	-0.295
Children and Families	Children Prevention and Support Total	0.000	0.000	0.000
Children and Families	Childrens Improvement and Development Total	0.345	0.350	0.004
Children and Families	Early Start Total	2.446	2.398	-0.048
Children and Families	Education and 14-19 Skills Total	-55.251	-55.118	0.133
Children and Families	Education Infrastructure and Outcomes Total	0.498	0.498	0.000
Children and Families	Education Participation and Pupil Support Total	19.758	20.053	0.295
Children and Families	Educational Psychologists Total	1.804	1.804	0.000
Children and Families	Preventative Services Total	4.373	4.128	-0.245
Children and Families	SEND Total	60.531	60.535	0.003
Children and Families	Children's Services Total	1.169	2.398	1.229
Children and Families	Childrens Social Care - Safeguarding Total	2.424	2.433	0.009
Children and Families	Cared for Children Total	9.204	9.250	0.046
Children and Families	Children in Need, Protection and Disabilities Total	9.874	10.821	0.947
Children and Families	Childrens Social Care Total	1.429	1.364	-0.065
Children and Families	Provider Services and Fostering Total	36.447	42.913	6.466
Children and Families	Integrated Front Door & Domestic Abuse Total	2.022	2.194	0.172
Children and Families	Social Worker Academy Total	0.276	0.330	0.054
Children and Families		97.352	106.350	8.998
Corporate Policy	Corporate Total	1.302	0.967	-0.335
Corporate Policy	Customer Services Total	2.671	2.571	-0.100
Corporate Policy	Human Resources Total	2.823	2.583	-0.240
Corporate Policy	Finance Total	5.718	5.718	0.000
Corporate Policy	Procurement Total	0.584	0.554	-0.030
Corporate Policy	Revenues and Benefits - Rent Allowances	1.218	2.475	1.257
Corporate Policy	Revenues and Benefits Other	2.685	2.382	-0.303
Corporate Policy	Digital Total	12.136	12.045	-0.091
Corporate Policy	Audit and Risk Total	3.241	2.868	-0.373
Corporate Policy	Democratic and Governance Services Total	4.118	3.749	-0.369
Corporate Policy	Legal Services Total	4.117	4.306	0.189
Corporate Policy	Business Change Total	1.985	2.460	0.475
Corporate Policy	Engagement & Communications Total	1.072	1.054	-0.018
Corporate Policy		43.671	43.734	0.062
Corporate Policy	Cross Transformation Savings	-13.452	-3.821	9.631
Corporate Policy - Cross Transformation Savings		-13.452	-3.821	9.631
Economy and Growth	Economic Development Total	1.492	1.082	-0.410
Economy and Growth	Estates Total	17.715	16.937	-0.778
Economy and Growth	Growth and Enterprise Total	0.150	0.262	0.112
Economy and Growth	Housing Total	4.063	3.595	-0.468
Economy and Growth	Rural and Cultural Directorate Total	4.752	4.281	-0.471
Economy and Growth	Place Directorate	0.570	0.300	-0.270
Economy and Growth		28.741	26.456	-2.285
Environment and Communities	Environment and Neighbourhood Services Total	0.334	0.750	0.416
Environment and Communities	Environmental Services Total	7.964	5.068	-2.896
Environment and Communities	Environmental Operations Total	23.741	23.958	0.217
Environment and Communities	Neighbourhood Services Total	4.532	4.952	0.420
Environment and Communities	Regulatory Services and Health Total	2.971	2.826	-0.145
Environment and Communities	Planning Total	4.128	3.571	-0.557
Environment and Communities		43.670	41.125	-2.545
Highways and Transport	Highways Total	11.980	11.730	-0.250
Highways and Transport	Infrastructure Total	0.110	0.138	0.028
Highways and Transport	Infrastructure and Highways Directorate Total	0.605	0.620	0.015
Highways and Transport	Strategic Transport Total	4.457	4.778	0.321
Highways and Transport		17.151	17.265	0.114
SUMMARY - SERVICE BUDGETS		384.390	398.071	13.681
Finance Sub - Central Budgets	Financing and Investment	34.039	30.759	-3.280
Finance Sub - Central Budgets	Movements in Reserves	1.304	1.304	0.000
Finance Sub - Central Budgets	Parish Precepts & Other Operating Expenditure	12.772	12.772	0.000
Finance Sub - Central Budgets	Contingency Budget	7.953	0.700	-7.253
Finance Sub - Central Budgets		56.068	45.535	-10.533
TOTAL		440.458	443.605	3.147
Finance Sub - Funding Budgets	Council Tax	-320.086	-320.086	0.000
Finance Sub - Funding Budgets	Business Rates Retention	-57.122	-57.122	0.000
Finance Sub - Funding Budgets	Revenue Support Grant	-0.849	-0.849	0.000
Finance Sub - Funding Budgets	Unringfenced Grants	-37.140	-37.140	0.000
Finance Sub - Funding Budgets		-415.197	-415.197	0.000
Exceptional Financial Support		-25.261	-25.261	0.000
SUMMARY TOTAL - OVERALL POSITION		0.000	3.147	3.147

Section 2: Directorate Revenue

Commentary and update on 2025/26

Approved Budget Change Items

The following section provides an explanation of the key drivers behind variances to Budget and the tables below provide detailed commentary on the progress against the approved budget change items that were agreed as part of the approved budget in February 2025. These are split by relevant committee.

Adults and Health favourable variance of £0.3m

- 2.1 The Adults, Health and Integration budget is forecast to underspend by £0.3m at FR1. This position is based on several early-year assumptions and estimates and is therefore subject to a potential range, from an optimistic underspend of £0.7m to a pessimistic overspend of £4.6m.
- 2.2 The MTFS 2025/26 targets were based upon the Inner Circle Deep Dives completed in July 2024, which provided a high-level estimate of savings that could be potentially achieved through the ASC Transformation Programme.
- 2.3 Business cases are now being progressed, helping us better understand when the savings are likely to come through to the budget. For two of the transformation programmes, pilots are being run to ensure the models adopted deliver the intended outcomes, and resources are being mobilised to support full implementation.
- 2.4 There is confidence that transformation plans are on track and that the full year effect of the targets remains achievable but when profiling the delivery of savings, it is clear some in year mitigation is required.
- 2.5 It is estimated that a further £3.9m of the planned savings will be delivered in 2025/26 through the Transformation Programme (see table below). Areas have been identified to mitigate the shortfall of £3.5m through increase in client contributions, use of one-off funding and efficiencies.
- 2.6 £0.5m of savings have been verified as delivered in Q1, these are linked to the Health and Social Care Partnership Case Reviews and the introduction of the Guide Price.

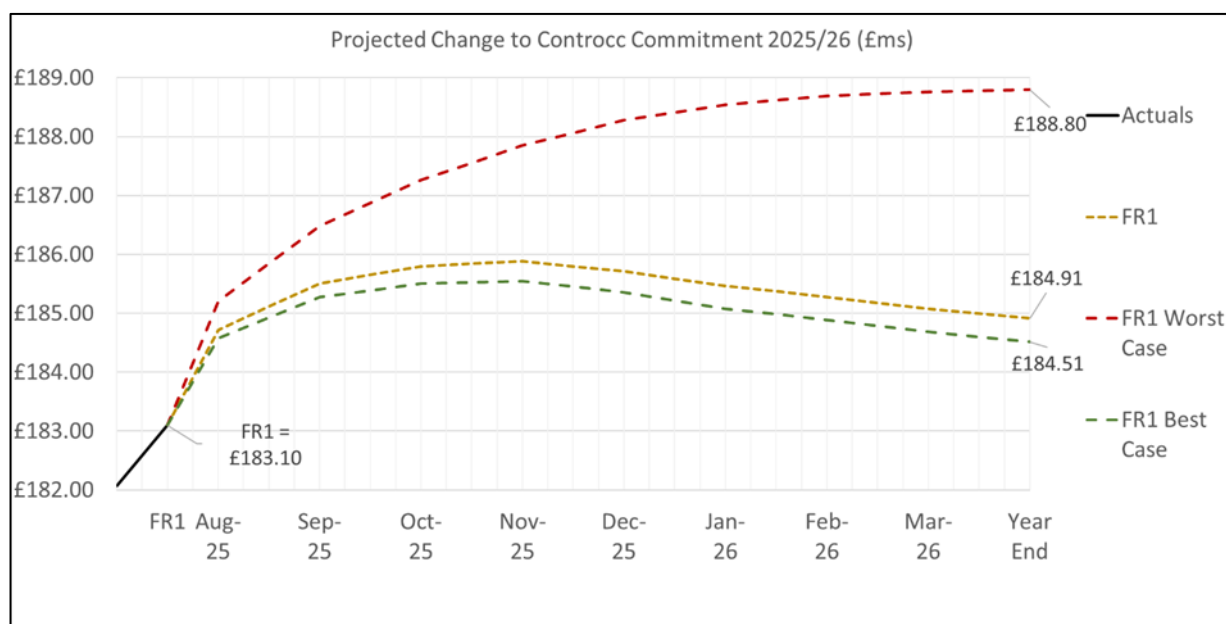
MTFS Saving 2025/26	Budget Target (£ms)	FR1 - Assumed Delivered (£ms)	FR1 - Estimate for remaining 2025/26 (£ms)	FR1 - Total Forecast (£m)	Budget Variance (£ms)
Prevent, Reduce, Enable	-1.500	0.000	-0.650	-0.650	0.850
Learning Disability transformation	-2.500	0.000	-1.000	-1.000	1.500
Commissioning and Brokerage	-0.500	-0.125	-0.375	-0.500	0.000
Partnership Case Review	-2.500	-0.343	-1.857	-2.200	0.300
Preparing for Adulthood	-0.868	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.868
Total	-7.868	-0.468	-3.882	-4.350	3.518

- 2.7 **Staffing:** The forecast assumes that staffing levels remain consistent with the June payroll. Underspends in year are currently being driven by held vacancies, which are forecast at FR1 to continue throughout 2025/26.
- 2.8 **Client income:** The position assumes that the overperformance in client income that we saw at the end of 2024/25 continues into 2025/26, supported by pension and benefit uplifts in 2025/26.

The forecasted full year effect of this is £3.5m and is expected to be a recurrent benefit. As the transformation plan continues to be implemented there may be implications for client income, and this will be monitored throughout the year.

Risks and Assumptions

- 2.9 **Demographic growth:** The forecast assumes externally commissioned care growth of £5.7m between FR1 and year end. This estimate matches the trend seen in 2024/25 and is based on comparable conditions and internal constraints for expenditure growth. The graph below projects the £5.7m growth and the forecasted delivery of savings from FR1 to the year end. The FR1 projection includes the estimated delivery of the £3.9m savings, the worst-case excludes this.



Summary of 2025/26 Controcc Financial Commitment as 7th July (FR1):

Primary Support Reason	Age Band	Accommodation with Care	Supported Living	Care at Home	Direct Payment	Day Care	Shared Lives	Total
Physical Support	18-64	£ 2,720,086	£ 2,165,280	£ 3,503,173	£ 2,431,986	£ 94,362	£ 79,229	£ 10,994,115
Physical Support	65+	£ 32,199,738	£ 605,400	£19,415,261	£ 802,415	£ 17,534	£ 42,454	£ 53,082,803
Learning Disability Support	18-64	£ 11,289,150	£ 26,447,204	£ 8,218,397	£ 5,504,444	£2,069,914	£ 234,976	£ 53,764,085
Learning Disability Support	65+	£ 1,682,844	£ 4,287,642	£ 1,241,728	£ 12,848	£ 96,873	£ 32,517	£ 7,354,453
Memory & Cognition	18-64	£ 1,880,712	£ 354,544	£ 256,178	£ 159,062	£ 9,892	£ 11,598	£ 2,671,986
Memory & Cognition	65+	£ 27,998,543	£ 245,213	£ 2,769,315	£ 676,097	£ 74,889	£ 57,148	£ 31,821,205
Mental Health	18-64	£ 2,115,946	£ 5,575,481	£ 1,867,532	£ 426,628		£ 80,739	£ 10,066,326
Mental Health	65+	£ 5,622,329	£ 572,751	£ 1,045,293	£ 73,570		£ 41,196	£ 7,355,139
Sensory Support	18-64	£ 157,900	£ 529,779	£ 205,021	£ 389,485	£ 44,627		£ 1,326,811
Sensory Support	65+	£ 574,533	£ 1,044	£ 186,454	£ 33,529		£ 3,842	£ 799,402
Social Isolation Support	18-64	£ 183,971	£ 774,437	£ 284,706	£ 263,482	£ 100,571	£ 53,052	£ 1,660,219
Social Isolation Support	65+	£ 182,072	£ 32,200	£ 74,560	£ 16,373	£ 2,818	£ 26,735	£ 334,760
Substance Misuse Support	18-64	£ 98,029	£ 177,287	£ 26,306			£ 1,932	£ 303,554
Substance Misuse Support	65+	£ 133,515		£ 66,456				£ 199,970
Support for Carer	18-64			£ 3,635	£ 77,684			£ 81,320
Support for Carer	65+				£ 80,045			£ 80,045
Block Contract Commitments								£ 1,203,386
Total		£ 86,839,370	£ 41,768,263	£39,164,013	£ 10,947,648	£2,511,479	£ 665,419	£ 183,099,578

- 2.10 **Use of grants:** The position assumes it will be possible to replicate the 2024/25 use of grants against eligible criteria.
- 2.11 **NHS:** A significant area of financial risk which is not reflected in the FR1 position, as it is impossible to quantify at this time, is the potential implications for Local Authorities as a result of changes in the NHS.

2.12 The NHS will be undergoing significant restructuring during 2025/26 following the announcement of the abolition of NHS England. In addition, all Integrated Care Boards (ICB) are required to make a 50% reduction in their administrative costs, primarily staffing. Cheshire and Merseyside ICB is one of the most financially challenged ICBs in the country and is formally in financial turnaround and required to make cashable savings of approximately £170m. This has the potential to drive costs to local Authorities through areas such as Continuing Health Care, S117 Mental health aftercare, changes to Service Level Agreements, as well as through the Better Care Fund.

MTFS Ref No	Detailed List of Approved Budget Changes – Service Budgets	2025/26 MTFS £m	2025/26 Forecast Outturn £m	2025/26 Forecast Outturn Variance £m	Progress 2025/26 (RAG rating and commentary)
	Adults and Health Committee	21.494	21.199	(0.295)	
1	Client Contributions	(5.182)	(5.182)	-	Green - Income target for 2025/26 has been achieved.
2	Revenue Grants for Adult Social Care	(0.220)	(0.220)	-	Completed
3	Pensions Cost Adjustment	(0.517)	(0.517)	-	Completed
4	Demand in Adult Social Care	5.000	5.000	-	Amber - We have completed a model to forecast cost and demand in adult social care which will form the basis of future growth and saving requirements.
5	Pay Inflation	2.251	2.961	0.710	Red - LGS pay offer for 2025. Full and final offers of 3.20% increase resulting in overspend of c.£1.6m across the Council. Updated at FR1 to include additional pressure from the 2.5% not previously identified.
6	Funding the staffing establishment	3.800	3.800	-	Green - Increases in the number of social care staff to maintain safe services and to meet increasing demands.
7	Fully Funding current care demand levels 2024/25	24.500	24.500	-	Green - Growth, recognising the full year effect of current pressures on the externally commissioned care budget.
8	Remodel extra care housing catering service	(0.270)	(0.270)	-	Green - Work is ongoing to remodel the catering offer in extra care facilities.
9T	Prevent, Reduce, Enable - Older People	(1.500)	(0.650)	0.850	<p>Amber - The Prevent Reduce Enable programme has been established in accordance with the Council's Strategic Transformation programme. The pilot began on 16 June.</p> <p>The Prevent, Reduce, Enable programme is focused on ensuring that people are supported to live independent lives for as long as possible, delaying the need for commissioned social care services.</p> <p>The business case for year one anticipates a realisable saving of</p>

MTFS Ref No	Detailed List of Approved Budget Changes – Service Budgets	2025/26 MTFS £m	2025/26 Forecast Outturn £m	2025/26 Forecast Outturn Variance £m	Progress 2025/26 (RAG rating and commentary)
					£650k. This is a shortfall of £850k against the MTFS. Offsetting savings are being identified.
10T	Learning Disability service transformation	(2.500)	(1.000)	1.500	Amber - Programme status has been updated to Amber due to continued challenges identified within working groups about delivery targets. The full year effect of the transformation programme remains at £2.5m as per the MTFS savings target, however, it is acknowledged the delivery of the full target will not be achieved this year due to a time lag in converting business cases into delivery. The forecast has been amended to £1m to reflect this. A breakdown of how the £2.5m (full year effect) savings target will be achieved is in development, covering the three key areas of the programme, Supported Living, Care4CE, and Shared Lives contributions. Work is also underway to confirm savings from the decommissioning of one of our Supported Living buildings, (estimated at £154k) this to be recorded against this target once validated.
11T	Commissioning and brokerage transformation	(0.500)	(0.500)	-	Green - The Guide Price Policy is now in place and a tracker has been set up to monitor savings against the MTFS target. there is a high confidence level that this can be achieved.
12T	Preparing for Adulthood	(0.868)	-	0.868	Red - This saving will be realised in children's services, it is likely that this is double counting with saving identified in the Birth to Thrive transformation group. We are reviewing as part of 'plan B' savings.
13T	Health and Social Care Partnership Case Review	(2.500)	(2.200)	0.300	Green - This is now part of BAU and the service will provide updates via a tracker as to the progress against the target. To date this year we have achieved 684k.
In year	Other forecast mitigations within the Adults services	-	(5.304)	(5.304)	Mitigations linked to maximisation of eligible grants, careful management of vacancies, and client income. To reconcile to FR1.
In year	Other forecast pressures within the Adults services	-	0.781	0.781	Other variances to reconcile to FR1 position.

Children and Families adverse variance of £9.0m

- 2.13 The Children's Services budget is forecast to overspend by £9.0m in FR1 based on the June 2025 reports. This is mainly due to increased costs in placements and staffing, and are the focus of this commentary.
- 2.14 The forecast placements cost for 2025/26 is £6.4m adverse to budget, this continues the year end outturn pressure which was £3.4m adverse to budget. The number of children in care at FR1 was 549 (at June 2025) compared to 550 at March 2025. Placement costs are increasing higher than inflation and £1.18m of net growth is forecast which was not factored into the budget. The forecast reports an overspend based on actual and committed costs which includes planned changes to specific client packages at this point in time.
- 2.15 This overspend is partly due to the increase in Care Leavers (Post 18) with a 54% growth in 2025 (£7.4m) to 2024. There were 95 post 18 placements at a weekly cost of £102k in June 2025 decreasing to 87 in July 2025 at a weekly cost of £95k. The weekly cared for children summary report on 25 July reported 546 children and included placement changes for 12 children which had a cost increase of 105% which highlights the costs are continuing to be a pressure.
- 2.16 The MTFS set out savings in relation to placements for Right Child Right Home £1.3m and New Accommodation with Support Offer for 16-25 Young People of £1.1m. Due to these increased placement costs the forecast has assumed these saving will not be met in 2025/26.
- 2.17 The Directorate are undertaking work to review and manage the placement governance with the aim to reduce the cost of this overspend in year.
- 2.18 The establishment staffing costs for 2025/26 is £2.2m adverse to budget, this continues the year end outturn pressures on the staffing base cost. This is offset by underspends on other staff related cost of £0.5m. The use of agency staff who are contracted to cover vacancies, sickness absence and maternity leave, especially in cared for children and children in need, protection and disabilities, continues to be a significant cost. This is due to ensuring staffing levels are safe and meet our statutory duties.
- 2.19 The forecast assumes positions covered by agency staff will continue, whilst vacant post with no agency workers assigned are assumed to be a budgeted position cost. The international social workers programme has begun with 4 staff commencing in June and 4 staff in July. The agency staff supporting their induction period should be removed after 6 months, this has not been included in the forecast and will be revisited in FR2 as a potential cost reduction.
- 2.20 The Directorate are working to reduce the reliance on agency staff by promoting recruitment campaigns to attract permanent staff instead of extending agency contracts.

MTFS Ref No	Detailed List of Approved Budget Changes – Service Budgets	2025/26 MTFS £m	2025/26 Forecast Outturn £m	2025/26 Forecast Outturn Variance £m	Progress 2025/26 (RAG rating and commentary)
	Children and Families Committee	8.659	17.657	8.998	
14	Pension costs adjustment	(0.050)	(0.037)	0.013	Red - Teacher's pension legacy costs are not reducing as anticipated.
		(0.487)	(0.487)	-	Completed - CEC pension reduction.

MTFS Ref No	Detailed List of Approved Budget Changes – Service Budgets	2025/26 MTFS £m	2025/26 Forecast Outturn £m	2025/26 Forecast Outturn Variance £m	Progress 2025/26 (RAG rating and commentary)
15	Growth to deliver statutory Youth Justice service, and meet Safeguarding Partnership duties	0.203	0.203	-	Amber - It is incumbent upon the three statutory safeguarding partners, the police, health and the Local Authority, to ensure that adequate funding is allocated to the Children's Safeguarding Partnership so it can fulfil its statutory functions in delivering the multi-agency safeguarding arrangements. An internal audit identified the Local Authority had not reviewed its contributions to the partnership and was insufficiently contributing to the delivery of the partnership arrangements. As a result, growth was approved by committee. This has been supported by an increase in contributions from all partner agencies. A vacancy has also been held in the business unit.
16	Growth in School, SEND and Social Care Transport budget	1.501	1.501	-	Red - Being reviewed as part of ongoing SEND improvement
17	Pay Inflation	2.624	2.874	0.250	Red - LGS pay offer for 2025.Full and final offers of 3.20% increase resulting in overspend of c.£1.6m across the Council.
18	Fully Funding current care demand levels 2024/25	3.295	7.313	4.018	Red - Will need to be closely monitored throughout the year to ensure that funding is sufficient to meet demand and complexity. This is also part of transformation work to ensure Edge of care/Right Child Right home.
19	Court Progression Improvement	0.023	0.023	-	Red - Some of this will be covered in the new structure build and re-design which may not require a separate court team, there is increased oversight on applications court delays at Director level, to minimise delays to court work.
20	Growth for annual contribution to the Regional Adoption Agency	0.213	0.213	-	Green
21	Growth for Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children due to emerging pressures	0.500	0.500	-	Green - Growth in Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children.
22	Reversal of a one year policy change for traded services	0.120	0.120	-	Green - Reversal of non-permanent 2023/24 policy change CF23-27 42.
23	Schools Improvement	0.175	0.175	-	Green - Due to staffing previously been paid out of the school improvement grant and this grant is now ceasing there is insufficient budget to cover the existing staffing

MTFS Ref No	Detailed List of Approved Budget Changes – Service Budgets	2025/26 MTFS £m	2025/26 Forecast Outturn £m	2025/26 Forecast Outturn Variance £m	Progress 2025/26 (RAG rating and commentary)
					in the service to cover our statutory duties.
24	Funding the staffing establishment	2.739	4.885	2.146	Red - A families First transformation area of work has commenced and the re-structure will be delivered as part of this.
25	Safe Walking Routes to School	(0.250)	(0.026)	0.224	Red
26T	New accommodation with support offer for 16-25 young people	(1.100)	-	1.100	Red - This reduction in expenditure relates to commissioning work that has identified lower cost accommodation for this group of young people. Savings will be achieved through accessing lower unit cost places. A paper has been approved at C&F committee on the 9 June. There is a delay in this saving, for 2025/26.
27T	Birth to Thrive	(0.500)	(0.500)	-	Red - This is delayed by SRO capacity and needs a review by Transformation Board.
28T	Right Child, Right Home	(1.320)	-	1.320	Red - The oversight of placements now in place should now support the future savings. This is unlikely to be delivered in 2025/26.
29	Extended Rights to Free Transport	0.388	0.388	-	The Extended Rights to Free Travel grant is being rolled in to the Local Government Financial Settlement. This growth item is offset by additional grants within the central budgets. Amount confirmed and updated as at provisional settlement 18/12/2024.
30	Children's Social Care Prevention Grant – Expenditure	0.905	0.905	-	Green - Expenditure relating to the Children's Social Care Prevention Grant.
31	Children's Social Care Prevention Grant – Grant Income	(0.905)	(0.905)	-	Green - Grant announced in 2025/26 financial settlement.
32	Foster4	0.114	0.114	-	Green
33	Foster Carers uplift of National Minimum Allowance (NMA)	0.471	0.471	-	Green - 3.55% NMA foster carer uplift.
In-year	In year variances not included in MTFS Proposals.	-	0.889	0.889	In Year variances mainly relating to Inspection of Local Authority Children's services (ILACS) overspend £0.7m.
In-year	In year variances not included in MTFS Proposals.	-	(0.214)	(0.214)	Quality Assurance, Commissioning and Partnership - Mitigations to balance back to Finance Review Position.

MTFS Ref No	Detailed List of Approved Budget Changes – Service Budgets	2025/26 MTFS £m	2025/26 Forecast Outturn £m	2025/26 Forecast Outturn Variance £m	Progress 2025/26 (RAG rating and commentary)
In-year	In year variances not included in MTFS Proposals.	-	(1.058)	(1.058)	Family Help & Children's Social Care - mitigations to balance back to finance review position.
In-year	In year variances not included in MTFS Proposals.	-	0.310	0.310	In year variances mainly relating to Youth Service.

Corporate Policy adverse variance of £0.1m

2.21 Corporate Services has a net budget of £43.7m, at First Financial Review, the budget is forecast to be overspent by £0.1m. This includes the pay award pressure.

2.22 The budgeted pay award is held centrally on a corporate code at this stage. Now the pay award has been agreed, the budget will be distributed to services before the increased amounts become payable, so they match up. This will change individual service forecasts but not the overall figure for Corporate.

2.23 Key issues with the FR1 variance:

- Vacancy management in Corporate Services has resulted in the majority of services forecasting an underspend on staffing budgets which is being partially offset by the use of agency staff in some services. The net underspend on staffing costs is forecast at approximately £1.9m;
- Vacancy management has been combined with tighter control on non-pay spending across all services which is achieving a forecast underspend of £0.3m;
- ICT underspend of £0.1m. The ICT forecast is based on:
 - April to August where the existing shared service continues
 - September to March where a reduced shared service will operate.
 - These have been compared to the existing budget breakdown and hence there are considerable variances due to the new structure and business model that will be introduced from September.
- There are several risks around the forecast, including:
 - It is unclear whether the service has sufficient resource to deliver the 50,000 hours of project work assumed in the projected figures.
 - The cost model has been changed by Gemini and Cheshire West and Chester (CWaC) so that the chargeable rate against the 50,000 hours is no longer viable and therefore the subsidisation of revenue by income has now changed and a new cost model to cover costs is yet to be agreed;
 - The Memorandum of Understanding with CWaC for the second half of the year has not yet been agreed, and hence the level of recharge cannot be guaranteed; and
 - There are risks around the revenue consequences of the shared Gemini capital programme and the lack of transparency – whilst these areas are becoming clearer they are not yet agreed.

2.24 However, these underspends have been offset by the following pressures:

- a forecast £1.3m under-recovery on Rent Allowances;
- a forecast under-recovery of income of £0.6m within several services particularly within Transformation and Improvement, Legal Services, and Audit & Risk;
- a £0.1m pressure due to unachievable savings from previous year's MTFS; and
- a staff budget pressure of £0.4m across Corporate Services relating to the estimated impact of the latest pay award offer versus the amount included in the MTFS.

MTFS Ref No	Detailed List of Approved Budget Changes – Service Budgets	2025/26 MTFS £m	2025/26 Forecast Outturn £m	2025/26 Forecast Outturn Variance £m	Progress 2025/26 (RAG rating and commentary)
	Corporate Policy Committee	1.078	1.140	0.062	
34	Enforce prompt debt recovery and increase charges for costs	(0.077)	(0.077)	-	Completed - The award of costs is a matter for the Magistrates at each court hearing. However, only by exception will they vary from the level already agreed by us with the Court Manager. The approach to the Court Manager has been made and the revised level agreed. The action is therefore complete, but the financial benefits will accrue as we continue the regular recovery process during the year.
35	Pension costs adjustment	(0.396)	(0.396)	-	Completed
36	Pay Inflation	1.494	1.893	0.399	Red - LGS pay offer for 2025. Full and final offers of 3.20% increase resulting in overspend of c.£1.6m across the Council.
37	Shared Services Review - Move to Hybrid Model for ICT	(0.733)	(0.733)	-	Completed - The Shared Service continues to reduce third party costs and agency spend as per the Business case.
38	The achievement of additional Registration Service income, over and above that which is currently identified as required	(0.350)	(0.350)	-	Green - Additional Registration Service income. To be reviewed in year as the season progresses.
39	Recognising the annual receipt of £45k of Police and Crime Panel grant income	(0.045)	(0.045)	-	Green - This reflects a grant payment from the home office that is received each year in the Council's budget subject to adequate justification being provided.
40	Remove unspent element of phones budgets in corporate services	(0.060)	(0.060)	-	Completed. The phone budgets were reduced accordingly following approval of this proposals to align budgets with spend levels.
41T	Digital Acceleration Revenue Growth	-	-	-	No proposal in 2025/26
42T	Digital Blueprint Revenue Growth	-	-	-	No proposal in 2025/26
43	Transactional Shared Services stabilisation plan	0.270	0.270	-	Green - To provide TSS with additional capacity in 2025/26 - impact of this item and further review to be determined.
44	Additional cost of External Audit Fees	0.265	0.265	-	Green - Additional cost of External Audit Fees - based on 2024/25 fee level.

MTFS Ref No	Detailed List of Approved Budget Changes – Service Budgets	2025/26 MTFS £m	2025/26 Forecast Outturn £m	2025/26 Forecast Outturn Variance £m	Progress 2025/26 (RAG rating and commentary)
45	Reduce Members Allowances budget	(0.100)	(0.100)	-	Green - Reduce Members Allowances budget for previous years pay award that was not taken.
46	Additional Cost of Bank Charges from 2025/26	0.120	0.120	-	Green - Based on current expectations of the 2025/26 charge this is deliverable.
47	Reverse reduction in leadership and management costs as posts are being retained	0.540	0.540	-	Completed. This reversal was necessary in light of the LGA review of decision making and the need to put an appropriate senior management structure in place in the corporate areas.
48	Reinstatement of a one-off saving of £150,000 from election budgets for 2024/25	0.150	0.150	-	Green - Reinstatement of a one-off saving of £150,000 from election budgets, for the 2024/25 year. Noted that the election costs will exceed the reserve and that difference will form a pressure on outturn. The next big local election is May 2027.
In year	Mitigations to balance back to Finance Review position	-	(0.337)	(0.337)	Mitigations to balance back to Finance Review position

MTFS Ref No	Detailed List of Approved Budget Changes – Service Budgets	2025/26 MTFS £m	2025/26 Forecast Outturn £m	2025/26 Forecast Outturn Variance £m	Progress 2025/26 (RAG rating and commentary)
	Corporate Policy Committee - Council Wide Transformation	(13.452)	(3.821)	9.631	
49T	Digital Customer Enablement Invest to Save	(0.750)	-	0.750	Red - Delivery of a Digital Enablement Framework which directly supports the ambitions of the Corporate Plan. This existing initiative is a key enabler for deliverables within Customer Experience Workstream, putting customer considerations at the centre of ongoing service delivery. It additionally provides transformational capabilities for ongoing change management and increased efficiencies within the end-to-end service delivery processes including keeping customers informed and corporate case management options.
50T	Digital Acceleration Invest to Save	(0.600)	(0.200)	0.400	Red - The Digital Acceleration Project is now rated RED to reflect a material delay in Senior Stakeholder decision making. This delay stems from the absence of committed

MTFS Ref No	Detailed List of Approved Budget Changes – Service Budgets	2025/26 MTFS £m	2025/26 Forecast Outturn £m	2025/26 Forecast Outturn Variance £m	Progress 2025/26 (RAG rating and commentary)
					<p>business ownership within services, which is significantly impacting the sign-off of benefits. To mitigate this, strategic alignment with the Workforce Programme is being actively explored to secure accountable ownership and embed benefit realisation into service planning. This alignment is critical to unlocking the value of the projects within the programme and ensuring sustainable adoption and benefit realisation across directorates.</p> <p>The Acceleration enablement process remains broadly on track except for the above-mentioned blocker, with notable progress achieved this period. The AI Transformation Platform contract is now in place and the design and delivery planning is being kicked off across all directorates. Realisation of the associated savings are dependent on the various Directorates adopting the solutions within the same financial period and continued delays in this area are likely to have a significant impact on the 25/26 benefit realisation forecast. Any potential impact will be identified and assessed during the detailed design activities which will complete over the coming period.</p>
51T	Digital Blueprint - Invest to Save	(4.000)	(1.000)	3.000	<p>Red - Digital Adoption is now rated RED to reflect a material delay in senior stakeholder decision-making. While quality and resource indicators remain green, the overall programme has shifted from amber to red due to persisting delays in business case approvals and the absence of committed business ownership within services.</p> <p>Phase 1 business cases have been drafted but are still awaiting sign-off. These delays—occurring at both service and board levels—are impacting delivery momentum and continued delays in this area are likely to have a significant impact on the 25/26 benefit realisation forecast.</p> <p>The initiative is designed to fast-track digital solutions that deliver council-wide service improvements and efficiencies. However, hesitancy from</p>

MTFS Ref No	Detailed List of Approved Budget Changes – Service Budgets	2025/26 MTFS £m	2025/26 Forecast Outturn £m	2025/26 Forecast Outturn Variance £m	Progress 2025/26 (RAG rating and commentary)
					service areas and the absence of a streamlined approval process are slowing the transition from planning to delivery. Realisation of the associated savings are also dependent on this process and ongoing delays in this area are likely to have a significant impact on the 25/26 benefit realisation forecast. Any potential impact will be identified, assessed and reported during the detailed design process which is continuing and will complete over the coming period.
52T	Target Operating Model (TOM)	(3.000)	(0.999)	2.001	<p>Red - At FR1 the forecast for this transformation proposal is nil achievement.</p> <p>A significant amount of work is taking place to establish a basis for making savings.</p> <p>This includes a line by line review and a number of other projects to identify savings.</p> <p>WF1 has seen good progress to date with the Operating Model, it has recently been re-scoped and delivered a draft People Strategy in preparation for the next phase of work around spans and layers across the Council.</p>
53T	Agency Staffing	(0.352)	(0.176)	0.176	<p>Red - At FR1 the forecast for this transformation proposal is being set at nil against this corporate line.</p> <p>There are expected savings of £690,000 from the first round of the purchase of additional annual leave scheme and from holiday payments to agency staff.</p> <p>These will be included in service figures so are not included here to avoid any double counting.</p> <p>A significant amount of work is taking place to establish a basis for making the savings.</p> <p>This includes a line by line review and a number of other projects to identify savings which will include reducing agency spend, increasing uptake of benefits through our Vivup Employee Benefits Platform (which increases income to us).</p>

MTFS Ref No	Detailed List of Approved Budget Changes – Service Budgets	2025/26 MTFS £m	2025/26 Forecast Outturn £m	2025/26 Forecast Outturn Variance £m	Progress 2025/26 (RAG rating and commentary)
					WF2 is focusing on delivery of tangible and non-tangible benefits. Savings modelling work is progressing with all Directorates.
54T	Workforce Productivity	(1.000)	-	1.000	<p>Red - At FR1 the forecast for this transformation proposal is nil achievement.</p> <p>A significant amount of work is taking place to establish a basis for making savings.</p> <p>This includes a line by line review and a number of other projects to identify savings.</p> <p>WF3 has delivered an Employee Engagement Strategy and refreshed Council Values. A new Employee Lifecycle is under development to support our People Strategy and delivery of our Cheshire East Plan 2024 - 2029.</p>
55T	Fees and Charges	(0.750)	(0.821)	(0.071)	<p>Amber - The project has identified business activities where fees and charges can be increased in order to meet the target and this was approved by the Transformation Board.</p> <p>There have since been suggested changes provided approved at the May 2025 Transformation Board which allow for additional income of £0.821m to be raised. Where necessary, the approval processes are being undertaken.</p>
56T	Third Party Spend	(3.000)	(0.625)	2.375	<p>Amber - An allocation approach has been agreed at CLT and further work is being undertaken to identify which areas the £3m savings are going to be delivered from. Additional resources have been provided to the Project Team in order to complete previously planned activity in order to identify potential contract savings. A report is being considered at Transformation Board in July 2025.</p>

Economy and Growth favourable variance of £2.3m

2.25 Growth and Enterprise Directorate and Place Directorate are forecasting an underspend of £2.3m against a budget of £28.7m.

2.26 The key reasons for the underspend are:

10 Assets Service: £0.6m underspend (vacancies and one-off invoicing for backdated rent).

11 Economic Development: £0.4m underspend (vacancies, use of grants and additional recharges to capital).

12 Housing: £0.5m underspend (vacancies, income and reduced spend).

13 Other £0.5m underspend (Tatton Park £0.2m staffing, Green infrastructure and cultural economy – vacancies £0.3m).

14 Directorate £0.3m (reduction in expenditure and use of reserves).

MTFS Ref No	Detailed List of Approved Budget Changes – Service Budgets	2025/26 MTFS £m	2025/26 Forecast Outturn £m	2025/26 Forecast Outturn Variance £m	Progress 2025/26 (RAG rating and commentary)
	Economy and Growth Committee	0.534	(1.751)	(2.285)	
57	Office estate rationalisation	(0.150)	(0.100)	0.050	Amber - due to the timeline for the transfer of buildings being extended. Risk associated with the transfer of Westfields to Education for a SEND school. This item is being mitigated by in year savings.
58	Pension Costs Adjustment	(0.164)	(0.164)	-	Completed
59	Tatton Park ticketing and EPOS upgrade	0.001	0.001	-	Green - A procurement process is currently underway to source a supplier who can ensure onsite and web-based delivery of a new system which aligns with present and future needs. Improved functionality should enable future savings delivery.
60	CEC Archives	0.014	0.014	-	Green - All elements of the programme are progressing well, on time and on budget.
61	Rural and Visitor Economy Electricity costs	(0.021)	(0.021)	-	Green - In line with wider national industry price caps, the projections of energy reduction costs to users were due to be introduced during 2025/26 and therefore consideration to reduce the budget provision has been carried out in the base budget.
62	Minimum energy efficiency standards (MEES) - Estates - Revenue Adjustment	0.023	0.102	0.079	Amber – Prioritised negotiations with 3rd parties/tenants occupying premises being expedited to avoid delays on obtaining access for surveys, completing necessary improvement works and legally completing lease renewals.

MTFS Ref No	Detailed List of Approved Budget Changes – Service Budgets	2025/26 MTFS £m	2025/26 Forecast Outturn £m	2025/26 Forecast Outturn Variance £m	Progress 2025/26 (RAG rating and commentary)
63	Pay Inflation	1.064	1.187	0.123	Red - LGS pay offer for 2025. Full and final offers of 3.20% increase resulting in overspend of c.£1.6m across the Council.
64	Maintenance and operation of new assets in Crewe town centre	0.205	0.205	-	Green - Expected to spend to allocated budget.
65	Land Fill Site Assessments Revenue Adjustment - Estates – Review and Risk Assessment of Council owned Landfill sites (53 sites) Review and Risk Assessment completions	0.010	0.010	-	Green - Environment Service capacity identified. 2nd stage review underway.
66	Tatton Park Estate Dwellings Refurbishment	0.015	0.015	-	Completed - Provision for response maintenance issues for 8 onsite dwellings to ensure properties meet standards required as part of tenancy agreements and the National Trust lease.
67	Improving Crewe Rented Housing Standards	0.188	0.100	(0.088)	Green - Due to the progression of the Governments Renters Rights Bill which will bring forward improvements to the private rented sector and the struggle to recruit to Housing Standards Officers posts this project has been currently placed on hold. To understand the current condition of the private rented sector within Cheshire East will require the commissioning of a Stock Condition Survey, which will influence future direction and plans. It is therefore the intention to utilise a proportion of the funding to undertake this commission to help to formulate a robust plan to improve the private rented sector.
68	Maximise potential of Countryside Access Management System	0.020	0.020	-	Green - Contract negotiation in progress following Procurement Engagement.
69	Assets - building and operational – Energy	(0.860)	(0.860)	-	Completed - This was a known reduction as agreed last year as part of the overall MTFS savings target.
70	Assets - building and operational – Maintenance	0.465	0.465	-	Green - Whilst Inflation limits have stabilised, the additional funding is required to offset known increases in material costs and labour rates that were inadequate in previous financial years and to mitigate the impacts moving forward. The overall backlog of maintenance still remains a challenge, alongside the continued holding costs associated with managing vacant premises, pending the implementation of the future use / operation.

MTFS Ref No	Detailed List of Approved Budget Changes – Service Budgets	2025/26 MTFS £m	2025/26 Forecast Outturn £m	2025/26 Forecast Outturn Variance £m	Progress 2025/26 (RAG rating and commentary)
71	Tatton Park - Increase Fees and Charges	(0.126)	(0.126)	-	Green - Following the strategic pricing review in 2020, Tatton Park continues to monitor and review parkland and attraction admission prices on an annual basis. Appropriate adjustments are made after considering the wider national economic situation, local competitor pricing and visitor dynamics to ensure that Tatton is able to achieve its budget targets.
72T	Corporate Landlord Model Refresh	(0.050)	(0.050)	-	Amber - This is a notional target saving allocation, based on the potential reduction of assets, linked to the disposals programme. Budget savings have been allocated from both the Assets Disposal programme and existing Facilities Management revenue funding.
73T	Asset Strategy Refresh	(0.100)	(0.100)	-	Amber - This was a notional target saving allocation, based on the potential reduction of assets, linked to the disposals programme. Several of the key sites are subject to planning consents or contractual conditions as part of the disposal strategy and may therefore be a challenge to achieve within year. Provisional budget has been identified from additional income and savings within the investment portfolio.
In-year	Place Directorate Mitigations to balance back to Finance Review position	-	(0.270)	(0.270)	Place Directorate Mitigations to balance back to Finance Review position
In-year	Growth & Enterprise Mitigations to balance back to Finance Review position	-	(2.179)	(2.179)	Growth & Enterprise Mitigations to balance back to Finance Review position

Environment and Communities favourable variance of £2.6m

2.27 Environment and Neighbourhood Services is forecasting an underspend of £2.6m against a budget of £43.7m.

2.28 The key reasons for the forecast underspend are:

15 Development Management: £0.6m underspend mainly from additional income.

16 Environmental Services: £2.9m underspend:

17 Extended Producer Responsibility Grant £1.4m one-off benefit.

18 Ansa management fee £0.2m – one-off benefit from vacancies.

19 Improved company reserves £0.8m one-off benefit.

20 General underspending £0.4m from vacancy management and additional income.

21 Leisure Commissioning: £0.6m overspend from delay in delivery of MTFS savings and shortfall in income.

22 Other service issues: £0.4m overspend (Pay award pressures).

MTFS Ref No	Detailed List of Approved Budget Changes – Service Budgets	2025/26 MTFS £m	2025/26 Forecast Outturn £m	2025/26 Forecast Outturn Variance £m	Progress 2025/26 (RAG rating and commentary)
	Environment and Communities Committee	(2.741)	(5.286)	(2.545)	
74	Strategic Leisure Review (Stage 2)	0.403	0.626	0.223	Red - Initial savings secured via committee decision on 11 March 2024. Proposals are being developed with EHL and town and parish councils to secure the residual £250k amount - dialogue is ongoing. Delays to disposing of Middlewich and Holmes Chapel Leisure Centres in year are having a negative impact on savings position.
75	Libraries Strategy - Stage 1	(0.100)	(0.061)	0.039	Committee approval to implement final Strategy secured on 27th November 2024, implementation now ongoing with revised opening hours at Tier 3 sites going live from January 2025 and Tier 2 sites as of 1st April 2025. Staff consultations now complete, new structure implemented from 7th July. Engagement with Town and Parish Councils undertaken to shape the Strategy proposals and seek funding contributions, which has resulted in a total of 8 sites being supported to a total of c.£154k enabling over 2,150 hours of library opening time per annum. Budget gap of £39k yet to be found, mitigated through in year savings from ongoing staff vacancies.

MTFS Ref No	Detailed List of Approved Budget Changes – Service Budgets	2025/26 MTFS £m	2025/26 Forecast Outturn £m	2025/26 Forecast Outturn Variance £m	Progress 2025/26 (RAG rating and commentary)
76	Reduce revenue impact of carbon reduction capital schemes	0.171	0.171	-	Green - Carbon Neutral Council target 2030 for the Council to be Carbon neutral with minimum of offset.
77	Pay Inflation	2.270	2.698	0.428	Red - LGS pay offer for 2025. Full and final offers of 3.20% increase resulting in overspend of c.£1.6m across the Council.
78	Pension Costs Adjustment	(0.159)	(0.159)	-	Completed
79	Explore a Trust delivery model for Libraries and other services	(0.150)	(0.150)	-	Green - Growth item to cover one off costs relating to implementation of alternative delivery model(s) for libraries service. Aligned to development of Libraries Strategy.
80	Land Charge Income Adjustment	0.147	0.147	-	Amber - Uncertainty around implementation timescales of HM Land Registry changes to centralise some aspects of land charges functions hence understanding of actual impact, to be regularly monitored.
81	Local Plan Review	0.315	0.315	-	Amber - Reprofiled budget adjustment to provide additional funding towards development of new Local Plan which has now commenced.
82	Review of CCTV service - service efficiencies and income generation from existing services	(0.040)	(0.040)	-	Green - On target. Restructure has been subject to recruitment process with final outcomes communicated. Establishment to be updated on Unit 4.
83	Environmental Services Growth 2025/26 onwards	3.041	1.808	(1.233)	Green - Environmental Services Growth 2025/26 onwards.
84	Environmental Services Savings 2025/26 onwards	(2.366)	(2.170)	0.196	Green - Environmental Services Savings 2025/26 onwards.
85	Environmental Services Growth - Pensions	0.727	0.727	-	Green - Environmental Services Growth - Pensions (2025/26 onwards). This is net nil for the Council and forms a housekeeping item to ensure the budgets for staff who have transferred in from the ASDVs, at different pension contribution rates, are consistent in advance of changes for all employees.
86	Environmental Services – expected income from Extended Producer Responsibility for packaging	(7.000)	(8.394)	(1.394)	Green - New Central Government Legislation Extended producer responsibility (EPR) 2025-26, Deposit Return Scheme 2027-2028 and Waste Disposal Carbon Tax UK Emissions Trading Scheme (ETS) 2027-28.
In year	Libraries Strategy Stage 1 (mitigation)	-	(0.039)	(0.039)	Savings mitigated through in year vacancy saving. 2025/26 RAG rated amber.
In year	Environment & Communities Mitigations	-	(0.925)	(0.925)	Environment & Communities Mitigations to balance back to Finance Review position

MTFS Ref No	Detailed List of Approved Budget Changes – Service Budgets	2025/26 MTFS £m	2025/26 Forecast Outturn £m	2025/26 Forecast Outturn Variance £m	Progress 2025/26 (RAG rating and commentary)
	to balance back to Finance Review position				
In year	Fees and Charges	-	0.160	0.160	Adjustment for fees and charges - presenting Lyon Review items centrally

Highways and Transport adverse variance of £0.1m

2.29 Highways and Infrastructure are forecasting an overspend of £0.1m against a budget of £17.2m.

2.30 The key reasons for the overspend are:

23 Car Parking £0.5m overspend (reduced income offset by back dated rent reviews).

24 Transport Policy £0.2m underspend from vacancies to address pressures in parking.

25 Highways £0.2m underspend from increased income to address pressures in parking.

MTFS Ref No	Detailed List of Approved Budget Changes – Service Budgets	2025/26 MTFS £m	2025/26 Forecast Outturn £m	2025/26 Forecast Outturn Variance £m	Progress 2025/26 (RAG rating and commentary)
	Highways and Transport Committee	1.061	1.175	(0.114)	
87	Increase parking charges	(0.450)	(0.450)	-	Green - Annual inflation adjustment to existing Pay & Display tariffs was implemented on 5th July 2024, in advance of bringing charges into effect in the "free towns" on the 2nd December 2024. A further inflation adjustment took effect in May 2025.
88	Safe Haven outside schools (Parking)	0.010	0.010	-	Green – Introduction of CCTV camera enforcement of waiting/loading restrictions at school gates on a trial basis using bespoke equipment that is type approved and proven for these purposes in order to improve road safety and increase enforcement capacity at these high risk locations.
89	Parking PDA / Back Office System contract - fall out of one off set up cost	(0.030)	(0.030)	-	Green - Introduction of a new system to administer the Council's parking services and process Penalty Charge Notices which will reduce administration costs and improve service response times.
90	Parking - Part-year effect of strategy changes	(0.720)	(0.139)	0.581	Red - Following decisions in January 2024, tariffs were uplifted from 1st July 2024 to extend pay and display to car parks in "free towns" from 2nd December 2024.
91	Parking - Staff and member parking	(0.250)	-	0.250	Red - Proposals for a new scheme of staff and members parking permits, integrated with the corporate travel plan, are being developed for consultation in 2025.
92	Transport and Infrastructure Strategy Team – Restructure	-	-	-	Green - The proposed changes will develop a more resilient in-house team and reduce reliance on agency / consultancy staff. The changes meet the needs of the Council, as it moves towards a new statutory Local Transport Plan and the development of transport functions in a new Cheshire and Warrington Combined Authority.

MTFS Ref No	Detailed List of Approved Budget Changes – Service Budgets	2025/26 MTFS £m	2025/26 Forecast Outturn £m	2025/26 Forecast Outturn Variance £m	Progress 2025/26 (RAG rating and commentary)
93	Local Bus	1.545	1.545	-	Green - A network of new bus service contracts has been procured and services started on 30 March 2025. Extra evening and weekend services are planned to complement our Bus Service Improvement Plan.
94	FlexiLink Service Improvement Plan - invest to save	0.592	0.592	-	Green - Bus service review is complete and specification for a revised flexible transport service (DRT) have been prepared. Flexible transport will be designed to fill gaps in local bus service provision, especially in rural areas, and over extended hours of operation, to open up the service to more users.
95T	Advertising Income. Initial project scoping work being undertaken to understand scale/complexity and resourcing needs	(0.025)	(0.025)	-	Amber - Proposal for the transformation of the Council's approach to on-street sponsorship and advertising have been prepared as part of the Transformation Programme.
96	Pension Costs Adjustment	(0.055)	(0.055)	-	Completed
97	Pay Inflation	0.228	0.263	0.035	Red - LGS pay offer for 2025. Full and final offers of 3.20% increase resulting in overspend of c.£1.6m across the Council.
98	Flood and Water Management Act 2010 SuDS and SABs Schedule 3 Implementation	-	-	-	Amber - The requirement is to be ready to implement changes when regulations are implemented nationally. A training plan for existing staff has been identified. Recruitment is to be progressed.
99	Highways: Revenue Service	0.216	0.216	-	Completed - This provides investment in highway infrastructure that will arrest the deterioration of the asset. This will reduce costs of reactive maintenance, improve safety and reduce risks of significant incidents. It will also control revenue budget pressures and work towards addressing customer dissatisfaction
100	Highways: Depots	-	-	-	Green - The highways depots need investment to reduce the risk that facilities could be unusable for reactive and winter maintenance. Investment will enable some operational efficiencies, provides winter service resilience and a reduction in highways depots from 3 to 2, delivering a capital receipt.
In year	Highways and Transport Mitigations to balance back to Finance Review positions	-	(0.968)	(0.968)	Highways and Transport Mitigations to balance back to Finance Review positions.

MTFS Ref No	Detailed List of Approved Budget Changes – Service Budgets	2025/26 MTFS £m	2025/26 Forecast Outturn £m	2025/26 Forecast Outturn Variance £m	Progress 2025/26 (RAG rating and commentary)
In year	Fees and Charges	-	0.216	0.216	Adjustment for fees and charges - presenting Lyon Review items centrally

Finance Sub favourable variance of £10.5m

2.31 The variance relating to the Finance Sub Committee is due to the use of £5.7m contingency budget to assist the overspend position. The variance shown below of £7.3m also includes a favourable variance of £1.6m which offsets the unbudgeted costs of the pay award being included in the service lines. In addition, there has been an improvement in the capital financing budget of £3.3m, this is in part due to a reduction in the cost of borrowing and also some slippage in the capital programme leading to a reduction in Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP) payable in year.

MTFS Ref No	Detailed List of Approved Budget Changes – Service Budgets	2025/26 MTFS £m	2025/26 Forecast Outturn £m	2025/26 Forecast Outturn Variance £m	Progress 2025/26 (RAG rating and commentary)
	Finance Sub-Committee (Central Budgets)	35.294	24.761	(10.533)	
101	Capital Financing Budget	3.387	0.107	(3.280)	Green - Improvement against MRP of £0.5m, linked to slippage in capital programme. Improvement on net interest cost due to lower than expected borrowing (int cost) and slight improvement on rates/levels of investments (int income) of £2.7m.
102	Creation of Contingency Budget	15.953	8.700	(7.253)	Green - Creation of Contingency Budget as per Finance Sub Committee June Budget Assumptions Report (virements of £0.7m for C&F and £8m for A&H approved at FSC 10/03/2025). Assumed general pay inflation pressure of £1.585m to be taken from this budget to offset pressure in service budgets.
103	Risk of unachievable budget savings or growth demands exceeding estimates	-	-	-	Green - Risk of unachievable budget savings or growth demands exceeding estimates.
104	Pension adjustment – linked to E&C growth item	(0.727)	(0.727)	-	Green - Linked to growth item in E&C. ASDVS coming back into house but currently paying lower pension contribution rate than the standard CEC rate.
105	Use of Earmarked Reserves (reversal of 2024/25 one off use of central EMRs)	3.723	3.723	-	Completed – Budget adjustment

MTFS Ref No	Detailed List of Approved Budget Changes – Service Budgets	2025/26 MTFS £m	2025/26 Forecast Outturn £m	2025/26 Forecast Outturn Variance £m	Progress 2025/26 (RAG rating and commentary)
106	Top up of Earmarked Reserves	-	-	-	Completed – Planned budget adjustment not until 2026/27
107	Use of General Reserves (reversal of one off use in 2024/25)	11.654	11.654	-	Completed – Budget adjustment
108	Top up General Reserves	1.304	1.304	-	Completed

MTFS Ref No	Detailed List of Approved Budget Changes – Service Budgets	2025/26 MTFS £m	2025/26 Forecast Outturn £m	2025/26 Forecast Outturn Variance £m	Progress 2025/26 (RAG rating and commentary)
	Finance Sub-Committee (Funding Budgets)	(26.666)	(26.666)	-	
109	Council Tax increase % growth	(14.326)	(14.326)		Green - Council tax and business rates income collection is managed through the Collection Fund therefore no impact on current year funding target if actual amount collected was to vary from budget.
110	Council Tax increase base growth	(5.852)	(5.852)		Green - Council tax and business rates income collection is managed through the Collection Fund therefore no impact on current year funding target if actual amount collected was to vary from budget.
111	Business Rates Retention	(0.495)	(0.495)		Green - S31 Grants to be received in line with final settlement from MHCLG plus net income from NNDR1. Increase related to inflationary forecast increase in settlement funding assessment (related to business rates baseline)
112	Unringfenced general grants change	(3.012)	(3.012)		Green - grants to be received in line with final settlement from MHCLG
113	National Insurance increase contribution	(2.981)	(2.981)		Green - grants to be received in line with final settlement from MHCLG

Section 3: Revenue Grants for approval

- 3.1. Cheshire East Council receives two main types of Government grants; specific purpose grants and general use grants. Specific purpose grants are held within the relevant service with a corresponding expenditure budget. Whereas general use grants are held in central budgets with a corresponding expenditure budget within the allocated service area.
- 3.2. Spending in relation to specific purpose grants must be in line with the purpose for which it is provided.
- 3.3. General use grants, also known as unring-fenced grants, are funds provided by the Government to local authorities without specific restrictions on how the money is spent. They allow councils to determine how best to utilise the funding to address local needs and priorities.
- 3.4. **Table 1** shows additional grant allocations that have been received over £1m that **Council** will be asked to approve.
- 3.5. **Table 2** shows additional grant allocations that have been received which are over £0.5m and up to £1m and are for **Committee** approval.

Table 1 – Council Decision

3.6. Supplementary Revenue Estimate Requests for Allocation of Additional Grant Funding over £1,000,000

Committee	Type of Grant	£m	Details
Environment and Communities	Extended Producer Responsibility Grant (Specific Purpose)	2.591	This is an increase on the MTFS forecast position. This grant is a policy approach where producers are given significant responsibility (financially and physically) for the management of their products and packaging at the end of their useful life. This shifts the burden of waste management away from local authorities and places it on those that create the waste. The fees collected from the producers are distributed to local authorities to help them manage packaging waste collection and recycling programs.
Economy and Growth	Enterprise Cheshire & Warrington (ECW): Skills Bootcamp (Specific Purpose)	1.371	This is a new grant from the Department for Education. It is for the delivery of and management of Skills Bootcamps in geographical and neighbouring areas in agreement with relevant local authorities. This element of skills bootcamp is being delivered through Enterprise Cheshire and Warrington.

Table 2 – Committee Decision

3.7. Supplementary Revenue Estimate Requests for Allocation of Additional Grant Funding over £500,000 up to £1,000,000

Committee	Type of Grant	£m	Details
Children and Families - Schools	Delivering Better Value in SEND (Specific Purpose)	0.767	This is a new grant from the Department for Education. Its purpose is to support the ability to carry out relevant data analysis and assurance required during Phase 1 of the programme, as part of overall participation in the Delivering Better Value (DBV) in SEND programme.
Children and Families – Schools	Early Years Expansion Grant (Specific Purpose)	0.634	This is a new grant from the Department for Education. This grant provides funding to support the early years sector as it prepares to deliver the final phase of expansion of the working parent entitlement from September 2025.

Committee	Type of Grant	£m	Details
Adults and Health – Public Health	OHID SSMTR Supplementary Substance Misuse Treatment & Recovery Grant (Specific Purpose)	0.525	This is a new grant from the Department for Health and Social Care. The SSMTR (Supplementary Substance Misuse Treatment & Recovery) Grant, also known as the Drug and Alcohol Treatment and Recovery Improvement Grant (DATRIG), is a funding initiative by the DHSC to enhance drug and alcohol treatment and recovery services across England. It aims to increase access to treatment, improve the quality of provision, and support individuals in their recovery journey
Environment and Communities	Transitional Resource Grant (Specific Purpose)	0.871	This is a new grant from the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs. It covers the implementation of the weekly food collections and the cost of resources to implement this such as officer time, public communications, distributing food waste containers and project management related costs.
Environment and Communities	High Speed 2 (HS2) Ltd (Specific Purpose)	0.850	This grant is from High Speed 2 (HS2) Ltd and is for landscape and environmental improvements in the Wybunbury area.

Section 4: Capital

Table 1: Financial Parameters for 2024/25 to 2027/28

Parameter	Value (£m)			
	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28
Repayment of Borrowing				
Minimum Revenue Provision*	15.327	17.977	21.920	23.934
External Loan Interest	19.412	18.359	19.271	20.995
Investment Income	(4.329)	(3.300)	(2.747)	(2.704)
Contributions from Services Revenue Budgets	(0.977)	(1.311)	(2.261)	(2.494)
Total Capital Financing Costs	29.433	31.725	36.183	39.731
Use of Financing EMR	(2.100)	0.000	0.000	0.000
Actual CFB in MTFS	28.508	35.039	38.758	41.860
Budget Deficit /(Surplus)	(1.175)	(3.314)	(2.575)	(2.129)
Capital Receipts targets*	1.000	1.000	1.000	1.000
Flexible use of Capital Receipts	1.000	1.000	1.000	1.000

*Anticipated MRP based on achieving capital receipts targets

- 1.1. The revised programme is funded from both direct income (grants, external contributions) and the Council's own resources (prudential borrowing, revenue contributions, capital reserve). A funding summary is shown in **Table 2**. For detailed tables by Committee please see **Annex 2**.
- 1.2. **Table 3** lists details of Delegated decisions up to £500,000 for noting.
- 1.3. **Table 4** lists Capital Supplementary Estimates over £500,000 and up to £1,000,000 for committee approval and Capital Virements over £500,000 and up to and including £5,000,000 that require Relevant Member(s) of CLT and Chief Finance Officer in consultation with Chair of the relevant Committee and the Chair of Finance Sub-Committee to approve.
- 1.4. **Table 5** lists Supplementary Capital estimates greater than £1,000,000 for recommendation to Council.

Table 2: Capital Programme Update

CHESHIRE EAST COUNCIL CAPITAL PROGRAMME SUMMARY					
CAPITAL PROGRAMME 2025/26 - 2028/29					
	Forecast 2025/26 £m	Forecast 2026/27 £m	Forecast 2027/28 £m	Forecast 2028/29 £m	Total Forecast 2025-29 £m
Committed Schemes - In Progress					
Adults and Health	0.132	0.424	0.000	0.000	0.556
Children and Families	46.836	20.285	16.945	13.403	97.469
Corporate Policy	12.991	3.265	2.377	0.600	19.233
Economy & Growth	44.420	39.649	47.806	49.559	181.434
Environment & Communities	23.822	2.646	6.033	9.285	41.786
Highways & Transport	64.245	64.629	32.495	93.317	254.686
Total Committed Schemes - In Progress	192.446	130.898	105.656	166.164	595.164
CAPITAL PROGRAMME 2025/26 - 2028/29					
	Forecast 2025/26 £m	Forecast 2026/27 £m	Forecast 2027/28 £m	Forecast 2028/29 £m	Total Forecast 2025-29 £m
New Schemes					
Adults and Health	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000
Children and Families	0.910	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.910
Corporate Policy	3.490	1.663	1.377	0.000	6.530
Economy & Growth	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000
Environment & Communities	0.549	0.370	0.214	0.349	1.482
Highways & Transport	8.147	12.960	13.069	11.502	45.678
Total New Schemes	13.096	14.993	14.660	11.851	54.600
Total	205.542	145.891	120.316	178.015	649.764
Funding Requirement					
Indicative Funding Analysis: (See note 1)					
Government Grants	128.403	93.235	39.007	102.750	363.395
External Contributions	14.160	21.230	26.673	40.606	102.669
Revenue Contributions	0.830	0.660	0.000	0.000	1.490
Capital Receipts	1.203	1.931	20.979	11.840	35.952
Prudential Borrowing (See note 2)	60.946	28.835	33.658	22.819	146.258
Total	205.542	145.891	120.316	178.015	649.764

Note 1:

The funding requirement identified in the above table does not currently represent a balanced and affordable position, in the medium term. The Council will need to transform the capital programme to reduce the number of schemes requiring Cheshire East Resources and the need to borrow.

Note 2:

Appropriate charges to the revenue budget will only commence in the year following the completion of the associated capital asset. This allows the Council to constantly review the most cost effective way of funding capital expenditure.

Table 3: Delegated Decisions – Supplementary Capital estimates and Budget virements up to £500,000

Committee / Capital Scheme	Amount Requested £m	Reason and Funding Source
Supplementary Capital Estimates that have been made up to £500,000		
Adults and Public Health		
Community - Rural Shared Prosperity Fund	0.088	New allocation for 2025-26 Rural UKSPF funding
Children and Families		
Family Hubs Transformation	0.105	New capital grant allocation for 2025-26 for Family Hubs Transformation
Economy & Growth		
Economic Development		
UKSPF E22 and E29 capital interventions	0.350	SCE to be approved to reflect 25/26 allocation of UKSPF and should be in place for FR2. Funds to be transferred from Revenue
Culture & Tourism		
Visitor Economy - Rural Shared Prosperity Fund	0.248	
Highways & Transport		
Bus Priority	0.132	To be funded by BSIP Phase 3 grant
Total Supplementary Capital Estimates Requested	0.923	
£m		
Capital Budget Virements that have been made up to £500,000		
Children & Families		
Education and 14-19 Skills		
Macclesfield Planning Area - secondary new places	0.200	Transfer budget to Tytherington High school project (CAP-10468)
Macclesfield Academy Resource Provision	0.100	Budget from CAP-10278 to be transferred to central High Needs allocation (CAP-10106)
New AP Free School	0.025	Transfer budget from New SEN Additional AP places (CAP-10599) to New AP Free School as no longer required as a separate project.
School Condition Grant	0.001	Return of remaining budget in School Condition Grant - Catering Block to central School Condition Grant allocation (CAP-00106)
Facilities Management		
Premises Capital (FM)	0.111	Virement from PSDS - 3B - Lot 1 programme aborted and no additional grant claims to be made, the Prudential Borrowing funding was allocated as match funding and there is a risk that SALIX request clawback, therefore the need for this funding to remain in the Capital Programme.
Total Capital Budget Virements Approved	0.436	
Total Supplementary Capital Estimates and Virements	1.360	

Table 4: Requests for Supplementary Capital Estimates (SCEs) and Capital Virements

Committee / Capital Scheme	Amount Requested £m	Reason and Funding Source
Service Committee are asked to approve the Supplementary Capital Estimates above £500,000 up to and including £1,000,000		
Highways & Transport		
A500 Corridor OBC Update	0.903	Final tranche of DfT development grant funding to fund the production of an update OBC Update for the A500 scheme. The A500 Scheme is one of 42 schemes under review by DfT which should report back this Autumn. No spend on this grant will be incurred ahead of the review's anticipated conclusion
Total Supplementary Capital Estimates Requested	0.903	
Service committee are asked to note Capital Budget Virements above £500,000 up to and including £5,000,000 for approval by Relevant Member(s) of CLT and Chief Finance Officer in consultation with Chair of the relevant Committee and the Chair of Finance Sub-Committee		
Corporate		
ICT Hybrid Model	0.750	Virement from Infrastructure Investment Programme to ICT Hybrid Model to support Gemini Phase 2
Highways & Transport		
A500 Corridor OBC Update	0.764	Virement from "A500 Dualling" project in respect of acquiring land. This land requirement now falls under "A500 Corridor OBC update" .
Total Capital Virements requested	1.514	
Total SCEs and Virements	2.417	

Table 5: Requests for Supplementary Capital Estimates (SCEs) for Recommendation

Committee	Amount Requested £m	Reason and Funding Source
Finance Sub Committee are asked to recommend to Council the approval of the Supplementary Capital SCEs over £1,000,000		
Highways & Transport		
Public Transport Infrastructure	0.700	To add BSIP Phase 4 grant of £2,122,646 to the Capital Programme, distributed over four projects.
Bus Priority	0.623	
Real Time Passenger Information (RTPI)	0.750	
Macclesfield Bus Station	0.050	
Total Supplementary Capital Estimates Requested	2.123	
Total Supplementary Capital Estimates and Virements	2.123	

Section 5: Reserves

Management of Council Reserves

- 5.1 The Council's Reserves Strategy states that the Council will maintain reserves to protect against risk and support investment.
- 5.2 The opening balance at 1 April 2025 in the Council's General Fund Reserves was £6.3m, as published in the Council's Statement of Accounts for 2024/25.
- 5.3 At FR1, the closing balance at 31 March 2026 in the Council's General Fund Reserve is forecast to be £6.5m.
- 5.4 The current balance on reserves is insufficient in order to provide adequate protection against established and newly emerging risks, particularly the DSG deficit, which is projected to rise to £146m by year end and has been highlighted in the MTFS as having no alternative funding.
- 5.5 The Council also maintains Earmarked Revenue Reserves for specific purposes. The opening balance at 1 April 2025 was £23.1m.
- 5.6 During 2025/26, £14.9m will be drawn down to fund expenditure specifically provided for by services. This includes £3.8m to fund one off Transformation costs, £2.2m for Capital expenditure and £6.2m to support the collection fund. These balances fall within the forecasts approved during the MTFS budget setting process. £11.5m will be added back to reserves, this is predominantly related to the collection fund and will be used to mitigate future legislative changes over the short to medium term. Net movement on reserves is therefore £3.4m.
- 5.7 The indicative closing balance on Earmarked Reserves at 31 March 2026, is forecast at £19.6m. With the General Fund reserves of £6.5m, total reserves available for Council use at 31 March 2026 are forecast at £26.1m.
- 5.8 Unspent schools' budgets that have been delegated, as laid down in the Schools Standards Framework Act 1998, remain at the disposal of the school and are not available for Council use. These balances are therefore excluded from all reserve forecasts.

Reserves Balances

Table 1 – Adults and Health Committee

Earmarked Reserves	Balance at 1 April 2025	Drawdowns to Support Service Costs (+)	Additional Funds to Reserve (-)	Forecast Balance at 31 March 2026	Notes
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Adults and Health Committee	£m	£m	£m	£m	
Public Health Reserve	(3.204)	0.207	0	(2.997)	Ring-fenced underspend to be invested in areas to improve performance against key targets.
PFI Equalisation - Extra Care Housing	0	0	(0.113)	(0.113)	Surplus grant set aside to meet future payments on existing PFI contract.
Adults and Health Committee Total:	(3.204)	0.207	(0.113)	(3.110)	

Table 2 – Children and Families Committee

Earmarked Reserves	Balance at 1 April 2025	Drawdowns to Support Service Costs (+)	Additional Funds to Reserve (-)	Forecast Balance at 31 March 2026	Notes
Children and Families Committee	£m	£m	£m	£m	
ILACS Spending Plan	(0.456)	0.456	0	0	To address the findings from the Ofsted inspection of local authority children's services.
Children and Families Committee Total:	(0.456)	0.456	0	0	

Table 3 – Corporate Policy Committee

Earmarked Reserves	Balance at 1 April 2025	Drawdowns to Support Service Costs (+)	Additional Funds to Reserve (-)	Forecast Balance at 31 March 2026	Notes
Corporate Policy Committee	£m	£m	£m	£m	

Collection Fund Management	(5.120)	6.199	(10.035)	(8.956)	To manage cash flow implications as part of the Business Rates Retention Scheme.
Capital Financing Reserves	(2.234)	2.234	0	0	To provide for financing of capital schemes, other projects and initiatives.
Insurance Reserve	(0.314)	0	0	(0.314)	To settle insurance claims and manage excess costs.
Elections General	(0.432)	0	0	(0.432)	To provide funds for Election costs every 4 years.
Digital Solutions Architect	(0.074)	0.074	0	0	To help fund the Digital Customer Enablement programme and will be key to realising the cost savings and efficiencies across the Council through a number of digital initiatives.
2025/26 Transformation Reserve 1	(3.500)	3.500	0	0	To support a group of projects across the Council's four Directorates to deliver improved service delivery through efficiency and revenue savings.
2025/26 Transformation Reserve 2	(5.300)	0.323	0	(4.947)	The Transformation Programme 2 reserve has been created to help mitigate one-off costs of the change delivery programme over the next two financial years.
ICT Programme	(0.300)	0.300	0	0	To support the costs associated with the Gemini project, including potential redundancies.
Corporate Policy Committee Total:	(17.274)	12.660	(10.035)	(14.649)	

Table 4 – Economy and Growth Committee

Earmarked Reserves	Balance at 1 April 2025	Drawdowns to Support Service Costs (+)	Additional Funds to Reserve (-)	Forecast Balance at 31 March 2026	Notes
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Economy and Growth Committee	£m	£m	£m	£m	
Place Directorate Reserve	(0.418)	0.418	0	0	To support a range of projects within the Place Directorate.
Investment (Sustainability)	(0.549)	0.050	0	(0.499)	To aid investment that can increase long-term financial independence and stability of the Council.
Legal Proceedings	(0.179)	0.025	0	(0.154)	To respond to insolvency/legal proceedings on land and property matters.
Tatton Park Trading Reserve	(0.050)	0.050	0	0	To support Tatton Vision capital project and for the replacement of vehicles
Economy and Growth Committee Total:	(1.196)	0.543	0	(0.653)	

Table 5 – Environment and Communities Committee

Earmarked Reserves	Balance at 1 April 2025	Drawdowns to Support Service Costs (+)	Additional Funds to Reserve (-)	Forecast Balance at 31 March 2026	Notes
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Environment and Communities Committee	£m	£m	£m	£m	
Strategic Planning	(0.287)	0	0	(0.287)	To meet costs associated with the Local Plan - site allocations, minerals and waste DPD. - Reserve needed in 26/27
Trees / Structures Risk Management	(0.084)	0	0	(0.084)	To help respond to increases in risks relating to the environment and adverse weather events.
Air Quality	(0.036)	0.036	0	0	Air Quality Management - DEFRA Action Plan. Relocating electric vehicle chargepoint in Congleton
Licensing Enforcement	(0.010)	0.010	0	0	Three year reserve to fund a third party review and update of the Cheshire East Council Taxi Licensing Enforcement Policies.
Flood Water Management (Emergency Planning)	(0.002)	0.002	0	0	Grant relating to Public Information Works.
Neighbourhood Planning	(0.041)	0.041	0	0	To match income and expenditure.
Street Cleansing	(0.022)	0.022	0	0	Committed expenditure on voluntary litter picking equipment and electric blowers.
Environment and Communities Committee Total:	(0.482)	0.111	0	(0.371)	

Table 6 – Highways and Transport Committee

Earmarked Reserves	Balance at 1 April 2025	Drawdowns to Support Service Costs (+)	Additional Funds to Reserve (-)	Forecast Balance at 31 March 2026	Notes
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Highways and Transport Committee	£m	£m	£m	£m	
Flood Risk and Adverse Weather Events	(0.400)	0.911	(1.193)	(0.682)	To help the service manage risks such as the impact of adverse weather.
Highways Procurement Project	(0.083)	0	0	(0.083)	To finance the development of the next Highway Service Contract. Depot mobilisation costs, split over 7 years from start of contract in 2018.
LEP - Local Transport Body	(0.019)	0	0	(0.019)	Contribution to LEP transport studies/consultancy . Ongoing working around Transport Legacy issues.
Highways and Transport Committee Total:	(0.502)	0.911	(1.193)	(0.784)	

Table 7 – Earmarked Reserves Summary

Earmarked Reserves	Balance at 1 April 2025	Drawdowns to Support Service Costs (+)	Additional Funds to Reserve (-)	Forecast Balance at 31 March 2026
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	£m	£m	£m	£m
Adults and Health Committee	(3.204)	0.207	(0.113)	(3.110)
Children and Families Committee	(0.456)	0.456	0	0
Corporate Policy Committee	(17.274)	12.660	(10.035)	(14.649)
Economy and Growth Committee	(1.196)	0.543	0	(0.653)
Environment and Communities Committee	(0.482)	0.111	0	(0.371)
Highways and Transport Committee	(0.502)	0.911	(1.193)	(0.784)
Earmarked Reserves Total	(23.114)	14.888	(11.341)	(19.567)
General Fund Reserve	(6.299)	0	(0.186)	(6.485)
CEC Total Usable Reserves	(29.413)	14.888	(11.527)	(26.052)



First Financial Review 2025/26

Results to end of June 2025

Capital tables by Committee

Adults & Health

CAPITAL

CAPITAL PROGRAMME 2025/26-2028/29													
Scheme Description	Forecast Expenditure							Forecast Funding					
	Total Approved Budget £m	Prior Years £m	Forecast Budget 2025/26 £m	Forecast Budget 2026/27 £m	Forecast Budget 2027/28 £m	Forecast Budget 2028/29 £m	Total Forecast Budget 2025/29 £m	Grants £m	External Contributions £m	Revenue Contributions £m	Capital Receipts £m	Prudential Borrowing £m	Total Funding £m
Committed Schemes in progress													
Adults Services													
Community - Rural Shared Prosperity Fund	0.449	0.361	0.088	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.088	0.088	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.088
Electronic Call Monitoring System	0.389	0.000	0.000	0.389	0.000	0.000	0.389	0.000	0.000	0.389	0.000	0.000	0.389
People Planner System	0.094	0.043	0.026	0.025	0.000	0.000	0.051	0.051	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.051
Replacement Care4CE Devices	0.093	0.065	0.018	0.010	0.000	0.000	0.028	0.028	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.028
Total Committed Schemes	1.025	0.469	0.132	0.424	0.000	0.000	0.556	0.167	0.000	0.389	0.000	0.000	0.556
Total Adults and Health Schemes	1.025	0.469	0.132	0.424	0.000	0.000	0.556	0.167	0.000	0.389	0.000	0.000	0.556

Children and Families

CAPITAL

CAPITAL PROGRAMME 2025/26 - 2028/29													
Scheme Description	Forecast Expenditure							Forecast Funding					Total Funding
	Total Approved Budget £m	Prior Years £m	Forecast Budget 2025/26 £m	Forecast Budget 2026/27 £m	Forecast Budget 2027/28 £m	Forecast Budget 2028/29 £m	Total Forecast Budget 2025/29 £m	Grants £m	External Contributions £m	Revenue Contributions £m	Capital Receipts £m	Prudential Borrowing £m	
Committed Schemes in progress													
Childrens Social Care													
Foster Carer Capacity Scheme	0.534	0.468	0.067	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.067	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.067	0.067
Crewe Youth Zone	5.135	0.570	3.718	0.847	0.000	0.000	4.565	3.718	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.847	4.565
Family Hubs Transformation (Early Years - C110120)	0.387	0.282	0.105	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.105	0.105	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.105
Children's Home Sufficiency Scheme	1.404	0.358	1.046	0.000	0.000	0.000	1.046	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	1.046	1.046
Strong Start, Family Help & Integration													
Early Years Sufficiency Capital Fund	1.036	0.985	0.050	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.050	0.050	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.050
Childcare Capital Expansion	0.749	0.009	0.640	0.100	0.000	0.000	0.740	0.740	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.740
Education and 14-19 Skills													
Adelaide Academy	0.904	0.069	0.835	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.835	0.665	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.170	0.835
Basic Need Grant Allocation	7.401	0.017	7.384	0.000	0.000	0.000	7.384	7.384	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	7.384
Congleton Planning Area - Primary (1)	2.209	0.179	2.030	0.000	0.000	0.000	2.030	0.764	1.266	0.000	0.000	0.000	2.030
Congleton Planning Area - Primary (2)	0.628	0.579	0.049	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.049	0.049	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.049
Congleton Planning Area - Primary (3)	7.504	0.004	0.049	0.500	2.000	4.950	7.499	4.299	3.200	0.000	0.000	0.000	7.499
Devolved Formula Grant - Schools	1.143	0.443	0.391	0.310	0.000	0.000	0.701	0.701	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.701
Energy Efficiency Grant - Schools	0.541	0.541	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000
Future Schemes - Feasibility Studies	0.400	0.124	0.150	0.126	0.000	0.000	0.276	0.276	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.276
Gainsborough Primary - Flooring	0.304	0.017	0.287	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.287	0.287	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.287
Handforth Planning Area - New School	13.003	0.010	0.040	0.500	4.000	8.453	12.993	0.129	12.864	0.000	0.000	0.000	12.993
Leighton Academy – Resourced unit (New SEN places	0.193	0.141	0.052	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.052	0.052	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.052
Leighton SEND Reception Adaptations	0.026	0.000	0.026	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.026	0.026	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.026
Little Angels Satellite Sites	0.029	0.021	0.008	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.008	0.008	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.008
Macclesfield Planning Area - Secondary New	0.531	0.006	0.525	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.525	0.525	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.525
Macclesfield Planning Area - New School	4.001	0.002	0.000	0.000	4.000	0.000	4.000	0.000	4.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	4.000
Malbank High School	1.922	1.897	0.025	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.025	0.025	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.025
Mobberley Primary School	1.208	0.037	0.050	0.861	0.259	0.000	1.170	0.870	0.000	0.000	0.300	0.000	1.170
Nantwich Planning Area (Primary Schools - 210	9.061	0.793	6.768	1.500	0.000	0.000	8.268	5.308	2.960	0.000	0.000	0.000	8.268

Children and Families

CAPITAL

CAPITAL PROGRAMME 2025/26 - 2028/29													
Scheme Description	Forecast Expenditure							Forecast Funding					Total Funding £m
	Total Approved Budget	Prior Years	Forecast Budget 2025/26	Forecast Budget 2026/27	Forecast Budget 2027/28	Forecast Budget 2028/29	Total Forecast Budget 2025/29	Grants	External Contributions	Revenue Contributions	Capital Receipts	Prudential Borrowing	
	£m	£m	£m	£m	£m	£m	£m	£m	£m	£m	£m	£m	
New AP Free School	0.525	0.003	0.521	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.521	0.521	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.521
New Satellite school - 2	9.000	0.013	0.987	5.000	3.000	0.000	8.987	8.987	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	8.987
New SEN Free School	0.998	0.010	0.740	0.248	0.000	0.000	0.988	0.988	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.988
New SEN places - 1	1.089	0.004	1.086	0.000	0.000	0.000	1.086	1.086	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	1.086
Oakfield Lodge & Stables	0.050	0.013	0.037	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.037	0.037	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.037
Poynton Planning Area	1.500	0.021	0.479	1.000	0.000	0.000	1.479	0.676	0.803	0.000	0.000	0.000	1.479
Provision of Sufficient School Places - SEND	7.182	6.974	0.208	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.208	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.208	0.208
Sandbach Primary Academy	1.583	0.912	0.671	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.671	0.671	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.671
Schools Condition Capital Grant	6.497	1.037	3.460	2.000	0.000	0.000	5.460	5.460	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	5.460
SEN/High Needs Capital Allocation	4.860	0.187	4.673	0.000	0.000	0.000	4.673	4.673	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	4.673
Shavington Planning Area - New Primary School	8.040	0.162	0.500	3.692	3.687	0.000	7.879	5.549	2.330	0.000	0.000	0.000	7.879
Springfield Satellite Site (Dean Row)	6.112	5.820	0.292	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.292	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.292	0.292
Springfield Satellite Site - Middlewich	6.000	0.017	3.983	2.000	0.000	0.000	5.983	5.983	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	5.983
The Dingle PS Expansion (Was Haslington PA- Tytherington High School	1.395	1.373	0.022	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.022	0.022	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.022
Various SEN Sites - Small Works/Adaptations	3.006	0.208	2.797	0.000	0.000	0.000	2.797	2.797	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	2.797
Wheelock Primary School	0.150	0.001	0.149	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.149	0.149	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.149
Wilmslow High School BN	2.411	0.890	0.521	1.000	0.000	0.000	1.521	1.062	0.460	0.000	0.000	0.000	1.521
Wilmslow Primary Planning Area	14.179	12.788	1.391	0.000	0.000	0.000	1.391	0.193	1.150	0.000	0.000	0.048	1.391
	0.626	0.001	0.025	0.600	0.000	0.000	0.625	0.125	0.500	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.625
Total Committed Schemes	135.456	37.986	46.836	20.285	16.945	13.403	97.469	64.960	29.532	0.000	0.300	2.678	97.469
New Schemes													
Education and 14-19 Skills													
Chelford Primary School	0.340	0.000	0.340	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.340	0.340	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.340
Park Lane Refurbishment additional SEND places	0.200	0.005	0.195	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.195	0.195	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.195
Alderley Edge Primary - 25-26 Condition Project	0.050	0.000	0.050	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.050	0.050	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.050
Rainow Primary - 25-26 Condition Project	0.025	0.000	0.025	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.025	0.025	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.025
Ruskin - 25-26 Condition Project	0.200	0.000	0.200	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.200	0.200	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.200
Styal primary - 25-26 Condition Project	0.100	0.000	0.100	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.100	0.100	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.100
Total New Schemes	0.915	0.005	0.910	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.910	0.910	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.910
Total Children and Families Schemes	136.371	37.991	47.746	20.285	16.945	13.403	98.380	65.870	29.532	0.000	0.300	2.678	98.380

CAPITAL PROGRAMME 2025/26 - 2028/29

Scheme Description	Forecast Expenditure							Forecast Funding					Total Funding
	Total Approved Budget	Prior Years	Forecast Budget 2025/26	Forecast Budget 2026/27	Forecast Budget 2027/28	Forecast Budget 2028/29	Total Forecast Budget 2025-29	Grants	External Contributions	Revenue Contributions	Capital Receipts	Prudential Borrowing	
	£m	£m	£m	£m	£m	£m	£m	£m	£m	£m	£m	£m	£m
Committed Schemes in progress													
ICT Services													
Accelerate Digital	5.719	0.282	2.709	1.350	1.377	0.000	5.436	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	5.436	5.436
Care Act Phase 2	6.314	5.256	1.058	0.000	0.000	0.000	1.058	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	1.058	1.058
Digital Customer Enablement	3.102	2.939	0.163	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.163	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.163	0.163
ICT Device Replacement	3.762	1.136	1.776	0.250	0.200	0.400	2.626	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	2.626	2.626
ICT Hybrid Model	3.449	1.758	1.690	0.000	0.000	0.000	1.690	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	1.690	1.690
IADM (Information Assurance and Data Management)	19.465	17.456	2.009	0.000	0.000	0.000	2.009	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	2.009	2.009
Infrastructure Investment Programme (IIP)	34.429	31.376	2.223	0.830	0.000	0.000	3.053	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	3.053	3.053
Vendor Management	1.006	0.767	0.239	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.239	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.239	0.239
Finance & Customer Services													
Core Financials	13.143	10.259	1.099	0.785	0.800	0.200	2.884	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	2.884	2.884
Vendor Management - Phase 2	0.099	0.024	0.025	0.050	0.000	0.000	0.075	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.075	0.075
Total Committed Schemes	90.488	71.255	12.991	3.265	2.377	0.600	19.233	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	19.233	19.233
New Schemes													
ICT													
Digital BluePrint	6.530	0.000	3.490	1.663	1.377	0.000	6.530	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	6.530	6.530
Total New Schemes	0.000	0.000	3.490	1.663	1.377	0.000	6.530	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	6.530	6.530
Total Corporate Policy Schemes	90.488	71.255	16.481	4.928	3.754	0.600	25.763	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	25.763	25.763

CAPITAL PROGRAMME 2025/26 - 2028/29

Scheme Description	Forecast Expenditure							Forecast Funding					Total Funding £m
	Total Approved Budget £m	Prior Years £m	Forecast Budget 2025/26 £m	Forecast Budget 2026/27 £m	Forecast Budget 2027/28 £m	Forecast Budget 2028/29 £m	Total Forecast Budget 2025-29 £m	Grants £m	External Contributions £m	Revenue Contributions £m	Capital Receipts £m	Prudential Borrowing £m	
Committed Schemes in progress													
Facilities Management													
Public Sector Decarbonisation Fund - FM 3	5.148	5.144	0.003	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.003	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.003	0.003
PSDS - 3B - Lot 3 (schools)	4.390	3.353	1.036	0.000	0.000	0.000	1.036	0.969	0.000	0.067	0.000	0.000	1.036
PSDS - 3C	1.672	0.086	1.586	0.000	0.000	0.000	1.586	1.363	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.223	1.586
Septic Tanks	1.585	0.291	0.094	0.400	0.400	0.400	1.294	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	1.294	1.294
Schools Capital Maintenance	8.315	5.788	1.797	0.730	0.000	0.000	2.527	2.257	0.000	0.271	0.000	0.000	2.527
Premises Capital (FM)	48.241	34.609	3.787	3.984	2.700	3.161	13.632	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	13.632	13.632
Housing													
Crewe Towns Fund - Warm and Healthy Homes	2.126	0.161	1.965	0.000	0.000	0.000	1.965	1.965	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	1.965
Disabled Facilities	26.244	14.040	3.486	2.906	2.906	2.906	12.204	11.302	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.902	12.204
Green Homes Grant	2.647	2.449	0.198	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.198	0.198	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.198
Gypsy and Traveller Sites	4.136	4.058	0.078	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.078	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.078	0.078
Home Repairs Vulnerable People	1.797	0.987	0.271	0.339	0.200	0.000	0.810	0.374	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.436	0.810
Home Upgrade Grant Phase 2	2.894	2.094	0.800	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.800	0.800	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.800
Local Authority Housing Fund	0.732	0.422	0.309	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.309	0.309	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.309
Sustainable Warmth - Home Upgrade Grant	0.843	0.829	0.014	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.014	0.014	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.014
Temporary Accommodation	1.479	1.076	0.403	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.403	0.000	0.287	0.116	0.000	0.000	0.403
Warm Homes Fund	0.239	0.218	0.021	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.021	0.021	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.021
Warm Homes Local Grant (DESNZ)	7.793	0.000	1.354	3.252	3.187	0.000	7.793	7.793	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	7.793
Estates													
Corporate Landlord - Non-Operational	1.336	0.000	1.336	0.000	0.000	0.000	1.336	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	1.336	1.336
Malkins Bank Landfill Site	1.360	0.782	0.080	0.497	0.000	0.000	0.577	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.577	0.577
Farms Strategy	2.910	1.689	0.152	0.065	0.335	0.669	1.220	0.000	0.000	0.000	1.220	0.000	1.220
WorkplaCE	1.000	0.255	0.745	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.745	0.745	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.745

CAPITAL PROGRAMME 2025/26 - 2028/29

Scheme Description	Forecast Expenditure							Forecast Funding					Total Funding £m
	Total Approved Budget £m	Prior Years £m	Forecast Budget 2025/26 £m	Forecast Budget 2026/27 £m	Forecast Budget 2027/28 £m	Forecast Budget 2028/29 £m	Total Forecast Budget 2025-29 £m	Grants £m	External Contributions £m	Revenue Contributions £m	Capital Receipts £m	Prudential Borrowing £m	
Economic Development													
Crewe Towns Fund - Repurposing Our High Streets	1.132	0.526	0.390	0.216	0.000	0.000	0.606	0.606	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.606
Crewe Towns Fund - Flag Lane Baths	1.969	0.603	0.012	1.353	0.000	0.000	1.365	0.012	0.000	0.000	0.000	1.353	1.365
Crewe Towns Fund - Mill Street Corridor	4.477	1.479	2.998	0.000	0.000	0.000	2.998	2.998	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	2.998
Crewe Towns Fund - Mirion St	1.190	1.066	0.125	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.125	0.125	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.125
Crewe Towns Fund - Crewe Youth Zone non-grant	0.351	0.246	0.067	0.038	0.000	0.000	0.105	0.105	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.105
History Centre Public Realm & ICV (Crewe Towns Fund) CTC1	0.580	0.028	0.152	0.400	0.000	0.000	0.552	0.552	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.552
Handforth Heat Network	13.219	0.035	0.695	0.450	12.039	0.000	13.183	2.569	7.428	0.000	0.000	3.187	13.183
Demolition of Crewe Library & Concourse CTC10	3.396	3.237	0.159	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.159	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.159	0.159
Future High Street Funding - CEC Innovation Centre	4.251	3.961	0.291	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.291	0.291	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.291
Crewe Town Centre Regeneration	32.333	31.010	1.323	0.000	0.000	0.000	1.323	1.000	0.064	0.000	0.000	0.259	1.323
South Macclesfield Development Area	34.630	3.283	0.176	0.000	0.000	31.171	31.347	10.000	10.000	0.000	11.347	0.000	31.347
North Cheshire Garden Village	57.866	9.530	6.991	17.810	23.535	0.000	48.336	17.693	0.000	0.000	21.700	8.944	48.336
Handforth Garden Village s106 Obligations	6.841	0.000	0.000	2.740	0.000	4.101	6.841	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	6.841	6.841
Leighton Green	2.096	1.495	0.000	0.601	0.000	0.000	0.601	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.601	0.601
Connecting Cheshire Phase 3	8.000	0.720	0.850	1.200	2.000	3.230	7.280	0.000	7.280	0.000	0.000	0.000	7.280
Digital Projects	9.250	5.680	0.070	0.000	0.000	3.500	3.570	3.570	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	3.570
UKSPF E22 and E29 capital interventions	1.654	1.304	0.350	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.350	0.350	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.350
Macclesfield Indoor Market Refurbishment (MIMR)	2.496	1.898	0.598	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.598	0.500	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.098	0.598
Nantwich Town Centre Public Realm Improvements	0.100	0.000	0.050	0.050	0.000	0.000	0.100	0.000	0.100	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.100
Culture & Tourism													
Countryside Vehicles	1.579	0.726	0.070	0.300	0.300	0.182	0.852	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.852	0.852
Culture & Tourism S106 Schemes	0.664	0.075	0.143	0.387	0.010	0.049	0.589	0.000	0.589	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.589
Green Structures Investment	0.896	0.000	0.271	0.239	0.195	0.191	0.896	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.896	0.896
New Archives Premises CTC1	10.256	1.566	8.362	0.328	0.000	0.000	8.690	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	8.690	8.690
PROW Capital Works	1.138	1.127	0.011	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.011	0.011	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.011
PROW CMM A6 MARR	0.100	0.070	0.001	0.029	0.000	0.000	0.030	0.030	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.030
Visitor Economy - Rural Shared Prosperity Fund	0.713	0.465	0.248	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.248	0.248	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.248
Tatton Park Investment Phase 2	3.280	1.446	0.500	1.334	0.000	0.000	1.834	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	1.834	1.834
Total Committed Schemes	331.345	149.912	44.420	39.649	47.806	49.559	181.434	68.768	25.747	0.454	34.267	52.197	181.434
Total Growth & Enterprise	331.345	149.912	44.420	39.649	47.806	49.559	181.434	68.768	25.747	0.454	34.267	52.197	181.434

CAPITAL PROGRAMME 2025/26 - 2028/29

Scheme Description	Forecast Expenditure							Forecast Funding					Total Funding £m
	Total Approved Budget £m	Prior Years £m	Forecast Budget 2025/26 £m	Forecast Budget 2026/27 £m	Forecast Budget 2027/28 £m	Forecast Budget 2028/29 £m	Total Forecast Budget 2025-29 £m	Grants £m	External Contributions £m	Revenue Contributions £m	Capital Receipts £m	Prudential Borrowing £m	
Committed Schemes in progress													
Environment Services													
Bereavement Service Data System	0.035	0.007	0.028	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.028	0.000	0.000	0.028	0.000	0.000	0.028
Booth Bed Lane, Goostrey	0.140	0.000	0.000	0.140	0.000	0.000	0.140	0.100	0.040	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.140
Bosley Village Play Area	0.020	0.000	0.020	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.020	0.000	0.020	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.020
Browns Lane Play Area 2024/25	0.012	0.000	0.012	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.012	0.000	0.012	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.012
Carbon Neutral 2030 Investments	13.980	0.104	0.297	0.300	4.000	9.279	13.876	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	13.876	13.876
Carbon Offset Investment	0.568	0.539	0.029	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.029	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.029	0.029
Carnival Fields	0.042	0.000	0.042	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.042	0.000	0.042	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.042
Chelford Village Hall Phase 2	0.061	0.000	0.061	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.061	0.000	0.061	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.061
Closed Cemeteries	0.152	0.000	0.152	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.152	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.152	0.152
Crewe Crematorium Flue Modifications	0.030	0.019	0.011	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.011	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.011	0.011
Crewe Crematorium and Macclesfield Crematorium Major	0.030	0.018	0.012	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.012	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.012	0.012
Elworth Park	0.052	0.002	0.035	0.015	0.000	0.000	0.050	0.000	0.050	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.050
Energy Improvements at Cledford Lane	0.985	0.914	0.071	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.071	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.071	0.071
Fleet EV Transition	6.897	0.990	3.580	0.327	2.000	0.000	5.907	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	5.907	5.907
Fleet Vehicle Electric Charging	0.585	0.159	0.286	0.140	0.000	0.000	0.426	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.426	0.426
Future High Street Funding - Sustainable Energy Network	1.566	1.349	0.216	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.216	0.216	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.216
Green Investment Scheme (Solar Farm)	4.150	3.459	0.536	0.155	0.000	0.000	0.691	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.691	0.691
Green Spaces Wilmslow - Mersey Forest	0.021	0.021	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000
Grounds Maintenance Management ICT System	0.121	0.060	0.062	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.062	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.062	0.062
Household Waste Recycling Centres	0.860	0.084	0.776	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.776	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.776	0.776
Jim Evison Playing Fields	0.161	0.019	0.120	0.022	0.000	0.000	0.142	0.000	0.142	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.142
Litter and Recycling Bins	0.208	0.119	0.010	0.052	0.027	0.000	0.089	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.089	0.089
Longridge Open Space Improvement Project	0.066	0.000	0.000	0.066	0.000	0.000	0.066	0.000	0.066	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.066
LTA - Tennis Facility Improvements	0.124	0.039	0.085	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.085	0.060	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.025	0.085
Macclesfield Chapel Refurbishment	0.629	0.022	0.607	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.607	0.000	0.000	0.607	0.000	0.000	0.607
Main Road, Langley	0.259	0.003	0.160	0.097	0.000	0.000	0.257	0.000	0.257	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.257
Newtown Sports Facilities Improvements	0.099	0.093	0.000	0.006	0.000	0.000	0.006	0.000	0.006	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.006
Park Development Fund	0.846	0.670	0.089	0.087	0.000	0.000	0.176	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.176	0.176
Park Play, Meriton Road & Stanley Hall	0.010	0.000	0.010	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.010	0.000	0.010	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.010
Pastures Wood De-carbonisation	0.051	0.038	0.013	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.013	0.000	0.000	0.013	0.000	0.000	0.013
Queens Park Bowling Green	0.017	0.002	0.015	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.015	0.000	0.015	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.015
Review of Household Waste Recycling Centres	1.000	0.000	1.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	1.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	1.000	1.000
Rotherhead Drive Open Space and Play Area	0.141	0.117	0.006	0.006	0.006	0.006	0.024	0.000	0.024	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.024
Rugby Drive, Macclesfield	0.071	0.024	0.047	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.047	0.000	0.047	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.047
Shaw Heath Recreation Ground	0.022	0.016	0.000	0.006	0.000	0.000	0.006	0.000	0.006	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.006
Stanley Hall Improvements	0.055	0.053	0.002	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.002	0.000	0.002	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.002
The Carrs Improvement Project	0.061	0.000	0.000	0.061	0.000	0.000	0.061	0.000	0.061	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.061
The Moor, Knutsford	0.036	0.032	0.004	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.004	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.004	0.004

CAPITAL PROGRAMME 2025/26 - 2028/29

Scheme Description	Forecast Expenditure							Forecast Funding					Total Funding £m
	Total Approved Budget	Prior Years	Forecast Budget 2025/26	Forecast Budget 2026/27	Forecast Budget 2027/28	Forecast Budget 2028/29	Total Forecast Budget 2025-29	Grants	External Contributions	Revenue Contributions	Capital Receipts	Prudential Borrowing	
	£m	£m	£m	£m	£m	£m	£m	£m	£m	£m	£m	£m	
Unsafe Cemetery Memorials	0.035	0.009	0.026	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.026	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.026	0.026
Victoria Park Amenity Improvements	0.020	0.012	0.008	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.008	0.000	0.008	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.008
Victoria Park Pitch Improvements	0.029	0.028	0.001	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.001	0.000	0.001	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.001
Weekly Food Waste Collections	8.209	0.192	7.517	0.500	0.000	0.000	8.017	2.519	0.000	0.000	0.000	5.497	8.017
West Park Open Space & Sports Improvements	0.120	0.045	0.075	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.075	0.000	0.075	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.075
Woodland South of Coppice Way, Handforth	0.089	0.068	0.005	0.016	0.000	0.000	0.021	0.000	0.021	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.021
Wybunbury Parish Open Space	0.005	0.001	0.004	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.004	0.000	0.004	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.004
Wybunbury St Chad's Closed Cemetery	0.219	0.000	0.219	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.219	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.219	0.219
Neighbourhood Services													
Congleton Leisure Centre	13.000	12.973	0.027	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.027	0.000	0.020	0.000	0.000	0.007	0.027
Crewe Towns Fund - Cumberland Arena	3.173	0.404	2.768	0.000	0.000	0.000	2.768	2.769	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	2.769
Crewe Towns Fund - Pocket Parks	1.481	0.954	0.527	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.527	0.527	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.527
Crewe Towns Fund - Valley Brook Green Corridor	3.339	0.590	2.748	0.000	0.000	0.000	2.748	2.748	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	2.748
Middlewich Leisure Centre	0.060	0.051	0.009	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.009	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.009	0.009
Libraries - Next Generation - Self Service	0.374	0.336	0.038	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.038	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.038	0.038
Strategic Leisure Review	3.400	1.329	1.421	0.650	0.000	0.000	2.071	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	2.071	2.071
Planning & Regulatory Services													
Regulatory Systems & Environmental Health ICT System	0.313	0.279	0.034	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.034	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.034	0.034
Total Committed Schemes	68.030	26.244	23.822	2.646	6.033	9.285	41.786	8.940	0.991	0.647	0.000	31.208	41.786
New Schemes													
Environment Services													
Parks	1.483	0.000	0.549	0.370	0.214	0.349	1.483	0.000	1.483	0.000	0.000	0.000	1.483
Total New Schemes	1.483	0.000	0.549	0.370	0.214	0.349	1.483	0.000	1.483	0.000	0.000	0.000	1.483
Total Environment and Communities Schemes	69.513	26.244	24.371	3.016	6.247	9.635	43.269	8.940	2.474	0.647	0.000	31.208	43.269

CAPITAL PROGRAMME 2025/26 - 2028/29

Scheme Description	Forecast Expenditure							Forecast Funding					Total Funding £m
	Total Approved Budget £m	Prior Years £m	Forecast Budget 2025/26 £m	Forecast Budget 2026/27 £m	Forecast Budget 2027/28 £m	Forecast Budget 2028/29 £m	Total Forecast Budget 2025-29 £m	Grants £m	External Contributions £m	Revenue Contributions £m	Capital Receipts £m	Prudential Borrowing £m	
Committed Schemes in progress													
Highways													
A532 Safer Road Fund Scheme	1.466	1.395	0.070	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.070	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.070	0.070
A536 Safer Road Fund Scheme	2.404	2.353	0.051	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.051	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.051	0.051
A537 Safer Road Fund Scheme	2.490	2.346	0.144	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.144	0.144	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.144
Air Quality Action Plan	0.523	0.522	0.002	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.002	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.002	0.002
Alderley Edge Bypass Scheme Implementation	60.411	60.360	0.051	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.051	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.051	0.051
Bridge Maintenance Minor Wks	12.463	11.672	0.792	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.792	0.374	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.418	0.792
Client Contract and Asset Mgmt	0.693	0.547	0.146	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.146	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.146	0.146
Footpath Maintenance - Slurry Sealing & Reconstruction Works	1.323	1.323	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000
Highway Maintenance Minor Wks	69.622	69.552	0.070	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.070	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.070	0.070
Highway Pothole/Challenge Fund	11.669	11.497	0.172	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.172	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.172	0.172
Jack Mills Way Part 1 Claims	0.307	0.307	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000
Local Highway Measures	7.255	7.105	0.151	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.151	0.151	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.151
Ward Members Local Highway Measures	0.872	0.319	0.553	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.553	0.177	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.376	0.553
Programme Management	1.547	1.546	0.002	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.002	0.002	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.002
Road Safety Schemes Minor Wks	6.423	6.260	0.163	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.163	0.034	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.128	0.163
Traffic Signal Maintenance	1.095	0.795	0.300	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.300	0.299	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.001	0.300
Traffic Signs and Bollards - LED Replacement	1.259	1.259	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000
Winter Service Facility	0.957	0.771	0.097	0.089	0.000	0.000	0.186	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.186	0.186
Managing and Maintaining Highways	4.712	0.000	4.712	0.000	0.000	0.000	4.712	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	4.712	4.712
Pothole Funding	17.397	0.000	5.799	5.799	5.799	0.000	17.397	17.397	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	17.397
Integrated Block - LTP	6.009	0.000	2.003	2.003	2.003	0.000	6.009	6.009	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	6.009
Maintenance Block - LTP	19.476	0.000	7.878	5.799	5.799	0.000	19.476	17.397	0.000	0.000	0.000	2.079	19.476
Incentive Fund - LTP	4.350	0.000	1.450	1.450	1.450	0.000	4.350	4.350	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	4.350
Infrastructure													
A500 Dualling scheme	88.692	11.117	0.050	0.150	0.000	77.375	77.575	74.125	3.450	0.000	0.000	0.000	77.575
A500 Corridor OBC Update	3.371	0.064	0.700	1.391	0.451	0.764	3.307	2.543	0.764	0.000	0.000	0.000	3.307
A50 / A54 Holmes Chapel	0.604	0.101	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.503	0.503	0.000	0.503	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.503
A54 / A533 Leadsmithy Street, Middlewich	0.564	0.177	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.387	0.387	0.000	0.387	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.387
A6 MARR CMM Handforth	1.088	1.046	0.042	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.042	0.042	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.042
A6 MARR Technical Design	0.473	0.285	0.188	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.188	0.070	0.119	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.188
A556 Knutsford to Bowdon	0.504	0.373	0.060	0.071	0.000	0.000	0.131	0.000	0.131	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.131
Peacock Roundabout Junction	0.750	0.036	0.516	0.000	0.000	0.198	0.714	0.000	0.714	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.714
Congleton Link Road	83.991	72.920	0.700	1.750	1.000	7.621	11.071	0.316	10.756	0.000	0.000	0.000	11.071
Crewe Green Roundabout	7.500	7.059	0.441	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.441	0.000	0.441	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.441
Flowerpot Phs 1 & Pinchpoint	4.249	1.516	0.100	0.488	0.336	1.808	2.732	1.719	1.014	0.000	0.000	0.000	2.732

CAPITAL PROGRAMME 2025/26 - 2028/29

Scheme Description	Forecast Expenditure							Forecast Funding					Total Funding £m
	Total Approved Budget £m	Prior Years £m	Forecast Budget 2025/26 £m	Forecast Budget 2026/27 £m	Forecast Budget 2027/28 £m	Forecast Budget 2028/29 £m	Total Forecast Budget 2025-29 £m	Grants £m	External Contributions £m	Revenue Contributions £m	Capital Receipts £m	Prudential Borrowing £m	
Future High Street Funding - Adaptive Signals	0.509	0.455	0.054	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.054	0.000	0.054	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.054
Future High Street Funding - Flag Lane Link	1.481	1.481	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000
Future High Street Funding - Southern Gateway	5.303	5.101	0.202	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.202	0.202	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.202
Highways & Infrastructure S106 Funded Schemes	5.113	1.316	1.176	1.268	0.000	1.354	3.798	0.163	3.635	0.000	0.000	0.000	3.798
Transport & Infrastructure Development Studies	0.350	0.043	0.307	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.307	0.307	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.307
Middlewich Eastern Bypass	96.600	27.679	18.000	37.682	13.240	0.000	68.921	46.779	14.611	0.000	0.000	7.532	68.921
Mill Street Corridor - Station Link Project	0.847	0.263	0.584	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.584	0.000	0.284	0.000	0.000	0.300	0.584
North-West Crewe Package	51.366	49.055	1.411	0.300	0.300	0.300	2.311	0.000	2.311	0.000	0.000	0.000	2.311
Old Mill Road / The Hill Junction	1.325	0.188	0.100	1.036	0.000	0.000	1.136	0.000	1.136	0.000	0.000	0.000	1.136
Poynton Relief Road	54.848	47.293	0.500	3.355	1.435	2.265	7.555	2.236	4.219	0.000	1.000	0.100	7.555
Sydney Road Bridge	10.501	10.112	0.014	0.375	0.000	0.000	0.389	0.000	0.390	0.000	0.000	-0.001	0.389
Strategic Transport and Parking													
Active Travel Fund	3.109	0.525	2.584	0.000	0.000	0.000	2.584	2.584	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	2.584
Active Travel (Cycling / Walking Route) Investment	2.920	2.854	0.066	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.066	0.001	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.065	0.066
Available Walking Routes	0.151	0.000	0.151	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.151	0.151	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.151
Car Parking Review	0.895	0.570	0.325	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.325	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.325	0.000	0.325
LEVI Capital Fund 23/24	2.172	0.000	0.217	0.652	0.652	0.652	2.172	2.172	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	2.172
On-street Residential Charging	0.551	0.389	0.162	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.162	0.151	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.011	0.162
Park Lane – Ayresshire Way, Congleton Walking and Cycling	0.482	0.433	0.049	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.049	0.049	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.049
Sustainable Travel Access Prog	2.245	2.059	0.186	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.186	0.186	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.186
Sustainable Modes of Travel to Schools Strategy (SMOTSS)	1.117	0.883	0.234	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.234	0.234	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.234
Public Transport Infrastructure	2.765	1.586	0.800	0.379	0.000	0.000	1.179	1.179	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	1.179
Bus Priority	0.755	0.000	0.413	0.341	0.000	0.000	0.755	0.755	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.755
Real Time Passenger Information (RTPI)	0.750	0.000	0.600	0.030	0.030	0.090	0.750	0.750	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.750
Macclesfield Bus Station	0.050	0.000	0.050	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.050	0.050	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.050
Local Access - Crewe Transport Access Studies	0.400	0.088	0.312	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.312	0.312	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.312
Local Access - Macclesfield Transport Access Studies	0.300	0.061	0.239	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.239	0.239	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.239
Local Transport Grant	7.754	0.000	7.754	0.000	0.000	0.000	7.754	7.754	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	7.754
Middlewich Rail Study	0.020	0.000	0.020	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.020	0.020	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.020
LTP Development & Monitoring Studies	0.900	0.460	0.220	0.221	0.000	0.000	0.441	0.441	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.441
Digital Car Parking Solutions	0.140	0.097	0.044	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.044	0.016	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.027	0.044
Pay and Display Parking Meters	0.620	0.607	0.013	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.013	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.013	0.013
Car Parking Improvements (including residents parking)	0.322	0.266	0.056	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.056	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.056	0.056
Total Committed Schemes	683.171	428.486	64.245	64.629	32.495	93.317	254.686	191.877	44.917	0.000	1.325	16.566	254.686

CAPITAL PROGRAMME 2025/26 - 2028/29													
Scheme Description	Forecast Expenditure							Forecast Funding					Total Funding £m
	Total Approved Budget £m	Prior Years £m	Forecast Budget 2025/26 £m	Forecast Budget 2026/27 £m	Forecast Budget 2027/28 £m	Forecast Budget 2028/29 £m	Total Forecast Budget 2025-29 £m	Grants £m	External Contributions £m	Revenue Contributions £m	Capital Receipts £m	Prudential Borrowing £m	
New Schemes													
Highways													
Highways Maintenance Capital	41.846	0.000	7.340	11.502	11.502	11.502	41.846	27.773	0.000	0.000	0.000	14.073	41.846
Highways: Depots (Macclesfield)	2.386	0.000	0.411	0.750	1.225	0.000	2.386	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	2.386	2.386
Highways: Depots (Wardle)	0.696	0.000	0.146	0.458	0.092	0.000	0.696	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.060	0.636	0.696
Strategic Transport & Parking Services													
Strategic Transport Model	0.750	0.000	0.250	0.250	0.250	0.000	0.750	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.750	0.750
Total New Schemes	45.678	0.000	8.147	12.960	13.069	11.502	45.678	27.773	0.000	0.000	0.060	17.845	45.678
Total Highways & Transport	728.849	428.486	72.392	77.589	45.564	104.819	300.363	219.650	44.917	0.000	1.385	34.411	300.363

Families First Task and Finish Group Feedback

Children and Families Committee
15th September 2025



- At its meeting in June 2025, the Children and Families Committee agreed the Terms of Reference for a new Task and Finish Group regarding Families First.
- The Task and Finish Group has met 4 times during July and August 2025.
- This presentation provides the Committee with an overview of the learning from the Task and Finish Group including the questions asked by Task and Finish Group members and responses provided.

Task and Finish Group Objectives

- To understand the rationale and evidence base for place-based locality working and locality proposals for multi-disciplinary and multi-agency working for children and families in Cheshire East.
- To understand how this links to the Families First Partnership approach and the **requirement to implement the reforms and be up and running by 31st March 2026.**
- To contribute towards the development of the Families First Partnership plans.

Membership and focus

Focus of the Task and Finish Group Meetings:

- 3rd July 2025: Understanding Families First
- 9th July 2025: Exploring the locality footprints
- 4th August 2025: Exploring how localities would work in practice (in line with Families First) using Family Stories
- 11th August 2025: Concluding reflections in readiness for September Committee.

Task and Finish Group Membership

The Task and Finish Group was attended by:

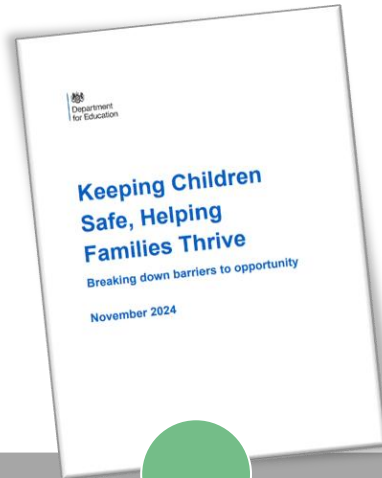
Councillor S Bennett-Wake (Chair)
Councillor L Crane
Councillor E Gilman
Councillor J Saunders

The questions asked by the Task and Finish Group along with responses are provided at the end of this slide deck

The vision and legislative journey

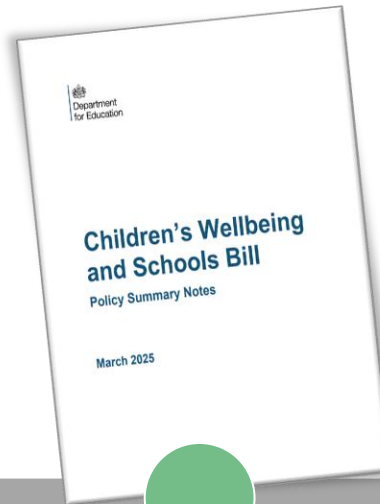
Background

- Following the Independent Care Review (Josh MacAlister) published in May 2022 the previous Government's published its response: Stable Homes Built on Love
- Ten Families First for Children Pathfinders were announced to 'test and learn'



Policy statement published on 18th November 2024

Outlines the Government's vision for the children's social care system and core legislative proposals



Introduced into Parliament on 17th December 2024


Breaks down the ambitions of the bill in seven parts, centred around keeping families together and children safe



Programme Guide published in March 2025

Sets out the delivery expectations for safeguarding partners
Co-signed by Department for Health and Social Care and the Home Office

- The Families First Partnership Programme is a new national programme set up by the Department for Education (DfE) and supported by the Department of Health and Social Care and the Home Office. [The Families First Partnership \(FFP\) Programme Guide](#) sets out the requirements of the reforms.
- Through the programme, Government is working in partnership with local areas (local authorities, police, health, education, childcare settings and other relevant agencies) to improve their local services and systems that help and protect children and families.
- The reforms include the introduction of Family Help, strengthening multi-agency child protection, and improving engagement with family networks.
- The programme is drawing on the experiences of the ten Families First for Children (FFC) Pathfinder Programme local areas (pathfinders), who have been testing the implementation of these system reforms since July 2023.
- Implementing multi-disciplinary and multi-agency teams that work in a place-based way will be a key enabler to both the implementation of the reforms and to Cheshire East's services for children improvement journey.

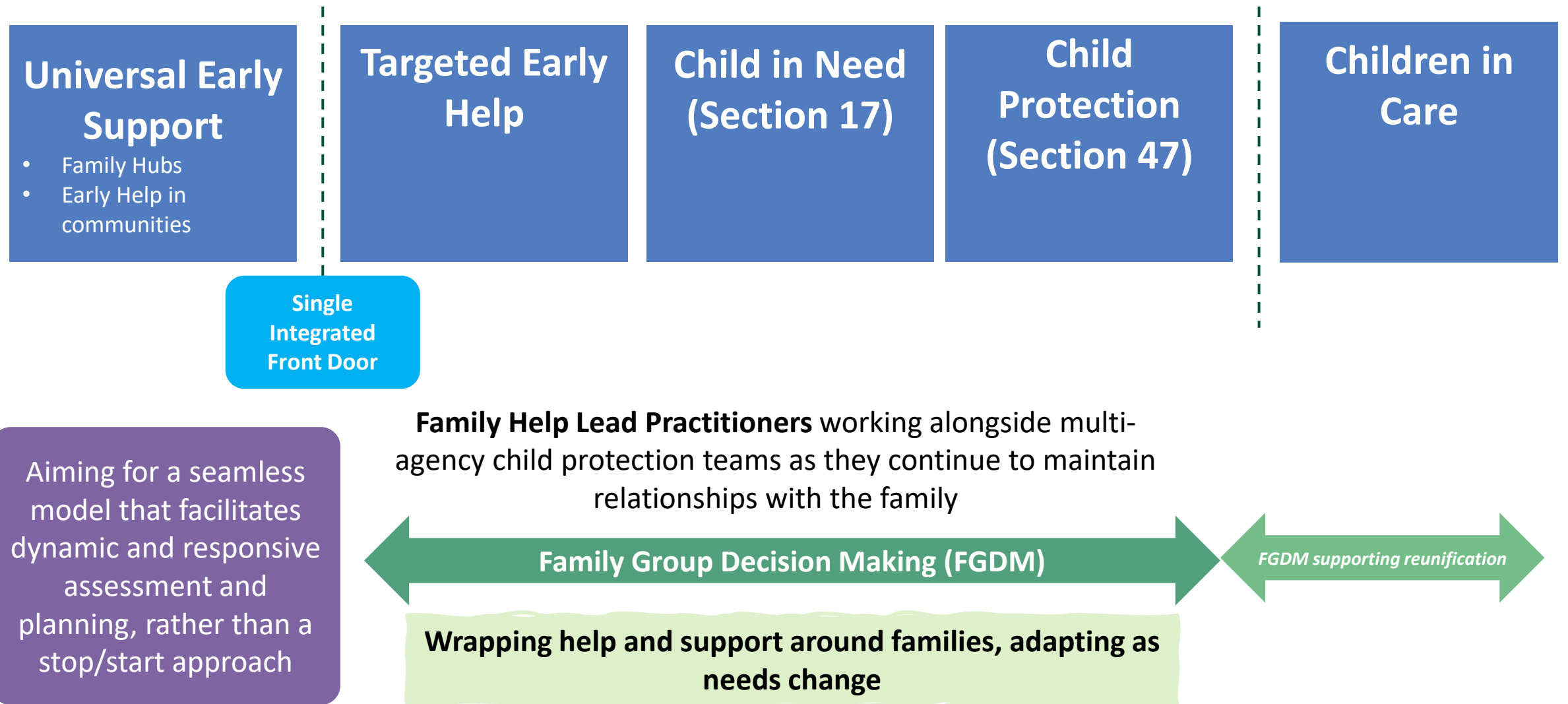
- 
- A decorative graphic on the left side of the slide featuring several thick, colorful ribbons (yellow, pink, blue, green, red) that are intertwined and looped together, creating a complex, knotted pattern.
- The reforms are underpinned by **strong multi-agency working**
 - Partnership reform to the children's social care system – **multi-disciplinary and multi agency teams**
 - Through these reforms we will **deepen our integration with our teams and our partners**
 - Build on foundations of Working Together to Safeguard Children and the Children's National Social Care Framework - **improving safety and wellbeing children at the heart**
 - **Collaboration among all partners and relevant agencies**, including voluntary and community sector organisations that work with children and adults (**whole family approach**)

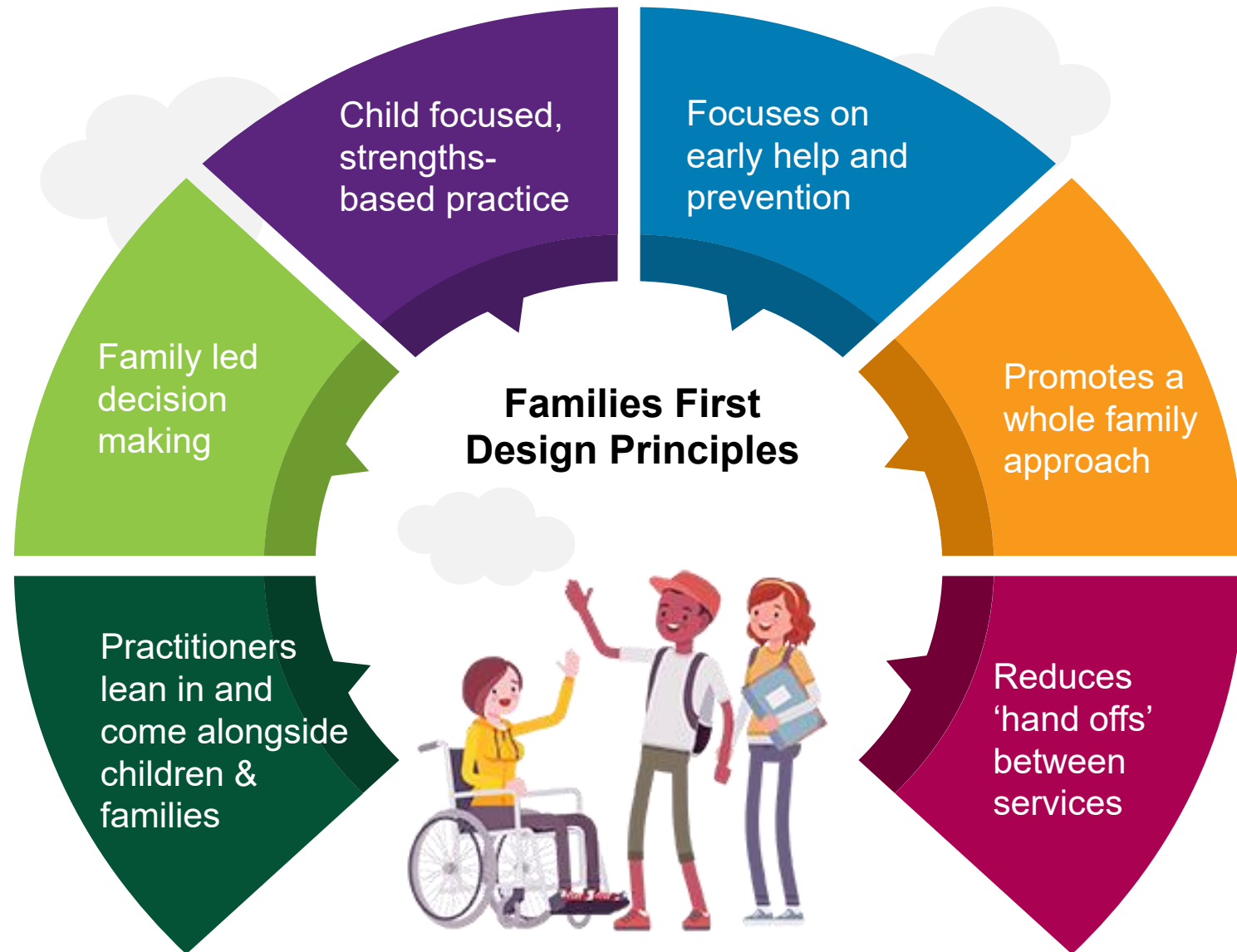
And with our families....

- Working in partnership with parents and carers where this is possible
- Voice of children, young people and families at the heart of design

Families First Partnership

An integrated system of Family Help and Multi-Agency Child Protection





- **Merging Targeted Early Help and Child in Need** work bringing together family support workers and social workers into a single service (from targeted early help through to multi-agency child protection)
- **Community-based, multi-disciplinary teams** that wrap help and support around children, young people and their families and take a whole family approach
- **Family Help teams** will be multi-disciplinary and draw on multi-agency partners building on those already operating in the **early help space** and through supporting families
- We'll also consider how to effectively join up **Family Help with existing SEND services**, to improve access to support for children with special educational needs, and disabilities.

domestic abuse | substance misuse | children and adult mental health | SEND – including the Designated Social Care Officer Role, as encouraged in Working Together | parental conflict | School attendance support teams | prison and probation | public health | youth justice | youth work | adult social care, specifically Safeguarding Adult Boards | Police | victim support including wider sexual abuse support | health visiting | midwives, sexual health and school nursing | employment advisors to support parents who are out of work | homelessness and housing

Multi-agency Child Protection System



- **Effective multi-agency child protection** is where the right decisions are made at the right time to keep children safe
- **Families will stay rooted in Family Help**, including when child protection action is necessary – the Family Help Lead Practitioner will continue their relationship with the family, making sure that the day-to-day life and experiences of the child are really understood
- Statutory Safeguarding Partners (Local Authorities, Integrated Care Boards and Police) are required to establish new, **expert led multi-agency child protection teams (MACPTs)**
- New expert social worker roles, **Lead Child Protection Practitioners (LCPPs)** will be embedded within MACPTs - responsible for statutory child protection decisions, drawing on wider multi-agency practitioners in the team

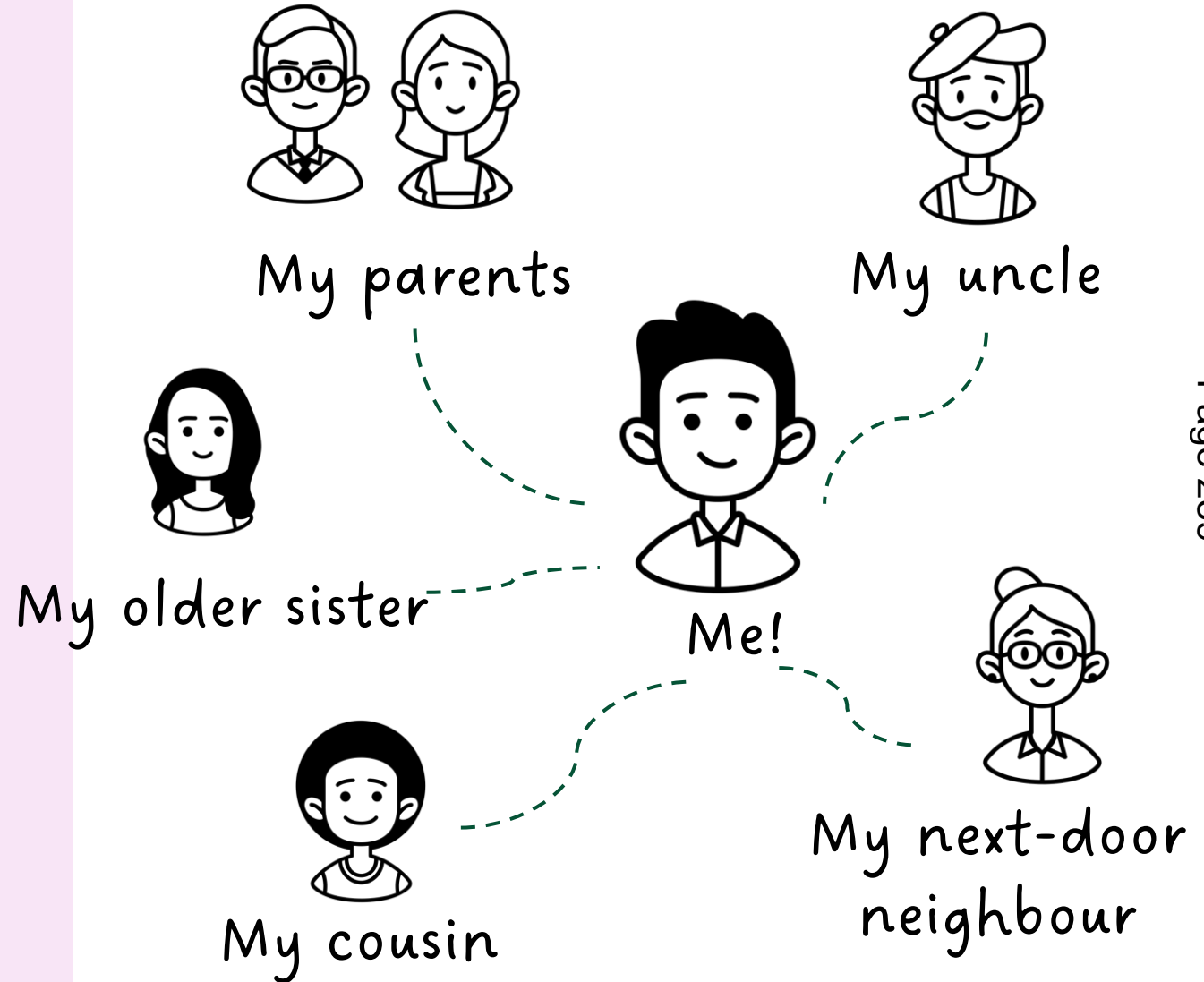
MACPTs will include:

- Social Workers (including the new LCPP roles)
- Police Officers
- Registered Health practitioners
- Education

There's also potential to include other agencies such as probation, domestic abuse services and youth workers according to local need

Family Networks

- Families should be supported to enable their children to remain living at home with their birth parents, where it is safe to do so
- **Empowering families** and wider family networks, to make plans to support children and help families stay together safely, is central to the whole family approach in the Families First end to end system reform
- **A family network** may include the child's parents or any other person with parental responsibility for the child, relatives, friends of other people connected with the child.



Family Group Decision Making



- **Is a voluntary process that enables the family network to come together and make a family led plan** in response to concerns about a child's safety and wellbeing, working alongside skilled professionals
- The plan includes **offering practical support** to parents and carers, whilst prioritising the safety and wellbeing of the child
- **Helps to ensure a family network is engaged** and empowered to participate in decision making whilst a child and their family is receiving help, support or protection
- **Family Help Lead Practitioners and Multi-agency Child Protection Teams will play a crucial role** in supporting FGDM as they know the child and family well and are delivering support through an existing plan

Integrated Front Door

Local areas should ensure families get the right support at the right time through effective "front door" systems—the first point of contact for help.

These systems vary but should be:

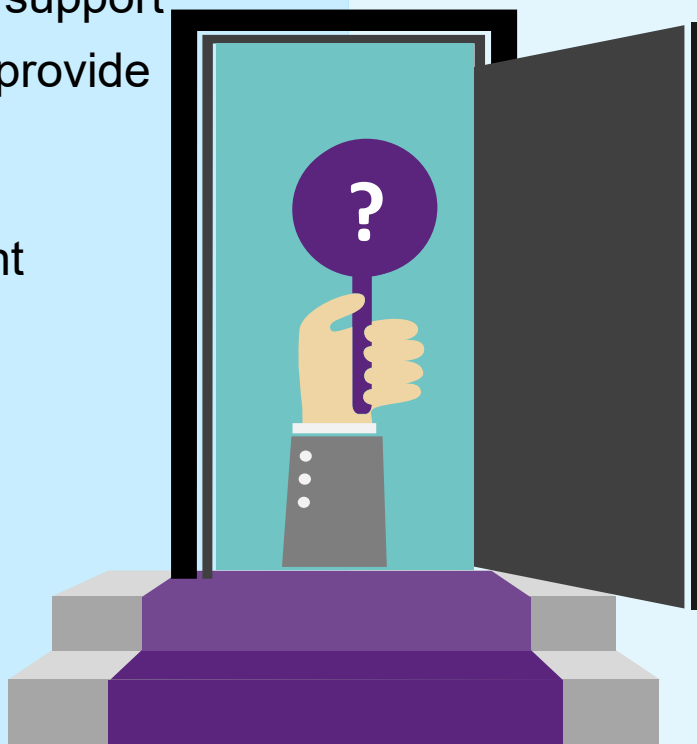
- Integrated with Family Help
- Accessible and non-stigmatising
- Focused on timely and appropriate support
- Provide an out of hours service, to provide support outside core working time

We can determine the roles at the front door, for example:

- Special Educational Needs and Disabilities
- Youth work
- Domestic abuse

The Integrated Front Door should:

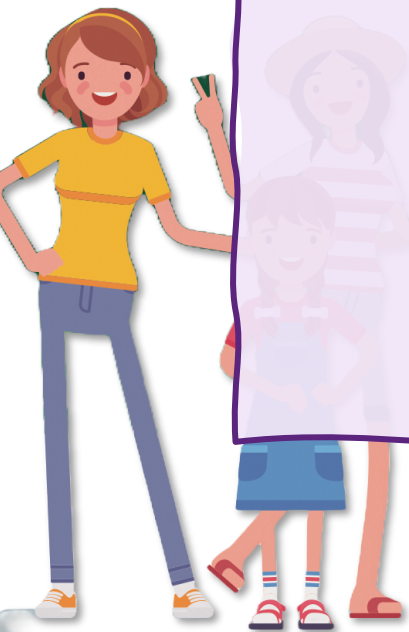
- ✓ Embed a relationship-based approach
- ✓ Triage contacts and referrals to the right level of support
- ✓ Connect families to universal and community services
- ✓ Strengthen how Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hubs (MASH) align with early help or other family contact points
- ✓ Involve a broad mix of professionals, such as education, health, police and youth workers



Universal services and community based early help continue to play a crucial role in identifying emerging problems and providing support at an early stage

For example: Family Hubs, youth services, after school clubs and routine health and housing provision

- We will build on the strengths of universal and community based early help delivery
- Voluntary and community services continue to be a vital part of the end-to-end system
- Community, faith and voluntary groups also provide a valued contribution



Education and childcare settings

Education and childcare settings often have the strongest relationships with children, young people and their families. They will often be the first to identify when help or protection is needed.

Education and childcare settings:

- ✓ May be able to offer support directly to families
- ✓ Connect them with other local services that provide more targeted support
- ✓ Have continued contact with a family to monitor progress and change
- ✓ Know when to escalate to seek further input, intervention or oversight

Our education and childcare settings are vital in understanding underlying causes of absence which can be indicators or causes of other issues.

Involvement of education teams ensures we are also focused on the needs of children who are not on the school roll, for example children missing from education or electively home educated children.

Key principles and enablers

There are many practical things that will help us to implement the reforms:

- **Making sure we're delivering in line with national policy:** e.g., Working Together to Safeguard Children and Children's Social Care Framework and Dashboard
- **Information Sharing:** Data, Case management system changes
- **Multi-agency safeguarding arrangements:** including implementing changes in Working Together and strengthening the voice of education across safeguarding arrangements
- **Delivering evidence-based interventions:** understanding local needs, learning from others
- **Local Policy and Practice:** Updating our local policy guidance and key documents e.g. forms, templates
- **Workforce development:** Learning and development to support practitioners to implement new ways of working



**We're building
something
special that
will last.....**





Cheshire East

TOGETHER for Children and Young People

Together we will make Cheshire East a great place to be young

What we want to achieve

We believe that...

- Children are best supported within their families and their communities.
- All children should enjoy the best education which prepares them to thrive in adulthood.
- Families and communities are strong and resilient, with the right help, by the right people, at the right time.

We already have an established vision in Cheshire East
- Families First aligns well

OFFICIAL

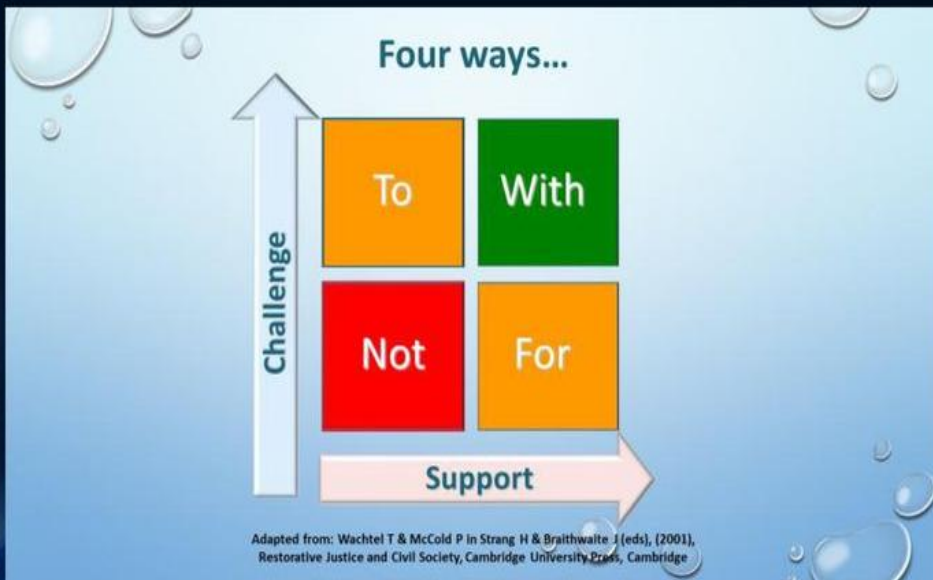


Practice model

Restorative Practice

Families First aligns with our practice model – our way of working, working with our families

Social Discipline Window



- Restorative Practice is based on relational practice - working with children and their families to build relationships, seeking to understand their perspectives and working with them to build on their strengths
- High Support, High Challenge approach

Family Hubs

- Oakenclough Family Hub | July 2023
- Oaktree Family Hub | July 2023
- Monks Coppenhall Family Hub | October 2023
- Ash Grove Family Hub | November 2023
- Congleton Family Hub | November 2023
- Crewe Lifestyle Centre Family Hub | April 2025

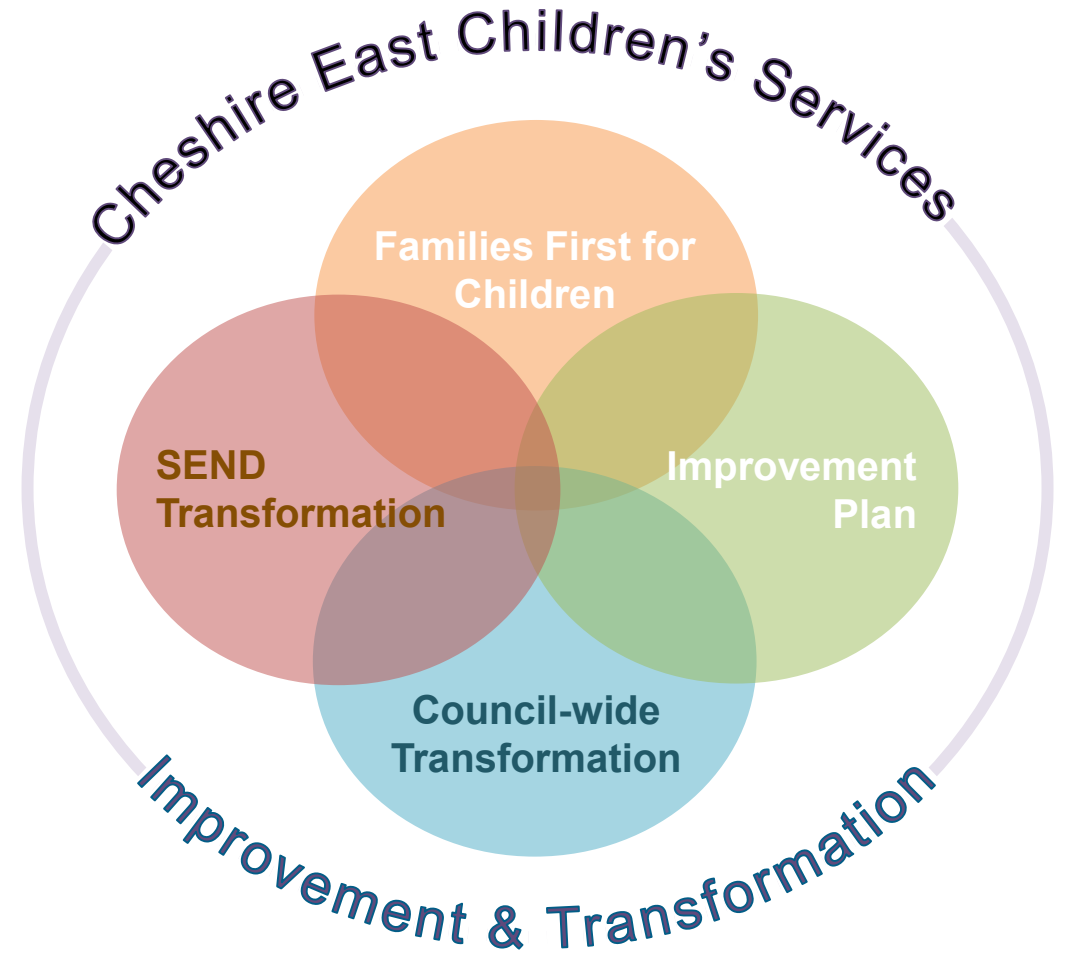


Our Family Hubs are established in communities



Context of the reforms

- We're implementing the reforms in the context of improvement
- As a Directorate, Council and partnership



- We have established place-based working within our Early Years and Family Hubs through Collaboratives
- We want to build on these foundations as we implement our approach to Families First
- The following slides highlight the evidence base that was put into place to inform the Collaboratives

These following slides summarise the work undertaken in the Autumn of 2022* to inform the development of Collaboratives and include:

- Population information for Cheshire East
- Key headlines from ONS (Office for National Statistics)
- Ward and LSOA information
- IMD (Indices of Multiple Deprivation) and Tartan Rug
- Service Mapping

*Some data still applies as the 2021 ONS census is still the current census, we have updated population estimates on the following slides where new data ONS/ DFE or knowledge hub data has been released.

Cheshire East - Demographics

With an estimated **population of 421,298** Cheshire East is the third **biggest unitary authority in the North West**, and the **seventeenth largest** in the country.

In the period from mid-2021 to mid-2024, the population estimate of Cheshire East increased by 5.2%.

Over this slightly longer period, Cheshire East was also among the 20% fastest growing local authority districts in England and Wales.

Cheshire East is a relatively affluent area and we are aware that most children and families do not live in poverty. However there are areas of the borough where child poverty and associated deprivation is endemic and intergenerational. In some cases living in a rural area can make these issues somewhat worse due to the lack of access to services, isolation and lack of community can compound these situations and the challenges faced.

It is estimated that within Cheshire East, there are around 15.2% of **children living in poverty (knowledge hub 2024)**. This reinforces the importance and role that Early Help and Early Intervention has with regards to improving the outcomes for our children and families. Where there is child poverty, this is evidenced by;

- High levels of unemployment
- Low educational attainment
- Homelessness/Poor and inadequate housing
- High incidence of lifestyle behaviours that contribute to ill health.

The source for these population figures are the [2021 Census](#) and the most recent 2024 ONS population estimates.

Key Findings

- Cheshire East population estimate in 2023 for 0-17 year olds was 81634 (Knowledge hub matrix 2025)
- Over the same decade (2017-27), using the 'policy on' forecasts from the Local Plan:
 - Overall, the population would increase by 31,000 residents (8.0%)
 - The number of children (aged 0-15) is **estimated to increase by 5,300 (7.8%)**
- **96.7%** of the borough's population is White British. (Census 2021)
- **5.4%** of Cheshire Easts school population have an EHCP and **10.9%** have SEN support. The 0-25 population with a plan is **4.9%**. (July 25 score card data)
- In 2023, 75.5% of Cheshire East's working population (16-64) residents had a qualification at or above an NVQ Level 3. This proportion is significantly higher than in the Northwest or England.(Latest ONS data)

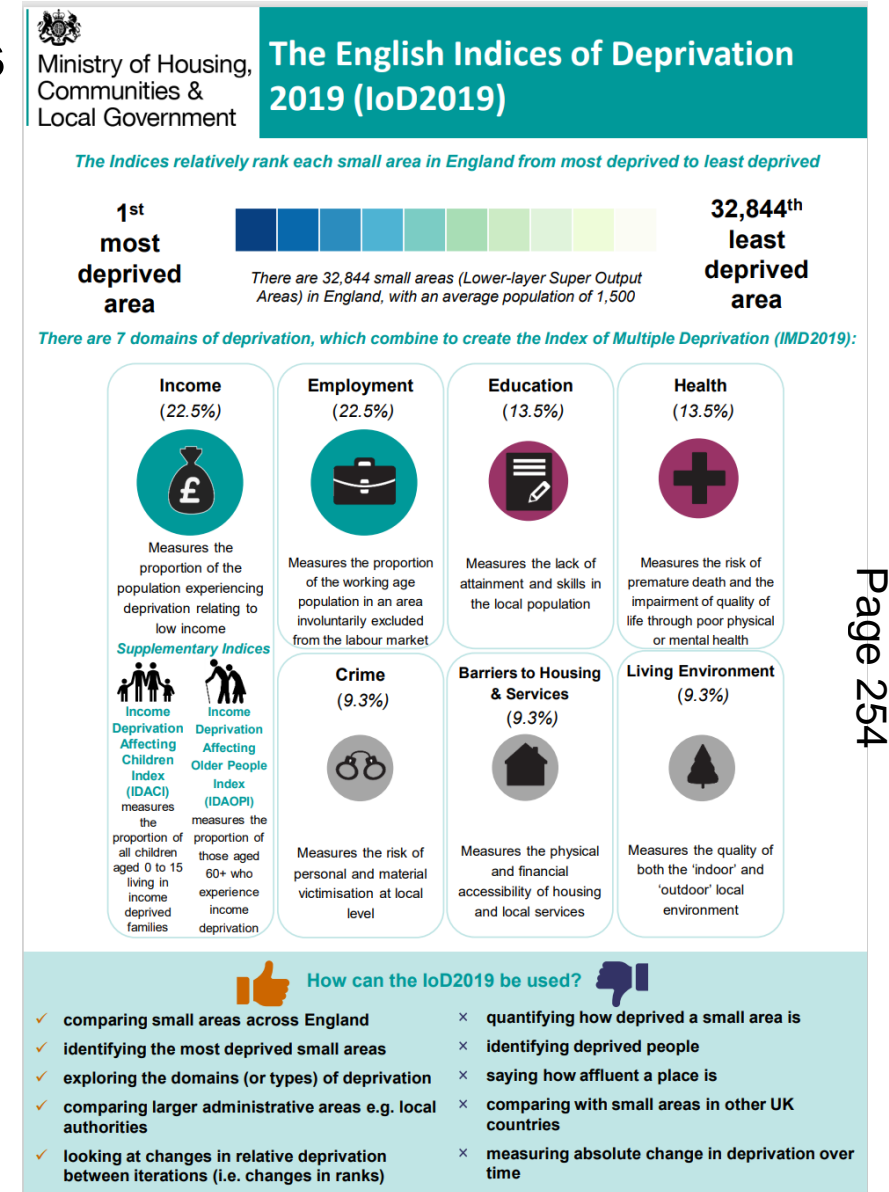
Background Information – Ward Profiles and LSOA's

The Index of Multiple Deprivation, commonly known as the IMD, is the official measure of relative deprivation for small areas in England. The Index of Multiple Deprivation ranks every small area in England from 1 (most deprived area) to 32,844 (least deprived area). These small areas are **Lower-layer Super Output Areas**, also known as LSOAs.

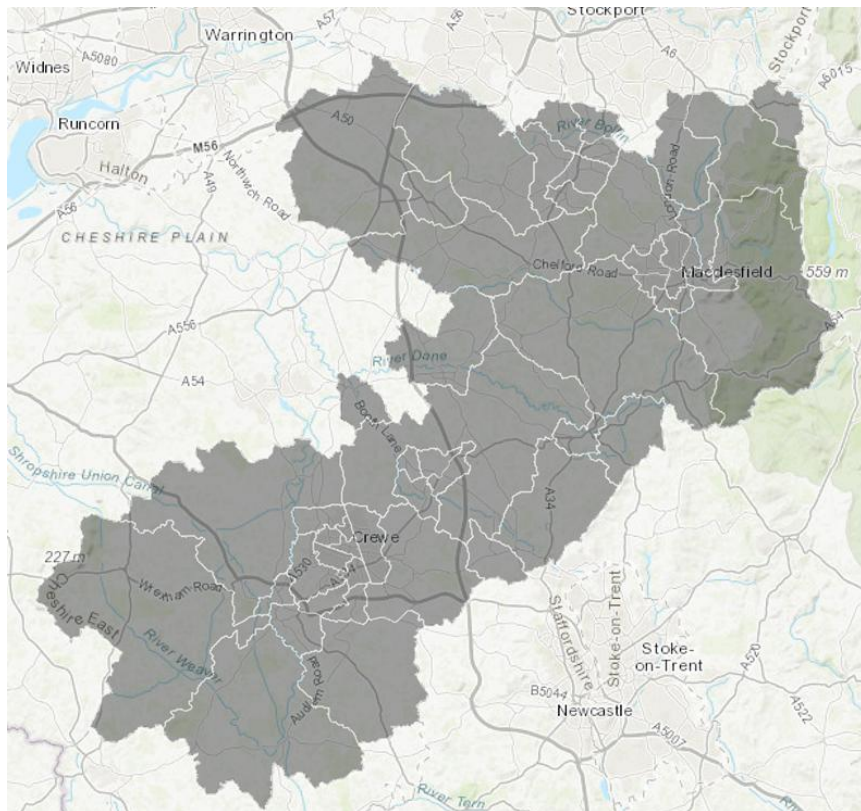
On average, each LSOA area contains around 1,500 people. Across Cheshire East there are 234 of these areas. The Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) combines information from the seven domains to produce an overall relative measure of deprivation.

The domains are combined using the following weights:

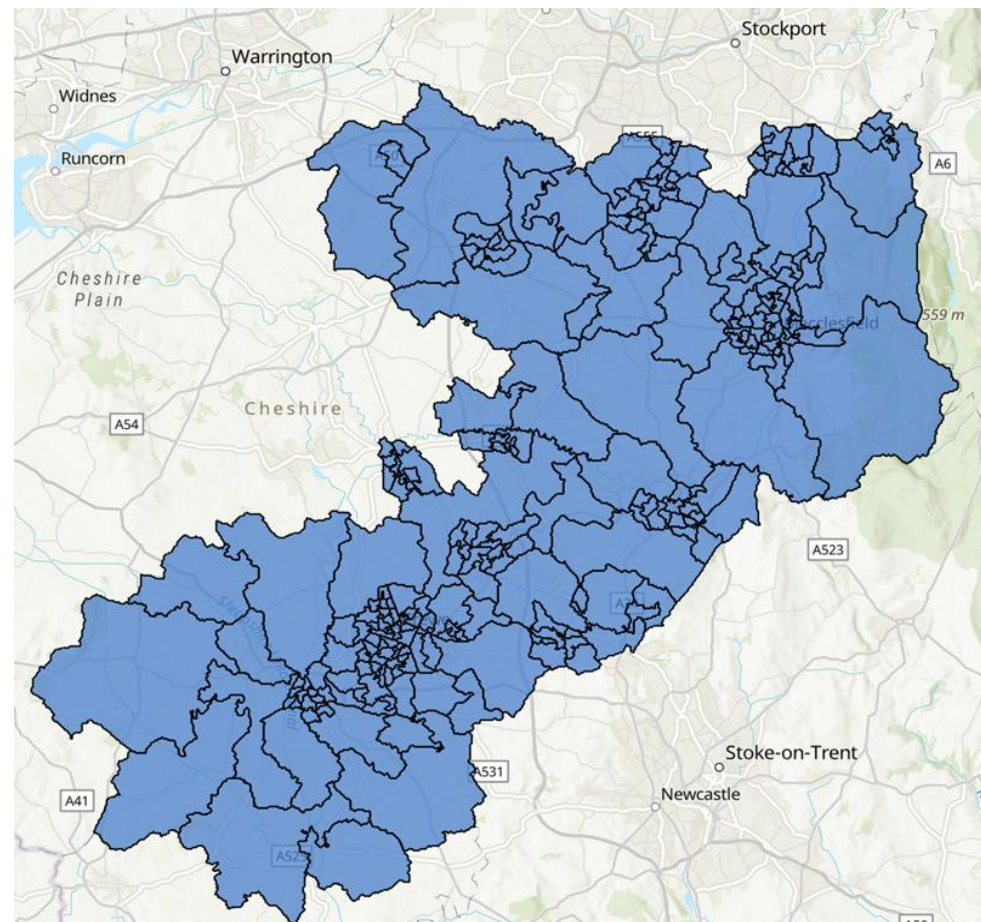
- Income Deprivation (22.5%)
- Employment Deprivation (22.5%)
- Education, Skills and Training Deprivation (13.5%)
- Health Deprivation and Disability (13.5%)
- Crime (9.3%)
- Barriers to Housing and Services (9.3%)
- Living Environment Deprivation (9.3%)



Cheshire East – Wards and Lower Layer Super Output Areas (LSOA's)

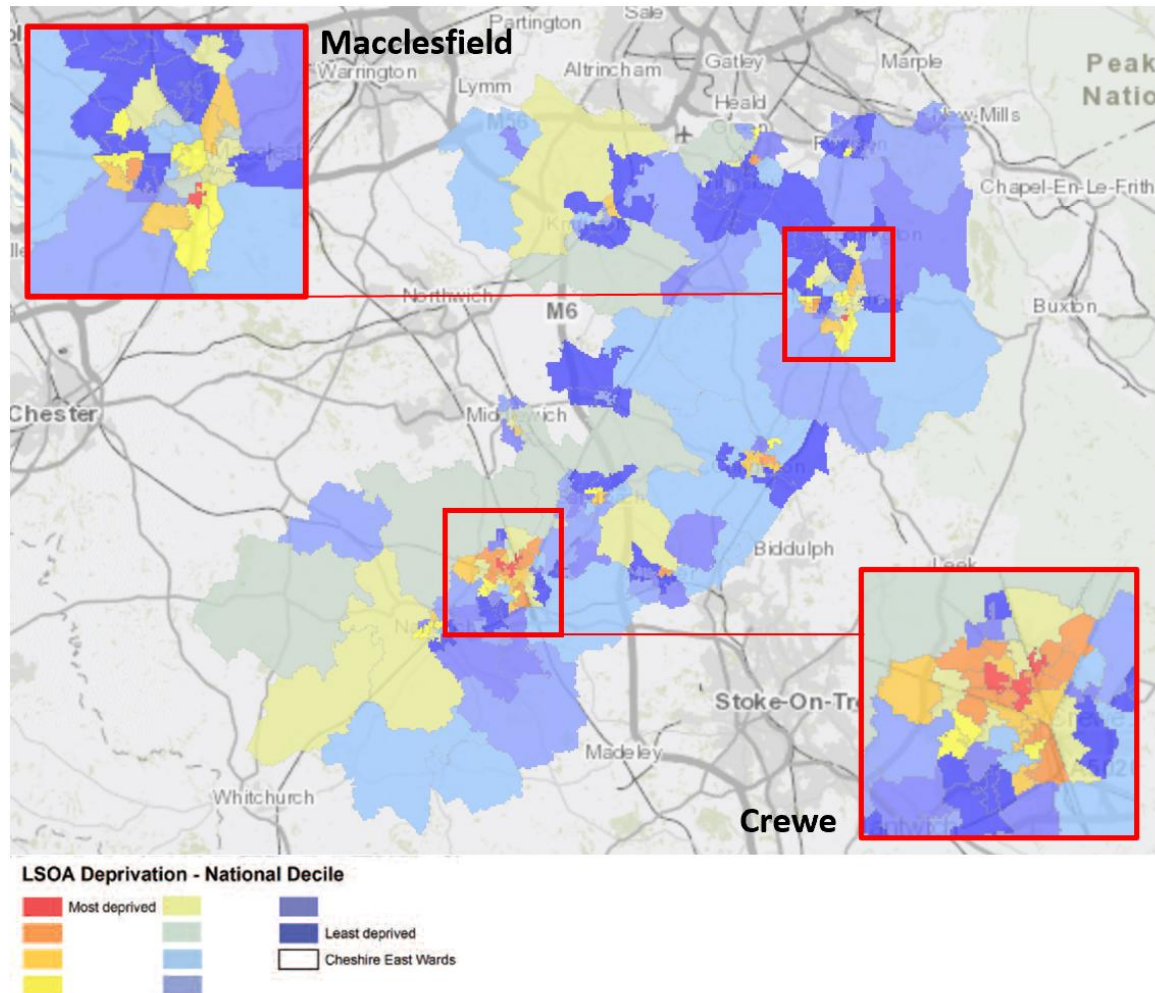


There are **52 wards** within Cheshire East



There are **244 LSOA's** within Cheshire East. Following the 2021 Census, to reflect changes in local population, LSOA's were updated. In Cheshire East, of the 234 former LSOAs - 11 LSOAs were abolished to become 21 new LSOAs, which were sub-divisions of the former LSOA boundaries.

Indices of Multiple Deprivation/Tartan Rug – Cheshire East



The Indices of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) is currently being released approximately every three to four years and has been since 2004. The 2019 release was published on the 26th September 2019. Deprivation measures are available at Local Authority (council) level. The image to the left shows council level deprivation in 2019. The key/legend in the bottom left-hand corner shows that the orange/red colours signify the most deprived areas, whereas the blue/purple colours signify the least deprived areas across the borough.

- Based on the headline measure of deprivation – the number of small areas (LSOAs) in the most deprived 10% of areas – Cheshire East has improved from 161st (out of 326 English LAs) to 171st (of 317). This improvement is due to there being a reduction in the number of areas in the most deprived 10%, from **6 to 4**.
- However, the rank of extent, the second headline measure of deprivation for councils, has declined – from 174th to 167th. This measure is based on the population living in England's most deprived 30% of areas, with more weight given to the residents of the more deprived areas – in Cheshire East this has increased from **32 areas to 36 areas**.
- Finally, the rank of average rank has declined from 241st to 228th – this score takes into account the population in each area and the level of deprivation in each area.
- The map clearly shows that there are two areas within the borough where there are areas of deprivation (Crewe & Macclesfield). However, there are some outlier LSOA's which are in other areas of the Borough.
- The most significant structural factors affecting deprivation within Cheshire East are **Health, Education & Employment**.

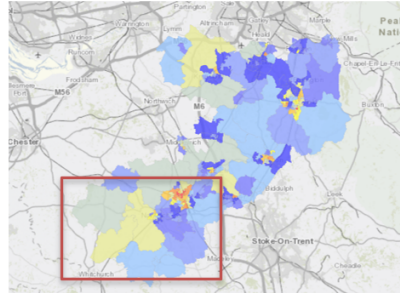


Mapping Exercise – Further Information

This is an example of the information shared during the development of the collaboratives.

It sets out the type of information available to us regarding Lower-layer Super Output Areas e.g. population, no of LSOA's, deprivation breakdown.

South Locality - Overview and LSOA Detail (0%-30%)

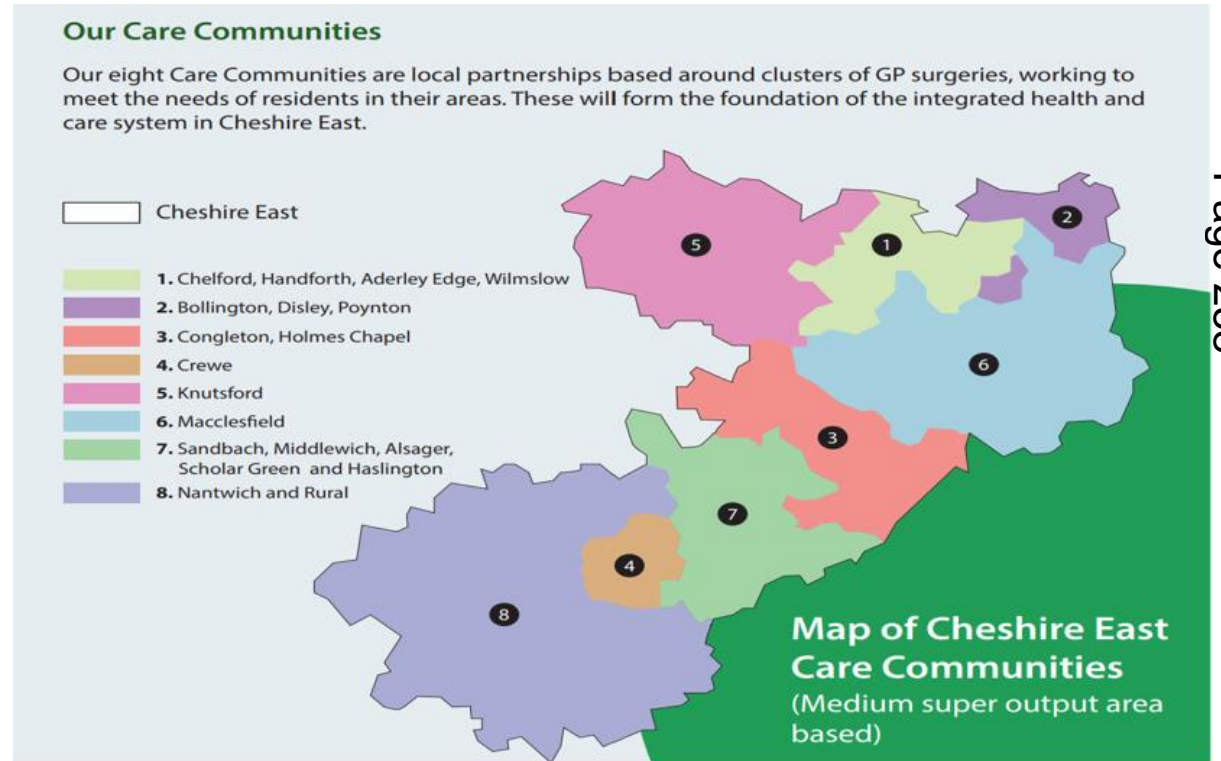


- The south locality of Cheshire East has a population in the region of **106,500 people**.
- Within this locality there are **73 LSOA's**.
- The table across shows the details of the **21 LSOA's** within this locality that are classed as being in some of the most deprived areas within the UK, based on their **IMD (0%-30%)**.

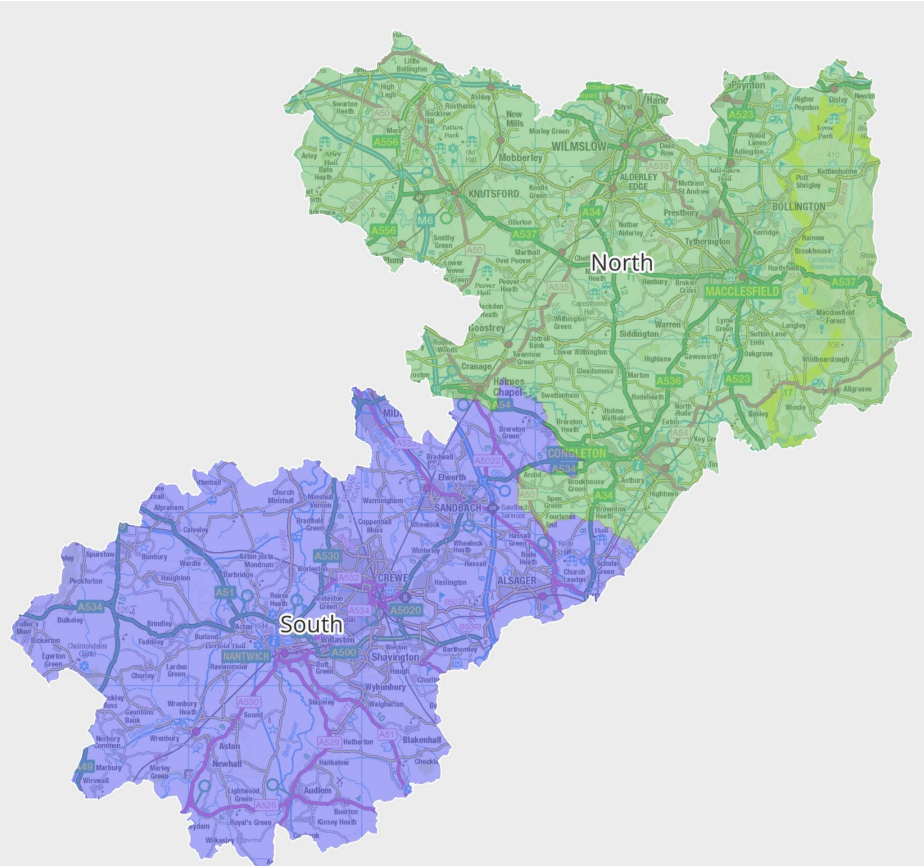
LSOA	Area	Overall IMD	Income	Employment	Education	Health	Crime	Housing	Living	RAG Rating
E01018445	Crewe	2	2	2	2	1	3	3	5	
E01018446	Crewe	3	4	3	3	3	1	5	10	
E01018454	Nantwich	3	3	4	2	3	5	9	5	
E01018459	Crewe	2	2	2	1	3	2	6	4	
E01018461	Crewe	3	3	2	2	3	3	8	4	
E01018462	Crewe	1	2	2	1	1	1	9	1	
E01018463	Crewe	2	3	3	2	2	1	8	1	
E01018464	Crewe	3	4	6	2	3	1	9	1	
E01018466	Crewe	1	1	2	1	2	1	9	2	
E01018467	Crewe	2	3	3	2	3	1	9	1	
E01018476	Crewe	1	1	1	1	1	1	5	8	
E01018477	Crewe	2	3	2	2	2	3	6	8	
E01018478	Crewe	2	3	3	1	2	5	8	6	
E01018482	Crewe	3	3	3	2	3	5	2	7	
E01018484	Crewe	2	3	3	1	1	6	6	8	
E01018485	Crewe	2	2	2	1	3	2	8	6	
E01018486	Crewe	2	3	3	2	2	1	6	1	
E01018487	Crewe	3	4	5	2	4	2	8	1	
E01018489	Crewe	3	4	5	3	5	3	6	1	
E01018497	Crewe	3	4	5	2	3	2	10	1	
E01018498	Crewe	2	2	2	1	1	3	5	9	

Other considerations

- ✓ **Early Help & Prevention Team Structures** – more teams to support the south locality
- ✓ **Children's Social Care Team Structures** – more teams to support the south locality/A50 road used
- ✓ **Care Communities**

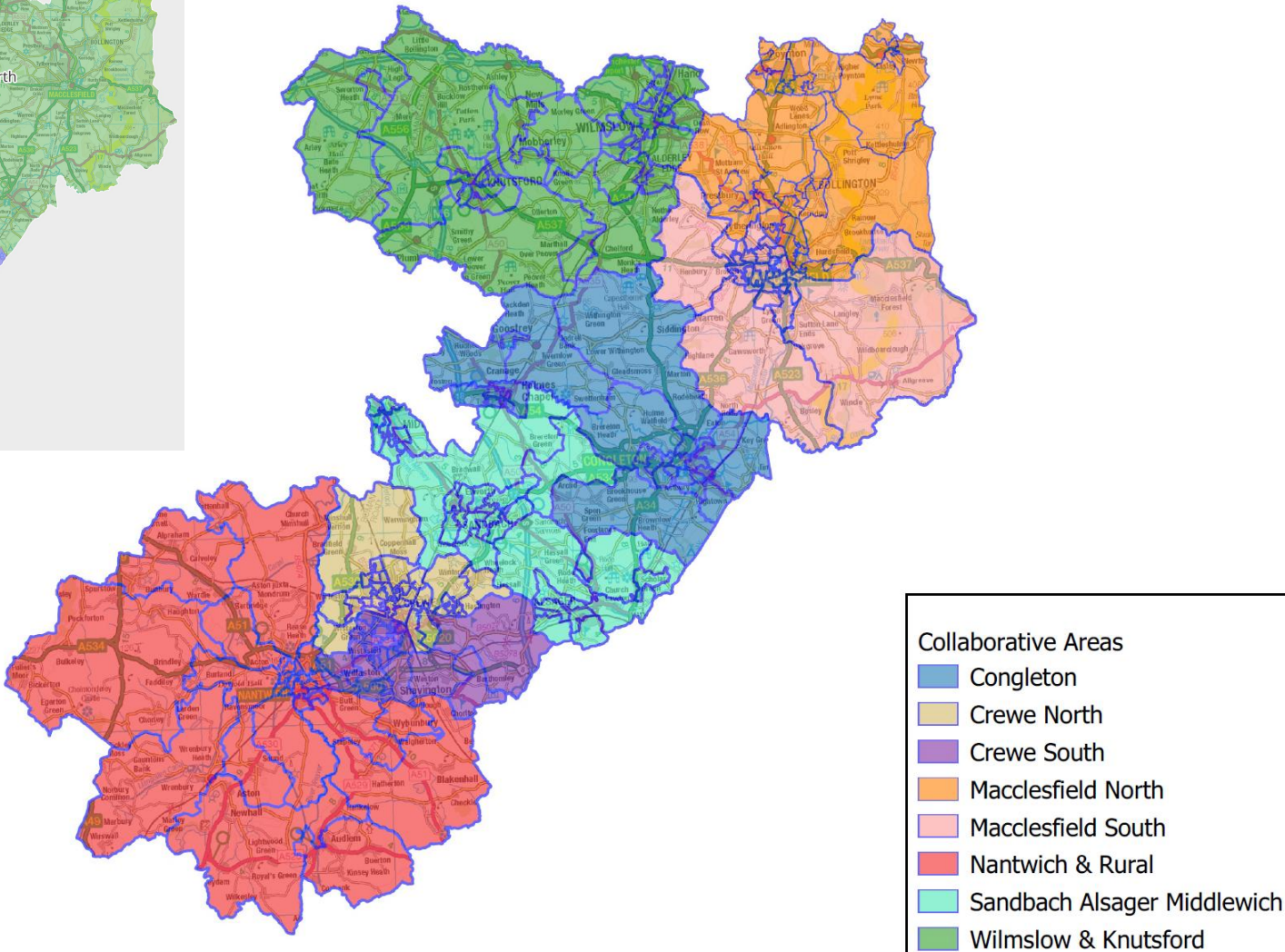
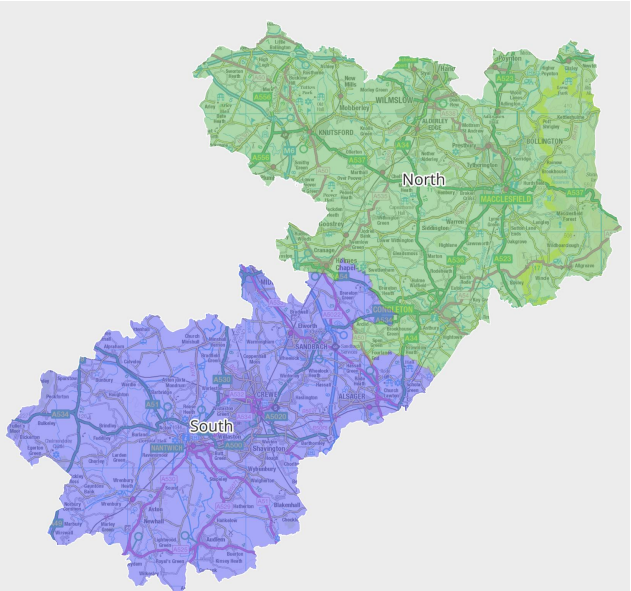


Cheshire East – LSOA's (Lower Layer Super Output Areas)



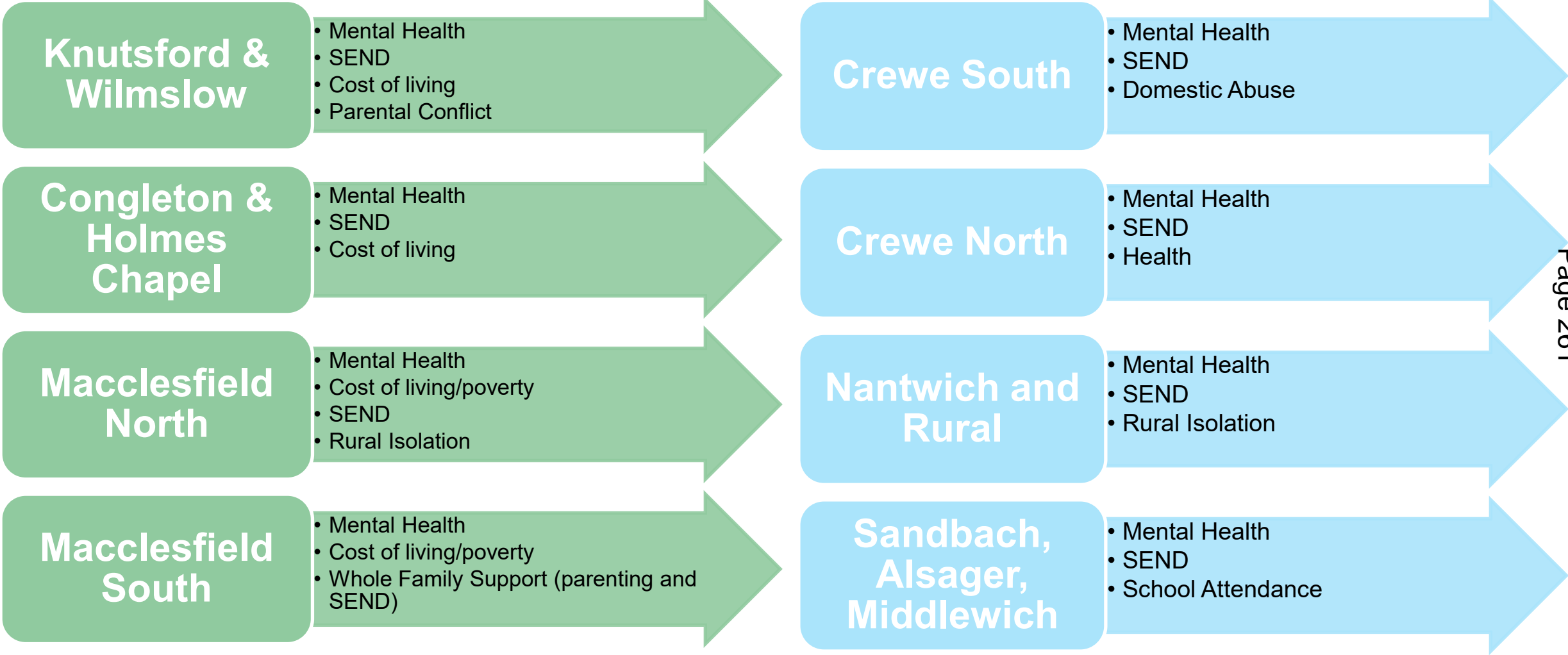
	North	South
Number of Collaboratives	4	4
Number of LSOA's (Lower-layer Super Output Areas)	129	122
Number of LSOA's in the 0-30% of the most deprived areas in Cheshire East	12	24

Locality development

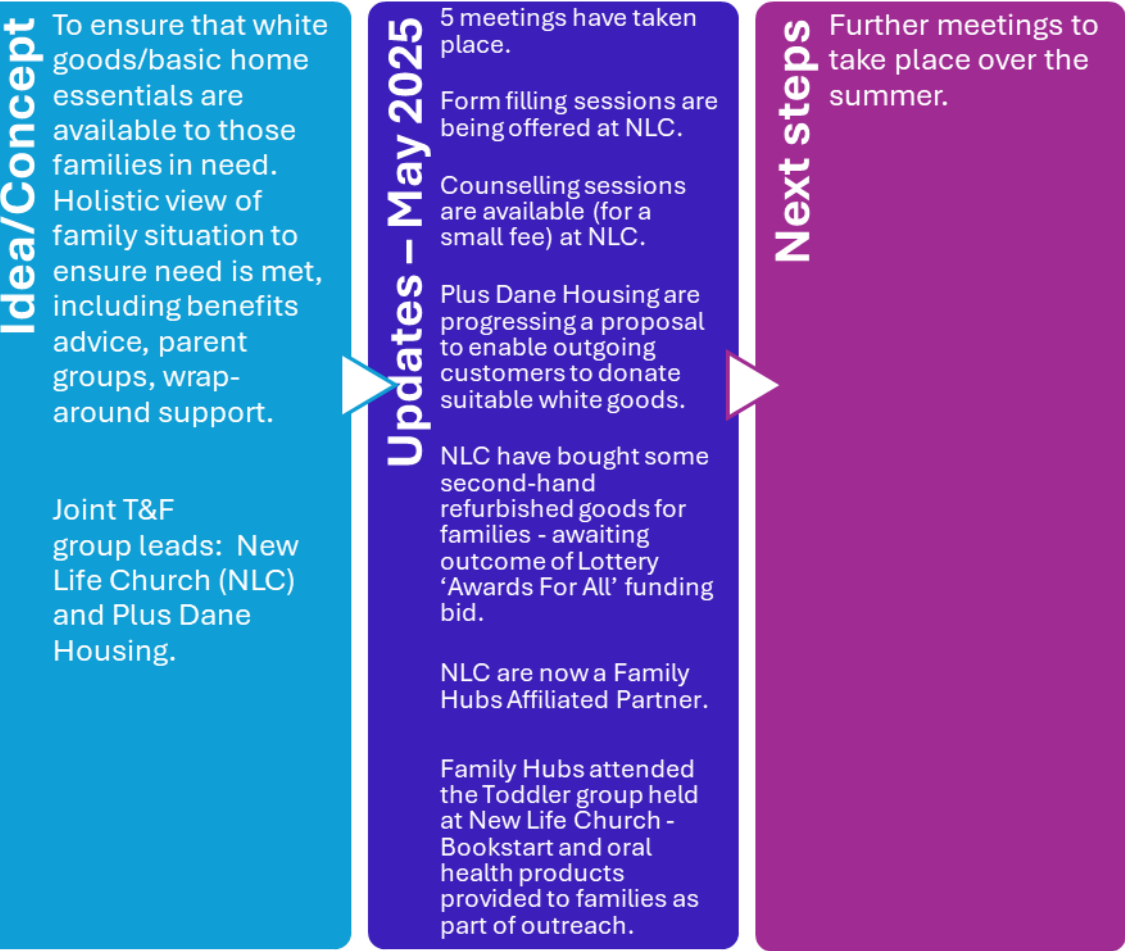


We formed **8 collaborative areas across** the Borough to establish local targeted action plans informed by data and intelligence to improve the way that we work together, prevent duplication and identify the key areas of focus to have a positive impact on the outcomes of **children and families**. There are **4 collaboratives in our north** locality, and **4 collaboratives in our south** locality.

North	South
Wilmslow & Knutsford	Sandbach, Alsager, Middlewich
Macclesfield North	Crewe North
Macclesfield South	Crewe South
Congleton	Nantwich & Rural



Congleton and Holmes Chapel – Cost of Living

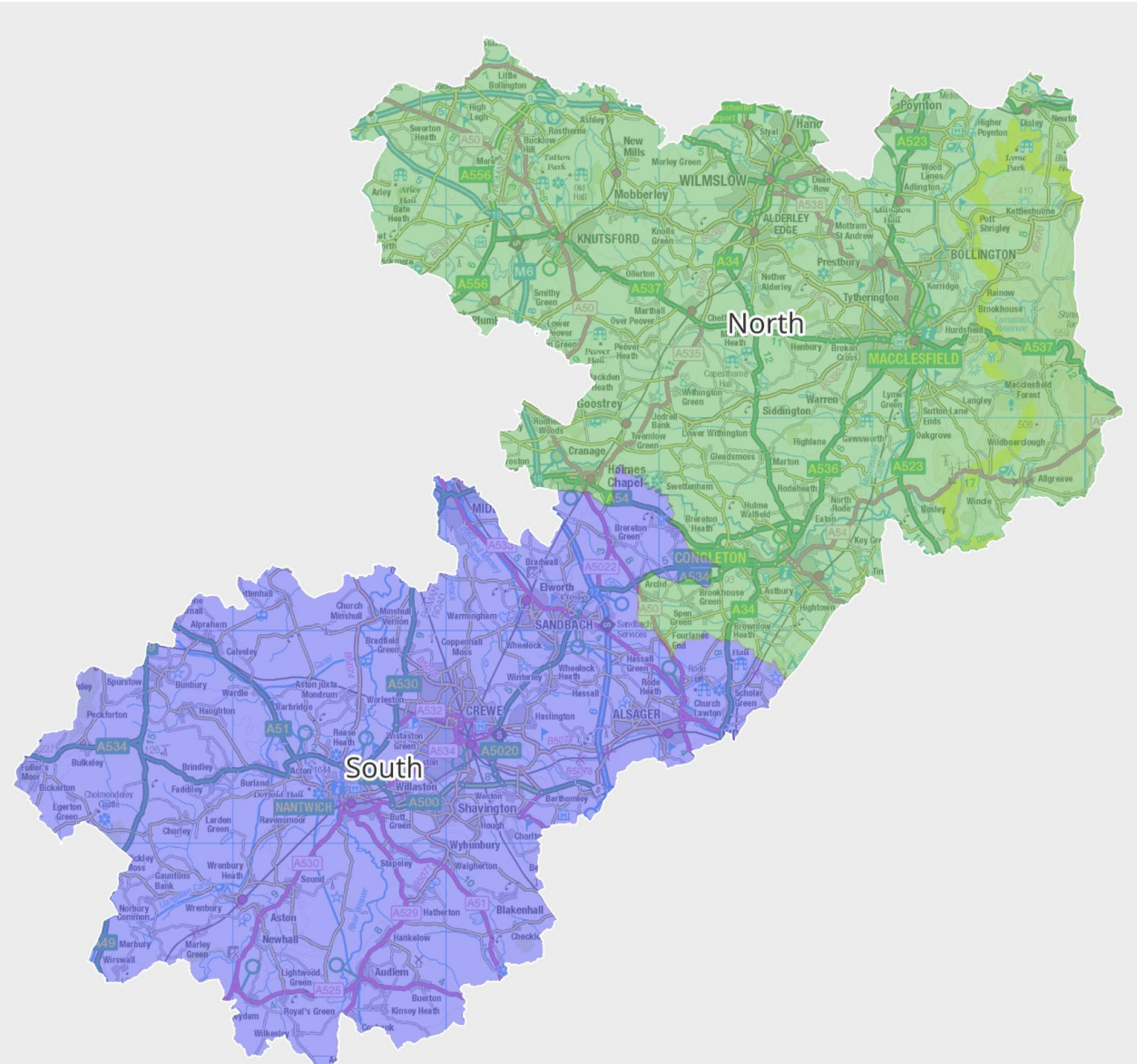


Wilmslow and Knutsford – Cost of Living



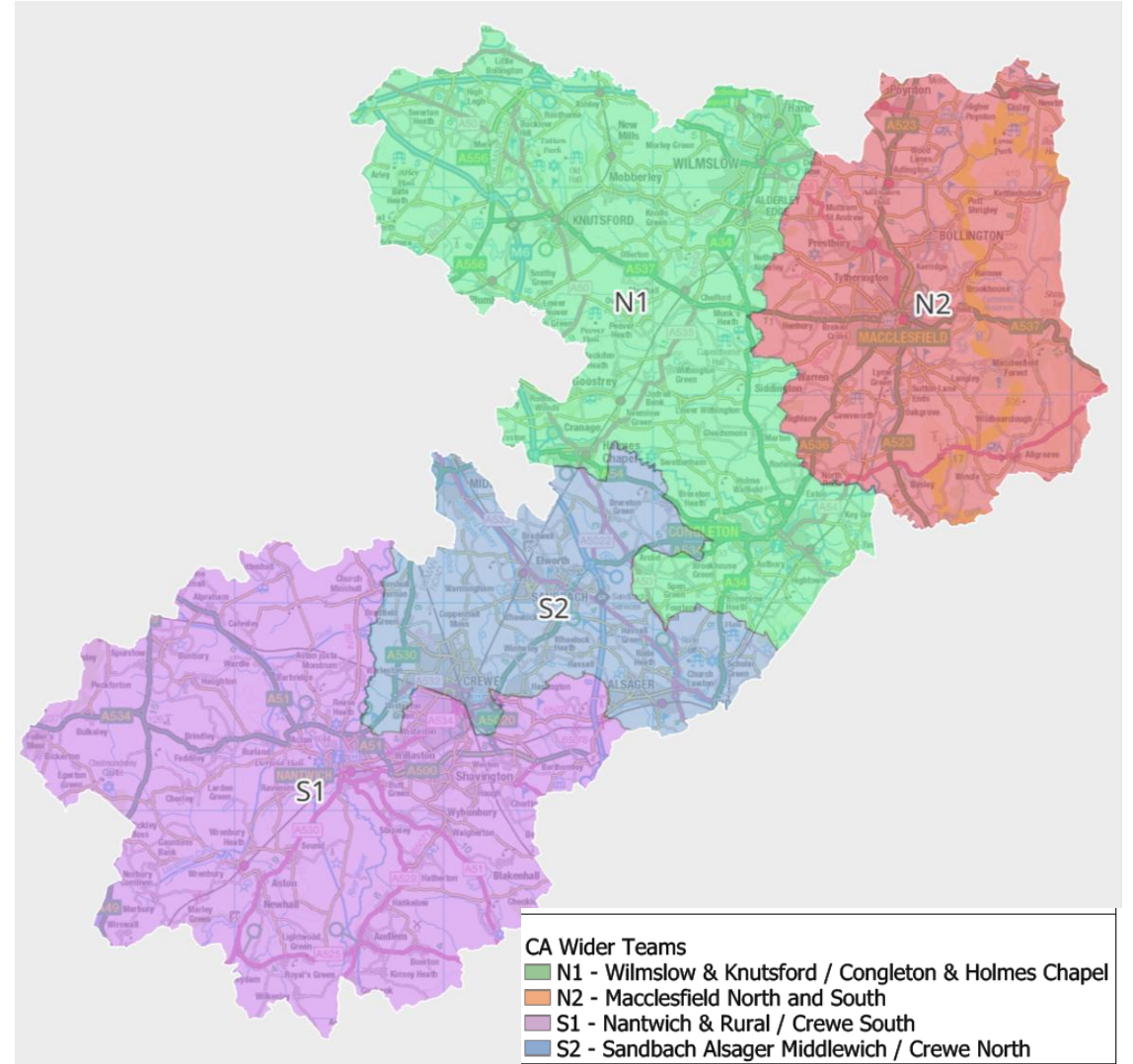
Locality development

North/South



Locality development

- We're thoughtful about how we shape to deliver Families First localities
- We think using collaborative areas to create 4 teams is workable and makes sense
- This would mean we could build upon the work so far as we shape teams to deliver Family Help
- We have called these N1/N2 and S1/S2



Locality working in practice...

How we
currently work



What could this
look like -
Families First
new ways of
working

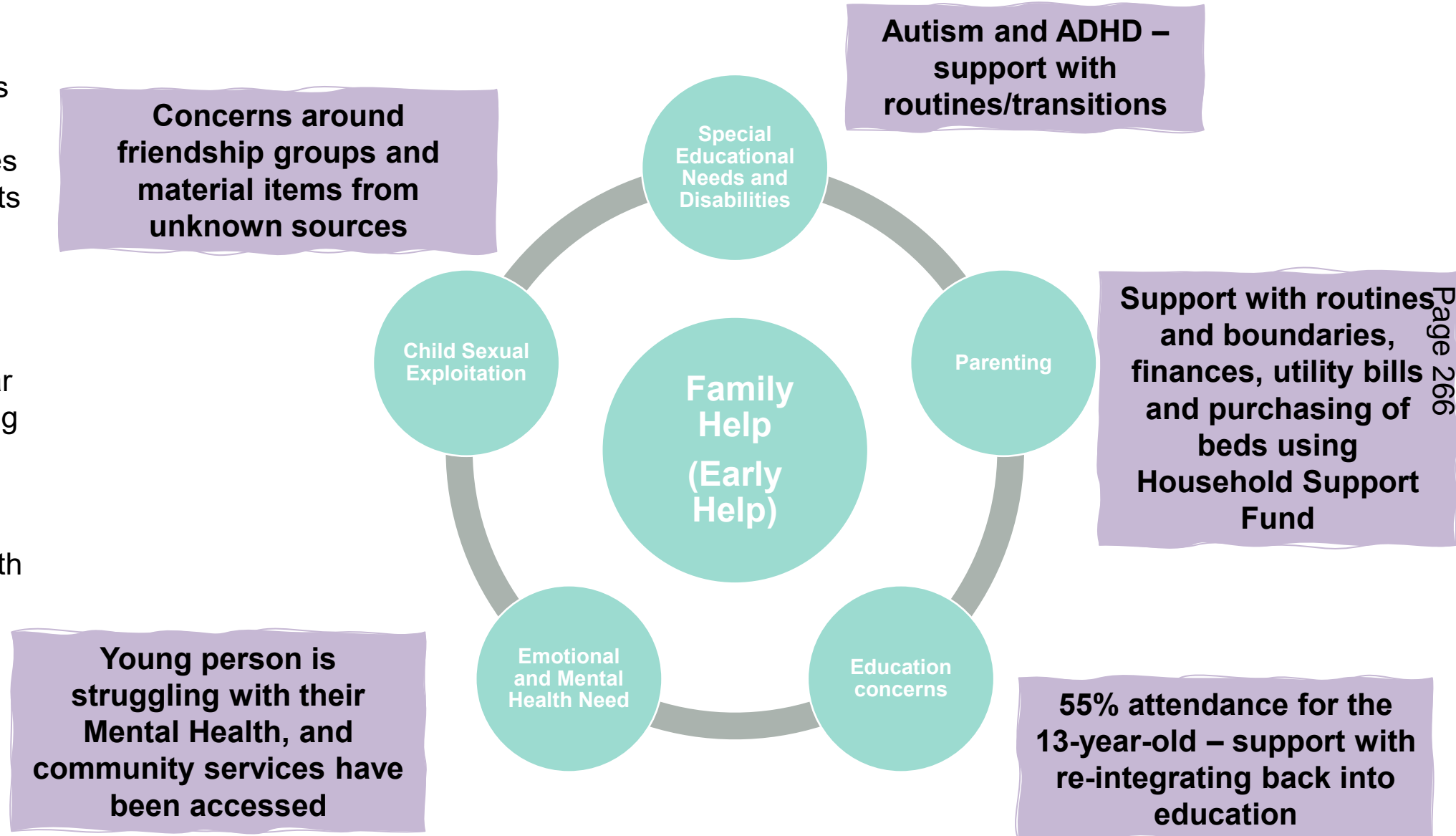


Opportunities
to build on our
work in
collaboratives

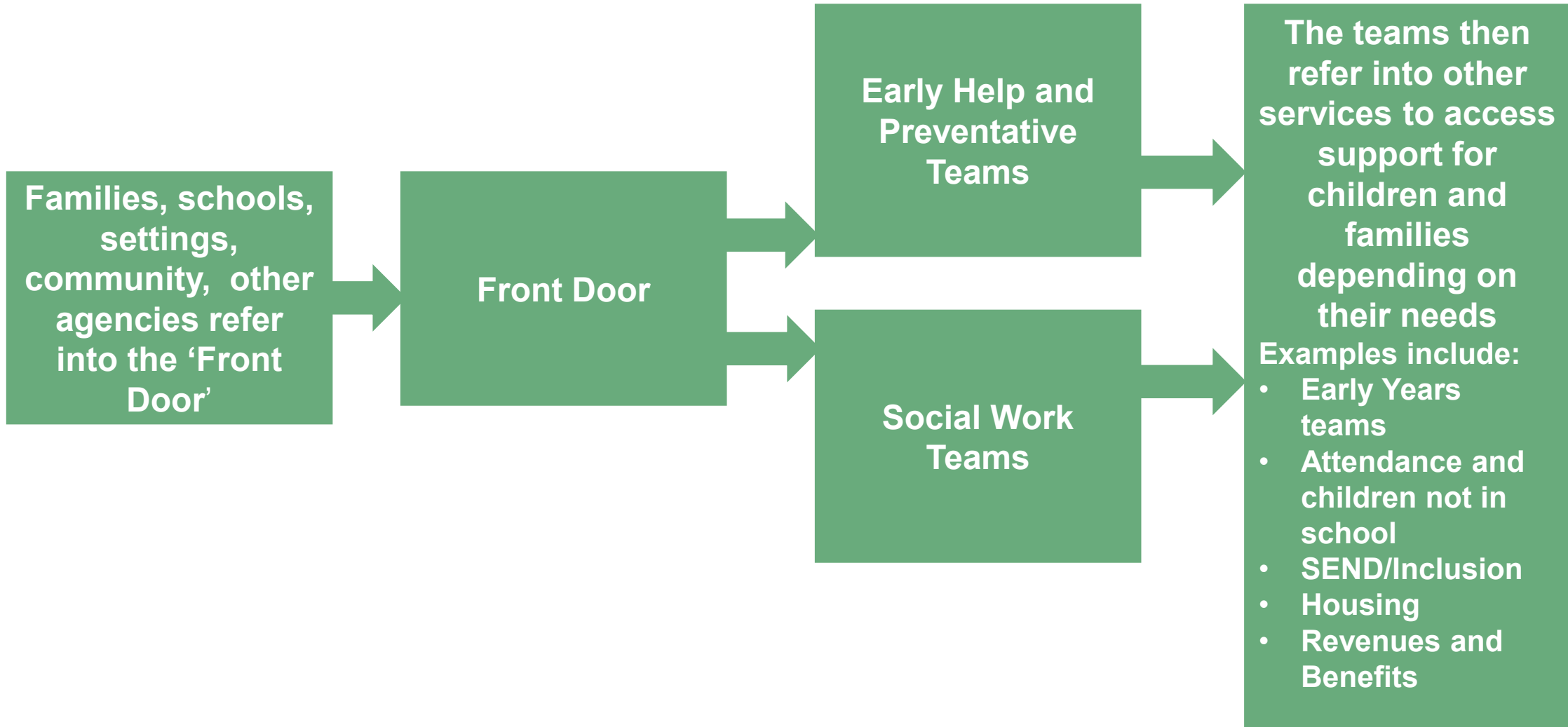
Fictional example of a Family Story

The Family

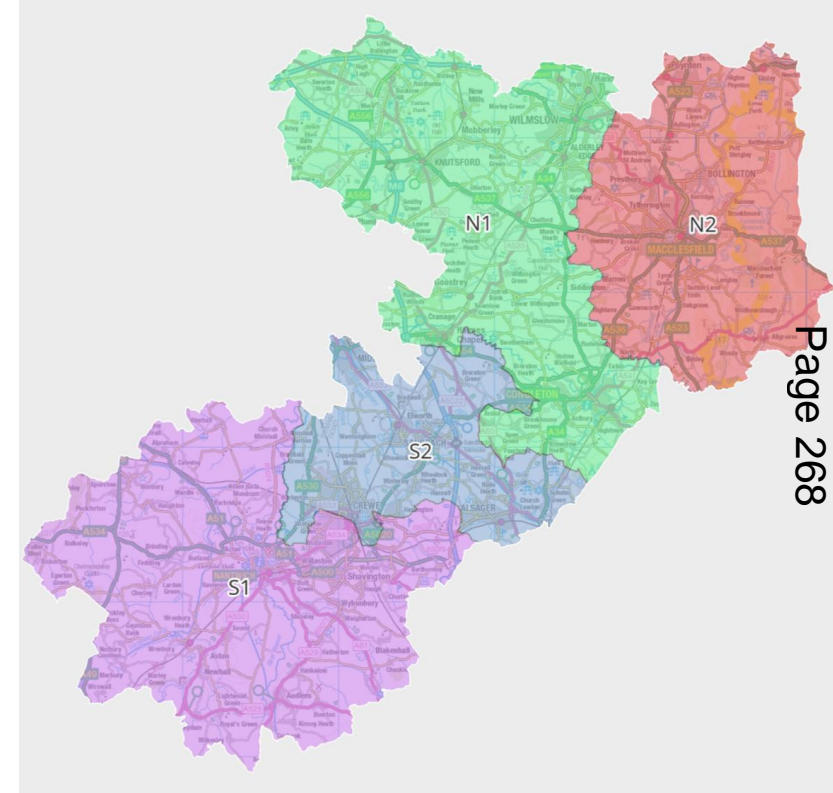
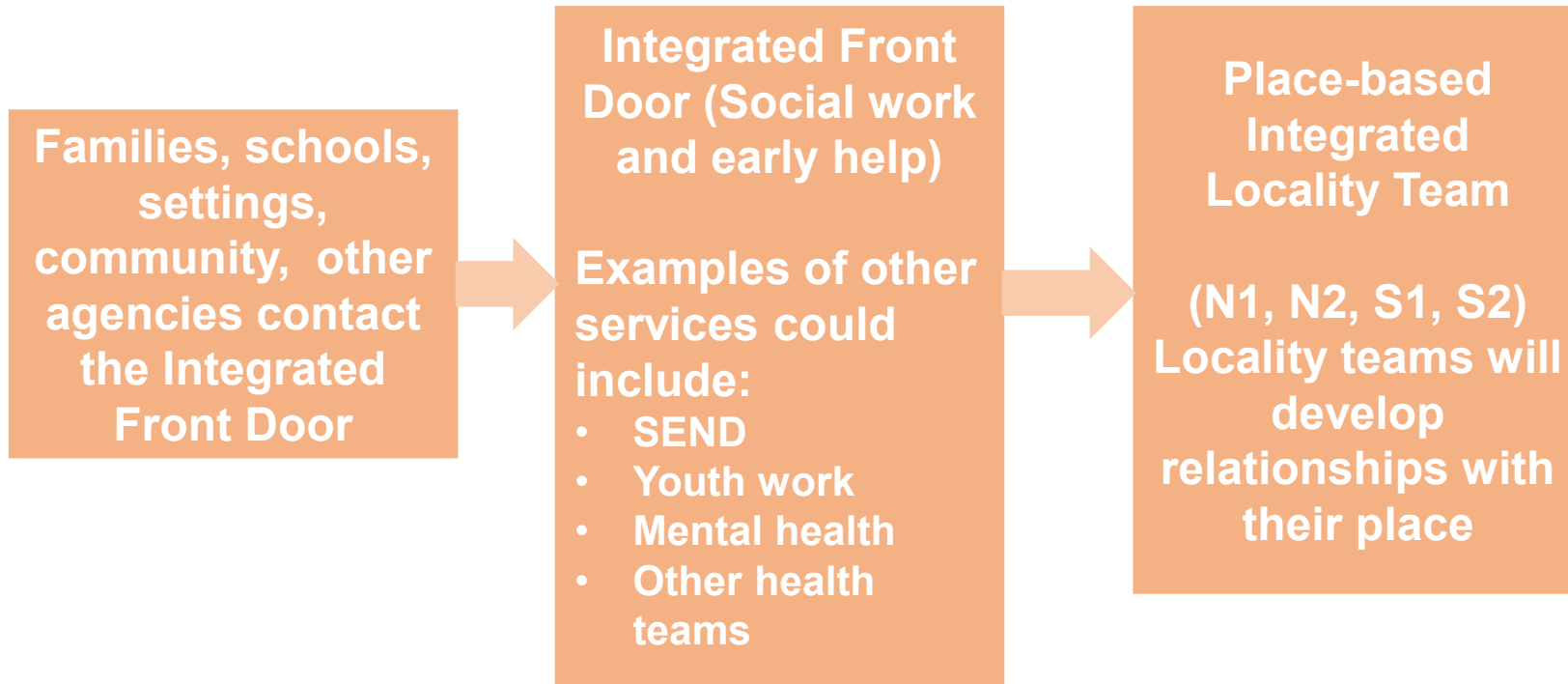
- Children are siblings age 13, 11 and 8
- The 13-year-old lives with Dad and parents co-parent all the children together
- Referral to Family Help via the Front Door from the 8 year old's school following a disclosure of smacking
- The family requires help and support with routine and boundaries



How we work now



How we will work: Families First



During our work to design our Families First approach we will look to integrate services at a locality level where possible and implement strong links and relationships with services in localities

Our model will evolve over time

- Practitioners will focus on a particular area
- Relationships – getting to know each other, really understanding what each other does – building trust
- Practitioners working together in one place, alongside each other, sitting next to each other where possible
- Knowing children and families
- Relationships with schools and settings
- Understanding community
- Understanding community assets for example voluntary sector, faith sector

Things that make it work in practice:

- Practical arrangements that maintain the integrity of expertise and professional disciplines (e.g. social work, youth work, early help) – different skills, experience, qualifications, professional supervision to maintain quality of practice
- Practice guidance and standards
- Practical - good organisation, bringing people together regularly to build relationships and teams
- In touch at a community level – information sharing, agile to respond to need – can make things happen



Responses to Questions asked by the Task and Finish Group

Families First questions: strategic

Question	Response
Will the guidance relating to the Families First become statutory once the Children's Wellbeing Bill was passed by Parliament?	<p>The Families First Partnership (FFP) Programme Guide is not statutory guidance and does not replace existing statutory guidance, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Working together to safeguard children 2023: statutory guidance is the multi-agency statutory guidance for every organisation, individual and agency who is involved in helping and supporting families and protecting children; or the• Children's social care national framework which sets out the purpose, principles and enablers of good practice of children's social care and the outcomes that should be achieved. <p>The Families First Partnership Programme Guide describes the programme vision and objectives and sets out the practice change Government expect to see to improve the support provided to children and their families.</p> <p>Government plan to update relevant statutory guidance and provide additional practice guidance for local authorities to support legislative changes set out in the Children's Wellbeing and Schools Bill. Children's Wellbeing and Schools Bill: policy summary notes</p>
What funding will Cheshire East receive to implement the reforms?	<p>Every Local Area has received funding to support with the implementation of the Families First reforms. Cheshire East has received an allocation of £905,253 - Children's Social Care Prevention Grant. Further funding will be provided over the following two years, allocations are yet to be confirmed.</p>
Is this reinventing the wheel?	<p>The reforms aim to address historical challenges of services having to refer on or transfer support for children and families to other teams when their needs increase.</p> <p>The aim is to reduce 'hand offs' between services, with an integrated multi-agency child protection team with expertise in child protection working alongside teams.</p>

Families First questions: localities

Question	Response
How will our rural areas be included, and how will they be able to access services?	Every area and community within the Borough will be included in one of the 4 locality areas.
How will Families First work in practice?	It is for each Local Area to shape how it will work in practice, for example putting into place systems for allocating of work from the Integrated Front Door to localities, decision making as needs of children and families change, and ensuring social work oversight. We will need to make sure our ways of working are designed in line with Statutory Guidance: Working Together to Safeguard Children. Learning from Pathfinders is available and the team are reflecting on this in design workshops.
How will frontline workers be included in the journey, including wider services that are place based such as libraries?	<p>Staff engagement is an important part of implementing the reforms and Staff events have already taken place with over 300 staff so far attending and colleagues from across the partnership also attending a Families First event in June. These events will continue over the coming months. Co-design workshops are also taking place.</p> <p>When locality teams are established, they would be connecting with the services in that community, building on the work of the collaboratives. This would include connecting with services such as libraries.</p>
<p>It was felt that using four locality areas to create four dedicated locality teams was workable, and these teams would each connect to two Collaborative areas.</p> <p>What does the next phase look like and how will we put this into place?</p>	Work would be undertaken to understand what the shape of the teams needed to be, in line with the Families First reforms. It was agreed that there needed to be flexibility to respond to changing/emerging needs of communities. Teams would be integrated including family workers, social workers and other practitioners (in line with the National Families First reforms).

Question	Response
Is there a mechanism for recording support for children and families taking place in universal services such as schools, early years, and community settings?	<p>Children’s services record their work on the Liquid Logic system. We will be exploring how Family Help provided by partners can be recorded as part of our Families First development.</p> <p>A single unique identifier for children is being introduced as part of the reforms and this will help support information sharing across all services.</p>

Families First questions: Staffing

Question	Response
What qualifications do our Family Workers have?	<p>Family Workers hold a Level 3 qualification in a relevant discipline.</p> <p>The term 'Alternatively Qualified' is used as Family Workers have a range of different backgrounds and qualifications. For example, they could have been a teacher, a SEND professional, a Youth Worker.</p>
Are our teams and staff who work in locality spaces getting same the training as everyone else?	<p>Staff events for all staff across Children's Services took place from April to June. Our staff are aware of what the vision is and how it will be shaped over next few months. Our partners are actively involved in the co-design and there will be more Families First multi-agency learning and development opportunities over time as our model develops. We have recently introduced a page on the Safeguarding Children Partnership website dedicated to Families First.</p>
Do we expect Families First changes to impact negatively on the number of social work vacancies and reliance on agency workers?	<p>The Children and Families Directorate is currently reviewing its structure and is focusing on moving towards having a permanent workforce.</p> <p>The Directorate has an ongoing focused approach to recruiting social workers, this includes the International Social Worker recruitment project.</p> <p>The Families First approach brings together alternatively qualified staff and social work staff into Family Help. The role and expertise of Family Workers has been recognised in the reforms.</p> <p>We are able to recruit Family Help workers and there is an established 'flight path' for career progression for Family Workers, for example Family Advisors moving into the Family Help Assistant role and then onto Family Help Worker roles.</p> <p>There are also examples of Family Help Workers progressing into Social Work roles. There are Family Help Workers currently on the social work apprenticeship too.</p>

Question	Response
<p>Have the Families First Pathfinder areas reported a noticeable change regarding engagement with families when it is likely that the consistent worker will be a Family Help Worker rather than a social worker.</p> <p>Is there less stigma about asking for help?</p>	<p>Anecdotal learning has been shared by the Pathfinders, with families and practitioners reporting positive impact of the Family Help Lead Practitioners and reduced stigma regarding changes to language and processes that have been co-produced with families.</p>

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OPEN

Children and Families Committee

15 September 2025

Improvement Plan Progress Report

Report of: Dawn Godfrey Executive Director of Children's Services

Report Reference No: CF/22/25-26

Ward(s) Affected: All

For Scrutiny

Purpose of Report

- 1 This report is part of our regular updates to committee on the progress of the children's services improvement plan. The improvement plan addresses the findings from the Ofsted inspection in February and March 2024.
- 2 This report also includes the [findings from the second Ofsted monitoring visit in June 2025](#), the findings from the sector led improvement partner (SLIP) work in August 2025, and the findings from the councillor visits to frontline services which took place in July 2025.

Executive Summary

- 3 We are continuing to make progress in delivering our improvement plan; since the [last report to committee](#) in June, the percentage of actions completed has increased from 27% to 49%.
- 4 The second Ofsted monitoring visit found that the quality of practice for children in need and children at child protection is inconsistent. Improvements have been made in specific areas of practice, such as the regularity of supervision and frequency of visits to children, and there are appropriate plans in place to further develop and embed improvements. This reflects what we expected inspectors to find.
- 5 The sector led improvement partner (SLIP) work completed over 11-13 August found strengths in our support, and we are continuing to work with our SLIP colleagues to support improvements to services.

- 6 The [new arrangements for councillor visits to frontline services](#) commenced in July, enabling councillors to have oversight of the quality of practice and people's experiences of working for the council.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Children and Families Committee is recommended to:

1. Note the progress against the improvement plan.
2. Note the findings from the second Ofsted monitoring visit on children in need and child protection in June 2025.
3. Note the findings from the councillor visits to the cared for service, care leaver service and court team in July 2025.

Background

- 7 Improvement governance arrangements are continuing to monitor progress against the plan and provide scrutiny and challenge monthly. Changes to the plan since the last report which have been agreed through these arrangements are included in Appendix 3 for transparency.

Progress against the improvement plan

- 8 The improvement plan at Appendix 2 was updated on 22 July 2025. Appendix 1 shows an overview of the RAG ratings for each action.
- 9 Key improvement activity which has taken place since the last update to committee includes:
- Implementation of the new process for councillor visits to frontline services as agreed in the committee in June.
 - The Care Leaver Ambassadors led the local offer mid-term review in June which fed back what action had been taken in response to the feedback provided at the local offer review in November 2024. Feedback from young people was positive and they could see that changes had been made to improve services.
 - The revised My Health Summary designed with young people is now complete and in use. Going forward this will be reviewed on a regular basis through the good health and wellbeing workstream. In 2024/25 100% of care leavers opted to receive their My Health summary around the time of their 18th birthday.
 - Practice guidance for cared for children was received and agreed by policies, procedures and practice (PPP) group on 24 June.

- Flude House Children's Home inspection took place in June with an outcome of good.
- Our second residential home, Cherry Tree House, opened in July 2025.
- The workshop to develop a Charter with registered providers for care experienced young people took place in May from which we have developed a draft Charter for consultation with the registered providers.
- Families First staff events have continued throughout April and June including a partnership session; engaging staff and partners in the reforms and beginning to think about design principles.
- The early help strategy has been agreed by the PPP group and is being prepared for launch.

Findings from the second Ofsted monitoring visit

- 10 Our second Ofsted monitoring visit took place in June 2025 and focused on children in need and child protection. [The findings](#) reflected what we expected inspectors to see and provide assurance that we understand our strengths and areas for development.
- 11 The next monitoring visit is expected to take place in September on cared for children and permanence. Planning is underway to support this.

Findings from the sector led improvement partner (SLIP) work

- 12 Our sector led improvement partner (SLIP), North Tyneside, completed work with our LADO service, cared for service, and quality assurance service over 11-13 August 2025.
- 13 The SLIP found strengths in our support, including:
 - Staff are committed, focused on outcomes for children, and know and care about the children they work with
 - There are many ways the children's voice is heard
 - Recording is developing
 - Evidence of some good quality practice
 - IRO oversight and footprint is improving
 - Improved LADO service in response to the recommendations identified through the SLIP work in April 2025
 - Investment in resources for quality assurance and understanding of the importance of performance and quality assurance.

- 14 We are continuing to work with our SLIP colleagues to support improvements to services. The work with our cared for service has supported our preparation for the next Ofsted monitoring visit which is expected in September 2025.

Findings from Councillor visits to frontline services

- 15 The new arrangements for councillor frontline visits commenced in July 2025 with visits to the cared for service, court team and care leavers service.
- 16 The visits support councillors to understand:
- The quality of frontline practice
 - How we support teams to deliver good quality practice.
- 17 The visits involved:
- Introduction and context from the service manager
 - A one-to-one session with a practitioner
 - A one-to-one session with a team manager
 - A focus group with practitioners.
- 18 The findings are summarised below. These findings are from the conversations between councillors and practitioners during the visits and reflect practitioners' views of their services.
- 19 Strengths:
- Practitioners and managers are dedicated and passionate about working with children and young people. They shared examples of how their work leads to positive outcomes for individuals. There was a genuine desire to improve outcomes.
 - The child's voice is at the centre of practice. The consistency of recording this has improved as everyone is using the same template. The care leaver ambassadors are working with services to shape improvements.
 - The new court team has reduced the workload for the cared for service and prevented interruptions to work that mandatory and short notice court appearances necessitated. The court team is developing specialist expertise in court work.

- Social workers now prepare for supervision meetings which has made the process more efficient. Supervision is regular and focused.
- Support from the virtual school is strong.
- Support from the education, employment and training (EET) team for care leavers was valued.
- Practitioners feel well supported by their managers and colleagues sharing best practice and expertise.
- There were a number of managers and social workers who had worked at the council for more than 10 years and had made progression in their careers and were actively encouraged to do this.
- One agency worker said they enjoyed working at Cheshire East and intended to transfer permanently to the council.

20 Areas for development:

- Consistency in the quality of practice, in particular the quality of plans and case summaries.
- Transition for young people is an area where we still need to improve. Personal Advisors (PAs) need to be matched with care leavers earlier to support better transition for young people between the cared for service and care leaver service.
- Strengthening and streamlining work between teams, for example to ensure the court team can start work on cases earlier.
- More local foster carers are needed, especially for sibling groups and children with specific additional needs.
- Some practitioners felt some accommodation for care leavers was not good quality or value for money. Practitioners suggested a care leaver accommodation hub should be developed where care leavers could live together if they wanted to so they could support each other.
- The care leaver hubs and junction 16 app could be improved – purpose-built buildings would work better for the hubs.
- Reintroducing credit cards for PAs for shopping for homewares for care leavers would allow items to be sourced second hand which would be more cost effective and would help the care leaver stretch the budget further.

- Changes in senior leaders, and absence in some key roles, had had an impact on teams and had meant there were a lot of changes introduced.
 - Workload pressures. Practitioners reported working long hours, some of which was caused by out of area placements and travel times. Social workers felt they did not have time to attend training and would like specific dedicated time for training. Practitioners identified opportunities where time could be saved – such as simplifying some forms/ processes, training on how to use AI to assist with recording and increasing family workers to support family time for parents and children throughout the court process.
 - A review of pay grades in relation to agency staff was suggested to increase recruitment and retention.
 - There are a high number of agency staff within the court team and there has been a lot of staffing changes.
 - The cared for service felt their working environment could be improved by working in pods or teams. Not all the monitors work and the office can be too hot at times. It would be helpful to have a small private meeting room reserved for the service for confidential conversations.
- 21 Detailed reports on the findings have been shared with the service managers and head of service, and these will inform service development.

Consultation and Engagement

- 22 Practitioners' views on improvements are sought through the councillor frontline visits, sector led improvement programme work, Ofsted monitoring visits, and DfE progress reviews. Feedback has also been sought from the councillors who conducted frontline visits to improve and develop the new arrangements.

Reasons for Recommendations

- 23 Cheshire East Council's children's services received an inadequate judgement in the Ofsted inspection in 2024. The inspection demonstrated that there are areas we need to address at pace to improve outcomes for children. The council needs to ensure the findings from the inspection are addressed in a timely way to ensure we achieve good outcomes for children and young people and councillors need to be assured that the arrangements in place to address the shortcomings and make the necessary improvements are sufficiently robust and will deliver good or better outcomes for our children within a reasonable timeframe.

Other Options Considered

Option	Impact	Risk
Do not scrutinise the improvement plan	Committee will not have oversight of progress against the plan so cannot be assured that outcomes will be improved for children and young people	There is a risk that improvements are not achieved at the pace needed.

Implications and Comments

Monitoring Officer/Legal/Governance

- 24 This is a further update report for the committee on the children's improvement plan. It is within the committee remit to monitor improvement within the service and ensure compliance with the improvement notice served by the DfE.
- 25 Members of the committee therefore need to be assured that all requirements and recommendations within the ILACS report and the improvement notice (served upon the council by the DfE on the 24 July 2024 resulting from the Ofsted inspection findings), are complied with and that the plans in place deliver the improvements required are within the timescales set by the DfE.
- (a) Failure to comply or poor progress against the Improvement Plan can result in the imposition of directions to secure performance, which can include DfE intervention and nomination of a person to act on its behalf to secure performance.
- 26 The protection of vulnerable people is a council responsibility. Continued regular oversight by members of the Childrens and Families Committee, alongside the overall approach to improving service provision, aligns with this obligation.

Section 151 Officer/Finance

- 27 The improvement plan to address the findings from the inspection was agreed at the Children and Families Committee on 16 July and Full Council on 17 July, which included the approach to the funding of the plan.
- 28 The overall funding was approved totalling £1.987m across the 2 financial years 2024/25 and 2025/26.

- 29 Included in the FR1 forecast position was an overspend for 2025/26 of £0.8m, a slight reduction to June report. The 2025/26 forecast is £2.2m as detailed in the table below and the combined two-year cost of £2.7m a total overspend of £0.7m.

Expenditure Group	2025/26 Budget (Original Planned)	2025/26 Actuals end of June 25	2025/26 Forecast
Edge of Care Support Workers	£208,100	£0	£164,260
Team Leader	£133,434	£15,741	£104,942
QA Officer	£66,717	-£2,771	£59,104
Project Manager (grade 11) to lead 18-25 accommodation recommission	£66,717	£18,431	£62,806
Connected Care Assessor	£114,702	£24,085	£119,590
Independent Reviewing Officer	£133,434	£29,004	£161,786
Personal Advisor	£124,860	£45,515	£148,404
2.00 FTE Agency Social Worker (initial plan 6.00 FTE Direct Employees)	£344,106	£40,159	£161,943
2.00 FTE Agency Team Managers	£0	£33,989	£170,638
Family Group Conference Support Worker	£166,480	£68,761	£275,041
Children's Home for Children with Complex Mental Health Needs and Challenging Behaviour - design costs and programme document	£0	-£1,292	-£1,292
Head of Service - Integrated Front Door	£0	£38,384	£167,258
Project Lead	£0	£37,255	£121,022
Relationship Support Service	£0	£15,000	£15,000
Safeguarding Quality Assurance Manager	£0	£28,220	£141,906
Service Manager - Children with Disabilities	£0	£30,792	£143,551
Specialist Expert Support - External Consultant to work on Health programmes	£0	£30,130	£140,472
Corporate Exc Workstream	£0	£0	£30,000
Grand Total	£1,358,550	£451,403	£2,186,432
Original improvement plan			
Original plan item replaced			
Updated plan			

- 30 This overspend is being monitored through the in-year forecast reporting.

Human Resources

- 31 HR are supporting improvement work and attend and report to each Improvement Board.

Risk Management

- 32 There are reputational and financial risks to not providing good quality services, as well as risks to individual children and young people. The council must continue to ensure that these risks are mitigated by ensuring effective plans are in place to improve and that these make an impact on children's outcomes.

Impact on other Committees

- 33 None.

Policy

	Commitment 2: Improving health and wellbeing	
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Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

- 34 Good quality practice with families ensures that all children and young people's needs are considered and supported.

Other Implications

- 35 The improvement plan aims to improve the outcomes for our most vulnerable children and young people.

Consultation

Name of Consultee	Post held	Date sent	Date returned
<i>Statutory Officer (or deputy) :</i>			
Ashley Hughes	S151 Officer	13/08/25	02/09/25
Janet Witkowski	Acting Governance, Compliance and Monitoring Officer	13/08/25	13/08/25
<i>Legal and Finance</i>			
Diane Green	Finance Lead Children's	29/07/25	05/08/25
Jennie Summers	Legal Team Manager (People)	29/07/25	04/08/25
<i>Other Consultees:</i>			
<i>Executive Directors/Directors</i>			
Dawn Godfrey	Executive Director of Children's Services	31/07/2025	31/07/2025
Caroline Tote	Interim Director of Commissioning,	29/07/25	29/07/25

	Quality Assurance and Partnerships		
Tracy Stephen	Director of Family Help and Children's Social Care	29/07/25	
Allison Sollom	Head of Service Cared for Children and Care Leavers	29/07/25	31/07/25

Access to Information

Contact Officer:	<p>Caroline Tote, Interim Director of Commissioning, Quality Assurance and Partnerships</p> <p>Caroline.Tote@cheshireeast.gov.uk</p>
Appendices:	<p>Appendix 1: RAG rating overview</p> <p>Appendix 2: Improvement Plan</p> <p>Appendix 3: Changes to improvement plan actions</p> <p>Appendix 4: Ofsted Monitoring Visit Report June 2025</p> <p>Appendix 5: Vital Signs Scorecard</p>
Background Papers:	<p>Report on the improvement plan to the Children and Families Committee on 9 June 2025</p> <p>Report on the improvement plan to the Children and Families Committee on 7 April 2025</p> <p>Report on the improvement plan to the Children and Families Committee on 13 January 2025</p> <p>Report on the improvement plan to the Children and Families Committee on 11 November 2024</p> <p>Report on the improvement plan to the Children and Families Committee on 16 September 2024</p>

	<u>Report on the improvement plan to the Children and Families Committee on 16 July 2024</u> <u>Report on the Ofsted inspection findings to the Children and Families Committee on 3 June 2024</u> <u>Cheshire East's Ofsted Inspection Report published 16 May</u> <u>Ofsted ILACS Framework</u>
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Improvement Plan

Rating Overview

Ratings as at 22 July 2025

Key

Colour	Action Definition
Grey	Not started yet/ action closed and replaced with new action
Red	Not on track
Amber	On track to be completed within timescales
Amber E	Completed but we need to embed and evidence impact
Green	Completed and embedded with evidence of impact

Chapter 1

Senior Leaders' Oversight			
Ref	Action	Due by	RAG
SL1	Reporting and governance arrangements	Jan 25	Complete
SL2a	Internal Family Feedback Strategy	Apr 25	Amber E
SL2b	Partnership Family Feedback Strategy	Mar 25	Amber E
SL3	Improvement Board	July 24	Complete
SL4	Children's Services Strategic Quartet	July 24	Amber E
SL5	Corporate parenting strategic board	Nov 24	Amber E
SL6	Corporate parenting training	TBC	Reviewing
SL7	Care leaver champions	Apr 25	Amber E
SL8	Cared for children and care leavers strategy	Sept 25	On track
SL9	Quality assurance activity against improvement plan	Feb 25	Amber E
SL10	Service manager thematic audit group	Aug 24	Complete
SL11	Share audit findings with teams	Sept 24	Complete
SL12	Vital signs performance report	Sept 24	Complete
SL13	Councillor oversight of frontline practice	Sept 25	On track
SL14	Children's social care national framework implications	Feb 25	Complete
SL15a	Practice guidance on timescales	Jun 25	Amber E
SL15b	Embed practice standards	Apr 25	Amber E
SL16	Examples of good practice	Aug 24	Amber E
SL17	Strengthen the audit process	Nov 25	On track
SL18	Family feedback implementation plan	Oct 25	On track

Care Leavers: Quality of Practice			
Ref	Action	Due by	RAG
CLA1	Practice standards	June 24	Complete
CLA2	Mandatory training plan	June 25	Complete
CLA3	Management structure	April 24	Complete
CLA4	New pathway plan format	May 24	Complete
CLA6	Arrangements for young adults where there are safeguarding concerns	Sept 24	Complete
CLA7	Recruit Care Leaver Ambassadors	Oct 24	Complete

Care Leavers: Planning for Adulthood			
Ref	Action	Due by	RAG
CLB2	Review Ignition Panel	Sept 24	Complete
CLB3	Preparing for adulthood in practice standards	June 24	Complete
CLB4	Care leaver hubs	July 24	Amber E
CLB6	Health histories development	July 25	Complete
CLB7	PA training on health histories	June 24	Amber E
CLB8	Local offer app	Aug 24	Complete
CLB9	Review the local offer	Dec 24	Complete
CLB10	PA training on the local offer	July 24	Complete
CLB11	Participation opportunities at hubs	July 24	Complete
CLB12	Free bus pass for care leavers	Oct 24	Complete

Care Leavers: EET			
Ref	Action	Due by	RAG
CLC1	EET plans for young people	Sept 24	Complete
CLC2	Offer of EET opportunities	Mar 25	Complete
CLC3	Work with local businesses and organisations	Mar 25	Complete
CLC4	Support on employment preparation	Oct 24	Complete

Care Leavers: Accommodation			
Ref	Action	Due by	RAG
CLD1	Emergency accommodation protocol	Aug 24	Amber E
CLD2	Review all young people who are/ at risk of being homeless or in emergency accommodation	June 24	Amber E
CLD3	Temporary and emergency accommodation meeting	June 24	Complete
CLD4	PA training on housing support	July 24	Complete
CLD5	Project group for accommodation	July 24	Complete
CLD6	Review temporary and emergency options	Sept 24	Complete
CLD7	Proposals to address accommodation shortages	July 24	Complete
CLD8	Flexibilities in current contracts for 16-18 year olds' accommodation	Oct 24	Amber E
CLD9	18-25 accommodation offer	Mar 26	On track

Care Leavers: aged over 21			
Ref	Action	Due by	RAG
CLE1	Contact all 209 care leavers over 21	Mar 24	Complete
CLE2	21+ offer protocol	July 24	Complete
CLE3	Review care leavers 21+ with a disability	June 24	Amber E
CLE4	Tracker for care leavers 21+	May 24	Complete
CLE5	Quality assurance of care leavers 21+	Aug 24	Amber E
CLE6	Review the impact of 21+ offer with young adults	Mar 25	Complete

Quality of Plans			
Ref	Action	Due by	RAG
P1	Restorative practice model	Dec 24	Amber E
P2	Masterclasses	Apr 25	Complete

P3	Management session on planning	Sept 24	Complete
P4	Reflective case discussions for CP	July 24	Complete
P5	Permanence action plan	Nov 25	On track
P6	Best practice guidance on care planning	June 25	Amber E
P7	Review children's panels	Sept 25	On track
P8	Training on partnership challenge	Dec 24	Complete
P9	New forms in line with families first	Feb 24	On track
P10	Single assessment	Oct 25	On track
P11	Training plan for lead practitioners	Apr 25	Amber E
P12	Central place for resources	Sept 25	On track

Quality and Frequency of Visits			
Ref	Action	Due by	RAG
V1	Performance framework	Sept 24	Complete
V2	Masterclasses on visiting	Sept 24	Complete
V3	Visiting template	July 24	Amber E
V4	e-learning on visiting	Aug 24	Complete
V5	Training on recording	May 25	Amber E
V7	Review visiting in supervision	Jan 25	Amber E

Management Oversight and Supervision			
Ref	Action	Due by	RAG
MO1	Leadership development programme	June 25	Complete
MO2	CSC management programme	Apr 25	Closed
MO3	Supervision policy and guidance	Sept 24	Complete
MO4	Supervision training	Oct 25	On track
MO5	Permanence tracker	Oct 24	Amber E
MO6	Review plans for cared for children who are not in foster care or planning to return home	July 24	Amber E
MO7	Include children's views in the supervision form	Oct 24	Complete

Effectiveness of IROs			
Ref	Action	Due by	RAG
IR1	IRO performance management framework	Sept 24	Complete
IR2	IROs on management programme	April 24	Complete
IR3	IRO practice standards	Sept 24	Complete
IR4	Quarterly IRO development days	June 24	Complete
IR5	IRO quality assurance alert guidance	Aug 24	Complete
IR6	Challenge permanence performance	July 24	Amber E
IR7	Consult with children on the impact of the cared for IRO service	Mar 25	Amber E

Sufficiency of Placements			
Ref	Action	Due by	RAG
S1	Family led decision making	TBC	Closed
S2	Join Foster4	May 24	Complete
S3	Build Foster4 offer and front door	Oct 24	Complete
S4	Opportunities for fostering marketing	Oct 24	Complete
S5	Specialist foster carers to support step down from residential	Jan 26	On track
S6	Third Mockingbird constellation	Sept 24	Complete

S7	Two council residential homes	Jun 25	Complete
S9	Joint commissioning high needs placements	Feb 26	On track
S10	Young people influence recruitment of foster carers	Sept 24	Complete
S11	Homes for cared for children workstream	Apr 25	Amber E

Chapter 2

The Front Door			
Ref	Action	Due by	RAG
FD1	Contact guidance	July 24	Amber E
FD2	Review LA MASH arrangements	Aug 24	Complete
FD3	Multi-agency workshop reviewing front door arrangements	Jan 25	Complete
FD4	Chapter 3 Working Together	Apr 25	Amber E
FD5	Establish a MASH	Mar 26	On track

Strategy Meetings			
Ref	Action	Due by	RAG
SM1	Workshop on strategy meetings	Aug 24	Closed
SM2	Minute-taking training	Aug 24	Closed
SM3	Management analysis box	June 24	Complete
SM4	Partnership and managers training	Oct 25	On track

Life-story work and later-life letters			
Ref	Action	Due by	RAG
LS1	Commission training	Mar 25	Amber E
LS3	Monitoring for life-story work and later life letters	Aug 24	Amber E

Health of Cared for Children			
Ref	Action	Due by	RAG
H1	Prioritisation for vulnerable children for CYPMHS support	Mar 25	Amber E
H2	Waiting well initiatives	Mar 25	Amber E
H3	Review emotional support for UASC	Aug 25	On track
H4	Joint health and CSC reviews of health assessments timeliness	May 24	Closed
H5	LA single point of contact	May 24	Closed
H6	Quarterly reporting to NHS England	May 24	Closed
H7	Health and wellbeing workstream	Jun 25	Amber E
H8	Review and streamline health assessment process	May 25	Amber E

Education for Cared for Children			
Ref	Action	Due by	RAG
ED1	Education advisor attendance meetings	Apr 24	Amber E
ED2	Attendance forum	Apr 24	Amber E
ED3	Multi-disciplinary attendance meetings	Apr 24	Amber E
ED4	PEP training	Dec 24	Amber E
ED5	Review PEP form	Sept 24	Amber E
ED6	Benchmark cared for attainment against their peers	Feb 25	Amber E

ED7	Audit young adults who are NEET at 20	Mar 25	Complete
ED8	Use RONI to identify at risk of NEET	Nov 24	Complete

Workforce			
Ref	Action	Due by	RAG
W1	Financial support for the plan	July 24	Complete
W2	Capacity for the care leaver service	July 24	Complete
W3	Review IRO capacity	July 24	Complete
W4	Recruitment and retention group	Sept 24	Amber E
W5	Recruitment and retention strategy	Dec 24	Amber E
W6	Recruitment campaign	Aug 25	On track
W7	Reporting on caseloads	Aug 24	Complete
W8	Masters apprenticeship scheme	Mar 25	Complete
W9	Seek practitioner views	Qrtly review	On track
W10	Communicate improvement progress	Qrtly review	Complete
W11	Seek children's views through audit	Monthly	Complete
W12	Base build children's services	Dec 25	On track

Chapter 3

Entries to Care			
Ref	Action	Due by	RAG
C1	Review children's experiences to see if early help could have been offered	Feb 25	Amber E
C2	Early Help Strategy	June 25	Amber E
C3	Joint protocol for police protection	July 25	Closed
C4	Neglect Strategy	June 25	Complete

Children’s home inspection			
Ref	Action	Due by	RAG
CH1	Weekly management reviews	Mar 25	Complete
CH2	Strengthen reg 44 visits	Mar 25	Complete
CH3	Review the recording system for residential provision	Mar 25	Complete

RAG rating for actuals against targets (it is not appropriate to have targets for all indicators)	On target	Within 15% of target	More than 15% from target
Direction of travel shown between current and previous month (green indicates an improvement and amber indicates a decline)	▲	▼	

Indicators of Success

The indicators below will demonstrate change achieved

Rates are calculated using the 2023 ONS mid year population estimate 0-17 of 81,634 (Office of National Statistics) and are calculated as a rate per 10,000 children aged 0-17.

ID	Early Help and Front Door Responses - Early Help and Front Door information only	Jul-24	Aug-24	Sep-24	Oct-24	Nov-24	Dec-24	Jan-25	Feb-25	Mar-25	Apr-25	May-25	Jun-25	Target	SN av	Direction of travel
1	Number of Early Help / Front Door Referrals (in month)	776	602	691	661	560	384	527	403	435	358	524	461	Monitor	N/A	▼
2	Percentage of Early Help Assessments completed within 45 working days (in month)	83.0%	90.0%	73.0%	84.0%	87.4%	94.0%	99.0%	96.0%	99.0%	95.0%	97.8%	98.4%	90.0%	N/A	▲
3	Percentage of Early Help episodes closed within the last 12 weeks who have been referred to Social Care (in month)	4.2%	4.3%	3.8%	4.4%	4.2%	4.5%	3.2%	7.5%	8.8%	5.5%	4.9%	4.8%	Below 8%	N/A	▼
4	Number of children stepped down from Child In Need to Early Help (in month)	16	17	29	41	18	20	9	27	31	19	21	21	Monitor	N/A	◀ ▶
5	Number of ChECS Contacts (in month)	900	642	865	935	747	817	933	912	1083	910	931	893	Monitor	N/A	▼
6	Percentage of repeat contacts where previous contact was within previous 12 months (in month)	51.6%	55.2%	53.1%	53.8%	50.8%	44.5%	46.1%	45.4%	43.1%	44.9%	41.1%	41.8%	45%	N/A	▲
7	Percentage of ChECS Contact decisions made within one working day (in month)	86.7%	90.6%	95.3%	77.2%	89.6%	91.7%	93.3%	84.7%	82.1%	87.8%	74.2%	71.2%	90.0%	N/A	▼
8a	Number of Referrals (in month)	248	192	214	226	181	216	223	255	272	180	229	330	Monitor	N/A	▲
8b	Percentage of referrals leading to 'No Further Action' (in month)	4.8%	8.3%	9.8%	10.2%	2.8%	0.5%	1.8%	0.3%	0.3%	2.8%	2.6%	7.3%	below 10%	N/A	▲
9a	Percentage of visits within 5 working days of referral (in month)	57.7%	65.6%	61.8%	68.4%	58.3%	57.7%	50.8%	65.2%	55.2%	64.5%	66.7%	45.9%	90.0%	N/A	▼
9b	Percentage of referral visits within 10 working days of referral (in month)	74.0%	81.0%	75.0%	84.0%	79.0%	77.0%	74.0%	83.0%	83.0%	88.0%	82.0%	74.0%	90.0%	N/A	▼
10	Percentage of re-referrals within previous 12 months (rolling 12 months)	17.0%	18.0%	17.0%	16.0%	16.0%	16.0%	16.0%	16.0%	16.0%	16.0%	15%	16%	below 18%	19%	▲
11	Percentage of single assessments leading to closure (in month)	44.0%	42.8%	53.7%	52.5%	43.0%	42.8%	48.6%	46.9%	47.7%	57.1%	57.1%	50.5%	45%	N/A	▼
12	Percentage of single assessments closed with outcome of Early Help	11.9%	12.5%	7.8%	16.4%	13.6%	21.1%	6.9%	17.5%	10.9%	12.4%	23.1%	12.9%	25%	N/A	▼
13	Percentage/ number of strategy discussions held within 48 hours of referral date	69.4%	52.3%	71.1%	80.6%	69.6%	83.7%	67.8%	60.8%	57.8%	47.6%	45.7%	50.0%	90.0%	N/A	▲
14	Percentage of strategy discussions with the outcome 'Section 47 enquiry required' (in month)	67.9%	62.7%	59.7%	75.9%	78.5%	62.2%	68.5%	71.7%	67.3%	59.1%	64.5%	57.9%	60%	N/A	▼
15	Percentage of authorised Section 47 Enquiries with the outcome 'Convene initial child protection conference' (in month)	33.3%	20.6%	27.1%	24.4%	16.1%	21.7%	24.1%	20.0%	30.4%	33.6%	16.2%	31.7%	35%	N/A	▲

Narrative:

ID 11 & 12: We are reducing the % of assessments being completed which are resulting in no further action or not requiring social care involvement but support at early help. This suggests that we are increasingly only undertaking statutory work where it is required.

ID	Robust and effective social work practice - All of CYPFS	Jul-24	Aug-24	Sep-24	Oct-24	Nov-24	Dec-24	Jan-25	Feb-25	Mar-25	Apr-25	May-25	Jun-25	Target	SN av	Direction of travel
16	Rate of Children in Need (CIN) per 10,000 children (month end snapshot)	112.5r	118.8r	109.4r	100.4r	106.2r	108.4r	126.4r	135.9r	134.9r	122.7r	127.4r	133.8r	105-135	N/A	▲

17	Rate of Children subject to a Child Protection Plan (CP) per 10,000 children (month end snapshot)	34.9r	35.0r	34.8r	34.3r	32.4r	30.4r	29.3r	28.9r	30.0r	30.6r	29.2r		30.4r	34-35	38r	▲
18	Rate of Cared for Children (CIC) per 10,000 children (month end snapshot)	66.4r	65.6r	68.5r	68.6r	68.6r	67.5r	67.3r	67.3r	67.4r	67.6r	66.8r		66.4r	64-66	64r	▼
19a	Percentage of single assessments completed within 45 working days (in month)	80.4%	75.3%	61.6%	74.4%	82.0%	66.5%	65.2%	76.0%	72.2%	86.4%	86.7%		88.8%	90.0%	87%	▲
19b	Percentage of single assessments completed within 45 working days (year to date)	76.2%	76.1%	72.8%	73.1%	74.0%	73.2%	72.5%	72.8%	72.7%	86.4%	86.5%		87.3%	90.0%	87%	▲
19c	Percentage of single assessments completed within 45 working days (rolling 12 months)	86.0%	85.1%	81.8%	80.2%	80.1%	78.4%	75.7%	74.0%	72.7%	73.4%	74.5%		76.6%	90.0%	87%	▲
20	Percentage of children seen during assessment (completed in month)	93.8%	98.0%	95.0%	97.80%	96.2%	99.1%	97.60%	98.2%	96.5%	96.0%	96.0%		90.1%	95.00%	N/A	▼
21	Percentage of Initial Child Protection Conferences held within 15 working days of Strategy Discussion (in month)	69.3%	76.0%	80.0%	93.9%	64.7%	66.7%	82.9%	71.4%	91.4%	87.8%	100.0%		79.4%	90.0%	79%	▼
22	Percentage of current children subject to Repeat Child Protection Plans within 2 years (month end snapshot)	13.5%	14.6%	11.3%	9.2%	9.8%	9.7%	8.4%	7.2%	8.2%	10.8%	11.3%		10.9%	below 15%	N/A	▼
23	Percentage of children who have a closed Child Protection plan open for 2 years or more (year to date)	1.5%	1.3%	2.7%	4.6%	4.1%	3.6%	3.1%	2.9%	2.7%	0.0%	0.0%		0.0%	below 4%	4%	◀ ▶
24	Number of children with a missing episode(s) in month	55	56	47	59	53	49	46	44	57	56	76		84	below 50	N/A	▲
25	Contextual Safeguarding - Number of Current Children with an active exploitation Flag (month end snapshot)	41	44	43	44	47	48	53	52	51	54	52		56	Monitor	N/A	▲
26	Percentage of PLO (Public Law Outline) concluding within 16 weeks	60.0%	28.6%	28.6%	66.7%	66.6%	40.0%	14.3%	12.5%	33.3%	35.7%	16.6%		14.2%	90.0%	N/A	▼

Narrative:

ID 19 a - c: The improvement in timeliness of assessment has continued in June, suggesting that we are meeting our vulnerable families quickly to identify support required.

ID 21: 4 of the 15 conferences held in June were out of timescales, however in all cases there was the engagement of parents.

ID	At risk of Care, Cared for and Care Experienced Children and Young People - All of CYPFS	Jul-24	Aug-24	Sep-24	Oct-24	Nov-24	Dec-24	Jan-25	Feb-25	Mar-25	Apr-25	May-25		Jun-25	Target	SN av	Direction of travel
27	Number of admissions to care in month	22	10	29	13	26	12	23	15	20	17	14		18	15	N/A	▲
28	Number of discharges from care in month	11	16	13	13	24	20	24	13	17	15	21		21	Monitor	N/A	◀ ▶
29	Number of unregistered placements – Under 16 (month end snapshot)		3	2	1	2	2	3	3	4	4	3		2	0	N/A	▼
30	Number of unregistered placements – Age 16+ (month end snapshot)		0	2	2	2	2	2	2	1	2	3		3	0	N/A	◀ ▶
31	Number of residential placements (month end snapshot)	42	42	40	41	42	44	49	50	51	50	45		46	43	N/A	▲
32	Number of children subject to Police Protection Powers (PPP) who entered care in month	5	2	8	7	8	4	5	3	4	4	3		4	0	N/A	▲
33	Percentage of discharges from care to Special Guardianship Order (rolling 12 months)	11.4%	11.1%	10.3%	9.0%	10.3%	10.6%	13.4%	12.9%	13.4%	14.5%	15.2%		16.0%	13.0%	10%	▲
34	Number of Special Guardianship Orders in place														Monitor	N/A	
35a	Number of Children in "in house" foster care provision (inc Kinship)	239	238	246	251	249	241	239	235	233	230	230		223	240		▼
35b	Number of Children in IFA Placements	123	119	115	121	118	114	124	121	119	130	126		131	Monitor		▲
35c	Percentage of children placed with 'in house' foster carers (month end snapshot)	66%	66.7%	68.1%	67.5%	67.8%	67.9%	65.8%	66.0%	66.0%	63.9%	64.6%		63.0%	70.0%	N/A	▼
35d	Total number of Mainstream Fostering Households				74	75	73	73	73	76	77	75		75	Monitor	N/A	◀ ▶
35e	Total number of approved Kinship Households				65	56	56	52	48	50	53	52		52	Monitor	N/A	◀ ▶
35f	Total number of Fostering Households				138	131	128	124	121	125	130	127		127	Monitor	N/A	◀ ▶

36	Short Term Placement Stability (month end snapshot)	13.1%	13.0%	13.3%	12.4%	11.5%	11.1%	11.7%	11.1%	11.5%	10.3%	11.0%		11.3%	11.0%	N/A	▲
37	Long Term Placement Stability (month end snapshot)	60.9%	61.5%	62.9%	65.3%	66.1%	67.4%	67.6%	67.6%	68.9%	69.5%	67.7%		68.6%	70.0%	N/A	▲
38a	Percentage of Initial Health Assessment Reports completed within month where paperwork was received from CE within 5 working days of admission to care	26.0%	62.5%	35.0%	30.0%	60.0%	77.8%	66.7%	27.3%	23.5%	50.0%	54.5%		NYA	85.0%	N/A	▲
38b	Percentage of Initial Health Assessment Reports completed within month that were completed within 20 working days of admission to care	50.0%	50.0%	36.0%	36.4%	60.0%	81.8%	61.9%	23.0%	20.0%	41.2%	50.0%		NYA	85.0%	N/A	▲
39	Percentage of children in care with health checks up to date	84.0%	84.0%	84.0%	83.0%	83.0%	86.0%	90.0%	92.0%	89.0%	88.0%	86.0%		84.0%	90.0%	85%	▼
40	Percentage of children in care with dental checks up to date	78.0%	75.0%	62.0%	62.0%	59.0%	57.0%	68.0%	62.0%	66.0%	86.0%	94.0%		96.0%	80.0%	75%	▲
41	Percentage of children in care with optical checks up to date															N/A	
42	Percentage of children in care with immunisations up to date			57.0%	55.0%	54.0%	53.0%	53.0%	54.0%	54.0%	81.0%	78.0%		76.0%	70%	N/A	▼
43	School attendance rate for children known to Social Care - statutory school age in Cheshire East schools only (month end snapshot for academic year)		Not reported	87%	87%	87%	86%	86%	86%	86%	85%	85.4%		84.8%	89.0%	N/A	▼
44	Number of Children in Care without a School Placement - statutory school age		Not reported	5	3	3	3	5	7	8	8	7		5	0	N/A	▼
45	Number of Children in Care with a Current Suspension - statutory school age		Not reported	11	15	27	32	36	38	40	40	44		47	below 20	N/A	▲
46	Number of Children in Care with a Current Permanent Exclusion - statutory school age		Not reported	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0		0	0	N/A	◀ ▶
47a	Percentage of Care Leavers aged 17 to 18 in Education, Employment or Training (month end snapshot)	77.0%	81.0%	75.0%	70.0%	74.0%	76.0%	74.0%	69.0%	65.0%	69.0%	67.0%		67.0%	77.0%	66%	▼
47b	Percentage of Care Leavers aged 17 to 18 in Suitable Accommodation (month end snapshot)	93.0%	92.0%	93.0%	93.0%	99.0%	97.0%	97.0%	98.0%	96.0%	97.0%	93.0%		93.0%	95.0%	87%	▼
48a	Percentage of Care Leavers aged 19 to 21 in Education, Employment or Training (month end snapshot)	57.0%	56.0%	55.0%	59.0%	61.0%	66.0%	68.0%	66.0%	63.0%	63.0%	64.0%		65.0%	60.0%	56%	▲
48b	Percentage of Care Leavers aged 19 to 21 in Suitable Accommodation (month end snapshot)	88.0%	88.0%	86.0%	92.0%	95.0%	97.0%	97.0%	95.0%	96.0%	97.0%	97.0%		96.0%	95.0%	87%	▼

Narrative:

ID: 29 & 30: As at the end of June the 5 unregistered placements relate to specialist provision inspected by CQC and notified to Ofsted.

ID 33: There continues to be a positive trend with the number of young people leaving care and being supported via a Special Guardianship order, providing that additional support within their family networks.

ID 37: There is an improvement in the long term stability measure. Having a stable home improves the life chances and opportunities for our young people.

ID 39, 40 & 42: We have worked closely with our health colleagues to address any recording issues regarding the health support for our cared for children. Again good health support is crucial for improved life chances.

ID 48a: An increased % of our care leavers aged 19-21 are in Education, Employment or training which will hopefully lead to improved life chances.

ID	Quality Assurance and Audit (safeguarding) - All of CYPFS	Jul-24	Aug-24	Sep-24	Oct-24	Nov-24	Dec-24	Jan-25	Feb-25	Mar-25	Apr-25	May-25		Jun-25	Target	SN av	Direction of travel
49	Timeliness of Reviews of Child Protection Plans (month end snapshot)	94.9%	86.3%	75.0%	93.4%	92.9%	97.0%	91.9%	90.0%	100.0%	100.0%	97.60%		100.0%	90-95%		▲
50	Timeliness of Reviews of Children in Care (month end snapshot)	81.5%	65.8%	63.4%	68.4%	78.0%	74.0%	77.1%	71.1%	91.3%	80.2%	80.0%		81.9%	90-95%		▲
51	Number of Informal quality assurance practice alerts	5	1	3	0	1	3	7	11	2	0	0		0	Monitor		▼
52	Number of formal quality assurance practice alerts	1	0	0	1	0	1	2	1	1	1	0		0	Monitor		▼
53	Number of good practice alerts	4	10	3	8	9	5	4	7	5	5	2		9	Monitor		▲

Narrative: ID 49: Child protection plan review timescales remain within target which is the best possible outcome for our young people. ID 51: There were no informal or formal practice alerts which is a potential early indicator of an improvement in quality of case planning and management.																
ID	Quality Assurance and Audit (auditing) - All of CYPFS	Jul-24	Aug-24	Sep-24	Oct-24	Nov-24	Dec-24	Jan-25	Feb-25	Mar-25	Apr-25	May-25	Jun-25	Target	SN av	Direction of travel
54	Overall number of collaborative audits completed	12	6	6	6	6	6	6	4	14	12	16	18	6 per month	N/A	▲
55	Overall percentage of audits completed within timescale	100%	100%	100%	100%	83%	100%	83%	67% (4)	74% (14)	41%(5)	31%(5)	50% (9)	100%	N/A	▲
56	Overall percentage of audits graded as good or better following moderation	8% (1)	17% (1)	17% (1)	0%	50% (3)	17% (1)	33% (2)	25% (1)	38% (3)	33% (4)	14% (2)	28%(5)	80%+	N/A	▲
57	Overall percentage of audits graded as 'does not yet meet good' following moderation	92% (11)	83% (5)	83% (5)	100% (6)	50% (3)	83% (5)	67% (4)	75% (3)	62%(5)	67% (8)	86% (14)	72%(13)	40.0%	N/A	▼
58	The % of audits that were down graded at moderation	67% (8)	50% (3)	83% (5)	17% (1)	0%	0%	33% (2)	25% (1)	13% (1)	25% (3)	14%(1)	33% (4)	10%	N/A	▲
59	Overall number of family help audits completed			6			7			9	6	6	5	6	N/A	▼
60	Overall percentage of family help audits graded as good or better following moderation			83%			43%			43%	0%	33%	40%	55%	N/A	▲
61	Overall percentage of family help audits graded as 'does not yet meet good' following moderation			17%			57%			57%	100%	67%	60%	30%	N/A	▼
62	The % of family help audits that were down graded at moderation			0%			0%			22%	0%	33%	20%	15%	N/A	▼
63	Overall number of thematic audits completed in a month			12			NA		NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	12	N/A	
64	Overall percentage of thematic audits graded as good or better following moderation			17%			NA		NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	55%	N/A	
65	Overall % of thematic audits graded as does not meet good or better			83%			NA		NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	30%	N/A	
66	The % of thematic audits that were down graded at moderation			8%			NA		NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	15%	N/A	
67	Overall number of Multiagency audits completed			5			27							25	N/A	
Narrative: ID 55: There is a positive improvement in both the number and % of audits being completed in a timely manner. ID 56: Whilst small steps it is good to see a slow increasing number of cases now being audited as good and 1 was upgraded from requires improvement at moderation.																
ID	A Stable and able workforce - All of CYPFS	Jul-24	Aug-24	Sep-24	Oct-24	Nov-24	Dec-24	Jan-25	Feb-25	Mar-25	Apr-25	May-25	Jun-25	Target		Direction of travel
68	Early Help / Targeted Support - Average Caseload													20		
69	Children's Social Work - CIN/CP Average Caseload	24	23	24	19	19	20	21	22	21	20	20	22	17		▲
70	Children's Disability Team - Average Caseload	18	19	23	21	25	22	21	22	20	17	15	20	20		▲
71	Cared for Children Service - Average Caseload (not inc Fostering Service))	17	17	17	17	17	17	17	17	16	16	16	16	17		◀ ▶

72	Care Leavers - Average Caseload	14	14	14	14	15	14	16	16	13	13	13		13	18		◀ ▶
73	Unallocated cases at month open where referral is over 3 working days			9	10	1	11	1	4	6	8	5		2	4		▼
74	Percentage of Social Workers with more than 20 children allocated (month end snapshot)	50.6%	53.8%	55.6%	36.7%	37.4%	42.4%	39.6%	48.4%	43.0%	41.0%	33%		45%	35%		▲
75	Percentage of Case Supervisions in time – CIN/CP Teams (month end snapshot (all workers))	52.5%	40.1%	79.0%	73.0%	66.0%	59.0%	62.0%	65.0%	68.0%	88.0%	80.0%		79.0%	95%		▼
76	Percentage of Case Supervision's in time – Cared for Team (month end snapshot (all workers))	59.0%	64.0%	64.0%	56.0%	60.0%	52.0%	58.0%	55.0%	51.0%	71.0%	72.0%		75.0%	95%		▲
77	Percentage of Case Supervision's in time – Care Leavers Service (month end snapshot (social workers))	63.0%	57.0%	98.0%	67.0%	66.0%	43.0%	61.1%	40.0%	12.0%	62.0%	43.0%		41.0%	95%		▼
78	Percentage of Case Supervision's in time – Care Leavers Service (month end snapshot (PA's))		67.0%	94.0%	74.0%	75.0%	69.0%	68.0%	78.0%	68.0%	59.0%	66.0%		68.0%	95%		▲
79	Percentage of Case Supervision's in time – Children's Disability Team (month end snapshot (all workers))	86.0%	77.0%	68.0%	79.0%	70.0%	73.0%	76.0%	63.0%	61.0%	71.0%	94.0%		98.0%	95%		▲
80	Percentage of Case Supervision's in time – Court team (month end snapshot (all workers))								34.0%	20.0%	10.0%	95.0%		78.0%	95%		▼
81	Percentage of Foster Carer Supervision – Fostering Service (month end snapshot)			89.0%	79.6%	90.0%	82.4%	76.0%	87.2%	90.9%	80.0%	86.8%		85.0%	95%		▼
82	Turnover rate for Social Workers (month end snapshot)	21.8%	19.6%	24.7%	16.7%	18.5%	18.5%	21.1%	24.2%	25.3%	26.2%	25.8%		22.2%	15%		▼
83	Vacancy rate for Social Workers (month end snapshot)	32.2%	27.6%	28.8%	26.5%	26.5%	25.6%	23.6%	28.7%	32.0%	29.9%	28.7%		27.4%	25%		▼
84	Sickness Average Days Lost Per FTE (Rolling Year) - CYPFS department as a whole	6.53	6.87	6.76	11.26	10.57	10.85	10.05	12.42	13.42	13.82	13.83		14.19	10		▲

Narrative:

ID 69-72: There is emerging pressure in the CIN/CP and CWD team in terms of increasing average caseloads.

ID 75-81: Supervision timeliness continues to be variable. We need to be confident that holiday period doesn't impact further

ID 82-83: There has been a further small reduction in the turnover and vacancy rate for Social Workers in June.

ID 84: The sickness days lost reports were rebuilt in October as it was identified the reports only included episodes opened and closed in a period and excluded any ongoing absense episodes. As a result from October we are reporting a truer picture.

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Children's Services Improvement Plan

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Introduction

This is our action plan to address the findings from the Ofsted inspection of children's services in Cheshire East which took place in February and March 2024. The findings from the inspection are available in a report on the [Ofsted website](#). The inspection gave Cheshire East's children's services an overall grading of inadequate and found that although some improvements had been made since our last inspection in 2019, the quality of practice and the experience and progress of children and young people was too variable, and for care leavers this was inadequate. We need to make significant improvements, and this plan sets out how we will do this.

We are committed to improving outcomes for children and young people. We will use the inspection and monitoring visit findings to continue to improve the support we offer. This plan responds to all the areas identified in the inspection report. Immediate action was taken to improve services, starting during the inspection, and this is reflected in the plan alongside longer-term actions and ambitions.

Through the delivery of our plan and our programme of improvement, we will continue to embed a culture of high support and high challenge and be a **child-focused** organisation that works **together with** people, through effective relationships that support positive change. We know our workforce is our most important asset and we will continue to support and regularly communicate with frontline practitioners and managers so everyone understands their role in improvement and we co-produce, deliver, evaluate and celebrate changes together.



Context

This inspection, and previous inspections, have shown that Cheshire East's children's services have not provided consistently good quality support to our children and young people. We were judged inadequate in 2013 and 2024. In developing this plan, we have critically considered what barriers have prevented us from achieving good quality services to date. We have recognised that in the past we have moved from fixing problem to problem, which has led to a 'stop/start' approach. We now need to embed a systemic approach to improvement; changing our culture, developing the right systems and processes to ensure we routinely evaluate impact, and holding our shape around the changes we expect to see – holding the right people accountable consistently at every level.

We will be reviewing and changing our services in line with the [children's social care national framework](#) to ensure that we deliver consistently good quality practice that achieves strong outcomes for children and young people.

Cheshire East Council, like councils across the country, has been experiencing unprecedented financial pressures. In February 2024, the council approved a balanced budget for 2024/25, which included spending money from reserves to cover the impact of additional financial pressures. The level of reserves is now insufficient to adequately protect the council against future risks. Forecasts indicate there is four-year funding gap of £100m to balance the budget and hold an appropriate level of reserves.

Alongside the improvement programme in children's services, Cheshire East Council has embarked on a significant transformation programme. The council-wide transformation plan will aim to address the funding gap and will be submitted to the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) as part of the criteria for exceptional financial support from the government.

We calculate that £1.986m of additional investment will be required to support children's services to deliver our improvement plan at pace. A

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costed proposal for additional capacity and expertise to support improvement was received and agreed by the Children and Families Committee and Full Council in July 2024.

Challenges for children's services are challenges for the whole council, and there is whole-council commitment and support for delivering this plan. This improvement plan is part of the council's transformation and has been informed by the findings from the LGA corporate peer review in March 2024.

The council's transformation plan will also support us to achieve our improvement plan. Cheshire East Council's transformation will include changes to the organisation's culture - embedding high standards, and effective challenge and performance management where these are not met, focusing on outcomes, not process. These messages will be echoed through our children's leadership and management programme.

The council's transformational plan will also support improved working between council services and improve the support to services from enablers.

This plan also feeds into our wider strategy for developing the council's children's services, the Together Strategy, which has the following building blocks:

- **Together supporting and enabling our workforce:** we have the right people, with the right skills and support to improve the outcomes of our children and young people
- **Together connecting as one team:** we work as one team across children's and adult services with shared skills, processes and communication to focus on the needs and experiences of children, young people and their families
- **Together improving and innovating our services:** our children, young people and their families have consistently good/ outstanding experiences of our services

- **Together collaborating with our families, colleagues and partners:** we adopt an 'experts by experience' approach that ensures that those receiving or delivering our services help to shape them.

Coproduction

In Cheshire East, we aim to work [TOGETHER](#) and adopt an 'experts by experience' approach that ensures that those receiving or delivering services help to shape them.

We will engage children and young people throughout our improvement journey in developing and delivering improvements. Children and young people's views will influence our delivery on a child, service, and strategic level. We are developing new Corporate Parenting governance arrangements that will include care experienced young people as key members. Young people will also be involved in shaping and evaluating services through our young people's participation groups, through our audits, young people's surveys, and the local offer app.

We will also continue to engage with practitioners and managers within our frontline teams to ensure we are all delivering improvements together, and we will ensure their feedback, and feedback from our partners, informs our evaluation of impact.

Support and Challenge

We are committed to delivering this plan and achieving consistently good and better services that achieve strong outcomes for children and young people. We know that we cannot deliver this plan alone, and that we need to work together with our children, young people and families, with our teams, across the partnership and throughout the council.

Throughout the development of the plan, we have engaged with frontline practitioners and managers on the inspection findings and what support

they need moving forwards, and we will continue to engage with our workforce throughout the delivery of the plan to ensure we are all on this journey together.

This plan has been developed together with and provided with scrutiny and challenge by:

- service managers and service leads, including partners
- the children’s services leadership team
- the council’s leadership team
- the Safeguarding Children’s Partnership
- the Improvement and Impact Board
- elected members on the Children and Families Committee and Cared for Children and Care Leavers Committee.

The final plan was endorsed by full Council.

We will continue to invest in our workforce through training, development, and management and leadership support and challenge. Training has been tailored to the areas for improvement raised during the inspection and will continue to be responsive to development needs throughout the year as identified in quality assurance and monitoring activity. This includes a bespoke leadership programme for all leaders within children’s services to embed a culture of high support and high challenge, and embedding restorative practice as our practice model so we build strong relationships that support effective change. The impact of training and support on practice will continue to be evaluated through the delivery of this plan so we can adapt and respond to areas for improvement.

We will also seek to ‘infect our system’ with good practice by collecting and sharing examples of good practice with teams.

We also recognise the enormous value from learning from other areas. We will work through the sector led improvement programme (SLIP) to support improvements. We have reviewed successful improvement plans in other areas and sought advice from other authorities and external bodies with specialist expertise, including the LGA and DfE, to support the

development of this plan and will continue to use these sources throughout out improvement journey. We will continue to learn from innovative and best practice in other areas to improve our offer for children and young people in Cheshire East.

Monitoring Impact

The first chapter of the plan is structured under the seven areas for improvement highlighted in the 2024 Ofsted inspection report. It starts with senior manager oversight, to ensure this drives continuous improvement, followed by care leavers, as this is the area requiring the greatest improvement. The second chapter considers the additional areas for development from the inspection report. The third chapter covers additional actions identified through internal assurance activities.

The plan sets out the actions we will take to improve services. What is most important is that what we do makes a difference, so each month we will report on impact against the inspection findings. Progress against actions and impact against the inspection findings will be rated using the following:

Colour	Definition
Grey	Action not started yet, no risk to implementation anticipated
Red	Action not on track
Amber	Action not yet completed, but on track to be completed within timescales
Amber E	Action completed but we need to embed and evidence impact
Green	Action completed and embedded with evidence of impact

The sources we will use to assess our impact for each area of the plan are outlined in each section. These include:

- Seeking and listening to children and young people’s experiences

- Single agency and multi-agency audits
- Performance indicators
- Listening to practitioners and managers, including within partner agencies
- Recruitment and retention information.

Our impact on work with children and young people will also be evaluated through Ofsted and DfE monitoring visits.

The plan will be a live and responsive plan, so will adapt to incorporate new actions as needed.

Governance and Accountability

Progress against the plan will be driven by senior leaders and will be assessed and monitored through specific workstreams that report into a Partnership Oversight Group.

An independently chaired Improvement and Impact Board will formally scrutinise progress and impact. Key members of the Safeguarding Children's Partnership and the council's senior leadership team are members of the Improvement and Impact Board.

The Corporate Parenting Executive Board will drive developments for cared for children and care leavers, and so will contribute to delivering improvements in relation to the inspection findings. The Cared for Children and Care Leavers Committee will scrutinise progress pertinent to care experienced young people.

The Safeguarding Children's Partnership will receive six monthly updates on progress enabling all members to scrutinise and challenge progress.

The Children and Families Committee will scrutinise impact against the plan at every committee meeting.

The Children's Services Strategic Quartet, chaired by the council's chief executive, will scrutinise progress for children and young people. Progress

will also be reported into the corporate assurance panel, an external panel monitoring the council's transformation.

Key stakeholders, including our workforce, will be kept informed of progress through regular communications. Feedback from our workforce will continue to be sought through existing forums/ mechanisms such as team meetings, senior leaders walking the floor, councillor frontline visits, and #talktogether staff sessions.

Glossary

The legal definition of a care leaver comes from The Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000 which states that a care leaver is someone who has been in the care of the local authority for a period of 13 weeks or more spanning their 16th birthday.

Care leavers can also be referred to as care experienced young people or young adults, as they have had experience of being in care. This term tends to be preferred by young people/ young adults. Both terms are used interchangeably within this plan.

Abbreviation	Expansion
CINCP	Child in Need and Child Protection
CYPMHS	Children and young people's mental health services
DfE	Department for Education
DLUHC	Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities
EET	Education, employment or training
ICB	Integrated Care Board
IRO	Independent Reviewing Officer
LGA	Local Government Association
MASH	Multi-agency safeguarding hub
NEET	Not in education, employment or training

NHS	National Health Service
PAs	Personal Advisors
PEPs	Personal education plans
RONI	Risk of NEET indicators
SLIP	Sector led improvement programme
SMART	Specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, time-based
UASC	Unaccompanied asylum-seeking children

Children's Services Improvement Plan on a Page

Our improvement plan sets out how we will address the findings from the [Ofsted inspection of local authority children's services \(ILACS\)](#) in February and March 2024. It covers the 7 areas inspectors highlighted:

Senior leaders' oversight	Care leavers	Quality of plans	Quality and frequency of visits	Management oversight and supervision	Effectiveness of IROs	Sufficiency of placements
What the inspection found: We need to improve how we monitor if children are getting the right support, as some children were not getting support that was good enough	What the inspection found: We need to improve the quality and consistency of support to care leavers, including those who are homeless and those who are over 21	What the inspection found: We need to improve the quality of plans for children so they are child-focused and drive timely change	What the inspection found: We need to improve the quality and frequency of visits to children to ensure they are purposeful and in line with children's assessed needs.	What the inspection found: We need to improve the quality of management oversight and supervision to ensure this supports consistently good practice	What the inspection found: We need to improve the effectiveness of child protection chairs and IROs to escalate, challenge, and scrutinise plans for children	What the inspection found: We don't have sufficient placements to meet children and young people's needs
What we will do: Review reporting and governance arrangements Develop a Family Feedback Strategy Monitor progress against the improvement plan through an independently chaired Improvement Board Embed our practice standards 'Being Brilliant at Best Practice' Revise quality assurance arrangements Step up a new Corporate Parenting Executive Board to ensure there is a whole council and partnership approach to improving outcomes for care experienced young people Commission corporate parenting training for senior leaders and elected members Develop corporate parenting champions across the council	What we will do: Develop practice standards Roll out a mandatory training plan specific to the care leavers service Change the management structure Revise the format of the pathway plan with young people Formalise arrangements around young adults where there are safeguarding concerns Develop care leavers hubs in Crewe and Macclesfield Launch an app for the local offer Develop EET plans for all young adults who are NEET and able to work Increase apprenticeships and other route to work opportunities Refresh the protocol for care leavers in emergency accommodation Mobilise additional accommodation options for 16-18 year olds Implement a wider 18-25 accommodation offer Review the 21+ offer and approach	What we will do: Embed restorative practice Continue to run masterclasses on plans Hold a management and leadership session on plans Establish reflective case discussion meetings to progress outcomes for children on longer child protection and repeat plans Develop a permanence action plan Review permanence decision panels Explore what partnership training is needed to support effective challenge Develop a new child protection plan in partnership with children, young people and families Review the cared for plan in partnership with children, young people and families	What we will do: Strengthen the performance framework to ensure there is robust performance management of visits to children Deliver masterclasses on purposeful visits Reissue the visiting template to support consistent recording Develop and roll-out e-learning on visiting Team managers to review visiting schedules in supervision, and IROs and CP chairs to have oversight of frequency visits to children	What we will do: Commission a bespoke leadership development programme for all leaders in children's services Deliver an in-house leadership and management programme for children's social care tailored to our areas for improvement Update the supervision policy and develop practice guidance on reflective supervision All managers to complete supervision training Embed the permanence tracker Review the care plans for all cared for children who are not currently in foster care or planning to return home	What we will do: Review the performance management framework for IROs Include IROs in the in-house and commissioned leadership and management programmes Review and refresh the IRO best practice guidance Hold an IRO service development day every 3 months Revise the guidance on IRO quality assurance alerts to support outcome-focused practice Explore and challenge performance around permanence in performance clinics	What we will do: Develop a system which enables family led decision making including training and a family network procedure Join Foster4 Work in partnership with the other Foster4 LAs to build our offer – ensuring there is an effective front door to support those who make an enquiry about becoming a foster carer Explore opportunities within the council to increase fostering marketing and raise awareness of fostering Develop specialist foster carers to support children to step down from residential care Develop our third Mockingbird constellation Open two council residential children's homes Carry out a deep dive on reunification and step down for children from care Investigate the potential for joint commissioning of high needs placements

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Children's Services Improvement Plan Timeline

Our improvement plan set out how we will address the findings from the [Ofsted inspection of local authority children's services \(ILACS\)](#) in February and March 2024. This is the timeline for what we will achieve by delivering our plan.

What we achieved by the end of June 2024

1. All 209 21+ care leavers contacted and offered support. Tracker in place to monitor engagement with 21+ care leavers
2. New management structure in the care leavers service
3. Developed and started delivering a bespoke training programme for the care leavers service
4. New best practice guidance for the care leavers service
5. Coproduced new pathway plan
6. Foster4 – we joined and launched new service
7. Opened a new residential home – Flude House
8. Revised quality assurance framework
9. New Improvement and Impact Board to drive and evaluate progress against the improvement plan
10. New Children's Services Strategic Quartet to provide improved leadership and accountability for children's services
11. Director level project group for accommodation for cared for young people and care leavers

What we achieved by the end of September 2024

12. Care leaver hubs (safe spaces) in Crewe and Macclesfield
13. Local offer app launched
14. Proposals in place to address 16-18 and 18-25 accommodation shortages
15. Revised protocol for care leavers in emergency accommodation
16. All young adults who are NEET and able to work will have an EET plan
17. Reflective case discussions established for longer child protection and repeat plans
18. Third Mockingbird constellation
19. Senior leaders and first tranche of managers trained in our bespoke management and leadership programme
20. Revised supervision policy
21. Vital signs performance report in place to support evaluation of the improvement plan

What we achieved by the end of December 2024

22. Additional capacity in place to deliver the improvement plan
23. First meeting of the multi-agency corporate parenting executive board
24. LGA corporate parenting training rolled out for senior leaders and elected members
25. Local offer reviewed together with young people and partners
26. Additional accommodation options in place for young people aged 16-18 using flexibilities/ modifications in current contracts
27. Refreshed workforce strategy

What we achieved by the end of March 2025

28. Strengthened performance framework
29. Increased apprenticeship opportunities and other route to employment opportunities in place for care leavers
30. Approaches in place to ensure the most vulnerable children and young people are prioritised for mental health support
31. 'Waiting well' initiatives developed with key health providers and third sector provision
32. Level 7 apprentice scheme to support people to train as social workers with Cheshire East

Improvement Plan

All ratings are accurate as at 22 July 2025.

Chapter 1

1. Senior Leaders' Oversight

What needs to improve				
Senior leaders' oversight of performance to ensure that there is a coherent approach to continuous improvement.				
What inspectors found	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Senior leaders had not recognised, until this inspection, the extent of improvement required in services for care leavers. Systems to monitor and track groups of individual children have not been effective in identifying vulnerable care leavers who are not receiving the services they need. As a result, too many vulnerable care leavers are not getting the right level of help, support or protection. Despite improvements, the quality of practice is still too variable. Improved timeliness has not been achieved for all children. Implementation of improvement plans needs to accelerate across teams but in particular within the care leavers service. Leaders have recognised in their self-evaluation that more needs to be done to ensure that quality assurance activity is identifying all areas of poor practice and that it is consistently having an impact on outcomes for children. Not all young people are informed of, or understand, the pledges contained within the cared for children and care leavers' strategy. 			
Ref	Action	Action Owner	Due by	Action Rating
SL1	Ensure there is effective line of sight from frontline practice through to the Executive Director of Children's Services through a review of reporting and governance arrangements, including a review of the performance framework.	Executive Director of Children's Services	January 2025	Complete
SL2a	Develop a Family Feedback Strategy to ensure our services develop in response to what our families tell us.	Head of Service Children's Development and Partnerships	April 2025	Complete but need to evidence impact

SL2b	Develop a partnership child and family Engagement strategy that describes how and when to facilitate co-production and will be linked to the family feedback strategy.	Safeguarding Children's Partnership	March 2025	Complete but need to evidence impact
SL3	Refresh the terms of reference for the Improvement and Impact Board, and expand the board to incorporate partners, to ensure there are robust arrangements in place to drive and scrutinise impact for children and young people in response to the inspection findings.	Executive Director of Children's Services	July 2024	Complete
SL4	Establish a Children's Services Strategic Quartet to provide improved leadership and accountability for children's services in line with best practice in the LGA guide for Chief Executives , and for council leaders , and DfE statutory guidance on the roles and responsibilities of the Director of Children's Services and the Lead Member for Children's Services .	Executive Director of Children's Services	July 2024	Complete but need to evidence impact
SL5	Step-up a multi-agency corporate parenting executive board to drive and scrutinise progress for cared for children and care experienced children and young people and ensure there is a whole council and partnership approach to supporting our young people.	Executive Director of Children's Services	November 2024	Complete but need to evidence impact
SL6	Commission LGA corporate parenting training for senior leaders across the partnership and all elected members.	Executive Director of Children's Services	TBC	Reviewing
SL7	Develop Corporate Parenting champions across the council to increase awareness and support for care experienced young people and young adults.	Head of Service Cared for Children and Care Leavers	April 2025	Complete but need to evidence impact
SL8	Refresh the cared for children and care leavers strategy 2022-26 and action plan together with our care leaver ambassadors.	Head of Service Cared for Children and Care Leavers	September 2025	On track
SL9	Develop quality assurance activity to evaluate the impact of the improvement plan.	Head of Service Children's Safeguarding and Quality Assurance	February 2025	Complete but need to evidence impact
SL10	Establish service manager thematic audits to understand our support to specific cohorts/ within specific areas and drive improvements.	Service Managers CINCP	August 2024	Complete

SL11	Develop mechanisms to ensure audit findings and feedback from children and young people are routinely shared with teams to strengthen the impact of audits on practice.	Head of Service Children's Safeguarding and Quality Assurance	September 2024	Complete
SL12	Develop a vital signs performance report in line with the improvement plan areas to support effective evaluation of improvement activity and drive improvements.	Business Intelligence Manager	September 2024	Complete
SL13	Ensure councillors have oversight of practice and receive feedback from frontline practitioners through a variety of opportunities.	Business Manager	September 2025	On track
SL14	Review the children's social care national framework and its implications for practice and processes, to embed consistently good practice that achieves strong outcomes for children and young people.	Principal Social Worker	February 2025	Complete
SL15a	Develop practice guidance on timescales to ensure expectations are clear to practitioners and managers.	Business Development Officer	June 2025	Complete but need to evidence impact
SL15b	Embed the practice standards ('Being Brilliant at Best Practice') through our culture, leadership, and developing and sharing key communications on practice. Continually evaluate impact and reinforce messages through monthly performance meetings and quality assurance activity.	Principal Social Worker	April 2025	Complete but need to evidence impact
SL16	Collate and share examples of good practice to embed understanding of good practice across teams and to celebrate good work.	Principal Social Worker	Start sharing practice by August 2024 and continue throughout the year	Complete but need to evidence impact
SL17	Strengthen the audit process – revise the audit tool and integrate audit and reporting within the child's record.	Quality Assurance Improvement Lead	November 2025	On track
SL18	Develop an implementation plan for the family feedback strategy.	Participation Lead	October 2025	On track
How we'll assess if we've	The pace and impact of changes will be evaluated through: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> monthly reports against the improvement plan 	What we will see when we've	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improvements result in consistently good quality practice - over 80% of audits will be good or better quality. Senior leaders have an accurate understanding of children's outcomes and areas for development. 	

addressed this area	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • monthly performance indicators in the vital signs performance report • practice review audits which assess the quality of practice across services • thematic audits to understand our support to specific cohorts/ within specific areas • feedback from children and young people from our participation groups and through audits. • Ofsted monitoring visits will demonstrate whether our understanding of improvements are accurate. 	addressed this area	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Senior leaders have an accurate understanding of the practice and development needs of staff on both an individual and workforce level. • Quality assurance activity drives improvements to the quality of practice, resulting in improved outcomes for children. • 90% young people tell us they understand the pledges contained within the cared for children and care leavers' strategy. • The council will have at least 20 care leaver champions across all the directorates.
Key improvement activities delivered this month and what impact we are achieving for children and young people			
<p>The new arrangements for councillor frontline visits commenced with visits to the cared for service, court team and care leavers service in July 2025. These visits involved one to one sessions with a practitioner and team manager, and a focus group with practitioners, so councillors could hear how practice has improved, our areas for development, and experiences of working for Cheshire East. The findings from these visits will be fed back to services to inform service development and will be reported to the Children and Families Committee in September.</p> <p>The audit form has been revised and built into LiquidLogic. Once there are some completed forms a range of power BI reports will be built.</p>			

2. Care Leavers

What needs to improve

The quality, consistency and responsiveness of support, advice and guidance for care leavers, including those who are homeless, with additional vulnerabilities, and those who are over 21 years of age.

A. Quality of practice

What inspectors found

The quality of practice for care leavers is inadequate.

Relationships and transition to the care leavers' service

- Not all children in care have the opportunity to get to know their personal advisers (PAs) to build a relationship with them before they are 18 years old. Planning for young people who transition to the leaving care service is not always robust. For some, their voice is not evident and plans lack detail which means their individual needs are not always sufficiently understood. This means that there are some young people who leave care with too much uncertainty about how they will be supported.
- Not all PAs know their young people well enough to have trusted and meaningful relationships with them. For some young people, PAs do not know their stories of why, or when, they came into care.
- Case records do not reflect the work undertaken with young people.

Pathway plans

- Pathway plans do not consistently cover all the important elements of young people's lives. Wishes and feelings are not always clearly expressed. They do not consistently include other professionals, they are not sufficiently ambitious for young people and they do not always capture young people's voices.
- Plans for unaccompanied asylum-seeking care leavers do not consistently acknowledge their unique cultural heritage, or identify how young people can access support for the trauma they have experienced.
- Plans are not always effective in helping young people to make meaningful change in their lives.
- Support for care leavers is not effective enough, which means that many do not access employment, further education or training.

Recognising and responding to risk

- Risk of harm is not always recognised or responded to effectively.
- For some young people, there is a lack of professional curiosity about their day-to-day lives and living arrangements. This has resulted in a lack of understanding of risk, or a clear recognition of how best to support young people when they are at their most vulnerable.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> When potential risk of harm for care leavers is identified, it is difficult to see how this risk is managed or mitigated effectively. This means that some care leavers may be exposed to risky situations and people. This was not fully understood by senior leaders until this inspection. <p>Management oversight</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> PAs receive supervision, however the quality of supervision was variable. Most supervision is brief and task focused. Significant gaps in supervision exist on some young people's care files meaning there is a lack of consistent management grip on driving young people's plans forward and ensuring they are safe. 				
Ref	Action	Action Owner	Due by	Action Rating
CLA1	Develop and launch practice standards for the care leavers service to support consistently good practice. This will include clear standards on recording, visiting, transitions, and responsibilities when cases are jointly held.	Service Manager Care Leavers	June 2024	Complete
CLA2	Develop and roll out a mandatory training plan that is specific for the care leavers service to support practitioners to deliver consistently good practice. This will include planning, professional curiosity, adult/ transitional safeguarding and culture/diversity.	Principal Social Worker Service Manager Care Leavers	Launch in June 2024 and deliver over the year	Complete
CLA3	Change the management structure of the care leavers service, removing the role of senior PAs, ensuring that all PAs receive direct oversight and supervision from a team manager (who are qualified social workers) to support good quality supervision and drive improved outcomes for care leavers.	Service Manager Care Leavers	April 2024	Complete
CLA4	Revise the format of the pathway plan with young people to ensure it supports good practice. The new plan will include sections for multi-agency professionals' views, and contingency plans.	Service Manager Cared for Children	May 2024	Complete
CLA6	Formalise arrangements around young adults where there are safeguarding concerns to ensure senior leaders have oversight of these young adults and that multi-agency team around the adult meetings are held to develop safety plans with them.	Head of Service for Cared for Children and Care Leavers	September 2024	Complete
CLA7	Recruit Care Leaver Ambassadors to work together with us to improve services, and to represent the experiences of cared for children and care leavers to the Corporate Parenting Strategic Board and corporate parenting workstreams.	Participation Lead	October 2024	Complete

Please also see the section on management oversight and supervision

How we'll assess if we've addressed this area	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Practice review audits will tell us about the quality of practice and plans and will assess if PAs can tell young people's stories. • Thematic audits will conduct deep dives to understand our support to specific cohorts/ within specific areas, for example UASC young people. • Some of the thematic audits will involve phone calls to young people to understand their experience of services, the impact of their plan, and their relationships with their PAs. • The percentage of young people with PAs and pathway plans at 16. 	What we will see when we've addressed this area	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Practice to support care leavers will be of consistently good quality and will support young people to achieve good outcomes. Over 80% audits will be good or better quality. • Management oversight is good quality and drives improved outcomes. Over 80% of management oversight in audits will be good or better quality. • 100% of young people will get to know their PAs from age 16. 90% young people will tell us they have good relationships with their PAs and know how they will be supported once they leave care. • 100% PAs will be able to tell young people's stories. • 100% case records will accurately reflect work with young people. • Pathway plans will cover all the important elements of young people's lives, and will reflect their voices and their individual needs, including their cultural heritage. Plans will consistently include other professionals and will be ambitious for young people. Over 80% plans audited will be good or better quality. • There is appropriate professional curiosity, which means risk of harm is recognised and responded to swiftly and effectively. When potential risk of harm is identified, it is managed or mitigated effectively. 100% audits will show appropriate professional curiosity and that risk of harm is responded to.
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B. Planning for Adulthood

What inspectors found	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transition planning into adulthood for most care leavers is variable. There is some proactive planning for disabled care leavers with complex physical needs, and young people with neurodiverse needs. However, for other care leavers such as those with complex mental health and emotional needs, proactive transition planning does not always take place. This means that these care leavers do not access the help and support that they need. • Not all care leavers have access to their full health history. This means important information that could be used to provide ongoing support to them as they transition to adulthood is not available or used to inform care planning for them.
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Not all PAs spoken to by inspectors could describe the local offer to care leavers or explain how care leavers could benefit from it. Not all young people are accessing the full range of entitlements or services available to them. The local offer is not communicated effectively to all care leavers, which means that they are not all aware of, nor do they access, their full range of entitlements. Care leavers can access community-based resources but do not have a dedicated place they can go to which provides a safe space for them to receive support. The plan is for the newly opened family hubs to provide this in the coming months but at present this is not available. 			
Ref	Action	Action Owner	Due by	Action Rating
CLB2	Review terms of reference and membership for Ignition Panel to ensure young people's post 18 plans are effectively tracked and reviewed from age 16 to ensure proactive transition plans are in place.	Head of Service Cared for Children and Care Leavers	September 2024	Complete
CLB3	The practice standards will specify which preparing for adulthood roles should be undertaken by social workers and which by PAs and will set clear expectations on what care leavers should receive/ have in place.	Service Manager Care Leavers	June 2024	Complete
CLB4	Develop care leavers hubs, with our care leavers, as a safe space for care leavers to access support and advice. Advice sessions will be offered from the hub to support preparation for adulthood, including housing, finances, drug and alcohol support, parenting support, careers advice, CV workshops, and interview preparation. Emotional health and wellbeing support will be available at the hub through Pure Insight and health support through the cared for nurse.	Service Manager Care Leavers Area Delivery Manager Targeted Youth Work	Interim hubs in Crewe and Macclesfield by July 2024	Complete but need to evidence impact
		Head of Service for Education Participation and Pupil Support	Consider suitable options for a long-term care leaver hub in Crewe by the end of 2025	On track
CLB6	Engage and consult with care experienced young people on how they want to understand their health histories and adapt the current process in line with their feedback.	Designated Nurse Safeguarding and Looked After Children	July 2025	Complete
CLB7	Deliver training to PAs on arrangements to support young people to understand their health histories.	Designated Nurse Safeguarding and Looked After Children	June 2024	Complete but need to evidence impact

CLB8	Launch an app for the local offer. This will ensure all care leavers have immediate access to the local offer and their entitlements through their mobile. It will also support us to keep in touch with young people and gain their feedback and allow young people to develop peer support groups.	Service Manager Care Leavers	August 2024	Complete
CLB9	Review the local offer together with young people and partners.	Service Manager Care Leavers	December 2024	Complete
CLB10	Deliver training on the local offer to all PAs.	Service Manager Care Leavers	July 2024	Complete
CLB11	Develop regular participation opportunities for care leavers through the care leaver hubs, to ensure their views shape services.	Participation Lead	July 2024	Complete
CLB12	Launch a free bus pass for care leavers aged up to 22.	Head of Service Cared for Children and Care Leavers	October 2024	Complete
How we'll assess if we've addressed this area	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Monthly thematic audits will conduct deep dives to understand our support to specific cohorts/ within specific areas. One theme will be planning for adulthood.• The thematic audit will involve phone calls to young people to understand their experience of services, what they know about the local offer, and how their plan is preparing them for adulthood.• The percentage of young people who have access to their health histories.• PAs can describe the local offer and explain how care leavers can benefit from it.• Feedback from young people accessing the care leaver hubs.	What we will see when we've addressed this area	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Proactive planning takes place for all care leavers ensuring they are prepared for adulthood. Over 80% audits will be good or better quality.• 90% young people tell us they feel well supported and have the information they need to be prepared for adulthood. 90% tell us they know about the local offer, the care leavers hub, and their entitlements.• 100% care leavers have access to their health histories.• 100% PAs can describe the local offer and explain how care leavers can benefit from it.	
Key improvement activities delivered this month and what impact we are achieving for children and young people				
A further training session on health summaries was delivered to approximately 60 staff from the care leavers team, including PAs, family time workers, social workers and managers who are now better informed to support young people. Training evaluations have been requested from attendees to assess impact.				

C. Education, Employment and Training

What inspectors found		• Too many care leavers are not in education, employment or training (NEET). They are not being encouraged and well supported to improve their life chances in order to achieve their aspirations for a better future.			
Ref	Action		Action Owner	Due by	Action Rating
CLC1	Work together with young adults who are NEET and able to work to develop an EET plan to support them towards gaining EET. Plans will be reviewed every 12 weeks.		Service Manager Care Leavers	September 2024	Complete
CLC2	Develop an offer of EET opportunities, including apprenticeships, that support young people to gain employment or training in their chosen field.		Service Manager Care Leavers	March 2025	Complete
CLC3	Work with local businesses and organisations, including the chamber of commerce, to secure additional corporate parenting support for cared for children and care leavers and to prepare employers for supporting young people in employment.		Service Manager Care Leavers	March 2025	Complete
CLC4	Provide bespoke support to enable young people to be prepared for entering employment through job readiness training, CV and interview support.		Service Manager Care Leavers	October 2024	Complete
How we'll assess if we've addressed this area		• The percentage of young people who are in EET. • Thematic audits will conduct deep dives to understand our support to specific cohorts/ within specific areas, including EET.	What we will see when we've addressed this area	• The percentage of care leavers who are in EET will increase – we want to increase to above 75% in EET. • By April 2025, we would have at least 10 new apprenticeship opportunities for young adults. • 90% young people will tell us they are encouraged and well supported to improve their life chances and access EET.	

D. Accommodation

What inspectors found	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> For care leavers who live out of the area, accessing suitable housing is challenging and some wait for extended periods in supported accommodation until suitable permanent accommodation becomes available.
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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A small number of care leavers are homeless. This group includes some care leavers with the greatest needs, including those who struggle with their mental health, those who are not in education, employment or training (NEET) or those who are in unsuitable accommodation, or have no fixed abode. • Information about where young people are living is not routinely updated. This means that the local authority cannot be assured that these vulnerable young people are safe and well cared for. 				
Ref	Action	Action Owner	Due by	Action Rating
CLD1	Refresh and relaunch the protocol for care leavers in emergency accommodation, with clear escalation requirements, to ensure all practitioners are working to expected practice standards and there is senior leadership oversight of any young adults in emergency and unsuitable accommodation.	Service Manager Care Leavers	August 2024	Complete but need to evidence impact
CLD2	All young people who are homeless, at risk of homelessness, or in emergency accommodation will be reviewed in weekly performance clinics and by the monthly risk management forum to ensure effective plans are in place to support and protect them.	Service Manager Care Leavers	June 2024	Complete but need to evidence impact
CLD3	The weekly temporary and emergency accommodation meeting will consider any care leavers who need accommodation.	Housing Options Manager	June 2024	Complete
CLD4	Deliver training for PAs on supporting young adults with housing concerns, including how to support young people to meet the criteria for housing allocation in other areas, so they can provide bespoke support tailored to young adults' needs.	Housing Options Manager	July 2024	Complete
CLD5	Establish a director level project group for accommodation for cared for young people and care leavers to drive increased sufficiency.	Interim Director of Commissioning	July 2024	Complete
CLD6	Explore and review the suitability of temporary and emergency accommodation options across Cheshire East to increase options for care leavers. Identify gaps in provision to inform commissioning to ensure we can meet young people's needs.	Service Manager Care Leavers Head of Housing Head of Commissioning Children, Families and Adults with Complex Needs	September 2024	Complete

CLD7	Develop proposals to address 16-18 and 18-25 accommodation shortages.		Head of Housing Head of Commissioning Children, Families and Adults with Complex Needs	July 2024	Complete						
CLD8	Mobilise additional accommodation options for cared for young people aged 16-18 using flexibilities/ modifications in current contracts.		Head of Commissioning Children, Families and Adults with Complex Needs	October 2024	Complete but need to evidence impact						
CLD9	Implement a wider 18-25 accommodation offer, ensuring this is shaped by our care experienced young adults.		Head of Housing Head of Commissioning Children, Families and Adults with Complex Needs	March 2026	On track						
<table><tr><td>How we'll assess if we've addressed this area</td><td><ul style="list-style-type: none">• Thematic audits will conduct deep dives to understand our support to specific cohorts/ within specific areas, including care leavers in unsuitable accommodation.• The thematic audit will involve phone calls to young people to understand their experiences.• The number of young people who are homeless.• The number of young people in unsuitable accommodation.</td><td>What we will see when we've addressed this area</td><td colspan="3"><ul style="list-style-type: none">• Over 80% care leavers who live out of area access suitable housing in a timely way.• 90% care leavers tell us they are well supported.• Effective plans and contingency plans prevent care leavers from needing to access emergency or unsuitable accommodation. Over 80% audits will be good or better quality.• Records on where young people are living are accurate and there is effective oversight of young people's accommodation.</td></tr></table>						How we'll assess if we've addressed this area	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Thematic audits will conduct deep dives to understand our support to specific cohorts/ within specific areas, including care leavers in unsuitable accommodation.• The thematic audit will involve phone calls to young people to understand their experiences.• The number of young people who are homeless.• The number of young people in unsuitable accommodation.	What we will see when we've addressed this area	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Over 80% care leavers who live out of area access suitable housing in a timely way.• 90% care leavers tell us they are well supported.• Effective plans and contingency plans prevent care leavers from needing to access emergency or unsuitable accommodation. Over 80% audits will be good or better quality.• Records on where young people are living are accurate and there is effective oversight of young people's accommodation.		
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Key improvement activities delivered this month and what impact we are achieving for children and young people											
An audit on emergency accommodation is underway to evaluate impact in this area.											

E. Care leavers aged over 21

What inspectors found	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> For care leavers over the age of 21, persistent efforts to engage them are not routinely made. When young people become 21, unless they are in education or highly vulnerable, they are no longer provided with a PA or leaving care services unless they contact a duty worker and explicitly request help. At the time of this inspection, there were over 200 young people in this category, and this included very vulnerable disabled young people. Some of these care leavers have not been receiving the services they need, or are entitled to, and the local authority cannot be assured that they are safe. It was not evident on young people's records that discussions had taken place to inform a decision as to young people's informed choice to move from having a personal advisor to the 21+ offer. Disabled care leavers who are open to the 21+ offer are not prioritised as a vulnerable group and as such the local authority cannot be assured that their needs are being met. In cases seen there was not enough evidence of persistence or curiosity in where they may be now, despite histories of having extensive engagement with services as children. The quality assurance of the care leaver cohort aged 21+ needs strengthening.
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Ref	Action	Action Owner	Due by	Action Rating
CLE1	Contact all 209 care leavers aged over 21 to ensure they are aware of the support available to them and offer them an allocated worker.	Service Manager Care Leavers	March 2024	Complete
CLE2	Review the 21+ offer and approach, formalising this in a protocol and ensuring it is clear on the local offer. The protocol will include continued proactive communication post 21 so young people know what support is available.	Service Manager Care Leavers	July 2024	Complete
CLE3	Review cases for care leavers with a disability who are open to the 21+ offer to ensure their needs are being met.	Service Manager Care Leavers	June 2024	Complete but need to evidence impact
CLE4	Develop a tracker for care leavers aged over 21 and monitor through weekly performance clinics to ensure there is regular oversight of engagement and support with these young people.	Service Manager Care Leavers	May 2024	Complete
CLE5	Establish regular quality assurance around care leavers aged over 21 to ensure there is effective oversight of their outcomes and that this drives improvement.	Head of Service for Cared for Children and Care Leavers	August 2024	Complete but need to evidence impact

CLE6	Review the impact of the revised 21+ offer with young adults, involving them in shaping any changes to services.		Service Manager Care Leavers	March 2025	Complete
How we'll assess if we've addressed this area	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Monthly thematic audits will conduct deep dives to understand our support to specific cohorts/ within specific areas. One theme will be support to those 21 and over, including those with a disability.The thematic audit will involve phone calls to young adults to understand their experience of services.The percentage of care leavers over 21 who we were in touch with within the last 3 months.	What we will see when we've addressed this area	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Persistent efforts to engage young adults over 21 are routinely made. We are in touch with over 90% of care leavers over 21 in the last 3 months.Over 90% young adults will tell us they know that support is available if they need it.There is effective oversight of young adults aged 21+ and their outcomes, including young adults with a disability.		
Key improvement activities delivered this month and what impact we are achieving for children and young people					
Quality assurance activity is continuing to take place to evaluate impact for care leavers with a disability and those aged 21+.					

3. Quality of plans

What needs to improve				
The quality of plans for children to ensure that they are more child-focused and drive forward positive change in a timely way.				
What inspectors found	Child in need and child protection <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The quality of child protection plans is inconsistent. Some are outcome focused although some lack purpose and urgency. Some children have been subject to protracted child protection planning. The quality of safety plans is inconsistent, mostly relying on vulnerable parents and are overly optimistic. The use of jargon makes it difficult for parents to understand what is required. Multi-agency core groups meet regularly to review progress however social workers do not routinely update children's experiences against the child protection plan. For some children who have been known to services for several years and have been the subject of repeat child protection and child in need plans, the quality of practice is too variable. Contingency thinking and planning are not strong enough for these children. This means that, for some children, plans are not effective in improving their outcomes. When child in need and child protection plans do not progress, there was drift and delay for children, and ineffective challenge from the chair and multi-agency group in child in need meetings, core groups and review conferences. 			
	Cared for children <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The quality of care plans for children is inconsistent. Consideration is not routinely given to permanence planning for children from an early stage. Some children are subject to statutory intervention for longer than they need to be. This is due to delays in the discharge of care orders. 			
Ref	Action	Action Owner	Due by	Action Rating
P1	Embed the agreed restorative practice model approach to support requirement for consistently good practice.	Principal Social Worker	December 2024	Complete but need to evidence impact

P2	Continue to provide masterclasses – short in-house training sessions for practitioners and managers on specific topics. This will include planning. The masterclass programme will continue to be responsive to audit findings to support improved practice.	Principal Social Worker	Starting in April 2024 and running throughout the year	Complete
P3	Hold a management and leadership session on planning to ensure there is a shared understanding on what constitutes a good quality plan, and that the role of team managers and IROs is clear in scrutinising plans to ensure all plans are good quality.	All Service Managers	September 2024	Complete
P4	Establish reflective case discussion meetings to progress outcomes for children on longer child protection plans and repeat plans.	Safeguarding and Quality Assurance Manager, Child Protection	July 2024	Complete
P5	Develop a permanence action plan to ensure permanence planning is considered and progressed from an early stage, with permanence plans being in place at the second cared for review. The permanence action plan should consider all routes to permanence, including reunification.	Head of Service for Cared for Children and Care Leavers	November 2025	On track
P6	Develop best practice guidance on care planning to ensure expectations to support permanence and life story work are clear.	Service Manager Cared for Children	June 2025	Complete but need to evidence impact
P7	Review children's panels and they outcomes they achieve for children (including permanence) to ensure they are effective and streamlined.	Director of Children's Social Care	September 2025	On track
P8	Explore within the multiagency safeguarding group what training is needed to support effective partnership challenge.	Children's Safeguarding Partnership Training Manager	December 2024	Complete
P9	Review and refresh forms within the child's record in line with families first and remove references to Signs of Safety.	Business Development Officer	February 2026	On track
P10	Develop a new C&F assessment.	Principal Social Worker	October 2025	On track
P11	Develop a clear training plan for the lead practitioners to support improved quality practice.	Lead Practitioners	April 2025	Complete but need to

				evidence impact
P12	Develop and launch a new central point for children and families resources, practice guidance and training.	Business Development Officer	Sept 2025	On track

Please also see action MO5 - Embed the permanence tracker to monitor achieving permanence planning within statutory and children's timescales.

How we'll assess if we've addressed this area <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monthly practice review audits will tell us about the quality of plans across all service areas. • Multi-agency audits will tell us about the quality of multi-agency challenge in supporting plan progression. • Permanence planning will be a focus of thematic audits. • The percentage of plans judged good or better. • The percentage of plans within timescales. • The percentage of children on repeat child protection plans. • Number of children on CP plans over 15 months. • The percentage of permanence plans in place by the second review. • The number of children on care orders and number of care orders discharged. 	What we will see when we've addressed this area <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Plans will be consistently good quality, with effective contingency plans, child-focused and result in good outcomes for children and young people. It will be easy for everyone to see what needs to happen from the plan. Over 80% plans audited will be good or better quality. • Drift and delay is prevented through effective management oversight and partnership challenge. • Consideration is routinely given to permanence planning for children from an early stage and children achieve permanence in a timely way. • Repeat child protection plans will be under 15%. • 100% permanence plans will be in place by the second review.
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Key improvement activities delivered this month and what impact we are achieving for children and young people

Forms that need review to remove Signs of Safety are being considered through the PPP group.

Work is taking place to ensure the new C&F assessment is aligned with Families First.

A demo of a new engagement and communication platform has been delivered to practitioners for their feedback.

4. Quality and frequency of visits

What needs to improve				
The quality and frequency of visits to children so that they are purposeful and in line with assessed needs.				
What inspectors found	<p>Child in need and child protection</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Visits to children in need and those subject to child protection plans are not always carried out at a frequency reflecting assessed need. Not all visits are carried out within local authority prescribed or statutory timescales. There is a lack of clarity on the expected visiting times for children in need. • Some children are not visited often enough for social workers to build trusting relationships with them. Changes in social workers impacts this. • Visits to children do not always have purpose and do not link to their plans clearly enough. Records of visits vary in depth and quality of detail. Some visits are very brief, and their contribution towards the assessment or progress of the plan is limited. <p>Cared for children</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Visits to children in care are not always carried out in line with statutory visiting schedules or their assessed need. 			
Ref	Action	Action Owner	Due by	Action Rating
V1	Strengthen the performance framework to ensure robust performance management of visits to children.	Director of Family Help and Children's Social Care	September 2024	Complete
V2	Support improved visiting practice through the masterclass training programme and briefings to team meetings.	Principal Social Worker	September 2024	Complete
V3	Reissue the visiting template to practitioners to ensure consistency in recording.	Principal Social Worker	July 2024	Complete but need to evidence impact
V4	Develop and roll out e-learning on visiting to support purposeful visits that are carried out with a frequency that reflects children's needs.	Principal Social Worker	August 2024	Complete

V5	Deliver training to the children’s social care workforce on the impact of recording and how this impacts on children’s understanding of their experiences.		Principal Social Worker	May 2025	Complete but need to evidence impact						
V7	Team managers to review visiting schedules in supervision, and IROs and CP chairs to have oversight of frequency visits to children.		All Team Managers and IROs	Evaluate in January 2025	Complete but need to evidence impact						
<table><tr><td>How we’ll assess if we’ve addressed this area</td><td><ul style="list-style-type: none">• Monthly practice review audits will tell us about the quality of practice and visits, and the quality of relationships with children and young people.• Timeliness of visits.</td><td>What we will see when we’ve addressed this area</td><td colspan="3"><ul style="list-style-type: none">• Visits to children are carried out at a frequency reflecting assessed need and this is clearly recorded on their files. Over 80% visits will be in line with need as shown through audit.• Children are visited often enough for social workers to build trusting relationships with them. 90% of young people will tell us they trust their social workers.• Visits to children are purposeful and clearly link to their assessments or plans.</td></tr></table>						How we’ll assess if we’ve addressed this area	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Monthly practice review audits will tell us about the quality of practice and visits, and the quality of relationships with children and young people.• Timeliness of visits.	What we will see when we’ve addressed this area	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Visits to children are carried out at a frequency reflecting assessed need and this is clearly recorded on their files. Over 80% visits will be in line with need as shown through audit.• Children are visited often enough for social workers to build trusting relationships with them. 90% of young people will tell us they trust their social workers.• Visits to children are purposeful and clearly link to their assessments or plans.		
How we’ll assess if we’ve addressed this area	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Monthly practice review audits will tell us about the quality of practice and visits, and the quality of relationships with children and young people.• Timeliness of visits.	What we will see when we’ve addressed this area	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Visits to children are carried out at a frequency reflecting assessed need and this is clearly recorded on their files. Over 80% visits will be in line with need as shown through audit.• Children are visited often enough for social workers to build trusting relationships with them. 90% of young people will tell us they trust their social workers.• Visits to children are purposeful and clearly link to their assessments or plans.								
Key improvement activities delivered this month and what impact we are achieving for children and young people											
The visiting template will be built into LiquidLogic to increase consistency of recording.											

5. Management Oversight and Supervision

What needs to improve				
The quality of management oversight and supervision to ensure that consistent, good social work practice is in place.				
What inspectors found	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Management oversight and challenge are not fully embedded across all service areas. Management oversight across all service areas does not provide sufficient challenge or reflection to improve social work practice. For some children, this has led to their needs not being recognised or acted upon in a timely way. The quality of supervision is too variable. Supervision is not always sufficiently analytical or reflective. Supervision is not consistently driving children's plans forward, actions although timebound roll over for many months without completion. This means not all children's circumstances are sufficiently understood. For a small number of young children who live in children's homes there have been significant delays in driving their care plans forward to secure long-term permanence. This is because there has not been effective management oversight and supervision of children's care plans, and IROs do not routinely challenge drift and delay. Recent arrangements to track permanence for children have been introduced, but it is too soon to see the impact of this, and some children continue to experience drift and delay. 			
Ref	Action	Action Owner	Due by	Action Rating
MO1	Commission a bespoke leadership development programme to support all leaders in children's services (from team leaders and above) to develop their leadership, reflective skills, and confidence in effective challenge to improve practice and outcomes for children.	Principal Social Worker	Running between March 2024 - June 2025	Complete
MO2	Deliver an in-house leadership and management development programme for children's social care, tailored to our areas for improvement, to support a culture of high support and high challenge and embed consistently good quality practice.	Principal Social Worker	To commence in April 2024 and run throughout the year	Closed
MO3	Update the supervision policy and develop practice guidance on reflective supervision based on best practice.	Principal Social Worker	September 2024	Complete

MO4	All managers to complete supervision training to support them to deliver reflective supervision that considers children’s lived experiences, supports learning and improves practice.		Principal Social Worker	Training to be delivered between November and March 2025 Commission a final cohort by end of October 2025	On track						
MO5	Embed the permanence tracker to monitor achieving permanence within statutory and children’s timescales.		Service Manager Cared for Children	Evaluate impact in October 2024	Complete but need to evidence impact						
MO6	Review the care plans for all cared for children who are not currently in foster care or planning to return home to ensure they are on the right plan.		Head of Service Safeguarding and Quality Assurance	July 2024	Complete but need to evidence impact						
MO7	Revise the supervision form to ensure that children and young people’s views are included and considered as part of reflective supervision.		Head of Service Child in Need and Child Protection	October 2024	Complete						
<table><tr><td>How we’ll assess if we’ve addressed this area</td><td><ul style="list-style-type: none">Monthly practice review audits will tell us about the quality of practice and management oversight. These audits include a review of case supervision which informs the judgement on management oversight.The percentage of supervision within timescales.</td><td>What we will see when we’ve addressed this area</td><td colspan="3"><ul style="list-style-type: none">Management oversight and challenge are embedded across all service areas. Over 80% of management oversight in audits will be good or better quality.Supervision is consistently good quality, analytical and reflective.Management oversight improves social work practice, leading to children and young people receiving timely support and experiencing good outcomes.Children achieve permanence in a timely way.100% children will have a permanence plan by their second review.Over 90% supervision will be within timescales.</td></tr></table>						How we’ll assess if we’ve addressed this area	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Monthly practice review audits will tell us about the quality of practice and management oversight. These audits include a review of case supervision which informs the judgement on management oversight.The percentage of supervision within timescales.	What we will see when we’ve addressed this area	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Management oversight and challenge are embedded across all service areas. Over 80% of management oversight in audits will be good or better quality.Supervision is consistently good quality, analytical and reflective.Management oversight improves social work practice, leading to children and young people receiving timely support and experiencing good outcomes.Children achieve permanence in a timely way.100% children will have a permanence plan by their second review.Over 90% supervision will be within timescales.		
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Key improvement activities delivered this month and what impact we are achieving for children and young people											

Staff College have completed a final evaluation from all three cohorts from the bespoke leadership programme which demonstrates participants were positive about the support they received through the programme.

Further supervision training has been arranged for September and has been advertised to the workforce.

6. Effectiveness of IROs

What needs to improve				
The effectiveness of child protection chairs and independent reviewing officers (IROs) to escalate, challenge and scrutinize plans for children.				
What inspectors found		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Child protection chairs are not consistently effective in driving forward plans for children. Some children have been subject to protracted child protection planning, some plans lack purpose and urgency. They do not consistently advocate for children. Consequently, there are missed opportunities to act when risks increase, or changes have not happened within the child's timeframe. For example, for children who experience long-term neglect. Child protection chairs recognise they need to be more specific about what needs to change within the timeframe for children. Some plans are lengthy and opaque, the use of jargon makes it difficult for parents to understand what is required. Permanence plans are not routinely identified by the time of children's second reviews, leading to drift and delay of children's plans. For some children, IROs were not seen to actively raise this within the cared for children's review. IROs do not always robustly challenge the appropriateness of plans, which are not always-outcome focused, or challenge drift. The quality and impact of care planning for cared for children was variable. For some children, the impact of multiple social workers and IROs has resulted in drift and delay of their plans and permanence. For a small number of young children who live in children's homes there have been significant delays in driving their care plans forward to secure long-term permanence. This is because there has not been effective management oversight and supervision of children's care plans, and IROs do not routinely challenge drift and delay. 		
Ref	Action	Action Owner	Due by	Action Rating
IR1	Review the performance management framework for IROs to ensure that we can evidence their impact in children's plans and children's lives.	Head of Service for Children's Safeguarding and Quality Assurance	September 2024	Complete
IR2	IROs will be included in the in-house and commissioned leadership and management development programme. This will ensure we have a consistent understanding of quality and expectations on practice and joint approach to improvement.	Principal Social Worker	IROs to be included by April 2024	Complete

IR3	Review and refresh the IRO practice standards to embed consistently good quality practice.			Safeguarding and Quality Assurance Managers	Review quarterly at service development days	Complete
IR4	Hold an IRO service development day every 3 months to embed consistently good practice.			Safeguarding and Quality Assurance Managers	Every 3 months from June 2024	Complete
IR5	Revise the guidance on IRO quality assurance alerts to support improved outcome-focused practice in line with our key improvement areas, e.g. planning, tailored visiting, and preventing drift and delay.			Safeguarding and Quality Assurance Managers	August 2024	Complete
IR6	Explore and challenge performance around permanence in performance clinics with IROs to ensure this is achieved within children’s timescales.			Safeguarding and Quality Assurance Manager, Cared for Children	July 2024	Complete but need to evidence impact
IR7	Carry out consultation and engagement sessions with cared for young people to evaluate the impact of the cared for IRO service and redesign the consultation forms for older young people.			Safeguarding and Quality Assurance Manager, Cared for Children	March 2025	Complete but need to evidence impact
How we’ll assess if we’ve addressed this area		<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Monthly practice review audits will tell us about the quality of practice and plans.• Themes and impact of IRO quality assurance alerts.• Percentage of plans that are good or better quality.• Number of children on CP plans over 15 months.• Percentage of repeat child protection plans.• Percentage of permanence plans at the second review.		What we will see when we’ve addressed this area	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• IROs consistently drive forward plans and advocate for children. Plans are good quality, outcome-focused, and result in good outcomes for children. Over 80% plans audited will be good or better quality.• Children achieve long-term permanence in a timely way.• 100% children will have a permanence plan by their second review.• Repeat child protection plans will be under 15%.	
Key improvement activities delivered this month and what impact we are achieving for children and young people						
IRO challenge is taking place however this is not always having impact for children due to other factors, such as legal capacity. Additional legal capacity is being brought in as part of a dedicated children's strike team reporting directly to the DCS to support improvements.						

7. Sufficiency of placements

What needs to improve				
The sufficiency of suitable placements that can meet children and young people's assessed needs.				
What inspectors found	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> When children cannot remain in the care of their birth parents, there is variability in how quickly potential carers from within the extended family are identified. Challenges to sufficiency impact on the choice of placements and the quality of children's experiences. Some children still live in homes that do not match their needs, due to a lack of choice. Sufficiency of in-house foster carers is a challenge. Some children experience multiple placement moves, which are unsettling for them. There are inconsistencies in management oversight and recording as to the rationale for this. A small number of young children who now live in children's homes have experienced frequent moves in foster care placements and too many changes in social worker. Some young children live in residential children's homes for long periods of time. 			
Ref	Action	Action Owner	Due by	Action Rating
S1	Deliver a system which enables family led decision making to support children and young people to stay safely within families: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Develop a family network procedure - Develop training for the workforce to deliver family network meetings 	Head of Service Child in Need and Child Protection	TBC	Closed
S2	Join Foster4, which will provide additional resources for fostering recruitment and training.	Head of Service Children's Provision	May 2024	Complete
S3	Work in partnership with the other local authorities to build our Foster4 offer, ensuring there is an effective front door to the fostering service so we can effectively support those who make an enquiry and increase the number of foster carers within Cheshire East.	Head of Service Children's Provision	October 2024	Complete
S4	Explore opportunities within the council to increase fostering marketing and raise awareness of fostering to increase the number of people considering fostering.	Head of Service Children's Provision	October 2024	Complete

S5	Develop specialist foster carers to support children and young people to step down from residential care.	Head of Service Children's Provision	January 2026	On track
S6	Develop our third Mockingbird constellation to increase support for foster carers and children and young people in foster care.	Service Manager for Fostering	September 2024	Complete
S7	Open two Cheshire East Council residential children's homes to increase the placement options for Cheshire East's young people.	Head of Service Children's Provision	Flude House to open in April 2024	Complete
			Cherry Tree House to open in July 2025	Complete
S9	Establish effective processes with relevant system partners for consideration of joint commissioning and funding arrangements of placements where there is a combination of health, education and social care needs.	Health Consultant	February 2026	On track
S10	Young people to develop recruitment questions to ask foster carers, and deliver training to the fostering panel, to ensure children and young people's voices and experiences are included in the recruitment and selection of foster carers.	Participation Lead	September 2024	Complete
S11	Develop a 'Good Homes for All' workstream and action plan to improve outcomes for cared for children. This workstream will include a care leaver ambassador to ensure the views of care experienced children and young people shape our priorities and service development.	Head of Housing Participation Team	April 2025	Complete but need to evidence impact
How we'll assess if we've addressed this area		<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Increase in in-house fosters and increase in range of foster carers to support different groups, for example older young people.• Percentage of children and young people in foster care with Cheshire East carers.• Reduction in the timeframe to bring in new foster carers.• Number of children and young people with 3 or more placement moves.		
What we will see when we've addressed this area		<ul style="list-style-type: none">• When children cannot remain in the care of their birth parents, their networks are explored at an early stage to support them to remain with their wider family where possible.• There is sufficient choice of placements to meet children and young people's needs, which means children are placed in a home that is right for them.		

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children and young people will report that their placements meet their needs and they feel safe and supported. 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children and young people experience stable homes and placement moves are prevented/ limited wherever possible.
Key improvement activities delivered this month and what impact we are achieving for children and young people			
<p>Family led decision making will be supported through the implementation of Families First so this action has been closed on the improvement plan as it will sit within the Families First work. The Families First work will include a training programme around supporting family led decision making.</p> <p>Cherry Tree House opened in July.</p> <p>The draft 'to be' pathway for pre and and post tenancy actions, information and support is being reviewed by members of the 'Good Homes for All' workstream. When finalised a roll out plan will be developed for Children's Services and Housing Teams to ensure the pathway is embedded in the process. Further consideration of options for tenancy readiness and independence training is planned for the meeting in September.</p>			

Chapter 2

1. The Front Door

What inspectors found		<ul style="list-style-type: none">For some children and families, there is a delay in the step-up from early help services to statutory services. The step-up process is not as streamlined as it should be.For a small number of children, obtaining information from partner agencies and the voice of the child can lead to a delay in decision-making when the threshold is clearly met.Issues relating to parental consent are not always well recorded.The multi-agency partnership is not routinely included in social care decisions about next steps to help and protect children, or, when managers make decisions to close referrals.		
Ref	Action	Action Owner	Due by	Action Rating
FD1	Update the contact guidance to include that where the threshold for a referral is clearly met, cases must be actioned immediately. This guidance will also include ensuring consent is clearly recorded. Embed the guidance to support consistently good practice.	Service Manager Integrated Front Door	July 2024	Complete but need to evidence impact
FD2	Review multi-agency safeguarding hub (MASH) arrangements in other local authorities to learn from good practice and inform the development of multi-agency decision making in the front door.	Head of Service Early Help, Prevention and Domestic Abuse Service Manager Integrated Front Door	August 2024	Complete
FD3	Hold a collaborative workshop to review the current front door provision and agree actions to establish multi-agency decision-making, informed by the inspection findings and observation of good practice in other areas.	Head of Service Front Door	January 2025	Complete
FD4	Consider chapter 3 of Working Together 2023 in the safeguarding partnership to establish agreed multi-agency working arrangements.	Head of Service Children's Safeguarding and Quality Assurance	April 2025	Complete but need to evidence impact

		Chair of the Safeguarding Partnership and statutory partners within the partnership		
FD5	Establish a multi-agency safeguarding hub (MASH), supported by effective partnership governance arrangements.	Head of Service for the Front Door	March 2026	On track
How we'll assess if we've addressed this area	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Monthly multi-agency front door thematic audits will conduct deep dives to understand our support to specific cohorts/ within specific areas. One theme will be step up to social care. These audits also consider consent and timeliness of decisions.The percentage of contacts that are referred to children's social care completed within 24 hours.	What we will see when we've addressed this area	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Families stepping-up from early help services to statutory services will swiftly receive support. Over 90% of referrals to children's social care will be within 24 hours.90% parental consent will be well recorded.All decisions for referrals to children's social care will be made swiftly. Over 80% referrals audited will be good quality.The multi-agency partnership is routinely included in social care decisions about next steps to help and protect children and when managers make decisions to close referrals.	
Key improvement activities delivered this month and what impact we are achieving for children and young people				
The integrated front door governance board is continuing to take place to deliver developments within the front door.				

2. Strategy Meetings

What inspectors found		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strategy meetings do not consistently capture the discussion about risk, which means that the rationale for decisions made, and next steps, is not always clear. 		
Ref	Action	Action Owner	Due by	Action Rating
SM1	Deliver a workshop on strategy meetings for team managers to support consistently good practice.	Service Managers CINCP	August 2024	Closed
SM2	Deliver training for unit coordinators on minute taking to support consistently good practice across the team in capturing discussions on risk.	Children and Family Service Business Support Lead	August 2024	Closed
SM3	A management analysis box to be added to the strategy discussion form to ensure a clear rationale for decisions is included.	Service Managers CINCP	June 2024	Complete
SM4	Develop partnership and managers training to strengthen partnership contributions during strategy discussions, what is recorded, and how minutes are signed off.	Partnership Training Manager Service Manager Front Door Lead Practitioners	October 2025	On track
How we'll assess if we've addressed this area		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strategy discussion audits within the 8-weekly multi-agency liaison meetings will tell us about the quality of strategy discussions and whether the rationale for decisions is clearly recorded. 	What we will see when we've addressed this area	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strategy meetings consistently capture the discussion about risk which means that the rationale for decisions and next steps is clear. 90% strategy discussions will have a clear rationale for decisions.
Key improvement activities delivered this month and what impact we are achieving for children and young people				
Internal training on strategy discussions is being carried out through the practice lead training programme.				

3. Life-story work and later-life letters

What inspectors found		• Life-story work and later-life letters are not usually started in a timely way. This means that children have limited opportunities to understand their journey into care at a time that is right for them.				
Ref	Action			Action Owner	Due by	Action Rating
LS1	Commission external training on life-story work to ensure practitioners understand the expectation, importance, and how to complete it.			Principal Social Worker	March 2025	Complete but need to evidence impact
LS3	Establish a process for monitoring and reviewing life-story work and later-life letters.			Service Managers Cared for Children	August 2024	Complete but need to evidence impact
How we'll assess if we've addressed this area		• Feedback from children and young people, and their carers – children will tell us they have a better understanding of their life stories.	What we will see when we've addressed this area	• Life-story work and later-life letters are started early so children understand why they are in care.		
Key improvement activities delivered this month and what impact we are achieving for children and young people						
The new practice guidance for cared for services include guidance on life story work.						

4. Health of Cared for Children

What inspectors found		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Waiting lists result in some delay in children accessing emotional support services. A small number of unaccompanied asylum-seeking children (UASC) and young people wait too long to access emotional support and counselling due to waiting lists. Initial and review health assessments are not always completed within appropriate timescales. 		
Ref	Action	Action Owner	Due by	Action Rating
H1	Develop prioritisation matrices/ approaches to ensure the most vulnerable children and young people are prioritised for mental health support based on an understanding of the additional and differing needs and risks for children with experience of the care system.	Head of Commissioning Children, Families and Adults with Complex Needs Programme Lead for Mental Health and Neurodiversity – Cheshire East NHS ICB	March 2025	Complete but need to evidence impact
H2	Develop 'waiting well' initiatives with key health providers and third sector provision to support children and young people while they wait based on an understanding of protective factors and how they can be increased and developed in response to needs.	Head of Commissioning Children, Families and Adults with Complex Needs Programme Lead for Mental Health and Neurodiversity – Cheshire East NHS ICB	March 2025	Complete but need to evidence impact
H3	Review the current emotional support offer for UASC young people in Cheshire East, taking into account any recommendations/ good practice from the Cheshire and Merseyside scoping exercise on support to UASC young people.	Designated Nurse Safeguarding and Looked After Children	August 2025	On track
H4	Health and children's social care to jointly review the timeliness of health assessments on a six-weekly basis to support improved timeliness.	Service Manager Cared for Children Designated Nurse Safeguarding and Looked After Children	May 2024	Closed
H5	Develop a single point of contact for health assessments within the local authority to support increased timeliness.	Service Manager Cared for Children	May 2024	Closed
H6	Report quarterly to NHS England on out of area initial and review health assessments that are out of timescale to drive improved timeliness.	Designated Nurse Safeguarding and Looked After Children	May 2024	Closed

H7	Develop a health and wellbeing workstream and action plan to improve health outcomes for cared for children and care leavers. This workstream will include a care leaver ambassador to ensure the views of care experienced children and young people shape our priorities and service development.		Designated Nurse Safeguarding and Looked After Children	June 2025	Complete but need to evidence impact
H8	Review and streamline the process around initial health assessments to improve timeliness.		Head of Service Child in Need and Child Protection	May 2025	Complete but need to evidence impact
How we'll assess if we've addressed this area		<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Waiting lists for children and young people's mental health services (CYPMHS).• Timeliness of annual health assessments, initial and review health assessments.	What we will see when we've addressed this area	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Children and young people access children and young people's mental health services (CYPMHS) without delay. 90% of non-urgent referrals receive an assessment within 6 weeks. 90% wait no more than 6 weeks between assessment and treatment.• 90% annual health assessments will be completed within timescales.	
Key improvement activities delivered this month and what impact we are achieving for children and young people					
The health and wellbeing workstream is focusing on sleep as this has been identified as one of the biggest factors impacting on the mental health of UASC.					

5. Education for Cared for Children

What inspectors found		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Too many primary-aged children in care experience attendance issues as they move into secondary school. • Personal education plans (PEPs) contain the required information, but outcomes for children in care overall are low. • Many children in care are ill-prepared for adulthood and struggle to cope with the challenges that they face when they leave care. • The identification of children and young people who are at risk of not being in employment, education or training (NEET) does not begin early enough. 		
Ref	Action	Action Owner	Due by	Action Rating
ED1	Review attendance through education advisors' fortnightly attendance meetings and determine clear actions for young people to improve their attendance.	Head of Service for Inclusion	April 2024	Complete but need to evidence impact
ED2	Review the plans for those with lower than 50% attendance, in alternative provision, or not in full time education, in a forum chaired by a head of service, to ensure there are clear actions on what needs to happen and there is senior leader oversight of these young people.	Head of Service for Inclusion	April 2024	Complete but need to evidence impact
ED3	Hold multi-disciplinary team meetings for individual children and young people when required to improve attendance. These meetings develop a plan to improve attendance and continue to meet until attendance has improved.	Head of Service for Inclusion	April 2024	Complete but need to evidence impact
ED4	Improve the quality of PEPs through delivering training, ensuring we are ambitious for young people, targets are SMART, and there is a clear early planning for preparing young people for adulthood and securing EET. Involve young people in the development and delivery of the training to ensure the impact of a good quality PEP is clear.	Head of Service for Inclusion	Delivery from September - December 2024	Complete but need to evidence impact
ED5	Review the PEP form to ensure that this supports improvement in areas where care experienced young people attain less well than their peers, for example reading.	Head of Service for Inclusion	September 2024	Complete but need to evidence impact

ED6	Report cared for children’s attainment against their peers within scorecards and performance reports to drive improved performance.		Head of Service for Inclusion	February 2025	Complete but need to evidence impact						
ED7	Audit young adults who are NEET at 20 and look what learning can be taken from their preparation for adulthood to improve our support.		Head of Service for Inclusion Service Manager for Care Leavers	March 2025	Complete						
ED8	Use the risk of NEET indicators (RONI) to identify which cared for young people in Year 11 are at risk of NEET and ensure that the right support is in place to support them into EET.		Area Delivery Manager Youth Support Service – NEET and Preparing for Adulthood	November 2024	Complete						
<table><tr><td>How we’ll assess if we’ve addressed this area</td><td><ul style="list-style-type: none">• Percentage attendance for cared for children.• Educational outcomes for cared for children.• PEP audits will tell us about the quality of PEPs and impact, and how well they support preparation for adulthood and prevent young people becoming NEET.• Percentage of PEPs that are good or better quality.• Percentage of young people in care in Year 12 and 13 that are NEET.</td><td>What we will see when we’ve addressed this area</td><td colspan="3"><ul style="list-style-type: none">• 95% attendance for all cared for children• Educational outcomes for cared for children are good and in line with their peers.• Cared for young people are well prepared for adulthood.• Identifying children and young people who are at risk of NEET begins early and helps to prevent them becoming NEET.• 95% of PEPs are graded as good or better• 90% of young people in care in Year 12 and 13 are EET.</td></tr></table>						How we’ll assess if we’ve addressed this area	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Percentage attendance for cared for children.• Educational outcomes for cared for children.• PEP audits will tell us about the quality of PEPs and impact, and how well they support preparation for adulthood and prevent young people becoming NEET.• Percentage of PEPs that are good or better quality.• Percentage of young people in care in Year 12 and 13 that are NEET.	What we will see when we’ve addressed this area	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 95% attendance for all cared for children• Educational outcomes for cared for children are good and in line with their peers.• Cared for young people are well prepared for adulthood.• Identifying children and young people who are at risk of NEET begins early and helps to prevent them becoming NEET.• 95% of PEPs are graded as good or better• 90% of young people in care in Year 12 and 13 are EET.		
How we’ll assess if we’ve addressed this area	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Percentage attendance for cared for children.• Educational outcomes for cared for children.• PEP audits will tell us about the quality of PEPs and impact, and how well they support preparation for adulthood and prevent young people becoming NEET.• Percentage of PEPs that are good or better quality.• Percentage of young people in care in Year 12 and 13 that are NEET.	What we will see when we’ve addressed this area	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 95% attendance for all cared for children• Educational outcomes for cared for children are good and in line with their peers.• Cared for young people are well prepared for adulthood.• Identifying children and young people who are at risk of NEET begins early and helps to prevent them becoming NEET.• 95% of PEPs are graded as good or better• 90% of young people in care in Year 12 and 13 are EET.								
Key improvement activities delivered this month and what impact we are achieving for children and young people											
We have improved the monitoring of children’s attendance over the last year. The number of our young people who attend school for fewer than 25 hours has dropped significantly from 21 students to 15. This, along with the number of children attending Alternative Provisions dropping by 10%, can be attributed to more stringent tracking and ensuring regular reviews of the provision are in place. The number of our young people with 95%+ attendance has risen from 173 children to 189, 33 of whom have 100% attendance this year (all of whom will be receiving reward vouchers in recognition of this fact).											

6. Workforce

What inspectors found	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Frequent changes in social workers impact on the quality of relationships and the progress of plans for some children, leading to delay. Too many children have experienced changes in social worker, which means they must retell their story, and this prevents them from being able to build trusting relationships. The impact of multiple social workers and IROs on care planning has resulted in drift and delay for some children in achieving permanence. 			
Ref	Action	Action Owner	Due by	Action Rating
W1	Review capacity across children's social care and supporting services to deliver the improvement plan and develop a costed proposal to the Children and Families Committee.	Director of Family Help and Children's Social Care	July 2024	Complete
W2	Assess demand to the care leavers service and determine what capacity is needed to support allocation at 15 years 9 months and to increase support to care leavers aged 21+.	Service Manager Care Leavers	July 2024	Complete
W3	Review capacity across the two IRO teams to look at how we can create dedicated time for supporting and driving improved outcomes for care leavers.	Head of Service Children's Safeguarding and Quality Assurance	July 2024	Complete
W4	Reestablish a workforce, recruitment and retention group for children's social care.	Director of Family Help and Children's Social Care	September 2024	Complete but need to evidence impact
W5	Refresh the workforce strategy.	Head of HR Principal Social Worker	December 2024	Complete but need to evidence impact
W6	Develop and launch a refreshed recruitment campaign to attract high quality practitioners and managers to Cheshire East.	Head of HR Principal Social Worker	August 2025	On track

W7	Develop reporting on caseloads specific to each service on what we would expect to see to support effective oversight.	Director of Family Help and Children's Social Care Business Intelligence Manager	August 2024	Complete
W8	Launch a level 7 apprentice scheme (a masters equivalent programme, so a shorter programme than our current BA equivalent level 6 apprenticeships) to supplement our current scheme supporting people to train as social workers with Cheshire East.	Principal Social Worker	To start in March 2025	Complete
W9	Seek practitioners' views on the support they receive to deliver good practice, workloads, and progress to date, through the practice review audits, elected member frontline visits, and walking the floor.	Executive Director of Children's Services	Quarterly review	On track
W10	Keep the children's workforce updated on developments around the inspection findings through the monthly children's newsletter and monthly talk together sessions with the DCS to ensure there is a joined up approach to improvement.	Executive Director of Children's Services	Quarterly review	Complete
W11	Seek children, young people and families' views of the support they have received through our audit process.	Head of Service Children's Safeguarding and Quality Assurance	Monthly	Complete
W12	Deliver a base build of children's services to ensure there is the right support to meet children's needs.	Executive Director of Children's Services	December 2025	On track
How we'll assess if we've addressed this area	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Monthly practice review audits will tell us about the quality of practice across all service areas and include feedback from children and families on their relationships with their workers.Caseload data.The percentage of social worker vacancies and the percentage turnover rate for social workers.	What we will see when we've addressed this area	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Social workers build effective and trusting relationships with children and families, which supports improved outcomes for children and young people. 90% young people tell us that they trust their social workers.Teams are stable, meaning children and young people don't experience frequent changes in social worker or IROs.Average caseloads are 15 for AYSEs, 20 for cared for, and 22 for CINCP.80% practitioners tell us that their caseloads are manageable and they feel well supported by managers.	
Key improvement activities delivered this month and what impact we are achieving for children and young people				

Filming for the refreshed recruitment campaign is planned for the end of July.

Practitioners' views are being sought through focus groups in the councillor frontline visits programme which commenced in July to the cared for and care leavers service.

Chapter 3

Actions from internal assessment activities from September 2024

Entries to Care

Source		Focus on Care Planning and Children who have become Cared for since April 2024 – Report to the Improvement Board on 7 November 2024		
Areas for improvement		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Too many children were coming into care in an unplanned way (58 of 116 in Q1 and Q2 2024-25). There were 25 children who were not open to children's services before becoming cared for. 7 children were open to early help when they came into care. The number of unplanned entries to care include a high percentage from the use of Police Protection Powers. Interim care orders were granted for 18 children where the Court did not endorse the care plan. 		
Ref	Action	Action Owner	Due by	Action Rating
C1	Review children's experiences and identify if there were opportunities where early help could have been offered to support them.	Head of Service for Early Help and Protection	February 2025	Complete but need to evidence impact
C2	Refresh and relaunch the early help strategy to ensure there is a strong partnership approach to delivering early help.	Head of Service for Early Help and Protection	June 2025	Complete but need to evidence impact
C3	Agree a joint protocol for responding to and managing police protection, including how police protection paperwork is shared and recorded on a child's electronic file.	Head of Service Children's Safeguarding and Quality Assurance	July 2025	Closed
C4	Develop a neglect strategy to ensure all agencies are responding appropriately to neglect and earlier intervention is considered where necessary.	Children's Safeguarding Partnership Business Manager Head of Early Help and Prevention	June 2025	Complete

How we'll assess if we've addressed this area	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase in the number of children coming into care in a planned way. • Reduction in the use of Police Protection. • Reduction in the number of care plans not endorsed by the court. 	What we will see when we've addressed this area	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children will come into care in a planned way. There will be no unplanned entries into care unless there are legitimate reasons which the partnership feel is acceptable (by exception). • Children and families will have their needs identified early and will receive effective support that prevents issues from escalating. Children who do come into care in a planned way will have evidence of earlier intervention having taken place.
Key improvement activities delivered this month and what impact we are achieving for children and young people			
Further work has taken place with police colleagues around the use of Police Protection Powers. Based on this discussion, it has been agreed that a joint protocol is not required in this area and so this action has been closed.			

Children's home inspection

Source		Children's home monitoring visit – 4 February 2025			
Areas for improvement		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Three requirements were restated from the last inspection in November 2024 as they were not met: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Written plans need to contain all known risks to children and have clear strategies for staff to follow to keep children safe. Monitoring and review systems need to ensure that shortfalls in the quality of care are identified and addressed. Case records need to be up to date and include the information and documents listed in Schedule 3. 			
Ref	Action	Action Owner		Due by	Action Rating
CH1	Implement weekly management reviews of compliance with standards to drive improved management oversight and improved quality of practice.	Registered Manager		7 March 2025	Complete
CH2	Strengthen the regulation 44 visits and reports through delivery of training to ensure there is effective oversight of the quality of care.	Head of Service Children's Provision		March 2025	Complete
CH3	Review the recording system for residential provision within LiquidLogic to ensure this supports best practice and recording holds appropriately.	Registered Managers and Business Intelligence		March 2025	Complete
How we'll assess if we've addressed this area	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Monthly regulation 44 visits and reports, considering the quality of practice and compliance with standards. Audit by Head of Service to test monitoring and review systems in place and quality of practice. 	What we will see when we've addressed this area	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Children's plans will contain all known risks to children, there will be clear strategies in place for staff which are followed and support children to be kept safe. Monitoring and review systems accurately identify shortfalls in the quality of care and actions is taken swiftly to address these. Case records are up to date and include all the information and documents listed in Schedule 3 so there is a accurate record of the child's experiences and support. 		

Appendix 3 – Changes to the improvement plan actions agreed through improvement plan governance arrangements

The timescales for the following have been revised to ensure these are suitable:

Ref	Action	Original timescale	Revised timescale	Reason
SL17	Strengthen the audit process – revise the audit tool and integrate audit and reporting within the child's record.	July 2025	November 2025	The audit form has been revised and built into LiquidLogic. This is expected to be available for use in September and will be rolled out for the October audits. Once there are some completed forms a range of power BI reports will be built.
P10	Develop a new C&F assessment.	July 2025	October 2025	A new C&F assessment has been developed but further work on this is being progressed by the new Director of Family Help and Children's Social Care to ensure this aligns with Families First.
P12	Develop and launch a new central point for children and families resources, practice guidance and training.	May 2025	September 2025	The scope of this work has increased with the potential for the development of a corporate solution regarding an effective engagement and communication platform for all staff. Work is ongoing in the meanwhile with children and families colleagues to understand further what the priorities of different service areas are.
MO4	All managers to complete supervision training to support them to deliver reflective supervision that considers children's lived experiences, supports learning and improves practice.	June 2025	October 2025	An additional supervision course was arranged for 6 June, however due to this taking place during the monitoring visit attendance was low and an additional course is still needed. This has now been booked in for 11 September and advertised to the workforce.
S5	Develop specialist foster carers to support children and young people to step down from residential care.	November 2025	January 2025	The report to committee on specialist foster carers has been delayed due to staff absence and will now go to the September Committee.

SM4	Develop partnership and managers training to strengthen partnership contributions during strategy discussions, what is recorded, and how minutes are signed off.	June 2025	October 2025	Internal training on strategy discussions is being carried out. Partnership training was due to take place on 9 July; however, this was delayed due to staff absence within the safeguarding children's partnership and no budget to cover absence.
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The following actions were completed later than originally anticipated:

Ref	Action	Original timescale	Achieved in
P6	Develop best practice guidance on care planning to ensure expectations to support permanence and life story work are clear.	May 2025	June 2025 – this was received and agreed by the Policies, Procedures and Practice group in June.
S7	Open two Cheshire East Council residential children's homes to increase the placement options for Cheshire East's young people.	Cherry Tree House to open in January 2025	July 2025 - Cherry Tree House's Ofsted Registration visit took place on 18 June. The home opened in July.

The following actions have been closed with agreement through the improvement plan governance arrangements:

Ref	Action	Reason
S1	Deliver a system which enables family led decision making to support children and young people to stay safely within families: - Develop a family network procedure - Develop training for the workforce to deliver family network meetings	Family led decision making will be supported through the implementation of Families First so this action has been closed on the improvement plan as it will sit within the Families First work. The Families First work will include a training programme around supporting family led decision making.
C3	Agree a joint protocol for responding to and managing police protection, including how police protection paperwork is shared and recorded on a child's electronic file.	Further work has taken place with police colleagues around the use of Police Protection Powers. Based on this discussion, it has been agreed that a joint protocol is not required in this area and so this action has been closed.

OPEN

Children and Families Committee

15 September 2025

DSG management plan 2025/26-2031/32 - Update

Report of: Dawn Godfrey, Executive Director of Children's Services.

Report Reference No: CF/32/25-26

Ward(s) Affected: All

For Scrutiny

Purpose of Report

- 1 To provide all members with an update of the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) management plan for the period 2025/26 to 2031/32 to reflect the financial outturn position and the reduced growth of Education, Health and Care plans (EHCP) numbers as at 31 March 2025.

Executive Summary

Cheshire East DSG Management Plan

- 2 The DSG management plan has been reprofiled to take in to account of the reduced growth of EHCP numbers (6.4% EHCP growth – 1.6% lower than anticipated) and a lower high needs deficit position than forecast as at 31 March 2025 (£6.4 million reduction in the high needs deficit position – giving a position of £113.7 million high needs block deficit).
- 3 The overall DSG deficit figure reported within the accounts at 31 March 2025 is £112.1 million. This is made up of high needs block deficit of £113.7 million plus an underspend on the early years block of £1.6 million.
- 4 The plan covers a seven-year period from 2025/26 to 2031/32. Previous versions of the plan have covered a seven-year period from 2024/25 to 2030/31.
- 5 The table below shows the reprofiled forecast of the cumulative deficit position, both unmitigated and mitigated and the impact of mitigations.

- 6 The previous version of the plan forecast a deficit position of £236.7 million at 2030/31. The reprofiled mitigated cumulative forecast deficit position is £205.4 million at 2030/31, a reduction of £31.3 million.
- 7 By 2031/32 this plan gives a forecast of £197.6 million.

Reprofiled September 2025 (based on outturn 31.03.25)	2024-25	2025-26	2026-27	2027-28	2028-29	2029-30	2030-31	2031-32
	£m	£m	£m	£m	£m	£m	£m	£m
Unmitigated cumulative deficit	112.1*	160.8	227.6	318.0	435.7	583.5	766.4	990.3
Mitigated cumulative deficit	112.1*	146.0	171.4	190.8	203.7	208.7	205.4	197.6
Impact of mitigations	-	(14.8)	(56.2)	(127.2)	(232.0)	(374.8)	(561)	(792.7)

*High Needs DSG deficit £113.7m plus underspend of Early Years DSG of £1.6m.

- 8 The overall strategy remains the same, of RIGHT SUPPORT, RIGHT PLACE, RIGHT TIME.
- 9 Elements of the plan include increased specialist provision. The timely opening of the provisions is reliant on circumstances which maybe out of our control and therefore carry a risk, such as delivering by the Department of Education, planning approvals and public consultations. Increased specialist provision include:
- (a) a new free special school, which will be delivered by the Department of Education (DfE).
 - (b) Additional special school satellite sites.
 - (c) Additional resource provisions/SEN units within mainstream schools.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Children and Families Committee is recommended to:

1. Note and scrutinise the DSG Management plan for 2024/25 to 2030/31 (approved by Children and Families Committee on 29 April 2024) has been reprofiled/re-cast to reflect the lower number of Education, Health, and Care plans and the lower deficit position as recorded on 31 March 2025.
2. Note and scrutinise the impact of the reprofiling:
 - a. An in year balanced position by year 7 (2030/2031) is still achievable.
 - b. A reduced forecast deficit reserve position of £766.4 million unmitigated and £205.4 million mitigated by the end of March 2031.

- c. A forecast deficit reserve position of £990.3 million unmitigated and £197.6 million mitigated by the end of March 2032.
3. Note the mitigations within the original plan remain in place (approved by Children and Families Committee on 29 April 24).
4. Note the accounting override has been extended to 2027/2028, by which point the deficit reserve position is forecast to be £318 million unmitigated and £190.8 million mitigated.

Background

Cheshire East Reprofiled DSG Management Plan

- 10 Appendix 1 of this report provides detailed analysis of existing EHCPs and forecasts both financial and EHCP numbers, along with comparisons to previous versions of the plan.
- 11 The DSG management plan provides a reprofiled forecast for both an unmitigated position and a mitigated position.
- 12 The unmitigated financial forecast is the do-nothing position. Whereas the mitigated financial forecast includes carefully considered interventions.
- 13 Total expenditure for 2025/26 is £96.8 million, against income of £64.5 million, forecasting an in-year deficit of £32.3 million and a cumulative deficit of £146 million.

Mitigations

- 14 All the mitigations within the plan have the strategic aim of RIGHT SUPPORT, RIGHT PLACE, RIGHT TIME, which is the focus of the recent DfE Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) and Alternative Provision (AP) Improvement Plan.
- 15 Details of the mitigations have previously been reported along with progress updates. Appendix 1 of this report provides a reminder of the mitigation areas.

Consultation and Engagement

- 16 The Cheshire East Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) and Alternative Provision (AP) Strategy and Development Plan – “One Plan” (approved by Children and Families Committee June 2025) has been coproduced with key stakeholders, and they will continue to be involved

in helping us deliver our priorities and in evaluating what difference we are making.

- 17 We have continued to update our stakeholders on progress and deliver key updates as part of on-going network meetings, such as Schools Forum, head teacher network sessions both primary, secondary and Special/AP, SEND conferences and governor forums.
- 18 The SEND an AP Partnership will ensure partners are aware of the issues and part of the design of any solutions.

Reasons for Recommendations

- 19 The DSG Management Plan will enable Cheshire East to:
 - a. Comply with paragraph 5.2 of the DSG: conditions of grant 2025 to 2025 [DSG: conditions of grant 2024 to 2025 - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/dsg-conditions-of-grant-2025-to-2025)
 - b. Monitor how DSG funding is being spent.
 - c. Highlight areas where local authorities may wish to review spending.
 - d. Form evidence-based and strategic future plans for the provision of children and young people with SEND.
 - e. Present complex funding information simply to schools forums and other external stakeholders.
- 20 The pressures on the DSG addressed through this management plan will also reduce the risk of future overspend on base budget of the SEND team, the Education Psychologists team and on school transport.

Other Options Considered

- 21 The table below sets out the issues:

Option	Impact	Risk
Do nothing (not produce a management plan)	<p>This is not acceptable as the DfE has made completion of a DSG management plan compulsory under certain criteria which the council has met.</p> <p>The needs of children and young people and their families are not considered</p>	The council would not be demonstrating commitment to managing the issues.

Subsidise DSG from other local funding sources	This may help to reduce the DSG deficit but increase pressure on other areas which were not intended to fund high needs. This is unlikely to address the extent of the budget pressure.	The true high needs funding gap is not recognised and there are unaffordable pressures on other budgets or the council's general reserves.
Not develop mitigations	<p>The council would be leaving itself in an unacceptable position in terms of overall reserves and not demonstrating a commitment to manage the DSG reserve deficit.</p> <p>In addition, the developing needs of children and families would not be considered</p>	The council would be reliant on the DfE meeting the full ongoing costs of the DSG Deficit which is unlikely to happen.

Implications and Comments

Monitoring Officer/Legal/Governance

- 22 The local authority currently receives funding for schools through the Dedicated Schools Grant, paid to the Council by the Secretary of State under the Education Act 2002. It is a specific ring-fenced grant given outside the local government finance settlement. The terms of the grant require it to be used to support schools' budgets for purposes defined in regulation 6 and schedule 2 of The Schools and Early Years Finance (England) Regulations 2022, and must have regard to DfE guidance as out lined in paragraph 18 above.
- 23 Under the Local Government Finance Act 1993, the council has a statutory duty to use resources efficiently and effectively against priorities and to achieve a balanced budget. S28 (budget monitoring: general) of the Local Government Act 2003 requires the Council to review its calculations from time to time during the year and to take such action, if any, as it considers necessary to deal with any changes in its financial position.
- 24 The Education and Skills Funding Agency Guidance on DSG: Conditions of grant 2024-25, require any local authority with an overall deficit on its DSG account to present a plan to the DfE for managing their future DSG spend and to keep the schools forum regularly updated

about the authority's DSG account and plans for handling it including high needs pressures and potential savings.

Section 151 Officer/Finance

Accounting Override – Dedicated Schools Grant adjustment account (England)

- 25 The council holds usable and unusable reserves on the balance sheet. Usable reserves are cash backed whereas unusable reserves are not. Examples of unusable reserves are pensions and the revaluation of land and buildings.
- 26 In April 2020 Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) introduced new legislation to switch the DSG deficit reserve from a usable to an unusable reserve and allowed the creation of an adjustment account on the balance sheet.
- 27 When MHCLG set up the accounting override it prevented local authorities from funding a DSG deficit from General Funds without the permission of the Secretary of State. It was made clear to council treasurers that this override was in place to allow time to find suitable arrangements to address the issue.
- 28 Since the override was first introduced, there have been two extensions to the date of removal, once to 31 March 2026 and most recently as part of the DfE spending review settlement, to 31 March 2028.
- 29 Without the override the size of the negative reserve for council expected as of 31 March 2028 would present a financial stability issue for the 2027/28 financial year. The council, like many throughout the country, does not have sufficient reserves to be able to cover the cost of the cumulative deficit if the override is removed.
- 30 The size of the deficit has negative cash flow implications for the council, as we are spending more money than we receive. This results in revenue interest costs linked to the cost of borrowing.
- 31 The impact on the council's revenue costs through the cost of interest in 2023/24 and 2024/25 totalled £7.6 million and is forecast to be in the region of £5.8 million in 2025/26. This cost will increase annually as the DSG cumulative deficit continues to increase.
- 32 As detailed in the Cheshire East MTFS the council is experiencing financial challenges at a scale that it has not faced before. This makes the approval and delivery of the DSG Management Plan imperative as the council is not in a position to be able to fund DSG pressures.

- 33 The council applied for Exceptional Financial Support (EFS) to the Secretary of State for Levelling Up. This application included a request to be able to capitalise the estimated cost of interest on the DSG deficit for years 2023/24 and 2024/25. This exceptional funding was used as part of the 2024/25 outturn.
- 34 A further application for EFS was submitted for 2025/26 highlighting the pressures which the council is facing, including the cost of interest on the DSG deficit. This has been approved in principle.

Human Resources

- 35 The SEND Transformation Team is not fully operational at this time as identified vacant posts for recruitment have not been approved. This is impacting on the capacity of the service to deliver. This is further compounded as the majority of these posts are grant funded and the grant will cease at some point in the near future.

Risk Management

- 36 A risk register is monitored by the 0-25 SEND and AP Partnership Board.
- 37 An impact on the council's base budget (council tax, national non-domestic rates and general grants) as a contribution may be required to manage the high needs pressures or DSG deficit reserve balance.
- 38 Service levels reduce as funding is not sufficient and future Ofsted inspections raise issues which damage reputation and result in the council being required to produce a "written statement of action" to remedy failings.
- 39 The council continues to make payments to settings but it is not able to fund them from the overall resources it has available.
- 40 The DSG Management Plan is based on a series of assumptions over EHCP numbers and average costs. These are subject to change and this risk will be mitigated through regular reviews of the plan.

Impact on other Committees

- 41 This report will be shared with Corporate Policy Committee on 2nd October 2025.

Policy

- 42 Local authorities are under a duty to ensure sufficiency of school places in their area (section 14 of the Education Act 1996).

- 43 The SEND Code of Practice (January 2015) provides statutory guidance on duties, policies and procedures relating to Part 3 of the Children and Families Act 2014 and associated regulations and applies to England.
- 44 The DfE issued the “SEND Review: Right support, right place, right time” - a SEND and AP green paper which is a consultation on the future of SEND services. The SEND Partnership response is in support of the proposals and promptly making those legal requirements will support the council in delivery of the necessary changes.
- 45 Following the green paper consultation in March 2023 DfE published their SEND and alternative provision improvement plan which sets out their plans to change the special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) and alternative provision system in England. The partnership will ensure we keep up to date with the DfE roadmap and change programme as this is progressed nationally. In addition the forthcoming schools bill (due for publication autumn 2025), will bring about changes to the statutory deliver of SEND.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/send-and-alternative-provision-improvement-plan/send-and-alternative-provision-roadmap>

Commitment 1: Unlocking prosperity for all	Commitment 2: Improving health and wellbeing	Commitment 3: An effective and enabling council
1.3 Education, skills and life-long learning leads to employment and roles in the community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 2.4 Children and young people thrive and reach their potential with targeted support when and where they need it 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 3.1 Financially sustainable council, enabled by council-wide service transformation and improvement 3.2 Effective and responsive governance, compliance and evidence-based decision making

- 46 The statutory duties include:
- The need to undertake a needs assessment where a child may have additional needs.
 - To issue an education, health and care plan within 20 weeks where assessment provides evidence this is required to meet the assessed needs.

- c. The local authority must then secure an appropriate school place and must consult with parental preference.

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

- 47 An Equality Inclusion Assessment has been completed previously for the DSG Management Plan, this is available on the website.
- 48 The SEND Code of Practice looks to ensure the assessed additional needs of children with special education needs are provided for, to enable them to reach agreed outcomes.

Children and Young People including Cared for Children, care leavers and Children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND)

- 49 The council has approved its Children's Vision which contains a priority around children with additional needs.
- 50 The Cheshire East Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) and Alternative Provision (AP) Strategy and Development Plan – "One Plan" (approved by Children and Families Committee June 2025) has been coproduced with key stakeholders, and they will continue to be involved in helping us deliver our priorities and in evaluating what difference we are making.

Other Implications

- 51 There are no direct implications for public health, rural communities or climate change.

Consultation

Name of Consultee	Post held	Date sent	Date returned
<i>Statutory Officer (or deputy) :</i>			
Ashley Hughes	S151 Officer	07/08/25	28/08/25
Kevin O'Keefe	Director of Law and Governance (Monitoring Officer)	07/08/25	27/08/25
<i>Legal and Finance</i>			

Jennie Summers	Legal Team Manager (People)	28/07/25	11/08/25
Diane Green	Finance Manager	28/07/25	29/07/25
<i>Other Consultees:</i> <i>Directors</i>			
Dawn Godfrey	Executive Director Childrens Services	25/07/25	14/08/25

Access to Information	
Contact Officer:	Alex Cooper alex.cooper2@cheshireeast.gov.uk
Appendices:	Appendix 1 – Reprofiled DSG management plan
Background Papers:	<p>Cheshire East SEND and AP One Plan and appendix – C&F Committee 9 June 2025</p> <p>CEC Report Template</p> <p>SEND Strategy 2021-2024 - draft (002).docx</p> <p>DSG Management Plan Update 2024/25 to 2030/31 and appendix – C&F Committee 11 November 2024</p> <p>CEC Report Template</p> <p>Appendix 1 - DSG Management Plan Update.pdf</p> <p>DSG Management Plan 2024/25 to 2030/31 and appendix – C&F Committee 29 April 2024 - CEC Report Template (cheshireeast.gov.uk)</p> <p>Appendix 1 - Safety Valve DSG Management Plan.pdf (cheshireeast.gov.uk)</p>

Appendix 1

Summary of Cheshire East Council Reprofiled DSG Management Plan 2025/26 to 2031/32

Introduction

1. This appendix provides a summary of the council's reprofiled Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) Management Plan for the period 2025/26 to 2031/32.
2. The DSG Management Plan is based on a very detailed spreadsheet template issued by the DfE. This Appendix provides a summary.
3. The plan is a rolling seven year programme. The DSG management plan originally covered the period 2024/25 to 2030/31. 2025/26 is the second year of the plan.
4. The DSG management plan provides an unmitigated and mitigated forecast for the period 2025/26 to 2031/32.
5. The DSG management plan has been reprofiled to take in to account the reduced growth of EHCP numbers (6% EHCP growth – 1.6% lower than anticipated) and a lower deficit position than forecast on 31 March 2025 (£6.4m reduction in the High Needs deficit position – giving a position of £113.7m).
6. The overall DSG deficit figure reported within the accounts at 31 March 2025 is £112.1 million. This is made up of high needs deficit of £113.7 million plus an underspend of early years DSG of £1.6 million.
7. Reprofiting will occur each year to ensure that the plan and forecasts are up to date and mitigations are adjusted as required.
8. Mitigations have been updated to reflect any update information and intelligence.
9. Forecast are based on the January 2025 education, health and care plan (EHCP) numbers from the SEN2 statutory return.
10. The DSG management plan is based on average costs for the placement of additional pupils. This must be used for modelling as the destination of each new child and their needs cannot be determined at this stage.
11. The average costs of provision ranges from £7,124 for a pupil supported in mainstream to £25,000 for a special school to over £62,450 for independent specialist provision.

EHCP Data Analysis

12. The number of EHCPs in Cheshire East has increased by 294 during the year, bringing the total of EHCPs as of January 2025 to 4,870. This represents a growth in the total of EHCPs of 6.4% compared with 13.6% the previous year. This includes 649 first/new EHCPs.

13. National growth recorded in January 2025 for 2024/25 is 10.8% [Education, health and care plans, Reporting year 2025 - Explore education statistics - GOV.UK](#)

14. The tables below shows the number of EHCPs and the percentage growth by provision type. This analysis is used to identify trends to inform the unmitigated forecast of EHCPs.

All EHCPs by provision type	Jan-22	EHCP Increase	% Increase	Jan-23	EHCP Increase	% Increase	Jan-24	EHCP Increase	% Increase	Jan-25	EHCP Increase	% Increase
Mainstream schools inc. Nursery/Private, Voluntary and Independent (PVI)	1,830	261	17%	2,084	254	14%	2,368	284	14%	2,583	215	9%
Resource Provision/SEN Unit	88	-6	-6%	132	44	50%	148	16	12%	147	-1	-1%
Special Schools	706	44	7%	778	72	10%	817	39	5%	874	57	7%
NMSS/ISS/SPIs	337	78	30%	545	208	62%	613	68	12%	600	-13	-2%
Alternative Provision (AP) and Pupil Referral Unit (PRU)	11	2	225	19	8	73%	19	0	0%	10	-9	-47%
FE college & sixth form	440	99	29%	471	31	7%	611	140	30%	656	45	7%
Total	3,412	478	16.0%	4,029	617	18.0%	4,576	547	13.6%	4,870	294	6.4%

All EHCPs (total) by provision type	Jan-22	Jan-23	Jan-24	Jan-25
Mainstream schools inc. Nursery/Private, Voluntary and Independent (PVI)	54%	52%	52%	53%
Resource Provision/SEN Unit	3%	3%	3%	3%
Special Schools	21%	19%	18%	18%
NMSS/ISS/SPIs	10%	14%	13%	12%
Alternative Provision (AP) and Pupil Referral Unit (PRU)	0%	0%	0%	0%
FE college & sixth form	13%	12%	13%	13%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%

15. The table below shows the number of new/first EHCPs issued in the calendar year 2024. The number of new/first EHCPs issued reduced by 9.2% compared with EHCPs issued in 2023 (The number of first EHCPs in the calendar year 2023 was a reduction of 3.6% on the previous year).

16. 88% of new/first EHCPs have been issued to mainstream children and young people, which is consistent with previous years. 6% of children with a new/first EHCP have entered specialist provision.

17. National growth of new/first EHCPs as at January 2025 is 15.8%. [Education, health and care plans, Reporting year 2025 - Explore education statistics - GOV.UK](#)

New/First EHCPs by provision type	Jan-22	% Increase	% of new/first plans in each provision type	Jan-23	% Increase	% of new/first plans in each provision type	Jan-24	% Increase	% of new/first plans in each provision type	Jan-25	% Increase	% of new/first plans in each provision type
Mainstream schools inc. Nursery/Private, Voluntary and Independent (PVI)	578	3%	88%	602	4%	81%	628	4%	88%	571	-9.1%	88%
Resource Provision/SEN Unit	8	100%	1%	24	200%	3%	9	-63%	1%	2	-77.8%	0.3%
LA Special	30	11%	5%	42	40%	6%	24	-43%	3%	32	33.3%	5%
NMSS/Independent/SPI	15	-35%	2%	47	213%	6%	19	-60%	3%	9	-52.6%	1%
Alternative Provision (AP) and Pupil Referral Unit (PRU)	7	75%	1%	10	43%	1%	9	-10%	1%	3	-66.7%	0.4%
FE college & sixth form	16	-24%	2%	17	6%	2%	26	53%	4%	32	23.1%	5%
Total	654	2.3%	100%	742	13.5%	100%	715	-3.6%	100%	649	-9.2%	100%

Basis of EHCP Forecasting

- 18.** The council must submit a SEN 2 return in January each year setting out the latest information on EHCP numbers.
- 19.** The data from the January 2025 SEN2 return represents the 2024/25 outturn position and is therefore the basis used for forecasting in this plan.
- 20.** The table below shows the original DSG management plan forecast position (approved by C&F committee 29 April 2024 which was the original submission to the DfE Safety Valve Programme) and the reprofiled DSG management plan (shared with C&F committee November 2024), compared with the SEN2 January 2025 outturn position (representing 2024/25).
- 21.** The overall outturn position of the number of EHCPs is 1.6% lower than the forecast produced last year and shared with C&F committee November 2024, however there are some variances when broken down by provision type.
- 22.** The largest variance relates to AP/PRU, however this is positive to see that our CYP with an EHCP are attending a mainstream school or special school rather than a pupil referral unit which is usually associated with CYP who have been excluded from an education setting. The second largest variance relates to RP/SEN units. Although progress has been made to open new provisions, at the date of census the places were not occupied, due to timing of openings compared with the timing of the plan.

	2024/25	2024/25	2024/25	
Type	Original Forecast April 24	Reprofiled based on 31.03.24 outturn	Actual Jan 2025	% Variance from reprofiled
Mainstream	2,649	2,546	2,583	1%
RP / SEN Units	172	180	147	-18%
Special Schools	922	927	874	-6%
NMSS & Independent	814	639	600	-6%
Post 16 & FE	588	626	656	5%
AP/Pupil Referral Unit (PRU)	19	19	10	-47%
Total EHCPs	5,164	4,937	4,870	-1%

Unmitigated Forecasts by Provision Type

23. The unmitigated forecast is the “do nothing” position. However, as we move through the life of the plan, we will continue to reprofile the forecast accordingly, based on outturn EHCP numbers.

24. The unmitigated forecast assumes that the levels of growth will fall in line with national levels of growth.

25. The table below shows the unmitigated forecast by provision type. The table also shows EHCP non-cumulative growth and the % growth year on year.

Reprofiled based on outturn 31.03.25	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5	Year 6	Year 7	Year 8
	Actual	Unmitigated Forecast						
Type	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28	2028/29	2029/30	2030/31	2031/32
Mainstream	2,583	2,945	3,328	3,760	4,210	4,675	5,189	5,759
RP / SEN Units	147	147	147	147	147	147	147	147
Special Schools	874	874	874	874	874	874	874	874
NMSS & Independent	600	826	1,067	1,339	1,621	1,912	2,235	2,593
Post 16 & FE	656	748	845	955	1,070	1,187	1,317	1,463
AP/Pupil Referral Unit (PRU)	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10
Total EHCPs	4,870	5,550	6,271	7,085	7,932	8,805	9,772	10,846
EHCP Growth		680	721	814	847	873	967	1074
% Growth		14%	13%	13%	12%	11%	11%	11%

Mitigated Forecasts

26. The mitigated forecast has been produced by using the unmitigated forecast (shown in the table above) and applying mitigations to reduce the overall growth and realign provision types. Mitigations have been adjusted since the original submission to recognise any information/intelligence previously not known.

27. All mitigations focus on **RIGHT SUPPORT, RIGHT TIME, RIGHT PLACE**.

28. The mitigations focus on:

- Supporting mainstream schools to adopt inclusive practice to enable more children and young people to remain in mainstream settings where appropriate, and embedding a graduated approach which sets clear guidance on support that should be available in mainstream settings.
- Strengthening the SEN support offer available in mainstream schools to reduce escalation of children and young people's needs and manage demand for EHCPs. This should include targeted investment on effective early intervention.
- Strengthening the professional networks across mainstream settings to promote learning and confidence in meeting children and young people's needs, including articulating school level inclusion standards.
- Expanding specialist provision within the LA appropriately to meet the needs of children and young people within the authority.
- Securing collaboration and financial commitment from partner agencies where appropriate, ensuring health partners make adequate contributions to provision.
- Developing and implementing a clear planning and decision-making process for placements, in line with the sufficiency strategy.
- Strengthening oversight and contracting with independent and non-maintained schools to ensure value for money, including reviewing approval routes of expensive placements.
- Strengthening the EHCP annual review process so EHCPs can be stepped down where children and young people's needs have been met appropriately and we can appropriately celebrate success.
- Reviewing and developing a clear SEND financial strategy that ensures case level decision making is strategic and appropriate.

29. The table below shows the mitigated forecast, which is based on the unmitigated forecast and applying mitigation measures.

30. By 2027/28 we are aiming to have 0% growth in EHCPs, followed by a target of negative growth in the remaining years to 2030/31 and then stabilise growth from 2031/32 onwards.

Reprofiled based on outturn 31.03.25	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5	Year 6	Year 7	Year 8
	Actual	Mitigated Forecast						
Type	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28	2028/29	2029/30	2030/31	2031/32
Mainstream	2,583	2,624	2,563	2,528	2,355	2,139	1,894	1,894
RP / SEN Units	147	255	430	430	430	430	430	430
Special Schools	874	944	1,022	1,113	1,204	1,252	1,252	1,252
NMSS & Independent	600	522	358	295	222	126	66	65
Post 16 & FE	656	662	670	675	673	672	662	662
AP/Pupil Referral Unit (PRU)	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10
Total EHCPs	4,870	5,017	5,053	5,051	4,894	4,629	4,314	4,313
EHCP Growth	294	147	36	-2	-157	-265	-315	-1
% Growth	6.4%	3%	1%	0%	-3%	-5%	-7%	0%

31. The tables below detail the reprofiled non-cumulative growth/reduction required each year by provision type (the first table: EHCP numbers and the second table: percentage change in EHCP growth)

Reprofiled based on outturn 31.03.25	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5	Year 6	Year 7	Year 8
	Actual	Mitigated Forecast						
Type	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28	2028/29	2029/30	2030/31	2031/32
Mainstream	215	41	-6	-34	-173	-216	-245	0
RP / SEN Units	-1	108	175	0	0	0	0	0
Special Schools	57	70	78	91	91	48	0	0
NMSS & Independent	-13	-78	-165	-63	-73	-96	-60	-1
Post 16 & FE	45	6	7	4	-2	-1	-10	0
AP/Pupil Referral Unit (PRU)	-9	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total EHCPs	294	147	36	-2	-157	-265	-315	-1

Reprofiled based on outturn 31.03.25	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5	Year 6	Year 7	Year 8
	Actual	Mitigated Forecast						
Type	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28	2028/29	2029/30	2030/31	2031/32

Mainstream	9%	2%	-2%	-1%	-7%	-9%	-11%	0%
RP / SEN Units	-1%	73%	69%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Special Schools	7%	8%	8%	9%	8%	4%	0%	0%
NMSS & Independent	-2%	-13%	-32%	-18%	-25%	-43%	-48%	-2%
Post 16 & FE	-47%	1%	1%	1%	0%	0%	-2%	0%
AP/Pupil Referral Unit (PRU)	7%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Total EHCPs	6.4%	3%	1%	0%	-3%	-5%	-7%	0%

Unmitigated and Mitigated EHCP Forecast – Comparison with prior versions of the DSG management plan

- 32.** The three tables below show the original EHCP forecasts (submitted to the Safety Valve programme in December 2023), the reprofiled EHCP forecast (based on 31.03.24 outturn, presented to C&F committee in September 2024) and the newly reprofiled EHCP forecast (based on 31.03.25) for both unmitigated EHCPs and mitigated EHCPs. **Please note the latest forecast shows an additional year 2031/2032, to demonstrate that after the seven year plan, the aim is to stabilise growth and mitigated EHCPs to remain at the same level.**
- 33.** The mitigated EHCP forecast, shows that there will inevitably be growth in the first couple of years but the level of EHCPs will decline over the later years of the plan and the proportions of EHCPs in provision types will differ. Ensuring that children and young people are placed in the right type of provision has a significant impact on the overall affordability and sustainability of the financial forecast and will allow services to be provided with in budget.

	Year1	Year2	Year3	Year4	Year5	Year6	Year7
Original Forecast December 2023 (C&F Committee April 24)	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28	2028/29	2029/30	2030/31
Unmitigated	5,484	6,247	7,051	7,892	8,756	9,626	10,585
Mitigated	5,164	5,300	5,240	5,197	5,061	4,769	4,413
% Unmitigated growth of EHCPs	15%	14%	13%	12%	11%	10%	10%
% Mitigated growth of EHCPs	8%	3%	-1%	-1%	-3%	-6%	-7%
Impact of mitigations	-320	-947	-1,811	-2,695	-3,695	-4,857	-6,172

	Year1	Year2	Year3	Year4	Year5	Year6	Year7
Reprofiled based on outturn 31.03.24 (C&F Committee November 2024)	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28	2028/29	2029/30	2030/31
Unmitigated	5,216	5,941	6,713	7,581	8,489	9,422	10,455
Mitigated	4,937	5,115	5,138	5,014	4,815	4,643	4,314
% Unmitigated growth of EHCPs	14%	14%	13%	13%	12%	11%	11%
% Mitigated growth of EHCPs	8%	4%	0%	-2%	-4%	-4%	-7%
Impact of mitigations	-279	-826	-1,575	-2,567	-3,674	-4,779	-6,141

	Year1 (actual)	Year2	Year3	Year4	Year5	Year6	Year7	Year8
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Reprofiled based on outturn 31.03.25	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28	2028/29	2029/30	2030/31	2031/32
Unmitigated	4870	5,550	6,271	7,085	7,932	8,805	9,772	10,846
Mitigated	4870	5,017	5,053	5,051	4,894	4,629	4,314	4,313
% Unmitigated growth of EHCPs	6.40%	14%	13%	13%	12%	11%	11%	11%
% Mitigated growth of EHCPs	6.40%	3%	1%	0%	-3%	-5%	-7%	0%
Impact of mitigations		-533	-1218	-2034	-3038	-4176	-5458	-6533

Financial Summary of the DSG Management Plan

- 34.** The overall DSG deficit figure reported within the accounts at 31 March 2025 is £112.1 million. This is made up of high needs deficit of £113.7 million plus an underspend of early years DSG of £1.6 million.
- 35.** The high needs funding has been forecasted using DfE guidance as 3% growth each year.
- 36.** The high needs funding allocation for 2025/26 is £63m
- 37.** The table below is a financial forecast in the DSG management plan for the **unmitigated position**. The forecast has been broken down over provisions types and details the expenditure, DSG income, school block transfer, the in-year deficit position, the deficit reserve brought forward from the previous year, resulting in the total deficit reserve position.
- 38.** The unmitigated financial forecast is without mitigations, the do-nothing position. Whereas the mitigated financial forecast includes mitigations which are detailed within the Cheshire East Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) and Alternative Provision (AP) Strategy and Development Plan – “One Plan”.
- 39.** The unmitigated forecast position for 2031-32 shows total expenditure of £299.2 million against an expected grant of £75.3 million, resulting in an in-year deficit of £223.9 million and a total deficit reserve position of £990.3 million.

	Outturn	Unmitigated Forecast						
Provision Type	2024-25	2025-26	2026-27	2027-28	2028-29	2029-30	2030-31	2031-32
	£m	£m	£m	£m	£m	£m	£m	£m
Mainstream	22.3	25.1	27.8	30.7	33.9	37.2	40.8	44.7
RP	3.5	3.0	3.0	3.0	3.0	3.0	3.0	3.0
Special	23.7	22.1	22.1	22.1	22.1	22.1	22.1	22.1
NMSS & Independent Special Schools	33.9	47.3	64.9	86.5	111.4	139.3	171.7	209.6
FE Colleges	4.6	6.1	7.4	8.4	9.5	10.5	11.7	13.0
Alternative Provision	3.9	3.6	3.6	3.6	3.7	3.7	3.7	3.7
Sensory & SALT	2.1	2.0	2.0	2.0	2.1	2.1	2.1	2.1
Pay & Pensions	-	0.9	0.9	0.9	0.9	0.9	0.9	0.9
High Needs Expenditure	93.9	110.1	131.7	157.3	186.5	218.8	255.9	299.2

High Needs DSG Income	(57.4)	(63.0)	(64.9)	(66.9)	(68.9)	(71.0)	(73.1)	(75.3)
School Block Transfer	(1.4)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
In year Surplus / Deficit	35.1	47.1	66.8	90.5	117.6	147.9	182.8	223.9
Surplus / Deficit Brought Forward	78.7	112.1	160.8	227.6	318.0	435.7	583.5	766.4
High Needs Deficit Reserve	113.7	159.2	227.6	318.0	435.7	583.5	766.4	990.3
Early Years Reserve (Underspend)	(1.6)	1.6						
Total DSG Deficit Reserve	112.1	160.8						

- 40.** The table below is a financial forecast in the DSG management plan for the **mitigated position**. The forecast has been broken down over provisions types and details the expenditure, DSG income, school block transfer, the in-year deficit position, the deficit reserve brought forward from the previous year, resulting in the total deficit reserve position.
- 41.** The mitigated forecast position for 2031-32 shows total expenditure of £69.8 million against an expected grant and school block transfer of £75.3 million, resulting in an in-year surplus of £7.8 million and a total deficit position of £197.6 million.
- 42.** As previously reported, the plan aims to achieve an in year balanced position in the seventh year.

	Outturn	Mitigated Forecast						
Provision Type	2024-25	2025-26	2026-27	2027-28	2028-29	2029-30	2030-31	2031-32
	£m	£m	£m	£m	£m	£m	£m	£m
Mainstream	22.3	22.7	21.6	20.3	19.3	18.1	16.7	16.1
RP	3.5	3.7	6.3	7.4	7.1	7.1	7.1	7.1
Special	23.7	23.1	24.9	27.1	28.4	29.3	29.5	29.5
NMSS & Independent Special Schools	33.9	35.3	27.7	21.7	17.3	11.8	6.8	5.0
FE Colleges	4.6	5.6	6.0	6.0	6.0	6.0	5.9	5.9
Alternative Provision	3.9	3.6	3.4	3.2	3.2	3.2	3.2	3.2

Sensory & SALT	2.1	1.9	1.9	1.9	2.0	2.0	2.0	2.0
Pay & Pensions	-	0.9	0.9	0.9	0.9	0.9	0.9	0.9
High Needs DSG Expenditure	93.9	96.8	92.7	88.5	84.1	78.3	72.1	69.8
High Needs DSG Income	(57.4)	(63.0)	(64.9)	(66.9)	(68.9)	(71.0)	(73.1)	(75.3)
School Block Transfer	(1.4)	(1.5)	(2.3)	(2.3)	(2.3)	(2.3)	(2.3)	(2.3)
In year Surplus / Deficit	35.1	32.3	25.4	19.3	12.9	5.0	(3.3)	(7.8)
Surplus / Deficit Brought Forward	78.7	112.1	146.0	171.4	190.8	203.7	208.7	205.4
High Needs Deficit Reserve	113.7	144.4	171.4	190.8	203.7	208.7	205.4	197.6
Early Years Reserve (Underspend)	(1.6)	1.6						
Total DSG Deficit Reserve	112.1	146.0						

Financial Summary Comparison against previous versions of the DSG management plan

43. The following three tables show the unmitigated deficit forecast and the mitigated deficit forecast and highlights the monetary value of the impact of mitigations. The first table shows the original plan (approved by C&F Committee April 24), the second table shows the reprofiled plan (shared with C&F Committee November 24) and the most recent reprofiled forecast based on the outturn position of 31 March 2025.
44. For comparison, the mitigated deficit position in 2030/31 has reduced to £205.4 million. The original forecast was £284.8 million, the forecast based on 31.03.24 was £236.7 million. **This is a £79.4 million reduction compared to the original forecast.**
45. The main contributing factors resulting in a lower deficit position than initially anticipated are due to:
- An increased DSG high needs allocation for 2025/26 of £63m, compared to £59m. Over the 7 years of the plan this amounts to approximately £24.7m additional income (assuming a 3% increase year on year).
 - Approximately £3m reduction in expenditure mainly relating to a revision of average costs for Independent special schools and non-maintained special schools.

	Year1	Year2	Year3	Year4	Year5	Year6	Year7
Original Forecast December 2023 (C&F Committee April 24)	2024-25	2025-26	2026-27	2027-28	2028-29	2029-30	2030-31
	£m	£m	£m	£m	£m	£m	£m
Unmitigated cumulative deficit	154.6	244.6	363.5	514.8	702.2	929.1	1,200.9
Mitigated cumulative deficit	140.9	189.0	227.7	256.5	276.2	285.4	284.8
Impact of mitigations	(13.7)	(55.6)	(135.8)	(258.3)	(426.0)	(643.7)	(916.1)

	Year1	Year2	Year3	Year4	Year5	Year6	Year7
Reprofiled based on outturn 31.03.24 (C&F Committee November 2024)	2024-25	2025-26	2026-27	2027-28	2028-29	2029-30	2030-31
	£m	£m	£m	£m	£m	£m	£m
Unmitigated cumulative deficit	132.6	208.7	310.8	443.8	612.2	820.0	1,073.0
Mitigated cumulative deficit	120.1	159.2	190.7	213.9	229.5	237.3	236.7
Impact of mitigations	(12.5)	(49.5)	(120.1)	(229.9)	(382.7)	(582.7)	(836.3)

	Year1	Year2	Year3	Year4	Year5	Year6	Year7	Year8
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Reprofiled based on outturn 31.03.25	2024-25	2025-26	2026-27	2027-28	2028-29	2029-30	2030-31	2031-32
	£m	£m	£m	£m	£m	£m	£m	£m
Unmitigated cumulative deficit	112.1	160.8	227.6	318.0	435.7	583.5	766.4	990.3
Mitigated cumulative deficit	112.1	146.0	171.4	190.8	203.7	208.7	205.4	197.6
Impact of mitigations	-	(14.8)	(56.2)	(127.3)	(232.0)	(374.8)	(560.9)	(792.7)

46. Glossary

Term	Meaning
DSG Management Plan	Dedicated Schools Grant Management Plan
EHCP	Education, Health and Care Plan
SEND	Special Educational Needs and Disabilities
SEN2	Special Educational Needs Survey
AY	Academic Year
NA	Needs Assessment
DfE	Department for Education
RP	Resource Provision - within a mainstream school
SEN Units	Special Education Needs Units
Special Schools	Maintained, academy, free schools, independent both within and outside of Cheshire East
NMSS ISS SPIs	Non-maintained special schools Independent special schools Specialist post 16 institutes
AP	Alternative provision
PVI	Private, Voluntary and Independent Nursery
SALT	Sensory & Speech and Language Therapy
PRU	Pupil Referral Unit
SI	Supported Internships

Children and Families Committee Work Programme 2025 - 26

Report Reference	Title	Purpose of Report	Lead Officer	Consultation	Equality Impact Assessment	Part of Budget and Policy Framework	Exempt Item	Comments
10 November 2025								
CF/03/25-26	Second Financial Review of 2025/26	To scrutinise and comment on the Second Financial Review and Performance position of 2025/26, including progress on policy proposals and material variances from the MTFS and (if necessary) approve Supplementary Estimates and Virements.	Executive Director of Resources, Section 151 Officer	No	No	Yes	No	Decision/Scrutiny
CF/04/25-26	Medium Term Financial Strategy Consultation 2026/27-2029/30	To provide feedback in relation to their financial responsibilities as identified within the Constitution and linked to the budget alignment approved by the Finance Sub-Committee in March 2025	Executive Director of Resources, Section 151 Officer	No	No	Yes	No	Decision/Scrutiny
CF/20/25-26	Cheshire East Safeguarding Children's Partnership Annual Report	To update the committee on the Cheshire East Safeguarding Children Partnership's activity over the past year.	Director of Commissioning, Quality Assurance and Partnerships	TBC	TBC	No	TBC	Scrutiny
CF/23/25-26	Improvement Plan Progress	To update committee on progress against the improvement plan to address the findings from the Ofsted inspection of local authority children's services (ILACS) in February and March 2024, and to ensure committee can scrutinise impact on outcomes for children and young people.	Director of Commissioning, Quality Assurance and Partnerships	No	No	No	No	Scrutiny
CF/18/25-26	Annual Youth Justice Plan	To endorse the annual youth justice plan	Director of Family Help and Children's Social Care	No	TBC	TBC	TBC	Decision
CF/34/25-26	SEND and AP 'One Plan' Progress Update	To update committee on progress against delivery of the SEND and AP 'One Plan'	Executive Director Children's Services	N/A	No	No	No	Scrutiny

Children and Families Committee Work Programme 2025 - 26

19 January 2026								
CF/05/25-26	Third Financial Review 2025/26	To scrutinise and comment on the Third Financial Review and Performance position of 2024/25, and (if necessary) approve Supplementary Estimates and Virements.	Executive Director of Resources, Section 151 Officer	No	No	Yes	No	Scrutiny
CF/06/25-26	Medium Term Financial Strategy Consultation 2026/27 to 2029/30 Provisional Settlement	To provide feedback in relation to their financial responsibilities as identified within the Constitution and linked to the budget alignment approved by the Finance Sub-Committee in March 2025.	Executive Director of Resources, Section 151 Officer	No	No	Yes	No	Scrutiny and Decision
CF/24/25-26	Improvement Plan Progress	To update committee on progress against the improvement plan to address the findings from the Ofsted inspection of local authority children's services (ILACS) in February and March 2024, and to ensure committee can scrutinise impact on outcomes for children and young people To update committee on the findings of the third Ofsted monitoring visit	Director of Commissioning, Quality Assurance and Partnerships	No	No	No	No	Scrutiny
CF/35/25-26	Crisis and Resilience Fund 2026 - 2029 - Delivery Plan	Approval of the Crisis and Resilience Fund Delivery proposal for 2026/27, 2027/28 and 2028/29.	Executive Director Children's Services	No	Yes	Yes	No	Decision
16 February 2026								
13 April 2026								
CF/07/25-26	Service Budgets 2026/27	To set out the allocation of approved budgets for 2025/26 for services under the Committee's remit, as determined by Finance Sub Committee	Executive Director of Resources, Section 151 Officer	No	No	Yes	No	Scrutiny

Children and Families Committee Work Programme 2025 - 26

Task and Finish Groups

Group	Membership	Established	Purpose
Review of Home to School Transport - This is a cross-directorate Task & Finish Group with Highways & Transport Committee	C & F - Cllrs M Beanland, L Crane, E Gilman, B Puddicombe H & T – Cllrs H Faddes, M Goldsmith, M Muldoon	April 2025	<p>This project will enable members of both Highways & Transport Committee and Children & Families Committee to jointly scrutinise the Councils' arrangements for provision of Home-to-School Transport, including SEND.</p> <p>The Council provides transport for approximately 4000 students to educational establishments in the borough and beyond. The MTFS provides an increase in budget (FY2025-26) of £1.5 million with further growth expected in future years. Transport services make up 17% of the overall children's revenue budget.</p> <p>There have been recent planned changes to the council's policies, procedures and procurement arrangements for home-to-school transport and members are interested to understand the effectiveness of these and what else can be done to ensure services provide value-for-money.</p>
Families First Programme	Cllrs L Crane, S Bennett-Wake, E Gilman, G Hayes, G Smith, Cllr J Saunders	May 2025	<p>The objectives of this project are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To understand the rationale and evidence base for place-based locality working and locality proposals for multi-disciplinary and multi-agency working for children and families in Cheshire East. • To understand how this links to the Families First Partnership approach and the requirement to implement the reforms and be up and running by 31st March 2026.

Children and Families Committee Work Programme 2025 - 26

			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To contribute towards the development of the Families First Partnership plans.
Review of Special Guardianship Orders (SGO's)	TBC	TBC	TBC

Briefing Reports/Reports for noting

Title	Purpose of Report	Lead Officer	Expected Circulation Date via the Members Hub

Note: These reports will be circulated outside of committee meetings - [Library folder - Reports for Noting - Reports for Noting | Cheshire East Council](#)

CHESHIRE EAST COUNCIL

Minutes of a meeting of the **Cared For Children and Care Leavers Committee**
held on Tuesday, 4th March, 2025 in the The Capesthorne Room - Town Hall,
Macclesfield SK10 1EA

PRESENT

Councillor C Bulman (Chair)

Councillors M Beanland, S Bennett-Wake, E Gilman, G Hayes, S Holland,
S Adams, H Seddon, L Wardlaw and J Snowball

Officers:

Josie Lloyd, Democratic Services Officer
Richard Nash, Interim Director of Family Help and Children's Social Care
Lisa Davies, Interim Improvement Director Children's Services
Theresa Leavy, Interim Executive Director of Children's Services (joined
remotely via Microsoft Teams)
Annemarie Parker, Head of Service – Cared for Children and Care Leavers
Annie Britton, Participation Lead
Nicola Wycherley, Designated Nurse Cared for Children, Integrated Care
Board

28 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors D Clark, B Posnett,
B Puddicombe and J Saunders.

Councillors H Seddon, S Adams, J Snowball and L Wardlaw attended as
substitutes.

29 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

30 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING**RESOLVED:**

That the minutes of the meeting held on 3 December 2024 be agreed as a
correct record.

31 UPDATE FROM THE SHADOW CARED FOR CHILDREN AND CARE LEAVERS COMMITTEE

The committee received a presentation from the Care Leaver Ambassadors from the Cared for Children and Care Leavers Shadow Committee.

The presentation provided an overview of the participation in the Children's Services improvement plan. Key points included:

- That the care leaver ambassadors have reviewed the Pathway Plan and provided feedback to the Care Leaver Service, such as ensuring it is easily understandable, making the questions relevant to the young person, the need to listen to young people and their pathway plans, and the importance of asking young people who they would like to attend their review
- The care leaver ambassadors have been working with the Commissioning Team to gather views of care experienced young people about supported accommodation to be included in the upcoming contract tender process
- The ambassadors met with Peter Cartledge to discuss the Junction 16+ app which was designed to communicate and provide information and support to care leavers in Cheshire East
- Young people had participated in the supported accommodation feedback survey

32 UPDATE FROM THE CORPORATE PARENTING EXECUTIVE BOARD

The committee received an update on the work of the Corporate Parenting Executive Board.

It was highlighted that there was an overview of workstreams 1, 2 and 3 on the first page of the update document within the agenda pack. With regard workstream 1, Good Homes for All, it was acknowledged that it was essential to be joined up on accommodation at every stage.

The update document included data around areas that the Executive Board wanted to understand more and improve.

The Chair congratulated officers on 86% of PEPs rated as good or outstanding, included within the virtual school scorecard.

33 CHILDREN IN CARE ANNUAL REPORT

The committee received the Children in Care Annual Report for 2023-24. The report on Health Outcomes for Cheshire East Cared for Children and Care Experienced Young People was also presented alongside this report.

RESOLVED:

That the report be noted.

34 HEALTH OUTCOMES FOR CHESHIRE EAST CARED FOR CHILDREN AND CARE EXPERIENCED YOUNG PEOPLE

The committee received the NHS Cheshire and Merseyside report on health outcomes.

RESOLVED:

That the report be noted.

35 INDEPENDENT REVIEWING OFFICER ANNUAL REPORT

The committee received the Independent Reviewing Officers Annual Report for 2023-24.

RESOLVED:

That the report be noted

36 CARED FOR CHILDREN AND CARE LEAVERS COMMITTEE QUARTER 3 SCORECARD

The committee received the Cared for Children and Care Leavers Committee Q3 scorecard for 2024-25.

RESOLVED:

That the report be noted.

37 HEALTH REPORT FOR CHESHIRE EAST CARED FOR CHILDREN AND CARE LEAVERS COMMITTEE

The committee received the NHS Cheshire and Merseyside quarter 3 report for 2024/25.

RESOLVED:

That the report be noted.

The meeting commenced at 2.00 pm and concluded at 3.10 pm

Councillor C Bulman (Chair)

CHESHIRE EAST COUNCIL

Minutes of a meeting of the Cared For Children and Care Leavers Committee

held on Tuesday, 24th June, 2025 in The Capesthorne Room - Town Hall,
Macclesfield, SK10 1EA

PRESENT

Councillor Laura Crane (Chair)
Councillor J Saunders (Vice-Chair)

Councillors M Beanland, S Bennett-Wake, D Clark, R Fletcher, E Gilman,
S Holland, B Posnett and B Puddicombe

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE

Dawn Godfrey, Executive Director, Children's Services
Tracy Stephen, Director of Family Help and Children's Social Care
Laura Rogerson, Head of Service, Inclusion
Nicola Wycherley, Designated Nurse
Alison Sollom, Interim Head of Cared for Children and Care Leavers
Kristy Broadhurst, Service Manager, Cared for Children
Samantha Derbyshire, Head of Provider Services
Jessica Hillman, Service Manager, Cared for Children
Annie Britton, Participation Lead
Jennifer Ashley, Democratic Services Officer

1 APPOINTMENT OF CHAIR AND VICE CHAIR

RESOLVED:

That Councillor Laura Crane be appointed as Chair for the 2025/26 municipal year.

That Councillor Jos Saunders be appointed as Vice Chair for the 2025/26 municipal year.

2 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor George Hayes.

3 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest received.

4 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the meeting held on 4 March 2025 be approved as a correct record subject to the inclusion of Laura Rogerson, Head of Service, being noted as in attendance.

5 REVIEW OF THE TERMS OF REFERENCE

The committee received the report on the review of the committee's terms of reference, as required on an annual basis.

RESOLVED:

That the Terms of Reference be noted.

6 UPDATE FROM THE CORPORATE PARENTING EXECUTIVE BOARD

The committee received an update on the work of the Corporate Parenting Executive Board.

Details were provided on three workstream areas:

- Good Homes For All - A housing workshop took place on 22 May 2025 with 10 of housing providers, along with 4 Youth Ambassadors to develop a Charter for Care Experienced Young People.
- Good Health and Wellbeing - 2 meetings of this group had taken place with good engagement and attendance
- Good Educational Skills - An action plan workshop had taken place with partners to map out priorities in relation to this workstream. Task and finish groups will be established to progress actions.

Information relating to performance updates from the virtual school and corporate parenting scorecard were also provided.

In addition, the committee received a presentation from the Cared for Children and Care Leavers Shadow Committee that provided details on

- Care Leavers experiences of moving into Independent Accommodation
- The redesign of Independence Packs, with input from the Participation Team and Care Leaver Service, Care Leaver Ambassadors and partner agencies
- Cared for Children engaging with the recommission of Independent Visitor and Advocacy Service with 20 young people taking part

- Cared for Children and Care Leavers had been involved in the recruitment of Senior Managers across the Local Authority

RESOLVED:

That the updates from the Corporate Parenting Executive Board and the Care Leavers Shadow Committee be noted.

7 FOSTERING SERVICE ANNUAL REPORT

The committee received the Fostering Service Annual Report for 2024/25.

It was highlighted to the committee that although the number of Fostering Carers had increased, work was required to recruit and retain more. The service had made improvements and strengthened the service with consistency of staffing.

Members requested information be circulated regarding how they can promote Foster Caring in their wards.

RESOLVED:

That the report be noted.

8 CARED FOR CHILDREN AND CARE LEAVERS COMMITTEE QUARTER 4 SCORECARD

The committee received the Cared for Children and Care Leavers Committee Q4 scorecard for 2024-25.

RESOLVED:

That the report be noted.

The meeting commenced at 2.00 pm and concluded at 3.20 pm

Councillor Laura Crane (Chair)

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Report – Open**Appendix 1 – Not for Publication**

Appendix 1 contains exempt information pursuant to paragraph 3, of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 and is therefore withheld from public inspection.

Children and Families Committee**15 September 2025****Approval to progress with the proposal for the provision of a new Primary school at Basford East, Shavington**

Report of: Dawn Godfrey, Executive Director of Childrens Services**Report Reference No: CF/29/25-26****Ward(s) Affected: Nantwich South and Stapeley, Shavington,
Willaston and Rope, Wybunbury, Crewe South and Haslington.****For Decision****Purpose of Report**

- 1 The purpose of this report is for the Children and Families Committee to consider and approve the proposal to progress with the free school presumption process to open a new primary school in Basford East, Shavington, including the process of attracting potential sponsors to run the new school.
- 2 For Committee to consider and approve entering into a preconstruction services agreement and delegate authority to the Executive Director of Children's Services to award a preconstruction services contract to facilitate the delivery of a new primary school on the Basford East development site together with any other agreements associated with or ancillary to the contract.

Executive Summary

- 3 As the Strategic Commissioner of School Places, Cheshire East Council has a statutory duty to ensure a sufficiency of school places for children resident in its area and a commitment to allow local children to attend their local school wherever possible.

- 4 The Basford East Development is a strategic site within the Cheshire East Council Local Plan (LPS2) and is expected to have a significant impact on education provision in the local area.
- 5 The data analysis indicates the need for additional school places, Reception to Year 6, as a result of the development at Basford East, Shavington. These additional places would be provided by the establishment of a new 1 Form of Entry (FE) Primary School (with the option for a 30-place nursery), with a proposed opening date of September 2028.
- 6 The building will be designed to include the infrastructure and design considerations to increase up to 2 Form of Entry to allow for future expansion if the need arises as a result of additional housing in the local area. The design will be developed to enable the additional capacity of a further form of entry to be added with minimal impact on the existing school, the services and utilities provided will be sufficient to future proof the building and will include a larger hall and other facilities such as offices, staff room and kitchen etc.
- 7 As part of the supporting infrastructure a site for the new primary school has been secured via the phase 1 Section 106 agreement which is large enough to provide up to 2 FE if the future need arises.
- 8 Future housing development schemes in the area include South Cheshire Growth Village (LPS8). As part of the planning process, it is anticipated that the service will request a Section 106 contribution towards the costs for providing additional school places. As detailed in the local plan, 650 houses are expected from this site, which would produce a pupil yield of 188 primary age pupils, 91 secondary age pupils and 8 special educational needs and/ or disabilities (SEND) pupils.
- 9 An expansion at Shavington Academy has been completed to provide an additional 200 places to meet the increasing demand for secondary aged pupils from developments within Shavington, including Basford East the South Cheshire Growth Village.
- 10 This report requests approval to proceed with undertaking the free school presumption process to identify and obtain agreement for a new school sponsor under section 6A of the Education and Inspections Act 2006.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Children and Families Committee is recommended to:

1. Agree to progress with undertaking the free school presumption process to identify and obtain agreement for a new school sponsor under section 6A of the Education and Inspections Act 2006. This will include undertaking a consultation with the local community, local schools, local councillors, town council and local MP. This is not the formal statutory consultation which sponsors are required to undertake.
2. Note that a further report will be provided to committee with the feedback from the consultation process.
3. Grant approval to enter into contract on a direct award basis with the preferred contractor.
4. Approve entering into a pre-construction services agreement and delegate authority to the Executive Director of Children's Services to award a preconstruction services contract to facilitate the delivery of a new primary school on the Basford East development site together with any other agreements associated with or ancillary to the contract where necessary in consultation with the Executive Director of Resources/S151 Officer, the Governance, Compliance and Monitoring Officer and the Executive Director of Place.
5. Approve the increase in the capital budget required to progress with the new school proposal as set out in the confidential Appendix 1 and request Finance sub-committee to approve the virement of the funds from Basic Need grant to support the scheme. (Appendix 1 is confidential as it contains commercially sensitive information).

Background

- 11 The Education Act 2011 changed the arrangements for establishing new schools and introduced section 6A (the 'free school presumption') of the Education and Inspections Act 2006 which requires that, where a local authority identifies the need for a new school in its area, it must seek proposals to establish an academy (free school). Section 6A came into effect on: 1 February 2012 for new mainstream and special schools.
- 12 The free school presumption process for a new primary school at Basford was originally started in December 2021. The service formally

met with Department for Education (DfE) officials to inform them of our intention to commence the free school presumption route for this new school. The service held a briefing session with local members for this area on the 9 December 2021 to discuss the proposals and a briefing session with local school leaders for this area was held on 13 December 2021.

- 13 A report was previously considered by the Children and Families Committee on 10 January 2022 where approval to progress with the free school presumption process to open a new primary school in Basford East, Shavington was sought. The recommendation was approved and the initial consultation regarding the proposed specifications of the school was undertaken between 25 April 2022 and 22 May 2022. The proposed opening of the new school was originally planned for September 2025.
- 14 A report summarising the feedback received during the consultation was presented to Children and Families Committee on 23 September 2022.
- 15 In April 2023, the Council were informed that the developer, Lane End Developments Construction Ltd had gone into administration. Consequently, the Phase 1 of the development, the site where the new school was due to be situated, was closed, no contractors were on site and all construction was stopped. Children and Families committee were updated on the situation and the scheme for the new school was put on hold.
- 16 The land is owned by Onward Build Limited whom have appointed Lovell Homes to deliver the Basford Phase 1 development. Lovell have now established their site set up and have commenced on site. For information, the Basford Phase 2 development on the other side of David Whitby Way is being delivered by Taylor Wimpey who are progressing with the construction phase.
- 17 The free school presumption had initially started in January 2022 and had progressed to draft specification stage including consultation.
- 18 Due to the length of time since the initial consultation and draft school specification documents officers we have been advised by the DfE to re start the process.
- 19 The Children and Families Capital Programme includes a line identified as Shavington Planning Area – Basford New Primary School which has been included within the MTFs and has a current identified budget of £8,040,000. This budget figure was established prior to the design work developed within the feasibility study.

Consultation and Engagement

- 20 In accordance with DfE “Establishing a new academy: the free school presumption route, Guidance for local authorities and new school proposers (May 2024) in order to open a new school, the local authority must follow the free school presumption process.
- 21 Before relaunching the competition to identify the sponsor to run the new school, we will undertake consultation and engagement sessions. As part of the consultation and engagement sessions the local authority will undertake the following:
 - A formal briefing with local councillors
 - A presentation through the Primary Schools Association
 - A presentation and meeting with local schools
- 22 Information will be made available on the Cheshire East website and during the representation period notified to key stakeholders including Ward Members, MP, Diocese, and Town Council. Information will also be emailed to all local schools together with a letter for distribution to their staff, governors, and parents.
- 23 It is proposed that a public drop-in session will be held (venue and dates to be confirmed), with representatives from the local authority in attendance to discuss the proposal and seek views from parents and the local community. Feedback gathered through consultation will be used to help formulate and finalise the local authority’s specification for a new school before its publication inviting expressions of interest from sponsors.
- 24 This is not the formal statutory consultation which sponsors are required to undertake under section 10 of the Academies Act 2010, which takes place during the pre-opening phase i.e., after the sponsor has been selected.
- 25 The DfE free school presumption process for proposing a new school has 9 steps, as set out in table 1, appendix 2. As this programme of work progresses, proposed timelines will be shared to show the suggested milestones achieved.

Reasons for Recommendations

- 26 This recommendation is made on the basis of the pupil forecasts for Weston Primary School (which is the only school within a two mile safe walking route from the Basford East developments) is not a suitable alternative to take in a significant number of additional learners due to

site restrictions. The provision of a new school will ensure that Cheshire East Council meets its statutory duty to ensure that there are sufficient school places in this planning area.

- 27 Current forecasts, for Reception to Year 6 and covering the period 2025 to 2029, indicate a shortage of primary school places at Weston Primary School see table 2, appendix 3. These figures are based on the latest information available and were submitted to the Department for Education in July 2025, but they have yet to be formally approved. The figures do include additional pupils anticipated from new housing in the area, including a proportion of pupils from the Basford East development, but doesn't include the desired 2% level of operational surplus, which is intended to facilitate admissions mid-year, some degree of parental choice and reasonable journey times to school, see table 3, appendix 3.
- 28 In addition to this, and following the necessary consultation process, from September 2022 Weston Primary School has reduced their published admission number from 38 to 30. This will have a cumulative effect on reducing the available places in the area by 8 places starting in Reception from September 2022 until 2028 when the reduction will have worked through each year group.
- 29 The establishment of the new primary school will help deliver the council's strategic plans for the provision of school places and ensure there is access to good quality schools within the area, particularly to ensure that the demand from new housing can be met.
- 30 This proposal incorporates elements of the Cheshire East Plan 2025 - 2029 in that it will support all children to have the best start in life and will increase opportunities for all children and young adults with additional needs ensure all children have a high quality, enjoyable education that enables them to achieve their full potential.
- 31 In line with DfE policy we are initiating the Free school presumption, this is the main route by which local authorities bring about the establishment of new schools to meet the need for additional places. Please find attached a copy of the DfE Free School Presumption guidance.
- 32 The local authority is expected to provide the site for the new school and to meet the associated capital costs and is expected to grant the standard DfE model free school lease (not the academy model lease) to the trust on handover of the new school. It is the department's expectation that the site be made available free or on a peppercorn basis by the local authority to the trust.

- 33 The local authority is also expected to meet the associated capital and pre/post-opening revenue costs. Basic need capital funding is provided by the DfE on an un-ringfenced basis, so that local authorities can provide the places that they need, including through new presumption schools. If costs increase between the specification being drafted and the school opening, these should be covered by the local authority; the department will not provide any funding.

Other Options Considered

- 34 The Council has undertaken a detailed analysis of the named schools in the planning area and concluded that none of the existing schools within the vicinity are suitable to accommodate the children expected to arise from the development at Basford East. The schools included are Weston Village Primary School, Shavington Primary School, The Berkeley Academy, Wybunbury Delves C of E Primary School, and Wistaston Church Lane Academy.
- 35 Please see table 4, appendix 3
- 36 Of the schools on the above table only Weston Village Primary School is within two miles of the furthest point in the development. Weston Primary School is the catchment school for the new development at Basford East but due to site restraints/limitations has been ruled out as a potential expansion.
- 37 School Admissions and Transport data was used to gather information on distance to schools and safe walking routes in the Shavington Planning Area. School admissions use a straight-line distance measurement to allocate school places. Eligibility for transport on distance is calculated based on the shortest safe and available walking routes to schools. From this information it has been identified Weston Village Primary School as the only suitable school within two miles safe walking route of the Basford East development
- 38 In table 4, appendix 3, Wybunbury Delves, Shavington and Wistaston Church Lane are showing surplus places however these schools are further than the two mile distance from the development and in addition to this there are no safe walking routes from the Basford East development, therefore have been discounted.

Option	Impact	Risk
Not increase mainstream provision	This would result in a failure to meet our statutory duties as a commissioner of school places and incur increasing costs transport costs	High

Implications and Comments

Monitoring Officer/Legal/Governance

- 39 In determining how to meet needs, the local authority may also take into reasonable consideration its own finances and budgetary position and must comply with its related public law duties.
- 40 Proposals to make significant changes in service provision require consultation with the public and those directly affected, including service users, staff and carers and relevant stakeholders.
- 41 The Gunning principles set out the common law principles to be observed when undertaking consultation. R v London Borough of Brent ex parte Gunning [1985] 84 LGR 168 established these principles, which set out that a consultation is only lawful when these four principles are met:
1. Proposals are still at a formative stage - A final decision has not yet been made, or predetermined, by the decision makers.
 2. There is sufficient information to give 'intelligent consideration' - The information provided must relate to the consultation and must be available, accessible, and easily interpretable for consultees to provide an informed response.
 3. There is adequate time for consideration and response- There must be sufficient opportunity for consultees to participate in the consultation. In the absence of a prescribed statutory period, there is no set timeframe for consultation, though it is widely accepted that twelve-week consultation period is sufficient. The adequacy of the length of time given for consultees to respond can vary depending on the subject and extent of impact of the consultation.
 4. 'Conscientious consideration' must be given to the consultation responses before a decision is made. Decision-makers should be able to provide evidence that they took consultation responses into account.
- 42 Following the consultation, members will then need to take care account of the views expressed in arriving at their decision. Members must give clear and conscientious consideration to any responses received to the consultation.
- 43 Subject to obtaining all the required approvals, the Property Projects Team have been engaged to manage the development and delivery of this project. The feasibility stage has been completed and instructions given to progress with the /planning submission using consultants from the Construction Related Consultancy Services Framework.

- 44 Committee approval is required before we can enter into a contractual agreement with the Contractor, however, the intention is to have the formal documentation in place to move forward quickly.
- 45 The report contains a confidential appendix that is classed as exempt information under paragraph 3 of the exempt information categories contained in paragraph 24 of the Access to Information Procedure Rules contained in the Council's Constitution dated December 2024 at Chapter 3 part 2 and contains information relating to the financial and business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information). The information is commercially sensitive relating to the construction costs of the project. The public interest test has been applied, and it is concluded that the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosure at this time.

Section 151 Officer/Finance

- 46 Funding for Children and Families capital programme is through a range of routes with the main ones relating to the use of the 'Basic Need' grant along with agreed Section 106 developer funding for education to mitigate the need for additional school places due to the impact of new housing. In addition to this external DFE grant has been allocated that supports SEN/High Needs schemes including provision of additional places.
- 47 The Council approved an £8.040m budget for the new primary school at Basford in the Medium-Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) 2025-26 on the 26 February 2025. The scheme is identified in the MTFS and Children and Families Capital programme as Shavington planning area – Basford New Primary School and is to be funded by a combination of Section 106 developer contributions and Basic Need Grant.
- 48 This £8.040m budget figure is currently made up with the following funding: -
 - Basic Need grant funding – £5,512,000
 - Section 106 developer contributions – £2,528,000
- 49 Phase 1 Basford East, planning reference 14/4025N, is for a total of 490 dwellings, with a Section 106 contribution of £1.568m towards the build costs of the new school.
- 50 Phase 2 Basford East, planning reference 15/1537N, is for a total of 325 dwellings, with a Section 106 contribution of £960,000 towards the build costs of the new school.

- 51 In addition to the agreed contributions detailed above, the planning application 22/1447N approved by strategic planning committee will provide an additional contribution once the S106 agreement has been signed. This element can be used to support the additional 2 FE infrastructure costs.
- 52 Revenue funding for schools is provided through the schools' block of the dedicated schools grant (DSG).
- 53 The new and growing school will be funded through the schools funding formula in place at the time and in line with the relevant minimum per pupil funding levels.

Human Resources

- 54 There are no additional human resource implications for the council.
- 55 Any new establishment will open as a free school and HR responsibility will be with the successful sponsor which arise as part of the project.

Risk Management

- 56 The proposed new school has been identified to address a basic need requirement for primary school places within Shavington because of a new housing development. Provision of this new school will ensure that the council meets its statutory duty to provide sufficient school places within two miles and within a safe walking route.
- 57 If additional places are not provided in Shavington, parents of Cheshire East children who are resident in the Shavington area may be unable to secure places at their local school and may be required to travel over two miles to alternative Cheshire East schools requiring transport assistance.
- 58 Should the proposal be approved, the building of the new school will be subject to the necessary planning and building regulation approvals. As the required building would be deemed to be land within the development allocated for education this would not be a change of use that requires consent from the Secretary of State for Education under section 77 of the School Standards and Framework Act and approval from the school.
- 59 A project of this size is subject to considerable risk including challenges associated with the land transfer, cost (a budget cost may not fully reflect the target cost and which may require value engineering), programme deliverability, impact on families on Basford development and the potential for home to school transport if the school is not

delivered on time, speed of residential development (may require the need to add capacity up to 2FE whilst building the 1FE, impact on other local schools.

- 60 All subsequent negotiation over the land transfer and document drafting / agreement will be managed by the Councils Estates and Legal Services teams.
- 61 All the building works will be planned carefully, and contractors will work with the project team to ensure that works are scheduled to keep disruption to a minimum for residents on the development.
- 62 Force Majeure – The global Covid pandemic has identified that there can be some risks that on impact cannot be mitigated against and will inevitably cause some delay, disruption, and any additional costs.
- 63 There is a risk management plan in place, and this will continue to be monitored as part of the Project Management of this scheme.

Impact on other Committees

- 64 Not applicable at this stage.

Policy

- 65 The provision of the new school will support the Council in meeting its statutory duty to provide sufficient school places.
- 66 Local authorities are under a duty to ensure sufficiency of school places in their area (section 14 of the Education Act 1996) and over the last 5 years, the percentage of parents receiving one of their three preferences has remained very strong and in line with the national average Cheshire East have been above national average for 3 of the last 5 years, in 2025 National Average was 98.3% and Cheshire East was 98.9%.
- 67 The Local Authority will determine the published admission number (PAN) from pupils for year groups Reception to Year 6, in line with the statutory timescales set out in the School Admissions Code (2021). The total capacity of the school will be 210 primary aged pupils initially (with the option for a 30 place nursery provision). Standard PAN initially will be 30 per year group.
- 68 The new school may open in stages; this will be agreed following appointment of the sponsor. The preferred option would be that the admissions arrangements were broadly in line with the Local Authority Admissions Arrangements for Community and Voluntary Controlled Schools. The local authority would propose a preferred catchment area

considering catchment areas for neighbouring schools, impact on admissions to both primary and secondary schools and transport.

- 69 Any admissions arrangements would be implemented under the appropriate process and consultation under the School Admissions Code. If the sponsor had alternative preferred oversubscription criteria (for example to allow consistency with other schools in the same Trust) the local authority would be willing to work with the sponsor but the expectation would be that the criteria would serve to meet the needs of the local families so the local authority may object to criteria that conflicted with this purpose.

Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion

- 70 A detailed Equality Impact Assessment will be completed and submitted as part of Step 2, Impact, and equalities assessment, of the DfE Free School Presumption process.

Other Implications

Rural Communities

- 71 There are no direct implications for rural communities although providing sufficient places in rural schools will ensure that pupils can stay in their local community.

Children and Young People including Cared for Children, care leavers and Children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND)

- 72 Providing sufficient school places for all children and young people resident in our area is a statutory duty.

Public Health

- 73 There are no direct implications for public health, however providing sufficient places in their local community could improve the child's social and emotional wellbeing.
- 74 By providing local school places the distances which some children may have to travel to attend school should be reduced thus reduce congestion on the roads and therefore reduce emissions improving the air quality and making a better environment to live in.

Climate Change

- 75 The council has set stretching targets to achieve carbon neutrality both for its own operations and for the wider borough. As one measure to facilitate these targets the council has adopted measures to reduce

carbon from buildings by adopting a Cheshire East low carbon build standard for new build and refurbished buildings.

- 76 It will be necessary to review how pupils will travel to the new school and for all efforts to be made to facilitate sustainable solutions with priority given to active travel and public transport to minimise private car.

Consultation

Name of Consultee	Post held	Date sent	Date returned
<i>Statutory Officer (or deputy):</i>			
Ashley Hughes	Executive Director of Resources/S151 Officer	27/08/25	28/08/25
Kevin o'Keefe	Director of Law and Governance (Monitoring Officer)	28/08/25	29/08/25
<i>Legal and Finance</i>			
Adrian Leslie/Mandy Withington	Principal Lawyer Procurement and Contracts/Principal Lawyer (Commercial Property and Projects)	07/08/25	11/08/25
Helen Donald	Capital Accountant	09/07/25	01/08/25
Ralf Kemp/ Emma Williams	Head of Environmental Services/ Carbon Manager	01/08/25	08/08/25
<i>Other Consultees:</i>			

<i>Executive Directors/Directors/</i>			
Phil Cresswell	Executive Director of Place	13/08/25	15/08/25

Access to Information	
Contact Officer:	<p>Claire Williamson - Director of Strong Start, Family Help and Integration</p> <p>Claire.williamson@cheshireeast.gov.uk</p> <p>Joanne Prophet – School Organisation and Capital Manager</p> <p>Joanne.prophet@cheshireeast.gov.uk</p>
Appendices:	<p>Appendix 1 – Exempt information – Children and Families committee – Basford Report</p> <p>Appendix 2 – New School Basford – Table 1</p> <p>Appendix 3 – New School Basford – Data tables</p>
Background Papers:	<p>1. Children and Families Committee – Basford East Primary School Postponement of scheme – 11 December 2023</p> <p>https://moderngov.cheshireeast.gov.uk/ecminutes/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=963&MID=10097#AI70865</p> <p>2. Children and Families Committee – Capital Programme – 07 April 2025</p> <p>https://moderngov.cheshireeast.gov.uk/ecminutes/documents/s123805/Capital%20Programme%20Update%20April%2007042025.pdf</p> <p>3. DfE guidance on establishing new schools through the free school presumption route</p> <p>https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/663dfcab993111924d9d324a/Free_school_presumption_guidance.pdf</p>

Appendix 2 – New School Basford

Table 1 – Free school presumption process

Step	Process	Detail	Proposed Timescale
1	Local Authority consultation	Consultation of the proposal with local schools, parents, carers, staff, pupils, school governors and trustees, Diocese representatives, local community, and ward members – Minimum of 4 weeks recommended. Feedback received will help formulate the specification for the school and	Autumn 2025 (Date to be confirmed)
2	Impact and Equalities Assessment	Local authorities should complete the Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) of the impact of the proposal, both on existing educational institutions locally and in terms of impact on particular groups of pupils (and others) from an equality's perspective.	TBC
3	Community Cohesion	When considering the specification, the LA should consider its impact on community cohesion.	TBC
4	School Specification	Local authority should draft the school specification and send to the DfE for approval	TBC
5	Seeking proposals	LA and DfE publish the specification and invite potential sponsors to submit their applications. Recommended to allow 6-8 weeks but if time allows 12-14 weeks may be more appropriate	TBC
6	Notifying the department – specification and proposals	Once the specified date for submitting the proposals to the local authority has passed, the local authority must provide the Secretary of State with details of the steps they have taken to seek proposals, and any proposals submitted to them by that date	TBC
7	Assessing proposals	The assessment of proposals should be based on the criteria as set out in the published specification and a clear and transparent process should be followed. Local authorities should invite a department official to be part of the assessment panel. The department official will take part in the interview panel and provide any relevant and up-to-date information the department holds on the trust to help the local authority identify the best and most appropriate proposal.	TBC

Step 8	Due diligence	The local authority should undertake due diligence checks on all proposers, so that the Secretary of State can be satisfied about their suitability to set up and run a free school, before deciding whether or not to enter into a funding agreement with any proposer.	TBC
Step 9	Local authority recommendation	Local authorities provide their assessments of each proposer, and preferred recommendation, to the Secretary of State. This assessment will enable the RD, on behalf of the Secretary of State, to decide on the most suitable proposer to take forward to open the new free school	TBC

Appendix 3 – New School Basford – Data tables

As referred to in section 27 and 28 of the report, table 2 shows the increasing shortfall in places at Weston Primary School for this forecasting period:

	Weston Primary School - Pupil Forecasts					Weston Primary School - Pupil Shortfall/ Surplus Without 2% operational surplus				
Capacity	2025	2026	2027	2028	2029	2025	2026	2027	2028	2029
240	235	266	290	312	333	5	-26	-50	-72	-93
	Table 2 Data Source - 2025 Pupil Forecasts									

Table 3 shows the increasing shortfall in places at Weston Primary School for this forecasting period with the desired 2% level of operational surplus.

	Weston Primary School - Pupil forecasts					Weston Primary School - Pupil Shortfall/ Surplus With 2% operational surplus - 5 additional pupils				
Capacity	2025	2026	2027	2028	2029	2025	2026	2027	2028	2029
240	235	266	290	312	333	0	-31	-55	-77	-98
	Table 3 Data Source - 2025 Pupil Forecasts									

The figures are based on an overall capacity of 240 following the reduction of the PAN from 38 to 30. Once the higher year groups of 38 pupils have moved through the school the capacity is expected to further reduce to 210 which would increase the shortfall. The alterations to the accommodation will be used to support SEND and curriculum delivery.

As referred to in section 35 and 38 of the report, table 4 below, shows the pupil forecast data for the primary schools within this planning area.

		Forecast NOR					Shortfall or Surplus Places				
School	Net Capacity	2025	2026	2027	2028	2029	2025	2026	2027	2028	2029
Weston Village Primary School	240	429	440	433	429	425	-9	-20	-13	-9	-5
Shavington Primary School	420	405	406	406	411	412	15	14	14	9	8

The Berkeley Academy	420	235	266	290	312	333	5	-26	-50	-72	-93
Wybunbury Delves CofE Primary School	209	408	401	391	389	384	12	19	29	31	36
Wistaston Church Lane Primary School	420	181	178	171	174	180	28	31	38	35	29
Totals	1,735	1,658	1,691	1,691	1,715	1,734	51	18	18	-6	-25

Table 4 Data Source - 2025 Pupil Forecasts

By virtue of paragraph(s) 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A
of the Local Government Act 1972.

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