

Children and Families Committee

Agenda

Date: Monday, 13th February, 2023
Time: 2.00 pm
Venue: Committee Suite 1,2 & 3, Westfields, Middlewich Road,
Sandbach CW11 1HZ

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 top 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 and non-pecuniary interests in any item on the agenda.

3. **Minutes of Previous Meeting** (Pages 5 - 14)

To approve as a correct record the minutes of the previous meeting held on 16 January 2023.

For requests for further information

Contact: Josie Lloyd

Tel: 01270 686466

E-Mail: josie.lloyd@cheshireeast.gov.uk with any apologies

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.

5. **Update report on the 2021/2022 Action Plan to address the ILACS recommendations** (Pages 15 - 48)

To receive an update on progress on the recommendations from the Ofsted Inspection of Local Authority Children's Services (ILACS) in November 2019.

6. **Corporate Parenting Committee Name Change** (Pages 49 - 52)

To consider a report on the proposed name change for the Corporate Parenting Committee.

7. **Schools Funding Formula and Early Years Funding Formula 2023/24** (Pages 53 - 82)

To consider a report on the Schools Funding Formula and Early Years Funding Formula for 2023/24.

8. **School Organisation: Academisation of Schools: Forward Plan** (Pages 83 - 88)

To note the status of academy conversions across Cheshire East schools.

9. **Work Programme** (Pages 89 - 92)

To consider the work programme and determine any required amendments.

10. **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.

11. **School Organisation: Selection of a Sponsor for Kingsley Fields Primary School, Nantwich** (Pages 93 - 100)

To inform the committee of the progress of the free school presumption process in the identification of a sponsor trust.

12. **Crewe Youth Zone** (Pages 101 - 146)

To receive an update on the progress of the Crewe Youth Zone project and the capital funding required to fully fund the development.

Membership: Councillors M Addison, L Anderson, M Beanland, J Buckley, C Bulman (Vice-Chair), K Flavell (Chair), A Gregory, S Handley, G Hayes, I Macfarlane, J Saunders, L Smetham and L Smith

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CHESHIRE EAST COUNCIL

Minutes of a meeting of the **Children and Families Committee**
held on Monday, 16th January, 2023 in the Committee Suite 1,2 & 3, Westfields,
Middlewich Road, Sandbach CW11 1HZ

PRESENT

Councillor K Flavell (Chair)
Councillor C Bulman (Vice-Chair)

Councillors L Anderson, M Beanland, J Buckley, S Handley, I Macfarlane,
J Saunders, L Smetham, J Rhodes, J Clowes and K Parkinson

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE

Deborah Woodcock, Executive Director of Children's Services
Jacky Forster, Director of Education and 14-19 Skills
Claire Williamson, Director of Strong Start, Family Help and Integration
Kerry Birtles, Director of Children's Social Care
Deborah Nickson, Legal Team Manager (People)
Steve Reading, Principal Accountant
Josie Lloyd, Democratic Services
Nabeel Chaudhry, Head of Service – Safeguarding
Mark Bayley, Head of Service - School Infrastructure & Outcomes

ALSO PRESENT

Amanda Williams, Associate Director of Quality and Safety (NHS Cheshire and
Merseyside)

61 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

The Chair referred to the recent sad death of Councillor Stephen Carter. There was a minute's silent reflection in tribute.

Apologies for absence were received from Cllr Addison, Cllr Gregory, Cllr Hayes and Cllr Smith. Cllr Clowes, Cllr Parkinson and Cllr Rhodes attended as substitutes.

62 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

63 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING**RESOLVED:**

That the minutes of the meeting held on 14 November 2022 be agreed as a correct record.

64 PUBLIC SPEAKING/OPEN SESSION

There were no public speakers.

65 UPDATE ON PROGRESS AGAINST THE JOINT TARGETED AREA INSPECTION ACTION PLAN

The committee received the report which provided an update on the partnership progress against the action plan from the joint targeted area inspection (JTAI) of the multi-agency response to the criminal exploitation of children in Cheshire East.

A query was raised as to concerns young people may have about confidentiality when they access NHS services, particularly around whether their parents or carers may be informed. The committee were advised that the NHS has strong rules around confidentiality and follows Gillick competency guidelines but that the partnership would take this away to consider whether it is being communicated clearly to young people, for example through schools.

A further query was raised as to whether more education is needed, both for school pupils and the public, on recognising and understanding signs of exploitation. It was noted that the inspection had found the Safeguarding Children in Education team was particularly strong from a single agency perspective but that the improvement would come from a multi-agency approach and this would be the next step. Officers welcomed the feedback from committee and would take this away for further consideration.

A concern was raised about settings for excluded pupils and the impact this may have. Assurances were given that the majority of excluded pupils were supported through Oakfield Lodge or the Cornerstone Academy which had excellent facilities but that the Director of Education would be keen to hear if there were some exceptions and would pick this up following the meeting.

The Chair passed on the committee's thanks for this work.

RESOLVED (unanimously):

That:

1. The Children and Families Committee consider the Action Plan appended (appendix 1) to this report and scrutinise the progress to date against the JTAI recommendations.
2. The committee agree to receive six-monthly reports on progress against this action plan.

66 **MEDIUM-TERM FINANCIAL STRATEGY 2023-27 CONSULTATION**

The committee received the report which aimed to capture committee members' feedback as consultees on the development of the Medium-Term Financial Strategy 2023 – 27 in relation to the responsibilities of the committee.

The following comments were put forward:

- Cllr Anderson queried the increase in cost of transport and requested a breakdown of where the additional costs are coming from. The Director of Education responded that the majority of the cost is the increase of children eligible for transport as well as the increase of cost due to procurement. A report brought to committee previously had set out in detail the strategy to review the programme but it was likely to be the next contract year when the benefit of that would be seen. The committee were advised that a small amount of that money would fund the additional capacity needed to deliver the change and that providing school transport for eligible children was a statutory requirement. The data requested would be extracted from the previous report and re-circulated to committee.
- Cllr Parkinson, who was present as a substitute, asked for clarity on the amount received from government grants in Children's Services and where these funds had been distributed. The Director of Strong Start, Family Help and Integration responded that there was regular reporting to committee on funding received from grants and that a full breakdown of this could be shared following the meeting.
- Cllr Beanland raised a query regarding what the resettlement fund is and whether there was any money left from that fund. The committee were advised that Cheshire East had received this funding for families coming to Cheshire East and that it applied to any services where cost was incurred, for example for transport or additional staffing costs. There was an ongoing piece of work to assign the income to services.
- Cllr Beanland raised a query regarding the £45.6m deficit on the DSG reserve and how it was being managed. The committee were advised that this was being managed by statutory override and that a piece of work was ongoing. The Chair highlighted that high needs did not sit within the MTFs but was part of a high needs management strategy and an update on this would be coming to committee for debate.
- Cllr Beanland raised a query regarding appendix 1 which referred to any betterment to the forecast outturn position being utilised to replenish reserves in line with the priorities of the Corporate Plan, and asked whether there was a figure available for the reserves. The committee were advised that it was necessary to wait for the year end to understand the position on this.
- Cllr Beanland raised a query relating to the £76m referred to in appendix 2 with regard to the DSG budget, specifically what the breakdown of this was and what control there was for how this was to be spent. The committee were advised

that a breakdown of this would be brought to the February committee meeting and any outstanding questions could be addressed at that point.

- Cllr Beanland referred to the table on policy proposals in appendix 2 and requested that future reports include a column showing what the original budget was for clarity. The committee were advised that this was included in the full MTFS budget consultation document.
- Cllr Beanland referred to the Educational Psychology service and queried whether this has brought in any income. The committee were advised that this had been included in the MTFS within the general income. The Educational Psychology service had brought in income with the traded service and there was good uptake of intervention work, however statutory work had also increased. A report was due to come to committee with an update.
- Cllr Beanland raised a query regarding the review of the Children's Services structure and how the £0.950m referred to would be achieved. The Executive Director of Children's Services responded that this was an opportunity to streamline and deliver services differently for less with a plan for the longer term. There were a number of existing and emerging priorities that needed to be delivered in the most efficient and effective way.
- Cllr Beanland made a request for the wording to be changed regarding Crewe Youth Zone to clarify that this was for the benefit of children and young people in Crewe. The Chair expressed a view that it was not necessary to change this as the clarification was not needed.
- Cllr Beanland raised a query regarding the Poynton planning area referred to in appendix 3 and what the £1.5m was for. The committee were advised that a slight shortfall in places at the primary phase was forecast and consultation with the schools was currently taking place. This was always the first stage in considering options and at the appropriate time a paper would be brought to committee for decision.
- Cllr Beanland stated that the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) appeared to be the same each year and queried whether it was expected to change. The committee were advised that there could be an increase but at this point it would be difficult to say what this would be. Further information would be coming to the next committee meeting.
- Cllr Saunders stated that she disagreed with points 35 (integrated children's service strategy) and 40 (early help redesign). Cllr Saunders disagreed with cuts to staffing levels in social services due to families facing profound difficulties at the current time.
- Cllr Saunders also expressed concerns about the impact of staffing cuts on the morale of existing staff and the chances of recruiting staff.
- Cllr Saunders agreed with point 29 regarding the reversal of travel savings that cannot be achieved.

- Cllr Saunders also expressed a view that an audit of buildings should take place with a view to selling buildings that were not needed.
- Cllr Saunders expressed a concern about the early help budget being used to support Crewe Youth Zone. Cllr Saunders stated that she was not against the youth zone but could not see how it could be afforded at the current time and did not feel that it was right to take money from the early help service to help to fund it. Cllr Flavell responded that the function of the youth zone was to provide early help and support and therefore it was not about cutting early help services but investing in something that will provide this service. Cllr Saunders added that the grant could have been used across the whole borough instead of focusing on one area.
- Cllr Clowes raised a query regarding school transport pressures and whether flexibility is being built into contracts for downward changes, for example petrol price decreases. The Director of Education advised that through Procurement there was a lot of challenge going on to look at reducing the contract prices but it remained a challenge.
- Cllr Clowes raised a query regarding safe walking routes to school and whether there had been any progress with this to reduce costs. The committee were advised that this was included in the transport review report.
- Cllr Clowes referred to pressures in social care payments and was surprised that it indicated a budget pressure as in Adults Services direct payments had caused some pressures to decrease. Cllr Clowes suggested this could also be a good thing to encourage to ease the transition from Children's Services into Adults.
- Cllr Clowes referred to the growth in children's social care and acknowledged that pressures are growing but that the budget in 2020 had provided for using Mount View and Bexton Court for provision and would have started to make cost benefits to the services involved within a five year period. Cllr Clowes stated that the business cases would need to be reviewed but with the cost of care going up, it would be expected that there would still be savings and suggested that this is looked into. The Director of Children's Social Care responded that half of the growth related to the need to realign the way DSG was applied and half was in relation to the growth pressures. A greater proportion of children and families had been accessing direct payments. There was an increasing number of children who were being supported by the local offer for children with disabilities and a reduction of children open to the Child in Need & Child Protection service and the Cared for Children with Disabilities service so the broader picture was of prevention and inclusion. The growth pressures in children's social care was around external placement costs. The service had been able to safely reduce the number of children living in residential care over the past 12-18 months. The inflationary costs of the external services had created the additional pressure. There were capital programmes for the refurbishment or purchasing of up to four residential children's homes and a paper on this would be coming to committee in March.

- Cllr Clowes referred to MARS and stated that she did not disagree with reviewing the structure but that MARS had previously not done as well as hoped. Consequently, money from predicted savings had to be put back in. Cllr Clowes suggested, in the light of new regulatory frameworks, the possibility of retraining staff before looking at MARS.
- Cllr Rhodes referred to the DSG and stated that Cheshire East was underfunded and children in Cheshire East were receiving less from the government than those in other areas.
- Cllr Rhodes agreed with Cllr Saunders and Cllr Clowes regarding concerns about the reorganisation of Children's Services.
- Cllr Rhodes also agreed that the MARS scheme had not always been as successful as hoped.
- Cllr Rhodes expressed a concern about cuts to early years as providing support early could reduce costs later on.
- Cllr Rhodes expressed a concern about school transport and getting value for money.
- Cllr Rhodes was in support of the Crewe Youth Zone and stated that Crewe had six wards in the top 10% of deprivation in the country and that the government had recognised this deprivation and awarded the funding for the project.
- Cllr Handley was also in support of Crewe Youth Zone and stated that the cost of living crisis had disproportionately affected children and young people in this area.
- Cllr Flavell recognised that there were external pressures that needed to be addressed and was in support of the way in which officers had managed this.

RESOLVED:

1. That the Children and Families Committee notes:
 - 1.1 The year-end forecast outturn position for 2022/23 (**Appendix 1**).
 - 1.2 The financial context and proposals contained within the Executive Summary of the Medium-Term Financial Strategy (**MTFS report Annex C, Section 1**).
 - 1.3 Revenue Grant Funding (**Appendix 4**).
 - 1.4 Earmarked Reserves (**Appendix 5**).
2. That the Committee provides feedback on the proposals within the MTFS, as related to the Committee's responsibilities, that can support and advise Full Council in fulfilling its responsibilities to approve a balanced budget for 2023/24, in the following areas:
 - 2.1 Revenue Proposals (Details are at **Appendix 2**).
 - 2.2 Capital Programme (**Appendix 3**).

67 SCHOOL ORGANISATION - FUNDING REVIEW FOR SPRINGFIELD SCHOOL: DEAN ROW SITE

The committee received the report which provided information regarding the need for the council to increase the funding envelope for the new Springfield Special School satellite site at Dean Row in Handforth following detailed assessment of the required works from £3m to £6.1m.

The committee recognised and supported the need to increase provision, however concerns were raised about the increase in costs and the time delay. The Chair highlighted that, despite the increase, the savings that would be made on placements was still expected to be greater than the cost. Officers gave assurances that a review had taken place with a report produced on lessons learned and it was requested that this be shared with the committee.

RESOLVED:

That the Children and Families Committee:

1. Note the requirement to increase the cost of the build for the delivery of additional SEN places at Springfield School, Dean Row, Handforth to £6.1 m.
2. Note that the Executive Director of Children's Services has completed the necessary documentation for the virement of this additional funding for this scheme and the awarding of the contract to build.

The committee adjourned for a short break.

68 SCHOOL ORGANISATION - NEW DFE SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS FREE SCHOOL APPLICATIONS

The committee received the report on the submitted application to expand the number of in borough special educational needs free schools through engagement with the Department for Education programme.

There was a requirement at this stage to give confirmation to the Department for Education that costs would be covered in order for the application to progress. However, assurances were given to committee that if the costs became excessive or onerous a further report would be brought back for debate and the option to withdraw.

RESOLVED (by majority):

That the Children and Families Committee:

1. Note the submission of two applications for SEN Free Schools. If successful, these new resources would provide a key mitigation within the SEN High needs management plan.
2. Agree to provide indemnity if one or both schemes are successful. Indemnity would need to be provided relating to any 'abnormal site development' costs. Such a task is part of any new school development site and the initial analysis of the two site is that there are low levels of risk.
3. Note that if successful, these schools would progress through the free school presumption route and appropriate reports would be provided to committee as projects progress to seek relevant delegated approvals.

69 SCHOOL ORGANISATION: PROPOSED REDUCTION IN SEN RESOURCE PROVISIONS AT MIDDLEWICH PRIMARY SCHOOL, MIDDLEWICH AND LINDOW COMMUNITY PRIMARY SCHOOL, WILMSLOW

The committee received the report which sought approval for the proposed reduction in special educational needs resource provision places for learners with a hearing impairment at Middlewich Primary School from 10 to 5 places and at Lindow Community Primary School from 12 to 6 places.

RESOLVED (unanimously):

That the Children and Families Committee give approval:

1. To reduce the number of specialist SEN places in the hearing impairment resource provision at Middlewich Primary School from 10 to 5 with effect from April 2023, having given due consideration to the responses to the statutory public notice and consultation process as per DfE statutory guidance.
2. To reduce the number of places in the hearing impairment resource provision at Lindow Community Primary School from 12 to 6 with effect from April 2023, having given due consideration to the responses to the statutory public notice and consultation process as per DfE statutory guidance.

70 SCHOOL ORGANISATION: THE DINGLE PRIMARY SCHOOL, HASLINGTON: AUTHORITY TO ENTER INTO A CONSTRUCTION CONTRACT INCLUSIVE OF PRE-CONSTRUCTION SERVICES

The committee received the report which sought authority to progress the proposed expansion of the Dingle Primary School into the final stages of design and construction.

It was noted that the latest cost estimate was from July 2022 and there was a query as to whether this will have changed. A further query was raised as to whether the £1m outlined in section 8.2.3 was additional to the latest cost estimate of £1.217m or in lieu of Section 106 contributions. Officers undertook to provide a written response to address these queries, confirming the current cost estimate and a breakdown.

RESOLVED (by majority):

That the Children and Families Committee delegate authority to the Executive Director of Children's Services to procure and award a construction contract for the expansion of The Dingle primary school to 2FE, inclusive of preconstruction services and any other agreements associated with or ancillary to the contract.

71 PROPOSED CHANGE IN AGE RANGE AT PEBBLE BROOK PRIMARY SCHOOL AND UNDERWOOD WEST ACADEMY

The committee received the report on the proposed change in age range at Pebble Brook Primary School and Underwood West Academy.

RESOLVED (unanimously):

That the Children and Families Committee:

1. Consider the consultation responses received to the change of age range at Pebble Brook Primary School.
2. Approve the proposed change of age range at Pebble Brook Primary School, Crewe, from 4 -11 to 2-11 to accommodate a nursery provision for implementation in February or March 2023 as a temporary change for a period of up to two years.
3. Note that the Regional Director for Education will move to extend the age range of Underwood West Academy, Crewe.

72 CHILDREN AND FAMILIES Q2 SCORECARD 2022-23

The committee received the report which provided an overview of performance against the core indicator set within the three directorate areas of Children's Services.

A query was raised as to the percentage of EHCPs issued within timescales as, while the figure was coming down from previous reports, it still appeared to be high. It was noted that timeliness had improved but that the figures were still impacted by a number of factors, including cases which had gone to tribunals. A suggestion was made for the scorecard to include an additional line to show the percentage of new plans completed on time to give a clearer indication of how the service was working.

RESOLVED:

That the report be noted.

73 SCHOOL ORGANISATION: ACADEMISATION OF SCHOOLS: FORWARD PLAN

The committee received the report which informed of planned schools across the borough which were seeking to move to academy status and join a multi academy trust.

RESOLVED:

That the committee receives and notes the summary table (Appendix 1) showing the status of academy conversions across Cheshire East schools.

74 WORK PROGRAMME

The committee considered the work programme. It was noted that the March meeting would be the last meeting before the May elections and a request was made for an update on the Delivering Better Value programme. A further request was made for the committee to receive the lessons learned report and action plan relating to Springfield School, with a further update in May.

RESOLVED:

That the work programme be noted.

The meeting commenced at 12:30 and concluded at 16:00

Councillor K Flavell (Chair)



Working for a brighter future together

Children and Families Committee

Date of Meeting:	13 Feb 2023
Report Title:	Update report on the 2021/2022 Action Plan to address the ILACS recommendations
Report of:	Deborah Woodcock, Executive Director of Children's Services
Report Reference No:	CF/34/22-23
Ward(s) Affected:	All wards

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1.** This report will provide the Children and Families Committee with an update on progress on the recommendations from the Ofsted Inspection of Local Authority Children's Services (ILACS) in November 2019. This report will focus on progress made since the action plan was presented to committee in May 2022, and includes the recommendations from the ILACS focussed visit in November 2021. The Children and Families Committee have received (January 2023) the improvement plan subsequent to the Joint Targeted area Inspection in relation to contextual safeguarding, which is a partnership development plan and is not replicated within this action plan.
- 1.2.** Ofsted ILACS inspections review the quality of our services and how well we support, protect and safeguard children and young people, and how well we support our cared for and care experienced children and young people. Therefore, our work to continue to develop services in response to the recommendations from these inspections contributes to achieving our aims in the Corporate Plan to:
- Protect and support our communities and safeguard children, adults at risk and families from abuse, neglect and exploitation.
 - Be the best Corporate Parents to our children in care.

2. Executive Summary

- 2.1. Continued focus on the areas for improvement post inspection are key to our improvement journey. Senior leaders must ensure Children's Social Care are continually working towards, and accountable for the required actions to support improvement towards the identified recommendations from the ILACS inspections in November 2019 and November 2021. The senior leadership team anticipate that a full inspection will take place in 2023 however these are not scheduled or planned inspections and therefore no certainty can be offered at this stage.
- 2.2. The Joint Targeted area Inspection in July 2022 offered an opportunity for external scrutiny of the effectiveness of partnership practice to safeguard children at risk of exploitation, including missing. In January 2023 the local authority welcomed a department of education (DfE) improvement advisor to support the partnership on their improvement journey. T. The senior leadership team have reflected on our improvement journey and our aspiration for deeper integration across our structures and seek to make further changes to our approach to improvement to continue our relentless drive to excellence for our children and young people.

3. Recommendations

- 3.1. The Children and Families Committee is recommended to receive the update on the progress to date against the recommendations, and the impact for children and young people, recognising the areas for continued development as well as progress made.
- 3.2. The Children and Families Committee to approve the proposal to undertake a review and refresh of the ILAC improvement plan. The decision to replace the existing plan with a broader more ambitious plan reflecting the improvement journey to date, the impact and learning achieved from the and the collective thinking of the senior leadership team, with support from the DfE improvement advisor.
- 3.3. Committee to agree that the plan be presented to the committee in July 2023 in order to provide an opportunity for scrutiny against outcomes for children and young people and reviewed at 6 monthly intervals.

4. Reasons for Recommendations

- 4.1. The council, working with statutory partners, has legal duties to safeguard and promote the welfare of all children and young people in Cheshire East. It is important that the Children and Families Committee has the opportunity to consider the achievements, progress to date, and the improvements planned ahead to ensure that the welfare of children and young people is prioritised.

5. Other Options Considered

- 5.1. Not applicable.

6. Background

- 6.1. All Children's Services are subject to regular inspection by the regulator body Ofsted. Cheshire East Council's last full inspection under the ILACS framework was in November 2019. Cheshire East Children's Services were judged as 'requires improvement to be good' in this inspection. The inspection recognised that significant progress had been made in a number of areas since the previous inspection in 2015.
- 6.2. Cheshire East Council received a focused visit in November 2021 from Ofsted. This focused on our Children in Need and Child Protection (CIN/CP) service and also evaluated the impact of leaders on frontline practice and outcomes for children.
- 6.3. Cheshire East Safeguarding partnership were inspected in July 2023 in relation to the effectiveness of the partnership in safeguarding children at risk of exploitation including missing. This was a Joint Targeted Area Inspection with inspectors from HMI, CQC and Ofsted. This inspection identified priority areas for action and areas for further improvement and the partnership now have an improvement plan and board, which is chaired by the DfE improvement advisor, to ensure that improvements are made at pace.
- 6.4. Inspections under the ILACS framework evaluate the effectiveness of local authority services and how we work together as a wider partnership to support children and young people, including:
- the help and protection of children.
 - the experiences and progress of children in care wherever they live, including those who return home.
 - the arrangements for permanence for children who are cared for by the local authority, including adoption.
 - the experiences and progress of care leavers.
 - the effectiveness of leaders and managers
 - the impact we have on the lives of children and young people.
 - the quality of professional practice.
- 6.5. The ILACS framework is a complex system of inspection; the aim is to create a proportionate inspection process based on their most recent inspection judgement and intelligence gathered throughout the year. There are three different types of inspections under the framework:
- **Standard Inspection** - this inspection covers all the services above across levels of need and takes place over three weeks, with one week's notice and inspectors onsite for two weeks. At the end of the inspection, a report is completed which gives a judgement on the quality of our services, either outstanding, good, requires improvement to be good or inadequate. Authorities that are already judged to be good or outstanding have a shorter standard inspection which takes place over two weeks.

- **Focused Visit** - these inspections focus on one area in particular. Prior to the recent focused visit in November 2021 on our Children in Need and Child Protection Service (CIN/CP) we had a focused visit on cared for children and care leavers. These inspections take place over two weeks and inspectors are onsite for two days. At the end of the inspection, a letter is written which outlines strengths and areas for improvement, no overall judgement is given.
- **Joint Targeted Area Inspections (JTAI)** – these inspections are multi-agency, and are carried out by inspectors from multi-agency inspectorates (including Ofsted, CQC, HMICFRS and HMI Probation). These inspections look at a particular topic, which changes on a regular basis. These inspections take place over three weeks and inspectors are onsite for one week. At the end of the inspection, a letter is written which outlines strengths and areas for improvement, no overall judgement is given.

6.6. Progress against the Recommendations from the Ofsted ILACS Inspection 2019 and further areas for improvement from the Focused Visit

6.7. Following the inspection in 2019, Children’s Services have been driven to address the areas for improvement identified where some progress has been evidenced in our focused visit into child in need a child protection and in some areas of our performance. With the current action plans the service have been able to remain focused on the areas that the inspection identified as requiring further improvement. However, some of the progress previously achieved has been impacted by challenges in the recruitment and retention of frontline colleagues, rising demand, increased complexity and further inspection activity. We have maintained a solid focus on our legal and statutory requirements however seek to progress further in our ambition to deliver truly excellent service to support and safeguard children and young people.

6.8. At this point in our improvement journey it is necessary to review and refresh our approach, strategy and action planning, to embed the rich learning and reflection that further inspection has offered us as a single agency and also as a partnership.

7. Consultation and Engagement

7.1. Children’s Social Care consult and engage with key stakeholders as part of service delivery. For the purposes of the period referenced, consultation has taken place specifically with foster carers, and cared for children and young people accessing emergency accommodation. Future consultation will take place with our stakeholders to ensure that our ambition is shared and that our planned activity on our continued improvement journey is achievable at pace.

8. Implications

8.1. Legal

- 8.1.1. Ofsted inspections are conducted under section 136 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006.
- 8.1.2. Cheshire East has a statutory responsibility to safeguard children and young people within the borough and the service operates within the relevant legal framework.

8.2. Finance

- 8.2.1. Financial plans are currently being reviewed to ensure that the service can continue to meet the needs of vulnerable children and young people in Cheshire East and will be reflected in the Medium-Term Financial Strategy.

8.3. Policy

- 8.3.1. Cheshire East is ambitious and committed to ensuring that together, we will make Cheshire East a great place to be young. Our priorities for improving outcomes for children and young people are driven through the council's Corporate Plan, the Children and Young People's Plan, and the Cared for Children and Care Leavers Strategy.

8.4. Equality

- 8.4.1. Good quality practice with families ensures that all children and young people's needs are taken into account and supported.

8.5. Human Resources

- 8.5.1. Recruiting and retaining high quality social workers and managers is crucial in supporting us to achieve consistently good practice for children and young people.

8.6. Risk Management

- 8.6.1. There are reputational and financial risks of not providing good Children's Services, as well as risks to individual children and young people. The council must continue to ensure that these risks are minimised by ensuring effective plans are in place to improve where areas for development are identified.

8.7. Rural Communities

- 8.7.1. Vulnerable children and young people are present in all communities in Cheshire East.

8.8. Children and Young People/Cared for Children

8.8.1. Our plans intend to improve the experiences and outcomes for children and young people across the borough, in particular those that are most vulnerable. Cheshire East Council has a Corporate Parenting responsibility for children in their care. Full council made pledges to cared for children and young people in December 2022 in line with the Cared for Children and Care Leavers Strategy.

8.9. Public Health

8.9.1. There are no direct implications for public health.

8.10. Climate Change

8.10.1. Children’s services continue to support the council with climate change objectives.

Access to Information	
Contact Officer:	Kerry Birtles Director Children’s Social Care Kerry.Birtles@cheshireeast.gov.uk
Appendices:	Action Plan to address the Ofsted ILACS Recommendations
Background Papers:	Children’s Inspection Report 2019 Children’s Services Focused Visit Report 2021

Together we will make Cheshire East a great place to be young

Action Plan to address the ILACS Recommendations

April 2021 – 2023

Progress updates from January 2023



Introduction

This is our action plan which began in 2021 in response to the recommendations from the Ofsted Inspection of Local Authority Children's Services (ILACS) in November 2019 and focused visit into children in need of help and protection in November 2021. The statutory children's safeguarding partnership experienced a Joint Targeted Area Inspection in July 2022, and a separate [action plan](#) exists to address those partnership recommendations. The full inspection reports are all available on the [Ofsted website](#).

The **ILACS inspection** found that significant progress had been made since our previous inspections in 2018 and 2015. Clear strengths were identified including our early help offer, a strengthened front door, our edge of care support, management of risk to children exposed to exploitation, the creativity of frontline practitioners in direct work with children and young people, and crucially **the voice of the child being at the centre of everything we do**.

However, overall, the quality of our practice was too variable, and required further improvement to be consistently good. Some vulnerable groups, such as children experiencing chronic long-term neglect, children who were privately fostered, and homeless 16 and 17 years olds, were not always receiving the right support.

The **focused visit** in November 2021 found that since the ILACS inspection in 2019, there has **been improvement in the overall quality of work** with children who are in need of help or protection.

Three specific areas were recommended to further improve the quality of social work practice in this area: the identification of contingency arrangements in child in need plans, the consistency and effectiveness of

management oversight for disabled children, and the completion of audit recommendations to further improve experiences for children.

We are committed to addressing the recommendations from all inspection activity to further improve the support we offer to children, young people, families and carers. Our continued focus is on achieving excellent outcomes for children and young people through **establishing consistently good practice**.

Our journey to excellence

It's been over three years since the full inspection, and since then we have experienced a focused visit, a [SEND re-inspection](#), a [pan-Cheshire Youth Justice Inspection](#), the uncertainty of a global pandemic, and a Joint Targeted Area Inspection. The directorate also engage in a cycle of peer and annual reviews which supports our learning and development through high support and high challenge.

We are also being supported by a Children's Improvement Advisor from the Department for Education (DfE) around our service developments in response to the Joint Targeted Area Inspection. We are participating in the DfE's delivering better value programme to support the council to achieve a more sustainable financial position in relation to special educational needs and/or disabilities. We are implementing Family Hubs to join up services locally, improve the connections between families, professionals, services, and providers, and put relationships at the heart of family help. Family hubs will support children and young people from birth until they reach the age of 19 (or up to 25 for young people with special educational needs and disabilities).

As leaders, we developed a clear vision for children, young people, and care experienced adults in Cheshire East, **Together for Children and Young People**. We must ensure that across the council and the partnership, everyone is clear on our shared ambition for children and young people, and we work together to achieve the best outcomes.

To support children and young people, the council has continued to invest in Children's Social Care Services with growth in 2021/2022 and further projected growth throughout the delivery of the Medium Term Financial Strategy, however the growth for 2023/24 and beyond needs to be seen in the context of savings that need to be made in repose to the high rate of inflation, pay awards and increased complexity and rate of demand. This

update report will provide data and quality assurance information from quarter 2 in 2022-23 (July to September 2022).

Action Plan

Date of progress updates: January 2023

<p>Recommendation</p>	<p>Improve the quality, consistency and analysis of assessments, and the child focus of plans (Nov 2019).</p>		
<p>What inspectors found</p>	<p>Inspectors found good quality practice, however overall, the quality of practice was not consistent, which meant some children and young people’s needs were not fully identified or effectively met:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some assessments did not contain enough analysis. • Assessments were not consistently updated when children and young people’s needs changed. • Some plans were not SMART enough – they were not always clear about the outcome or timescales, and some were too focused on adult needs. <p>Recording on children’s files did not always capture the extent of the work that was taking place, including the rationale for decisions so children could understand why decisions were made for them. Sometimes there was not enough analysis of children and young people’s experiences and the impact on them (for example in recording home visits).</p> <p>Findings from the Focused Visit - November 2021</p> <p>Assessments and plans are mainly thorough and focused on improving outcomes for children...timely assessments of children’s needs include careful consideration of family history and children’s experiences to appropriately identify strengths and risks for children. The views and opinions of children, parents and relevant professionals are sought effectively to inform assessment conclusions.</p> <p>Children who need help or protection are identified as a result of effective assessments of risk and need...however, some assessments do not fully consider children’s identities when reaching decisions and assessments are not always updated promptly when children’s circumstances change.</p>		
<p>Baseline from 2020/21</p>	<p>Target for September 2021</p>	<p>Target for September 2022 (Q2)</p>	
<p>45% audited cases were good or better quality in November 2020.</p>	<p>60% audited cases will be good or outstanding.</p>	<p>70% audited cases will be good or outstanding.</p>	

Position in September 2022 (Q2) in relation to targets				Progress relative to targets
Quarter 2 quality assurance activity found that 25% audited cases were good (however the sample size of this audit was small due to the impact of the Joint Targeted Area Inspection and audit activity divert to other areas of partnership focus.)				 Below target
Ref	What we will do to achieve consistently good practice	Lead person	Timescale	Progress to date
1a	Continue to deliver our 'doing the basics well' training programme for practitioners to support consistently good practice across all services.	Sarah Flint, Principal Social Worker	December 2023	2022 experienced some significant staffing challenges and therefore it is necessary to deliver our revised masterclass programme again throughout 2023 including 4 x per week during learning week.
1b	Refresh and implement the Neglect Operational Strategy as our partnership approach to addressing neglect. Evaluate the impact of the Strategy via the Safeguarding Children's Partnership Neglect Board on a quarterly basis.	Louise Hurst, Head of Service Child in Need and Child Protection	March 2022 Impact evaluated quarterly.	<p>The Neglect Strategy has been refreshed in consultation with all partners and children and young people. It was launched in July 2021. Outcome measures listed below have been agreed across the partnership. The Neglect Board reviews progress and impact on performance on a quarterly basis.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase in early help assessments led by partner agencies where neglect is identified as a factor. • Increase in the number of contacts to ChECS where neglect is identified that are accompanied by a neglect screening tool. • Reduction in the number of children experiencing a second or subsequent Child Protection Plan for neglect.

1c	Deliver high support and high challenge to teams through our lead practitioners, extending this from three to four lead practitioners from June 2021.	Sarah Flint, Principal Social Worker	March 2022	Four lead practitioners are in place to respond to areas of focus identified through audit and quality assurance activity. They are delivering masterclasses, targeted support to newly qualified social workers, and direct work with children and families. Monthly impact reports on this support are produced which are reported to the Excellence in Social Work Practice Leadership Meeting.
1d	Develop an annual training offer for social workers so it is clear what training is available and required for each specialism.	Jo Rigg, Training Officer	Annually	Following on from our training offer launched in July 2021 our updated annual offer commenced in June 2022. The refreshed plan for 2023 will be delivered from April 2023.
1e	Review the forms on the child's record, starting with plans, to ensure they support best quality practice.	Sarah Flint, Principal Social Worker	February 2023	The service has developed a single plan for children and young people which will avoid duplication and provide an opportunity for consistency.
1f	Ensure that assessments consider children's identities when reaching decisions. Ensure ethnicity is recorded at point of referral.	Sarah Flint, Principal Social Worker	March 2023 Training plan reviewed annually	Masterclasses were delivered to frontline practitioners in March 2022. This continues to be an area of focus and will be a mandatory part of the contact and referral report to ensure that this improves further.
1g	Ensure that when children's circumstances do change, assessments are updated promptly to reflect this. 80% of all open cases will have had an updated assessment in the last 12 months.	Louise Hurst, Head of Service Child in Need and Child Protection Annemarie Parker, Head of Service Cared for Children and Care Leavers.	March 2023	84% children have an updated C&F assessment within the last 12 months in Q2.

1h	Introduce child-centred recording where case notes on children's files will be written in the style of a letter to the child.	Director of Children's Social Care	June 2023	Plans are being put in place to introduce this, the aim is to support child-centred practice through explaining why decisions were made to the child.
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Recommendation	Ensure consistent management oversight and supervision in the organisation to ensure that consistent, good-quality social work practice is in place (Nov 2019)
What inspectors found	<p>Management oversight and supervision did not provide sufficient challenge or reflection to enable practitioners to improve their practice.</p> <p>Management oversight:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Management oversight and challenge was not fully embedded in all areas - management oversight from both Team Managers and IROs did not always drive progressing plans within children's timescales. • Performance information was not always scrutinised sufficiently to provide critical challenge of all services. • Current checks and balances did not identify the areas of weaker practice found in the inspection. <p>Audits:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Team manager audits were inconsistent in quality, and some audits were over-optimistic in their judgements. Some audits were more compliance focused so were less effective in supporting reflection and improved practice. Some parts of the audit forms were not completed. • Inspectors felt there was not enough moderation of audits from senior managers (14% audited cases were moderated) given the over-optimism of judgements in team manager audits. <p>Supervision:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Most social workers received regular supervision; however supervision was not always sufficiently analytical or reflective. <p>Findings from the Focused Visit - November 2021</p> <p>In most parts of the service, more effective management oversight is ensuring that children's needs are met including through the provision of relevant services...most managers have regular oversight of social work with children and their families. Supervision takes place with sufficient frequency in most teams...however, management oversight does not always challenge and prevent drift</p>

for all children effectively. This is particularly evident in the service for disabled children, where supervision and management oversight are less regular and effective.

Baseline from 2020/21	Target for September 2021	Target for September 2022 (Q2)
<p>In Q4 2021/22, 74% assessments were completed within 45 days.</p> <p>In April 2021, 65% children had an updated C&F assessment within the last 12 months.</p> <p>In Q4 2021/22, the percentage of plans updated within timescales was:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 72% CIN 87% CP 95% Cared for 	<p>80% assessments will be completed within 45 days.</p> <p>80% children will have an updated C&F assessment within the last 12 months.</p> <p>Over 80% of all plans will be updated within timescales.</p> <p>80% audited cases will have good management oversight.</p> <p>80% judgements from internal auditors will be agreed as accurate by the external auditor.</p>	<p>90% assessments will be completed within 45 days.</p> <p>90% children will have an updated C&F assessment within the last 12 months.</p> <p>Over 90% of all plans will be updated within timescales.</p> <p>90% audited cases will have good management oversight.</p> <p>90% judgements from internal auditors will be agreed as accurate by the external auditor.</p>
Position in September 2022 (Q2) in relation to targets		Progress relative to targets
From July – September 2022, 56% assessments were completed within 45 days and 70% within 50 days.		 Below target
84% children had an updated C&F assessment within the last 12 months in Q2.		 Below target
<p>Percentage of plans updated within timescales in Q2:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cared for plans - Crewe CINCP 82%, Macclesfield CINCP 58%, Cared for 92%, CWD 100% CP plans – Crewe CINCP 91%, Macclesfield CINCP 87%, CWD 100% CIN plans - Crewe CINCP 60%, Macclesfield CINCP 54%, CWD 44% <p>* Timescales for our Children with Disabilities may fall outside of statutory timescales following consideration of the statutory and regulatory duties contained within <i>Section 17(4) of the Children Act 1989, Volume 2 of the Children Act 1989 guidance, How to safeguard and promote the welfare of disabled children using short breaks (DSCF 2010)</i> and the <i>Care Planning, Placement and Case Review (England) regulation (2010)</i>, where we conclude that the parents are appropriately exercising their</p>		 Some teams are achieving above target and some are below target – CIN plans are below target for all teams 

parental responsibility and there are no safeguarding concerns we will visit and review in a frequency that is proportionate to the child's needs.				
From July – September 2022 17% of audited cases showed good management oversight (however the sample size of this audit was small due to the impact of the Joint Targeted Area Inspection and audit activity divert to other areas of partnership focus.)				 Below target
Ref	What we will do to achieve consistently good practice	Lead person	Complete by	Progress to date
2a	Quality assurance from experienced practitioners and managers to evaluate the quality of case file audits, disseminate learning and continue to drive practice forward.	Kerry Birtles, Director of Children's Social Care	March 2022 Quarterly	Quality assurance manager to moderate a percentage of whole case file audits to ensure effective benchmarking.
2b	Develop a new process around senior manager moderation.	Phil Alcock, Audit and Quality Assurance Officer	July 2021	A new process has been developed; heads of service, the director of children's social care and executive director of children's services are now included in the children's social care audit process.
2c	Annual supervision audit to be undertaken to ensure there is continued focus on impact on outcomes for children which drives improvement to practice, and there is a golden thread between senior leaders and frontline teams.	Kerry Birtles, Director of Children's Social Care	June 2023/	Supervision audits will be completed for 2023 in June. Compliance with supervision is tracked on a monthly basis.
2d	Performance challenge and scrutiny sessions to be carried out at Directorate Management level and with the senior leadership team for Children's Social Care to ensure scrutiny of performance drives improved outcomes for children.	Deborah Woodcock, Executive Director of Children's Services	March 2022/ Quarterly	Performance scrutiny takes place on a quarterly basis, demonstrating transparency and accountability of frontline practice to the DCS. However we recognise that some areas of our performance needs further improvement, so this action has been marked as amber.

2e	Two Heads of Service to apply for the Practice Leadership Development Programme as part of our continued development of our senior leadership team.	Kerry Birtles, Director of Children's Social Care	April 2021	One Head of Service was successful in securing a place and has completed the course.
Recommendation	Improve management oversight of cases in pre-proceedings, to avoid drift and delay for children (November 2019)			
What inspectors found	<p>Pre-proceedings work to try to achieve positive change for children and to avoid the need for them to come into care was not consistently timely.</p> <p>Some children's cases were managed within public law outline processes for too long without sufficient management oversight and review to decide whether alternative action needed to be taken to protect them.</p> <p>No children were found to be at immediate risk, however a small number of children experienced neglectful situations for too long. Some children waited too long to enter care and experience a sense of permanence. For a few children, this meant that they entered care in an unplanned way.</p> <p>Findings from the Focused Visit - November 2021</p> <p>Children receive pre-proceedings support when it is appropriate given the nature or duration of concerns about them. Improved senior-management oversight of early pre-proceedings work is having a positive impact on the timeliness and effectiveness of this input for children. Cases are appropriately stepped down from pre-proceedings when concerns lessen as a result of effective and focused support</p>			
Baseline from 2020/21		Target for September 2021		Target for September 2022 (Q2)
<p>Audits in February and March 2021 showed that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Management oversight is improving. Team managers had improved their oversight of PLO casework in the majority of cases. • The 4-week review that was implemented in February 2020 is having a positive impact on 		<p>Audit of cases within pre-proceedings will show that for 80% cases, management oversight is effectively ensuring that children do not experience drift or delay.</p>		<p>Audit of cases within pre-proceedings will show that for 90% cases, management oversight is effectively ensuring that children do not experience drift or delay.</p>

identifying and preventing potential early drift in PLO. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There was evidence of consistent Service Manager oversight. 				
Position in September 2022 (Q2) in relation to targets		Progress relative to targets		
An audit on PLO in Q2 showed that: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 80% cases were sitting within 26 weeks • Cases that concluded in Q2 were on average completed within 26 weeks. • When reviewing case files, it can often be difficult to identify the impact that any drift and delay is having on the child, so further work is needed in this area. 		 Below target		
Ref	What we will do to achieve consistently good practice	Lead person	Complete by	Progress to date
3a	Lead/ engage in the Local Family Justice Board and Public Law Working Group Publication to ensure compliance and practice is in line with external changes and challenge the delays that are created by Court capacity.	Kerry Birtles, Director of Children’s Social Care	Ongoing	The director of children’s social care is now the vice chair of the Local Family Justice Board. The team are to embark on a peer review of the Public Law Outline (PLO) in February and March 2023 and are ambitious to continue to make progress in relation to PLO to assist in the timeliness of care proceedings in achieving timely and good quality outcomes for children and young people.
3b	The service to be held to account for the effectiveness of social work practice in this area through accountability to the Local Family Justice Board.	Kerry Birtles, Director of Children’s Social Care	Quarterly to the Local Family Justice Board	The Local Family Justice Board has a developed action plan to address the regional challenges in relation to progress in PLO and public law care proceedings.
3c	Regular audits to be completed on pre-proceedings and proceedings to ensure progress in this area continues to be monitored.	Louise Hurst, Head of Service for Child in	March 2022	Quarterly audits of PLO are taking place which are reported to the children’s social care senior leadership team.

		Need and Child Protection		
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Recommendation	Improve the response to children in private fostering arrangements, children who are homeless aged 16 and 17 years old, and care leavers who need emergency accommodation (November 2019)		
What inspectors found	<p>Private fostering The response to children who were privately fostered was variable - the needs of some children were not thoroughly assessed, some did not always receive the right support, and the need for permanence was not always addressed promptly.</p> <p>Care leavers who need emergency accommodation Some care leavers told inspectors that they did not always feel safe when they had been placed in emergency accommodation.</p> <p>Young people presenting as homeless When young people presented as homeless, there was not a sufficiently robust response to ensure that their needs were fully identified, that they were fully supported, or that they were made aware of their right to become cared for. As a result, a small number of young people remained in situations of vulnerability.</p>		
Baseline from 2020/21		Target for September 2021	Target for September 2022 (Q2)
We have recommissioned our emergency accommodation offer in light of the feedback from young people and inspectors.		The bi-monthly ChECS audit will tell us that children and young people feel safe in their accommodation.	The bi-monthly ChECS audit will tell us that children and young people feel safe in their accommodation.

<p>An audit of privately fostered cases in January 2021 found that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 10 out of 11 children’s arrangement met the criteria for private fostering • 10 out of 11 arrangements were suitable for the child • 7 out of 11 children had an updated assessment within the last 12 months. • However, the audit also showed that there were areas which still needed further improvement. • Going forward audits will be rated against the Ofsted criteria. <p>An audit of homeless 16-17 year olds in February 2021 found that :</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 83% cases had a clear discussion on young people’s choice regarding section 17 and section 20. • 100% had evidence of management oversight. • Areas for improvement included advocacy, which was not consistently discussed with young people, and there were opportunities for improvements to practice identified in 2 cases. 	<p>80% privately fostered cases that are audited will be good or outstanding.</p> <p>80% audited cases for 16-17 year olds will show that support is good or outstanding quality.</p>	<p>90% privately fostered cases that are audited will be good or outstanding.</p> <p>90% audited cases for 16-17 year olds will show that support is good or outstanding quality.</p>
<p>Position in September 2022 (Q2) in relation to targets</p>		<p>Progress relative to targets</p>
<p>A survey from Crewe YMCA with young people in October 2021 found that 86% young people felt safe in their accommodation. Our Care Leavers survey that took in November 2021 found that 85% of young people felt safe in their accommodation.</p> <p>A survey of care leavers in October and November 2021 found that 85.3% young people felt safe in their home, and 90.6% said they knew who to contact if they didn’t feel safe at home.</p>		<p>★ Achieved target</p>

<p>A dip sample of all seven privately fostered cases open in November and December 2022 found that :</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The fostering independent reviewing officer's oversight was evident on 6 of the 7 children's records • There was evidence of appropriate challenge to the case management where this was required • There was some team manager oversight. 	<p>Judgements were not made during this audit as it was assessing consistency in practice.</p>
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<p>An audit of homeless 16-17 year olds in November 2022 found that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Between 31 March 2022 and 31 October 2022 7 young people were identified as genuinely homeless. • There was clear management oversight in 5 cases (71%). • There was evidence within young people's files that section 17 and section 20 had been discussed, but the guidance wasn't provided in all cases. • Joint housing interviews have taken place and have been face to face wherever possible. 	<p>Judgements were not made during this audit as it was assessing consistency in practice.</p>
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Ref	What we will do to achieve consistently good practice	Lead person	Complete by	Progress to date
4a	<p>Provide additional capacity within the Fostering Service to lead on private fostering to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - raise awareness in a dedicated campaign from September 2021 - audit cases so we can use the learning to focus on where we need to continue to improve practice - profile private fostering in the community. 	<p>Claire Shepherd, Fostering Independent Reviewing Office</p>	<p>March 2021</p>	<p>The private fostering lead is in place; initial audit activity began in May 2021 continues on a monthly basis. Currently there are seven private fostering cases which are being scrutinized on a monthly basis to ensure that there is consistent adherence with timescales. A masterclass programme has been developed to inform staff of the private fostering arrangements. Policy and procedures have been refreshed and ongoing work is continuing on updating the profile of private fostering with the community.</p>
4b	<p>Provide accommodation under the recommissioning of 16+ supported accommodation.</p>	<p>Dave Leadbetter, Head of Service Children's Commissioning</p>	<p>July 2021</p>	<p>The recommissioning of 16+ supported accommodation is complete and the contract has been awarded. Extensive remodeling has taken</p>

				place with a complete rebuild of accommodation following consultation with young people.
4c	Implement the recommendations following external validation from Jill Boak, Ministry of Housing.	Annemarie Parker, Head of Service for Cared for Children and Care Leavers	June 2021	We have made significant progress against the action plan in response to the external validation from the Ministry of Housing. We met with Jill Boak from MHCLG and our Housing colleagues on 3 September 2021 to review progress against the action plan. The MHCLG were satisfied that we are continuing to work effectively as a partnership.
4d	Update the joint housing protocol with our ambition that no care leaver will access emergency accommodation.	Annemarie Parker, Head of Service for Cared for Children and Care Leavers	July 2022	On reflection this has not been included within the joint housing protocol as we feel there are some circumstances in which we would be unable to prevent care leavers needing to access emergency accommodation – for example if there was a fire/flood/fleeing from violence. Our Ignition Panel continues to work well and the use of emergency accommodation remains at an absolute minimum.
4e	Employ a housing officer in the front door to further strengthen the offer of prevention of 16/17 homelessness, and to support a robust response when this does happen.	Naomi Hollinshead, Service Manager for ChECS	June 2021	Recruitment to this post is complete and the housing officer is now in place, providing additional support and functions such as housing in the context of domestic abuse.
4f	Monthly multi-agency audits on 16-17 presenting as homeless to continue to take place in the front door to assess progress in this area.	Naomi Hollinshead, Service Manager for ChECS	March 2022/ Bi-monthly	A reduction to bi-monthly audits was agreed in line with the positive progress made in this area. These will continue to ensure assurance is offered about meeting the needs of this potentially vulnerable group.

Recommendation	Improve the quality and consistency of support and engagement with foster carers (November 2019)		
What inspectors found	<p>Sufficiency of in-house foster carers was a known challenge - the number of approved fostering households had reduced and recent attempts to improve recruitment had not had the impact that we had hoped for.</p> <p>A significant group of foster carers had raised concerns about the support they received from the council. Inspectors found that foster carers were not always well supported, and that in some cases, working relationships were at risk of breaking down. Senior leaders were aware of the issues, and an independent review of the fostering service was planned prior to the inspection taking place.</p>		
	Baseline from 2020/21	Target for September 2021	Target for September 2022 (Q2)
<p>As at February 2021, our fostering recruitment campaign had resulted in</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 83 new foster care enquiries • 14 new foster carers in assessment. <p>100% of our assessments of new foster carers were completed within the 8 months statutory timeframe. Our internal ambition is to complete these within 16 weeks.</p>	<p>We will gain an additional 30 in-house foster carers over the next 3 years (5 new carers by September).</p> <p>Over 50% assessments for new foster carers will be completed within 16 weeks.</p> <p>90% foster carer annual reviews will be completed within timescales (held every 12 months).</p>	<p>We will gain an additional 30 in-house foster carers over the next 3 years (5 additional new carers between September and March).</p> <p>Over 80% assessments for new foster carers will be completed within 16 weeks.</p> <p>99% foster carer annual reviews will be completed within timescales (held every 12 months).</p>	

<p>97% foster carer annual reviews were completed within timescales (held every 12 months).</p> <p>Feedback from foster carers demonstrates relationships have improved since the inspection.</p>	<p>Feedback from foster carers will continue to demonstrate improved relationships between foster carers and Cheshire East Council.</p>	<p>Feedback from foster carers will continue to demonstrate improved relationships between foster carers and Cheshire East Council.</p>		
<p>Position in September 2022 (Q2) in relation to targets</p>		<p>Progress relative to targets</p>		
<p>In Q1 and Q2 of 2022-23 we have not achieved a net gain of additional homes for children, as although we have recruited new fosters carers, we have also experienced some resignations.</p> <p>We have been continuing to step up recruitment activities, and had a very successful Cheshire Foster Care Fortnight Campaign in May 2022. We attended various events across the county to continue to spread the message about the difference that fostering can and does make to children's lives. This activity has led to a steady increase in enquiries and applications from people who want to foster.</p>		<p>↓ Below target</p>		
<p>We are still short of achieving new foster carer assessments within 16 weeks. Of the 2 newly approved foster carers in Q2 neither were achieved within 16 weeks.</p>		<p>↓ Below target</p>		
<p>96% of fostering annual reviews were being completed within timescales in Q2.</p>		<p>↓ Below target</p>		
<p>Feedback from foster carers continues to demonstrate improved relationships. Direct feedback is sought from the Fostering IRO at every Foster Carer Review. Foster carers are also assisting in the delivery and design of frontline services such as foster carers delivering training to frontline colleagues and sitting as core members of the Virtual School Governing Body, Mockingbird project and Fostering Board. The Foster Carer Survey has been completed and the results are being analysed. The Foster Carer forum has been relaunched in March 2022 with good attendance, foster carers feedback that they feel there have been improvements in communication. The Foster Carers Association was established in September 2022, chaired by foster carer Ken Talbot.</p>		<p>↑ Achieved target</p>		
<p>Ref</p>	<p>What we will do to achieve consistently good practice</p>	<p>Lead person</p>	<p>Timescale</p>	<p>Progress to date</p>

5a	<p>Continue to improve fostering recruitment and retention by</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -continuing to develop our marketing and recruitment campaign -becoming a foster friendly employer -launching a foster carer charter so it is clear what foster carers can expect from the LA, and our expectations of carers -developing specialist salaried foster carers. 	Samantha Walker, Head of Provider Services	March 2023/ Ongoing	<p>We have been continuing to step up recruitment activities, and had a very successful Cheshire Foster Care Fortnight Campaign in May 2022. We attended various events across the county to continue to spread the message about the difference that fostering can and does make to children’s lives. This activity has led to a steady increase in enquiries and applications from people who want to foster.</p> <p>We have set up our dedicated Facebook page and launched Fostering Champions Ambassadors Scheme, Christmas and World Cup campaign. We are using advertisement on roundabouts across Cheshire East and an ongoing radio campaign.</p> <p>In 2002 we promised to plant a tree for every fostering household this year and for every new household over the next 5 years.</p> <p>We are planning to plant between 40-50 young tree saplings in 4 locations across Cheshire East in</p> <p>We have ambitions to become a foster friendly employer and to launch a revised foster carers charter.</p> <p>We are working with colleagues in the Marketing and Communications Team on launching a fresh campaign for Foster Care Fortnight to launch our new ‘Did you know’ campaign and to consolidate our targeted recruitment to attract more foster carers who can offer home to sibling groups, teenagers, parent and baby, unaccompanied asylum-seeking children and step down from residential.</p>
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5b	Redesign the fostering service to establish specialised teams to enable effective support to foster carers and young people.	Samantha Walker, Head of Provider Services	December 2022	The fostering service redesign has been completed.
5c	Develop and launch our second Mockingbird Hub.	Sarah Probert, Mockingbird Lead Practitioner	January 2022	We successfully launched our second Mockingbird Hub in January 2022.
5d	Continue to update the fostering policies and procedures.	Samantha Walker, Head of Provider Services	April 2023	We are moving to having our policies and procedures provided and maintained by a specialist company – Tri-ex. The new policies and procedures will be in place by April 2023.
5e	Increase sufficiency in short break provision, including retendering our short break local offer for disabled children and their families.	Samantha Walker, Head of Provider Services	March 2022	Our Short Break Local Offer for Disabled Children and their families has been recommissioned and began operation on 1 June 2021. Between May 2022 and January 2023 there were 884 people using short breaks. We have also recruited three new Short Break Foster Carers which increases our overall number to six.
5f	Continue to engage with foster carers through regular newsletters, foster carer workshops, and involving foster carers in service development through task and finish groups.	Samantha Walker, Head of Provider Services	March 2022	Annual foster carer survey complete. We have continued to publish regular newsletters. We have foster carer representation on all of our development groups and have recruited a foster carer to the Virtual School Governing Body. We have reestablished our Foster Carer Forums with a good attendance and positive feedback received about the improvements in communication shared at the February 2022 meeting.

5g	Develop and launch an information recording system which enables data input and data capture specifically through the fostering service (Fostering System Optimisation).	Samantha Walker, Head of Provider Service	July 2023	<p>5 workstreams are in place which are overseen by officers and service users. These are:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Portals – A number of new portal forms have been developed with a large training drive for Foster Carers in Q3 2022/23. 2. Fostering Recruitment Workflow – the new Workflow went live in December 2021. 3. Family and Friends Workflow – the new Workflow went live in December 2021. 4. Special Guardianship Workflow - the new Workflow went live in December 2021. 5. Private Fostering Workflow – Work on Private Fostering will continue into 2023/24.
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Additional recommendations following the Focused Visit: November 2021

Recommendation	Improve the identification of contingency arrangements in child-in-need plans.			
What inspectors found	<p>Contingency arrangements in child in need plans are not always sufficiently well-formed or detailed. Management oversight is also not always fully responsive to children’s changing needs, and child in need meetings do not always lead to the identification of drift for children. This all means that, when situations deteriorate for children in need, alternative decisive action is not always taken promptly.</p> <p>Family support networks are routinely considered to offer immediate support for children and families. This helps families to build resilience and lessens the need for external professional involvement. Family support networks are not explored well enough in longer-term contingency planning.</p>			
Baseline from 2021/22		Target for September 2022		Target for September 2022 (Q2)
Family support networks were not consistently explored well enough in longer-term contingency planning.		Family Networking to be evidenced on 80% of children’s records who remain open to Children’s Social Care following an assessment.		Family Networking to be evidenced on 90% of children’s records who remain open to Children’s Social Care following an assessment.
Position in September 2022 (Q2) in relation to targets			Progress relative to targets	
Lead practitioners are supporting the workforce to gain confidence around holding family networks. This has included masterclasses on holding family network meetings, and role modelling. The consistent use of family networking as part of ongoing child in need planning requires further embedding.			 Below target	
Ref	What we will do to achieve consistently good practice	Lead person	Timescale	Progress to date
6a	Masterclasses for all staff on Family Networking and one to one support to be offered where required to practitioners	Sarah Flint, Principal Social Worker/ Practice Leads	December 2023	2022 experienced some significant staffing challenges and therefore it is necessary to deliver our revised masterclass programme again throughout 2023, 4 x per week during learning week.

6b	Bottom lines to be set at key points in a child's journey to embed the practice of family networking and its impact on children and families	Louise Hurst, Head of Service for Child in Need and Child Protection	April 2023	This will be reviewed at the end of quarter 4 and is now a standard part of performance clinics.
6c	Updated assessments to be completed when a child's needs change and this is to be reflected in the child's plan – this is a bottom line and will be measured through dip sample.	Louise Hurst, Head of Service for Child in Need and Child Protection	September 2022	84% children have an updated C&F assessment within the last 12 months in Q2.
6d	Updated Family Networking Policy to be launched	Sarah Flint, Principal Social Worker	April 2023	We are moving to having our policies and procedures provided and maintained by a specialist company – Tri-ex. The new policies and procedures will be in place by April 2023

Recommendation	Improve the consistency and effectiveness of management oversight for disabled children.	
What inspectors found	Most managers have regular oversight of social work with children and their families. Supervision takes place with sufficient frequency in most teams, and children's wishes and experiences are usually considered in discussions. However, management oversight does not always challenge and prevent drift for all children effectively. This is particularly evident in the service for disabled children, where supervision and management oversight are less regular and effective. While children are not left at risk of immediate harm as a result, they experience a more reactive service because of this.	
Baseline from 2021/22	Target for September 2022	Target for September 2022 (Q2)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Supervision was not being completed across the CWD team in line with our supervision policy. Management oversight was not always consistent, particularly in relation to decision making and rationale for CIN intervention, visiting and review regimen. The wishes and feelings of the parents of disabled appeared to be given precedence over the wishes and feelings of disabled children themselves. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Supervision will be completed and recorded in line with our supervision policy and evidence will be available to demonstrate the impact that supervision is having on the lives of our children. Management decisions will be recorded both in the case record and as part of the Child in Need assessment process that defines the reason for involvement and the CIN visiting and review requirements for each individual case (within case notes and case summary) The wishes and feeling of disabled children will be visible within Child in Need assessments and reviews. 	The preceding targets are evident on 100% of CWD cases.
Position in September 2022 (Q2) in relation to targets		Progress relative to targets
<p>At the end of Q2 2022-23, case supervision was at 76% within 8 weeks, however within the CWD service there are some children that require supervision at 12 week intervals as opposed to 8. We are further developing Power BI to ensure we are accurately able to report on this so we have a more accurate picture of supervision.</p> <p>Weekly dip sampling has taken place throughout Q1 and Q2 which has evidenced improvement in timely visiting to children and recording the rationale for visiting intervals.</p>		<p style="text-align: center;"> Below target</p>

There continues to be work required to bring the voice of the child through explicitly in every assessment however a significant improvement has been seen. We have also seen an improvement in the voice of the child being evidence in referrals to the CWD Care Package Panel.

Ref	What we will do to achieve consistently good practice	Lead person	Timescale	Progress to date
7a	Supervision will be completed with all social workers and family support workers that meets the requirements of our own supervision policy.	Michelle Jones and Cat Linde, Team Managers Children with Disabilities	April 2022	<p>During December 2021 all social workers were allocated team managers to work through their allocated cases. This set a benchmark for Team Manager Michelle Jones to work from when she joined the CWD Service.</p> <p>At the end of Q2 2022-23, case supervision was at 76% within 8 weeks, however within the CWD service there are some children that require supervision at 12 week intervals as opposed to 8. We are further developing Power BI to ensure we are accurately able to report on this so we have a more accurate picture of supervision.</p>
7b	CWD Child in Need Visiting and Review Policy to be developed and implemented.	Keith Martin, Service Manager Children with Disabilities	May 2022	The policy was updated in May 2022.
7c	The rationale for the application of the child in need visiting and review regimen is clearly recorded on each case, in line with the policy described above.	Michelle Jones, Team Manager Children with Disabilities	Ongoing	Rationales are continuing to be written to each new and re-assessment and are recorded within the case summary.
7d	Dip sample audits will be completed each month to look at supervision and the application of the CWD child in need visiting and review policy.	Keith Martin, Service Manager Children with Disabilities	Ongoing on a monthly basis	Dip sampling audits commenced in April 2022 on a monthly basis.

				<p>Weekly dip sampling has taken place throughout Q1 and Q2 which has evidenced improvement in timely visiting to children and recording the rationale for visiting intervals.</p> <p>There continues to be work required to bring the voice of the child through explicitly in every assessment however a significant improvement has been seen. We have also seen an improvement in the voice of the child being evidence in referrals to the CWD Care Package Panel.</p>
7e	Reporting system will be developed through Power BI that accurately reflects visiting and review performance matched against the CWD Child in Need visiting and review policy.	Business Intelligence and Children with Disabilities Management Team (Pete Thorley, Michelle Jones and Keith Martin)	September 2022	Power BI has been developed to enhance performance management. Weekly Performance Clinics review all elements of statutory business.
7f	A series of Team Development Days will be established that will focus on acknowledging good practice and improving practice across the service.	Children with Disabilities Management Team (Keith Martin, Michelle Jones, Cat Linde and Louisa Joyce)	Ongoing throughout the year	These sessions are being run on a regular basis.

Recommendation	Improve the completion of audit recommendations to further improve experiences for children.			
What inspectors found	A child-focused auditing programme provides a clear overall picture of the impact of practice for children across the service. Thematic findings from this work inform areas for future service development. For example, the identification through audit of the need to strengthen support for children at risk of neglect has led to more effective responses to these children. While the impact of individual audits can be seen in subsequent practice with some children, this is not always evident for every child whose records have been audited.			
Baseline from November 2021		Target for September 2022		Target for September 2022 (Q2)
The follow up of audit recommendations was not consistent for all children.		Progress of the implementation of audit recommendations will be tracked and monitored through the dip sampling of cases by our four Practice Leads on a monthly basis.		Senior leaders will be confident that the process is fully embedded, feedback from our Practice Leads and quarterly audit reports will confirm this, and outcomes for children will be improved.
Position in September 2022 (Q2) in relation to targets				Progress relative to targets
We are establishing a process to further track audit outcomes; our Practice Leads will dip sample eight cases per month to ensure that previously made audit recommendations have been followed up.				↔ On track to achieve target
Ref	What we will do to achieve consistently good practice	Lead person	Complete by	Progress to date
8a	Audits will continue to be completed over a quarter period. The headline report of the audit findings will be completed by the Audit and Quality Assurance Officer at the end of each quarter and reported to the social care senior leadership team (SCLT).	Phil Alcock, Audit and Quality Assurance Officer	Ongoing throughout the year	This action has been completed every quarter and a report is provided to SCLT on a quarterly basis. This contains an update of findings, learning/ training that has been provided in response to audit themes and identifies if actions from previous audits have been completed. This report has supported the identification of where practice can be strengthened.

	Principal Social Worker to provide a quarterly briefing report to ensure learning and training is reflective of audit findings.			
8b	All auditors are responsible for tracking actions from audit and updating the case file with a case note to confirm completion.	Phil Alcock, Audit and Quality Assurance Officer	Ongoing throughout the year	This has been introduced as of quarter 3 as there is evidence that team managers have not consistently been responding to actions from audit.
8d	Practice Leads will dip sample eight cases per month to ensure that previously made audit recommendations have been followed up.	Sarah Flint, Principal Social Worker/ Practice Leads	Ongoing throughout the year	The Principal social worker has been providing an update on a quarterly basis around whether actions from audit have been completed. This has highlighted that actions from audit have not consistently been completed. The Principal social worker will continue to support quarterly updates and it is expected that the introduction of action 8b will result in a consistent approach to ensuring actions from audit are completed.
8e	The Audit and Quality Assurance Officer will moderate 9 cases every quarter period.	Phil Alcock, Audit and Quality Assurance Officer	Ongoing throughout the year	An Independent Auditor has moderated 20 audits that were completed in quarter 1 and 2 of 2022-2023. This demonstrates that most of the judgements made by our auditors are sound.

				The Audit and Quality Assurance Officer will continue to moderate 9 cases every quarter period.
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Working for a brighter future together

Children and Families Committee

Date of Meeting:	13 February 2023
Report Title:	Corporate Parenting Committee Name Change
Report of:	Deborah Woodcock – Executive Director Children’s Services
Ward(s) Affected:	All

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1.** The purpose of this report is to recommend a name change for the Corporate Parenting Committee. This change of name reflects the wishes of cared for children and care leavers who have asked for professionals to simplify the language that is used when working with them or making decisions about them.
- 1.2.** By listening to the wishes and feelings of our care leavers we will ensure that Cheshire East is ‘a great place to be young’. It is also a great opportunity for Cheshire East Council to be ‘an open and enabling organisation’ and for decision makers to demonstrate their commitment to listen, learn and respond to our young people by having a ‘two-way conversation’ as stated in the council’s Corporate Plan.
- 1.3.** By supporting cared for children and care leavers to share their views freely and be taken seriously, Cheshire East Council and partners uphold their responsibility of being duty bearers of children’s rights.
- 1.4.** This report was considered by the Corporate Parenting Committee on 10 January 2023 and the committee agreed the recommendation that the name should be changed to the Cared for Children and Care Leaver Committee. This report requests that the name change is endorsed by the Children and Families Committee as the parent committee.

2. Executive Summary

- 2.1 From October to November 2022 the participation team worked with cared for children and care leavers to explore the option to change the name of Corporate Parenting Committee. This report summarises the feedback and recommendations from cared for children and care leavers. Feedback was captured during an activity day and at the My VOICE group. My VOICE is a group for children and young people with care experience. By giving our cared for children and care leavers the opportunity to shape the Corporate Parenting Committee we uphold the corporate parenting principles to encourage children and young people to express their views, wishes and feelings.

3. Recommendations

- 3.1. To endorse the recommendation from the Corporate Parenting Committee that the name of the Corporate Parenting Committee is changed to the **Cared for Children and Care Leaver Committee** in response to feedback from care experienced children and young people.

4. Reasons for Recommendations

- 4.1. Children and young people told us that professionals use a lot of jargon, and there is a lot of terminology that we use that they don't understand. Children and young people said they don't understand the term 'Corporate Parenting' and that it sounds clinical. After discussions with cared for children and care leavers it was decided to change the name of the Corporate Parenting Strategy to the 'Cared for Children and Care Leavers Strategy'. Now that the Cared for Children and Care Leavers Strategy has changed its name, we also ask that the name of the Corporate Parenting Committee adapts the same language for continuity and so it is clear to children and young people what the committee covers.
- 4.2. Simplifying the language we use when communicating with cared for children and care leavers will ensure that services and support are open, inclusive and accessible.

5. Other Options Considered

5.1.

Option	Impact	Risk
Don't change the name of the Corporate Parenting Committee	<p>Inconsistent language with the strategy</p> <p>We don't deliver what we agreed in the Cared for Children and Care Leavers Strategy</p>	Cared for children, young people and care leavers don't feel listened to and aren't able to recognise that the committee is focused on improving outcomes for them

		without someone explaining this to them.
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6. Background

- 6.1.** Ref 1.4 in the [Cared for Children and Care Leavers Strategy](#) states: “Continue to work with cared for children and care leavers to change the language we use” and **ref 1.9** states: “We will change the name of our Corporate Parenting Committee to reflect children and young people’s wishes regarding the language we use”. By changing the name of the committee, we will do what we said we would do to support and listen to our cared for children and care leavers. This also links to Pledge 6 of the strategy which states: “We will work TOGETHER with children and young people”.

7. Consultation and Engagement

- 7.1.** In October and November 2022 around 15 cared for children and care leavers worked with the participation team to discuss different options for changing the name of Corporate Parenting Committee.
- 7.2. Legal**
- 7.2.1.** No implications.
- 7.3. Finance**
- 7.3.1.** No implications.
- 7.4. Children and Young People/Cared for Children**
- 7.4.1.** Changing the name of the committee will reflect that we listen to children and young people.

Access to Information	
Contact Officer:	Annie Britton Lead Participation Worker Annie.britton@cheshireeast.gov.uk 07890321844
Appendices:	
Background Papers:	Cared for Children and Care Leaver Strategy 2022-26

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Working for a brighter future together

Children and Families Committee

Date of Meeting:	13 February 2023
Report Title:	Schools Funding Formula and Early Years Funding Formula 2023/24
Report of:	Deborah Woodcock, Executive Director of Children's Services
Report Reference No:	CF/39/22-23
Ward(s) Affected:	All

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1. To provide committee with an update on the Dedicated School Grant (DSG) for 2023/24.
- 1.2. To request approval for the allocation of each sub block making up the DSG.
- 1.3. To request approval of the schools funding formula and early years funding formula following recommendations from the Schools Forum.
- 1.4. To request approval to provide delegated authority to the Executive Director of Children's Services to use the funds in accordance with the relevant guidance and proposed funding formula methods.
- 1.5. This is supporting the council's Corporate Plan objectives as follows:

An open and enabling organisation	Ensure that there is transparency in all aspects of council decision making.
A council which empowers and cares about people	Support all children to have the best start in life. Ensure all children have a high quality, enjoyable education that enables them to achieve their full potential.

2. Executive Summary

- 2.1. The report sets out the details of the four DSG funding blocks and requests approval for each block.
- 2.2. The report sets out the process to:
 - 2.2.1. Determine the schools funding formula for 2023/24 and requests approval of the formula by Children and Families Committee. It is a requirement for Children and Families Committee to approve the schools funding formula taking into account the recommendation from Schools Forum.
 - 2.2.2. Determine the early years funding formula for 2023/24 and requests approval of the formula by Children and Families Committee. It is a requirement for Children and Families Committee to approve the early years funding formula taking into account the recommendation from Schools Forum.
- 2.3. The report provides details of the planned high needs block and central schools services block budgets which comply with DFE guidance on use of these funds and requests approval for those allocations. Information on these funds will be shared with Schools Forum for transparency and discussion.
- 2.4. The report requests approval to delegate authority to the Executive Director of Children's Services to use the funds in accordance with the relevant guidance and proposed funding formula methods.

3. Recommendations

Schools Block

That the committee approves the following for the adoption of the Schools Funding Formula 2023/24:

- 3.1. The use of a local funding formula that uses the Department for Education (DfE) national funding formula factors, uplifted for the Cheshire East area cost adjustment, and with any additional funding being allocated via the basic entitlement factor. The formula factors are set out at **Appendix 2**.
- 3.2. The use of +0.5% as the minimum funding guarantee percentage.
- 3.3. The creation of a local Growth Fund at a value of £0.8m.

- 3.4. Provides delegated authority to the Executive Director of Children's Services to use the schools block grant and the mainstream schools additional grant in accordance with relevant guidance.

Early Years Block

That the committee approves the following for the adoption of the Early Years Funding Formula for 2023/24:

- 3.5. The continued use of the current funding formula and an increase in the hourly rates by the same percentage increase as the increased funding from the DfE.
- 3.6. The new funding rates. The rates for 2022/23 and the proposed rates for 2023/24 are set out at **Appendix 4**.
- 3.7. Approves funding to support children learning English as an additional language with effect from 1 April 2023. Westminster Nursery School, Crewe, would currently qualify for this funding.
- 3.8. Provides delegated authority to the Executive Director of Children's Services to use the early years grant in accordance with relevant guidance.
- 3.9. That the committee delegates authority to the Director of Strong Start, Family Help and Integration to enter into revised contracts with providers in accordance with the DfE funding increase.

High Needs Block

- 3.10. That the committee approves the provisional budget allocations of the high needs block and additional high needs funding as set out in **Appendix 5**.
- 3.11. Provides delegated authority to the Executive Director of Children's Services to use the high needs block and additional high needs funding in accordance with relevant guidance.

Central Schools Services Block

- 3.12. That the committee approves the provisional budget allocations and use of the Central Schools Services Block as per **Appendix 6**.
- 3.13. Provides delegated authority to the Executive Director of Children's Services to use the Central Schools Services grant in accordance with relevant guidance.

4. Reasons for Recommendations

The Schools Funding Formula 2023/24:

- 4.1. The local authority is required to review the schools funding formula on an annual basis and consult with schools. The recommended formula has been developed through a Schools Forum working group. It has been subject to consultation with all mainstream schools and then voted on at Schools Forum.
- 4.2. The formula needs to be considered and approved each year by Children and Families Committee under current guidance. This step maybe removed in due course when the national funding formula is applied at school level by the DfE.

The Early Years Funding Formula 2023/24

- 4.3. The DfE has funded local authorities under the Early Years National Funding Formula (EYNFF) since April 2017 when the current formula was introduced on a phased basis during 2017/18 and 2018/19.
- 4.4. The recommended formula continues to be in line with the national guidance, ensures sustainability of the childcare market and continues to target funds to 'narrow the gap' between children from disadvantaged areas and their peers.
- 4.5. Local authorities may retain a maximum of 5% of the allocation from the DfE. Cheshire East retains 5%. Therefore, a minimum of 95% of any increase in the funding from the DfE must be passed through to providers. Increasing the hourly rates paid by Cheshire East to providers by the same percentage increase as the hourly rates allocated by the DfE to Cheshire East ensures that the statutory 95% pass through to providers is maintained.

High Needs Block 2023/24

- 4.6. The High Needs Block is provided to the council to meet its responsibilities regarding special educational needs and disabilities. The initial DfE allocation for 2023/24 is £54.1m plus an additional allocation has been provided of £2.3m giving a total of £56.4m.
- 4.7. The use of the funds is split between the forecast number of placements needed for the year (place and pupil funding) in mainstream settings, special schools and independent settings and funding for associated support services such as autism and sensory services.

- 4.8. The detailed spending plans are determined by a mix of the council's DSG Management Plan approved by Children and Families Committee in September 2022 and the latest information on activity levels predicted in 2023/24.

Central Schools Services Block 2023/24

- 4.9. The Central Schools Services Block is allocated to the council for a number of different services. The initial DfE allocation for 2023/24 is £2.4m.
- 4.10. The Central Schools Services Block is split into two elements: historic commitments and ongoing responsibilities and provides funding for a number of areas including contributions to statutory posts.
- 4.11. Schools Forum have agreed to the allocations where required to do so and committee are being asked to agree to the provisional budget allocations.

5. Other Options Considered

- 5.1. Setting of the schools funding formula and the setting of the early years funding formula are determined by different operational guidance notes produced by the DfE.
- 5.2. In both cases the council has followed the prescribed processes to arrive at the recommendations being presented to Children and Families Committee as set out below.

The Schools Funding Formula:

- 5.3. The process to consider and consult on particular options for the schools funding formula was undertaken by a sub-group of Schools Forum.
- 5.4. Given the local circumstances of being close to the national funding formula at school level and the expectation that the DfE will make that compulsory in the next few years then the options were intentionally restricted to two different levels of minimum funding guarantee (MFG) percentage (0% and +0.5% were used).
- 5.5. Full details of the two different levels were provided to schools as part of the consultation and they preferred the +0.5% option which is being recommended. Please refer to paragraph 7.1 Consultation and Engagement below.
- 5.6. In previous years higher levels of MFG were available but the DfE reduced the maximum MFG percentage in the national funding formula (NFF) from +2% to +0.5%. The NFF applies these without capping or scaling. That cannot be achieved in Cheshire East at present due to affordability constraints.

Early Years Funding Formula

- 5.7. A range of factors for the funding formula were considered when it was introduced. These are set out within **Appendix 3**. The objectives have not changed, and the formula continues to be appropriate. This was agreed in consultation with the Early Years Reference Group (EYRG) in line with statutory guidance.

High Needs Block

- 5.8. The allocations represent the planned costs of demand in each area. The council is required to comply with the SEND code of practice and funding guidance meaning there are no alternative options. This will be subject to in-year monitoring and adjustment to meet children's needs.
- 5.9. Projects to mitigate expenditure on the high needs block have been presented to committee as part of the DSG Management Plan report in September 2022.

Central Schools Services Block

- 5.10. The allocations represent the planned cost in each area. The allocations have been reviewed and where necessary approved by Schools Forum.

6. Background

General

- 6.1. The council receives the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) funding as a ring-fenced grant to pay for education, early years provision, high needs provision and certain prescribed supporting central functions. The Grant is received in four blocks and local decisions are made over the use of the blocks and the basis for allocation to settings and services.
- 6.2. The NFF announcements mean that each DSG block is determined by the DfE using a different national funding formula. These are based on a mix of census and proxy data.
- 6.3. The final DSG figures for 2023/24 were released on 16 December 2022. Further information is provided at **Appendix 1**. The allocations are summarised in the table below:

Cheshire East - DSG Block Allocations	2022/23	2023/24	Year on Year	Year on Year
	Nov 2022	Dec 2022	Change	Change
	£m	£m	£m	%
Schools Block	254.7	270.5	15.8	6.2%
Mainstream Schools Additional Grant	7.4	9.1	1.7	23.0%
Total Schools Funding	262.1	279.6	17.5	6.7%
High Needs block	48.9	54.1	5.2	10.6%
Additional High Needs Funding	1.8	2.3	0.5	27.8%
Total High Needs Funding	50.7	56.4	5.7	11.2%
Central Schools Services Block	2.6	2.40	-0.2	-7.7%
Early Years block (not available until Dec 2022, 22/23 fig used for July 22)	23.9	25.2	1.3	5.4%
Total	339.3	363.6	24.3	7.2%

Schools Funding Formula:

- 6.4. The Schools Forum continues to have the ability to recommend the schools formula funding to the Children and Families Committee. The Forum follows a process of evaluation, consultation and debate to arrive at the final recommendation.
- 6.5. The recommendation from Schools forum on 8 December 2022 is being presented to Children and Families Committee for consideration.
- 6.6. The recommended model includes the setting of a minimum funding guarantee of +0.5%. This means that individual school funding levels should increase by at least +0.5% compared to the 2022/23 levels (subject to the items included in minimum funding guarantee protection) and excluding pupil number changes.
- 6.7. The recommendation also includes setting a local growth fund at £0.8m for 2023/24. This will be held back initially and used to recognise additional classes and additional pupils from the October 2022 census to the October 2023 census. It will be paid out to schools in February 2024.
- 6.8. Following release of the modelling tool containing October 2022 school census data the council has been able to determine schools block funding for each school. The recommended schools formula factors and values from the model are set out at **Appendix 2**.
- 6.9. As the area is very close to using the NFF at school level most of the factors match the ones used by the DfE. Specific points to note are that the mandatory minimum per pupil funding levels set by the DfE have been met and the scaling back to fund the +0.5% minimum growth is very low.

- 6.10. The outcome of the Children and Families Committee meeting will be reported to the Schools Forum on 16 February 2023. School funding levels have to be issued to schools by 28 February 2023.

Early Years Funding Formula:

- 6.11. From 1 April 2017 local authorities have been funded via the Early Years National Funding Formula. (EYNFF)
- 6.12. Following detailed modelling of the formula and consultation, a formula was implemented on 1 April 2017 that met a number of criteria and objectives.
- 6.13. Further details of the EYNFF are set out at **Appendix 3**. The current funding formula to providers is set out in **Appendix 4**.
- 6.14. The table summarises the hourly rates of funding from the DfE:

	2 year olds	3&4 year olds
2022/23	£5.65	£4.61
2023/24	£5.71	£4.87
Increase (£)	£0.06	£0.26
Increase (%)	1.1%	5.64%

- 6.15. Retaining the formula and increasing the hourly rates paid to providers by the same percentage increase as the rate paid by the DfE will ensure that the minimum 95% pass through rate is maintained and the objectives set by the formula continue to be met. The proposed funding to providers, effective from 1 April 2022, is set out in **Appendix 4**.
- 6.16. Prior to 2022/23, the base rate paid by Cheshire East increased very slightly over time due to rounding up the formula to the nearest 1p. The formula was rounded down in 2022/23 to ensure that the funding allocated to providers did not exceed the allocation from the DfE. It is recommended that the base rate formula should not be rounded up to avoid spending more than the funding allocation.
- 6.17. Rounding down the base rate from 3 decimal places to 2 decimal places to avoid spending more than the funding allocation will create a small saving. The rounding down could range from £0.001 to £0.009. Consequently the saving will vary year on year depending on the allocation.
- 6.18. The saving must remain within the funding formula paid to providers to ensure the 95% pass-through requirement is met. It is recommended that the saving from rounding the base rate should create a new element of the

early years funding formula to provide very targeted support for English as an Additional Language (EAL).

- 6.19. The funding allocation from the DfE includes an element for EAL. The DfE does not collect data on EAL in early years. Therefore, EAL in Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2 levels is used as a proxy to calculate this component.
- 6.20. It is recommended that the funding for EAL should be allocated to group based providers using a similar proxy where:
 - 6.20.1. The provider is located in the school catchment area of the primary school with the highest proportion EAL in the borough , and
 - 6.20.2. EAL exceeds 60% of the Free early education entitlement (FEEE) children.
 - 6.20.3. Where there is more than one eligible provider, the funding will be distributed based on the number of FEEE children on roll at the annual early years census. The funding will be paid over the 3 terms.
 - 6.20.4. This element of the formula to be reviewed on an annual basis.
- 6.21. The proposal was presented to the Schools Forum on 8 December 2022 and unanimously supported.

High Needs Block

- 6.22. The high needs block is used for meeting the costs of pupils with an education, health and care plan (EHCP).
- 6.23. The volume of pupils with an EHCP has significantly increased since 2016 and now significantly exceeds funding levels. However the national funding formula does not fully recognise this increase. This has resulted in a significant deficit position which is being
- 6.24. Children and Families Committee have received a number of reports on this matter recently and the council is participating in the delivering better value programme.
- 6.25. This report sets out the provisional allocations of the high needs block in 2023/24 at a high level for approval.
- 6.26. These provisional allocations are informed by the DSG Management Plan approved by committee in September 2022, the latest information on demand in 2023/24 and the impact of existing and new mitigating activity.
- 6.27. The forecast mitigated DSG Reserve deficit as at 31 March 2024 is £63.6m. This aligns with the DSG Management Plan.

Central Schools Services Block

- 6.28. The CSSB was created under the National Funding Formula (NFF) changes from 2018/19. It represents the collation of items previously top-sliced from the schools block for specific costs in relation to historic commitments and on-going central functions.
- 6.29. It also includes funding for statutory functions that were previously met by the former Education Services Grant prior to it being rolled into DSG.
- 6.30. Several CSSB funded services are subject to a limitation of no new commitments or no increases in expenditure after 2017/18.
- 6.31. Since 2020/21 the DfE has applied a 20% year on year reduction to the historic commitments element and that has continued into 2023/24. The expectation is that similar reductions will be applied in future.
- 6.32. This is placing a pressure on the prudential borrowing element and the council's base budget is now being used instead through budget growth in the MTFS.

7. Consultation and Engagement

- 7.1. Setting of the schools funding formula and the setting of the early years funding formula are determined by different operational guidance notes produced by the DfE. Links to these documents are provided in the "Background Papers" section of the report. As such the two blocks are subject to different consultation arrangements.
- 7.2. In both cases the council has followed the prescribed processes to arrive at the recommendations being presented to Children and Families Committee.
- 7.3. Details of the local schools funding consultation are included at **Appendix 1**.
- 7.4. The Early Years Reference Group (EYRG), a sub-group of the Schools Forum which consists of 9 members from across the early years sector, was consulted on 9 and 25 November 2022. Attendees of the meeting supported the proposed approach. The proposal was presented to the Schools Forum on 8 December 2022 and was unanimously supported.
- 7.5. The council does not have to consult on the use of the high needs block but continues to work closely with school representatives on the Schools Forum and the SEND partnership group.
- 7.6. Use of the central schools services block has to be, in part, agreed by the Schools Forum and this approval was granted on 8 December 2022.

8. Implications

8.1. Legal

- 8.1.1. The local authority currently receives funding for schools through the Dedicated Schools Grant. The local authority has the statutory responsibility under the Schools and Early Years Finance Regulations for allocating this funding to schools and must consult with the Schools Forum to determine the individual schools budget for all schools in the area and must have regard to DFE guidance: The national funding formulae for schools and high needs :2023 - 2024 (July 2022)(‘the Guidance’)and the Guidance Early Years entitlements: local authority funding operational guide 2023 to 2024 Published 16 December 2022
- 8.1.2. The National funding formula for schools will determine how much each local authority in England receives and the local authority will still have the statutory responsibility for distributing this to individual schools in consultation with the Schools Forum. Paragraph 18 of the Guidance provides..... *In 2023-24, local authorities will remain responsible for determining final allocations to schools, in consultation with the Schools Forum .*
- 8.1.3. Paragraph 5 of the Guidance should be noted as set out below :
- 2023-24 will also be our first year of transition to the direct schools NFF – with our end point being a system in which, to ensure full fairness and consistency in funding, every mainstream school in England is funded through the same national formula without adjustment through local funding formulae.
- The approach to tightening was confirmed in the government response to the first stage of our consultation on the direct NFF which was completed last year. In 2023-24, local authorities will only be allowed to use NFF factors in their local formulae, and must use all NFF factors, except any locally determined premises factors.
- 8.1.4. The EYNFF funds the free entitlement to early years provision for disadvantaged 2 year olds as well as 3 and 4 year olds across all sectors, which is the Authority’s statutory duty under Section 7 of the Childcare Act 2006. It also assists with the Authority’s delivery of its duty to secure sufficient childcare for working parents under Section 6 of the Childcare Act 2006. The Authority funds providers under the terms of free early entitlement contracts for 2, 3 and 4 year olds, reviewed and Legal Services in February 2022. This is based on a model contract issued by the DfE.

8.2. Finance

- 8.2.1. The schools funding formula is the mechanism through which the Dedicated Schools Grant schools block is provided to schools. The NFF arrangements mean that all schools block funding will be delegated to schools.
- 8.2.2. The schools funding formula has no impact on the council’s Medium Term Financial Strategy.
- 8.2.3. The overall carry forward balance for maintained schools is reflected on the council’s balance sheet.
- 8.2.4. The EYNFF is funded through the Dedicated Schools Grant. Mid-year adjustments are made to reflect January census data. All providers of the free entitlement will receive an increase in funding based on the proposed formula. Centrally retained levels will continue to not exceed 5% in line with the guidance.
- 8.2.5. The DSG deficit resulting from high needs funding not matching spend is a major issue and the significant deficit reserve is permitted by a temporary accounting override announced by the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities. This override has been extended to 31 March 2026.

8.3. Policy

8.3.1. The council is supporting the priorities in the Corporate Plan:

An open and enabling organisation	Ensure that there is transparency in all aspects of council decision making.
A council which empowers and cares about people	Support all children to have the best start in life. Ensure all children have a high quality, enjoyable education that enables them to achieve their full potential.

8.3.2. Policy implications relate to the proportion of the base rate in relation to any supplements and how the supplements are targeted. The implemented supplements focus on ‘narrowing the gap’ between children from disadvantaged areas and their peers and sustaining provision in rural areas. Increasing the funding rate within the existing formula would continue to meet the policy objectives.

8.4. Equality

- 8.4.1. The Government NFF announcements include an equality statement. The local schools funding formula applies to all schools based on pupil characteristics. The NFF provides more funding to such characteristics so will help more vulnerable groups in due course.

8.5. Human Resources

- 8.5.1. Changes to school funding levels may result in staffing changes at schools requiring HR support. Each school will need to consider the impact of using the existing local formula as opposed to NFF on their three-year financial plans and review their staffing establishment accordingly.

8.6. Risk Management

- 8.6.1. Prompt agreement of the schools funding formula allows schools to receive their budget allocations in advance of the financial year. They can ensure their expenditure plans are in line with their available budget. 28 February 2023 is the date by which school block funding levels must be notified to schools.
- 8.6.2. It is recognised this will be challenging for schools and early years providers as costs are increasing.

8.7. Rural Communities

Schools Funding Formula:

- 8.7.1. All maintained and academy schools in the Borough are affected by decisions over total funding levels and the local formula used to allocate it to schools.
- 8.7.2. The NFF contains an element of sparsity funding for remote schools meeting the set criteria.

Early Years Funding Formula:

- 8.7.3. The current formula provides additional funding for provision in rural areas in recognition of their limited ability to attract the numbers of children required to cover operating costs. The additional funding is paid to provision determined by a sixfold classification of rural/urban wards produced by Cheshire East Council.

8.7.4. Funding should continue to be awarded to rural areas to support sustainability of provision and the Authority’s sufficiency duty.

8.8. Children and Young People/Cared for Children

8.8.1. All maintained and academy schools in the Borough are affected by decisions over funding levels and the formula to allocate funding.

8.8.2. In addition to DSG schools block funding, schools continue to receive other grant funding such as pupil premium allocations for cared for children where they are eligible and universal infant free school meals funding.

8.8.3. Adequate and equitable funding contributes towards sustaining sufficient levels of early years provision across the borough for children to access their free early education entitlement. This is a statutory duty for the Local Authority.

8.9. Public Health

8.9.1. There are no direct implications for public health.

8.10. Climate Change

8.10.1. There are no direct implications

Access to Information	
Contact Officer:	<p>Schools Name: Jacky Forster Job Title: Director of Education and 14-19 Skills Email: Jacky.Forster@cheshireeast.gov.uk</p> <p>Early Years Name: Claire Williamson Job Title: Director of Director of Strong Start, Family Help and Integration Email: claire.williamson@cheshireeast.gov.uk</p>
Appendices:	<p>Appendix 1 Setting the Schools Funding Formula 2023/24 Appendix 2 Recommended Formula – Factors and Values 2023/24 Appendix 3 Further Details of the Early Years NFF April 2017</p>

	<p>Appendix 4 Hourly rates payable to providers of the Free Early Education Entitlements and Proposed hourly rates payable to providers of the Free Early Education Entitlements for 2023/24.</p> <p>Appendix 5 ~ DSG High Needs Block Allocations 2023/24</p> <p>Appendix 6 ~ DSG Central Schools Services Block Allocations 2023/24</p>
<p>Background Papers:</p>	<p>Schools Forum papers for 2022 are held at: http://www.cheshireeast.gov.uk/schoolsforum</p> <p>The DfE released funding information for 2023/24 at this link.</p> <p>The respective DfE Operation Guidance Notes are available at:</p> <p>Schools Early Years High Needs</p> <p>Central School Services– guidance is included in the schools block guidance from section 34.</p> <p>The council’s DSG Management Plan is available at Agenda for Children and Families Committee on Friday, 23rd September, 2022, 1.00 pm Cheshire East Council As item 34</p>

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Appendix 1 ~ Setting the Schools Funding Formula 2023/24

1. The Schools Forum is required to make a recommendation to Children and Families Committee on the funding formula to allocate funding to schools for the next financial year.
2. The Schools Forum meeting on 6 October 2022 considered the approach to the 2023/24 funding formula. They agreed to convene a sub-group to consider the issues in more detail and consult with schools.
3. The sub-group met on four occasions (20 September, 13 October, 3 November and 1 December 2022) to consider the issues for schools and ran a consultation process from 17 November to 7 December 2022.
4. The consultation process considered two minimum funding guarantee options.
5. Schools were asked to feed back their views to Schools Forum representatives for consideration at the meeting on 8 December 2022. At the meeting four representatives voted for 0% MFG and seven representatives voted for +0.5% MFG.
6. The feedback was considered and the Forum recommended the +0.5 MFG option to Children and Families Committee.

Available Funding Levels

7. The initial DSG funding allocations released in July 2022 were used to inform the modelling work used in the consultation process.
8. These figures allowed for the updated headline minimum per pupil funding levels (MPPF) for primary and secondary schools to be achieved with a relatively low levels of MFG scaling back.
9. All the modelling for the consultation used October 2021 pupil numbers and the revised NFF factors provided by the DfE.
10. The recommended model will be fully updated by the revised funding announcements from the DfE incorporating October 2022 pupil information that were released on 16 December 2022. These confirmed the additional number of pupils and the local growth factor and increased schools funding by 6.7% for 2023/24 to £279.6m (including a new supplement of £9.1m as announced in the 2022 Autumn Statement).

Minimum per pupil funding levels

11. The compulsory MPPF figures have increased by 0.5%.

Change to Minimum Per Pupil Funding Levels	2022/23 Restated	2023/24	Change	Change
Primary	£4,384	£4,405	£21	0.5%
Secondary	£5,689	£5,715	£26	0.5%

The Formula Option for 2023/24

12. Two formula options were consulted on. These were based on the same model using the national funding formula (NFF) plus area cost adjustment and all flexibility routed through the basic entitlement. Then two different levels of MFG were applied:

MFG at	0%
MFG at	+0.5%

Setting the minimum funding guarantee percentage

13. MFG is a self-funding method of ensuring no schools suffer significant reductions to funding levels by scaling back funding from those schools set to gain.

14. Therefore, any models needed to consider the achievement of the MFG percentage and the resulting scaling back percentage. Previous years have seen high levels of MFG scaling, however that has reduced to less than 5% under the current funding arrangements.

15. The Schools Forum voted to recommend a model with MFG at +0.5%. In context the previous exercises have always led to the Schools Forum recommending the lowest MFG option available. As such this differed from the views of the formula sub group.

Growth Fund

16. The council is able to hold an element of schools funding back and use it to provide some extra funding to schools who have increased their admission number in September or seen significant levels of in year pupil growth. This is called the Growth Fund.

17. The extra pupils are not funded through the main formula until the following year and the Growth Fund is intended to help schools manage the delay in receiving the formula funding. The Schools Forum have recommended setting the Growth Fund at £0.8m. This was based on consideration of the medium term financial plans for the Growth Fund.

Timetable

18. The following key stages of the process will be followed:

Date	Event
16 December 2022	Final school and pupil funding announcements
20 January 2023	APT model submitted
	Circulate the list to schools as provisional
13 February	C&F Committee – determine formula
16 February	Schools Forum receive final school funding levels
28 February	Source of funds issued to schools

19. Full details of the process are available in [Schools Forum papers](#).

20. The other three funding blocks all follow the requirements of the specific funding guidance.

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Appendix 2 ~ Recommended Formula – Factors and Values 2023/24

Reception uplift		No	
Description		Amount per pupil	
1) Basic Entitlement Age Weighted Pupil Unit (AWPU)	Primary (Years R-6)	£3,429.83	
	Key Stage 3 (Years 7-9)	£4,835.51	
	Key Stage 4 (Years 10-11)	£5,449.93	
Description		Primary amount per pupil	Secondary amount per pupil
2) Deprivation	FSM	£481.74	£481.74
	FSM6	£707.56	£1,033.74
	IDACI Band F	£230.83	£336.22
	IDACI Band E	£281.02	£446.62
	IDACI Band D	£441.60	£622.25
	IDACI Band C	£481.74	£682.47
	IDACI Band B	£511.85	£732.65
	IDACI Band A	£672.43	£933.38
Description		Primary amount per pupil	Secondary amount per pupil
3) Looked After Children (LAC)		£0.00	
4) English as an Additional Language (EAL)	EAL 3 Primary	£582.11	
	EAL 3 Secondary		£1,570.68
5) Mobility	Pupils starting school outside of normal entry dates	£948.43	£1,364.94
Description		Weighting	Amount per pupil (primary or secondary respectively)
6) Prior attainment	Primary Low Attainment		£1,159.19
	Secondary low attainment (year 7)	54.47%	£1,756.35
	Secondary low attainment (year 8)	64.53%	
	Secondary low attainment (year 9)	64.53%	
	Secondary low attainment (year 10)	64.53%	
	Secondary low attainment (years 11)	63.59%	
Other Factors			
Factor		Lump Sum per Primary School (£)	Lump Sum per Secondary School (£)
7) Lump Sum		£128,464.64	£128,464.64
8) Sparsity factor		£56,504.37	£82,197.30
Fixed, tapered or NFF sparsity primary lump sum?		NFF	
Fixed, tapered or NFF sparsity secondary lump sum?		NFF	
Fixed, tapered or NFF sparsity middle school lump sum?		NFF	
Fixed, tapered or NFF sparsity all-through lump sum?		NFF	
9) Fringe Payments			£0
10) Split Sites			£173,873
11) Rates			£2,043,072
12) PFI funding			£0
Exceptional Rents			£23,797
Total Funding for Schools Block Formula (excluding minimum per pupil funding level and MFG Funding Total)		£267,046,820	99.02%

14) Additional funding to meet minimum per pupil funding level	£2,630,377	0.98%
Total Funding for Schools Block Formula (excluding MFG Funding Total)	£269,677,196	100.00%
15) Minimum Funding Guarantee	0.50%	£72,620
Apply capping and scaling factors? (gains may be capped above a specific ceiling and/or scaled)		Yes
Capping Factor (%)	0.50%	Scaling Factor (%) 2.23%
Total deduction if capping and scaling factors are applied		-£72,620
Total Funding for Schools Block Formula		£269,677,197
High Needs threshold (only fill in if, exceptionally, a high needs threshold different from £6,000 has been approved)		£0.00
Additional funding from the high needs budget		£0.00
Growth fund (if applicable)		£800,140.00
Falling rolls fund (if applicable)		£0.00
Other Adjustment to 21-22 Budget Shares		£0
Total Funding For Schools Block Formula (including growth and falling rolls funding)		£270,477,337
% Distributed through Basic Entitlement		77.90%
% Pupil Led Funding		90.96%
Primary: Secondary Ratio	1 :	1.28
22-23 NFF NNDR allocation		£2,043,072
Total Funding For Schools Block Formula (including growth and falling rolls funding) after deduction of 22-23 NFF NNDR allocation		£268,434,265

Appendix 3 ~ Further Details of the Early Years National Funding Formula, April 2017

1. The Early Years National Funding Formula (EYNFF) aimed to:
 - Deliver fairer funding for local authorities.
 - Maximise funding to providers by requiring local authorities to pass through the majority of funding to providers.
 - Deliver a new Disability Access Fund that will award an annual payment of £615 to settings who support children aged 3 and 4 who are in receipt of disability living allowance and the free early education entitlement.
 - Provide funding for maintained nursery schools.
2. A range of factors for the funding formula were considered within the limitations of the operation guidance from the DfE:
 - Local authorities continue to have the ability to use funding supplements. These are given in addition to the base rate to reflect local needs or policy objectives.
 - The total value of supplements must not be any more than 10%.
 - Deprivation is a mandatory supplement.
 - Discretionary supplements include: Rurality / sparsity; flexibility; quality; and English as an additional language (EAL).
3. Following consultation, early years and childcare providers strongly favoured the majority of the funding via a universal base rate subject to the limitations of the guidance.
4. The DfE allocation to local authorities fluctuates based on the number of hours delivered. Therefore, the funding formula should be linked to the characteristics of the population rather than characteristics of the provider.
5. Supplements linked to characteristics of the provision rather than the child can create instability in the funding model as take up shifts across providers. As a result these are not used.
6. A formula that gives the provider the opportunity to alter their hourly rate each year could result in a significant overspend due to the high pass through requirement. Similarly, the Authority could fail to pass through the minimum requirement if providers reduce their hourly rate.

7. This could only be controlled by revising the funding formula on an annual basis. This would not be practical and would prove an administrative burden on the Local Authority. As a result these are not used.
8. The funding paid to providers of the 2-year-old Free Early Education Entitlement is not subject to a formula. Therefore, it is equitable to increase the hourly rate paid to providers by the same percentage increase as the hourly rate paid by the DfE.
9. Following detailed modelling of the formula and consultation, a formula was implemented on 1st April 2017 that met the following objectives:
 - High pass through rate of 93% in 2017/18 and 95% in 2018/19.
 - High proportion of the funding via the base rate.
 - Additional funding for children from disadvantaged areas.
 - Additional funding to support provision in rural areas.
 - All providers receive more funding than the previous formula.
 - An average hourly rate of at least £4.

Appendix 4**Hourly rates payable to providers of the Free Early Education Entitlements.****Funding Formula from 1 April 2022:**

	2021/22 (£ per child per hour)	% Increase	2022/23 (£ per child per hour)
3-&4-year-olds			
Base rate	4.10	3.829%	4.25
Deprivation - group based provision	0.0058	3.829%	0.006
Deprivation - childminder	0.069	3.829%	0.072
Rurality	0.072	3.829%	0.0748
2-year-olds			
	5.17	3.860%	5.37

All rates are applicable to all the children in the setting.

Proposed hourly rates payable to providers of the Free Early Education Entitlements.**Funding Formula from 1 April 2023:**

	2022/23 (Per child per hour)	% Increase	2023/24 (Per child per hour)
3-&4-year-olds			
Base rate	£4.25	5.64%	£4.48 (£4.489 rounded)
Deprivation - group based provision	£0.006	5.64%	£0.0063
Deprivation - childminder	£0.072	5.64%	£0.076
Rurality	£0.0748	5.64%	£0.079
2-year-olds			
	£5.37	1.1%	£5.43

All rates above are applicable to all the children in the setting.

EAL budget £43,966.13 (created by rounding base rate of £4.489 to £4.48).

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Appendix 5 ~ DSG High Needs Block Allocations 2023/24

1. The council's high needs block allocation for 2023/24 is set out in the table below.

Cheshire East - DSG Block Allocations	2022/23	2023/24	Year on	Year on
	Nov 2022	Dec 2022	Year Change	Year Change
	£m	£m	£m	%
High Needs block	48.9	54.1	5.2	10.6%
Additional High Needs Funding	1.8	2.3	0.5	27.8%
Total High Needs Funding	50.7	56.4	5.7	11.2%

2. The funding is provided to meet the costs of pupils with education, health and care plans and is under significant pressure from increasing demand.
3. The detailed allocations of the block and the additional funding will be developed over the next few months based on the existing DSG Management Plan approved by committee in September 2022, the latest information on demand and the mitigations, and the outcomes of the Delivering Better Value Programme so far.
4. The provisional allocations of the budgets, based on 2022/23 spend, are set out in the table below:

2023/24**Planned Allocations of High Needs Block**

	£m	£m	£m
High Needs Block plus supplementary funding			56.4
Planned Expenditure			
Brought forward DSG Reserve Deficit	45.6		
		45.6	
Post 16 places	2.2		
Resource Provision Places	1.4		
Top - up Funding for Resource Provision and mainstream	14.9		
Enhanced Mainstream Provision	0.8		
Special Schools	12.0		
Supported Internships	0.1		
Alternative Provision	1.4		
Independent and non maintained schools	34.6		
Use of additional high needs funding	2.3		
		69.7	
Additional services to support children including the tuition team, autism service, sensory service, speech and language support and the virtual school.	4.0		
Early Years - high needs support	0.7		
		4.7	
Total Estimated Expenditure		<hr/>	120.0
Estimated DSG Reserve Deficit at 31 March 2024			<hr/> (63.6) <hr/>

Appendix 6 ~ DSG Central Schools Services Block Allocations 2023/24

1. This appendix provides further details of the central schools services block.
2. The table below summarised the allocation for Cheshire East and shows the change from 2022/23.
3. The DfE have continued their approach of reducing the historic commitments element by 20% year on year.

Change to CSSB	2022/23 December 2021	2023/24 July 2022	%
Historic Commitments	£752,128	£601,702	-20%
On-going Responsibilities	£1,785,601	£1,823,257	+2.1%
Total	£2,537,7290	£2,424,960	-4.4%

4. The figures are broken down into the proposed allocations set out below:

Service	Historic Commitments 2023/24 £'000	On-going Responsibilities 2023/24 £'000	Approval Required
Central licences negotiated by the Secretary of State		301	For Schools Forum awareness only
Admissions Service		370	Schools forum approval given
Servicing of Schools Forum		21	Schools forum approval given
Contribution to responsibilities that local authorities hold for all schools.		1,094	Former ESG element. Schools forum approval given.

Service	Historic Commitments 2023/24 £'000	On-going Responsibilities 2023/24 £'000	Approval Required
Eg Finance, Audit, Statutory Heads of Service posts etc			
Contribution to combined budgets for ICT systems and analysis – eg data capture and analysis software and analysis time.	294		Schools forum approval given.
Prudential borrowing costs	458		Schools forum approval given
Increase in on-going responsibilities because of pupil numbers		37	
20% reduction applied to historic commitments	-150		
Total 2023/24	602	1,823	2,425
Total 2022/23	752	1,786	2,538
Net Change	-150	37	113



Working for a brighter future together

Children and Families Committee

Date of Meeting: 13 February 2023

Report Title: School Organisation: Academisation of Schools:
Forward Plan

Report of: Deborah Woodcock, Executive Director of
Children's Services.

Report Reference No: CF/40/22-23

Ward(s) Affected: All

Purpose of the report

This report is presented to committee to allow committee members to be informed of planned schools across the borough who are seeking to move to academy status and join a multi academy trust. The forward plan shows such schools and those that will require committee approval or will be progressed through delegated authority.

There are no changes to this paper from the version which was considered at the January committee meeting.

1. Executive Summary

- 1.1 At the Children and Families Committee meeting on 12 July 2021 committee approved the delegation, with certain exemptions, for current and future conversions including academy leases and commercial transfer agreements jointly to the Executive Director of Children Services and the Executive Director of Place. Where exemptions apply delegation is not applicable and a full report would be presented to committee.
- 1.2 It was proposed that committee will receive a forward plan at each meeting highlighting conversions due to take place and confirmation of the conversions that have taken place so that committee is fully informed and can note and scrutinise the academisation process. The forward plan has not been to the last two committees due to the size of the agenda and number of key decisions being taken at these meetings, however, this will be included on the forward plan for all meetings going forward.
- 1.3 A summary report (Appendix 1) provides an update for committee on those schools which have/are planning to convert to an academy so that committee

members are kept informed. Note that in the vast majority of cases, schools converting to an academy will be required to join an existing multi-academy trust.

Recommendations

- 2.1 That the committee receives and notes the summary table (Appendix 1) showing the status of academy conversions across Cheshire East schools.

3. Reasons for Recommendation

- 3.1 The committee has asked to receive a forward plan at each meeting highlighting conversions due to take place and confirmation of the conversions that have taken place.

4. Other Options Considered

- 4.1 The option to not inform committee of academy approvals is not considered appropriate as each academy conversion will have varying levels of risk and the inclusion of a forward plan of pending conversions allows committee members to be kept aware of future changes.
- 4.2 School governing boards apply to the secretary of state to progress with an academy order, the alternative is to remain a maintained school. There is no requirement for a school to convert to an academy unless directed to do so through an inadequate Ofsted inspection.
- 4.3 Failure to cooperate could result in the Secretary of State making transfer schemes which would be binding on the council.

5. Background Information

- 5.1 At the C&F committee meeting in July 2021, committee agreed the delegation for academy conversions as below:
- a. The Executive Director of Children's Services, in consultation with the Chief Finance Officer and Monitoring Officer, has authority to take all steps necessary to agree and execute the commercial transfer agreement, novation of third-party contracts, shared use agreements/facilities access agreements, staffing and information transfer.
 - b. The Executive Director of Place in consultation with Chief Finance Officer and Monitoring Officer to take all steps necessary to agree and execute any transactions in relation to land, facilities or shared use agreements.
 - c. No delegation may be exercised to execute any agreement as set out above where:
 - The school has a deficit of £100k or there is any significant impact on the

Medium Term Financial Strategy

- There are substantive third-party land interests.
 - i. Any public funds are to be reclaimed under section (land contributions)
 - ii. Any current or proposed legal claim has been identified where an indemnity is sought against Cheshire East Council on any matter.

5.2 This report presents the status of a range of recent and future conversions so that committee are kept aware of ongoing work in this area. However, it should be noted that proposed conversion dates can be delayed for a variety of reasons.

6. Consultation and Engagement

6.1 Appropriate consultation and engagement takes place as part of the academy process with both staff and the local community.

7. Implications of the Recommendations

7.1 Legal

7.1.1 All legal requirements are undertaken and approved ahead of any academy conversion.

7.2 Finance

7.2.1 All financial requirements are undertaken and approved ahead of any academy conversion

7.3 Policy

7.3.1 The implementation of academy conversion is undertaken in accordance with national legislation as per the various Education Acts

7.4 Equality

7.4.1 Not applicable for this report summary

7.5 Human Resources

7.5.1 All HR requirements (mainly relating to TUPE arrangements) are undertaken and approved ahead of any academy conversion.

7.6 Risk Management

7.6.1 All associated risks are considered by legal, finance and HR as part of managing the academy conversion process.

7.6.2 The implications of the roll out of UNIT 4 /ERP administrative/transactional system have increased levels of risk due to the requirement to establish a new payroll process as part of the transition to academy status. This has generated some delays in conversion dates due to associated services having the capacity to build payroll structures ready for conversion.

7.7 Rural Communities

7.7.1 Not applicable for this report summary

7.8 Children and Young People/Cared for Children

7.8.1 There is scrutiny of multi academy trusts by the Regional Schools Commissioner to ensure they have capacity to adopt the school. Therefore, assuring that the school joins a strong trust that can ensure outcomes for children and young people continue to improve

7.9 Public Health

7.9.1 There are no direct implications for public health.

7.10 Climate Change

7.10.1 There are no direct implications for climate change.

Access & Authorisation of Information	
Contact Officer:	Mark Bayley Head of Service – Infrastructure and Outcomes mark.bayley@cheshireeast.gov.uk
Background Papers:	https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/convert-to-an-academy-documents-for-schools Committee paper from 12 July 2021
	Academisation of Schools Report.pdf (cheshireeast.gov.uk)

APPENDIX 1:

C&F Committee: School Academisation – Forward Plan

Date of Meeting: 13 February 2023

The following table will be updated ahead C&F Committee meetings as required to provide the latest position on current/forthcoming school academy conversions. Conversions included within the table are from the date of the commencement of the Council Committee system commenced in July 2021.

Green – completed. Amber – in progress Yellow – initial discussions taking place NOR: Numbers of Pupils on Roll (2021 census)

School	Phase	Status	Core School information	Proposed (P) & Actual (A) Conversion Dates	Commentary
Bosley CofE	Primary	Diocese of Chester:	NoR : 35 – Macc. rural school. Ofsted: 2016: Good	A: 1 st September 2021	Converted on time following approval at July C&F Committee.
Audlem St James'	Primary	Diocese of Chester:	NoR : 187 – rural school. Ofsted: 2018: Good	P: 1 st November 2021 A: 1 st December 2021	Converted following approval at C&F Committee meeting in October
Middlewich High	Secondary	Community Maintained	NoR : 705 Ofsted: 2019: Good Leisure Centre on site.	P: 1 st November 2021 A: 1st December 2021	Converted following approval at C&F Committee meeting in October
Christ the King	Primary	Joint Diocesan: Chester & Shrewsbury Diocese.	NoR : 87 Macclesfield Ofsted: 2018: Inadequate	P: 1 st November 2021 A: 1 st April 2022	No requirement to be considered by Committee. Significant work required to agree suitable trust with both Diocesan.
Elworth Hall School	Primary	Community Maintained	NoR : 201 Sandbach Ofsted: 2022: Requires Improvement	A: 1 st April 2022	No requirement to be considered by Committee.
Oakfield Lodge	Secondary	Pupil Referral Unit (those at risk or have been permanently excluded)	NoR : 60 Crewe Ofsted: July 21: Requires Improvement	P: 1 st February 2022 A: 1 st September 2022	Expected conversion now planned for 1 September. Recs approved at Committee March 23 2022. School now converted.
Wilmslow Group of schools: <i>Proposing to all convert into a multi-academy trust at same time. schools outlined below:</i>	1x Secondary 4 x Primary			Date as yet to be confirmed	Ongoing discussions taking place with schools – will be brought to future Committee for consideration.
Wilmslow High School	Secondary	Community Maintained	NoR: 2130 Ofsted:2019: Good		

			Significant build programme currently in programme		
Styal	Primary	Community Maintained	NoR : 119 Ofsted: 2018: Good Land ownership: National Trust		
Alderley Edge	Primary	Community Maintained	NoR : 203 Ofsted: 2014: Outstanding		
Ashdene	Primary	Community Maintained	NoR : 419 Ofsted: 2019: Outstanding		
Lindow	Primary	Community Maintained	NoR : 210 Ofsted: 2018: Good		
St Gregory's Catholic Primary School	Primary	Diocesan of Shrewsbury	NoR : 71 Ofsted: Special measures	Date as yet to be confirmed	This will be a sponsored academy conversion due to an inadequate Ofsted inspection. Ongoing discussions with Diocese and Regional Director office.
Implications of recent White Paper: Trust expectations	All			N/A	Registration of interest submitted to Regional Director to establish a local authority multi academy trust – outcome expected in September 2022.

Work Programme – Children and Families Committee – 2022/23

A Report title in Bold indicates that this is a significant decision

Reference	Committee Date	Report title	Purpose of Report	Report Author /Senior Officer	Consultation and Engagement Process and Timeline	Equality Impact Assessment Required and Published (Y/N)	Part of Budget and Policy Framework (Y/N)	Corporate Plan Priority	Exempt Item and Paragraph Number
CF/44/22-23	20 Mar 2023	12 Month Report on Councillor Frontline Visits to Safeguarding Teams	To receive an update on the findings from member frontline visits carried out over the last 12 months.	Director of Children's Social Care	N/A	No	Yes	A council which empowers and cares about people	N/A
CF/24/22-23	20 Mar 2023	Children's Residential Provision	To ensure sufficient homes for cared for children and young people within Cheshire East.	Director of Children's Social Care	No	Yes	Yes		N/A
CF/68/22-23	20 Mar 2023	Development of a Shared Marketplace for Complex Needs Services in Cheshire East	This report seeks approval to establish a shared marketplace for the future procurement of care and support services across both health and social care for individuals with complex needs, including those individuals in transition to adulthood who have a learning disability and or mental health support needs.	Director of Commissioning	No	Yes	No	Fair	
CF/57/22-23	20 Mar 2023	Development of Family Hubs Update Report	To provide Children and Families Committee with an update on the development of family hubs in Cheshire East, review progress of the transformation so far, and next steps.	Director of Early Help and Prevention	No	No	Yes		No

CF/61/22 -23	20 Mar 2023	High Needs Funding Post-Pilot Update	To provide an update on the results of the recently undertaken pilot in relation to a potential change in allocation model, and gain recommendations on next steps for this work.	Director of Education and 14-19 Skills	Yes	Yes	No		No
CF/69/22 -23	20 Mar 2023	Household Support Fund 4 & 5 (HSF4/HSF5) Grant Delivery	This report updates on the household support fund 4/5 (HSF4/HSF5) grant awarded to Cheshire East and seeks endorsement of the delivery options proposed in this paper and for the Executive Director of Children's Services to receive delegated authority from committee.	Director of Strong Start, Family Help and Integration	No	Yes	Yes	Fair	
CF/30/22 -23	20 Mar 2023	Report on the Educational Psychology Service	To receive an update on the Educational Psychology Service.	Director of Education and 14-19 Skills	N/A	No	No		N/A
CF/41/22 -23	20 Mar 2023	Review of the learning disability and mental health strategy	To review the learning disability and mental health strategy.	Director of Commissioning	Yes	Yes	Yes	A council which empowers and cares about people	N/A
CF/31/22 -23	20 Mar 2023	School Catering Review Outcomes	To consider the recommended outcomes from the review of school catering.	Director of Education and 14-19 Skills		Yes	Yes		N/A
CF/42/22 -23	20 Mar 2023	Second financial review of 2022/23	To receive the third financial review for Children and Families and to note or approve virements and supplementary estimates as required.	Director of Finance and Customer Services (s151 Officer)	N/A	No	Yes	Ensure that there is transparen cy in all aspects of council decision making	N/A
CF/43/22 -23	20 Mar 2023	Self-evaluation of Children's Services	To receive the self-evaluation of services which shows the quality and impact of services.	Executive Director Children's Services.	N/A	No	Yes	A council which empowers and cares about people	N/A

CF/46/22-23	20 Mar 2023	Update on Academisation	To receive an update on the forward plan for academisation.	Director of Education and 14-19 Skills	Yes	Yes	Yes	A council which empowers and cares about people	N/A
CF/45/22-23	June 2023	Progress on the All Age Carers Strategy	To receive an update on the progress against the All Age Carers Strategy.	Director of Commissioning	N/A	No	Yes		N/A
CF/18/22-23	June 2023	Independent Care Review Outcomes	To update Committee on the outcome of the Independent Care Review and implications for services.	Director of Children's Social Care	N/A	No	Yes		N/A
CF/18/21-22	June 2023	Annual Progress Report on the SEND Strategy	To receive the annual progress report on the SEND Strategy.	Director of Education and 14-19 Skills	N/A	No	Yes		N/A
CF/29/22-23	June 2023	Update report on progress against the Mental Health Spotlight Review	To receive an update on progress against the Mental Health Spotlight Review.	Director of Early Help and Prevention	N/A	No	Yes		N/A

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